

June 2023

The Southwest Renewal Foundation (SWRF) is a 501c3 located in High Point, NC. The vision of the organization is to create a modern inner-city manufacturing and business park where people live and work. In 2022, the Foundation received a community development grant from Guilford County, NC to be used for planning purposes. As a result, SWRF partnered with nationally-recognized town planning firm Dover, Kohl & Partners to create the Blueprints for Southwest High Point. This document summarizes the strategies, concepts, and visualizations generated by the planning team to highlight possible changes to the area over time. The Blueprints illustrate opportunities to build more complete neighborhoods while collectively telling the story of a revitalized Southwest High Point.

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DOVER, KOHL & PARTNERS
town planning



“The Blueprints for Southwest High Point demonstrate the benefits of revitalization and redevelopment when public improvements and private investment are working together towards a common goal. The time is now to act on the potential to create signature public spaces— especially walkable, green streets— and to inspire new confidence, as the lights are turned back on at these historic addresses and lost spaces are transformed into creative workplaces, dwellings, and centers of neighborhood pride.”

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Victor B. Dover'.

Victor B. Dover, Founding Principal
Dover, Kohl & Partners, Town Planning

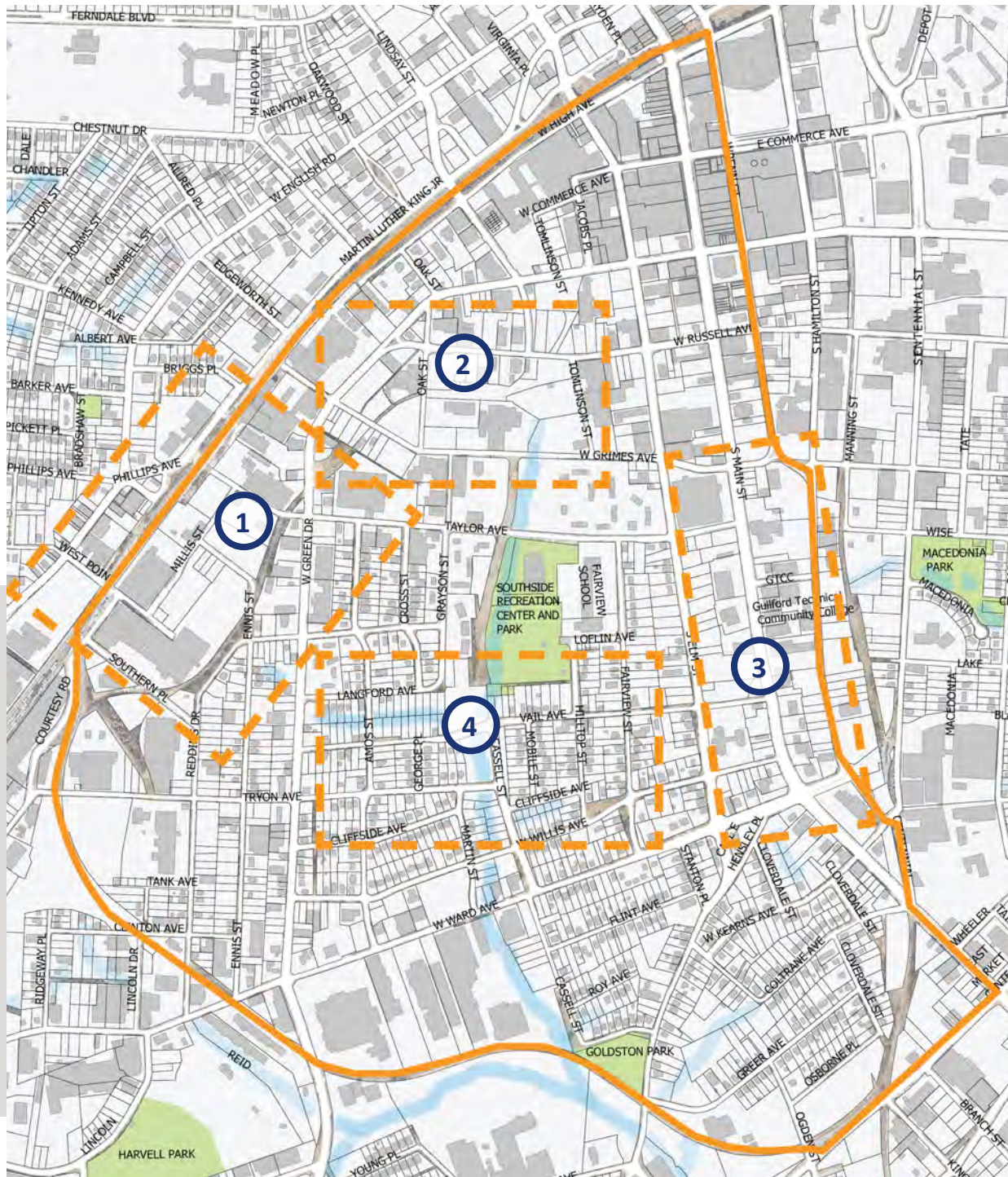
OVERVIEW

The Blueprints for Southwest High Point provide a collection of transferable redevelopment strategies to create a walkable, connected, mixed-use district that embraces modern-day industry, jobs, and commerce along the Heritage Greenway. With its close proximity to Downtown, coupled with a long legacy of industry and a rich history of community, Southwest High Point has the ability to become a proud example of revitalization that both preserves neighborhood character and accommodates strategic infill development. As properties are re-purposed and the lost spaces between buildings are reclaimed, public improvements and private investment can work in partnership to stitch this area of High Point back together in an orderly, smart, and flexible way.

