

**A RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE STAFF WITH DIRECTION ON THE
DOWNTOWN VISIONING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOL BOX REPORTS
Resolution No. 123/2001-02**

WHEREAS, the Carrboro Board of Alderman authorized the Staff to contract with Dan Burden of Walkable Communities to produce a Downtown Visioning document, and Mike Luger of the UNC-Chapel Hill Office of Economic Development, Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise to conduct a Downtown Carrboro Market Analysis, and

WHEREAS, the consultants solicited input from the Board of Aldermen, citizens, business people, professional planners, and local architects to survey other towns of similar size and common interests, and

WHEREAS, the Board accepted these reports on March 21, 2002, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Carrboro Mayor and Board of Alderman has

- 1) Reviewed the reports
- 2) Considered the recommended strategies
- 3) Developed the following lists for staff to address:
- 4) Adopted the recommended Tool Box strategies and has directed staff to develop an economic development action plan with the understanding...

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert Morgan

FROM: Michael B. Brough

RE: Downtown Vision Report

DATE: March 13, 2002

I have reviewed the final report on the Downtown Visioning Charrette and it is most interesting. One of the questions that always arises in the aftermath of such reports is what the Board is to do with the report. I have some suggestions which you may or may not find useful in making your recommendation to the Board.

First, as I read the report, it consists primarily of the consultant's recommendations (colored certainly by citizen input at the Charrette) as to what Carrboro should do in terms of making public improvements and changing town ordinances to guide private development. Accordingly, I believe the first step should be just to accept the report as the conclusion of the process, without debate as to the merits of any of the recommendations. It would then be clear that the report per se does not constitute an officially adopted plan with which developers are required to comply under the land use ordinance.

The second step, in my judgment, is for the Board to review the report pretty much on a paragraph by paragraph, and sometimes line by line, basis to (1) identify the recommendation or "vision" expressed therein, and (2) make a determination (by consensus or vote) whether the town should *consider* taking further action to implement the recommendation or vision (i.e. whether the staff should include an item in the "implementation consideration report" – see below – to implement the recommendation or vision). Some recommendations or visions might not "make the cut" because the Board simply disagrees with them. Others might not be added to the report because, although the Board agrees the vision is a good one, it concludes that the town does not now have and will not likely have in the foreseeable future the resources or legal authority to bring the vision to reality.

The third step is for the staff to prepare an "implementation consideration report" based upon the results of step two. This report would break the implementation proposals into two major categories – public works and ordinance changes. Within the public works category there would be multiple sub-categories, such as streets, sidewalks, streetscapes, parking areas, and other public spaces. The ordinance changes category would be broken down into similar subcategories. Each subcategory might be further divided, the intention being to present the policy choices to the Board in a manageable fashion that can be acted upon. The report would contain enough information about the costs and impacts of each element so that the Board could make a decision on whether to move forward with the project, and in what order of priority.

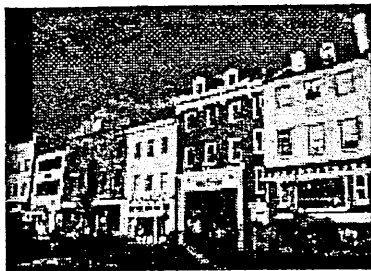
The fourth step, and the end product of the Board's review of the third step, would be the adoption of an action agenda that would spell out what the Board wants to accomplish and in what order of priority. Some of the short term items might be added to the "action agenda" adopted as the product of the Board's retreats. Others might be longer term, and would be added to the annual "action agenda" in future years.

I am sure the foregoing needs much refinement. However, it may provide a starting point for discussion.

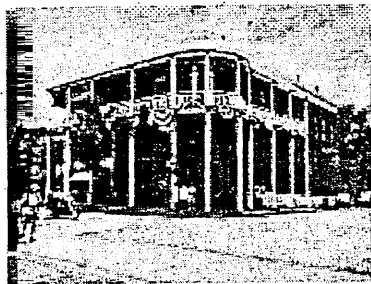
Recommendations



Buildings with similar traits create a street that is perceived as highly ordered and cohesive, in spite of significant stylistic variations.



Historical buildings such as the one below from another community enhance community identity and create attractive focal points. Charrette participants placed a high value on historic preservation.



Consultants evaluated input from participants, studied background material, and assessed current conditions to develop recommendations. This section explains the recommendations and some of the underlying principles and concepts.

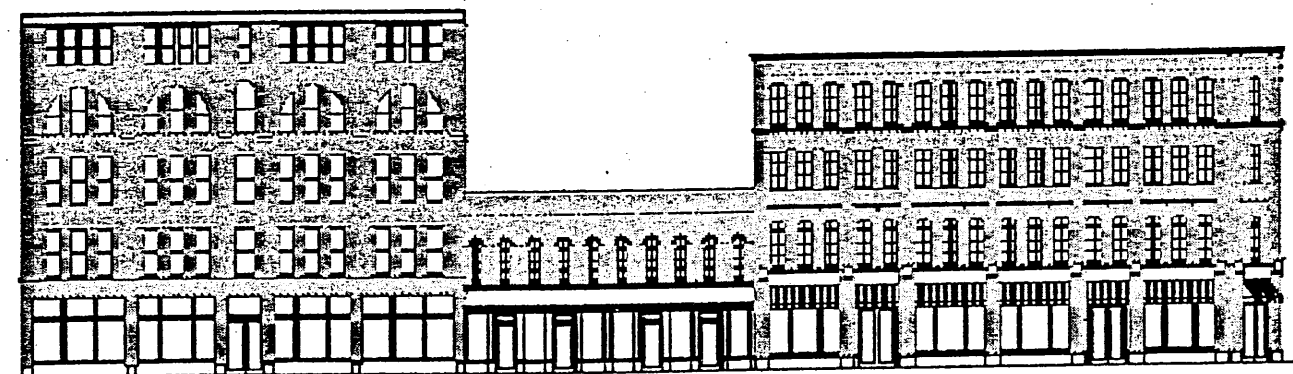
The essential ingredient in attaining the community's vision is to make better use of the available land and public space. A more compact land use pattern with few vacant parcels or parking lots between buildings is necessary. New mixed-use buildings, enhanced appearance of existing buildings, and additional parking will open the downtown to new enterprises and residents. Streetscaping, gateways, and amenities are recommended to strengthen the downtown identity. Pedestrian links, sidewalk and crosswalk improvements, and pedestrian scale lighting are recommended to enhance walkability. Some of the public space currently dedicated to vehicles should be transformed to provide more space for downtown activities and identity. These efforts should embrace a future that includes greater use of transit, trolley, trains and bicycles.

Buildings

Having buildings with similar designs is a trait common to all successful urban districts. For purposes of this report, an urban district refers to a geographic area that contains the characteristics of a city. When consistent building types are used the street is perceived as highly ordered and cohesive, in spite of significant stylistic variations.

Historic Preservation

The preservation of buildings with architectural merit was a priority for most charrette participants. Architectural styles should be documented with measured drawings, and old photographs. Every effort should be made to facilitate their restoration.





Encourage consistent rhythm of openings.
Require no less than one entrance every 60 feet and no less than 60% glass at ground floor.

Require use of brick and painted storefronts consistent with historic precedents.



Require a consistent building line along sidewalk.

Encourage pedestrian amenities, such as arcades and awnings designed to provide shade and shelter.

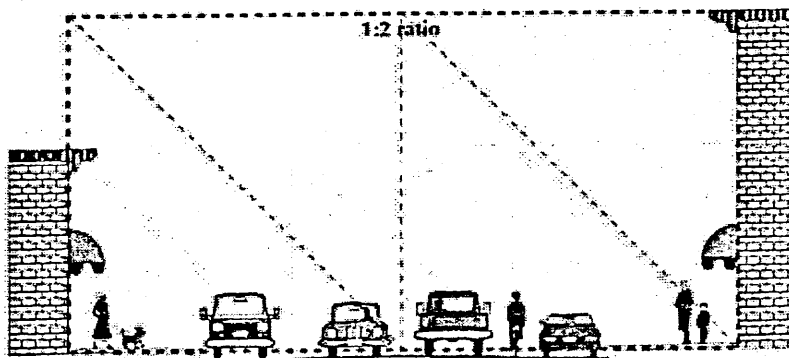
Historic preservation activities should provide inspiration for new buildings. Far too often, cities that emphasize the restoration of historic structures fail to make a direct connection between the features and attributes worth preserving, and the need to apply comparable standards to new construction. In fact, from the point of view of urban design and town planning, there should be few distinctions between the design principles of old buildings and current practices. Good ideas should apply to all buildings, and the best source for ideas are the most outstanding examples of past architecture.

New Buildings

New buildings should be inspired by fundamental design principles of existing historic structures. Some of these principles are indicated in the photos and captions. In addition, their massing and general layout should be compatible with the character of the district. This does not mean that new buildings must slavishly copy old architectural details. Instead, this concept suggests that all buildings should strive for harmony and compatibility.

Building design principles in successful redevelopment projects are based on concepts of massing, scale, and composition that are common to all successful urban districts and neighborhoods. The width of the public space needed for a comfortable ratio should be established by the dimen-

The diagram at right illustrates a human-scale ratio between heights of buildings and the distance between facades. Most architects agree that this ratio should be between 1:1 and 1:3 in a community like Carrboro. This illustration is adapted from "Main Street: A Handbook for Oregon Communities" published by the Oregon Department of Transportation.





