

MEMORANDUM

Project 21046 / Huntersville 2022 Downtown Master Plan

Re Phase I Discovery – Preliminary Assessment

Date **DRAFT In Progress**: 21 February 2022

From Larry R. Zinser II / Shook Kelley

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DISCUSSION ITEMS

General Overview.

The information and documents referenced below are outlined intentionally as a **DRAFT In Progress** and **Raw Format** for use by the DPSC to support member discussions during its Meeting #5 on 24 February 2022.

Phase I Discovery – Preliminary Assessment Summary Report.

DRAFT In Progress

Bullet point narrative outlining preliminary conclusions and potential recommendations relative to SK Team observations presented on 27 January 2022 during Public Forum #1 along with subsequent and ongoing preliminary assessment activities. Additional information and considerations are forthcoming.

I. Infrastructure Assessment Summary.

A. Transportation.

1. Arterial Streets & Intersections (Gilead Rd, HWY 115/Old Statesville Road, Main Street).
 - Continue collaboration with NCDOT to ensure roadway construction for its Main Street Improvement Project advances per designs with safe, multimodal access (vehicular, bicycle, and, pedestrian) in accordance with adopted Town plans and policies.

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- Convene with NCDOT and Norfolk Southern to share considerations and discuss feasibility for potential roadway design modifications and/or enhancements including traffic lane and circulation/turning movement patterns, sidewalk widths and streetscape amenities, and on-street parking relative to the U-5908 Main Street project (currently under construction) segment(s) located at the intersections of Huntersville-Concord Road and Church Street and the Norfolk Southern railroad crossing.
 - Consider extending the 25 MPH traffic zone continuously along HWY 115/Old Statesville Road between the new roundabouts under construction at the intersections of Main Street at Fourth Street and Mt Holly-Huntersville Road.
 - Convene with NCDOT to provide update on current Downtown and Subregional context, and share considerations and discuss feasibility for potential roadway design criteria relative to the U-5807 Gilead Road project to ensure multimodal access (vehicular, bicycle, and, pedestrian) in accordance with adopted Town plans and policies. Note: It is understood this Project may undergo reprioritization per the NCDOT STIP - Verify along with timing and opportunity to include updated designs.
 - Convene with NCDOT relative to the U-5114: HWY 21/Statesville Road and Gilead Road project to share considerations and discuss feasibility for Town's desired intersection alignment (chicane toward east), design (signalized or roundabout), and extension (continuation of Commerce Center Dr to the Town's Holbrook St. Extension Project – recently completed).
 - (Re)Prioritize Town's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) roadway projects and funding allocation if possible to support and enhance level of service per proposed design alternate(s) for key NCDOT streets including: Gilead Road, Huntersville-Concord Road, Main Street, and HWY 115/Old Statesville Road.
 - Advance evaluation of proposed new east/west street connection between Commerce Center Drive, and HWY 115/Old Statesville Road and Main Street per the 2040 Community Plan – Downtown Regulating Plan / Character and Connections Map – including but not limited to: potential street alignment(s), design criteria (design speed, cross-section(s) and intersections, etc.), and integration with existing land ownership and uses.
 - Enhance existing, and identify and preserve potential new opportunities for north/south multimodal street (vehicular, bike, and pedestrian) intersections and connections across Gilead Road to increase mobility with pedestrian-oriented street grid and block patterns.
2. Downtown & Adjacent Neighborhood Streets.
- Update Town's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) roadway projects and funding allocation to include proposed new streets and improvements to targeted existing streets within the Downtown area.
 - Inventory, catalogue, and illustrate existing street types, design cross-sections, and general conditions.
 - Clarify existing street right-of-way widths along with associated ownership and maintenance responsibilities - NCDOT, Town, or Private.
 - Enhance existing, and identify and preserve potential new opportunities for east/west multimodal street (vehicular, bike, and pedestrian) intersections and connections between and across HWY 115/Old Statesville Road and Main

