DOWNTOWNRALEIGH
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Activating the Downtown Core

Introduction

Downtown Raleigh Alliance (DRA) and the City of Raleigh have developed an economic development strategy that aims to position Downtown Raleigh for the future, particularly as we emerge from the last three years. This work will require a holistic approach that identifies the key opportunities to maximize downtown's strengths, make stronger connections to nearby assets and neighborhoods, activate streets with a diverse mix of businesses, design vibrant places for people and, to talk as a community about what will make downtown more welcoming with opportunities for everyone. As Raleigh grows, the economic development strategy will ensure downtown has a prominent role to play in the calculus of where to live and to invest.

The strategy is focused on four key areas (shown below).

Figure 1. Focus Areas

Figure 2. Project Schedule

This initial chapter of the report is focused on Fayetteville Street and surrounding streets - the original center of Raleigh. Ten major ideas are presented as the initial result of close collaboration with local residents, business owners, property owners and other stakeholders. These strategies for the downtown core are also integrated in the full economic development strategy with other components of the plan - addressing the downtown retail and office market, advancing and supporting minority- and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE), and identifying catalytic projects.

This document is accompanied by a separate but related document - **"Downtown Raleigh Economic Development Strategy"** - which can be accessed on the Downtown Raleigh Alliance website: www.downtownraleigh.org/ed-strategy or by scanning the QR code:

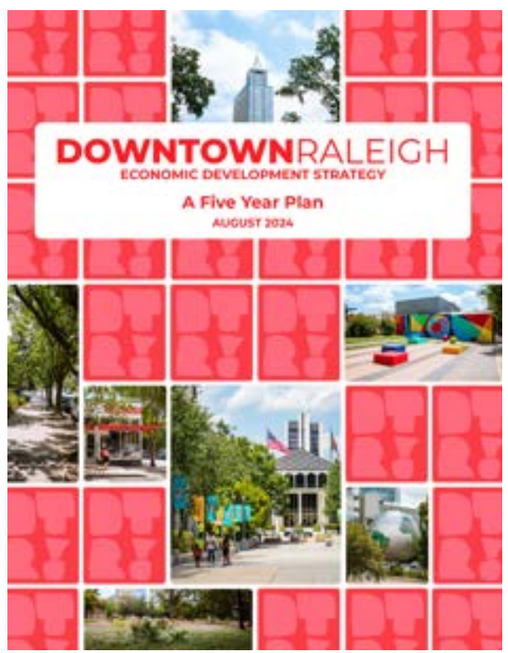
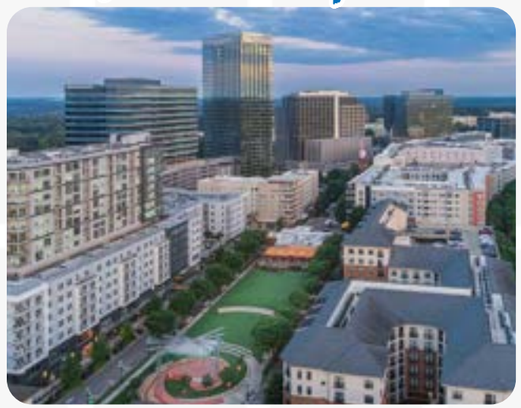


Figure 3. Map of Downtown Raleigh

regional competitors



Source (top to bottom):
North Hills (www.visitnorthhills.com);
Village District (Life in NC/El Pictures)

Downtown Raleigh in context

The Research Triangle is a global brand and Raleigh is the urban center of the Triangle as well as the state capital - home to a considerable number of State assets. However, it faces stiff competition within the region. While Raleigh is one of the fastest-growing cities in the US, other parts of the region are growing quickly as well.

Office utilization is a major concern for the health of the office market and retail. As of Q4 2023, cell phone data from Placer.ai shows that the average daily workday visits[1] in Downtown Raleigh is at 78% of pre-pandemic levels. Hybrid work is becoming more entrenched; surveys by Deloitte and Conference Board asking about return to work for 2024 show 67% of CFOs expecting to offer hybrid arrangements, with only 4% of CEOs saying they will prioritize going back to the office full-time. We need to prepare for a permanent structural shift and plan for other forms of foot traffic and different types of visitation patterns.

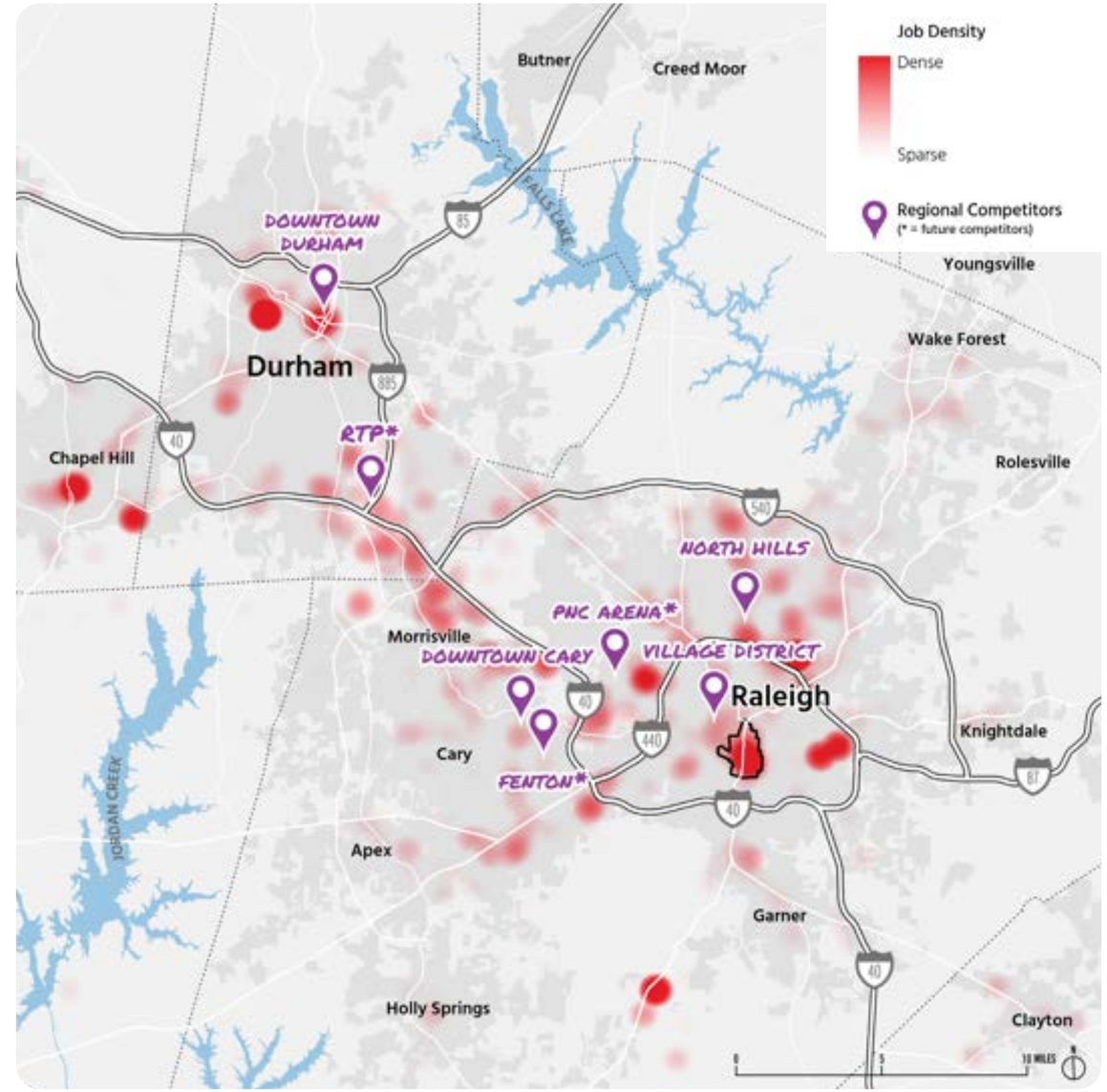
Downtown shopping has faced competition since the 1950s with the development of shopping malls like Village District (formerly Cameron Village). Today, the primary competitors are lifestyle centers that offer pedestrian friendly, new urbanist environments with curated tenants and a public realm managed by a single owner.

Downtown Raleigh is not a mall nor a lifestyle center and has an opportunity to lean into the qualities that make it distinctive: its history and authenticity, its stately trees, local small businesses, its embodiment of all things North Carolina as the state capital, and its potential for innovation and risk taking:

> "We're still becoming what we want to be. Other big cities are already defined and set in stone."

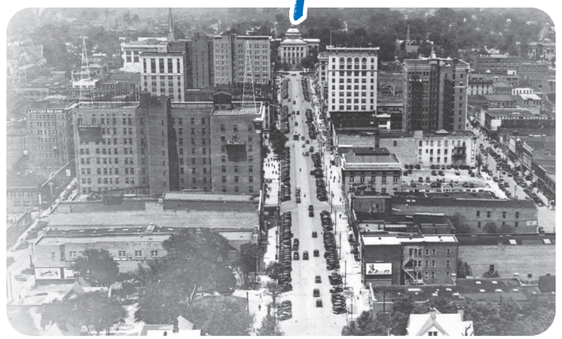
1 Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.
(Source: Placer.ai, Downtown Raleigh Alliance)

Figure 4. Regional Commercial Activity



Source: US Census Bureau LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics - All Other Services Worker Area Profile, 2020

historic Fayetteville Street



Source: North Carolina State Archives

As the identity of Raleigh has evolved, so has the look, feel and functionality of Fayetteville Street. It's historic nature and centrality make it an important symbol for Raleigh and the state of North Carolina.

Figure 5. Timeline of Fayetteville Street Development

1792

In the William Christmas Plan (the original street plan for Raleigh), Fayetteville Street is identified as one of four main thoroughfares.

1977

Fayetteville Street is closed to cars to accommodate plans to transform the space into a pedestrian mall.

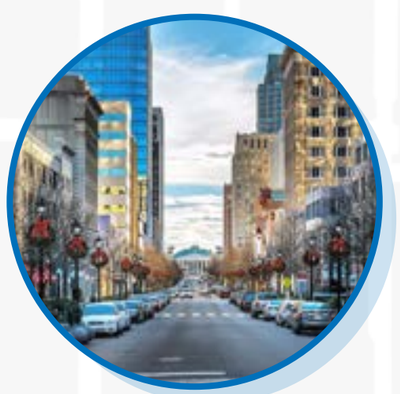
The closure of Fayetteville Street to vehicular traffic and a trend away from downtown in the 1970s had a negative impact on the commercial vibrancy of the corridor, and many businesses closed.

2003

The Livable Streets Plan calls for the restoration of vehicular traffic and the re-establishment of the Capitol vista on Fayetteville Street.

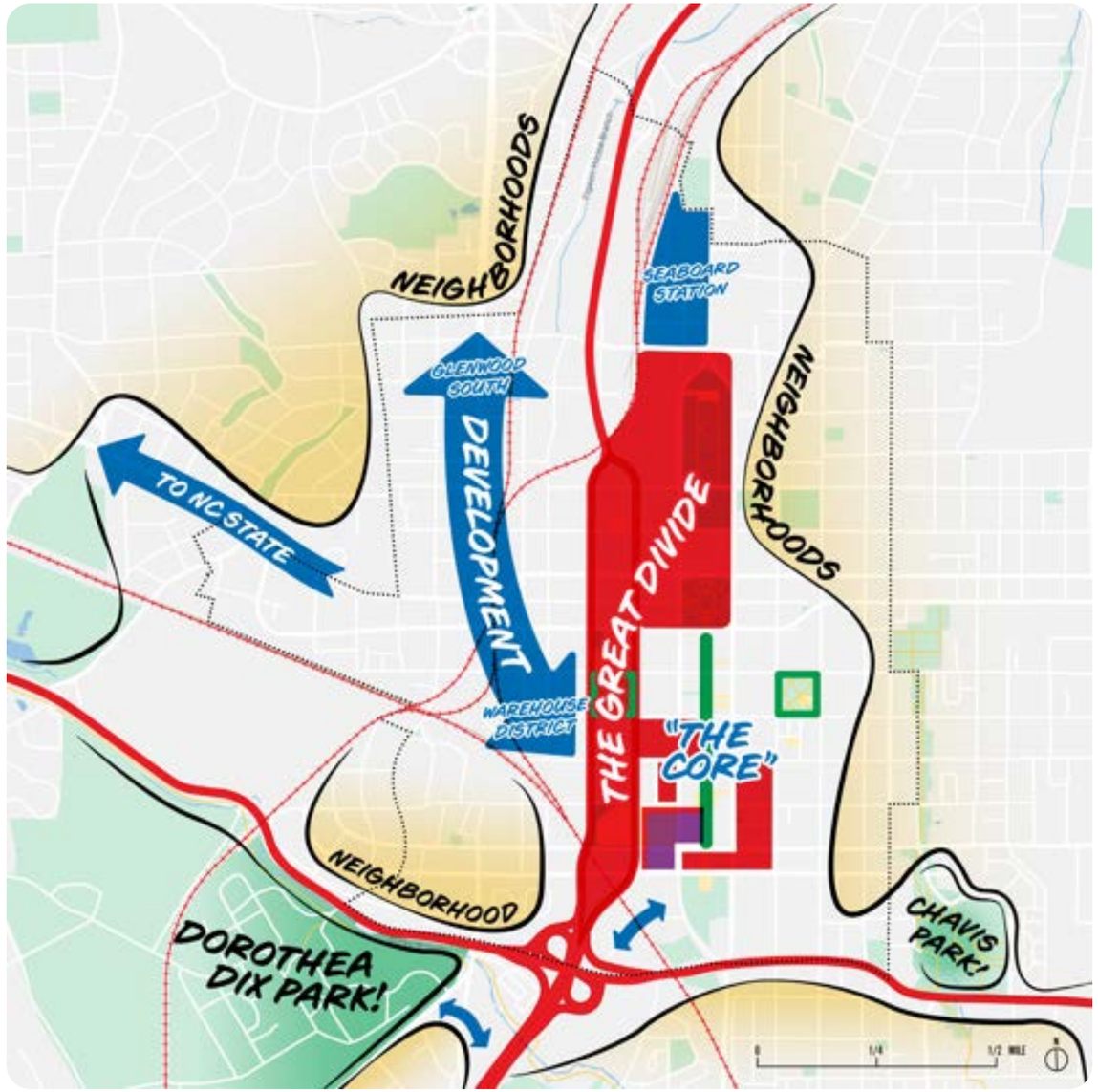
2006

Fayetteville Street reopens to cars and the vista from the Capitol to the Performing Arts Center is restored. The relocated Raleigh Convention Center is an additional economic driver in the area.



Source (left to right): State Archives of North Carolina, William Christmas Plan from "The 2030 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Raleigh"; Bill Dickinson; "Livable Street Plan" (2003)

Figure 6. Fayetteville Street and the Downtown Core in Context



Over time, downtown development has shifted west to areas like Hillsborough Street, the Warehouse District, Glenwood South, and now to the south around Dix Park. The core of downtown centered around Fayetteville Street is disconnected from these investments and lacks some of the color and vibrancy of these newer districts. To thrive, Fayetteville Street needs a compelling vision that prioritizes street activity and improves connections to nearby assets.

