

South SLOPE

A SOUTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD
Vision Plan

DRAFT January / 2022



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South Slope Vision Plan creates a vision for the area bringing together the history, current context, community input, city goals, and best practices for the growth of cities.

The vision for the South Slope area is one of a **vibrant, safe, inclusive, and welcoming place for everyone**. Though separate and somewhat removed from the historic core of downtown, with its own unique character and history; the South Slope is seamlessly connected to the surrounding community, downtown and adjacent neighborhoods through business and community relationships, green infrastructure, and multimodal transportation connections. The streets are safe and walkable with accessible pedestrian infrastructure and amenities.

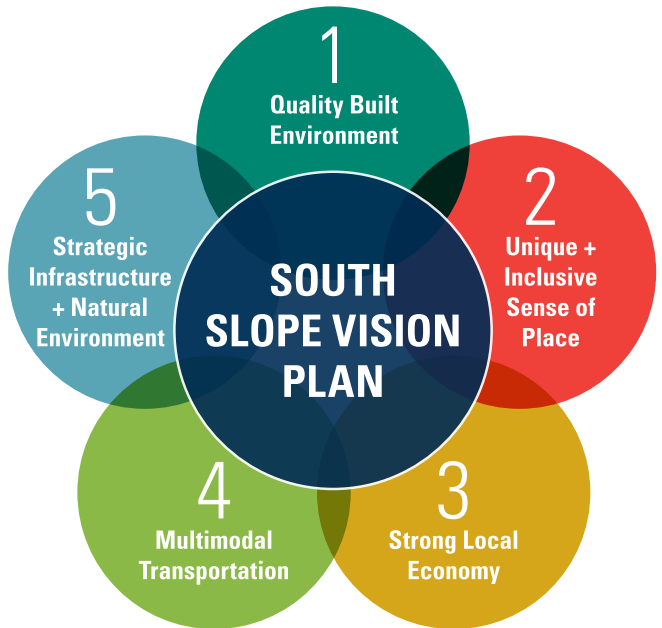
Over the past two decades, **the South Slope has changed and grown organically**, in part due to the growth in the historic core of downtown, and the zoning that is in place. This plan does not suggest any sweeping changes for the area, but rather **ways to build on the existing assets already in place**. The recommendations focus on refining the existing regulations and transportation infrastructure to channel coming growth in a way that fits the physical context, benefits local residents and works with the environment. Additionally, this plan suggests strategies to make the area more inclusive of the surrounding neighborhoods, support local businesses and create opportunities for city residents to benefit from the growth that is occurring.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Five Core Themes

The Vision Plan has five main themes, each with its own goals and strategies. The goals and strategies are interrelated and support each other. The five core themes are:



1 QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- Identify, respect and celebrate the **unique character of different areas within the South Slope.**
- Encourage and reinforce a **more urban form.**
- Encourage uses that **support local residents.**
- Improve the **quality of the public realm.**

2 UNIQUE + INCLUSIVE SENSE OF PLACE

- **Create social and economic connections within the South Slope** and with surrounding areas.
- **Make the South Slope a welcoming and inclusive place** for all of Asheville's residents.

3 STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY

- **Encourage a mix of businesses** which include local services and maker-spaces.
- **Support existing businesses** to thrive and grow to their fullest potential.
- **Support development of new and existing BIPOC owned businesses.**
- **Continue to strengthen organizational supports** for businesses and the district.
- **Ensure that public infrastructure provides ample multimodal access** and gathering spaces.
- **Encourage a mix of unit types and sizes** to attract a diverse population to the area.
- **Encourage the production, preservation & protection of affordable housing** for local residents and the business community.

4 MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

- **Create safe, accessible, pedestrian-friendly streets.**
- **Pursue transportation improvements** that promote public space and vibrant streetlife.
- **Provide safe connected bicycle facilities** within and through the district.
- **Increase viability of alleys for access** to reduce driveways on major streets and to provide additional pedestrian connections.

5 STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE + NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- **Implement green infrastructure** to mitigate flooding and improve water quality.
- **Enhance the urban tree canopy** and green spaces.
- **Increase energy efficiency** and renewable energy production.
- **Build streetscape infrastructure.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 10 Key Initiatives

In addition to the five themes of this plan, there are 10 Initiatives, which are more concrete initiatives for implementation. In some cases the initiatives build on and reinforce existing city projects while others are new. Some may take longer than others but they provide a road map of priorities for plan implementation. The 10 Key Initiatives are:

- 1 UPDATE ZONING + DESIGN GUIDELINES TO ACHIEVE COMMUNITY GOALS**
- 2 CREATE A GATEWAY AT BILTMORE + SOUTHSIDE AVENUES**
- 3 HONOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY**
- 4 WEAVE ART THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT**
- 5 DEVELOP CITY-OWNED PROPERTY FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING + JOB CREATION**
- 6 ENACT EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT**
- 7 CONVERT BANKS + BUXTON AVENUES TO SHARED STREETS**
- 8 CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS VIA THE SOUTHSIDE GREENWAY CONNECTOR**
- 9 MAKE COXE A GREEN MAIN STREET**
- 10 DEVELOP SUCCESSFUL INCENTIVES FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

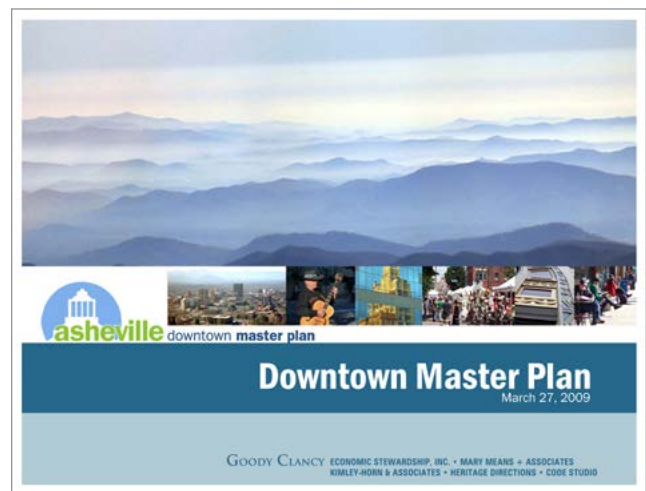
INTRODUCTION + CONTEXT



WHY A VISION PLAN NOW?



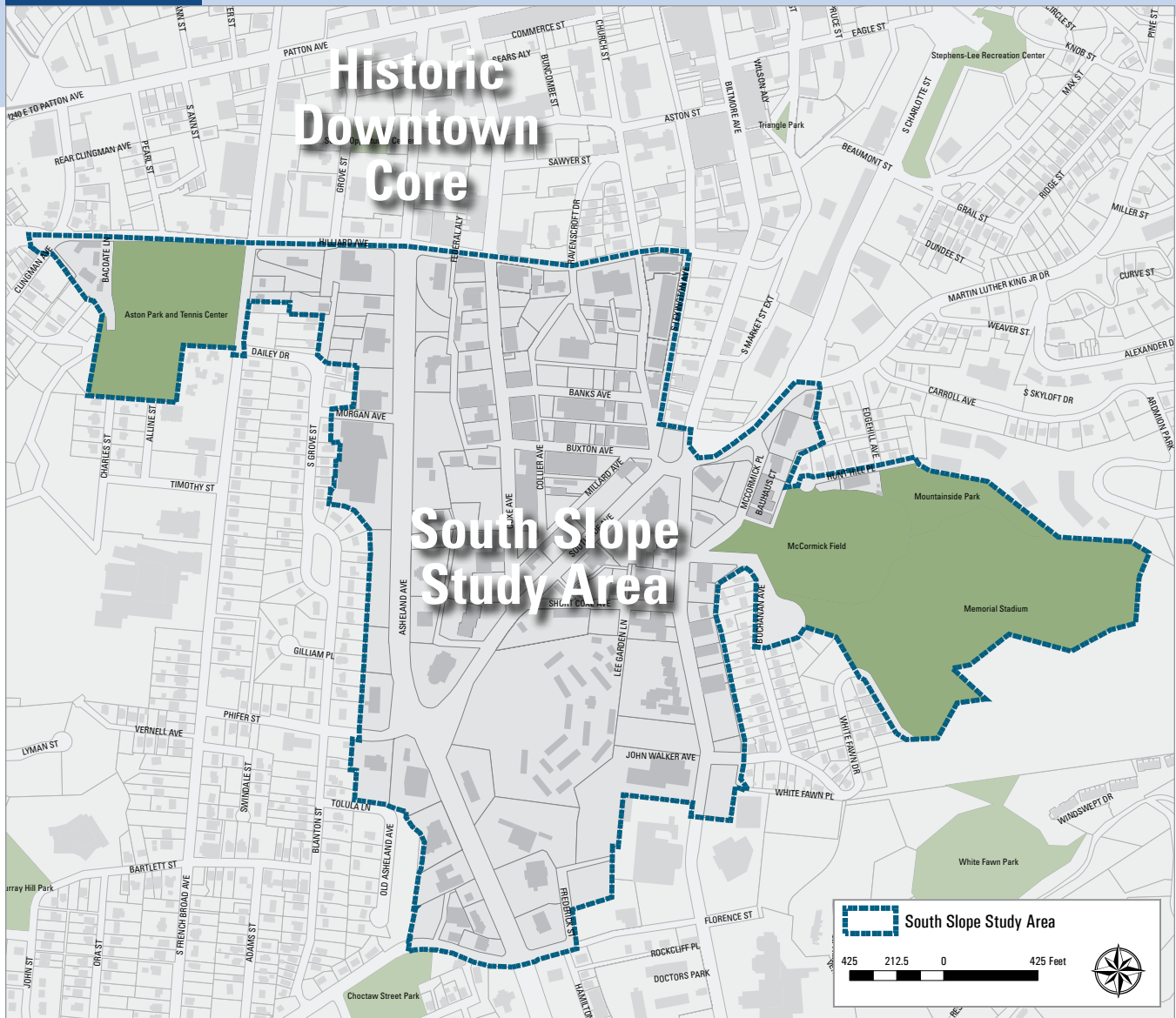
The impetus to develop a vision plan for what has become known as the South Slope emerged from the 2009 Downtown Master Plan (DMP), which identified five sub-districts of downtown Asheville. The DMP encouraged that these sub-districts be further explored and recognized as a means to establish an urban design framework that would intensify their unique sense of place and community. It was also acknowledged that the South Slope, with its strategic geography, serving as the southern gateway to the downtown core and proximity to the hospital district had great potential for redevelopment and growth, and that its unique history should be explored and celebrated.



The South Slope Vision Plan is intended to fulfill the goals of the Downtown Master Plan and guide both city policy and private sector decision making. It is also intended to help push the downtown core's cherished qualities into this evolving area.

Over the last 10 years the South Slope has indeed experienced significant growth and redevelopment. No longer a sleepy warehouse district, the area has experienced somewhat of a renaissance. The combination of new businesses, historic renovations, and new construction has resulted in a vibrant and diverse mix of uses that include manufacturing, entertainment, restaurants, and office uses. Consequently the area has emerged as a destination for both local residents and out of town visitors and more attention has been placed on the neighborhood as a sub-district of the downtown.

SOUTH SLOPE MAP



The need for a vision plan was further intensified with the establishment of the area as an innovation district in 2014. At that time four Innovation Districts were established, which included Downtown, South Slope Extension, the River Arts District, and Charlotte Street. The purpose was to initiate more focused planning and capital investments in these areas. This followed the initial adoption of the Downtown District as a Municipal Service District in 2012, by the City Council. The South Slope Extension District added Aston Park, McCormick Field, and Memorial Stadium as well as some commercial areas adjacent to the existing downtown District.

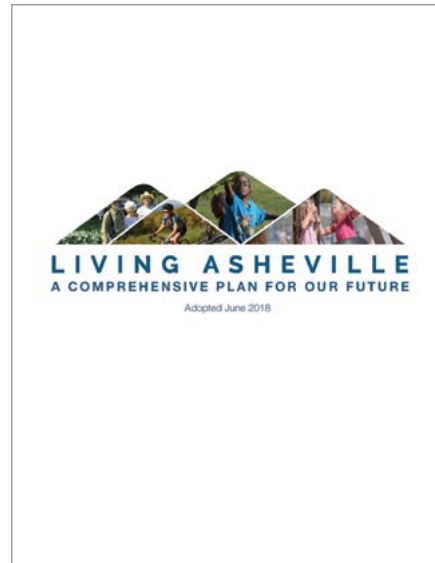
The creation of the Innovation District was an acknowledgment by the City that the area was transforming from a place characterized by underutilized industrial properties to a vibrant urban neighborhood and destination and that public infrastructure investments would be prioritized as part of a community visioning process.

As new development has occurred, it has also become increasingly apparent that both the Central Business District (CBD) zoning standards and design guidelines in place for most of the South Slope needed adjustments to allow the area's unique character to shine.

WHY A VISION PLAN NOW?

It is important to acknowledge that the South Slope study area referenced in this plan incorporates commercial areas of the Southside neighborhood. This area overall is somewhat removed from the historic core of downtown, so that it feels like a different and unique neighborhood. While there is some overlap with the larger downtown in terms of general issues and development, the residents and businesses in this area have distinguished themselves from the other areas of downtown. From a zoning perspective, close to half of the Study Area is zoned Central Business District (CBD) like the historic core.

The South Slope and Southside commercial areas form an interesting confluence in the community, connecting the East End, Hospital District, downtown core, South French Broad Neighborhood, and the Southside Neighborhood. As the southern gateway and connecting point to and from downtown, this area has a great deal of potential for the future. As a community, we are in a time of growth and community concerns abound: for residents being able to remain and thrive in Asheville, for our natural environment, and for building a community that's inclusive and sustainable. At the same time, the South Slope is a great place to accommodate growth, with access to transit and close proximity to jobs. This growth should occur in a way that a broader range of community members, including Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) members, can benefit. This vision plan looks to address these issues and provide a roadmap to the future.

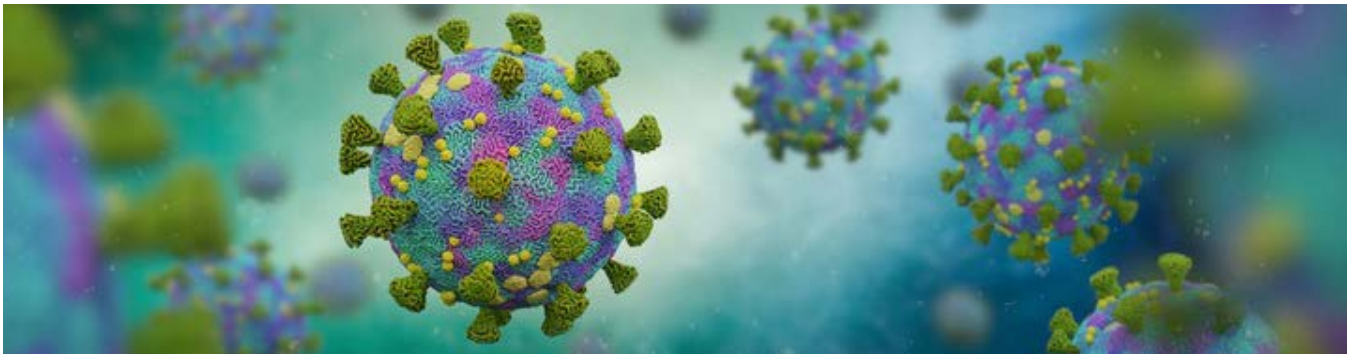


Consistency with Living Asheville: A Comprehensive Plan for Our Future

The city adopted the Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan in June of 2018. In that plan it was recognized that a finer grained neighborhood planning process was necessary to identify specific actions and initiatives necessary to implement the broad aspirational ideas, goals, and strategies outlined in Living Asheville.

Elevating innovation districts as vibrant mixed-use hubs of activity and investment is a growth strategy at the heart of Living Asheville's holistic vision for a more livable future for all Ashevilleians. The comprehensive plan calls out innovation districts as a key growth area, where the city should prioritize resources while balancing equity goals. Thus to align with the comprehensive plan the South Slope, as an innovation district, should continue to be strategically targeted to promote mixed-use activity and investment with the intention of aligning public-private partnerships, collaborative efforts, infrastructure improvements, and placemaking initiatives to further job creation, livability, and sense of place. District identity and appropriate design and development regulations were also recognized as an important focus for this area.

This plan aims to bring a finer grained analysis of the neighborhood, consistent with the comprehensive plan and its growth strategy for innovation districts, which are also reflective of engagement with the people who live, work, and play in the local community. The Key Initiatives, especially, provide a road map for plan implementation at the local level.



A WORD ABOUT 2020 AND 2021

The majority of this plan was written before the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic shift. The closing of businesses, either temporarily or permanently, hit Asheville hard and caused economic hardships, especially for Black and Brown people in Asheville and Buncombe County.

What does that mean for this plan? Economic recovery is bound to take more than a few months and will likely last several years. The plan underscores the importance of affordable housing and support for locally owned businesses throughout the city. Furthermore, we have the opportunity to make economic recovery more inclusive of those who were left behind previously, and not just try to recreate the way things were before the pandemic.

This plan was also written before the nationwide and local protests related to police violence and the Black Lives Matter movement. Because the City of Asheville had already embarked on equity work, there are elements of the plan that relate directly to

the issues of racial equity, inclusion, and equitable development. Our city and country's history has laid the groundwork for where we are today and it will take work at all levels of our government, private sector, and community to change the status quo for people of color and provide equal opportunities for success. City Council's recent Reparations Resolution makes that work even clearer and relevant for local government.

For those elements of the plan that do not seem to directly address equity, it is still an issue. For new city projects (parks, greenways) it is vital to understand how each project will affect the community. Will it continue or increase existing disparities or can it help narrow them? There are also opportunities for community benefit in construction, contracting, and implementation. Lastly, this plan is a long range plan. There are concepts which may not happen for years to come or may not happen at all, but the strategies and goals around a strong economy, housing, and inclusion are more important than ever.



► **Black Lives Matter Mural:** Coordinated by the Asheville Area Arts Council, over 20 artists created a mural in the heart of downtown Asheville on Sunday, July 19, 2020. Aerial photo by Reggie Tidwell, CurveTheory.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Community Engagement Process

The South Slope Vision Plan was developed with the input of various stakeholders including business owners, residents, property owners, and nearby neighbors. City staff utilized a pop-up urban design studio which was set up in the Refinery, (a studio space managed by the Asheville Area Arts Council) located at 207 Coxe Avenue. The studio provided the community an opportunity to access historical and background information on the South Slope area and engage with staff. A kickoff meeting was held in November of 2017 and a design charrette was held in early January 2018. Follow-up meetings were held in the space with stakeholders and property owners. Specially themed focus groups were also held. They included meetings with a focus on economic development, bike and pedestrian advocacy, and design and development. The South Slope Neighborhood Association also held a meeting in the design studio.

Since the engagement process for this plan occurred, the Southside neighborhood has committed to creating their own community plan. A Southside Rising representative joined the Advisory Committee and further feedback with that community will need to take place as there will likely be an overlap of plan geographies.

ONLINE SURVEY

As an additional means to gather public input, a survey was conducted through Open City Hall. The survey covered the themes of the plan and had both multiple choice and open-ended questions. It was open for two months and approximately 220 people responded to the survey. The survey can be found in the Appendix.

SOUTH SLOPE NEIGHBORHOOD “PLAN ON A PAGE”

This vision plan also acknowledges the work of the The South Slope Neighborhood Association which formed in late 2015 and developed their own ‘Plan on a Page’ as a part of the Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan (see Appendix).



The Design Studio hosted a number of meetings (from top to bottom) including a drop-in open house, the Greenways Committee, the Design Charrette, and the Advisory Committee.



THE VISION

Through the community engagement process the following vision for the South Slope took shape:

The vision for the South Slope area is one of a **vibrant, safe, inclusive, and welcoming** place for everyone. Though separate and somewhat removed from the historic core of downtown, with its own unique character and history; the South Slope is **seamlessly connected** to the surrounding community, downtown and adjacent **neighborhoods** through business and **community** relationships, **green infrastructure**, and multimodal **transportation** connections. The streets are **safe** and **walkable** with accessible pedestrian infrastructure and **amenities**.

There are a **mix of uses** that support the local community as well as the needs of visitors. Business is **thriving**, **historic** buildings are preserved, and new construction is **sensitive** to the historic context with regards to building materials, **local character**, and scale.

The streetscapes are also reflective of the area's authentic character and **unique sense of place**. **Streetlife is vibrant** and the atmosphere is leafy and green with **tree shaded streets** and sidewalks. Public spaces are available that allow for **recreation**, contemplation, and **entertainment** activities, which contribute to the vibrant streetlife.

The **natural environment** and impacts associated with climate change are fully considered. All new construction and public infrastructure is developed with **energy efficiency** in mind. **Sustainable** practices are utilized to protect the tree canopy and safely manage stormwater to minimize flooding.

HISTORY OF THE SOUTH SLOPE AREA



Mount "Pisgah" from Swannanoa Hotel

▶ **A view in 1887** looking southwest from what is today Biltmore Avenue. The Ravenscroft school, today at 29 Ravenscroft, stands on center right. At this time there were farm houses and fenced fields. Image courtesy of the Special Collections, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC.

Before there was an Asheville, the land in what is now Buncombe County was Cherokee land.

Patton Avenue and Biltmore Avenue form what is locally called the “original Cherokee crossroads”. The French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers were important to the Cherokee and there were settlements along the rivers. It is important to acknowledge that the beginnings of our community came out of taking land away from the indigenous peoples that were here before white settlers came to settle after the Revolutionary War.

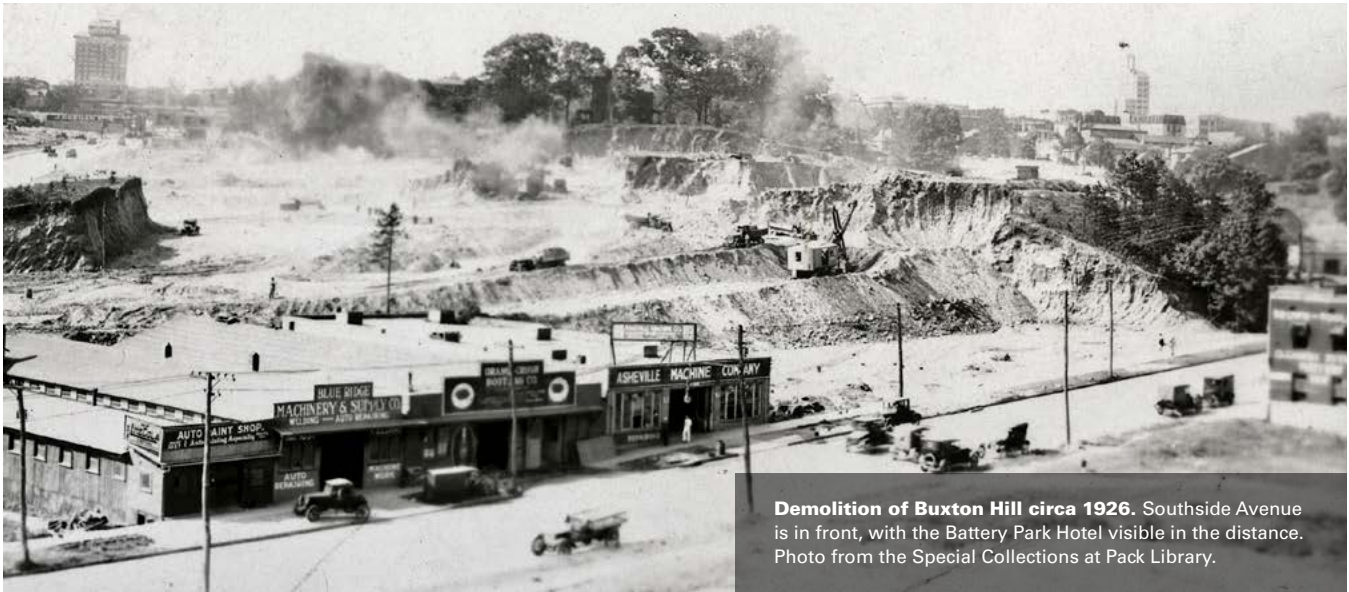
For this specific area, there is not a lot of detailed history available. By the mid to late 1800s, people were residing in the area. There were houses, schools, and farms. Early drawings and photographs reflect a primarily residential and somewhat rural character. Sanborn maps for the early 1900s show commercial establishments, although sparsely on Southside, Biltmore, McDowell, and Asheland Avenues. For Asheville in general, the 1920s brought an era of growth both in population and development that applies to this area as well.

HISTORY OF THE SOUTH SLOPE AREA

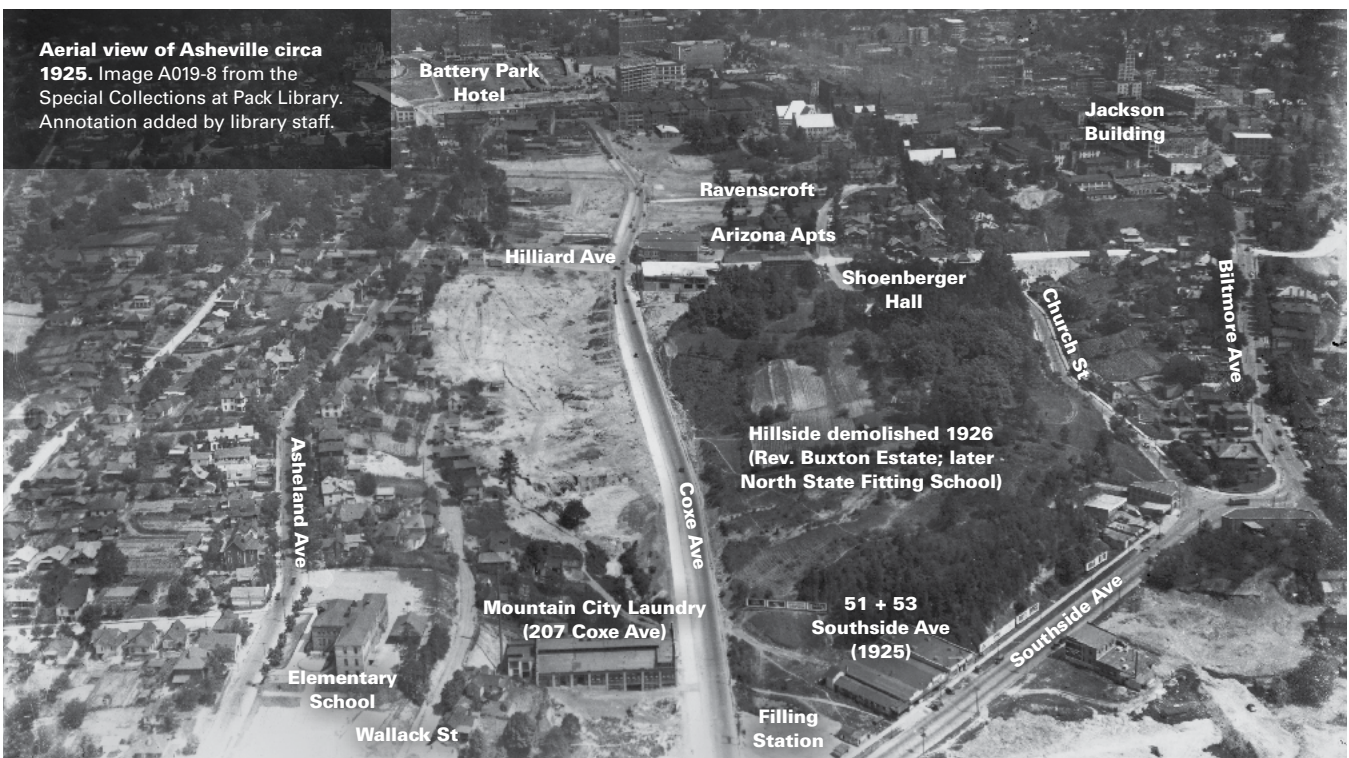
In 1926, E.W. Grove began the development of a new Battery Park Hotel and the Grove Arcade. Because of the enormous hill, a massive effort was undertaken to tear down the hill and move the dirt to the south of the business district. This dirt filled in a gully running south from Patton Avenue. The filled in gully became

Coxe Avenue (originally named Battery Park) and began a new era of commercial development, largely centered around automobile sales and service.

