

neighborhoods of center city

Envision a socially and culturally inclusive Center City that is a seamless tapestry of complete neighborhoods inside and outside the loop. These affordable, diverse, full-service neighborhoods—where Charlotteans have a choice of living in homes of all different sizes, types and price points—contain local retail shops, commercial services, parks and open spaces, community centers, and places of worship within easy walking distance of homes. Development in the commercial centers and corridors respects the scale, design and intimacy of nearby residential areas, transitioning appropriately from higher- to lower-intensity. Center City's neighborhoods reflect the warmth and graciousness of the genteel city that is Charlotte.

Existing Situation

Center City is a desirable place to live with a wide range of amenities, including relatively low transportation and parking costs; proximity to arts, cultural and entertainment facilities; and diverse dining and nightlife. The neighborhoods surrounding Uptown provide a variety of services and residential options and as a result have remained strong over the years. New housing types and reinvestment have attracted substantial residential growth to Uptown and South End in particular, with more than 10,000 units developed in these areas between 2000 and 2010.

Center City neighborhoods benefit from active resident participation and a long history of planning. At a broad scale, the City adopted the Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework to guide the integrated development of land and transportation infrastructure in Charlotte. Generally, the plan identifies employment opportunities and allocates higher-density housing along activity centers and growth corridors, while maintaining the lower-density residential character of the “wedges.” At the local scale, there are more than a dozen specific area plans for Center City's





neighborhoods, wards, corridors and centers. These plans have helped to guide development and growth over the decades.

The process of development and redevelopment over time has resulted in a varied urban environment, with a range of densities, architectural styles and land use patterns. The I-77/ I-277 loop has helped to keep vehicle congestion off of neighborhood streets. The presence of the loop, combined with zoning regulations and market land values, has also helped to contain high rise buildings within Uptown, preserving the character of the surrounding neighborhoods. However, the freeway acts as a real and perceived barrier between the four wards and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Recent residential growth in Center City, and particularly Uptown and South End, has typically been comprised of market rate housing and higher-end units; however, development of lower-income housing has also remained an important part of Center City's growth over the past several years. The Charlotte Housing Authority (CHA) provides a variety of home ownership opportunities. CHA is an active participant in the Hope VI grant program, providing funding for a range of affordable housing projects such as First Ward Place. CHA's existing and planned Center City housing projects include mixed-income and assisted (low-income) housing developments. New projects such as the Seigle Point Apartments in Belmont, a redevelopment of the former Piedmont Courts, provide medium-density, mixed-income housing that is integrated within the neighborhood fabric and within walking distance of nearby amenities and Uptown.

Opportunities and Challenges

The neighborhoods and wards of Center City are major assets that provide a high quality of life, opportunities for cultural exchange, and a variety of housing options for all age groups, income levels and backgrounds. These neighborhoods can be further enhanced to achieve the overall vision for Center City in the coming years. Specifically, there are **opportunities** to:









- Highlight and bolster the individually distinct neighborhoods of Center City.
- Increase the diversity of housing types, design and character, including housing at a variety of price points.
- Support appropriate urban infill development to revitalize neighborhoods, increase housing density, and activate underutilized areas of Center City.
- Seize upon recent national trends in urban living to increase the number of amenities and attract more residents to Center City.

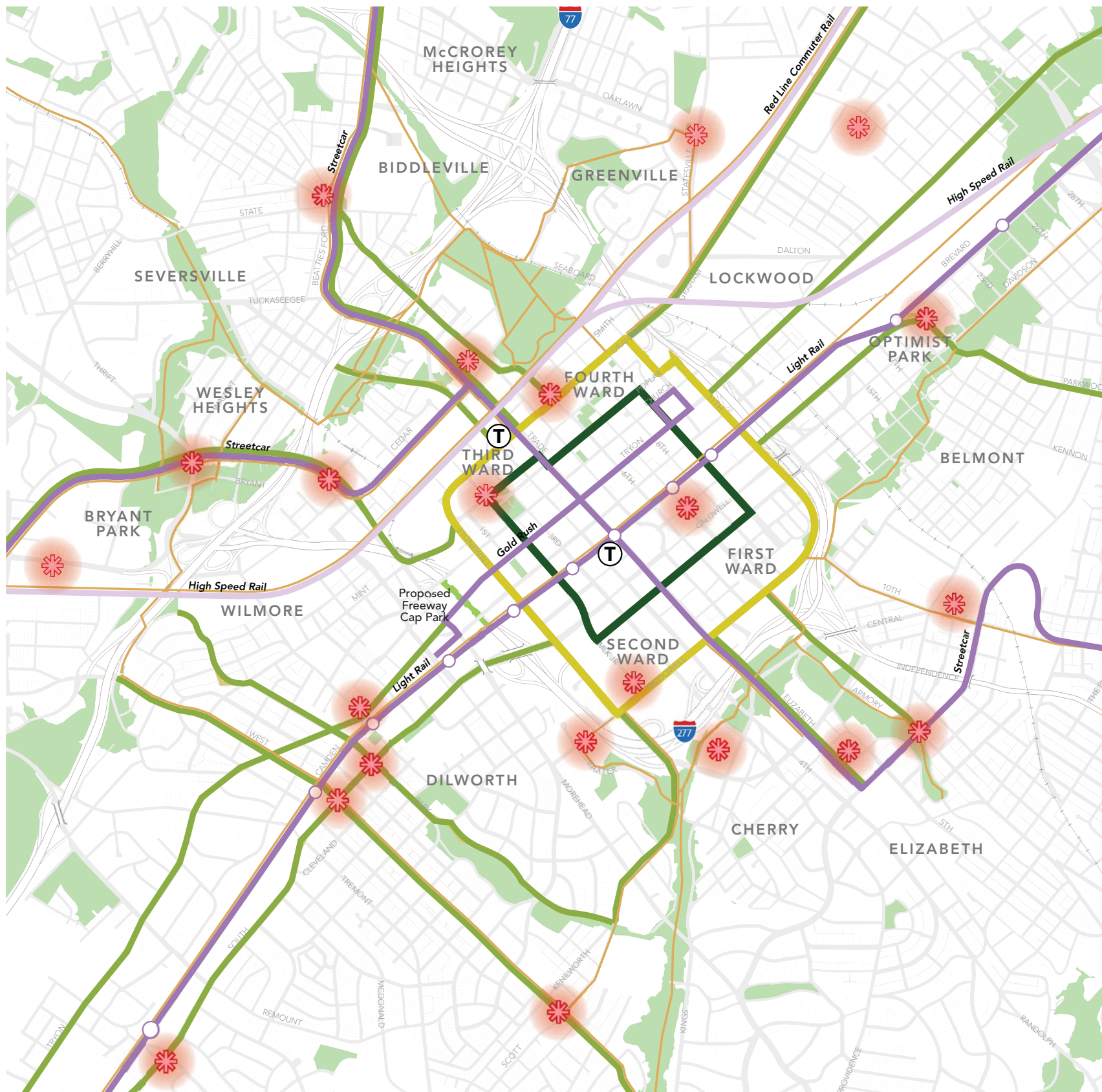
Specific **challenges** that must be addressed in order to achieve the desired vision include:

- Poor connectivity between neighborhoods, neighborhood centers, and key Uptown facilities and destinations.
- Presence of the physical and psychological barrier of the I-77/I-277 freeway loop.
- Uneven distribution of services among and within neighborhoods, such as retail stores, food markets, and recreation spaces to promote health and wellness.
- Lower accessibility for families and people with lower income levels to live in Center City due to high costs and rents, limited housing choices, and less affordable daily goods, especially in Uptown.
- A growing number of homeless individuals in Center City and the larger region.
- Inappropriate transitions between high-density development and established Center City neighborhoods.

Recommendations

Center City’s diverse wards and neighborhoods are essential to its future vitality. The following recommendations and physical strategies will help ensure **appropriate development and growth while maintaining the unique qualities that residents hold dear**. Together, the recommendations support these 2020 Vision Plan goals:

<p>GOAL 1 Urban Design and Sustainability</p> 	<p>GOAL 2 Regional Economic Engine</p> 	<p>GOAL 3 Lifelong Learning</p> 	<p>GOAL 4 Premier Arts, Cultural and Entertainment Destination</p> 	<p>GOAL 5 Walkable, Full-Service Neighborhoods</p> 	<p>GOAL 6 Interconnected Natural and Recreational Amenities</p> 	<p>GOAL 7 Thriving Retail and Restaurants</p> 	<p>GOAL 8 Multi-Dimensional Transportation System</p> 
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neighborhoods of center city physical strategies

Uptown's wards and the surrounding neighborhoods should continue to represent a varied tapestry linked by strong transit, pedestrian, bicycle, greenway trail and roadway connections. Though interconnected, each neighborhood should have easy access to nearby amenities that serve residents' daily needs in well-located neighborhood centers.

- Parks and Open Space
- Neighborhood Center
- Regional Transit Connection
- Local Transit Connection
- T Transit Hub
- Light Rail Station
- Ward Loop
- Boulevard Loop
- Neighborhood "Spoke"
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Connection
- Freeway/Ramp
- Rail



neighborhoods of center city recommendations



NCC-1. Preserve and Enhance Center City Neighborhoods

Family-friendly places and overall livability of Center City’s neighborhoods help to attract and retain residents and employers. The adoption of strategies to prevent incompatible uses from infiltrating existing residential neighborhoods should be coupled with a complementary set of tools to help ensure that Center City has choices for everyone, including low- to middle-income families and individuals.

NCC-1a. Finalize and introduce a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District (NCOD). The NCOD is a zoning overlay intended to preserve neighborhood character and assets. Through additional regulations of street design, greenway trails, rights-of-way, site layout and built form, the NCOD (currently in development) will augment existing regulatory mechanisms to reduce conflicts between new construction and existing development while encouraging compatible infill development.

NCC-1b. Provide a mix of housing options to residents of Center City. Recommended tools include community land trusts, which are nonprofit corporations that acquire and manage land to preserve affordability for any housing located upon the land; an affordable housing protection overlay, which would require developers to replace affordable housing in comparable locations, preferably within the same neighborhood; down payment assistance and low interest financing, including grants for down payments

and low interest mortgages; and inclusionary zoning, which would require that a share of new construction be affordable to people with low to moderate incomes. Potential locations for new workforce and affordable housing development in Center City include:

- Redevelopment/upgrades of multi-family housing in West End between the proposed Five Points streetcar station and Gateway Station at Trade and Graham streets.
- New affordable, medium- and high-density housing units on the currently state-owned land along railroad tracks in Fourth Ward.
- Medium- and high-density housing that could support new neighborhood center commercial development in Optimist Park, Lockwood and Greenville neighborhoods.

NCC-1c. Continue to provide homeless support and services to ensure inclusivity and social equity. Current efforts by Mecklenburg County, local religious institutions and other support organizations should continue to utilize existing policies and programs and receive financial resources. CHA’s policy to redevelop existing Center City properties via public/private partnerships should also be reinforced. A successful local example includes the Strawn Apartments Redevelopment in First Ward.

neighborhoods of center city recommendations

NCC-2. Establish New Neighborhood Centers and Strengthen Existing Centers



Several Center City neighborhoods already have a mature center that provides local services and shopping opportunities.



