Downtown Roanoke 2017

December 18, 2017, as amended

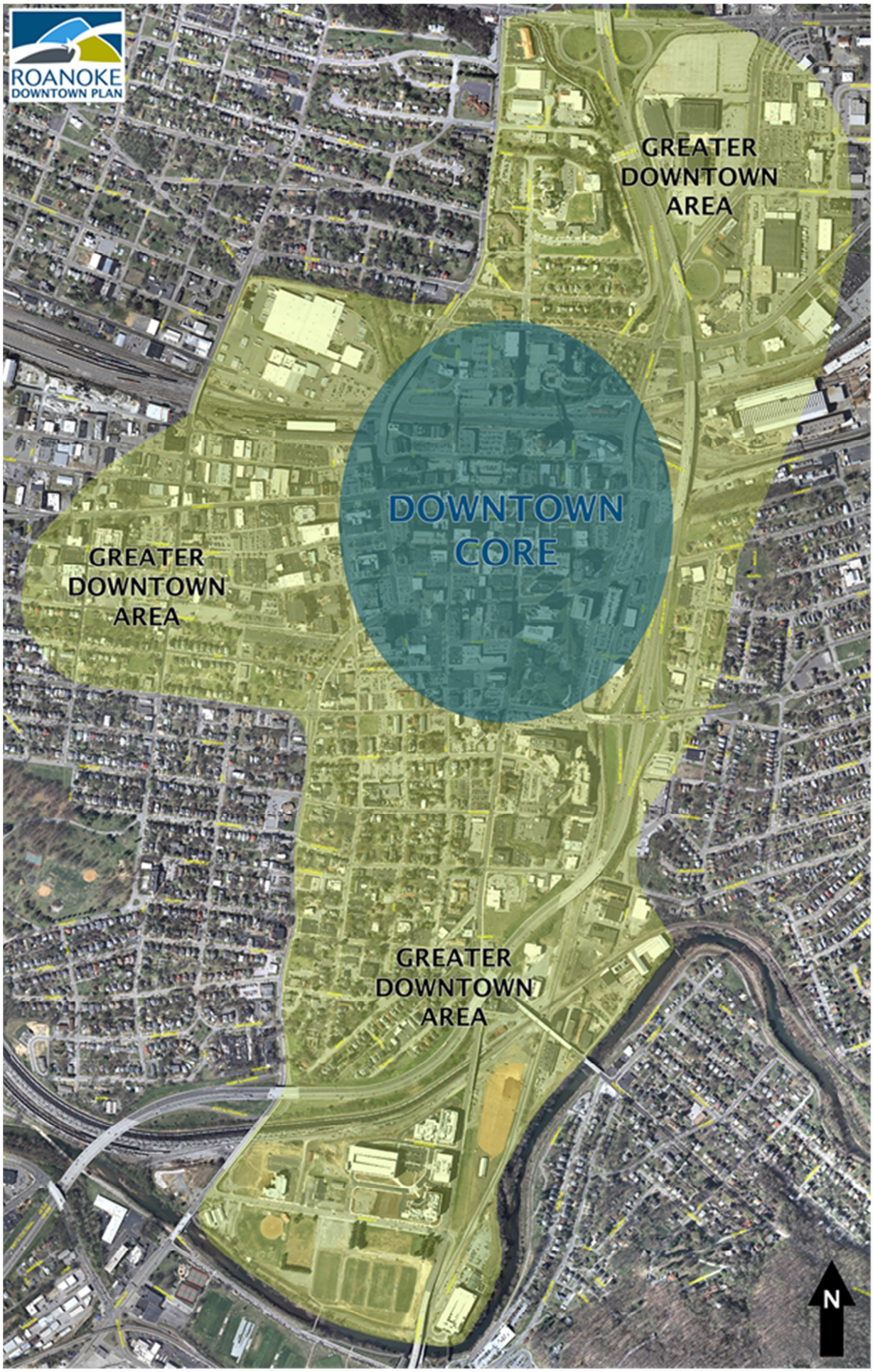
Introduction

In the heart of the Roanoke Valley, Downtown Roanoke is the cultural, economic, and social hub of Virginia's Blue Ridge. Downtown Roanoke is a vibrant and friendly place with a growing economy, proud history, and natural beauty. Downtown Roanoke's success is vital to the City of Roanoke and to the greater region.

Downtown Roanoke has experienced resurgence over the last several decades. Since the fabled Design 79 revitalization effort in which an energetic public planning process jump started its revitalization, downtown has reclaimed its regional prominence as an economic, social, and cultural anchor. A cursory glance at the City's 2001 downtown plan, Outlook Roanoke Update, reveals that progress has been at a relatively rapid pace over the past fifteen years. The renovation of the Patrick Henry Hotel and numerous other historic building renovations such as the Hancock, Colonial Arms, Ponce de Leon, and Shenandoah Buildings have created new residential opportunities. Major public improvements include the renovations of Elmwood Park, Market Square, and the City Market Building.

It is time to focus on the next generation of changes and decisions facing Downtown Roanoke. Downtown has seen incredible progress that benefits the entire region, but it is not without its unique challenges. While significant public and private investments have recently been made, it is important to protect and build on those investments by addressing the future of everyone's neighborhood in the Roanoke Valley-- Downtown Roanoke.

The Downtown Roanoke 2017 plan seeks to establish a vision for the future of downtown, which includes the downtown core and the greater downtown area. The core of downtown is loosely defined as the area extending from the Taubman Museum of Art and the City Market Building south to Elmwood Park, and from Williamson Road west over to 2nd Street. The greater downtown area includes areas to the north anchored by the Hotel Roanoke and the Roanoke Higher Education Center, to the west over to 8th Street anchored by the Jefferson Center and the new growth along Campbell and Salem, and to the south extending from Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital and the Jefferson College of Health Sciences down to the South Jefferson Redevelopment Area anchored by the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute. The study area for the Downtown Roanoke 2017 plan incorporates the downtown core and the defined greater downtown area, identifying this combined area as Downtown Roanoke. The Downtown Roanoke 2017 plan seeks to build on Roanoke's over 100 years of planning excellence. As policies and actions are established within this plan, the plan will be complimentary to the adjacent and overlapped neighborhood plans.


ROANOKE
DOWNTOWN PLAN
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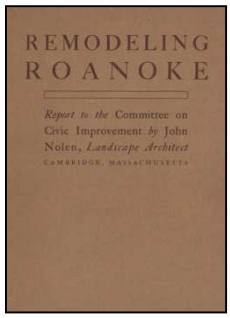
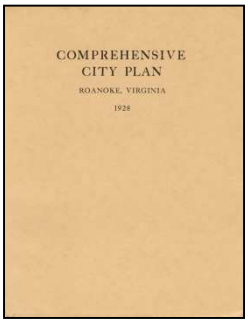
Over 100 Years of Planning Excellence



The City of Roanoke has a distinguished planning history. In 1907, John Nolen, a landscape architect from Cambridge, Massachusetts, wrote *Remodeling Roanoke*. This was considered by many to be one of the first comprehensive plans written in the United States. Nolen was hired by The Women's Civic Betterment Club of Roanoke, Virginia to write the plan. The plan was completed and presented to the Women's Club on August 28, 1907. In the plan's opening pages Nolen states "Roanoke is one of the first cities of relatively small population to plan for its future in a businesslike, comprehensive manner. In this it shows its progressiveness."

The plan proposes green space throughout the City limits as well as creating greenways along the Roanoke River and Tinker Creek. The plan also proposes certain use areas (many specific to downtown) as well as street design alternatives for main thoroughfares. The City's present day Street Design Guidelines reflect ideas Nolen had over 100 years ago. The plan also speaks to building character, form, and function and how they are important to the overall fabric of the city. As a result of Nolen's forward thinking about these concepts as well as others, the 1907 Comprehensive Plan was awarded, by the National Planning Association in 1997, as an American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) National Planning Landmark.

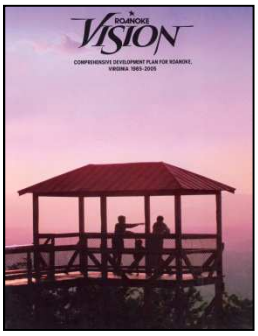


In 1928 Nolen returned to Roanoke to write the City's second comprehensive plan. Nolen had matured greatly as a city planner in the 21 years between the plans, having written a number of other plans around the country. As a result, the *1928 Comprehensive Plan* was more detailed and tactical than the first. It reflected the City's position as the focal point of a growing region. There are seventeen principal recommendations explained in detail in the plan. Two of the recommendations are specific to the downtown area. The first emphasizes and builds upon Roanoke's many public buildings such as City Hall, the Federal Building and Post Office, the Public Library, Museums, and an Auditorium. The plan recommends the City continue to focus on building design and character as more structures are built in the downtown area. The second recommendation involves automobile parking in the central business district and proposes development of additional parking facilities to meet future needs.

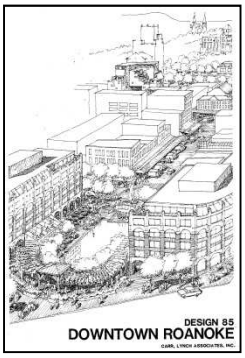
The next plan in Roanoke's history was the *1964 Comprehensive Plan, A Development Plan for Roanoke*. It provided the City with a long range plan for development through the 1960s and 1970s. The major emphasis of the plan was placed on land use planning. The plan outlined proposals for future patterns of land uses including residential, commercial, industrial, and public land uses which best serve the complex functions of the modern city. However, it also outlined other major elements of the City's comprehensive plan, including community facilities and transportation. Through the use of broad patterns, the plan outlines the extent and preferable locations of homes, stores, factories, parks, as well as other major components of the City. Great emphasis was placed on residential use areas due to the anticipated growth in population expected into the 1970s and 1980s. The

final section of the plan was devoted to a description of the various "tools" available to the municipal government for the implementation of the plan.

Roanoke Design '79 was the first plan to deal specifically with Roanoke's downtown revitalization. Design 79 evaluated the development potential of Downtown Roanoke and was the result of a mandate to prepare a revitalization plan for downtown Roanoke. This plan would not only spotlight downtown, but in so doing provide benefits for the entire community and bolster Roanoke's position as the metropolitan center of southwestern Virginia. A continually-manned storefront office and a series of live "Design-a-Thon" television shows produced by Roanoke's WDBJ-TV were used to ensure maximum public participation in the planning process. The series of four prime-time "Design-a-Thons" achieved community participation on a scale never before seen in the United States. The shows were an unprecedented two-way forum on commercial TV featuring a bank of telephones, live on-air discussions with architects and other technical and design experts, presentations of design concepts, and an open airing of issues. The principal goals and proposals of Design 79 created downtown districts in which certain activities seemed to be focused. These districts include the Retail Core, Downtown East, the Market District, the Government District, the Industrial District, Old Southwest, N & W District, and Gainsboro. Each of the districts was studied in detail and recommendations were made for future development.

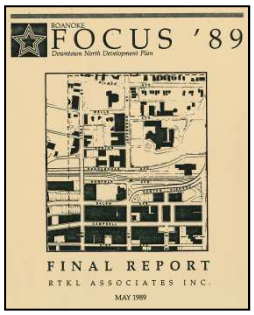


In keeping with the City's tradition of civic involvement in planning, *Roanoke Vision 1985-2005* asked citizens what they wanted their city to be in twenty years. Through a broad-based public participation process, including a public opinion survey, television special, and series of planning workshops and community meetings, a growing vision of Roanoke's future emerged. The plan was built on four priorities and set a roadmap for the City through the late 1980s and 1990s. The priorities set forth in the plan were broad-based, yet specific in their focus, stating that: (1) Roanoke should be a city of neighborhoods; (2) Roanoke's appearance and environmental quality should enhance the city's image for residents and visitors; (3) Roanoke's continuing economic development should be pursued as crucial to neighborhood health as well as to regional growth; and (4) Roanoke and its downtown should serve as a dynamic center for the region.



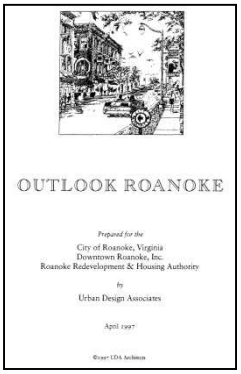
Design '85 Downtown Roanoke was prepared for Downtown Roanoke, Inc. and was completed in December 1986. Design 85 built on the momentum and initiatives created with Design 79. The plan and its proposals focused primarily on private sector investment spawned by specific and critical public actions. When implemented these actions and investment would attract conventions and visitors downtown, liven the Market District, connect Hotel Roanoke with the downtown core, create new entertainment venues, create downtown living, expand retail, and continue growth in office employment. The plan called for downtown to be "the pride of the city."

The driving force of Design 85 was to fill in critical gaps in the downtown fabric while creating and maintaining linkages between them. A key feature of the plan was to create a public/private management corporation to guide further development and continue promoting downtown. As with Design 79, Design 85's priorities were broad-based yet specific in their focus. Design 85's priorities were to: (1) create an exhibition and meeting facility in conjunction with the existing Hotel Roanoke; (2) focus on the Market District and housing; (3) create retail linkages; (4) focus investment in Downtown East; (4) coordinate downtown management; and (5) plan for 1990 and beyond.



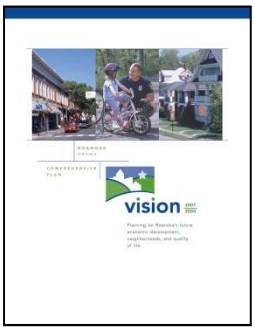
Roanoke Focus '89, Downtown North Development Plan, was completed by RTKL Associates, Inc. in May 1989. Focus 89 is an extension of prior planning efforts for Roanoke's downtown area. However, this plan had a limited scope and focus on the northern downtown area. The plan consisted of four main objectives: (1) improve vehicular access within the study area promoting better circulation; (2) identify future sites for office development; (3) recommend a location for a convention/exhibit center along with parking facilities; and (4) create better connections across the railroad tracks to reconnect the northern part of downtown to the southern part of downtown.

Perhaps, the most critical recommendation presented in Focus '89 is the demolition of the Jefferson Street leg of the Hunter Viaduct. Implementing this recommendation was essential to improving transportation within the entire downtown area. It also would enhance the visual and economic aspects of downtown. The location of the viaduct was a prime location for new development which would reinforce the traditional centers of office and retail activity as well as creating opportunities for additional linkages to the northern segment of downtown. Today, the Wells Fargo Tower and parking garage stands in this location as a result of the plan's recommendations.

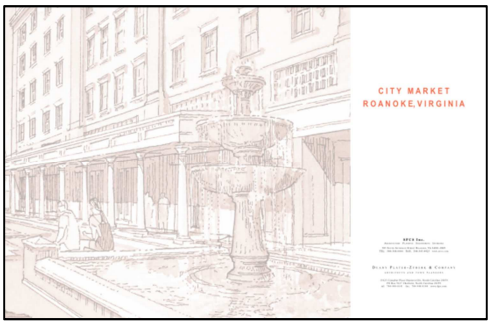


In April of 1997, *Outlook Roanoke* created a five-point strategy focusing on economic development in Downtown Roanoke. To make Roanoke "A Five Star City," as mentioned in the plan, the strategies explained below were proposed for implementation over the five year life expectancy of the plan. First, it was critical to tap into the expanding regional economy in ways that would ensure that downtown benefits by and participates meaningfully in the regional economy. Second, the plan called to diversify the market for downtown development to include residential initiatives; expansion of retail to meet demand generated by residential uses; and strengthen the recreational and entertainment uses of downtown venues. Third, the plan aspired to celebrate the City's heritage reinforcing the link between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods via cultural and historical attractions. Fourth, the plan aimed to revitalize neighborhoods contiguous with downtown so they will convey a positive image to residents, employers, visitors, and those employed by downtown businesses. Finally, the plan sought to define city places through distinct character development and a comprehensive identity system including streetscapes, way-finding and destination signage, improved public parking and new traffic patterns that integrate various destination points within the overall downtown area.

The *Outlook Roanoke Update*, completed in 2002, built on the achievements and successes of the Outlook Roanoke plan. The main focus of this plan update is the Jefferson Street Corridor and trying to extend the success of the Market area west of Jefferson Street. The plan update created five initiative areas, three of which straddle Jefferson Street, and two easily connected to it. These initiatives build on Jefferson Street's potential to link separate efforts into an overall strategy for revitalizing areas west of Jefferson Street and integrating them with the Market area. These five initiatives are: (1)Elmwood Park; (2)Church Avenue; (3)E-Town; (4)The Market; and (5)Jefferson Center.



