

2017

# Downtown Streetscape Master Plan

Aberdeen, North Carolina





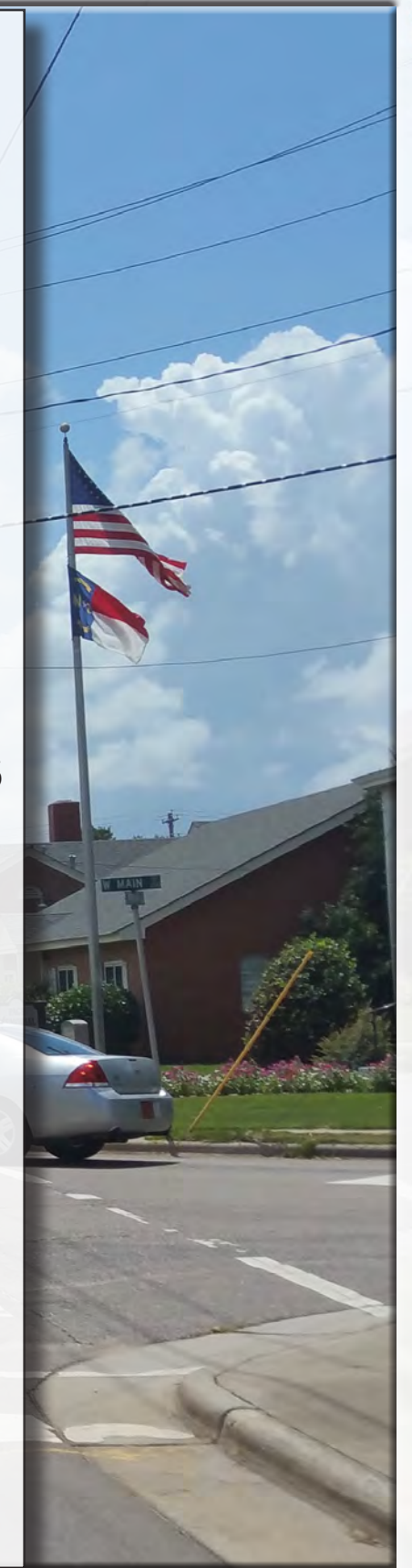






# Aberdeen Downtown Master Plan

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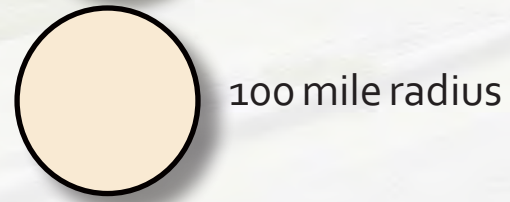
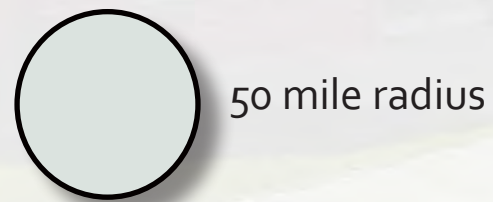
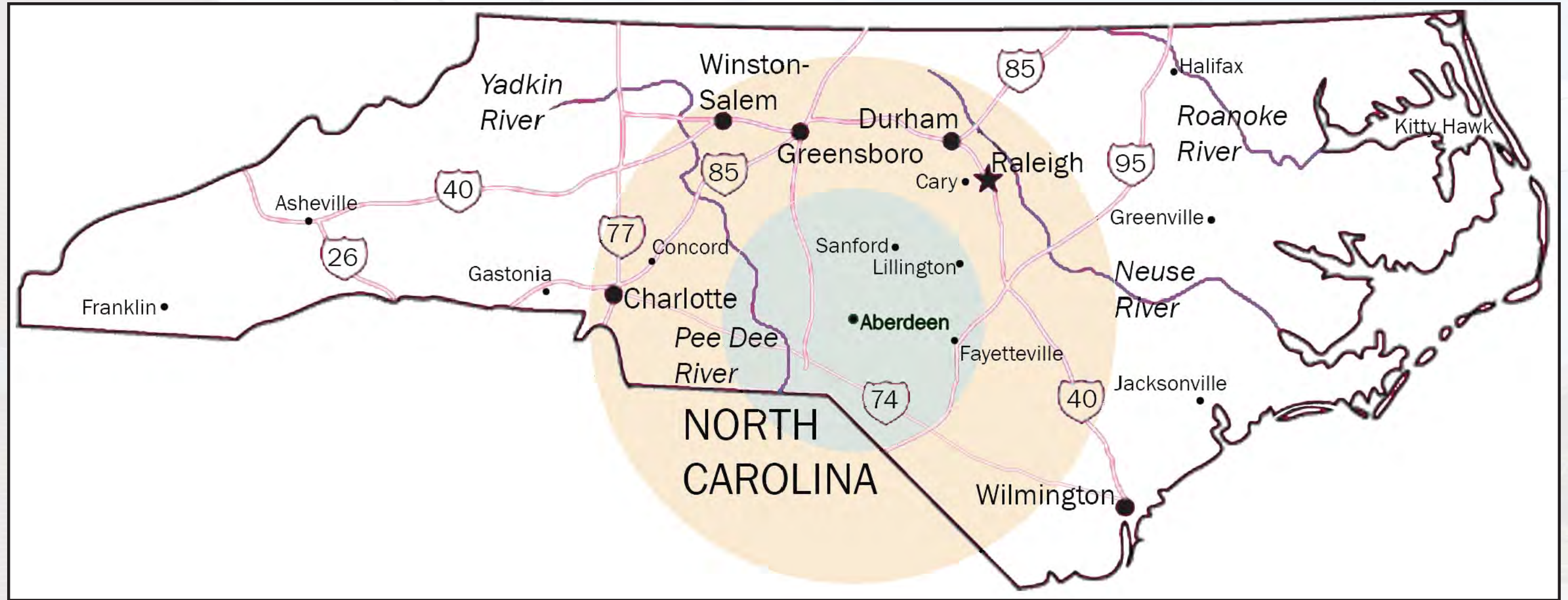
Betsy Saye

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# Location



Downtown Aberdeen is approximately a two hour drive to the North Carolina Coast (Wilmington) and is about three hours drive to the mountains of Boone North Carolina. The capital city of Raleigh is a short one hour drive from Aberdeen. Aberdeen is conveniently located to a number of regional tourist destinations including pottery road (30 minute drive from Aberdeen) which has offered hand-turned or “hand-thrown” pottery to tourists since the eighteenth century. Aberdeen is literally minutes from Pinehurst and it’s nationally recognized resort attractions.

As the graphic above shows, a number of the most populated areas in North Carolina including the “Research Triangle” cities of Raleigh, Durham, the town of Chapel Hill, Greensboro, Winston Salem, and Charlotte are within a 100 mile radius of Aberdeen. Aberdeen’s proximity to North Carolina’s major cities is an important resource and opportunity to attract private investment and tourism.



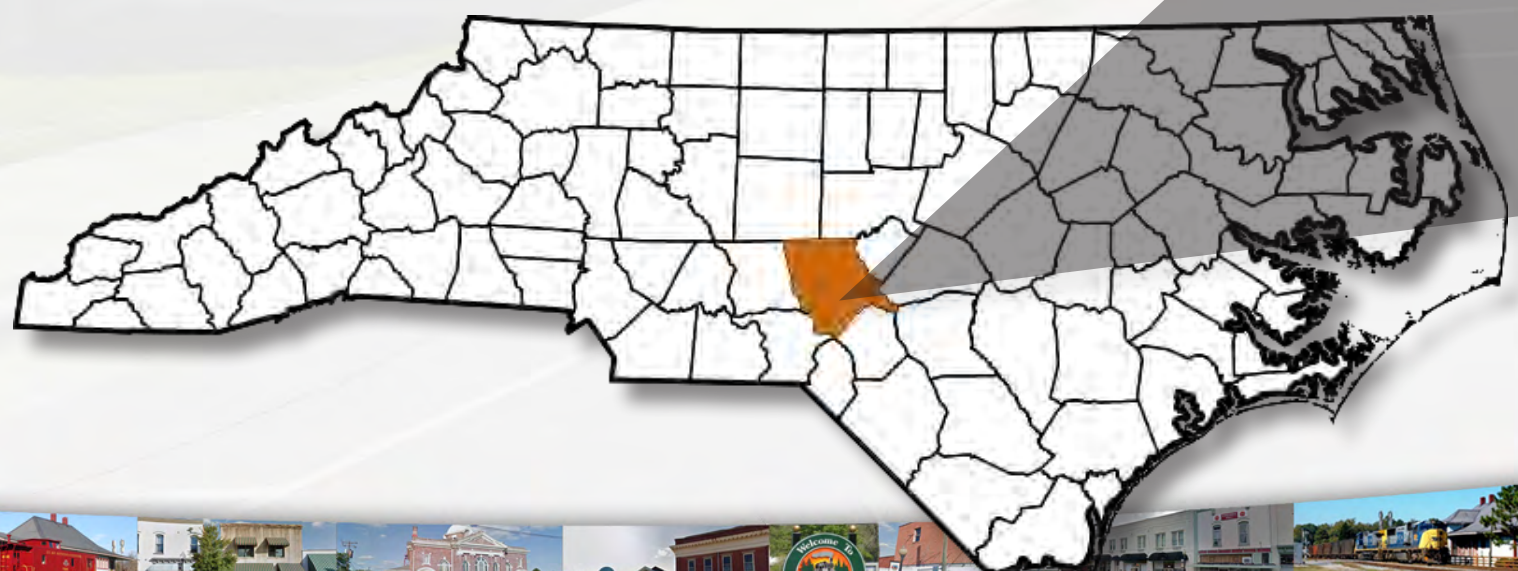




# Location

Aberdeen is located within the Sandhills region of North Carolina within Moore County. Downtown Aberdeen is approximately 17 miles from Carthage which is the County seat of Moore County.

Downtown is conveniently located between Pinebluff, Southern Pines and Pinehurst. The Downtown area is at the confluence of three different railway lines (Aberdeen & Rockfish, Aberdeen Carolina & Western, and CSX) which provides residents and visitors with a unique sense of place steeped in railroad history and culture. The core of Downtown includes Main Street, Polar Street, South Street and Sycamore Street.





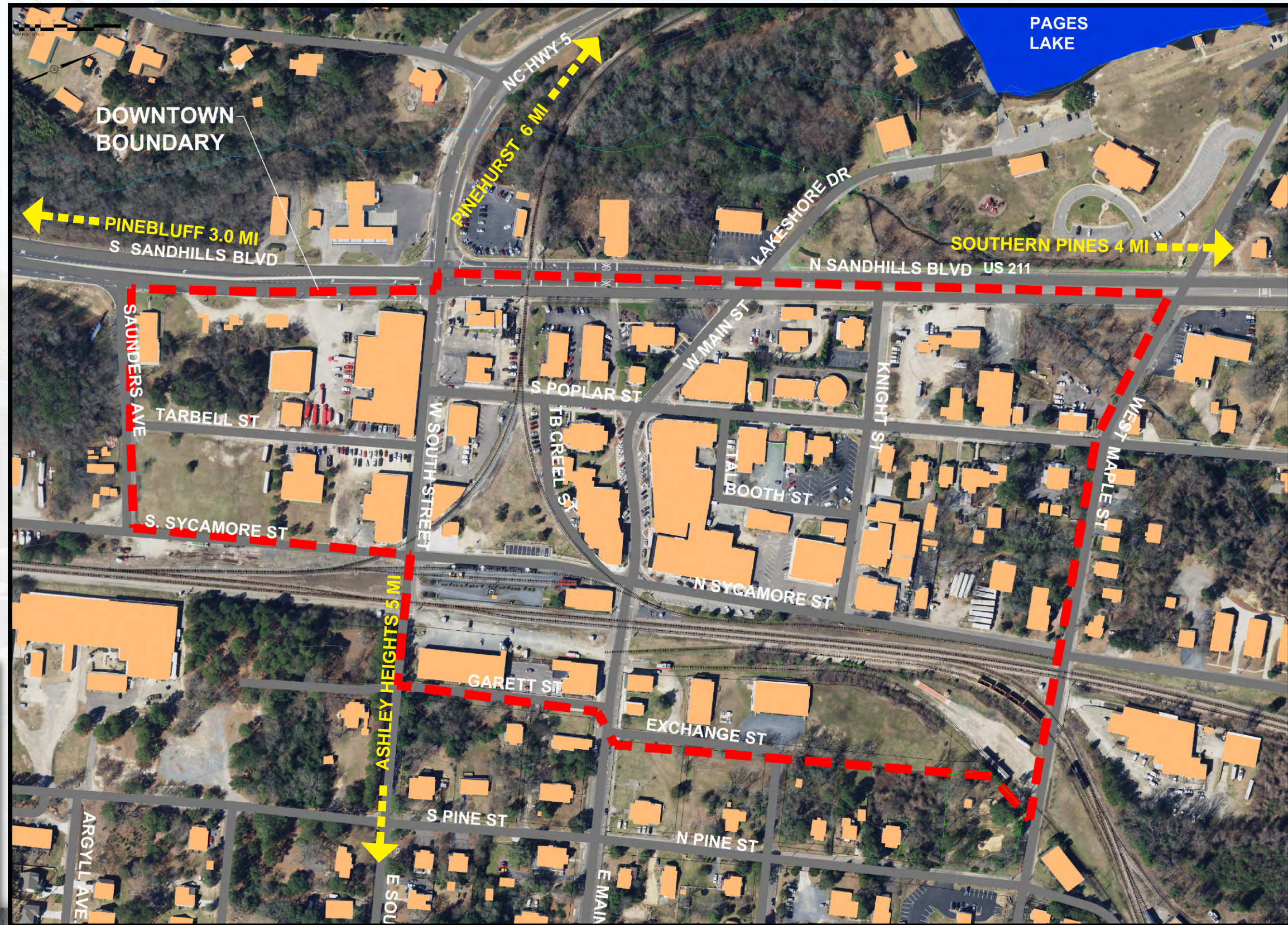
# History

Settled by Scottish emigrants in the 1700's, the Town was known as Bethesda and Blue's Crossing before it adopted its current name in the later part of the nineteenth century. Known for pine timber, railroads and a strong sense of community, Aberdeen continues to grow.

Aberdeen is home to the annual Reindeer Run which is held in December and attracts over 2,600 participants and countless additional spectators.

Other notable attractions to Downtown include the Railhouse Brewery, Artist's League, Union Station Railroad Museum, Aberdeen Lake Park and Downtown restaurants, businesses and notable music venues such as The Rooster's Wife.

## ABERDEEN Downtown, NORTH CAROLINA





# Introduction

Aberdeen has a rich history as a railroad town and a crossroads for business. Established in 1877 (Blue's Crossing), much of Aberdeen's Downtown is included in the National Register of Historic Places. Aberdeen has historically been a central hub of industry and manufacturing in Moore County, as well as a center for retail. Today, Aberdeen sits at the intersection of US Highway 1, US Highway 15-501, NC Highway 211 and NC Highway 5. The heart of Aberdeen is Downtown which is bordered by East Maple Street, Saunders Avenue, North Sandhills Boulevard and Exchange Street. Other busy corridors include Knight Street, TB Creel Street, Poplar Street, South Street, Main Street and Sycamore Street.



Traditional main streets (as we see today) became the heart of the community for residents, visitors and surrounding communities. The human scale of buildings, variations in architectural styles and diversity of commercial and entertainment offerings - attracted people to congregate there for centuries and they still do today. Aberdeen Downtown remains a cultural, financial, retail and civic center of the community. In order to maintain relevance and support quality of life, attractive design, strategic new renovation, thoughtful planning and a focus on Downtown's unique identity can pay off in investment, diversification and competitiveness. The adaptive reuse of structures and the rediscovery of historic features and pedestrian friendly design that built the Downtown initially can bring back vibrancy, energy and attention.

One key to attracting patrons and passersby is to have a visually appealing and aesthetic Downtown. "Curb appeal" includes buildings, storefronts, signage, sidewalks, landscaping, activities, window displays, graphic promotional materials and other attractions. These types of items are critical to creating a community brand and a destination for residents and community visitors. Being a destination translates to people traveling farther to visit and staying longer while visiting. Downtown merchants must be willing to invest in the renovation and enhancement of their structures that are, (in more than one sense) their greatest asset. Through careful blending of their individual tastes and styles, a beneficial and productive vision of the Downtown as a whole can lead to unique Downtown flavor that patrons will remember. In addition, the Town should continue to reinvest in the Downtown through enhancement and programming.

The character of Downtown can provide a sense of place that is appealing to longtime residents and intriguing to first-time visitors. It should evoke and maintain a sense of discovery or rediscovery that brings people back. The character may come from local landmarks and entertainment, geographic or historic features, natural environment, buildings, or regional products and most importantly, the people. A recognizable character is the result not of uniformity of appearance, but of individuality and identity of the community. This identity is the result of community consensus and is not imposed by single individuals. The established identity forms the brand that can be used to promote "Downtown" to existing and potential community residents and businesses, visitors and tourists. Using the brand in marketing and promoting the Downtown is almost endless, with opportunities ranging from publications to mass media and websites.



The importance of the resulting economic growth from Downtown revitalization cannot be overstated; but, the sense of pride and attitude of confidence it can instill for the citizens of Aberdeen may be more important. A broad desire to visit, promote and/or serve as ambassadors for the Downtown are optimal outcomes.





## Purpose

The purpose of this Master Plan is to provide a framework and vision for Downtown as it continues to grow and redevelop. Following an analysis of existing conditions, design decisions can be made that highlight the elements of Downtown preservation and revitalization, while encouraging those elements that characterize successful Downtown districts. Typically they include:

- Prominent employment centers
- Reflection of the town's heritage, history and culture
- Significant portions of the community tax base
- Ideal locations for independent businesses and individual entrepreneurs
- Overnight tourist destination
- Concentrations of diverse development (commercial, residential, recreational, etc.)
- Protectors of surrounding property values
- Convenient venues for pleasant shopping experiences
- Host of governmental and/or private service centers
- Central areas for gatherings, events, and/or entertainment

With these features in mind, the Master Plan will include recommendations for the revitalization of Aberdeen Downtown in terms of both aesthetics and economic opportunities; but also, it will emphasize how such factors as accessibility, traffic flow, and safety are critical to the success of commercial districts in general.