Neighborhood centers can include an array of amenities, from groceries and community centers to churches and boutique shops.

Neighborhood centers include small- to medium-sized concentrations of commercial and/or civic uses that provide goods, services and activities to meet the needs of nearby residents. Centers also play an important social role within communities by providing places to relax and gather. Many centers are anchored by civic, religious and other community uses. In some cases, a single restaurant, store, school or community facility serves as the neighborhood center. Places such as Kenilworth/Scott, East Boulevard in Dilworth, and the intersection of Central Avenue and The Plaza in Plaza Midwood are examples of streets and intersections that act as neighborhood centers.

NCC-2a. Strengthen mature neighborhood centers through targeted reinvestment, prioritized pedestrian and bicycle facility upgrades, and improved connections to multi-modal transit corridors. Shops, restaurants and other neighborhood amenities are top reasons current residents cite for choosing to locate in Center City. As neighborhood centers grow, these places could take on unique identities with respect to their scale, character, services, events and celebrations. Bicycle, pedestrian and transit facilities would make them more accessible. Mature neighborhood centers, such as the intersections of East/Scott/Kenilworth, Pecan/Caswell/7th and Thomas/Central/Plaza, could benefit from targeted development and coordinated planning efforts to maintain their economic vitality and sense of place.

NCC-2b. Ensure that emerging neighborhood centers develop to provide walkable amenities and convenient transit connections for residents.

Future construction of residential development around transit stations—and as part of master plans such as Second Ward Village—would spur the growth of new neighborhood centers. Creating a high-quality pedestrian experience, providing a diverse mix of services, extending Gold Rush service to more neighborhoods and bolstering neighborhood identity through the design and function of new centers would help make emerging areas of Center City attractive places to live, run a business or visit. For example, development in areas such as the West Morehead/Freedom Drive neighborhood center and around the planned Five Points streetcar station should be guided to ensure optimal urban design, boost the area's economy and foster a special sense of identity.

NCC-2c. Develop new neighborhood centers to improve long-term livability and the ability to attract future residents. Neighborhoods such as Belmont, Optimist Park and Greenville require interventions to fill service gaps and disparities that restrict growth and change. Community development corporations, façade improvement programs and development incentives should continue to be utilized to make these areas prosper.

neighborhoods of center city recommendations

NCC-3. Improve Linkages between Neighborhoods, Neighborhood Centers and Uptown

Complete neighborhoods rely on strong connectivity to adjacent and nearby neighborhoods to ensure provision of daily needs and choices for residents. Physical, social and programmatic connectivity between neighborhoods and Uptown—and from one neighborhood center to another—is critical.

NCC-3a. Make Gold Rush and other transit services convenient, safe and attractive options for accessing each of Center City's neighborhood centers. Neighborhoods would benefit from a more robust network of frequent and convenient transit routes. Proposed Charlotte streetcar expansions would improve the ability to travel between Center City's neighborhoods without reliance on a car. Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) and other partners should work together to identify a dedicated funding source to provide a supplemental neighborhood Gold Rush trolley service with connectivity to Uptown and between neighborhoods. CATS should conduct a study to determine the best means of connecting Center City neighborhoods via transit.

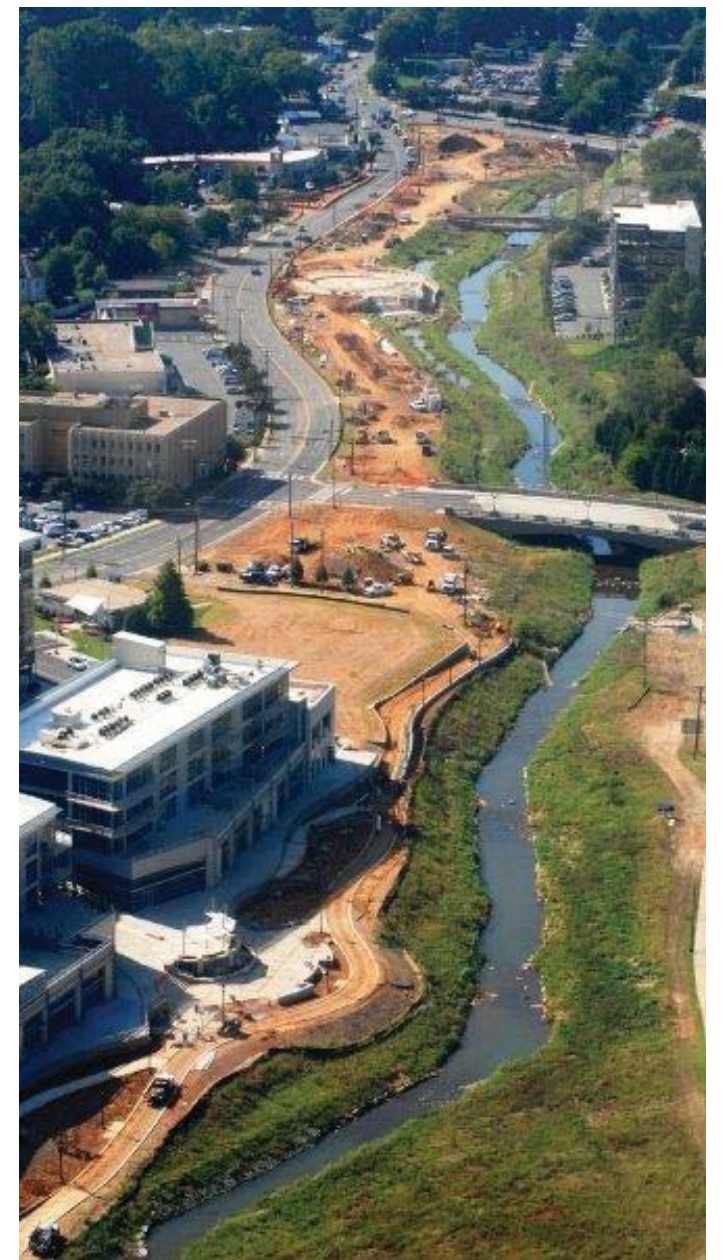
NCC-3b. Enhance functionality of streets and intersections to provide direct linkages between neighborhoods, centers and Uptown. The street grid needs to be reconnected in key locations to repair obstructions created by freeways, rail lines, difficult intersections and earlier construction

that consolidated city blocks. Several high-priority improvements are listed below. A more complete list can be found in existing neighborhood plans, area plans and the Center City Transportation Plan (CCTP).

- o Euclid Avenue and Davidson Street are blocked by on-ramps to I-277. As recommended in the CCTP, a bicycle and pedestrian bridge should be built over the freeway to improve the link between the Dilworth neighborhood and Second Ward.

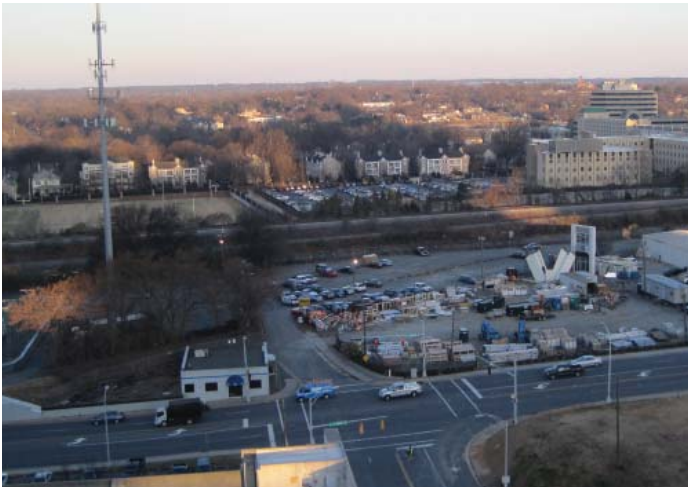


A dedicated funding source should be identified to provide supplemental Gold Rush service to neighborhoods around Uptown.



Additional connections, such as the Midtown Greenway (now complete), are needed to better link Center City's neighborhoods.

neighborhoods of center city recommendations



A pedestrian, bicycle and/or roadway connection should be developed to better connect the western part of Third Ward to the Ballpark Neighborhood and Uptown core.



Streets within and connecting to neighborhood centers should have features that help create a distinctive experience and identity.

- In Second Ward, the historic street grid is further fragmented by the presence of large blocks around Charlotte’s civic district. A system of new streets to establish pedestrian and vehicle connections through the blocks between East Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK) and East 3rd Street would greatly improve access to, through and around Second Ward.
- A new direct rail trail connection across I-277 between South End and Uptown.
- In Third Ward, a new connection under the railroad tracks at West MLK would minimize a significant barrier between Uptown’s ward neighborhoods. The connection should include bicycle and pedestrian connections.
- A pedestrian and bicycle connection bridging across the rail yards in North End would provide improved east-west connectivity between Optimist Park and Lockwood.
- Specific improvements to the 36 portals into Uptown across the I-77/I-277 loop should be identified and prioritized.
- The pedestrian experience along streets with direct linkages to neighborhood centers should be improved with a varied palette of plantings, wayfinding signage, street furniture and pedestrian-scaled lighting that can be unique to each area.

NCC-3c. Establish a coalition of organizations to facilitate dialogue and interaction between Center City’s neighborhoods. A Center City Council of Neighborhoods should be established with representation from the four Uptown wards and the surrounding neighborhoods. The council should facilitate communication between the neighborhoods and with various agencies to achieve shared objectives and foster 2020 Vision Plan implementation.

network of parks, open space and recreation

In 2020, Center City has a fully interconnected network of parks, open space and recreational facilities that supports and promotes healthy, active lifestyles. Parks are within walking distance of area residents, who are connected to these open spaces by attractive trails, pathways, greenway trails and open spaces. People can easily and safely walk or bike to major Center City destinations, the four wards and all of the surrounding neighborhoods. This comprehensive system is integrated with streets and transit lines, and it connects with the Carolina Thread Trail and other regional green spaces. In addition to fostering numerous recreational opportunities, the network incorporates cutting-edge sustainability practices, encourages economic development activity and supports the hospitality industry. Center City's beautiful green network helps make Charlotte an appealing, livable and memorable city.

Existing Situation

Center City's open space system currently offers a variety of experiences, from small, intimate spaces such as 9th Street Park to the large and busy Independence Park and Freedom Park. These places are complemented by several urban plazas, greenway trails with restored creeks, community gardens, and cemeteries. Private landscaped areas and plazas around buildings also provide spaces for greenery, events and public gathering. For example, the Green is a private park offering an escape to a fantasy garden inspired by books. Planned new public spaces such as Romare Bearden Park in Third Ward, a new First Ward Park, and a Brooklyn Village park in Second Ward will bring additional recreational spaces, formal gardens, lawns, water features and play areas to Center City.





Numerous recreational facilities and programs are currently managed by Mecklenburg County and other organizations. Programs include a variety of neighborhood-led and organized sports and youth activities. The Aquatic Center and First Ward Recreation Center are two facilities that have family-friendly environments close to Center City residences and workplaces.

