

CONNECTING

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THE STRATEGIC VISION PLAN FOR UNIVERSITY CITY

Executive Summary Published June 2021



2021

FOUNDATION

Our vision is for Charlotte's University City to be a vibrant place that is urban in scale and design. It will be energized by transit and will be a popular and accessible destination offering diverse and unique choices for living, shopping, working, learning and leisure. It will become a premier employment center in the region with sophisticated infrastructure and attractive amenities.

Currently, University City is a diverse ecosystem that, as the second largest employment center in the city, is a significant driver to Charlotte's economy.

The plan that follows is a road map to University City's next 20 years of development. It is built on the foundation of four themes:

- An **urban north-south axis** focused on transit oriented development
- A **east-west green belt** for mobility and recreation
- Building **character**
- Providing 21st Century **mobility**

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Initial Interviews and Dialogue

12 1:1 Interviews with Stakeholders and Employees at Large Institutions and Businesses

3 Focus Groups with Employees, Residents, UNCC Faculty and Administrators

Resident Vision Session: James Rojas at the Camino Center

Student/UNCC Vision Session: Holly Christian, Gensler

Intercept Survey Specific to Crossing the Street: Alta / Kimley Horn

Targeted and Broad Surveys

Market Assessment Survey, County Wide: 1,100+ Responses

University City Resident Preference Survey: 250+ Responses

Greenway Preference Survey of Greenway Users: 100+ Responses

Ongoing Input Groups

UCP P&D Committee: Richmond Baker, Resident

UCP Board of Directors: Stuart Parks, Parks Chevrolet, The Entertainment District

Plan Presentations to Stakeholders

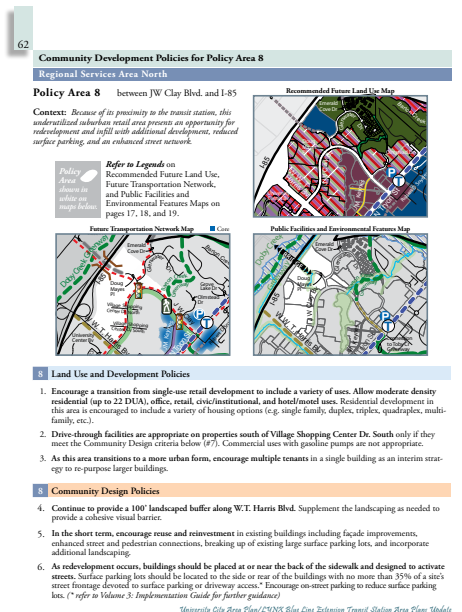
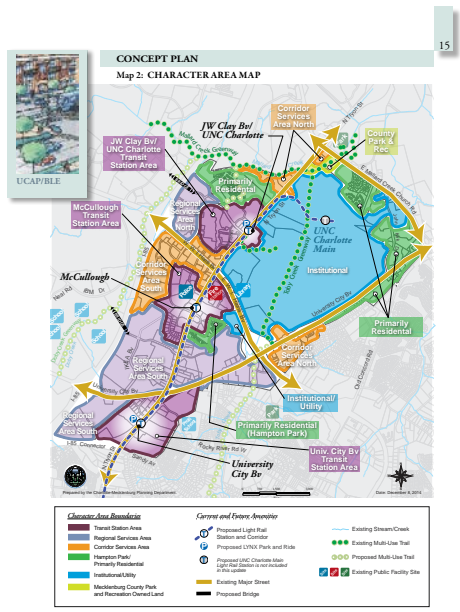
50 Presentations to Stakeholder Groups, Businesses and Neighborhoods

University City is guided by two primary plans, the University City Area Plan (2015) and the University Research Park Plan (2010). While these plans serve as excellent guides to public investment and general land use policy, the pace of change is daunting, and as opportunities come and go, gaps in our past work have become evident.

The resulting document will act as an internal guide for University City Partners as well as a strong start to updated area plans considered by the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

This work considers the following plans:

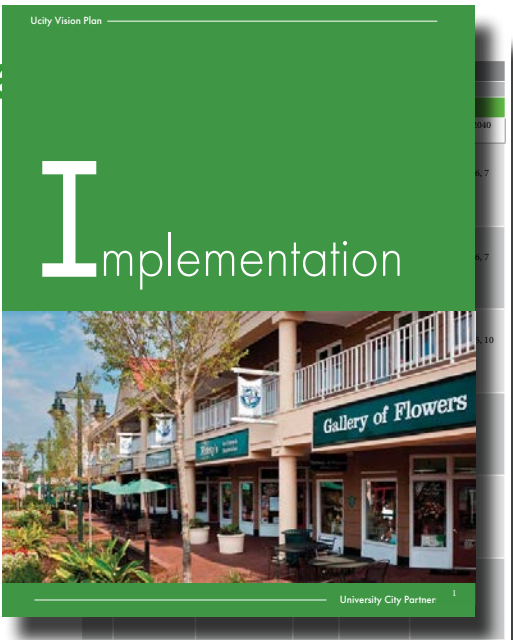
- University City Area Plan (2007 & 2015 update)
- University Research Park Plan (2010)
- University City Boulevard Design Guidelines (2010)
- JW Clay Station Area Plan (2016)



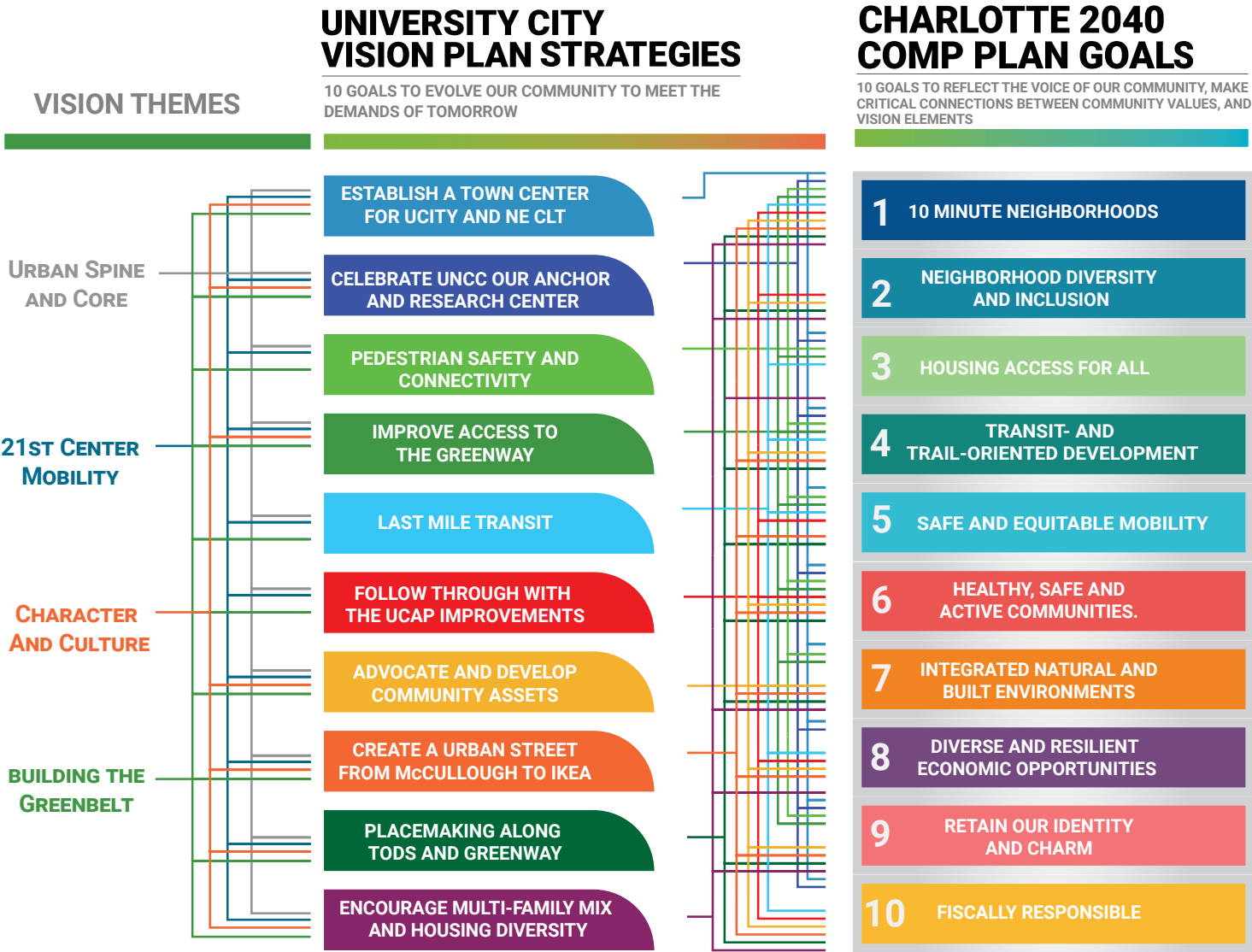
University City Vision Implementation

Outlined within the Implementation chapter of the University City Vision plan are the recommendations, actions and partners needed to work towards meeting the goals listed in this Vision.

The matrix below denotes which the strategies are necessary for meeting each vision element. Additionally, each of these strategies align with one or more of the goals listed in the 2040 Charlotte Comprehensive vision Plan



Key Strategy Matrix



Strong North/South and East/West Axis:

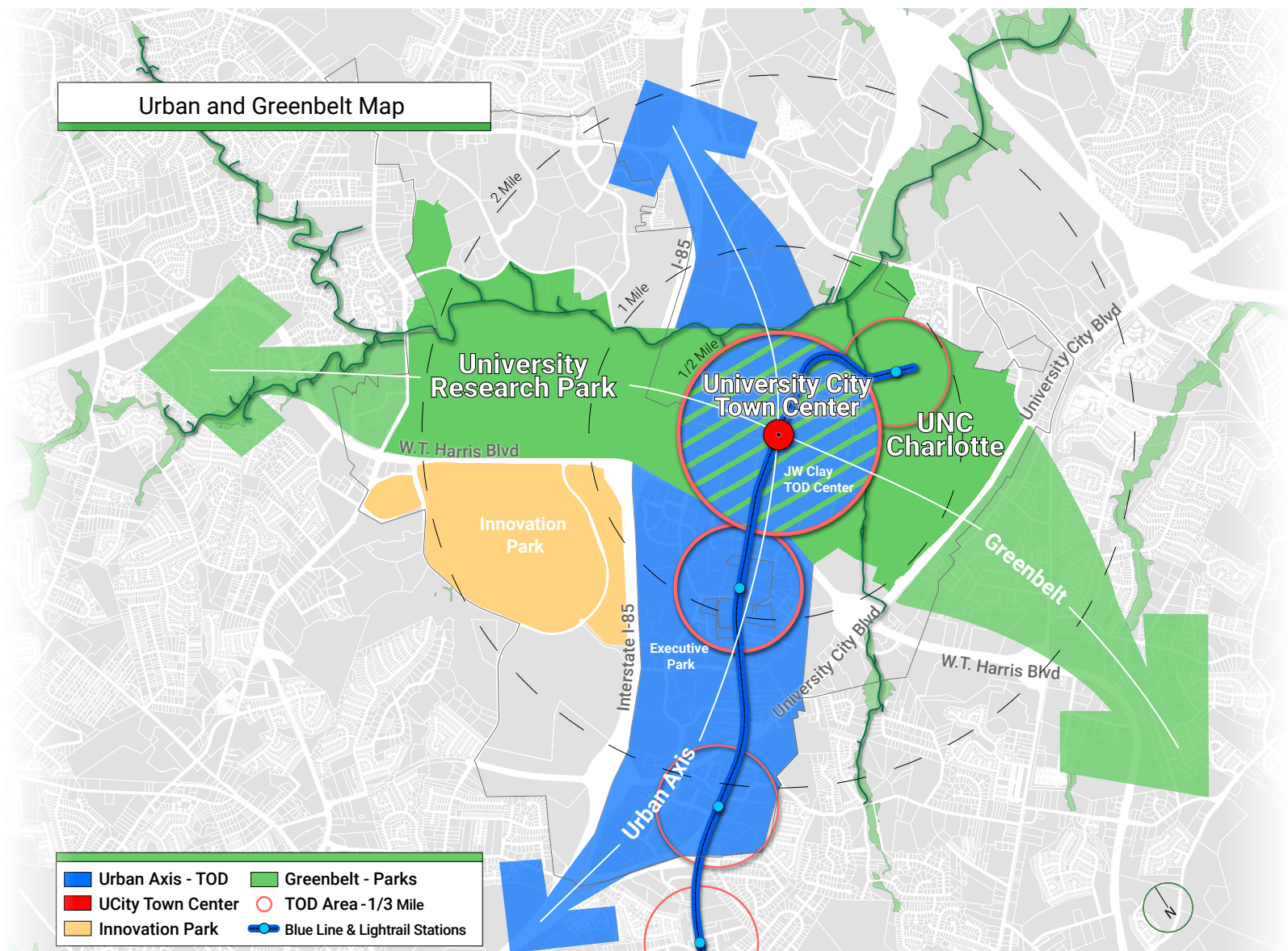
Building the Urban Spine and Greenbelt

Principle

The strategy for University City mirrors the best practices of city-building, organized on a strong north-south and east-west axis.

However, departing from the concept that each axis is urban, the strategy set forth in this plan balances urbanity and nature, commerce and community, and seeks to reconsider daily commutes, pivoting away from cars and offering opportunities for other modes to flourish.

Urban and Greenbelt Map



Strong Center:

A Town Center for NE Mecklenburg

Principle

While the vision for University City places density along the urban spine, the JW Clay Station will become a strong center, bridging UNC Charlotte and the University Research Park. This concept also aims to attract entertainment and draw surplus sales tax revenues from neighboring counties, contributing to the city and county's bottom line without the carrying expense brought by residential development.

JW Clay Station today



Future Town Center



Strong Neighborhoods:

Transit Anchored 10-Minute Neighborhoods

Principle

In addition to a Town Center, the urban spine will have smaller community center type nodes that serve the surrounding station areas. With other stations set at a distance of more than 3/4 miles and encumbered by major thoroughfares including WT Harris and University City Boulevard, each station area has the opportunity to act as its own community center, tied to the others by rail and human scale pedestrian infrastructure.

With the ability to reach the center in short walk, it is important that these nodes be considered for urban amenities including public open space, investments in last mile infrastructure and a well maintained streetscape.

Urban Neighborhoods



SAFE

1. Sidewalks
2. Crosswalks
3. Sidewalk Extension shorten crossing distance
4. Median refuge islands
5. On-street parking as buffer
6. Pedestrian crossing timers
7. Curb ramps with tactile dome panels

USEFUL

8. Variety of Destinations within a walkable proximity
9. Connections to bike parking and facilities
10. Connections to transit stops
11. Wayfinding signage

INVITING

12. Large maturing street trees
13. Street furniture
14. Cafe seating
15. Pedestrian-scale lighting
16. Ground floor awning and windows
17. Transit shelters
18. Places for public

Image Source: National Association of Transportation Officials

Four Elements for the Future

Urban Spine and Core



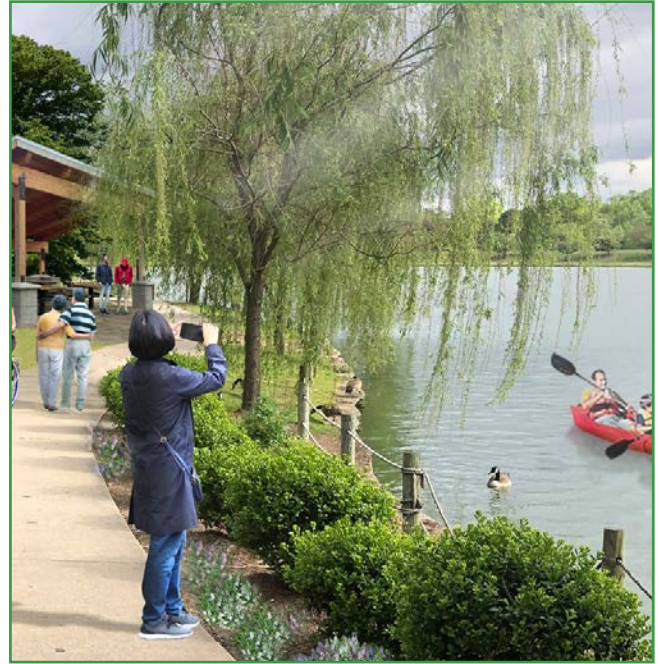
21st Century Mobility



Character and Culture



Building the Greenbelt



THE URBAN SPINE



4

LYNX Lighrail
Stations



50

Acres Developable
of Land Within 1/4
of Transit Stations



176

Acres Develop-
able of Land Within
1/2 of Transit Sta-
tions



1766

Businesses on the
LYNXs BlueLine
Corridor within
University City



15,300

Employees in the
LYNXs BlueLine
Corridor within
University City

Urban Spine:

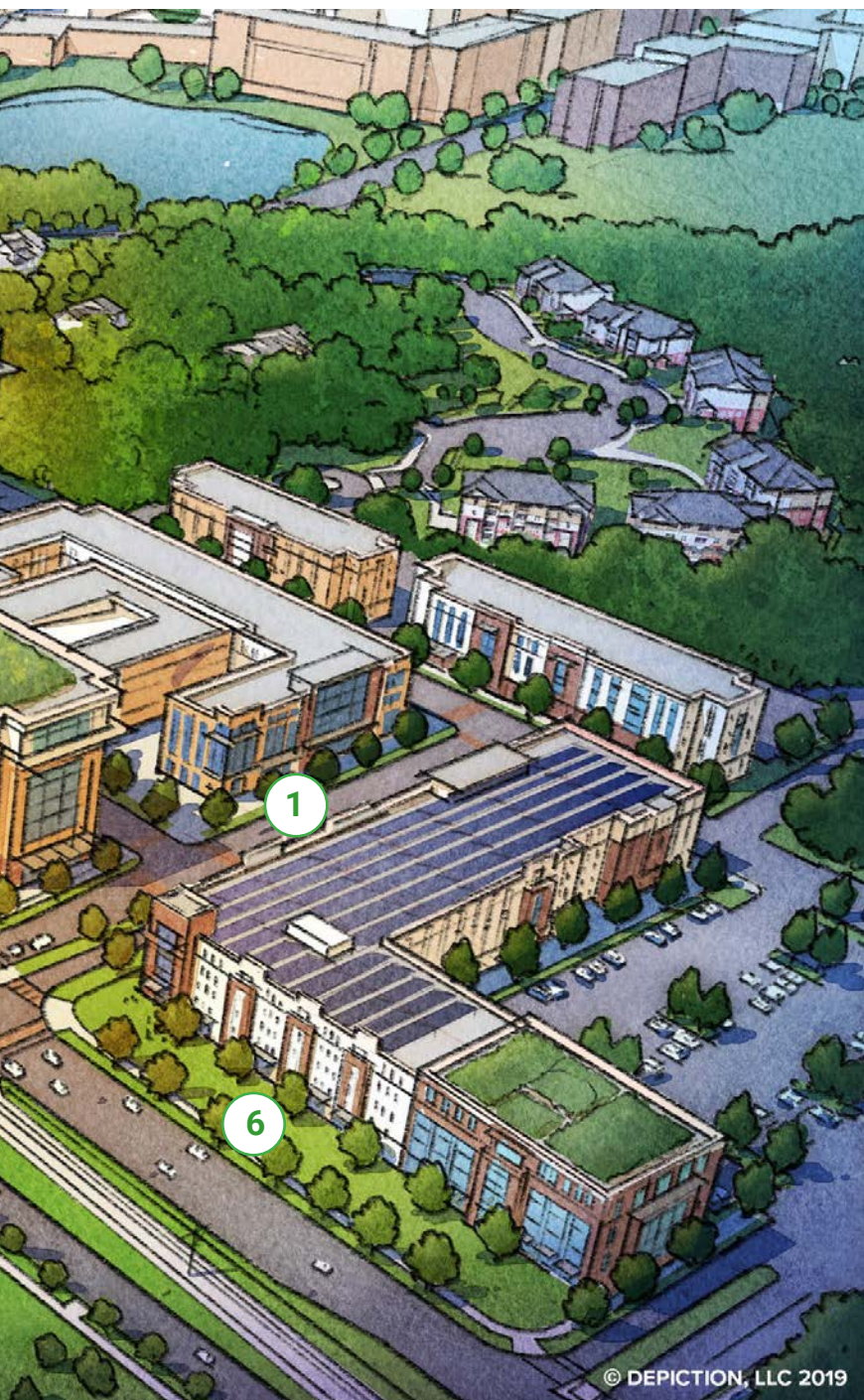
Building a Downtown Around the JW Clay Station

In 2040, North Tryon Street is transformed and University Place truly becomes University City's "Downtown"

As the "Main Street" of University City, several blocks of North Tryon Street form an urban boulevard, where people stroll past shops, offices and apartments, protected from traffic and with easy access to the light rail station. It is lined with buildings and canopy trees, ties UNC Charlotte and the Atrium University Hospital to the east with downtown University City (formerly University Place) to the west, anchored by the lake.



Downtown University City has fully realized a compact, walkable urban form, first envisioned in its 1980s master plan and restated in the JW Clay Area Plan (2016). Atrium University Hospital continues to expand its footprint with medical offices and outpatient services. “Eds and Meds” are supported by the University Research Park (URP) and UNC Charlotte. Diverse, walkable and connected, downtown University City thrives.



