



# City of Petersburg Virginia

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## March 5, 2024 - City Council Work Session

March 5, 2024  
Petersburg Public Library  
201 West Washington Street  
Petersburg, VA 23803  
5:00 PM

### City Council

Samuel Parham, Mayor – Ward 3  
Darrin Hill, Vice Mayor – Ward 2  
Marlow Jones, Councilor – Ward 1  
Charles Cuthbert, Jr., Councilor – Ward 4  
W. Howard Myers, Councilor – Ward 5  
Annette Smith-Lee, Councilor – Ward 6  
Arnold Westbrook, Jr., Councilor – Ward 7

### City Administration

John "March" Altman, Jr. - City Manager  
Anthony Williams - City Attorney

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1. **Roll Call**
  2. **Prayer**
  3. **Pledge of Allegiance**
  4. **Determination of the Presence of a Quorum**
  5. **Public Comments**
  6. **Approval of Consent Agenda (to include minutes of previous meetings):**
    - a. **Minutes: (Page 3)**
      - Minutes of February 20, 2024 - Closed Session
      - Minutes of February 20, 2024 - Regular Meeting
    - b. 2023-ZTA-02: A request to schedule a public hearing on the consideration of an ordinance to amend and readopt Article 21, Sign Regulations, to regulate and allow for sandwich board/A-frame signs. **(Page 23)**
  7. **Special Reports**
    - a. Project Pipeline Study: S Crater Road, Wagner Road, and Rives Road
    - b. Presentation and Update on the 2024 Employee Health Insurance.
    - c. Presentation and report on Employee Health Insurance Renewal
  8. **Monthly Reports**
  9. **Finance and Budget Report**
  10. **Capital Projects Update**
  11. **Utilities**
  12. **Streets**
  13. **Facilities**
  14. **Economic Development**

- a. A Communication / Special Report Request to Present the Petersburg Downtown Plan via Interface Studio. **(Page 38)**

**15. City Manager's Agenda**

- a. Presentation and Update from JMT on Poor Creek.

**16. Business or reports from the Clerk**

**17. Business or reports from the City Attorney**

**18. Adjournment**





# City of Petersburg

## Ordinance, Resolution, and Agenda Request

**DATE:** March 5, 2024

**TO:** The Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

**THROUGH:** March Altman, Jr., City Manager

**FROM:** Nykesha Lucas

**RE:** **Minutes: (Page 3)**  
**-Minutes of February 20, 2024 - Closed Session**  
**-Minutes of February 20, 2024 - Regular Meeting**

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**PURPOSE:** Minutes from previous meetings.

**REASON:** Minutes from previous city council meetings.

**RECOMMENDATION:** To approve minutes with consent agenda.

**BACKGROUND:** See attached information.

**COST TO CITY:** N/A

**BUDGETED ITEM:** N/A

**REVENUE TO CITY:** N/A

**CITY COUNCIL HEARING DATE:** 3/5/2024

**CONSIDERATION BY OTHER GOVERNMENT ENTITIES:** N/A

**AFFECTED AGENCIES:** N/A

**RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING ORDINANCE OR RESOLUTION:** N/A

**REQUIRED CHANGES TO WORK PROGRAMS:** N/A

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. February 20, 2024 Closed Session Meeting Minutes
2. February 20, 2024 Regular Meeting

The Closed Session Meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on Tuesday, February 20, 2024, at the Petersburg Public Library. Mayor Parham called the Closed Session Meeting to order at 3:08 p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL:**

Present:

Council Member Charles H. Cuthbert, Jr.  
Council Member W. Howard Myers  
Council Member Annettee Smith-Lee  
Vice Mayor Darrin Hill  
Mayor Samuel Parham

Absent:

Council Member Arnold Westbrook, Jr. (arrived after roll call)  
Council Member Marlow Jones (arrived after roll call)

Present from City Administration:

Kenneth Miller,  
City Manager John March Altman, Jr. (arrived after roll call)  
City Attorney Anthony Williams

**2. CLOSED SESSION:**

- a. The purpose of this meeting is to convene in the closed session pursuant to §2.2-3711 (A) (7) and (8) of the Code of Virginia for the purpose of receiving legal advice and status update from the city attorney and legal consultation regarding the subject of specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by the city attorney, specifically including but not limited to matters requiring the legal advice of the city attorney; under Section 2.2-3711 (A)(3) for the purpose of discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and the disposition of publicly held real property where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body, specifically including but not limited to the acquisition and disposition of real property; and under Section 2.2-3711 (A)(29) of the Code of Virginia for the purpose of discussion regarding the subject matter of a public contract involving the expenditure of funds and terms of scope of such contract where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining or negotiating strategy of the public body, specifically including but not limited to the discussion of the award and terms of a public contract; Section 2.2-3711 (A) (28) for the purpose of discussion of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 11 of Section 2.2-3705.6 by a responsible public entity or an affected locality or public entity, as those terms are defined in Section 33.2-1800, or any independent review panel appointed to review information and advise the responsible public entity concerning such records; under Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) for the purpose of discussion pertaining to performance, assignment, and appointment of specific public employees of the City of Petersburg, specifically including but not limited to discussion of the performance, assignment, and appointment of specific public officer of the City of Petersburg.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion that the City Council go into closed session for the purposes noted. Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion.

On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Myers, Smith-Lee, Hill, and Parham; Absent: Jones and Westbrook

The City Council entered closed session at 3:11 p.m.

**CERTIFICATION:**

Mr. Williams stated, "The Mayor would entertain a motion to conclude the closed session called today to certify in accordance with §2.2-3712 that the Code of Virginia that to the best of each members knowledge that only public business matter lawfully exempted from the opening meeting requirements were discussed and that only such public business matters were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened, heard, discussed, or considered. If any member believes that there was a departure from the foregoing requirements should state prior to the vote indicating the substance for departure in which he believes has occurred. This requires a roll call vote Mr. Mayor."

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to return the City Council to open session and certify the purposes of the closed session. Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion.

The motion was approved on roll call vote.

On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

**24-R-11 A RESOLUTION CERTIFYING, AS REQUIRED BY THE CODE OF VIRGINIA, SECTION 2.2-3712, THAT TO THE BEST OF EACH MEMBER'S KNOWLEDGE, ONLY PUBLIC BUSINESS MATTERS LAWFULLY EXEMPTED FROM OPEN MEETING REQUIREMENTS OF VIRGINIA LAW WERE DISCUSSED IN THE CLOSED SESSION, AND ONLY SUCH PUBLIC BUSINESS MATTERS AS WERE IDENTIFIED IN THE MOTION CONVENING THE CLOSED SESSION WERE HEARD, DISCUSSED, OR CONSIDERED.**

City Council returned to open session at 5:48pm

Vice Mayor Hill stated, "Mr. Mayor and members of council, I make a motion to add a motion to accept the unsolicited PPEA broadband proposal of WanRack for publication and conceptional phase consideration."

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion add a motion to accept the unsolicited PPEA broadband proposal of WanRack for publication and conceptional phase consideration. Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to accept the unsolicited PPEA broadband proposal of WanRack for publication and conceptional phase consideration. Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

### **3. ADJOURNMENT:**

The City Council adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk of City Council

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

The regular meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on Tuesday, February 20, 2024, at the Petersburg Public Library. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL:**

Present:

Council Member Charles Cuthbert, Jr.  
Council Member Marlow Jones  
Council Member Annette Smith-Lee  
Council Member Arnold Westbrook, Jr.  
Council Member W. Howard Myers  
Vice Mayor Darrin Hill  
Mayor Samuel Parham

Absent: None

Present from City Council Administration:

City Manager John March Altman, Jr  
City Attorney Anthony Williams

**2. PRAYER:**

Mayor Parham asked Vice Mayor Hill to include in his prayer the victims of the house fire that took place earlier.

Vice Mayor Hill led the city council meeting in the opening prayer.

**3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

Mayor Parham led the council and the citizens in the pledge of allegiance.

**4. DETERMINATION OF THE PRESENCE OF A QUORUM:**

A quorum was determined with the presence of the city council members.

**5. PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS/PRESENTATION OF CEREMONIAL PROCLAMATIONS:**

a. Presentation of a proclamation recognizing Kristi K. Higgins.

Mayor Parham and the council presented Ms. Higgins with a proclamation of recognition.

**6. RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS PUBLIC INFORMATION PERIOD:**

Mayor Parham stated that responses are found under council communications.

**7. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA (to include minutes of previous meeting/s)**

a. Minutes:

-February 6, 2024 – Closed Session Minutes  
-February 6, 2024 – Work Session Meeting Minutes  
-February 9, 2024 – Emergency Special Closed Session  
-February 12, 2024 – Closed Session Minutes

b. Consideration of an appropriation ordinance for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2023, and

ending on June 30, 2024, for the Firearms Violence Intervention and Prevention Grant Program.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Council Member Myers seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

## **8. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT AND SPECIAL REPORTS:**

- a. Presentation from Jo Ann Glazier on the Animal Sanctuary.

### **Key Notes:**

- This SPCA was founded in 1911 in Petersburg. It is all volunteer work.
- It is maintained by donations and is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
- It assists with medical expenses, animal food, and the spade and nurturing of dogs and cats. It also assists with supplying food to low-income residents.
- It offers a platform for reporting suspected animal cruelty and the needs to do this.
- They collaborate with the local police and animal control to address these reports and work to improve animal welfare through new laws and measures.
- It also includes a bi-weekly newsletter called "Tale of Two Cities."
- They help all the shelters in the area.
- They helped to promote with the city a new animal shelter for the City of Petersburg.

## **9. OFFICIAL PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

- a. A public hearing for consideration of an ordinance authorizing the City Manager to execute a Lease Agreement toward the Lease of the City – Owned Property at 301 North Sycamore Street.

**BACKGROUND:** No background information.

**RECOMMENDATION:** To approve the ordinance for the leasing of 301 North Sycamore Street.

Brian Moore, Director of Economic Development, gave a brief overview of the request.

Virginia McCay (Owner of Alibi's) gave an update on the request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Shavar Wade, 230 North Sycamore Street, stated, "I work at Old Towne Alibi's. I have been working there since day one. On the agenda tonight is patio expansion. I am here to say that nobody deserves this opportunity more than Kat or her business. From the outside looking in you would not see the full amount of the extent of love, dedication, and compassion that she pores daily into her business and the community. She is truly a special person, and her heart is genuine to the good things that she puts into this world. It is not our intention to hold everyone up tonight as we could easily put out a call for many people to be lined up to speak on behalf of her. I am only here to point out that the number of people in this room behind me feel the same way that I do. We all hope that when this meeting concludes that it will include the ability for Kat to continue to grow her business and spread her love throughout the community. Thank you for your time."

Seeing no further hands, Mayor Parham closed public comments.

There was discussion among the city council members.

Council Member Jones made a motion to approve the lease and to direct the funds to go towards Petersburg Academic Sports League and the homeless initiative by Ms. Pat Hines. Council Member

Westbrook seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; Abstain: Cuthbert

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he is abstaining because Ms. McCay is running for city council seat for the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward.

**24-ORD-2     AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A LEASE AGREEMENT TOWARD THE LEASE OF A CITY-OWNED PROPERTY AT 301 NORTH SYCAMORE STREET.**

- b.     A public hearing for the consideration of an ordinance authorizing the City Manager to execute a Purchase Agreement toward the Sale of a City – Owned Property at 101 West Washington Street.

**BACKGROUND:**     No background information.

**RECOMMENDATION:**     Approve by ordinance of the sale of 101 West Washington Street.

Brian Moore, Director of Economic Development, gave a brief overview of the request.

Dr. Hirsch and Dr. Gibson gave an update on their request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments. And I did infer that it might be a dialysis center based on the name of the applicant. So, I am relieved that there is something different and that there is a plan. Because it was lacking a development plan and there wasn't much to go on, so I certainly feel more optimistic about it now. One question remains, that my recollection is that early during his tenure as a council member, Councilor Jones asked that the city change its policy about selling property for one half of the assessed value. The objection being that we are cutting ourselves out of potential revenue. And this particular lot I think is in a prime location. It is very valuable. I believe that the question to change that policy has come up more than once. And based on what we are seeing here with the proposal nothing has happened. I hope that will give some of you pause and you will reconsider what you asked for from this medical practice. I believe that it is in the current climate of desirability of real estate. It does seem like the city is leaving money on the table. So, I hope that you will look at that and even look back in your minutes and own records and observe that this has been talked about before."

Larry Murphy, Interim President of Urban League of Greater Richmond, stated, "I just wanted to stand and speak in support of this proposal. I think that the location of the proposal and the need for additional access to another medical facility, and the fact that it is across from the Mass Transit Center is critical. The need for care in this area, as the doctor's mentioned, will be auxiliary with additional medical facilities that will also be housed in this building. So, I understand, and I support this building. Thank you."

Darius Wyatt, 17200 Eppes Road, stated, "I am here for something totally different. But hearing this I have to stand and support this because my grandfather was under Dr. Gibson for 15 years on dialysis. Just thinking about it, this would be perfect across from the bus station. And it would help so many people. I do not think people realize how many people are on dialysis until you actually go to the center and see. This would be great for Petersburg."

Seeing no hands, Mayor Parham closed the public hearing.

There were comments and discussion from the City Council Members.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to approve the ordinance authorizing the sale of 101 West Washington Street provided that approval of the design of the building be subject to council's approval with the provision be included in the development agreement. Council Member Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook,

Hill, and Parham

**24-ORD-3 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A LEASE AGREEMENT TOWARD THE LEASE OF A CITY-OWNED PROPERTY AT 101 WEST WASHINGTON STREET.**

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "I would like council to study this issue with the sales price on surplus properties and discuss this in closed session when we meet next. To see if we can come to a revised understanding that is more to the city's advantage."

Mr. Williams stated, "I will work on that. Some items have to be discussed in open session, but I will check the code and confirm whether that will properly fall under the closed session exceptions."

- c. A public hearing and the consideration of a request from Chase Gibrall, applicant, and representative for Navarrete's Auto Sales, to obtain a Special Use Permit at 2520 Deerfield Drive to operate a used car lot as provided for under Article 23, Supplementary Use Regulations – Special Uses. Section 4, Special Uses Enumerated. Item (22) of the Zoning Ordinance to establish stand-alone used vehicle sales not associated with a new -vehicle dealership or not located upon the same parcel as such new-vehicle dealership, if located upon parcels of less than one acre in area, such to be permitted within the B-2 and Me-1 zoning districts only.

**BACKGROUND:** An application for a Special Use Permit was submitted to the Petersburg Department of Planning and Community Development on November 28, 2023, by the applicants Chase Gibrall and Marbell Navarrete. The application is for the operation of a used automobile dealership to house 10 vehicles. The subject property has been used for auto-related businesses and services activity since construction in 1980; however, the commercial, one story, cinder block building with metal roof now appears to be vacant.

Prior to the receipt of this application, the property had been used as a coin-operated four (4) bay car wash with a wax room. There have been several inquiries with Planning Department staff regarding the permitted uses allowed, auto-related uses, such as a vehicle tow lot, used care lot and the continuation of the car wash. None of the previous parties initiated an application to move forward with the Specia Use Permit process.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Planning Commission and Staff recommend the approval with conditions.

1. The lot shall be maintained in an appropriate, clean manner; paved; and vehicles for sale shall be parked only one per space.
2. Only 10 vehicles are to be for-sale on the property at a given time due to parking requirements. A site plan shall be submitted to the Planning Department prior to the issuance of a Business License showing the delineation of such parking spaces.
3. A lighting plan should be submitted and approved by the Planning Department staff to ensure residentially used properties will not be impacted by glare or spillover.

Naomi Siodmok, Director of Planning and Community Development, gave a brief overview of the request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Paula Chester, 1013 Oakmont Drive, stated, "Is this location in the Battlefield Subdivision or is it Deerfield Drive and one of those streets over there?"

Vice Mayor Hill stated, "Yes. That is in Oakhurst. It is right almost in the neighborhood when you first come in. It is right behind where Drivetime used to be. It was a carwash at one time years ago."

Chase Gibrall, 2525 Deerfield Drive, stated, "I had as a carwash before, and they were not taking such good care of it. I had a lot of people that wanted to put a dealership in there. It has been empty since November because I am trying to put something in there that is going to be better and not disturb the neighborhood as much. It seems like the only problem from planning was that they did not want a lot of commotion in the neighborhood. I figured that a car dealership would be less commotion than a carwash."

Marie 2564

Marie, Owner of Dealership stated, "At the last meeting when we met, I was telling them that we plan n keeping everything clean. There are only going to be ten cars for sale. As again, we are a small dealership venturing in this new business. I just wanted to leave that with you guys. We plan on keeping everything good for the community."

Seeing no further hands, Mayor Parham closed public comments.

There was discussion among the city council members and staff.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to deny the request for a Special Use Permit. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

- d. A public hearing and the consideration of a request from Grand Generation, LLC, owner D. Wyatt for a Special Use Permit pursuant to Article 23, Section 4(20) of the Zoning Ordinance to operate as a vehicle removal operator, vehicle storage lot, or vehicle tow lot, such to be permitted within the M-1 and M-2 zoning districts only. The subject property is located at 1700 – 1701 Midway Avenue and is zoned M-1, Light Industrial District.

**BACKGROUND:** N/A

**RECOMMENDATION:** Planning Commission and staff recommend approval with conditions:

1. All vehicles are to be stored within the confines of the property's fence.
2. Beyond vehicles, no open, outdoor storage is permitted.
3. The site shall be properly lit with lighting directed in a downward and inward position to not spillover onto adjacent properties. A lighting plan shall be submitted and approved by the Planning Department staff prior to the issuance of a Business License.

Naomi Siodmok, Director of Planning and Community Development, gave a brief overview of the request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Seeing no hands, Mayor Parham closed public comments.

Council Member Westbrook made a motion to deny approval of a Special Use Permit for Grand Generation, LLC. Council Member Cuthbert seconded the motion. There was discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "I think that this city council has recognized in the past and has recognized tonight that it is a new day in Petersburg and the aesthetics are important. And we do not want just used car lots and lots for storage of vehicles. That is not the image that we want in Petersburg. That is not our future or our growth industry. And I hope that the Department of Planning will take that into account in the future. That is my personal request. Thank you."



- e. A public hearing and the consideration of an ordinance to amend and readopt Article 3, Definitions, and Article 19, Off-Street Parking Regulations, to clarify the requirement of driveways for low-density housing at the request of the Planning Commission.

**BACKGROUND:** Though the City Ordinance under Article 19, Off Street Parking Regulations, states that parking spaces are required for residential development, the issue of developers not installing driveways prior to requesting a certificate of occupancy reveals that the ordinance needs clarification.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Planning Commission recommends approval of the text amendment.

Naomi Siodmok, Director of Planning and Community Development, gave a brief overview of the request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Seeing no hands, Mayor Parham closed public comments.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to table action on the request of amendments to the text amendments regarding off-street parking until the next business meeting of city council. Council Member Myers seconded the motion. There was discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he handed out paperwork regarding the off-street parking to all the members of council to review. He stated that particular information regarding parking in the front yard on the grass is no longer in the ordinance.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to refer the former provision of Section 4 Subpart 8 to the Planning Commission as a proposed text amendment for their consideration and recommendation to city council.

Council Member Myers stated, "Councilman Cuthbert, I know you said something about parking in the front yard, but we did create an ordinance against that with a fine. So, we probably need the clerk to find that ordinance."

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "If we got it great, But I could not find it. Can we leave it like this? Do you want to revisit this at our next business meeting?"

Council Member Myers stated, "Yes. But if I recall, we did adopt something with a fine for parking in front of your house."

Mr. Altman stated, "Would you want to talk about this at the work session? This sounds like a good work session topic to work through before we bring something for action."

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to table action on Article 19, Off Street Parking Regulations, and move it to the work session on March 4<sup>th</sup> for discussion. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion. The motion was approved on voice vote. On voice vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

- f. Consideration to accept a donation in the amount of \$500,000 from People's Advantage Federal Credit Union – 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading.

**BACKGROUND:** The City of Petersburg and People's Advantage Federal Credit Union (PAFCU) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding and Sponsorship Agreement where PAFCU agreed to invest \$500,000 toward the construction and maintenance of the Petersburg High School Fieldhouse. The city has received sponsorship funds in accordance with the MOU. Once City Council formally accepts the donation, city

staff will transfer the funds to the Petersburg High School Stadium Enhancement Committee, a 501(c)3, that is undertaking the fundraising and construction of a new fieldhouse/athletic training facility at Petersburg High School. The funds are budgeted and appropriated as part of the FY24 budget amendment.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Accept the donation of \$500,000 by People's Advantage Federal Credit Union and direct the City Manager to transfer the funds to the Petersburg High School Stadium Enhancement Committee.

Mr. Altman gave a brief overview of the request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Seeing no hands, Mayor Parham closed public comments.

Council Member Myers made a motion to accept the donation of 500,000 by People's Advantage Federal Credit Union and direct the City Manager to transfer the funds to the Petersburg High School Stadium Enhancement Committee. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; Absent: Smith-Lee

g. A public hearing to amend the FY2023-2024 Budget.

