



# Petersburg Downtown Plan

February 2024

# Executive Summary

The *Petersburg Downtown Plan* is the result of a community-driven process that unfolded over the course of 2023. Looking ahead to 2040, the plan will guide the next 15 plus years of growth and change, development and preservation within Downtown and the Downtown community.

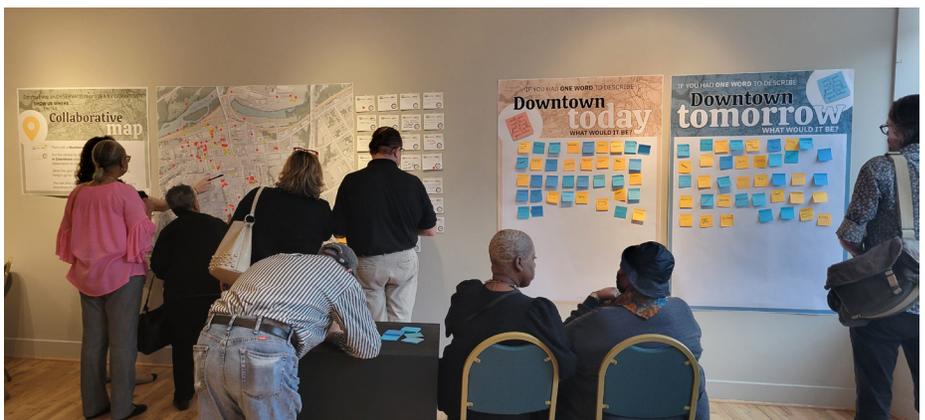
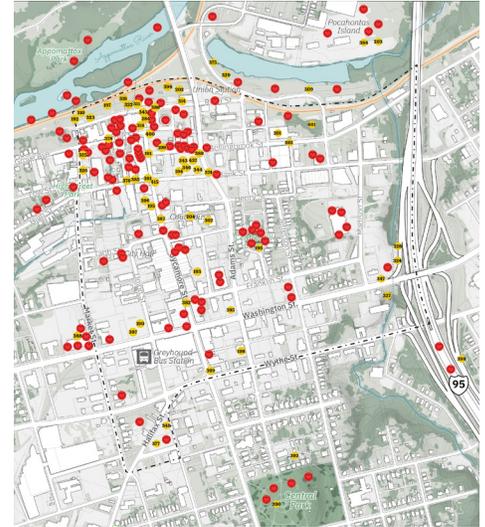
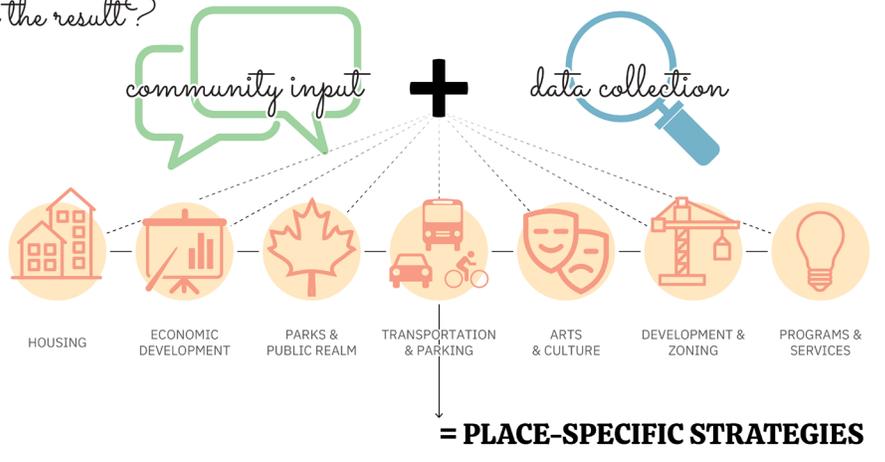
The City of Petersburg Department of Economic Development led the planning process for the City, in coordination with the Mayor and City Council, the City Manager and other City agencies, and a range of committed partners and citizen stakeholders, among them Downtown residents and business owners, community-based organizations, non-profits, property owners, developers, and other champions of Downtown. Over 400 different people shared their time and thoughts throughout the process.

Developed during the same time frame as the City's new Comprehensive Plan, *Petersburg Next*, this district-specific plan for Petersburg's historic urban core is an opportunity to demonstrate how the ideas and overarching direction of the Comprehensive Plan touch the ground in Downtown, at once the central business district, a walkable neighborhood, a hub of community, and a destination for visitors who travel from near and far. Serving a range of diverse functions and a diverse community, the *Petersburg Downtown Plan* grapples with a range of important issues from economic development and housing to design and preservation; history and narrative; walkability, sustainability, and inclusivity; parking, parks, and programming.

As the *Petersburg Downtown Plan* shifts its focus from planning to implementation, this plan provides a road map to inspire change, raise funds, direct public spending, and support lasting partnerships -- all ingredients necessary to make visible, tangible (and less-tangible, but no less important) improvements in Downtown over the coming years. The plan includes 29 strategies, organized by five key goals that support the community's shared vision for investment in Downtown's properties, public realm, and people. Some of the strategies are lower cost and can be accomplished in the near term, while others are complex and costly and will require time, significant resources, and coordination between the City, its partners, private property owners, and engaged business owners, residents, and volunteers.

With the plan now complete, the real work of bringing it to life begins, but armed with a shared vision and shared sense of direction and purpose, Downtown Petersburg is poised to work together toward common goals.

**WHAT GOES INTO A PLAN?** and what is the result?



Images from June 7, 2023 Public Visioning Event

# Acknowledgments

Many thanks to all who attended a public event, completed the survey, participated in an interview, served on the Advisory Committee, and otherwise lent their time and thoughts to help shape the *Petersburg Downtown Plan*. Your voices and vision punctuate the pages of this plan.

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# Introduction

## PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Cities, and the downtown districts and neighborhoods they comprise, are dynamic -- they change over time, influenced by factors big and small: environmental features, economic trends, warfare, disease, weather patterns, and the movement of goods and people, as well as the energy of everyday citizens and leaders. Downtown Petersburg has been shaped over time by these macro events and trends and the efforts of local movers and shakers. Today, these forces remain in play, and at this point in Downtown's unfolding future, City leadership identified the need for a "visionary, creative, and reality-based Downtown Plan," one that reckons with past challenges and hardships and builds upon the assets and potential that exist today.

Indeed, strong and economically vibrant cities have strong downtowns, and great downtowns evolve and thrive with careful planning and public input. With historic Downtown Petersburg experiencing a steady resurgence in interest and investment that began in 2000, slowed briefly during the COVID-19 pandemic, but now continues, the City's Department of Economic Development commissioned this plan to chart the next 15 years of growth and change in Downtown, asking:

- **How do we maintain the essence of Petersburg, especially its historic significance and charm?**
- **How do we establish and maintain an attractive, inviting, and walkable downtown?**
- **What is needed to fill vacant storefronts, enhance the economic vitality of Downtown, and support entrepreneurs?**
- **How do we leverage our assets?**
- **How do we connect to the Appomattox River?**
- **And what are the appropriate incentives and strategies to drive the investment and change Petersburg wants and needs?**

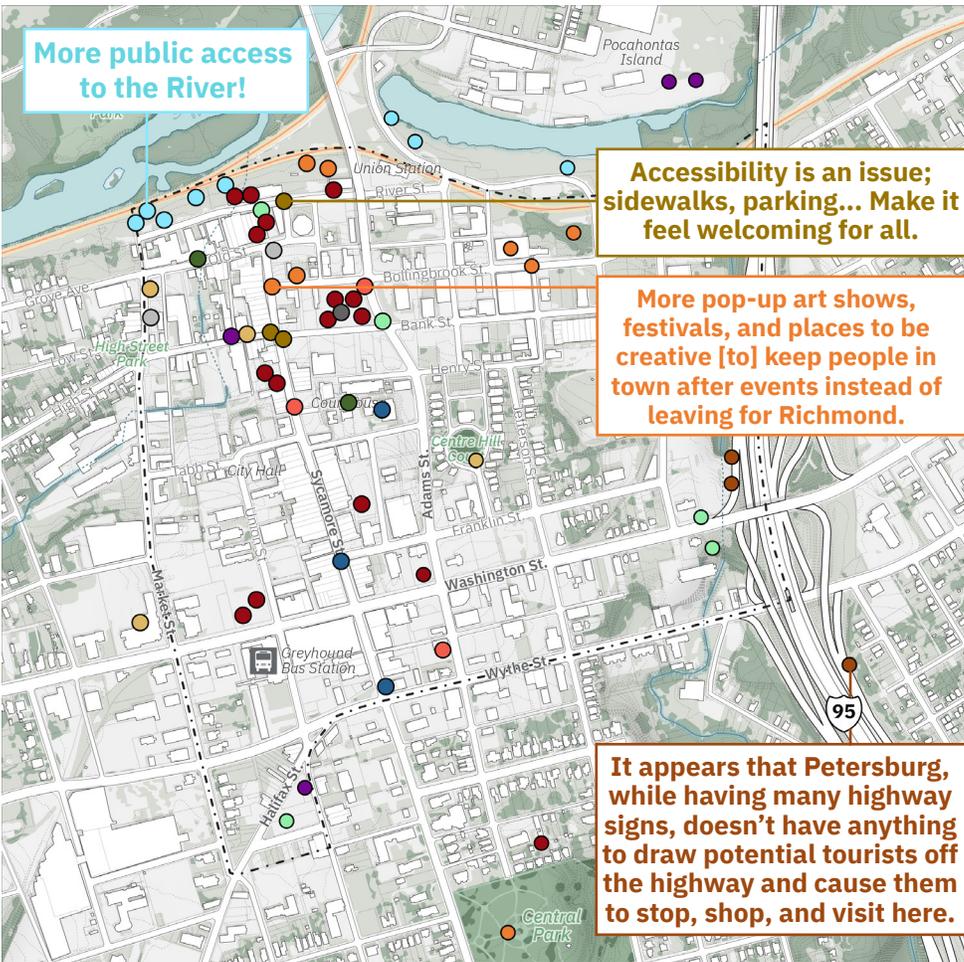
To answer these questions, the plan must blend research and data on Downtown's past and present with community priorities for change. Downtowns succeed by welcoming everyone, and at the outset of this plan, the City called for an inclusive, community-driven process. Anyone who lives, works, worships, studies, invests, hangs out, passes through, used to visit, thinks about, cares about, and/or is curious to learn about Downtown Petersburg was invited to participate in the planning process.

To ensure that the plan would echo the values, voices, and vision of residents, business owners, community organizations, cultural and religious institutions, elected officials, and community leaders, the planning team created multiple opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests to help shape the plan, including:

- **Five meetings with a 20-person Advisory Committee**
- **30 one-on-one or small group interviews**
- **Two public visioning events with over 150 in attendance**, and a
- **Downtown survey offered in person and online with over 320 participants**

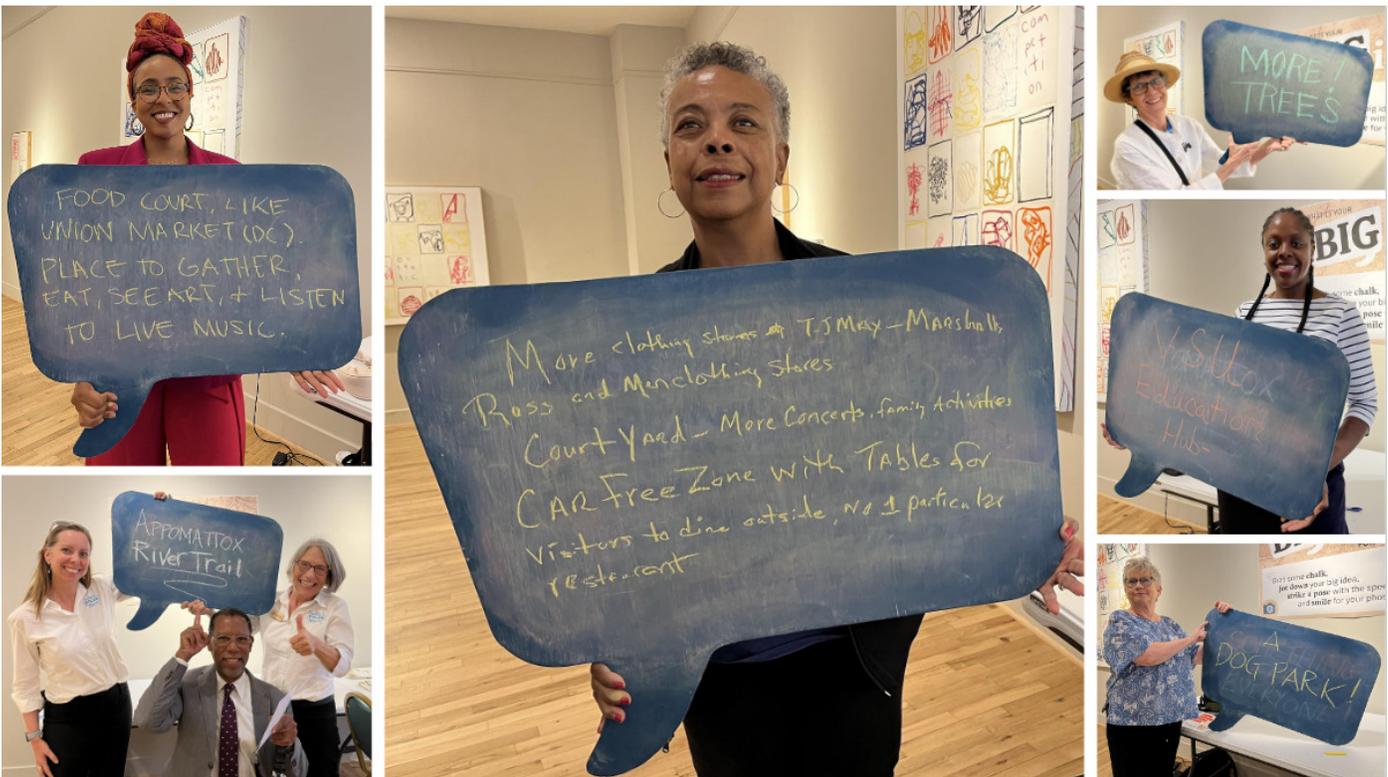
Now that the plan is done, it can serve as a useful tool for aligning priorities for Downtown with other initiatives in the City and region, for evaluating decisions, projects and proposals against a shared vision for the future, for fundraising, for fostering partnerships, and for guiding the efforts and energy of this generation of Downtown advocates, investors, entrepreneurs, and stewards. Despite the current momentum and interest within Downtown and in Petersburg more generally, there is real work ahead to assemble the resources and sustain the level of commitment and investment necessary to fully restore Petersburg's historic Downtown.

This plan can and should help focus investments and identify a series of achievable, smaller projects that together build toward a cohesive vision. Such early action steps can and really must be implemented in the near-term to maintain the momentum and excitement brewing Downtown and build capacity and a track record of accomplishments that shift the dominant narrative surrounding Downtown, thereby expanding the audience and continuing to improve the experience of all who live, work, and play in this special place.



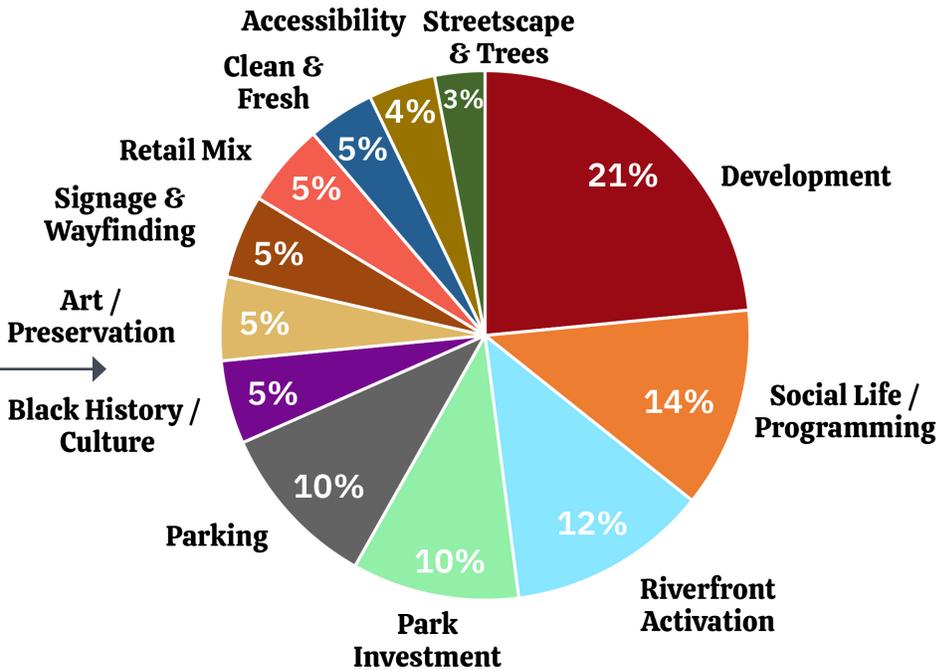
## Comments from Collaborative Map

The collaborative map received more than 60 ideas and insights from the community



Photos from June Public Visioning Event that capture attendees and their One BIG Idea for Downtown

The Downtown Plan's vision and strategies reflect the community's input throughout the planning process.

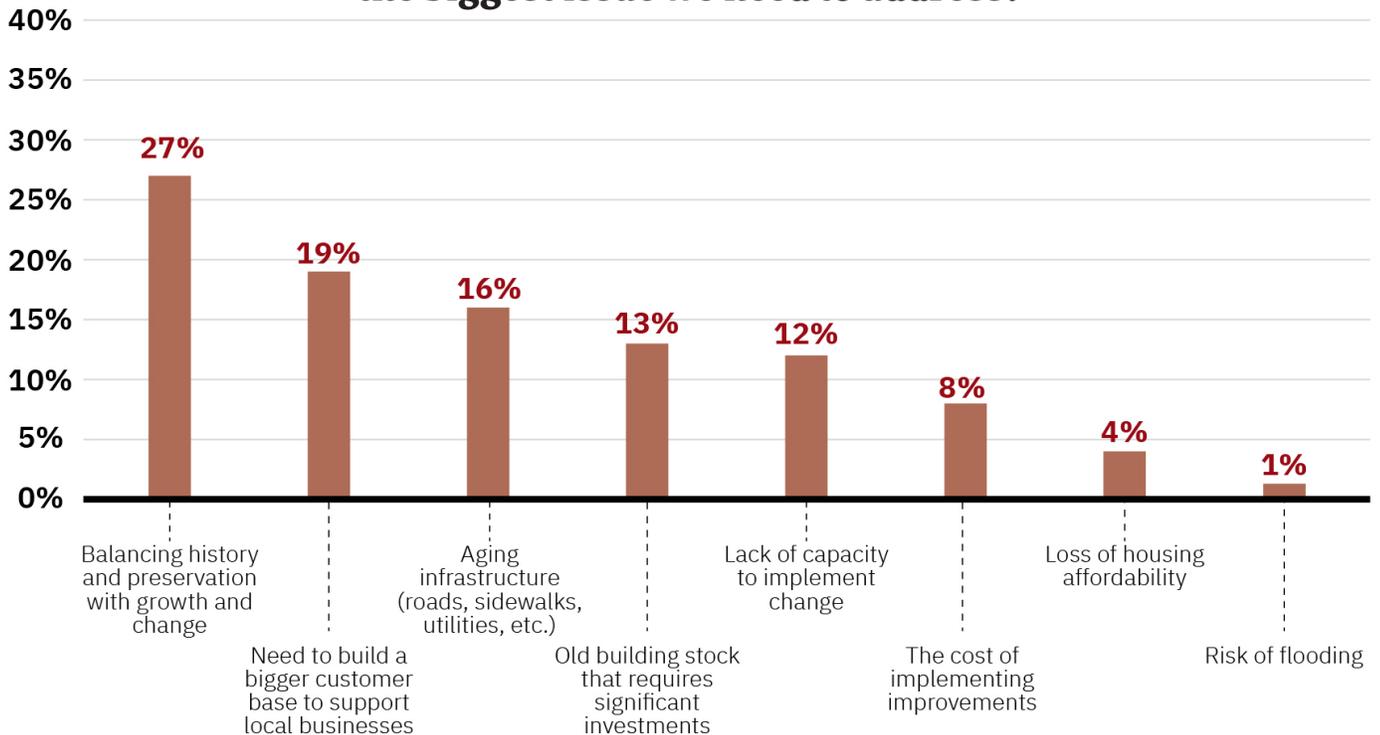


Collaborative Map Topic Areas



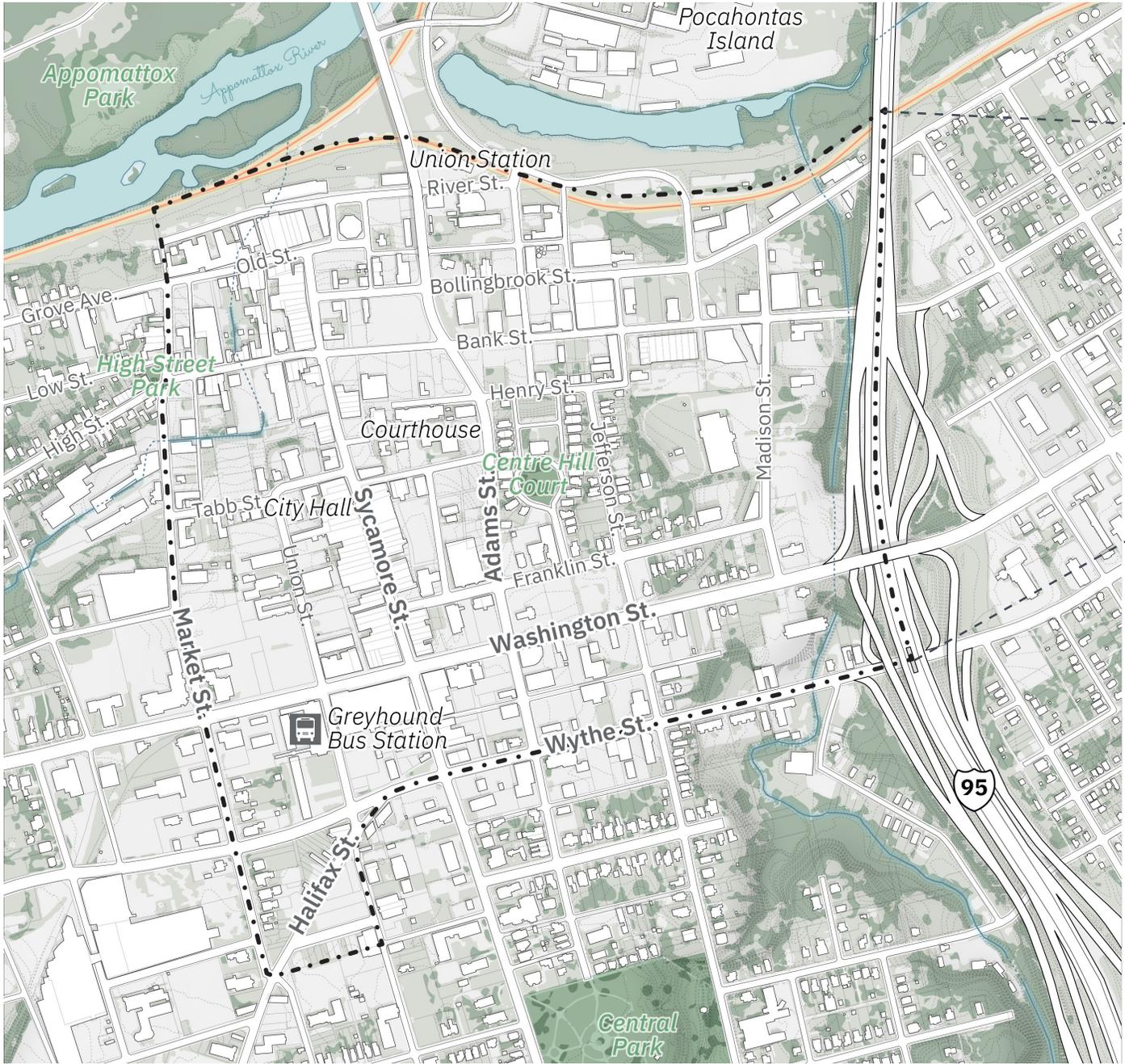
Photos from June Public Event

### When you think about the future of Downtown, what is the biggest issue we need to address?



Sample of Input from the Community Survey

**Figure 1. Downtown Study Area**



 Study Area Boundary

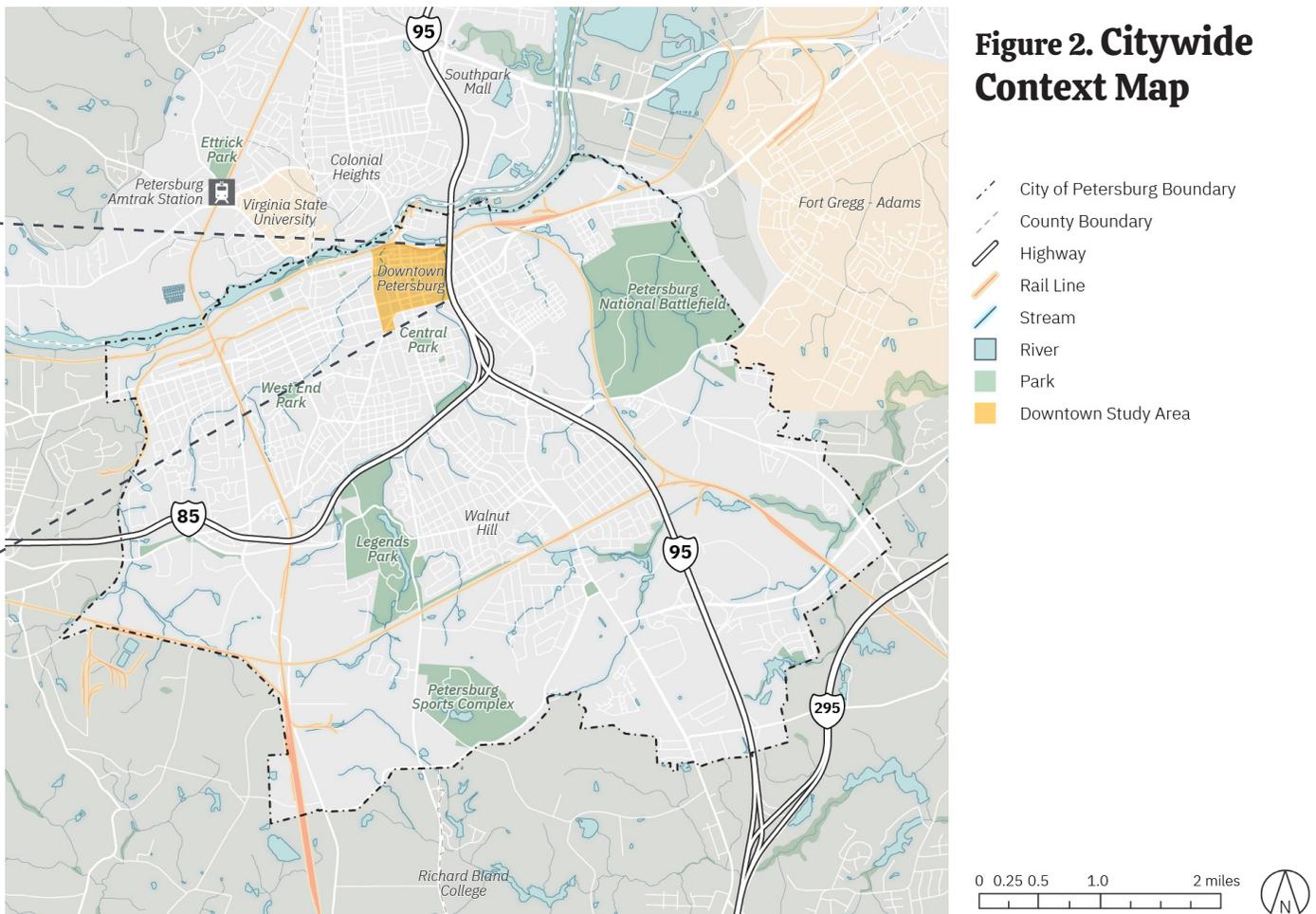
0 0.05 0.125 0.25 miles



## DEFINING DOWNTOWN

The study area for the Downtown Plan covers the area from the Appomattox River to the north down to Wythe and Halifax streets to the south, and from Market Street on the west over to the I-95 corridor to the east. Downtown is the historic heart of Petersburg, home to 2,000 residents, over 50 small, local businesses, and over 1,600 jobs.

**Figure 2. Citywide Context Map**



Just a third of a square mile in size, Downtown is located in close proximity to major institutions, attractions, and infrastructure corridors, big and small, all of which contribute to the Downtown community and have the potential to increase Downtown’s customer base.

- Virginia State University, Virginia’s first Historically Black College and University, with a student body population of approximately 5,400, is just one mile away, on the north side of the Appomattox River in Chesterfield County near Ettrick.
- The Petersburg National Battlefield managed by the National Park Service is 2.5 miles to the east of Downtown, drawing an estimated 180,000 visits each year.<sup>1</sup>
- The military base at Fort Gregg-Adams is just beyond the city limits, roughly five miles east of Downtown, with a population just shy of 10,000 service members in training as quartermasters to meet the US Army’s logistical missions.
- The I-95/I-85 interchange provides vehicular connections to the north and south, bringing between 47,000 and 111,000 vehicles a day in each direction past historic Downtown Petersburg and providing a fast path to Virginia’s capital city of Richmond.<sup>2</sup>
- Amtrak’s Petersburg Station is just 2.5 miles from the heart of Downtown, on the far side of VSU’s campus, providing convenient access by train to cities up and down the eastern seaboard, and
- The Appomattox River Trail, with segments that pass through Downtown fully funded and soon to be in design, and the planned Fall Line Trail will offer beautiful and natural bicycle and pedestrian connections between Downtown and other destinations in the region.

