



Downtown Vibrancy, Design & Marketing Plan

January 17, 2018

REPORT SUBMITTED TO

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Executive Summary

The City of Williamsburg retained the consulting team comprised of Econsult Solutions, Inc. (ESI), Group Melvin Design GMD), and The Riddle Company (TRC) or the Team, to undertake a Downtown Vibrancy, Design & Marketing Plan for the City of Williamsburg.

The purpose of this project is to build a framework to guide the Williamsburg Economic Development Office and the Planning Department to develop a sustainable and vibrant downtown. The objective of the plan is to strengthen downtown's appeal by creating a vibrant environment, to develop a sustainable implementation strategy to help generate momentum and to help the City and investors to make better decisions, manage risk, and improve the prospects for success. Additionally, the strategy is intended to enhance visitation and patronage of the downtown businesses, and build a sense of pride and project ownership within the community (residents and businesses) for ongoing management and implementation.

To reinforce the downtown's sense of place and support growth, the plan builds upon Williamsburg's unique historic, natural and cultural assets.

The Team spent several months gathering information on the physical conditions of downtown Williamsburg, including existing public spaces, infrastructure, architectural character, and streetscape elements. They completed a retail market & merchandise analysis. The information from both these exercises was used to inform the strategy and identify opportunities to strengthen and even diversify the retail and entertainment offerings within the city.

Local stakeholders and the community were engaged as part of the planning process. Community and stakeholder input was gathered from:

- › Local and regional residents
- › Colonial Williamsburg visitors and staff
- › College of William and Mary community (Administration and students)
- › Downtown Williamsburg businesses and residents
- › City and public leadership (elected officials, the city Administration, relevant city departments and regional organizations including tourism officials).

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Introduction

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The report includes five major chapters: Market & Demographic Snapshot, Retail Market Analysis, Placemaking, Community Engagement, and Recommendations. The narrative addresses placemaking, vibrancy, retail and marketing. The recommendations offer a series of tools and tactics, including both permanent and temporary solutions that will help advance downtown's overall vibrancy. There is overlap between some sections as many of the topics are interrelated.



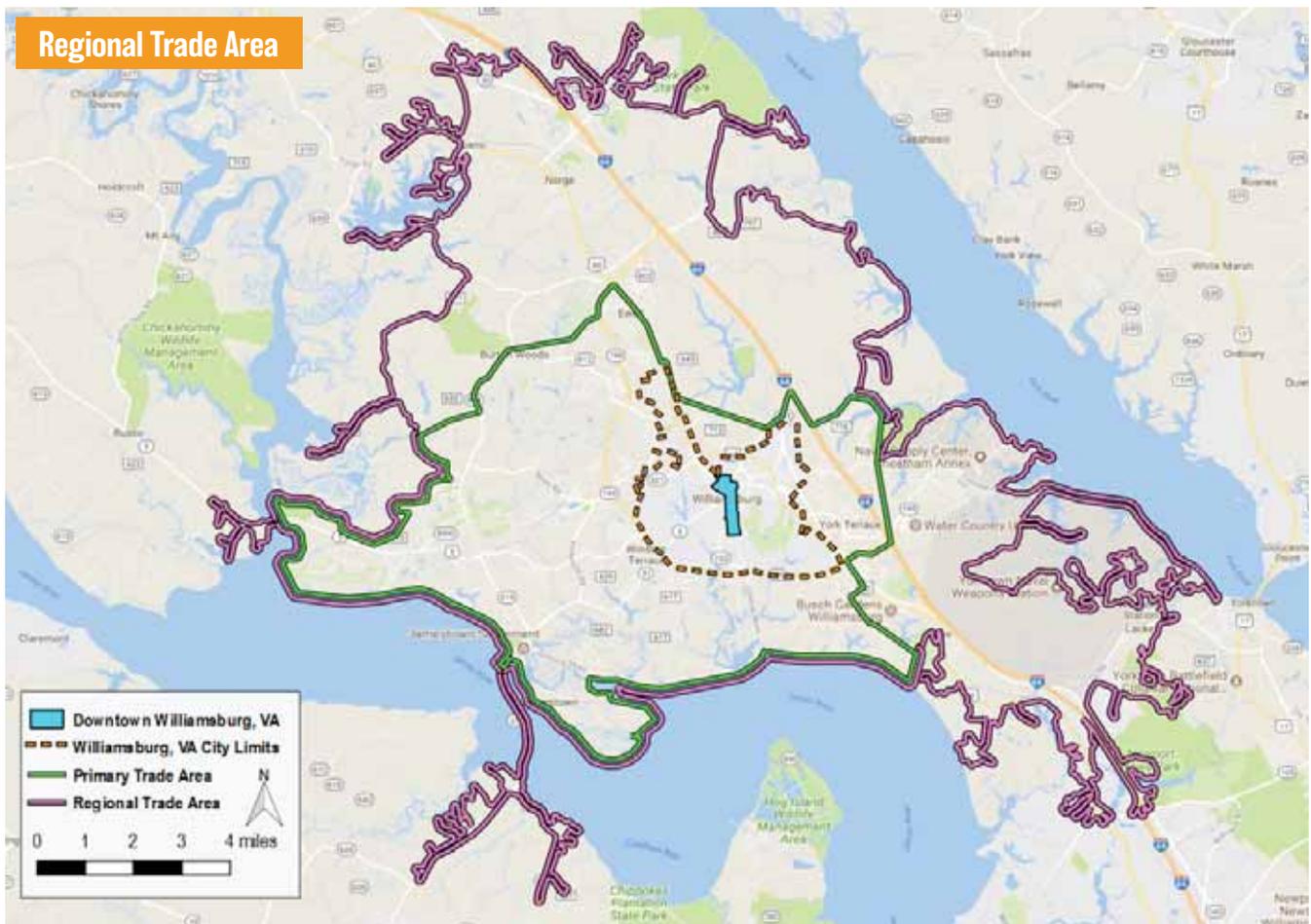
**Cities have
the capability
of providing
something for
everybody, only
because, and
only when, they
are created by
everybody.**

**- Jane Jacobs, The Death
and Life of Great American
Cities**



About the Team

The Team members have worked together on projects for clients in this realm in Virginia and nationally. Specific experience includes the Stafford County Retail Strategy, the Portsmouth Downtown Technical Advisory Plan, the Center City Philadelphia Retail Marketing & Attraction Strategy, Downtown Baltimore Retail Marketing Strategy, the Vision and Goal Master Plan for Trenton, and Design Guidelines for Building Facades and Streetscapes in Camden. Our Team members have influenced downtown environments in some of the nation's largest and most vibrant markets such as Philadelphia, PA, Miami, FL, Washington, DC, Chicago, IL and Atlanta, GA, and in some of America's smallest and most challenged communities such as Newark, NJ, Camden, NJ, and Frederick, MD.



1.0 Market Data & Demographics

The City of Williamsburg shares and boasts many economic benefits and strengths. Table 1 (p. 11) provides a snapshot of how the various study geographies compare.

Household composition and characteristics vary by submarket. Household wealth and size increase the further away you move from the city. The median age in Williamsburg is 24.9 years old, nearly 40 percent below that in the primary trade area. The overall population is well educated and employed. Over 58 percent of the population in the city have at least a Bachelor's degree, 63.4 percent of the workforce is in white collar and professional positions. The primary trade area, the primary audience for downtown retailers, performs well above the city on many indicators including wealth, education and employment.



Williamsburg by the Numbers

14,956

Residents in Williamsburg in 2016

8,740

Students at The College of William & Mary Fall 2017

38.8%

Residents 20-34 Years of Age

24.2%

Residents 55+

3.0%

Projected Population Growth from 2016 to 2021

50.9%

Residents (25+) Who Have a Bachelor's Degree or Higher

\$47,092

Median Household Income of Williamsburg Residents

13,065

Total Employment in Williamsburg

3,328

Residential Properties

\$243,000

Median Residential Sales Price 2016

\$1,009

Median Apartment Rent in October 2017

7,500

Daily Ridership on Williamsburg Area Transit Authority Buses Q2 2017

86

Walk Score in Downtown Williamsburg from DoG and Boundary Streets

Sources: ESRI (2016), College of William & Mary Factbook (2017), American Public Transportation Association (2017), Rent Jungle (2017), City of Williamsburg Real Estate Assessment Office (2017), Walk Score (2017)

Table 1: Selected Economic Characteristics (2016)

Williamsburg Market Profile	City of Williamsburg	Primary Trade Area	Regional Trade Area
Population			
2016	14,956	72,830	97,884
2021	15,398	78,233	105,260
Rate of Change 2016-2021	0.58%	1.44%	1.46%
Household Data			
# of Households	4,857	28,395	37,471
Average HH Size	2.18	2.39	2.46
Median HH Income	\$47,092	\$75,795	\$70,917
Percent of HHI over \$100,000	21.30%	36.80%	34.50%
Age			
Median Age (Years)	24.9	43.7	42.2
Millennials (20-34 years of age)	38.80%	19.80%	19.80%
Population Over 65	15.30%	23.40%	21.40%
Education & Employment			
Population with BA Degree or Higher	58.50%	50.40%	55.60%
Population with Graduate Degree	25.30%	24.70%	21.80%
Civilian Employment	95.00%	96.40%	96.00%
Professional/White Collar Jobs	63.40%	66.30%	65.00%
Ethnicity			
White Only	72.30%	74.70%	74.70%
Black	14.50%	15.60%	15.00%
Hispanic	7.30%	6.80%	6.80%

Source: U.S. Census, ESRI

Employment

The local workforce is an important part of a community’s consumer base. The type, location and concentration of jobs can influence spending and retail location decisions, especially for food, apparel, and convenience retail related uses. Commuting patterns can also influence the location and mix of retail. Commuters who bike or walk to work can enhance vibrancy. Over 10,500 workers commute to the city from the region. The largest source of commuters (4,000) come from within James City County and the next largest source come from Newport News (1,200).¹

Total employment in the city in 2016² was 13,065 a slight decrease from 2015 (13,110). Employment has declined since a ten year high in 2006 at 16,642. Seasonal fluctuations driven by tourism lead to higher employment during the months of May, June,

¹ Virginia Employment Commission
² Bureau of Labor Statistics

July and August. Unemployment at year end 2016 was 5.6 percent down from a high in 2009 of 14.8 percent. Two of the city’s largest employers, Colonial

Top Ten Employers

1. College of William and Mary
2. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
3. Colonial Williamsburg Hotel
4. Sentara Healthcare
5. Sodexo
6. City of Williamsburg
7. Williamsburg James City County School Board
8. National Center for State Courts
9. The Yankee Candle Company Inc
10. Harris Teeter Supermarket

Williamsburg and William and Mary are located in downtown. Collectively they employ over 3,500 people, just over 26 percent of the local work force.

Tourism

Tourism is an important contributor to the Williamsburg local and regional economy. Williamsburg has consistently ranked as one of the top ten tourist locations in the state since 2002. Tourism related spending in 2015 was estimated to be \$556 million.³ An estimated 5 million visitors came to Williamsburg in 2016. Many visit the Williamsburg market for 3-4 days, spending time in Colonial Williamsburg and area amusement and water parks. Colonial Williamsburg is the city's biggest tourist attraction, but it has experienced a decline in revenue and ticket sales since 2013.⁴ Admissions have held steady at around 600,000 for most of the past ten years,⁵ a drop from more than 1,000,000 in the 1970's and 1980's.

Colonial Williamsburg has been introducing interactive initiatives and programs over the past few years. In 2016, they installed an ice skating rink on Duke of Gloucester Street which was well received by audiences of all ages. Colonial Williamsburg also recently launched an app that allows visitors to plan their trips and buy tickets



Colonial Williamsburg.

in advance. In a small but helpful move, Colonial Williamsburg accommodated Pokémon Go, a popular smartphone app that allows players to catch virtual monsters in the physical world. Pursuit of these virtual monsters brought many children (and adults) to the streets of

Parking

Parking is a continually contentious topic of discussion among businesses and residents in the city. There are pressures, real and perceived, on parking accessibility and availability and cost. There is a growing sense that the City and the Colonial

³ Virginia Travel Corporation, Virginia Gazette, Sept. 2016

⁴ Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

⁵ VA Gazette, Sept. 2016

Williamsburg Foundation may need to adjust in current parking policies and practices to better accommodate current and future parking demand.

“**There is a lot to do in the market but you have to know where to look to know what *your options* are.**

There are *many associations, chamber-like entities*, and similar organizations, but they seem to do very little to coordinate/harmonize with one another.

- Stakeholder Interviews ”

The City of Williamsburg recently completed a parking study to analyze the opportunities and needs for parking in downtown Williamsburg and develop a parking master plan for the next 10 years that meets the needs of visitors, downtown merchants and employees, City residents, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and the College of William and Mary. This includes planned expansion at the Museum and anticipated growth with the reinvestment at the inn and the conversion of management of the Colonial Williamsburg hotels to Marriot Corporation.

The study indicated the City's parking "shortage" is in fact a problem of perception rather than an actual scarcity of parking. Currently, much of the public parking supply in downtown Williamsburg is provided to users at no cost. The City only charges in the less convenient parking garages and lots located on the fringes of the downtown core. The most desirable parking spaces in the core of the downtown are nearly 100 percent occupied, parking facilities within one to two blocks of the Merchants Square area have excess capacity. The challenge for the city is to effectively utilize the existing parking resources. One of the strategies recommended in the study to achieve a more balanced parking system is to expand the paid parking to include more off-street facilities and on-street parking spaces. Enhanced signage and other improvements adopted by the city at the completion of this parking study in 2017 intended to address turnover rates, should ameliorate many of the parking challenges.

Marketing

An active calendar of events invites visitors and residents to frequent downtown and the area.

Notable current events include Christmas celebrations in Colonial Williamsburg, the Farmers Market, and arts oriented events including Arts on the Square and An Occasion for Arts. There also is growing interest in creating more events such as the Williamsburg Craft Beer Festival.

Merchants Square also offers a schedule of free events in the summer such as the "Summer Breeze" concerts featuring musical performances from oldies to big band, salsa, jazz and R&B and Movies on the Square.



Though not in downtown, the Arts District, which was formally launched in 2011 and is managed by the Williamsburg Arts District Association (WADA), works to promote the district including programs as The Sculpture Gallery, showcasing 21 unique works of art and is featured in several walking tours.⁶

Several distinct groups take responsibility for marketing and promoting downtown and the community including the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the Merchants Square Tenant Association, and Visit Williamsburg. The city also regularly invests in tourism through funding provided to the Chamber, the Tourism Alliance and Colonial Williamsburg. While there is an active calendar of local and more high-profile events scheduled in Williamsburg, finding information on these events is not always easy. Some organizations only promote their own assets and activities. Tools such as the City's Wayfinder mobile engagement app are a good step to enhancing connectivity and providing information on events and area businesses.

⁶ The Sculpture Gallery is scheduled to close in 2017

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2.0 Retail Market Analysis

Downtown Retail Market Considerations

The economic situation and growth opportunities in downtown Williamsburg are complex, driven by the mix of uses and landholdings. Thus, strategies for strengthening and expanding the retail base and enhancing the overall vibrancy must investigate a variety of potential paths. We analyzed the current market conditions, potential opportunities for retail development, and the competitive retail landscape. These opportunities are guided and constrained by the ownership patterns in downtown, physical factors such as the street patterns and size, as well as by economic factors, such as existing supply and demand for a given use.

Our retail analysis begins with a definition of the various trade areas, and includes a description of the market, current demand and retail potential, and spending patterns. We examine the merchandise mix in the study area, the competitive environment including brands, and leasing trends. We also present a summary of the primary and target audience. And finally, we consider potential uses and investments/installations including place making assets, and the impact they might have on the retail environment. We recommend actions the city of Williamsburg can take to improve its retail environment and the overall vibrancy of the retail in downtown. (See Recommendations Section 5, p.49).

Retail Trade Areas

Understanding a community's trade area is central to demonstrating the potential for sales and for determining market and consumer demand for retail. Trade areas reflect "local demand" based on residential population and households within those areas. Understanding these trade areas will enable Williamsburg to determine what the best types of retail and entertainment uses to target are and why.

A **Primary Trade Area** is the geography for much of the local consumer market. The primary trade area represents nearly seventy-five percent of the retail spend (depending on the density of the market). Primary trade areas are critical for basic goods and services, groceries and some food and beverage. A **Secondary Trade Area** draws ten to twenty percent

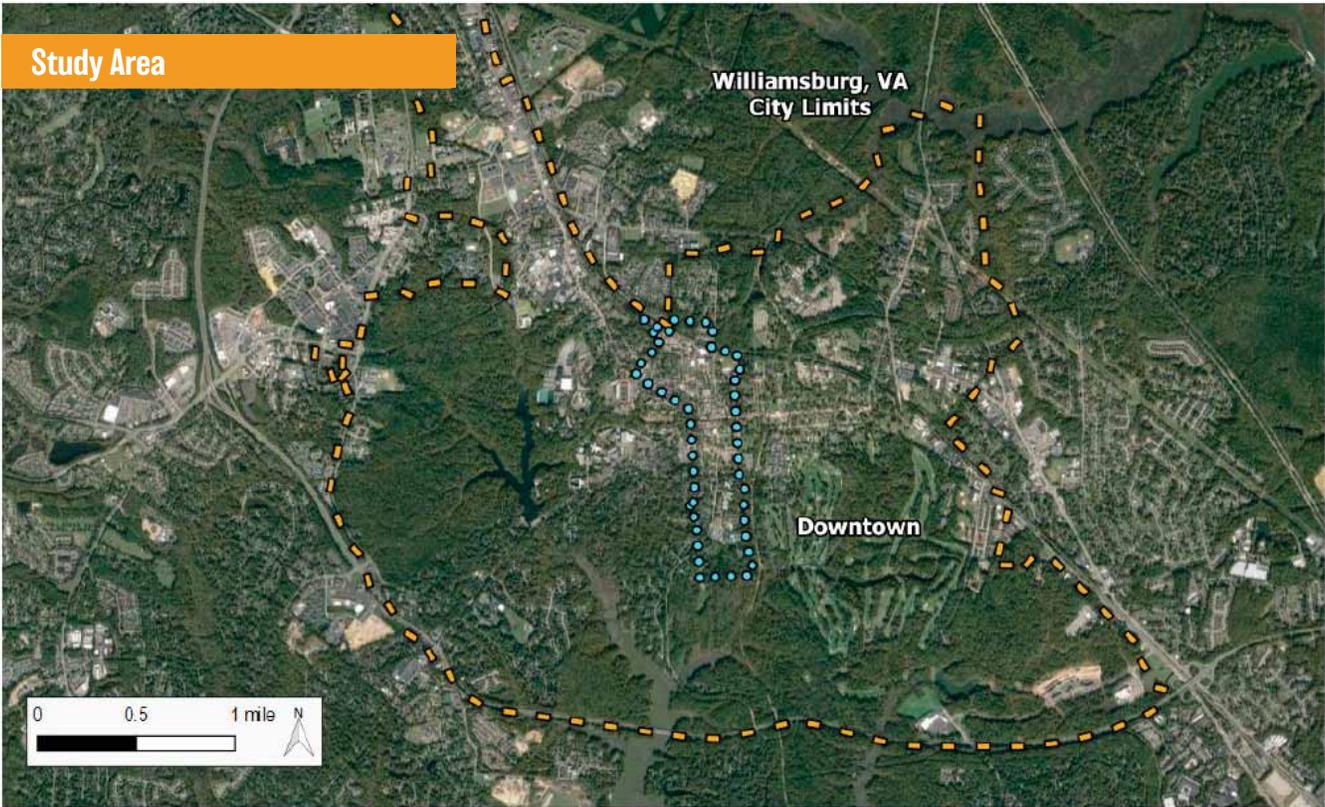
of consumers and can range from three to ten miles. These can extend even further in areas that are less dense for housing and retail and that include large undevelopable areas (water, forests). These are critical for evaluating the market for food and beverage. A **Tertiary Trade Area** or a regional trade area covers the rest of the consumers and can extend up to twenty miles.

The parameters for the trade areas for downtown Williamsburg were developed using a combination of walk times and driving distances. Physical boundaries including infrastructure and natural features (bodies of water, bridges, road network) and Williamsburg's location between Richmond and Virginia Beach were also considered. The elements of destination (Colonial Williamsburg, the College of William and Mary, and regional tourism), and the diversity of the residential base including time share and retirement communities also factored into the trade areas. For the purposes of this study we focus on just two:

1. The **Primary Trade Area** is a custom geography from the intersection of Prince George and Boundary Streets. This intersection also serves as the center point for the other trade areas.
2. The **Regional Trade Area** is the area within a twelve-mile drive time from the intersection of Prince George and Boundary Streets. The maps on the next page show the relationship of the trade areas to the study area, the city and the region.

The core market for downtown is within one half to one mile of the intersection of Prince George and Boundary Streets. This area accommodates walkability for residents and student who live nearby as well as those who tend to drive to downtown, and includes most of the customer base.

Study Area



Map of the Regional Trade Area



Retail Demand, Sales & Opportunities

2.1.1 Retail Sales, Gaps & Leakage

Retail sales were compiled by expenditure type within the trade areas and the city. This analysis includes sales by cluster and by individual sectors as well as the retail gap and leakage for each of these categories. (see Table 2 below). Leakage is defined as retail sales that are leaving the market, and indicates that there is unmet demand in the market. It does not necessarily mean that there is room for new businesses in this category. Often this demand is being met by retail in adjacent neighborhoods or within the region.

A gap, or surplus, reveals that local sales exceed local demand, and that sales are coming from outside the trade area. This is common in downtown markets and those with strong tourism economies such as Charleston and Annapolis.

In addition to the gaps and leakage, we also looked at expenditures by household to determine if any patterns and trends exist regarding spending. We also indexed potential spending for select categories.¹

The top three retail categories for household spending in the city and in the primary and regional trade areas are food, entertainment and apparel.

Spending on food and dining is rising across the country and Williamsburg is following this trend. Food is the dominant retail expense for households, with food purchased for consumption at home exceeding food out of home.² Sales of food outpace demand in all three geographies, demonstrating that local food businesses are servicing a consumer base larger than the local market. The strong sales are likely attributed to Williamsburg’s tourism market coupled with traffic driven by the strong visitor appeal of downtown including the college.

Table 2: Retail Supply & Demand

	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Gap	Leakage Factor
Citywide				
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	\$194,704,268	\$357,597,737	\$162,893,468	-29.5
Total Retail Trade	\$175,585,239	\$268,015,575	\$92,429,336	-20.8
Total Food & Drink	\$19,119,029	\$89,583,162	\$70,464,133	-64.8
Primary Trade Area				
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	\$1,557,381,022	\$1,249,409,815	\$307,971,207	11.0
Total Retail Trade	\$1,406,606,463	\$1,070,247,800	\$336,358,663	13.6
Total Food & Drink	\$150,774,559	\$179,162,015	\$28,387,456	-8.6
Regional Trade Area				
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	\$1,912,550,903	\$2,754,860,757	\$1,168,690,146	4.6
Total Retail Trade	\$1,726,892,737	\$1,519,944,338	\$206,948,399	6.4
Total Food & Drink	\$185,658,166	\$223,916,419	-\$34,248,253	-9.3

Source: ESRI

¹ Household spending does not reflect where dollars are spent.

² Note this includes only retail categories and not all household budget expenditures.

Gaps & Leakage

Examining sales against demand by category is another way to examine the strength and opportunities within a retail market. When sales exceed demand it generally signifies that an individual category is drawing consumers from outside the trade area, which is very common in a tourism economy. When demand outweighs sales, it suggests sales are leaving the market, otherwise known as leakage. However, it does not necessarily demonstrate an opportunity for new retail, especially what is desirable or appropriate for an individual community, especially if there is competitive retail in the region.

Our analysis of the trade areas revealed several areas of opportunity including apparel (men's, women's, children's) drinking establishments (bars and breweries), casual dining (cafes, coffee shops, family oriented restaurants), specialty foods (baked goods, meat/poultry cheese, gourmet items), select entertainment, general retail goods and select home goods (lawn and garden, building/home improvement).

2.1.2 Potential Retail Spending Index

We looked at the potential retail spending index for select retail categories to better understand how these are performing within the current merchandise mix and the potential for expansion. Understanding what households are spending money on, coupled with other data, can be useful to predict what type of retail uses are likely to be sustainable. This index also provides insight on how Williamsburg performs against the national average within individual retail sectors. The national average for household spending in each category is indexed to 100. Anything above 100 suggests household spending is above the national average for that category, anything below 100 indicates household spending falls under the national average. A one or two-point shift is considered marginal, while any shift greater than 10 points indicates a strength or weakness.

The individual retail categories considered are those commonly found in a vibrant downtown market, and those identified as a priority through the community engagement process. This includes food, apparel, entertainment and limited living expenses Table 3 reveals the potential spending by category.

The potential for spending in the Primary Trade Area exceeds the national average for all individual categories of retail. The potential retail indices are above the national average for most traditional living

Table 3: Index of Williamsburg Retail Expenditures

	Citywide	Primary Trade Area	Regional Trade Area
Apparel	105	130	122
Women's Apparel	106	135	125
Entertainment & Recreation	99	132	124
Fees for Sports	97	144	129
Food	104	132	121
Food at Home	103	128	120
Food Away from Home	105	131	123
Bakery Products	103	128	120
Alcoholic Beverages	109	134	125
Mortgage Payments	84	137	129

expense categories in the primary and secondary trade areas, and more closely aligned to the national average for all individual categories except tickets to movies, museums and parks. Potential spending on apparel in the city is close to the national average, except for women's, which is slightly higher. The potential for general apparel spending is higher in the primary and secondary trade areas and above the national average. Potential spending on food is similar to performance by geography for other retail categories. The potential for spending in the city is closer to the national average, but higher in the primary and secondary trade areas.

