



MATTHEWS DOWNTOWN PLAN

As adopted by the Matthews Board of Commissioners January 7, 2013

Introduction

As we enter a new decade, now more than at any time over the past 60 years Downtowns across the Country are experiencing a renaissance as consumer preferences shift away from post war suburban sprawl. New town centers and lifestyle centers have supplanted the typical strip mall or enclosed mall and represent a changing dynamic in how and where people live and go about their day to day lives. Traditional downtowns such as Matthews are keenly positioned in the market to take advantage of this resurgence because they embody a sense of history and sense of place that is lacking in even the best designed new developments. That intrinsic value is something that should be preserved and carefully built upon as Downtown Matthews continues to grow into a central business district for a community in excess of 30,000 individuals and countless others in South Charlotte and Union County who consider Matthews “home”. A walk through Matthews today yields countless examples of best practices as well as lost opportunities. The purpose of this Master Plan is to succinctly identify several main objectives. Mainly, the plan will:

- ⇒ Make recommendations regarding building design, layout, and general aesthetics
- ⇒ Identify opportunities for both specific small and large scale redevelopments
- ⇒ Provide recommendations for future roadways and parking facilities
- ⇒ Create a framework that guides development in an orderly fashion



Acknowledgements

The Downtown Matthews Master Plan was developed through a collaborative effort shared by Town citizens, Board members, staff, committees and volunteer interns.

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The State of Downtown: Architecture and the Urban Environment

Over the years, infill development and redevelopment have altered the landscape in both positive and negative aspects. New development that occurred generally from the 1960's to the 1980's abandoned the urban design and architectural principles that gave us most of the important historic buildings extant today. As a result, downtown Matthews is not unlike many small towns and large cities today in that it features an array of buildings built over more than a century.

Setbacks for buildings vary greatly with a mixture of buildings that also feature suburban style front setback parking. Perhaps the biggest challenge to the built environment and the pedestrian experience in downtown is the linking together of different subareas and districts within downtown. The historic buildings in the 100 block of North Trade Street are broken up with too many open spaces to achieve a continuous shopping experience. Trade Street and the newer buildings along Matthews Station Street are also somewhat disconnected. Sidewalks are generally present throughout the downtown, but there are gaps and instances where they are only present on one side of the street. Overall, the pedestrian experience is fairly inconsistent with different sidewalk widths and planting strips widths (or no planting strip at all). Overhead utilities are common and create a great degree of visual clutter on most streets.

The Architectural Evolution of Downtown Matthews



The State of Downtown: Parks and Open Space

Many recent efforts have created a more substantial system of parks and green spaces than existed even 15 years ago. The Town Green and KP park were developed in 2001 and 2010 respectively, and Stumptown Park has continued to be improved since the 1990's. The Town currently has a policy to provide more pocket parks to create more passive green space within the community. New residential development in and around downtown is creating higher demand for open space for downtown residents. Downtown Matthews is also strategically located near both the Four Mile Creek Greenway and the future Carolina Thread Trail. A new regional Sportsplex is located on County land bounded by Tank Town Rd, Independence Boulevard and I-485 and serves as a regional park and sports field destination only 1.2 miles from the center of Downtown.

Downtown Matthews is roughly 3/4 of a mile square, or about 480 acres. Of that land area, less than two percent is dedicated to public open space. On average, cities as a whole generally average about 8% of total land area dedicated to parks

Downtown Parks and Open Space Inventory

- Stumptown Park - ~1.2 acres
- KP Pocket Park - .25 acres
- Town Green - .40 acres

Nearby Facilities

- Matthews Elementary - 8 acres
- Four Mile Creek Greenway
- Baucom Park - .8 acres



Dedicated in 2010, KP Park transformed a leftover remnant of street right-of-way into a beautiful green space with a gazebo, benches and public art

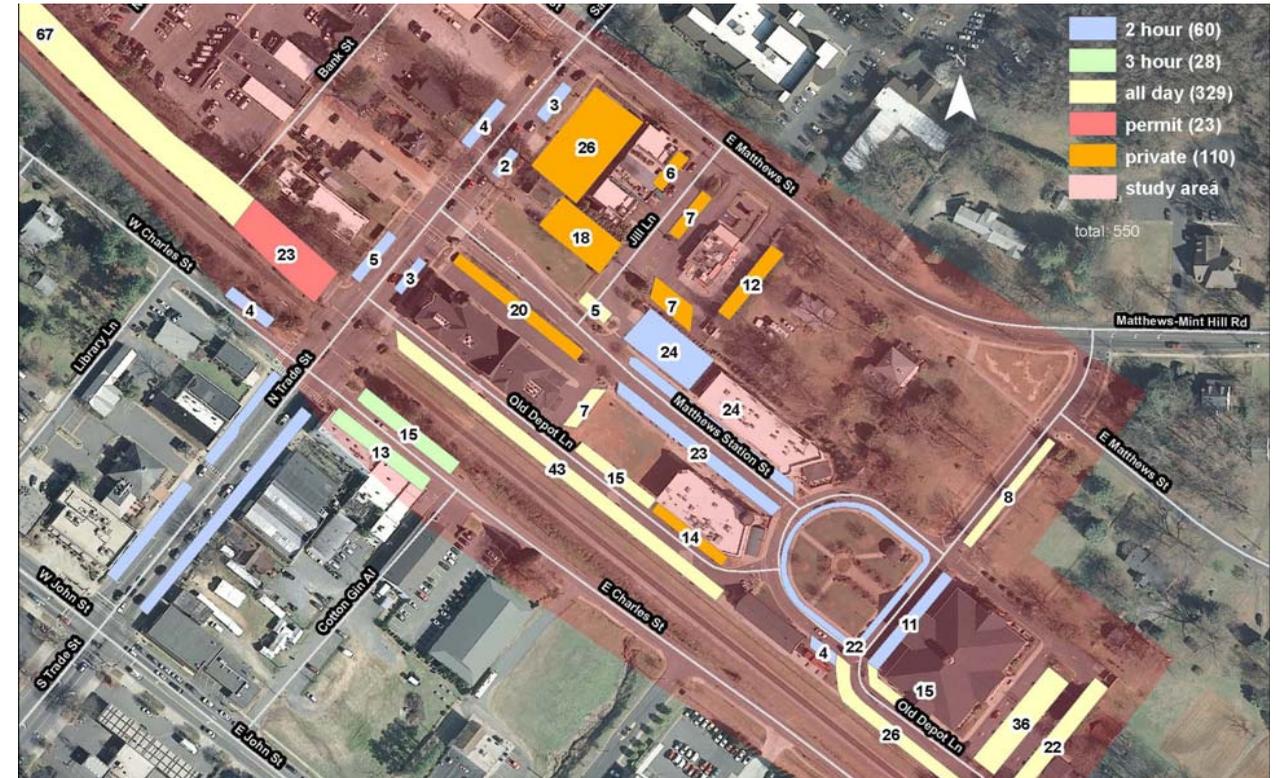
The State of Downtown: Traffic and Parking

Traffic volumes and parking availability continue to be a common complaint from both residents and visitors. Even with the completion of the 51 bypass in the 1990's, downtown continues to feature two highly traveled North/South and East/West routes. John Street is a major East/West thoroughfare and bisects the downtown with over 20,000 cars daily. Trade Street is a heavily traveled North/South route and is also the Town's main street. While traffic is good for visibility for downtown merchants, it is also a detriment where visitors and residents may choose to avoid downtown altogether due to congestion. Future planned roadways outside of the downtown area may remove some cut through traffic and increase the percentage of downtown traffic that is destination rather than pass-through.

Parking, as with most downtown, continues to be an issue as well. The Town has added new on-street spaces where possible and also created the "railroad parking lot" between Trade Street and Ames Street. In recent years, the Town has completed parking studies and parking management plans that created permit parking as well as a tiered hourly parking structure to better manage parking. Today there are over 500 public parking spaces allocated to permit, hourly, or all day parking.



Routine traffic congestion on North Trade St makes parking difficult and creates an unfriendly pedestrian environment



Most public parking in Downtown Matthews is located North of the railroad tracks

The State of Downtown: Shopping, Dining and Destinations

Matthews is fortunate to have a strong downtown with numerous shopping and dining options. To its detriment, more could be done to establish the right retail mix at street level to encourage more tourism and window shopping. In particular, the Matthews Station area has never fully developed and still features prominent building pads available for development. A disconnect exists between shops and restaurants near Town Hall and on Trade Street. The 100 block of North Trade Street, anchored by Renfrow Hardware, continues to be the historical center of commerce in the Town while Matthews Station Street and Matthews Gateway have added new retail and shopping destinations to round out the 3 distinct commercial sub districts. In recent years, downtown has evolved into a popular dining and entertain district with numerous food and beverage related establishments.

The Town has zoning regulations in place that require retail uses for 50% of the first floor of buildings in the HUC district. In addition, infill development could strengthen ties between existing buildings and districts to create a more cohesive downtown environment. Stumptown Park, the Community Center, the Farmers Market and the Library continue to be the most frequented cultural and institutional destinations within downtown.

The Commercial District: By the Numbers

Commercial Space: About 200,000 sq ft

Office Space: About 200,000 sq ft

Food and Beverage Establishments: 20

Retail Goods and Services: 24

Civic and Cultural Institutions: 7

Parks: 3

**Inventory as of December 2012*



The Matthews Farmers Market is a hub of activity on Saturday mornings but remains a vastly underutilized space during the week. Expanded weekday hours have recently been added.

History



Matthews in 1923

The roots of the Matthews community began with the establishment of a general store and post office in 1825 near what is now the intersection of Country Place Drive and South Trade Street at the edge of the Downtown area. Although Matthews was a stop along a stagecoach route between Charlotte and Monroe, it was the extension of rail service in 1879 that kicked off the growth of the area we now know as Downtown Matthews.

Prior to World War II, the Town's population was still less than 1,000 inhabitants and development was generally sparse. Due to this small population, the Downtown area was small and consisted of about two blocks of one and two-story commercial buildings and a number of residential homes. The earliest commercial structures were built in the 1880's to serve the small but growing farming community.

As of the Town boundary map from 1923, the entire Town of Matthews still only consisted of what we today consider to be only Downtown. The boundaries were approximately 3/4 of a mile North to South and East to West. Along John Street, the Town limits ended near the old Matthews Cemetery near present day Matthews Township Parkway to the West and along Charles St behind current Town Hall to the East. From North to South, the Town boundaries extended from approximately the intersections of Matthews Township Parkway and Sam Newell Rd and South Trade Street and Main Street. Compared to County Seats such as Monroe, Shelby, Charlotte, or Statesville, Matthews had no Court-house or central gathering spot. We were, in essence, a whistle stop!

