

MEMORANDUM

Project 21046 / Huntersville 2022 Downtown Master Plan  
Re Phase I Discovery - DPSC and Public Input Report  
Date 11 March 2022  
From Larry R. Zinser II / Shook Kelley

DISTRIBUTION

**OWNER**

**Town of Huntersville (TOH): 2022 Downtown Plan Steering Committee**

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DISCUSSION ITEMS

**General Overview.**

During the Phase I Discovery process, the Downtown Plan Steering Committee (DPSC) and the general Public were invited to participate and provide input with interactive tools including:

- I. DPSC Homework Assignment – Place Preferences.
- II. Visual Preference Survey.
- III. Interactive Input Map.
- IV. Supplemental Public Inputs – In-Person and Online.

This report and attachments provide an overview and actual results for each input instrument, and can be found at: <https://www.letsplanhuntersville.org/steering-committee>

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## I. DPSC Homework Assignment – Place Preferences.

See Attachment A

### Overview:

As an extension to the DPSC Topical Issues Survey; during the DPSC Meeting #2 on December 9, 2021, DPSC Members were asked to share images, which represent what they **LIKE** and **DISLIKE** about the most memorable downtown(s) they have visited - as noted within their responses to the Survey along with others that they may have since remembered or recently discovered. In addition, members were asked to share a brief narrative description for each image which explains the specific characteristics they feel are important to consider in defining the Downtown Plan.

File sharing was active between December 17, 2021 - January 31, 2022.

### Results:

The DPSC Members shared a range of images from a number of downtowns and places located predominately in North Carolina including: Shelby, Hendersonville, Pinehurst, Belmont, Matthews, Pineville, Zebulon, Asheville, Hickory, Blowing Rock, Boone, Concord, Davidson, Mooresville, NODA District in Charlotte, Salisbury, Statesville, Mebane, and Oxford.

In addition, images were shared from a few locations outside of North Carolina including: Greenville, SC, Somerville, NJ, and Manitou Springs, CO.

Common attributes among the places shared include:

- A. **Building Form and Scale:** The buildings are predominately 1 to 3 stories in height (and stories and/or rooflines vary along blocks) with continuous, yet incremental frontage (approximately 30 to 40 feet) along the street. Most rooflines are defined with articulated parapet walls, with a few expressions of unique forms defining individual buildings along the block. Most images depicted only one side of the street. However, where both sides were included, it appeared the public space of the street created by the fronting buildings achieved spatial enclosure ratios between 1:3 and 1:4.
- B. **Building Type and Uses:** Most of the buildings appear to have the desired characteristics of the **Shop Front Building** Type as outlined by the Town's Zoning Ordinance, defined by street level commercial shops and restaurants, and commercial office or residential uses on the upper levels. In addition, a few examples of Civic Building Types were shared, which depict town halls and other cultural uses.
- C. **Building Façades - Storefronts, Materials and Color, Articulation, Character:** Most of the buildings have a variety of well-proportioned expressions and detail at the street as well as the upper levels. On the street level, storefronts appear uniquely designed and composed with transparent glazing and entrances for individual businesses. Storefront heights undulate comfortably along an approximate 16-20 foot datum, which provides a continuous, animated frontage along the sidewalk. In addition, a compatible vocabulary of awnings and signage elements and designs add to the pedestrian experience. Where buildings have upper levels, they are equally well-articulated with individual, yet harmonious sculptural relief and details, materials and colors, and window compositions – appropriately expressing the residential or office uses within. A few examples of colorful murals on secondary façades are also included.
- D. **Pedestrian Oriented Sidewalks, Streetscape, and Activities:** Common among most of the

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places shared are characteristics including:

- Wide sidewalks; whereby people can comfortably stroll side-by-side, and/or accommodate adequate outdoor dining areas, programmed gathering areas, and/or outdoor merchandizing, art installations, and decorative landscaping.
- Locally expressive, intentional, and well-maintained approach to streetscape elements including decorative streetlights, street trees, public art installations, wayfinding signage, decorative railings, and other public furniture (including a variety of inviting fixed and movable seating presentations).
- On-street parking is presented in both parallel and diagonal configurations.

