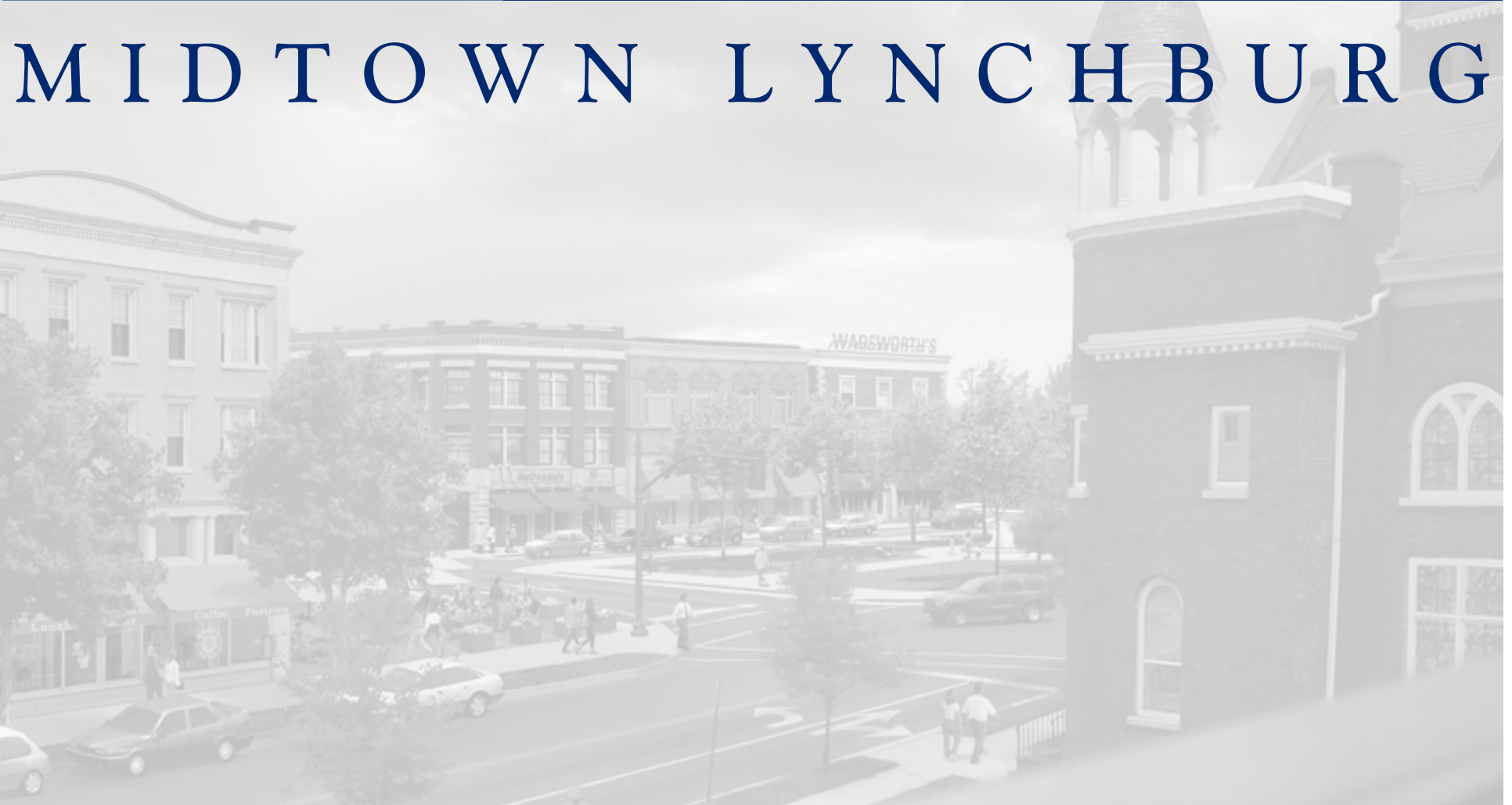


October 2005



# MIDTOWN LYNCHBURG



**MIDTOWN PLANNING TEAM**

City Officials

Dover, Kohl & Partners

Craddock Cunningham Architectural Partners

UrbanAdvisors

Hall Planning & Engineering

UrbanAdvantage

and Hundreds of Lynchburg Citizens

October 2005

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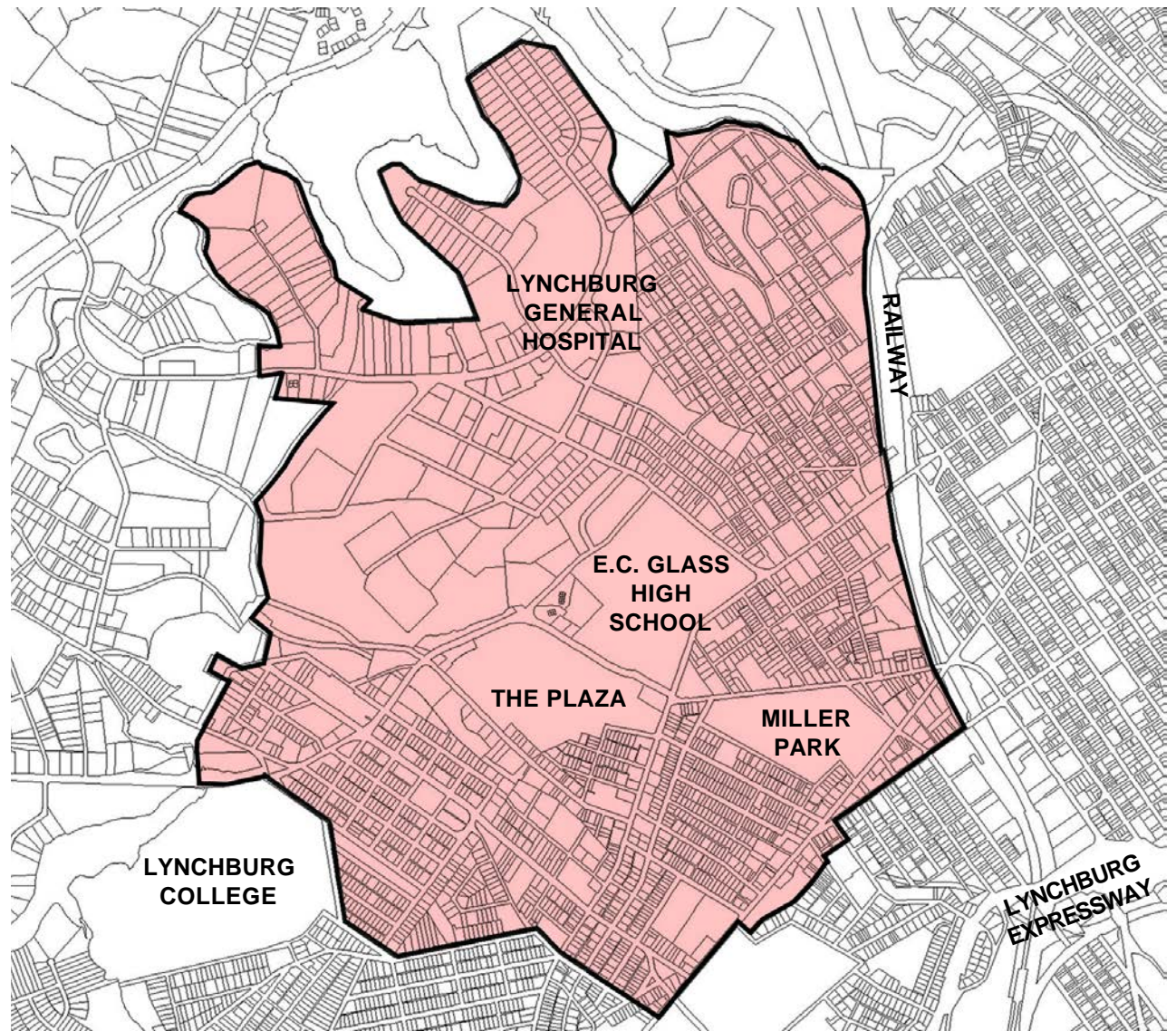
# research & analysis **1**

City officials decided to create a plan for the future of Midtown Lynchburg as stated in the 2002 - 2020 Comprehensive Plan. In 2004 the planning and design firm of Dover, Kohl & Partners was selected to oversee this effort. Their team included local architects, Craddock Cunningham Architectural Partners, urban economists, UrbanAdvisors, transportation experts, Hall Planning & Engineering, and a computer visualization company, UrbanAdvantage. The extensive planning process began with a thorough evaluation of the study area. This chapter details the analysis of Midtown; the chapters following describe the community charrette and resulting plan.

## MIDTOWN ANALYSIS

The area of Lynchburg referred to as Midtown is bounded by the 5th Street Bridge to the east, Fort Avenue to the south, the Lakeside Drive entrance to Lynchburg College to the west, and the Blackwater Creek Trail to the north. The area is west of Downtown and is the geographic center of Lynchburg. Due to its location, natural features, history, strong institutions, businesses, neighborhoods, and physical character, Midtown is an area that deserves the best planning. We must study Midtown's past to prepare for its future, in turn creating a plan for the area which builds on its strengths and addresses its challenges.

The thorough examination of background information, whether through photographing existing conditions, talking to citizens, or analyzing base maps, helped the planning team to better prepare for creating a workable plan for Midtown.



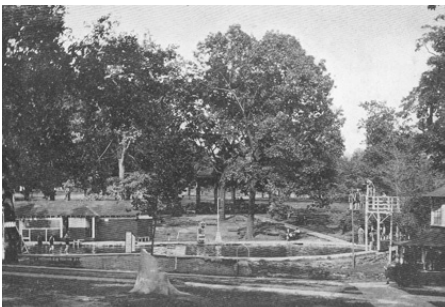
The shaded area above denotes the Midtown study area.



Miller Home for Girls, 1872



West Lynchburg Inn, 1890



Miller Park, 1926 (dedicated in 1862)



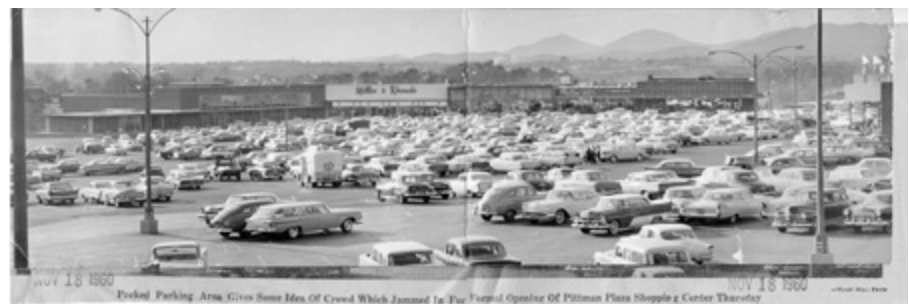
Lynchburg General Hospital, 1956



Pittman Plaza, 1959



Memorial Avenue, 1962



Pittman Plaza, 1960



Miller Home for Girls and Sears Roebuck Store, 1958

## STUDYING THE PAST

Midtown Lynchburg is an area which has experienced tremendous change over recent decades. Originally platted as an extension of Downtown neighborhoods, the area was once a country retreat area that became a thriving streetcar suburb. Miller Park was dedicated in 1862 and continues today to serve as a great community space. The Miller Home for Girls was located close-by along Memorial Avenue and the surrounding neighborhoods were made up of graceful homes on tree-lined streets. The West Lynchburg Inn, a resort hotel accessible by train, was built in 1890. The Inn was purchased by Josephus Hopwood in 1903 to begin Lynchburg Christian College, later renamed as Lynchburg College.

E. C. Glass High School opened its doors in 1953 and remains strong today. The opening of Lynchburg General Hospital in 1956 provided an emerging economic engine for Midtown. The area surrounding the hospital began to expand and evolve as the medical community became a centerpiece of the city.

In 1960 Pittman Plaza opened as a major retail shopping center. Located on the site of the former Miller Home for Girls, the opening of Pittman Plaza marked the move from downtown commerce to suburban retail.

All photos provided by Nancy Marion Blackwell

Pittman Plaza had a prosperous, yet short life. In 1980 with the opening of River Ridge Mall, the Plaza began to decline. As stores relocated the property changed ownership several times; however, no efforts to revive the Plaza to its earlier prosperity have been successful. While many Lynchburg residents have fond memories of visits to the Plaza, the shopping center property today is in need of a dramatic renaissance.

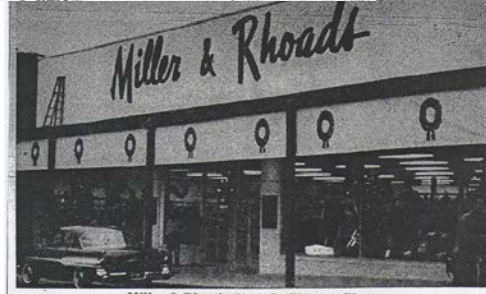
Citizens and City leaders recognized the importance of revitalizing Midtown and included specific action steps in the City's 2002 Comprehensive Plan. This report and planning process are a result of the City's initiative to create a plan for the future of Midtown.

# Penney To Open In Plaza, Close Downtown Store

V.F. - LYON - PLAZA SHOPPING CTR  
NEW 1-17-60

# Pittman Plaza To Employ 2,000 With \$150,000 Weekly Payroll

BY BILL HULLMAN  
NEW 1-16-60



Miller & Rhoads Store In Pittman Plaza  
FOR MILLER & RHOADS  
NEW 1-17-60  
First Suburban Store Opening



## The News LOCAL

LYNCHBURG, VA., THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1960 B-1

### Pittman Plaza Opening Today

Pittman Plaza, Lynchburg's first modern shopping center, opens formally at 10 a.m. today. The opening will be marked by a brief and simple ribbon-cutting ceremony. The ribbon will be cut by Miss Virginia, Catherine Cynthia Birch of Staunton. Those observing these hours will be Harry Ispa Co., Bowers Jewelry Co., Rand Box, Lerner's Phillips, Shoes and Miller & Rhoads. First National Trust and Savings Bank will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Mondays through Thursday and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Peoples Drug Store will be open from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Most days through Saturdays and from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Sunday.

## BUSINESS

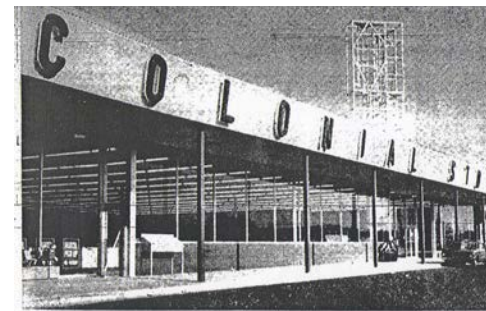
The News & Daily Advance Sunday, February 15, 1960 F-4

### The Plaza: Hard times are thing of the past

Twenty-five years after its birth as Pittman Plaza and just five years after many people pronounced it dead, the Plaza has risen from the grave and is making its presence felt in the five years since the Richmond-based Corning Co. purchased the Plaza and announced its plans to revive the shopping center. Corning declined to reveal the new tenants because company policy shows the intent to announce their opening first. A representative of Montgomery Ward said last week the company is interested in Lynchburg and is negotiating with Corning for an official of Corning Co. confirmed that Bradley's is a home-based clothing store, as indicated in the Plaza. Gary Anderson, manager of Big Bear grocery store, said he couldn't comment on how the opening of another food store in the Plaza would affect his store because he doesn't even know for certain that the store is opening. AKA, a Richmond-based sporting goods and active wear store, plans to open a store in the Plaza within six weeks, said Bill Brink, AKA head buyer. He didn't have any details on the store's location or size available. A Radio Shack official mentioned that the store on Walworth Street is negotiating with Corning Co. but no details were available yet. Mr. S. G. Carter said he is more than doubling the current 200,000-sq-ft store by adding a 1,000,000-sq-ft vacant space of last year.



Since its down days in 1960, the Plaza has added several stores with more renovations in works



Colonial Stores Supermarket In Pittman Plaza  
COLONIAL STORES  
NEW 11-17-60  
Supermarket Largest Of Kind



## Shopping hub shows its age

After 41 years ... V.F. - LYON - PLAZA SHOPPING CENTER  
NEW 12-29-02

Customers recall The Plaza bustling during its youth

By Emily Bertke  
The News & Advance  
Downtown Lynchburg has a November week-day, cars and shoppers buzz past the Plaza shopping center, as parked in Christmas cars fill the walkways. There's activity here, but The Plaza today is far from the Pittman Plaza before Montgomery Ward's rise in the 1930s. Montgomery would join the Plaza as she walked to school at E.C. Lane. She'd often stop to pick up groceries for her mother. "I used to go over there and shop when I was a teenager because I didn't have a car," Montgomery said. "A truck or one would get together and more or less just walk." She said when Leggett, Stone, J.C. Penney and Miller & Rhoads were open, the Plaza was a popular place for families to take out-of-town guests—especially since back then, Montvale drove near U.S. 29, the main artery leading to all points north and south. Although it's not the one-stop shopping destination it once was, The Plaza still attracts a steady stream of shoppers. "The store is what brings me here," said Amanda St. John, as she looked into Food Land. St. John said she doesn't buy groceries but it's worth it for her to drive, since her house is



Retailers shift to box stores on city's edge

By Emily Bertke  
The News & Advance  
A three-story U.S. 15 building in Lynchburg shows the progression of retail development in the city. If you start walking south on Piedmont Street downtown, the original retail district, you soon hit the Plaza. Lynchburg's first major shopping center. Easy driving and just past the old Town Plaza or Hill Plaza, depending on which store you remember better, just past the way to the Plaza. "That's sort of the natural progression," said Gary W. Case, a local commercial real estate agent. The building of shopping centers in the 1930s and '40s led to the 1950s and the big development of the 1960s led Lynchburg with no shortage of retail space. The Planning Department estimates that 400,000 square feet of the vacant throughout town. Case said today's big retailers come in two categories. There are the all-purpose big boxes that try to be everything to everybody (think Wal-Mart and Target), and then there are what Case calls "category killers," the super-specialty stores like Barnes & Noble and Circuit City that can become the market on whatever they're selling.

## BUSINESS NEWS

February 1987

### Sale of Plaza center is finalized

Developer says to expect "big changes" for shoppers

From Staff Reports  
The Plaza shopping center in Lynchburg has been sold by Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company for an undisclosed amount to Sandor Development Corp., a small, family owned company located in Indiana. The sale was finalized in late December 1986. Jay Stein of Sandor Development said the company is very pleased with the sale, even though the center has been hurt by the vacancies created by Best Products, Dynamic Lady and other merchants over the years.



The Plaza (left) includes Best Products,

Newspaper clippings provided by Lynchburg Memorial Library



## ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

A variety of urban and suburban physical characteristics exist in the Midtown area and the team focused its efforts on documenting such examples. Walking or driving the study area, team members photographed corridors, neighborhoods, civic buildings, and open spaces to document the existing conditions of Midtown.



THE PLAZA



LYNCHBURG GENERAL HOSPITAL



**MILLER PARK**

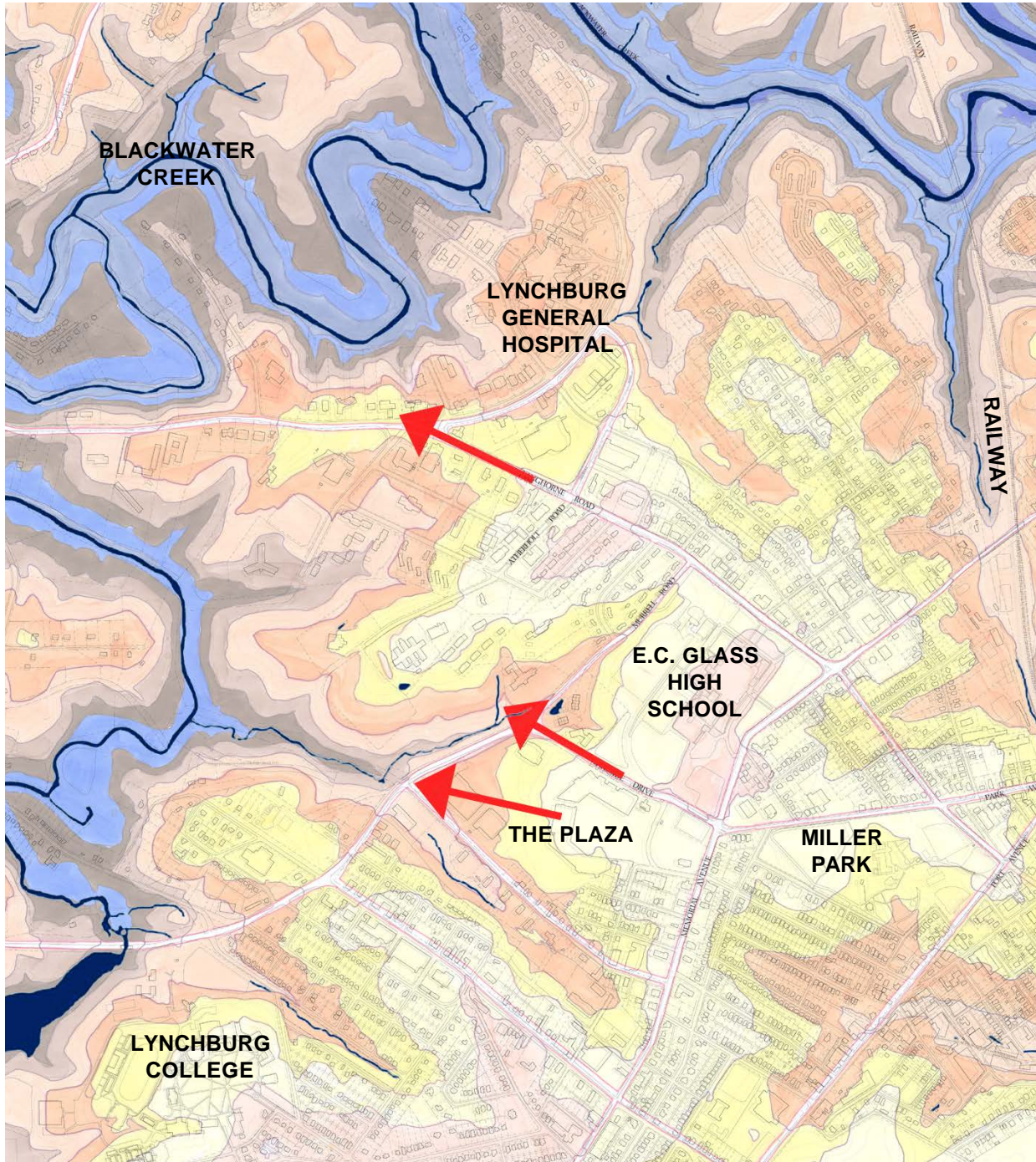


**CORRIDORS**



**NEIGHBORHOODS**





### Analysis Diagrams\*

In addition to photographing the study area, the team analyzed past studies of the area, the City's zoning code, recent development proposals, police crime data, and other relevant background information. Using the City's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data, the team created a series of analysis diagrams to better understand the dynamics of the planning area.