History

Although a geographically small area, by the turn of the 20th century Matthews was a bustling place with a lively Downtown. There were several churches, two hardware stores, a bank and numerous other general merchants. The layout of Matthews is similar to many small towns of the era. Of note, the business district not surprisingly only occupied the 100 block of North Trade St. Alleys were incorporated to provide service entry to the rear areas of buildings. In fact, one could argue that the symmetrical location of 4 alleys, two on either side of the 100 and 200 blocks of North Trade Street, is one of the most purposely planned aspects of the Town layout. Through the early 1960's Downtown Matthews continued to evolve but the footprint of the original commercial district changed little. A decade later, a shopping plaza with a Harris Teeter grocery store occupied the roughly 6-acre area where Matthews Station is located today.

As car ownership soared in the 50's and 60's, so did the demand for auto related services. Two gas stations have long occupied the corner of Trade and John and still do today. Drive thru bank branches and a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant rounded out the various auto-related uses that cropped up during a period from the late 1950s to the 1980's. These uses, although useful in their own regard, represented a monumental shift from the traditional, pedestrian friendly buildings original to the Town.

Several older, charming traditional buildings were razed for modern construction. However, "progress" was not the only form of change. Fire shaped the architectural character of the Town numerous times resulting in the total removal of some buildings or the removal of the second floor of others. An iconic two store structure, the Matthews Drug Store, was a key center of social activity in the Town until it burned to the ground in 1972. At 2 and a half stories tall, the imposing brick structure gracefully anchored the corner of John and Trade Streets for decades. Like many buildings of the era, the second floor housed apartments while the first floor was dedicated to retail activity. In recent years, upper floor residential has returned to Matthews at Park Square across from the Post Office and most recently at Matthews Gateway in the North End. Although Matthews does not retain a large number of historic properties, there has been a very active historic preservation movement over the past 25 years. Numerous buildings have been saved and renovated by locals. In fact, there are very few historic properties in downtown today

To learn more about the colorful history of Matthews, copies of the book *DISCOVER MATTHEWS, From Cotton to Corporate* by Paula Lester are available for purchase at Matthews Town Hall



Funderburk Building on North Trade Street, late 1940's, before conversion to 1-story after fire



The same site today

Guiding Values, Goals and Key Recommendations

Values

The following four principles of the Downtown Matthews Master Plan create the framework which collectively reinforces the vision for downtown. These concepts define the quality and character of the built environment and the overall desirability of both Downtown and Matthews as a whole.

Sustainability

All new construction projects should be based on a sustainable concept that promotes social, economic and environmental well being. Buildings should be constructed with consideration to what represents the highest and best use for the site. A well crafted building should be designed to last for more than a generation and not be destined for a landfill when its design life has passed.

Quality

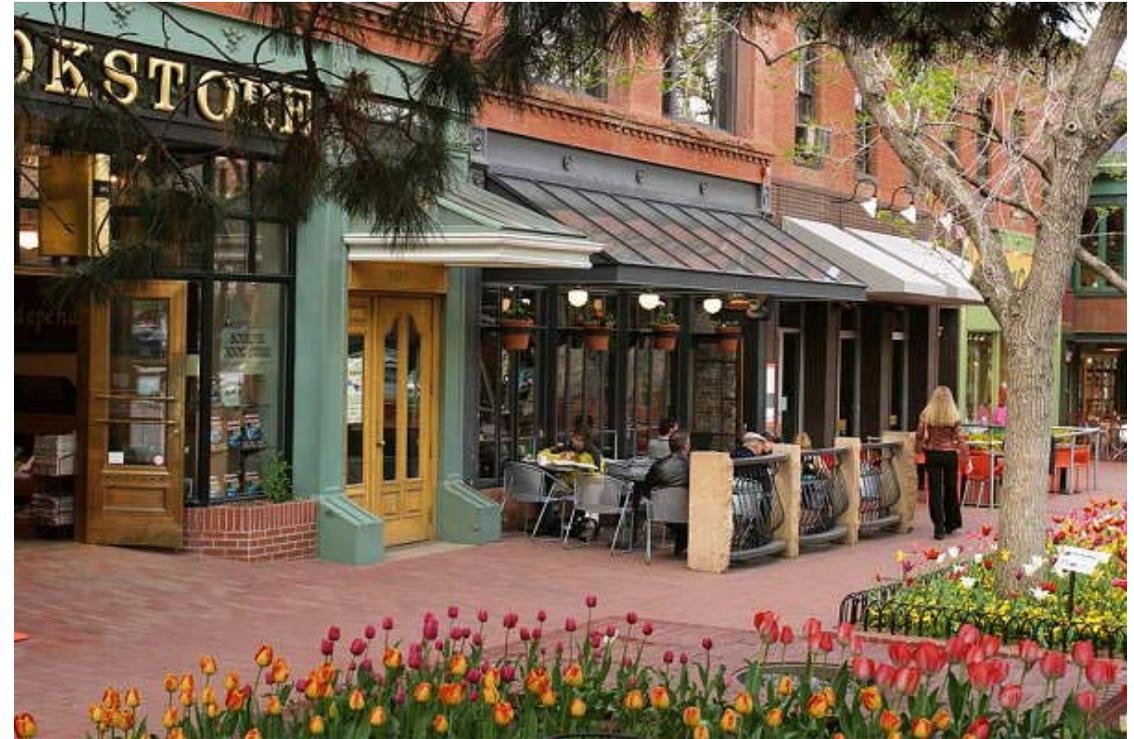
Improvements to Downtown, whether public or private, roads or buildings, should be designed at a high level of quality. The public realm in Downtown defines much of Matthews' civic identity and pride. The style and quality of buildings play a great role in creating a sense of place that visitors and residents care about and are proud of.

Diversity of Use

A mixed-use environment creates a healthy downtown for a multitude of reasons. Congestion reduction, reduced parking needs and a more vibrant street life are key. Land use in Downtown should feature mixed-use as the primary development style while peripheral areas such as single family neighborhoods and office uses may be located on the edges of the Downtown area

Well Connected and Compatible

New streets should be planned with logical connections to existing and future streets. Places such as parks and plazas should be designed to play a role in the larger pedestrian and open space system. New buildings should blend seamlessly with neighboring structures and feature on-site pedestrian open space, alleys or breezeways to ensure movement throughout the site and to other nearby buildings.



An attractive brick streetscape with plantings and outdoor dining in Boulder, CO

Guiding Values, Goals and Key Recommendations

Goals of the Downtown Master Plan

Land Use

- 1 Mixed-use buildings should become the standard practice for new construction. The addition of significant numbers of new housing units is key to creating a more vibrant, pedestrian friendly downtown. First floor retail uses should continue to be required in the HUC district and generally confined to the Downtown core area so as to not dilute the main shopping district.

Urban Design and Development Character

- 2 Streamlined Design Guidelines and Development codes ensure flexibility. Downtown Matthews should continue to evolve as a walkable, pedestrian friendly urban core with lively streets and unique businesses. New construction should complement and enhance the existing built environment and contribute to vibrant street life. Street furniture, lighting, sidewalks and other public provisions should be of uniform design and quality. These qualities, in addition to buried utilities, traffic light masts and other public improvements collectively reinforce Downtown as the civic heart of Matthews.

Transportation and Parking

- 3 A well connected system of streets and alleys that facilitate good traffic flow and provide for multiple travel routes throughout downtown. Strategically located public and private parking facilities should be plentiful, accessible and blended seamlessly into the Downtown fabric.

Pedestrian and Public Interactive Space

- 4 Wide, tree lined sidewalks should be complemented by greenways, trails, plazas and parks that are woven into the Downtown landscape. Common pattern linkages such as brick accents should visually link sidewalk and park spaces.

Economic Development and Quality of Life

- 5 A dynamic Downtown attracts people, investment and opportunity. The Downtown area should be a source of pride for the entire community. It's continued progress as the civic, social and entertainment hub of the community should increase Matthews' appeal as place for corporations or citizens to call home.



Greenville, SC

Guiding Values, Goals and Key Recommendations

Key Recommendations

1. Reimagine the intersection of Matthews Street and North Trade Street as a new focal point in Downtown and in the Town
2. Incorporate shared use parking structures into the downtown fabric. Additional public parking options in key locations encourage economic development by allowing for increased density on nearby development parcels and allow for better access for visitors and employees
3. Establish an active Downtown Organization to oversee the continued enhancement of Downtown Matthews
4. Develop the Market Alley concept between Trade St and the Post Office
5. Expand Stumptown Park as Matthews' signature civic space and festival park
6. Continue to expand the Downtown street grid
7. Promote Infill development in the 100 and 200 blocks of North Trade St. to provide a more continuous streetscape
8. Create better connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and development areas such as the Sportsplex and Wingate Commons
9. Encourage the continued development of additional housing units to enliven the Downtown area
10. Maintain Farmers Market in Downtown



The Illustrative Plan: Highlights

The illustrative plan for Downtown Matthews represents only a vision of what could become of vacant or underutilized property and where possible new infrastructure and open space could be located. It does not dictate exactly what should be developed on each individual site but provides guidance for how sites could develop or redevelop.



1 New mixed use at 51/West John

2 Redevelopment of shopping center along West John with office and and housing

3 New senior living Apartments and townhomes

4 Townhomes along new College St and fronting Stumptown Park

5 Stumptown Park expansion

6 Three Story mixed-use at John/Trade and two stories along East John

7 Market Alley redevelopment of vacant/underutilized land

8 New "North End Park"

9 Mixed-use "bookend" development at N. Trade and Matthews St + intersection improvements

10 Andrew Carolina/ Matthews Station Connector

11 Matthews Station Parking Structure and housing

12 2-story condo flats along Matthews Station Extension adjacent to historic Plaxco home.

13 3-story condo flats and townhomes along Matthews St

14 Buckley Way

Transportation and Circulation

As the downtown area, the Town and surrounding communities continue to grow, traffic will continue to be a pressing issue and cause for concern. Overall, Matthews is fortunate that so many well travelled streets converge in the Downtown area. Many smaller downtowns, especially those with highway bypasses, struggle due to poor visibility to the general public. The high traffic counts in Downtown Matthews contribute to high visibility to retailers. However, congestion can also be a detriment to the appeal and viability to an area as well. If access is poor, visitors will shun the area for other destinations.