<sup>1</sup> National Park Service Visitor Data Sets, 2022 (<https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/Park/PETE>)

<sup>2</sup> VDOT Average Daily Traffic Volume, 2022

# DOWNTOWN PLANNING IN CONTEXT

Until now, Petersburg has never had a plan focused solely on Downtown, though prior planning efforts and studies have touched ground in Downtown in different ways. In setting a new vision for Downtown, it is important to revisit past plans, align with ongoing initiatives, and seek ways to complement investments and opportunities on the horizon. The Petersburg Downtown Plan takes all of the following into consideration, for inspiration and coordination:

## Past Plans

- In 2007, volunteers of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) participated in a four-day **Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT)** charette focused on the same Downtown study area as this plan. Named the **Re-envisioning Petersburg Together Plan**, the resulting plan developed urban strategies and sketches to illustrate the redevelopment potential of the different districts within the Downtown; many of the ideas remain relevant today.
- The **2007 Strategic Investment Plan** developed visions for the redevelopment and infill of four pockets of Petersburg with high concentrations of vacant properties, the Halifax Triangle and adjacent neighborhood fabric immediately south of Downtown among them.
- The **2009 Petersburg National Battlefield Boundary Adjustment Study** evaluated the possibility of including South Side Depot (located at 37 River Street in Downtown Petersburg) in the park boundary due to the significant role it played in Confederate logistics during the siege of Petersburg in 1864-1865. While the boundary expansion did not move forward, the City has invested American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to restore the structure and add modern restroom facilities, and conversations remain ongoing about the possibility of establishing a visitors center inside with some degree of presence or partnership from the National Park Service (NPS).

## Ongoing Initiatives

- **Petersburg Next: Our Plan for a Bright Future** is the new citywide comprehensive plan for the City, developed through a community process that unfolded during the same time frame as the Petersburg Downtown Plan. With recommendations on Economic Development; Housing & Neighborhoods; Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation; Community Facilities & Infrastructure; Safety; Natural Environment; Mobility & Transportation; and Future Land Use, there is much overlap between these two concurrent plans. The Alignment Table on page 86 charts alignment between the Downtown Plan and the new comprehensive plan, demonstrating that implementation of this plan's recommendations will provide ample opportunities to advance the goals and objectives of *Petersburg Next*.
- **Partnership for Petersburg** is an effort launched in August 2022 by Governor Glenn Youngkin in coordination with Petersburg Mayor Sam Parham to effect comprehensive change and catalyze comprehensive investment in the City of Petersburg. With a goal of channeling state resources to support local initiatives in education, health, safety, commerce, transportation, and community partnerships, the effort names revitalizing Downtown Petersburg as one of its key initiatives.
- **Main Street Petersburg** is a community-based organization committed to supporting the preservation and development of Downtown Petersburg as a premier destination for diverse



Images from 2007 Strategic Investment Plan

Ongoing Plans and Studies



Ongoing Initiatives



tourism, rich culture, and a strong community. Main Street Petersburg is currently seeking Main Street designation through Virginia Main Street, which would open doors to additional resources and technical assistance to support ongoing community and economic development programming in the historic downtown.

- The **Appomattox River Trail** is a 25-mile east-west trail that will connect six communities flanking the Appomattox River as it reaches the confluence of the James River. Spearheaded by Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR), this “blueway-greenway” includes bicycle and pedestrian paths, riverside parks, historical sites, and riverfront access points, with Downtown Petersburg located at the mid-way point. The two-mile segment that winds through Downtown Petersburg from Patton Park to Pocahontas Island is shovel-ready and fully funded. Design will begin in 2027, and construction should be underway in 2029.
- The **Fall Line Trail** is a new 43-mile multi-use north-south trail currently under development that will extend from Petersburg north to

Ashland, Virginia. The southernmost trailhead will be in Patton Park, just a half-mile from Downtown, where it will intersect with the Appomattox River Trail, bringing yet more active recreation enthusiasts and tourists to and through the area. Construction is expected to begin in 2025.

- The **STARS (Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions) Study** examining the I-95/I-85 interchange will evaluate a suite of improvements to the I-95 corridor as it passes by Downtown Petersburg, including the feasibility of converting Washington and Wythe Streets from one-way thoroughfares to two-way corridors that provide safer, multi-modal access to and from Downtown.
- With aged infrastructure and low-lying areas, portions of Petersburg experience localized flooding when it rains. The 2023 **Citywide Drainage Study** is an effort to map the City’s storm sewer system, model its stormwater management capacity, and inform future planning and design efforts to mitigate flooding by improving drainage and upgrading the system.

# DOWNTOWN YESTERDAY

Downtown is steeped in history, which is visible at every turn in cobblestone streets and historic structures, a point of pride, and a major draw for visitors.

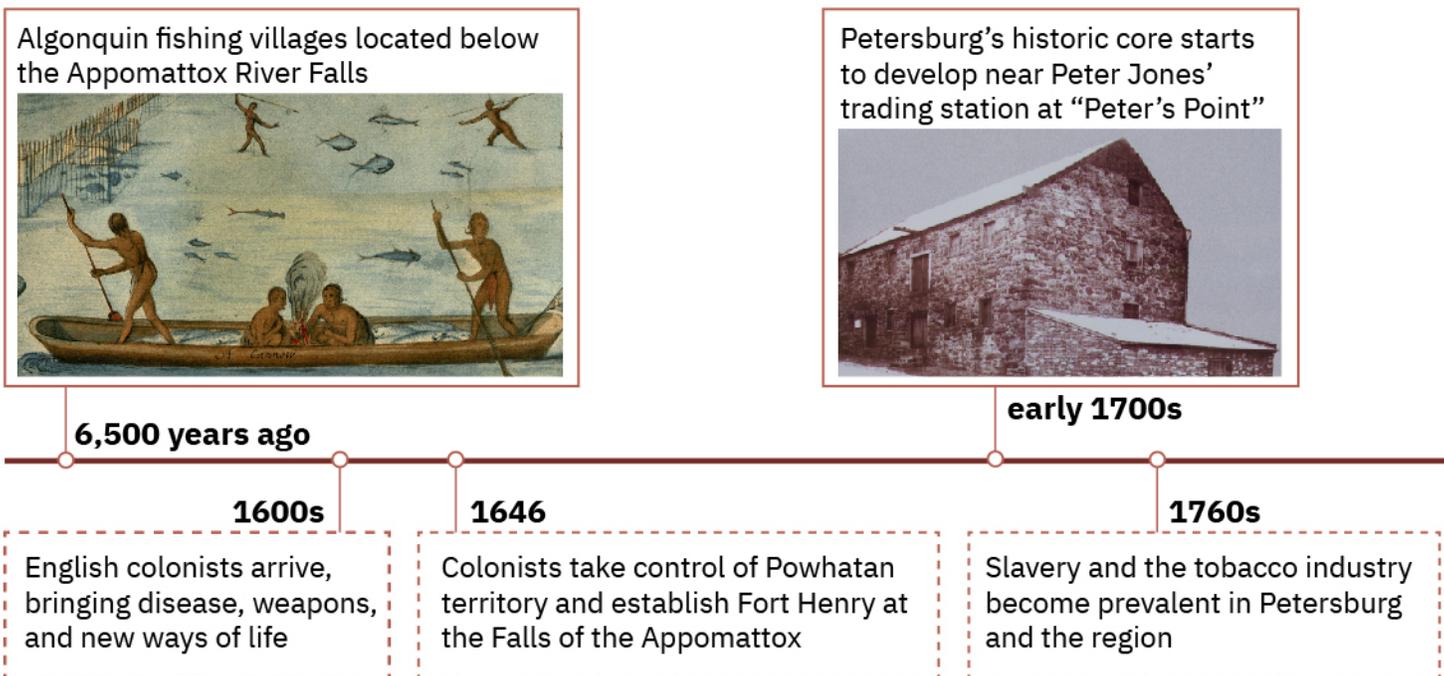
The area, situated on the banks of the tidal Appomattox River, which feeds into the James River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean beyond, was home to Indigenous people dating back at least 15,000 years. Evidence of seasonal fishing villages located below the Falls has been dated to 6,500 years, and those Algonquin settlements allied in the coastal Powhatan chiefdom existed into the 1600s,<sup>3</sup> when English colonists arrived, bringing disease, new weaponry, and new ways of life, ultimately taking control of Powhatan territory, and eventually establishing Fort Henry at the Falls of the Appomattox in 1646.

Around this site, Petersburg’s historic core developed, fueled by a robust Indian trade into the early 1700s; the city’s namesake, Peter Jones operated the trading station at “Peter’s Point,” the ruins of which remain visible at the intersection of

Old and Market streets today.<sup>4</sup> By the 1700s, the tobacco industry had taken root in the southern colonies, along with the brutal practice of slavery. By the 1760s one-third of tobacco exported from Virginia passed through an inspection station in Petersburg, as did high numbers of enslaved people sold by Petersburg’s slave traders after having survived the Middle Passage from Africa to the colonies.

Following the American Revolution, development of Downtown and near neighborhoods continued, and the Town of Petersburg incorporated in 1784. Large numbers of formerly enslaved Africans, freed for religious reasons, remained in Petersburg, forming the largest proportion of free African Americans of any American city before the Civil War; in 1860, more than half of Petersburg’s population was Black, and one-third were free.<sup>5</sup> Pocahontas Island, across the River from Downtown Petersburg, became the first majority free Black settlement in Virginia.

**Figure 3. Historic Timeline**



<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native\\_American\\_tribes\\_in\\_Virginia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_tribes_in_Virginia)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.historicpetersburg.org/>

While tobacco remained king, the region's economy evolved over time from trade and agriculture to include manufacturing, driven by the water power of the Falls that activated cotton mills and iron foundries among other commercial uses. New transportation routes -- both roadways and rail -- supported the movement of goods and materials. The City of Petersburg incorporated in 1850, and in the coming Civil War, Petersburg's transportation infrastructure, which funneled supplies to the Confederate capital in Richmond, drew General Grant's attention. In 1864, Union forces led by Grant attempted to capture the city. The bloody four-day Battle of Petersburg was followed by a 10-month siege of the City defined by trench warfare between Union and Confederate soldiers and the resulting loss of life, buildings, and disruption of the Downtown economy. Richmond, meanwhile, grew in strength, absorbing many of Petersburg's most important businesses and wealth.

Following the Civil War, during the tumultuous years of Reconstruction, Black voters in Petersburg successfully elected Black state delegates to

rewrite the Commonwealth's constitution and enact progressive legislation that included the creation of Virginia State University a stone's throw from Downtown.

*Black Virginians began reconstructing their own lives at the first opportunity. They founded their own churches and benevolent organizations, reconstituted their families, and started businesses. In many ways, these quiet, non-political actions were the most enduring acts during Reconstruction.<sup>6</sup>*

By the end of the 1800s, however, Jim Crow laws had legalized racial segregation and re-codified discrimination at the state level. Downtown establishments along Sycamore Street and elsewhere catered to white residents, while The Avenue (today known as the Halifax Triangle bound by South Avenue, Halifax Street, and Harrison Street) became Petersburg's Black business district, where Black businesses served Black residents and a bustling social scene emerged.<sup>7</sup>

City of Petersburg incorporates; Pocahontas Island becomes first majority free Black settlement in VA



1850-1860

Civil War; four-day battle and 10-month siege of the City of Petersburg



1864

1784

Town of Petersburg incorporates, following the Revolutionary War

after 1865

Years of Reconstruction; Black state delegates elected to rewrite Virginia constitution

late 1800s

Jim Crow laws legalize racial segregation and re-codify discrimination

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pocahontas\\_Island](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pocahontas_Island)

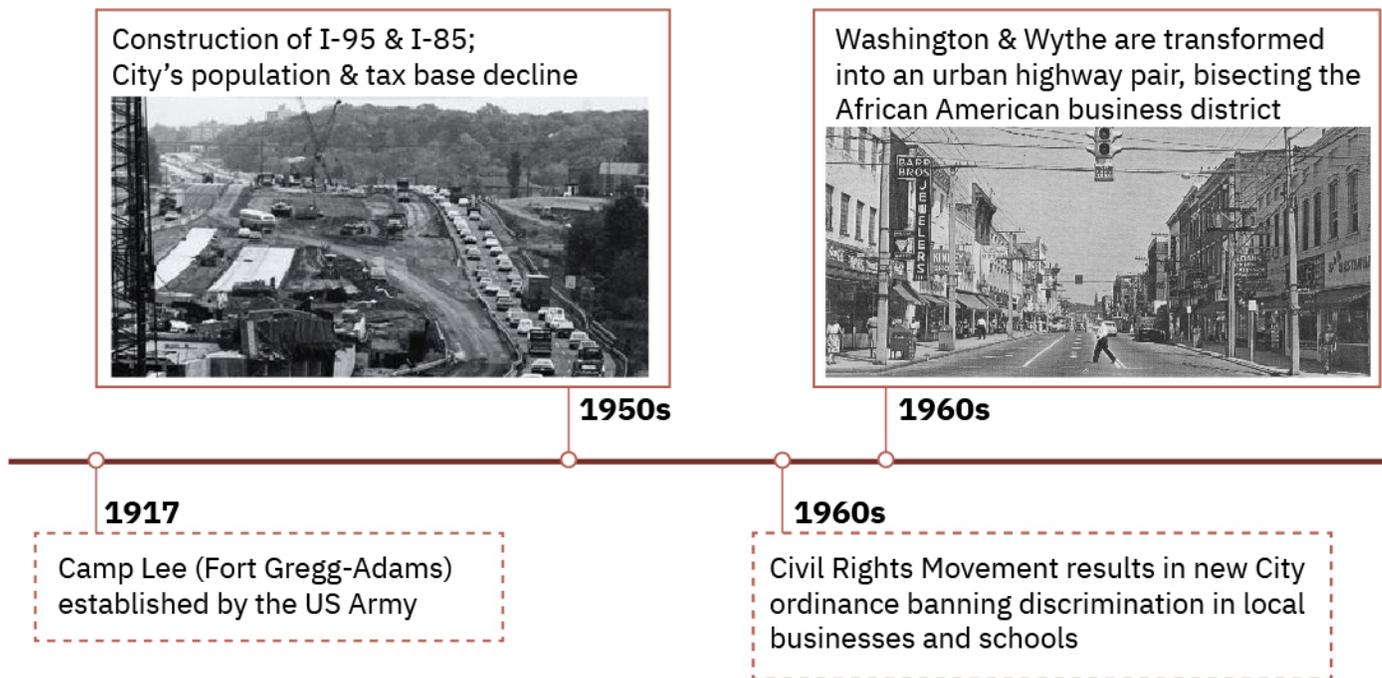
<sup>6</sup> <https://reconstructingvirginia.richmond.edu/overview>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.progress-index.com/story/news/2022/02/24/avenue-harlem-south-petersburg-what-like/6898258001/>

Camp Lee, which became Fort Lee and is now known as Fort Gregg-Adams, was established by the US Army in 1917, as the United States entered World War I. It served as a recruit training facility for tens of thousands, and Downtown became a destination for off-duty soldiers, drawn by entertainment, both on stage and off. Following World War II, Petersburg, like many Downtown and cities across the nation, began to experience an outflux of its middle-class residents. The construction of I-95 and I-85 in the 1950s provided new access to new suburbs beyond the city limits, and the City's population and tax base declined.

As the Civil Rights movement grew in strength in the 1960s, movement leaders conducted many sit-ins at Downtown Petersburg businesses, which ultimately resulted in a new City ordinance banning discrimination in commercial establishments and the eventual integration of the public schools. Meanwhile, the ongoing suburbanization of the nation and commercial and job centers continued to draw people and resources out of Petersburg's historic Downtown. Businesses closed, jobs were lost, and in time, buildings demolished and replaced with surface parking. The City and state transformed Washington and Wythe into a one-way urban highway pair that bisected the African American business district from the rest of Downtown.

### Figure 3. Historic Timeline, continued



Concerned about decades of disinvestment and loss, Downtown champions and historic preservation advocates began work to counterbalance or counteract a wholesale redevelopment of the historic downtown fabric. The Historic Petersburg Foundation formed in 1967 and led the effort to create numerous National Historic Districts in the downtown area to protect the building stock in Downtown Petersburg. The Appomattox Iron Works returned to life with artists and small businesses filling its cavernous structure, branding the area Old Towne, and seeding a new style of revitalization centering on the area’s history and historic charm.

A devastating 1993 tornado disrupted the forward progress, tearing a path of destruction through Downtown and Pocahontas Island, but this disaster catalyzed targeted investment, and by 2000, Downtown began to re-emerge as a regional destination for local restaurants, arts, and culture. The adaptive reuse of historic buildings for apartments followed, breathing new life into many formerly industrial and mixed use structures, even while the City experienced new levels of economic hardship.

A devastating tornado tears a path of destruction through Downtown and Pocahontas Island



1993

Downtown begins to re-emerge as a regional destination for local restaurants, arts, and culture



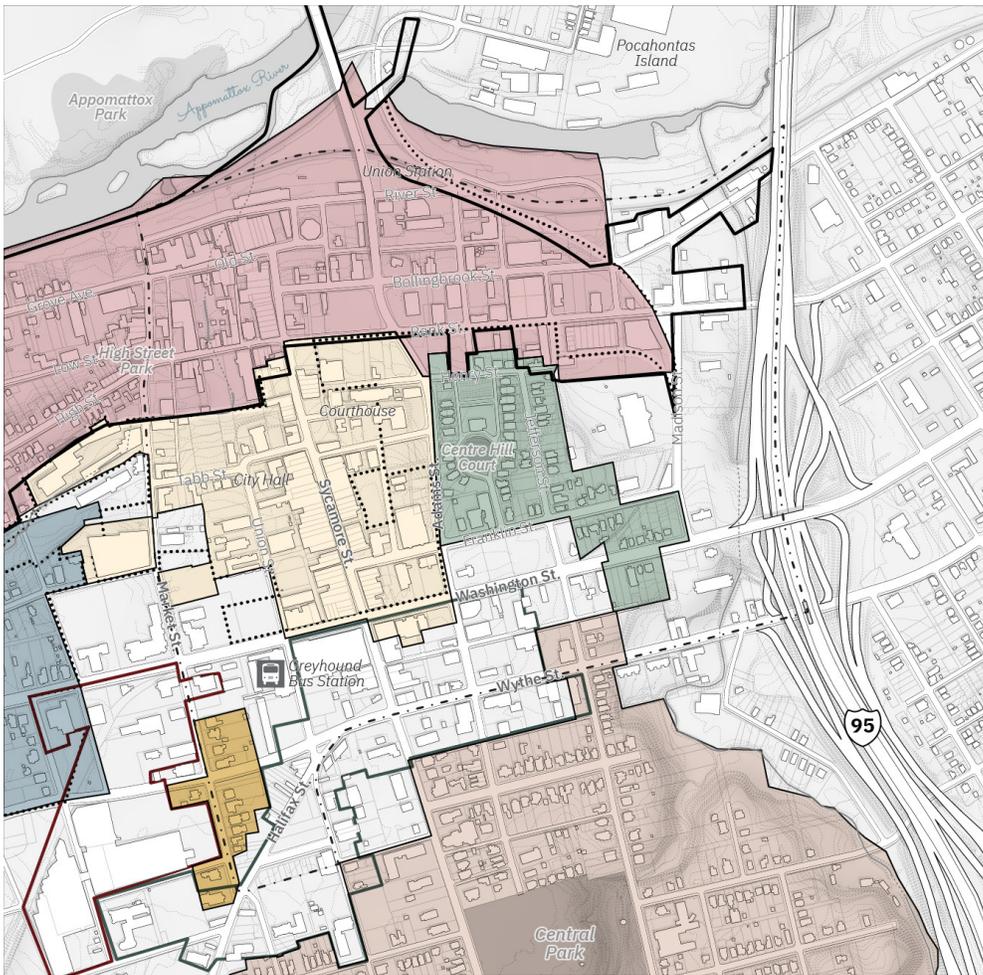
2000-present

1967

The Historic Petersburg Foundation forms and creates National Historic District in Downtown

1970-1980

The Appomattox Iron Works returns to life with artists and small businesses, branding the area Old Towne

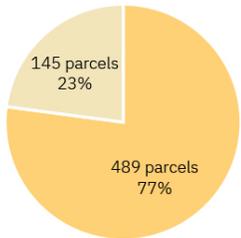


**Figure 4. Historic Districts**

Source: City of Petersburg

- Downtown Study Area
- Local Historic Districts**
  - Old Towne
  - Folly Castle
  - Courthouse Historic Area
  - Centre Hill Historic Area
  - South Market St Historic Area
  - Poplar Lawn Historic Area
- State & Federal Historic Districts**
  - Old Town Historic District (VDHR)
  - Old Town Historic District (Nat'l Register)
  - Halifax Triangle & Downtown Commercial Historic District (Nat'l Register)
  - Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Commercial & Industrial Historic District (Nat'l Register)

**Percentage of Downtown Parcels in Local Historic Districts**



- Parcels in Local Historic District
- Parcels outside Local Historic District

*We need to highlight our history while still transcending, being innovative.*

- quote from interview

Today, 77% of Downtown properties are located within one of five locally-designated historic districts, mainly the Old Towne, Courthouse, and Centre Hill Historic Areas, with smaller pockets falling within the South Market Street Historic Area and Poplar Lawn Historic Area, and while vacancy--in the form of both empty structures and underutilized land--remains prevalent, so too is the desire to preserve and rebuild. The Old Town Historic District is also recognized by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) and the National Register of Historic Places, though the boundaries vary slightly. The National Register also includes two Historic Districts south of Washington: the Halifax Triangle and Downtown Commercial Historic District and the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Commercial and Industrial Historic District.

# DOWNTOWN TODAY

Though the shut-downs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic presented new challenges for downtowns worldwide, Downtown Petersburg maintained an impressive continuity of business operations by closing portions of Sycamore Street to cars and inviting people to come together to meet and eat outdoors, served by and in support of local restaurants. Today, new restaurants and shops continue to open their doors in Downtown, additional apartments are planned, a boutique hotel is under construction, and a \$130 million mixed use development is in design in conjunction with a new courthouse complex and City Hall.<sup>8</sup> And yet there is much more room and need for change. Nearly one-third of Downtown’s parcel area is dedicated to surface parking, and three out of five developed properties along Sycamore Street have vacant storefronts.



*Croaker's Spot restaurant interior, Demolition Coffee outdoor seating, Resist Bookseller's window display*



*View looking north on Sycamore Street*

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.wtvr.com/news/local-news/petersburg-plans-april-12-2023>



At once the seat of local government, central business district, a walkable neighborhood, a hub of community, and a destination for tourists and locals alike, Downtown has much potential but also a range of competing needs.

The balance of this chapter presents key take-aways from the analysis of existing conditions in Downtown. Going forward, the Petersburg Downtown Plan will help the City and its partners respond to and navigate the present-day issues and opportunities described on the following pages.



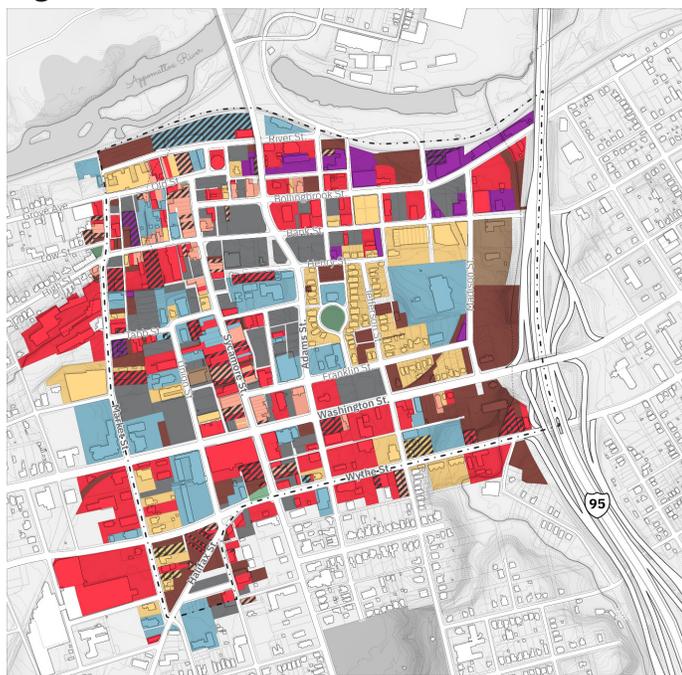
Public Library mosaic of iconic Downtown buildings, photos of Downtown housing, businesses, and community gathering places

## Downtown has a mix of land uses and walkable streets, but the pedestrian experience deters many from walking and perpetuates local concerns about a lack of parking.

Commercial and institutional uses make up half of Downtown, with a range of businesses, government offices, and services clustered in the area. Downtown is also known for its concentration of restaurants, bars, local shopping, and arts-related events. While these uses activate Downtown during the work week and after hours, nearly 30% of Downtown’s parcels are vacant or dedicated to surface parking. This area is equivalent to 51 acres or 39 football fields, which dramatically affects the experience of walking through Downtown.

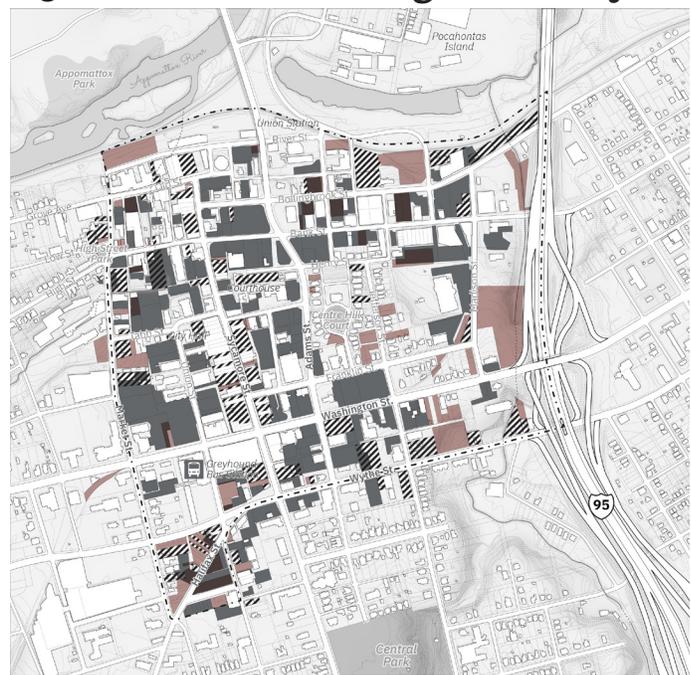
Without active storefronts, occupied buildings, and programmed open spaces, 50% of Downtown’s block frontages are inactive, and another 31% are somewhat active, leaving just shy of 20% active and interesting enough to drive pedestrian traffic and contribute to a pedestrian experience that feels both pleasant and safe. Add to that the distressed condition of many of Downtown’s sidewalks, curbs, and crosswalks, and the relatively few shade trees along the sidewalk, and many people prefer to drive to and from various Downtown destinations rather than walk, despite the fact that Downtown is compact and really quite walkable.