A few unique attributes and considerations include (paraphrased):

- Revisiting the 2005 Downtown Master Plan, Huntersville Downtown Civic Core, whereby the Civic Core was envisioned with a Civic Plaza to be located on the north side of Huntersville-Concord Road and anchored by the expansion of the current Town Hall along with a proposed Arts and Cultural Facility, Garden Hall, and a 400+ Space Parking Structure serving the surrounding uses and future CATS Commuter Rail Transit station.
- Public events and activities such as a Scavenger Hunt (similar to Greenville, SC).
- Integration of interesting or non-conventional outdoor seating (similar to Camp North End, Charlotte, NC).
- Dual sidewalks defined by street trees and landscape areas along pre-existing residential areas of Downtown to distinguish residences now used for commerce.
- Mixed-Use Civic buildings such as combined Town Hall and Library.
- Multi-Use Plaza space.
- Multiple level sidewalks where necessary.
- Comingling parks/open spaces with Main Street.
- Public Park visibility from most of Downtown area.
- Farmer's Market with provisions for a variety of vendors.
- Coordination of building, streetscape, and landscape colors.
- Sun barriers and long-span canopies over walkways.
- Decorative bridges over streams within parks.
- Outdoor speaker systems integrated within the streetscape/landscape.
- Downtown canal system providing solutions for multimodal transportation with waterway and gondola access, and stormwater management.

Specific **LIKES** were identified with notes and include (paraphrased):

- Complimentary and congruent material use in buildings, streetscapes, and open spaces.
- Adequate public parking and signage.
- Uniformity of buildings – historic or new.
- Mix of old and new buildings together.
- Conformity and range of building storefront awning types.
- Adjacency of recreation space to Downtown.
- Coordinated festivals and activities.
- Park entrances defined as gathering spaces with fountains and seating areas.
- Historical events honored with statues and art.
- Colorful landscaping and decorative planters.
- Colorful mix of townhomes and businesses.
- Neat and eclectic Downtown.
- The positive transformation of downtown Belmont, NC.

Specific **DISLIKES** were identified with notes and include (paraphrased):

- Excessive paving and concrete associated with roadways and parking areas.

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- Tall building heights.
- Mix-matched storefront awnings.
- Unused railroad.
- Disconnected or uncoordinated sidewalk paver patterns.
- Bland character of buildings and surrounding environment.
- Unkempt existing buildings and cluttered sidewalks within Downtown Huntersville.
- Unrealistic or inappropriate uses and structures relative to the existing context of Downtown Huntersville.

## II. Visual Preference Survey.

See Attachment B

### Overview:

This public survey (re)introduces images in accordance with the vocabulary of Building Types established in the Huntersville Zoning Ordinance - Urban Workplace, Shop Front, Apartment, etc. along with Building Form and Scale, Open Space and Street Types. While this survey provides only a snapshot of community preferences, it will help establish a basic common visual language together with the community as these types are defined and considered for located within the Alternative Futures and Master Plan.

The Visual Preference Survey was active between January 27, 2022 – February 28, 2022.

### Results:

A total of 490 surveys were completed by the public. See Attachment B to see results within each image set including:

- Percentages of each image selected.
- Top three and bottom two choices.
- Key observations.

## III. Interactive Public Input Map.

See Attachment C

### Overview:

The Town of Huntersville created an online, Interactive Public Input Map for citizens to pinpoint and describe features they would like to change or protect within the Downtown area along with key places that could benefit from strategic planning in support of the Huntersville 2022 Downtown Master Plan.

The map included the following **Public Input Categories**:

- Community Asset.
- Desired Use.
- Development Opportunity.
- Infrastructure Improvements.
- Lighting Improvements.
- Parking Improvements.
- Parks and Open Space.
- Pedestrian Improvement.
- Property Improvements.
- Transportation Improvements.
- Undesired Use.
- Other (Open for general comments).

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Together, these public inputs will help inform the definition of Organizing Principles that are more in sync with community desires and help the Consultant Team in distinguishing the Alternative Futures.

**Results:**

A total of 914 entries were made by the public on the map, which touched upon all twelve Content Categories. Common and unique considerations are synthesized and paraphrased as outlined below within each Content Category (see Attachment C for all unedited public inputs and map locations).

