CHAPTER 6

development Framework

"Everything is connected. . . no one thing can change by itself."
- Paul Harken

BUILDING THE VISION

The development framework outlined in this chapter provides a road map for future investment in Downtown. The starting point for any framework should be a consensus. This vision should not only articulate Downtown's physical changes, but also its identity and social character.

The overriding concept for a Downtown Durham vision focuses heavily on "quality of life" issues, such as strong neighborhoods, attractive spaces, wealth of services and active social outlets. Concern for these issues has been reinforced throughout the public involvement process. In this vision, Downtown Durham is a quality of life asset for the entire community, bringing unique spaces, recreation, excitement, history, social opportunities and cultural resources to all Durham residents.

To serve as a guide for the development of the master plan, the City of Durham outlined a series of goals for the planning process. These goals, listed below, provide a benchmark from which the recommendations proposed in the master plan can be measured.

GOAL 1: To implement the 2020 Plan goal of establishing Downtown as the pivotal activity center in Durham and the region.

GOAL 2: To promote a vibrant, compatible, well-connected mix of uses to increase the density and activity of the area, as well as to increase jobs, residences and the tax base.

GOAL 3: To make Downtown more pedestrian, bicycle and overall transportation friendly.

GOAL 4: To provide guidance for marketing Downtown for future development including, guidance for development incentives.

Photo courtesy of Downtown Durham, Inc.

Photo courtesy of Downtown Durham, Inc.

"The idea is to seek a vision that gives you a purpose in life and then to implement that vision. The vision itself is one half, one part, of a process. It implies the necessity of living that vision, otherwise the vision will sink back into itself."

- Lewis P. Johnson

GOAL 5: To create building and streetscape design standards for development in the area that highlight and accent Durham's existing wealth of historic architecture, spaces, places and views and are compatible with traditional planning and defensible space concepts.

GOAL 6: To allow flexibility in the plan in order to take advantage of future development opportunities as they arise.

GOAL 7: To examine, identify and program costs for infrastructure changes that promote the above goals.

These goals are intended to be the driving force in articulating a new direction for Downtown. In order to achieve these results and realize the vision for Downtown, a series of objectives was established that provide a standard for Downtown improvement.

KEY OBJECTIVES

The vision for Downtown Durham has two primary elements: **1) *PHYSICAL*** and **2) *ORGANIZATIONAL***. The development framework addresses these elements by establishing a series of objectives that embodies the seven goals and have physical and programmatic implications.

The **PHYSICAL** framework elements establish a strong "sense of place" for Downtown and are often the visible results within the City. It is the successful combination of architecture, circulation and environmental enhancements that will make Downtown attractive, active, safe and interesting. Objectives that support this framework element fall within two categories: Downtown Character and Downtown Circulation.

Downtown Character:
The charm and character of Downtown are found in its strong stock of historic structures. The aesthetic appearance of Downtown, from the design of new buildings and streetscape enhancements to infrastructure improvements, reinforces Durham's character.

Objectives:

- Encourage and facilitate historic preservation
- Initiate a comprehensive streetscape program
- Encourage compatible and quality design in new building and streetscape recommendations
- Design appropriate transitions between the core area and the surrounding neighborhoods
- Utilize image and gateway features to establish a unique downtown identity
- Mitigate impacts from incompatible uses
- Introduce and/or improve lighting character
- Promote effective business storefront signage, graphics and window displays
- Provide additional user-friendly amenities (drinking fountains, downtown directories, etc.)

Downtown Circulation:
Access to Downtown via the regional transportation system is quick and easy. The multi-modes of transportation include automobile, local and regional buses, bike and pedestrian trails, inner-city rail, as well as the proposed introduction of regional rail. Downtown attractions and activities are within close walking distance of several neighborhoods. Enhancements to the flow of traffic and parking will make Downtown more user-friendly. Downtown will no longer seem like just a way to get to another part of the city, it will be a destination that meets the needs of its users.

Objectives:

- Identify new transportation links
- Introduce multi-modal transportation options
- Improve functional circulation
- Convert unnecessary one-way streets to two-way
- Organize and provide adequate parking facilities
- Balance pedestrian and vehicular traffic demands

The ***ORGANIZATIONAL*** framework elements establish the identity for activities in Downtown. This identity is created through community events, social programs and the interaction of residents. Objectives that support this framework element are organized in three categories: Downtown Experience, Downtown Economics and Downtown Management.

Downtown Experience:
Downtown Durham is a unique place where the environment sustains a wide range of experiences and interaction. The dynamic urban fabric of Downtown should always provide an essential part of community life that is vibrant, interesting and stimulating.

***Objectives*:**
- Encourage 'destination' uses that can serve the entire region to locate Downtown
- Encourage day/night activities through all seasons
- Facilitate a series of community events
- Provide public space to support large public functions/festivals
- Introduce/provide variety of housing options
- Provide additional recreational opportunities

Downtown Economics:
Downtown should boast a healthy business environment and strategically position itself in the region as a center of employment, entertainment and civic life.

Objectives:
- Support private/public reinvestment in Downtown to decrease vacancy rates
- Encourage business recruitment, retention and development
- Diversify tax base
- Invest public dollars strategically to leverage private investment

Downtown Management:
Downtown development, operations and management should be championed by a partnership of the City, County, Downtown Durham, Inc. and other not-for-profit organizations so that the the center city is 'owned' and appreciated by the entire community.

Objectives:

- **Expand and improve technology and infrastructure**
- **Create efficient and effective management structure of existing organizations**
- **Formulate and maintain a Downtown improvement budget**
- **Maintain physical improvements**
- **Prepare marketing materials for development sites to aid in the recruitment of new Downtown investment**
- **Enhance and build upon Downtown marketing program**
- **Foster partnerships with business and non-profit groups**
- **Identify roles and responsibilities for achieving development goals**

It is the intent of this master plan that these objectives be used to guide and focus the agenda for future Downtown improvement for several years to come. These objectives are intended to provide a foundation of the basic philosophy from which decisions on plan implementation are made. Over time, new issues and opportunities will undoubtedly arise, and the vision articulated through the goals and objectives should be used as a basis for decision-making when determining if the proposed actions are consistent with the overall Downtown vision.

"The rich street life is no frill. It is an expression of the most ancient function of a city-- a place for people to come together, all kinds of people, face-to-face. . . "

- William H.Whyte

THE FRAMEWORK PLAN

The physical relationship of the elements of the framework are summarized within the *Desired Framework Plan* shown at right. This plan highlights areas with predominatly similar development patterns and potential, critical links and corridors, major anchors and important gateways.

This *Desired Framework Plan* identifies, at a conceptual level, how the framework objectives can manifest themselves throughout Downtown. It also is intended to illustrate the following planning and development principles:

- A revitalized Main Street that accommodates two-way traffic and functions as an entertainment corridor. Main Street shall serve as the east-west 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 vehicular thoroughfare, but also as a principal pedestrian spine in Downtown.
- The 'crossroads' of the two major thoroughfares and heart of Downtown is the City Center that serves as a traditional focal point, concentration of pedestrian-oriented amenities, and densest assemblage of historic architectural resources. The City Center provides not only new private development opportunities, but also the potential for public open space.

"Good design makes a city work better, not just look better."

- Adele Fleet Bacow

Desired Framework Plan

- 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 that are more strongly linked to the core area. The railroad tracks, which currently serve as a barrier, provide an opportunity to link areas rather than to 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' that 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 and connects adjacent residential neighborhoods, while providing new residential opportunities.

- Stronger emphasis on preserving and enhancing outlying residential neighborhoods to make them integral parts of the Downtown community.

FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS

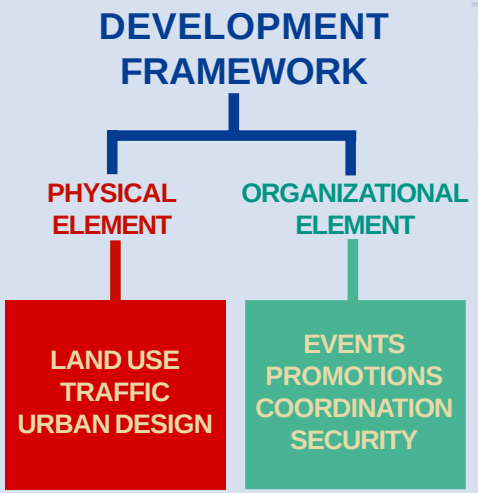
There are two key elements to the Development Framework: physical and organizational. To better understand the components of each element and how they can reinforce the objectives of the master plan, a discussion of policies and recommendations for each component has been included in this document. This framework structure is illustrated in the figure at right, *Framework Elements*, and is outlined below.

PHYSICAL ELEMENT

1) **Land Use**
2) **Traffic and Circulation**
3) **Urban Design**

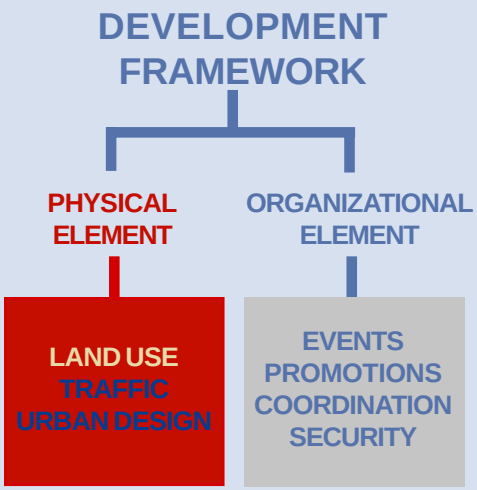
ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENT

1) **Events**
2) **Promotions**
3) **Coordination**
4) **Security**



Framework Elements

PHYSICAL FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS



PHYSICAL ELEMENT ONE: LAND USE

The *Desired Framework Plan*, illustrated on page 61, highlights areas with similar development potential and provides broad land use and development policy for Downtown Durham. The *Proposed Land Use Plan,* shown on page 67, was created based on this diagram. This map is not intended to be enforced as a comprehensive land use plan, but rather a source of general direction to guide future decision-making.

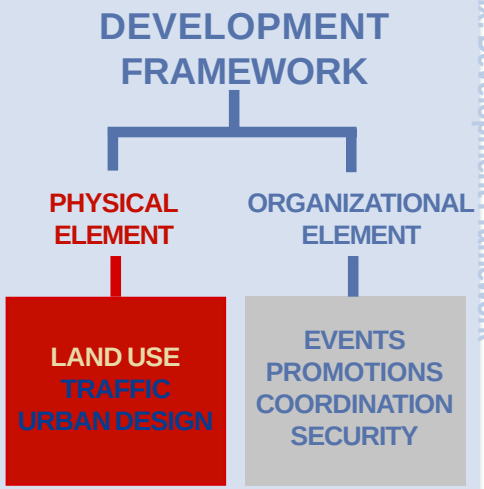
The success of most Downtowns is based on the fact that they offer a diverse mix of users in immediate proximity to each other. The land use pattern exhibited in the *Proposed Land Use Diagram* reflects a combination of existing development, proposed development not yet constructed, and new development proposed as part of this master plan. This pattern is expressed by a well-defined, mixed-use corridor along Main Street that offers a series of compatible and reinforcing uses radiating from that corridor.

Particular emphasis is placed on reinforcing that corridor with entertainment-related uses, extending east along Main Street from Brightleaf Square to Corcoran Street, and south along Blackwell Street to the Durham Bulls Athletic Park. This corridor includes a design treatment that emphasizes pedestrian orientation. Major new development, as well as renovation to the American Tobacco Warehouse site, is proposed. The designation as an urban entertainment corridor will be made by providing new connections across the rail lines and encouraging new commercial development, such as restaurants, speciality retail and nightclubs, into the area. As such, it will become a major destination in Downtown, adding vitality and increasing the synergy between the Downtown core and the surrounding districts.

The core area plays an important role within Downtown Durham. Having a successful and vital City Center is key to the overall success of Downtown. An active core will be an asset to the other areas of Downtown, promoting more successful development, which in turn attracts people and investment. The establishment of high-density, mixed-use and institutional uses in the City Center area represents a policy of formalizing and intensifying the cultural resources of Downtown. Attracting additional civic institutions, such as a Civic Center expansion and new County development, is a logical extension of the existing function of Downtown that provides support for the commercial core, promotes the area as a governmental center and increases tourism activity.

The land use plan also illustrates the addition of new, concentrated residential uses. This is a significant policy shift from existing zoning guidelines and is based upon the anticipated diversification of the housing market in Durham. It is expected that a segment of this growing market will have the desire to live in close proximity to a vibrant and attractive Downtown. This nationwide trend has supported downtown redevelopment in cities throughout the country. The two major areas for new residential development are located between Carr and Willard Streets, south of Pettigrew Street, and between Queen and Dillard Streets, south of Main Street. In addition, it is expected that throughout the City Center opportunities for residential development, particularly on upper floors, will be created and reinforced.

The *Proposed Land Use Plan* also includes areas of conservation of existing uses within the greater Downtown area. The land uses that provide commercial support to the adjacent neighborhood north of the central business district should be supported. Existing residential neighborhoods west and east of Downtown are also to be preserved and enhanced with compatible infill development. These traditional neighborhoods are a vital part of the greater Downtown and represent an important housing resource for Downtown Durham.



Steps should continually be taken to link these neighborhoods with Downtown. A proposed expansion of Central Park eastward to Mangum provides a green link that not only connects these neighborhoods to each other and the Downtown core, but also increases the passive and active recreational options for Downtown users. This transition between the residential neighborhoods, commercial support and Downtown creates a buffer that provides new development opportunity and supports property rehabilitation.

The *Proposed Land Use Plan* outlines a series of specific land-use designations. These designations are described below.

Single Family: Single-family residential use, approximately 12-16 units/acre.