At the same time, Buxton Hill was also leveled to create Banks, Buxton, and Millard Avenues.



Demolition of Buxton Hill circa 1926. Southside Avenue is in front, with the Battery Park Hotel visible in the distance. Photo from the Special Collections at Pack Library.



Aerial view of Asheville circa 1925. Image A019-8 from the Special Collections at Pack Library. Annotation added by library staff.

HISTORY OF THE SOUTH SLOPE AREA



► **Coxe Avenue**, east side parking lot, across from Harry's Used Cars, 1979. Parkland Auto Center Sales also in view, as are houses and a gas station on Ashland Avenue. Photo from the Alan Butterworth, Real Estate Appraiser Books.

After the creation of Coxe, Banks, and Buxton Avenues, the area turned into Asheville's "Motor Mile" with numerous car dealerships. Several buildings remain from that period. The Sawyer Motor building at the corner of Hilliard and Coxe was a showroom for cars on the ground floor and service center on the second floor, accessible from Hilliard Avenue. These uses continued in the South Slope for a number of years and have been slowly disappearing during the 1990s and 2000s.

For much of the 20th century there were not many residents overall in the majority of the South Slope area. The majority of properties were in commercial use. Asheland Avenue being the main exception with residences lining most of the street. These residences were eliminated during urban renewal. There were some apartment buildings and homes along Biltmore and Hilliard as well as scattered throughout the area. There were plans and even subdivision plats made in the Buxton Hill area in the 1920s, with plans for single family homes to follow, but those were never built.

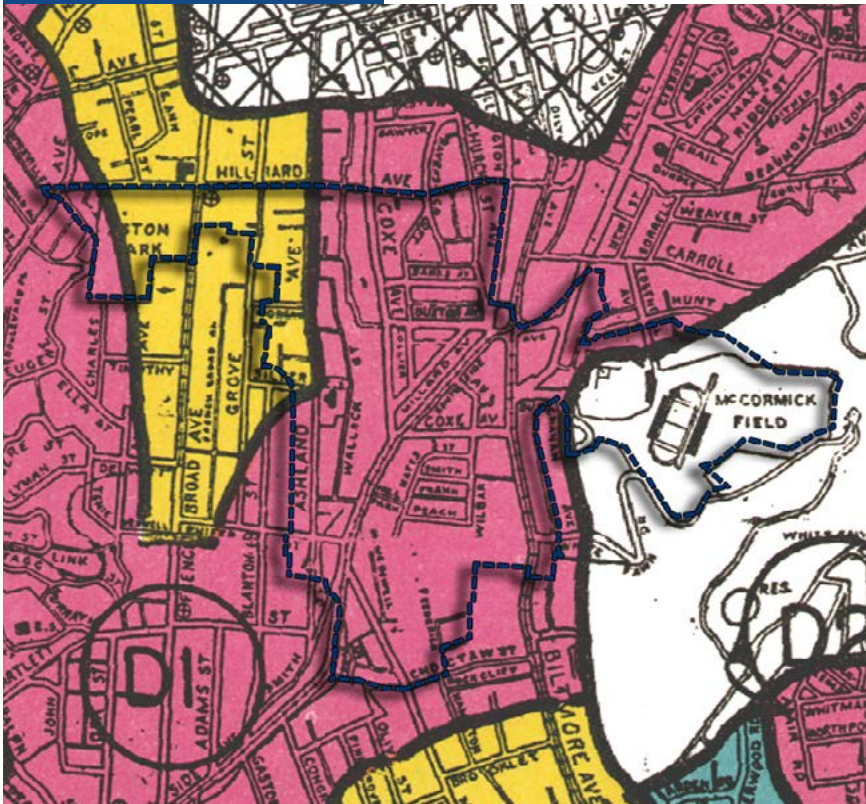
Redlining

In the 1930s and 1940s during the New Deal, the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) a government agency, recruited mortgage lenders, developers, and real estate appraisers in nearly 250 cities to create maps that color-coded credit worthiness and risk on neighborhood and metropolitan levels. These maps and their accompanying documentation helped set the rules for nearly a half century of real estate practice. The consequences have been far reaching, and have impacted wealth, health, and many other facets of life for African-Americans.

The South Slope and Southside areas were shown in red and generally described negatively. Parts of the South French Broad neighborhood are shown in yellow. This area had white residents and larger houses. Notably, Asheland Avenue had white residents north of Silver Street and African-American residents south of Silver Street, which is reflected in the yellow and red areas of the map (next page).

HISTORY OF THE SOUTH SLOPE AREA

ASHEVILLE HOLC REDLINING MAP



EAST RIVERSIDE / URBAN RENEWAL MAP



LEFT: The 1934 HOLC map of Asheville with boundary of the South Slope Vision Plan in dotted line. **RIGHT:** This East Riverside map displays the structures that existed within the boundaries of East Riverside at the time of the project's proposal. The map also illustrates the structures the ARC proposed to retain as well as acquire for private and public housing development. Not all the buildings proposed in this map were built. Source: "Illustrated Site Plan," Housing Authority of the City of Asheville, D.H. Library, Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Redlining has deeply affected the African-American community, making it extremely difficult to get financing for home loans impacting future generations. It has also become clear that African-Americans who did buy homes often had to pay more interest and/or had worse mortgage terms than white home buyers.

Urban Renewal

Urban renewal was a program created by the Housing Act of 1949, with the intention of redeveloping areas of cities that were deemed blighted. Providing affordable housing and infrastructure (water and sewer lines) was often a goal of these programs. However in many cities, neighborhoods with low income residents were displaced and replaced with commercial or industrial development. Across the United States, hundreds of thousands of people were displaced and disproportionately these were people of color.

The East Riverside urban renewal project affected a portion of the South Slope study area. Asheland, McDowell, and sections of Coxe and Southside were in the project boundaries. The project focused mainly on residential buildings and demolished about 800 homes. The project took place between 1968 and 1974 and relocated 499 people.

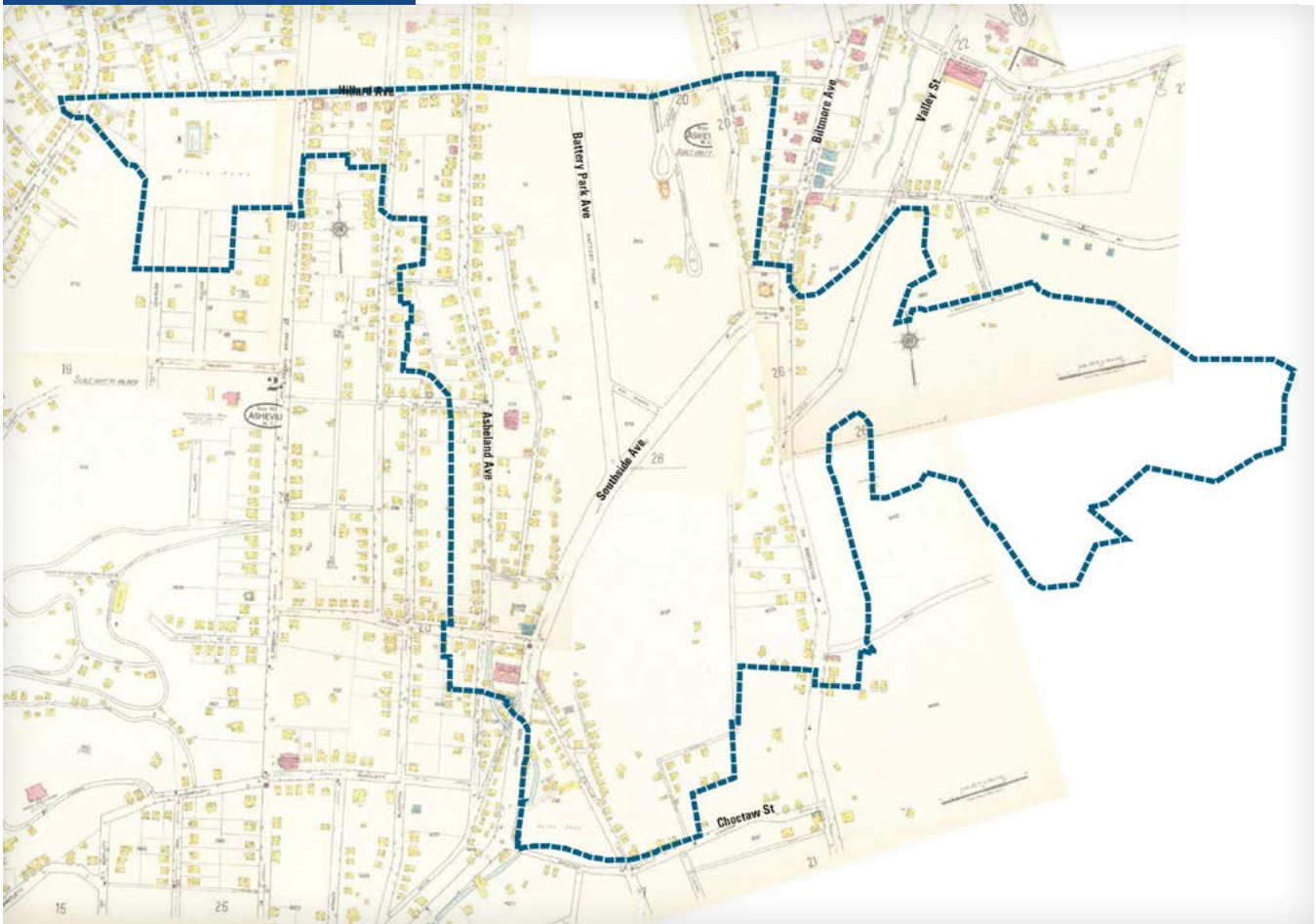
The greatest impact in the vision plan study area occurred on Asheland and Southside Avenues. Today's suburban office buildings that replaced mostly residences are the legacy of urban renewal. Coxe Avenue was not affected by the East Riverside project. However, the psychological and economic impacts of the project have deeply impacted the African-American community and how the city is viewed.

HISTORY OF THE SOUTH SLOPE AREA

Development Over Time

Looking at development in an area over time helps to more fully understand the present conditions. These three maps compare development through mapping and aerial photographs. There are additional maps of the same area over time that look at block structure, street networks, and building footprints in the Appendix.

1917 SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAP

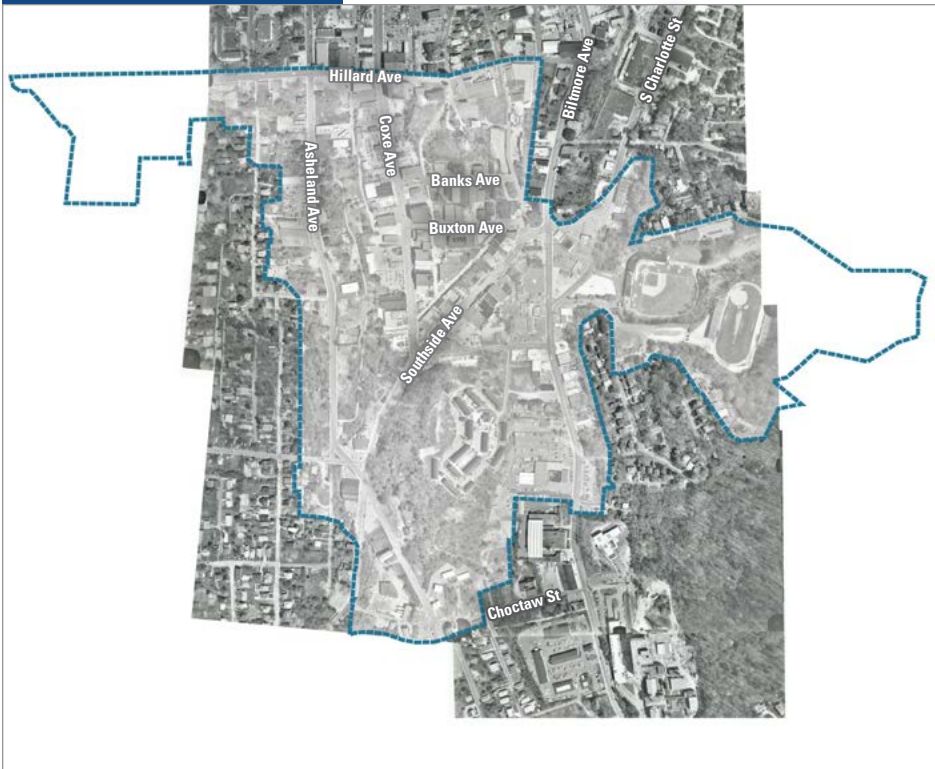


Sanborn Maps provide a great deal of information about structures, uses, and sometimes racial patterns of housing, schools, and businesses. On this map, yellow indicates frame structures (more susceptible to fire), red (pink) indicates brick structures, and blue is for stone buildings.

At this point in time, the majority of development is residential with single-family homes along Ashland Avenue, Biltmore Avenue, Wallack Street, and Southside. The future Coxe Avenue is indicated as Battery Park Avenue but it has not yet been built; much of the land between Southside Avenue and Hilliard Street is undeveloped.

HISTORY OF THE SOUTH SLOPE AREA

1974 DEVELOPMENT PATTERN



By 1974, many changes had taken place including the building of Lee Walker Heights (1953), and more commercial buildings in the core of the South Slope (Banks, Buxton, Coxe Avenues). This aerial was also taken before many of the roads were either changed or eliminated.

Many of the residential structures on Asheland, however, have been removed as a part of the East Riverside Urban Renewal Project.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PATTERN (2018)



This aerial from 2018 shows the current development pattern. McDowell and Asheland are almost solely commercial streets, with office space being the predominant use.

Wallack Street and sections of Frederick Street and Wilbar were eliminated over time as well.



South Slope Demographics

The South Slope is an area of overlapping geographies. The boundary for this plan was drawn to incorporate the commercial area south of the downtown core, north of the hospital district, and between the surrounding residential areas. The South Slope was identified as a neighborhood in the 2000s by local businesses and then local government and media. The neighborhood association began meeting in 2015, and developed “A Plan on a Page” in 2016.

Within the South Slope study area boundary there are approximately 228 acres. Of this area, 145 acres are in about 300 parcels. The taxable value in 2019 was 164 million dollars. Tax exempt land in the district is worth an additional 33 million dollars. Tax exempt properties are mainly owned by local governments. There are a little more than four miles of public streets in this area.



POPULATION

According to the 2010 Census, there were approximately 354 people living in 205 residential units in the South Slope study area. The majority of these people live in rental units. Units owned by the occupant accounted for 18.5% of the units.

Since the 2010 Census approximately 100 units have been added along Coxe Avenue, Short Coxe Avenue, and McCormick Place. In 2019, the 96 units at Lee Walker Heights were demolished and are now under construction as part of a new development project. There will be a total of 212 units on the site when completed. By the end of 2021, the number of residential units in the study area will have more than doubled, totalling more than 400. The Ironwood project at Coxe and Asheland will add another 500 units, and 49 more units have been proposed for Biltmore Avenue. These units will likely be completed between 2023-2025.

In general, there has been a loss of African-Americans in Asheville. In this particular area, however, the loss is not significant, mainly due to the low number of residential units in the area. For Census Tract 9 overall, which includes the larger Southside and South French Broad neighborhoods, the decline has been significant.

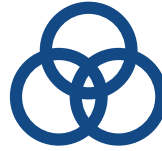


ECONOMY

Over the past five to ten years, South Slope has continued to evolve and thrive. There has been a movement towards more breweries, restaurants, and more housing. Slowly the number of automotive businesses – repair shops and suppliers – have declined every year, but some still remain. Overall, the general mix is predominantly hospitality / entertainment, office, and retail use. Most hotels are located outside of the study area, although, one small hotel has been approved for Collier Avenue.

In 2018, the City had a market study done for city-owned property on Biltmore and S. Charlotte Street (see Appendix for the study). The study indicated a strong demand for apartments of a variety of income levels, with demand being highest for households with an income of 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The second highest level of demand was from households between 50% and 80% of AMI. These are the two income groups that most affordable housing is targeted to serve. The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) defines affordable housing as housing that does not exceed 30% of a household's income. Further, the City defines affordable housing that is affordable to a household at or below 80% of AMI. In 2019, the area median income for a family of four in Asheville was \$66,400. The study did not cover the demand for home ownership.

The market study also indicated that there was demand for professional office space and medical office space along Biltmore closer to the hospital. This demand was quantified at approximately 20,000 square feet for both professional office and medical office (each). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly interrupted the economy and there are now different views as to the future of office space. Some in the real estate industry expect that demand will continue, while others believe that there may be a falling off of demand as some companies have workers, or at least a portion of their employees work from home.



OPPORTUNITY ZONES

In 2018, new federal legislation for “opportunity zones” was passed as a part of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. The purpose of opportunity zones is to incentivize private investment in census tracts where poverty rates exceed 30% and median household income is less than 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). In Asheville, several census tracts were designated as opportunity zones including Census Tract 9, which includes the River Arts District, Southside, and the South Slope area.

The mechanism for incentivizing investment is through the deferral of capital gains taxes, if those gains are invested in an opportunity fund. If the investment is for 10 years or more, the capital gains taxes are waived. The potential danger, especially in a “hot” real estate market like Asheville, is that investors can invest in projects that don't benefit the community and, moreover not benefit the economically disadvantaged people that the legislation was supposed to help.

Before the legislation was finalized, there were efforts to make sure protections were put in place, but they never materialized. The impacts of potential development using opportunity funds has yet to be seen. The South Slope Apartments project between Coxe and Asheland, with nearly 500 residential units, will utilize this incentive for part of the development and the owners have committed to 10% of the units being affordable.

Asheville City Council passed a resolution in 2018, with the intention that the city will work with investors and developers of projects in opportunity zones to promote equitable growth without displacement for residents in and around opportunity zones. More work still remains to be done around developing strategies and policies to prevent displacement. Investment spurred by the opportunity zone legislation will continue in the coming years.

Vincinity Map



**Historic
Downtown
Core**

WECAN

**South
French Broad**

**South
Slope**

**River Arts
District**

Southside



**East End /
Valley Street**

**Study
Area**

Oakhurst

**Mission
Hospital**

THE FIVE CORE THEMES





THE FIVE CORE THEMES

The plan is built around five core themes:

1



Quality Built Environment

Ensure that appropriate design is considered for all structures and streetscapes on both private and public property.

2



Unique + Inclusive Sense of Place

Continue to encourage an authentic place and work towards a truly inclusive culture and economy.

3



Strong Local Economy

Provide ample opportunity for people to live, work, and thrive.

4



Multimodal Transportation

Ensure that the area is accessible by multiple modes of transportation.

5



Strategic Infrastructure + Natural Environment

Provide infrastructure, including stormwater, utilities, green streets, and lighting that reinforce a safe, healthy, and sustainable place.

In addition to the **Five Core Themes**, there are **10 Key Initiatives** (pictured on the radial chart, opposite page and outlined further within this document). These initiatives are higher priority projects that will advance the vision for the district.

QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT



The built environment is the physical manifestation of a community's vision realized through the application of land use and urban form policy decisions as reflected in zoning codes and design standards. The built environment affects everyone, whether they live in a residential unit, own a business, shop at a store, eat in a restaurant, work in an office, or are merely walking down the street. In this plan the built environment includes both buildings and the physical public realm at the street level.

For many years the built environment didn't change much in the South Slope area. The early 2000s saw a new office building and the construction of Lexington Station (condominiums and retail). There were plans for several large buildings on Ravenscroft, Collier, and Coxe Avenue, but due to the Great Recession these developments were abandoned. Recently, things have changed. Many older buildings have been rehabilitated and now house small businesses. New apartments and townhomes have also been constructed. It has become critical to reexamine codes and policy guiding documents that affect the development of the built environment due to the increased development and demand for growth.

Character and Height

While the Downtown Master Plan (DMP) was under development in the 2008-2009 timeframe, several tall buildings of 20 stories or more were being proposed for the downtown core area and the community was concerned that the taller buildings would compromise the historic character of downtown. The adopted 2009 DMP recognized the South Slope as one of several sub-areas or neighborhoods of downtown and recommended further planning for these sub-areas. For South Slope it foresaw the construction of taller buildings and recognized the relationship of the area to the Mission Hospital campus, but the plan was otherwise brief on describing the character of the South Slope.

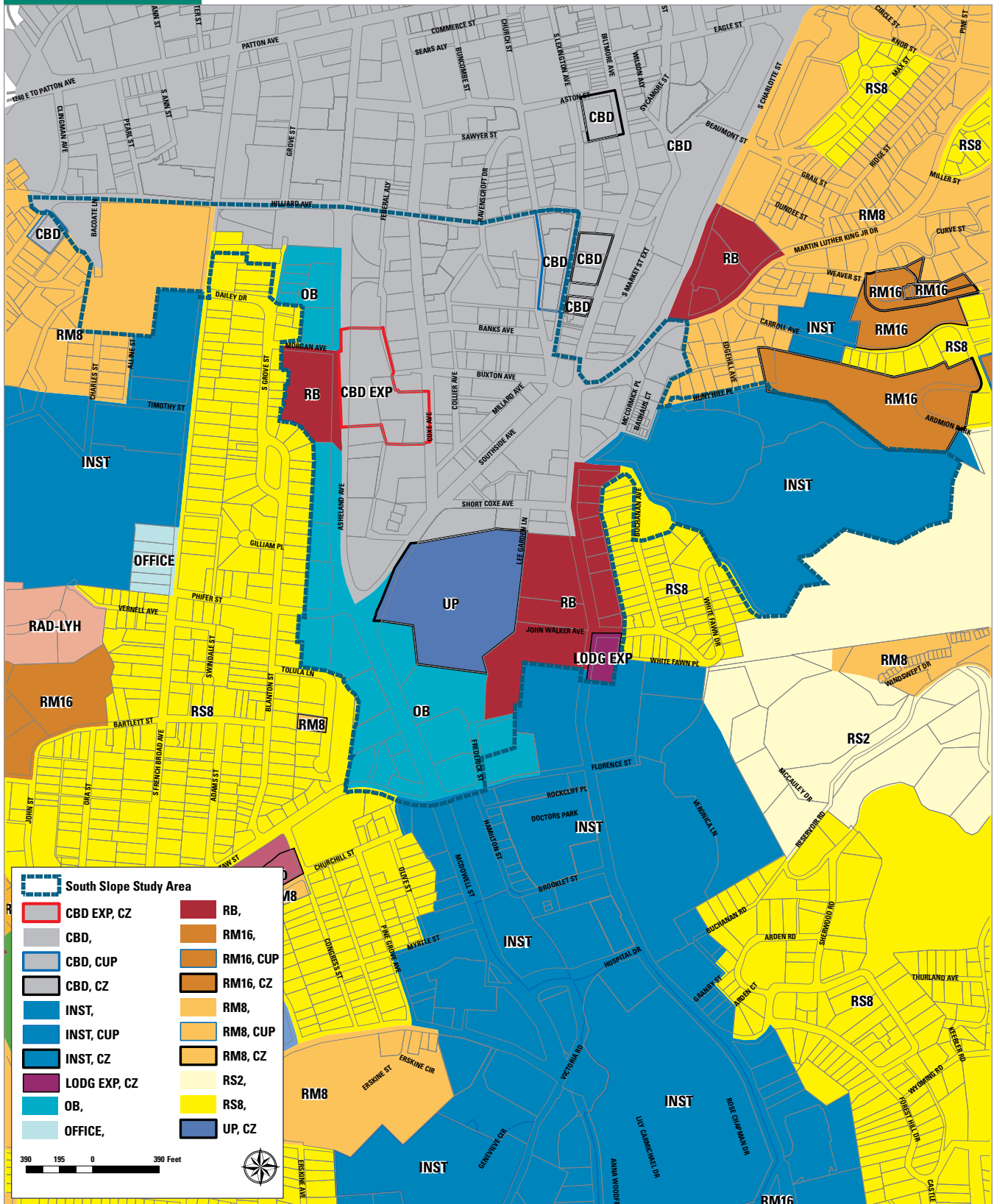
In 2010, based on recommendations of the DMP, there were some zoning code changes that affected the Central Business District (CBD). Prior to the 2010 zoning code changes there had been no height limit in the CBD, but the 2010 changes created two height zones. The majority of the South Slope, being located outside of the downtown historic district, was located in the tallest zone where heights of 265 feet were allowed ([see Current Allowable Heights Map on page 30](#)). Since then there has been significant private investment in the South Slope area and some new construction but the latest building proposals are at most seven stories tall.

GOALS

1. **Identify, respect, and celebrate the unique and historic character** of areas within the South Slope.
2. Encourage and reinforce a **more urban form**.
3. Encourage uses that **support local residents**.
4. Improve the **quality of the public realm**.