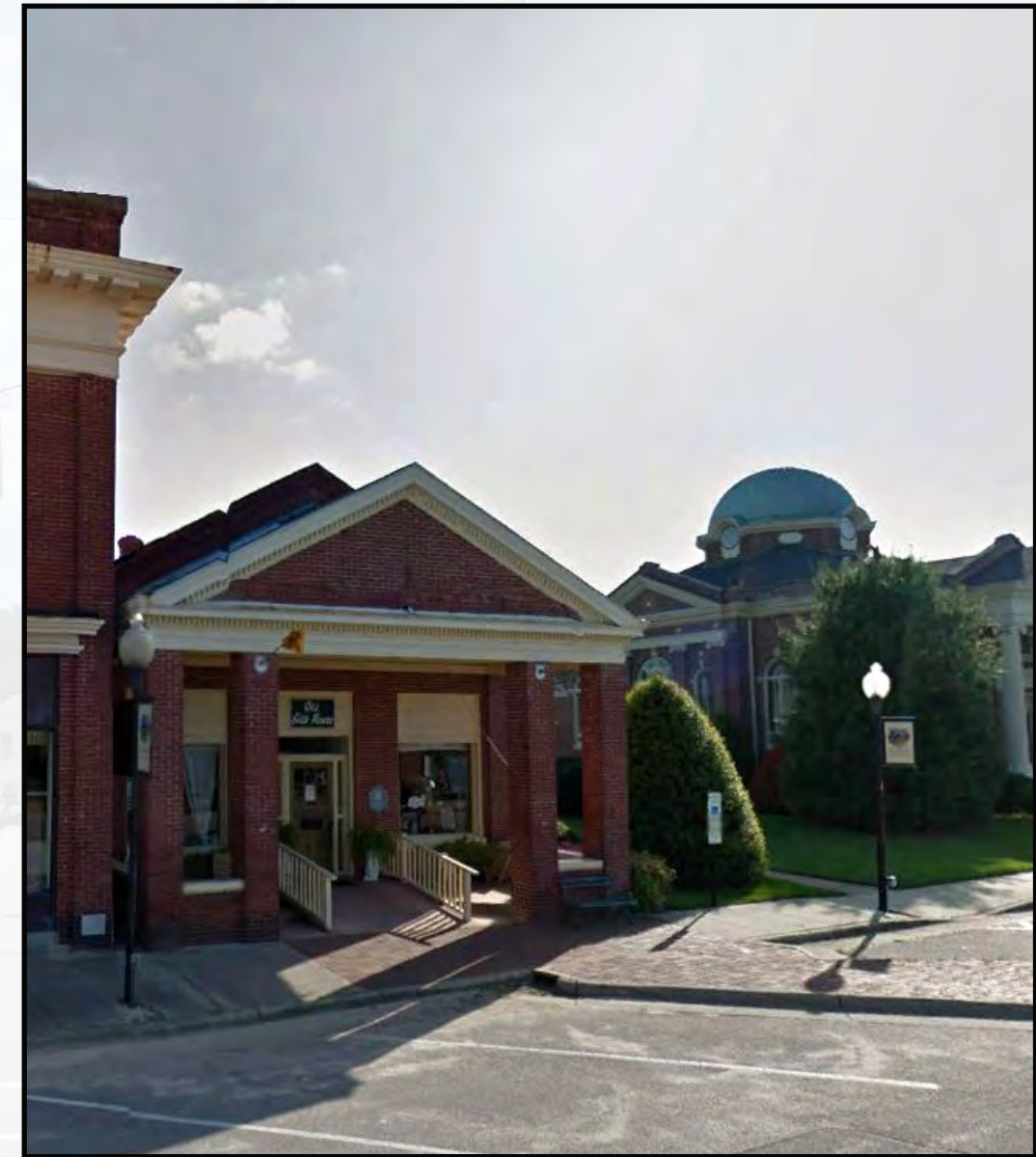




## Objectives

The overall objective for this planning document is to guide Aberdeen in the enhancement of its Downtown area; by creating a vibrant atmosphere in an aesthetic environment, which will attract more people - both residents and tourists. The Downtown revitalization should get a passerby to stop and take notice; become a hub for area attractions and activities as well as accommodate those looking for an overnight destination; entice additional investment and encourage return visits. The following items contribute to a more successful and attractive Downtown:

- Increase the number of gathering places that would result in higher frequency of Downtown utilization.
- Create a safer more pleasant pedestrian environment.
- Create a unique identity that will result in a “sense of place” for the community.
- Increase marketing effectiveness of the current and future Downtown and community assets.
- Provide a diverse mix of Downtown options to include:
  - Retail Business
  - Residential living units
  - Professional offices
  - Tourism destinations (art, dining, entertainment etc.)
  - Overnight lodging opportunities
  - Community events and festivals
  - Governmental facilities
  - Conference/Meeting facilities
  - Entertainment Options
  - Relevant support services
  - Green Space



The objectives of the master planning process center on the enhancement and diversification necessary for the continued growth and development of the Downtown area.





## Past Planning Efforts

### Aberdeen Downtown Revitalization Task Force Recommendations

As part of the review of past Aberdeen planning efforts, a list of recommendations made by the Town of Aberdeen Downtown Revitalization Task Force in 2015 was found to be relevant to this plans goals. The Task Force recommendations came out of a review and analysis of the 1997 Streetscape Master Plan for Development Renewal of Downtown Aberdeen. The main findings of the Task Force review were that Aberdeen should:

- Establish a “Town Center”
- Enhance pedestrian facilities
- Improve parking opportunities
- Increase the amount of residential opportunities in Downtown
- Improve maintenance of Downtown public spaces
- Make sidewalk repairs and improvements
- Improve the appearance and safety of road and railroad crossings
- Improve connectivity from Route 1 to US 15/501

The Task Force also made a number of recommendations (Tier 1 & 2) for the Board of Commissioners to consider. Those include:

#### Tier I Recommendations

- Establish a defined Downtown Center capable of supporting community events and other public gatherings (the “Y” is a prime example under consideration and investigation, with notably reduced liability and naming rights).
- Address conditions at all rail crossings in the Downtown area providing greater convenience and safety for pedestrians while improving their overall appearance and conditions.
- Improve safety and sustain the maintenance of all Downtown walkways, curbing and crossings, including designating cross walks, with stamping, similar to other towns in the area.
- Provide care and maintenance of all Downtown plantings on a continuing basis and look to introduce additional shade trees which do not compromise pavement surfaces or which require extensive care.





## Past Planning Efforts

### Tier I Recommendations Continued

- Establish ordinances and policies that support or reinforce the *compatibility of mixed uses and business clusters*.
- Encourage *destination events* (e.g., annual food, art, and music festivals), *destination businesses* (e.g., regionally recognized dining experiences), and *destination experiences* (e.g., walking/bicycling trail networks, a children’s museum or an exceptional playground).
- Fund maintaining a Downtown that is clean and litter free (e.g. regular side walk and street cleaning, additional waste containers (and benches) and their maintenance, and invite cooperation by business and property owners.
- Continue investments in gateway designations and wayfinding in the Downtown area including adding an element of curiosity which would help to direct pedestrians to different shops or districts within the Downtown area and vehicles to available parking (note the placement of a kiosk or two).
- Look to establish an Arts Overlay District, along with other districts or distinct Downtown designations (e.g., technology; retail, food, and entertainment; and fitness).
- Encourage (through supporting and nurturing regulations and other incentives) residential uses above existing street level businesses, infill residential development within the Downtown, and mixed uses development in expansion areas within the Downtown.
- Providing additional parking areas (e.g., paving and lining/lighting the area between Main and South Streets in front of Railhouse Brewery) and improving the existing parking area behind Poplar and between Knight and Talbooth Streets (note drainage improvements scheduled for Talbooth St.).
- Track carefully and forcefully the concept and final designs of recently Town endorsed “Superstreet” along Rt. 1 and 15/501 to insure safety and aesthetics (e.g., general appearance and greenscape).



### Tier II Recommendations

- Create a visual vista off of Highway #5 overlooking the Lake and Town Rec Center as a first look at the town of Aberdeen.
- Establish and fund a “Green Space” plan for Downtown: the “Y”, pocket parks, along the rail lines, and other areas of interest including alleyways and the like.
- Investigate opportunities through local ordinances to protect safety along public walkways as well as general appearances.
- Working with the Town’s Associate Main Street team establish a plan and means for “recruiting” desirable businesses that complement existing business and which fit Aberdeen’s size and welcoming environment (e.g., pizza shop, other lunch spots, health food type store, children’s toy store, gift shops, wine shop, bicycle shop).





# Past Planning Efforts

## Tier II Recommendations Continued

- Develop a 5 year plan, schedule and budget for providing available and safe sidewalks throughout all of the Downtown area.
- Work with NC DOT to minimize signage along Rt. 1 and 15/501.
- Continue to support the signalized pedestrian crossing to Lake and Rec Center across Rt. 1 and 15/501.
- Investigate and validate cost to add the Aberdeen Town Crest to the water tower along Rt. 1 and 15/501.



## **Downtown Aberdeen 2020 and Brownfield Renewal Task Force**

These two efforts support Downtown improvements. Recommendations from these groups that should still be considered include but are not limited to:

- Consideration of parking and walkability issues
- Railroad engagement
- Improvement of public spaces
- Branding and managing the image of Aberdeen (“live, work, recreate and educate”)
- Appeal to both older and younger individuals
- Support public gathering and event spaces
- Enhance land and streetscapes

## **2011 Aberdeen Pedestrian Transportation Plan**

Aberdeen’s Pedestrian Plan addresses the needs of pedestrians within Aberdeen by proposing needed improvements to connectivity across Town for both recreation and transportation. This through plan addressed the community’s concerns and desire for safer pedestrian facilities, reduced traffic congestion, improved livability, and a healthier and safer pedestrian environment.

Much of the document discusses the importance of pedestrian improvements in Downtown. This plan supports the recommendations made and urges the Town to consider implementation of it’s recommended improvements.

## **1997 Streetscape Master Plan for Development Renewal of Downtown Aberdeen**

The Streetscape Master Plan provided and exhaustive analysis of Downtown in the late 1990’s. The document was thorough and sought to provide a framework for Downtown’s development renewal. The plan considered public, town government and staff input as well as property owners, special interest groups and direction from the Aberdeen Downtown Development Commission. Many of the recommendations made in the plan are still relevant today which include parking and public space creation.

## **1995 Main Street renovations**

The Town, with significant involvement of the Downtown merchants implemented phase 1 of the Main Street renovations that currently provide the foundation for much of Downtown’s current identity and offers precedent for future improvements.





## Existing Conditions

Identifying existing conditions is critical when accessing opportunities for design, amenities, and activities that could serve the public and energize Aberdeen Downtown. An understanding of current conditions is also helpful in anticipating future land-use patterns, roadway conditions, population trends, and other infrastructure-related issues. A thorough inventory and evaluation of existing conditions is vital as an initial step in the master planning process for Aberdeen Downtown. Ultimately, the final assessment will directly affect the planning decisions and recommendations that evolve from the Master Plan and that will benefit the municipal district – now and in the future.

An overview of the factors which determine the current conditions within the Downtown planning area is summarized below and is presented in the following pages by means of maps, graphs, and/or detailed explanations, with examples. These factors include:

- Open (Green) Space
- Historic Structures
- Land Use
- Parking Inventory
- Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation





# Existing Conditions

## Open (Green) Spaces

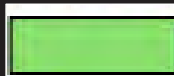
Open green space in Aberdeen Downtown consists of parking lots, undeveloped properties, small pockets of green space around buildings and within railroad right of way, and park space. There are a few areas available for parking Downtown, which account for most of the open space. The Town should evaluate these existing parking lots to determine what improvements should be considered. Subsequently, these spaces should be landscaped with vegetation in order to soften their "hard" look and feel. Other undeveloped areas should be maintained, as well, to reflect a positive, pleasant appearance.



Mini parks and open spaces add to the diversity of destinations within a Downtown. These areas often act as gathering places for informal activities such as picnics, art exhibitions, and for people-watching. Existing park spaces should be continually maintained and improved to encourage their usage by residents and visitors.

Incorporating small public open space into Downtown will improve the visual and environmental quality of Aberdeen. Small open spaces can be used for a variety of group or individual functions, as well as simply provide a quiet place for pause and find respite within the daily hustle of a lively Downtown. Areas that can be transformed into small open spaces include undeveloped green areas, vacant properties, and underutilized areas like between buildings..



 Existing Downtown Open Space



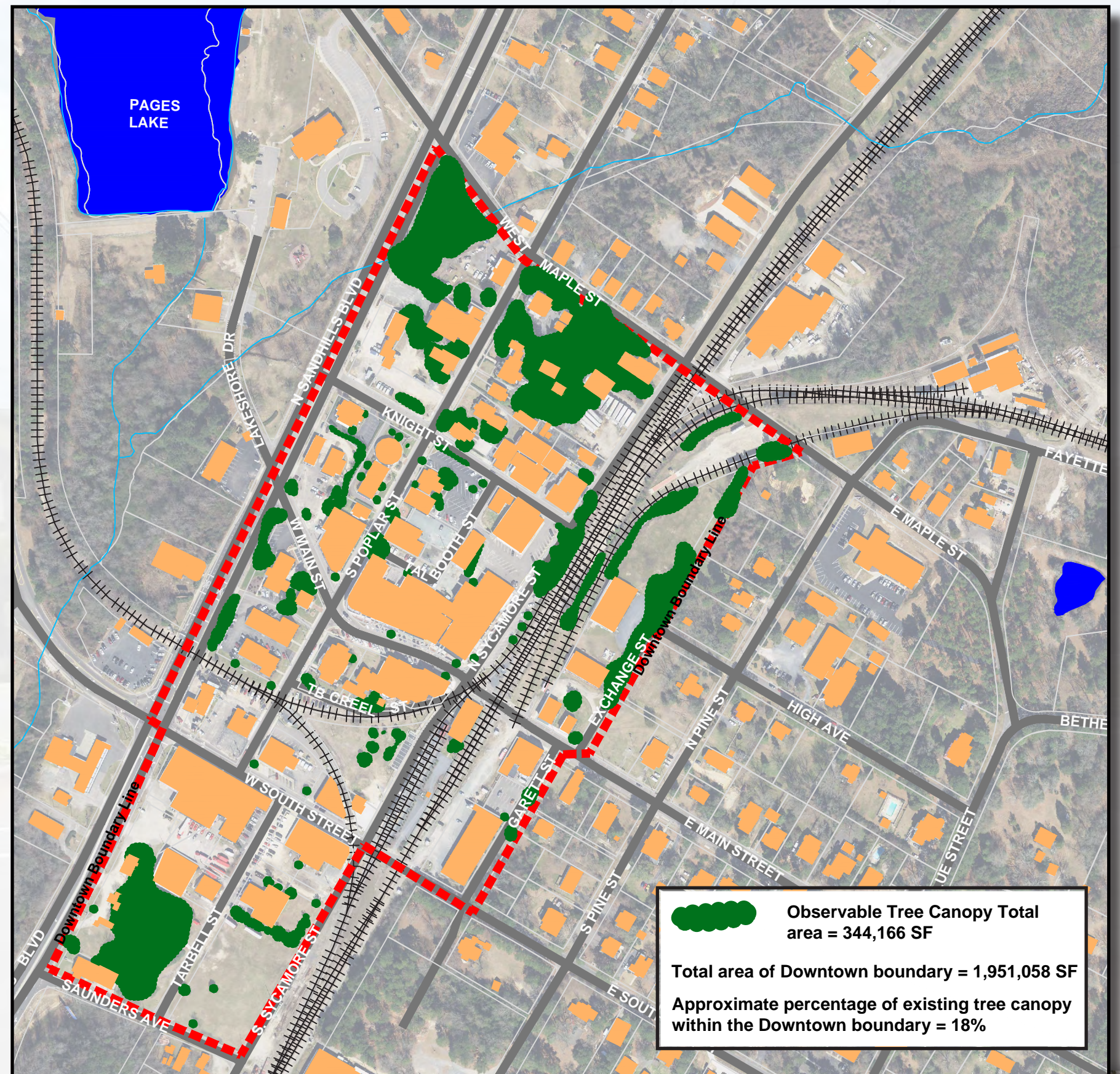
The "Y" area



# Tree Canopy

Trees are a vital component of urban environments like Aberdeen's Downtown area. In addition to the aesthetic value of trees they provide significant economic and environmental benefits, including: reducing storm water runoff, energy conservation, improving air quality, and enhancement of community vitality, stability and property values for residential and business areas.

As a part of the Downtown inventory a review of the existing observable tree canopy was conducted using satellite aerial photography. By downloading recent aerial images of the Downtown area into computer assisted design software an accurate percentage of canopy to overall area was calculated.



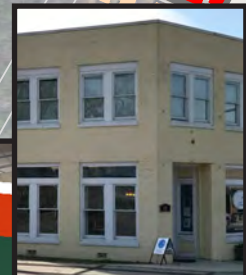
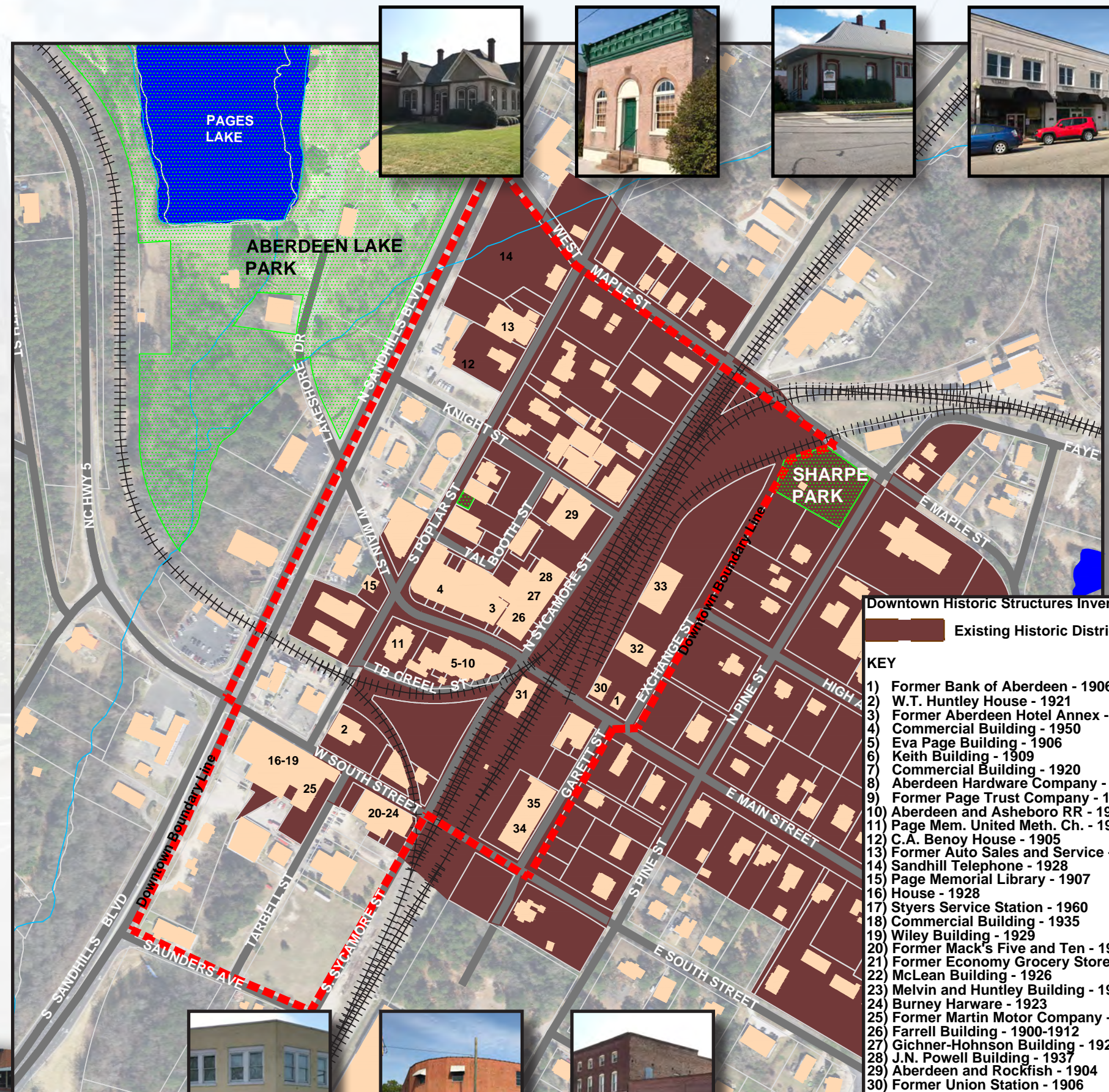


# Existing Conditions

## Historic Structures

Among Downtown Aberdeen's 34+ historic building and structures, most predate the World War II era. There have been notable restorations and most building have been well maintained. However opportunities exist for investments that will serve to firmly root the Town to its cultural origins and provide an attractive, aesthetic perspective for future growth.