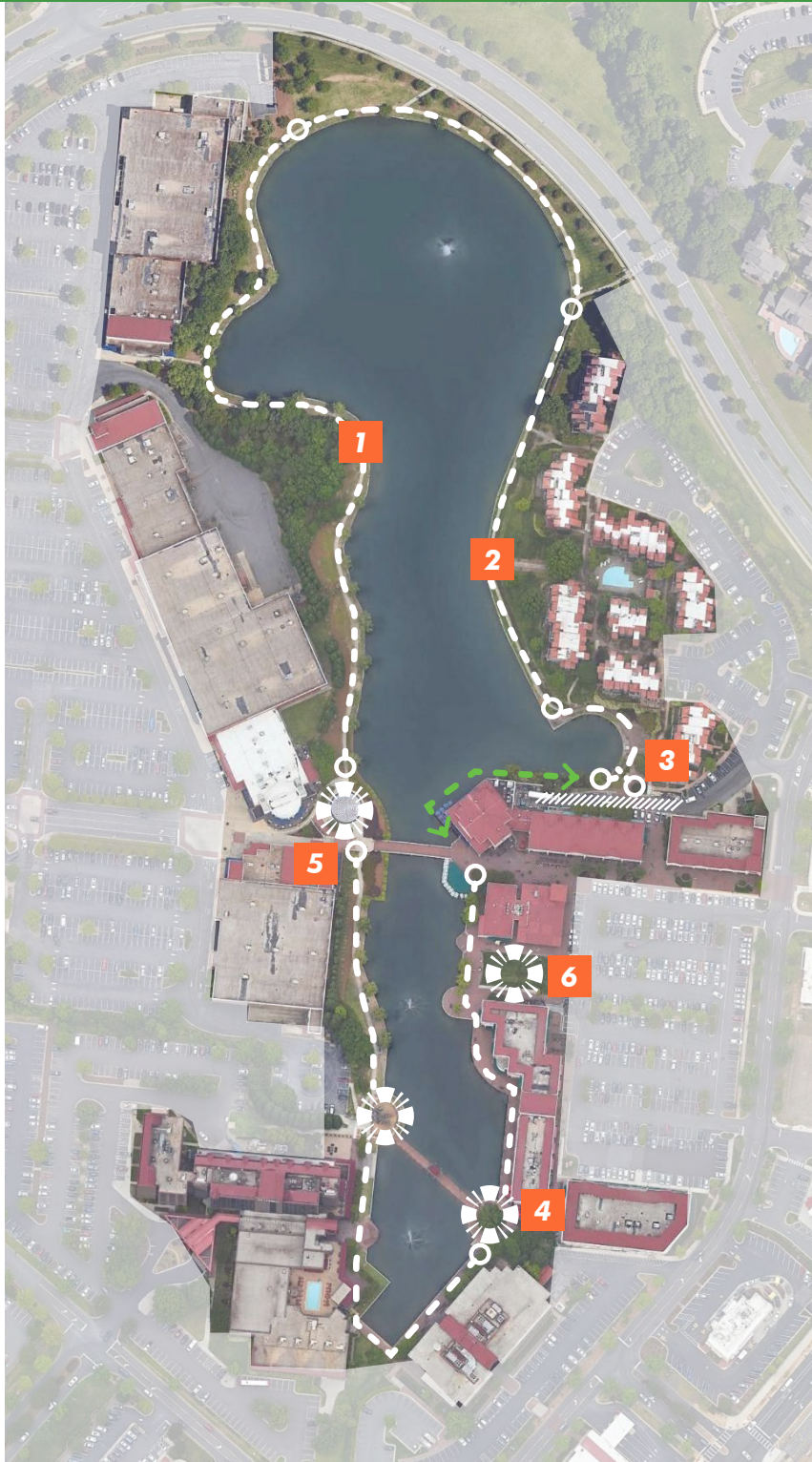
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- 1 Mallard Pointe shopping center transformed to a transit-oriented Main Street (JW Clay Station Area Plan)
- 2 University Place becomes a high-density, walkable downtown for University City
- 3 UNCC’s western edge along North Tryon Street is activated with dense, mixed-use development
- 4 A grand pedestrian promenade (linear park) has been implemented on UNCC’s side of North Tryon Street from the campus entrance to WT Harris Boulevard
- 5 Atrium University expands its footprint by creating a mixed-use medical village
- 6 A variety of public spaces of various sizes, including pocket parks, plazas and active alleys, encourage vibrancy

Left: Conceptual illustration of future transit-oriented development at North Tryon Street and the JW Clay Station Area. Above: The same area in 2019

Lakefront Opportunities

The Lakefront presents several opportunities for near-term enhancements including low cost, high impact tactical intervention.



1. Reduce Buffer and Enhance Permeability

- » Thin out thick landscaped buffer and open up pocket space for flexible uses

4. Organize an Active Edge

- » Existing uses should utilize the lake edge daily
- » Remove thick landscaping and make the edge permeable and open; add movable seating



The Lake at University Place "The Boardwalk"

- » This Man-made lake was constructed in the 1980s with the creation of Boardwalk, the multifamily community that surround it.
- » Although the commercial boardwalk buildings will change, as plans to redevelop them are currently underway, the Lake frontage will continue to be a prominent open space for University City residents.



2. Open Up the Private Edge

- » Remove hedge and provide public easement



3. Connect the Loop

- » Add wayfinding
- » Provide direct connections

5. Creative Programming Opportunities

- » Encourage formal and spontaneous programming
- » Provide movable seating and tables



6. Central Community and Cultural Space

- » Weekly/Monthly Programming focused on Community assets like the University City Farmers Market
- » Encourage Persevering the green as an asset



Future Precedent - Columbus, OH Bicentennial park

- » The Park formerly a series of cascading fountains was transformed using an interactive water feature know as the The Scioto Mile Fountain. Equipped with colored LED lighting, the park becomes an active public art display, changing based on community events.
- » World Class public space elements like this are not out of the scope for University City funding and planning efforts realize the space into the center of culture for Northeast Charlotte.



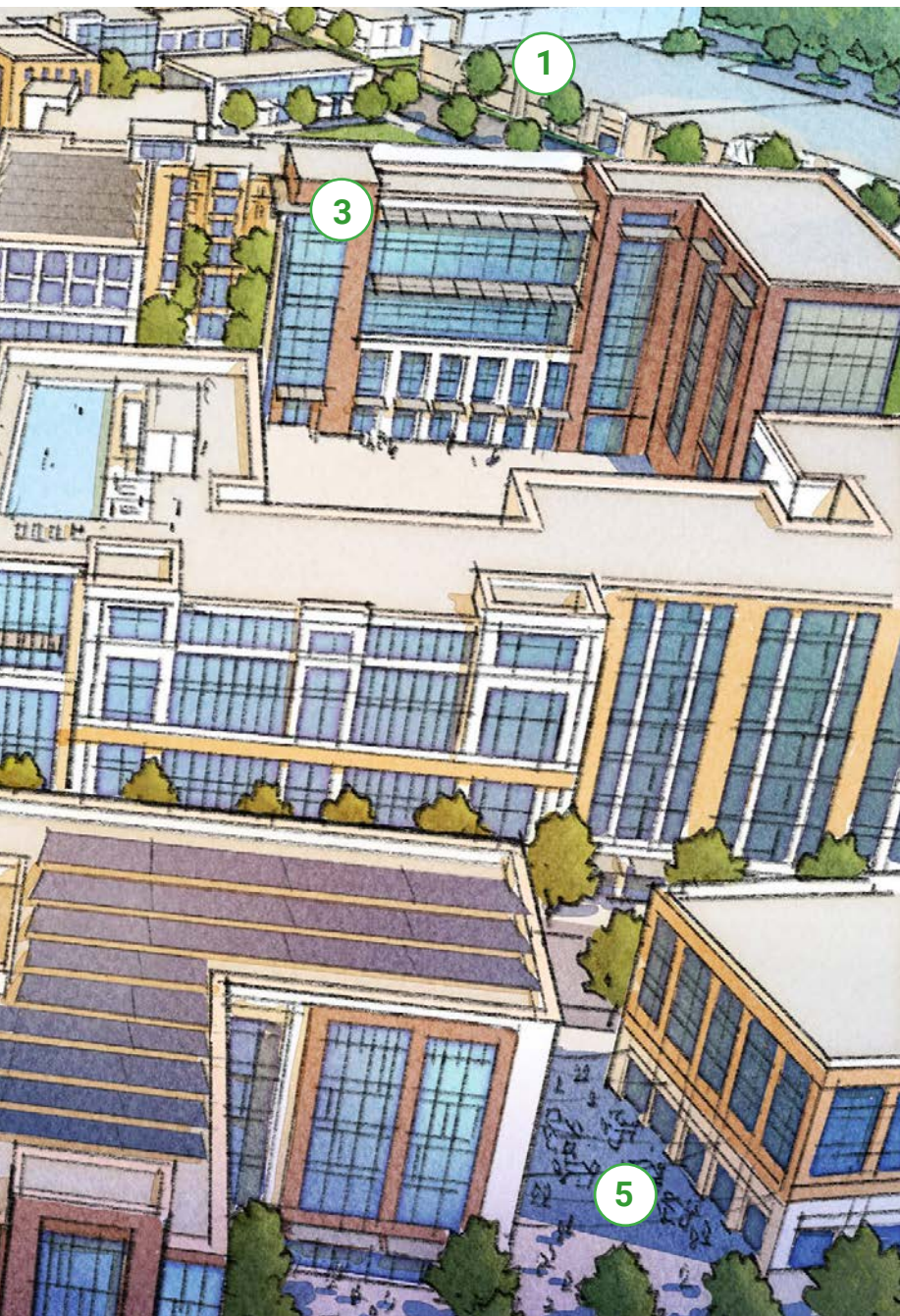
Urban Spine:

JW Clay Station, Bridging the University City Research Park and UNC Charlotte

How the North Bridge over I-85 Transforms “Back of House” Areas into a New Front Door

The North Bridge across I-85 linking University Research Park to University Place (University City’s Downtown) and UNCC is “game-changing.” It brings the University Research Park (URP) closer to the core of the district and UNC Charlotte, ripening University Place to transform with infill, adding intensity and creating a strong downtown. This new connection opens-up a unique opportunity for shuttles, micro-transit options, pedestrians and bicyclists to connect to research and business activities. Sites on the east side of I-85 occupied by the older generation.





KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- 1 Adaptive reuse of big box buildings
- 2 New multi-modal street with protected bicycle lanes, street trees, pedestrian-level lighting and sidewalks connects the JW Clay Station to the North Bridge and URP and is a focal intersection for University City's downtown
- 3 Infill development of surface parking lots includes high-profile corporate office, linked to URP by the North Bridge
- 4 High-density multifamily development adjacent to office and retail provides a walkable live-work-play environment
- 5 An extension of University City's "downtown" centered around the JW Clay Station and the lake
- 6 A vibrant public linear park wraps around the entire edge of the lake

Left: Conceptual illustration of the redevelopment of portions of University Place near I-85 from a big box center to a walkable, dense, mixed-use transit-oriented district. Above: Existing view of the same area in 2018.