**BACKGROUND:** The Finance Department takes a very conservative position when projecting revenue. Our conservative approach allowed the city to accumulate a strong general fund balance. The current financial policy requires that the city maintain a 17% actual expenditure fund balance. The city's current fund balance through the FY2022 fiscal year was 53% (\$40 million). The FY2023 unaudited fund balance projects a large fund balance increase. After the recent close of FY2023, we have completed a detailed revenue analysis through January 31, 2024, and have determined that some revenue categories needed to be updated. Please note that the Finance Department's requested budget modification updates are still very conservative, and still anticipate a significant increase in fund balance.

**RECOMMENDATION:** To approve the amendment and appropriation ordinance.

Garry Cozier, Budget Analyst, gave a brief overview of the request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Barbra Rudolph, 1675 Mt. Vernon Street, stated, "Thank you. That was an enlightening presentation because I had a lot of questions from looking at the agenda package. And some of them have been answered. I did want to comment that this is the first time that we have seen the ordinance. So, I believe by the Rules of Council you will not be able to vote on this tonight. Looking at this expenditure chart, the two things at the bottom, the special projects, and the contingency, that kind of looks like slush funds. I mean it does not have anything specific and I feel like for almost \$900,000 there should be more information about what your plans are. But let me jump back to something else about the revenue, which was on the previous slide. You had something in there for \$766,593 for additional public assistance and children services revenue. It seems like how does that revenue switch over to be being spent on other things that do not have to do with that. That is the part that I do not understand. I do understand but let's go back to the other slide. The worker's compensation, these are the kind of questions that I think that you guys should be asking. I mean that there are some answers here, but you have to dig a little deeper. The \$750,000 increase, the original budget for worker's compensation was \$250,000. So, if you spend all of that and you need another \$750,000 there is something irregular going on. There is an increase in worker's compensation cases. Are there a lot of injuries? The audit and compliance contracts, I remember the presentation of the spending through November to December and all that money was spent down. So, there is no surprise for the increase here. But the question is why would we under budget for so much. Those are the kind of things that we budget for every year. WE do not have an in-house capacity to do audits and compliances. And we have not for years. I mean I question why so much of an increase. You already know what I think about the library. I mean it says a lot about your

priorities. But I did want to mention one thing. When you look at what the price tag that was given for this conference room addition, it was supposed to be basically a private fundraising effort to pay for it. The city, when I add up all the different money that has gone towards this conference center it is 37% of the total. That is a lot. Anyway, I mean it's done. It just says a lot about your priorities. Now the Southside Virginia Emergency Crew, there is a later piece in the agenda package about that and it is confusing. It says something about a \$300,000 increase. So, I do not know does it mean we need \$650,000 to add or we need to add \$300,000 and we already had a \$350,000 budget. Excuse me if I get the numbers wrong because I do not have an agenda packet in front of me. When you get to that part, you will see that it says something about a \$300,000 increase in a couple of places in the memo. You explained the bond debt and I thank you for that. Those were my questions. And again, the ordinance is only being supplied tonight in this agenda package. It needs to come back a second time to be voted on. Thank you."

Seeing no further hands, Mayor Parham closed public comments.

9. **PUBLIC INFORMATION PERIOD:** A public information period, limited in time to 30 minutes, shall be part of an Order of Business at each regular council meeting. Each speaker shall be a resident or business owner of the City and shall be limited to three minutes. No speaker will be permitted to speak on any item scheduled for consideration on the regular docket of the meeting at which the speaker is to speak. The order of speakers, limited by the 30-minute time period, shall be determined as follows:
- First, in chronological order of the notice, persons who have notified the Clerk no later than 12:00 noon of the day of the meeting,
  - Second, in chronological order of their sign up, persons who have signed a sign-up sheet placed by the Clerk in the rear of the meeting room prior to the meeting.

Shayla Pittman, Program Administrator for Urban League of Greater Richmond, stated, "Today, I come before you to present an opportunity that holds immense potential to uplift our community and invest in the future of Petersburg Public School students. The program that I am referring to is "L.E.E.P (Leading with Education, Equity and Access Program." Our mission is clear. To recruit potential tutors who would dedicate themselves to empowering Petersburg Public Schools students in grades 3<sup>rd</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> in one-on-one tutoring and small group sessions tailored to individual needs. We seek your support in spreading the word and encouraging qualified individuals to join us in this endeavor. The subjects that we cover are fundamental pillars of education of math, English, science, and history. Our goal is to provide comprehensive support with fostering a holistic learning experience that equips students to success in all aspects of their life. Tutors in our program are valued and compensated \$15/hr. with flexibility in scheduling to accommodate personal commitments. Transportation is provided upon request, ensuring accessibility for all participants. Before stepping into the tutoring role, our tutors undergo an intensive three-week training program that is led by myself in conjunction with Petersburg Public School Instructional Specialist. This training includes subject matter guidance. Scheduling is designated with both students, tutors, and my needs. Tutors have the freedom to create schedules based on personal availability with assignments thoughtfully scheduled to exclude student lunch periods. Applying to become a tutor is simple, interested individuals can complete the online interest forms or connect with us through Urban League of Greater Richmond through social media platforms. In conclusion, the LEEP tutoring program is not just about academic support. It is about empowerment, opportunity, and investing in the future of Petersburg. I urge you to support us in recruiting potential tutors and spreading the word about this invaluable program. Thank you for your time and consideration."

Barbara Rudolph, 1675 Mt. Vernon Street, stated, "I will start by asking that you seek citizen input on your list of casino operators potential upfront funding uses. Now, I want to go back and pick up on a discussion from the last meeting when Councilman Cuthbert questioned how much of the city's unassigned fund balance and borrowed money is invested in the Local Government Investment Pool or LGIP. Treasurer Mullin said that the current \$7 million dollars in investments was made some time ago and that the \$50 million dollars in general fund balance was not invested. The city manager incorrectly pointed out that the \$50 million dollars mentioned was operating funds and this derailed the discussion. I want to offer some facts to get us back on track. The city's general fund operating budget is \$84 million dollars and not \$50 million dollars. At your January work session, the acting CFO showed a chart showing that as of FY2022, the unassigned fund

balance was \$39 million dollars. Considering that the pre-audited general fund balance for FY2023 is over \$19 million dollars. It is responsible to project a current unassigned general fund balance of about \$55 million dollars. This is what Councilman Cuthbert was talking about. Not even getting into investing any operating funds or monies that the city has recently borrowed. My other concern is the constant excuse making that the city cannot make a move in finance without a meeting of the Finance Committee. An entity that Davenport recommended that you formerly approved in early July. But you cannot get together to make any decisions because Davenport is too busy to participate. We have heard that on several occasions. Based on your long history with Davenport as the city's financial advisory and the fact that you are still using the Robert Bobb Group to help with financial issues, it is fair to assume that you trust them and respect their guidance. Robert Bobb urged you to create a finance committee six and a half years ago. Now Davenport started pushing it last year, yet you still have not done anything with it. Please stop trying to impress Standard, Poor's, and Moody's with having a finance committee on paper and figure out how you can actually use the committee to act upon sound investment advice. That way you can stop passing up millions of dollars in interest income that the city should be earning instead of passively sitting there and listening to repeated excuses of this meeting that cannot take place. Thank you."

Genevieve Lohr, 19 Guarantee Street, stated, "First earlier tonight we talked about the aesthetic of Petersburg and car lots, car washes, etc. However, it kind of brought to mind something that was interesting to me because I am pretty sure we had a similar conversation about Dollar General's in Petersburg a while back. But almost every day when I drive to work, I see where they are building a new Dollar General on 460. I find it a little interesting. We talked about something and then the follow through is not there. And it is not just with Dollar General, but it is really intriguing to me that this is where things happen. I urge you to try and remember those things and follow-up with them. Because there is really not a lot of confidence when something is said and the follow through is not there. So, I think that is important. Second, I love our library and I work in this library. I meet clients in this library, and I attend meetings here personally and professionally. It is an amazing setting and I think that everyone would agree with that. However, this library is not open on Sundays. This library is only open for five hours on Saturdays and it closes at 5pm or 6pm on Fridays. It is the only safe location for children and adults who need a place to go in this city and its closed half of every weekend. And that is not acceptable. So, I recommend with some of your available funding of approximately \$800,000 in the budget that you think about increasing the hours of the library. There is no reason that we need to build another building. We can just open the one that is running right now. Last, two weeks ago we heard from a number of people about homelessness in the city. People who are professionals, people who are kind and good people. People who are doing the work every single day. A woman who still has a full-time job who is in her 70s who does not live in Petersburg and comes to our city every single day she is working to talk to people under a bridge or an empty house. And I listened to our city council. First of all, say negative things about these efforts being made but then no one defending the people who were here. And it was embarrassing. So, I recommend you spend some time with the people who are doing the work because it is being done. And it is actually being done by people who do not live here sometimes who come to our city to help. And I think that it is appropriate that you guys spend some time with them to see what they are doing and how they are impacting us. Thank you."

Rozelia Weaver Roy, 2942 Homestead Drive, stated, "I am here this evening as it relates to the change in real estate assessment. Many individuals received notices that their assessment has changed. We realize that there are many changes as it relates to city property and the surrounding community in which they live. And what I am referring to is where they live in that environment on the street and the surrounding community within their street location. The housing cost has increased for some individuals, and this is the assessment over 100% and it is having a devastating reaction on our population. Some citizens are fortunate enough to own homes as many have had them for many years. Since Petersburg is a very historic environment, many houses have experienced environmental changes. Some remain livable and some not. As we have a high percentage of blight property, as a result individuals and companies have purchased homes and restored them and are selling them at very high cost. This raises the value of your home even if you have not done anything to upgrade it. Some individuals have been assessed with an increase of 100% or more. As I look at the population that we have here in Petersburg, as reflected in the U.S. Census report, our poverty rate is 22.2%. The state average is 10.6%. The housing ownership is 35.9% and over 75.8% still have house payments. This situation is really a concern of many people in the city. Our employment rate is 5.40%. And as you know the

rate should be higher as it relates to employment. Homeownership as it has been said is 37.4%. I know that this is a nationwide trend for the assessment of houses and their worth. Many of us desire a beautiful and prosperous Petersburg. As we have paid through the years to keep the city afloat. We desire to reduce blight and have beautiful neighborhoods. Many have left but we have stayed. But now some of us will be forced to leave because of the impact of change. Progress is good for our city. As a recommendation, possibly we can cap the amount of increase for the property. Another recommendation to make available is grants or funding to individuals who are experiencing hardships in meeting payments and have a designated person to help them to apply for the grants. So, we need to continue to bring large and small businesses to help us to stand our city. We want to find a way to protect residents' interests without blocking new development that might actually benefit us. We need to find ways to create inclusive neighborhoods that welcome newcomers while enabling all of us to stay and benefit from new benefits and services and amenities. We would like to use some of these resources to generate the individuals that will possibly be displaced. By providing financial assistance to current homeowners, helping small businesses, and preserving our community. Thank you."

**11. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE MAYOR OR OTHER MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL:**

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "Mr. Altman, would you bring council up-to-date as to your efforts to convene the finance committee so we can move forward with the decision as to how much of the city's cash to transfer to the local government investment pool?"

Mr. Altman stated, "Yes. I have dates to share with the mayor for next week and the following week to schedule a meeting of the finance committee."

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "Alright. Do you think that the meeting can take place before the work session on March 5<sup>th</sup>?"

Mr. Altman stated, "Yes. I believe so."

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "That would be great. Would you at the March 5<sup>th</sup> meeting in open session give the council and the public an update on the finance committee. That would be great. Thank you. Mr. City Manager, also I was intrigued by this three quarters of a million dollar increase in a worker's comp premium when we had budgeted around a quarter million. So, it tripled? Or an additional tripling is being called for. I am scratching my head. That is a lot of money."

Mr. Cozier stated, "I can speak to that. Just from the data from the last few years we have spent over a million dollars in workers compensation. So, the price was just underrepresented for this fiscal year significantly."

Council Member Cuthbert asked Mr. VanVorhees to add information to the screen for council and public to see.

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "About 11 months ago, I took this photo on March 18, 2023. I am here to celebrate the progress and to let you see the progress that is being made. It took a lot of pushing by a lot of people in the city, but this is a moment to celebrate. I certainly thank code enforcement for getting this to this point. With that said, let me shift to another visual. I took this photograph this morning also. This is on Webster Street facing Glenside Court. So, this is the west side of Webster Street facing Glenside Court. Now, I wonder why city staff does not recognize something like this. I am happy to bring this to their attention, but you have to be blind not to see that this is a problem. And we are told that the job of the city council is to make policy and it's the job of the administration to attend to the nuts and bolts of running the city. Well, that is not happening. And I would hope that Mr. Altman would ask code enforcement to do what is appropriate with this building. This is just an example, and it is examples like this all over town."

Mayor Parham asked Council Member Cuthbert if he can tell everyone what the property used to be.

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "I am guessing it was a garage for private homes. But I am honored that you think that I might remember. But I really don't. It looks like it could have been a garage at one time for cars that were small. I am doing a lot of guessing. And in any event Mr. Altman would you ask code enforcement to bring its powers to bear. Thank you."

Council Member Jones stated, "I have a list of things, so everyone bear with me. I am going to go down that list and I am going to say some things today that is probably going to make you cringe but I hope it makes you smile in the end. First, I want to say thank you to everyone who is up here and everyone that is out there. I am going to go by what I have been hearing and reading in public. I read today that somebody said that kids do not need a new school, we need to make them come to school. Now, I have a problem with that statement. We have not had a new school in years since the 70s. And would you come to a school or want to come to a school where you felt not wanted. If that school was old or outdated or the school was the same school your grandparents went to. If that school did not have any pride or if it looked like a prison, then it did an educational facility. Would you want to come to that school? Not only do the children need a new school, but the educators also need a new school. This is what generates pride. We keep keeping them in these jails. That's what they are. They are prisoners before they go to prison. That is what we are doing. Our kids and educators need new schools. Simple as that. And I am already fighting for brick for brick. That is what I am pushing for right now. We are definitely going to approach the conversation on real estate. I talked to the city manager, and I have been educated on a lot of stuff. So, I want you guys to know that even though the assessment went up, it is up to council to vote to make sure that what you are paying does not go up. Am I correct on that? The tax rates?"

Mayor Parham stated yes.

Council Member Jones stated, "I am going to keep it real blunt today because I have too. I want to sleep good at night. And you cannot sleep good at night with holding something on my mind. To the Fire Chief that is sitting in here, Mr. Magann, I trained you when you first came into this department. Do you remember that? And I want you to know heart to heart, person to person, and man to man, council member to the new Deputy Chief Magann, give him a hand by the way. He is the new deputy chief for the fire department. I want you to know Magann that I was not against you. What I am against is any deviation from policy and procedures. But now that you have this position, I am going to hold you accountable, but I know that you will do a good job. Because you are a good job kind of dude. So, thank you and congratulations Magann. My next topic is heroes. We need heroes. And we had heroes operating today by way of police, fire, and EMS. We lost someone today. We lost a three-year-old who happens to be a family member. I cannot thank you enough for the efforts Chief Christian and your entire staff. The command staff was on scene and the fire department doing their thing. This is what a hero is everybody. A hero is somebody who goes to work risking their lives and not thinking about that paycheck. See there is a lot of people in the fire department and police department that want more money but that is not what being a firefighter or police officer is about. We know that you have families to take care of. It is about answering the call to the city that you are serving. And they did just that today. It could have been worse. And I just want to say thank you to the fire department, police department and EMS workers. Last but not least this is Black history month. Please pardon me for the language that I am about to use. But I cannot sleep tonight if I don't say it. It has been on my mind for a long time. Black History Month, to the white people that is in the city, this is not just your city. To the Black people in the city, this is not just your city. But to the citizens in the city and the business owners and taxpayers in the city and regardless of what you look like, this is your city. This is our city. This is Petersburg. And what is missing is our pride. See we have to kill that divide and noise and give birth to a new day like Mr. Cuthbert said. This is Petersburg. And we have to start germinating those seeds of life to be just that. Like you said we don't want junk or trash here. You all see for yourself the young man who was just here pleading for us to open a dealership and then when it didn't go his way, he talked cash mess about us. If we have to go in one of his vehicles, then we probably will not go anywhere. I am Black today, this month, and I am proud to be black. I am going to be black everyday of the year. You are going to be white today, tomorrow, and every day of the year. You Arabic today, Asian today, and you will be all of those everyday of the year. The issue is to be proud of who you are. The problem is when your proudness interferes with the health, safety, and lifestyle of others. That is the problem. So be proud to be white because I am proud to be black. But let's not make that interfere and hurt anybody's lifestyle or bring harm to anybody in the future. And you all see the way that the world is going today. There is a lot of interracial relationships and love blooming in the air just like the trees in the springtime, different colors. Twenty years

from now some of your grandkids will be some of everything. God is fixing it that way. We are one. But in Petersburg, protect this city. I challenge every business owner, every citizen, everybody here to protect this city. Have pride in it. Pick up the trash if you see it. You do not have to call anyone if you see trash on the street. Just pick it up. We used to be a city full of pride. We have to go back to being a city full of pride. That's all I got."

Council Member Westbrook stated, "Thank everyone for being here tonight. I was blessed to listen to Ms. Liz Cheney from the Republican Party this past Saturday at the Richmond Forum. I have said it before and just to put it on the record again that I hope that we do not miss the opportunity that is coming to town in about eight months. Virginia State is hosting the Presidential General Election Debate on October 1<sup>st</sup>. This is the first time being held at a HBCU. We are doing a lot of work to prepare and hope that the city doesn't miss that opportunity as well from business owners downtown to citizens. Because however you feel about it the circus is coming to town, and I am going to leave it at that. Hopefully, economically we can prioritize and monetize it. I hope that we can start a health committee. Hopefully, we can talk about it more to present it to everyone in the audience as well as the citizens. The purpose of this committee is not to say that we cannot do an arts committee or other things like that. But I have just been seeing in the past six months to a year, I do believe there is a problem with the overall health of the city. I am not knocking the numbers, but very little impact is happening. Are we allowing the higher ups in the General Assembly to say that they are doing something? How can we really get the citizens to do something? I spoke with the mayor, and I understand that there are a lot of private business but hopefully we as citizens can come together and put our ideas on how we can get to the doctor more to get our check-ups. So, I did ask Mr. Altman to see if we can come up with a health committee with members being selected by him and the council and report back to us bi-monthly. And hopefully it can be put on our legislative agenda going forward into the 2024-2025 session which will be next year. As we do our Comprehensive Plan, and I know that it will be wrapped up soon, I hope that we can come up with a Petersburg West Plan. Because I do believe as Council Member Cuthbert said that it is a new day, and it is not to go against car dealerships and storage lots. I just do not want Petersburg to be an automotive haven when there are better places to go if you want a new car on 95. But we get all the used cars and towing and storage places. So, I would like to call it the Magnificent Mile which is West Washington Street where you have the beautiful Dominion Power building sitting on the edge in Dinwiddie coming all the way to the Pepsi-Cola Plant into Council Member Smith-Lee 6<sup>th</sup> Ward. I do know that basketball season is wrapped up which is a big money-making sport as far as support. But please do not forget to support your wrestling team, forensic team, and other teams that the youth are still doing things with. Going back to parks and recreation, I know that they are signing up for first kick and softball. So, let's get our kids involved with those sports as well and again change the overall health of the city. Next, I wish Mr. Randall Williams or someone from public works, there is a dead animal or deer that has been on the side of Defense Road right by the Ramblewood Subdivision for about a week. Hopefully, someone can get that deer up so that we do not let roadkill stay there for too long. Happy Black History Month as we move into Women's History Month in March. So, hopefully as much as we celebrate Black History Month, we can also celebrate the greater history that the women of Petersburg do next month. And hopefully again, working with Mr. Marquis Allen, we can have some celebrations for the women of Petersburg. Thank you."

Council Member Myers stated, "I do not have anything Mr. Mayor but I would like to thank the public works department and Mr. Richard Harris for all that they did with the leaf collection in Ward 5. And thank the public works department as well."

Council Member Smith-Lee stated, "I just want you all to know that Ward 6 and 7 is going to have joint meetings on April 4<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. And I promise you that Mr. Westbrook will not take over. Thank you, Mr. Richard Harris, and Mr. Steve Stenson, in reference to all the great work that you have been doing in the last past three months with the call of duty. You all are on it. I truly appreciate it. I just want everyone to know that customer service in billing and collection is getting better. If you call down there and you do not get them right away, and you leave a message, they will call you back. So, I think that we need to clap on that. Thank you, Mr. March, and Mr. Byerly, to make sure that customers that call and want answers, that now things are moving forward. That concludes my report."

