

An aerial night photograph of Downtown Norfolk, Virginia. The city is illuminated by streetlights and building lights, with a large body of water in the foreground. The text "Downtown Norfolk" is overlaid in a large, white, serif font.

Downtown Norfolk

Retail Strategy

Presented 5/27/2021

Executive Summary

Introduction

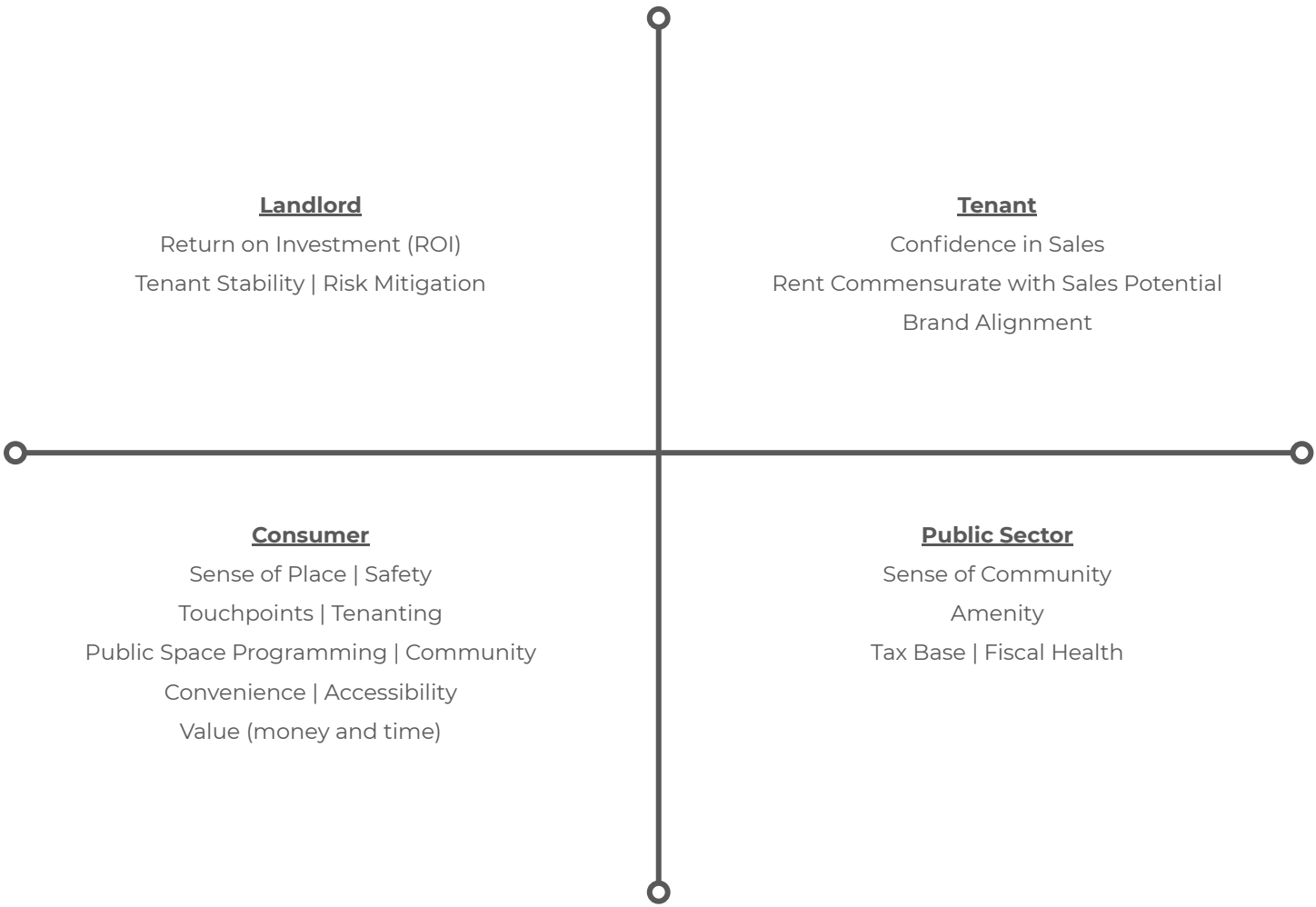
The retail industry is an ecosystem; a group of participants, each critical to a healthy and sustainable business climate. While retail is one of the fundamental components critical to activating the public realm, existing to serve the public, retail is a business and must achieve results in order to not just survive, but thrive. The most celebrated brands and their investors require superior results, forgoing opportunities that fail to yield the highest and best use of a finite set of resources. All retail ecosystems are comprised of the same participants and seldom is a retail environment not experiencing some sort of evolutionary trajectory. Evolution can take months or decades and to laymen, the pace may be so slow that evolution may be not be apparent, but every retail environment exists on a trajectory that is either on an incline (positive) or decline (negative). Even the most successful and established retail environments experience this and the ones that are sooner to recognize and correct negative trajectories are the ones that remain the most successful and productive places to do business. Long periods of decline require more resources and more time to recover.

Environments most equipped to manage ebbs and flows are owned by a single entity (e.g. shopping mall, lifestyle center), while “main street” environments (including Downtown Norfolk), which are comprised of a multitude of property owners with competing interests and requirements for return on investment, are less equipped. This is not to say that main street environments are less competitive, but rather to emphasize that in order to compensate for one disadvantage, they must be sure to address as many other competing factors as possible.

Retail has forever been in a constant state of motion, evolving to meet the changing needs and tastes influenced by growth, innovation and the consumer’s constant thirst for newness and spontaneity. At an already evolving point in retail history, a pandemic accelerated most trends already in play. A retail climate that already had too much (and still increasing) retail space and a shrinking number of tenants to fill it has been made exponentially more challenging. The principles of meeting the needs of the consumer and the merchants who serve them have and will continue to be paramount in fostering a productive and desirable retail environment. A retail environment that fails to evolve develops a sameness, turning its offering into a commodity. Without indistinguishable qualities, landlords who control space can only compete by lowering rent--the opposite of a healthy retail climate--seeking out the highest rent payer, regardless of character or quality.

The Retail Ecosystem

The exhibit below illustrates the retail ecosystem, whereby each of the four participants, and the meeting of their respective needs (outlined below), are critical to sustained economic health and maximum public good.



Key Takeaways: Strengths & Opportunities

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Downtown Norfolk has an appealing, memorable urban character, and the historic assets along Granby Street differentiate the area from the rest of Norfolk. The area has a strong pedestrian scale and a streetscape that is in good condition. There is generally a positive perception of safety. The downtown area is also accessible by the Elizabeth River Trail, a trail that is celebrated by area residents and drives visitors to downtown.

CUSTOMER BASE

The downtown area does not have a dense population of residents, but there is a robust collection of established neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown core. Daily foot traffic is sourced largely by the daytime office market with supplemental traffic coming from Tidewater Community College, regional cultural visitors and seasonal visitors, including cruise ship passengers.

BUSINESS / REGULATORY

In the business environment, there is a small collection of noteworthy tenants. The business community is tightly knit, as is evidenced by Selden Market, which is a celebrated local institution for regional makers and creatives. There is a collection of promising pipeline projects, supported by local leaders, many of whom have made Downtown Norfolk both a professional and personal priority. Generally speaking, stakeholders are open and willing to share information with one another if it benefits the community, and the city is proactive with fund sourcing, especially with programs such as Open Norfolk and the Vibrant Spaces Initiative.

ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

There are a number of notable downtown institutions with broad appeal to regional residents, including the Chrysler Museum, the Scope Arena, MacArthur Center, the Waterside District, and Nauticus.



Key Takeaways

Weaknesses & Threats

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

While downtown is teeming with historic charm, there are several areas with inactive ground floor frontages and a general lack of public space, compounded by limited sidewalk depth which also limits high statement, highly productive food and beverage outdoor seating potential.

The storefronts at the base of otherwise beautiful, historic buildings lack texture, articulation and high impact lighting in the evenings.

Lastly, MacArthur Center feels removed from the downtown core, with little relationship to the pedestrian experience.

From an accessibility perspective, the tolls, tunnels, and bridges are all barriers to downtown. The parking experience and cost are also viewed as impediments to consumer foot traffic, especially when compared to competitive suburban environments, which boast (perceivably) more convenient surface parking and free parking in new garages . A lack of micro mobility infrastructure both limits ridership and yields unpleasant conflict between users, pedestrians and motorists.

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Downtown Norfolk is up against a high degree of recently emergent regional competition, with many retail destinations boasting stronger offerings and connectivity, considered more accessible and seamless by the target audience. At the same time, local entrepreneurship, which can be a source of differentiation for urban environments, is not as robust as in other markets.

Fragmented ownership downtown--common in any “main street” environment--yields inconsistent landlord priorities, which makes strategic initiatives more complicated. This is evident in Downtown Norfolk, where a lack of a progressive ownership base and non-strategic approach to leasing result in a fragmented experience and lack of substance, making it difficult to compete at a regional level.

REGULATORY / ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

In the regulatory environment, there is a lack of retail-zone prioritization within Downtown Norfolk as well as requirements for active ground floor activity which cannot be supported by current market demand. This leads to oversupply and lack of concentrated energy so critical to retail.

Furthermore, it was noted that it is difficult to access the information needed for tenant recruitment, limiting capacity for tenant engagement and development of tenanting strategy.



Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways

Market Analysis: Downtown Demand

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Downtown Norfolk exists in a highly competitive regional retail landscape, and its growth and success is limited by its location as well as the abundance of retail at the waning MacArthur Center. Today’s vacancy rates, coupled with changing consumer habits, call for the need to “right size” downtown retail with priority areas and take into consideration other activating non-retail uses, including residential and office space. A multidimensional downtown retail environment should contribute to, not take away from, long-term value generation.

Unfortunately, MacArthur Center’s performance and redevelopment schemes directly impact the ability for other areas in Downtown Norfolk to recapture value and capitalize on retail demand. A decision for MacArthur Center’s future will directly impact future growth and economic productivity on Granby Street.

The lack of residents living downtown, paired with an oversupply of retail, warrants the exploration of using residential product to activate the ground plane.

KEY STATS

1,560,000 SF of total Retail Inventory

This includes space leased to retail tenants, vacant retail-appropriate space, and retail space currently occupied by a non-retail use)

982,820 SF occupied by retail tenants

23% vacancy rate

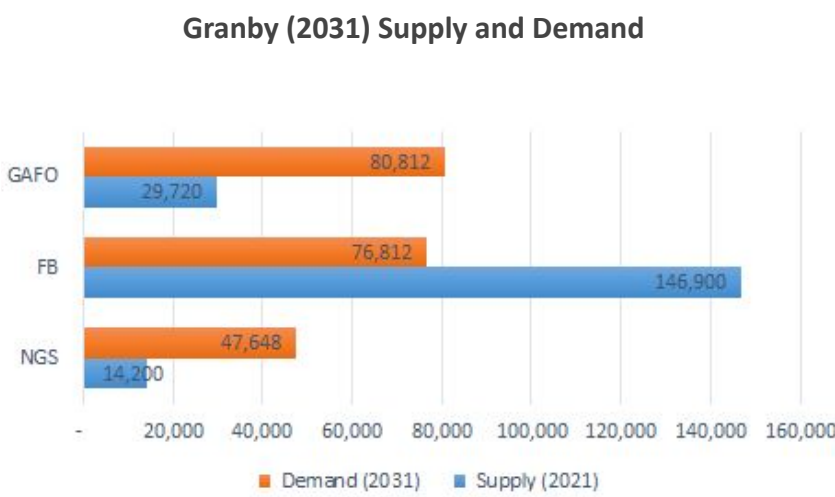
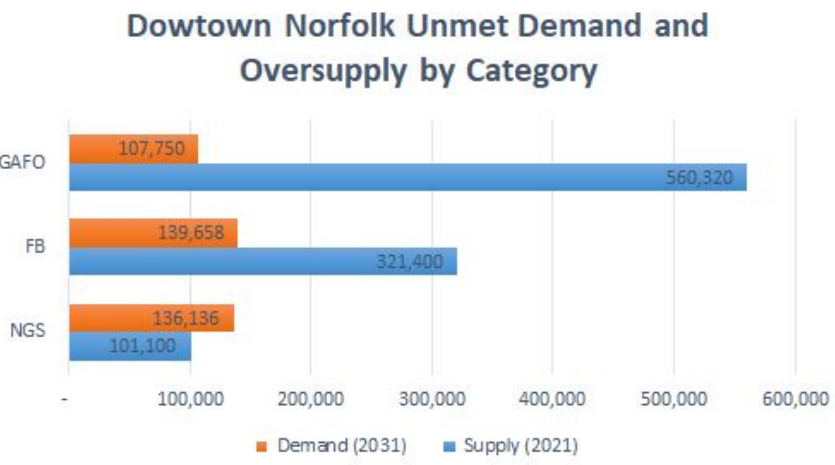
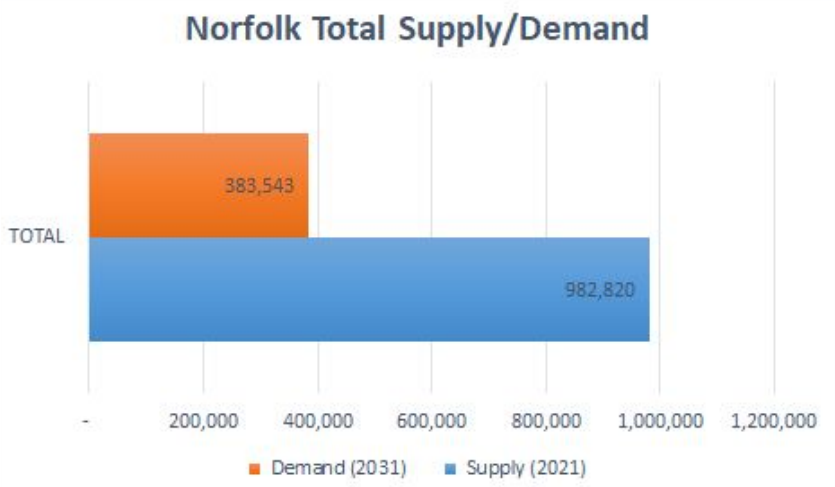
At the time of report, the national average was estimated to be 6.4%. A significant share of the submarket's vacancy rate is directly tied to oversupply stemming from MacArthur Center. **Without MacArthur Center, overall vacancy is 16%.**

ACRONYMS:

GAFO: General Merchandise, Apparel, Furnishings, & Other

F&B: Food & Beverage

NG&S: Neighborhood Goods & Services



Key Takeaways

Regulatory Assessment

As the demand for brick and mortar retail space softens, downtowns across the nation are grappling with how to ensure they do not build more space than can be supported by existing (or projected) market demand.

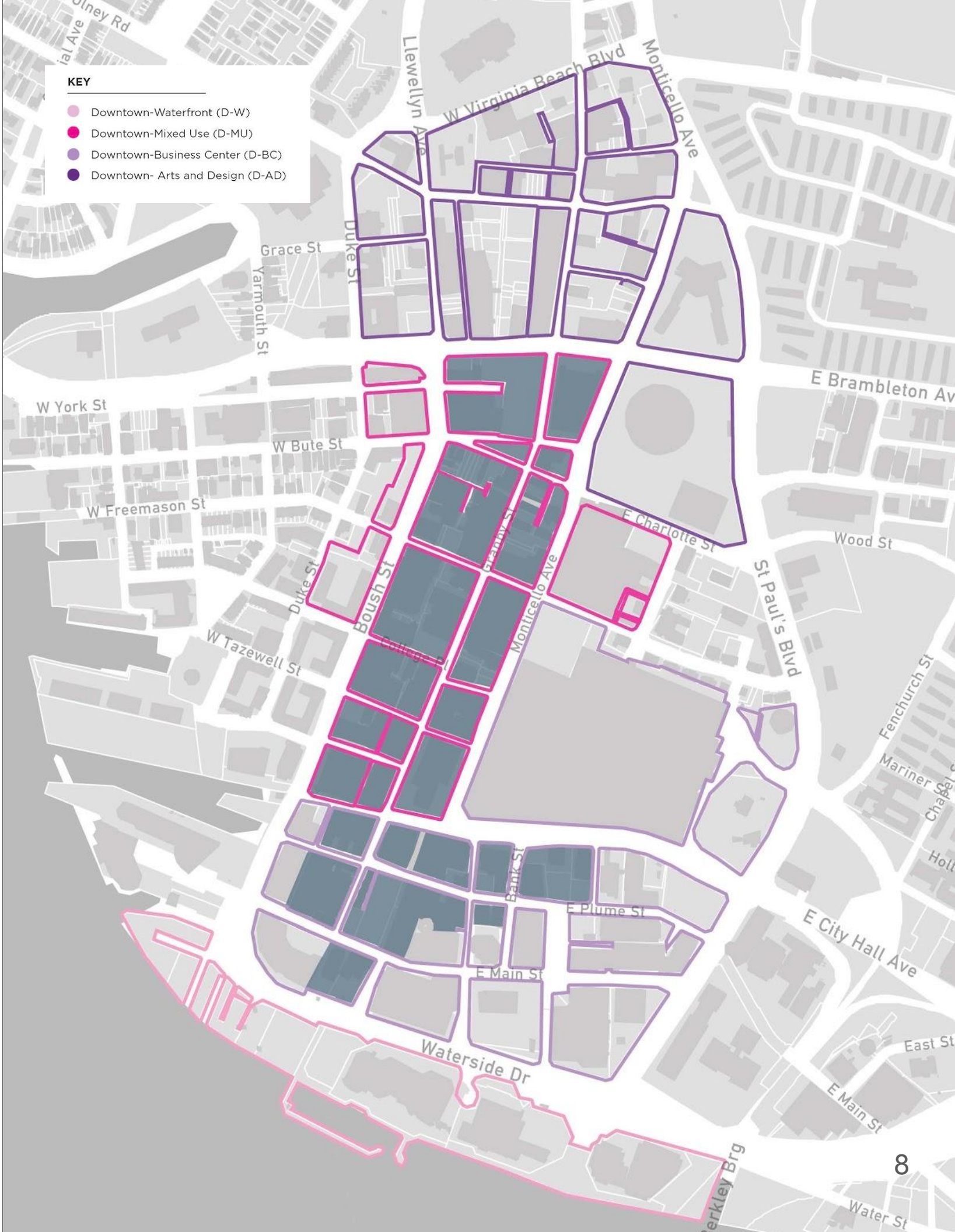
In planning circles, ground floor retail uses have historically been perceived as preferable to ground floor residential uses. This is reflected in zoning codes around the country, including in Downtown Norfolk, which include restrictions on residential ground floor space. . This is changing, however, as cities respond to a universal decline in retail demand and enlightenment toward the fact that street-facing unit entries and “stoops” can activate a street very well, particularly streets that deserved activation but have limited retail potential. Furthermore, a movement by many developers toward lifestyle-driven, often publicly-accessible, retail-infused lobbies, have proven themselves highly capable of activating retail streets, much like a hotel lobby, even contributing a dynamic that traditional retail would have otherwise been unable to do.

