

Norlina

Typology: Rural Downtown



View looking North on Hyco Streets

VISION

Celebrate Norlina's heritage as a railroad depot by attracting new residents and businesses to downtown, investing in greenway/ trail connections, and positioning Norlina as a gateway to regional tourism assets.



Today

Hyco Street Today

MARKET READINESS

5 = Strongest; 1 = Weakest

Current Market Strength



Over the past decade, downtown Warrenton, located about four miles away, has captured much of the development momentum within Warren County. However, there are major planned investments from Glen Raven Inc. and Kenya Christian Fellowship in America, Inc. just outside the Norlina town limits that will attract new jobs and development to the area. The addition of regional passenger rail service could also catalyze new development within Norlina's downtown.

Existing Development Demand Projection (20 years)

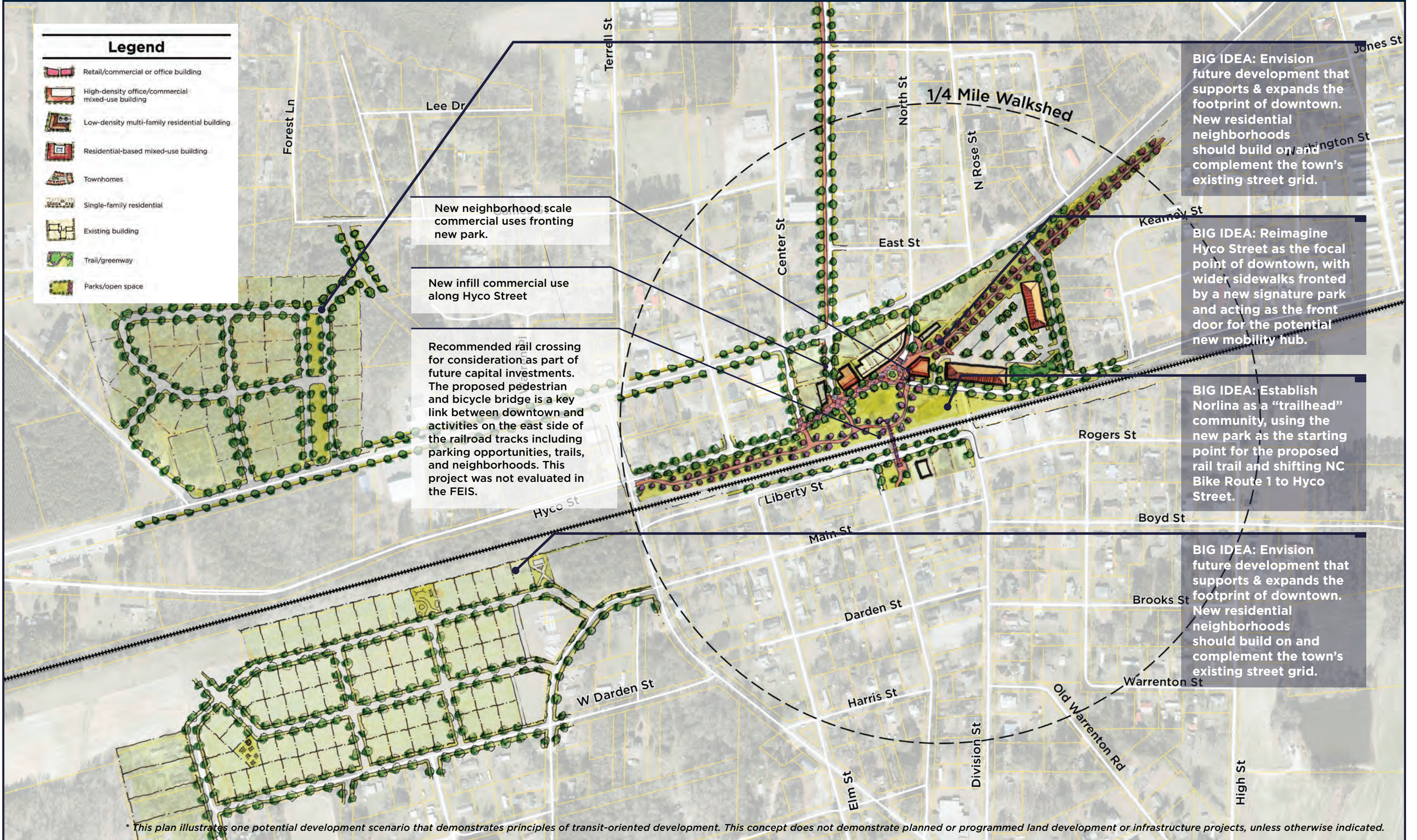


The development demand projections are estimates of the development activity that may occur by 2042 if a passenger rail station is built in this study area. The demand projections are based on historic development patterns, pipeline development projects, and a qualitative assessment of the future real 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



New neighborhood scale commercial uses fronting new park.

New infill commercial use along Hyco Street

Recommended rail crossing for consideration as part of future capital investments. The proposed pedestrian and bicycle bridge is a key link between downtown and activities on the east side of the railroad tracks including parking opportunities, trails, and neighborhoods. This project was not evaluated in the FEIS.

BIG IDEA: Envision future development that supports & expands the footprint of downtown. New residential neighborhoods should build on and complement the town's existing street grid.

BIG IDEA: Reimagine Hyco Street as the focal point of downtown, with wider sidewalks fronted by a new signature park and acting as the front door for the potential new mobility hub.

BIG IDEA: Establish Norlina as a "trailhead" community, using the new park as the starting point for the proposed rail trail and shifting NC Bike Route 1 to Hyco Street.

BIG IDEA: Envision future development that supports & expands the footprint of downtown. New residential neighborhoods should build on and complement the town's existing street grid.

* 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 - Norlina

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.



Built Form Needs	Status	Policy Recommendation/Action Item
Building & Architectural Character		
Protect and enhance Norlina's small-town visual character by ensuring that building siting, massing, and architectural elements are consistent with and contextually sensitive to Downtown Norlina architecture and historic character.		Adopt a comprehensive plan to enable Chapter 160D-compliant zoning regulations. Add Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) policies that will complement small-town character preservation.
Orient buildings close to and fronting streets (specifically, along Hyco Street), primary intersections, 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.		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.
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 Hyco Street as well as historically significant buildings along Route 1 area (e.g., façade treatments, materials, roof and window treatments, etc.).		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan. Update C-I Downtown Business District to allow for vertical integration of uses. As a followup, create a mixed-use overlay district, above the core area of Hyco Street near the mobility hub, to include the transit-oriented guidelines as well as to encourage vertical integration of land uses.