Multi-story buildings, with retail or office ground floor and office or living space above, create the density needed for a vibrant, self-sustaining downtown core.



Provide well-defined location for signs. This location should be uniform among all buildings, and should be incorporated as an architectural feature.



Articulate building--simple molding or cornice

sion between the facades of the buildings. Even though increased density is desirable, the consultant team recommends maintaining a ratio of 1:1 to 1:3 between the height of the buildings and the width of the public space. Public space in this case is defined as the distance between the facades of facing buildings. In other words, the height of buildings should be proportionate to the distance across the street.

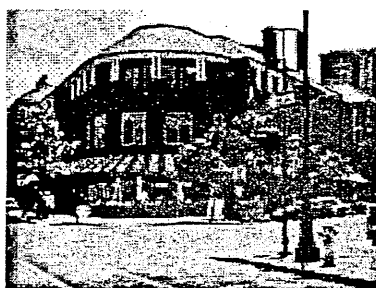
In redevelopment projects, it is recommended that new buildings be designed to harmonize with neighboring structures in terms of the building types. The following guidelines and illustrations suggest an appropriate concept for downtown Carrboro based on the input of the charrette participants:

1. Encourage building heights compatible with adjacent and nearby structures
2. Require prominent molding between first and second story in commercial and mixed-use buildings
3. Require cornices or ornamental parapet at the top of a building
4. Require vertical articulation of facade
5. Require glass surfaces between 40% and 80% of total facade, with 60% minimum at ground floor
6. Require a building entrance from street every 60 feet or less
7. Encourage architectural features which are compatible with the general aesthetic character of the historic Main Street area and with the design of adjacent buildings, such as use of brick for commercial buildings; use of porches in residential areas, etc.

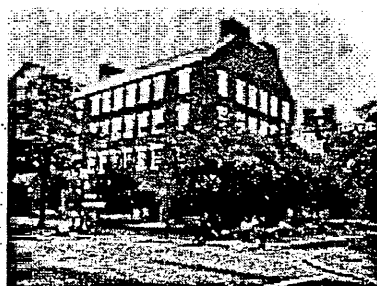
Require molding at top of first floor. This line will give cohesion to a mixed-use building by separating commercial use from office or residential. This is important, as commercial retail uses change signs and displays often.

Articulate base of building





Each building has an opportunity to contribute to a quality place. These photos show multi-story mixed-use buildings in other communities that may suggest possible options for Carrboro development. Store fronts are at ground level to welcome shoppers. Upper floors can be devoted to office and professional space, or for residential purposes.



Site Planning Concepts

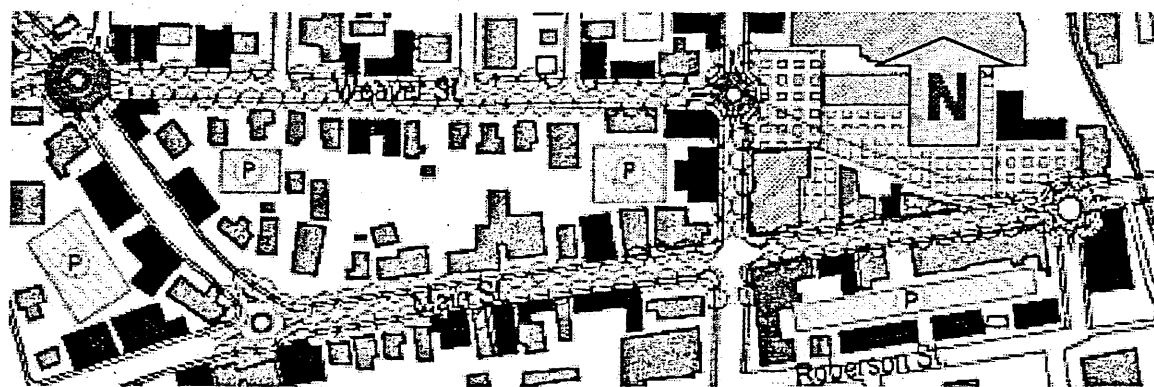
High quality urban buildings follow very specific site design principles. Without proper siting, even the most ornate and well conceived structure would not contribute to the overall quality of life of a street, a block, or a district. Too often, simple decisions about the location of entrances or parking can make the difference between a lively street and an unpleasant road. The following principles should be used as a guide to design and evaluate proposed site plans:

1. Locate front of building adjacent to sidewalk
2. Place parking behind building and access through back alley
3. Locate services on alley or back parking lot. This includes trash containers, transformers, power lines, and the like

Mixed-use

Mixed-use buildings combine a number of uses including retail, office, residential, and even parking. Encouraging affordable housing as a component of mixed-use in-fill building brings a number of benefits. Allowing more people to live downtown will increase the amount of shopping done there. Allowing employees and business owners to live downtown eliminates the need for commuting, thereby easing traffic and parking needs. Finally, mixed-use housing allows people to occupy the downtown twenty-four hours a day—not just during business hours. Safety is enhanced because of more “eyes” on the street and opportunities for social interaction are multiplied. Therefore, in-fill development represents a great opportunity to develop the cohesiveness and critical mass, which will bring prosperity to downtown Carrboro.

The public identified many possibilities for development to meet deficiencies in commercial, cultural, and living space. Precise building location and use will be determined as development opportunities arise. Emphasis was placed on small to medium structures west of the railroad tracks.



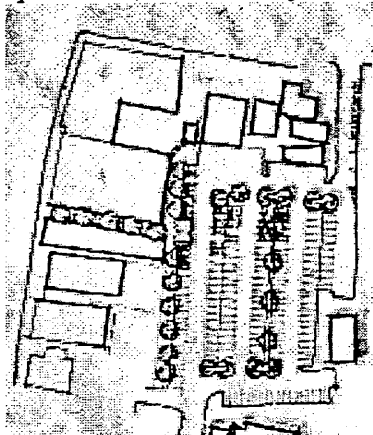
The buildings in black show how new buildings can complete the fabric of downtown Carrboro.



Parking must be easy to locate and access but it should blend with its surroundings



The photo above shows how existing parking appears uncoordinated. The conceptual sketch, from another community, illustrates how parking can be pooled. Vehicle access is shared, and a pedestrian link is shown at left.



Existing buildings are in red. Parking is in pink and white. Though parking may be perceived as a problem, the amount of space already devoted to parking appears ample.

Parking

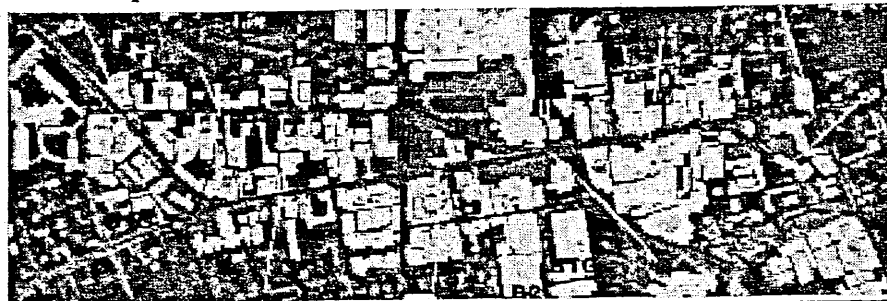
The Consultant team found that downtown has random, casual and disorganized parking lots that consume valuable space. According to town statistics, there is more than one square foot of parking for each square foot of commercial building. Though parking is perceived as a problem, this is likely not a lack of physical space. More likely, it is the location of parking that is the problem. Although people will walk as far as 1200 feet to access shops in a large mall, there is an expectation of curbside parking in downtown areas.

Territorial boundaries by businesses and property owners prevent off-street parking capacity from flexibly matching parking needs. Many of these small parking areas, such as those behind structures on the southern side of Weaver Street, could be pooled into large, attractively landscaped parking areas. The number of driveways into existing lots could be consolidated, reducing congestion on the streets, adding on-street parking in some areas, and improving walkability through driveway reduction. Large service vehicles such as garbage trucks, tractor-trailers, and fire engines would have more room to maneuver in larger, consolidated parking lots.

As a first step toward enhancing Carrboro's unique image, clear and distinctive signage needs to be designed and installed to alert motorists of the existence and whereabouts of ample off-street parking. Additional on-street parking can be added on Roberson Street and on East Weaver Street in conjunction with recommended changes in the street configuration.

Charrette participants wanted to preserve their free parking, rather than use meters to manage parking. Managing curbside and off-street parking by establishing parking zones ranging from 30 minutes to all day would help keep the most convenient spaces open without using meters. Employees should have their own designated free, all-day parking at a short distance from where they work, to reserve the closest parking for customers. Strict code enforcement is essential for effective parking management.

These efforts take advantage of existing opportunities. The increased marketability of Carrboro that will accompany the aesthetic improvements will provide additional opportunities for parking that is submerged or on the rooftops of new buildings.





Downtown Identity

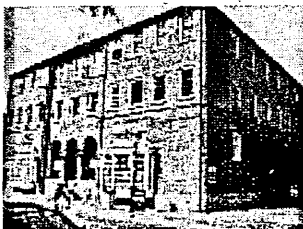
Downtown Carrboro must fully develop its unique identity in order to realize its market potential. The gateway entrances and street edges offer an opportunity for a rhythmic, repetitive theme that enhances the unique qualities of the Town. The centers of gateway roundabouts are excellent sites for public art, water fountains, or other features. The edges of the downtown core should be demarcated by tasteful yet distinctive features that clearly identify the heart of Carrboro. Transit stops, information kiosks, lamp posts, signs, bicycle parking areas, benches, trash cans, outdoor gathering places, and public art sites are examples of potential identity opportunities.