Fayetteville Street

not Fayetteville Street

We've been listening

Since August 2023, the consultant team has conducted over 60 stakeholder interviews and 15 focus groups with business and property owners, brokers, developers, employers, institutions, and government representatives and elected officials. In October, November and December, the team talked to residents and workers through pop-ups, virtual and in-person residents groups, and online activities. The input and ideas from these conversations inform the vision, goals and ideas that follow.

public engagement results

over **200** respondents through pop-up and online activities

Figure 7. Relationship to Downtown Raleigh

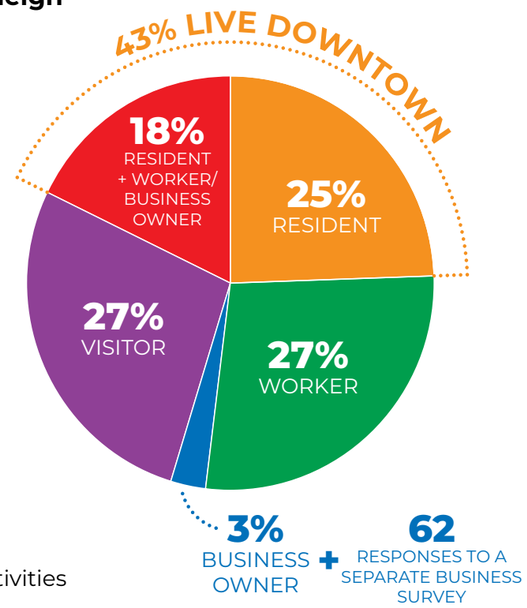


Figure 8. Fayetteville Street Activation

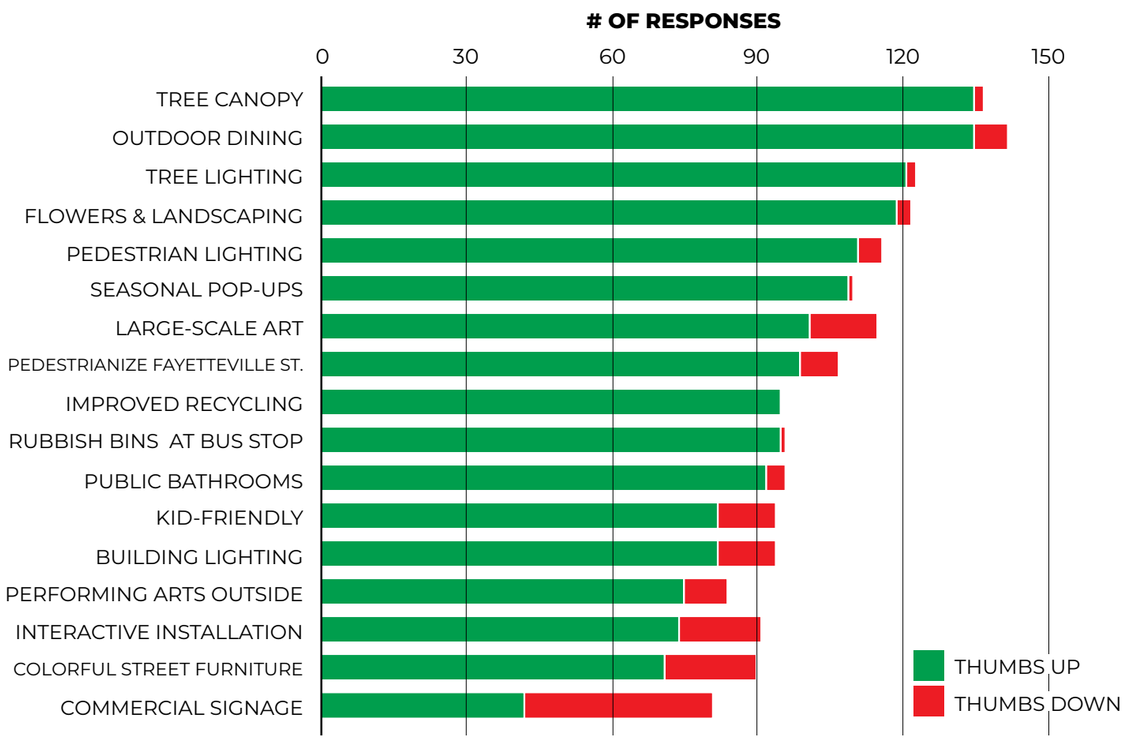
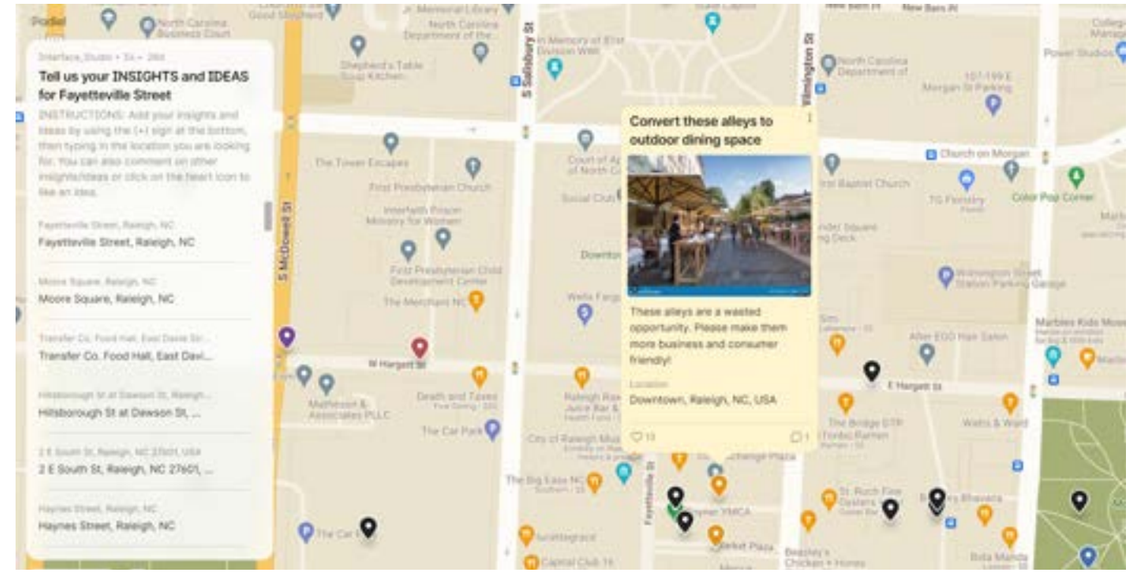


Figure 9. Insights and Ideas for Fayetteville Street & Downtown



Screenshot of online collaborative map. Source: Padlet.com

October 2023 pop-up event in City Plaza

Vision for Fayetteville Street

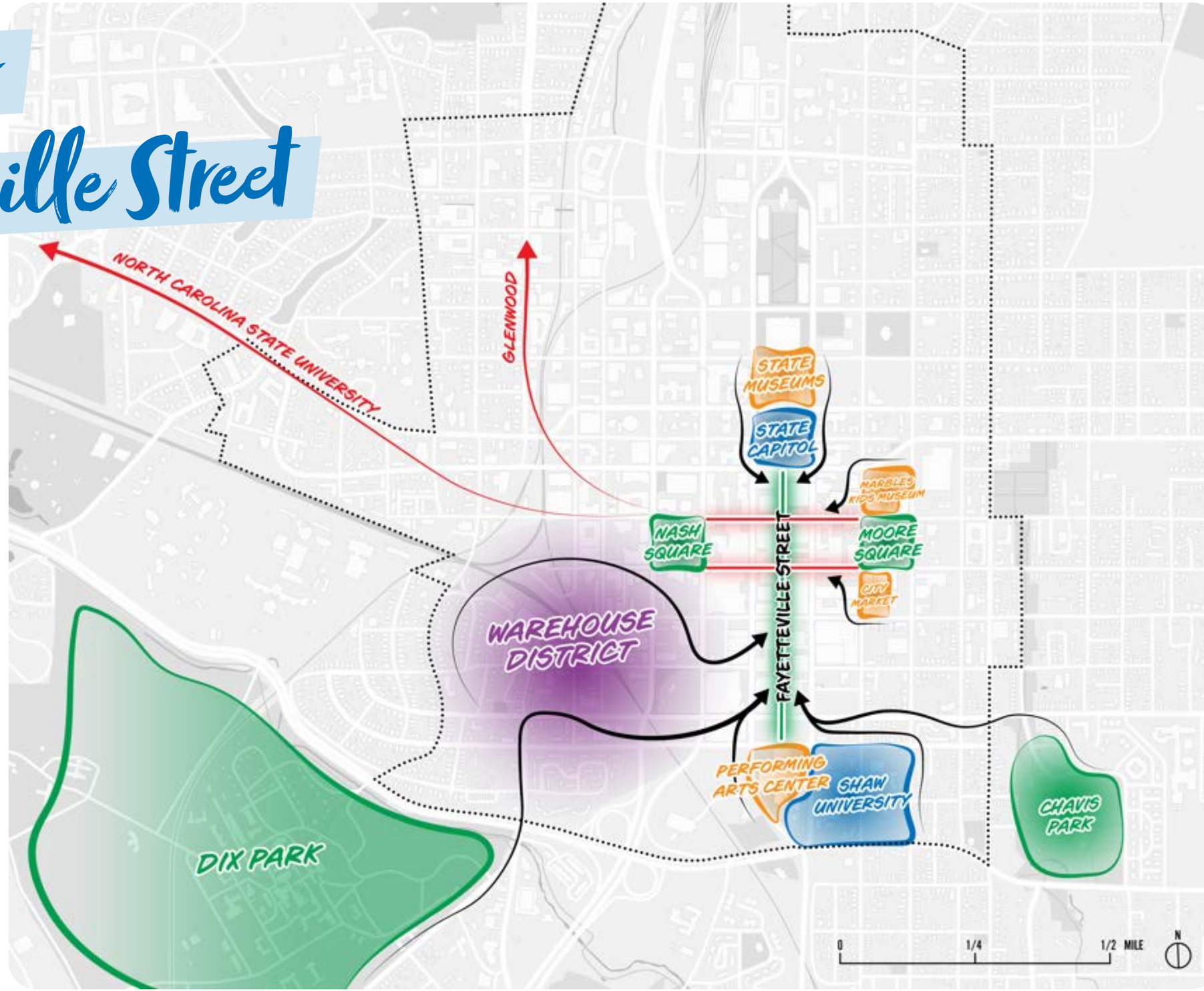
North Carolina's **main street.**

Vibrant and active to help drive **entrepreneurship and growth.**

A **linear park** in the heart of downtown.

Connected to other destinations downtown.

Downtown for all: fun for **families and kids**, memorable to **visitors**, a beacon of **civic pride** and **inclusive** for people of all backgrounds.



What are we trying to accomplish?

At the highest level, the recommendations for the core of downtown aim to achieve the following:

> **Loosen up** and encourage **vibrant street activity** on Fayetteville Street

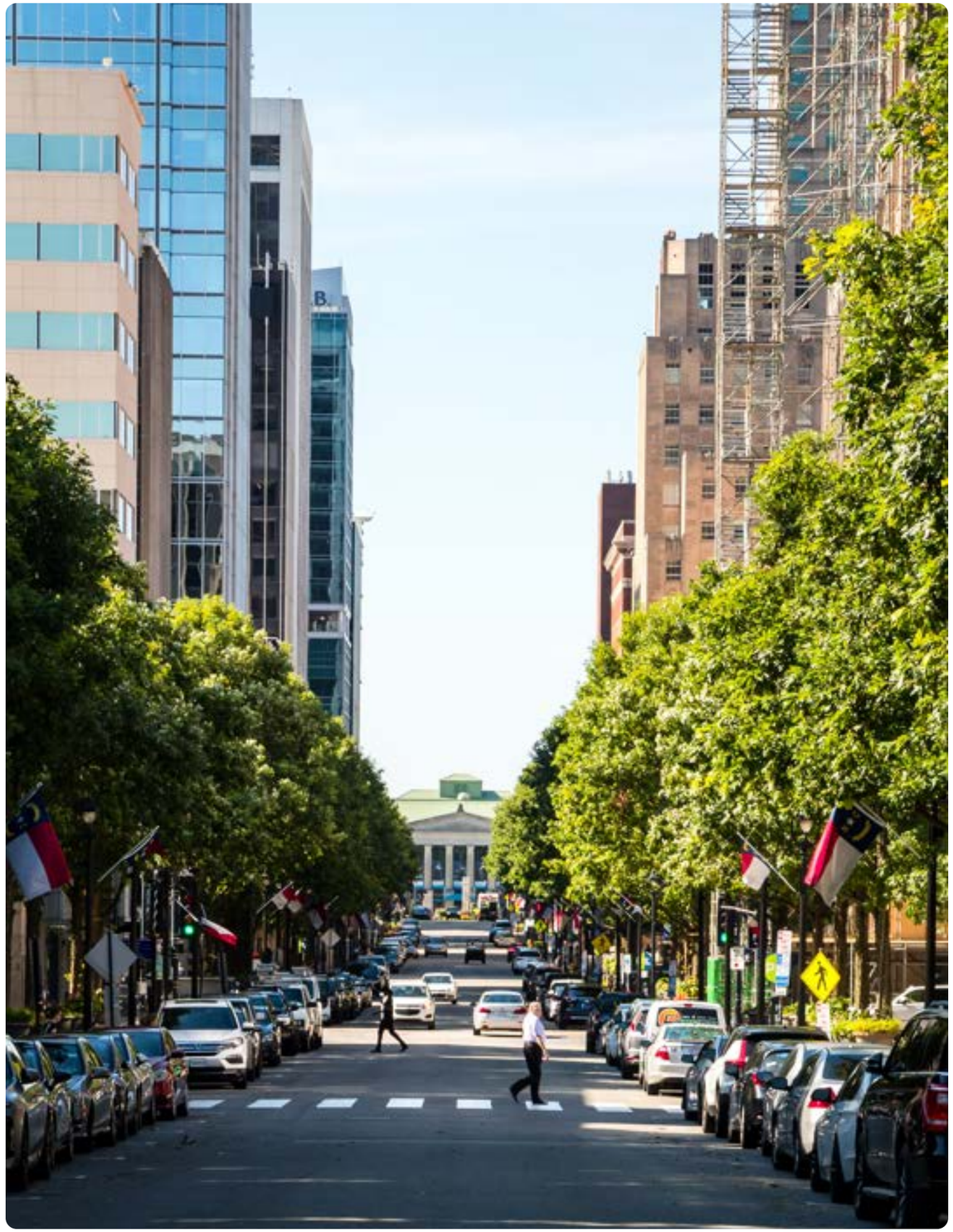
> Bring **more restaurant and retail** but be **strategic** about location and type

> Bring **more housing** to the core

> Leverage downtown's role in **entertainment** to help bring more activity to the core

> **Connect** the core to **nearby amenities**

> Encourage a **culture of innovation and risk taking** downtown

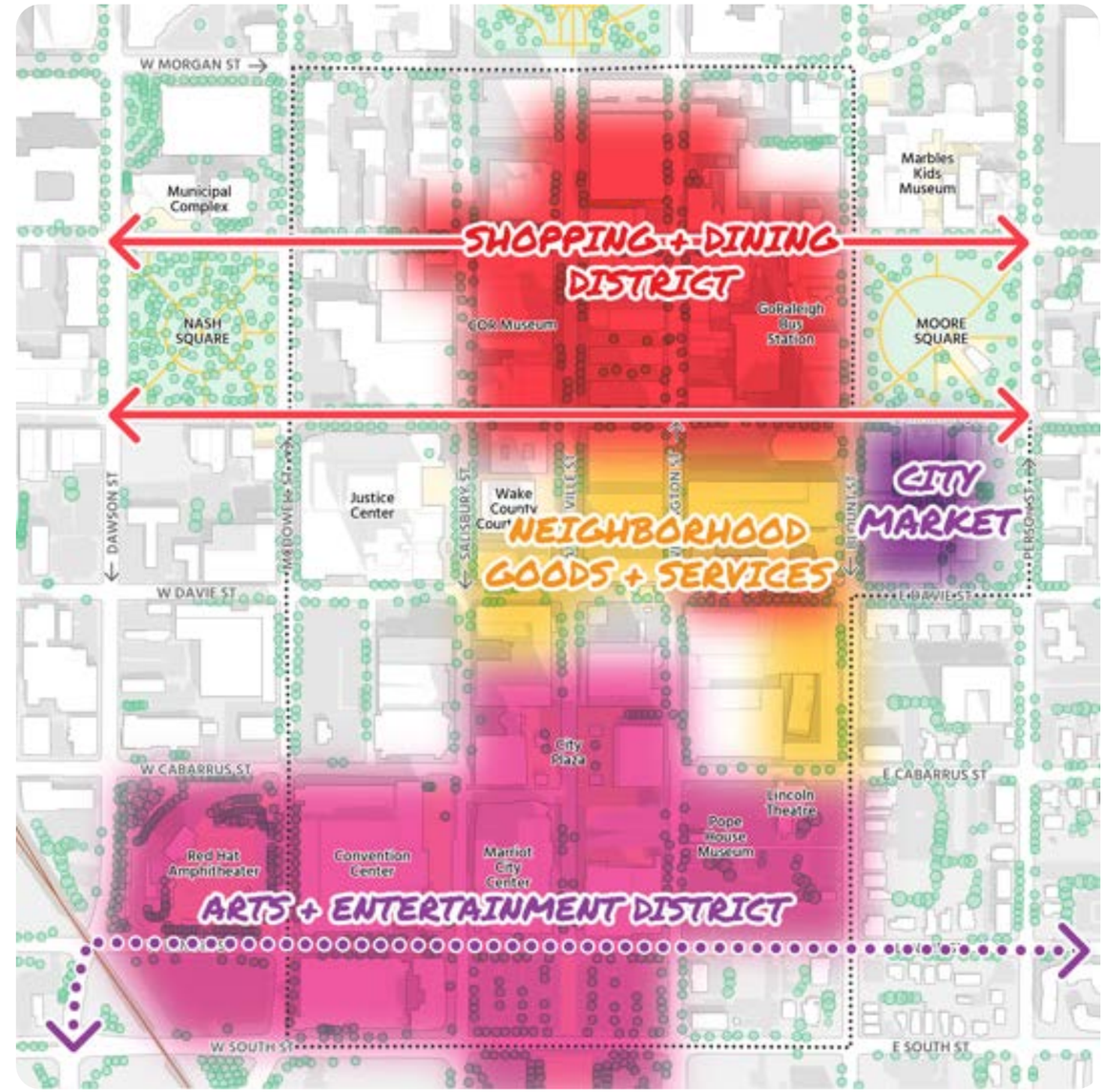


We also need to think of Fayetteville Street as more than a single street; it is really a series of overlapping mini-districts tied to surrounding streets and uses. In this way, Fayetteville Street has different personalities, and the design and retail strategy should reflect that. This plan envisions a future Fayetteville Street and downtown core that builds on existing characteristics and grows more fully into the following:

- **Shopping & Dining District**: A 16-18 hour district anchored by unique chef-driven restaurants, destination bars, and stylish fashion and furnishings representing the best of North Carolina
- **City Market:** A curated, unique mix of independent food, beverage, and artisan goods manufacturers to showcase Raleigh's local creativity, anchored by a restaurant and event space at the market hall
- **Neighborhood Goods & Services:** Essential goods and services proximate to downtown's residents and office workers looking for coffee, grab-and-go meals, sundries, and personal services nearby
- **Arts & Entertainment District:** Vibrant and lively storefronts providing a wide diversity of known entertainment, dining, and shopping opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages

The ideas in this plan include a mix of retail strategies, physical improvements, programming and policies all with an eye to further activating Fayetteville Street and the downtown core. Some ideas are foundational - i.e. the things that must be done to set the table for a more vibrant downtown. Other ideas are focused on creating new and varied experiences that will elevate the downtown core to attract new businesses, residents and visitors.

Figure 10. Downtown Core Framework



10 Big Ideas for the Downtown Core

1. Develop a streetscape design for Fayetteville Street that offers variations on a theme
2. Build a strong foundation to ensure downtown is clean, safe and vibrant
3. Develop a family-friendly itinerary and route around downtown core attractions
4. Design and market the downtown core as North Carolina's Main Street
5. Celebrate Raleigh's Black Business District
6. Add more housing on and around Fayetteville Street
7. Use public space to support neighborhood livability
8. Reposition City Plaza as downtown's front porch
9. Grow Raleigh's arts and entertainment district
10. Create a bold connection south of downtown

Idea #1

Develop a streetscape design for Fayetteville Street that offers variations on a theme, allowing for flexibility while still maintaining an overarching look and feel

Fayetteville Street should be the green heart of Downtown Raleigh and the front door to North Carolina; a place that is lively and connects the attractions and neighborhoods around it.

Fayetteville Street is a unique street. Besides connecting the State Capitol to the Martin Marietta Center for the Performing Arts, it has wide sidewalks and, largely due to the fact it is not a through street, Fayetteville Street does not need to juggle a lot of daily traffic. Simply put, Fayetteville Street offers opportunities other streets cannot. However, despite the wide sidewalks, the current design limits the use of the street, even preventing the ability for restaurants to easily offer outdoor dining to customers. By fine-tuning the current design of the street, Fayetteville Street can once again reflect the importance it holds in the minds of local residents.

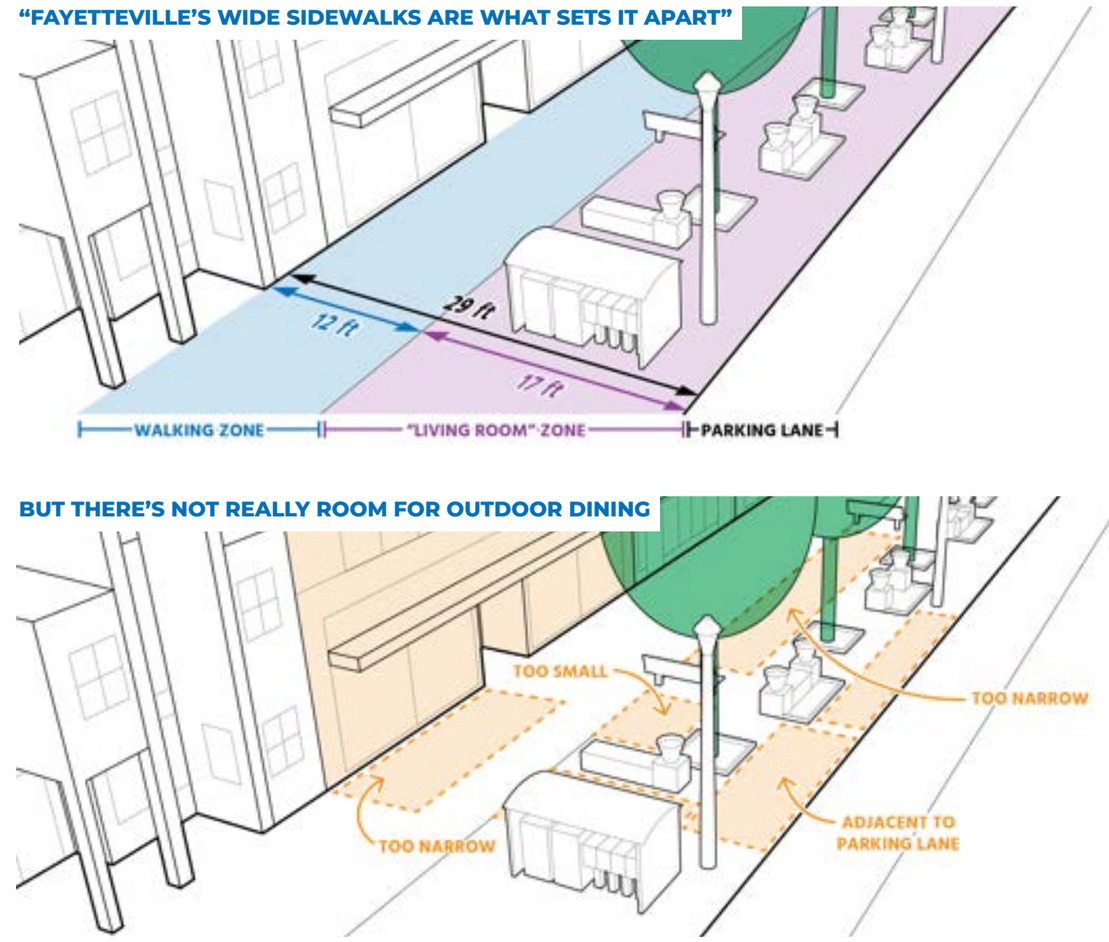
Actions

1. **Update Fayetteville Street streetscape standards and revise regulations** to allow flexibility for activation and delineate clear zones for business use, clearance for walking, street furniture and activity, and planting

How To Get Started

- ☐ Convene working group of relevant City departments, public safety officials and other stakeholders (such as a board, commission or advisory group)
- ☐ Empower one City department to carry forward Fayetteville Street recommendations regarding private use of public space
- ☐ Update Fayetteville Street streetscape standards
- ☐ Allocate financial and technical assistance for street activation and lighting by property owners, including retaining lighting designers, landscape architects, and architects to develop concepts

Figure 11. Fayetteville Street Sidewalk Issues



incentive programs

DOWNTOWN CHALLENGE GRANT MACON, GA

Funded through philanthropic agencies, these grants fund community action to implement the ideas in the Macon Action Plan, including public space improvements and programming.

PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION FUND, LOS ANGELES, CA

Funding through the City's Department of Cultural Affairs, ranging from $600 to $45,000, is available for temporary, locale-relevant, creative projects on streets, sidewalks, and adjacent public spaces.

Idea #1

2. **Remove some streetscape elements to make room for activity (and re-purpose elsewhere if possible),** including:
   - Existing planters
   - Benches
   - Newspaper corrals

3. **Refresh the streetscape with common elements** including:
   - Benches, trash cans, and bike racks at the intersections and mid-block crossings

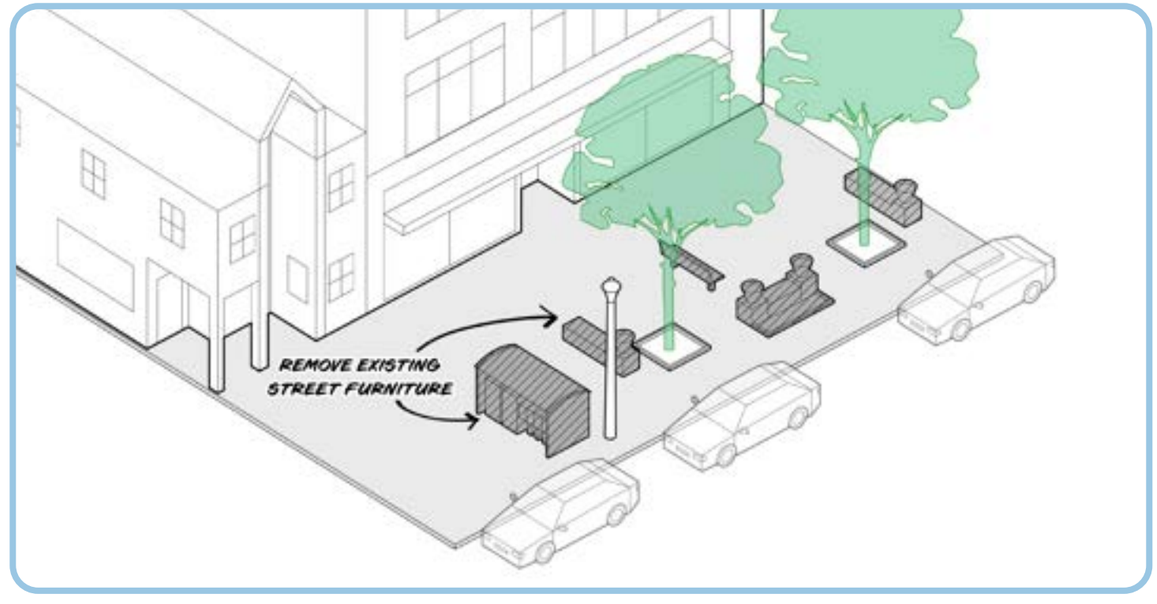
How To Get Started

- [ ] Hire an engineer and landscape architect to develop a strategy for furniture removal, paving repair and selective plantings *(with prescribed recommendations from this report)*

Fayetteville Street sidewalks are wide but cluttered.

Figure 12. Streetscape Redesign

STEP #1: REMOVE TO ACTIVATE

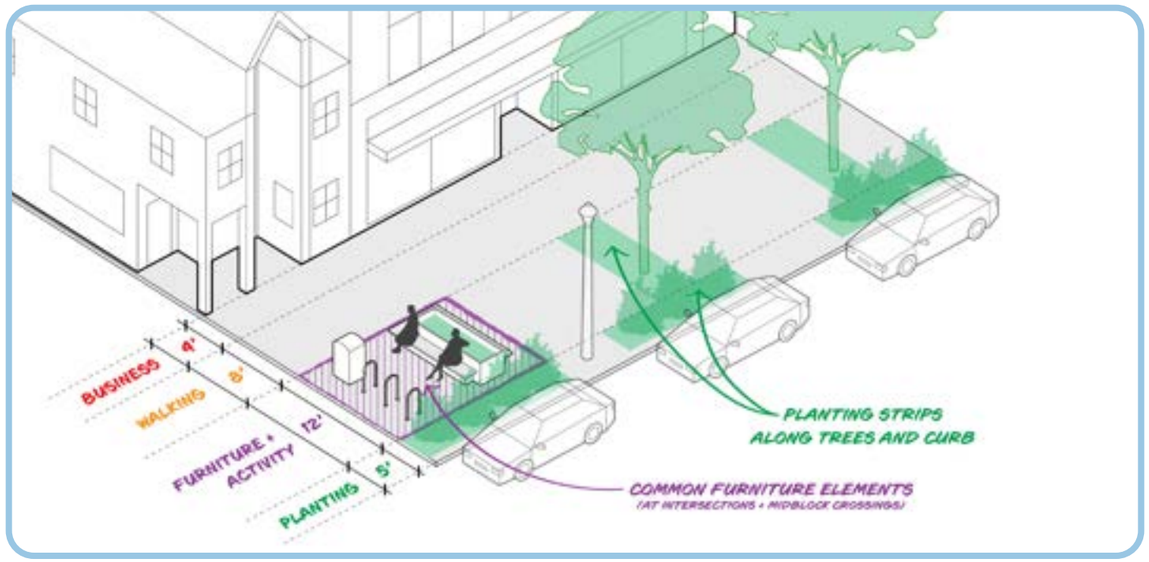


STEP #2: DELINEATE CLEAR ZONES FOR SIDEWALK ACTIVITY

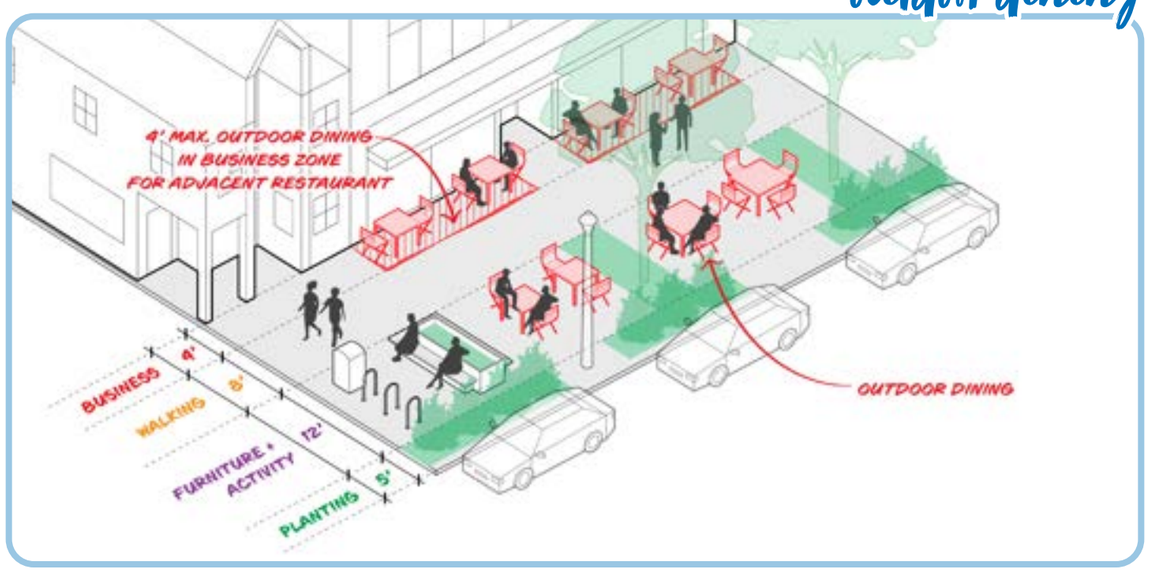
Idea #1

Figure 15. Streetscape Redesign (cont.)