Existing Conditions

The Downtown street network is comprised of a mixture of State maintained thoroughfares and Town streets. Of note, John Street is designated as a major thoroughfare on the MUMPO plan and more or less bisects Downtown. Over the years, the Town has added North Trade Street, Sam Newell Road and Matthews Mint Hill Rd to the Town street system. The most obvious barrier to circulation and connectivity is the rail line through the center of Downtown. Many Downtown streets end abruptly near the tracks and new crossings are prohibited by CSX. The only new crossings that are generally allowed are where an existing crossing is closed in exchange for a new crossing elsewhere. Overall, Downtown Matthews benefits greatly from having a somewhat connected street grid despite many glaring needs. Although the Matthews Township Parkway Bypass was intended to reduce traffic through the center of the Town, many people still use North Trade Street as a major North-South route. Over the next decade, it is widely anticipated that John Street will transition into a four or five lane cross section from the intersection with Trade Street to I-485 and continuing into Union County. The roadwork will impact existing businesses in downtown as well as residences along East John Street.

Specific Downtown Solutions

Many of the solutions to traffic woes in the Downtown area will occur through road projects outside of the Downtown Plan study area. However, incremental improvements to existing roadways and the extension or creation of new streets to the downtown street grid will serve to smooth traffic flow in and out of downtown. A fine balance must be achieved to move traffic through the area as efficiently as possible while still maintaining a safe pedestrian environment. All roadway projects and enhancements should be thoroughly evaluated not only from a traffic engineering standpoint but from a quality of life perspective as well.

Suggested Roadway Improvements

Andrew Caroline extension to Matthews Mint Hill Rd

This roadway would extend a very short stub street along North Trade St and create greater connectivity in the northeastern quadrant of Downtown. Improvements will be coordinated among the Town, Presbyterian Hospital and adjacent land owners.

New Street Between Charles Street and Sadie Drive

This new cross street would begin as a part of the Market Alley concept and cross John Street. From John Street. to Sadie Drive the street would follow an alignment that uses what is now for all purposes used as a street but set up as a driveway though BB&T and First Baptist Church property.

Buckley Way/Andrew Caroline Blvd

Beginning from the South, this street would follow an alignment using existing Town property adjacent to the warehouse at xxx East John St. After crossing the railroad tracks, the street would curve behind Town Hall, cross Matthews Street, and connect the extended Andrew Caroline Blvd

Old Depot Ln Extension to Crestdale Rd

This proposal would extend a new east/west street from Crestdale Rd to the new Andrew Caroline/Buckley Way extension. The road facilitates better connectivity between the historic Crestdale community and downtown and also creates a much needed connection once the troubled railroad crossing at Crestdale Rd is closed.

Independence Pointe Parkway/Greylock Ridge Road

Outside of Downtown, this particular roadway would create a much needed relief valve to traffic problems by providing another north/south connection.

Sample Daily Traffic Counts in Downtown

N. Trade Street	18,000
S. Trade Street	17,000
John Street	26,000

Transit

Transit

The downtown district is well served by Charlotte Area Transit System buses with multiple stops in and around downtown. Citizens and visitors alike can reach Downtown Charlotte and numerous other destinations in Mecklenburg County via 7 day a week service. The convenience of local bus services not only increases mobility for those without automobile access, but also gives people options to driving. In general, downtown dwellers are far more likely to walk, bike or use public transit than those in more conventional suburban or rural settings. Any increase in development density, whether it be commercial or residential, should occur with the continuation and expansion of transit service to Downtown Matthews.

Facilities

Currently, transit facilities in downtown consist of bus shelters of North Trade and West John streets as well as a park and ride lot at Matthews Presbyterian on West John. Bus stops are also located on North Trade in the North End district and along Matthews Mint Hill near Presbyterian Hospital. A dedicated CATS owned Park and Ride facility is located about 1.2 miles from downtown along Independence Pointe Parkway.

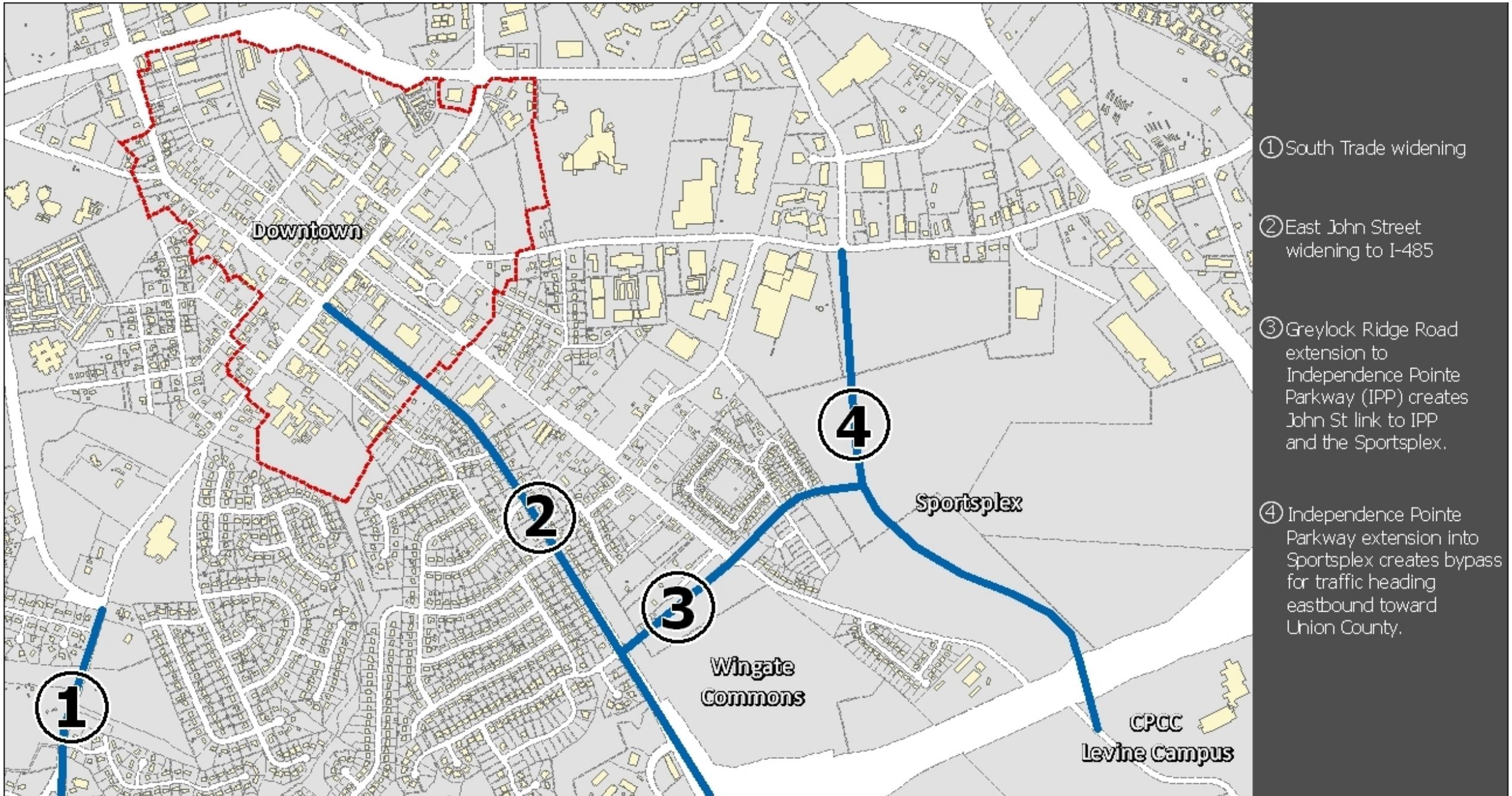
Future Transit Plans

Plans for the southeast Silver Line as a part of the CATS 2025 plan would create a regional rail or bus rapid transit line from Downtown Charlotte to the CPCC Levine Campus across I-485. However, those plans continue to be on hold due to budgetary constraints as CATS moves to complete other transit lines ahead of the Silver Line. Were the line to be built, service would be located near Downtown Matthews with a station at Independence Pointe Parkway, just over a half mile away. Other proposals in recent years have focused on streetcars along Monroe Road from Charlotte to Matthews but have thus far gained little traction. Going forward, Matthews should strongly advocate for regional rail or bus rapid transit service to and from Charlotte. With continued bedroom community growth in western Union County, rapid transit service could serve to reduce commuter traffic and congestion through Matthews.