A consistent design theme for street features such as kiosks and transit stops will tie the downtown together and emphasize its distinct qualities.



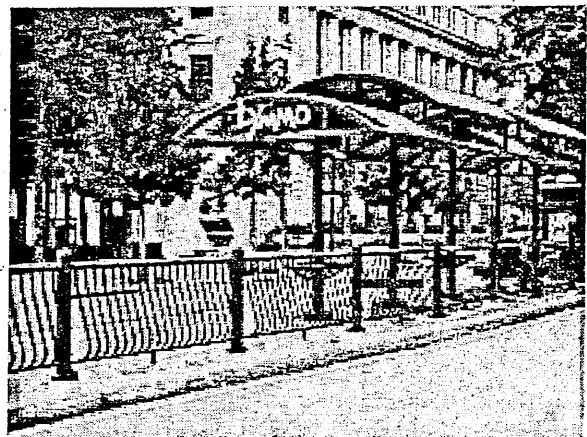
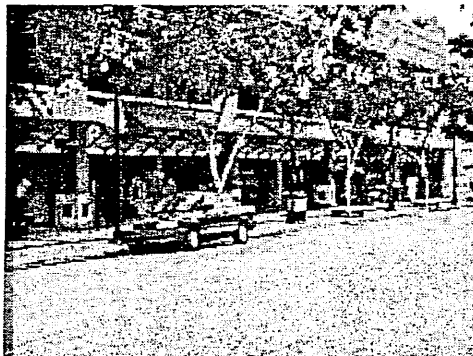
Design principles apply to parking garages as well as other buildings in the downtown core.



The Town should develop and adhere consistently to a streetscape and landscape master plan that establishes a planting scheme, the style of various amenities, and a systematic approach to signing for motorists and pedestrians. A consistent, repetitive theme builds identity. Landscaping should be used to create attractive edges at parking lot entrances, along existing set-back buildings, gas stations, and streets, where possible. Use low-growing shrubs and trees trimmed up 8-10 feet to protect visibility between drivers and walkers.

Charrette participants identified a number of qualities that distinguish Carrboro, including "quirky," "artsy," and "historical mill-town." In planning the future and selecting a theme to emphasize identity, special care must be taken to preserve the best of the past. Nostalgia has proven again and again to be an important ingredient to the financial success of downtowns.

Though this might not be Carrboro's look, it demonstrates that theme elements can be used to provide comfort and identity.





Creating a more walkable environment requires attention to detail. Separate walkers from cars, parked or moving, with landscaped edges. Eight foot wide sidewalks are absolute minimums in the downtown core. Note the parking meter at the far right and diagonally parked cars in the background.

Walkability

There are a number of areas in downtown Carrboro that are difficult for pedestrians to access due to barriers (both physical and psychological) that exist with the current pedestrian facilities. Crossings and sidewalks are poorly marked and lit. There are too few crossing opportunities. Traffic often fails to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks. When motorists fail to honor crosswalks many pedestrians choose to cross at random. Narrow, discontinuous sidewalks combined with lack of on-street parking places the pedestrian directly next to the travel lane with high speed traffic. Wide intersections with no median refuge islands make streets difficult to cross safely.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks in the downtown area should be smooth, continuous and at least eight feet wide, with a preference for ten to twelve feet. Sidewalks should be buffered from motorized traffic by planter strips, bike lanes, and on-street parking. Planter strips bring streets to life with the beauty of landscaping and space for attractive street furniture, lighting, and other amenities. Planter strips provide places outside sidewalk space for traffic signs, fire hydrants, utility boxes and other operational elements of streets.

Sidewalk and crossing materials should be consistent throughout the downtown core. Concrete could be colored, patterned, or otherwise textured in ways that do not negatively impact wheelchairs and other users. Bricks, paver stones and asphalt are three other popular materials. Driveway widths should be as narrow as possible. Two wheelchair ramps should be provided at every corner as shown in the photo. Sidewalks that do not meet these requirements should be replaced.



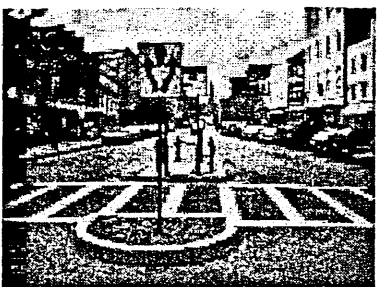
Materials for sidewalks should be consistent throughout the downtown.

Sidewalks are built to last many years, and should therefore be build wide enough to accommodate the walking traffic Carrboro can expect in the future. Enhanced transit, including light rail, regional growth, and special events will all result in increased walking.

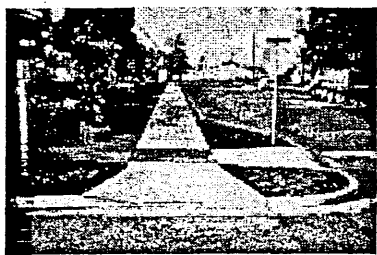




Shown above are examples of existing mid-block crossings.



Refuge islands in the center of the crossing, as shown above, and bulb-outs (curb extensions), shown below, allow pedestrians to select a shorter gap in traffic to cross. The crossing distance is shortened.



Charrette participants explained that there was once a link through the historic buildings on Main Street. Links such as this should be restored whenever possible. Continuity within the downtown can be aided by paying attention to the small spaces. Alleys can be transformed, and a vacant lot can become a pocket park.

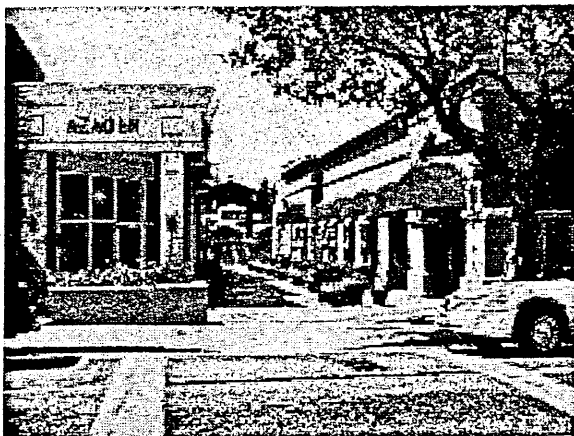
Crossings

Crosswalks should be well lit, marked with highly visible markings, and provided at frequent intervals. Long blocks, such as Weaver Street west of Greensboro Street, need several mid-block crossings. Refuge islands and medians should be provided, especially in high activity areas such as the Weaver Street Market. Refuges are created at roundabouts by the splitter-islands. Signalized intersections should provide adequate time for pedestrians to cross and should not require a pedestrian to push the button for a walk interval in the downtown core.

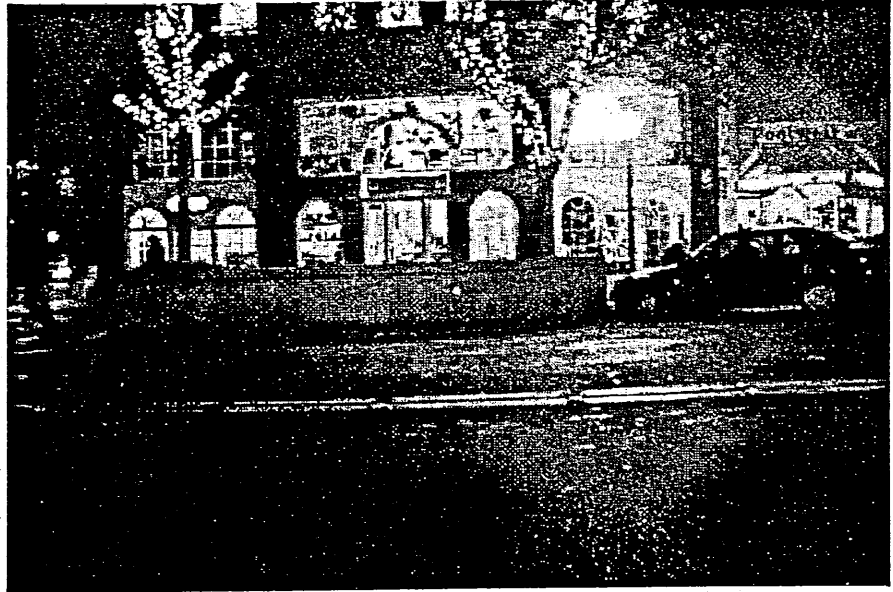
Bulb-outs, which are extensions of curbing that reduce lane widths, should be installed where feasible. Bulb-outs shorten crossing distances for pedestrians. Bulb-outs at intersections also slow turning traffic, provide added space for street amenities, protect parked vehicles, and improve sight lines.

Links

Attractive, convenient connections between residences and the downtown, and between parking areas and probable destinations, promote walking and should be provided whenever possible. These links create continuity and offer opportunities to strengthen downtown identity with kiosks, signing, and other attributes.



Interior lighting, from ground floor and upper level windows as shown in this photo, provides warm, radiant light that welcomes walkers. The photos at the bottom of the page are examples of street lighting fixtures other communities have found attractive.