Urban Spine:

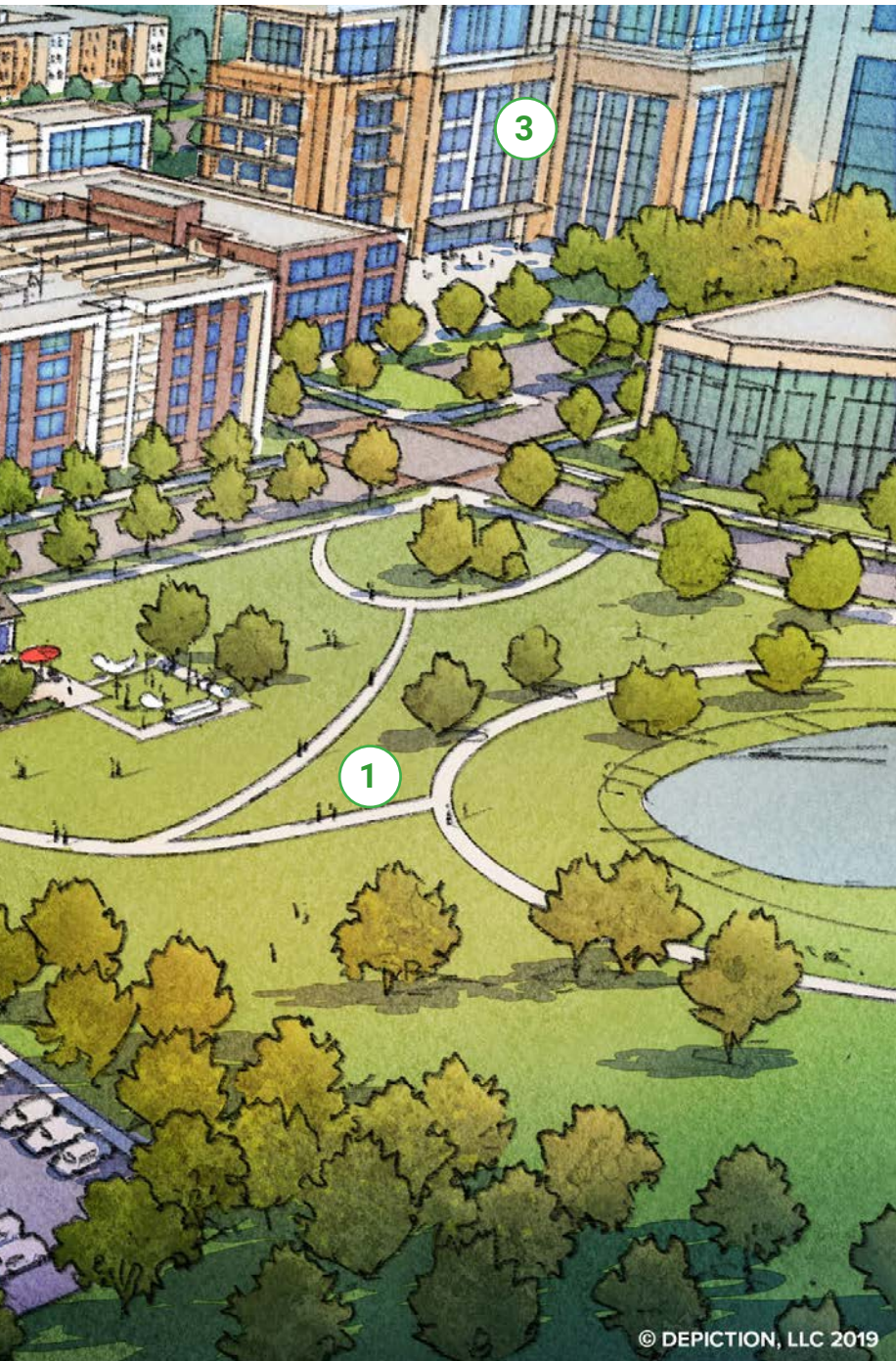
Gateway to University City at University City Boulevard Station

How the University City Boulevard Station Area becomes the “Front Door” to University City

The University City Boulevard Station, marked on the horizon with mid-rise office buildings, apartments and condos, alert northbound travelers that they have arrived. The mixed-use environment and entertainment options have attracted corporate offices and talent who enjoy proximity to higher education, interstate access and seemingly constant trains to Uptown and destination neighborhoods along the Blue Line Extension.



The neighborhood park adjacent to the station is a hub of activity with children and adults. On the east side of Tryon Street, a wide range of housing types complement the existing subdivisions. A short shuttle ride, bike, or walk from the station, and bordering I-85, an exciting shopping and entertainment district has grown up here. Indoor and outdoor facilities for sports, gaming, -and small concerts provide a destination in Charlotte and beyond.



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

A new network of streets and blocks with infill development, workforce housing and a neighborhood open space surrounding the existing Blue Line Station and Parking Deck along North Tryon.

- 1 A generous neighborhood park serving the station area
- 2 Small retail buildings on the park help to provide vibrancy and activity
- 3 High density office towers, mid-rise office, housing and hotels adjacent to the transit station fill in vacant or underutilized properties
- 4 Walkable streets and a compact block structure complete the disconnected network around the transit station

Left: Conceptual illustration of the future University City Boulevard Station Area.

Above: Existing University City Blvd station area today.

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Urban Spine:

Urban Village at McCullough Station

How McCullough Station Becomes the Focus of a New Neighborhood

The McCullough station area becomes the vibrant hub of a new “urban village,” centered on the train station and spurred by the creation of a new and much-needed “crosstown” connection from University City Boulevard to WT Harris Boulevard. This new street connection reorients McCullough Station from being a “stop on a line” into a focal crossroads with 400-500 foot long urban blocks. This mixed-use urban district includes a new linear park that creates a local sense of place within the larger University



City, with seamless pedestrian crossings at North Tryon Street into the Promenade and Chancellor Village, less than a half mile away. Distinctly different in character from the energy of the entertainment district at University City Boulevard Station and the downtown of the JW Clay Station, the McCullough Station is a more serene enclave in the middle of it all, attractive to empty-nesters, graduate students and everyone in between.



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- 1 Extension of Ikea Boulevard north across McCullough Drive connects University Executive Park Drive and road alignments will form a more regular grid of streets
- 2 New streets provided by new development form compact walkable blocks and support a neighborhood-scale character
- 3 New neighborhood park at the roundabout intersection of Ikea Boulevard and McCullough Drive
- 4 Mixed-use infill development over time with a variety of residential development including workforce housing, townhomes and apartments.

Left: Conceptual illustration of the future McCullough Station Area including a walkable, local street network, and an extension of Ikea Boulevard. A new neighborhood park near the roundabout provides much needed public space in University City.

Above: Existing view of the same area in 2018.

Key Recommendations: Informing the 10 Strategies

- 1 RECONCEPTUALIZE** the blocks around the McCullough Street train station to take advantage of the proposed extension of East McCullough Drive to connect to Shopping Center Drive near University City Boulevard. This investment provides much needed connectivity links the blocks around the station to become the activity hub of the district. [University City Plan \(1983\)](#); [JW Clay Station Area Plan \(2016\)](#)
- 2 RECONFIGURE** and reconstruct the old “suburban pattern” of car-dominated streets and “superblocks” to create and capture more development value in redeveloped, “walkable” urban blocks, with new connecting streets laid out in a grid network. [University City Plan \(1983\)](#); [JW Clay Station Area Plan \(2016\)](#)
- 3 EXTEND** Ikea Boulevard to align with University Park Executive Drive as it crosses WT. Harris Boulevard. [University City Plan \(1983\)](#); [JW Clay Station Area Plan \(2016\)](#)
- 4 RECONSTRUCT** the curved portion of University Executive Park Drive into a broadly rectilinear grid with connected cross streets to make walkable blocks between North Tryon Street and the extended Ikea Boulevard. [University City Area Plan \(2015\)](#)
- 5 ENCOURAGE** and support the redevelopment of older commercial and residential sites within 1/4 mile of the McCullough Station into new mixed-use developments with a variety of housing types. [JW Clay Station Area Plan \(2016\)](#)
- 6 ACTIVATE** the street frontages of the older and adaptively reused commercial buildings that remain by infilling with pedestrian-oriented outparcel developments as land becomes available through reduced parking demands. [University City Strategic Vision \(2020\)](#); [JW Clay Station Area Plan \(2016\)](#)
- 7 EXPERIMENT** with temporary projects like creating an informal public space in the open area at the intersection of McCullough Drive and Ikea Boulevard. Initiate low cost, high impact ways to activate this space and encourage nearby office workers and residents to use it (see opposite page). [University City Area Plan \(2015\)](#); [JW Clay Station Area Plan \(2016\)](#)
- 8 EXPAND** University City’s “green” infrastructure. Create a new neighborhood park at the focal intersection of McCullough Drive and Ikea Boulevard. Link this new park with existing and preserved tree-save and landscape areas through the district to create a new linear park as a recreation and transit option for residents and workers. [University City Strategic Vision \(2020\)](#)