### Topography and View Corridors

The terrain of Midtown is that of sweeping hills and mountainous views. The planning team paid particular attention to the topography of the study area, emphasizing that design must be respectful of the natural environment. The diagram at left highlights areas of various slopes based on 10 foot contour lines. The lighter shades represent higher elevations with darker shades representing lower elevations. The arrows denote spectacular views towards the Blue Ridge Mountains.

### Streams and Lakes

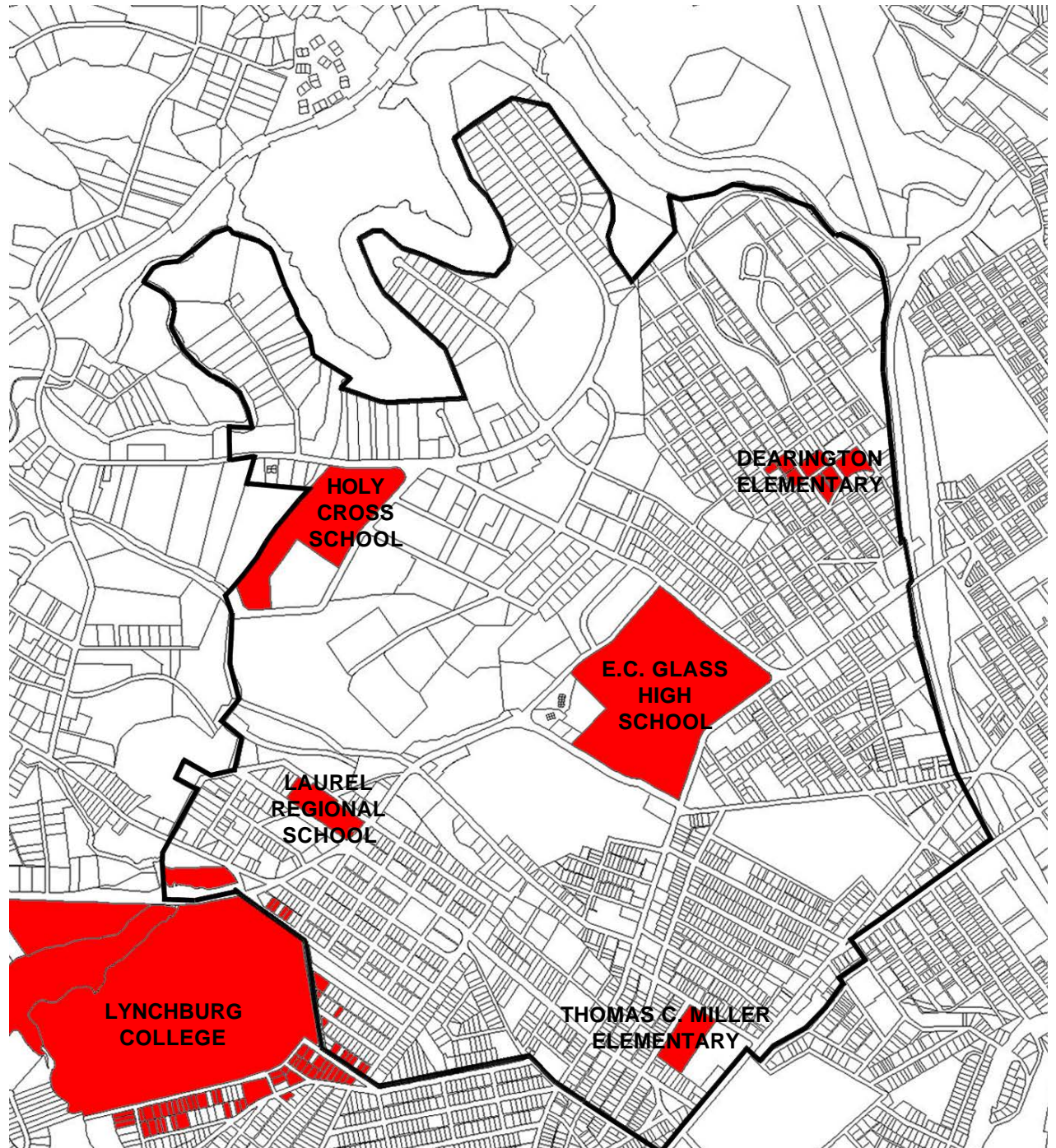
An analysis of water features in the study area reveals that there is an extensive stream and lake system within Midtown. From Blackwater Creek to the lake at Lynchburg College, a network of streams moves water throughout the area. The analysis of such water features will help to ensure that existing and proposed development drains properly to the natural water bodies. More importantly, as development occurs it is extremely important to cleanse and treat stormwater before it enters the network of streams and lakes. The plan for Midtown includes both physical and natural mechanisms to provide for adequate drainage as well as water purification and cleansing.

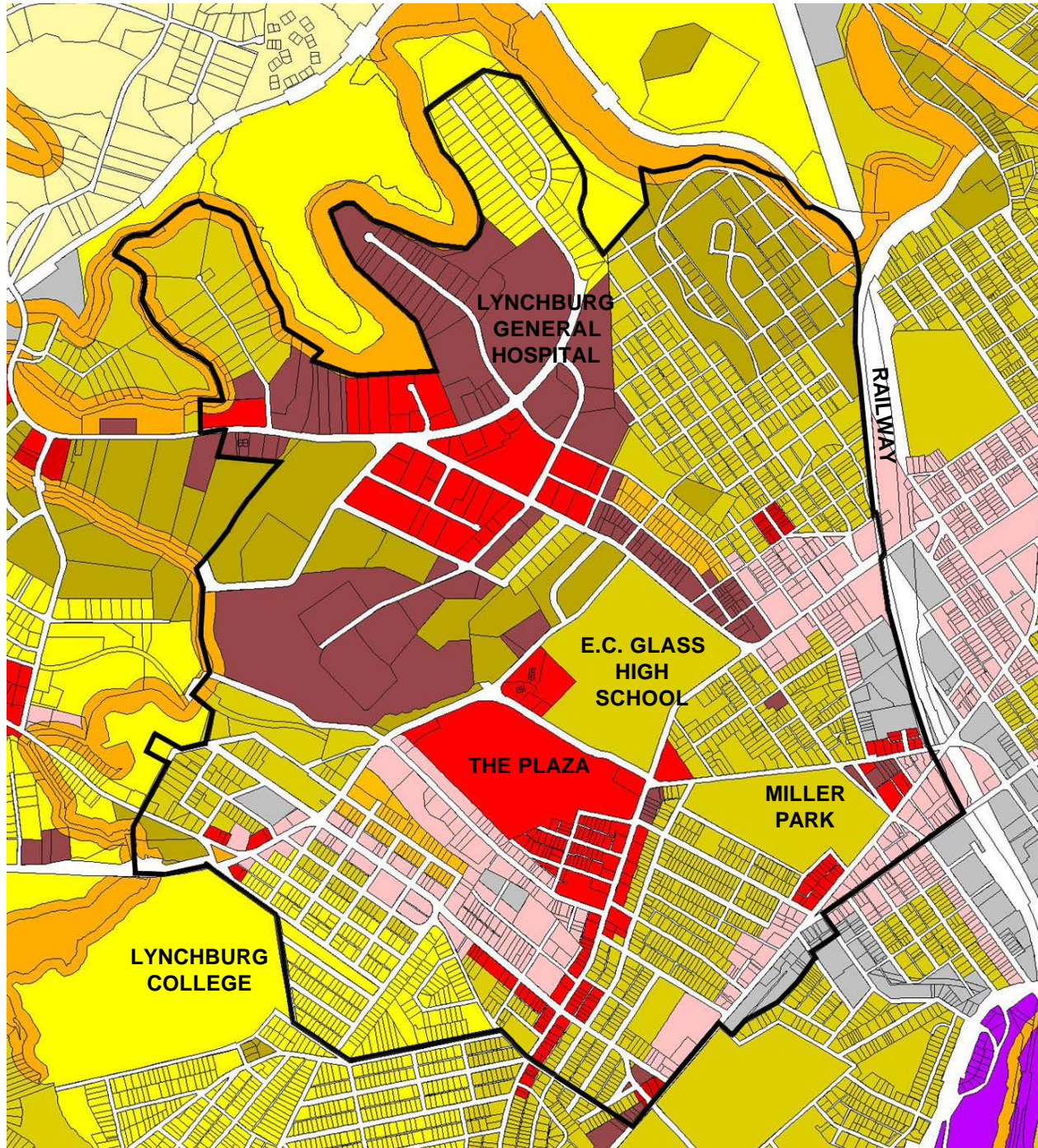
\* The analysis diagrams are based on April 2005 GIS information provided by the City of Lynchburg. This information is updated from time to time; any inconsistencies should be brought to the attention of the City.

## Analysis Diagrams

### Places of Learning and Education Centers

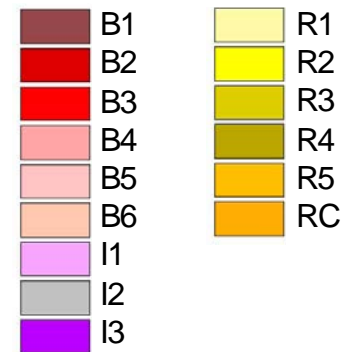
Midtown Lynchburg has a variety of places of learning which serve the community. This diagram identifies four elementary and secondary schools and one college, Lynchburg College, all located in Midtown.





**Zoning**



Parcels in Midtown represent a broad spectrum of zoning classifications. The majority of parcels are zoned R-3 (medium density two-family residential district), while business districts are interspersed.

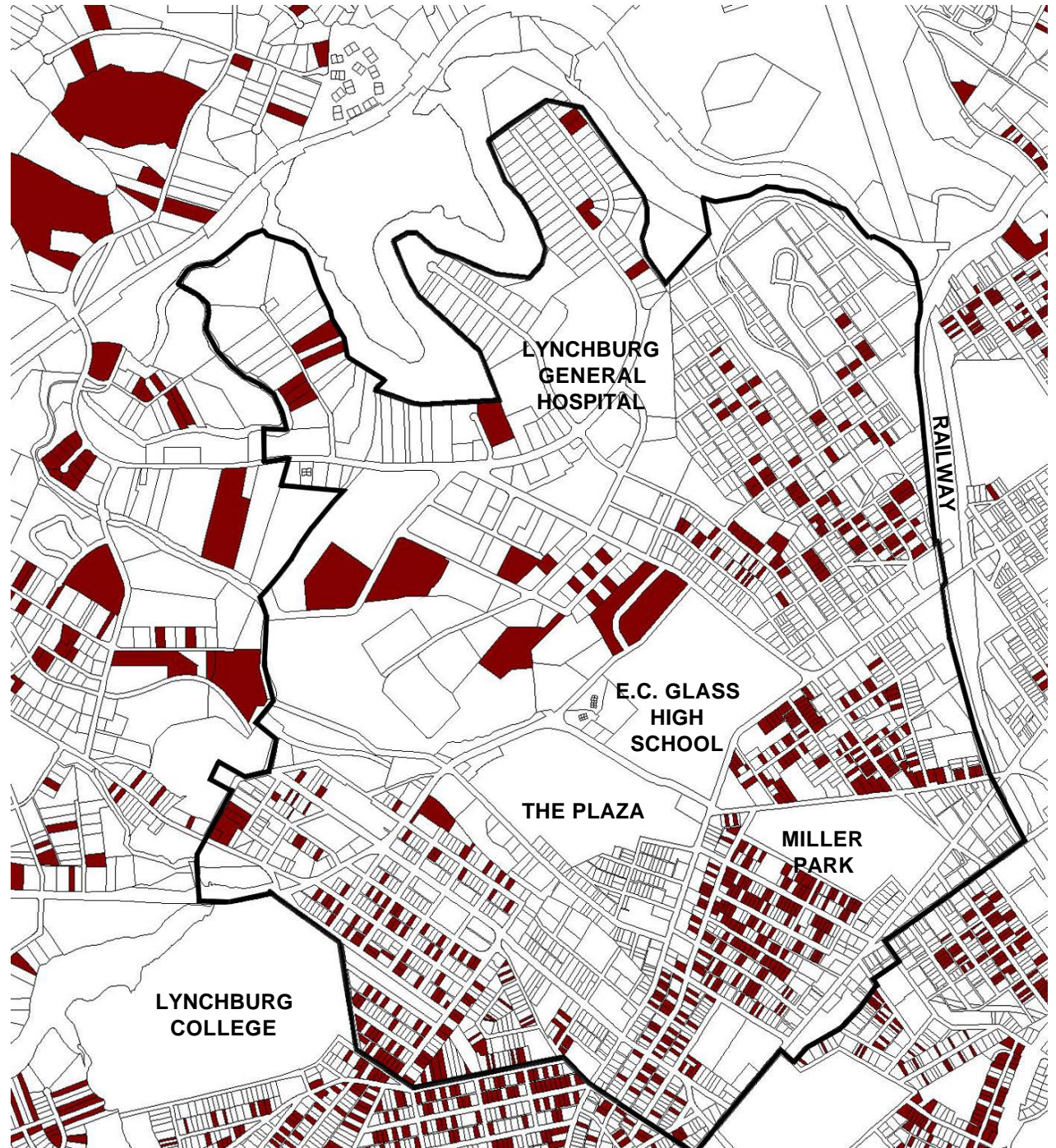


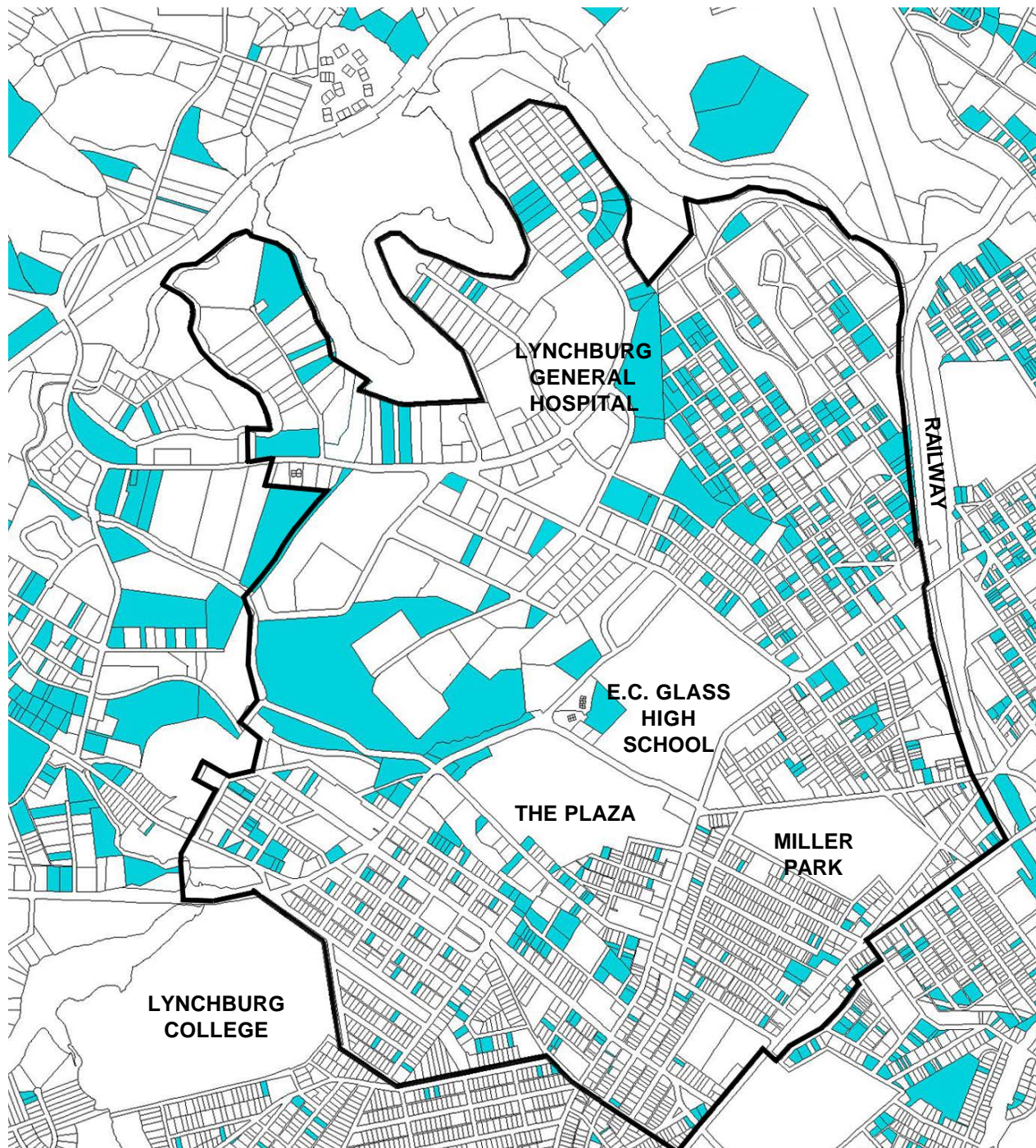
## Analysis Diagrams

### Owner and Renter Occupied

Midtown Lynchburg contains a mix of owner and rental occupied single family housing. The neighborhoods surrounding Miller Park show a "piano key" pattern of owner occupied housing interspersed with rental units.

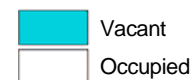
Rental Property   
Owner Occupied 





**Vacant Parcels**

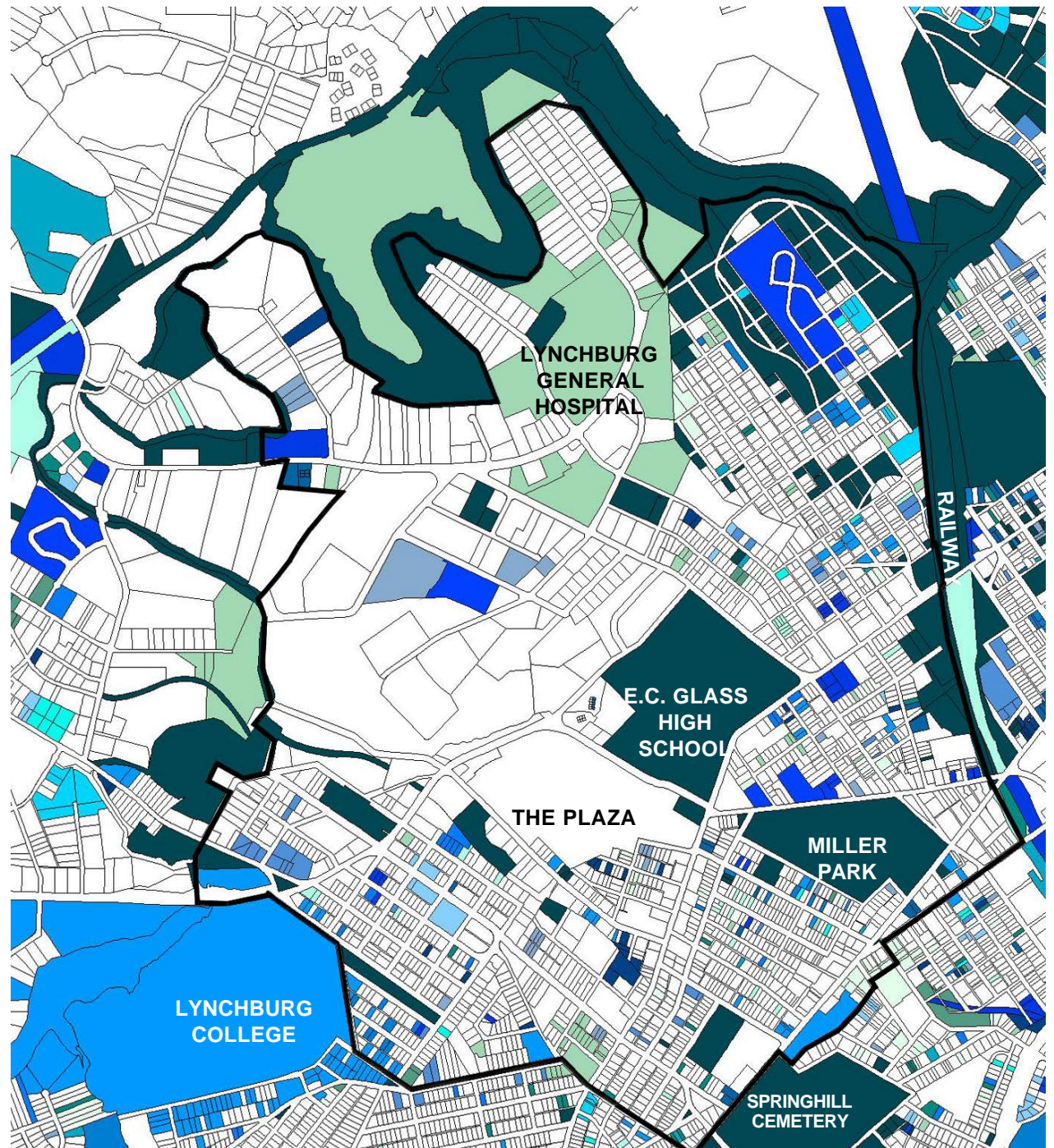
Based on GIS data provided by the City, the parcels noted in blue are classified as currently being vacant. These properties represent opportunity sites for infill development.