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- Street to increase mobility with pedestrian-oriented street grid and block patterns.
- Establish street design guidelines for new and pre-existing/retrofit street types.
 - Explore implementation of innovative Woonerf street type within commercial and residential context.
 - Develop street and sidewalk improvement strategy for pre-existing adjacent neighborhood streets to encourage lower traffic speeds and enhance pedestrian safety, walkability, and connectivity with Downtown.
3. Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities.
- Create **Downtown Sidewalk Improvement Plan** to establish street-specific design guidelines for improving conditions of existing sidewalks within the Downtown core area and extending sidewalk pathways and connections to adjacent and emerging neighborhoods.
 - Bridge existing gaps in pedestrian and bicycle mobility and connectivity with new and/or enhanced trails and sidewalks within and between Public Greenways and Parks, and the Downtown core.
 - Identify, inventory, categorize, and value existing street and sidewalk conditions for potential improvement by associated ownership entity and maintenance responsibilities. Consider implementation of geolocation strategy to pinpoint specific sidewalk damage or other impediments deterring pedestrian and bicyclist access, which can be prioritized for improvements by associated ownership and maintenance entity.
 - Establish and reinforce requirements for regular maintenance and service activities relative to street access and interface with adjacent streetscapes including garbage pick-up and on-street deliveries.
4. Public Transit – Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Commuter Rail Transit (CRT) Station Area Plan.
- Establish a Station Area Planning (SAP) Team to help guide and provide proactive feedback to Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) as they advance short, medium, and long-term planning consideration for its proposed BRT and CRT corridors.
 - Prepare **BRT and CRT Station Area Plans** for both stations, which clearly define the SAP Key Components and functional criteria within the context of the 1/4-mile station area and greater Downtown.
 - Prepare a comparative analysis for the BRT Station location Option A and Option B proposed by CATS to evaluate and share specific considerations for preference by the Town.
 - Reevaluate and update the 2008 CRT Station Area Plan prepared by CATS in accordance with expected SAP Key Components and functional criteria, subject to future review by Norfolk Southern.
 - Ensure current Transportation Plans (including Roadway, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Plans) accommodate and support multimodal access to the BRT and CRT Station Area.
 - Increase and enhance multimodal (vehicular, bike, and pedestrian) access and safety within 1/8-mile of the BRT and CRT Station Areas.



- Explore implementation of innovative mobility solutions such as on-demand public transit to reduce vehicle miles travelled (VMT) and provide options for first and last-mile access to the existing Huntersville Gateway Park and Ride Lot, and future BRT and CRT Stations.

5. Parking - Distribution, Supply & Demand.

- Review and revisit the recommendations outlined within the Town of Huntersville *2006 Downtown Parking Study** including:
 - Conduct a more detailed parking study.
 - Consider street improvements to allow for more on-street parking.
 - Consider establishing shared-use parking agreements.
 - Consider adopting an In-Lieu Fee System to fund future public parking.
 - Implement a maximum off-street parking limit.
 - Allow on-street parking to count toward required parking.
 - Revise the existing parking ordinance to provide additional design and quantitative guidelines for development and uses within the Downtown context.

*Note: The *2006 Downtown Parking Study* was prepared with projected need for parking according to the 2005/2006 Master Plan and prior to the construction of the parking structure serving the Huntersville Town Center/Discovery Place Kids building.

- Create a **Downtown Parking Plan**, which builds on the recommendations of the *2006 Downtown Parking Study*, and incorporates current conditions and the 2022 Downtown Master Plan upon final adoption.
- Collaborate with existing property and business owners to evaluate existing off-street parking conditions and potential funding mechanisms for improvements including but not limited to:
 - Vehicular access and circulation efficiency (automobile and service vehicles) within and between adjoining lots.
 - Pedestrian safety, accessibility and circulation within and between adjoining lots, and adjacent sidewalks and building entrances.
 - Wayfinding signage – vehicular and pedestrian.
 - Surfacing materials, landscaping, lighting, drainage (including integration of potential stormwater strategies such as pervious pavers, bioretention areas, and underground vaults).
- Identify location(s) and approaches for potential future public, shared parking facilities (surface and/or structured) as determined appropriate relative to site parcel and block size and geometry, street access, and demand per existing and potential future adjacent and nearby development program.

B. General Infrastructure Systems.

- Coordinate development program and intensity in conjunction with existing infrastructure capacities and/or phase in accordance with Town’s CIP.
- Recognize the Water and Sewer Authority of Cabarrus County (WSACC) existing wastewater basin status and capacity limits and impact on timing and phasing of potential future development on the eastern Downtown area.

C. Environment & Open Space.

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1. Terrestrial Systems.
 - Conduct a comprehensive Arborist Tree Assessment Report to inventory conditions of the existing tree canopy.
 - Identify existing wooded areas to consider for potential preservation and use to supplement public greenway and open space systems in the Downtown area.
 - Consider recalibrating tree preservation requirements, mitigation strategies, and/or provide incentives to developers for contributions to a **Downtown Tree Fund/Bank** set up by the Town for the planting and maintenance of trees elsewhere in the Downtown area.
 - Create design guidelines for sensitive approaches to the integration of new development within pre-existing wooded areas, which facilitate the preservation of a maximum number of trees.
2. Public Greenways, Trails & Parks.
 - Enhance wayfinding signage within Public Greenways and Parks, and throughout the Downtown to promote locations and activities, and encourage community and visitor access.
 - Identify existing features within parks for potential future design and material enhancements including but not limited to: decorative hardscapes, light fixtures, railings and fencing, furniture (benches, waste/recycle receptacles, bicycle racks, etc.), public art installations, shelters, playground equipment, etc.
 - Implement Downtown Park post-construction inspection and clean-up of internal and perimeter wooded areas and understory brush.
3. Stormwater Systems.
 - Identify and encourage preservation and/or consider purchase of larger land parcels (or portions of) as stormwater capture sites for implementation of potential 'regional' stormwater strategy in harmony with the existing topography, and flow patterns and drainage basins within each quadrant of the Downtown area.
 - Conduct a detailed **Downtown Stormwater Study** to determine feasibility for a potential 'regional' stormwater approach for the Downtown area.
 - Encourage and implement innovative and creative stormwater features as intentional and visually appealing amenities, which are designed, scaled, and integrated sensitively within the surrounding context – urban/developed and natural/undeveloped areas of the Downtown.
 - Pending feasibility and implementation of regional stormwater strategy and associated facility(s), consider potential stormwater banking and mitigation program for existing and future development in the Downtown area.