**Figure 5. Land Use**



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Residential | <span style="color: brown;">■</span> Utility         |
| <span style="color: red;">■</span> Commercial     | <span style="color: green;">■</span> Park/Open Space |
| <span style="color: orange;">■</span> Mixed Use   | <span style="color: grey;">■</span> Parking          |
| <span style="color: blue;">■</span> Institutional | <span style="color: black;">▨</span> Vacant Building |
| <span style="color: purple;">■</span> Industrial  | <span style="color: darkred;">■</span> Vacant Land   |

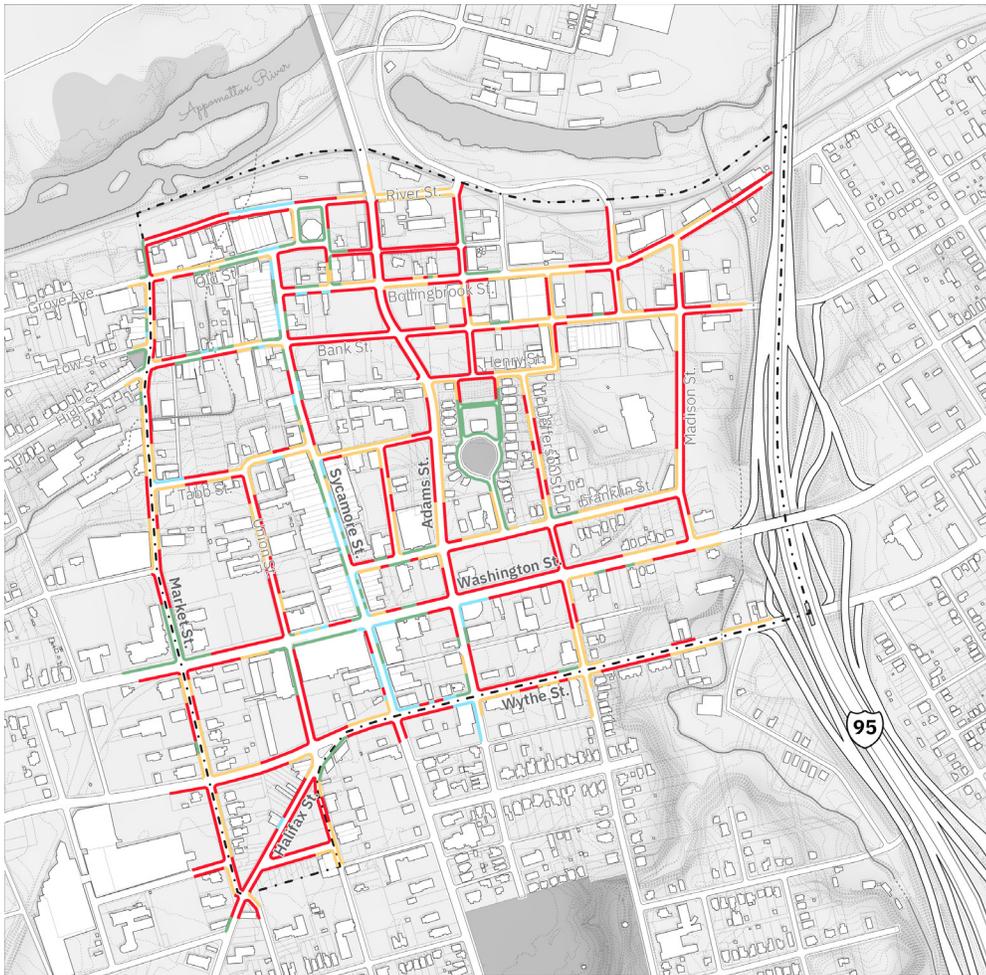
**Figure 6. Surface Parking & Vacancy**



- |   |
|---|
| <span style="color: darkgrey;">■</span> Surface Parking                                   |
| <span style="color: brown;">■</span> Vacant Land  |
| <span style="color: black;">▨</span> Vacant Building (fully vacant & ground floor vacant) |

0 0.05 0.125 0.25 miles

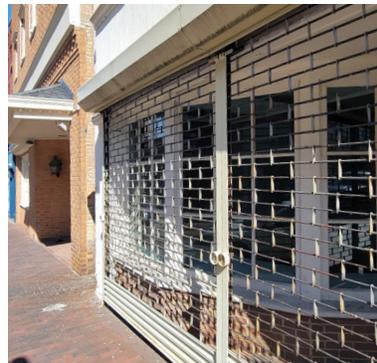
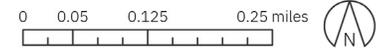
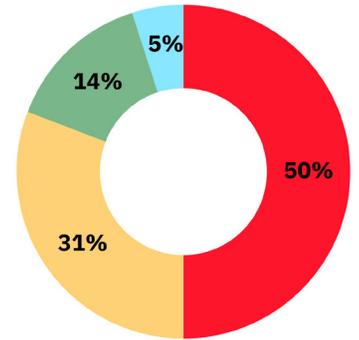




### Figure 7. Street Activation Map

Source: Interface Studio field survey

- Active
- Somewhat Active
- Inactive
- Potential to be active



*Unused surface parking and inactive building frontage and storefront*

*I love the texture of the building materials and the potential for an intimate pedestrian-centric space.*

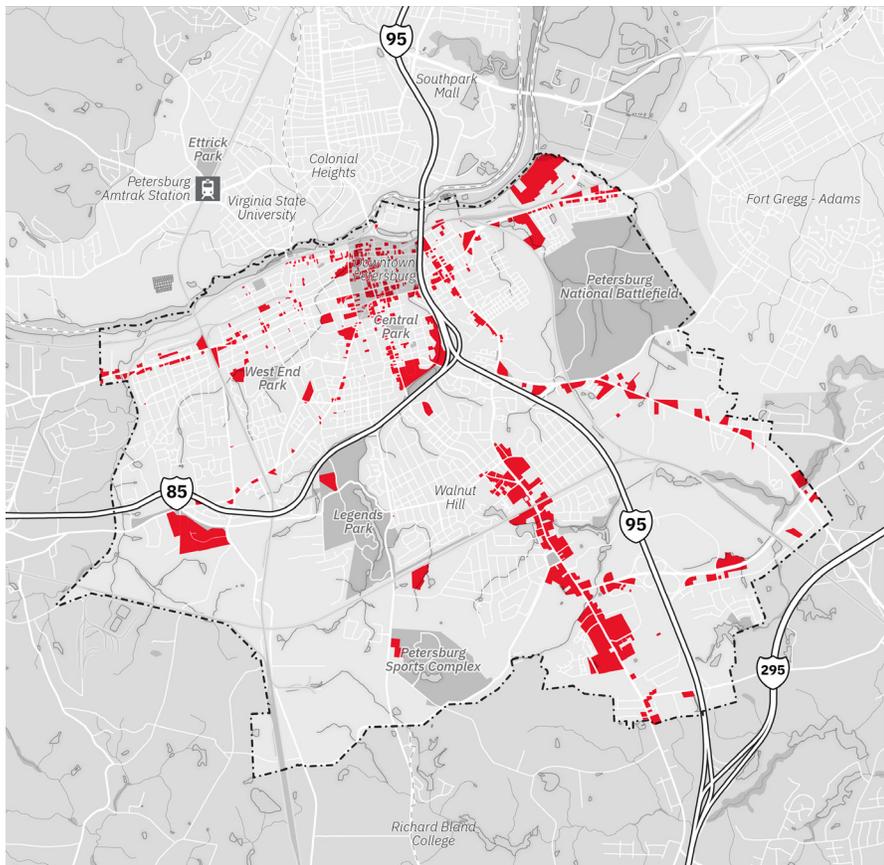
*- quote from survey*

As a result, residents, businesses, property owners, and employees Downtown cite concerns about a lack of parking. In fact, most days of the week and year, free on-street parking abounds, and additional free off-street parking exists for those who know where to look. As investment and new development introduce new destinations and demand, a more consistently activated streetscape will emerge, walking will become more of a norm, and the willingness to walk several blocks from a parking space to a destination will increase.

# Downtown is an economic engine for the City, but the engine needs tuning.

Commercial properties account for 7% of land across the city as a whole, and unsurprisingly, Downtown contains a disproportionate amount. Eight percent (8%) of all commercial acreage in Petersburg is in Downtown, which comprises just 1% of the city’s land area. Half of all jobs in Downtown are in Public Administration and Healthcare/Social Services; 8% are in food services and accommodation, 6% are in retail, and 5% are in arts and entertainment. Despite the strong public sector presence, Downtown hosts a cluster of private businesses, the majority of which are small businesses with fewer than 10 employees, mostly clustered on Sycamore Street and sections of Old Street, Bolingbrook, Bank, Washington, and Market. These local businesses include an array of restaurants, bakeries, coffee shops, and bars, antique stores, a book store, beauty salons, hair stores, professional services, and host of other independent operations that contribute to Downtown’s vibrancy and charm with their goods, services, events, and outward aesthetic.

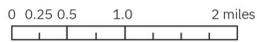
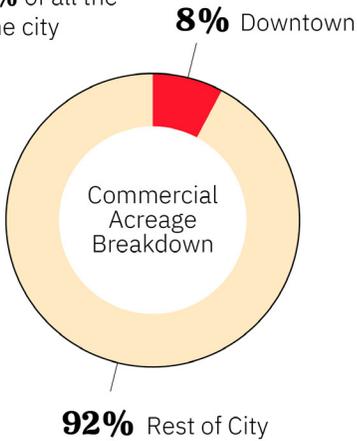
*Right now, Downtown is hit and miss, hit and miss.*  
 - quote from interview

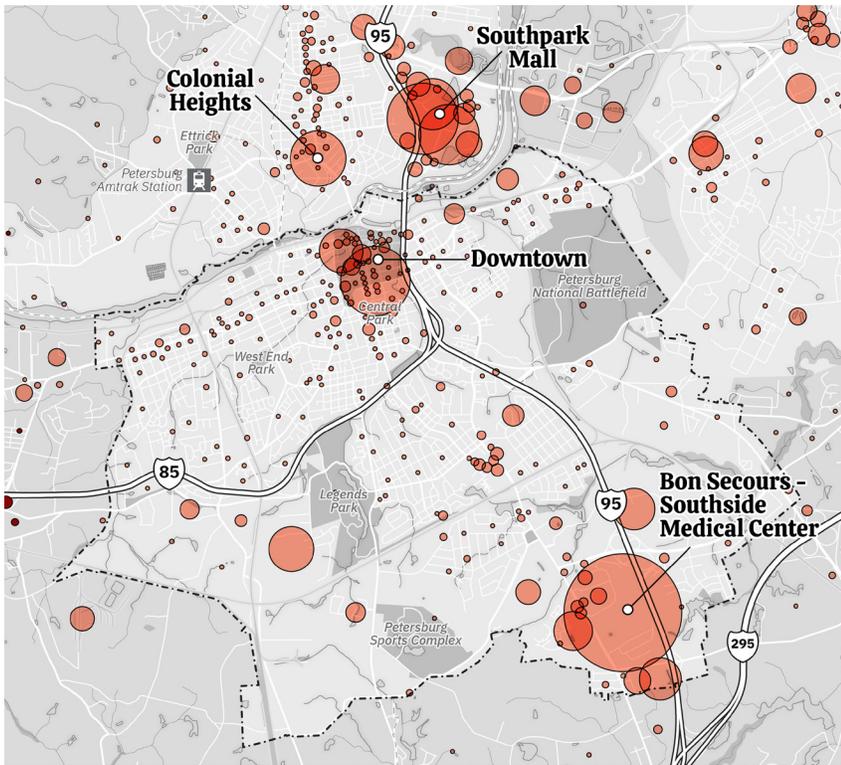


**Figure 8. Commercial Properties**

- City of Petersburg Boundary
- County Boundary
- Highway
- Commercial Property (Assessors Property Code)

\* Commercial properties account for **7%** of all the land across the city

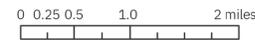
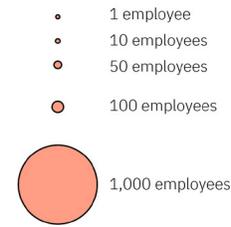




**Figure 9. Total Employment (2020)**

Source: Census On The Map

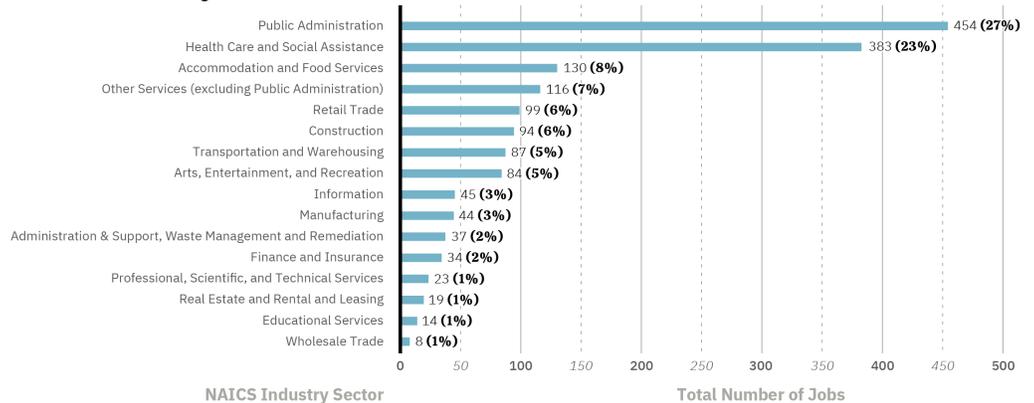
Scaled Proportionally by Number of Employees per Census Block



*The businesses that serve food and drink are really fantastic, and there is a lot to choose from.*  
- quote from survey

**Total Jobs by Sector**

Total Number of Jobs: **1,671**

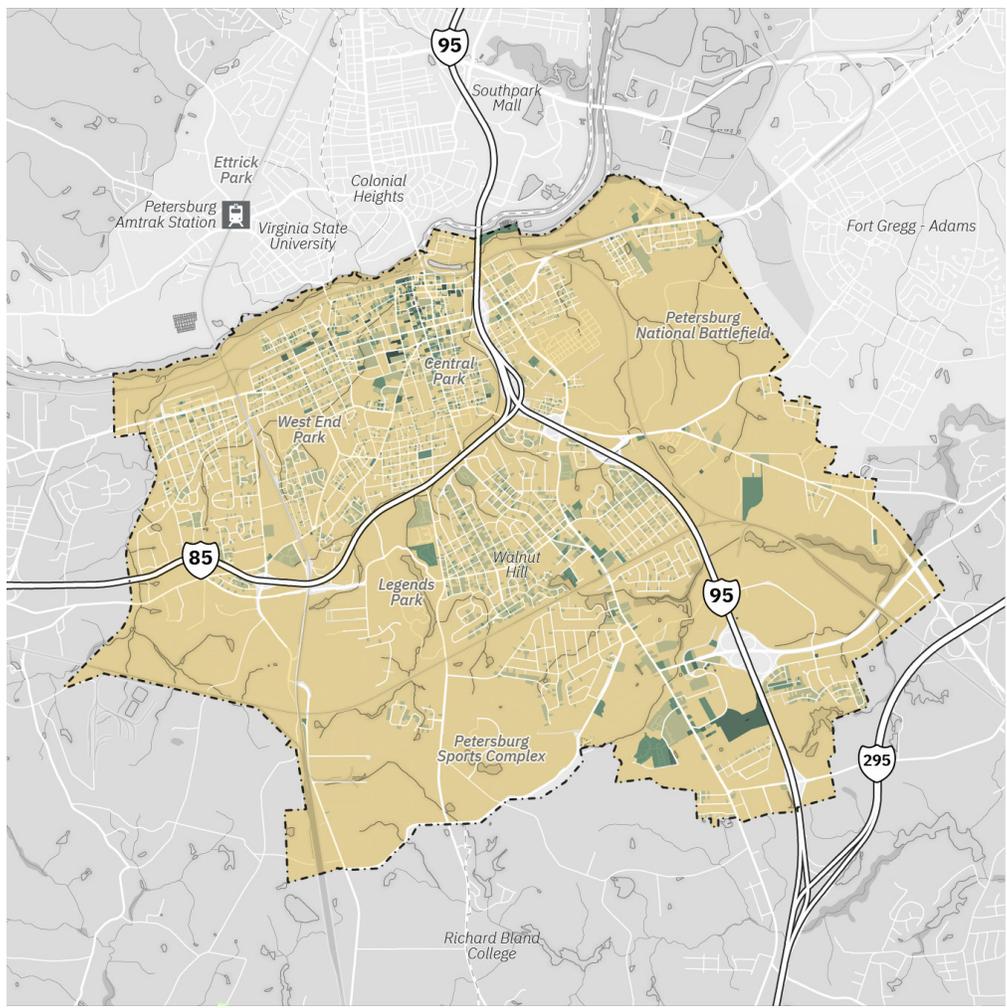


Interviews indicate that business activity across Downtown is uneven, with some businesses coming out of COVID stronger and others shuttering or not recovering as quickly as others. Throughout the Downtown, one in three properties with a commercial space in the ground floor does not have a commercial tenant and instead presents a vacant storefront at street-level. On Sycamore Street, which is remarkably intact for a historic mixed use corridor, 60% of developed properties have a vacant ground floor, and many buildings have vacant upper floors as well. Survey respondents want to double down, with nearly a quarter calling for more retail and more restaurants, more than any other use, but to support such growth, Downtown will need more residents, more visitors, and a broader customer base. In the meantime, efforts to expand the commercial mix should seek opportunities to diversify -- to appeal to new markets, such as the untapped student market at Virginia State, or, for example, to partner with new companies investing in Petersburg’s developing pharmaceutical industry that might seek to locate front-offices or related uses in the Downtown.

## The value and condition of Downtown land and property stand to slow continued progress.

Downtown comprises only 1% of the City’s land area, but it contains 9% of the City’s total assessed value, boasting the highest value per acre density in Petersburg. While one in five (20%) Downtown properties have sold since 2020, few if any have resulted in new construction. Indeed all of the significant building permit activity in Downtown in recent years has been for building renovations. While these adaptive reuse projects have preserved historic structures with creative new uses from apartments and artist studios, to coffee shops, bakeries, and breweries, they have made good use of available subsidies in the form of Historic Preservation Tax Credits and available adjacent land to provide convenient parking for new tenants. These successful early projects have restored value in Downtown, driving up the asking prices for land and buildings.

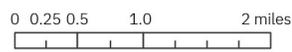
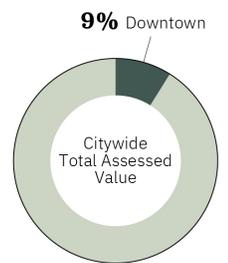
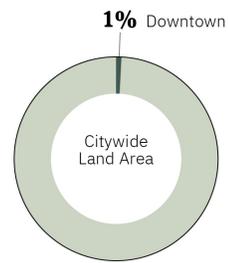
The reality is, however, that Downtown’s building stock -- while beautiful -- is costly to restore and maintain, and Downtown’s aged utilities present their own challenges, from expensive repairs due

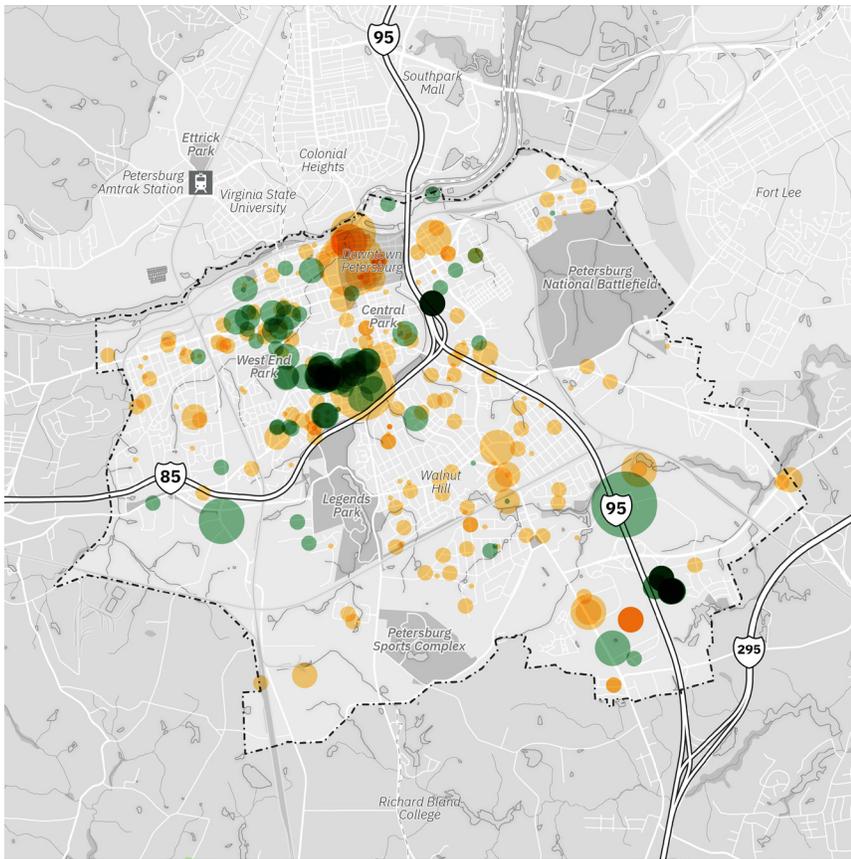


**Figure 10. Value per Acre**

Source: City Assessor

- Less than \$500k
- \$500k - \$1m
- \$1m - \$2m
- \$2m - \$5m
- \$5m plus



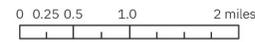


**Figure 11. Permits  
(March 2022–March 2023)**

- Renovation (*alteration, renovation, repair*)
- New Construction (*addition, detached accessory, new construction*)

**Scaled Proportionally by Cost of Project**

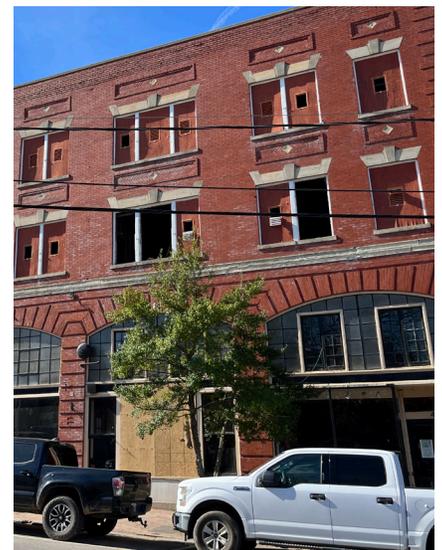
- under \$10K
- \$10K - \$100K
- \$100K - \$500K
- \$500K - \$1M
- \$1M - \$5M
- \$5M+



to water main breaks to capacity concerns related to future new construction. The tension between Downtown’s inherent value, its newly improved market value, and the costs of construction today threaten to stall ongoing investment, which is much needed in order to prevent further structural decay of one of Downtown’s most important assets: its historic building stock.

*29% of survey respondents identified the need to address aging infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, utilities) and the old building stock as the biggest issue that Downtown must address.*

*Restore derelict buildings and put them to use.*  
- quote from survey



*Photos of vacant historic structures*

## Downtown has grown as a neighborhood, but it has a long way to go.

While the stately homes atop Centre Hill and along nearby Jefferson Street have long been an established residential pocket within Downtown, many Downtown residents today can remember a time when they were among the first to be living in Old Towne back in the 1990s. Today, 6% of the City’s population, or roughly 2,000 residents, live Downtown, making their home in scattered residential and mixed use properties. While this growth is notable, and in fact housing growth in the core of Downtown Petersburg area substantially outpaced that of the Commonwealth beginning in 2020 and continuing through 2022.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the growth in the larger Downtown study area has been slower than Virginia overall. As a neighborhood, Downtown has yet to reach critical mass.

New residential development, which is good for businesses and good for the City’s tax base can, in turn, support other Downtown improvements. Today 19% of Downtown properties are tax exempt amounting to 28% of the parcel area Downtown, and with 30% vacant or surface parking, the existing taxable properties are often underperforming, yielding less tax revenue than if they were to be redeveloped. Beyond helping to rebuild the tax base, each new residential unit in Downtown brings built-in foot traffic to support local retail and restaurants. Interviews with Downtown businesses and credit card data confirm that though Downtown has been adding businesses in recent years, this is not necessarily translating into equivalent spending growth. Rather, Downtown Petersburg must continue to focus on increasing the customer base. New residents are one key ingredient.



**Figure 12. Downtown Population**

Source: 2020 US Census, NHGIS

- Study Area Boundary
- 1 Dot = 1 Person
- Total Population in Census Blocks within Downtown Study Area : 1,961
- Occupied Residential or Mixed-Use Residential Parcels
- Total Occupied Residential or Mixed-Use Residential Parcels within Downtown Study Area : 160

0 0.05 0.125 0.25 miles



<sup>9</sup> Center for Inclusive Growth based on American Community Survey data



Photos of homes on Centre Hill and loft apartments in formerly industrial



Photos of apartments on Sycamore Street

As a point of reference, nationally there is one full-size grocery store for every 8,550 people,<sup>10</sup> and this statistic holds true even in downtowns where grocery stores typically have smaller footprints and serve more quick trips than stock-up trips that come with larger totals at the register. To reach critical mass, Downtown will need to welcome additional housing of different types, sizes, and prices to appeal to a range of market segments seeking both rental and ownership opportunities. Before new construction projects begin breaking ground, Downtown will need to consider how contemporary designs and materials can both respect and complement the existing historic fabric of Downtown -- and soon. The mixed-use development associated with the new Courthouse and City Hall includes 196 apartments in its conceptual design, along with a sizable parking garage, and 28,800 square feet of commercial, both retail and office.

There are some historic structures left that could be converted, which could add another 200 units or so, but we need to start talking about new construction.

- quote from interview

It has an old historic charm with a modern twist that stays true to the culture and history of the neighborhood.

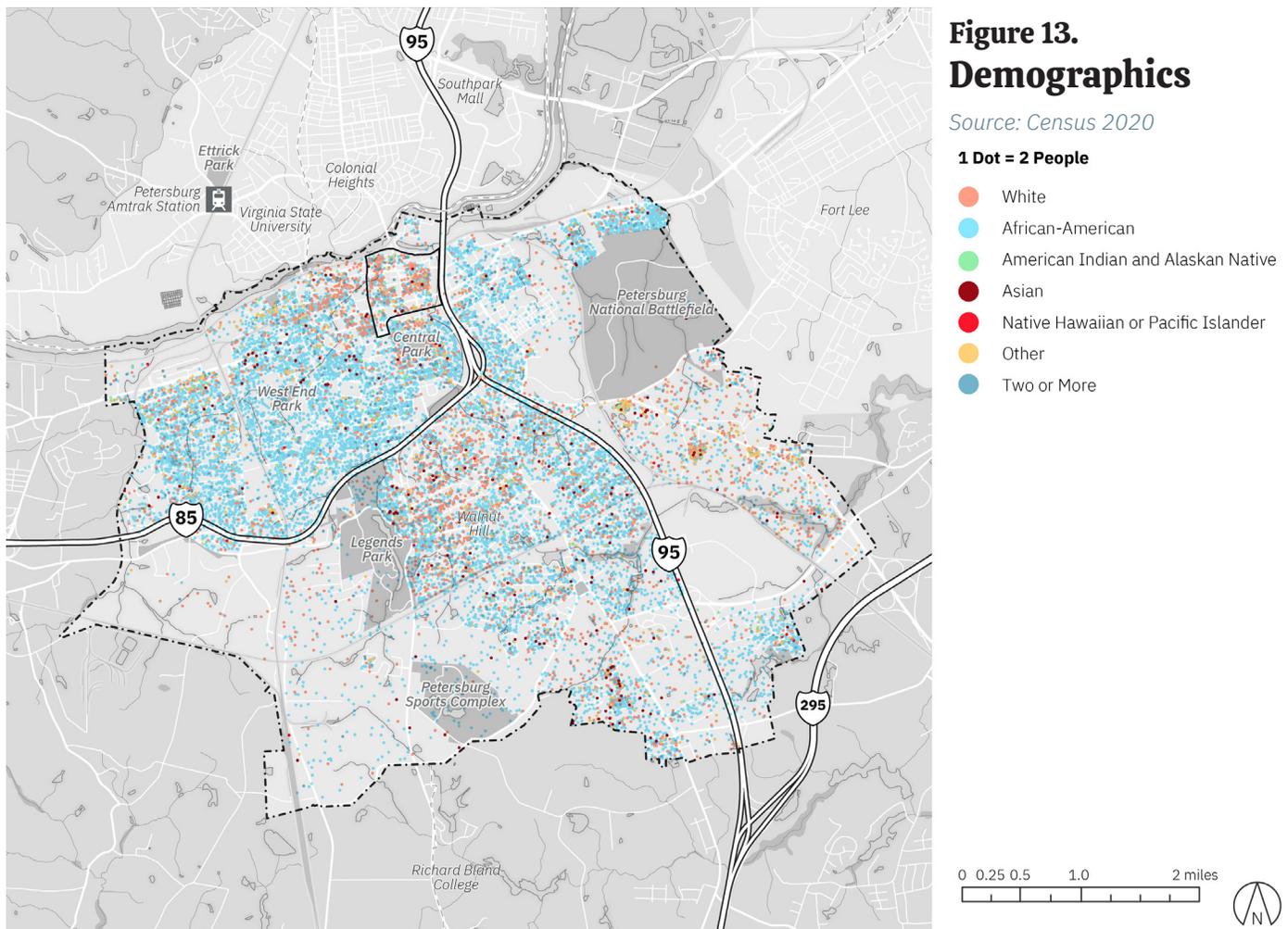
- quote from survey

<sup>10</sup> Food Marketing Institute, Mastercard

## Downtown is Petersburg’s mixing ground, and while “spectacularly diverse,” some do not feel welcome or at home in Downtown.

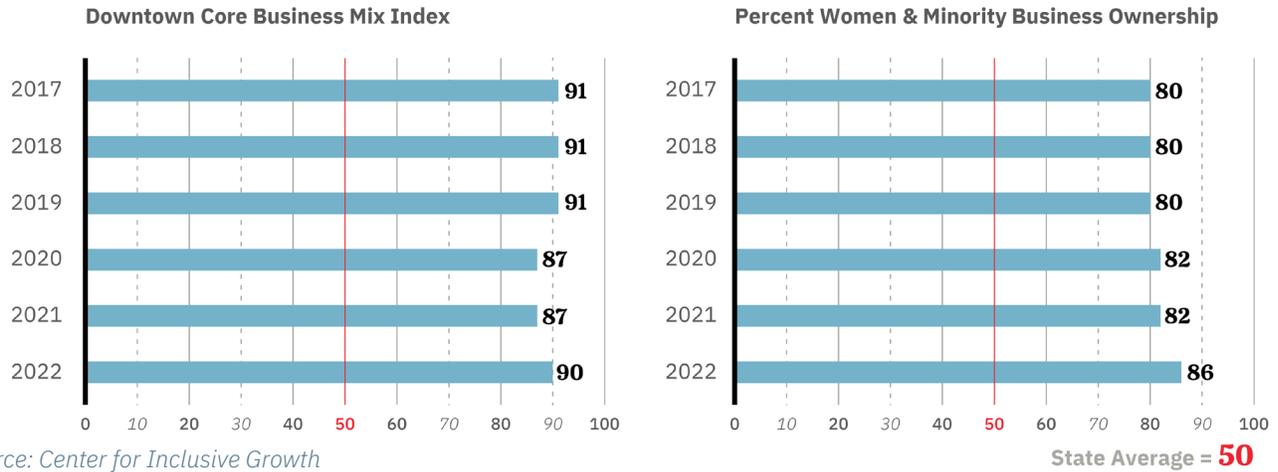
Beyond adding new residents, another way to broaden the customer base is to ensure that everyone in the City or region feels welcome in Downtown and sees something for themselves among Downtown’s retail, restaurants, entertainment, services, and open space offerings. The City of Petersburg is 77% African American, but Downtown’s population is 51% Black, 39% white, 1% American Indian, 1% Asian, 3% people who identify as another race, and 5% people who identify as two or more races. Like the residential community, Downtown’s business community is also diverse and diversifying. Compared to the Virginia average, Downtown has significantly more diversity in business type and much higher instances of women and minority-owned businesses than elsewhere in the Commonwealth.<sup>11</sup>

Many proudly describe the Downtown community as diverse and tight-knit, stating, “it’s like Cheers, everyone knows your name and the people are friendly,” and, “the ambiance of Downtown offers a hometown feel and the vast diversity of a city.” Others, however, are quick to recall the lasting legacies of the Jim Crow era when Downtown establishments were off-limits to Black residents who found



11 Center for Inclusive Growth

## Diversity of Downtown Businesses Compared to Commonwealth of Virginia

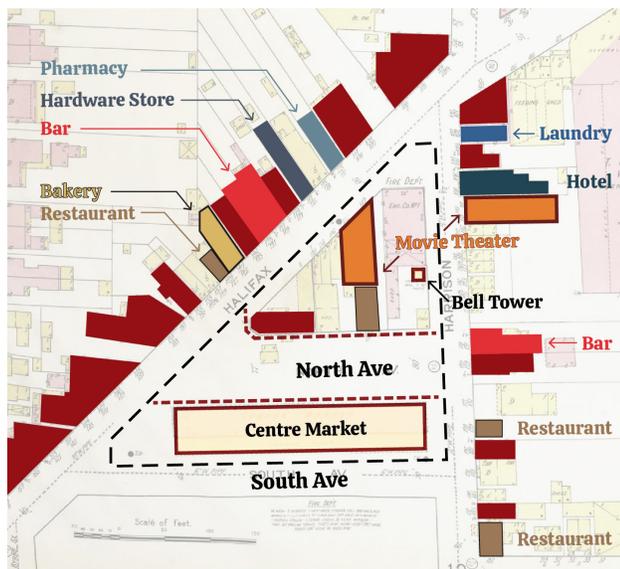


Source: Center for Inclusive Growth

community along The Avenue to the south near today’s Halifax Triangle. Though much has changed and the clientele at many Downtown businesses is a diverse reflection of the City of Petersburg and the Downtown community, the fact remains that some residents of the city and region do not make a habit of going Downtown. This decision could be one of convenience, one driven by lack of awareness of Downtown’s offerings, one driven by history, or by more recent experiences. Regardless, it points to a need to better cultivate and celebrate Downtown businesses, events, and programming that truly speak to and attract a diverse audience, locally and regionally.



