



*City of Fairfax*

# Old Town <sup>2020</sup> Small Area Plan

**ADOPTED 6/23/20**

## OLD TOWN INTRODUCTION

A Small Area Plans are neighborhood-level plans intended to provide the City with guidance on each of its five Activity Centers defined in the 2035 Comprehensive Plan.

While the Comprehensive Plan advises the Activity Center's development at a high level, Small Area Plans provide more specific guidance for each Activity Center, including desired mix of uses, recommended height and density, building typologies, street locations, multi-modal connections, infrastructure improvements, parking, and open space.

As the historical center and heart of the City of Fairfax, Old Town is a critically important study area. The 2035 Comprehensive Plan highlights this area as an Activity Center, appropriate for mixed-use development and placemaking.

The plan was developed through extensive stakeholder meetings, community charrettes and town halls, consultations with city staff, property owners and other stakeholders. The result is a vision for Old Town that both respects the historical past while planning for an exciting future.

The Small Area Plan effort re-imagines Old Town as a dynamic, mixed-use center with a deep inventory of cultural destinations. Old Town is intended to bring in regional populations to come visit, interact, work, play, shop and dine in the city. It is a unique place within the region, with its historical downtown fabric and its adjacency to George Mason University.

The vision builds on the existing cultural draws: George Mason University and its student and faculty population, the

historic Main Street buildings, Old Town Square and popular events, the regional library, and the local arts community. The Small Area Plan vision seeks to amplify and enhance these assets and showcasing the community to a wider audience. The plan calls for a new Arts Walk, which will highlight professional, university and high school talent, a restaurant district featuring local businesses, an injection of color, light, and vibrancy to the historic structures, and building residential uses into the downtown core.

Lastly, this plan builds on the consensus work and the vision statement of the Old Town Visioning Committee: "A vibrant destination for all people to connect, innovate, and share unique experiences".

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# PLAN VISION

The Development Plan

Key Idea #1: Old Town as a Cultural Destination

Key Idea #2: The Arts Walk

Key Idea #3: Injecting Color into Downtown

Key Idea #4: A Pedestrian Precinct

Key Idea #5: Creating a Balanced Mixed-Use Activity Center

Key Idea #6: “The Spine”

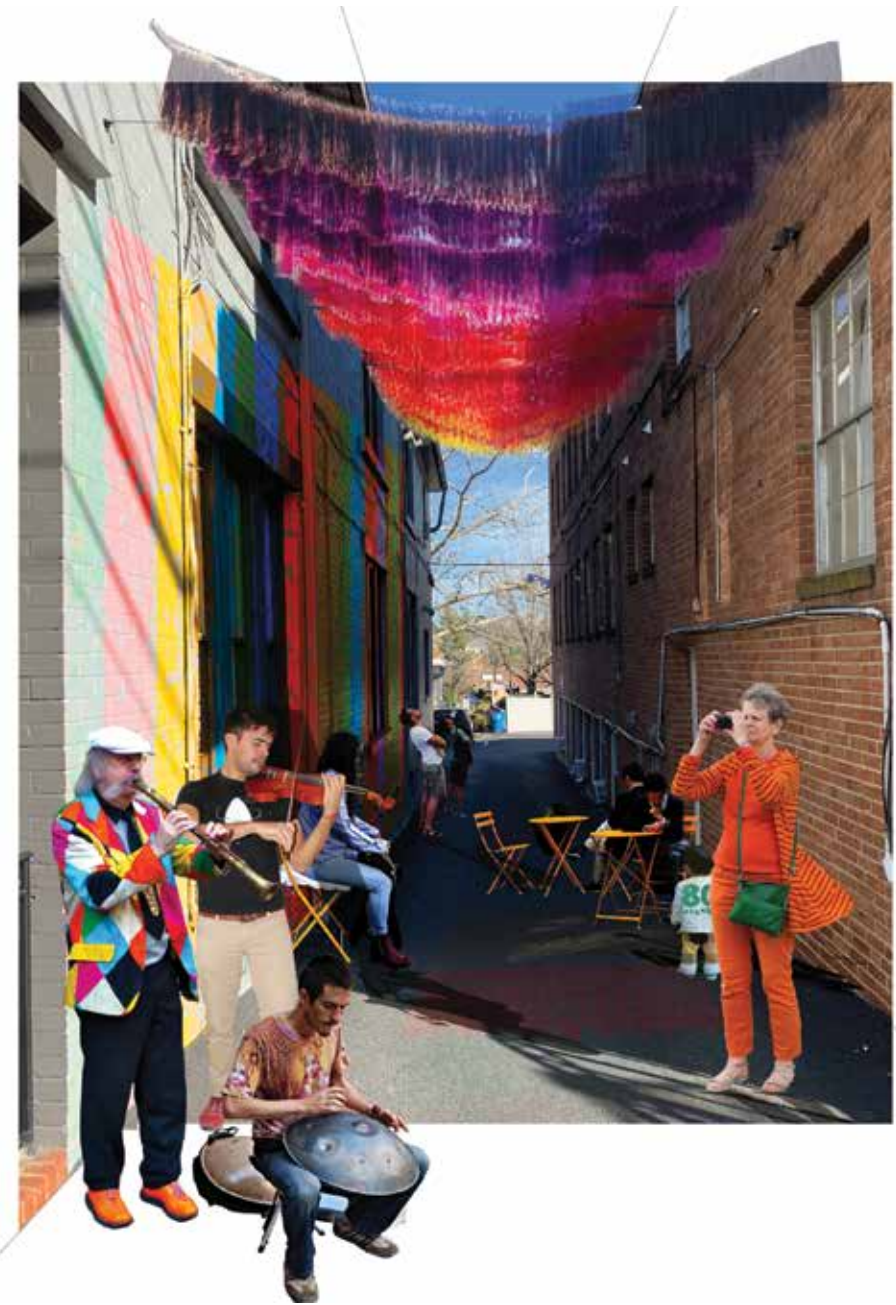
# DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## OLD TOWN



### MAP KEY

1. Historic Main Street
2. Old Town Square
3. New Arts Walk
4. Old Town Parking Garage (Existing)
5. New Parking Garage
6. Regional Library
7. Proposed Public Open Space
8. New Loop Road Connection
9. "The Spine" - Connector to George Mason University



## KEY IDEA ONE: OLD TOWN AS A CULTURAL DESTINATION

### RE-IMAGINING THE DOWNTOWN

What makes a neighborhood a cultural destination? Cultural destinations highlight unique businesses, history, the arts, and music and showcase these elements to foster economic and social vibrancy. Examples of cultural destinations range from historic Old Town Alexandria to modern developments like the High Line in New York City.

Old Town is already a unique historical district with specialty shops and restaurants serving nearby residents, workers, and visitors alike. The plan proposes amplifying this existing cultural and economic context to make Old Town an unforgettable destination for the

region. The anticipated result is a vibrant and authentic mixed-use neighborhood, rooted in the past, supported by the local community but beloved regionally.

What sort of uses will support this re-imagined cultural destination?

- **Restaurants and Food:** As outlined in previous chapters, Old Town already has a large cluster of unique food options and festivals. Continuing to support and highlighting this can help establish this as a major regional food destination.

- **History:** Old Town as part of both a national register historic district and local historic district has an intrinsic history few other places in northern Virginia can compete with. Emphasizing and linking these uses to festivals, the arts, hospitality, and retail can help bolster Old Town as a cultural destination.

- **The Arts:** Old Town already has a number of retail establishments and residents involved in music and the arts. This artistic community is unique to Northern Virginia. Cultural uses that support the visual, performing arts, and live music

will help distinguish Old Town from other retail and restaurant destinations in the region. Arts uses not only support economic vitality but also foster a better civic life that will help reinforce local residents connection to Old Town.

- **The Judicial Center** is a natural partner for activation of historical buildings like the Courthouse and the Legato School through lighting and programming. Through future engagement with the Judicial Center Master Plan, the city has a unique opportunity to leverage support for shared cultural and economic uses.

- **George Mason** is a vibrant university with an active arts community, sports facilities, and unique culture of its' own. Bringing some of that culture downtown-whether it be a performing or fine arts facility or homecoming parade - should be a central focus of future planning efforts. Fostering Old Town as George Mason's hometown will help attract alumni, university visitors, and students alike to Old Town which in turn will help retail, business, and cultural institutions thrive.



## KEY IDEA TWO: THE ARTS WALK

### CREATING A UNIQUE DESTINATION EXPERIENCE

Placemaking “is the practice of using a community’s public amenities to make economic progress”<sup>1</sup> and cultural vitality.

The architecture of Old Town is undoubtedly one of the most important assets of the study area. Unique historic buildings already help define the neighborhood as a recognizable place unique in the region.

However, the same unique urban design also creates limited outdoor public space due to narrow sidewalks, and often busy roads.

The plan proposes re-investigating the alleyways, parking lots, and often neglected rear and side facades of the historic district and activating them as spaces for the arts, seating, and entertainment for the city.

The above graphic demonstrates how an interconnected series of spaces could be transformed into active community spaces equipped with murals, art installations, and seating. During special events, parking lots could be transformed to event spaces or spaces for the arts.

Small tactical urban design interventions - like adding planters, painting an unsightly wall, transforming

underused spaces to patio seating, and more - could provide the retail the space they need to compete with modern shopping areas while also giving people a unique view of the historical neighborhood they had never seen before.

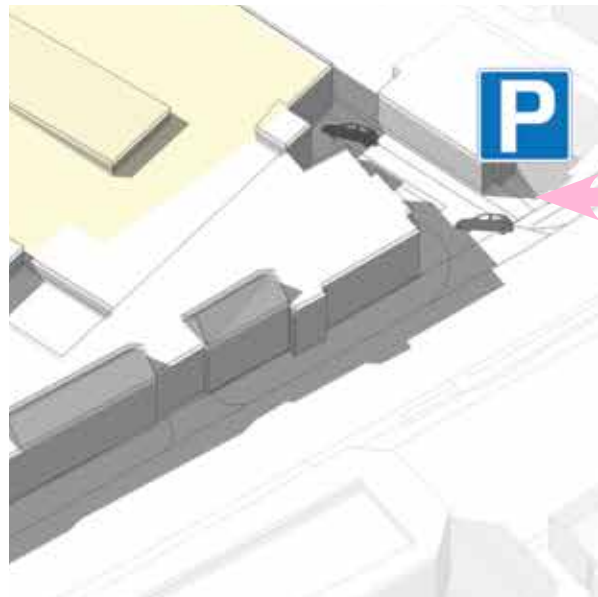
These urban “in-between” space are often used for service as alleys or parking - they are limited traffic environments that could be made into

shared use pedestrian focused parts of the study area. The plan does not necessarily remove existing parking and loading spaces, rather, open up possible alternative uses (potentially in off-peak or non-business hours, for example) for the spaces that enhance the properties and the downtown as a whole.

The result is a new safe pedestrian route through the most vibrant part of the study area connecting visitors

from parking to shops and unique architecture and activating economic vibrancy and the local arts culture.





**BETTER VISIBILITY AT PARKING GARAGES**

Larger signage consistent graphically with regional parking signs.

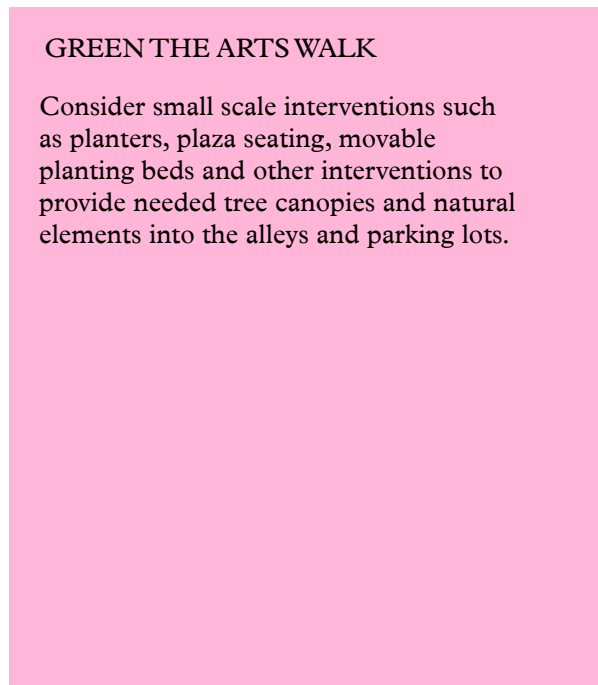
Graphic language should utilized a blue color with similar font as found in Fairfax County, Arlington County, Alexandria, and other jurisdictions not just at this garage but at all garage locations in Old Town.



**VISUALLY OPEN THE PLAZA TO THE PUBLIC**

Consider removing the existing fountain to allow the plaza to have more outdoor seating and be visually open to the sidewalk.

Continue to add inviting small scale interventions such as overhead lighting, murals, and art interventions to make the plaza an active public space.



**GREEN THE ARTS WALK**

Consider small scale interventions such as planters, plaza seating, movable planting beds and other interventions to provide needed tree canopies and natural elements into the alleys and parking lots.



**ILLUMINATE HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Consider partnering with the County to illuminate the historic courthouse to create a visual nighttime connection.

Consider using the historic lawn as an active community space to hold events such as movie watching, local festivals, and art installations to bring people from the arts walk and retail to the resource.

Partner with property owners to explore ways to illuminate and activate privately held historic resources.

Other historic resources in the City, such as Old Town Hall and the Ratcliffe-Allison-Pozer House, and other structures, should be illuminated.



**PARKING LOTS AS PUBLIC SPACE**

Activate the parking lots and alley spaces with murals, art, overhead lights and installations, and with temporary retail pop ups to make more pedestrian activity in these spaces.

Consider a cohesive branding strategy, specialty painting of pavement, temporary closure of lots for events, and other interventions to make these spaces an permanent recognizable arts destination.

**THE ARTS WALK: HIGHLIGHTED DETAILS**



## KEY IDEA THREE: INJECTING COLOR INTO DOWNTOWN CELEBRATING HISTORIC FABRIC

The core of Old Town contains an eclectic collection of historic structures and newer buildings. While many structures themselves are quite distinctive, the overall sense of downtown is that it is fairly monochromatic and bland. The plan vision calls for the introduction of color to downtown by more consistently painting and detailing buildings with more varied colors.

Colorful historic downtowns can be found across the region - good examples of vibrantly colored streets include streets in Old Town Alexandria, Manassas, and Culpeper. These examples build upon the idiosyncratic nature of historic main streets and use lighting and color to accentuate their unique characters.





## KEY IDEA FOUR: A PEDESTRIAN PRECINCT A DOWNTOWN FOR PEOPLE

Today, the streets of Old Town serve as traffic arterials to push through regional volume. More than 30 percent of daily traffic through Fairfax originates and ends outside of the city, meaning much of the through traffic does not interact with the city.

In the Old Town Study area, Main Street, North Street, Chain Bridge Road, University Drive and Old Lee Highway are currently detailed

around traffic volume processing. These streets generally have narrow sidewalks, no bicycle facilities, little to no on-street parking, and high traffic speeds. Pedestrians and cyclists report very high concern with the safety and comfort with the downtown street grid.

The long-term plan vision is to create a pedestrian-friendly precinct in the downtown core. The detailing of these streets will be transformed from

vehicular processing to pedestrian and bicycle-friendly details, including: larger sidewalks, consistent on-street parking to protect pedestrians, sidewalk space for outdoor seating, consistent street lighting and furniture, reduction of vehicular turn lanes, and bicycle facilities.





## KEY IDEA FIVE: A BALANCED ACTIVITY CENTER

### TRANSITIONING TO A MIX OF USES

Today, the outer edges of Old Town are dominated by car-focused single-use development, a reflection of its suburban development history from 1950 to 2020. Most of the available commercial space within the study area is office (65%), with smaller components of commercial retail. Most of the building stock within Old Town was built prior to 2000, and many non-historic structures are nearing the end of their useful lifespan.

Old Town has an opportunity to transform into a mixed-use Activity Center that centers and anchors the surrounding communities. Transitioning to a more balanced mix of uses will help create a better sense of place, bring more activity around the clock, potentially reduce single-use peak traffic, and help create more dynamic public spaces. The existing offices would be greatly enhanced by additional daytime retail, including restaurants, and a

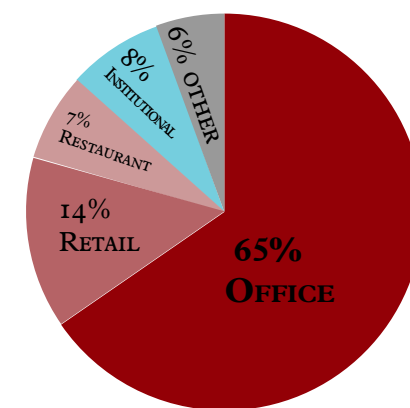
larger nearby residential population.

In the medium-term of 15 years, the plan expects a sizable infusion on residential and retail uses that will help bolster Old Town and bring public benefits and amenities.

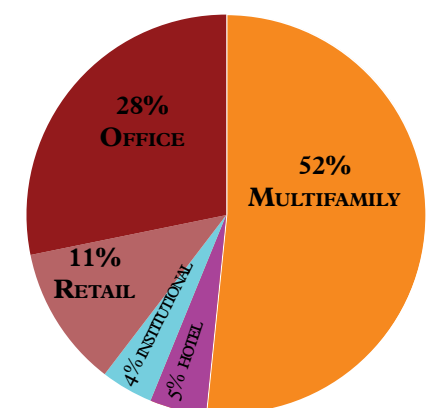
Above left, an example of a townhouse development in historic Ledroit Park, Washington, DC

Above middle, an example of a shared pedestrian oriented street.

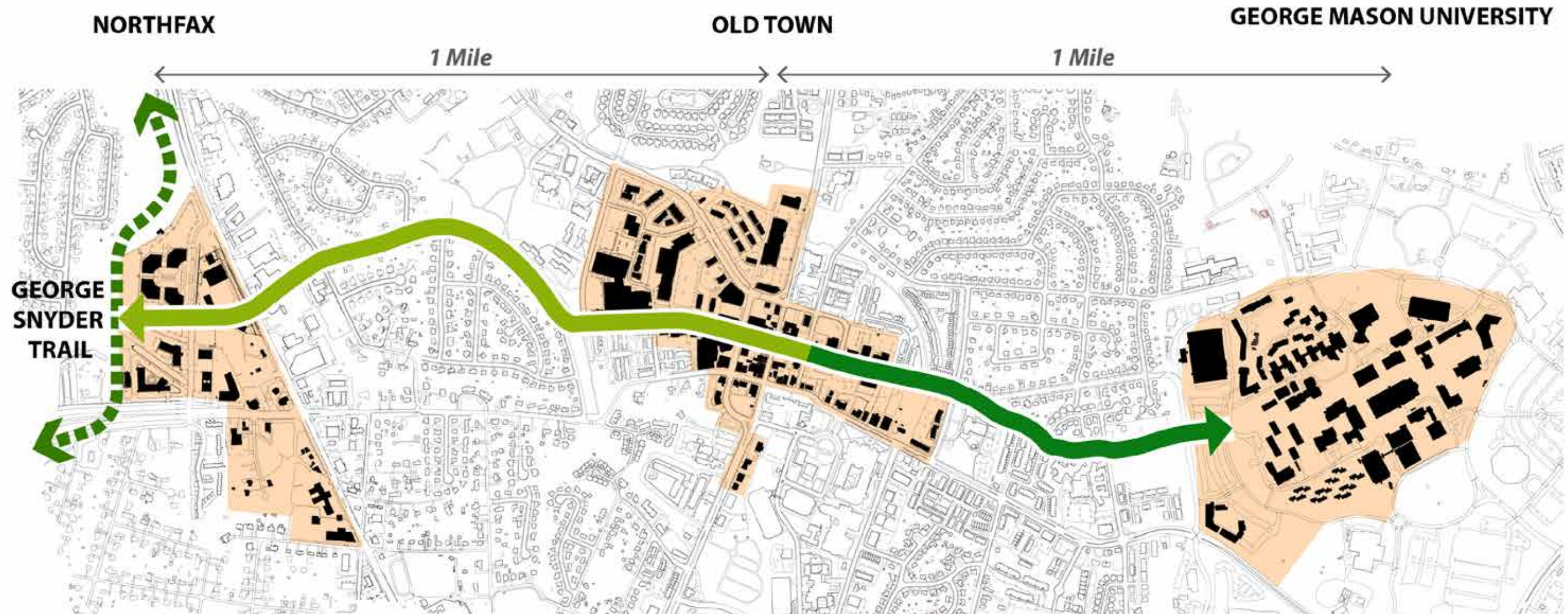
Above right, a rendering of a pedestrian oriented multifamily development



EXISTING MIX OF USES



MEDIUM TO LONG TERM MIX OF USES



## KEY IDEA SIX: “THE SPINE” CONNECTING THE CITY

One of the key recommendations of this Small Area Plan is developing ‘The Spine’ - a safe and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle connection linking Northfax, Old Town, and the George Mason University (Mason) campus. George Mason Boulevard and University Drive form a prominent north-south connector within Fairfax City. This alignment provides a direct connection between George Mason University, Old Town, and Northfax. Despite the lack of continuous comfortable facilities for people who walk and bike, many students and residents mentioned that they use these streets to walk and bicycle between the university campus, Old Town, and

Northfax. The Spine along George Mason Boulevard and University Drive can serve as the City’s main north-south multi-modal link that provides a continuous, comfortable, and vibrant route that accommodates all users.

The Spine could be a context-sensitive pedestrian and bicycle facility along George Mason Boulevard from Patriot Circle to Armstrong Street and University Drive from Armstrong Street to Eaton Place. Northfax and Mason are both separated from Old Town by about a mile to the north and south, respectively. A one-mile distance can be comfortably traversed

on foot or a bike with the availability of safe and comfortable facilities.

The City, beginning to realize the multi-modal potential of the corridor, has implemented a road diet project on University Drive from Armstrong Street to Sager Avenue, just south of Old Town. This project added a center-running two-way left turn lane and dedicated bicycle lanes by re-purposing one vehicular lane in each direction. The City is also planning a neighborhood traffic calming project along University Drive, north of Old Town, from Layton Hall Drive to Stratford Avenue. The Spine will build on these previous

and ongoing efforts to create an attractive and branded connection that serves people who walk and bike.

The City should consider developing the Spine as a branded connection with consistent design elements such as street furnishings, benches, paving patterns, landscaping, and wayfinding signage for the entire length. However, the specific pedestrian/bicycle facility types could change as the land use and street context changes. There is an opportunity to widen existing sidepaths and sidewalks to create a 10 to 12-foot wide shared-use path along the west side of George Mason Boulevard and University Drive

from Mason to Old Town. University Drive from Old Town to Northfax is a residential neighborhood street where bicycle boulevard treatments would be more appropriate. Bicycle boulevard treatments will build on the City’s traffic calming project to add bicycle shared lane or sharrow markings along with specific wayfinding and branding signs. Bicycle boulevards are streets with low motorized traffic volumes and speeds, designated and designed to give bicycle travel priority. Bicycle boulevards use signs, pavement markings, and traffic calming measures to create comfortable streets for people on bicycles to share the lanes with low-speed automobiles.

Wide shared-use paths, traffic-calmed bicycle boulevards, and well-designed crossings would provide more comfortable facilities for people who walk and bike and encourage active transportation. Certain areas around significant intersections could be designed with gateway treatments to create small plazas or parklets with seating areas. Improved pedestrian crossings would encourage people of all ages and abilities to use the corridor for commuting, recreation, and exercise. With consistent branding and wayfinding design, The Spine can become an iconic pedestrian and bicycle connector within Fairfax City.