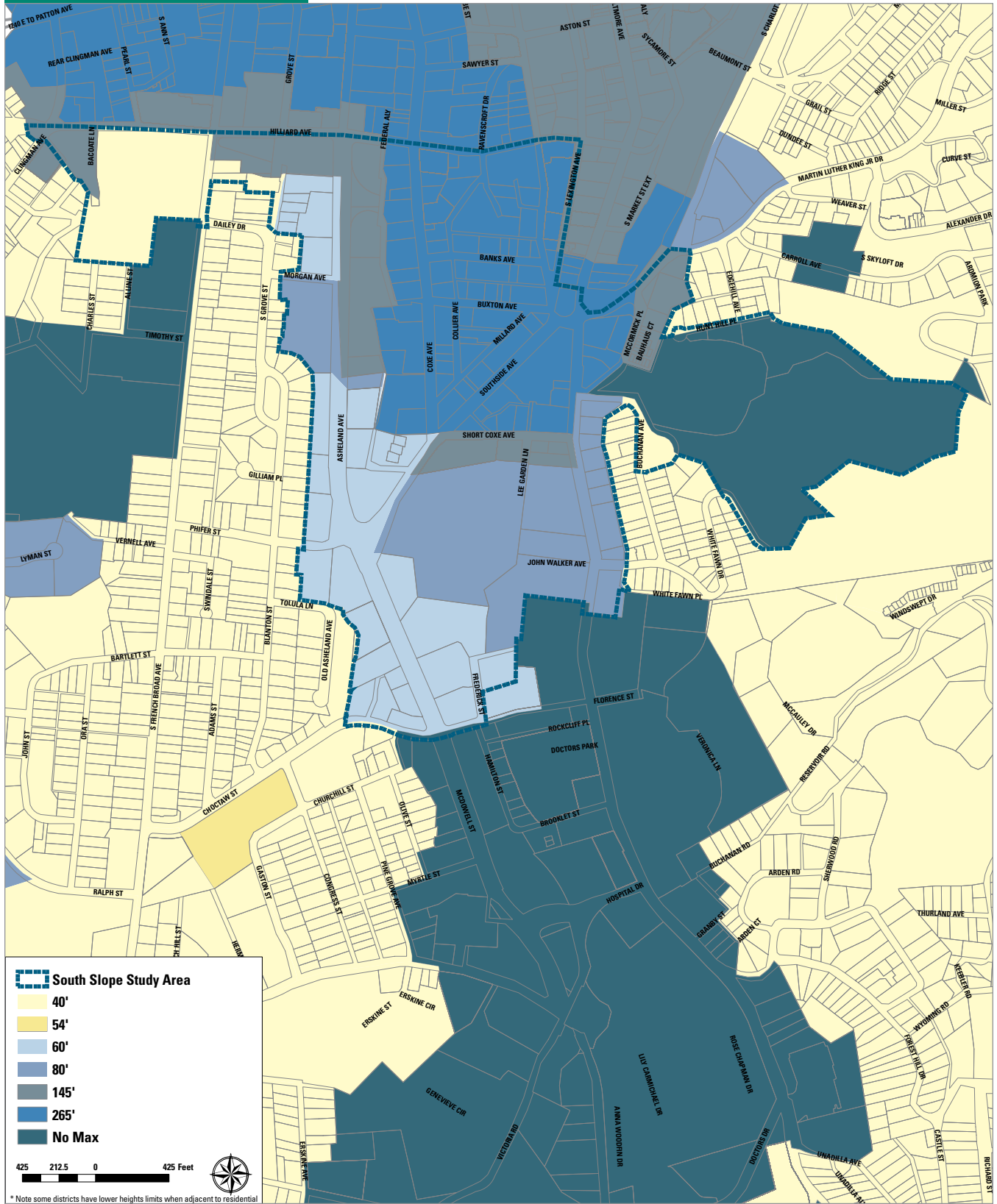
QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

CURRENT ZONING MAP

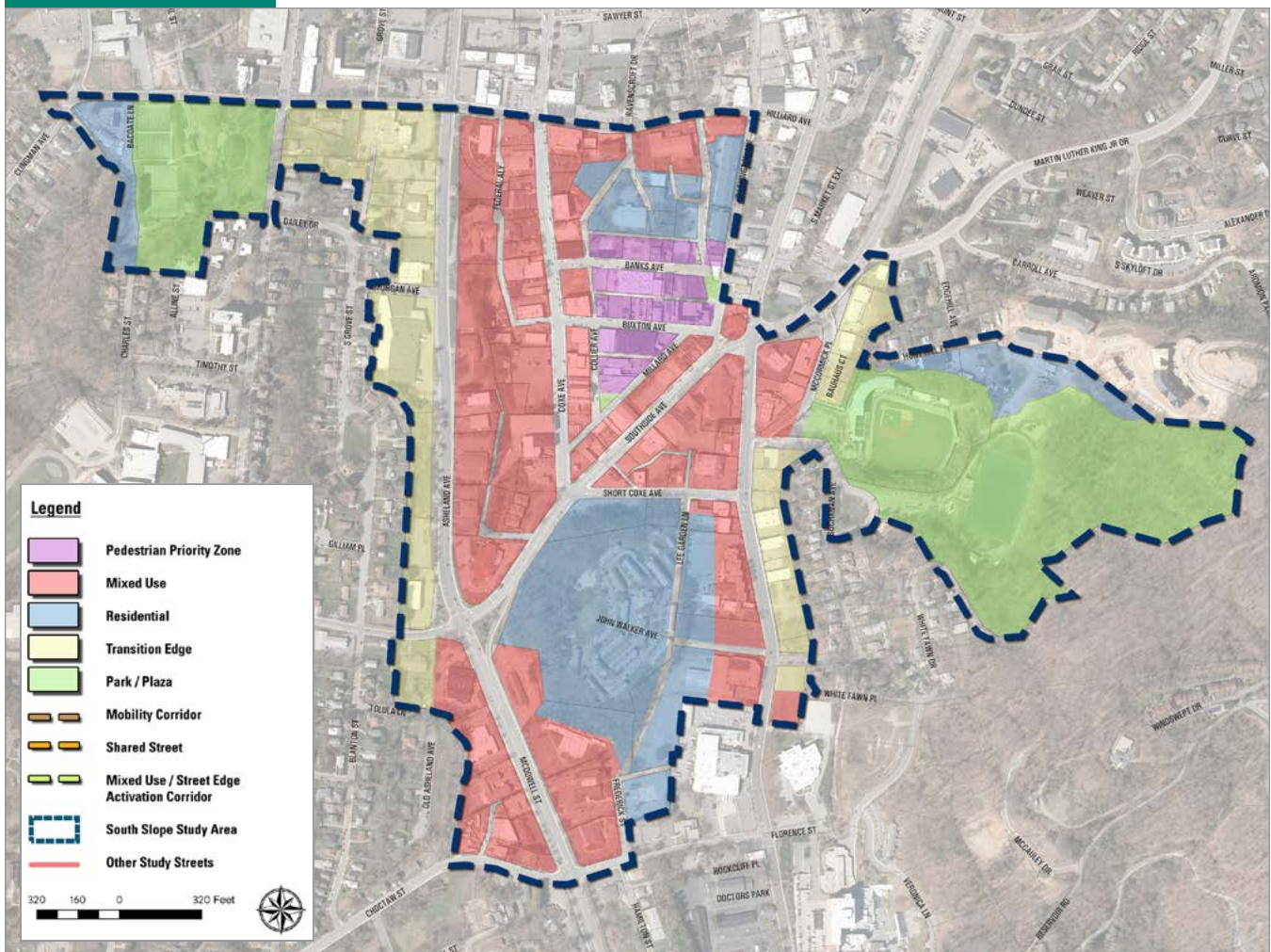


QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

CURRENT ALLOWABLE HEIGHTS MAP



CHARACTER AREAS MAP



Character Areas

In an effort to further the recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan and retain the character of South Slope while also accommodating new development, this vision plan suggests several distinctive character areas and proposed future height zones, which are reflective of the historic context and various building forms found within the South Slope.

MIXED-USE AREAS: COXE, ASHELAND, SOUTHSIDE, MCDOWELL, BILTMORE (RED ■)

A large part of the South Slope combines a mix of traditional urban buildings with some buildings that take on a more suburban form. Along Asheland and McDowell, the vast majority of buildings were built after 1950, and many after urban renewal changed

the street layout in the area. Southside, Short Coxe, and Biltmore are more of a mix of old and new. Urban renewal also created mega blocks along Asheland and McDowell, hindering connectivity and walkability.

Suburban development from the 1950s emphasized automobiles as the prime mode of transportation. Buildings were usually placed away from the street, often with parking in the front. This form destroys the urban character and the social interactions that happen along a street. Large parking lots even to the side of buildings also disrupt the urban fabric and make being a pedestrian much less comfortable. Suburban building form can include one-story buildings that take up more land versus more compact, multiple-story buildings. Suburban form also consumes valuable urban land with low-cost buildings and does not contribute as much to the tax base.

QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Over time it is expected that the suburban form will be replaced by a more urban form with buildings pulled up to the street and parking located to the side or rear. This character area is more appropriate for taller buildings. The current code allows buildings up to 265 feet, which is unlikely to happen. Lowering this height threshold somewhat would give a measure of predictability to both property owners and the community. At the same time taller buildings that provide the opportunity for greater density are important in Asheville, as the city boundaries are fixed and land is at a premium.



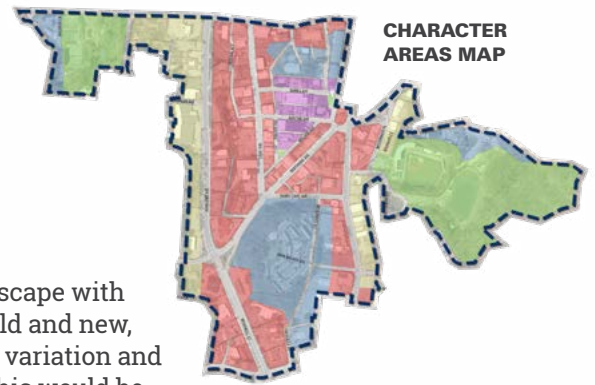
► An example of car-oriented, suburban form on McDowell Street.

It makes sense for design guidelines to differentiate between the Asheland corridor and the Coxe Avenue and Southside Avenue corridors while the mixed-use area is being defined as a whole. Historically, these corridors have had a more industrial character, especially along Coxe and Southside. Asheland, however, has had almost all of its past character changed by urban renewal. Prior to urban renewal it was primarily homes and apartments but now the street is dominated by suburban office buildings.

BANKS / BUXTON AREAS (PURPLE)

The Banks and Buxton area is special to many people in the district and to those who visit. People gravitate towards the businesses that have developed here and are also drawn to the comforting aspects afforded by the human scale of the streetscape and rehabilitated historic buildings. The building stock consists primarily of one or two story structures with taller structures fronting on Coxe that wrap around onto both Banks and Buxton.

If most of the older buildings were preserved some taller buildings could compliment the character of



the streetscape with a mix of old and new, providing variation and vitality. This would be similar to Wall Street, where buildings are generally smaller, but the Public Service and Flat Iron are much taller. Wall Street is still comfortable because it is not a canyon of taller buildings. See additional information for this [Character Area on page 81](#).

RESIDENTIAL PRIORITY AREAS (BLUE)

The Character Areas Map also identifies locations where residential uses are most appropriate. One prominent location includes the Lee Walker Heights community, currently undergoing redevelopment into 212 new affordable apartments and the former Matthews Ford site, which is now city-owned. The City is currently seeking a development partner for the Matthews Ford site, which could accommodate an additional 300 housing units. The goal is to include some commercial or community space in both developments and have the two projects work seamlessly together, creating a mixed-income community.

South of Hilliard and north of Buxton is a small, more quiet area, where several taller buildings were planned in the late 2000s. The recession stopped those plans from coming to fruition, but the potential for development remains. Given the relative isolation from busier Coxe Avenue and Banks Avenue, it is a natural place for residential development. Business uses are currently located on these parcels, with an apartment building at the corner of Hilliard and Ravenscroft and another apartment building planned for Collier Avenue.

NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSITION AREAS (LIGHT YELLOW)

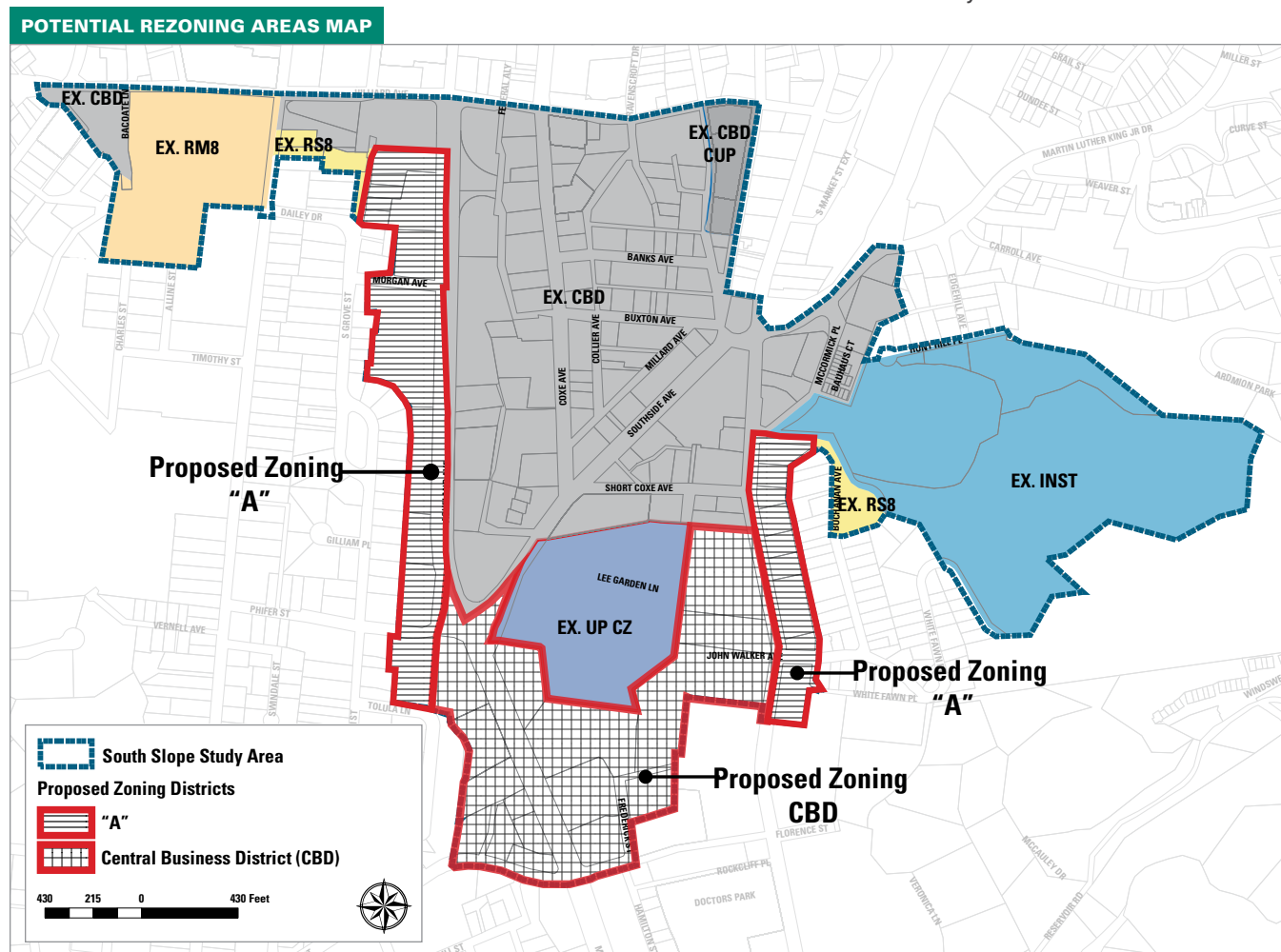
Both the South French Broad and Oakhurst neighborhoods are directly adjacent to the business corridors of Asheland and Biltmore Avenues but due to the topography many homes are located below the commercial lots or buildings on the corridors. While this character area, being downtown and with good transportation access, would otherwise be a preferred location for more density and taller buildings, residents in both of these neighborhoods have been concerned about future development and the impacts on their quality of life. Along Asheland, neighbors have voiced concerns about existing cut-through

traffic, future land uses that may create excessive noise, overflow parking in the neighborhood, and taller buildings near the neighborhood.

Considering that parcel depths along both Biltmore and Asheland are limited, future development in this character area should be moderated to create a buffer or transition in height and intensity. Currently, the suburban form along Asheland, and to some degree on Biltmore, has resulted in buildings being pushed back closer to residential homes with their parking often in the front of the buildings instead of entirely in the rear. Future zoning in these areas should take the residents' concerns into account, while at the same time requiring urban form and meeting city goals. A balanced approach to new development is paramount in these transition zones.

Potential Rezoning Areas

The Current Zoning Map (page 29) shows the majority of the South Slope in the Central Business District, and areas along Asheland, McDowell, and Biltmore zoned Office Business and Regional Business. These two zoning designations tend to produce suburban buildings that are centered around cars over people. For this reason rezoning the area is recommended to bring future development in line with the Character Areas Map (page 31). The areas next to neighborhoods are labeled Proposed Zoning A (below) and these rezonings could also further restrict height in these sensitive areas. In addition to rezoning further height designations that are more detailed within the CBD are recommended. Currently, the Central Business District has two height zones of 145 and 265 feet, respectively. These allow tall buildings, and while they are rarely built, the allowance can cause fear and distrust in the community.



QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Proposed Height Zones

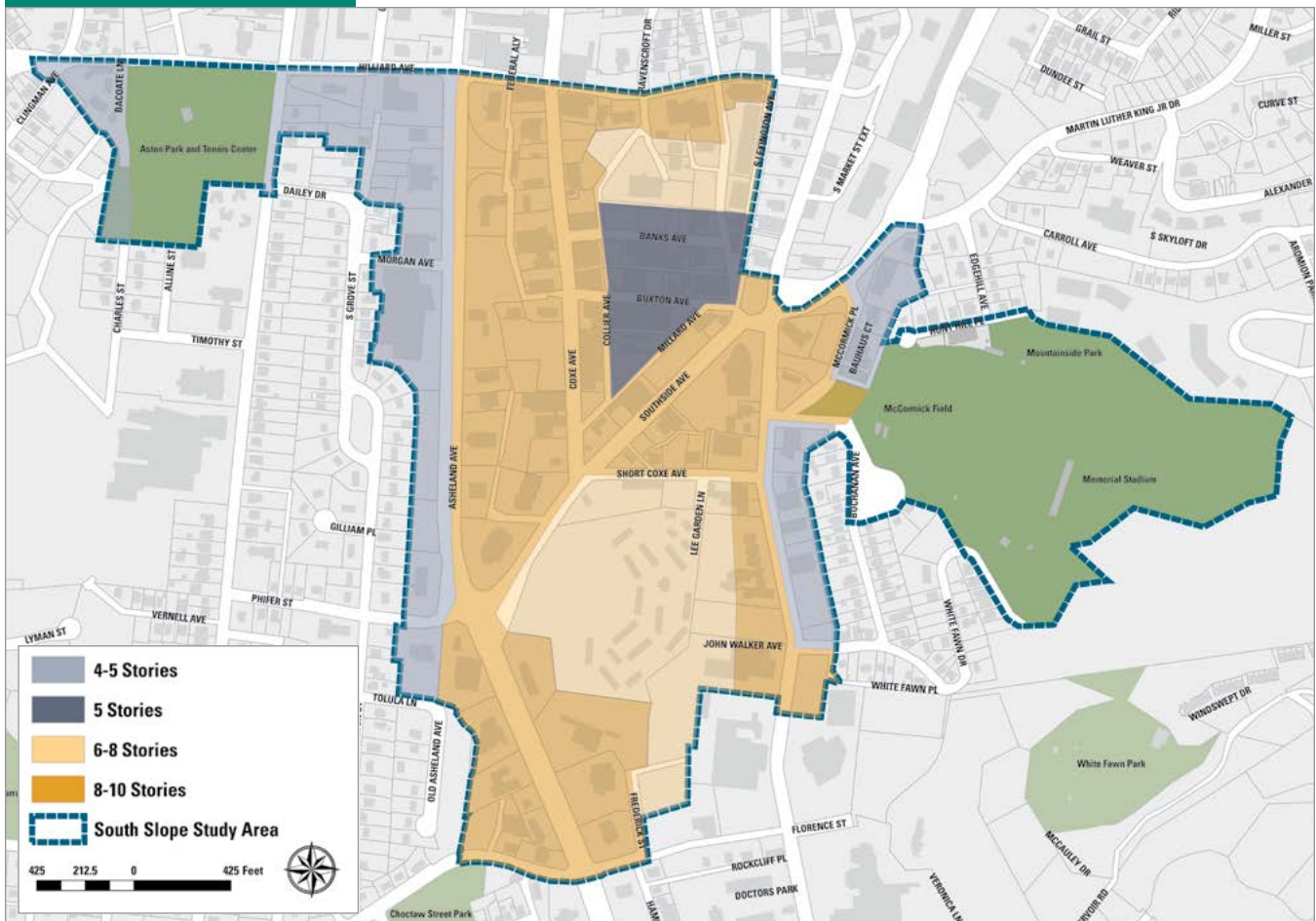
This vision plan recommends new maximum allowable building heights that align with the community's and City's vision for the area. Currently the Office Business and Regional Business zoning districts on Asheland and McDowell allow 60 and 80 feet of height for new buildings. This plan suggests that heights should be much more moderated next to neighborhoods, and taller buildings could be along the major spines of Coxe, McDowell, and parts of Biltmore and Asheland. Overall, these are lower heights than currently allowed in the CBD. Generally in Asheville tall buildings over six stories are not as likely to be built given construction costs. There may also be other tools used such as Height Transition Zones to help moderate height immediately adjacent to residential zoning.

Design Guidelines and Design Review Process

The Downtown Design Review Guidelines, adopted in 2010, cover all of the Central Business District (CBD) and any expansion of the CBD would also be subject to these guidelines. The design guidelines allow for a great deal of flexibility in architectural styles and materials. More guidance on design and materials for different sub-neighborhoods would be appropriate.

The area south of Hilliard has not been distinguished in any way in the design guidelines. The architectural character of this area is different, and having a set of guidelines in particular for this area would be helpful considering that new construction is anticipated in the future. New construction should be compatible with the surrounding context or differentiated in an appropriate way. [See page 62](#) for the Key Initiative related to zoning and design guidelines.

POTENTIAL HEIGHT ZONES MAP



QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Sidewalks and Streetscape

The public realm is an important piece of the built environment. Sidewalks are generally narrow and in some cases don't exist at all throughout the study area. Wider sidewalks that meet ADA compliance are the first step in making a mixed-use business district walkable and pedestrian friendly. When the opportunity arises sidewalks should be widened to a minimum of 10 feet or more if feasible.

The streetscape, which includes sidewalk design and street furniture, can be an important feature in defining the "feel" of a place. Street furniture can be selected as a part of a palette that reflects the character or history of the area. Most if not all of the streetscape investment (benches, trashcans, light poles, special sidewalk materials) in downtown to date have been in the downtown core, north of Hilliard Avenue. While the South Slope may not need a unique palette, the addition of street furniture alone would greatly improve the streetscape.



QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

1. Identify, respect, and celebrate the unique and historic character of areas within the South Slope.

- Continue to allow an eclectic range of uses in the South Slope, using building form to guide the future character of the area without thwarting innovative design.
- Develop more refined design guidelines for the South Slope that differentiate the area from the core of downtown. Encourage appropriate contextual development and address material choices, utility encroachments, and preservation of historic structures. New, innovative buildings should fit into the district, but can be distinctive.
- Continue to adaptively reuse and rehabilitate historic buildings.

2. Encourage and reinforce a more urban form.

- Build on the existing CBD code to further tailor zoning to the area:
 - » Develop maximum building heights on a block by block basis, with the larger, north/south streets being available for more height than smaller streets. Consider Right of Way (ROW) widths as a guiding principle for either heights or stepbacks, as well as the context of existing adjacent residential neighborhoods.
 - » Allow for greater front or side setbacks for wider sidewalks, outdoor dining, or gathering spaces.
 - » Explore varying the building frontage requirement on Key Pedestrian Streets (currently at 80%).
 - » Examine fenestration percentages and refine them, including consideration of topographic challenges for ground floor fenestration.
 - » Develop maximum block lengths for projects that have over 500 feet of frontage.

- Change the existing suburban zoning that borders neighborhoods to create a more urban form, while maintaining sensitivity to the adjacent neighborhoods around the issues of height, noise, and other impacts.
- Explore developing more cross streets and/or pedestrian connections between Asheland, Coxe, and Biltmore Avenues where existing block lengths exceed 800 feet.
- Encourage smaller pedestrian connections where appropriate (i.e. Collier Avenue) to improve overall connectivity.

3. Encourage uses that support local residents.

- Consider requiring ground floor activation and lining ground floor parking structures for all projects.
- Incentivize affordable housing and other community benefits by allowing additional height in appropriate areas, reducing parking requirements, offering an expedited development review process, and/or other similar strategies.

4. Improve the quality of the public realm.

- Create a streetscape plan for the area, including a furniture palette that distinguishes the area from other districts within the City.
- Develop wider sidewalks and public spaces through development standards and guidelines for new buildings.
- Provide quality core services and infrastructure to meet the needs of businesses including parking, utilities, sidewalks, and quality public spaces.



UNIQUE + INCLUSIVE SENSE OF PLACE

Located at the confluence of the East End, the hospital district, the Southside and South French Broad residential neighborhoods, and the historic downtown core area – the South Slope occupies a unique place in Asheville. This area also had previous sub-neighborhoods with names such as Buxton Hill and the Ravenscroft School area. The South Slope Vision Plan consequently spans or touches on several geographies.

Like other neighborhoods in the city, people want the area to retain its uniqueness and character. In addition to the physical aspects, such as buildings and streetscapes, this also includes the people who live there, their relationships to each other, and the historical and cultural characteristics that lend authenticity to the place.

What makes it unique and different from other areas? Public input reveals that the wider community recognizes that the building stock from the auto-mile days, along with warehouses and industrial buildings, characterize the district. The small businesses, both old and new, also contribute to the identity of the area. Developing a neighborhood identity and embracing it is one way to build on an area's uniqueness, but care should be taken as often this can result in embracing one type of business or patron and pushing others out. Although the area is mostly commercial, displacement from gentrification can still impact commercial tenants and the surrounding residential neighborhoods; and, therefore should be mitigated via development that is equitable.

“**PLACEKEEPING** is the active care and maintenance of a place and its social fabric by the people who live and work there. It is not just preserving buildings, but keeping the cultural memories associated with a locale alive, while supporting the ability of local people to maintain their way of life as they choose.”

– U.S. Department of
Arts and Culture



GOALS

1. **Create social and economic connections within the South Slope** and with surrounding areas.
2. **Make the South Slope a welcoming and inclusive place** for all of Asheville's residents.

UNIQUE + INCLUSIVE SENSE OF PLACE

Model of Inclusion

What would it mean for this area to feel inclusive?

Some local residents have remarked that current development in the area sends a signal to them that this place is not for them, and they believe that they will not be able to afford to live in the area any longer. They are concerned that the area is becoming dominated by new businesses with a majority of white customers, employees, and owners. The remaining businesses owned by African Americans have mostly left over the past few decades. This presents an opportunity to work towards a more inclusive business district with a mix of businesses, employees, and customers. Everyone should feel welcome to the area.