The past 25 years have witnessed market maturation and a significant amount of new retail supply. Furthermore, through stakeholder interviews, landlords have indicated a struggle in landing quality tenancies that truly make a contribution to the downtown environment.

The City of Norfolk must reassess ground floor retail expectations, supporting the concentration of retail activity only along priority corridors where retail “wants” to be. Eliminating requirements in areas that are less conducive to retail activity will prevent further saturation in the market and will help to focus higher quality tenancies on priority streets--particularly Granby Street. Elimination of these requirements will also incentivize more residential development, providing developers the ROI necessary to make a project feasible.

Restrictions on some ground floor uses can also stifle innovative, authentic and creative ground floor uses that now populate many of the country’s most celebrated places; the restrictions on breweries outside of the NEON District being one example.

Finally, the challenges associated with getting permits for projecting signage within the downtown area, particularly along Granby Street, must be addressed to improve visibility of downtown businesses and contribute a much needed layer of texture to the streetscape.

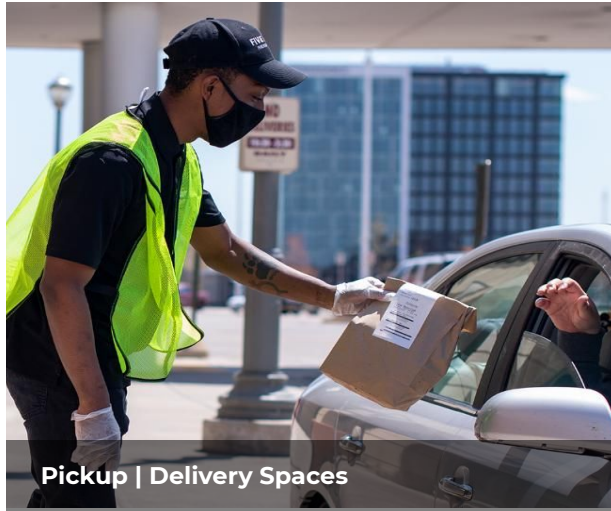
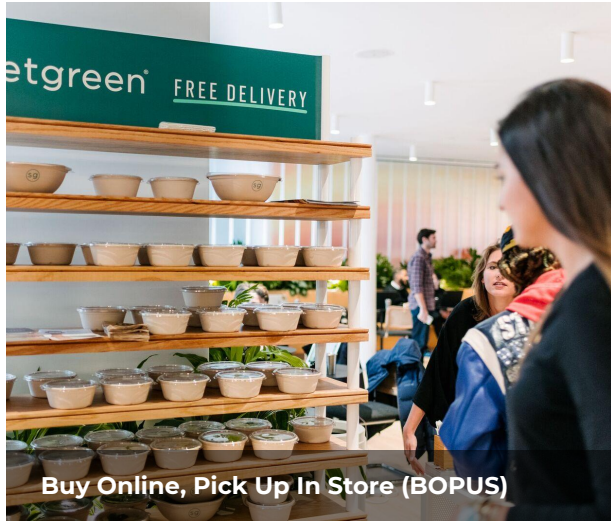


Trends Real Estate

With increased pressure for buy online, pick up in store services, property owners must reconsider their spaces to provide smaller store footprints that can better accommodate seamless customer pickup, micro-fulfillment, delivery services, and walk up windows.

Key Impacts to Downtown Norfolk

Granby Street benefits from smaller spaces historic buildings possess. Still, demand for non-public facing uses for off-street space is likely to increase, as is the pandemic-fueled growth of delivery and short-term pick-up services, which will likely be a lasting disruption in consumer behavior. Accommodating these disruptions will be important to remaining relevant and productive.

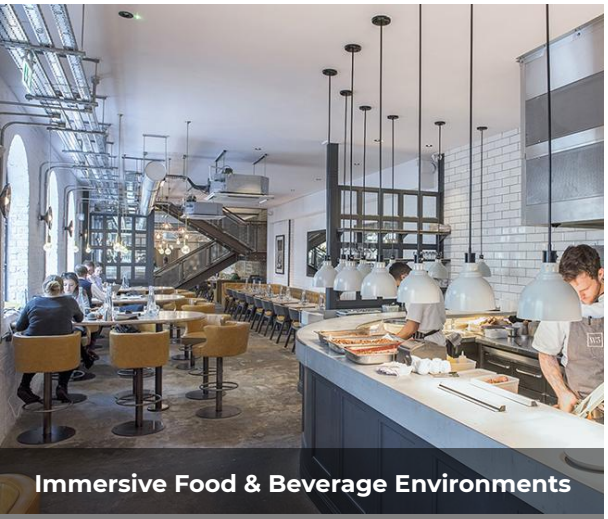


Trends Experience

A buzzword in retail for more than a decade, even a 12+ month pandemic has not been able to scare people into permanent isolation. There will always be moments to spend time and money that cannot be replicated digitally or at home. A return to normal should be expected for sit-down dining, cultural, public space programming and other uses that don't translate well to a virtual environment.

Key Impacts to Downtown Norfolk

Experiences that cannot be replicated at home or digitally will remain most relevant, while goods-based businesses will continue to pursue a more productive omni-channel model. In a competitive regional retail landscape, Downtown Norfolk will need to improve its experiential offering in order to draw foot traffic.



Trends

Outdoor Dining

Road diets and other creative ways to increase outdoor space were already on the rise, but pandemic-related shutdowns and empty streets have yielded opportunities vast outdoor seating environments. Outdoor seating environments, both on the ground plane and along the roofline, have the potential to put otherwise forgotten places “on the map.”

Key Impacts to Downtown Norfolk

Downtown Norfolk does have physical limitations when it comes to accommodating outdoor dining. Identifying memorable, quaint nooks for outdoor seating and encouraging more indoor/outdoor porosity will create value for merchants and enhance sense of place for the neighborhood.



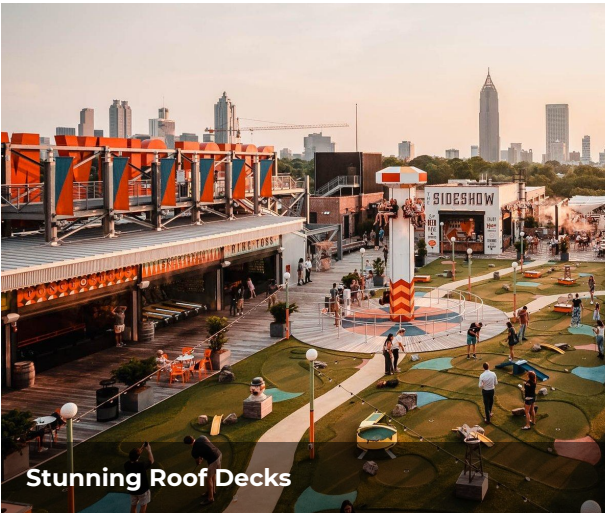
Indoor / Outdoor Porosity



Memorable Outdoor Environment



Quaint Nooks & Crannies



Stunning Roof Decks

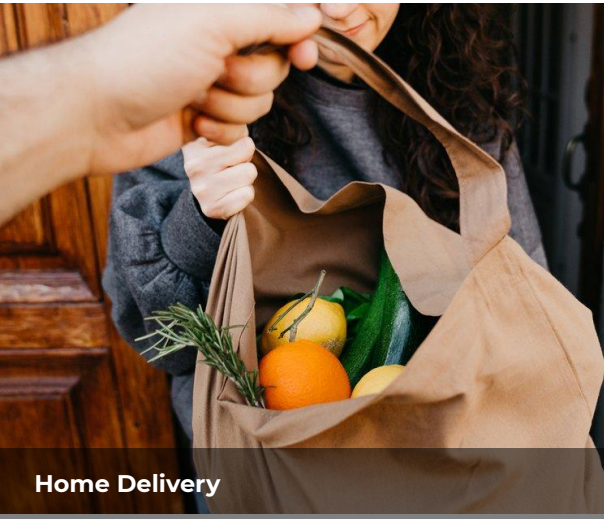
Trends

Work from Home

Prior to the 2020/2021 pandemic, 7% of Americans worked from home. Forced adoption of virtual working will yield a degree of permanence to this disruption, and increases in daytime population in residential neighborhoods will have a significant impact on retail properties.

Key Impacts to Downtown Norfolk

Downtown Norfolk lacks residential density, although adjacent neighborhoods are likely to see an uptick in permanent WFH. Incentives for residential uses are a step towards increasing foot traffic, including the conversion of class B and C office space. Creating environments that deliver on “15-minute neighborhood” expectations to serve a burgeoning residential base should also be prioritized.



Home Delivery



Buy Online, Pick Up In Store



Work From Anywhere



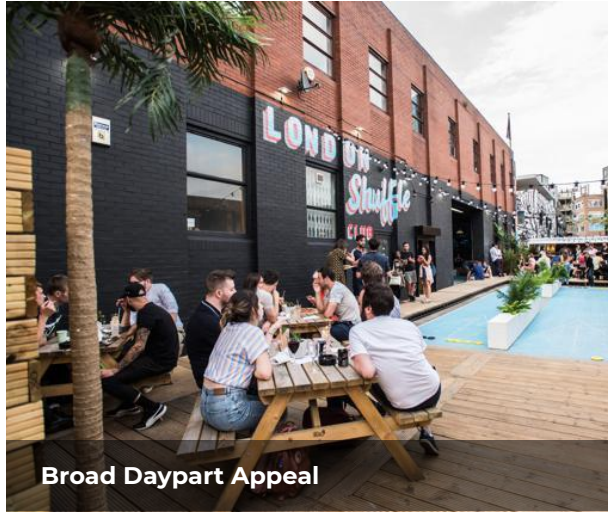
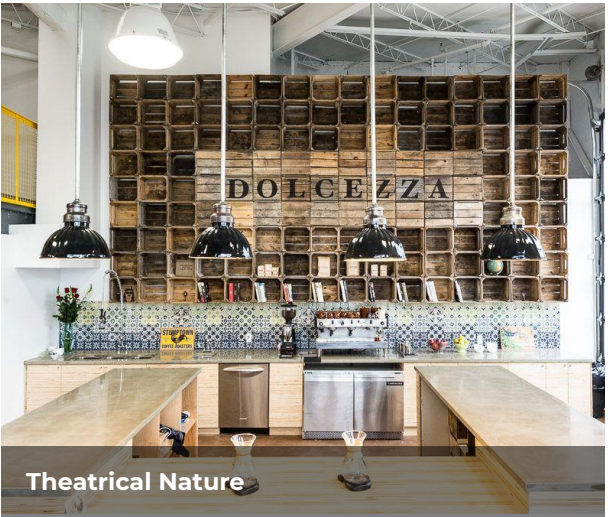
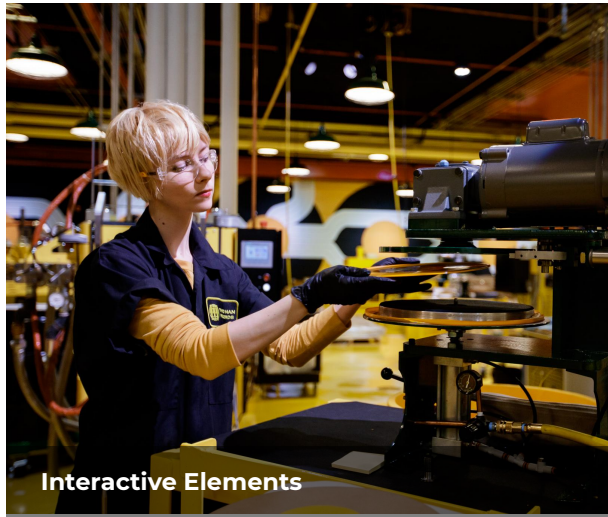
Dedicated Space for Curbside Pickup

Trends Entertainment

Multidimensional, experiential destinations, these places draw a diverse spectrum of users and generate foot traffic, especially on weekday evenings and weekends. These spaces can also serve as alternative, flexible workspaces during the weekday.

Key Impacts to Downtown Norfolk

There are a number of entertainment destinations downtown that are beloved locally, however, they have a niche draw and do not have the potential for daytime activation. Encourage social spaces that offer a variety of experiences will serve the needs of the community over a multitude of dayparts.

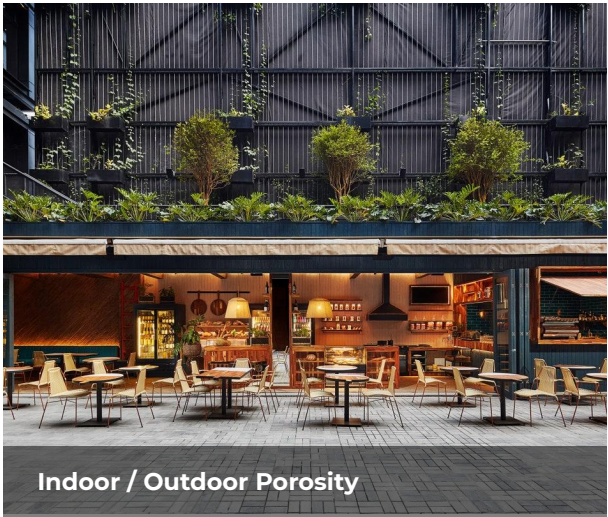


Trends Hospitality

Hospitality isn't just for hotels anymore. Retail environments that deliver on one-of-a-kind memorable charm and destination-worthy interiors stand out among competitors and build loyal followings. Hospitality forward environments also include street-activating uses, with a reliance on indoor/outdoor porosity, which blurs the line between public and private.

Key Impacts to Downtown Norfolk

Downtown Norfolk's quiet, narrow streetscape keeps consumers from wandering, exploring, and lingering, which ultimately hampers retail productivity. A few hospitality-forward uses would help to soften the experience, draw foot traffic, and enhance retail productivity.



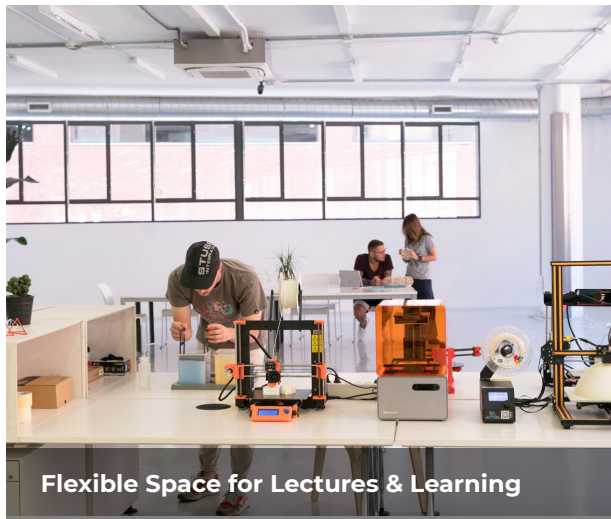
Trends

Artisan Space

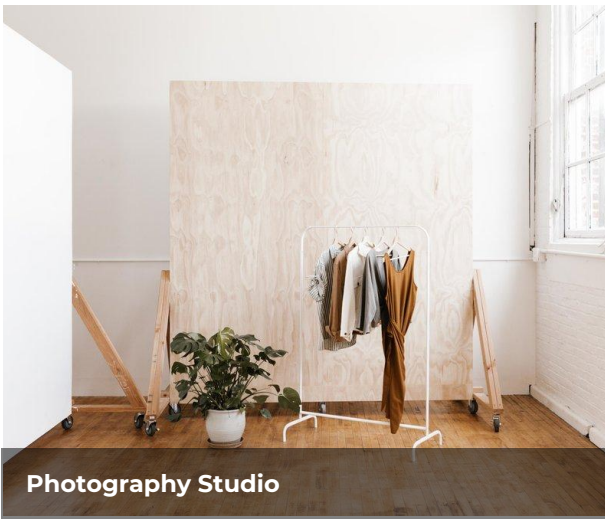
There is a growing desire for local, creative goods in favor of mass-merchant products. Artisan spaces have the potential to foster community pride, to drive credibility for the neighborhood, to flex as a space for workshop and events, and to serve as an income producer for challenged space.

Key Impacts to Downtown Norfolk

Selden Market is living proof of Norfolk's appetite for creative retail; as tenants in Selden outgrow their spaces, opportunities along Granby should be made more readily available so that the foot traffic these tenants draw is not distributed into other parts of the city.



Flexible Space for Lectures & Learning



Photography Studio

Trends

Residential | Office

Most foot traffic-heavy places possess a mix of uses. Office and residential uses bring people to the sidewalks during the day, evenings and on weekends. People want to be around people, which makes these uses catalysts for incremental foot traffic. Some developers of these uses are programming the ground floor like hotel lobbies, porous and public.

Key Impacts to Downtown Norfolk

If done properly, ground floor office and residential uses can have a positive effect on street activation, with highly immersive, hotel-like lobbies open to the public, with blurred edges between retail and lobby environments. These indoor “living rooms” can supplement what is a limited amount of outdoor public space in the downtown core.



Creative Collaboration



Transparent Spaces



Cooking School



Small, Ground Floor Retail Spaces



Public “Living Room” Lobby Spaces



Indoor / Outdoor Porosity

Overview of Strategic Approach

Developing Strategies

The following strategies combine a mix of policy, programs, and capital improvement projects on which Downtown Norfolk Council and its existing partners/stakeholders can take lead in implementing, addressing previously identified challenges and opportunities. Many of these strategies are also designed to fold into the work plan of a dedicated Economic Development professional embedded within Downtown Norfolk Council.

Prior to the development of each of the following recommendations and strategies, Streetsense conducted a physical assessment of Downtown Norfolk, performed a market demand assessment, and conducted stakeholder interviews. These insights were critical to understanding the level of public buy-in and how any newly proposed recommendations might be received, as well as a level of resource commitment that may need to be dedicated to new programs and tools.

Streetsense then leveraged its national experience and in-house expertise in Placemaking & Branding/Marketing to develop each strategy and execution, some of which are district-wide, with others being prioritized in specific locations.