Shared-use path precedent image: Cultural Trail, Indianapolis, IN



Shared-use path precedent image: Potomac Yard Trail, Alexandria, VA



Shared-use path precedent image: Grand Rounds Scenic Byway, Minneapolis, MN



Bike boulevard precedent image: Austin, TX



Bike boulevard precedent image: Berkeley, CA

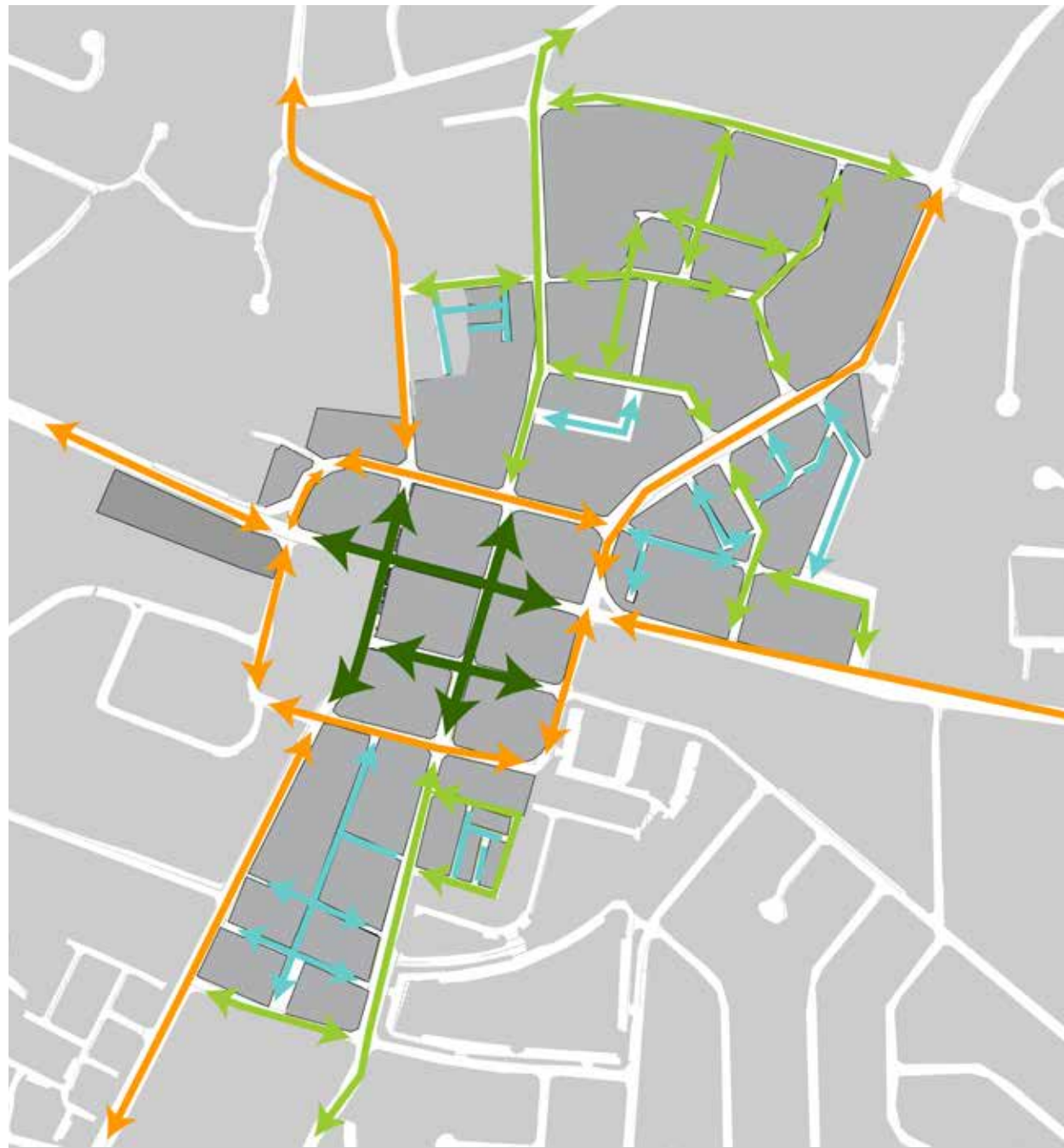


Bike boulevard precedent image: Portland, OR





## THE SPINE: PRECEDENTS

# URBAN DESIGN

1. Urban Framework
2. Public Open Space
3. Street Sections
4. Land Use and Economics
5. Building Height and Setbacks



### STREET HIERARCHY

-  Commercial Main
-  Pedestrian Precinct
-  Active Street
-  Alley + Minor Street

## URBAN FRAMEWORK

### STREET + BLOCK PLAN AND SUB-DISTRICTS

The street and block plan creates a central pedestrian oriented core framed by supporting mixed use neighborhoods to the north and south. Major streets like Old Lee Highway, North Street, and Chain Bridge Road serve as regional connectors while a loop road is proposed to calm traffic at the core of the Old Town Study area.

The plan calls for land uses that reflect this

street network. In Old Town North and South, the plan supports buildings that are larger in scale while focusing on infill and arts, hotel, and institutional uses to the cultural district.

While all development in the cultural district needs to be sensitive to the existing historical context- uses such as architecturally well crafted mixed use buildings, hotels, or arts uses should be encouraged.

New street designs within the Old Town study area should refer to the Old Town Streetscape Standards and the typical street sections depicted in the following pages.

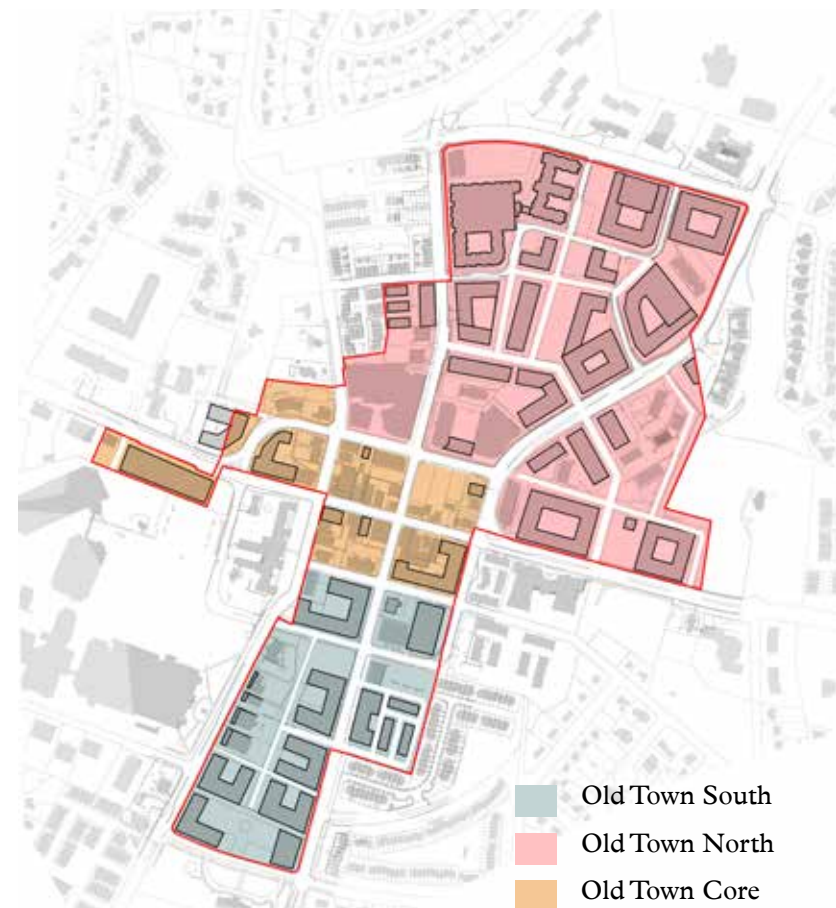


### NEW BLOCKS

The proposed plan supports breaking up the large superblocks in Old Town North and Old Town south to help support a more walkable experience.

The block sizes shown are smaller in scale - helping to foster a better pedestrian experience while also helping facilitate traffic concerns.

The extension of South Street also helps create a street grid harmonious with the existing historic fabric of the core of Old Town.






### SUB-DISTRICTS

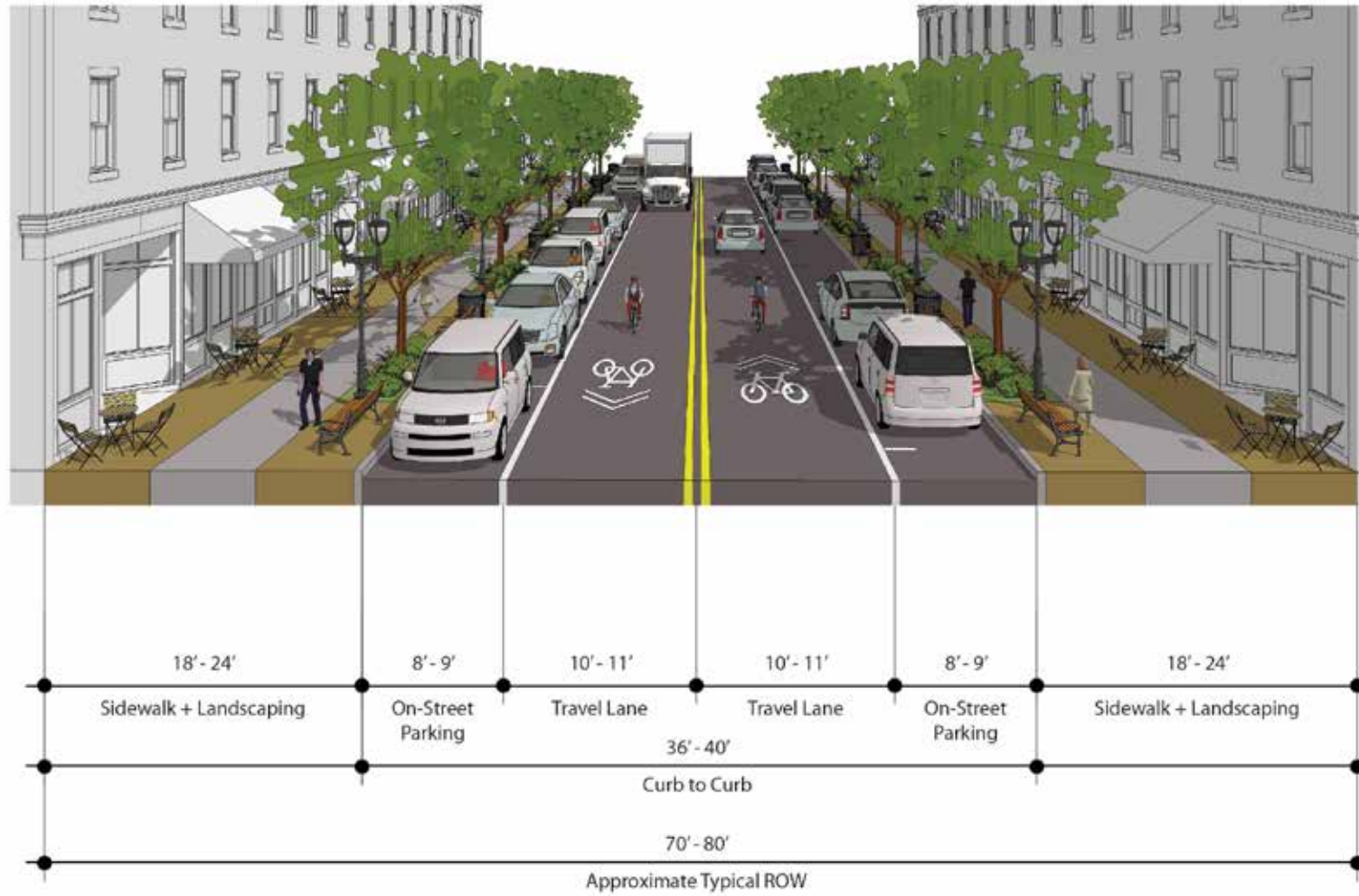
Old Town Core - with its vibrant historical uses and existing unique retail options should allow limited residential, retail, and hotel development that is architecturally significant and helps support historical and retail uses.

Old Town South - with its proximity to George Mason and the Massey Complex is ideal for linking Fairfax to core economic generators. The character of this district should focus on those economic links and the proposed offices and parks as anchors.

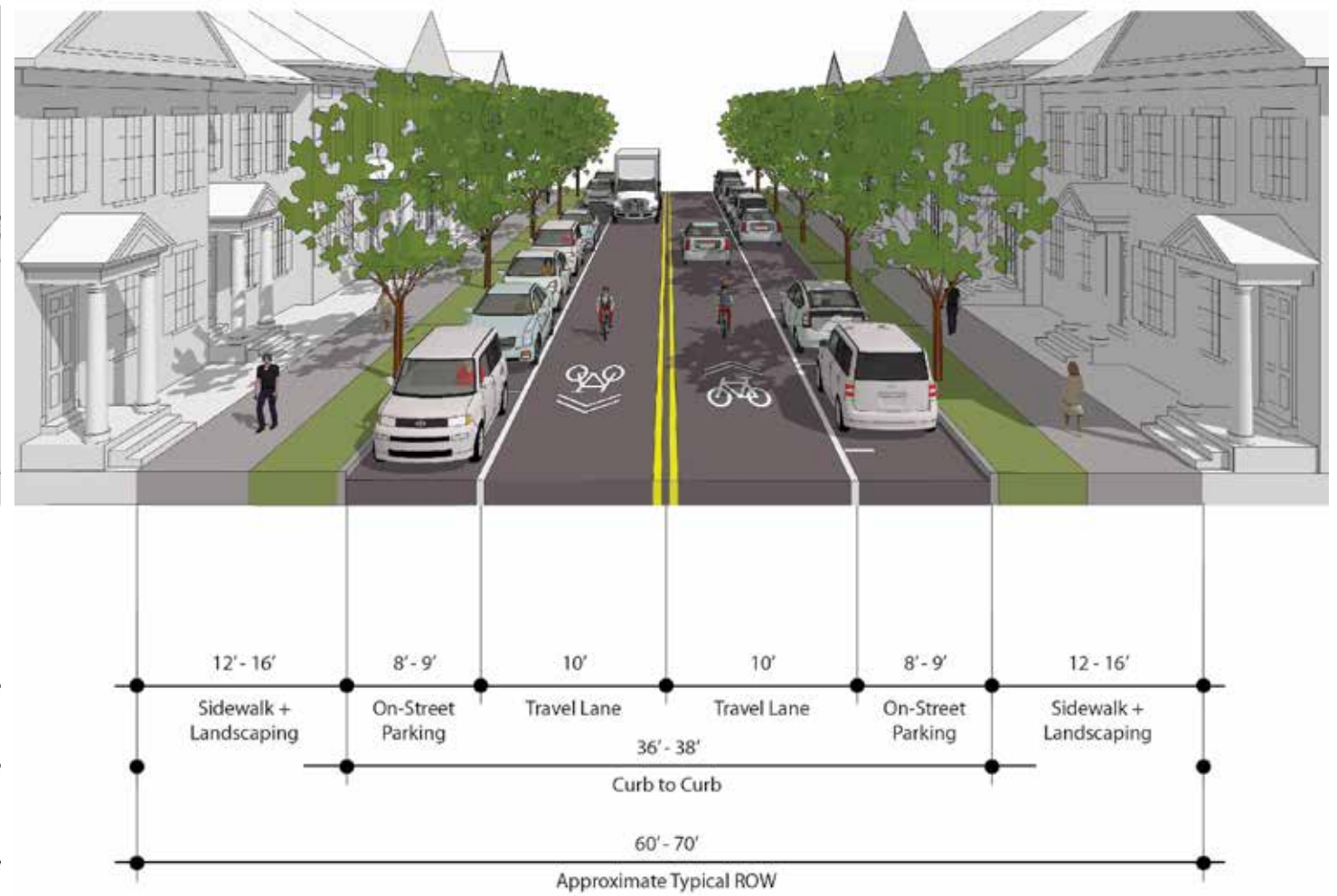
Old Town North - with its large blocks with consolidated ownership - is the optimal location for large scale mixed use redevelopment efforts. The city should leverage redevelopment efforts to create neighborhood serving retail nodes in this area.

-  Old Town South
-  Old Town North
-  Old Town Core





Typical street section for new active streets, with retail



Typical street section for new active streets, with residential

# TYPICAL STREET SECTIONS

## NEW ACTIVE STREETS

Above are sections of typical streets in the Old Town study area that could support a vibrant, pedestrian oriented mixed use community. These typical sections should be used in conjunction with the previous highlighted placemaking moments in the plan to guide typical road networks and urban design.

To the left is a typical street section for a new retail oriented active street. Critical in retail areas is ample space for outdoor retail uses in front of or businesses and accessible to sidewalks. This zone is where activity such as outdoor sales, cafe seating, signage, and other retail can occur. This both builds a vibrant street land cultural

life, visual interest for pedestrians, and also helps support the viability of retail. Urban design should support glass frontages so that retailers can display products and pedestrians have a variety of visual experiences.

Other supporting elements include street trees for shade, street furniture for gathering spaces, on-street parking to protect pedestrians, adequate sidewalk widths to allow people to stroll, and travel lanes that can support cars, bicycles, and other modes of travel.

To the right is a typical street section for a new residential oriented active street. The urban

design of buildings should be outward focused with porches, balconies, and stoops that can create publicly interactive outdoor spaces for the residential uses. This helps create vibrancy on the street.

Similarly, supporting elements include street trees for shade, street furniture, on-street parking to protect pedestrians, adequate sidewalk widths to allow people to stroll, and travel lanes that can support cars, bicycles, and other modes of travel.



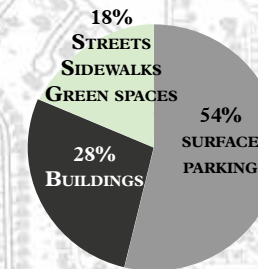
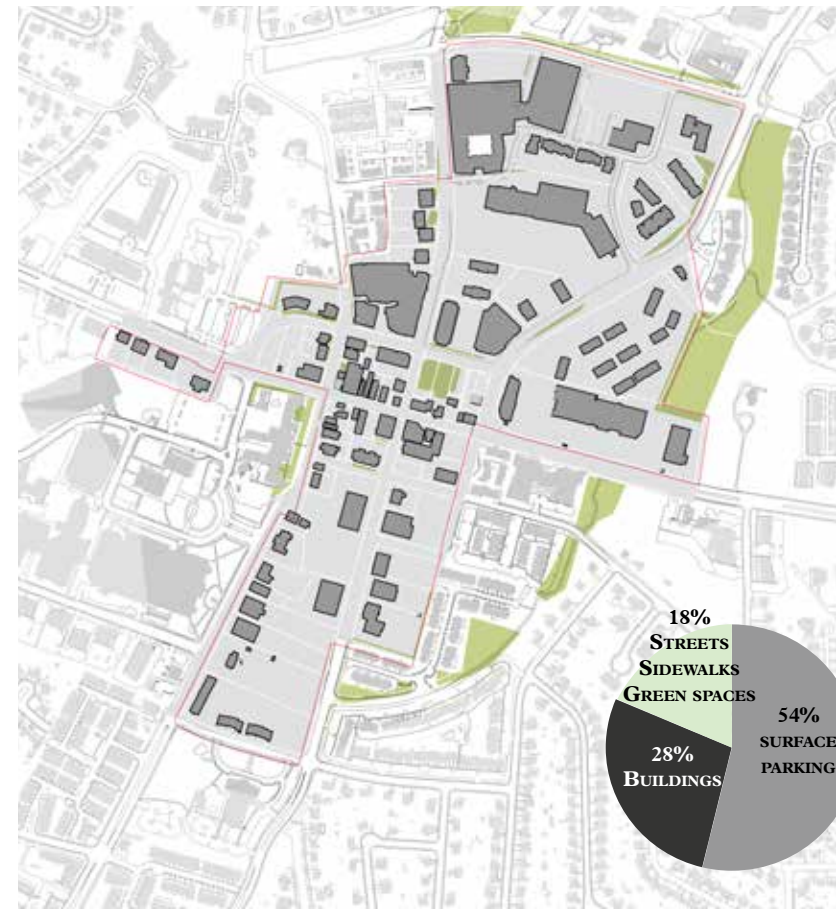
- TRAILS & NATURAL SPACES
- NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS & PLAZAS
- POCKET PARKS & OTHER OPEN SPACES

## PUBLIC OPEN SPACE FROM POCKET PARKS TO TRAILS

The urban plan calls for a variety of green spaces - from trails and natural spaces to neighborhood parks and plazas. The range of green and open spaces can allow a variety of activities to take place for the residents and visitors. Specifically, the plan recommends a large new green space in Old

Town North and one in Old Town South, as well as a green space at the eastern edge of the study area, should the existing retail redevelop. Critically important is also reactivation and connection to neighboring green space. The historic Courthouse and City Hall all have large underutilized green

spaces which could be programmed with activities or connect to future residents and visitors needs. Likewise, the existing trail systems to the North and South are critical resources that proposed sidewalk and green systems should connect with.

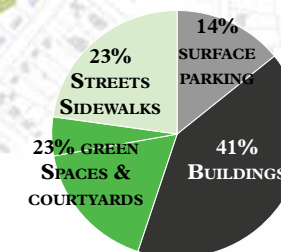
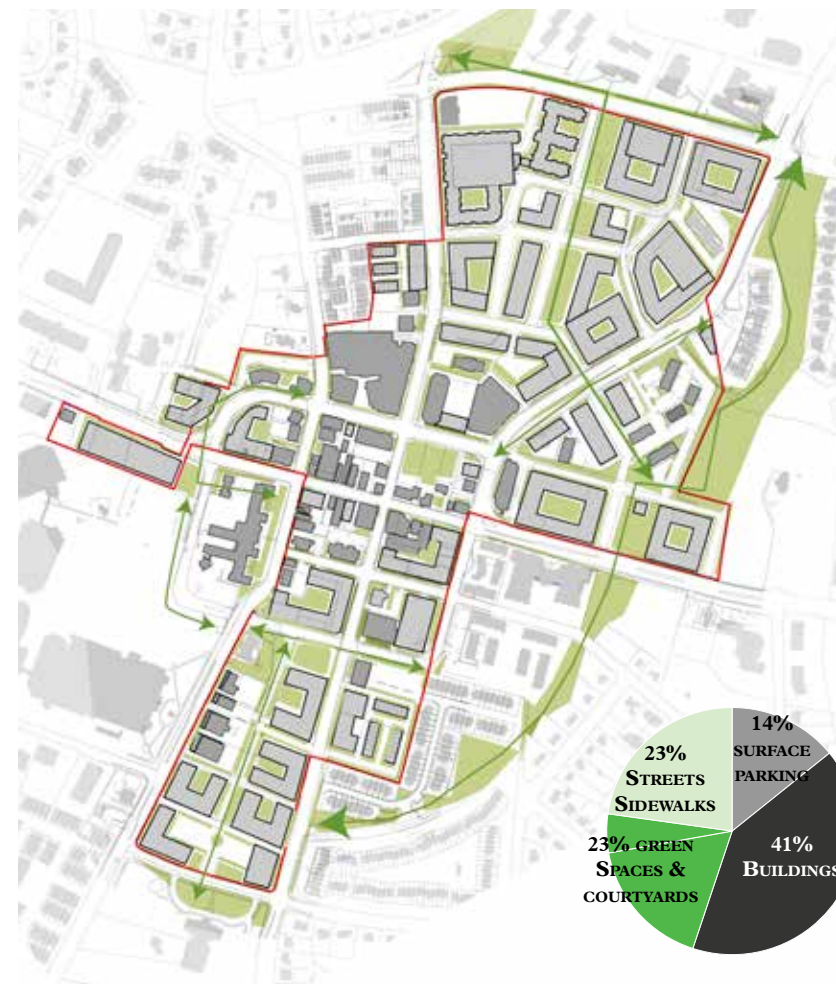


## SURFACE PARKING TO GREEN SPACE

The existing plan has less than 20% of the study area devoted to green space within the study area including sidewalks, medians, and other non programmed green space. Currently Old Town is mostly paved surfaces and existing buildings, which do little to capture stormwater.

The proposed demonstrates that as much as 20% of the study area could potentially be public and private green spaces - from building courtyards to new larger city parks.

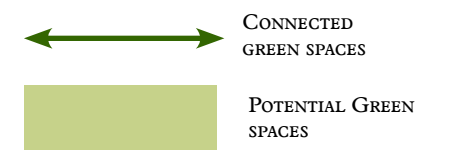
New developments will adhere to modern stormwater guidelines and start to address on-site stormwater capture throughout Old Town. If green building guidelines are adopted in the future, these stormwater standards will further increased.