*Put in businesses that will draw everyone, not just a select group of people.*  
 - quotes from public engagement



Businesses near Halifax Triangle, Source: Sanborn Map, 1957

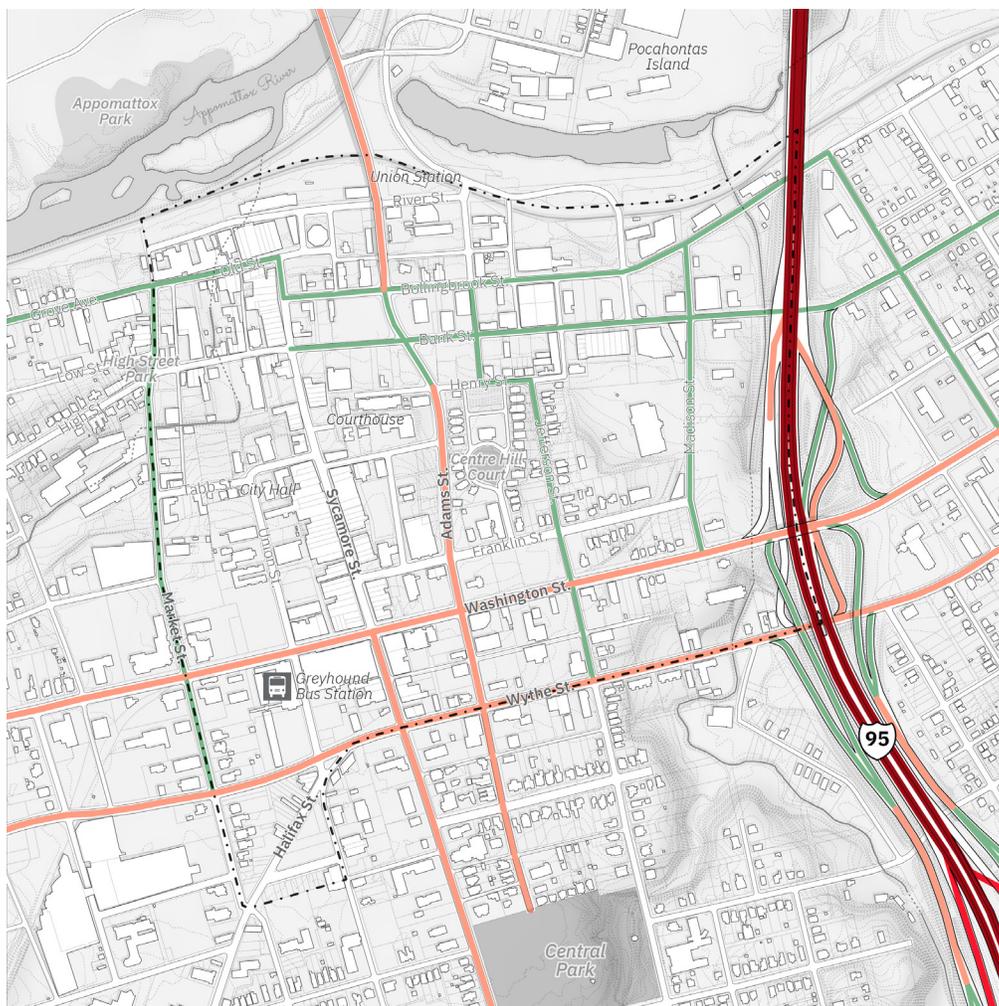


Photos of Halifax Triangle today (above left) and yesterday (above)

## Despite good highway access and major destinations in the region, Downtown Petersburg is not quite on the mental map of many visitors to the region.

Downtown is missing out on potential visitors and visitor dollars for several reasons. There is no signage directing travelers along I-95 toward Historic Downtown Petersburg, and first impressions upon exiting the Interstate at Washington fail to impress. The wide and auto-oriented thoroughways along Washington, Wythe, and Adams carry the most traffic in and out of Downtown, and while Adams has had recent streetscape improvements that dress up the crosswalks and streetscape elements, the Washington and Wythe street corridors do not communicate to drivers (or visitors to the Petersburg National Battlefield) that there is a downtown district worth exploring nearby, nor do they require that drivers slow down to a speed compatible with a pedestrian-friendly Downtown.

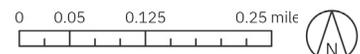
Beyond issues with signage, a lack of gateways, distressed and vacant properties, and few public realm improvements along these key corridors leading to and from Downtown, there is a shared sense that much of Petersburg’s history or histories remain unknown to many passersby. There is a physical and perceived gap between the main heritage tourism sites in the region, most notably Petersburg National Battlefield, and the wealth of historic sites within and surrounding Downtown.

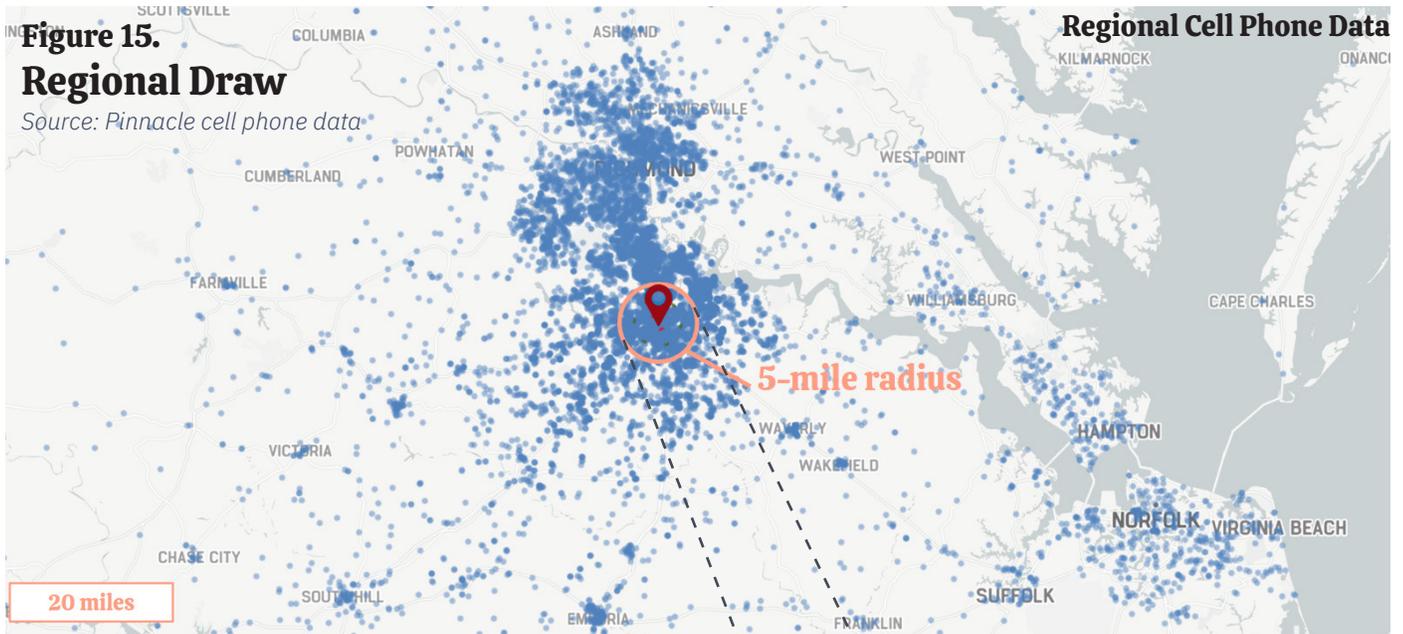


**Figure 14.**  
**Average Daily Traffic**

Source: Virginia DOT

- under 5,000 vehicles
- 5,000 - 20,000 vehicles
- 20,000 - 50,000 vehicles
- 50,000 + vehicles





Cell phone data illustrate that Downtown has a regional draw, attracting people from Ashland south to Dinwiddie and from coastal areas near Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Hampton, and Williamsburg. However, 70% of visitors come from within the “Mobile Trade Area” that covers a much tighter geography, reaching north to Richmond but otherwise hugging a roughly a 5-mile radius from the center of Downtown. Taking a closer look at the cellphone data confirms that at present, Downtown fails to attract a significant portion of the student and soldier markets and that a very small fraction of Battlefield visitors make it to Downtown.<sup>12</sup>



Historians and historic preservationists underscore that Downtown is a destination rich with multiple stories to tell -- Native American history, African American history, Civil Rights history, Civil War history, Revolutionary War history, colonial history, and industrial history, among others. Downtown’s history and architecture are among the most prized qualities of Downtown Petersburg, so the challenge becomes raising awareness about Petersburg’s historic sites and narratives, better weaving them into the Downtown experience for visitors, and creating stronger connections through cross-marketing with other historic destinations in the region in an effort to attract visitors who may be more apt to spend their time and dollars in Richmond, for example, until Petersburg convinces them otherwise.

*Make Downtown less car-centric!*  
*There is so much below the surface.*  
 - quotes from survey

<sup>12</sup> Pinnacle cell phone data

**Downtown’s public realm is awash in contradictions: it is beautiful and charming, but in need of investment; it has a river but struggles to connect to the water; and though Downtown is a meeting place, there is no central gathering place.**

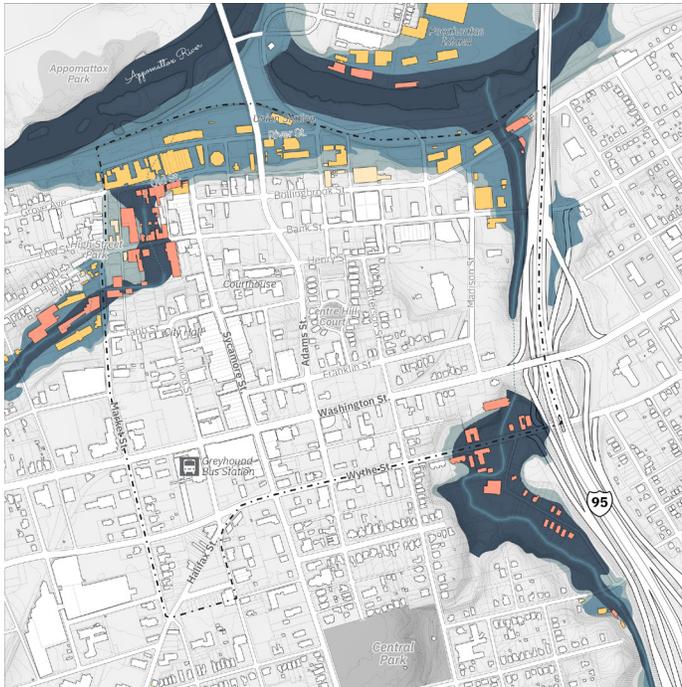
As an historic urban center, Downtown’s DNA is inherently walkable. Its network of streets, alleys, courtyards, and walkways offer those traveling by foot many options for exploring Downtown. Hidden interior courtyards provide elements of surprise to the curious, and the backs of buildings often have their own entrances and their own stories dating back to pre-Civil War times when enslaved people came and went through different doorways. Made from a mix of brick, cobblestone, and concrete, and suffering from lack of resources for maintenance, the pedestrian paths in Downtown have started to crack and crumble. Sidewalks in some places are narrow by today’s standards, and curbs are often uneven and inaccessible for those with limited mobility. A top priority for community members is to improve basic maintenance -- the accessibility, appearance, and cleanliness of the sidewalks and crosswalks that form the backbone of Downtown’s public realm.

The Downtown community is also clamoring for investments in open space. The Appomattox River forms Downtown’s northern edge, and the Appomattox River Trail will soon traverse that edge, providing a new multi-use path for leisure and recreation along the waterway. With that opportunity, comes the opportunity to reconsider, program, and improve the green spaces between River Street and the rail lines west of Adams, and along the Harborfront, east of Adams. These sizable swaths of land, partially in the Floodway, have been known to flood in the past. In their current state, they do not serve their full



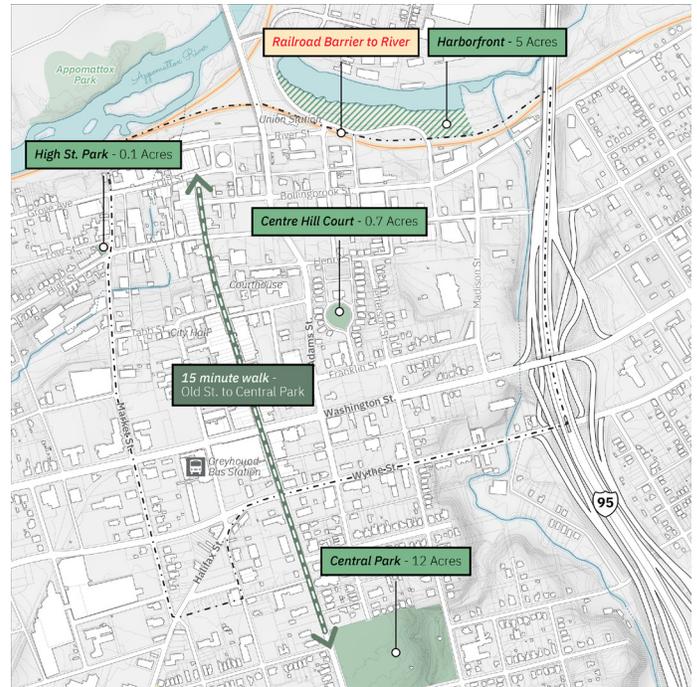
*Photos of Downtown streets, sidewalks, alleys, and riverfront*

**Figure 16. Floodplain**



- Stream
- Floodway
- 1% annual chance flood hazard
- 0.2% annual chance flood hazard
- Building touching floodway
- Building touching 1% floodplain
- Building touching 0.2% floodplain

**Figure 17. Parks & Open Space**



- Study Area Boundary
  - Highway
  - Rail Line
  - Stream
  - River
  - Park
- 0 0.05 0.125 0.25 miles
- 

potential either to absorb flood waters through Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) or to provide a regular Downtown destination save for occasional events, such as the wildly popular Fourth of July fireworks show that now takes place at the Harborfront. Brickhouse Run and Lieutenant Run reach into the Downtown, drawing the Floodway and flood risk inland along Downtown’s eastern and western edges. As the land uses along these waterways continue to evolve, there may be opportunities to establish new green-blue trails that connect people to the banks of the River.

While the green space along the Appomattox has immense potential as a public space that has captured the imagination of many as an improved green space, play space, performance space, and starting place for visitors, there are also opportunities within the core of Downtown to create a new central gathering space that benefits Downtown businesses, properly frames key views and important architecture, and makes space for community life to take shape in new ways, right in the heart of Downtown, along Sycamore Street.

*Accessibility is an issue; sidewalks, parking, make it feel welcoming for all.*

*- input from public meeting*

*We’ve got a river, but we act like it doesn’t exist!*

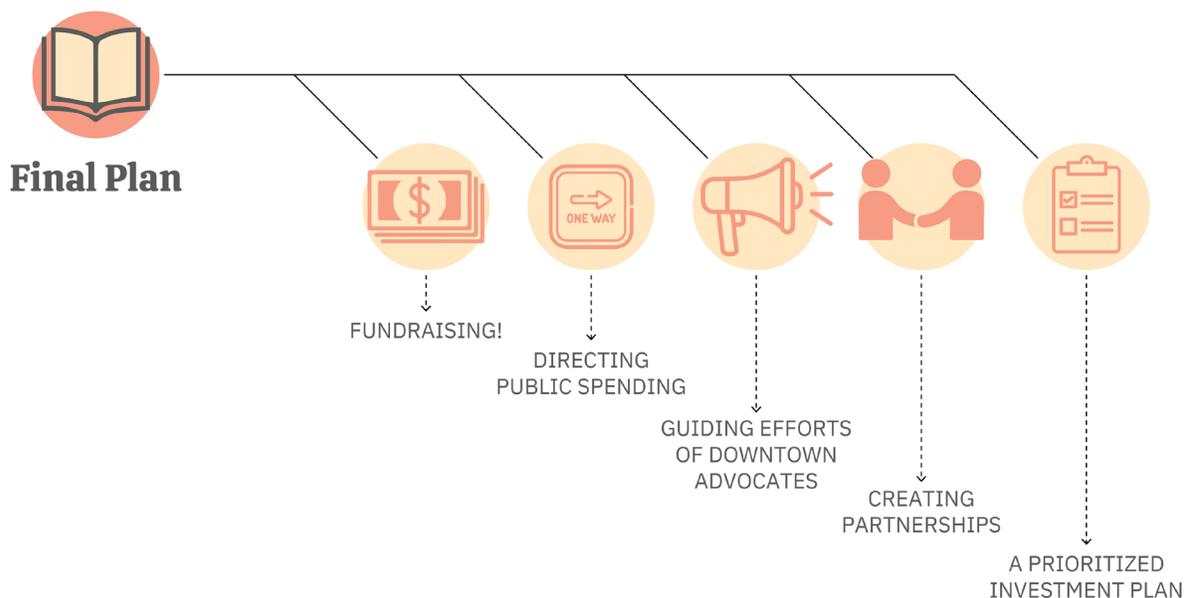
*- quote from interview*

## The opportunity to rebuild Downtown, restore its building stock, and reframe its narrative, comes with a need to rebuild capacity to drive change.

Downtown has great bones and much to build on, but the to-do list is long and challenging. Sustaining progress will require a range of financial resources -- local, state, and federal, private, and philanthropic -- as well as people power in the form of public-private partnerships, non-profit support, and volunteer efforts. Following the City's 2016 financial crisis, Petersburg has come a long way toward rebuilding its financial footing and economy. The case for Downtown's continued role as a driver of economic and residential development is strong, and therefore investments in Downtown's public realm and development potential merit serious consideration as the City determines how best to allocate its budget and leverage debt going forward.

Equally important, is to recognize that while piece-meal change may continue to unfold in Downtown, advancing projects here and there, the real opportunity is to focus dedicated resources and staff time toward targeted, holistic implementation efforts to push this plan's vision forward. The piecemeal approach has served Downtown well as the catalysts that brought Downtown to this moment. Going forward, the City will benefit from a collaborative partnership with a strong Downtown organization structured by a clear delineation of roles. Likewise, leadership in the public and non-profit sectors must also seek opportunities to delegate some implementation responsibilities to community groups, individuals, and private entities playing to their strengths, passions, and interests. This work will take many minds and many hands.

### ONCE THE PLAN IS DONE *what is it for?*





# Vision & Goals

## VISION

Downtown is a **thriving** symbol of Petersburg's resurgence, ready to realize its **potential once again**. Downtown is **proud of its history** and its present-day - the **people, local businesses, and opportunities** that together create a **hometown feel** with the **diversity of a city**. Downtown is **a place and a community** that is committed to **balancing history** with **growth and change**.

*As a place*, we will continue to preserve Downtown's **charming scale**, its historic **texture** with a **modern twist**, the **intimate pedestrian experience**, and the **unique** collection of **local restaurants and stores** that make Downtown a **destination**. As we re-grow Downtown as a full-service **neighborhood**, we will also grow **greener** and **healthier**.

*As a community*, we will work to remain a place that is **warm** and welcoming, that celebrates and lifts up our **Black heritage and culture**, with **inclusive** spaces and **events** that draw people from across Petersburg and the region - a regular favorite for residents, **families with young children, college students**, service members, tourists and others who spend time in Downtown Petersburg.



*All the words or phrases in **bold** came directly from the community.*

## GOALS

Five key goals organize the strategies to guide change in Downtown Petersburg through 2040 and beyond.

- 1 Open for Business:** Support Downtown's business community, and restore Downtown's economic vitality and building stock
- 2 Right at Home:** Develop Downtown as a livable neighborhood with parking as part of the mix
- 3 Wander and Wonder:** Foster lush and lovely connections throughout Downtown, to the River, and farther afield that encourage people to walk, bike, and explore
- 4 On the Map:** Grow Downtown as a destination for residents, students, service members, and visitors, and a place that people know about (and know how to find!)
- 5 Positioned for Success:** Build capacity for implementation and stewardship over time.

The remaining chapters detail the Downtown Plan's strategies or action steps to be taken to make the vision become reality. The final chapter includes an implementation matrix that identifies early, mid, and long-term actions, key partners, and potential resources.

# Strategies for Change

## OPEN FOR BUSINESS

1. Provide smaller-scale grants for temporary installations that uncover windows and activate storefronts with art
2. Subdivide large ground floor spaces to create a multi-tenant retail hub
3. Encourage property owners and businesses to utilize facade improvement grants
4. Build a pipeline of new local businesses
5. Attract and retain anchor office tenants
6. Carefully cultivate new retail programming, and explore a small format grocery

## RIGHT AT HOME

7. Update design standards for new construction
8. Maintain existing residential homes and structures, and encourage continued adaptive reuse
9. Build new homes, of different types, including townhomes
10. Coordinate to convert the vacant upper floors on Sycamore Street to housing
11. Partner with developers to build a new mixed use development and parking garage to service others

## WANDER & WONDER

12. Enhance Downtown's alleys as part of a network of pedestrian routes
13. Maintain and beautify streetscapes and sidewalks
14. Test design scenarios that activate the public realm
15. Create a central public plaza and gathering space on Sycamore in front of the Courthouse
16. Consider activating Sycamore Street as a pedestrian-first street
17. Invest in a connected green space along the River
18. Implement a road diet on Washington and Wythe

The **Petersburg Downtown Plan** has 29 recommendations or action steps organized by five key goals. All of the recommendations are in alignment with the City's new Comprehensive Plan, **Petersburg Next**.

## ON THE MAP

19. Partner with the National Park Service to draw visitors from the Battlefield
20. Complement regional tourism destinations with investments in local attractions that tell lesser known histories and foster memories made in the present
21. Increase marketing to a range of audiences, including Petersburg residents
22. Host regular events and programs that draw people from a variety of backgrounds and interests
23. Create a stronger presence for VSU Downtown
24. Invest in gateways with signage and wayfinding
25. Monitor and support the development of new, boutique lodging options in and near Downtown as tourism continues to grow

## POSITIONED FOR SUCCESS

26. Formalize the local Main Street organization with paid staff to support implementation and focus on Downtown initiatives in coordination with City leadership
27. Build the network of volunteers engaged in Downtown's future
28. Secure new revenue sources to invest in Downtown
29. Consider updates to zoning and policy to support plan implementation

# Open for Business

## ACTION ITEMS:

**01**

Provide smaller-scale grants for temporary installations that uncover windows and activate storefronts with art

**02**

Subdivide large ground floor spaces to create a multi-tenant retail hub

**03**

Encourage property owners and businesses to utilize facade improvement grants

**04**

Build a pipeline of new local businesses

**05**

Attract and retain anchor office tenants

**06**

Carefully cultivate new retail programming, and explore a small format grocery

**Support Downtown's Business community, and restore Downtown's economic vitality and building stock.**

The strategies under this goal aim to reactivate ground floor spaces, provide small business support, retain a mix of office tenants, and cultivate retail development and recruitment.

**01**

Provide smaller-scale grants for temporary installations that uncover windows and activate storefronts with art

Sycamore Street has the greatest concentration of ground floor retail spaces, but more than 60% of these storefronts are currently vacant presenting a blank window to the street. Some of the active businesses have beautiful storefront displays that engage passersby and add to Downtown's character, but others mostly obscure their storefront windows with signage and advertisements that prevent people from seeing in or out of the store. Taken together, the empty and obscured storefronts create a first impression that this key retail street is struggling. Two early-action programs geared toward business owners, building owners, and artists can help activate Sycamore's storefronts and send a clear message that Downtown Petersburg is, indeed, very much open for business.

*Clean up the litter, create a sign ordinance to take full window cover posters down.*

*- quote from survey*

Retain a storefront designer to work with existing businesses to refresh their storefront windows and signage - Downtown's existing businesses are one of its greatest assets. Start there, reaching out to business owners whose storefronts have room to improve, and recruit an initial group to participate in a storefront improvement project that could include window clearing and cleaning, new display strategies for merchandise, lighting, and signage. These improvements, focused on restoring sight-lines into the stores and highlighting merchandise in new ways require less planning, time, and resources than a full facade improvement grant focused on the storefront's structure. Virginia Main Street would be an important partner for this initiative.

Commission artists to create and install temporary exhibits in empty storefronts - The installations -- which could feature new work, custom-designed for the space, existing pieces arranged to be visible, lights or video to animate the windows at night, or decals that use the windows themselves as a canvas -- can paint the vacant storefronts in a new light, share a story about the area's history, draw foot traffic to Downtown, and attract the attention of potential tenants. First, identify a group of empty storefronts with large, visible windows. Meet with building owners, invite them to participate in the program, and request an on-site visit to see the space. Check to make sure each of the chosen sites is clean (or can be cleaned), has lighting and electricity, and can be accessed for the installation.

The Petersburg Area Arts League can help develop a Call for Artists and market the opportunity to local artists. A grant from Virginia Main Street may be able to provide artist stipends as well as technical assistance. The role of the City's Department of Economic Development and/or the local Main Street organization should be to encourage building owners to participate and generate buzz about the new art experience once it is on display in Downtown's newly designated Arts and Cultural District.



*Existing vacant or obstructed storefront windows*



*Existing empty storefront window well suited for artwork*

# CASE STUDY:

## Windows of Opportunity

Main Street America offers guidance on how to put vacant storefronts to work telling a visual story, promoting pop-up retailers in temporary locations, and infusing art, beauty, and visual interest to activate the pedestrian experience without a permanent business tenant in place.

[www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)



Storefront window installation in Milwaukee  
Photo credit: Retailworks, Inc.



Figure 18. Rendering of Storefront & Public Realm Improvements

## 02

### Encourage property owners and businesses to utilize available facade and commercial interior grants

While storefront improvements provide a strategy for quick, relatively affordable, and high-impact investment in the sidewalk, shopping, and dining experience in Downtown Petersburg, some buildings require more substantial investment in their facades or interiors as a precursor or complement to storefront improvements. The City's Department of Economic Development currently offers two incentives for building owners within the Central Business District: a Facade Improvement Grant that can equal up to 50% of the cost of facade renovations with a maximum award of \$5,000, and an Architectural Assistance Grant that can equal up to 50% of the cost of interior renovation design plans for commercial buildings with a maximum award of \$2,500.

Given the importance of Downtown's historic building stock in Petersburg and the value they bring to the Downtown experience, coupled with the high costs of materials and construction, the City and its partners should find ways to make these existing programs more appealing. Identify additional funding to increase the grant amounts and/or ratio of costs covered by the grant award. Retain an architect to provide facade improvement and interior renovation drawings at a reduced rate to program participants. Conduct targeted outreach to the owners of key properties in need of ground-floor facade improvements or interior renovations that will help make their spaces move-in ready or rentable over the long-term. Aim to complete one or two of each project type per year, and where these grants improve empty storefronts, provide follow-up support to find a suitable tenant.



*Examples of well restored facades along Sycamore Street*



# CASE STUDY:

## Agora Market - Harrisonburg VA



The Agora Downtown Market in Harrisonburg is a great example of a multi-tenant retail arrangement that brings vintage goods, handmade bags, fair-trade goods, zero-waste products, clothing, toys, ceramics, art, and freshly roasted coffee under one roof. Together, the vendors create a unique shopping experience, and the shared space and access to a shared customer-base supports small and emerging local businesses.

[www.shopsatagora.com](http://www.shopsatagora.com)

*A food court, like  
Union Market in DC.*

*- quote from public event*

## 03

Subdivide large ground floor spaces to create a multi-tenant retail hub

Some of Downtown's ground floor commercial spaces are quite large and deep, which can pose a challenge in finding viable commercial tenants who can afford to rent the entire ground floor. Explore a multi-tenant retail model to bring a new shopping experience to Downtown powered by a collection of emerging entrepreneurs. Similar to pop-up markets, these shared space strategies subdivide large ground floor spaces into smaller units, renting each unit to a different vendor, maker or designer. Together, these small businesses can activate the space, afford the rent, and benefit from a brick and mortar presence as well as each other's foot traffic.

Lessons from examples such as the Agora Market in Harrisonburg include:

- Reach out to local artists, makers, and entrepreneurs who may currently focus on online business or work out of their home
- Seek out small businesses that may appeal to the student market with smaller goods or goods offered at a range of prices
- Aim to include a coffee shop or other purveyor food and drink that can attract daily customers; consider adding a few tables and chairs for students who may like to study in the space

Beyond retail, the shared-space model can be applied to food related businesses -- as demonstrated by the food hall concept currently under construction at 106 Ktchn & Mrkt, which will host six to eight local food vendors as well as fresh locally-grown produce -- or co-working space, such as the Metropolitan Business League's new City Point Innovation Resource Center at 325 Brown Street.

## 04

### Build a pipeline of new local businesses

Work with Virginia Main Street, the local Main Street organization, the Metropolitan Business League, and the VSU Center for Entrepreneurship to develop a targeted small business support program that offers micro-loans, marketing assistance, business coaching, networking, and mini-grants for businesses interested in locating in or remaining in Downtown. Find ways to connect participants in VSU's Minority Small Business Launch Center<sup>13</sup> (a program of VSU's Center for Entrepreneurship) with Downtown business support programs and available retail spaces as graduates prepare to take the next step in their business development.

## 05

### Attract and retain anchor office tenants

In addition to the retail and restaurants that activate Downtown's ground floor spaces, Downtown also hosts a range of office jobs that provide important professional services, while also driving foot traffic and dollars to local businesses. Though the upper floors of Downtown's historic buildings have proven adaptable as offices for attorneys, insurance brokers, real estate developers, and many others, the creation of new, Class-A office space with modern amenities could attract major new tenants such as pharmaceutical office operations seeking to establish a Downtown presence to complement their research, development, and manufacturing facilities at the southeastern edge of the city. Other uses suited to modern office space in Downtown include primary or urgent medical care services, which are much needed, particularly where conveniently located for patients.