The diagram on this page shows the locations of Downtown Historic Structures and also includes photographs which convey the varied local vernacular of the architecture. In addition, the photographs on the next page of this Master Plan depict notable characteristics of some of the architecture, streetscapes, and decor in Aberdeen Downtown - the identities of which are to be preserved and enhanced.



**Downtown Historic Structures Inventory**

Existing Historic District

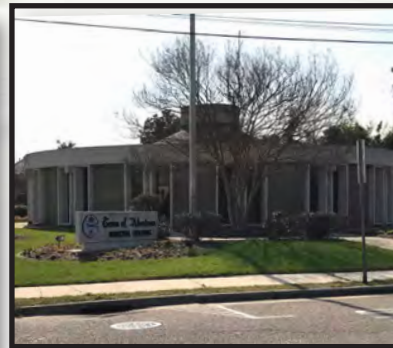
**KEY**

- 1) Former Bank of Aberdeen - 1906
- 2) W.T. Huntley House - 1921
- 3) Former Aberdeen Hotel Annex - 1919
- 4) Commercial Building - 1950
- 5) Eva Page Building - 1906
- 6) Keith Building - 1909
- 7) Commercial Building - 1920
- 8) Aberdeen Hardware Company - 1912
- 9) Former Page Trust Company - 1914
- 10) Aberdeen and Asheboro RR - 1906
- 11) Page Mem. United Meth. Ch. - 1913
- 12) C.A. Benoy House - 1905
- 13) Former Auto Sales and Service - 1928
- 14) Sandhill Telephone - 1928
- 15) Page Memorial Library - 1907
- 16) House - 1928
- 17) Styers Service Station - 1960
- 18) Commercial Building - 1935
- 19) Wiley Building - 1929
- 20) Former Mack's Five and Ten - 1926
- 21) Former Economy Grocery Store - 1926
- 22) McLean Building - 1926
- 23) Melvin and Huntley Building - 1923
- 24) Burney Harware - 1923
- 25) Former Martin Motor Company - 1925
- 26) Farrell Building - 1900-1912
- 27) Gichner-Hohnson Building - 1920
- 28) J.N. Powell Building - 1937
- 29) Aberdeen and Rockfish - 1904
- 30) Former Union Station - 1906
- 31) Former Aberdeen Wholesale Grocery - 1912
- 32) Warehouse - 1920
- 33) Commercial Building - 1920
- 34) Former Tobacco Warehouse - 1915



# Existing Conditions

## Notable Downtown Architecture



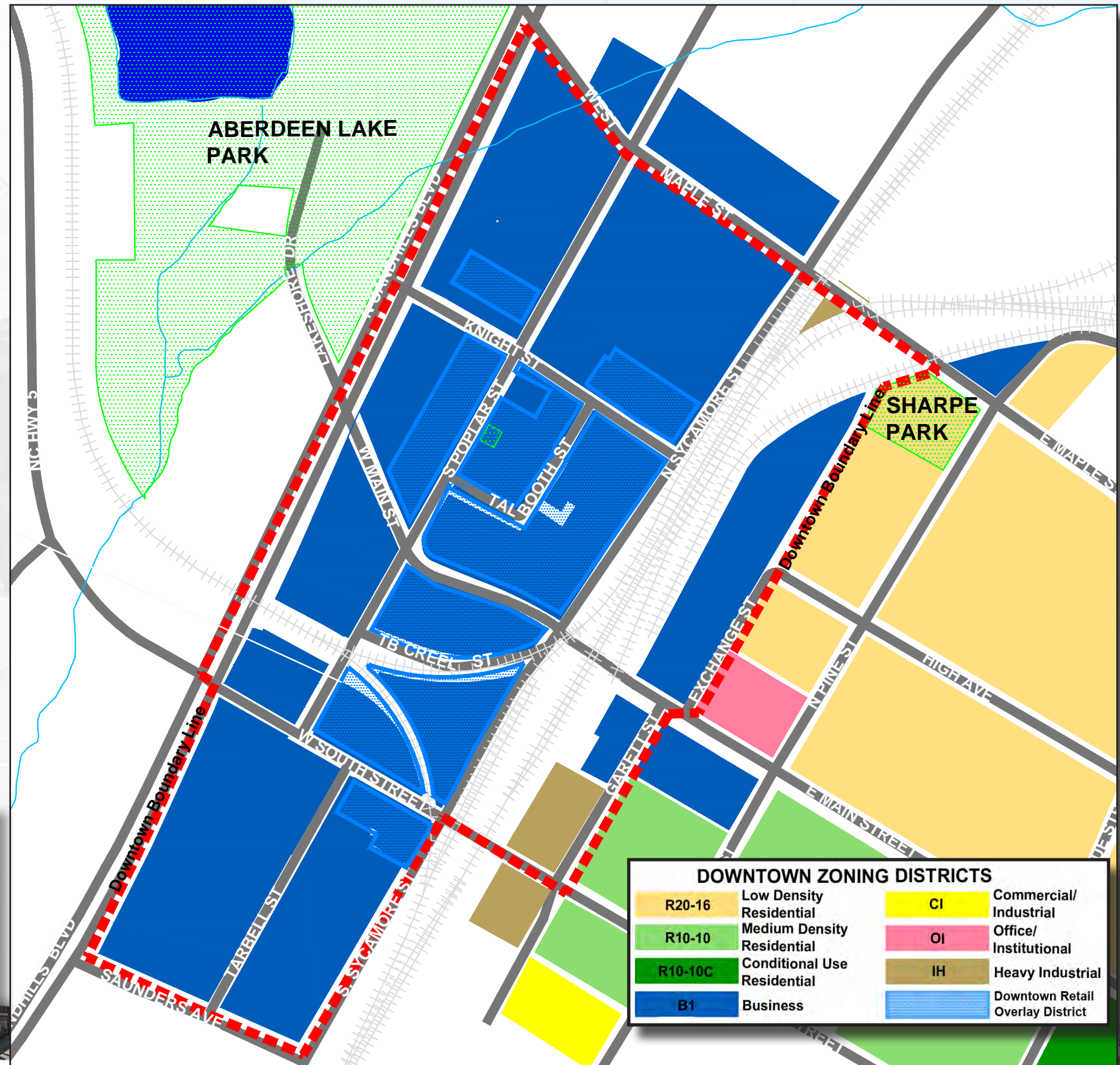
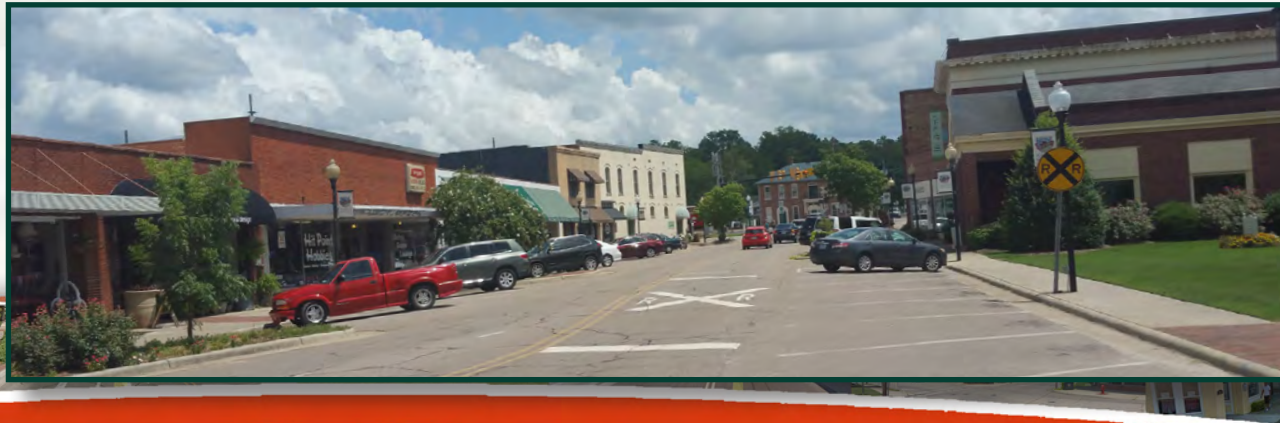


# Existing Conditions

## Downtown Zoning

Aberdeen Downtown features a mixture of land uses including commercial, residential, and light Industrial. The organization of these land uses is traditional. The pattern of land use that can support a lively, accessible, and economically thriving Downtown. However, single family homes are the primary residential type and are mainly located outside the confines of Downtown, limiting the number of people living Within walking distance of the Downtown commercial area. It is recommended that opportunities be explored to convert under-utilized Downtown spaces to residences, such as apartments, condominiums, etc., or develop infill areas that incorporate a residential component within the Downtown Retail Overlay District.

Currently, Aberdeen Downtown has very few entertainment and dining opportunities during evening hours. At the close of regular business hours, there are few reasons to remain in the heart of Aberdeen. By encouraging additional varieties of entertainment and dining businesses to locate Downtown, people will have more opportunity to frequent them during the evening hours. Not only does this result in more patrons for businesses, it also increases the safety by putting more eyes on areas formerly out of view in the evenings.





# Existing Conditions

## Parking Inventory

Driving is the dominant mode of transportation to and from Aberdeen Downtown. Subsequently, any information regarding parking opportunities, the designation of different parking types, alternate locations, and payments (if required) should be clear and well placed. Such signage should be placed at entrances to parking lots with highly visible and easily understandable operational information.

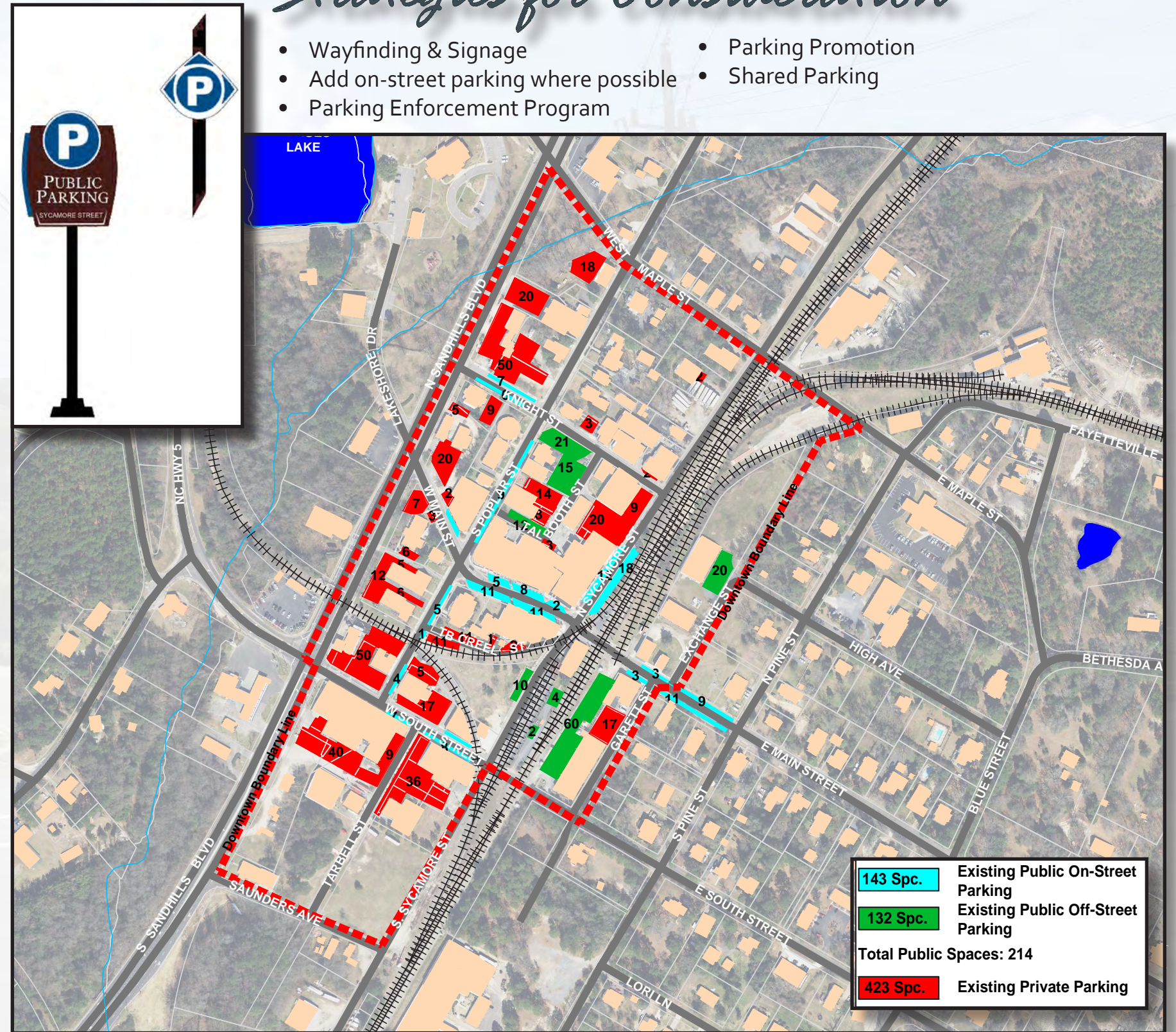
Parking opportunities in Aberdeen Downtown are typical for a historic urban area. Parkingspots in Downtown include public on-street to private and public off-street parking lots. Two public parking lot areas are located between South Poplar and Talbooth Streets. Two public parking areas serve Downtown across from Town Hall on Poplar Street and off Garrett Street between Kees Appliances and Railhouse Brewery.

Existing parking lots could be more clearly marked and have directional wayfinding signage, which can direct visitors and residents to available parking locations. It is recommended that the parking signs be consistent in design and of prominent dimensions to have the best opportunity to be noticed.

Attractive landscaping and continual maintenance are relatively low cost opportunities for the Town to show their interest and pride in Downtown.

# Strategies for Consideration

- Wayfinding & Signage
- Add on-street parking where possible
- Parking Enforcement Program
- Parking Promotion
- Shared Parking





# Existing Conditions

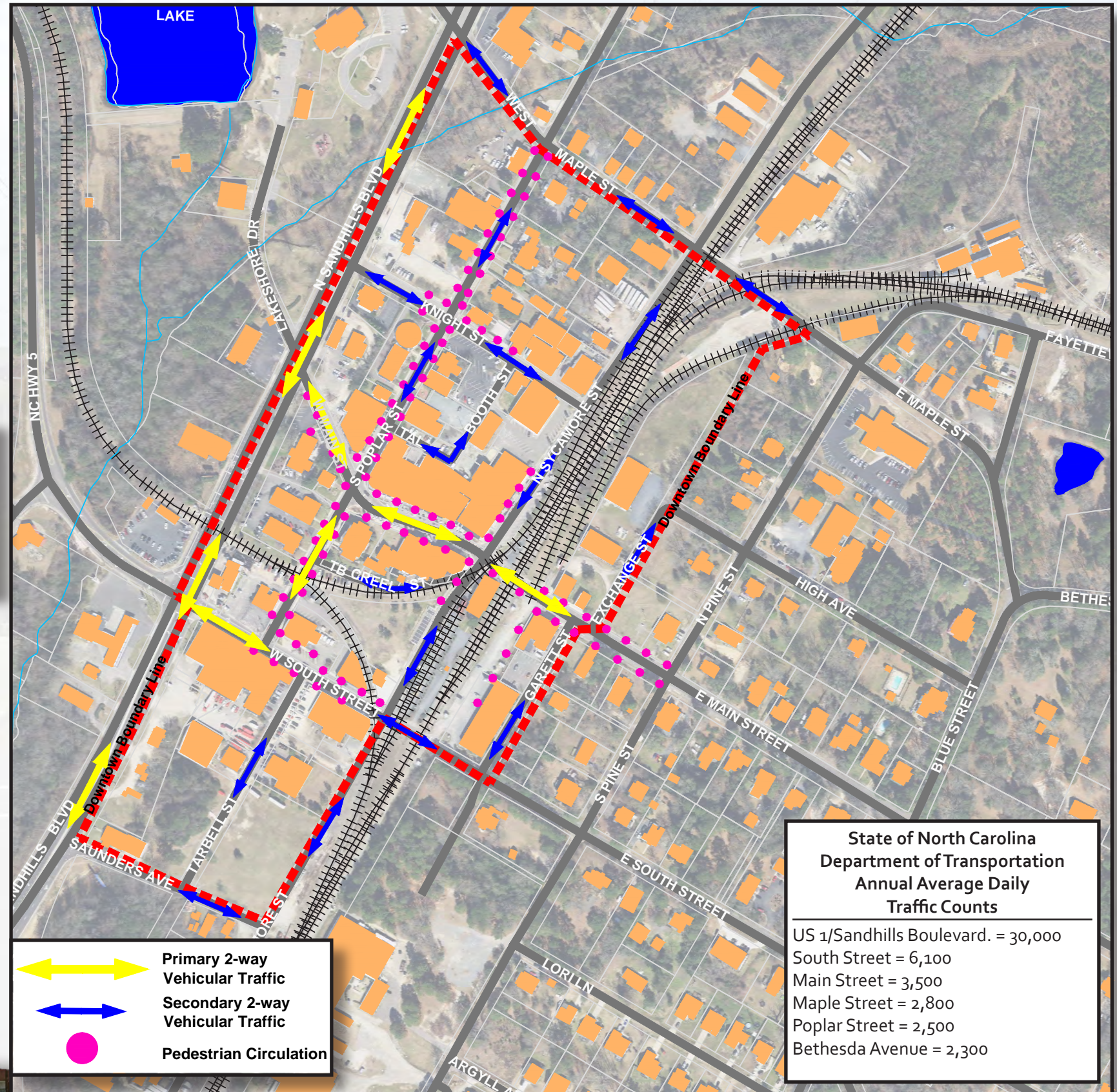
## Vehicular & Pedestrian Circulation

Examining the traffic patterns and corridors within Aberdeen reveals that the Downtown is organized by a grid system of blocks. All streets provide two-way vehicular traffic. The majority of vehicular traffic is along Sandhills Boulevard/US 1. The main business district of Downtown is accessed via Main and Poplar Streets but South, Maple, Knight and Sycamore Streets area commonly used corridors and pedestrian circulation along the entirety of Sycamore Street from Saunders to Maple. The current arrangement of two-way streets through Downtown works to maintain the traditional Downtown



feel while providing the safest way to accommodate both vehicular and pedestrian transportation. According to the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) at [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org), two-way streets are preferred over one-way streets because they are more traffic calming and provide the following benefits:

- There is less driving, less confusion, and better traffic access.
- It eliminates the need to drive blocks and blocks out of the way.
- There is no need to make extra turns to get to nearby destinations.
- It increases commercial traffic and business.
- It decreases the speed of traffic.