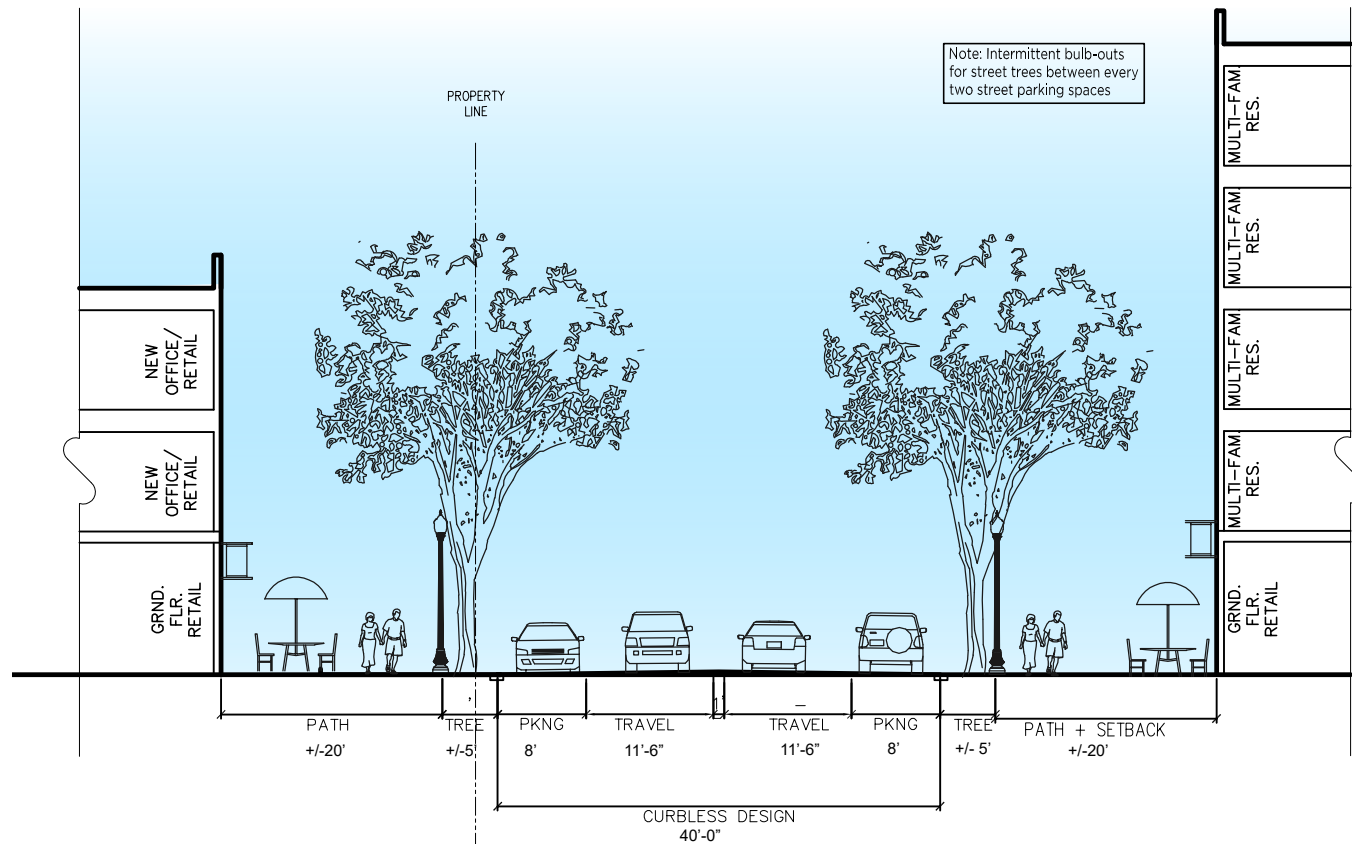


## CONNECTED GREEN SPACES

The diagram to the left demonstrates potential green spaces in a total build out of the plan.

The goal of this green space approach is to create 1) interconnected green spaces to facilitate movement of people and potentially wildlife, 2) A variety of park sizes and spaces to support different outdoor activities and 3) connecting green spaces within the study area to activate trail systems and cultural resources.





TYPICAL NEW RETAIL STREET

## OLD TOWN NORTH - RETAIL STREETS

### PEDESTRIAN ORIENTED RETAIL IN OLD TOWN NORTH

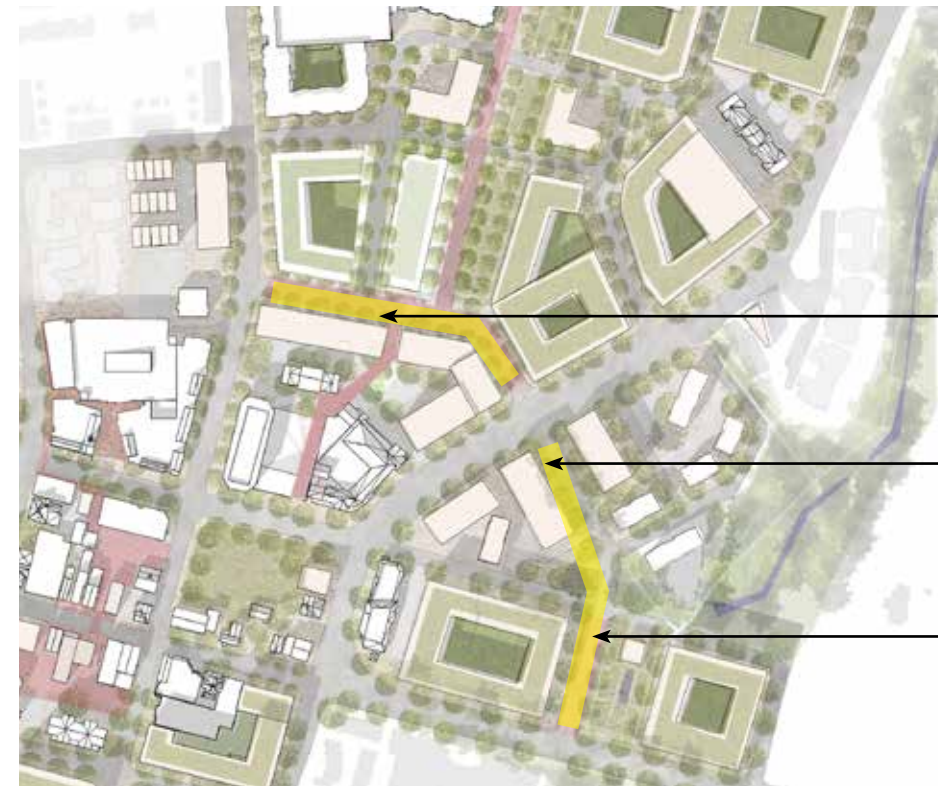
Old Town North is an existing retail area - with largely neighborhood serving retail. The plan proposes to preserve the existing neighborhood serving retail while also planning for a more walkable, pedestrian oriented mixed use experience.

To help encourage a more pedestrian oriented environment, the plan calls for wider sidewalks, street trees, and - where possible - a curb-less street design. These design elements - indicated in the section above - along with wider sidewalks to

support outdoor seating will be critical for the vibrancy of any redeveloped retail in this area and support a stronger, more resilient mixed use neighborhood.

Middle Image<sup>2</sup>- An active streetscape in 14th Street in Washington, DC. Ample space is given for outdoor seating, walking, street trees and street furniture.

Lower Image - A curb-less retail street along the Wharf at the southwest waterfront in Washington, DC. Curb-less streets like this often feature unique paving, bollards and vegetation that helps delineate pedestrian areas and shared vehicular areas.

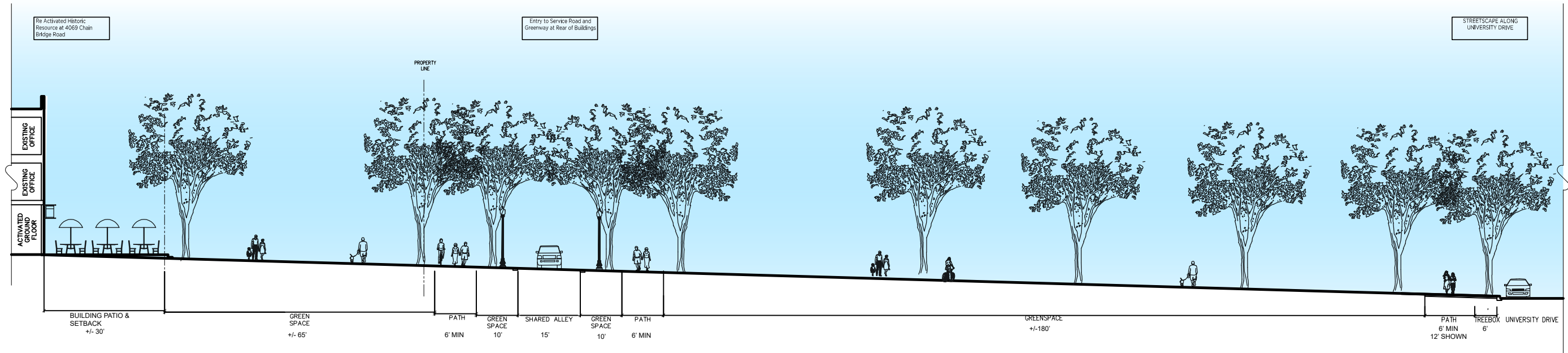


Potential Pedestrian Oriented Street Anchored by Grocery Store and Park

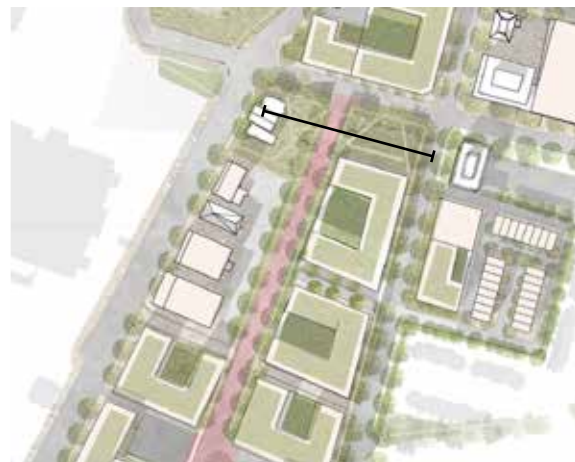
Potential Pedestrian Oriented Street Anchored by Existing Retail Redevelopment

Small retail pavilion and park anchoring southern end of retail street.





NEW URBAN PARK IN OLD TOWN SOUTH



OLD TOWN SOUTH - NEIGHBORHOOD PARK  
 NEW PUBLIC SPACE ANCHORING MIXED USES

Old Town South is an existing office park district - that largely serves the Count and municipal governments, George Mason University, and a local and niche office uses. The plan proposes to account for a projected increase in demand for mixed use and residential uses. It also supports preserving existing offices uses and encouraging partnerships with George Mason University and other economic anchors to encourage new development where feasible.

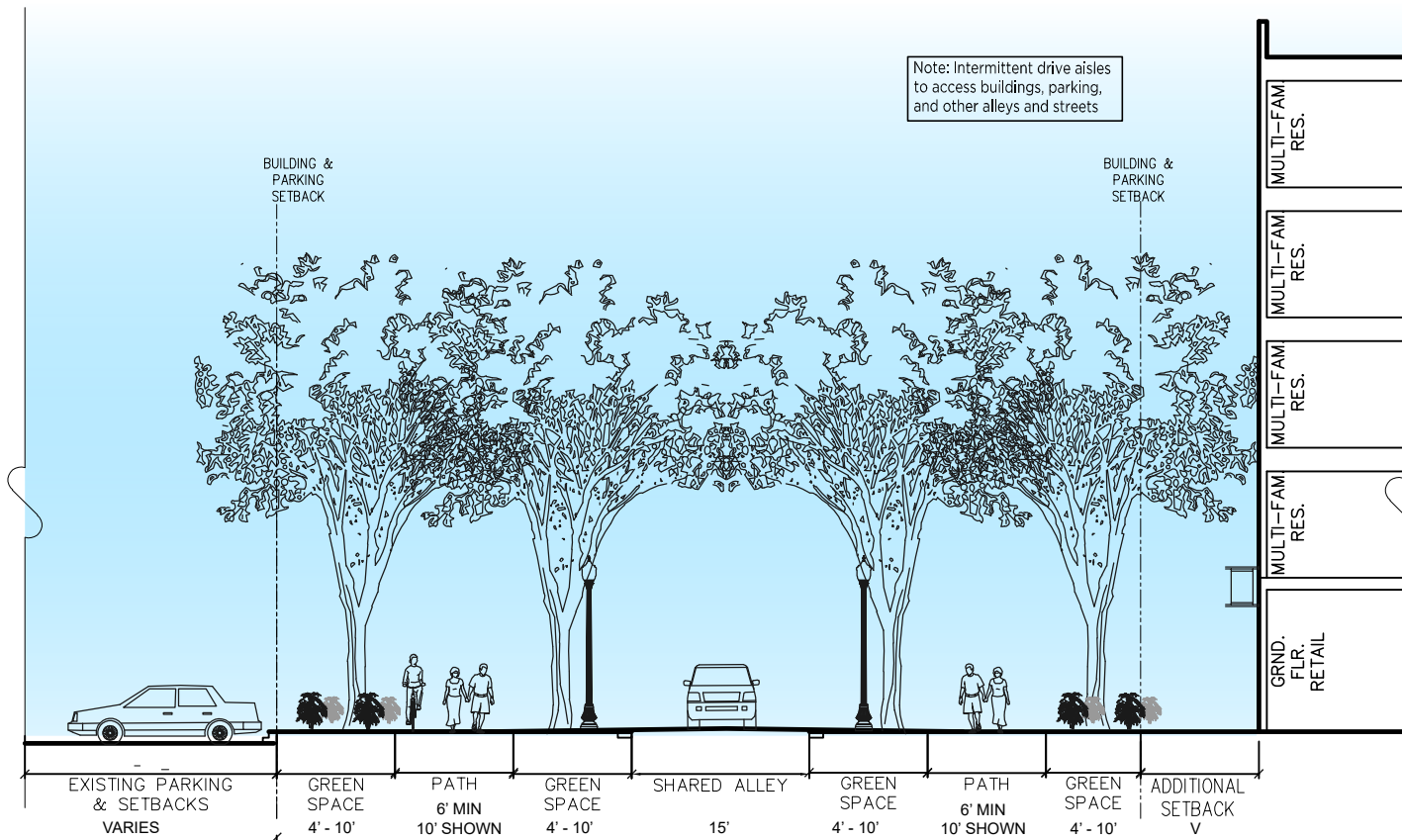
The plan is proposes a new neighborhood park to be a major gathering place in the neighborhood at the terminus of the cultural district and a shared use green alleyway system.

This new neighborhood park is to be anchored by an existing historic resource (shown above) and fronted by a variety of mixed use residential, retail, and office uses as well as a new pedestrian oriented University Drive.

This new park is most likely to occur through large scale consolidation of the south blocks and/ or in the process of creating the new east-west connection of South Street. Future efforts should continue dialogue with these property owners to further this future development goal.



Above Left, The plan encourages an adaptive reuse of 4069 Chain Bridge Rd so the rear of the building can serve as a focal point of this new urban park.  
 Above Middle - Neighborhood park with bike parking, park benches, mature trees, and spaces to gather.<sup>3</sup>  
 Above Right, Green space for people to gather.<sup>4</sup>  
 Bottom Right, Rain garden with native plants<sup>5</sup>



## OLD TOWN SOUTH - THE GREENWAY

### A TREE-LINED PATH AND SERVICE STREET

Between Chain Bridge Road and University Drive, the plan supports the creation of a shared green way-service street that can serve as a community backyard for the new mixed use residential buildings and existing office units.

The new street will function as a shared use service alley bound by walking paths and back patios associated with the nearby buildings. This use continues the existing character of Old Town - with its numerous unique alleys- while providing the community with a multi-use space.

Critical to this design is flexibility to allow drive aisles, space for parking, or other service functions while also creating spaces to gather and walk to pedestrians.

Above Right<sup>6</sup> - Lining the service street with trees can provide an important placemaking and pedestrian oriented experience as the above tree lined alley in Philadelphia, PA shows.

Below Right - Cady's Alley in Georgetown<sup>7</sup> functions as a alley that handles pedestrians, fire trucks, and necessary services while also being an inviting pedestrian experience through details like unique pavement, curb-less design, discrete parking and drive aisles, and careful placement of bollards and planters.



# RETAIL FRONTAGE

## BUILDING ORIENTATION

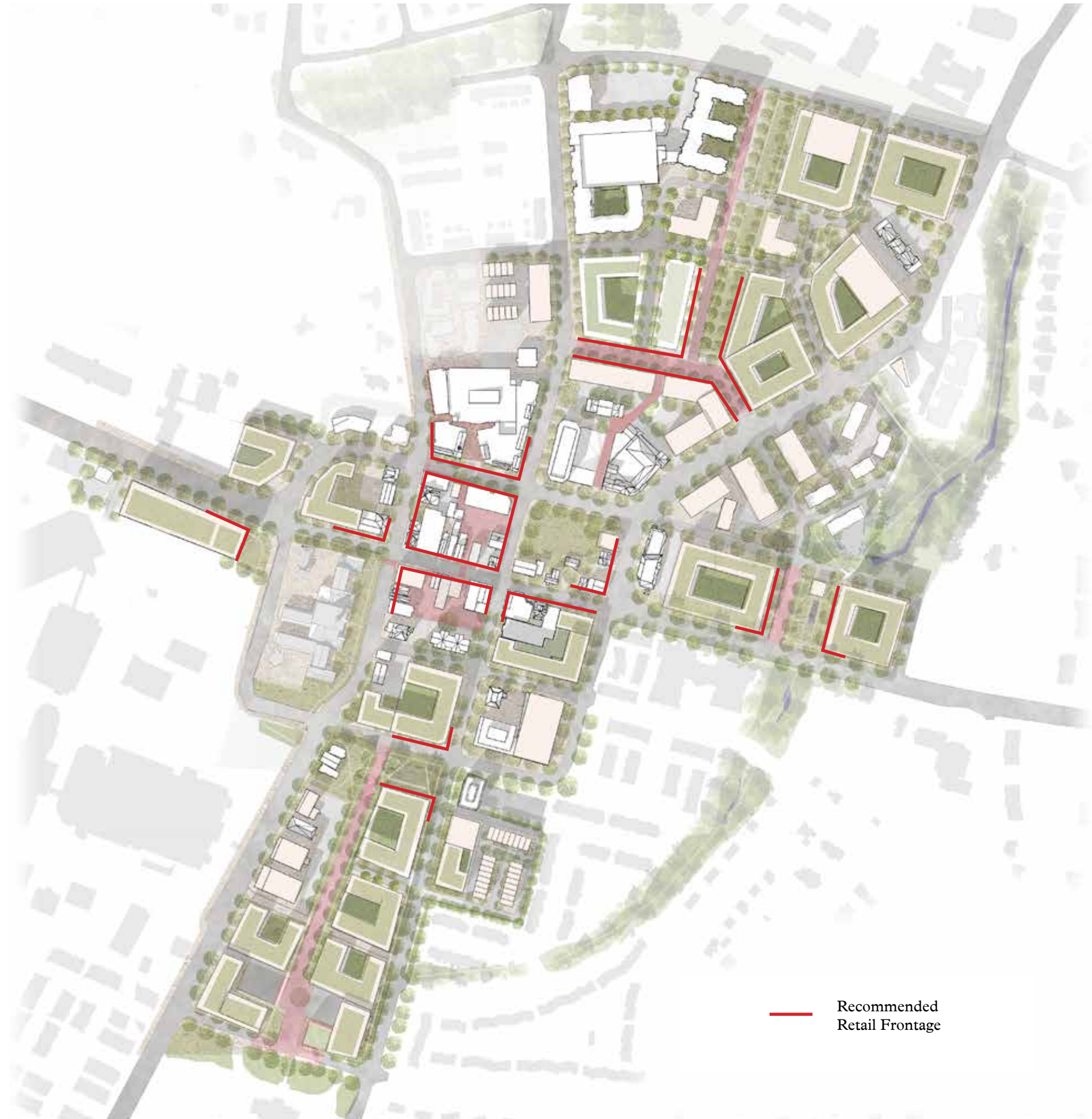
While the Old Town study area has capacity for dynamic retail, there are limitations on the quantity and location of retail frontage in the study area.

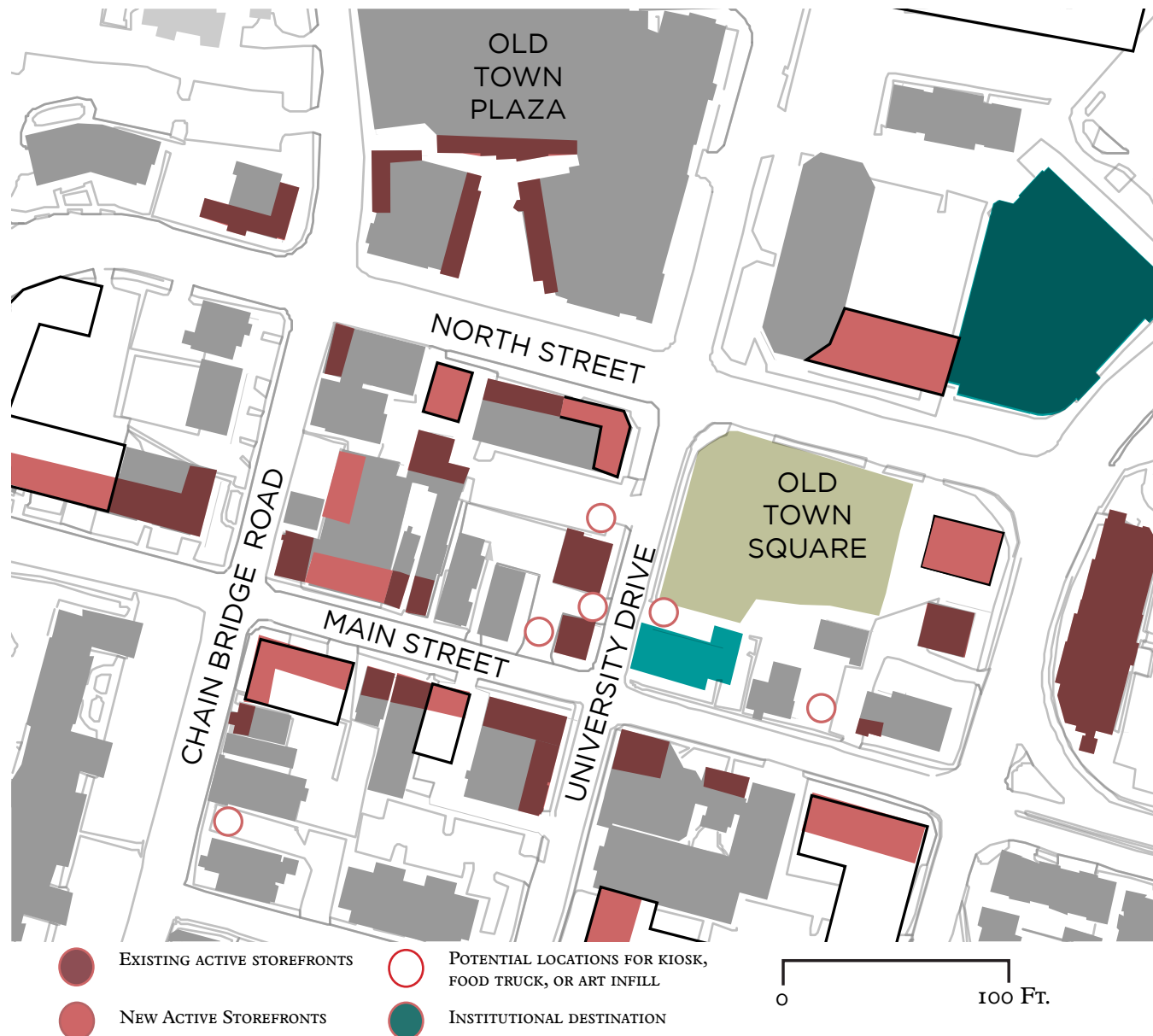
Retail thrives when concentrated in nodes of no more than two to three urban blocks, and in traditional two-sided walkable pedestrian-friendly streets and continuous retail frontage. Public open space can be advantageously used by adjacent retail uses to strengthen the civic life of the park and help support the retail.

Retail should be most concentrated in the pedestrian precinct and cultural core- building upon it's unique existing retail opportunities. Infill buildings and temporary pop up retail should focus on fronting parking lots so pedestrians have a continuous shopping experience. This retail is best suited to be destination focused building upon the arts walk and emerging food scene

At Old Town North- the redevelopment of the existing Courthouse Plaza shopping center and, in the likely longer term, the redevelopment of the Main Street Marketplace. Retail uses here are likely best suited to continue to support new and existing residents with grocery and neighborhood-serving retail options.

While it is important to focus and concentrate retail storefronts, retail opportunities sometimes occur outside of recommended areas. Opportunities outside the recommended retail zones, such as a unique restaurant experience, can function and enhance the study area significantly. These opportunities should be analyzed with the context of the study area and its impact on the local retail market.





## LAND USE - RETAIL

### A CONNECTED RETAIL EXPERIENCE

One of the most important urban design strategies for Old Town is fostering a cohesive retail experience and cultural destination. Several land use and tactical economic development strategies can help make Old Town a new regional destination.