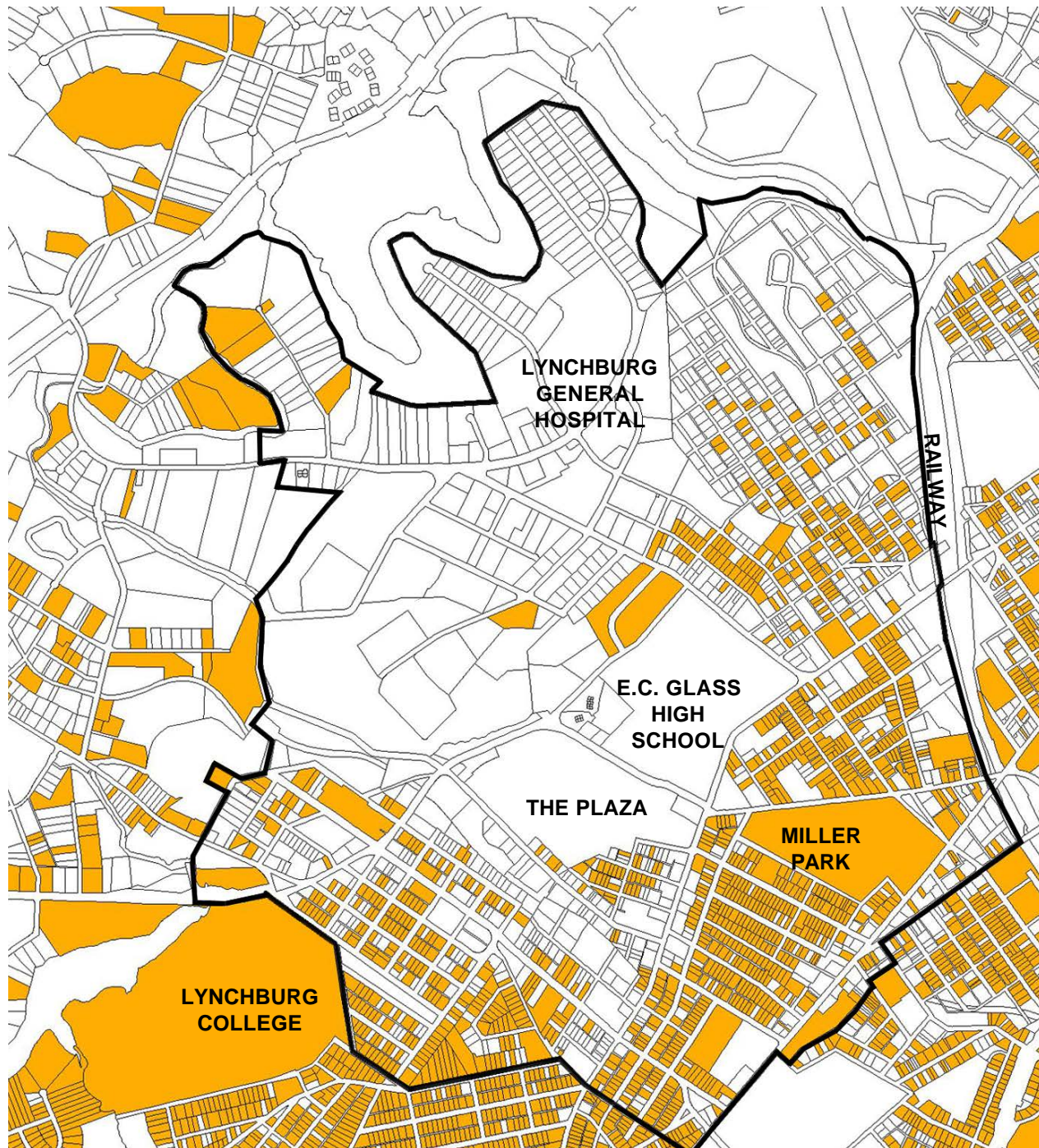
## Analysis Diagrams

### Property Ownership (5 or more parcels)

The property ownership diagram highlights multiple properties owned by the same landowners. The purpose of this diagram is to identify any large assemblies of land where substantial infill development could occur.

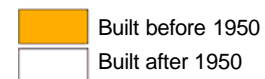






**Building Construction**



The housing and building stock of Midtown Lynchburg is fairly old. A majority of properties located within the study area were built prior to 1950. This analysis reveals the opportunities for historic preservation, as well as rehabilitation or redevelopment based on building conditions.

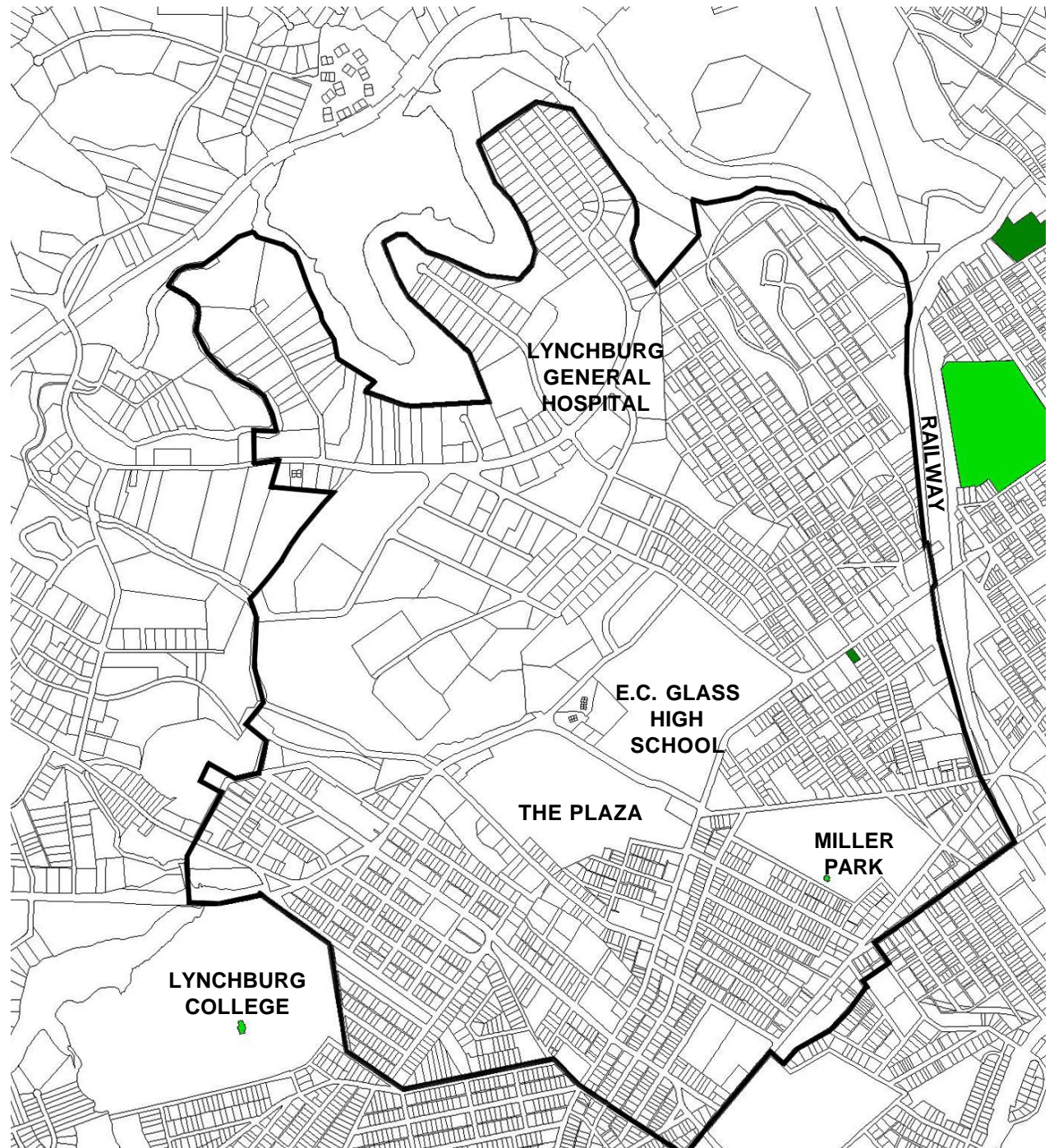


## Analysis Diagrams

### Historic Districts

The parcels delineated in shades of green are those which are designated in either a city or state historic district. Based on the previous diagram of building construction, Midtown contains a large number of buildings built prior to 1950. The age, quality, and character of the architecture is of real value; it can be guaranteed and preserved for generations to come through historic district designation. For this reason, the establishment of one or many historic districts should be considered for Midtown's neighborhoods.

Local Historic District   
State/National Historic District 

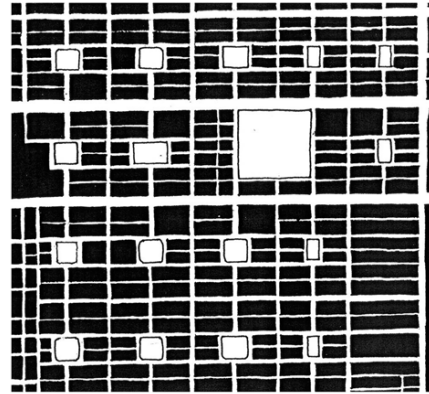


## Scale Comparisons

These scale comparisons helped the planners and community participants to better understand the scale of Midtown in relation to other great places. Below is the Plaza at the same scale as other well known towns and universities. The scale comparisons give light to the great development possibilities that could be achieved on the Plaza site.



The Plaza



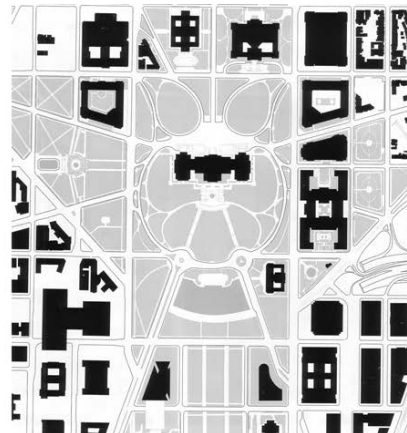
Savannah, GA



Colonial Williamsburg, VA



The Plaza



The Mall, Washington, D.C.

Credit: Ayers Saint Gross



Virginia Tech Drill Field

Credit: Ayers Saint Gross



University of Virginia Lawn

Credit: Ayers Saint Gross

## PRELIMINARY ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

At the start of the planning process UrbanAdvisors, urban economists, reviewed the economic components of the City of Lynchburg 2002-2020 Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Master Plan, and supporting documents previously produced by Economic Research Associates (ERA). Supplementary data on the City of Lynchburg and the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) were collected and reviewed. UrbanAdvisors assisted with stakeholder interviews during the March and April 2005 site visits to better understand resident and business concerns and incorporate local intelligence.

The City's Comprehensive Plan 2002-2020 observes that new housing in the surrounding counties has been growing at a greater rate than in the City. One explanation suggested by a local real estate professional is that there is an insufficient supply of adequate middle-income housing available in the City. This observation is supported by the larger proportion of low and high-income households captured by the City and the lower proportion of middle-income households (see Table 1.1 and 1.2). Together, this suggests that there is latent demand for quality middle income housing opportunities close to amenities in the City, including the Midtown Area. The new neighborhood of Wyndhurst and the Downtown loft units prove that there is a market for new housing types in Lynchburg for middle and upper income resident who choose to live in neighborhoods designed as traditional urban developments.

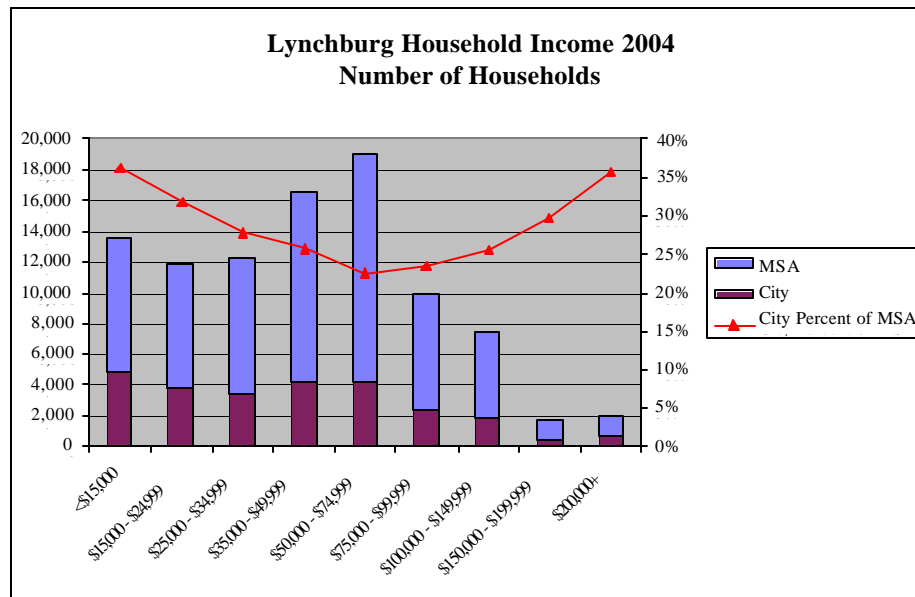


Table 1.1 Demographic trends for both the city and MSA suggest growth in the number of households with incomes over \$100,000 annually. (Source: ESRI BIS, and UrbanAdvisors Ltd)

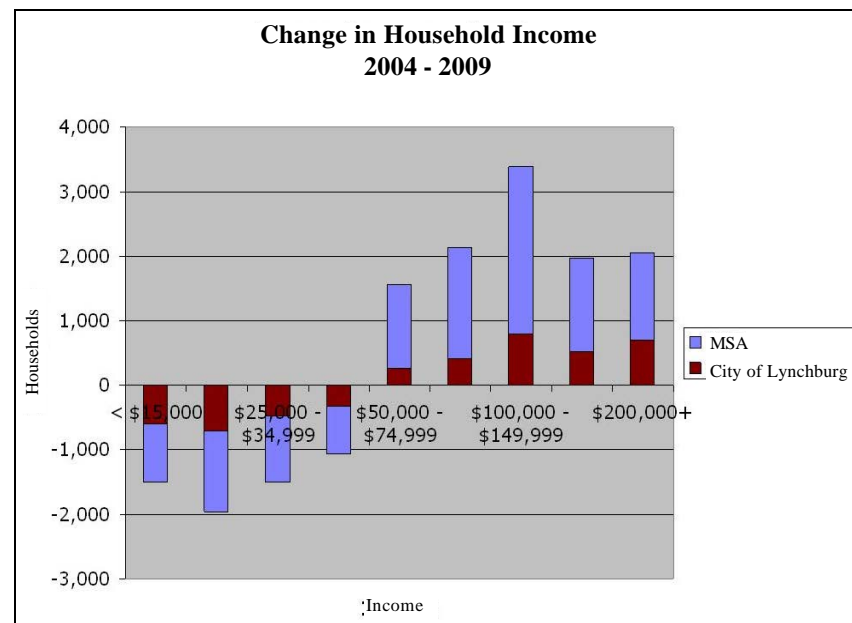


Table 1.2 Household incomes are increasing in the MSA and within the City, however the majority of households with higher incomes are locating outside of the City. This shows that there is a gap in the Lynchburg housing market where increased housing options and opportunities could attract a wider range of households. (Source: ESRI BIS, and UrbanAdvisors Ltd)



creating the plan **2**



*The plan for Midtown Lynchburg was created through teamwork and collaboration.*

### **What is a Charrette?**

*Charrette* is a French word that translates as "little cart." At the leading architecture school of the 19th century, the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, students would be assigned a tough design problem to work out under pressure of time. They would continue sketching as fast as they could, even as little carts—charrettes—carried their drawing boards away to be judged and graded. Today, "charrette" has come to describe a rapid, intensive, and creative work session in which a design team focuses on a particular design problem and arrives at a collaborative solution. Charrettes are product-oriented. The public charrette is fast becoming a preferred way to face the planning challenges confronting American communities.

Community involvement was an essential component in creating a workable vision and plan for the future of Midtown Lynchburg. "Designing in public," the Dover-Kohl team conducted an open planning process in April 2005 to identify the ideas, needs and concerns of the community. Participants helped to create the Midtown Master Plan through an intensive design event called a *charrette*. Over the course of seven days, the community and the team of design professionals worked to design the plan. Over 500 interested residents and stakeholders participated in the planning process, including property owners, neighbors, business people, developers, elected officials, appointed officials, City staff, students, and community leaders.

## **CHARRETTE PREPARATION**

Prior to the charrette, the Dover-Kohl team focused their efforts on gathering base information and studying the existing physical conditions of the area. This included learning about local history, reviewing previous plans and studies, examining existing City ordinances and land development regulations, and analyzing the physical, social, and economic characteristics of Midtown. A more detailed overview of the team's review of background information can be found in Chapter 1.

Members of the team visited Lynchburg in March 2005 and met with City officials, staff, community leaders, business owners, and other local stakeholders in preparation for the charrette. The meetings served as a way to better understand the dynamics of Midtown and the area's role in the city and region. Team members met with City staff to further understand previous planning efforts and met with City officials to better gauge the leadership's vision and ideas for the future of Midtown. The team talked with representatives from Centra Health, impressed to learn of the hospital's expansion and continued presence in the area. The Chamber of Commerce offered information on recent business trends and activities and local property owners expressed their desires to see the area undergo a major revitalization.

A key element in preparing for the charrette was generating public awareness. City staff spread the word about the Midtown planning process by placing ads in the local newspapers, posting public notices, going door-to-door with flyers, and extensive mailings.



## STUDY TOURS

To further understand the planning context of Midtown, the team arrived a few days prior to the start of the charrette to allow time to study and tour Midtown and its surroundings, including Downtown, Rivermont, and Wyndhurst. The study tours helped the team to understand Midtown's place within the City and surrounding region and enhanced the team's understanding of current issues, concerns, and prospects. The team examined virtually every street in the study area on foot and by car, noting areas of particular interest or concern. With base maps in hand, the planners and designers analyzed the existing urban fabric, paying careful attention to the historic network of blocks and streets.

Team members walked and photographed a variety of urban conditions, noting building form, building placement, architectural character, street design, topographic conditions, and the natural landscape. Particular attention was devoted to analyzing the existing conditions of the Plaza site to prepare for a thorough review of the potential for future development of the site. On maps of the existing conditions of the study area, team members highlighted potential areas for infill development, buildings of architectural/historical significance, and unique conditions and characteristics of Midtown, such as the magnificent views to the mountains.



ONE WORD that comes to mind about Midtown:

NOW: UNINVITING

IN THE FUTURE:  
ATTRACTIVE  
(In my vision)

ONE WORD that comes to mind about Midtown:

NOW: Neglected

IN THE FUTURE:  
livable  
(In my vision)

ONE WORD that comes to mind about Midtown:

NOW: Stagnant

IN THE FUTURE:  
Vibrant  
(In my vision)

At the Kick-off Presentation, residents were asked to write one word to describe Midtown now, and how they envision the area in the future.



Mayor Hutcherson welcomed the community at the Kick-off Presentation.



The team answered questions at the end of the Kick-off Presentation.

## THE CHARRETTE

On Friday, April 22, 2005, a Community Kick-off Presentation marked the start of the charrette. Residents, City leaders, and local stakeholders gathered at Lynchburg College for the evening. After introductions by Mayor Hutcherson, Victor Dover, principal of Dover, Kohl & Partners and charrette leader, outlined the challenge for participants during the charrette week. Victor emphasized that the Plan would be created by the community, for the community. He stressed the importance of citizen involvement through the process to ensure the creation of a plan truly representative of community ideals. He provided background on traditional town building, community planning, and smart growth principles. The presentation included both old and new newspaper clippings about the evolving history of the Midtown area. Victor introduced other members of the team, including Rick Hall, of Hall Planning & Engineering, who spoke about transportation issues facing Midtown. The evening concluded with a lively discussion of questions and answers as excitement grew for the week-long event.

