

Franklinton

Typology: Rural Downtown



Looking South on Mason Street

VISION

Support the rebirth of downtown Franklinton and improve multimodal access to the central business & entertainment district and surrounding areas.



MARKET READINESS

5 = Strongest; 1 = Weakest

Current Market Strength



Residential



Office



Retail



Hotel

Franklinton has been experiencing some downtown reinvestment and residential growth, especially during the pandemic, attracting residents who appreciate the community's small-town charm and abundance of land. Much of this residential growth has been single-family housing, although market projections indicate demand for multifamily housing in a TOD scenario that could result in a significant (greater than 50%) increase in the total study area population.

Existing Development Demand Projection (20 years)



550 units
(No-Build = 225 units)

Residential



50,000 sq. ft.
(No-Build = 0 sq. ft.)

Office



25,000 sq. ft.
(No-Build = 15,000 sq. ft.)

Retail



0 rooms
(No-Build = 0 rooms)

Hotel

The development demand projections are estimates of the development activity that may occur by 2042 if a passenger rail station is built in this study area. The demand projections are based on historic development patterns, pipeline development projects, and a qualitative assessment of the future real estate market dynamics for each study area. The projections are not calibrated to the actual development capacity of the study area as determined by current land availability, current local zoning regulations, etc.

TOD Vision Plan

Legend

-  Retail/commercial or office building
-  High-density office/commercial mixed-use building
-  Low-density multi-family residential building
-  Residential-based mixed-use building
-  Townhomes
-  Single-family residential
-  Existing building
-  Trail/greenway
-  Parks/open space

Franklinton High School

Franklinton Middle School

Lofts at Sterling Mill

The Tanyard Street Extension is an identified project in the 2050 MTP (Project #FRNK26) that will provide a new rail crossing that provides additional access to downtown from neighborhoods east of the railroad tracks. This project has not been evaluated by the FEIS.

The Novozymes Trail is a key part of the larger trail network in Franklin County.

The proposed pedestrian and bicycle tunnel is a key link between downtown and activities on the east side of the railroad tracks including parking opportunities, trails, and neighborhoods.

A new roundabout at this intersection will be a community gateway and help slow vehicular traffic as it approaches downtown while providing more and safer opportunities for pedestrian and bicycles to use and cross the street

Medium density transit supportive residential uses (e.g., townhomes) can provide transition to established single family neighborhood

BIG IDEA: Create new community open space by converting Front Street to a festival street. This festival street could be closed to through traffic for special events and connect the new green space in the triangular block between Front Street and Green Street and the station area.

BIG IDEA: Support infill development and adaptive reuse of existing buildings to expand the downtown footprint.

BIG IDEA: Maintaining pedestrian and bicycle connections across the railroad tracks is critical to support both downtown activity and station access.

BIG IDEA: Create a community park as a focal point in the south side of downtown and where a key pedestrian and bicycling rail crossing can be incorporated.

* This plan illustrates one potential development scenario that demonstrates principles of transit-oriented development. This concept does not demonstrate planned or programmed land development or infrastructure projects, unless otherwise indicated.





















Built Form & Development Recommendations - Franklinton

The below table summarizes the key elements of the built form that are best practices applicable to this typology. The table summarizes which of these elements are already in place within the current regulatory tools and zoning, what is not in place and which elements are in progress. For applicable elements, a policy recommendation or action item is recommended.