Retail thrives when the pedestrian has a continuous exciting walking experience. The existing parking lots and uninviting retail storefronts make the neighborhood as a whole less inviting.

To create a continuous retail experience, the plan proposes encouraging activation of existing storefronts, infill of new buildings in parking lots, and encouraging temporary infill strategies.

New colorful paint, interesting murals, and where possible - parklets or outdoor seating - can help activate existing buildings. The city should also investigate ways to encourage pop up retail to activate vacant or struggling businesses as a means to help encourage this continuous street life.

New buildings should be encouraged in existing parking lots with designs that are pedestrian and retail friendly storefronts particularly along key shopping corridors like Main Street. These new buildings should be retail or restaurant oriented where possible with mixed use office or residential where feasible.

Temporary infill strategies are another way to address vacant parking lots. Food trucks or kiosks are often activators for creative culinary industries and work together with local restaurants to create a foodie destination.

These would be excellent strategies for parking lots adjacent to places where infill is unlikely.

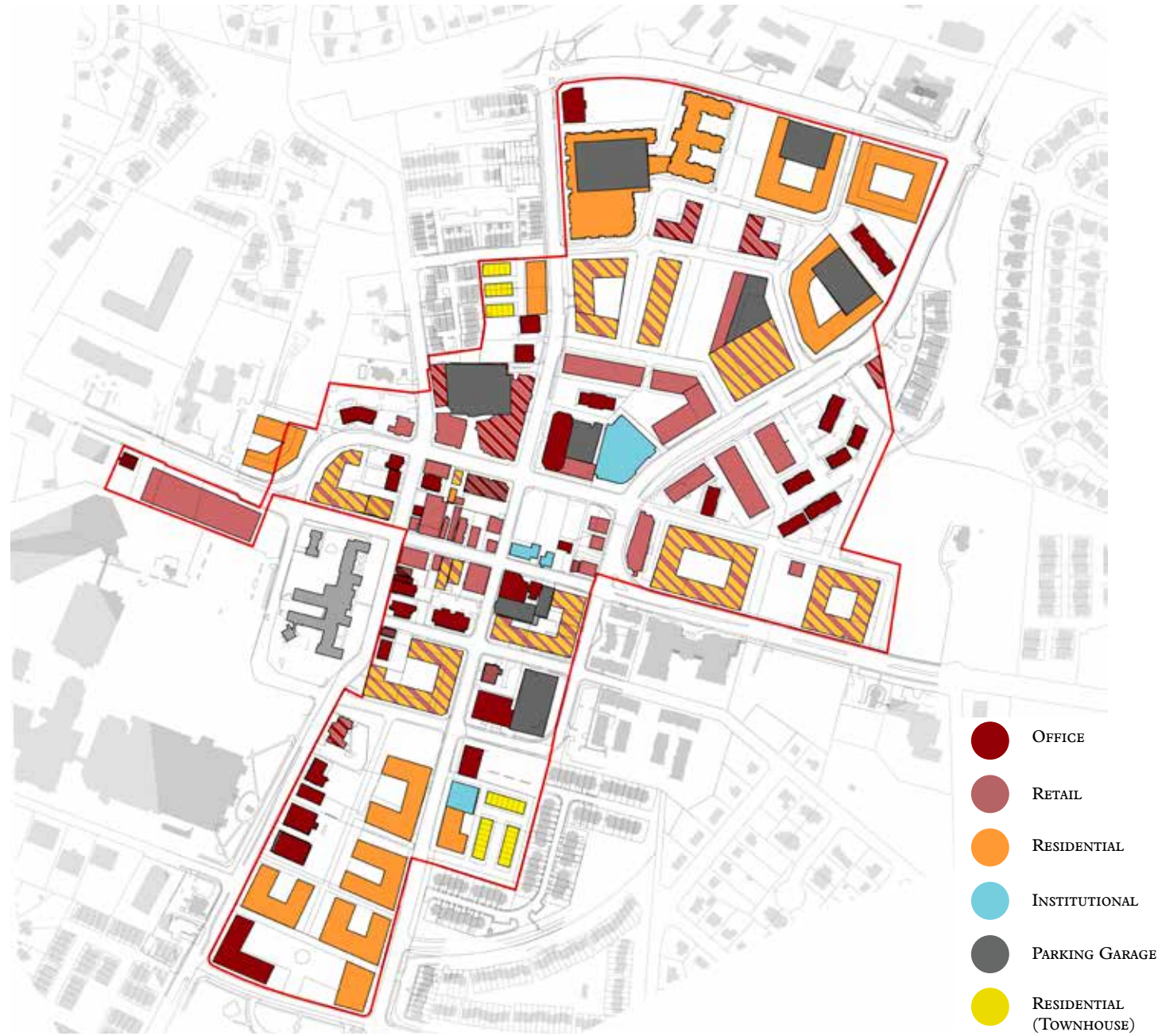
Lastly, the arts walk can help activate street life by creating points of interest for shoppers and visitors. Temporary sculptures and art installations as well as festivals in parking lots can help foster Old Town as a unique destination while also helping frame a continuous walking experience. Art installations should be focused on vacant areas between existing retail to help create visual continuity.

Top Middle, Food trucks can compliment local restaurants- helping foster a culinary destination with new innovative food options.

Lower Middle, Activating vacant parking lots with art and events can help enliven local retail

Top right, Pop up shop filling vacant store front. Creative local businesses often pop-up to test out innovative ideas.

Bottom right, art installation filling vacant parking lot. Art installations- permanent or temporary- can help make the street life more interesting destination.



## LAND USE AND ECONOMICS

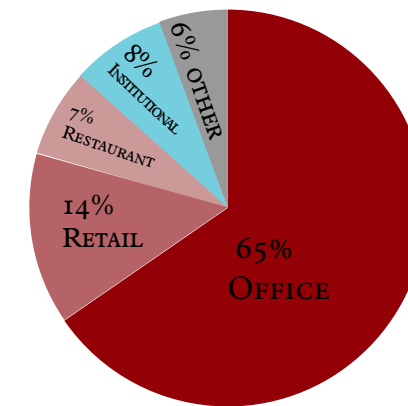
### COMMERCIAL USES IN OLD TOWN

The diverse economic anchors of Old Town - including its historic regional role - provide the natural market underpinnings to support the Small Area Plan concepts. The benefits to the City of Fairfax reach well beyond rational land use planning, impacting both the fiscal health of the City and the positive perceptions of its residents and users.

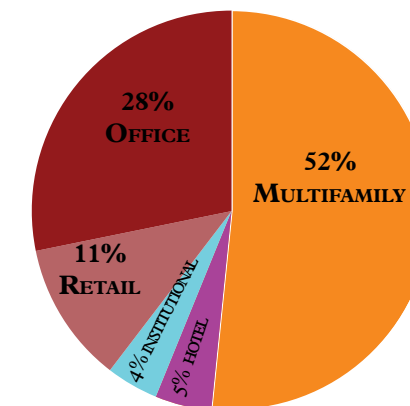
The recommended uses are subject to

change over time, as building typologies, as well as the local and regional market evolve. Additional commercial uses, such as additional hotels, offices, institutional and arts-related uses, though not currently strongly market-supported, may be future opportunities for Old Town, and should be considered enhancements to the Activity Center. Additionally, the City's ongoing relationship with George Mason University may leverage

partnerships, such as the Mason Enterprise Center and Mason's Innovation District initiative, into additional dynamic development projects in Old Town.



EXISTING MIX OF USES



MEDIUM TO LONG TERM MIX OF USES

## RETAIL ECONOMICS

- The retail market is limited by a finite amount of regional and local demand. Distribution of future retail will be shared between the City's five Activity Centers.
- Activity Centers will thrive through diversification. Old Town, for example, will serve as local, regional food services along with cultural use and specialty retail.
- Primary Demand Sources Old Town draws upon multiple demand sources that comprise the Judicial Complex, George Mason University, local and regional households (more than 50% from outside vicinity).

## OFFICES

- The existing inventory citywide provides office tenants options below the cost of new construction.
- Existing stable office market will undergo updates medium term but most new development will be concentrated in Fairfax County's Judicial Complex.

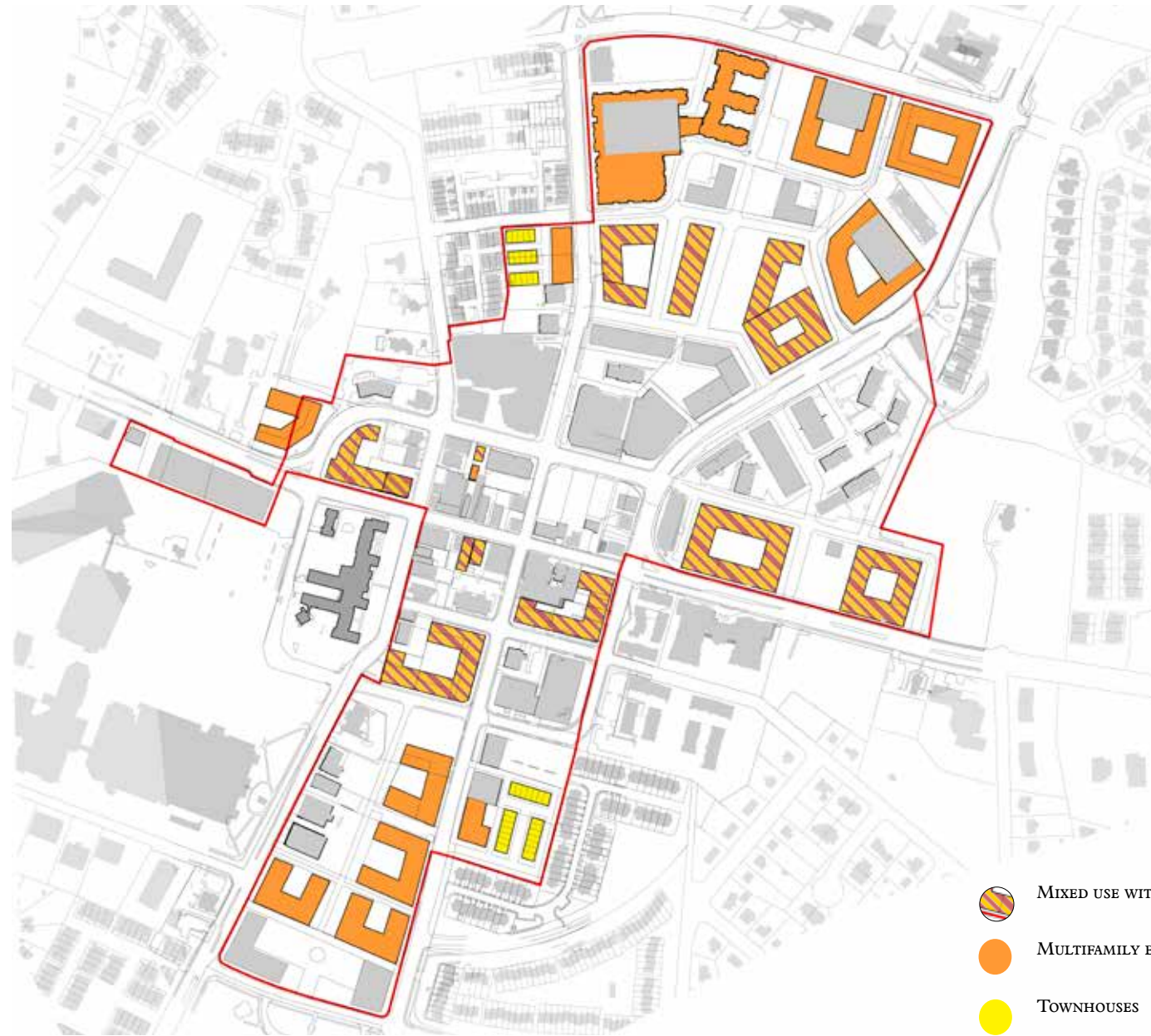
## HOTEL




- Old Town is well suited to accommodate a smaller-scale boutique hotel.

## CULTURAL & INSTITUTIONAL

- The City of Fairfax has a central Fairfax County location with a compelling cross section of amenities.
- As new housing, office, and retail amenities are provided, there will be a need for a future community or institutional facility to service the neighborhood.
- Old Town's historic district has strong potential for institutional based partnerships (i.e. George Mason University) for added cultural and arts space.



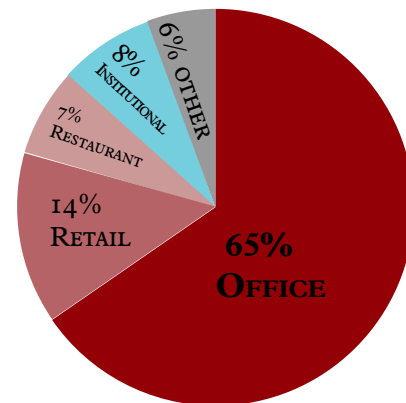


-  MIXED USE WITH RESIDENTIAL
-  MULTIFAMILY BUILDING
-  TOWNHOUSES

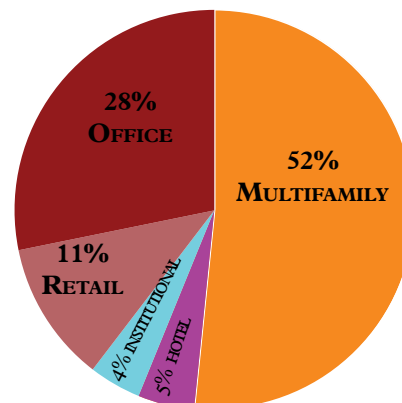
## LAND USE AND ECONOMICS

### RESIDENTIAL USES IN OLD TOWN

Residential uses are key to supporting new development in the Activity Centers, both of which are currently dominated by office space. New residential construction also provides diversification of residential product type since most of the City's existing residential inventory comprises older single family homes and apartment complexes. Expanding residential choices to include new construction, including target market occupants (students and seniors), can help nurture a well-balanced sustainable community.



EXISTING MIX OF USES



MEDIUM TO LONG TERM MIX OF USES



### TOWNHOUSES

- The combination of strong market demand, lower density and lowest construction costs per square foot equates to limited developer risk.
- Development economics generally equate to the highest land value per acre.
- High land value proceeds can best help pay for infrastructure and possible inclusion of other desired land uses (i.e. commercial and other uses).



### MULTIFAMILY HOUSING

- The combination of moderate market demand, higher density and higher construction costs per square foot equates to potential developer risk.
- Development economics have mixed impact regarding land value.
- Positive land economics may help pay for infrastructure and possible inclusion of other desired land uses (i.e. commercial and other uses).
- Market-rate rental units are more likely than condominiums



### SPECIALTY HOUSING: SENIOR, STUDENT, AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Senior housing units are already being proposed in Old Town and represent a market-driven use.
- Old Town is a natural location to accommodate off-campus student housing given its proximity to George Mason University's campus as evidenced by the recent approval of the Capstone Collegiate project.
- The Comprehensive Plan recommends leveraging underutilized public land and partnering with non-profit and other institutions as a means of accommodating new dedicated affordable housing units. These opportunities should be explored, particularly at identified locations in this plan.

# BUILDING HEIGHTS + SETBACKS

## A TAILORED APPROACH

A major goal of the Small Area Plans is to articulate a development vision using realistic patterns of development, with building typologies and land uses based on current market research and regional context. According on this research, the current zoning and other regulations may be hindering optimal land development patterns.

The Small Area Plan is also tasked with making recommendations for modifying existing zoning regulations, including land use, massing and height, to allow for better long-term development outcomes.

Currently, most of the properties within the Old study area are regulated by the Old Town Historic District Overlay and the Old Town Transition District Overlay, which limits buildings to a maximum height of 3 stories and 4 stories, respectively.

As articulated in the 2035 Comprehensive Plan and other market research, quality mixed-use developments that are appropriate for Activity Centers need a critical mass of height, density and public amenities in order to be achievable. Based on development history within the region, it is generally expected that a fraction of the study area will redevelop at higher heights and densities over the next 15 years.

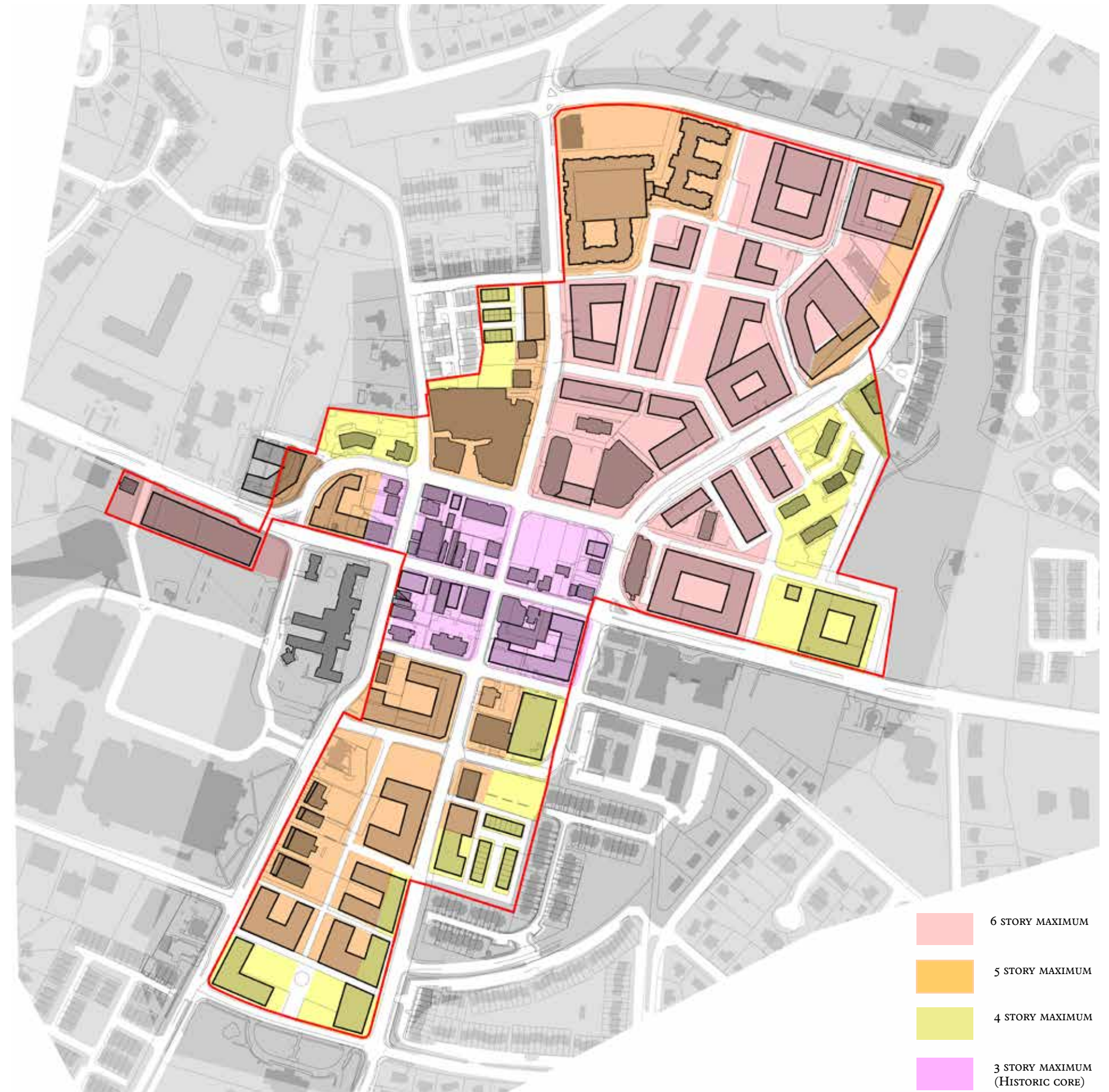
In this diagram, the Small Area Plan project team recommends a tailored approach to height limits by establishing a lower height limit setback of 4 stories closer to adjacent residential communities. Areas not close to adjacent residential structures are recommended to have a 6 story height limit. Hybrid transition areas are designated with a 5 story or a 4 story height limit. The historic core of downtown is recommended to remain limited to 3 stories.

Height limits and setbacks must both allow feasible development to occur while also respecting historical and nearby existing

single family uses. At key locations where the study area is adjacent to residential areas, the plan proposes lower scale townhouse uses or pedestrian friendly green spaces and streetscapes to allow a clean visual and programmatic transition.

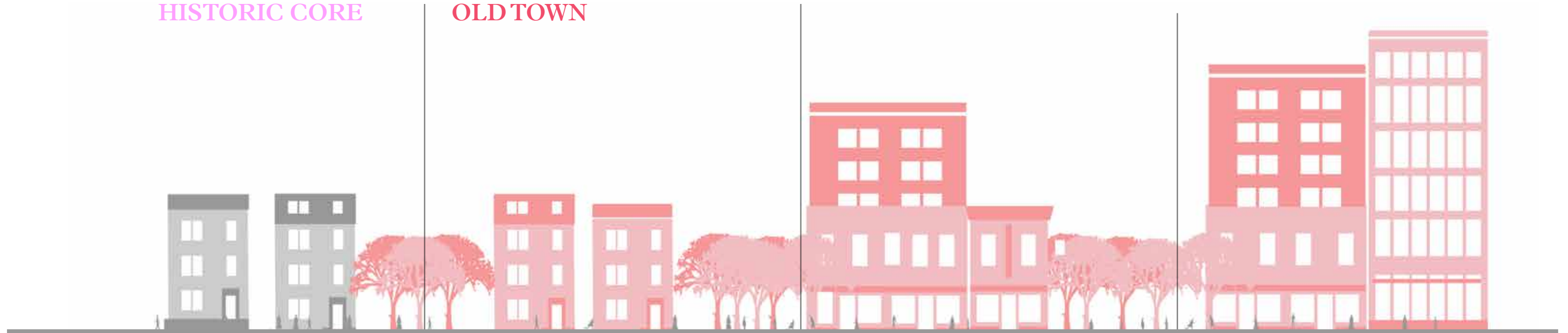
The plan focuses larger scale redevelopment in Old Town North and Old Town South. Taller buildings conform to the existing character established by the larger existing office buildings and nearby tall structures at the Massey Complex.

Lastly, the Old Town study area may consider unique and special projects within the downtown area, such as institutional uses, a boutique hotel and/or performing arts center. These unique uses have special public merit and civic / economic development benefits, and may require exceptions to the height limits depicted here, and are subject to further review by city staff.



## HISTORIC CORE

## OLD TOWN



### HISTORIC CORE

- TYPICAL LAND USES
  - HISTORIC BUILDINGS
  - CULTURAL USES
  - PARKS
  - RETAIL / RESTAURANTS
  - OFFICES
  - MULTIFAMILY CONDO
  - MIXED-USE AND HOUSING
- HEIGHT LIMITS
  - 3 STORY MAXIMUM / PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES
- CHARACTER
  - HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

### RESIDENTIAL ADJACENT ZONES

- TYPICAL LAND USES
  - RESIDENTIAL TOWNHOUSE
  - LIMITED MIXED USE / MULTIFAMILY
  - PARKS + GREENSPACES
- HEIGHT LIMITS
  - 4 STORY MAXIMUM
- CHARACTER
  - RESIDENTIAL ZONES THAT ARE HARMONIOUS TO NEIGHBORING SINGLE FAMILY AND TOWNHOUSE USES

### HISTORIC SENSITIVE INFILL + TRANSITIONAL LAND USES

- TYPICAL LAND USES
  - MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL
  - MIXED USE
  - RETAIL
  - OFFICES
  - PARKS + GREENSPACES
- HEIGHT LIMITS
  - 5 STORY MAXIMUM
- CHARACTER
  - TRANSITIONAL CHARACTER FROM RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS TO DOWNTOWN OR HIGHER DENSITIES

### NEIGHBORHOOD NODE

- TYPICAL LAND USES
  - MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL
  - MIXED USE
  - RETAIL/OFFICES
  - PARKS + GREENSPACES
- HEIGHT LIMITS
  - 6 STORY MAXIMUM
- CHARACTER
  - NEW MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOODS WITH OPEN SPACE AND RETAIL

## BUILDING HEIGHTS & LAND USE TRANSITIONING FROM NEIGHBORHOOD TO MIXED USE CORE

The diagram above illustrates the goals of the small area plan to provide a transition from the historic core and nearby neighborhoods to the rest of the study area.

The plan proposes areas near to the existing single family and townhouse neighborhoods to be residential in character. In these zones, building heights or setbacks for buildings should be no more than 4 stories.

As the one moves away from the proposed residential areas, a transitional zones of medium scale heights of 5 stories maximum is proposed. These transitional zones are found in areas where busy roads or retail corridors are adjacent to lower scale, primarily residential uses.