The Blueprints are not a detailed plan for the area, but rather a collection of representative ideas and strategies designed to shape and guide revitalization efforts of Southwest High Point. An over-arching theme of the Blueprints for Southwest High Point is improved connections: physical connections in the form of walkability and great streets; historic connections celebrated in building rehabilitation and reuse; community connections in the form of education, training, and neighborhood pride; and, environmental connections centered on the greenway, parks, and green spaces.



The Blueprints for Southwest High Point reflect the mission of the Southwest Renewal Foundation by promoting economic development through environmental enhancement, while also building upon the momentum of existing revitalization and reinvestment initiatives.



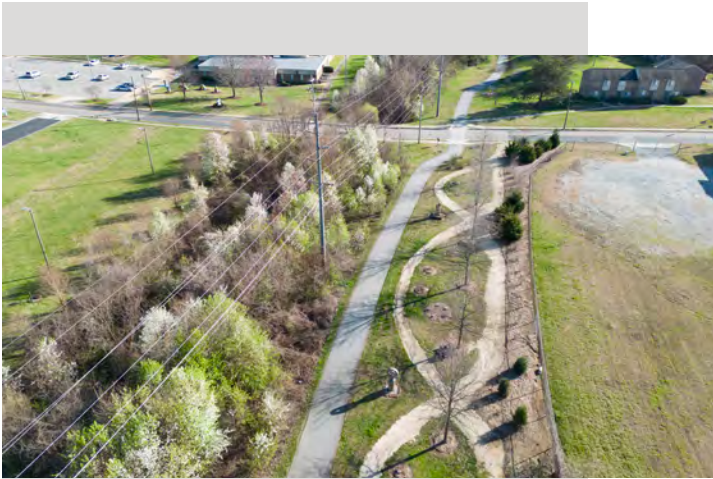
- KEY LOCATIONS:**
- ① Mill Environs
 - ② 300 Oak
 - ③ Main Street/GTCC
 - ④ Southside

The Southwest quadrant of High Point, NC is defined by Downtown to the north, S. Main Street to the east, W. High Avenue and the rail line to the west, and Richland Creek and W. Market Center Drive to the south. This important quadrant of the City includes 535 acres of industry, commerce, neighborhood, and the Heritage Greenway.

A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

The Blueprints for Southwest High Point are the result of on-site analysis, stakeholder input, technical review, and community conversations. From February 28 to March 3, 2023 the Dover, Kohl & Partners team of urban designers and town planners worked in Southwest High Point at a temporary design studio located at Pandora’s Manor. By working in-town, the team was able to sketch various design scenarios, quickly gather feedback, and work interactively with local leaders to further shape a vision for the future of the district.





