

**CITY OF MONROE
DOWNTOWN ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
DOWNTOWN OFFICE – 120 N. MAIN STREET
MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA 28112
Wednesday, March 18, 2026 - 9:00
AM
AGENDA**

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Approval/Acceptance of Minutes from October 8, 2025, January 14, 2026 and February 18, 2026 (Action Required)
4. Downtown Director's Report
5. America250 Community Mural Review
6. Spring Fest Sponsorship
7. April Meeting Date
8. Downtown Monroe Vision Changes
9. Main Street Sub-Committees & Volunteer Discussion (cont.)
10. Adjourn Meeting

**CITY OF MONROE
DOWNTOWN MONROE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
300 W CROWELL STREET, MONROE, NC 28112
October 8, 2025
MINUTES**

DAB Members Present: Chair Joyce Rentschler, William Heisner, Courtney Garrison, Lisa Boix, Sheila Crunkleton, Clint Lawrence and Greg Moore were all present.

DAB Member(s) Absent:

Staff Present: Assistant City Manager Jeff Wells, Downtown Manager Donna O'Keefe

Item 1: Call to order

Joyce Rentschler called the October 8, 2025 meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Item 2: Roll Call

Roll was documented by Donna O'Keefe through a sign-in sheet.

Item 3: Approval of August Meeting Minutes

Clint motioned to approve the August Meeting Minutes. Courtney seconded. Motion passes.

Item 4: Recommendation of Downtown Master Plan Steering Committee

Donna O'Keefe discussed the Downtown Master Plan with the Downtown Advisory Board. The Downtown Advisory Board needs to recommend a steering committee to oversee the project. The steering committee will represent a broad section of the community and perspectives and includes residents, business owners, and property owners. Donna reviewed the role of the committee to advise the consultants on the master plan project. Donna also described the 9 affinity groups that will work with Shook Kelley on their specific areas (tourism, arts, etc.).

Donna discussed each of the steering committee members and why they were selected to serve on the board:

- Chris Duggan
- Drew Lawrence
- Peter Karlan
- Amanda Cameron
- Michelle Lancaster
- Dr. Milner
- Jason Hill
- Jason Walle
- Griffin Walters
- Mary Helen Secrest-Treece
- Byron Jones
- Clare Purdy

- Father Ben Roberts
- Jordan Hennessee
- Andre Yandow
- Jordan Griffin

Sheila made the motion to recommend the group to General Services and then on to City Council. Courtney seconded. Motion passes.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Jeff introduced Scott Hunt, the new staff attorney.

Donna noted that Sheila and Joyce's terms will go through the end of December 2026.

Jeff introduced Donna's new role as the Existing Industry & Business Manager for the new Economic Development Department. He recognized Donna for her accomplishments and thanked the DAB for being a great team. Jeff talked about the plan for the future – finding a seasoned downtown director with familiarity with the main street program, master plans, elected officials, and engaging downtown stakeholders. Jeff and Donna indicated they had a plan and someone in mind for the role.

Donna noted that she was excited to continue to support businesses in Monroe in her new role and emphasized that she would always have a heart for downtown and would continue to be housed in the same office.

Donna gave a few additional updates. The new downtown office has walls and electrical and plumbing are in progress. The office has two offices, a welcome area, and a conference room.

The new downtown furniture will all be installed by mid-October. Some of the new light poles are up, and once those are up the new speakers can go up. The new crosswalk and ramps will be going up soon on Hayne Street at Morgan Alley. Donna is working on a kids play area with the Kiwanis Club in Monroe.

Courtney asked staff about public bathrooms. She asked if we could look into adding bathrooms that area accessible to the public. She also asked about how we could help improve speed all throughout downtown. Jeff noted that the police department is increasing enforcement throughout downtown for speeding.

Item 6: Adjourn (Action Required)

Sheila moved to adjourn the meeting. Bill seconded. Motion passes. Meeting was adjourned at 9:52 a.m.

City of Monroe
Downtown Advisory Board Meeting
120 N Main Street Monroe, NC
January 14, 2026, 8:30 a.m.
Minutes

DAB Members Present: Chair Joyce Rentschler, William Heisner, Courtney Garrison, Lisa Boix, Sheila Crunkleton, Clint Lawrence and Greg Moore were all present.

DAB Member(s) Absent: none

Staff Present: Downtown Director Ashley Nowell

Call to Order

Joyce Rentschler called the meeting to order at 8:39 a.m.

Roll Call

Ashley recorded attendance.

Approval of November Minutes

Sheila made a motion to approve November meeting minutes. Bill seconded. Motion passes.

Downtown Sponsorship Application: Downtown Monroe Art Walk

Joyce recused herself from voting on this item. Ashley asked the DAB to consider a recommendation for a sponsorship to Joyce Rentschler for the Downtown Monroe Art Walk. The event will be on Friday, April 10 from 5:30-9 p.m. and Saturday, April 11 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. The event is an art crawl with galleries set up in downtown businesses. All businesses are invited to participate by scheduling artists. Participating businesses are shown on a map and given a sign to display during the event. The event is marketed to people of all ages and shared on social media, radio, newspaper, posters, and banners. Total expenses are \$500. Staff recommended approval of the sponsorship for \$500.

Greg asked if the hours of the event could be extended on Saturday as Home Brew's Spring Fest will also be occurring. Joyce said she would mention this to downtown businesses. Joyce noted that she expects to have 40-45 art galleries throughout downtown.

Sheila motioned to approve the sponsorship of the Art Walk in the amount of \$500. Bill seconded. Motion passes. Joyce recused herself.

2026 Meeting Schedule

The DAB reviewed their meeting dates and times for the year. The board decided to change their meeting location from City Hall to the new Downtown Offices at 120 N Main Street.

Downtown Master Plan Update

Staff provided an update on the downtown master plan. The first steering committee meeting was held on Monday, December 8 with Shook Kelly and city staff. They reviewed the role of the

committee, discussed branding, and shared initial public input concepts.

The first public input workshop will be on Wednesday, February 18 from 4-7 p.m. Staff reviewed the communication plan, website, and branding with the DAB.

Staff noted that additional diversity was needed on the steering committee and has added several additional members. Clint and Sheila recommended the owners at Rodriguez Produce and would connect Ashley to them.

NC Main Street Conference

The annual Main Street Conference will be held on March 10-12 in New Bern, NC. Sheila will be attending as Monroe's Downtown Champion. Ashley stressed that these are important events to attend and a great way to learn about main street and share ideas with other communities.

For each main street community, one staff member and one volunteer are required to attend and two registrations are given for free. Ashley needs the board to let her know by Thursday, February 12 if they'd like to attend. She will cover registration and reimburse for hotel and travel.

Joyce indicated that she would like to attend.

Adjourn Meeting

Sheila motioned to adjourn. Bill seconded. Motion passes. Meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m.

The Downtown Advisory Board's next meeting is on Wednesday, February 18 at 9 a.m.

**City of Monroe
Downtown Advisory Board Meeting
120 N Main Street Monroe, NC
February 18, 2026 9 a.m.
Minutes**

DAB Members Present: Chair Joyce Rentschler, William Heisner, Courtney Garrison, Lisa Boix, Sheila Crunkleton, Clint Lawrence and Greg Moore were all present.

DAB Member(s) Absent: none

Staff Present: Assistant City Manager Jeff Wells, Downtown Director Ashley Nowell

Call to Order

Joyce Rentschler called the meeting to order at 9 a.m.

Roll Call

Ashley recorded attendance.

Grow Monroe Grant Applications – Flora Greens (dba, Bloomers)

The DAB reviewed a recommendation for a Grow Monroe Grant for Cathy Haney, owner of Bloomers, at 205 E Franklin St. The Grow Monroe Grant offers rental and/or up-fit assistance for new or growing businesses. Award amounts are determined using a formula based on square footage.

Bloomers retail store is 1,362.5 square feet. As a retail shop, the business is eligible for \$6 per square foot in assistance, or a maximum of \$8,175. Her monthly rent expense is \$2,200 a month, \$26,400 a year. The business would be eligible to receive \$4,087.50 for the first 6 months and \$4,087.50 after twelve months. Proof of payment is required before funds can be released. Staff recommends approval of the grant.

Greg motioned to recommend approval of the Grow Monroe Grant to Flora Greens to City Council with a resolution and budget amendment to appropriate funds of \$8,175. Lisa seconded. Motion passes.

Building Rehabilitation and Improvement Grant Update

Staff reviewed the Building Rehab and Improvement Grant and provided a view updates to the DAB, including setting a maximum award amount and recommending a yearly budget.

The BRIG Program is designed to stimulate investment and encourage property owners to make physical repairs and improvements to their building. Currently, it is a 50/50 matching grant with a maximum amount of 10% of the tax value after project completion. The grant also included escalators that added additional incentive if a business was in a certain cluster, if a business was relocating or moving to an upper-story space, or if housing was added above street level.

In order to better align downtown incentives with the economic development incentive policy,

city staff is recommending setting a maximum award amount, yearly budget, and removing the connection to the tax value. Grant documentation was included in the packet and changes to the documentation include:

- Detailing a maximum award amount of \$7,500
- Removing award amount connection to tax value
- Removing incentive escalators
- Only allowing one grant per year per building
- Adding language to further define permissions needed from property owners
- Adding language to require certificates of occupancy, where applicable
- Detailing that a building may reapply for new projects one year after being paid
- Removing “routine maintenance work” from ineligible projects

Staff shared that the plan is to create a third downtown incentive program that supports larger redevelopment projects. This grant would have a minimum investment amount in order to qualify and be based on the increase in property value. Staff will do research and bring to DAB at a later date.

Bill indicated that he was hesitant for tax dollars to pay for building maintenance and that he supported setting a limit on the amount received.

Bill made a motion to approve the changes to the BRIG Program and send to General Services for review. Clint seconded. Motion passes.

Downtown Director Update

Ashley will give a monthly update on major project in downtown, business openings and closing, and necessary updates to the board.

America250 – Ashley serves on the America250 Committee. We are brainstorming ways to celebrate the year long event. Currently, we are planning some patriotic decorations, new banners, an expanded July 4th Event, a Monroe Serve Day, and connections to the businesses. The board discussed the Monroe Serve Day and recommended it be a week long. Sheila said they are doing a blood drive in July and recommended partnership with Wingate, SPCC, and DSS. The board discussed holding a patriotic decorating contest for the businesses as well. 2026 is also the 25 anniversary of 9/11 and the board asked if there were plans for an expanded event.

Downtown Office – Doors were installed on 2/17. Staff is continuing to decorate the space and plans to host a ribbon cutting later this spring.

Downtown Coordinator – the department is hiring for a 30 hour + benefits position to serve an administrative role with the department. This position will be hired over the next month or two.

Downtown Master Plan – the steering committee met on 2/10 to review the market analysis that shows the opportunities Monroe has for additional retail or restaurants in the next 5 years. The document was emailed in the packet and will be more thoroughly reviewed at the March meeting. There is also an interactive map and survey on the website. Staff and Shook Kelley will host the first workshop on Wednesday, February 18 from 4-7 p.m. It is a drop-in style event. Posters have been delivered to businesses, and we're working to get bag stuffers, a-frames, table tents, and light pole banners. Sheila recommended yard signs as well.

Kiwanis Project – Ashley is working on the kid-friendly space in Morgan Alley with Kiwanis. DAB will get to review over the next few months.

Antique & Vintage Market – the event is scheduled for May 2 in partnership with Lowe Country Estates and Murphy's. Staff will keep the board updated on progress.

Staff included important dates in the report and will be adding these dates to the boards' calendars.

Greg mentioned Spring Fest on April 11 and asked if we need DAB approval for it went to City Council. After board discussion, the board votes to recommend approval of Spring Fest. Sheila made the motion, Courtney seconded. Motion passes.

Main Street Assessment

Each year, main street communities complete a self-assessment, grading their performance on 6 standards. Staff reviewed the baseline requirements and standards, as well as the average score for each.

Ashley listed items that the board will be working on over the next year including partnerships, gathering feedback, improving communications, and starting committees. The board and staff acknowledged there was a lot of work to do, but stressed the importance of having a great board and group of volunteers.

Rules & Procedures

At the January meeting, the board discussed rules and procedures. Ashley provided attachments and the board terms. The Citizens Appointment Committee is made up of councilmembers and they appoint members to the Downtown Advisory Board.

The board discussed the terms – each member has a 4 year term and can serve 2 consecutive terms. They discussed e-voting, but Assistant Manager Wells noted this was not allowed. The DAB can call a special meeting if a quick vote is needed on an item.

Downtown Committee & Volunteer Discussion

At the January meeting, the board discussed main street four-point committees. Ashley put together a plan for launching these committees over the next several months.

The Promotions Committee will develop customers. It focuses on business friendly events, promotions, and marketing campaigns. Greg volunteered to chair this committee. The Economic Vitality Committee develops businesses and will focus on recruiting, retaining and supporting downtown businesses. Bill volunteer to chair this committee. The Design Committee develops spaces and focuses on projects that enhance the look and feel of downtown. Joyce volunteered to chair this committee. Ashley noted that multiple board members can serve as co-chairs for those committees. The idea is that the board member chairs the committee and the committee volunteers are accomplishing the project.

The board discussed how we launch these committees. At our March meeting, each board member will bring a list of people they think might be interested in volunteering. We'll create a list of projects these groups will work on. We'll host a few volunteer meet-ups to share what our vision is and produce marketing materials to share upcoming projects. Ashley will begin to work on marketing materials and meetings dates.

Adjourn Meeting

Sheila motioned to adjourn. Courteny seconded. Motion passes. Meeting was adjourned at 10:29 a.m.

The Downtown Advisory Board's next meeting is on Wednesday, March 18 at 9 a.m.



STAFF REPORT

TO: Downtown Advisory Board

DATE: March 18, 2026

FROM: Jeff Wells, Assistant City Manager

PREPARED BY: Ashley Nowell, Downtown Director

SUBJECT: Downtown Director Update

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Each month, the Downtown Director provides an update on major projects, business openings or closings, and important updates in downtown.

REVIEW

Incentive Update

General Services and City Council updated the BRIG Program policy, setting a \$7,500 limit for the amount a business can receive.

Incentives in process include:

Business	Stage	Amount
Flora Greens	Public Hearing 3/24	\$8,175

America 250

The Serve Monroe project is scheduled for May 13-16. Nonprofits will organize service projects and the city will advertise them. Volunteers that participate will receive a t-shirt and attend a celebration on Friday, May 15 at the Music on Main event. The sign-up for nonprofits to participate should go live this week.

At the last DAB meeting, we discussed the idea of doing a window decorating contest for July and special deals during the month of July. Staff and DAB members can work on getting businesses involved in this!

Downtown Office

Doors are installed, but the penny-tile at the front isn't level and the pattern is off. So that will be redone soon. Ashley is continuing to work on decorating.

Downtown Coordinator Position

Staff has narrowed down the candidates and will be scheduling interviews over the next few weeks.

Downtown Master Plan

The February 18 Public Input session was a huge success with more than 150 people in attendance! Shook Kelley has summarized the feedback, and it is included in the agenda. Currently, we have a survey live about the seven opportunity redevelopment sites. This survey aims to gather feedback from the public to narrow down the sites from 7 to 3-4. DAB members can take the survey [online](#).

The next steering committee meeting will be in early April. The steering committee will review the opportunity redevelopment site survey and narrow down the sites that will be reviewed in the plan.

Small Business Workshops with SPCC's Small Business Center

The Downtown Department will be partnering with SPCC's Small Business Center to hold 2 workshops on May 11 and May 18 at Vetus Distillery. SPCC will be booking the speakers talking about Google Business optimization and customer experience. Once times are confirmed, we'll add these to the board's calendars.

State Conference Recap

Sheila, Joyce, and Ashley went to the state conference in New Bern on March 10-12. There were more than 850 people in attendance from 150+ cities. Ashley gave a presentation on downtown master plans. We also connected with staff from Preservation NC, Land Design (completing the Winchester plan), and UNCG School of Architecture. Sheila was recognized as Monroe's 2025 Main Street Champion, and a video can be found [online](#).

Business Updates

Lisa at Main Street Bistro is retiring! Trattoria on Main will be taking over her spot and bringing a small Italian restaurant to downtown.

Courtney is expanding Superior Home Medical into her former boutique space.

Bloomers opened in February.

Sappy Sweet Boutique opened in March.

Upcoming Events & Meeting Dates

Tuesday, March 24, 6 p.m. | City Council (public hearing for Bloomers Grant)

Wednesday, March 25 4-7 p.m. | Monroe Historic District Branding Charrette @ Dowd

Wednesday, April 1 | Month of the Young Child and Child Abuse Prevention Month @ Dowd

Thursday, April 2, 4:15 p.m. | General Service (reviewing mural concept) @ City Hall

Friday, April 10 | Car Cruise-In

Friday, April 10 – Saturday, April 11 | Art Walk

Saturday, April 11 | Spring Fest

April 13-15 | National Main Street Conference in Tulsa

Tuesday, April 14, 6 p.m. | City Council (approval of mural) @ City Hall

Tuesday, April 21, 4 p.m. | City Council Budget Workshop @ City Hall

Friday, April 24, 6:30 p.m. | Music on Main

Saturday, May 2, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. | Antique & Vintage Market

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for discussion.

Attachments:

February 18 DMP Workshop Comments & Summaries

NC Anchor Study

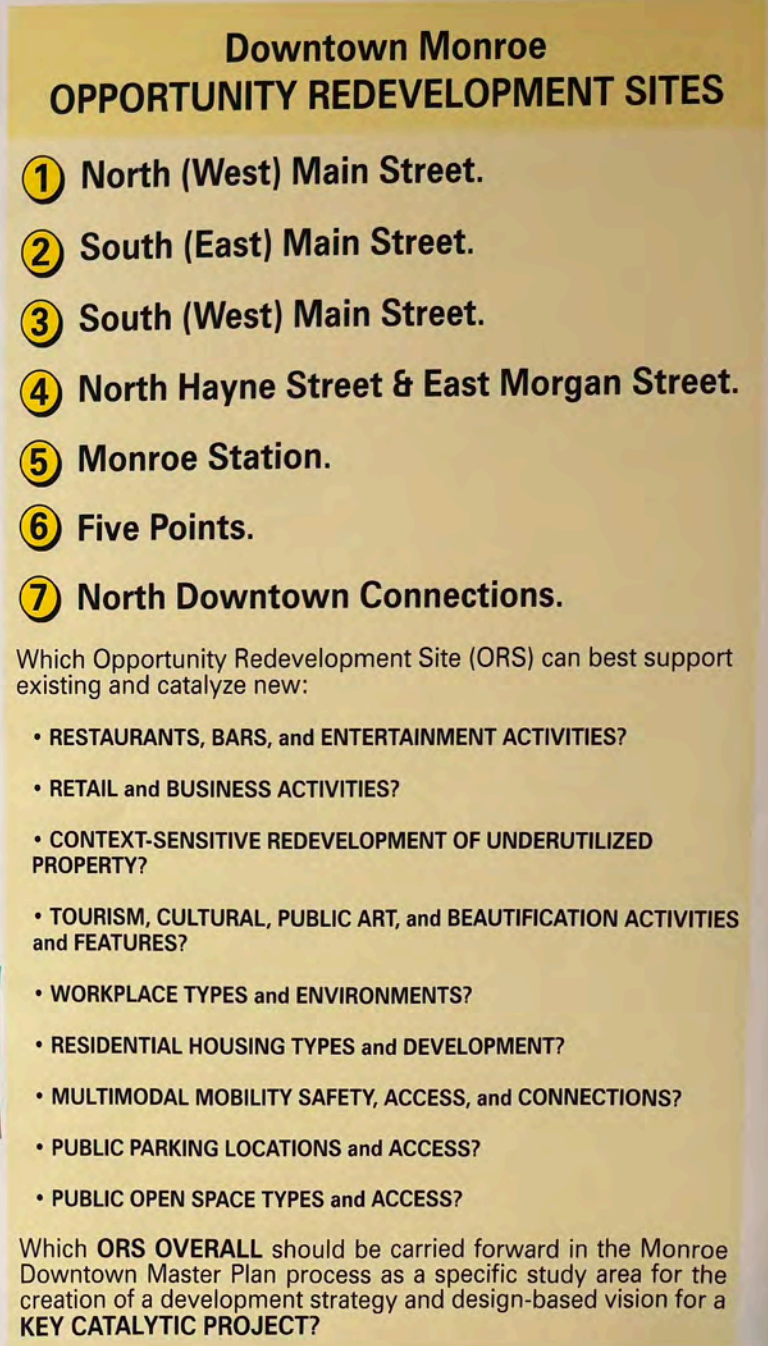


Public Workshop #1

Community Feedback

02/18/2026

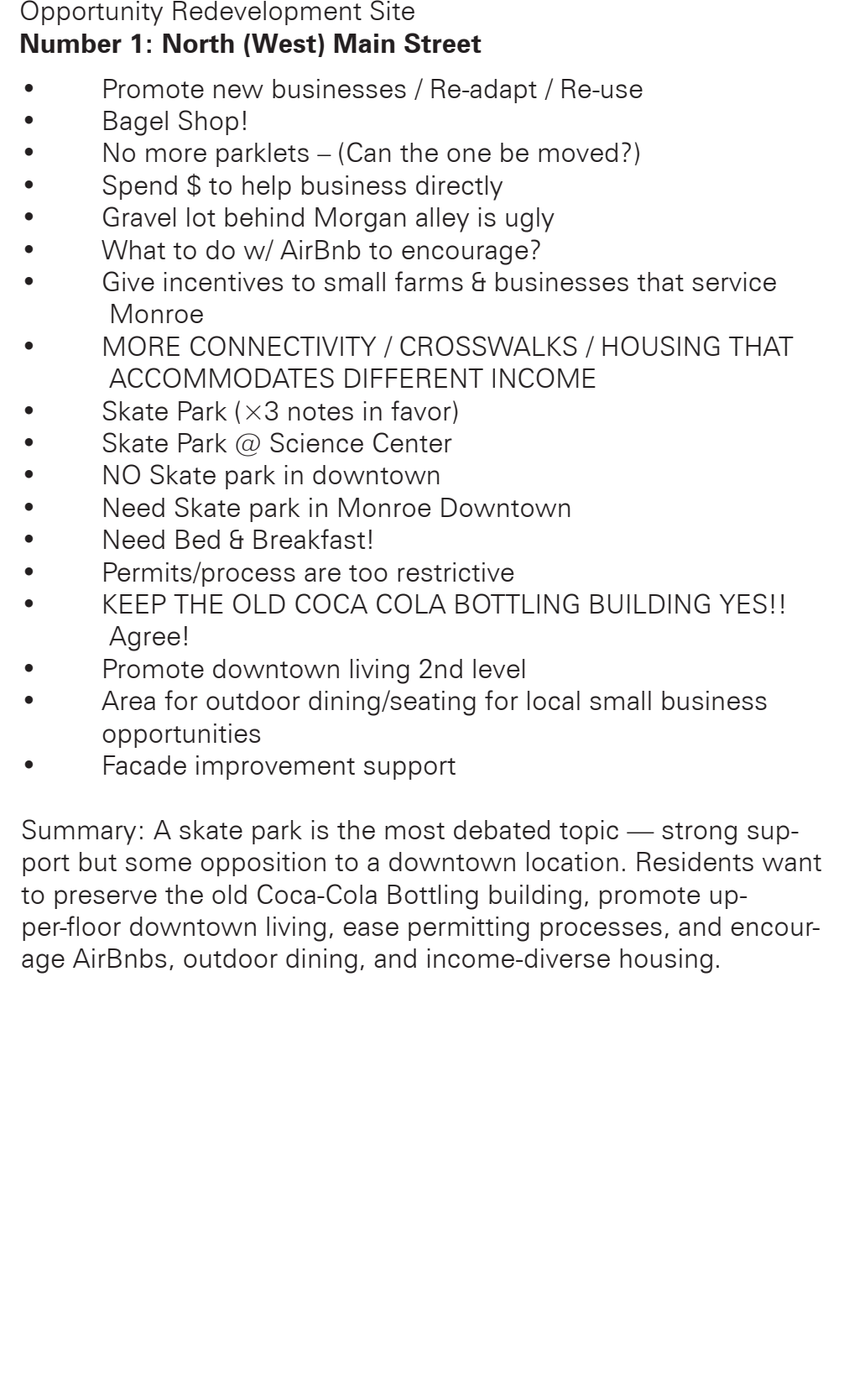
Opportunity Redevelopment Sites



shook kelley Working DRAFT In Progress: 2/18/2026 City of Monroe, North Carolina 2026 Downtown Master Plan – Phase 1: Preliminary Analysis LUP-E.2

- "get rid of all this parking"
- "More Park Space Utilize the park we have"
- "affordable housing"
- "Better Connection/walkability from roundabout (74) to sky way"
- "Affordable housing"
- "public open space types (park and trail etc) Agreed!"
- "USE buildings NOT in use to help low income & house re fuse families"
- "Restaurants (more variety)"
- "Make vacant buildings move-in ready"
- "No CAMERAS in Monroe!"
- "More shops more restaurants upscale"
- "get rid of all this parking"
- "More Park space utilize the park we have"
- "Better Connectivity/Walkability from museum out to sky way"
- "affordable housing"
- "(1) Restaurants (2) Apartments (3) Retail"
- "Affordable housing"
- "public open space/legal space types (rich and varied)"
- "No Bell Parade to the Belk Building (Center Artist)"
- "Make vacant buildings move-in ready"
- "USE buildings NOT in use to help low income families & reduce homeless"
- "More shops & Restaurants & grocery"

Summary: Strong push to reduce excess parking, add parks and varied open space, deliver affordable housing and mixed-use (restaurants/apartments/retail), reuse vacant buildings for housing and services, and broaden restaurant/retail offerings while resisting expanded surveillance.





Downtown Monroe – Opportunity Redevelopment Site

Number 1: North (West) Main Street

Opportunities and Strengths

- Anchor and enhance activity on North Main Street.
- New Public Open Space.
- Main Street Infill Development.
- Re(use) of City-Owned Property.
- Renovation and Adaptive Reuse of Historic Buildings.
- Connection and Extension of Morgan–Windsor Alley.
- Existing Historic Buildings, Including Old County Courthouse.

Possible Rent Subsidies/Incentives for small businesses

GO UP WITH PARKING

MAKE/BUY AN AREA FOR AN ART CENTER

Old Newberry Building - ?? -

Need more restaurants - - + 1 + 2

Bike lanes

Constraints and Challenges

- Pedestrian Walkability and Access Across N Charlotte Ave, W Franklin Street, and W Jefferson Street.
- Small Block Sizes.
- On-Site Parking.
- Street and Site Slopes.
- One-way Streets (W Jefferson St and W Franklin St).

Parking challenge

Lack of public restrooms

LACK OF PUBLIC RESTROOMS!