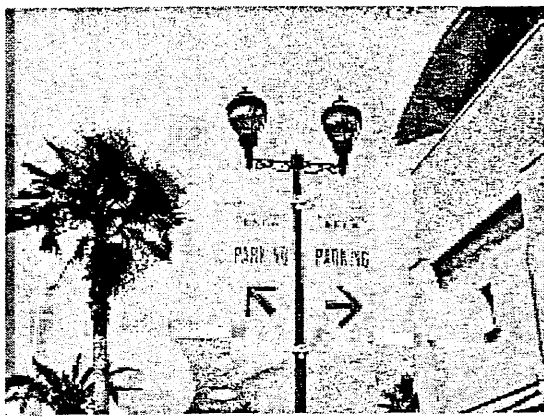
Lighting

People walking along streets seek a steady flood of low angle light at night. Street lamps enhance many themes, conveying moods reflective of modern downtowns, historic neighborhoods, revitalized industrial areas, mountain or beach communities. Carrboro should select lighting fixtures that support a consistent landscape/streetscape theme.

Attractive streets at night have three lighting elements. The first combines pedestrian-scale and higher vehicle luminaires. The lower lamps are placed to provide warm radiant light creating continuously lit corridors. The higher light poles provide more diffuse, general area lighting.

The second source of light should be theme lighting. This element often includes lights focused on building edges, crowns, entryways or other locations celebrating buildings and plaza space. Trees can also be lit.

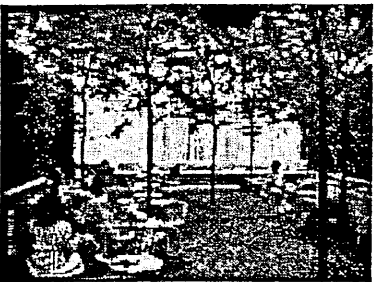
The third source of lighting is the warm, radiant glow of lights from ground level shops. These lights are set on timers and should remain lit until a designated hour, such as midnight on week nights, or 2:00 a.m. on weekends. The combination of these three sources of light create welcoming, secure, night conditions inviting evening walks. Increased presence of people making use of corridors for night walking and gathering adds real security, and hence, social interaction, vitality and economic success.



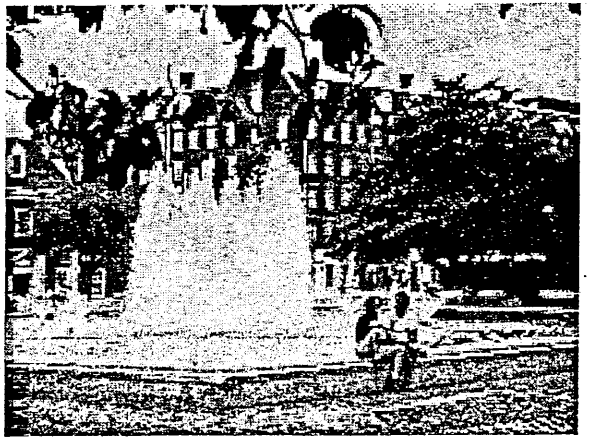
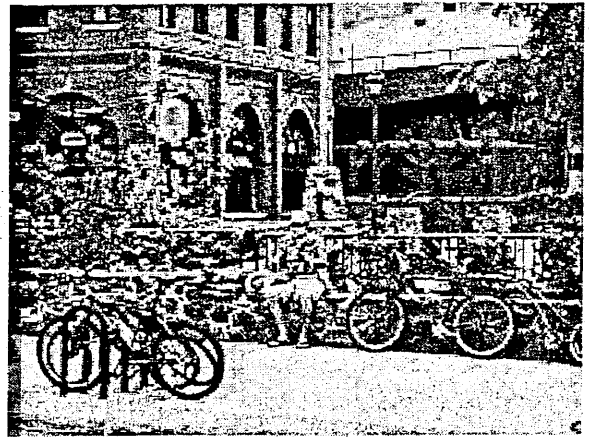
Public Space



The Vision Map on page 20 depicts many changes to the public roadway space, including roundabouts and additional open space near the Weaver Street Market. The redesign of the road as a *public space* is a principal concept in urban redevelopment. This entails a fundamental shift in road design philosophy from past practices. Road design concepts tend to address issues in isolation. To illustrate, if excessive vehicle traffic is a problem, a typical solution would comprise the widening of the road. However, little regard would be given to the effects and consequences of this change in other aspects of the function or the appearance of the street. *Public spaces*, on the other hand, are complex. They are designed for people. Therefore, great emphasis is placed on pedestrian safety and comfort.



Public outdoor gathering places are almost universally welcome and inviting. Whether a large plaza or an intimate table for two, people gravitate toward welcoming places.



These two photos share a common element: a low wall that can be used for informal seating. Water features, such as fountains, reflecting pools, and recirculating water falls help promote a soothing and tranquil ambience.

A four-leg intersection has 75 percent fewer conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians and other vehicles, compared to a conventional four-leg intersection. *Roundabouts: An Informational Guide, Federal Highway Administration*

Roundabouts

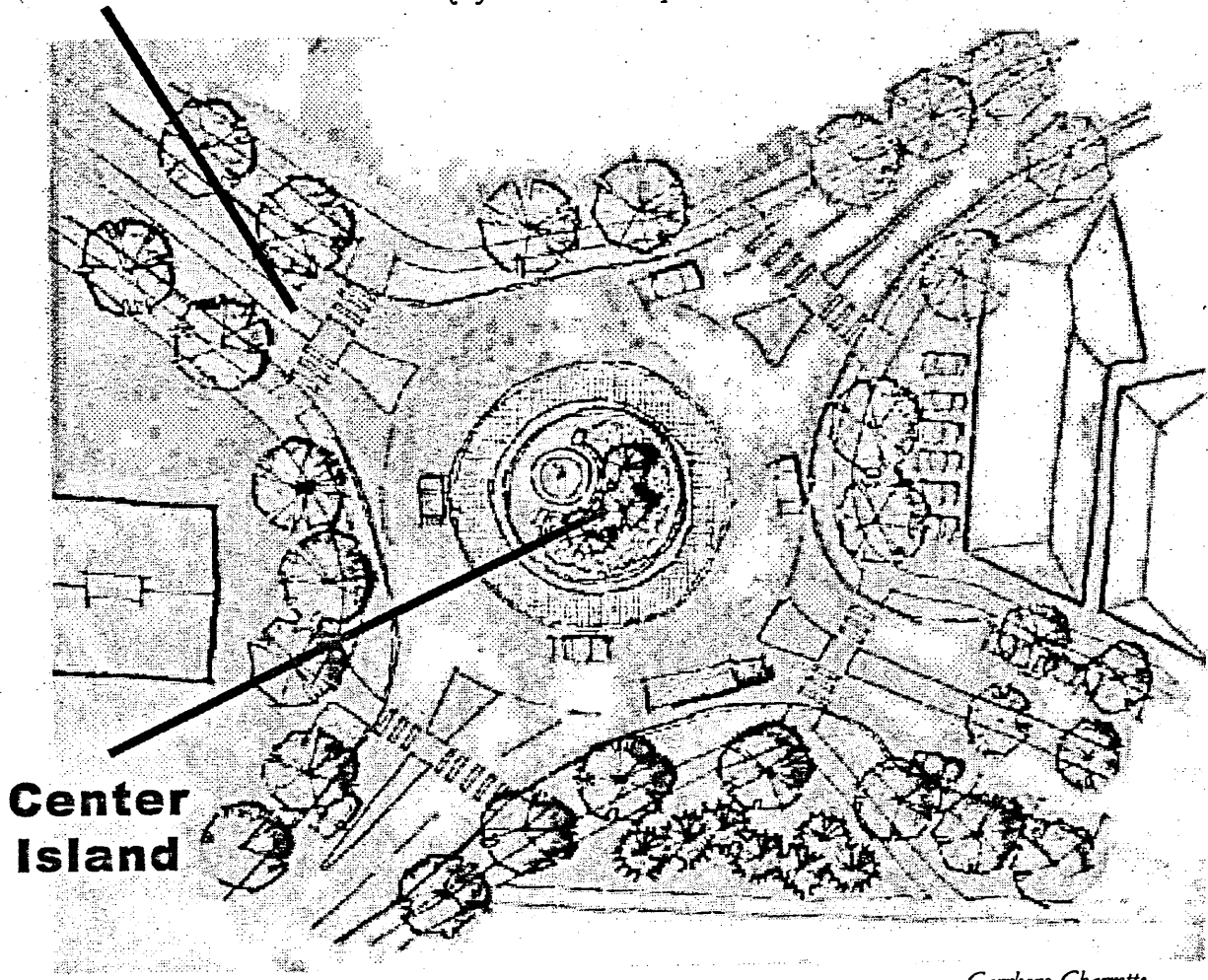
Roundabouts offer opportunities to provide attractive entries and focal points. Center islands and splitter islands are often landscaped and may contain features such as gateway signs or prominent statues. Even more important than their aesthetic value are their safety benefits.

A series of roundabouts designed for speeds of 15 to 20 mph will calm the downtown traffic, reduce traffic noise, and promote speed consistency and smooth traffic flow.

The streetscape/landscape master plan should include a distinctive scheme for the roundabouts that contributes to the repetitive theme used to enhance downtown identity. The maintenance cost savings achieved by replacing a signal with a roundabout can be used to offset maintenance costs of roundabout features.

Splitter Island

The roundabout in this illustration is similar to those that could be designed for Carrboro. The size of the roundabout depends on the volume of traffic and other factors.