Vision 2001-2020, the City's Comprehensive Plan is the product of an extensive collaborative planning process starting in the fall of 2000 that involved a citizens' advisory committee, citizen-based task teams, City staff, consultants, Roanoke City Planning Commission, Roanoke City Council, and the public. More than 2,000 people participated in the process. The overall strategy of Vision 2001-2020 and its many specific approaches are based on the goals and values expressed by the community. On August 20, 2001, City Council members unanimously adopted *Vision 2001-2020* as the City's Comprehensive Plan. Vision 2001-2020 is still in effect today and continues to guide the City as it plans for its future.



The *Roanoke City Market District Plan* designates the downtown market area as the geographic and social center of the Roanoke Valley. It is recognized as one of the best public spaces in America and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register. Revitalization of the City Market began in the late 1970s and early 80s with Design '79. In 2005, SFCS and Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co. (DPZ) were chosen to lead the planning effort for the City Market District Plan. SFCS is a local firm with many years of experience working in Roanoke, specifically on improvements to the City Market area. DPZ, from Charlotte, N.C., is world-renowned for its progressive planning ideas and respect for unique urban public spaces. Via downtown businesses and citizens input the plan developed specific, broad reaching ideas for the Roanoke City Market District.

Top-rated plans have been a part of Roanoke's history for over 100 years. The *Downtown Roanoke 2017* plan builds on the ideas and achievements of the past while incorporating new and innovative approaches to modern planning issues. John Nolen stated it nicely in 1907: "The Roanoke Spirit" at its best must be invoked. "A conservative, well considered, and whole-hearted course of action must be adopted and consistently followed if the best results are to be secured."

Planning Process

Public involvement is a hallmark of the City's planning initiatives. In this plan, the public's contribution was extraordinary, both in terms of quantity and quality. Realizing that downtown is everyone's neighborhood, the City made efforts to capture the opinions and impressions of a broad range of citizens, from all over the city.

In 2013 a citizen Advisory Committee was created and from that group a 12 member Steering Committee was formed. The Steering Committee guided staff in the development of the plan in a hands-on manner and then reported to the larger Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee vetted ideas and concepts before they were presented to the public. The committee members were chosen for their expertise and commitment to Downtown Roanoke, and a variety of professionals and city residents were included.

While the Advisory Committee provided staff with much needed expertise and oversight, the first step of the process was soliciting input from the general public. In 2013 a survey was distributed on the internet-based Survey Monkey website and over 250 people responded. The survey was followed up by three (3) public meetings which began the early discussions leading to the development of themes that helped frame this plan. Hard copies of the survey were distributed at these meetings, and staff distributed the surveys at the various neighborhood meetings they attended. The future of Downtown Roanoke was further discussed as part of a Cityworks (X)po walking tour and workshop.

In 2014, City Staff met with developers and real estate professionals to discuss development opportunities within the downtown. Following that discussion, the process also included three (3) charrettes on streetscapes, which engaged stakeholders in the design and discussion of desired cross-sections for streets within the downtown. Discussions continued into 2015 at which point the project was tabled due to personnel changes at the City.

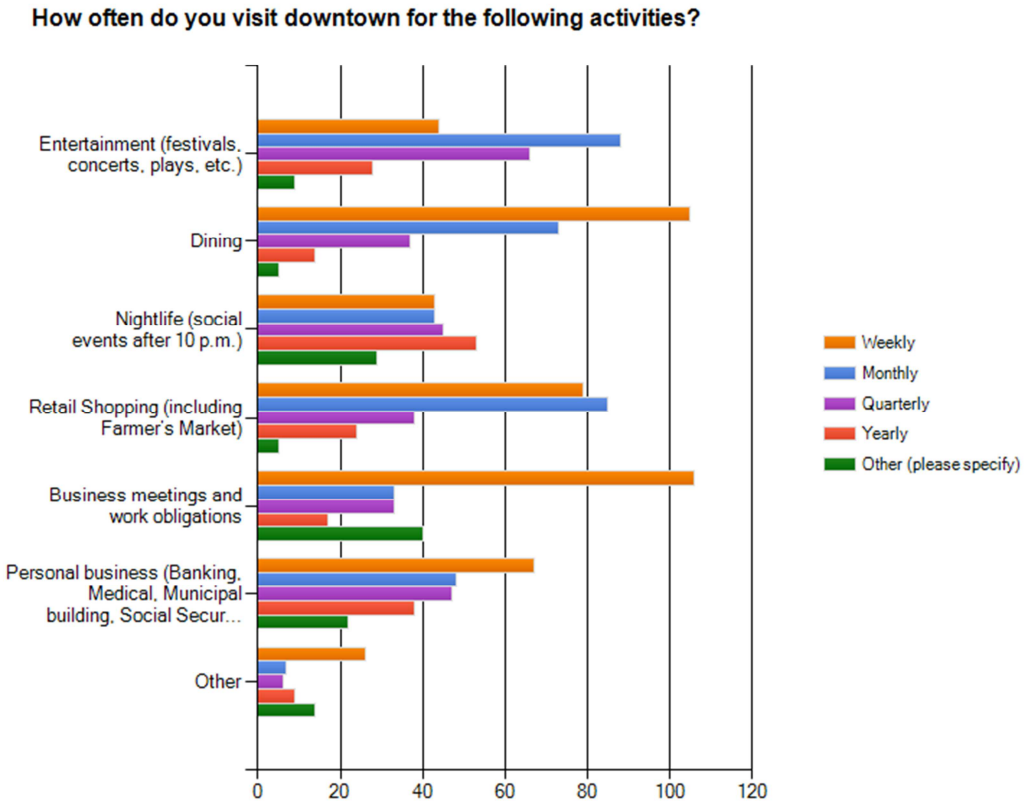
In 2016, the planning process recommenced with two (2) public meetings held that fall. The Advisory Committee and the Steering Committee were combined to form a Stakeholder's Committee that continued to convene and help shape the efforts and ideas developing within the plan.

In 2017, the City held one (1) public meeting in the spring that displayed the themes for the Downtown Roanoke 2017 plan along with some of the major policies and actions. The Planning Commission dedicated time to the downtown plan during their work sessions between March and October of 2017. City Council was briefed in June, and a joint meeting was held between City Council and the Planning Commission in early October. Public Hearings were held in December. Planning Commission reviewed the plan and voted unanimously to recommend adoption of the Downtown Roanoke 2017 plan. The City Council voted 6-0 on December 18, 2017, to incorporate the plan, as amended, as an element of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Crafting the Vision

The survey, performed in 2013, identified important elements to be focused on within the plan, including the public sentiment for Downtown Roanoke and a sense for the patterns of usage.

The survey received over 250 responses, with eleven percent (11%) of respondents living in Downtown Roanoke, fifty-eight percent (58%) living in other areas of the City, and twenty-seven percent (27%) living elsewhere in the Roanoke Valley. Overall ninety percent (90%) liked Downtown Roanoke and they visited for business, dining, retail, and entertainment, with ninety-six percent (96%) traveling by car and fifty-one percent (51%) parking on the street.



Survey respondents selected their preference for the most important elements to be focused on within the Downtown Roanoke plan, and the topics most chosen within the survey were:

- Renovation of existing buildings;
- Retail options;
- Streetscape/sidewalk improvements; and
- More/better green/public space.

Engaging the public through the course of the planning process helped establish a vision for Downtown Roanoke that guides this 2017 plan. Establishing the strengths and weaknesses of downtown and discussing opportunities and potential constraints, the public process set the direction for the plan and helped establish the major themes the plan is developed around.

What do you most appreciate about Downtown Roanoke?

The public appreciated that downtown had many **big city amenities, but a small-town feel**. With an abundance of restaurants, a top notch park, museums, performance venues, festivals and events throughout the year, transportation options, and variety of activities, downtown has many of the same amenities that one might find in a larger city. At the same time, Downtown Roanoke retains its small town feel with easy accessibility, friendly people, a high quality of life, a sense of safety and livability, and a quality pedestrian and bicycle experience.

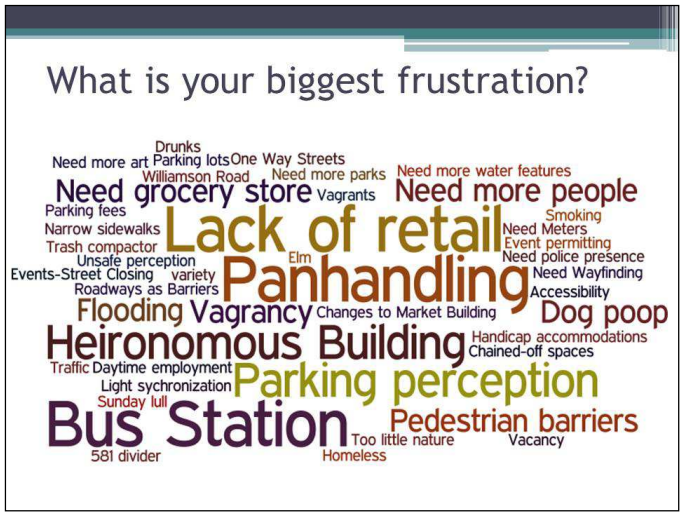
People also recognized Downtown Roanoke as **special and unique**, with many historic buildings, the farmer's market, a feeling of authenticity and unique character, and a diverse culture. In addition, the general location for Downtown Roanoke was seen as a strong attribute, with its central location in the heart of the Roanoke Valley, and its close proximity to Mill Mountain, the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Appalachian Trail, and other areas of scenic beauty.

There was also a strong sense that **great things are happening**. The development and continued expansion of the greenways and the addition of public art have added to the vibrancy of downtown. Growth in residential development downtown has helped support an array of local businesses, increased activity in the area, and helped contribute to downtown's momentum. Many of the multifamily residential projects were developed with the assistance of historic rehabilitation tax credits that supported the adaptive reuse of these historical buildings and aided in downtowns expansion to the west.

What is your biggest frustration with Downtown Roanoke?

Concerns stemmed from the fact that **small cities grow incrementally**. The public appreciated all the amenities that downtown has but wanted more retail and a full service grocery store. They wanted more art, parks, and water features, and wanted to bring more residents and visitors to downtown. Downtown Roanoke has seen a lot of growth, but it has occurred bit by bit and it is not likely to fully develop overnight.

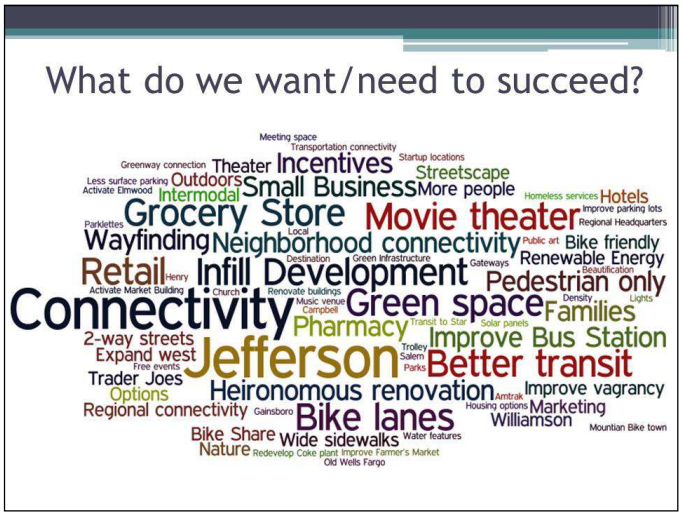
The public was also concerned that downtown **has gaps and disconnects**. Some of the surrounding roadways, such as I-581, act as a barrier to access. There were concerns about handicap accessibility and the impacts of outdoor dining within the pedestrian area. The public recognized the issue of vacancy in downtown and was specifically discouraged with the vacancy of the Heironimus Building at the corner of Church Avenue and Jefferson Street. The current bus station at Campbell Court was mentioned as a barrier, creating a disconnect between the core downtown area and the expanded area to the west.



The public expressed **concern about visitor's perceptions** of downtown. Generally, staff heard that parking was adequate for Downtown Roanoke, but there was a strong concern that infrequent visitors might have a perception that parking is hard to find or not available. Frequent street closings for events and festivals coupled with a confusing street network with several one-way streets and little existing directional signage may create obstacles for visitors. There was concern that vagrancy and panhandling might create an unsafe perception and the occasional unclean conditions of the streets and sidewalks, littered by irresponsible pet owners, smokers, and nighttime revelers, could deter downtown visitors.

What does Downtown Roanoke need to succeed?

When asked how they would improve the downtown, the public wanted **more amenities**. People responded that downtown needed more retail, a grocery store, and a pharmacy, along with more event venues, such as a movie theater and a music venue. They sought more hotels within downtown to support an increase in visitors and tourists. The public hoped downtown would remain a hub for small businesses and thought incentives could help encourage entrepreneurship and support development within Downtown Roanoke. They wanted to see more activity within the City Market Building and more green space and parks in the downtown.



There was a desire for **improvements** to be made within downtown. Less surface parking, more infill development and continued renovation of existing buildings, including the renovation of the Heironimus building and improvements to the bus station were common responses. People also wanted to see improvements regarding vagrancy and an increase in homeless services. They

also suggested implementation of green infrastructure projects to help reduce flooding issues, and general beautification of downtown and increased marketing to attract new visitors.

Many thought that **better connectivity** was critical to the continued success of Downtown Roanoke. Citizens requested streetscape improvements, wide sidewalks, directional signage, and conversion to 2-way streets to build better connectivity throughout downtown including the South Jefferson Street Corridor, Williamson Road through downtown, new growth areas to the west, and all the neighborhoods surrounding downtown. There was a focus on multimodal transportation options, with recommendations for pedestrian only areas, better transit (including transit to the Mill Mountain Star), an improved bus station, a focus on bike friendliness, and strong connectivity to the region.

If this plan is successful, what will Downtown Roanoke look like in 20 years?

The public wants to see a downtown that has great neighborhood connections, and is pedestrian friendly and bikeable. There will be new retail (including a grocery and pharmacy), and public art, green space and parks with ample comfortable seating, music, and other attractions.

Downtown will remain a regional destination and a hub for business and transportation. A new trolley route will help connect neighborhoods and other commercial areas to downtown. The bus station would be relocated and the new Amtrak connection would successfully bring new visitors to Roanoke to enjoy a variety of activities and events.

Downtown Roanoke will be perceived as safe, accessible, vibrant, and fun. Infill development and the renovation of historic buildings will create opportunities for both new businesses and housing. Flooding in downtown will be alleviated and connections will be made with the proposed Innovation Corridor, the Roanoke River, and the network of greenways.

Developing a path forward

Underlying Principles

Utilizing the input received throughout the planning process, the Downtown Roanoke 2017 plan is guided by underlying principles that help establish the mission and expectations of the plan.

Downtown is everyone's neighborhood

Downtown Roanoke is the heart of the Roanoke Valley and Virginia's Blue Ridge, it should be welcoming and inviting as a premiere destination for people to live, shop, work, and play. Accessible to all and adaptable to meet different needs, improvements to Downtown Roanoke benefit the entire region.

Big city amenities with small town feel

The variety and extent of amenities in Downtown Roanoke are similar to what may be found in larger cities, but the small town feel remains and contributes to a high quality of life for those in the region. As the downtown grows, it is imperative to retain the ease of accessibility, sense of safety, and livability within Downtown Roanoke.

Change occurs incrementally, not overnight

Downtown has been revitalizing over the last thirty years and has potential for more expansion and growth. This plan will help guide public improvements and private development and investment over the next twenty years, recognizing that the size of the region will temper the rate of change and that growth can also be affected by fluctuations in the economy.

Placemaking is Economic Development

The growth in a knowledge-based economy has given more significance to the importance of place for attracting economic development. Building on the unique assets of Downtown Roanoke to create a quality space teeming with activity, improves prospects for attracting talented workers, investments, travelers, and business to the region.

Themes

The framework for the Downtown Roanoke 2017 plan will be structured around six themes that serve to build on the success of downtown and aid in its continued revitalization and growth over the next 20 years.

1. Build on Strengths
2. Fill in the Gaps
3. Expand
4. Enhance Public Space
5. Strengthen Connections
6. Maintain and Market

1. Build on Strengths

The downtown is steeped in history, surrounded by natural beauty, and serves as the regional center for commerce, culture, and entertainment. Strengthening these foundational elements of Downtown Roanoke will help support future growth and expansion.