Discourage large-scale, auto-oriented commercial uses and strip center development near the the mobility hub area adjacent to Hyco Street to protect the small-town character.		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.
Maintain significant viewsheds looking toward and out from new Downtown Park, pedestrian plaza areas and buildings along Hyco Street.		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.
Utilize the new Downtown Park as the starting point for a proposed rail trail and promote additional mobility options, such as adapting Hyco Street as a bicycle route.		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.
Establish consistent building frontages along Hyco Street closest to the mobility hub by minimizing the space between buildings.		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan. Update zoning regulations (17A-27.2) to regulate zero front setback within CI Downtown Business District. As a followup, create a mixed-use overlay district, above the core area of Hyco Street near the mobility hub, to include the transit-oriented guidelines.
Minimize setbacks along primary streets, specifically along Hyco 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 around public plaza along Hyco Street for seating and outdoor dining.		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan. Follow 17A-27 Downtown Business District guidelines.
Height, Massing & Development Transitions		
Encourage building heights of up to 2 stories specifically around the mobility hub along Hyco Street to complement the existing height and intensity of buildings in the downtown area. Consider heights of up to 3 stories (35') on a case-by-case basis along Hyco Street east of Walker Avenue for parcels closest to the mobility hub.		Follow Town's Zoning Ordinance (Sec. 17A-37)
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.		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.
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 masses into multiple buildings, especially on long blocks (on either side of the central block along Hyco Street); • variations in building form and massing, such as step-backs and terracing. 		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.
Encourage the use of trees, vegetation, and green spaces as visual buffers and transitions between different land uses.		Follow zoning ordinance 17A-38
Infill Development and Adaptive Reuse		
Promote and celebrate Norlina's history by encouraging the preservation and/or adaptive reuse of historic structures in the downtown, specifically along Hyco Street.		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.
Expand the downtown footprint to the east and west along Hyco Street and allow for low- to medium-density infill residential uses.		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.
Extend and connect the street network as new development occurs.		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.
Incorporate green spaces (e.g., courtyards and other small green spaces) as part of new development.		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan. Follow open space requirements as per zoning ordinance. However, update the ordinance to encourage sharing of open spaces by properties within a block (or 400') whichever is less.
Encourage affordable housing options and a mix of housing types, including senior housing.		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.
Enhance the character and privacy of residential infill development (in the expanded downtown area) by incorporating limited front setback areas with landscaping.		Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.

