

# CHAPTER 1

## Executive Summary

*“Make no little plans, they have no magic to stir men’s blood.”  
- Daniel Hudson Burnham*

## Executive Summary

Durham, North Carolina is blessed with a storied past and a dynamic presence. Whether in its establishment of the first tobacco-processing facility in 1858 or its present-day development of a world renowned research and business park, Durham is a community that knows how to court change and take advantage of new opportunities. In the past the Durham community has understood the economic and social trends which facilitated the creation of a strong tobacco manufacturing presence, the development of an outstanding university and college educational system, and an important foothold in the high technology or knowledge-based industry.

The *Downtown Durham Master Plan* strives to emulate that community spirit in outlining a future for Downtown. Present-day Downtown Durham no longer reflects the Downtown Durham of yesteryear. Many retail shops are gone, Black Wall Street is a shadow of its former self, and financial institutions and businesses have moved elsewhere. The new Downtown Durham has yet to hit full stride. But make no mistake about it, Downtown is alive and well. There are many positive changes taking place thanks to outstanding leadership and a supportive community. The Civic Center and Carolina Theatre welcome thousands of visitors to Downtown on a weekly basis. The Durham Bulls Athletic Park hosts more than one half million fans annually for Durham Bulls baseball games. Plans for Central Park have gone from one man's dream to a community vision. Brightleaf Square is the place to be for everyone within the three-county area. The list of successes goes on and continues to grow.



## Market Findings

- Population is growing in and around Downtown
- Median income level of Downtown residents is growing significantly
- Strong market potential exists within Downtown for restaurants and entertainment venues
- Annual projected office demand is estimated at 50,000 to 74,000 square feet
- Additional hotel is needed for Civic Center to expand

## Development Findings

- Downtown is not commercial center of community
- Several new mixed-use projects have been developed or are projected in Downtown
- Investment trend in Downtown is on the rise
- Current Downtown circulation network is a development impediment
- 'Loop' perceived as a major barrier in linking Downtown components
- More on-street and off-street parking is needed
- Main Street is not fully functional as a one-way street
- County government is a potential major investor in Downtown
- Regional rail system will stimulate new development opportunities

It is within this context of change that the Master Plan process was born. The question of how the Durham community can harness these incremental changes, and forge them into a Downtown that is "everyone's neighborhood"-- a place to work, live, and play-- was eagerly raised by Downtown stakeholders and the community at large. . . a Downtown with warmth and the ability to be a unique one-of-a-kind experience. . . a Downtown that sees the future and understands how to take advantage of it.

The community embarked on a master planning process in March of 1999 with the assistance of a consulting team and staff from the City of Durham. The team was given seven goals to guide its thinking as it engaged the community:

- establish Downtown as a pivotal activity center in the region;
- promote a vibrant, compatible and well-connected mix of uses;
- make Downtown more pedestrian, bicycle and overall transportation friendly;
- market and establish incentives for Downtown development;
- highlight Durham's wealth of historic architecture;
- allow flexibility to accommodate future change; and
- identify program costs and potential funding mechanisms.

In summary, initiatives outlined in the Master Plan hope to:

***Establish Downtown Durham as a regional destination where commercial, office, residential, cultural, and institutional uses coexist promoting new economic activity and creating an exciting, vibrant, attractive and safe environment.***

The study area bound by NC 147 on the south, Dillard Street on the east, Seminary and Geer Streets on the north, and Duke Street and Buchanan Boulevard on the west (see *Desired Framework Plan* on page 10) was the focus of the planning process. Public input was solicited from the Downtown community, neighborhood residents, businesses, visitors, as well as county residents that may not be frequent visitors to Downtown. A community open house was held to receive public opinion on issues ranging from traffic circulation to building and streetscape design. The consulting team also worked with several committees representing a cross section of the community as it progressed with development and program concepts that needed community input and refinement.