 Already in Place

 In Progress

 Not in Place

Built Form Needs	Status	Policy Recommendation/Action Item
Building & Architectural Character		
Protect and enhance Franklinton's small-town visual character by ensuring that building siting, massing, and architectural elements are consistent with and contextually sensitive to Downtown Franklinton architecture and historic character, specifically along N. Main Street.		Update Comprehensive Plan to reflect this guidance
Orient buildings close to and fronting streets (specifically, along N. Main Street), primary intersections (of N. Main Street with Vine Street, Mason Street and Green Street), and open spaces including the new Downtown Park along the railroad right-of-way, proposed roundabout and pedestrian plaza areas. The ground-floor design of buildings should engage the street with transparent façades (fenestration) and active uses, similar to recent façade improvements of the buildings on the eastern side of N. Main Street between Vine Street and Mason Street.		Amend UDO to reflect this guidance
Where appropriate, encourage building design that is complementary to, or takes design cues from, existing historic or culturally-significant architectural features, including the scale and form of historical development patterns and the prevailing architectural styles of the downtown area buildings along N. Main Street (e.g., façade treatments, materials, roof and window treatments, etc.).		Update Comprehensive Plan to reflect this guidance
Discourage large-scale, auto-oriented commercial uses and strip center development to protect the small-town character.		Amend UDO to reflect this guidance
Establish consistent building frontages along N. Main Street, Front Street closest to the mobility hub by minimizing the space between buildings.		Amend Downtown Commercial (C-2D) District to reflect this guidance. Amend UDO requirements for C-2D District for maximum setbacks for front and side yards in lieu of minimums.
Minimize setbacks along primary streets, specifically along N. Main Street and Front Street, while still allowing for wide sidewalks and expansive streetscape elements. Additional setbacks should be considered for elements that activate the public realm, including areas along N. Main Street and pedestrian-priority areas along Front Street for seating and outdoor dining.		Amend Downtown Commercial (C-2D) District to reflect this guidance.
Height, Massing & Development Transitions		
Encourage building heights of up to 2 stories specifically around transit station along N. Main Street to complement the existing height and intensity of buildings in the downtown area. Consider heights of up to 3 stories on a case-by-case basis around transit station.		Follow UDO guidance
Provide transitions in height and massing to existing residential neighborhoods, such that buildings "step down" in height and scale in the vicinity of smaller-scale residential neighborhoods.		Amend the UDO to reflect this guidance around the transit station area (ex. Sec. 156.3F)
Break up the horizontal and vertical massing of buildings through approaches such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • variations in façade elements, modulation of rooflines; • dividing single building mass/façade into multiple buildings to create a diversity of building façades (such as façade treatments of "downtown" buildings along N. Main Street between Vine Street and Mason Street), especially on long blocks; • variations in building form and massing, such as step-backs and terracing within upper floors. 		Amend UDO to reflect this guidance
Encourage the use of trees, vegetation, and green spaces as visual buffers and transitions between different land uses.		Follow UDO guidance
Infill Development and Adaptive Reuse		
Promote and celebrate Franklinton's history by encouraging the preservation and/or adaptive reuse of historic structures in the downtown, specifically along Main Street and Front Street.		Update Comprehensive Plan to reflect this guidance
Expand the downtown footprint to the north and south along Main Street as well as along Front/Water Street to allow for low- to medium-density infill commercial/mixed-use and residential uses.		Update Comprehensive Plan to reflect this guidance
Create new community open space by converting Front Street to a festival street that will allow for public gathering activities and serve as a community amenity. Add special paving to distinguish the area from adjacent streets and sidewalk areas.		Update Comprehensive Plan to reflect this guidance
Extend and connect the street network as new development occurs.		Follow UDO guidance
Incorporate green spaces (e.g., publicly accessible plaza areas, courtyards and other small green spaces) as part of new development.		Follow UDO guidance
At the downtown mobility hub, create adequate spaces for public gathering, pedestrian-friendly amenities, bicycle parking, bus stops, taxi amenities and related mobility related improvements. Add special paving within the mobility hub to help differentiate from adjacent sidewalk and roadway spaces.		Update Comprehensive Plan to reflect this guidance
Encourage affordable housing options and a mix of housing types, including senior housing.		Amend the UDO to reflect this guidance around the transit station area
Enhance the character and privacy of residential infill development (in the expanded downtown area of College Street and Tanyard Street) by incorporating limited front setback areas with landscaping.		Amend UDO to reflect this guidance
Multimodal Transportation & Parking		
Provide on-street, parallel parking along Main Street and Front/Water Street in the vicinity of the mobility hub.		Amend the UDO to reflect this guidance around the transit station area
Locate off-street parking areas at the rear and side of buildings on Main Street.		Amend the UDO to reflect this guidance around the transit station area

[continue >>](#)

Built Form & Development Recommendations - Franklinton

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Built Form Needs	Status	Policy Recommendation/Action Item
Screen off-street parking areas from surrounding land uses, utilizing trees, landscaping, and architectural treatments as visual buffers.	✓	Follow UDO guidance
Explore opportunities for shared parking arrangements between multiple lots, uses and/or buildings.	✓	Follow UDO guidance, as per Sec. 156.5B
Consider shared and consolidated driveway access, where possible, for pedestrian safety, shared parking access, and to maintain the integrity of the streetscape.	✗	Amend UDO to reflect this guidance (Article 156.5 Sec. 5.1)

Precedent Image Examples of Built Form Recommendations



Open Space

Today, Franklinton enjoys a resurgent downtown with new businesses including restaurants and retail providing life and vibrancy to Main Street. There are also two crossing points on the S-Line - one at-grade crossing at Mason Street, and an underpass at Green Street. The proposed S-line alignment severs the crossing at Mason Street, resulting in a disconnected network through the heart of downtown. Preserving and enhancing access to downtown via rail crossings is critical to maintaining equitable access to opportunity, jobs, services, and cultural activities for neighborhoods to the east. This change will affect how people navigate and circulate in Franklinton and it presents an opportunity to reconsider the public space framework in downtown.