Each of these strategies is guided by a set of four core principles (or beliefs and values) that emerged through the research conducted and developed in consensus with the Downtown Norfolk Council.

They are also supported by relevant case studies that helped shape a robust understanding of estimated time and cost for implementation, potential models to adapt/replicate, likely partners needed for implementation (including city agencies, private property owners and businesses, non-profit organizations, etc.), as well as potential sources of funding (including Federal, State, Local and Philanthropic).

The following plan should serve as tool to define a work plan for a new hire, inform Downtown Norfolk Council's ongoing advocacy efforts, solicit new expertise and funding, as well as strengthen applications for local, state and national funding opportunities and grants.

Project Rubric

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Project Title | An action-oriented statement, e.g. Install lighting in public plaza |
| Category | Regulatory Access & Circulation Public Realm Private Realm Organizational Capacity |
| Guiding Principles | Create a place that is business-sustainable Improve sense of place Create a place with broad daypart appeal Improve downtown accessibility & connectify |
| Estimated Time & Cost | Cost: Low: <\$50,000 (\$), Medium: \$50,000-\$200,000 (\$\$), High: >\$200,000 (\$\$\$) Time: Short: <1 year, Medium: 1-5 years, Long: 5+ years |
| Diagnostic | A challenge or opportunity identified in the diagnostic assessment that necessitates the implementation of the strategy |
| Action Items & Process | A concise description of the project and key actions that will be taken; this may include a list of chronological steps to fully implement the project (e.g. training, property/land purchase). |
| Partners & Resources | A list of public/non-profit/private entities and individuals whose support and cooperation is critical to successful implementation of projects, and specify any roles |
| Case Study & Best Practice Model | Descriptions of projects similar to the one being proposed. Examples may be local/regional/national |

* Organizational capacity refers to a combination of leadership (across public, private, and non-profit sectors), resources (both human and financial), and regulatory and policy frameworks that enable catalytic investments and improvements to take root.

Downtown Norfolk Strategic Positioning

Downtown Norfolk is a **regional destination** with **unique and authentic** offerings that meet the needs of a growing **residential community**, with strong appeal to **regional visitors and tourists** alike. The heart of Downtown is Granby Street, where **historic buildings** and a **vibrant dining and nightlife** scene coexist.

Moving forward, we envision a concentrated set of more diverse downtown retail and food & beverage **offerings that appeal to a broad spectrum of customers**. Granby Street will be the starting point for many local and regional residents, as well as visitors. It will be a place **equally appealing to young people as it is to families and empty nesters**. The area will be **activated during the day, evenings, and weekends**, with activities, retail and f&b offerings that set Downtown Norfolk apart.

Downtown Norfolk Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles

Create a place that is business-sustainable

Improve sense of place

Create a place with broad daypart appeal

Improve Downtown Accessibility & Connectivity

Why?

The regional landscape surrounding downtown is highly competitive, and Downtown Norfolk is perceived to have many limitations that keep consumers from spending and tenants from investing in the area. In order to compete at a regional level, the environment will require both business and regulatory adjustments and recalibrations.

The architecture of downtown is uniquely historic with a great sense of scale, but the pedestrian experience lacks memorability. With a lack of public space, operable storefronts, signage, and outdoor dining, downtown’s ability to generate foot traffic is constrained.

Places with a broad daypart appeal are active morning, afternoon, and night, on weekdays and weekends, 12 months a year; they offer a diverse set of offerings that appeal to different audiences at different times. There is an opportunity, through place enhancement and tenanting, for downtown to build its user base and generate repeat trips critical to supporting retail businesses.

Customers in the region have a wide range of destinations from which to choose when considering where to shop, dine, and be entertained. Although downtown serves customers that are familiar with the area’s offerings, impediments pertaining to cross-neighborhood connectivity, lack of a memorable central public space and a substandard parking experience collectively create an experience that encourages a broader, more discerning user to spend their dollars and time elsewhere.

Strategy Overview

| Category | Action / Strategy | Budget/ Timeframe | Guiding Principle |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Regulatory | Ground Floor Zoning | \$ Medium | Create a place that is business-sustainable Create a place with broad daypart appeal |
| | Tenant Signage | \$ Short | Create a place that is business-sustainable Improve sense of place |
| Access & Circulation | Parking Garages | \$\$ Short | Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity |
| | Street Parking | \$\$\$ Medium | Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity |
| | Vehicular Wayfinding | \$\$ Short | Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity |
| | Pedestrian Wayfinding | \$\$ Short | Improve Sense of Place Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity |
| | Micromobility | \$\$\$ Long | Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity |
| Public Realm | Public Space Enhancements | \$.\$\$\$ Depends | Create a place with broad daypart appeal Improve sense of place |
| | Outdoor Programming | \$ Short | Create a place with broad daypart appeal Improve sense of place |
| | Building Lighting | \$\$ Short | Improve Sense of Place |

| Category | Action / Strategy | Budget/ Timeframe | Guiding Principle |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Private Realm | Urban Living Rooms | N/A Medium | Create a place with broad daypart appeal Improve sense of place |
| | Catalytic Development Opportunities | N/A Medium | Create a place with broad daypart appeal Improve sense of place |
| | Outdoor Dining & Operable Storefronts | \$ Short | Create a place with broad daypart appeal Improve sense of place |
| Organizational Capacity | Access & Loading | \$ Medium | Create a place that is business-sustainable Improve sense of place |
| | Educate Property Owners Brokers | \$ Medium | Create a place that is business-sustainable |
| | Educate Tenants | \$ Short | Create a place that is business-sustainable |
| | Merchandising Plan | N/A Short | Create a place that is business-sustainable Create a place with broad daypart appeal |
| | Social Media & Marketing | \$ Short | Create a place that is business-sustainable Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity |

Key:
Cost: Low: <\$50,000 (\$), Medium: \$50,000-\$200,000 (\$\$), High: >\$200,000 (\$\$\$)
Time: Short: <1 year, Medium: 1-5 years, Long: 5+ years

Regulatory

Regulatory: Ground Floor Zoning

Project Category:

Regulatory

- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

Create a place that is business-sustainable

- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- o Establish concentrated core retail zones within which active ground floor uses are required (e.g. Granby Street)
- o Remove requirements for active ground floor uses outside of established core retail zones
- o Allow ground floor residential outside of established core retail zones, with conditions for units and/or lobby and common space to activate the street
- o Develop guidelines for ground floor residential units that address resiliency requirements and current Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM)
- o To mitigate blank walls resulting from ground floor residential, create a set of defined streetscape mitigation activities that can be applied towards the Resilient Point System for Residential Development

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Medium, 1 - 5 years

What did we hear and observe?

The market assessment identified a current and projected oversupply of downtown retail (including F&B) which, when coupled with an already softening of demand for brick-and-mortar space, must be addressed to reinforce existing areas of commercial concentration and to prevent storefront vacancy “blight” and undesirable tenancies over time.

We note that some concern has been raised regarding the inclusion of ground floor residential as a viable ground floor use, particularly given the Design Flood Elevation and restrictions that would result in elevated first floors. We acknowledge this challenge, but believe it is important to address by seeking a series of solutions. A glut of vacant commercial space does not contribute to a vibrant downtown environment and devalues the retail submarket as a whole in the form of curb appeal and confidence in the ability to generate business. More residents, however, do contribute to business viability. Finding a balanced set of solutions that enable ground floor residential on side streets within downtown - while recognizing the need to activate and raise living spaces above Design Flood Elevation is a challenge we feel confident that Norfolk is able to meet.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

The “rightsizing” of retail downtown is critical to preventing further diffusion of business activity and to reinforce concentration of offerings - an important characteristic of successful place-based retail environments. Furthermore, removing costly and risky retail requirements will enhance appeal from developers already operating on thin margins. The ability to support additional residential development will will yield an increase spending and a broadening of hours toward a diverse 18-hour environment.

Where commercial activity is less likely to be supported (primarily on side streets), ground floor residential construction should include strong design guidance to ensure new development reinforces walkable environments. We acknowledge that the required Design Flood Elevation (DFE) is high-- in some cases equivalent to an entire story--and that residential construction is not allowed below the DFE. Cities with high flood risk have mitigated this challenge by developing guidelines to address the visual disconnect caused by elevated buildings and prevent blank walls by incorporating streetscape mitigation (i.e. fenestration requirements, setbacks that allow for reconciliation of grade changes, plantings along streetwall, open or covered porticoes, stair turns, and raised yards). These enhancements, can be incorporated into the Resilient Point System for Residential Development.

Who can help support this project?

Downtown Norfolk Council can advocate for zoning changes, but these changes will need to be led and supported by the City of Norfolk.

Regulatory: Ground Floor Zoning

Project Category:

Regulatory

- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

Create a place that is business-sustainable

- Improve sense of place
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- To mitigate blank walls resulting from ground floor residential, create a set of defined streetscape mitigation activities that can be applied towards the Resilient Point System for Residential Development

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Medium, 1 - 5 years

Nationwide, a number of communities have changed zoning to address the reduction in demand and changing market conditions for retail, conditions that have only been exacerbated by the pandemic. A downward trajectory of demand for retail space will only continue. Additionally, the desire to support housing production has further fueled an interest in zoning adjustments, with housing costs increasing as a result of both increased construction costs and supply constraints.

In Grand Rapids, a housing shortage identified in a 2020 Housing Needs Assessment, coupled with high ground floor vacancy rates along non-primary corridors, highlighted the opportunities to both create new housing by allowing ground floor residential units in spaces that otherwise would have likely remained vacant.



VACANT STOREFRONT | GRAND RAPIDS, MI

In 2021, the City passed zoning reform that allowed developers and property owners in over half of the City’s 6,000 commercial zoned parcels to convert retail space to residential space.

The goals were to meet population density goals, address the city’s housing shortage and lack of affordability, give greater flexibility to property owners struggling to fill ground-floor units, and address changing market conditions that have placed an added strain on an already challenged retail market.

The zoning amendment received widespread support from business and neighborhood associations.



RESILIENCY MITIGATION TECHNIQUES FOR RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS| NEW YORK

Following Hurricane Sandy, the City of New York recognized the need to develop strategies for increasing the resilience of waterfront communities to coastal flooding and sea level rise. The challenge for elevated multi-family residential buildings and homes was particularly acute, and design solutions that address the reconciliation of grade changes included a variety of approaches, including plantings along street walls, open or covered porticoes, stair turns and raised yards. Additional information can be found in [Designing for Flood Risk](#), prepared by the City of New York, which includes robust streetscape mitigation techniques for a wide variety of building typologies.

Regulatory: Ground Floor Zoning

Project Category:

Regulatory

- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
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- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- Establish concentrated core retail zones within which active ground floor uses are required (e.g. Granby Street)
- Remove requirements for active ground floor uses outside of established core retail zones
- Allow ground floor residential outside of established core retail zones, with conditions for units and/or lobby and common space to activate the street
- Develop guidelines for ground floor residential units that address resiliency requirements and current Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM)
- To mitigate blank walls resulting from ground floor residential, create a set of defined streetscape mitigation activities that can be applied towards the Resilient Point System for Residential Development

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Medium, 1 - 5 years



Residential | Office

Residential and office uses make unique retail opportunities on the ground floor more economically viable and are major foot traffic generators. Each has the potential to have catalytic influence on street using publicly accessible and activated lobbies, becoming all-day “third place” for both the residents/employees and the surrounding community.

Contributing Attributes

- Mix of commercial/public common spaces
- Multi-daypart commercial offering
- Blurred commercial/common edges
- Array of seating typologies
- Potential for bold storefront operability



Cultural | Community

The most memorable retail destinations drive foot traffic throughout the day and week by supplementing a traditional retail offering with cultural and community-focused touchpoints that encourage gathering and respite. These publicly-accessible gathering spaces are credibility-driving neighborhood anchors; their unique, experiential qualities help foster community pride and diversify the spectrum of users.

Contributing Attributes

- Educational elements
- Access to otherwise unobtainable services
- Multitude of touchpoints
- Entrepreneurial support
- Collection of diverse minds and skills



Service Retail

Service retail helps to create a “complete street,” through diversifying the experience and offering at the ground plane. Service retail has been experiencing a renaissance in recent years, with a marked increase in quality of product/service, presentation and overall experience. These repeat traffic generators are major contributors to foot traffic and forge loyalty across user bases. They are also an opportunity to support local entrepreneurship and create places that are both useful and memorable.

Contributing Attributes

- Elevated experiences
- (Potentially) unique brands
- Personal connectivity
- Exceptional service
- Lifestyle supporting

Regulatory: Tenant Signage

Project Category:

Regulatory

- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

Create a place that is business-sustainable

Improve sense of place

- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- Establish a grant or matching fund to support improved signage within the commercial core
- Engage a sign fabricator and negotiate bulk pricing
- Pursue batch approvals on behalf of participating businesses
- Create a Guide to Downtown Signage Permitting to help business owners understand the guidelines and process for signage approval.

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year

What did we hear and observe?

During the market tour it was observed that the facades along the Granby corridor were flat, lacking texture that is so critical to placemaking. Furthermore, the narrow sidewalks are such that sightlines to traditional transom signage are limited.

Though Downtown Norfolk is considered to be generous with signage surface area allowances, blade signs do require an additional review from the architectural review board, which is considered a cumbersome process. Many business owners expressed interest in blade signs but indicated they were put off by the time and effort it would take to get approvals, in addition to the already added expenses associated with installation and maintenance.

Additionally, there are fenestration requirements that usually keep tenant signage from being as effective as it could be. Storefront transparency is important to street activation, however, some of the most engaging and photographed storefronts are ones that through innovative signage, materiality, and even biophilia (sometimes highly opaque) become destinations unto themselves.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

Blade or projecting signs are important to businesses and visitors alike. They offer visitors “breadcrumbs” that signal the location of offerings, shorten the visual distance between businesses, and give texture to the street environment and buildings.

In studies, blade signs have been shown to increase foot traffic by as much as 30%. They also ensure that downtown has a distinct “mercantile” feel that is instantly recognizable, even from a distance, as a business district that is active and filled with interesting offerings.

Who can help support this project?

There are opportunities to help businesses navigate the existing process by developing a program, led by the Downtown Norfolk Council, in which grants or matching grants, together with support for fabrication coordination and batch approval, can help get more signs up within the historic district.

Additionally, the Downtown Norfolk Council can help businesses gain a clearer understanding of the process for approval through the creation of a guide for business owners.

Regulatory: Tenant Signage

Project Category:

Regulatory

Access & Circulation

Public Realm

Private Realm

Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

Create a place that is business-sustainable

Improve sense of place

Create a place with broad daypart appeal

Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

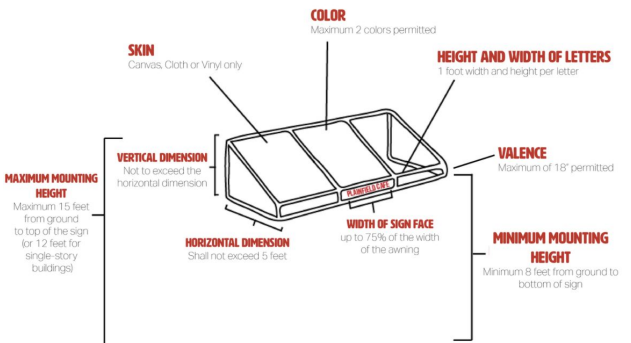
Potential Subtasks:

- Establish a grant or matching fund to support improved signage within the commercial core
- Engage a sign fabricator and negotiate bulk pricing
- Pursue batch approvals on behalf of participating businesses
- Create a Guide to Downtown Signage Permitting to help business owners understand the guidelines and process for signage approval.

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year

| SIGN RULES FOR DOWNTOWN WALL SIGNS & PROJECTING SIGNS | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| NUMBER OF SIGNS 1 for each ground floor business maintaining street frontage | MAXIMUM VERTICAL DIMENSION wall sign: 2.5 feet projecting sign: 4 feet | MAXIMUM SIGN AREA wall sign: 30 square feet projecting sign: 4 square feet | |
| SIGN LOCATION wall sign: on the wall at the main public entrance or center along the street frontage projecting sign: attached to the wall with sign face and all signage oriented in a position that is perpendicular to the wall to which it is attached | MAXIMUM MOUNTING HEIGHT wall sign: not to exceed the height of the ground floor, or 14 feet, whichever is less projecting sign: not to exceed the height of the sill or bottom of any 2nd story window or 16 feet, whichever is less. In the case of single-story buildings, maximum height shall not exceed 12 feet or the top of the wall, whichever is less. | MAX. HORIZONTAL DIMENSION wall sign: 20 feet, or 70% of the width of the building frontage occupied by the use, whichever is less. projecting sign: 4 feet... | |
| ILLUMINATION indirect illumination (Goose Neck or Halo) | | | |
| ADDITIONAL PROJECTING SIGN REGULATIONS | | | |
| SIGN FONT SIZE maximum height and width of letters, numbers, or other characters or images on the signboard shall not exceed 1 foot. | MIN. MOUNTING HEIGHT 12 feet from ground level to lowestmost portion of sign | MAX. HORIZ. PROJECTION FROM BUILDING WALL 3-12 feet. Projecting signs may project over a public sidewalk only, and shall not extend over any other portion of any other public right-of- way. | MAXIMUM SIGN THICKNESS 4 inches |
| ELEMENTS OF AN A WYNN SIGN | | | |



Downtown Plainfield | Plainfield, NJ

In addition to providing grants to business owners interested in enhancing storefront signage, the BID provides clear guidance on sign regulations through simple graphics. These diagrams, hosted on a dedicated 'Storefront Design' page on the BID's website, complement other storefront-related resources made available by the City. The webpage also identifies local sign manufacturers located within the BID that business owners may choose to use.



Atlantic Avenue | Brooklyn, NY

The BID along Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn secured funding from a local State Senator for a blade sign program. They worked with a single manufacturer and a dozen small businesses to create custom signs along a two block stretch of Atlantic.

Signs were fabricated for approximately \$2,500 a sign.



Shiloh Street - Pittsburgh, PA

The blade signs on Shiloh Street in the Mount Washington neighborhood in Pittsburgh were part of a program led by local non-profit Mount Washington CDC, which had taken the lead in the revitalization of the corridor. The signs were paid for by a grant (funded by PNC Bank). A local fabricator was selected and four businesses participated. A pedestrian traffic count analysis recorded a 30% increase in pedestrian traffic, with businesses reporting noteworthy increases in sales. The non-profit indicated that once the first set of signs were installed, other businesses saw the impact and put up signs on their own without prodding or subsidy.