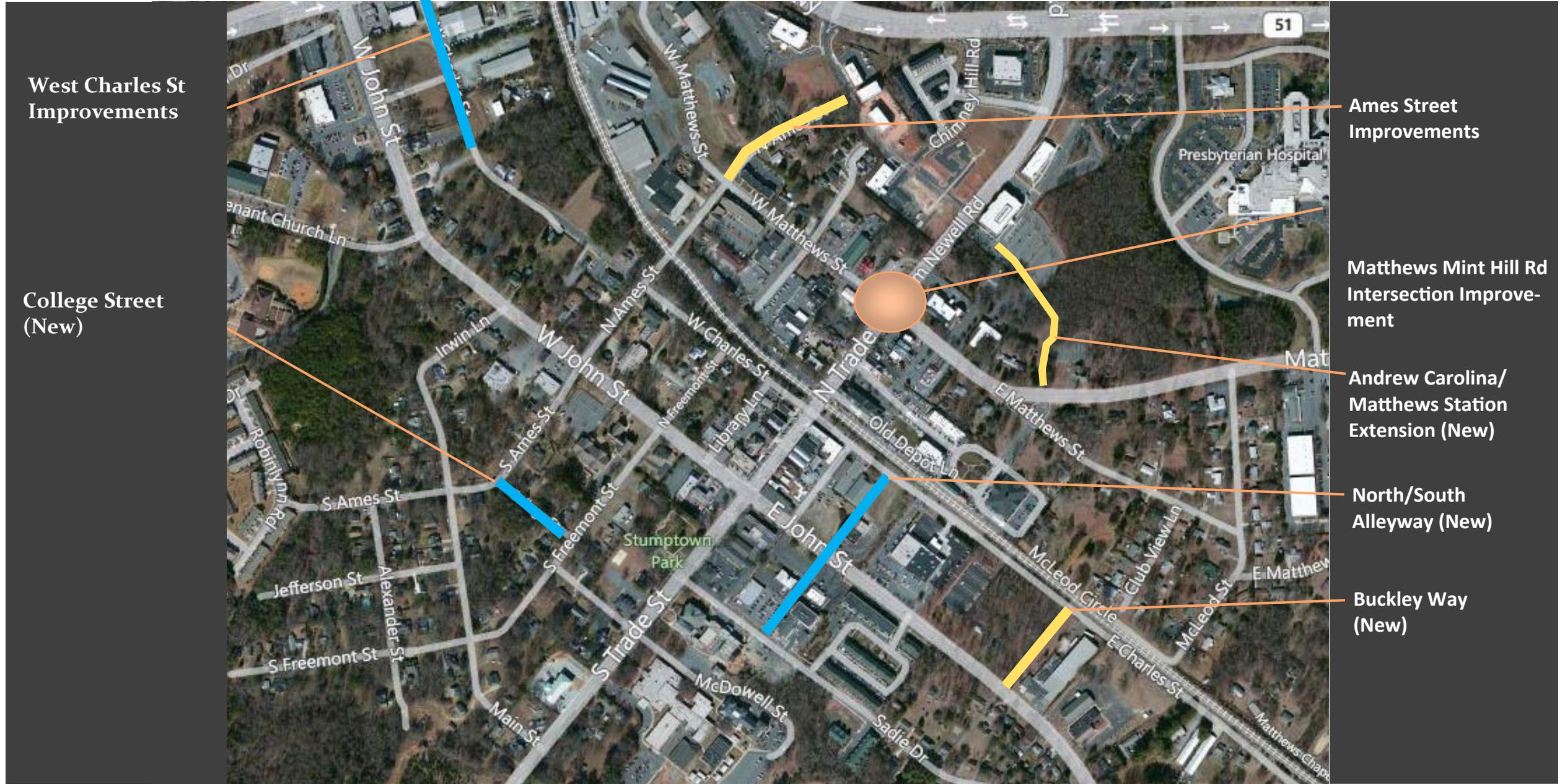


Silver Line Alignment Map Courtesy of Charlotte Area Transit System

Transportation Improvements Map: Downtown and Surrounding Areas



Transportation Improvements Map: Downtown Specific





Key Sidewalk Projects

- ◆ New, north side of Matthews Mint Hill from Matthews St to Presbyterian Hospital
- ◆ New, North side of railroad tracks to Crestdale
- ◆ New, west side of Trade St connecting North End to Downtown Core
- ◆ Improvements to block face of West John from Trade St to Library Ln
- ◆ Widening and improvements from Trade St to Cotton Gin Alley

**Dotted red line represent proposed sidewalks, improved sidewalks or multiuse pathways*

Future Roads and Connections

Key Intersection Improvements

North Trade Street/Matthews Street

Although the crossing point of Trade and John Streets is generally thought of as the main intersection in Matthews, from a Downtown Standpoint, the intersection is severely impacted by traffic volumes on John St. Approximately 40,000 vehicles per day travel through the intersection, making it as busy as some portions of I-485! North Trade Street and Matthews St, however, provide an excellent opportunity for a multitude of improvements. At the street level, upgraded crosswalks and crossing indicators, plazas at each corner and new buildings could create another signature intersection for the Town. Additional aesthetic improvements could include traffic light masts and buried utilities to reduce visual clutter.



North Trade Street and Matthews Street today



Rendering showing overhead power line removal and signature development on Northwest corner (Building rendering courtesy of Brookchase Properties, all rights reserved)

Future Roads and Connections

College Street

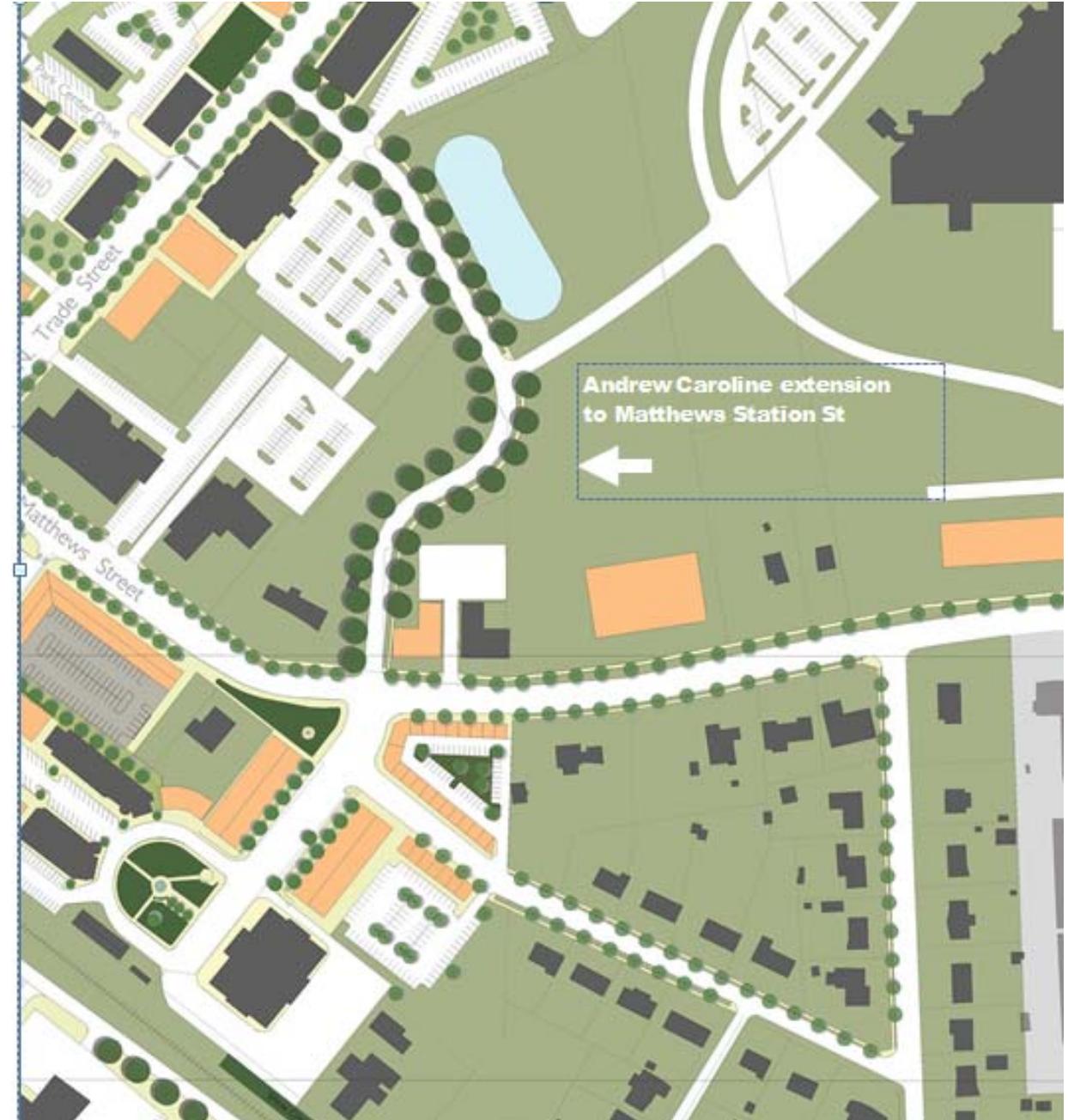
Although College Street appears on Town maps, it is currently unopened right-of-way. Construction of this short, 400' segment of street would create better access to an expanded Stumptown Park. Townhomes could also be developed around the new street to create a barrier between the park and single family homes in the area.



Future Roads and Connections

Andrew Caroline/Matthews Station St Extension

The extension of Matthews Station St to Andrew Caroline creates a valuable addition to the Town street network and will serve as an additional link provide relief from Downtown traffic congestion. The new street segment may also provide a better connection between Downtown and Presbyterian Hospital.



Parking

As Downtown has grown in popularity in recent years, parking location and availability continues to be a major concern. In recent years, the Town has taken steps to better manage existing parking by creating permit areas, adding hourly parking regulations and creating a valet parking ordinance. The Town has consistently added new on-street spaces when new roads are built or added spaces where additional right-of-way was available. Recent studies the Town has conducted mirror trends at a national level with regard to parking in urban areas. Much of the time, supply isn't so much a problem as the actual location of the parking. However, for the Town to achieve a lively, mixed-use Downtown, the need for parking must be balanced with appropriate levels of density. New developments that provide acres of on-site parking on par with their suburban counterparts fall short of creating a vibrant Downtown environment. To successfully increase the density of downtown, shared-use parking structures should be embedded into the Downtown fabric. These facilities should typically be associated with dedicated users to avoid a "white elephant" situation where the facility is underused. Many successful parking structure developments arise from public private partnerships. For instance, a deck could be built with space dedicated to an office or residential project with a certain percentage of space dedicated for public use as well. A comprehensive market study should determine what demand future buildings will create on existing parking infrastructure. The addition of structured parking allows the Town to grow its tax base to encourage more building construction and less surface parking.

Design is Key

On a number of levels, design is integral to the success of parking in downtown, whether public or private, surface or structured. What should typically be avoided are large, monolithic parking garages that detract from the character of Downtown and create no added value other than additional vehicle storage. Instead, garages should blend well with existing buildings and enhance the overall architectural integrity of the area. Decks may be designed to be visible at the street while using quality building materials such as this example in Staunton, Virginia. Or, they may be completely hidden behind a filler building that fronts the street and sidewalk.