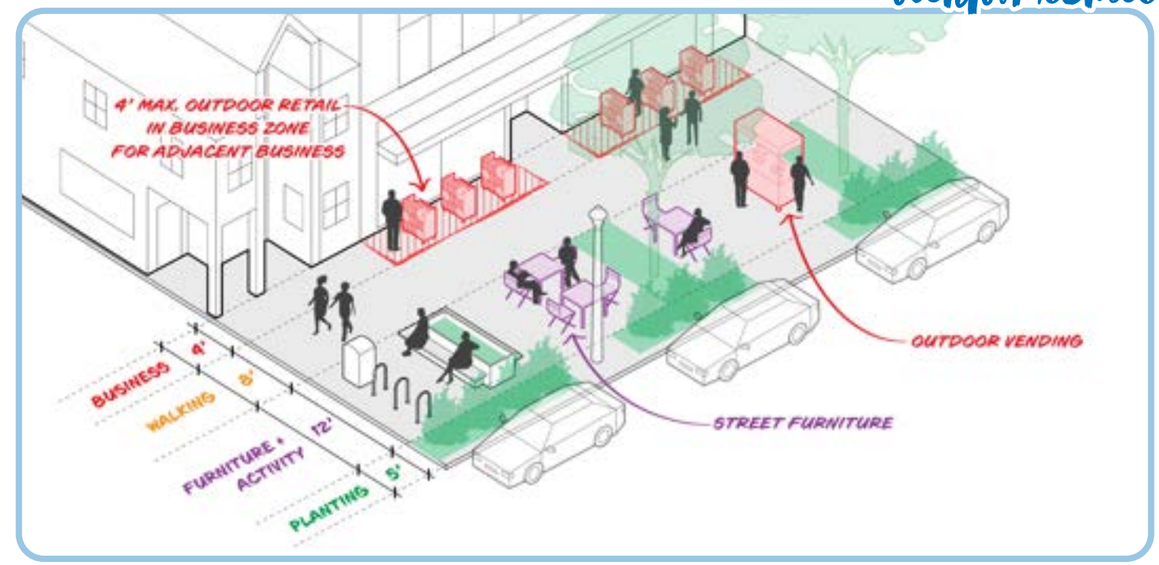
STEP #3: REFRESH WITH COMMON ELEMENTS



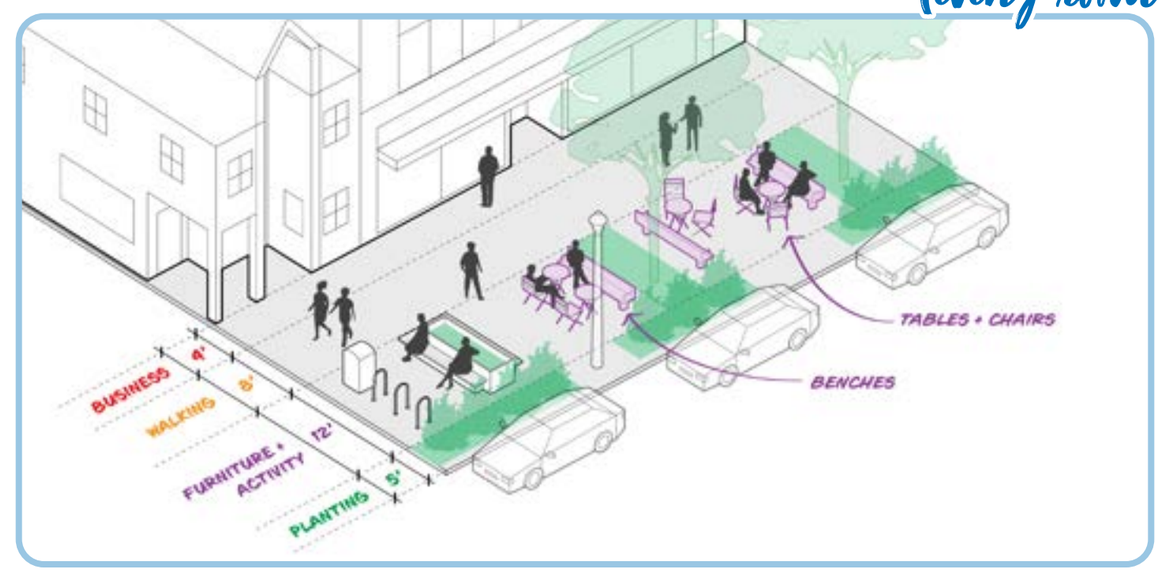
STEP #4: ENCOURAGE ACTIVITY AND SUPPORT ADJACENT BUSINESSES *outdoor dining*



outdoor retail



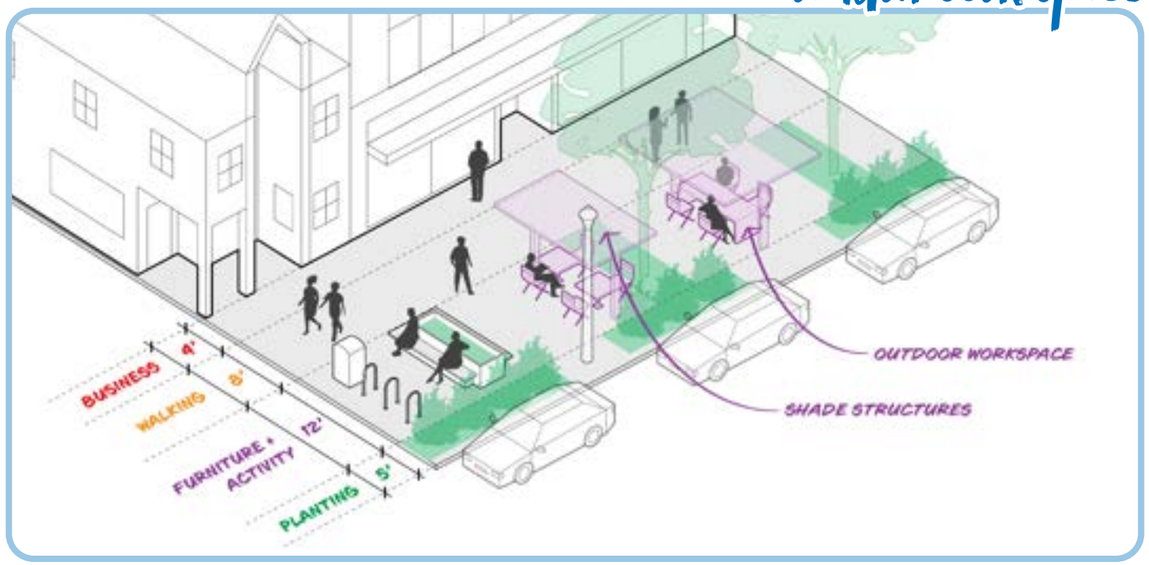
living room



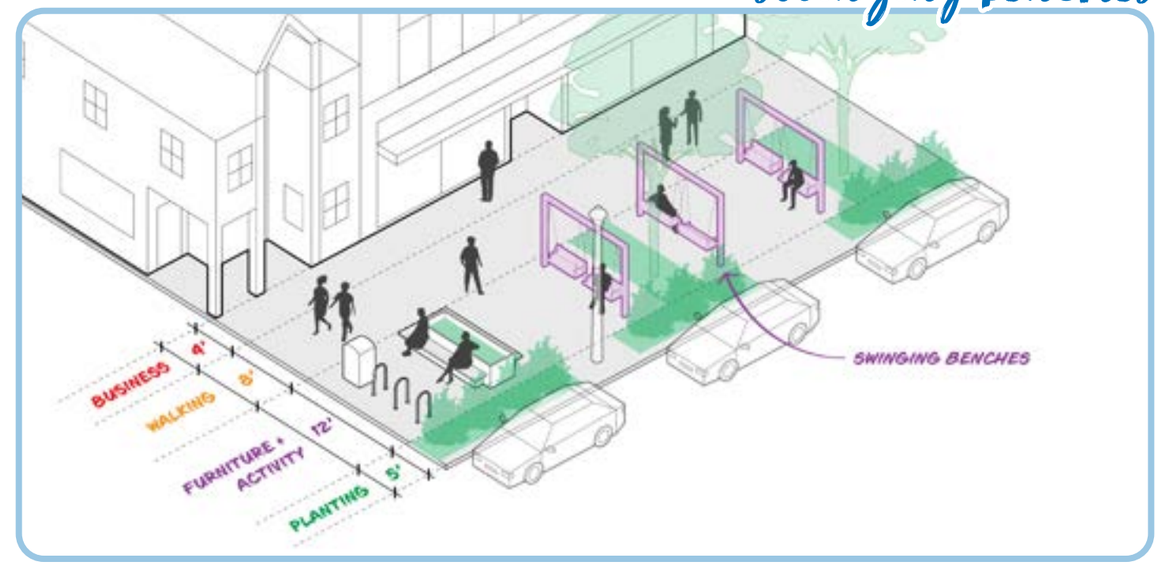
Idea #1

Figure 15. Streetscape Redesign (cont.)

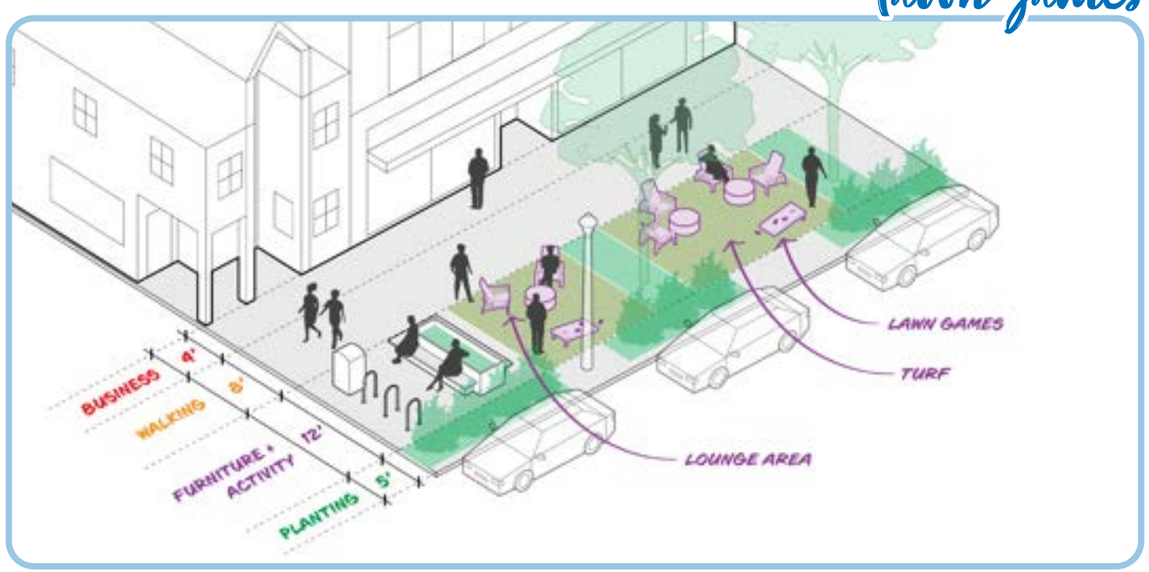
outdoor workspace



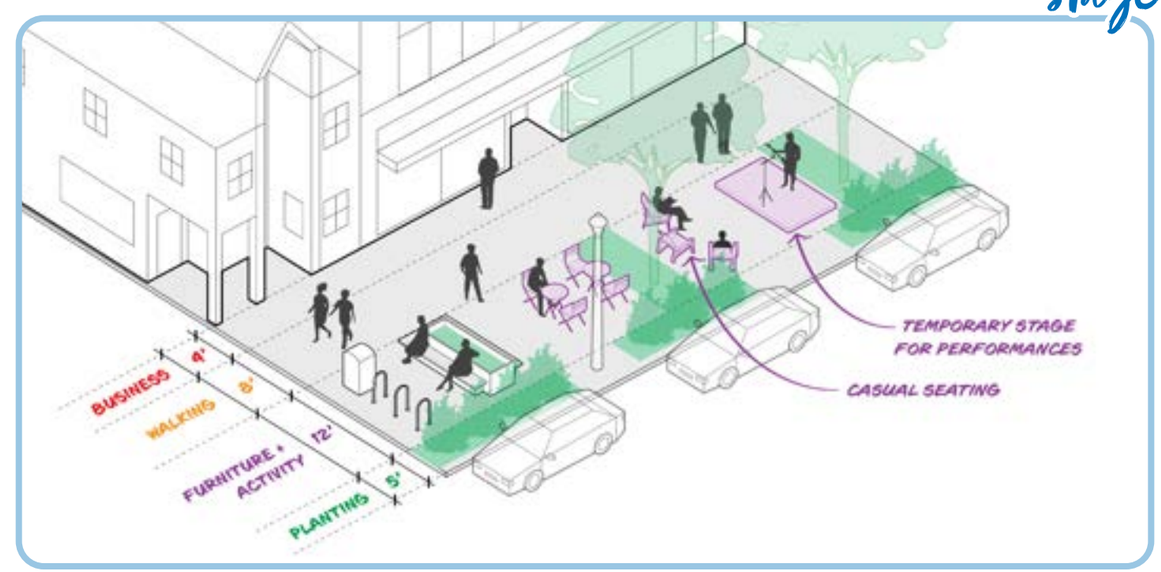
swinging benches



lawn games



stage



Idea #1

4. **Ramp up lighting and greening,** including:

- Uplighting on architecturally significant buildings to serve as gateways
- Tree lighting (interim and tactical such as solar tree lights)
- New catenary lighting
- Curb extensions with greenery
- Potential planters in the parking lane alternating with existing trees, plantings along the curb, pedestrian-scale lighting

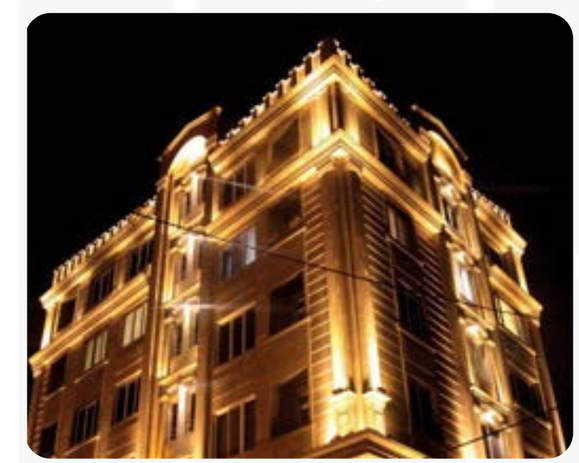
Landscaping and new lighting will help make Fayetteville Street an attractive place to be both during the day and at night.

Figure 15. Streetscape Redesign (cont.)

STEP #5: RAMP UP GREENERY AND LIGHTING

string lights

building lighting



Source (left to right): Port Huron Times Herald/Brian M. Wells; PLD Magazine/Dr. Elham Souri

Idea #1

A Fayetteville Street that is lively vibrant busy joyous

Idea #2

Build a strong foundation to ensure downtown is clean, safe and vibrant

Safety is the bedrock for a vibrant downtown and many aspects of the public realm contribute to the perception of safety, including the maintenance of streets, sidewalks and landscaping. Elevating the customer experience will leave lasting impressions, generate positive word of mouth, and encourage repeat visits.

Downtowns across the country have collectively struggled post pandemic. Concerns around public safety, panhandling and maintenance are compounding other issues related to a smaller number of office workers actually coming back to the office. With less street traffic, perceptions around the look and feel of downtowns are all the more important. Festivals and programming can help to bring positive activity to Downtown Raleigh but continued work is necessary to ensure it is clean and safe. The City and DRA took action and hired private security to help address recent concerns. This focus should continue to support all of the remaining ideas presented in this report.