Figure 1: Index Comparison of Typical Living Expenses

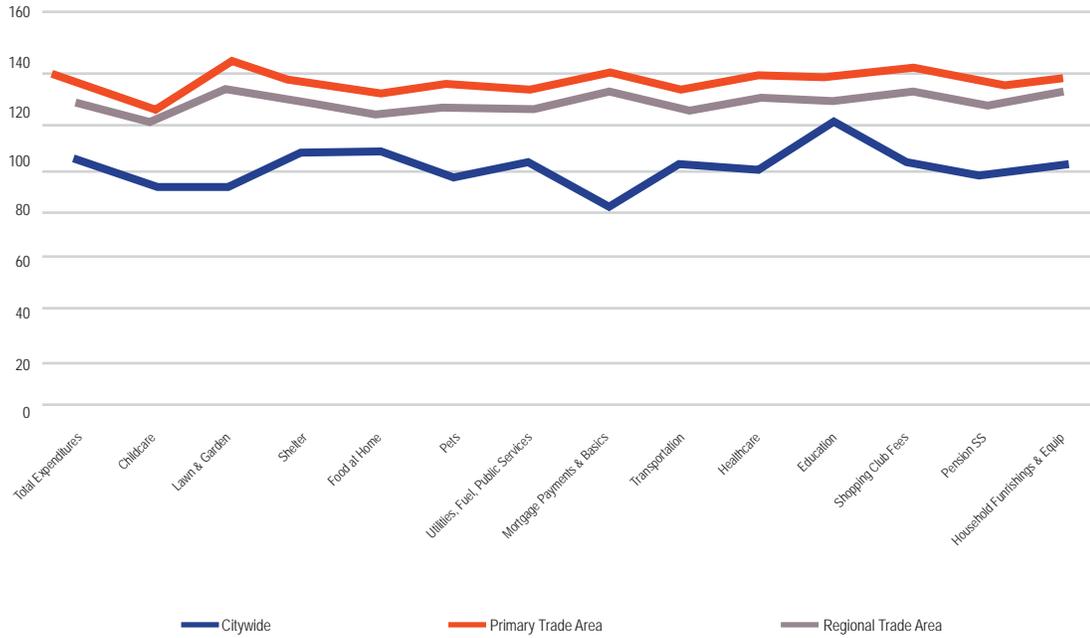


Figure 2: Potential Index Spending Comparison: Apparel

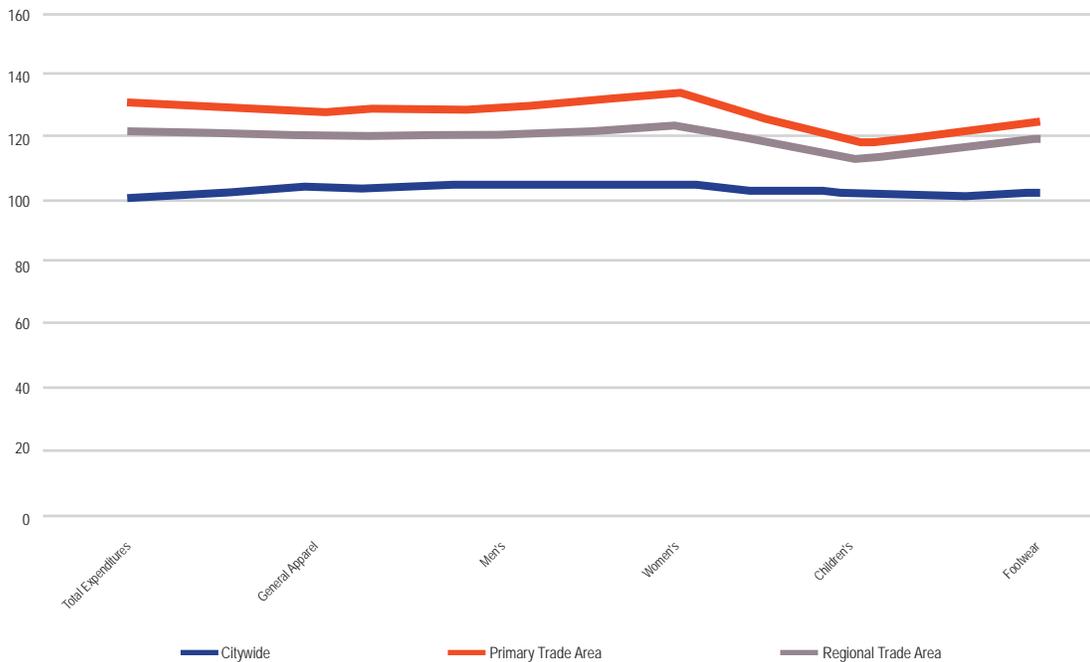


Figure 3: Potential Spending Index: Entertainment & Leisure

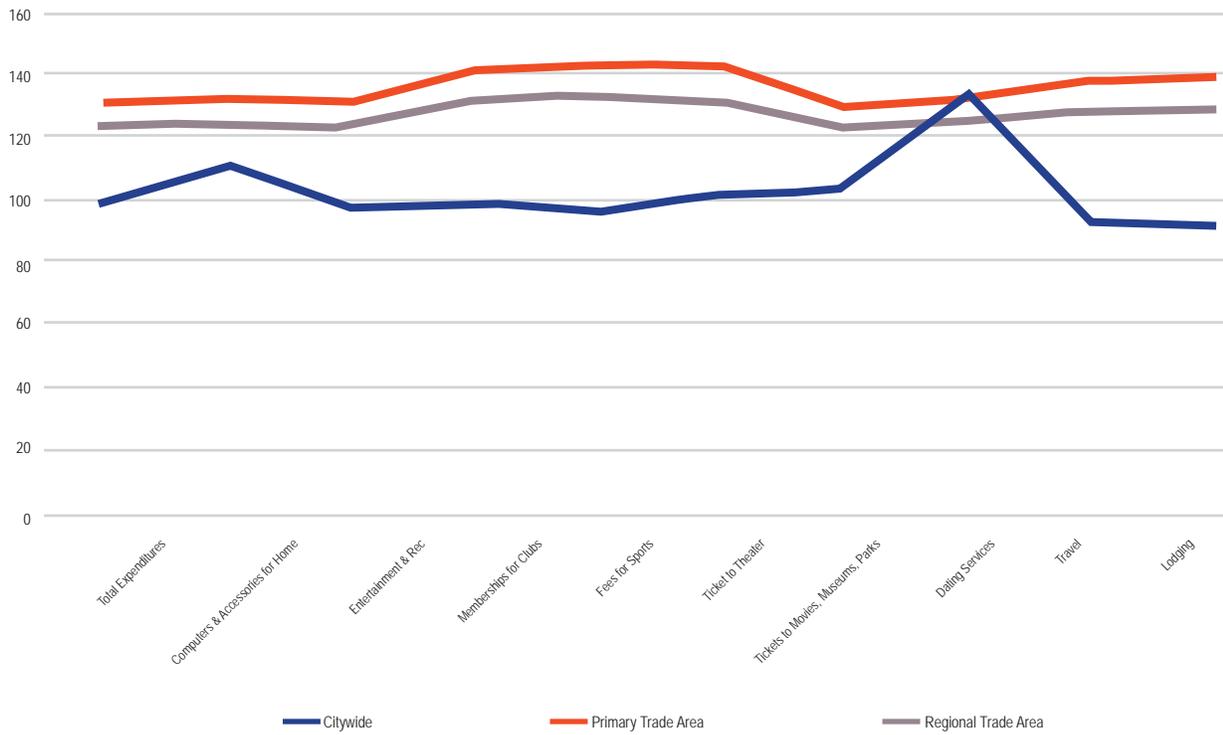
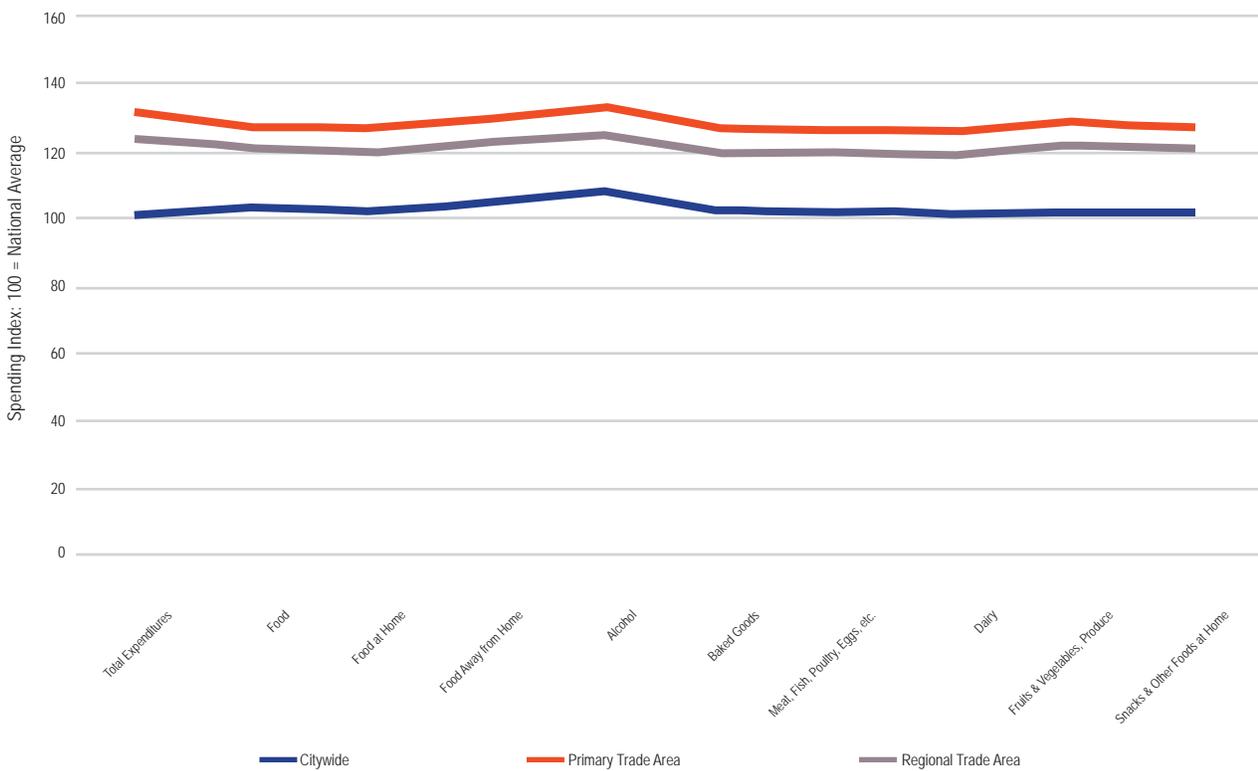


Figure 4: Potential Spending Index: Food



2.1.3 Shopper Preferred and Sentiment³

Consumer preferences also influence retail sales and potential retail development. We used a variety of sources, including stakeholder meetings, the Online Survey and the Merchants Square Annual Survey (MSQ) to gain an understanding of where and when consumers are most likely to shop today. The data also sheds insight on consumer preferences and likely spending (retail and dining). Additional information about preferences and choices is contained in the Section 3 (p.31).

The most popular retail centers and destinations in order of preference are:

- New Town
- Merchants Square
- Settlers Market
- Monticello Shopping Center
- Williamsburg Premium Outlets

The top three locations for dining (dinner and lunch) in order of preference are:

- Downtown
- New Town
- Richmond

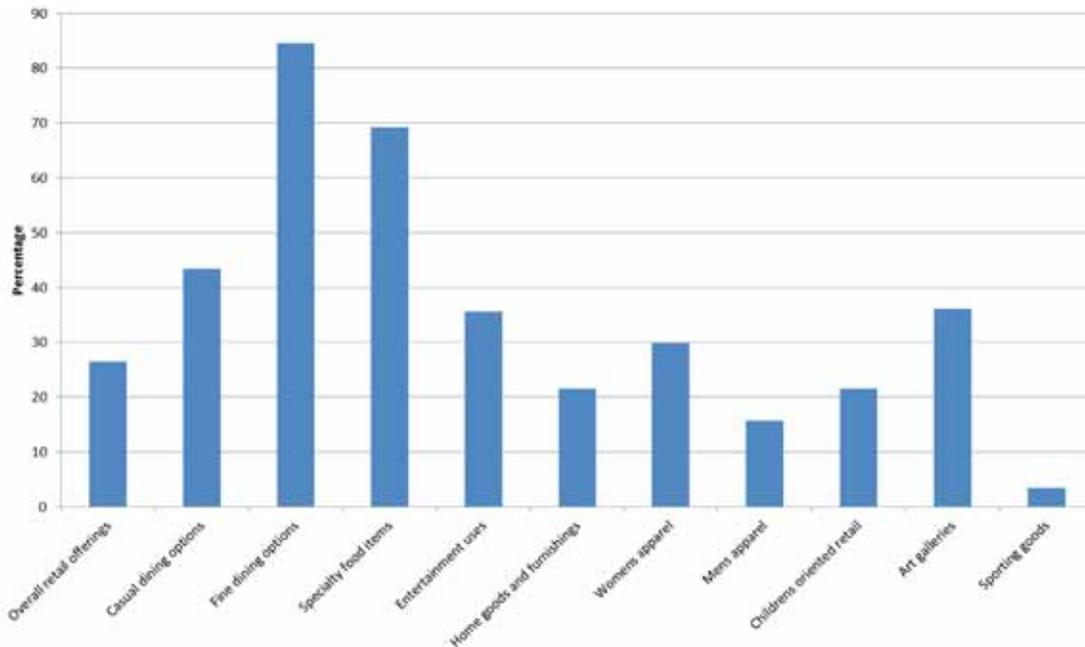
Food dominated the respondent's preferences for the type of retail they would like to see downtown, from casual dining and cafés to breweries and late-night venues for drinks, and spaces to gather for dancing and poetry readings. Locally owned businesses seem to have a very strong appeal to the local consumer base.

The top three types of restaurants people would like to see in downtown in order of preference are:

- Casual dining
- Cafes and coffee shops
- Ethnic restaurants

Figure 5 reports how respondents ranked individual retail categories. Percentages represent the good and very good options, and measure the quality of the current offerings downtown.

Figure 5: Summary of Rankings for Retail Categories in Downtown

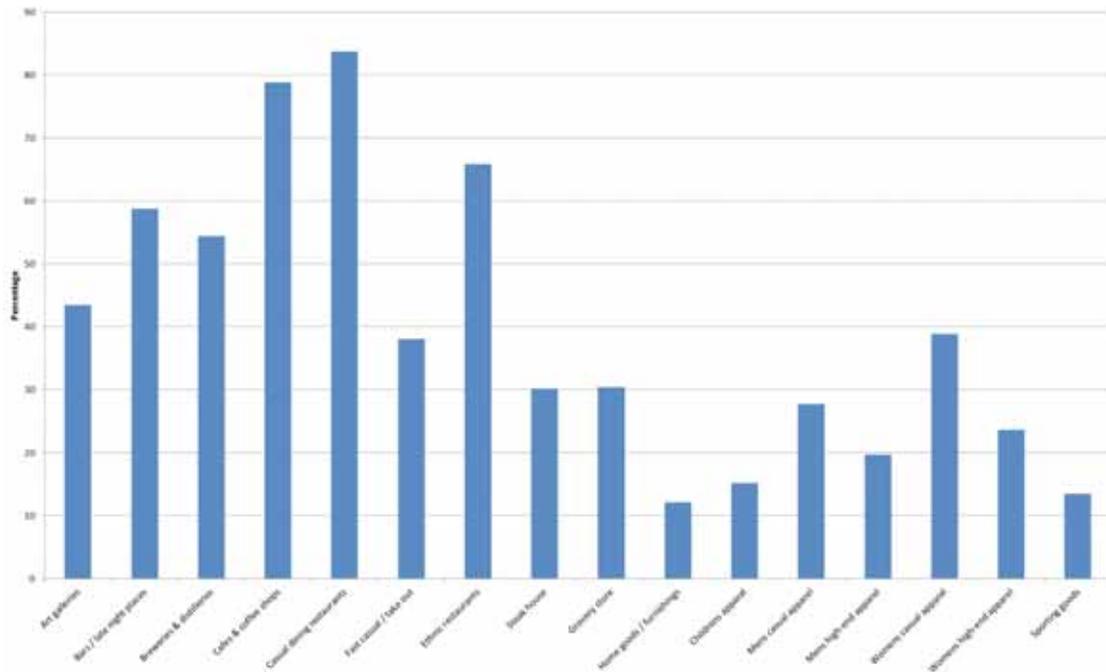


Ranked good and very good

³ Compiled through the Online Retail Perception Survey, Stakeholder Meetings, and MSQ Annual Surveys

Figure 6 illustrates what types of retail respondents would like to see in downtown.

Figure 6: Summary of Preferences for Retail in Downtown



Ranked strong or very strong

The Competitive Marketplace

There is abundant retail competition in this market. Major centers such as Merchants Square, New Town, Settlers Market, and the Williamsburg Premium Outlets offer shoppers easy access to more than two million square feet of retail and entertainment uses. The Williamsburg Shopping Center, which is being rebranded and repurposed as Midtown Row, a mixed-use development with retail, will augment this mix.

Many national retail brands have a presence in the market, whether in a traditional storefront or as an outlet at locations such as the Williamsburg Outlet Center, with 135 national brands on Richmond Road. Projects such as New Town, designed as a walkable mixed-use environment reminiscent of a traditional downtown replete with a grid and open space, offer shoppers more traditional entertainment options including movies (Regal Cinema) and affordable dining choices (Panera Bread, Corner Café).

When it comes to groceries, Williamsburg benefits from a strong mix of stores which provides

consumers access to groceries and fresh produce at a variety of price points. The market hosts traditional stores such as Food Lion, Walmart, and Harris Teeter and more boutique and upscale stores including Fresh Market and Trader Joes. Whole Foods is relatively accessible, a twenty-minute drive from downtown. As competition in grocers ramps up nationwide, interest in Williamsburg is expanding among newer international and organic brands looking at expanding market share. Aldi has one store in the market, and Lidl, is intent on a building a presence here. Several smaller organic stores that compete with Whole Foods are also exploring the market such as Earth Fare and Sprouts.

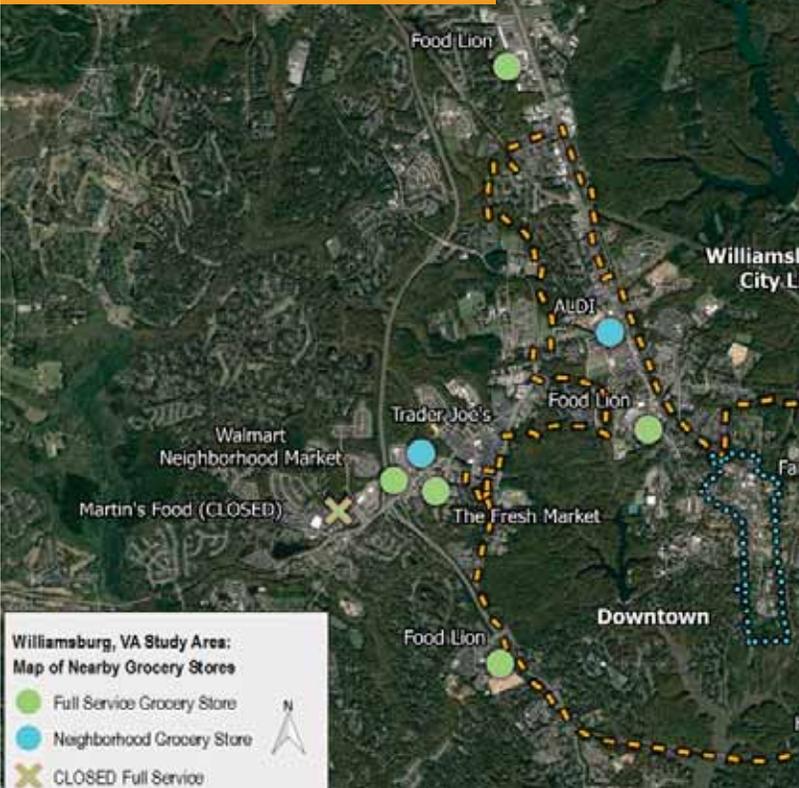
Though there has been some discussion regarding locating another grocer in the downtown area, The Online Perception Survey and the MSQ Surveys indicate this may not be a priority for consumers. It might be possible to achieve some of the demand for groceries and “grab and go” items with stores that sell fast casual and take away items and fresh food including produce.

Nearby Shopping Centers



Proposed Concept Midtown Row 9/1

Nearby Grocery Stores



2.1.4 Retail Brand Assessment

The City of Williamsburg sits amid a very diverse and concentrated retail market offering shoppers, visitors and residents access to most major retail brands at locations and centers within and adjacent to the city. These brands include many leading national brands and currently coveted brands such as Williams - Sonoma, Under Armour, Ulta, Timberland, Target, Talbots, Pier 1 Imports, Pandora, Nike, Michael Kors, Marshall's, Lilly Pulitzer, Justice, Home Goods, Edie Bauer, Crocs, Coach, Chico's, Carters, Calvin Klein, Brooks Brothers, Boss, Barnes & Noble, Bath & Body Works, and Ann Taylor. Though some of these centers are not within the city boundaries, they are readily accessible, and most are in the primary retail trade area. A few stores have multiple locations including Barnes & Noble and Chico's.

Notably absent are general merchandise and department stores such as Macy's and Bloomingdales, home furnishing stores, and those brands that appeal to younger audiences including Anthropologie, H&M, Forever 21, Uniqlo, Sephora, and Blue Mercury. Customers must travel to Hampton and Newport News to find many of these.

Several retail categories are weakly represented within the trade area including apparel (casual, teens, off price, beauty), service related tenants (eye wear), sporting goods, entertainment, home goods/furnishings, children's, and high-end apparel and boutiques other than the few at Merchants Square and at the Premium Outlets. The gaps in food oriented retail include fast casual brands and healthy foods that might appeal to students, workers, tourists and families; high-end dining, which today is limited to a few restaurants at Merchants Square (Blue Talon, Fat Canary, The Trellis Bar and Grill). There is no high-end steak house (Capital Grille, Morton's). Ethnic eateries are limited as are entertainment venues (night time bars, bowling).

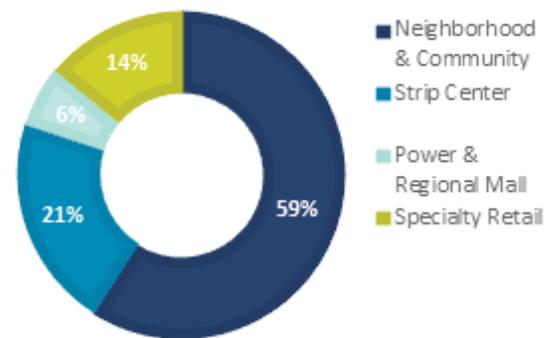
A closer look at downtown reveals a market that closely mirrors the primary trade area. Though some say that downtown Williamsburg is food heavy, the options are relatively narrow and consist of mostly American fare and fine dining. There are limited options of casual dining, family style restaurants, green and healthy choices and ethnic eateries downtown, all of which are highly sought by consumers. Colonial Williamsburg recently announced the addition of Mellow Mushroom a pizza restaurant with locations across the country and a new brewery/restaurant. Both restaurants will help to diversify the dining offerings. Several new

potential activity nodes presented in the section on placemaking (see **Placemaking Analysis p.31**) present an opportunity for new food related retail uses, including restaurants, casual dining and an urban format grocer. These proposed activity areas serve several purposes, including an opportunity to introduce anchors of activity (use and cluster) creation of new retail space to accommodate growth and tenants seeking space and, expansion of the overall retail district.

2.1.5 Retail Leasing

The current total retail inventory in the Williamsburg market (larger than the city boundaries) is 7.6 million square feet.⁴ A large share of the retail space in the Williamsburg market is in neighborhood and regional centers⁵ such as Merchants Square, New Town and Settlers Market, which in aggregate contribute over two million square feet of retail in the primary trade area. These centers are very competitive due to their convenience and free parking. The retail inventory at these centers is expected to increase as new projects come on line including the redeveloped **Midtown Row**, and future phases of the Shops at High Street.

Figure 7: Availability of Retail Space by Type



The retail vacancy rate in the city of Williamsburg has varied between 7.4 percent and 7.8 percent over the past 24 months, and at the time of the report is estimated to be slightly lower at 7.1 percent.⁶ While slightly higher than nearby markets, it is still below the national average for neighborhood and community retail centers at 9.9 .

4 Cushman Wakefield.

5 ICSC definition of centers averaging between 100,000-400,000 SF

6 LoopNet, Cushman Wakefield, 2017 Q1 Report

Table 8: Retail Leasing Fundamentals, Q1 2017

Market	Retail Vacancy Rate	Overall Avg. Asking Rents (Per/SF)	Range of Asking Rents (Per SF, NNN)	Total Inventory (SF)
Williamsburg	7.10%	\$15.84	\$10.00 - 29.01	7,607,311
Newport News	6.40%	\$14.00	\$8.00 - 20.50	9,118,050
Hampton Roads	6.10%	\$14.02	\$8.00 - 21.00	102,319,015

Nationally, average asking rents increased 0.4 percent in the first quarter of 2017, matching growth in the fourth quarter of 2016. In Williamsburg, average asking rents rose 3 percent from \$15.35 in 2016 to \$15.84 in the first quarter of 2017. Asking rents in the city vary by product. Older and inline space starts at \$10 /SF while average asking rents for newer space is \$25/SF. Both amounts are higher than surrounding and locally competitive markets. Rising rents are driving some tenants outside of the core of Williamsburg.

Trending in Retail

How people shop and where people shop has changed dramatically during the past decade. Our expectations for retail have also changed from the level of experience that occurs to the customer service performance. Some of this change corresponds with today's lifestyles - higher debt, smaller homes, increasingly transient, but also the advent of technology. In the "age of information" today's shoppers are smarter, have more choices and are more price savvy. Technology empowers the casual shopper putting pressure on retailers. Market shifts are also impacting retail from consolidations to shrinking stores. Merchants and landlords must adjust their models and adopt mainstream technology and marketing tools and tactics to remain competitive. The following is a snapshot of industry and consumer trends affecting the retail industry and real estate and downtown development.

Despite a wave of high-profile store closure announcements in the first quarter of 2017, retail real estate fundamentals remained strong.⁷ Vacancy rates at regional malls were just 7.9 percent and strip centers at 9.9 percent. Store closings are at an all-time high. Industry experts report the biggest reason why stores are closing now is that what consumers want has changed. The following is a snapshot of industry and consumer trends affecting retail real estate and downtown development.

⁷ REIS

Average Asking Rents /SF

- \$15.84 Williamsburg
- \$12.59 Hampton Roads
- \$14.00 Newport News
- \$16.08 Virginia Beach
- \$25.57 Northern Virginia

Baby boomers in their high purchasing years wanted products that were:

- Commercial
- Global
- Generic
- Prestigious
- Status
- Mass

Millennial and Gen Z consumers want products that are:

- Locally-sourced
- Ethically made, with fair salaries paid to everyone in the supply chain
- Environmentally friendly
- Artisanal
- Authentic
- Experiential

National Trends

1,500 – 2,000 SF AVG. STORE SIZE

- Fashion boutiques are running as small as 500 SF
- Store sizes are shrinking

SEE IT; BUY IT; HAVE IT DELIVERED

- Within 24 hours or the same day
- Showrooming is rising

LEASE TERMS ARE SHRINKING.

- 10 + 5 yrs was standard, 3 years is now okay
- Standard lease terms no longer exist

TRANSIENT RETAIL IS NOW COMMON

- Temporary stores drive traffic and test a market
- Shops within Shops and pop-ups are on the rise

EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL IS TRENDING

- Dining, drinking, and performance is tempting
- Merchandise plans include more entertainment oriented uses

ONLINE SALES ARE LESS THAN 10%

- Online spending is increasing
- How, when and where peoples shop is changing

51% OF ALL SALES BEGIN ONLINE

- Consumers expect to buy online and pick up in-store
- 85% of consumers still prefer an in-store experience, even if they buy online

INTEGRATED SELLING PLATFORMS WITH SMART TECH

- Bricks and mortar are linking to web based marketing
- Omni-channel marketing is a must regardless of size

DISCOUNT AND HIGH-END RETAIL MAKE GREAT NEIGHBORS

- Landlords and tenants are warming to new co-tenancy concepts
- Price points and brands are assimilating

LOYALTY PROGRAMS ARE BECOMING COMMONPLACE

- Reward programs can influence traffic and sales
- Independent brands and landlords are embracing rewards

INTEGRATION OF PRODUCTS AND EXPERIENCE IS SEAMLESS.

- Bookstores have theaters, apparel stores serve wine
- Product cross selling is the new normal

LOCALLY MADE AND SOURCED GOODS ARE APPEALING

- The decision to buy locally is a lifestyle choice
- Hyper local is driving retail and restaurant concepts

ENTREPRENEURIAL RETAIL CONCEPTS ARE EMERGING

- Local are increasingly less of a risk
- Landlords are increasing leasing to local purveyors

FOREIGN RETAILERS CONTINUE TO INCREASE US MARKET SHARE

- National and local retailers and brands feeling the pressure
- Grocery and apparel sector aggressively expanding (H&M, Aldi, Lidl)

CONVENIENCE IS KING WHEN IT COMES TO FOOD

- Explosive growth in “grab and go” – fast casual and meals
- Menus including more fresh, high-quality ingredients and meals to go

Commercial Trends

- A curated experience is imperative
- Experience and convenience often trump price today.
- Comparison-shopping and sales between independent businesses and chains is about “overall value, uniqueness, not just price”.
- Consumers are happy to “rent” rather than own when it comes to high-end fashion and home goods. Rent the Runway now offers a monthly subscription program.
- Cash usage for retail purchases is falling. Only 21% of those between 23-34 make all or most of their purchases with cash.
- Preferred payment types vary by age: people ages 25 to 44 preferred credit cards, while the 18-24 crowd and the 45-54 crowd prefer debit.
- Transactions are increasingly done electronically. 48% of smartphone users said they made a purchase from their device in 2016.
- Consumers are spending less on apparel and home goods and more on food and dining out.

- Apparel sales are trending toward casual and trendier and less costly items, even “throw away” attire.

When it comes to food...

- Dining and entertainment is more than one half of annual retail spending for Millennial populations.
- Younger generations eat more meals out than at home, and those at home are a blend of prepared food and take out.
- Fast casual and small plates are winning the dining wars over full service operations.
- Patrons, especially millennials, prefer restaurant brands that share their responsible beliefs and values. They go to restaurants that recycle and source locally.
- Increased demand for fresh food and locally sourced products is impacting menu offerings at all types of restaurants and grocers.
- Sales at grocers and restaurants for meal kits and “Grab and go items” that are partially prepared have grown dramatically since 2012. The jury is still out regarding long-term performance.
- More millennials are buying meals daily, which benefits grocers by an increasing number of daily trips.
- Consumers demand for healthy food and beverage options continues to drive traffic at leading grocery chains, compelling grocers to find innovative ways to “own” the healthy market.
- Grocers are going local, and in some cases, are redefining the assortment of offerings to include locally produced products to improve local appeal.
- Conventional is out - custom cocktails and blended beverages are increasingly popular.
- Fusion is not just for drinks, chefs are blending ethnic foods to create unique dining experiences.
- Locally grown and produced food and liquors are increasingly popular.

The Retail Audience

2.1.6 Who is the Williamsburg Customer

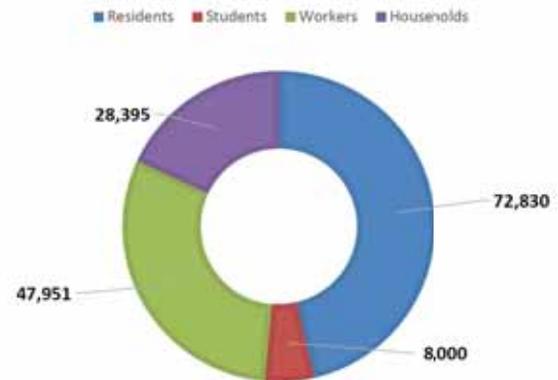
Understanding the consumer audience is a critical step in retail planning. Williamsburg’s location between Richmond and Virginia Beach, and the presence of William and Mary and Colonial Williamsburg lends it to a diverse consumer base. The combination of the workforce, residents, tourists and the student body offer a stable day time population. The summer months yield the highest level of tourists and visitors, which balances out the college summer term. Students represent a sizable portion of the retail consumer base

in downtown. Those living on campus enjoy access to a strong retail mix on campus that may satisfy their daily needs.