**A. Community Asset:**

- Parks and Open Space including:
  - Greenway Park.
  - Veterans Park.
  - Existing Greenways and Tree Canopy.
  - Cemetery.
- Discovery Place Kids (DPK).
- Boy Scouts of America – Scout House and Program.
- Local Businesses including:
  - Crafty Beer Guy's (CBG's) Taproom.
  - Hair on Mane, Main Street Coffee.
  - Main Street Tavern.
  - Photography Shop.
- Civic Building and Churches.
- Senior Living.
- Landmark and Historic Structures including:
  - Old Jail.
  - Houses.
  - Water Tower.

**B. Desired Use:**

- Arts District (proposed along N Church Street).
- Existing Houses (along S Maxwell Avenue).
- Grocery Store serving Downtown.
- Tree canopy preservation on east side of Downtown.
- Greenway and trail preservation and expansion.
- Local small business support and preservation.
- Future economic development in the northeast quadrant of Downtown.
- Smaller urban parks.
- Civic uses including:
  - DPK.
  - Huntersville Elementary School.
- Adaptive reuse of Cashion's.
- Creative stormwater solutions incorporating wet ponds and park space.
- Existing Town Hall expansion and public parking structure per 2006 Downtown Master Plan.
- Town Hall location on the west side of the Town Center building.
- Enhancement of Norfolk Southern railroad corridor including parallel trails and pedestrian crossing between Church Street and Main Street.
- Existing building frontage along the south side of Gilead Road.

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- Redevelopment of underutilized Town-owned property(s).

### C. Development Opportunity:

- Several development opportunities are pinned and clustered in the following locations:
  - Around the intersections of Gilead Road, Huntersville-Concord Road, Old Statesville Road, Maxwell Avenue, and Main Street.
  - On the east side of Downtown within the blocks defined by N Church Street, Huntersville-Concord Road, Walters Street, First Street, and Second Street.
  - Along the north and a portion of the south side of Gilead Road.
  - Around the new north and south roundabouts per the Main Street improvement project.
- Considerations for the new Town Hall include:
  - Expanding the existing Town Hall building per the 2006 Downtown Master Plan.
  - Locating on the currently planned site along Old Statesville Road adjacent the Town Center building.
  - Locating on the American Legion site to anchor Veterans Park.
- Provide opportunities for affordable housing within the Huntersville Town Center project.
- Include and support more small businesses and facilitate potential relocations from northern areas Old Statesville Road.
- Explore opportunities for expanding Downtown Park and connections in conjunction with new brewery redevelopment of former Police Headquarters building.
- Explore opportunity for commercial and/or civic redevelopment of CMS property fronting along Gilead Road in conjunction with new Huntersville Elementary School construction.
- Focus improvements for businesses and buildings along with infill and/or redevelopment opportunities within block defined by the block defined by Old Statesville Road, Huntersville-Concord Road, Main Street, and E Greenway Street.
- Provide mixed use of housing from higher density to lower within potential future development block fronting N Church Street on east side of Downtown.
- Limit the number of government buildings at the intersection of Gilead Road, Old Statesville Road, and Huntersville-Concord Road.
- Establish street design for Gilead Road in character with a Downtown environment.
- Explore purchase of American Legion building and site for potential redevelopment including:
  - New Town Hall Site.
  - Veterans Park Expansion.
  - Farmer's Market.
- Explore purchase and redevelopment opportunity near the new north roundabout.
- Consider commercial zoning along N Church Street between Second Street and Third Street.
- Consider improvements to Veterans Park including:
  - Expanded area.
  - Provision of parking.
  - Relocation to larger site to facilitate new structure for Farmer's Market and other events.
- Consider future redevelopment of the Town public parking lot on Main Street.
- Explore improvements to the existing shopping centers flanking Gilead Road at the intersection of Statesville Road to create a gateway experience from I-77 into

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Downtown.