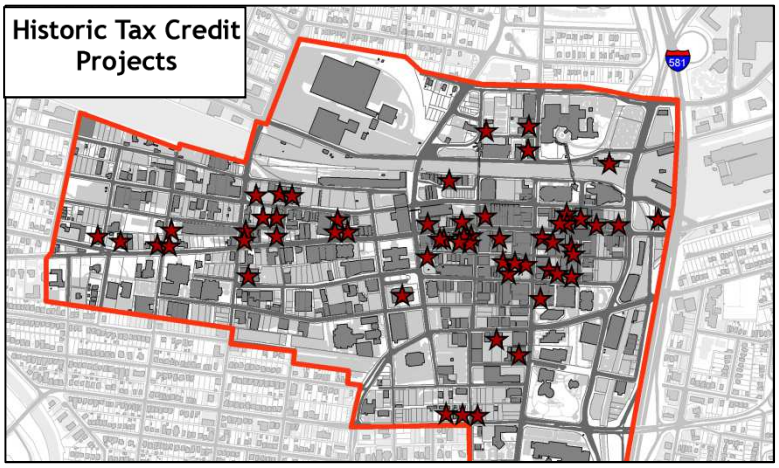
Formerly known as Big Lick, the City of Roanoke was founded in 1882 and grew quickly as a prosperous railroad town around the turn of the 19th Century. Decades of rampant growth left a legacy of historically significant buildings within the downtown. Many of these buildings have been the key to revitalizing Downtown Roanoke, as developers have found ways to use historic tax credits to support the redevelopment of these buildings into a variety of uses. Restoration of historic structures has added new life to downtown and helped to preserve these buildings for decades to come. Downtown Roanoke also has several historic and otherwise significant murals and roof signs that have become part of the fabric of downtown. Downtown Roanoke's historic assets add authenticity and help preserve a sense of the past.

Downtown Roanoke is conveniently located to serve the region as the commercial, cultural, and entertainment hub and is situated close to the Roanoke River and Mill Mountain with views of the Blue Ridge at every turn. Its close proximity to the Appalachian Trail, Blue Ridge Parkway, and other scenic destinations make it a natural stepping off point for outdoor adventures. As the economy has transitioned from the railroad industry to education, medical, service, and tourism, Downtown Roanoke has retained its role as the central business district for the region. People from throughout the region have come to appreciate downtown as a place to shop, dine, enjoy festivals and events, and experience culture in a walkable urban environment.

POLICY 1-A: Encourage historic renovation and support the use of historic tax credits.
The historic tax credit program has played a significant role in Downtown Roanoke's revitalization. Roanoke has had over 130 tax credit projects, with the majority of them located in the downtown area. Pressures to trim budgets have brought the Virginia historic tax credit under legislative scrutiny with the possibility of caps or cuts to the program.

Research completed in 2014, by the Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Urban and Regional Analysis show that the state historic tax credit program has generated almost $4 billion in economic activity in the state from 1997 to 2013 through 2,375 projects, which supported about 31,000 jobs. Within Roanoke, there was nearly $314 million invested in revitalizing buildings, incorporating just over $78 million in state tax credits, during the study period.

Survey results and other public input for the Downtown Plan have shown that Roanoke supports the continued revitalization of historic properties with the downtown area. The use of tax credits should be encouraged throughout downtown and the City should encourage Virginia lawmakers to keep the highly effective incentive in place.



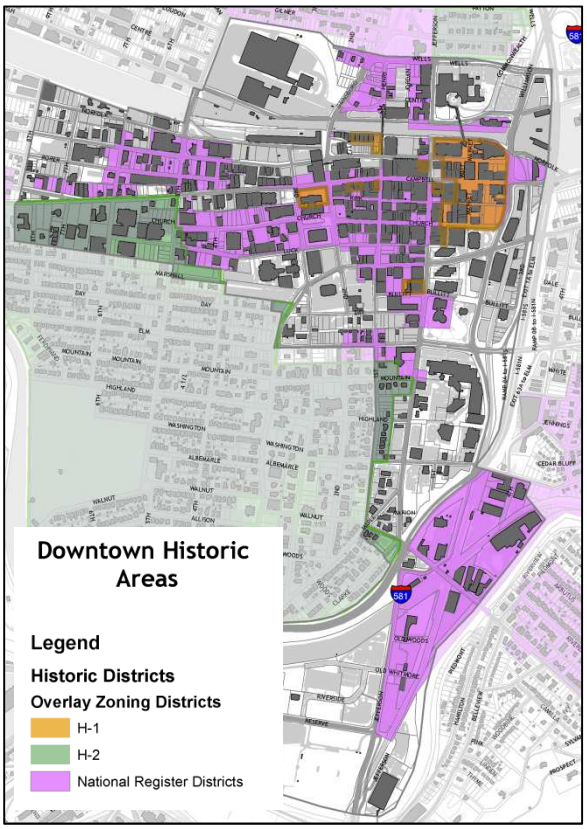
ACTION: Provide support for and lobby to maintain the historic tax credit.

POLICY 1-B: Protect historically significant buildings in the downtown.

Downtown Roanoke contains several National Historic Districts:

- Gainsboro Historic District;
- Henry Street Historic District;
- Norfolk & Western Historic District;
- Roanoke Downtown Historic District;
- City Market Historic District;
- River and Railroad Historic District;
- Southwest Historic District; and
- Salem Avenue/Roanoke Automotive Historic District

The downtown has two local historic districts. The H-1 covers the City Market area and the core of downtown, while the H-2 covers the Gainsboro and Old Southwest neighborhoods. There is a significant amount of overlap between the local and national districts, but there are many areas of downtown that are only covered under the National Historic District and not the local historic districts. Properties within the national districts are eligible for historic tax credits, but there are very little protections in place to protect these properties (unless tax credits or federal funds are involved).



The local historic district provides some protections, as modifications or repair to buildings in the H-1 and H-2 must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness either reviewed by staff or the Architectural Review Board. Guidelines for the local district guide the review process and they generally discourage demolitions or other changes that would diminish the historic character of the district. A survey of downtown properties outside of the

local historic district should be prepared to define an expansion area for the H-1 district, to provide protections to significant historic structures.

ACTION: Expand the local historic district to cover other significant areas of downtown.

POLICY 1-C: Preserve signs and murals that add to the fabric of Downtown.

In addition to the historical buildings, in the downtown there are many historic or artistic murals and roof top signs that support the unique character of Downtown Roanoke. The public recognized that downtown was special and part of that culminated from the signs and murals that contribute to the overall aesthetic of downtown.

Surveying these elements of downtown will assist with their preservation and allow them to be considered part of the inventory of art and culture within downtown.

ACTION: Document the significant signs and murals, recognizing them as part of the city's art and culture.

POLICY 1-D: Market the close proximity to the mountains, Roanoke River, Blue Ridge Parkway, and Appalachian Trail.

The Roanoke Regional Partnership, the economic development organization for the region, created the Roanoke Outside Foundation to showcase Roanoke as one of the best outdoor communities in the United States. As the region continues to capitalize on its natural amenities, Downtown Roanoke should also maintain strong connections to these nearby resources.

The greenway network provides a seamless connection from downtown to the Roanoke River, The Roanoke River Blueway, Mill Mountain, and beyond. Future expansion within the County hopes to extend the greenway out to the Blue Ridge Parkway near Explore Park. Downtown needs to find efforts to spotlight this connection.

New connections can be created as well. The Appalachian Trail (A.T.) has several trailheads within a 30 minute trip from downtown. With some of the best hiking along the trail, Dragon's Tooth, McAfee Knob, and Tinker Cliffs sections are clustered near Roanoke. The trailhead parking to access these sections has become overused and crowded on peak days. There are currently some resources available regarding transportation to the Appalachian Trail, but there

are no listed services specifically related to transporting people from Roanoke City to trailheads. Many of the transportation services are provided by individuals and not professional shuttle services.

A shuttle that runs on the weekends and can connect these major trailheads and other locations such as Carvin's Cove and the trailhead near Daleville, could not only alleviate parking concerns, but also make a strong connection between Downtown Roanoke and these nearby activities. Conference attendees, tourists, and out-of-town guests can extend their stay an extra day to take one of these amazing hikes. Locals can spend the morning at the City Market before heading on the shuttle to reach the trailhead with no concern for a full trailhead parking lot.

ACTION: Maintain greenway maps that can be used to help visitors explore beyond downtown.

ACTION: Support the inception of an AT shuttle connecting downtown to nearby trailheads.

POLICY 1-E: Celebrate the unique culture and growing diversity of Roanoke.

Roanoke has an array of events and festivals that help bring the community together. Beginning with the St. Patrick's Day Parade in March and continuing through December with the Dicken's of Christmas festivities and into January with Elmwood on Ice, the downtown is alive with events along major streets and locations such as the Market area, Elmwood Park, Dr. Pepper Park, and Rivers Edge Sports Complex. The restaurants and music venues continue to have a variety of entertainment that is the perfect complement to events occurring downtown. This variety of activities should continue to be inclusive and support the broader community.

ACTION: Encourage cultural, historical, and community based events within the downtown.

POLICY 1-F: Support Downtown Roanoke's position as the regional center for the Virginia's Blue Ridge area.

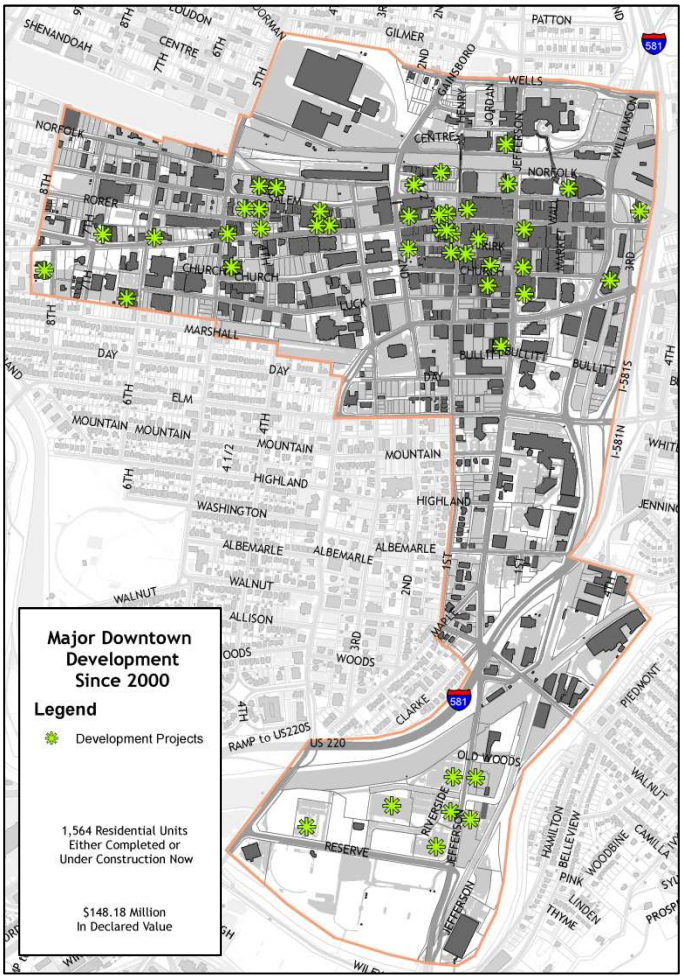
During the first half of the 20th Century, Downtown Roanoke was the premiere shopping destination in the region. Anchored by major department stores and complemented with smaller local businesses, downtown was bustling with activity. As the community grew more suburban, the department stores also moved out to regional malls, and downtown was left to reinvent itself. Roanoke's previous planning efforts helped lead the way supporting both private and public investment in improvements to keep downtown relevant and prosperous. Downtown Roanoke is still a major regional destination for people to live, shop, work, and play. As Roanoke goes forward into the rest of the 21st Century, it will need to build on its strength as a walkable urban environment with appropriate development patterns and urban design that complements the livability of Downtown Roanoke.

There has been a significant increase in market demand for walkable downtowns and neighborhoods. People of all walks of life are recognizing the benefits of these places. The ability to easily walk, take a bike, or a quick transit trip to your destination can expand the amount of time one can spend with friends, family, or community and reduce the amount of money spent on transportation. Walkable urban places are driving economic growth, as companies decide where to locate, in part, based on the quality of life a community can provide to its employees. Downtown Roanoke is a great asset to the region, as it provides a great example of a walkable urban place within a smaller city and region. Downtown should continue to create and expand its walkable urban environment to better showcase the high quality of life within the Roanoke region and attract new business and private investment. The City of Roanoke should review current development standards and adjust as necessary to strengthen the walkable urban environment. A *Pedestrian Area Plan* would also be valuable to make sure that Downtown Roanoke is poised to compete against other walkable urban areas in luring economic development and in providing the highest level of livability for residents, tourists, and other users of downtown. The plan would take into consideration the unique character of Downtown Roanoke and utilize best practices to suggest improvements to the walkability in and around downtown and strengthen connections from the core to other areas such as the River's Edge Sports Complex, the Civic Center, and the Jefferson Center.

ACTION: Review development standards/tools to ensure the proper mix of uses and design elements to reinforce a vibrant pedestrian environment.

ACTION: Develop a Pedestrian Area Plan that evaluates design standards, zoning, and streetscape elements.

2. Fill in the Gaps



Downtown Roanoke has seen a steady pattern of major developments since 2000 that has added over 1,500 new residential units, many revitalized commercial spaces and a variety of other uses; but downtown still has many empty storefronts, gaps in the streetscape, and areas that could be improved upon to improve the pedestrian experience. Many of the public's biggest concerns with downtown relate to these issues. The Heironimus Building was consistently mentioned as an eyesore as it sits empty at such a prominent location along Jefferson Street. Campbell Court is another area that requires some improvements. The Market area has seen many improvements over the years and a few minor changes could greatly improve functionality.

In addition, recent weather patterns have also reminded residents that Downtown Roanoke sits partially within a floodplain and contains a high percentage of impervious surface. Many members of the public commented on a need to improve the situation of flooding, which may include stormwater projects and other green infrastructure improvements. Stormwater improvements and sidewalk enhancements that help fill in the gaps within downtown can strengthen the experience of visitors and create better connections throughout downtown.

POLICY 2-A: Work to fill vacant storefronts.

As Downtown Roanoke continues to grow, it becomes even more imperative to find ways to fill empty storefronts, activate and better connect areas of downtown, and encourage downtown users to extend their stay by providing more opportunities for retail, dining, entertainment, or other services or businesses.

Within downtown there are several smaller buildings that provide great space for a small business to have a location within Downtown Roanoke. The City should actively seek resource opportunities for small business owners that could provide guidance on how to modify their business plan to locate within these downtown buildings. For example, a typical three-story building downtown could provide office or retail space on the first floor but have opportunities for income generation from residential rental units on the second and third floors. If a small

business owner was coached on how to use this rental income to offset the cost of their mortgage, it might help more small businesses to be located within their own building. This is a great way to encourage more retail within the downtown.

Linking small businesses with a mentorship may also be valuable. Giving small businesses the opportunity to have a mentorship with a larger, more established company can increase their success rates and help them establish themselves in their beginning years. According to U.S. Small Business Administration, 'a mentor can help navigate the complex challenges that often come with being a business owner, and the guidance from someone who has been there themselves can be a real asset'. The City of Roanoke could benefit from mentorships and educational programs that deal with restaurants, retail, and other business types to help new businesses become established in downtown.

A few downtown buildings under private ownership remain vacant. Some properties, including the Heironimus building, a former department store, and the former First National Exchange Bank building, often have unique characteristics specific to its former use and are therefore not easily adaptable to new uses. Efforts to recruit interested parties to these unique properties, including developers of historic properties, have been successful however none to date have proven to be economically feasible. Marketing and targeted recruitment efforts should continue in seeking new owners and tenants for these properties.

Likewise, while encouraging newer small businesses and recruiting other specific businesses, we need to actively support the existing businesses that help make Downtown Roanoke a special destination. Encouraging their involvement with Downtown Roanoke Inc. (DRI), helps provide the existing businesses with a forum to address issues that may arise. Attention to the needs of existing small businesses can increase retention as downtown grows, preserving some of the unique character of Downtown Roanoke. Changes within downtown are not always initially accepted, but efforts should be made to keep downtown businesses informed regarding proposed changes.

ACTION: Connect small businesses with information and resources to help them use downtown spaces.

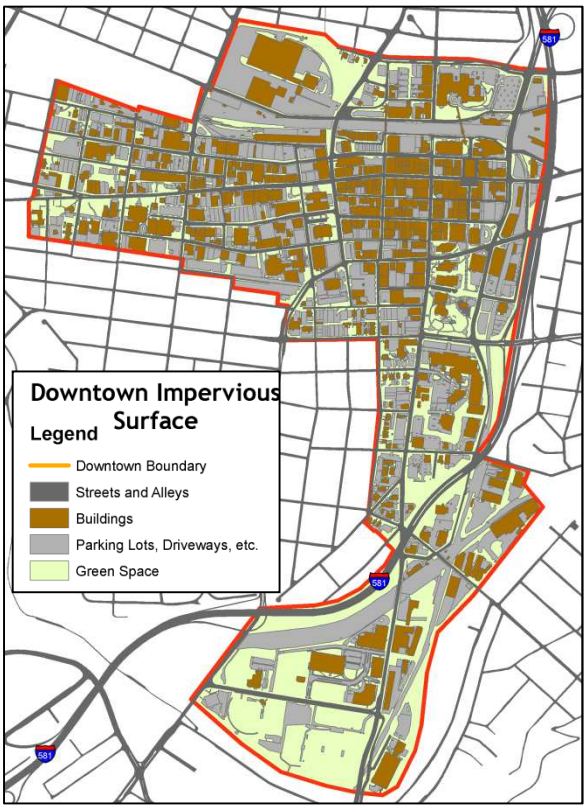
ACTION: Target and recruit businesses to occupy downtown buildings.

