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**City of Albemarle, NC**

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1 Overview & History

The Downtown Streetscape Master Planning process included three phases over a period of six months. The design team immersed themselves into the community, engaged the citizens of Albemarle, and produced the final streetscape master plan.

1.0: Project Overview

The downtown environment can be greatly enhanced by a streetscape plan that accounts for more than simply aesthetics. The plan must be developed with quality urban design, historic preservation, economic development and overall downtown revitalization in mind. This plan aims to bring best practices from around the country to the City of Albemarle in hopes of continuing to transform downtown into an exciting, vibrant place to live, work and play.
1.1: Past Efforts

The consultant team evaluated several previous planning studies which made recommendations related to the downtown environment. Brief synopses of each plan are found below noting relevant recommendations related to this streetscape master plan effort:

**HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES**

Chapter 3: Site Design
This chapter addresses parking/paving, sidewalks, awnings, fences/walls, and signs.

Key Takeaways:

- New development in the historic district should preserve significant trees or vegetation shall be preserved.
- Lighting the public realm is important and care should be given to ensure pedestrian-scaled fixtures and lights.
- Parking in Downtown should be to the rear of buildings or on the interior of a block so that a continuous building frontage is maintained/created.
- Pedestrian crossings should be clearly marked with an alternate material or striping.

Sidewalk displays, including sandwich boards, and outdoor dining are encouraged.

**HISTORIC WALKING TOUR OF DOWNTOWN ALBEMARLE**

This self-guided, one-mile tour was made possible by a collaboration between Stanly County Historical Society, Stanly County Museum, Stanly County Department of Public Health, Stanly County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Vac & Dash, and the Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation.

Points of interest along the tour are listed to the right.
Potential tenants to attract to downtown identified by a Leakage Study:
- Specialty Food
- Clothing
- Gifts
- Sporting Goods
- Full Service Dining (most important)

Recommended Initiatives:

1. Develop a Wayfinding Signage System
   a. Downtown Gateways
   b. Vehicular Trailblazer Signs
   c. Parking Signage
   d. Pedestrian Kiosks
2. Continue Pedestrian Enhancements
   a. Green Up the Downtown
   b. Stamped asphalt at major intersections and crosswalk
   c. Public Works Department Annual Improvement Projects
3. Create an Investor Package for Downtown
4. Launch a Community Branding and Marketing Campaign (complete)
5. Develop Catalyst Projects (?)
6. Pursue Recommendations of the Parking Study (?)

**Downtown PROGRESS REPORT (2014)**
Produced by ADDC

This plan is organized around the four areas of the Main Street Program: Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Restructuring. Design is the most relevant aspect of this study. Key takeaways include:

- **Goal:** Albemarle’s physical environment will be a signal to investors that the community is ready for revitalization and positioned for long-term investment.
- **Objective:** To show immediate improvements for existing and potential downtown stakeholders.
- **Strategy:** Downtown Beautification: Facilitate and advocate for the physical appearance of downtown Albemarle for renewed community pride and increased private investment.

**Relevant tasks:**
- Continue to work with City of Albemarle on safety issues
- Continue to work with Public Works on beautification of the downtown
- Review City ordinances and work on the Mayor’s Task Force to suggest changes for ordinances and regulations

**COUNCIL GOAL SESSION (JANUARY 6, 2015)**

Mayor and Council recently reviewed items concerning the Economic Development Plan; Business Development Task Force; City Council Retreat Report 2014; Master Plan 2009; Land Use Plan 2028; Parks, Recreation and Greenways Master Plan 2010; Pedestrian Plan and Bicycle Plan; and Safe Routes to Schools Action Plan.

It was determined that the top priorities of the Mayor and Council related to Downtown are:

1. Downtown Development
2. Downtown Housing
   - Central School
   - Albemarle Hotel
   - Residential Development
3. Investor Package Downtown
SECOND STREET STREETSCAPE
(MARCH 2015)
Produced by Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG)

This effort took a look at 2nd Street from Main Street to a block north of North Street.

Key Recommendations:
  • Replace Gingko street trees
  • Add more wayfinding/signage to the area
  • Upgrade the existing mid-block crosswalk at City Hall
  • Continue sidewalks and signage to the hospital
  • Renovate Courthouse Square Park
  • Convert angled parking to parallel parking and utilize the asphalt for bicycle accommodations

Counterclockwise from top right: Photosimulation of Second Street's Enhanced Mid-block Crosswalk and Conversion to Parallel Parking with the Addition of Bike Lanes; Plan View of Second Street Improvements; Photosimulation of Courthouse Square Park's Fountain Retrofit into Splash Pad

All imagery on this page courtesy of CCOG
**BRANDPRINT REPORT (2015)**
Produced by North Star Destination Strategies

This effort strives to determine Albemarle’s true, unique, and relevant brand position to aid the area in marketplace differentiation.

- **Differentiators:** Abundance of Natural Resources, Urban Core/Downtown Charm
- **Challenges:** Area lacks awareness and strong advocates, Appearance needs an upgrade, Aging Population, Lack of recreation related connectivity
- **Opportunities:** Capitalize on natural resources to enhance quality of life, economic development and tourism
- **Brand Platform:** For those looking for small town life with big character and room to grow the City of Albemarle, NC, just east of Charlotte, is blessed with an abundance of water—the source of all life and exceptional quality of life so your recreation is relaxing and your opportunities for prosperity are secured—now and into the future.

*Brandprint Report 2015*
New City Logo
Photo Credit: North Star Destination Strategies

*Examples of Branding Material for Downtown*
Photo Credit: North Star Destination Strategies
Summary of Public Input

Public input is about creating a meaningful dialogue during the design process. The Downtown Streetscape Master Plan reached over 700 citizens in the Albemarle community! The word we heard the most was POTENTIAL, indicating that Albemarle is a community with the knowledge they are not where they want to be but with the heart and drive to get there over time.

2.0: Public Process Overview

A combination of tools and events were used to reach the public during this process including:

- Online Survey (625 survey respondents)
- Social Media
- Focus Group Meetings (53 participants)
- Man on the Street Interviews (11 participants)
- Tactical Urbanism Event (50 participants)
- Open Design Studio (5 participants)
- Public Workshop (16 participants)

“There is no logic that can be superimposed on the city; people make it, and it is to them, not buildings, that we must fit our plans.”

— Jane Jacobs
2.1: Online Survey Results

Where in Albemarle do survey respondents live?

- 54% Live Inside the City Limits
- 46% Live Outside the City Limits

Where in Albemarle do survey respondents live?

- 54% Live Inside the City Limits
- 46% Live Outside the City Limits
Why do you live in Albemarle?
Top 3 Reasons Given

- **24%**
  Proximity to Family/Friends

- **17%**
  Originally from Albemarle

- **12%**
  Employment Opportunities
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

When friends and family visit, do you take them to Downtown Albemarle?

60%
Declining

21%
Stable

18%
Improving

1%
Thriving

How often do most people visit, shop or eat in Downtown Albemarle?

Once a Month
Top 3 Requested New Businesses

- Family Sit-Down Restaurants
- Live Entertainment Venue
- Movie Theater

Retail & Restaurants Scored “Middle of the Road” for Quality
90% of Respondents Feel Safe Walking in Downtown but over 50% of Respondents Feel Downtown Needs to be Easier to Navigate as a Pedestrian with Improved Signage & Crosswalks
What is the most important streetscape element?

Respondents also value...