Actions

1. Coordinate the maintenance of the public realm to increase level of service

- Designate point person to oversee downtown public realm coordination with regular Council committee check-in
- Consider additional staffing to increase level of service

2. Manage commercial trash bins

- Limit the number of bins and placement on city sidewalks
- Pilot incentives for new trash bin solutions and screening on sidewalks

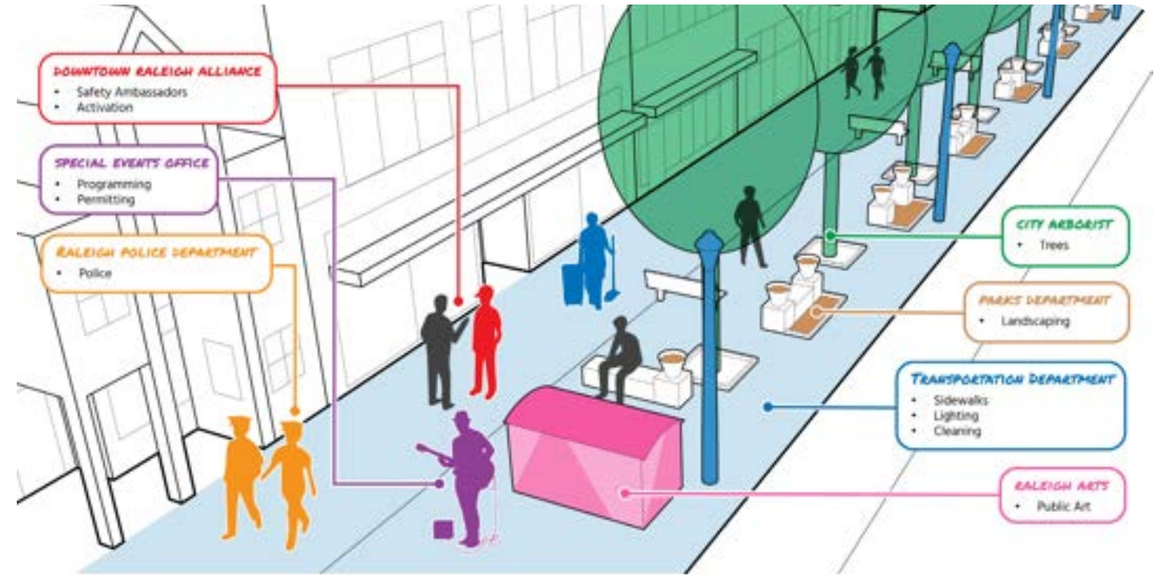
3. Provide public restrooms in downtown:

- Increase maintenance and hours of operation for free restrooms in public buildings
- Identify locations for standalone public toilets

How To Get Started

- ☐ Initiate public realm maintenance audit
- ☐ Review commercial trash regulations
- ☐ Explore downtown locations to pilot public toilets

Figure 13. Who is Responsible?



public bathrooms

JCDECAUX

- *Requires plumbing and power*
- *Self-cleaning*
- *Funded through outdoor advertising*

PORTLAND LOO

- *Designed to prevent crime, vandalism and deterioration*
- *Solar-powered*
- *Requires cleaning attendant (2-5 times a day)*

Source (left to right): Patti McConville/Alamy Stock Photo; Sam Turken/WLRN

Idea #2

4. **Develop a PR strategy to promote downtown**
   - Hire consultant to support DRA Marketing and Communications team:
     - Define mediums to reach populace with negative impressions of downtown
     - Serve as a media buyer
     - Understand spikes and sources of negative messaging
   - Fundraise for and launch a large scale campaign that showcases target audience-based itineraries (e.g., family fun, date nights, etc.)
     - Reiterate investments made, events, and programming
   - Continue seeking corporate philanthropy, in-kind sponsorships, and affiliate marketing to deepen media relationships and secure earned and paid media opportunities
     - Create a Shop Local segment on leading news outlets, highlighting the story of downtown business
   - Formalize retail grand opening press events and coordinate Mayor's and press attendance
   - Seek a monthly placement in leading national and local culture media - e.g., Eater Carolinas, Our State Magazine, News & Observer, airline magazines, etc.

How To Get Started

- ☐ Make a big deal of the release of this plan and connect it with recent positive improvements and business openings downtown

grand openings

Source: Downtown Raleigh Alliance

local news coverage

Source: Downtown Raleigh Alliance

Idea #2

5. Make it easier to find and access parking

- Improve signage to help drivers locate parking garages
- Explore adjustment to the weekday on-street, metered paid parking hours
- Explore ability to add time from phone app
- Expand free customer parking in City-owned garages to cover the first 2 hours any day and time of the week
  - Explore opportunity with private garage owners that have reduced occupancy and with Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) for conferences and events
  - Integrate technology to streamline operations for retail business validation at City-owned garages
- Expand small business parking program to cover all retail and restaurant employees and consider making it permanent

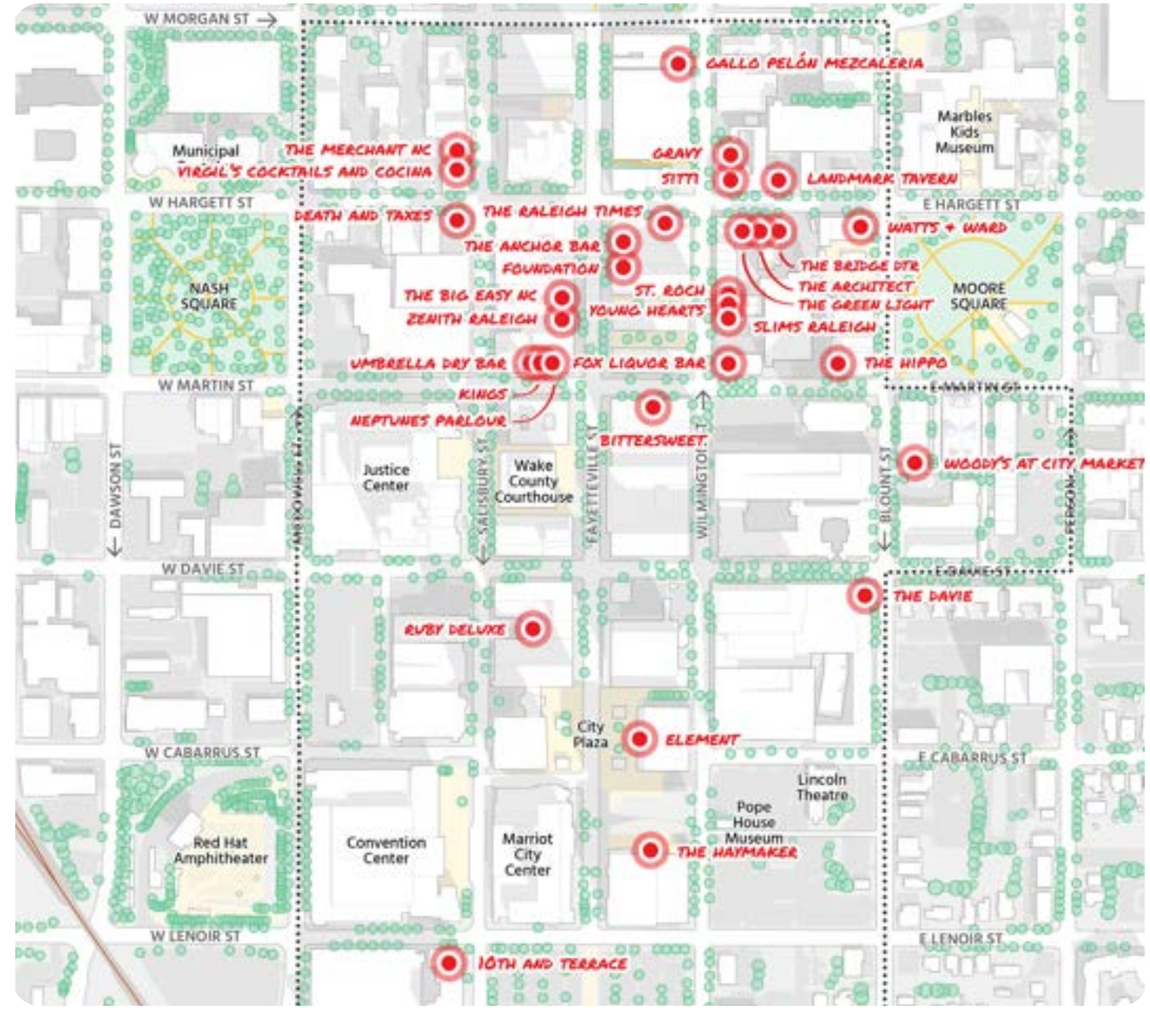
6. Launch targeted programming, itineraries, and specials to drive traffic to businesses

- Prioritize efforts around conferences, events, and holidays that drive customer traffic
- Produce collateral and mapping tools that can be easily integrated into partner organization's media

How To Get Started

- ☐ Review on-street parking policies and consider piloting changes in hours for metered parking
- ☐ Review City parking policies for garages to expand free parking for employees and shoppers
- ☐ Work with restaurant owners to design a downtown cocktail guide with daily specials

Figure 14. Downtown Cocktail Bars



date night itinerary

The Date for...	Eats:	Activity:	Sweets:	Drinks:	Late Night:	At Home:
New Romance	BUL	Flowers from Little Shop of Flowers	Insomnia Cookies	Coffee @ Tryst	Drinks at Death Punch	Gift Bundle from Urban Dwell
Jazz lover	Taquería al Lado	Browsing records at Smash	Rise Gluten-free Bakery	Jack Rose Dining Saloon	Madam's Organ	
Family	Andy's Pizza	Shopping at Because Science	Chocolate Croissant at D' Light Cafe	Milkshakes at the Diner	Puzzle from Urban Dwell	Book Bundle from Lost City Books

Source: Adams Morgan Date Night Itineraries, Washington, D.C. (The Adams Morgan Partnership Business Improvement District)

Idea #3

Develop a family-friendly itinerary and route around downtown core attractions

Extend visits by making it easy for families to explore multiple attractions in the downtown core.

Downtown Raleigh has some of the greatest attractions a downtown can offer for families to enjoy. Today, these assets feel disconnected. Making connections and encouraging families to stay will take intentional investment.

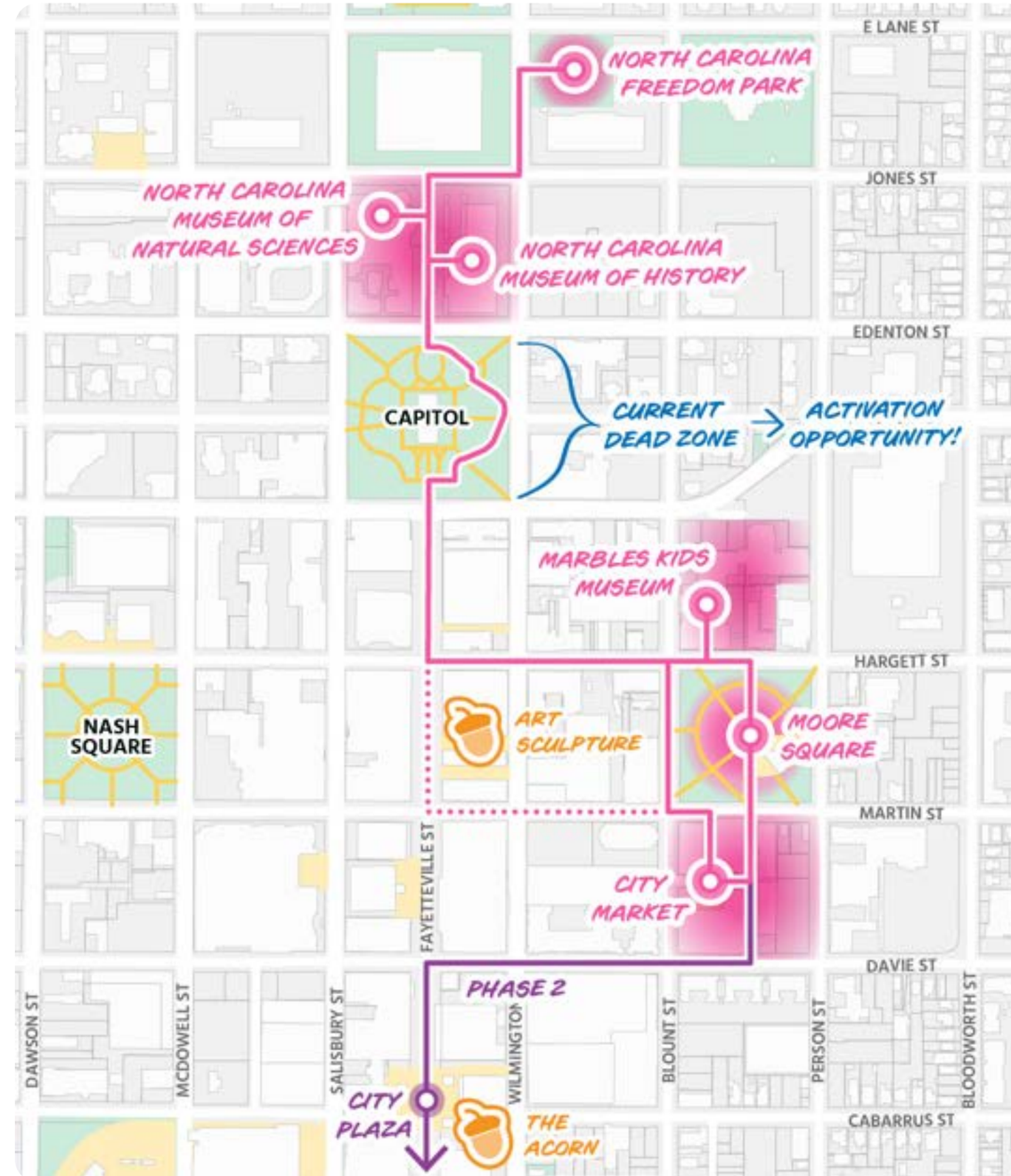
Actions

1. **Market a family-friendly route in the downtown core that connects the main attractions,** such as:
   - State Museums
   - State Capitol
   - North Carolina Freedom Park
   - Marbles Kids Museum
   - Moore Square
   - City Market
   - Local businesses
2. **Develop a Raleigh or North Carolina-themed scavenger hunt to lead families through downtown**
3. **Partner and cross-market with attractions and businesses on the route to offer discounts and/or prizes,** for example show a Marbles or State Museum admission sticker for discount at local businesses, or prize redeemable at Marbles or Visitor Center for completing Scavenger Hunt

How To Get Started

- ☐ Convene working group to explore activation, partnerships and cross-marketing opportunities with attractions and businesses in the downtown core
- ☐ Develop a branded itinerary, for example "Acorn Adventures," to market attractions, events, and scavenger hunt, and push out through marketing campaigns among participating partners

Figure 15. Family-Friendly Route



Idea #3

4. **Integrate public realm improvements and beautification on streets along the route and connect to Fayetteville Street,** focusing on Wilmington Street Hargett Street, and Martin Street
5. **Use public art as wayfinding to demarcate and activate the route**
6. **Connect Moore Square to Marbles Kids Museum and City Market with raised crosswalks**
7. **Further enhance Moore Square with a nature playground, shade and potential programming in partnership with museums**

How To Get Started

- [ ] Focus public realm maintenance and improvements along the route, including sidewalks, crosswalks, landscape beds, trees, and signage
- [ ] Develop small-scale, pilot improvements around the Capitol designed for families with kids

The Marbles Kid Museum is an important family-friendly destination in Downtown Raleigh.

scavenger hunt

wayfinding

Source (left to right): City of Orlando; Mamam

nature play

raised crosswalk

Source (left to right): The Fay School, Houston, TX (Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds), City of Orlando

Idea #4

Market the downtown core as "North Carolina's Main Street"

Clustering retail and restaurants around a "Best in North Carolina" theme plus engaging public space design will support foot traffic and street activity.

The northernmost blocks of Fayetteville Street and adjacent blocks between Nash and Moore Squares are characterized by historic building stock with storefronts that were home to the capital city's early retailers. Strategically reinvesting and supporting tenants present and future through a unique district identity that includes aligning tenanting, public art and placemaking to celebrate North Carolina can yield a vibrant and cherished environment, attractive to both residents and visitors alike.