Charlotte residents have expressed that parks and recreation are critical aspects of their vision for the future through their continued support of funding through bonds and other funds. Bond-funded projects such as the extension of the Cedar Yards Greenway Connection, the extension of Stewart and Irwin Creek greenways, and the Greenville Neighborhood Park will further enhance the livability of Center City.

Despite these assets and initiatives, recent analysis indicates that while Uptown has approximately 2.25 acres of park and open space per 1,000 people, the area should have approximately six acres per 1,000 people in order to stay competitive with peer cities and enhance the quality of life of residents, employees and visitors.

Opportunities and Challenges

Center City's network of parks, open space and recreation is a valuable asset that should be leveraged to achieve the overall vision. Specifically, there are **opportunities** to:

- Expand and extend the system of existing parks, urban plazas and greenway trails that currently contributes to a high quality of life enjoyed by Center City residents.
- Build upon the existing planning foundation, including the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department (MCPR) Master Plan, which directs funding and sets significant action and performance goals identified by residents for a 10-year period starting in 2008.
- Ensure construction of the three Center City parks and one greenway trail expansion project that are currently planned and designed.
- Link to the existing transit and street infrastructure, including pedestrian and vehicular wayfinding, which can provide enhanced connectivity to parks, greenway trails and open spaces.
- Integrate sustainable stormwater management methods into park and greenway trail design.
- Meet the community's strong desire for more green spaces, trails and recreational opportunities of all types in Center City.

Several barriers must be overcome to achieve the desired vision for a network of parks, recreation and open space. Specific **challenges** include:

- Parks and recreational facilities that are disconnected from each other and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Existing parks do not currently support the needs of rapidly-growing user demands for facilities and programming.
- Lack of understanding of the significance of the environmental, health and social benefits provided by additional parks and open space.
- An insufficient amount of park space within close proximity to residents and employees throughout Center City.
- A lack of a large, central community gathering space for celebrations and other civic events.
- Inadequate funding to address all of the enhancements and new facilities outlined in the MCPR Master Plan.

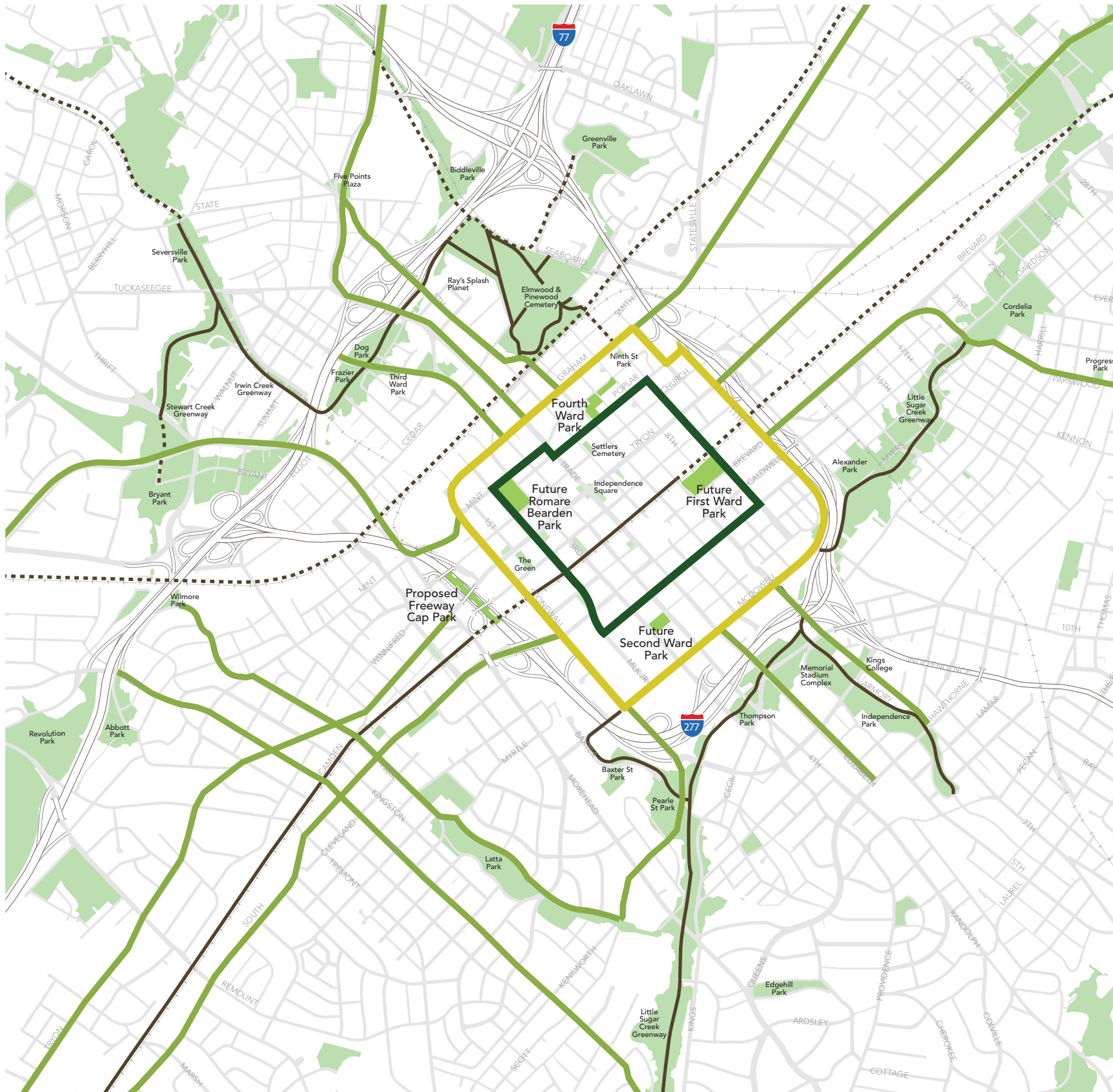


Expanding the current park system, including developing an urban plaza with a water feature such as this one in downtown Houston, is an opportunity for Uptown.

Recommendations

Center City's network of diverse, high-quality parks and open spaces supports many recreational opportunities while promoting health and wellness, fostering sustainability, and incorporating nature into the urban setting. The following recommendations and physical strategies will help transform these assets into a **fully integrated system that better serves the growing needs of residents, workers, students and visitors**. Collectively, the recommendations support the following overall 2020 Vision Plan goals:

<p>GOAL 1 Urban Design and Sustainability</p> 	<p>GOAL 2 Regional Economic Engine</p> 	<p>GOAL 3 Lifelong Learning</p> 	<p>GOAL 4 Premier Arts, Cultural and Entertainment Destination</p> 	<p>GOAL 5 Walkable, Full-Service Neighborhoods</p> 	<p>GOAL 6 Interconnected Natural and Recreational Amenities</p> 	<p>GOAL 7 Thriving Retail and Restaurants</p> 	<p>GOAL 8 Multi-Dimensional Transportation System</p> 
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network of parks, open space and recreation physical strategies

Creating a more robust network will involve strengthening pedestrian, bicycle and greenway trail connections; tying together existing open spaces; and creating new urban parks. A "Ward Loop" and "Boulevard Loop" will link existing and future ward parks in Uptown.

- Parks, Plazas and Open Space
- Ward Loop
- Boulevard Loop
- Neighborhood "Spoke"
- Existing Trail/Greenway Trail Connection
- Future Trail/Greenway Trail Connection
- Freeway/Ramp
- Rail

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network of parks, open space and recreation recommendations



POR-1. Develop a Network that is Unique to Charlotte and Center City

Center City’s open space network is a critical component of the social, cultural and economic future of Charlotte. A well-connected system with design that is distinctly Charlotte will serve a broad array of people, as well as add value to redevelopment projects, adjacent properties and surrounding neighborhoods.

POR-1a. Improve existing parks and establish new parks to support the growing demands of Center City.

- **Improve existing parks.** Center City should enhance the park network by upgrading the physical condition of existing parks and/or revamping programmatic offerings. Improvements at Frazier, Bryant, and Pearl/Baxter streets parks are needed to further connect to surrounding residential areas, provide respite from the urban bustle and achieve greater connectivity between neighborhoods.
- **Construct planned new parks in First, Second and Third wards.** Construction of three new parks would significantly address the current lack of park space and recreational opportunities in Center City. In Third Ward, plans are underway to build a park to commemorate Charlotte-born artist Romare Bearden, adding diversity to the types of park spaces currently found in Center City. First Ward Park is being planned and designed as part of First Ward Village. A future Second Ward Park is a central element of the area plan. All three

would complement the existing Fourth Ward Park, creating attractive, active spaces and focal points for each of these neighborhoods.

- **Explore opportunities for new parks within and near neighborhood centers.** Whether commercial, educational or civic in character, neighborhood centers are the places where Charlotteans congregate and create a shared sense of community. The addition of parks space to South End and in or adjacent to neighborhood centers, where appropriate, would contribute to each area’s sense of place and overall public life. These additions would also help raise the relatively low park and open space per capita ratio in Center City.
- **Take steps to unify ideas in existing plans to build a robust system.** The MCPR Master Plan expresses residents’ vision for parks, recreation and open space development and improvement through 2018. The Center City Transportation Plan, Transportation Action Plan, Urban Street Design Guidelines and the guidelines of the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) also contain specific recommendations and designs to create a complete pedestrian and bicycle trail system. Ensure that the recommendations of these plans for parks and open space are unified and complementary, and that the plans work together to enhance Charlotte’s open space network.

network of parks, open space and recreation recommendations



A cap park over the John Belk Freeway would create a dynamic, exciting civic gathering space framed by dramatic architecture and linking South End with Uptown.

POR-1b. Improve Center City recreational facilities.

- **Upgrade existing recreational facilities.** By restoring and repurposing existing recreational facilities, Charlotte would be able to serve its residents in new ways and minimize future construction costs. Rehabilitation of aging or outdated structures would breathe life into adjacent park spaces and add to the sense of pride in established neighborhoods.
- **Create new active recreational facilities.** Public demand for additional forms of recreation such as the Grady Cole Center and improvements to the American Legion Memorial Stadium in Center City may require the construction of facilities such as skate parks, basketball courts, tennis courts and swimming pools. Such venues would attract a new contingent of park users who would benefit from improved health, wellness and fitness through recreation.

POR-1c. Create centrally-located civic gathering spaces

- **Construct a “cap park” over the John Belk Freeway.** A cap park over the John Belk Freeway would include a multi-functional, iconic and exciting civic gathering space that would directly serve nearby neighborhoods of Second Ward, Third Ward, Dilworth and Wilmore. The gathering space would also serve the broader spectrum of Center City residents and workers, and it should

network of parks, open space and recreation recommendations

have a high profile with special design and significant venues to attract visitors. Construction of the cap could be phased over time, ultimately spanning segments of the freeway between the LYNX Blue Line and Church Street. The park should be activated by a collection of employment, retail and civic uses (see Stonewall/I-277 section in Chapter 4: Focus Areas for more detail).

- **Repurpose and better activate Independence Square.** The space at the historic crossroads of Tryon and Trade streets provides an opportunity to improve a true central public gathering space in the heart of Uptown. Although the existing infrastructure is relatively new, Independence Square's four corner plazas could be better linked to one another with materials, furnishings and landscaping. The area should retain iconic public art, seating and water elements while building in greater flexibility to accommodate large gatherings and ongoing programming. The improvement process should include exploration of a curbless environment with removable bollards that would allow the Square to be closed to traffic during special events.