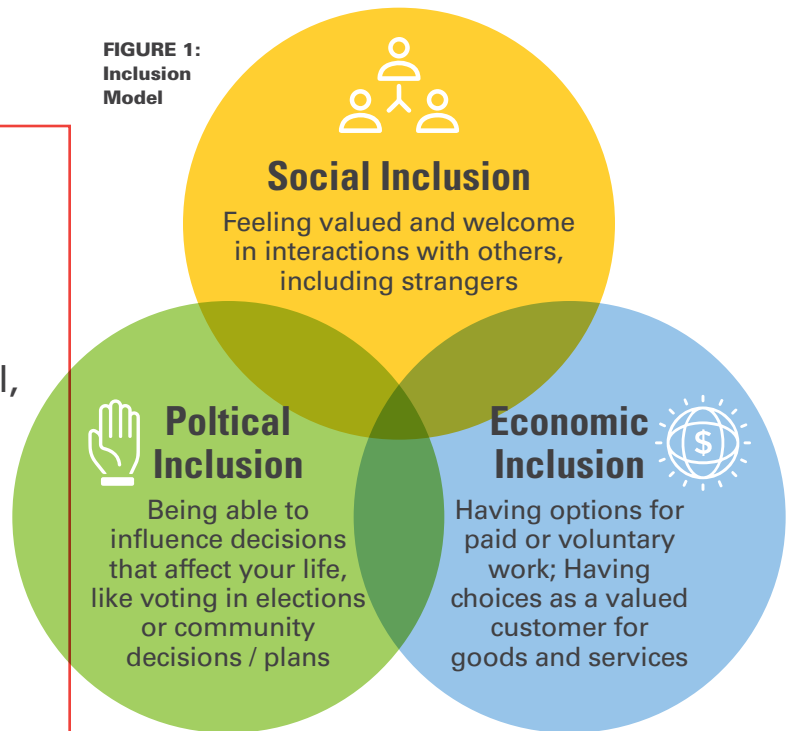
“**BELONGING** means more than having access, it means having a meaningful voice, and being afforded the opportunity to participate in the design of political, social, and cultural structures. Belonging means being respected at a basic level that includes the right to both contribute and make demands upon society and political institutions.”



– Othering & Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley

Inclusion is not a concept only about race; it includes income, age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, language, and nationality. Organizations and people who study this topic have broken down the concept of inclusion into several different types, which is helpful in understanding how it applies to our community.

FIGURE 1:
Inclusion
Model



QUESTIONS THAT CAN HELP ILLUMINATE INCLUSION:

- 1. Economic Inclusion:** Who can afford to live here and have access to places to live? Who owns businesses and works here? What businesses are present and who are their customers?
- 2. Social Inclusion:** Who plays here and inhabits the public spaces? What stories are told about the place?
- 3. Political Inclusion:** Who decides what happens here in the future? Do residents feel like they have a voice in decisions and are represented in local organizations and boards?

UNIQUE + INCLUSIVE SENSE OF PLACE

Equity and Inclusion

Equity has become a very popular term over the past 5-10 years in the United States. Not to be confused with equality, which can be defined as fair treatment, equity is concerned with fair results. Inclusion is a necessary practice to get to equity, but does not necessarily guarantee it.

Why does this matter? Throughout our city, residents and elected officials are concerned about the growing gaps in wealth, housing, and health indicators. These are reflected in our community by racial groups and income groups. The most recent crisis brought on by COVID-19 exposed the gaps in our economy and shows that people who work in the service economy or

other lower paid jobs are very vulnerable to disruptive events. Moreover, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have been disproportionately affected in large part because of our country's history of racist policies, practices, and procedures, which have caused disparities in wealth, housing, and health with Black and Brown communities. Equity and inclusion look to make sure that everyone in the community has both the chance to participate and benefit from the local economy and the ability to thrive.

Since 2015, the City of Asheville has worked on embedding equity and inclusion into all departments and city services. Although there is still a long way to go, important strides are being made including training staff and changing policies and procedures.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

1. Create social and economic connections within the South Slope and with surrounding areas.

- Promote and encourage businesses that serve a range of resident needs such as small groceries, child care, or other neighborhood services.
- Foster relationship-building amongst residents of surrounding neighborhoods (Lee Walker Heights, Southside, East End / Valley Street, Downtown / DARN) with local business owners.
- Develop a business incubator that focuses on entrepreneurs of color.
- Encourage property owners and developers to include affordable housing and affordable small business spaces in new developments or rehabilitation of properties. This may include local, state, or federal subsidies or incentives.
- Engage anchor institutions and local businesses to participate in voluntary buy, train, and hire programs to benefit people of color, women, and small business enterprises.
- Provide opportunities to surrounding BIPOC neighborhoods to learn about the vision plan and available City / other programs and resources related to economic development, and increase awareness of how neighborhoods can benefit from economic activity in the South Slope.
- Look for opportunities to build relationships and partnerships amongst the South Slope Neighborhood Association, Southside Rising,

East End / Valley Street Neighborhood, Lee Walker Heights, Downtown / DARN and the Oakhurst Neighborhood. An intentional process could result in strong ties between neighbors and a healthier community for all.

- Encourage residents of Maplecrest (formerly Lee Walker Heights) and the future 319 Biltmore Avenue development to participate in the South Slope Neighborhood Association and their own residents' association.

2. Make the South Slope a welcoming and inclusive place for all of Asheville's residents.

- Acknowledge and honor the area's history, including redlining and urban renewal, longtime residents, businesses, and institutions.
- Develop a campaign to support making the district welcoming to all people.
- Include public art throughout that supports the creation of great public spaces for congregation. Public art can be used to relay the history of the area, and connect the business district to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Develop public gathering spaces including the creation of new, larger areas of sidewalk.
- Strengthen public participation processes that are inclusive and diverse around design, development and decision-making for City projects, and ensure that voices from historically underrepresented communities are heard.

3

STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY



A local economy that works for everyone is one that provides places to work as well as places to live. Both business development and housing are integral to the South Slope. With the construction of 700 to 1,000 units of housing in the pipeline, this area will continue to evolve.

Economic Development

The South Slope is home to an eclectic mix of businesses both longstanding and new. The history of this area includes a diverse array of African-American businesses, which were the cornerstone of the Southside community, as well as auto-oriented uses on Coxe Avenue, previously known as the “motor mile.” In the mid 1970s urban renewal changed the social and physical landscape of the greater area. In the early 1990s downtown began to revitalize and it was not until the mid 2000s that the South Slope followed. Today there is a diversity in the ownership, types of businesses, and customers located in the district.

Infrastructure, both physical and organizational, has been put in place to support new entrepreneurs. Creativity continues to be a hallmark, with local artists, makers, brewers, and service providers thriving in the area. McCormick Field and Memorial Stadium also brings thousands of locals and visitors to Tourists games and Asheville City Soccer Club matches as well as other events. Overall, Downtown Asheville, including much of the South Slope area, currently serves as the primary economic and employment hub of the region. Supporting and maintaining a healthy economy in the South Slope area is a high priority.

GOALS

- 1. Encourage a mix of businesses** which include local services and makerspaces.
- 2. Support existing businesses** to thrive and grow to their fullest potential.
- 3. Support development of new and existing BIPOC owned businesses.**
- 4. Continue to strengthen organizational supports** for businesses and the district.
- 5. Ensure that public infrastructure provides ample, multimodal access** and gathering spaces.
- 6. Encourage a mix of unit types and sizes** to attract a diverse population to the area.
- 7. Encourage the production, preservation and protection of affordable housing** for local residents and the business community.

STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY

Challenges

Barriers to business development, identified during the planning process, include high rents, access to local ownership, leases limiting control, and affordable housing. These are challenges to businesses throughout the Asheville community in a time when property values and rents are rising. There are very real limits to regulatory control of the market which means most strategies used will be incentive-based rather than regulatory in nature.

Existing Programs

The City supports local and regional economic development in partnership with local agencies including the Economic Development Coalition, a division of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, which leads business recruitment, expansion, and retention initiatives in Buncombe County. The City of Asheville contributes \$100,000 annually to support their work, which focuses on job growth in the region's five leading industry sectors.

Entrepreneurial development and new venture creation, through a program known as Venture Asheville, is another important component to this

work. Venture Asheville helps Asheville's high-growth entrepreneurs and connects them to mentors and investors through unique programming and events.

The City's recently formed Office of Business Inclusion works to identify Minority, Women, and/or Small Business Enterprises (MWSBEs) for opportunities to participate as providers of goods and services to the City, while also working more broadly to promote, monitor, and evaluate these businesses with the goal of widening opportunities for participation and growth in the Asheville area.

In 2019, the Mountain Community Capital Fund was launched in partnership with the City, Carolina Small Business Development Fund, Mountain BizWorks, Self-Help Credit Union, and Buncombe County. This loan fund is intended for small business borrowers whose main barrier is lack of collateral. The Fund guarantees 85% of the loan amount up to \$70,000. It is available to all entrepreneurs, especially entrepreneurs of color and borrowers with low incomes, living within the City of Asheville or Buncombe County.



Wicked Weed

STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY

Existing Programs (continued)

The Mountain Business Equity Initiative is designed to deliver high-quality technical assistance to emerging, or existing Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) led and owned small businesses, startups, and entrepreneurs across the 10-county Asheville Market and beyond. This work is a direct response to the 2018 Disparity Study, and the work that followed on community action planning, while engaging community members, entrepreneurs, and leaders in a strategic response.

Asheville launched several initiatives to support the ability of local businesses to operate viably and safely in alignment with public health guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to waiving permit fees, offering free parking for a period of time, and introducing new curbside pick-up zones, the City facilitated opportunities for businesses to expand seating and merchandise outdoors onto private parking lots, public sidewalks, and into public parking spaces through an expedited authorization

process at no cost to the participating business. This allowed for safer operations and customer access in alignment with distancing guidance.

In addition to these opportunities available to local businesses and organizations throughout Asheville, the City designated Banks Avenue and Buxton Avenue as “Shared Street” Pedestrian Priority Zones, enabling all businesses on these corridors to expand into adjacent on-street parking spaces without going through a formal application process and with initial set-up materials provided by the City. The Pedestrian Priority Zone designation also encouraged safe distancing by allowing people to use the roadway for walking. This created a safer and more pedestrian-oriented environment in South Slope and throughout other areas of Downtown. This suite of outdoor expansion initiatives, called AVL Shares Space, continued throughout 2021 and into 2022 as the City works on next steps for transitioning elements of these initiatives into long-term programs.



Patron seating on Buxton Avenue as a part of the AVL Shares Space initiative.

STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY



The South Slope Cheese Co.



The High Test Deli & Sweet Shop



The Prospect



Burial Beer Co.



Pie.Zaa Pizza

STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY

Housing and Affordable Housing

An integral part of a strong economy is housing. Housing not only provides places for residents to live – it provides eyes on the street, making business districts safer for everyone. The core of downtown Asheville became much more successful after the number of downtown residents increased. Generally, residents also become customers of local businesses and a part of the social fabric. A variety of prices, rents, and types of housing is ideal to attract a diverse resident population.

Currently in the South Slope, the number of residents is somewhat limited. The Sawyer Motor Building, Lexington Station, and a couple of apartment buildings on Coxe Avenue are where most residents are concentrated. New development is bringing condominiums (on the higher end of the market) to Short Coxe and McCormick Place. The new apartments at Lee Walker Heights, and the Coxe / Asheland project will also bring even more residents to the area.



Generally, the market will provide housing at the upper end of the market, and market rate units. For people working in the service economy, and many folks in the medical sector, education, public safety and other similar professions, market rate rents are not affordable. Units that are considered affordable for low to moderate income households, meaning that households with incomes at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), are hard to produce. Lower income units at or below 60% AMI are even harder to produce as they generally require some type of government subsidy. These subsidies can range between \$30,000 to \$120,000 per unit for rental units. In the downtown area, where land prices are higher, subsidies also tend to be on the higher end of the scale.



The recently approved Coxe / Asheland project, called The Ironwood, is slated to have a total of 500 units with 10% of these units affordable to those at or below 80% AMI. All 212 units at Maplecrest (formerly Lee Walker Heights), an Asheville Housing Authority project, will be affordable to people at or below 60% AMI. In addition, the City is planning to develop city-owned property at 319 Biltmore Avenue to be a mixed-income community, adjacent to Lee Walker Heights ([see page 75](#)). A proposed building on Collier Avenue would provide an additional 42 units of housing, all affordable at 80% AMI. All three of these projects have or will have City funding to help build the affordable units. The City contributed \$4.2 million to the Lee Walker Heights rebuild, and approved a Land Use Incentive Grant (LUIG) for the affordable units at the Ironwood and the Collier apartment building.

The South Slope neighborhood will likely continue to change incrementally as new housing and businesses are constructed and as the area grows into a more urban environment. Change can be difficult for the community to absorb, but Asheville and Buncombe County as a whole are growing, and channeling a portion of the growth into urban form is the most environmentally friendly way to accommodate the inevitable growth. How the South Slope grows and develops so that it improves the lives of everyone and not just the few is a hallmark of this vision plan.



Photos this page / next: The Lee Walker Heights Development (now named Maple Crest). Images courtesy of Mountain Housing Opportunities and McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture.

STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY



RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

1. Encourage a mix of businesses which include local services and makerspaces.

- Encourage service business uses for local residents (grocery, convenience stores, retail)
- Encourage partners to create incentives for small businesses potentially including makerspaces, business incubators, micro-businesses, and the creative sector.
- Develop incentives for affordable rents.
- Explore / Implement zoning incentives for creating small business spaces.
- Explore requiring commercial uses on key corridors (Coxe, Banks, Buxton, Southside), potentially mandating a percentage of ground floor activation in specific areas. Shallow spaces in liner buildings can create opportunities for entrepreneurs, and increased available ground floor commercial space for tenants can help keep rents affordable.

2. Support existing businesses so they can thrive and grow to their fullest potential.

- Update existing incentive policies and programs including fee rebates, Land Use Incentive Grants (LUIG), Industrial Development / Business Development Grants and the Industrial Development Program:

- » Evaluate and address how disparity study results can be addressed and incorporated into these programs.
- » Understand how these programs work and could integrate with the Mountain Community Capital Fund (loan program).
- Pilot new grant programs for existing businesses – focusing on Innovation Districts including the South Slope.
- Provide easy access to information, resources, and services that support business growth and success such as funding and training opportunities at A-B Tech.
- Create an organized strategy for assisting with conversion of businesses to employee ownership and/or cooperative as well as succession planning and training (to be initiated by the business community or local service provider / non-profit).
- Encourage networking opportunities, community building, and neighborhood advocacy through the South Slope Neighborhood and Asheville Downtown Associations.
- Support collaboration for the creative sector through co-working sites and affordable rents.

STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES (CONTINUED)

3. Support development of new and existing BIPOC owned businesses.

- Develop a business incubator either within or near the area that provides space and support for emerging entrepreneurs of color. The incubator could also house business support organizations.
- Work with local organizations such as Green Opportunities and Southside Rising to engage with entrepreneurs from nearby neighborhoods of East End and Southside and connect them with opportunities in South Slope and downtown to do business, lease space, etc.
- Guide investment in Opportunity Zones (Census Tract 9) to benefit new and existing BIPOC owned businesses.

4. Continue to strengthen organizational support for businesses.

- Explore partnerships (CVB, ADA, Asheville Grown, AIR, SSNA) to increase marketing and promotional opportunities for small and local businesses.
- Support capacity-building of local business / neighborhood associations through partnerships, financial support, and shared accountability.
- Host a regular business district workshop to bring together leaders of Asheville's commercial areas to share insights and ideas.
- Support the development of a pro-community brokerage firm or service that helps retain local ownership of businesses. This could be a program of an existing organization. A Business or Community Improvement District (BID or CID), if formed, could assist with this type of service.
- Work with non-profit organizations and other partners to advocate for small and local independent businesses downtown.

5. Ensure public infrastructure provides ample multimodal access and gathering spaces.

- Provide quality core services and infrastructure to meet the needs of businesses including parking, utilities, sidewalks, and quality public spaces.
- Explore the needs of manufacturing uses and makers for loading and access to ensure that their operations can be accommodated and supported.
- Develop an inspiring environment where the creative sector can thrive. This may include public and private art projects, as well as public spaces that encourage interaction and community connection.
- Create spaces that are family-oriented including play equipment and seating while encouraging all-age-friendly private sector investments and services.

6. Encourage a mix of unit types, sizes, and price points to attract a diverse population to the area.

- Continue to support city incentives for affordable housing
- Expand the LUIG program to existing units.
- Explore using preferences for downtown service workers and hospital workers in affordable units.

7. Encourage the production, preservation, and protection of affordable housing for local residents and the business community.

- Explore zoning amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to incent affordable units through utilization of community benefits for larger projects.
- Explore using height bonuses to incent affordable housing.
- Encourage denser housing (as opposed to mixed-use) at the edges of the district as a buffer between neighborhoods and the commercial areas.



MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

Multimodal transportation refers to a diverse network of transportation options, typically including: walking, cycling, public transit, and automobile driving, as a means of moving people of all abilities from place to place within the built environment.

GOALS

1. **Create safe, accessible,** and pedestrian-friendly streets.
2. **Pursue transportation improvements** that promote public space and vibrant streetlife.
3. **Provide safe connected bicycle facilities** within and through the district.
4. **Increase viability of alleys for access** to reduce driveways on major streets and to provide additional pedestrian connections.



Glenn's Creek Greenway extends westward from Weaver Park on Merrimon Avenue to Riverside Drive along the French Broad River.



“WHETHER YOU drive a car, take the bus, ride a bike, or walk, getting around Asheville is easy. Public transportation is widespread, frequent, and reliable. Sidewalks, greenways, and bike facilities get us where we want to go safely and keep us active and healthy. It is easy to live in Asheville without a car and still enjoy economic, academic, and social success.”

– Asheville City Council Vision 2036
Transportation and Accessibility



MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

Planning Framework

The Asheville City Council vision for transportation sets the framework for other city plans and policies. In addition, this vision for a healthy transportation system supports other Council vision themes such as “A Well-Planned and Livable Community” and “A Thriving Local Economy.”

Supporting this Council vision is Asheville's Complete Streets Policy, which states that all modes of transportation will be considered as changes to streets are contemplated. Many streets in Asheville have limited amounts of space – and choices must often be made between competing uses for the street.

Previously adopted city transportation plans include the Asheville in Motion Plan, Pedestrian Plan, Comprehensive Bicycle Plan, Greenways Master Plan, and Transit Master Plan. All of these plans contain strong support for a healthy transportation system serving multiple modes of transportation. Based on the unique characteristics of each street, the facilities for the different uses will vary. Often, choices need to be made between facilities such as bicycle lanes, improved sidewalks, travel lanes for vehicles, and on-street parking. Through the complete streets policy, each mode will be considered as changes are made to streets.



“

“THE VISION for Asheville is a clear, effective, and connected transportation system that is lasting and offers enhanced choices. A community where transportation investments align with economic and social goals. A city where the quality of choices increases the closer you get to its center.”

– Asheville in Motion, 2016

”

Overview + Area Context

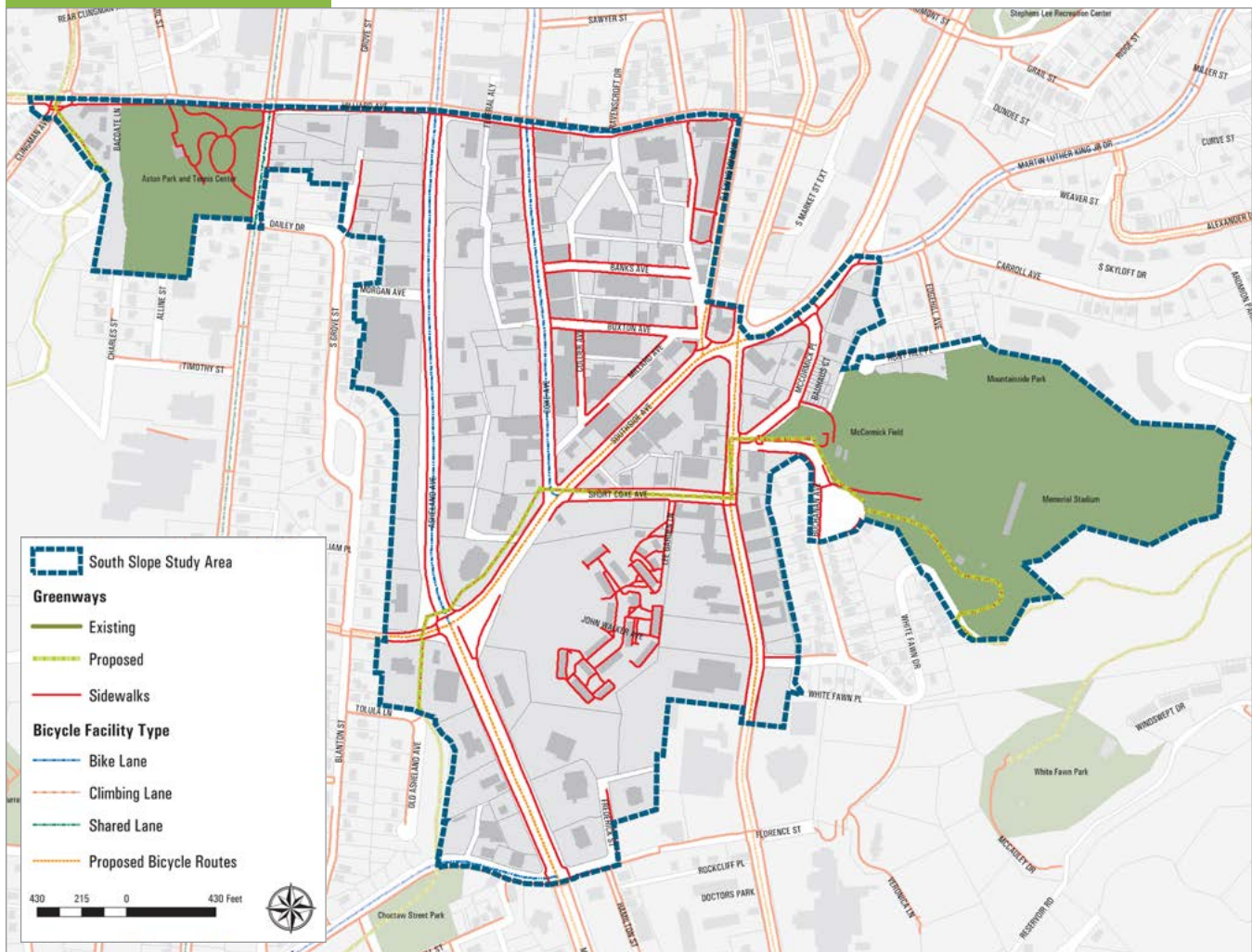
Each street in the South Slope has unique characteristics – varying in terms of traffic volume overall width, presence of on-street parking, bicycle facilities, sidewalk condition, and the quality of the street lighting. Each street has opportunities for multimodal improvements.

The streets in South Slope also are part of a larger network of streets moving vehicles (including bicycles) between areas like Biltmore Village, Mission Health, the River District, and the Southside Neighborhood. The streets that are likely to continue to serve these intra-city movements are Biltmore Avenue, Asheland Avenue, Southside Avenue, and Hilliard Avenue.

Most of the streets in the South Slope are owned and maintained by the City of Asheville. Two of the main corridors, Biltmore, Southside, and McDowell Avenues, are owned and maintained by the North Carolina Department of Transportation and are a part of U.S. Highway 25. There are numerous opportunities to improve pedestrian connectivity and the pedestrian experience in the South Slope by adding missing sections of sidewalk, improving street lighting, and making other streetscape improvements. Alleys also provide an opportunity to expand the pedestrian network and provide additional route choices to pedestrians.

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

MULTI-MODAL FACILITIES MAP



There is a need for continued development of the bicycle network for the primary north-south and east-west movements. For the north-south movements, Coxe Avenue has lower traffic volumes than Biltmore Avenue and has a more gentle grade than Asheland Avenue. The most likely routes for the east-west bicycle connection are Hilliard Avenue and Southside Avenue. Separated or buffered bicycle lanes are preferred, but there is not always adequate space. In some cases a bicycle climbing lane in the uphill direction is preferred both for space reasons and compatibility with the speed of traffic on the street.

Site Specific Recommendations

HILLIARD AVENUE

Hilliard Avenue currently provides an east-west connection through downtown. Current deficiencies include missing pedestrian crossing signals, a lack of lighting, missing sections of sidewalk, and bike facilities that are not separated from traffic. Large retaining walls and limited right-of-way width limit the opportunities to expand facilities. The city should work to close sidewalk gaps, make crossing improvements, and add pedestrian scale lighting.

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

ASHELAND / MCDOWELL AVENUES

Due to urban renewal which removed a number of structures along Asheland and changed the road profile and location, the Right of Way (ROW) south of Hilliard is quite wide, averaging 100 feet in width. Currently, much of that width is in the form of grass lawns behind the sidewalk or in some cases, private parking for buildings.