**D. Infrastructure Improvements:**

- Woonerf street type design for Maxwell Avenue (coupled with grant program for building façade improvements per new frontage).
- Address blind corners including:
  - Old Statesville Road and Huntersville-Concord Road.
  - Main Street and Huntersville-Concord Road.
  - N Church Street and First Street.
- Extend street network and create connections within and between Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods and development.
- Advance planning and implementation of new east/west street alignment parallel to Gilead Road to determine tie-in locations on the north side.
- Implement pedestrian oriented sidewalk and street intersection improvements including:
  - Median separation between roadway and sidewalk.
  - Pedestrian crossings at streets and railroad.
- Gilead Road improvements including roadway and streetscape design and widths to accommodate vehicular traffic along with multimodal access for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Address traffic safety, congestion, and circulation patterns in the Downtown.
- Implement traffic calming measures along streets relative to both typical vehicles and large truck/semi vehicles.
- Roadway widening to accommodate stormwater infrastructure.
- Signage improvements including:
  - Traffic control and circulation patterns.
  - General wayfinding to key uses and amenities.
- Utility improvements including relocating poles above grade per vehicular and pedestrian conflicts, and/or underground to enhance visual character of Downtown.

**E. Lighting Improvements:**

- Relocate utilities underground along Old Statesville Road and Main Street between the new north and south roundabouts.
- Street lights and/or improved lighting levels are needed along pedestrian pathways and streets including Gilead Road, Old Statesville Road, and Huntersville-Concord Road to enhance pedestrian walkability and safety throughout Downtown.
- Implement decorative light fixtures along Maxwell Avenue.
- Install interior block parking lot lighting without the use of tall pole-mounted spotlight fixture types in consideration to light pollution.

**F. Parking Improvements:**

- Locate new public parking structure on the north side of Huntersville-Concord Road between Old Statesville Road and Maxwell Avenue per the 2006 Downtown Master Plan.
- Implement improvements to existing surface parking lots within the block defined by Old Statesville Road, Huntersville-Concord Road, Main Street, and E Greenway Street.
- Additional parking is needed along Main Street and North Maxwell Avenue.
- Inquire with American Legion about extending shared parking agreement and/or dedication of public parking within its surface lot.

**G. Parks and Open Space:**

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- Explore opportunities to create new public parks throughout Downtown including: at the corner of Second Street and Walters Street, on the currently planned Town Hall site, and on the southern end of the Huntersville Town Center project.
- Prioritize connecting greenways to parks throughout Downtown.
- Expand Veterans Park.
- Create an Entertainment Courtyard on the north side of Huntersville-Concord Road per the 2006 Downtown Master Plan.
- Preserve existing wooded areas for greenway and trail expansion.
- Implement landscape improvement program throughout the Downtown.
- Implement park amenities tailored for young families including: playground, fountain, splashpad, and seating.
- Implement a phased approach to landscape and hardscape for the Seam Trail and streetscape on both sides of the Norfolk Southern railroad corridor with consideration for the future Commuter Rail Transit Station per CATS long-term planning for the LYNX Red Line.

**H. Pedestrian Improvements:**

- Several pedestrian improvements are pinned and clustered along the following streets:
  - Gilead Road.
  - Huntersville-Concord Road.
  - Old Statesville Road.
  - Main Street.
- Common pedestrian improvements identified for consideration include:
  - Installing sidewalks currently missing along existing streets and intersections.
  - Install sidewalks for safer crossing at Norfolk Southern railroad corridor.
  - Installing wider and safer sidewalks.
  - Implementing repairs to existing sidewalks.
  - Adding street trees.
  - Adding and/or improving illumination.
  - Providing signalized crosswalks at street intersections.
- Neighborhoods and amenities (including parks and visitor attractions) within and surrounding Downtown are disconnected (physically and perceptually) from each other due to lack of continuous and safe sidewalks.
- Unique considerations for pedestrian improvements include:
  - Closing vehicular access on Huntersville-Concord Road between Old Statesville Road and Main Street and open to pedestrian traffic only.
  - Provide continuous sidewalk along Maxwell Avenue between Veteran Park and Huntersville Presbyterian Church.
  - Extend the Vine trail across Old Statesville Road to Maxwell Avenue and Veterans Park.
  - Purchase right-of-way to extend the Vine trail to Holbrook Street Extension for Greenway connection.
  - Install continuous sidewalk along Old Statesville Road from Mt Holly-Huntersville Road to Stumptown Road.