The budget to support the fabrication of approximately five signs was \$10k, which included design.

Access & Circulation

Access & Circulation: Parking Garages

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation**
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity**

Potential Subtasks:

- Physical improvements to facilities (i.e. repaint, enhanced lighting)
- Implement smart parking tools
- Enhance wayfinding
- Adjust rate structure (customers and businesses)
- Allow for parking validation if a certain amount is spent with downtown retailers

Budget: \$\$, \$50,000 - \$200,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year

What did we hear and observe?

Parking is one of the most pressing and contentious topics in the downtown experience and is perceived by many as a significant competitive disadvantage when compared to other regional offerings.

From a planning perspective, the parking garages are well distributed throughout downtown, although connectivity to Granby Street is limited, which is not ideal, given that consumers seek parking as close to their point of destination as possible and can easily become disoriented. Disorientation is one of the most significant contributors to pedestrian frustration, impacting potential for repeat visits. Given their disconnectedness from Granby Street, users are impacted by ineffective and spotty wayfinding. The absence of smart parking systems and payment via handheld device contribute to the inferiority of the garages compared to regional competition.

Cost of parking compared to competition is another subject commonly referenced in stakeholder interviews. For retailers, parking presents a huge financial burden, made worse by tolls. Many choose to pay for parking for their employees and some even validate parking for customers, as a way of mitigating pushback. For prospective retailers, these parking issues are seen as a major obstacle. Service retailers, whose customers seek convenient and quick parking, struggle with repeat business for these reasons.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

A seamless parking experience supplemented by a more robust, relevant downtown retail experience encourages consumers to feel more empowered to visit downtown for work, errands, and leisure, eliminating the perceived hurdles that exist when comparing downtown to suburban or neighborhood offerings. Clean, bright and safe garages must be the minimum standard. Technology and bold (not necessarily expensive) design features found in private sector facilities must be looked at as competition, given the fact that the consumer makes little to no distinction between the two. The customer journey, from entering the garage to finding a space; to getting out of the car and getting to the street, and then the return outbound trip must all be considered at every stage and to every degree, as this is how the privately owned retail properties approach user experience.

A new approach to employee parking (cost and process) will relieve employers of hiring and bottom line burdens. Similarly, retail consumer pricing and payment methods should be adjusted to be competitive with other jurisdictions.

Though changes to the parking garage are not the starting point for improvements to the retail experience downtown, they represent a major role in the long-term success of the area.

Who can help support this project?

The Parking Division for the City of Norfolk is an important partner in this effort. The Parking Division may want to consider upgrades that can be supported through new financing mechanisms such as General Obligation Bonds, which can be used to cover the cost of new construction. Parking fees can also be used as collateral for float bonds in collaboration with the City of Norfolk’s parking division regional parking authority.

Access & Circulation:

Parking Garages

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation**
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity**

Potential Subtasks:

- Physical improvements to facilities (i.e. repaint, enhanced lighting)
- Implement smart parking tools
- Enhance wayfinding
- Adjust rate structure (customers and businesses)
- Allow for parking validation if a certain amount is spent with downtown retailers

Budget: \$\$, \$50,000 - \$200,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year



Park and Shop Program | York, PA

The City of York, owner of public parking garages in downtown York, offers a parking voucher program that enables business owners to purchase 1-hour parking vouchers in bulk at 50% reduced rate.

Business owners have control over how they may choose to distribute parking vouchers to its customers/clients. This program is intended to encourage minimum spend and drive visitation to downtown during low peak periods.



Albany Parking Authority - Capital Walls Program | Albany, NY

The #CapitalWalls mural program is a partnership between Albany Parking Authority, Albany Center Gallery and Albany Barn to create public art (on facades of parking garages and other major transportation infrastructure) and to promote walkability in downtown Albany. The program, funded in part by the Parking Authority with support of the City's Downtown Revitalization Initiative award, covers artists' fees, insurance fees, and material costs. Visitors can now take a self-guided walking tour by referring to tagged #CapitalWalls photos on social media.



ParkPGH Smart Parking | Pittsburgh, PA

The smart parking tool offers real-time garage parking availability for select downtown Pittsburgh garages through an iPhone app, mobile-friendly website, text messaging, and call-in service. This system was funded in support by The Benter Foundation and was created in partnership by the Parking Authority, Downtown Partnership, and various arts/cultural institutions.

Access & Circulation: Street Parking

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation**
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity**

Potential Subtasks:

- Consider more widely adopted payment app
- Dedicate grab & go parking spots for restaurants
- Dedicate zones for outdoor dining
- Dedicate zones for rideshare pickup as well as micromobility
- Create loading zones that ease pressure on retailers
- Make off-street parking cheaper than on-street parking to free up and create flexibility for curb along main retail corridors
- Assign retail-designated spots

Budget: \$\$\$, >\$200,000

Timeframe: Medium, 1 - 5 years

What did we hear and observe?

Similar to parking garages, we heard many concerns and frustrations around the availability of street parking downtown. There is ample street parking in the appropriate areas, however, payment and monitoring were issues that were expressed.

While the city has its own parking app, ParkMobile is the nation's most commonly used parking app and makes travelling from region to region or city to city (in the case of Hampton Roads) much more seamless. Users become fatigued when tasked with registering for a new parking app, remembering passwords, etc. Employing a more universally adopted app should be considered.

Additionally, a handful of on-street parking spaces are currently being used for outdoor dining, which could become a mainstay moving forward. Finding the right calibration of programming along the curb will be critical to Downtown's success.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

A seamless, on-street parking experience empowers consumers to visit downtown, whether as a destination for regional residents or dinner or errands for nearby neighborhoods. A seamless parking journey for all users is essential to making businesses thrive.

Additionally, the pandemic forced the masses to embrace delivery services, which went from being near exclusively for national businesses to something locals were also now employing. A degree of permanence should be expected in the way consumers make purchases. Private sector projects are holding on to permanent spaces for pickups and delivery services. In order to be competitive and business friendly, the City of Norfolk should consider the same in select areas.

Who can help support this project?

The future of street parking is multi dimensional--a proverbial space where private vehicle parking, passenger pickup and drop-off, commercial loading zones, bike and scooter parking, and parklets all coexist. As street parking along Granby is examined, the city should also consider adding more street parking on side streets surrounding downtown, which are less heavily trafficked and wide enough for conversion of one lane on each side into street parking.

Access & Circulation: Street Parking

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation**
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity**

Potential Subtasks:

- Consider more widely adopted payment app
- Dedicate grab & go parking spots for restaurants
- Dedicate zones for outdoor dining
- Dedicate zones for rideshare pickup as well as micromobility
- Create loading zones that ease pressure on retailers
- Make off-street parking cheaper than on-street parking to free up and create flexibility for curb along main retail corridors
- Assign retail-designated spots

Budget: \$\$\$, >\$200,000

Timeframe: Medium, 1 - 5 years



Pebble by Sidewalk Labs

A vehicle sensor that helps manage parking in cities by providing real-time parking and curb availability data



Digital Curbs

Dedicated street-parking spots should not be reserved just for picking up of grab-and-go orders; a flexible, digital curb allows for multidimensional programming of parking spots, so that loading zones, passenger pick-up/dropoff, and parklets can all coexist.



Flexible Parking Rates in City of Spokane

In Spokane, Washington, parking rates are determined by demand; prices change seasonally

Access & Circulation: Vehicular Wayfinding

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation**
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity**

Potential Subtasks:

- Improve directional signage on highways and major arterials
- Upgrade street signage
- Introduce gateway features at the north and south end of Granby Street

Budget: \$\$, \$50,000 - \$200,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year

What did we hear and observe?

Navigating downtown as a visitor can sometimes be challenging. A maze of freeways, made more complicated by waterways and tunnels can be intimidating to certain user types. For those unfamiliar with downtown, It can be difficult to determine where to go, where to park, and where to find activity, especially since Granby Street is not a through street that benefits from high visibility. Visitors have to find it on their own or know that it is there to patronize the area.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

Directional signage can improve traffic flow and navigation to parking for visitors, reinforce the historic identity of the area by defining destinations, architecture and landmarks. A study should be conducted, analyzing effectiveness of current directional and street signage, identifying ways to improve upon the offering.

Who can help support this project?

Directional signage should be led as a collaborative partnership between the Norfolk Downtown Council and the City, which will be required for approval of signs in the public right of way. A regionally-collaborative undertaking is also recommended, given the urban geography of the Hampton Roads region.

Access & Circulation: Vehicular Wayfinding

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation**
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity**

Potential Subtasks:

- Improve directional signage on highways and major arterials
- Upgrade street signage
- Introduce gateway features at the north and south end of Granby Street

Budget: \$\$, \$50,000 - \$200,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year



Comprehensive Sign Program | Salem, MA

This program includes city gateways, vehicular directional signs, district gateway, pedestrian directional signs for major anchors and institutions, and identification of public parking.



Carnaby Street | London, UK

The overhead gateway sign on pedestrianised Carnaby Street in SoHo London is dressed according to holiday/season and is an iconic spot in the district for photo taking by visitors.



Downtown Exit Sign | Richmond, VA

Signs along Federal and State Highways can help raise awareness of the downtown business district.

Access & Circulation: Pedestrian Wayfinding

Project Category:

Regulatory

Access & Circulation

Public Realm

Private Realm

Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

Create a place that is business-sustainable

Improve sense of place

Create a place with broad daypart appeal

Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- Enhance wayfinding for pedestrians for both utility and brand expression
- Improve wayfinding between light rail and Granby Street
- Historical markers redirecting to major attractions and select nearby businesses
- Expand upon and strengthen the existing system for pedestrian wayfinding

Budget: \$\$, \$50,000 - \$200,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year

What did we hear and observe?

Visitors to downtown can sometimes have difficulty gauging distance between attractions and areas of concentrated activity. Pedestrians who may not be accustomed to walking even short distances, may need help navigating between downtown assets and commercial areas, including the waterfront and Waterside, Granby Street, MacArthur Center, and the NEON District.

Helping pedestrians understand the proximity of these areas throughs signage can prolong their length of stay and help them build a more robust itinerary of activities during their visit.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

Distinct from automobile wayfinding, pedestrian wayfinding is scaled and located to facilitated pedestrian navigation through downtown. It can also encourage a “park once” mindset by reinforcing the proximity of uses through signs that indicate distance and/or time to from a given place to other attractions and districts.

A well-crafted wayfinding program can also contribute to sense of place by physical manifestation of brand. Wayfinding can be just as memorable and photogenic as it is functional.

Who can help support this project?

The Downtown Norfolk Council is naturally positioned to lead this effort, with support, funding, and approvals required from the City of Norfolk.

Access & Circulation: Pedestrian Wayfinding

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation**
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity**

Potential Subtasks:

- Enhance wayfinding for pedestrians for both utility and brand expression
- Improve wayfinding between light rail and Granby Street
- Historical markers redirecting to major attractions and select nearby businesses
- Expand upon and strengthen the existing system for pedestrian wayfinding

Budget: \$\$, \$50,000 - \$200,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year



Center City District, Philadelphia, PA

Philadelphia's leading Business Improvement District led in the planning of a transformative pedestrian wayfinding system that defined six branded districts within downtown that pointed pedestrians to nearby assets and areas of concentrated retail activity. The system consists of over 650 signs and 400 pole mounted "disk maps".

Newer sign programs in other Cities have incorporated wifi, charging stations and solar power as part of the sign installations.



City Wayfinding System | Adelaide, Australia

This legible, bold sign is informative and boast strong design qualities; it gives the pedestrian a sense of scale and a sense of intrigue as to what you can explore in the area.



City of Boston Freedom Trail Markers | Boston, MA

The 2.5-mile Freedom Trail markers lead visitors to 16 significantly historic sights across the City, including the Old South Meeting House, Paul Revere's House, and the U.S.S. Constitution. The markers are also connected by a consistent pattern of red bricks or red stripe painted on the pavement. The trail is overseen by the City of Boston's Freedom Trail Commission and funded in part by grants from various nonprofits and foundations, private philanthropy, and Boston National Historical Park.

Access & Circulation: Micromobility

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation**
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity**

Potential Subtasks:

- o Improve connections to cycling trail
- o Explore dedicated lane or shared street concepts, especially along Market Street
- o Provide convenient places to dock and park
- o Create equity around micromobility that increases access, convenience, and reliability of resources

Budget: \$\$\$, >\$200,000

Timeframe: Long, >5 years

What did we hear and observe?

The growth in micromobility holds great promise for dense walkable communities like Downtown Norfolk. Occupying space between auto or mass transit offerings and walking, these modes of transportation promise to shorten the distance and time it takes for residents from nearby neighborhoods, as well as visitors, to get into and around downtown. This offering improves the likelihood of cross-neighborhood patronage and enhancing connectivity between the downtown core and waterfront attractions.

Like any mode of transportation, however, using alternative forms of mobility elevates risk of injury, particularly if there are limited safe passageways for people traveling by this mode of transportation. Families with young children, as well as older residents, who might consider this option forgo the opportunity if they feel unsafe. Therefore it's critically important to establish safe, smooth networks and paths that accommodate people of all ages and abilities and ensure a harmonious, rather than combative, relationship between the pedestrian, automobiles, light rail, bikes and scooters.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

Providing long-term safe passageways will help increase the likelihood that residents will be more likely to patronize downtown businesses, helping to improve market penetration of customers from adjacent neighborhoods.

Prioritizing less-trafficked streets for micromobility, with key points of intersection with Granby Street is something that should be considered. Safer options for micromobility can also improve connectivity between the Elizabeth River Trail and downtown commercial areas.

Who can help support this project?

The City of Norfolk in partnership with downtown stakeholders.

The City of Norfolk has worked to enhance mobility safety; this should be continued to ensure that these safe passageways provide for improved access for other forms of mobility, particularly to and from Granby and the Elizabeth River Trail as well as adjacent neighborhoods.

Access & Circulation: Micromobility

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation**
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity**

Potential Subtasks:

- Improve connections to cycling trail
- Explore dedicated lane or shared street concepts, especially along Market Street
- Provide convenient places to dock and park
- Create equity around micromobility that increases access, convenience, and reliability of resources

Budget: \$\$\$, >\$200,000

Timeframe: Long, >5 years



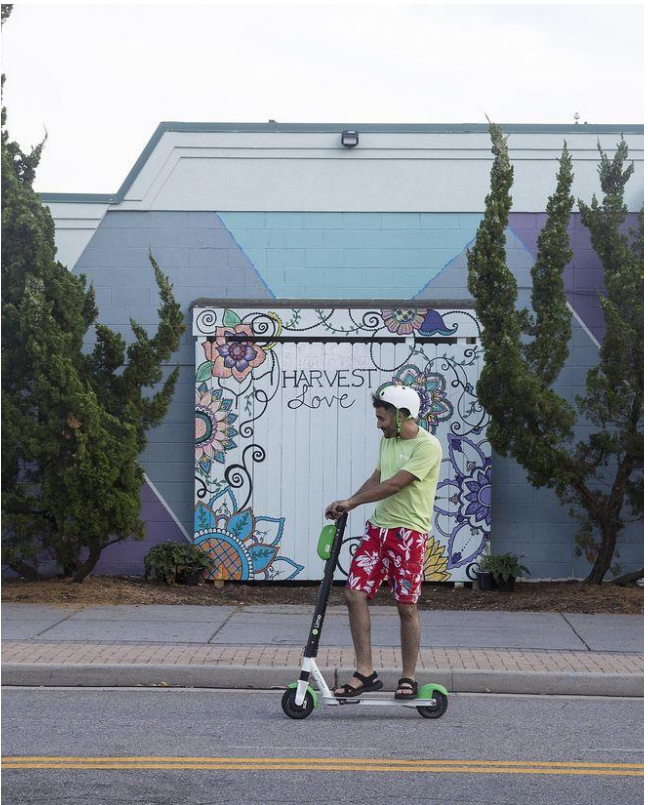
Micro-mobility Hubs

These centers keep resources charged, easy to access, and out of the way.



Dedicated Micromobility Parking

These solutions help to keep sidewalks clear and make accessing a last-minute ride more predictable and seamless.



Safe Paths and Buffered Lanes

As the use of e-scooters, e-bikes and other alternative modes of transportation grow, riders need safe, smooth, dedicated paths that offer both safety and convenience.

While early adopters are young, the opportunity to support a wider range of users is dependent on providing the infrastructure to enable these riders to get to and from their destinations with ease and comfort. Technology is now being employed that lets scooters notify users when they are riding in a zone that is prohibited, ensuring a more harmonious coexistence between riders, pedestrians and automobiles.

Public Realm

Public Realm: Public Space Enhancements

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm**
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place**
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- Convene property owners and building managers to conduct a public space evaluation, identifying improvements that can be made.
- Create a public realm implementation plan and unified urban design framework
- Provide funding support for small-scale public realm enhancements

Budget: \$, <\$50,000 - \$\$\$, >\$200,000

Timeframe: Short to Long-term interventions outlined below

What did we hear and observe?

A preliminary physical assessment of Downtown Norfolk found two critical issues that limited public realm vibrancy. The first is the lack of a central public space along Granby Street that is designed to support active use and downtown events.

Although College Plaza (corner of Granby/College Place) and the pedestrianized walkway east of the community college are closely located to retail offerings, they are presently designed to support passive uses and therefore function as throughways for pedestrian traffic or areas of respite for downtown workers/college students. These spaces lack memorable qualities that would otherwise enhance downtown’s identity.

Downtown’s narrow sidewalks limit organic business activity extensions into the public realm that would otherwise heighten visibility of local retailers. The narrow widths limit common public realm activations such as sidewalk cafe seating, outdoor merchandising, and sandwich board signage.

Lastly, there are gaps in the tree canopy along Granby, particularly on the East side of the 100 and 200 blocks, but also sporadically on the 400 blocks. Narrow sidewalks and underground utilities may be to blame, but an assessment is worth conducting.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

By conducting a comprehensive study of public spaces (including an assessment of existing conditions of sidewalks, streets, alleyways, plazas, parks, parking lots and vacant lots), a unified vision and urban design framework for the district is possible, identifying immediate, short-term and long-term interventions as well as implementation and maintenance strategies.

While long-term interventions requiring significant capital improvements should be led by the City, smaller and shorter-term placemaking interventions may be better led by local stakeholders whose businesses and properties sit adjacent to key sites identified in the public realm implementation plan.