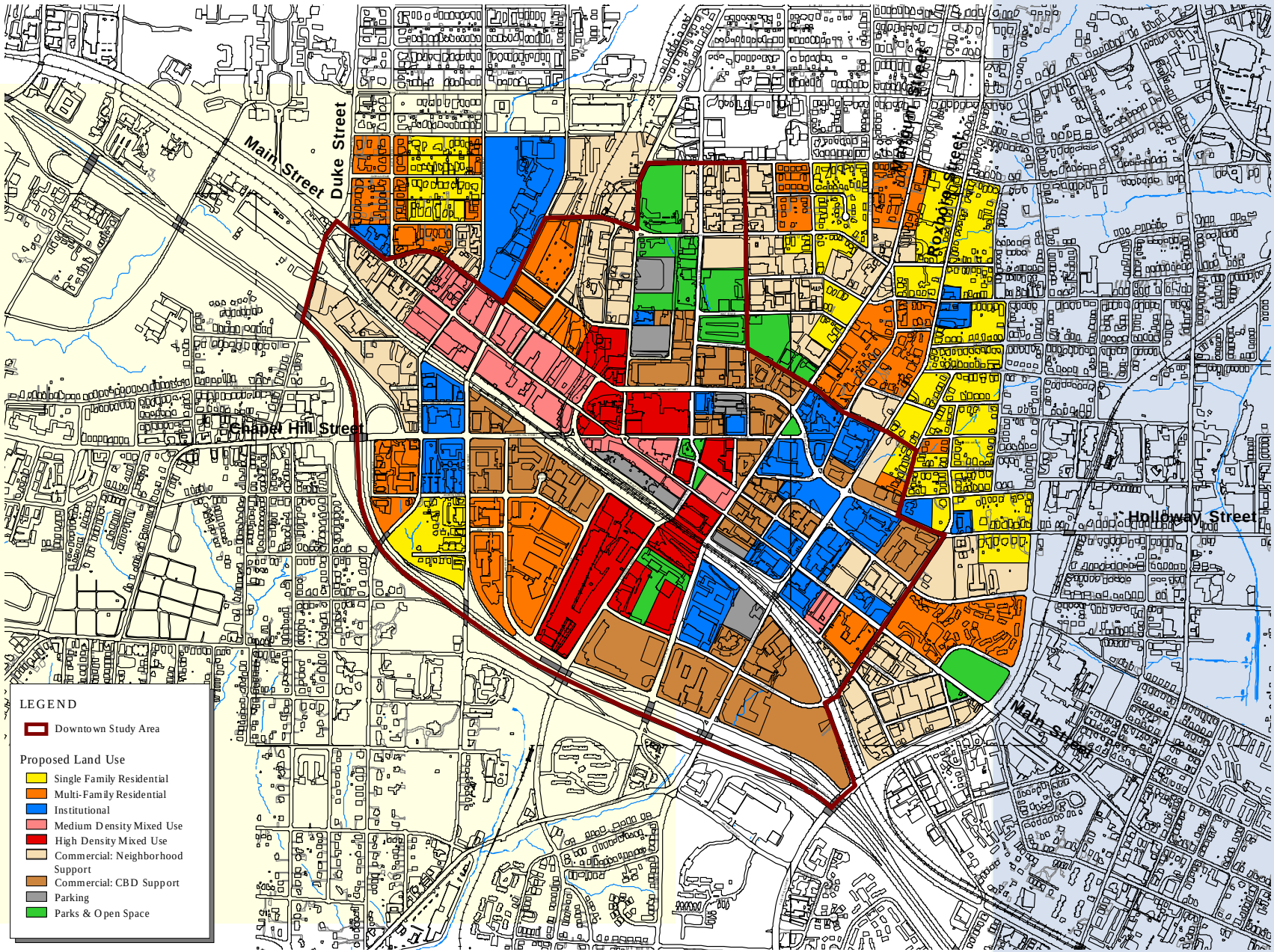
Multi-Family: Multi-family and townhouse residential use consisting of two or more dwelling units per building at an appropriate density to reinforce urban character, approximately 14-20 units/acre.

Institutional: Includes public uses, such as City Hall, courthouses and library, as well as semi-public uses such as churches and civic organizations.

Medium Density Mixed-Use: Mix of retail, office, parking and upper-floor residential that supports a daily routine of users.

High Density Mixed-Use: An area where new and existing development is designed to attract retail, recreational, office, institutional, residential and public uses as a primary economic function of Downtown. These are areas intended to be activity centers of the City, preserving the core and extending support to all Downtown districts. Concentrating use and activity through first floor commercial use, upper floor residential use and civic/tourism attractions increases the urban identity and draw of Downtown.

The strength of the residential market in the Durham area will benefit neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown as well as adaptive reuse projects within Downtown that can provide alternatives to traditional residential units.



Proposed Land Use Plan

Additional commercial opportunities will support City Center business activity as well as neighborhood residents.

Commercial: Neighborhood Support: Area proposed for retail/office uses that service and support the surrounding neighborhoods. The uses intended for this land use category are support commercial uses that benefit from proximity to the Central Business District and surrounding residential areas, but do not require locations within the core area. Areas that are designated with this category are east, west and north of the City Center. Typical uses include limited retail, small-scale office and business services such as dry cleaners, video rental, etc.

Commercial: CBD Support: Primary retail-oriented uses, including a combination of service providers and offices, designed to service and support the institutional, civic and mixed-uses found in the Downtown Central Business District. Appropriate uses would include print shops, legal offices and financial services.

Parking: Areas where surface parking lots or structured parking are the primary uses.

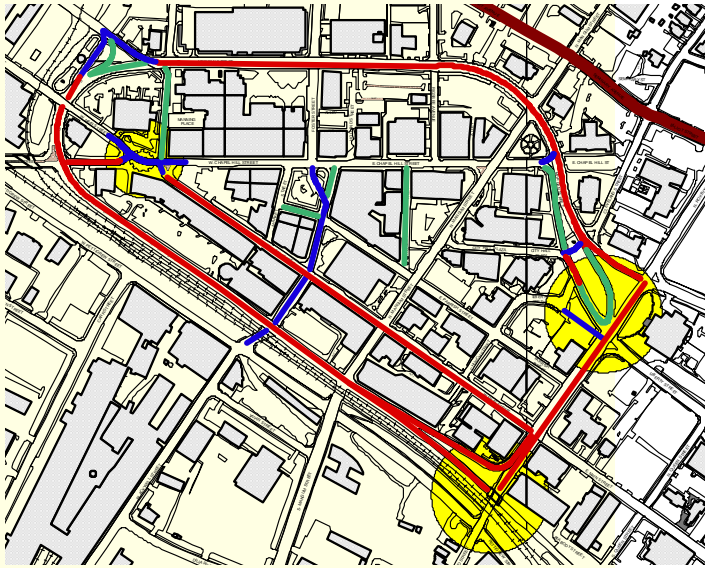
Parks and Open Space: Areas of green space for both passive and active recreation. These include public plazas and parks, as well as areas that are not necessarily under public ownership but are accessible to all Downtown users.

The *Proposed Land Use Plan* is a tool that articulates the various physical relationships within Downtown. It contains recommendations for focusing areas of new development, the extent of such development and the compatibility of uses; however, it is not intended to be a rigid land use plan. As portions of this plan are implemented over time, the configuration of areas for medium density mixed-use or commercial neighborhood support must be modified. Such adjustments should not be perceived as inconsistent with the overall direction established in the *Desired Framework* and *Proposed Land Use* plans, but are expected evolutions of this master plan.

PHYSICAL ELEMENT TWO: TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

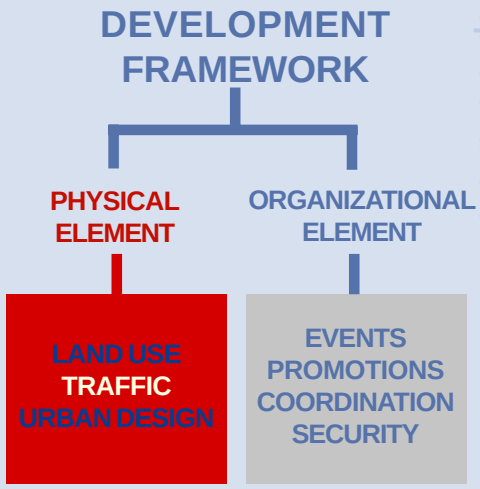
The transportation recommendations developed as part of the master plan build upon the City's current plan to realign Blackwell, Corcoran and Foster Streets to create an additional north-south corridor through Downtown. Additional circulation alterations that support the objectives previously outlined are highlighted in the diagram below, *Circulation Alterations*.

To complement the improvement in traffic circulation created by the Blackwell-Corcoran-Foster realignment, it is proposed to revert, as much as possible, the Downtown street system to a more traditional grid pattern. Intended to better facilitate traffic flow and provide traveler orientation, this configuration can be accomplished by converting critical one-way streets to two-way flow and realigning intersections to lessen some of the negative impacts associated with the existing 'loop.'



Circulation Alternatives

- Streets Changing from 1 Way to 2 Way
- Streets Closed
- Streets Realigned
- Special Study Areas



Main Street Illustrative Sketch

Main Street

As proposed in the 1999 Capital Improvement Report, prepared as part of the master plan process, the first street improvement should be the widening of Main Street to allow for two-way traffic between Great Jones Street and Roxboro Street, with parking on alternating sides of the street. A Main Street conversion will jump-start the implementation of an improved, interconnected transportation network in Downtown. The Main Street project will also address concerns of Durham residents and business owners who say they find it difficult to get around and provide directions to places Downtown.