Vice Mayor Hill stated, "Thank everyone for coming out today. I want to thank our city manager, public works, and the contractors for doing our curbside. You all know that throughout the City of Petersburg they are making it handicap accessible. So, that is a good thing. I believe that they just finished Crater Road. Now I think that they are on Wythe and Washington Street. I believe that is going to help our bicycle and individuals who are handicapped to be able to access the sidewalks a little bit better. Thank you. There is a change in our city that you can kind of see. Even with the council. When certain things come, and we know what we want, and we know what we don't want. And we are pretty much unified on that. And it was evident today and some meetings ago that there are certain things that we want in our city and certain things that we do not want. I am just going to leave it at that. Also, that the blight is getting a lot better than it was. If you go through some of the neighborhoods a lot of the homes are being renovated. I am not going to talk about celebrating African American History Month. Every month to me is African American History Month. But the other two council members spoke on it well. Ward 2 will be having a meeting in the month of March. I have to get with the church. I was out of town, so I have to get back with them. And to our first responders, I was in a restaurant today and someone that I knew that was an employ of the city and he said that the first responders responded well. He was listening to his scanner to know and hear what was going on. Now I just want to say kudos to you all. A lot of time I know a lot of things are said. Police Officers parking behind buildings and things like that. You guys did an amazing job today. I just want to thank you all again for the work that you continue to do for the City of Petersburg. Also, Legends Park, I was happy that they have the tennis courts all fixed now and Petersburg High are now having tennis matches over there right now. That ends my report."

Mayor Parham stated, "I just want to just close out today again in thanking our first responders and everyone at Southside Virginia Emergency Crew, Petersburg Fire, and Petersburg Police. We cannot thank you guys enough for giving your all everyday especially on a day today. I know today was challenging and emotional draining. We cannot thank you enough. And ask that God look over each and every one of you all and bless when you go out here and provide services to the City of Petersburg. I also want to thank Marquis Allen and his staff for Black History Month. He has his last event coming up this Friday, and I am asking everyone to come out and support one of Petersburg own, Rodney Stith. He is coming to Petersburg to perform and close out. It has almost been Black History Month celebrations every weekend. The book signing event here was spectacular as well that he had a few weeks ago. I also want to thank some of the trailblazers that have come through the City of Petersburg during Black History Month. Council Member Jones just reflected on that, and I just cannot just sit here in this fine library and not think about Wyatt T. Walker and the struggles that he went through at the McKenney Library. I know you all can remember us being kids here going to that old library. I remember the kid section was down in the basement of that library. And I never liked going to the basement to see the books. It was like a dungeon. The only thing that I can say now is that we have a first-class facility here for our kids to have a top-notch library. Even this space here that has become the center of the community in the City of Petersburg. It has provided so many weddings and events from all elected officials. It is the center of community activity, and I am proud that we have partnered with the Library Foundation to get this off the ground. Even though we contributed 37% it was well spent here. Also, I just want to thank Mrs. Ann Taylor and P.T. They have done so much here in growing up here as well. We thank them for always being ambassadors here. You think about doing this Black History Month here of trailblazers here who are unselfish and doing it for about 40 years. They have always been generous with the monies that they have to help in Petersburg, even with the library. Again, thank everybody and wish everyone a wonderful rest of the month. See you here Friday for the final Black History Month celebration."

**12. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA:**

\*There are no items for this portion of the agenda.

**13. FINANCE AND BUDGET REPORT:**

\*There are no items for this portion of the agenda.

**14. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

\*There are no items for this portion of the agenda.



**15. NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. Consideration of an appropriation ordinance for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2024, and ending on June 30, 2025, for the Edward Byrne JAG Grant in the amount of \$33,140 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading

**BACKGROUND:** Petersburg Bureau of Police applied for and was awarded the Edward Byrne JAG Grant. See attached ordinance.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Recommend that council accept the funds for the Edward Byrne Grant to be spent in the fiscal year.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to accept the funds and approve the ordinance. Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Seeing no hands, Mayor Parham closed the public comments.

The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; Absent: Myers

**24-ORD-4 AN ORDINANCE, AS AMENDED, SAID ORDINANCE MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR COMMENCING JULY 1, 2024, AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, FOR THE FY23 EDWARD BYRNE MEMORIAL ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM IN THE AMOUNT OF \$33,140.**

- b. Consideration of a resolution of support for the Certified Crime Prevention Community Certification Program.

**BACKGROUND:** Our community, City of Petersburg, Virginia, wishes to participate in the Certified Crime Prevention Community Certification Program. The leadership of this community fully realizes this program requires dedicated efforts. By making entry into this program, we are pledging our honest efforts to become designated as a "Certified Crime Prevention Community."

The program requires the existence of formation of a local community crime prevention/community safety council or coalition. The name of the council/coalition is The Ace Team. The goal of the community is to successfully complete this program within six (6) months of the day of the official start date, to be recorded when the program manual is delivered.

**RECOMMENDATION:** To approve of the resolution of support for the Certified Crime Prevention Community Certification Program.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the resolution of support for the Certified Crime Prevention Community Certification Program. Council Member Westbrook seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; Absent: Myers

**24-R-12 A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE PARTICIPATION OF THE CERTIFIED CRIME PREVENTION COMMUNITY PROGRAM.**

- c. Consideration of an appropriation ordinance for State Aid to Public Libraries Revenue Funds in the amount of \$34,450 – 1<sup>st</sup> Reading

**BACKGROUND:** State Aid to Public Libraries is a formula based grant that encourages the formation of library systems as the regional, county and city level. The Petersburg Public Library has received notification from the Library of Virginia that its State Aid to Public Libraries appropriation is \$227,628 for FY24. This is \$34,650 more than the anticipated in the City's FY24 budget which takes into consideration \$193,976 for State Aid to Public Libraries. The additional funds will be used for eligible State Aid expenditures to include the purchase of books, magazines, e-books, newspapers, and other library materials necessary to enhance the library collection offerings to the patrons of the Petersburg Public Library.

**RECOMMENDATION:** To approve the appropriation ordinance.

Mayor Parham stated, "Mr. Williams, does this need to be added to our consent agenda."

Mr. Williams stated, "You can just add the first reading now. But it will have to come back before you adopt it."

Mayor Parham stated, "This is first reading."

- d. Consideration of an appropriation ordinance for the donation to the Petersburg Public Library in the amount of \$19,620. – 1<sup>st</sup> Reading

**BACKGROUND:** In November 2023, the Petersburg Public Library was notified that it was not one of the beneficiaries of the estate of Nina G. Thaxter. Mrs. Thaxter was once a resident of Petersburg, Virginia but was residing in Arizona. In December 2023, the Petersburg Public Library received a check in the amount of \$19,620 from the estate of Mrs. Thaxter. These funds will be used to update the computers in the children's section of the library.

**RECOMMENDATION:** To approve the appropriation ordinance in the amount of \$19,620.

Mayor Parham stated that being that this item is a first reading it will be added to the second meeting in March.

- e. Consideration of a Memorandum of Understanding with Southside Virginia Emergency Crew.

**BACKGROUND:** SVEC has provided Advanced Life Support (ALS) service to the citizens of Petersburg since 1945. In 2019, SVEC and the City of Petersburg entered a MOU for the provision of EMS/ALS service. Many factors, including a 60% increase in operating expenses due to an increase in call volume of over 30%, have rendered the renewal of the current agreement an unsustainable option for SVEC. To address the increased call volume SVEC is changing its staffing model to add an additional daytime unit. This will result in Staffing/Units available as follows:

- 2 EMS ALS Transport Units-7 days a week, 1930-0730
- 3 EMS ALS Transport Units-7 days a week, 0730-1930
- 4 EMS ALS Transport Units-5 days a week, 0900-1700

SVEC will act as the primary EMS response agency during peak call times of 0730-1930 – 7 days/week. In the event all SVEC response vehicles are unavailable, the Petersburg Fire Rescue & Emergency Services (PFRES) will provide additional EMS Transport Units to respond or request mutual aid from a neighboring locality. This will result in an increased cost to the city of \$300,000 annually.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Authorize the City Manager to enter a Memorandum of Understanding with SVEC for the provision of EMS Services for 2-years at a cost of \$650,000 annually.

Mr. Altman gave a brief update on the request.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Southside Virginia

Emergency Crew. Council Member Cuthbert seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; Absent: Myers

- f. Consideration of an Unsolicited PPEA Proposal – Design and Construction of a New Courthouse.

**BACKGROUND:** City of Petersburg has received and accepted an unsolicited proposal from Gilbane Building Company and Commonwealth Architects under the Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act of 2002, Virginia Code §§ 56-575.1, et seq., (hereafter referred to as “PPEA”), and the City’s PPEA implementing procedures for the design and construction of City of Petersburg’s new consolidated courthouse. The location proposed is the site located across from on property identified as 27-37 E. Tabb Street and 40 Henry Street, further identified as City of Petersburg Real Estate Tax Map Nos. 011220006 and 011220019, respectively. The City intends to evaluate the proposal simultaneously along with any competing proposals that comply with the PPEA, the City’s implementing procedures, and the instructions, terms, and conditions in a more detailed “Receipt of Unsolicited PPEA Proposal and Solicitation of Competing Proposals” (“Solicitation”), which has been issued concurrently with this Notice. The City and may negotiate an interim or comprehensive agreement with the proposer based on the proposal. A public copy of the unsolicited proposal received is included in this notice, subject to the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Code of Virginia, PPEA, and City Purchasing Policy.

**RECOMMENDATION:** A motion to accept the Unsolicited PPEA from Gilbane Building Company and Commonwealth Architects for the purpose of publication and conceptual phase consideration and direct the City Manager to proceed with issuance of a notice soliciting competing proposals and corresponding review and recommendation.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to accept the unsolicited proposal from Gilbane for courthouse construction in accordance with Section 3(A)1 of the city’s PPEA Guidelines for the purpose of publication and conceptual phase consideration with the exception that council directs the manager to extend the minimal 45 day publication requirement contained in paragraph 3(A)2 of the city’s PPEA Guidelines to 90 days instead of 45, in order to allow sufficient time to competing unsolicited proposes to come forward with their proposals. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; Absent: Myers

**16. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CLERK:**

Mr. Altman stated, “If I could, because I did not get a chance to do it earlier. I want to thank all of our first responders. Having been on scene this morning when they arrived that apartment was fully involved. And if it was for the courage of our fire department going in and really tackling that fire. It really could have damaged a whole lot more than just one unit. Unfortunately, we did have a loss of life and that is tragic, but as Council Member Jones indicated earlier, we have heroes that walk among us that serve our city every day. And I will add that the mom that went back in, is a hero. She is a hero because she went back in to save the child. She was burned but we are thankful.”

**17. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM CITY ATTORNEY:**

Mr. Williams stated that he has no report.

**18. ADJOURNMENT:**

The City Council adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

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Clerk of City Council

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor



# City of Petersburg

## Ordinance, Resolution, and Agenda Request

**DATE:** March 5, 2024

**TO:** The Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

**THROUGH:** March Altman, Jr., City Manager

**FROM:** Naomi Siodmok

**RE:** **2023-ZTA-02: A request to schedule a public hearing on the consideration of an ordinance to amend and readopt Article 21, Sign Regulations, to regulate and allow for sandwich board/A-frame signs. (Page 23)**

**PURPOSE:** The City of Petersburg has seen a growth of small, local businesses seeking a way to make their establishments shine. With that, sandwich board signs have been identified as a solution for small businesses to stand out, supplement existing signage, and have versatility in messaging. Currently, sandwich boards signs are illegal per the City Code. This text amendment seeks to allow sandwich board signs and regulate them.

**REASON:** Sandwich board signs are prevalent throughout the city of Petersburg, but currently are not legal per the City Ordinance. This text is proposed to support the legal continuation of sandwich board signs.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Planning Commission recommends approval.

**BACKGROUND:** Currently, Chapter 98 (Streets, Sidewalks and Other Public Spaces) Article II. Section 98-124 (a) and Appendix B. Article 21. Section 6.7 prohibit the use of sandwich board signs per the excerpts below:

Sec. 98-124 (a): No person shall place, keep or store, or exhibit or display for sale, any goods, wares or merchandise, or maintain any advertising signs, on the sidewalks of the city.

Section 6. - Prohibited signs: The following signs shall be prohibited in all districts:

6.7. All portable or nonstructural signs.

The proposed text amendment seeks to allow sandwich board signs with regulations. This proposal has gone through the Planning Commission through a work session as well as for a vote and recommendation for approval.

**COST TO CITY:** N/A

**BUDGETED ITEM:** N/A

**REVENUE TO CITY: N/A**

**CITY COUNCIL HEARING DATE: 3/5/2024**

**CONSIDERATION BY OTHER GOVERNMENT ENTITIES: N/A**

**AFFECTED AGENCIES: N/A**

**RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING ORDINANCE OR RESOLUTION: N/A**

**REQUIRED CHANGES TO WORK PROGRAMS: N/A**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Sandwich board ordinance
2. Memo Template - Copy
3. ARTICLE\_21.\_\_\_\_SIGN\_REGULATIONS

**AN ORDINANCE APPROVING TO AMEND AND READOPT ARTICLE 21, SIGN REGULATIONS, TO REGULATE AND ALLOW FOR SANDWICH BOARD/A-FRAME SIGNS.**

WHEREAS, the City of Petersburg Zoning Ordinance includes Article 21. – Sign Regulations; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of this article is to set forth regulations that govern the construction, alteration, repair, maintenance, and use of all signs, together with their appurtenant and auxiliary devices; and

WHEREAS, The City of Petersburg currently prohibits the use of all portable signs under Article 21, but is interested in defining, allowing, and regulating sandwich board signs; and

WHEREAS, the City Council seeks to allow one sandwich board sign per establishment to help small businesses stand out, allow versatility in messaging, and maintain the current character of Petersburg, which as of now exhibits sandwich board signs; and

WHEREAS, the City Council seeks to do this with requirements related to where a sign can be located, the size and material of the sign, restrictions of flashing lights and balloons on signs, and the requirement that signs be removed when the business closes; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the requirements of Title 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, as amended, this public hearing was advertised, in accordance with applicable laws.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED that City Council does hereby approve an ordinance to amend and readopt Article 21, Sign Regulations, to regulate and allow for sandwich board/a-frame signs.



## City of Petersburg

Department of Planning and Community Development

135 N Union St, Room 304

Petersburg, VA 23803

(804) 733-2308

# MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** March 2024

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** Planning Commission

**RE:** 2023-ZTA-02: A public hearing and consideration of an ordinance approving to amend and readopt Article 21, Sign Regulations, to regulate and allow for sandwich board/A-frame signs.

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**SUMMARY:** This text amendment is proposed to address the abundance of sandwich board/a-frame signs in the City of Petersburg. This amendment seeks to regulate and not eliminate sandwich board signs, which are currently not permitted within the Petersburg sign ordinance.

**BACKGROUND:** The city of Petersburg has seen a growth of small, local businesses seeking a way to make their establishments shine. With that, sandwich board signs have been identified as a solution for small businesses to stand out, supplement existing signage, and have versatility in messaging.

Currently, Chapter 98 (Streets, Sidewalks and Other Public Spaces) Article II. Section 98-124 (a) and Appendix B. Article 21. Section 6.7 prohibit the use of sandwich board signs per the excerpts below:

Sec. 98-124 (a): No person shall place, keep or store, or exhibit or display for sale, any goods, wares or merchandise, or maintain any advertising signs, on the sidewalks of the city.

Section 6. - Prohibited signs: The following signs shall be prohibited in all districts:

6.7. All portable or nonstructural signs.

The proposed text amendment seeks to allow sandwich board signs with limitations to include the following:



1. One (1) sandwich board sign may be located on a property occupied by a lawful use in any zoning district allowing commercial uses.
2. Such sign shall be located:
  - a. Within the same parcel boundaries as the business the sign advertises, OR
  - b. Within the pedestrian right-of-way ONLY when the primary face of the building is less than five (5) feet from the pedestrian right-of-way, or
  - c. Within the closest, main pedestrian right-of-way to the business establishment when a business fronts an alley.
  - d. Any sign within the pedestrian right-of-way shall allow for at least a thirty-six (36) inch wide clearance.
  - e. Sandwich board signs shall not be located in any required off-street parking space, driveway, alley, curb ramp, or fire lane.
3. The sign shall not exceed four (4) feet in height and three (3) feet in width.
4. Signs are to be constructed of plastic, metal, or other similar weather-resistant materials, and shall be maintained in a neat and orderly condition. Use of cardboard or paper shall be prohibited.
5. Signs shall not be lighted or flashing in any manner.
6. No attachments such as pennants, balloons, etc. are allowed unless otherwise permitted.
7. Sandwich board signs are only to be displayed during the business establishment's hours of operation to include additional time before and after formal operation, while businesses set-up and break-down.
8. Sandwich board signs are not subject to Chapter 98. Article III. Section 98-124 (a).

**RECOMMENDATION:** Planning Commission recommends approval of the proposed text amendments.

## ***ARTICLE 21. SIGN REGULATIONS<sup>1</sup>***

### **Section 1. Short title.**

The regulations contained in this article may be cited as the "sign ordinance."

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

### **Section 2. Purpose and intent.**

- 2.1. The purpose of this article is to set forth regulations that shall govern the construction, alteration, repair, maintenance and use of all signs, together with their appurtenant and auxiliary devices.
- 2.2. The intent of these regulations is to permit and regulate all signs, except as otherwise provided herein, in such a manner as to protect property values, promote neighborhood character and stability, ensure safety on the streets by minimizing obstruction of vision or confusion of those utilizing the streets, promote clarity in the transmission of sign information, and to facilitate the creation of an attractive and harmonious community.

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

### **Section 3. Permit required.**

A sign permit shall be required to erect, structurally alter, relocate or replace any sign within the city, except as otherwise provided herein. A separate permit shall be required for each sign.

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

#### **Section 3.1. Application.**

- A. Prior to the erection, installation, placement, or alteration of any sign, a permit application shall be submitted to the zoning administrator. Each application for such permit shall be accompanied by plans showing the dimensions of the sign, the area, and height above grade level; the proposed location of the sign, including proper sight lines, rights-of-way, streets, sidewalks, buildings, and existing signs on the premises; the methods of illumination or lighting; the method of fastening such sign; and the name and address of the sign owner and of the sign erector, including written permission of the owner, lessee, or his authorized agent of the building or land on which the sign is to be erected or placed. Except as required by the building official, it shall not be necessary for the applicant to submit drawings or renderings from a licensed professional engineer, or to submit a survey from a licensed surveyor, as part of the application.

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<sup>1</sup>Editor's note(s)—Ordinance No. 10-Ord-10, adopted March 2, 2010, amended App. A, Art. 21, to read as herein setout, revising Art. 21, Ordinance No. 91-23, adopted March 19, 1991. Former App. A, Art. 21, relative to sign regulations, derived from the original zoning ordinance adopted April 20, 1971. As amended by Ord. No. 89-55, adopted June 6, 1989.

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- B. A sign permit shall become null and void if the work for which the permit was issued has not been completed within a period of six months after the date of issuance of the permit, and there shall be no refund of any fee required by this article.

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

## Section 4. Definitions.

For the purpose of this article, and notwithstanding other provisions elsewhere in this article, certain terms and words pertaining to signs are hereby defined as follows:

- (1) *Historic area.* Historic area means an area designated by ordinance as containing buildings or places in which historic events occurred, or which have special public value because of notable architectural or other features relating to the cultural or artistic heritage of the community of such significance as to warrant conservation and preservation.
- (2) *Nonconforming sign structure.* A nonconforming sign structure shall be any lawfully erected sign structure that fails to meet current ordinance standards.
- (3) *Sign.* A sign is any structure, or part thereof, or any device attached to, painted on, or represented on a building, fence, or other structure, upon which is displayed or included any letter, word, numeral, picture, illustration or decoration, emblem, symbol or trademark, flag, banner, or pennant, or other device, figure, or character used as, or which is in the nature of, an announcement, direction, advertisement or other attention-directing device, and which is visible beyond the boundaries of the parcel of land on which the same is located.
  - a. A sign shall not include:
    1. A similar structure or device located within a building, except illuminated signs within show windows;
    2. Official court or public notices; or
    3. The painted or posted message on a properly permitted general advertising sign structure.
  - b. *Sign, abandoned.* Any accessory or business sign which no longer identifies or advertises a bona fide business, lessor, service, owner, product, or activity located, conducted, or sold on the premises upon which such sign is located, which use has been discontinued for a continuous period of two years.
  - c. *Sign, accessory or business.* A sign directing attention to a business, commodity, service or entertainment conducted, sold or offered on the same premises upon which the sign is located and not included as exemptions in section 5 of this article.
  - d. *Sign, billboard.* A general advertising sign owned or operated by a person engaged in the business of outdoor advertising licensed by the Department of Transportation 33.1-361 of the Code of Virginia.
  - e. *Sign, changeable message.* Any changeable message sign that is illuminated, stationary and constant and does not change more than once every eight seconds shall be permitted, including a billboard sign which contains electronic messaging as expressly authorized by the Code of Virginia in § 33.1-369.
  - f. *Sign, face, surface area.* The surface area of a sign shall be computed as including the entire area within a circle, semicircle, triangle, rectangle, parallelogram, or trapezoid enclosing all elements of the matter displayed, excluding frames and columns or uprights on which the sign is placed. One side of a double-faced sign, whose sign faces are parallel and are at no point more than two feet

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from one another, shall be included in the computation of total sign area; for all other signs with more than one face, each side shall be included in the computation of total sign area.