# Existing Conditions

## Overhead Utility Inventory

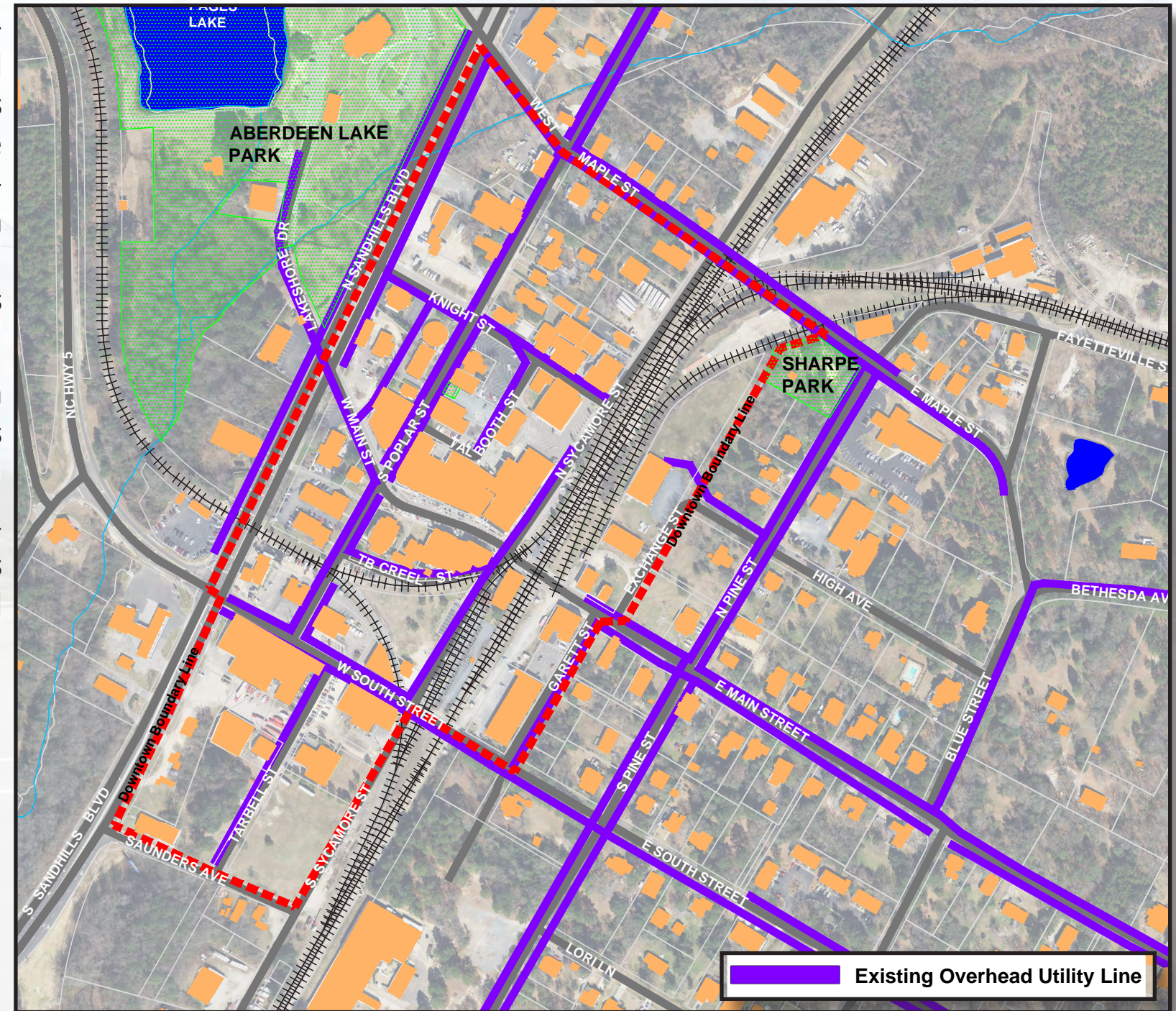
The influence of overhead wiring and utility poles on the landscape is both physical and aesthetic. View sheds that otherwise would be unobstructed are interrupted by the siting of transmission lines. Design of streetscapes is influenced by the location and complexity of utility lines and overhead wiring further limits the development of design alternatives. The aesthetic quality of the streetscape is often shaped by the location of utility lines, and design responses, in many instances, are patterned after the utility infrastructure. The appearance of an area can be greatly improved by reducing the visual clutter of overhead utility lines. For these reasons, a visual inventory of Aberdeen's existing overhead utilities was conducted.

The Town procured grant funds to pay for the burring of utility lines on a portion of Main Street. The difference between that portion of main street and areas where the lines remain is striking.

This plan recommends that conduit required to move overhead utilities underground be installed as sidewalk/roadway improvements are completed. This may incentivize utility companies to further invest in the burring of lines and would make future projects easier to accomplish.

# Benefits of Relocating Utilities

- Aesthetics
- Reduced Maintenance
- Safety and Community Health
- Economic Development



Corner of Poplar and Main



Main Street

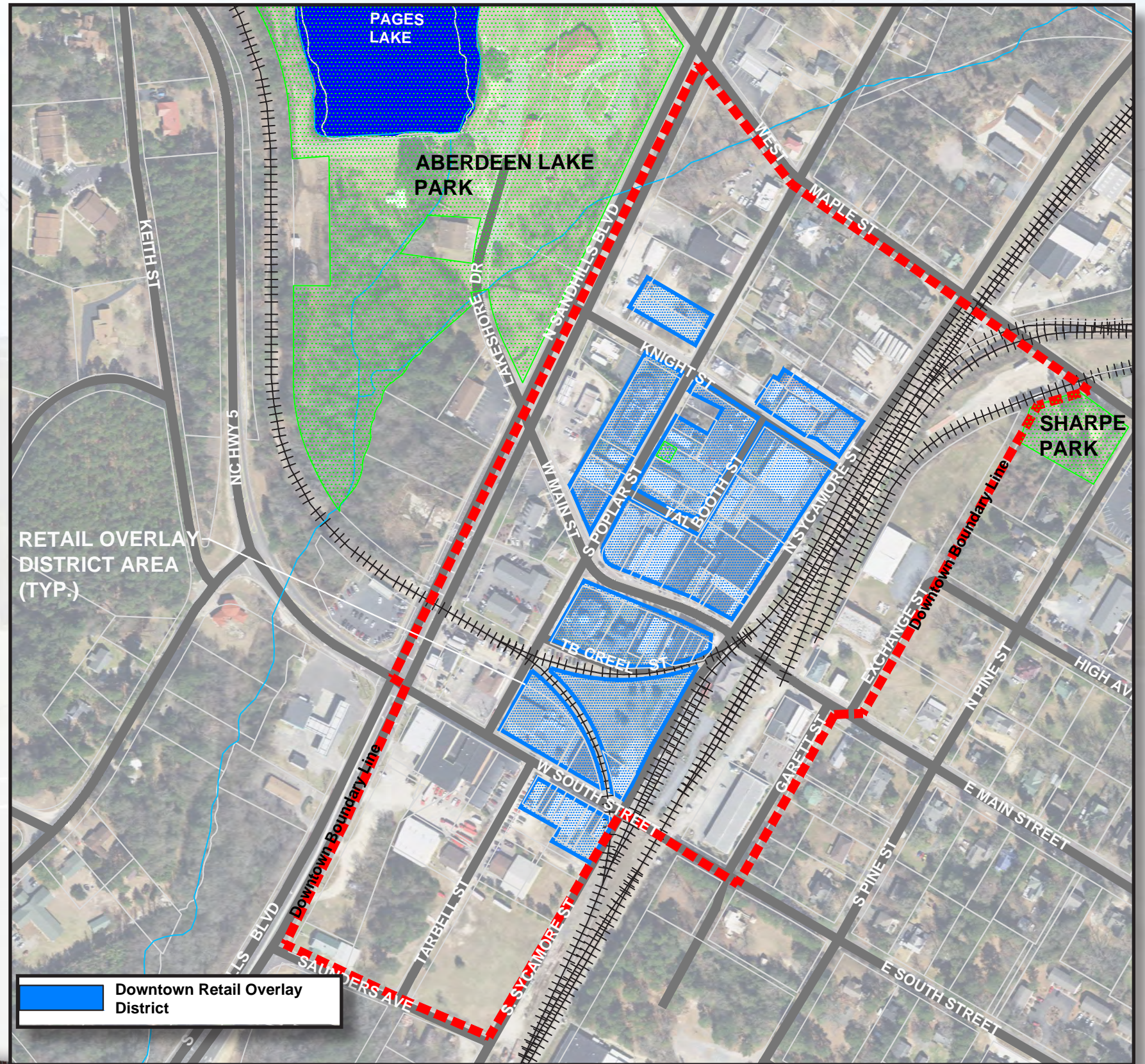




# Existing Conditions

## Downtown Retail Overlay District

The Downtown Retail Overlay District (“DROD”) encompasses most of the core of Aberdeen’s historic central business district, which includes numerous historic structures and has traditionally been the heart of commercial life in Aberdeen. The purpose of this district is to preserve and revitalize this core, so that it can house unique businesses offering goods and services that will make the Aberdeen Downtown both a destination for visitors and a vital part of the community for years to come. Moreover, the DROD is intended to be a place where small businesses can locate and thrive, and residential uses are encouraged to provide a ready market for the services, particularly on weekends and evenings. To this end, the DROD allows and encourages retail sales and services and entertainment establishments while limiting or prohibiting noncommercial uses other than residential. Noncommercial uses that are open only infrequently or at irregular times would lead to gaps in the retail environment and be detrimental to a vibrant Downtown.





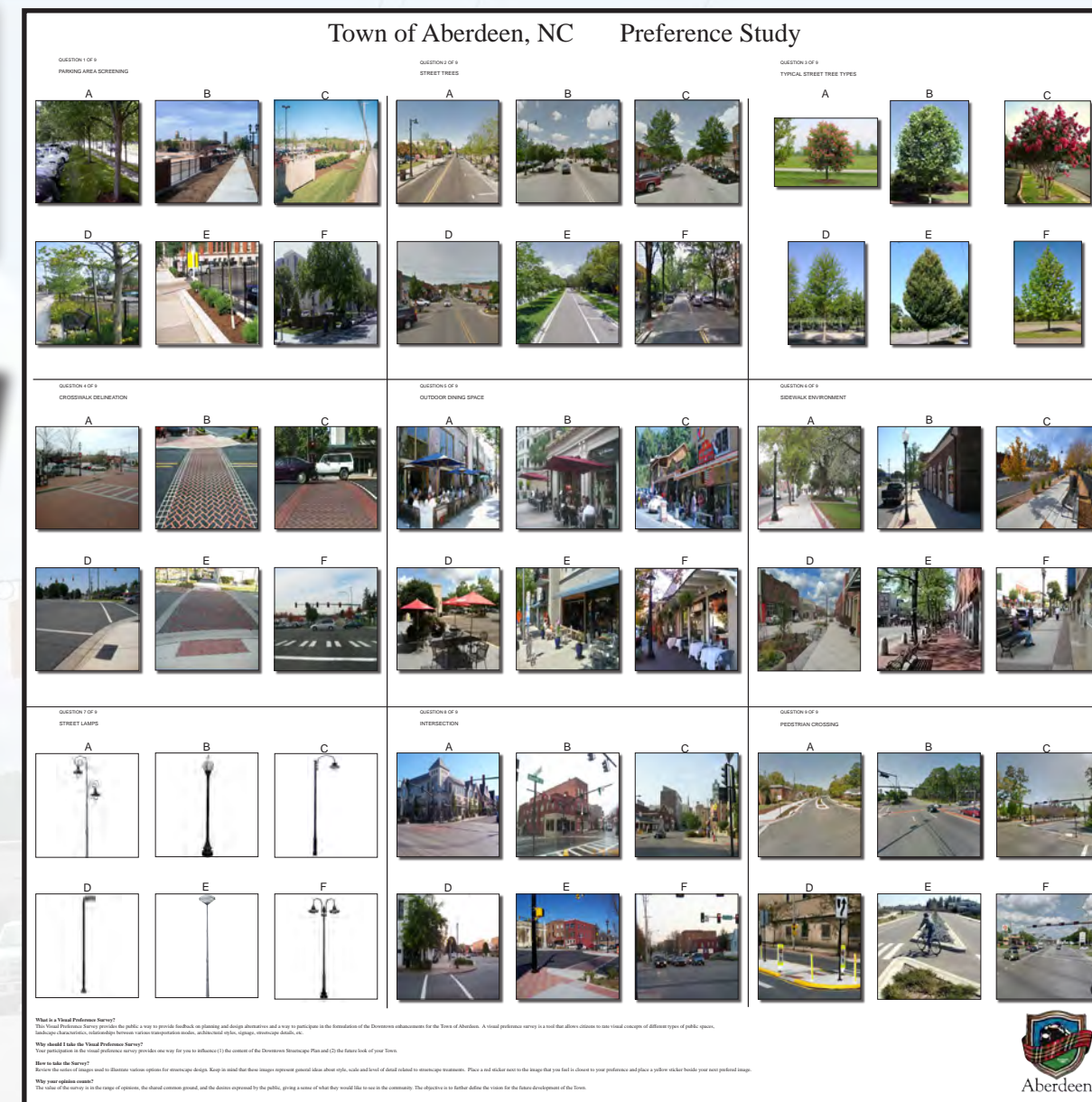
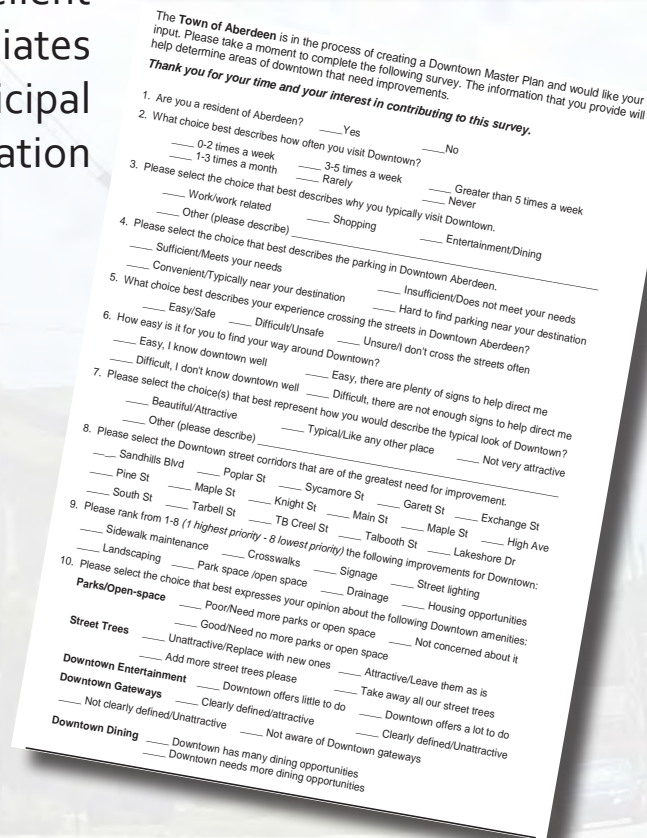
# Public Input

## Open House Charette

On January 19, 2017, McGill Associates took advantage of an excellent opportunity to interact with citizens of Aberdeen. McGill Associates held a community open house meeting at the Aberdeen Municipal Building within the Rotunda, to encourage community participation in the formation of the Downtown Master Plan.

The devices used to collect public input included:

- **Surveys:** Participants were given questionnaires/pens and asked to complete a series of questions that ranged from their age - to their current use of the Downtown area - to their ideas for Downtown enhancement and entertainment. For those participants that preferred to take the survey online, a survey card with a web link to the online survey was provided.
- **Map Exercises:** Maps of the Downtown area were available on the table and on tripods. Residents were asked to sketch or show "what and where" they saw problem areas in Aberdeen Downtown.
- **Visual Preference Survey:** Residents participated in the "dot" exercise (shown here), which is a tool used to gather public opinion of desired visual streetscape elements. In this case, they were shown nine (9) groups of Downtown images – each containing six (6) variations and were asked to place a colored sticker on their preference for what the feature should be or look like. The rankings were then ordered and the results can be found on the next page of this document.



- **Open Forum:** Citizens were given the opportunity of asking questions about the proposed Downtown enhancements as well as being able to make comments or suggestions about needed improvements. Their thoughts, ideas, and concerns were very useful during the planning stages of the master plan process.





# Public Input

## Visual Preference Survey Results

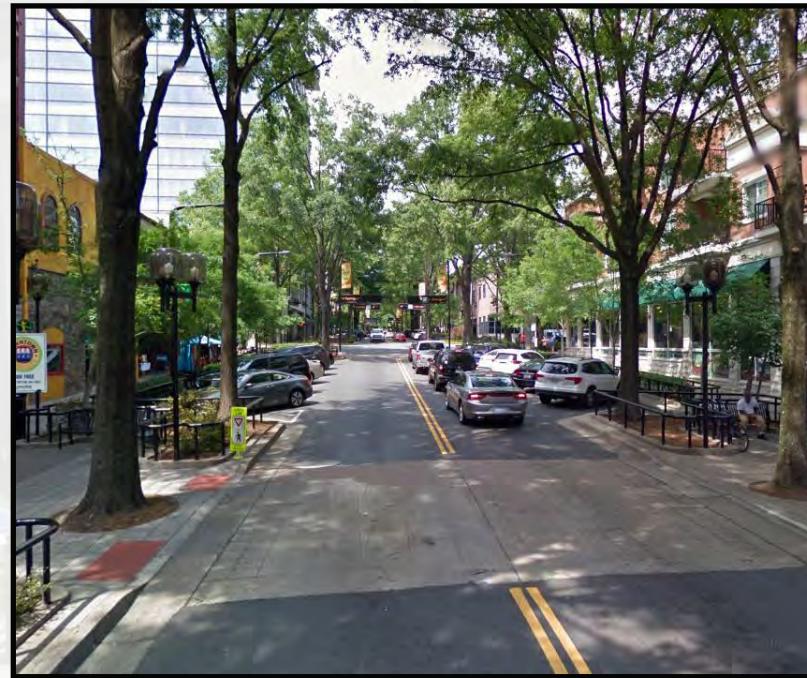
Community meeting participants were asked to take a visual preference survey concerning enhancements for Aberdeen Downtown. The McGill Associates' staff found that the participants in the activities were interested in increased dining and entertainment opportunities that would bring them to (or keep them in) the Downtown area after business hours. Images selected by the community for specific amenities are shown below.