A. FESTIVAL STREET NETWORK

As shown in this concept and the priority infrastructure map, a network of festival streets using Water Street, Front Street, the blocks of Mason and Vine Streets between the S-Line and Main Street to create an extensive festival street network that connects and integrates into a proposed pocket park on Water Street and parking area near the railroad tracks. A festival street is designed to give equal priority to all modes of transportation. Pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles may all use the space. These streets include wide sidewalks, street trees to provide shade, and often include a curbless design, with vehicular space delineated by bollards. These streets offer flexibility and versatility for the town, allowing the street to provide circulation for drivers that need to access the mobility hub or parking, while also allowing the street to be closed to host community events. Navigating the this type of street requires drivers to slow down, which creates a safer environment for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users. Franklinton currently uses Front Street and Mason Street for community festivals. This design concept would support future events and create opportunities to expand over time.

B. WATER STREET PARK

This new pocket park at the corner of Water Street and Green Street creates a green space and plaza space where none exists today. This space can support local businesses and provide a sense of arrival for people driving into downtown from the west.

C. MASON STREET PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE CROSSING

Maintaining access across the tracks is of critical importance to residents and business owners in Franklinton. This concept explores a grade-separated

crossing identified in the S-Line's 2015 Final Environmental Impact Statement (2015 FEIS). FEIS proposes a pedestrian and bicycle bridge at this location to maintain access. This concept, however, explores a tunnel to provide an alternative for discussion. The proposed crossing will need to be further evaluated and vetted with NCDOT. Town staff will also need to coordinate on topics including feasibility, cost, funding, construction, and maintenance. The concept shown here illustrates a new, grade-separated pedestrian crossings at (approximately) Pine Street between Hyco Street Park and Liberty Street near the US Post Office.

TUNNELS

Creating tunnels underneath the railroad presents a number of design challenges and opportunities. The primary advantage of tunnels is that they allow for continuous motion as people travel through the, and if well-designed they will not function as a barrier to people on either side. The tunnel design should primarily focus on create a space that feels safe and comfortable to all users. The space should be wide enough so that all potential users (e.g.: cyclists, golf carts) and circulate through while considering other important factors like stormwater management infrastructure, lighting, and aesthetics. Additionally, due to the depth below grade, it will be necessary to construct ADA-compliant ramps to allow people to access the tunnel from street level. These ramps will require space to construct, and thus will provide an opportunity for green space. The landscape design should consider shade trees and other vegetation along with CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) best practices.

BRIDGES

Pedestrian and bicycle circulation across the S-Line can also be provided with pedestrian bridges. These bridges are commonly used in North Carolina, and NCDOT has approved their construction in other locations, including Kannapolis and Charlotte. The primary advantages of a bridge are its more predictable cost and increased visibility. The design should also consider the area around the foot/landing on each side, as these spaces are opportunities to create inviting public plazas that are attractive to users. Bridges also create some challenges - notably they can function as a barrier due to the time it takes people and cyclists to ascend/descend using stairs and/or an elevator. The maintenance costs and responsibility for a public elevator would also need to be determined.



Festival Streets like this one in Burlington, VT can provide unique opportunities to create a public gathering place when closed for special events while maintaining daily parking and circulation needs.



Trees and vegetation add vibrancy to streets, and make downtown feel more inviting.



Building frontages with active ground floor uses support street life and provide built in-activities and programming during for town events.



Public open should be surrounded by buildings with active ground floor uses that provide passive surveillance or "eyes on the park" for users.

Catalytic TOD Sites

Opportunity Sites

Three sites within the Franklinton station area have been identified as strong candidates for supporting TOD.

A

Main Street Properties

The 1.4-acre, privately-owned site contains eight parcels between N Main St and the S-Line, along S Front Street to its intersection with Mason Street. The collection of properties holds a veterinarian's office, some undeveloped land, and eleven store fronts, all of which are vacant aside from a Jamaican restaurant and wine spot. Seen as an opportunity to "extend the downtown character of the station area" redevelopment of the site would be advantageous for the implementation of the proposed festival street, while also supporting multimodal improvements along Green and Main Streets. The proposed site has been identified as a critical facilitator of TOD in supporting the placemaking potential and event capacity of downtown Franklinton and there is a clear opportunity to incentivize TOD and site acquisition. The impact of and momentum for supporting TOD at the site makes it a definite first mover.