Figure 9 shows a breakdown of permanent audiences located within the primary trade area.

Complementing the permanent audience are tourists and visitors. More than five million people visit the area every year. There is also a considerable time

Figure 9: Target Audience Primary Trade Area



share community that is not well measured. And more people visit Colonial Williamsburg than buy tickets to exhibits.

2.1.7 Consumer Profiles

We examined the psychographic profile (segmentation) of the city and the individual trade areas to better understand consumer spending, habits and preferences. Segmentation provides an accurate and detailed description of neighborhoods and the residents that reside within those neighborhoods. ESRI’s Community Tapestry segmentation system combines the “who” of lifestyle demography with the “where” of local neighborhood geography to create a model of various lifestyle classifications or segments of actual neighborhoods which addresses distinct behavioral market segments. The hallmark of an effective segmentation methodology is that it provides insight into consumer preferences and spending patterns and the ability to predict likely opportunities and uses that will be successful.

What Does Psychographic Analysis Mean?

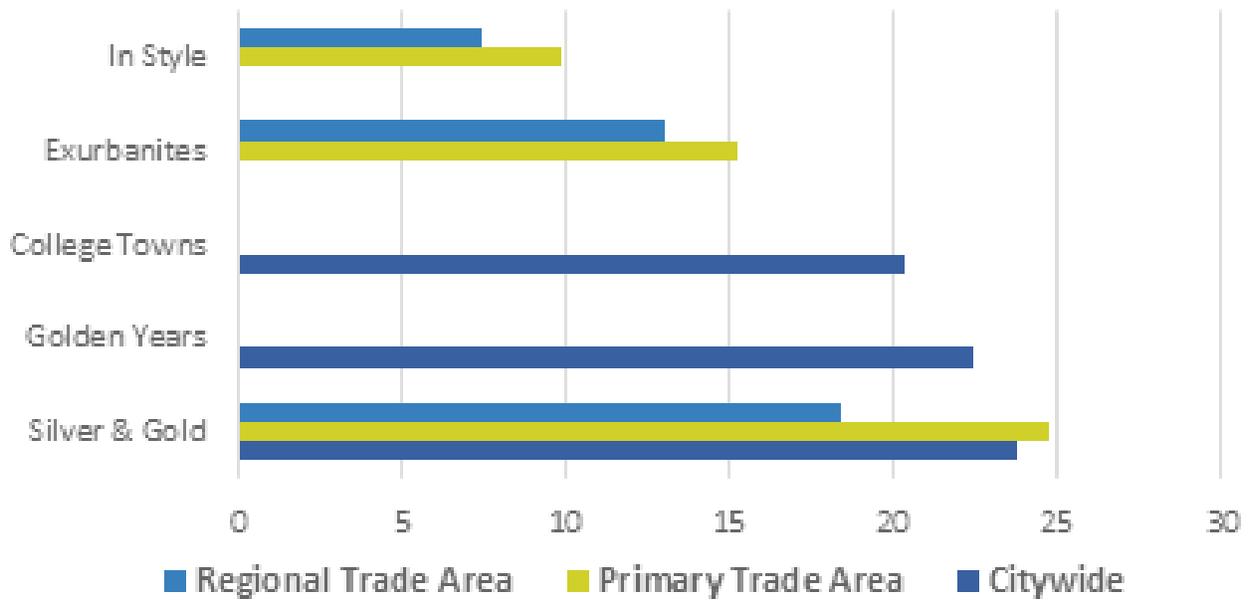
The psychographics of needs and wants segmentation operate on the theory that people with similar tastes, lifestyles, and behaviors seek and cluster with others having the same profile (“Birds of a feather flock together”) and that these behaviors can be measured, predicted and targeted. Retailers understand these

tendencies and use this information to profile, categorize and understand consumers in markets they are evaluating. They also use it to determine whether prospective consumer segments are an ideal fit for the goods and/or services they sell and to select the merchandise they sell.

demographic data for the three geographies areas studied. Figure 10 provides a snapshot of each of the prominent consumer segments in the primary trade area. This is followed by a comparison of retail indicators across each of the consumer segments.

Five segmentation groups prevail across the three geographies we examined: Silver & Golds, Exurbanites, Golden Years, complemented by College Towns and In Style. Each has distinct characteristics, but there is overlap and there are dominant traits, trends and preferences that stand out. These groups closely align with clusters and the

Figure 10: Tapestry Types



Silver & Gold

Median Age 61.8
Median HHI \$63,000
Avg. HH Size 2.02

- Affluent senior market, afforded the opportunity to retire to sunnier climates that feature exclusive communities and vacation homes. They have the free time, stamina, and resources to enjoy the good life.
- Commonly married empty nesters or singles living alone, primarily in single-family, owner occupied homes (83%), (including seasonal getaways and time-shares), retirement communities, or high-rise apartments. They are well-educated, and while primarily retired, still work, (41%). Household income derived from wages/salaries, Social Security, and investments.
- While the latest Smart Phone may not be their thing, they are partial to luxury cars, SUVs and convertibles. Their income/savings allow them to pursue luxuries and an active social life (dining and entertainment, travel, hobbies, golf and boating, and home maintenance and cleaning services. They typically outspend the national average on food, housing healthcare, entertainment and recreation, and spend less than national average apparel. They are avid readers of newspapers, magazines (sports and travel), and books (audio, e-readers, or tablets).

Exurbanites

Median Age 49.6
Median HHI \$98,000
Avg. HH Size 2.48

- Currently approaching retirement, with few signs of slowing down (60% still employed) they have a lifestyle that is both affluent and urbane and travelled. Their proximity to metropolitan centers allows them to support the arts and culture and local nonprofits.
- They are largely empty nesters, including childless married couples, and primarily live in single-family homes with a high median value of \$346,000, preferring a more expansive home style in less crowded neighborhoods. Home ownership is close to 90 % and most still carry mortgages. Median income and household wealth are well above the national average which translates to strong purchase power.
- This group is well educated, over 50% have a college degree. Quality rather than cost drives their purchasing. Personal style (home and apparel) is important in their choices. They prefer late model luxury cars and SUVs, natural or organic products, and avidly spend money on home improvement and personal care (beauty, spa etc.). Their spending puts them well above the average household on food, housing and entertainment, including recreation for themselves and their kids. Tech savvy the use the Internet for everything from shopping to managing their finances.

In Style

Median Age 41.1
Median HHI \$66,000
Avg. HH Size 2.33

- This is a fairly affluent market with strong employment and income supplemented by investments. They embrace an urbane lifestyle that includes support of the arts, travel, and extensive reading. They are connected and make full use of the advantages of mobile devices. Professional couples or single households without kids, they have time to focus on their homes and interests.
- These city dwellers primarily live in single-family homes, (or town homes) in older neighborhoods with a median value of \$213,500. They spend money on entertainment, dining out and their homes.
- They are partial to late model SUVs or trucks. Homes are an integral part of their styles, and invest in home remodeling/maintenance. They prefer organic foods, and many grow their own vegetables. They are financially active and savvy and have a variety of investments to home equity lines of credit and tend to be well insured and well invested for retirement. They actively support the arts, culture, charities and causes.

Conclusions about the Retail Audience, Market and Competition

Historically, downtowns were where people shopped. Retail clustered in city cores, creating a center for community and even entertainment. Investment in transportation resulted in strong suburban growth. As residential development moved out of the city core, retail followed. Many retail centers are designed to emulate a traditional downtown environment.

Today the appeal of convenience and the desire to live, work and play downtown is driving growth in many communities. This is more challenging for small communities such as Williamsburg that do not have the density to support considerable new retail. Additionally, in a small market, the audience

tends to be mobile (including commuters out of the market) and many of their retail needs are satisfied elsewhere.

Downtown Williamsburg must differentiate itself as a destination that cannot be found elsewhere in the region. It must offer an experience and an atmosphere that resonates with a broad audience (residents, students, retirees, visitors) by offering a range of amenities. The ideal mix of retail including entertainment, dining, specialty retail and some local-serving retail (grocery store, pharmacy, etc.) will give people a reason to come. Locally owned, designed and produced goods (restaurants, artisan items, food, apparel, furniture) and a selection of affordable entertainment uses (dining, events, theater) set in an appealing environment, will give people a reason to linger.

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3.0 Placemaking Analysis

The City of Williamsburg is a culturally and historically rich city with many amenities to provide to its residents. It is attractive to a variety of people, including families, retirees, students, tourists and visitors. Attractors include proximity to large cities and ample outdoor activities, the College of William and Mary, Colonial Williamsburg, nearby shopping outlets and Busch Gardens Williamsburg and Water Country USA.

The City of Williamsburg, by requesting and funding the Downtown Vibrancy, Design, and Marketing Plan, recognized that improvements could be made to the downtown area to improve the physical environment for residents, students, and visitors alike, and promote it as a vibrant hub for the City. Williamsburg starts from a much stronger position than many other downtowns. There is a large and diverse retail base, relatively little vacancy, and an overall healthy retail environment. However, there is room for adjustment. Downtown today lacks the ideal vibrancy and street life of a bustling, active downtown. Many conditions contribute to the current state of downtown Williamsburg. Several are a product of the built environment, while others are the product of perception and unclear physical and perceived definitions of space. The remainder of this section describes the current conditions that inhibit downtown's potential for greater success.



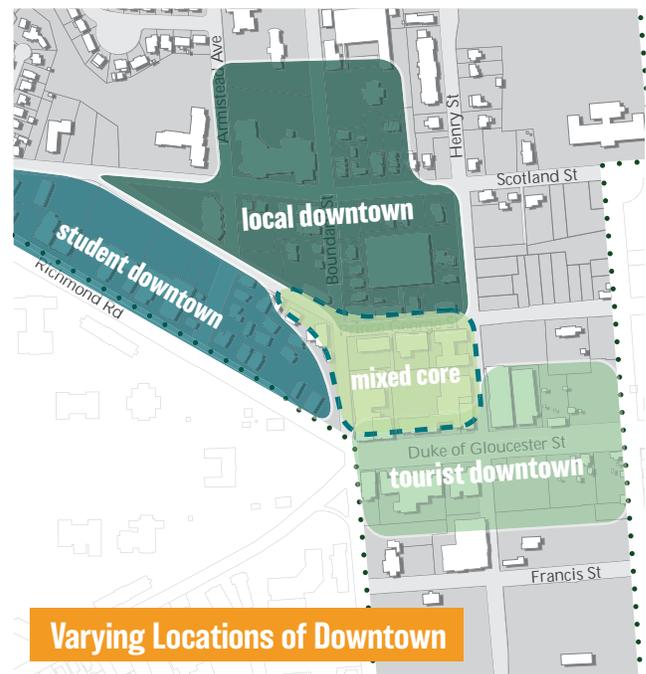
3.1 Identifying a Downtown Core

It is not a simple task to define where "downtown" Williamsburg is – or should be - located. The Study Area (p.31) is comprised of a variety of land uses and densities and only a portion of it is conducive to creating a vibrant, active downtown environment.

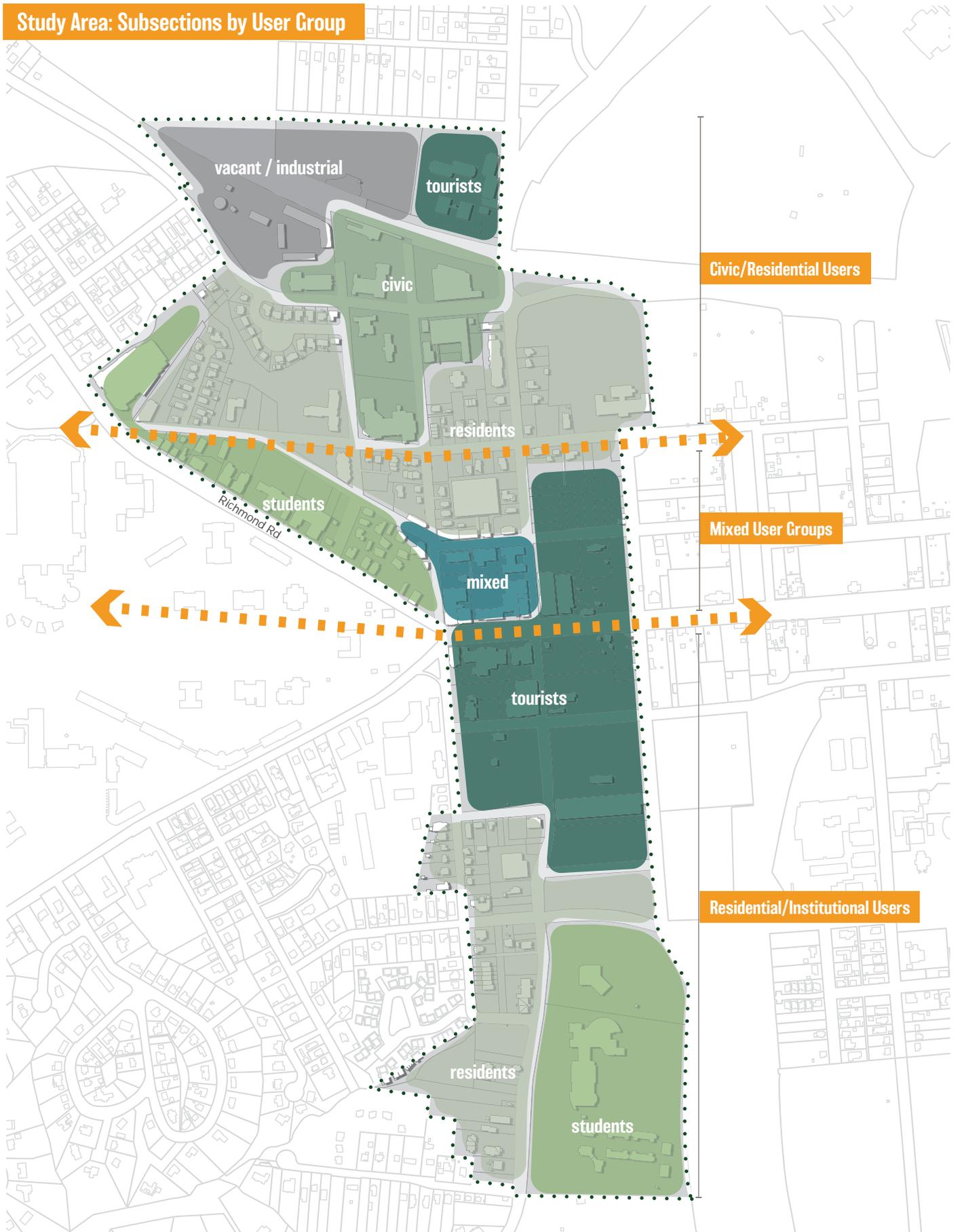
The "Study Area: Subsections by User Group" map (p.33) shows the study area broken into regions by user. The southern and northern portions of the study area are primarily civic, residential, and institutional uses. The region defined as the "Mixed User Groups" is most suitable to a downtown environment.

A typical downtown in a city the size of Williamsburg has a main street or intersection. This allows visitors to quickly understand where it starts and stops, and how big it is. Williamsburg's current downtown core, however, is really three blocks and two streets. This configuration makes it hard for users to understand the boundaries of the downtown core.

When asked to describe "downtown," stakeholders had different ideas about the physical location of the downtown, although patterns emerged, as shown in "Varying Locations of Downtown." To a visitor, or non-resident, downtown Williamsburg is most commonly seen as the Duke of Gloucester Street and surrounding retail offerings of Merchants Square. To residents and students of the College of William and Mary, the downtown area is comprised similarly of Merchants Square, but also extends north toward the public library and train station, and northwest down Scotland and Prince George Streets toward the triangular intersection of Scotland St. and Prince George St. The students also include the popular delis on Richmond and Scotland Streets in their definition of what comprises the downtown area.



Study Area: Subsections by User Group



3.2 Streetscape Improvements

One reason the downtown is hard to define is that the streets lack infrastructure that visually delineate downtown streets from the rest of the city. In a typical downtown, the density and/or height of buildings are higher than surrounding areas, and the streets are defined as special in some way. Examples of these types of improvements include streets elements such as:

- › unique sidewalk pavers
- › wide sidewalks to accommodate heavier volumes of pedestrian traffic and sidewalk cafes
- › lamp posts and other types of lighting
- › banners and upgraded signage and wayfinding
- › high quality permanent and movable landscaping such as street trees and planters
- › high volume bike infrastructure

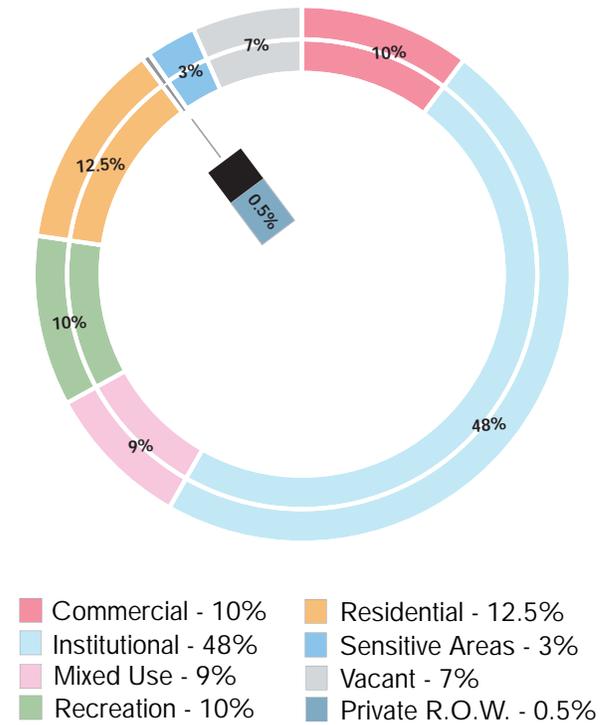
Many of these elements are sporadically placed in downtown Williamsburg. This sporadic placement of streetscape improvements leaves the visitor with few visual clues to signal that they are within the downtown. Further, the adherence to one style of street amenity that blends with the colonial feel of the Historic Williamsburg blurs the lines between where downtown starts and Colonial Williamsburg begins. There is no "pop" to catch the viewer's attention or differentiate the city of Williamsburg from Colonial Williamsburg.

3.3 Mix of Land Uses within the Study Area

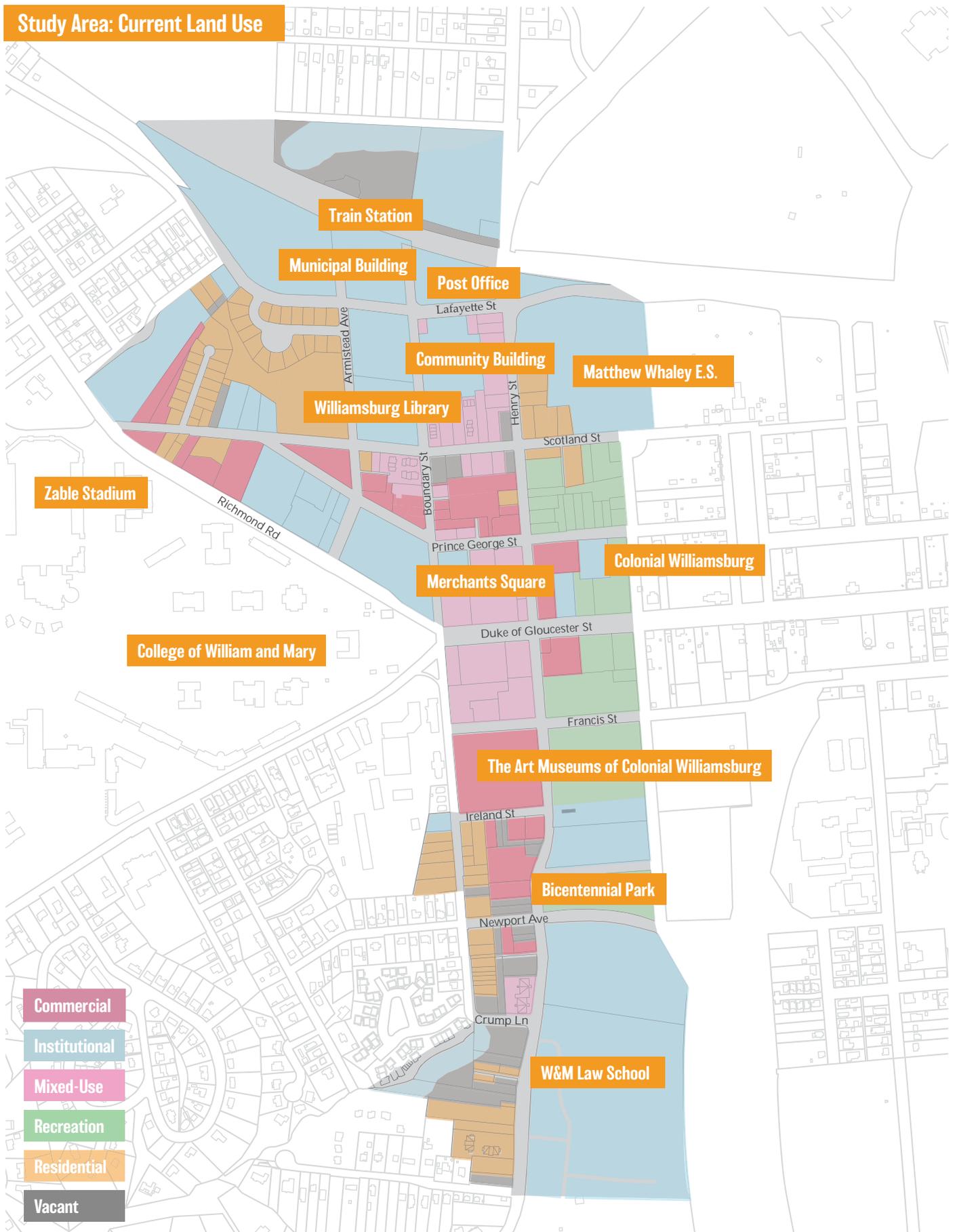
The existing mix of land uses in the downtown core presents a further barrier to vibrancy. As illustrated in the "Study Area: Current Land Use" map (p.35) and the Land Use as Percent of Study Area diagram (right), institutional uses occupy half the land within the entire study area, with few commercial properties, residential units or public open and recreational space. Ownership data shows that a majority of non-developed "open space" in the study area is privately owned. As a result, there are relatively few people on the sidewalks, which makes the downtown feel empty.

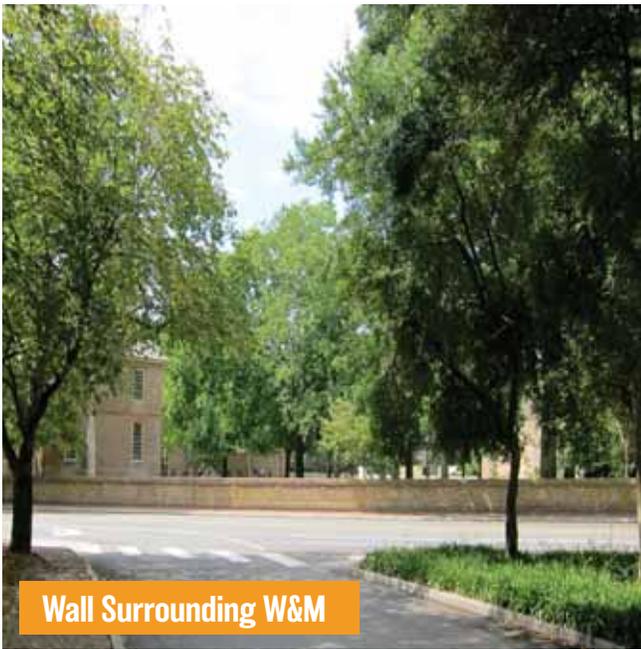
A short supply of third places also contributes to a smaller number of people visiting the downtown. A third place (or third space) is a social surrounding that is separate from the two usual social environments of home ("first place") and the office ("second place").

Land Use as Percent of Study Area



Study Area: Current Land Use





Wall Surrounding W&M

Third places are places you go to on a regular basis, such as convenience stores, coffee shops, or dry cleaners, and are critical for bringing visitors to an area and building a sense of community.

The physical and mental "wall" between the College of William and Mary (right) and the city of Williamsburg separates the students, one of the largest populations in Williamsburg, from the downtown. A lack of destinations for students in the downtown also reduces the desire for students to use the downtown.

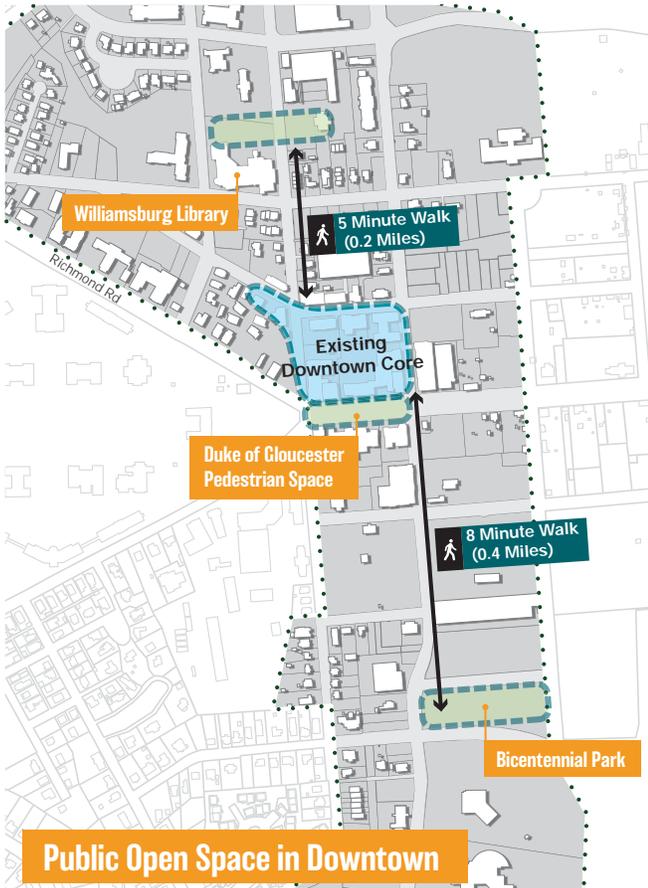
A. Mixed-Use Buildings & Residential

The current mixture of building uses in downtown produces some activity during the day as people travel to and from work, but results in a quiet downtown after office hours (see Current Land Use Map, p.35). There are also limited residential options within the downtown. A higher volume of residential uses in the downtown, which was expressly encouraged by stakeholders in the interview process, would increase the street life of the downtown, and would bolster use of local shops and destinations.

B. Public Open Space/Green Space

Bicentennial Park and the outdoor space in the rear of the public library are the only true public green spaces in the Study Area. The open field adjacent to the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg is a large open space, but it does not feel connected to downtown, and is not public. That lawn is used for events on occasion. Similarly, Duke of Gloucester west of Henry Street feels a part of Colonial Williamsburg and not a true public space. The two green spaces that are within the downtown are located on the fringe of the downtown (see Public Open Space in Downtown, left). An open space in a prime location, in the heart of the "action," is sorely needed. There is also a need for centrally located playgrounds, park space, and lawn areas.

The current open spaces also feel inaccessible to residents, students and visitors; they do not feel free to visit and relax there. There are no areas in the downtown that feel conducive to a non-programmed experience - to relaxing with a picnic lunch, or throwing a Frisbee with your dog. Furthermore, there are no small open spaces or green spaces in-between the larger parks. These smaller areas of green or plazas are necessary to ensure the downtown area is cohesively connected and people have access to a variety of open space amenities.



Public Open Space in Downtown

C. Ownership

Two large institutional owners – Colonial Williamsburg (300+ acres) and the College of William and Mary (1,200 acres + outparcels), control most of the land in downtown. Colonial Williamsburg also owns and operates Merchants Square and several out-parcels on Prince George and Henry Streets. The remainder of retail space in downtown is owned by individual landlords and the City of Williamsburg.

3.4 Street Bounce

Within the downtown, the streets also lack "street bounce," or a reason to cross the street, visit additional shops or restaurants, mingle on the sidewalk and chat with friends, and generally extend one's stay. Bounce is primarily a product of the retail and commercial offerings on one or both sides of the street. A number of streets within the downtown area have only one active edge of shops and restaurants. The limited number of destinations on a street restricts the probability that the street will reach a critical mass of people required to make the street feel lively and active.

3.5 Shade and Greening

With daily high temperatures in the summer months that hover close to 85 degrees Fahrenheit, the brick sidewalks and lack of shade in Williamsburg can leave residents and visitors alike confined to interior spaces. With nobody left to mingle on the sidewalk, the downtown appears less frequented than it may truly be.

3.6 City Programming

The location of parades and events such as Liberty's Ice Pavilion make Duke of Gloucester Street the current social hub of Williamsburg. These activities are hosted by Colonial Williamsburg, and many require attendees to purchase tickets.

Duke of Gloucester Street looks, and more importantly feels, like Colonial Williamsburg to visitors. It has a vibe that is distinctly different from other streets within the downtown. When events and programming are held on Duke of Gloucester Street, the energy created by those events stays on the street; it does not disperse into other parts of the downtown. The restraints of the Street constrict the organic energy that could occur in the downtown during events and traps it in a space that is highly



regulated by Colonial Williamsburg.