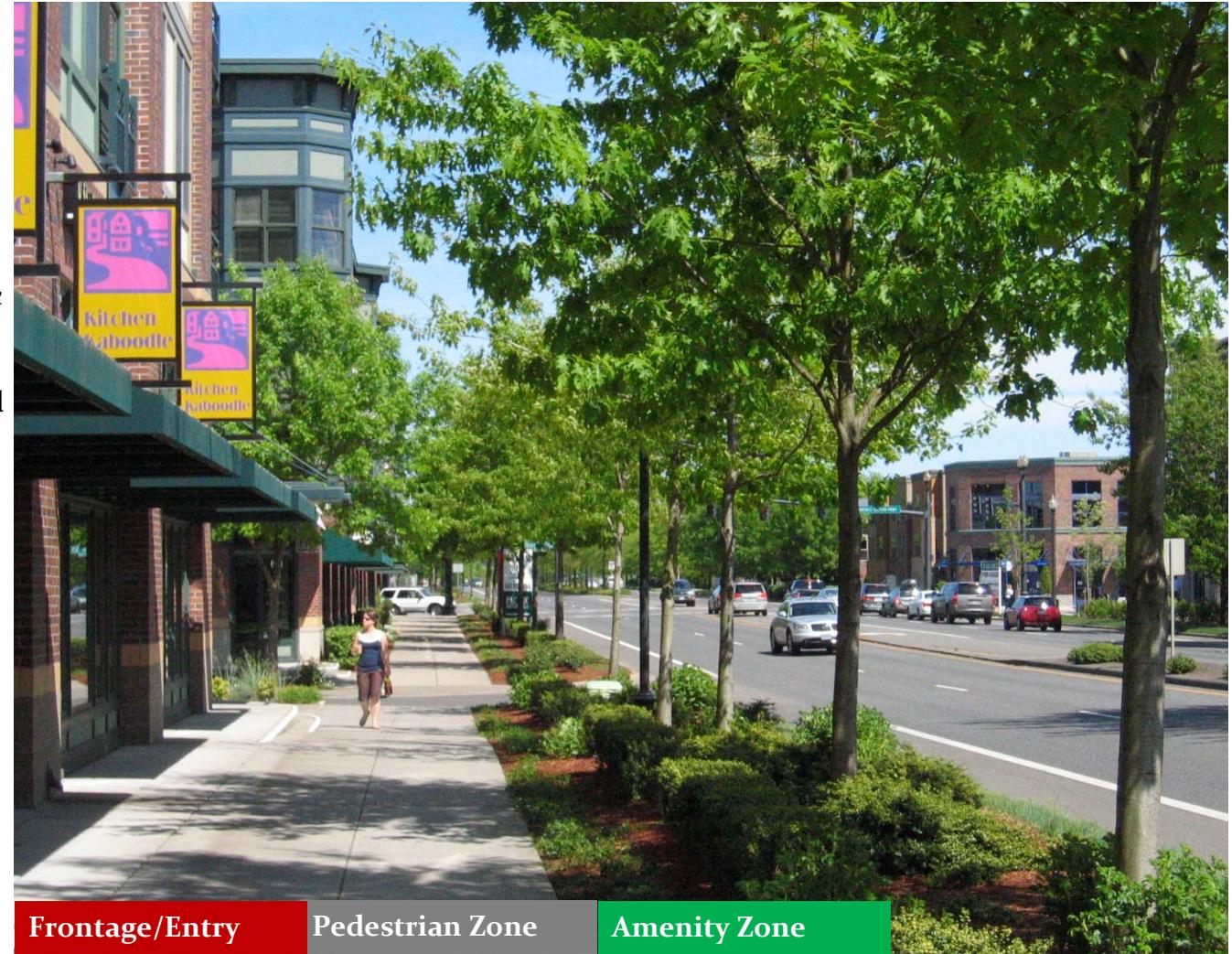
Brick and Precast Stone parking garage with street level retail
Staunton, VA
(Photo Credit EPA Smart Growth)

Streetscape, Urban Design and Building Design

Much of the charm of Matthews lies in something that has occurred naturally over time. The lack of uniform sidewalks, differing street types, building setbacks and tree types lends a very natural and organic feel to the pedestrian experience. However, new development should follow a more orderly approach that creates a more uniform pedestrian experience that is both aesthetically pleasing as well as safe and functional. Setbacks should generally place buildings at or near the property frontage however exceptions should be made based on the district or location within downtown. On North Trade Street, buildings should line up with the existing historic building stock. However, a pedestrian plaza or pocket park may also occupy the street frontage with the building tucked further back from the sidewalk. New construction outside of the North Trade Street core should respect existing buildings and setbacks. Infill on John Street should be sensitive to the gracious setbacks of the many late 19th and early 20th century homes that remain today.

Streetscape Design

Streetscape amenities should be uniform in nature and conform to the standards within this document. Benches, wayfinding signage, street lights, waste receptacles and even brick pavers should be of a uniform design to visually connect different areas of Downtown. Sidewalks should be as wide and unobstructed as possible in high use zones where greater pedestrian traffic is expected or encouraged. Wider sidewalks provide enough space in an urban environment to allow 3 distinct zones to occur. The frontage or entry zone is the area adjacent to the storefront.



The wide sidewalk and wide planting strip at Orenco Station In Hillsboro, Oregon is appropriate for buildings fronting on busy thoroughfares.

Streetscape, Urban Design and Building Design

Building Design

A delicate balance should be created where new buildings complement historic ones while establishing their own identity. It is not the intention that all new buildings should completely replicate the past. They should, however, follow basic principles of geometry and form. An exception, however, would be the 100 block of North Trade Street and West John Street. Any new construction along either of these streets should replicate as closely as possible the architectural designs and themes of buildings in Matthews and the rural Piedmont in the late 19th and early 20th century. Building heights should generally be 1 or 2 stories except at street corners so as to not overwhelm buildings such as Renfrow Hardware and the Mercantile Building (Weaver Bennett and Bland). Along West John Street where office infill is the likely use, office cottage style structures that blend seamlessly with existing, older house stock are the preferred building typology.

The Matthews Downtown Design Guidelines will provide further detail and recommendations for the architectural character of infill construction in the Downtown area.



Infill in the 100 block should respect the design and scale of buildings original to Downtown Matthews



Mixed-use infill 1st floor retail and 2nd floor boutique lodging

Examples of Existing Infill In Downtown Matthews



Examples of Urban Infill in Other Small Towns and Cities



Kalamazoo, MI



*Stowe's Corner
Davidson NC*



*City Center Building
Carmel, IN*



*Wachovia Place,
Greenville SC*



*Infill, former gas station site.
Boulder, CO*

Streetscape and Urban Design

Recommendations

1. Use common design elements to visually connect and identify the Downtown area. Common themes include but are not limited to:
 - Brick accent pavers
 - Pedestrian lighting
 - Street furniture such as garbage cans and benches
 - Street trees with tree grates
 - Unique planters with a common design theme to complement the popular hanging baskets
2. Encourage alleyways and breezeways to foster better pedestrian circulation around buildings
3. Implement additional phases of the North Trade Street improvements to improve sidewalks and streetscape
4. Bury overhead utilities in downtown and along gateway corridors
5. Install traffic light masts in lieu of wires at main intersections in downtown and gateway corridors.

*** See streetscape details within this document for public furnishings standards**



*An urban sidewalk with clearly delineated furnishing, walking and building entry zones
Bethesda Row, MD*

Parks and Open Space System

This plan identifies existing and planned green infrastructure within and adjacent to the downtown area and makes recommendations for possible new open spaces and changes to existing facilities. To begin with, it is important to recognize the importance of parks and open space and how they benefit the environment and the citizenry of Matthews. The urban core of any city is typically its most densely developed area with a high percentage of built upon area. Parks, whether they're active or passive, provide needed relief from noise, traffic and other aspects of the urban environment. However, creating parks for the sake of creating parks is a mistake we as a Town cannot afford. There should be a clear and consistent vision for what a park's purpose is and how it will be used. According to the Project For Public Spaces, "successful public spaces are lively places where the many functions of community life take place."

A Different Style Of Living

Although single family subdivisions surround Downtown, the average downtown resident does not have private, outdoor open space typical of a single family home. Townhomes, apartment buildings and mixed-use structures with housing typically offer no more than a courtyard or a balcony. Park space should be provided throughout the Downtown area to provide outdoor recreation opportunities. Sites for new parks should consider the audience. Is it a passive space for the weary shopper or simply a place for friends to meet up? Or is it a green space where an apartment or condo dweller simply wants to enjoy an afternoon reading a book or tossing a Frisbee. Fortunately, Downtown is well positioned to offer a little of everything. Stumptown Park offers a manicured open space with a playground on a daily basis and transforms into an exciting event park on many weekends and during festivals such as Beachfest and Matthews Alive. Downtown is also well positioned near access to the Four Mile Creek Greenway which in turn leads to 34-acre Squirrel Lake Park. In the near future, a new Sportsplex and the Carolina Thread Trail will provide additional recreation options.

Pocket Parks

In 2010, the Town completed KP Park as the first official pocket park in Matthews. It is recommended that additional pocket parks be located throughout Downtown. These additional small green spaces are intended to provide small respites for pedestrians as they navigate the area.

Key Park Initiative

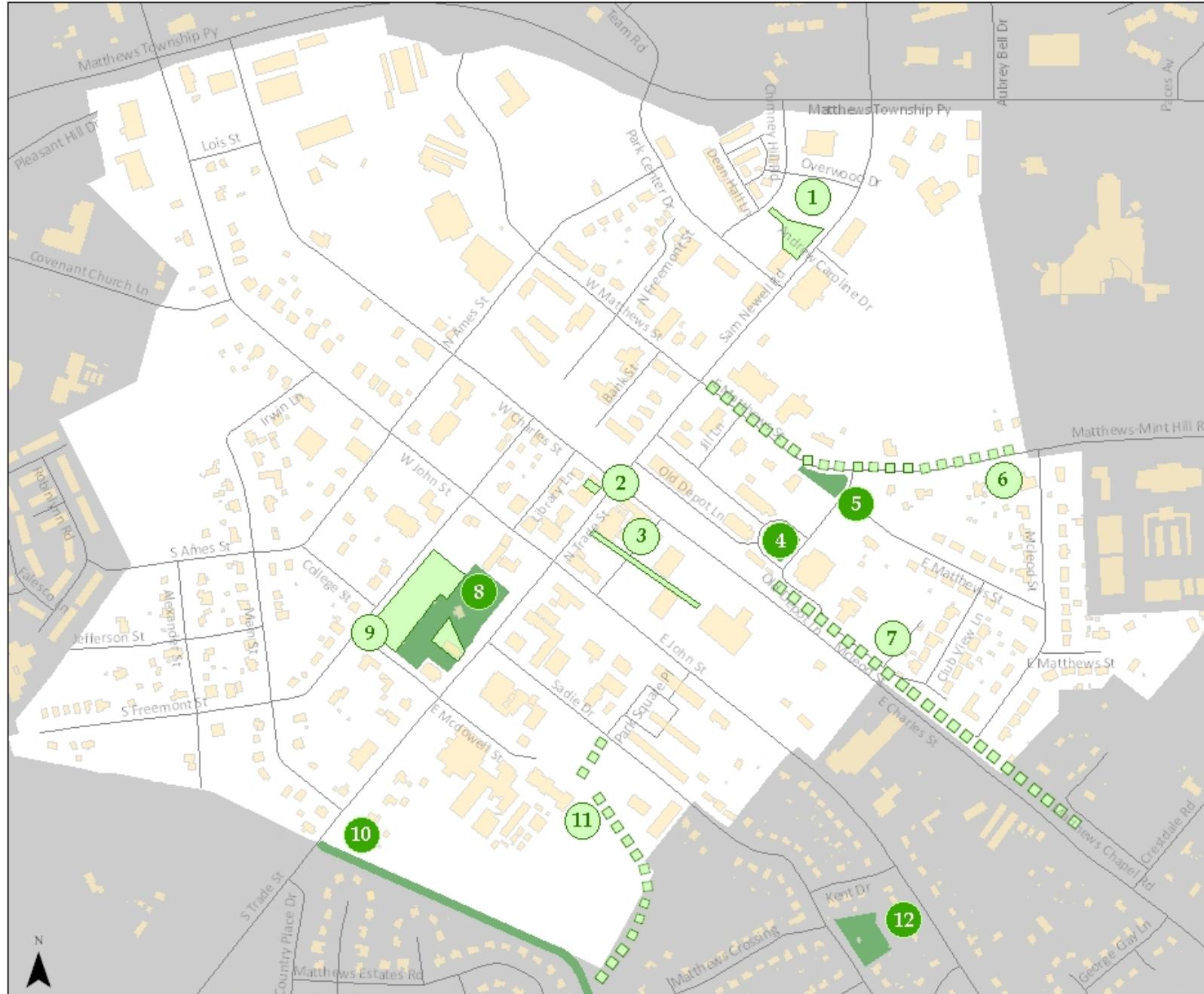
Stumptown Park

Stumptown Park serves as Matthews' premier civic space and hosts numerous events throughout the year. The park is also the epicenter of the Matthews Alive Festival every Labor Day weekend. Currently, the park consists of approximately 3.5 acres and features odd property boundaries due to several land acquisitions over the years. While the Town has been proactive in purchasing land, no clear vision for the future layout of the Park has emerged. To create a good canvas for the creation of a full scale master plan of the park, three additional lots should be acquired. The lot at the corner of Freemont and McDowell and the Masonic Lodge in the middle of the park are barriers to creating a larger, more functional park space. The home on Freemont Street adjacent to a Town-owned home would square off the property boundaries and create more flexibility in the future design of the space.