POR-1d. Develop distinct infrastructure that serves multiple purposes while balancing form and function.

- **Construct a Ward Loop that connects neighborhoods within Uptown.** Linking the four wards of Uptown via special pedestrian- and bicycle-oriented design along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK) and Davidson, 7th and Poplar/Mint streets would be a unique, integrating feature of the park and recreation system. The Ward Loop would improve existing streets and support new residential development and neighborhood-supporting retail. While several of these streets have constrained rights-of-way, elements such as distinctive street trees, street furniture, wayfinding and interpretive signage should be woven together to create a consistent, identifiable connector that offers noticeably more green space. The loop would serve both transportation and recreation needs while addressing urban stormwater management with attractively designed vegetated swales and natural areas. The loop could also serve festival uses by connecting and extending the parks.



The cap park should incorporate bold, exciting uses and programming such as a live performance venue.

network of parks, open space and recreation recommendations

- **Construct a Boulevard Loop to establish pedestrian-friendly street environments and facilitate safe, efficient vehicle flows within Uptown.** Wide sidewalks, a continuous tree canopy, and landscaped medians and sidewalk buffers are essential elements of urban boulevards. When completed, a well-connected Boulevard Loop comprised of pedestrian-oriented streets—McDowell, Graham and Stonewall streets and 11th/12th streets couplet—would establish functional connections around Uptown while linking to the regional roadway system. In addition to facilitating auto traffic, these boulevards should feature attractive street tree canopies, wide sidewalks, street furniture, wayfinding, signage and other amenities to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists and other users.

- **Improve Center City’s network of greenway trails, bikeways and trails.** The MCPR Master Plan outlines a strategy to develop 129 miles of trails throughout the County. New trails, bikeways and greenway trails should connect with public transit, parks and public spaces while providing safe and convenient access to Center City neighborhoods. Within parks and greenway trails, trail design should consider a range of users, adjacent properties and land uses, and environmental impacts. Trails could also be located within existing rights-of-way, including streets, railways and utility corridors. Acquisition of additional rights-of-way should be targeted where possible to make key connections between greenway trails, bikeways and trails.

- **Complete gaps in the pedestrian network along transit corridors and at stations.** A major pedestrian gap exists where the Rail Trail along the LYNX Blue Line stops at the I-77/I-277 freeway loop as the rail enters Uptown from the South End. While the path is currently connected via surface streets, this link should be built to create better pedestrian and bicycle access to the heart of Uptown. The urban design for the South End segment should be applied all along the rail line. Future rail projects should prioritize trail construction alongside the rail alignment and treat these trails as highly-designed linear park elements.



① The Ward Loop should include special streetscape enhancements that identify it as a unique cultural resource, recreational amenity and path of travel.



② The Boulevard Loop should be an attractive environment that typically balances automobile flows with pedestrian comfort, but could sometimes host weekend events.



network of parks, open space and recreation recommendations

POR-2. Expand Requirements for Open Space Enhancements and Develop New Initiatives

City Center’s green network should be the responsibility of both the public and private sectors. Appropriate mechanisms should be employed to ensure that new development responds and contributes to the overall system.

POR-2a. Strengthen policies to require more open space in new developments, including residential and mixed-use projects. One of the best tools the City has to strengthen the parks system is the ability to create new green spaces through development projects. The Uptown Mixed Use District (UMUD) zoning that covers most of Uptown has an urban open space requirement for new office space. During the Mecklenburg County

rezoning and redevelopment processes, staff often requests a dedication of park and open space property, especially in underserved areas of the County. Development within Center City must also dedicate open space as a condition of approval. Detailed standards should be developed that specify the condition of land to be dedicated.

POR-2b. Develop a park impact fee and/or “in-lieu of fee” policy that encourages developers to contribute to a fund for park development. Sometimes the constraints of a development project will not provide adequate land for necessary on-site open space features. In such cases, developers should be granted permission to build on the

condition that a fair, proportionate and competitive fee is paid to Center City’s park development fund. Center City and greater Charlotte should emulate cities such as Raleigh, North Carolina, whose park impact fee program has provided funding for the purchase and improvement of numerous parks and open spaces. Fort Worth, Texas, and Portland, Oregon are two examples of cities that have implemented successful in-lieu of fee programs to purchase and maintain new parks and open space land.



Greenway trails can be framed by urban development.



New parks and natural spaces can be funded through park impact fees and/or in-lieu of fees.

network of parks, open space and recreation recommendations

POR-3. Develop Strategies to Improve Health and Wellness

The health and wellness of all Charlotte residents are paramount. Active and traditional recreation activities should be complemented by interactions with nature, beautification efforts, gardening programs, options for healthy food choices and a lush tree canopy.



Community gardens and urban agriculture should be woven into the fabric of Center City.

POR-3a. Develop a hands-on nature venue near Center City greenway trails. Nature play stimulates curiosity, imagination, physical activity, healthy brain development and social interactions. Natural areas should be restored and enhanced to become integrated within Center City. Portions of Center City's greenway trails and parks should be redesigned, where appropriate, as places where children, adolescents and adults can all interact with nature in hands-on, unstructured free play. These areas should be programmed in partnership with organizations such as the Nature Museum, Carolina Raptor Center, and Discovery Place.

POR-3b. Promote continued community partnerships to beautify Center City. Business organizations, neighborhood associations, individuals and service organizations should be encouraged to help beautify and maintain Center City through adoption of the public realm. This program could be facilitated through sponsorships. It could include a variety of projects such as flower baskets, tree planting projects, art and sculpture, public plaza and trails maintenance, and median plantings.

POR-3c. Create community and rooftop gardens to increase access to healthy foods, educate residents about health and wellness, and facilitate social interaction. Health and food planning has become one of the more pressing issues in cities across the country, including

Charlotte. Community gardens allow residents to lease small garden plots for personal use. Mecklenburg County currently offers garden plots for rent by local residents through an application and fee. A community gardening program should be expanded to promote healthy eating habits, introduce participants to like-minded neighbors, provide hands-on recreational outlets, incorporate stormwater design and encourage sustainable planting. Rooftop gardens are another way that community gardens could fit within the urban environment. These spaces could form a collective network of urban gardens that provide affordable and fresh produce for residents of Center City's neighborhoods.

POR-3d. Continue to establish and support farmers and neighborhood markets that provide local, healthy foods. Some areas in Center City lack access to markets for healthy food and fresh produce. Locally-grown food programs such as farmers markets could provide an opportunity for residents to learn new skills through participation in gardening, urban agriculture and related programs. Partnering with institutions like Johnson & Wales University and CPCC to create community culinary education programs could increase public interest and dialogue about urban food, wellness and health.

dynamic shopping experience

Envision a future in which Center City has a genuinely exciting and memorable shopping experience. Its distinctive niche retail stores, restaurants, bars, cafés, groceries and more support the needs of residents, businesses, employees and visitors. As a result, Center City is a compact and vibrant hub of shopping and round-the-clock entertainment. A strategic mix of local, regional and national establishments helps to distinguish Uptown retail from suburban malls and regional outlet stores. The Dynamic Shopping Experience supports Center City's critical role as a great place to live, work, play, visit—and shop.



Existing Situation

Center City retail offerings have significantly improved over the last decade, with the emergence of a range of restaurants, cafés and bars lining the streets, the development of the EpiCentre and Metropolitan retail centers, and new retail space in the Duke Energy Center. However, the shopping experience in Charlotte's downtown is fairly monotonous and has yet to develop a range of "consumer goods"—such as apparel, shoes, cosmetics, specialty items, furniture and other lifestyle-related items—that would establish it as a strong retail destination. While trendy clothing shops and specialty stores are desirable, it has been difficult to attract national and local retailers that offer these goods.

The greater Charlotte area is generally well served by a range of retail options, with per capita shopping center square footage approximately 40 percent higher than the average for U.S. metropolitan markets. Regional retail includes numerous malls, outlet centers, "lifestyle centers," high-end stores, and other destination and neighborhood retail.



Center City neighborhoods adjacent to Uptown contain a varying mix of shopping activity. While several neighborhoods have successful retail centers, many neighborhoods, such as those along Beatties Ford Road west of Uptown, lack adequate local stores and services. Both Uptown and its adjacent neighborhoods have unmet potential for neighborhood-serving retail, including supermarkets and businesses which meet everyday needs.

Uptown retail space totals approximately two million square feet and represents slightly more than six percent of the total retail space in the region. A recent analysis determined that approximately 400,000 to 800,000 square feet of additional retail space targeting shoppers' goods could be supported in Uptown by 2020. The new retail space in the EpiCentre and Metropolitan already accounts for 200,000 square feet of that figure, leaving an adjusted amount of supportable space of approximately 200,000 to 600,000 square feet. By comparison, this represents the size range for just one lifestyle center.

Due to these tight market conditions, many City Center retail developments have benefited from subsidies. Some projects have received funding assistance through synthetic tax-increment financing. Using this funding tool, developer costs associated with infrastructure and related physical improvements are reimbursed from a portion of the future increase in property taxes paid by the project.

Opportunities and Challenges

Center City's shopping environment holds the potential for targeted, strategic growth. Specifically, there are **opportunities** to:

- Increase the number of specialized retail and services in Center City, particularly building on Uptown's solid base of dining and entertainment establishments.
- Target the area's well-educated, professional workforce and growing residential population.
- Support and connect to Center City's arts, culture and entertainment corridors and clusters.
- Augment the existing and support the planned neighborhood centers in the four Uptown wards and the surrounding Center City neighborhoods.
- Leverage the unique downtown environment and experience that only Center City can offer in the region.