- On Street Parking
- Vegetation and Flowers
- Public Gathering Spaces
- Street Trees
Type of Seating Respondents Would Like to See in Downtown Albemarle...It’s movable!

Do you like the current street trees?

- 60% Like the Street Trees
- 40% Don’t Like the Street Trees
Describe Downtown Albemarle in One Word...
2.2: Visual Preference Survey Results

Participants in both the Tactical Urbanism Event and the Public Workshop took a look at other downtowns across the country to see what best practices they’d like to see in Albemarle. And the winners are...

- Bicycle Facilities
- Transit Stops
- Crosswalks
- Lighting
- Mid Block Crossing
- Outdoor Dining
- Benches
- Paving
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

Planters

Street Trees

Empty Storefronts

Public Art

Tree Wells

Signage/Wayfinding
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

Things around downtown that folks think aren't working today...

Things around downtown that folks like...
2.3: **Focus Group Meetings & Interviews**

The following ideas and opinions were recorded during focus group meetings with invited individuals determined by the City of Albemarle. These thoughts may not directly reflect the majority’s opinion. A complete list of recorded thoughts can be found in the appendix of this document.

**TOURISM**
- Morrow Mountain State Park & Outdoor Amenities #1 Attraction to Area (479,000 visitors in 2014)
- Market Station.Asset but perceived disconnect between location and downtown.
- Need space for turnkey events plus a visitor’s center in downtown.
- Baseball/Softball Tourism_New Facility Coming
- Restaurants and retail downtown would help tourism.
- Play music downtown to add ambiance.
- Need free wi-fi downtown.
- Current issues with poor tree canopy, need for public art, outdoor seating and improved crosswalks.
- Running/Biking events in downtown draw visitors.
- Theater needed in Downtown.
- Historic walking tour attracts visitors.
- Precedent communities: Asheville, Asheboro, Brevard, Chattanooga, Greenville, SC
- Farmer’s Market, Halloween, Christmas events bring people downtown.
- Pfieffer University may be an untapped tourism driver.
- Potential downtown hotel renovation would provide a unique experience from current offerings outside of the city.
- Planning and Zoning: Revise Food/Alcohol ratio.
- Connections to amenities, the approach to downtown and key gateway improvements would enhance tourism.

**OWNERSHIP**
- Desire for an “average joe” checklist. Explanation of forms and where to go.
- Building rehab is perceived as difficult and costly.
- ADDC facade, landscaping and sign grants available-need to advertise more.
- More Communication between City and Owners Needed
- Sprinkling a building is cost prohibitive for upper floor housing.
- County should participate in partnerships.
- Streets are nice; buildings are deteriorating.
- Property values are down.
- Need entrepreneurs.
- Businesses close down daily 5-6ish. Mondays are closed, Wednesdays close at noon. Not open long on Saturdays…really nothing is open on weekend.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**
- Ginkgos, hollies and maples all installed in the 1990s
- String lights in trees began 6 years ago.
- Baskets/urns maintained by street division (provided through a grant through CCCOG)
- Benches: 10-15 years old…painted trash cans 8 years ago.
- 2011 Festival Circuits Installed
- Currently replacing some lighting fixtures around downtown.
- NCDOTped counts installed in last 3-4 years.
- Need to Complete the loop for decorative tees.
- Brick pavers in sidewalk are the location where conduit runs. (row lock)
- NCDOT open to any facility within reasons.
- Stormwater system installed in 1939…planned for 5 year storm.
- Angled parking is tough to handle…safety issue.
- Fire: Main Street is east/west corridor for 2 of 3 locations. Closed downtown location.
- Police: Main Street location with foot patrol downtown.
- Little to no vandalism.
• Sweeping fruit is maintenance issue...“deballing” the ginkgos to be proactive.
• Utilities are dated and messy underground.
• Major communication lines 1st and 2nd street and Main.

PLANNING & ZONING
• Housing is allowed in CBD.
• Considering a Unified Development Code
• City often blamed or confused with County enforced regulations.
• City is proactive about pursuing new ventures: Central School, Lillian Mills examples.
• ADDC provides consultation for new businesses.
• Business plan with Stanly County Community College available.
• Several conversion of houses to offices in downtown area.
• Broadened sign ordinance... wayfinding included.
• Need new construction with a vision and investment
• Divided lanes with small planted medians (re-allocate ROW)
• Strategic widening of sidewalks to allow outdoor seating
• Ginkgos-mixed feelings but inappropriate for downtown

MEETING OF THE MILLENNIALS
• Surrounding downtown housing is perceived as affordable to this generation.
• Surrounding natural amenities are big draw for millennials.
• Enjoy slower pace and quality of life in Albemarle.
• Biking is a big draw; more facilities needed.
• Would like to see extended shop hours, sidewalk sales and store with men’s clothing.
• Need gateway signage on the arterials.

• Need a balance of between night life and family oriented restaurants
• Would like to see better communication, outreach, advertisement etc.
• Need a place to congregate, public space with movable furniture
• Live music/entertainment venue
• Would like to see transit options
• Entrepreneurial generation: cost of rehabbing buildings in downtown prevents them from opening businesses.
• “Tailgators” in Locust would consider opening a second location in downtown Albemarle.
• Love the addition of food trucks and want even more added.
• Desire for memory making events for families.
• Need pedestrian buttons at major intersections with countdowns.
• More mid-block crosswalks and better signage at existing one
• Angled parking unsafe.
• Terrain makes walking difficult
• Ginkgo’s need to go!
• Bulb out with nice landscaping at major intersections
• Tree lights are great
• Put local artwork or advertising in vacant windows
• Flexible public art opportunities.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION
• Historic District Walking Tour-self
• Albemarle Hotel Redevelopment
• Central School rehab is a positive.
• Relocate Stanly County Museum to City Hall Annex
• Commercial Maintenance Code coming soon to help with historic properties allowed to decline.
• West Main old cinema only facade left.
• Old livery stable and old bus station site needs rehab.
• Celebrate Historic Figures and Celebrity Connections. Examples: Patton has been to Albemarle. WWII bomb assembly occurred here. Jimmy Carter was here in 1975 while running for president. Kellie Pickler lived/ worked here.
• Desire to rehab historic community theater.
• Stames is a destination business reflecting Albemarle’s hayday.
• Up-light the abandoned silos...various colored lights.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
• Downtown identifying which buildings can be developed...partnering to develop buildings, office job or retail, types of infrastructure to attract industry.
• Short on industrial buildings to attract business.
• Infrastructure improvements.
• Parks and rec investing in facilities that will draw folks.
• Smaller restaurants downtown craft brewery or microbrewery. Small business center working to strengthen entrepreneurship. Small businesses need an incubator space.
• Free business plans...seminars or one on one counseling available. A gathering on the first Tuesday of every month for networking of small businesses.
• City is collaborating with Electricities study on commercial. Target areas and leakage. Home grown businesses. County review process, health inspectors, gives alternatives to business prospects.
• Historic Hotel Rehab Moving Forward
• Schools were once greatest resource.
• Missing community. Negative attitudes are detrimental.
• Helpful to communicate with regional and statewide groups.
• Business Breakfast Series
• Restoration vs. Renovation? Different Standard? Taking building back to original state may be more possible.
A FEW THOUGHTS FROM STREET INTERVIEWS

- Commercial and Residential: Chicken and the Egg
  - Redevelop commercial or build residential?
  - Store hours need to extend
  - Retiree community
- Branding/Identity Needed
- Building Code – too expensive to renovate/bring structures up to code
  - Need tax incentives
  - Could selectively renovate in downtown Albemarle then build new construction
- Incubator spaces needed for small businesses to kick-start
- Create a vision with avenues for the people
  - Inspire creativity
  - Passionate people who want to succeed
  - Find the right people to execute
- Local businesses keep the small, mill town feel that created Albemarle
- Element of conservation with some residents
  - Not open to change
  - Attitude creates stagnant market
  - Stuck in the retail based downtown of 1960s
- Due to the continuous restaurant failures and high vacancy rate, new business owners are too scared to start.
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

Imagery from Street Interviews
2.4: Tactical Urbanism Event

As part of the public outreach process, the design team utilized a tactical urbanism event during Albemarle’s Annual Craft Fair at Market Station. The event took place on Saturday, October 24th from 8AM to 12PM.