WALKABILITY - MORE CROSS WALKS

Too many liquor services / LAWYERS - BAD LOO

Public parking an issue

LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING / DIVERSE HOUSING OPTIONS

Safe cross walks

Blinking light at crosswalk on Hayne @ Morgan Alley

Shook Kelley – Starter List

Community Considerations

Shook Kelley – Starter List

Community Considerations



Opportunity Redevelopment Site

Number 2: South (East) Main Street

- CROSSWALKS
- SLOW DOWN TRAFFIC (x2 notes)
- J. WISSEN'S OPENING SOON – TRADER JOE'S PLEASE!
- Trader Joe's!! & Publix
- PEDESTRIAN LIGHT YES!!!
- FANCY RESTAURANT
- Permanent home for Arts Center
- Maximize use of 2nd & 3rd floors
- Would love co-working space w/ meeting rooms for entrepreneurs
- KEEP THE Arts Center PLEASE!
- KEEP US AS AN ART CENTER I SECOND THAT!
- THE ART CENTER/UNION FITZGERALD BUILDING WAS TAKEN OVER FOR OFFICES BY STORMWATER STAFF. IF YOU'VE GIVEN THE OFFICE SPACE CREATE 2 SHIFTS... 8 AM – 2:30 PM / 3 PM – 8:30 PM
- Downtown playground
- Arts Council and Union County Playmakers need a home
- Arts Council needs a home
- AGREE Arts Council + building for Monroe
- The valuation of second-floor living spaces here will be worth the investment. I 2nd this!!!
- Keep the arts center! Incorporate Belk Theater into the business district
- The Art Center is a great asset to the downtown area. It brings people in and provides a space for creativity. It should be preserved and supported.
- Retain Historic Character
- Permanent art center with 8 rooms for classes, art painting, meeting etc.
- Talleyrand St needs to be a one way street West bound between Church and Hayne – 2nd This!!!
- YES! I 4th this!
- We have lost so many of the historic buildings that give Monroe character. Any redevelopment should work to preserve these structures.
- This needs light when someone wants to cross
- Spot for Amphitheater in Monroe – bring in concerts & local music

Summary: Overwhelming community support for preserving and finding a permanent home for the Arts Center/Arts Council. Frustration over the Fitzgerald Building being repurposed for city offices. Calls for grocery stores (Trader Joe's, Publix), co-working space, traffic calming, historic preservation, and an amphitheater for live events.



Downtown Monroe – Opportunity Redevelopment Site

Number 2: South (East) Main Street

Opportunities and Strengths

Constraints and Challenges

Shook Kelley – Starter List

- Anchor and enhance activity on South Main Street.
- New Public Open Space.
- Extend Main Street with Infill Development.
- Re(use) of City-Owned Property.
- Existing Building Adaptive Reuse and Renovation.
- Connection and Extension of Morgan–Windsor Alley.
- Existing Activity and Social Hub – Home Brew Taproom & Tunes.
- Renovation and Adaptive Reuse of Existing Historic House/Site.

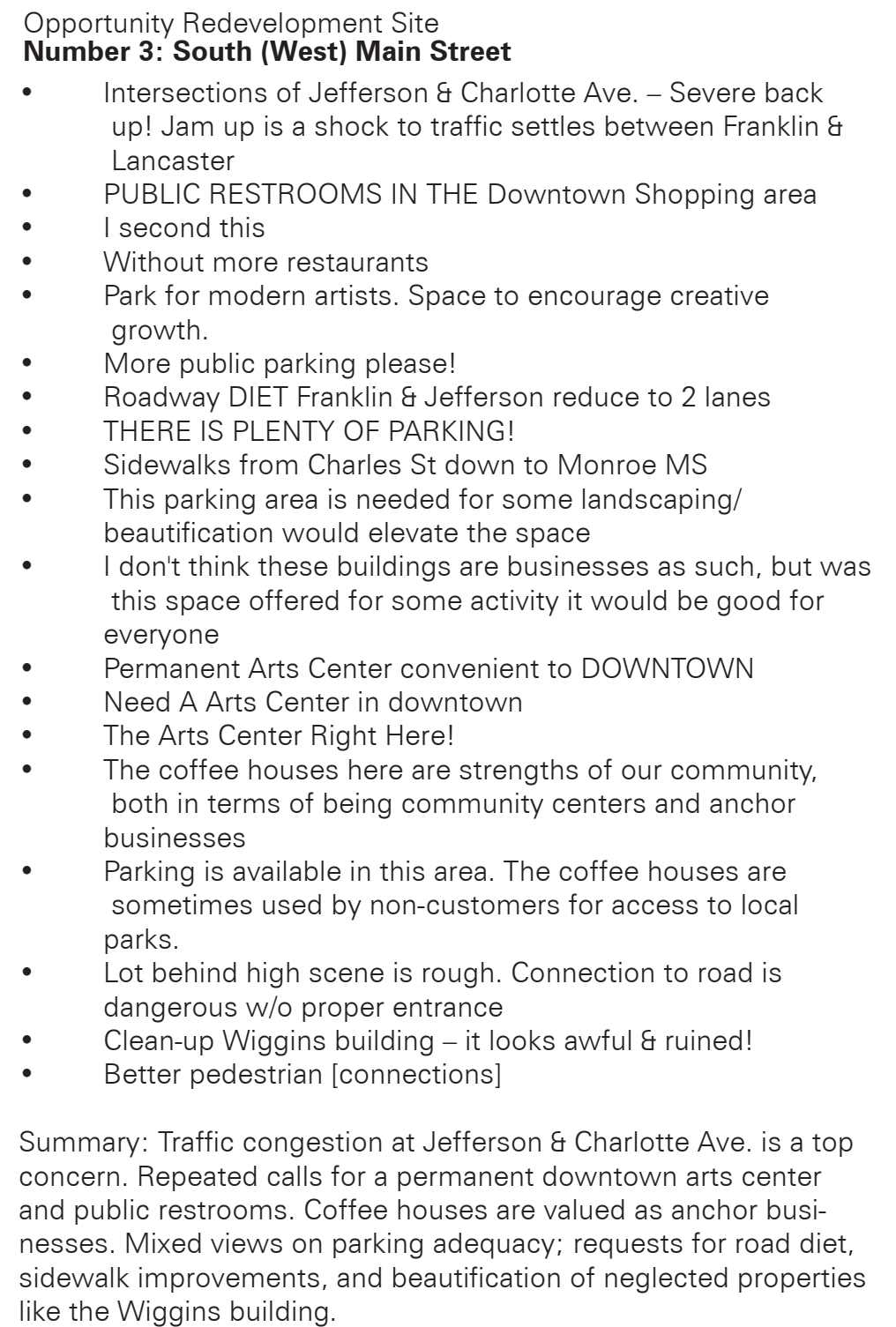
Community Considerations

Meeting space needed for Union County Artists / Writers

Shook Kelley – Starter List

- Missing Main Street Frontage and Street Level Activity
- Interruption and Reduction of Walkable ‘Retail Loop’.
- Loss of Spatial Enclosure (Outdoor Urban Room Experience) along Main Street.
- Traffic Speeds along N Hayne Street.
- Pedestrian Walkability and Access Across S Hayne Street.
- Small and Narrow Block Sizes.
- On-Site Parking.

Community Considerations



Opportunities and Strengths

- ## Shook Kelley - Starter List

Community Considerations

Meeting Spaces needed for Union County
Artists & Writers & Theater
ART Center for Visual ART
Art Center for visual AND performing arts !!!
More restaurants & cycle retail -
Bike Lanes Please

- Missing Main Street Frontage and Street Level Activity.
- Interruption and Reduction of Walkable 'Retail Loop'.
- Loss of Spatial Enclosure (Outdoor Urban Room) along Main Street.
- Traffic Speeds along N Charlotte Ave and Lancaster Ave.
- Pedestrian Walkability and Access Along and Across N Charlotte Ave and Lancaster Ave, and intersection at W Houston St.
- Large Expanse of Exposed Surface Parking With Minimal Landscape or Pedestrian Amenities.

- Complex Existing Land Ownership Pattern.
- A pedestrian bridge here would help
- Need parking (go up - deck style parking)
- **LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING /**
- **DIVERSE HOUSING OPTIONS**

Shook Kelley - Starter List

Community Considerations



**Opportunity Redevelopment Site
Number 4: North Hayne Street & East Morgan Street**

- Art Center like Cornelius, Mooresville & Concord have! LAN CAS CAMDEN MONROE NEEDS CULTURE
- Add more safer crosswalk
- Arts Center @ old Walter Bickett
- Arts Center YES
- TRAFFIC STUDIES TO ELIMINATE DIESEL + 18 wheelers - hurts the charm of historic area
- Electric scooters
- Electric scooters YES
- More motorcycle parking throughout downtown
- Electric parking
- Parking isn't a problem it will work for growth Monroe
- Parking Deck
- Additional parking study
- More parking - ditto
- More Restaurants
- Retail - boutique - gourmet grocery store - coffee shop - book store - bike shop
- More RESTAURANTS + RETAIL
- DON'T MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO RE-USE HISTORIC STRUCTURES (OR ANY STRUCTURES) FOR NEW BUSINESSES
- More bike racks
- One thing that makes this area out-of-the-box look for is charming
- Parking Deck - NO! - too expensive - not beautiful

Summary: Strong desire for an arts/cultural center, more restaurants and retail diversity, and better infrastructure for bikes and scooters. Parking opinions are split — some want a parking deck, others say parking is fine. Community wants to preserve historic charm and ease business reuse of existing structures.



Downtown Monroe – Opportunity Redevelopment Site Number 4: North Hayne Street & East Morgan Street

Opportunities and Strengths

Constraints and Challenges

Shook Kelley – Starter List

Community Considerations

- Redevelopment Facilitating Pedestrian-Oriented Connections Between Monroe Science Center and Main Street Activity Centers and Designations.
- Renovation and Adaptive Reuse of Historic Buildings.
- Franklin Court – Outdoor Urban Open Space
- Connection and Extension of Morgan-Windsor Alley.
- Centrally Located Shared Parking Strategy.
- Linear Park Space and Specimen Tree Save along N Hayne Street.

Yes to outdoor urban space. Option to sit/ rest when visiting downtown

Public restrooms

Bebe L'onez

Shook Kelley – Starter List

Community Considerations

- Compatibility with Existing Development and Uses.
- Continuation of City of Monroe Customer Service, and Associated Access Functions (Parking and Drive-Through).
- Continuation of Parking Space Needs of Adjacent Development and Uses.
- Small Block Sizes.
- Traffic Speeds along N Hayne Street.
- Pedestrian Walkability and Access Along and Across Block Perimeter Streets and Intersections at N Hayne Street, E Franklin Street, E Windsor Street, and N Church Street.

MORE CROSS WALKS

MORE FINE DINING

MORE COFFEE SHOPS

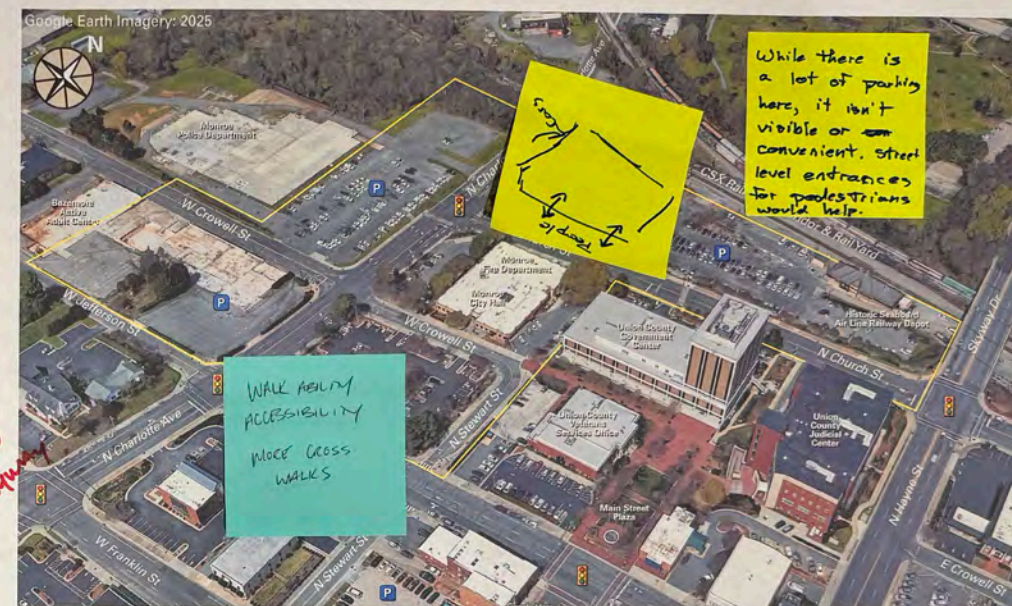
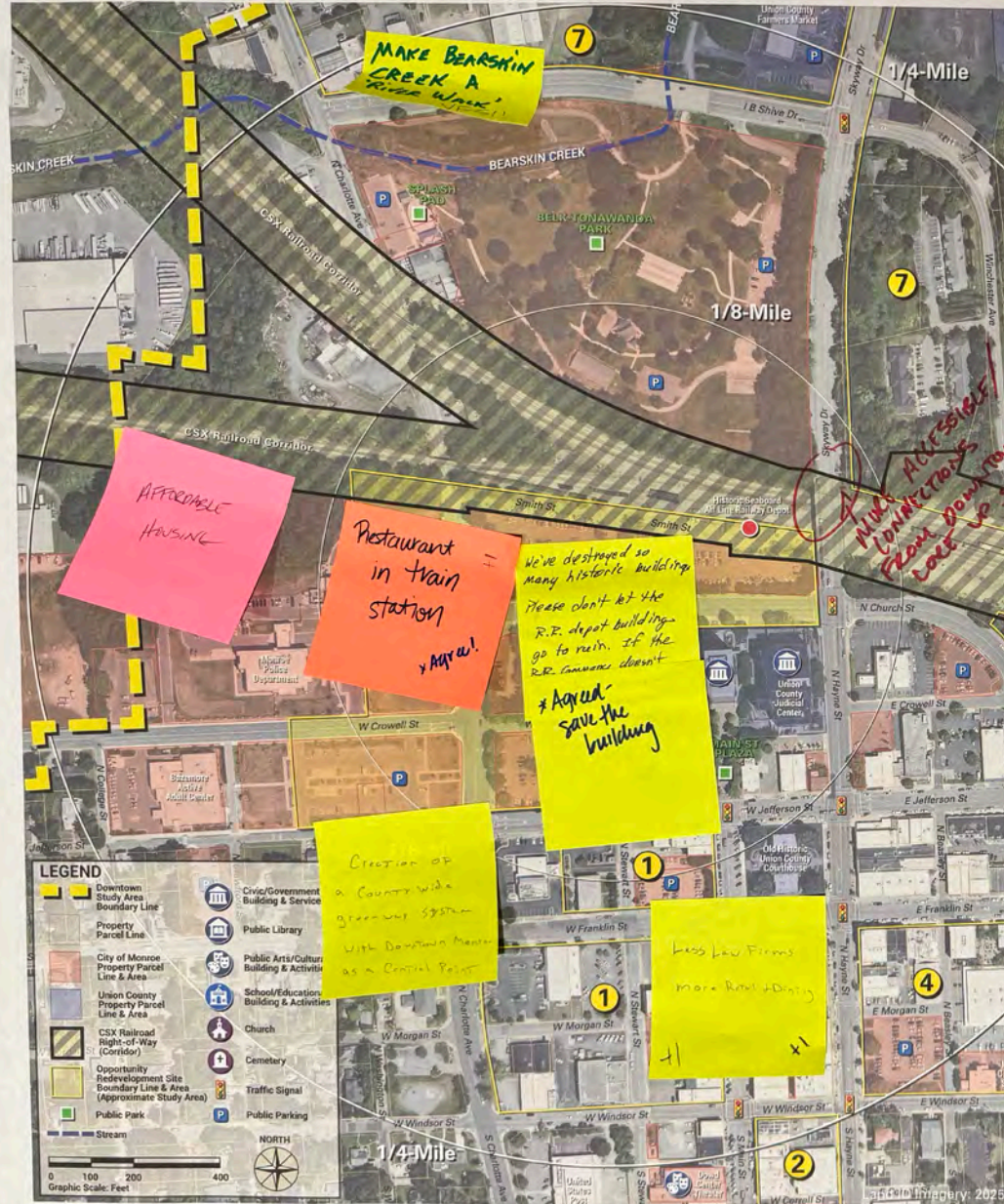


FIGURE E.16: Opportunity Redevelopment Site: NUMBER 5 - Monroe Station.

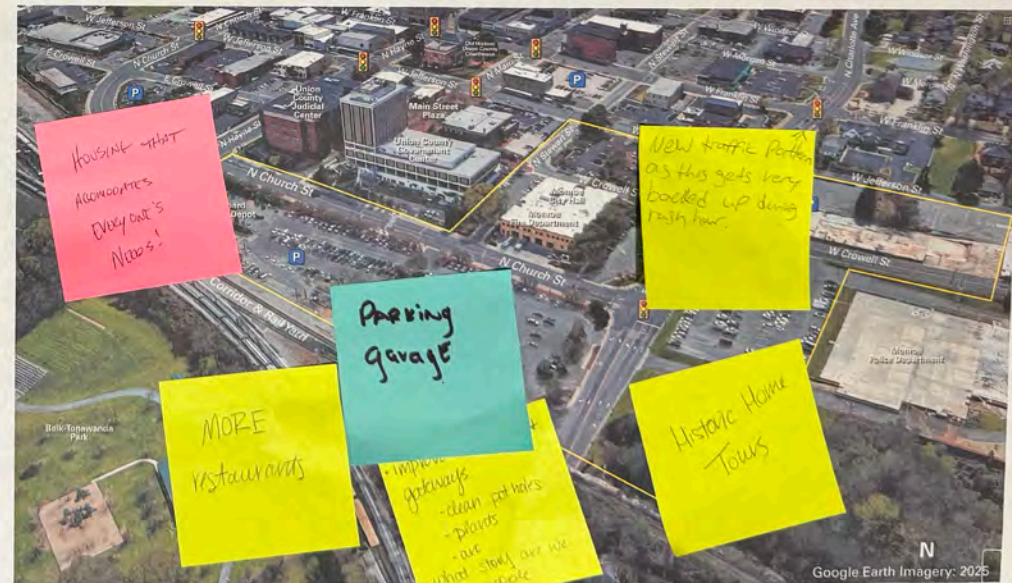


FIGURE E.17: Opportunity Redevelopment Site: NUMBER 5 - Monroe Station.

City of Monroe, North Carolina 2026 Downtown Master Plan - Phase 1: Preliminary Analysis LUP-E.7

Opportunity Redevelopment Site Number 5: Monroe Station

- MAKE BEARSKIN CREEK A "RIVER WALK"
- AFFORDABLE HOUSING
- Restaurant in train station – Agreed!
- We've destroyed so many historic buildings. Please don't let the R.R. depot building go to ruin. – Agreed, save the building
- Creation of a County Wide Greenway System with Downtown Monroe as a Central Point
- Less Law Firms More Retail & Dining
- WALKABILITY ACCESSIBILITY MORE CROSSWALKS
- HOUSING THAT ACCOMMODATES EVERYONE'S NEEDS!
- MORE restaurants
- Parking Garage
- Lighting – pathways – clean up pot holes – plants – tell our history story so we keep people
- Historic Home Tours
- New traffic pattern as this gets very backed up during rush hour
- While there is a lot of parking here, it isn't visible or convenient. Street level entrances for pedestrians would help.
- No More Lawyers Offices Downtown – We need something for family Entertainment

Summary: A Bearskin Creek "river walk" and county-wide greenway centered on downtown are popular visions. Residents want to save the railroad depot, convert it to a restaurant, and replace law office saturation with retail, dining, and family entertainment. Affordable/inclusive housing, walkability, and better wayfinding to existing parking are recurring themes.



Downtown Monroe – Opportunity Redevelopment Site

Number 5: Monroe Station

Opportunities and Strengths

Constraints and Challenges

Shook Kelley – Starter List

Shook Kelley – Starter List

Community Considerations

Community Considerations

- Large Expanse of Underutilized and Underdeveloped Block Area (City-Owned Property).
- Re(use) of City-Owned Property for Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD).
- Multimodal Hub (including potential future Commuter Rail Station at Historic Seaboard Air Line Railway Depot).
- Expand Civic Micro-District with Complimentary Mixed-Use Development.
- Gateway to Historic Downtown Monroe.
- Potential Parking Strategy: Phasing, Type (Surface, Structured), and Shared Mixed-Use.

- Disconnected from Downtown Core Area.
- Traffic Speeds along N Hayne Street and N Charlotte Avenue.
- Pedestrian Walkability and Access Along and Across Block Perimeter Streets and Intersections at N Hayne Street, N Charlotte Street, N Church Street, and W Crowell Street.
- Pedestrian Walkability and Access Along Skyway Drive at Bridge OVER CSX Corridor, and Along N Charlotte Avenue at Bridge Underpasses UNDER CSX Corridor.
- Street and Site Slopes.
- Frontage and Barrier Along CSX Railroad Corridor.

Construct connectivity to Winchester community

Use of City owned property for transit

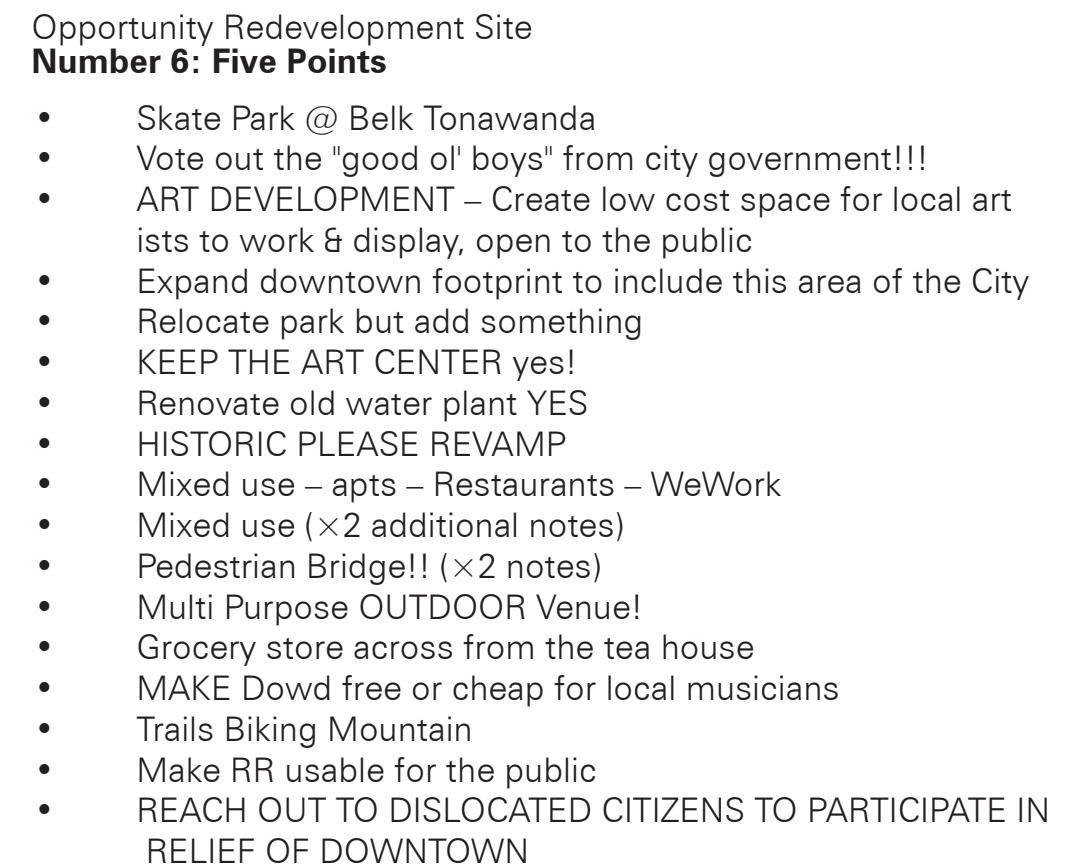
Support a commuter rail

I support a parking deck w/ security

Bebe Lane

Parking

NO AFFORDABLE HOUSING/DIVERSE HOUSING OPTIONS



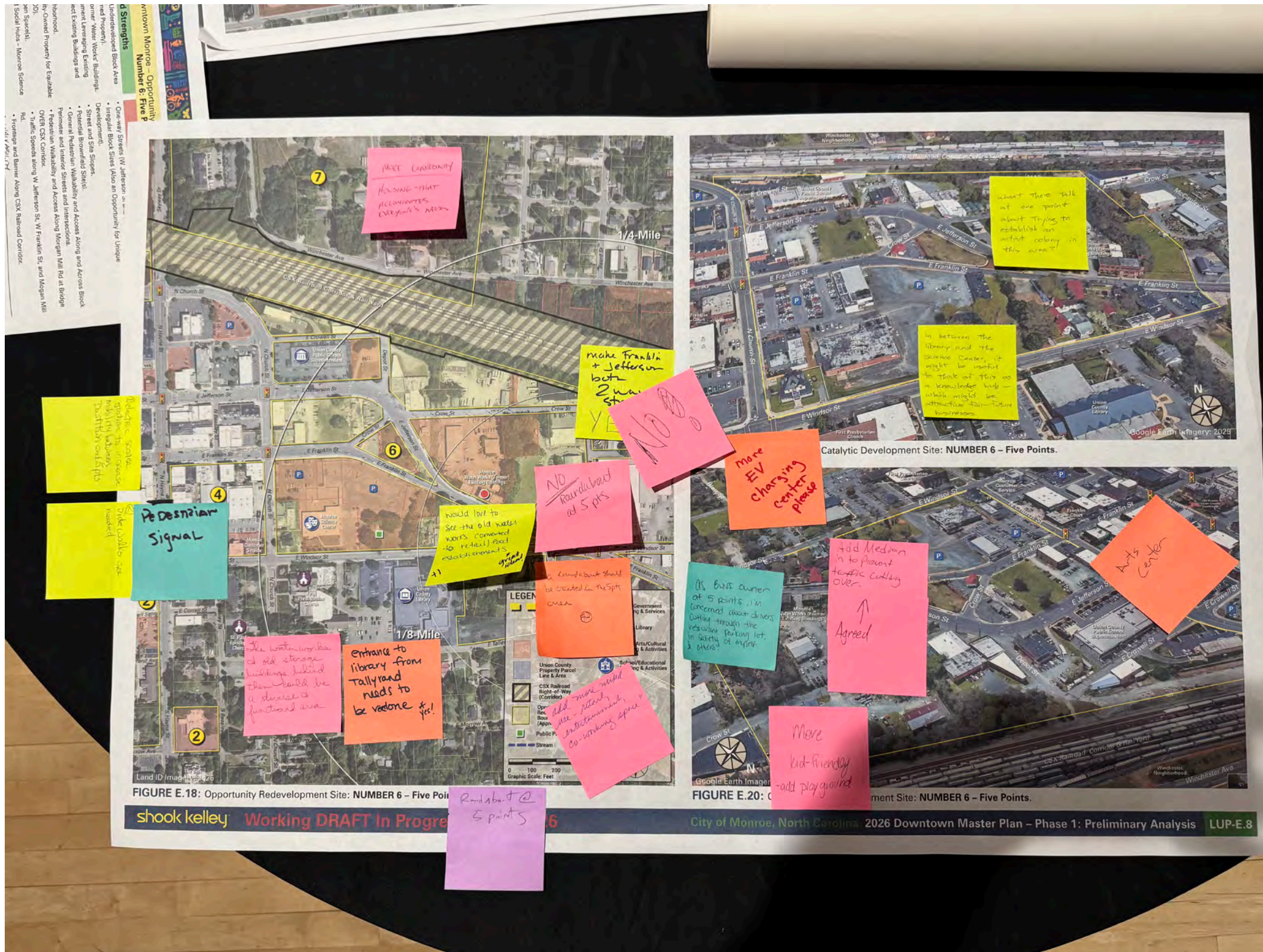
Summary: Strong push to expand the downtown footprint into surrounding industrial areas with mixed-use redevelopment. Residents want the old water plant renovated, pedestrian bridges, outdoor venues, and affordable artist space. Railroad infrastructure should be made public-accessible. Calls for community inclusion and government accountability.