Nonetheless, there are other events that take place in the downtown. A series of programming is offered during the summer including Summer Breeze Concerts and Movie Nights. However, these too come with restrictions and limitations due to their nature as permitted events, also creating a missed opportunity for local restaurants and eateries to benefit from the crowds. Rather, the City should be the entity to host events, with the support of local businesses and vendors, in spaces that feel like part of Williamsburg's downtown, as recommended in Section 5.0.

None of these events create connections to other uses and districts including the Arts District.

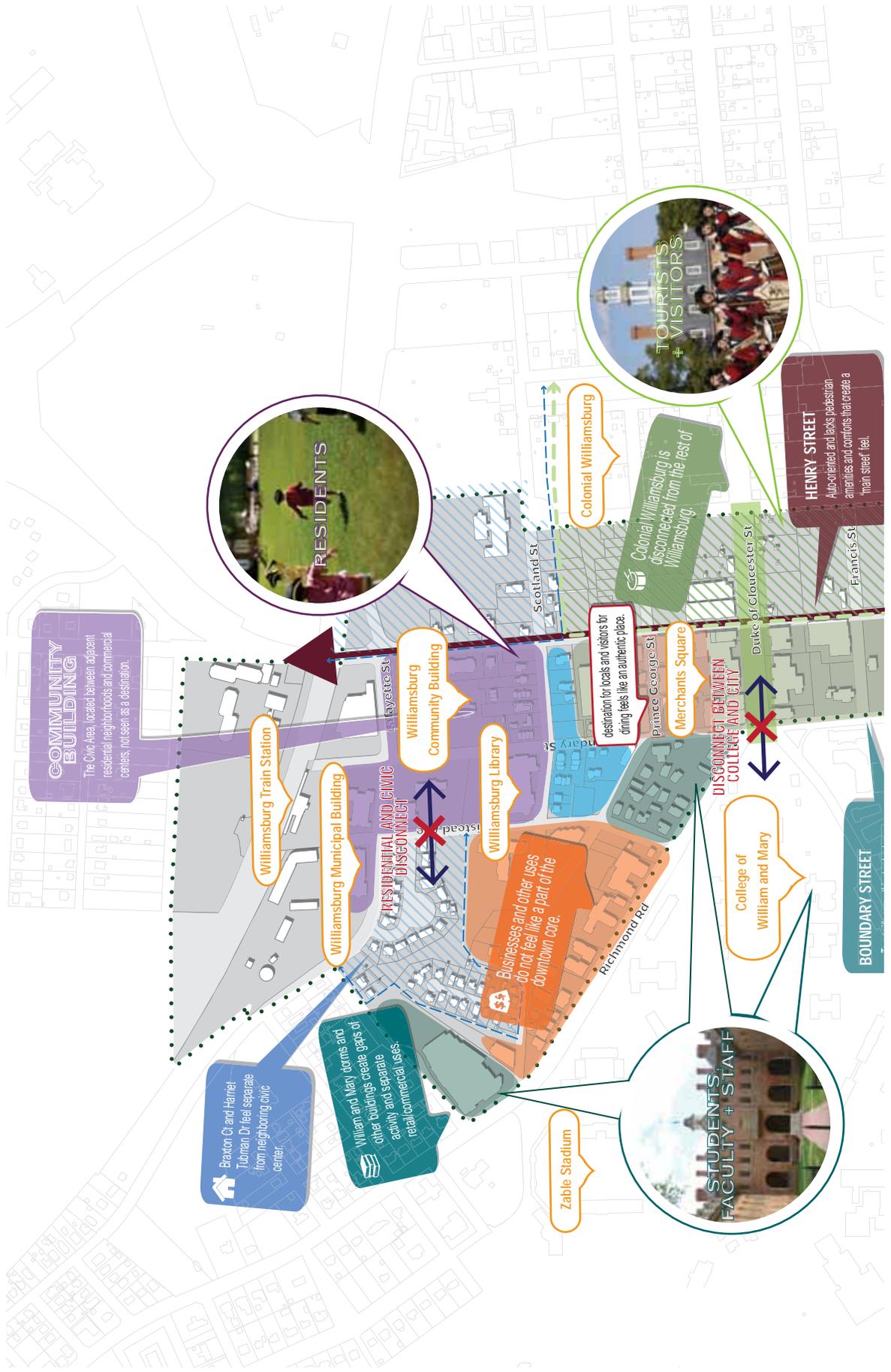
3.7 Existing Conditions Summary and Map

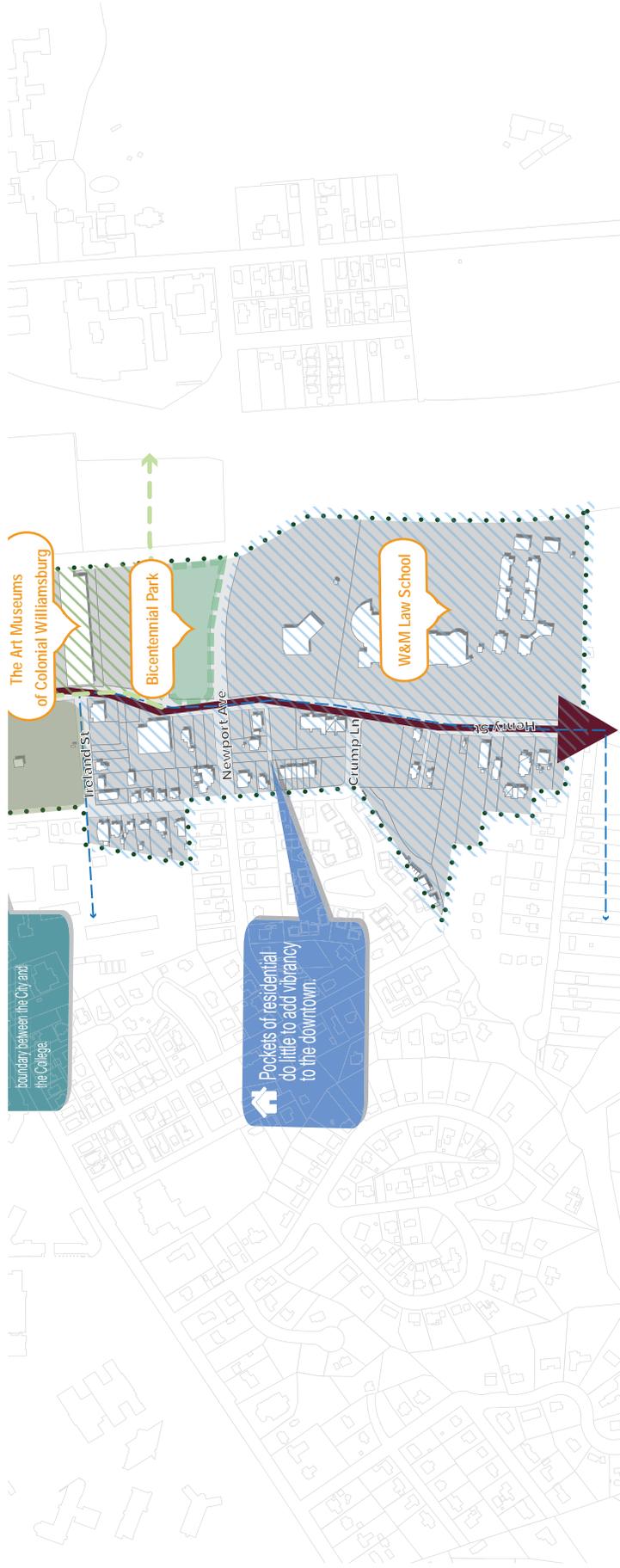
The general findings of the plan, discussed above, represent conditions that are found throughout the downtown, and conditions that are site-specific. The Existing Conditions Map (p.39-40) displays this information graphically.

The Recommendations section of this report (Section 5), identifies numerous recommendations, both large-scale and permanent, and small-scale and impermanent opportunities that can help bring vibrancy to the built fabric of the downtown. Additionally, this section will outline the new retail uses and locations that will help to strengthen the retail market.

EXISTING CONDITIONS MAP

Downtown Vibrancy, Design & Marketing Plan

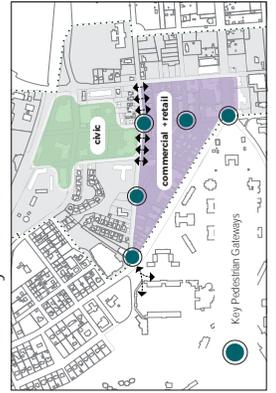




• Major Downtown Roads Network



• Gateway Intersections



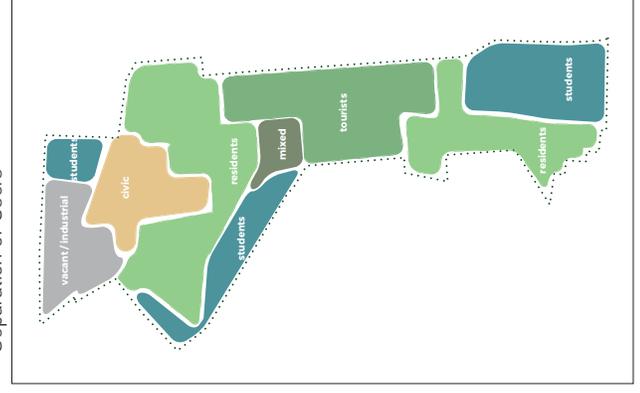
• Active/Quiet Streets



• Open Space/Public Green Space



• Separation of Users

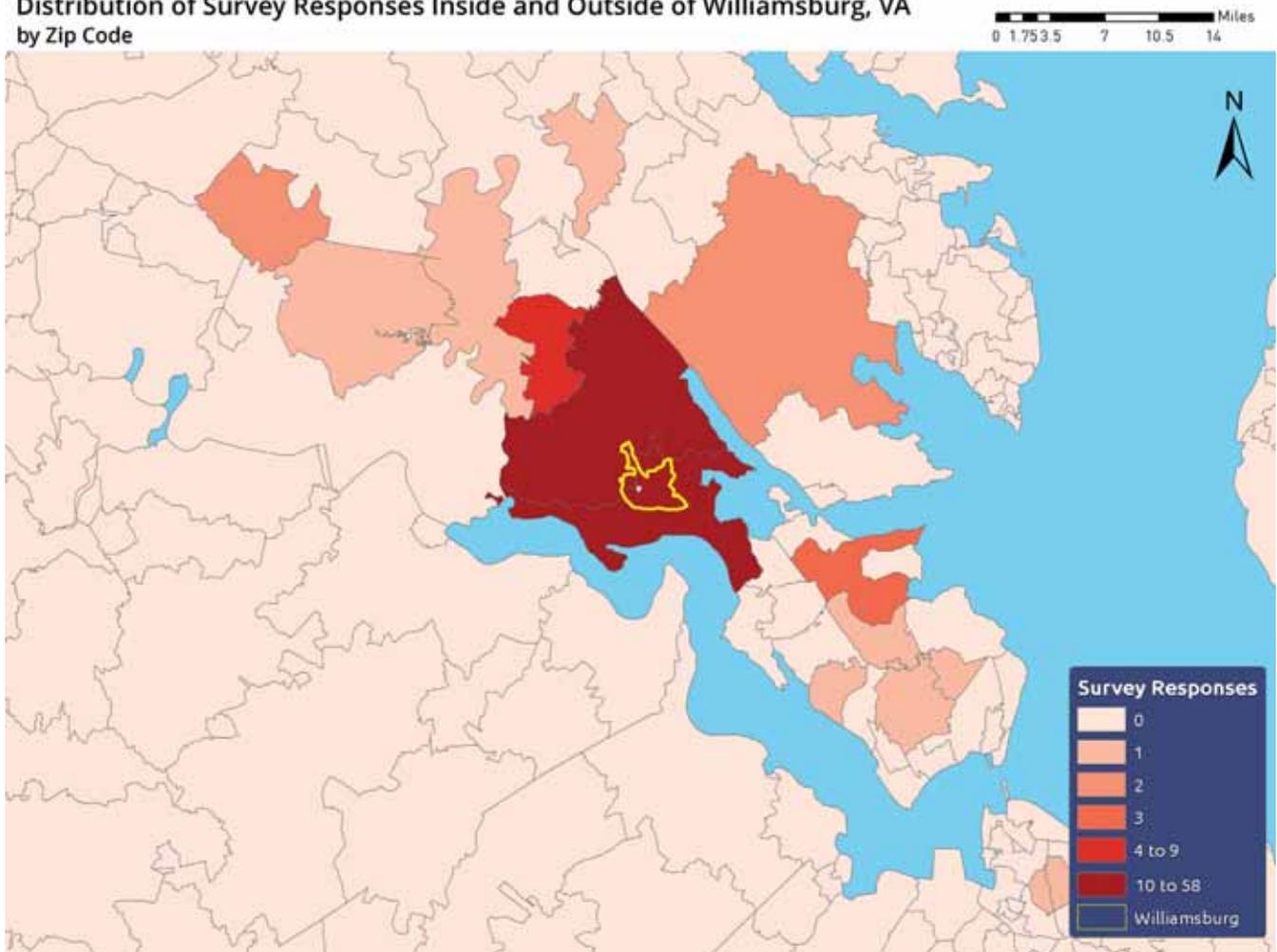


4.0 Community Engagement

Our approach to community engagement assumes that all local citizens have something to contribute to any planning process. Local stakeholders enjoy a level of familiarity and awareness of a market that is critical when considering change. Further, when citizens are engaged in community planning they tend to be more open to embrace any changes that do occur. We employed a range of tools to ensure we had access to the widest cross section of stakeholders possible. These tools included focus groups, one on one meetings and interviews with industry groups, elected officials, city leadership, area businesses, residents, and individuals and students affiliated with William and Mary as well as an online survey.

The stakeholder meetings were conducted in a relaxed format to encourage an open dialogue and communication. Participants (59 total) were provided questionnaires which allowed us to quantify their age, and location, and included a few detailed questions regarding preferences and perception.

**Distribution of Survey Responses Inside and Outside of Williamsburg, VA
by Zip Code**



The Online Retail Perception Survey that was released to the public, with questions pertaining to the shopping and retail preference, dining and entertainment spending and preferences and issues that affect the physical environment. Over 1,200 people opened the survey, and 241 completed it.

The result of all these tools is a comprehensive set of inputs that reveal patterns and trends about how people perceive downtown and why they go downtown, information about where and how people shop and preferences about the type of retail they prefer, and input on the physical environment including what is present today and what people might like to see in downtown.

Stakeholder Groups

The responses to key questions asked of all the stakeholders' groups are summarized below. Similar comments were combined and discreet comments are included in quote section. We also highlighted overarching messages that emerged during the meetings, including perceptions about downtown.

4.1.1 Where is Downtown Williamsburg

In many communities, the perception of downtown varies among individual users, given their experience with downtown, but there is a general understanding of where downtown is. While downtown Williamsburg is also understood by individual user experiences, its boundaries are less clear. The unique street patterns combined with a few large landowners and uses, makes defining downtown Williamsburg more complex. Before exploring how to enhance the vibrancy of downtown, we need to confirm where it is and what it is.

The stakeholder groups indicated that there are two commonly understood definitions of downtown Williamsburg.

- › The first concept places Duke of Gloucester Street as the center of downtown. This view includes William & Mary, Historic Colonial Williamsburg and uses up and along Henry Street, Prince George Street toward Scotland Street and Richmond Road, and North Boundary Street to Lafayette as the western Boundary.
- › The second concept includes Merchants Square/ Duke of Gloucester Street as the core, and Colonial Williamsburg and William and Mary, but boasts more expansive boundaries. In this view, downtown

extends as far north as the Train Station, the football stadium to the west and the cemetery to the south.

The most common boundaries are Richmond Road, considered by most to be the southern boundary, and Duke of Gloucester Street to the East. Midtown has its own identify and is not generally associated with downtown. There is some debate whether the Arts District, Midtown Row and Tribe Square are part of downtown.

4.1.2 Perception of Downtown

How citizens view downtown, and their perception of it, informs the value and role downtown plays in the local economy and in peoples' daily routines. The perception of downtown is best framed in a dialogue of assets, strengths, amenities, weaknesses and challenges.

The following is a summary of the responses received from stakeholders about their overall perception of downtown and how and why they use it.¹

Emotional and physical factors

- › Overall, downtown is safe
- › History is the defining asset
- › Merchants Square and Williamsburg are losing uniqueness, partly due to the switching from boutique shops to chain stores
- › Downtown needs to be expanded
- › Students and locals don't shop downtown
- › Downtown is hard to define: Merchants Square used to be the downtown but it was taken by Colonial Williamsburg and DoG St. was the center of downtown
- › New Town has fractured some of the camaraderie of downtown
- › All corridors lead to downtown but it's dominated by tourists and students
- › The distance between attractions/areas is farther than people would be willing to walk
- › Connectivity between Midtown and downtown may be difficult. The difficulty is largely due to sidewalks and curb cuts
- › Williamsburg not as dead at night as it once was, but

¹ Similar comments were combined; discreet comments are included in quote section.

it is hard to find “the scene”

- › The city is not child friendly. For example, retail options are not family friendly in either layout or price)
- › The market still too small for some larger restaurant chains
- › Growth and development can possibly ruin the character of downtown

What is the primary purpose that brings you to the downtown area?

- › Dining for all meals: lunch, dinner and breakfast. Some respondents indicated they ate in downtown
- › Quick food and snacks, such as the Cheese Shop, Aromas, and ice cream
- › Entertainment and special events, such as the theater, movies, and drinks. Less frequently these events includes concerts and holiday festivals
- › The Farmers Market
- › Meetings, often with coffee or a meal, primarily breakfast and lunch
- › Exercise, primarily walking and running, and secondarily biking
- › Visiting Colonial Williamsburg. Several have annual passes
- › When friends and family visit. Bring out of town visitors downtown to Merchants Square and Colonial Williamsburg
- › Shopping

What are the greatest assets in downtown?

- › Uniqueness, charm
- › History
- › Walkability
- › Duke of Gloucester Street
- › Farmers market
- › Skating rink
- › William & Mary and Colonial Williamsburg
- › Scale of the buildings in Merchants Square & adjacent blocks
- › Walkability of Colonial Williamsburg
- › The Kimball Theater

What are the greatest challenges in downtown?

- › The city is not friendly for empty nesters
- › Parking – cost, availability, and ease of locating spots
- › Lack of accessibility and mobility (ADA compliance), sidewalks (too small, hard to navigate, lack of ramps), parking, etc. Need better lights and better sidewalks
- › Balancing needs and wants of various audiences – tourists, students, elderly, and residents
- › Retail does not satisfy the needs of a downtown shopping district
- › Limited affordable food options which limits frequency for residents and students (and visitors)
- › Reputation of being expensive for both consumers and businesses
- › The only tenants who can afford to move into Colonial Williamsburg/Merchants Square are big national tenants
- › Colonial Williamsburg/Merchants Square is losing uniqueness
- › Overwhelmed by tourists and students
- › Lack of density
- › Lack of residential choices
- › Poor and limited signage
- › Street orientation is confusing
- › Perception of too much traffic
- › Hours of operation are inconsistent for area businesses
- › Nothing to do after 9 pm
- › Not kid friendly (cost or use)

What other type of amenities would you like to see downtown?

- › Maps (of downtown, cultural activities and assets)
- › More and better signage (parking, events, pedestrian crossing)
- › Free parking, more parking
- › Better sidewalks, wider sidewalks, ADA compliance
- › More and better lighting – along streets and sidewalks
- › Activities for families (nothing permanent)
- › Benches and/or more seating (including at bus stops or periodically around town, covers for weather)
- › A playground, dog park, and pop-up parks
- › Outdoor heaters in the winter

- › More art installations, art work
- › More greenery/landscaping
- › Retail diversity
- › Bike share and bike racks
- › Enhanced public transportation and access to transit. Increased bus service and more frequent routes. Better bus stops, including cover, signage, and seating

What types of retail, other businesses and uses would you like to see downtown?

- › Co-working space
- › Recreation or fitness center
- › Running store, bike store
- › Bike sharing
- › A museum of some sort (e.g. local history though not colonial)
- › More businesses and amenities to attract both young professionals and older populations
- › Pop-up tourism station (accessing crowds of people wherever they might congregate). (There isn't enough support to establish a full-time tourism office)
- › Things to do other than walking around. Something active for \$5 or less
- › More affordable things to do (for \$5 rather than \$50)
- › Other retail/entertainment uses rather than merely food or apparel (sporting and music venue, galleries)
- › Decorative arts stores
- › More diverse food offerings, particularly healthy food
- › Night-life, including bars and other after-hours offerings
- › A speakeasy. For example, a "Busboys and Poets" idea would fit well
- › Affordable retail/restaurants. (Not enough options for a student or "non-tourist" budget)
- › Enhanced music scene - a venue for local performance, dancing, jamming, later night activity and artists in general--create a center for music
- › Antiques
- › Grocery store – small market – upscale market
- › Better movies, concerts that students and residents would both go to
- › Arts Center to feature local art and culture, though some said the Arts District in a more appropriate place
- › Consignment shops

- › "Special night downtown," Night Markets

The Online Retail Perception Survey

An Online Perception Survey was released through the City of Williamsburg on March 28th, 2017. A total of 1,174 individuals opened the link and 241 completed the survey.² The survey questions were designed to capture perception about issues related to retail shopping and preferences, and placemaking. The survey included several basic questions to help us understand who was answering the survey.

Respondents

- › Fifty one percent of respondents have lived in the area for more than 10 years, 28 percent five years or less.
- › Most the respondents drive to work or school (78 percent), only 13 percent walk, and 5 percent bike.
- › Less than 50 percent stop for coffee or breakfast on their morning commute. Of those that do, 35 percent go to downtown, followed by New Town (32 percent) and then Richmond Road (24 percent). Of those that do buy coffee in the morning only 5 percent do this as part of their daily routine, and 18 percent do 1-3 times a week.

Dining Perceptions

- › Downtown is one of the most popular choices for dining.
- › Lunch appears to be more popular than breakfast. 73.2 percent buy lunch out a least once a week, 8 percent do so daily and the remainder do so between 1 -3 times per week.
- › When they do go out, 44 percent prefer to go to restaurant compared to 44 percent which tend to do take out, and then take it back to their desk or outside.
- › 54 percent go downtown for lunch. The next most popular location is New Town (39 percent) and followed by Richmond Road (32 percent). Downtown was identified as the preferred location for dinner as well (55 percent), followed by New Town (45 percent) and then Richmond Road (39 percent). 15% of the responders indicated that they also go to Second St/ Capitol Landing Road.
- ›

percent found current options average, while 43 percent ranked the options above 2 The survey's 21% response rate is well above the standard result of 10% or less.

average.

- › For fine dining 84 percent ranked the options above average.
- › Specialty foods (ice cream, candy bakery) also ranked well with 68 percent above average.

Other Current Merchandise

- › Approximately 34 percent ranked the offerings for apparel (men's and women's) as average. Women's ranked higher or above average (29 percent vs 15 percent) with over 30 percent rating both below average.
- › 37 percent find the entertainment choices just average, and 35 percent rank it above average. Soft goods and sport goods and children oriented retail fared more poorly. 80 percent ranked sporting goods below average followed by 45 percent for Children's retail and 44% for home goods (33 percent ranked it average).
- › Art galleries ranked higher with nearly 40 percent rated these as average, 36 percent ranked this above average.

The following is how the larger categories ranked.

Desires for Future Options Downtown

- › Small shops and stores
- › Specialty stores
- › Bars and live music
- › Organic retail (food and merchandise)
- › Fresh food including fresh food gifts
- › Wine store
- › More eateries and restaurants including those with outside dining

Groceries

Respondents currently shop at Trader Joe's, Harris Teeter, Food Lion, Farmers Market, Fresh Market, and Farm Fresh (ranked highest to lowest). Other stores where people buy groceries include Martins, Costco, Kroger, Sam's Club, Target and Publix.

Respondents would prefer to shop at Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, the Farmers Market and Wegman's, each of which ranked approximately 30 percent.

Other uses

The survey indicated that there are other uses that people would like to see in downtown.

New residential alternatives (rental and condominium apartment units) received the strongest support followed by a bed and breakfast/hotel. There was little support for additional commercial or co-working space. Additional uses and activities mentioned included events, parking, seating, play areas and things to do for kids.

Placemaking

How downtown is defined often determines how people will use it. 78 percent of the responders follow a common view articulated by other stakeholders that downtown is "Merchants Square, and the blocks to the west, Prince George Street and Armistead Avenue. Other contributions to this definition include the college, north of Prince George among Scotland and Richmond Road and the Monticello Shopping Center.

Placemaking elements and activities contribute to vibrancy. The survey asked responders to rank elements and activities often present in a vibrant downtown. The following is how these ranked from most desirable to least.

- › More outdoor seating and seating areas
- › More public bathrooms
- › More shade cover
- › Landscaping including trees
- › More green space
- › Outdoor performance space
- › Bike Paths/Bike lanes and bike racks (ranks same as next)
- › More and better street lighting

- › Wayfinding signs
- › Bus Shelters
- › Additional and/or better market crosswalks
- › Wider sidewalks
- › Water features such as children’s play fountains
- › Different sidewalk materials

Activities and installations that people would like to see are listed in order of preference:

- › Small scale entertainment, such as street music
- › Street vendors and/or food trucks
- › Art installations
- › A museum
- › Children's activities
- › Temporary tenants and uses.

Other suggestions included a nice outdoor public park, pop-up restaurants and retailers, musicians, family oriented festivals and performers/ performances, free public WIFI and a way finding application.

Additional Items

- › Nearly half of the responders walk around downtown when they go to the library or Community Center. Yet, only 18.7 percent visited the library at least once a week (24 percent once a month).
- › Nearly 19 percent visit downtown once a week to attend an event or take advantage of cultural activities, and 30 percent do so once per month. 42 percent only go downtown for cultural activities every few months.

Overarching Messages

There is a range of ideas about what is working. There is broad agreement about what is not working, which can be broken down into two primary areas – downtown as a place and downtown for retail. There is clearly some tension between audiences – the permanent population (residents and students), tourists, and within the business community - between businesses that are tenants of Colonial Williamsburg and those that are not. The following are the overarching messages we heard.

General

- › The definition of downtown is not consistent and may

vary depending on an individual’s perspective and residence.

- › “Arts District should be in downtown – and it’s not” There is disconnect between the two hubs; part of this is the lack of activity and uses along the corridor which make it less appealing or apparent as a continuous corridor.
- › There is interest in living downtown from all age groups and segments. However, the lack of housing is pricing many out of the market. Residents really would like to see residential density – especially in the downtown core – this includes more square footage and even multifamily. This desire was expressed frequently by individuals as an option for aging in town and appeal to walkability but also to attract younger workers.
- › Residents and business owners expressed concerns that growth/development in the core might:
 - Possibly ruin the character of downtown
 - Create too much competition for existing businesses
 - Bring too much traffic
 - Price locals out (residents and shoppers)
- › Interest in expanding public transit usage and even current routes, including link transit systems for gated communities and that would also expand the consumer base and traffic – rather than letting those dollars leave to other built product with free parking.
- › While there are many things to do in Colonial Williamsburg (downtown and the city), these are not well advertised to locals and, locals feel crowded out by tourists. There needs to be better information and coordinated marketing bout events.
- › MSQ tenants believe those outside are benefiting from marketing efforts at their expense – they benefit from increased traffic without having to contribute economically.
- › The business owners not part of Merchants Square feel a bit disenfranchised.
- › Individuals at all stages of the spectrum expressed an interest in more options for kids and visitors – museums that tie into the history but also complement it (Museum for kids, slavery, etc.). Also expressed was more hands-on touch experiences.
- › Hours of operation for downtown businesses are unpredictable and inconsistent. MSQ Tenants have certain requirements for hours of operation but those outside of the center do not. Additionally, many businesses close early, which might curtail evening

traffic which in turn prevents other businesses from remaining open including bars and restaurants that might benefit from late night business.

- › Parking is still a very contentious issue. The majority agreed that parking should be free and more convenient. Additionally, the city should do a better job of enforcement, especially with students that take street parking, which prevents locals from coming downtown and ultimately hinders business.
- › Many locals actively avoid Colonial Williamsburg largely due to the tourists, excessive costs and perceived lack of parking. Yet, many of these same residents walk to and around downtown and enjoy MSQ and Colonial Williamsburg as a means of exercise; some hold passes and patronize the historic area (and Merchants Square) off season.

Retail

- › Many locals are unaware of the businesses that exist in the downtown area – and what products that are available.

- › The Farmers Market is one of the best amenities – it has something for everyone of all race, creed, age and class, one of the rare venues where all groups integrate well.
- › Independent tenants believe they are being priced out,
- › Downtown Williamsburg does not satisfy the needs (daily, convenience) of the local market. Many concur the dining options are limiting and not necessarily priced or suitably diverse to appeal to families, older longtime residents nor students (assumed in part due to high rents and operators with multiple locations that control pricing). The lack of diversity (food, ethnic options, and hours) hampers frequency by locals who select to go elsewhere. “There is no place for them to “just shop” downtown for basic goods and services – even food or linger”.
- › Residents and students tend to frequent affordable dining options such as Aroma’s and the Cheese Shop for convenience food (and deli’s) and would like to see more restaurants including those that are open later; a place to go for a date, after the theater. Many indicated they believe a grocer would be a strong asset for downtown.