THE GREENBELT COMMUNITY ASSET



14.41

Miles of continuous greenway in University City



46%

of Mecklenburg County residents visit parks at least once a month



62%

do not think it's currently easy to bicycle in Charlotte



51%

Charlotteans would like to bike more

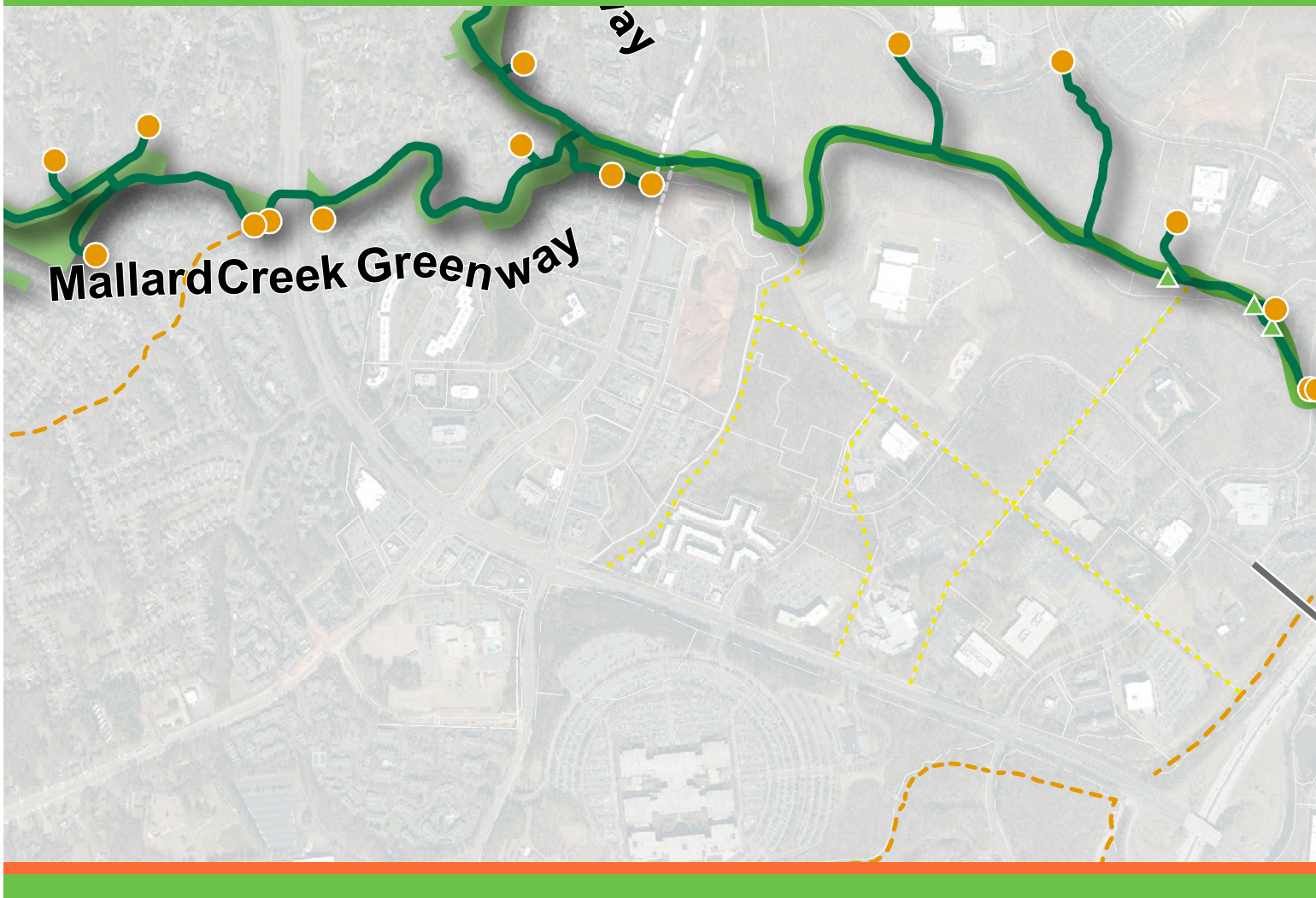


ZERO

Parks are in University City despite its significant growth



The Greenbelt: East-West Axis



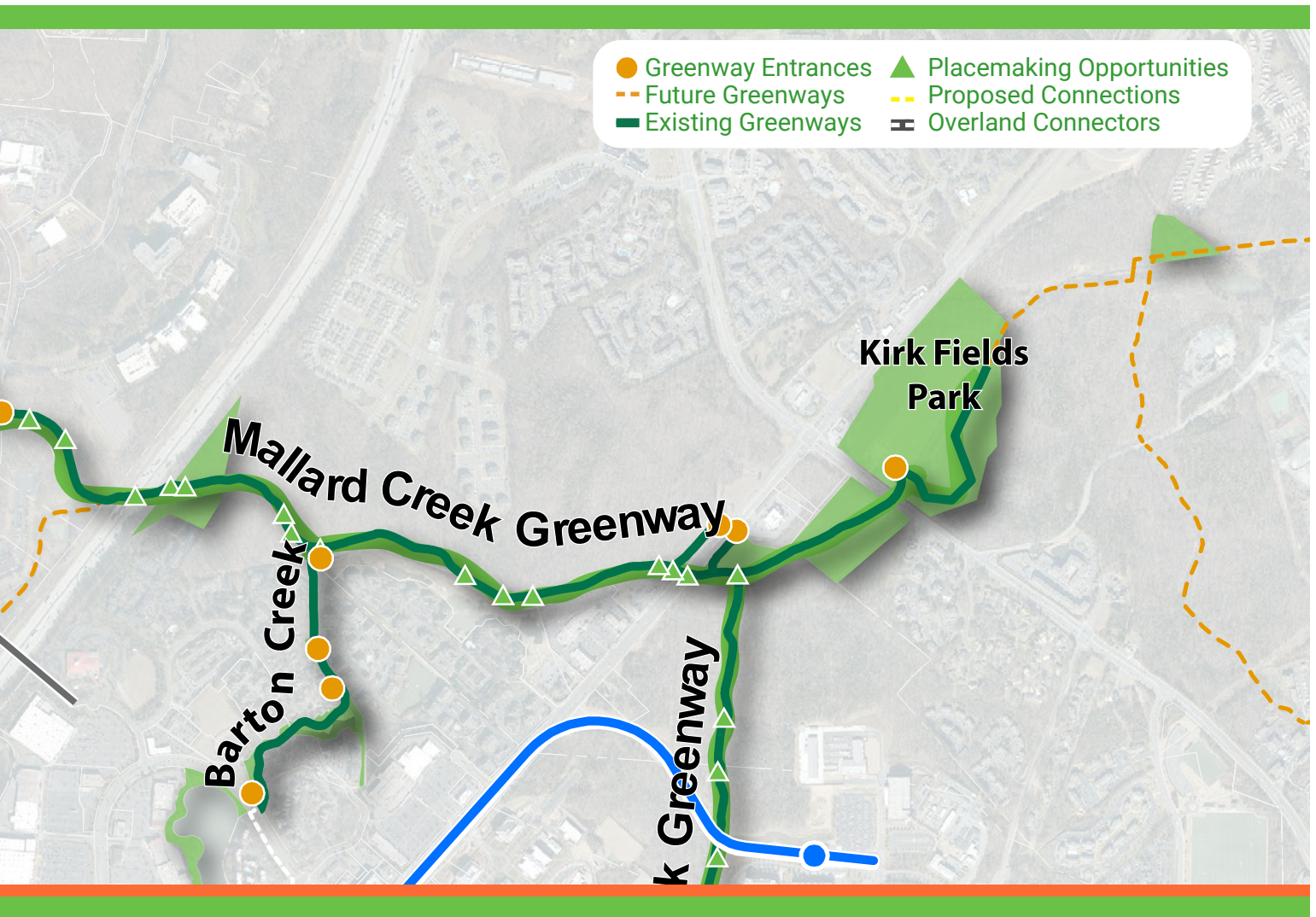
The Greenbelt:

Corner of Greenway and Main Street

The center of modern suburbia does not follow age old template putting the center town at the intersection of two main streets. People are slowly changing behaviors that have long favored driving, allowing the “corner of main and main” to become the “corner of greenway and main.”

Scooters, electric bikes, and other electric wheeled vehicles of all types are growing quickly in popularity. This is the thinking behind a Green Belt as the east-west axis in University City, a spine capable of supporting all of these modern transportation options, and all running parallel to the main thoroughfare WT Harris Blvd, carrying over 66,000 cars per day on average and upwards of 100,000 in the future.

Composed of many existing greenways – the Toby Creek, Mallard Creek, Clark’s Creek and Barton Creek Greenways in University City form the longest contiguous section of greenway in the county. All these paved green-



ways run parallel to and cross their namesake waterbodies, providing scenic views of natural spaces and wildlife. The Green Axis capitalizes on this asset to offer more access and enjoyment for transportation and recreation users. University Place, the Town Center of University City and focal point of density, is connected to the Green Belt by a short spur trail, the Barton Creek Greenway. The multimodal opportunities supported by these two separate connections are the organizing elements of the east-west axis.

The North Bridge will provide additional opportunities for E-bikes, local vehicle traffic and other modes in the future, perhaps autonomous shuttles and last-mile solutions. This relatively short distance is also the most reasonable for many commuter cyclists, not different from what they would ride in a more dynamic urban environment where they could be less comfortable.



The Greenbelt:

A Transportation Asset

Multimodal Highway

The Green Belt, comprised of the extensive east-west greenway network in University City as well as the North Bridge, offer new possibilities for navigating University City. As autonomous vehicles become mainstream in the coming decade and e-bikes and scooters act as a viable option to human-powered travel, the greenway will adapt to become as much about transportation as it is recreation, potentially requiring separated facilities for these different users.



A First-Mile / Last-Mile Solution

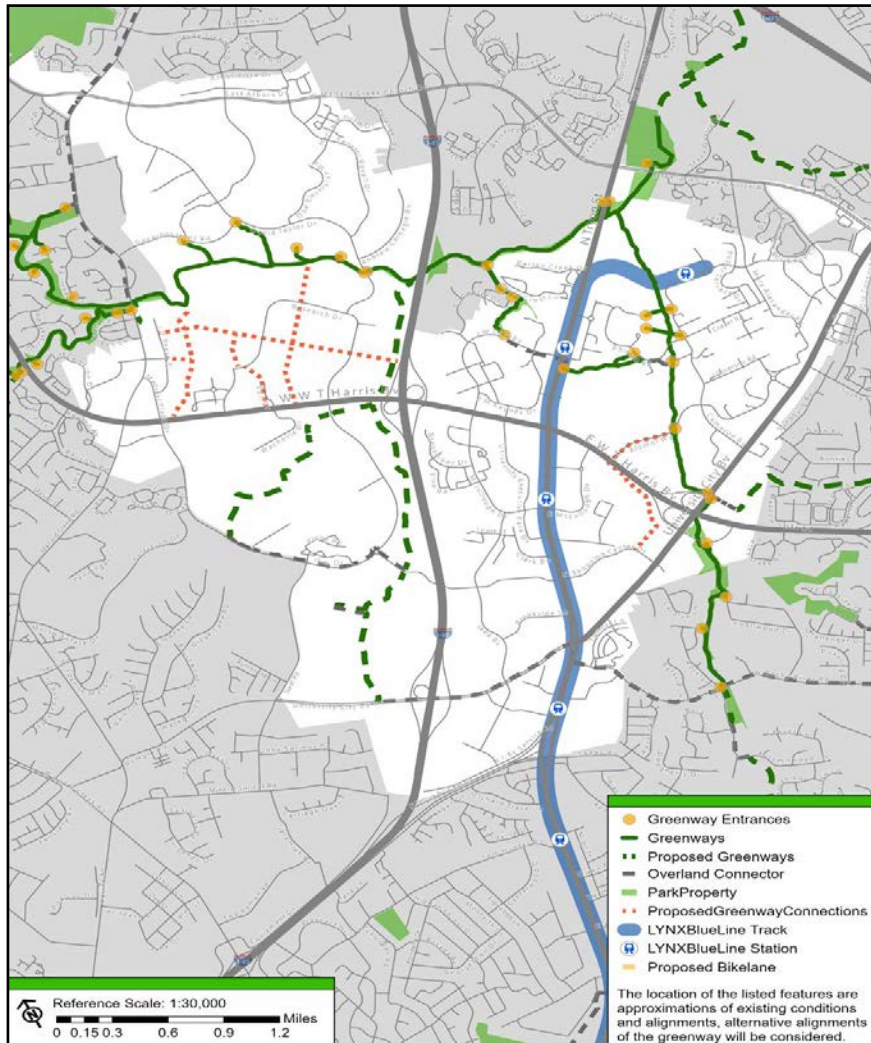
The intersection of a vast greenway system with transit service as well as several major arterials invites the use of many modes to navigate between UNC Charlotte, the University Research Park and throughout University City. Hubs at or near light rail stations may be one of many solutions to improving transit ridership and reducing reliance on single occupancy vehicles.