[continue >>](#)

Built Form & Development Recommendations - Norlina

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Built Form Needs	Status	Policy Recommendation/Action Item
Multimodal Transportation & Parking		
Provide on-street, parallel parking along Hyco Street in the vicinity of the mobility hub.	✘	Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.
Locate off-street parking areas at the rear and side of buildings while meeting Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for accessible parking.	✘	Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.
Screen off-street parking areas from surrounding land uses, utilizing trees, landscaping, and architectural treatments as visual buffers.	✘	Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.
Explore opportunities for shared parking arrangements between multiple lots, uses and/or buildings.	⚠	Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan. Follow zoning ordinance 17A-42 for off-street parking requirements by expanding shared parking uses beyond churches, theaters, or assembly halls.
Consider shared and consolidated driveway access, where possible, for pedestrian safety, shared parking access, and to maintain the integrity of the streetscape.	✘	Add policies within the recommended Comprehensive Plan.

Precedent Image Examples of Built Form Recommendations



Open Space

Today, Hyco Street is a wide street with the historic buildings fronting the north side of the street. Both formal and informal parking occur throughout the day, and the CSX right-of-way along the south side this street is largely vacant with the exception of some historic structures and the local history museum.

The construction of the S-Line presents an opportunity to reconsider the design and function of Hyco Street and the CSX right-of-way to the south. The currently adopted S-Line alignment will result in a 'leftover' space that can be used to create a new "front door" for both Norlina and Warren County. The concept shown to the right highlights one vision of how these spaces can be redesigned to support downtown Norlina and the S-Line mobility hub while supporting local economic development goals, being sensitive to the local context, offering flexibility to evolve over time, and creating a welcoming space for people.

A UPGRADE HYCO STREET

Three blocks of Hyco Street between Highway 1 and Walker Avenue should be upgraded to create a "festival street" in downtown Norlina. 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. This design supports local economic development goals and provides a sense of arrival upon entering downtown. The following concepts should be used as the design of this space evolves and decisions are made about the location of the mobility hub:

B HYCO STREET PARK

Create a large park in CSX right-of-way not used by the S-Line tracks. Creating an attractive public

space here supports downtown Norlina by making it a more attractive place to visit and do business. The park area has ample space to place multiple features to attract and entertain users. This illustration highlights a playground for families, an amphitheater for performances, a new home for the Norlina History Museum, and plaza space for people to gather.