- g. *Sign, flashing.* Any sign displaying flashing or intermittent lights, changing in degrees of intensity, which constitutes a public safety or traffic hazard in the judgment of the city's traffic engineer.
- h. *Sign, freestanding or ground.* A non-movable sign supported by a fence, retaining wall or by upright structural members or braces on or in the ground and not attached to a building.
- i. *Sign, general advertising.* Any sign which directs attention to a business, commodity, service or entertainment not conducted, sold, or offered on the same premises upon which such sign is located, except a wall sign that is determined to be historic by the architectural review board. General advertising sign includes a "billboard sign" as defined in this article, however, any general advertising or billboard sign owned or operated by the city shall not be subject to the provisions of this article.
- j. *Sign, height.* The vertical distance from the average street grade or from the average lot grade of the real property upon which the sign is located, at the required minimum front setback line for signs, whichever allows for the greater height, to the highest point of the sign.
- k. *Sign, illuminated.* Any sign designed to give forth artificial light, or designed to reflect light from one or more sources of artificial light erected to provide light for the sign.
- l. *Sign, portable.* Any sign not permanently affixed to the ground nor to a building, which is designed or constructed in such manner that it can be moved or relocated without involving any structural or support changes (including a sign attached to or displayed on a vehicle that is used for the express purpose of advertising a business establishment, product or service when the vehicle is parked so as to attract the attention of motoring or pedestrian traffic).
- m. *Sign, projecting.* Any sign which is attached to and projects more than 12 inches from the face of a wall of a building.
- n. *Sign, roof.* Any sign painted, erected, or constructed upon or above the roof of a building or structure, or part thereof; any sign that projects above the intersection of the roof decking and wall face; or any sign that extends above the eave or parapet shall be deemed to be a roof sign.
- o. *Sign, sandwich board.* Portable, freestanding sign, typically in the shape of an inverted V, with two sign boards attached to each other at the top of the sign; also known as a sidewalk or A-frame sign.
- pe. *Sign, temporary.* A sign which advertises community or civic projects or special events on a temporary basis. Temporary signs for community or civic projects or special events shall be permitted only for events of public interest, e.g. fairs, carnivals, community gatherings, or other similar events.
- qp. *Sign, wall.* A sign attached to or painted on or otherwise inscribed on the outside wall of a building and supported throughout its length by such wall or building and not extending more than 12 inches from the building wall.
- rq. *Structure.* Anything constructed or erected, which requires location on the ground, or attached to something having a location on the ground, including, but not limited to, advertising signs, billboard signs, main buildings, outbuildings, fences, walls, lamp posts, light fixtures and, posterboards.
- sf. *Structural alterations.* Any change in the supporting members of a building or structure, including, but not limited to, bearing walls or partitions, columns, beams or girders, or any substantial

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change in the roof or in the exterior walls, provided that in order to be a structural alteration, the alteration shall meet the criteria otherwise provided in the Uniform Statewide Building Code.

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

## **Section 5. Exemptions.**

The following signs are exempted from the permit requirements of this article provided that they comply with all other regulations of this article; however, nothing in this section shall be construed as providing an exemption from any requirement of the Building Code:

- 5.1. One identification sign not exceeding one square foot in area and bearing only property numbers, post box numbers, names of occupants or premises, or hours of operation.
- 5.2. Signs identifying municipal or governmental buildings or buildings used for religious purposes, provided such signs are erected upon the building or land upon which such building is located and not exceed 25 feet in area.
- 5.3. Public signs of a noncommercial nature and in the interest of, erected by, or on the order of, a public officer in the performance of his public duty, such as directional signs, regulatory signs, warning signs, and informational signs.
- 5.4. Temporary real estate signs which advertise the sale, rental or lease of the premises on which such signs are displayed, provided that advertisement display area does not exceed six square feet in residential districts or 16 square feet in commercial or industrial districts. Such signs shall not be illuminated and, if freestanding, shall not be more than six feet in height.
- 5.5. Signs warning the public against trespassing, dangerous animals, swimming or the like, provided such signs do not exceed three square feet in area per sign.
- 5.6. One sign, not more than one square foot in area and not illuminated, identifying a home occupation in any and all zoning districts.
- 5.7. Not more than three construction signs, when placed at the construction site. Such signs shall not be illuminated, shall not exceed 16 square feet in area for each sign, and shall be removed within ten days following completion of construction.
- 5.8. Signs designating entrances, exits or conditions of use for parking lots. Such signs shall not exceed six square feet in area for each sign.
- 5.9. Commemorative plaques and historic markers recognized by the city.
- 5.10. Yard or garage sale signs displayed on the premises of such sale, provided that such signs shall not exceed six square feet. No such sign is permitted elsewhere and if so displayed or placed, may be removed by the city. The cost of such removal shall be charged to the occupant of the property on which the yard or garage sale is conducted.
- 5.11. Temporary agricultural or seasonal signs that promote the sale of agricultural produce and that do not exceed 12 square feet per sign on the premises on which such signs are displayed, provided such signs are removed at the end of the sales season.
- 5.12. Political campaign signs, including posters, banners, writings, pictures, paintings, lights, models, displays, emblems, notices, illustrations, insignias, symbols, and any other advertising devices, the purpose of which is to announce a referendum or the nomination or election of individuals seeking an elected public office, provided that the total area of such signs shall not exceed six square feet in a residential zone and 32 square feet in a commercial or industrial zone. These signs shall be confined with private property and shall not encroach into the visibility triangle at street intersections:

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- (a) In those situations where a final election follows a primary election, those candidates who won in the primary election may continue to display their signs during the interim period and up to ten days after the final election, at which time all political campaign signs shall be removed. Persons responsible jointly and severally for the maintenance and removal of political campaign signs are:

- (1) The candidate, spokesman or campaign committee;
- (2) The owner of the premises on which the sign is located;
- (3) The person erecting the sign; or
- (4) The person causing erection of the sign.

5.13. Sandwich board signs as defined and regulated within this article.

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

## **Section 6. Prohibited signs.**

The following signs shall be prohibited in all districts:

- 6.1. Signs which by reason of their location, position, size, shape, color, design or means of illumination may be construed as or confused with, or may interfere with, obstruct or obscure the view of all or any portion of a traffic control sign, signal, or device.
- 6.2. Signs which imitate an official sign or signal or which contain the words "stop," "go," "slow," "yield," "caution," "danger," "warning" or similar words which imply any official warning or command or which may imply the need for special actions on the part of any vehicle operator or pedestrian.
- 6.3. Any flashing sign.
- 6.4. Signs which contain or consist of pennants, ribbons, streamers, spinners, strings of light bulbs, or other similar moving devices. Pennants, flags, and banners, when not part of any sign, even if attached to the poles or other supporting elements of the sign face, however, are allowed in the B-2, General Commercial, and B-3 B, Central Commercial Districts, provided such devices are connected to a rope or wire that is attached securely at both ends or attached directly to a supporting pole; otherwise such devices, when not part of any sign, are prohibited in any district.
- 6.5. Any sign or means of sign illumination which causes glare into or upon any building other than the building to which the sign may be related.
- 6.6. Any sign affixed to, hung, placed, or painted on any other sign, cliff, tree, public utility pole, radio or television or similar tower, provided that this prohibition shall not affect official traffic, parking or informational signs placed on utility poles by the city government.
- 6.7. All portable or nonstructural signs except for sandwich board signs, which are further regulated in this article.
- 6.8. Roof signs.
- 6.9. Signs advertising activities which are illegal under federal, state, or city laws or regulations.
- 6.10. General advertising signs, except billboard signs as otherwise provided herein.

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

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## **Section 7. General regulations.**

The following regulations apply generally to all signs and are in addition to the regulations contained elsewhere in this article:

- 7.1. Structural and safety features and electrical systems shall be in accordance with the requirements of the Uniform Statewide Building Code. All signs requiring permits shall be inspected by the zoning administrator for compliance with all the requirements of this article and by the building official for compliance with the requirements of the Uniform Statewide Building Code.
- 7.2. The zoning administrator, upon application as required in this article, may issue temporary permits for the following signs and displays for a period not to exceed 30 days, when in the administrator's opinion, the use of such signs and displays would be in the public interest and would not result in damage to private property including signs advertising a special civic or cultural event such as a fair or exposition, play, concert or meeting, sponsored by a governmental, civic or charitable organization.
- 7.3. Special sales promotion displays in a district where such sales are permitted, including displays incidental to the opening of a new business.
- 7.4. No signs shall project over public right-of-way without the express written permission of the city manager, except for permitted flat signs which may so project not more than six inches.
- 7.5. The sign face of a sign which advertises an activity, business, product or service no longer produced or conducted on the premises where the sign is located may remain in place for not more than 90 days from the date of vacancy by the tenant or owner previously occupying the premises on which the sign is located. An abandoned sign structure may be removed in accordance with section 15.2-2307.

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

## **Section 8. Liability insurance.**

No sign shall be hung, kept in place, maintained or erected over any public right-of-way including streets, alleys or sidewalks within the city unless the owner or tenant of the building or structure to which such sign is, or may be, attached shall have secured and deposited with the city manager a policy of insurance against public liability and property damage, issued by some solvent insurance company licensed and duly authorized to execute such policies within the state, or a proper certificate of such insurance company showing that such owner or tenant has obtained such policy, insuring the city against liability for bodily injuries, including death, in an amount not to exceed the sum of \$250,000.00 for injury to any one person, or the sum of \$500,000.00 for injuries arising out of any one accident, and against liability for property damage in an amount not to exceed the sum of \$100,000.00 in any one accident, where such liability arises out of the erection, maintenance or presence of any such sign, or on account of any damages or injuries caused thereby. Such policy or insurance shall contain a clause obligating the company issuing the policy to give ten days' written notice to the city manager before cancellation thereof. In lieu of such policy of insurance, the owner or tenant of such building or other structure shall be permitted to enter into a bond, with surety satisfactory to the city manager, and in a form approved by the city attorney, payable to the city, with conditions therein similar to the conditions hereinbefore provided with respect to such policies of insurance.

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

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## Section 9. Permitted signs by zoning district.

The regulations set forth in this section pertain to the various types and specifications for signs expressly permitted in each designated zoning district, except for billboard signs which are addressed in section 10.14 of this article.

- 9.1. In District R-B, regulations shall be established in accordance with article 13, section 2.
- 9.2. The maximum advertising display area for accessory or business signs in the mixed use districts (MSD) shall not exceed 25 square feet.
- 9.3. In District B-1, regulations shall be established in accordance with article 14, section 6.
- 9.4. The maximum advertising display area for accessory or business signs in District B-2 shall not exceed 150 square feet.
- 9.5. The maximum advertising display area for accessory or business signs in District B-3 shall not exceed 125 square feet.
- 9.6. In Districts M-1 and M-2, sign area shall not exceed in the aggregate three square feet in area per linear foot of building frontage, such frontage shall be measured as the longest horizontal dimension of the building and which does not pass through or between any adjacent elements of same, provided, however, no such sign or signs shall exceed an aggregate total of 350 square feet in area.
- 9.7. No part of any freestanding or projecting sign shall be higher than 25 feet from grade.

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

## Section 10. ~~Intentionally blank~~Sandwich board signs.

Sandwich board signs are permitted subject to the conditions set out in this section.

1. One (1) sandwich board sign may be located on a property occupied by a lawful use in any zoning district allowing commercial uses.
2. Such sign shall be located:
  - a. Within the same parcel boundaries as the business the sign advertises, OR
  - b. Within the pedestrian right-of-way ONLY when the primary face of the building is less than five (5) feet from the pedestrian right-of-way, or
  - c. Within the closest, main pedestrian right-of-way to the business establishment when a business fronts an alley.
  - d. Any sign within the pedestrian right-of-way shall allow for at least a thirty-six (36) inch wide clearance.
  - e. Sandwich board signs shall not be located in any required off-street parking space, driveway, alley, curb ramp, or fire lane.
3. The sign shall not exceed four (4) feet in height and three (3) feet in width.
4. Signs are to be constructed of plastic, metal, or other similar weather-resistant materials, and shall be maintained in a neat and orderly condition. Use of cardboard or paper shall be prohibited.
5. Signs shall not be lighted or flashing in any manner.
6. No attachments such as pennants, balloons, etc. are allowed unless otherwise permitted.



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7. Sandwich board signs are only to be displayed during the business establishment's hours of operation to include additional time before and after formal operation, while businesses set-up and break-down.
  8. Sandwich board signs are not subject to Chapter 98. Article III. Section 98-124 (a).

## **Section 11. Signs permitted in local historic districts.**

Before any sign shall be painted, erected, or constructed in local-designated historical areas, a certificate of appropriateness shall be obtained from the architectural review board, in accordance with the provisions of article 35 of this appendix. Notwithstanding the sign regulations established herein, the architectural review board, in approving a sign, may further regulate such sign with respect to area, height, placement, materials, color, lighting, graphics, lettering or architectural styling, provided that area and height limitations established herein are not exceeded. Sandwich board signs are not subject to this review.

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

## **Section 12. Maintenance.**

12.1. All signs, including those exempt from the permit requirements of this article, together with all of their supports, braces, connections, anchors, and electrical equipment shall be maintained in good structural condition at all times. All materials used in the sign shall be kept in good condition, free of holes, rotting, peeling paint or other forms of decay. If the sign is illuminated, all lighting shall be maintained in working order and meet the standards and requirements of the Building Code. Billboard signs shall be maintained in accordance with section 10.14.6 of this chapter.

12.2. Except as otherwise provided herein, whenever a sign fails to meet the maintenance requirements, as specified in this section, or becomes structurally unsafe, or endangers the public safety, the zoning administrator or the building official shall order that such sign be properly maintained, repaired, made safe, or removed. Such order shall be complied with within ten days of receipt thereof by the person, firm or corporation owning or using the sign, or the owner of the building or premises on which such sign is affixed or erected.

12.3. The ground area around any freestanding sign shall be kept free and clean of weeds, trash and other debris.

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

## **Section 13. Nonconforming signs.**

No sign lawfully erected or placed before the effective date of Ordinance No. 91-23 which does not conform to the provisions of this article, and no sign lawfully erected or placed before the effective date of any amendment to such ordinance which does not conform to the provisions of such amendment, shall be enlarged, structurally altered, or reconstructed in any manner, except for billboard signs as otherwise provided herein. No nonconforming sign shall be moved on the same lot, however, notwithstanding any other provisions of this article including article 3, nonconforming billboard signs shall be governed by section 10.14 of this article.

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

## **Section 14. Billboard signs.**

For the purpose of section 10.14, the following terms and words pertaining to billboard signs supplement the definitions in section 10.4:

- 
- (1) "Consolidate and reconstruct" means that the applicant will demolish an existing single-faced billboard structure and combine that single-faced billboard with another single-faced billboard structure to create one double-faced billboard, which may be a monopole structure. However, there shall be no billboard stacked above another billboard, commonly referred to as a "double stack".
  - (2) "Demolition of billboard sign structure" means that the applicant will demolish an existing billboard sign structure and remove of all of the debris from the demolition site.
  - (3) "Receiving area" means the area that includes any parcel of real property that is zoned commercial or industrial, as of the date of adoption of this article and is adjacent to: (i) the main traveled way of Interstate 95 but not including any parcel of real estate located on Pocahontas Island, or (ii) Route 460 East, from Interstate 95 eastbound to the city limits but not including any parcel of real estate that is within 500 feet of a residential dwelling.
  - (4) "Relocation" means that the applicant will demolish an existing billboard sign structure in a sending area and reconstruct a new billboard sign structure in a receiving area.
  - (5) "Sending area" means any parcel of real property in the city that that is not expressly designated as being in a "receiving area".

#### 14.2. Relocation of billboard sign structures.

Billboard sign structures may be "relocated" only in accordance with this section. Applications to relocate a billboard sign structure shall be made to, and subject to approval of, the zoning administrator.

No application for relocation of a billboard sign structure shall be approved unless the applicant first applies for a demolition permit to demolish an existing billboard sign structure of equal or greater sign face area. Further, no such building permit shall be approved until the zoning administrator confirms that the demolition of the billboard sign structure designated for demolition has in fact occurred and the debris from the demolition removed from the site.

#### 14.3. Consolidation and reconstruction of billboard sign structures.

Billboard sign structures may be consolidated and reconstructed only in accordance with this section. Applications to consolidate and reconstruct shall made to, and subject to approval of, the zoning administrator.

No application for consolidation and reconstruction of a billboard sign structure shall be approved unless the applicant first applies for a demolition permit to demolish an existing billboard sign structure of equal or greater sign face area. Further, no such building permit shall be approved until the zoning administrator confirms that the demolition of the billboard sign structure designated for demolition has in fact occurred and the debris from the demolition removed from the site.

#### 14.4. Installation of changeable message sign technology.

Changeable message sign technology may be installed on a billboard sign structure only in accordance with this section. Applications to install changeable message technology shall [be] made to, and subject to approval of, the zoning administrator.

No application to install changeable message sign technology on an existing billboard in a receiving area shall be approved unless the applicant first applies for a demolition permit to demolish an existing billboard sign structure of equal or greater face sign area. Further, no such building permit shall be approved until the zoning administrator confirms that the demolition of the billboard sign structure designated for demolition has in fact occurred and the debris from the demolition removed from the site.

#### 14.5. Height and size of billboard sign structures; other provisions.

---

The maximum height of any billboard structure along Interstate 95 shall not exceed 50 feet, with the maximum height of any other billboard structure being limited to 25 feet, measured from the natural grade of the center-line of an adjacent state or federal highway.

The size of any billboard sign face shall not exceed 675 square feet. No billboard sign structure shall be located closer than 100 feet to an entrance or exit ramp on Interstate 95, measured in accordance with Virginia Department of Transportation standards. Further, no billboard sign structure shall be located less than 500 feet apart on the same side of the road.

All billboard signs in sending areas shall remain nonconforming. Billboard signs in receiving areas on property zoned for commercial or industrial as of the date of adoption of this article shall be conforming and a permitted use. Changeable message sign technology shall be permitted only on conforming billboard sign structures.

**14.6. Maintenance and repair; condemnation.**

Billboard sign structures shall be maintained in good repair. Such maintenance and repair shall be governed by the Code of Virginia and the regulations of the Virginia Department of Transportation. In the event of condemnation, the owner of the billboard shall relocate the billboard on the same parcel of real property at no expense to the condemner.

**14.7. Building permits required.**

No alteration (as defined by the Building Code) to an existing billboard or relocation of a billboard shall occur without obtaining a building permit as provided herein.

**14.8. Permitting process.**

A billboard sign visible from the main traveled way of the right-of-way of any highway within the city classified as a part of the national system of interstate highways, shall not be erected except in conformance with title 33.1, chapter 7 of the Code of Virginia, entitled "Outdoor advertising in sight of public highways". However, no city permit shall be issued until such time as an outdoor advertising permit approved by the Virginia Department of Transportation is presented to the zoning administrator; and provided further, that the requirements of this section are met.

**14.9. Compliance with state and federal laws and regulations.**

Billboard signs shall comply at all times with applicable state and federal laws and regulations for traffic safety.

(Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)

## **Section 15. Removal of signs.**

Except as otherwise provided herein for billboard signs, the zoning administrator may order the removal of any sign erected or maintained in violation of this article. Upon determination of such violation, the zoning administrator may give 30 days' written violation notice, by certified mail, to the owner of such sign, or of the building, structure or premises upon which such sign is located if the owner of the sign is not identified, to remove the sign or to bring it into compliance with applicable regulations. If the owner or person notified of the violation fails to remove or alter the sign to comply with the applicable requirements of this article within the 30 days, the zoning administrator shall cause such sign to be removed or brought into compliance at the cost of the owner or person notified of the violation. Removal of sign shall mean the dismantling and removal from premises of all signs, embellishments, and structures designed specifically to support such sign. This process described herein also is applicable to abandoned signs.

(Ord. No. 91-23, 3-19-1991; Ord. No. 10-10, § 1, 3-2-2010)



# City of Petersburg

## Ordinance, Resolution, and Agenda Request

**DATE:** March 5, 2024

**TO:** The Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

**THROUGH:** March Altman, Jr., City Manager

**FROM:** Brian Moore

**RE:** **A Communication / Special Report Request to Present the Petersburg Downtown Plan via Interface Studio. (Page 38)**

---

**PURPOSE:** To provide City Council with a presentation of the Petersburg Downtown Plan.

**REASON:** To present, to the City of Petersburg, the Downtown Master Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION:** For the City of Petersburg to accept Interface Studio's submission of the Petersburg Downtown Plan.

**BACKGROUND:** The City of Petersburg entered into an agreement with Interface Studio to develop a Downtown Master Plan that includes an Advisory Committee comprised of area Stakeholders and Business Owners in the Downtown area.