Old Town is intended to function as an Activity Center with a historic downtown center surrounded by a supporting mix of uses. The historic core

is recommended to retain its current height limit of three stories. Areas of new neighborhood nodes, including parts of Old Town North, are recommended to have a 6 story height limit to accommodate mixed-use buildings that support the Activity Center.

# TRANSPORTATION

1. Old Town Transportation
2. Pedestrian Precinct and Loop Road
3. Main Street
4. University Drive
5. Old Lee Highway
6. North Street
7. Parking Management

# OLD TOWN TRANSPORTATION

## TRANSPORTATION CONTEXT

### Transportation Context in Old Town

Today, streets in Fairfax City are designed to prioritize the efficient flow of vehicular automobile trips in the morning and afternoon peak hours to avoid congestion. As identified in the City’s Multi-modal Transportation Plan, most of the trips on the City’s roadway network are people driving in cars that start and end beyond the City’s limits. Despite prioritizing regional traffic to avoid congestion, “traffic” is an oft-repeated complaint from residents, employers, and visitors when discussing the quality of life in the City. This Small Area Plan provides a unique opportunity to fundamentally rethink the role and design of Old Town’s streets to prioritize people over cars. With this approach, streets can be designed to focus on local activities and local trips made by all modes rather than regional car trips that do not serve the City’s goals.

The City’s historic street network has limited space or public Right-of-Way (ROW). The majority of this public space has been dedicated to moving cars. As a result, less space is left for people who walk, bike, take transit, or for people to mingle in public spaces. Old Town’s many historic buildings, as well as everyday destinations like parks, restaurants, and offices, attract residents, employees, and visitors alike. Many residential communities are also within a fifteen-minute walk from the center of Old Town. The existing roadway network in Old Town consists of a historic grid with small block sizes compared to the rest of the City. Main Street and North Street serve as primary east-west connections, while University Drive and Chain Bridge Road serve as north-south links. Currently, Main Street and North Street are designed to prioritize regional commuter traffic in personal automobiles rather than local trips on foot or bike.

Old Town’s original grid network provides excellent roadway connectivity in the area but has limited facilities for people walking and biking. The only dedicated on-street bicycle facilities in the Old Town area are along University Drive

and Layton Hall Drive. Although most of the streets in Old Town have sidewalks on both sides, they are very narrow for typical downtown areas. The crossings are mostly limited to signalized intersections and are not ADA compliant in many cases. Already limited existing space for people walking is increasingly congested as new transportation options grow in the City. Micro-mobility modes such as scooters and e-bikes are becoming popular and create further demands for sidewalk space, especially because of the lack of comfortable on-street options.

Multiple off-street trails are also located near Old Town. The Fairfax City Bike Trail, as well as trails along creeks, run along the eastern and northern edge of Old Town. However, these trails are disconnected from each other and do not provide a city-wide network.

The City has been planning and implementing several projects to enhance the infrastructure for people walking and biking in Old Town. Some of the projects include repurposing vehicle lanes to add bicycle facilities along University Drive, an Old Town Sidewalk Spot Widening Program, Old Lee Highway Multi-modal Improvements, and the Main Street streetscape project.

Successful historic districts are characterized by streets that create an inviting and comfortable public realm. Wide tree-lined sidewalks, landscaping, sidewalk cafes, and other amenities such as benches, street lighting, wayfinding, and signage all help create an inviting public realm. Reconfiguring the existing streets in Old Town to implement complete streets elements has the potential to shift the focus from vehicular throughput to active transportation, placemaking, and economic vitality.

### Managing Traffic

The Old Town Activity Center is divided into three broad areas – the Historic Core, Old Town North (the area between North Street and Layton Hall Drive), and Old Town South

(the area between Sager Avenue and Armstrong Street). The Historic Core has a well-defined grid of streets with a small block pattern. However, this grid quickly disappears on all sides beyond the Historic Core. The lack of a street network beyond the Historic Core results in the Old Town North and Old Town South areas acting as large superblocks with minimal internal connectivity. The lack of a connected street network also leads to Main Street and University Drive acting as congested major thoroughfares carrying a large number of vehicular trips through the Historic Core. Transportation improvements are unlikely to “solve” this congestion. The approach of this plan is to manage the traffic impacts of redevelopment through an array of multi-modal transportation strategies while enhancing the overarching goals of making Old Town an attractive, walkable, mixed-use Activity Center.

The following strategies describe the approach in managing traffic:

- Leverage a mix of uses to increase internal trips
- Create a street network
- Connect to surrounding neighborhoods
- Establish a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program

### Leverage a mix of uses to increase internal trips

Mixed-use redevelopment built as walkable districts invite more local travel and produce much higher rates of “internal capture” than typical single-use automobile-dependent developments. Internal trips are defined as trips that start and end within the district. For example, with the right balance of housing and office uses, more employees could choose to live close to where they work, restricting their commute within the district. Similarly, trips to retail uses such as restaurants, coffee shops,

dry cleaners, etc. can become internal trips, if these uses are designed near housing and offices within the district. These internal trips are often shorter than external trips and can be made on foot or a bike. A high-level analysis of Old Town has shown that the internal trip capture rate can be between 13% to 29% in the weekday AM and PM peak hours. The Old Town redevelopment plan proposed creates a better balance and mix of land uses to increase the potential for travel to and within the area and surrounding neighborhoods.

A planning-level analysis of the traffic that is likely to be generated due to these proposed plans is presented in the Appendix. A more detailed traffic analysis will be required in the future as specific development is proposed to identify specific traffic impacts and offer appropriate mitigation options.

### Create a street network

This plan proposes new street connections to create more walkable blocks with a grid of connected streets. Not only is pedestrian connectivity enhanced by the creation of smaller blocks and higher intersection density, but a well-connected network allows choice for travelers to filter through a grid of streets and potentially shorten travel distances. The street grid will result in providing options for people to use other streets and may reduce additional traffic at major intersections than otherwise would be added in the absence of a new network.

### Connect to surrounding neighborhoods

New street and trail connections are proposed to the surrounding neighborhoods around Old Town. These new connections will help provide a more direct option for current residents to walk and bike much shorter distances to get to their destinations in Old Town. Currently, many neighborhoods around Old Town do not have direct connections. This lack of connectivity

results in much longer travel distances that end up being car trips.

### Establish a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program

Travel Demand Management, particularly with many new and emerging travel choice options, is influencing people’s behavior to use the existing and planned infrastructure in more efficient ways. TDM strategies provide information and incentives, so the City is responsive to transportation needs using all available options rather than past solutions responsive only to single-occupancy vehicle travel. TDM encourages the use of existing excess capacity before adding additional capacity. Excess capacity often exists in transit vehicles, sidewalks, trails, and bike lanes. Parking is often oversupplied, located in areas not best suited to efficiently leverage demand and the value of the land it occupies.

A comprehensive and dynamic TDM program should be developed for the City with a focus on attractive development areas like Old Town. The strategies should provide data-informed insights that engage businesses and developers and tailor strategies to changing needs and opportunities. Some of the common TDM strategies relevant to the Old Town Activity Center include the following:

### Encouraging active modes of transportation:

- Provide comfortable sidewalks and street crossings throughout the Activity Center
- Develop a complete network of safe and comfortable bicycle facilities linked to destinations beyond the Activity Center
- Establish bike-share and scooter-share programs
- Enhance transit facilities and provider coordination for frequent bus service and stops with shelter, bench, and

real-time arrival information.

### Collaborating with employers:

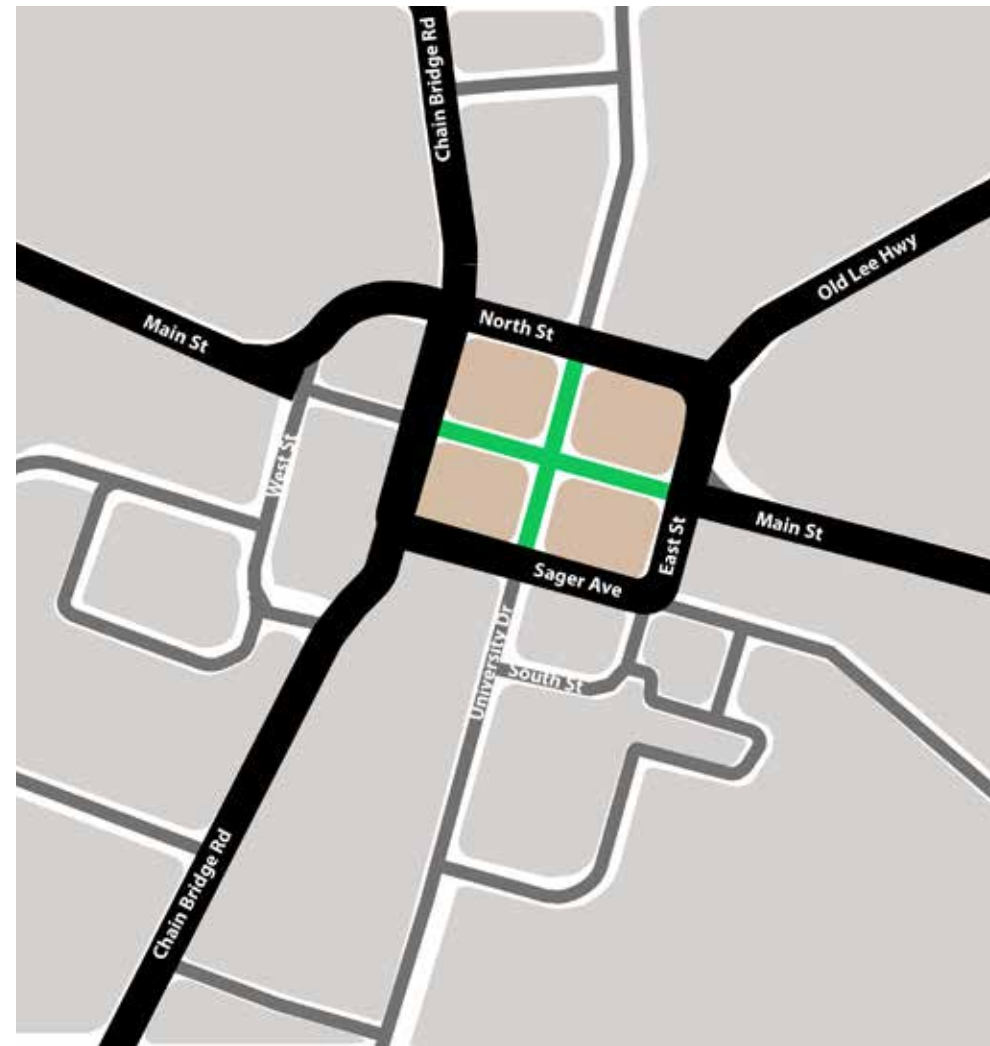
- Establish employee transit benefits and subsidies
- Provide showers, changing rooms, and secure bike parking to help employees’ bike to work
- Organize vanpools and carpools
- Provide priority parking for carpools
- Eliminate or reduce free parking
- Allow flexible work schedules and encourage telework

### Providing incentivizing to developers:

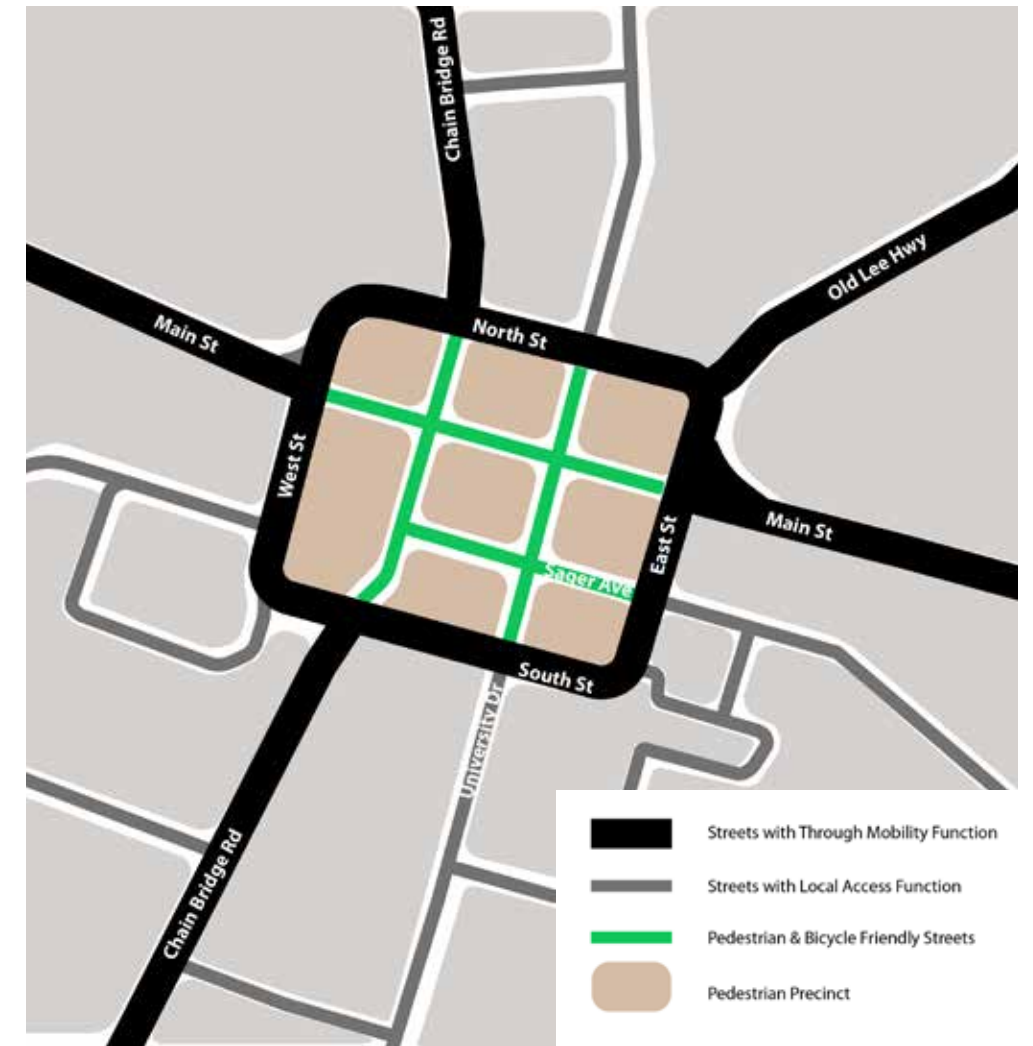
- Allow developers to offer transit passes, a bike-share membership, shuttles in lieu of meeting parking requirements
- Allow developers to fund or public parking or other forms of access infrastructure in lieu of meeting parking requirements
- Require developers to provide bike parking or bike storage as part of the design review or the entitlements process
- Require developers to provide or contribute to new street or trail connections to the surrounding neighborhoods to enhance overall connectivity as part of the design review or the entitlements process
- Allow developers a more streamlined review process if the proposed development fits within the proposed land uses. This includes minimizing TIA requirements and allowing developers to contribute to a fund providing transportation improvements to the entire Old Town area rather than specific to the proposed development.



Existing Old Town street network



Loop road and pedestrian precinct: Near Term Recommendation



Loop road and pedestrian precinct: Long Term Recommendation

-  Streets with Through Mobility Function
-  Streets with Local Access Function
-  Pedestrian & Bicycle Friendly Streets
-  Pedestrian Precinct

## PEDESTRIAN PRECINCT AND LOOP ROAD

### A NEW VISION

One of the key recommendations of this plan is to rethink Old Town's street grid and circulation system as a loop road surrounding a pedestrian precinct. The loop road can be designed to carry vehicle trips originating and ending beyond Old Town, while the internal streets within the precinct can be designed as pedestrian-oriented streets that only allow local access and local delivery vehicle trips. Pedestrian-oriented streets can be traffic-calmed public realms with wide sidewalks, street trees, and amenities such as benches and lighting. These streets within the precinct could be completely closed off to vehicular traffic on weekends or for events.

In the near term, North Street/West Street, Chain Bridge Road, Sager Avenue, Old Lee Highway/East Street will form the loop road. Main Street from Chain Bridge Road to Old Lee Highway, and University Drive from Sager Avenue to North Street can be designed as pedestrian-oriented streets. The near term concept recommends restricting north-bound and south-bound left turns from University Drive onto east-bound and west-bound Main Street. All left turns can be limited to intersections of University Drive and Sager Avenue, and University Drive and North Street. Restricting left turns at the intersection of Main Street and University Drive

provides an opportunity to remove the left turn lanes at this intersection. The additional space currently dedicated to left turning vehicles can be repurposed for wider sidewalks.

In the long term, North Street, West Street, South Street, Old Lee Highway/East Street, can form the loop road. Main Street from West Street to Old Lee Highway, Sager Avenue from Chain Bridge Road to East Street, Chain Bridge Road from South Street to North Street, and University Drive from South Street to North Street can be designed as pedestrian-oriented streets. South Street can be extended to the west beyond

University Drive to Chain Bridge Road as part of the redevelopment of the Old Town South superblock. Continued coordination with the redevelopment of the Fairfax County Massey Complex property provides an opportunity to further extend South Street to the west of Chain Bridge Road and connect it to West Street to complete the loop.

The long term loop road concept also provides an opportunity to re-examine the one-way circulation system that was in effect in Old Town until 2006. However, unlike previously, when Main Street and North Street acted as a one-way couplet, North Street and

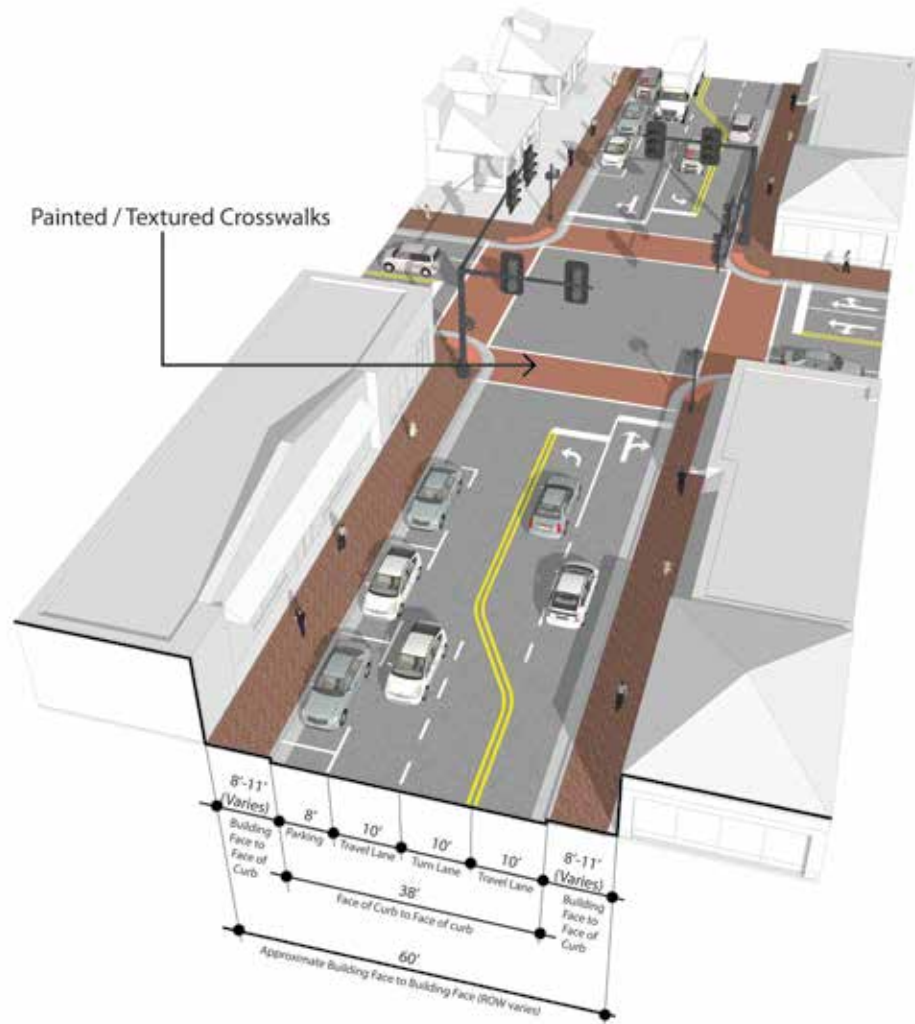
the extended South Street can become one-way couplets. East Street/Old Lee Highway and West Street could also become a new one-way couplet to form a large one-way square-about loop road in the counterclockwise direction around the pedestrian precinct.

The City currently encourages through east-west traffic to use North Street instead of Main Street. The loop road configurations will encourage a similar traffic pattern for north-south through traffic to use Chain Bridge Road instead of University Drive.

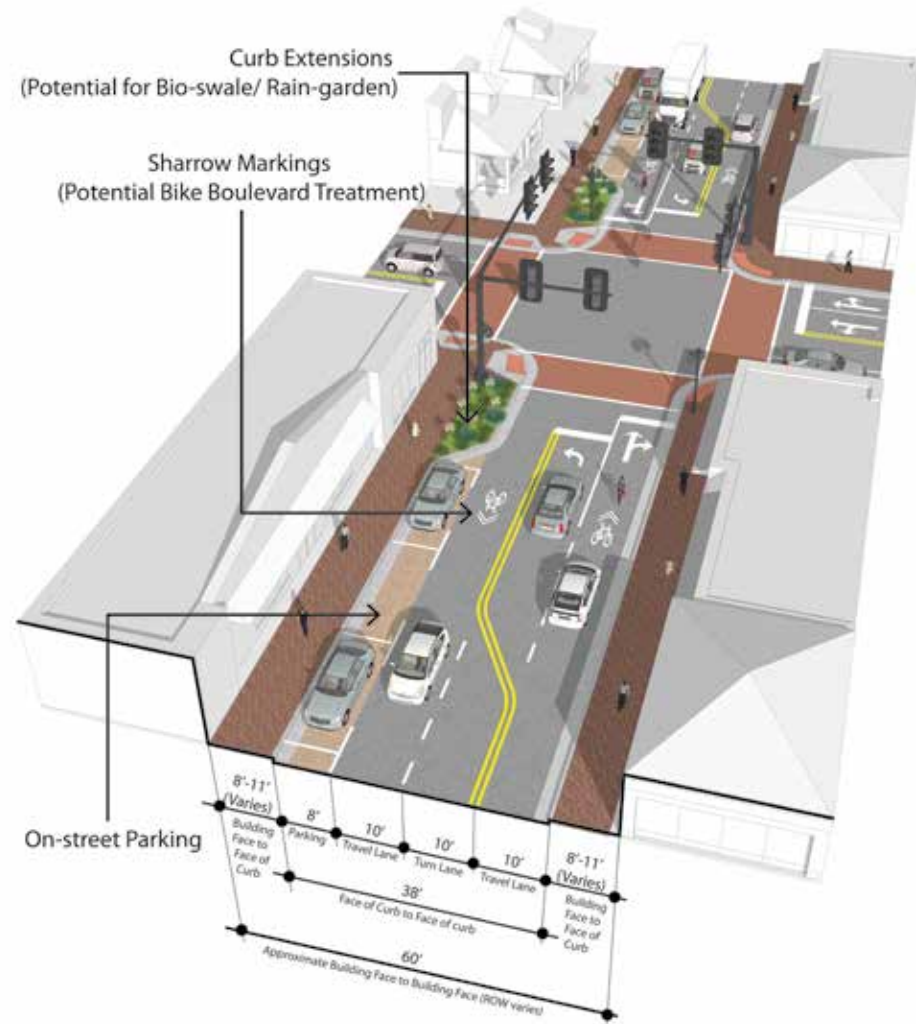
Although the loop road is envisioned

to carry a large number of vehicular trips, it will be critical to provide safe and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle facilities along the loop road, as well as crossing opportunities across the loop road. This pedestrian and bicycle connectivity will ensure that the pedestrian precinct does not end up being an island disconnected from surrounding neighborhoods.