ONE word to describe Southwest High Point now:



ONE word to describe Southwest High Point in the future:





A SMALL BUILDING CAN HAVE A BIG IMPACT

There are many existing buildings in the Southwest that exemplify a classic American mercantile form that are ripe for re-use and re-investment. Take for example 520 West Green Drive. Once a corner store positioned in a prominent location on the hilltop, the building currently sits empty with doors and windows “blocked” in. What if the storefront was re-energized with new doors and windows to face the street, and the lights turned back on? This small-scale building is in a prime position to make a big difference, serving as a catalyst for change and reinvestment in the area. The activation of 520 West Green Drive is an example of how a small, modest building could have a big impact on the revitalization of the overall area.





A GREEN BUSINESS INCUBATOR

The City of High Point has made a substantial investment in the purchase and planned refurbishment of 300 Oak Street. The City's forward-thinking initiative to transform this central space into a green business incubator sends a message of trust, support, and importance in the ongoing revitalization of the Southwest. The building's unique location along the greenway will also serve to activate the space with a courtyard where people can gather as they walk and bike along the greenway.



Before



After (image property of City of High Point, NC)



Before



After (image property of City of High Point, NC)

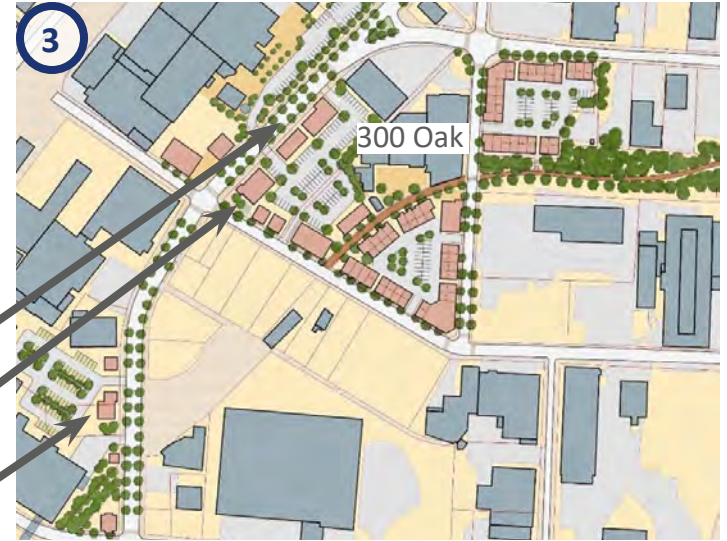
STRATEGIC INFILL

As properties are redeveloped and additional opportunities that bring a more robust mix of uses are explored, over time the missing buildings along blocks, streets, and the greenway will be realized. By supporting strategic infill, a wide expanse of under-utilized real estate in the Southwest can be re-purposed with a range of building types and uses. By orienting new buildings to line sidewalks and the greenway (with parking to the rear), the experience for pedestrians and cyclists will be improved. From live-work units fronting streets and the greenway to flexible spaces with right-sized parking, strategic infill can create more opportunities for people to live and work in Southwest High Point while also improving the overall public realm for all.





Courtyard
 Buildings fronting the
 greenway and public spaces
 21 live/work townhouses
 (park under) with +/- 15,000sf
 flex space



Green Drive retrofit
 Buildings and public spaces
 meet the intersection at
 Green Drive and Grimes Ave
 Buildings front Green Drive



Potential future conditions

CREATIVE INDUSTRY ALONG THE GREENWAY

With its long history as the furniture capital of the world, building, creating, and making things is an important part of High Point's story. A collection of once active furniture and textile mills along the rail line form a historic landscape linking the Southwest area's industrial roots to classic American industrial architecture. Once a thriving district of industry and commerce, the area has the potential to be a reflection of how changing market conditions and a renewed interest in creative strategies can successfully revitalize an area.