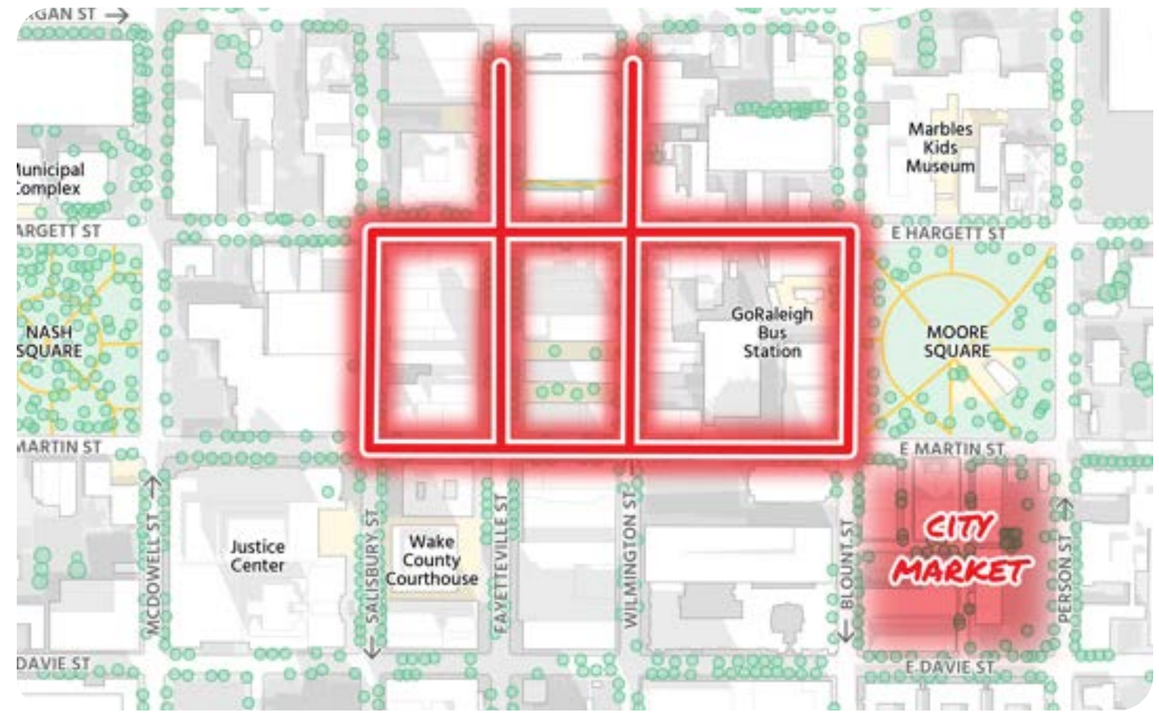
Actions

CREATE A FOCUSED RESTAURANT AND RETAIL STRATEGY

North Carolina's Shopping & Dining District: A 16-18 hour district anchored by unique chef-driven restaurants, destination bars, and stylish fashion and furnishings representing the best of North Carolina

1. **Develop a vibrant shopping and dining district identity through sustaining and recruiting NC business owners to open unique one-of-a-kind shops and chef-driven concepts**
   - Prioritize recruitment efforts to restaurateurs and large format businesses that can occupy hard-to-lease vacant spaces

Figure 16. Restaurant & Retail Core



vibrant dining

Source (left to right): Commonwealth Restaurant & Skybar, Charlottesville, VA (Alloy Workshop); The Mercantile, Worcester, MA (The Mercantile Worcester)

Idea #4

2. Re-tool policies and processes to support businesses and activation downtown and city-wide:

- Enable landlords to apply and qualify for the City of Raleigh Upfit Grant opportunities and expand award amount to rightsize subsidy based upon costs and size of improvements
- Relaunch the Facade Rehabilitation Grant program
- Develop new or expand existing financial tools, such as a no- to low-interest loan program, for landlords without a secured tenant to reinvest in vacant second generation spaces requiring investment to reposition for modern tenant needs, including larger spaces requiring subdivision, use change, or transition into multi-tenant spaces and incubators, among others
- Bring back the expedited permitting team for downtown projects with dedicated staff support for downtown storefront businesses navigating municipal services
- Review policies for use change permits to limit unexpected costs for small businesses

grant progams

MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION - REVITALIZATION AND PLACEMAKING PROGRAM 2.0

Provides real estate rehabilitation and development grants of up to $5 million per project; $100 million allocated to the program

RHODE ISLAND COMMERCE - SITE READINESS PROGRAM

Offers an average of $125,000 in grants

SMALL MEDIUM BUSINESS GROWTH FUND GRANT PROGRAM, WASHINGTON DC'S DEPUTY MAYOR'S OFFICE OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Provides up to $100,000 in grants to support incubators, defined as brick-and-mortar spaces that allow 3+ smaller businesses to operate with them; these businesses can rotate and be non-profits

COMMERCIAL AFFORDABILITY PROGRAM, CITY OF DENVER'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & OPPORTUNITY DEPARTMENT

Provides a 10-year grant (90% towards real estate; 10% technical assistance) to implement creative strategies to address commercial affordability challenges such as, collaborative spaces for small businesses, multi-small business commercial property acquisition

3. Develop an interim strategy for larger spaces that encourages the co-location of businesses and seasonal pop ups:

- Identify a storefront to co-locate business support organizations (and other large offices) with pop-up retail space in the storefront

The former CVS on the southwest corner of Hargett Street and Fayetteville Street is one of the larger retail spaces that have been difficult to re-tenant.

business support orgs

- *Downtown Raleigh Alliance (DRA)*
- *Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce*
- *Raleigh Economic Development Office*
- *City of Raleigh Small Business Development Department*
- *Wake County Small Business Center*
- *Wake County Economic Development*
- *Raleigh Downtown Living Advocates*
- *Raleigh Merchants Association*
- *North Carolina Retail Merchants Association*
- *Greater Raleigh Merchants Association*
- *Small Business Administration (SBA) - North Carolina District Office*
- *North Carolina Main Street & Rural Planning Center*
- *Raleigh SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives)*
- *Greater Raleigh Women's Business Center*
- *Wake County Restaurant and Lodging Association*
- *Shop Local Raleigh*
- *Wake County Public Library - Business Resources*
- *Raleigh Entrepreneurial Center*
- *Raleigh Community Development Department*
- *Innovate Raleigh*
- *North Carolina Department of Commerce*
- *Wake County Innovation & Entrepreneurship Center*
- *Prospera*
- *Black Dollar NC*
- *Wake Tech*
- *City of Raleigh Small Disadvantaged Minority & Women Owned Business Assistance*
- *El Centro Hispano*

Idea #4

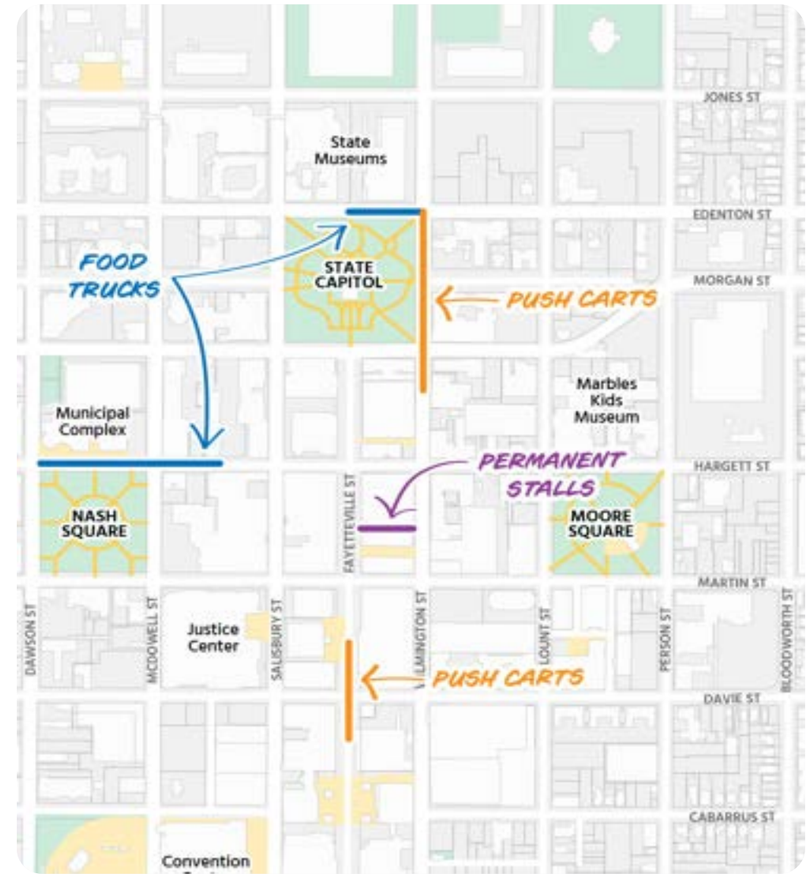
4. **Expand mobile retail, vending carts and permanent stalls to connect the gaps between anchors:**
   - Pushcarts and food trucks in dead zones that are complementary to existing businesses in terms of offering and opening times
   - Permanent stalls on Exchange Plaza to support emerging Black-owned businesses
5. **Strategically engage retail brokers and landowners to build relationships and align tenanting opportunities and rent expectations**
   - Encourage consolidated landlord representation opportunities, particularly for small landlords
6. **Give the district a unique brand identity through marketing and public realm improvements**
7. **Create a downtown gift card program**
   - Focus outreach for participation in areas with less foot traffic and activity

How To Get Started

CREATE A FOCUSED RESTAURANT AND RETAIL STRATEGY

- ☐ Explore financial tools and incentives to help property owners re-tenant large vacant spaces
- ☐ Bring back the expedited permitting team
- ☐ Review use change policies with an eye toward reducing costs for property owners
- ☐ Identify business attraction targeted at tenants that can occupy larger vacant spaces

Figure 17. Expansion of Food Trucks, Stalls, and Push Carts



gift cards

Source: www.yiftee.com

vendor stalls

Source (left to right): Human Touch Group Pavilion (Partyk Lewiński); Lucky Plaza (Choo Yut Shing)

Idea #4

REPOSITION CITY MARKET AS A BOUTIQUE RETAIL DESTINATION

City Market: A curated, unique mix of independent food, beverage, and artisan goods manufacturers to showcase Raleigh's local creativity, anchored by a restaurant and event space at the market hall

1. **Give the district a unique brand identity through marketing, tenanting and public realm improvements**
   - Design and implement a City Market environmental signage and wayfinding program
   - Continue to encourage outdoor cafe seating, events and street closures to support City Market businesses
   - Align the repositioned brand with a curated tenant mix that continues to focus on maker and locally-owned businesses
2. **Amplify the brand through the repositioning of Market Hall as an event space and restaurant concept that centers traditional market goods** (butcher, fish market, vegetable stand, spice shop)
   - Explore partnerships with the State's farmers' market farmers and vendors
   - Retain flexibility to host events that occupy entirety of the market hall
   - Align repositioning with delivery of newly constructed buildings surrounding Moore Square
3. **Ensure long-term sustainability of market hall businesses through responsive development at adjacent redevelopment site**
   - Ensure access to alley for essential operations

How To Get Started

- ☐ Coordinate alley easements and access to essential services (e.g., trash, grease traps, loading/delivery) between City Market and redevelopment site immediately east
- ☐ Continue coordination with owner to advance branding and positioning as development around Moore Square progresses

market hall inspiration

Source (top to bottom): St. Anselm, Washington, D.C. (Rey Lopez/Eater DC); Cochon Butcher, Nashville, TN. (Nashville Guru)

Idea #5

Celebrate Raleigh's Black Business District to highlight both the rich history and current day Black-owned businesses

Tell the story of Raleigh's Black Business District on Hargett Street from Salisbury to Blount and on Exchange Plaza.

The Black Business District can be more visibly and fully incorporated into Downtown Raleigh through physical interventions and programming that enhances the downtown experience and benefits businesses.

Actions

1. **Install public art along Hargett, on Exchange Plaza, and at key business locations throughout downtown recounting the stories of Black businesses**
2. **Develop and promote stories and tours of Black-owned businesses**
3. **Install permanent stalls on Exchange Plaza as opportunities for small Black-owned businesses**
4. **Expand existing and develop new festivals with street vendors, Sip and Stroll, and entrepreneurial workshops**
5. **Connect with the South Park Heritage Walk**

NOTE: See the Economic Development Strategy companion document for additional MWBE actions.

How To Get Started

- ☐ Organize recruitment and resources for Exchange Plaza micro-businesses, including sourcing quotes for kiosks, outreach to business support organizations for prospective tenants, and advisory services with leasing attorney on lease/license/agreement structure
- ☐ Organize design studio course in partnership with North Carolina State University and Shaw University to create initial placemaking and public art plan to celebrate Black Business District
- ☐ Begin outreach to corporate sponsors and philanthropic donors socializing approach

historic black businesses

In 1873, Black businesses were scattered along Fayetteville, Hargett, and Wilmington Streets and Exchange Plaza (the site of the previous City Market). By 1921, Jim Crow laws restricted leasing to Black business owners and many Black businessmen purchased property on Hargett Street and remained there. Moore Square served as a hub of Black business activity because that was the commercial line between Black and white residents.

Lightner Arcade at 122 E Hargett Street
Source: North Carolina State Archives

- *Union Reformer - Newspaper and corner store; Wilmington and Hargett St locations noted*
- *Harris Barber College - Barbershop and barber college; Wilmington Street>Hargett Street>Blount Street*
- *Bee Hive Cafe - restaurant; 225 S Wilmington Street*
- *Lightner Arcade - hotel, restaurant, and other businesses, apartments; 122 E Hargett Street - a main location of social activity for Blacks*
- *Hamlin Drug - previous name: People's Drug; 126 E Hargett Street - first drug store in the state*
- *Mallette's Drug Store*
- *Community Drug Store*
- *Lassiter's Hardware*
- *Hayes-Jackson appliance*
- *Hoover's Dry Goods Sore; Wilmington Street between Hargett and Martin*
- *Range of meat/butcher shops and fish markets at City Market (total of 7)*
- *Moore Square - home of Black performances and festivals*
- *North Carolina Land Company - Tucker Hall (demolished in 1920 and replaced by Taylor's Department Store); Fayetteville Street*
- *Mechanics and Farmers Bank Branch; Hargett Street*

Idea #6

Add more housing on and around Fayetteville Street

Increasing the residential population is a critical component of transitioning the downtown core into a neighborhood with a healthy mix of residents, workers, and visitors that can support businesses.

While there has been residential growth throughout downtown in the last 15 years, more recently it has been concentrated on the western edge. Of the more than 5,300 residential units built or under construction since 2020, almost none are near Fayetteville Street.

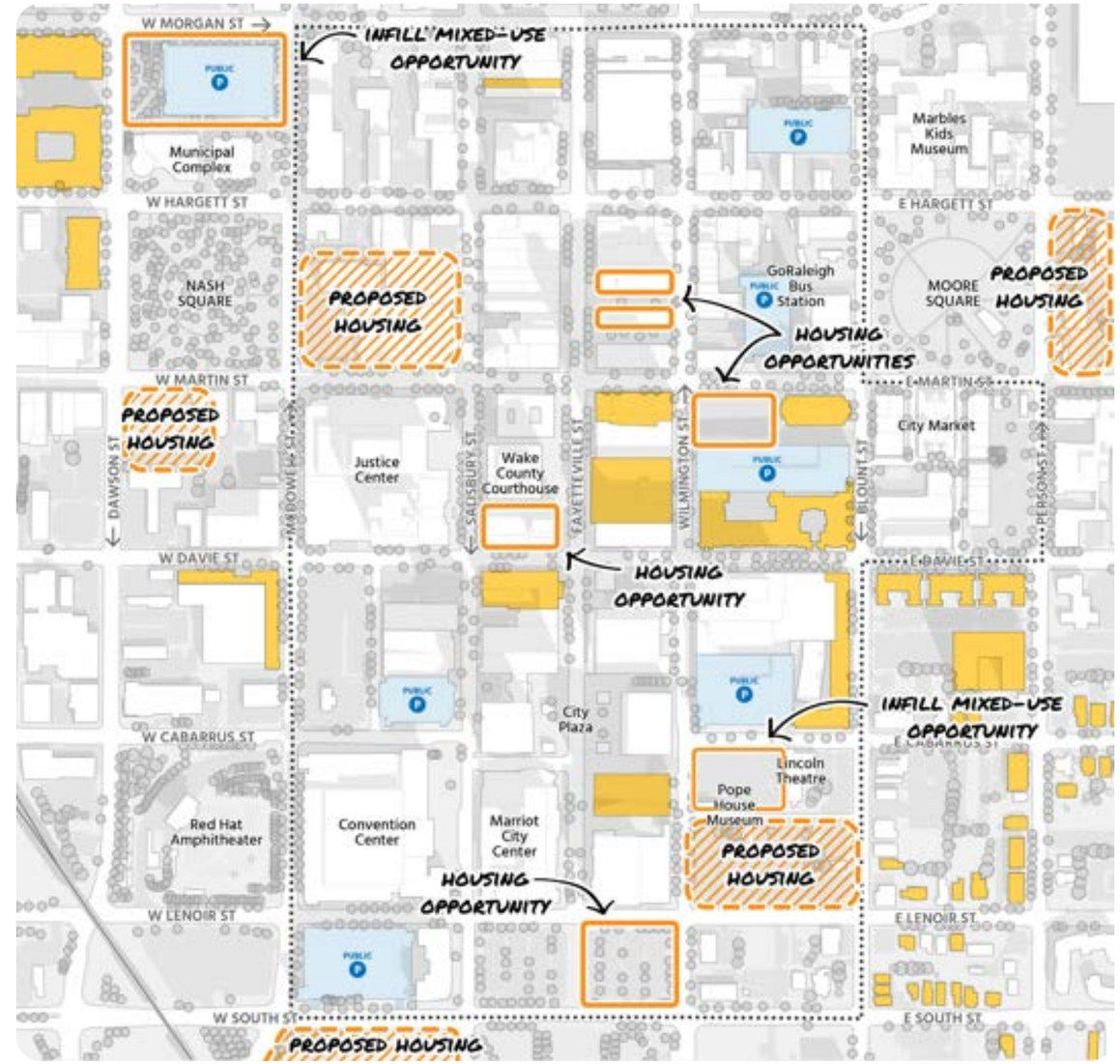
Actions

1. **Advocate for the redevelopment or conversion of strategic buildings on Fayetteville Street to housing**
   - These are buildings with the potential right-sized floorplate to make conversion an option
2. **Encourage the development of parking lots around Fayetteville Street to include housing**
   - Surface lots are opportunities for new housing that can support downtown businesses
3. **Encourage shared parking at garages for adjacent housing developments to reduce development costs**
   - Parking is a major expense for development. Shared parking enables residents to park in spaces that are unused in the evenings by office workers.
4. **Explore opportunities to redevelop older City-owned parking decks to add more housing options while retaining parking capacity**
5. **Complement housing density with a focus on a convenience-based retail mix,** including coffee shops, grab-and-go dining, convenience store, barber shops/ salons, gyms, etc.