Parcel numbers: 1865-06-5611; 1865-06-5647; 1865-06-4571; 1865-06-3514; 1865-06-3501; 1865-06-3491; 1865-06-2485; 1865-06-5507

B

Water Street Properties

The 0.9-acre, privately owned site contains four parcels located at the corner of W Green, Water, and S Main Streets. It currently holds a vacant building, convenience store/gas station, and two seemingly vacant homes. It offers an opportunity to incentivize TOD by supporting the proposed festival street by creating a new public plaza or park.

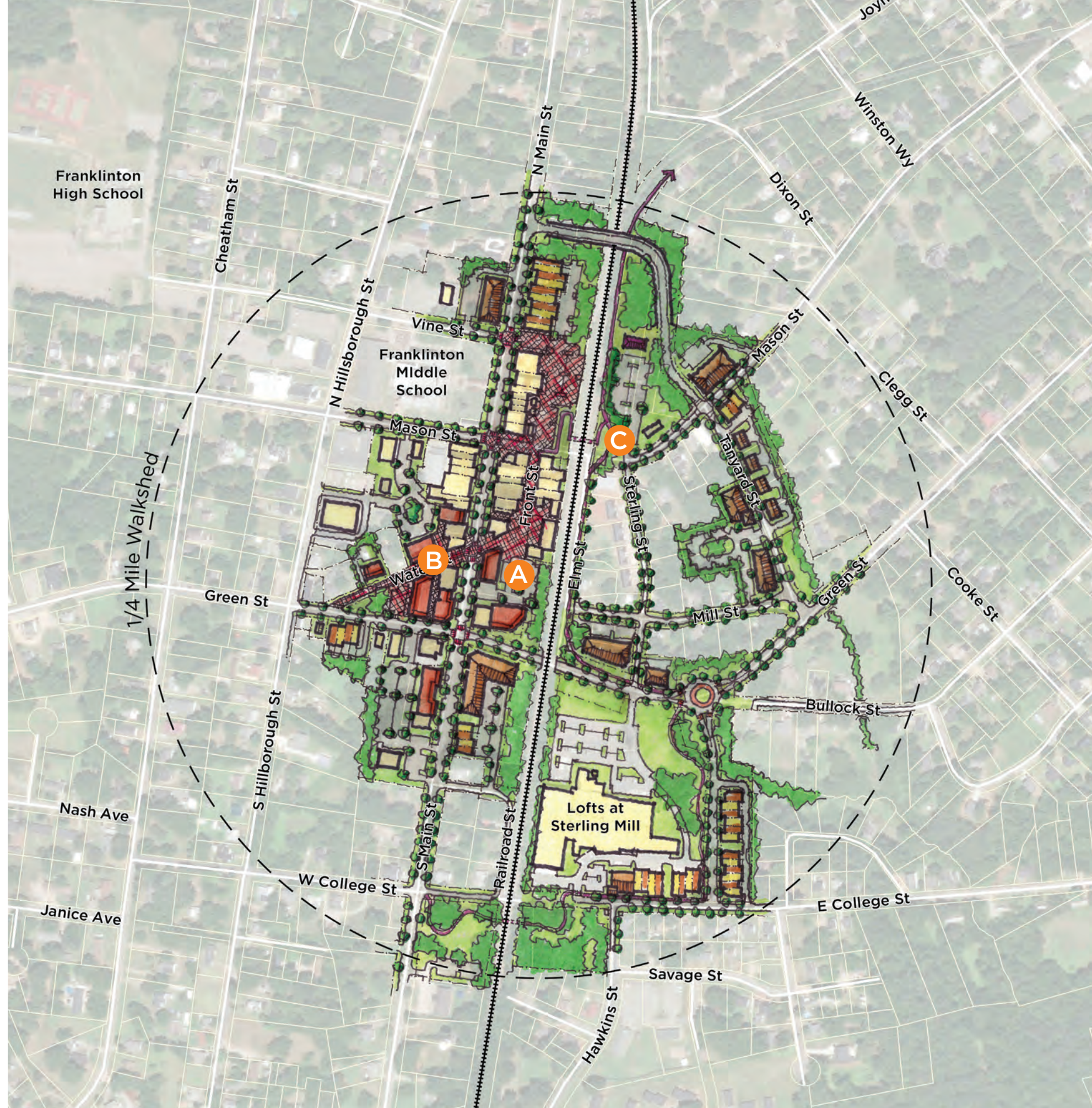
Parcel numbers: 1855-96-9579; 1855-96-9600; 1865-06-1692; 1865-06-1507