In addition to the public involvement, the master planning process evaluated the existing market and development conditions influencing the Downtown area. As a result of this effort, a better understanding of Downtown's economic potential was realized. A summary of the findings is shown on the previous page.

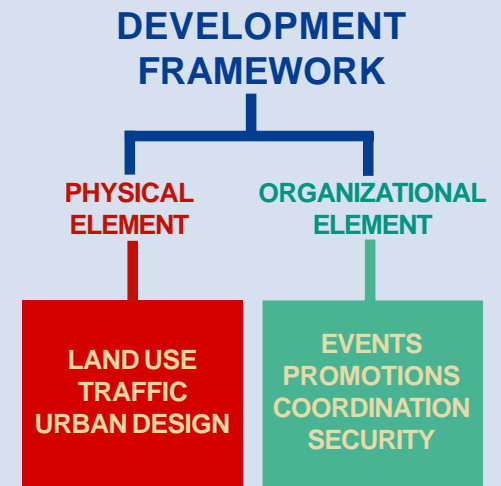
Despite recent successes, there are critical components that must be addressed if Downtown is going to become a significant regional destination. Surrounding neighborhoods, particularly those to the east, have traditionally felt divided from Downtown. The 'loop' has served to isolate the core area from the rest of the community, and many believe it is a deterrent to new investment and activity Downtown. The entire circulation system must also be addressed to further stimulate activity and enhance the overall environment.

The *Downtown Durham Master Plan* addresses several key components, including market trends, urban design elements, infrastructure and transportation conditions, real estate development opportunities, programming, and marketing. If Downtown Durham is going to become a full-service Downtown that appeals to a broad spectrum of "customers," all of these components must be carefully crafted to create an interactive and dynamic urban fabric.

To organize these diverse elements, a *Development Framework* was created that consists of two primary components: **physical elements** that include land use, traffic and urban design improvements; and **organizational elements** that include events, promotions, coordination and security recommendations.

The proposed physical framework for Downtown is summarized in the *Desired Framework Plan* on the following page and is characterized by:

- A revitalized Main Street that accommodates two-way traffic and functions as an entertainment corridor. Main Street shall serve as the spine to which other activity districts are linked.
- A north/south connector that includes a realigned Blackwell/Corcoran/Foster street corridor serving not only as a major thoroughfare, but also as a principal pedestrian spine in Downtown.



# Durham

*from City of the New South*



*Desired Framework Plan*

- The 'crossroads' of the two major thoroughfares, and the heart of Downtown, is the City Center, which serves as a traditional Downtown focal point with a concentration of pedestrian-oriented amenities and the most dense assemblage of historic architectural resources. The City Center provides not only new private development opportunities, but also the potential for public open space.
- A newly created Civic and Arts District (CAD) that better links the Brightleaf District with the City Center and other areas to the south. The CAD would include opportunities for new hotel space along with an enhanced arts presence at the reconfigured intersection of Main Street and Chapel Hill Street.
- Improvements to the south end to more strongly link it to the core area. The railroad tracks and grade change, which currently serve as a barrier, provide an opportunity to link areas rather than separate them.
- A newly created mixed-use entertainment district at the site of the former American Tobacco Warehouse adjacent to the Durham Bulls Athletic Park on the south side of Downtown.
- A reconfigured 'loop' allows for two-way traffic and is significantly altered to improve connectivity between districts, overall circulation and development potential.
- Major new gateway opportunities at key intersections in all directions.
- An expanded Durham Central Park on the north side of Downtown that extends further west and southeast to more strongly connect adjacent residential neighborhoods and enhance opportunities for new residential development.
- Stronger emphasis on preserving and enhancing outlying residential neighborhoods to make them integral parts of the Downtown community.