The strategy for Downtown office space is not based solely on the private sector, however. Downtown's day-time population swells with necessary jobs at City Hall and the Courthouse complex, which hosts Petersburg's Circuit Court, General District Court, and Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court as well as the Sheriff's Department and Police Department.



<sup>13</sup> <https://www.minoritysmallbusinesslaunchcenter.com/>

A judicial court order has mandated the construction of a new Courthouse, and current conceptual designs for the development include, among other uses, a new City Hall within the Courthouse complex, which would enable the consolidation of City functions currently divided between the existing City Hall at 135 North Union Street and the City offices at 30 Franklin Street. These facilities, proposed as part of a larger mixed-use development at Bank and Adams streets with new office and residential components, will support new efficiencies in government operations.



*Partial view of site poised for redevelopment*

## 06

Carefully cultivate new retail programming, and explore a small format grocery

Local businesses are a hallmark of the Downtown Petersburg shopping and dining experience, and as business recruitment efforts move forward, it will be important to protect and preserve a predominantly local business mix -- even, if possible, when it comes to anchor retail opportunities such as a new small format downtown grocery store. Here, too, for long-term viability, seek a tenant that offers a blended merchandise mix, such as the IGA/TruValue or Bassett's in Port Clinton, Ohio, which offers both grocery and hardware store items. Ensure that delivery through Instacart or another provider is an option for Downtown residents who may not have a car as well as a competitive advantage over other larger chain stores in the region that may not offer convenience services.

With retail recruitment, Downtown's market niche at present is dining, and there is an opportunity to promote and continue to build upon and build out that sector with programming such as Restaurant Week or coordinated marketing through brochures or an app.

*Will this mean we start getting more chains and lose the local business character that makes up Downtown?*

*- quote from interview*

*Would love to have a grocery store.*

*- quote from survey*

## CASE STUDY:

The Market @ 25th -  
Richmond VA



The Market @ 25th in Richmond, VA is a 27,000 square foot grocery store that is part of a larger mixed use development project with apartments, a health center, and a culinary school. The produce section features locally-grown fresh goods, prepared foods for grab-and-go, and bakery items made by local entrepreneurs as well. The store also includes an independently-owned and operated pharmacy. Interior design and signage includes extensive references to local history, landmarks, community leaders, and African-American business owners from the Church Hill neighborhood where the store is located.

[www.themarketat25th.com](http://www.themarketat25th.com)

# Right at Home

## ACTION ITEMS:

07

Update design standards for new construction

08

Maintain existing residential homes and structures, and encourage continued adaptive reuse

09

Build new homes, of different types, including townhomes

10

Convert the vacant upper floors on Sycamore Street to housing

11

Partner with developers to build a new mixed use development and parking garage to service others

## **Develop Downtown as a livable neighborhood with parking as part of the mix.**

The strategies under this goal aim to introduce new housing and supporting land uses to grow the residential population with homes of different types and price points.

07

Update design standards for new construction

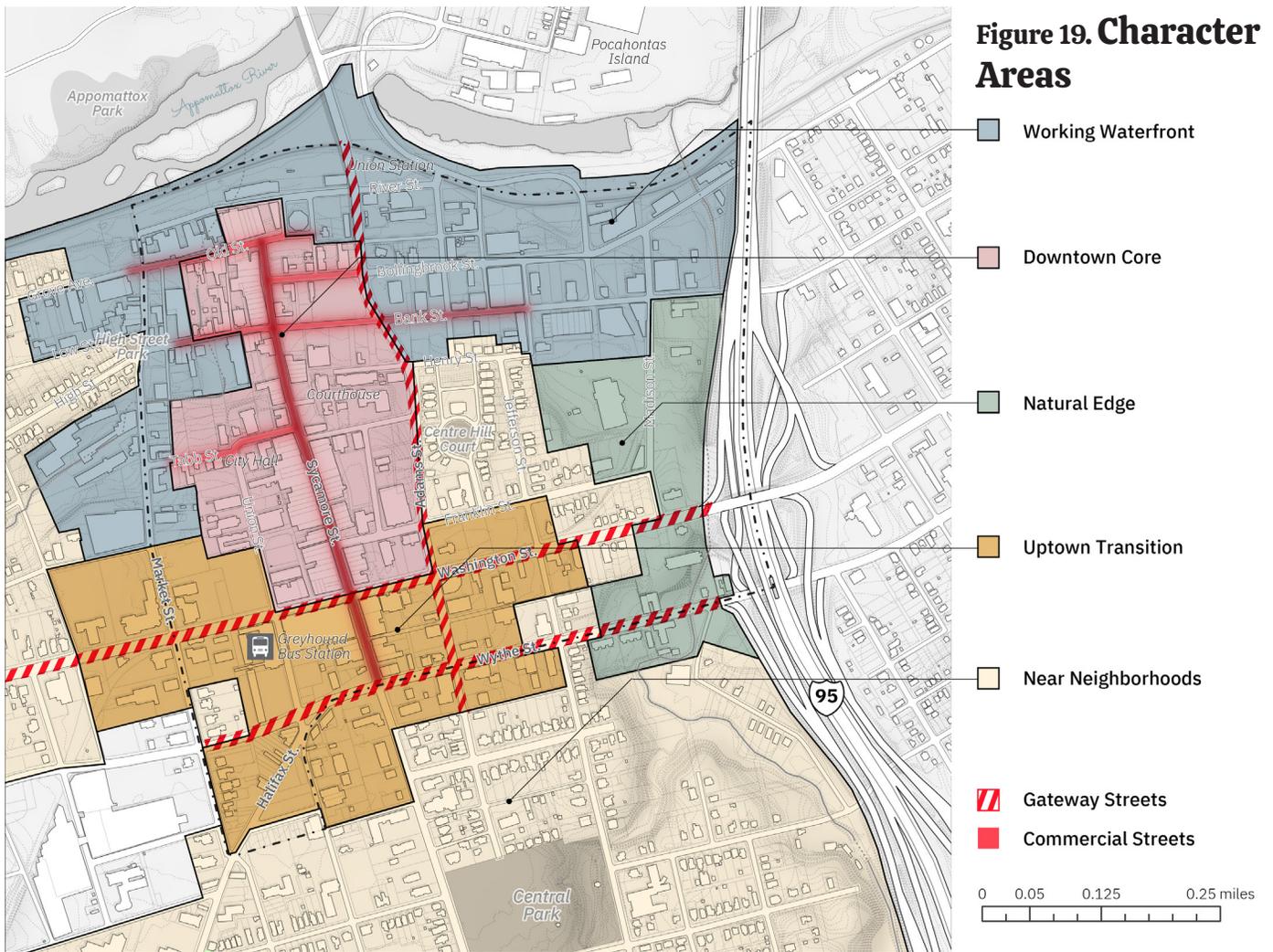
Much of Downtown's charm and appeal is due to its historic building stock, and preservation of historic building facades that contribute to Downtown's character is critical. However, the character of Downtown's streets varies block-to-block, and in many places the loss of historic buildings to vacancy, surface parking, or non-contributing buildings detract from the Downtown pedestrian experience. As investment interest and development momentum builds, bringing opportunities for new construction, it will be important to update the design guidelines on how to blend historic architecture with contemporary building practices and materials that complement the historic look and feel but allow for growth, change, and more contemporary features. New buildings in different character areas within Downtown can and should be treated differently, and translating the design guidelines into a more visual document will help investors comply and navigate the Architectural Review Board process.



*If I could change one thing about Downtown, I'd change the insistence on keeping the buildings looking one specific way.*

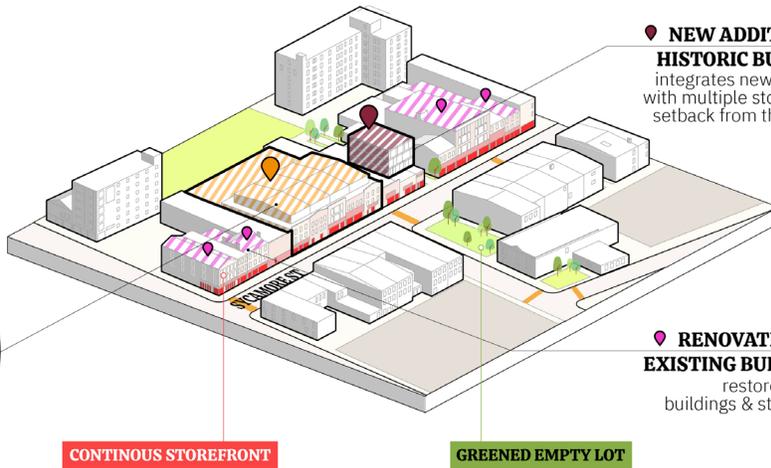
*- quote from survey*





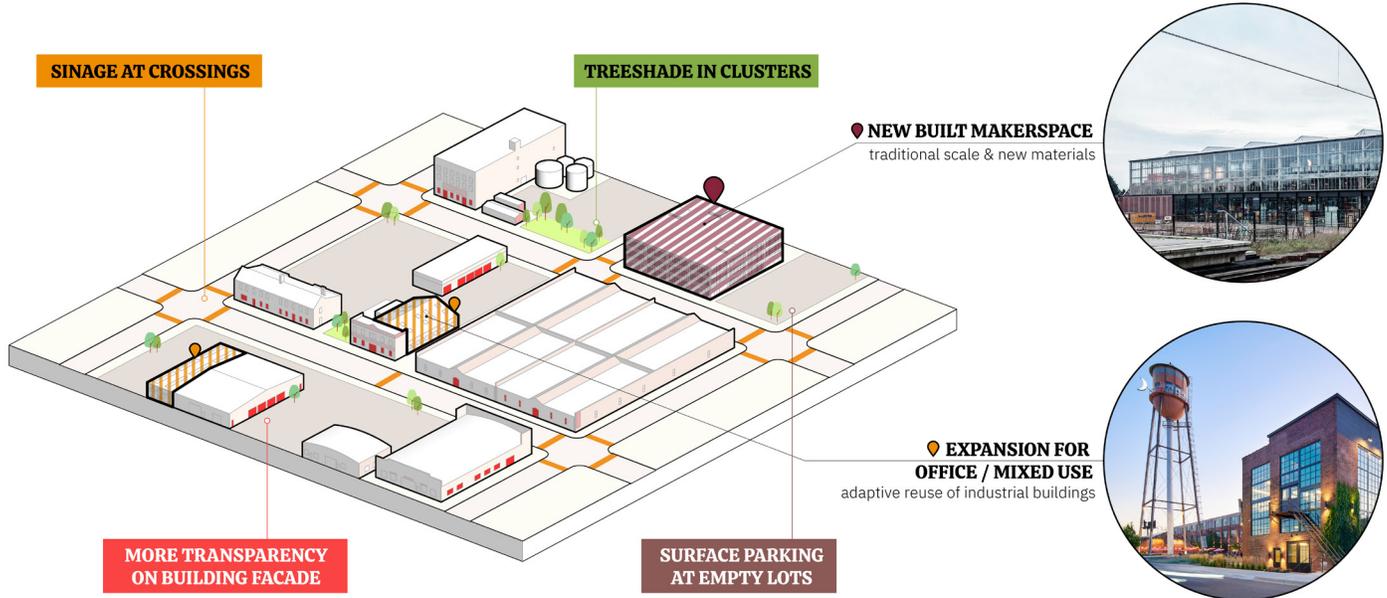
**Downtown Core** - Within the Downtown Core, with the most traditional mixed use historic building stock, renovate existing facades where possible. Encourage density here, but seek designs that step back vertical additions from the original facade. New construction should respect the surrounding building scale and integrate common materials, but modern designs should be supported, allowing for elements that give the Core a modern feel within the historic Downtown Core.

**NEW CONSTRUCTION** respects the building scale of adjacent context, has an upper floor setback, and keeps a consistent material palette in a modern way.



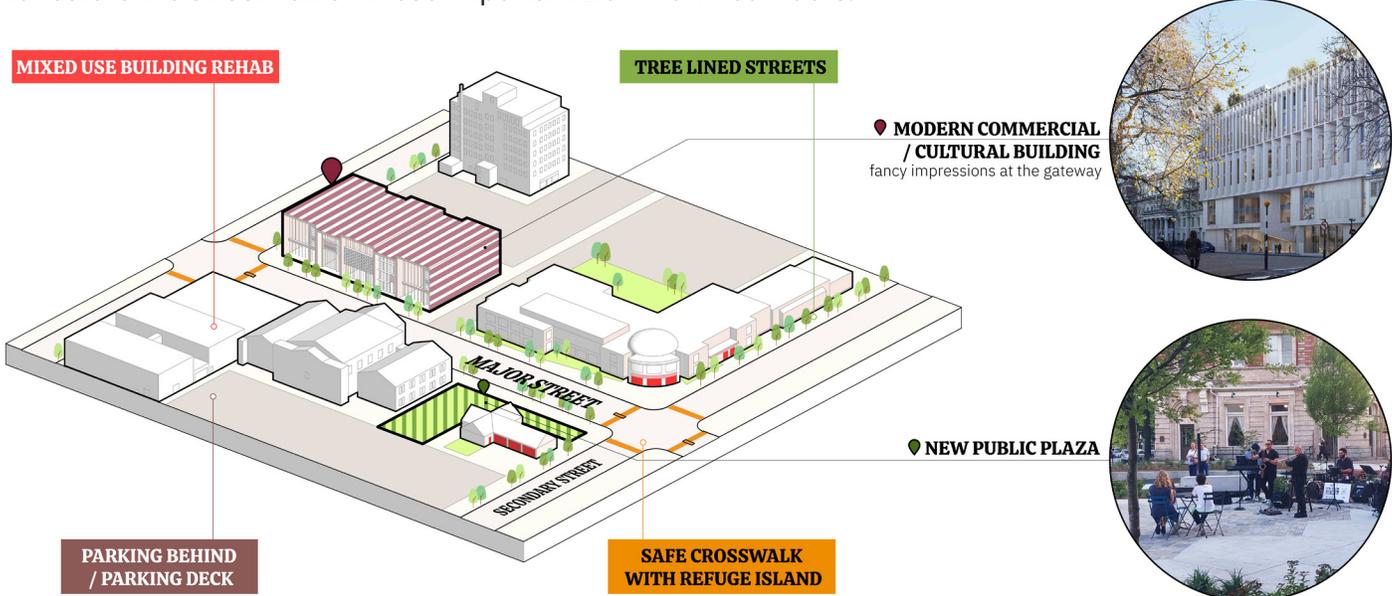
*Suggested design practices in the Downtown Core*

**Working Waterfront** - The formerly industrial buildings within the Working Waterfront character area make this zone the most appropriate for incorporation of modern architecture and design features that complement the design quality of nearby adaptive reuse projects that include lofts, breweries, cafes, restaurants, and public realm improvements that give this section of Downtown a hip and youthful feel.



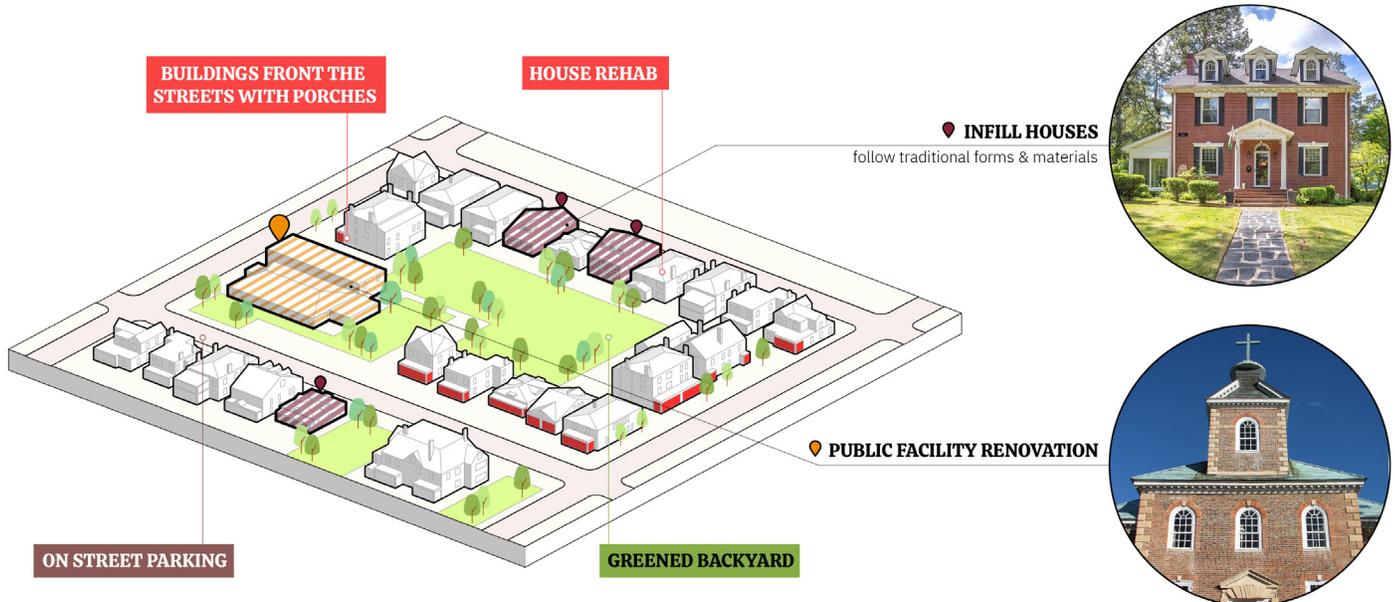
*Suggested design practices in the Working Waterfront area*

**Uptown Transition** - The Uptown Transition zone flanks Washington and Wythe, extending south to include the Halifax Triangle area. This character area has a collection of notable religious institutions and important public buildings including the library. There is also a fair amount of sizable vacant properties along these key corridors that lead drivers to and through Downtown. As improvements to these auto-oriented corridors proceed, there will be opportunities to welcome a mix of new land uses and higher density development in this area. Designs must consider key corners for their visibility with investments in materials and gateway features. Where possible, welcome designs that tuck parking behind the buildings to restore the streetwall on these important Downtown corridors.



*Suggested design practices in the Uptown Transition area*

Near Neighborhoods - Within the near neighborhoods, where possible, strive to preserve the remaining historic housing stock. Where vacant lots present opportunities for new construction, welcome designs that respect the scale and set back of adjacent homes, echo the forms and materials of historic homes with design features such as porches and roof lines.



*Suggested design practices in the Near Neighborhoods*

## 08

### Maintain existing homes and structures, and encourage continued adaptive reuse

The historic preservation of Downtown’s building stock is critical, both for the City of Petersburg’s potential as a tourism destination and to the community’s identity. Working with the Architectural Review Board and the process for obtaining a required Certificate of Appropriateness for any construction, alteration, or restoration work on the exterior of any building within a designated historic area, support the ongoing adaptive reuse of formerly commercial and industrial buildings within Downtown as loft apartments and modern living space. These efforts breathe new life into aging structures and welcome new residents into important buildings that tell the story of Petersburg’s development, commerce, and industry throughout time.

Additionally, wherever possible, avoid the demolition or further deterioration of the existing historic homes Downtown, found primarily in Centre Hill and along Jefferson and Franklin Streets. These structures contribute to the character of Downtown and provide charming and spacious housing options within the walkable Downtown. Work with Historic Petersburg Foundation to build awareness of existing resources, such as State tax credits available for rehabilitation of owner-occupied as well as income-producing properties. Consider expanding preservation-related programming and resources to include educational workshops and trainings for homeowners or investors, a tool library, advocacy efforts targeting vacant properties at risk of demolition by neglect, and capital improvements within Downtown’s Historic Districts.

# CASE STUDY:

## Historic Macon's Fading Five List Macon GA



The Historic Macon Foundation annually announces a top five list of historic homes threatened by neglect or possible demolition. The group uses the campaign to raise awareness of these significant structures, raise resources, and force action before it is too late. Since launching the Fading Five initiative in 2015, Historic Macon has put 18 significant properties on the list, and to date, 13 of them have been saved and protected, while only one has been lost.

[www.historicmacon.org/macons-fading-five](http://www.historicmacon.org/macons-fading-five)

## 09

### Build new homes, of different types, including townhomes

The adaptive reuse of mixed use and formerly industrial buildings into modern-day apartments with historic charm and unique character has put Downtown on the map as a neighborhood. As a next step, adding new housing types to the Downtown market will be key to efforts to grow the Downtown neighborhood. The proposed mixed use development at Adams and Banks includes 196 new apartments in a new construction building, which will offer a different product in terms of design and amenities than the existing rental mix Downtown.

During the planning process, residents expressed interest in new homeownership opportunities in Downtown as well, in particular attached townhomes, which can maintain the denser urban fabric typical of a downtown with smaller lots requiring less maintenance and cost compared to one of Downtown's historic single-family homes. For this type of development, seek blocks with lower traffic counts and slower speeds where a front door and on-street stoop will be more comfortable and appealing, such as segments of Franklin and Hinton streets.

Both of these housing products are likely to add housing choices for renters and buyers in the upper end of the market.

# 10

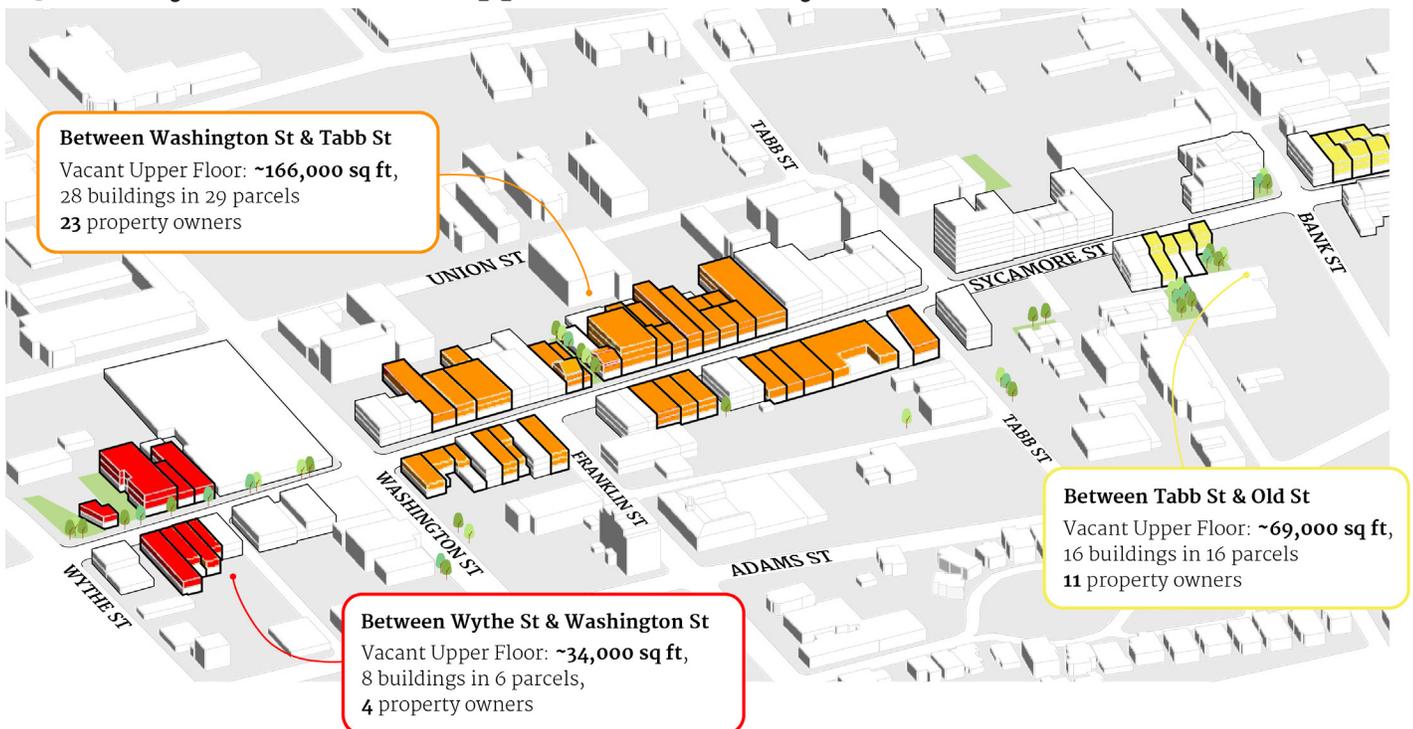
## Coordinate to convert the vacant upper floors on Sycamore Street to housing

The 250,000 to 270,000 square feet of upper floor vacancy along Sycamore Street is problematic for two reasons: it contributes to visual signals that Downtown is struggling, and it threatens the long-term health of signature buildings and blocks in Downtown. Based on a sidewalk survey and analysis of building footprints, approximately 150 to 200 additional housing units could be added in Downtown through the rehabilitation of vacant upper floors along Sycamore Street. These projects, however important, will be costly, as the buildings and their infrastructure are aging, and structures that did not previously include housing will require elevators. There are several potential paths for incentivizing a coordinated effort to transform the upper floors of Sycamore, particularly between Washington and Tabb.

Consider retooling the Facade Improvement Program and / or the Architectural Assistance Grant to also include grants to support some of the cost of conversion to residential such as ADA, fire code, or developing Historic Tax Credit applications.

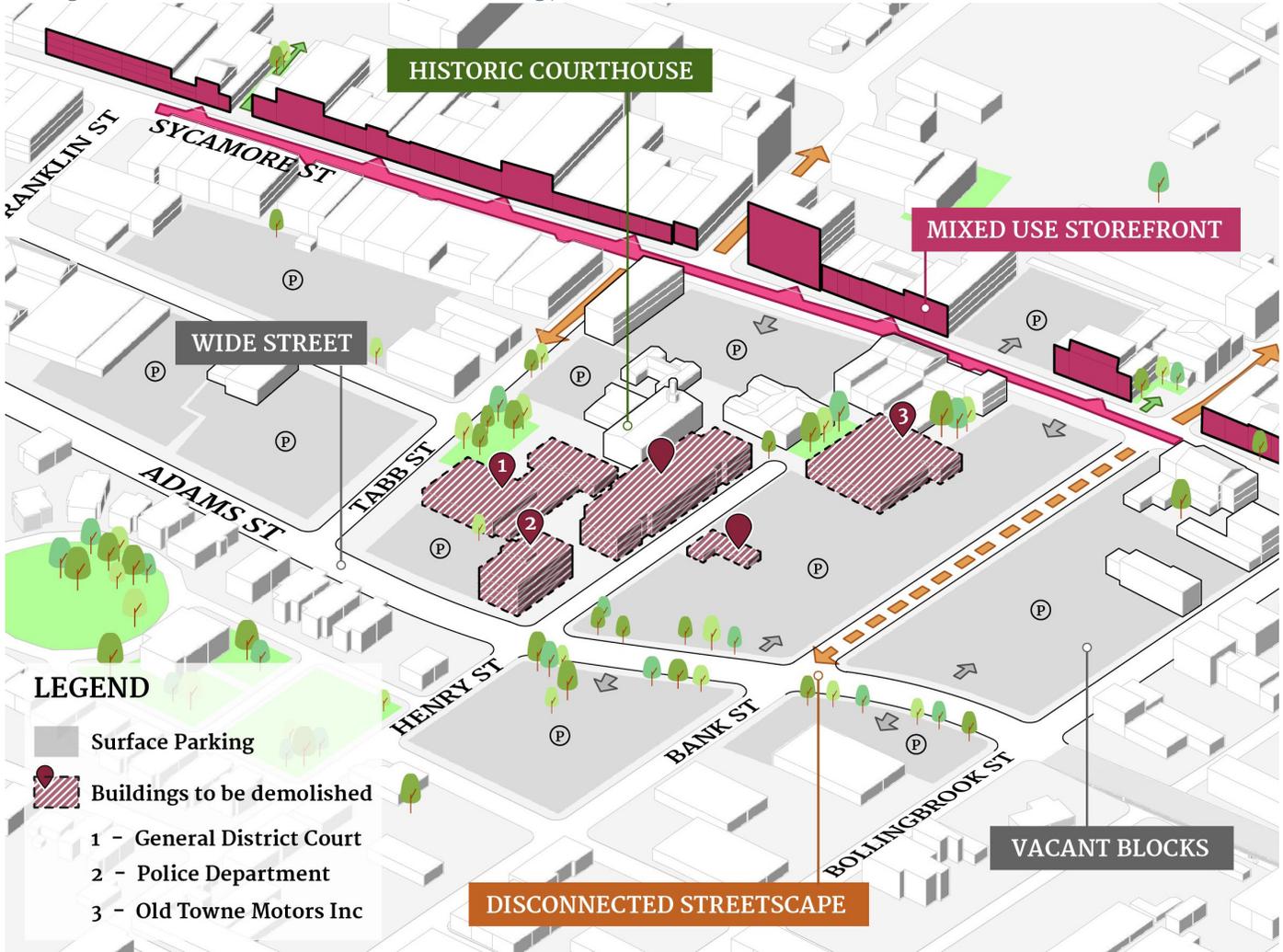
Organize a meeting among the multiple property owners to evaluate current incentives such as the City Assessor Real Estate Rehab Tax exemption and whether it needs adjustments, as well as future options for combining properties such as pooling, a Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT), or potentially a condominium structure to pursue tax credits and other forms of capital in an effort to move away from piecemeal redevelopment and make a greater impact.