ACTION: Use DRI as a forum to connect with and support existing businesses.

POLICY 2-B: Repair voids in the streetscape and improve the pedestrian realm, while supporting infill development.

Streetscape improvements have improved the walkability and aesthetics of Downtown, but care should be made to maintain these elements and extend these treatments throughout downtown. Wide sidewalks, street trees, lights, trashcans, pedestrian crossings, and other elements help people feel more comfortable walking through downtown. As these elements fall into disrepair they should be fixed immediately to avoid creating a sense of disorder. Lighting is critical for maintaining a safe environment where all visitors and residents feel comfortable.

Extending the streetscape treatments is a strategy for tying different areas of downtown together. Visitors are more likely to continue their exploration of downtown, if they feel the areas are well connected and they do not feel that they have left the downtown area.



Parking lots and vacant lots can be an impediment to the extension of the pedestrian realm. Currently, a third of the downtown area is made up of parking lots, driveways, railroads, and other impervious surface, while only 20 percent is occupied by buildings. As downtown grows, infill development with structured parking should be encouraged. New surface parking lots should be discouraged and existing surface parking and vacant lots should be considered as development opportunities

The City of Roanoke should seek opportunities to create structured parking as part of a public private partnership when these development opportunities arise. The city should create a map of vacant or underused properties to help market these areas for development. It may be necessary for the city to look at possible incentives to encourage infill development within downtown.

ACTION: Make maintenance of existing streetscape elements a top priority in the downtown aided by regular inspection by DRI.

ACTION: Repair street lighting when necessary.

ACTION: Look for opportunities to extend the core streetscape elements, creating a continuous pedestrian experience.

POLICY 2-C: Improve the area around Campbell Court.

Throughout the public input process, Campbell Court was often a point of concern. The transit station is vital to the City of Roanoke and the surrounding transit service area. It is a critical point for transfers, adding accessibility for users. However, the station has inadequate lighting, undersized loading areas, and driveway aprons that abruptly cut into the streetscape of downtown. The Intermodal Transportation Study evaluated the potential for the redevelopment of the transit center in connection with the Amtrak station or platform. The addition of Amtrak to the downtown is not only a great boon for the region, but it also provides the perfect opportunity to find a public private partnership opportunity to move the transit center based on the ideas in the Intermodal Transportation Study.

The current condition of Salem and Campbell Avenues around Campbell Court could also be improved. On the Campbell Avenue side, redevelopment of the existing Campbell Court could provide active storefronts that help downtown visitors continue along Campbell and encourage economic development opportunities west of Jefferson Street.

Potential changes for Salem Avenue streetscape.

Salem Avenue behind Campbell Court could be better activated with appropriate streetscape. Currently, the sidewalk drops off behind Campbell Court, as the building opens up with bus

entrance and exit aprons. As Campbell Court is redeveloped, the sidewalk should be reestablished to encourage opportunities along this stretch of Salem Avenue and create better connections to recent development areas located just further west along Salem.

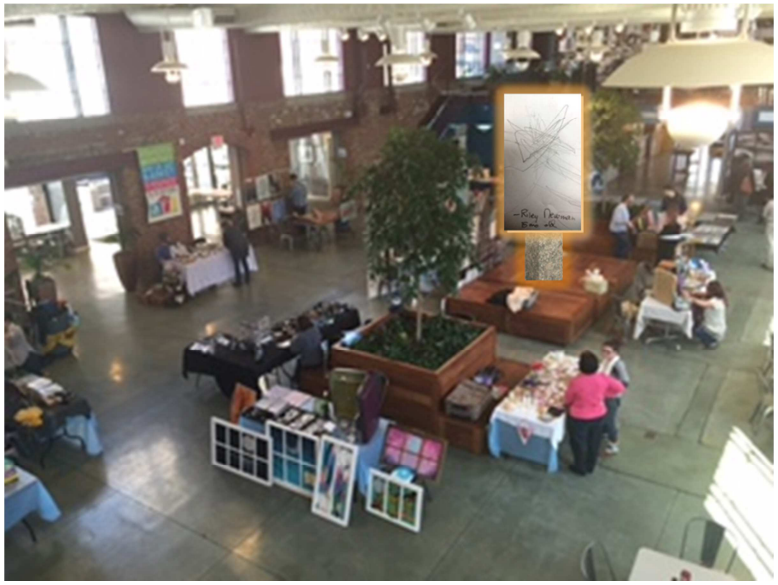
ACTION: Redevelop the transit center seeking opportunities to create connections with passenger rail and other transportation options.

ACTION: Improve streetscape along the Salem Avenue side of the Campbell Court area.

POLICY 2-D: Activate the City Market Building.

The City Market Building has done a great job of activating the exterior spaces, but the interior of the Market Building has a feeling of underuse, as it lost some of its intimacy when renovated. Strategies should be employed that make the space more engaging.

The City Market Building should be activated with portable market stalls and retail carts. These carts and stalls could be made for the purpose of temporary and portable retail. Other events and programming are important for the interior of the market building and utilizing portable retail, allows for that use to be moved for other programming. Other ideas to activate the City Market Building could include adding elements of play, integrating playground equipment or public art that is designed for play.



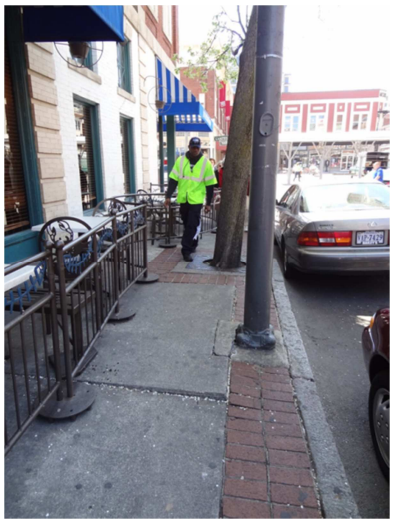
In order to bring more attention to the interior of the Market Building, there should be some collaboration to find a signature art piece that would draw visitors into the building and complement the mosaics at the entry and the nearby art museum. Suspended from the ceiling or set on a pedestal in the middle, the public art piece would be sheltered from the elements and could be of materials that are more appropriate for display inside.

Adding more retail and art into the interior of the City Market Building will help showcase this significant building and help support the businesses within the Market Building and in the surrounding Market area.

ACTION: Encourage the implementation of portable market stalls and retail carts within the City Market Building.

ACTION: Work with the Market Building Foundation, DRI, and the City Arts Commission to install signature art piece in the City Market Building.

POLICY 2-E: Enhance the pedestrian experience within the Market area.



The area along Wall and Market Streets on either side of the City Market Building currently has parking on both sides of the street. The sidewalks on the opposite sides of the Market Building are often partially impeded by outdoor dining that migrates beyond its permitted space and limits circulation. The issue of accessibility was brought up often in our public discussions, and this area in particular was called out as an area of concern.

As part of a charrette on streetscapes, stakeholders looked at this area and suggested wider sidewalks and the possibility of closing it for traffic altogether. At the same time there is a good deal of activity in this area and retaining some parking in this area is important for nearby businesses. Reduction of parking is a necessary tradeoff for enhancements of public spaces that improve the overall Market area.

Potential changes for Wall and Market Streets adjacent to City Market Building.

As Wall and Market Streets, are periodically closed for events, it seems an appropriate area to put in place a new treatment that will complement the Market Square area, meet the concerns of the public, and the needs of the surrounding businesses. Raising the street to eliminate the drop

off at the curb, would allow the area to be better used for events when the streets are closed. This street treatment could also stretch up Market all the way to Church Avenue to strengthen that connection from the City Market Building to Elmwood Park.

Eliminating parking on one side or both sides of Wall and Market Streets will allow for more usable sidewalk space that can alleviate the congestion on the sidewalks opposite the Market Building. The extra space would also allow for some streetscape improvements, with room for larger trees and outdoor dining areas. Typically the streets would remain open for traffic, but allow better pedestrian access along the sidewalks and when closed for traffic the street treatment would be more conducive for event-goers. These changes would also help the City Market Building better connect to Market Square and create a significant active public space.

ACTION: Raise the street to sidewalk level along Market and Wall Streets, to allow for better use when closed for events and to slow speeds when open for traffic.

ACTION: Expand the sidewalks on the opposite side from the City Market Building.

POLICY 2-F: Support the City Farmer's Market.

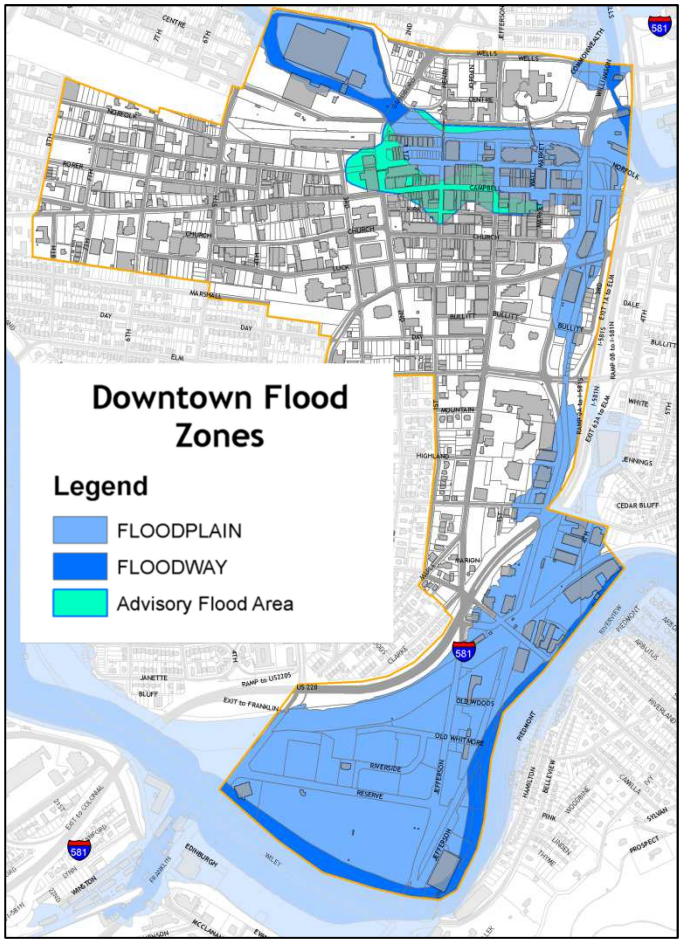
The City of Roanoke is fortunate to have a farmers market that is open daily and has been in operation since 1882. The activity created by the Historic Roanoke City Market helps enliven the Market area and is a major draw for visitors to Downtown Roanoke. Although the market is open every day except Christmas and New Year's Day, there are a limited number of vendors on slower days and the southern block of Market often has market stalls that are empty. The emptiness of the market stalls on the slower days of the week give the sense that the market is not successful. Efforts should be made to activate these spaces, either by continuing ongoing recruitment of new vendors that have an interest in using the space during the slower days, or removing the fixed tables and utilizing a table that can be secured to the structure when not in use to open up areas for pedestrians and outdoor dining opportunities. This would activate the space when not in use by the regular market vendors, and would still allow the vendors to use this space when the market is fully occupied, typically Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. On these busy days, the vendors can also spill over into Market Square.

As part of an overall downtown mobility strategy, closure of Market Street, from Campbell Avenue south to Church Avenue, for all traffic other than vendors should be considered during market hours on the busy days of the week.

ACTION: Study opportunities to activate the section of market stalls along Market Street between Church and Kirk.

POLICY 2-G: Support appropriate floodplain management.

Downtown Roanoke has an existing FEMA recognized 100 year floodplain. The downtown area has an area of floodplain to the north resulting from a channelized stream. There is a portion of floodplain to the east of downtown and to the south there is a larger area of 100 year floodplain and an area of floodway because of the adjacency of the Roanoke River.



The City has done some preliminary work looking at the floodplain area to the north and based on the surrounding topography, it appears that an even larger area of downtown could be subject to flooding during a 100 year storm event. The City has initiated a study to better define the flood prone area in the core downtown area.

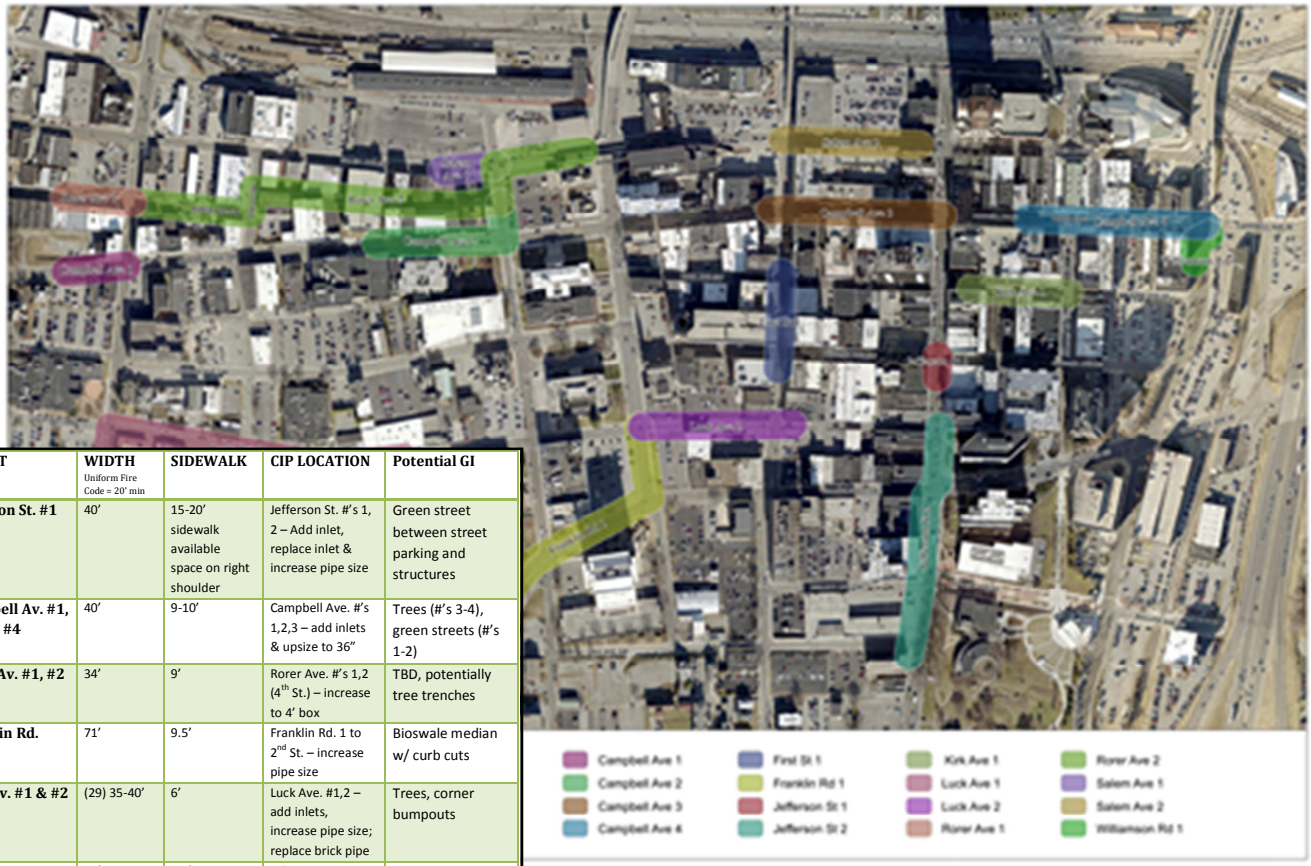
ACTION: Use the downtown flood study to advise downtown property owners of the flood potential for their properties.

ACTION: Make the extended floodplain evaluation available to the public.

POLICY 2-H: Reduce flooding by encouraging stormwater and green infrastructure projects in downtown.