Opportunity Redevelopment Site Number 6: Five Points

- MORE COMMUNITY HOUSING THAT ACCOMMODATES EVERYONE'S NEEDS
- Make Franklin + Jefferson both 2 way streets
- Wasn't there talk at one point about trying to establish an artist colony in this area?
- In between the library and the Science Center, it might be nice to think of this as a knowledge hub
- Arts Center
- Add median to prevent traffic cutting over – Agreed
- More EV charging center please
- More kid-friendly – add playground
- As a business owner at 5 points, I'm concerned about drivers cutting through the vacant parking lot, for safety
- NO roundabout at 5 pts
- Roundabout @ 5 points
- Would love to see the old water works converted to retail/food/entertainment
- The water works & old storage buildings behind them would be a diverse & functional area
- Entrance to library from Talleyrand needs to be redone – yes!
- Pedestrian Signal
- Sidewalks needed
- Improve sidewalks to increase walkability between Downtown & Belk Tonawanda Park

Summary: Adaptive reuse of the old waterworks is a popular idea for retail/food/entertainment. The Five Points intersection sparks debate (roundabout vs. no roundabout). Residents want inclusive housing, EV charging, better sidewalks connecting downtown to Belk Tonawanda Park, and a "knowledge hub" concept near the library/Science Center.



Opportunities and Strengths

- ## Shook Kelley – Starter List

Community Considerations

- meeting spaces needed for Union County Artists & Writers
- Pedestrian & Bike Safety Enhancements
- Consider this a priority site
- Would be a great place for upscale apartments
- Need beautiful signage to welcome to city
- Bike Racks

Constraints and Challenges

- ## Shook Kelley – Starter List

Community Considerations

- WALKABILITY
- CROSSWALKS
- Bike Paths Lock
- MORE PARKS ~~Star~~ More Parks
- make Jefferson + Franklin two way
- address walkability



Downtown Monroe – Opportunity Redevelopment Site

Number 6: Five Points

Opportunities and Strengths

- Large Expanse of Underutilized and Underdeveloped Block Area (City-Owned Property and Private-Owned Property).
- Adaptive Reuse of City of Monroe former ‘Water Works’ Buildings.
- Incremental and Phased Redevelopment Leveraging Existing Character and Adaptive Reuse of Select Existing Buildings and Landmark Features.
- Connection(s) to Winchester Neighborhood.
- Multimodal Hub and Re(use) of City-Owned Property for Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD).
- Creation of New Public Urban Open Space(s).
- Existing Community Activity and Social Hubs – Monroe Science Center and A Cause for Tea.
- Gateway to Historic Downtown Monroe.

Handwritten note: ~~Old Senior Center~~ NEEDS to STAY an **Art Center** for the many, many Artists of the City of Monroe!

Handwritten note: We were given this Center. A lot of work was put into it and NOW - You're taking it away from us - It isn't Right! It's Indian - ~~giving~~ Giving to ~~us~~ do this to us!

Handwritten signature: Carmen David son

Constraints and Challenges

- One-way Streets (W Jefferson St and W Franklin St).
- Irregular Block Sizes (Also an Opportunity for Unique Development).
- Street and Site Slopes.
- Potential Brownfield Site(s).
- General Pedestrian Walkability and Access Along and Across Block Perimeter and Interior Streets and Intersections.
- Pedestrian Walkability and Access Along Morgan Mill Rd at Bridge OVER CSX Corridor.
- Traffic Speeds along W Jefferson St, W Franklin St, and Mogan Mill Rd.
- Frontage and Barrier Along CSX Railroad Corridor.

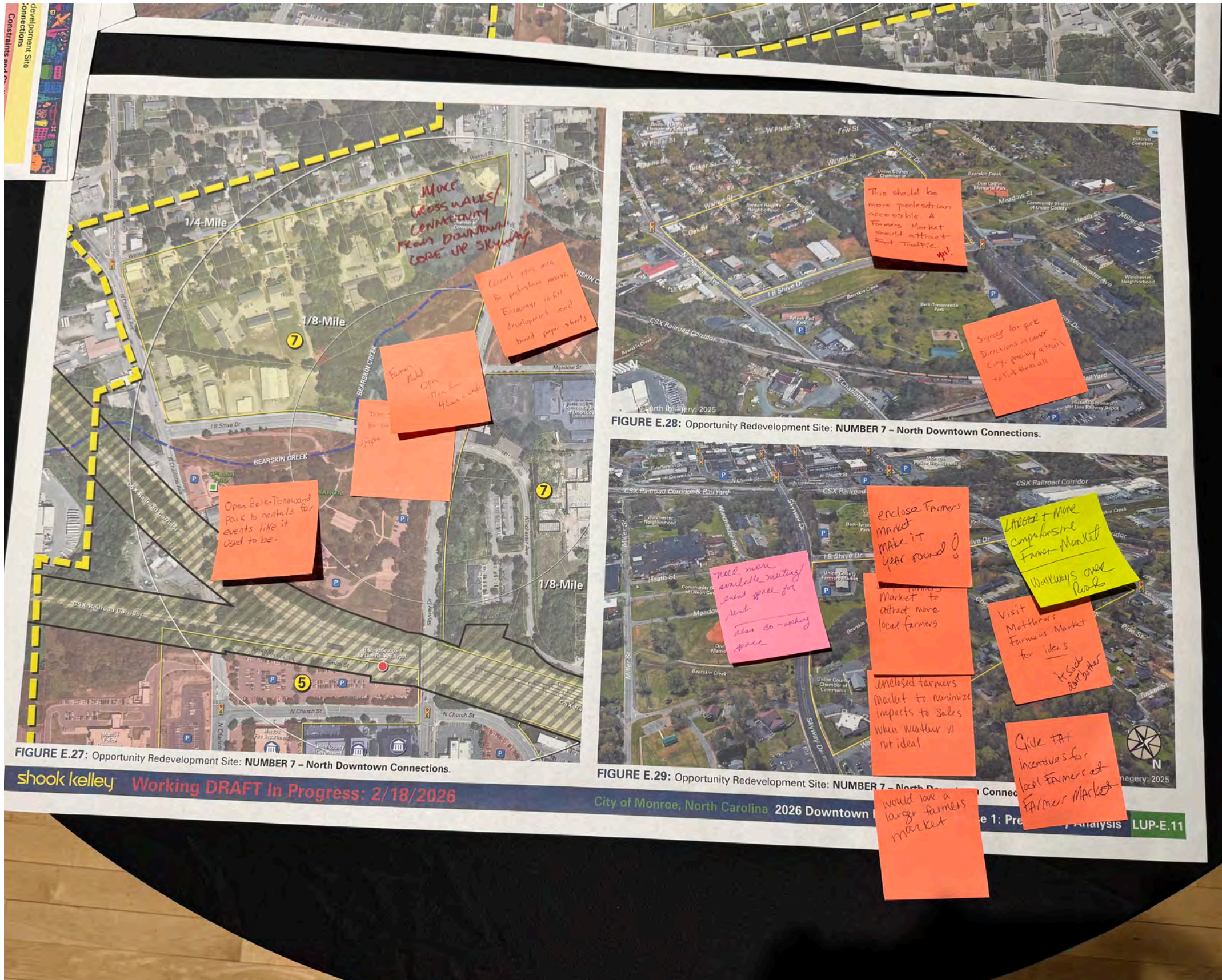
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Shook Kelley – Starter List

Community Considerations

Shook Kelley – Starter List

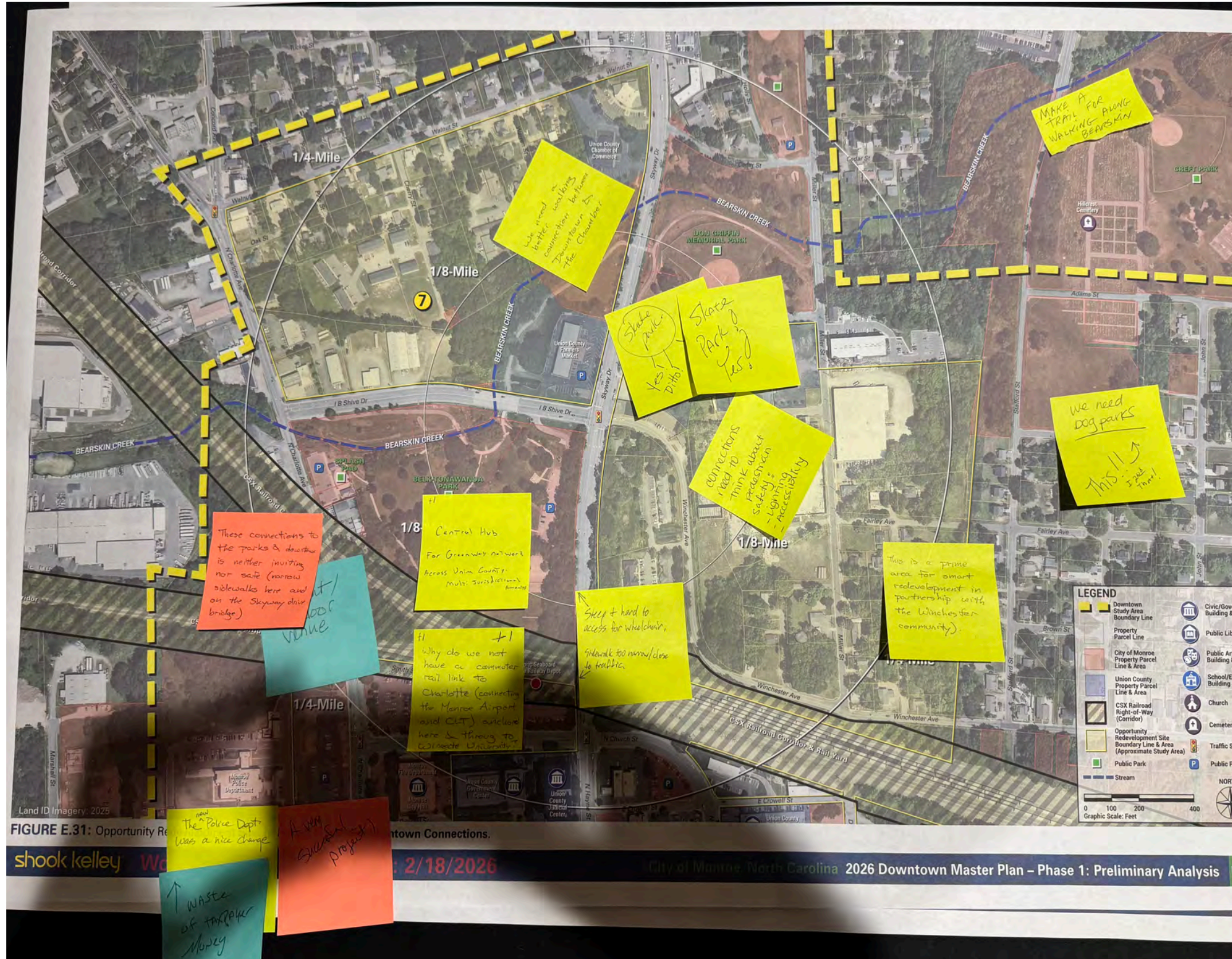
Community Considerations



Opportunity Redevelopment Site Number 7: North Downtown Connections

- "Put PARKING DECK HERE"
- "People have only been? Not all of us are coming from 10-15 miles away. Some of us live in the city and walk. This is not a walkable city. It's a car city."
- UNION COUNTY PLANNERS SHOULD BE IN OUR THEATER"
- "DOWD"
- "Seaboard would better for multi parking lot project"
- "Do not like this spot Should be open space"
- "good spot for garage"
- "Could be a public/private partnership!"
- "KEEP FOUNTAIN IN PARK DO NOT INSTALL OPEN SPACES"
- "More organized public parking"
- "Love the idea of Retail & residential"
- "I would think about a small parking Deck"

Summary: Mixed opinions on deck location and size, concern about walkability versus car dependence, ideas for alternative sites, preserving park/fountain, and using public private partnership with integrated retail/residential.



Opportunity Redevelopment Site Number 7: North Downtown Connections

- "We need more walking connections between the town homes and the downtown."
- "MAKE A TRAIL ALONG BEARSKIN CREEK"
- "Skate park!"
- "Skate Park! Yes!"
- "We need dog parks"
- "This!! I don't have a dog but I want this!"
- "Central Hub for greenway network (trail head/bike hub/bike rentals/etc)"
- "Steep & hard to access for wheelchairs. Sidewalk too narrow/close to traffic."
- "This is a prime area for vibrant redevelopment in partnership with the Winchester community."
- "Why do we not have a connection rail link to Charlotte (connecting the Monroe Airport and CLT) and/or here & through to Wingate University?"
- "The Police Dept was a nice change"
- "A very successful project!"
- "Waste of taxpayer money"

Summary: Focuses on more walk connections, trails/greenways, skate and dog parks, ADA access, partnership with Winchester, and debate over public projects, plus interest in rail links to Charlotte and Wingate.

FIGURE E.31: Opportunity Redevelopment Site Number 7: North Downtown Connections.



Downtown Monroe – Opportunity Redevelopment Site

Number 7: North Downtown Connections

Opportunities and Strengths

Constraints and Challenges

Shook Kelley – Starter List

Community Considerations

- Improve Multimodal (Pedestrian and Bicyclist) Access and Connections between Belk-Tonawanda Park and Bearskin Creek Greenway, and adjacent Downtown Core Area, Winchester Neighborhood, and Benton Heights Neighborhood and Surrounding Greater City of Monroe.
- Enhanced Public Park Programming and Events.
- Union County Farmers Market.
- Context-Sensitive Redevelopment with a Range of Residential Types.

- Disconnected from Downtown Core Area.
- Traffic Speeds along Skyway Drive.
- Large and Irregular Block Sizes.
- Street and Site Slopes.
- General Pedestrian Walkability and Access Along and Across Block Perimeter and Interior Streets and Intersections.
- Frontage and Barrier Along CSX Railroad Corridor.
- Pedestrian Walkability and Access Along Skyway Drive at Bridge OVER CSX Corridor, and Along N Charlotte Avenue at Bridge Underpasses UNDER CSX Corridor.

meeting spaces needed for Union County Artists, Writers & Theatre
Free/Low cost spaces for Flea market type shops
Mixed use zoning
Need Art Center for Visual Art
meeting spaces for work from home collaboration – yes please!
Permanent Arts Council/Playmakers Location
Beke Lanes.

Keep roads & streets in good condition
We need a large permanent spot for the arts in Monroe & Union Co. ZMO

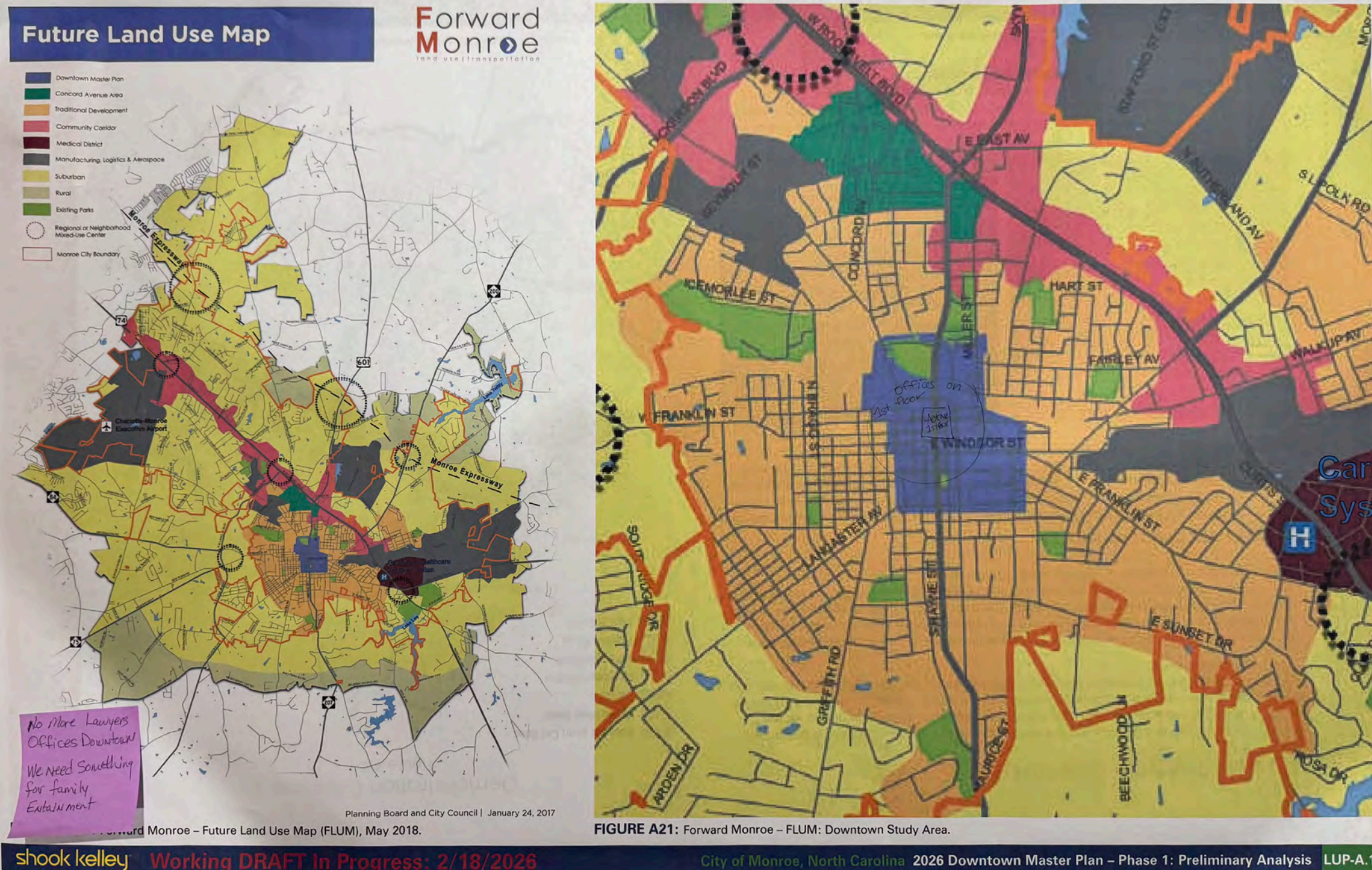
Shook Kelley – Starter List

Community Considerations

Preliminary Analysis

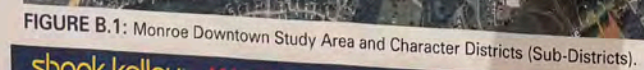
Future Land Use Map

- Move attorney offices to second floors for more family entertainment uses.



- “Mountain Biking”
- “Mountain Biking TRAILS”
- “More focus to Character of Cultural Arts”
- “SIDEWALKS on S. WESTOVER FRANKLIN LANCASTER”
- “Why is this not downtown?”
- “Median on W. Franklin”
- “Pedestrian on W. Franklin”
- “West side of 74 also needs to be under Council of Down town”

Summary: Requests mountain bike trails, upgraded sidewalks and medians, and extending downtown recognition/governance west of 74 with stronger cultural arts focus.

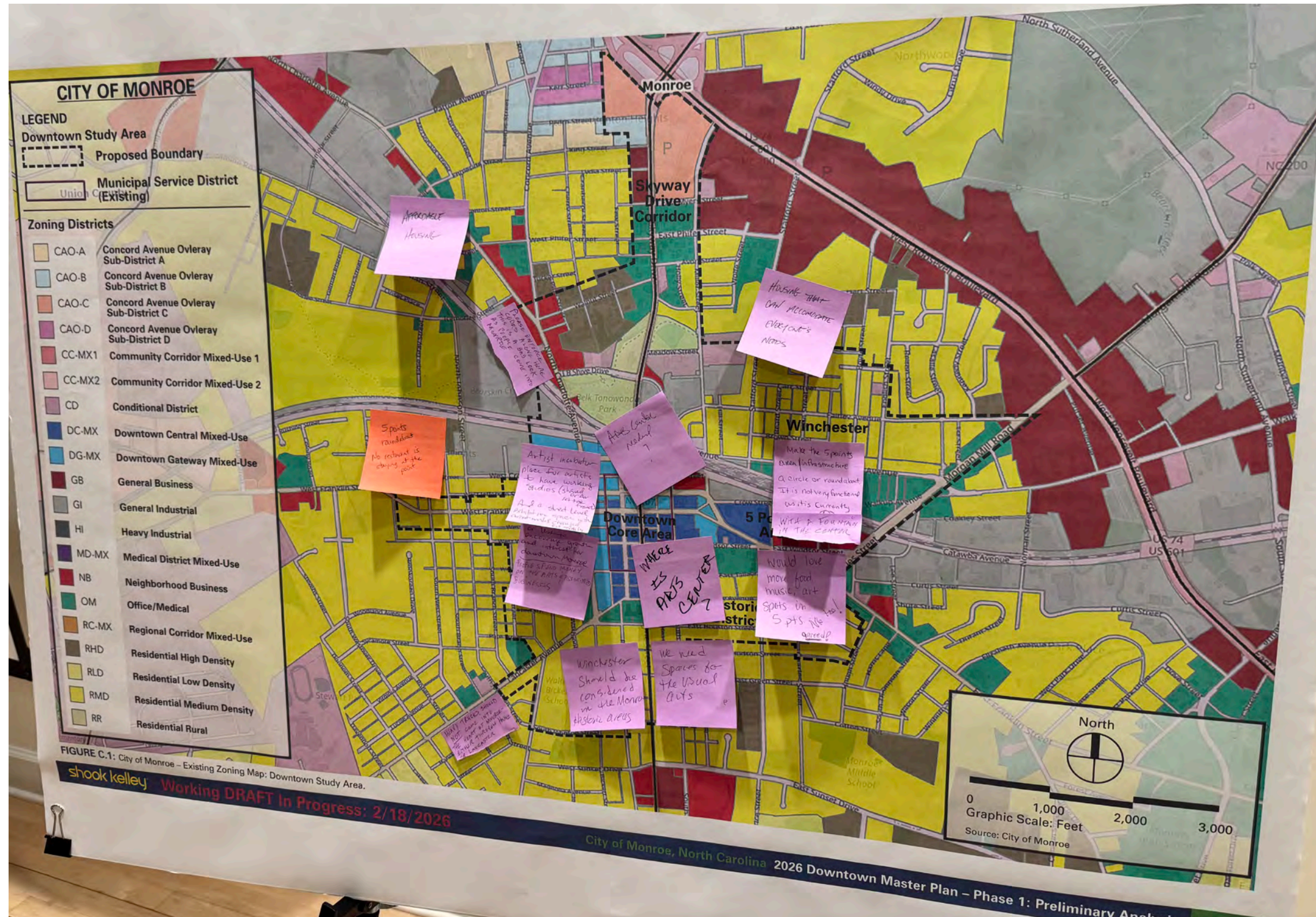




Existing Zoning Map

- "AFFORDABLE HOUSING"
- "Sports facilities No restaurant is playing at the park"
- "HOUSING THAT CAN ACCOMMODATE EVERYONE'S NEEDS"
- "Artist village - place for artists to have working studio space and a place to live."
- "WHERE IS ARTS CENTER?"
- "We need spaces for the Visual Arts"
- "Winchester should be considered in the Monroe Historic areas"
- "Would love more live music/art spots in historic district"
- "Make the 5 points area pedestrian friendly. A circle or roundabout. It is not very functional as it is currently. With a fountain in the center."
- "More bike lanes/sidewalks connecting to downtown."

Summary: Emphasizes affordable, inclusive housing, new arts/artist spaces, recognition of Winchester as historic, and making 5 Points and bike/ped access more people friendly.





Urban Block Structure

- "City has an easement here greenway"
- "Butcher Shop or fresh foods market."
- "Bagel Shop"
- "Escape room!"

Summary: Notes point out an existing greenway easement and suggest small food/entertainment businesses to activate the downtown core.



FIGURE D.10: City of Monroe – Urban Block Structure (Street Pattern and Building Footprints): Downtown Study Area.