**COST TO CITY:** N/A

**BUDGETED ITEM:** N/A

**REVENUE TO CITY:** N/A

**CITY COUNCIL HEARING DATE:** 3/5/2024

**CONSIDERATION BY OTHER GOVERNMENT ENTITIES:** N/A

**AFFECTED AGENCIES:** City Manager, Economic Development

**RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING ORDINANCE OR RESOLUTION:** N/A

**REQUIRED CHANGES TO WORK PROGRAMS:** N/A

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. DRAFT\_PetersburgDowntownPlan\_Report\_022124



Draft



# Petersburg

## Downtown Plan

February 2024



# Executive Summary

The *Petersburg Downtown Plan* is the result of a community-driven process that unfolded over the course of 2023. Looking ahead to 2040, the plan will guide the next 15 plus years of growth and change, development and preservation within Downtown and the Downtown community.

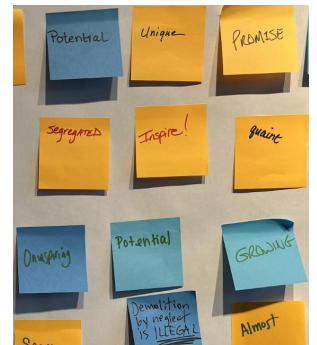
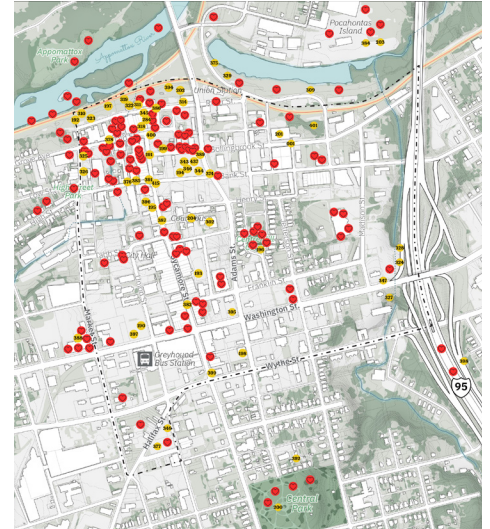
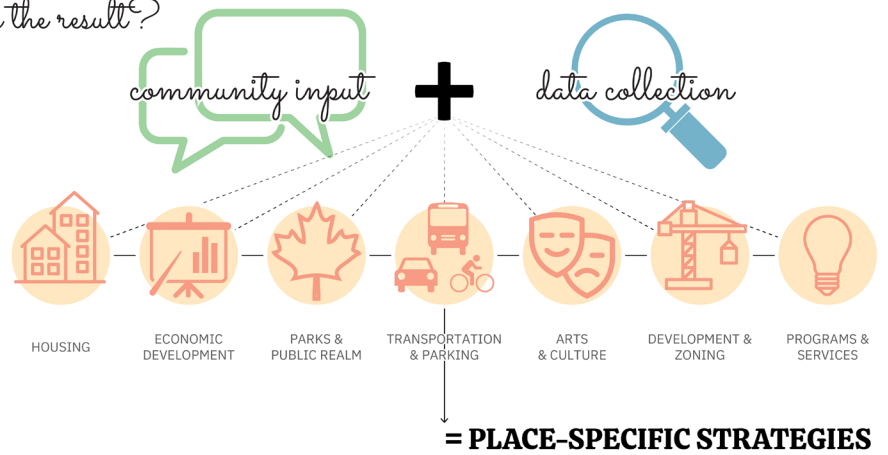
The City of Petersburg Department of Economic Development led the planning process for the City, in coordination with the Mayor and City Council, the City Manager and other City agencies, and a range of committed partners and citizen stakeholders, among them Downtown residents and business owners, community-based organizations, non-profits, property owners, developers, and other champions of Downtown. Over 400 different people shared their time and thoughts throughout the process.

Developed during the same time frame as the City's new Comprehensive Plan, *Petersburg Next*, this district-specific plan for Petersburg's historic urban core is an opportunity to demonstrate how the ideas and overarching direction of the Comprehensive Plan touch the ground in Downtown, at once the central business district, a walkable neighborhood, a hub of community, and a destination for visitors who travel from near and far. Serving a range of diverse functions and a diverse community, the *Petersburg Downtown Plan* grapples with a range of important issues from economic development and housing to design and preservation; history and narrative; walkability, sustainability, and inclusivity; parking, parks, and programming.

As the *Petersburg Downtown Plan* shifts its focus from planning to implementation, this plan provides a road map to inspire change, raise funds, direct public spending, and support lasting partnerships -- all ingredients necessary to make visible, tangible (and less-tangible, but no less important) improvements in Downtown over the coming years. The plan includes 29 strategies, organized by five key goals that support the community's shared vision for investment in Downtown's properties, public realm, and people. Some of the strategies are lower cost and can be accomplished in the near term, while others are complex and costly and will require time, significant resources, and coordination between the City, its partners, private property owners, and engaged business owners, residents, and volunteers.

With the plan now complete, the real work of bringing it to life begins, but armed with a shared vision and shared sense of direction and purpose, Downtown Petersburg is poised to work together toward common goals.

## WHAT GOES INTO A PLAN? and what is the result?



Images from June 7, 2023 Public Visioning Event

# Acknowledgments

Many thanks to all who attended a public event, completed the survey, participated in an interview, served on the Advisory Committee, and otherwise lent their time and thoughts to help shape the *Petersburg Downtown Plan*. Your voices and vision punctuate the pages of this plan.

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Heather Barrar, **Friends of the Lower Appomattox River**

Joseph Battison, **Developer**

Cheryl Brown, **OTEX Media**

Richard Cuthbert, **River Street Market, Main Street Petersburg**

Ella Dickinson, **City of Petersburg, Main Street Petersburg**

Ray Ferguson, **Escape Old Towne, Southern Virginia Regional Chamber of Commerce**

Demetrius Frazier, **Resist Booksellers**

Marlo Green, **CPA, Developer**

Ebony Leach, **Shotz from the Heart**

Kelli Parker, **Tri-Cities Habitat for Humanity**

DJ Payne, **Wabi Sabi**

Dave McCormack, **Waukeshaw Development**

Paula Mims, **At The Globe, Resident**

Ken Prichett, **Realtor, Centre Hill Resident**

Kristopher Russell, **106 Ktchn & Mrkt**

Tiara Russell, **Haus on Market**

Cynthia Taylor, **M&T Bank**

Sergei Troubetzkoy, **Main Street Petersburg**

Nick Walker, **Roslyn Farms Corporation**

Joanne Williams, **City of Petersburg, Director of Communications**

Dr. Sarah Melissa Witiak, **VSU, Centre Hill Resident**





## **CLIENT**

### **City of Petersburg**

#### **Department of Economic Development**

Brian Moore, Director

Shalonda Venable-Royster, Project Manager

## **CONSULTANT TEAM**

### **Interface Studio**

*Urban Design & Planning*

Scott Page

Mindy Watts, AICP

Jamie Granger

Hongyi Li

### **Monteverde Engineering & Design Studio**

*Traffic Engineering & Public Realm Design*

Seth Roderick

Jonathan Ernest

### **Merritt Chase**

*Landscape Architecture*

Nina Chase

Danica Liongson

### **Ninigret Partners**

*Market Analysis & Strategy*

Kevin Hively

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# Introduction

## PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Cities, and the downtown districts and neighborhoods they comprise, are dynamic -- they change over time, influenced by factors big and small: environmental features, economic trends, warfare, disease, weather patterns, and the movement of goods and people, as well as the energy of everyday citizens and leaders. Downtown Petersburg has been shaped over time by these macro events and trends and the efforts of local movers and shakers. Today, these forces remain in play, and at this point in Downtown's unfolding future, City leadership identified the need for a "visionary, creative, and reality-based Downtown Plan," one that reckons with past challenges and hardships and builds upon the assets and potential that exist today.

Indeed, strong and economically vibrant cities have strong downtowns, and great downtowns evolve and thrive with careful planning and public input. With historic Downtown Petersburg experiencing a steady resurgence in interest and investment that began in 2000, slowed briefly during the COVID-19 pandemic, but now continues, the City's Department of Economic Development commissioned this plan to chart the next 15 years of growth and change in Downtown, asking:

- **How do we maintain the essence of Petersburg, especially its historic significance and charm?**
- **How do we establish and maintain an attractive, inviting, and walkable downtown?**
- **What is needed to fill vacant storefronts, enhance the economic vitality of Downtown, and support entrepreneurs?**
- **How do we leverage our assets?**
- **How do we connect to the Appomattox River?**
- **And what are the appropriate incentives and strategies to drive the investment and change Petersburg wants and needs?**

To answer these questions, the plan must blend research and data on Downtown's past and present with community priorities for change. Downtowns succeed by welcoming everyone, and at the outset of this plan, the City called for an inclusive, community-driven process. Anyone who lives, works, worships, studies, invests, hangs out, passes through, used to visit, thinks about, cares about, and/or is curious to learn about Downtown Petersburg was invited to participate in the planning process.

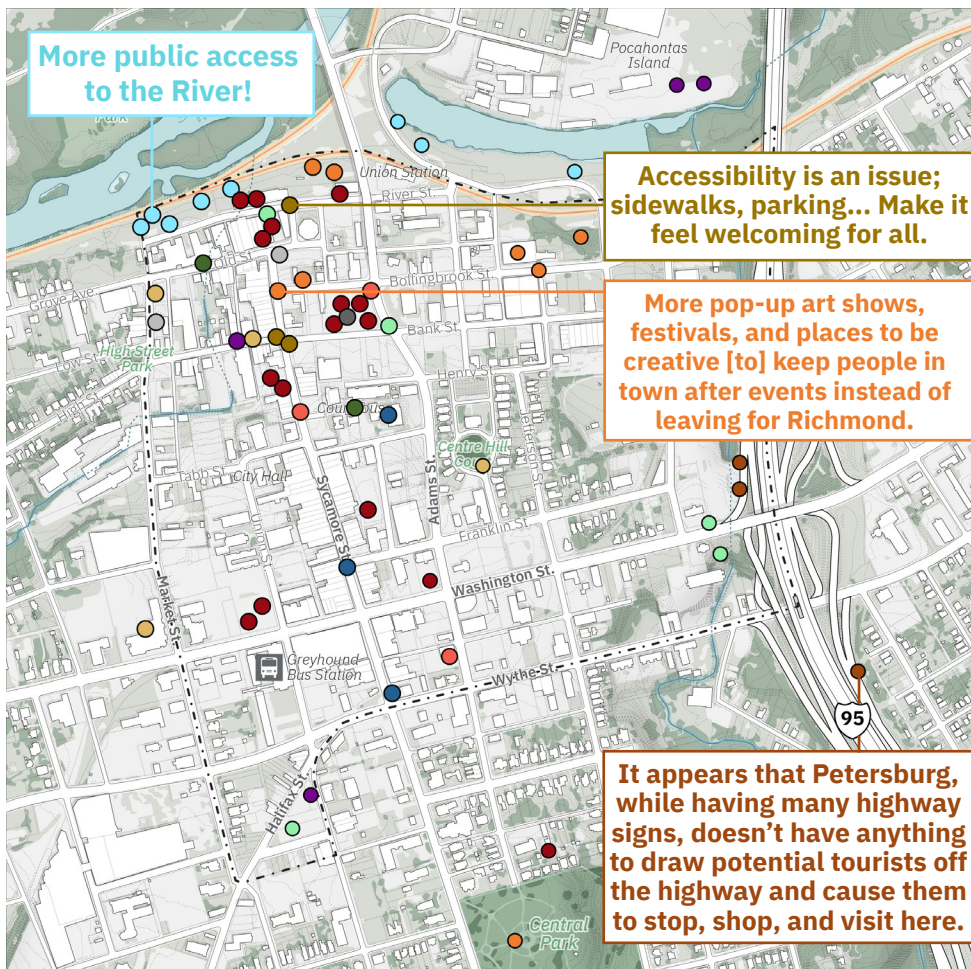
To ensure that the plan would echo the values, voices, and vision of residents, business owners, community organizations, cultural and religious institutions, elected officials, and community leaders, the planning team created multiple opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests to help shape the plan, including:

- **Five meetings with a 20-person Advisory Committee**
- **30 one-on-one or small group interviews**
- **Two public visioning events with over 150 in attendance**, and a
- **Downtown survey offered in person and online with over 320 participants**

Now that the plan is done, it can serve as a useful tool for aligning priorities for Downtown with other initiatives in the City and region, for evaluating decisions, projects and proposals against a shared vision for the future, for fundraising, for fostering partnerships, and for guiding the efforts and energy of this generation of Downtown advocates, investors, entrepreneurs, and stewards. Despite the current momentum and interest within Downtown and in Petersburg more generally, there is real work ahead to assemble the resources and sustain the level of commitment and investment necessary to fully restore Petersburg's historic Downtown.

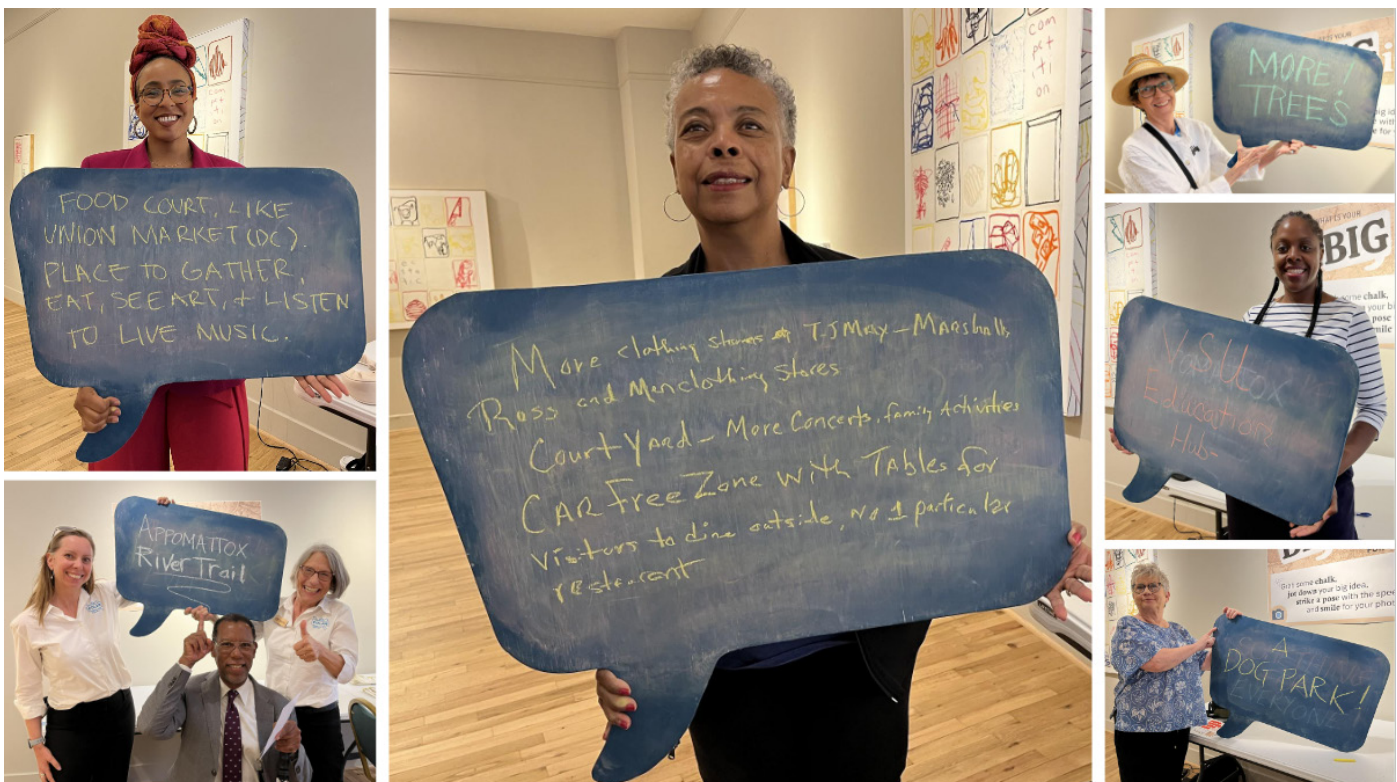
This plan can and should help focus investments and identify a series of achievable, smaller projects that together build toward a cohesive vision. Such early action steps can and really must be implemented in the near-term to maintain the momentum and excitement brewing Downtown and build capacity and a track record of accomplishments that shift the dominant narrative surrounding Downtown, thereby expanding the audience and continuing to improve the experience of all who live, work, and play in this special place.





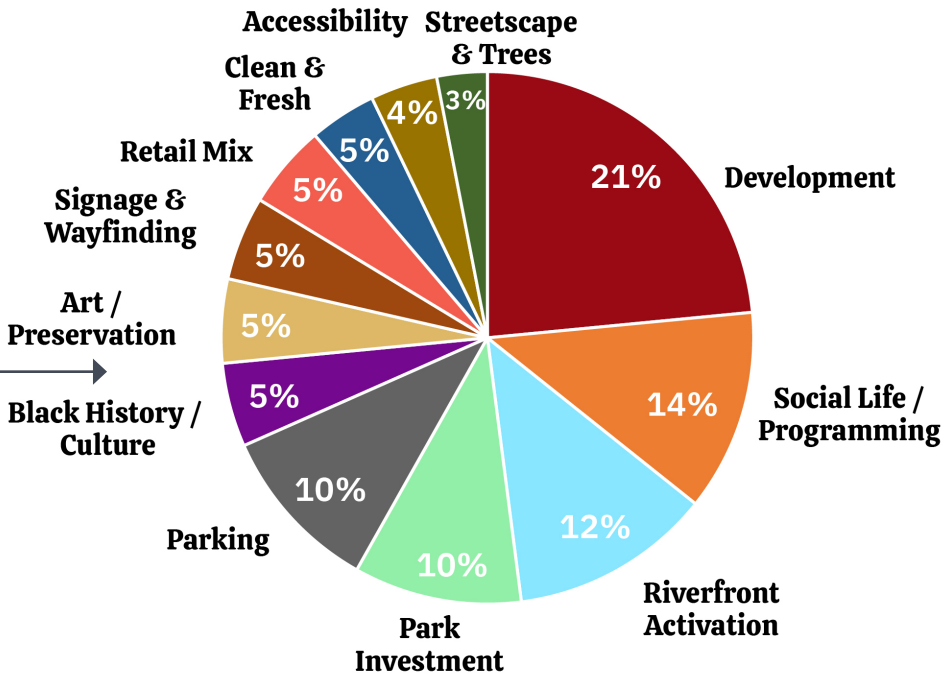
## Comments from Collaborative Map

The collaborative map received more than 60 ideas and insights from the community



Photos from June Public Visioning Event that capture attendees and their One BIG Idea for Downtown

The Downtown Plan's vision and strategies reflect the community's input throughout the planning process.