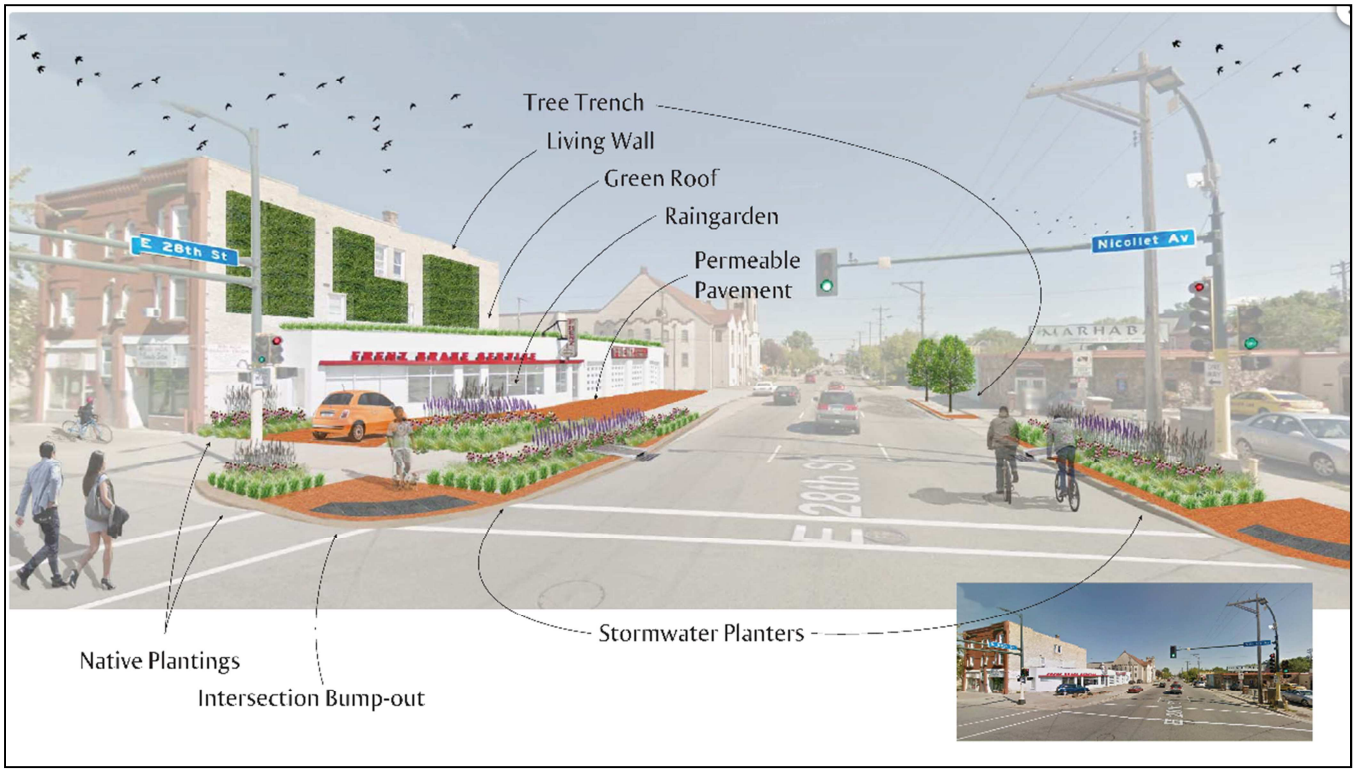
As work on this plan progressed, concern grew over flooding in the downtown area. Several flood events occurred during the summer of 2016 sparking the public's interest in this problem. The events were sparked by storms with a high rainfall rate in a short period of time. The water receded quickly but only after inundating some of the downtown streets. The issue of flooding is not a new one, as a channeled stream flows underneath a portion of downtown creating an area of floodplain within downtown. In addition, the large amount of impervious surface within downtown creates high rates of stormwater flow that collects in the low lying floodplain area at the northern end of downtown. Flooding in this area has been mentioned throughout previous planning efforts and the occasional flood event is not entirely new.

The City has increased efforts to handle stormwater issues and has a list of stormwater improvements within downtown in the queue for funding. These projects can be temporarily disruptive, but the long term benefits may warrant this short term interruption. As Downtown Roanoke is critical to the economic success of the city and the region, it is imperative that stormwater projects within the downtown area receive priority.



STREET	WIDTH Uniform Fire Code = 20' min	SIDEWALK	CIP LOCATION	Potential GI
Jefferson St. #1 & #2	40'	15-20' sidewalk available space on right shoulder	Jefferson St. #'s 1, 2 – Add inlet, replace inlet & increase pipe size	Green street between street parking and structures
Campbell Av. #1, #2, #3, #4	40'	9-10'	Campbell Ave. #'s 1,2,3 – add inlets & upsize to 36"	Trees (#'s 3-4), green streets (#'s 1-2)
Rorer Av. #1, #2	34'	9'	Rorer Ave. #'s 1,2 (4th St.) – increase to 4' box	TBD, potentially tree trenches
Franklin Rd.	71'	9.5'	Franklin Rd. 1 to 2nd St. – increase pipe size	Bioswale median w/ curb cuts
Luck Av. #1 & #2	(29) 35-40'	6'	Luck Ave. #1,2 – add inlets, increase pipe size; replace brick pipe	Trees, corner bumpouts
Salem Av #1 & #2	40'	6.5'	Salem Ave. #1,2 - add replace inlets & pipe	Trees, corner bumpouts
Kirk Av #1	20'	9'	Kirk Ave. 1 – add inlet and increase pipe size	Stormwater Tree, retrofit existing bumpouts with vegetation and curb cuts
First St.	30'	6'-9.5'	Two DI-3, L=12' and 15" RCP connecting directly to First St. trunk line	Stormwater drainage well
Williamson Rd.	60'	9'	Add DI and pipe	Stormwater trees, stormwater drainage well
Elmwood Park			Project Complete	Permeable Pavers, rainwater harvesting

Other improvements, such as adding tree canopy, green roofs, rain gardens, rainwater harvesting, and green streets should also be pursued by the city and by property owners when opportunity arises. These smaller green infrastructure projects have the potential to reduce some level of runoff and thereby improve the overall flooding potential. Green infrastructure is becoming more popular because of the multifaceted benefits to the urban environment and community. Community benefits can include increased urban livability and opportunities for education and engagement. Multiple studies have shown environmental benefits of green infrastructure to include reduced flooding, improved water quality, increased groundwater recharge, reduced public expenditures on traditional gray infrastructure, reduced energy use, improved air quality, and enhanced aesthetics and property values.



Examples of green infrastructure projects along a streetscape. Source: Metro Blooms.

Although flooding within Downtown Roanoke has been an occasional event over the past century and a half, there is now a growing focus on stormwater, and the city is implementing best management practices to decrease the stormwater flows, both reducing propensity for flooding and reducing some of the contamination from runoff downstream. Flood proofing measures can help better protect properties within the floodplain.

ACTION: Identify stormwater improvement projects in downtown to prioritize.

ACTION: Increase green infrastructure, such as: tree canopy, green roofs, rain gardens, rainwater harvesting, and green streets.

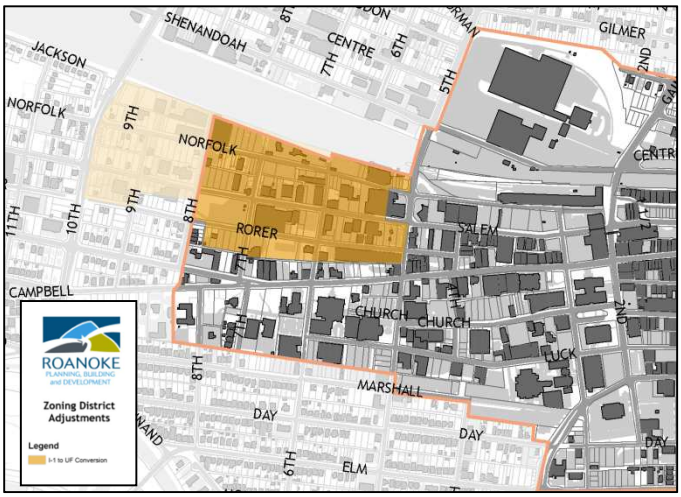
ACTION: Educate property owners in floodplain areas to encourage appropriate flood proofing measures.

3. Expand

Downtown Roanoke is growing. Residential growth and new commercial areas to the west of downtown have opened up new opportunities and areas for future growth. The amazing transformation of the South Jefferson Redevelopment Area into a prosperous and expanding mixed use area anchored by Roanoke's emergent Health and Education sectors has expanded downtown's vibrancy to the south. The area to the north of downtown has historically been separated by the railroad lines, but the success of the Hotel Roanoke and the Roanoke Higher Education Center have helped forge better connections with downtown and offers more opportunity for developments that connect with the nearby residents. The Downtown Roanoke 2017 plan has integrated these growing areas into the narrative of downtown as a key opportunity for thoughtful expansion. Efforts should be made to create improved transitions between the existing core of downtown and the greater downtown area.

POLICY 3-A: Build on new growth to the west of downtown by encouraging redevelopment of vacant buildings.

Revitalization projects along Salem Avenue and Campbell Avenue have helped expand downtown's footprint west and created new opportunities for future development. A substantial increase in apartments and some significant commercial spaces in addition to the existing anchors such as the Virginia Museum of Transportation, the Jefferson Center, and the Kirk Family YMCA breathed new life into this side of downtown. The significance and success of these projects have opened the door for more adaptive reuse and development to the west of downtown.



The area just beyond this current western expansion has some active industrial uses but is abundant with unused industrial and warehouse buildings. Many of these properties are still zoned I-1, Light Industrial. Although it is important to still allow some light industrial uses for these buildings, it seems imperative as Downtown Roanoke expands west to allow a broader array of uses in these buildings, such as mixed use, retail, and residential. The current I-1 parcels in this area west of downtown should be rezoned to UF, Urban Flex. This is the same zoning that was used for a portion of the Wasena neighborhood that was formerly industrial, adjacent to the Roanoke River and Roanoke River Greenway. The Urban Flex zoning district accommodates industrial uses but also allows for mixed use development such as occurred with the River House development. Following the same process as implemented in Wasena, a rezoning to the west area of downtown should be preceded by outreach to property owners.

The increase in residential units in the western side of downtown has created a growing demand for parks and open space to accommodate new residents and their pets. With larger park space located in the core of downtown, the need is primarily for pocket parks, small open space areas, which can be used as additional space for outdoor activities. There is potential that a pocket park in this area could also be used in a stormwater management role, capturing and storing stormwater by integrating green infrastructure and stormwater best management practices.

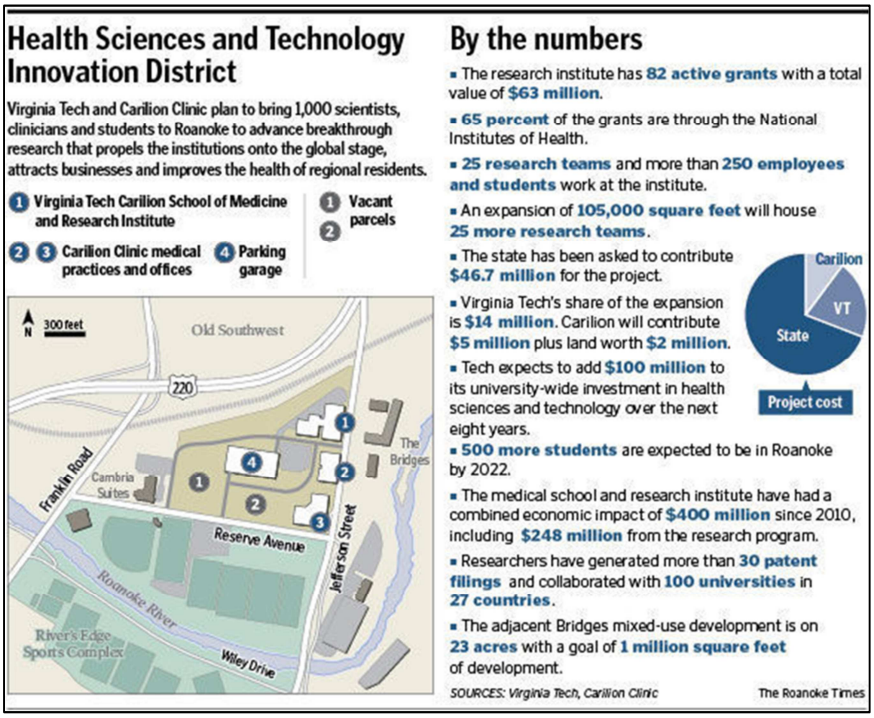
ACTION: Rezone Industrial zoned property to the west of downtown to Urban Flex.

ACTION: Look for opportunities to partner with Stormwater and Parks and Rec to create a pocket park area to the west of downtown.

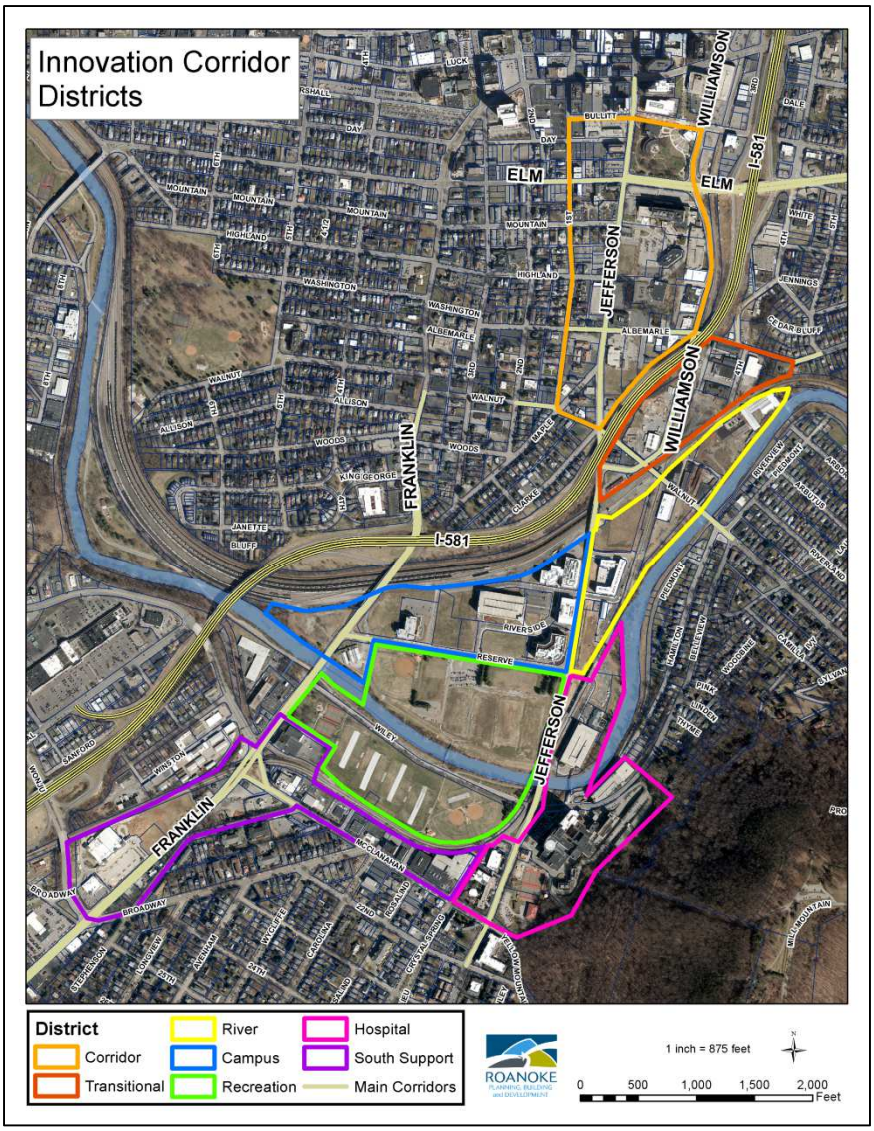
POLICY 3-B: Capitalize on the expansion of the South Jefferson Redevelopment Area.

The South Jefferson Redevelopment Area is a major success story. This area south of downtown was formerly a major industrial area, with railroad uses, a grain plant, a scrap metal operation, a trolley barn, warehouses, and other uses. In 2001, the South Jefferson Redevelopment Area Plan was approved and paved the way for a major economic development initiative for the City of Roanoke and Carilion Clinic. The Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority partnered in the acquisition of blighted property and the City of Roanoke used EPA Brownfields grants to assist with assessments and cleanup to help many of the properties enter into a voluntary remediation program through the state Department of Environmental Quality. The Bridges development sits on the site of the former Virginia Scrap Iron and Metal Company site.

The Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute formed in 2007. The medical school opened in 2009, with the research institute opening in 2010. Now recognized as the world leader in brain research, the research institute is preparing to double in size.



Virginia Tech and Carilion Clinic have formed a new $25 million venture capital fund as they look to invest and prepare for future growth that could spin off from the work occurring at the Research Institute. Hoping to keep some of this innovation in the area, they are looking at the area between the core of downtown and the South Jefferson Redevelopment Area as a potential Innovation Corridor, and hope to work with the City to help shape future development in this area.