**Figure 20. Sycamore Street Upper Floor Vacancy**



*Study of potential and opportunity for upper floor residential conversion*

Existing conditions at the Courthouse Complex, including planned demolitions



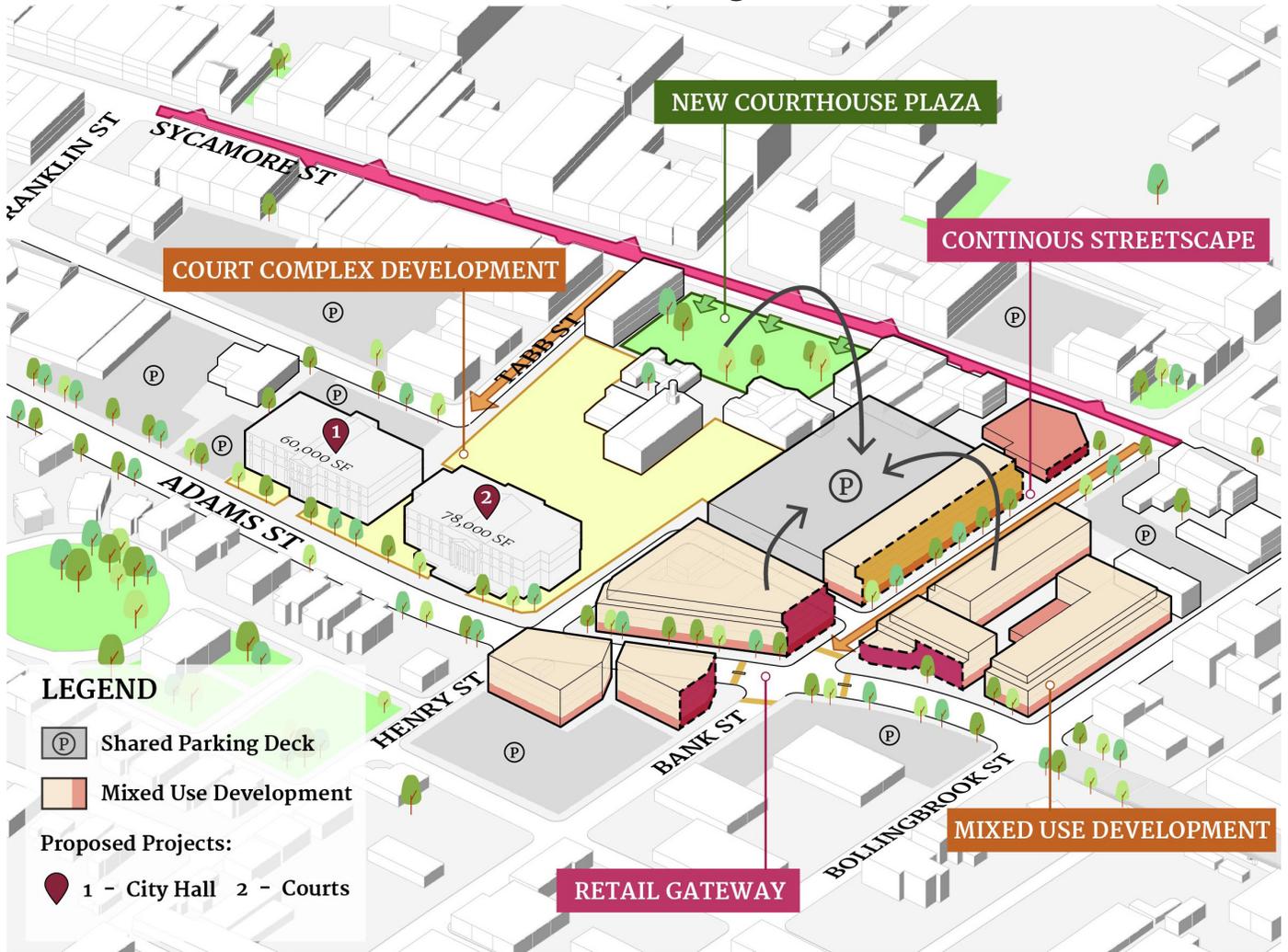
# 11

Partner with developers of the new mixed use development to build a parking garage that benefits Downtown as a whole

As the City evaluates development proposals that aim to add new uses and new residents to Downtown, it will be important to preserve elements of Downtown living that contribute to quality of life, parking and park space among them. The new mixed use development proposed at Adams and Bank streets includes a stacked parking

deck to be shared by a range of users: visitors to the Courthouse complex, residential, office, and commercial tenants, and the public at large. This site is well located and within a five-minute walk of most of Downtown. As the development moves forward:

**Figure 21. Courthouse Complex Mixed Use Design Considerations**



Conduct a formal Downtown Parking Study to assess the true need of additional or improved parking to serve existing and future residents and businesses, and how best to share parking spots throughout the course of the day and between land uses and properties to ensure maximum use and avoid over-paying for the development of unnecessary parking spaces. Development of the new parking deck can likely free-up existing surface parking elsewhere in Downtown for development or for a new gathering space at the footsteps of the Historic Courthouse - arguably the most iconic forecourt in the Downtown, with potential to add to Sycamore Street’s streetscape and Downtown’s livability for near neighbors.

Carefully design the details to make sure that the scale, materials, and design of the new parking garage is appropriate for the historic Downtown; that to the extent possible, parking is tucked at the center of blocks and active uses wrap the parking deck on key block frontages; and that the parking resource includes modern technologies and public assets such as electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and bicycle parking.

# Wander & Wonder

## ACTION ITEMS:

**12**

Enhance Downtown's alleys as part of a network of pedestrian routes

**13**

Maintain and beautify streetscapes and sidewalks

**14**

Test design scenarios that activate the public realm

**15**

Create a central public plaza and gathering space on Sycamore in front of the Courthouse

**16**

Consider activating Sycamore Street as a pedestrian-first street

**17**

Invest in a connected green space along the River

**18**

Implement a road diet on Washington and Wythe

**Foster lush and lovely connections throughout Downtown, to the River, and farther afield that encourage people to walk, bike, and explore.**

The strategies under this goal aim to activate Downtown's alleyways, re-engage with the River, and create a constellation of new public spaces where people can gather. To complement these open spaces, additional strategies focus on the streets as an equally important part of the public realm, aiming to slow traffic, add shade, and ensure that Downtown's streets and sidewalks are safe, beautiful, comfortable, accessible, and cohesive in their design.

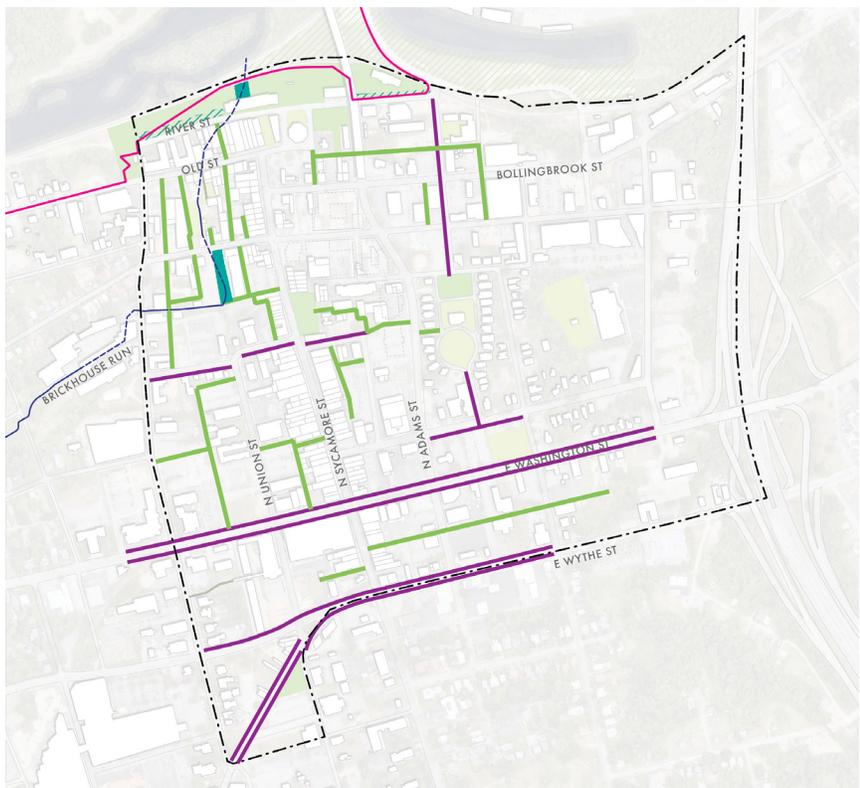
**12**

Enhance Downtown's alleys as part of a network of pedestrian routes

One of the unique characteristics of Petersburg's historic Downtown is its network of pedestrian-scale alleys, which encourage people to explore Downtown on foot. At present, these slightly hidden walkways are largely unrecognized assets, often used for waste removal and parking access, or hardly used at all. These paths can and should be improved with art and lighting, and--where space allows--plantings and street furniture to serve adjacent businesses, as done by Buttery Baking House on West Old Street in the alley that leads to the Appomattox Ironworks rear courtyard.



*View toward Buttery Baking House along the Ironworks alleyway*



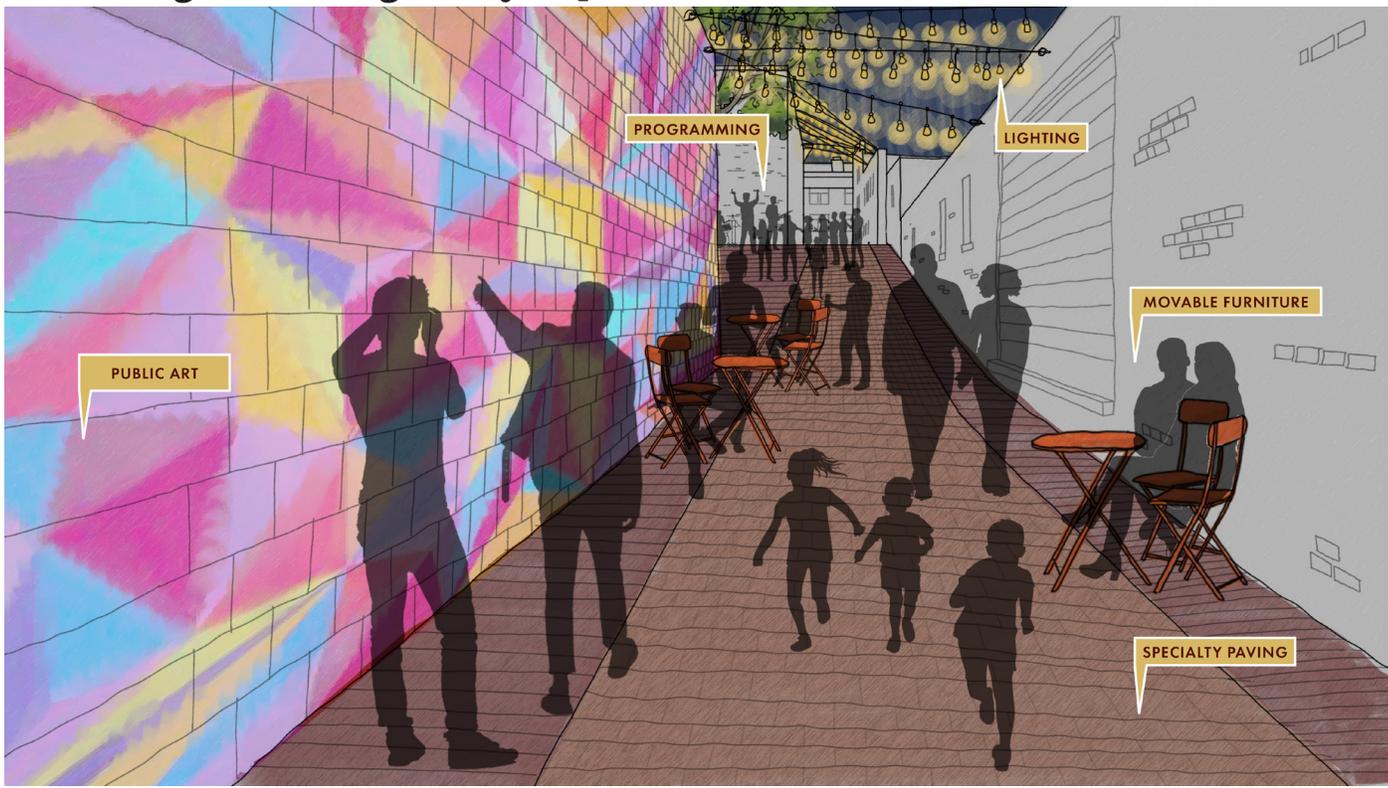
**Figure 22. Pedestrian Routes**

- Alley Network  
*Improvements and activations*
- Sidewalk Improvements  
*To enable pedestrian connections*
- Appomattox River Trail
- Daylighting Brickhouse Run Opportunity
- Rain Gardens and Stormwater Management

While the alley network is extensive and could be expanded to trace the Brickhouse Run and Lieutenants Run as they course through Downtown, several locations worthy of consideration for early action include:

Exchange Alley between Old and Bank streets, which is a narrow, steep section of roadway with a human scale. It should be improved with public art and string lights overhead to encourage passersby to travel this alternative route through Downtown.

**Figure 23. Rendering of Exchange Alley Improvements**





*View of visible stretch of Brickhouse Run along Exchange Alley with potential for public realm improvements*

Exchange Alley between Bank and Tabb streets, where the alley opens up, creating a unique space flanking a visible segment of Brickhouse Run. There is a small landscaped area where the grade changes, and the building backs meet to frame an intimate corner in Downtown that could host some street furniture looking toward the waterway and adjacent greenery. Investments here should include improved landscaping on the hill and along the Run.

Pelham Alley between Trapezium Brewing and Cockade Alley, which has the potential to connect loft housing and businesses on the east side of Downtown with Old Towne under the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Bridge. The pathway can be improved with ground stone, lighting, a mural and some wildflowers in the summertime.

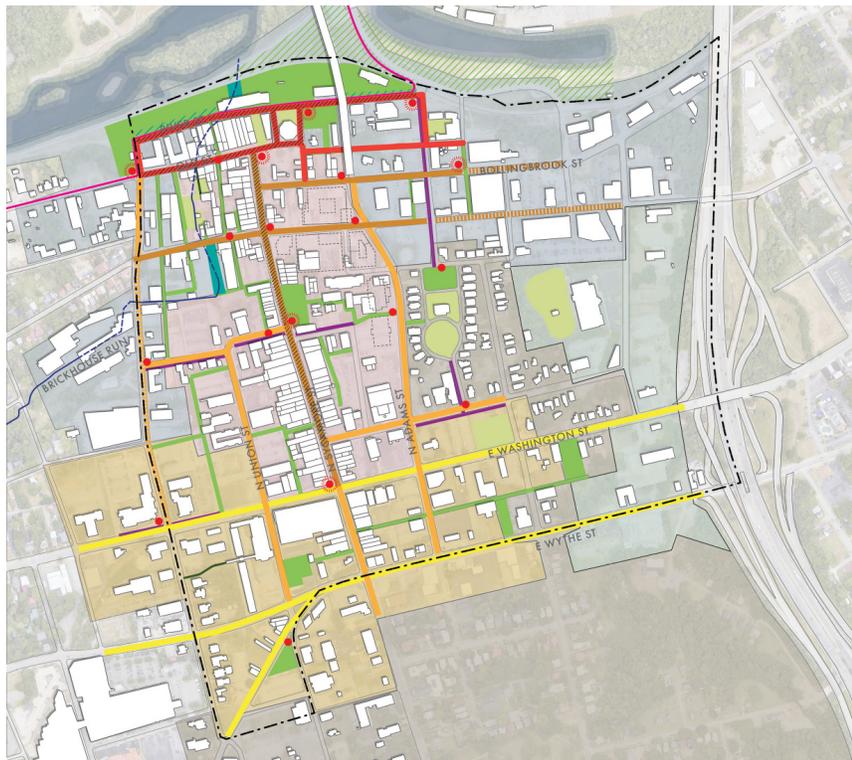
# 13

## Maintain and beautify streetscapes and sidewalks

Downtown’s aging infrastructure is apparent at surface level, with cracked and narrow sidewalks and uneven curbs that pose a challenge to pedestrians--especially those with limited mobility or sight. Throughout much of Downtown, there are significant stretches of sidewalk that lack shade trees and pedestrian lighting, resulting in sun exposure during the hot summer months and dark evenings for patrons leaving local restaurants and bars after the sun goes down. As development and rehabilitation efforts move forward in Downtown, take every opportunity to improve the basics -- replacing curbs and sidewalks, adding pedestrian scale lighting, and integrating trees for added greenery and shade.

Use the sidewalk and crosswalks to provide design cues tied to particular locations in Downtown, with the Riverfront area retaining its cobblestone streets and brick sidewalks and other Old Towne streets retaining a Historic look with fully brick sidewalks. Elsewhere in Downtown, adopt a “Historic Light” approach that uses brick as an accent along sidewalks and crosswalks, but allows other materials to meet the street. For consistency, select the same style of pedestrian lighting and other street furniture (benches, trash cans, wayfinding signage) to deploy throughout Downtown. Wherever space allows, introduce planting strips and trees.

**MORE TREES!**  
- quote from public meeting



**Figure 24. Street Typologies**

- Riverfront
- Historic
- Historic Light
- Road Diet Redesign
- Sidewalk Improvements
- Wayfinding & Cultural Signage
- ⊙ Gateway Signage
- ▨ Street Closure and/or Pedestrian First Zone
- Existing Open Space
- Proposed Open Space & Alley Network

## Figure 25. Street Typology Illustrations

**Riverfront Typology** with cobblestone streets, locally-sourced brick sidewalks and crossings, trees and landscaped buffers, plus planted bump-outs. Also includes pedestrian-scale historic lighting and coordinated benches.



**Historic Typology** similar to Riverfront, but with asphalt street paving.



**Historic Light Typology** similar to Historic, but integrating concrete as a complementary sidewalk material in between brick accents. Bricks for sidewalk accents should be locally-sourced.



*More lights and better sidewalks.  
Infrastructure can bring a place up.*

- quote from survey

# 14

## Test design scenarios that activate the public realm

Streetscape improvements to upgrade curbs and sidewalks, install additional pedestrian-scale lighting and street furniture, introduce gateway signage and public art, and bury utilities where opportunity presents involve costly capital projects with design, engineering, and construction phases. To make improvements in the near term, seek opportunities for quicker, but impactful -- and often temporary -- projects to test ideas that will improve the public realm, reclaim asphalt for people or shade trees, slow road-ways, and build excitement about more permanent changes to come.

Cities across the nation, including Petersburg during the COVID-19 shut-down, have had success with outdoor pop-ups atop underutilized land and within right-of-ways that can be temporarily closed to cars. Beyond greening and temporary-road-diet improvements, opportunities to test-drive public realm improvements in the near-term include:

Halifax Triangle - In the 1950s, there were two movie theaters in the Halifax Triangle, which is now mostly open and un-programmed. Before district-specific planning for reinvestment and formal public space design moves forward in collaboration with neighbors and community members, consider a temporary drive-in (or BYO lawn chair) movie theater to welcome families back to the space with regular programming.

Flexible Outdoor Dining Tables - Efforts to upgrade vacant lots in close on or near Sycamore with shared outdoor seating for customers who have ordered take-out from Downtown restaurants; an ideal location for this type of shared outdoor dining area would be on a lot that is not adjacent to an existing food or beverage destination that might otherwise be able to offer outdoor table-service, which is a nice option to have in Downtown.

## CASE STUDIES:

### Pop-Up Beer Garden Philadelphia PA



The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) creates seasonal gardens and hang-out spaces with seating, shade, and plantings. With to-go food options near by and beer on tap, these spaces are a major summertime attraction.

### Monroe Street Drive-In Detroit MI



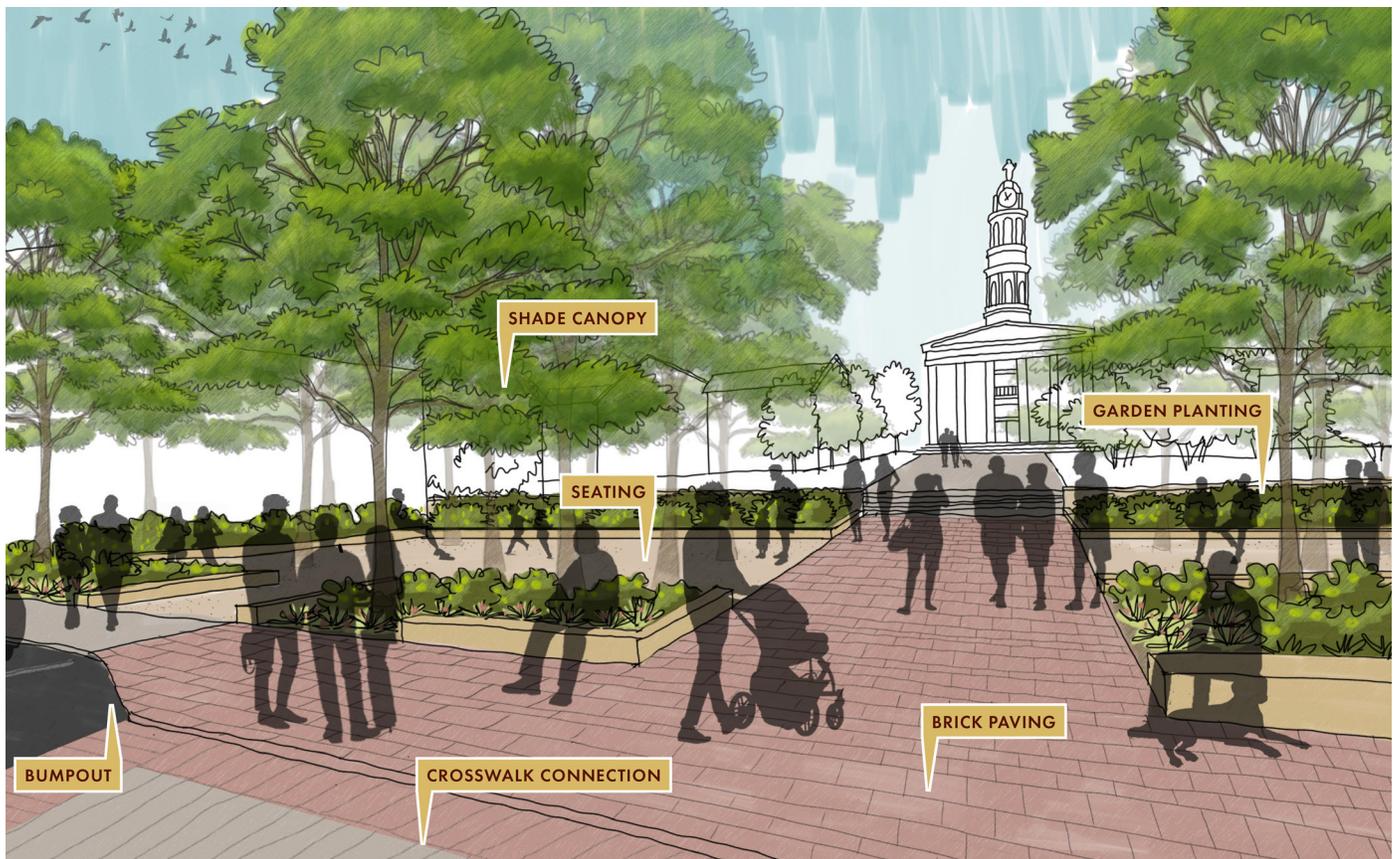
In partnership with Bedrock and Emagine Entertainment, the City of Detroit reactivated a paved area in Downtown with a drive-in pop-up movie theater that offered showings Thursdays through Sundays. This winter activity transforms into an outdoor roller rink in the summer months.

# 15

Create a central public plaza and gathering space on Sycamore in front of the Courthouse

Efforts to bring a permanent public open space to the heart of Downtown should focus on a catalytic opportunity to transform the parking lot in front of the historic Courthouse with a well-designed plaza fit to frame this iconic building, host events, and provide a relaxing space along Sycamore Street. Though the planned investments to the Courthouse complex include some green space tucked behind the Courthouse, it will be elevated, invisible from main corridors, and thus only lightly used by the public. Redirecting those design dollars to this parking lot will bring new activity and energy to Sycamore Street, and the proposed parking garage that will accompany the new Courthouse will more than replace lost parking spaces.

**Figure 26. Rendering of Courthouse Steps Plaza**



*This plaza should be designed with green stormwater infrastructure that helps capture rainwater, slowing its path to the aged sewers.*

More outdoor seating  
for people.

- quote from public event

*At present, the historic Courthouse, set atop a hill, steps down to a parking lot that occupies a prime stretch of Sycamore Street frontage and the most iconic view in Downtown.*



# 16

## Consider activating Sycamore Street as a pedestrian-first street

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Downtown community rallied in support of local businesses and closed a segment of Sycamore Street to cars, instead inviting restaurants and bars to serve their patrons outdoors in the street and inviting people to walk freely within a small stretch of Downtown. People loved it and want to bring back a pedestrian-oriented zone on the stretch of Petersburg’s main street between Tabb and Old streets. While temporary measures can close the street for special events, consider redesigning Sycamore Street as a pedestrian-first street in the long-term.

Brick paving across the street at the same level as the sidewalk can send a signal to drivers to slow down as they carefully navigate this unique space designed for pedestrians, but retaining the flexibility to allow through-traffic and deliveries for adjacent businesses. Use bump-outs to add greenery and shade, which will add beauty, comfort, and extra character to this shared street.

*Existing view looking north on Sycamore Street*



### Figure 27. Rendering of Sycamore as a Pedestrian-First Street



*Likewise, the planted beds should incorporate green stormwater infrastructure to lessen the burden on Downtown’s aging sewers.*

# 17

## Invest in a connected green space along the River

The project that most captured the community's imagination during the planning process is the opportunity to create a multi-functional series of connected green spaces along the Appomattox River and Harborfront at the northern edge of Downtown. Designed to welcome locals and visitors, people of all ages, for individual or small group visits as well as large events, the conceptual site plan includes, from west to east:

A trailhead for the Appomattox River Trail

A small but formalized parking area to augment the new planned parking garage, which will be within a five minute walk of the riverfront park

Rain gardens to absorb rainfall and floodwaters and opportunities to daylight Brickhouse Run

A destination playground to draw families from across Petersburg and the region

A Visitors Center within South Side Depot

An event lawn and stage for musical and theatrical performances

Gathering terraces where people can sit and relax

A formalized plaza for the farmers market complete with a covered pavilion to protect against sun and rain

A plaza for City events in front of Union Station that connects to trails, harborfront boardwalks, and an event center and flexible great lawn at the Harborfront

**Figure 28. Conceptual Site Plan of a Downtown Riverfront Park**



**Figure 29. Rendering of Downtown Riverfront Park from MLK Jr. Memorial Bridge**



This large-scale and long-term investment will require significant design, phasing, and resources, but it promises to anchor Downtown’s social life, improve its resiliency to heat and flooding, encourage healthy activities for residents who come to exercise, to exhale, or to connect with nature and fellow community members.

*Existing view looking north on Sycamore Street*



*A smaller-scale outdoor music venue. Could have a playground, shaded seating, stage, and maybe even a dog park nearby.*

*- quote from public event*

*A place to gather, eat, see art, listen to live music.*

*- quote from public event*

# 18

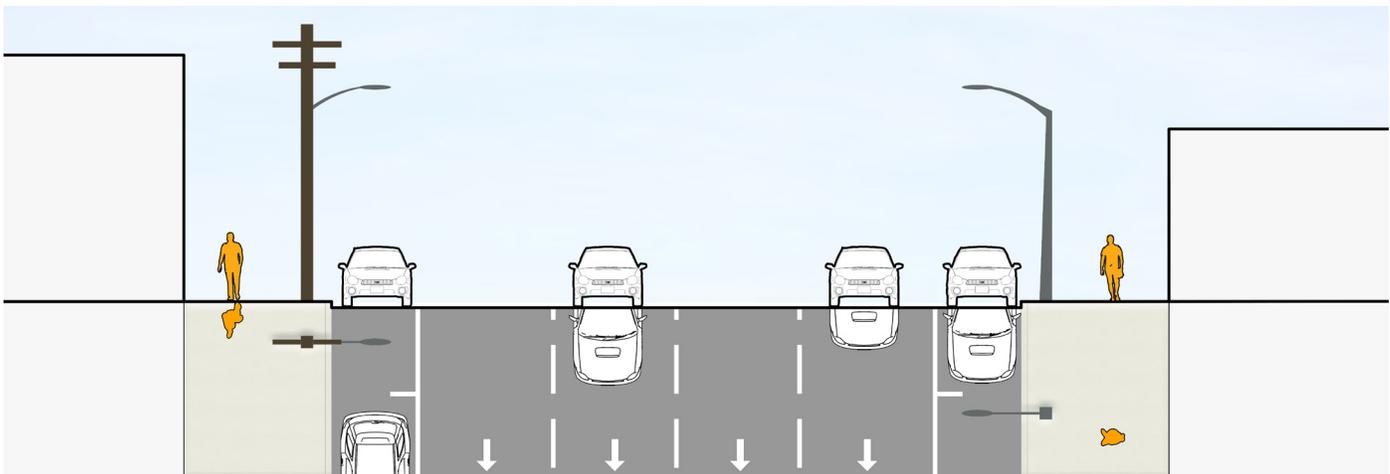
## Implement a road diet on Washington and Wythe

*Slower traffic. Need to stop speeders.*

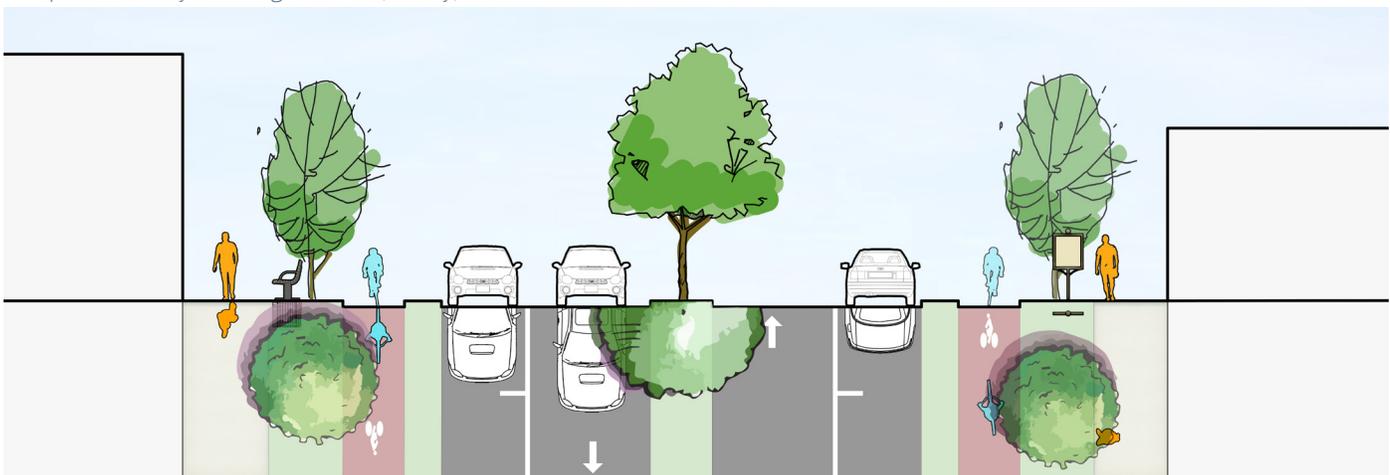
*- quote from public event*

The one-way, auto-oriented, vehicular thoroughways along Washington and Wythe streets bring high-speed traffic through Downtown, while creating a significant barrier between Downtown and near neighborhoods to the south. The initial design of these wide corridors, which tore through Petersburg's historic Black business district at the Halifax Triangle, created a new pattern of land use and architecture less suitable for the historic Downtown core.