On Saturday, April 23, community members gathered at the former Heironimus store at the Plaza for the hands-on design session. Approximately 150 community members attended. Victor started the day with a brief "food for thought" presentation, and laid out the ground rules for the day. Participants then gathered in small groups at tables, each with several maps of Midtown. Residents came full of ideas and went to work, becoming "citizen planners." Participants talked with fellow neighbors about their fond memories of Pittman Plaza on opening day and their hopes of a better future for the area. Armed with markers and pencils, participants rolled up their sleeves and began to illustrate their vision for the future of Midtown on large maps. A member of the design team or a volunteer from the City was placed at each table to serve as a facilitator and guide the participants through a series of design exercises.





Residents work together, sharing ideas for the future of Midtown.



As the day progressed, participants continued to draw on the maps and write down their ideas for the future of Midtown. Participants examined the existing road network and discussed various possibilities for the Crosstown Connector. The table groups highlighted areas in need of improvement and identified neighborhood resources and civic sites. At the end of the day, a representative from each table presented their table's ideas to the entire assembly. Common themes began to emerge quickly, as the important goals for Midtown were identified. Some of the most widely shared ideas are included along the bottom of this page.

The goal of the hands-on session was to forge an initial consensus and develop an overall community vision for Midtown. In addition to the group presentations, each participant filled out an exit survey at the end of the session. The surveys allowed the consultant team to gain more detailed insight into the ideas of the many individuals that participated. Feedback was very valuable and the event was essential for creating a realistic and unified plan.



One representative from each table presented their work to the entire group.

*“would like to see an interconnected system of green spaces, walkways, neighborhoods, businesses, and services”*

*“a center for intergenerational interaction!”*

*“take advantage of the mountain views”*

*“create a world class gateway to the medical district”*

*“create the heart of the city”*

*“would like a comfortable, quiet, enjoyable place to live, work and raise kids/grandkids”*

*“a dynamic mixed-use area with good housing choices, supported by traditional neighborhood design”*

- community comments from the Hands-on Design Session



Over 100 students from E.C. Glass High School visited the on-site design studio.

From Sunday through Thursday, the design team ran an open design studio at the former Heironimus store. Citizens and local leaders were encouraged to stop by the studio throughout the week to check the status of the plan, provide further input, and to make sure the design team was on the right track. The location of the studio at the Plaza, as well as the immense community interest, led over 100 people to participate throughout the week. The workgroup drawings and plans from the Saturday design session were placed around the room for easy review as new people became involved. While community members visited the studio, the design team continued to analyze the information gathered at the hands-on session site analysis in order to formulate the initial concepts for the plan. The team was tasked with synthesizing the many ideas heard from the community throughout the week into a single cohesive master plan. The planners and designers created lists, graphs, diagrams, drawings, and plans, working to combine and refine the ideas. Working on-location allowed the design team ready access to the study area during all hours and on different days of the week. The planners observed day-to-day traffic patterns, public uses, and other details of everyday life in Midtown.

In addition to the public design studio, members of the design team met with specific stakeholders in scheduled technical meetings. The team met with City officials, representatives from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Centra Health, Lynchburg College, the Community Monitoring Committee, Lynchburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and other community organizations and local businesses. The technical meetings helped to further shape the detailed elements of the plan and to ensure that the ideas being processed were consistent amongst many viewpoints. The owners of the Plaza, Sandor Development Company, were also active participants in the design studio. The design team worked with a representative from Sandor for two days to explore redevelopment opportunities for the Plaza site.



Technical meetings during the week helped to shape the details of the plan.



The design team worked on-site to create the plan for Midtown.



The charrette week ended with an evening "Work-in-Progress" presentation on Thursday, April 28 at Lynchburg College. Over 150 citizens returned for the presentation eager to hear and see how the planners and designers were able to synthesize the community's ideas into the vision for the future of Midtown. Victor Dover began the presentation with a summary of the week's events, then presented sketches and computer visualizations illustrating the hypothetical future build-out of Midtown. Focusing on specific areas, Victor walked the audience through a "future tour" showing both short and long-term changes that are possible under the plan. Renderings showed "before and after" illustrations of possible development scenarios. At the end of the presentation, a new survey was distributed to gauge the community's opinion on the ideas presented that evening.

## AFTER THE CHARRETTE

At the conclusion of the week-long charrette, the design team departed Lynchburg and returned home to their offices. Over a period of six weeks the illustrative master plan produced during the charrette was refined and this report was created. The plan documents were then submitted for City and community review. The following report represents a synthesis of desires and goals for the future of Midtown within a workable framework of specific implementation measures.

*"(The Midtown Plan) is something that reflects the wishes, desires, and values of our community."*

*- - Kimball Payne, City Manager*

**Midtown Area Plan**  
Work-in-Progress Presentation, April 28, 2005

Did you attend the Community Kick-off Presentation (Friday, April 22nd)?  
Yes  No

Did you attend the Hands-on Design Session (Saturday, April 23rd)?  
Yes  No

Did you visit the Design Studio (Sunday, April 24th - Thursday, April 28th)?  
Yes  No

Of the many ideas you heard tonight, which idea should be made a top priority?  
Confidence Corridors  
↑ Civic landmarks  
improve historic/church buildings.

Are there any elements of your vision for the future of Midtown we might have missed?  
To see how it comes together in your plans, my vision seems so limited. What I liked most is the cohesiveness of the plan.

Do you think the plan is generally on the right track?  
Yes, this is the #1 reason I moved to Lynchburg from the Philadelphia area. I am excited to be a part of this.

Please write additional comments on back of sheet. Thank you for your help and your ideas!  
Please leave this on the table at the door or fax it to Ken Whelan, Senior City Planner at 842-7830.

Sample exit survey response

### Work-in-Progress Survey Results:

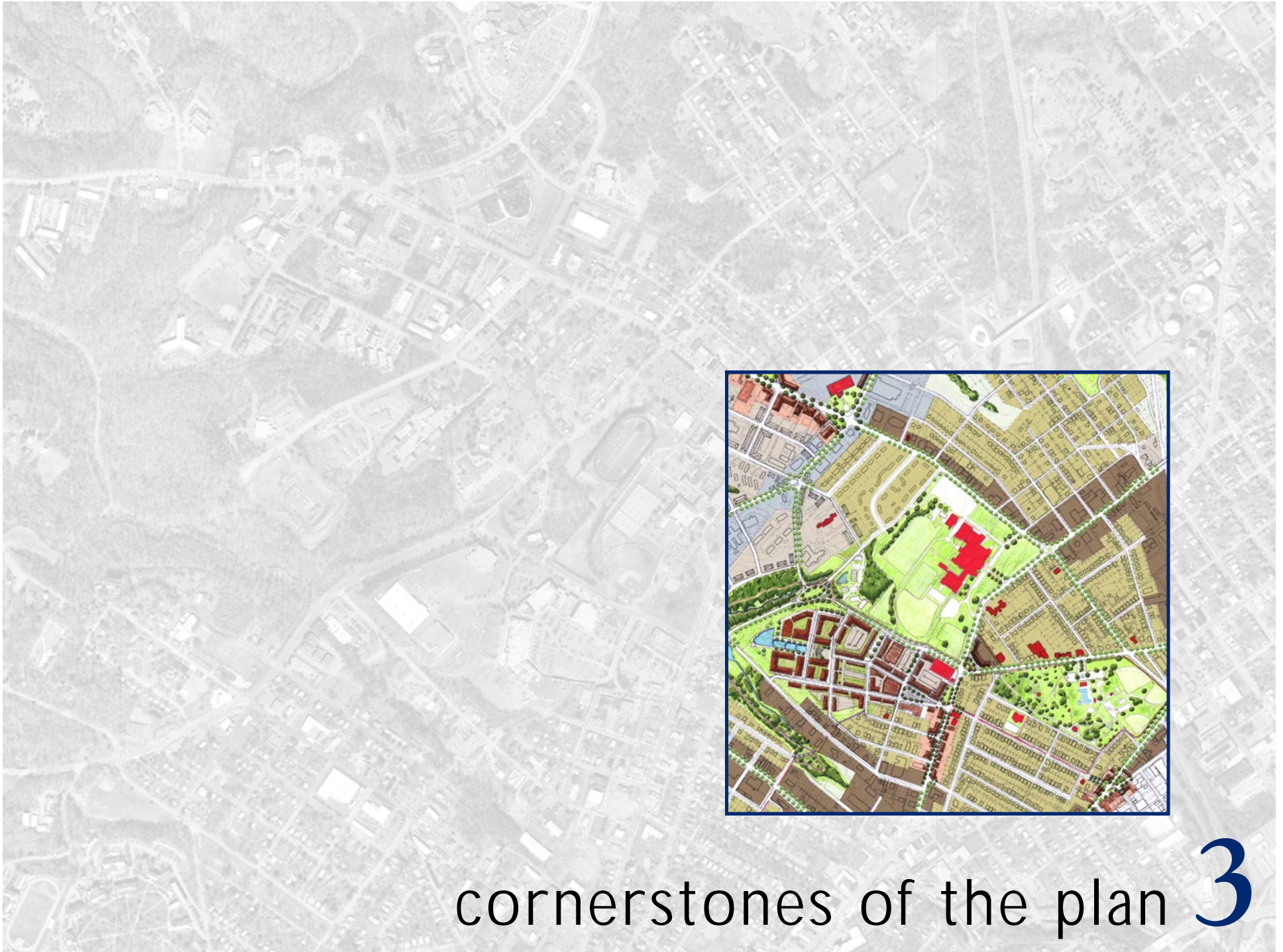
Do you think the plan is generally on the right track?

Yes = 66%

Somewhat = 4%

No = 0%





cornerstones of the plan 3

While there are several features and institutions that make the Midtown area unique, there are basic planning principles that apply to all of America's great cities. Lynchburg is one of those great cities. It has a very strong and sound history of excellent planning. From the charrette, four of the foundations in planning were validated and reinforced for Midtown. This chapter describes the four principles; specific design components of each principle are further detailed and illustrated in Chapter 4. General guidance on implementing each principle is included; specific implementation strategies can be found in Chapter 6.

## CORNERSTONES OF THE PLAN

- I. Neighborhoods*
- II. Great Streets*
- III. Preserve and Connect*
- IV. Start Now, Together*



The Illustrative Master Plan at right was created during the charrette. The plan synthesizes community ideas and depicts the idealized build-out for Midtown. This map is for illustrative purposes and is not a regulating document. The Illustrative Master Plan identifies key opportunity parcels for potential development, redevelopment, conservation, and preservation. A large copy of the plan is included in Appendix A and is on display at City Hall.

## I. NEIGHBORHOODS

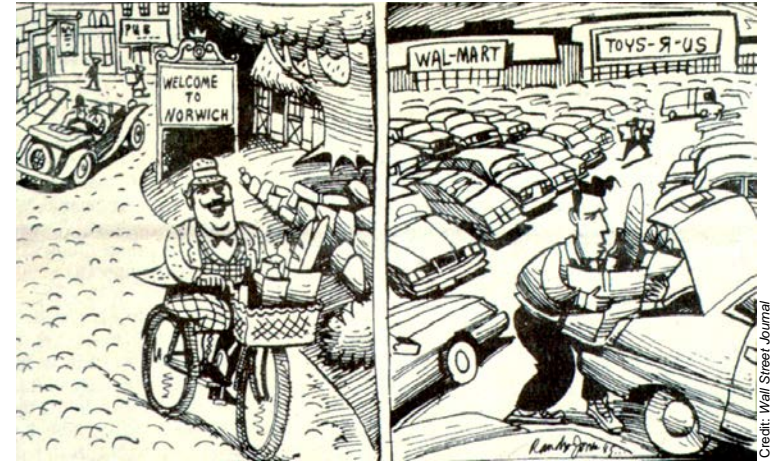
Neighborhoods are the glue that hold Lynchburg together. The city has a variety of classic, historic neighborhoods and these neighborhoods contribute to Lynchburg's identity. Midtown contains several neighborhoods, primarily located adjacent to Miller Park. Sidewalks line the grid of streets which form relatively small, intimate blocks. Houses range in size, providing for a variety of housing options.

As Midtown continues to evolve, these existing neighborhoods must be respected, maintained, and restored. Where infill opportunities exist, every opportunity should be maximized to reflect the character of Midtown's existing historic neighborhoods. Its streets connect and blocks are small. Houses are located close to the street, with sidewalks and street trees wherever possible. These lasting qualities should be applied as new neighborhoods emerge and old neighborhoods grow more complete.



As we look to the future of Midtown, it is important to encourage and provide more opportunities for people to live in the area. Lynchburg's neighborhoods traditionally have had a mix of uses and types of buildings. A variety of uses within the neighborhood creates the ability to live, work, shop and have daily needs and services within walking distance. It is time for Midtown Lynchburg to become a primary, first-choice residential option. Encouraging a balance of people living and working in Midtown has several benefits, including: less daily trips that rely on the regional road network; increased support for local businesses; and, new and historic housing can provide a greater variety of housing options for Lynchburg. The Illustrative Master Plan identifies specific sites for residential and mixed-use infill development.

Housing for a mix of incomes must be provided in Midtown. A variety of building types allows for a diversity of family sizes, ages, and incomes to live in the same neighborhood. Midtown should not be just a place for the richest of the rich and poorest of the poor. It is a place for everyone, and should support a diverse population from every income level. To reach the best possible spectrum of residents, Midtown living should be promoted simultaneously to all incomes - modest, middle, and high incomes. This mix of incomes is essential to securing a socially and economically balanced community.



Cartoon depicting traditional neighborhoods and conventional development.

## NEIGHBORHOODS — GETTING THERE

The following steps are necessary in creating lasting Midtown neighborhoods:

- a. Amend the City's Zoning Code and create a Form Based Code specific to Midtown to protect and enhance the character of Midtown's neighborhoods and to return to traditional planning principles reflective of Lynchburg planning.
- b. Where applicable, designate neighborhoods as Historic Districts and encourage residents and property owners to use Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits to rehabilitate historic structures.
- c. Develop a rehabilitation / adaptive re-use strategy as a mechanism to create additional housing options in Midtown that meet contemporary housing needs.
- d. Create an infill development strategy to better maximize land and to provide opportunities for mixed-use development in Midtown.
- e. Conduct an annual inventory of land uses to compare the supply and demand for specific land uses in Midtown.
- f. Institute housing programs which offer homeowners assistance in purchasing homes.

Additional Implementation Strategies are included in Chapter 6.

## Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) Principles

Traditional neighborhoods ...

1. Have an identifiable center and edge.
2. Are of a walkable size.
3. Include a mix of land uses and building types.
4. Have an integrated network of walkable streets.
5. Reserve special sites for civic purposes.



## II. GREAT STREETS

A network of interconnected blocks and streets is present in Lynchburg. The historic urban fabric of the city allows for a series of intimate public spaces and streetscapes. Over time, however, the traditionally walkable streets have been affected by road widenings and automobile dominance. In the future these streets must be reclaimed, creating a healthy balance between vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

More than any other feature, streets define a community's character. "Great streets" are walkable, accessible to all, interesting, comfortable, safe, and memorable. While great streets accommodate vehicular and pedestrian travel, they are also *signature public spaces*. Great streets showcase high quality buildings; mixed-use streets provide good addresses for sustainable commerce while residential streets are key to livability in neighborhoods.

### STRATEGIES FOR DESIGNING GREAT STREETS

#### 1. Design for pedestrians first.

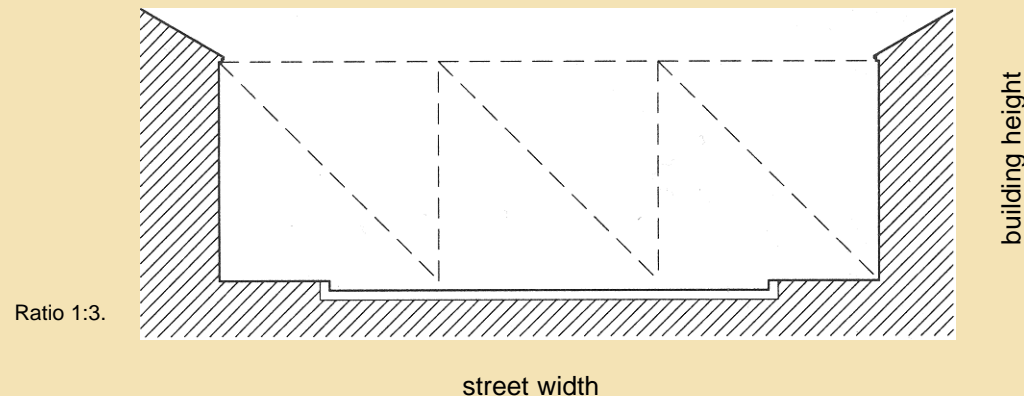
The configurations of great streets consistently provide a high-caliber experience for pedestrians as a baseline obligation, and go on from there to accommodate all other required modes of travel.

#### 2. Scale matters.

A street should function as a three-dimensional outdoor room, surrounding its occupants in a space that is welcoming and useable, especially for pedestrians. A ratio of 1:3 for building height to street width is often cited as a minimum benchmark of success, although even more narrowly proportioned street spaces can produce a still more satisfying urban character.

#### Proportions of Street Space

*The height-to-width ratio of the space generates spatial enclosure, which is related to the physiology of the human eye. If the width of a public space is such that the cone of vision encompasses less street wall than sky opening, the degree of spatial enclosure is slight. The ratio of 1 increment of height to 6 of width is the absolute minimum, with 1 to 3 being an effective minimum if a sense of enclosure is to result. As a general rule, the tighter the ratio, the stronger the sense of place and, often, the higher the real estate value. Spatial enclosure is particularly important for shopping streets that must compete with shopping malls, which provide very effective spatial definition. [emphasis added]. In the absence of spatial definition by facades, disciplined tree planting is an alternative. Trees aligned for spatial enclosure are necessary on thoroughfares that have substantial front yards.*



Excerpted from  
AIA Graphic Standards

Although pedestrians are invariably more comfortable on narrower streets, great streets vary in size and shape and are successful in many different configurations. Width is only part of the recipe. From an urban design point of view, there are extremely successful eight-lane roads just as there are miserable failures two lanes wide. Streets need to be sized properly for their use and matched in proportion to the architecture and/or trees that frame them. The Champs-Élysées in Paris, for example, is 230 feet wide but it is considered a "great street;" the scale of the boulevard is defined three-dimensionally. Buildings on the Champs-Élysées are 75 to 80 feet tall, creating an effective sense of enclosure. By contrast, intimate residential segments of Church Street in Charleston have a right-of-way only twenty-two feet wide—just seventeen feet curb-to-curb, plus a sidewalk—and the houses that line both sides are two stories tall. Classic streets in American streetcar suburbs, such as Rivermont Avenue, feature shallow front yards, broad planting strips for trees, and relatively narrow pavement; the trees on both sides enhance the spatial definition. The designed ratio of height to width is followed on most great streets around the world.

### 3. Design the street as a unified whole.

An essential distinction of great streets is that the whole outdoor room is designed as an ensemble, including utilitarian auto elements (travel lanes, parking, curbs), public components (such as the trees, sidewalks, and lighting) and private elements (buildings, landscape, and garden walls). Again, Rivermont Avenue is a great example. As tempting as it may be to separate these issues, by for example leaving building placement and orientation out of the discussion when planning new thoroughfares, all the public and private elements must be coordinated to have a good effect. For example, the best city streets invariably have buildings fronting the sidewalk, usually close to the street. The random setbacks generated by conventional zoning only rarely produce this effect, so the land development regulations along a given corridor must be rethought in conjunction with any road improvement (especially widenings). In some cases, minimum height of buildings should be regulated to achieve spatial definition, almost impossible to attain with one-story buildings. Similarly, the old routine of widening roads but citing last-minute budget problems as the reason to leave street trees or sidewalks "for later" is unacceptable, comparable to building a house with no roof.

### 4. Include sidewalks almost everywhere.

Without sidewalks, pedestrian activity is virtually impossible. The design matters, too. The sidewalks adjacent to Randolph Macon Woman's College and Virginia Baptist Hospital are examples of properly design sidewalks. One of the simplest ways to enhance the pedestrian environment is to locate the walkway at least 5 or 6 feet away from the curb, with the street trees planted in between. Pedestrians will be more willing to utilize sidewalks if they are located a safe distance away from moving automobile traffic. The width of the sidewalk will vary according to the location. On most single-family residential streets, five feet will usually suffice, but more width is needed on rowhouse streets to accommodate stoops. On Main Streets, fourteen feet is usually most appropriate, but the sidewalk must never fall below an absolute minimum of eight feet wide.