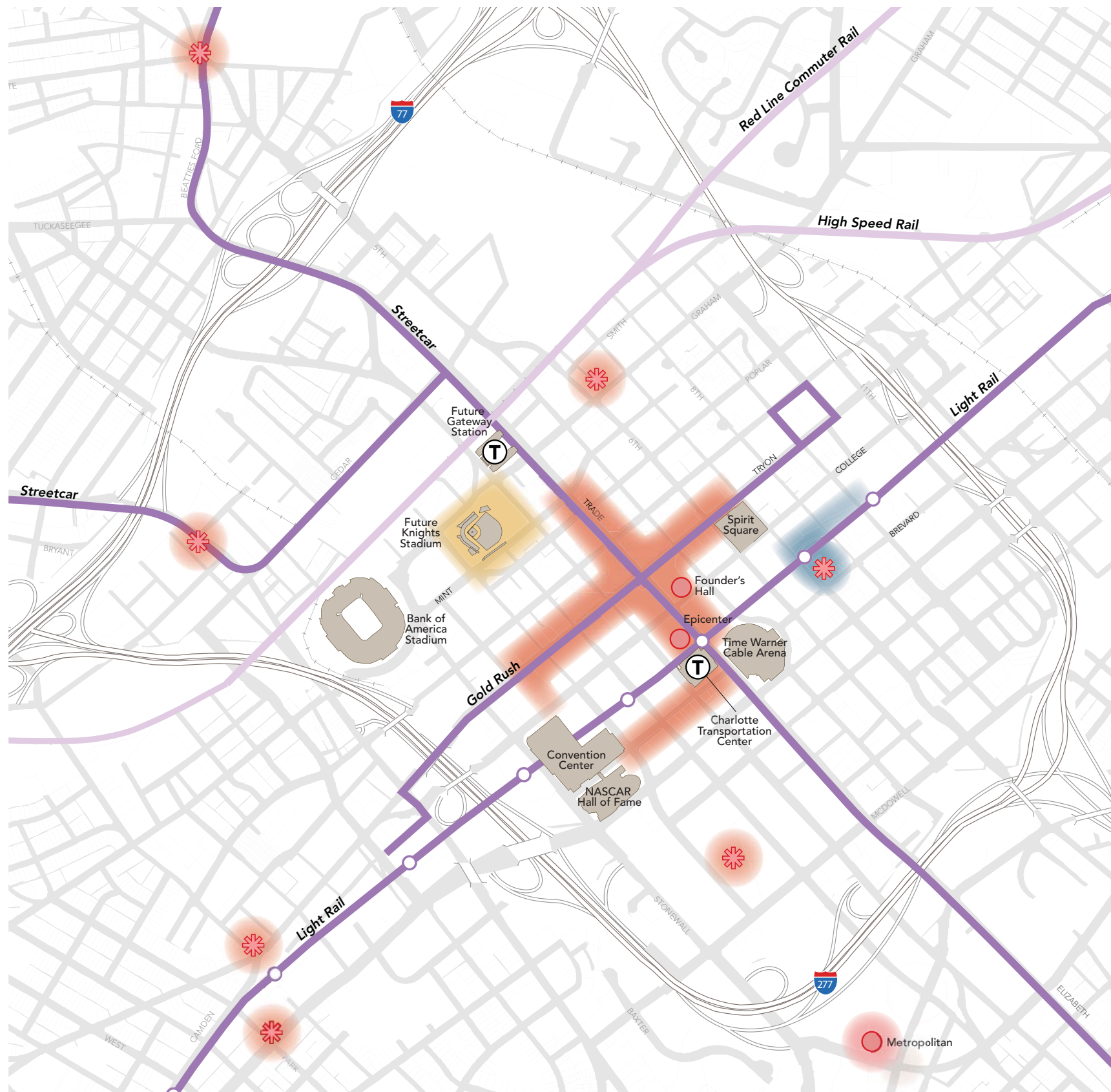
Center City faces several challenges that must be addressed in order to achieve the desired vision for an exciting and memorable shopping experience. Specific **challenges** include:

- Several regional shopping centers in close proximity to the downtown trade area have retail offerings that provide more choice and convenience to suburban residents than existing Center City retail.
- A general lack of differentiation in product mix and target markets between new Uptown retail and regional shopping destinations.
- Absence of a coordinated retail strategy, incentive program or implementation plan.
- A lack of a critical mass of shoppers to help attract the right mix of retail and services to Center City destinations and create successful retail corridors or clusters.
- A limited number of suitable sites for new Uptown retail development in close proximity to existing Center City retail nodes.
- Current market forces and inadequate street frontage space that inhibit the placement of small, locally-owned retail.
- The inward orientation of Overstreet Mall, providing poor pedestrian access to its retailers who occupy interior second-story space and discouraging street-level foot traffic, which is critical to the success of urban retail.

Recommendations

The Dynamic Shopping Experience should allow residents and visitors to fulfill most of their consumer needs within Center City’s urban shopping districts. Catering to a multitude of preferences and expectations, these shopping areas should have something to offer everyone—from health and wellness retailers to specialty foods purveyors to designer apparel—and be designed for pedestrian comfort and access to transit. The following recommendations and physical strategies will ensure the **continued success and vitality of Center City’s urban shopping experience**. Collectively, the recommendations support the following overall 2020 Vision Plan goals:

<p>GOAL 1 Urban Design and Sustainability</p> 	<p>GOAL 2 Regional Economic Engine</p> 	<p>GOAL 3 Lifelong Learning</p> 	<p>GOAL 4 Premier Arts, Cultural and Entertainment Destination</p> 	<p>GOAL 5 Walkable, Full-Service Neighborhoods</p> 	<p>GOAL 6 Interconnected Natural and Recreational Amenities</p> 	<p>GOAL 7 Thriving Retail and Restaurants</p> 	<p>GOAL 8 Multi-Dimensional Transportation System</p> 
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dynamic shopping experience
physical strategies

Capturing retail in Uptown involves differentiating and clustering a critical mass of shops near the majority of Uptown workers, around major destination venues and along key streets. An attractive pedestrian streetscape, good design of ground-floor retail spaces, and proximity to transit will be key factors to success.

- Retail/Destination Anchor
- Retail Area**
- Tryon/Trade/Brevard Streets
- Ballpark Neighborhood
- First Ward Village
- Neighborhood Retail Center
- Regional Connection
- Transit Connection
- Transit Hub
- Light Rail Station
- Freeway/Ramp
- Rail



dynamic shopping experience recommendations

dynamic shopping experience (DSE)
DSE-1. Develop and Implement a Cohesive Retail Strategy
DSE-2. Differentiate the Center City Shopping Experience
DSE-3. Use Effective Storefront Design and Develop Flexible Ground-Floor Spaces
DSE-4. Facilitate the Long-Term Transition of the Overstreet Mall
DSE-5. Develop Innovative Financial Tools and Technical Assistance Programs

DSE-1. Develop and Implement a Cohesive Retail Strategy

Center City’s retail success will not occur through direct competition with other existing shopping areas in Charlotte. Rather, retail in Uptown and the surrounding neighborhoods needs to provide complementary offerings that establish a distinct market position. This position should focus on Center City’s competitive strengths by providing unique offerings that attract daytime workers, visitors from out of town, and residents seeking a variety of dining, entertainment and shopping choices.

DSE-1a. Create strategic retail clusters along Tryon, Trade, College and Brevard streets, The Green and in the Ballpark Neighborhood. The moderate amount of potential market support means that a strategic approach should create differentiated clusters that concentrate retail activity and complement each other.

- **Tryon Street**, as Uptown’s traditional retail corridor, provides the most diverse mix of dining, entertainment, apparel, specialty stores and services. New and improved buildings along Tryon Street should be designed to better accommodate street-oriented shops.
- **Trade Street** presents an opportunity to create neighborhood-scale retail with expanded specialty food and local-serving goods and services to support Uptown’s growing residential population. New streetcar service would add transit riders to the customer mix.

- **Brevard Street** presents a longer-term opportunity for more visitor-oriented dining, entertainment and stores. This retail could evolve in an organic manner into a “stroll district” with targeted infill development and ground-floor sports-related retail between the Convention Center, NASCAR Hall of Fame, Time Warner Cable Arena, and the Charlotte Transportation Center.
- **College Street** is already home to Founder’s Hall and EpiCentre. The core retail segment along College Street nearest Trade Street provides a critical connection between Independence Square and Brevard Street.
- **The Green**, with its strategic location and linkages to the Levine Center for the Arts, Charlotte Convention Center, NASCAR Hall of Fame and new Duke Energy Center, offers the potential for higher-end dining, apparel boutiques, and specialty retail and services.
- **Ballpark Neighborhood** would be at the crossroads of transit and a variety of activity in Third Ward, offering the potential for restaurants, bars and sports-themed stores, as well as visitor- and commuter-oriented retail in and around the Gateway Station.

dynamic shopping experience recommendations

DSE-1b. Enhance the pedestrian environment to support retail clusters. Streetscape improvements—including widened sidewalks (where possible), more street trees, and high-quality materials and fixtures—could visually identify shopping areas, help connect them and encourage foot traffic. Improvements should also include new LED street lighting that is energy efficient and creates a more enjoyable nighttime environment to encourage pedestrian activity. Physical improvements alone may not attract new retail, but combining them with new mixed-use development that leverages retail market potential is a proven revitalization strategy. Initial streetscape

improvements should be focused in the priority districts listed above, which either have the greatest existing concentration of shops and/or the strongest future potential to attract new retail.

DSE-1c. Establish neighborhood retail nodes in the four wards and Center City surrounding neighborhoods. Beyond the strategic retail clusters, there are opportunities to address unmet demand for neighborhood-serving retail in the four wards and surrounding areas. Certain neighborhoods are already experiencing increased mixed-use development. These include traditional retail districts along Elizabeth and in the Plaza-Midwood neighborhood, as well as the Metropolitan mixed-use lifestyle center in Midtown. More than one ward or neighborhood could share a retail node. Since the amount, location and timing of neighborhood retail is driven by current and future residential population and demographics, new development should be guided by findings in completed market demand studies. The findings from this research could be used to create developer and retailer interest in Uptown neighborhood retail.

DSE-1d. Establish coordinated branding, marketing and retailer recruitment in Center City to better leverage existing and future retail assets.

- New and innovative **marketing strategies** should be created that continue to promote the Find

Your Center (FYC) brand. With elements tailored to existing and potential Uptown employers, employees, residents and visitors, the marketing strategy should tie into existing programs and events and serve as the basis for new ones.

- A **retailer recruitment strategy** should identify retailers that would be a good fit with the Center City, facilitate their interest, and introduce them to project and site opportunities. Such recruitment could span a range of targets, from retailers looking to open temporary “pop-up stores” to test new concepts and locations, to targeted attraction of strong independent retailers already in the region, to marketing to potential anchors for new projects. Strong and capable independent retailers are a particular priority because they are willing to take risks that national tenants won’t. In turn, their success could catalyze national retailer interest. The retailer recruitment program should also target landlords with upcoming lease renewals to educate them on the potential for placing higher-quality retail in their buildings.

DSE-1e. Provide additional on-street parking with short-term time limits to promote turnover.

As identified in the Curb Lane Management Study, short-term on-street parking should be maximized in retail nodes to support retail growth.



Coordinated marketing and branding efforts should be developed to support the 2020 Vision and Dynamic Shopping Experience strategies.

dynamic shopping experience recommendations

DSE-2. Differentiate the Center City Shopping Experience

Given the small amount of retail in Uptown and the large number of shopping opportunities regionally, it will be important to encourage the development of unique shopping choices in Center City that are distinct from suburban offerings.

DSE-2a. Construct the Charlotte City Market.

The Charlotte City Market would be a full-fledged public market that offers a broad range of high-quality fresh and prepared foods, with an emphasis on local produce. It would accommodate a limited amount of complementary food-themed retail, along with crafts. It could also incorporate sit-down restaurants within the facility or adjacent to it. The market would attract workers for lunch and for grocery shopping on the way home; Uptown residents for regular grocery shopping; Charlotte residents seeking food products not typically available in local supermarkets; and visitors looking to experience a unique and dynamic market setting.

DSE-2b. Attract a new Uptown shopping center.

A new mixed-use lifestyle center (potentially anchored by a fashion-forward retailer such as H&M, Zara or Barney's Co-op) along with other apparel and specialty retailers should be developed to anchor the Tryon corridor. Finding a suitable site of sufficient size would likely involve a complex land assembly requiring City involvement.