The idea of an event like this is to illustrate that it doesn’t take a great deal of money or time to make a huge impact on the public realm. A parklet was constructed in an empty parking space using pallets and cinder blocks. While those ingredients may not sound appealing, with a little creativity, the team and Albemarle’s Public Works Department transformed a once empty space into a unique public parklet full of life! There were places to sit, places to draw and places to play. Two six foot tall chalkboards urged people to identify those things they love about Albemarle and those things that could use some improvement.

The visual preference boards were available for feedback along with the word cloud bubbles. Around 50 people participated in the event. Hopefully, the effort inspired a few to do some tactical urbanism of their own!

A temporary crosswalk was drawn using sidewalk chalk across Main Street to facilitate safer pedestrian movement from the parking area into Market Station.

The City also coordinated a food truck to be on-site as part of the event. Food trucks, while temporary, can help bring life to the area, particularly when partnered with other activities. A food truck currently visits downtown Albemarle a few times a week and has become extremely popular.
Imagery from Albemarle’s First Tactical Urbanism Event
WHAT IS POP-UP RETAIL?

The original purpose was to “promote the temporary use of vacant retail space or lots.” However, “companies large and small, property owners, artists, and community organizations quickly adopted and calibrated the concept for a wide range of purposes... becoming a sanctioned community revitalization technique.” - Tactical Urbanism Guide

WHAT ARE EXAMPLES?
- food truck
- lemonade stand
- farmer’s market
- clothing stand
- homemade crafts like jewelry

WHO ARE THE LEADERS?
- developers
- local entrepreneurs
- artists
- corporations

WHY TRY IT?
- local incubator
- low-cost pilot
- retail to become permanent if successful

WHERE CAN IT BE DONE?
- vacant store fronts
- oversized parking lots
- underutilized public spaces

ENCOURAGING POP UP RETAIL & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

At the tactical event, the team had a booth set up illustrating the concepts of Pop Up Retail. The City of Albemarle desires to have an “Open for Business” sign on their front door. Small business owners are the heart and soul of a downtown, and the city can encourage entrepreneurship by allowing and facilitating this with incubator space. This can be a temporary stand, food truck or kiosk that disappears at the end of the day, or it may evolve into a more permanent space in a storefront that rotates seasonally.
**What is PopUp Providence?**
PopUp Providence is an award-winning, urban place-making program that introduces interactive, artistic and cultural displays and interventions throughout the City’s 25 neighborhoods. The program supports quick, temporary and inexpensive interventions that engage residents, workers and visitors of all ages, and enliven the city.

**How is PopUp Providence funded?**
The Providence Redevelopment Agency dedicated $150,000 for the program, in October 2013, in the amount of $50,000/year, for a period three years (2013-2015).

**What qualifies as a PopUp?**
Installations must fall within one of the following categories:

- PopUp PLAYSPACE: Indoor or outdoor, recreation or activity-based, projects that promote physical interaction.
- PopUp PARKLET: On-street parking spaces that are repurposed for public space.
- PopUp ART: A display of any artistic medium that is appropriate for a public setting, and directly responds to the community in which it is located.
- PopUp SHOP: Vacant storefronts that are re-purposed for community, retail or commercial purposes.
- PopUp AMENITY: Enhancements to the public realm, for exclusive use by the public (e.g., seating, landscaping, bicycle parking, lighting).

**Who can apply for this program?**
Any member of the public, including individuals, arts groups, neighborhood associations, institutions, community groups and non-profits. Applicants must be 18 years of age or older at the time the application is submitted.

**What are the general requirements of the program?**

- Installations must be created for use and enjoyment by all members of the public, and must remain publicly-accessible at all times.
- Installations must relate to the neighborhood, serve and reflect the community, and activate and enhance the site.
- Applicants must construct and install the project within 3 months of receiving grant award.
- Applicants must maintain the project in a state of good repair.
- Applicants must operate the project, if operation is required.
- Applicant is responsible for at least 20% of total project costs. The PRA will provide up to 80% of project costs, not to exceed $10,000 per project.
- Applicants must obtain Comprehensive General Liability insurance of $1,000,000.

**CASE STUDY: POP UP PROVIDENCE**
Article Credit: Greater City Providence, an organization that promotes the growth and development of the Greater Providence, RI, region in an urban pattern as possible.
2.5: Open Studio & Public Workshop

On October 26th, the City held a day long open design studio in the Community Room of City Hall along with an evening workshop to solicit input from the community. Citizens stopped by during the day to chat with the design team, learn about the process and offer their vision for Downtown.

On the same day, an evening workshop included the visual preference survey, word cloud questions, and a presentation illustrating best practices of successful downtowns across the nation. Then, the audience broke out into small groups for a table mapping exercise. The questions asked are found to the right and a consolidated public input map is found on page 29.

- Identify key blocks within the study area that need public investment with a PURPLE marker. (within the public right of way) What types of streetscape enhancements would you like to see in these areas?
- Identify key blocks that need private investment with a RED marker. (individual buildings are appropriate) What types of uses do you see in these buildings in addition to general façade improvements?
- What are your favorite destinations in downtown Albemarle? Mark with a STAR STICKER. Create a written list as well for the group.
- Identify the key intersections that need additional beautification and pedestrian safety measures with GREEN circles. Identify key gateways to Downtown with a BLUE circle! Brainstorm ideas of needed elements!
- Identify the significant public spaces/parks with GREEN DOTS. Is there a need for other types of public spaces or describe any changes to existing spaces that you think would make them more functional?
Compilation Map from Community Workshop
**Conversations Happening Around the Table**

**What types of streetscape enhancements would you like to see in the public right of way?**
- Planters
- Sculptures
- Murals
- Pocket parks (well lit)
- Lighting – buildings with lights and string lights across the street
- Light the greenway
- Mid-block crosswalks
- Art as consistent icon of Albemarle – painted bears in Hendersonville or painted pianos in Salisbury
- Street trees that create a canopy or enclosure
- Infill development – redevelop parcels and renovate vacant buildings
- Noticeable signs at city limits

**What are your favorite destinations in downtown Albemarle?**
- Glory Beans
- Second Street Sundries
- La-T-Dah
- Off the Square
- Courthouse Square – food trucks, music, professional photos
- Library
- Albemarle Music Store – train display upstairs
- Starnes Jewelers – vacant opera house upstairs
- Albemarle Sweet Shop
- Donut Dinette
- Falling Rivers Gallery
- The Goody Shop
- Consigning Kids
- Market Station
- First Lutheran Church
- First Baptist Church
- First Presbyterian Church
- Central United Methodist Church
- City Hall
- Vac & Dash
- The Stanly News and Press
- GHA Autism Supports Administration
- Music on Main
- Uwharrie Bank
- Liberty Gardens – geo-gardening, events, ceremonial space
- Pawn shop
- Bakery
- Oriental shop
- Printers
- Banks

**What are some changes to existing green spaces that you think would make them more functional?**
- Clean-up creek and make the surrounding flood plain into a park
- Dog park
- Splash pad/play fountain
- Re-use fire station
- Connect and enhance greenway
- Create public spaces for people to spill into while or after using adjacent shops
- Courtyard style parks – opportunity behind Music on Main

**Other comments:**
- Difficult to make the wide streets feel homely
- Are trees the right place to start? The conditions of the vacant buildings are more worrisome.
- Hire consultant to analyze and categorize individual trees for their health
- Fear that the state won’t allow mid-block crosswalks
**WORDLE 1**
Name **ONE** thing that would add more beauty to Downtown.