The story of revitalization of the mill environs unfolds along the future greenway. A ½-mile segment of the Heritage Greenway is complete and subsequent phases along the abandoned railroad right-of-way will further energize the space as a beautiful, attractive, and green linear park. The greenway will connect the mill environs with Downtown and the surrounding areas, becoming a strategic address as well as a valuable economic development tool.

The industry of today is far different from the industry of the past. Small-scale manufacturing and non-toxic, clean trades where people can make, create, live, and work is the vision for Southwest High Point's next generation of industry.



The striking architecture of former industrial buildings provides a unique backdrop for new destinations and work spaces along the greenway.



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Southwest
HIGH POINT, NC

MAKE GREEN DRIVE GREEN AGAIN

Green Drive runs east-west, parallel to the rail line, connecting the Mill District and Southside neighborhood with Downtown. The City was recently awarded a \$5 million grant from the State of North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality to be used towards stormwater infrastructure improvements on W. Green Drive. With the goal of transforming Green Drive into a “green street”, changes to the space between buildings have the potential to not only improve stormwater management but also create an aesthetically beautiful and adaptable street space.

One key desire is to prioritize “green” over “gray” on Green Drive. Currently, over-sized travel lanes and a wide right-of-way leads to an expanse of roadway (“gray”) with limited people-oriented and natural elements (sidewalks, street trees, rain gardens – “green”). By adding rain gardens and other modern-day tools to manage stormwater and clean it before eventually running into Richland Creek, improvements to Green Drive can serve as a model of green infrastructure not only for High Point but the State of North Carolina and nation as a whole.

Curbside areas can be used a lot of different ways. Understanding the important need for close-by on-street parking, drop-off / pick-up zones, and loading / deliveries, the curbside lane can be configured in a variety of ways to accommodate business and industry needs.





Along the sidewalk, rain gardens and surface treatments will help to slow water down so that as water is absorbed and discharged into the surrounding natural watershed, it will be cleaner.



WALKABLE STREETS

At the intersection of W. Grimes Drive and W. Green Drive, opportunities for public improvements and private investment are illustrated to highlight potential change-over-time. The widths of travel lanes are reduced therefore decreasing pedestrian crossing distance at the intersection. By re-purposing some of the existing right-of-way along Green Drive, the street space can become a more walkable, pedestrian-friendly space with activated buildings featuring doors and windows fronting the street.



MORE OPTIONS FOR THE SOUTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD

The Southside neighborhood sits just a short walk from Downtown yet is one of the poorest Census Tracts in the State of North Carolina (Census Tract 143). Years of urban renewal have resulted in devastating physical changes in the neighborhood, yet the community fabric remains strong.