The *Desired Framework Plan* also incorporates and responds to a number of significant development trends occurring in Durham. In order to most effectively capitalize on past investment and to fulfill the principles inherent within the framework, four distinct, but interrelated, *Major Development Components* were identified. These development components are critical steps in the achievement of the goals of the plan because they respond to and capitalize upon development trends, serve as activated links between established activity centers, and can serve as significant catalysts for additional development activity. If appropriately implemented, they will also:

- Reinforce a compatible mix of uses,
- Increase density and activity,
- Create pedestrian-friendly spaces, buildings and streetscapes,
- Create well-defined “centers” of activity,
- Accent Durham’s historic architecture,
- Create gateways into Downtown,
- Remove barriers that isolate parts of Downtown, and
- Improve circulation and linkages throughout Downtown.

The four *Major Development Components* include:

1. **Civic and Arts District (CAD).** Includes 270,000 to 400,000 square feet of office space; 45,000 to 95,000 square feet of commercial/retail space; 215,000 to 450,000 square feet of new hotel space; 2.5 acres of public open space; and more than 500 new parking spaces.
2. **City Center.** Includes 1.3 million square feet of office space; 50,000 square feet of commercial/retail space; 2.5 acres of public open space; and more than 1,400 new parking spaces.
3. **County Expansion.** Includes 350,000 square feet of new office space for County offices; 30,000 square feet of private commercial office space; 150,000 of renovated space for County office use; and 1,250 new parking spaces.
4. **Development Bridge.** Includes 180,000 square feet of office space; 100,000 square feet of other commercial/retail space; 38,000 square foot indoor ice skating rink; more than 4 acres of new public park space; and 1,000 new parking spaces.

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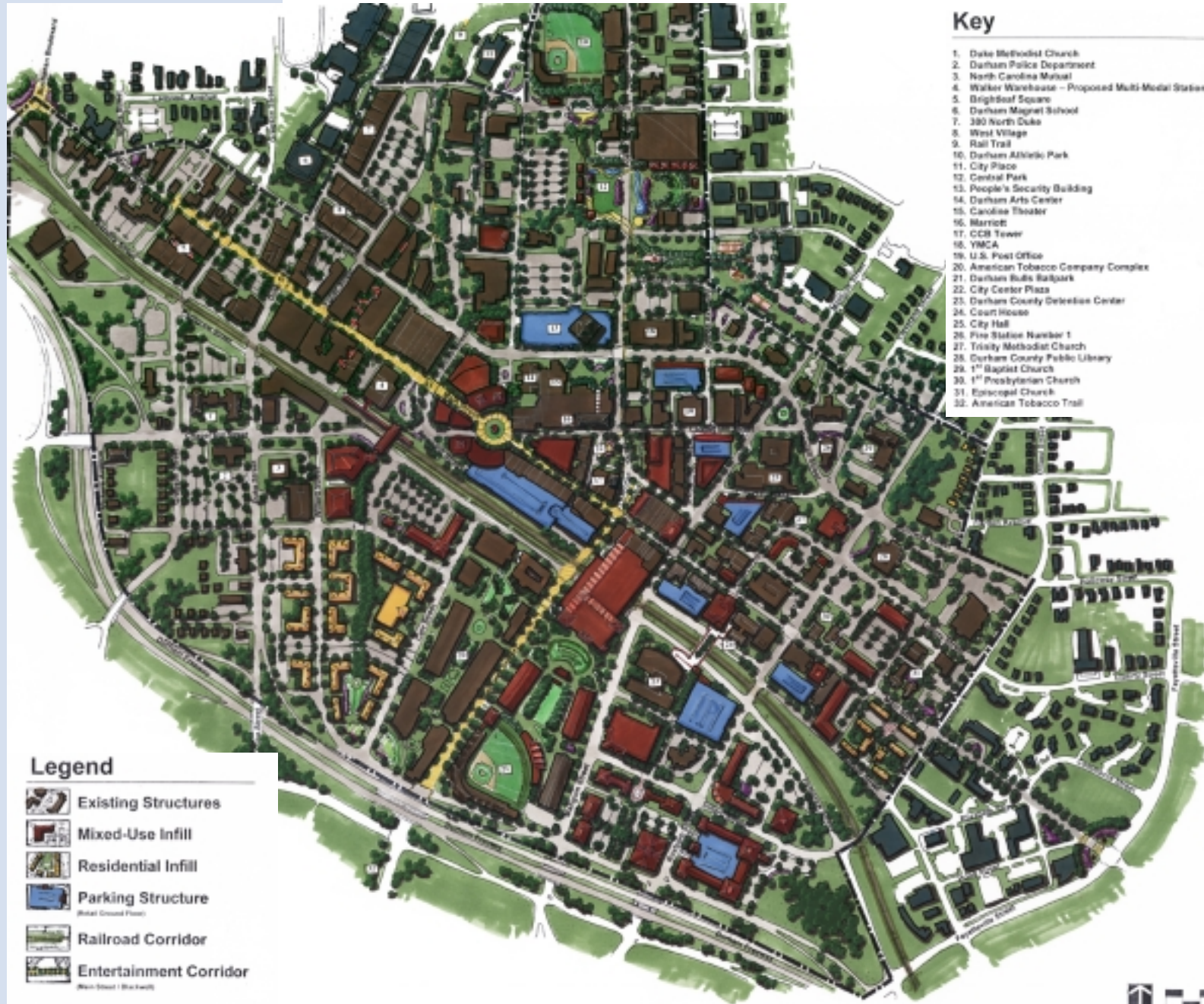
*“For every complex, difficult problem, there is a simple, easy solution. . . and it is wrong.”*