Virginia DOT's ongoing STARS study is evaluating options for improving Petersburg's I-85 and I-95 highway interchange, and with that work, also evaluating potential improvements to Washington and Wythe. A significant road diet for both streets aimed at slowing through-traffic and creating a safer and



Sample section of Washington Street, today; note that corridor varies in width as it traverses Downtown.



**Figure 30. Section of Potential Road Diet for Washington Street**

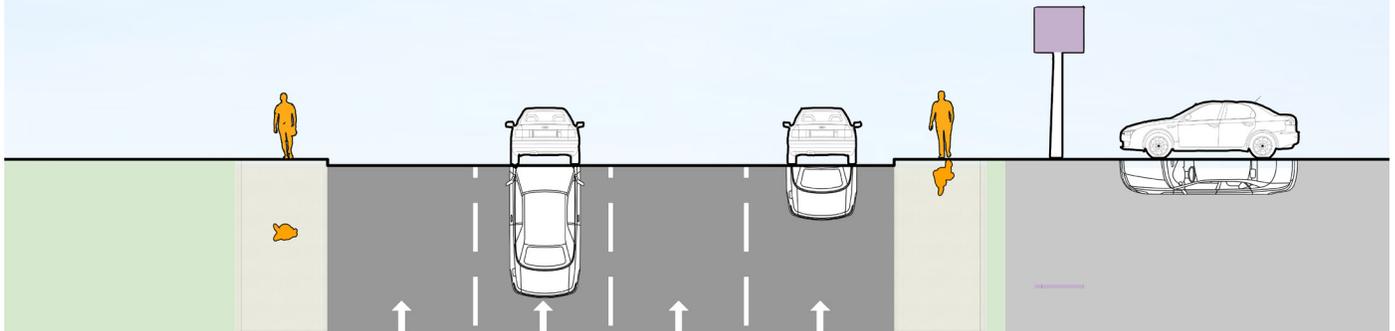
Potential for Washington Street - a two-way conversion would reduce the road from four lanes to two, with protected bike lanes, on-street parking on both sides of the street, plus a tree-lined landscaped median and planted buffers between the bike lanes and sidewalks

more comfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists is necessary and will help provide a sense of arrival in Downtown. Though designs are still in progress, initial concepts emerging from the STARS study are well aligned with the values and priorities of the Downtown Plan, envisioning a return of both corridors to two-way traffic and a reduction in vehicular lanes to make space for bike lanes, trees, safer sidewalks, shorter crossing distances, as well as room for street furnishing such as benches, pedestrian-scale lighting, trash receptacles, possible bike share stations, and wayfinding signage. Transforming these corridors as multi-modal or “complete streets” will also boost the appeal and thus the land value and redevelopment potential of adjacent property.

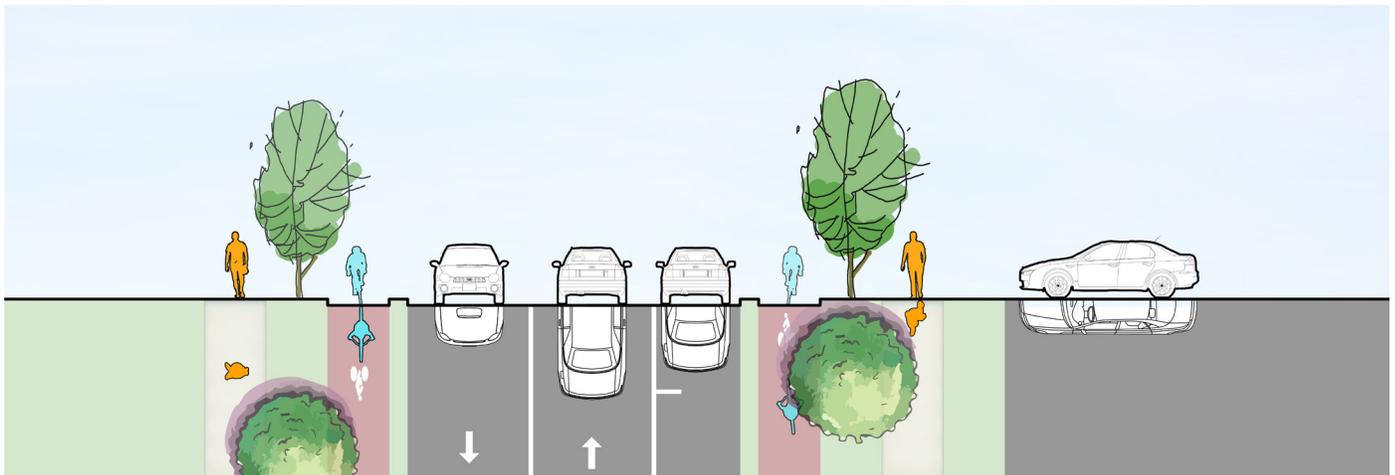
The bike lanes would connect to planned bike lanes along Adams and a potential bike lane on Market Street, both of which would lead cyclists north to the Appomattox River Trail and beyond.



*Precedent images of similar improvements*



*Sample section of Wythe Street, today; note that corridor varies in width as it traverses Downtown.*



**Figure 31. Section of Potential Road Diet for Wythe Street**

Potential for Wythe Street - a two-way conversion would reduce the road from four lanes to two, with space to incorporate protected bike lanes, on-street parking on one side of the street, and trees to add shade coverage for the bike lanes and sidewalks

# On the Map

## ACTION ITEMS:

**19**

Partner with the National Park Service to draw visitors from the Battlefield

**20**

Increase marketing to a range of audiences, including Petersburg residents

**21**

Host regular events and programs that draw people from a variety of backgrounds and interests

**22**

Create a stronger presence for VSU Downtown

**23**

Invest in gateways with signage and wayfinding

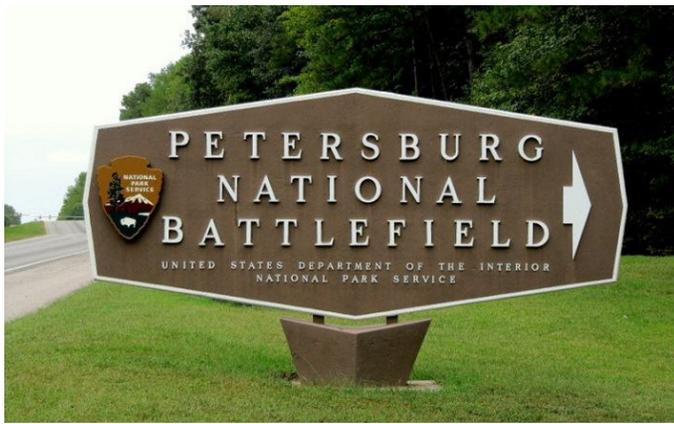
**Grow Downtown as a destination for residents, students, service members, and visitors, and a place that people know about (and know how to find!).**

The strategies under this goal aim to draw more residents, students, and visitors to Downtown through new attractions, improved marketing, investments in signage and wayfinding, and intentional programming in Downtown to attract missing markets and increase inclusivity.

**19**

Partner with the National Park Service to draw visitors from the Battlefield to Downtown and vice versa

Petersburg's most notable tourist attraction is the Petersburg National Battlefield, which includes the Eastern Front Visitor Center and Poplar Grove National Cemetery in Petersburg, Five Forks Battlefield in Dinwiddie, and Grant's Headquarters at City Point in Hopewell. A 2009 Boundary Adjustment Study by the National Park Service (NPS) considered adding South Side Depot in Downtown Petersburg to the Petersburg National Battlefield's footprint, suggesting that by locating a contact station or visitors center in South Side Depot, an additional 30,000 to 40,000 tourists would come to Downtown each year. Though the site met all the requisite criteria, the boundary expansion did not occur, and the NPS remains committed to providing visitor services at its main location on the Eastern Front. There remain, however, several critical opportunities to strengthen the connection between Downtown Petersburg, its history, and historic assets with those of other sites in the region of national significance, most notably the Battlefield.



### Establish a Petersburg Visitor Center in Downtown

- In 2022, the City allocated \$2.4 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to renovate the historic South Side Depot in hopes of creating a Visitor Center to draw tourists directly to Downtown. Though the Park Service does not currently have the staff capacity to have a regular presence at such a satellite location, the NPS is interested in finding ways to collaborate with the City to provide occasional programming (i.e., lectures, tabling at events, walking tours), visitor education, and volunteer training at South Side Depot, along with maps and brochures that provide information about NPS sites nearby. As plans for a Downtown Visitor Center take shape, engage the NPS to determine the specifics of a partnership in program delivery and promotion. The goal should be to staff the center such that it can welcome guests seven days a week, and if the potential arises to co-locate an official NPS and City Visitor Center in Downtown at South Side Depot, such an arrangement would be immensely beneficial for Downtown businesses and tourism, and would likely result in increased visitorship for the Park Service as well.

Pursue cross-marketing opportunities - While the NPS cannot make specific recommendations about regional food, beverage, and other tourist destinations, the brochure racks at NPS Visitor Centers can provide information about the region's offerings. Make sure that materials about Downtown's food, drink, hospitality, and

entertainment venues are up to date, and include information about historic sites clustered in and around Downtown for visitors keen to explore the area's history more deeply. Also review existing NPS materials online and in print and suggest updates to reflect the current Downtown experience. If possible, create a cross-referenced calendar of events that includes special events at the Battlefield and those in Downtown as well.

Strengthen multi-modal connections - currently the best way to travel between Downtown Petersburg and the Battlefield is to drive. Once at the Battlefield, many visitors enjoy walking the 10 miles of trails across the Eastern Front. With investments in the regional trail network coming the Appomattox River Trail and proposed Fall Line Trail, there may be opportunities to extend a bicycle and walking trail connection to the Petersburg National Battlefield Park, which would add to the unique combination of outdoor recreation and historical tourism in the area. In the shorter-term, revisit the plan to establish a trolley loop between the Petersburg Battlefield sites, Downtown, and other historically significant sites nearby, such as Blandford Church and Cemetery. The City and NPS successfully obtained trolleys through the Federal Lands Access Program; now they need to be put to use. Work with NPS to develop a pilot plan, tied either to special events, or specific efforts to increase local community visitorship (i.e., from VSU, from Fort Gregg-Adams, or from different Petersburg neighborhoods) to both Downtown and the Battlefield.

# 20

Complement regional tourism destinations with investments in local attractions that tell lesser known histories and foster memories made in the present

Beyond Petersburg National Battlefield, the City is rich with historic sites. The City currently relies on volunteers to staff Centre Hill Museum and Blandford Church, so visiting hours are limited. The Centre Hill Museum is open on Saturdays and Sundays or by appointment, and Blandford Church, which currently hosts the City’s temporary visitors center, is open Thursdays through Sundays or by appointment. Other attractions in the region, such as Battersea, may be open only one day each week, and some, such as the former Seige Museum located in the Merchant’s Exchange Building, which also hosts Visitors Center functions, have been closed.

These local sites, plus others -- among them, a collection of sites with notable African American histories in Downtown and on Pocahontas Island -- tell a rich story of the city. The Historic Petersburg Foundation website provides a good deal of information about many local sites, but

does not include a centralized “plan your visit” page with a map and information about each site’s visiting hours or other history-related tourism opportunities, such as the Petersburg History Walking Tours led by Petersburg Company. The Petersburg Area Regional Tourism has a print brochure and a “History Buff Tour” web page which does contain a map and visiting hours for Blandford Church, Centre Hill Museum, Petersburg National Battlefield, City Point National Cemetery in Hopewell, and Pamplin Historical Park & The National Museum of the Civil War Soldier in Dinwiddie, but it does not contain the full collection of local sites of interest. Work with both groups to build out a user-friendly visitor’s guide that invites heritage travelers to scratch below the surface and discover the city’s lesser known sites and histories during their visit. Also work with the historic sites themselves to align open hours so that tourists can see multiple sites within one trip.



*Photos taken at Pocahontas Island and the Halifax Triangle*

**Figure 32. African American Heritage Assets in and near Downtown**



African American history is United States history, and Downtown Petersburg, is rich with significant historical sites that tell the story of the African American experience. Though various history websites make the more dominant historical narratives easily accessible online, it can be difficult to find information on these lesser known sites and role they played in Petersburg's, and this nation's history, more broadly.

## 21

Increase marketing to a range of audiences, including Petersburg residents

To grow Downtown's business mix, Downtown must grow its customer base not just by adding new Downtown residents, but by attracting more resident visitors from elsewhere in the City and region -- including students, soldiers, and their families -- and capturing the attention of more tourists traveling from farther afield to visit not just the Battlefield and historic sites in the area, but other regional attractions such as the Virginia Motorsports Park in North Dinwiddie and the Keystone Truck and Tractor Museum in Colonial Heights, both of which draw significant numbers of visitors. Cell phone data suggest that Downtown Petersburg is not on the radar of many potential visitors. Different audiences will respond best to different messaging, events, and attractions, but all require clarity in terms of what local offerings are available and when.

Establish a Downtown (and regional) calendar of events as a one-stop information shop that connects regular programming like the River Street Market days, Friday for the Arts!, Wabi Sabi's live music schedule, Trivia Night at Trapezium Brewery, and other social events with special events in the region, such as the Festival of Grapes and Hops, the Independence Day Fireworks Show, VSU's Homecoming, Family Weekend, and Graduation, Fort Gregg-Adam's Graduation Ceremonies.

Increase the local marketing budget and capacity to include different channels that together tell a well-rounded story of Downtown. Beyond established historical narratives, highlight recreational, educational, cultural, and social offerings. Collaborate with the Petersburg Area Regional Tourism bureau to ensure that local efforts complement and expand their regional outreach strategy, rather than duplicate efforts.

## 22

Host regular events and programs that draw people from a variety of backgrounds and interests

Regularly scheduled and special events are an important part of any Downtown's social life. They create reasons for people to come Downtown, meet friends, and support local businesses. Existing events, including the weekly farmers market and monthly art walk, as well as seasonal events such as the Christmas Tree lighting have a faithful following, but there are opportunities to add to Downtown's social calendar and draw more people and dollars to Downtown in the process.

Make sure that students are invited to Downtown early and often, with specific events planned during Freshman and new student orientation. Given the proximity, lead a walk or bike ride from campus to Downtown businesses offering student welcome deals. Design a Downtown scavenger hunt to encourage students to look around. Host a special outdoor concert or festival marketed to students. Exposure to Downtown's businesses will help students see Downtown as part of their college experience.

Diversity program offerings, and aim to host events that are representative of Petersburg's population. During the planning process, some people shared that they do not currently feel welcome in Downtown or do not see events Downtown that are of interest to them. People expressed an interest in more cultural festivals and events that celebrate Petersburg as a majority-Black city. Other cities have hosted music, film, dance, fitness, and nature programs that center Black participants and welcome their allies. With its riverfront, planned trail network, and rich cultural heritage, Petersburg has many opportunities to expand programming along these lines.

## CASE STUDIES:

### AFRAM - Baltimore MD



AFRAM is a free, family-oriented celebration of Baltimore's African American heritage hosted in a public park over Juneteenth weekend with live music, entertainment, food, activities, and more. [www.aframbaltimore.com](http://www.aframbaltimore.com)

### Black Girls Run - nationwide



With local chapters leading neighborhood runs and representing in big race events, the goal of Black Girls Run is to encourage and motivate Black women to practice a healthy lifestyle. [www.blackgirlsrun.com](http://www.blackgirlsrun.com)

Encourage locals to experience Downtown anew with specific events designed to draw residents from across the City. During the planning process, we also heard that while Downtown and Uptown used to be major shopping destinations, many people have fallen out of the habit of visiting. Work with businesses to offer a local discount, to host locals nights at bars and restaurants, and consider an annual outdoor Downtown block party along Sycamore Street, complete with a street closure, music, food, and games. As investments in the Riverfront park or Courthouse plaza progress, the location of the block party can change to welcome the City to Downtown's newest destinations.

*2,000 people live Downtown, and more than half are Black. In most events hosted in Downtown, I did not feel as a Black woman that it reflected all cultures present in Petersburg. More cultural festivals.*

*- quote from public event*

### In Color Birding - Philadelphia PA

In Color Birding makes birding a positive experience for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) folks and their allies, organizing inclusive outings that bring BIPOC voices, nature lovers, and birders of all levels to parks, waterways, and historically underserved areas.

[www.incolorbirding.org](http://www.incolorbirding.org)



## 23

### Create a stronger presence for VSU Downtown

Downtowns that function as college towns benefit from the energy and income that students and visiting families bring, and vibrant Downtowns also help universities attract top talent. Beyond a series of welcoming events for VSU students each fall, partner with Virginia State University leadership and faculty to find ways to grow VSU's presence in Downtown. Downtown Petersburg has space to welcome VSU classroom or lab space, student housing for upperclassmen, social space where students can hang out, experience-based learning opportunities through internships and jobs with Downtown businesses and organizations, and civic or community service projects. As such a stronger presence for VSU in Downtown could take the form of real estate development that establishes a physical footprint for the campus in Downtown as well as softer connections forged by private businesses that market to students with prices and products of interest.

*VSU Education Hub!*

*- quote from public event*

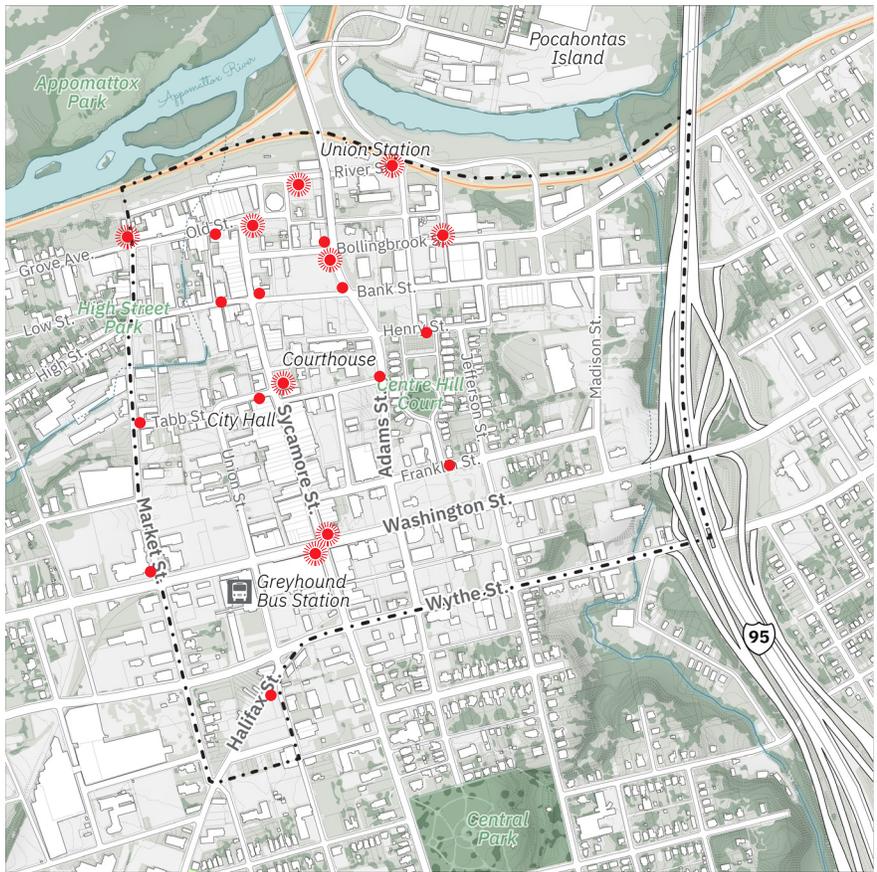
## 24

### Invest in gateways with signage and wayfinding

Most people arriving in Downtown Petersburg from elsewhere approach from Interstate 95. Southbound Exit 52 for Washington and Wythe streets does have signs for Historic Old Towne Petersburg and Petersburg National Battlefield, with smaller signs advising drivers to use Washington Street for Historic Old Towne Petersburg and Wythe Street for the Battlefield. There is also vertical signage that announces arrival in Petersburg at the end of the exit ramp, and some businesses have installed wayfinding that directs drivers toward Trapezium Brewery, Demolition Coffee, and Saucy's Bar B.Q. Another sign on the south side of Washington at Madison says "Welcome to Historic Downtown Petersburg," but that is a full three blocks from Sycamore Street,



*Examples of existing gateway signage*



**Figure 33. Gateways and Wayfinding Locations**

- Wayfinding & Cultural Signage
- ☀ Gateway Signage

the main spine of Downtown. There is no signage directing drivers to turn in on Sycamore Street which leads to the heart of Downtown’s historic business district. Similarly for travelers exiting the bus station at Washington and Union; there is little wayfinding support to help newcomers navigate to Downtown’s destinations.

While the streetscape improvements to Washington and Wythe will go a long way toward beautifying the approach to Downtown, slowing traffic, and incentivizing redevelopment for an improved land use mix that better transitions into Downtown, there is a need to add wayfinding signage as a signal closer to Sycamore Street that directs visitors to the Downtown core toward parking resources, restaurants, and stores.

The approach from the MLK Jr. Memorial Bridge into Downtown is better than Washington and Wythe, because drivers are treated to a view of Petersburg’s skyline, defined by the ornate top of the Courthouse, as well as an intersection ringed by brick crosswalks at Bollingbrook Street that signals an entrance of sorts into the historic Downtown. Again, however, there is little wayfinding directing newcomers to Sycamore Street or nearby parking resources that would encourage people to get out of their cars and walk.

Work with Virginia Main Street on an early action project to design and deploy visible signage at these key intersections, directing traffic toward Downtown, and specifically toward area businesses and parking opportunities.

## 25

Monitor and support the development of new, boutique lodging options in and near Downtown as tourism continues to grow

According to the Virginia Tourism Corporation, tourism in Petersburg in 2022 generated \$41M in visitor spending supporting more than 520 jobs (direct and multiplier impacts) in the city.<sup>14</sup> This represents an increase in spending of 17% since 2016. Moreover, with its proximity to the Petersburg National Battlefield, the Virginia State University campus, Fort Gregg-Adams, and new pharmaceutical businesses locating in the City, Downtown Petersburg is a tourist, visitor, and business-traveler destination distinct from the Capital district in Richmond or the Hampton Roads region, and local visitors have a significant economic impact that benefits the City and region. The Petersburg National Battlefield generated 180,000 visitors, spending an estimated \$11.9M in 2022.<sup>15</sup> Visitation at the Battlefield has recovered since 2020, but lags behind its historic average of 199,000 annual visitors. Regardless, Petersburg is part of a major tourism region with an estimated 1.5 million visitors.<sup>16</sup>

The area surrounding Downtown does include a new inn and event space at Strawberry Hill and an estimated 300 AirBnb options for guests, as well as a mix of mid-to-value brand chain hotels. However, the closest full-service high-end hotel is on Wagner Road, several miles from Downtown and the City's main attractions. At the time of this plan's writing, a 68-room 4-Star Hilton-affiliated hotel with a restaurant that will offer dinner seven nights a week is under construction, and completing that project should remain a top priority for the City, as it will support multi-day tourism visits, be able to host larger groups, and drive economic growth fueled by Petersburg's tourism potential going forward.

<sup>14</sup> 2022 Direct Visitor Impact for Virginia Localities, <https://www.vatc.org/research/economicimpact/>

<sup>15</sup> National Park Service, 2022. Visitor Spending Effects, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Virginia Tourism Commission presentation, June 29, 2023.



*Rendering of restored Hotel Petersburg, currently under construction*



*Photo of Strawberry Hill Inn on Hinton Street*

# Positioned for Success

## ACTION ITEMS:

**26**

Build the network of volunteers engaged in Downtown's future

**27**

Formalize Main Street Petersburg with paid staff to support plan implementation

**28**

Secure a new revenue source by reintroducing paid parking and cycling dollars back into Downtown

## **Build capacity for implementation and stewardship over time.**

The strategies under this goal aim to assemble the resources necessary to take sustained action for change in Downtown Petersburg. No one entity will be able to take on all the recommendations in this plan; rather, implementation will require coordination and team-work, such that each partner can play to their strengths. The resources needed to drive implementation include dedicated staff and technical expertise to advance complex projects, coordinate with business and property owners, and marshal volunteers; a robust network of community volunteers ready to help; new revenue sources and grants from government and philanthropic sources, and supporting policies to guide decision making going forward.

## 26

### Formalize the local Main Street organization with paid staff to support implementation and focus on Downtown initiatives in coordination with City leadership

At present, Main Street Petersburg, Inc. is a volunteer organization working to build capacity through the Virginia Main Street Accelerator Program and identify funding for a paid Executive Director position. Without full time staff, Downtown lacks the dedicated staff time necessary to focus on implementing the plan and various programs and projects designed to support Downtown's business ecosystem.

The City's Department of Economic Development has stepped up to lead this Downtown planning effort, but going forward, both of these groups -- the City and a local Main Street organization -- have important roles to play in Downtown's unfolding future. Indeed, to effect change in the near-term, it is critical that dedicated staff be assigned or hired to drive the plan's implementation.

On the City side, responsibilities will include ongoing pursuit of government and philanthropic grants, policy changes, the creation and oversight of incentive programs, land use decisions, and development plan review, among other tasks. A strong, nonprofit Main Street organization is needed to complement the City's efforts with additional fundraising capacity, targeted marketing to elevate the visibility of Downtown and its businesses, hosting of events and programming that draw people to Downtown, conducting outreach to existing businesses in an effort to establish more consistent business hours throughout the Downtown, and organizing training and networking opportunities for existing and new local businesses.

While Main Street Petersburg works through the Accelerator Program in pursuit of Main Street designation, early action items to support the organization's development include hiring a consultant to act as an organizational coach to develop a work plan, support efforts to rebuild the Board, begin to fundraise, and seek sustained funding for a full-time Executive Director position. While the long-term goal will be to build out the paid staff beyond an Executive Director, a Main Street organization also provides great learning ground for motivated VSU interns looking for experience in marketing, social media communications, event planning, fundraising, and other small business and economic development-related tasks.



## 27

### Build the network of volunteers engaged in Downtown's future

Beyond paid staff within the City and a local Main Street organization focused solely on Downtown, implementation will benefit from an all-hands on deck approach. Some strategies -- such as investing in a connected green space along the Appomattox River -- can be advanced through a project-based approach that taps existing partners -- such as FOLAR and the owners of the Harborfront -- to lend energy and expertise and help marshal resources as needed.

Other projects and ideas, however, may be best advanced by passionate individuals or entities interested in taking on a piece of the plan and making it happen. One way to encourage meaningful volunteer work is to engage local philanthropic partners in the design, funding, and administration of a Downtown Challenge Grant program that invites applications from anyone who has an idea that will advance the plan's goals and strategies, thereby incentivizing volunteer participation by providing resources to implement people's passion projects.



*Macon Lights is an example of a successful Challenge Grant project*

# CASE STUDY:

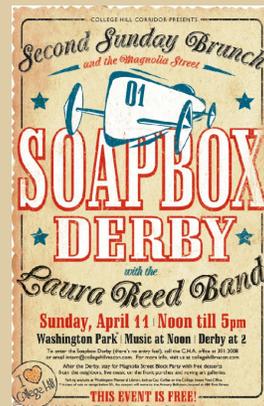
## Downtown Macon Challenge Grant

Spurred by a sizable philanthropic gift, which is stewarded by a local foundation, the initial commitment of resources can finance projects proposed by community members in the spirit of the plan, which helps maintain momentum and advance smaller-scale efforts as the groundwork is laid for larger developments and capital projects. If such funding can be secured, the process involves a call for proposals, published once or twice a year, that asks for a project idea, a proposed budget and timeline, and narrative description of how the project relates to the plan, how it will be implemented, and by whom. A Downtown Challenge Review Committee and process will need to be developed to select projects for implementation. Be prepared to offer some technical assistance both during the application process and as projects move forward.



The Community Foundation of Central Georgia, with funding from the Peyton Anderson Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, has administered multiple rounds of a Downtown Challenge Grant program to implement the Downtown Macon Action Plan (MAP). In the first round alone, the program deployed \$3 million over the course of three years to community members committed to bringing ideas from the plan into reality. Grants ranged from \$2,000 to \$50,000 or more, depending on the project budgets pitched by community members.

[cfcga.org/dtc-grant-announcement](http://cfcga.org/dtc-grant-announcement)



*Other projects include Gospel Brunch Concerts in the park and a yearly Soap Box Derby, events that bring people together Downtown.*

# 28

## Secure new revenue sources to invest in Downtown

All in, this plan's strategies will require and investment of hundreds of millions in public improvements, which will yield economic benefits back to the City in the form of additional consumer and tourism dollars as well as associated tax revenue growth through the growth and preservation of Downtown as a place and new energy and excitement throughout the community. Additional investments to modernize Downtown's aged infrastructure will be necessary to support new development and prevent recurring disruptions to Downtown business, services, and social life caused by breakdowns in the sewer system. Different financial mechanisms exist to capture and direct much needed reinvestment dollars to Downtown.

Consider increasing debt utilization - In Petersburg, where the memory of the 2016 financial crisis lingers, commitments of public resources are weighed carefully, as they should be. Today, the City's economic outlook is much stronger, and the City's financial advisors acknowledge that it is important to continue to diversify Petersburg's economy and to invest in parks, in Downtown, and in economic development strategies that can increase wealth and income for the City. With a debt service level of 4.5% of the City budget in 2023 compared to 10%, which is typical of other municipalities and allowed under existing City policy, one option to raise funds for strategic investment is to use more debt capacity and use that debt for key projects or to address needed capital improvements caused by failing infrastructure and increased development.

Consider Tax Increment Financing (TIF) - The time may be ripe to establish a Downtown TIF District, used to capture the increased tax revenue from new development and cycle those dollars back into the Downtown District for continued improvements. With several significant development projects on the horizon and the potential for more, it is not too late in Downtown's renaissance to embrace this strategy. However, a TIF District does require a certain scale of development before the revenue generated for reinvestment is significant.