The Greenbelt:

Untapped Destination Potential

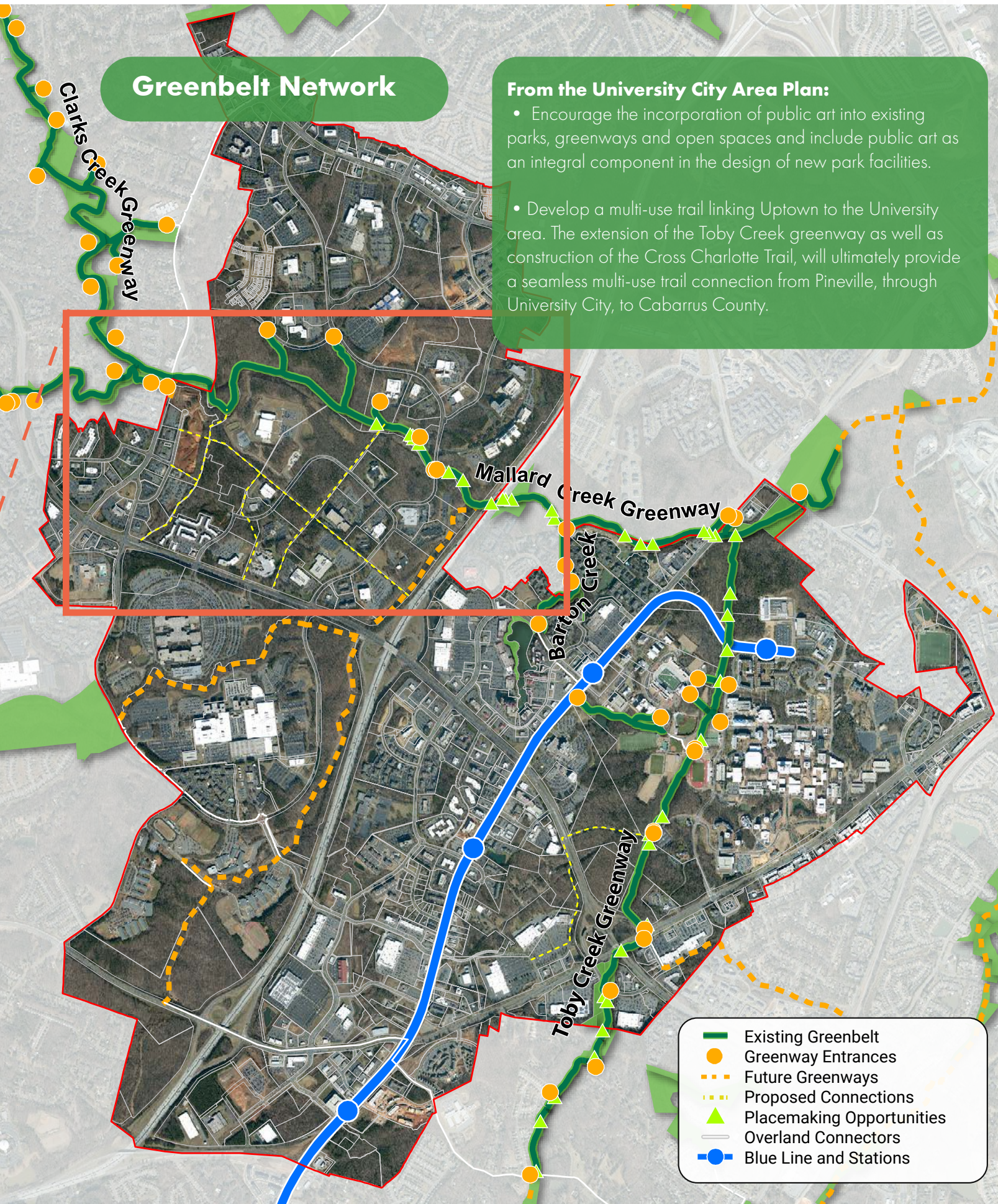
Simple additions to the greenway and on bordering properties, the Green Belt can easily become a model of Trail Oriented Development. Low impact plantings and natural materials art installations as well as investments in placemaking by office and residential properties, recognizing the Green Belt as an incredible amenity, will build a destination for those beyond the daily population of University City.



Greenbelt Network

From the University City Area Plan:

- Encourage the incorporation of public art into existing parks, greenways and open spaces and include public art as an integral component in the design of new park facilities.
- Develop a multi-use trail linking Uptown to the University area. The extension of the Toby Creek greenway as well as construction of the Cross Charlotte Trail, will ultimately provide a seamless multi-use trail connection from Pineville, through University City, to Cabarrus County.



- Existing Greenbelt
- Greenway Entrances
- Future Greenways
- Proposed Connections
- Placemaking Opportunities
- Overland Connectors
- Blue Line and Stations

Key Recommendations

- 1 SHARE** the benefits of having deeper spur trails to access the greenway with property owners and tenants in the park.
- 2 IMPROVE** connectivity to the existing and proposed greenway trail system, thus maximizing the length of runs and linkages to destinations. *Comprehensive Park and Recreation Master Plan Update (2015)*
- 3 PROVIDE** transportation alternatives, and to link to other transportation opportunities. As the CATS bus and light rail systems continue to expand greenway linkage to mass transit becomes extremely important. Ikea Boulevard to align with University Park Executive Drive as it crosses WT. Harris Boulevard. *Comprehensive Park and Recreation Master Plan Update (2015)*
- 4 IMPROVE** the 1.2 mile stretch of Mallard Creek Greenway that runs through the URP to attract new investors *University Research Park Area Plan (2010)*
- 5 ESTABLISH** 1.5 acres per 1,000 residents as the open space standard for neighborhood parks. *Comprehensive Park and Recreation Master Plan Update (2015)*
- 6 PRESERVE** +/- 120 acres of undeveloped land flanking Mallard Creek for the creation of a new community park and improved greenway. The plan envisions a community park amenity that will connect the URP to adjacent properties, as well as the surrounding community. *University Research Park Area Plan (2010)*
- 7 CREATE** a connected system of open space by improving the Mallard Creek and Doby Creek Greenways and connecting other more local greenways (existing and planned) to it. The linear linkages, complete with trails, should reinforce the connections between neighborhoods, schools, office uses and local retail establishments, as envisioned in the plan. *University Research Park Area Plan (2010)*

21 ST CENTURY MOBILITY



26,000

Average weekly riders at the JW Clay Station, the 4th busiest station on the Blue Line



11%

of Residents walk or take public transportation to work



14.09

Miles of Bike lane in University City



1 Million

Dockless Bike Share trips taken since November 2017 in CLT



26.77

Miles of sidewalk in University city

vs

57.19

Miles of sidewalk in Uptown Charlotte

***Maps to scale**

Transit Connectivity: Smart Mobility Hubs and Routes

While full integration of different options will take time to implement, the groundwork has to be laid today so that publicly owned facilities can support private investments.

MAP LEGEND

- TIER 1 MULTI-MODAL NODES
High density, urban, transit-oriented development with high development potential
- TIER 2 MULTI-MODAL NODES
Medium density, transit-oriented development
- ON-STREET MULTI-MODAL FACILITIES
- OFF-STREET GREENWAY FACILITIES



Walking and Rolling

The University City Active Transportation Study

The University City Active Transportation Study was initiated to find ways to provide more comfortable conditions for non-vehicular modes with consideration of proper vehicular access points into and out of campus. The intent of this effort was to make entering and leaving the University safe and efficient in the short- and long- term. This study included extensive public outreach, including public surveys (online and intercept), on-site data collection, stakeholder meetings, on-site work sessions, and an open house. The needs of bicyclists and pedestrians are best served when facilities and programs complement each other. The recommendations for the University City Active Transportation Study seek to achieve this balance. This chapter describes ways to make study area corridors and intersections safer and more accommodating for bicyclists and pedestrians through targeted on and off-street facilities.



Concept Design



Example Recommendation
From the University City Active
Transportation Study

RECOMMENDATIONS

NETWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

The unprecedented growth surrounding the University Area requires a look into the network that supports the population. Potential issues along roads and corridors were identified in the planning process and possible solutions were evaluated. The proposed network recommendations involve a variety of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements. These recommendations are displayed on the next page and possible options for how these recommendations could look are depicted below.



SHARED LANE MARKINGS

Bikes share the lane with vehicles. This treatment is good for quieter streets and is usually implemented with other traffic-calming treatments.



BIKE LANES

Bike lanes are on-street facilities that follow the same direction as vehicle traffic. They designate an exclusive space for bicyclists through the use of pavement markings and signage.



SIDEPATHS

Sidepaths are bidirectional shared-use paths located adjacent and parallel to roadways. Sidepaths offer a comfortable experience for all users as compared to on-road facilities in heavy traffic environments.



MEDIAN-REFUGE ISLAND

Refuge islands make crossings more comfortable by shortening crossing distance and allowing pedestrians to take advantage of traffic gaps in 1 direction at once.



PEDESTRIAN HYBRID BEACONS

Pedestrian hybrid beacons (PHBs) are pedestrian-actuated signals that stop traffic in both directions to allow for safe and comfortable crossings.

Pages from the University City Active Transportation Study Active

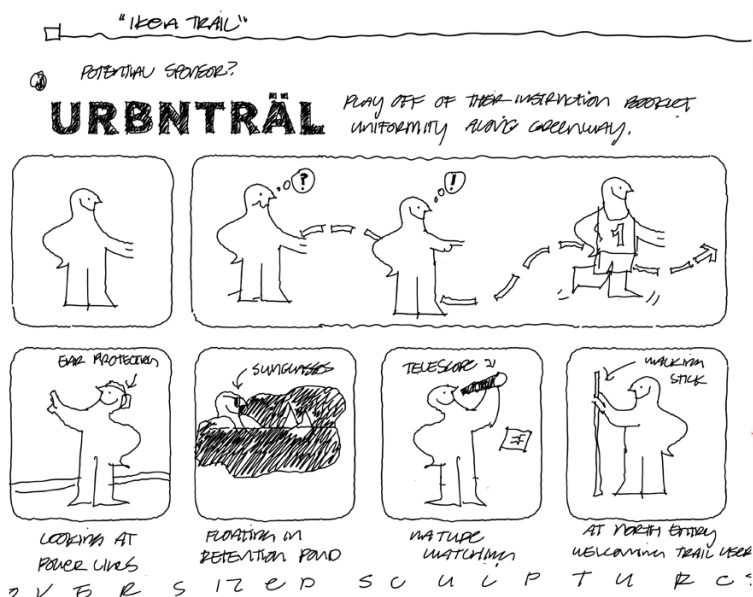
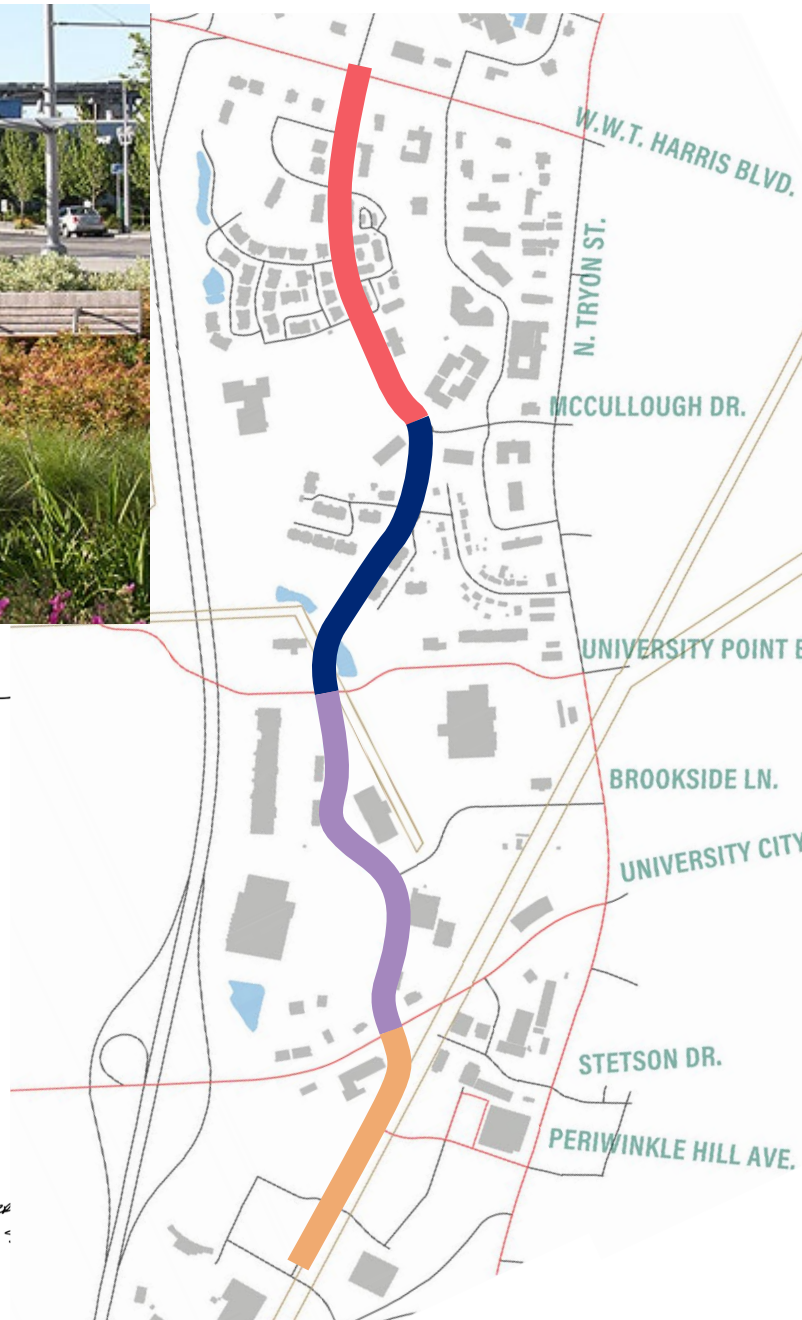
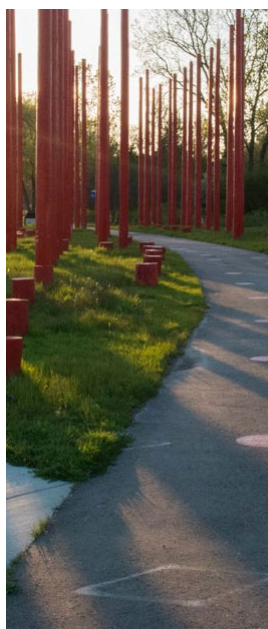
UNIVERSITY AREA
ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION STUDY