Southside Neighborhood, 1958



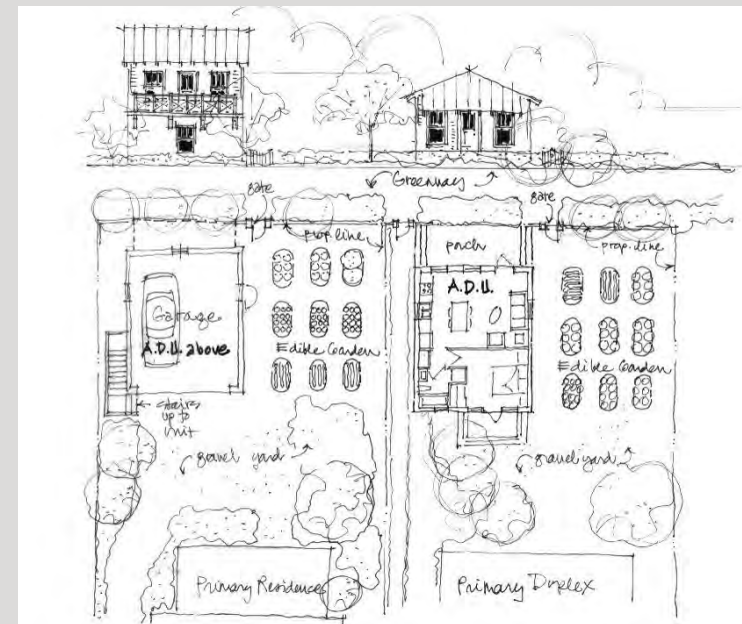
Southside Neighborhood, 2022

The traditional block and street network has been eroded over time with the demolition of housing and widening of roads with only a portion being built back. A fraction of the original population remains yet opportunity exists to reclaim and fill in lost spaces with a mix of housing and other building types to reflect the existing and future needs of the community. This can include allowing workspaces on residential lots, expanding housing options to include garage apartments or accessory dwelling units, or providing for a form of multi-family housing that fits well with surrounding homes such as townhouses, tri-plexes, or small-scale apartment buildings that look like large houses. All buildings should contribute to the historic neighborhood setting with common elements such as porches and stoops, and doors and windows facing the street.



Housing options should be expanded to encourage and allow accessory dwelling units in the Southside neighborhood.

As the City of High Point works to update its Comprehensive Plan, specific recommendations should be included to support opportunities for current residents to continue to live, work, and prosper in the Southside neighborhood. Community outreach should continue and strategies to expand housing choices should be reinforced in updated regulations (zoning and land use policies).



A variety of building types, appropriately scaled to the character of the neighborhood, will provide for more housing choices.

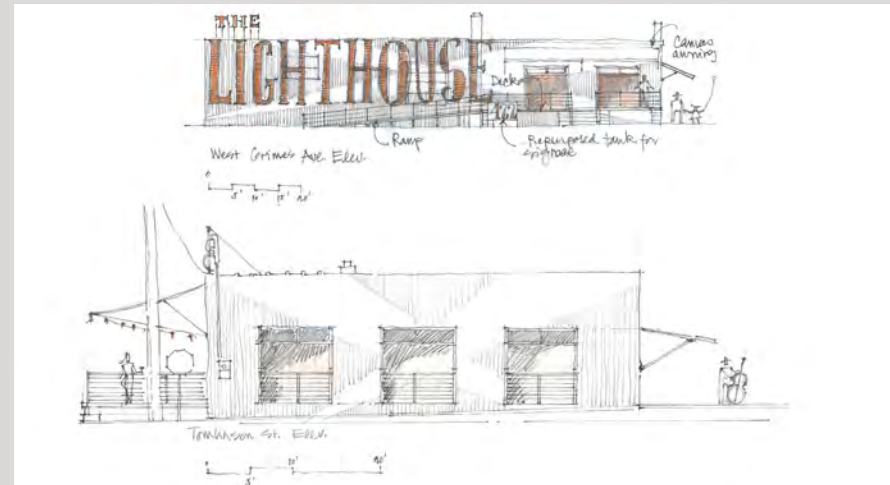
A SYMBOL OF PROGRESS: 422 TOMLINSON

Located along the Heritage Greenway near the headwaters of Richland Creek, the old mattress factory building at 422 Tomlinson was recently purchased by the Southwest Renewal Foundation (SWRF). This simple, utilitarian building is ripe with potential. Years of neglect have left the property overgrown and the building in disrepair. By envisioning something better for the property, while also restoring and repairing this mid-century American mercantile style building, 422 Tomlinson will become a beacon of progress for the neighborhood. This site can be a “lighthouse” – not in the traditional sense of the word, but rather a lighthouse that adds light, hope, and prosperity back into the neighborhood.

Sample drawings and sketches illustrate a simple building brought back to life by opening up walls with windows and open-air possibilities to better connect the space to the greenway and surrounding community. Not far from the City of High Point’s green incubator at 300 Oak Street, the Southside Community Center at the heart of the neighborhood, and Fairview Elementary School, the “Lighthouse” at 422 Tomlinson could house a variety of community activities.

The Lighthouse is ripe with possibilities to become a symbol of progress for the Southside neighborhood and Southwest High Point community.

Building on the history and culture of the Southside neighborhood, the Lighthouse could be a wonderful space to nurture the creative instincts of children across science, technology, engineering, arts, and music (STEAM). The space could also be a place for seniors to gather close to home while an outdoor kitchen or barbecue pit would provide a shared outdoor eating space, bringing folks together for a meal and conversation.