**WORDLE 2**
What would bring you to Downtown Albemarle more often?

**What is a Wordle?**
A wordle is a summary graphic illustrating the answers received to the questions posed. The more time an answer is given, the larger the word appears.
WORDLE 3

Why do you come to downtown Albemarle?
WORDLE 4
Name **ONE GOAL** this plan should achieve for downtown Albemarle.
3 Metrics of Successful Downtowns

“...it’s all about the pedestrian and how many amenities — from housing to restaurants to work — the average citizen can get to on foot...they’re part of a real town...”

How Childress Klein is adapting development to work-force trends July 4, 2014 Charlotte Business Journal

3.0: How is Good Urbanism Measured?

In a world where public funding is becoming more and more limited, capital projects have to bring a significant return on investment. We know that more and more people want to work in a walkable environment; it is not enough anymore to have a nice office building. People are seeking meaningful places...authentic spaces where they can live, work and play. Employers are using great places for recruitment and retention purposes. In turn, a diversity of employment opportunities in a downtown equals patrons to restaurants and retail.
“A vision is not a forecast, but a strategy to preserve the best options.”

Robert Grow, Envision Utah

Through research and experience, we have found that there are essential elements that help create successful downtown environments. In combination, these elements yield measurable performance indicators of success. We know it is not enough to simply get the design right; implementation and management are key to creating an environment where patrons want to spend money and time.

The old adage “if you build it they will come” is true only if you have good code and good design bones in place along with proper management. The product of a successful downtown environment is more employment, diverse population, higher sales per square foot, and overall positive economic development for a community.
3.1: Design Elements

Design Elements that contribute to successful downtown environments include:

- **Short Blocks & Dense Street Network:** This element is centered around people not cars; cars do not care how often there is an intersection. The average block length between cross-streets should be shorter in a downtown environment because it feels more pedestrian in scale. It also means shorter distances between shops and creates a coherent network.

- **On-Street Parking:** This element provides a one ton safety barrier between moving cars and pedestrians. Ground floor retail also requires convenient parking to be successful. Retail will not survive without it; patrons see cars parked on the street as a signal of activity and a need to slow down and take a look. On-street parking also provides friction for moving traffic and provides an inherent traffic calming element.

- **Continuous Frontage:** This element keeps pedestrians and bicyclists interested while traveling along the street. Research has proven that people are more likely to keep walking along a continuous frontage to see what is beyond. One dead block can create a barrier to success. The key is getting one good block at a time.

- **Enclosure of Street:** The ratio of building height to street width is more than simply a planning principle. It manages shade and sun in a downtown environment—a key comfort element for pedestrians. This ratio varies based on right-of-way width, and where appropriate building height cannot be achieved, trees can help contain the street.
3.2: Implementation & Management Issues

Implementation of design features and management of the spaces and activities in a downtown contribute directly to the overall success of the place. Some keys include:

- **Quality & Diversity of Public Space:** Public space is a top requested element in downtowns. It is not enough to simply have one park or civic gathering space. Spaces of varying sizes programmed for a diversity of events are necessary for overall event success and energy.

- **Keys to Parking:** The key to parking in a downtown environment is that location needs to be considered over quantity. It is all about management. Parking problems are a good thing and mean that people are spending time and money in your downtown. This is an issue that needs to be re-evaluated every three to four years.
Residential population within a walkable distance to downtown is one of those performance measures that actually often comes before many of the other design and implementation elements. Albemarle is fortunate to have quality housing within a half mile of Main Street. The other elements shown below are good measures of the success of a downtown environment. All of these feed and complement one another. In addition, other key performance measures include:

- **Daytime Employment:** Total employment population in Downtown as a percent of the overall community employment.
- **Commercial Activity:** Sales per square foot should be higher than in the suburban areas of the community.
- **Pedestrian Activity:** Density of pedestrian activity on Main Street is a key indicator of success.

Active Ground Floor Uses: Being a pedestrian is about two things... the journey and the destination. Activating the ground floor of buildings in your downtown is something that can be incorporated into the code. As humans, we have a sense of fear that can prevent us from continuing a journey if triggered by a dead space or boarded up facade.

Ambient Illumination: Lighting in a downtown is about both safety and interest. This is another element that can be coded in a downtown environment. There are different zones of lighting: the lighting of storefronts, lighting of the general pedestrian pathway, and street lighting.

Hours of Operation: Twenty-five percent of retail sales happen after 5 o’clock in the afternoon. The coordination of store hours ensures a more predictable environment for the potential shoppers. The object is to create an environment about selling things where people want to spend time.

Clustering: Restaurants in a downtown are a key component to creating the destination. One restaurant won’t do as well as four because when you have a cluster of options, people go to the area and have choices.
Understanding the existing conditions of Downtown Albemarle is a key step in the process of its eventual evolution. Streetscape elements were documented and evaluated, and a walking tour evaluation of the street character revealed high priority blocks that require improvement in the future.

4.0: Analysis Overview

The study area is bounded by Market Station to the west and Five Points to the east with First, Second and Third Streets as north/south axes perpendicular to Main. The team needed to gain the full picture of opportunities and constraints within the study area in order to provide meaningful recommendations. Albemarle is a City with great bones, and this analysis serves as a way to highlight what is working and what may need some improvement.
4.1: Existing Streetscape Conditions

One idea became evident throughout this process: the general consensus is that improving facades in the area will help improve the downtown’s success and appearance. While this is a valid point, this plan seeks to identify those investments necessary between the building facades that can make a huge impact on the walkability and sense of place in the area.

Noteworthy Existing Conditions:

- Downtown Albemarle’s street system is characterized by a traditional grid with north/south blocks twice as long as wide.
- The current planting scheme includes maples, ginkgos, and hollies. Seasonal hanging baskets and various container plantings are placed throughout the downtown.
- The lighting is focused on the street at a height that is between a traditional street light and a pedestrian-scaled light.
- Brick banding is found running parallel to the sidewalk direction typically down the center of the pathway.
- Some intersections have brick paver corners, and two pedestrian signals are in the core area—at Main and First and at Main and Second.
- Nineteen benches and fifteen trash receptacles are scattered throughout the downtown area.
Utilizing best practices, the team evaluated the downtown core from a qualitative viewpoint looking at a variety of key factors from successful downtowns. These include ground floor activity and quality of the pedestrian environment. Quantitative analysis was also performed looking at streetscape elements and their locations including trees, benches, and trash receptacles.