Once the general concepts for this district are established, City Council will need to consider the adoption of any plans and guidelines necessary to establish the Innovation Corridor.

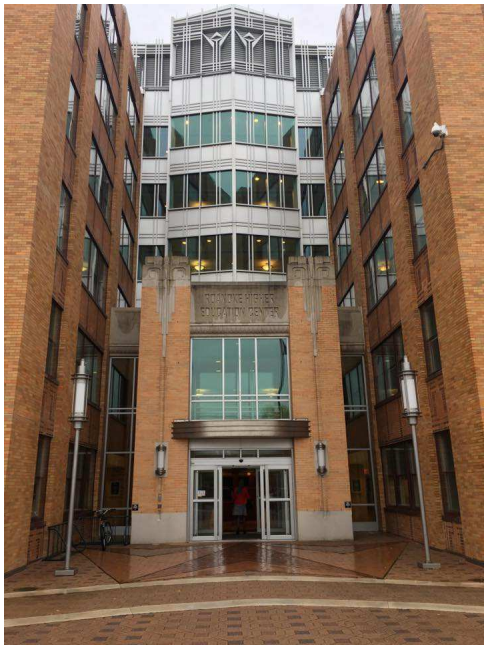
The proposed area in its entirety extends from Franklin Road at Wonju to the South Jefferson Redevelopment Area and north through downtown along Jefferson Street and across to the Hotel Roanoke and the Higher Education Center. The area to the south has been discussed as seven distinct Districts, as shown in the map above, with the area to the north identified as the Creativity District.

As the South Jefferson Redevelopment Area grows and expands along the Innovation Corridor, it is important that this growth area to the south is well integrated with downtown.

ACTION: Create a strategic plan to support the Innovation Corridor.

ACTION: As the Innovation Corridor grows, keep it coherent with Downtown through good connections and signage.

POLICY 3-C: Encourage development to the north of downtown to be connected with the surrounding neighborhoods.



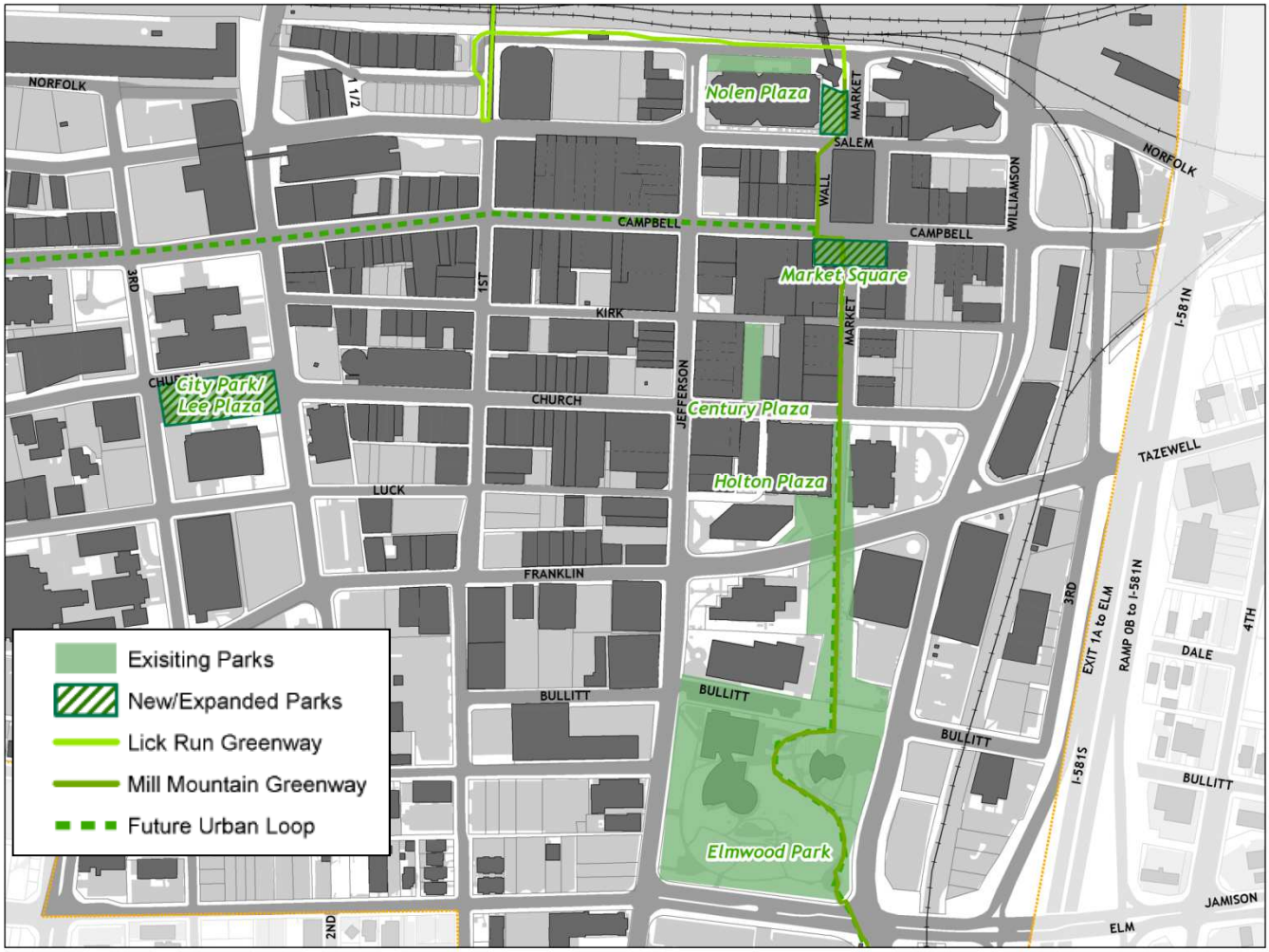
Urban renewal projects and the decline of Henry Street as a commercial and cultural center resulted in Gainsboro being disconnected from downtown. The MLK pedestrian bridge has helped to forge a better physical connection; and the Roanoke Higher Education Center and the expansion of the AJ Pollard Culinary Arts program are great examples of how major renovation and new development can expand the footprint of downtown while also providing services to the surrounding neighborhoods. Opportunities for development in this area should be evaluated based on how they could provide better opportunities to the neighborhood. Public art should continue to be added at key gateways to the neighborhood to help celebrate the history of the area. This could include an expansion of the History Walk project.

ACTION: Encourage development projects that serve and provide transition to the surrounding neighborhoods.

4. Enhance public space

As Downtown Roanoke builds on what makes it unique and works to fill in the gaps while expanding its footprint, it is important that downtown remains welcoming and accessible. One of the most important roles that can be played by the City is in the maintenance and development of the public space, which includes parks, plazas, open space, streets, and streetscape. Making minor improvements in the public realm can help establish Downtown Roanoke as a top-notch destination while improving circulation and access.

The core of downtown, from Jefferson Street at Elm Avenue up to the City Market Building is well served with park space and the City of Roanoke has created an axis of public space that is a strong feature of downtown. This existing park space is used for various events and activities and helps create a celebrated vista and seamless pedestrian access from Elmwood Park to the Market area. Holton Plaza is now complete and will add to this axis of public space. Minor additions and expansions of parks downtown could help strengthen this core area and provide additional park space to serve other areas of downtown.



Improvements to the streets and streetscape can transform the way people access different areas of downtown. As downtown expands south connecting to the South Jefferson Street Redevelopment Area, improvements to the streetscape can help to extend the walkability and bike friendly elements of downtown into this new growth area. Likewise, minor improvements to the circulation pattern of downtown can shorten travel times and eliminate confusion. Other enhancements to the public space can have big rewards. The provision of public art and streetscape elements help create a place that people want to live, shop, work and play.

POLICY 4-A: Improve the empty lot next to the Wells Fargo Tower into an active plaza.
The empty lot next to the Wells Fargo Tower is home to the annual Christmas Tree display and is often used as space for other events, but during the majority of the year it sits as a barren void that greets visitors entering the Market area from the pedestrian bridge. Located just north of the City Market Building and directly south of the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center and the connecting pedestrian walkway, the lot has the potential to be a key gateway into downtown.

Potential design for Nolen Plaza.

The lot should be framed with landscaping to create an open plaza, Nolen Plaza. Named after John Nolen, who wrote the City of Roanoke's 1907 and 1928 Comprehensive Plans, the plaza should commemorate Roanoke's 100 years of planning excellence. The plaza is also envisioned as the "zero-mile" location for the greenway system. The plaza will be left open on the Market Street side to allow for various programming, including placement of the Christmas Tree, construction of a stage, and the ingress and egress of food trucks.

The plaza should include trees, landscaping, and a feature that will help activate the space when not in use for events. The center of the plaza could be enhanced with a circular splashpad that will create an active use during the warm months, as children (and those young at heart) splash in the fountain-like sprays of water. Likewise, a piece of art that is interactive could also help activate the space. Another option is a passive water feature that incorporates flowing water which could be built along the edges of the space to help define the boundaries of the plaza along with landscaping and trees. The majority of the space should remain vegetated and walkways should utilize permeable pavement when possible. Other green infrastructure strategies should be employed within the landscaped areas to help capture stormwater.

Creating Nolen Plaza, will complement the existing axis of public space and bring year round activity to this vacant lot. The plaza has the potential to be one of the more active areas of downtown. As conference-goers traverse the pedestrian bridge they will be greeted by a vibrant plaza that highlights the history of planning efforts that have combined to help make Downtown Roanoke a truly special destination.

ACTION: Create Nolen Plaza by framing the space with landscaping, leaving the Market Street side open to facilitate other uses.

ACTION: Add a feature to Nolen Plaza to activate the space that still allows for the Christmas Tree and other event needs.

POLICY 4-B: Create new park spaces.

With over 1,500 residential units added since 2000, and more on the way, downtown has more residents and a few more pets. With limited opportunities to acquire new park space, the City should look to expand upon the properties already within its inventory. Implementing some minor changes can help add outdoor space without the high cost of acquisition.

Adjacent to the Municipal Building's south entrance, Lee Plaza is a small plaza that includes the Roanoke Valley War Memorial. Expanding this plaza will create an opportunity for a beautiful civic space, enclosed by buildings, which can serve the growing west side of Downtown Roanoke and provide ample space for public events and other programming. The potential expansion of this plaza into a larger park is restricted by the encroachment of a parking lot and an overly-wide street. Decreasing the width of Church Avenue and removing the interior parking lot will create substantial space for additional green space. The loss of parking will be mitigated by the addition of more street parking along both 2nd and 3rd Streets.

Additional parking could be added along 2nd and 3rd Streets if the 200 block of Church Avenue is closed entirely. The complete closure of this section of Church Avenue would create some disruption in the downtown street network; but, Church Avenue is already affected by an awkward offset intersection and has two parallel streets nearby that can accommodate additional traffic. Changes to the street network should be considered as part of an overall downtown mobility strategy.

Potential redesign of Lee Plaza into a larger City Park.

The City should also investigate opportunities to create small public spaces within the right of way. Utilizing the streetscape to create small linear parks can connect different areas of downtown, provide green space and seating, and reduce stormwater along the public right of way. Small parklets, also can relieve some of the need for park space. These tiny park spaces are typically reclaimed parking spaces that can be permanently or temporarily sectioned off with seating and plantings. As changes to streets and streetscaping occurs, thought should be put into the possibility of creating small public spaces within the right of way.

ACTION: Redesign the area around Lee Plaza to create a larger City Park by removing the interior parking lot and using Church Avenue space.

ACTION: Create small public spaces within the right of way.

POLICY 4-C: Improve connections to South Jefferson with improvements to streetscape.
With Downtown Roanoke's expansion south to the South Jefferson Redevelopment Area, expectations are high that the area between these two ends of downtown will see substantial growth and development as the Innovation Corridor advances into fruition. As this occurs, more pedestrians and bicyclists will be utilizing South Jefferson Street and demand will be high for this corridor to promote a strong sense of livability that encourages investment and supports the residential market. Improvements to the streetscape are a great way to improve accessibility and link this area to the core of downtown.

Potential changes along Jefferson Street between Elm Avenue and the Jefferson Street Bridge.

Fortunately, there is room to make some minor changes along South Jefferson Street. While the stretch from Elm Avenue south to the Jefferson Street Bridge is four lanes, it only has the traffic to support two lanes. A road diet along this stretch is not only preferable to allow for more pedestrian improvements and an improved sense of safety, but it is also warranted from the typical traffic counts. Decreasing the traffic to one lane in each direction with turn lanes at the traffic lights and where needed will allow for expanded sidewalks, curb extensions, and street parking. Bike lanes will help bicyclists traverse the Jefferson Street Bridge before transitioning

back into a shared lane with motorists as they continue into downtown. Improvements to street lighting and the addition of street trees will help create a more pedestrian and bike friendly corridor. Students and workers will be able to safely commute without a car and reduce congestion. It will also help solidify this South Jefferson Avenue corridor as Roanoke's next high growth area.

Likewise, South Jefferson Street heading north from Elm Avenue to Salem Avenue has four traffic lanes open from 7am to 9am on the weekdays. During the other times of day and the weekend the outer lanes are used as parking. Closing these outer lanes to traffic permanently would allow for some sidewalk expansion, curb bump-outs, and parking. These changes would allow for more trees and green infrastructure, shorten pedestrian crossing distances, allow more space for directional signage, and improve sight triangles for cars turning onto Jefferson Street.

ACTION: Repurpose right of way along South Jefferson Street, both south and north of Elm.

ACTION: Implement pedestrian and bicycle improvements and additional parking as appropriate for each section, to include bike lanes, expanded sidewalk, street trees, curb bump outs, on-street parking, crosswalks, and green infrastructure.

POLICY 4-D: Improve mobility throughout downtown streets.

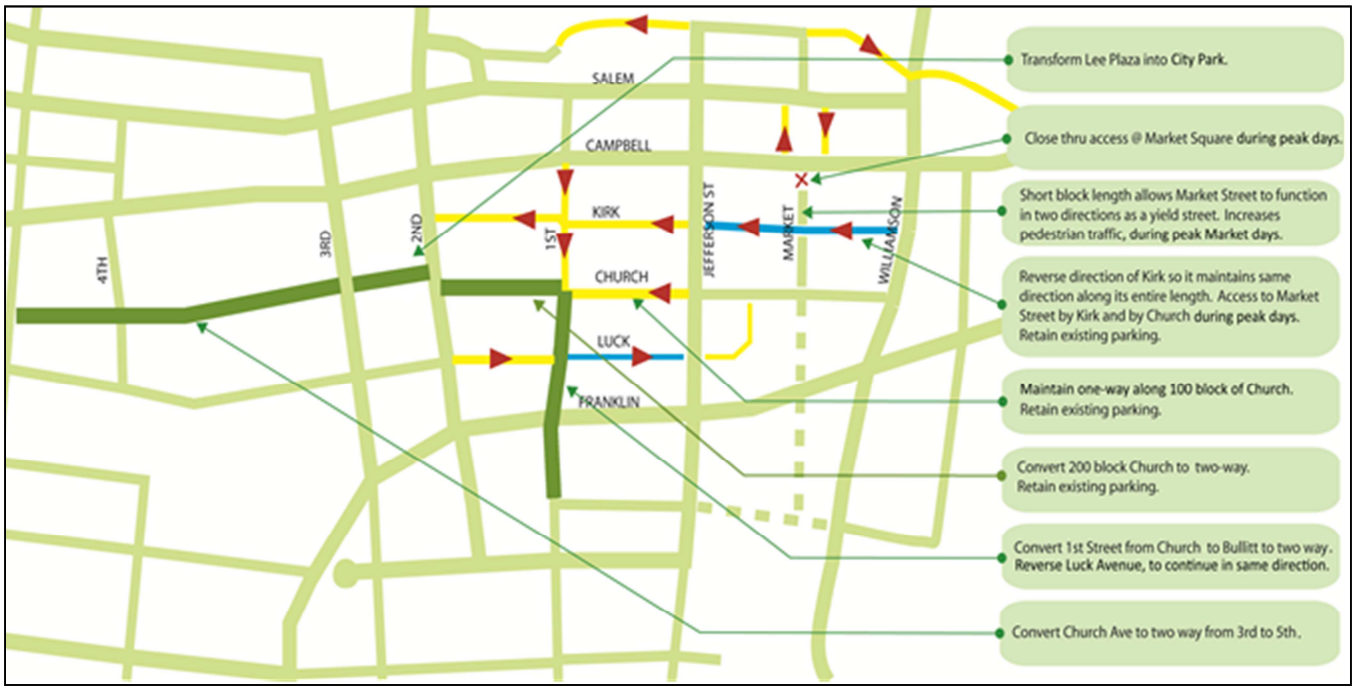
Most, if not all, Downtown Roanoke's streets originally had two-way traffic. Several Roanoke streets were converted to one-way traffic after World War II when the use of the automobile became the norm, suburban growth was rampant, and families began living further away from downtown. The one-way streets were designed to ferry people out of downtown, contributing to the decline seen in this era, because traffic was faster, drivers were less likely to notice storefronts and pedestrians felt out of place. Restoring two-way traffic is a tried and true revitalization strategy. Salem and Campbell Avenues were both converted back to two-way in the early 2000s, with considerable objection. Since then, downtown has prospered and many now support the changes after initially opposing the idea.