Preferred Retail Destinations

New Town
 Merchants Square
 Settlers Market
 Monticello Shopping Center
 Williamsburg Premium Outlets
 Richmond
 Hampton Roads
 Newport News

Dining & Food Options

Locally owned
 Ethnic restaurants
 24-hour options
 Full service fine dining but still affordable
 Fast Casual
 Family Friendly
 Breweries & cafes
 Outdoor dining
 Late night offerings
 Live entertainment
 A grocery store

Preferred Retail & Downtown Uses

Apparel - contemporary and affordable (shoes, womens, casual wear, sporting goods)
 Local and small shops, non-tourist oriented
 Locally made goods
 Entertainment venues (music, dance, word)
 Temporary tenants
 Art galleries
 Pharmacy
 Residential options
 Street entertainment, vendors and food trucks

Placemaking Priorities

Outdoor seating
 Public rest rooms
 Shade cover & better landscaping (incl trees)
 Outdoor performance space
 Wayfinding signs and apps
 Bike paths, bike lanes
 Wider sidewalks and improved cross walks
 Better and more lighting
 Art installations
 Public parks (dog parks, pop-up

- › The real estate pricing and costs attributed to being a Colonial Williamsburg tenant is a barrier for independent stores, as is their perceived control over the downtown market. The only tenants who can afford to move into Colonial Williamsburg/Merchants Square are big national tenants and as a result it is losing uniqueness.
- › Concern that MSQ appears to be leasing in house stores (CoW oriented stores) in spaces that are hard to lease (location and cost). This is causing tension with all tenants in the market.

Institutions

- › William and Mary and Colonial Williamsburg must be at the table for any improvements or changes as they are majority stakeholders. Although, their needs and priorities may conflict with those of residents and business owners.
- › William & Mary could be a better community partner to the community, especially in supporting area businesses (College and the students). Two critical issues identified: the reduction of dining dollars and the acquisition of property outside the campus including funding of New Town. Businesses view these decisions as being detrimental to their livelihood.
- › A complicated relationship exists between retailers and Colonial Williamsburg.
- › If not part of the Colonial Williamsburg structure, excluded from downtown marketing activities and prevented from reaching the primary audience.
- › Students are not really perceived as a problem by many residents or the businesses – however they are a challenge for residents in the neighborhoods key issues include noise, and condition of the housing (primarily rentals) – or ownership of college rentals passed down by parents.
- › The students have great wealth but are shopping at New Town which is draining business from downtown.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 Placemaking and Vibrancy

Imagine a Downtown Williamsburg structured like the historic American house. At the front of the house is a porch that welcomes visitors. The front porch connects the house to the town around it; it is an intermediate space between the hustle and bustle of the community and the home. For the City of Williamsburg, the front porch is Duke of Gloucester Street. Duke of Gloucester Street is the first-place visitors to Williamsburg encounter; it is effectively the face of Williamsburg for visitors to the city and Colonial Williamsburg. The front porch is an essential part of the home, but it is not the primary gathering space for residents.

The living room is the central gathering space; it is where long conversations occur, and stories are shared. The Placemaking and Vibrancy recommendations provide elements to create "living rooms" for the City of Williamsburg; to redefine spaces in the downtown to create a vibrant, active urban environment.

This section of the plan identifies four levels of strategic placemaking and vibrancy recommendations. First, the plan identifies specific interventions for distinct areas, or living rooms, within the Study Area, identified as **activity nodes** (see Recommendations Map, p.50). Second, the plan identifies strategies to be implemented to **connect** activity nodes. Third, **programming and events** are discussed, to bring activity to the downtown, because if you want people to visit your house, sometimes you have to throw a party! Fourth, the plan offers **phasing** and implementation recommendations, to ensure that this plan provides a clear path forward for the City of Williamsburg.

Recommendations Map



5.1.1 Activity Nodes

Creating New Living Rooms

Activity nodes are meant to draw downtown users from Duke of Gloucester Street into the rest of the downtown. They will also draw local users to downtown with higher frequency. The nodes also bring modern amenities and vibrant spaces to downtown. They are specific places within downtown Williamsburg chosen for their location and potential for revitalization.

The recommendations for each activity node are permanent, built-environment improvements. They will have the greatest impact on vibrancy and how the downtown functions. They are also the most costly to implement, as large-scale redevelopment projects.

This plan recommends that the City of Williamsburg implement redevelopment within seven activity nodes (next page). These areas are referred to as:

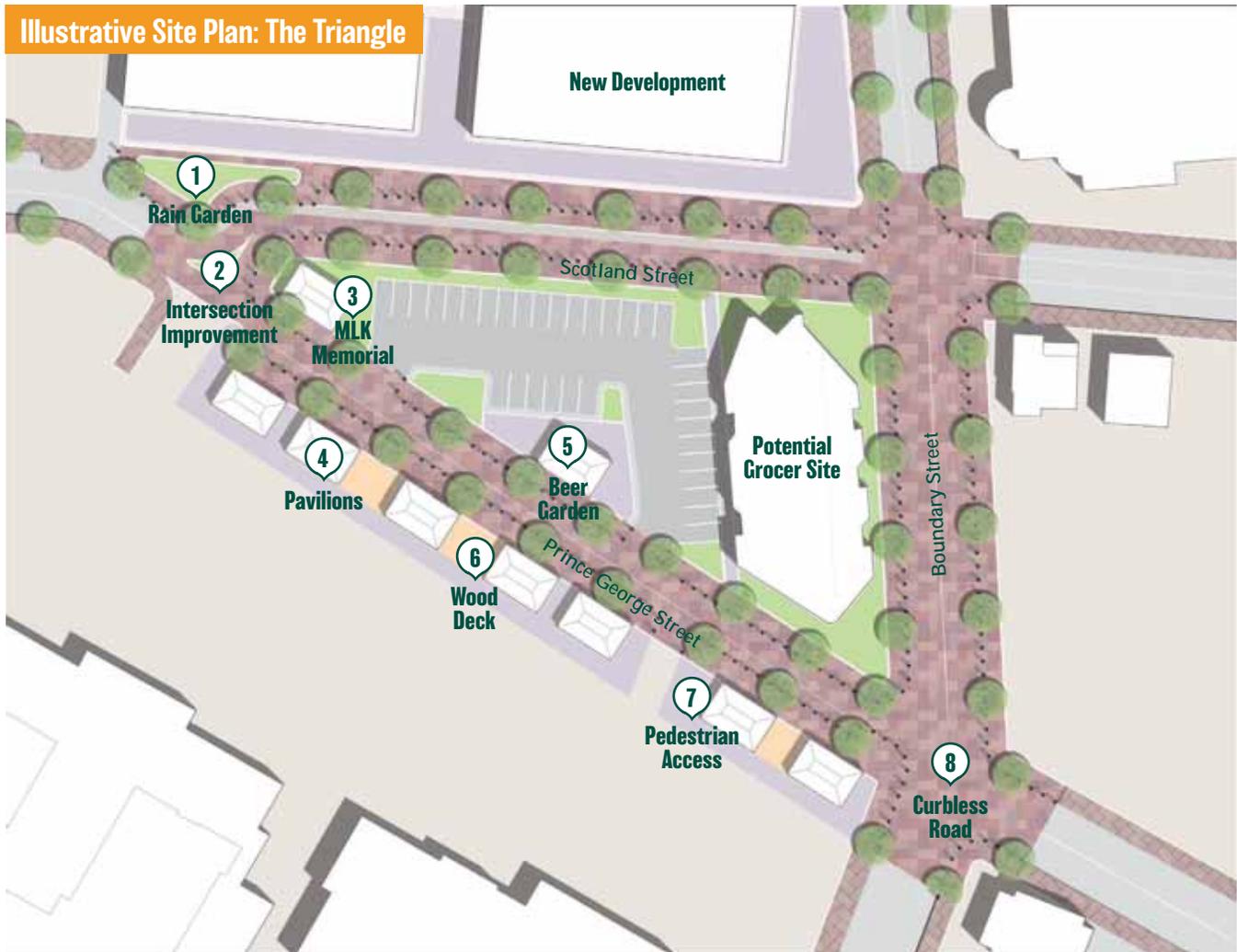
- › The Triangle, a new premier entertainment district;
- › Urban Grocer, a mixed-use development with apartments, an urban-scale grocery store, and parking;
- › Merchants Square, to be redesigned;
- › City Park, a premier gathering space between the library and the community center;
- › Peacock Hill, a townhouse development;
- › Restaurant Row, adaptive re-use for eateries;
- › and Design "P6", a housing, office and retail development.

Activity Nodes Map



- Tourists
- Students
- Residents

The Triangle



The Triangle presents the best opportunity to create a new "local" downtown and entertainment/gathering district in downtown Williamsburg. With targeted infill development, smart use of space, and the use of high quality materials in the built environment, the Triangle should become the shopping and activity destination that draws visitors from DoG Street, throughout other areas of the downtown, and from the City as a whole.

Large parking lots bordering Prince George Street limit the number of destinations that can be created along the street, restricting the probability that the street will feel lively and active. To maintain the existing quantity of parking in the parking lots adjacent to the existing churches, infill development should be small scale – within approximately 22' of

width between parking lots and the sidewalk. This narrow band of 22' is essential for maximizing infill while preserving the existing parking lots. It is intended that no more than one row of existing parking will be lost to redevelopment. To fulfill this need, something similar to pavilions, kiosks, or containers should be used to create "micro-retail" opportunities. The "micro-retail" that is created can provide a variety of amenities, such as coffee shops, eateries, or local goods merchants.

On the opposite side of Prince George Street, adjacent to the Triangle Building, an active outdoor use, such as a beer garden, will bring activity across the street, connecting the two spaces. The MLK Memorial currently at this location should remain. The Triangle Building would also be well-suited to incorporate a new use such as a small-scale grocer.

- ① Sidewalk flush with roadway
- ② Removable bollards
- ③ Pervious clay pavers on roadway and sidewalks
- ④ Vendor pavilions



Rendering: Prince George Street Improvements



A. Traffic Flow Alterations

A one-way street system is proposed within the Triangle district. This will reduce the number of car travel lanes and the speed of traveling vehicles, but will also maintain efficient movement of vehicles. Further, a one-way street system will increase pedestrian and bicycle safety and will create a more welcoming sidewalk atmosphere.

Traffic flow should be altered to create a one-way street system on Scotland Street between Boundary Street and the intersection of Scotland and Prince George, with traffic flow in the direction of Richmond Road. The street should then return to a two-way traffic pattern after the intersection. Prince George Street between the intersection and Boundary Street should then be converted into a one-way street, directing traffic back towards Henry Street. Within the triangular pattern created, the two lane roads would be converted to one travel lane and one parking lane, with the potential to include a bike lane.

B. Streetscape Design

The streetscape within The Triangle district should follow the Premier Street Design type outlined on p. 80, a street type designed to maximize **flexibility**. It functions as a street, moving cars when necessary, but can also be closed to traffic and used as festival space. Streetscapes within the Triangle district should also include the highest quality amenities, such as benches, planters, bollards, street lights, and sidewalk materials.

To control stormwater runoff, promote sustainability efforts in Williamsburg, and to create an additional green element, rain gardens are recommended within The Triangle.

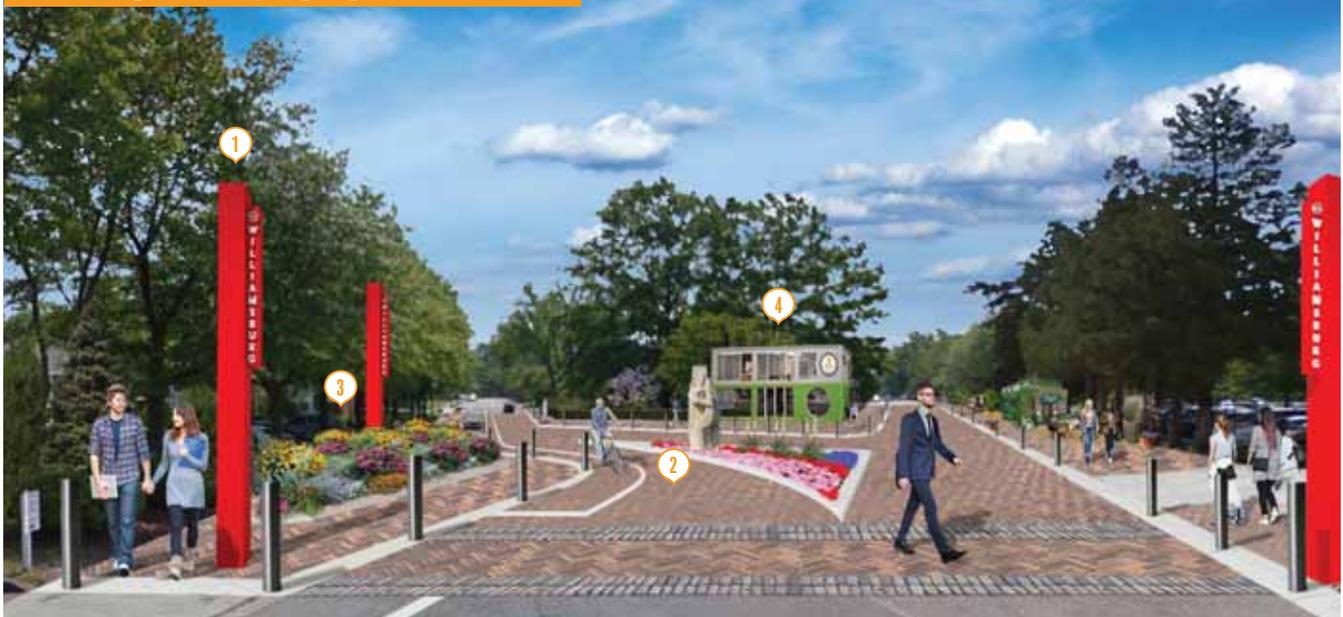
A unique series of internally lighted LED gateway signs are also recommended to be installed at the entrance to The Triangle district, and downtown, at the intersection of Prince George Street and Scotland Street (rendering, p.55) (location, p.81).

- ① Gateway Signage
- ② Roadway Improvements
- ③ Rain Garden
- ④ Vendor Pavilions



Existing: Prince George & Scotland Street

Rendering: Gateway Signage on Scotland St



Pavilion

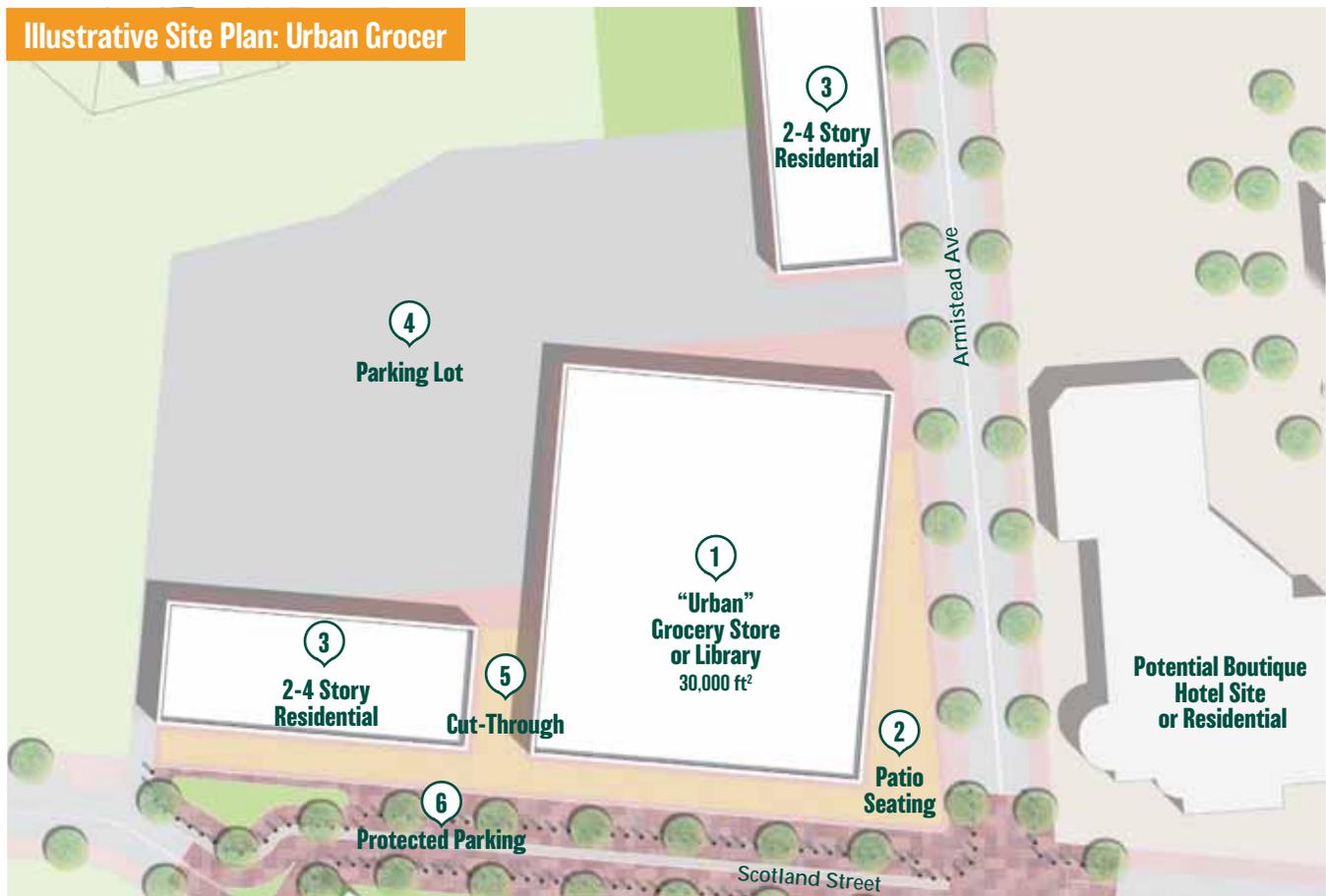


Pop-Up Beer Garden



Pavilion

The Triangle: Urban Grocer



C. Urban Grocer

The site north of Scotland Street in the Triangle district, currently senior housing with the potential for relocation, is well suited for redevelopment. This plan recommends that the best use of the site would be for residential and commercial uses.

At the currently proposed build-out, 30,000 square feet of commercial use could be accomplished on a portion of the development site. As discussed in further detail in the retail merchandising recommendations, there is an unfilled need for a grocer in the downtown; the footprint of a grocer could fill the 20-30,000 square feet of commercial development. This could be one use, such as a grocery store, or it could be a mix of uses included within one footprint, much like an indoor market. Space for outdoor patio seating is also recommended, and is a growing trend for grocery outlets, particularly in urban settings. The ability to grab a quick sandwich or other prepared foods and eat on the patio will be a popular option with both students and downtown workers alike, and will concentrate more energy within the new entertainment district. It is important for this site to provide "on-site" foot traffic to support the commercial uses, but also to enhance the vibrancy of The Triangle district. The commercial portion of the site would also be suitable for a public library or other civic space, should the library consider relocating.



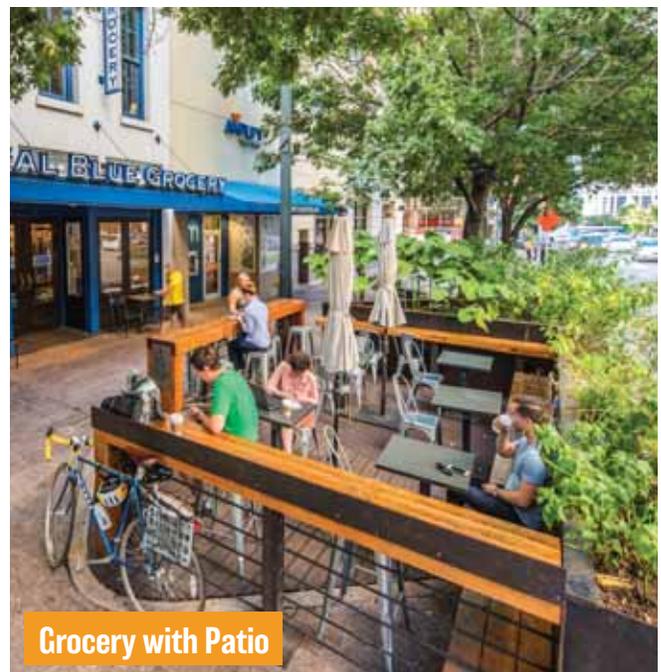
Indoor Market



Outdoor Seating



Local Market with Cafe Seating



Grocery with Patio

The proposed urban grocer/library site would also easily accommodate residences, depicted in the illustrated site plan (p.56) as double-loaded corridor apartment buildings. This, or other high-density residential development models are recommended. Apartments are popular with a variety of residents, including young professionals and empty-nesters. Located in close proximity to the College of William and Mary, the apartments would also be well suited for college students. The plan recommends the residential components on this site be 2-4 stories. The residences built could also accommodate the existing senior housing units that currently exist on site, and would require relocation on- or off-site by HUD.

Should surrounding areas, such as the library site, ever open as an opportunity for redevelopment, high density residential uses should be highly encouraged. These uses would support the new "local" downtown and the City Park discussed on p.58. A boutique hotel catering to patrons of downtown would also be an encouraged use.

City Park: Option 01



The green space between the Williamsburg Public Library and the Community Center presents a unique opportunity to create a high-quality public open space that will function as a downtown park for the community, and ground the civic uses that currently exist there. It is the perfect location to create an activity space that plays off of the energy created by the public library and the Triangle district.

Removed from the commercially dense areas, the park will be the premier new improvement to the downtown, and will re-focus the energy of downtown into a new space that has been designed to cater to the unique needs of Williamsburg residents, students, and visitors. The park is an opportunity for the City of Williamsburg to brand itself as a modern, innovative city. It will show residents and visitors that the city is committed to improving the built environment of the downtown, and providing high-quality amenities to its residents.

This new space, in combination with recommended updates to Boundary Street, will also redefine the focus of downtown, moving it away from Duke of Gloucester Street. The park should visually connect all of the new downtown improvements via Boundary Street.

It is recommended that the two green spaces located behind the public library and in front of the community center be **connected** using a park space and a redesign of the street into a one-way loop system (above). This design will bridge both public spaces to create one high quality activity space. For the interior park area, this plan recommends amenities within flex spaces, such as a paved area that doubles as a spray ground in the summer and skating park in the winter, and terraced landscaping that doubles as seating. A stage area is also incorporated into the concept opposite seating for concerts, and for other events such as movie nights.

- ① Stage built into Landscaping
- ② Integrated Seating
- ③ Spray Ground
- ④ Removable Bollards



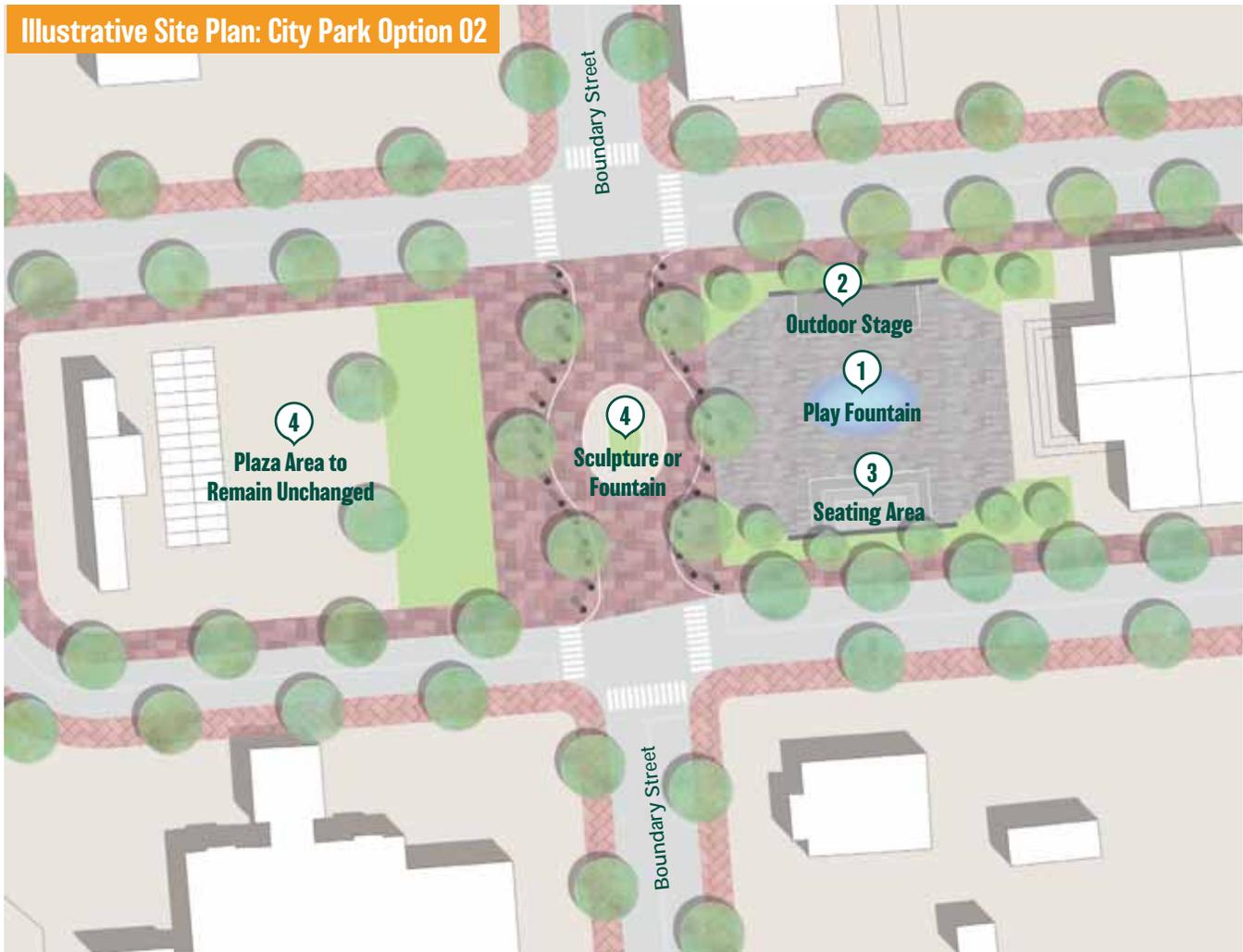
Rendering: City Park Option 01



The loop road system should be zero-grade, with protective bollards, similar to the premier streets design type. This system will allow the park to be closed off for larger events.

The park is further conceptualized as the ideal place to bring food to a public space. This may be accomplished by utilizing local food trucks or a concession stand.

City Park: Option 02



A second design option for City Park offers a redesign of Boundary Street in order to less drastically disturb current traffic patterns. The design provides the same amenities featured within Option 01, but instead locates those features within the green space in front of the community center.

The roadway, now designed as a two-way system with a landscaped median to slow traffic, should be zero-grade, with protective bollards, similar to proposed in Option 01. This system will allow the park to be closed off for larger events. Within the landscaped median, a fountain, sculpture, or similar vertical element is recommended. This element will act as a beacon for the park to those coming from other areas in the downtown.

- ① Stage built into Landscaping
- ② Integrated Seating
- ③ Spray Ground
- ④ Removable Bollards



Merchants Square

Merchants Square is in a prime location to bring additional traffic and energy into the downtown beyond Duke of Gloucester street. Two versions of a major redesign of the space are presented. Both would bring transformative change to the area. Each version begins by creating a street that cuts through the site, bringing the square back into the urban grid. While the road can be used for vehicles, primarily for small-scale delivery and fire/safety ingress and egress, the road should be primarily designed to guide pedestrians into the space and evoke a historical building pattern of shops along narrow alleyways.