### STREET TREE TYPE



A variety of different levels of enhancement can occur within Downtown alleys - from simple improvements in lighting and safety, to making the alley a pleasant pedestrian corridor.

### STREET TREES



A variety of different levels of enhancement can occur within Downtown alleys - from simple improvements in lighting and safety, to making the alley a pleasant pedestrian corridor.

### PARKING AREA SCREENING METHOD



Downtown parking can visually detract from the overall aesthetic of a streetscape. As a result, various screening methods can be used as a way to mitigate the sight of parking areas.





## Visual Preference Survey Results

Community meeting participants were asked to take a visual preference survey concerning enhancements for Aberdeen Downtown. The McGill Associates' staff found that the participants in the activities were interested in increased dining and entertainment opportunities that would bring them to (or keep them in) the Downtown area after business hours. Images selected by the community for specific amenities are shown below.

### CROSS WALK MATERIALS



Crosswalks not only serve as a safety feature for pedestrians, they visually represent the pedestrian space on the streets of the Downtown. An eye-catching, aesthetic crosswalk is important in streetscape design.

### OUTDOOR DINING



Gateways serve to mark the Downtown limits and also set the precedent for the Downtown's look and feel. Materials and colors used for gateways are often repeated in the Downtown streetscape design.

### SIDEWALKS



Sidewalk width, lighting, and level of ornamentation serve as the visual foundation for the Downtown streetscape.





# Public Input

## Visual Preference Survey Results

Community meeting participants were asked to take a visual preference survey concerning enhancements for Aberdeen Downtown. The McGill Associates' staff found that the participants in the activities were interested in increased dining and entertainment opportunities that would bring them to (or keep them in) the Downtown area after business hours. Images selected by the community for specific amenities are shown below.

### STREET LAMPS



Street lighting provides security in urban areas. It increases the quality of life by artificially extending the hours of light so that man can carry on despite the dark.

### INTERSECTIONS



Intersections offer great opportunities for marking prominent Downtown gathering areas as well as serving to visually enhance Downtown nodes.

### CROSSWALKS



The perceived safety, walkability, and character of the Downtown can be affected by the look and feel of Downtown street corridors.





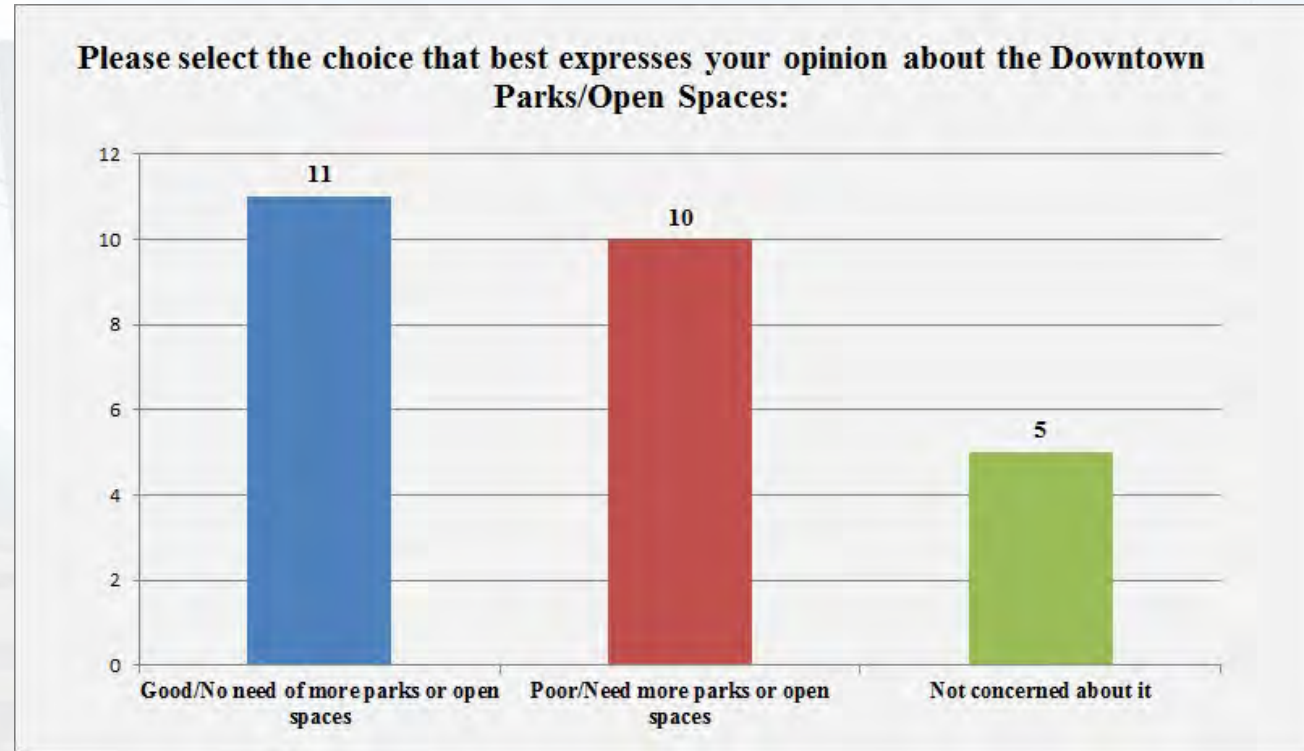
A public questionnaire was used to help collect public input. This tool was made available at public meetings and offered on line. Participants had the option of clicking a link on the Town’s web page, typing the survey link into their browser or using the provided project QR code with their smart-phone to access the questionnaire.

Approximately 30 completed surveys were returned from public outreach meetings.

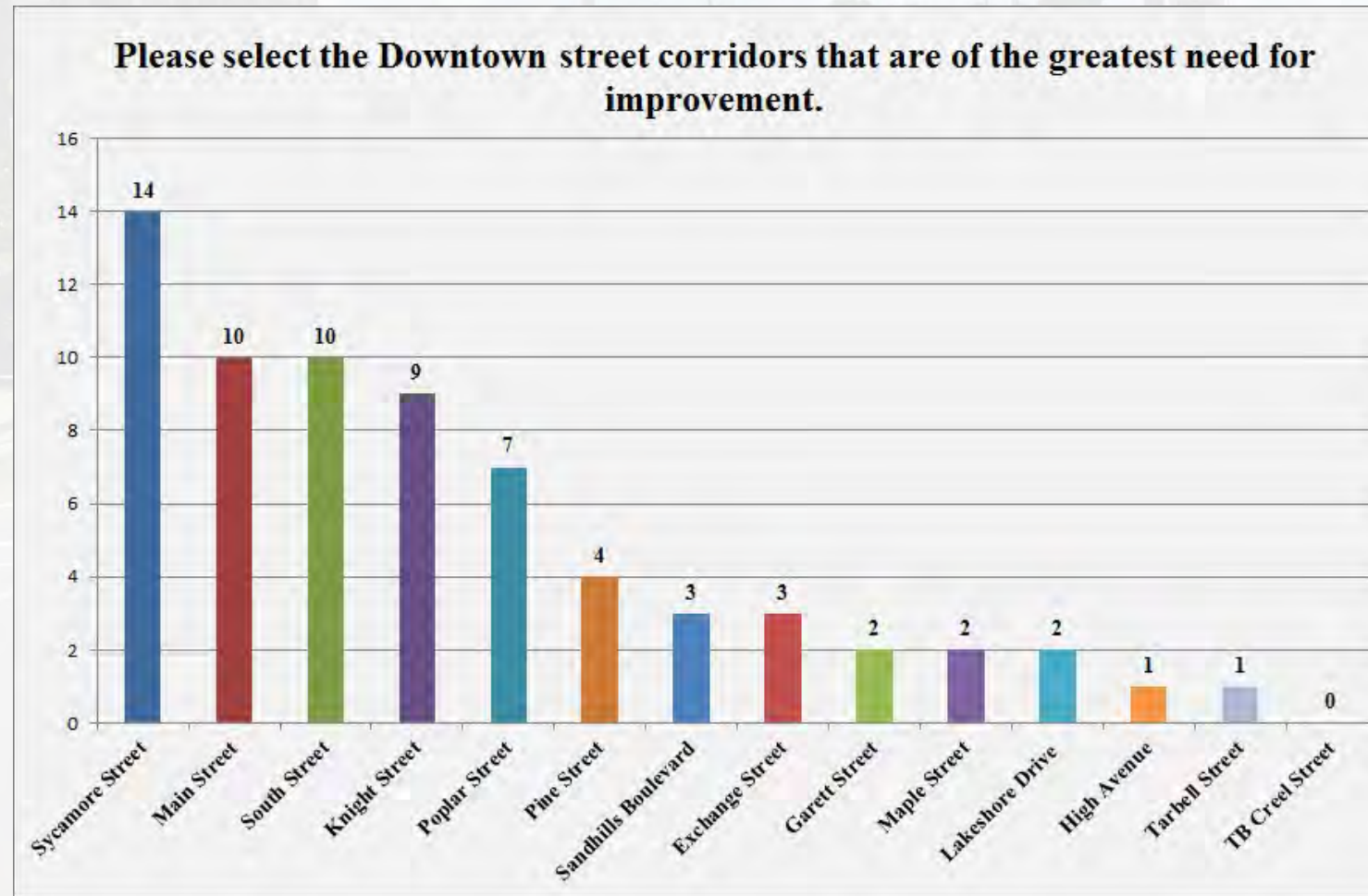
When asked to rank Downtown improvements participants overwhelmingly chose entertainment venues as the most important improvement followed by crosswalks and street lighting. Also of notable mention was a desire for parks and open spaces.

Survey responses indicated that most participants found it easy to find and navigate Downtown but that aesthetics were in need of improvement. Half of survey participants felt there was sufficient parking in Downtown and half felt parking was insufficient.

The majority of survey participants felt that Downtown dining and entertainment opportunities were limited.



Survey participants were mixed when asked about the need for parks in Downtown.



Survey participants felt that Sycamore Street was in greatest need of improvements.





# Development Principles

In studying the current conditions in Aberdeen Downtown and projecting the needed improvements, McGill Associates examined the presence/absence of these eight extremely important factors, which are characteristic of successful Downtown districts:

## 1. MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

Successful Downtown districts consider mixed-use developments to be critical components of the Downtown environment. A combination of shops, restaurants, lodging, offices, government buildings, activity centers, and parks attract a diverse group of people of all ages, income levels, cultures, and races.

## 2. ENTERTAINMENT

A vital inner-city component, entertainment extends the life of the Downtown from the daytime into the evening with an assortment of shopping, dining, movies, performing arts, sports activities, and recreation opportunities. These activities should be located within 1/4 mile of one another to encourage pedestrian activities.

## 3. PUBLIC CENTERS

Public and Civic facilities must be available to supply businesses and entertainment. Places that generate activity in Downtowns include cultural and civic buildings such as museums, government offices, post office, libraries and performing arts centers.

## 4. WALKABILITY

All walking areas should have a pedestrian-friendly design. Destinations should be within ten (10) minutes walking time. Interconnected street and sidewalk networks ease walking - creating a vibrant Downtown environment – where retail sales also increase.



## 5. NEIGHBORHOODS

Successful urban areas have very strong, established residential neighborhoods, which advocate for and support of local Downtown businesses. Residential areas are an important market for mixed-use development (housing, apartments, condominiums, live/work units) in in Downtown.

## 6. INVESTMENTS

Downtown areas are commonly known for their business entrepreneurs; but successful Downtowns should not be completely dependent on individual businesses. There must be sustained public investments in the management of public facilities and infrastructure, such as streets, sidewalks, parking, public buildings, and community centers/activities. Such investments show the community that the public sphere has interest and pride in their Downtown and encourages private investment in the district.

## 7. SAFETY

Customers and business owners want a sense of safety and security when they are working, shopping, living, or enjoying entertainment. To enhance the safety of residents and visitors, the Downtown area and surrounding community must be well-policed; the buildings and streets must be well-maintained; and the sidewalks and streets must be well-lit and well-marked.

## 8. PRIDE

A successful Downtown must be beloved by the citizenry. Its structures and amenities are a continued source of local and regional pride and they reflect the culture of the community. The enhancement of a Downtown area must preserve the heritage and integrity of its population while offering a welcoming environment to new comers.





# Planning Approach

The approach to the planning process for the Aberdeen Downtown Master Plan included the interactive involvement of Downtown representatives (such as property and business owners), Town Staff, the Aberdeen community, and other stakeholders in the future success of the Downtown area. Town staff and representatives from the North Carolina Main Streets Program assisted with the planning process. Meetings were held to develop and discuss various thoughts and ideas for the enhancement of Aberdeen Downtown.

Once all the stakeholders had identified areas of improvement, they discussed alternative actions that would produce the desired solutions. This planning document has been prepared for the purpose of review and comment by Town Staff, other stakeholders (who are not involved in the Downtown Master Plan Task Force process), and other interested citizens and business owners. After review by the aforementioned entities, a final Aberdeen Downtown Master Plan will be presented to the Board of Commissioners for approval.

The Master Planning process includes these overall key elements:

- A comprehensive assessment of existing conditions both within and adjacent to the Downtown area
- Community involvement through the use of written surveys, map exercises, visual preferences, and open forum
- The identification of guidelines and elements involved in the successful enhancements of municipal districts
- Recommendations for specific improvements to increase the appeal and aesthetics of the Downtown area
- Conducted meetings with Town staff and the Down Town Master Plan Task Force to review, discuss, and develop recommendations for the Master Plan





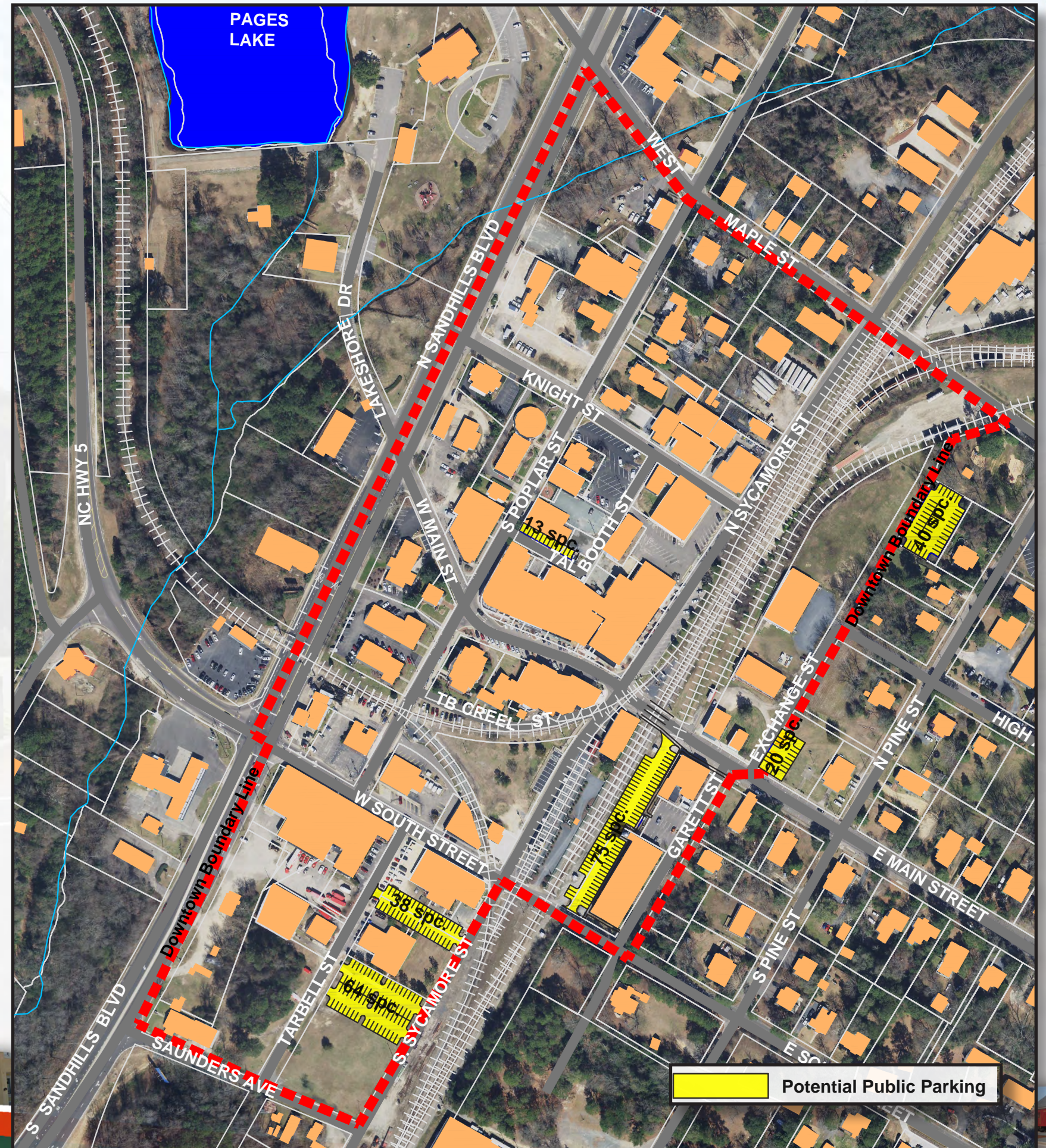
# Potential Public Parking

The influence and value of parking in planning for livable communities is often underestimated and not well understood. As one of the largest single land uses in municipalities' "footprints," parking deserves more attention than it typically gets, due to its influence on the character, form, function, and flow of our communities.

The design and management of parking supply affects the functionality and walkability of any Downtown. Building additional parking without managing the existing supply can lead to having unbalanced use of available parking areas.

Managing the existing supply can be a cost-effective way to reduce demand and increase the attractiveness of underutilized parking spaces. One of a municipality's most pressing challenges for parking is to find the right balance between supply and demand.

The proposed parking locations and number of potential new spaces that could be gained in Downtown are shown on the map on this page. Opinions of probable costs for these improvements can be found in the Appendix.