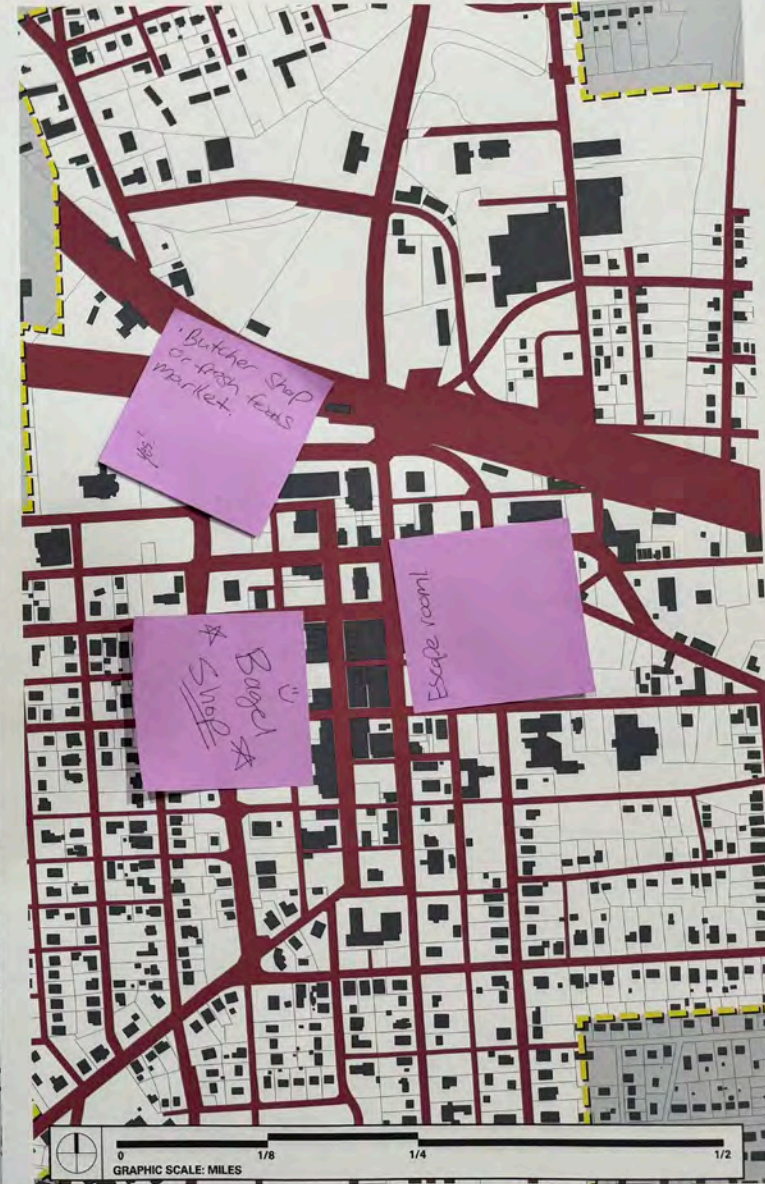
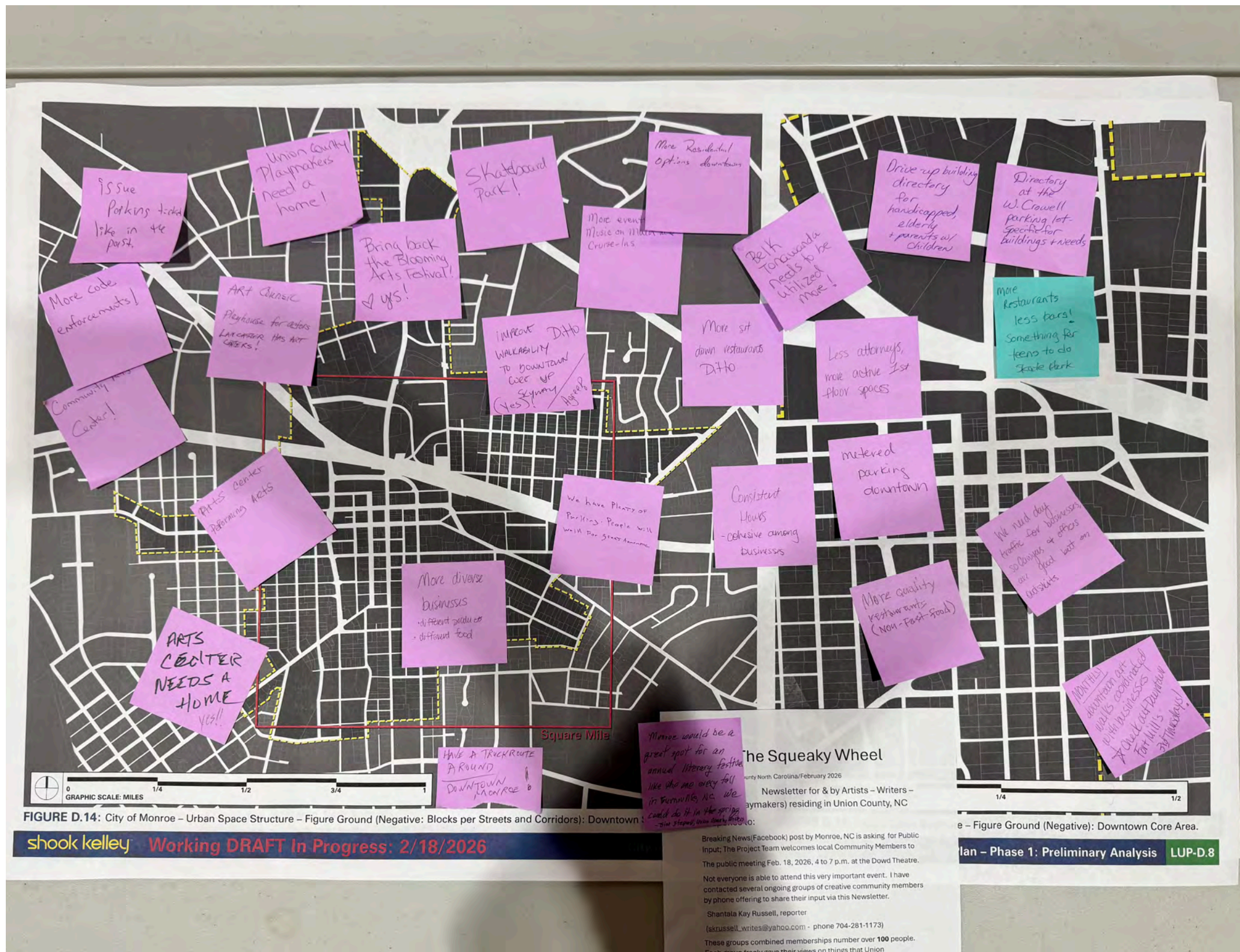


FIGURE D.11: City of Monroe – Urban Block Structure: Downtown Core Area.

General Comment Sheet (Figure Ground)



- Issue parking tickets like in the past
- Union County Playmakers need a home!
- Skateboard Park!
- More residential options downtown
- More code enforcement!
- Bring back the Blooming Arts Festival! ☐ yes!
- More events – Music on Main – Cruise-ins
- Belk Tonawanda needs to be utilized more!
- Drive up building directory for handicapped, elderly + parents w/ children
- Directory at the W. Crowell parking lot specific for buildings + roads
- ART Clinic Playhouse for actors – LAY CENTER HAS ART CLASSES!
- Improve WALKABILITY TO DOWNTOWN over the Skyway Bridge – Yes
- More sit down restaurants – Ditto
- Less attorneys, more active 1st floor spaces
- More restaurants less bars! Something for teens to do – Skate park
- Community Center!
- ARTS CENTER NEEDS A HOME – Yes!!
- Arts Center / Performing Arts
- More diverse businesses – different price pts – different food
- We have plenty of parking. People will walk the streetscape.
- Consistent hours – cohesive among businesses
- Metered parking downtown
- More quality restaurants (Non-Fast-Food)
- We need day traffic for businesses. Shops or others are good but only at night.
- HAVE A TRUCK ROUTE AROUND DOWNTOWN MONROE!
- Monroe would be a great spot for an annual literary festival like the one every fall in Burnsville, NC. We could do it in the spring. – John Thomas, Union County Writers
- MONTHLY afternoon art walk in downtown! With live music! Check out Rock Hill's "Art Party" on Thursdays!

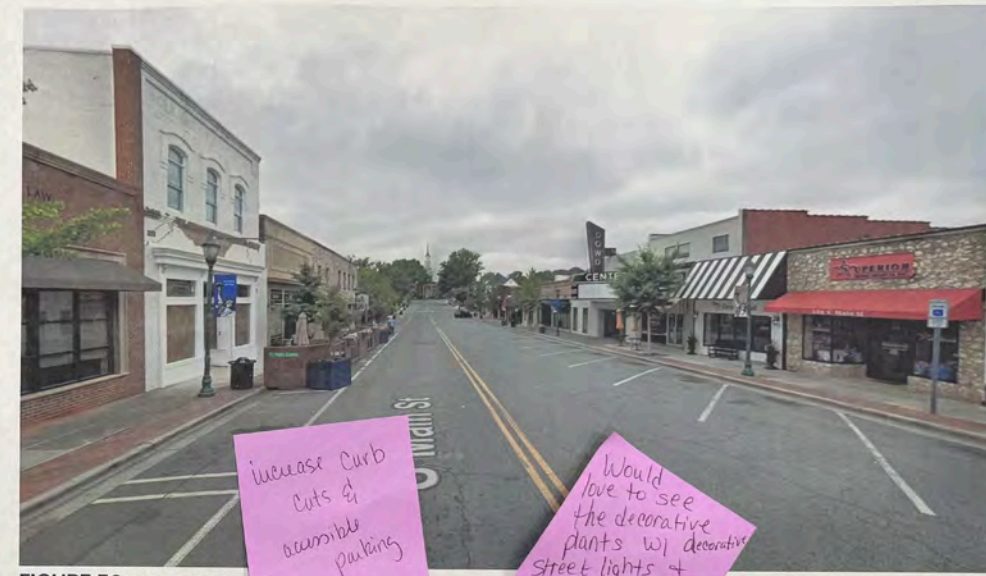
Summary: This catch-all comment page reinforces the top recurring themes: the arts community desperately needs a permanent home; downtown needs more quality restaurants and diverse retail (not law offices or bars); walkability and accessibility improvements are essential; community events (festivals, art walks, cruise-ins, Music on Main) should be expanded; and truck traffic should be rerouted around downtown. A literary festival and regular art walk are specific new event ideas.



S Main Street Analysis

- Increase curb cuts for accessible parking
- Would love to see the decorative plants w/ decorative street lights + more outside seating without restrictions

Summary: Requests for ADA-accessible parking improvements and enhanced streetscape with decorative lighting, plants, and outdoor seating.



Street Type: MAIN STREET Public Right-of-Way (R/W) Width: 72 Feet		Street Name: S Main Street Street Ownership/Maintenance: City
Existing Street Key Components:		
A Lane Assembly (Two Way) Roadway Width: 54 Feet	B Public Frontage Streetscape Area	C Private Frontage Developable Area
1 Travel Lane: 14 Feet 2 Travel Lane: 14 Feet 3 On-Street Parking: 18 Feet Diagonal 45 Degrees Approach: Head In 4 On-Street Parking: 8 Feet Parallel 5 Parklette: 8 Feet: R/W Encroachment	1 Sidewalk Width: ± 10 Feet 2 Sidewalk Width: ± 8 Feet 3 Streetscape Width: ± 16 Feet 4 Furniture & Amenities: Benches, Tables, etc. 5 Street Tree 6 Decorative Planter 7 Decorative Street Light 8 Signage: Wayfinding, Regulatory, etc.	1 Setback: ± 0 Feet 2 Canopy/Awning: R/W Encroachment 3 Building/Tenant Signage: R/W Encroachment



Windsor Street Analysis

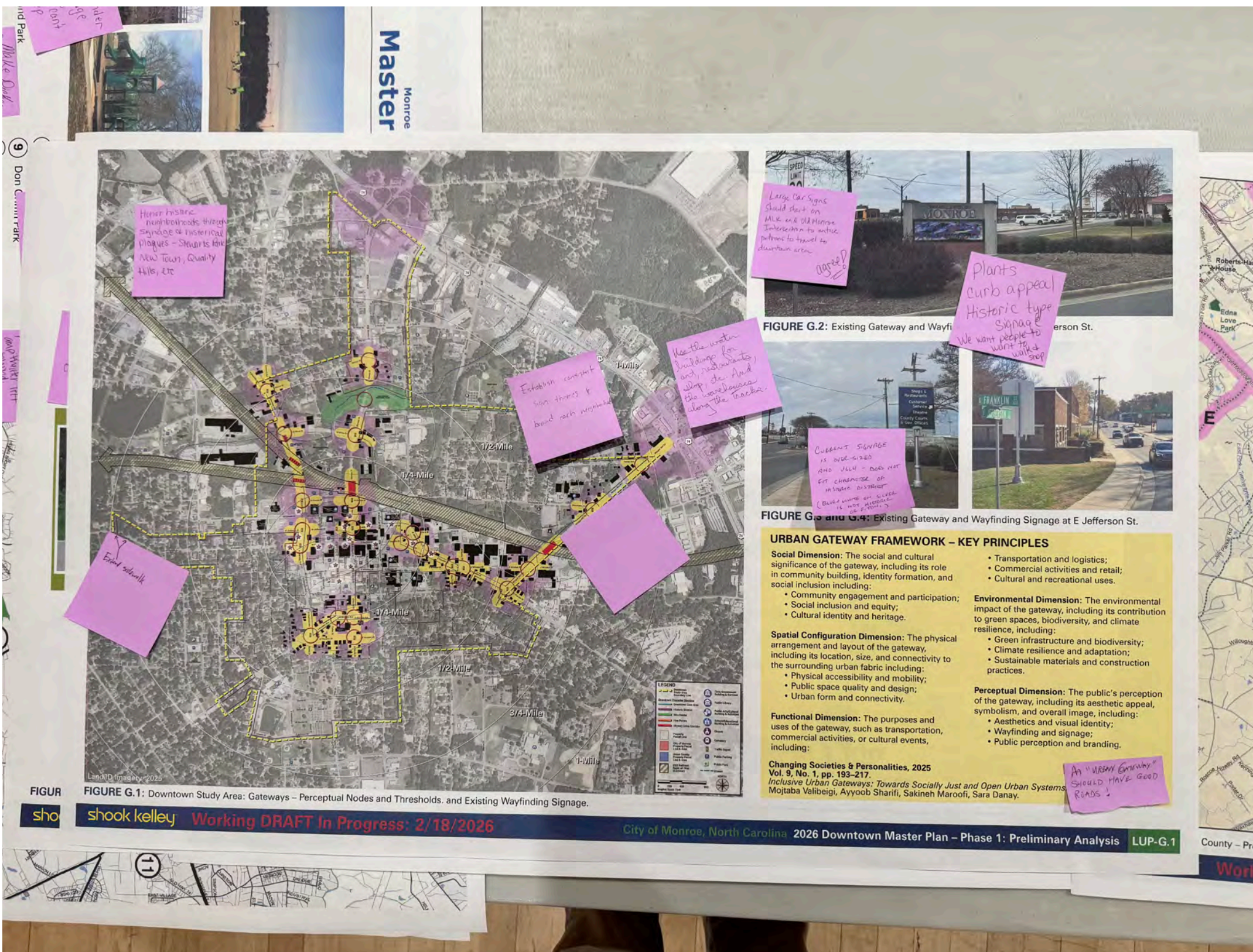
- Maintain road widths downtown neighborhoods to accommodate parking on the street



Gateways & Wayfinding

- Honor historic neighborhoods through signage & historical plaques – Stearns Park, New Town, Quality Hills, etc.
- Establish consistent sign themes & brand each neighborhood
- Use the water buildings for art, restaurants, shops, etc. And the warehouses along the tracks.
- Extend sidewalk
- Large City Signs should start on MLK and Old Monroe intersection to entice patrons to travel to downtown area – agreed!
- Plants curb appeal – Historic type signage – we want people to want to walk/shop
- CURRENT SIGNAGE IS ONE-SIZE AND UGLY – DOES NOT FIT CHARACTER OF HISTORIC DISTRICT (BLUE/WHITE OR SILVER IS NOT HISTORIC COLORS)
- AN "URBAN GATEWAY" SHOULD HAVE GOOD ROADS!

Summary: Existing wayfinding signage is widely criticized as generic and incompatible with the historic district's character. Residents want neighborhood-specific branding, historical plaques, and gateway signage starting at MLK/Old Monroe Road to draw visitors downtown. Adaptive reuse of waterworks and warehouse buildings is again highlighted.





- Possible shrubs under the bridge area so people can't sleep
- Make Dickerson Park + Center more attractive & welcoming
 - the area doesn't feel safe
- Beautify Parks
- Skateboard / Union Symphony hosting shows downtown
- Belk Tonawanda Park – parking lot needs to be "spruced" up – parking space lines – Amphitheater underutilized, needs to be utilized. Parking lot & amphitheater left behind.
- I love Belk Tonawanda, but too many homeless folks make me feel unsafe
- More greenway walks away from busy streets

Summary: Safety concerns dominate — residents feel unsafe at both Dickerson and Belk Tonawanda parks due to homelessness. The Belk Tonawanda amphitheater is seen as underutilized. Calls for park beautification, better greenway connections away from traffic, and hosting more community events like symphony shows.



Greenway Master Plan

- Need more safety/lighting on greenways
- Emergency blue light poles
- Park rentals emergency light through downtown & parks
- Make produce for local retailers
- Better access from downtown – Old Charlotte & Hayne are dangerous to walk
- Open Belk-Tonawanda Park rentals like it used to be

Summary: Safety on greenways is the primary concern — residents want emergency blue light poles and better lighting. Pedestrian access from downtown via Old Charlotte and Hayne is considered dangerous. Residents want Belk-Tonawanda park rental facilities reopened.

FIGURE I.3: City of Monroe Parks and Recreation Department - Greenway Master Plan Update (June 2015).

FIGURE I.4: Existing Greenway Facilities Plan.



Greenway Master Plan Central Monroe

- Emergency blue light poles
- DOWNTOWN IS HERE (with arrow)
- Connection from Winchester to Downtown
- FORMER ARTS CENTER WE WANT IT BACK!!!

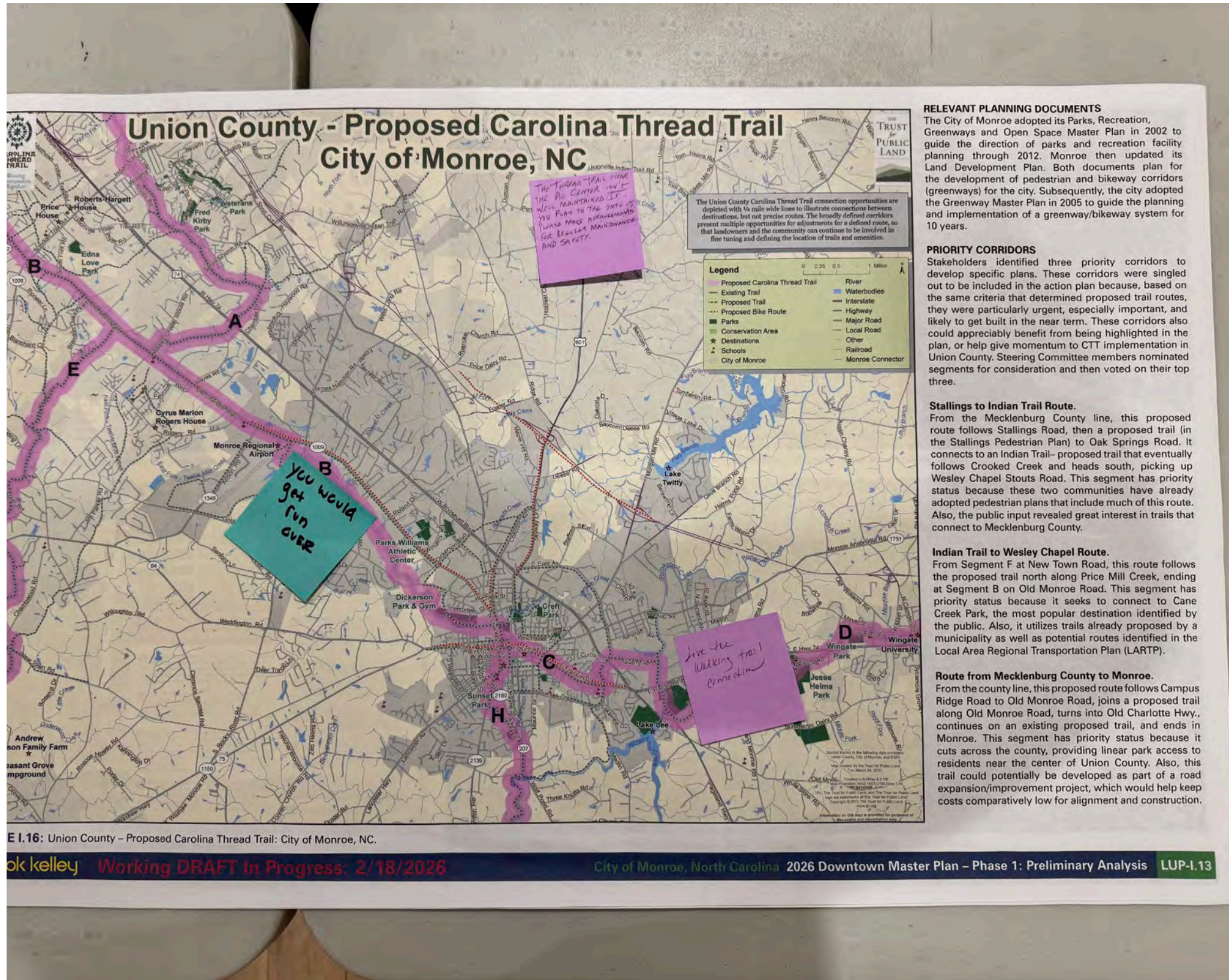
Summary: Continued demand for emergency safety infrastructure on greenways. A strong emotional plea to restore the former arts center. Desire for better connectivity between Winchester neighborhood and downtown.



FIGURE I.6: Greenway Master Plan – Central Monroe.

shook kelley Working DRAFT In Progress: 2/18/2026

City of Monroe, North Carolina 2026 Downtown Master Plan – Phase 1: Preliminary Analysis



E I.16: Union County – Proposed Carolina Thread Trail: City of Monroe, NC.

shook kelley Working DRAFT In Progress: 2/18/2026

City of Monroe, North Carolina 2026 Downtown Master Plan – Phase 1: Preliminary Analysis LUP-I.13

Carolina Thread Trail

- THE THREAD TRAIL NEAR THE REC CENTER ISN'T WELL MAINTAINED. IF YOU PLAN TO TAG ONTO IT, PLEASE MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR REGULAR MAINTENANCE AND SAFETY.
- You would get run OVER (near airport area)
- Love the walking trail connection

Summary: Support for trail connections but serious concerns about maintenance and pedestrian safety along existing Thread Trail segments, particularly near the airport.

RELEVANT PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The City of Monroe adopted its Parks, Recreation, Greenways and Open Space Master Plan in 2002 to guide the direction of parks and recreation facility planning through 2012. Monroe then updated its Land Development Plan. Both documents plan for the development of pedestrian and bikeway corridors (greenways) for the city. Subsequently, the city adopted the Greenway Master Plan in 2005 to guide the planning and implementation of a greenway/bikeway system for 10 years.

PRIORITY CORRIDORS

Stakeholders identified three priority corridors to develop specific plans. These corridors were singled out to be included in the action plan because, based on the same criteria that determined proposed trail routes, they were particularly urgent, especially important, and likely to get built in the near term. These corridors also could appreciably benefit from being highlighted in the plan, or help give momentum to CTT implementation in Union County. Steering Committee members nominated segments for consideration and then voted on their top three.

Stallings to Indian Trail Route.

From the Mecklenburg County line, this proposed route follows Stallings Road, then a proposed trail (in the Stallings Pedestrian Plan) to Oak Springs Road. It connects to an Indian Trail– proposed trail that eventually follows Crooked Creek and heads south, picking up Wesley Chapel Stouts Road. This segment has priority status because these two communities have already adopted pedestrian plans that include much of this route. Also, the public input revealed great interest in trails that connect to Mecklenburg County.

Indian Trail to Wesley Chapel Route.

From Segment F at New Town Road, this route follows the proposed trail north along Price Mill Creek, ending at Segment B on Old Monroe Road. This segment has priority status because it seeks to connect to Cane Creek Park, the most popular destination identified by the public. Also, it utilizes trails already proposed by a municipality as well as potential routes identified in the Local Area Regional Transportation Plan (LARTP).

Route from Mecklenburg County to Monroe.

From the county line, this proposed route follows Campus Ridge Road to Old Monroe Road, joins a proposed trail along Old Monroe Road, turns into Old Charlotte Hwy., continues on an existing proposed trail, and ends in Monroe. This segment has priority status because it cuts across the county, providing linear park access to residents near the center of Union County. Also, this trail could potentially be developed as part of a road expansion/improvement project, which would help keep costs comparatively low for alignment and construction.

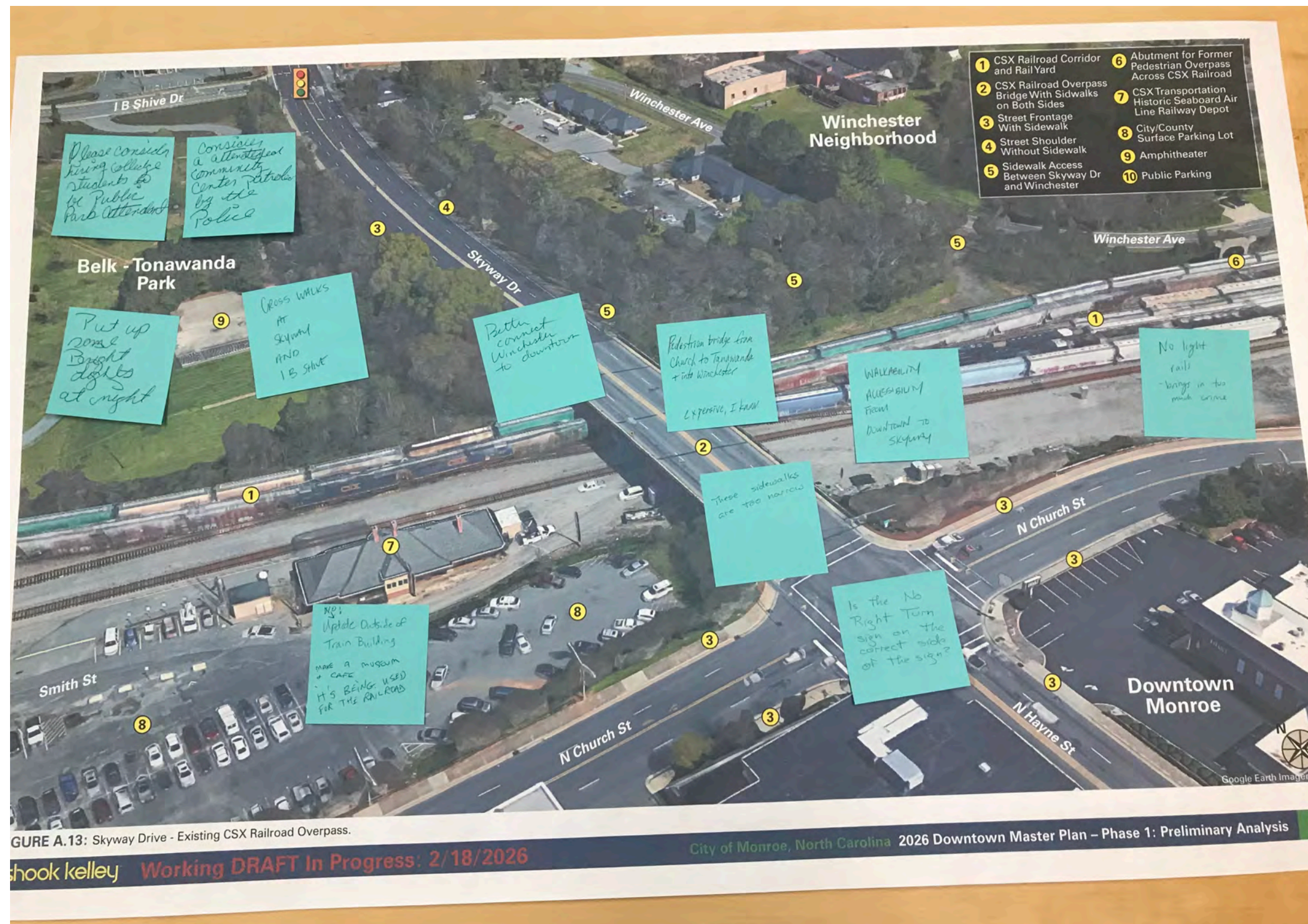
Infrastructure Systems

-



- "Transportation from Monroe to Charlotte + the Airport"
- "Public Transportation Please the bus stop has to be accessible as well as affordable"
- "MORE STOPS THROUGH 74 CORRIDOR"
- "DOWNTOWN STOPS FOR BUS"
- "Place connectors for riders to find a bus easily"
- "WHERE IS DOWD ?"
- "SOUNDS GREAT, LET'S DO IT!"
- "POSITIVE expansion allows for accessibility"
- "Would love to have a place for the ARTS/Perform - possibly use the Dowd"

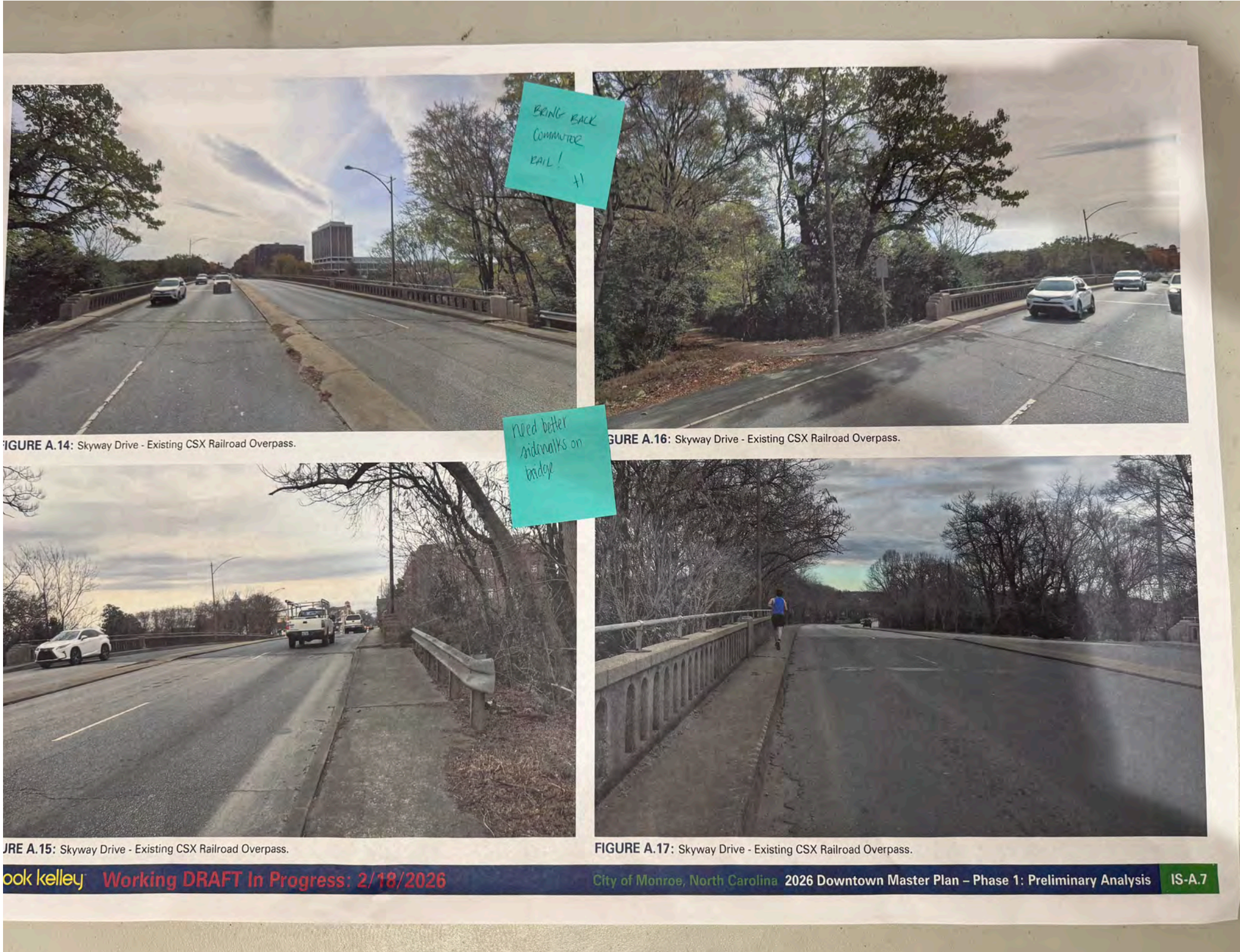
Summary: Emphasizes improved and affordable transit to Charlotte and CLT, more stops on 74 and downtown, better connection/wayfinding, and using the Dowd for arts and performance.