The objectives in improving Main Street are four-fold:

1) Converting the traffic pattern to two-way directional flow to promote Main Street as a significant east-west thoroughfare connecting west Durham parts of Downtown to east Durham,
2) Allowing vehicular traffic to park on-street to support the existing commercial uses,
3) Modifying the typical section of Main Street not only to facilitate vehicular traffic, but also pedestrian traffic, and
4) Activating storefronts to increase business potential.

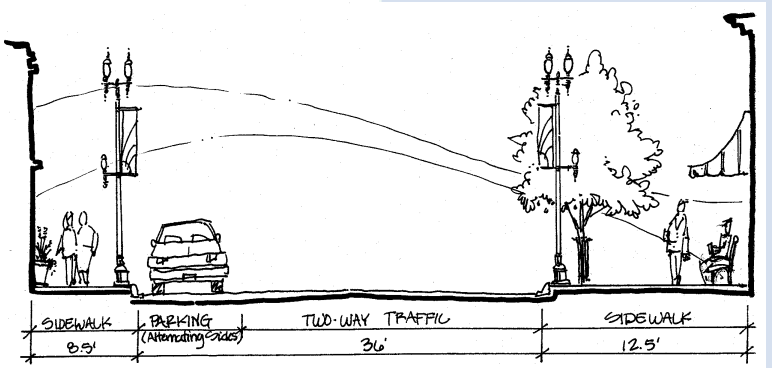
To achieve the desired two-way traffic along Main Street and adequate sidewalk widths for pedestrians, parking would be provided in the form of alternating cutouts, approximately every other block along the length of Main Street. This solution, illustrated in *Main Street Illustrative Sketch* and *Typical Section through Main Street,* provides uninterrupted traffic flow, strong east-west connections to surrounding neighborhood districts, and additional area for site amenities. The streetscape design for Main Street should build upon the inherent character of Downtown Durham in a way that produces an aesthetic enhancement that is functional and compatible with the area's rich character.

Chapel Hill Street

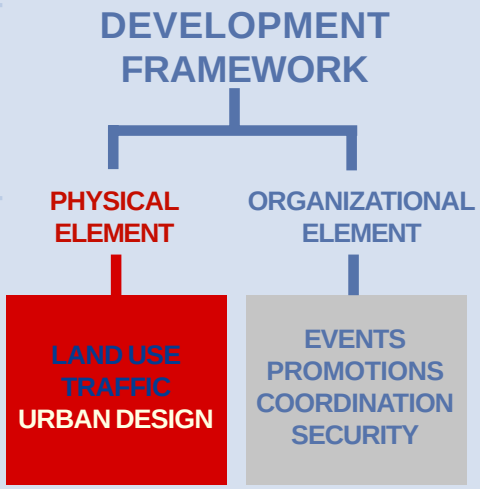
In addition to the Main Street reconfiguration, Chapel Hill Street should be converted to two-way traffic from Great Jones Street to Mangum Street. In contrast to the conversion of Main Street, the conversion of Chapel Hill Street is a simple improvement. Minimal street reconstruction is required because the street is wide enough to accommodate traffic movement in both directions. Chapel Hill Street should be converted to two-way traffic at the same time as Main Street so that no directional imbalance is created through the conversion of only one of a pair of one-way streets.

'Loop' Reconfiguration

The third transportation recommendation involves altering the existing 'loop' to a more traditional grid pattern. Converting the 'loop' to two-way travel, introducing on-street parking on either side, and re-aligning selected intersections will not only reinforce the fabric of Downtown; it will open up new sites for development. As shown in the proposed *Circulation Alternatives* diagram on page 69, the Morgan Street/Roxboro Street intersection will be realigned with Holloway Street. On the west side, the Morgan Street/Great Jones Street intersection will be realigned to facilitate thru-traffic on Morgan Street, thus promoting Morgan Street as a major east-west thoroughfare in Downtown. In addition, another sizeable development pad will open up at this intersection, bridging the gap between Brightleaf Square and City Center. Great Jones and Ramseur Streets will also be converted to two-way traffic, with the latter having a similar typical section to Morgan Street, providing on-street parking on both sides. Because of engineering complexities and significant cost implications, the intersection of Ramseur and Roxboro Streets will require a detailed study to assess the reconfiguring alternatives for that specific intersection. Lastly, it is proposed that Roxboro Street is converted to two-way between Ramseur Street and Morgan Street, but only after a more detailed evaluation of the trade-off between improved directional travel is weighed against potential reduced traffic capacity.



Typical section through Main Street



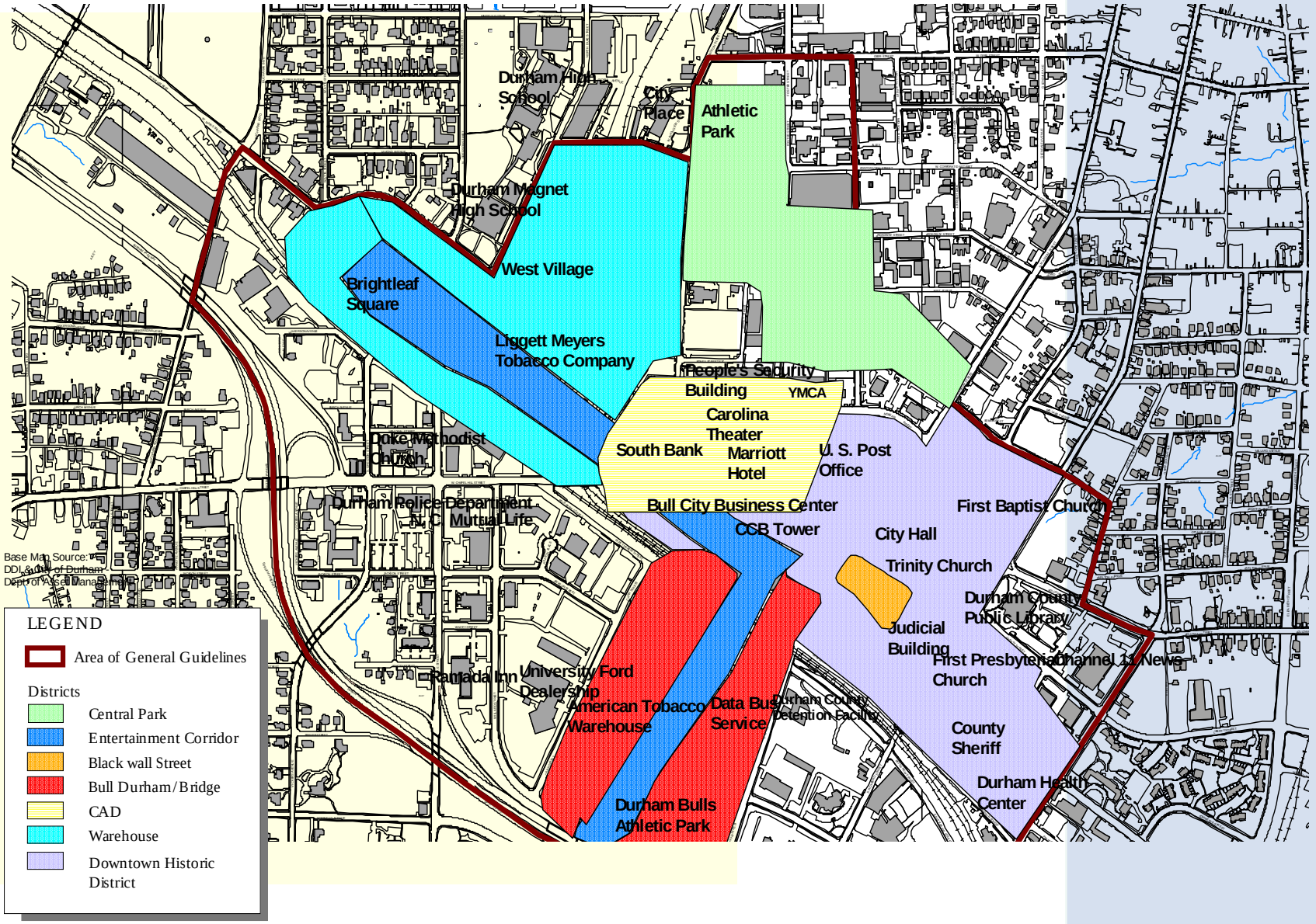
Creating more parking on Main, Morgan and Ramseur Streets will increase the number of on-street spaces by more than 200. This will greatly increase the supply for short-term users as well as those patrons that prefer on-street parking in the evening hours. Additional off-street parking structures will be provided at key activity areas to serve both long-term and short-term users.