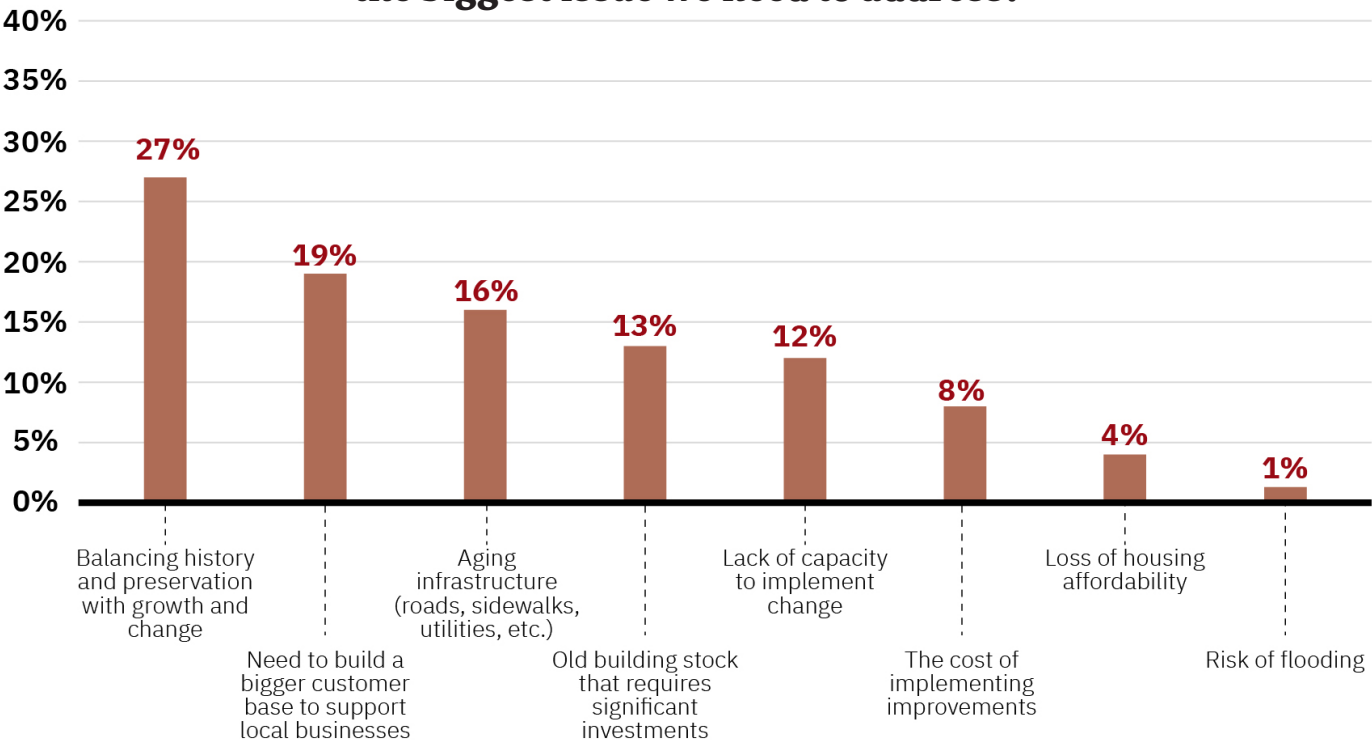


Collaborative Map Topic Areas



Photos from June Public Event

### When you think about the future of Downtown, what is the biggest issue we need to address?



Sample of Input from the Community Survey



**Figure 1. Downtown Study Area**

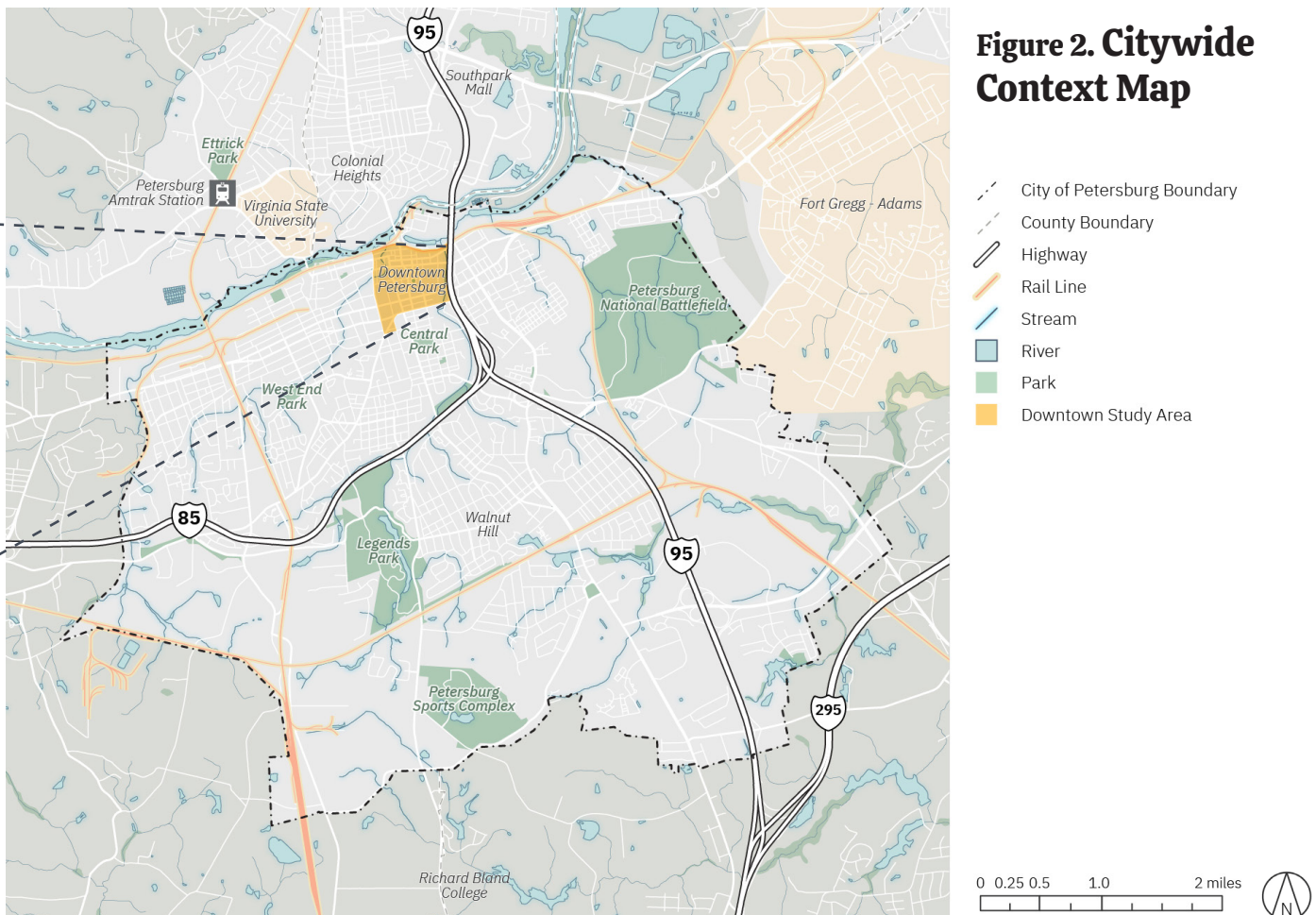


## DEFINING DOWNTOWN

The study area for the Downtown Plan covers the area from the Appomattox River to the north down to Wythe and Halifax streets to the south, and from Market Street on the west over to the I-95 corridor to the east. Downtown is the historic heart of Petersburg, home to 2,000 residents, over 50 small, local businesses, and over 1,600 jobs.



**Figure 2. Citywide Context Map**



Just a third of a square mile in size, Downtown is located in close proximity to major institutions, attractions, and infrastructure corridors, big and small, all of which contribute to the Downtown community and have the potential to increase Downtown’s customer base.

- Virginia State University, Virginia’s first Historically Black College and University, with a student body population of approximately 5,400, is just one mile away, on the north side of the Appomattox River in Colonial Heights.
- The Petersburg National Battlefield managed by the National Park Service is 2.5 miles to the east of Downtown, drawing an estimated 180,000 visits each year.<sup>1</sup>
- The military base at Fort Gregg-Adams is just beyond the city limits, roughly five miles east of Downtown, with a population just shy of 10,000 service members in training as quartermasters to meet the US Army’s logistical missions.
- The I-95/I-85 interchange provides vehicular connections to the north and south, bringing between 47,000 and 111,000 vehicles a day in each direction past historic Downtown Petersburg and providing a fast path to Virginia’s capital city of Richmond.<sup>2</sup>
- Amtrak’s Petersburg Station is just 2.5 miles from the heart of Downtown, on the far side of VSU’s campus, providing convenient access by train to cities up and down the eastern seaboard, and
- The Appomattox River Trail, currently under construction, and planned Fall Line Trail will offer beautiful and natural bicycle and pedestrian connections between Downtown and other destinations in the region.

<sup>1</sup> National Park Service Visitor Data Sets, 2022 (<https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/Park/PETE>)

<sup>2</sup> VDOT Average Daily Traffic Volume, 2022

# DOWNTOWN PLANNING IN CONTEXT

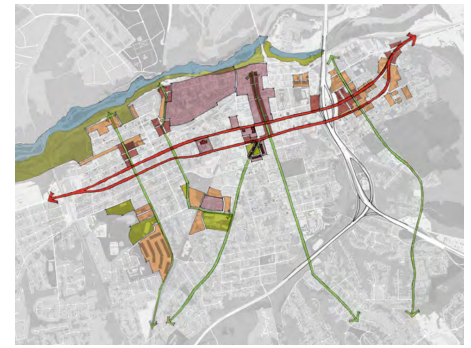
Until now, Petersburg has never had a plan focused solely on Downtown, though prior planning efforts and studies have touched ground in Downtown in different ways. In setting a new vision for Downtown, it is important to revisit past plans, align with ongoing initiatives, and seek ways to complement investments and opportunities on the horizon. The Petersburg Downtown Plan takes all of the following into consideration, for inspiration and coordination:

## Past Plans

- In 2007, volunteers of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) participated in a four-day **Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT)** charrette focused on the same Downtown study area as this plan. Named the **Re-envisioning Petersburg Together Plan**, the resulting plan developed urban strategies and sketches to illustrate the redevelopment potential of the different districts within the Downtown; many of the ideas remain relevant today.
- The **2007 Strategic Investment Plan** developed visions for the redevelopment and infill of four pockets of Petersburg with high concentrations of vacant properties, the Halifax Triangle and adjacent neighborhood fabric immediately south of Downtown among them.
- The **2009 Petersburg National Battlefield Boundary Adjustment Study** evaluated the possibility of including South Side Depot (located at 37 River Street in Downtown Petersburg) in the park boundary due to the significant role it played in Confederate logistics during the siege of Petersburg in 1864-1865. While the boundary expansion did not move forward, the City has invested American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to restore the structure and add modern restroom facilities, and conversations remain ongoing about the possibility of establishing a visitors center inside with some degree of presence or partnership from the National Park Service (NPS).

## Ongoing Initiatives

- **Petersburg Next: Our Plan for a Bright Future** is the new citywide comprehensive plan for the City, developed through a community process that unfolded during the same time frame as the Petersburg Downtown Plan. With recommendations on Economic Development; Housing & Neighborhoods; Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation; Community Facilities & Infrastructure; Safety; Natural Environment; Mobility & Transportation; and Future Land Use, there is much overlap between these two concurrent plans. The Alignment Table on page 86 charts alignment between the Downtown Plan and the new comprehensive plan, demonstrating that implementation of this plan's recommendations will provide ample opportunities to advance the goals and objectives of *Petersburg Next*.
- **Partnership for Petersburg** is an effort launched in August 2022 by Governor Glenn Youngkin in coordination with Petersburg Mayor Sam Parham to effect comprehensive change and catalyze comprehensive investment in the City of Petersburg. With a goal of channeling state resources to support local initiatives in education, health, safety, commerce, transportation, and community partnerships, the effort names revitalizing Downtown Petersburg as one of its key initiatives.
- **Main Street Petersburg** is a community-based organization committed to supporting the preservation and development of Downtown Petersburg as a premier destination for diverse



Images from 2007 Strategic Investment Plan

Ongoing Plans  
and Studies



Ongoing  
Initiatives



tourism, rich culture, and a strong community. Main Street Petersburg is currently seeking Main Street designation through Virginia Main Street, which would open doors to additional resources and technical assistance to support ongoing community and economic development programming in the historic downtown.

- The **Appomattox River Trail** is a 25-mile east-west trail currently under construction that will connect six communities flanking the Appomattox River as it reaches the confluence of the James River. Spearheaded by Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR), this “blueway-greenway” includes bicycle and pedestrian paths, riverside parks, historical sites, and riverfront access points, with Downtown Petersburg located at the mid-way point. The two-mile segment that winds through Downtown Petersburg from Patton Park to Pocahontas Island is shovel-ready and partially funded.
- The **Fall Line Trail** is a new 43-mile multi-use north-south trail currently under development that will extend from Petersburg north to

Ashland, Virginia. The southernmost trailhead will be in Patton Park, just a half-mile from Downtown, where it will intersect with the Appomattox River Trail, bringing yet more active recreation enthusiasts and tourists to and through the area.

- The **STARS (Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions) Study** examining the I-95/I-85 interchange will evaluate a suite of improvements to the I-95 corridor as it passes by Downtown Petersburg, including the feasibility of converting Washington and Wythe Streets from one-way thoroughfares to two-way corridors that provide safer, multi-modal access to and from Downtown.
- With aged infrastructure and low-lying areas, portions of Petersburg experience localized flooding when it rains. The 2023 **Citywide Drainage Study** is an effort to map the City’s storm sewer system, model its stormwater management capacity, and inform future planning and design efforts to mitigate flooding by improving drainage and upgrading the system.



# DOWNTOWN YESTERDAY

Downtown is steeped in history, which is visible at every turn in cobblestone streets and historic structures, a point of pride, and a major draw for visitors.

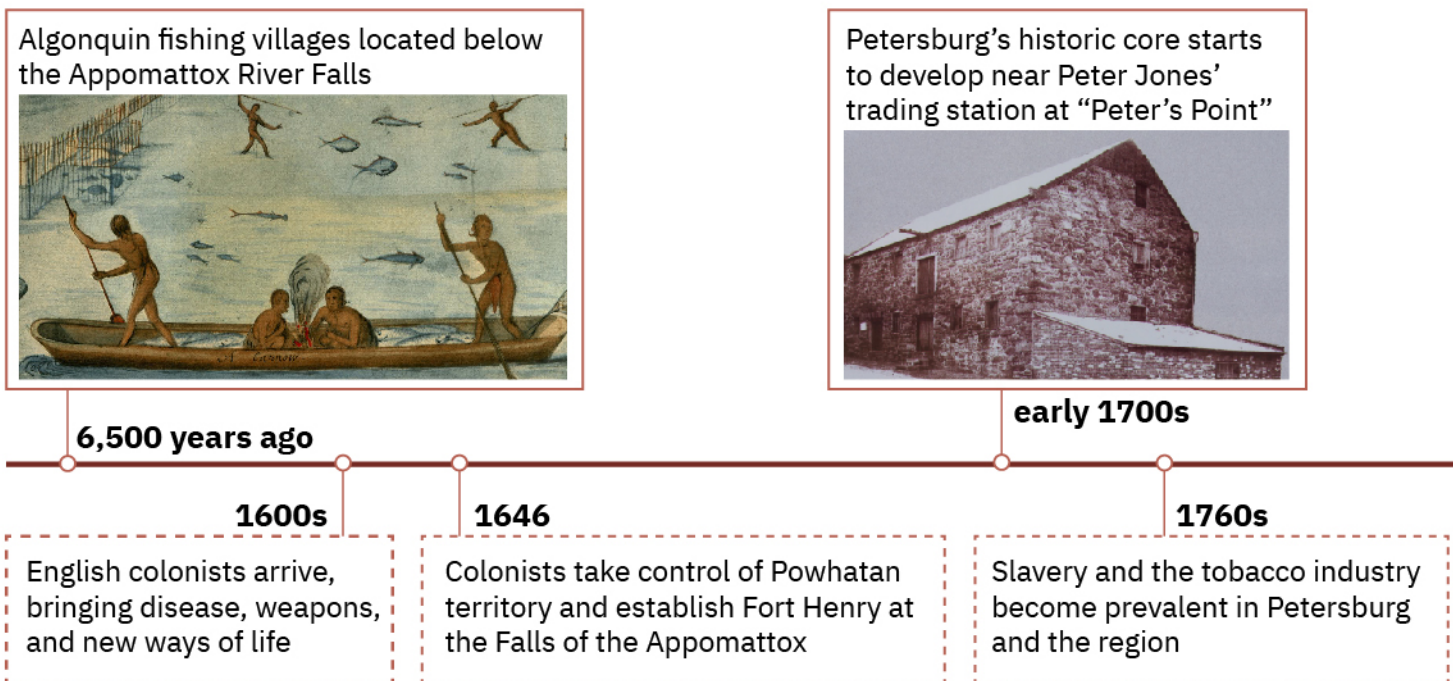
The area, situated on the banks of the tidal Appomattox River, which feeds into the James River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean beyond, was home to Indigenous people dating back at least 15,000 years. Evidence of seasonal fishing villages located below the Falls has been dated to 6,500 years, and those Algonquin settlements allied in the coastal Powhatan chiefdom existed into the 1600s,<sup>3</sup> when English colonists arrived, bringing disease, new weaponry, and new ways of life, ultimately taking control of Powhatan territory, and eventually establishing Fort Henry at the Falls of the Appomattox in 1646.

Around this site, Petersburg’s historic core developed, fueled by a robust Indian trade into the early 1700s; the city’s namesake, Peter Jones operated the trading station at “Peter’s Point,” the ruins of which remain visible at the intersection of

Old and Market streets today.<sup>4</sup> By the 1700s, the tobacco industry had taken root in the southern colonies, along with the brutal practice of slavery. By the 1760s one-third of tobacco exported from Virginia passed through an inspection station in Petersburg, as did high numbers of enslaved people sold by Petersburg’s slave traders after having survived the Middle Passage from Africa to the colonies.

Following the American Revolution, development of Downtown and near neighborhoods continued, and the Town of Petersburg incorporated in 1784. Large numbers of formerly enslaved Africans, freed for religious reasons, remained in Petersburg, forming the largest proportion of free African Americans of any American city before the Civil War; in 1860, more than half of Petersburg’s population was Black, and one-third were free.<sup>5</sup> Pocahontas Island, across the River from Downtown Petersburg, became the first majority free Black settlement in Virginia.

Figure 3. Historic Timeline



<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native\\_American\\_tribes\\_in\\_Virginia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_tribes_in_Virginia)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.historicpetersburg.org/>

While tobacco remained king, the region's economy evolved over time from trade and agriculture to include manufacturing, driven by the water power of the Falls that activated cotton mills and iron foundries among other commercial uses. New transportation routes -- both roadways and rail -- supported the movement of goods and materials. The City of Petersburg incorporated in 1850, and in the coming Civil War, Petersburg's transportation infrastructure, which funneled supplies to the Confederate capital in Richmond, drew General Grant's attention. In 1864, Union forces led by Grant attempted to capture the city. The bloody four-day Battle of Petersburg was followed by a 10-month siege of the City defined by trench warfare between Union and Confederate soldiers and the resulting loss of life, buildings, and disruption of the Downtown economy. Richmond, meanwhile, grew in strength, absorbing many of Petersburg's most important businesses and wealth.

Following the Civil War, during the tumultuous years of Reconstruction, Black voters in Petersburg successfully elected Black state delegates to

rewrite the Commonwealth's constitution and enact progressive legislation that included the creation of Virginia State University a stone's throw from Downtown.

*Black Virginians began reconstructing their own lives at the first opportunity. They founded their own churches and benevolent organizations, reconstituted their families, and started businesses. In many ways, these quiet, non-political actions were the most enduring acts during Reconstruction.*<sup>6</sup>

By the end of the 1800s, however, Jim Crow laws had legalized racial segregation and re-codified discrimination at the state level. Downtown establishments along Sycamore Street and elsewhere catered to white residents, while The Avenue (today known as the Halifax Triangle bound by South Avenue, Halifax Street, and Harrison Street) became Petersburg's Black business district, where Black businesses served Black residents and a bustling social scene emerged.<sup>7</sup>

City of Petersburg incorporates;  
Pocahontas Island becomes first  
majority free Black settlement in VA



**1850-1860**

Civil War; four-day battle and 10-month siege  
of the City of Petersburg



**1864**

**1784**

Town of Petersburg incorporates,  
following the Revolutionary War

**after 1865**

Years of Reconstruction;  
Black state delegates elected  
to rewrite Virginia constitution

**late 1800s**

Jim Crow laws legalize racial  
segregation and re-codify  
discrimination

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pocahontas\\_Island](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pocahontas_Island)

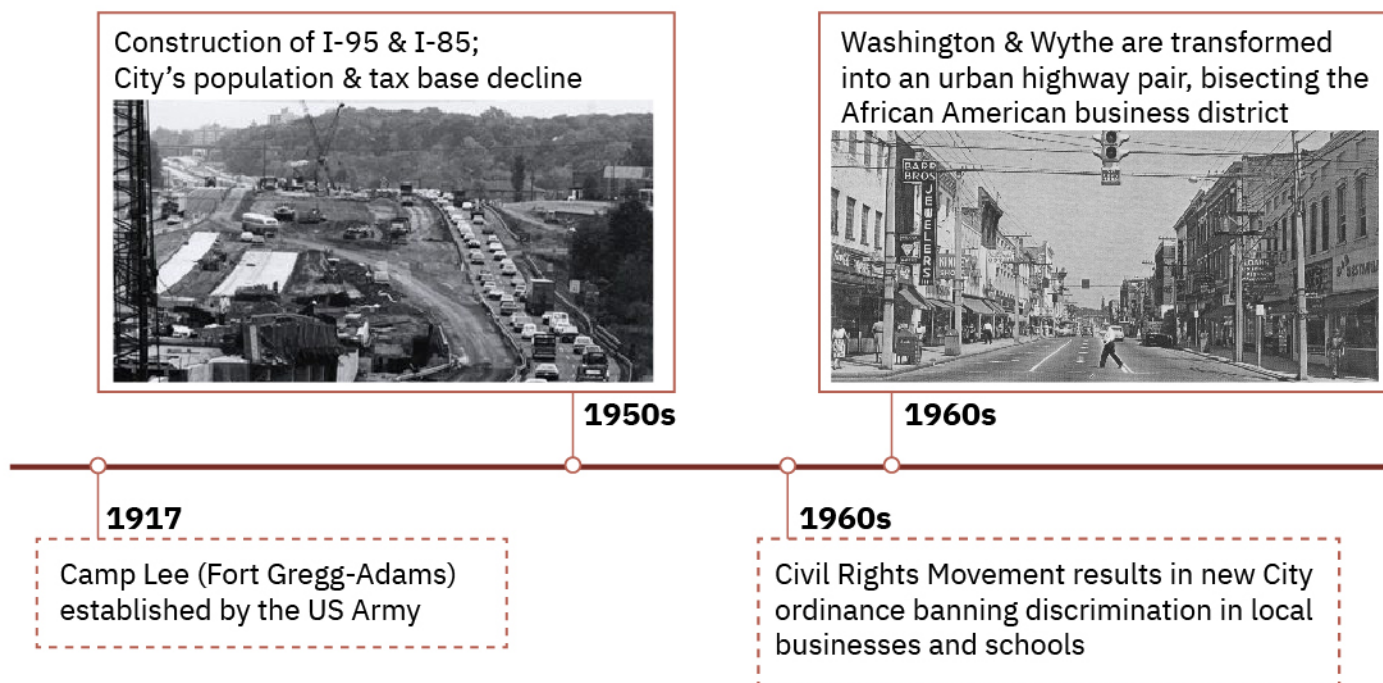
<sup>6</sup> <https://reconstructingvirginia.richmond.edu/overview>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.progress-index.com/story/news/2022/02/24/avenue-harlem-south-petersburg-what-like/6898258001/>

Camp Lee, which became Fort Lee and is now known as Fort Gregg-Adams, was established by the US Army in 1917, as the United States entered World War I. It served as a recruit training facility for tens of thousands, and Downtown became a destination for off-duty soldiers, drawn by entertainment, both on stage and off. Following World War II, Petersburg, like many Downtown and cities across the nation, began to experience an outflux of its middle-class residents. The construction of I-95 and I-85 in the 1950s provided new access to new suburbs beyond the city limits, and the City's population and tax base declined.