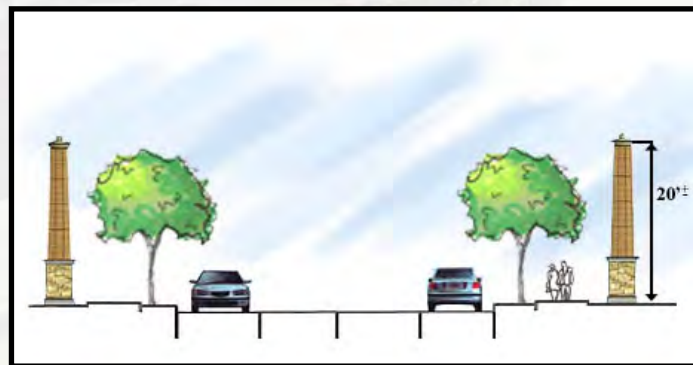
# Proposed Gateway Opportunities

To enhance the image of the Downtown, gateway elements help to identify the entrance to the Downtown district. Gateway elements may also serve to provide a hierarchy of entry through the Downtown area. A series of primary and secondary gateways should be developed and placed at the periphery of the Downtown limits as identified on the map on this page. These gateway markers should identify major and minor elements within Downtown and help to identify prominent gateway corridors. Recommended Downtown gateway corridors should include US Hwy 1, Main, Poplar and South Streets. Gateway corridors are overlay areas in Downtown with special requirements related to signage and other aesthetic rules.

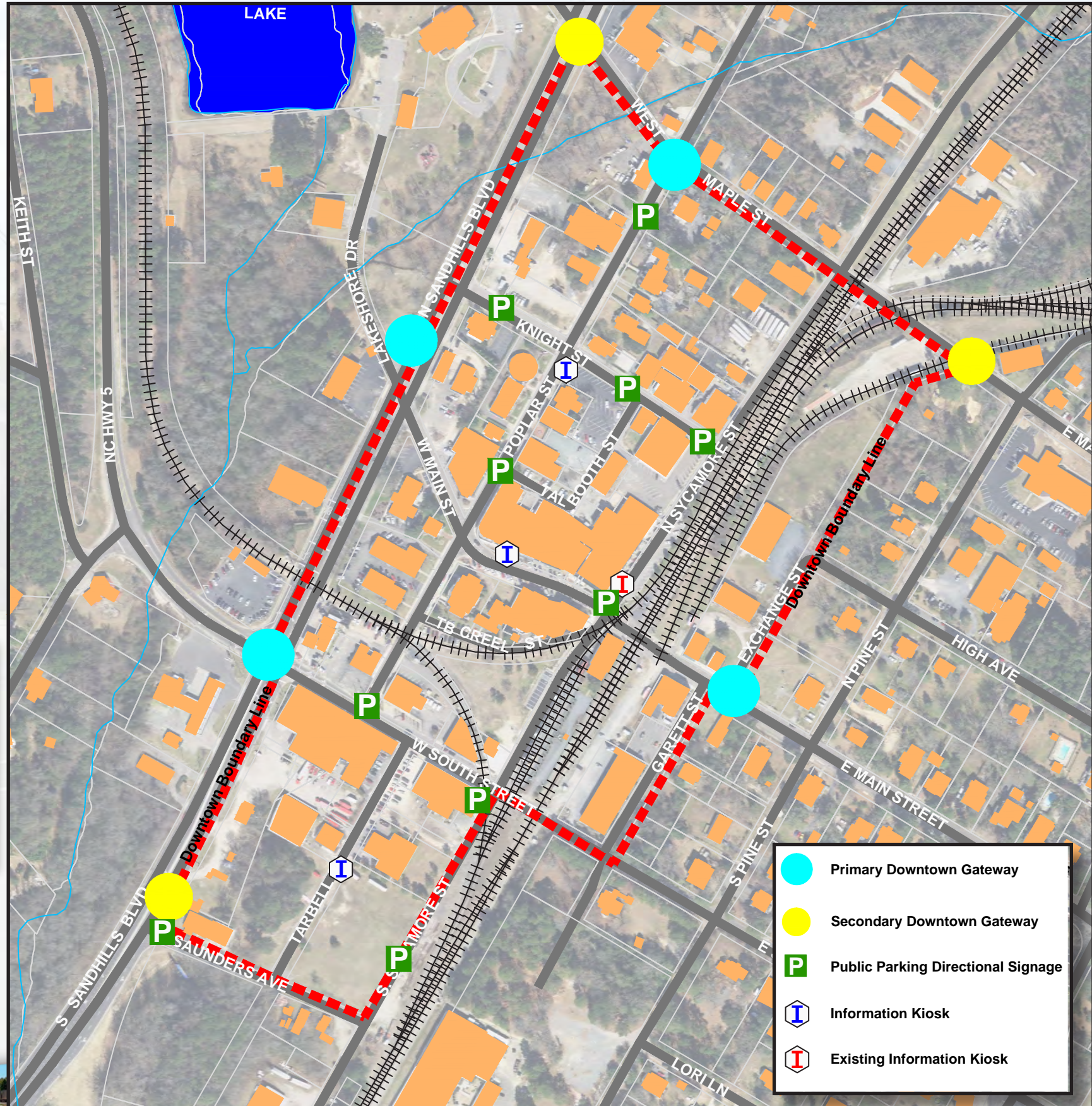


Monument signs now welcome residents and visitors into the Town and set the visual tone for materials and colors to expect throughout Downtown public spaces.

Tall vertical elements can also serve as primary gateways and be seen on approach to Downtown. Such features can set the sense of place for drivers passing through and into Aberdeen.



Wayfinding signage consists of a slightly smaller, yet still elegant and effective sign to guide Downtown residents and visitors. Walking distances are included to encourage pedestrian activities.



-  Primary Downtown Gateway
-  Secondary Downtown Gateway
-  Public Parking Directional Signage
-  Information Kiosk
-  Existing Information Kiosk



# Streetscape Furnishing and Art

The streetscape of Aberdeen Downtown should provide an attractive atmosphere to residents, visitors, and potential businesses. An inviting streetscape begins by having appealing public amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, and the like. It is recommended that Aberdeen's Downtown public amenities exhibit a consistent pallet of color, materials, and design.



Public art is setting a growing trend by being an important and recognized part of our public history and our evolving culture. It adds meaning to our cities and create uniqueness to our communities and neighborhoods, it reflects who we are and what we like to surround ourselves with . Public art is accessible for everyone , it provides a bridge between the past, present and the near future, it is the mirror image of its community



Murals have become a unique and appealing way of increasing tourism and improving commerce.



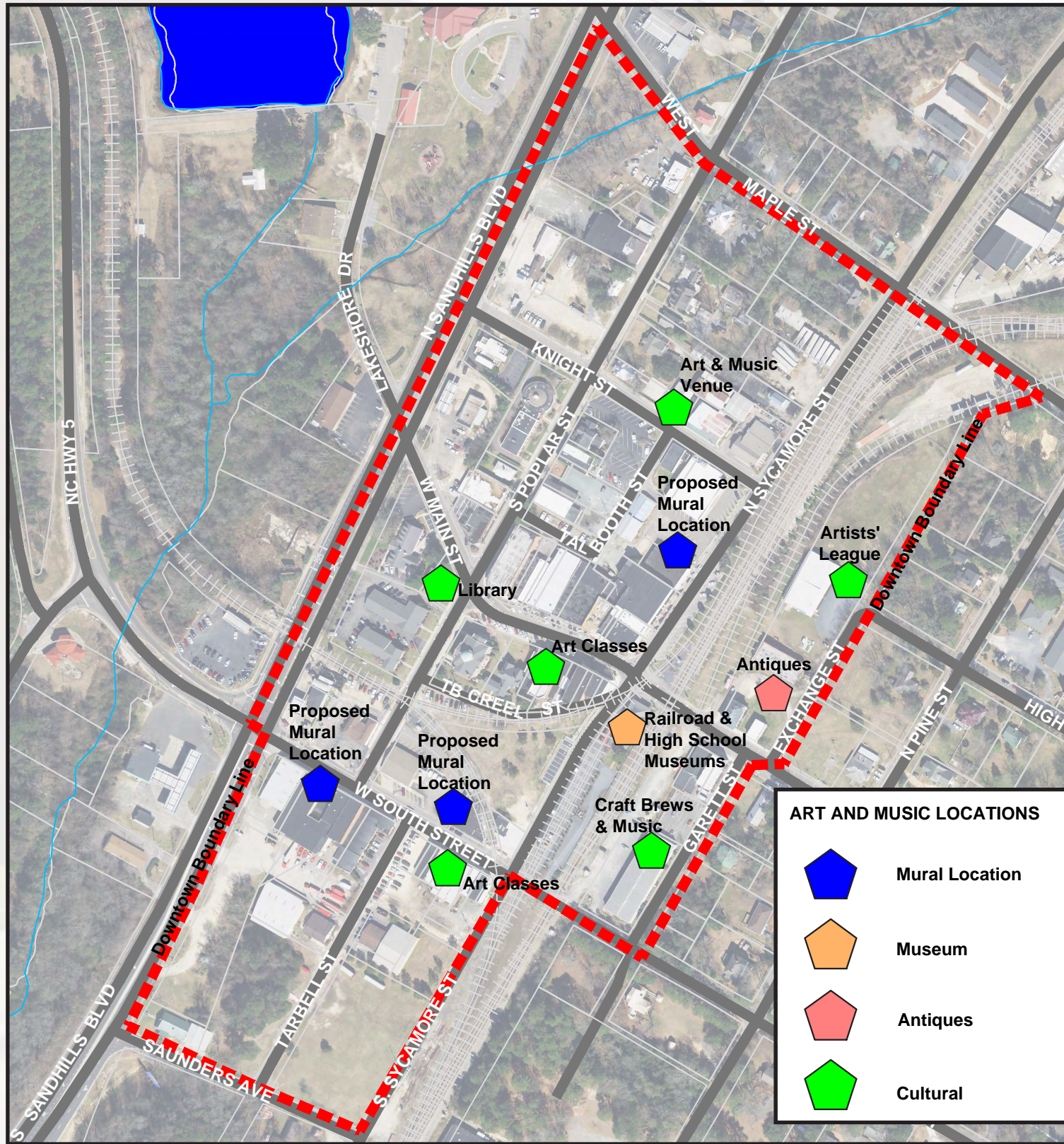
The Town has selected quality trash receptacles, planters and benches for Downtown. The Town should continue to add these furnishings in areas as needed that compliment each other with regard to color, durability and style. Variations to these should attempt to reflect the existing streetscape furnishings and support the historic character of Downtown.

Other new streetscape components such as fencing, bike racks, planters, or tree grates should compliment the existing look and materials established by the Town.





# Downtown Art and Culture



Existing venues for culture, music and art such as the Library, Railhouse Brewery and Artist's League have added interest and value to the Downtown area. This plan proposes that Aberdeen continue to support art and music Downtown by expanding opportunities for these valuable types of community assets. Projects such as wall murals can both reinforce Aberdeen's history and add color and interest to Downtown buildings.

Arts and culture contribute to building local identity and pride of place. Arts and culture can improve public safety and business climate; and they can animate community spaces and neighborhood life.

Arts and culture contribute to local and regional economies, generating jobs and spending, attracting tourists, and making places attractive to businesses and their employees.





# Downtown Wayfinding

Getting around Downtown relies on clear and understandable communication as well as a succession of communication clues delivered through our through clear and recognizable components. Wayfinding helps people know where they are and how to get where they want to go. This task relies on architectural, graphic, audible, and tactile communication.

Any visual wayfinding system is more than just signs; it encompasses architecture, landscape architecture, lighting, landmarks and orientation points. The primary elements of wayfinding for Downtowns consist of directional and interpretive signage, proper signage placement, and other visual cues that help identify a place. An example of this is having decorative crosswalks throughout the Downtown area.

Wayfinding should provide clear, sequential, vehicular, and pedestrian directional information for important destinations throughout the Downtown and the surrounding areas. The directional sign system should work from the macro scale – public transportation routes and vehicular roadways to parking key drop-off points, key visitor destinations. Micro-scale elements carry the theme into the Downtown area along pedestrian pathways; well identified destination points and help to round out the wayfinding system.



Examples of recommended crosswalk and sidewalk paving patterns to consider.



This plan recommends that informational kiosks similar to the existing design be constructed and placed at prominent locations within Downtown (see Proposed Gateway Opportunities map on page 29).

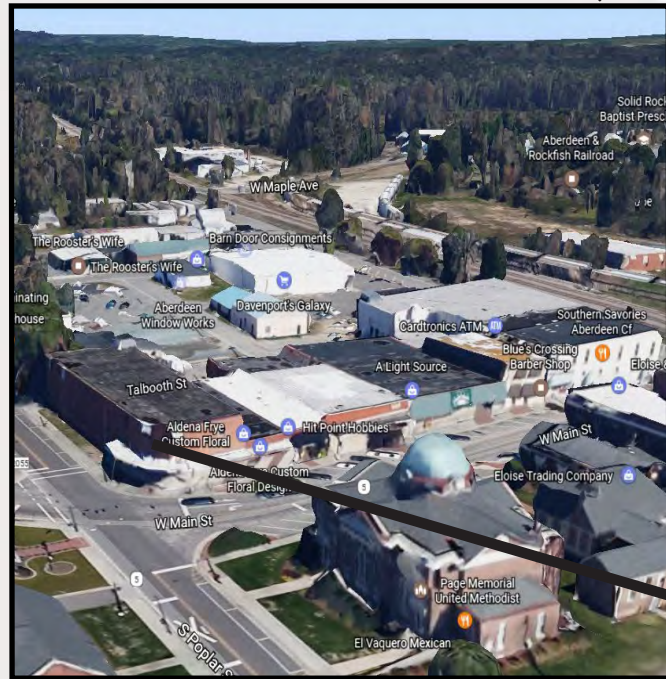
Cooperation between the Downtown members of the Aberdeen Business Guild and Town should include maintaining and updating all Downtown information kiosks on a regular basis.



Aberdeen has recently invested in attractive wayfinding signs at some locations. This plan recommends the continuation of this effort. In addition to signage, wayfinding may be accomplished through a combination of architectural elements, lighting features, and visible identification of buildings and pathways. Enhancements such as paving patterns, banners, interpretive events, and donor/volunteer recognition opportunities are often integrated into various different Downtown architectural elements.



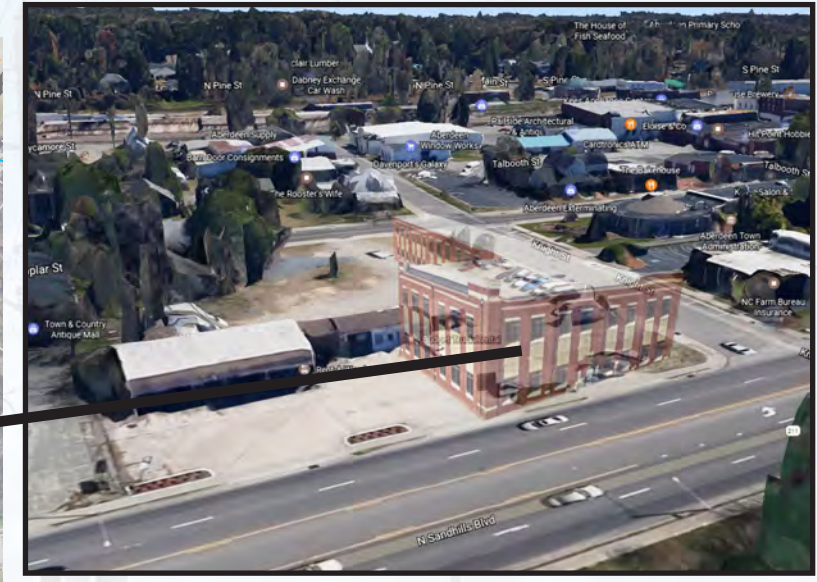
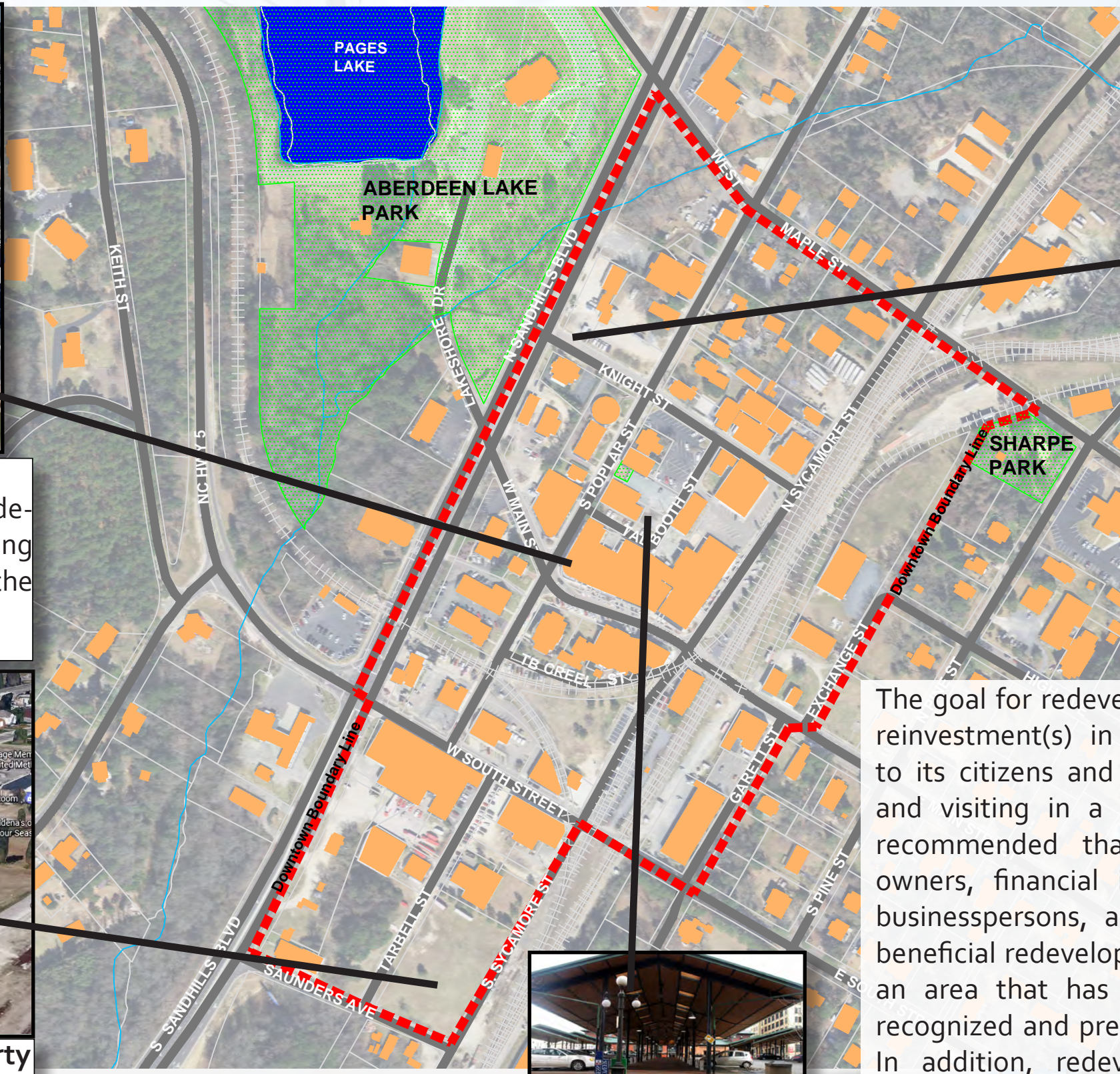
# Proposed Infill Opportunities



**DJ Energy Property**  
 There is potential for residential redevelopment of top-story space along Main Street buildings such as at the corner of Main and Poplar Street.