**I. Property Improvements:**

- Several property improvements are pinned and clustered in the following locations:
  - Within the block defined by Old Statesville Road, Huntersville-Concord Road, Main Street, and E Greenway Street.
  - Along the north side of Gilead Road and Huntersville-Concord Road near the

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- intersection of Old Statesville Road.
    - Within the block defined by Old Statesville Road, Main Street, Gibson Park Drive, and Mt Holly-Huntersville Road.
    - Within the blocks by Old Statesville Road, Main Street, Maxwell Avenue, Bigham Street, and North Church Street.
    - Around the new north roundabout intersection of Old Statesville Road and Main Street.
    - On the east side of Downtown within the blocks defined by N Church Street, Huntersville-Concord Road, Walters Street, First Street, and Second Street.
  - Specific improvements along S Maxwell Avenue and Within the block defined by Old Statesville Road, Huntersville-Concord Road, Main Street, and E Greenway Street include:
    - Building restoration and repurposing.
    - Façade and storefront repairs and improvements.
    - Outdoor dining patio.
    - Selective building demolition and redevelopment opportunities including retail shops, restaurants, affordable housing, townhouses, live/work, small business space.
    - Site cleanup and improvements.
    - Establish signage guidelines.
  - Explore purchase strategies and/or tax incentives along with code enforcement to encourage property owners to implement site and building improvements.
  - Considerations for alternate Town Hall location include:
    - The site behind the Mama Mia Too property with frontage along Maxwell Avenue and Veterans Park.
    - The site occupied by the apartments located on the west side of Old Statesville Road with frontage on Downtown Park.
  - Considerations for the Cashion’s property include:
    - Site and building cleanup and improvements and/or renovation.
    - Apply sign ordinance/regulations.
    - Relocate gas station use.
    - Adaptive reuse.
    - Potential general store.
    - Purchase and demolish building for use of site as public park.
  - Considerations for the Mama Mia Too property include:
    - Site and building cleanup and improvements.
    - Façade repairs and improvements.
    - Encourage historic preservation.
    - Encourage a more consistent use or service.
    - Encourage code enforcement.
- J. Transportation Improvements:**
- Address street blind curve location at Dellwood Drive intersection with S Church Street and Main Street.
  - Improve traffic circulation patterns relative to Huntersville Elementary School including:
    - Student drop-off and pick-up.
    - Intersection improvements such as signalization (timing).
    - Alternative intersection roundabout design.
  - Implement traffic calming measures to increase pedestrian safety and connectivity including:

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- Speed tables along Gilead Road and Old Statesville Road.
- Sidewalks along Holbrook Street and Hillcrest Drive.
- Implement street improvements including:
  - Widening of Church Street and Gibson Park Drive among others to accommodate increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
  - Straighten curve in Huntersville-Concord Road at the intersection of Warfield Avenue.
  - Corrective lane striping at key intersections.
- Include both Commuter Rail and Bus Rapid Transit in planning for future of Huntersville within the context of North Mecklenburg.

**K. Undesired Use:**

- The Cashion’s gas station location on the corner of Gilead Road and Old Statesville Road is visual eyesore and deters pedestrian connections between Downtown Park and other areas of Downtown.
- Consider relocation of Huntersville Fire Station #1 to eliminate traffic and access conflicts in Downtown.
- The American Legion building, while functional and surrounded by surface parking, is not a Downtown amenity.
- Consider improving appearance and/or relocating the old caboose from Veterans Park to another location near the American Legion.
- The automobile repair shop and garage building and site car storage uses located along Old Statesville Road at the new north roundabout (under construction) are an eyesore and deter pedestrian connections into Downtown.
- Concern about offensive expressions displayed on private property adjacent to playground located on Main Street.
- Consider appropriate location(s) for situating food vendor / food trucks and activities along Main Street.

**L. Other:**

- Purchase the American Legion building and site and add Farmer’s Market area for events.
- Explore cellular tower service to Vermillion.
- Explore opportunity for extending additional parking, green space, and shops along S Main Street.
- Complete cleanup of pipeline leak area with appropriate accountability.
- Increase police patrol to help deter speeding.
- Plant trees to enhance beautification at site cleared for unfulfilled development.
- Preserve mature and character trees along Gibson Park Drive near the intersection of S Church Street.
- Establish gateway experience at the new Main Street roundabouts with decorative lighting and beautification with visual elements.
- Consider Town purchase or land swap of property adjacent to existing Town hall to provide additional parking and expand Civic core in keeping with the 2006 Downtown Master Plan.