PHYSICAL ELEMENT THREE: URBAN DESIGN

The physical and aesthetic character of Downtown Durham is crucial to its success. The appearance of Downtown strongly impacts community attitude, tourism and retention of business efforts. An unattractive and neglected Downtown conveys a negative image. It is not welcoming, and is often perceived as an unsafe and unsuccessful environment.

Any Downtown can be made reasonably attractive if a concentrated effort is made to implement and maintain physical improvements; however, simply replicating the successful design treatment of other cities is not the correct approach. It is important that physical improvement recommendations, from new building construction, rehab and streetscape improvements, focus on elevating and celebrating the character and identity of Durham. When Downtown's urban design character reinforces the Durham "sense of place," a truly unique destination place will be realized.

The diagram on the following page, *Urban Design Districts*, shows proposed districts within Downtown for which specific design standards should be developed. Rather than establish one set of improvement standards for all of Downtown, this master plan proposes the reinforcement of multiple districts that will each highlight their own architectural, spatial and signage features. For example, sign standards in the CAD might be much more sedate and reserved than in the Bull Durham district because of the difference in the architecture and anticipated uses.



Urban Design Districts

The First Baptist Church is an example of Neoclassic architecture, a style inspired by classic Greek and Roman architecture.

Architectural Vocabulary

The buildings in Downotwn Durham are illustrative of diverse architectural styles and periods. Downtown has a strong character that is defined by its existing and historic architecture. The collection of Downtown buildings offer a snap-shot of architectural trends from the last century. Neoclassic, Beaux Arts, Gothic Revival, Art Deco and Moderne are styles from the late Nineteenth to mid-Twentieth centuries that are expressed in the architecture of Downtown.

Just as past architectural styles have influenced Durham's built environment, new construction should look to the manifestation of those styles in order to reinforce an urban fabric that is uniquely Durham. Another distinctive design element which separates Downtown Durham from any other downtown is the traditional brick warehouses that housed various tobacco plants. The design of the new Durham Bulls ballpark reflects the character of this unique architecture with its traditionally inspired design.

The Mechanics and Farmers Bank is also designed in the Neoclassic tradition.

The First Presbyterian Church is of the Gothic Revival style which is distinguished by pointed archtes combined with towers, steep gabled roofs, clustered columns, bay windows, and leaded stained glass.

Like many civic and collegiate buildings, Trinity United Methodist Church is a Gothic Revival structure.

The Hill Building/CCB is from the Moderne tradtion, a style that features 'streamlined' facades with few decorative elements.

The Carolina Theatre is a Beaux Arts building as indicated by elaborately decorative variations of classic details.

The Kress Building is typified by stylized Egyption, Aztec and Mayan motifs which indicates that it is an Art Deco building.

The Snow Building is another examples of the Art Deco style of architecture.

Main Street has an intimate, pedestrian-oriented character; however, future improvements must allow for a business-friendly environment.

Landscaping, water features and seating should be considered as new open space opportunities are realized in Downtown.

The image established by the mix of these dominant styles can only be found in Downtown Durham. It will be this mix coupled with new development that is compatible with Durham's design character that will make Downtown truly unique. These are unique qualities exhibited in Downtown, both historic and today, that define the architectural vocabulary. The importance of these qualities was reinforced throughout the master plan process by the focus groups and public open participants. It is this architectural vocabulary that should be capitalized upon and enhanced through future physical improvement projects and initiatives.

Elements of a Strong Downtown

An understanding of the architectural vocabulary of Durham provides a foundation for urban design recommendations. For some, urban design is simply the selection of light fixtures and paving materials. But for urban design to be successful and meaningful, it must define the urban design objectives for the city and a process for regulating the city's future character.

Healthy and strong urban design character focuses on four major areas, including:

1. **Retention of Distinguishing Design,**
2. **Encouraging Activity at Street Level,**
3. **Providing Gathering Spaces, and**
4. **Attention and Respect to Design Detail.**

The recommendations that focus on these four major design areas consist of proposals for new development, redevelopment and enhancement. These recommendations are intended to set the direction for design and illustrate the potential for physical improvement standards. As represented in *Urban Design Districts* shown on page 73, the general design standards discussed below are to be applied throughout the entire study area.

1. Retention of Distinguishing Design

Important views and historic buildings are elements worth preserving. Buildings adjacent to the street often frame a view of a prominent feature, such as the CCB Tower or the sightline established along Church Street. While views are an important part of the City, they are often overlooked and easily destroyed by the lack of proper site planning guidelines. Historic buildings provide a wealth of character in the Downtown fabric. These structures often provide visual clues that reflect changing times and values. The preservation of historic buildings recognizes good design from the past and maintains the district's unique characteristics.

General tools that will preserve this design character include the establishment of specific site guidelines and the establishment of historic district or design review overlays.

The creation of a group which can be responsible for evaluating improvement proposals and physical changes in Downtown should help foster appropriate design; however, this review process should not become so laborious or rigid that new development is discouraged. The development of clear design guidelines is the first task of this proposed design review group.

1a. Site Plan

The streets in the Downtown area are the most public and prominent spaces within the City. The structures located along the edge of these streets form the "walls" of these outdoor rooms, and as such, they should be planned accordingly to provide the desired effect. Essential to the success of the street are the lower floors of a building. These floors should be located against the street edge, except at designated open space areas. Traditionally, the Downtown streets have been lined with buildings that adjoin the sidewalk. It is appropriate to reinforce this tradition from not only a historical perspective, but also a functional view. By locating the structure adjacent to the street, the space created along the street helps to define functional urban open spaces and enhance the pedestrian activity.

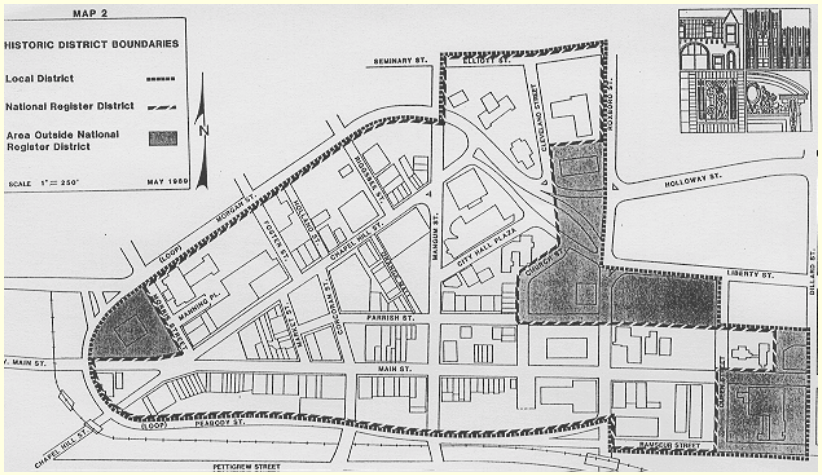
View along Church Street

"Some property owners and developers, the ones who will benefit most directly from design excellence, fail to recognize the connection between quality design and the identity and success of downtown."