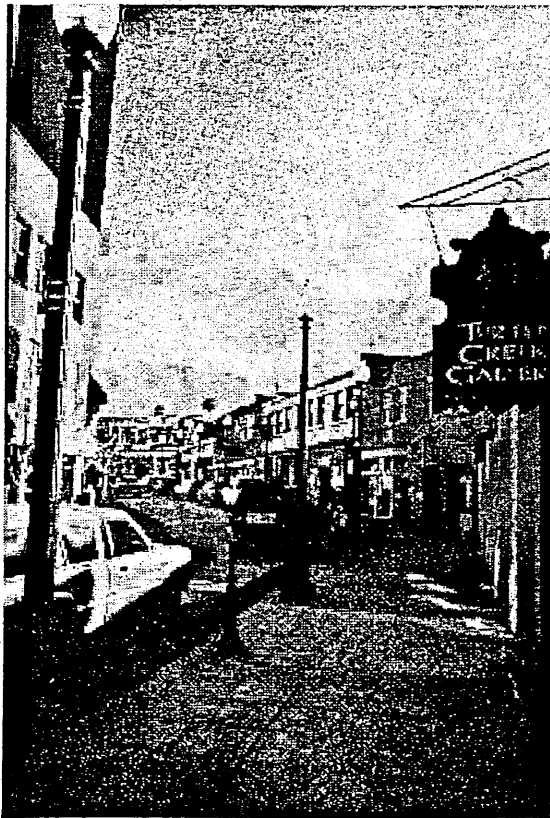
Good public space attracts use. Water features should allow touching or splashing. Shade, places to relax, restrooms and other amenities should be provided.



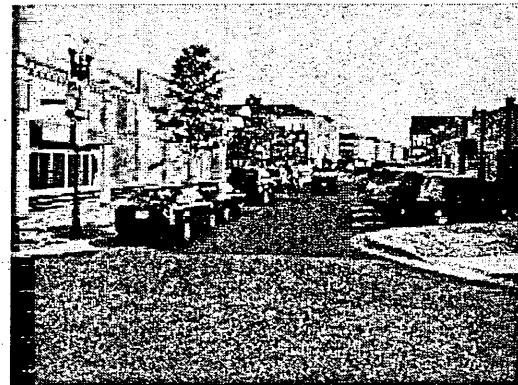
Weaver Street

The success of the Weaver Street Market prompted some participants to suggest closing or redesigning East Weaver Street to provide more space dedicated to events and community. A compromise between full closure and allowing some local traffic that simply wants to access nearby businesses can be achieved using the *woonerf* concept. Woonerf, or *woonerven* for plural, is a Dutch term for "streets for living." Woonerven are streets raised to the same grade as curbs and sidewalks on which pedestrians, bicyclists, children at play, and vehicles share a common space. Vehicles are slowed to the pace of pedestrians by narrow, curvilinear paths, trees, parking areas and planters. The design philosophy of the woonerf is to create the message that the street belongs to the people who are not in vehicles, but they are willing to share the space with those who need access. Motorists are treated as the intruder, and usually feel uncomfortable driving at speeds in excess of 10 mph.

Public space on East Weaver Street that is currently dedicated to vehicular traffic can be converted to address the priority values of nature, green, trees, walkability, beauty, diversity, art and music, safety, community, and activity expressed by participants. The current car-dominated atmosphere is not friendly, nor conducive to the kinds of activities and events people requested for the downtown. A traffic circulation study and other detail analyses will be required to develop the preliminary design for a woonerf on Weaver Street.



Asheville, NC used the woonerf concept on Wall Street.



The new street above borrows principles from the Dutch woonerf below.



Transit, Trolleys, Trains and Bikes

Increased transit ridership yields tremendous benefits to downtown Carrboro, including reduced traffic congestion and parking demand. Transit use should be encouraged by providing features to enhance the comfort and convenience of riders. Transit stops should be conveniently located. Transit stops should include bike racks, shade, benches and rider information. These stops should be beautiful additions to the Town that are pleasant and inviting. At transit stop locations near buildings, façade upgrades that incorporate awnings and benches should be promoted to enhance rider comfort. Route information should be provided at all transit stops.

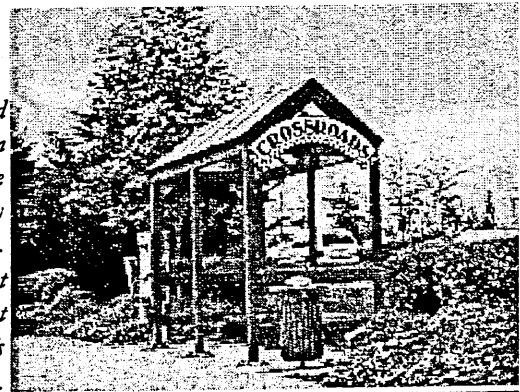
The proximity of the rail network is a tremendous asset that should be cultivated. This corridor has the potential to bring new opportunities for transportation, recreation and business enterprises to the downtown area. The Town should build a strong alliance with the University of North Carolina and begin now to plan to expand the Libba Cotton bikeway and to include other transit, bicycle and pedestrian activities in the Southern Railway right-of-way to the north. The access that would be provided is mutually beneficial. The Town should work with the Triangle Transit Authority to extend rail transit service to the downtown area.

Carrboro should capitalize on its established reputation as a good place for bicycling. Bicycle features, including signing and bike racks, should be designed to enhance the downtown identity scheme. Promotion of bicycling will assist trip reduction strategies that mitigate traffic congestion.

Summary

The recommendations can be used to redevelopment efforts toward a common vision for downtown as defined during the charrette. The next section suggests specific steps based on the recommendations.

Transit stops should provide some protection from the weather and be located close to key destination points. Shelters are an excellent opportunity to accent the community's identity.



Action Steps

The Recommendations discussed in the previous section define overall principles and concepts to create the downtown Carrboro envisioned by charrette participants. The Action Steps develop the Recommendations into implementation strategies. The Action Steps are divided into two basic groups: Projects, and Planning Policies and Procedures.

Projects describes locations identified on the map below in terms of how the Recommendations could be applied to that area to help achieve the overall downtown vision. When development in each of these areas is considered, these concepts can serve as guidelines for the final design. A traffic circulation study will be needed determine the impacts of the roundabouts. Additional design work and analyses will be necessary before implementation of any project can begin.

Planning, Policies, and Procedures describes actions that can be taken by the Town during the course of daily activities to move toward realization of the Vision Plan. Many of these steps can begin immediately.

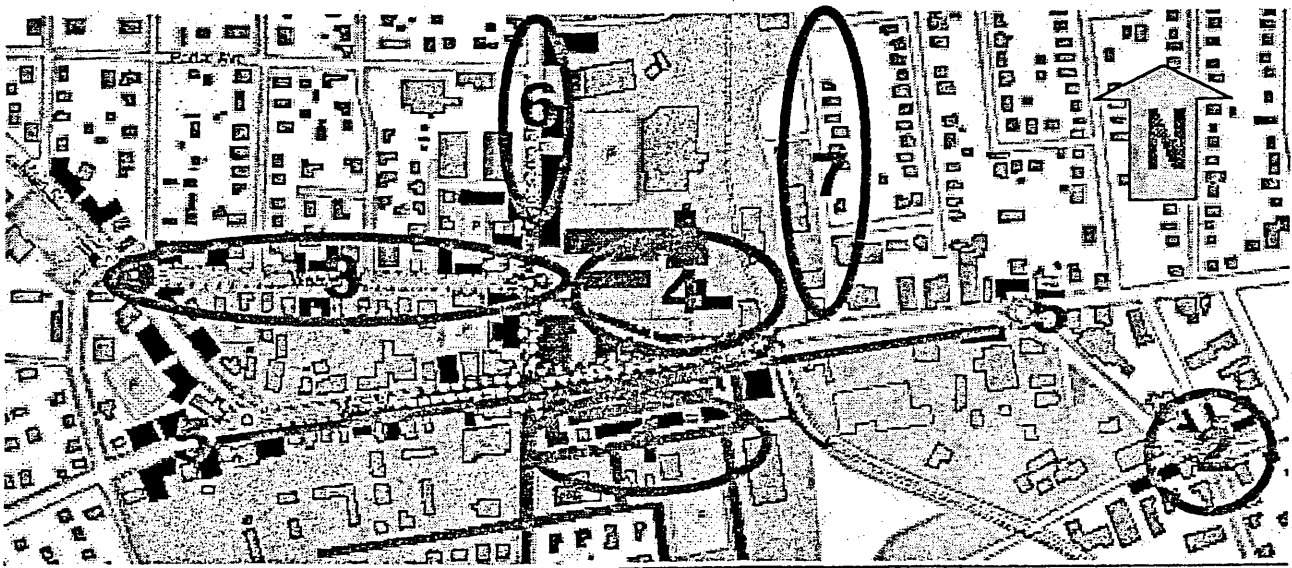
Projects

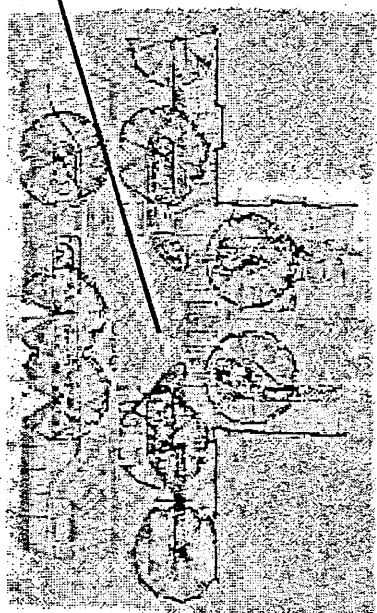
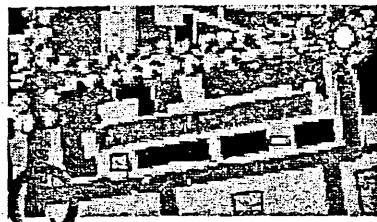
It would be ideal if the Town had adequate resources to construct the elements depicted on the Vision Map below. A more likely scenario is for the Town to begin implementation in conjunction with the normal process of governing and managing the Town, then proceed with capital improvements as funding sources are identified. Projects are presented in a preferred order, but the phasing may be contingent upon selective funding sources that become available, such as the storm reserve funds that will be spent on Weaver Street. Other factors, such as negotiations with developers, grant funding opportunities, or needed street maintenance will also influence phasing decisions.