These diagrams directly inform the resulting streetscape master plan and phasing strategy for the City of Albemarle.
This diagram illustrates the evaluation of ground floor activity on a scale from completely inactive to highly active. Successful downtowns have highly active ground floor uses which help create an intriguing pedestrian friendly environment and encourages shopping, walking and dining. This exercise reveals that as the downtown evolves over time, a great deal of effort will need to be placed on activating the core blocks of downtown. One could argue that active ground floor uses have the most impact on the quality of a place.
This diagram is a qualitative assessment of the character of the streets within the downtown core. The principles that guide this exercise are all about the pedestrian experience. Downtown's grid system and tight-knit fabric of development is inherently walkable; however, the success of the downtown hinges on the quality of the journey along the streets and sidewalks.
This diagram illustrates a “man on the street” assessment of the stability of a property related to development. Firm properties are assumed to be unlikely to change; this can be assumed by either the building itself have intrinsic value, the property having a civic structure on it, or an open business that isn’t likely to go away. Ripe properties are ready for a new beginning; they are often empty parcels, parking areas or areas for sale. The “opportunity” sites are somewhere in between these two descriptions; they may currently have buildings or functioning businesses; however, they present an opportunity for redevelopment into a higher and better use. Sometimes the buildings can stay in these situations and sometimes a complete redevelopment of the parcel needs to occur.
This diagram highlights the major property owners within the downtown core. Ownership in many downtowns is extremely fragmented making larger redevelopment scenarios often difficult. Albemarle has several key opportunities created by common ownership that can transform entire blocks with a shared vision.
The following four diagrams are a quantitative assessment of street trees, trash bins, benches and pedestrian signals around downtown Albemarle.
STREET FURNITURE & TREES
DIAGRAM - BLOCK 2

- maple trees
- ginkgo trees with fruit
- holly trees
- trash bins
- benches
- ped signal

0 100 200 Feet
STREET FURNITURE & TREES
DIAGRAM - BLOCK 4

- maple trees
- ginkgo trees with fruit
- holly trees
- trash bins
- benches
- ped signal

0 100 200
feet

N

E MAIN ST

E NORTH ST

N THIRD ST

N SECOND ST
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5.0: Master Plan Overview

The master plan provides detailed recommendations for the following streetscape elements:

- Furnishings
- Paving
- Lighting
- Plantings
- Alleyscaping
- Public Art
- Signage
- Civic Spaces
- Downtown Gateways
- Bicycle Accommodations
- Window Shopping

The key is low cost, high impact projects along with stabilizing, long-term infrastructure. Great downtowns encourage people to stroll, to gather, to shop, to exercise and to meet each other on the street.
5.1: Streetscape Elements

The map on page 73 illustrates the overall streetscape vision for Downtown Albemarle. The detailed recommendations of that plan are outlined in this section.

5.1.1 Furnishings

Furnishings in Downtown Albemarle are somewhat dated and misplaced or completely lacking in some areas.

**Recommendations:** Benches should be situated so they face buildings when placed near the curb. Benches should also be placed against buildings to create more of a conversation atmosphere. Groupings of benches often work better than single benches spaced farther apart. Upgrading these public furnishings is a key aesthetic change but also affects the overall comfort and image of the entire downtown area.

A key addition to the furnishings palette is movable seating. Restaurants often provide this type of seating for their patrons; however, the city should consider placing movable seating in other public spaces and various areas within the downtown. The minimum width of a sidewalk to accommodate comfortable outdoor seating is fourteen feet from curb to building face. Most sidewalks in downtown Albemarle are around twelve feet in width. This simply means that the seating will not be as deep and consideration of spot opportunities to do bulb outs with protected seating areas should be investigated.

Trash receptacle design should coordinate with the styling of the benches, and the City should consider this upgrade as an opportunity to introduce recycling into the downtown environment. Combination receptacles are becoming commonplace in urban settings.

Bike racks should also correlate with other furnishings in Downtown, and the style should provide a two point connection for cyclists so that bikes are parked parallel to the road when locked.

Whimsical transit shelters may become more useful as area transit (SCUSA) increases service to downtown. Key locations for future transit shelters are identified in the master plan.

The slopes in the area are also conducive to terraced seating or decking as an alternative to public furniture. An example of this can be found in photosimulation 5.4.4 later in this chapter.
5.1.2 PAVING

The streetscape’s current paving includes mostly brick and concrete. The brick banding found throughout the downtown is a nice accent and functional place to run conduit. The brick corner accents at intersections add beauty and shorten crossings for pedestrians and are keys to overall safety and walkability.

**Recommendations:** The Square at the intersection of Main and Second Street should be celebrated for its historic significance; perhaps a nod to the original paving style on Main Street would be appropriate. See the photosimulation for this concept on page 79. (5.4.1)

Crosswalks need to be enhanced in this location, but all major intersections within the core should be considered for improvement. Providing curb extensions on key corners to shorten the crossing distance and adding paving enhancements is another ingredient to the paving strategy for Albemarle. These locations are identified in the overall master plan and include several mid-block crossings.

Permeable pavers should also be considered as an alternative to traditional concrete in the sidewalk areas. Permeable pavers allow water to infiltrate, aiding not only in stormwater management but also provide a natural water source for trees and other nearby plantings.
5.1.3 LIGHTING

The current street lights have a nice appearance, but the challenge is that they are at a height that straddles the line between being a true street light and a true pedestrian-scaled fixture.

**Recommendations:** The plan recommends investigating retrofitting the existing lampposts to include a pedestrian-scaled fixture casting light directly onto the sidewalk.

Buildings without storefronts around downtown should consider adding a matching wall-mounted fixture to the buildings at regular intervals to cast light directly onto the sidewalk. The building lights could be a public-private partnership, but care should be given to not have a situation that is creating glare on any nearby storefront windows. This type of mounted fixture should also be introduced into alleyways around downtown.

A more invasive alternative is to introduce a standalone pedestrian scale fixture as appropriate particularly at intersections and other key pedestrian locations throughout the core.

The white lights on the street trees are a huge contributor to the ambiance in downtown, and their use year round should continue. Other locations can benefit from string lighting as well. You will see the introduction of string lights in alleyways converted to public plazas in the photosimulation section of this chapter. (5.4.4)
5.1.4 PLANTINGS

The existing street trees include a variety of species. Many trees in downtown are in poor health, and the root area currently allotted is extremely small. The issue of street tree selection was evenly split in the public’s opinion with some preferring the existing trees and others hoping for new species to be selected through this process. Trees planted in pits with little thought given to their well-being don’t typically thrive and sometimes only last around a decade before requiring replacement.

The scale of the baskets and containers is currently smaller than appropriate in an urban setting. Some areas within downtown have overgrown shrubbery that does not enhance the beauty of Albemarle.

Recommendations:

5.1.4.1 Trees

Trees need to be seen as a **TOP TIER** public investment. The core value of trees in a downtown setting is they not only provide the obvious elements of shade and beauty but also inherently increase public safety by reducing speeds and creating safer experiences for pedestrians. They also help reduce greenhouse gases and directly enhance air quality in urban areas where tailpipe emissions are inherently higher. Research has also proven the impact trees have on our mental and emotional state as human beings. Dan Burden wrote a brilliant paper entitled “Urban Street Trees: 22 Benefits Specific Applications” that the City of Albemarle should use as a reference tool moving forward.

The current tree wells are insufficient for the growth of mature, lasting street trees. To keep costs down, retrofitting the current tree wells by cutting out the concrete is going to be key to tree survival. This plan recommends creating 4’ x 7’ openings. Improving the soil in these locations is pertinent as well.