Champs-Élysées, Paris, France



Rivermont Avenue, Lynchburg, VA

*It is not surprising that, given their multiple roles in urban life, streets require and use vast amounts of land. In the United States, from 25 to 35 percent of a city's developed land is likely to be in public right-of-way, mostly streets. If we can develop and design streets so that they are wonderful, fulfilling places to be, community building places, attractive public places for all people of cities and neighborhoods, then we will have successfully designed about 1/3 of the city directly and will have an immense impact on the rest.*

- Allan Jacobs, *Great Streets*



Rivermont Avenue, Lynchburg, VA



Peakland Place, Lynchburg, VA



Lynchburg, VA

## 5. Shade!

Motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists all prefer shady streets. In looking at these various images throughout Lynchburg, one can understand why. Street trees should be placed between automobile traffic and pedestrians, for an added layer of psychological security for pedestrians. Street trees with fairly continuous canopies that extend over the travel lanes and the sidewalks should be the norm. This is especially vital on arterial roadways or other wide streets that contain expanses of concrete and asphalt and depend on trees for spatial definition. In areas like Downtown Lynchburg architectural encroachments over the sidewalk like awnings, arcades and colonnades, and cantilevered balconies can be used (where there may not be the opportunity to plant shade trees) to protect pedestrians from the elements and shield storefronts from glare. The taller buildings and tighter height-to-width ratio on Lynchburg's Main Street also produces some shade. In Downtown, streetlights, bus shelters, benches, and other street furniture occupy the wider sidewalks and provide the appropriate separation between pedestrians and the curb.

## 6. Make medians sufficiently wide.

Where divided thoroughfares are unavoidable, the medians must be generous enough to serve as a pedestrian amenity. For street trees to thrive and for pedestrians to have adequate refuge when crossing streets, the medians need to be sized accordingly, like on Peakland Place in Lynchburg.



Charlotte, NC



Beaufort, SC

### **7. Plant the street trees in an orderly manner.**

Great streets are not the place to experiment with random, romantic, or naturalistic landscaping. Urban trees are typically planted in aligned rows, with regular spacing, using consistent species. This will not appear rigid or mechanistic, for trees do not grow identically; rather, the power of formal tree placement is that it at once shapes the space, reflects conscious design, and celebrates the intricacy and diversity within the species. More importantly, the shade produced by the trees will be continuous enough to make walking viable, and the spatial impression of aligned trees also has a traffic calming effect.

### **8. Use smart lighting.**

Streets should be well lit at night both for automobile safety and pedestrian safety. Pedestrians will avoid streets where they feel unsafe. "Cobra head" light fixtures on tall poles spaced far apart do not provide for pedestrian safety. Shorter fixtures installed more frequently are more appropriate, and can provide light under the tree canopy as street trees mature. An example of good lighting can be seen in Lynchburg's Downtown and on Peakland Place.

### **9. Allow on-street parking in suitable locations.**

On-street parking provides further separation between pedestrians and moving cars and also serves as a traffic calming device because of the "visual alertness" it triggers. Parallel parking is often better than head-in or diagonal parking because it requires less space, although diagonal parking is acceptable in exceptional cases on shopping streets if the extra curb-to-curb width is not achieved at the expense of properly sized sidewalk space. Parking near the fronts of buildings also encourages people to get out of their cars and walk, and is essential to leasing street-oriented retail space, like along Rivermont Avenue and in Wyndhurst.

### **10. Resist parking lots in front of buildings.**

The bulk of a building's parking supply should not be up against the sidewalk or facing the street but should occur behind the building instead (or in a few cases, beside the building). The acres of surface parking between storefronts and the street are responsible for the negative visual impact of the typical commercial "strip". Such a disconnected pedestrian environment is in part due to bad habits on the part of auto-oriented chain stores, but also reflects the large setbacks and high parking requirements in conventional zoning. If the rules are changed to provide "build-to" lines rather than mandatory front setbacks for commercial buildings, it is possible to grow streets with real character, like at Wyndhurst.

Streets are the public living rooms in a community; the spaces between the buildings often matter more than the spaces within. Buildings located along streets sell for great addresses, street scene, and the convenience to walk places. Street oriented architecture does not turn its "back" to the street; doors, windows, balconies, and porches face the street, not blank street walls. In this way, a level of safety is reached by creating "eyes on the street." In a thriving community, street oriented architecture makes the public realm between buildings satisfying.



Forest Hills Gardens, NY



Richmond, VA



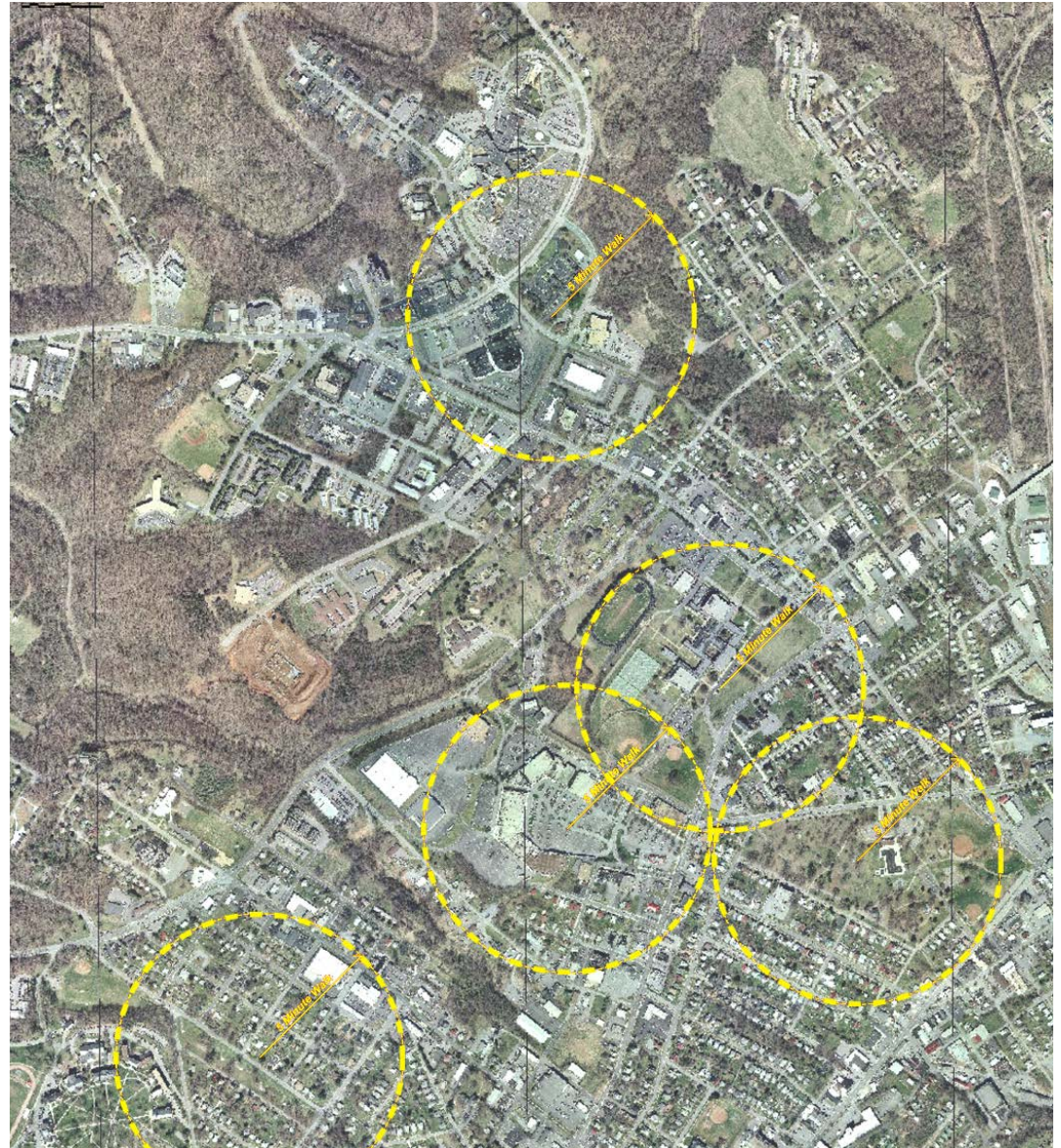
Frankfort, KY



If streets are walkable, most people will walk a distance of approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile (1320 feet) before turning back or opting to drive or ride a bike rather than walk. You can see this in the way Downtown Lynchburg was designed; from 5th Street to 12th Street it is a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile walk. Most neighborhoods built before World War II are  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from center to edge. This dimension is a constant in the way people have settled for centuries. This distance relates to the manner in which people define the edges of their own neighborhoods.

Of course, neighborhoods are not necessarily circular in design, nor is that desirable. The  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile radius is a benchmark for creating a neighborhood unit that is manageable in size and feel and is inherently walkable. Neighborhoods of many shapes and sizes can satisfy the  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile radius test. Midtown demonstrates the  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile radius principle with several distinct neighborhoods or quarters that combine to form the whole. The Illustrative Master Plan shows how to reinforce the identity and completeness of each of the Midtown's neighborhoods with infill development and preservation.

The team paid careful attention to pedestrian, vehicular, physical, and social connections within the study area. Focusing on a quarter mile walking radius, the team used base maps and on-site analysis to show that many of the destinations and community amenities of Midtown are within walking distance of one another, although missing connections and road designs that are auto-oriented inhibit walking today.



The red circles on the aerials above indicate a walking distance of a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile.

## GREAT STREETS — GETTING THERE

The following steps are necessary for the continued creation of great streets in Midtown:

- a. Amend the City's Zoning Code and create a Form Based Code specific to Midtown to protect and enhance the character of Midtown's neighborhoods and to return to traditional planning principles reflective of Lynchburg planning.
- b. For major street and infrastructure improvements, the City should earmark funds in the municipal budget or apply for grants from the federal government.
- c. Amend the *Manual of Specifications and Standards Details* to include the the proposed street sections found in the Midtown Plan.
- d. Encourage sidewalks on every street in Midtown.
- e. Concentrate retail in Midtown to create a "park once" environment so that patrons can walk to many shops and stores rather than having to drive to each location.
- f. Enhance Midtown streets through physical improvements, street modifications, and infill development.

Additional Implementation Strategies are included in Chapter 6.

### III. PRESERVE AND CONNECT

Historic buildings, green spaces, and long views towards the mountains are key to the revitalization of Midtown. The built environment should be connected with the natural environment and destinations within Midtown enhanced.

Neighborhood preservation and restoration is an important element in maintaining Midtown's character. Many neighborhoods are threatened by demolition and road-widening projects. A balance must be reached between neighborhood preservation, new development, and the rush to move more cars. The revision of the City's land development regulations is an essential step in controlling and providing this balance. Where infill development is to occur, such development would benefit by reflecting the architectural character of the existing neighborhood.

Throughout Midtown there are a variety of old, charming, historic structures. From homes to civic buildings, these structures should be preserved. Many small projects can be readily accomplished with a historic preservation philosophy. The economic benefits and success of historic preservation is apparent from other Lynchburg neighborhoods.

From 1977 to 1999, older neighborhoods not designated as historic districts had an average **decline** in assessed value of 12%.

Neighborhoods designated as historic districts had an average **increase** in assessed value of 110%.

Source: City of Lynchburg Tax Assessments, 1977 – 1999.



1101 Polk Street

412 Harrison Street

Madison Street

Habitat for Humanity

Lynchburg Neighborhood Development Foundation

Lynchburg Neighborhood Development Foundation

In addition to the actual preservation of buildings, open spaces and views should also be protected. Whether enhancing Miller Park or adding additional green space, there should be a leveraged creation of smart green spaces. The Blackwater Creek Trail is a tremendous asset to Lynchburg and the trail should extend as green fingers throughout Midtown.

### **PRESERVE AND CONNECT — GETTING THERE**

The following steps are necessary to preserve and connect the Midtown community:

- a. Amend the City's Zoning Code and create a Form Based Code specific to Midtown to protect and enhance the character of Midtown's neighborhoods and to return to traditional planning principles reflective of Lynchburg planning.
- b. Create a Midtown Business Improvement District to enable a tax collection for specific services and neighborhood improvements.
- c. Where applicable, designate neighborhoods as Historic Districts and encourage residents and property owners to use Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits to rehabilitate historic structures.
- d. Develop a rehabilitation / adaptive re-use strategy as a mechanism to create additional housing in Midtown.
- f. Acquire green space to create a complete green network throughout Midtown.

Additional Implementation Strategies are included in Chapter 6.







## **START NOW, TOGETHER**

Citizens and leaders of Lynchburg will need to continue to work together confidently to make the Midtown Plan a built reality. Implementation can sometimes prove to be a long and difficult endeavor so folks in Lynchburg must pull together various resources to work together. Public and private sectors, civic groups and neighborhoods, residents and business owners, and local government agencies and state government agencies should all work together to implement the plan for Midtown. The formation of public-private partnerships will send a positive message to residents as well as people and businesses looking to locate in the area.

### **START NOW, TOGETHER — GETTING THERE**

The following steps are necessary to preserve and connect the Midtown community:

- a. Form a Small Business Investment Corporation to create and retain businesses in Midtown.
- b. Provide technical assistance to businesses.
- c. Promote the Midtown Plan at every opportunity.

Additional Implementation Strategies are included in Chapter 6.





special places **4**

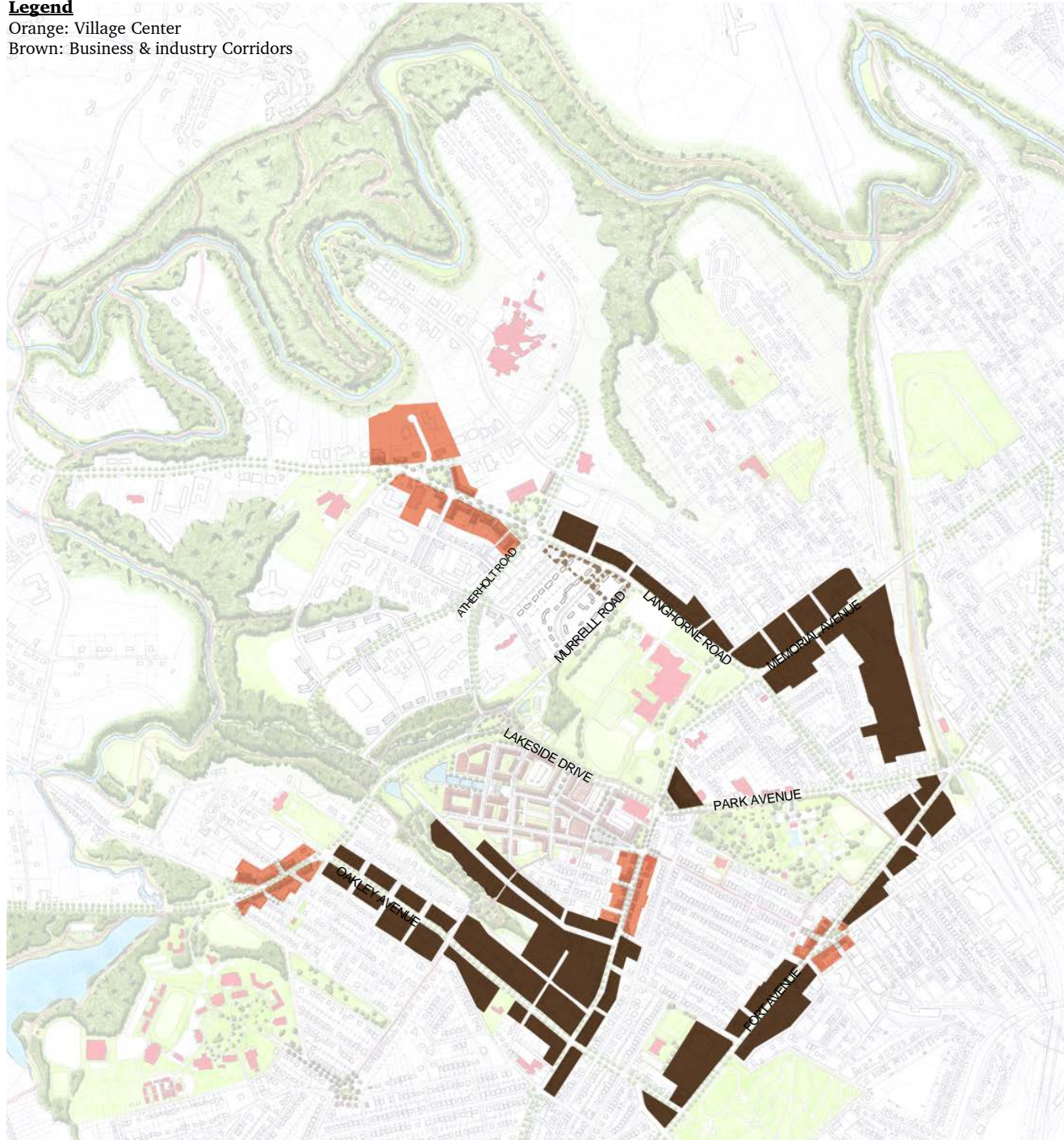
## CHARACTER AREAS

The Illustrative Master Plan for Midtown Lynchburg is a synthesis of six "**Character Areas**", each with its own distinct attributes and special qualities. The areas are organized as 1.) Village Centers, 2.) Neighborhood Conservation, 3.) Neighborhood Infill and Redevelopment, 4.) Medical Arts District, 5.) Business and Industry, and 6.) Green Network. The character areas combine to form a cohesive vision that will guide growth in Midtown Lynchburg for generations to come. This chapter describes the various character areas and details the special places of Midtown.



**Legend**

Orange: Village Center  
Brown: Business & Industry Corridors



**VILLAGE CENTERS**

An assortment of small, mixed-use village centers will continue to make-up the social and economic heart of Midtown. These important village centers should contain a variety of uses in a compact area, easily accessible by surrounding residential neighborhoods. The village centers identified in the plan are to include the Medical Arts District, the gateway to Lynchburg College, a portion of Memorial Avenue near the Plaza, and the intersection of Wadsworth Street and Fort Avenue. Each center should continue to evolve as centerpieces of Midtown life, similar to the Village Center on Rivermont Avenue adjacent to Randolph Macon Woman's College.

**BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY CORRIDORS**

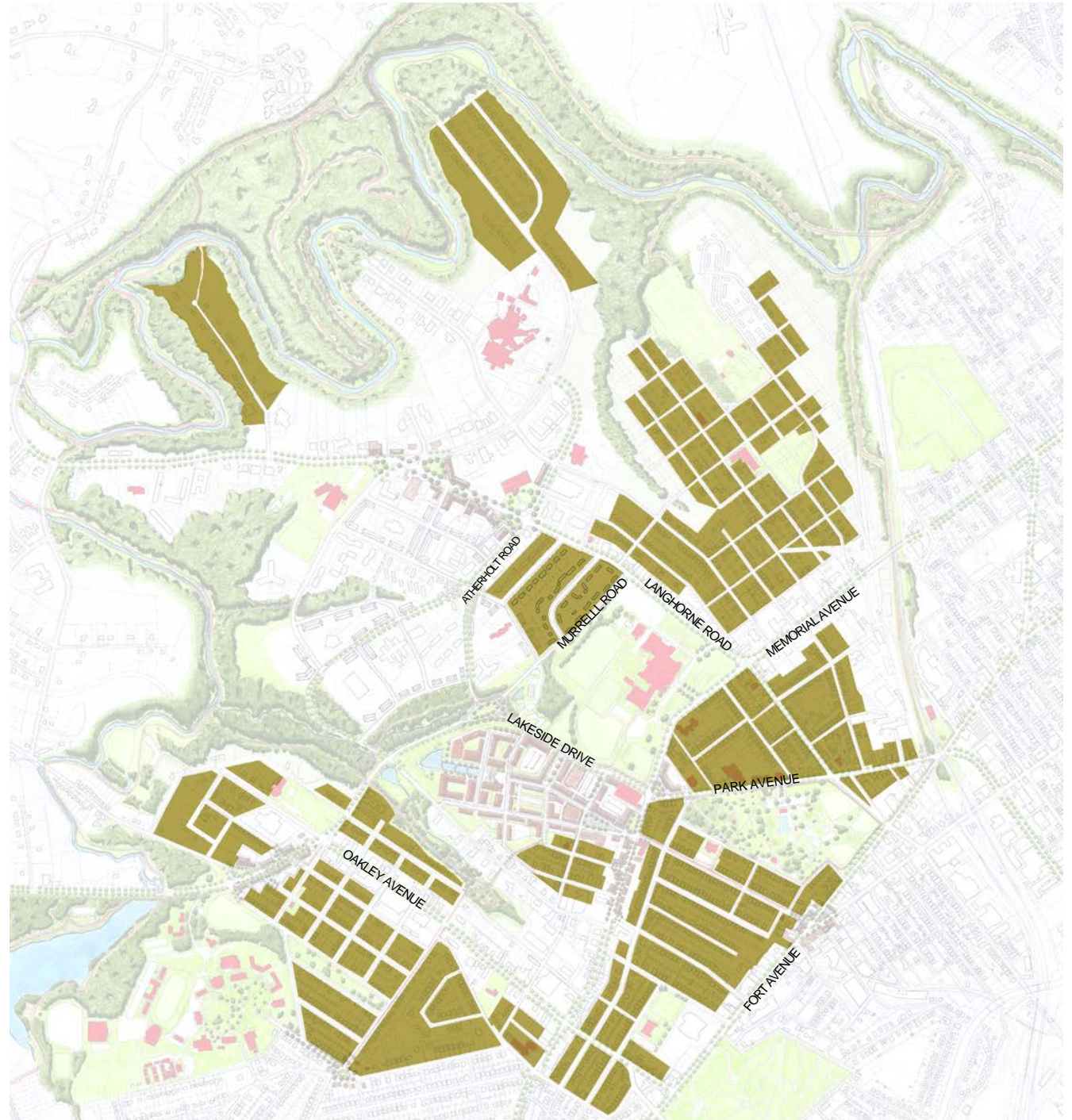
In addition to the Village Centers, several important Business and Industry Corridors are identified in the plan. These well-traveled corridors of Midtown are important locations for business and industry. These central corridors are addresses for many commercial, office, and light industrial businesses, and should continue as prime locations for businesses. Although zoned as commercial properties, these corridors are also candidates for mixed-use development. The areas shaded in brown are either existing businesses or are prime candidates for business and industry. The areas outlined in a dashed brown line could be considered for redevelopment in the future as part of a business and industry corridor. However, property that is vacant, blighted, or aesthetically unattractive should be the first priority. Any redevelopment should be constructed using traditional neighborhood design (TND) principles, outlined in Chapter 3.

## NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION

There are many great neighborhoods in Lynchburg and several of these neighborhoods are located in Midtown. These neighborhoods should be maintained and further improved as high quality residential neighborhoods. This established residential character prevalent in Midtown should serve as an example for the addition of new neighborhoods. The neighborhoods shaded in light brown are ones that should be conserved.



The neighborhood south of Langhorne Road, between Murrell Road and Atherholt Road (detailed above), is not a severely blighted or high-priority redevelopment site, and currently makes a good contribution to the neighborhood. If however an opportunity does arise for the redevelopment of this site, the property must be redeveloped as a mixed-use, traditional neighborhood.





## NEIGHBORHOOD INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

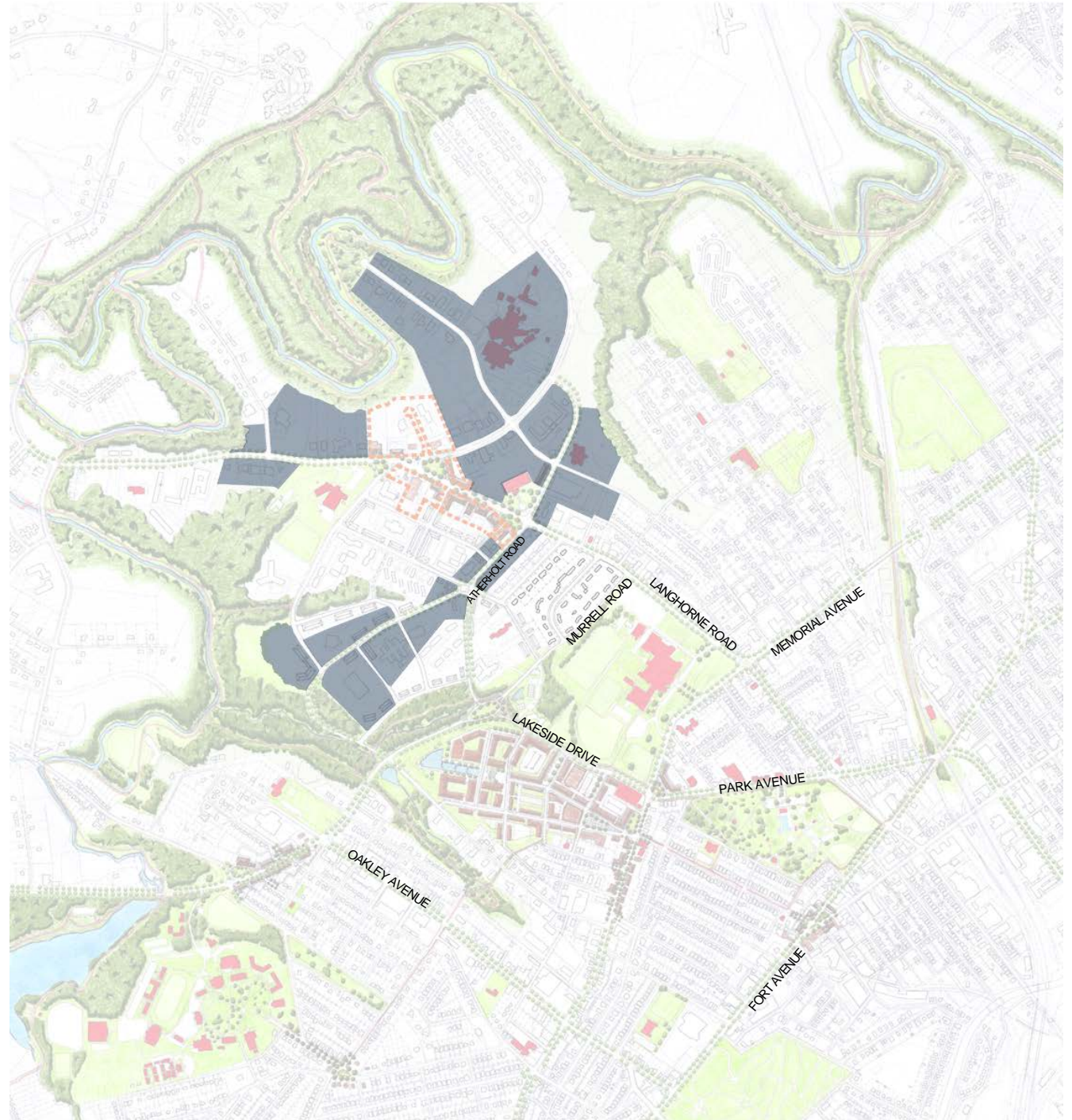
While a strong, stable neighborhood fabric exists in Midtown, a variety of places remain as opportunities for infill development. Neighborhood infill or redevelopment should occur where there are vacant lots, blighted properties, or aesthetically dull structures that are not contributing to the character of Midtown. These strategic infill sites are opportunities to build complete neighborhoods. Any infill or redevelopment needs to follow the traditional planning practices outlined in Chapter 3, such as buildings with doors and windows facing the street and parking in the rear. There are areas in Midtown that are worthy of conservation, however, they could be candidates for infill or redevelopment if, in the future, the market supports higher density residential infill or redevelopment in this area. Vacant or blighted properties should remain first priority for any infill or redevelopment.



If the neighborhood south of Langhorne Road, between Murrell Road and Atherholt Road (detailed above), is considered for redevelopment, the property must be developed as a mixed-use neighborhood based on traditional neighborhood design (TND) principles.

## MEDICAL ARTS DISTRICT

The Medical Arts District will mark the location of medical services located in Midtown to serve greater Lynchburg. The district is designed to attract all services related to the medical field, in hopes of creating a compact cluster of medical facilities. Maintaining functional links is important to encourage and allow for a pedestrian environment and campus type atmosphere for the district. As a great economic engine for the City, the centerpiece of the Medical Arts District is Lynchburg General Hospital. The district should operate as a unique center by providing a mix of uses to serve this prosperous medical community.







## GREEN NETWORK

The plan for Midtown integrates the physical environment with the natural environment. Fingers of green are intertwined throughout the plan, making parks, open spaces, and trails a centerpiece of Midtown life. The adjacent Blackwater Creek Trail is a tremendous resource for Midtown. This unique resource should be expanded to bring access to more Midtown residents. Forming an emerald necklace of green spaces, the extensive green network can serve for both recreational and scenic purposes as well as an environmental system for water purification and cleansing. A combination of walking and biking trails throughout the green network will help to better connect Midtown with greater Lynchburg.

## CHARACTER AREAS — GETTING THERE

The following steps are necessary to achieve the proposed vision for each Character Area:

- a. Amend the City's Zoning Code and create a Form Based Code for Midtown
- b. Promote the Midtown Plan at every opportunity.
- c. Develop a rehabilitation / adaptive re-use strategy as a mechanism to create additional housing in Midtown.
- d. Create an infill development strategy to target locations in Midtown for residential and mixed-use development.
- e. Conduct an annual inventory of land uses to compare the supply and demand for specific land uses in Midtown.
- f. Acquire green space to create a complete green network throughout Midtown.
- g. Sponsor a pilot project program to encourage private reinvestment in Midtown.

Additional Implementation Strategies are included in Chapter 6.

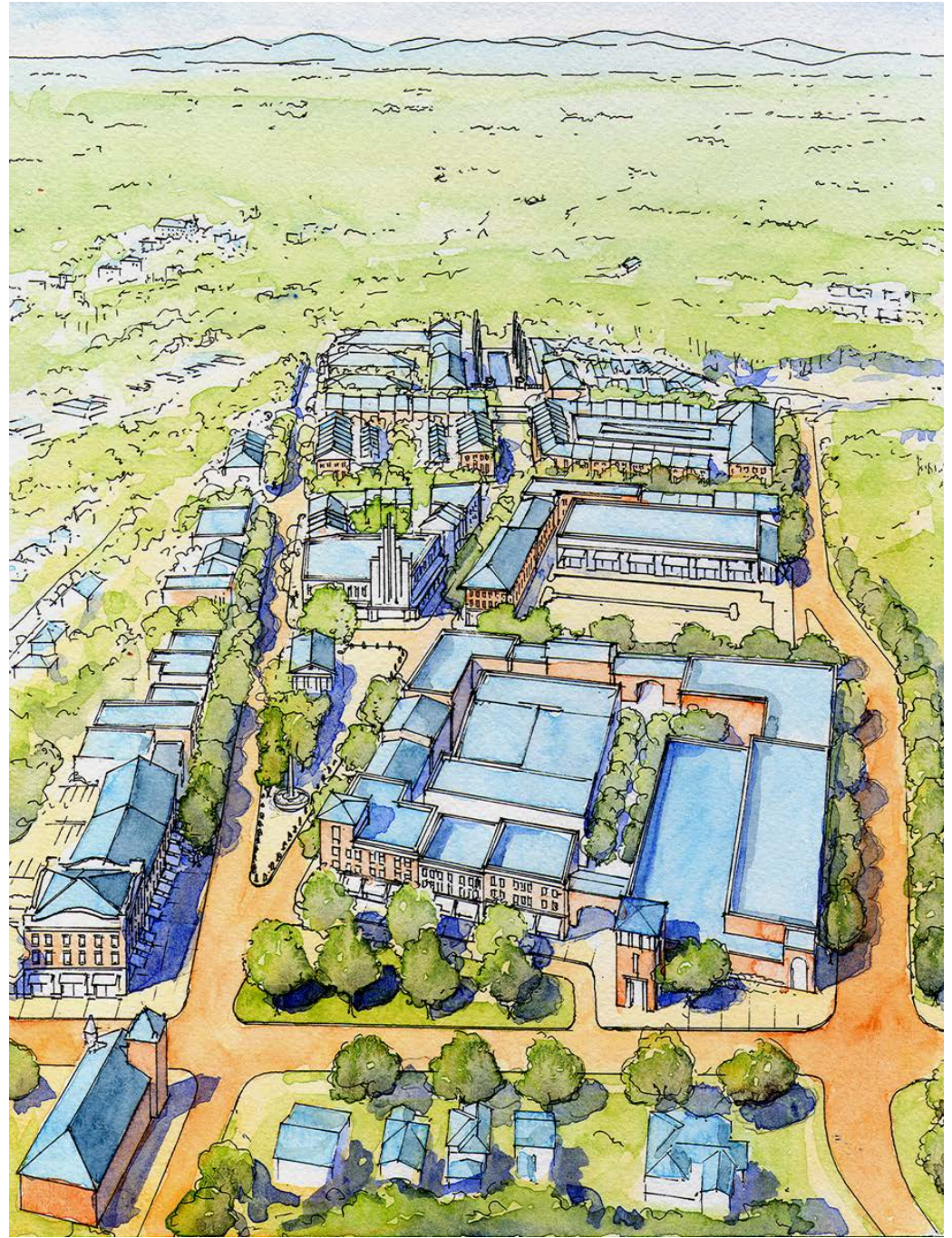
## SPECIAL PLACES

### THE PLAZA

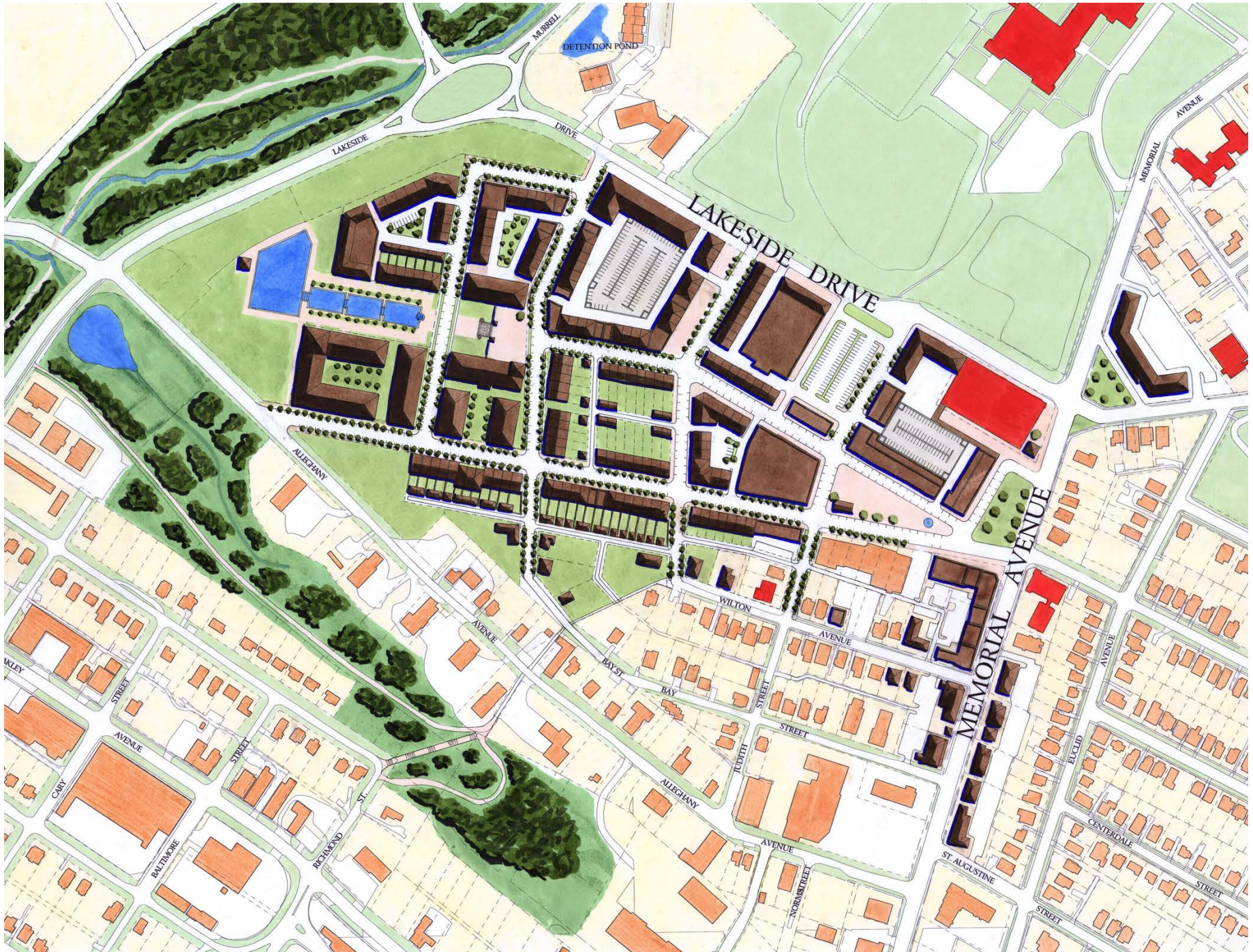
The plan for Midtown includes a conceptual redevelopment vision for the Plaza. The detailed plan for the Plaza shows the location of new blocks, streets, and parking facilities. The single use retail center should be replaced with a new mixed-use neighborhood. A variety of housing options are included in the plan, including mid-rise apartments, rowhouses, and condominiums. Such housing will serve both middle and upper income residents, which will be needed to attract newer types of retail to the Midtown area. Wadsworth Avenue should be transformed into a Main Street of shops, entertainment, and retail opportunities. The Lynchburg Library should remain as a central civic building in the redeveloped Plaza site.



Existing aerial view of the Plaza, looking west from Memorial Avenue.



Proposed aerial view of the Plaza, after redevelopment.



In addition to its pattern of blocks and streets, the redesign of the Plaza site allows for the creation of a variety of unique public spaces within the heart of Midtown Lynchburg. Park View United Methodist Church will be a focal building for a new Village Green on the corner of Memorial Drive and Wadsworth Street. Streets will be oriented to frame views of the neighborhood church steeples and the Blue Ridge Mountains. The primary street of the neighborhood will connect all of the special public spaces, starting at the Village Green, continuing past the hardscaped plaza and ending at the Overlook Terrace. From the vantage point of the Overlook Terrace, residents and visitors alike will be able to relax while they enjoy views of the Blue Ridge Mountains mirrored in a series of reflecting pools. This variety of public spaces will provide a complete range of spatial experiences within a short walk of each other.



Street views can be terminated by civic buildings, such as church steeples.

**Memorial Avenue *change-over-time*:**

Below, an illustration of how the corner of Wadsworth Street and Memorial Avenue could redevelop over time. The far left picture shows the existing conditions today.

*First Steps:* Utility lines are placed underground.

*Short-term Improvement:* A new mixed-use building with outdoor dining replaces the bank on Wadsworth and Memorial. Street trees and on-street parking are added to Memorial Avenue.





View of the overlook terrace.

*Revitalization Continues:* Improvements made to Park View Methodist Church continue to spur revitalization in the area.



*Long-term Improvements:* New mixed-use buildings are constructed within the Plaza site to complete the new Village Square. The new Square provides a gathering place for residents and is faced by focal buildings including Park View Methodist Church and Lynchburg Public Library.

## THE MEDICAL ARTS DISTRICT VILLAGE CENTER

As Lynchburg General Hospital expands and surrounding properties are redeveloped, a new village center could emerge along Langhorne Road. Restaurants and shops would be able to provide a meeting place for local residents, medical professionals, and hospital visitors and a new hotel on the hospital property would provide accommodations for visiting family members. The proposed Cancer Center, to be located at the northwest intersection of Langhorne Road and Atherholt Road, should become a landmark building for the district. Over time, lost spaces should be reclaimed as redevelopment occurs.



Plan detail of the Medical Arts Village.



**Langhorne Road *change-over-time*:**

These illustrations demonstrate how Langhorne Road through the Medical Arts District can become a pedestrian-friendly village center. The picture above shows the existing conditions today at the intersection of Langhorne Road and Atherholt Road.

*Infill Redevelopment:* The addition of street trees and pedestrian-scaled light fixtures increase walkability through the new village center. Over time, new buildings are constructed along the edge of the sidewalk, with shopfronts and awnings to enhance the pedestrian experience.



*Redevelopment Alternative:* New buildings can become landmarks in the village setting. This illustration depicts additional buildings located at the edge of the sidewalk, completing the walkable environment along the street.



## RECONNECTING LYNCHBURG COLLEGE

Lynchburg College and its students are becoming somewhat isolated from Midtown as a result of an expanding "auto zone" along Lakeside Drive. A non-pedestrian oriented environment has slowly evolved along the most direct link between the College and Midtown. The College is growing and the creation of a village center along Lakeside Drive would make a better welcome to Lynchburg College.

The proposed "College Corner" should be a place where students, faculty, and Midtown residents alike could reach by foot and shop and eat. New mixed-use buildings should be built close to the street with wide sidewalks, on-street parking, and parking areas tucked behind the structures. Overhead wires should be removed, street trees added, and the cobra head lights replaced with streetlamps that are scaled to serve both automobiles and pedestrians.



Existing conditions of Lakeside Drive.



Proposed Village Center on Lakeside Drive near the entrance to Lynchburg College.



Plan detail for Lynchburg College area

## CORRIDORS OF CONFIDENCE

While Lakeside Drive, Langhorne Road, and Park Avenue represent three of the primary streets in Midtown Lynchburg, there is little visual indication of their importance. The borders between public and private space are ill-defined, and a number of properties are in disrepair or are vacant lots. This has resulted in a negative image of Midtown for those who travel these streets on their way to the hospital or points beyond. Plans have been proposed by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to redesign these streets as a part of the Crosstown Connector.

Citizens and city officials expressed concern over the physical appearance of VDOT's redesigned streets. In response to these concerns, the design team produced alternative design concepts at several key locations. In each case, an equal amount of attention was paid to the design of the public and private realms revealing how these streets can become a "Corridor of Confidence" for Midtown.



*Scenario 1:* An inviting streetscape has been created through the introduction of street trees and defined parking lanes and the removal of overhead wiring. Buildings are built close to the street and a new focal building on the current Chamber of Commerce site terminates the view. These improvements allow Langhorne Road to become a contributing member of the "corridors of confidence" and a vital wayfinding link in the Midtown Lynchburg street network.



*Scenario 2:* By narrowing the lanes of Langhorne Road a second row of parallel parking can be added to the street. This additional row of cars functions as a traffic calming device as well as a buffer for pedestrians.

### Langhorne Road Redevelopment:

Langhorne Road is one of the primary routes to Lynchburg General Hospital. Today, gaps in the street wall and poorly maintained properties are located along this route (existing conditions photograph, right). Above are two possible scenarios for redevelopment are illustrated.