Skyway Drive Overpass

- Crosswalks at Skyway
- Update the existing Train Building
- Walkability and accessibility to uptown
- Is the No Right Turn on wrong side?
- Fear light rail would bring crime
- Sidewalks are too narrow
- Better connect Winchester
- Bright lights at night are needed
- Consider police patrolling park
- Pedestrian bridge or connection to park

Summary: Better connections to the park and to downtown are wanted. With narrow side walks and a busy street, accessibility over and around Skyway is not easy.



Skyway Drive (CSX overpass)

- “BRING BACK COMMUTER RAIL! +1”
- “Need better sidewalks on bridge”

Summary: Reinforces support for commuter rail and notes deficient sidewalk conditions on the Skyway bridge.



North Charlotte Avenue

- "cross walk here"
- "Visibility issues from I B Shive to Charlotte Ave due to bridge (crosswalk?)"
- "THIS IS FOR SALE. PLEASE FIND A WAY TO CLEAN IT UP AND MAKE A FEATURE OF THE SITE."
- "open art/day wall"
- "5pm traffic backed up from Church St @ Griffith Rd all the way to Charlotte/Concord St"
- "finish the mural"

Summary: Notes safety and visibility concerns, recurring congestion, and opportunities for site cleanup and public art (including finishing the mural and creating an art wall).



FIGURE A.18: N Charlotte Avenue - Existing Railroad Underpasses.

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City of Monroe, North Carolina 2026 Downtown Master Plan - Phase 1: Preliminary Analysis IS-A.8

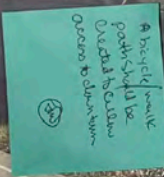


FIGURE A.19: N Charlotte Avenue - Existing Railroad Underpass (Northern): View heading toward Downtown.

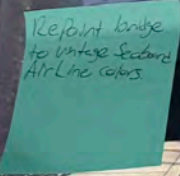
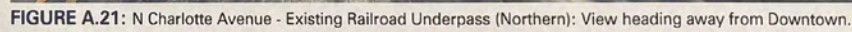


FIGURE A.20: N Charlotte Avenue - Existing Railroad Underpass (Southern): View heading toward Downtown.



FIGURE A.22: N Charlotte Avenue - Existing Railroad Underpass (Southern): View heading away from Downtown.

City of Monroe, North Carolina 2026 Downtown Master Plan – Phase 1: Preliminary Analysis IS-A.9

- "A bicycle/walk path light & clean up below"
- "Repaint bridge to vintage Seaboard AirLine colors"
- "Convince CSX to widen 2 bridges to allow 4 lane Char. Ave."
- "Street lights"
- "Put a mural on the other overpass!"
- "Signage of height on bridges"

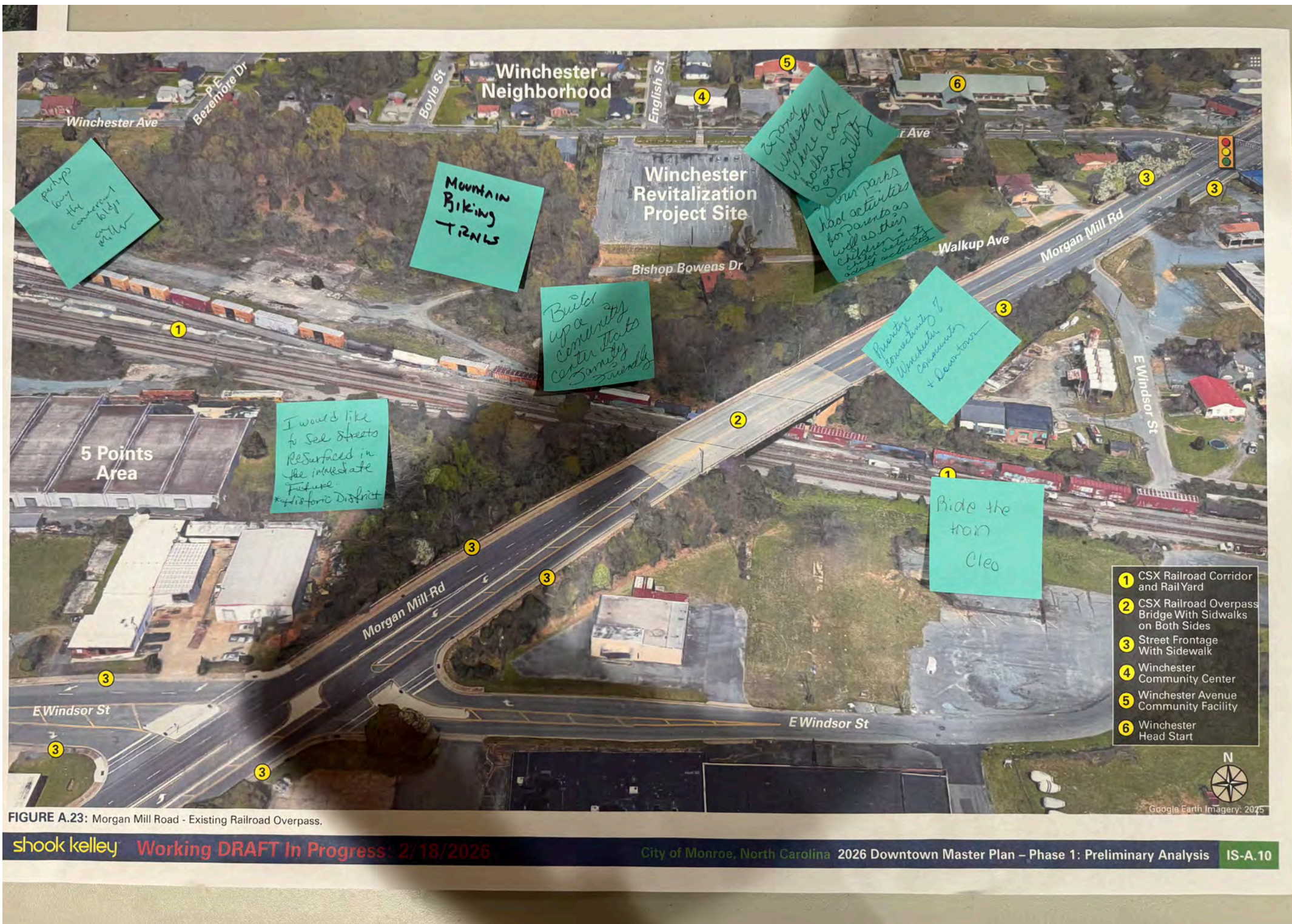
Summary: Calls for improved paths and lighting, aesthetic upgrades (historic repaint, more murals), expanded capacity at the bridges, and clearer height signage.



Morgan Mill / Winchester Existing Conditions

- “perhaps lower the overpass bridge”
- “MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS”
- “Build up a community center that's family friendly”
- “I would like to see streets resurfaced in the immediate future *Historic District”
- “Expand Winchester! We need all hands on deck! Betty”
- “Our parks need activities for parents as well as their children - adult activities”
- “Prioritize connectivity of Winchester Community + Downtown”
- “Ride the train Cleo”

Summary: Suggests structural changes to the overpass, adding mountain bike trails, upgrading community and park facilities for all ages, resurfacing streets in the historic district, and connecting Winchester better to downtown—including via rail.

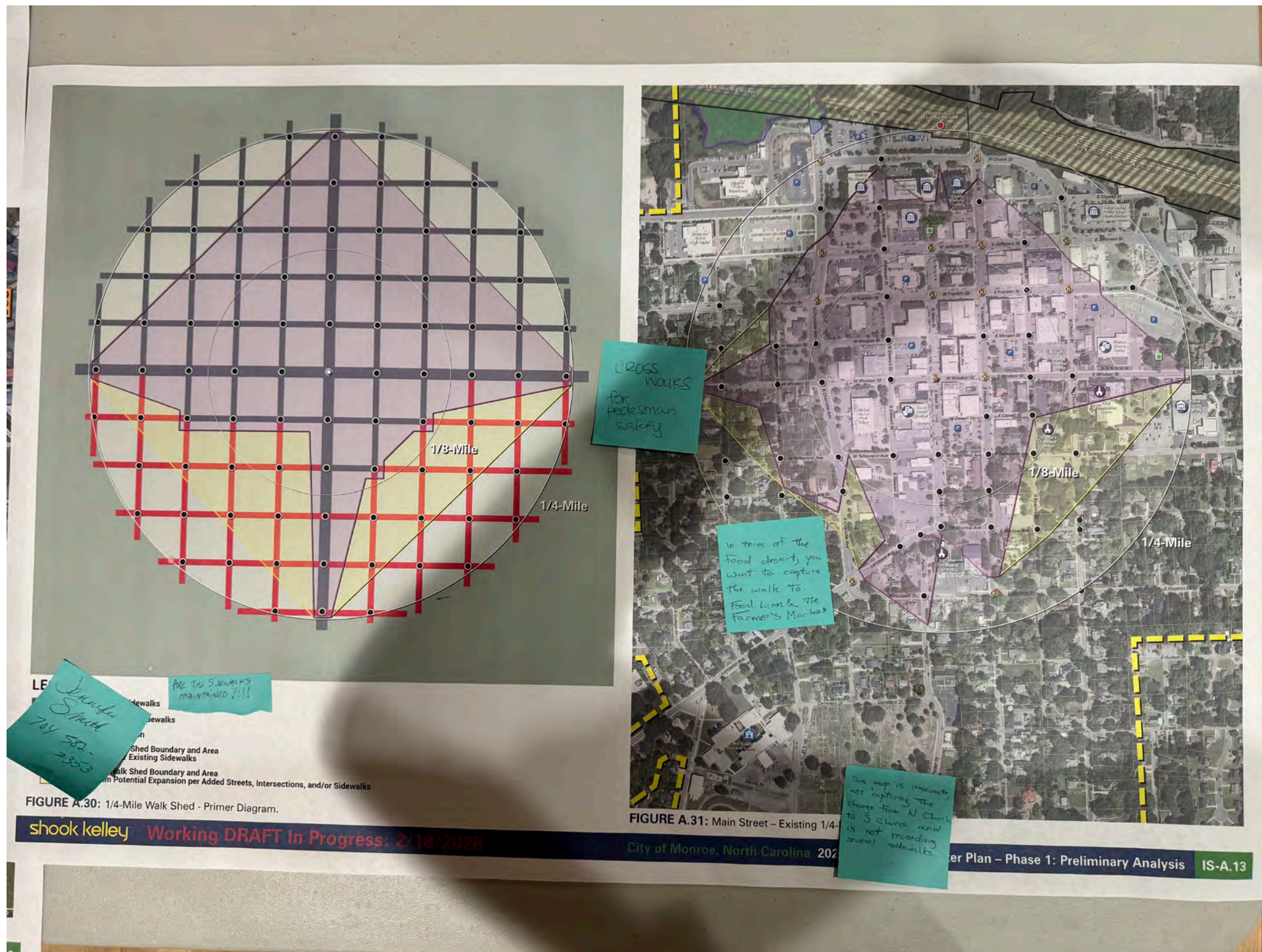




Walk-shed Main Street

- "ARE THE SIDEWALKS MAINTAINED ?!!!"
- "CROSS WALKS - for pedestrian safety"
- "In terms of the Food desert, you want to capture the walk to Food Lion & the Farmer's Market"
- "This map is inaccurate, not capturing the change from N Church to S Church and is not recording several sidewalks."

Summary: Raises concerns about sidewalk maintenance, mapping accuracy of walk-sheds and sidewalks, and the importance of capturing walking routes to food sources like Food Lion and the farmers market.





Walk-sheds – City/County lot & 5 Points

- “ROAD DIET? 4 LANE RD HAS HEAVY TRAFFIC. FEWER PARKING SPACES FOR ANYTHING ON SHORT ADDS & PARK”
- “GENERAL PARKING”
- “pedestrian crossings @ central Ave - no one wants to go to Church to cross - desire pathways!”
- “Hayne St. - pedestrian crossing @ Morgan Alley to parking lot”
- “SLOW DOWN TRAFFIC”
- “CROSSWALKS”
- “CROSSWALKS”

Summary: Highlights the need for a road diet, traffic calming, and multiple new crosswalk connections from the parking lot to key streets and destinations.

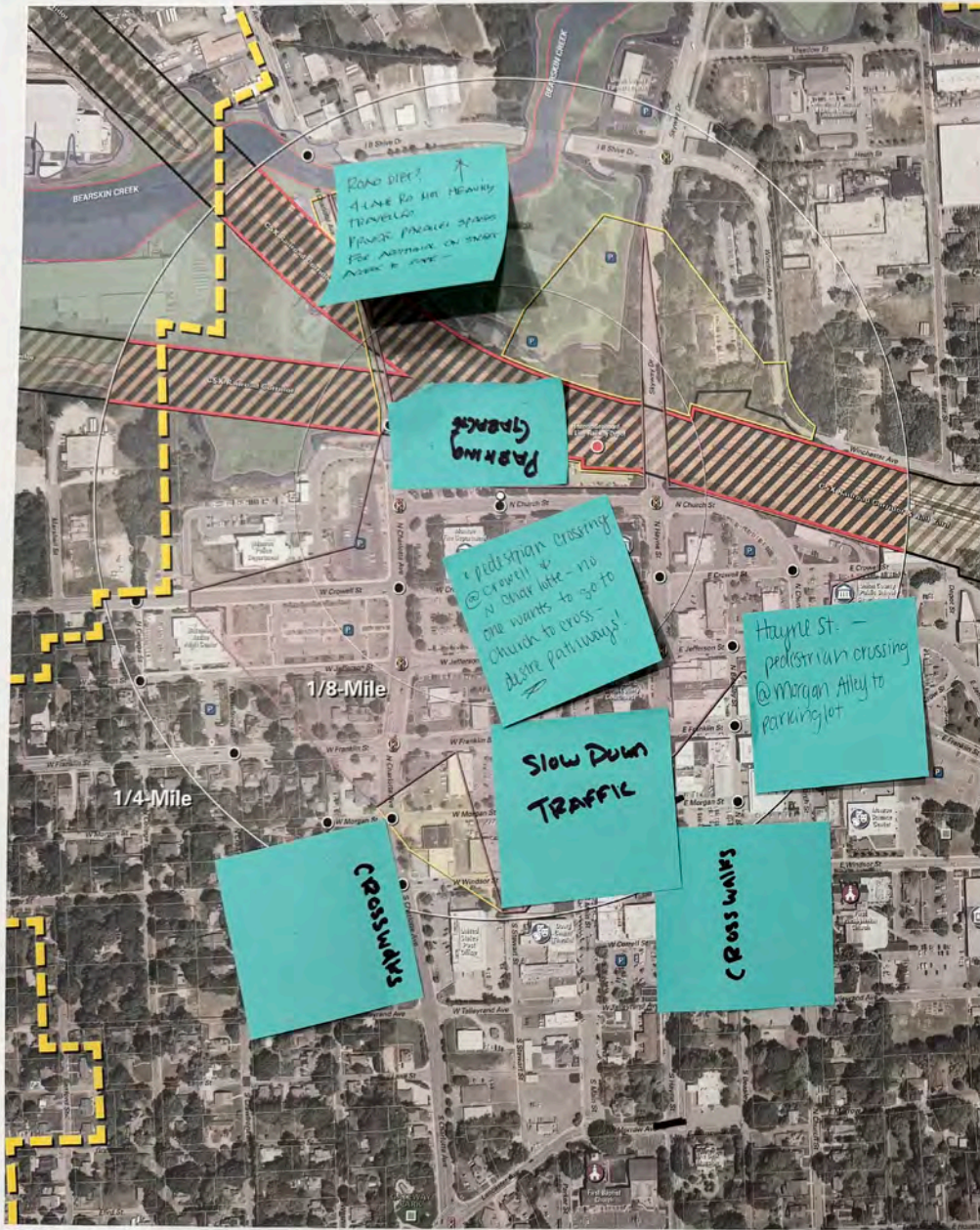
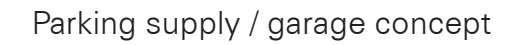


FIGURE A.32: City/County Parking Lot – Existing 1/4-Mile Walk Shed.



FIGURE A.33: 5 Points Area – Existing 1/4-Mile Walk Shed.



- "instead of 3 Also - make 2 lanes Franklin + Jefferson Reverse Angled Parking on"
- "That's definitely enough parking! Good job Monroe!"
- Survey page (online form screenshot):
- "THERE ARE 2500+ SPACES Do we really need to dedicate more space to cars ???"
- "Put PARKING DECK HERE"
- "People have only been? Not all of us are coming from 10-15 miles away. Some of us live in the city and walk. This is not a walkable city. It's a car city."
- "UNION COUNTY PLANNERS SHOULD BE IN OUR THEATER"
- "DOWD
- "Seaboard would better for multi parking lot project"
- "Do not like this spot Should be open space"
- "good spot for garage"
- "Could be a public/private partnership!"
- "KEEP FOUNTAIN IN PARK DO NOT INSTALL OPEN SPACES"
- "More organized public parking"
- "Love the idea of Retail & residential"
- "I would think about a small parking Deck"

Summary: There is some speculation for need on parking garage in the downtown area, and also thoughts there is enough space dedicated to parking currently.

FIGURE B.6: City of Monroe Parking Inventory – Engineering Department (2/24/2024).



2/17/26, 6:20 PM

Online Form Submittal: Monroe Downtown Master Plan Introductory Survey

4. What is one thing you would change about Downtown Monroe? Why?

Parking. Look down Main street at all the businesses on the angled parking side. Without angled parking many would not survive. Franklin Street and Jefferson Street are wide streets and one side of those streets should be converted to angled parking. This is overdue. In 120 feet of curb you have 5-6 parallel spaces, whereas you could fit 10-11 angled spaces.

5. What types of businesses would you like to see in Downtown Monroe?

Variety of restaurants and stores.

6. What is the most important issue to Downtown Monroe that you would like considered during the master planning process?

Parking. Look down Main street at all the businesses on the angled parking side. Without angled parking many would not survive. Franklin Street and Jefferson Street are wide streets and one side of those streets should be converted to angled parking. This is overdue. In 120 feet of curb you have 5-6 parallel spaces, whereas you could fit 10-11 angled spaces.

**THERE ARE
2500+ SPACES**

**Do we really need
to dedicate more
space to cars
???**

2026

ANCHORS + VIBRANCY IN NORTH CAROLINA'S DOWNTOWNS



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ABOUT THIS PROJECT

The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center commissioned this Anchor Study to gain a deeper understanding of how downtown anchors, such as major employers, cultural institutions, and civic facilities, perform and contribute to local economies. The goal was to analyze how surrounding businesses leverage these anchors and how anchors influence foot traffic and retail sales patterns within downtown districts. By investing in this data-driven research, the Center sought to provide local Main Street programs with actionable insights that inform strategies for economic growth, job creation, and business development. This forward-thinking approach ensures that communities can maximize the economic potential of their anchors, strengthen their downtown ecosystems, and position themselves for long-term success.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Downtown anchors are widely viewed as essential drivers of revitalization. Communities invest significant time and resources recruiting and promoting anchors under the assumption that if people are drawn downtown, surrounding businesses will automatically benefit. This study finds that assumption is often wrong.

Across small and mid-sized downtowns in North Carolina, many anchors are active but not anchoring. They generate visits and, in some cases, stay for a long time, yet little of that activity extends into surrounding blocks. The result are downtowns that appear busy but fail to capture lasting, district-wide economic value.

This study repositions how anchor performance should be understood and measured. Rather than asking whether anchors attract people, it asks when anchors actually anchor downtown activity.

Anchors Are Not All Doing the Same Job

Traditional definitions of anchors rely on size, visibility, or name recognition. Large civic facilities, performing arts venues, destination attractions, and well-known businesses are often labeled anchors by default. Research tells us that there is more to the story.

Drawing people to a place and spreading that activity into surrounding businesses are not the same outcome. Many anchors can perform well for their own benefit while contributing little to downtown foot traffic beyond their doors. Others, sometimes smaller or less obvious, consistently bring activity into nearby businesses. Treating these outcomes the same leads to a fundamental misunderstanding and an inability to effectively leverage their presence.

This study introduces a clear behavioral distinction between:

- Anchors that generate visits, and
- Anchors that anchor activity into surrounding blocks

Visits signal attraction. Anchoring shows up in visitor movement, extended dwell time, and repeat behavior.

Measuring Anchoring Through Behavior, Not Assumptions

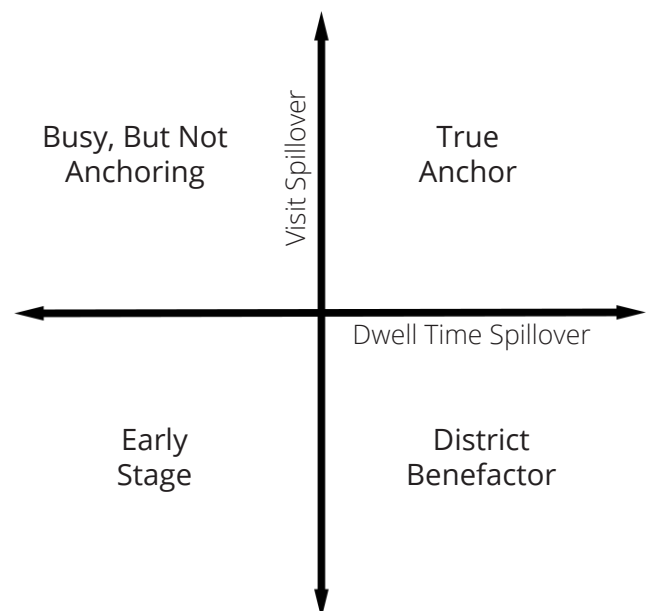
To move beyond anecdotes, this study used geofencing and GIS data to examine how people behave once they arrive downtown. Analysis was conducted at the block level rather than at individual parcels, recognizing that downtowns function as connected systems, not isolated destinations.

Three core metrics are used throughout:

- Visit volume
- Median dwell time
- Visit frequency

These are paired with two spillover ratios that compare anchor performance to surrounding block performance. Positive spillover indicates that activity extends beyond the anchor footprint. Negative spillover signals containment or trip termination. Importantly, spillover indicates association, not causation. It shows how activity aligns across space, not why it occurs.

A central message emerges repeatedly in the data: anchors can be active without anchoring.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Downtown Condition Matters More Than Anchor Type Alone

One of the fastest ways to misread anchor performance is to compare downtowns operating under very different conditions as if they were the same. A theater in a tourism-driven coastal town is not doing the same job as a theater in an early-stage mill town.

This study organizes findings around four downtown conditions:

- High-Momentum Districts
- Developing Districts
- Early-Stage Districts
- Tourism-Driven Districts

The same type of anchor can behave very differently across these downtown districts. In High-Momentum Districts, activity often spreads naturally, and no single anchor dominates movement. In Developing Districts, anchors can help connect emerging pieces together, but only when gaps and customer circulation is managed. In Early-Stage Districts, anchors frequently remain isolated because the district cannot yet support spillover with complimentary businesses or destinations. In Tourism-Driven Districts, activity is often concentrated within attractions unless foot traffic is intentionally designed for.

Understanding downtown condition is essential for interpreting spillover data correctly and setting realistic expectations for what anchors can and cannot do.

Not All Anchors Behave the Same Way

The study establishes anchor types to help downtown professionals better understand performance patterns.