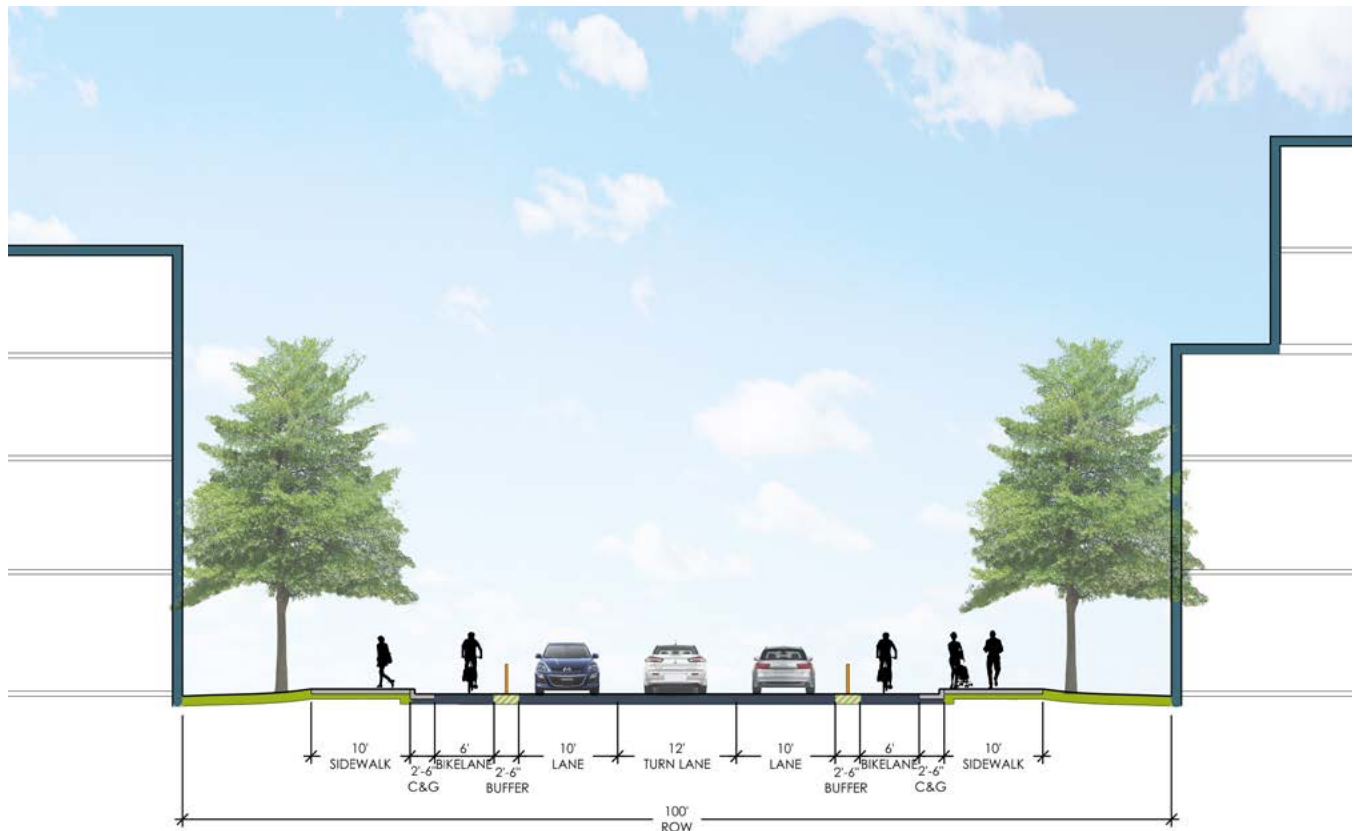
It is expected that this street will see an urban development pattern evolve over time; and therefore, bike and pedestrian amenities would be appropriate. Two concepts were developed for this plan. One concept envisions a road diet that could be implemented within the current curb lines and would be less costly.

The second design option would be a complete rebuild of the street, which would be very costly, and is less likely to be a high priority for the community.

South of Southside Avenue, Asheland turns into McDowell Avenue and also US-25, leading to Hendersonville Road. At this point, it turns into a NC-DOT road as well and widens to five lanes, and in some areas six lanes. McDowell south of Southside has the highest vehicle counts in the area at an average of 22,000 vehicles a day.

- **Find opportunities to improve McDowell Avenue** as an urban complete street through the Biltmore / McDowell Corridor Study (adopted by City Council in 2021).
- **Develop best short and longer term use of Asheland Avenue** right of way south of Hilliard Avenue.

ASHELAND AVENUE CONCEPT



MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

BILTMORE AVENUE

Biltmore Avenue along with Southside Avenue is part of US Highway 25 and is maintained by the NCDOT. Higher traffic volumes and limited space present challenges to making changes to Biltmore Avenue in the isolated area of the South Slope. The City conducted a corridor study for Biltmore, Southside, and McDowell Street that looks at the larger north-south street network and makes recommendations for improvements to those corridors.

- **Improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities** along Biltmore Avenue.
- **Find opportunities to improve Biltmore Avenue** as an urban complete street through the Biltmore / McDowell Corridor Study.

BANKS AND BUXTON

Banks Avenue and Buxton Avenue are the center of leisure and entertainment uses for the South Slope. Both streets have relatively low traffic volumes. The location and character of these streets provide an opportunity to transform them into pedestrian-oriented areas that increase space to gather, while still allowing vehicles to access the street. These streets will continue to serve as a place for deliveries, passenger drop-off, and ADA accessibility. A vision for Banks and Buxton Avenues is [outlined on page 81](#).

RAVENSCROFT DRIVE AND COLLIER AVENUE

Ravenscroft Drive and Collier Avenue are narrower, low-volume streets in the South Slope that provide important connectivity for vehicles and pedestrians in the area. With the addition of missing sidewalks and improved lighting, future development along these streets will add to both pedestrian and auto traffic and the vitality of the neighborhood.

COXE AVENUE

Coxe Avenue is a primary north-south route in the heart of the district. The street has relatively low traffic volumes and a gentle grade and therefore serves as a preferred route for bicyclists over the steeper Asheland Avenue. Coxe Avenue is also a primary pedestrian connection between the South Slope and the center of downtown.

The wide right of way on Coxe Avenue presents an opportunity for transformational improvements that could include wide sidewalks, gathering spaces, improved lighting, street trees, and bicycle facilities. On-street parking will continue to be an important part of this “complete street.”

The potential for redevelopment on Coxe Avenue also contributes to its potential to become a “main street” for the South Slope. Another advantage for Coxe as a “main street” is that there are very few overhead utilities, which would make it easier to put existing wires underground and to allow street trees to mature. [See page 83](#) for more detailed vision and plans for Coxe Avenue. The City has received a Surface Transportation Block Grant to partially fund a re-design (not construction) of Coxe Avenue.

The City of Asheville AIM plan demonstrated that the wide right of way on Coxe Avenue allows opportunities to improve other modes of transportation such as bicycling and walking. This South Slope plan recommends improving sidewalks, retaining on-street parking, and adding bicycle facilities as space allows. Most likely the design would allow for a bicycle climbing lane in the northbound (uphill) direction. These recommendations are based on input received during the South Slope visioning process. These recommendations differ from the City of Asheville in Motion (AIM) Plan which recommended removing on-street parking to create buffered bicycle lanes. Based on the in-depth planning process for this area the recommendations in this plan replace the AIM plan recommendations for Coxe Avenue.

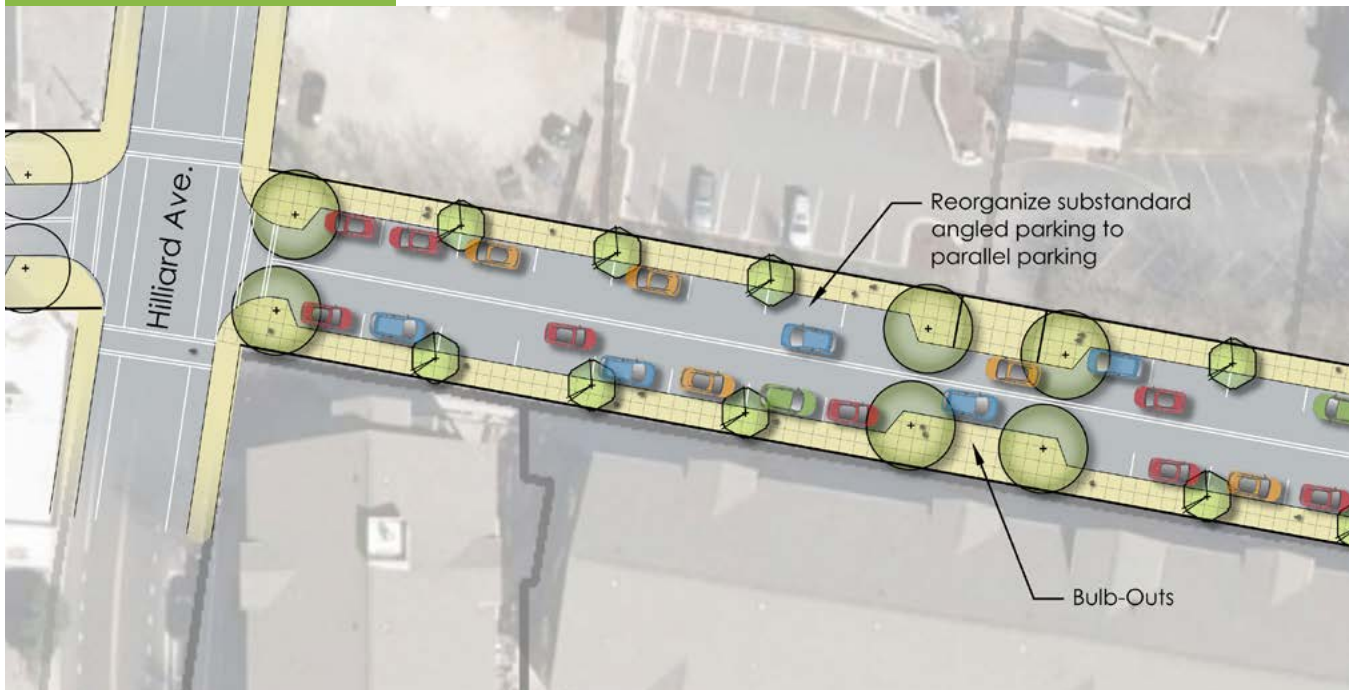
SOUTH LEXINGTON AVENUE

South Lexington Avenue has low traffic volumes and is a direct connection between South Slope and the rest of downtown. Unlike Coxe Avenue, South Lexington has a narrow right of way with buildings close to the street, and numerous overhead power lines.

South Lexington is likely to continue as an access street for developments with primary street frontage on Church Street and Biltmore Avenue. Also, the overhead utilities are likely to stay in place due to the high cost of putting them underground. South Lexington is missing sections of sidewalk, and other sections of sidewalk do not have adequate width.

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

SOUTH LEXINGTON PLAN SECTION



The South Lexington Plan above shows a small section of a potential design for South Lexington. With limited ROW, the main goal is to ensure full pedestrian access. The full design can be seen in the Appendix .

The City of Asheville should advance a capital project to improve sidewalks and strengthen South Lexington as a pedestrian connection to the South Slope. Longer term, look for opportunities to reconfigure the street network at the southern end of South Lexington by changing the connections between Church Street, South Lexington, and Banks Avenue. This would improve connectivity and accessibility for all modes of transportation.

SOUTHSIDE AVENUE GREENWAY CONNECTOR

Greenway connectors are on-road bicycle and pedestrian segments that bridge the gaps between greenways. The City of Asheville is designing a greenway connector through the South Slope on Southside Avenue that connects the Nasty Branch Greenway and river district to Beaucatcher Greenway at Memorial Stadium. ([See Southside Connector Section on page 79](#)).

- **Construct the Southside** Greenway Connector.
- **Continue to improve Southside Avenue** as an urban street, including eliminating or consolidating driveways when possible.

ALLEYS

The South Slope street network includes many service alleys that were designed to be used for deliveries, trash collection, and other business-related activities. Alleys provide significant potential to provide additional pedestrian access and business frontage / activity, while continuing to function as areas for commercial loading and unloading access.

The alleys in the South Slope are assets that can provide opportunities for public art, well-lit nighttime passage, and additional green space. By increasing the viability of alleys for access to parking, as properties redevelop there will be fewer driveways along the primary streets, increasing pedestrian safety and creating opportunities for public gathering spaces and outdoor dining.

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

Alleys in the South Slope should be redesigned to be unique and inviting connections for pedestrians and bicyclists, while maintaining vehicle access and continuing to serve business-related activities.

- **Encourage the use of alleys for vehicular access to parking** with the goal of reducing driveway connections on primary streets.
- **Ensure that city policies and ordinances support the use of alleys** for access to businesses.

PARKING

The City of Asheville adopted a Comprehensive Parking Study and Strategic Plan in 2017. The plan focuses on best practices and recommends strategies including communications, “park once”, a downtown shuttle and performance-based operations and funding strategies. The Parking Enterprise Fund is a self-sustaining operation that is able to contribute money toward the transit system while also maintaining and improving the current surface and structured parking facilities.

The City used parking decks as a tool for downtown revitalization from the 1980s to the 2000s by increasing parking so that the private sector could rehabilitate buildings without providing parking. Today, the demands on the city budget for core services are higher, especially as the City has grown both in area and the number of residents it serves. While there are some that would like to see the City build new parking structures, it is unlikely that the City will build parking decks at the same pace as in the past, if at all. Making the most of current available parking is the best strategy, and the City’s parking app helps drivers find existing spaces.

The Buncombe County parking deck, completed in 2018 and located near Hilliard Avenue on Coxe Avenue,

has 650 spaces and is just over a quarter mile from the heart of the South Slope. There are many spaces available to the public on a daily basis, even on busy days.

The community gave feedback that a parking deck would be welcome at the southern end of Coxe Avenue. Additional structured parking could be provided by private development or with a public / private partnership and could take advantage of the grade changes between Coxe and Asheland Avenues.

A park once strategy is a way to encourage visitors to the area to find a place to park their car for a longer period of time and get around the district on foot or other means (shuttles, bike, wheelchair, ride service). On-street parking should be preserved on key corridors where appropriate not only to provide public parking options but also to help slow vehicle speeds and make pedestrians feel safer. Parking on private property should be accessed from alleys when possible, and parking structures should be lined with active uses.

TRANSIT

While not in the South Slope study area, the ART transit center North of Hilliard on Coxe Avenue will continue to be an important hub for transit services. The ART transit master plan maintains this location as a transfer center, and the plan calls for many routes to be expanded in terms of service hours and frequency as well as adding additional routes to the system. Recently, ART service has been increased in and through the South Slope and the Southside neighborhood. In 2020, the City made important improvements to the Transit Center including accessibility, seating, and lighting. Transit service is an important component of the park once strategy outlined above. Transit utilization could be increased for both residents and visitors.

COXE + ASHELAND AVENUES GRADE CHANGE



MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

1. **Create safe, accessible, and pedestrian-friendly streets.**
 - Complete missing sections of sidewalk and increase sidewalk width where feasible.
 - Improve safety at intersections and mid-block crossings in the district and at connections to surrounding neighborhoods and districts.
 - Reduce driveway cuts on primary streets.
2. **Pursue transportation improvements that promote public space and vibrant streetlife.**
 - Create inviting sidewalks, street furniture, trees, and lighting.
 - Balance parking needs with good urban design.
 - Encourage a park once strategy.
 - Find opportunities for plazas and outdoor gathering spaces.
3. **Provide safe connected bicycle facilities within and through the district.**
 - Use design measures to slow down vehicles.
 - Implement bicycle facilities that form logical connections to the larger bicycle network.
4. **Increase viability of alleys for access to reduce driveways on major streets and to provide additional pedestrian connections.**
 - Make improvements to alleys that increase the connectivity and usability of the alley network.
 - Transform alleys into inviting spaces to promote pedestrian activity where possible while maintaining access for operational needs like trash pick-up where necessary.

PRIORITIZED IMPROVEMENTS

(Projects 1 and 2 are funded and moving forward)

1. **Southside Greenway Connector** - City capital project to build an on-street, two-way bicycle and pedestrian facility to bridge gaps in the greenway system. The project will include a “road diet” on Southside Avenue and intersection crossing improvements.
2. **Coxe Avenue Streetscape** - City capital project for transformational improvements that could include wide sidewalks, gathering spaces, improved lighting, street trees, and possibly bicycle facilities.
3. **South Lexington Avenue Pedestrian Improvements** - City capital project to improve sidewalks and strengthen South Lexington Avenue as a pedestrian connection to the South Slope.
4. **Improvements to Alleys** - Conceptual level plan to improve access, vehicular and pedestrian connectivity, and attractiveness of the alley system in the South Slope.
5. **Gateway Improvements** - Conceptual level plan to create gateway features at the intersection of Biltmore and Southside and at the intersection of McDowell and Southside.
6. **Banks and Buxton Pedestrian Oriented Streets** - Conceptual level plan to transform Banks and Buxton Avenue into streets built to prioritize pedestrians while maintaining vehicle access.
7. **Collier Avenue and Ravenscroft Drive Future Improvements** - Conceptual level plan to improve connecting streets, bringing them up to urban standards by providing improved sidewalks, lighting, and stormwater facilities.
8. **Hilliard Avenue Future Improvements** - Pedestrian safety improvements including filling in missing sections of sidewalk, pedestrian crossing improvements, and pedestrian scale lighting.
9. **Asheland and McDowell Avenues Future Improvements** - Conceptual level plan to use the wide right of way on Asheland Avenue to implement multimodal improvements such as bicycle lanes, wider sidewalks, street trees, or other streetscape improvements.
10. **Biltmore Avenue Future Improvements** - Conceptual level plan to improve the experience for bicyclists and pedestrians to further develop Biltmore Avenue into an urban street.



STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE + NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

5

Infrastructure forms the backbone of our society, providing essential services such as energy, water, and waste management that interconnect and drive the modern economy. Infrastructure can also negatively impact the natural environment and if managed improperly increase the City's vulnerability to natural disasters and the effects of climate change.

GOALS

- 1. Implement green infrastructure** to mitigate flooding and improve water quality.
- 2. Enhance the urban tree canopy** and green spaces.
- 3. Increase energy efficiency** and renewable energy production.
- 4. Build streetscape infrastructure.**

Nuisance flooding was also identified as a climate related threat for the South Slope. Nuisance flooding is defined as an event that overwhelms stormwater infrastructure and results in inconveniences such as road closures and damage to infrastructure. This flooding primarily occurs in the streets and is associated with large storm events. This is different from riverine flooding which occurs when rivers overflow their banks.

It is important to manage stormwater runoff in urban areas, which is exacerbated by impervious surfaces that impede groundwater infiltration leading to a higher rate and volume of stormwater runoff. Reducing the volume and slowing down the flow of stormwater from this area will also benefit downstream communities by reducing erosion and other pollutants and help to improve the water quality of the French Broad, our city, and the watershed.

Climate Resiliency Assessment

The City's most recent comprehensive plan, Living Asheville: A Comprehensive Plan for our Future, adopted in 2018, includes an assessment of hazards and threats facing the City due to climate change. The Climate Resiliency Assessment was used to inform planning strategies citywide, with the intent to build resilience in the face of climate change. Living Asheville also includes some physical strategies at a larger scale for the five geographic areas of the City, thus as part of the central area of Asheville, extreme heat associated with the urban heat island effect was identified as the primary threat facing the South Slope. The large number of parking lots with minimal landscaping contributes to this effect as does the lack of street trees on many streets.

Stormwater

Most stormwater originating from downtown drains through the South Slope and continues through the Southside community via Nasty Branch Creek. This drainage originally flowed through a ravine that was filled in to create Coxe Avenue with material from the leveling of Battery Hill north of Patton Avenue.

Currently, many downtown development projects do not trigger new stormwater management mitigation measures since the existing built-upon conditions are already impervious – and no new threshold is reached – which is in contrast to a new greenfield development. To mitigate stormwater the City has to initiate projects or developers must do it voluntarily, which can be very costly given downtown land costs.

STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE + NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure is an approach to stormwater management that tries to mimic natural systems. In an urban area, this could look like native street trees, bioretention cells (rain gardens), solar street lights, permeable pavement, and green roofs. This plan envisions Coxe Avenue as a potential pilot project to highlight and demonstrate various sustainable measures. In addition to the physical systems, signage can help educate the public about the infrastructure and its benefits to our community.

GREEN STREETS

Green streets use vegetation, soil, and engineered systems to slow, filter, and clean stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces. Rather than directing stormwater runoff away from impervious surfaces into storm sewer systems, green streets attempt to capture rainwater as near as possible to where it falls, using design elements such as street trees, pervious pavements, bio-retention, and swales.

TREE CANOPY AND GREEN SPACES

In 2018, the overall tree canopy was 20% for the study area. Approximately one-third of this is attributed to part of Beaucatcher forest being included in the boundary. Without this parcel, the tree canopy for the South Slope area in 2018 was 13%. Recent development has impacted the tree canopy and will continue to impact it. The new Tree Canopy

Protection Ordinance will create additional standards for the downtown tree canopy and provide a way for developers to pay for additional trees if they cannot be accommodated onsite.

Existing public space and rights of way should be used to add trees to the South Slope through street trees and landscaping above usual requirements. The design for Coxe Avenue ([see page 83](#)) shows additional street trees and planting areas.

The potential for more traditional urban parks within the South Slope area is limited in part due to city budget constraints and land availability. There are some areas in the South Slope that could be made into green spaces by the private sector.

Notably, a group of South Slope businesses, residents, and stakeholders have been working to purchase a site on Collier Avenue to preserve the trees. The site has been approved for an apartment building containing affordable housing but the developer has agreed to sell the land if the funds can be raised by the community. If this happens, it is envisioned by the community to be a publicly accessible park, likely to be owned and maintained by the owners. Asheville Greenworks is a partner in this effort. The community also envisions the adjacent portion of Collier Avenue as an enhanced pedestrian-oriented street.



► **LID (Low Impact Development)** measures are used to slow, store, and filter rainwater. Here an example from Little Rock, AR (left) and from Craven Street in the River District of Asheville. Photo Credit: Crafton Tull (left photo).

Green Building + Energy Efficiency

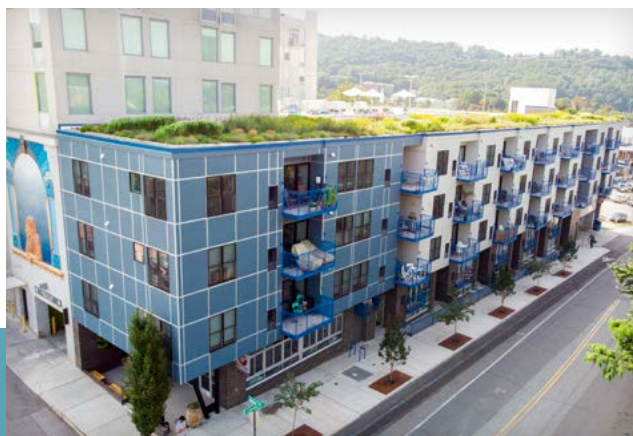
The importance of energy efficiency and green building cannot be overlooked when considering climate change and making cities livable. Buildings account for nearly 40% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions worldwide and the number of buildings is projected to keep growing. The City of Asheville has done significant work on increasing energy efficiency in its own buildings, and all new city buildings must be LEED certified. There are community examples of green buildings, but most of these are single family homes. Given the amount of potential growth in the South Slope over the next 20 years, more efficient buildings are vital to reducing the amount of carbon emissions and energy demands.

CASE STUDY: GARAGE APARTMENTS LIVING ROOF

The living roof at the Garage Apartments on South Lexington consists of 6,200 square feet of native plants that supports pollinator populations, reduces the urban heat island effect, and reduces the amount of stormwater going into the City's stormwater system. In a case study of this roof, it has been estimated that the living roof is preventing between 103,815 and 117,486 gallons of water from entering public storm drains by the process of evapotranspiration. Additionally, it reduces the peak flow by 49% during a 10-year storm event and by 39% in a 25-year storm event.

Living roofs have additional benefits to buildings. They can increase the lifespan of roofs another 20 years, when the normal roof lifespan is 20 years. These roofs also insulate the building and reduce the amount of energy needed for heating and cooling. Although there is a higher up-front cost, the building will save the owners money over the long term.

Photos courtesy of Living Roofs Inc. www.livingroofsinc.com.



STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE + NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



Streetscape and Lighting

Street furniture is an important part of the streetscape in areas with higher pedestrian traffic. There has not been an extension of street furniture from the downtown core to the South Slope. Benches, light poles, additional garbage, and recycling containers should be installed in the area as needed. These elements are also great opportunities to introduce public art or functional art and enhance the character of South Slope.

The lack of street lighting and its relation to safety is a concern for many in the area. Currently, street lights are not consistent in the area, and there is the opportunity to extend this infrastructure. Solar street lights are a possibility and could be independent of the power grid. This technology is evolving, but has been used along highways and in some downtown areas. On Coxe Avenue, where there are no transmission lines, solar street lights could be a great solution for lighting concerns without adding to overhead power lines.

Waste and Recycling

Waste and recycling pickup is becoming a bigger issue for residents and businesses as the City grows. Currently, when developments need more than 3 roll carts, they are required to contract with a commercial service. Commercial haulers will pick up from dumpsters or larger dumpster carts that can be put away after they are emptied. But there are still instances where businesses or residents will use individual carts and city service.

A plan to ensure that there is sufficient space for trash storage and that sidewalks are not cluttered with carts is needed. The ordinance guiding solid waste is outdated, and needs to be updated. A solid waste master plan (for the whole city) would analyze alternatives, and look at how these services could be improved in an urban environment. Sidewalk waste and recycling receptacles are needed on multiple streets, but face funding challenges.

► **Solar light poles and solar lit bus shelter**, photos courtesy of SEPCO, Solar Electric Power Company.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

1. Implement green infrastructure to mitigate flooding and improve water quality.

- Work towards a green street pilot project on Coxe Avenue ([see Key Initiative, page 83](#)).
- Develop incentives for green building and LID mechanisms through zoning tools and/or funding strategies.

2. Enhance the urban tree canopy and green spaces.

- Develop a streetscape plan for all major streets, including a street tree plan that specifies tree species. Draft a policy for placement of street trees on NCDOT streets and work with NCDOT to adopt and implement the policy.
- Explore opportunities for small urban green spaces, either on public or private property.
- Explore opportunities to collaborate with the Southside / South French Broad Neighborhoods on potential community gardens and rain gardens on city-owned land. Such a project could benefit the community both economically and ecologically.
- Encourage private businesses and property owners to “Adopt a Spot” or add plantings on private property to increase vegetation in the area, especially pollinators and other recommended plants.

3. Increase energy efficiency and renewable energy production.

- Develop a resource guide for developers to guide them on fulfilling the vision for South Slope, including “green” elements.
- Promote city, state, and federal incentives to increase renewable energy production.

4. Build streetscape infrastructure.

- Develop a street lighting plan in conjunction with the streetscape to eliminate dark areas along public streets using solar street lights when possible.
- Develop a palette for street furniture that can reinforce the identity of South Slope and can be integrated with green infrastructure.
- Coordinate streetscape furniture and waste pickup issues with the Public Space Management Guidelines.
- Develop a policy in concert with downtown stakeholders for waste collection and storage in urban areas.