### Langhorne Road Streetscape:

This stretch of Langhorne Road lacks a strong definition between the public and private realms. Front yards are poorly defined and overhead wires dominate the view. Narrow sidewalks next to shallow curbs make an unfriendly environment for pedestrian activity.



*Proposed Streetscape Improvements:* Street trees and parallel parking create a more pleasant environment for strolling pedestrians. Fences help create a stronger definition between the public and private realm. The neighborhood residential streetscape allows ample space for emergency vehicle passage. Refer to page 5.6 for additional information on emergency access.

### Park Avenue:

Park Avenue near Miller Park currently has two travel lanes and sidewalks on both sides. A historic wall forms the northern edge of Miller Park. There are few street trees and parallel parking is not well-defined.

*Currently Proposed:* The Virginia Department of Transportation's redesign of Park Avenue calls for the addition of one lane in each direction. In this scenario, the historic wall at Miller Park would need to be razed or relocated. The result would be a wide expanse of pavement that would impede pedestrian activity between Miller Park and the surrounding neighborhoods.

*Alternate Design:* Street trees have been added along Park Avenue and in Miller Park. Utilities have been moved underground and the parking lane has been striped. If additional lanes on Park Avenue in this area is determined to be unnecessary, this pedestrian-oriented design is possible. The neighborhood residential streetscape allows ample space for emergency vehicle passage. Refer to page 5.6 for additional information on emergency access.





### **Lakeside Drive:**

The existing conditions on Lakeside Drive do not provide a pedestrian-friendly environment. The Plaza buildings turn their backs to the street and their loading docks detract from the beautiful views of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the distance.



*Current Proposal:* The Virginia Department of Transportation has proposed that Lakeside Drive become part of the new Crosstown Connector. The resulting redesign of the road calls for the addition of two travel lanes and a large safety zone. While a new sidewalk would be added along the north side of the street, Lakeside Drive would remain a hostile environment for pedestrians.

**Lakeside Drive *change-over-time*:**

The first step in improving Lakeside Drive would be the removal of overhead utilities. Power and telephone lines can be placed underground thereby reducing the visual clutter along Lakeside Drive.



*Short-term Improvements:* Lakeside Drive is widened to accommodate on-street parking along the south side. A brick safety zone in the middle would be utilized by ambulances making their way to Lynchburg General Hospital. Street trees and a new sidewalk are added. A new fence is constructed along the E.C. Glass High School property.



*Long-term Improvements:* New buildings are built close to the street on the Plaza site. Doors and windows on the street provide visual interest for pedestrians and activate the public realm. Pedestrians and motorists alike are now greeted with a focused view of the Blue Ridge Mountains.



The following steps are necessary to implement the vision outlined for the Special Places of Midtown:

- a. Amend the City's Zoning Code and create a Form Based Code for Midtown
- b. Promote the Midtown Plan at every opportunity.
- c. Develop a rehabilitation / adaptive re-use strategy as a mechanism to create additional housing in Midtown.
- d. Create an infill development strategy to target locations in Midtown for residential and mixed-use development.
- e. For major street and infrastructure improvements, the City should earmark funds in the municipal budget or apply for grants from the federal government.
- f. Encourage sidewalks on every street in Midtown.
- g. Concentrate retail in Midtown to create a "park once" environment so that patrons can walk to many shops and stores rather than having to drive to each location.
- h. Enhance Midtown streets through physical improvements, street modifications, and infill development.

Additional Implementation Strategies are included in Chapter 6.



transportation analysis **5**

The transportation analysis for Midtown Lynchburg was performed by Hall Planning & Engineering (HPE). The analysis included interviews during the April 2005 charrette with various stakeholders to identify transportation issues, as well as an examination by HPE of the area's transportation context. In addition, HPE studied traffic speeds and street designs in a sample of Lynchburg locations, conducted interviews with City Officials in Public Works, the Fire Department, the Police Department, and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and prepared a Synchro computer analysis of the traffic system. This chapter includes information on specific analysis techniques and initial conclusions in regards to improving the Midtown transportation system.

## THE TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGE

The City of Lynchburg possesses a largely intact pre-World War II network of interconnected streets. The Midtown study area is almost exclusively this type of system. Late 20th century development along the outskirts of the city displays conventional auto-oriented road systems with low levels of walkability, and this is seen in the western reaches of the Midtown study area, but the bulk of Midtown and neighboring in-town areas retain a basic framework friendly to pedestrians. These areas possess sidewalks, narrower street widths, short blocks, and lower traffic speeds which are major contributors to good walkability. From a transportation planning context, the planning team recognizes four primary destinations that anchor local trip patterns in the study area: Lynchburg General Hospital, Miller Park, Lynchburg Memorial Library, and Lynchburg College. In addition, there are several roads that carry traffic through the area on the regional expressway system. Balance is essential to all Midtown planning; the goal should be to provide adequate access and circulation for the local and through motor vehicle trips while simultaneously increasing the inherent walkability and livability of the area.

The planning team has identified the following issues as relevant to meeting this challenge:

1. Specific vision for Midtown urban design patterns
2. Walkable thoroughfare design
3. Context-sensitive design of the Crosstown Connector
4. Completing the thoroughfare network
5. Providing for emergency vehicle access
6. Transit

## 1. MIDTOWN URBAN DESIGN VISION

Much of America's suburban land development pattern results from street and highway networks dictating its structure. Highways designated as arterials change little as they approach developed areas. Generally speeds drop from 55 to 45 or 35 miles per hour (mph), however, on-street parking is usually not allowed in emerging areas and is often removed from older areas. Arterial street designs, by definition, tend to exclude side streets of limited volume, leading to longer block size (600 to 1,000 feet) and higher speed 45 mph, both of which cause difficulty for pedestrians.

To achieve urban places that encourage (and thrive with) pedestrians as part of the mobility mix, the patterns of proposed development must be specified first, during the community planning stage. It is important to note that land use decisions should be the first priorities for cities, with suitable transportation planning to follow. Then, transportation plans for balanced mobility can be crafted with walkability considered first and vehicle mobility second. This is not to imply that motor vehicle mobility will be dramatically reduced, but that pedestrians, being exposed to the open environment are more vulnerable than when they are drivers, and solutions for their comfort are more complex. Often, greater walkability yields only small reductions in vehicle capacity, even though vehicle speeds are lower. Generally more streets per square mile result from a more open network and drivers can avoid the degree of peak hour congestion that occurs when a limited number of large streets break down.

Midtown's transportation network is based on a recommended vision enumerated by the design team, of mixed-use, walkable areas with greater diversity of pattern than currently exists. It includes new links to reduce pressure on key intersections, small blocks, central and outlying "Village Center" districts and many other features. A balance is achieved by land use patterns guiding transportation design.



Langhorne Road



Kemper Street



## 2. WALKABLE THOROUGHFARE DESIGN

HPE found the streets in the Midtown area, by and large, continue to have their historical walkability features. The blocks and streets are appropriately sized and designed to encourage walkability, and sidewalks are generously provided. The planning team witnessed many instances of people walking from the store, families walking together to various destinations, and people walking to church as well. The existing thoroughfare system allows for walkability, however, to improve walkability the area needs a greater variety of destinations to which to walk. While churches, a park, the library, and a school are present, there could be more commercial development to encourage greater walkability for both shopping and employment.

As Midtown undergoes a revitalization process, the most important consideration is to preserve the existing levels of walkability. Next is to increase the walkable destinations in the area, which thereby lessens traffic.

As new streets are added or existing streets are improved, walkability can be maintained through careful application of walkable street sections. Figure 1 is the recommended street section that Hall Planning & Engineering (HPE) has designed to address some of the unique needs of the Midtown area. This street section includes walkable features such as narrow lanes and wide sidewalks, but also provides for emergency access (described in greater detail below.) This is the walkable street section that should be used whenever street improvements are made in the Midtown area.

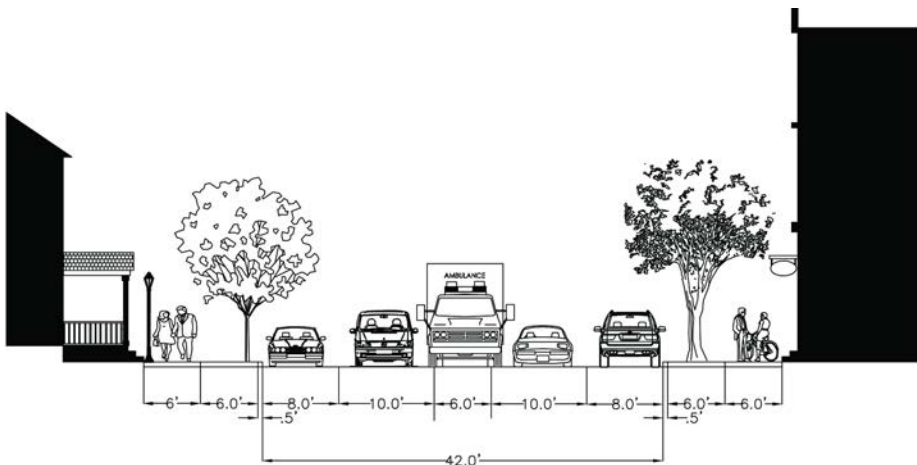


Figure 1: Proposed New Street Section for Midtown

This street section is based on an existing street design along Rivermont Avenue in Lynchburg. This street was tested for speeds and walkability by HPE and found to be very effective, with a few recommended changes to reduce travel speeds. The proposed street sections are based on the Right-Of-Way and lane configurations of the Rivermont Avenue street section.

### Creating Walkable Streets

Transportation facilities and systems provide excellent tools to support the future vision for Midtown, as set by the community. Many components of the urban fabric, including transportation, combine to yield that special "sense of place" - that qualitative sense of comfort and value one feels in a given urban setting. The street is central to this experience as it forms the public realm within which we move, live and play out our daily lives.

Pedestrians are especially sensitive to the quality of public space, since they move through it without the usual protection afforded by home or auto. Due to the sometimes challenging urban and suburban environment for pedestrians, the automobile is perceived as the safe mode of travel for many. The down side is the limited potential for healthy exercise, interaction with friends, enjoyment of nature, freedom from parking and other benefits central to the pedestrian experience.

Travelers with a choice of riding or walking therefore must have an excellent "street" experience to encourage them to venture forth from modern automotive comfort. Captive walkers, those unable to afford a car or operate a vehicle, although less sensitive to street walkability, deserve the best experience the public can provide. Walkers at the workplace can accomplish many daily tasks on foot if the setting and scale are right. The classic walk to work is rare today and is considered icing on the cake for walkable communities; i.e. the last component to evolve for mature pedestrian places.

What factors contribute to an excellent pedestrian experience? Observations and design experience suggest the following prioritized features.

- |                                  |                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Small Block Size!             | 6. Interconnected Streets |
| 2. Buildings Fronting the Street | 7. Sidewalks              |
| 3. Mixed Land Use                | 8. Lower Traffic Volumes  |
| 4. Lower Traffic Speeds          | 9. Street Trees           |
| 5. On-street Parking             | 10. Narrower Streets      |

These parameters have proven themselves successful in the field. When a majority of these are combined in one location, pedestrians are routinely seen. Midtown's walkable streets are no exception to this experience. Therefore, these concepts are applied to support walkability in Midtown.

### 3. CONTEXT SENSITIVE DESIGN OF THE CROSTOWN CONNECTOR

The Crosstown Connector is a Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) transportation project designed to provide greater speed and capacity for vehicles traveling through the Midtown area. The first official mention of the Crosstown Connector was in the "General Land Use Plan for the Langhorne Road Area" by the City of Lynchburg Planning Commission in 1954. The proposed Crosstown Connector is shown in plan (map #4) and identified as a dotted line called "CROSTOWN THOROFARES & CONNECTORS". While the plan for the connector has been studied and designed for decades, portions of the project remain in the planning stages. The current proposal for the Crosstown Connector would widen key roadways in Midtown in an attempt to reduce travel times and congestion levels along key corridors. Specifically, the plans call for the four and five-laning of Kemper Street, Park Avenue, and Lakeside Drive as these streets pass through Midtown.

The roadway design featured in the VDOT proposed Crosstown Connector plan is appropriate for a rural or suburban context, in which there is no existing street system or urban fabric to disrupt and the fast transport of automobiles is the only goal to be accomplished. However, this road design is not optimal when other factors are considered, such as walkability and the prosperity of the areas surrounding the roadway.

Experience with these types of roadway designs in other cities throughout the 20th century has generally supported the notion that these designs are harmful to neighborhoods and urban areas. This is especially the case when the new roads disrupt an existing grid pattern such as that in Midtown. Past experience has been that this road design often brings blight when it passes through existing urban areas because residents and businesses which rely on a calmer street network cannot succeed on highway design roads. Wide, fast roads of the type proposed for the Crosstown Connector invariably divide neighborhoods and ultimately create as much or more congestion than they initially alleviate. Widening roads does not typically reduce traffic congestion; more cars fill the roadway and congestion continues. What is preferred is to have multiple routes and multiple modes of transportation so that people have a choice in getting from here to there.

In addition, existing traffic counts and projections provide at best weak support for the need for this type of road from a capacity standpoint. Figure 2 indicates the most recent traffic counts available at the time of the charrette (April 2005). These counts were loaded into a Synchro computer traffic analysis program and "grown" by 10% to match projected traffic levels. Under this scenario, the existing traffic system continued to operate during the peak hour, though with some additional delay along the Crosstown Connector Corridor. The same scenarios were also conducted for a modified traffic network based on the proposed new street connections from the Midtown Plan. The traffic system worked as well or better than the existing system under that analysis. The Synchro analysis is covered in greater detail in the Appendix C.

For these reasons, HPE recommends that the Crosstown Connector be constructed not as a high-speed, rural-style highway, but instead be constructed in a context-sensitive design as an urban Boulevard. By improving and increasing the existing street network, additional traffic can be moved through the Midtown area efficiently without also destroying the existing and vital urban fabric (see Figure 2). The following key modifications to the current Crosstown Connector plans would be necessary under the Midtown Plan:

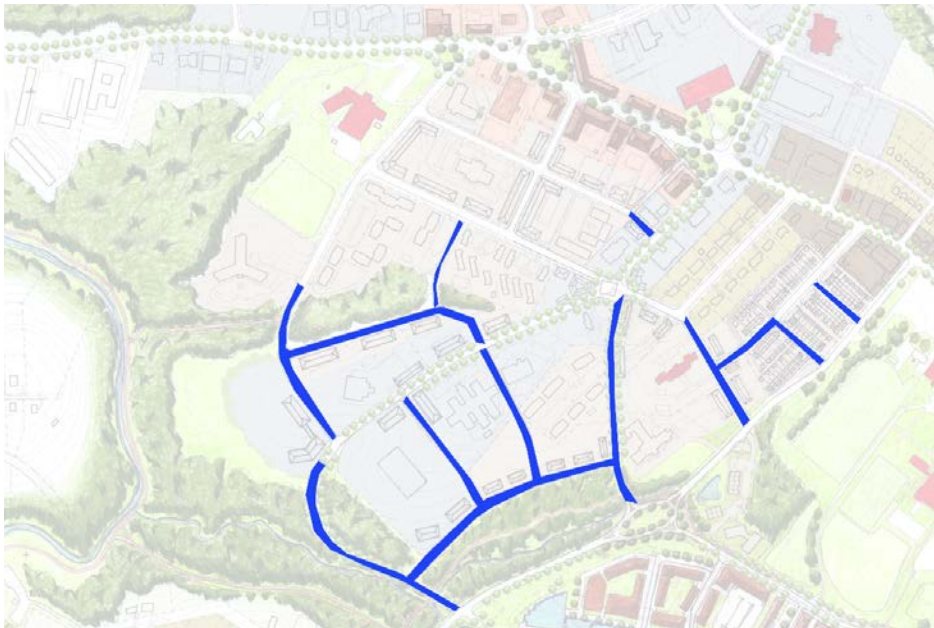
- Due to past City commitments and expectations of stakeholders, it was agreed to proceed with the four and five laning of Kemper Street to Fort Avenue, and Park Avenue from Fort Avenue to Langhorne Road. There is still the opportunity for the widened street to provide for pedestrian comfort and mobility. The design team identified several redevelopment opportunities for this corridor that could provide a walkable location, if the four / five laned street is appropriately designed (street trees, sidewalks, and narrower travel lanes).
- On the remaining sections of the Crosstown Connector – Park Avenue (west of Langhorne Road) and Lakeside Drive (between Memorial Avenue and Old Forrest Road) – reconstruct the street using the recommended street section. HPE's Synchro traffic analysis (described in greater detail in Appendix C) indicates that a two lane section on these streets will provide for automobile conditions comparable to the proposed Crosstown Connector four lane sections, and no worse than the existing conditions.



## 4. COMPLETING THE THOROUGHFARE NETWORK

Although the Plaza is now located in the center of the Midtown area, at the time of construction following WWII it was "on the edge of town". Development patterns since the 1950's have been more automobile-oriented, with longer blocks, lower density, and faster roadway design speeds. Consequently, the newer street network to the north and west of the Plaza is generally less connected and less walkable than the older areas to the east and south. The design team identified two possible new streets that could be used to improve the connectivity to the northern portion of Midtown (especially in the direction of the hospital.)

These connections are important for two reasons. First, they provide a finer network of streets with greater options for automobile travel. This reduces the need for wider arterial streets by maximizing the alternative route choices for automobile drivers. Second, the finer network of streets increases the walkability of the thoroughfare network by providing shorter routes for pedestrians and bicyclists.



A new roundabout has been created at the intersection of Murrell Road and Lakeside Drive. The extension of Atherholt Road and the creation of several new streets directly link the Plaza site to the Medical Arts District. With the expansion of the street network, the door is opened for several redevelopment and infill opportunities in the area. Another additional benefit is improved circulation in the area. As the existing apartment and medical office buildings in the neighborhood become obsolete, these sites could be redeveloped with buildings oriented to the street.

The recommended connections go from Allegheny Avenue and Lakeside Drive north to connect to Atherholt Road (shown in Figure 3 as dashed lines). These new connections would provide additional access opportunities to and from the hospital. At the intersection of Lakeside Drive, Murrell Road, and the new Atherholt Road extension, an elliptical roundabout pattern could be constructed to improve the traffic flow at the existing intersection. The street section shown in Figure 1, with appropriate modifications for on-street parking, is recommended for these new streets. These connections are critical for access to Lynchburg General Hospital, particularly for those traveling from the west.

In addition to the walkable thoroughfare streets, Lynchburg has an opportunity to create greater walkability through the non-motorized thoroughfare system. The design team identified a way to connect the existing Blackwater Creek trail system through the redeveloped Midtown area using a multiuse path along the west side of the Plaza. The bike trail would connect the Blackwater Creek Trail System to the Kemper Street Station. With the urban area, this system would be used for transportation as well as recreation. The path connection provides an even finer level of walkability and bikeability for the Midtown area.

## 5. EMERGENCY VEHICLE ACCESS

The proximity of Lynchburg General Hospital provides an important stimulus for economic investment and redevelopment in Midtown. In designing the thoroughfare system for the area, the presence of the hospital presents two requirements: first, the system must account for the common presence of emergency vehicles such as ambulances. Second, the system must provide clear travel direction for visitors and residents seeking the hospital.

Walkable streets provided in a traditional neighborhood design context are invariably narrow streets, with parking on one or both sides. This design is safe and appropriate for areas where emergency vehicle access is infrequent. In such neighborhood areas, traffic is expected to be light and emergency vehicle passage can take place with little or no interference. On a busier city street, however, and with the proximity of a hospital that will generate routine and relatively frequent emergency vehicle passage, the narrow Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) walkable street design can be modified to further accommodate safe travel of emergency vehicles.



Rivermont Avenue at Randolph Macon Woman's College

Figure 4: Rivermont Avenue Street Section is the Model for the Proposed Midtown Street Section

The street section that HPE has recommended, shown in Figure 1, provides for safe and routine passage of emergency vehicles while maintaining the traffic-calming effects of narrow lanes and on-street parking, using the 45' street pavement width that already exists on Rivermont Avenue, one of Lynchburg's premier streets (Figure 4). The proposed section incorporates 8' parking lanes, one 10' travel lane in each direction, and a 6' foot center area that can be traversed by emergency vehicles. This area will be either cobbled or equipped with a contrasting pavement color to discourage regular use as a travel lane, but the area can be straddled by an emergency services vehicle. Automobiles will pull to the side to provide room for the emergency services vehicle to pass safely at speed.

HPE also interviewed the Lynchburg Fire Department and took measurements and turn radius dimensions from the Department's vehicles (Figure 5). The Fire Department indicated that they routinely use the existing Lynchburg street system and do not regard the street widths as particularly difficult. They also indicated their general agreement with the proposed street sections.

In addition to providing emergency services vehicle passage, this street section will also assist in orienting visitors and patients to the hospital. Streets that lead to and from the hospital will be designated to receive the new street treatment. In addition, signage will be provided indicating hospital direction. But most importantly, for this purpose, the general character, attractive appearance, and directional clarity of the redesigned



Figure 5: HPE staff measured Lynchburg Fire Department vehicles to create accurate turning specifications.

thoroughfare system will help create a "corridor of confidence" to direct visitors and patients to the hospital.