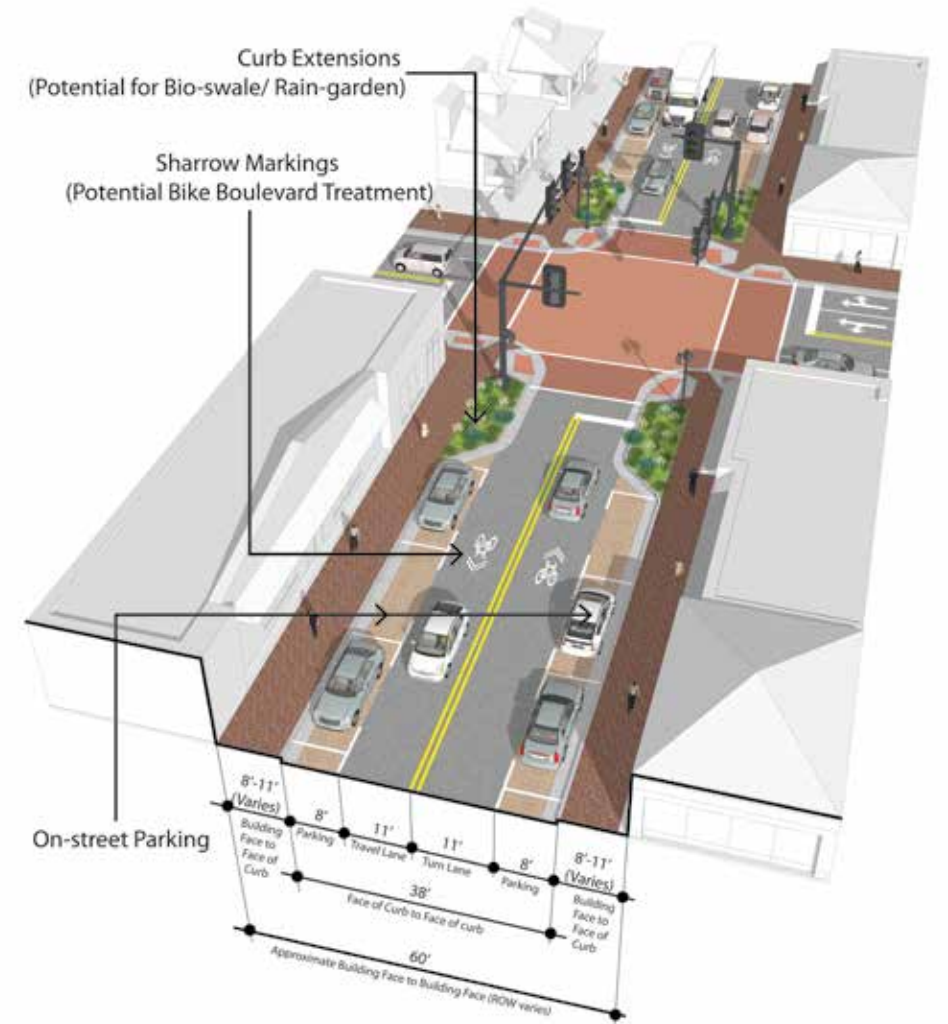
The loop road and pedestrian precinct recommendation is a high-level concept. Detailed traffic analysis will be required to vet the feasibility of this idea. This type of analysis was beyond the scope of this plan and has not been conducted.



Main Street: Existing



Main Street: Near Term Recommendation



Main Street: Long Term Recommendation

## MAIN STREET REDESIGNING OLD TOWN STREETS

Main Street, from West Street to Old Lee Highway, is Fairfax City's historic central street. Currently, Main Street is characterized by narrow sidewalks, no bicycle facilities, uncomfortable crossings, and traffic congestion. Due to lack of street network beyond the Historic Core, Main Street carries the burden of many regional vehicular trips. The majority of the limited public ROW along Main Street has been dedicated to moving cars. As a result, less space is left for people who walk, bike, take transit, or for people to mingle in public space.

Inviting pedestrian-friendly Main Streets are a hallmark of successful historic downtowns. The City has

already developed 30% design plans for a streetscape project along Main Street. Although the streetscape plans do not change the number of vehicular travel lanes, the proposal introduces curb extensions at intersections to widen pedestrian space and shorten crossing distance. The Old Town Small Area Plan incorporates the 30% streetscape design plan as a near term recommendation for Main Street.

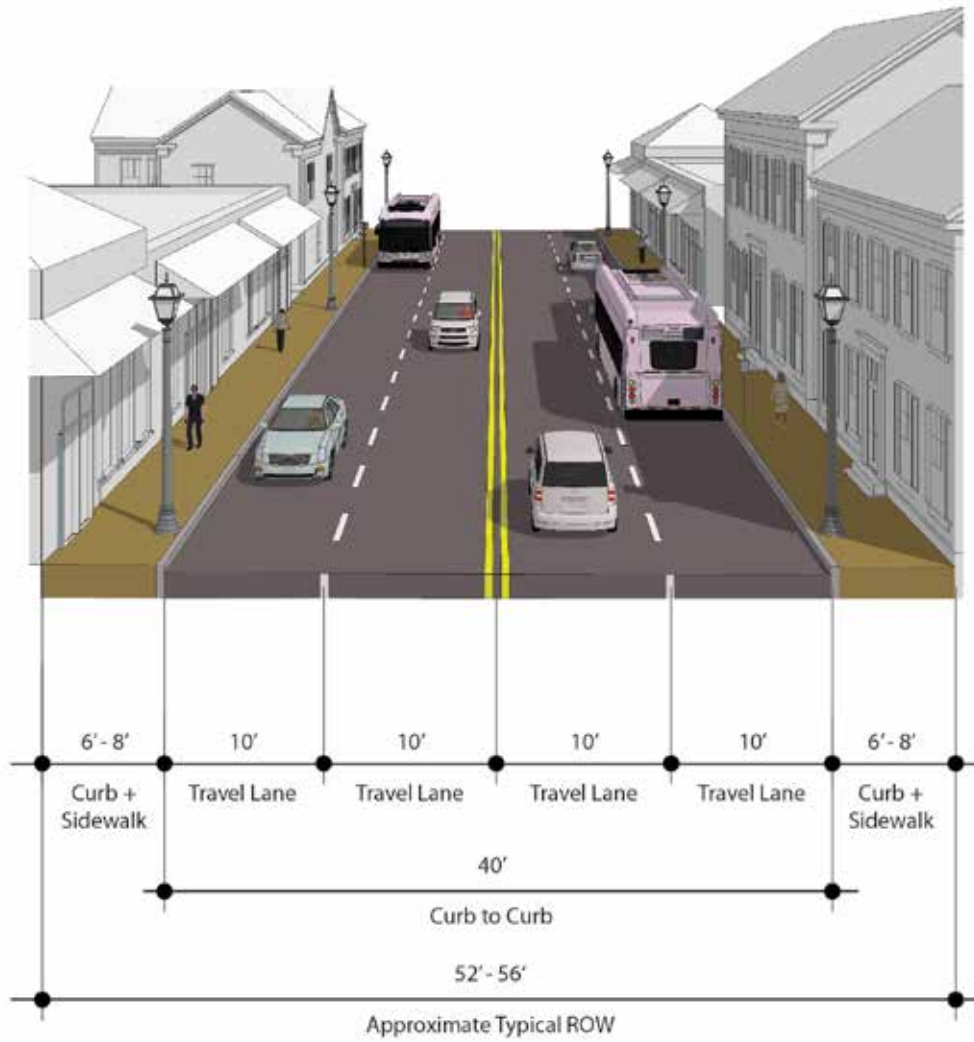
In the long term, once the overall loop road is built by extending South Street to West Street, Main Street could be redesigned to get rid of left-turning movements to and from Main Street between West Street and

East Street, eliminating the need for a continuous left-turn lane. This space currently dedicated to left-turning vehicles could be repurposed for wider sidewalks and on-street parking with curb extensions at intersections.

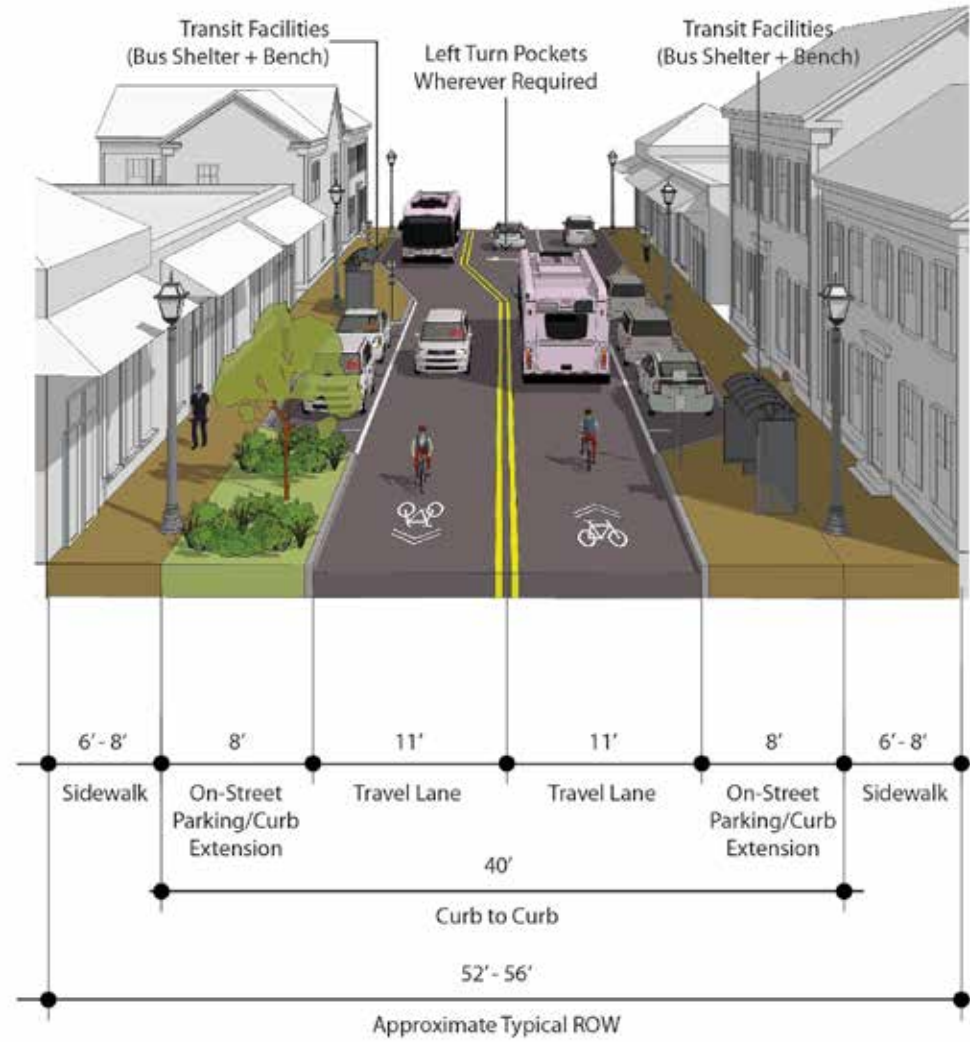
The long-term recommendation for Main Street is a high-level concept. Detailed traffic analysis will be required to vet the specifics and feasibility of this idea. This type of analysis was beyond the scope of this plan and has not been conducted. Significant additional traffic analysis will be required as part of a future study to test the feasibility and assess the value of trade-offs of this recommendation further.



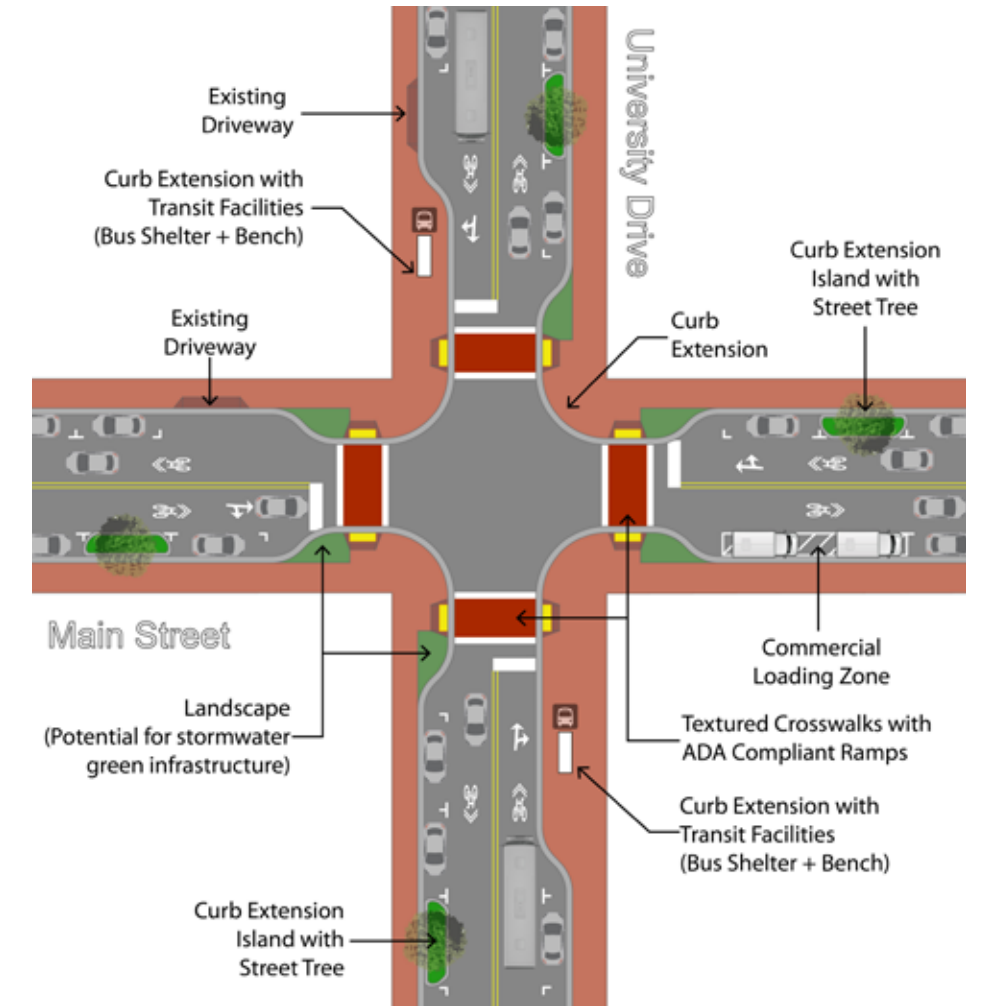
Photo of Main Street



University Drive in Pedestrian Precinct: Existing



University Drive in Pedestrian Precinct: Recommended



University Drive and Main Streets intersection recommendation

## UNIVERSITY DRIVE A ROAD DIET

Similar to Main Street, University Drive from South Street to North Street is Fairfax City’s historic north-south central street. Currently, University Drive is characterized by narrow sidewalks, no bicycle facilities, uncomfortable crossings, and traffic congestion. The majority of the limited public ROW along University Drive has been dedicated to moving cars. As a result, less space is left for people who walk, bike, take transit, or for people to mingle in public space.

A Road Diet project can be implemented on University Drive from South Street to Layton Hall Drive. This recommendation will extend a similar Road Diet project

that was recently implemented on University Drive from Armstrong Street to South Street. This project converted the existing four-lane undivided street into a three-lane street with one vehicular travel lane in each direction and a two-way center left-turn lane. Additional roadway space was used to add buffered bike lanes in both directions.

Within the pedestrian precinct, from South Street to North Street, University Drive can be narrowed to one lane in each direction to add on-street parking on both sides. As mentioned in the Loop Road and Pedestrian Precinct section—restricting left turns at the intersection

of Main Street and University Drive provides an opportunity to remove the left turn lanes at this intersection. At the intersections of South Street and North Street, on-street parking can be restricted to include left-turn lanes.

Road Diet projects that convert four-lane undivided roads to three-lane roads offer several high-value improvements at a low cost. As per the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), benefits of a Road Diet project include enhanced safety, mobility, and access for all road users and a “complete streets” environment to accommodate a variety of transportation modes. The resulting

benefits include a crash reduction of 19 to 47 percent, reduced vehicle speeds, improved mobility and access by all road users, and integration of the roadway into surrounding uses that results in an enhanced quality of life. A key feature of a Road Diet is that it allows reclaimed space to be allocated for other uses, such as bike lanes, sidewalks, pedestrian refuge islands, bus shelters, parking, or landscaping.

Four-lane undivided roadways experience relatively high crashes, especially due to conflicts between high-speed through traffic, slower left-turning vehicles, and other road users. FHWA has

deemed Road Diets a proven safety countermeasure and promotes them as a safety-focused design alternative to a traditional four-lane, undivided roadway.

University Drive is also the alignment for another key recommendation - the Spine. The Spine will provide a branded pedestrian and bicycle connection from George Mason University to Northfax along George Mason Boulevard and University Drive. As part of the Spine, a wide shared-use path is recommended along the west side of University Drive and along the east side that can be implemented as part of the redevelopment of Old

Town South and Old Town North superblocks, respectively. People on bikes will have to share travel lanes along the traffic-calmed street with sharrow markings within the pedestrian precinct preceding from Sager Avenue to North Street due to narrow available ROW.

A planning-level traffic analysis for this recommendation is included in the Appendix. Additional detailed traffic analysis will be required as part of the engineering design to test the feasibility of this recommendation further.

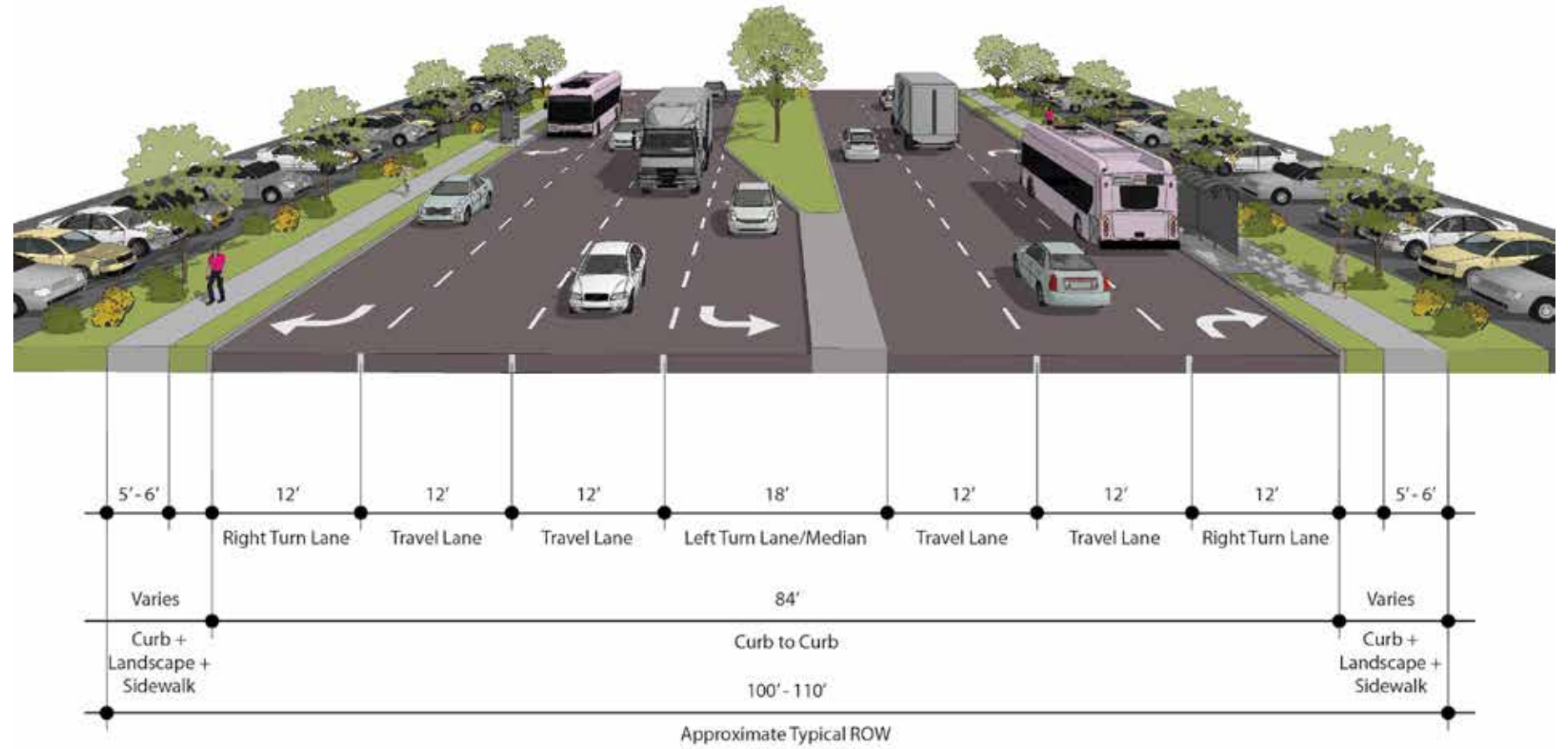


# OLD LEE HIGHWAY

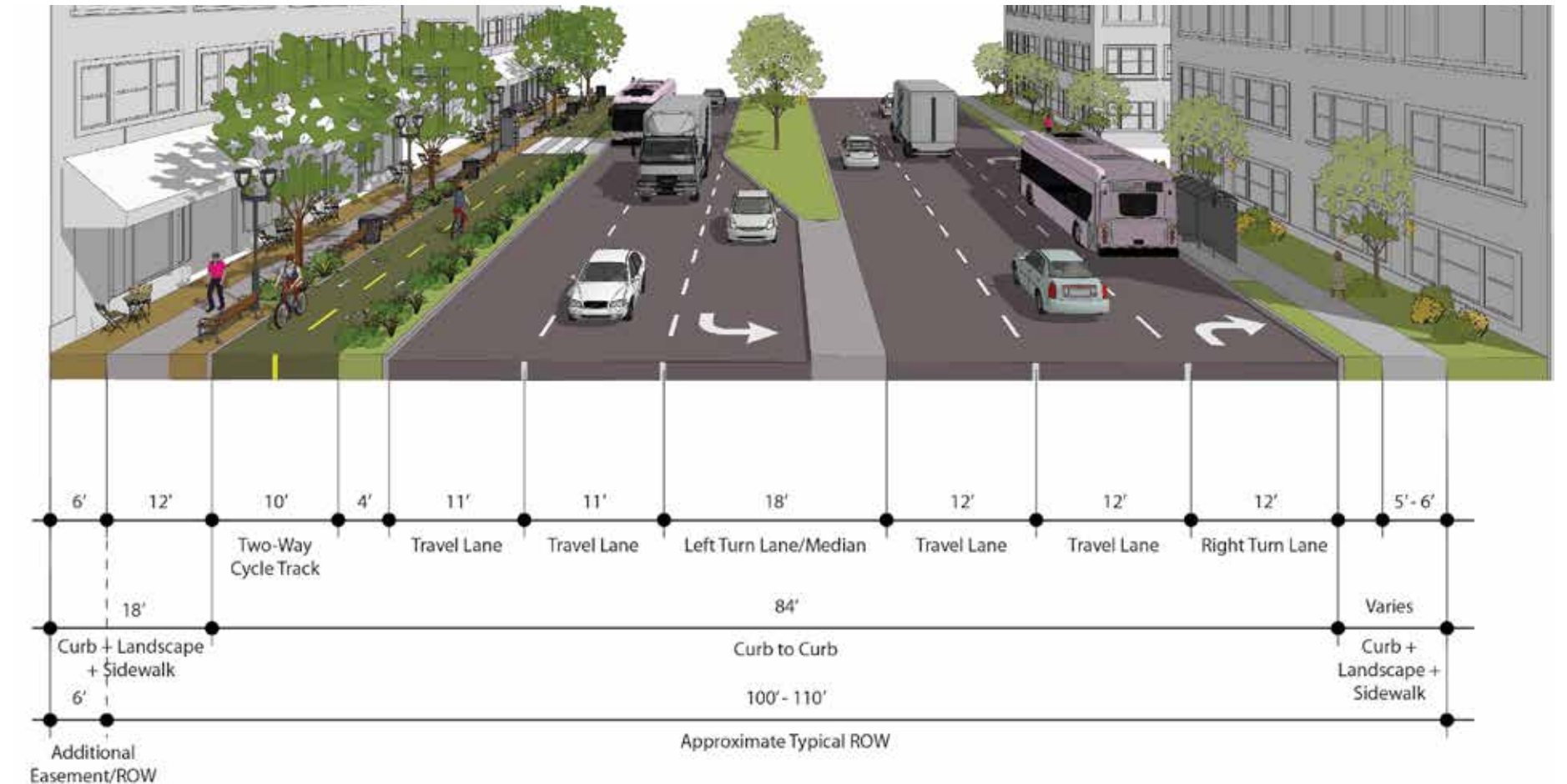
## NEW BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Old Lee Highway is a major roadway connecting Old Town to Fairfax Circle. The City is currently redesigning Old Lee Highway from Layton Hall Drive to Ridge Avenue. The plan will include a two-way cycle track and a shared use path on the north/west side of Old Lee Highway, a continuous sidewalk on the south/east side and upgraded bus stops and shelters throughout the project area.