At present, 1st Street, and Church, Luck, and Kirk Avenues are the significant one-way streets in downtown. Conversion to two way streets would greatly benefit: public safety, as emergency response vehicles could respond more efficiently and traffic speeds would be slower; property values, as research has found an increase in property values along streets converted from one-way to two-way; and overall livability, as studies show that people view two way streets in downtown as more desirable and stress-free.

Analysis of these streets should be done to determine if the current traffic pattern is optimal or if some changes are warranted. Potential changes may include conversion to two-way traffic, redirection of one-way traffic and streetscape improvements. In converting one-way streets to two-way traffic as much on-street parking as possible should be retained and new opportunities

for green infrastructure should be considered. Specific changes to the direction of streets should be coordinated with property owners and businesses as part of a separate process and not decided within a larger area-wide plan. The Downtown Roanoke 2017 plan hopes to give some direction to those future discussions by describing current situations and suggesting some future improvements.

One of many options to improve circulation in Downtown Roanoke.



Church Avenue between Jefferson and 5th Street is the largest one-way street. Church Avenue between Jefferson Avenue and 1st Street is significantly narrower than the rest of the street. Conversion of this block to two-way traffic would reduce on-street parking, as one side would need to be removed. Conversion to two-way should be evaluated for the entire length of Church Avenue (Jefferson to 5th Streets), but particular attention should be paid to the block between Jefferson and 1st Streets to weigh the potential impact.

Kirk and Luck Avenues and portions of 1st Street are much narrower. 1st Street should be converted to two way, except for the narrow portion between Campbell and Church Avenues. Both Kirk and Luck Avenues have one-way traffic in opposite directions. Kirk Avenue is split by Jefferson Street and Luck Avenue is split by 1st Street. This negatively effects circulation as drivers are forced to either use heavily traveled Campbell Avenue or Franklin Road to Jefferson Street in order to access the blocks east of 2nd Street. Portions of these streets should be reversed to keep them in a single direction and they should be modified along with other changes to improve the overall circulation.

Potential changes for Church Avenue between 3rd and 5th Streets

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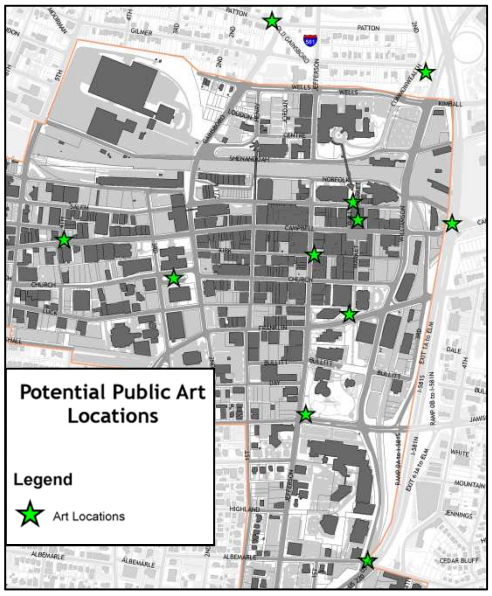
ACTION: Develop a Downtown Mobility Strategy and work with stakeholders to implement.

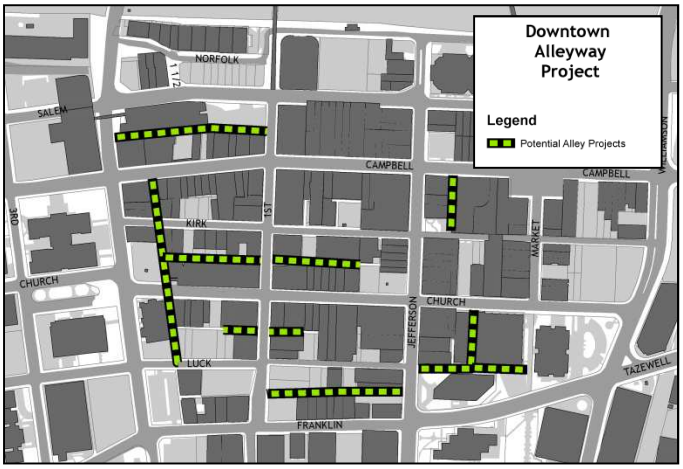
POLICY 4-E: Add art and other treatments to add vibrancy to downtown.

The City has done a tremendous job supporting public art throughout downtown. The Roanoke Arts Commission oversees the implementation of the Roanoke Public Art Plan, adopted in 2006. The Commission has overseen the installation of dozens of temporary and permanent public art pieces within the downtown. The City has also installed art on the city buses and trashcans in addition to supporting several mural projects. During public discussion for the Downtown Plan there was widespread support for public art and often a desire for more installations throughout downtown.



There are several opportunities for additional public art in the downtown. As mentioned, the City Market Building would be an ideal location for a significant art piece that is a major attraction

to downtown. In addition, some of the new and old park spaces would benefit from the addition of public art. At the corner of Elmwood Park where Jefferson Street and Elm Avenue meet, a public art piece would act as a gateway to the park and signify the connection between the Innovation Corridor and the core of downtown. As Holton Plaza is completed, public art would be a great addition to this space. Public art would be an important addition within the proposed Nolen Plaza, City Park (the redesigned Lee Plaza area), and the potential pocket park along Campbell Avenue. Likewise, public art can be used to help with connections under I-581 and to celebrate the history of the neighborhoods to the north of downtown.



Another way to add vibrancy within the downtown is to pursue ways to liven up the alleys. The City's Solid Waste Management division established five sealed compactors within the core of downtown that accept trash and recycling from residents and businesses. This has contributed to a clean, attractive streetscape within downtown, free of clutter, unpleasant odors, unwanted pests, and debris. The alleyways downtown in particular have benefitted from this change in solid waste pickup. The alleys are located throughout downtown and offer the opportunity for various treatments to liven up the area. In other locations, lighting, arched gateways, plantings, and public art installations have been used to brighten up these otherwise neglected areas.

Additional lighting in alleyways can be used to create a more welcoming and safe atmosphere. Lights can be streamed in zigzags across the top of the alleyways. An arch could be installed at the entrance to an alley to catch pedestrians' eyes. Plantings can be installed vertically on the walls, or placed in planters on the sides of the alleys. Pervious pavement retrofits could be completed to reduce stormwater runoff. Art could have a historic or cultural relevance to Roanoke, or be commissioned by a local artist. Possibilities include a tile mosaic, woodworking, collage, or mural. This piece of art could be interactive, engaging

ALLEY #111, AUSTIN, TX, Completed April 2013
http://www.fyoog.com/20-ft-wide/ 1

people to take pictures with the wall, etc. Pop up art shows rotating from alley to alley is another way to focus art into these areas. Alleyways could be themed, based on their history or points of interest that they currently help connect. The treatments within the alleys will help establish them as outside rooms.

These alleys should also be considered for opportunities for event space, alley parties, and other temporary programming or permanently closed to traffic to create public space that could further integrate the alleys into the fabric of downtown. Downtown Roanoke's alleyways have the potential to be a positive, multi-use space instead of space that community members typically avoid. The renovation of Roanoke's downtown alleyways could be a draw for downtown and generate more outdoor areas for people to gather.

ACTION: Expand art installations to other key areas of downtown.

ACTION: Liven up the alleys with art, lights, and other unique treatments.

POLICY 4-F: Reclaim public spaces and amenities for appropriate civic use by all.

The public had a lot of concern regarding anti-social behavior and the effect this behavior had on people's perceptions of Downtown Roanoke. Due to this concern, efforts have been made in the past to eliminate seating in public spaces. Unfortunately, this has not deterred panhandling and anti-social behavior but has instead prevented people from using these spaces, in essence making the problem worse.

The best way to handle the problem is to make our public spaces attractive and functional for everyone. If these spaces can be activated and used regularly, the mere presence of 'eyes on the street', a term coined by Jane Jacobs to describe the activity and presence of street life in her seminal, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, can detract the anti-social behavior. There is no set tipping point, and each location is likely different. Some locations may not attract enough people to warrant the addition of amenities, but those public spaces that are ripe for activity should be programmed as such.

If an undesirable element is using the chairs and tables that are placed within the space, then more table and chairs should be added to create opportunities for others to use the space and create the 'eyes on the street' element that will begin to deter the anti-social behavior. In doing so, it is pertinent to use seating that is designed for urban areas. Often this seating will be built in a way to deter users from lying down to help minimize the issue of overnight users.

> *Places designed with distrust get what they are looking for and it is in them, ironically, that you will most likely find a (undesirable). You will find (undesirables) elsewhere, but it is the empty places they prefer; it is in the empty places that they are conspicuous – almost as if, unconsciously, the design was contrived to make them so.*
>
> The Social Life of Small Urban Places, William H. Whyte

In order to better manage downtown's public spaces, the City should work closely with the City Police Department. Market Square has recently been adopted as a city park, which will allow enforcement against late night loitering. During the public planning process, the police department was often complimented for their efforts working within the downtown area but comments often suggested the need for more enforcement. The City should work closely with Downtown Roanoke Inc. and the City Police Department to monitor the situation of anti-social behavior in the downtown area.

Active public spaces are a primary element for placemaking, and if Downtown Roanoke is to achieve success as a walkable urban place that contributes to the region's livability, then efforts should be made to maintain public spaces that are not mere blank, lifeless plazas but comfortable locations to sit and enjoy the movements of the city, eat lunch, place a phone call, scan the headlines, or work on one's mobile device. The addition of seating is not a guarantee that anti-social behavior will be reduced, but at least downtown's prominent public spaces will be accessible for everyone.

ACTION: Put in place seating that is designed for urban areas. Create environments to encourage 'eyes on the street' within downtown public spaces.

ACTION: Work with police department to reduce anti-social behavior.

5. Strengthen Connections

Downtown Roanoke should be accessible to everyone and efforts should be made to improve the way the public navigates and arrives to downtown. Within downtown, visitors and other users should be able to navigate from one point of interest to the other, encouraging exploration and discovery. Once users experience the multi-faceted nature of downtown, they are more likely to return, make purchases, attend events, and enjoy the ease of access and abundant amenities available. Likewise, connections to the neighborhoods, the pedestrian and bicycle network, and other modes of transportation are critical to help Downtown Roanoke be the heart of the City and the region.

The Downtown Roanoke 2017 plan survey found that a strong majority of those that visit downtown arrive via automobile. Downtown should greet those arrivals with adequate and easy to follow information related to parking availability and location. As better connections are made to the surrounding neighborhoods and with other modes of transportation, there is the potential to increase the number of regular users arriving without a vehicle. Decreasing the percentage of users that arrive by car will help alleviate some of the demand for parking, which is particularly important during peak periods and special events. Increasing the user-friendliness of Downtown Roanoke will benefit both new visitors and regular users alike.

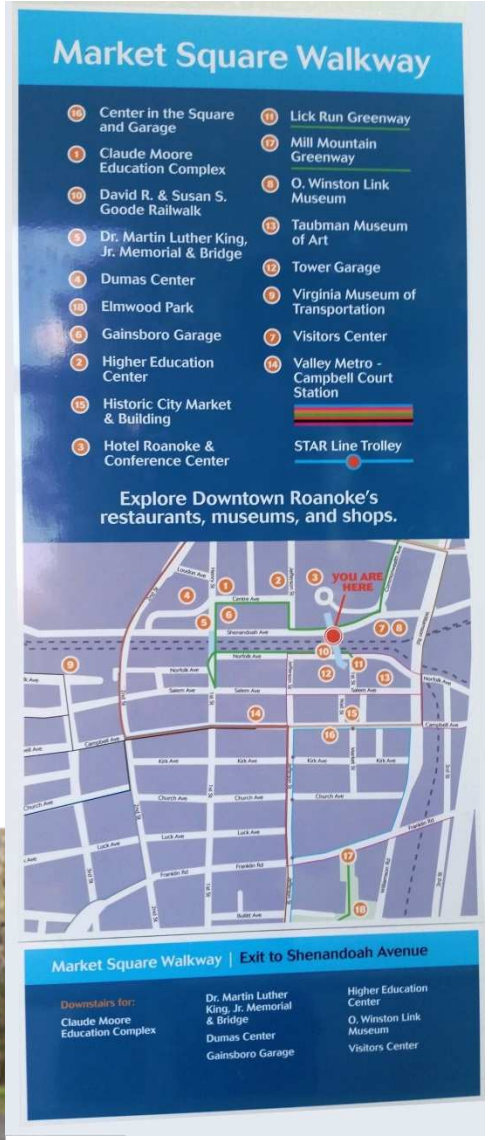
POLICY 5-A: Support directional signage throughout downtown.

There is an ongoing effort to create wayfinding for the region. Wayfinding is a term used to collectively describe signs, maps, and other graphic or audible methods used to convey location and directions to travelers and other downtown users. It will be beneficial to have our region connected better with directional signage that helps visitors travel from one attraction to the other. A big focus of the ongoing wayfinding project will be to highlight the many amenities within Downtown Roanoke. The Downtown Roanoke 2017 plan supports the continued development and implementation of this regional wayfinding.

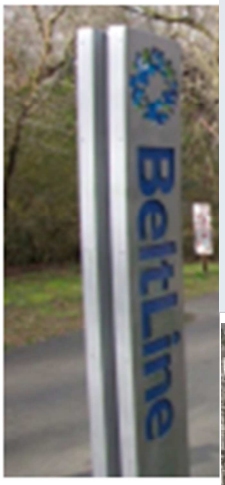
In addition to directing visitors to the major points of interest in downtown, directional signage should also direct people to what's around the next corner. Building from the design palette of the regional wayfinding system, downtown should initiate a wayfinding system that directs downtown visitors to restaurants, retail spaces, and other businesses or attractions located down each street. Placed at each intersection, the pedestrian level signs help visitors navigate to their next destination or explore new locations. The wayfinding would primarily be put in place in areas that already attract significant foot traffic, such as the streets within the core of downtown. There could be a small fee

for the placement of each business name on the signs to help recoup some of the costs for the block by block wayfinding.

As the regional points of interest and block by block wayfinding programs are put in place, it may also be valuable to have a small location map placed along with the wayfinding. There are a few of these points of interest maps around downtown already; they could be used with some of the other directional signage and located in more areas of Downtown Roanoke.



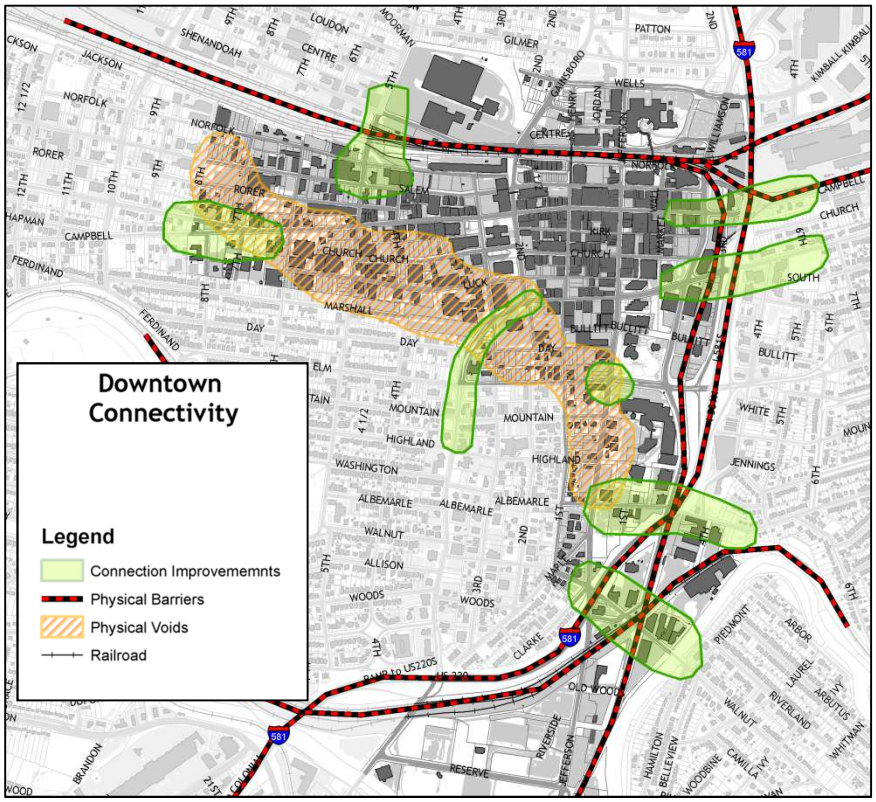
The adjacent Market Square Walkway Map example also maps the greenway network. Efforts should be made to create better directional signage for the Lick Run and Mill Mountain Greenways and the future connection to Tinker Creek Greenway as they connect through downtown, either utilizing the aforementioned wayfinding efforts or creating specific wayfinding for this section of greenway. Examples of efforts in other locales include metal medallions placed within the sidewalk or roadways, or more traditional or modern signposts. Improving this route through downtown will help draw attention to close proximity of the greenway system and the many points of interest connected by the greenways to Downtown Roanoke.