This type of locally-driven placemaking intervention may be best supported by Downtown Norfolk Council through a public realm matching grant program that provides reimbursements for projects that directly align with the vision of the downtown public realm plan, and that closely follow the unified urban design framework created with the public realm implementation plan. The grants may be used for lighter, quicker, cheaper interventions such as string lights, light projections, removable furniture, planters, and murals.

An assessment of tree plantings should be conducted. Considerations should be made for bold hanging potted plants on light standards along the entire downtown stretch of Granby.

Who can help support this project?

The creation of a public realm implementation plan that guides future enhancements of downtown’s extensive network of public spaces (including sidewalks, streets, alleyways, plazas, and parks) should be led in partnership by Downtown Norfolk Council and the City. Similarly, the design and construction of any large-scale capital improvements will need to be led by the City of Norfolk and its urban design consultants (an RFP for urban design and planning consultants was issued by the City in 2020).

Lighter, quicker, and cheaper interventions that are impermanent or easily removed may be more suitable for Downtown and its local stakeholders (including business owners, developers/property owners, artists) to lead.

Public Realm: Public Space Enhancements

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm**
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place**
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- o Convene property owners and building managers to conduct a public space evaluation, identifying improvements that can be made.
- o Create a public realm implementation plan and unified urban design framework
- o Provide funding support for small-scale public realm enhancements

Budget: \$, <\$50,000 - \$\$\$, >\$200,000

Timeframe: Short to Long-term interventions outlined below



Matching Grant Program | Dallas, TX

Parks for Downtown Dallas received a \$25,000 grant in 2020 to install raised planters along the perimeter of the soon-to-open West End Square park. These planters add street trees and robust plantings for shade and cooling for visitors to this new recreational space.



Quirk Hotel | Charlottesville, VA

The Quirk Hotel and its adjacent cafe are designed with wandering, intimacy, and discovery in mind. A beautiful, public dining area is tucked between buildings, accessible through a textured, greenery-lined path.



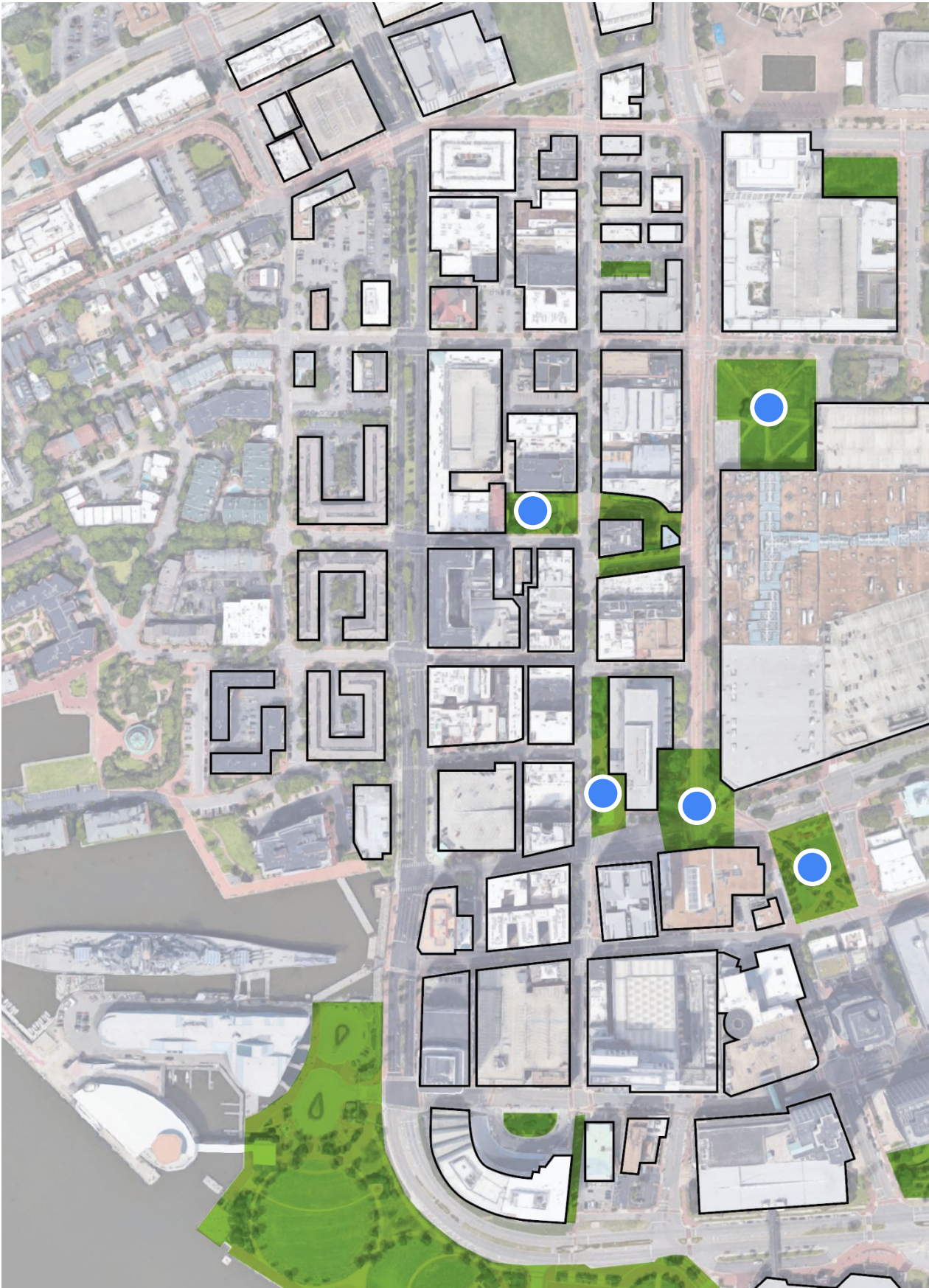
Sundance Square Plaza | Fort Worth, TX

Coordination with the Federal Government regarding the use of public space is challenging but not impossible. Working in conjunction with the GSA and the City of Fort Worth, Sundance Square Plaza is an award-winning open space that included significant input from local residents, business and property owners. The square combines private and federal property. The private parcel previously functioned as a parking lot. This “found” public space is an excellent example of creative thinking to address a lack of open space in a downtown environment. The GSA has assumed management of the park in front of their building. Other examples of public space planning with Federal Agencies include Federal Courthouses in Miami, FL and Helena, MT.

Public Space Enhancements

Large-Scale Interventions

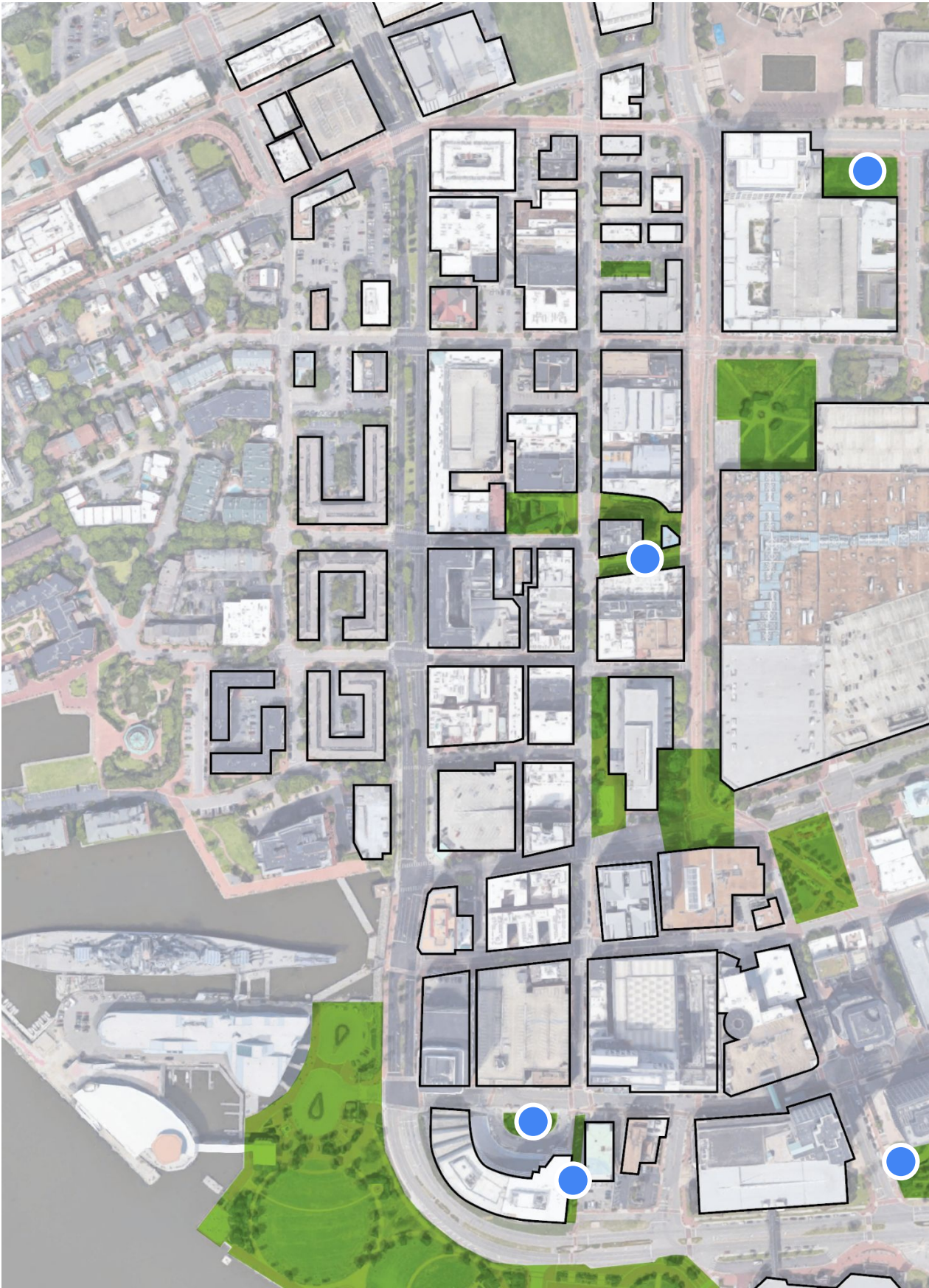
- Qualities:**
- Permanent
 - Diversity of seating typologies
 - Memorable programming schedule
 - Abundance of greenery, texture, and shade
 - Sense of hierarchy and layering of spaces
 - Requires significant capital investment



Public Space Enhancements

Medium-Scale Interventions

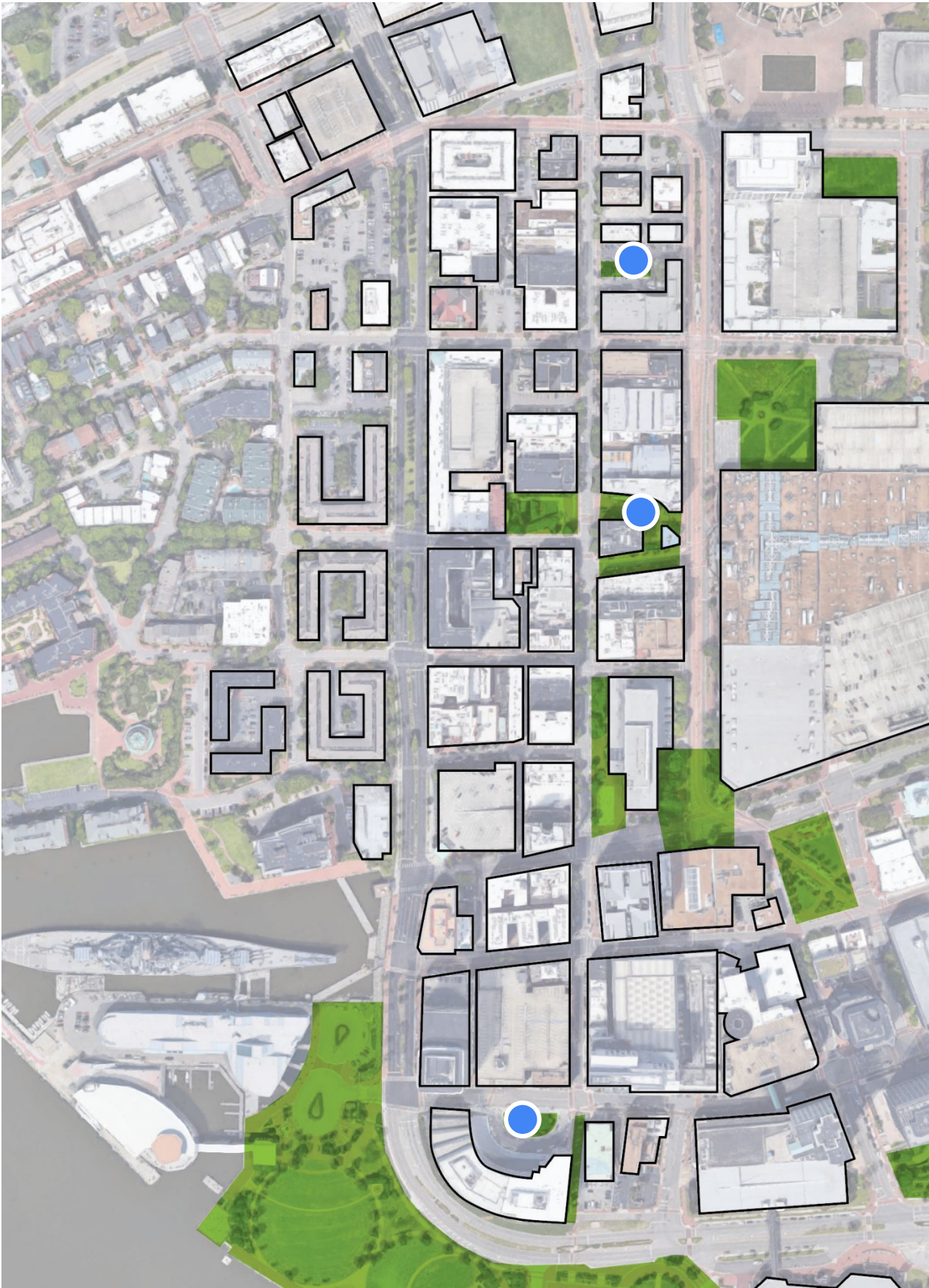
- Qualities:**
- Can be fixed or temporary
 - Inviting scale
 - Memorable pedestrian scale
 - Flexible seating opportunities
 - Playful elements



Public Space Enhancements

Small-Scale Interventions

- Qualities:**
- Vibrant and Playful
 - Intimate
 - Flexible arrangements
 - Most often a temporary installation



Public Realm: Outdoor Programming

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm**
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place**
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- o Offer grants and technical assistance to local stakeholders interested in programming/activating designated downtown spaces
- o Strengthen relationship with yearly waterfront festivals, so that Granby feels like a more integrated part of the experience

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year

What did we hear and observe?

There is a robust set of outdoor, year-round programs and events taking place along the waterfront, organized largely by local not-for-profit, Norfolk Festevents. These programs, however, have not been well-integrated with offerings in the core of downtown and often inadvertently direct visitors from retail and dining along Granby.

In order to reorient activities and events to support and complement businesses along Granby, Downtown Norfolk Council will need to actively organize, crowdsource, and support events/programs/activations in designated priority spaces as determined in the public realm implementation plan. These programs will also need to complement rather than compete with audiences of waterfront activities.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

Programming can be a powerful tool to help attract diverse downtown visitors and a new customer base. For example, while small farmers’ markets may serve local residents in search of fresh groceries and convenience goods, open gallery nights and outdoor music events featuring popular acts may attract a more regional audience interested in music, arts and culture.

An effective way to offer a comprehensive set of ambient and anchor entertainment along Granby, without overburdening the staff at Downtown Norfolk Council, is to empower local individuals, organizations, and businesses to lead this work through grants and technical support as part of a ‘Downtown Activation, Events, and Animation program’.

Grants should be used toward fees for the creators/artists, installation and teardown, and any other costs related to the production and execution of the event/activation. Technical support provided by Downtown Norfolk to applicants may include guidance on permitting, marketing and promotion, and support with photo documentation and event signage.

Who can help support this project?

Local businesses may serve as sponsors of the ‘Downtown Activation, Events, and Animation program,’ providing funds that can be used toward grants for program applicants.

City partners, including the Office of Special Events, Commissioner of Revenue, Department of Public Health, and Norfolk Fire Marshal's Office, will need to be key partners of the program to support any permit applications for special event business licenses, temporary food service permits, and vendor parking permits.

Public Realm: Outdoor Programming

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm**
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place**
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- o Offer grants and technical assistance to local stakeholders interested in programming/activating designated downtown spaces
- o Strengthen relationship with yearly waterfront festivals, so that Granby feels like a more integrated part of the experience

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year



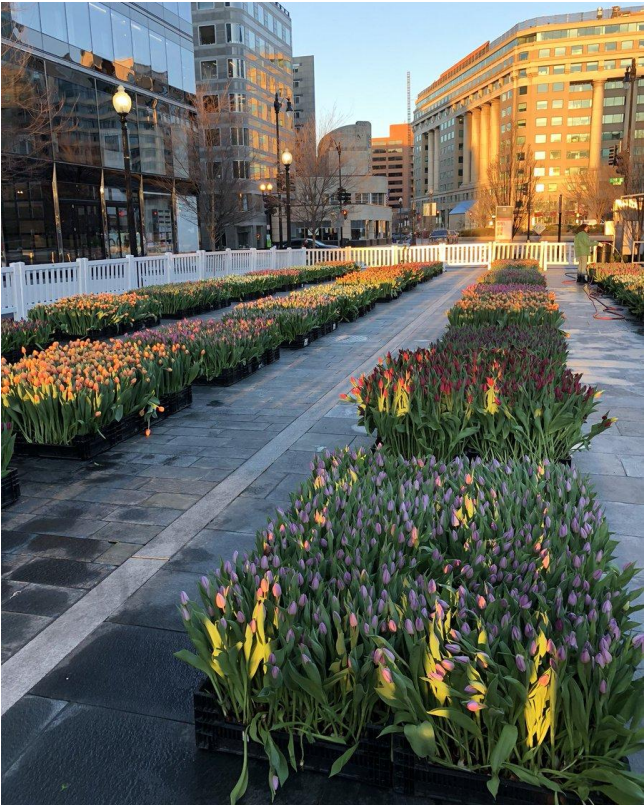
**Events, Animation, and Activation Grants |
Memphis, TN**

Downtown Memphis Commission provided grants of up to \$5,000 per applicant to fund a mix of events, public art, creative placemaking, and social and professional engagements that aligned with the program’s goals of ‘celebrating the Memphis spirit and culture within Downtown’. In its earliest iteration, the program supported large-scale events like the International Rockabilly Festival and the Brewery Revival, which activated an historic brewery with a temporary beer garden.