*- H. L. Mencken*

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# Durham

*from City of the New South*



- Key**
1. Duke Methodist Church
  2. Durham Police Department
  3. North Carolina Mutual
  4. Walker Warehouse - Proposed Multi-Modal Station
  5. Brightleaf Square
  6. Durham Magnet School
  7. 300 North Duke
  8. West Village
  9. Rail Trail
  10. Durham Athletic Park
  11. City Place
  12. Central Park
  13. People's Security Building
  14. Durham Arts Center
  15. Canolise Theater
  16. Marriott
  17. CCB Tower
  18. YMCA
  19. U.S. Post Office
  20. American Tobacco Company Complex
  21. Durham Bulls Ballpark
  22. City Center Plaza
  23. Durham County Detention Center
  24. Court House
  25. City Hall
  26. Fire Station Number 1
  27. Trinity Methodist Church
  28. Durham County Public Library
  29. 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Church
  30. 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church
  31. Episcopal Church
  32. American Tobacco Trail

- Legend**
- Existing Structures
  - Mixed-Use Infill
  - Residential Infill
  - Parking Structure  
(Retail Ground Floor)
  - Railroad Corridor
  - Entertainment Corridor  
(North-South | Blue South)



Other support development initiatives that will enhance the quality of life in Downtown and will become viable extensions of the *Major Development Components* include new housing in the east and southwest portions of Downtown, office development on the south side, and a new entertainment corridor along Main Street that provides connections to the Durham Bulls Athletic Park and other south end attractions.

Because all of the projects and programs defined in the Master Plan are envisioned to occur over a 20-year period and represent a potential total investment of approximately one billion dollars, the ***Downtown Durham Master Plan*** must be formally put on the community's agenda in order to generate strong buy-in and local support that will help ensure its implementation. The Master Plan product is a beginning, rather than an end, and it must continue to evolve and be updated in the years ahead. Key players must be assigned to the overall work program and be responsible for seeing specific elements through to implementation.

There are many roles to be assumed during the plan implementation. From detailed project management and task assignment to project facilitation and general leadership, the team necessary to fulfill the goals and objectives of the ***Downtown Durham Master Plan*** will need to be skilled, committed, and dedicated to action. As Joel Barker states in *The Power of Vision*:

*“Vision without action is merely a dream.  
Action without vision is just passing time.  
Vision with action can change the world.”*