Stumptown Park and Town owned land shown in green

Proposed Downtown Parks, Open Space and Trail System



Existing and Proposed Park Facilities

- 1 North End Park
- 2 Park @ Trade and Charles
- 3 Merchants Alley
- 4 The Green
- 5 KP Park
- 6 Thread Trail Connector
- 7 Crestdale Heritage Trail
- 8 Stumptown Park
- 9 Stumptown Park Expansion
- 10 Four Mile Creek Greenway
- 11 Greenway Connector
- 12 Baucom Park

Parks and Open Space Recommendations

1. Convert circular planting bed on Town green into signature fountain.
2. Acquire parcels to complete Stumptown park and create a master plan for future development.
3. Work with Presbyterian Hospital to ensure that space is reserved for the Carolina Thread Trail
4. Fund additional pocket parks at strategic interspersed areas throughout and near Downtown
5. Develop North End Park along North Trade Street

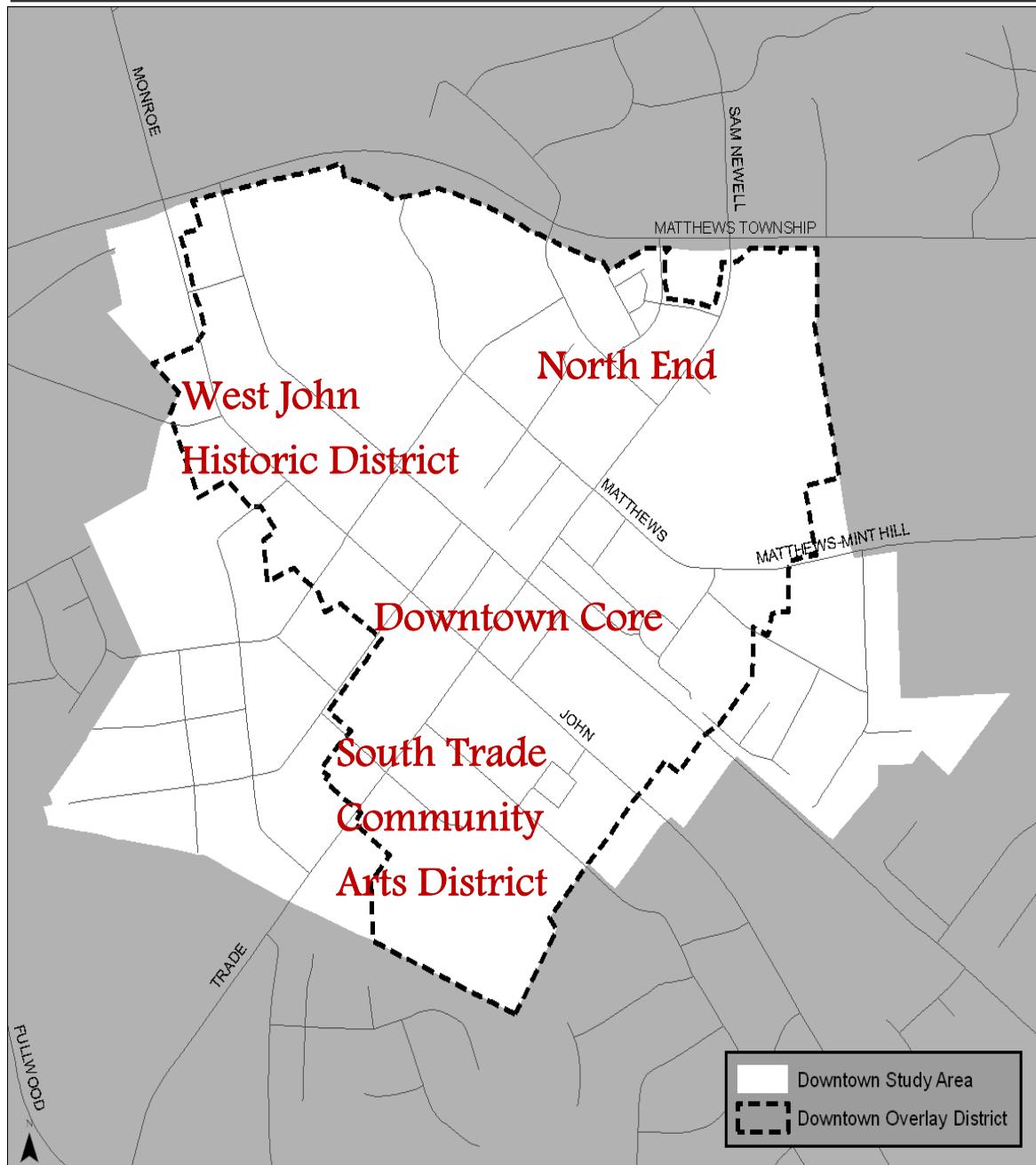


Conceptual plan for pocket park near Four Mile Creek Greenway and Country Place near Downtown



Open space at The Greene Mixed Use Center in Beavercreek, OH

Downtown Districts



The Downtown Overlay District is a special district created with the intent of establishing specific development guidelines to ensure the compatibility of existing and new development. For the purpose of the Downtown Plan as well as for future branding and marketing of subareas of Downtown, the area is broken up into four distinct districts.

- **Downtown Core**
- **North End**
- **West John Historic District**
- **South Trade Community Arts District**

Recommended Changes To The Downtown Overlay District and to Zoning Classifications For Certain Parcels

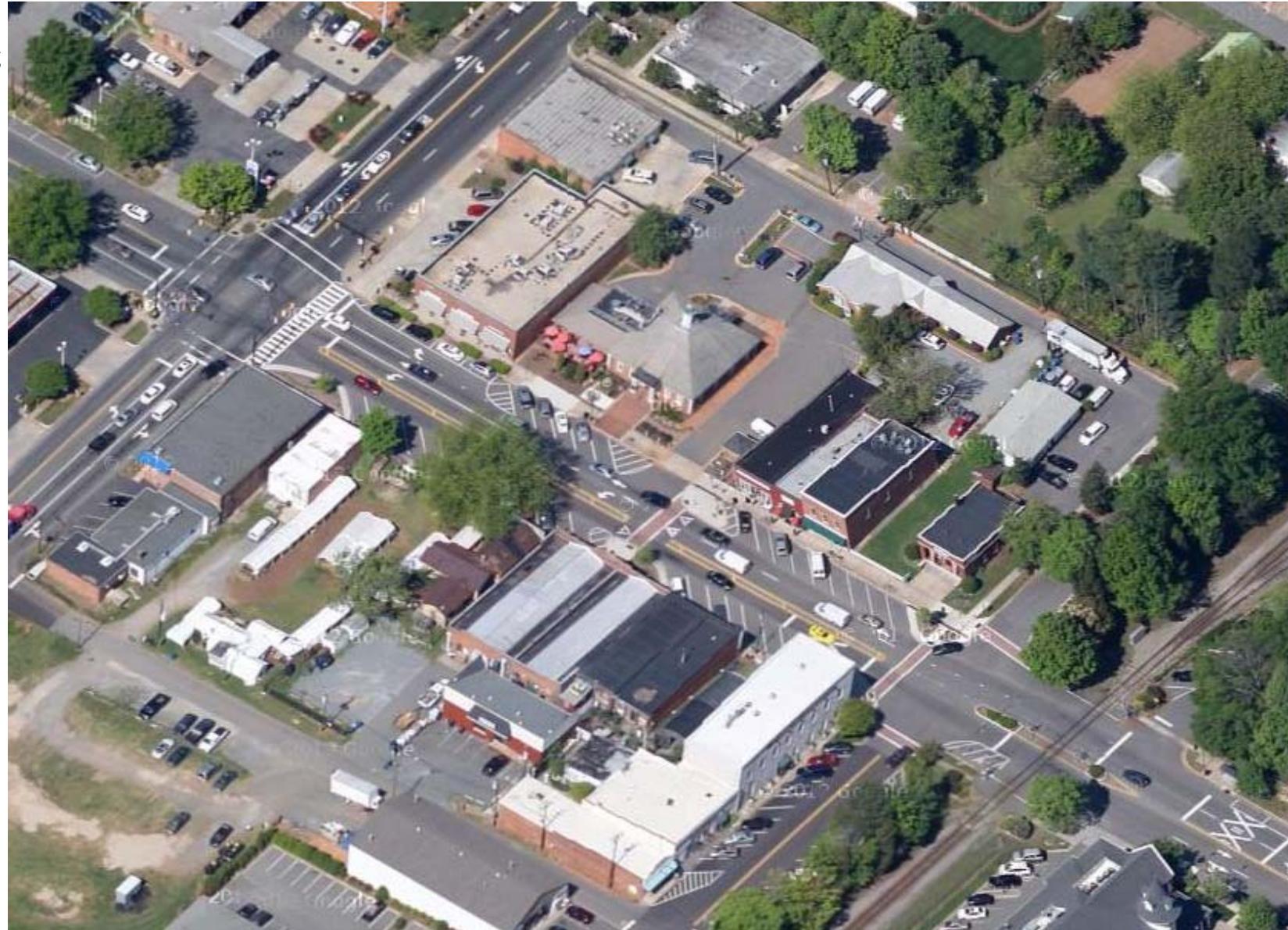
- Extend the Downtown Overlay to the southeastern boundary of the new Buckley Way connector road
- Rezone parcels backing up to Matthews Station Street and fronting East Matthews Street
- Create a new historic district along West John Street

Downtown Core: 100 Block of North Trade Street

The original retail core of Matthews consisted of primarily the 100 block of North Trade St. Although small, this was a bustling area with multiple pharmacies, hardware stores and various other services for a Town with less than 1000 inhabitants prior to World War II. With nearly 30 times that many residents today, the Downtown has expanded several blocks in each direction. Fortunately many of the original commercial buildings remain today even if they have been altered by fire or renovation. Renfrow Hardware remains an important “anchor tenant” in the Downtown shopping scene and is complemented by many other shops and services. However, as the downtown has expanded, so to has the focus away from this central block.