**Eastern Market Farmers’ Market |
Washington, DC**

This weekly market, featuring local farmers, artisans, and makers, has become an institution in DC by casting a wide, deep draw on foot traffic.



**Pop-Up Tulip Field |
Washington, DC**

This pop-up tulip field and market was an iconic way to bring weekend foot traffic into an area that was otherwise reliant on daytime weekday foot traffic.

Public Realm: Building Lighting

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm**
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place**
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- Uplighting of historic buildings
- Artistic light installation projections

Budget: \$\$, \$50,000 - \$200,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year

What did we hear and observe?

Downtown Norfolk possesses a strong collection of historically-significant buildings. While the streetlight program is well executed, architectural lighting is lacking.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

Lighting installations can accomplish a number of simultaneous goals, including ambient lighting in the evening while also making bold statements by highlighting the historic building assets downtown.

Artistic light installations and building projections are a form of public space programming and can generate a tremendous amount of regional foot traffic and buzzworthy word of mouth that brings a new generation of users to downtown in the evenings.

Who can help support this project?

This project can be coordinated by the Downtown Council in partnership with participating property owners and local utility companies.

Public Realm: Building Lighting

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm**
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place**
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- Uplighting of historic buildings
- Artistic light installation projections

Budget: \$\$, \$50,000 - \$200,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year



Downtown Lightshow | Indianapolis, IN

The Downtown Business Improvement District developed a light show during the pandemic in Monument Circle, one of their most significant downtown open spaces. The two-minute light display highlighted the downtown buildings and was controlled via computer. The show utilized energy-efficient light bulbs and included changing colors and pulsating movements.

These kinds of light shows can also include coordinated music and are often done during the holidays to help attract more downtown visitors.



Bay Street | Staten Island, NY

As part of the Commercial Corridor Challenge Program, led by the City, local non-profits and the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce, a 14-foot tall image of the district’s logo was projected on a building at the gateway of the corridor. This image helped to provide a sense of arrival to visitors, while further reinforcing the brand and sense of place within the district.



Berkshire Lightscares | Pittsfield, MA

Berkshire Lightscares is an initiative to create permanent, artistic lightscares on Dunham Mall, City Hall, and Park Square in the center of downtown Pittsfield, in partnership with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Lighting Research Center. The project received unanimous support from various downtown stakeholders including the Director of Cultural Pittsfield, the Mayor, the Director of Community Development, Downtown Pittsfield Inc., local merchants, local developers, and cultural and arts organizations. Initial funding for the project was raised through crowdsourcing and a matching grant from MassDevelopment.

Private Realm

Private Realm: Urban Living Rooms

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm**
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place**
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal**
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- o Meet with property owners and landlords to discuss value of concept
- o Identify spaces with potential for transformation

Budget: N/A

Timeframe: Medium, 1 - 5 years

What did we hear and observe?

Though the downtown area does have a handful of public spaces, including Town Point Park and MacArthur Square, there is a lack of public space in the downtown core for people to gather and connect. There is also a limited number of outdoor spaces available for an upgrade that would provide downtown with a much needed focal point.

The emergence of indoor urban “living rooms” has equipped planners and developers with yet another tool to encourage gathering and socialization. These spaces are more like a hotel lobby than a winter garden. The Assembly will be among the first of these spaces along Granby.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

Historically, non-retail uses like lobby space has not been encouraged on retail high streets like Granby Street. Spaces like these, however, are packed with potential for activating a retail corridor with new user segments and providing a memorable social asset to a retail street that doesn’t otherwise have a much outdoor public space. These publicly-accessible “urban living rooms” are multi-dimensional indoor spaces; “third places” with the potential to amplify the downtown experience, expand dayparts, provide a place of respite, and create a central meeting place where people can linger. They are often paired with an F&B offering, which broadens the audience base

These spaces often have operable storefronts that invite the public in and create a blended environment between the public and private realm. These spaces can also be flexible, and be designed to accommodate lectures, events, and workshops in a space that faces the street and feels very inviting. The best executed versions of these spaces are transformative, bringing instant credibility to a neighborhood or street.

Who can help support this project?

To accommodate this use type, zoning regulations will need to be adjusted. Property owners will also need to be educated on how these spaces add value to both the ground floor environment and (more significantly) the upper floor use(s).

Private Realm: Urban Living Rooms

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm**
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place**
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal**
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- o Meet with property owners and landlords to discuss value of concept
- o Identify spaces with potential for transformation

Budget: N/A

Timeframe: Medium, 1 - 5 years



The Apollo | Washington, DC

The three-story, publicly-accessible lobby at The Apollo in the District of Columbia serves as a residential building lobby in addition to cafe seating for The Wydown, a locally-beloved coffee shop by day, wine bar by night, located on the first floor. The diversity of seating arrangements, coupled with greenery and an abundance of natural daylight, has contributed to putting H Street Corridor on the map for DC experiences.



The Ramble | Denver, CO

Similar to The Apollo, The Ramble lobby in Denver, serves as a gathering space for hotel guests, in addition to restaurant seating for renowned cocktail bar, Death & Co. The lobby has soft lounge seating in addition to more formal two-tops and booths, allowing both use types, lobby and restaurants, to coexist comfortably. This space has become a central meeting point in the RiNo Arts District.



The Hoxton | Chicago, IL

Urban living rooms don't always have to face the street; they are also a great strategy for activating rooftops. The Hoxton Hotel uses this approach, generating multi-user appeal by combining restaurant seating, lounge seating for hotel guests, cafe seating for the public looking to grab a quick bite to eat or open a laptop to get work done, and a central meeting space for hotel guests. The rooftop location offers a unique view of the city, which is appealing to residents and visitors alike.

Private Realm: Catalytic Development Opportunities

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm**
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place**
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal**
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- o Identify underdeveloped parcels and buildings for these opportunities
- o Communicate strategy and approach to private sector to spur action
- o Enhance communication with property owners and brokers
- o Plan that identifies which sites that are not living up to their highest and best use

Budget: N/A

Timeframe: Medium, 1 - 5 years

What did we hear and observe?

Though Downtown Norfolk has a handful of entertainment-focused destinations with an energetic evening draw, there are no destinations with broad daypart appeal that would be considered “retail catalysts” in the community. There are no places where people can start their afternoon and linger on into the evening. Similarly, there are presently no places large or small, private or public for which Downtown Norfolk is uniquely identifiable. Waterside District was an attempt at this, but it is removed from the downtown core and does not attract a diverse audience and is not a place celebrated by locals.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

Catalytic development opportunities are places such as live music halls, social clubs, soft brand hotels, or even restaurants that boast unique qualities, whether because of the product the design, the brand essence or all of the above. They are places so unique and beloved that regardless of the foot traffic they generate, they earn a tremendous amount of credibility with coveted local consumers.

Downtown Norfolk possesses a number of underutilized buildings, parking lots and building lots that are well-suited for these kinds of uses. Catalytic assets can be alleyways, nooks and crannies.

Catalytic Examples

- Live music venue
- Social club
- Community hub
- Indoor/outdoor restaurant and bar
- Cultural destination
- Brewery/restaurant
- Maker space
- Tucked away alleyway

Who can help support this project?

The City of Norfolk and the Downtown Norfolk Council, in identifying catalytic development opportunities; large and small; short-term and long-term.

Private Realm: Catalytic Development Opportunities

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm**
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place**
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal**
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- Identify underdeveloped parcels and buildings for these opportunities
- Communicate strategy and approach to private sector to spur action
- Enhance communication with property owners and brokers
- Plan that identifies which sites that are not living up to their highest and best use

Budget: N/A

Timeframe: Medium, 1 - 5 years



Bacchanal Wine | New Orleans, LA

Part wine shop, part outdoor wine bar, Bacchanal is a beloved New Orleans institution, known for having a steady stream of live music in a comfortable, approachable, casual outdoor environment. It draws foot traffic from across the city and is one of the most sought after places to visit for those looking for “where the locals hangout.”



Blagden Alley | Washington, DC

Blagden Alley put the residential neighborhood of Shaw on the map in Washington, DC, and turned this once dangerous neighborhood into a hip haven of food and retail where newcomers, DC-natives and out-of-town visitors coexist. It is now a destination for up and coming F&B and the home base for some of the city’s most celebrated dining establishments, including Michelin Star winning “The Dabney.”.



Ace Hotel | New York City, NY

The highly publicly and retail-activated Lobby at the Ace Hotel is a “scene” while still feeling approachable. The 3-meal offering creates an all day gathering space where people flock to work, collaborate, and socialize. The space digs deeper roots into the community by leveraging partnerships with local chefs and retail startups. The catalytic hotel turned a previously unknown NoMad neighborhood into the “it” spot in New York City.

Private Realm: Outdoor Dining & Operable Storefronts

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm**
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place**
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal**
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- o Increase operability of storefronts
- o Identify underutilized spaces that could be used for outdoor dining
- o Create a permanent outdoor dining/streeterly program
- o Greater allowances within architectural review board

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year

What did we hear and observe?

The architecture along Granby and in downtown has a beautiful, historic texture, but often the design of the storefronts does not reflect the potential of downtown. The storefronts in downtown feel flat and unactivated, which is caused by a lack of articulated signage, lighting, and storefront operability.

With narrow sidewalks, outdoor dining is challenging. Maximizing outdoor seating while encouraging a greater presence of storefront operability will increase tenant productivity and enhance the neighborhood’s sense of place and overall magnetism.

In spring 2020, Downtown Norfolk restaurants began to offer outdoor patio dining as well as other street dining arrangements, known as ‘streateries’. The City’s OpenNorfolk program enabled restaurant owners to quickly set up a range of outdoor dining set-ups through an online application and approval process. Downtown Norfolk Council has been supporting this effort by [adapting its Vibrancy Grants program](#) to provide restaurants up to \$5,000 for restaurants to build or improve upon a streaterly.

With outdoor dining becoming a mainstay in the downtown F&B experience, there is a need to put in place a combination of permanent tools and resources to support the extension of dining into a variety of outdoor spaces - including streets/roadways, sidewalks, plazas, alleys, and underutilized parcels. Unlike during the pandemic, where environments were built to be temporary, high quality installations should be employed for permanent fixtures.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

Operable, engaging storefronts and outdoor dining arrangements can create an interconnected relationship between public and private space, which extends the experience of the streetscape and gives greater visibility to tenants. In order to compete with other destinations in the region, the downtown area needs an energy and memorable buzz; one that is often achieved when diners spill out onto the street. Granby Street suffers from narrow sidewalks, which in turn limits the amount of outdoor dining and opportunities for sidewalk sales, but the addition and encouragement of operable storefronts as well as the spillover of dining into underused parking spots and adjacent alleys/spaces can help to soften a street that otherwise feels flat, linear, and unwelcoming, while introducing moments of spontaneity and uniqueness.

To complement [design guidelines](#) and [DIY manuals](#) created by the City, Downtown Norfolk Council should work with local property owners to identify and designate any underutilized spaces downtown that may be activated by outdoor dining.

To support local businesses that may not have direct resources to hire/procure architects to create operable storefronts, Downtown Norfolk Council should also provide a list of pre-approved storefront and outdoor dining architects to applicants of its grant programs, or even retain an on-call architect for on-demand services.

Who can help support this project?

While the city may play a key role in providing regulatory and permitting guidance to businesses seeking to design/construct operable storefronts and streateries, Downtown Norfolk Council should continue providing financial and technical assistance to proactive business owners. Technical assistance should also be outsourced by Downtown Norfolk Council to hospitality/F&B consultants with significant experience in designing modular streaterly units or historic storefronts.

Private Realm: Outdoor Dining & Operable Storefronts

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm**
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place**
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal**
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- o Increase operability of storefronts
- o Identify underutilized spaces that could be used for outdoor dining
- o Create a permanent outdoor dining/streetery program
- o Greater allowances within architectural review board

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year



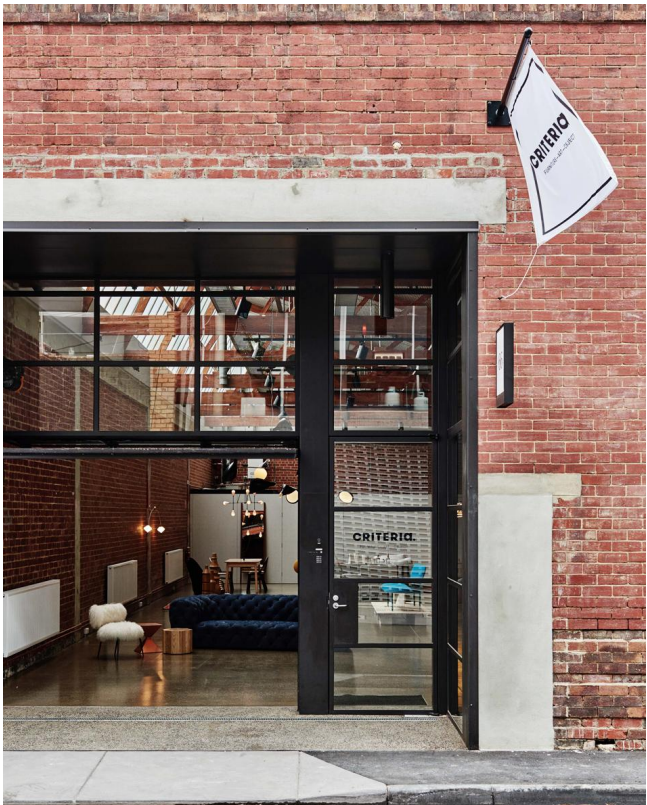
Extended Outdoor Dining in Seattle, WA

Seattle chose to extend their Safe Start permits into May 2022, providing restaurants free permits for outdoor dining allowances.



Thoughtful Outdoor Dining Design

Outdoor seating solutions should not feel like a forced afterthought. Structures can be simple, with a relationship to the street. Diners should feel safe and protected from the street, while drivers should still be able to see the names of storefronts. If done well, these fixtures can be magnetic in their appeal.



Storefront Operability

Operable storefronts help to soften the streetscape and to draw the public into shops and restaurants. They make it easy to wander and explore, and break down the barrier between public and private space. They also help to make narrow sidewalks feel a little less narrow.

Private Realm: Access & Loading

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm**
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable**
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity**

Potential Subtasks:

- o Improve opportunities for street access & loading for tenants and employees
- o Improve BOH infrastructure for tenants & employees in alleyways

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Medium, 1 - 5 years

What did we hear and observe?

While not the glamorous side of retail, loading and trash are one of the most prominent daily exercises for a retail business. If executed well, tenants load product in and trash out without the general public ever seeing it and with no time spared by the business. If executed poorly, loading blocks visibility, creates traffic jams, occupies valuable consumer parking and can damage elements in the public realm. Poorly executed trash pickup is unsightly, odorous, pest inducing and can spill into and tarnish the public realm.

These challenges are common in urban environments but municipalities best in these virtues maintain quiet, spotless environments, through alley improvements and street-servicing monitoring and restrictions.

In Downtown Norfolk, access to loading zones for tenants is limited, and oftentimes, the loading zones are occupied by consumers looking for short-term parking. Retailers at Selden Market have an especially difficult time with loading – employees are often parking and hauling from a nearby parking garage instead of having direct access into the building.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

Seamless loading infrastructure is critical to a retailer's success. Even if curbs are flexible, there should be designated times that allow for loading from the street if there is no way to load from the rear of the building.

Who can help support this project?

Property owners in partnership with the City of Norfolk.

Organizational Capacity

Organizational Capacity: Educate Brokers & Property Owners

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity**

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable**
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- o District open house for available spaces
- o Connect small business technical assistance providers with new entrepreneurs entering the market
- o Dedicated role for economic development position
- o Create a retail and development guide for developers and key stakeholders
- o Quarterly brokers meeting

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Medium, 1 - 5 years

What did we hear and observe?

Following the issuance of this playbook and merchandising strategy, the Downtown Council will need to develop tools and strategies to educate downtown property owners on how the vision can be supported through their leasing strategies.

The Downtown Council will need develop a robust set of tools to keep lines of communication open as property owners look for tenants that will advance of cohesive merchandising strategy for downtown.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

Business owners typically have existing businesses to run, making it difficult to focus on expansion and the tedious granularity of site selection and lease negotiation, which illustrates the importance of the retail brokerage community. Brokers, however, tend to favor “low hanging fruit” opportunities, hence the importance of streamlining processes, much in the way the best private sector projects do. It will become increasingly important to coordinate and educate property owners and developers on downtown market conditions and help them tenant their spaces in a more coordinated fashion to support alignment with a cohesive merchandising strategy.

Identifying partners and advocating for resources that can be used by those partners to support new tenants through permitting processes, including permit expediters and one stop shop for restaurant permitting.

Typical in a lease to have some contingency; permitting can take a long time, most tenants start paying rent when they open, and they often tell them to hire an expediter.

Who can help support this project?

The Downtown Norfolk Council, in partnership with the City of Norfolk and small business technical assistance providers in the region.