A. Create Interior Plaza:

After the street is created through the center of Merchants Square, the interior parking lot should be converted into a premier public plaza, with amenities such as a fountain with an incorporated performance space. The design of the plaza should continue to allow for gatherings such as festivals, but also continue to be flexible enough to be enjoyed on a day-to-day basis by residents. The parking loss will be easily accommodated through the parking garage located on the adjacent block, a finding supported by the downtown parking study conducted by Walker Parking Consultants, who noted that 'parking "shortage" is a problem of perception rather than an actual scarcity of parking'.¹

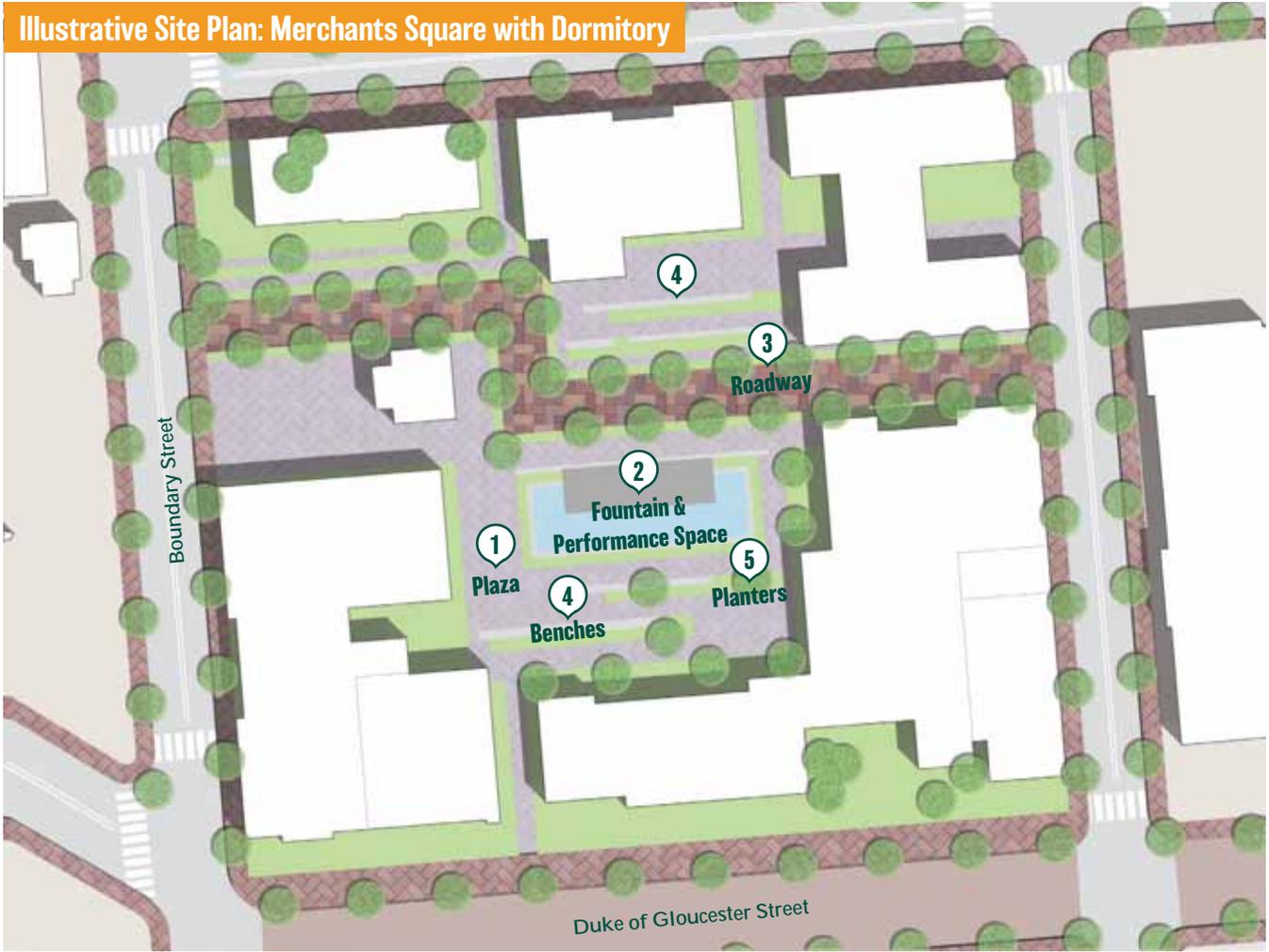
B. Open the Plaza:

The second option of the redesign, and most dramatic recommendation made by this plan, would be the removal of the William and Mary dormitory, known as Brown Hall, which sits on the corner of the site. The removal of the dormitory would create necessary sight lines into the new plaza, and create greater flow between the downtown, Merchants Square, and Duke of Gloucester Street. It will allow visitors to feel a part of the action of downtown, while also using the amenities offered by the plaza. If the dorm could not be razed, then it would be preferable that the dorm be purchased from the college, and converted into micro-apartments or a boutique hotel, uses that would promote more street activity and a greater housing density within the downtown core. The removal of the dormitory would only require the re-allocation of 72 students.

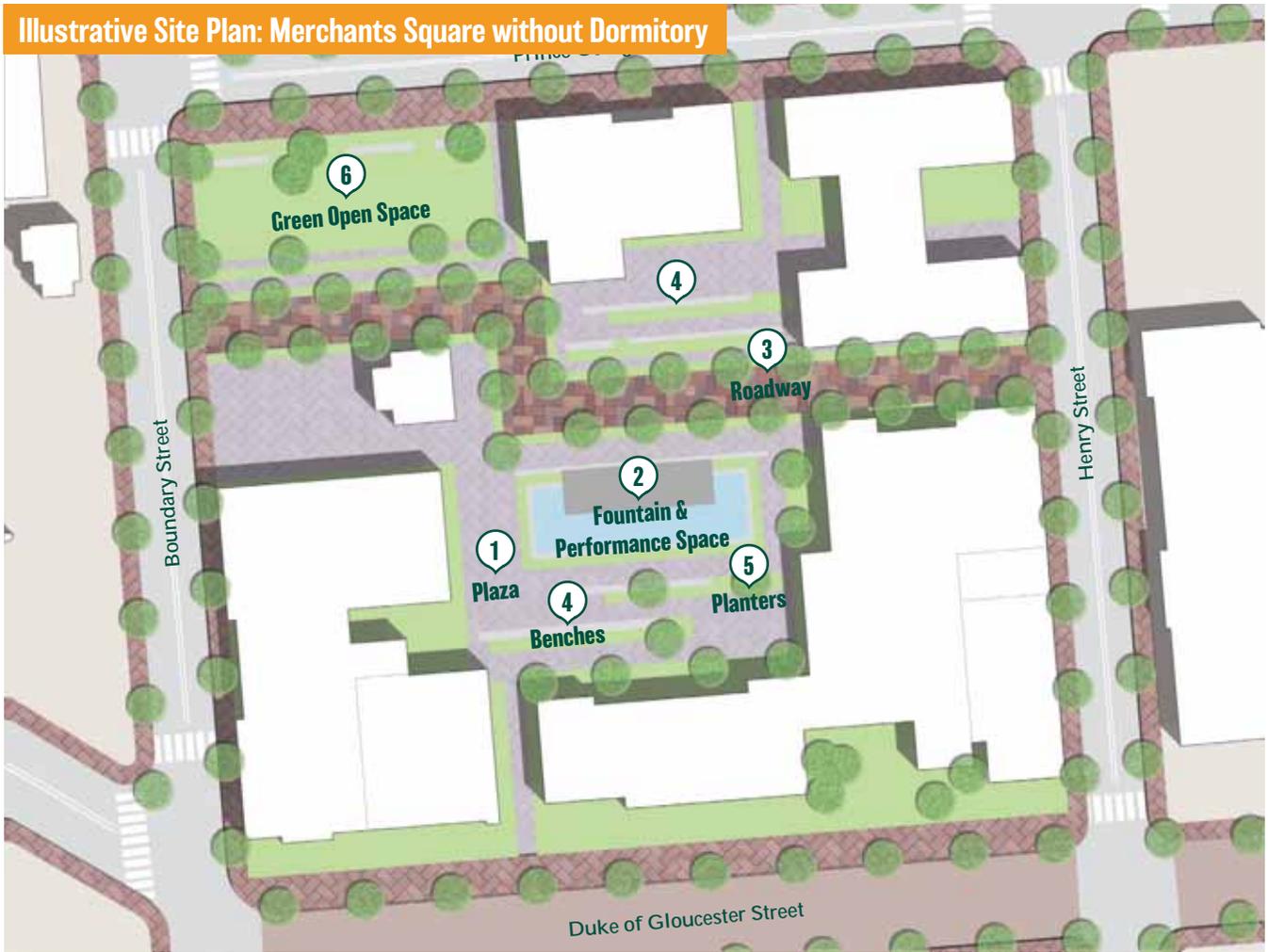


¹ Downtown Parking Study, Sept. 2016.

Illustrative Site Plan: Merchants Square with Dormitory



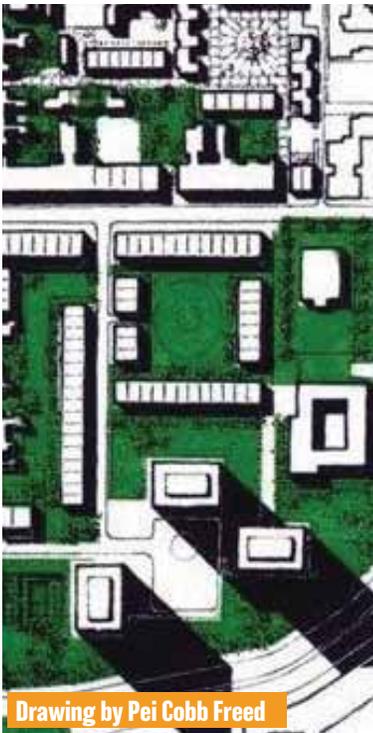
Illustrative Site Plan: Merchants Square without Dormitory



Peacock Hill

A high demand for housing in the downtown, coupled with a lack of larger development-ready parcels, makes the vacant pasture-land between Henry Street and Prince George Street a prime development opportunity. The plan recommends that development on this site mimic, in site plan only, the design for the site originally proposed by renowned architect I.M. Pei. As proposed, the site would contain a townhouse development, a popular housing type, and one still particularly well-suited to downtown Williamsburg today. The illustrative plan (next page) is based off of a similar design, found in the historic Society Hill neighborhood of Philadelphia (below). The scale of the design is still consistent with surrounding development. The architectural design of the townhouses themselves should be chosen to the taste of the City. It is highly recommended, however, that any development be high-density residential in nature.

This downtown vibrancy, design & marketing plan recommends that the City of Williamsburg either choose to keep the name Peacock Hill, as it is known today by Williamsburg residents, or to name the new housing to honor a prominent figure in history.

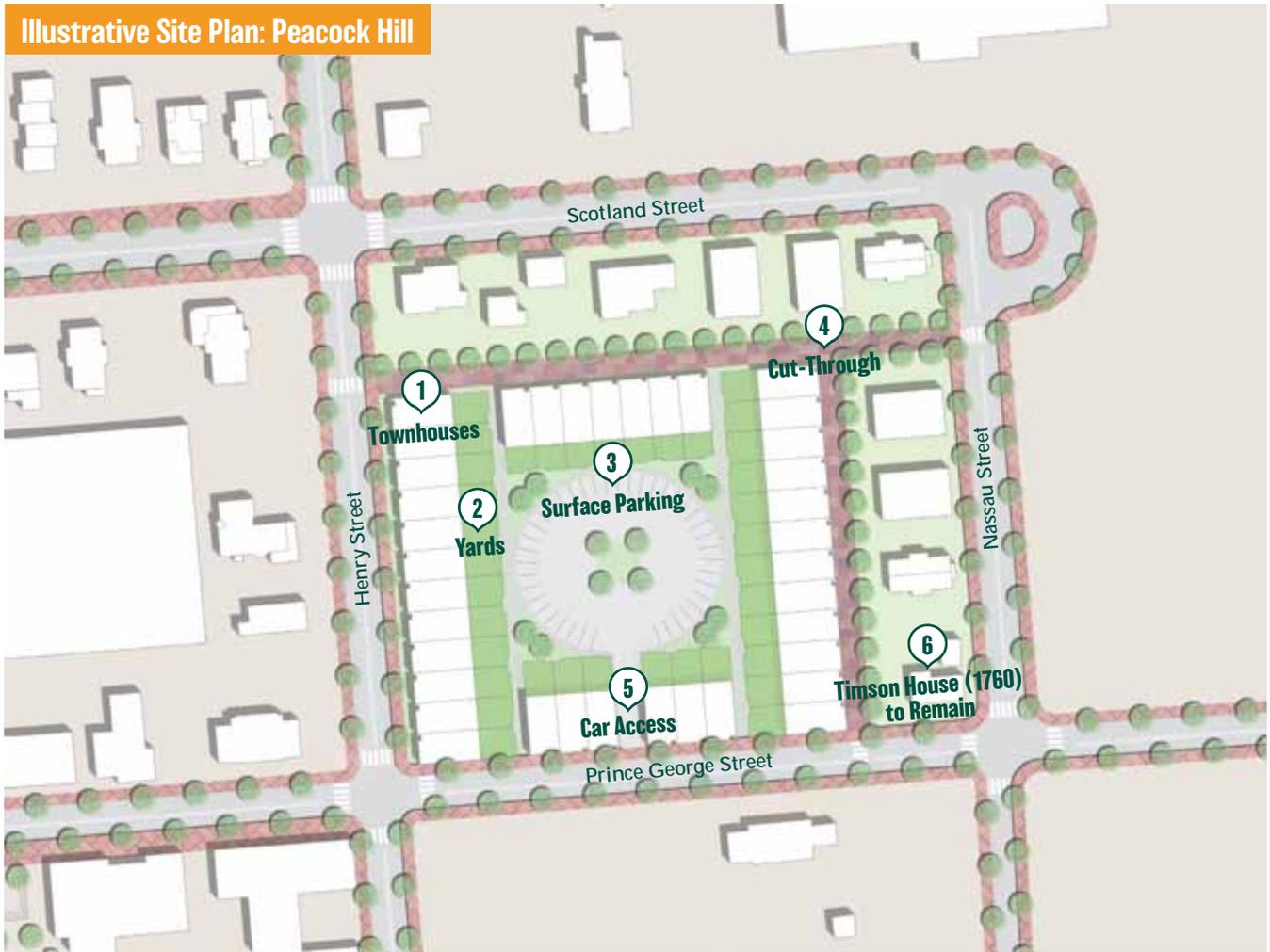


Drawing by Pei Cobb Freed



Townhouse design example

Illustrative Site Plan: Peacock Hill



Brick Townhomes

Design "P6"

Another prime development opportunity within the downtown is the area currently used as a parking lot between Francis St W, Henry St, Boundary St, and Ireland St, also known as Lot P6. The illustrative plan (next page) highlights the highest potential use for this area; a mixed-use housing and retail development with interior parking and green space. Three to four story structures are recommended to include retail and commercial uses on the first floor, with double-loaded corridor style apartments located on the above floors. At minimum, it is recommended that facades adjacent to Francis Street and Henry Street should contain active non-residential ground-floor uses, such as restaurants.

This recommendation combines both retail and housing options to "stretch" the downtown into the southern portions of the Study Area. Retail offerings will be key for bringing vibrancy to this piece of the Study Area, and housing uses will compliment surrounding residences and increase **housing availability** in the downtown as a whole, particularly for the existing tight apartment market. It is essential that the site bring additional residents to live in downtown, so that they can support the new local economy being fostered through this plan.

While one ingress/egress point is reserved for vehicular traffic, the plan also recommends three ingress/egress points to be reserved specifically for pedestrians. The pedestrian access points support the walkability of the downtown, and highlight the importance of creating a downtown that is geared towards a **pedestrian experience**. The plan also incorporates the preservation of the Byrd House as part of the site design.

For the purposes of this study, the plan has given this area the name Design "P6", however the City should choose an appropriate name for the site, possibly to honor a prominent figure in history, as similarly suggested for naming the development at Peacock Hill.

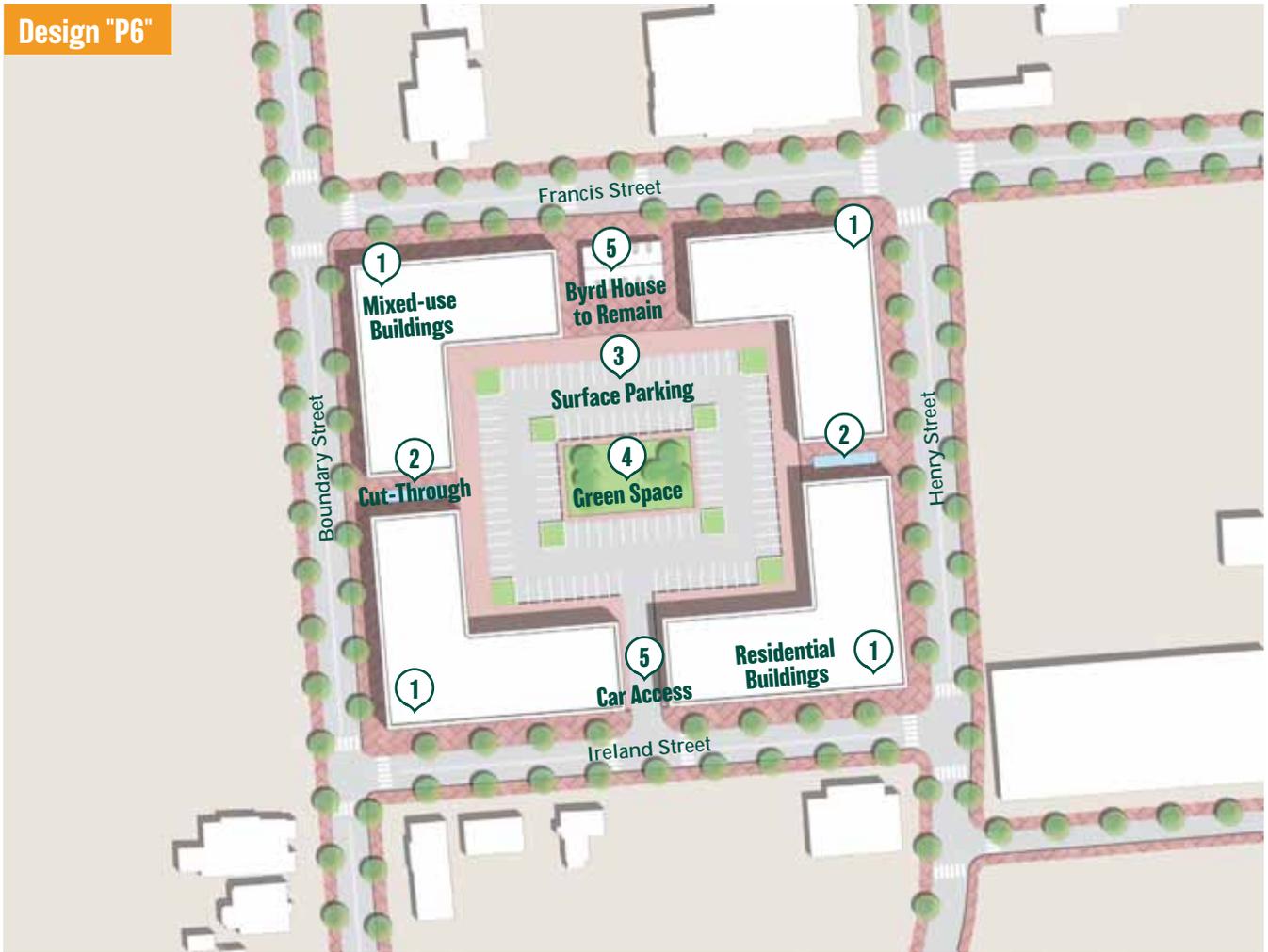


Landscaped Cut-Through



Water Feature

Design "P6"



3-Story Mixed-Use Building



Pedestrian Cut-Through

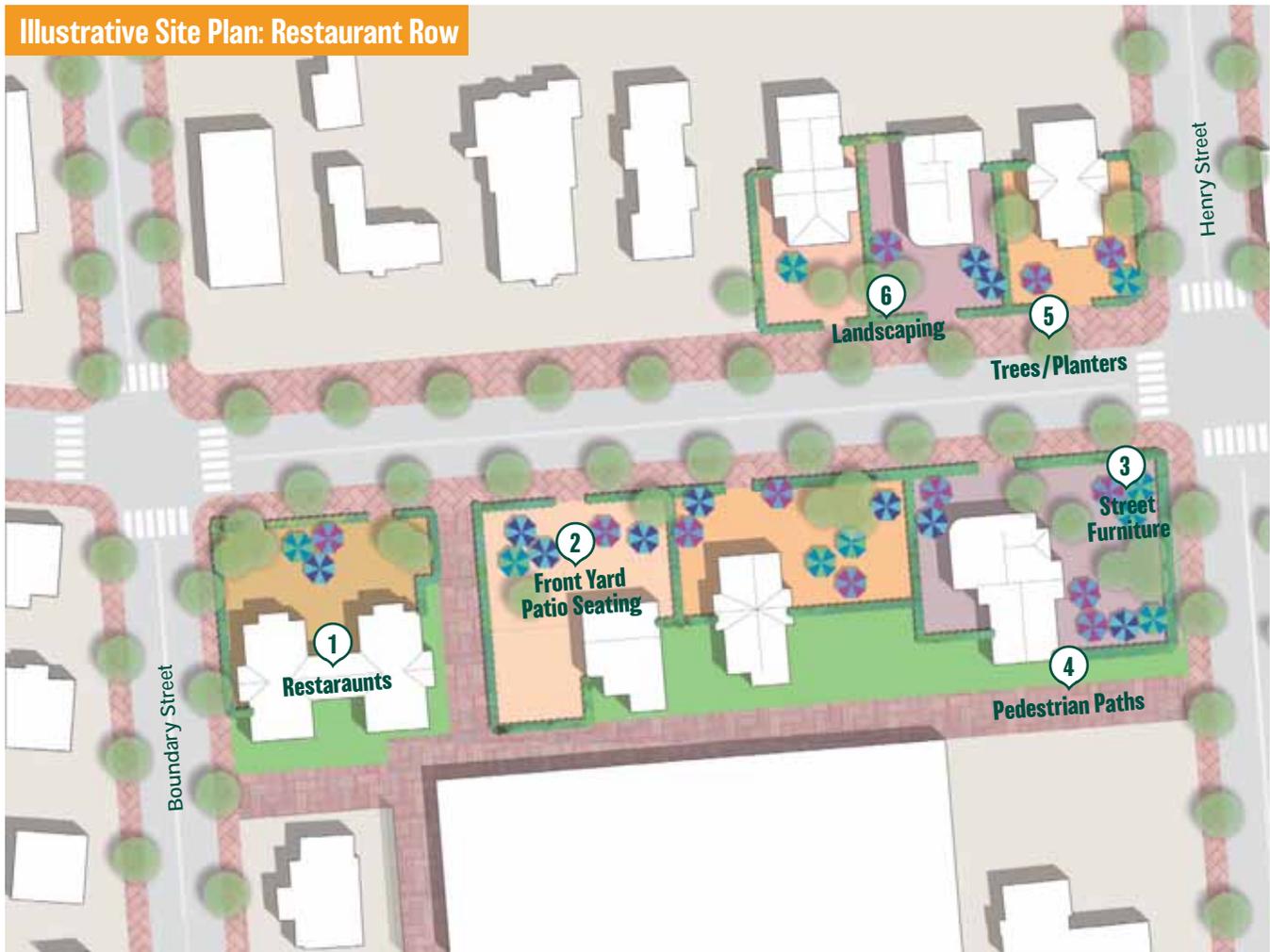


3-Story Mixed-Use Building



Fountain

Restaurant Row



Expanding upon the existing food offerings in downtown, in both food options and price range, will bring in more patrons. A restaurant district, defined by the existing offerings on Prince George Street, and the new "Restaurant Row" proposed for Scotland Street, will not only provide visitors and residents with more options, but restaurants contribute a vibrant aesthetic on streets. The hustle and bustle and energy provided by restaurants to the streetscape, particularly in the evening hours, will be of huge benefit to the downtown.

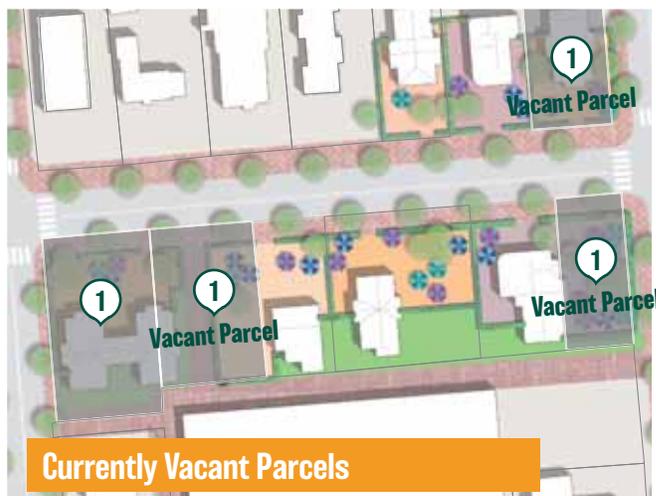
It is recommended that existing single-family homes on Scotland Street are converted from current uses, as residences and offices, to cafes, restaurants, and bed and breakfasts. The benefit to choosing Scotland Street for the new restaurant row, aside from the

large footprint of the homes, which will easily allow adaptive re-use, is the large amount of lawn space that the homes currently possess. This lawn space is ideal for creating leafy, gardenesque outdoor seating and patios for the restaurants, which will add another layer of vibrancy and air of activity to the streetscape.

Additionally, small structures with a shared kitchen could be constructed on vacant parcels to accommodate a "test kitchen" or restaurant incubator concept. The white houses located on Jamestown Road could be relocated to provide the mini-restaurant structures.

The premise for Restaurant Row is further discussed within the Retail and Marketing Recommendations section of this plan.

- ① Updated Street Lights
- ② Large Planters
- ③ Outdoor Patios
- ④ Sharrows for Bicyclists



5.1.1.1 Zoning

Facilitating Activity Nodes

Bringing more people to downtown Williamsburg is crucial for creating vibrancy; the activity nodes will allow this to happen. Not only will they place more people on the street, creating a more active and vibrant environment, but community outreach supports the notion that the demand for living, dining and shopping downtown far outweighs the current options.

In order to achieve the development prescribed by the activity node recommendations, and other development like it, the current zoning is in need of examination. The plan recommends the following changes to existing zoning:

A. Downtown Business District (B-1)

- › Add as Permitted Uses; Townhomes, Stacked Townhomes, Elevator Flats or Apartments.
- › Add as Permitted uses fronting on Scotland St, Prince George St, Francis St, Boundary St, and Henry St “Mixed-Use Buildings where ground floor is commercial and upper floors are either residential or office.
- › Parking Lots should be removed as a permitted “principle use”. Should the City decide that there is additional need for parking downtown in the future with new development, a use variance may be issued.
- › Parking should be restricted to “rear” yards. No parking in Front Yards.
- › “Storage of materials and supplies”, off-street parking, and signs should be moved from “Permitted” uses to “Permitted Accessory “ uses.
- › Service Stations should be removed from “Uses permitted with special use permit” section.
- › Maximum Height should be changed to Three or Four Floors and 42 or 56 feet to top of parapet or cornice, respectively.
- › Density allowed: Net 36, or 64 for buildings fronting on Scotland St, Prince George St, Francis St, Boundary St, and Henry St.

The Proposed Zoning Map (next page) provides a visual example of parcels where a change in zoning is proposed.

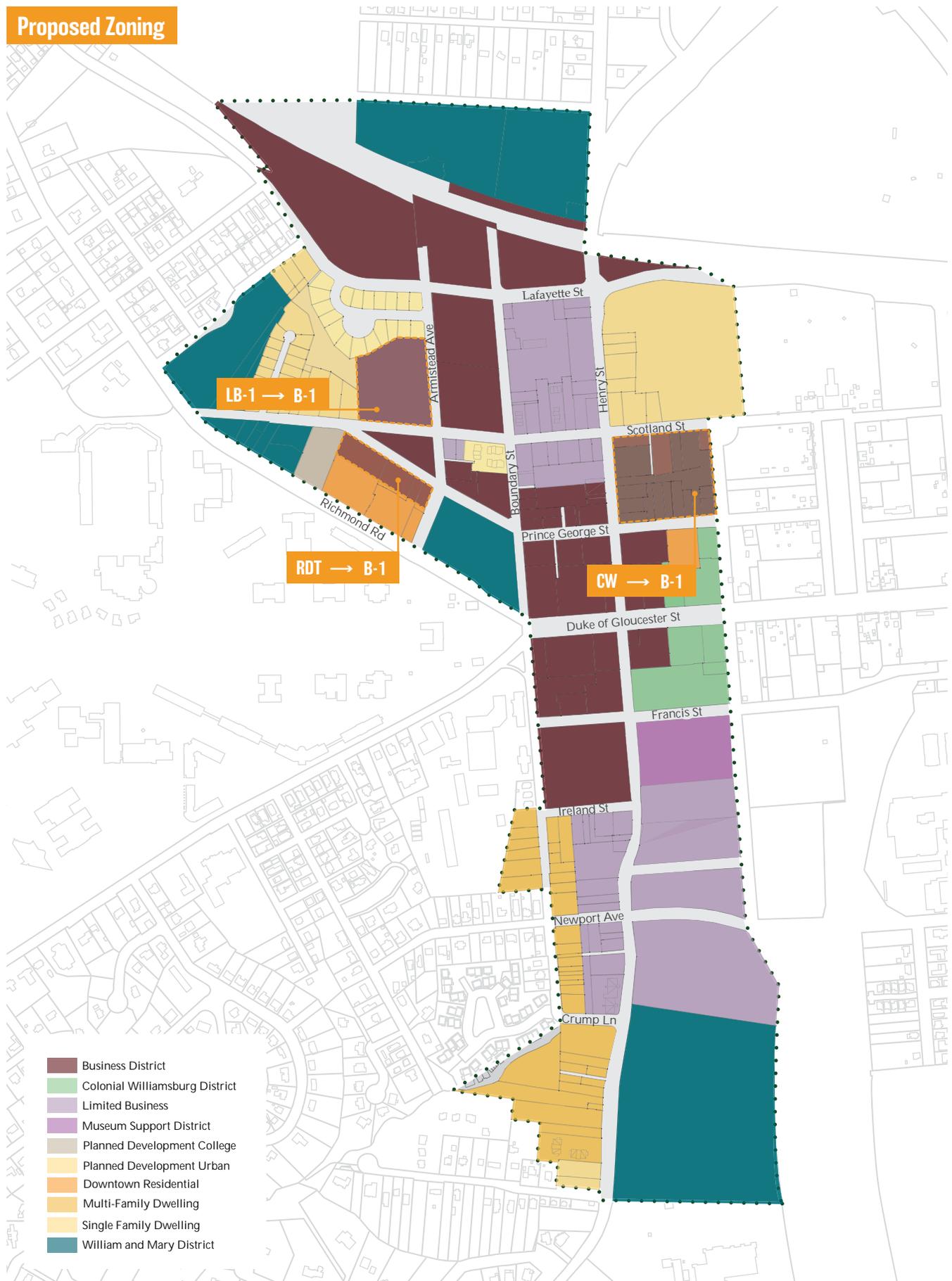
B. Design Standards

To ensure that all streetscape alterations and new development meets the expectations set forth in this plan, it is further suggested that additional design standards be set in place for all areas within an activity node, as well as for streets with an applied design type. This will ensure that any changes fulfill the vision set forth by the plan, and supported by the community. Recommended models include:

- › Buzzard Point Streetscape Guidelines (Washington D.C.)
- › Designing Great Streetscapes. Better Streets San Francisco

ARB design guidelines for the downtown study area should also be updated to reflect the modern vision for the activity nodes, and the study area as a whole. Design guidelines within the downtown should allow for architectural elements that contrast, but also complement the colonial era styling that currently exists.