THE 10 KEY INITIATIVES





THE 10 KEY INITIATIVES

In addition to the five themes of this plan, there are 10 Key Initiatives, which are more concrete actions for implementation. In some cases the initiatives build on and reinforce existing city projects while others are new. Some may take longer than others but they provide a road map of priorities for plan implementation. The 10 Key Initiatives are:

- 1 Update Zoning + Design Guidelines to Achieve Community Goals**
- 2 Create a Gateway at Biltmore + Southside Avenues**
- 3 Honor African-American History**
- 4 Weave Art Throughout the District**
- 5 Develop City-Owned Property for Affordable Housing + Job Creation**
- 6 Enact Equitable Development**
- 7 Convert Banks + Buxton Avenues to Shared Streets**
- 8 Connect Neighborhoods Via the Southside Greenway Connector**
- 9 Make Coxe a Green Main Street**
- 10 Develop Successful Incentives for Sustainability**

1 UPDATE ZONING + DESIGN GUIDELINES

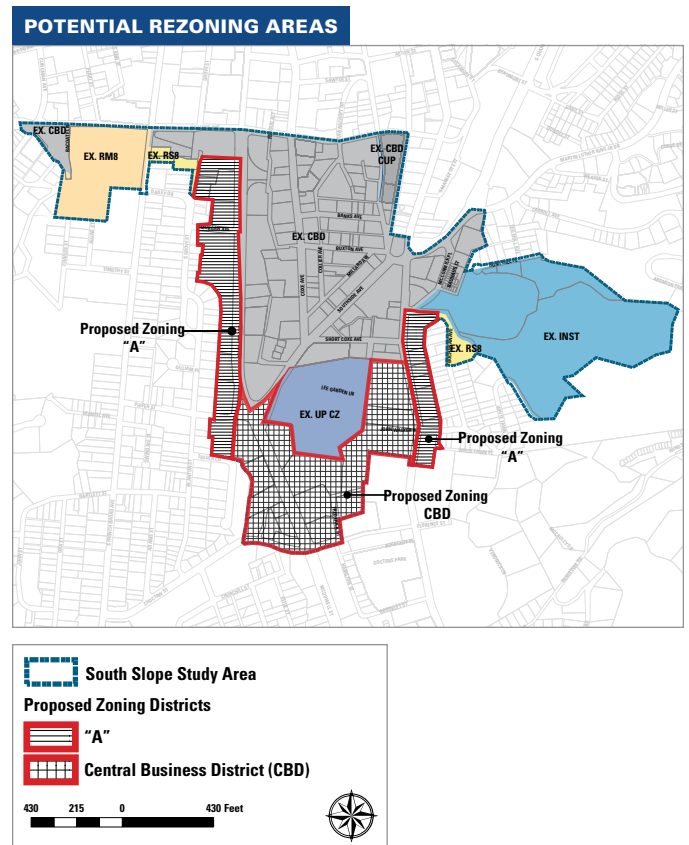


Currently, all new development and exterior changes to buildings in the Central Business District (CBD) require mandatory Downtown Design Review with voluntary compliance, except hotels which are mandatory compliance. In 2021, City Council created the Design Review Committee to carry out design review for the CBD, River areas and hotels. Although compliance is voluntary, development projects generally improve through the process, and developers of projects headed for City Council usually desire the approval of the Design Review Committee.

In 2010, the zoning for the CBD was revised and a number of items from the guidelines were incorporated into the code; changing from suggestions to requirements. Those changes affected properties in the CBD, but not the gateway areas surrounding it, which had previously been in the Downtown Design Review boundary. Consequently, since 2010, design review has only occurred within the CBD.

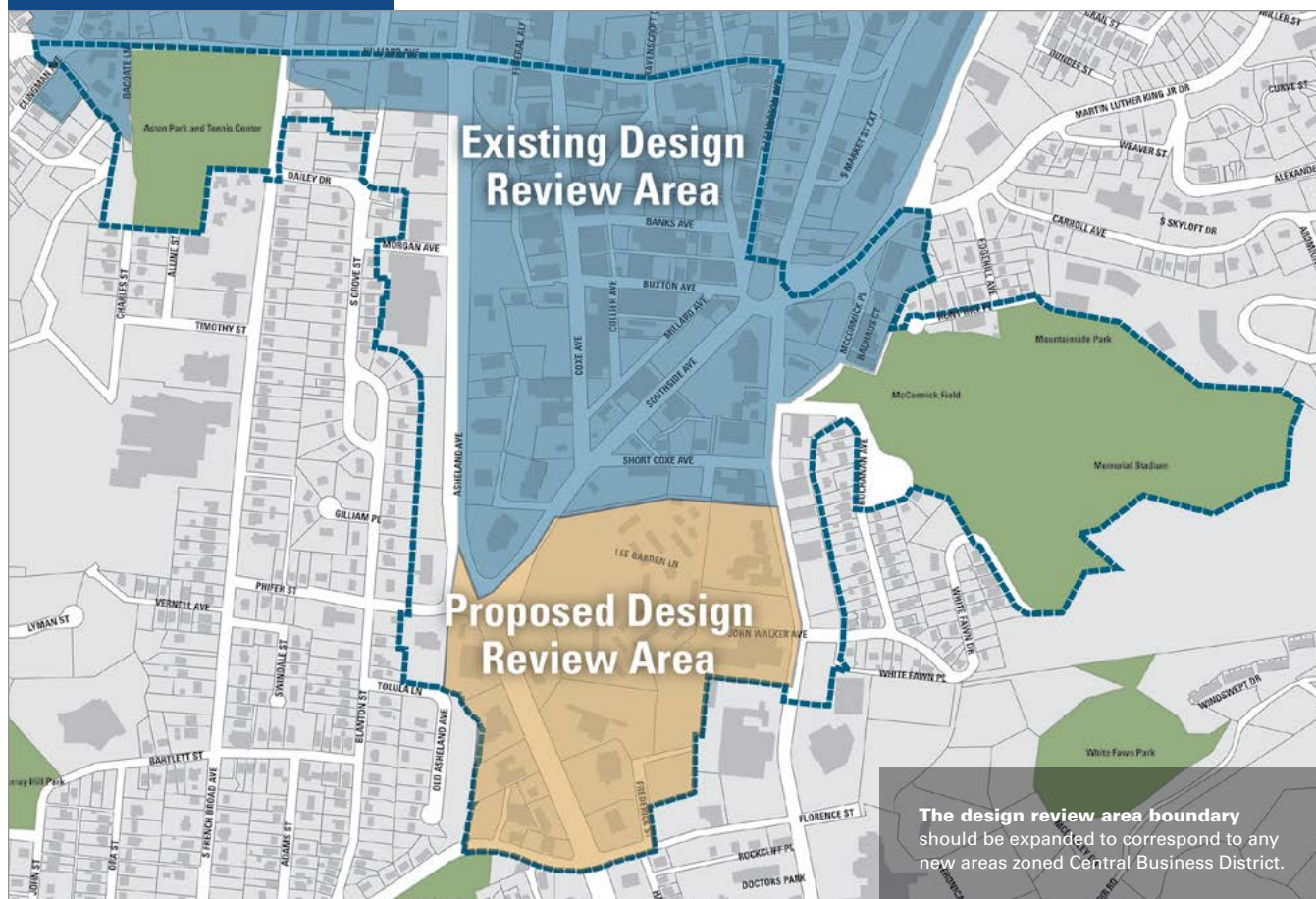
Over the past 10 years development has significantly increased in the South Slope and new uses and building types that were not anticipated have been proposed and warrant further scrutiny. The South Slope still has an abundance of surface parking lots, some of which have been converted into outside dining and entertainment areas. Vacant one story buildings have served as business incubators for new businesses, which has benefited the community. Expansions and additions to existing buildings have at times pushed the limits of the existing zoning code and raised new questions about what is appropriate.

Areas adjacent to the CBD, but also immediately adjacent to single family neighborhoods, should be rezoned to compatible, urban districts instead of the suburban type districts in place today. Expanding the CBD southward to include sections of McDowell Street and Biltmore Avenue will also help guide future development to be appropriately urban in character, defined by mixed-use developments that contribute to the built environment and are pedestrian-oriented.



UPDATE ZONING + DESIGN GUIDELINES

PROPOSED DESIGN REVIEW AREAS



ACTION STEPS

- 1. Review current CBD zoning standards** to make sure they still align with the community vision. Specifically, front setbacks, standards for additions, height limits, window requirements, and frontage requirements should be reviewed carefully. Ground floor activation and parking structure requirements should also be considered. Several of these standards have been the subject of variance requests in the past ten years. The Key Pedestrian Streets Map should also be revised.
- 2. Revise the Downtown Design Guidelines** to make them more usable and consider additional guidelines for the South Slope. Guidelines should align with character areas and reflect the history of these areas while continuing to allow for creative and inspiring architecture and design that reflects the South Slope's unique attributes and forward thinking ethos.
- 3. Undertake a rezoning process by working with the community** to rezone properties adjacent to the CBD as either Central Business District, or other higher density mixed-use districts such as Urban Residential. Areas immediately adjacent to neighborhoods may not be good candidates for zones that allow very tall buildings. Zoning to CBD with a lower height limit may be acceptable to surrounding neighbors. Transitions between denser areas and exiting residential areas will require careful consideration of buffers and height transitions.

2 CREATE A GATEWAY AT BILTMORE + SOUTHSIDE

MCCORMICK AERIAL MAP



The intersection of Biltmore and Southside Avenues is an identified gateway to Asheville’s downtown. Community feedback clearly identified that there are several Biltmore Avenue crossings that feel dangerous to pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists because of high

vehicle speeds, lack of infrastructure, and overall design. Recently, the NCDOT has made improvements to the intersection, but further improvements could be made to increase the overall safety of all users and to enhance the intersection as the gateway it is intended to be.

CREATE A GATEWAY AT BILTMORE + SOUTHSIDE



Photo Credit: Elizabeth Newton

McCormick Field and Memorial Stadium have become much more heavily used in the past five years. The Tourists minor league baseball, Asheville City Soccer Club, and other teams use these facilities for both practice and games. Future improvements at McCormick Field are expected to bring the facility up to MiLB standards. At the same time, Mountainside Park, which includes Memorial Stadium, continues to be operated as a neighborhood park and open space for the benefit of surrounding residents and the community. It is also the primary trailhead access to Beaucatcher Mountain and its network of natural surface trails.



Photo Credit: Bill Keogan

The Ballpark development in St. Louis serves as a gateway and a mixed-use hub next to the ball field. Arches serve as wayfinding for visitors and can also be artistic elements in a streetscape.

A gateway to reconnect McCormick Field and Memorial Stadium to the rest of downtown in a meaningful way has the potential to accomplish several goals:

- **Improve pedestrian crossing safety** and connectivity with the surrounding area.
- **Improve the experience for everyone visiting** McCormick Field and City parks; both for events and everyday exercise and recreation.
- **Reduce the parking pressure** on neighborhoods through structured parking.
- **Increase redevelopment opportunities** for older buildings and facilities in the immediate area, with an emphasis on creating spaces for local businesses.
- **Urbanize the area with infill development** that frames the street and enhances the gateway.
- **Create new urban open space areas** for congregation and enjoyment by locals and visitors.

CREATE A GATEWAY AT BILTMORE + SOUTHSIDE

The following pages examine several concepts that have been developed for the area immediately in front of McCormick Field. Some communities have created spaces adjacent to ballparks to make public plazas or restaurant/retail areas – places to go before and after games or events. This concept is a visionary one. It is important to note that the City of Asheville's fuel station located here will stay in place unless there is an ability to move it. Currently, there is not funding allocated for this project.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Consult the East End / Valley Street and Oakhurst neighbors** early in the process to explore and evaluate concepts.
- **Incremental options** should be considered.
- **Provide connectivity** and potentially more parking to take pressure off of nearby neighbors for larger events.
- **Look for opportunities** to increase the tree canopy in the area.
- **Include opportunities** for small, local businesses.
- **Integrate affordable housing** in all residential developments.
- **Create new public spaces that are inclusive** and welcoming to the entire community.

MCCORMICK GATEWAY CONCEPT



1. **Plaza with significant piece of art** to act as wayfinding for pedestrians and vehicles traveling through the South Charlotte Street and Biltmore Avenue intersection.
2. **Mixed-use building with structured parking.** This building to have activated pedestrian level edges on all sides.
3. **Mixed-use building with structured parking.** This building to have activated pedestrian level edges that can access McCormick Plaza on the "ground level" and McCormick Field promenade on the upper level.
4. **Mixed-use buildings to have activated pedestrian level edges** with residential uses on the upper levels.
5. **Gateway elements to act as wayfinding** and to define the Ballpark Village area.
6. **Significant pedestrian area with large areas for congregation,** outdoor dining, events, etc. This space will also be urban open space for the residents of this area.
7. **Realigned McCormick Plaza.** Create an active pedestrian friendly street with on-street parking.
8. **Plazas located throughout the area** to create space for congregation and outdoor dining.
9. **Strong pedestrian routes from the greenway** connector and larger downtown area.

CREATE A GATEWAY AT BILTMORE + SOUTHSIDE

MCCORMICK GATEWAY: LIMITED REDEVELOPMENT APPROACH



► The concept above shows that additional development and public space could occur on publicly-owned land and leave existing uses in place.

MODEL OF MCCORMICK GATEWAY CONCEPT



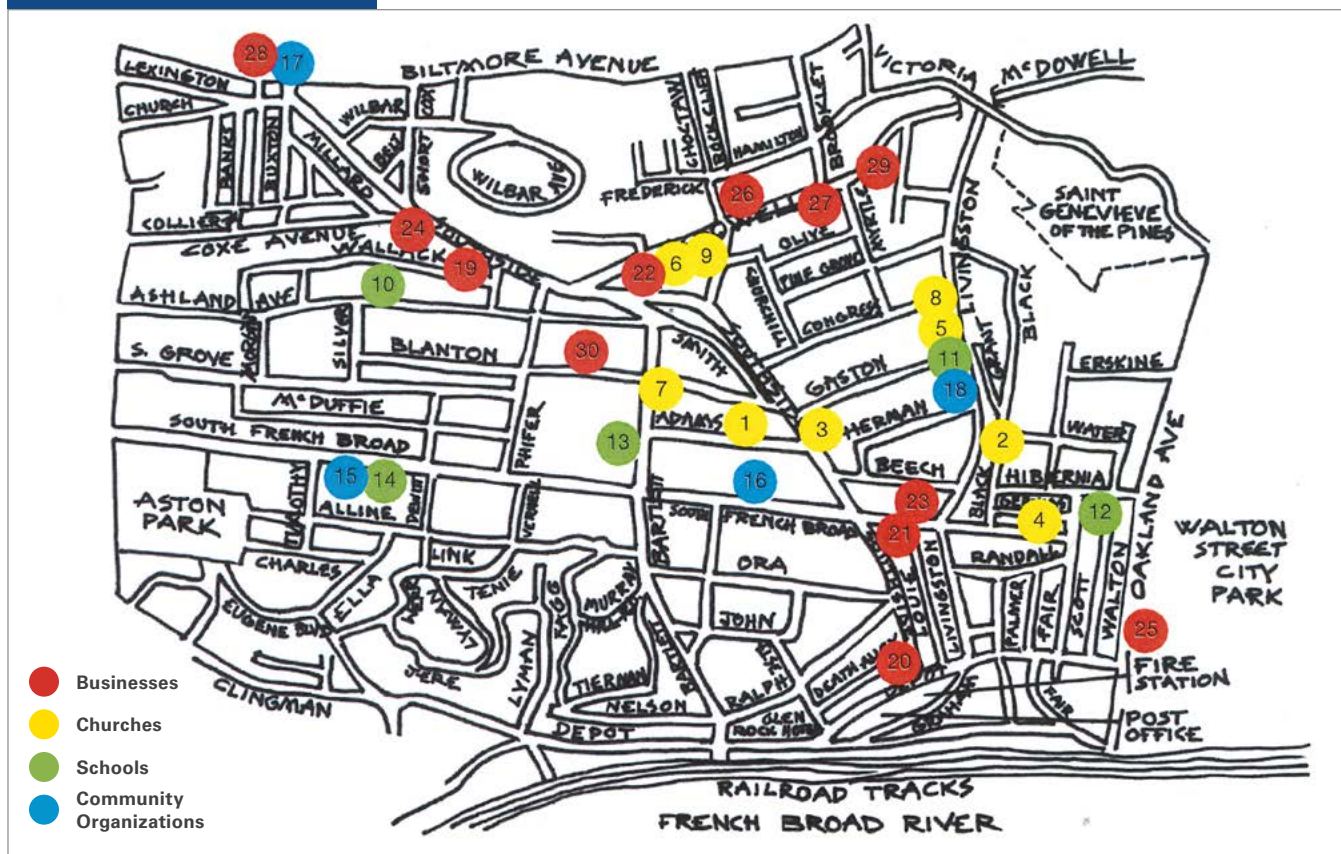
3

HONOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY



The area we currently refer to as “South Slope” was historically part of the **Southside Community**. Many African American businesses flourished in this area, primarily west of Coxe Avenue along the western section of the Southside Avenue corridor and along McDowell in the early to mid 20th century. Urban renewal and the East Riverside project removed a large number of commercial and residential buildings, eliminated some streets, and redeveloped other streets. Visitors to the area today often have no idea about the history of the area and what occurred in the community prior to the recent influx of new businesses and many breweries since about 2010 to the present.

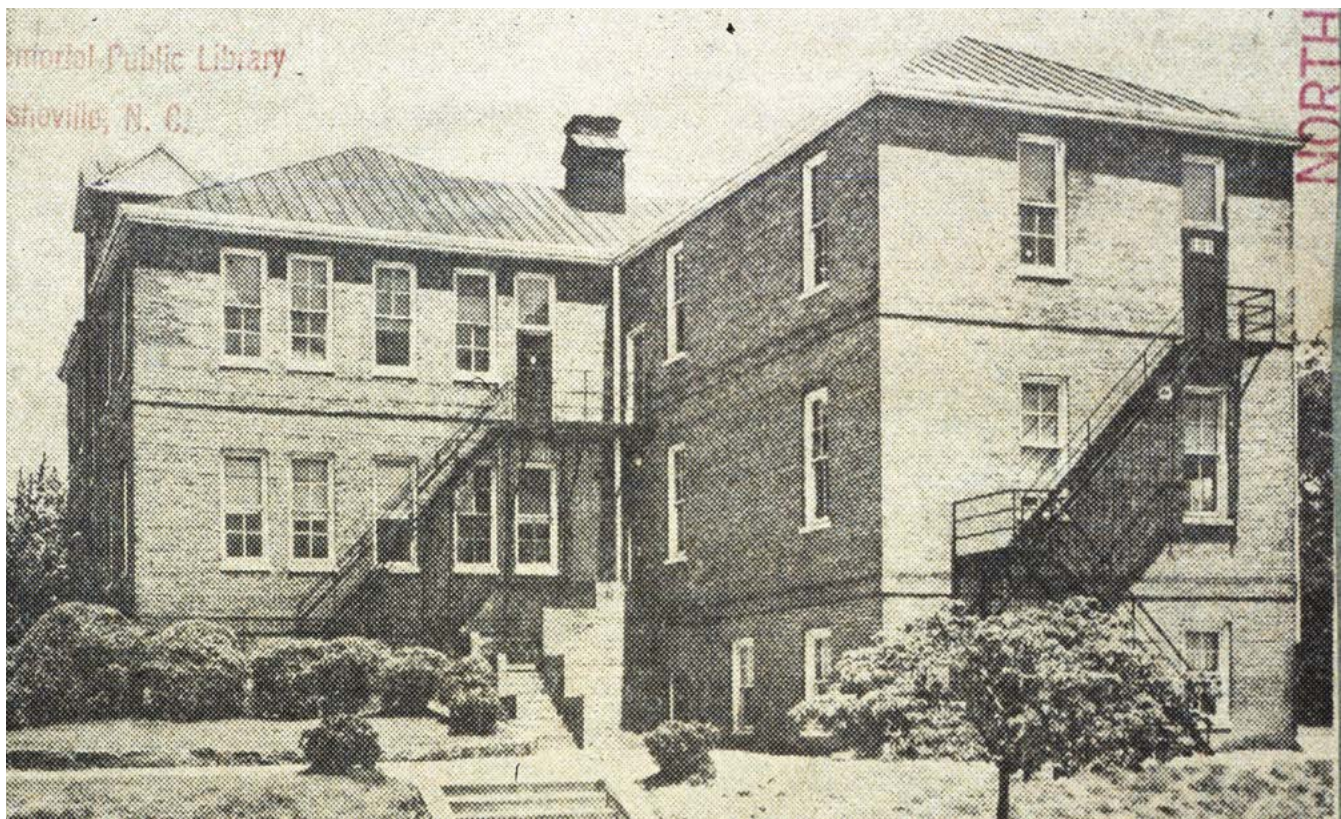
HISTORICAL MAP OF SOUTHSIDE



Historical Map of Southside from “Twilight of a Neighborhood” *Crossroads, A Publication of the NC Humanities Council*, Summer-Fall 2010. Map by Betsy Murray, Archivist, Pack Memorial Public Library, North Carolina Room. Locations are approximate. The red dots represent African American businesses.

HONOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

► **The former Bailey Street School**, located at 190 Asheland Avenue. This school served the African American community from 1938 to 1949 when it was closed. The 1952 Sanborn Insurance map shows vacant land where the school stood previously. Photograph courtesy of the North Carolina Room at Pack Memorial Library.



The African American Heritage Resource Survey, currently in progress, provides an overview of the history of Asheville's African-American neighborhoods and begins to document architectural resources (buildings) associated with African-American history in Asheville and Buncombe County. The survey identifies the Southside neighborhood, which overlaps with this Vision Plan study area, but does not list any individual resources in that overlapping area. The survey was a limited first phase and it is anticipated that future surveys will be able to identify more architectural resources including those that were lost over time.

There are a number of sites within the South Slope and Southside areas that should be recognized with interpretive signage, making this history more accessible to the public.

Marker Projects

Currently, there is a marker project being managed by Buncombe County that has identified locations for historical markers in several historically African-American neighborhoods. Southside, Burton Street, Shiloh, and East End are included in this project.

As part of a separate initiative, the City is also working to place historic markers along the Nasty Branch Greenway that speak to the history of the Southside neighborhood. Additionally, an African American Heritage Trail is funded as part of a Tourism Product Development Fund grant, with development of the trail and public engagement underway. Given the rich history of the commercial area around Southside Avenue and McDowell Avenue, there is the opportunity for current property owners, businesses, and the community to work together to ensure that this important heritage is not lost.

HONOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY



Photo showing a baseball game between the Asheville Royal Giants and Atlanta at Oates Park (Southside Avenue near Choctaw Street). The Royal Giants were Asheville's first Black baseball team. Southside AME Zion church (#198) left background. Copy print 1991 gift of Mrs. Lola Byers (daughter of E. W. Pearson, organizer of the team). Photograph courtesy of the Buncombe County Library Special Collections.

The South Slope Neighborhood Association recently completed a marker project that covers the history of the immediate Coxe Avenue / Motor Mile area, as well as much of the rich history that overlaps Coxe, Southside, Asheland, and McDowell Street. The topics range from the origins of the area when the ravine south of Hilliard was filled in with dirt from E.W. Grove's demolition of the original Battery Park Hotel, creating Coxe Avenue to the Motor Mile and African-American businesses that were so important to the area.

Who Tells the Story

With a painful history and a community's sense of loss, re-telling and presenting that history can be complicated and fraught with emotions. How it is decided what story is told, from whose perspective, and who is involved is just as important as the end product itself. While this plan is suggesting that there are stories to tell, places to mark, and community history to acknowledge, it is not the intention that the City or any particular institution be the sole implementor. Rather, working with and supporting the African American community's desires and priorities is appropriate.

ACTION STEPS

1. **Identify specific places** that should be designated with public markers.
2. **Coordinate with community leaders** who are working on markers throughout the City to make additional markers fit in with the surrounding areas.
3. **Bring property and business owners together to discuss the potential** for interpretive panels, signs, and/or plaques throughout the South Slope and Southside commercial areas to acknowledge past businesses, residents, and leaders from the past.
4. **Work with the Buncombe County Library and the African American Heritage Commission** to continue collecting oral histories related to the Southside and South Slope area.
5. **Explore the opportunity to work with Asheville City Schools and UNCA students** who are studying local history to carry out research and collect oral histories.



WEAVE ART THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

4

Public art, whether in public or private space, is a great tool to enhance placekeeping / placemaking and to create a welcoming environment for all people. There are multiple ways to do this – murals (on buildings and streets), sculptures, functional street furniture, and more. The South Slope can use arts and culture to continue to reflect its unique social, physical, and economic place in Asheville.



The look and feel of the artistic expressions in the traditional or historic downtown core (north of the South Slope) is rooted in the architecture from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the bronze markers for the Urban Trail tell the story of that same time period. However, the development history and resulting look and feel of much of the South Slope is different and still under development.

Warehouse and commercial / industrial buildings are serving as the palette on which entrepreneurs and local artists collaborate on the South Slope Mural Trail project. And while the African American Heritage Trail has not been designed yet, many of the stations will be located along the Southside and South Slope, and the stories it tells and the artists and materials used will be unique.



4

WEAVE ART THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT



WAKE, a sculpture by Mel Chin and produced with UNCA's STEAM Studio installed at Millard and Collier Avenues. The sculpture was previously installed in Times Square, New York City.

“**PLACEMAKING** inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public space as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.”

– Project for Public Spaces

While there are few, if any, pieces of art from the City's collection in South Slope, the private sector has used artists to develop murals and artful signage in a way that has contributed to the unique look and feel of the area. The South Slope Mural Trail, developed by the South Slope Neighborhood Association with the support of the Asheville Downtown Association Foundation and Explore Asheville, documents murals in the area and provides a self-guided tour, sharing the inspiration and history behind the art and artists.

The Tourism Development Authority's recent funding of the African American Heritage Trail provides momentum for the community's interest in creating an intentionally inclusive neighborhood – one that embraces and amplifies the perspectives of African-American and other traditionally underrepresented groups, businesses, and artists. This focus on artistic reflections of people of color, non-white ethnicities and cultures, and the LGBTQ+ community can make the area the welcoming place the community envisions. By engaging members of those communities to lead and develop these projects, the broader community will ensure that art in the district is authentically reflecting the South Slope's past and current character. Additionally, focusing on public art that is flexible, rotating, or temporary in nature can not only help define local character, but emphasize the South Slope's dynamism at the same time.



WEAVE ART THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Support emerging projects** like the African American Heritage Trail and the South Slope Mural Trail.
- 2. In advance of anticipated capital projects in the South Slope** (such as the Coxe Avenue project), engage the community and area arts professionals to discuss how the City's 1% for public art policy can be used to address community needs / promote goals for the area.
- 3. Identify locations for major art installations.** Reserve space in the public ROW for public art pieces (see Coxe Avenue and McCormick gateway initiatives).
- 4. The City and arts and culture partners should explore how to incent the creation or preservation of affordable artist studio space** through the development process – such as through the City's Land Use Incentive Grant (LUIG) community benefits process or a similar tool.
- 5. When the Arts and Culture Master Plan for Buncombe County** (currently being proposed by the Asheville Area Arts Council) is being developed, educate the project leadership team on the unique cultural position of South Slope and ensure that arts and culture stakeholders from the neighborhood have the opportunity to thoroughly engage in the initiative.
- 6. Encourage and incentivize developers to incorporate art into their building design and spaces,** with an emphasis on working with local artists. When developers add this type of amenity it can create connections to the community and its history. (See Case Study of 55 S. Market Street below).
- 7. Incorporate functional art** in the streetscape where appropriate.
- 8. Use arts and culture, including festivals,** as a way to connect the histories of downtown, Southside, and surrounding neighborhoods with the evolution of the South Slope.
 - **Encourage the public expression of arts and culture** whether on public or private property
 - **Support the continued presence of working artist studios** in the district.
 - **Plan for areas to be available for busking** or performances in streetscape projects.