**New Aberdeen Warehouse Property**  
 A portion of this land provides the opportunity of becoming future multi-family residential.



**McNeill Oil Company Property**  
 Corner of N. Sandhills Boulevard and Knight Street.  
 This property provides an opportunity for future downtown residential units or mixed use retail.



Consider a Farmer's Market/Event space at Talbooth Street.

The goal for redeveloping Aberdeen Downtown is to encourage reinvestment(s) in the places and things that are desirable to its citizens and visitors. People will enjoy living, working, and visiting in a thriving, energetic Downtown area. It is recommended that Aberdeen work closely with property owners, financial institutions, developers, Realtors, builders, businesspersons, and investors to promote opportunities for beneficial redevelopment. Aberdeen Downtown should become an area that has unique restaurants and shops, historically recognized and preserved buildings, and attractive public parks. In addition, redevelopment should include the renovation of existing homes and buildings for residential purposes; as well as, perhaps, the new construction of residential facilities.



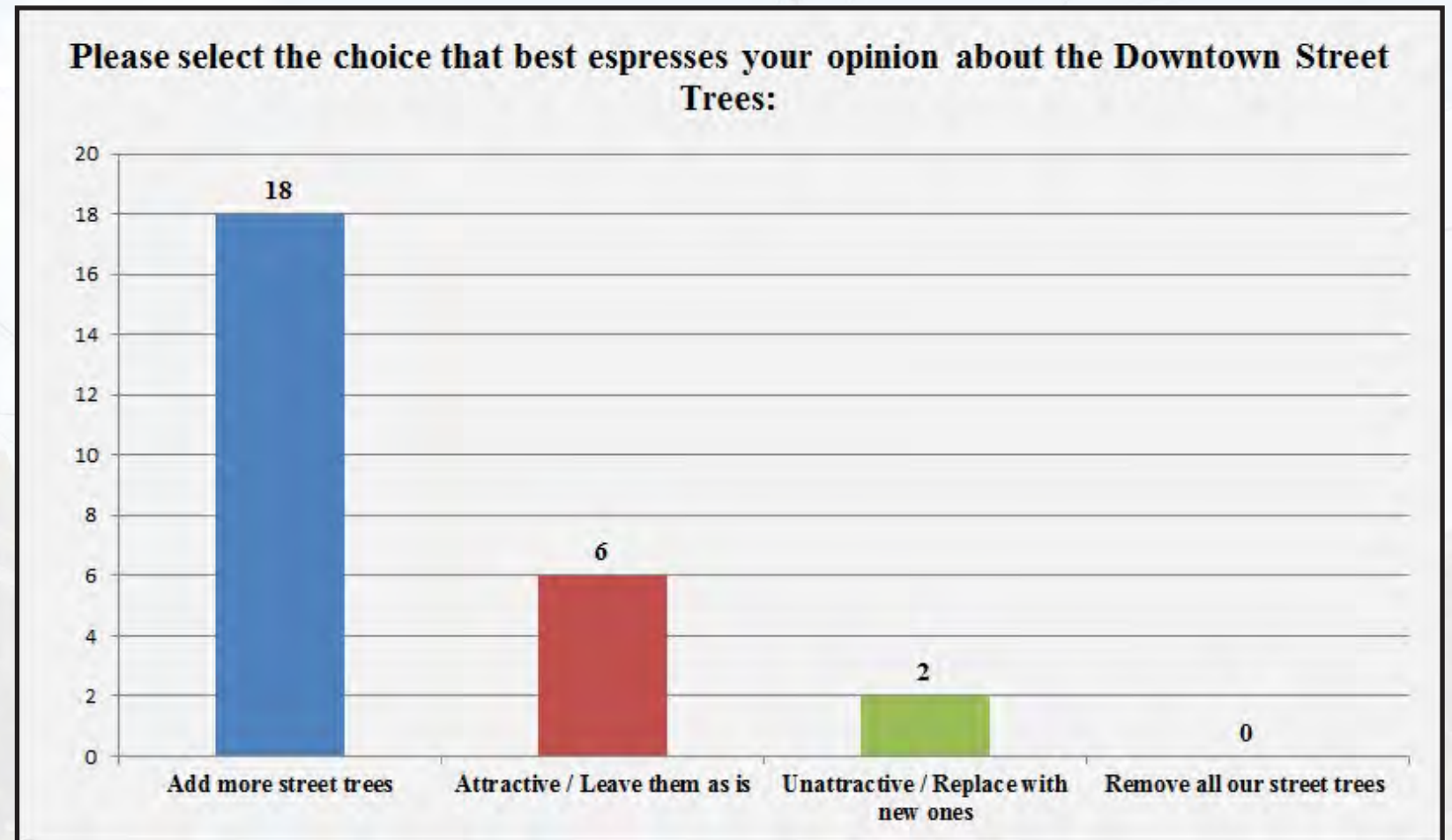
# Landscaping

Public space, particularly street rights-of-way, can provide a framework for Downtown improvements – creating the Town’s streetscape. A main component of streetscape improvements is “trees”, which soften architectural lines and create an urban forest. Valuable cooling mechanisms, urban forests provide visual interest and serve as ceilings for outdoor spaces. Urban tree canopy highlights all four seasons providing shade in the summer months. Street trees enhance Downtown areas by reducing noise, conserving energy, improving air and water quality, controlling storm-water, reducing heat island effects and defining pedestrian and vehicular zones.

Healthy trees provide visual interest and reduce the impact of other less desirable visual elements. Various other factors (such as power lines, poles, sidewalks, signs, and pavement) also enhance a streetscape. Studies show people consider trees to be of therapeutic value.

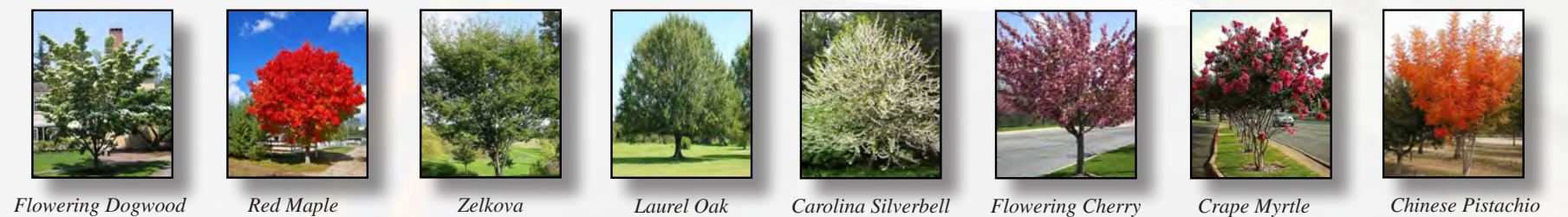
Proper tree selection is as critical as determining location. Considerations should include height at maturity, drought tolerance, foliage color, crown shape, and overall hardiness in urban environments.

Seasonal interest can also be supported by planting and maintaining annual/perennial flower beds.



Public survey data indicates a clear desire for street trees.

## Recommended Street Trees





## Benefits of Downtown trees

- Extend the life of paved surfaces through cooling shade
- Increase traffic safety by reducing vehicle speed
- Improve economic sustainability
- Positively affect consumer perceptions and behaviors
- Increasing real estate values
- Increasing energy savings

## Other landscaping recommendations

- Use native vegetation whenever possible to reduce maintenance and reflect the character of the Downtown.
- Incorporate vegetation along roadways and in open spaces.
- Use planters along street corridors and Downtown intersections to define the streetscape and provide visual interest.
- Redevelop existing parking lots by incorporating tree islands to delineate parking spots, soften hard elements and create shade
- Implement alternate tree species for street corridor to provide distinction for individual streets and prevent disease.
- Select plant material which is adaptable to its intended location.
- Adequately provide for maintenance, including irrigation.

Examples of how trees can define a Downtown's public spaces.



Choose native street trees that enhance the seasons with either spring flowers or fall leaf color.



Maple





# Lighting



Traffic and pedestrian signals should be metal with black finish and be consistent throughout Downtown. The Town should consider mast arm poles like the one at the corner of Main and Sycamore street, in place of existing cable hung stop lights. Antique style posts can add interest and support the historic appeal of Downtown.

Typical mast arm pole replacement of traditional wire hung traffic lights ranges in cost from \$100,000 to \$150,000 per intersection.



Street lamps should be the antique Acorn topped style and be metal with black finish or other acceptable material to match existing colors and styles found on Main Street. Street lamps should incorporate banner frames for seasonal and special event signage.

The Town should produce a lighting plan for Downtown. The key to developing a good plan is fit lighting types to the nighttime functions of a certain space. It is important to remember that street lighting is more than just a safety and security need, or a design component. Street lighting should be thought of and utilized in terms of how the type, placement, and bulb wattage affect how a street is perceived and used.

Although its primary purpose is nighttime visibility for security and safety, successful street lighting takes into account the human users of the street, not merely NCDOT standards and local public works minimum requirements. To emphasize pedestrian activity over automobile traffic is to replace standard overhead cobra street lights with smaller-scale, more frequently spaced fixtures like acorn style or similar types.







Before

The 'Y' is an open space located between active rail lines owned by Aberdeen & Rockfish, Carolina & Western, and CSX. This property is located very near to the heart of Downtown. The existing aesthetics of this site could be described as utilitarian. Proposed improvements aim to improve the visual appeal of this prominent section of the Downtown fabric. Proposed changes are contingent on cooperation of the railroad companies. At a minimum this plan recommends landscaping upgrades to include perimeter shrubs, and native flowering trees to be planted within safe locations per railroad approval. Aberdeen should annually review and seek cooperation from the railroad companies concerning the possibility of more extensive improvements. Future improvements may include park-like elements as seen in concept B.



Concept A



Concept B





# Vision of Improvements

## The 'Y' area Continued



In 2015 the Town worked with Cardno Landscape Architecture to design a planting plan the 'Y' area. This plan suits the site well and should be considered for implementation.

The Town is encouraged to continue negotiations with Aberdeen Carolina & Western Railroad Company, so that the site can be improved both for safety and to provide a wider range of uses.



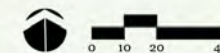
The 'Y' lot has become an important venue for Downtown events.

## The 'Y' Park

Town of Aberdeen, North Carolina



October 20, 2015



Preliminary Concept Exhibit





# Vision of Improvements

Previous Town efforts led to the rendered concept below. This example is of a median refuge and crosswalk across US 1 connecting Aberdeen Lake Park to the Downtown core. The median refuge, with clear signage, and speed limit reduction, is intended to provide a safer pedestrian crossing of the five-lane, heavily congested US 1. A pedestrian activated "HAWK" signal (flashing lights) should also be considered at this location in order to alert vehicular traffic of when a crossing pedestrian is present.

## US 1 Pedestrian Crossing From Downtown to Aberdeen Lake Park



Before

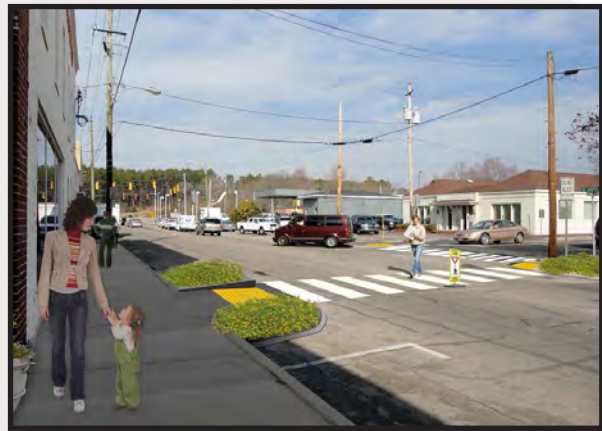


After





# Vision of Improvements



Sidewalk and crossing improvements as envisioned and recommended in the 2010 Aberdeen Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan.

Intersection of Poplar Street and South Street



Before



After

South Street is a gateway corridor. Recommended streetscape improvements include updating the sidewalks with new street lamps set into traffic controlling bulb-outs. Crosswalks should have decorative paving (stamped concrete or asphalt), planted areas to be landscaped with hardy shrubs and uniform street-tree plantings. The Town should consider partnering with the owners of the existing Coca-Cola building to enhance the building facade.





## Intersection of Sycamore Street and South Street



Before



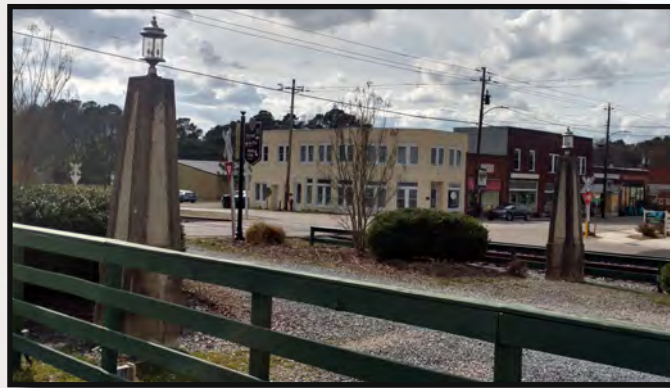
After

Recommended streetscape improvements include adding raised curb planters where existing parking space is located. This feature not only provides the opportunity to add attractive landscaping to the South Street corridor, but helps to make drivers more aware of the need to slow down for potential pedestrian and railroad traffic. Planted areas to be landscaped with hardy shrubs and low maintenance street trees that can be maintained to preserve sight lines. The burring of utility lines at this location would greatly enhance the appeal. As a way of including public art, a mural has been added to the end of Kirk's building.





# Vision of Improvements

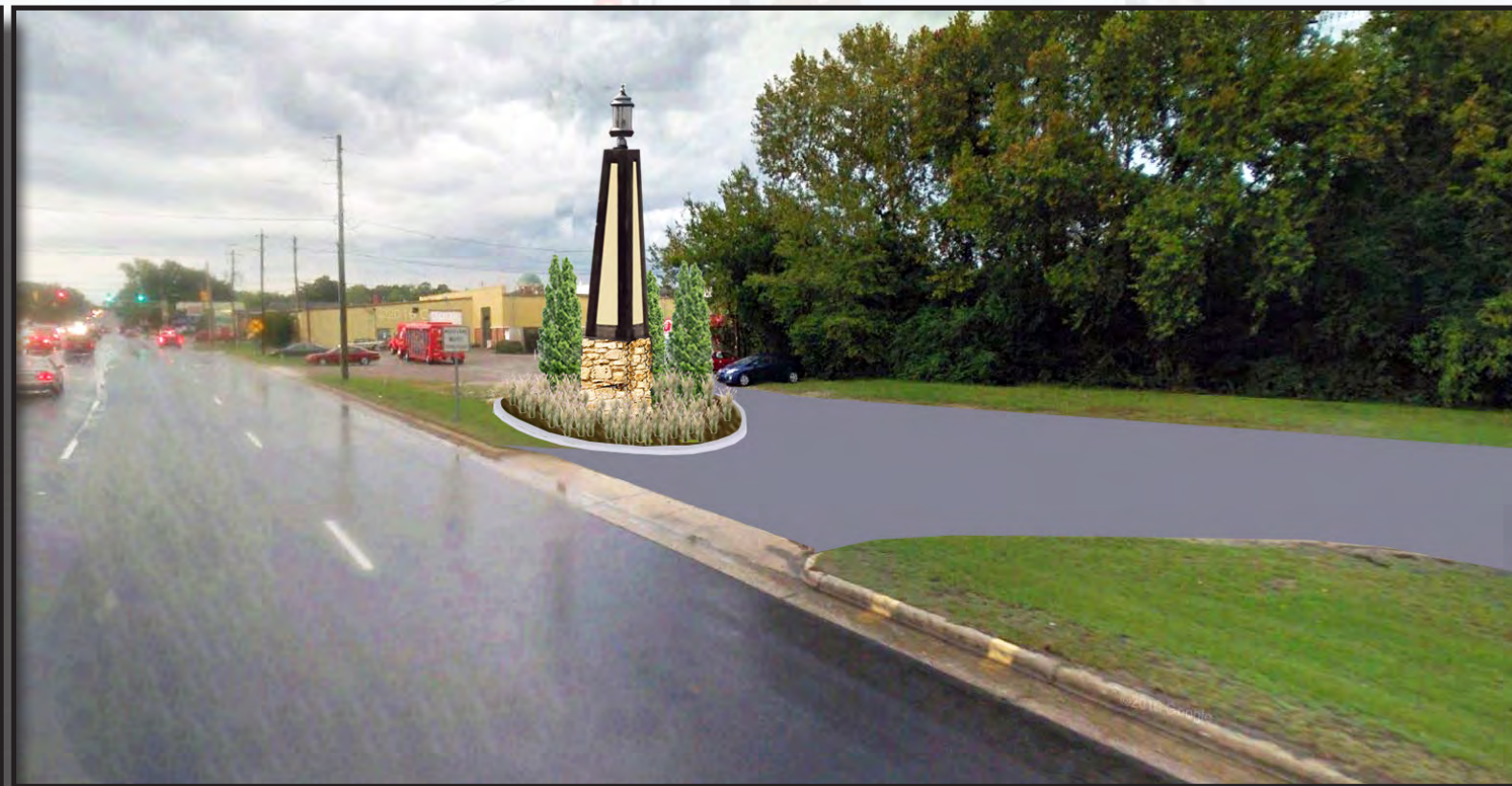


Existing Aberdeen gateway lamp posts at Union Station.

## Gateway Monument on Sandhills Boulevard



Before



After

Gateway Monuments are free standing, non-required roadside structures that provide communities with a means of identifying themselves while creating a favorable image. Aberdeen Downtown has existing gateway lamp posts near Union Station (see image above) and may offer historic context to inspire other Downtown monuments. This plan proposes a monument marker for Downtown located along Sandhills Boulevard using a stylistically similar feature. The design and final location should be coordinated with the North Carolina Department of Transportation.





## Intersection of Poplar Street and Main Street



Before



After

Recommended streetscape improvements include new road asphalt and concrete sidewalks. Accessible ramps with truncated domes and acorn style street lamps with signalized crossing help to increase both aesthetics and pedestrian safety. Mast arm poles should replace the existing cable hung stop lights. This use of colorful, thematic sidewalk art at this corner could bring both life and interest into the fabric of Downtown. The Town should encourage and partner with Downtown building owners to identify locations where such art displays could be painted.