DSE-2c. Develop a sport-oriented retail center or district. Development of a sports-oriented retail center or district at the west end of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK) and adjacent to the planned Knights Stadium and existing Bank of America Stadium is a priority. This could feature a mix of dining and entertainment uses, as well as recreational sports facilities and public gathering places to support the Ballpark Neighborhood. Such a project could serve as a gathering place for major sporting and other events, similar to the LA Live mixed-use project adjacent to the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

DSE-2d. Encourage food choices by allowing more food carts and trucks to operate in Uptown.

Small-scale food stands, along with catering trucks, have emerged in numerous cities in the past several years as excellent opportunities to expand food choices, particularly for downtown workers. They also allow new chefs an opportunity to experiment with concepts and grow successful ones into new restaurants. Going far beyond the traditional hot dog cart, these stands offer creative new food choices, can stimulate foot traffic and can activate the edges of parking areas. The City should work with property owners and vendors to allow small-scale food stands on the periphery of parking lots. Food trucks should be allowed to serve Uptown customers in designated locations.



The Charlotte City Market will provide a range of goods for residents, workers and visitors, similar to this market in downtown Milwaukee.



Catering trucks and food stands should be placed throughout Center City to expand eating choices and activate the streets.

dynamic shopping experience recommendations

DSE-3. Use Effective Storefront Design and Develop Flexible Ground-Floor Spaces



Center City should recruit fashion-forward urban retailers who create exciting storefront experiences, such as Zara.



Retail shops and cafés should look outward and “spill out” into plazas and alley spaces.

To compete with the ample shopping opportunities around the Charlotte region, quality storefront design is essential to the Center City retail experience. New development should also anticipate future demand for retail by incorporating flexible ground-floor spaces that can be converted to shops as the market grows.

DSE-3a. Continue to develop attractive ground-floor retail space to attract existing and new tenants.

To enhance the physical and retail environment, continue to implement the City’s policies that require the creation of ground-floor space to accommodate retail uses in new buildings and existing buildings as they are renovated. Both new and improved spaces should be configured so that they have street frontage and are not hidden from street view. Ground-floor restaurants should have operable storefront windows, transparent façades and sidewalk café areas. Transforming out-of-date street-level floor plans in existing buildings is oftentimes be more cost effective and faster to accomplish than creating new structures.

DSE-3b. Ground floors should include public/semi-public uses and be accessible from multiple points of entry from the building’s primary street façade.

Retail uses should have individual, well-articulated entrances that are oriented to the street. To create a thriving retail environment, shoppers must have the sense that ground-floor uses are permeable and friendly. Additional doorways

or improved entries should be made to existing spaces to better link to transit, dining options, gathering spaces, and nearby high-traffic arts and entertainment destinations.

DSE-3c. Create new public spaces that consist of renovated or enhanced streets, or strategically selected places that are directly linked to the street system.

Public gathering opportunities—places to sip a coffee, people-watch or chat with friends—should be created along existing streets or at other strategic places such as plazas or alleyways. New storefronts, shops and other retail/services should spring from the creation of street-oriented public spaces.

DSE-3d. Expand the area of City Center where current regulations require design and development practices that foster a street-level retail experience.

While the market demand for leasable retail space may be limited today, it is important to ensure that there is adequate opportunity for ground-floor retail in the future. In unfortunate cases, ground-floor locations are developed as non-retail space in a manner that makes future conversion to retail awkward or infeasible. The City’s Uptown Mixed Use District (UMUD) zoning encourages active and engaging façades. This special overlay should be expanded to areas of Tryon, Trade and College streets and the Ballpark Neighborhood.

dynamic shopping experience recommendations

DSE-4. Facilitate the Long-Term Transition of the Overstreet Mall

To support making Center City's streets a more thriving, accessible retail environment, retailers should be encouraged to relocate to street-level locations outside of the Overstreet Mall. Space inside the Overstreet Mall could work better for non-retail-oriented services targeting Uptown business customers that benefit from synergies and adjacencies to this customer base.

DSE-4a. Adopt a policy that ceases the expansion of the Overstreet Mall, underground tunnel connections between buildings, and other infrastructure that discourages street-level pedestrian activity. In support of this policy, a strategy should be developed to work with Uptown landlords to relocate Overstreet Mall tenants that carry consumer goods to ground-floor spaces as lease renewals come up and limit replacement tenants to non-retail business service type tenants.

DSE-4b. Develop ground-floor retail space adjacent to the street-level entrances of the Overstreet Mall. Much can be done to enhance Uptown's shopping identity by developing street-level shops and services at entrances to the Overstreet Mall. This could entice Uptown workers who utilize the mall for circulation between buildings. New street-level retail would not be subject to the mall's early closing hours, allowing stores to stay open later and giving customers more shopping flexibility.

DSE-4c. Redesign hidden entrances to the Overstreet Mall to make them more visible and inviting from the street. Until retail business transitions out of the mall to street-level commercial units, there should be improvements to encourage circulation between existing street retail and the mall and to make people more aware of retail offerings inside the facility. As with other storefront façade improvements, improving the ground-level physical presence of the mall entrances would improve the overall quality of the nearby urban environment.



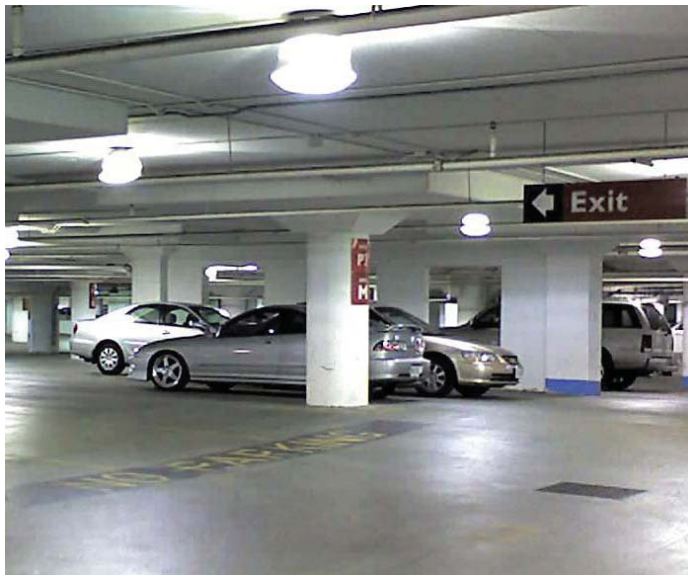
The Overstreet Mall should undergo functional and aesthetic changes to improve the mall entrances and strengthen connections with street-level retail.



The Overstreet Mall should be re-programmed to focus on business-oriented services.

dynamic shopping experience recommendations

DSE-5. Develop Innovative Financial Tools and Technical Assistance Programs



Shared parking should be explored to mitigate project development costs.

The relatively modest level of current Uptown retail activity means that both tenants and developers see new retail projects and stores as a high-risk activity with uncertain returns. Creating catalyst projects and tenancies that can demonstrate that the market is ready for retail will be key to generating investment. However, catalyst projects and tenancies will require the use of innovative financial tools and other technical assistance to mitigate the risks they present.

DSE-5a. Explore land assembly and write-down opportunities. Development of a new Uptown shopping center, a sports-oriented retail center or district, or a new stand-alone anchor tenant would necessitate assembly of a sufficiently large site from multiple parcels. Developers are typically willing to take on the risk of assembly for only a limited number of sites; more complex assemblies require the City or another entity to lead the effort. Depending on project economics, it may also be necessary to provide a subsidy by writing down a portion or most of the land value of assembled sites prior to transfer to a developer or retailer.

DSE-5b. Create provisions for shared parking or access to publicly-financed parking. Parking costs are often a primary driver of project feasibility. Dining and retail uses typically have peak parking demand periods that are complementary to office uses. A program to facilitate evening and weekend retail use of office parking spaces—with offsetting

reductions in the number of spaces retail projects are required to build—could enhance feasibility. This could be complemented as needed by construction of publicly-financed parking garages in strategic locations to meet project parking requirements.

DSE-5c. Develop a program for tenant improvement assistance. Tenant improvement costs for a new retailer can be expensive, ranging from \$100,000 to upwards of \$1 million for a large anchor user. As an incentive to attract desired types of retailers, the City should establish a program that provides a subsidy for a portion of these costs. Such a program could be funded from the creation of a tax increment finance district per recent state legislation or through use of a portion of the increased sales tax revenues generated by the new retailers, as is done in Washington, D.C.'s program.

DSE-5d. Continue to assist with storefront façade improvements. Uptown has a very limited number of remaining historic buildings that provide good locations for innovative retail. However, it does have a large number of existing office buildings whose street levels are not designed to support retail uses. The existing storefront façade improvement program provides grants, forgivable loans or purchase of façade easements and could assist in the redesign of street-level office space to support retail uses. It should also be promoted in neighborhood centers.

integrated transportation network

The future Center City is an Integrated Transportation Network, with all of the right connections for people to easily and seamlessly travel within and between Uptown, the surrounding neighborhoods and greater Charlotte. Streets are for everyone—Center City’s roadway network is designed to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Streets are also active urban spaces, connecting major destinations and neighborhoods in a quality, experiential way. Charlotte’s Center City is where the region’s transportation systems converge, with Gateway Station and the Charlotte Transportation Center as dual hubs of local and regional transit; as well as autos, buses, taxis, streetcars, light rail and high speed rail. The stations are redeveloped as major mixed-use employment centers linked by a streetcar line along Trade Street, helping to make that street a distinctive experience between the two stations. State-of-the-art technology plays a critical role in guiding people comfortably, efficiently and accurately to and from their destinations. With premier services and unparalleled connectivity, Center City truly is the hub of all local and regional mobility.

Existing Situation

The interrelationship between Center City’s transportation and land uses greatly affects the quality of life for residents and commuters. The ability to shape future growth and economic development in the City core—in functional, programmatic and aesthetic ways—also relies heavily on this important relationship. The existing transportation system must be adapted to accommodate future demand for access to Uptown, major employment centers and the surrounding neighborhoods of Center City.

Automobile travel times within the region have increased dramatically since 1990. According to the 2007 Charlotte Regional Indicators Project, the average annual travel delay per peak traveler nearly doubled from 1995 through 2005. Many local roadways that provide access from adjacent residential neighborhoods are congested at certain times of day.



In addition, highways such as the I-77/I-277 freeway loop and the area's rail lines limit connectivity between neighborhoods. Recognizing this disconnect, the Center City Transportation Plan identifies several realignments to improve interstate ramps. The plan also identifies new street locations, reconfigurations and other enhancements to improve connectivity.

Fortunately, Charlotte has a strong base for future transit options. The LYNX Blue Line light rail, operated by the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), began service in 2007. The line has 15 stations and runs through Uptown and South End, before paralleling South Boulevard to its southern terminus just north of I-485. CATS also operates an extensive bus transit system with local and express buses throughout the metro region. The 2030 Transit Corridor System Plan adopted in 2006 outlines future expansion for light rail, commuter rail, streetcars and bus rapid transit along five key corridors in Charlotte.