C

Parcels Along the Railroad

The privately owned, 3.8-acre site borders the S-Line on both sides. Completely undeveloped, the site runs parallel with N Main Street behind single-family homes and a small commercial strip at N Front Street's intersection with E Mason Street. The site is highlighted for a potential mobility hub and could complement the Reimagine Front Street project by extending its multimodal capabilities or offering existing space for events within the festival street component.

Parcel numbers: 1865-07-9295



Catalytic TOD Sites - ACTION PLAN

In order to prime downtown Franklinton to support TOD in the future, the Town should prioritize its investments in creating the infrastructure to support a vibrant downtown core through public realm enhancements and maximizing the infill development potential of vacant and underutilized sites in downtown Franklinton.

Near-Term (12-18 months)

- Review the Town's current UDO and comprehensive plan and amend as needed to allow for TOD-supportive development within the mobility hub area.
 - Investigate potential to develop a TOD Overlay District in the downtown area.
- Review and update the Town's Economic Development Strategic 5-Year Plan to track progress made to date and identify existing gaps.
- Develop a downtown master plan to inform desired development typologies, land uses, design, and other elements in downtown Franklinton.
- Initiate discussions with private property owners in the downtown area, such as CSX Transportation, to investigate the potential to either acquire catalytic properties or facilitate partnerships with private developers.

Mid-Term (2-5 years)

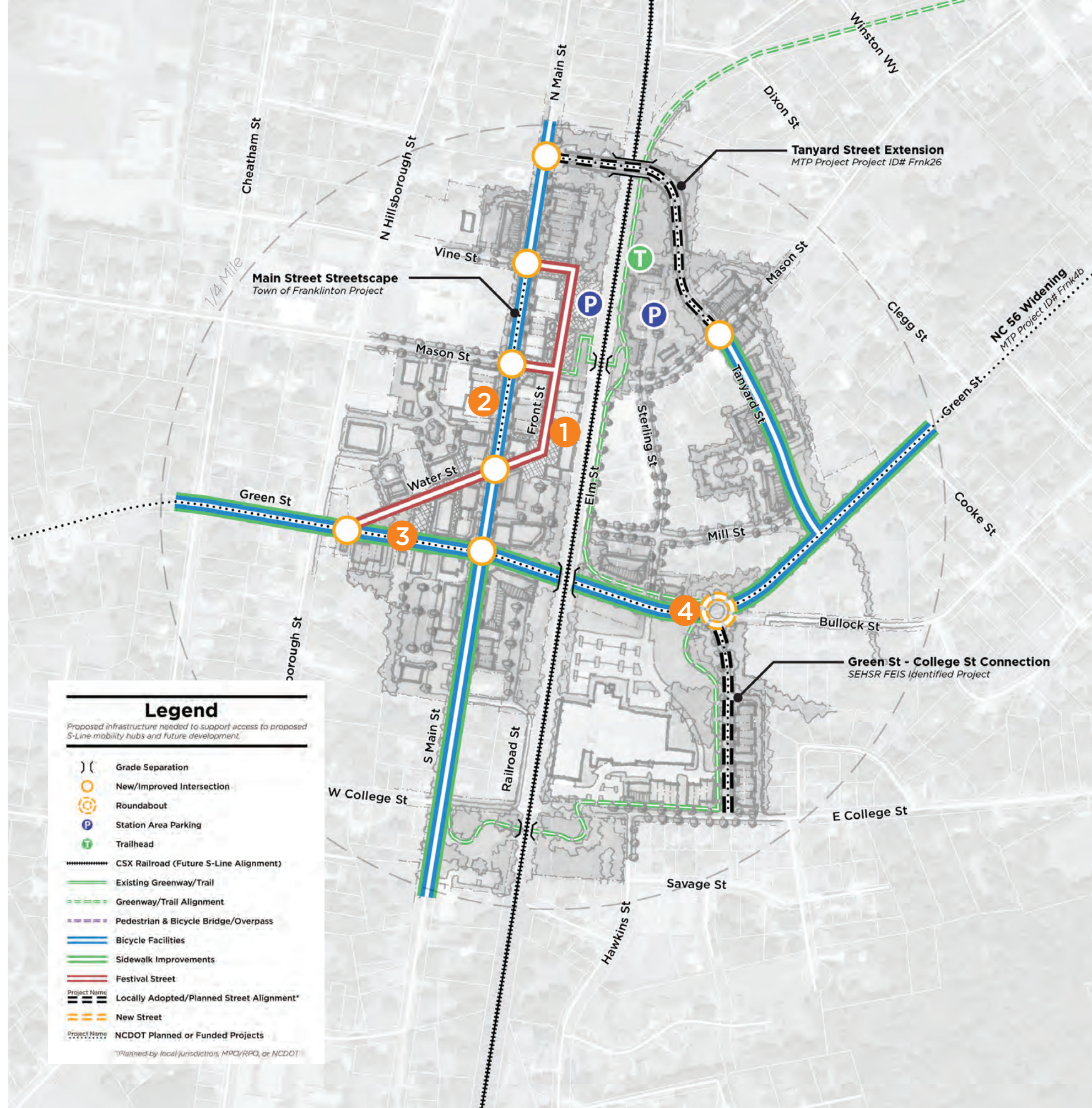
- Support the creation of a downtown organization to champion the economic health, growth, and vibrancy of downtown Franklinton.
 - This downtown organization can be the Town's vehicle to foster relationships within downtown property owners and businesses, lead streetscaping and beautification efforts, and marketing for downtown Franklinton.
- Create a business improvement or municipal service district in the downtown area to support streetscaping, public realm enhancements, signage and wayfinding, and marketing for downtown Norlina.
- Initiate the development of public infrastructure improvements and festival street.
 - Leverage state and federal grant sources to fund the development of a festival street and pedestrian connections across the rail line.
- Establish a suite of financing and regulatory tools to incentivize private development in the downtown core.
 - Financing tools, such as bonds, grants, loans, and tax abatements, can offset predevelopment costs, as well as establish permanent financing for TOD and affordable housing.
 - Regulatory tools, such as density bonuses, reduction in parking minimums, and expedited permitting, can be used to support affordable and/or workforce housing in downtown Franklinton.
- Conduct a downtown parking study to assess future parking needs with the Town's current growth trajectory.