- Mayor Bill Harris, Lincoln, Nebraska

1b. Historic District Overlay

The Downtown Historic Districts (Local and National Register, see map below) contain several buildings that are identified as outstanding, notable and contributing. These historic structures provide distinctive statements that should be enhanced and preserved. Existing buildings that exhibit significant architectural or historic qualities should be rehabilitated with respect to the original character and design intent. The materials, detailing, proportions and ornamentation of the facades should be preserved and enhanced as part of the rehabilitation process.



Historic District Boundaries, courtesy of Downtown Durham Historic District Preservation Plan

New infill buildings that are proposed adjacent to these existing structures should be sensitive to their context. The scale, massing, height and materials of proposed infill buildings should respond positively to these structures to "knit" the street together in a uniform and cohesive pattern. Architectural detailing, such as matching cornice lines and the use of coordinating materials is an effective devices that provide a transition between existing and proposed buildings. High quality materials such as brick, limestone, and tile should be included in the design detailing of the exterior facades of buildings in this particular district.

Special emphasis should be placed throughout the Black Wall Street district to celebrate that important part of Downtown's history. Preserving the remaining structures and providing a "walk of fame" through decorative sidewalk treatments would designate that area as an important and unique district in Durham's development.

2. Encouraging Activity at Street Level

Projects that improve existing pedestrian circulation and provide new and stimulating pedestrian experiences are essential for achieving a vibrant urban character. Unnecessary voids in the street, such as those resulting from parking lots and vacant buildings, should be screened or fronted with appropriate elements (such as fencing, walls, landscaping, etc.) that interject a visual continuity. People-oriented places, such as a street, sidewalk cafe or urban plaza, need a sufficient number of pedestrians to make it successful and attractive. Pedestrian walkway networks should be established, connecting buildings, blocks, districts and adjacent neighborhoods. Appropriate uses at the street level, such as restaurants, cafes and retail establishments, should be encouraged. These uses should be relatively compact, so that workers, visitors and residents can walk or ride easily from area to area. Main Street should certainly be redeveloped in this manner, as should other City Center corridors such as Parrish, Church and Chapel Hill Streets. A compact downtown or district is not only convenient for users, it also serves to increase the density needed to achieve active and vital street life.

General techniques that encourage activity at street level include the establishment of specific guidelines for parking and site amenities and the establishment of an entertainment corridor overlay.

2a. Parking

Parking is needed and essential to attracting new commercial uses; however, surface parking lots often create voids or gaps along the street. This void breaks up the impact of a strong building line, and often detracts from surrounding context. At a minimum, surface lots throughout the Downtown should be screened with appropriate landscaping or ornamental fencing.

Sidewalk cafes, like this one in St. Louis, bring activity and life to the street.

The Durham Centre parking provides little street-level interest for pedestrians.

Banners and signage introduce color and graphics to downtown streetscapes.

Parking structures are an essential part to Downtown. However, the negative physical impacts, such as poorly designed ground floor levels and imposing size, should be minimized. The first-floor level of any structure should include areas for retail space. The facade of the structure should coordinate with the surrounding architecture, including appropriate materials, colors, lighting and awnings. Additional parking structures should be coordinated with new development and enclosed within buildings to minimize the visibility of parking ramps from the street.

2b. Site Amenities

The addition of site amenities to urban open space encourages street activity and provides a sense of identity and appeal. The addition of pools and fountains can provide a focal point and can serve to buffer street noise. The introduction of brick, granite, and textured concrete adds color and diversity to the sidewalk treatment. A variety of street furniture, including fixed and moveable chairs, benches and low seat walls should be included throughout the Downtown area. These seating areas should be located in both shade and sunny areas along primary circulation corridors and activity nodes. The addition of informational kiosks, signage and banners provide spatial orientation and definition to a special district. Not only do they direct pedestrian and vehicular movement, they provide a sense of continuity and the opportunity to promote special events.

2c. Entertainment Corridor

A continuous street-wall of activity oriented to the pedestrian is essential to sustain a vital urban district. The success of this Main Street/Corcoran/Blackwell entertainment corridor relies on overcoming any real or perceived “dead spaces.” The number of blank facades, empty storefronts and vacant lots should be minimized. Attractive signage, building lighting, rich materials and awnings should be considered in any renovation or new construction. Empty storefronts should be maintained and lit so they do not detract from the quality of the streetscape, and surface parking lots should be removed and replaced with adequate parking facilities behind the structures.

3. Providing Gathering Spaces

Potential gathering spaces include streets, plazas, parks, alleys, arcades, vacant land and public uses at the ground floors of buildings. Large urban parks that provide areas for festivals, farmers markets and concerts are appropriate for Downtown. Smaller spaces that include passive recreation and garden areas, as well as the street right-of-way, provide additional gathering spaces of varying scales.

General tools that provide gathering spaces include the establishment of specific guidelines for urban open space.

3a. Urban Open Space

Successful urban open space requires a sense of definition and containment from its surroundings. The use of buildings, arcades and landscaping all can provide the necessary definition to an urban plaza, courtyard or entryway. Once the space is defined, the enrichment of the space should include the use of appropriate landscape, hardscape and water features that visually and functionally enlivens and gives character to the space.

This master plan provides the opportunity for a significant new civic-oriented open space in the Civic and Arts District (see chapter 7, *Major Development Components*). As a contrast, existing and proposed open spaces in the City Center should have a noticeably different character to them. The size of any urban open space, either existing or proposed, should be appropriate to the scale of the adjacent streets, buildings and activities for which it is intended. Smaller spaces are usually related to the use of adjacent buildings (i.e. lunchtime activities), while larger spaces are often more civic in nature and can accommodate a wider range of seasonal activities. A variety of these spaces can provide a wealth of opportunity to enliven the street and are appropriate to providing vitality and diversity to the Downtown.

Awnings, lighting and street furniture are elements that help animate and create exciting entertainment corridors.

Large public gathering spaces provide opportunities for community events and celebrations. Photo courtesy of Downtown Durham, Inc.

A coordinated signage program for directional, informational and marketing purposes can complement the design character of Downtown districts.

4. Maintaining Attention to and Respect for Detail

While architectural continuity is important, variation in design should also be encouraged. By identifying design elements characteristic to the region, new architecture can be unique and remain compatible with the existing building stock. It is essential that any improvements, whether they are new construction or rehabilitation, stress quality. The quality of materials and design detailing, as well as a high level of maintenance, is indicative of a focused effort to provide a quality urban environment.

General tools that reinforce detail design attention include the establishment of guidelines for building scale and design, signage, landscaping and lighting.

4a. Building Scale & Design

New building construction in the Downtown area should not mimic existing structures, but should be designed in such a fashion as to reinforce the scale, horizontal and vertical layering, range of traditional materials and level of detail and ornamentation found in the existing building stock. In general, a building height of 2-4 floors is appropriate throughout most of the Downtown area, especially along Main Street and other City Center corridors. Height restrictions can be varied on a block-by-block basis. In order to enforce and regulate these building design guidelines, a design review process should be iniated.

Buildings should be brought up to meet current ADA code and standards, and structures should be upgraded to conform to current health and safety standards. The addition of any modern electrical and mechanical equipment should be screened from views from pedestrians at street level and, as much as possible, by adjacent buildings.