Performing arts and event anchors are among the most reliable generators of block-level foot traffic when timing aligns with nearby businesses. Experience-driven anchors such as breweries and nightlife venues often outperform larger civic investments when nearby businesses and pedestrian design support and encourage exploration. Destination retail anchors generate focused visits and require clustering of other

similar retail to produce spillover. Routine food anchors produce volume but frequently are the end of a visit, not the beginning. Civic parks and recreation anchors generate high use but often have little spillover unless their edges are intentionally activated. Institutional anchors are valuable community assets but rarely anchor surrounding blocks without specific connectivity.

Low spillover in many of these cases does not indicate failure. It indicates that anchors are behaving exactly as intended within districts that are not yet leveraging their value.

When Anchors Don't Anchor, the System Is Usually the Problem

Across the communities studied, the same issues appear when anchors aren't anchoring. Non-complimentary surrounding businesses, poor connectivity, misaligned operating hours, and lack of block identity consistently suppress movement. These are quiet constraints that limit spillover even when demand exists. Multiple misalignments reinforce the problem. Civic amenities are expected to function as economic engines. Restaurants are expected to generate circulation on their own. Anchors are recruited before connectivity is repaired. Success is measured by visit counts instead of behavior. Each misalignment treats individual assets as solutions rather than components of functioning block. The data repeatedly points to the same conclusion. In most cases, the anchor is doing its job. The district is not capturing the value.

Designing for Anchoring, Not Just Activity

The study concludes with a shift in emphasis from recruitment to design and system performance. Downtowns that capture value over time prioritize connectivity over attraction, time alignment over volume, and block capture over isolated success. Anchoring is not accidental. It is the result of systems that allow and encourage people to move, linger, and repeat. Anchors matter not because they exist, but because of what they enable when the surround area is aligned. Understanding that distinction allows communities to avoid misplaced expectations, and turn existing activity into lasting downtown vibrancy.

WHY ANCHORS MATTER

Since the days of the downtown department store, the concept of an anchor is a core tenant of downtown revitalization. Communities talk about recruiting and building strategies around anchors as if the term itself carries a shared and accepted definition. In practice, it does not.

Traditionally, anchors have been defined by size, visibility, or name recognition. Large employers, major civic facilities, destination venues, and well-known brands are often labeled anchors based on the assumption that they draw people and therefore strengthen downtown by default. This definition made sense in an era when proximity and limited choice shaped behavior. If people had to travel to reach a destination, nearby businesses benefited simply by being close.

Behavior in downtowns today tells a more subtle and delicate story. Drawing people to a place and anchoring activity into the surrounding district are not the same thing. Many downtown anchors are highly successful at generating visits while producing little spillover. Others, sometimes smaller or less obvious, consistently transmit activity into nearby blocks. Treating these outcomes the same hides what is actually happening.

This matters because visits alone do not create downtown vibrancy. Movement does. The difference between an anchor that generates visits and an anchor that anchors activity is the difference between presence and impact. One brings people to a place. The other helps those people move, linger, and engage beyond that place.

An anchor that generates visits may still be doing its job well. It may be busy, popular, and loved by the community. But if foot traffic begins and ends at the front door, the broader downtown district sees limited benefit. Meanwhile, an anchor that helps spread foot traffic into surrounding blocks may not dominate raw visit counts, but it contributes to connectivity, extends visits, and promotes cross-visitation. Its value lies not just in who it attracts, but in what those visitors do next.

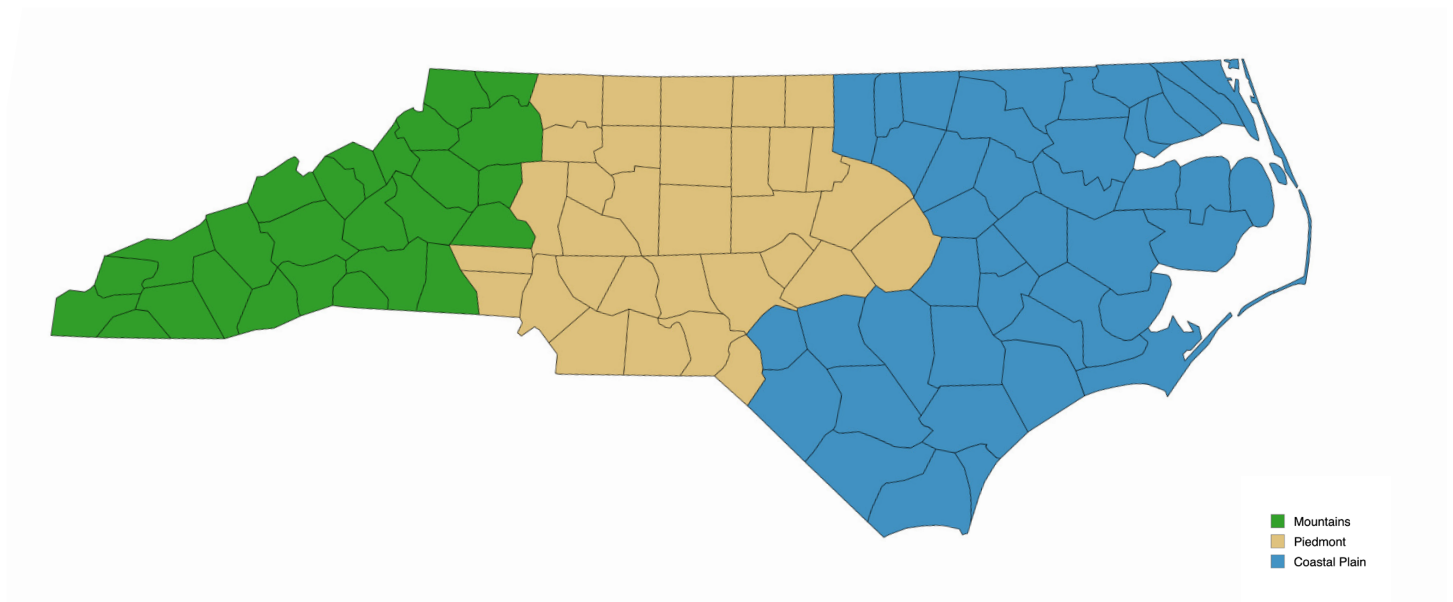
The frequent misuse of the term anchor comes from combining these two roles into one. When scale or attendance is treated as proof of anchoring, expectations become warped. Civic amenities are expected to act as economic engines. Restaurants are expected to generate connectivity on their own. People assume large investments guarantee district-wide benefit. When things do not materialize, attention turns to the asset rather than the surrounding environment.

This study is built around a more precise question. Not whether anchors attract people. Most do. The central question is when anchors actually anchor downtown activity. When do they help move people beyond themselves? When do they extend tie spent across blocks? When do they contribute to a district or block that feels active rather than visit-specific?

Answering that question requires shifting focus away from labels and toward how they actually behave. It requires looking at things like when and how people visit, how long they stay, and what spills over to the rest of the block and district. Most importantly, it requires acknowledging that anchoring is not an inherent property of a business or building. It is the result of the interaction between an anchor and the downtown district that surrounds it.

Understanding that difference does not diminish the importance of anchors. In fact, it clarifies it. Anchors matter not because they exist, but because of what they enable when the district is aligned.

GEOGRAPHIC SAMPLING



Why Context Matters More Than Counts

One of the easiest ways to misread anchor performance is to compare downtowns that operate under very different conditions and treat them the same. A theater in a coastal tourism town is not doing the same job as a theater in a former mill town. A park in a compact, walkable downtown behaves very differently than a park in a district that's more spread out. Ignoring those differences leads to unrealistic expectations and poor decisions.

From the outset, this study was designed to avoid that mistake.

Rather than asking which anchors perform best in absolute terms, the study focuses on how anchors behave in different downtown conditions, and what that means for strategy. That required both intentional geographic sampling and a clear way to describe how each downtown functions today.

Regional Representation

Communities were selected across three regions of North Carolina: the Coastal Plain, the Piedmont, and the Mountains. This was not simply about geography. Each region reflects distinct development patterns, economic drivers, and visitor dynamics that influence how their downtowns work.

Coastal communities are often shaped by tourism and seasonality. Piedmont communities reflect a wide mix of legacy downtowns, growing suburbs, and industrial transition. Mountain communities tend to be smaller, more compact, and influenced by outdoor recreation and heritage tourism.

Sampling across all three regions allows the findings to be relevant to a broad range of North Carolina communities, and helps local leaders see themselves in the analysis rather than dismissing it as context-specific.

ANCHOR TYPES & HOW THEY BEHAVE

Before anchor performance can be measured, anchors need to be understood for what they are and for what they aren't. Not all anchors work the same way, and more importantly, they aren't intended to create the same results. Treating them the same leads to misunderstanding data and creating unrealistic expectations for how a downtown functions.

Anchors attract visitors in different ways, keep them for different lengths of time, and vary widely in their ability to create movement into the surrounding area. Some anchors naturally encourage movement. Others generate significant activity but keep it within their own footprint. Others generate and absorb large numbers of visitors while producing little outward movement outside the anchor at all.

Acknowledging these differences is important when understanding visit and dwell data. High visit counts don't automatically create a vibrant downtown. What matters most is how foot traffic moves once people are there.

This section looks at anchor categories from two perspectives:

- How the anchor is intended to function
- How it typically behaves once placed within a real downtown environment

The intent isn't to rank anchors. Each type plays a different role in a downtown district. The goal is to establish a realistic context for spillover patterns and to understand when a downtown is capturing activity and when it's simply hosting it.

Performing Arts and Event Anchors

Performing arts venues and event-focused anchors include theaters, concert halls, event centers, and similar facilities designed to draw large groups of people at specific times.

These anchors generate strong spikes in visitation



and predictable dwell times tied to performance schedules. Visitors arrive shortly before events begin and depart soon after they end.

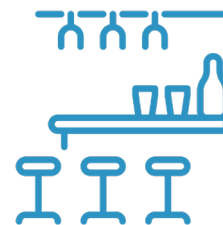
Because of this pattern, the strength of performing arts anchors lies in timing. Events create concentrated times of activity that present natural opportunities before and after performances. Visitors often look for places to eat, drink, or extend their visit.

Whether or not that opportunity translates into further downtown activity depends almost entirely on the surrounding block. When nearby businesses are open, visible, and easy to reach, spillover follows. Visitors are already out, already walking, and already primed to continue their evening. When surrounding storefronts are closed or poorly connected, activity ends at the venue door.

When performing arts anchors are described as “not anchoring,” the issue is rarely the venue itself. More often, the problem is a lack of alignment between event timing and nearby business hours, weak pedestrian connections, or poor lighting that discourages movement. In these situations, the anchor is functioning exactly as intended. The downtown or block simply fails to capture the activity it generates.

Experience-Driven Anchors

Experience-driven anchors include breweries, nightlife venues, cultural retail, wellness uses, and other businesses where the experience itself is the primary draw. These anchors tend to produce longer dwell times and more inconsistent movement patterns. Visitors are not on a strict schedule and are usually open to wandering before or after their primary activity.



Because of this flexibility, experience anchors often generate some of the strongest spillover potential in downtown environments. When surrounding

ANCHOR TYPES & HOW THEY BEHAVE

blocks are active and connected, visitors naturally explore other nearby businesses, extend their stay, or make multiple stops.

However, experience-driven anchors are highly sensitive to their surroundings. Poor connectivity, inactive storefronts, or a lack of complementary businesses can limit their impact. When the surrounding environment doesn't clearly identify where to go next, visitors tend to remain within the experience itself rather than venturing outward.

When these anchors are active but not anchoring, the issue is usually not the business itself. The district or block doesn't encourage movement. Without a visible next step, additional movement simply never happens.

Destination Retail Anchors

Destination retail anchors attract visitors for a specific product, specialty category, or shopping experience that cannot easily be found elsewhere. Examples include specialty retailers, antique clusters, and highly differentiated boutiques.



Visits to destination retail anchors are often focused. Customers come with a clear purpose, make a purchase, and leave once that activity has been fulfilled. Dwell times are middling, but movement beyond the store is not guaranteed.

Spillover improves when there is complementary retail, dining, or entertainment options nearby and visible. In retail districts where complimentary storefronts cluster together, destination retail can become meaningfully to block-level activity. In districts with less retail these anchors function as specific destinations rather than gateways.

When destination retail anchors appear not to be anchoring, it is often because the visit itself is more narrowly defined. Customers came for a specific thing and don't have a reason to extend their trip unless the district has more engaging options. Low

spillover in these cases does not indicate poor performance. It reflects the focused intent that drives the visit.

Routine Food Anchors

Routine food anchors include cafes, casual dining restaurants, and everyday food and beverage businesses that serve regular, repeat customers. These uses create steady foot traffic and predictable peaks throughout the day, particularly during morning, lunch, and evening meal periods.



Despite their consistency, routine food anchors regularly produce limited spillover. Most restaurant customers arrive to eat, remain for the meal, and leave once it is finished.

In dense and highly walkable districts with multiple visible options, restaurants can support spillover. Visitors may continue to shop, linger, or explore after their meal. In districts with fewer options, restaurants often function as endpoints. Activity begins and ends inside the restaurant.

Routine food anchors are often misinterpreted as underperforming when spillover ratios appear low. In reality, they are doing exactly what they are designed to do. The limitation typically lies in the surrounding block rather than in the restaurant itself.

Civic Parks, Recreation Centers, and Trail-Based Anchors

Civic anchors include parks, trails, recreation centers, and other public spaces that draw people through recreation or community use. These spaces can generate high visit volumes and long dwell times while still producing limited activation of nearby commercial blocks.



ANCHOR TYPES & HOW THEY BEHAVE

The reason lies in orientation. Civic spaces tend to absorb activity inward rather than encourage outward. Visitors enter the space, engage with the intended activity, and leave once that activity is over.

When civic anchors successfully anchor surrounding districts, it is rarely because of their size or popularity. It is because the edges of the space function as extensions of downtown rather than buffers against it. Active storefronts, visible entrances, seamless pedestrian transitions, and clear visual connections to nearby businesses all play a critical role in converting recreational use into real economic activity.

Without those connections, even heavily used civic amenities may produce little block-level spillover.

Institutional and Lodging Anchors

Institutional and lodging anchors include hotels, hospitals, colleges, government buildings, and similar facilities that host large numbers of people for reasons unrelated to downtown exploration.

These anchors can generate steady visit volumes, but spillover varies widely. Lodging anchors tend to offer stronger spillover potential than institutional uses, particularly when guests are encouraged to explore nearby amenities.

When anchors aren't anchoring in this category, the issue is often orientation. Visitors may not perceive downtown as accessible, relevant, or convenient from the anchor itself. Wayfinding, visibility, and programming play outsized roles in whether activity is captured.



Using the Typology

This typology provides a baseline for interpretation, not a prediction of outcomes. The same anchor type can behave very differently depending on the district's, block business mix, and surrounding uses.

Understanding anchor type helps downtown professionals set appropriate expectations, interpret spillover ratios, and focus activities where they are most likely to matter. The goal is not to force every anchor to anchor. The goal is to understand how each anchor creates opportunity and whether the downtown district is positioned to capture it.

ANCHOR TYPES & HOW THEY BEHAVE

ANCHOR TYPE SUMMARY



Performing Arts and Event Anchors

These venues generate powerful, time-concentrated bursts of foot traffic tied to performance schedules, creating natural windows of opportunity before and after events. They only convert that energy into downtown activity when nearby businesses are open, visible, and accessible.



Experience-Driven Anchors

Breweries, nightlife venues, and cultural retail produce longer, more flexible dwell times that naturally invite wandering and multi-stop visits. They are among the highest-spillover anchors when the surrounding block gives visitors a clear and compelling next step.



Destination Retail Anchors

These specialty shops draw visitors with a focused purchase intent, meaning trips are efficient and purposeful. Spillover depends almost entirely on whether the district offers an obvious reason to stay once that purpose is fulfilled.



Routine Food Anchors

Cafes and casual restaurants provide reliable, predictable traffic at consistent times of day but typically function as endpoints rather than gateways. The surrounding block, not the business itself, determines whether a meal becomes a longer downtown visit.



Civic, Parks, and Recreation Anchors

Parks and recreation spaces attract high volumes of visitors but tend to absorb activity inward. They only convert that use into commercial spillover when their edges are designed to flow seamlessly into active storefronts and pedestrian connections.



Institutional and Lodging Anchors

Hospitals and government buildings draw obligation-driven visitors with little reason to explore, while hotels offer the opposite potential. Hotels generate repeated daily movement that translates into real downtown activity when walkable amenities are close and visible.

DOWNTOWN CONDITIONS

The same anchor business, operating at a similar size and quality, can produce very different outcomes depending on the downtown it is in. In some places, activity spreads naturally across surrounding blocks. In others, it stops at the front door. This is often where misunderstanding of the situation occurs, frustration sets in and where conclusions are drawn too quickly.

When anchor performance is evaluated without considering the downtown's condition, the data is easy to misread. Visit counts, dwell time, and spillover ratios all reflect district or block behavior, not just business performance. Downtowns are not simple backdrops. They are environments with varying levels of density, connectivity, and momentum. Anchors respond to those factors whether we acknowledge them or not.

This typology outlines four common downtown conditions across small and mid-sized communities. It is important to note these are not rankings or value judgments. They are practical definitions intended to help downtown professionals understand anchor performance in context and consider realistic expectations for what anchors can and cannot do.

High-Momentum Districts

High-Momentum Districts are strong downtowns where activity reinforces itself. Uses are dense and complimentary, blocks are consistently activated, and visitors move easily through the district without needing direction.

In these districts, no single business carries the weight of generating all of the foot traffic. Multiple anchors and near-anchors operate within a close proximity, joined by a mix of retail, dining, and public uses. Visitors come for a range of reasons and tend to move around because there are multiple options of things to see, do, and experience within a short walk.

Spillover ratios in High-Momentum Districts are typically positive but often evenly distributed. This is important. When anchors aren't anchoring in these environments, it is not necessarily a signal of weakness. It often reflects a district or block where activity is occurring in multiple places at once

instead of concentrated around one destination. The district itself is doing much of the work. The common mistake in these districts is expecting a single anchor to stand out as the primary driver of activity. In healthy districts, that role is shared.

When anchors aren't anchoring in High-Momentum Districts, it is often because the surrounding system is spreading foot traffic more evenly. Low or moderate spillover ratios don't automatically indicate a problem. They may simply reflect that no single location dominates foot traffic because the district offers multiple worthy places.

Developing Districts

Developing Districts show times of high foot traffic, but the activity remains uneven. One or two strong places or clusters of businesses exist, while other blocks are still working to catch up. These downtowns are often in transition, with visible momentum but inconsistent activity.

Visitor behavior in Developing Districts is selective. People will move between destinations, but only when it's close, safe, and there are other things to do or businesses to visit. Timing also matters. Daytime and evening patterns often look very different, and spillover ratios can vary widely by block.

In these districts, anchors play a more visible role in shaping movement. Well-located anchors can help extend activity beyond their immediate frontage, but only if the surrounding blocks are active with businesses who are open to receive it. Spillover ratios are especially useful here because they help distinguish between anchors that are helping connect the district together and those operating as isolated destinations.

Anchors aren't anchoring in Developing Districts most often when the blocks around them is not yet ready. The issue is rarely the anchor itself. It is the spaces between that still need to be filled.

DOWNTOWN CONDITIONS

Early-Stage Districts

Early-Stage Districts lack concentration and continuity. Activity is light or inconsistent. Visitors tend to arrive for a single purpose and leave shortly after.

These districts typically have few anchors, and those that exist are often spaced far apart. Long stretches of inactive storefronts, limited complementary businesses, and comfort or visibility issues limit connectivity to the rest of the block or district. Spillover ratios in Early-Stage Districts are frequently low or negative, and that result is usually accurate.

This is where the phrase “anchors aren’t anchoring” is most important. It restates the problem away from individual businesses and toward district readiness. An anchor may be active and not generate block-level benefit because the surrounding block doesn’t support spillover activity. Expecting anchors to carry downtown revitalization in these conditions is not realistic.

In Early-Stage Districts, improving spillover typically requires large changes. Density, infill, reuse, and basic connectivity matter more than marketing, events, or branding.

Tourism-Driven Districts

Tourism-Driven Districts operate under a different set of dynamics. Activity is shaped by attractions, events, and seasonal demand rather than steady local use. Visit volumes can be high, but they are often “one and done.”

Visitors in these districts frequently arrive with specific itineraries. They spend a lot of time inside attractions and may skip nearby businesses altogether. Dwell time within an anchor can be high while block-level spillover remains low. This is not a failure. It is a reflection of the visitor’s intent.

Anchors aren’t anchoring in Tourism-Driven Districts when spillover is assumed rather than designed for. Strong visit counts do not automatically translate into district-wide activity. Capturing activity in these district needs deliberate programming, physical cues, and experiences that encourage movement beyond the primary attraction.

Why the Same Anchor Behaves Differently Across Contexts

Anchor performance is not portable. A brewery, theater, market, or museum will not behave the same way in every downtown because downtown districts are not interchangeable. Spillover ratios make this visible.

In High-Momentum Districts, anchors reinforce existing activity. In Developing Districts, they help shape it. In Early-Stage Districts, they struggle to transmit it. In Tourism-Driven Districts, they concentrate it.

Understanding a district’s condition allows downtown professionals to understand anchor data accurately and respond with appropriate actions. More importantly, it helps avoid the common mistake of asking individual businesses to solve district challenges they can’t. The goal is not to make every anchor anchor equally. The goal is to align expectations and actions with the downtown system as it actually exists.

It's relatively easy to say that an anchor is working or not working. It's much harder to explain why. This study uses geofencing and GIS data to move that conversation away from anecdotal stories and toward observed behavior, while still being honest about what the data can and can't tell us.

Use of Geofencing and GIS Data

For this study, geofencing was used to examine:

- This data does not identify individuals or motivations. What it does provide is a consistent way to compare behavior across different places using the same type of data and definitions.

That consistency is what allows patterns to emerge across communities, anchor types, and downtown conditions.



For that reason, this analysis evaluates anchors in relation to their surrounding blocks. The block is the smallest unit where connectivity, lingering, and multi-stop activity can be measured. It is also where a downtown's success or failure is most visible to businesses and property owners.

By comparing anchor performance to block performance, the analysis asks a more useful question than whether an anchor is popular. It asks whether the anchor is anchoring activity into the downtown district.

Core Metrics Used

Three core metrics are used throughout the analysis.

Visits- Represent the number of recorded trips to a defined geography. Visits indicate volume and draw, but by themselves they do not tell us whether activity spreads or stops.



Median Dwell Time- Represents how long people typically stay. Median is used rather than average to reduce the distortion from outliers. Dwell time is a strong indicator of whether people are lingering, browsing, or making multiple stops.



Visit Frequency- Represents how often people return over time. Frequency helps distinguish one-time destination trips from habitual use and repeat downtown behavior.



Each metric provides partial insight on its own.
Their real value emerges when they are compared
across anchor and block geographies.

HOW ANCHORING IS MEASURED

Spillover Ratios as Indicators of Anchoring

To understand whether anchors are anchoring, this study uses two spillover ratios that compare anchor behavior to block behavior. These ratios do not measure success or failure. They indicate how activity relates across geographies.

Visit Spillover Ratio

The Visit Spillover Ratio compares the number of visits to the surrounding block relative to the anchor itself.

A positive visit spillover indicates that the block receives more visits than the anchor alone. This suggests that activity extends beyond the anchor footprint and that people are doing more than one thing in the area.

A near-zero visit spillover suggests that most activity is concentrated within the anchor and that the block is not capturing additional visits.

A negative visit spillover indicates that the anchor dominates block activity, which is a common signal of trip termination.

In practical terms, high positive visit spillover often appears in walkable, mixed-use blocks where people naturally move between destinations.

Negative or minimal spillover frequently appears where access, design, or adjacency discourage movement.

Dwell Spillover Ratio

The Dwell Spillover Ratio compares median dwell time at the block level to median dwell time at the anchor. This ratio helps answer a different question: are people staying longer because of what is around the anchor?

A positive dwell spillover indicates that people typically spend more time in the block than inside the anchor itself. This is a strong signal of lingering, browsing, or multi-stop behavior.

A near-zero dwell spillover suggests that time spent at the anchor and the block are similar, often indicating limited extension beyond the anchor.

A negative dwell spillover indicates that people spend less time in the block than at the anchor, which commonly reflects in-and-out behavior or quick departures after the primary visit.

Positive dwell spillover does not require people to stay for hours. Even modest increases can indicate meaningful circulation, especially in emerging downtowns.

How to Interpret Positive and Negative Spillover

It is important to understand what spillover does and does not mean.

Positive spillover does not prove that an anchor caused surrounding activity. In some cases, the block was already strong and the anchor simply benefits from that strength. In others, the anchor may genuinely be generating new movement.

Negative spillover does not mean an anchor is failing. Many anchors are designed to serve a specific purpose efficiently. A recreation center or institutional use may be busy and valuable even if it does not anchor surrounding activity.

Spillover indicates association, not causation. It shows how activity patterns align across space, not why they occur.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Anchors can be active without anchoring. An anchor can have high visitation, long dwell, and strong repeat use while still failing to extend activity into surrounding blocks. That outcome is often a reflection of downtown condition, block design, or timing rather than anchor quality.

Spillover Ratio Formulas

$$\frac{(\text{Block Visits} - \text{Anchor Visits})}{\text{Anchor Visits}} = \text{Visit Spillover}$$

$$\frac{(\text{Block Dwell} - \text{Anchor Dwell})}{\text{Anchor Dwell Time}} = \text{Dwell Time Spillover}$$

SPILLOVER PATTERNS

WHAT DIFFERENT COMBINATIONS MEAN IN PRACTICE

		VISIT SPILLOVER		
		Negative	Near Zero	Positive
DWELL TIME SPILLOVER	Positive	Lingering Without Circulation People stay longer than the anchor alone would suggest, but visits are limited. Often seen where one or two adjacent uses encourage lingering, but the block is not yet drawing additional trips. Indicates partial anchoring.	Contained Lingering People spend time, but mostly at or immediately adjacent to the anchor. The anchor is active and pleasant, but the block is not yet capturing broader movement. Common in emerging downtowns.	Strong Anchoring People arrive, stay longer, and move through the block. This is the clearest signal that the anchor is anchoring activity into the downtown system.
	Near Zero	Quick In-and-Out Visits concentrate at the anchor with little added time or movement. Trips are efficient and purpose-driven. The anchor is active but not anchoring.	Anchor-Dominant Pattern Most activity is confined to the anchor footprint. The block neither adds time nor attracts additional visits. This is a common baseline condition in fragile downtowns.	Circulation Without Depth People move through the block, but do not linger. Indicates that adjacency exists, but comfort, variety, or cues to stay are limited. Often a design or programming opportunity.
	Negative	Highly Terminating Trips People spend time inside the anchor and leave quickly afterward. This is typical of institutional, civic, or routine service uses. Valuable, but not anchoring.	Efficient, Single-Purpose Use Trips are focused and short beyond the anchor. Downtown functions as a destination of necessity, not a place to spend time.	Pass-Through Activity People move through the block but spend little time there. Often seen where circulation paths exist but the environment does not invite stopping.

ANCHOR IMPACT ON THE BLOCK

Anchoring is not an abstract concept. It shows up clearly in behavior when you know what to look for. The difference between an anchor that's anchoring and one that is merely active is visible in how people move, how long they stay, and how often they return.