The **ginkgo trees** have pros and cons, but this plan recommends the replacement of this species over time. Some of the trees have done better than others, but we do not believe that ginkgos provides an appropriate canopy in an urban setting. While they do have urban tolerance, their form misses the mark for creating the enclosure desired. The fruit drop on several of the trees has also been a
the brick banding. Rebuild this area with structural soil that is more conducive to root health and growth. Replace paving with permeable pavers that allow water to percolate into the root zone. This would not only increase the viability of Albemarle’s street trees but also be a low impact stormwater intervention for the downtown area.

The holly trees found along Main Street and parts of South Street are not a particularly successful street tree choice. This plan recommends their removal and replacement with a more appropriate species. During this replacement, the tree wells need to increase in size to a minimum of 4’ x 7’ with consideration taken as to the level of intervention affordable to the City. If possible, removal of the concrete between the curb and the brick banding should be considered and structural soil put in place as outlined under “intense intervention”.

The maple trees are a nice street tree selection but the health of the current trees is unfortunately very poor. The plan suggests increasing the tree well dimension by cutting out the concrete, aerating the soil upon hardscape removal, and placing the trees on a health program that includes regular fertilization and care. Alternatively, they could be replaced with another species in a properly sized tree pit.

**Final Thoughts About Trees:**
We recommend planting street trees that have a minimum of 3.5” caliper at the time of planting. Proper size at installation will better ensure long-term health and achieve a more aesthetic canopy sooner. Starting with a nice size tree is another piece of the survival puzzle. Trees are resilient; however, in a downtown setting, they need more care and attention because of the stress they endure. Dedicating resources to overall tree health will pay off dividends in the beauty of downtown Albemarle and can eventually enhance economic development.
5.1.4.2 Hanging Baskets and Containers

The baskets utilized on the street lights should be a minimum of 28” diameter. We also recommend two baskets on each pole. New fabrication techniques also make container plantings lower maintenance by utilizing self-watering techniques.

Understanding the Importance of Soil Volume and Crown Spread: The plan recommends the use of structural soil to increase the overall soil volume available to street trees.

Image Source: Casey Trees
5.1.4.3 “Vegetation Edit”
Areas in the downtown need to utilize plantings for aesthetic improvements, but the City must be careful not to block views into public spaces or buildings. There are several publicly-owned locations that require pruning and/or a simplification of the current planting palette. Often, trading out dated or overgrown shrubbery for a combination of dwarf ornamental grasses with perennial/annual mixes for color can make a huge impact on the visual appeal of downtown.

Examples around Downtown Albemarle that Need a “Vegetation Edit”
5.1.5 ALLEYSCAPING

Alleys are a key component to a functional downtown. They are often the places reserved for unsightly, yet functional aspects of city life. Relegating them to this utilitarian status can often be a missed opportunity.

**Recommendations:** Several key alleys around downtown would benefit from a makeover. This is not simply an aesthetics argument but also one of safety. The city should enhance them with lighting, art, vegetation and functional seating depending on their use. Improving the alleys does not always mean removing the cars, but it is about creating a multi-modal environment where cars, people and bikes can coexist.

Cities to glean alleyscaping strategies from include:

- San Francisco, CA
- Longmont, CO
- Seattle, WA
- Chicago, IL
- Detroit, MI
- Fort Collins, CO

*Take a detailed look at how San Francisco handles their alley improvements!*

http://www.sfbetterstreets.org/find-project-types/reclaiming-roadway-space/living-alleys/

5.1.6 PUBLIC ART

Interest and intrigue are key elements of the pedestrian experience. Public art as part of a streetscape offers the opportunity for Albemarle to establish an identifiable and unique character. With the native talent of the community, finding a variety of art forms and themes should be an achievable task.

Recommendations: Develop a community art master plan which identifies opportunities for building murals, sculpture and other forms of creative thinking.
5.1.7 SIGNAGE
The recently completed branding strategy addresses styling of decorative and wayfinding signage in the downtown area. However, this is only one layer of signage in a downtown environment.

Recommendations: The key to signage as a placemaking tool is adding another layer to this basic signage package. Allowing the use of creative business signage including sandwich boards, hanging signs perpendicular to the building facade and highlighting key gateways to the downtown with appropriate signage all add to the success of a downtown’s signage program.

Also, the simple replacement of the street signs in the downtown core will make a huge impact on the feeling of the area. Street signs should be enhanced versions of the standard with a different color background appropriate for a historic district.

Recent updates to the sign ordinance make ideas like these possible. The existing signage grants should be promoted and creativity should be encouraged. Those businesses in downtown that are currently using hand-written cardboard signage in store windows should be encouraged to remove and/or replace those signs. The Commercial Maintenance Code recently adopted may take care of this outstanding issue.
5.1.8 CIVIC SPACES
This plan strives to transform the streets themselves into dynamic public spaces as another layer of the downtown experience. Larger public spaces including parks and plazas in downtown Albemarle include Courthouse Square Park, Liberty Gardens and Market Station. These have the potential to be key gathering places and part of the real identity of downtown.

Recommendations: As mentioned in the planting section, a landscape edit needs to occur in these spaces paying particular attention to the balance of transparency and enclosure. They should feel like a respite from the bustling street; however, they need to be planted in such a way that exhibits safety and welcomingness.

Urban parks and plazas need a few key elements to ensure success. The Project for Public Spaces has identified four categories to analyze the success of a place. They include sociability, uses and activities, access and linkages, plus comfort and image.

The most critical component currently missing from Albemarle’s public spaces is movable seating. A visit to any vibrant downtown will reveal a variety of seating styles and choices.

The plan also makes recommendations about other potential civic spaces within the downtown study area. Please refer to the master plan diagram for these locations.

Don’t forget that public spaces don’t have to be costly or complicated. Take the lessons learned from the Tactical Urbanism event to test ideas out before investing a ton of money. Public spaces should be fun!
WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?

Image Source: Project for Public Spaces

CAN YOU IMAGINE THIS AT THE CORNER OF SECOND AND NORTH STREET?
5.1.9 DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

Visitors to Albemarle currently do not receive visual cues that give them a sense of arrival and signify the beginning of the approach into the core. Traffic funneling into downtown from outsiders is mostly from the south and west, while the eastern edge receives more local traffic.

Recommendations: The plan identifies three gateways into the downtown area. One from the west, one from the east and one from the south (identified on the master plan). These gateways will need to combine many of the design concepts already mentioned in this chapter.

The paving, including crosswalks and central intersection areas, should be improved. Lighting and signage should signal the entrance into downtown, and the form of development should complement the gateway.

A variety of seating should be provided, and landscaping should be enhanced with seasonal color. Gateways make wonderful locations for civic art displays as well.

All three potential gateways have opportunities for new development. The City should ensure buildings are built close to the street and have appropriate fenestration.
5.1.10 BICYCLE FACILITIES
Albemarle has a tremendous bicycling, walking and running population. Many of the design elements discussed thus far contribute to the overall pedestrian experience. Bicycles require on street facilities, and add yet another layer of the multi-modal downtown experience of Albemarle.

Recommendations: The streetscape master plan recommends both shared and dedicated bicycle facilities. Second Street currently has angled parking which the plan advocates to eventually change to parallel; this will yield five foot bike lanes in both directions. This recommendation is a longer term proposition as dedicated bike facilities are only as good as the connections they are a part of. Once more of the overall bicycle network is in place, this transition can be considered. The other key core streetscapes within downtown including Main, North, South, First and Third would accommodate cyclists with sharrows.