CASE STUDY: 55 S. MARKET STREET



The condominium project at 55 S. Market had a blank wall in its design that through the development process required some type of public art to mitigate the solid wall. The developer began attending meetings of the local businesses and organizations, and came to understand the history of The Block, and the need for their project to connect to the community and its significance. Through a community-wide contest, 19 proposals were submitted and ultimately Cleaster Cotton, an artist with a studio in the Refinery on Coxe Avenue was selected. Her art piece is called "Going to Market" and has multiple meanings – reflecting both The Block as the economic center of the African-American community, but also the painful past of slave markets. There are many examples of local artists contributing on the interior of projects, but far fewer examples of local artists creating pieces (that are not murals) on public-facing façades. Photo courtesy of Cleaster Cotton.

5

DEVELOP CITY-OWNED PROPERTY FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING + JOB CREATION



In North Carolina, cities are severely limited in their ability to require the participation of the private sector to further community goals such as affordable housing and job creation. Instead, cities look to offer incentives to the private sector in order to help realize community goals.

When a municipality owns property it has more control over the future of that property and will often seek partnerships with the private sector. In the larger Southside area, the City of Asheville owns several pieces of land, some of which were analyzed as part of the high impact sites initiative associated with the affordable housing bond. These projects have the potential to affect change on the following sites:

- Matthews Ford site, 319 Biltmore Avenue
- South Charlotte Street properties (currently home to city government offices and services)
- Asheland Avenue site

Mathews Ford Site

Adjacent to the new apartments at Maplecrest, the former Lee Walker Heights, is a 5.4-acre property located at 319 Biltmore Avenue that the City purchased from Duke Energy. Previous analysis done for the City has shown that this site could be developed for up to 310 residential units, a parking structure, and commercial space.

Connectivity to Maplecrest is an important aspect of this project and will require thoughtful consideration of how to best connect residents at Maplecrest with the Mathews Ford site and Biltmore Avenue, creating a more cohesive community instead of an isolated affordable housing development on top of the hill.

The actual buildout for this site is unknown at this time. Consultants for the City created a potential site buildout (see renderings below) to estimate building costs, numbers of units, and potential affordability numbers. The model includes 12,000 square feet of commercial space. Ideally, this space will house services or programs that benefit the community. Childcare, non-profit office space, or other services are ideas that should be considered. Partnerships with local institutions and mission driven organizations could help make these a reality.



► **Pictured Renderings:** Potential Site Design and Massing for 319 Biltmore Avenue, former Mathews Ford Dealership. Images provided by Lord Aeck Sargent.

DEVELOP CITY-OWNED PROPERTY FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING + JOB CREATION

POTENTIAL SITE DESIGN OF SOUTH CHARLOTTE STREET



Potential Site Design for South Charlotte Street. Image provided by Lord Aeck Sargent.

South Charlotte Street Properties

As part of the federal urban renewal program, in the 1960s / 1970s the City of Asheville and Asheville Housing Authority took over a large area of land east of Biltmore Avenue in the East End community. Many homes were demolished and a new, wider roadway, South Charlotte Street, was constructed to replace Valley Street. As a part of this redevelopment, residential homes on the west side gave way to the eventual construction of a large garage for city public works trucks, a new city office building (currently home to the city departments of Public Works and Development Services) and a parking lot for employees and visitors.

The City is investigating the redevelopment of the garage facility, the fleet building, and the ABC store as part of the high impact sites initiative in conjunction with the affordable housing bond. This site spans from south of Beaumont Street to Biltmore Avenue and totals 7.5 acres. The City worked with a consultant to evaluate the feasibility to develop this area and to prepare conceptual massing renderings but further community input is needed at this time to establish what type of redevelopment should happen here in a way that addresses community needs and in alignment with both city and community goals for repurposing Urban Renewal properties currently owned by the City.

The South Charlotte Street rendering, above and on page 74, depicts 400-500 units of housing and some

areas of commercial space. Other community goals that could be accommodated include childcare, small business spaces, and green space. This vision has the intention to re-knit the East End back into downtown and will require changes be made to the actual street making it friendly to the community instead of a wide divider that separates the East End / Valley Street community from The Block and the rest of downtown.

There are several large barriers to realizing this vision. Relocating city services to another site would require land acquisition and construction of new facilities. The City is currently undergoing a study to assess the feasibility of moving these services to a unified, larger campus.

Since the time that this model was developed, the City of Asheville passed a resolution in the summer of 2020 to make reparations to the Black community for past wrongs including urban renewal. The removal of Valley Street and construction of South Charlotte Street were a part of the East End / Valley Street Redevelopment Project. Though the Public Works building and the garage were built later, this land on South Charlotte Street is associated with urban renewal in the community's mind.

Exact policies around city-owned land in these areas have not been determined yet; however, future policies are likely forthcoming as part of the City's process to deliver community reparations for Black Asheville.

DEVELOP CITY-OWNED PROPERTY FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING + JOB CREATION

ASHELAND AVENUE CONCEPT



Asheland Avenue

The City owns an approximately one-acre site on the west side of Asheland Avenue. The parcel is shallow in depth, at only 100 feet and is 475 feet long. The property slopes down toward the adjacent residential properties to the west. This parcel is a remnant of the 1970s East Riverside urban renewal program and has long been considered a site for potential affordable housing. Development on this parcel will need to be sensitive to the South French Broad / Southside neighborhood immediately behind it on Blanton Street. Currently, there is a deed restriction on the property which City Council would have to ask HUD to remove.

This concept shows two buildings, each with a footprint under 9,000 square feet and the ability to have 32 - 50 residential units, depending on the height of the buildings, which could be two or three stories tall (as measured from Asheland Avenue). The wide right-of-way (ROW) means that there is ample space for street trees along the front.

The Asheland Avenue concept was developed using the Urban Residential Zoning District. Future development should include additional community engagement to ensure it is context-sensitive to the adjacent neighborhood. Through the City's policy on properties that came from Urban Renewal, the future use and programming will be informed by the Reparations process and community input, with the final decision resting with City Council.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING & BUILDING COMMUNITY

Developing affordable housing is an important goal for our city. At the same time, the city has a goal of creating community, not just housing units. One successful approach is building mixed income communities where a portion of the housing is affordable and also equipped with opportunities for residents to build wealth, start businesses or hold jobs. Affordable housing is very expensive to produce, and generally a developer will need additional funding to provide 20% or more affordable units.



ENACT EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

6

In real estate, housing, and economic development, it is often assumed the market will provide what is needed, and that this is inevitable and is “natural.” When the market is left to its own devices, however, the results will only serve a portion of the community, and those who are low-income are almost always negatively affected as the investment will raise property values, rents, and prices. There are positive benefits to this of course – an improved tax base will provide more funds for city services and some business owners will thrive. But, the market also thrives on leaving people out, without adequate jobs, housing, and access to services.

In 2015, the City of Asheville was awarded a Technical Assistance Grant from the EPA to look at opportunities for equitable development in the East of the Riverway area. This area included the Hillcrest, Southside, South French Broad, and South Slope neighborhoods. The result of the assistance was a report that made recommendations for furthering equitable development in Asheville. Today, many of the same recommendations still apply and could be opportunities in the South Slope to encourage the future growth to benefit the community more widely, while still achieving a vibrant place.



Southside Community Garden at the Arthur R. Edington Education & Career Center.

“

EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT IS...

“an approach for meeting the needs of underserved communities through policies and programs that reduce disparities while fostering places that are healthy and vibrant. It is increasingly considered an effective placed-based action for creating strong and livable communities.”

– U.S. EPA website

”

ENACT EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

North Carolina gives limited powers to its cities, and tends to favor property rights. Cities in North Carolina do not have access to the same tools that are used in many larger cities to prevent or reduce displacement of lower income residents or businesses. These tools include rent control, inclusionary zoning, or Community Benefits Agreements. Consequently, communities in North Carolina must become more creative in developing strategies to achieve these goals.

The Asheville Buncombe Community Land Trust, a recently established non-profit organization, is working towards providing permanent affordable housing which, when implemented on a larger scale, can result in stabilizing neighborhoods. There are also opportunities for long term ownership of buildings by either non-profits or mission driven organizations that can help stabilize rents for residents and tenants. The Public Service Building on Wall Street in downtown is a great example of this. Self-Help, a non-profit organization, owns and manages the building and provides stable office space to non-profit organizations and small local businesses.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Develop mixed-use projects** that include both affordable residential and commercial spaces.
2. **Expand existing affordable housing** efforts including the Community Land Trust.
3. **Engage anchor institutions** and local businesses in voluntary buy, train, and hire programs.
4. **Support neighborhood preservation** and capacity building efforts.
5. **Identify opportunities for incorporating equitable development goals** into broader City policies and other initiatives.
6. **Look for opportunities to build relationships, partnerships and then projects** between the South Slope Neighborhood Association, Southside Rising, East End / Valley Street Neighborhood, and the Oakhurst Neighborhood.
7. **Develop anti-displacement policies** and strategies to counter the ever-increasing pressure on residents and businesses as the South Slope develops.

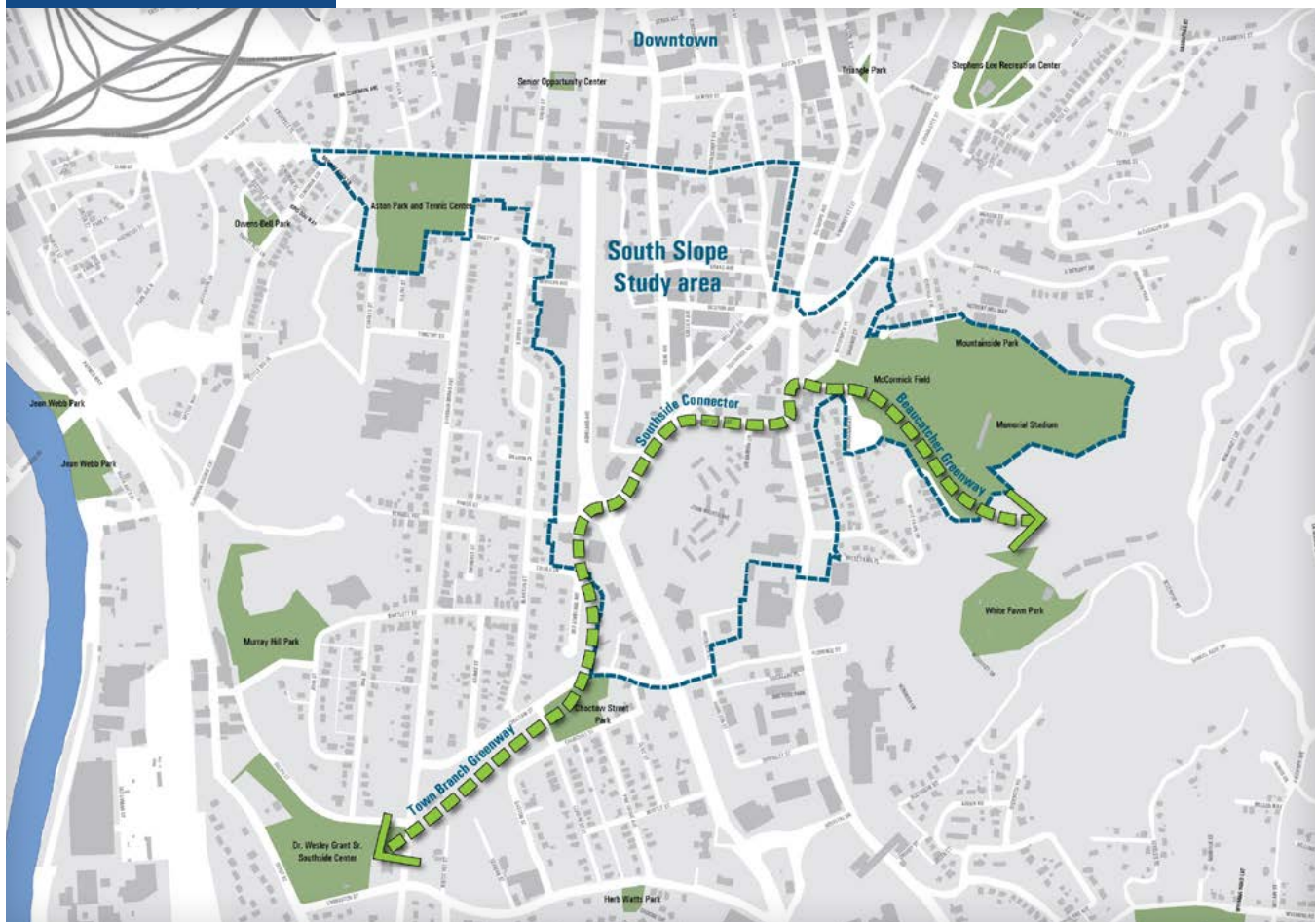


CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS VIA THE SOUTHSIDE GREENWAY CONNECTOR

7

Greenway connectors are on-road bicycle and pedestrian segments that bridge the gaps between greenways. The City of Asheville is designing connectors on each side of the future Nasty Branch Greenway in the Southside community: one on Depot Street that will connect it through the River Arts District (RAD) to the French Broad River Greenway and the future Bacoate Branch Greenway, and the other through the South Slope to Beaucatcher Greenway at Memorial Stadium.

GREENWAY CONNECTOR MAP



7 CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS VIA THE SOUTHSIDE GREENWAY CONNECTOR

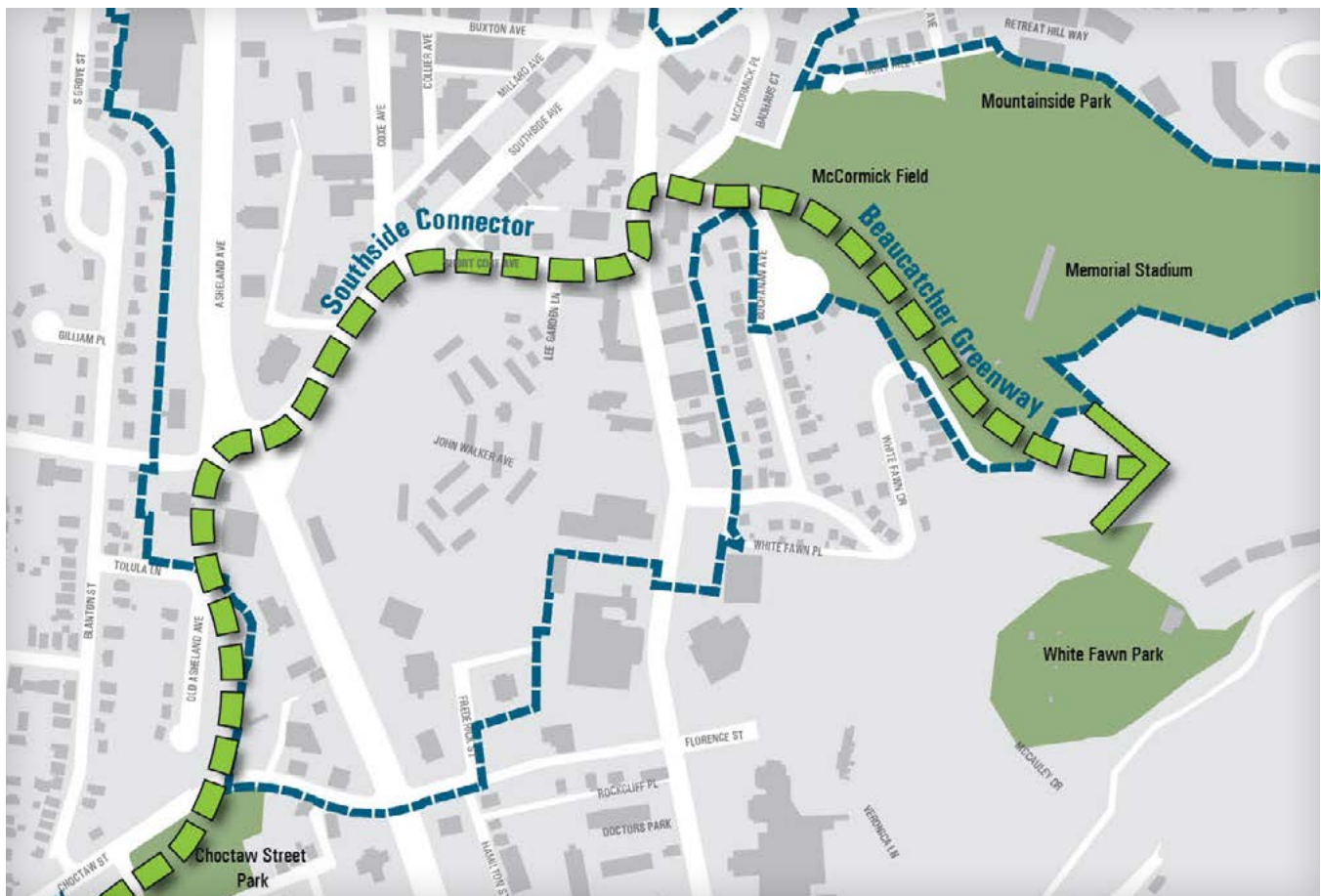
Known as the “Southside Connector,” this on-road segment begins at the greenway trailhead located on Phifer Street, just west of Keystone Labs on McDowell Street. It will have an on-street, two-way facility that includes the elimination of an extra travel lane referred to as a “road diet” on Southside Avenue; intersection crossing enhancements such as countdown heads, high-visibility crosswalks, and ADA-accessible curb ramps at the Southside / McDowell and Short Coxe / Biltmore intersections.

Wayfinding

Wayfinding is one of the more important functions of greenway connectors. Successful wayfinding provides indications to travelers that they are headed in the right direction to arrive at the next greenway trailhead. Wayfinding signs will be placed in key intersections to provide additional help for pedestrians. In the future, the Greenway Connectors will be a good opportunity to string various Asheville African American Heritage projects together with a designed wayfinding system between the East End and the Southside as part of the African American History Trail.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE PROJECT

- **Keep the facility** in the existing right-of-way;
- **Minimize reconstruction**, use excess pavement or space wherever possible;
- **Create a facility that is intuitive** to the user;
- **Preserve on-street parking** as much as possible;
- **Minimize impacts** to existing businesses;
- **Develop a design that is in harmony** with the surrounding neighborhood’s character.

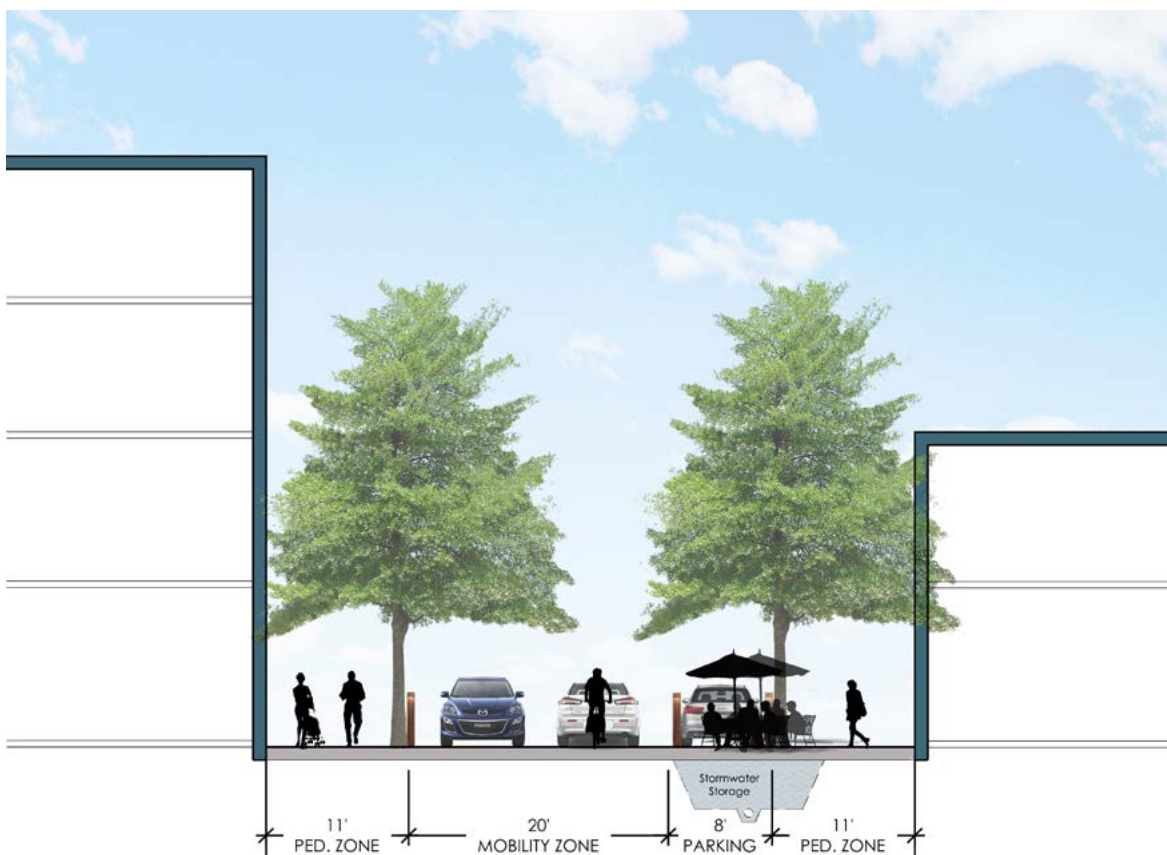


CONVERT BANKS + BUXTON TO SHARED STREETS

8

Over the last 10 years, Banks and Buxton Avenues have been at the heart of the renewal of the South Slope district. Dirty Jacks was one of the first new businesses to open in an area that many local residents had previously avoided except for the auto service and dry cleaning establishments. These streets, largely characterized by one and two story warehouse buildings, have become home to numerous breweries, manufacturing, food, and entertainment establishments. Prioritizing the pedestrian experience on these streets would further enhance the public realm and the intimate character that already exists.

BANKS + BUXTON AVENUE CONCEPT

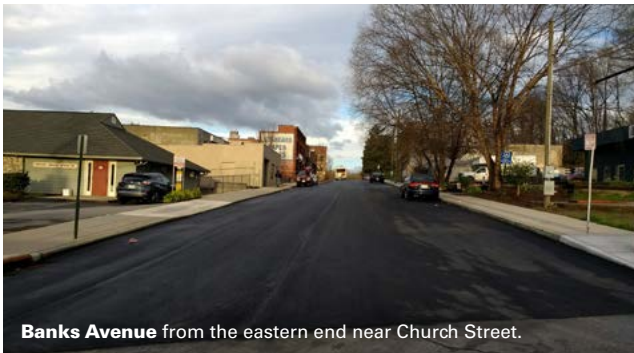


CONVERT BANKS + BUXTON TO SHARED STREETS

Through the public participation process, the idea emerged to convert Banks and Buxton to shared streets where there is a high quality pedestrian experience.

A full conversion of these two streets would require a large capital investment, and timing will depend on resources and partnerships.

In the interim, incremental improvements could be made with planters and parklets if business owners wanted to pursue these options.



Banks Avenue from the eastern end near Church Street.



Sidewalk conditions on Buxton Avenue.



Existing conditions at Buxton and Coxe.

WHAT ARE SHARED STREETS?

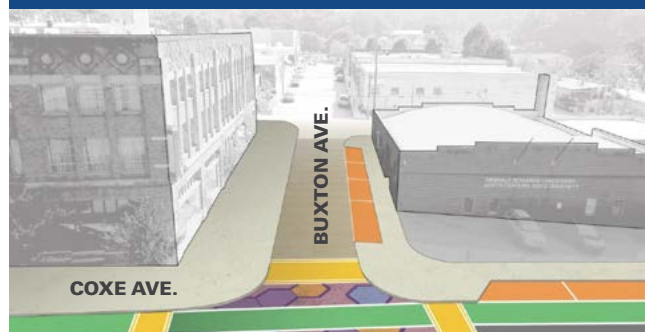


Shared streets are streets where cars become the least comfortable mode of transportation.

Pedestrians are given the priority. The terms “shared space” and “woonerf” (originally used in the Netherlands and Flanders, Belgium) are also used to describe similar street designs. Asheville’s own Wall Street is held up nationwide as an example for this type of street. Recommended design elements for a successful shared street include:

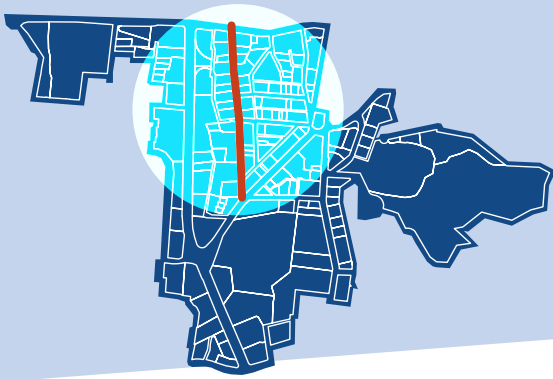
- **Curb-less streets** where the distinction between cars and pedestrians is minimized.
- **Narrowing** the travel lane.
- **Changes in pavement texture** to make car drivers less comfortable driving at higher speeds.
- **Street furniture** such as bollards, benches, or lights can be used to provide a pedestrian only zone.

POTENTIAL REDESIGN OF BUXTON INTO A SHARED STREET



Potential future vision, rendering by McMillian Pazden Smith Architecture.