ACTION: Support regional wayfinding project.

ACTION: Enhance directional signage in Downtown Roanoke, connecting different expansion areas, businesses, greenway, and key points of interest.

POLICY 5-B: Create strong pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Gainsboro, Belmont, Old Southwest, Hurt Park, Mountain View and West End neighborhoods.



Downtown Roanoke is encircled by neighborhoods and these connections should be strengthened to encourage more travel on foot and bike into downtown. There are several barriers that hinder the neighborhoods' connections with downtown. The railroad lines separate the neighborhoods to the north, the railroad tracks and the Interstate 581 separate the core of downtown from the Southeast neighborhoods and the South Jefferson Redevelopment Area, and the Roanoke River separates the South Jefferson Redevelopment Area from its surrounding neighborhoods. The neighborhoods to the southwest and west of downtown have fewer barriers but are still confronted by voids that make accessing downtown more difficult or less comfortable. These voids include vacant lots, inactive storefronts, parking lots, fenced lots, underutilized warehouse or industrial buildings, or busy street crossings.

Major street crossings should be improved to better accommodate pedestrians with pedestrian signals, crosswalks, and shorter crossing distances. The underpasses that create barriers for many of the neighborhoods to the east and southeast can be brightened up with improved lighting and art projects, such as the Gateway Mural at the intersection with Tazewell Avenue and Interstate 581. Other underpasses could benefit from similar treatment, and signage could help navigate pedestrians and bicyclists through these narrow passages.

Efforts will be made to encourage infill development to fill in the voids and decrease the vastness of barren parking, fenced lots, and vacant buildings along the edges of downtown, but this type of change will be market driven and not likely to occur overnight. Good signage and pedestrian accommodations along the right of way can help encourage cross connections from the neighborhoods to the downtown.

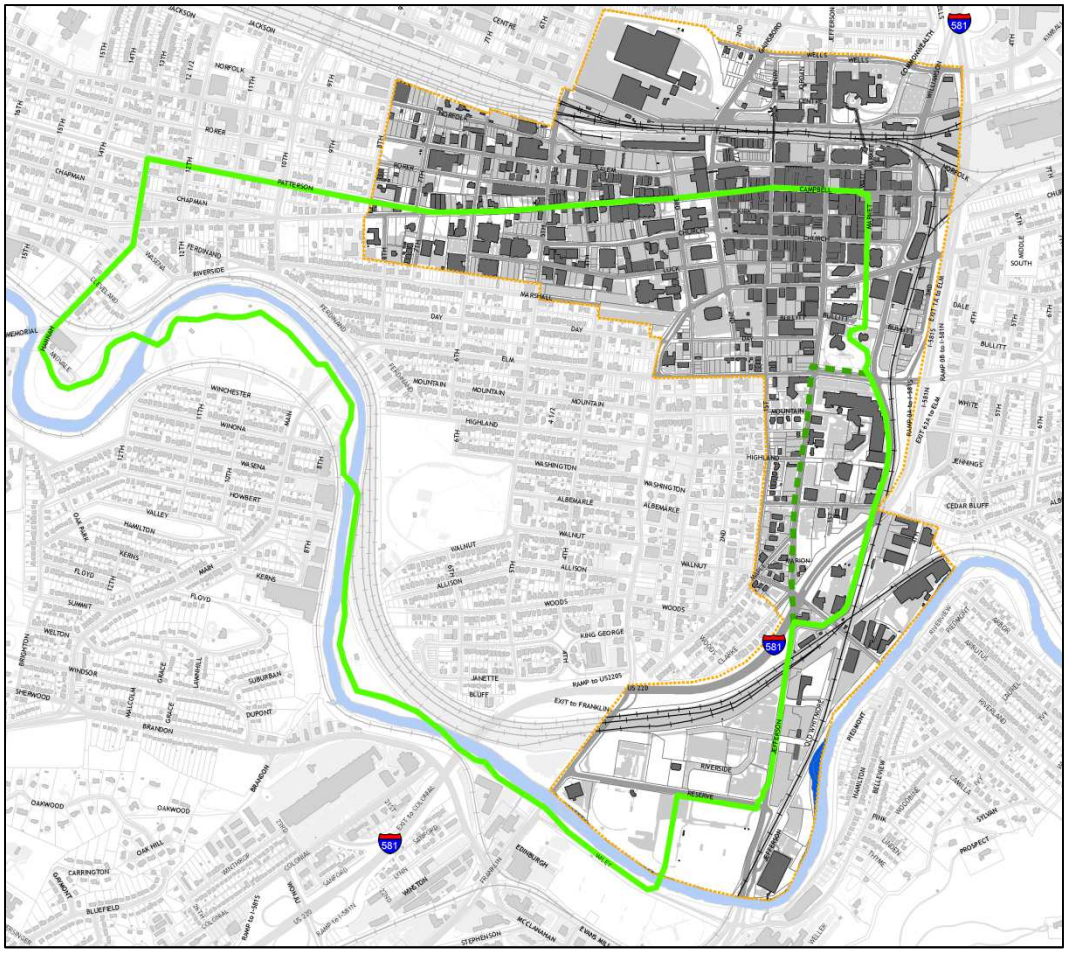
Proposed improvement at intersection of Elm and Franklin.

One particular cross connection envisioned within this plan is an Urban Loop that will encircle Downtown Roanoke, helping to connect different areas of downtown, the greenway system, several village centers, and the surrounding neighborhoods. Modeled after the Indianapolis Cultural Trail in Indianapolis, IN and the Downtown Greenway in Greensboro, NC the proposed Urban Loop would be approximately five miles long and be built around the existing greenway system. The Downtown Roanoke Urban Loop would incorporate the existing greenway path through the core of Downtown and follow the Mill Mountain Greenway until continuing across the Jefferson Street Bridge and crossing over to the Roanoke River Greenway at a planned promenade through the Rivers Edge Sports Complex. The Urban Loop would then follow the greenway west through the Wasena area and connect with the

Greensboro reports that, "Private developers have invested more than $215 million in planned and completed projects along the Downtown Greenway that credit the project as part of their reason for making the investment. Based on national statistics, for every dollar we invest, we can expect a $5-$12 return in additional investment, and we have exceeded that expectation."

http://www.downtowngreenway.org/faqs/

new streetscape improvements along 13th Street, heading north to Patterson Avenue and connecting into downtown on Campbell Avenue. The majority of the route is already existing greenway or recently improved streetscape. Improvements would need to be made to Patterson and Campbell Avenues as they approach downtown to better accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel. The route will need specific marketing, branding and mapping. The directional signage should be complementary to and integrated with greenway signage and regional wayfinding.



ACTION: Improve critical street crossings to be more accommodating to pedestrians.

ACTION: Encourage infill to improve voids created by vacant lots, and use art, lighting, and signage to overcome physical barriers.

ACTION: Create an Urban Loop greenway encircling downtown, using existing greenway, improvements to Campbell and Patterson, and branded signage.

POLICY 5-C: Make efforts to improve the user-friendliness of parking in downtown.

Downtown Roanoke has a variety of different parking options. Free on-street parking varies from 30 minutes to 2 hours depending on location. There are both private and public parking lots and decks with a variety of hourly, daily, monthly, or annual pricing. Many of the lots and parking decks have been updated and now accept credit cards. The public largely felt that parking in Downtown Roanoke was adequate and available, but there was concern that the perception of parking was a problem for downtown as those that do not regularly travel to downtown might not have a good idea of where to go or might be thwarted when they arrive during a big event and have difficulty finding parking. The public often cited that the on-street parking, which was coveted because it was free and close to destinations, was typically full.

The City of Roanoke tested parking meters for on-street parking in the downtown. Testing has been completed and meters have been installed in three (3) sections of the downtown. The parking meters will help encourage turnover of on-street parking. The Downtown Roanoke 2017 Plan would encourage the use of parking meters throughout the core of downtown, to discourage long term parking use of the on-street parking spots and leaving those spaces available for short term parking during daytime business hours. The meters may potentially discourage the daytime worker from shuffling their car throughout the day and leave those on-street spots to the customer trying to run in for lunch or to make a purchase. It is important that parking be priced to create a 15-20 percent vacancy rate. As the pilot project is reviewed it may prove worthwhile to adjust the pricing to find the equilibrium of use and turnover.

The City of Roanoke should explore new signage to improve visibility and navigation to the public parking decks. Improved signage will help infrequent visitors find the available parking. During peak times and special events, it may also be helpful to know the availability of the parking decks before entering. Real-time digital vacancy signs can provide an easy way to notify visitors where the best areas are to park and which parking decks are full. These digital signs can be posted outside of the major decks and potentially near the exit ramps off of Interstate 581. The City of Roanoke should explore the possibility of utilizing this technology as part of a long term strategy to help visitors find parking in Downtown Roanoke.

As the vacant office space within downtown begins to become occupied, there will be a tightening of parking availability in certain areas within the core of downtown. Seeking more office uses within Downtown Roanoke, there may be a shortage of parking for daytime

employees that could be a limiting factor in recruitment of businesses. As the City of Roanoke is still paying for the parking decks that it now has in its inventory, it is unlikely at the present time to build an additional parking deck without the support of a public private partnership. As new development occurs within downtown the City of Roanoke should look for public private partnership opportunities to help build structured parking as part of a larger development.

ACTION: Use parking meters to increase turnover of street parking.

ACTION: Develop long term strategy for signage to help identify parking facilities.

ACTION: Look for public private partnership opportunities to assist with parking decks to support new development.

POLICY 5-D: Expand multimodal connections in downtown.

Downtown Roanoke can also reduce parking demand and auto congestion by supporting new modes for people to arrive to downtown. On bike, bus, or train, a rider on one of these alternative modes of transportation will reduce the number of vehicles in downtown, essentially having the advantage of being a downtown user that didn't have to drag their car with them.

Bike share is an excellent idea for the City of Roanoke and the surrounding area. Ride Solutions recently started a bike share nearly overnight with primarily private funding. The bike share has been tremendously popular and helps connect the neighborhoods and their village centers with Downtown Roanoke and the greenway system. The Downtown Roanoke 2017 Plan recommends expanding the bike share by encouraging new private and public investment for more bike stations in the downtown. Currently at 13 stations, downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods could benefit from several more stations helping to connect the neighborhoods with Downtown Roanoke and to facilitate people taking short trips on bike versus a car.

Another popular way to move around downtown is the Star City Trolley. The free trolley service is operated by Valley Metro as part of the city's public transportation system and connects the core of downtown to Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital, the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute, and the surrounding neighborhood. The trolley is a joint effort funded primarily with federal and state funds along with a couple local partners: Carilion, Downtown Roanoke Inc., and the City of Roanoke. The trolley with its

historic appearance was a very popular point of discussion with the public, and it was often mentioned that the City should add another trolley route. Often Grandin Village and Wasena were mentioned as possible stops. A new trolley route would not only encourage people to arrive in downtown via trolley but may also help extend the stays of visitors and guests who spend an extra day exploring Roanoke's unique village centers. The City of Roanoke should look for future partnership opportunities to fund and operate another trolley route linking even more of the city with downtown.

The platform for the new Amtrak service to Roanoke is located in Downtown Roanoke. The train service will be a great amenity for residents in the Roanoke Valley and may likely create a new avenue for tourists and business travelers alike. Although train stations are typically centralized, stations in many cities are in areas of town that are inconvenient or seldom traveled. Roanoke has the advantage of having its stop in a very walkable location in the middle of Downtown Roanoke. As the center of business, culture, and entertainment, Downtown Roanoke is well suited to benefit from this transit stop. It will be important to provide directional signage to help arrivals navigate around downtown or find transportation for their next destination. A city map and directional signage will help encourage visitors to stay in downtown and discover the many different restaurants and businesses that are all within walking distance.

ACTION: Support the continued expansion of bike share.

ACTION: Partner with private entities to initiate an additional trolley service.

ACTION: Provide information and directional signage to help Amtrak passengers reach their destination.

6. Maintain and Market

POLICY 6-A: Maintain downtown to show visitors that we recognize it as a special part of our community.

Downtown Roanoke has an opportunity to be a premiere destination for tourists seeking to explore a unique walkable urban environment with a variety of retail and amenities located within a close proximity to outdoor recreation. For the same reasons, downtown should be a strong attractor for prospective businesses coming into the region. In order to help Downtown Roanoke stand out above other competitive downtown markets, downtown needs to be maintained and kept in pristine condition to help promote it in the best possible light. Although regular users may learn to ignore the pile of cigarette butts and trash left in the tree wells, the visitor quickly makes note of this lack of cleanliness and may lose the sense of Downtown Roanoke as a special place. The City of Roanoke should evaluate its routine cleaning and maintenance schedule and look to add staff where necessary to improve current conditions within the downtown. Downtown Roanoke Inc. (DRI) should help monitor cleanliness issues, reporting situations to the City. Voluntary clean up events can also play an important role in keeping downtown clean.

The City of Roanoke should also continue to support façade improvement programs, to help businesses clean, maintain, and upgrade storefronts. Programs such as the Downtown Roanoke Beautification Grants supported by DRI can help business and property owners to spruce up their storefronts. With opportunities for assistance available, business and property owners should be encouraged to make these aesthetic and health and safety related improvements. The City of Roanoke should evaluate its current policy on maintenance of encroachments in the right of way and either pursue tighter enforcement or consider amendments to the policy to ensure that signs, awnings, and outdoor dining placed in the right of way are maintained.

ACTION: Keep it clean, increasing staff to maintain and clean downtown.

ACTION: Enforce a policy on maintaining encroachments in the right of way, to include signs, awnings, and outdoor dining.

POLICY 6-B: Support aesthetic streetscape treatments within the downtown.

Downtown Roanoke Inc. (DRI) has been funding the purchase of hanging flower baskets for the downtown light posts and has been adding more and more baskets every year, allowing them to cover a growing expanse of downtown. DRI has staff to water and maintain the hanging baskets within the Market area, but is not able to maintain some of the hanging baskets along Jefferson, and western portions of Campbell and Salem. The City of Roanoke has been assisting with the maintenance of these plants, and as the area of coverage grows, the City of Roanoke and DRI should coordinate and find ways to water and maintain the plants. The hanging plant baskets help connect and beautify areas of Downtown Roanoke. They are a valuable piece of the aesthetic appeal of downtown.

ACTION: Continue expansion of hanging plants in the downtown area and coordinate City and DRI to handle maintenance of the plants.

POLICY 6-C: Support special events in our downtown, recognizing a need to be selective to avoid oversaturation and continual disruption.

One of the great traditions within Downtown Roanoke is the abundance of events that occur throughout the year. These events draw people into downtown and help keep downtown active and festive. Some events do however require road closings and other special accommodations, which may impede some businesses from their normal flow of business. Efforts should be made to rotate locations around downtown, and to look for areas outside of downtown that may be appropriate for smaller events. Encouraging events to occur in other parts of the greater downtown area can get people into parts of downtown they don't typically frequent, which could help strengthen connections between those areas and the core of downtown. The *Special Events Policy* should allow the special events coordinator to be more selective, looking for special events that have the biggest draw, a history of success, celebrate our unique culture and growing diversity, and are otherwise significant enough for Downtown Roanoke. The *Special Events Policy* has been updated and will be implemented beginning January 2018.

ACTION: In order to avoid being overused, identify other areas that smaller events can occur.

POLICY 6-D: Market downtown to businesses, developers, visitors, and current and potential residents.

Downtown Roanoke should strive to be a top destination within the State by continuing to work on placemaking and marketing. Build on the efforts of Virginia's Blue Ridge and market Downtown Roanoke to potential businesses and residents, developers, current residents, and visitors. A marketing campaign should be City of Roanoke specific, with a big focus on the downtown. With the new Amtrak service, it would be valuable to extend marketing to the northeast area and perhaps target the Amtrak newsletter, The National. Many people are not that familiar with Roanoke, so building familiarity will help create a draw to our vibrant downtown.

ACTION: Building on Virginia's Blue Ridge, fund a marketing campaign that reaches a regional audience and describes the uniqueness of Roanoke.