**IV. Supplemental Public Inputs – In-Person and Online.**  
 See Attachment D

Overview:

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*In-Person*

Public Forum #1 *Our Essential Downtown*, originally intended as an in-person public event, was reformatted and conducted on January 27, 2022 as a virtual live-stream event as a result of COVID-19 protocols per surge of the Omicron variant.

Accordingly, in an effort to provide additional methods for the public to learn about the Phase I Discovery process and information gathered within the Preliminary Assessment, hardcopy plots of key presentation slides were pinned and displayed in sequential arrangement as sheets on the walls of the Town Hall Council Chamber. In addition, a Visual Preference Survey booklet was printed and located in the Council Chamber. Together, these items were open to the public with an invitation to post notes directly on the sheets, and Town Staff was available to meet and discuss information with interested visitors.

The In-Person display and input was active between February 7, 2022 - February 28, 2022.

*Online*

Supplementing the Visual Preference Survey and the Interactive Public Input Map, the public was invited to share ideas about the Downtown Master Plan and upload supporting images.

The Online input was active between February 10, 2022 - February 28, 2022.

**Results:***In-Person*

Specific comments and considerations include (paraphrased):

- Improve walkability between Town Center and Veterans Park.
- Connect Greenway Trail head to existing Town Hall and Veterans Park.
- Plant hearty, fast growing street trees and other landscape features to replace greenery lost with the Main Street project.
- Work to include Pottstown as part of Downtown.
- Advance Church Street project to align across Huntersville-Concord Road.
- Keep on-street parking along Main Street.
- Install move streetlights within Downtown, especially along Gilead Road.
- Install speed tables and on-street parking along Gilead Road.
- Begin public discussions about Gilead Road improvements and reduced traffic speeds.
- Solve car stacking issue along Sherwood Drive at Huntersville Elementary School.
- Encourage retail/commercial frontage along N Church Street.
- Improve Bigham Street as connection between street pairs – Old Statesville Road and Main Street.
- Improve street approach from Sherwood Drive to Old Statesville Road.
- Protect against further intrusion of development in existing neighborhood adjacent to the southwest quadrant of Downtown.
- Implement traffic calming measures on Hillcrest Drive, Greenway Drive, and Holbrook Street.
- Identify and ensure implementation of safety precautions relative to pedestrian access at the greenway tunnel below I-77.
- Retain existing forested areas for wildlife.
- Encourage thoughtful planning versus hodgepodge development.
- Acknowledge that the planned intersection design at Dallas Street & HWY 21 will allow additional northbound traffic into Downtown.
- Opposition to depicting the Future Commuter Rail Transit Station per CATS long-term planning for the LYNX Red Line.

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- Concern about perceived sprawl of the proposed Town Center Project.
- Explore opportunities for parks, arts, and pedestrian mall.
- Improve or create new sidewalks with increased widths to accommodate multi-use activities and make Downtown more walkable and bikeable.
- Expand existing Town Hall toward the north.
- Provide permanent green space adjacent to the Town Center building on the corner of Gilead Road and Old Statesville Road.
- Consider keeping the currently proposed new Town Hall site as green space and find alternate location for new Town Hall building.
- Explore possibility to create park and arts area on the west side of the Town Center building.
- Embrace and seek opportunities to incorporate existing greenways as natural areas.
- Formation of a Huntersville Downtown Business Association is very important.
- Increase pedestrian and bike access in Downtown.
- Concern about the proposed Huntersville Town Center project.

*Online*

**Question: What are your thoughts about Downtown Huntersville?**

Specific comments and considerations include:

- It is not a destination. Would love development that brings the community together.
- Downtown Huntersville is in need of a face lift and downtown restaurants and bars.
- Restaurants and breweries are needed! Downtown Huntersville is NOT a destination.
- Downtown needs retail and destination areas. With Charlotte and the surround [sic] neighborhoods in Mooresville, Davidson and Cornelius, Huntersville is missing out.
- Walkability, restaurants, brewery, coffee shop/bakery, yoga studio, nail salon, book store.

**Attachments - See Link:**

<https://www.letsplanhuntersville.org/steering-committee>

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- II. TOH 2022 DMP\_Public Visual Preference Survey Results.
- III. TOH 2022 DMP\_Interactive Public Input Map Results.
- IV. TOH 2022 DMP\_Supplemental Public Inputs – In-Person and Online.

**END OF MEMORANDUM**

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