- 1 **ELECTRIC-ASSIST MICRO-MOBILITY**
Build a system of electric-assist micro-mobility options for destination on and near campus.
- 2 **DISTRACTED MOVEMENT CAMPAIGN**
Pursue a campaign that increases awareness of distracting driving, walking, and cycling.
- 3 **PEDESTRIAN SAFETY + COMFORT**
Enhance the pedestrian experience with an emphasis on effective landscaping and lighting.
- 4 **PEDESTRIAN + BICYCLE WAYFINDING SIGNAGE**
Implement a comprehensive wayfinding system with consistent and intuitive signage design.
- 5 **DESIGNED INTERFERENCE FOR ENCOURAGED BEHAVIOR**
Encourage safe and active use of multimodal facilities with integrated design cues.
- 6 **TRAFFIC CALMING INTERVENTIONS**
Implement coordinated street design strategies that slow speeds, increase awareness, and improve safety for all users.
- 7 **ENHANCED AESTHETICS**
Improve the look and feel of study area streets through landscaping, streetscaping, and public art that is uniquely University City.
- 8 **TECHNOLOGY + DATA**
Leverage current and emerging data sources to better manage the transportation system and understand user habits.

Walking and Rolling

The Urban Trail

Reviewing the map on the opposite page, it is clear there are two routes for north-south connectivity along the transit corridor running along Tryon Street. One, Tryon Street, hosts tens of thousands of vehicles daily, creating an inhospitable condition today. There is another option, however. Connecting McCullough Drive, Ikea Boulevard, and McFarlane Drive with amenities and placemaking could easily transform this section of existing sidewalk into something more inviting. Much like the Rail Trail and the Cultural Loop, public funding should be sought to improve this route for University City residents and employees.

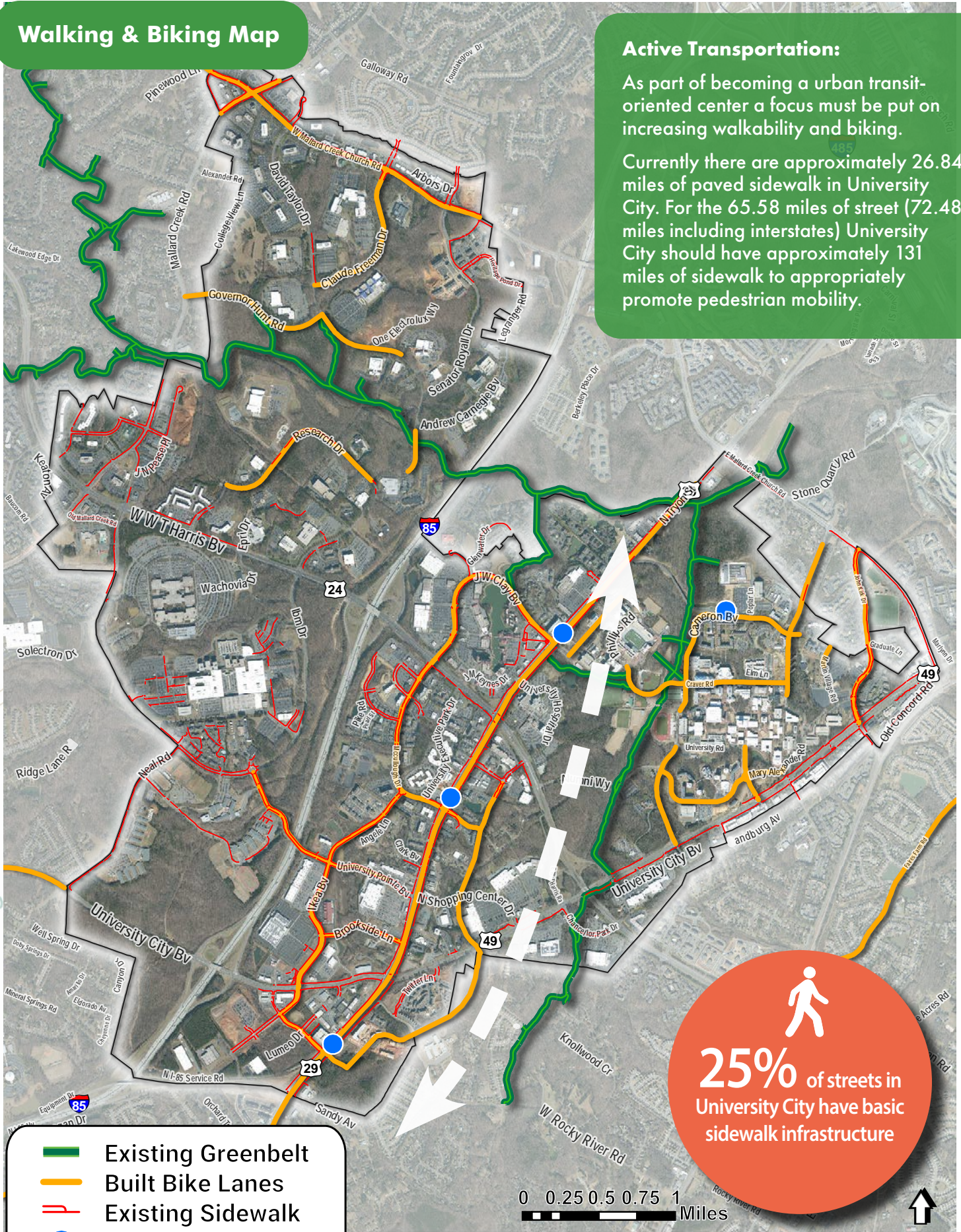


Walking & Biking Map

Active Transportation:

As part of becoming an urban transit-oriented center a focus must be put on increasing walkability and biking.

Currently there are approximately 26.84 miles of paved sidewalk in University City. For the 65.58 miles of street (72.48 miles including interstates) University City should have approximately 131 miles of sidewalk to appropriately promote pedestrian mobility.



Road Connectivity



Big Roads

The fact University City is well served by massive arterials moving talent, freight and commuters through the area daily is both one of its greatest assets and deficiencies. Where these roads support some of the lowest commute times in the region, moving talent in and out of the market during peak hours, they also pose uncrossable barriers to non-drivers.

Widening these massive roads will cost \$225,000,000 over the next 30-years. However, it is all but certain that the return on that investment will be temporary as roads will again reach levels of service unacceptable to NCDOT within just a few short years following completion.

Density, certain to follow the \$1-billion investment in transit, undermines investments in massive roads and vice-versa. To ensure investments of tax payer funds are invested wisely, our vision is for NCDOT and CDOT to seek ways to build out a more robust menu of roads, not only relying on widening.