Organizational Capacity: Educate Brokers & Property Owners

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity**

Guiding Principle:

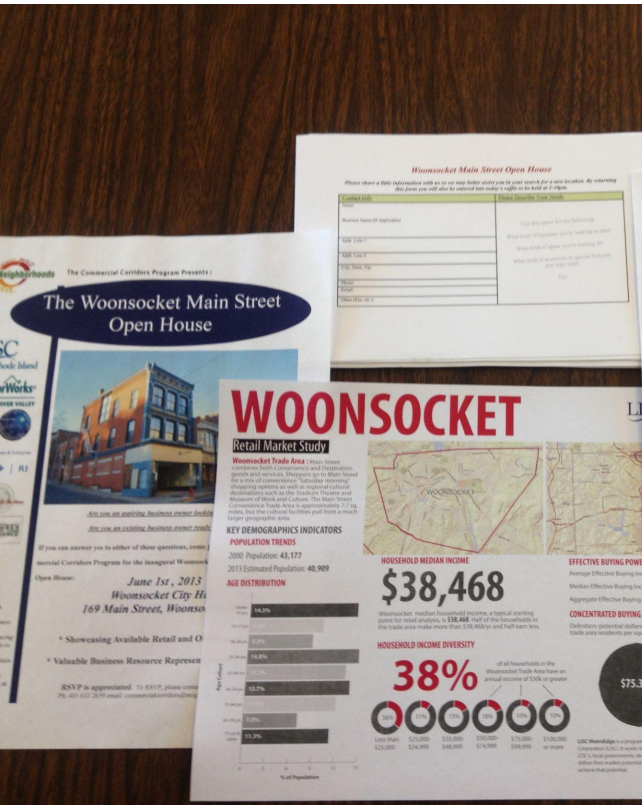
- Create a place that is business-sustainable**
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- District open house for available spaces
- Connect small business technical assistance providers with new entrepreneurs entering the market
- Dedicated role for economic development position
- Create a retail and development guide for developers and key stakeholders
- Quarterly brokers meeting

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Medium, 1 - 5 years



Storefront Stroll | Woonsocket, RI

In partnership with the Local Initiative Support Corporation and Neighborworks Blackstone River Valley, a “storefront stroll” and open house helped highlight available commercial properties for rent within Woonsocket, Rhode Island’s downtown. Neighborworks developed an inventory of all available downtown spaces and created a directory to share with participants. The event occurred on a Saturday morning and was widely promoted in local press. Prior to the event, coordination with downtown property owners was required to ensure their spaces would be available for viewing during the stroll. The event also included resources from the State’s Small Business Administration, the regional Chamber of Commerce and local universities who had tables to provide technical assistance to interested entrepreneurs. A two-part series on the effort can be found [here](#).



Organizational Capacity: Educate Tenants

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity**

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable**
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- Engage a business coach to provide consultation
- Set up an automatic online tool that filters the necessary permits, licenses, and applications applicable to the proposed business activity
- Simplify the site plan review process

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year

What did we hear and observe?

The newest tenants in a given market are often the least skilled in running a business. Typically they get into business because they make a great product or sell a valuable service, but skills in the art of sales, merchandising, staffing, purchasing and general accounting process are often absent. The City of Norfolk is no exception.

Although the City of Norfolk has created an online resource, [New Business Action Guide](#), that outlines clearly the various steps that a new entrepreneur will need to take toward setting up the business and applying to appropriate licenses and permit, the Downtown Norfolk Council has indicated that a significant amount of their time and resources have been necessary to help entrepreneurs navigate their entrance into the downtown market.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

New business owners should be offered the resources and expertise they need to be successful while also pulling Downtown Norfolk Council out as the technical assistance middle men.

By enhancing the City’s current webpage on starting a new business and creating self-evaluation forms (available across various languages) that narrow down the appropriate applications and permits that need to be filled out by business owners, both City and Downtown Norfolk Council staff can remove themselves from an otherwise cumbersome process.

Who can help support this project?

Downtown Norfolk Council together with the City of Norfolk and small business technical assistance providers.

Organizational Capacity: Educate Tenants

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- Engage a business coach to provide consultation
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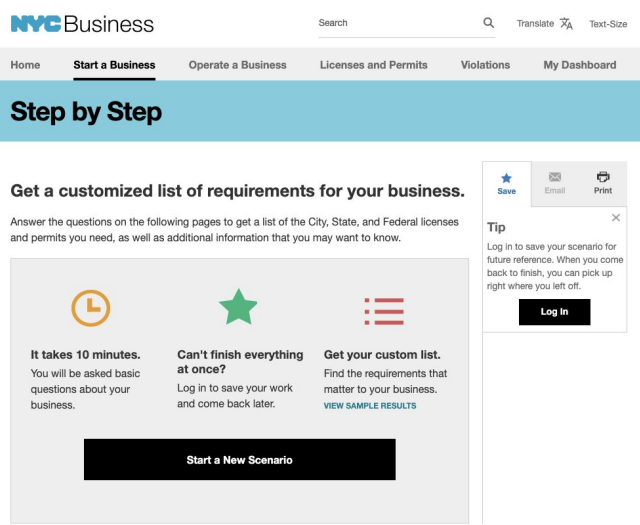
Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year



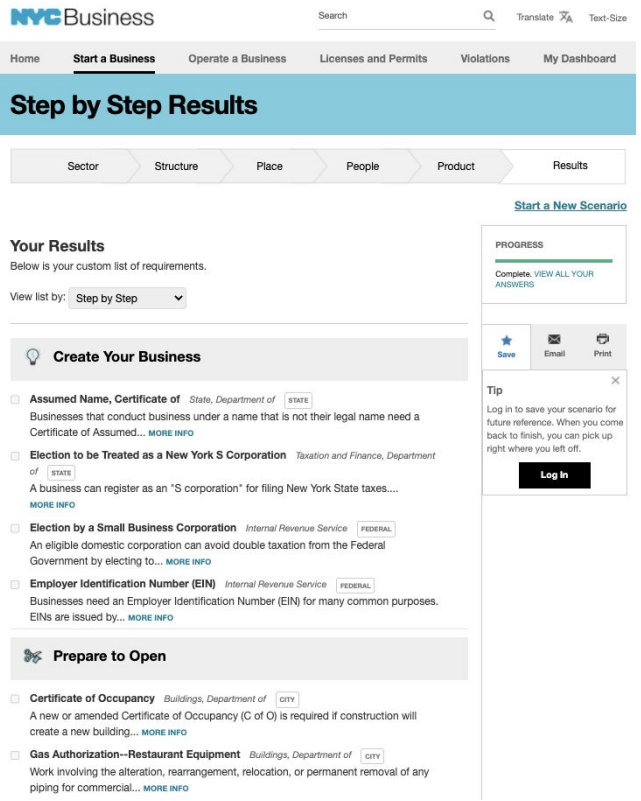
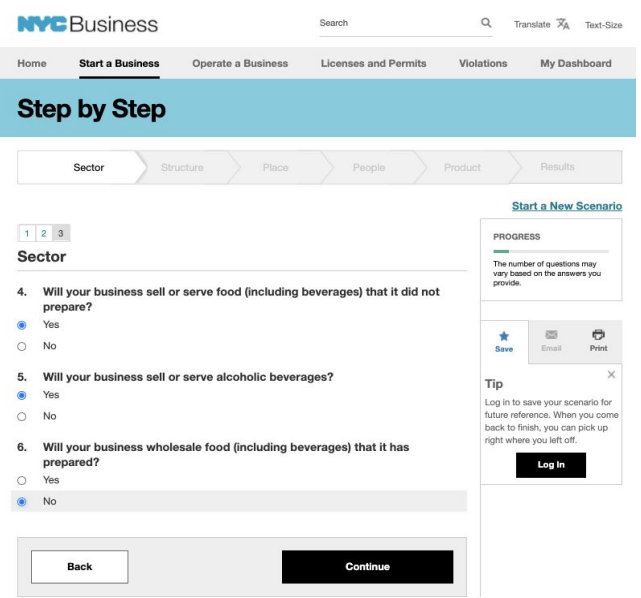
Guide to Doing Business, Downtown | Joplin, MO

Downtown Joplin, MO created online portal that walks entrepreneurs through the permitting process and helped reduce the need for resource intensive one-on-one technical assistance.



Step-by-Step Start a Business Online Tool | New York, NY

Potential business owners/entrepreneurs answer a set of questions through an online survey tool that automatically narrows the set of City, State, and Federal licenses and permits applicable to the proposed business operation.



Organizational Capacity: Merchandising Plan

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity**

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable**
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- o Identify what is missing downtown and what we are looking for to strengthen the downtown experience
- o Bike shop, hardware store, plant shop, bakery, art gallery, wine shop
- o Consider 15-minute neighborhood elements
- o Recalibrate the nighttime economy to be more family-friendly
- o Identify retail priority areas
- o Think about positioning of the traffic-generating retailers
- o Encourage the incubation of local soft-goods retailers and service-based offerings downtown

Budget: N/A

Timeframe: Short, <1 year

What did we hear and observe?

Not atypical of high street environments, there doesn't appear to be a well-articulated "north star" for merchandising and tenanting. Landlords are making their decisions in isolation, focusing solely on face rent, which can negatively impact collective momentum in character and what the environment means to the local consumer. A lack of merchandising north star also results in a unbalanced tenant mix that does not serve multiple dayparts, nor contribute to an appeal to a broad audience.

There is a lack of goods-based retail downtown; while these uses infuse character and variety beyond food and beverage uses, it is the most challenging sector in retail, made even more challenged locally by competition from MacArthur Center and suburban offerings. Local stakeholders have also communicated the shallow pool of local entrepreneurs that typically occupy the goods-based retail sector in downtown environments.

Service-based retail is also lacking downtown, although a dense residential base is typically a must for these types of businesses to thrive.

Despite the challenges, a more diverse offering in the downtown retail landscape should be prioritized.

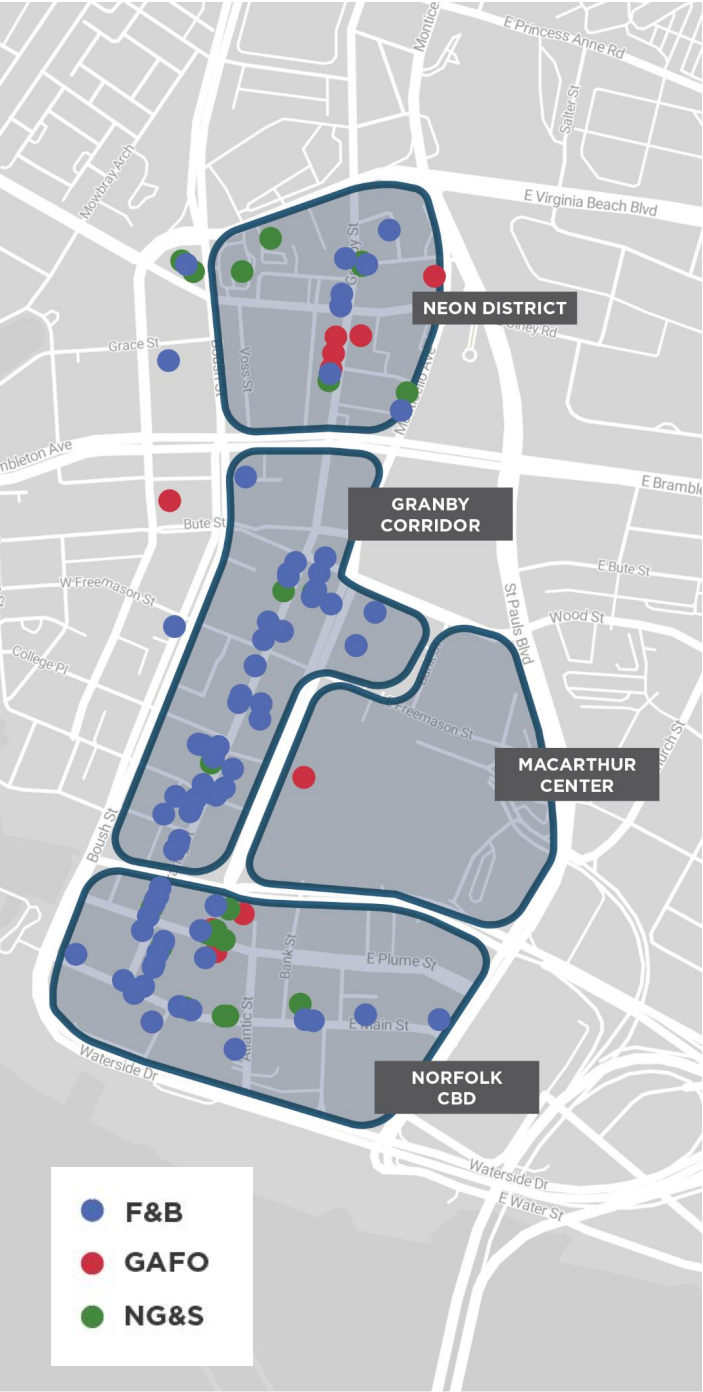
What is this seeking to accomplish?

A landlord-endorsed, market-relevant, merchandising plan empowers landlords to make decisions that are best for their properties long-term and for the value of the greater good. A rising tide lifts all boats and high street environments are no exception. A merchandising plan facilitates a common vision and stakeholder alignment that is often absent from multi-landlord environments.

Who can help support this project?

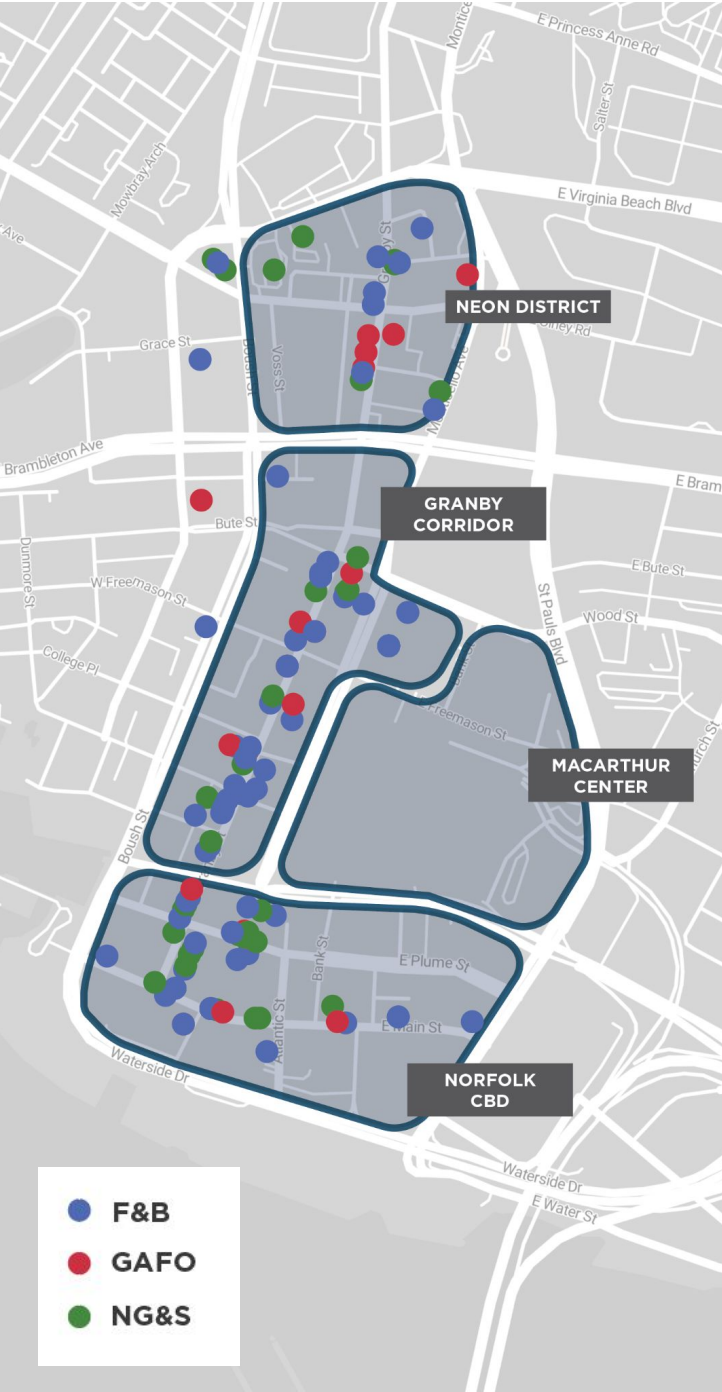
Downtown Norfolk Council together with the City of Norfolk and landlords.

Merchandising Plan Current



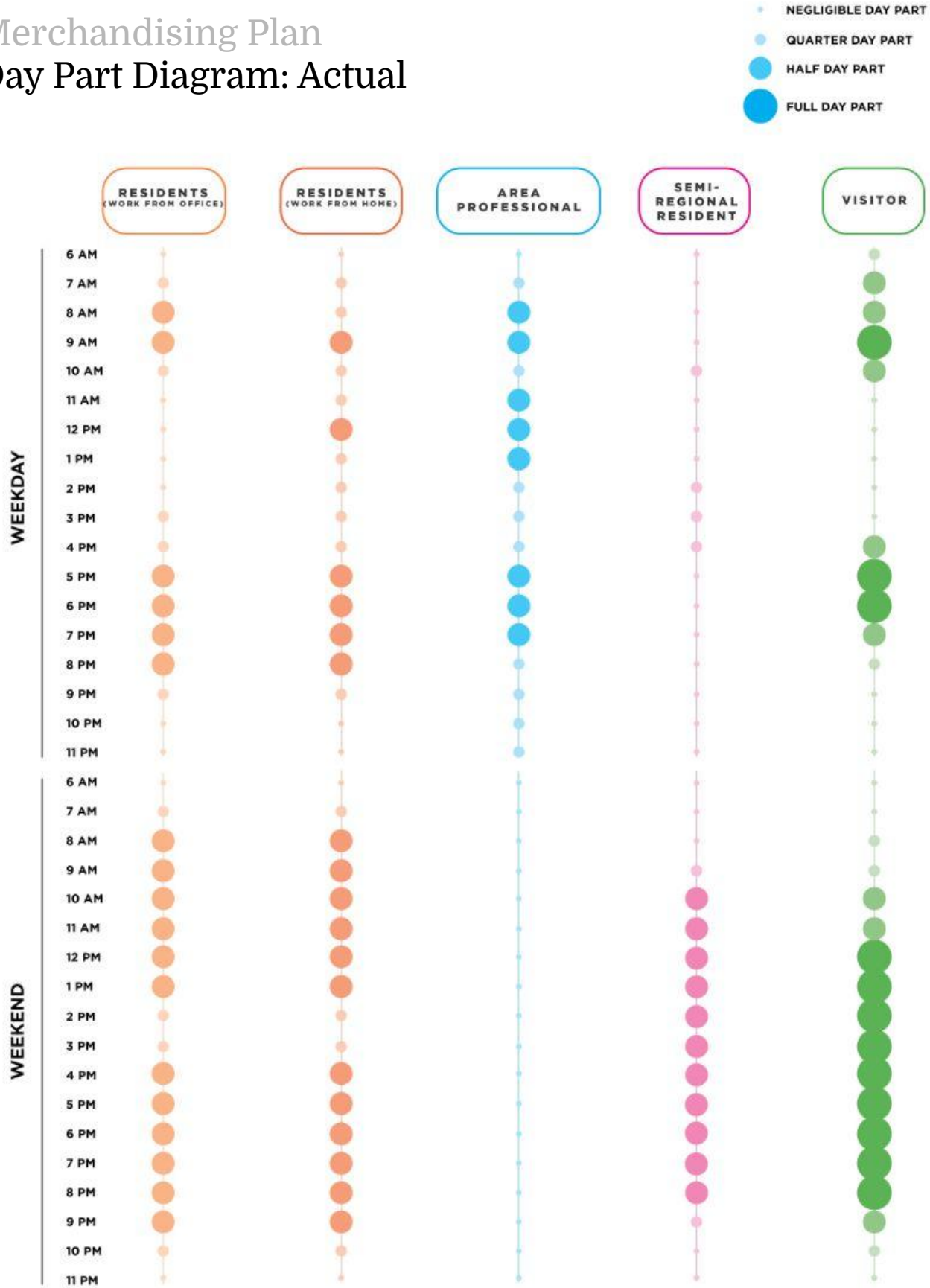
- NEON District**
 - Creative Retail **with** Micro-Manufacturing
 - Creative Retail **without** Micro-Manufacturing
 - Destination Restaurants
- Granby Corridor**
 - National F&B Chains
 - Notable Restaurants
 - Entertainment-Focused Destinations with limited daypart appeal
- Norfolk CBD**
 - Service-Focused Retail
 - Specialty Retail Offerings (Selden, Bookstore)
- MacArthur Center**
 - National F&B Chains
 - National Retail Chains