While Lakeside Drive, Langhorne Road, and Park Avenue represent three of the primary streets in Midtown Lynchburg, there is little visual indication of their importance. The borders between public and private space are ill-defined, and a number of properties are in disrepair or are vacant lots. This has resulted in a negative image of certain sections of Midtown for those who travel these streets on their way to the hospital or points beyond. The industrial image of Kemper Street and parts of Park Street can be confusing to first time visitors who think they have made a wrong turn to get to the hospital.

Citizens and City officials expressed concern over the physical appearance of VDOT's redesigned streets. In response to these concerns, the design team produced alternative design concepts at several key locations. In each case, an equal amount of attention was paid to the design of the public and private realms revealing how these streets can become a "corridor of confidence" for Midtown.

## 6. TRANSIT

Hall Planning & Engineering (HPE) studied the transit system in Lynchburg and met with transit patrons and the Director of the Greater Lynchburg Transit Company (GLTC). The following items were identified by GLTC and the planning team as most important to the study:

1. The main transfer center is located at the Plaza, adjacent to the public library. The current design of the transfer center, as shown in Figure 6, requires patrons to cross an active street in order to transfer between buses and walk to surrounding businesses and residences. This presents a safety hazard for patrons. However, the City currently rents the space for the transfer center from the Plaza owners, which makes the construction of a more suitable facility financially challenging. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds that could be used to build a new facility cannot be secured for rental property.
2. GLTC patrons desire continued access to the Plaza, both in its current condition and as the future vision emerges. The Plaza is a center Midtown location which attracts patrons and this will continue regardless of the future disposition of the Plaza. A great concern of GLTC patrons and certain Midtown residents is that transit would be excluded entirely from the re-designed Plaza, thus excluding transit users from any benefits of redevelopment.



Figure 6: The current bus transfer facility, located at the Plaza, requires patrons to cross an active street to transfer between buses.

3. GLTC has decided to develop a City-wide transit study, expected to get underway in late 2005 and be completed in 2006. The study will explore every aspect of public transit including, 1) the best location for a transit center or transit centers, 2) the potential for quieter, smaller, and more fuel efficient vehicles, 3) the best accessibility features for all transit customers including those with disabilities, and 4) the potential for alternative routing.

During the charrette of the Midtown Area, a conceptual transfer center layout was studied for better safety and access. However, it was decided that the GLTC City-wide transit study would have to be completed before any transit center redesign at the Plaza site could be properly incorporated. The redesign would have to be balanced with the final conclusions of the transit study and the investment requirements for future redevelopment of the Plaza site.

In the mean time, preliminary Midtown Plan analysis and discussions with GLTC revealed the following:

- If it is determined that GLTC maintain one transit transfer facility for the entire service area at the Plaza site, then it would require close to an entire city block to be done properly. Items such as lay over facilities, bathrooms, ticket booths, supervisor office, etc. would be in this central transit center. This is more area than the current Plaza layout can accommodate. It is also more area than the design team thinks would be available to attract investment in the Plaza site.
- A transit transfer facility that takes up an entire city block would generate significant bus traffic. Therefore, it would be very important to coordinate the needs of any future investors, developers, retailers, or other businesses with the transit-user community. Noise and pollution from large buses must not deter ridership or business investment.
- To maximize FTA funds, the City would need to purchase the property for a transit facility, which would further reduce the amount of property available for private development. Property ownership and the market demands of investors are two important factors for future redevelopment.

Transit is considered important to the success of Midtown redevelopment. The walkable village center design alone will increase the usability of the Plaza area for transit patrons and ensure continued access to whatever redevelopment occurs. To insure that patrons can still reach the Plaza, at a minimum, sufficient bus lines and headways below 30 minutes are recommended by the design team. The block and street structure of the redesigned Plaza would easily accommodate bus stops throughout the location, providing safety and maximum flexibility to the transit system in terms of bus stop location.

For these reasons, the design team, in consultation with the City, determined that the main bus transfer facility would be better re-located to another place, perhaps to the alternative location indicated by the GLTC Director.

Transit is still considered important to the success of Midtown redevelopment. The walkable village center design alone will increase the usability of the Plaza area for transit patrons and ensure continued access to whatever redevelopment occurs. To insure that patrons can still reach the Plaza

sufficient bus lines and headways below 30 minutes are recommended. The block and street structure of the redesigned Plaza will easily accommodate bus stops throughout the location, providing maximum flexibility to the transit system in terms of bus stop location.

## SUMMARY

By designing the desired land uses first and then creating a transportation system that serves those land uses, and by making walkability a central feature of the desired future land uses and transportation system, the Midtown Plan creates a thoroughfare system that is sustainable, moves traffic, and provides internal circulation in the Midtown area. The proposed system will allow regional transportation and create greater access to key Midtown destinations. The proposed street sections will allow routine passage of emergency vehicles and provide greater legibility and navigability through the corridor of confidence concept. Finally, the proposed alternative to the Crosstown Connector will move future traffic as well as the original Crosstown Connector concept, and will have the additional advantages of context-sensitive design, greater connectivity, and maintenance of the existing community fabric and walkable character.









August 5, 2005

MIDTOWN LYNCHBURG

implementation

6

The community vision for Midtown Lynchburg has been documented in the preceding chapters of this report through plans, illustrations, and text. This chapter identifies the necessary steps for realizing the place depicted in the imagery, transforming the community vision into a built reality. The following steps address policy recommendations, regulatory changes, public-private partnerships, neighborhood revitalization mechanisms, economic development goals, and business recruitment and retention strategies.

## **POLICY AND REGULATORY CHANGES**

### **1. APPLICATION OF THE MASTER PLAN.**

The Midtown Plan is a supplement to or amendment to the City's 2002 - 2020 Comprehensive Plan. This plan sends an important message to property owners and residents that the City Council and community support the initiative and that the City intends to implement its principles. City staff and members of the Planning Commission have a clear direction to instruct applicants to meet the goals of the Plan.

### **2. AMEND MIDTOWN ZONING AND CREATE A FORM BASED CODE**

The review of existing zoning regulations and site analysis indicated that in many cases the zoning in Midtown does not match either the existing use or the goals of the community. Appropriate zoning encourages development by providing certainty. A zoning process that requires additional hearings and variances increases the risk of time and money to developers. By establishing clear zoning that supports the City's vision and provides a visual guide to design criteria, investors can be sufficiently certain that their project will be approved. Neighbors can be assured that what will develop will be desirable, not harmful, to the existing Midtown neighborhoods. The City should rewrite the land development regulations to include a Form Based Code for Midtown.

A Form Based Code is a land development regulatory tool that places primary emphasis on the physical form of the built environment with the end goal of producing a specific type of "place". Conventional zoning strictly controls land-use, through abstract regulatory statistics, which can result in very different physical environments. The base principle of form-based coding is that design is more important than use. Simple and clear graphic prescriptions for building height, how a building is placed on site, and

building elements (such as location of windows, doors, etc) are used to control development. Land-use is not ignored, but regulated using broad parameters that can better respond to market economics, while also prohibiting undesirable uses.

The Form Based Code would allow by-right development of property in congruence with standards set forth in the code. The Form Based Code would streamline the process of getting projects approved because of the investment in public process and consensus that the Midtown Plan incorporates. The City's Zoning Ordinance should be amended to include a Form Based Code for Midtown.

### **3. REZONING REQUESTS**

The City should wield its power to rezone property very selectively, to maintain stability and in particular to direct retail into clustered environments for better performance and a less auto-oriented configuration. The City should work to quickly revise the existing zoning to a Form Based Code to reduce the uncertainty associated with zoning and rezoning requests. The City must work to uphold and maintain high standards for Midtown and should not let short-term benefits outweigh long-term effects.

### **4. APPOINT A DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR**

The City should create a Development Coordinator staff position to begin the implementation of the Midtown Plan. This person should have a full understanding of the principles and intent of the plan. One of the first steps of action for the Development Coordinator should be the creation of a Form Based Code for Midtown.

### **5. AMEND THE MANUAL OF SPECIFICATIONS AND STANDARDS DETAILS**

Amend the Manual of Specifications and Standards Details (Public Works Department, Engineering Division) to include the proposed street sections found in the Midtown Plan.

### **6. PROMOTE THE MIDTOWN PLAN**

Continuing to spread the word about this plan and successful initial projects is vital for implementation. A variety of media should be used: brochures, Internet, or TV are some common methods. Promote the plan so it will start to take on a life of its own and continue to work for Midtown for years to come.

## FUNDING MECHANISMS

To achieve the goals of the Midtown Plan, funding will be necessary. Public funding mechanisms for redevelopment include allocating City funds in the General Fund and Capital Improvement Program, grants from public and private sources, general obligation bonds approved by the public, donations, and general fund expenditures. Funding assistance for private development and economic development includes New Market Tax Credits, Historic Tax Credits, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Federal Loan Guarantees to financial institutions, federal matching funds for Small Business Investment Corporations, federal funding to assist local Community Development Corporations, revolving loan funds set up by local financing institutions for redevelopment and business, and, last but by no means least, standard financing for market rate development.

### 7. GRANTS

There are a number of federal grants available for redevelopment and community service purposes as well as grants for infrastructure. Federal grants require the City to have a Consolidated Plan in order to receive Community Development Block Grants. Lynchburg does have a Consolidated Plan and is eligible for funding. The Federal Department of Transportation also has grants for infrastructure, including funding for roads and highways and innovative transportation grants for research and implementation of alternative transportation. A list of federal funding programs has been included in Appendix F.

Private grants from foundations are available through application by the City, community development corporations and other community oriented non-profit organizations. They are rarely given to private for-profit businesses. Finding grants can be daunting as there are literally thousands of foundations and grant givers; most organizations that rely upon such funding hire what is termed a "development specialist" to research the grants and write proposals.

It is suggested that the City train a staff member in grants research and writing, and to research and apply for private foundation opportunities as well. The City has already been successful in obtaining grants from agencies such as the Virginia Department of Transportation, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Forestry, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

### 8. TAX CREDITS

Tax credits can be very powerful funding incentives for private development. There are three basic credits available now that have application in redevelopment: New Market Tax Credits; Federal and State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits; and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. Several property owners in the city have taken advantage of these programs for their properties in the downtown and center city neighborhoods. In the Midtown area E.C. Glass High School is utilizing historic tax credits for its renovation. The rules for tax credit investment are laid out in the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. Tax credits allow a dollar for dollar reduction in tax (not income) and thus are of use to anyone with a need for tax reduction. Tax credits are often sold (securitized) to investors, allowing non-profits and project owners unable to use them to gain funding for construction and other allowable project costs.

**New Market Tax Credits** permits taxpayers to receive a credit against Federal income taxes for making qualified equity investments in designated Community Development Entities (CDEs). The Lynchburg Community Loan Fund (an affiliate of Lynchburg Neighborhood Development Foundation) is a certified CDE. In addition there are other organizations, i.e. Wachovia Bank and the National Trust for Historic Preservation that are certified CDEs. Lynchburg could apply for New Market Tax Credits through these various entities. For example, Bluff Walk Center has successfully applied to Wachovia Bank to benefit from their New Market Tax Credits. The New Market Credit was authorized by Congressional House Bill 12392, which outlines the availability and terms of use for the tax credit (more information can be found at [www.cdfifund.gov](http://www.cdfifund.gov)).

**State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits** require that the property be listed on the Virginia Landmarks Registry. The Rehabilitation Tax Credits are dollar-for-dollar reductions in income tax liability for taxpayers who rehabilitate historic buildings. Credits are available from both the federal government and the State of Virginia. The amount of the credit is based on total rehabilitation costs. The state credit is 25% of eligible rehabilitation expenses. In some cases, taxpayers can qualify under both programs, allowing them to claim credits of 45% of their eligible rehabilitation expenses. The City's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) should commission an inventory of buildings in Midtown neighborhoods and apply to have certified structures listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register.

**Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits** require that the project be in a historic district as a contributing structure or that the structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Rehabilitation tax credits can be applied to 20% of eligible project costs. The City's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) should commission an inventory of buildings in Midtown neighborhoods and designate appropriate buildings as historic to be included in a Midtown Historic District. Such buildings in the district should be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The HPC should also agree upon a designation of non-contributing but significant structures in Midtown that could be upgraded to contributing status; by doing so, the potential for the use of tax credits would increase and more structures would be rehabilitated and preserved. Owners of historic buildings Downtown and other historically designated properties have extensively used these tax credits, estimated in the millions of dollars as an investment in the revitalization of Lynchburg.

**Low-Income Housing Tax Credits** (LIHTC's) can be used for providing housing to households at or below 60 percent of median income and provide either four percent or eight percent credits. Areas with 60 percent of median household income by household size are calculated every year by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. It is not necessary for all units in a building to be affordable to receive the tax credit; the credit applies only to those units that are eligible. To receive the credit, the units must be kept affordable for fifteen years to receive ten years of tax credits. Non-profit developers, such as Lynchburg Neighborhood Development Foundation (LNDF) and Regency Development have successfully revitalized blighted housing in College Hill, Tinbridge Hill, and White Rock Hill.

Historic rehabilitation tax credits and LIHTC's can be applied on the same project. This means that for affordable housing units in Midtown, a credit from 45 to 48 percent could be achieved in redevelopment.

An information program to familiarize developers and property owners with tax credit opportunities should be undertaken by the City. This could be performed effectively as an addition to the City web site, which is already an excellent resource. Elements would include explanations of the credits, links to credit websites, and downloadable information and application forms. Pro forma templates for calculating tax credits would also be useful for those not familiar with credits.

## **9. SMALL BUSINESS INVESTMENT CORPORATIONS**

Small Business Investment Corporations (SBIC's) are business development venture funds for business creation and development that are regulated by the Small Business Administration. The federal government will match local funding at a three to one ratio. What this means is that if local investors, banks and others form a SBIC with \$1 million in start-up funding, it may be possible to get grants of up to \$3 million to match. Since the Midtown Plan calls for new businesses to provide the services that are desired by residents, the formation and operation of a Midtown or Lynchburg SBIC could be a means for creating and retaining business in the midtown area. SBIC's are allowed to use funds for investment in small business and to act as an advisory resource. This means that the SBIC employees could fund and advise businesses on issues such as effective use of information technology, effective retailing practices, financial management, employee management, efficient use of resources, etc. The Economic Development Department and the Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce should institute a committee to research the feasibility of setting up an SBIC and work with local and state financial institutions to fund it initially.

## **10. BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT**

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a special taxing district created with the consent of its property owners that allows the City to levy a tax to pay for specific services and improvements agreed upon by the City and property owners. BID's are used to pay for such things as street cleaning and maintenance of special features, programs such as planters and street furnishings, maintenance of parking areas, etc. The formation of a Midtown Business Organization associated with the BID could work directly with the Community Planning and Development Department to implement the Midtown Plan and represent the interests of the business community.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

## 11. MARKET RESEARCH

To identify the most likely prospects for people choosing Midtown for their entertainment, restaurant and shopping needs, annual market research should be conducted, as follows.

Use information from sales tax receipts and the GIS system to correlate sales by category with building square feet, resulting in aggregate sales and sales per square foot by category. Subscribe to a data service such as ESRI Business information services to compare actual sales per square foot by category with the available consumer spending for each category. Make the non-confidential aggregate results available to retailers and prospective businesses.

## 12. PROMOTE RETAIL, BUT NOT EVERYWHERE

It is anticipated that the revitalization of Midtown will require a destination retail center as well as new residential uses. Retail is not a primary generator of local income, but it is an indicator of the performance of the local economy. Because it is a visible indicator, those who come from outside the area looking for opportunities to locate or start a business often interpret retail as a proxy for the vitality of the local economy. The Midtown Plan outlines different areas for retail and commercial centers. It is important to reach consensus on the composition of these areas and adhere to the planning. For example, retail isolated between civic uses and distant from the core loses some of its ability to draw people based upon the liveliness of the district and simultaneously detracts from the concentration of uses within the designated districts. Retailers move to an area in the expectation of support in the form of nearby shops and the foot traffic they generate. The Midtown Plan identifies Village Centers where retail should be concentrated. These Village Centers are located along Memorial Avenue, Lakeside Drive, and Langhorne Road. The Midtown Plan should be used as a guide for the location of retail in Midtown.

## 13. TECHNICAL BUSINESS AND RETAIL ASSISTANCE

Small startup retail businesses typically need expert assistance in areas such as store layout, lighting design, inventory controls and information systems for understanding consumer preferences. Programs could also include assistance with design and permitting to redevelop property in accordance with the proposed Form Based Code.

Business assistance is a task to be undertaken through a Small Business

Investment Corporation, BID, or the Chamber of Commerce. It is suggested that the City, Chamber, and local business collaborate in formation of an SBIC to handle this function. Because of its ability to leverage federal funding, an SBIC could potentially have a greater effect for the same amount of local funding.

## 14. ESTABLISH A PARCEL ASSEMBLY PROGRAM

The Lynchburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority (LRHA), through the City's power of eminent domain, has the ability to consolidate parcels of land for the purposes of redevelopment; the City Council should grant authority to consolidate parcels for economic development, as well.

One strategy for creating new development is the identification of opportunity sites and the consolidation of parcels to allow development at a scale feasible for the type of use desired. Similarly, the City should establish a land bank under the (LRHA), which uses revolving funds to acquire and assemble key sites and solicit preferred development alternatives. The identification of sites for redevelopment can be accomplished through the use of the City's Geographic Information System (GIS) and analysis of the factors required for development.

A new BID and the City collaborate on the formation of a land bank to acquire key opportunity parcels to preserve them for appropriate and supportive development.

## 15. CONDUCT ANNUAL INVENTORIES OF LAND USES

An annual inventory of land use allows prospective developers and businesses to understand the supply and thus the need or demand for various land uses. The inventories should include housing, retail, office, industrial, and warehouse uses, among others. The inventories would show opportunities in the market as well as trends of current redevelopment. The City should conduct annual inventories of its land use using the City's GIS system, and make the results available on the City's website.

## NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

### 16. ESTABLISH A PILOT PROJECT PROGRAM

To further stimulate revitalization of Midtown, the City should challenge private developers to submit proposals for infill development or redevelopment projects to become selected as a "pilot project". A pilot project would be one that exemplifies the goals and vision of the Midtown Plan, serving as a model example of appropriate development for the area. One or more City-selected pilot projects would receive a property tax abatement for a ten year period and a property tax freeze for another two years commencing at the conclusion of the ten year abatement period. The pilot project would also receive design assistance from City staff, including architecture and planning expertise, and the final design must follow traditional urban planning principles (i.e. Wyndhurst Design Guidelines) and meet City approval. The pilot project program should be promoted by the City as a way to raise awareness about Midtown, demonstrate the City's support for private investment, and expedite the revitalization of Midtown.

### 17. DEVELOP AN INFILL STRATEGY

A strategy should be developed to target vacant, underutilized or "soft" properties that detract from the quality of Midtown. Vacant land and derelict buildings offer opportunities for change and redevelopment. In order to seize these opportunities it is necessary to inventory and map the locations of vacant land and derelict buildings and then target new users and promote the inventoried opportunities to new investors. The city has begun a similar effort for economic development, and a similar strategy should be used for targeting opportunities for new housing and neighborhood services. The City can use its extensive GIS system to begin to identify a list of properties that might benefit from infill. This can be done as a part of the annual inventory of land use recommended above.

### 18. ACQUIRE GREEN SPACE

The City should actively work to acquire properties for green space to further complete the green network through Midtown. Approximately 60 to 100 acres of additional land has been illustrated as green space in the Midtown Plan. The City should allocate money in its general fund and seek private sources to acquire land noted in the Midtown Plan for additional trails, greens, and park space.

### 19. PROMOTE A REHABILITATION/ ADAPTIVE RE-USE STRATEGY

Associated with an infill strategy, this strategy should provide policy and guidelines for the adaptive reuse of buildings that have become functionally or economically obsolete and facilitate the permitting process. Midtown property owners should apply for the City's Real Estate Rehabilitation Program (for more information, please contact the City Assessor Department).

### 20. CITYWIDE HOUSING STRATEGY

In order to address the issues inherent in redevelopment, a citywide housing strategy is necessary, as discussed in the City's 2002 - 2020 Comprehensive Plan. The strategy should evaluate how and where to increase housing and the types of housing needed to accommodate the current and future housing market. Such a strategy should provide market-feasible locations for a mix and range of types that will attract a diverse range of residents and help to stabilize neighborhoods.

### 21. INSTITUTE HOUSING PROGRAMS

As part of neighborhood revitalization, many communities offer assistance for homeowners. As part of continued neighborhood revitalization in Lynchburg, the City may want to consider new programs successful in other municipalities. The cities of Elgin, and Waukegan, Illinois offer \$10,000 to \$15,000 per unit to return divided houses to single-family homes. Other strategies include assistance and education for homeowner maintenance with tax exemptions for the improvement value of renovations. Fargo, North Dakota offers down payment assistance as part of a first time buyers program; other cities commonly assist with securing low interest mortgages for first time buyers. In addition to local initiatives, there are several federal programs available to homeowners.

**First-time homebuyer program** - Funding is available from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for first time homebuyers.

**Mortgage guarantee programs** - The federal government has a series of grants for guaranteeing mortgages on single-family and multi-family housing in order to reduce local lender risk.



Master Plan - Appendix

A

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