The quality of pedestrian connectivity varies throughout Center City. Many streets and buildings were primarily built to cater to automobile travel. As a result, numerous streets are lined with blank walls and parking structure entrances; others have inadequate sidewalks and poor streetscape design. Many streets lack active ground-floor retail spaces. There is a significant number of surface parking lots and fast-moving, auto-oriented roadways that create uncomfortable and unattractive pedestrian environments. The core of Tryon Street in Uptown is an example of a street that fosters pedestrian mobility and comfort with active ground floors, wide sidewalks, street furniture and bustling activity.

There are limited options for bicyclists entering Uptown. Extensive freeway on- and off-ramps, busy streets, and a lack of bikeways all discourage bike activity. However, the recent City of Charlotte Bicycle Plan sets forward a strategy for an accessible, connected and safe network of bicycle facilities in the City of Charlotte, including Center City.

Opportunities and Challenges









Center City already has numerous assets and opportunities upon which to create a more integrated transportation system. Specifically, there are **opportunities** to:

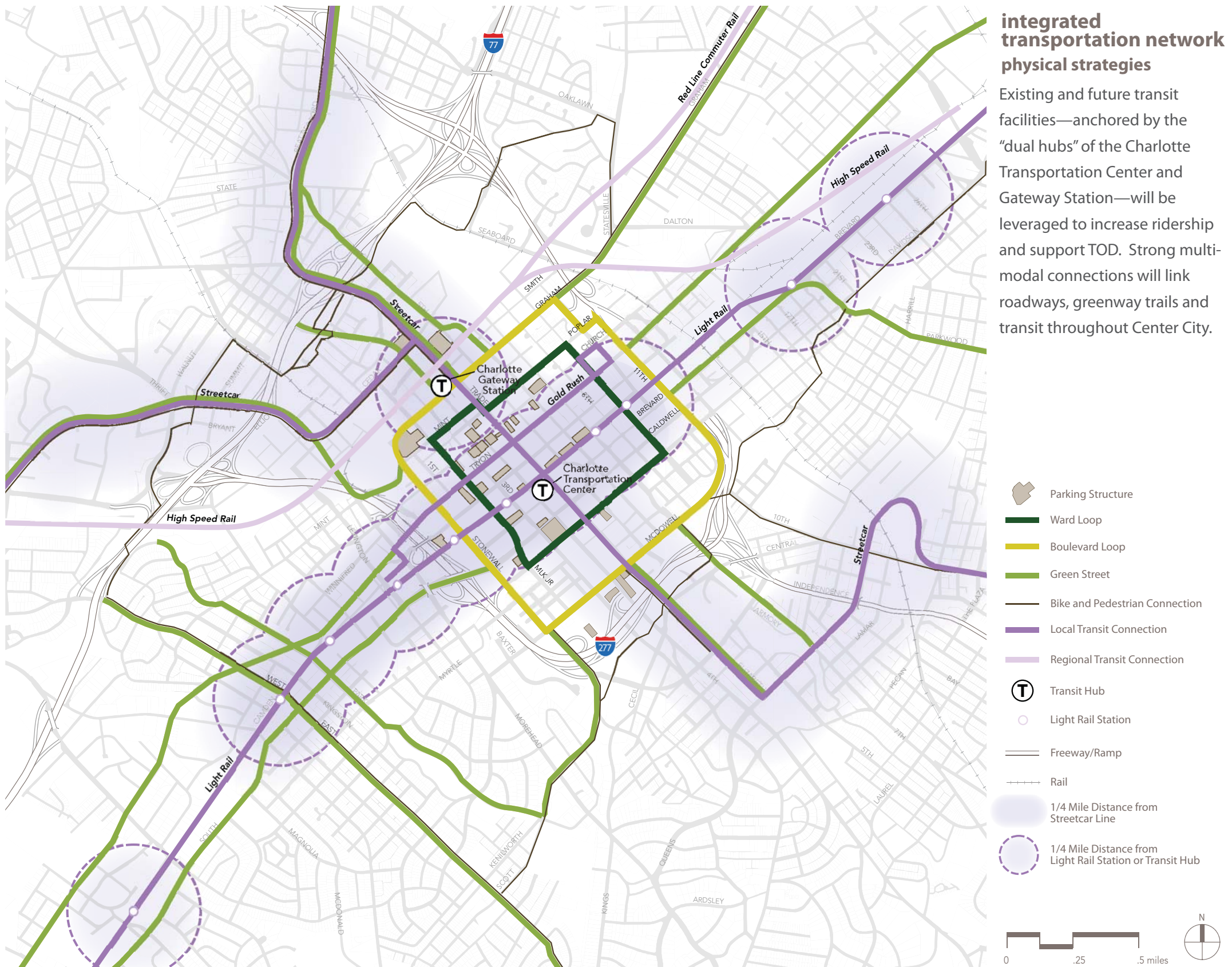
- Take advantage of Center City's position as the geographic heart of the metropolitan region and roadway network.
- Create stronger links along the 36 portals/entrances into Uptown from the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Leverage existing transit, which includes traditional bus, the Gold Rush rubber tire trolley and the LYNX Blue Line light rail, and benefit from its strong access to centers of employment, shopping and entertainment.
- Expand the existing transit system with light rail extensions, streetcar service and commuter rail, as well as high speed rail as part of a future network along the Eastern Seaboard.
- Capitalize on the significant synergy that would occur between two future transportation hubs, the Charlotte Transportation Center and the Gateway Station, to foster transit-oriented development (TOD) and activate Trade Street and all of Uptown.
- Use the air rights over the transportation hubs to catalyze development that would benefit from the ease of access and transportation options.

- Expand Transportation Demand Management (TDM) practices and programs to increase the number of people travelling by modes other than the automobile.
 - Take advantage of Center City’s proximity to the Charlotte Douglas International Airport.
 - Build upon the presence of several Signature Streets to establish a walkable, pedestrian-oriented Center City.
 - Improve existing and future greenway trail linkages to improve bike connectivity.
- Several obstacles may prove problematic to achieving a more diversified and efficient transportation network in Center City. Specific **challenges** include:
- The percentage of drivers commuting to work alone has increased and has remained high since the 1990s, encouraged by subsidized parking provided by major employers.
 - Center City and the region are experiencing longer commute times with more drivers on the road.
 - Competition from suburban sites for locating businesses, due to the common perception of easier parking and access than Center City.
- Few streets in Uptown are pedestrian-friendly and the I-77/I-277 freeway loop acts as a barrier separating Uptown and the surrounding neighborhoods.
 - Funding for road improvements, which is becoming increasingly difficult to secure while costs are rising.
 - A lack of bicycle facilities that cater to the full range of cyclists’ abilities, needs and comfort levels.
 - Parking structures and surface lots without any use other than weekday business parking, which are a dominant feature in Center City Charlotte, particularly in Uptown.

Recommendations

A fully Integrated Transportation Network will provide residents, employees and visitors with safe, convenient and affordable access and mobility. It will also play a key role in Center City’s economic, physical, social and cultural development. The following recommendations and physical strategies will **move Charlotte toward a transportation future that is on par with the nation’s greatest cities**. Together, the recommendations support these 2020 Vision Plan goals:

<p>GOAL 1 Urban Design and Sustainability</p> 	<p>GOAL 2 Regional Economic Engine</p> 	<p>GOAL 3 Lifelong Learning</p> 	<p>GOAL 4 Premier Arts, Cultural and Entertainment Destination</p> 	<p>GOAL 5 Walkable, Full-Service Neighborhoods</p> 	<p>GOAL 6 Interconnected Natural and Recreational Amenities</p> 	<p>GOAL 7 Thriving Retail and Restaurants</p> 	<p>GOAL 8 Multi-Dimensional Transportation System</p> 
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integrated transportation network recommendations

integrated transportation network (ITN)
ITN-1. Leverage Gateway Station and the Charlotte Transportation Center and Maximize Transit-Oriented Development Opportunities
ITN-2. Increase Transportation Choices for People Who Live, Work and Play in Center City
ITN-3. Improve Network Navigation, Comfort and Connectivity
ITN-4. Create a True City of Bikes
ITN-5. Strengthen the Unified Parking System and Program

ITN-1. Leverage Gateway Station and the Charlotte Transportation Center and Maximize Transit-Oriented Development Opportunities

Charlotte has the opportunity to develop a unique dual hub transit system as a regional nexus of transportation and employment that links local and regional buses, Gold Rush rubber tire trolley, streetcar, light rail and high speed regional rail with transit-oriented development (TOD). The location of the multi-modal stations at either end of West Trade Street would catalyze development between the two hubs and energize the corridor linking them. The two stations should be developed as dense mixed-use employment centers with strong connections to each other, other Uptown destinations and the surrounding neighborhoods. Other TOD opportunities should be fostered around existing and future LYNX light rail stations, as well as future streetcar lines.

ITN-1a. Build the new multi-modal regional Gateway Station so that it can grow with the increasing demands for transit, offices and retail.

The future development of Gateway Station is one of the most exciting city-building opportunities for Charlotte. The multi-modal transit center should be a significant, mixed-use architectural icon and should be envisioned as a second major employment center for Charlotte's Center City. The station would provide Center City with a range of transportation options including Amtrak passenger and CATS commuter trains as well as local and regional bus service such as Greyhound. The site would directly link to streetcar service along Trade Street, and also serve as the major anchor of a new employment hub (see

Ballpark Neighborhood section in Chapter 4: Focus Areas for more detail). Gateway Station should be developed to allow for future vertical expansion as market demand grows and commuter and high speed rail service is added. Though various services would be managed by different transportation agencies, passengers should experience the station as one seamless operation. An urban design study should be prepared in conjunction with engineering plans, to make sure that issues related to neighborhood connectivity, function, infrastructure and design needs are addressed.

ITN-1b. Redevelop the Charlotte Transportation Center as a mixed-use, state-of-the-art transportation station.

This center would work in tandem with Gateway Station to support the continued infill of Uptown Charlotte and expand Center City mobility options. The station would provide enhanced bus service, efficient connections to the LYNX Blue Line light rail station and platform, real-time arrival and departure information, and direct access to streetcar lines. Together, Gateway Station and the Charlotte Transportation Center would provide a seamless combination of local and regional connectivity. When fully implemented, these two major mixed-use hubs could work in a coordinated way to improve routing, circulation and accessibility and provide a full range of transit options (see Charlotte Transportation Center section in Chapter 4: Focus Areas for more detail).

integrated transportation network recommendations



Gateway station could be the hub of a major new mixed-use transit-oriented development, like the future Transbay Terminal in San Francisco.

ITN-1c. Establish strong pedestrian and transit connections between Gateway Station and the Charlotte Transportation Center. To fully realize the potential of a dual hub system, Gateway Station and the Charlotte Transportation Center must feel like they are closely linked along the corridor of Trade Street. Strong pedestrian connections and frequent low-cost or free streetcar service should be established along the Signature Street. Related recommendations in the Center City Transportation Plan should be implemented. Streetscape design elements should emphasize the importance of these connections and be supported by new office uses; unique architecture; active ground-floor uses; plazas and open spaces; and amenities for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders.