When an Anchor Is Anchoring

When an anchor is truly anchoring downtown activity, the block begins to outperform the anchor itself. Block-level visits exceed anchor visits because people are doing more than just going to one place. They are moving, stopping, and engaging multiple destinations within the same trip.

Dwell time follows the same pattern. Block dwell exceeds anchor dwell, signaling that time spent downtown is not being contained within a single footprint. Visitors may spend meaningful time inside the anchor, but they also linger elsewhere. They sit, browse, eat, walk, or attend multiple activities. The anchor acts as a catalyst rather than a container.

Over time, visit frequency increases. People return more often because downtown feels useful, interesting, and worth revisiting. Trips become less transactional and more habit. This is a key signal that anchoring is happening. The anchor is not just pulling people in. It is helping build a pattern of repeat engagement across the district.

In these cases, the anchor is doing more than attracting attention. It is supporting a system that captures and redistributes activity.

When Anchors Aren't Anchoring

When anchors aren't anchoring, the opposite pattern emerges. The anchor dominates block activity. Most visits to the block can be traced directly to the anchor, with little evidence of movement beyond it.

Dwell time often collapses outside the anchor footprint. Visitors spend time inside the anchor, then leave. Block-level dwell may be minimal or fragmented, even when the anchor itself shows strong performance. The data reflects containment rather than circulation.

Trips also tend to terminate rather than extend. Visitors arrive, do what they came to do, and exit without engaging anything else on the block. Downtown functions as a destination stop instead of a connected experience. High visit counts may still exist, but they mask a lack of broader engagement.

This pattern is especially important to recognize because it is easy to misinterpret. An anchor can look successful by conventional measures while contributing little to downtown vibrancy. In these cases, the issue is not that the anchor is failing. It is that the system around it is not capturing the value being created.

Why It Matters

These patterns are not judgments. They're diagnostics. They help distinguish between anchors that are actively shaping downtown behavior and those that are operating in isolation.

Anchoring is visible when activity spreads, dwell extends, and trips repeat. When those signals are absent, the data is not pointing to a bad anchor. It is pointing to a system that has more work to do. Understanding that difference allows communities to respond with precision rather than frustration and to focus on strengthening the conditions that allow anchors to do what they already do well.

MAKING ANCHORS MORE EFFICIENT

Once it is clear that anchors are active but not anchoring, the question is no longer whether the anchor is working. The question becomes whether the district or block is positioned to capture the value the anchor is already creating. The answer to that question varies by downtown condition.

Anchoring is not a universal playbook. What helps an anchor spread foot traffic in a High-Momentum District may not have much affect in an Early-Stage District. This section outlines how anchoring should be approached in each downtown condition and, just as importantly, what needs to be addressed before recruiting new anchors.

High-Momentum Districts

High-Momentum Districts already possess the core ingredients needed for anchoring. There's a lot of activity across the board, blocks are connected, and visitors move naturally across the district. In these environments, the goal is not to force anchoring, but to avoid hindering it. Anchors in High-Momentum Districts tend to underperform only when there's a conflict.

Small breaks in connectivity, loss of active storefront, or mismatched hours can weaken otherwise strong spillover. The most effective strategy in these districts is to preserve what's working versus changing. Protect walkability. Maintain continuity. Reinforce the patterns that people are using to better interact with the block and district.

Before recruiting new anchors, these districts should focus on ensuring the blocks and districts are strong in connectivity, active storefronts, and continued consistent hours. A single dead block or poorly designed infill project can interrupt connectivity and reduce spillover far more than adding another destination improves it. In High-Momentum Districts, the surrounding block matters more than the next tenant.

Developing Districts

Developing Districts are at a crossroads. Anchors exist, activity is present, but foot traffic is uneven. These are the districts where targeted actions can dramatically improve anchoring outcomes.

In this condition, anchoring is less about the anchor and more about connecting parts. Anchors are often capable of transmitting foot traffic, but the blocks between them are not yet ready to receive it. Gaps, inactive or non-complimentary businesses, and unclear paths suppress spillover even when demand exists.

The focus should be on strengthening connections between existing pieces. Improve connectivity. Activate the most visible gaps. Align hours where possible. Even small improvements in comfort and connectivity can assist in creating more spillover.

Before recruiting new anchors, Developing Districts should fix the space between the anchors they already have. Adding another destination without addressing connectivity can create another isolated success rather than a stronger district.

Early-Stage Districts

Early-Stage districts are where expectations and reality most often clash. There isn't much activity yet, clusters of businesses may not exist yet, and a handful of anchors are expected to do all the heavy lifting. That almost never works.

In these districts, anchoring is constrained by reality. Even strong anchors struggle to spread foot traffic when connectivity is low, distances feel long, and complementary businesses aren't there. The data may show active anchors with little spillover, not because the anchors are failing, but because the system can't support anchoring behavior yet. The strategic priority in Early-Stage Districts should be building the conditions for future anchoring.

Focus on infill, reuse, and block-level identity. Reduce gaps. Improve comfort and visibility. Create reasons for people to stay longer, even if foot traffic remains limited at first.

Recruiting new anchors before these conditions are addressed leads to disappointment. The anchor may succeed internally, but the rest of the downtown will remain flat. In Early-Stage Districts, systems work must precede anchor strategy.

MAKING ANCHORS MORE EFFICIENT

Tourism-Driven Districts

Tourism-Driven Districts operate differently altogether. Visitors arrive with schedules and activities already in mind, centered on attractions or events. Anchoring doesn't happen automatically, even when there are a lot of visitors.

In these districts, anchoring has to be designed. Transitions from attractions to surrounding businesses need to be obvious and intentional. Edges matter. Timing matters. Programming and physical cues have to work together to encourage foot traffic beyond the primary attraction.

The goal isn't to change how visitors behave. It's to work with it. That means focusing on how people move through downtown, how they find their way, and how experiences connect, rather than simply adding more attractions.

Before developing new anchors, Tourism-Driven Districts should examine whether existing visitors are being captured at all. If the current attractions are absorbing activity without spillover, adding more will not change the outcome. The district must be adjusted to convert visits into further foot traffic.

What to Fix Before Recruiting New Anchors

Across all downtown conditions, one principle holds. Recruiting anchors into a system that cannot support anchoring behavior rarely produces the desired result.

Before adding new anchors, communities should address:

- Block-level gaps
- Connectivity, comfort, and visibility
- Operating hour alignment
- Block identity and signaling

Anchors create opportunity. Systems determine whether that opportunity is realized. Turning active anchors into anchoring anchors requires focusing less on who is recruited next and more on whether the downtown system is ready to let activity move.

DESIGNING TO ANCHOR

Downtown revitalization efforts often succeed at drawing attention without necessarily strengthening the surrounding district. Events attract crowds, investments create excitement, and individual destinations perform well on their own terms. Those outcomes matter, but attendance alone does not guarantee that nearby businesses benefit or that visitors stay longer than a single stop. Anchoring is reflected less in peak moments and more in patterns over time, including whether people continue walking, visit multiple storefronts, and return regularly. Designing for anchoring requires looking beyond immediate activity and focusing on how downtowns capture value after people arrive.

This section focuses on practical design and operational priorities that help downtowns convert interest into sustained block performance rather than isolated success.

Connectivity Over Attraction

Bringing people downtown is only part of the challenge. What matters just as much is whether the environment encourages them to continue moving once they are there.

Communities often invest heavily in attractions while giving less attention to the routes between them. An anchor located at the end of a quiet block, separated by large parking areas, or reached through uncomfortable crossings may generate strong attendance while contributing little to surrounding storefronts. Visitors complete the purpose of their trip and leave, not because interest is lacking, but because continuing the experience feels uncertain or inconvenient.

Designing for connectivity means prioritizing continuity and clarity. Walkways should feel intuitive. Destinations should be visible from one another. Crossings should feel safe and comfortable at different times of day. Storefronts and façades should signal activity rather than create visual gaps that suggest the experience has ended. When these connections work, even smaller destinations can support nearby businesses. When they do not, popular attractions often remain isolated despite strong demand.

Alignment of Hours Over Visit Volume

Downtown success is often measured by attendance numbers, event turnout, or visitor counts. While those metrics are easy to track and celebrate, they do not always reflect whether surrounding businesses have an opportunity to benefit.

Anchoring depends heavily on timing. Visitors need nearby businesses to be open during the same windows when demand exists. A theater that releases a crowd after surrounding storefronts have closed will appear disconnected from the block regardless of ticket sales. Similarly, businesses that close just before an event begins may miss the opportunity created by incoming visitors.

Designing for anchoring requires paying attention to schedules as much as physical design. Coordinated operating hours, programming that encourages people to arrive earlier or remain afterward, and lighting or visibility improvements that support evening activity can significantly extend opportunity. In many downtowns, modest adjustments to timing produce greater impact than adding another attraction.

Block Capture Over Isolated Success

A successful destination does not automatically create a successful downtown.

A busy restaurant, a well-used park, or a popular venue may demonstrate strong demand while neighboring storefronts remain quiet. Anchoring occurs when activity extends beyond a single address and becomes shared across the block. Visitors move between businesses, stays lengthen, and repeat visits become more likely because multiple experiences are available within a short distance.

Designing for block capture means evaluating performance at the scale visitors experience it. The question shifts from whether a single business is busy to whether activity continues along the street. Complementary uses, visible transitions between storefronts, and consistent activation along primary walking routes help create the hand-offs that allow success to compound rather than stall.

DESIGNING TO ANCHOR

The Shift That Matters

Designing for anchoring ultimately requires a shift in focus from attracting attention to supporting continuity. New investments and destinations will always play an important role, but long-term performance depends on how well those investments connect to surrounding businesses and to each other.

Downtowns that capture value over time are rarely defined by a single attraction. They succeed because movement feels natural, opportunities overlap, and visitors encounter multiple reasons to stay engaged. Anchoring is not accidental. It results from choices that allow activity to extend beyond one front door and become shared across the district.

WORKING WITH ANCHORS AND THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM

Data can show what is happening on a block, but it can't do the harder work of convincing people to make changes. Even when data is clear and the path looks straightforward, downtown revitalization still depends on relationships between people. These people often experience the district from very different perspectives. Independent business owners who built their livelihoods one customer at a time, property owners who may have held buildings for decades, and anchors operating under institutional missions or business-focused priorities all shape how a downtown functions.

These relationships, while often complicated, are the key to implementation.

Anchoring is also not something any individual business can create on its own. It happens when all the pieces of an entire block allow and encourage people to move, linger, and repeat. That reality often creates tension. When spillover from an anchor is weak, independent business owners may believe the anchor is not doing enough to support surrounding businesses, while property owners may not want to make improvements because they don't see how their building affects the block beyond their frontage. Both reactions are understandable, but both overlook the same underlying principle. Anchors create opportunity, and the surrounding block determines whether that opportunity is captured.

This section focuses on how those relationships influence success and how downtown leaders can work through them honestly and productively.

Engaging Independent Business Owners

Independent business owners are often the most invested groups in a downtown ecosystem. They are frequently the most skeptical and for good reason. Many have watched recruitment efforts come and go, heard repeated promises about foot traffic that never resulted in new revenue, and weathered slow seasons while still participating in community meetings and supporting events.

Most independent businesses operate on thin margins, which makes efforts around anchors particularly sensitive. When owners see significant activity at an anchor but little change inside their own storefront, frustration builds. The assumption is often that the anchor is keeping customers to themselves rather than sharing them. In reality, the issue is usually less about the anchor itself and more about the surrounding environment.



Low spillover frequently reflects gaps in timing, visibility, or adjacent properties or businesses. Businesses may not be open when activity peaks. Storefronts may not be welcoming to customers. Visitors may not experience a reason to continue walking once their original reason for coming to the anchor has been accomplished. In those situations, the anchor may be performing well while the block is not yet ready to receive the activity it generates.

“Anchors create opportunity, and the surrounding block determines whether that opportunity is captured.”

WORKING WITH ANCHORS AND THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM

The most common mistake is treating data itself as persuasion. Showing a business owner a chart or ratio rarely answers the question they are actually asking, which is whether the effort being proposed will help their business. That question requires a direct and honest conversation about timing, readiness, and realistic expectations.

Starting with the skeptic rather than the believer is often more productive. Every downtown has business owners who support nearly any initiative, but focusing only on them leaves important voices left out of the conversation. The oldest business on a block or the person neighboring businesses watch when deciding hours or storefront investment often carry more influence than a formal leadership role. Bringing those voices to the table early builds credibility and prevents misunderstandings later. Is it difficult to do this? Yes. But it is also necessary.

Honesty about what anchors can and can't do is equally important. Anchors create opportunity windows rather than guarantees. A theater generates predictable surges before and after performances. Hotels create repeated traffic throughout the day. Parks and civic amenities attract steady use but often direct activity inward unless connections to the surrounding district are obvious. Whether visitors stop elsewhere depends largely on what they encounter immediately outside the anchor.

Productive conversations tend to focus on alignment rather than blame. Operating hours should overlap with anchor activity as much as possible. Storefronts should clearly communicate that they are open and welcoming during peak moments. Businesses should consider whether they offer a visible reason for someone to extend a visit beyond its original purpose. Small adjustments in those areas often matter more than marketing campaigns or additional programming.

At the same time, downtown professionals must respect the cost of participating in these efforts. Extending hours, hiring additional staff, or investing in storefront improvements represents real

financial risk for small businesses. When those investments don't immediately produce results, the business owner has not failed. Conditions may not yet support conversion. Honest communication about timelines and readiness builds far more trust than sustained encouragement not supported by results.

Anchoring ultimately functions as a handoff between businesses. It succeeds when surrounding businesses are positioned to receive the activity already being created.

Working With Property Owners

Property owners are among the most influential participants in a downtown and the least engaged in strategic conversations. A single inactive storefront on an important block can interrupt foot traffic far beyond its frontage, particularly in Developing or Early Stage districts where continuity is already fragile. Even small gaps matter. Dark windows, deferred maintenance, or long-term vacancy shorten visits and weaken the effectiveness of the block.

For that reason, understanding vacancy requires direct conversations with property owners rather than assuming to know their intent. Downtown districts often encounter several ownership patterns that impact how properties are managed and if storefronts remain active. Some buildings are owned by absentee landlords who don't experience the daily impact of their dark storefronts. Others are owned free and clear, often for decades, with little financial pressure to lease or reinvest. In still some other cases, owners are undercapitalized and lack of the resources needed to prepare a commercial space for occupancy even when interest exists. Each of these cases produces vacancy for different reasons, and each requires a different response.

Vacancy is not always stubbornness, but it does carry measurable consequences. A dark storefront weakens adjacent and nearby businesses, interrupts connectivity, and gradually erodes vibrancy along the block. Over time, it also undermines the long-term value of the

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vacant building itself. What may feel like a neutral holding strategy for one owner often means lost opportunity for neighboring properties and an increased risk across the entire block.

Conversations with property owners (and other leaders) should focus on both the value of the individual property and the impact on the value of surrounding properties. Maintaining an active and productive storefront protects the value not just of the building itself, but for surrounding properties as well.

When storefronts remain inactive or misaligned with surrounding uses, uncertainty increases for everyone. When activity strengthens across multiple storefronts, lease stability improves and asset value increases across adjacent properties. This is not a civic obligation argument. It is a financial performance and asset protection argument grounded in self interest.

Many property owners are not opposed to activation itself but are responding to the complexity involved. Tenant recruitment, permitting, build out costs, and lease negotiations require time, expertise, and money. Programs that simplify those steps, including tenant matching assistance, façade grants, temporary lease structures, and short-term activation tools frequently produce more progress than large incentive packages that require long term commitments upfront. At the same time, downtown leadership must be willing to use the full range of tools available. A carrot only approach rarely changes behavior in every case.

Consistent and fair code enforcement establishes expectations around maintenance, safety, and minimum activation standards while signaling that prolonged neglect is not a neutral choice. When paired with incentives and technical support, this balanced approach protects the block while still encouraging reinvestment.

It's critical to note occupancy alone is not the end goal. The type of tenant occupying a storefront can influence block performance as significantly as

vacancy itself. Professional service businesses such as attorneys, financial planners, insurance agents, accountants, and similar office based uses are often stable tenants and valued members of the local economy. Many become long term investors and civic leaders within their communities. Yet many of these businesses operate by appointment, maintain traditional business hours, or rely on interior focused layouts that provide limited visual engagement with the sidewalk. From a leasing perspective the space is occupied. From a block perspective it may function much like vacancy during peak visitation periods.



Anchors depend on visible continuity along main walking paths. Visitors leaving a theater, park, event, or restaurant make quick decisions about whether to continue walking. When they encounter dark windows, closed blinds, or a series of storefronts without visible activity, the signal is clear and movement often stops. Clusters of office uses along critical frontage can shorten visits even when demand exists nearby, weakening the adjacent businesses and reducing spillover. This is not an argument against service businesses. It is an argument for placement and tenant mix strategy. Upper floors, secondary streets, or dedicated office clusters often provide strong long term homes for professional services while preserving key ground floor frontage for uses that generate visibility, extended hours, and repeat visitation. Ground floor space along primary corridors is a limited asset, and how it is used influences the performance of every property around it.

WORKING WITH ANCHORS AND THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM

Direct conversations with property owners should reflect that reality. Filling space matters, but filling it in ways that support nearby businesses and block performance produces stronger long term financial returns for both individual buildings and the district as a whole. The question is not whether a property owner is helping an anchor succeed. The question is whether the block is positioned to perform and whether each building contributes to or constrains that performance over time.

Coordinating Anchors with the Block

Anchors operate according to their own operational realities, but their decisions shape surrounding behavior whether they mean to or not. Event scheduling, entrance orientation, programming choices, and amenities all influence how visitors move through the district.

An anchor scheduling events during retail closure hours or directing visitors toward parking rather than storefronts is not making a wrong decision. However, those choices can unintentionally limit spillover.

Engaging anchors as partners requires making those unintended effects visible while identifying how they could make decisions that are mutually beneficial. Many leadership teams simply may not see how scheduling or operational decisions affect nearby businesses. Presenting visitor patterns as useful information rather than criticism creates more productive conversations.

Showing a venue that restaurant activity improves when events begin later in the evening provides useful insight. Asking them generally to support downtown does not.

Most anchors benefit directly from active surroundings. Hotels attract more bookings in lively districts. Performance venues sell more tickets when dining options exist nearby.

Civic amenities receive stronger advocacy and programming support when surrounded by active storefronts. Coordination grounded in shared benefit tends to last longer than cooperation based solely on civic obligation.

Moving from Blame to Coordination

When anchors are active but not anchoring, frustration tends to spread across the system. Businesses question anchors. Anchors question surrounding inactivity. Property owners question market demand. Local leaders question tenant mix.

Each perspective reflects real experience, but none captures the full picture.

Spillover analysis helps shift the conversation toward behavior. When visits remain concentrated inside the anchor, activity may be terminating there. When dwell time drops sharply outside the anchor, visitors may be leaving quickly after completing a single task. When activity spreads and visitors linger across storefronts, the block is beginning to function as a connected environment.

Downtown leadership plays a coordinating role by aligning hours during peak activity, reducing visible gaps along primary walking paths, improving comfort and visibility, and encouraging complementary uses near anchors. In most cases, anchoring improves not by replacing tenants but by helping existing participants function together more effectively.

When Relationships Are the Constraint

In some downtown districts, the physical conditions necessary for improvement are already present. Anchors may be active, connectivity may be there, and analysis may clearly identify the steps most likely to strengthen block or district performance.

Even so, progress can stall. In these situations, the primary barrier is often not analytical or structural but relationships. Past experiences, unresolved conflicts, and long-held perceptions often shape decision making in ways that are not immediately visible through the data alone.

Property owners who have struggled with difficult tenants may become risk averse and view vacancy as a safer alternative to reinvestment. Anchors that have experienced public disagreement or

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operational conflict with neighboring businesses may disengage from surrounding blocks despite continued activity within their own facilities.

Groups of business owners whose disagreements predate current efforts may see new initiatives through the lens of earlier disputes rather than evaluating them on their own merits. These dynamics can limit cooperation even when market conditions show there is an opportunity.

Progress depends on consistent engagement and the gradual rebuilding of trust among parties who may not share the same experiences.

Effective downtown practitioners often succeed not because of data, but because they establish credibility over time through reliability, transparency, and follow through on small commitments. Repeated presence and clear communication can gradually change how stakeholders evaluate risk and opportunity.

Trust cannot be faked or accelerated, and once damaged, takes time to rebuild. Maintaining it requires honesty when timelines shift, transparency about issues even when results fall short of expectations, and a willingness to adjust strategy when things change. Stakeholders are more likely to remain engaged when they understand both the challenges and the reasoning behind decisions affecting the district.

Downtown revitalization ultimately depends on alignment between people whose interests do not always naturally overlap. Analysis can identify where a system is underperforming and what interventions are most likely to improve outcomes, but implementation relies on property owners, businesses, and anchors who must see their interests reflected in the effort. Building that alignment is often the most time consuming part of revitalization work, yet it is also the work that determines whether plans move beyond recommendation into lasting change.



CASE STUDIES

STUDY AREAS

In November of 2025, the North Carolina Main Street & Rural Planning Center sent out a survey to all of the communities participating in their program. Dozens of potential anchor sites were submitted for consideration. That list was narrowed to 15 communities, most with two anchor sites each, spanning three geographic regions across the state: Mountain, Piedmont, and Coastal. In addition to regional location, community size and anchor types were also considered. Below is a list of the communities and anchors that were studied.

Community	Region	Community Size	Anchors Studied
North Wilkesboro	Mountains	Under 5000	Wilkes County Library / Talia Espresso Coffee
Brevard	Mountains	5,001-10,000	Highland Books / DD Bullwinkel's Outdoor
Bessemer City	Mountains	5,001-10,000	Centennial Park / The Lofts at Osage Mill
Morganton	Mountains	10,001-20,000	Benjamin's and Libba's / Fairfield Inn
Mooresville	Mountains	40,001-60,000	Epic Chophouse / Liberty Park
Elkin	Piedmont	Under 5000	Reeves Theater / Yadkin Valley Heritage & Trail Center
Troy	Piedmont	Under 5000	Capel Centennial Park / Uwharrie Mercantile
Lexington	Piedmont	10,001-20,000	Edward C. Smith Civic Center / Conrad & Hinkle
Albemarle	Piedmont	20,001-40,000	Pfeiffer University / Market Station
Sanford	Piedmont	20,001-40,000	Temple Theater/ Public Art Mural Trail
Manteo	Coastal	Under 5000	Roanoke Marshes Lighthouse / Boardwalk / Roanoke Island Festival Park
Ayden	Coastal	5,001-10,000	Gwendy's Café & Bakery / Bum's Restaurant
Kinston	Coastal	10,001-20,000	Mother Earth / Kinston Music Park & African American Music Trail
Henderson	Coastal	10,001-20,000	McGregor Hall / George's Restaurant
Garner	Coastal	40,001-60,000	Garner Recreation Center / Zin Yoga & Wine Studio

BREVARD: A TALE OF TWO BLOCKS

Brevard, located in southwestern North Carolina among the Appalachian Mountains, is a lovely mountain town that is a mix of a Tourism-Driven District and a High Momentum District. The community benefits from seasonal visitors as well as several camps and retreats located nearby. The local Main Street organization, Heart of Brevard, provides marketing outreach both for the district overall, but also with the camps and retreats. The two anchors studied were Highland Books, a locally-owned bookshop, and D.D. Bullwinkels, a locally-owned outdoor clothing store. These two destination retailers are located approximately a block away from each other on opposite sides of the street.



Anchor	Highland Books	D.D. Bullwinkels
Visits (Last 12 Months)	91,800	23,400
Visit Spillover Ratio	1.75	10.53
Dwell Time Spillover Ratio	0.09	0.63

Both Highland Books and D. D. Bullwinkels are excellent retailers and have been pillars of the community for years. Both are fairly similarly located in their respective blocks and both blocks have a significant amount of retail businesses, though D.D. Bullwinkels block has slightly more. Highland Books receives far more foot traffic yet its Visit Spillover Ratio and Dwell Time Spillover Ratio are significant lower. Why? The answer lies in the surrounding businesses.

While Highland Books does have other retailers nearby, they are a variety of retail types: a coffee shop, interior design and home furnishings, a clothing store, a toy store, an ice cream shop, and a gaming card store among others. There is also a vacant storefront and a service business on the same side of the street.

Conversely, D.D. Bullwinkels is both one of several outdoor-themed businesses as well as one of several clothing stores on their block. This anchor is located among other similar businesses, creating a cluster of retailers that makes it a destination in and of itself. This clustering of like businesses creates higher visit spillover, customers going through several stores since they are in the market for clothing, than if it stood alone.

This comparison shows that anchoring is shaped less by the strength of an individual business than by the surrounding block. Clustering complementary retailers encourages customers to browse across multiple storefronts, extending visits and increasing opportunity for neighboring businesses. Even strong destinations can struggle to generate spillover when adjacent storefronts interrupt movement (vacant or service-based businesses.)

MORGANTON: OPPOSITE ANCHORS

Morganton, located in the foothills of western North Carolina along the Catawba River, functions as a mix of a Developing District and a Tourism-Driven District. The downtown benefits from regional visitors drawn to the nearby mountains and outdoor recreation, as well as steady activity generated by local residents and civic uses. The two anchors studied were The Fairview Inn, a historic boutique lodging property, and Benjamin's and Libba's, a locally owned specialty clothing and gift retailer. These anchors are located on opposite ends of the downtown district, each contributing to visitor activity in different ways while helping to frame the broader circulation of the district.



Anchor	Fairfield Inn	Benjamin's & Libba's
Visits (Last 12 Months)	60,300	15,300
Visit Spillover Ratio	1.55	15.05
Dwell Time Spillover Ratio	-.086	0.22

The Fairfield Inn and Benjamin's and Libba's represent two very different anchoring profiles within the same downtown, and the difference between them shows how unevenly activity can be distributed across a district even when strong demand exists at both ends.

The clothing store punches well above its weight. With 15,300 visits, it generates a visit spillover ratio of 15.05 and a dwell time spillover of 0.22, landing firmly in the strong anchoring category. People are arriving, moving through the block, and staying longer than the anchor alone would explain. This suggests the clothing store sits within a well-functioning retail and restaurant cluster where complementary businesses give shoppers a clear reason to stay. The anchor's modest visit count is almost beside the point. The block around it is doing exactly what a healthy downtown block should do.

The hotel presents a more nuanced picture. Its 60,300 visits and visit spillover of 1.55 indicate that guests are genuinely venturing beyond the hotel into the surrounding block. The dwell time spillover of -.086 appears concerning at first glance but requires important context. High internal dwell at a hotel largely reflects overnight stays rather than engaged activity, which artificially inflates the anchor dwell figure and makes the block comparison unreliable. Visit spillover is the more useful metric here, and by that measure the hotel is contributing positively to surrounding block activity.

The more important question is whether the corridor connecting these two anchors is active enough to let the hotel's considerable visitor volume find its way to the stronger end of downtown.