As the Civil Rights movement grew in strength in the 1960s, movement leaders conducted many sit-ins at Downtown Petersburg businesses, which ultimately resulted in a new City ordinance banning discrimination in commercial establishments and the eventual integration of the public schools. Meanwhile, the ongoing suburbanization of the nation and commercial and job centers continued to draw people and resources out of Petersburg's historic Downtown. Businesses closed, jobs were lost, and in time, buildings demolished and replaced with surface parking. The City and state transformed Washington and Wythe into a one-way urban highway pair that bisected the African American business district from the rest of Downtown.

**Figure 3. Historic Timeline, continued**





Concerned about decades of disinvestment and loss, Downtown champions and historic preservation advocates began work to counterbalance or counteract a wholesale redevelopment of the historic downtown fabric. The Historic Petersburg Foundation formed in 1967 and led the effort to create numerous National Historic Districts in the downtown area to protect the building stock in Downtown Petersburg. The Appomattox Iron Works returned to life with artists and small businesses filling its cavernous structure, branding the area Old Towne, and seeding a new style of revitalization centering on the area's history and historic charm.

A devastating 1993 tornado disrupted the forward progress, tearing a path of destruction through Downtown and Pocahontas Island, but this disaster catalyzed targeted investment, and by 2000, Downtown began to re-emerge as a regional destination for local restaurants, arts, and culture. The adaptive reuse of historic buildings for apartments followed, breathing new life into many formerly industrial and mixed use structures, even while the City experienced new levels of economic hardship.

A devastating tornado tears a path of destruction through Downtown and Pocahontas Island



1993

Downtown begins to re-emerge as a regional destination for local restaurants, arts, and culture



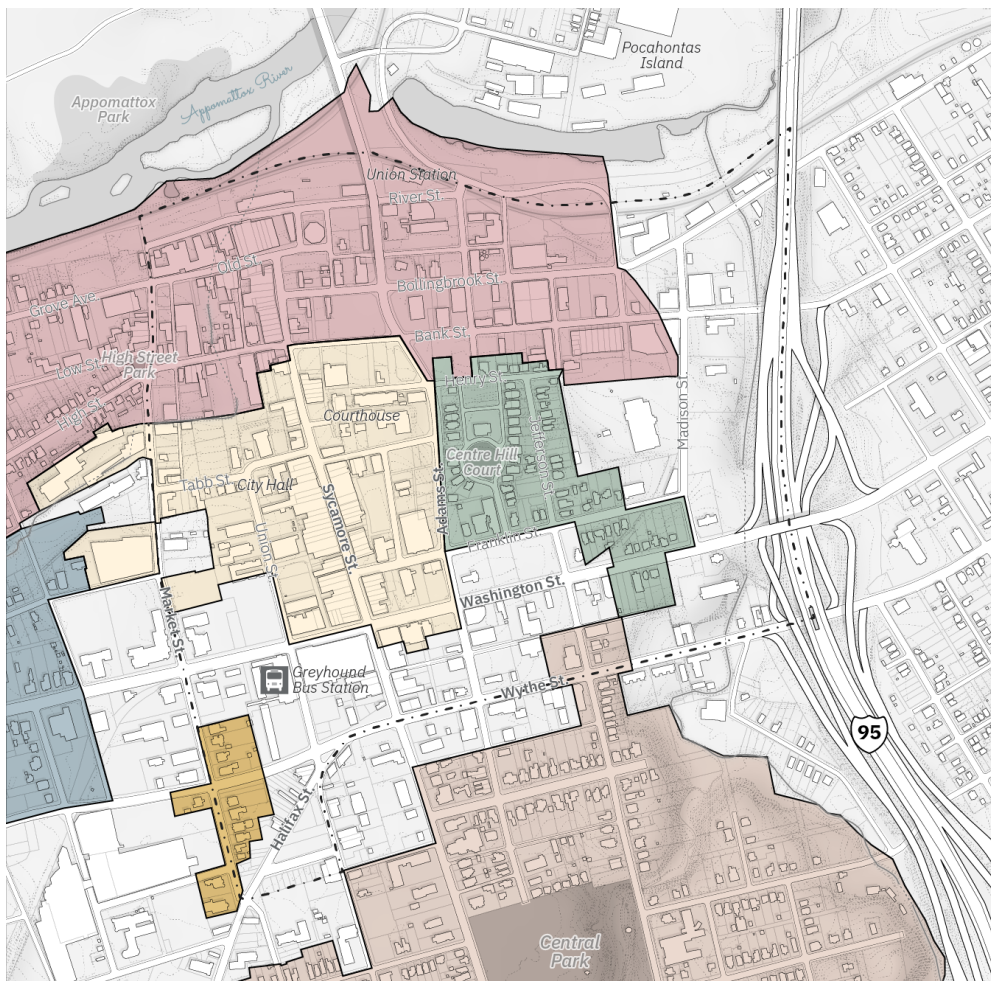
2000-present

1967

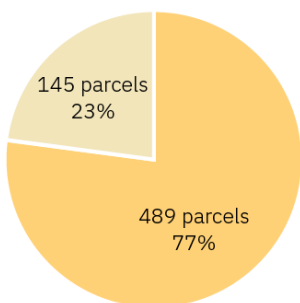
The Historic Petersburg Foundation forms and creates National Historic District in Downtown

1970-1980

The Appomattox Iron Works returns to life with artists and small businesses, branding the area Old Towne

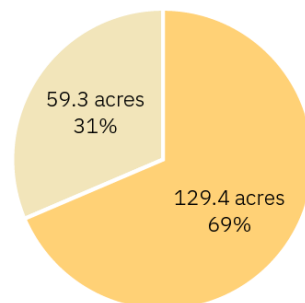


**Percentage of Downtown  
Parcels in Historic Districts**



■ Total parcels in Historic District  
■ Total parcels outside Historic District

**Percentage of Downtown  
Parcel Area in Historic Districts**



■ Total Area of parcels in Historic District  
■ Total Area of parcels outside Historic District

*We need to highlight  
our history while still  
transcending, being  
innovative.*

- quote from interview

Today, 77% of Downtown properties are located within one of five historic districts, mainly the Old Towne, Courthouse, and Centre Hill Historic Areas, with smaller pockets falling within the South Market Street Historic Area and Poplar Lawn Historic Area, and while vacancy--in the form of both empty structures and underutilized land--remains prevalent, so too is the desire to preserve and rebuild.



# DOWNTOWN TODAY

Though the shut-downs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic presented new challenges for downtowns worldwide, Downtown Petersburg maintained an impressive continuity of business operations by closing portions of Sycamore Street to cars and inviting people to come together to meet and eat outdoors, served by and in support of local restaurants. Today, new restaurants and shops continue to open their doors in Downtown, additional apartments are planned, a boutique hotel is under construction, and a \$130 million mixed use development is in design in conjunction with a new courthouse complex and City Hall.<sup>8</sup> And yet there is much more room and need for change. Nearly one-third of Downtown's parcel area is dedicated to surface parking, and three out of five developed properties along Sycamore Street have vacant storefronts.



*Croaker's Spot restaurant interior, Demolition Coffee outdoor seating, Resist Bookseller's window display*



*View looking north on Sycamore Street*

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.wtvr.com/news/local-news/petersburg-plans-april-12-2023>







At once the seat of local government, central business district, a walkable neighborhood, a hub of community, and a destination for tourists and locals alike, Downtown has much potential but also a range of competing needs.

The balance of this chapter presents key take-aways from the analysis of existing conditions in Downtown. Going forward, the Petersburg Downtown Plan will help the City and its partners respond to and navigate the present-day issues and opportunities described on the following pages.



*Public Library mosaic of iconic Downtown buildings, photos of Downtown housing, businesses, and community gathering places*

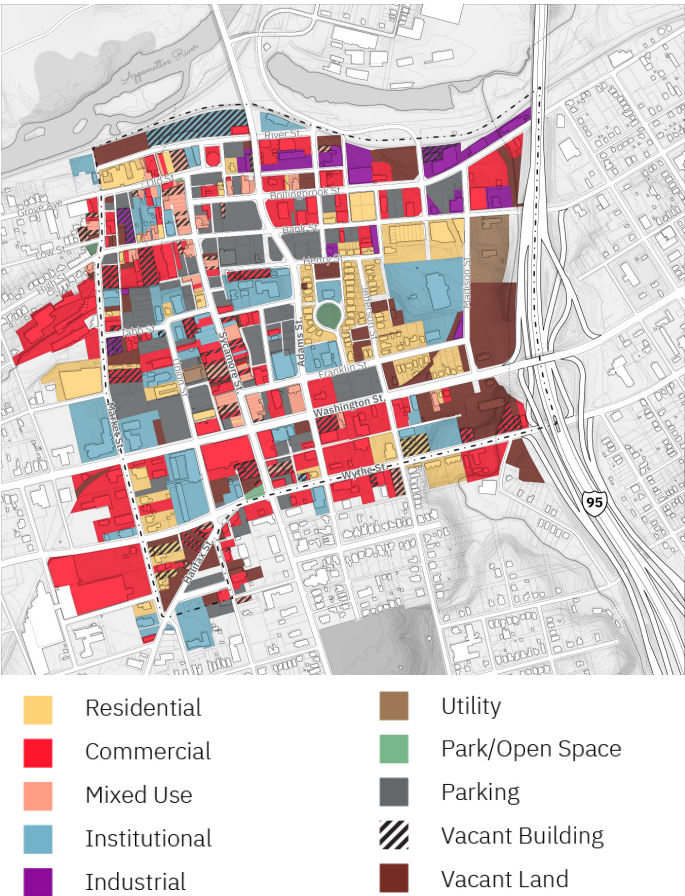


**Downtown has a mix of land uses and walkable streets, but the pedestrian experience deters many from walking and perpetuates local concerns about a lack of parking.**

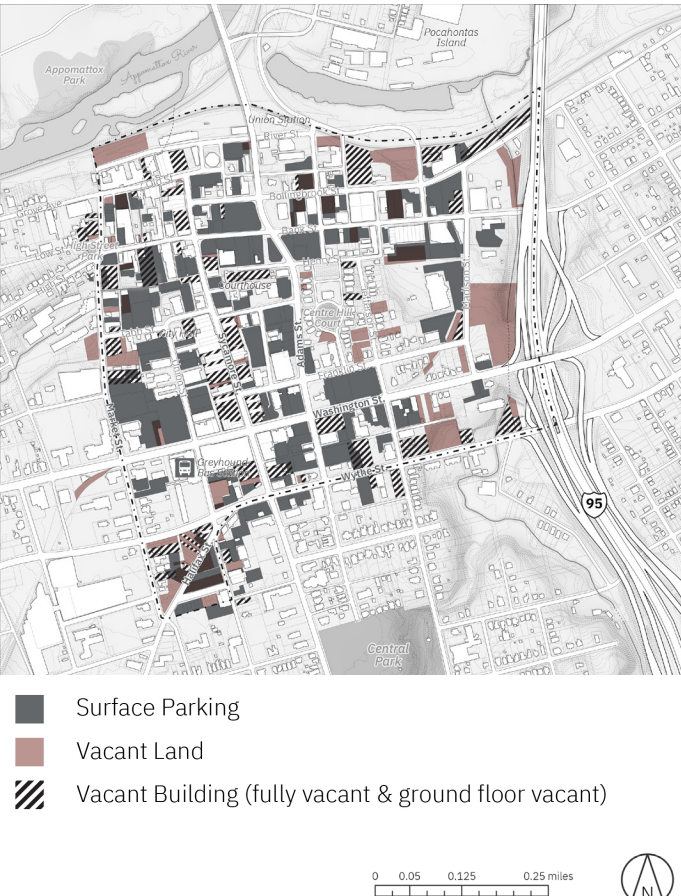
Commercial and institutional uses make up half of Downtown, with a range of businesses, government offices, and services clustered in the area. Downtown is also known for its concentration of restaurants, bars, local shopping, and arts-related events. While these uses activate Downtown during the work week and after hours, nearly 30% of Downtown’s parcels are vacant or dedicated to surface parking. This area is equivalent to 51 acres or 39 football fields, which dramatically affects the experience of walking through Downtown.

Without active storefronts, occupied buildings, and programmed open spaces, 50% of Downtown’s block frontages are inactive, and another 31% are somewhat active, leaving just shy of 20% active and interesting enough to drive pedestrian traffic and contribute to a pedestrian experience that feels both pleasant and safe. Add to that the distressed condition of many of Downtown’s sidewalks, curbs, and crosswalks, and the relatively few shade trees along the sidewalk, and many people prefer to drive to and from various Downtown destinations rather than walk, despite the fact that Downtown is compact and really quite walkable.

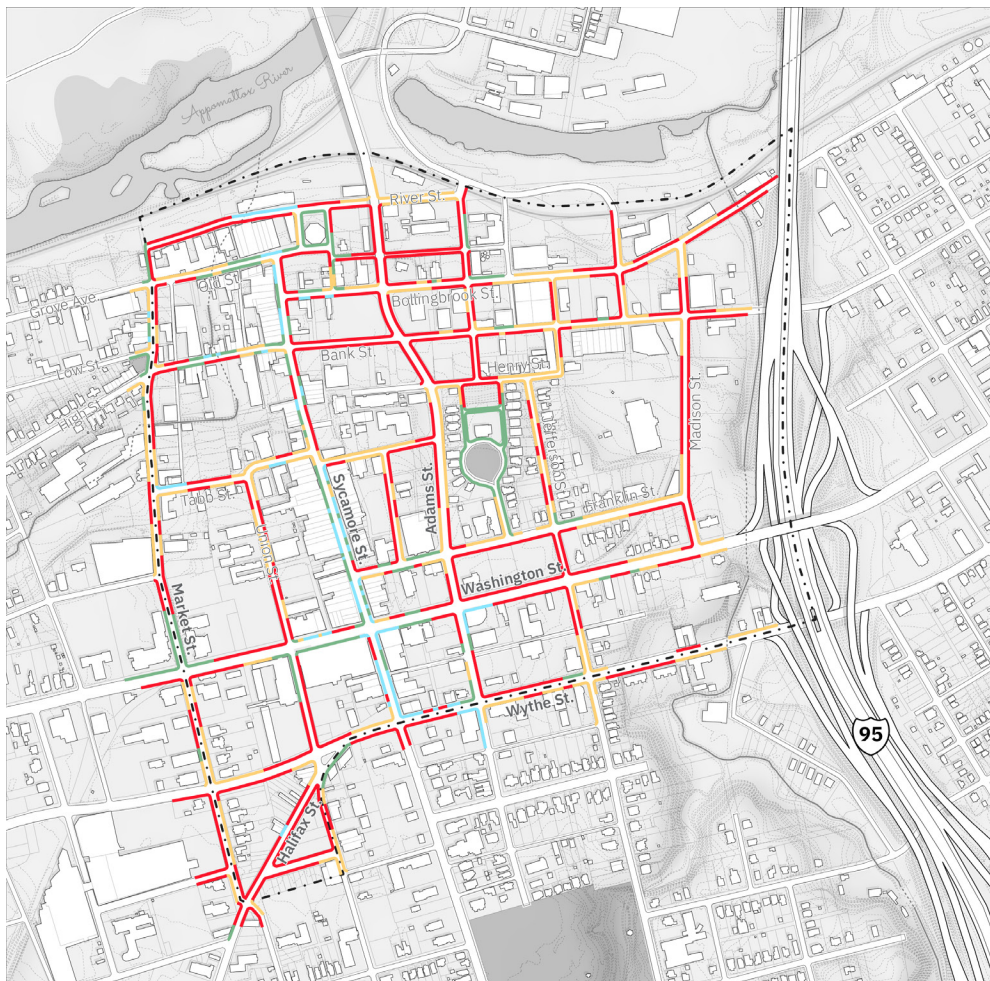
**Figure 5. Land Use**



**Figure 6. Surface Parking & Vacancy**

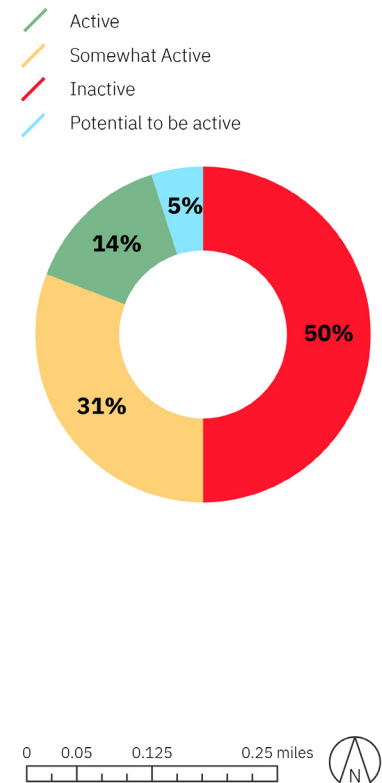






**Figure 7. Street Activation Map**

Source: Interface Studio field survey



*Unused surface parking and inactive building frontage and storefront*

*I love the texture of the building materials and the potential for an intimate pedestrian-centric space.*

- quote from survey

As a result, residents, businesses, property owners, and employees Downtown cite concerns about a lack of parking. In fact, most days of the week and year, free on-street parking abounds, and additional free off-street parking exists for those who know where to look. As investment and new development introduce new destinations and demand, a more consistently activated streetscape will emerge, walking will become more of a norm, and the willingness to walk several blocks from a parking space to a destination will increase.

Downtown is an economic engine for the City, but the engine needs tuning.

Commercial properties account for 7% of land across the city as a whole, and unsurprisingly, Downtown contains a disproportionate amount. Eight percent (8%) of all commercial acreage in Petersburg is in Downtown, which comprises just 1% of the city’s land area. Half of all jobs in Downtown are in Public Administration and Healthcare/Social Services; 8% are in food services and accommodation, 6% are in retail, and 5% are in arts and entertainment. Despite the strong public sector presence, Downtown hosts a cluster of private businesses, the majority of which are small businesses with fewer than 10 employees, mostly clustered on Sycamore Street and sections of Old Street, Bolingbrook, Bank, Washington, and Market. These local businesses include an array of restaurants, bakeries, coffee shops, and bars, antique stores, a book store, beauty salons, hair stores, professional services, and host of other independent operations that contribute to Downtown’s vibrancy and charm with their goods, services, events, and outward aesthetic.