ITN-1d. Direct investments toward new TOD projects along transit corridors and within Focus Areas such as the Ballpark Neighborhood, West Trade Corridor, Charlotte Transit Center and South End. The recommendations of the Center, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework should be implemented at five linear Growth Corridors along high-capacity transportation routes that extend from Center City to the edge of Charlotte. This guide provides development recommendations such as pedestrian-oriented villages designed to include a mix of complementary moderate- to high-intensity uses.

ITN-1e. Create partnerships between private ventures, public agencies and neighborhood groups to ensure successful TODs. Incentives should be provided to attract developers and project investment such as “fast track” permitting, property tax abatement and density bonuses. Potential commercial tenants should be marketed to through a portfolio of available properties and provision of incentives for local merchants. Successfully completed projects should be documented and used to demonstrate efficacy and gain interest and support.

integrated transportation network recommendations

ITN-2. Increase Transportation Choices for People Who Live, Work and Play in Center City

To achieve the goal of decreasing the number of people who drive alone to Center City, the full range of transportation options must be expanded and promoted to residents, workers and visitors. A multi-modal strategy—with emphasis on pedestrian, bicycle and transit mobility in addition to accommodating the automobile—could support existing and future transportation demand and could help alleviate issues related to congestion, air quality and public health.

ITN-2a. Initiate a car share program that provides mobility options and helps to reduce the number of cars in Center City. A comprehensive and flexible car share program should serve a range of people. Employers could reduce parking provisions and the number of employees who drive. Parking currently occupied by fleet vehicles could be freed up by enrollment in the program. Workers could use cars to run errands during the day and avoid the cost of commuting and parking their personal vehicles. Residents may need fewer household vehicles and would have access to a greater range of vehicle types. Finally, visitors could use existing memberships for exploring Center City neighborhoods and other areas of Charlotte.

ITN-2b. Develop a discounted pass program that integrates multiple transportation modes.

A primary advantage of living and working in Center City is the growing range of transportation options that are available. To encourage use of these options, a pass program should be developed that accommodates residents and employees who use a variety of modes for their commute and errands. A monthly or quarterly pass should include multiple levels and entail a combination of daily parking, transit rides, car share and bike share usage.

ITN-2c. Employ multiple strategies to increase transit ridership. The Charlotte region is making large investments in transit with the greatest concentration of amenities converging in Center City. Programs should continue to be explored to increase transit ridership. Strategies may include a fare-free zone, discounted individual pass programs, employer-provided passes, additional amenities at transit stops and on transit vehicles, smart phone applications, and more.

ITN-2d. Invest in new transportation technology.

Support investments in applications that allow connection to real-time information about Center City transportation. Use the forthcoming 2012 Democratic National Convention as a catalyst for development of these systems and behaviors.



Smart phone technology should be used to connect people to a range of transportation choices.



A comprehensive car share program should be developed to increase mobility options, reduce parking needs and decrease the number of cars in Center City.

integrated transportation network recommendations

ITN-3. Improve Network Navigation, Comfort and Connectivity

Setting the stage for healthy and sustainable transportation choices will include creating a network of multi-modal streets that balance the needs and preferences of a range of users.

ITN-3a. Undertake a comprehensive study of the I-77/I-277 loop. With its wide lanes, fast-moving traffic, and multiple bridges and tunnels, the freeway loop is the biggest obstacle to connectivity in Center City. A full analysis of the system should be undertaken to investigate the possibility of reducing the number of interchanges; shortening on-ramps and off-ramps; changing the design and/or location of overpasses and underpasses; and improving connectivity for bicycles, pedestrians and transit. This study should be a collaborative undertaking of the relevant transportation agencies (including Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT) and NCDOT), City planning, and other stakeholder agencies.

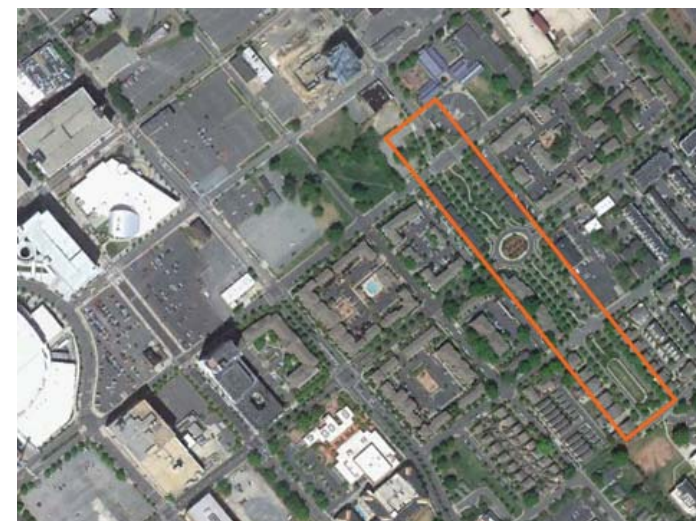
ITN-3b. Use traffic calming techniques to better facilitate walking and biking on Center City streets. Efforts must continue to slow traffic speeds on Center City streets. A key goal of the Center City Transportation Study is to ensure that all streets inside the I-77/I-277 loop are safe and comfortable for pedestrians and cyclists. Continued efforts should include, but not be limited to, reducing the number and width of travel lanes in strategic

locations; adding on-street parking where feasible; exploring curb extensions that reduce pedestrian crossing distances; increasing pedestrian amenities; creating pedestrian-priority streets that provide increased pedestrian crossing time; and enforcing speed limits.

ITN-3c. Restore key connections within the existing street grid to create a stronger and more navigable roadway network. New streets and street segments should be constructed to improve connectivity and meet special needs. These new or modified streets include those in the vicinity of Gateway Station and Third Ward Park; an overpass over I-277 and adjacent to the LYNX Blue Line light rail from Second Ward to Dilworth; street extensions and a new street from 7th Street to 11th Street paralleling the light rail extension in First Ward; and neighborhood residential streets in the future redevelopment of Second Ward.

ITN-3d. Implement the Boulevard Loop and Ward Loop to create attractive circulator routes within the core of Uptown. The peripheral Boulevard Loop should feature grand tree-lined boulevards along Graham, Stonewall and McDowell streets and a one-way couplet on 11th and 12th streets. The Boulevard Loop should have enhanced landscaping and great pedestrian amenities, as well as be integrated with the recently installed signage system promoting wayfinding and convenient

connections to the freeway loop. The City of Charlotte should request control of Graham within the city limits from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and accept responsibility for the design and maintenance of the roadway. The Ward Loop should foster pedestrian- and bike-friendly neighborhood connections between the four wards. The loop should include Poplar/Mint streets, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK), and Davidson and 9th streets (see recommendation POR-1d in Network of Parks, Open Space and Recreation section of Chapter 3: Transformative Strategies).



9th Street in First Ward already has streetscape design that lends itself to becoming a key link on the Ward Loop.

integrated transportation network recommendations

ITN-4. Create a True City of Bikes

Bicycling is healthy, sustainable and convenient. It should be a preferred mode of transportation for getting around Center City. Differences between user abilities, comfort levels and trip purposes will require a range of on-street and off-street connections, end-of-trip facilities, bike sharing, signage and wayfinding.

ITN-4a. Create a network of dedicated and shared bicycle facilities to foster easy access and mobility throughout Center City. The area should include options for bicyclists ranging from shared roadways to bicycle lanes to multi-use pathways, including facilities that foster quick, efficient and safe bicycling options for commuters. Riders of different ages and skill levels have varied comfort levels and preferences when it comes to bicycle facilities. While all streets within Center City should accommodate bicycles in the travel lanes, CDOT should explore opportunities for additional separated bicycle facilities, bicycle lanes and shared lanes on streets with low traffic speeds and volumes.

ITN-4b. Provide a range of quality end-of-trip facilities throughout Center City to encourage and support bicycle commuting. A variety of short-term and long-term bicycle parking solutions should be implemented in Center City. These should range

from additional bike racks to shower facilities for employees and residents. Reduced auto parking requirements could be linked to provision of bicycle parking facilities. In addition, clothes changing and shower facilities should be provided at or near major employment centers.

ITN-4c. Develop a bike share system for residents, employees and visitors to offer flexibility for those wanting an alternative way of getting around Center City. A bike share system can significantly reduce the use of automobiles in Center City by providing employees, students and residents with a quick and inexpensive means of running errands and making impromptu trips during the day. Electric bicycles can broaden the appeal of the program and extend the range of trips that could be made using a shared bicycle.

ITN-4d. Seek funding to refine and implement the City of Charlotte Bicycle Plan. The City of Charlotte Bicycle Plan includes a comprehensive collection of recommendations for improving cycling throughout the community including connections to and through Center City. The City should update the plan regularly and continue to seek local, state and federal funding to implement the plan recommendations.



End-of-trip facilities, with parking, lockers and showers, are vital to making the area a true City of Bikes.



A flexible, easy-to-use bike share system should be installed in Uptown and then extended out to surrounding neighborhoods.

integrated transportation network recommendations

ITN-5. Strengthen the Unified Parking System and Program

Automobile parking will continue to be a valuable resource in Center City that requires deliberate management and creative solutions. A unified parking system will require a high level of design, coordination and management.

ITN-5a. Continue to develop a balanced and shared parking system to optimize use of resources and reduce overall parking demand. New parking supply should be carefully implemented. Consideration should be given to where the greatest demand will exist, where there is a predicted deficit of supply, and how the parking strategy can complement other Transportation Demand Management initiatives. A shared-use



Real-time information and wayfinding should be a part of the unified parking system and program.

approach to parking should be embraced to allow for the efficient use of this valued asset. The creation of a shared-use model would empower planners with sufficient data to make informed decisions about the location, amount and policies that would manage Uptown parking resources on typical weekdays as well as for weekends and special events.

ITN-5b. When designing new parking, ensure that it is pedestrian-friendly, context-sensitive and adds to the urban fabric of Center City. Special attention to parking design must be paid to facilities located on high-value streets and blocks where heavy pedestrian movements are most prevalent. Parking facilities in these locations should be integrated as a part of buildings and maintain an active façade with occupied space and integrated building architecture. Regardless of location, all parking should be designed to be safe, attractive, and include interesting details that make a positive contribution to the experience of Center City. New parking facilities should also incorporate green building design practices whenever possible.

ITN-5c. Increase on-street parking supply where appropriate and based on curb use recommendations in the City's Curb Lane Management Study. Increase on-street parking supply where appropriate and based on curb

use recommendations in the City's Curb Lane Management Study. Increasing on-street parking supply would assist both with calming traffic and with increasing the supply of short-term parking that supports retail. The addition of on-street parking should be strategic and implemented in accordance with curb use recommendations from the Curb Lane Management Study. On some lower-volume streets that have higher traffic demands during peak times, options should be explored that allow partial closure to motor vehicles during off-peak periods.

ITN-5d. Apply new technology and other progressive parking programs. New approaches to parking should continue to be explored, including those that integrate technological components such as smart phone applications, dynamic signage showing available spaces, and other new parking structure technology and infrastructure. Car sharing and electric vehicle parking with charging stations should be installed to accommodate the evolving technology and changing use of the automobile. Finally, the provision for credit card-enabled, multi-space meters should continue as the City converts parking meters to pay stations for on-street parking throughout Uptown.