How To Get Started

- ☐ Advance the disposition of One Exchange Plaza and City-owned parking lot north of the Performing Arts Center for housing
- ☐ Explore tools to support more housing in the core - some redevelopment such as affordable housing, conversion, and demolition will more expensive
- ☐ Audit City-owned parking decks on Wilmington and Salisbury Streets to determine opportunities for shared parking and redevelopment based on capacity, commitments, and lifecycle

Figure 18. Housing Opportunity Sites



"The **number one focus has to be more residents near Fayetteville Street**...Most issues with Fayetteville Street can be fixed with more residents living around Fayetteville Street."

Idea #7

Use public space to support neighborhood livability

Great public spaces are good for residents as well as visitors and workers, increasing vibrancy on the street and enhancing built attractions.

Fayetteville Street includes a number of smaller passages and alleys that connect it to nearby streets, parking garages and major destinations including the Raleigh Convention Center. These spaces are opportunities to become more than pass-throughs, but as spaces that creatively welcome residents and visitors to Fayetteville Street.

Actions

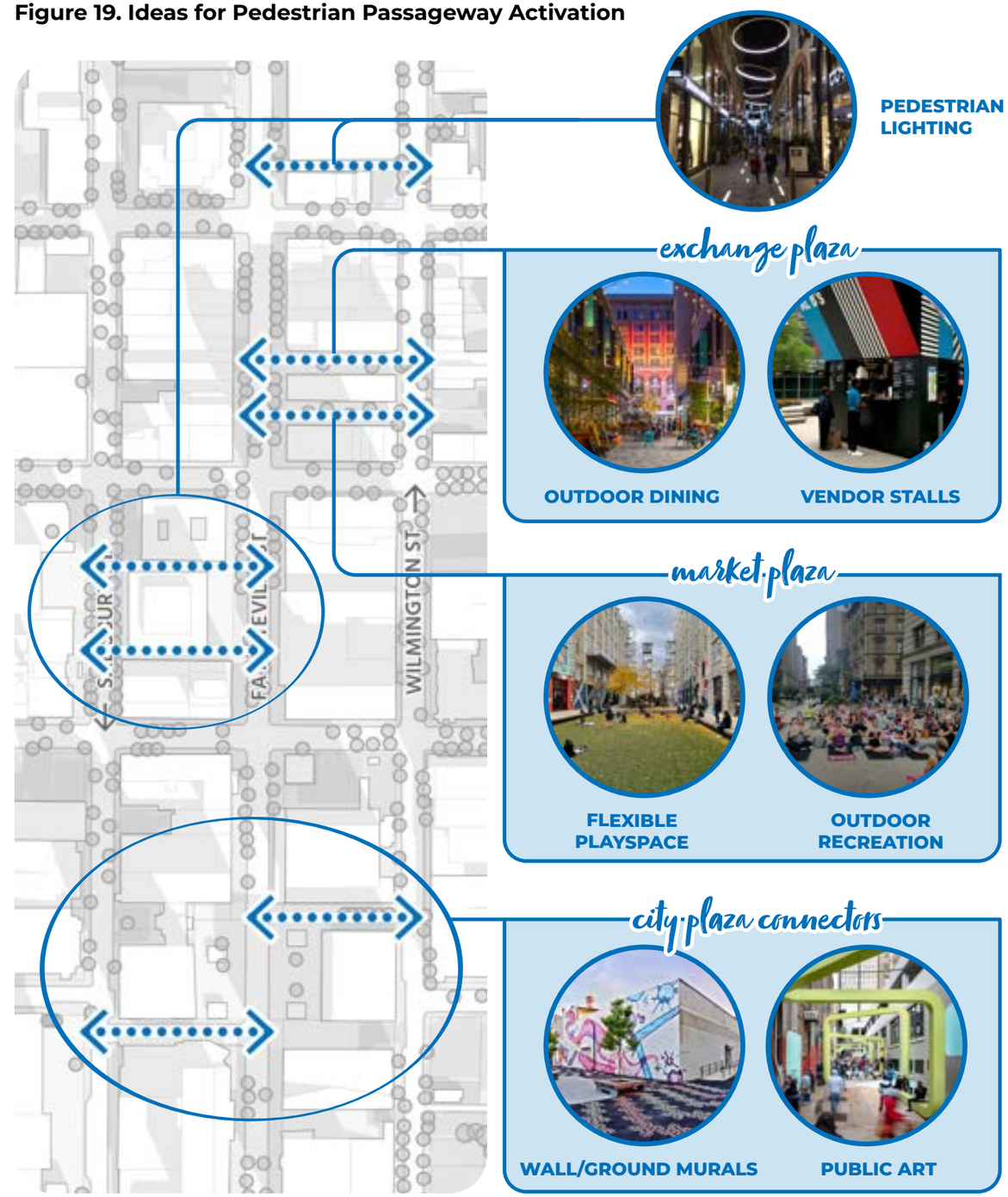
1. **Use art, lighting and creative wayfinding in the pedestrian passages to draw people from the garages and nearby uses to Fayetteville Street**
2. **Develop permanent stalls on Exchange Plaza for micro-businesses and encourage outdoor dining**
   - This will help to provide spaces accessible to new and small businesses and activate a space in the heart of Fayetteville Street
3. **Redesign Market Plaza for play and exercise, including space for kids, dogs and fitness**
   - This move will help to ramp up the livability of downtown for local residents
4. **Allow activation and day-to-day programming in public spaces**
5. **Refresh landscaping, lighting and furnishings in Nash Square as part of Municipal Campus redevelopment**

How To Get Started

- ☐ Engage designers for pedestrian passage improvements, Exchange Plaza stalls and Market Plaza redesign
- ☐ Review permitting rules for temporary pop-up activations and day-to-day programming

"Leverage Fayetteville Street to become the center of a **vibrant LIVABLE downtown** and tourists and visitors will follow to check it out."

Figure 19. Ideas for Pedestrian Passageway Activation



Source (top to bottom): Covent Garden (Inspired By Nature); Albee Square (Downtown Brooklyn Partnership); Industry City (Interface Studio); Flatiron Fitness (Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership); Lawrence Connector (KMDG); City Thread (Garey Gomez)

Idea #7

A SIGNATURE GATEWAY FOR CITY PLAZA AND FAYETTEVILLE STREET

Idea #7

A SIGNATURE GATEWAY FOR CITY PLAZA AND FAYETTEVILLE STREET

Idea #8

Reposition City Plaza as downtown's front porch

Rooting daily, year round activation through select removal of a few streetscape items, re-tenanting of available commercial space, and programming at every scale.

This plaza should represent the heart of the city - from food and drink to artisanal products to art and entertainment. City Plaza is designed as an easy-to-use outdoor venue for major festivals and concerts. The day-to-day experience, however, is much different. To program the Plaza for small events and day-to-day activities, there is limited space available that does not block a building entrance or is not too close to the street. Strategic investments in the plaza can welcome residents and visitors and introduce them to all the city has to offer.

Actions

ENSURE PROGRAMMING DRIVES EVERYDAY FOOT TRAFFIC AND SUPPORTS BUSINESSES

1. **Consolidate control of permitting and programming of the plaza under one organization with a focus on and resources for proactively programming the Plaza**
2. **Introduce smaller scale but more frequent programming throughout the week and year,** such as live music, outdoor performing arts, recreation and seasonal pop ups, and more culturally diverse events
3. **Design events on Fayetteville Street to support storefronts:**
   - Site vendor tents and event infrastructure for visibility and engagement with businesses
   - Remove restrictions for Sip and Stroll placed on existing businesses during events
   - Increase the number of days temporary events may be held at one location

How To Get Started

- ☐ Finalize MOU for Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department to oversee City Plaza
- ☐ Revisit large event design and policies to better support existing businesses
- ☐ Meet with Performing Arts Center and other local arts organizations to develop regular outdoor programming that reinforces the Arts and Entertainment District brand
- ☐ Develop a programming plan and budget that integrates a range of scales including major events, smaller-scale but more frequent events, and seasonal events

seasonal pop-ups

family-friendly

outdoor performances

fitness classes

Source (top to bottom): Campus Martius (Pure Michigan); Wollman Rink (The DiscOasis); Healthi Kids Pop-Up (Common Ground Health); Spruce Street Harbor Park (Visit Philadelphia); The Plaza at 300 Ashland (Downtown Brooklyn Partnership); Klyde Warren Park.

Idea #8

4. Design the plaza for comfort, flexibility and activity, making it cooler, easier to program, and an expression of North Carolina pride.

Some possibilities include:

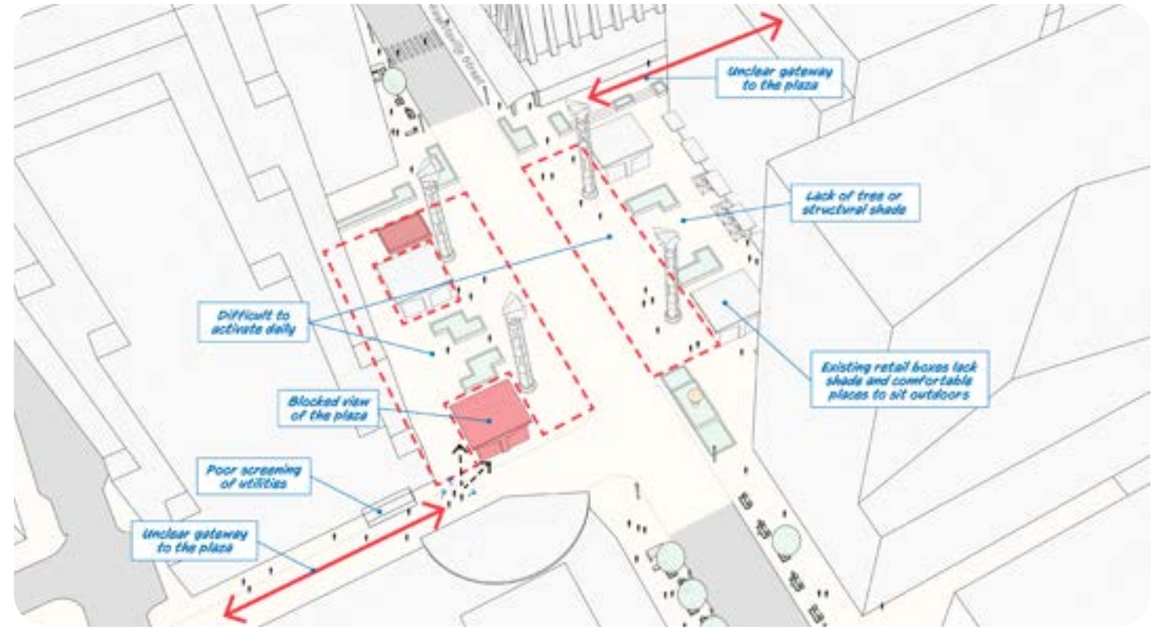
- Creating more comfortable patio space around the glass retail pavilions with shaded patios for cafe seating and branding them through the use of graphic wraps and roof treatments
- Planting more trees in planters
- Installing large-format commercial umbrellas
- Designing a flexible play space
- Commissioning a large-scale North Carolina-themed interactive artwork
- Removing a glass box to create a larger, visible, programmable space with stage and seating for a more robust series of events both large and small as part of a long-term tenanting strategy and relocation of existing grab and go businesses (see #6)

5. Consider renaming the plaza to better reflect its repositioning

City Plaza is difficult to activate with daily programming, due to its design and the existing permitting process.

Figure 20. City Plaza Redesign

STEP #1: REMOVE SOME ELEMENTS TO IMPROVE VIEWS AND CREATE ROOM FOR ACTIVATION



STEP #2: ADD ELEMENTS TO MAKE THE PLAZA GREENER, MORE ACTIVE, AND AN EXPRESSION OF NORTH CAROLINA PRIDE

Idea #8

STEP #3: IN THE LONGER-TERM, CONSIDER REMOVING A JEWEL BOX TO MAKE MORE SPACE FOR PROGRAMMING AND PLAY

NOTE: For illustrative purposes only. Further study and refinement needed for redesign of City Plaza.

Idea #8

ENCOURAGE 16-18 HOURS OF ACTIVATION AT SPACES ON AND AROUND THROUGH AN ACTIVE BUSINESS MIX

6. **Re-tenant the transparent glass retail pavilions over time**
   - Recruit businesses such as an all-day limited-service cafe, beer/wine garden, and a relocated visitor center with rotating products from Downtown Raleigh businesses
   - Relocate existing grab and go restaurants tenants to similar sized vacancies on Fayetteville Street

7. **Bring special exhibits from area museums to one of the glass boxes or office lobbies as an additional discovery point**

8. **Co-locate recreation rental and tour departure facilities on and near the Plaza,** e.g., bike rental facility, bus tour departure points, to concentrate customer activity

How To Get Started

- ☐ Engage Highwoods to determine lease restrictions of existing tenants, desired rent terms for future businesses, available spaces for business relocation, and architectural/engineering constraints to business operations, shaded patios, graphic wraps, and roof treatments
- ☐ Meet with North Carolina Museum of History, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, and North Carolina Museum of Art to explore challenges and opportunities to expanded use of their archived and special collections
- ☐ Identify a recreation rental or tour company in greater Raleigh interested in expansion opportunities and low-cost commercial/storage space in the Plaza

the wharf

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Sitting on an inlet of the Potomac River, steps away from historic monuments, this development has enlivened Washington, DC's tourist core with an entertainment district that includes residences, offices, hotels, shops, restaurants, cultural uses, marinas, and public spaces. The relevance of this district to the southern end of Fayetteville Street is the ground floor's ability to cater to a range of audiences, across many parts of the day.

The range of business types, from jewel boxes and quick service restaurants to fine dining, entertainment, and nightlife establishments, ensures everyone is able to find an experience for them. The public space includes activities everyone can enjoy - fire pits to roast marshmallows and remain warm in colder months, giant swings to experience the youth in us all. Collectively, The Wharf utilizes stellar design of storefronts and pedestrian walkways to attract and captivate customers, creating a memorable experience impacting the brand and notoriety of DC and its southern waterfront for decades to come.

Source (top to bottom): &Access; Kebony

visitor center

Source: Charlotte Visitor Info Center (Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority)

Idea #9

Grow Raleigh's arts and entertainment district

By leveraging larger-scale development opportunities to build custom spaces for destination entertainment and restaurant concepts, the Lower Fayetteville Street area can contribute to the area becoming more strongly associated with arts and entertainment, and able to attract visitors as well as workers.

Importantly, new entertainment concepts can provide different audiences an opportunity to come and stay around Fayetteville Street including conventioneers who often look for things to do immediately nearby and families looking for fun activities on the weekends.