Sharrows are simple, inexpensive pavement markings that indicate the road is to be used by both vehicular traffic and bicycle traffic. They not only serve as a reminder to often oblivious motorists but also increase general foot traffic in downtown which is great for retail sales! Bicycle infrastructure attracts new residents to a community and increases property values. Albemarle is no stranger to an active lifestyle, and these improvements are a much needed layer of additional infrastructure in downtown.

The City needs to provide bicycle parking in strategic areas throughout downtown to encourage cyclists to park their bikes and walk around downtown, and more important still, to spend their money downtown!

As mentioned in the Furnishings Section 5.1.1, the racks should coordinate with other downtown furnishings; however, the City should strive to be creative in their design! These racks can be functional and public art all at the same time.
5.1.11 WINDOW SHOPPING

Window shopping is an age-old part of the downtown experience. It knows no generational boundaries and appeals to our intense visual nature as humans.

**Recommendations:** The city should incentivize the enhancement of window displays in downtown. A seasonal competition could add a fun twist and bolster these improvements. This would be a wonderful public-private partnership between the City and its business owners. Some communities even have a “win the window” raffle during the holidays to encourage the community to stroll the streets.

5.2: Overall Streetscape Master Plan

The map on page 77 illustrates the overall streetscape master plan for downtown Albemarle. Please refer to the next two sections for street sections and photosimulations of the vision.

*Note about Seating & Art in Downtown:
There is no magic formula to determine the number of benches you need in a downtown environment. In many cases, too many benches are provided that end up unused or vandalized. As mentioned throughout this report, movable seating is a more economical option that garners greater use because of its flexibility. This plan does not suggest placing benches every “X” number of feet along all of the streets. This plan does advocate for public seating in areas of activity and in configurations that encourage conversation and use! The public seating icons you see on this master plan are not a one size fits all solution, but each area should be investigated in detail and a seating strategy should be developed and provided...soon!!!

This plan also identifies potential locations for three dimensional public art. As mentioned previously, a complete public art master plan should be undertaken by the City to include mural locations, 3D art and other forms of creative interest to add to downtown.
Overall Streetscape Master Plan
Two major streetscape themes emerged through this process. The two street typologies are both urban in nature; however, one is more appropriate to the central core whereas the other is suited best for the transitions to the surrounding neighborhoods. The street color guide found on the master plan diagram corresponds to these sections.

### Urban Core Streetscape A:

**Main Street, First Street**

- **Description of Concept**: Main Street and First Street are two of the more urban streets in downtown. The current lane configuration will not change dramatically. As repaving occurs over time, restriping to give an extra foot to the parking area and narrowing the travel lanes will aid in pedestrian safety as it will slow traffic down naturally. Retrofitting the lamp posts along these streets to accommodate a sidewalk fixture and additional hanging basket will also enhance these streets. With strategic urban seating placed based on foot traffic and ground floor uses, these streets can encourage more community interaction. The street trees should be an up-arching variety and utilizing self watering containers should also be considered. As appropriate, bulb outs that give back a few parking spaces to seating or landscaping should be considered.
Urban Core Streetscape A: Second Street

Description of Concept: Second Street is the only street in downtown with angled parking, and this planning effort revealed many have safety concerns about this configuration. This plan suggests the conversion of angled parking to parallel and giving the residual space to bike lanes running north and south. Similar enhancements to Main and First are also noted with seating, trees, and lamp posts. Again, taking back a few parking spaces to expand the public space outside of key frontages is highly encouraged. Photosimulation 5.4.4 is a nice example of an opportunity to do that along Second Street.
**Third Street**

- **No street trees in public R.O.W.**
- Sidewalk with light
- Parallel parking
- Travel lane
- Dual-turn lane
- Parallel parking

**NORTH STREET**

- **No street trees in public R.O.W.**
- Sidewalk with light
- Parallel parking
- Travel lane
- Travel lane
- Parallel parking

**SOUTH STREET**

- **Hollies**
- Sidewalk with planting strip
- Parallel parking
- Travel lane
- Dual-turn lane
- Travel lane
- Parallel parking

**EXISTING SECTIONS**

- Streetscape varies along South Street
- Typical sidewalk
  - Condition 1
  - Condition 2

**EXISTING IMAGERY FROM NORTH, THIRD AND SOUTH STREETS (TOP TO BOTTOM)**
Urban Core Streetscape B: North Street, South Street, Third Street

Description of Concept: These streets have an urban transition character with varying setbacks and residential converted to office in many locations. Many existing mature trees are found on private property along these streets so the lack of street trees does not immediately stand out to a passerby. The City should work with property owners to encourage the maintenance of those trees adjacent to the public realm because of the value they add to the streetscape environment. Strategic bulb outs in the parallel parking zone should be considered to introduce street trees over time. Spot median opportunities with low, seasonal landscaping should be incorporated where possible. Sharrows should also be added in the center of the travel lanes. The introduction of downtown lamp posts would also greatly enhance these streets. The potential to partner with a property owner and encourage urban seating just on the outside of the sidewalk area should be investigated at appropriate businesses. Note as repaving occurs over time, a reallocation of the pavement to narrow travel lanes, enlarge the median area and parallel parking area is encouraged.

5.4: Photosimulations

Photosimulations are graphic tools to illustrate a before and after scenario. They are intended to be a conceptual vision and anything located on private property in the images is simply a suggestion to stimulate the opportunities that may exist. Nothing is set in stone; however, the development and improvements illustrated are based on best practices from other successful downtowns around the county. Enjoy!!!
5.4.1 HISTORIC SQUARE

Before Image of Main & Second Street Intersection aka The Historic Square
Photo Credit: Stanly County Chamber of Commerce

After: Corner Vignettes

Before Image of Main & Second Street Intersection aka The Historic Square
Photo Credit: Stanly County Chamber of Commerce
After: Historic Square Enhancements

- Historic District Street Signs
- Art Opportunities
- Movable Seating
- Mid Block Crosswalk with Planted Refuge
- Enhanced Crosswalks
- Art Themed Intersection Treatment
- New Street Trees
- Bike Racks
- Benches in Key Locations
5.4.2 MAIN AND THIRD

Before: Corner of Main Street and Third Street

After: Conceptual Redevelopment

**Note: A complete market study and building assessment would need to be completed to make the right redevelopment decision for this site. The developments illustrated in these scenarios are not based on market demand but are simply used as visual options.**
After: Existing Building Renovation

- Historic District Street Signs
- Movable Seating
- Catalyst Site Rehab Option
- Enhanced Crosswalks
- New Street Trees
- Retrofit Lamp Post

- Curb Extension Plantings
- Mid Block Crosswalk with Planted Refuge
5.4.3 FIRST AND SOUTH GATEWAY

**Note: A complete market study and building assessment would need to be completed to make the right redevelopment decision for this site. The development illustrated in this scenario is not based on market demand but simply used as one visual option for a gateway building.**

Before: Intersection of First Street and South Street
After: First and South Gateway

- Gateway Redevelopment Site
- New Street Trees
- Movable Seating
- Historic Street Signs
- Art Opportunities
- Retrofit Lamp Post
- Spot Median Planting at Gateway
- Reallocate Asphalt
- Art Themed Intersection Treatment
- Enhanced Crosswalks
5.4.4 MID-BLOCK ON SECOND

Before: Corner of Main Street and Third Street
After: Mid-block on Second

- **New Street Trees**
- **Mural Opportunity**
- **Alleyscape: Conversion to Urban Parklet**
- **String Lights**
- **Parklet with Movable Seating**
- **Seasonal Plantings**
- **Conversion to Parallel Parking With Door Open Zone**
- **Community Theater Reopened**
- **Bike Lane**
- **Enhanced Facade**
- **Enhanced Mid-Block Crossing**
More than a streetscape design, the resulting plan will identify how best to leverage public investments to encourage private investment.