Proposed Zoning



5.1.2 Connecting Space

Joining Activity Nodes

The creation of nodes of activity is vital for vibrancy. However, it is equally vital to design for how these nodes are **linked**. The recommendations made for connecting space will create a hierarchy of spaces, both at the scale of the vehicle, and of pedestrians and bicyclists. This will create a flow for users throughout the downtown.

Section 5.1.2 will discuss Connecting Space through the following interventions:

- › Street linkages and traffic patterns
- › Greenways and pathways
- › Three street types: Premier, Quality, and Greened
- › Street Furniture
- › Pedestrian Safety

5.1.2.1 Links Street Types

Returning to the analogy from the introduction to the chapter, if the front porch for the City of Williamsburg is Duke of Gloucester Street, it is the goal of the remainder of Downtown Williamsburg to welcome visitors into the living rooms, the activity nodes, and to make them comfortable enough to stay for a bit. Drawing residents, students, and visitors from Duke of Gloucester Street into different areas of downtown will strengthen the downtown as a whole. It will also be critical to draw residents from elsewhere in Williamsburg to support new activity centers, restaurants and shops, and to draw students from campus into the downtown. A crucial intervention in creating movement between Duke of Gloucester Street and activity nodes is the creation of visual cues that draw visitors to areas of activity and importance.

To accomplish this, the plan recommends creating three street types:

- › Greened Streets (p.75)
- › Quality Streets (p.76)
- › Premier Streets (p.77)

A street types map is shown on page 74.

In addition to three street typologies, the plan discusses improvements that are recommended for Boundary Street (p.78). Significant streetscape improvements should be made to Boundary Street from Duke of Gloucester Street to Lafayette Street to redefine the street as the new main street, as Boundary Street links together all of the activity nodes, and will function as the spine of the downtown.

Furthermore, the plan recommends improving three pedestrian crosswalks within the study area (p.79). All three areas represent high pedestrian-traffic areas where street patterns are confusing. These crosswalks will increase safety as pedestrians venture into areas of downtown.

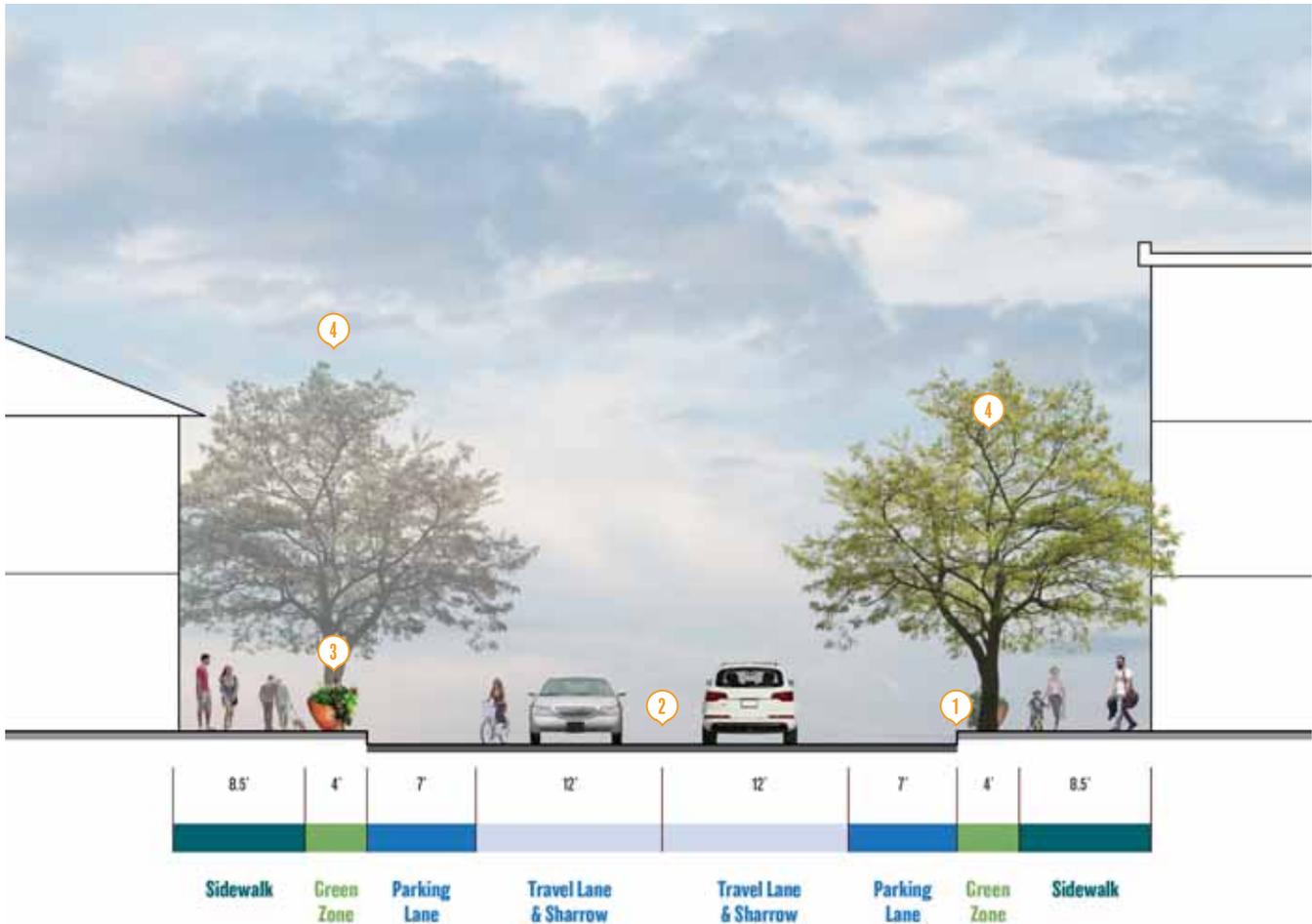
Street Types Map



- Crosswalks
- Premier Streets
- Quality Streets
- Greened Streets

GREENed Street Design Type

- ① Curb separates sidewalk
- ② Two-way traffic with two parking lanes
- ③ Large planters
- ④ Mature street trees



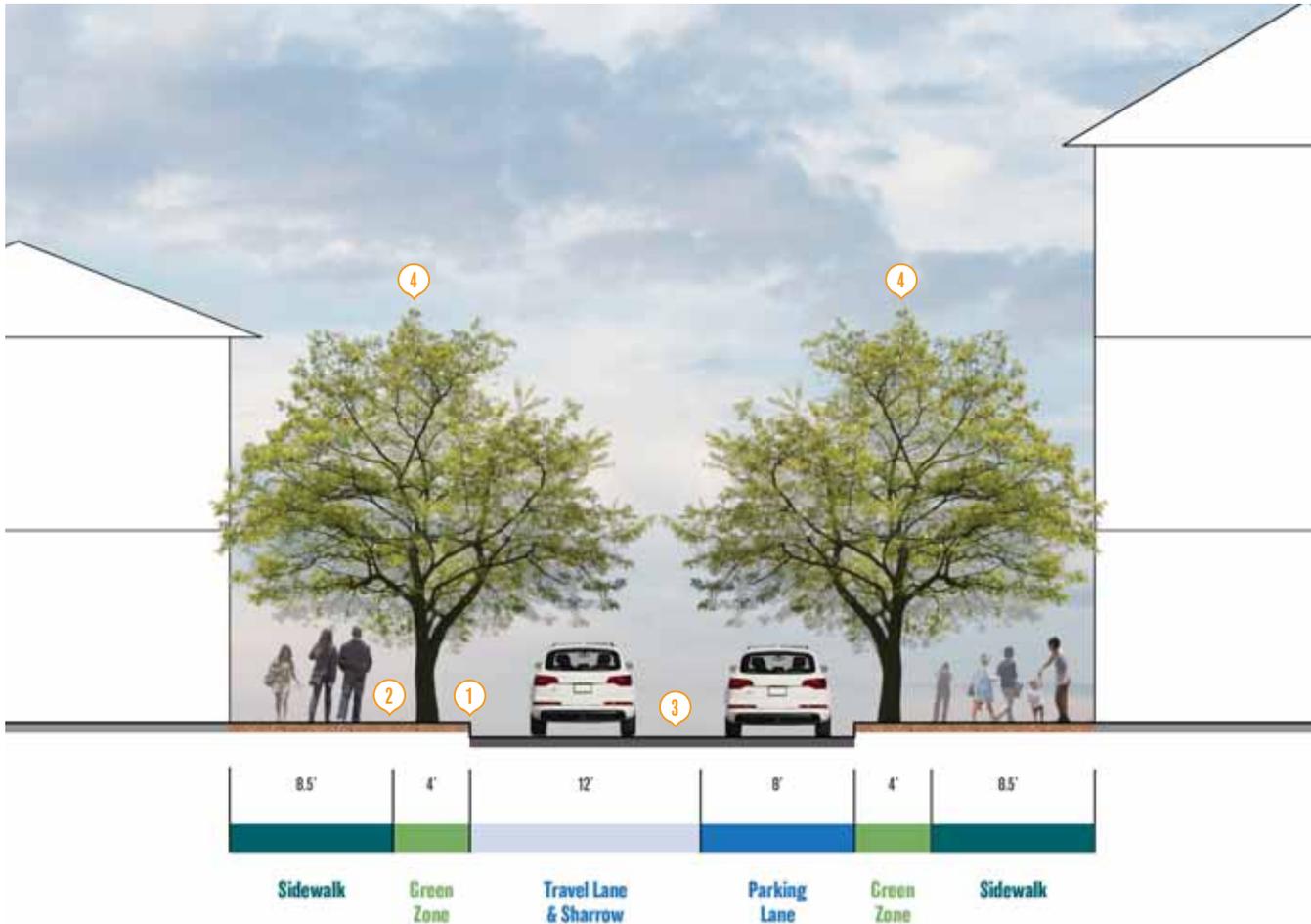
Greened Streets are the least intensive street design type; they act as the first layer of streets to welcome visitors into downtown from Duke of Gloucester Street. On Greened Streets, the goal is to create a lush, vibrantly colorful streetscape. These streetscapes will act as Greened **links** between nodes of activity, and highlight the street as a downtown corridor. Mature street trees and large planters will line both sides of the street. Planters will hold a mix of flowers, shrubs like crepe myrtle, and multi-stemmed, or clump-type birch trees. Greened Streets will provide additional shade for pedestrians, increasing the **comfort** of the streetscape and encouraging pedestrians to linger.

Traffic patterns will remain **unchanged** on Greened Streets, with a two-way traffic and a parking lane in both directions, except on Boundary Street between Duke of Gloucester Street and Scotland Street. The plan recommends that both travel lanes have a sharrow for bicycle circulation, to promote bikeability throughout the downtown.

Quality Street Design Type



- ① Curb separates sidewalk
- ② Pervious clay pavers on sidewalks
- ③ Asphalt paving on roadway
- ④ Mature street trees

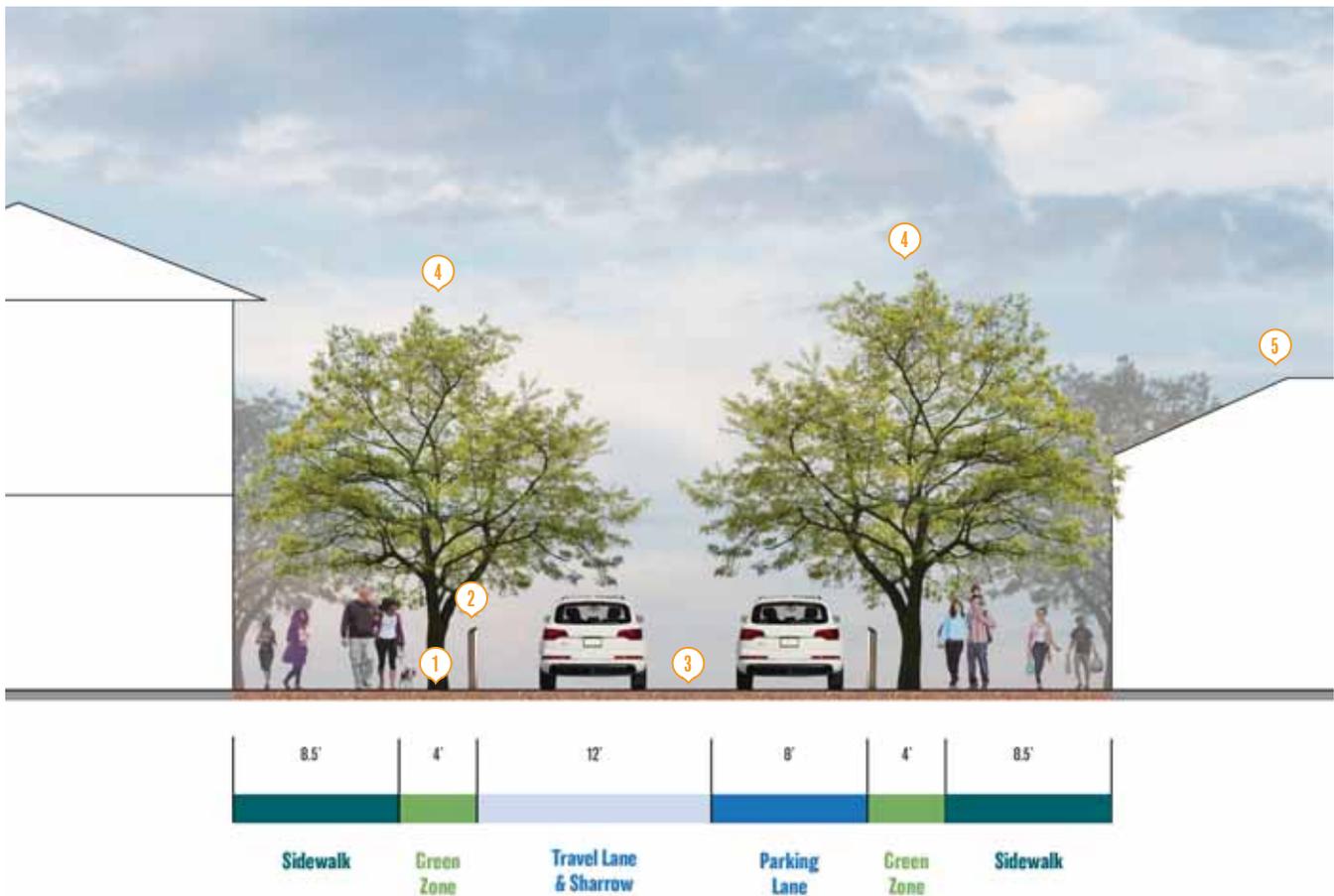


Quality Streets act as the street design type that transitions the streetscape from Greened Street to Premier Street. A quality street has additional streetscape elements to draw users towards the center of downtown, and to newly created downtown districts, which are defined by the Premier Street design type. On Quality Streets, the roadway and sidewalk are separated by a curb, as a typical street would be. However, the sidewalk material on these streets transitions to a pervious clay paver, which is also found on the Premier Street, and creates visual continuity between the two street types.

The quality street typologies found abutting The Triangle district (see page 56) should have the following design: the street has one travel lane with a sharrow for bicycle circulation and one parking lane. Mature street trees in standard rectangular tree pits line both sides of the street. Along Prince George Street between N. Boundary Street and Henry Street, the Quality Street should remain a two-way system.

Premier Street Design Type

- ① Sidewalk flush with roadway
- ② Removable bollards
- ③ Pervious clay pavers on roadway and sidewalks
- ④ Mature street trees
- ⑤ Vendor pavilions



Premier Streets are the most intensive and versatile street design type in that they are meant to be used to define the active core of Downtown Williamsburg. They create a streetscape that accommodates cars, but is also highly accommodative to pedestrian and bike activity, and can be closed off for events.

In this street design type, the roadway and sidewalk are flush, with **no curb** to separate the two. This allows for the roadway to be closed to vehicular traffic for special occasions, such as festivals or street fairs, with a seamless transition between the roadway and sidewalk areas. Removable bollards separate cars and

pedestrians when needed, but can be easily removed when the street is closed for events. The roadway and sidewalks are paved with the same material on Premier Streets, a pervious clay paver laid in a herringbone pattern with color variations that are complementary to brick.

The roadway itself has one travel lane with a sharrow for bicycle circulation and one parking lane, a major change in the circulation pattern around both The Triangle district, and the city park (see p.62 for a map locating these areas). Mature street trees in circular tree pits will provide much needed shade on Premier Streets.

Boundary Street

- ① Updated Street Lights
- ② Large planters
- ③ Street Trees and Planters
- ④ Porous Paver Crosswalks



The majority of streetscaping efforts that define a main street in Williamsburg occur on Henry Street, the street that bridges Colonial Williamsburg and the City of Williamsburg. Henry Street also brings the majority of vehicular traffic into the City from I-64, Route 60 and the Humelsine Parkway. However, the spine of the proposed retail, open space, and street network improvements within this report is Boundary Street. It is recommended that significant streetscape improvements be made to Boundary Street from Duke of Gloucester Street to Lafayette Street to redefine the street as the new main street, including the addition of large-scale planters with lush greenery and flowers,

banners and street lights, benches and wayfinding signage. Portions of Prince George Street and Scotland Street should be given the same streetscaping design. It is also recommended that the city consider renaming Boundary Street. The word boundary implies it is a border and psychologically may prohibit people from crossing it.

With Boundary Street as the new spine of the downtown, the street will support a wide variety of shops and restaurants, and will also serve to direct residents to other areas of the downtown, such as restaurant row.

Crosswalks



Crosswalks, or pedestrian crossings, could be improved in a number of key locations within the downtown (see crosswalk locations above) to increase safety as pedestrians travel along streetscapes to activity nodes. This plan recommends three locations—all are high pedestrian traffic areas. They are also areas with irregular vehicular traffic patterns, or have heavy traffic volumes. Crosswalks in these recommended areas, as well as throughout the downtown, will guide pedestrians to intersections where they can cross most safely.

This plan recommends utilizing either pervious pavers, or brick pavers for all crosswalks within the downtown, to differentiate them from the street. Creative crosswalks, permanent or temporary, would also be well-suited to the downtown, particularly to highlight events or pop-ups.

5.1.2.2 Elements

Street Furniture

Adding elements on the street such as trees, planters, street furniture, and streetscape materials brings richness to the streetscape. It also highlights visually the importance of the street to visitors. Furthermore, street furniture marginally improves street bounce and extends user activity. Benches provide seating opportunities for pedestrians, and bicycle racks make it easier for bicyclists to come to downtown. Street lighting also extends the times that the street feels usable; street lights promote active street life after sundown. Lighting amenities are recommended to be placed at intervals so that streets have enough light to feel safe and well-lit after dark.

A street furniture package is provided to bring street furniture elements to downtown streets in a uniform manner. Elements detailed include: Planters (p.83), Lighting (p.83), Bollards (p.84), Bike Racks (p.85), and Wayfinding Signage and benches(p.87). Elements recommended for specific locations are highlighted in the Street Furniture Map (p.81).

The street furniture elements suggested are modern; they provide a stark contrast to elements that currently exist, which complement colonial era styling. The modernity of the elements chosen is intentional. These furniture elements declare, "this is our modern, vibrant downtown!" The elements indicate to users of the street that this place is different from Colonial Williamsburg. The streetscape instead is a reflection of the contemporary city to which it belongs. ARB design guidelines for the downtown study area should be updated to reflect this vision.



If you plan cities for cars and traffic, you will get cars and traffic. If you plan for *people* and *places*, you will get people and places.



- Project for Public Places

Street Furniture Map



Street Furniture: Planters



Wave Series Planters by Slick Rock Inc.



A variety of large planters will be interspersed with street trees along all streets defined by a street design type in the Study Area. These stained concrete planters from **Slick Rock Inc.** come in a range of sizes and colors. These planters are perfect to hold a mix of crepe myrtle or birch trees, complemented by flowering annuals.

The waved rim of the bowl provides a contemporary look, but the earth tones are neutral enough to blend in nicely with the historic vibe of the surrounding area.

Street Furniture: Lighting



Colonial Williamsburg Cressets can be carried into the Study Area along parts of Duke of Gloucester Street and Boundary Street up to Prince George Street (see Street Furniture Map). A gas light system would be installed in these Cressets to make them safer and easier to use than the wood-burning version that currently exists in Colonial Williamsburg. The gas system also provides the opportunity for the city to partner with local utilities to sponsor the lights.



For the remainder of the Study Area, the LP Nest Light by Louis Poulsen is a great modern take on a historic torch lamp. The latticed cage structure evokes a similar feel as the Cresset, but uses modern LED technology. Streets with Premier and Quality street typologies will represent the first phase for installing the modern light fixtures throughout the Study Area.

Street Furniture: Bollards



To provide a barrier between pedestrians and car traffic, as required by the Premier Street design type, sleek stainless steel bollards can be installed on Prince George Street and around City Park. Removable bollards, like these from **Reliance Foundry**, can be taken out for events when the entire street is closed to traffic.

Another option is a bollard with a column light to provide extra lighting along pedestrian pathways. This model from **Forms + Surfaces** also comes in a variety of perforated styles to create more ambient lighting.

Street Furniture: Bike Racks



Olympia Bike Rack



Bike racks should be installed throughout the Study Area. Recommended locations for bike racks can be found on the Street Furniture Map on page 84. These bike racks from Olympia are made from solid cast aluminum and are only 3 inches wide, which will minimize the amount of space occupied by the bike racks as well as the appearance of the racks on the street.

The shape of the bike rack allows for multiple bikes to be locked to one post in several different configurations. All locking configurations meet the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) guidelines for security and functionality.

Street Furniture: Wayfinding Signs



Gateway Signage

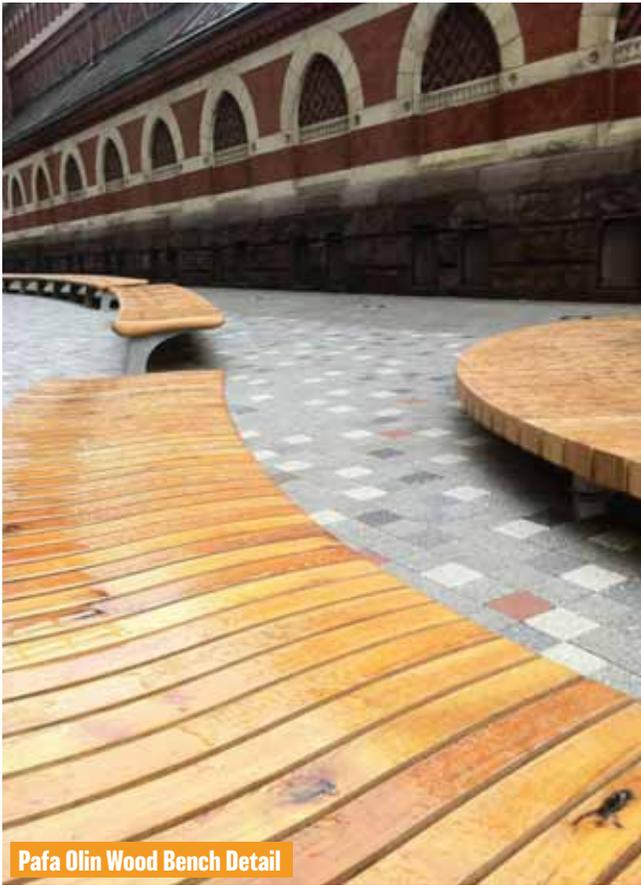


Walk Williamsburg Wayfinding Signs

Left: A unique series of internally lighted LED gateway signs will be installed at two major entrances to downtown -- the intersection of Prince George Street and Scotland Street coming into downtown and on Boundary Street just south of City Park (see Street Furniture Map). These posts will illuminate during the night and may change colors if desired. The gateway signs are designed to be approximately 16 feet tall.

Right: Walk Williamsburg wayfinding signs will be installed throughout downtown to direct pedestrians to special greenways, trails, and other pedestrian and bike paths, as further discussed in Section 5.1.2.3.

Street Furniture: Benches



Curvilinear benches made from slatted wood provide a unique, high-end seating option for public spaces. They are playful and functional, and many can be used in a variety of ways. They are typically custom made, but there are some pre-fab options available in a variety of shapes and sizes.

These benches would be installed throughout the Study Area along all Premier Streets and Quality Streets.



Street Furniture: Common Elements



Top Left: On Premier and Quality Streets, the sidewalk material is a clay paver system laid in a herringbone pattern. On Premier Streets, this material will also be used in the roadway. The picture above is an example of how this system was used in Hawthorne Park in Philadelphia.

Bottom Left: Two different kinds of tree pits are proposed for streets throughout the Study Area. Premier Streets will have street trees in round tree pits, like those seen here in Montclair, New Jersey (designed by Arterial LLC). All tree pits should be planted with seasonal annuals and groundcover.

Top Right: On Premier Streets, the sidewalk is flush with the street, with no curb to separate the two. As in the example pictured here, bollards can be used to divide car and pedestrian traffic. This option allows for the street to be closed off to cars more easily for special events.

Bottom Right: Quality and Greened Streets will have square or rectangular tree pits for street trees. These tree pits would be surrounded by a wrought iron structure and filled with ground cover or flowers.

5.1.2.3 Multi-Modal Transportation

With changes in street typologies taking place within the Study Area, it is crucial to understand how new one-way systems and street patterns will affect the ways users travel through the downtown - on foot, by bike, and by car. It is the goal of the following recommendations to make the flow of people, bikes, and vehicles as smooth as possible throughout the downtown.

A. Pedestrians

To highlight the redesign of streetscapes and to be more enjoyable to pedestrians, the plan recommends going one step further to create an entire pedestrian network called "Walk Williamsburg" (see Pedestrian Network map on p.90) The network will link public parks and areas of interest via Greened sidewalks (sidewalks on roads with Greened Streets design type), and a trail network, linking both public and private existing pedestrian networks. A pedestrian network is a much needed amenity; the defined streets and trails will allow pedestrians to easily find their way throughout the downtown, aided by Walk Williamsburg Wayfinding signs, placed along trails and sidewalks. The string of open spaces and parks will also serve as destinations and give the downtown a gardenesque feel.

B. Bikes

In combination with adding sharrows on roadways for bicyclists, and installing bike racks throughout the downtown, the City of Williamsburg should continue to explore the implementation of a bike share program, beginning in the Downtown area. Bike share stations are not only attractive to visitors who want a quick way to explore the City; they also appeal to commuters who may bike from one area of the city to another for work.

The City of Williamsburg should also incorporate bike improvements in the downtown to connect to the Capitol Trail extension that will be present on Henry Street.

C. Personal Vehicles and Parking

Parking is a continually contentious topic of discussion among businesses and residents in the city. There are pressures, real and perceived, on parking accessibility and availability and cost. There is a growing sense that the City and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation may need to make adjustments in current parking policies and practices to better accommodate current and future parking demand. The City of Williamsburg recently completed a parking study to analyze the opportunities and needs for parking in Downtown Williamsburg and develop a parking master plan for the next 10 years that meets the needs of visitors, downtown merchants and employees, City residents, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and the College of William and Mary. This plan agrees with both the findings and recommendations found within the parking study.

The study indicated the City's parking "shortage" is in fact a problem of perception rather than an actual scarcity of parking. Currently, much of the public parking supply in downtown Williamsburg is provided to users at no cost. The City only charges in the parking garages and lots located on the fringes of the downtown core. The most desirable parking spaces in the core of the downtown are nearly 100% occupied; parking facilities within one to two blocks of the Merchants Square area have excess capacity. The challenge for the city is to effectively utilize the existing parking resources. One of the strategies recommended to achieve a more balanced parking system is to expand the paid parking to include more off-street facilities and on-street parking spaces. Enhanced signage should also make those off street and lot facilities easier to find.