Actions

Arts & Entertainment District: Vibrant and lively storefronts providing a wide diversity of known entertainment, dining, and shopping opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages

1. **Recruit North Carolina's most visited and nationally recognized establishments seeking expansion opportunities**, including:
   - Family-friendly entertainment (like eatertainment and indoor recreation)
   - Small merchant stalls that serve quick bites, sweet treats, and novelties
   - Fast-casual, limited services, and destination upscale restaurants
   - Establishments that offer private dining rooms and event rentals
2. **Attract and grow nighttime anchors like nightlife, indoor live music venue, and sports bars**
3. **Increase and elevate Performing Arts Center offerings to better compete regionally**
   - Commission performing arts feasibility study to determine potential steps
4. **Permit and encourage experiences that spill onto the street through interventions** such as:
   - Use of active edges
   - Two story businesses with second story balcony uses
   - Garage doors
   - Cafe seating
   - Pedestrian connections to surrounding anchors
5. **Install playscapes for all ages to serve as gathering spaces before and after events**
6. **Designate pick-up and drop-off zones in site plans as density increases**
7. **Continue to expand hotel options in the downtown core**
   - Consider the conversion of properties such as the U.S. Post Office Building

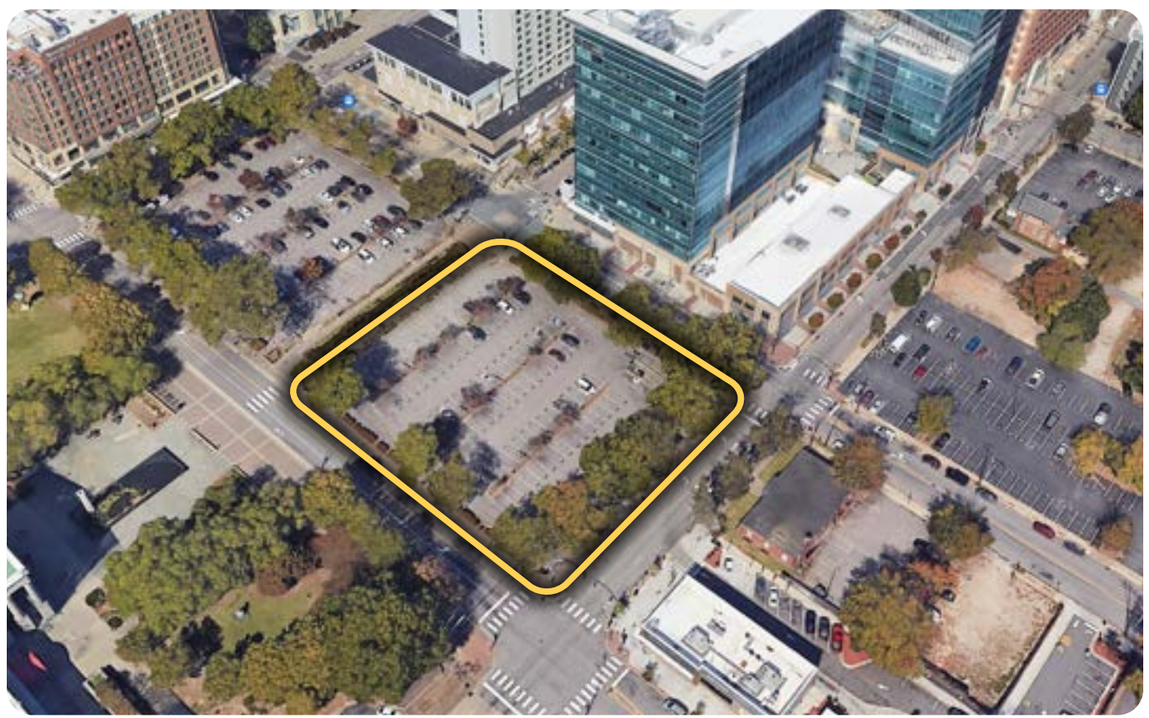
entertainment district

Source (top to bottom): Brilliance Photography; ASD|SKY; Passport Design Bureau; Morag Myerscough; Backyard Band

Idea #9

How To Get Started

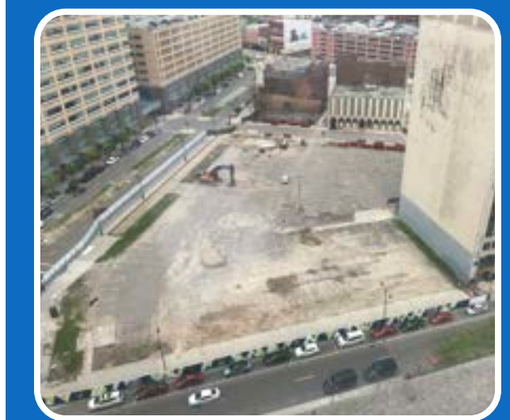
- ☐ Engage Raleigh Convention Center expansion and Omni Hotel team to share recommendations and partner to refine design to promote activation
- ☐ Develop temporary activation plan and operator for the northwest corner of W South and S Wilmington Streets, incorporating play, small business opportunities, and entertainment during summer months and large conferences and events
- ☐ Meet with Raleigh-based brokers to share targeted tenant mix and align recruitment responsibilities
- ☐ Interview existing entertainment establishments downtown to investigate potential of new concept under their ownership group

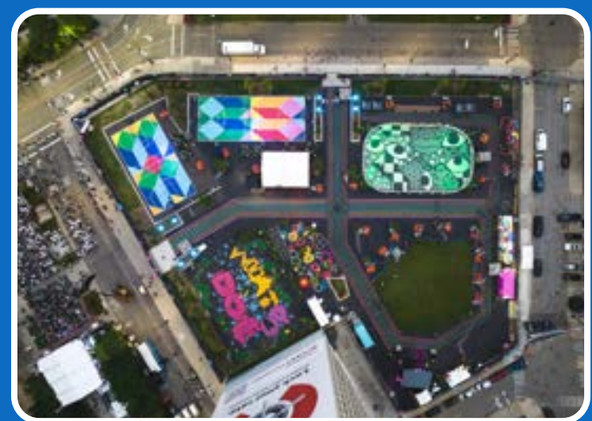


Before the parking lot at the northwest corner of South and Wilmington is redeveloped, the site could be activated through play, small business opportunities, and entertainment options. Source: Google Maps

DETROIT MONROE STREET MIDWAY PARKING LOT ACTIVATION

Bedrock, the leading real estate investor in Downtown Detroit, organizes various events such as markets, art exhibitions, and other retail and public space initiatives through its Decked Out Detroit program. One notable example is the Monroe Street Midway, a visionary seasonal activation of a historically underutilized parking lot. Whether basketball and rollerskating in the summer or fire pits and bumper cars in the winter, this unique, family-friendly experience attracts local residents and visitors alike.





Source (top to bottom): Detroitisit ; Crain's Detroit Business; ; Rock Media

Idea #10

Create a bold connection south of downtown

Investment and growth in the south of downtown will be important to connect to the downtown core and surrounding neighborhoods. There is an opportunity to create a distinctive connection that could include aerial or bridge connections or an art walk that traverses and includes neighborhood destinations.

A number of large investments are planned and under construction just south of the downtown core, including Dix Park, Heritage Park and several mixed use developments. It will be important not just to connect Dix Park to the downtown core but also to neighborhoods and destinations along the way.

Actions

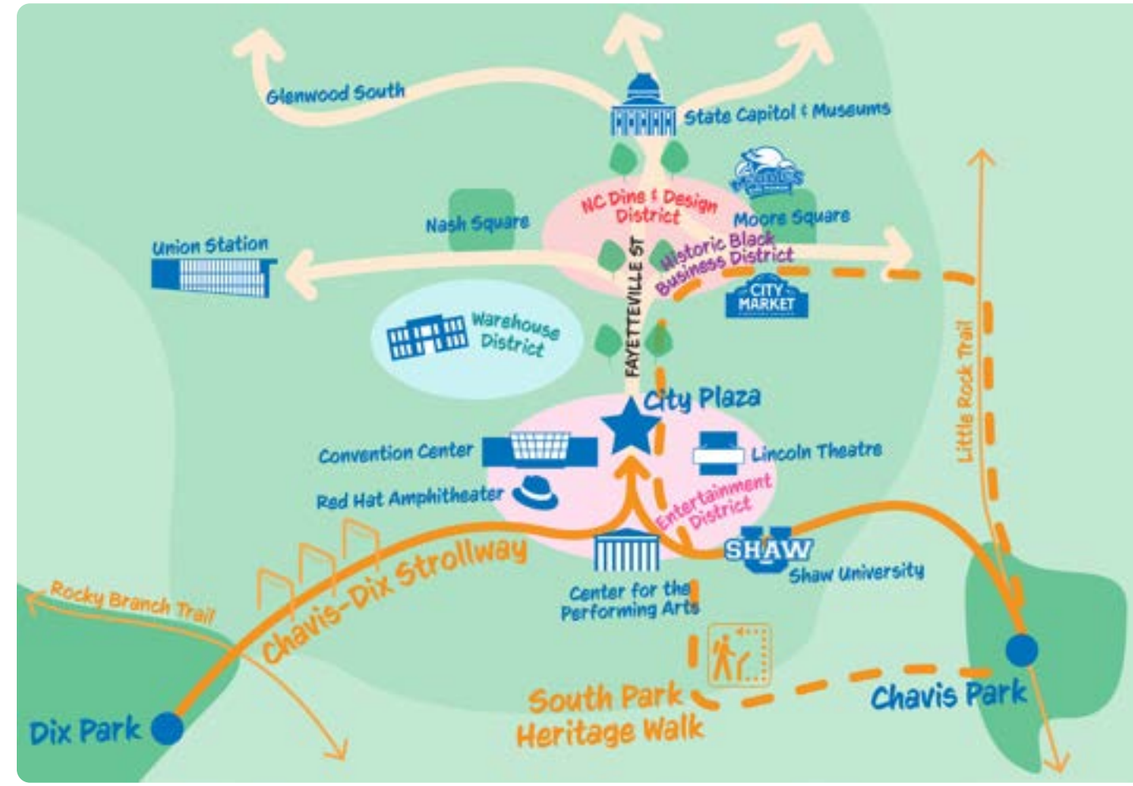
1. **Identify a large-scale, bold connection from downtown core to Dix Park**
2. **Support the South Park Heritage Walk and Chavis-Dix Strollway to connect Dix Park, Chavis Park, East Raleigh and the destinations in the downtown core**
3. **Study maintaining Fayetteville Street as a pedestrian plaza between Lenoir and South Streets and ensure its design encourages active and welcoming spaces**
4. **Encourage active frontage in new construction along South Fayetteville Street and the Strollway**
5. **Incorporate cultural elements in addition to the bike facility,** such as:
   - Wayfinding and interpretive signage highlighting key stops and destinations
   - Public art
   - Enhanced tree cover, landscaping
6. **Replace freeway aspects of Western Boulevard to make it pedestrian-friendly and a better connection as part of the Western Corridor BRT**

NOTE: See the Economic Development Strategy companion document for additional ideas for a bold connection to Dix Park.

How To Get Started

- ☐ Work with stakeholders to develop Strollway route to maximize connections between neighborhoods and destinations
- ☐ Ensure new construction along the Strollway and at the southern end of Fayetteville Street has active ground floor frontage, and the Convention Center and Red Hat Amphitheater expansion are designed to complement the Strollway

Figure 21. Downtown Connections



public art

Source (left to right): Rail Trail, Charlotte, NC. (blazeCLT); Art Installation, Scottsdale, AZ. (Scottsdale Public Art)

Let's Get Started!

Immediate Next Steps and Priorities

the first 100 days

1. DEVELOP A STREETSCAPE DESIGN FOR FAYETTEVILLE ST. THAT OFFERS VARIATION ON A THEME

- [ ] Convene working group of relevant City departments, public safety officials and other stakeholders (such as board, commission)

2. BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR INCREASED INVESTMENT

- [ ] Designate point person to oversee downtown public realm coordination for increased level of service for cleaning, safety, and landscaping

3. DEVELOP A FAMILY-FRIENDLY ITINERARY AND ROUTE AROUND DOWNTOWN CORE ATTRACTIONS

- [ ] Explore family-friendly route partnerships for cross-marketing and activation

4. MARKET THE DOWNTOWN CORE AS NORTH CAROLINA'S MAIN STREET

- [ ] Develop a branding and PR campaign centered around the downtown core as North Carolina's Main Street
- [ ] Review on-street parking policies to consider piloting a change in hours for metered parking

8. REPOSITION CITY PLAZA AS DOWNTOWN'S FRONT PORCH

- [ ] Consolidate permitting and programming of City Plaza
- [ ] Finalize the design for Plaza shading and move forward with implementation
- [ ] Engage Highwoods to determine lease restrictions of existing tenants, desired rent terms for future businesses, available spaces for business relocation, and architectural/engineering constraints to business operations, shaded patios, graphic wraps, and roof treatments
- [ ] Meet with North Carolina Museum of History, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, and North Carolina Museum of Art to explore challenges and opportunities to expanded use of their archived and special collections
- [ ] Identify a recreation rental company in greater Raleigh interested in expansion opportunities and low-cost commercial and storage space visible from the Plaza

9. GROW RALEIGH'S ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

- [ ] Engage Raleigh Convention Center expansion and Omni Hotel team to share recommendations and partner to refine design to promote activation

the first year

1. DEVELOP A STREETSCAPE DESIGN FOR FAYETTEVILLE ST. THAT OFFERS VARIATION ON A THEME

- [ ] Rewrite Fayetteville Street Design Standards
- [ ] Hire an engineer and landscape architect to develop a first phase removal and planting plan for Fayetteville Street
- [ ] Execute Tree Lighting study funded by ARPA with clear action items identified for lighting tree canopy and sidewalks with decorative lighting

2. BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR INCREASED INVESTMENT

- [ ] Initiate public realm maintenance audit
- [ ] Review commercial trash regulations
- [ ] Make a big deal of the release of this plan and connect it with recent positive improvements and business openings downtown

3. DEVELOP A FAMILY-FRIENDLY ITINERARY AND ROUTE AROUND FAYETTEVILLE ST. ATTRACTIONS

- [ ] Develop small-scale, pilot improvements around the Capitol designed for families with kids
- [ ] Push out kid-friendly itineraries and promotions through marketing campaigns among participating partners and through Visit Raleigh and Chamber

4. MARKET THE DOWNTOWN CORE AS NORTH CAROLINA'S MAIN STREET

- [ ] Review City parking policies for garages and on-street opportunities to expand free parking for employees and shoppers
- [ ] Work with restaurant owners to design a downtown cocktail guide with daily specials

5. CELEBRATE A BLACK BUSINESS DISTRICT

- [ ] Organize recruitment and resources for Exchange Plaza micro-businesses, including sourcing quotes for stalls, outreach to business support organizations for prospective tenants, and advisory services with leasing attorney on lease/license/agreement structure

5. CELEBRATE A BLACK BUSINESS DISTRICT (CONT'D)

- [ ] Organize design studio course in partnership with North Carolina State University and Shaw University to create initial placemaking and public art plan to celebrate Black Business District

6. ADD MORE HOUSING ON AND AROUND FAYETTEVILLE STREET

- [ ] Advance the disposition of City-owned parking lot north of the Performing Arts Center for housing

8. REPOSITION CITY PLAZA AS DOWNTOWN'S FRONT PORCH

- [ ] Meet with Performing Arts Center and other local arts organizations to develop regular outdoor programming that reinforces the arts and entertainment district brand

9. GROW RALEIGH'S ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

- [ ] Develop temporary activation plan and operator for the northwest corner of W South and S Wilmington Streets

10. CREATE A BOLD CONNECTION SOUTH OF DOWNTOWN

- [ ] Determine Strollway route, install bike facility and signage, and identify locations for public art

POLICY AND COORDINATION

- [ ] Explore financial incentives and tools for landlords repositioning, subdividing, and tenanting larger vacant spaces
- [ ] Explore recruitment strategies, financial tools, and incentives to help property owners re-tenant large vacant spaces
- [ ] Review use change policies with an eye toward reducing costs for property owners
- [ ] Revisit large event design and policies to better support existing businesses
- [ ] Review permitting rules for temporary pop-up activations and day-to-day programming

ap room