4b. Signage

The role of signage is important throughout Downtown. It provides direction and information and can be used as a successful marketing tool. However, it is important that the scale, placement and graphic style is

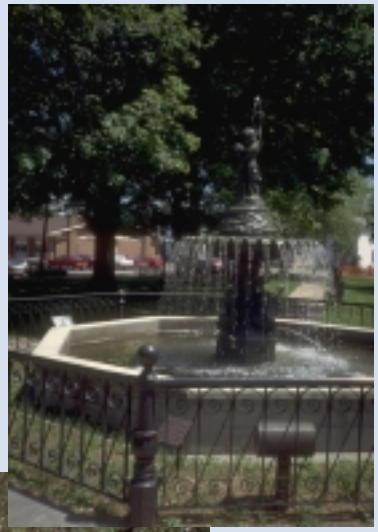
consistent with the character established for Downtown. A standard signage system for orientation and information should be established to serve as directional markers to destination points, landmarks and circulation routes. For example, a designated or desired travel route between the Durham Bulls Athletic Park and Central Park or Brightleaf and historic 'Black Wall Street' could be highlighted with a sign or marker system. Decorative signage, often used to as a gateway statement or to identify landmarks, should be included in a comprehensive signage program. A Downtown sign program would most likely include multiple design treatments for multiple districts with different characteristics. Guidelines for appropriate building signage should reviewed and amended as appropriate.

4c. Landscaping

Throughout Downtown area, it is appropriate to use a variety of softscape materials to provide a contrast to hard urban surfaces. The addition of plant material will add shade, color and layers of texture to the urban fabric. Low ornamental material, such as flowers, groundcover and shrubs, should occur in key areas, particularly along corridors that are heavily traveled by vehicles or dominated by surface parking, such as Mangum, Roxboro, and Blackwell/ Corcoran/Foster. These areas would include planters, sidewalk cutouts and parking lot screens. Street trees that are high branching and open in character should be used in combination with ornamental tree grates and guards. Trees should be placed along the street to frame or highlight buildings and provide larger splashes of greenery without closing in the street. Water-conserving and urban tolerant plants should be used. A maintenance program that includes seasonal plant rotation, regular sidewalk/street cleaning and a four-season banner rotation program should be established.

4d. Lighting

The appropriate use of lighting is critical in creating an urban environment that is active and safe. At a minimum, two ornamental light fixtures should be adopted as the lighting standard to be used throughout the Downtown area. The first should be an ornamental fixture that meets the criteria for



Attractive and well-maintained landscaping softens hard urban edges and creates inviting spaces.

City/State highway standards, yet is visually consistent with the traditional character of Downtown. This type of attractive fixture is important to incorporate on vehicular thoroughfares such as Mangum and Roxboro streets. The second fixture should be a decorative, pedestrian-scaled light standard. It will be important to utilize these fixtures along key pedestrian-oriented streets such as Main, Blackwell/Corcoran/Foster, Chapell Hill, Parrish Streets, etc. Both fixtures should coordinate with each other, and provide appropriate foot-candle levels to illuminate the street, sidewalk or open space. Additional lighting in the form of bollards, up-lighting and back-lighting should be encouraged to highlight building facades, landscape treatment and signage. Lighting standards that vary in style and character from the overall City standard should be used as appropriate to designate or highlight unique Downtown districts such as the Entertainment corridor and the ballpark environs.

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

Land use, traffic and urban design are the three key elements that establish the physical framework. Several public improvements outlined below are integral parts of the physical framework and have been referenced throughout this master plan. They represent a significant commitment to elevate Downtown to a successful urban center that is functional, safe and attractive. Generally these items, their design, implementation and maintenance, will be the responsibility of the City; however, opportunities for shared costs for these items should be explored. It will be important for the City to develop a strategy for committing to an ongoing, long-term public improvement program within Downtown to address these, and other, public improvement projects:

- On-street parking
- Lighting
- Street signage
- Street furniture (bus shelters etc.)
- Open space (hard and soft)
- Parking garages (new and old)
- Pedestrian links and trails
- Gateways
- Traffic calming (medians, pedestrian signalization, street narowing)
  - Loop reconfiguration: Holloway/Morgan, Ramseur-Roxboro and Great Jones-Morgan/Ramseur/Chapel Hill
  - Chapel Hill/Main St.
  - Corcoran/ Foster/Blackwell
- Maintenance
- Recreation facilities (parks, central park)
- Public art
- Sidewalks – special paving areas and maintenance repair
- Potential Black Wall Street "walk of fame"

The investment necessary to implement and maintain a comprehensive public improvements program in Downtown will be substantial, yet this is a critical task that will reinforce and encourage private investment. Nine years ago in Philadelphia, the business community voted to improve the physical environment for pedestrians in the Downtown. The Downtown business improvement district, Center City District, issued a $21 million bond and received $5 million in matching funds from the City. They invested the funds in new sidewalks, trees, curbs and light fixtures to make the area more pedestrian friendly. The new lights make the sidewalks two to three times brighter, and as such, they appear safer. Since the improvements began, the Center City District has reversed its declining employment base and seen substantial employment growth.

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS

This master plan for Downtown Durham proposes a number of physical development and infrastructure improvements; however, it acknowledges that a 'build it and they will come' approach to urban redevelopment is shortsighted. As such, organizational, management and programming strategies are critical elements of the framework. Any area aiming to attract employers, employees, shoppers, diners, etc. must provide the physical facilities for those activities to take place; but there must also be a concerted effort to ensure that once people come Downtown there are always events, management and security that make Downtown safe and exciting to discover over and over again.

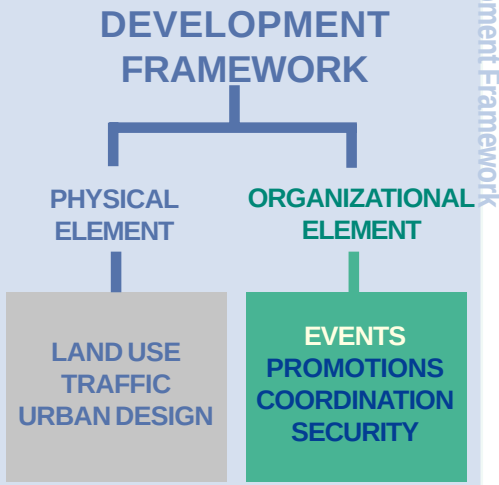
In response to these goals, the master plan recommends the development of a system for sponsoring and promoting activities that is organized around four areas of focus:

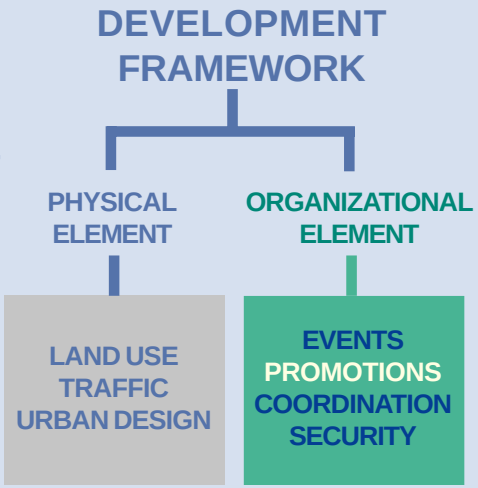
- Events
- Promotions
- Coordination
- Security

ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENT ONE: EVENTS

There is no limit to the number and types of events that can be hosted Downtown. Downtown Durham is having success with concerts and art events; but other cities have expanded their events to include farmers markets, outdoor movies, holiday parades, special tree lighting, alley parties, flea markets, etc. The cities that have the greatest success in programming their downtowns have a designated organization or department within an organization that is responsible for the planning of events. This staff can also serve as a resource for private groups who may want to host an event but do not have the capacity or experience to make all of the arrangements.

As event days grow, most Downtowns have witnessed the private sector responding with businesses such as carriage rides or trolleys that shuttle visitors and residents between destinations. These activities may, of course, also be supported or encouraged by the private sector. The importance and potential impact of Downtown events is threefold. Events after business hours can help retain the Downtown employee population after 5:00, create active and dynamic activities and environments for residents, and enhance the convention and visitor experience.





ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENT TWO: PROMOTIONS

Promoting Downtown is not unlike the selling of any product in its need for an overarching theme or mission that can be summed up both succinctly in a catchy phrase or radio jingle and comprehensively in more detailed advertising material. As a result of the master plan and the commitment to its implementation, the need exists for a compelling campaign to sell Downtown as a place to live, work, and play. In the early twentieth century, Durham was known as the 'City of the New South' for its progressive integrated business climate. A creative campaign that captures the essence of the Durham community today is an immediate priority that should be led by the City, County, Downtown Durham, Inc., Chamber of Commerce and the Convention and Visitors Bureau. Private business interests should also have a role in the process. Whatever the message, it should reflect the uniqueness of the City and its citizens and should establish a basis for all other promotional and marketing activities.

There are other more immediate manageable promotional pieces and activities that can be developed to facilitate Downtown activities. A monthly newsletter distributed to business and residents can highlight activities and accomplishments. Even better, a weekly broadcast fax or e-mail can keep people apprised of activities on a weekly basis; it can also serve as a means of advertising or highlighting Downtown businesses. Developing programs aimed at youth, such as educational walking tours and on-site history lessons, can help to engage future generations in the appreciation of Downtown.

As an example, The Landmarks Foundation in St. Louis, Missouri conducts a historic walking tour of Downtown for children that introduces them to basic architectural principles. Students learn about building materials and carry magnets with them so they can determine which building storefronts are cast iron. The Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County, North Carolina has prepared a Color Me Asheville coloring book that highlights historic structures.

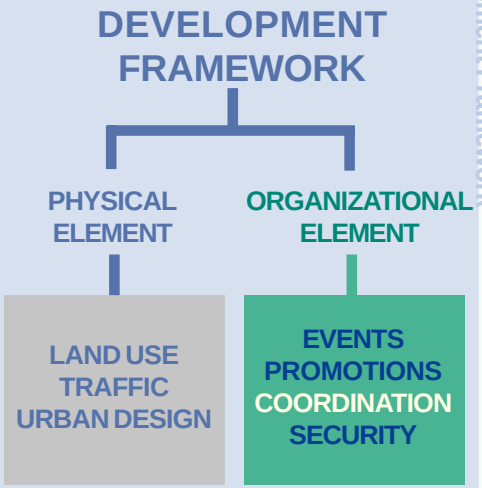
In addition, a network of prominent community leaders and business people who commit themselves to selling downtown could have a significant impact on recruitment efforts.

After ranking as the second worst large American city in 1975, Cleveland's business community assembled private sector leaders from throughout the region to champion solutions to the City's problems. The resulting group, Cleveland Tomorrow, initiated a dramatic turnaround in the late 1980's that included more than $1 billion worth of Downtown investment.

ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENT THREE: COORDINATION

Coordinating and publicizing the many events that occur Downtown should not just be aimed at the customer, but also at business owners. Many cities prepare monthly reports for business owners that list all of the events (and the expected attendance) that will occur in Downtown for that month. This allows businesses, particularly restaurants, to be appropriately staffed and prepared for fluctuations in patronage. In addition, this kind of support to business can be reciprocated when it comes time to talk about uniform store hours or parking validation programs— other coordination activities that will require collaboration and cooperation between the public and private sectors.

Encouraging a mechanism for Downtown businesses to collectively share advertising costs, and perhaps even providing financial support to that effort, is another way of strengthening the relationship between the business community and downtown support organizations. Advertising could be done on a district level highlighting Main Street, for example, but identifying individual businesses within the district.



Bike patrols offer a visible security presence throughout Downtown. Photo courtesy of Downtown Durham, Inc.

The Red Bank BID in New Jersey encouraged stores to open for business or Sundays. Within a few months of the campaign's start the number of stores open on Sundays increased from 22 to 82. Sunday is now the second best day for sales volume for many retailers. Other efforts have focused on generating activity so that it is worthwhile for businesses to stay open. In Downtown Indianapolis, a former Warehouse district, now known as the Wholesale District, houses several nighttime venues such as Have a Nice Day Cafe, Hard Rock Cafe, Jillian's etc. These businesses have partnered with one another and Indianapolis Downtown Inc. to collectively market the area as a singular destination. The local transportation provider was even brought into the effort to provide a shuttle service between individual businesses.

The Ybor City Chamber of Commerce in Tampa, Florida promotes the restaurants and nightclubs of the Ybor City District, a National Historic Landmark District. Using money from the county's Tourism Development Fund, the Chamber markets the district to visitors outside a 50-mile radius of the area. The chamber uses two guides: a festival guide and a calendar of events and accommodations. Most of the brochures are distributed at welcome centers throughout the state. The Chamber also promotes two annual events in the Florida Tourism Guide. Finally, the coordination of maintenance activities must remain a priority so that the presence of trash, litter, graffiti, etc. is kept to a minimum. Again, by supporting business in other activities, Downtown leaders should be able to request the assistance of business owners in this endeavor.

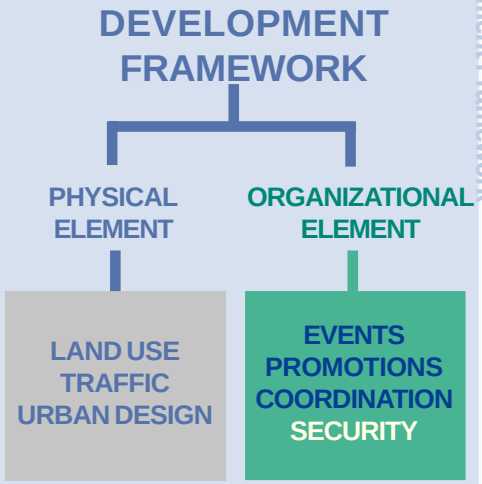
ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENT FOUR: SECURITY

If people do not feel safe and comfortable in Downtown, all the events, restaurants, and activities will not bring them to the center city. As such, relationships with law enforcement are critical to the success of Downtown. Encouraging 'back to the basics' mechanisms, such as foot patrols, bike patrols, and mounted police, can put a police presence on the street in a non-threatening way. Current security efforts in Downtown, such as bike patrols and a strong police presence provide a good foundation for additional programs. Many cities have initiated Downtown ambassador programs that provide a friendly face for visitors who may need directions, assistance, or simply advice on a good place to dine. When these ambassadors are connected by radio to police officers, they are often the first line of defense in deterring and battling crime in downtown. As traffic and activities increase in Downtown Durham, an ambassador program may be a worthwhile activity for the City or Downtown Durham, Inc. to sponsor.

In Downtown Memphis, the Center City Commission sponsors the Blue Suede Brigade team of Downtown ambassadors connected by radio to the local police. These uniformed 'brigadiers' give directions, assist with security and report maintenance issues. In addition, the clever marketing of the program that is unique to Memphis and its famous former resident, Elvis Presley, is part of its success.

Appropriate levels of lighting, building maintenance and landscape maintenace will also help to present Downtown as a safe environment. If Downtown looks well-maintained and cared for, it will appear safe to outsiders.

The Center City District (CCD) in Philadelphia is a business improvement district with an annual budget in excess of $7 million. The CCD serves a 100-block area in the heart of Philadelphia's business district with, among other services, grafitti removal. A Special Project Team uses paint, chemical solvents, and high-pressure washers to remove grafitti from public and private structures, signs, poles and telephones.



Summary

In order to begin prioritizing action steps for achieving the framework, an assessment of ongoing development trends and findings from the market research was studied so that critical major development components could be identified. A detailed discussion of these development components, whose implementation potential is conceptually shown at right in the *Illustrative Master Plan,* are described in greater detail in the following chapter.

llustrative Master Plan