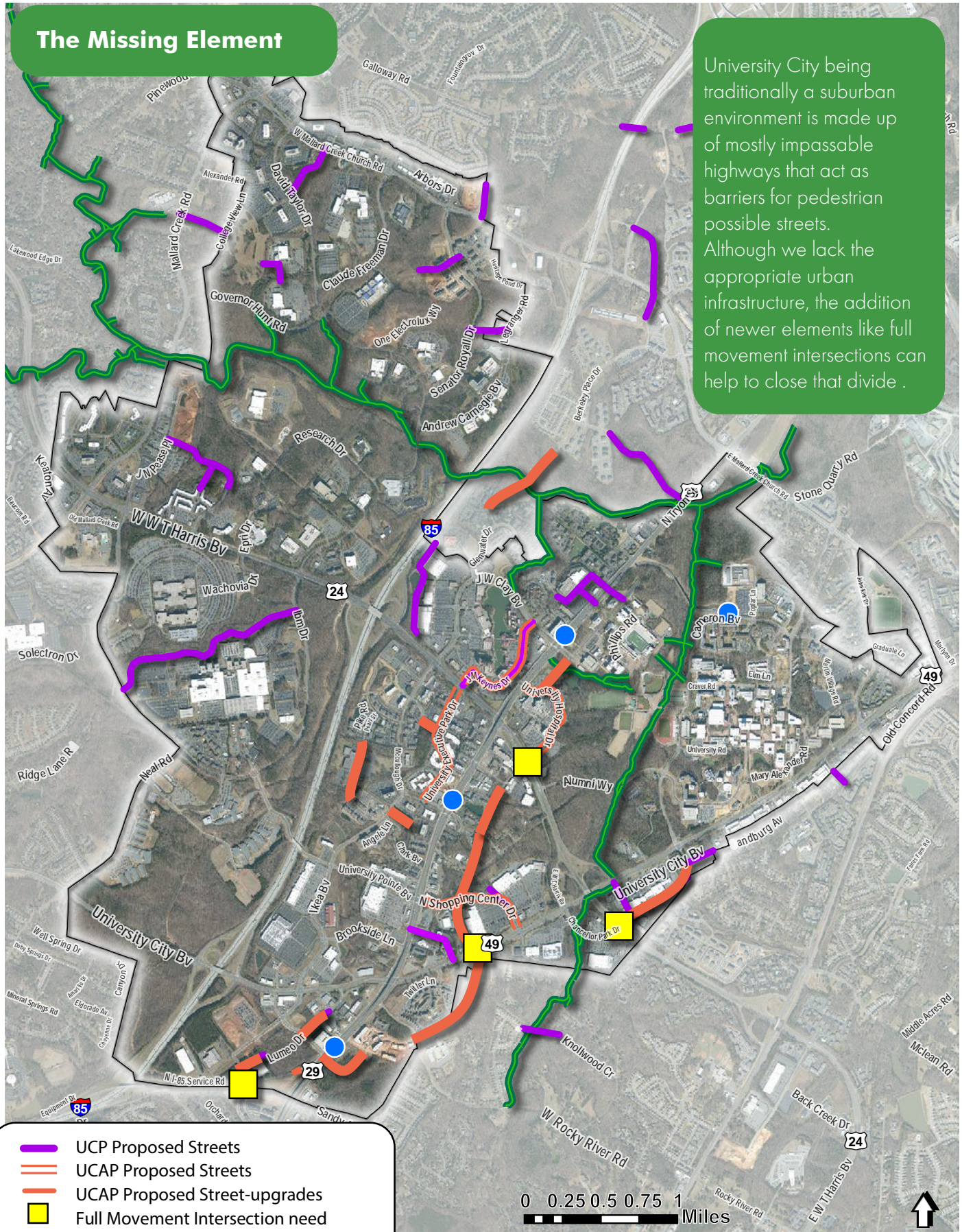
Human-Scale Connections

One rarely sought solution is the addition of shorter connecting streets throughout the area intended to mitigate congestion for short trips. Where nearly 50% of all trips are less than 3-miles and 20% being less than 1-mile, shorter connecting streets have the opportunity to have a positive impact on congestion, especially as University City densifies.

The City of Charlotte's North East Corridor Infrastructure program (NECI) funded several connections in and around University City, another round of investments for this purpose is critical to remaining competitive as workers seek quality of life, active living and street at a human-scale, rather than thoroughfares deadly to those who aim to cross them.

The Missing Element

University City being traditionally a suburban environment is made up of mostly impassable highways that act as barriers for pedestrian possible streets. Although we lack the appropriate urban infrastructure, the addition of newer elements like full movement intersections can help to close that divide.



- UCP Proposed Streets
- UCAP Proposed Streets
- UCAP Proposed Street-upgrades
- Full Movement Intersection need
- Greenbelt System
- Light Rail Stations

Building Connecting Streets: Key Recommendations

- 1 INFILL** excess parking areas along street frontages at intersection(s) with pedestrian-oriented out-parcel development that creates both a street-front presence and also encloses pedestrian patio spaces to the rear. [University City Plan \(1983\)](#); [JW Clay Station Area Plan \(2016\)](#)
- 2 SLOW** down through traffic along David Taylor Drive near the intersection with Mallard Creek Church Road by means of tighter lane dimensions, on-street parking, wide sidewalks for pedestrian activity, regular street tree plantings, and, most importantly, lining the street edge with coherent building frontages to communicate clearly to drivers that they are entering an urbanized, pedestrian-friendly area. Pedestrianize the intersection with high-visibility crosswalks and a speed table. [University City Plan \(1983\)](#); [JW Clay Station Area Plan \(2016\)](#)
- 3 UTILIZE** the infill and pedestrianization of the Mallard Creek Church Road/David Taylor Drive intersection and surrounding area as a model for similar conversions of other locations along Mallard Creek Church Road at Claude Freeman Drive and Senator Royall Drive. [University City Plan \(1983\)](#); [JW Clay Station Area Plan \(2016\)](#)
- 4 CREATE** sheltered and landscaped pedestrian courtyards on the interior of blocks and intersections as settings for local community and commercial activities. [University City Area Plan \(2015\)](#)
- 5 COMPLETE** the connection of David Taylor Drive with Mallard Creek Road. [University Research Park Area Plan \(2010\)](#)
- 6 ENCOURAGE** a pedestrian bridge connection as a safe greenway crossing over WT Harris Boulevard. This bridge connection will not only provide a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists and advertise the extensive greenway system, but it will create a strong gateway to the URP and bring an identity along with it.
- 7 PLAN** for future connectivity to break down the scale of the suburban “super blocks” through the larger suburban campuses. New local streets should form loose grids to mitigate congestion and to open up new development options within redundant parking areas. Connect new local streets to existing and proposed streets and junctions. [University Research Park Area Plan \(2010\)](#); [University City Area Plan \(2015\)](#)

BUILDING CHARACTER



2nd

Highest Volume
for Library Users
in Mecklenburg-
county



100+

Arts & Architecture
events presented a
each year at UNC
Charlotte Campus

#1

For Latinx Enrollment
within North
Carolina at UNC
Charlotte



18

NCAA Division 1
Varsity Sports to see
at UNC Charlotte



350+

Student Organi-
zations and outreach
programs at UNC
Charlotte

Building Character

Placemaking in TODs and on the Greenway



Placemaking for Walkability

At the heart of any community are unique places that reimagine what public spaces can be. Placemaking is the process by which we create those places that maximize the value of a space, while strengthening connections within a community.

While these small interventions are often built simply to improve a quiet corner or make a multi-use path more interesting, in University City they are a catalyst for change. Focusing placemaking efforts will improve routes to access transit nodes, making them more friendly and inviting.

Successful placemaking also tends to invite people to linger longer, or become “sticky,” and therefore adding an element of safety, security and an increasingly inviting environment.

University City’s greenways are a community asset enjoyed by people across the spectrum. Through efforts to improve quality of life, community bonds and opportunities for place based economic development; they will become one of Charlotte’s featured assets. Partnerships with the UNC Charlotte Botanical Garden, artists, real estate developers and others must be forged to make most enhancements, which will indefinitely help to create a broad mix of installations, both temporary and permanent.



Placemaking vignette at the JW Clay Station jointly funded with the City of Charlotte’s Urban Design Program

Building Character

Advocate for and Develop Community Assets



The Cornerstones of Community

University City is an emerging center for northeast Charlotte. It is home to the fastest housing growth in the city with Steele Creek, and job growth is beginning to follow. Home to the largest CMPD Division in the City, the city's thoughtful investment in a new station will pay dividends as the population in University City booms.

The University City Farmers Market, launched by University City Partners, aims to build social and economic capital while addressing food insecurity issues and an imbalance of health outcomes in communities located in the crescent. Although these significant investments are vital to the health of the community, they are only a beginning.

A significant deficit in park space is slowly being addressed through land purchases, although they may not be developed for a decade or more.

Opportunities improve economic mobility in the crescent beg an investment in the University City Regional Library, where juvenile reading is the second highest in the system based on circulation. Knowing that 3rd grade reading is a key social outcome, we will advocate for this asset and others, while creating our own.

Below: Conceptual Renderings of the University City Library (Left) and the new CMPD building on N Tryon (Right).



Building Character

Celebrate UNC Charlotte as Our Anchor and Research University



Small Improvements

UNC Charlotte, Charlotte's leading research University, is a major talent generator for the City of Charlotte. While many Charlotteans move from out of state and often claim a different alumni than UNC Charlotte, approximately 70% of living graduates reside in the region. To boost the local recognition of this major research University and celebrate the positive impacts it has on the City, University City Partners will be a leader in "staking claim" to being the proud home of Niner Nation. From Friday night football pep-rallies and to hosting the performing arts in easily accessible off-campus locations, we will broaden the recognition of UNC Charlotte and the broad range of talented young people who attend. Near term initiatives include extending the UNC Charlotte brand deeper into the community, perhaps even into the state roads, as has been done in other college towns.

To the right, we can see Clemson's "Paws to the Stadium" which is their logo painted on the streets around campus. Ideas like are an feasible and inexpensive way we can spread UNCC pride and character throughout Charlotte and University City.



Key Recommendations: Informing the 10 Strategies

- 1 REDIRECT** thinking, branding and marketing emphasis for this area away from previous “back end of the site / retail uses” to a new “front door” placemaking focused vision – opening up opportunity for innovative businesses and civic uses that are inviting to residents . *University City Plan (1983); JW Clay Station Area Plan (2016)*
- 2 ENCOURAGE** partners and other members of our business community to host, work with or support the Universities programs and events at UNC Charlotte.
- 3 EXPERIMENT** with a smart mobility program that connects high concentrations of employees in University Research Park to UNC Charlotte as well as the JW. Clay Station and University Place amenities. *University City Plan (1983); JW Clay Station Area Plan (2016)*
- 4 PAINT** the city green with UNC Charlotte and Niner focused branding, placemaking elements and murals to Boost the local recognition of UNCC and celebrate the positive impacts it has on the City.
- 5 SUPPORT** the community and local businesses by continuing to hold and Implement new events that give local vendors and community members a platform to express their creativity, messages and cultures.
- 6 REDUCE** Food Insecurity by providing continued access to affordable produce with the weekly University City farmers market bring local grown produce and healthy foods to the community. While educating residents of the resources, assets and options for dining in University City.



Left: Several locations around the lake would be well-suited for tactical placemaking experiments.

Opposite Above Right: The existing path along the lake's edge at University Place is an underutilized amenity. Previous plans have recommended creating a linear park around the lake, providing a premier public space for University City's Downtown at University Place.

Opposite Right: Conceptual vision for the redevelopment of properties along the lake edge with higher densities, a variety of mixed uses and an enhanced linear park. Redeveloped properties fronting onto the linear park will increase usage and local monitoring.

Key Strategies For the Future

Built on the recommendations of previously adopted plans for University City, the following ten strategies are set forth move University City closer to an urban, transit-oriented future. While these are likely to remain far beyond the 20-30 year horizon of this plan, they will guide shorter term programs of work and goals for achievement.

Each strategy aims to serve more than one of the following elements:

- Create an Urban Spine and Core
- Build a Greenbelt for Recreation and Transportation
- Build Mobility for the 21st Century
- Build Character through Suburban Reinvestment and Placemaking

1. Make University Place a Town Center for University City

2. Celebrate UNC Charlotte as our anchor and as Charlotte's main research University.

3. Improve pedestrian safety and connectivity to UNC Charlotte and transit.

4. Develop placemaking installations on greenways and improve connectivity with spur trails into parcels near the trail.

5. Add last mile service, micro-mobility and improve conditions for bus riders.

6. Seek public funding to implement all NECI projects remaining in the University City Area Plan.

7. Advocate for and develop community assets.

8. Transform McCullough Drive / Ikea Blvd to a walkable alternative to N Tryon Street

9. Focus placemaking within TOD areas and along greenways

10. Maintain and connect a population diverse in age, culture and income