II. Land Use / Urban Design Assessment Summary

- A. Adopted Town Documents, Ordinance & Policies.
 - Consider update and expansion of Building and Lot Type definitions and regulations within the existing Zoning Ordinance and/or create new Types to include broader range of varieties with the Downtown area.
 - Consider review of Development Plan (By-Right and Rezoning) submittals to include evaluation of adherence to the adopted Master Plan and proposed **Downtown Urban Design Guidelines** document (see below).

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- Development Plan submittal checklist should include requirement for provision of an Urban Context Plan, whereby the proposed project is depicted within the surrounding 1/4 mile context.
 - Consider additional community engagement process(s) for review of Development and Rezoning Plan submittals within the Downtown including collaborative charrettes together with town staff and department heads, adjacent neighborhoods, and other community stakeholders.
- B. Urban Design Guidelines.
- The existing Urban Design Guidelines *2008 Design Guidebook* provides good and broad guidance for design of development throughout the entire Town. However, a new and separate **Downtown Urban Design Guidelines** document should be created to provide specific guidelines focused on the design of new and existing development improvements within the Downtown area - including but not limited to building form and design, open space, and streets.
 - Include urban design strategies for sensitive transition and integration between Downtown and adjacent existing and emerging neighborhoods.
 - Craft proposed **Downtown Urban Design Guidelines** to clearly describe and encourage form-based and context sensitive approach to design of new development.
 - Identify, inventory, categorize, and value existing building and site conditions for potential retrofit improvements to encourage and enhance compliance with proposed **Downtown Urban Design Guidelines**.
- C. Existing Land Use & Development Site Typologies, Form, and Program.
- Define and reinforce appropriate pattern(s) and hierarchy of development and open space in the Downtown (Tier 1 and Tier 2) with intentional building frontages and complimentary building sizes to frame streets and open spaces which transition sensitively between adjacent neighborhoods.
 - Follow and enforce proposed **Downtown Urban Design Guidelines** to encourage form-based and context sensitive approach to design of new development.
 - Update and expand the Building and Lot Type definitions and design criteria established within the current Zoning Ordinance and/or consider the formation and inclusion of new Types.
- III. **Economic Development Assessment Summary.**
- A. Existing Ownership Patterns: Town-Owned & Private-Owned Assets.
- Identify underutilized private properties (or portions of) and engage owner(s) to consider opportunities including: Access and/or Parking Agreements, Land Swaps, Purchase, or Public Private Partnerships (P3).
 - Inventory existing Town-Owned properties and establish/reevaluate strategic planning for future sale, swap, use, and/or potential additions per aggregation with acquisition of adjacent parcels.
 - Recognize and plan for a phased approach to potential future development based on the realities of existing land ownership patterns and associated parcel sizes, geometries, and street frontage.
- B. Existing Development Activity Types & Patterns: Recent & Emerging.



- Engage and encourage collaboration with developers and landowners to share and coordinate recent, emerging and potential future development concepts and/or intentions per short, medium, and long-term planning horizons.
 - Facilitate potential joint-development approaches with multiple developers and landowners.
 - Encourage incremental, smaller scale, infill development congruent with existing land ownership, and parcel sizes and geometries.
 - Encourage implementation of shared parking and/or joint access agreements.
- C. Market Study.
- Establish and reinforce Best Practices criteria to elevate design quality of existing and new development to enhance commercial viability and success.
 - Establish mechanism(s) for management of existing and new commercial activity such as a Main Street Program or Business Improvement District (BID).
 - Identify, inventory, categorize, and value existing building and site conditions for potential improvement.
 - Provide intentional and active marketing and recruitment for local and new business development in the Downtown.

REFERENCES See Link: <https://shookkelley.sharefile.com/d-s0482fd89046a4fe0a7eb5b2c5ce58991>

A. Discovery Exhibits:

- A1_2022-01-27_TOH 2022 DMP_PA_Infrastructure
- A2_2022-01-27_TOH 2022 DMP_PA_Land Use & Urban Design
- A3_2022-01-27_TOH 2022 DMP_PA_Economic Development
- A4_2022-02-10_TOH 2022 DMP_GPG 01_Placemaking
- A5_2022-02-10_TOH 2022 DMP_GPG 02_Retail Analysis
- A6_2022-01-27_TOH 2022 DMP_PA_Photo Tour

END OF MEMORANDUM

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