Existing



Future greenway connection

NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS REIMAGINED

Home to a proud neighborhood school in Fairview Elementary School, an active Southside Recreation Center, and recently completed segment of the Heritage Greenway, public spaces in the Southside neighborhood serve to define, connect, unite, and strengthen the community. However, one of the most common public spaces, neighborhood streets, have been over-looked and over-engineered.

Streets are wide and lack pedestrian amenities. As a public space, these existing spaces can be re-purposed to provide a safer and better balance between vehicles and pedestrians. Travel lanes can be reduced, and streets can become more walkable and safe, with sidewalks, street trees, and appropriate lighting. By right-sizing streets to encourage and welcome walking and biking, these key public spaces will instill confidence and serve as a catalyst for additional improvements in the neighborhood.



*The time is now to work together to encourage redevelopment and revitalization reflective of the **diverse character** and **proud legacy** of the neighborhood.*



An example of infill development at the corner of Vail Avenue and S. Elm Street demonstrates how vacant land can be cultivated to build back the once vibrant neighborhood fabric of residences and businesses lining neighborhood streets. What if Elm Street can once again be a prominent neighborhood corridor, offering a variety of housing options and economic opportunities for neighborhood commerce?

S. MAIN STREET: IMPROVED CONNECTIONS

S. Main Street is an essential gateway and entrance into High Point, connecting I-85 to Downtown. It is the “living room” of the community yet the physical form of the street space is not representative of the pride, prosperity, and welcoming environment that residents associate with High Point. With buildings set back from the street, wide travel lanes, and limited opportunities for pedestrians to safely walk along the corridor, S. Main Street divides the community as an auto-oriented, strip-commercial highway.

Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) is located a short walk from the Southside neighborhood (between Vail Street and Taylor Avenue) yet due to its location on the east side of S. Main Street, this invaluable community resource is difficult to access. As the Southside neighborhood embraces community and economic development strategies, it is important to improve connections to GTCC.

Additionally, to better connect GTCC to the neighborhood, it is essential to re-establish the street edge and pedestrian realm with doors, windows, balconies, and storefronts facing the street. Vehicular travel lanes should be reduced in width and sized correctly to accommodate auto travel while becoming more pedestrian-friendly through wider sidewalks and safer crossings.

New street-oriented buildings can fill in lost spaces and support a mix of uses at a variety of scales, from more urban, multi-story buildings along S. Main to more neighborhood-scaled buildings along adjacent streets. Vacant lots present great opportunities for redevelopment and revitalization, serving to repair the urban fabric and make the neighborhood whole again with a variety of housing types, businesses, and walkable streets.



Improved pedestrian connections to the GTCC campus will help to better link Southside residents with opportunities to expand skills, knowledge, and job possibilities.





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HIGH POINT, NC

S. Main Street, reconfigured

PARTNER FOR SUCCESS

From the green incubator district at 300 Oak Street to a renewed interest and reinvestment in the mill environs, as well as economic and community development opportunities in the Southside and reclaiming S. Main Street as a welcoming entrance to High Point, all areas of the Southwest work together as one complete district connected by a blue-green network – the Heritage Greenway. Improved natural systems in the Richland Creek and Heritage Greenway, paired with right-sized, pedestrian-friendly, safe streets will help to better serve and connect Southwest High Point to Downtown and beyond. In addition, a mix of building and housing types with street-oriented architecture will not only shape memorable public spaces, but also provide a range of options to live and work in the area and evoke community pride and prosperity.

Public and private partnerships, with continued community outreach and involvement, will be key to bringing positive transformational change to the area. The Blueprints for Southwest High Point can be used to inform and coordinate these efforts. This collection of ideas illustrates how public and private improvements can honor and support the existing community while growing a more complete neighborhood, with opportunities to live and work in a park-like setting along the greenway.



Interested in getting involved to promote effective change and betterment in Southwest High Point?

Want to learn more about revitalization efforts?

*Visit **highpointsouthwest.org***

for project updates and plan progress.