Long-Term (5+ years)

- Begin marketing publicly owned sites to support TOD or mixed-use development.
- Continue to monitor market conditions in order to reposition underutilized properties to attract TOD-supportive uses and development typologies, such as multifamily rental and professional office.

Priority Infrastructure Projects

- 1 Main Street Streetscape**
 This project will improve safety and comfortable experience for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers by providing wider sidewalks, ADA ramps, street trees, and bicycle facilities. Key intersection enhancements - notably at Mason Street, Vine Street and Water Street.
- 2 Reimagine Front Street**
 This project will reconstruct the street to prioritize pedestrian and bicycle travel while allowing for vehicular circulation to access businesses and the station. The festival street design allows for increased space for pedestrians, ample parking for businesses, and creates opportunities to temporarily close the street for community events.
- 3 Green Street Multimodal Safety & Intersection Improvement**
 This project will improve safety and comfortable experience for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers by providing wider sidewalks, ADA ramps, street trees, and bicycle facilities. The key intersection enhancements at Green Street and Main will become the main focal point entering the community.
- 4 Green Street & Bullock Street Roundabout**
 Developing a new roundabout at the intersection of Green Street and the proposed street connecting Green Street to College Street. The new intersection creates a gateway into downtown that slows traffic, creating a safer and more comfortable experience for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.



Grant Funding Database

Federal

- Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program
- Opportunity Zone
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) (includes Building Demolition funds)
- INFRA Grants program
- Federal Historic Tax Credits

State

- State Rural Grants - Building Reuse (includes Vacant Building and Existing Building grants)
- State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)
- Historic Preservation Tax Credits

Local

- Obligation Bond
- Capital Reserve
- Powell Bill



View the *Online Eligible Grant Dashboard*
<----- (click here)

Franklinton Policy Recommendations

Note: The project team understands that the Town's Comprehensive Plan review began in 2021, but as of now an approved version of the plan has not yet been released on the Town's website.

1. Update the Comprehensive Plan to reflect Transit-Oriented Development guidelines.
2. Amend UDO to address transit-supportive urban design guidelines, as noted above.
3. Amend UDO requirements for C-2D District for maximum setbacks for front and side yards in lieu of minimums.