Supporting Economic Development

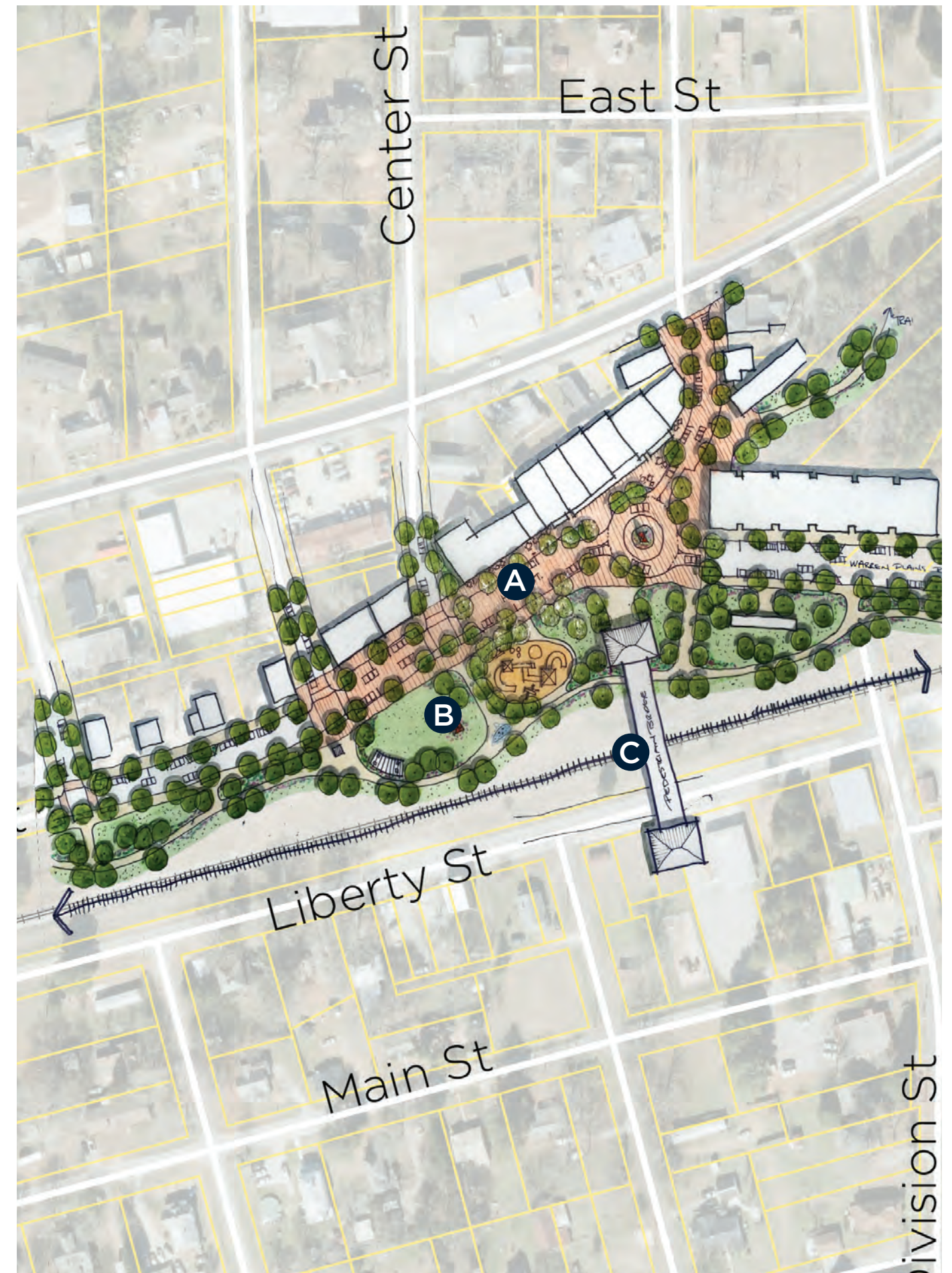
The park can support Warren County's nature-based tourism goals by serving as both an outdoor destination and a trailhead. The illustration includes the start of a trail network running along Hyco Street and continuing as illustrated on the Priority Infrastructure page.

C PINE STREET PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE BRIDGE

Maintaining access across the tracks is of critical importance to residents and business owners in Norlina. This concept explores a new grade-separated crossing in addition to other changes recommended in the S-Line's 2015 Final Environmental Impact Statement (2015 FEIS). The proposed crossing will 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.

Bridges

Pedestrian and bicycle circulation across the S-Line can 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.



Catalytic TOD Sites

Opportunity Sites

Five sites within the Norlina mobility hub area have been identified as strong candidates for supporting TOD. Potential opportunity sites include:

A Hyco St Park
 This rail-company owned site has been identified locally as a first mover. Privately-owned, the site is located at the end of the S-Line and may provide an opportunity to create a public park and plaza connected to a potential mobility hub. The site could also identify the priority Reimagine Hyco St process, which Norlina wants to use to shift the downtown corridor's main road (Hyco St) into a multimodal hub, festival street that can be closed for community events, and represent a "front door" to both Norlina and Warren County.