Merchandising Plan Proposed

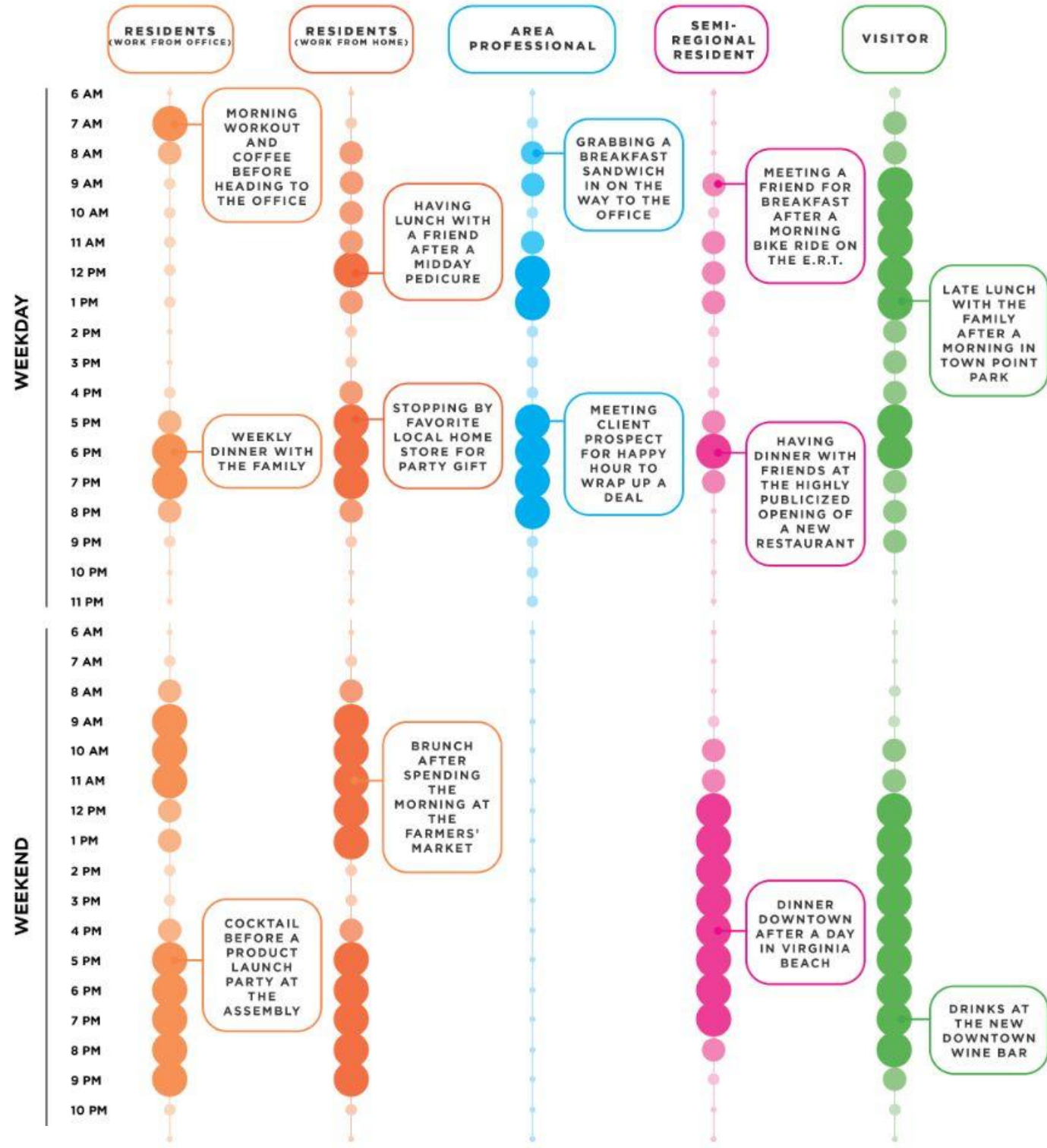


- NEON District**
 - Creative Retail **with** Micro-Manufacturing
 - Creative Office
 - Destination Restaurants
- Granby Corridor**
 - Creative Retail **without** Micro-Manufacturing
 - Destination restaurants
 - Wine Bars and Cocktail Bars
 - Entertainment-Focused Destinations with Live Music and Family-Friendly Activities
 - Small Format Market
 - Specialty Stores (Books, Gifts, Apparel, Plants)
- Norfolk CBD**
 - Quick, convenient Breakfast, Coffee, and Lunch Eating Establishments
 - Medical offices
 - Fitness offerings
 - Service-Retail (dry cleaners, personal care)
 - Selden Market
- MacArthur Center**
 - Catalytic Development Opportunity

Merchandising Plan
Day Part Diagram: Actual



Merchandising Plan
Day Part Diagram: Potential



Merchandising Plan

Tenanting Approach

FOOD & BEVERAGE

Use Types:

- Full Service
- Quick Service
- Cafe
- Bar

Tenant Qualities:

- Local | Regional
- Credible Operator
- High Quality Product
- High Quality Environment
- Approachable
- Not too Niche but Not Generic
- Multi-Generational Appeal

Design Considerations:

- Tall floor-to-floor height
- Rectilinear space geometry
- Depth to accommodate B.O.H. and avoid waste of frontage Operable storefront systems
- Opportunities for memorable outdoor seating Operations-friendly loading and trash
- Appropriately-sized M.E.P.
- 12’ clear ceiling height minimum

GENERAL MERCHANDISE, APPAREL, FURNISHINGS, & OTHER

Use Types:

- Gifts & Home Accessories | Plants
- Women’s Apparel
- Men’s Apparel

Tenant Qualities:

- Local | Regional
- Credible Operator
- High Quality Product
- High Quality Environment
- Approachable
- Differentiated
- Experiential | MULTidimensional
- Business Savvy

Design Considerations:

- Bold, character-rich storefronts Strong adjacencies
- Rectilinear space geometry
- 10’ clear ceiling height minimum

NEIGHBORHOOD GOODS & SERVICES

Use Types:

- Personal Care
- Boutique Fitness
- Medical / Healthcare

Tenant Qualities:

- Local | Regional
- Credible Operator
- High Quality Product
- High Quality Environment
- Approachable
- Differentiated
- Experiential | MULTidimensional
- Business Savvy

Design Considerations:

- Bold, character-rich storefronts Strong adjacencies
- Rectilinear space geometry
- 10’ clear ceiling height minimum

Illustrative Tenants for Granby Corridor
Full-Service Dining



The Green Onion



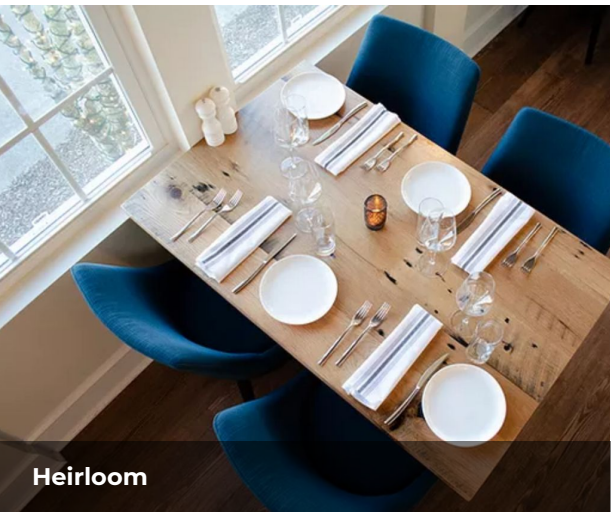
The Public House



Commune Norfolk



Brothers (Right off of Granby)

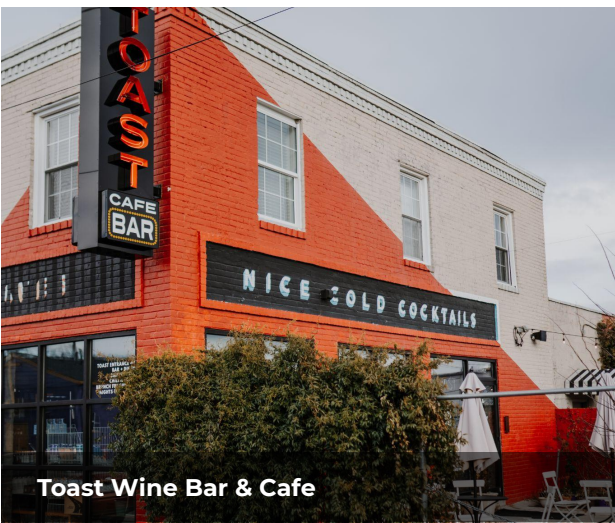


Heirloom



Press 626 Wine Bar

Illustrative Tenants for Granby Corridor
Quick-Service Dining/Cafe



Toast Wine Bar & Cafe



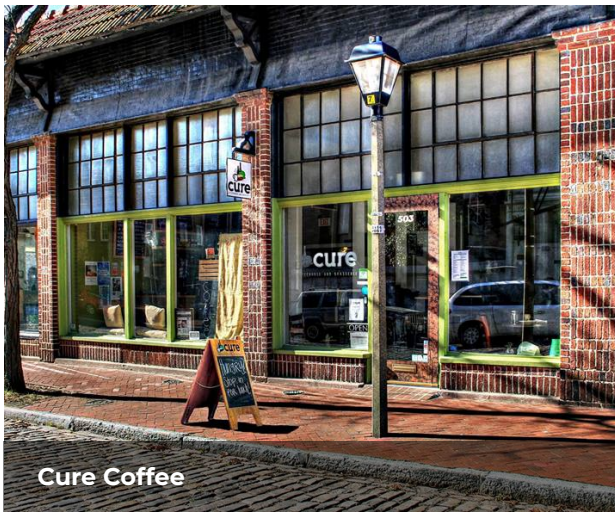
Taste Sandwiches



Virginia Cheese Company



The Handsome Biscuit

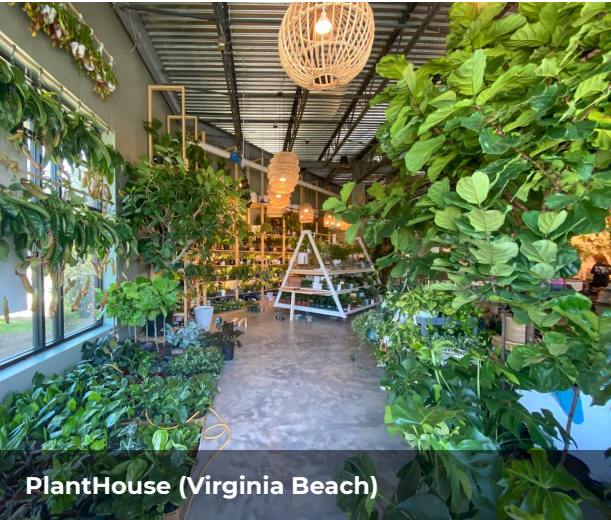


Cure Coffee

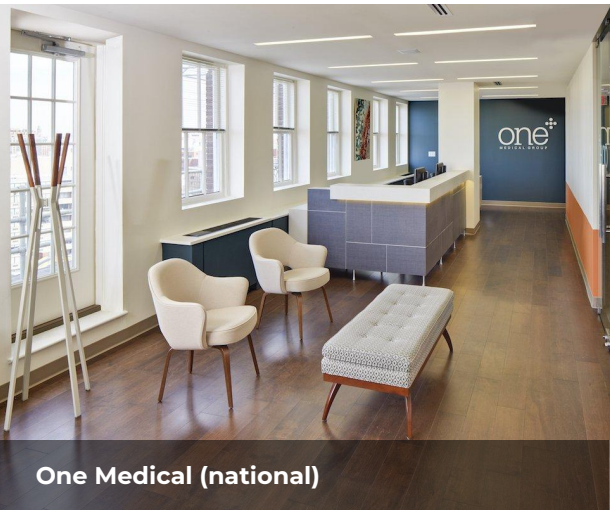
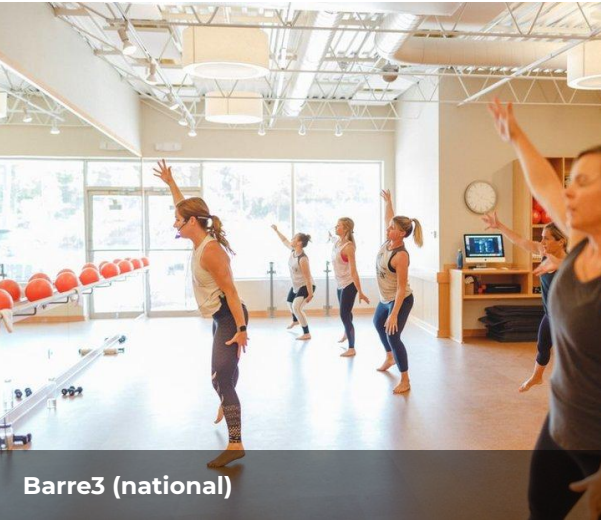
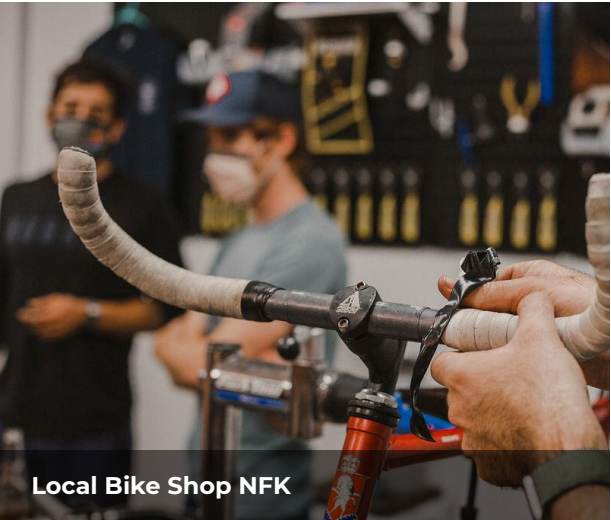


Three Ships Coffee

Illustrative Tenants for Granby Corridor
Gifts | Home Accessories | Apparel | Furnishings | Other



Illustrative Tenants for Granby Corridor
Neighborhood Goods & Services



Organizational Capacity: Social Media & Marketing

Project Category:

- Regulatory
- Access & Circulation
- Public Realm
- Private Realm
- Organizational Capacity**

Guiding Principle:

- Create a place that is business-sustainable**
- Improve sense of place
- Create a place with broad daypart appeal
- Improve downtown accessibility & connectivity

Potential Subtasks:

- Create a library of professional photography and marketing images that can be be easily accessed
- Strengthen social media presence on Instagram
- Work with influencers to bring attention to downtown businesses

Budget: \$, <\$50,000

Timeframe: Short, <1 year

What did we hear and observe?

Downtown Norfolk Council has dedicated resources and staff to support marketing and communications. However, the organization is in need of a new comprehensive marketing strategy that provides a roadmap for cohesive brand rollout across digital, social and editorial spaces. Additional resources also need to be created by Downtown Norfolk Council to build authentic and effective campaign awareness, as well as overcome any pre-existing public perceptions of Downtown Norfolk.

What is this seeking to accomplish?

A new marketing strategy should include:

- Setting new marketing goals, objectives, and key performance indicators
- Defining key messaging per target audience
- Developing an owned media strategy (Website, Email, Direct), paid media strategy (Social, Display, PPC), shared media strategy (social platforms), earned media
- Social media regular posting cadence, community management strategies, and boosting strategies
- Audit of the downtown website to ensure audience responsiveness and search engine optimization

A micro-influencer program should establish targeted partnerships with local social media micro-influencers whose profiles, interests and behaviors align closely with Downtown Norfolk’s brand and target audiences. All agreements should be independently sourced and negotiated to lower program costs.

A media vault or image repository should serve as a free and readily available resource for tourism partners and members of the media seeking to feature Downtown Norfolk events/activities and businesses in their outlets. Images should be high-quality and feature popular attractions, activities, and key points of interest. These images may be hosted on Downtown Norfolk Council’s website or made available through a cloud-based hosting platform.

Who can help support this project?

This effort should be led by the Downtown Norfolk Council.

The Downtown Norfolk Council may need to hire professional photographers on an annual contract to take high-quality images of regular events, programming, and general downtown street life.

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Micro Influencer Program | Tempe, AZ

Downtown Tempe established a micro influencer program to increase authentic engagement and ramp up BID marketing efforts.

Staff at Downtown Tempe first conducted influencer research to identify key micro-influencers best suited to the downtown's brand and audience persona, before crafting individual agreements with each influencer and creating targeted assignments for contracted influencers.

Through its pilot program, the organization found that while working with newer influencers may have cost less, staff had to spend more time and resources on coaching. In its next iteration, the program will look to expand Facebook, YouTube and TikTok micro-influencing efforts



Media Vault | Media Vault

The Destination Management Organization of Puerto Rico, Discover PR, regularly updates its media vault with high-quality, inspiring images of the island. These images are hosted on PhotoShelter, an online image archive platform, and made available to media reps that register an account with Discover PR.

An aerial night photograph of a city skyline, likely San Francisco, featuring the Transamerica Pyramid and other skyscrapers. The city lights are reflected in the water in the foreground. The text "Thank You" is overlaid in a large, white, serif font in the center of the image.

Thank You