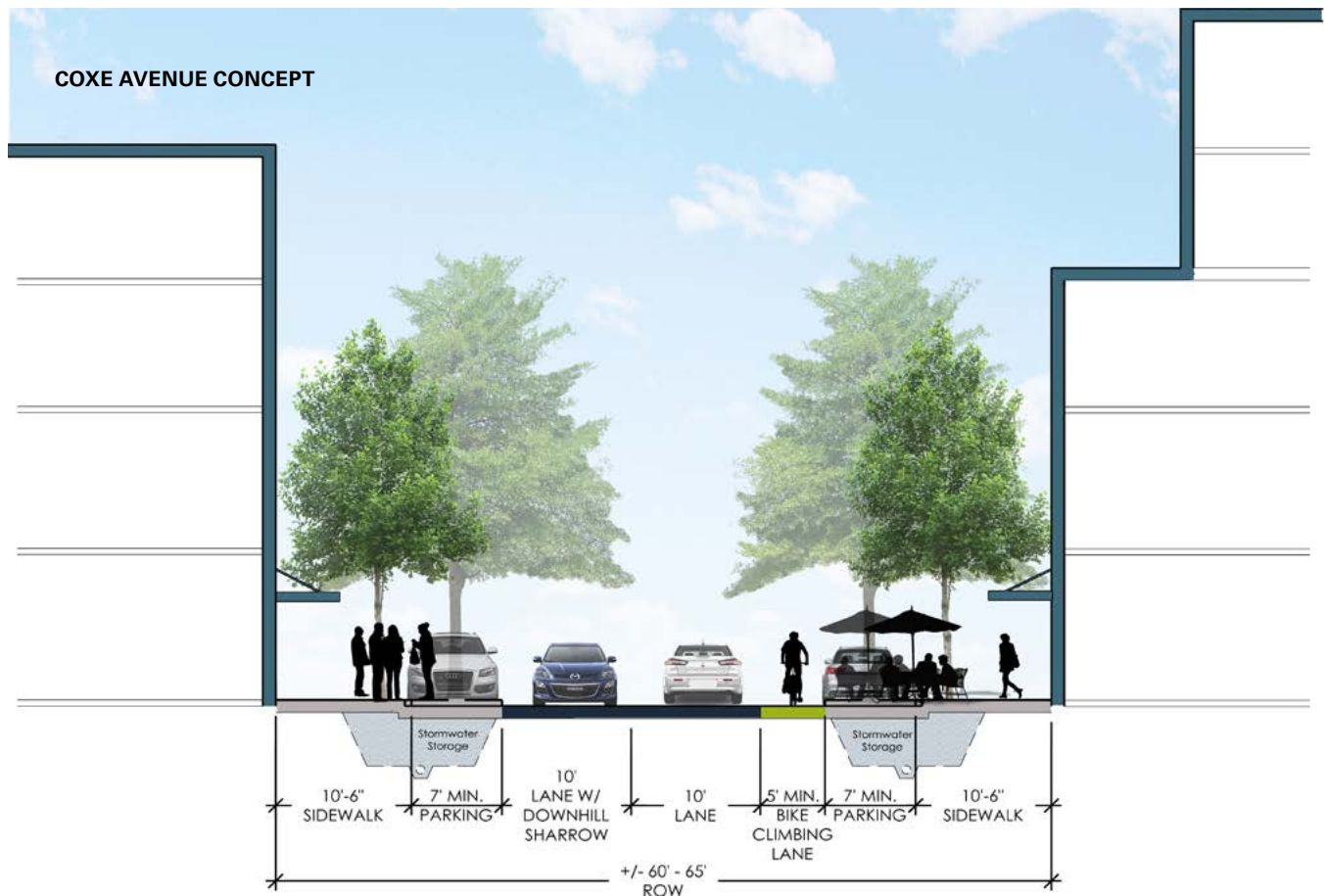
MAKE COXE AVENUE A GREEN MAIN STREET



Coxe Avenue was developed as Asheville’s original “Auto Mile”. After the suburbanization of auto showrooms, Coxe Avenue businesses continued to be auto-oriented, but other service businesses were added over the years. In the early 2000s several new office buildings were built to accommodate professional offices.

Today, Coxe serves as the backbone of the South Slope and connects the core of downtown to the Southside community. Coxe Avenue has the potential to serve as the “Main Street” for the South Slope, and can potentially accommodate larger buildings, parking structures, and numerous residences and businesses. To set the stage for this growth, the public realm should be inviting and make the most of the existing Right of Way (ROW).

Through the planning process, a suggested vision for Coxe Avenue evolved where it could serve as a green street with plantings in the sidewalk to assist with stormwater run-off. As noted in other parts of the plan, this area is draining a large area of the Central Business District.



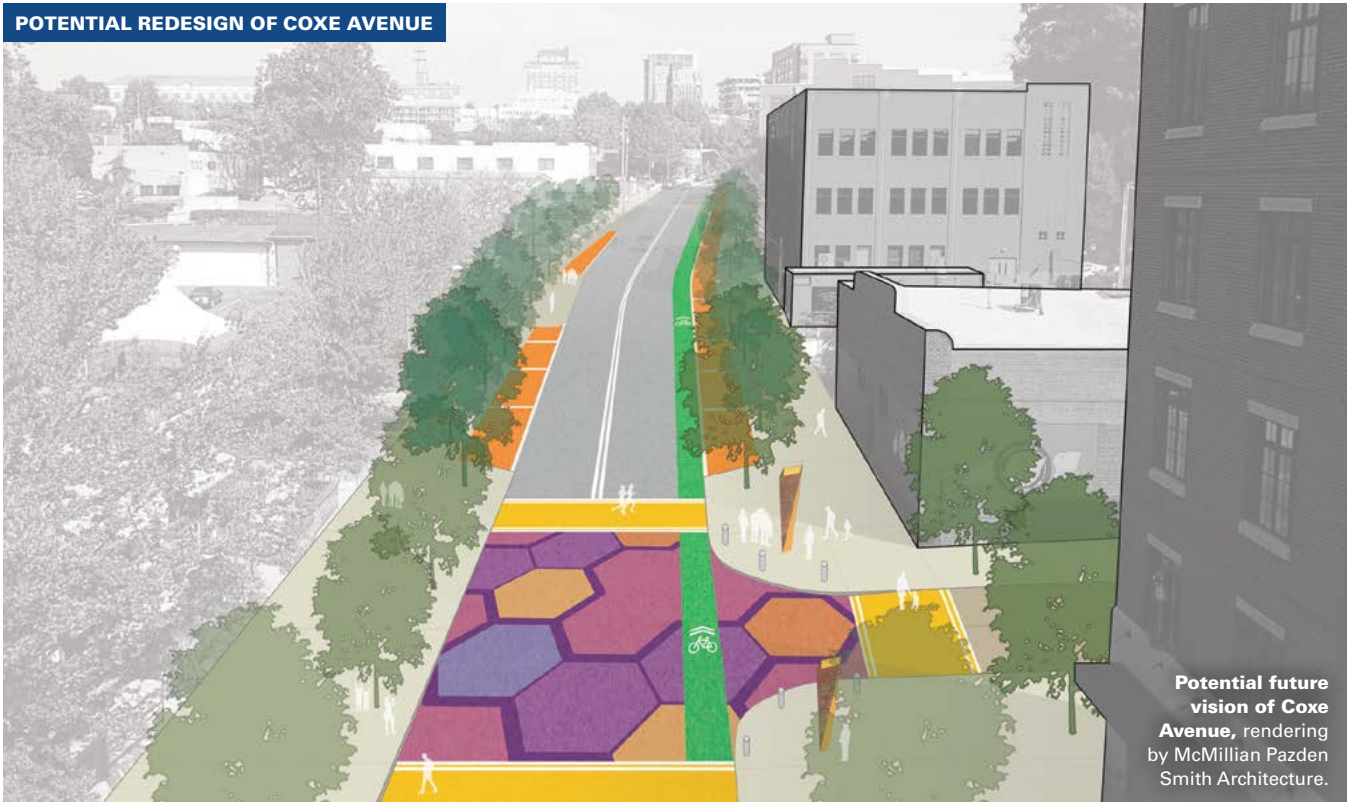
9

MAKE COXE AVENUE A GREEN MAIN STREET



Existing conditions at Coxe Avenue.

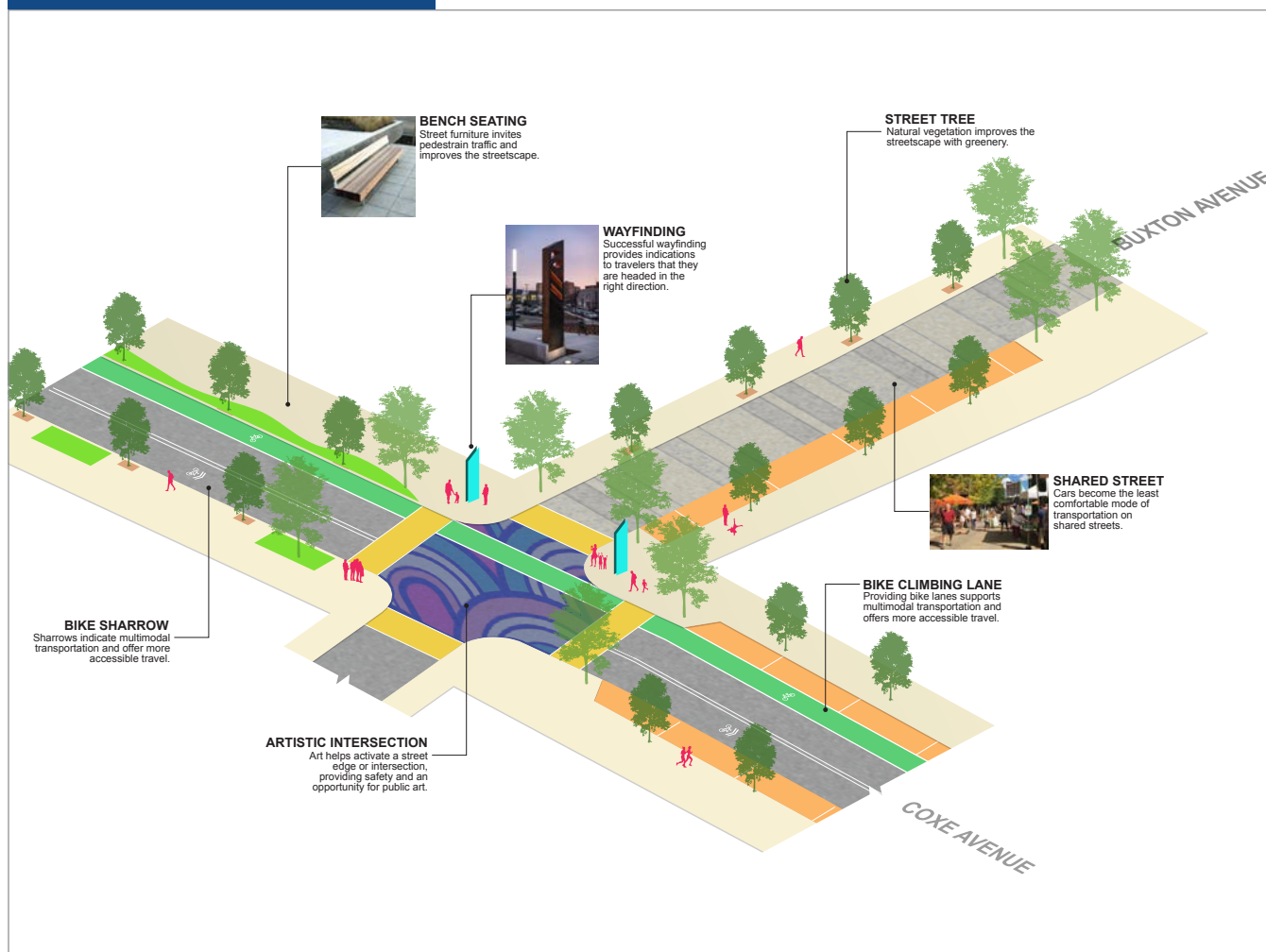
POTENTIAL REDESIGN OF COXE AVENUE



Potential future vision of Coxe Avenue, rendering by McMillian Pazden Smith Architecture.

MAKE COXE AVENUE A GREEN MAIN STREET

COXE / BUXTON INTERSECTION CONCEPT



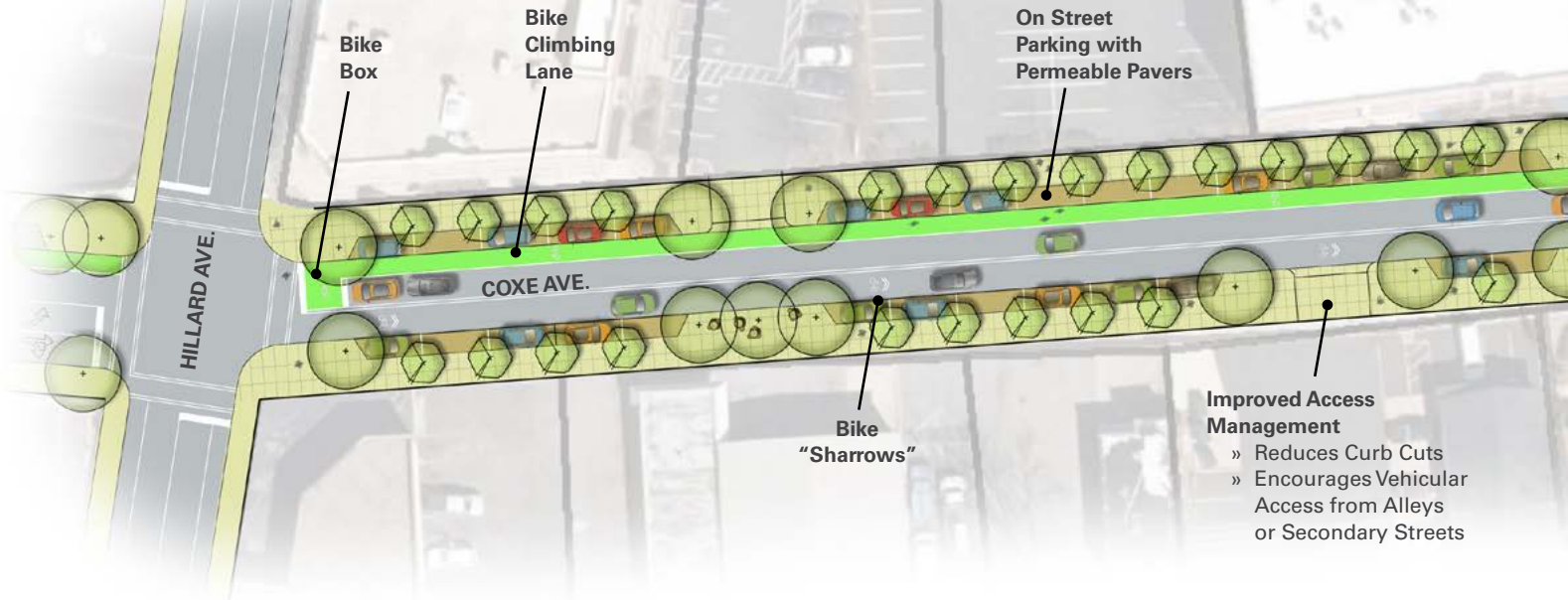
VISION HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Activate the street edge for pedestrians** through larger sidewalks, congregation spaces, and creating opportunities for public art and streetscape elements.
- 2. Increase safety for all modes of transportation** by slowing vehicles, managing vehicle curb cuts, and improving bike and transit facilities.
- 3. Explore opportunities to make Coxe a demonstration "Green Street"** for Asheville through utilizing Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater devices, street trees, and native vegetation.
- 4. Encourage overhead utilities** to be buried where present.
- 5. Consider the use of solar street lights** with no overhead lines.
- 6. Treat the block between Banks and Buxton** with additional streetscape details (i.e. artistic intersections, unique sidewalk patterns) to highlight it as a special area.
- 7. Balance the need for parking** with improved pedestrian facilities.
- 8. Explore removing turn lanes** south of Hilliard.

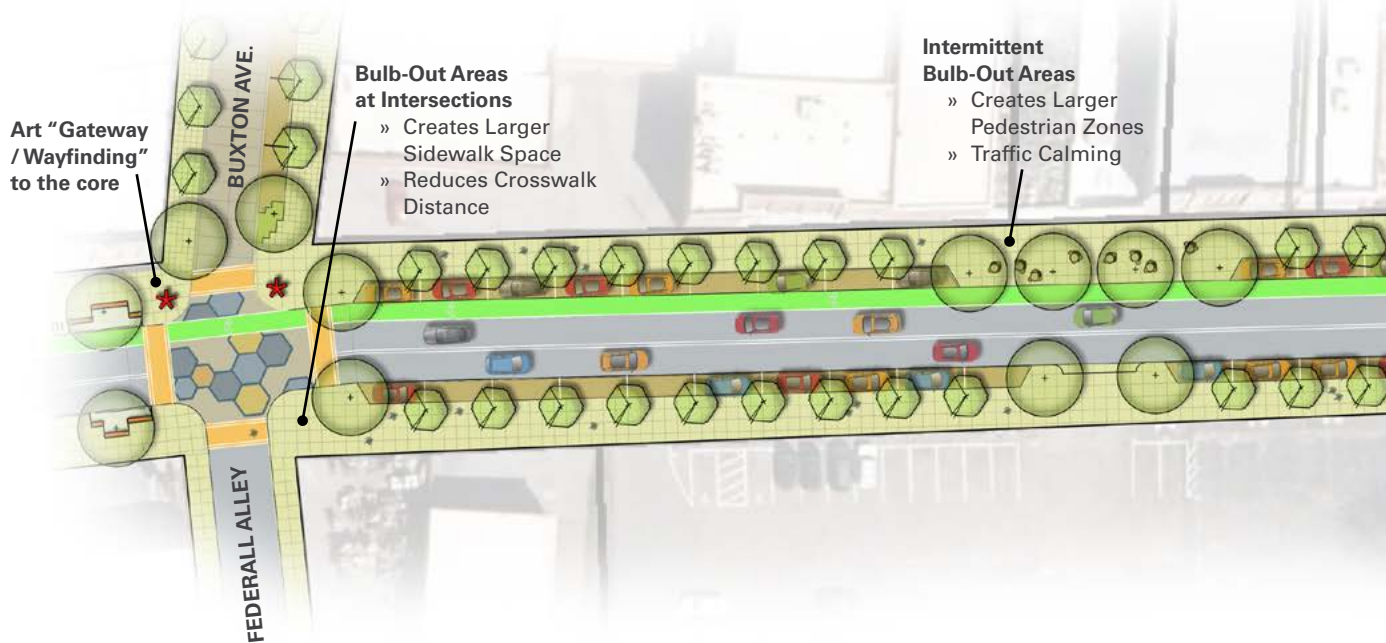
MAKE COXE AVENUE A GREEN MAIN STREET

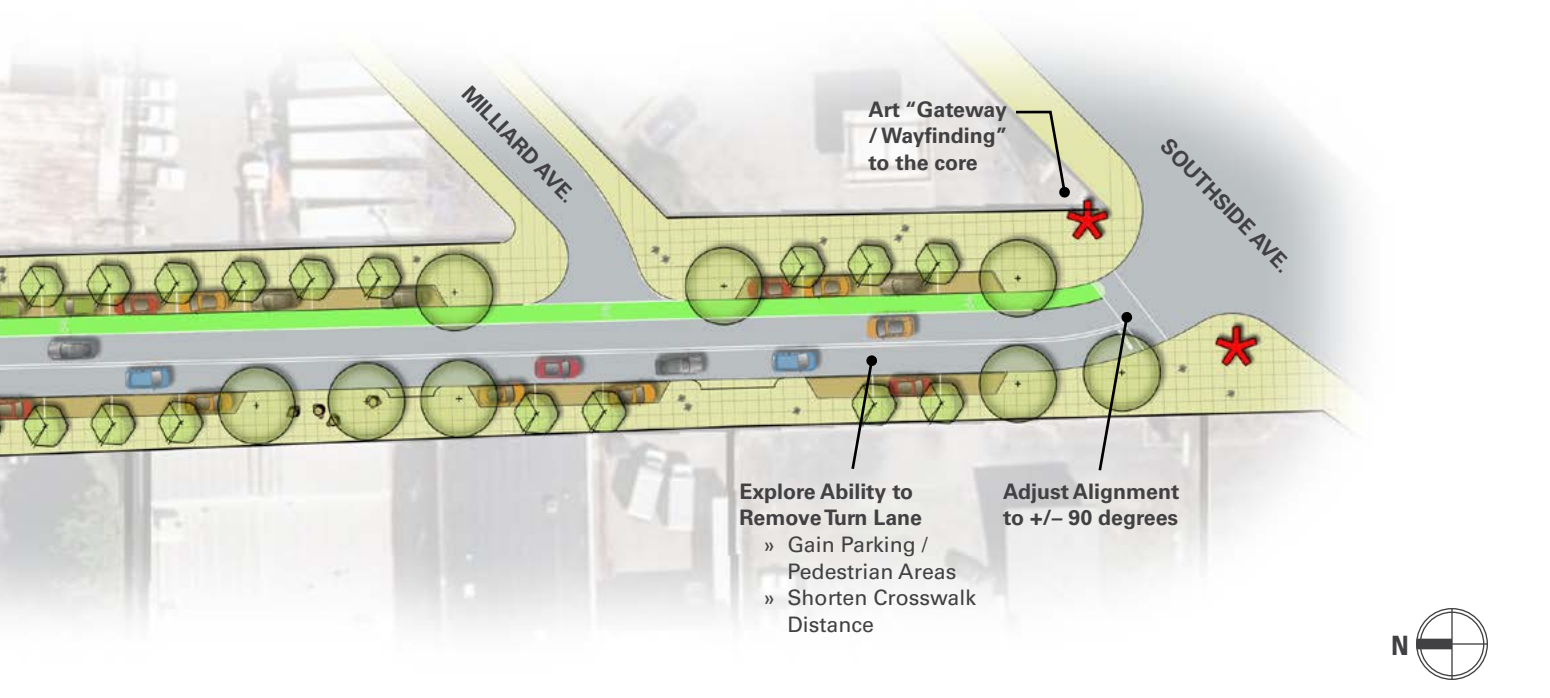
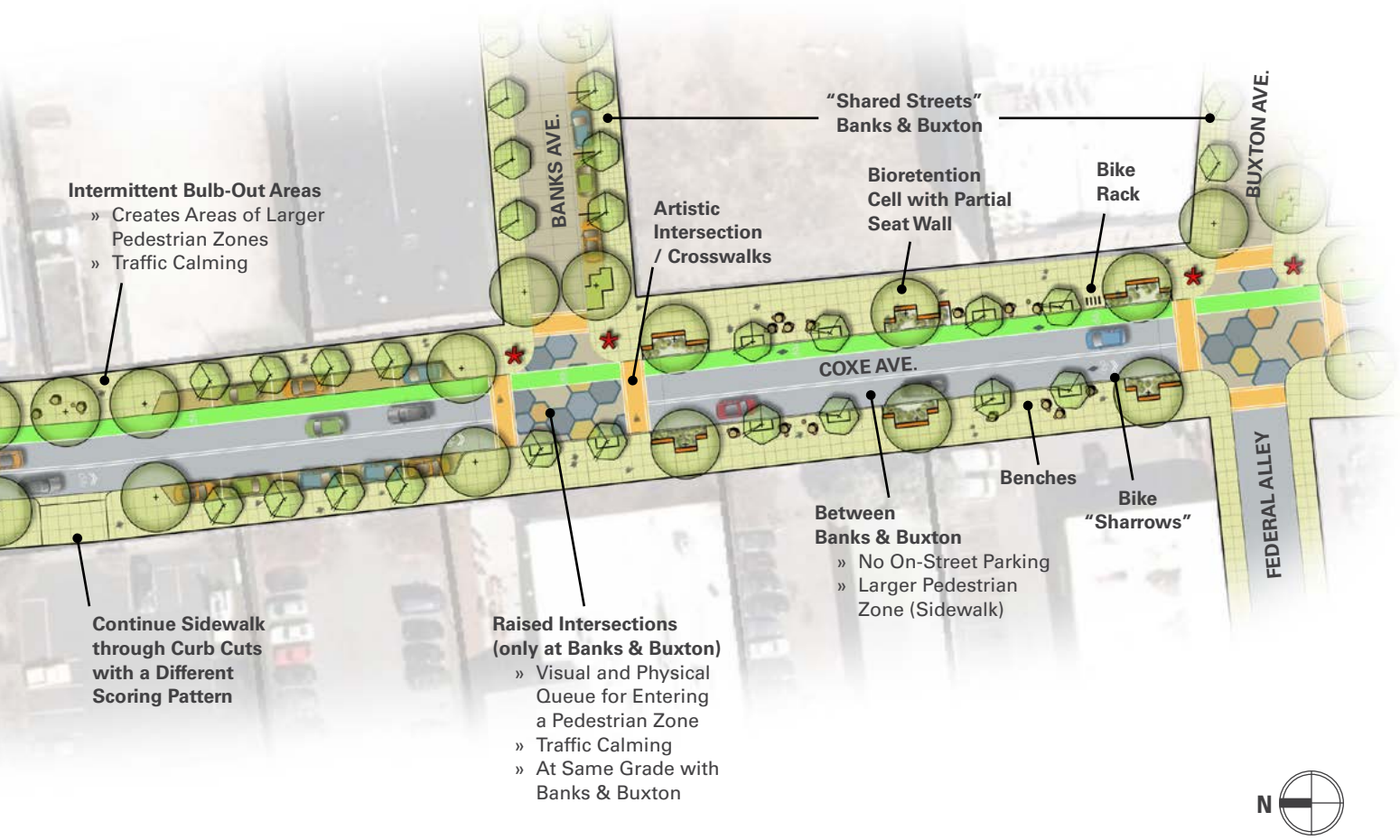
COXE AVENUE CONCEPT / SITE PLAN

HILLARD AVENUE TO
BUXTON AVENUE



BUXTON AVENUE TO
SOUTHSIDE AVENUE





10 DEVELOP SUCCESSFUL INCENTIVES FOR SUSTAINABILITY



The City of Asheville has a long standing commitment to sustainability. In 2008, the Office of Sustainability was created to integrate sustainable design, technology, and practice into municipal operations, infrastructure, and services. There are numerous resources as a result of this work: the Sustainability Management Plan, the Climate Resilience Assessment, and multiple city policies and initiatives. Other local organizations have also contributed to this effort, most recently, the Central Asheville Watershed Restoration Plan, developed by RiverLink, directly addresses water quality and stormwater runoff management in an area that includes the South Slope.

Making our community more sustainable will include multiple strategies and technologies. Solar power, green infrastructure, geothermal energy, wind power, green roofs, waste reduction, and energy efficiency and conservation are key pieces of the sustainability puzzle. Due to its central location within the City, the South Slope is well positioned to benefit from transportation related energy efficiencies, but could also greatly benefit from building related energy reduction and efforts to manage both the quality and quantity of stormwater.



Momentum Gallery with 34 kW Solar Panel System.



Asheville Rides Transit Center on Coxe Avenue with solar panels.

Over the past two decades, some developments have included green roofs and businesses have often added solar panels for energy production. But new commercial or mixed-use buildings that are green built or certified LEED (or other certifications) are a rarity in the area and elsewhere in Asheville. In private development, a project must be profitable, or it won't get built. As the South Slope continues to grow, developers will likely only incorporate green building and other sustainable practices if it makes financial sense. Providing incentives could help shift this trend towards more sustainable building practices, retrofits, and infrastructure construction.

DEVELOP SUCCESSFUL INCENTIVES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

10



Annie's Naturally Bakery with six Solar Hot Water Collectors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Expand city development fee rebates and incentives** offered for green building and energy reduction projects to multifamily and commercial buildings.
2. **Create incentives for businesses, lessors, property owners, and renters** to improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings.
3. **Advocate for funding options** for developers including green banks, utility on-bill tariffs and PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) legislation in North Carolina.
4. **Work with utility providers to increase funding** available for energy reduction incentives and solar power rebates.
5. **Pursue grant funding for installation and maintenance** of green infrastructure, using the Central Asheville Watershed plan as a guide.
6. **Work to educate the development community about the benefits of green infrastructure,** including using alternative paving materials that reduce stormwater runoff and/or chemical runoff into the watershed.

APPENDIX



Additional Maps	APPENDIX A
Online survey	APPENDIX B
Market Study	APPENDIX C
Plan on a Page	APPENDIX D
Resources + Further Reading	APPENDIX E