Vision Map

Project areas are shown on the map below. The work on Weaver Street will include drainage improvements.

1. Roberson Street
2. Eastern Gateway
3. West Weaver
4. East Weaver
5. Main Street
6. Greensboro Street
7. Lloyd Street





The sketch above shows a typical T intersection design that might be suitable for Roberson and Greensboro.

Roberson Street

Roberson Street and the immediate vicinity has the potential to enliven the downtown core, provide additional convenient on-street parking, and provide much-needed mixed-use space.

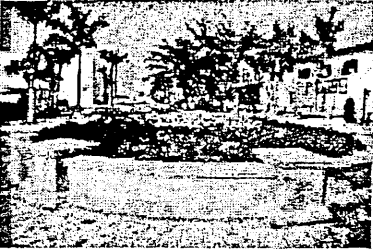
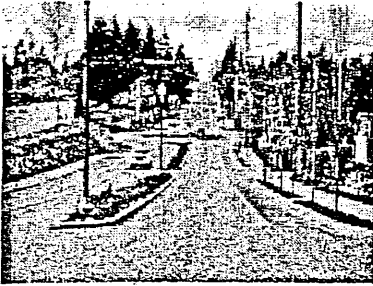
Development of any privately owned site is contingent upon the motivation of the property owner. Public investment into the infrastructure, or an agreement with a property owner to provide infrastructure changes during the construction process, may encourage development. The street improvements should include Roberson Street to Main Street and Greensboro Street from Roberson to Main Street. Street improvements such as underground utilities, sidewalk improvements, angled parking, lighting, and connections throughout this area will highlight it as a priority location for development. Any development of the property should require development of attractive, hidden parking that is shared with nearby establishments. Additional analysis will be required before preliminary designs can be developed, but these concepts can serve as guidelines to ensure the streets fits the vision defined by charrette participants.

An example of a mixed-use building suitable for the Roberson Street area is shown at right. See page 10 for additional information on mixed-use development.

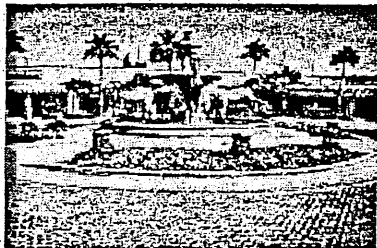


These photos of other communities demonstrate how angled parking, ample sidewalks, and appropriate building set-backs enhance the environment for both drivers and people on foot. These are concepts that can be applied to the Roberson Street area as development is considered.

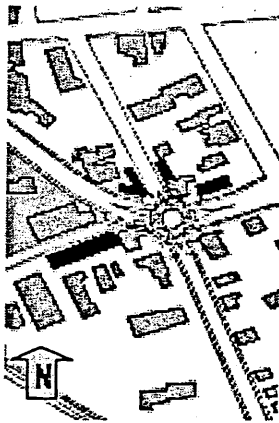
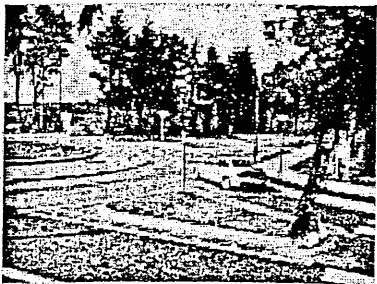




The photos above and below picture public space design elements incorporated into the right-of-way, including medians and roundabouts. The lower photo shows a fountain center feature.



The photos below and to the right show "splitter islands" which serve to direct traffic towards the proper entry angle. Note the crosswalks. Pedestrians can use the splitter islands as a refuge to await a gap in traffic.

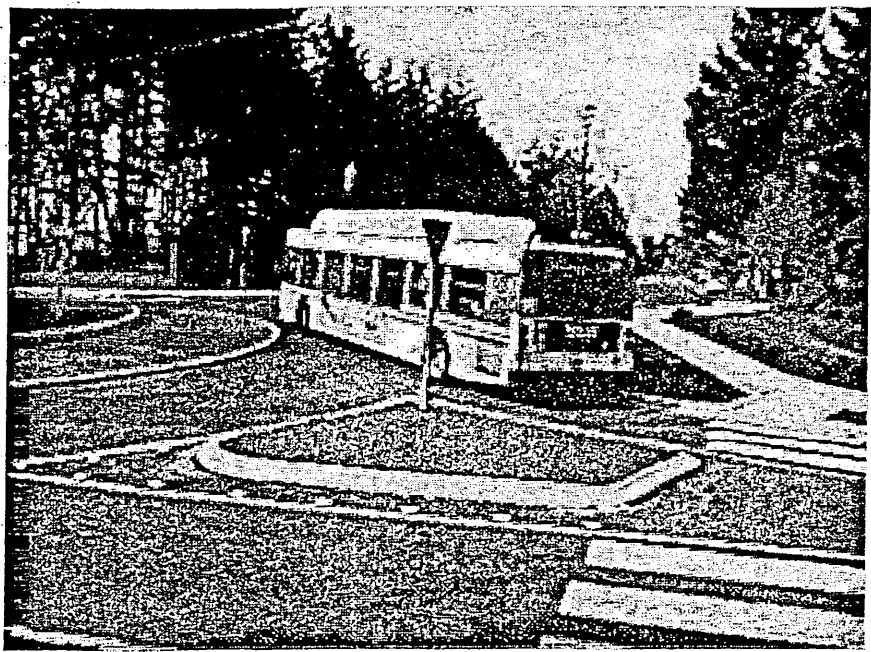


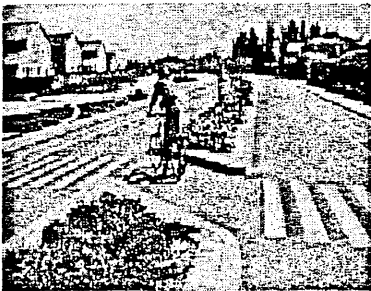
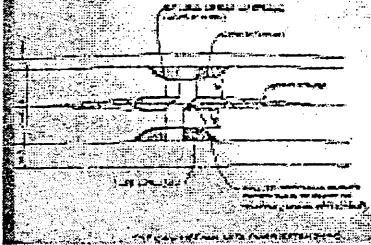
Merritt Mill Road and East Main Street.

Gateway

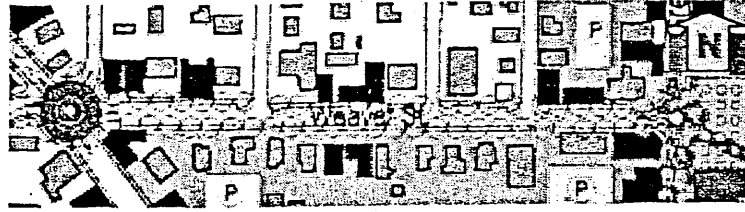
The gateway entry at Merritt Mill Road and East Main Street should be the first roundabout constructed. The roundabout will slow traffic and announce arrival in the Town of Carrboro. This announcement plays a key role in the development of the Town of Carrboro as a destination, not a passageway to somewhere else. Construction should incorporate needed sidewalk improvements, lighting, planter strips, and other elements consistent with the downtown theme. These improvements are likely to stimulate private investment in this area, but would require coordination with the Town of Chapel Hill and NCDOT. Developers should adhere to the architectural guidelines adopted by the Town and supplemented with guidelines in this report.

Single lane roundabouts can handle up to 25,000 cars per day. Roundabouts also serve as effective gateways to mark the boundaries of a community. The large photo shows a bus negotiating the turn. Note the brick paving at the front left of the vehicle. If necessary, very long vehicles can ride up on this "apron" as they start the leftward turn. This is the reason for the low, mountable curb around the center.



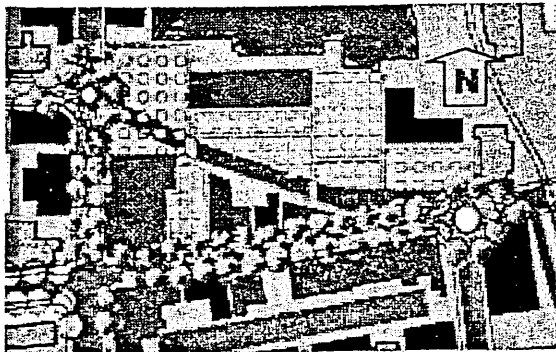


The sketch and photo above show how a mid-block crossing can be angled to encourage the bicyclist or walker to face in the direction of on-coming traffic before proceeding across the other lane. The sketch shows a street with parking, whose lanes are narrowed to ten feet at the crossing point. If bike lanes are marked on the street, they should continue through the crossing area.