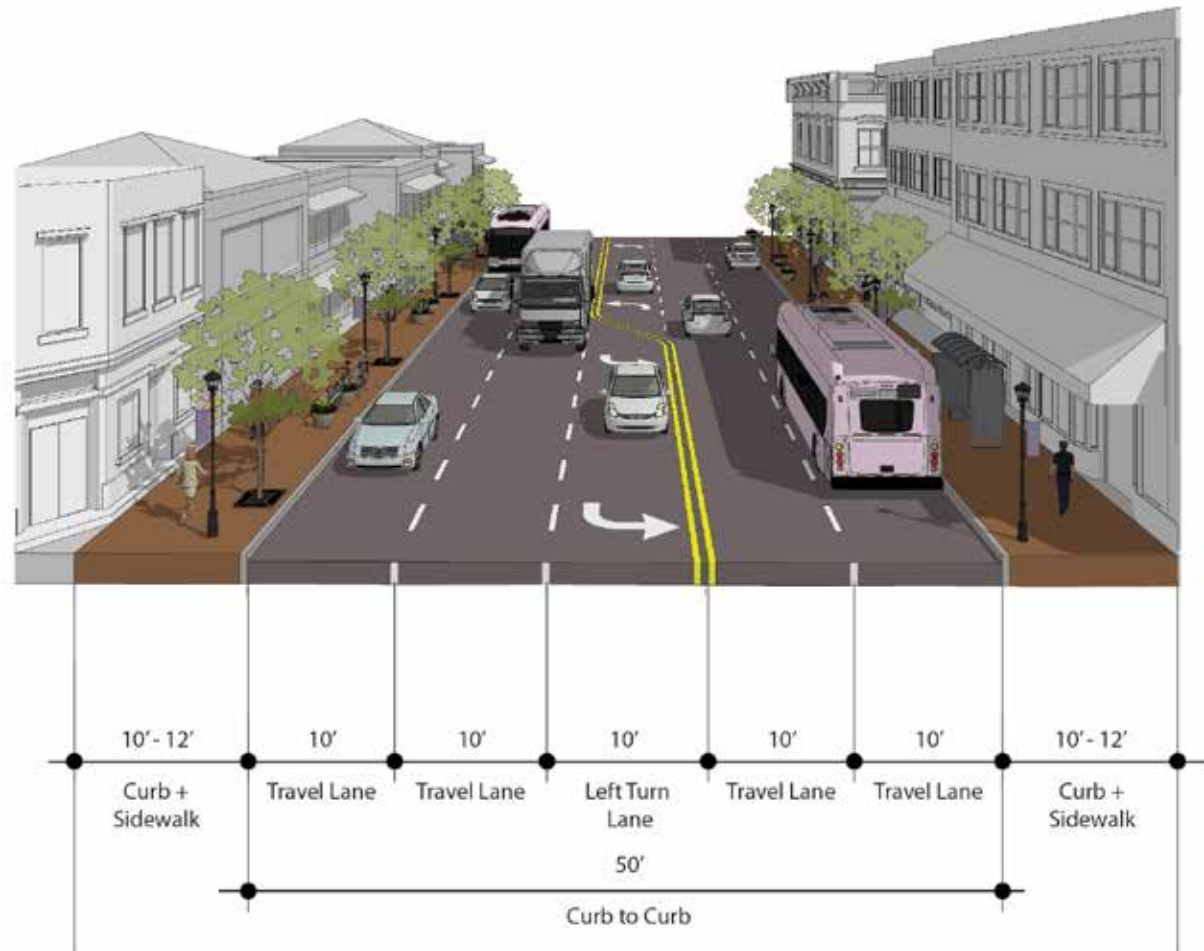
The two-way cycle track and wide sidewalks currently under design are recommended to be extended southwards from Layton Hall Drive to North Street as part of the Old Town Small Area Plan. Currently there are continuous right-turn lanes along Old Lee Highway for most of the length between North Street and Layton Hall Drive. The south-bound right-turn lane can be repurposed to add a two-way cycle track on west side. With redevelopment proposed as part of the Small Area plan all along Old Lee Highway, there opportunity to consolidate driveways and access points such that a continuous right-turn lane is no longer needed. The redevelopment can also provide additional ROW or easements to widen sidewalks.



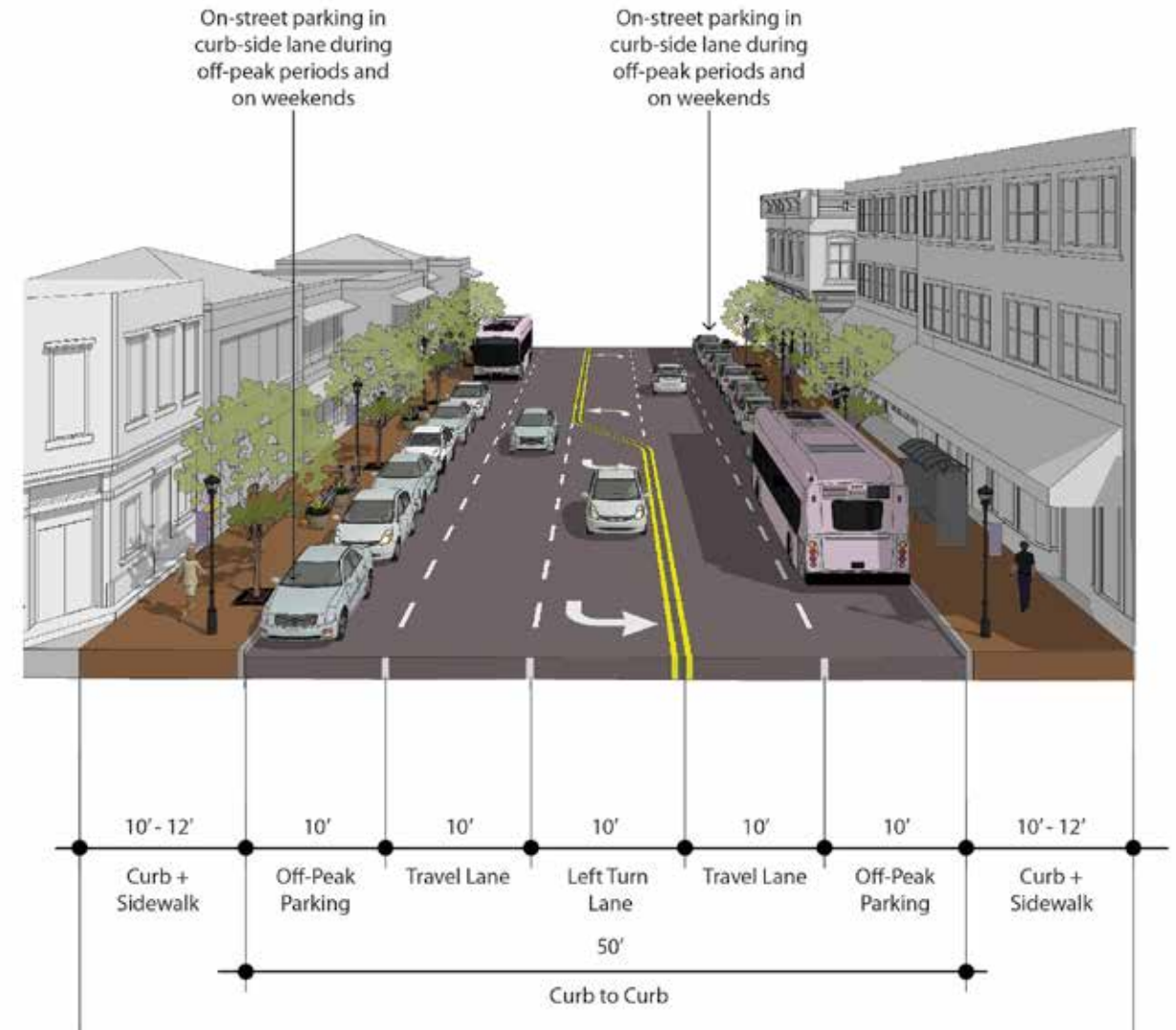
Old Lee Highway: Existing Conditions



Old Lee Highway: Proposed Conditions



North Street: Existing



North Street: Curbside on-street parking during off-peak weekday hours and weekends

## NORTH STREET OFF-PEAK PARKING

A potential opportunity to manage curbside space is along North Street in Old Town by providing on-street curbside parking during off-peak weekday hours and all weekends. North Street currently has five lanes, with two lanes in each direction and left-turn lanes at intersections. However, there is no on-street parking along North Street. Buildings with sidewalk-fronting ground floor retail along North Street can benefit from the availability of curbside on-street

parking. The pedestrian environment is also enhanced by the presence of parked cars acting as a buffer between fast-moving traffic and sidewalks.

This recommendation is a high-level concept. Additional traffic analysis will be required as part of a future study to further test the feasibility of this recommendation.



Photo of North Street

# PARKING MANAGEMENT

## STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Parking supply and how it is managed affects congestion, pollution, pedestrian comfort and safety, the feel of a place and the value of its open space and business activity. It is a critical driver of how people choose to get around. The cost and perceived availability to find parking must be carefully balanced to the demands of new uses and building an attractive, walkable Activity Center. Parking management for the Activity Center relies on the following five strategies:

- Create a park-once and walk district
- Encourage shared parking
- Establish district-wide parking regulations
- Encourage the use of on-demand mobile parking apps
- Manage curbside space

### Create a park-once and walk district

Old Town is a major mixed-use destination that will invariably attract visitors who do not live within walking or biking distance. Most of these visitors are likely to drive to Old Town and require parking. The key to managing this parking need while maintaining an attractive and walkable district is to design Old Town as a park-once and walk district. With multiple uses within the Activity Center, visitors may need to visit more than one destination, resulting in more trips. With a park-once district environment, the additional trips can be made on foot along walkable streets, while the car is parked in a centralized parking location.

In a park-once environment, people are encouraged to park their car in one centralized place and then make stops on foot rather than driving from one destination to another within the district, unlike in a car-oriented single-use area. Creating the type of environment where it is easy for people to walk between

destinations involves both good urban design and parking policies. If each destination is required to provide its own off-street parking, and each building is required to provide parking on all sides, dead zones of surface parking lots are created between destinations that make walking distances longer and the walking experiences less pleasant, thereby incentivizing people to get back in the car to drive to other nearby destinations.

As part of the Small Area Plan, there are several shared parking garages designed to accommodate parking needs at the district level. This consolidation of parking along a few major streets enables the creation of a walkable internal street network that will result in a park-once district.

### Encourage shared parking

Shared parking is a strategy that optimizes parking capacity by allowing complementary land uses to share parking spaces, rather than developing separate spaces for separate uses. This strategy leverage synergies between adjacent land uses that require parking at different times within a 24-hour period. Mixed-use walkable districts can leverage this difference by sharing parking spots and reducing overall parking inventory.

Parking demands operate on a peak and off-peak schedule dependent on the related land use. Distinct but complementary patterns, such as “office parking” that is generally empty in the evenings and on weekends and “residential parking” that is usually fuller in the evenings, offers an opportunity to better meet parking requirements without increasing supply.

Research has shown that deploying shared parking strategies could reduce the need for parking spaces by up to 38% as compared to providing separate parking for each individual property or land use type. The City should consider creating a parking management district

for Old Town to encourage shared parking and maximize parking resources while minimizing excess parking supply.

### Establish district-wide parking regulations for the Activity Center area

Most of the time, developers have to provide minimum parking spaces stipulated in the City’s development code resulting in a site-by-site parking supply that typically exceeds demand, cannot be shared and takes considerable space for the utility of storing cars. Fairfax City’s Zoning Ordinance recognizes this effect and has set parking maximums for commercial and industrial uses as well as encourages shared parking. However, the City has several requirements that may limit the use and location of shared parking strategies. In mixed-use Activity Centers, parking should be considered as a shared resource, and regulations should allow sharing of centrally located parking in-lieu of on-site parking requirements, especially for commercial and retail land uses. The City should develop a comprehensive district-wide parking regulation for the Activity Center area to provide clarity and predictability of parking requirements throughout Old Town. These regulations can include a methodology to calculate shared parking ratios by land use type and implementation framework that can allow developers to pay into a fund to build centrally located shared parking garages in lieu of on-site parking requirements.

### Encourage the use of on-demand mobile parking apps

Advances in technology have also enabled more efficient use of existing parking inventory. Mobile apps such as Spot Hero, Parking Panda, ParkMobile, among others, allow users to reserve a parking spot on demand and in advance at a specific location.

These mobile apps open up publicly and privately owned parking spaces

to be shared as public parking spaces, increasing the available supply without any additional cost to the City. The distributed nature of parking supply that is made possible by the use of such technologies also mitigates the traffic congestion that can be caused by a single large parking lot or garage.

As part of the overall TDM program, the City should consider organizing educational or marketing campaigns to make residents, employees, and visitors aware of these additional parking options.

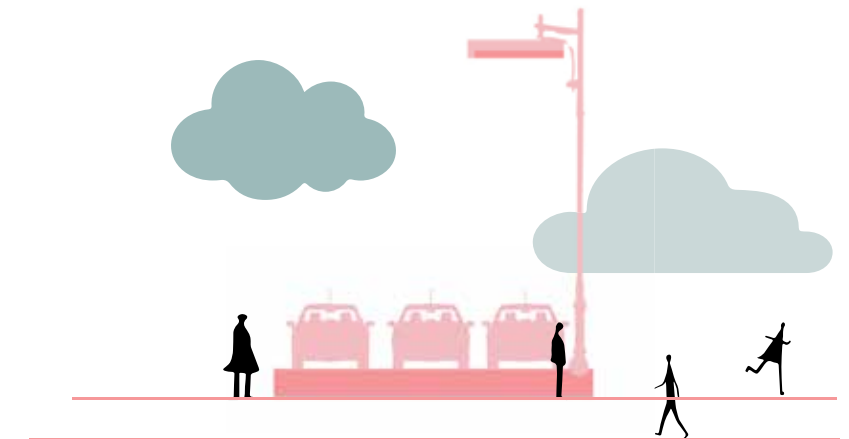
### Manage curbside space

The City’s curbside space is one of its most valuable resources, especially in the Activity Centers. Proper management of this resource results in greater access, increasing the efficiency and functionality of the space for residents, visitors, and business owners alike. This, in turn, produces economic and quality of life benefits for everyone. The City’s curbside environment is utilized by a diverse range of users in cars, on bikes, on buses, and in commercial vehicles. The boom in online shopping and ride-hail services has contributed to an uptick in commercial and individual demand for pick-up/drop-off zones and curbside loading zones. Along with ride-hail applications, new transportation options like shared scooters and other micromobility modes are simultaneously expanding access to the City’s Activity Centers and surrounding neighborhoods resulting in increasing demand for already limited curbside space.

Often, these competing demands outstrip the amount of available space, requiring proactive management. Competing demands need to be balanced by analyzing trade-offs and looking closely at the local context. A solution that works in Old Town may not be appropriate for Northfax or any other Activity Centers.

The City should develop a specific curbside management plan for each

Activity Center clearly identifying pick-up/drop-off spaces, loading areas, bike-share and scooter-share parking, and on-street parking with various regulations by streets and block faces.



# IMPLEMENTATION AND DETAILS

1. Old Town Core Details
2. Old Town North Details
3. Old Town South Details
4. Phasing and Economics
5. Sustainability
6. Cultural Preservation
7. Utility Recommendations
8. Zoning and Regulatory Recommendations

# OLD TOWN CORE

## PLAN DETAILS AND EXPECTATIONS

This diagram is a short summary of the expected land uses, building typologies and special details within the Development Plan. These details were based on major stakeholder outreach (including property owners), market research, and urban design best practices.

The buildings and land uses depicted here serve as a conceptual build out for the Small Area Plan framework in Old Town. Although the core ideas should remain consistent, the plan also recognizes that land uses, building typologies, and specific designs may change in the future.

### New Construction (Residential / Mixed-Use Building / Open Space):

- 5 story height limit
- City-owned property recommended for consolidation with adjacent church property
- Affordable housing recommended
- Alternative uses as public open space and/or townhouses

### Infill Construction (Residential / Mixed-Use Building):

- 5 story height limit
- Preservation/renovation of historic bank building

### New Construction (Performing Arts Center / Hotel):

- 6 story height limit
- Potential for increased height limit for special uses with civic benefits, such as boutique hotel / arts center
- Architecturally sensitive and contextual, due to height and massing

### Historic Courthouse (to be coordinated with County):

- New lighting for historic building
- Activation of green space

### New Construction (Mixed-Use / Residential Building):

- 5 story height limit
- Consolidation with neighboring property recommended



### Existing Parking Garage and Mixed-Use Property:

- New parking signage with increased size and visibility to general public
- Renovation of plaza to open up visibility of internal businesses
- Integration with Arts Walk

### Historic Core Infill Construction:

- 3 story height limit
- Careful preservation of original historic structures
- Sensitive additions and renovation of historic structures
- Integration with Arts Walk

### Infill Construction (Mixed-Use Building / Hotel):

- 3 story height limit at Main Street / 4 story towards Sager St (working with topography)
- Potential for increased height limit for special uses with civic benefits, such as boutique hotel
- Ground floor retail and Lobby at Main Street recommended
- City-owned property recommended for development and/or consolidation

### New Public Parking Garage:

- 4 story height limit
- Architectural screening along all exposed facades
- Clear signage and wayfinding for users coming to Old Town

# OLD TOWN NORTH

## PLAN DETAILS AND EXPECTATIONS

This diagram is a short summary of the expected land uses, building typologies and special details within the Development Plan. These details were based on major stakeholder outreach (including property owners), market research, and urban design best practices.

The buildings and land uses depicted here serve as a conceptual build out for the Small Area Plan framework in Old Town. Although the core ideas should remain consistent, the plan also recognizes that land uses, building typologies, and specific designs may change in the future.

### New Construction (Residential / Commercial / Mixed-Use Buildings):

- 6 story height limit
- Projected uses are flexible, should accommodate future Activity Center needs
- New publicly-accessible open space to be coordinated among property owners and city

### New Construction (Residential / Commercial / Mixed-Use Buildings):

- 6 story height limit
- Grocery store anchor recommended
- New publicly-accessible open space
- Above-grade structured and underground parking to be integrated with site development
- Retail frontage oriented towards new street and public open space

### Willard-Sherwood Master Plan:

- New public buildings, including community center, health services and other programs

### New Construction (Residential / Commercial / Mixed-Use Buildings):

- 5 and 6 story height limit
- Projected uses are flexible, should accommodate future Activity Center needs

### Infill Construction (Commercial / Mixed-Use Buildings):

- 4 and 6 story height limit
- New construction oriented towards Old Lee Highway

### New Construction (Mixed-Use Building):

- 4 and 6 story height limit
- New publicly-accessible open space connecting trail segments
- Retail frontage oriented towards civic plaza



# OLD TOWN SOUTH

## PLAN DETAILS AND EXPECTATIONS

This diagram is a short summary of the expected land uses, building typologies and special details within the Development Plan. These details were based on major stakeholder outreach (including property owners), market research, and urban design best practices.

The buildings and land uses depicted here serve as a conceptual build out for the Small Area Plan framework in Old Town. Although the core ideas should remain consistent, the plan also recognizes that land uses, building typologies, and specific designs may change in the future.

### Public Open Space:

- Preservation of historic structure
- New public space for outdoor activities

### New Construction (Residential / Commercial / Mixed-Use Building):

- 5 story height limit
- Architecturally sensitive facade along University Drive, forming street edge
- Retail orientation towards public open space

### Existing Office Buildings:

- Renovation of existing structures
- New ground-level engagement of Chain Bridge Road
- Consolidation and development into commercial (non-residential) uses recommended; residential uses not recommended

### New Construction (Commercial / Mixed-Use Building):

- 4 story height limit
- Architecturally sensitive facade along University Drive and Chain Bridge Road, forming street edge



### Fire-station Feasibility Study:

- Potential redevelopment or renovation of existing Fire Station
- Design options pending future studies

### Infill Construction (Residential / Commercial Buildings):

- 4 and 5 story height limit
- Lower height limit along property edges near residential neighborhood
- Architecturally sensitive facade along University Drive, forming street edge

### New Construction (Mixed-Use Building):

- 4 and 5 story height limit
- Architecturally sensitive facade along University Drive, forming street edge

### New Construction (Senior Housing):

- 4 and 5 story height limit
- Adjustment of this site and building layouts may be necessary to allow an appropriate full intersection across from Breckinridge Lane
- Architecturally sensitive facade along University Drive, forming street edge
- Public outdoor space may be included with site design

# PHASING AND ECONOMICS

## NEAR TERM DEVELOPMENT (15 YEARS)

While it is difficult to predict the long term future, the project team has interviewed a majority of the property owners within the study area, with particular attention to future planning efforts. This background information, coupled with ongoing market analysis and regional trends, allows the team to project and illustrate the near-term conceptual buildout of Old Town.

The development figures below are a benchmark for the city's evaluation of the Small Area Plan effort, and the achievement of these figures should precipitate a re-evaluation of the development plan.

For a near term horizon of 15 years, it is estimated that Old Town will bring in substantial new development and land use changes, including:

### Residential:

- Increase of 1,250 residential units (includes townhouses, condos, market-rate apartments, senior living, student, and affordable housing units)

### Office:

- Increase of at least 25,000 GSF new office space

### Retail:

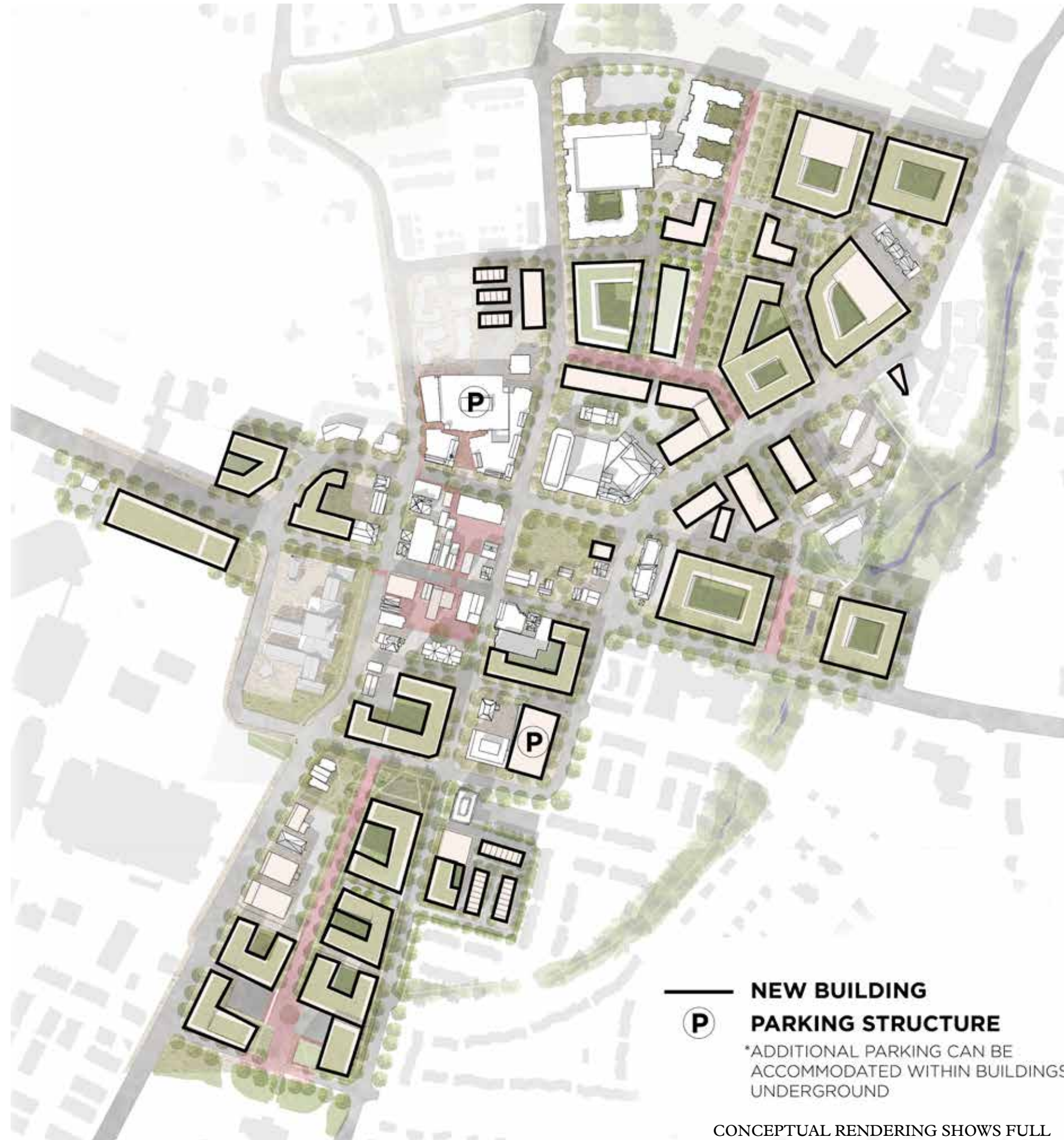
- Increase of at least 60,000 GSF new retail space
- Activation of at least 20,000 GSF of currently vacant retail space