In the early 2000’s, Matthews Station Street became a key infill development with shops, restaurants and the Town Hall/ Library. The blocks that make up today’s downtown core are perhaps the most important in the Town because they display our heritage and history as a Town. As South Trade becomes a key destination with an increasing number of cultural destinations, and the North End continues to add residences and retail, special care must be taken to ensure the vitality of the original downtown core. To ensure the long term vitality of the 100 block of Trade Street will entail a multifaceted approach to downtown revitalization. Several key pieces of the puzzle may include but not be limited to:

- Infill Development
- Streetscape Improvements
- Parking Solutions
- Historic Preservation



Downtown Core: Key Projects and Initiatives

Market Alley

While Development has occurred on a consistent basis in most areas of Downtown, the 100 block and parcels directly behind it have remained virtually unchanged for decades. Acres of fallow land virtually back up to the main commercial district and create a vast dead zone in the heart of the Town. Market Alley is a development concept aimed at creating a pedestrian friendly alley as well as providing better vehicular access, more parking, residences and commercial space. A direct connection to the Post Office would also occur. A multi-story parking structure within the block provides parking for both existing and future uses and allows for more intense development on nearby parcels.

New Infrastructure

The proposed pedestrian alley would bisect a roughly 5-acre area bounded by North Trade, East Charles, East John and the post office property and feature brick sidewalks, seating, lighting and landscaping. A new vehicular alley to complement Cotton Gin Alley would be located at the end of the block closest to the Post Office.

Development Potential

Vacant and underutilized land in the area could yield as much as 250,000 square feet of parking, residential, office and commercial space to Downtown Matthews.



Downtown Core: Market Alley Character Images



Cades Alley - An example of a “Woonerf” which allows some motorized traffic while keeping priority use to pedestrians and cyclist.

Georgetown, DC

Alleyway with sidewalk cafes and trees

Ferndale, MI

Downtown Core - Matthews Station

Matthews Station Area Expansion

New development along Matthews Station Street was created via a public private partnership in 2000 with Lat Purser and Associates to develop the Town Hall/Library as well as new shops and offices along the newly created street. Today, the initial development should be expanded and complemented with a greater focus on residential living. A parking structure should be developed in conjunction with new development to limit the expansion of additional surface parking.

- Create multiple new housing options
- Develop a joint venture parking facility
- Preserve the historic Plaxco Home
- Develop condo flats and townhomes as a transition to single family homes on East Matthews St
- Develop new mixed-use buildings with street level retail along Matthews Station St to create a stronger critical mass of retail
- Reorient parking spaces at Depot building to create on-street parking on both sides of Matthews Station adjacent to Pure Taqueria



South Trade Cultural Arts District



The area just south of the intersection of John Street and Trade Street carries the potential to become a cultural arts destination both within the Matthews community and the region. Currently, several Town owned facilities attract thousands of annual visitors to daily and weekly programs, musicals, plays, classes and special events such as Matthews Alive. Destinations in the area include:

The Matthews Community Center

Fullwood Theater

The McDowell Arts Center

Stumptown Park

Together, the park and buildings form the nucleus of what could become an even more vibrant cultural arts district. The area is also home to large institutions such as First Baptist Church and Matthews Elementary School. An entrance to Four Mile Creek Greenway is located at the southern end of Downtown and acts as a key pedestrian access to Downtown from many nearby neighborhoods. The former Outen Pottery, located at the end of Jefferson Street, offers a unique opportunity to create an additional arts related destination within the district. The pottery was built in the late 1940's and is the only site of its kind today in Mecklenburg County.

Public art and branding could further solidify the area as the premiere arts and entertainment destination in southeastern Mecklenburg County and Western Union County.

South Trade Cultural Arts District

Recommendations

Commission a streetscape project along South Trade St to improve sidewalks, parking, traffic movement and lighting.

Create a master plan for Stumptown Park

Implement zoning text changes that allow for gallery uses to be located in some single family homes along South Trade Street

Create a low interest loan program to encourage galleries to locate in the area

Work with local artist to establish a non profit artist colony

Strengthen pedestrian connections to future Plantation Village

Work with Masonic Lodge to find a compatible location for a new or relocated building

Restore McDowell Street to its original design and include decorative pavement, lighting and bollards to close the street for events

Renovate the former Outen Pottery to create a small, interpretative pottery center and classroom

Build College Street from Freemont St to Ames St to provide better access and additional parking

Develop townhomes or multifamily housing to along Stumptown Park boundaries to anchor the park and provide a transitional buffer to single family homes in the vicinity.



North End District

The North End District is primarily composed of new development along Sam Newell Road between Matthews Street and Matthews Township Parkway. New buildings constructed over the last decade adhered to the requirements of the Downtown Overlay district and form a distinct gateway corridor leading into the core of Downtown Matthews. The district is composed of a mix of building types and uses, but has primarily grown with a focus on medical facilities and recently, apartment dwellings. The Matthews Gateway project provides much needed urban residential and retail to area to the area in a true mixed-use environment.

Strengthen Pedestrian Connections

Dovetailing with previously discussed plans for the Matthews St/North Trade Street intersection, sidewalk should be completed on the western side of Sam Newell Rd between Matthews Gateway and Matthews Street. The intersection should be fully signalized for pedestrians with crosswalk signals.

Signature Civic Space

North End Park would anchor this new district as a focal civic space while providing much needed open space to an underserved area. There are approximately 1,000 dwelling units within a 1/2 mile walk of the site with no other park amenities in the area. In addition, hundreds of office and retail workers are also located in that same 1/2 mile area.



North End District



District Recommendations

Create better sidewalk connectivity into Downtown and along Matthews Township Parkway

Develop “North End Pocket Park” to provide open space

Bury utility wires to create a more attractive entrance corridor into downtown

Apply the “North End” branding throughout the district to create a unique destination within Downtown

Locate a grocery store on the vacant land between Walgreens and Matthews Gateway



M A T T H E W S
NORTH END
D I S T R I C T

West John Historic District

As far back as the 1850s, John Street was a primary travel route from Charlotte to Monroe and points beyond and contains many of Matthews' oldest residential homes. Today, the vast majority of historic structures along West John have been converted to office use although some private homes still remain. Land uses are varied, with numerous commercial businesses located at the intersection with Matthews Township Parkway and along the corridor. Today, West John Street/Monroe Rd is a 4 lane cross section that begins near Downtown Charlotte in the Elizabeth neighborhood and reduces down to a two or three lane cross section at Trade Street. The intersection with Trade Street is characterized by rush hour backups due to the transition from 4 lanes down to two. As the only street in Matthews with a large concentration of 19th and early 20th century homes, West John Street is a precious commodity. It is recommended that the Town work with the Historic Landmarks Commission to explore the creation of a linear historic district along West John from Trade Street to Matthews Township Parkway



West John Historic District



Recommendations

Explore historic district feasibility

Redevelop corner of Township Parkway and West John with mixed-use development

Improve portions of West Charles Street

Redevelop strip shopping center at Ames and West John

Develop senior housing on vacant land near Christ Covenant Church

Develop residential style “office cottages” as infill on vacant parcels



Gateway Corridors

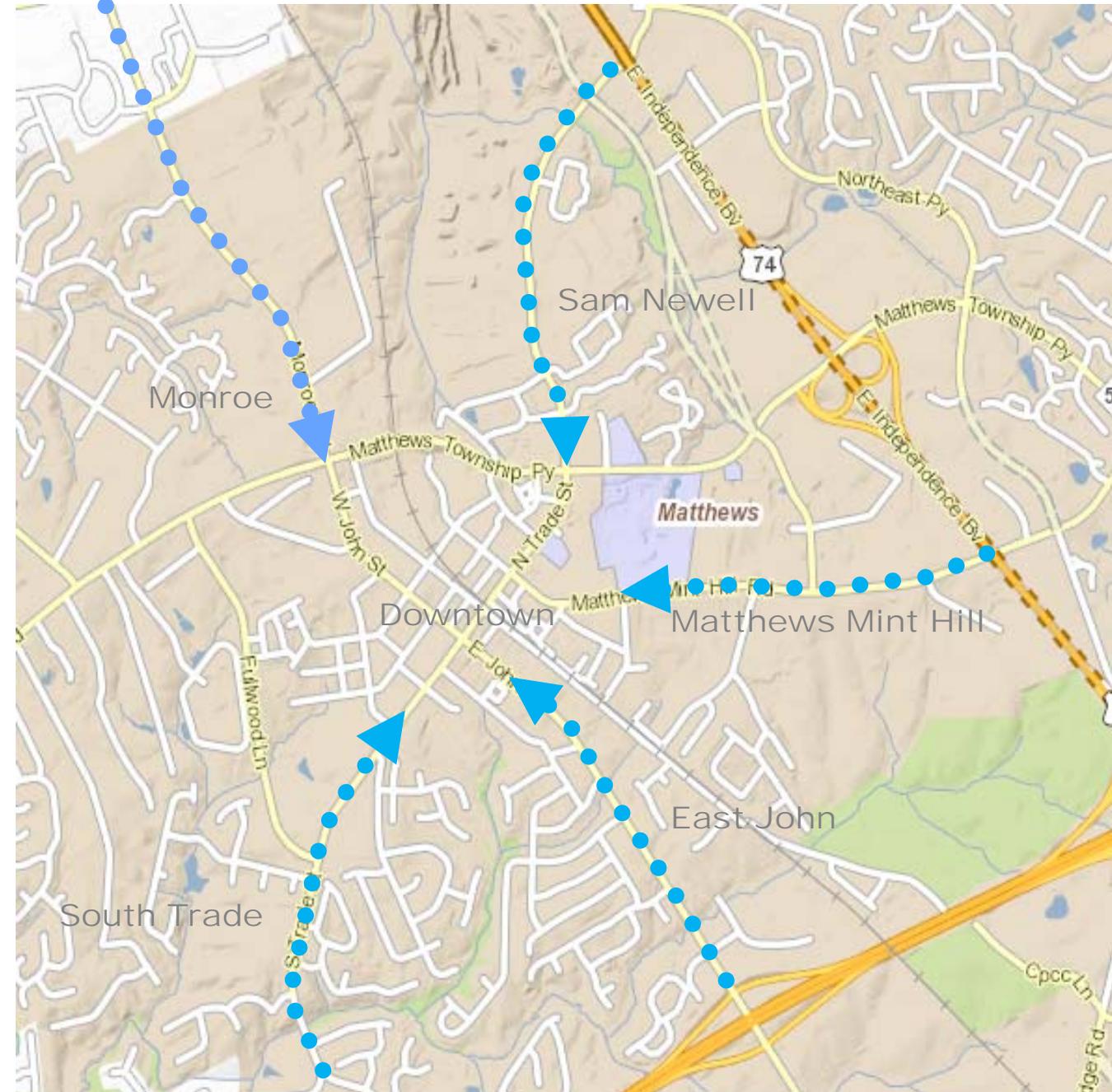
To reinforce the importance of Downtown as a central place in Matthews and to create better connections to nearby neighborhoods, entrance corridors should be established along major roadways that serve the immediate area. Such corridors should build upon the basic character of Downtown and announce that one is entering a special place. To achieve this, overlay districts should be created along the following streets:

- Sam Newell Rd from Independence Pointe
- Matthews-Mint Hill Rd from Independence Pointe
- East John Street from 485
- South Trade Street from Fullwood Lane
- Monroe Rd from the Charlotte city limit

KEY DESIGN PARAMETERS

Entrance corridors should feature a higher level of detail in regards to both public and private improvements. Buildings should be placed adjacent to the sidewalk with parking in the rear to promote a better pedestrian experience. In particular, Matthews Mint Hill Rd and Sam Newell Rd will one day serve as linkages between mass transit stations and Downtown Matthews. Key to creating a more solid design concept for these corridors, are:

- Sidewalks on both sides of the street
- Buried power lines to reduce visual clutter
- Complete street designs with bike lanes or multiuse paths
- Street Trees
- Pedestrian Lighting
- Special Signage and Wayfinding
- Architectural design requirements



Connectivity to Adjacent Areas Along Gateway Corridors



1
Downtown

2
Sportsplex/
Family Entertainment
District

3
Crestdale

4
Wingate
Commons

Streetscape Details - Public Amenity Guidelines

To the greatest degree possible, uniformity should be created for all public improvements such as benches, waste receptacles, lighting, sidewalks and signage and even brick used for sidewalk projects and crosswalks. The traditional core blocks of downtown, the 100 and 200 blocks of Trade St as well as Matthews Station Street are the most formal areas of Town. Here, it is important that a rhythm is created that visually connects the area. Although these standards shall become the norm, exceptions should be made where an artistic touch is added to a bench or bike rack. Private development should also incorporate these standards.

The furnishings called for in the Downtown Plan should be standard throughout Downtown as well as along any gateway corridor. The following fixtures should feature a standard color palette as follows:

Black Painted Surface

Traffic light mast arms
Street lights
Pedestrian lighting
Waste receptacles
Benches
Bike Racks
Stop signs
Street signs

Brown/Bronze Surface

Wayfinding signage
Flower pots



The City of Statesville, NC recently completed an entire streetscape enhancement project that features standards for public furnishing.

Streetscape Detail Examples



Deluxe acorn fixture with fluted pole and round base.
Bulbs shall be metal halide or LED



Waste receptacle, black
Hadco or similar



Lincoln park bench with arched back
Barco Products or similar



Two bike post
Barco Products or similar



Inverted bell planter,
Plant Containers.com or similar



Composite view showing stop sign, street sign
and lighting styles

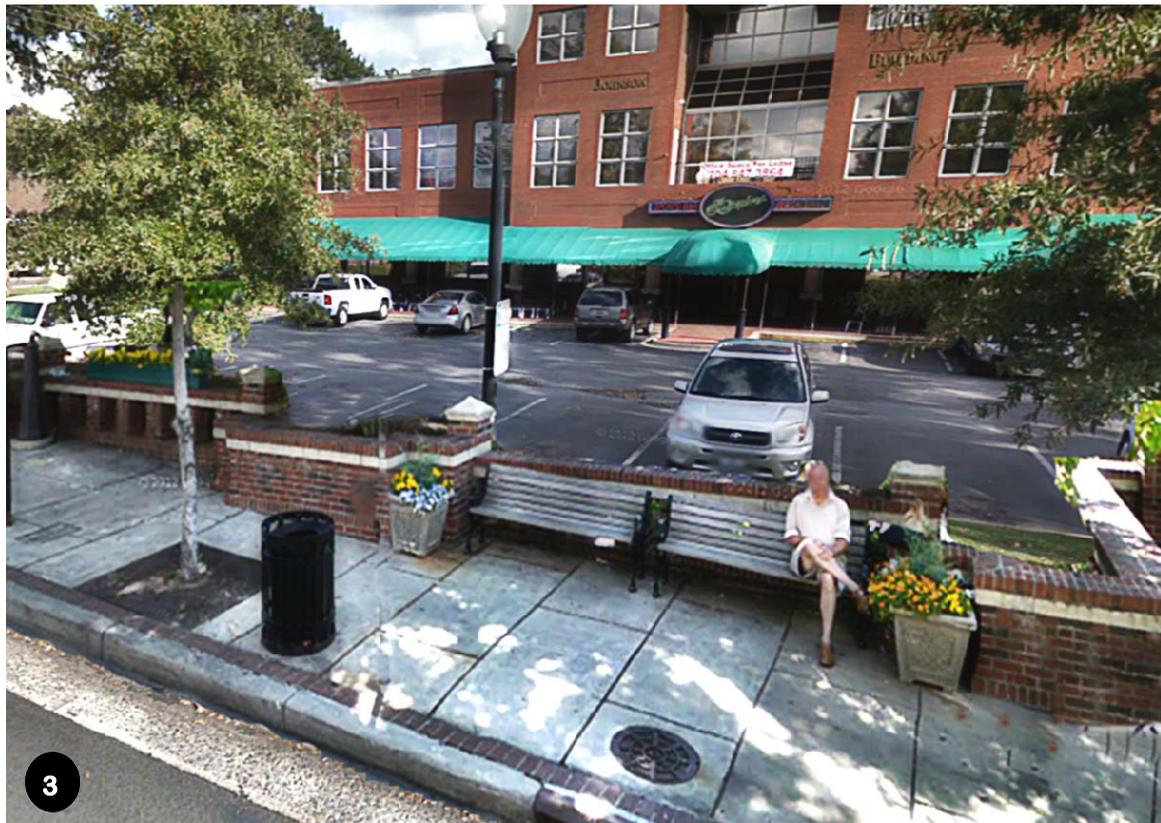
Project Listing and Implementation Guide

Project	Year	Cost/Funding Source	Coordination
Short Term Projects (1-3 years)			
1 Construct Buckley Way between E. John and Charles St.	2013	CIP Funds	
2 Sidewalk between West Matthews St and Matthews Gateway property line	2013		
3 Widen Ames Street and install sidewalk between W. Matthews and Park Center Dr.	2014		
4 Crosswalk Signals at North Trade and Matthews Street	2013		
5 Sidewalk along Matthews Township Parkway between N. Trade and Presbyterian Hospital	2013		
6 Sidewalk along Matthews Mint Hill Rd. between North Trade Street and Presbyterian Hospital	2015		
7 Sidewalk along Matthews Township Parkway between Park Center Dr and Chimney Hill Rd	2013		
8 West Matthews St restriping for parallel parking, new C&G/parallel parking/sidewalk near intersection with North Trade St and construction of missing sidewalk segments	2013		Adjacent owners
9 Sidewalk along North Freemont St between West Matthews St and Freemont St Cottages	2015		
10 South Freemont			
11 Construct pocket park/plaza on North Trade St. between Bike Shop and Planet Ballroom	2015		Landowner
12 Widen W. Charles sidewalk between N. Trade and Cotton Gin and convert to parallel parking	2015		
13 Construct fountain on Town Green	2013	Grant Funding	
14 Streetscape improvements on John St between Trade St and Library Ln	2013		
15 Streetscape Enhancements 200 Block North Trade	2014		
Intermediate Term Projects (4-6 years)			
16 East Matthews St/Mcleod St Streetscape/sidewalk project	2017		
17 Crestdale Heritage Trail connection from N. Trade St. to Crestdale Rd	2018		
18 West Charles St improvement to intersection with Matthews Township Parkway	2018		
19 Construct College St between S. Freemont St and S. Ames St.	2019		
20 Develop Market Alley including alleyway and associate public improvements	2017	Explore funding alternatives and partnerships	Adjacent Landowners
21 Matthews Station extension to Andrew Caroline	2017	Town/Presbyterian Hospital	
Long Term Projects (7-10 years)			
21 Construct Matthews Station Parking Deck and Supporting Development	2020	TIF/Developer Cost Share	Partnership
22 Stumptown Park Expansion	2021	Grant Funding	
23 Bury Utility Lines and Install Traffic Light Mast Poles at N. Trade St. and W. Matthews St.	2023		

Selected Photo Renderings of Proposed Developments and Improvements



1



3

1

West Matthews Street Intersection Improvements and Mixed-Use Redevelopment

2

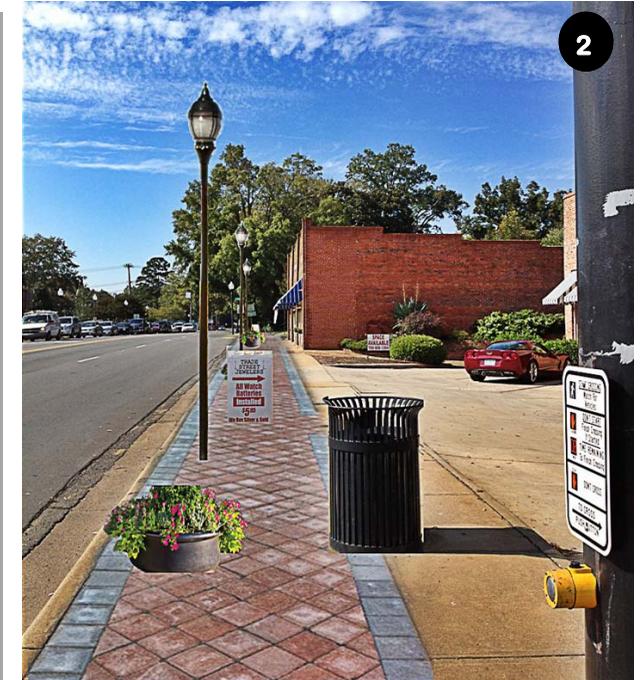
Sidewalk Improvements on West John Street

3

Brick wall and seating along Johnson Building Frontage

4

Infill residential with Subsurface Parking along Matthews Station St on Plaxco Home Property



2



4