West Weaver Street

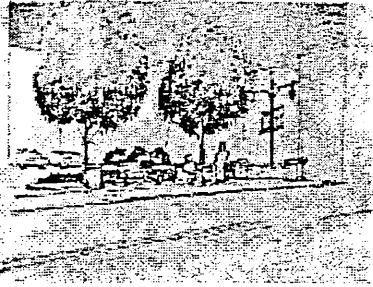
Linking Weaver Street between the Town Commons and the Carr Mill Mall will begin to tie the downtown district together. Sidewalks eight feet or wider, planter strips, pedestrian scale lighting, and street amenities such as benches and trash cans should be provided on both sides of the street. A street reconstruction should include bike lanes, one lane of traffic in each direction, a median with left turn pockets and curbside parking. Utilities should be buried if possible. The pooling of parking as recommended will eliminate some of the driveways, which will improve traffic flow. Frequent crossing opportunities should be provided to encourage people to park once and walk to multiple destinations. Crossings should have high visibility markings, stop bars at least 20 feet from the crossing, and refuge islands. If the street is not widened, short medians and tree wells should be considered as a traffic calming treatment and crossing point. The Greensboro Street and Weaver Street roundabout will strengthen the link between the Town Commons and the Carr Mill Mall area.



The drawing shows East Weaver Street from Greensboro to East Main Street. A woonerf, as described on page 18, is recommended between the two roundabouts.

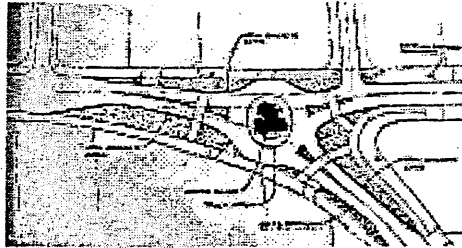
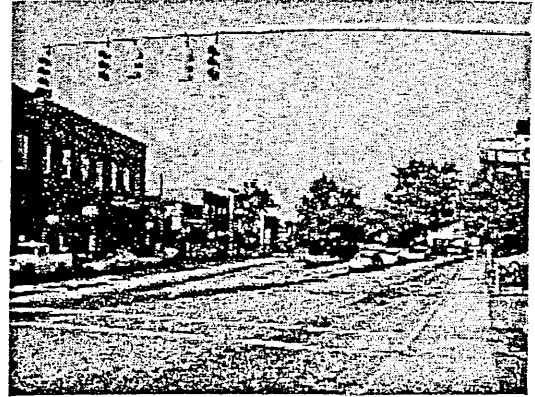
Carr Mill Mall and East Weaver Street

This site in front of Carr Mill Mall is already successful, but event public space near the privately owned space will offer greater diversity for the use of the area. The Town is already experimenting with temporary closures of Weaver Street to host events. The purpose of additional space is to complement the activities of the Weaver Street Market, as opposed to competing. The space should incorporate a woonerf as described in the Recommendations and be landscaped consistently with the theme developed for the downtown core. Information kiosks, benches, trash cans, water fountains, pedestrian scale lighting, and public art are a few of the amenities needed to create vibrant public space. Parking in small quantities can be incorporated,



This artist's concept shows how existing parking lots on Main Street could be landscaped to hide cars. Benches and other street furniture can be provided as part of the landscaping effort.

The sketch below shows how a roundabout was designed for a "Y" intersection in another community. A similar design is recommended at the East Weaver and East Main "Y" intersection shown in the photo on the right.



Medians should be provided on Weaver and Main Streets where the width of the right of way permits.

but too much parking will adversely impact the balance between vehicles and people. Roundabouts at both ends of East Weaver force traffic to enter and exit the area slowly and enhance pedestrian crossings.

The roundabout at the intersection with Main Street should be constructed in conjunction with this project. The roundabout will improve pedestrian crossings from the Town Commons area, facilitate smooth traffic flow, and reduced speeds. It is a key anchor for the downtown identity theme. The site should be landscaped and upgraded as necessary to blend with the theme established for the downtown area.

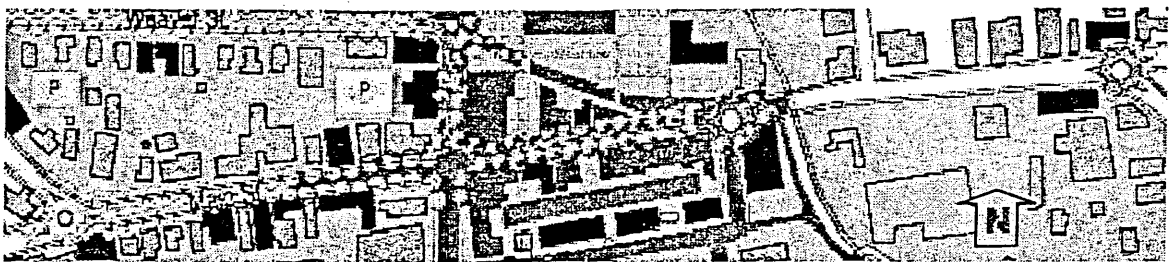


Combining a curb extension with a median shortens the crossing distance for pedestrians and create better visibility between the motorist and the person crossing. Curb extensions can alternate with on-street crossing but should not extend into the bike lane.

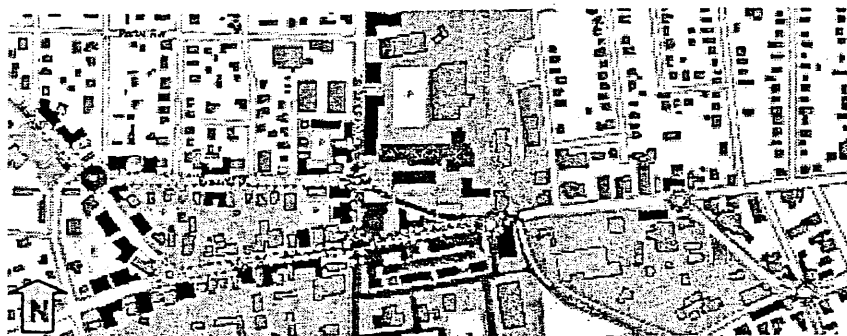
Main Street

Gateway entries at the eastern and western edges of downtown should help "calm" traffic by reducing speeds and smoothing flow. The roundabouts on Main Street at Jones Ferry Road and at the junction with Rosemary Street will help reinforce these calming effects where appropriate. Sidewalks at least eight feet wide, planter strips, pedestrian scale lighting, and street amenities such as benches, bike racks, and trash cans should be provided on both sides of Main Street.

This diagram suggests how roundabouts at Main and Jones Ferry and Main and Rosemary could be situated.



The buildings in black on the Vision Map at right show potential sites for new buildings.



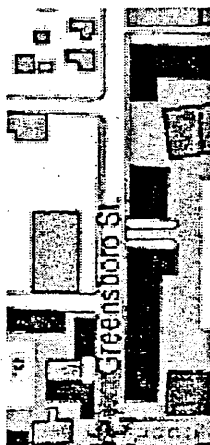
The Vision Map depicts new buildings filling in spaces between existing buildings. This continuous fabric will create continuity in the downtown. Parking should be pooled behind buildings accessed from side streets and clearly marked with themed signs. Limiting driveway access will facilitate smooth traffic flow and increase the carrying capacity of the street. Attractive, well-lit connections for pedestrians and bicyclists between the parking areas and the street should be provided between buildings.

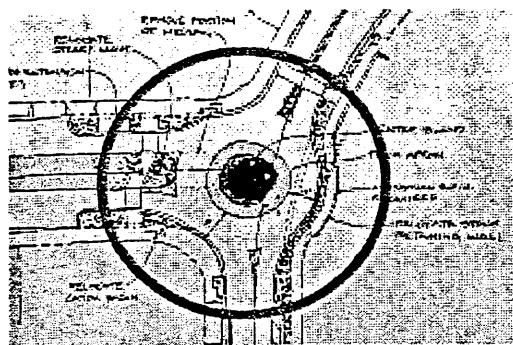
When the street is reconstructed, properties that do not have a continuous façade should have landscaped edges. Cars parked in lots should be screened from view by landscaping features. These edges can incorporate resting places, art displays, and other street features that make walking interesting.

Right-of-way widths vary along Main Street. Two ten-foot lanes should be provided along the entire route. In areas where it is feasible, landscaped medians should be installed. If space is not adequate for a continuous median, install pedestrian refuge islands at intervals of approximately 150 feet. Exact location will be influenced by street width, but they should serve points most often accessed by pedestrians. Mid-block crossings should be well lit, well marked, and have stop bars placed at least 20 feet away from the crosswalk. On-street parking should be provided whenever possible, but refuge islands should be a higher priority.