TROY: SPECIALTY RETAIL ANCHOR

Troy, located in central North Carolina near the Uwharrie National Forest, is a small-town district that reflects characteristics of both an Early-Stage District and a Developing District. The community benefits from outdoor recreation traffic tied to the forest and nearby Badin Lake, as well as local families who regularly use its parks. The two anchors studied were Uwharrie Mercantile, a charming and successful multi-channel retailer operating in a historic former hotel and featuring a mercantile model and nearby Capel Centennial Park, a multi-use outdoor concert venue with adjacent little league baseball and softball fields. The focus of this case study is on Uwharrie Mercantile.



Anchor	Uwharrie Mercantile
Visits (Last 12 Months)	90,000
Visit Spillover Ratio	0.41
Dwell Time Spillover Ratio	0.11

Uwharrie Mercantile is an incredible business by any measure, drawing 90,000 visits over the last twelve months in a small downtown that reflects characteristics of both an Early-Stage and Developing District. That visit volume speaks to the strength of the business itself and its ability to draw customers from well beyond the immediate community.

Yet the spillover ratios tell a more complicated story. A visit spillover of 0.41 and dwell time spillover of 0.11 are both positive, which means activity is extending beyond the anchor’s footprint, but neither number suggests the surrounding block is capturing the full opportunity that 90,000 visits creates. People are moving and lingering slightly beyond the store, but not in proportion to the demand the anchor is generating.

This is less a reflection of the anchor than of the district around it. In Early-Stage and Developing Districts, even strong anchors struggle to pass along foot traffic when complementary businesses are limited, gaps exist along primary walking paths, and the surrounding block isn’t yet dense enough to give visitors a clear next step. Uwharrie Mercantile is almost certainly doing more heavy lifting than its spillover ratios suggest. The anchor is generating exceptional demand. The district simply isn’t yet positioned to absorb it.

The opportunity here is significant precisely because the raw visit volume is so strong. Modest improvements in surrounding business density, storefront activation, and pedestrian connectivity would likely produce meaningful spillover gains. The demand already exists. The block needs to catch up to it.

SANFORD: UNEXPECTED ANCHOR

Sanford, located in central North Carolina between the Research Triangle and the Sandhills region, functions as a mix of a Developing District and a Tourism-Driven District. The downtown benefits from regional visitors as well as steady local activity supported by nearby employers and civic uses. The two anchors studied were the Sanford Antique Mall, a large multi-vendor destination retail store, and the Temple Theatre, a historic performing arts venue that hosts plays, concerts, and community performances. These two anchors are located within roughly a block of one another in the downtown core, each attracting visitors at different times of day and contributing to overall activity in the district. The focus of this case study is on the antique mall.



Anchor	Sanford Antique Mall
Visits (Last 12 Months)	48,800
Visit Spillover Ratio	3.03
Dwell Time Spillover Ratio	0.02

The antique mall is a strong performer by any regular measure, drawing 48,800 visits over the last twelve months and generating a visit spillover ratio of 3.03. People are clearly moving beyond its footprint into the surrounding block. For a destination retail anchor, a category the study describes as typically producing focused, purposeful trips that end at the front door, that level of circulation is genuinely notable.

The dwell time spillover of 0.02 tells a more complicated story. People are spending time, but mostly within or immediately adjacent to the mall itself. The block is not yet adding meaningful time beyond what the anchor generates on its own.

This is not surprising given the nature of antique shopping. Browsing through a large antique mall already mimics the wandering behavior that typically drives spillover, which likely explains why visit circulation is stronger than expected for this anchor type. Visitors arrive in an exploratory mindset and some of that behavior extends outward. But without a clear and compelling next step visible from the anchor, most of that energy stays contained.

The antique mall is doing more than its anchor type would typically predict. The opportunity lies in giving visitors an obvious reason to continue that browsing behavior beyond its doors. Complementary uses, active storefronts, and visible pedestrian connections would likely convert the circulation already happening into longer, deeper downtown visits.

KINSTON: THE POWER OF BEER

Kinston, located in eastern North Carolina along the Neuse River, functions as a mix of a Developing District and a Tourism-Driven District. The downtown benefits from regional visitors drawn to its growing food, beverage, and cultural scene, as well as steady local activity supported by nearby employers and institutions. The primary anchor studied was Mother Earth Brewing, a locally founded craft brewery that has become a major destination for both residents and visitors. Located within the downtown district, the brewery serves as a gathering place and experiential anchor that helps attract visitors and support activity among nearby businesses.



Anchor	Mother Earth Brewing
Visits (Last 12 Months)	118,200
Visit Spillover Ratio	1.27
Dwell Time Spillover Ratio	-0.11

Mother Earth Brewing is a destination anchor by any standard, drawing 118,200 visits over the last twelve months. That is an exceptional volume for a downtown brewery in a small city, and it speaks to a regional draw well beyond Kinston’s immediate market.

The visit spillover of 1.27 confirms that activity is extending beyond the brewery’s footprint into the surrounding block. For an experience-driven anchor of this size, that is an encouraging sign. The study identifies breweries as among the highest spillover potential anchor types when the surrounding environment supports exploration, and Mother Earth is demonstrating that tendency even in a district that is still developing.

The dwell time spillover of -0.11 is where the story gets nuanced. It sits close enough to zero to signal contained lingering rather than true trip termination. Visitors are spending meaningful time inside the brewery, and while the block isn’t yet adding significant time beyond that, it isn’t losing visits quickly either. The brewery creates a strong gravitational pull that is difficult for surrounding businesses to compete with. Visitors arrive, settle in, and find little obvious reason to venture further because the experience inside is self-contained and compelling.

Mother Earth is generating remarkable demand. The surrounding block has movement but not yet depth. Given the sheer volume of visits this anchor produces, even modest improvements in adjacent business activation and pedestrian connectivity could translate into significant spillover gains for the broader district.

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A D V I S O R S



STAFF REPORT

TO: Downtown Advisory Board

DATE: March 18, 2026

FROM: Jeff Wells, Assistant City Manager

PREPARED BY: Ashley Nowell, Downtown Director

SUBJECT: America 250 Mural

SUMMARY STATEMENT

To celebrate America's 250th Anniversary, staff is proposing to add a community mural on the side of the Lee Building. DAB will review the request and make a recommendation to the General Services Committee and to City Council.

REVIEW

As a part of Monroe's America250 Committee, City Council and staff have found a mural kit concept and selected the design below from Mural Mosaic. Each of the squares shown is painted individually and assembled together to create the full image. More than 600 tiles will make up the full mural.

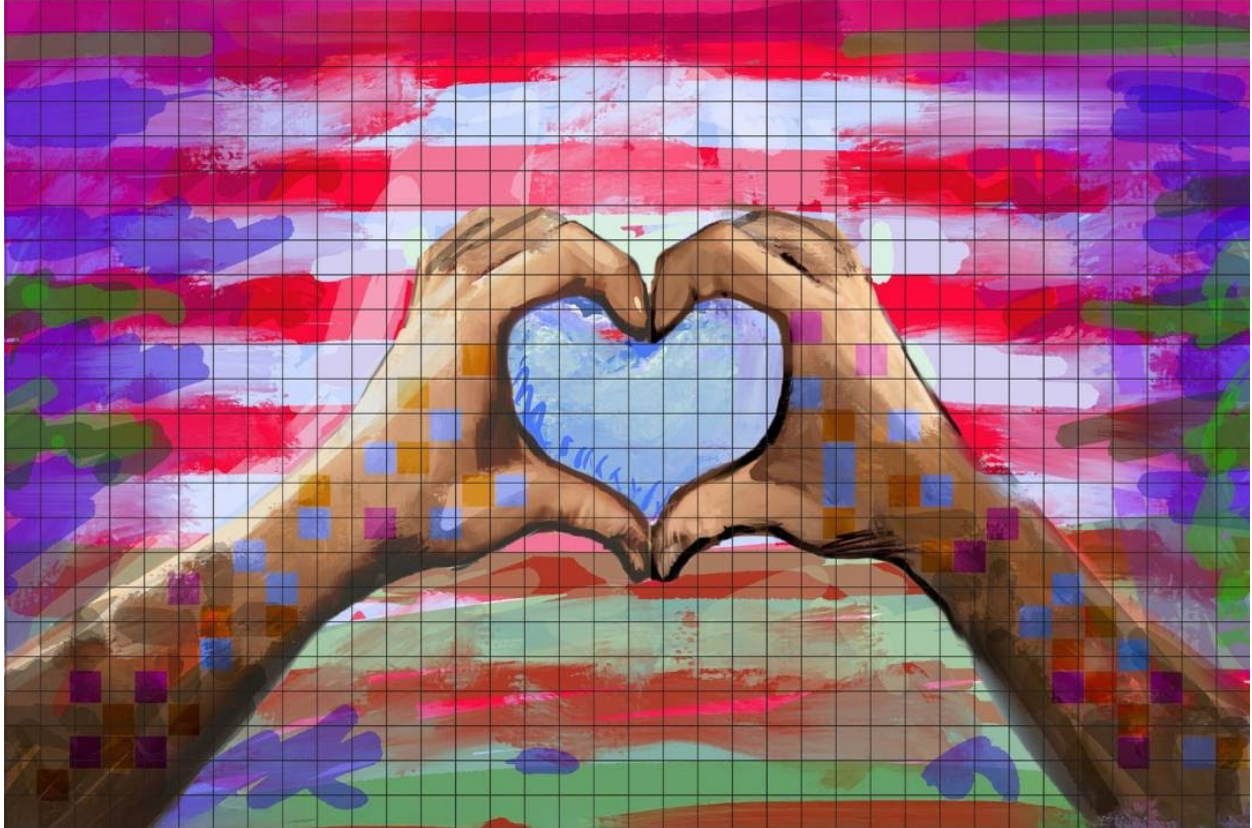
Once ordered, Mural Mosaic will take about 4-6 weeks to prep and ship. Each tile includes its own paint kit with two brushes, a custom palette, instructions, and access to an online learning portal. We'll plan to do community paint events during special events throughout the year. All ages and skill levels are welcome to participate in the collaborative art piece.

The mural will be installed on the north facing wall (on Franklin Street) of the Lee Building. The city's attorneys are working on a mural easement for installation and maintenance of the mural. Mural Mosaic provides a guidebook and consults regarding assembly and installation. The tiles are made of aluminum and are primed. Outdoor murals are expected to last for 8-10 years.

For more information, you can visit www.muralmosaic.com.

Monroe's Mural Ordinance outlines that public murals "should be carried out of behalf of the public only by the City of Monroe utilizing a well-designed process involving public input and

approval by Monroe City Council.” The Downtown Advisory Board will review the mural on March 18 and make a recommendation to the General Services Committee. General Services will review the mural on April 2 and make a recommendation to the City Council for their April 14 agenda.



RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Downtown Advisory Board approve the mural design and send to General Services for review.



STAFF REPORT

TO: Downtown Advisory Board

DATE: March 18, 2026

FROM: Jeff Wells, Assistant City Manager

PREPARED BY: Ashley Nowell, Downtown Director

SUBJECT: Downtown Sponsorship Applications – Monroe Spring Fest

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The Downtown Advisory Board is asked to consider a recommendation for a Downtown Sponsorship Application for Home Brew for Spring Fest on April 11.

REVIEW

Greg Moore, owner of Home Brew, organizes a Spring Festival in April each year. This year's event will occur on Saturday, April 11 from 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. on Main Street. The event is a shopping event that includes games, food, music, and activities for the community. It's promoted via social media, yard signs, and banners. This year, there will be over 80 vendors and food trucks.

Event expenses include police, porta-johns, trash, and entertainment, totaling \$3,200. Greg has submitted an application to the DAB for sponsorship.

Each year, the DAB budgets \$6,000 for event sponsorships, and has generally given out \$1,500 per quarter. For FY26, we have committed to \$1,500 for Fall Fest and \$500 for the Art Walk, leaving us with \$4,000 to spend in event sponsorships. Additionally, the N Hayne St parking lot lease has generated \$9,000 that we must spend prior to end of FY26.

Due to the funds remaining, staff recommends covering the security/police expenses at \$1,500, as well as keeping the porta-johns used for Car Cruise-In on location through the weekend. There will be a remaining \$2,500 in the event sponsorship budget that we can use for the Antique and Vintage Market.

Additionally, the DAB should consider reworking these event sponsorships. What types of events do we want to prioritize, how do we want to help, and what/if any limits do we want to set on applications?

RECOMMENDATION

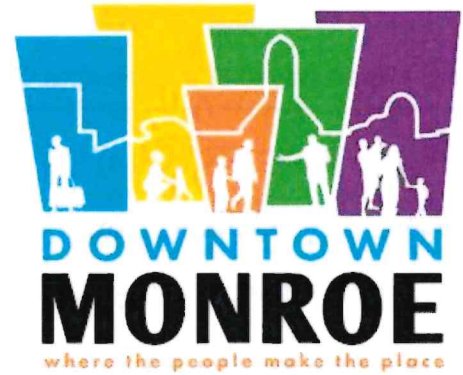
Staff recommends the Downtown Advisory Board approve the Downtown Sponsorship Application for the Spring Fest on April 11, 2026 by covering the cost of police officers/security and assisting with porta-john scheduling.

Attachments:

Application

Downtown Sponsorship Application

The City of Monroe Downtown pursues an ever growing economic development initiative which emphasizes the need for new and exciting places, events, and people. If you have an event you feel could have a positive impact on the growth of Downtown, we want to help make that dream become a reality. Listed below are questions the City must consider to sponsor an event in Downtown:



All questions must be answered "Yes" for consideration

	Yes	No
Is your business within the Central Business District?	✓	
Will the event produce a positive impact on the Downtown Monroe Community and coordinate well within the existing promotions calendar?	✓	
Will the event encourage visitors to shop at the event and surrounding downtown businesses? (including street closures and new traffic/pedestrian patterns)	✓	
Will the event have the financial support necessary to carry out operations of the event or will it require additional funding sources?	✓	
Does the event generate enough interest to draw in people from within the City of Monroe and the surrounding area?	✓	
Are all Downtown businesses offered to participate?	✓	
Are there at least 10 Downtown, retail and/or restaurant businesses participating? (Please Provide a List)	✓	
Will the event occur within the Central Business District?	✓	

Please note that the sponsorship may not exceed \$1500 per event and funds are limited to one per quarter. A person(s) may only apply for one sponsorship per year. The Downtown Advisory Board has the final decision on where these funds are to be allocated.

Contact Information

Name of Person Submitting Event: *Greg Moore*

Email: *gregmoorenync@gmail.com*

Phone Number: *980-215-3564*

Description of Event

Event Name:

Brief Description below or add attachment:

<i>Spring Fest 26 and Fall Fest 26</i> <i>4/11/26 - 11am - 5pm</i> <i>10/10/26 - 11am - 5pm</i>

What month(s), day(s), and time of the week do you see the event taking place?

How often do you propose the event will take place?

Is there a direct way to tie this event to the Downtown Monroe businesses? Explain:

These are annual festivals that brings hundreds of people to downtown Monroe. All businesses downtown see a significant increase in sales each year.

Marketing

Who is the target market for this event?

Core message of the campaign:

Please describe how this event would be promoted.

Spring and Fall Fest are shopping events which include games, food, music, and activities for our community to enjoy. We promote via social media, yard signs, and banners.

Below describe each method of promotion in detail.

Medium or Channel	Length of Time	Start Date of Promotion	Specific Target Group
Social media	1 month prior to event	3/11/26 + 9/10/26	everyone
yard signs	1 month prior to event	3/11/26 + 9/10/26	everyone
window banners	2 months prior to event	2/11/26 + 8/10/26	everyone

Pre-Planning Management

Please describe the steps involved in the actual pre-planning process- where, when, hours and time, activities involved, groups who will participate in planning.

These festivals are planned a year in advance by Greg Moore and Sandra Murschel. We design them to be fun for all ages to help increase attendance. You'll find over 80 vendors, music, games, activities, food trucks, and fun!

Food: ☒ YES ☐ NO

Will the food be:

☐ GIVEN AWAY ☒ SOLD

(County Permit Required if YES)

List of Vendors and Businesses in Attendance

NOTE: Event Organizers and Vendors must complete the applications and permits through the Union County Public Safety Division. Please contact the Environment Health Department for additional information. (704)283-3553

[illegible]

*Will the event require street or parking lot closings? ☒ YES ☐ NO (City Permit Required if YES)

NOTE: If yes, please provide a map showing which streets will need to be closed & exactly where barricades will need to be located.

*Will the event require a tent or temporary structure? ☒ YES ☐ NO (City Permit Required if YES)

*What is the square feet of the tent or temporary structure? 10' x 10'

*Will the tent structure be used by 10 or more occupants? ☐ YES ☒ NO

NOTE: Building and fire permits are required for tents or other temporary structures erected for a period of less than 180 days and that has an area greater than 120 square feet or is to be used by 10 or more occupants.

Please describe in detail the labor needs on the day of the event. This could range from security, volunteers to clean up.

Greg Moore manages the event throughout the day and handles all clean up when event is finished. Security is paid for by Greg so any financial assistance is greatly appreciated.

Funding

Please give a budget for expenses related to this event. Attach separate sheet if necessary. Income generators /revenue streams include such activities as ticket sales, vendor space rentals, beverage sales, sponsorships, etc.:

Description of Expenses

Amount

Security / Police

\$1,500

Porta Johns

\$600

Garbage Cans

\$100

Entertainment

\$1,000

Total Expenses

\$3,200

Description of Income Generators

Amount

Vendors

tbd - approx \$4,000

downtown businesses

tbd

sponsors

\$1,000

Total Income

\$5,000

Net Income (Total Income minus Total Expenses):

\$1800

Have you included sponsorships as one of your income generators? If so do you have the ability to raise these sponsorships? ☒ YES ☐ NO

Thank you for taking the time to share your event idea with us. This information will be shared with the Downtown Department and City of Monroe Committees. You may be asked to attend the scheduled meeting of the committees to further discuss your idea. We appreciate your interest in bringing people to Downtown Monroe!



STAFF REPORT

TO: Downtown Advisory Board

DATE: March 18, 2026

FROM: Jeff Wells, Assistant City Manager

PREPARED BY: Ashley Nowell, Downtown Director

SUBJECT: April Meeting Date

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The Downtown Director will be at the National Main Street Conference during our regularly scheduled April meeting and is recommending a new meeting time.

REVIEW

On April 13-15, the Downtown Director will be attending the National Main Street Conference in Tulsa, OK. Our regularly scheduled Downtown Advisory Board Meeting is on Wednesday, April 15 at 9 a.m. Staff is recommending moving the meeting to Wednesday, April 22 at 9 a.m.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Downtown Advisory Board move the April meeting to Wednesday, April 22 at 9 a.m. at the Downtown Office.



STAFF REPORT

TO: Downtown Advisory Board

DATE: March 18, 2026

FROM: Jeff Wells, Assistant City Manager

PREPARED BY: Ashley Nowell, Downtown Director

SUBJECT: Vision Changes

SUMMARY STATEMENT

In reviewing Downtown Monroe's vision, staff saw opportunity to make some small changes to improve clarity. Staff and DAB will discuss changes and options for improvement.

REVIEW

For Main Streets, the vision is incredibly important. It's where we want to go and what we want to see. Visions are written in the present tense and include economic development strategies that guide projects throughout the year.

Over the last year, the DAB has put together some ideas, included below. Staff has made a few changes to shorten these pieces and bring them into main street community alignment. We want to make sure the vision is unique to Monroe and showcases what makes us us!

OLD Vision

The success of Downtown Monroe will be due to a lively mix of quality retail shops, professional services, restaurants, entertainment, and upper-floor residential space, providing a variety of opportunities for a distinct cultural experience. Downtown will retain a safe, friendly, small-town pedestrian-oriented atmosphere for residents and visitors while engaging a positive spirit enhanced by its distinct sense of place built upon its rich agricultural history and architecturally significant buildings.

The varied mix of retail and service businesses and continued expansion will strengthen Monroe's sense of community and quality of life through the cooperative marketing and promotion efforts of our Downtown

NEW Vision

Downtown Monroe is the heart of our community – where life happens. By blending a lively mix of retail, professional services, and dining with upper-floor residential spaces, we offer a distinct small-town identity. We weave together our rich agricultural history and historic architecture with vibrant amenities to create an authentic experience that is safe, family-friendly, and uniquely Monroe.

Our Mission (stays the same)

To recognize, revitalize, preserve, and promote the historic, cultural, social, and economic significance of Monroe's Downtown.

Economic Development Strategies (these are pulled directly from our vision)

1. Create a lively mix of retail, services and dining businesses
2. Encourage more upper floor residential spaces
3. Promote history, unique architecture, walkability, and amenities that support diverse business mix and upper floor residential.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the new vision statement.

Attachments:

Prior Year's Work Plan

Monroe, North Carolina

Economic Development Implementation Plan – 2026

Our Vision
The success of Downtown Monroe will be due to a lively mix of quality retail shops, professional services, restaurants, entertainment, and upper-floor residential space, providing a variety of opportunities for a distinct cultural experience. Downtown will retain a safe, friendly, small-town pedestrian-oriented atmosphere for residents and visitors while engaging a positive spirit enhanced by its distinct sense of place built upon its rich agricultural history and architecturally significant buildings. The varied mix of retail and service businesses and continued expansion will strengthen Monroe's sense of community and quality of life through the cooperative marketing and promotion efforts of our Downtown

Our Mission
To recognize, revitalize, preserve, and promote the historic, cultural, social, and economic significance of Monroe's Downtown.

Vision/Economic Positioning Statement in YEAR: A vibrant and welcoming downtown that celebrates Monroe’s rich heritage, historic character, architecture, and unique identity as a thriving culture and economic hub where residents and visitors can experience a unique blend of tradition, creativity, and economic vitality.

City Messaging:
Experience Authentic Monroe: Come for the History, Stay for the Growth, Monroe is waiting to welcome you!
Immerse yourself in the rich history, exciting growth, and the unforgettable experience of our vibrant city.
Where every block has a unique story to tell that blends the perfect mix of tradition and progress, all served with a generous helping of southern hospitality.

Implementation Strategy: Monroe is a designated NC Main Street Community. We are currently rebooting the Main Street Program, which follow the Main Street America Four Point Approach of Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization. We are currently undergoing a Downtown Master Plan, which will help set the vision and economic development strategies for the next few years.

The actions and goals listed below are what we will be working on in the year ahead.

DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES	ECONOMIC VITALITY	DESIGN	PROMOTION	ORGANIZATION
Economic Development Strategy, Goal & Objective	Measurable Actions:	Measurable Actions:	Measurable Actions:	Measurable Actions:
Strategy #1: Growth and development of quality retail shops, professional services, restaurants, and entertainment in Monroe that make it a destination for commerce, culture and creativity, while also retaining a blend of historic charm and modern infrastructure. Goal: Grow our visitation, foot traffic, and commerce in downtown. Strategy #2 Strengthen Monroe’s beauty and sense of place. Goal: Encourage visible and impactful improvements in downtown that strengthen Monroe’s sense of community and quality of life through place-making projects, cooperative marketing and promotion efforts	Actions for Economic Vitality: - Create a data collection plan from downtown stakeholders and visitors - Make Small Business Support Plan that shows new businesses what they need to do to open and provides resources for existing businesses to grow - Create an upper floor redevelopment strategy - Promote new grant programs - Create a building and business inventory (in progress)	Actions for Design: - Add public art to downtown - Establish strong connection with Historic Preservation Commission - Host Historic Preservation Workshops	Action to Promote Downtown Monroe - Establish Downtown social media accounts - Research feasibility of having a downtown website - Create promotional materials for downtown - Plan Small Business Saturday and other Shop Small Events - Coordinate with Parks and Rec on special events in downtown	Action for our Organization: - Establish a Main Street Office that has street access. This “Welcome Center” will provide much needed access to our downtown staff and informational materials. (to be completed in Spring 2026) - Create actionable workplans with strategies, tasks and volunteer/board support. Include clear and measurable goals. - Establish Four-Point Committees and recruit volunteers - Complete Downtown Master Plan - Upon completion of Downtown Master Plan, establish a recognizable brand for downtown - Create and distribute an annual report - Establish strong partnerships with community organizations



STAFF REPORT

TO: Downtown Advisory Board

DATE: March 18, 2026

FROM: Jeff Wells, Assistant City Manager

PREPARED BY: Ashley Nowell, Downtown Director

SUBJECT: Downtown Sub-Committee & Volunteer Discussion (continued)

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Last month, staff put together ideas for launching main street sub-committees to help lead and direct projects in downtown, engage volunteers, and foster stronger community connections. These main street sub-committees are necessary to achieve national accreditation through NC Main Street and Main Street America.

Staff requested that the Downtown Advisory Board bring volunteer ideas to the March board meeting. Staff has selected some info session dates and has included some project ideas for each committee. DAB should be prepared to bring volunteer names and project ideas for next fiscal year. Projects should help us accomplish our vision of:

The success of Downtown Monroe will be due to a lively mix of quality retail shops, professional services, restaurants, entertainment, and upper-floor residential space, providing a variety of opportunities for a distinct cultural experience. Downtown will retain a safe, friendly, small-town pedestrian-oriented atmosphere for residents and visitors while engaging a positive spirit enhanced by its distinct sense of place built upon its rich agricultural history and architecturally significant buildings. The varied mix of retail and service businesses and continued expansion will strengthen Monroe's sense of community and quality of life through the cooperative marketing and promotion efforts of our Downtown.

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REVIEW

GOAL: Launch Main Street Sub-Committees to lead and direct projects in Downtown Monroe, to engage volunteers, and to foster stronger community connections.

Promotions: develops customers
Supports business-friendly events, promotions, and campaigns.

Projects:

- Event Sponsorship Program
- Small Business Saturday
- Vintage & Antique Market
- Car Cruise-In
- America250
- Connection to Parks & Rec Events: Music on Main, July 4th, Halloween Happenings, etc.
- Connection to Dowd Events
- Developing marketing efforts (social media, website, ad campaigns)

Potential Volunteers:

- Retail store owners
- Event planners
- Marketing/advertising professionals

Economic Vitality: develops businesses

Helps to recruit, retain, and support downtown businesses with small business resources and market data.

Projects:

- Review market analysis and develop list of target businesses
- Develop recruitment materials for target businesses
- Develop commercial and residential incentive programs
- Manage downtown social district
- Review anchor business report
- Small business workshops

Potential Volunteers:

- SPCC Small Business Center
- Chamber of Commerce
- Realtors and Brokers
- Property Owners
- Bankers

Design: develops places

Enhances the look and feel of downtown through beautification and preservation efforts.

Projects:

- Research and recommend Morgan Alley kid-friendly enhancements
- Reimagine wayfinding signage/downtown directory enhancements
- Recommend trash can improvements
- Manage downtown public art program, adding art each year
- Encourage good storefront design and recommending simple improvements

Potential Volunteers:

- Gardeners/landscapers
- Historic preservation

- Artists

Next Steps:

1. **Schedule a Main Street Mixer.** These events will provide volunteers an easy, low pressure way to learn about what we're doing.
 - April 29 or 30?
2. **Finalize workplan** (April meeting)
3. **Finalize marketing materials** (April meeting)
 - Committee names, projects, meeting dates (starting in July)
 - Invite to Main Street Mixer

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for discussion.