6.0: Overview

Downtown Albemarle is an environment with many moving parts. The key to building success is making sure everyone is working toward the same goal in a phased approach. The core elements of the streetscape improvement will be achieved with public dollars; however, the intent is to target compatible private investment that complements and multiplies these investments.
Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.

– Vincent Van Gogh

6.1: Construction Phasing

The table on the adjacent page outlines the phasing strategy for various improvements within downtown Albemarle.

This plan strives to give the city some early “quick” wins as part of this process identifying those low cost items you can address within the first 1-3 years. These catalyst components build on the momentum of this process, and give the public a visual success on which to build.

There are longer term, higher cost investments that need to occur over time as well. These may be capital funds or grant-eligible transportation improvements. Downtown Albemarle is broken down into manageable blocks, and that supports existing businesses staying open throughout the streetscape process. Keeping in mind that downtown is a living, working environment that provides the monthly paychecks Albemarle citizens need to support their families, the city should not undertake anything that will essentially shut down any large portion of the city for a long period of time.
**Short Term and Lower Cost**
- Add Movable Seating & Upgrade Downtown Furnishings* [PP]
- Edit the Vegetation Around Downtown* [P]
- Test Parklets* [PP]
- New Banners Based on Branding [P]
- Paint Sharrows* [P]
- Install Historic Street Signs* [P]
- Add Self-Watering Containers & Baskets [PP]
- Storefront Window Competitions [PP]

**Middle of the Road Effort**
- Retrofit Lampposts* [P]
- Historic Square Enhancements [P]
- Public Art Master Plan & Installations [PP]
- Enhance Crosswalks Throughout Core [P]

**Long Term & Higher Cost**
- Replace Trees & Install Structural Soil on Main, Second and First [P]
- Gateway Treatments [P]
- Pedestrian Countdowns Added Throughout Core [P]
- Seek Redevelopment of Catalyst Sites Identified Through this Process [PP]
- Enhance Alleyscapes [PP]
- Mid-Block Crossings [P]
- Strategic Street Tree Plantings in Curb Extensions on North, South and Third [P]
- Transit Shelters (as ridership increases) [P]
- Repave and Reallocate Second Street’s Asphalt [P]

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**Key to Phasing of Action Items**
- P=Public Funding (Operating, Capital or Grant Funding)
- PP=Public/Private Partnership Opportunity
- $=Level of Public Funding Required (Order of Magnitude $-$ $$)

*One of the “Top 6 in 3” Recommendations found in Section 6.2
The top six fast, economical physical improvements with big visual impact to downtown Albemarle. These things are intended to be a signal to the community that the city is vested and ready for a transformation.

1. **Add movable seating!** You do not have to buy a large amount to begin with, but simply try several groupings around town including bistro style seating, Adirondack chairs in green spaces or even rocking chairs.

2. **Edit the vegetation in public spaces.** Trim, trim, trim! You do not have to be prepared to replant the entire area. A simple trim of existing material to provide more transparency is the first step.

3. **Upgrade street signs in historic district.** Find a local fabricator to keep costs down on this improvement. Perhaps the city can even make them in their sign shop!

4. **Make your lamp posts work-horses!** Retrofit light poles to add a pedestrian-level sidewalk fixture. Install new banners based on the branding study, and add one more basket to the singles you currently have in place for more impact.

5. **Test out several parklet ideas using tactical urbanism.** The city saw through this process that a little energy and creative thinking can transform a once-empty space. Take this concept and try out several of the proposed parklets around downtown. Find community groups to partner with and make it happen!

6. **Grab a can of paint!** Paint sharrows on the streets designated in the master plan. This is an inexpensive strategy to introduce bicycle facilities throughout the core. The bicycling community of Albemarle will be thrilled, and this action can serve as an announcement to residents and visitors that the City is a bicycle and pedestrian friendly community!

“Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”

Thomas A. Edison
6.2: Cost Estimate

The table on the following page outlines a preliminary cost analysis of the various improvements suggested by this plan. The city can use this estimate for budgetary planning and in seeking grants from state and federal agencies.

It took many decades for Downtown Albemarle to become what it is today, and its transformation into something even better will take time as well. Having a realistic cost estimation allows the city to plan ahead and allocate funding and energy in the proper locations.

As noted on the line items, some of these costs are subject to final detailed design and also will vary based on how projects are combined, procured and installed (Albemarle staff or private contractors).

Examples of the visual impact the Top 6 in 3 can have on Downtown Albemarle.
## Streetscape Concept Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Unit Price</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Movable Seating (including table/chairs, Adirondack chairs, rocking chairs)</td>
<td>VARIES</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Powder Coated Bench</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Powder Coated Trash Receptacle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Street Signs for Historic District</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4A</td>
<td>Replace Existing Green Standards</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4B</td>
<td>Additional Blades on Key Existing Traffic Signal Bars</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4C</td>
<td>New posts</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>$24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Retrofit Existing Lamp Posts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5A</td>
<td>Urban Core Streetscape A (includes Main, First and Second): Add pedestrian</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>$245,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lamp for sidewalk and need new banners plus additional basket on poles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5B</td>
<td>Urban Core Streetscape B (includes North, South and Third): Need new street</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$195,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lamp and pedestrian lamp. (Quantity: 39)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Painted Sharrow Markings</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$26,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Repave and Realocate/Restripe Asphalt on Second Street (45' width, 1400'</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>SY</td>
<td>$75</td>
<td>$525,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>length) (includes conversion of angled parking to parallel and bike lanes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Self-Watering Container Plantings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>$600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Enhance Crosswalks Quantity: 12 @ 45'x10'</td>
<td>5,400</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>$25</td>
<td>$135,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Themed Accent for Intersection (Quantity: 4) (Area = 50'x50' each)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>$25</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mid-Block Crossings/Quantity: 6 @ 45'x10'</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>$30</td>
<td>$81,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Pedestrian Countdowns (10 intersections w/ 8 fixtures each)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Curb Extensions (brick pavers): Quantity: 14 @ 30'x20'</td>
<td>8,400</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$148,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Transit Shelters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Street Tree &amp; Tree Pit Retrofit Strategy (3.5&quot; caliper trees: Approximately</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>120 trees) Minimum well size 4'x7'. Tree pits should be as large as possible</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for increased soil volume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15A</td>
<td>Least Intervention: Leave existing trees and saw cut concrete surrounding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>them to allow for better health. Utilize an air spade to clear compacted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>soil from around sensitive roots and amend the area with organic material</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and finely shredded mulch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15B</td>
<td>Moderate Intervention: Remove existing trees and replant with a new species.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase the tree well sizes by cutting the existing concrete and improving the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>soil before planting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15C</td>
<td>Intense Intervention: Remove the existing trees and replant with a new</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>species. Remove the existing concrete between the curb and the brick banding.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rebuild this area with structural soil that is more conducive to root health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and growth. Replace paving with permeable pavers that allow water to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>percolate into the root zone. This would not only increase the viability of</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albemarle's street trees but also be a low impact stormwater intervention for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the downtown area.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Alleyscapes (SUBJECT TO DESIGN)</td>
<td>1,815</td>
<td>LF</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$181,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Downtown Gateways (SUBJECT TO DESIGN)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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