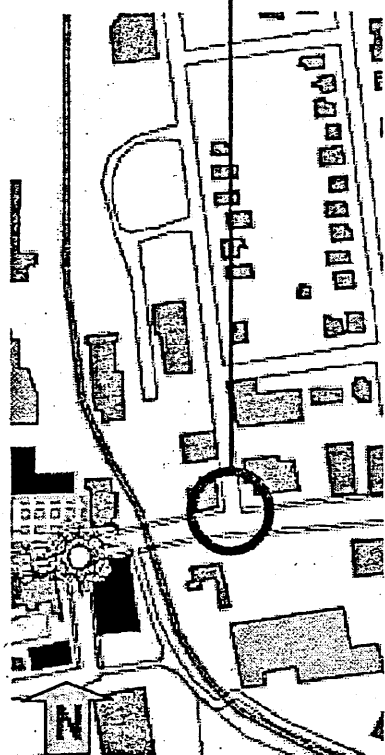
Greensboro Street / Carr Mill area

Street improvements should continue north of Main Street past the Carr Mill. The Vision Map shows new buildings on both sides of the street in the Carr Mill area. The footprint of these buildings is shown close to the roadway, which is more consistent with setbacks in historical areas than the open parking lot typical of modern malls. This type of redevelopment is dependent upon the motivation of the property owner, but as the demand for commercial space increases the owner may find the opportunity appealing.





This three-leg roundabout drawing from another community is typical of the type of design that would be developed for the roundabouts in Carrboro. It could be modified to add a connection to the Arts Center if desired.



Lloyd Street

Many ideas emerged during the charrette that have a direct impact on the people residing in the vicinity of Lloyd Street. Residents here have worked long and hard to obtain a traffic signal at Lloyd Street and Main Street. This decision was based on their knowledge of available tools for improving safety and convenience. However, if safety is their first concern, they should at least be aware that roundabouts are much safer than traffic signals. There is also less delay at a roundabout and the added benefit that traffic entering the street will probably move more slowly. If a signal design is retained, it should include bulb outs at the corners to shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians. A workshop in which the advantages and disadvantages of each of these traffic control devices should be conducted. During the workshop participants should also discuss a connection between Lloyd Street and Carr Mill that was proposed during the charrette. Do they want a connection? Should it serve vehicles, or just those walking and riding bicycles?

Planning, Policies, and Operations

Capital improvements require funding, detailed plans, and a phased schedule that limits disruption in the downtown core. It takes time to bring these elements together.

Many other steps can be taken with little or no investment beyond the normal operational costs of managing a city. These steps involve integrating the Vision Plan into the policies and processes that are part of the daily functions of the Town.

Some additional planning is recommended to solicit input from the Lloyd Street residents and to prepare a Landscape/Streetscape Master Plan. Traffic operations, parking management, and project review processes already in place can incorporate many Vision Plan elements immediately. Zoning and policy documents need to be reviewed to ensure they facilitate implementation.

- Carrboro's low priority in the metropolitan area as a whole.

Some of these problems can be and have been influenced by local policy and some are the unintentional result of economic conditions or geography. In the next section we focus on where local policy can be a lever to capitalize on the types of growth the town wants.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLBOX

In order to emphasize economic growth in the downtown and to expand the commercial tax base, Carrboro should emphasize the creation of a diverse business environment. Like most government agencies, the town has a limited ability to affect the local economy but can assist in several ways, including the provision of basic public infrastructure and services. In addition, Carrboro can adopt a number of different strategies to encourage economic growth. Below we offer several possible strategies, along with examples and justification for each.

In adopting any of these strategies, it is recommended that the town set very clear goals as well as methods and measures for evaluating success. It is frequently difficult to determine whether strategies are successful after the fact unless baseline measures are taken.

Infrastructure requirements

1. Build a parking structure or encourage the creation of a private parking structure
 - Despite the desire to create a pedestrian village, Carrboro is now (and will be for the foreseeable future) dependent upon the automobile to support businesses
 - Survey indicates that most people are willing to pay some for parking, but it is very difficult for a parking deck to break even
2. Develop methods of reducing traffic impacts
 - Even though retail businesses gravitate toward high traffic areas, the amount of congestion in the downtown area is already excessive. Some better method of handling traffic should be developed.
 - Even though it is not an economic development method per se, infrastructure maintenance and enhancement are critical for further expansion of the local economy.

Real estate development

3. Produce a fast-track development process for individual tracts of land or zones
 - Private developers see the entitlement process in Carrboro as the primary weakness of development in town
 - Demand is constrained by the development process, but the town can use this constrained demand to target investment where it is desired, without preventing development
 - Long-term view must be taken, but Orange County currently has a glut of office space
 - The town board should determine what they would like to see and convey this to potential developers, while remaining flexible in the goals

- The town should consider expedited entitlements through matrix incentives, like Austin, or entitlements that are designated for particular uses on tracts the town would like to see developed.
4. Recommend shared or reciprocal parking agreements for all developments downtown
 - Reduce the land area required for parking to maintain density of downtown
 5. Designate high-priority development parcels

Business assistance

6. Seek out additional capital for the revolving loan fund
 - This has been Carrboro's most successful tool to support economic development
 - An increased amount in the loan fund would provide the ability to support larger businesses or more businesses at one time
 - Some portion of the loan may be used to assist businesses that fall upon difficult times
7. Explore the creation of a business incubator, possibly with an agreement with other landlords to transition the successful businesses into larger spaces when they "graduate"
 - Create wireless network throughout town (partner with Cisco, etc.)
 - The incubator could be focused on high-growth entrepreneurial activities, or it could focus on providing general small business services, such as the new Vilcom Small Business Center in northern Chapel Hill.
8. Encourage a general merchandise store downtown
 - This is one of the most requested stores by shoppers and one of the few services missing from downtown
 - Carrboro may find it difficult to find an operator who will consider working within the town's requirements for frontage and parking
 - General merchandise stores that are not deep-discount stores often have a difficult time surviving. The Hammer Siler George strategy reflected this difficulty in the recommendations for specialty retail and entertainment.
9. Entrepreneurial development
 - Evaluate whether the town can assist in the development of a venture or angel fund to provide risk capital to new ventures in Carrboro
 - Create a business incubator in Carrboro
 - Join with other organizations (such as the Council for Entrepreneurial Development) to identify possible future ventures
10. Become a clearinghouse of information for businesses, banks, and developers
 - Facilitating a network of potential dealmakers provides new venture or expansion ideas a forum for sharing and action

- Informal clearinghouse activities have long been a part of the office, but more formalized and complete information could provide a substantial benefit to local businesses.
11. Seek out successful local businesses that would consider an additional location in Carrboro
 - Businesses that already have a successful operation in other nearby towns may be more likely to be able to survive in Carrboro than new start-up businesses
 - The desire to have local businesses can be met without compromising all of the greater security of chain stores

Organizational recommendations

12. Conduct ongoing focus groups to generate ideas and guide strategies for the town, for example:
 - Technology
 - Entertainment focus
 - Small businesses
 - Developers, brokers, and lending institutions
 - Residents
13. Evaluate marketing effectiveness
 - Marketing materials appear effective, but analysis may determine cost-effective synergies with other public information campaigns
 - It may be as costly to evaluate marketing success as it is to generate the marketing. A possible solution may be to involve students (e.g., a practicum).
14. Continue to emphasize connections with other economic development agencies and organizations in the region and state.
 - Working with county, regional, state, and federal organizations as well as specialized organizations (such as small business, entrepreneurial, or industrial recruitment organizations) provides visibility to other influential organizations about opportunities in Carrboro.

Guiding principles

15. Create a unified development approach that incorporates infrastructure requirements, business attraction and retention strategies, and land use goals.
 - Municipalities frequently have scattered goals that impede success on any of them
 - Public awareness of the town's objectives will make increase the likelihood of necessary private action
16. Focus the town's economic development on specific high-return strategies:
 - Market the town's ideas to developers and property holders and encourage specific developments on specific sites

- Seek out firms to fill service needs for the downtown actively rather than passive encouragement
17. Focus redevelopment methods immediately to the east and west of the core Carrboro area
 - The town has a strong core between Greensboro Street and the railroad tracks
 - If the downtown is to develop further, redevelopment should be focused on areas adjacent to the core that are currently less appealing or underutilized
 18. Create a downtown attraction of some sort in order to bring people into downtown, something that is Carrboro-scale but has the effect of a hands-on museum or aquarium
 - Proceed cautiously, because this strategy is risky without a unique offering.
 - Consider that Carrboro is not even listed in the North Carolina visitors' guide, since it currently has no attractions or lodging.
 19. Continue to encourage the development of downtown residential areas
 - Emphasize high-density housing in downtown, such as over street-level businesses
 - Communicate to the townspeople the importance of high density in the downtown
 - Do not overdo it, or the commercial tax base gain will be offset by residential tax base growth.
 20. Set the goal of maintaining a diversity of business types
 - Diverse business mix weathers downtown locations better
 - Provides a more complete destination for shoppers
 - Provides a better draw to residences that develop around town
 21. Retain dollars lost to other communities
 - Money that stays in the town does not have to be regenerated through export
 - Some innovative methods suggested by the Rocky Mountain Institute:
 - Encourage energy efficiency as a method of preventing dollars from leaving town
 - Provide a service to local businesses to connect them to local suppliers to encourage wealth to stay within the community
 22. If Carrboro determines that industry should be developed to increase the tax base, very specific goals should be determined (e.g., see the Vision 2020 document).
 - Clean, innovative industries are the best possibility.
 - Join with the Council for Entrepreneurial Development, North Carolina Technology Development Authority, the University, and other organizations to find industries that are specifically viable in the area and are clean firms.
 - There are relatively few examples currently, but these will be growing. Collins and Aikman Floorcoverings, which uses a closed loop manufacturing process, is one such example.