### Hotel:

- Introduction of a new 100 key boutique hotel

### Institutional / Arts:

- Increase of 100,000 GSF of institutional and arts-related space

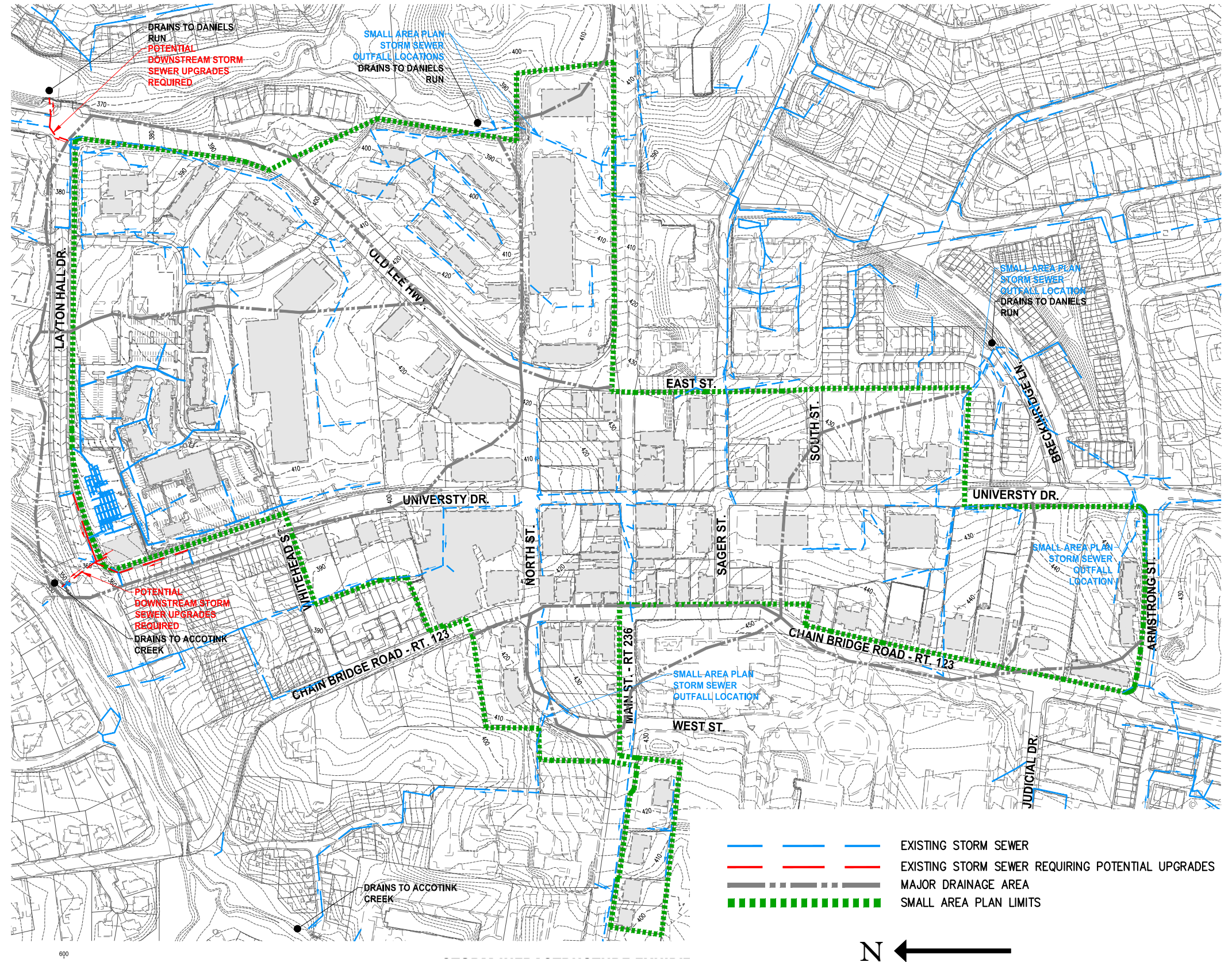


CONCEPTUAL RENDERING SHOWS FULL BUILDOUT OF STUDY AREA (MORE THAN 15 YEARS)



# UTILITIES - STORMWATER RECOMMENDATIONS

The southern and eastern ends of Old Town drain to Daniels Run, while the northern and western portions drain to Accotink Creek. While most existing storm sewer mains within the plan area appear to generally be adequate to convey expected flows from properties within the plan area, it is possible that potential upgrades to the existing storm sewer runs that leave the Old Town limits along the northern boundary will be required following future investigations of pipe size, slope and condition.

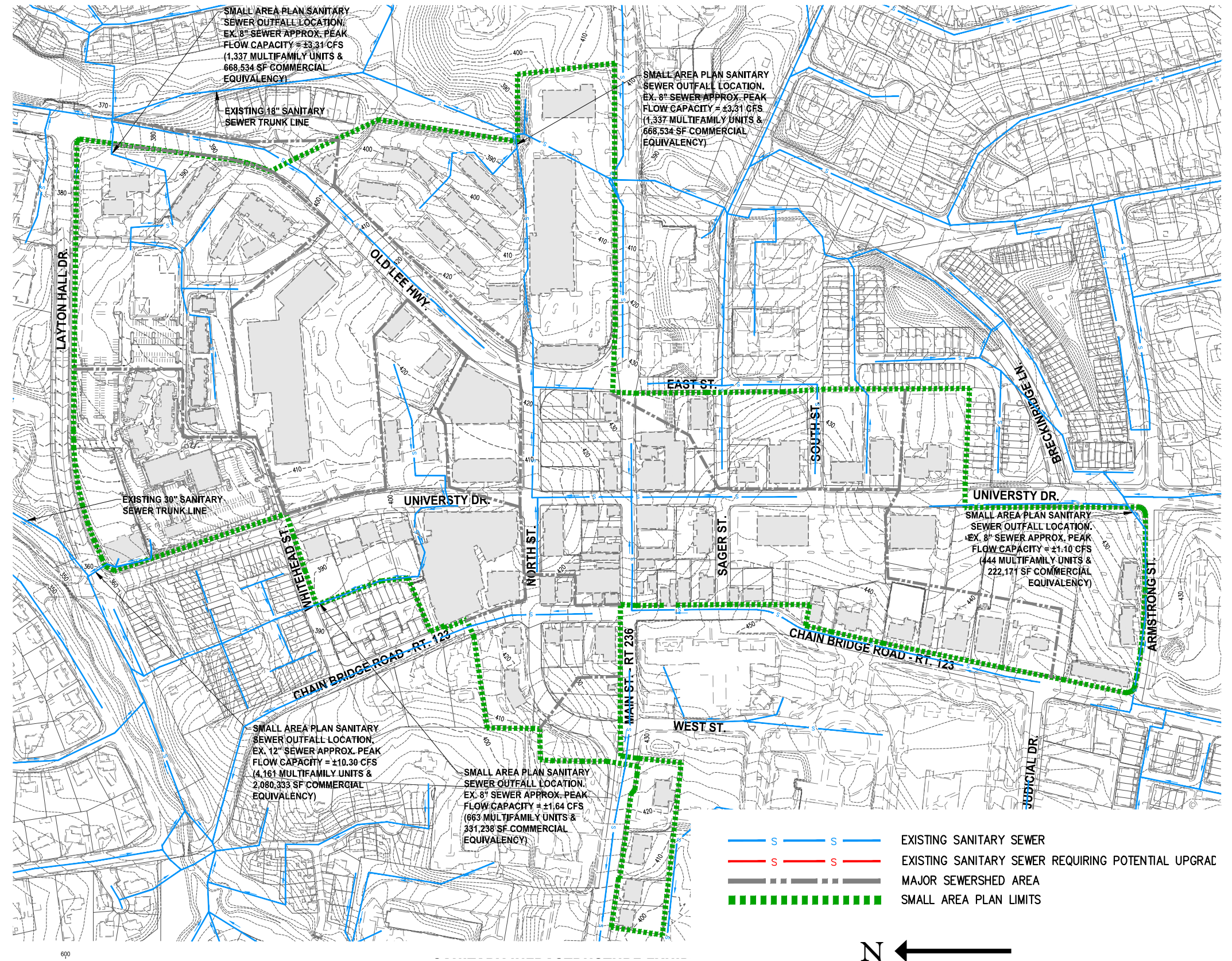


# UTILITIES - SANITARY

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Old Town sewershed is comprised of portions that drain either to an 18" trunk sewer line within the vicinity of Daniels Run or a 30" trunk line that follows Accotink Creek. Most of the sanitary sewer lines that leave the limits of Old Town are 8" in size (except for a portion at the northern end on University Drive that is 12") but with relatively small drainage areas.

While the exact information regarding the material, slope and condition of the existing outfall sewers is unknown, the approximate peak flow capacity analysis has been performed and, in general, the trunk sewer infrastructure in place within the plan area is likely adequate to convey project sewer flows from anticipated future development. Should future investigations determine that sewer upgrades are required, measures such as slip-lining or upsizing portions of the sewer can be considered.

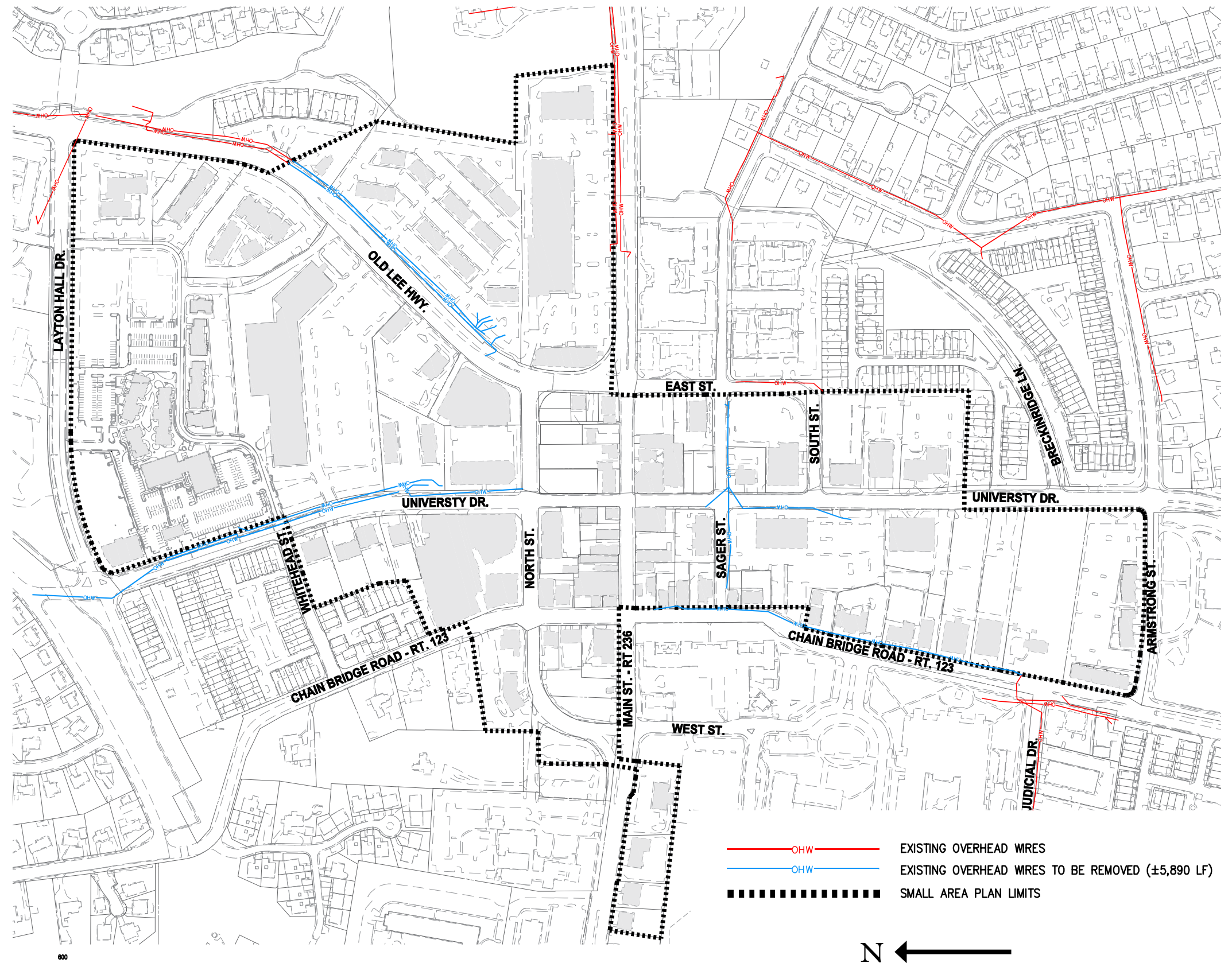


# UTILITIES - OVERHEAD UTILITIES

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Within this plan area, there is approximately 5,900 linear feet of existing overhead utilities. The plan recommends that future developments be encouraged to place existing overhead utilities underground. This could be accomplished through enforcement of existing zoning ordinance provisions.

Based on the review of cost data across a variety of projects in this region, it is estimated that costs for undergrounding can vary from \$1,300 to \$2,000 per linear foot. This significant variation in potential costs is due to the wide range of complexity levels depending on the extent of undergrounding and how the lines are to be undergrounded function within the larger utility grid. Based on this estimate, undergrounding of all overhead lines within the plan area over time could cost \$7,700,000 to \$11,800,000. For dense, urban environment such as this plan area, it is estimated that undergrounding costs will likely be near the high end of this estimated range.



# ZONING AND REGULATORY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Small Area Plan outlines a long-term development vision for Old Town and implementing this vision will require adjustments to current zoning and regulations.

1. Zoning (Building Height) – Currently, most of Old Town is currently regulated by the Old Town Historic District Overlay and the Old Town Transition District Overlay, which limits building heights to 3 stories / 36 feet and 4 stories / 48 feet, respectively. The plan recommends that properties within the study areas have a tailored height limit based on the plan vision (see Building Height and Setbacks) instead of the zoning height restrictions.
2. Zoning (Land Use) - Currently, most of Old Town is currently regulated by the Old Town Historic District Overlay, which does not allow hotel uses without special exceptions. The plan recommends that approved zoned land use for properties within the study area be expanded to include hotel uses.
3. The City is beginning an effort to revise the Federal Register Historic District boundaries. Consider revising the Historic Overlay District boundaries to coordinate with the revised Federal Register Historic District boundaries once established.

# IMPLEMENTATION OF KEY IDEAS

Realizing a revitalized Old Town will require an ongoing commitment by all stakeholders towards the implementation of key ideas.

## Key Idea #1: Old Town as a Cultural Destination

1. The formation of an Old Town Guidance Committee – this group should be coordinated by City staff and should oversee the implementation the Old Town vision over time. The committee should be comprised of city staff, community leaders, business owners, George Mason University representatives, and property owners. This group should meet quarterly to give updates, coordinate planning, and to promote the efforts and implementation of the Small Area Plan.
2. George Mason University Coordination – City Economic Development to continue to meeting regularly with George Mason University representatives to identify areas of joint interest with regards to the Small Area Plans.
3. City Events – Regularly scheduled major city events should be encouraged to utilize the Arts Walk and other Small Area Plan ideas. Events such as Restaurant Week and City festivals could be significantly enhanced by the placemaking ideas in this plan.

## Key Idea #2: Color in the Old Town

1. Color Recommendations - The plan recommends an introduction of color to the downtown core, particularly the historic buildings. The city Design Guidelines should be updated to

help encourage a wider range of color on downtown buildings.

2. The Old Town Guidance Committee to meeting occasionally with historic core property owners, listen to their ideas and concerns, and encourage color and detailing for downtown buildings.
3. City to consider coordinating with an expert to develop color recommendations for interested owners, and distribute recommendations to individual property owners, in coordination with the BAR and other stakeholders.
4. Board of Architectural Review (BAR) to review and approve/ veto/modify color applications.

## Key Idea #3: Creating a New Arts Walk

1. Old Town Guidance Committee should regularly meet with key stakeholders and give updates on events and planning efforts.
2. Outdoor space on private property - City and stakeholders, including property owners, to explore flexible uses for loading and parking spaces in between buildings and alleys. For example, daytime office parking spaces can be used after hours for special Art Walk events for outdoor seating and art installations. The Art Walk does not necessarily mean losing private parking spaces, but rather enhance these properties with additional arts and civic-related uses.
3. Local Artists and George Mason University Arts Programs – Bring in local arts groups (professional artists, university and high school

artists) to provide rotating content to display in the Arts Walk.

4. Mural Program – City to explore a civic mural program that will produce two or three large murals within the Arts Walk.

## Key Idea #4: A New Pedestrian Precinct

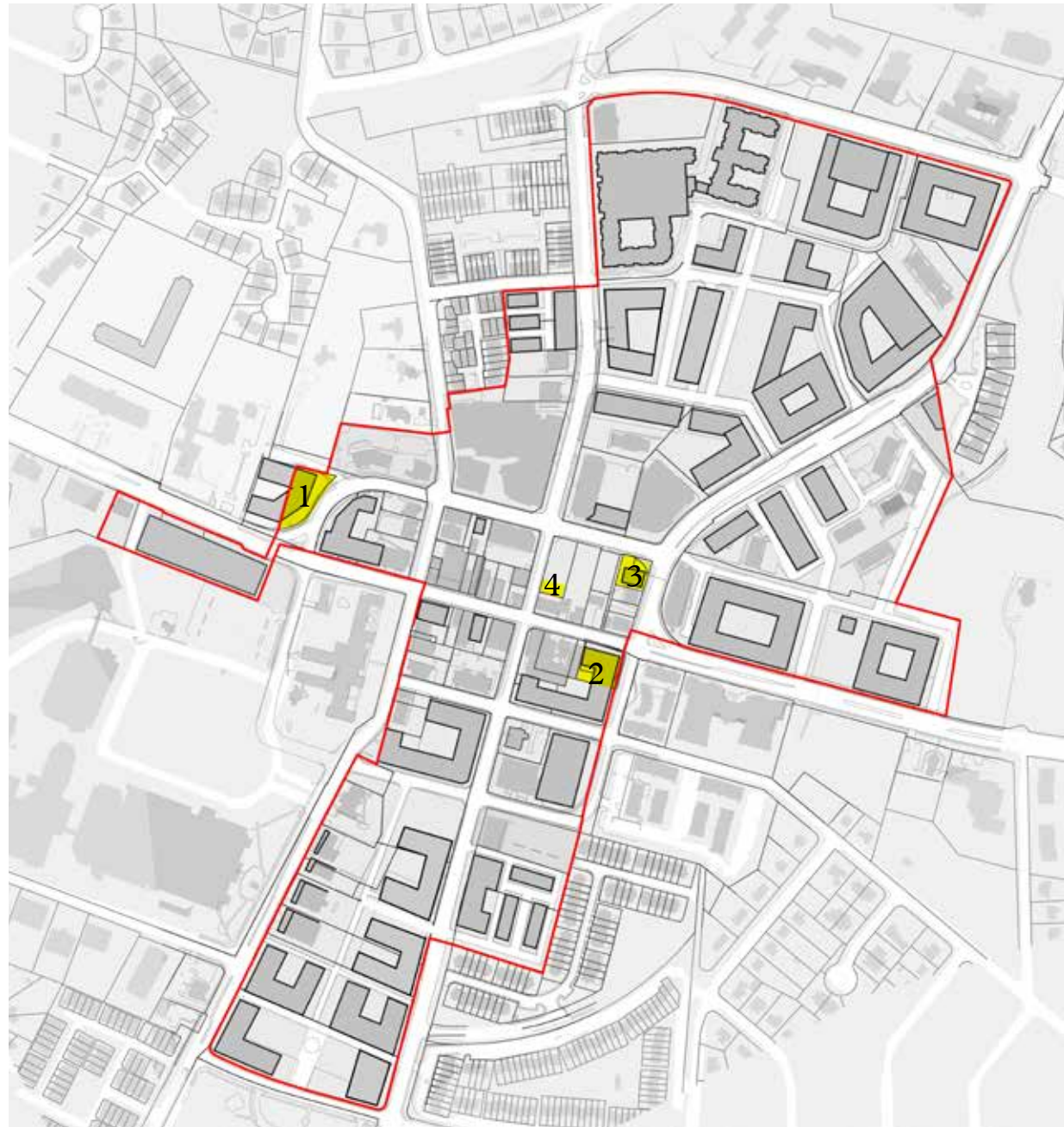
1. Main Street – the current Main Street streetscape improvement project fits into the goals of creating a downtown pedestrian precinct.
2. Loop Road Analysis – city staff to study the network impacts of a new loop road, with one-way pair and two-way options. City to work with private property owners and Fairfax County to chart out a timeline for implementation and construction of the loop road.
3. City transportation staff to further study Main Street and University Drive long term recommendations (on-street parking, reducing dedicated turn lanes, larger sidewalks).
4. North Street Off-Peak Parking – City staff to further study options for off-peak parking lanes, including daily timing, towing policies, and engineering details.

## Key Idea #5: Encouraging Balanced Land Use

1. City staff to track data as new land uses come in to replace older ones, and analyze the long-term economic, fiscal, transportation and environmental impacts. This data should be used to help guide future planning efforts.

## Key Idea #6: The Spine

1. City transportation to coordinate “The Spine” idea with upcoming bicycle master planning efforts. Interconnecting the city’s Activity Centers is a core idea of the Spine.
2. City staff to continue coordination of the Spine planning with George Mason University planners and staff. George Mason University is encouraged to be involved with the design and planning, as well as input on user-friendliness. Branding is another area of potential shared interest.
3. City staff to coordinate design options, final design, as well as signage, branding and marketing of “The Spine” to the broader community.



KEY:  
 1. TRURO LANE PARKING LOT  
 2. AMOCO PARKING LOT  
 3. OLD TOWN SQUARE PARKING LOT  
 4. OLD TOWN HALL PARKING LOT

 CITY OWNED PARCELS

## ECONOMIC CONTEXT

### CITY OWNED PROPERTIES

The City of Fairfax owns several properties within the small area plan boundaries. Consideration has been given as to how these properties can be best integrated into overall plan recommendations and other City priorities.

Factors evaluated as part of this analysis include, but are not limited to:

- Property specific characteristics such as location, parking, traffic impacts, etc.
- Market opportunities
- Supporting plan goals and objectives
- Synergistic factors with adjacent land uses
- Community benefit
- Fiscal impact
- Possible City partnering tools

Proposed treatment of City-owned property contemplates possible future site redevelopment, both as stand-alone sites and if planned in conjunction with adjacent properties, to effectuate the most beneficial reuse of the property. See the Appendix for additional details on these properties.



### 1. TRURO LANE PARKING LOT

10480 Main Street

#### Plan Recommended Uses

- Stand Alone: Site could accommodate a small residential development (5+/- Townhouses) or public open space.
- Parcel Consolidation: More units (including multifamily) could be accommodated if redeveloped with adjacent church property. Could also be integrated with redevelopment of the Bank of America parking lot site.



### 2. AMOCO PARKING LOT

10367 Main Street

#### Plan Recommended Uses

- Stand Alone: Depends on net usable square feet / site density.
- Coordinated Redevelopment with Adjacent Parcels: Facilitates commercial redevelopment.



### 3. OLD TOWN SQUARE PARKING LOT

10413 North Street  
 3928 Old Lee highway

#### Plan Recommended Uses

- Stand Alone: Likely continued use as surface parking.
- Block Consolidation: Master plan remainder of block to maximize space reactivation and utilization (“Surf Shop, Old Town Hall parking, Old Town Hall, etc.).



### 4. OLD TOWN HALL PARKING LOT

3999 University Drive (Actual)

#### Plan Recommended Uses

- Stand Alone: Continued parking or use could augment existing Old Town Square Park (i.e. amenity kiosk).
- Block Consolidation: Master plan remainder of block to maximize space reactivation and utilization (“Surf Shop, Old Town Hall parking, Old Town Hall, etc.). Could function as an anchor for Arts Walk.

## Endnotes

BeyondDC. "Cady's Alley, Georgetown." Flickr. Yahoo!, August 6, 2012. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/beyonddc/7721972150/>.

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