Consider creating a Tourism Improvement District (TID)<sup>17</sup> - Similar to a BID, a TID is a tourism-related business district created to increase revenue for the specific purposes of destination marketing and capital investment. This is in addition to the already existing Tourism Zone. Tourism businesses like hotels, restaurants, bars, and other attractions in the district agree to levy and manage the usage of an additional quarterly sales tax percentage of 1% to 2% to fund tourism marketing and development, which could include supporting tourism development and experience enhancements in Downtown. With sufficient resources it could also include projects such as a historical interpretation center at South Side Depot, or outdoor recreation destination at the Riverfront, among other uses.

Continue to explore Public Private Partnerships - Also known as PPPs or P3s, public private partnerships emerge with larger-scale developments, like the one proposed at Adams and Bank streets and referenced in Strategy 11, where a combination of City resources (in the form of land or gap financing) plus private capital work together to yield public benefits, such as the proposed parking deck within the project's broader development program.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.vatc.org/TDFP/>

Reintroduce paid parking in Downtown, and cycle parking revenue back into Downtown - With the proposed parking deck bringing paid off-street parking to Downtown, it will be necessary to bring back paid on- and off-street public parking within Downtown to avoid a disincentive to utilizing the new parking deck. Current legislation enabling metered parking both on-street and on off-street lots owned or operated by the City is quite out of date, as is the set rate for parking in a metered space, which is \$0.10 per hour. As part of the Parking Study referenced in Strategy 11, include a pricing assessment to inform updates to the paid parking legislation. Write into the new legislation that some or all of the revenue collected from paid parking in Downtown shall be reinvested in Downtown. Uses could include infrastructure improvements (i.e., sidewalks, lighting, underground utilities) and support for certain Downtown services, which could be provided by the local Main Street organization (i.e., street sweeping, landscape management).

Pursue grant funding from the Commonwealth and Federal government - City staff will need to continue to write grants for state and federal funding streams that become available and align with plan goals and strategies. Examples include:

- The **Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) program** through the National Park Service and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation,<sup>18</sup> which could support elements of the proposed riverfront park.
- **Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)** is a federal grant program through FEMA that supports municipalities undertaking hazard mitigation projects to reduce risk of natural hazards and disasters, including flooding. As open space investments move forward along the riverfront and uphill in front of the historic Courthouse steps, there may be opportunities to use green stormwater infrastructure to absorb rain and flood waters, thereby lessening the burden on Downtown's aging infrastructure.
- Roadway improvements to Washington and Wythe developed through the ongoing STARS (Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions) Study will qualify to apply for implementation funding through the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment's SMART SCALE process. With representatives from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, the SMART SCALE process helps prioritize **District Grants Program (DGP)** funding and **High-Priority Projects Program (HPPP)** funding for transportation projects that improve safety, reduce congestion, increase accessibility, contribute to economic development, promote efficient land use, and support a healthier environment.
- Virginia Main Street **Community Vitality Grant (CVG)**<sup>19</sup> funding through the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which is designed to assist non-designated Main Street communities in achieving downtown revitalization goals.

<sup>18</sup> <https://cityparksalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/NPS-presentation.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/Docx/vms/vms-fy24-grant-manual.pdf>

- Virginia Main Street **Financial Feasibility Grant (FFG)** funding also through DHCD, which allows communities to work with owners of significant derelict buildings toward re-activating non-productive upper floor space. This funding stream provides a good first step for advancing Strategy 10.
- DHCD’s **Community Business Launch (CBL)** grants, which funds projects designed to train emerging entrepreneurs and small business owners on business planning practices as they work toward a competition in which they pitch their ideas to a panel of judges; winners receive grant funding and technical support to kick-start their venture. This could be a good fit for a multi-tenant retail hub project, described in Strategy 3.
- DHCD’s **Virginia Business District Resurgence Grant (VBDRG)**<sup>20</sup> projects support historically economically disadvantaged communities with organizational capacity building, business support, and technical assistance grants targeted specifically to small, women-owned, minority-owned, and immigrant-owned businesses within a targeted business district.
- And more!

Seek philanthropic support for Downtown programming and new capital projects - Many of this plan’s goals and strategies align with the mission and interests of area foundations, which include:

- Improved health and wellness opportunities, supported by investments in Downtown’s walkability, shade, and outdoor recreation amenities including trails and playgrounds
- Community and economic development efforts that result in new housing, jobs, and green space
- Historic preservation and conservation efforts that celebrate Petersburg’s unique histories and historic assets and protect open spaces and natural resources while encouraging people to reconnect with nature
- Arts and cultural investments that catalyze community revitalization and economic development

<sup>20</sup> <https://dhcd.virginiainteractive.org/sites/default/files/Docx/vms/fy24-resurgence-grant-hta-presentation.pdf>

# 29

## Consider updates to zoning and policy to support plan implementation

*Petersburg Next*, the City’s new comprehensive plan includes a future land use map with three main land use categories within Downtown: Community Mixed-Use, Historic Core Neighborhoods, and Conservation and Recreation along the waterways and atop Centre Hill, and these land use designations along with the planning and development principles that accompany them in the comprehensive plan are consistent with the vision of the *Downtown Plan*. The Future Land Use Map further identifies North Sycamore Street, Washington and Wythe, and Halifax Street as Corridors, which should receive consistent streetscape and gateway treatments.

Several land use, zoning, and policy-related strategies within the City’s comprehensive plan are worth reiterating here, and they dovetail with recommendations in the Downtown Plan and will support implementation efforts in keeping with this plan’s community-driven vision:

### **For the public realm:**

Prioritize capital improvements such as wayfinding, streetscaping, lighting, and pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure along designated Gateways and Corridors, including Sycamore, Washington, Wythe, and Halifax

Facilitate active and healthy lifestyles through integrating sidewalks, bike lanes, and green space into new development

### **For development:**

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow for a greater variety of residential types, including accessory dwellings and live/work units, in residential and mixed-use districts

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to support “missing middle” housing; create incentives within the Zoning Ordinance for these types of structures to promote their development

Direct adaptive reuse or infill development on underdeveloped or vacant properties when possible

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to ensure compatible development in designated historic districts and throughout Historic Core Neighborhoods

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to reduce parking minimums and require installation of bike racks at parking areas in multi-family residential, commercial, and mixed-use districts

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to require EV charging stations at all new multi-family residential, mixed-use, commercial, and industrial development based on the number of parking spaces on site

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to bolster requirements and incentives to incorporate low impact development and environmental site design into development applications

Evaluate City fees, including impact and connection fees, to ensure they can adequately generate funding for future infrastructure improvements

# Alignment with *Petersburg Next*, the City's new Comprehensive Plan

Each of the strategies in the *Downtown Petersburg Plan* aligns with at least one -- and often several -- of the strategies proposed in the City's new comprehensive plan, *Petersburg Next*. In fact, recommendation 10.2.2 in the comprehensive plan specifically calls to **“Implement the recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan to create a more attractive, vibrant, and interconnected Old Towne area.”** This means that implementation efforts to bring elements of the *Downtown Plan* from vision to reality will, at the same time, advance the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan.

The table on the following pages identifies the specific recommendations within both the *Downtown Plan* and the *Petersburg Next* comprehensive plan that are mutually-reinforcing or overlapping in their desired outcomes. The *Downtown Plan*'s recommendations are listed by goal area in the left column, and the other columns indicate the chapters (column headers) and corresponding recommendation numbers (#.#.#) for the City's new comprehensive plan.

**The select *Petersburg Next* recommendations excerpted here are those most relevant to the *Downtown Plan*.** They are included as a quick reference for the numbered strategies in the Alignment Table on pages 86- 91. **Visit the City's website to view the full comprehensive plan.**

## 3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**3.1.2:** *Work with state economic development agencies, local economic development organizations, and local business partners to market Petersburg to Health Care businesses and manufacturers that would complement the existing businesses in these clusters.*

**3.2.1:** *Expand existing clusters in the Manufacturing, Retail, and Accommodation sectors to represent larger shares of the local economy.*

**3.2.3:** *Focus recruitment efforts on gaps identified in the Economic Development Strategic Plan by identifying and targeting prospective businesses to fill them.*

**3.2.5:** *Direct community-oriented, environmentally sustainable, and well-designed development at the historic Petersburg Harbor.*

**3.3.3:** *In partnership with local economic development organizations, offer two small business forums a year that provide educational opportunities on city processes, support opportunities, and new development in Petersburg.*

**3.3.4:** *Maintain a viable Revolving Loan Fund to assist in microlending to entrepreneurs.*

**3.3.6:** *Facilitate the development of a coworking space in Old Towne as a pilot program for entrepreneurs and remote workers.*

**3.5.1:** *Direct the development of new lodging and dining options around Old Towne and the Interstate 85 and 95 entrance corridors through incentives and Tourism Zone financing opportunities.*

**3.5.4:** *Update the City's social media and tourism website weekly to include information about upcoming events, things to do, and options for lodging, dining, and retail.*

**3.5.6:** *In partnership with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), install branded wayfinding signage to Old Towne Petersburg, Petersburg National Battlefield, the Appomattox River Trail and waterfront, and historic sites from the American Civil Rights Movement Rights Movement, and Pocahontas Island.*

**3.5.7:** *Create a visitor center in the old South Side Depot to serve as a centralized hub for tourism and information.*

## 4 HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

**4.1.4:** Avoid demolition of properties in identified historic districts, pursuing rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, or creative reuse instead.

**4.2.1:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to support “missing middle” housing. Create incentives within the Zoning Ordinance for these types of structures to promote their development.

**4.2.2:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow transitional housing as a by-right use in appropriate districts.

**4.2.6:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow for adaptive reuse, creative reuse, and opportunities for new housing in non-traditional areas (e.g., former shopping centers, former churches and schools, etc.).

**4.4.1:** Update small areas plans for Pocahontas Island, Halifax Triangle, and University Boulevard to further detail broad-based, inclusive visioning and planning for revitalization in these neighborhoods.

**4.4.2:** Collaborate with community groups and partner organizations in tactical urbanism efforts to beautify neighborhoods in the short-term. Evaluate the creation of a Private Property Mural Program as a first step.

**4.4.3:** Apply for grant funding related to infrastructure improvements as a means of supporting quality neighborhoods and economic development.

**4.5.2:** Direct mixed-income residential development in appropriate areas throughout the City, as guided by the Future Land Use Framework and Map

**4.5.2:** Ensure that adaptive reuse and infill development in designated historic districts and Old Towne is complementary to the scale and architectural character of the surrounding area.

## 5 PARKS + RECREATION, ARTS + PRESERVATION

**5.1.4:** Apply for grants and other creative funding sources to install new playground equipment in parks that currently lack facilities.

**5.1.8:** Develop new parks throughout Petersburg so 70% of all residents are within a 10-minute walk of a park.

**5.2.1:** Identify underutilized City-owned properties for reinvestment as multifunctional facility spaces for rentals and events.

**5.2.3:** Identify and evaluate opportunities for increased sponsorship opportunities at major events and parks.

**5.2.4:** Leverage creative marketing and branding to generate interest in recreational programming, assets, and events and drive participation rates.

**5.4.1:** In collaboration with regional stakeholders, invest in park upgrades and facilities at Patton Park, Rotary Park at Pocahontas Island, and Appomattox Riverside/Ferndale Park.

**5.4.2:** Identify opportunities to create additional riverfront park space with piers and docks for water access.

**5.4.3:** As river access increases, install additional wayfinding and safety signage along the riverbank for both land navigation and water access.

**5.5.3:** Actively market Arts and Culture District incentives to entrepreneurs and arts organizations; consider adding new incentives to locate in vacant, underutilized spaces.

**5.5.4:** In collaboration with local stakeholders, organize festivals and events to increase tourism and establish Petersburg as a regional event center.

**5.6.1:** In collaboration with local partners and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), identify creative ways to further educate the community on Petersburg’s diverse history.

**5.6.2:** Build inclusive preservation efforts by identifying and preserving sites/districts associated with historically Black and disinvested neighborhoods.

**5.6.3:** Direct the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic Old Towne properties as a means of increasing downtown population and economic vibrancy.

**5.6.4:** Utilize key design elements from the City’s historic districts to inform new development, especially along major commercial corridors and within transition areas between historic districts and non-historic peripheral areas.

## 5 PARKS + RECREATION, ARTS + PRESERVATION (CONTINUED)

**5.6.6:** Leverage historic preservation and heritage tourism as key elements for a strong and resilient local economy.

**5.6.8:** Create new local historic districts for Pocahontas Island, Walnut Hill, Westover Avenue, and the Halifax Triangle.

**5.6.9:** Provide support, including funding as needed, to ensure the continued operations of Petersburg's museums, such as Blandford Church, Exchange Building, and Center Hill Museum, as tourism drivers and sources of City history and identity.

## 6 COMMUNITY FACILITIES + INFRASTRUCTURE

**6.1.4:** Explore the feasibility of creating a centralized government complex.

**6.3.1:** Develop comprehensive water, sewer, and stormwater improvement strategic plans to determine the highest priority needs for investment.

**6.3.3:** Upgrade stormwater infrastructure in dense residential neighborhoods with histories of spot flooding and ponding issues.

**6.5.5:** Allocate funding for the placement of additional waste receptacles around Old Towne.

**6.5.8:** Recommend approval of rezoning and development proposals for primary, urgent, and emergency medical care land uses in and around the Old Towne, South Crater Road, and Blandford areas.

## 7 PUBLIC SAFETY

**7.4.1:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to adopt community design standards that incorporate principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) – including but not limited to requirements for lighting and landscaping maintenance – in both residential and commercial areas.

## 8 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

**8.3.8:** Preserve available open spaces adjacent to marsh and wetlands to allow for natural protection of water quality, flood mitigation, and the protection of biodiversity and habitat.

**8.4.2:** Locate new development and critical facilities and infrastructure outside of current flood zones and areas projected to be impacted by sea level rise in the future.

**8.5.1:** Reduce the heat island effect by proactively installing new native trees throughout the city, with priority areas determined by using heat mapping data from Virginia State University and the Heat Watch project. Apply for Tree City USA designation to help implement this strategy.

**8.5.2:** Require the use of plants native to the area in all public landscaping, and require or strongly encourage the use of natives for private development through ordinances and invasive species management plans.

## 9 MOBILITY + TRANSPORTATION

**9.1.4:** Complete a parking study/inventory in Old Towne to provide further information about parking surpluses, deficiencies, and maintenance priorities.

**9.1.5:** Complete additional road safety audits along Wythe Street, Halifax Street, and Sycamore Street.

**9.3.2:** Complete a study to assess the feasibility of developing complete streets at the five locations identified (including Washington & Wythe, N Adams, N Sycamore, and Halifax streets) and serve as a foundation for obtaining grant funding.

**9.3.4:** In partnership with CPDC and TCAMPO, complete a greenways plan to identify potential locations for future greenways and steps for acquisition and development.

**9.4.2:** Work with FOLAR and VDOT to develop and locate appropriate safety and wayfinding signage along the Appomattox River Trail and banks of the Appomattox River.

**9.5.1:** Map and record the location and quality of all sidewalks in Petersburg to provide a foundation for data driven, location-based investment over the next twenty years.

**9.5.2:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to reduce parking minimums and require installation of bike racks at parking areas in multi-family residential, commercial, and mixed-use districts.

**9.5.3:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to require EV charging stations at all new commercial or industrial development based on the number of parking spaces on site.

## 10 LAND USE

**10.1.2:** Prioritize capital improvements such as wayfinding, streetscaping, lighting, and pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure along designated Gateways and Corridors.

**10.1.3:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow for a greater variety of residential types, including accessory dwellings and live/work units, in residential and mixed-use districts.

**10.1.5:** Facilitate active and healthy lifestyles through integrating sidewalks, bike lanes, and green space into new development.

**10.2.1:** Direct adaptive reuse or infill development on underdeveloped or vacant properties throughout the City when possible.

**10.2.2:** Implement the recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan to create a more attractive, vibrant, and interconnected Old Towne area.

**10.2.3:** Evaluate all land use applications and capital improvements against the applicable planning and development guidelines of the Future Land Use Map Area Designation.

**10.2.4:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to ensure compatible development in designated historic districts and throughout Historic Core Neighborhoods.

**10.2.5:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to create an overlay district that more specifically regulates development along designated Gateways and Corridors.

**10.3.2:** Ensure water, sewer, stormwater, public safety, and transportation infrastructure is available to support the required level of service for all new development.

**10.3.4:** Market the economic potential of interchanges along Interstates 85 and 95 and recommend approval of appropriate development opportunities, such as hospitality-oriented uses and mixed-use development, in those areas.

## Plan Alignment Table

<b><i>Petersburg Downtown Plan</i></b> <b>Goals &amp; Strategies</b>		
	<b><i>Petersburg Next</i></b> <b>Comprehensive Plan Chapters:</b>	<b>Economic Development</b>
<b>OPEN FOR BUSINESS</b>		
<b>01</b>	Provide smaller-scale grants for temporary installations that uncover windows and activate storefronts with art	
<b>02</b>	Encourage property owners and businesses to utilize available facade and commercial interior grants	3.5.9
<b>03</b>	Subdivide large ground floor spaces to create a multi-tenant retail hub	
<b>04</b>	Build a pipeline of new local businesses	3.2.1 3.3.3, 3.3.4, 3.5.1
<b>05</b>	Attract and retain anchor office tenants	3.1.2
<b>06</b>	Carefully cultivate new retail programming, and explore a small format grocery	3.2.3 3.3.6
<b>RIGHT AT HOME</b>		
<b>07</b>	Update design standards for new construction	
<b>08</b>	Maintain existing residential homes and structures, and encourage continued adaptive reuse	3.5.9
<b>09</b>	Build new homes, of different types, including townhomes	
<b>10</b>	Convert the vacant upper floors on Sycamore Street to housing	
<b>11</b>	Partner with developers of the new mixed use development to build a parking garage that benefits Downtown as a whole	

## Alignment with *Petersburg Next* Chapters & Recommendations (#.#.#)

	Housing & Neighborhoods	Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation	Community Facilities & Infrastructure	Safety	Natural Environment	Mobility & Transportation	Land Use
							<b>10.2.2</b>
		5.5.3					
							10.2.1
		5.5.3					10.2.1
			6.1.4 6.5.8				
							<b>10.2.2</b>
	4.2.2 4.5.2	5.6.4					10.2.4
	4.1.4 4.2.6	5.6.2, 5.6.3			8.4.2		10.2.1
	4.2.1 4.4.1		6.3.3				10.1.3 10.2.4
	4.1.4		6.3.3				10.2.1
	4.5.1					9.1.4	10.1.5 10.3.2

## Plan Alignment Table, Continued

<b><i>Petersburg Downtown Plan</i></b> <b>Goals &amp; Strategies</b>			
		<i>Petersburg Next</i> Comprehensive Plan Chapters:	Economic Development
<b>WANDER &amp; WONDER</b>			
<b>12</b>	Enhance Downtown’s alleys (and waterways) as part of a network of pedestrian routes		
<b>13</b>	Maintain and beautify streetscapes and sidewalks		3.5.9
<b>14</b>	Test design scenarios that activate the public realm		
<b>15</b>	Create a central public plaza and gathering space on Sycamore in front of the Courthouse		
<b>16</b>	Consider activating Sycamore Street as a pedestrian-first street		
<b>17</b>	Invest in a connected green space along the River		3.2.5
<b>18</b>	Implement a road diet on Washington and Wythe		
<b>ON THE MAP</b>			
<b>19</b>	Partner with the National Park Service to draw visitors from the Battlefield		3.5.7
<b>20</b>	Complement regional tourism destinations with investments in local attractions that tell lesser known histories and foster memories made in the present		
<b>21</b>	Increase marketing to a range of audiences, including Petersburg residents		3.2.1 3.5.4

## Alignment with *Petersburg Next* Chapters & Recommendations (#.#.#)

	Housing & Neighborhoods	Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation	Community Facilities & Infrastructure	Safety	Natural Environment	Mobility & Transportation	Land Use
							<b>10.2.2</b>
	4.4.2	5.5.2 5.6.1				9.3.4	
		5.5.2	6.5.5	7.4.1	8.5.1, 8.5.2	9.5.1	10.1.2 10.3.2
		5.5.2					10.1.2
			6.3.1		8.5.1, 8.5.2		10.1.5
	4.4.3					9.1.5, 9.3.2	10.1.2 10.2.5
	5.1.4, 5.1.8 5.2.1 5.4.1, 5.4.2	6.3.1			8.3.8 8.4.2	9.4.2	
					8.5.1, 8.5.2	9.1.5 9.3.2	10.1.2 10.2.5 10.3.4
							<b>10.2.2</b>
		5.6.1, 5.6.2, 5.6.6, 5.6.8, 5.6.9					
		5.2.4 5.5.3 5.6.6, 5.6.8					

## Plan Alignment Table, Continued

<b><i>Petersburg Downtown Plan</i></b> <b>Goals &amp; Strategies</b>			
		<b><i>Petersburg Next</i></b> <b>Comprehensive Plan Chapters:</b>	<b>Economic Development</b>
<b>ON THE MAP (CONTINUED)</b>			
<b>22</b>	Host regular events and programs that draw people from a variety of backgrounds and interests		
<b>23</b>	Create a stronger presence for VSU Downtown		
<b>24</b>	Invest in gateways with signage and wayfinding		3.5.6
<b>25</b>	Monitor and support the development of new, boutique lodging options in and near Downtown as tourism continues to grow		3.5.1
<b>POSITIONED FOR SUCCESS</b>			
<b>26</b>	Formalize Main Street Petersburg with paid staff to support plan implementation and focus on Downtown initiatives in coordination with City leadership		3.3.3
<b>27</b>	Build the network of volunteers engaged in Downtown’s future		
<b>28</b>	Secure a new revenue sources to invest in Downtown		
<b>29</b>	Consider updates to zoning and policy to support plan implementation, in keeping with the City's new Comprehensive Plan		

## Alignment with *Petersburg Next* Chapters & Recommendations (#.#.#)

	Housing & Neighborhoods	Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation	Community Facilities & Infrastructure	Safety	Natural Environment	Mobility & Transportation	Land Use
							<b>10.2.2</b>
		5.2.3, 5.5.4					
							10.2.2
		5.4.3				9.4.2	10.1.2, 10.3.4
							<b>10.2.2</b>
							10.2.2
						9.1.4, 9.5.2, 9.5.3	
	5.6.8					5.6.8, 9.5.2, 9.5.3	10.1.3, 10.2.3, 10.2.4, 10.2.5

# Implementation Approach

The *Downtown Petersburg Plan* includes a range of strategies, some of which are lower cost and relatively straightforward to implement in the near term. Other recommendations are complex and much more costly, requiring substantial time, dollars, and coordination between the City, its partners, and Downtown businesses and property owners. The strategies listed here are well positioned to move forward in the near-term.

The **Implementation Matrix** on the pages that follow provides more detailed notes on each of the recommendations -- short, medium, and long-term. It provides guidance on relative costs, anticipated timeframe, key partners poised to help advance the work, and notes on possible early action steps to make progress on the various strategies.

The plan and its strategies are intended as a living document. Market conditions, physical conditions, grant opportunities, key players, and other factors will change with time. As the City of Petersburg and its Downtown partners work together to implement this plan in the coming years, two guiding questions when evaluating possible projects, investments, and programs should be, “**Is this idea aligned with the spirit of the Downtown Plan?**” and “**Will this investment help advance the plan’s goals?**” If the answer to either question is yes, then it is time to get started!



# Implementation Matrix

		RELATIVE COST
<b>OPEN FOR BUSINESS</b>		
<b>01</b>	Provide smaller-scale grants for temporary installations that uncover windows and activate storefronts with art	\$
<b>02</b>	Encourage property owners and businesses to utilize facade improvement grants	\$\$
<b>03</b>	Subdivide large ground floor spaces to create a multi-tenant retail hub	\$
<b>04</b>	Build a pipeline of new local businesses	\$\$\$
<b>05</b>	Attract and retain anchor office tenants	\$\$
<b>06</b>	Carefully cultivate new retail programming, and explore a small format grocery	\$\$\$
<b>RIGHT AT HOME</b>		
<b>07</b>	Update design standards for new construction	\$
<b>08</b>	Maintain existing residential homes and structures, and encourage continued adaptive reuse	\$\$
<b>09</b>	Build new homes, of different types, including townhomes	\$\$\$
<b>10</b>	Convert the vacant upper floors on Sycamore Street to housing	\$\$\$
<b>11</b>	Partner with developers to build a new mixed use development and parking garage to service others	\$\$\$\$

short = years 1&2  
 medium = 2-5 years  
 long = >5 years

TIME-FRAME	KEY PARTNERS	NOTES ON EARLY ACTION
Short	Business Owners, Virginia Main Street, PAAL, Dept. of Economic Development	Retain a storefront designer to work with existing businesses to refresh or activate their windows and signage
Short	Property Owners, Dept. of Economic Development	
Medium	Property Owners	Identify a potential property and start making connections with the owner and local makers to gauge interest
Medium	Virginia Main Street, Metropolitan Business League, VSU Center for Entrepreneurship, Dept. of Economic Development	
Long	Private Developers, Dept. of Economic Development	
Long	Private Developers, Dept. of Economic Development, Main Street Org	
Short	City of Petersburg Dept. of Planning, Architectural Review Board	Advance this effort ahead of Bank Street mixed-use development
Short	Architectural Review Board, Historic Petersburg Foundation, Property Owners	
Medium	Private Developers	
Medium	Property Owners, Dept. of Economic Development	Consider expanding the use of the Facade Improvement Program or Architectural Assistance Grant to cover some of the cost of upper floor residential conversion
Long	City of Petersburg, Private Developer	Continue conversation with developers; make interim improvements to parking lots (signage, gravel) Conduct Downtown Parking Study

## WANDER & WONDER

<b>12</b>	Enhance Downtown’s alleys as part of a network of pedestrian routes	\$	
<b>13</b>	Maintain and beautify streetscapes and sidewalks	\$\$	
<b>14</b>	Test design scenarios that activate the public realm	\$\$\$	
<b>15</b>	Create a central public plaza and gathering space on Sycamore in front of the Courthouse	\$\$\$	
<b>16</b>	Consider activating Sycamore Street as a pedestrian-first street	\$\$\$	
<b>17</b>	Invest in a connected green space along the River	\$\$\$\$	
<b>18</b>	Implement a road diet on Washington and Wythe	\$\$\$\$	

## ON THE MAP

<b>19</b>	Partner with the National Park Service to draw visitors from the Battlefield	\$\$\$	
<b>20</b>	Complement regional tourism destinations with investments in local attractions that tell lesser known histories and foster memories made in the present	\$\$\$	
<b>21</b>	Increase marketing to a range of audiences, including Petersburg residents	\$\$	
<b>22</b>	Host regular events and programs that draw people from a variety of backgrounds and interests	\$	
<b>23</b>	Create a stronger presence for VSU Downtown	\$\$\$	
<b>24</b>	Invest in gateways with signage and wayfinding	\$\$\$	
<b>25</b>	Monitor and support the development of new lodging options in and near Downtown as tourism continues to grow	\$\$\$	

TIME-FRAME

KEY PARTNERS

NOTES ON EARLY ACTION

	Short	Adjacent Property Owners, PAAL, Main Street Org	Improve Pelham Street as a pedestrian connector to Downtown with an improved hardscape or gravel path, new lighting, and public art
	Medium	City of Petersburg	Collaborate with local partners and seek grant funding for planting shade trees along North Adams Street to improve the sidewalk experience and comfort for pedestrians
	Short	City of Petersburg, Main Street Org	
	Medium	City of Petersburg, Main Street Org	Engage design consultant to develop conceptual plan and cost estimate for public plaza and use to bid out the work. Close the parking lot to cars and build a temporary installation to test plaza design and use
	Medium	City of Petersburg, Main Street Org, Local Businesses	Partner with businesses to activate the street and undeveloped land on a regular, but temporary basis
	Long	City of Petersburg, FOLAR, Waukeshaw, Main Street Org	Engage design consultant to develop conceptual plan and cost estimate for the event lawn and terraced seating. Continue programming, concentrating efforts in the future event lawn area
	Long	VDOT, City of Petersburg, Adjacent Property Owners	Participate in ongoing STARS Study to test feasibility

	Medium	NPS, City of Petersburg, Petersburg Area Regional Tourism, Main Street Org	Continue exploration of possible Downtown Visitor Center at South Side Depot
	Short	City of Petersburg, Petersburg Area Regional Tourism	Build out a visitors guide for a more inclusive and expansive history-related tourism experience
	Short	Main Street Org, City of Petersburg, VSU, Fort Gregg-Adams, NPS	Establish a Downtown calendar of events. Coordinate with Petersburg Area Regional Tourism and the local Main Street organization to define marketing roles and responsibilities
	Short	Main Street Org, VSU, City of Petersburg, Property Owners, PAAL, FOLAR	Host the first annual Welcome to Downtown event for new and returning students in the fall. Aim to plan and host four new events, one per season to bring people Downtown
	Long	VSU Administration, Faculty, Students	Explore internship opportunities for VSU students with the Main Street organization or other Downtown businesses
	Medium	City of Petersburg, VDOT, Main Street Virginia	Work with Virginia Main Street to design and deploy visible signage at key intersections, directing traffic toward Downtown businesses and parking resources
	Short	Private Developers, City of Petersburg	

RELATIVE  
COST

**POSITIONED FOR SUCCESS**

<b>26</b>	Formalize Main Street Petersburg with paid staff to support plan implementation	\$\$	
<b>27</b>	Build the network of volunteers engaged in Downtown's future	\$\$	
<b>28</b>	Secure a new revenue source to invest in Downtown	\$	
<b>29</b>	Consider updates to zoning and policy to support plan implementation	\$	

TIME-  
FRAME

KEY PARTNERS

NOTES ON  
EARLY ACTION

Short	Main Street Org, Virginia Main Street, Dept of Economic Development	Seek Main Street Designation by DHCD Work on building leadership and capacity for a strong Downtown organization to help advance the plan Explore internship opportunities for VSU students
Short	Local Foundations, Volunteers	Pursue Downtown Challenge Grant to distribute implementation efforts, energy, resources
Short	City of Petersburg	Pursue new grant opportunities Include a pricing assessment in the Downtown Parking Study”
Short	City of Petersburg	