# Vision of Improvements

## Intersection of Sycamore Street and Main Street



Before



After

This location serves as an important focal point for the Main Street corridor and aesthetically anchors the railroad to the core of Aberdeen. Recommended improvements include decorative stamped asphalt crosswalks and pedestrian refuge areas, striping to help narrow travel lanes and removable planters to add both a sculptural element and vegetation to the hard-scape.





# Vision of Improvements

## Poplar Street



Before



After

Poplar Street is a gateway corridor. Streetscape improvements should include new road asphalt and concrete sidewalks. This concept introduces the benefits of adding street trees along Downtown streets. The benefits of this landscaping improvement include softening the streetscape, adding season interest (spring flowers or fall leaf color) and slowing traffic through the use of repeating vertical and horizontal elements. The after image also proposes a mid block crossing between the existing public parking lot and Town offices.





# Vision of Improvements

## Downtown Art



Before



After

The idea of introducing public art into Downtown can include traditional sculpture and displays located within existing landscape areas and on sidewalks. However, the Town should look for opportunities to dress up existing buildings and structures with art related to areas businesses or historic themes like the railroad. The concept shown above is one such example where a mural dresses up an existing hopper structure. This element changes what might be considered an eyesore to some and makes into an attractive art piece that supports the historic rail and Scottish themes of Aberdeen and advertises a Downtown business.





# Street and Sidewalk Improvements

The proposed streetscape improvements for the Downtown area of Aberdeen include any combination of the following elements: proposed infill development, curb and gutter, sidewalks, multi-use paths, curb ramps, bicycle racks, street lighting, way-finding signage, and landscaping.

Some streets reviewed in this document are controlled by the Town and others may be controlled by the North Carolina Department of Transportation. It is recommended that property owners and businesses located within Downtown contact the Aberdeen Planning Department and past Town planning documents such as the Brownfield Redevelopment Plan for Downtown and Town of Aberdeen's Downtown Revitalization Task Force's efforts for additional advice and direction on development issues.

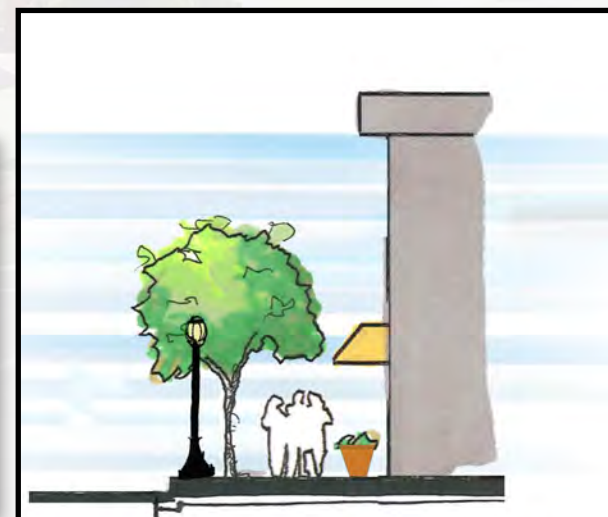
The recommended style for all Downtown development should reflect basic principles of geometry and form while complimenting the existing rural North Carolina Sandhills vernacular of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Future streetscape elements such as benches, street lights, sign poles, and landscaping should enhance, not conflict with those examples found on Main Street.

For the majority of Downtown streets, all the following minimum street type standards are recommended:

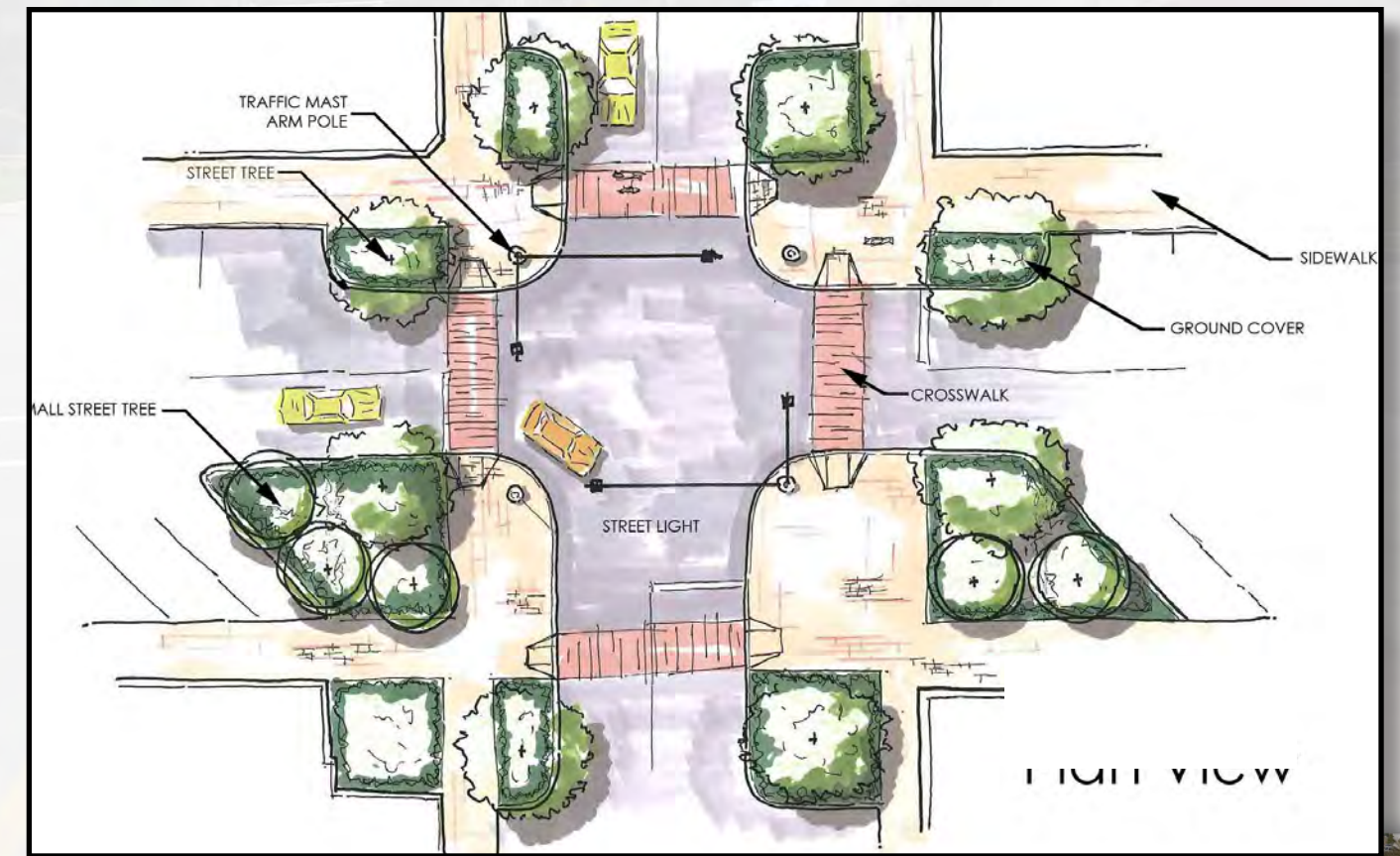
- A clear, accessible sidewalk with a minimum width of 6' is recommended.
- It is recommended that a 3-foot pedestrian amenity zone provided between the sidewalk and building facade. This amenity zone may consist of bike racks, seating, removable planters and private temporary signage as approved by the Town of Aberdeen.
- It is recommended that on-street parking exist on at least one side of the street.
- It is recommended that street-lamp lighting be located within 2' of the face of curb or edge of pavement if curbing is not in place.
- Existing driveway cuts should be maintained and any new driveways must be approved by the Town of Aberdeen prior to construction.



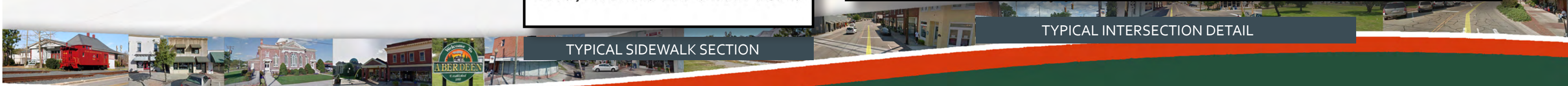
TYPICAL STREET CROSS SECTION



8' TO 12' WIDE SIDEWALK WITH TREES, PLANTERS AND STREET LIGHTS



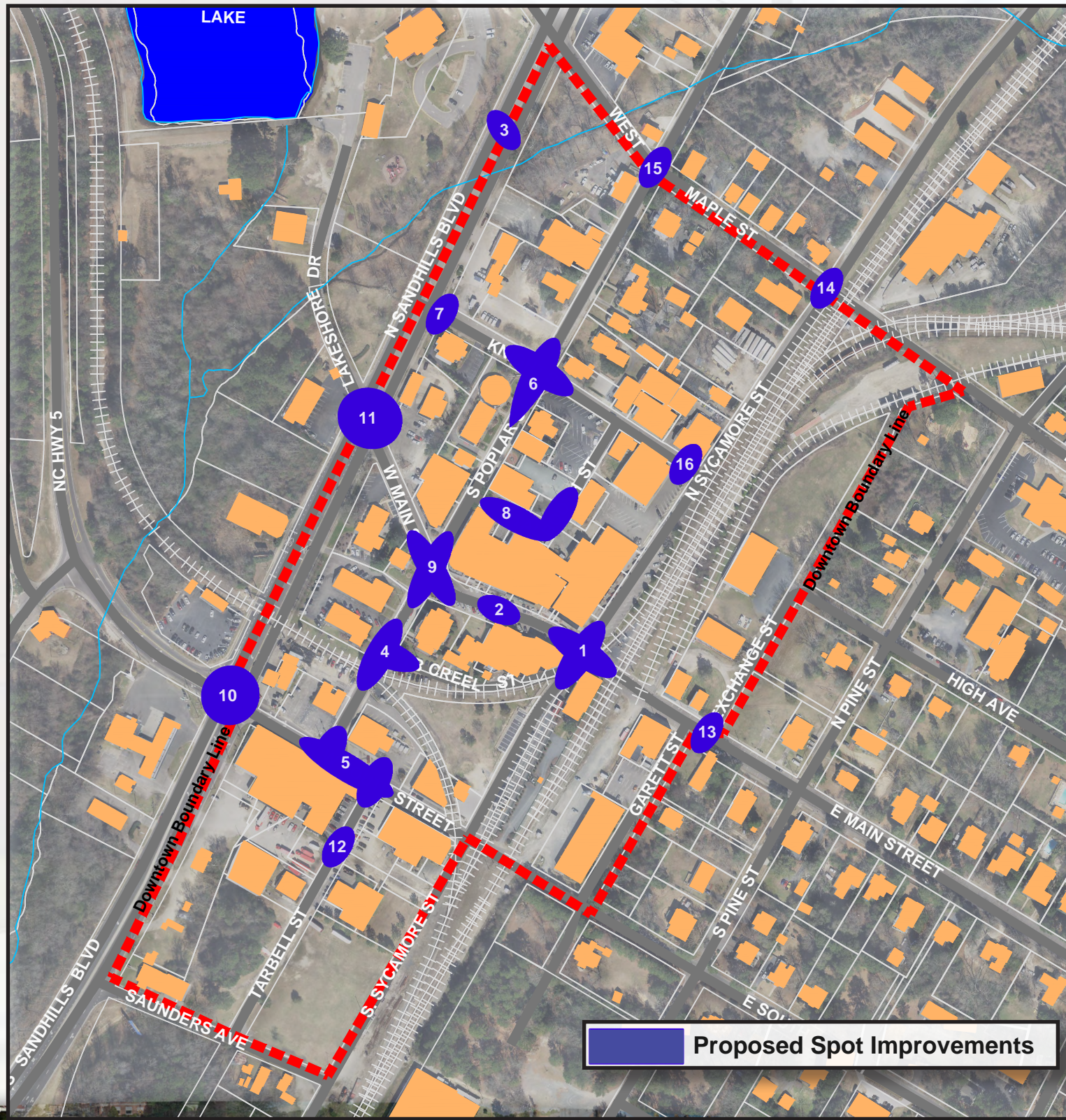
TYPICAL INTERSECTION DETAIL







# Downtown Spot Improvement Projects



Spot Improvements are actions that address problems at specific locations such as intersections, short lengths of roadway, or specific destinations. They differ from traditional street or sidewalk projects by limiting the scope of improvements being made to a specific location. The smaller nature of these types of improvements usually mitigates costs and shortens the project time line. The shorter duration from plan to project completion improves public perception and supports a positive expectations for future change.

## Spot Improvements and opinions of probable costs\*

1. Marked crosswalks with accessible crossing over railroad tracks - \$45,000
2. Mid-block crossing with decorative paving - \$6,500
3. Mid-block signalized (HAWK) crossing - \$5,000
4. Traffic calming bulb-outs with decorative paving crosswalks - \$150,000
5. Traffic calming bulb-outs with decorative paving crosswalks - \$150,000
6. Traffic calming bulb-outs with decorative paving crosswalks - \$150,000
7. Traffic calming bulb-outs with painted crosswalks - 50,000
8. Decorative paving crosswalks - \$6,500
9. Decorative paving crosswalks and curb extension at 124 Main Street - \$40,000
10. Painted crosswalk with pedestrian signalization - \$10,000
11. Painted crosswalk with pedestrian signalization - \$10,000
12. Painted crosswalks with signage - \$5,000
13. Painted crosswalks with signage - \$5,000
14. Painted crosswalks with signage - \$5,000
15. Painted crosswalks with signage - \$5,000
16. Examine possibility of one-way access to Sycamore Street from Knight Street to alleviate traffic congestion.

\*Unless other wise noted spot improvement costs do not include signage or repairs to existing facilities.



## Implementation Strategy

This document presents ideas and visions for future Downtown improvements. These projects are presented as spot improvements that may be accomplished as short term (1-2 years), medium term (3-5 years) projects or grouped into long term (6-15 years) corridor projects. This method allows the Town to take on projects as funding is acquired.

These improvements cannot come to fruition without successful public-private partnerships and a commitment to financing recommended projects.

Working with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) will be critical for State controlled corridors such as Sandhills Boulevard, Main Street and portions of South Street. Equally important will be working with local property and business owners, railroad companies, utility providers and local non-profits.

To successfully implement Downtown improvements, it will not only require cooperation between stakeholders but will rely on public support and development friendly policies.

The Town should refer to a recent North Carolina Main Streets report which presented data on Aberdeen in 2017 for direction and further recommendations related to what attracts Downtown property/business investment and what may drive patrons to Downtown shopping opportunities.

Town-led efforts to upgrade streets, parking opportunities and pedestrian facilities should be publicized and include public engagement in building ongoing interest in Downtown Aberdeen.

Potential revenue and positive economic impact results from encouraging Downtown entertainment such as art festivals, concerts, food and beverage sales, road races and other generators of traffic that will benefit Downtown retail sales and attract future residents.

It is recommended that the Town create a Private Use of Public Space policy that makes it clear and easy to approve a café, put out a sign board, install a canopy, put out sidewalk plants, find a spot for vending, busking etc. Such a policy supports the arts and culture that often characterize a vibrant Downtown atmosphere.

The Town should allocate a yearly budget towards growing the funds required to implement the recommended projects or to serve as future grant matching dollars.

Aberdeen should continue to work with the Downtown Aberdeen Improvement Task Force, Planning Department staff and other interdisciplinary professionals to vet projects, organize the public and select qualified designers.

This guide should be considered an evolving document and should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it is continuing to meet the needs of Aberdeen residents and Downtown businesses. An update of this plan should be completed in five years with a thorough update in ten years.





## Summary

Aberdeen remains a critical link in the economic prosperity of Moore County, North Carolina. Beginning with the establishment of Blue's Crossing in 1877 and later developing into an important hub for rail services, the area now known as Aberdeen offers businesses and residents a livable, and attractive place to settle.

The intent of this plan is to serve as a guide for achieving the Town's goals through attractive and practical streetscape design guidelines. Utilizing public input and analysis of existing conditions and past planning efforts; recommendations to improve the functionality and enhancement of streets, sidewalks, and public spaces within Downtown have been presented.

This Plan has examined the areas associated with pedestrian and vehicular traffic, Downtown businesses, art and dining. Areas of opportunity and a vision of future improvements have been presented. Potential design guidelines that Aberdeen should consider implementing are also provided. This guide should be considered an evolving document and should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it is continuing to meet the needs of Downtown merchants and residents of Aberdeen. Having a well-planned Downtown result in a more economically and environmentally sustainable future. An update of this plan should be completed in five years with a thorough update in ten years.

### Key Recommendations

- Re-imagine the intersection of Main Street and Poplar Street as a focal point in Downtown that highlights the Town's history through public art, well maintained building facades, and streetscape components.
- Construct public parking options in key locations shown in this plan to encourage economic development by allowing for better access for residents, visitors and employees of local businesses.
- Install public art within Downtown landscape areas (where possible)
- Encourage property owners to maintain or update building facades to historically appropriate standards.
- Develop the parking and spot improvements recommended by this plan in order to promote safer more convenient public spaces in Downtown.
- Create better connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods through sidewalk maintenance, expansion, wayfinding signage, landscaping and lighting.
- Consider expansion of the Downtown boundary to include more residential properties southeast of Downtown (within historic district) such as along South, Main, High and Maple Streets.
- Continue with efforts to develop parking and open space along Talbooth street to provide a more continuous streetscape environment for Downtown events.
- Consider developing a Farmers Market on Talbooth Street.
- Install attractive landscaping for the 'Y' property.





## Summary

### Key Recommendations Continued

- Install street trees along the Poplar Street gateway corridor.
- Encourage the continued development of upper-story housing units within existing Downtown buildings to enliven the Downtown area and extend hours of activity.
- Use common design elements to visually connect and identify the Downtown Area. Common themes include but are not limited to:
  - Brick accent pavers
  - Pedestrian lighting on Poplar, South, Talbooth, Knight and Maple Streets
  - Street furniture such as garbage cans and benches on Poplar, Talbooth and South Streets
  - Street trees with tree grates on Poplar, Talbooth, South Streets.
  - Use unique planters with a common design theme to complement the existing planters as seen on Main Street for all Downtown Streets.
- Update Main Street planted areas.
- Bury overhead utilities in Downtown and along gateway corridors
- Install traffic light mast arm poles in lieu of wires at unimproved intersections in Downtown and within gateway corridors.
- Update all Downtown sidewalks to meet current A.D.A. standards
- Implement additional recommendations made by the Downtown Aberdeen Task Force.
- Aberdeen should consider tax increment financing (TIF) or municipal service districts as a way to fund improvements within specific development districts or project areas within Town. Public improvements made with these types of financing strategies can lead to private investment and tax revenue increases for those improved properties.







Aberdeen