Parcel number: N/A (not in local records)

B 119 Hyco St
 This 0.1-acre, publicly owned site sits at the edge of a small business strips. It contains the Norlina Police Department and is seen as part of the historic fabric of downtown. The Town wants to facilitate infill redevelopment, and the space could be leased or sold to provide additional retail space or potentially serve as a town museum.

Parcel number: 2938721320

C 302 Liberty St/Norlina Junction Park
 This 0.5-acre, publicly owned site is at the corner of Liberty and Pine Streets, currently undeveloped, it sits east of the local Post Office is currently undeveloped and offers a landing point for a proposed pedestrian bridge to Hyco Street. Increased pedestrian access offers an opportunity for reimagining and reinvesting in this proposed park space.

Parcel numbers: 2938711655, 2938711704, 2938711602, 2938710762

D 214-216 Liberty St
 This .43-acre site sits south of Liberty Ave between Pipe and Elm Streets. It is currently undeveloped and shares a block as multiple blighted single-family homes, and a barber shop. Vacant aside from a demolished building, the site could serve as an additional piece of the reimagined pedestrian access to Hyco Ave or complement the barber shop in a retail redevelopment.

Parcel number: 2938618667, 2938618636

E Main and Division (102 Main St and 308 Division St)
 This 0.16-acre, publicly owned site is east of the Norlina post office. Located at the Corner of Main and Division Streets adjacent to Liberty Street, it currently contains two underutilized industrial buildings and undeveloped land separating it from the post office. It could be included in the proposed 302 Liberty Street redevelopment as a park extension or provide mixed-use retail development that includes the post office.

Parcel numbers: 2938713689, 2938712697



Catalytic TOD Sites - ACTION PLAN

In order to prime Norlina to support TOD in the future, the Town, in partnership with Warren County, should prioritize its investments in creating the infrastructure to support a vibrant downtown core. Public realm improvements, such as a park or civic gathering space, can enhance the character of downtown and spur additional redevelopment opportunities in the downtown core.

Near-Term (12-18 months)

- * Continue collaboration with Warren County to finalize comprehensive development plan for the County.
 - Ensure that the vision for downtown Norlina includes the potential for mixed-use development and denser residential uses, such as multifamily, townhomes, and other 'missing-middle' housing typologies.
- Create a downtown Norlina plan and/or policy to establish development guidelines in Norlina.
 - The plan should also include a vision for civic gathering spaces (i.e., festival street, park) in the downtown core, as well as design guidelines to support the community's vision.
 - Begin discussions with private property owners, such as CSX, 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 Norlina.
 - This downtown organization can be the Town's vehicle to foster relationships within downtown property owners and businesses, lead streetscaping and beautification efforts, and establish a marketing program to create vibrancy within downtown Norlina.
- 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 civic gathering spaces.
 - Leverage state and federal grant sources to fund the development of a downtown park, festival street and pedestrian connections across the rail line.
 - Investigate establishing 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 Norlina.

Long-Term (5+ years)

- Begin to market publicly owned sites, such as the police station site, to support development of mixed-use development and/or commercial uses.
- Continue to monitor market conditions in order to reposition underutilized Town-owned sites to attract TOD-supportive uses and development typologies, such as multifamily rental and retail.

Priority Infrastructure Projects

1

Reimagine Hyco Street

Hyco Street is the focal point of Norlina today, and will serve as the front door to both the town and Warren County with the potential addition of a mobility hub. This project will reconstruct the street to prioritize pedestrian and bicycle travel while allowing for vehicular circulation to access businesses and the mobility hub. 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.

2

US 158/401 Multimodal Safety Improvements

Access points across the railroad tracks are critical to circulation within the community and to connect to the mobility hub. 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 Hyco Street and Liberty should be maintained to allow multimodal circulation for residents and businesses south of the railroad tracks.

3

Walker Avenue Intersection Improvement & Shared Use Path

The Kenya Christian Fellowship investment will create a significant destination north of town. This project will install sidewalks and off-street shared-use path on Walker Avenue and make intersection improvements at US-1 to provide access into downtown for pedestrians and cyclists.

Warren County has also begun planning and feasibility work around a multi-modal pathway connecting the County's three municipalities, including connecting into a future mobility hub in Norlina. The Town's continued coordination with the County is an important priority to preparing for a mobility hub and future TOD.