Pedestrian Network



- Street Greening
- Trail way (public access)
- Private Network
- < Access to/from campus
- Green space

5.1.3 Programming

Activating Nodes and Streets

The development of activity nodes and the redesign of streetscapes, should bring substantial change to downtown Williamsburg. However, none of these changes will matter if nobody uses them. Small-scale interventions, either temporary or permanent, and programming and events should play the vital role in attracting people to visit downtown. Events and programming will introduce the new activity nodes to residents, students, and visitors and build an active user-base who is excited to spend time downtown.

Small scale interventions and programming also have the added benefit of creating an inviting downtown Williamsburg as quickly as possible, and inexpensively. Easy wins, such as movable planters filled with flowering annuals, will create a welcoming streetscape and can be upgraded or relocated in the future as elements are integrated into a permanent streetscape design. Small interventions should also allow for greater flexibility and creativity, lending a uniqueness to different areas of the downtown. With each small intervention that is accomplished, the feel of downtown will change, promoting a more vibrant experience.

The following interventions are proposed:

- › Pop-Up Placemaking (p.92)
- › Programming and Events in Downtown (p.93)
- › Seasonal Decorations (p.94)
- › Additional Greening (p.95)
- › High Quality Signage (p.96)
- › Food Trucks (p.97)

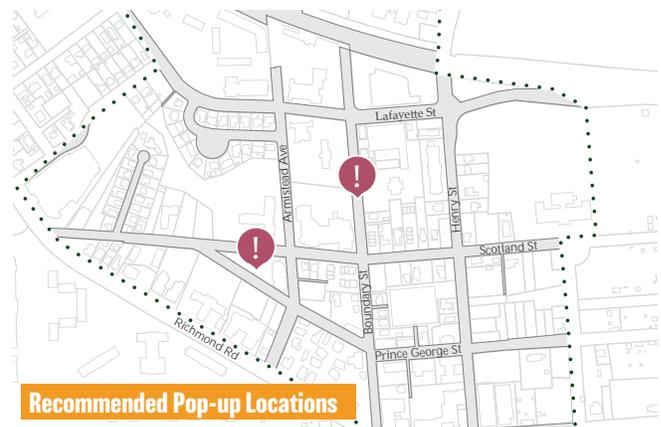


Pop-up Placemaking



One of the elements of vibrant urban space that can be replicated through placemaking is the concept of the serendipitous moment. There is an element of surprise in large urban settings, where the environment is constantly changing. This element of surprise is one of the components of urban space that keeps people returning to an area; it will not be the exact same place the next time you arrive. The "frozen in time" feeling of downtown Williamsburg - characteristically similar to Colonial Williamsburg - hinders these organic moments from occurring in a way that feels unique and genuine. The strategic use of pop-up installations is one of the most highly-used and widely successful ways to activate space in a temporary manner. Pop-ups also allow for the City of Williamsburg to engage with a variety of audiences, by gearing pop-ups, and the programming held there, to different groups of users, such as students or visitors.

One of the most valuable tools that can be provided to private and nonprofit organizations, and to city departments themselves, is a list of resources for how to properly implement pop-up installations and programming. As a tool for community building, pop-up is not brand new, and many resources are available so that the City will not have to "recreate



the wheel." The planning department should work closely with other interested departments to create a "pop-up handbook" to walk interested parties through the process of designing and implementing pop-ups, and guides parties towards projects that the city is most interested in implementing. Valuable resources for this process include but are not limited to the following organizations:

- > Better Blocks
- > Project for Public Space
- > Street Plans Collaborative

Programming and Events



Programming within downtown spaces is crucial for creating an active user-base within the downtown. Programming is important as a tool to build a sense of community, but will also move the focus of events programming into newly defined downtown spaces, and away from Duke of Gloucester Street. The goal of programming efforts should be to pull people out from Duke of Gloucester Street and into the rest of the downtown.

The City should consider creating a communication and events programming coordinator to undertake this initiative.



Events Programming Concepts:

- › “Dog days of summer” event to welcome residents to a pop-up dog park
- › Movie Night under the stars in a pop-up green space
- › Free workout programs
- › Participation in crowd-sourced pop-up events such as “park(ing) day” or Diner en Blanc
- › Art/music/food festivals

Seasonal Decorations



Festival



Seasonal Plantings



Winter Holiday Decorations

Seasonal streetscape decorations, such as holiday decor, seasonal plants to add visual appeal to planters and tree pits year-round, and string lighting, are popular, easy-to-implement ways to draw attention to particular streets in the downtown. Furthermore, decorating a street shows community pride, and can be a helpful tool for promoting events put on by the city, such as festivals or parades.

Additional Greening



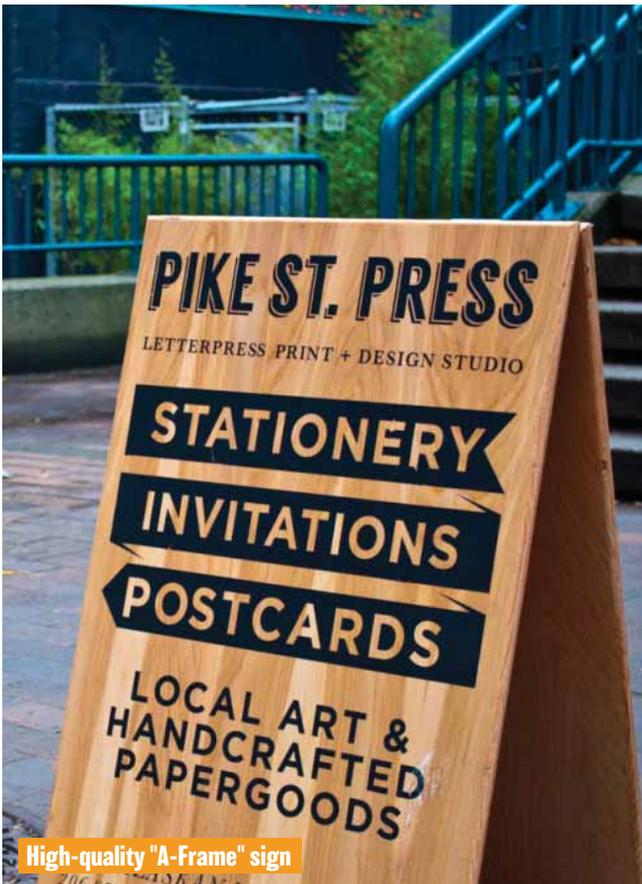
The addition of more shade trees and awnings will reduce ambient temperatures and make the street more comfortable for pedestrians. Lush greenery in permanent planting strips and containers will also provide the downtown area with a garden-like feel.

Window boxes are a common element in many historic urban settings, and allow local property owners and residents to bring a unique element to their properties while also maintaining a common element on the street and bringing additional greenery to the streetscape. Small Business Improvement Grants, if expanded to apply to businesses within



the downtown, could be used to fund landscaping elements for commercial businesses, such as window boxes. A business improvement district could also fund such improvements.

High Quality Signage



High-quality "A-Frame" sign



Painted Metal "Blade" Sign



Metal Wall Sign

High quality signage adds an additional layer of unique character to the streetscape. This plan suggests expanding the Small Business Improvement Grant program, facilitated by the Williamsburg Economic Development Authority, to qualifying businesses in the downtown, in addition to the tourism zone.

The grant program, which focuses on enhancing the vibrancy and character of the City, would assist commercial business owners with improvements to their businesses, which will provide an overall benefit to the downtown.

Food Trucks



Food Truck Patrons

Food trucks are a popular amenity, and bolster activity where they operate. They cater to a grab-and-go audience, and are popular for workers on a short lunch break, students on a budget, and patrons at festivals and events, a segment not easily accommodated through brick and mortar restaurants. Although the City is currently working with a committee to craft a comprehensive food truck policy, this plan suggests the following within downtown Williamsburg:

- › Allow food trucks to operate on private property throughout the entire downtown, in addition to within the hospitality district (B-4).
- › Allow food trucks to operate without a special events permit on streets directly surrounding City Park (right).



Mobile Market



Food Trucks at Park



Recommended Food Truck Locations

5.1.4 Phasing

Implementation Plan

The timing of implementation is key to the success of the downtown vibrancy plan. The Phasing section of this plan is a roadmap for that success. Without the ability of the City to easily implement recommendations, it is just a plan on a shelf. The recommendations are meant to be used as a menu of options, which can be implemented as sets of initiatives, or individually, with each piece building the collective conditions for vibrancy desired in downtown Williamsburg. The recommendations are structured to produce incremental, quick and easy “wins” and also to build community buy-in to undertake larger, capital intensive projects.

Recommendations are categorized in a number of ways. First, they are categorized within three phases: immediate, or to be implemented as soon as possible; short term, or within 1-5 years; and long-term, or 5-10 years. Phase was determined by weighing the priority of an improvement for the vibrancy of the downtown, the ease of implementation, and also by budget and necessity for community input. Secondly recommendations are categorized as permanent or non-permanent/episodic, to help guide the City in choosing a mixture of permanent and impermanent interventions in each phase.

	\$ - Small cost with immediate success
	\$\$\$ - Funded through long-term capital investment
P	Permanent intervention
S	Soft/non-permanent intervention or episodic
	Phase 1: Immediate
	Phase 2: 1-5 years
	Phase 3: 5-10 years

Intervention	Phase	Cost	Funding Source	Responsible Agency
Update Zoning	P		City of Williamsburg	Planning Department
Add Flower Planters	S/P		City of Williamsburg	Public Works & Utilities
Add Street Trees	P		City/State	Public Works & Utilities
Install new Street Lights	P		City of Williamsburg	Public Works & Utilities
Install new Street Furniture	P		City of Williamsburg	Public Works & Utilities/ Parks & Recreation
Install New Wayfinding Signs	P		City of Williamsburg	Public Works & Utilities/ Parks & Recreation
Allow Food Trucks	S		City of Williamsburg	Planning Department/ City of Williamsburg
Implement Pop-up Parks	S		City/Grants	City of Williamsburg
Bring a Beer Garden to downtown	S/P		Developer/Retailer	Developer/Retailer
Urban Grocer	P		Developer/Retailer	Developer/Retailer
Add Housing in downtown	P		Developers, VA Housing Agency/HUD	City of Williamsburg
Restaurant Row	P		Developer/Retailer	City of Williamsburg
Add Pavilions	P		City of Williamsburg	City of Williamsburg
Street Typologies - Greened Streets	P		City of Williamsburg	Public Works & Utilities
Street Typologies - Quality Streets	P		City of Williamsburg	Public Works & Utilities
Street Typologies - Premier Streets	P		City of Williamsburg	Public Works & Utilities
Install Gateway Features	P		City of Williamsburg	City of Williamsburg
Install Bike Share Stations	P		City of Williamsburg	City of Williamsburg
Design and Build City Park	P		City of Williamsburg	City of Williamsburg
Redesign Merchants Square Plaza			Merchants Square, City of Williamsburg	Colonial Williamsburg
Implement Trails and Greenway Network and Install Wayfinding Signage	P		City of Williamsburg, Grants	Public Works & Utilities
Parking	P		City of Williamsburg	Public Works & Utilities
Seasonal Decorations	S		City of Williamsburg	City of Williamsburg
Programming	S		City of Williamsburg	City of Williamsburg - new position to be created

5.2 Retail and Marketing

Downtown retail districts are an integral part of vibrant communities. Often the primary commercial hub, these districts enrich the overall quality of life by providing access to basic goods and services and entertainment. Downtown retail districts also enhance the experience of visitors and tourists and function as the primary places for community events and social gatherings. They are also an important generator of tax revenue.

Creating and optimizing a sustainable retail environment is both an art and a science. The mix of retail and entertainment in a downtown must be appealing to be sustainable. Rapid changes in technology and massive shifts in consumer preferences and shopping patterns make achieving a sustainable mix increasingly difficult. Yet, while the physical structure of retail is largely “permanent”, how retail is curated can be flexible, from the merchandise and presentation to the delivery to the consumer.

Given the prominent role of retail assets in downtown Williamsburg, we have focused our retail recommendations on measures and tactics to strengthen the current retail environment, attract new and complementary uses, and on activating the market.

5.2.1 Retail Merchandising

The first set of retail recommendations concerns the mix of stores and the merchandise they carry. A healthy merchandising mix allows stores to support one another, as customers drawn to one store are attracted to and patronize other nearby stores. These recommendations reflect national best practices as adapted to Williamsburg’s specific situation.

Augment the Retail Merchandise Mix. The current retail mix in downtown is tourist oriented. The research (data and surveys) suggests that additional uses, certain food and soft goods uses would be well received in the market. Examples of potential additional stores include:



Grape & Bean in Old Town Alexandria VA has bridged the divide between day and evening traffic with coffee and wine.

- **Grocer** - There is an unfilled need for a small gourmet/boutique grocer with a combination of fresh and organic items balanced with affordable foods. The grocer would be relatively small, approximately 3,000-4,000 SF, and should sell fresh produce, a small selection of prepared foods and convenience foods (cold drinks, sandwiches, fruit, donuts, salad). This type of grocer would be a strong asset for downtown. The grocer would not need to sell soft goods, such as toilet paper and cleaning products.
- **Entertainment Venues** – adding music and nightlife into the existing fabric of Merchants Square Annual Survey with a few bars and a brewery with space to accommodate date night, the after-theater crowd or simply a late-night drink. Uses that appeal to young and single audiences and families would be appropriate as well.
- **Fast Casual Dining** – These eateries focus on fresh food, grab and go items, and pre-packaged items that are affordable. National brands that would complement the existing culture including Freshie and Sweet Green.
- **Cafes and Coffee Shops** that encourage lingering. Students and visitors alike linger in cafes while they socialize or work, and these places add to the vibrancy of the downtown. It might be possible to expand the traditional coffee shop concept by selling coffee by day and wine at night. Regardless of the specifics, outdoor seating is a key element for cafes.
- **Full Service Dining and Restaurants** – the market shows potential for high end dining and ethnic restaurants. This opportunity includes a high-end steak house that also offers late hours;



ethnic restaurants especially Asian and Indian. In addition, affordable choices that meet the needs of students, families, such as a noodle bar, have potential. One implementation strategy is to target local chefs in the region, even as far away as Virginia Beach and Richmond, who have relationships within the regional food distribution system.

- **Artisan & Locally Produced Goods** including artisan apparel, housewares art and foods are a good fit, building on the history of local makers.

Other types of items are less likely to be successful. For example, teen and "throw-away" brands, mid-priced business and casual attire (men's and women's), shoes and sporting goods are all offered by competition in the market, which satisfies most of the current demand. For example, Midtown Row offers an ideal location for larger format stores such as H & M or Forever 21 and the juxtaposition to the college helps to build a solid argument for this location. A small boutique or shoe store with a very narrow offering of well-known brands (and available to order others on demand) or a showroom style has the greatest likelihood of survival in the downtown.

Restaurant Row - The addition of more restaurants, offering a wider variety of price points and food options, could be well accommodated through the support of a restaurant row. The ideal location for these restaurants would be on Boundary Street and along Scotland Street, between Henry and Boundary streets. The current grouping of houses on Scotland Street could be retrofitted to accommodate restaurants or small bed and breakfasts, and the large front yards are ideal for creating outdoor seating. A wine bar, or beer garden, would also suit the open spaces in front of the homes. Turning Boundary into "Main Street" will help to link the "dining" and "entertainment" districts. Streetscaping, particularly with street lights bright enough to facilitate evening activity, is recommended along this street, and within the downtown. Signage along this street will be of primary importance for promoting these restaurants, and signage design guidelines are highly recommended.

Entertainment District. The evolution of tenants locating along Prince George Street hints at the creation of an "entertainment oriented district." This district would offer drinks and desert, date night specials, and even late-night dining (delis, new brewery). Several of these businesses have

sufficient space and suitable character to add live entertainment, such as music and readings. The street is also somewhat buffered from residential uses, and could easily accommodate more bustle and movement.

Focus on Artisans, Local Goods and Shops.

Part of the Colonial Williamsburg experience is a celebration of makers. In the Historic Area tradespeople use real 18th-century tools and techniques in their crafts, and visitors have several opportunities to get a real, hands-on experience.

Building off the experiential component of this aspect of Williamsburg, extend the merchandise mix to include other locally owned goods and shops. Local artisans from cottage food (e.g., homemade pickles, honey, and peanuts) to soft goods and furniture add value to the downtown shopping experience by offering something unique.

A recent retailing trend is an increasing preference to purchase from local businesses. Launch a **“Buy Local Campaign”** to support this preference. Building branding around local goods and local experience will strengthen the overall perception of downtown, including Colonial Williamsburg.



Encouraging the businesses and owners to participate in nationally recognized programs around local buying, such as Small Business Saturday and Small Business Week, and linking all promotions to social media, both local and national, will help bolster the downtown retail experience.

Cluster National and General Merchandise Away from Merchants Square. Sites such as Midtown Row offer an ideal location for national retail tenants and general merchandise. Focusing bigger box tenants and national retailers to these types of sites will help to maintain the neighborhood scale and character in downtown that many stakeholders find charming. This location strategy will not prevent smaller national tenants from locations in downtown, and select tenants might help fill the gaps in the retail offerings.

Refresh the Retail Presentation & Merchandising. To accommodate today’s consumer, retailers must present an inviting environment that utilizes contemporary display protocol and materials. While some of the existing brands in downtown are strong, some of the merchandise presentations are out of date.

Signage, displays and lighting all influence which store a customer enters, and how long they stay. Encourage local businesses to take cues from national retailers, using more current materials and color schemes. A short-term approach might include simple upgrades and improvements (fresh paint, natural wood) and can make a significant difference to performance.



Embellish & Animate Window Displays. Williamsburg boasts a very successful winter holiday program. Establish a rotating program around themes and seasons can keep this and other programs from getting stale. Lighting can help to animate the windows, including LED string lights all season long for retailers and restaurants. Additionally, offer vacant spaces to local artists and designers to showcase their work. (Image at the top is Pop-up Window Display Detroit)

Adopt a Pop-Up Strategy. Activate vacant space to test new concepts and activate space. Pop-up stores can be seasonal, must offer optimal pricing (consumers will expect a deal), a unique assortment of goods, and perhaps most of all a fun experience. Pop-ups can be used to showcase local entrepreneurs and even extend seasonal goods.

Strategically placed, pop-ups can help to shift shopping patterns. In addition to contributing to the overall experience they give locals a reason to keep coming back.

Pop-up retail also integrates with public temporary installations. The public installations could be partially retail oriented, bolstering the vibrancy and giving people a reason to come and stay downtown. These can be seasonal, such as the Garden District in DC, which took over a former gas station space, or revolving uses even food.

5.2.2 Retail Marketing and Management

Create a Downtown Business Association. (DBA) Downtown needs a cohesive voice, which would be responsible for marketing all the retail and entertainment assets of downtown. The Merchants Square Association, which is limited to Colonial Williamsburg tenants, promotes businesses within Merchants Square and events and activities, but excludes businesses not affiliated with Colonial Williamsburg. Collectively the businesses in downtown offer a stronger voice that could reach a broader audience of customers.

The DBA might have a tiered membership that includes all merchants and businesses in downtown as well as property owners. The by-laws must address governance, marketing, dues, and participation. Marketing the retail and dining opportunities in downtown, needs to be part of the DBA's mission. This would include special events, campaigns, even media.

Establish, Expand and Maintain Consistent Operating Hours. Nothing is more disappointing for a consumer than to go to a shop or restaurant and discover it is not open. Inconsistent hours among downtown businesses will diminish the value of the cluster that drives traffic to all the businesses.

Establish regular hours for downtown businesses, including during events. Though a beer or arts festival may not bring a large base of customers for certain stores, staying open during these events is an important part of marketing.

Many local stakeholders articulated they are more likely to patronize downtown when it is not tourist season. Celebrate this permanent customer base by extending evening hours, even if only one evening a week. Direct any specials and promotions (1/2 price on a bottle of wine) to the local audience. This type of programming helps to strengthen residents' allegiance to local businesses. These special hours often become part of customers' regular routine.

Create a Business Directory of All Retail, Restaurants and Entertainment Uses in Downtown. different local websites offer directories that feature different shopping and dining options. Not all directories are current, and not all are complete. Create an electronic directory, building on the downtown Williamsburg brand, that can be easily distributed and marketed to individuals, hotels and concierges, tourists (and tour groups), even the media. Use social media to push out a link to relevant regional and national sites. Connect this directory to local apps, including the City's Wayfinder and Colonial Williamsburg's new app. Update the data consistently and recirculate at least twice per year.

Develop an Interactive Directory in Downtown Tied to Wayfinding Signage Program. Locate the directories at key intersections and gateways. A well-designed directory will help counteract confusion resulting from the street patterns. Secure sponsorship from area businesses and investors for the directories.

Revisit and Expand "Dining Dollars". Many local businesses revealed the recent downsizing of the dining dollars program at the College of William & Mary has hurt their business. Flexible dining is known to enhance the residential college experience and plays a vital role in recruitment today. Work with the college to develop a program that allows and even encourages local spending. If current food service contracts preclude immediate implementation, determine when this would be feasible. William & Mary, as the largest employer in downtown, is an important partner in the vibrancy

of downtown. These types of programs help to build good will, while providing students access to more choices, including healthy food.

Promote Downtown Businesses to National and Regional Media. The recent Wall Street Journal Article is a splendid example of stretching your reach about the distinct businesses in the market and that the experience is far more than the historic park. Pursue additional articles, at least four per year, focused on the food offerings, local events, individual business owners and offerings. Use testimonials from operators and patrons to provide credibility including why they are there. Leverage any placement with social media to extend the influence.

Why You Should Spend Spring Break in the 18th Century

"Thanks to a spate of luxury upgrades, Virginia's famed living-history museum is luring tonier traditionalists—without or without the kids" WSJ March 2017

Create and Use a Dedicated Hash Tag. A dedicated hash tag will become synonymous with the downtown. Encourage all local businesses, partners and residents to use this when they tweet or post information on social media (Linked In, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). Encourage everyone (locals,

students, visitors, businesses) to use #willyB! when tweeting or posting images from Williamsburg. Promote the use of the hashtag. For example, the DBA could select a photo of the week and post it on the website. This could help shift perception about downtown as a distinct destination.

Create a Retail Advisory Committee This should be viewed as an advisory entity for the city and the EDA, and that can also be called on to advocate for downtown retail. Include representation from all major stakeholders, including Colonial Williamsburg, Merchants Square, William & Mary (staff and students), residents, business owners, and even tourism officials. Task the group as a resource and conduit for marketing, retail PR, communication, and addressing relevant issues which impact retail such as parking, zoning and use restrictions, ongoing retail attraction, and so forth. The Philadelphia Retail Marketing Alliance and the DC Retail Committee (DCBIA) are good examples of how retail stakeholders can come together to support a common mission. This advisory committee is separate from the DBA, but would coordinate activity.

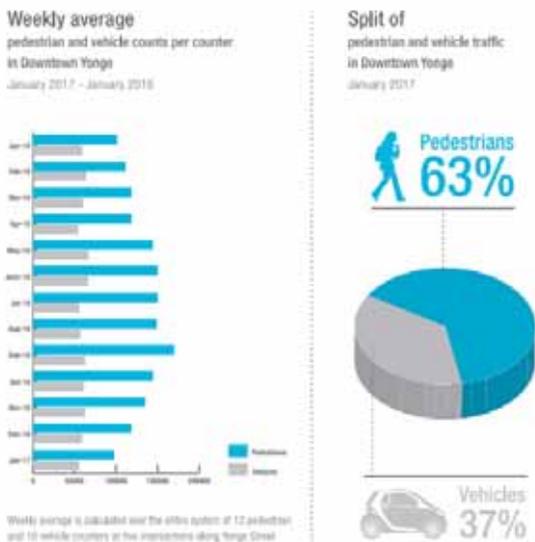
Many cities embrace these organizations as a means of keeping a pulse on the marketing with existing and new retail businesses. This group could also

become a vehicle to enhance communication among the various parties, including where there may be conflicting and competing issues (events, marketing, etc.) and to provide important feedback to the City on issues around opportunities and challenges.

Be Pro-active and Strategic About Business Recruitment. Strategic retail marketing is essential to ensure a community is accurately delivering its message to its target audience. Williamsburg’s audience includes retailers, brokers, craftsmen and entrepreneurs, investors and the media. Use the Internet and social media to amplify a market to its intended audience. Participate in industry oriented events that will yield new businesses. For example, the International Council of Shopping Centers local and regional deal making conferences offer a great venue to interact with potential tenants and brokers. Local business conferences including in Richmond and Virginia Beach offer another means to network with local businesses. Retail is a relationship-based business.

Non-retail businesses are also important. Transform vacant and underutilized commercial space to short term and co-working space, making the space social and fun. Many recent graduates want to stay in Williamsburg but have no job or place to work. This type of space will appeal to young entrepreneurs and retirees who might want to keep their hand in business, and it also will bolster day time traffic.

Create a Retail Market Dashboard Retailers and their investors like facts. Establish a set of indicators to measure growth and success and that can be used to support retail attraction. This information will become a valuable tool for local stakeholders to track



progress and evaluate what is working and what is not. The dashboard should include metrics related to visitation, retail sales, new stores and events, and especially pedestrian counts. The dashboard should also include soft indicators, such as retail brands offered (3,700 food items, 200 locally made products), milestones in sales – “the 1 millionth ice cream cone sold.” These metrics become stories for use on social media.

Tourism and visitor numbers must be part of this dashboard. Different organizations have different numbers for visitor traffic. Local organizations that track tourist traffic and spending need to become part of the larger marketing effort. Their clientele will benefit if downtown is more vibrant – this translates into more visitors. Room nights (total and average nights stayed) are a measure retailers often



use to evaluate potential sites. This information can also influence marketing dollars and events.

The dashboard should be packaged in a way that is visually appealing but also helps demonstrate the promise of the market. Update the data annually, and release the data to the media and other partners.

Establish a Retail Centric Portal. Dedicated to all things retail, this portal is best located on the EDA’s site Yes Williamsburg. Add a portal that looks like a “header” that is just retail information (this can link back to the demographic section). Use this to supplement other data and information already on the site. Include retail spaces for lease (and sale) separate from the “Available Properties” section. Encourage local brokers to submit listings – and update the site on demand. Market this site to the industry as the source for all intelligence on the retail market. Consider including business profiles, quality of life information and news.

Leverage Local Resources to Support Local Businesses. Develop a program to strengthen the small businesses in the downtown market, including

potential entrepreneurs. Construct a streamlined small business resource and marketing program that helps local owners scale up their businesses. Include training on business fundamentals. Link to local resources including the business school at W & M, to foster stronger community ties and keep costs down. The Williamsburg library and the community center are a short walk from downtown and can serve as co-working spaces for business owners. Also consider linking to or creating a list of financial tools / assistance that provide access to working capital to existing and start-ups for operational costs, including tenant fit out and façade redesign.

5.2.3 Miscellaneous

A Retail Management Company Merchants Square is a retail shopping center. It needs to be managed like one, including coordinated promotions and management. With all the changes underway this presents an opportunity to have that management company assume the role for other areas in downtown that are not part of Colonial Williamsburg. This organization could assume the marketing for the DBA like what a BID or DDA does. This would further support the concept of “one voice” in downtown, but allow for distinctive exposure and activities for individual partners and businesses.

Commit to New Residential in Downtown. People of all ages want to live within walking distance of downtown. This is a message we heard repeatedly through community engagement effort. Williamsburg already has a walkable downtown, but it lacks the proper amount of downtown residential offerings to create a vibrant space. Downtown residential development must be a priority for the City, and would help the existing and proposed retail to thrive.

There are a limited number of sites suitable for residential use. The sites that would best accommodate residential development are:

- The “IM Pei site” (Henry & Prince George Streets)
- The site of the WHRA Blayton Building housing community at Armistead Ave and Scotland Street, (pending the results of the current study to identify the highest and best use for the site)
- Parking Lot 5, currently owned by Colonial Williamsburg – this would add an important

anchor to the eastern most side of the downtown retail area.

Reposition the New Planned Entrance to the Art Museum. Although a new entrance for the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg has been designed to face the interior of Colonial Williamsburg, the downtown, and the museum itself, would benefit more from positioning the new entrance to face either Francis Street or Henry Street. Having the entrance along either street will help to shift pedestrian traffic to the front of the museum and invite visitors from the downtown core to the museum, and vice versa. The current entrance location, and the proposed entrance location, is hidden from view from the primary streets of the town. This condition deters the random passerby from deciding to visit the museum.

The lawn area in front of the museum is also a vital green space for Williamsburg; the museum could attract more visitors by staging events in the space, or presenting artwork on the lawn, similar to the “Inside Out” program by the Philadelphia Museum of Art (pictured).

Change the Name of Boundary Street. Intentional or not, it creates a concept of a boundary. Its location between the College and Colonial Williamsburg’s Merchant Square keeps the two uses separate rather than integrated components of downtown. What the name becomes is important. Calling it Center or Main Street, for example, would help to build brand identity for downtown and are names readily associated by most as the center of activity. Its role as “Main Street” also helps to link various uses along the street and that intersect with the street.