*Right now, Downtown is hit and miss, hit and miss.*

- quote from interview

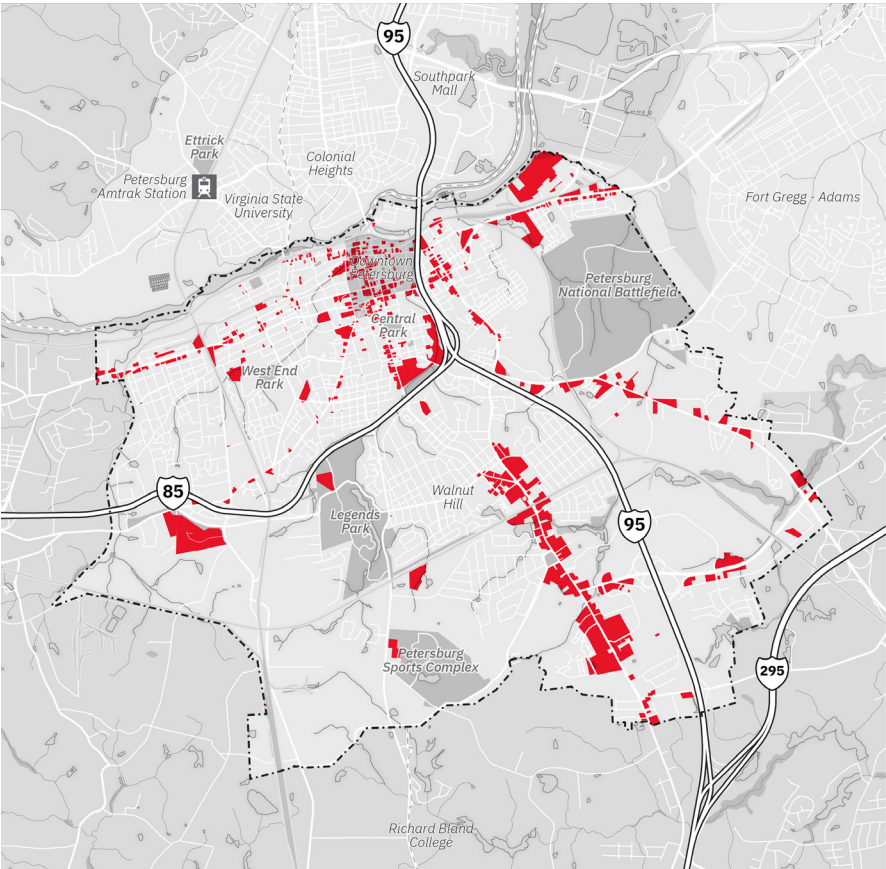
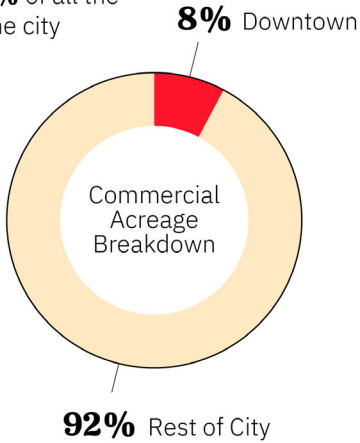


Figure 8. Commercial Properties

- City of Petersburg Boundary
- County Boundary
- Highway
- Commercial Property (Assessors Property Code)

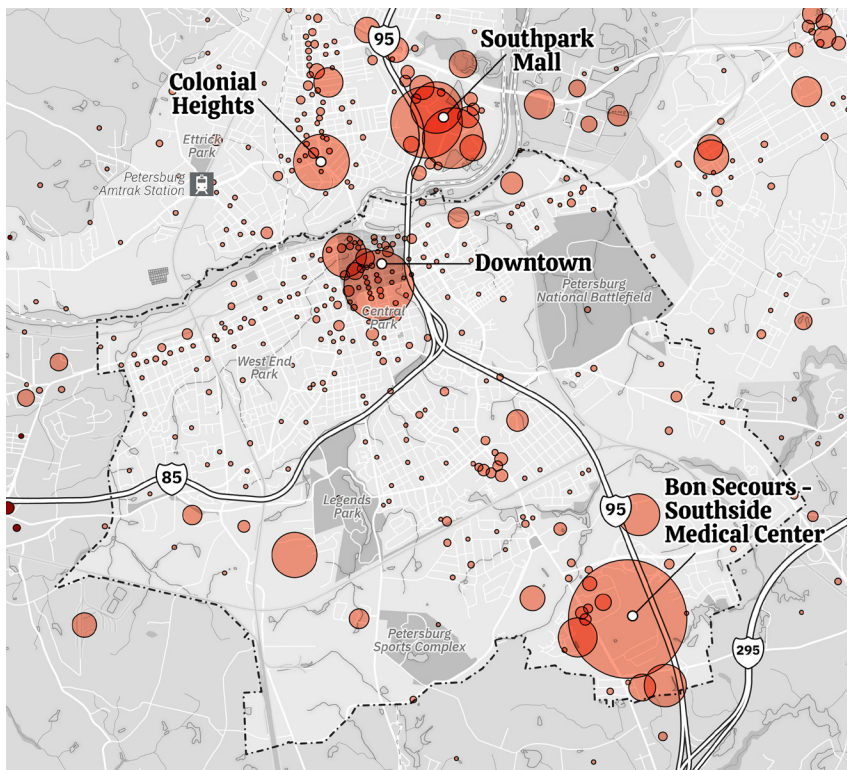
\* Commercial properties account for 7% of all the land across the city



0 0.25 0.5 1.0 2 miles



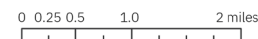
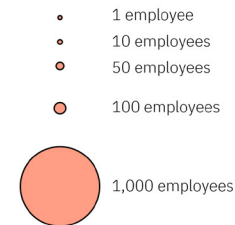




**Figure 9. Total Employment (2020)**

Source: Census On The Map

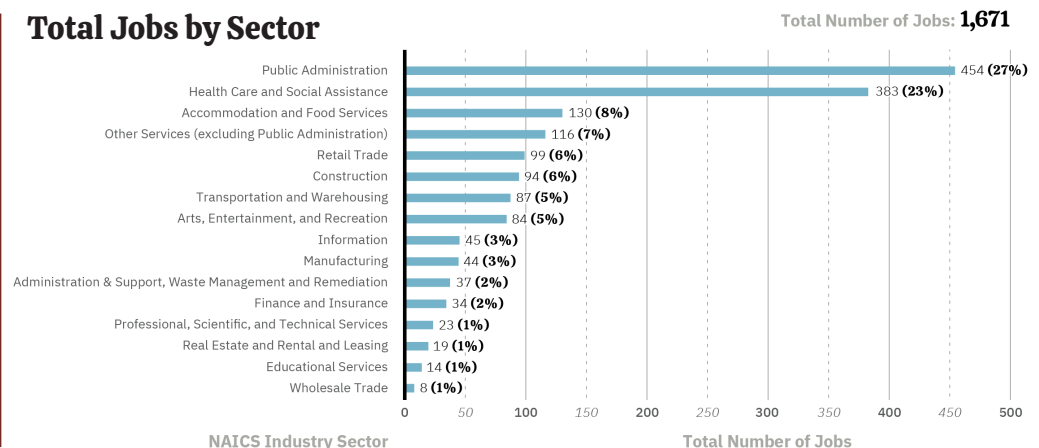
Scaled Proportionally by Number of Employees per Census Block



*The businesses that serve food and drink are really fantastic, and there is a lot to choose from.*

- quote from survey

### Total Jobs by Sector

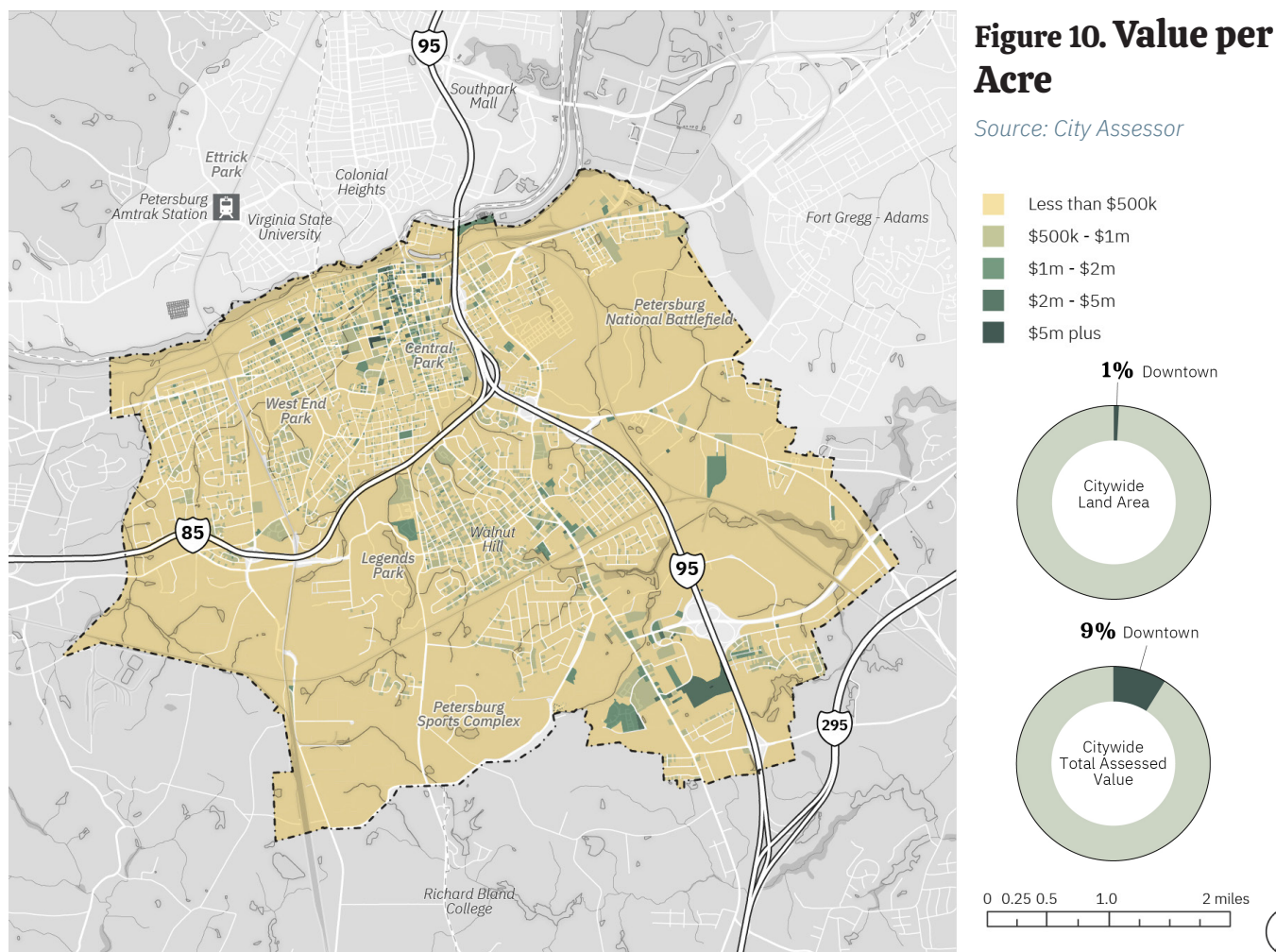


Interviews indicate that business activity across Downtown is uneven, with some businesses coming out of COVID stronger and others shuttering or not recovering as quickly as others. Throughout the Downtown, one in three properties with a commercial space in the ground floor does not have a commercial tenant and instead presents a vacant storefront at street-level. On Sycamore Street, which is remarkably intact for a historic mixed use corridor, 60% of developed properties have a vacant ground floor, and many buildings have vacant upper floors as well. Survey respondents want to double down, with nearly a quarter calling for more retail and more restaurants, more than any other use, but to support such growth, Downtown will need more residents, more visitors, and a broader customer base. In the meantime, efforts to expand the commercial mix should seek opportunities to diversify -- to appeal to new markets, such as the untapped student market at Virginia State, or, for example, to partner with new companies investing in Petersburg's developing pharmaceutical industry that might seek to locate front-offices or related uses in the Downtown.

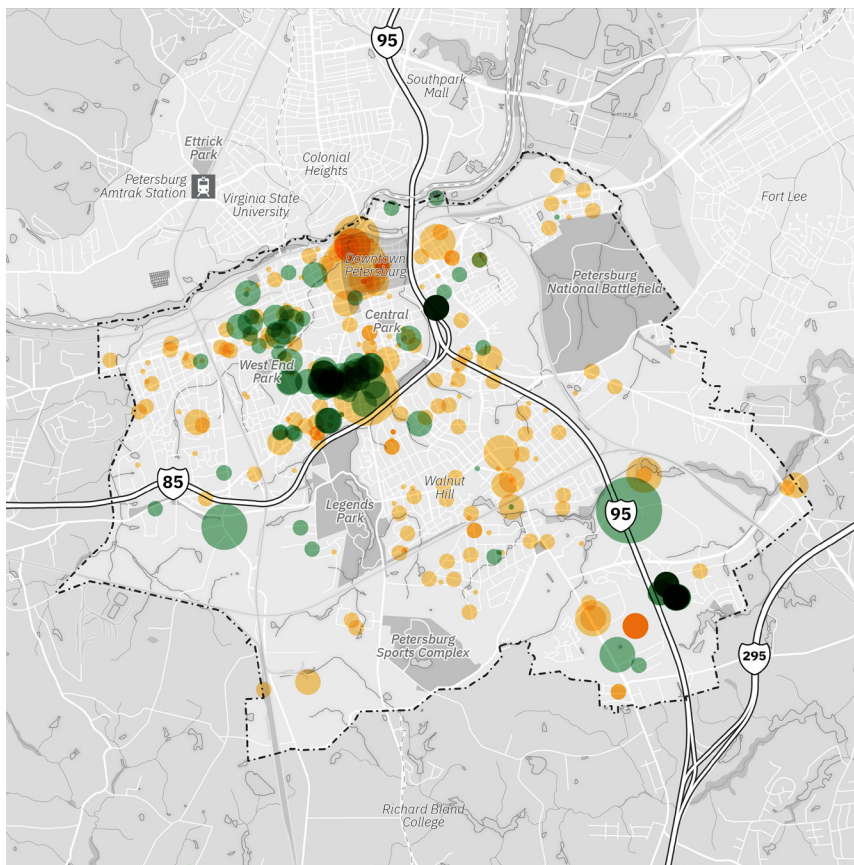
## The value and condition of Downtown land and property stand to slow continued progress.

Downtown comprises only 1% of the City's land area, but it contains 9% of the City's total assessed value, boasting the highest value per acre density in Petersburg. While one in five (20%) Downtown properties have sold since 2020, few if any have resulted in new construction. Indeed all of the significant building permit activity in Downtown in recent years has been for building renovations. While these adaptive reuse projects have preserved historic structures with creative new uses from apartments and artist studios, to coffee shops, bakeries, and breweries, they have made good use of available subsidies in the form of Historic Preservation Tax Credits and available adjacent land to provide convenient parking for new tenants. These successful early projects have restored value in Downtown, driving up the asking prices for land and buildings.

The reality is, however, that Downtown's building stock -- while beautiful -- is costly to restore and maintain, and Downtown's aged utilities present their own challenges, from expensive repairs due







**Figure 11. Permits  
(March 2022–March 2023)**

- Renovation (alteration, renovation, repair)
- New Construction (addition, detached accessory, new construction)

**Scaled Proportionally by Cost of Project**

- under \$10K
- \$10K - \$100K
- \$100K - \$500K
- \$500K - \$1M
- \$1M - \$5M
- \$5M+

0 0.25 0.5 1.0 2 miles



to water main breaks to capacity concerns related to future new construction. The tension between Downtown’s inherent value, its newly improved market value, and the costs of construction today threaten to stall ongoing investment, which is much needed in order to prevent further structural decay of one of Downtown’s most important assets: its historic building stock.

29% of survey respondents identified the need to address aging infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, utilities) and the old building stock as the biggest issue that Downtown must address.



*Restore derelict  
buildings and  
put them to use.*

- quote from survey

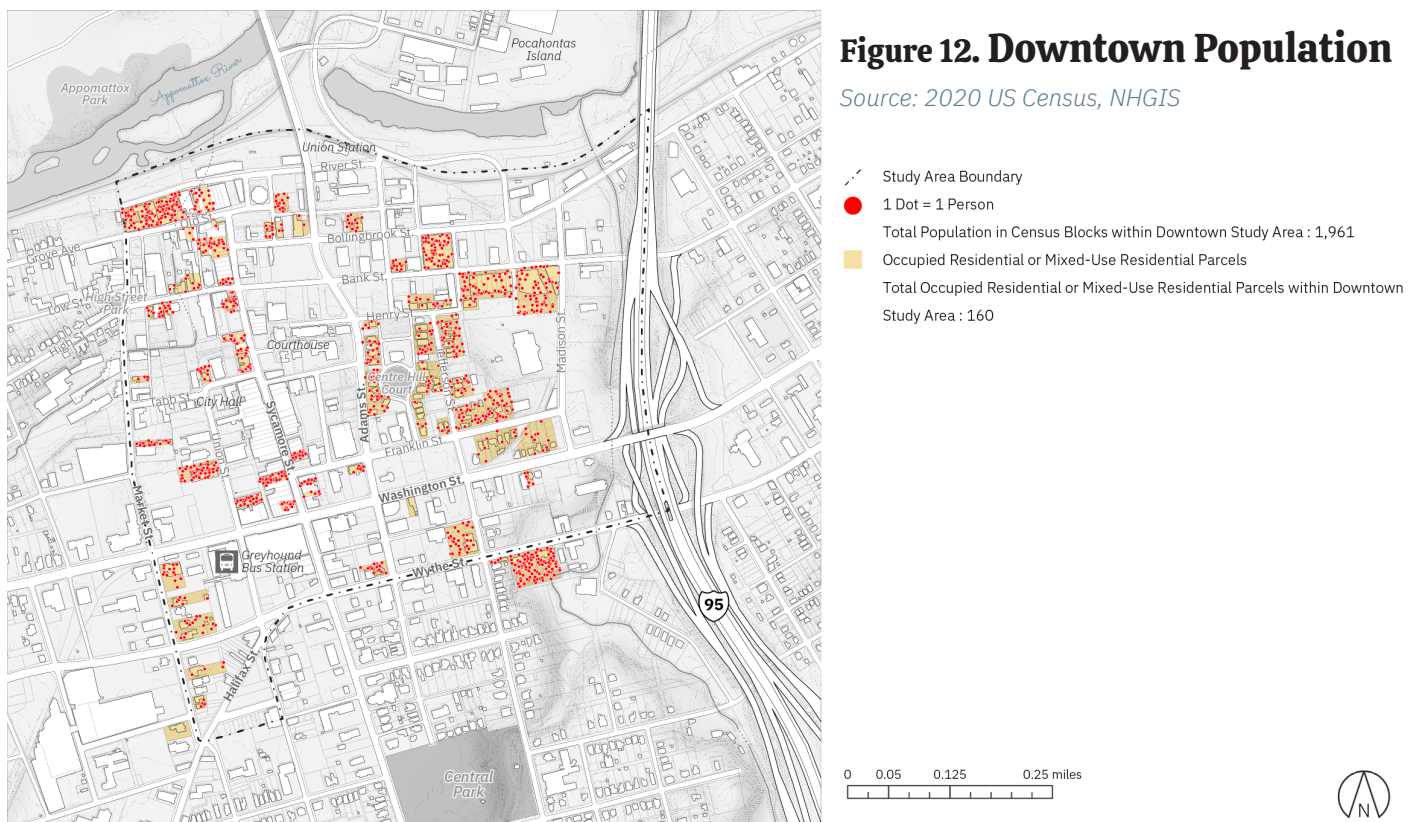


*Photos of vacant historic structures*

## Downtown has grown as a neighborhood, but it has a long way to go.

While the stately homes atop Centre Hill and along nearby Jefferson Street have long been an established residential pocket within Downtown, many Downtown residents today can remember a time when they were among the first to be living in Old Towne back in the 1990s. Today, 6% of the City's population, or roughly 2,000 residents, live Downtown, making their home in scattered residential and mixed use properties. While this growth is notable, and in fact housing growth in the core of Downtown Petersburg area substantially outpaced that of the Commonwealth beginning in 2020 and continuing through 2022.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the growth in the larger Downtown study area has been slower than Virginia overall. As a neighborhood, Downtown has yet to reach critical mass.

New residential development, which is good for businesses and good for the City's tax base can, in turn, support other Downtown improvements. Today 19% of Downtown properties are tax exempt amounting to 28% of the parcel area Downtown, and with 30% vacant or surface parking, the existing taxable properties are often underperforming, yielding less tax revenue than if they were to be redeveloped. Beyond helping to rebuild the tax base, each new residential unit in Downtown brings built-in foot traffic to support local retail and restaurants. Interviews with Downtown businesses and credit card data confirm that though Downtown has been adding businesses in recent years, this is not necessarily translating into equivalent spending growth. Rather, Downtown Petersburg must continue to focus on increasing the customer base. New residents are one key ingredient.







Photos of homes on Centre Hill and loft apartments in formerly industrial



Photos of apartments on Sycamore Street

As a point of reference, nationally there is one full-size grocery store for every 8,550 people,<sup>10</sup> and this statistic holds true even in downtowns where grocery stores typically have smaller footprints and serve more quick trips than stock-up trips that come with larger totals at the register. To reach critical mass, Downtown will need to welcome additional housing of different types, sizes, and prices to appeal to a range of market segments seeking both rental and ownership opportunities. Before new construction projects begin breaking ground, Downtown will need to consider how contemporary designs and materials can both respect and complement the existing historic fabric of Downtown -- and soon. The mixed-use development associated with the new Courthouse and City Hall includes 196 apartments in its conceptual design, along with a sizable parking garage, and 28,800 square feet of commercial, both retail and office.

There are some historic structures left that could be converted, which could add another 200 units or so, but we need to start talking about new construction.

- quote from interview

It has an old historic charm with a modern twist that stays true to the culture and history of the neighborhood.

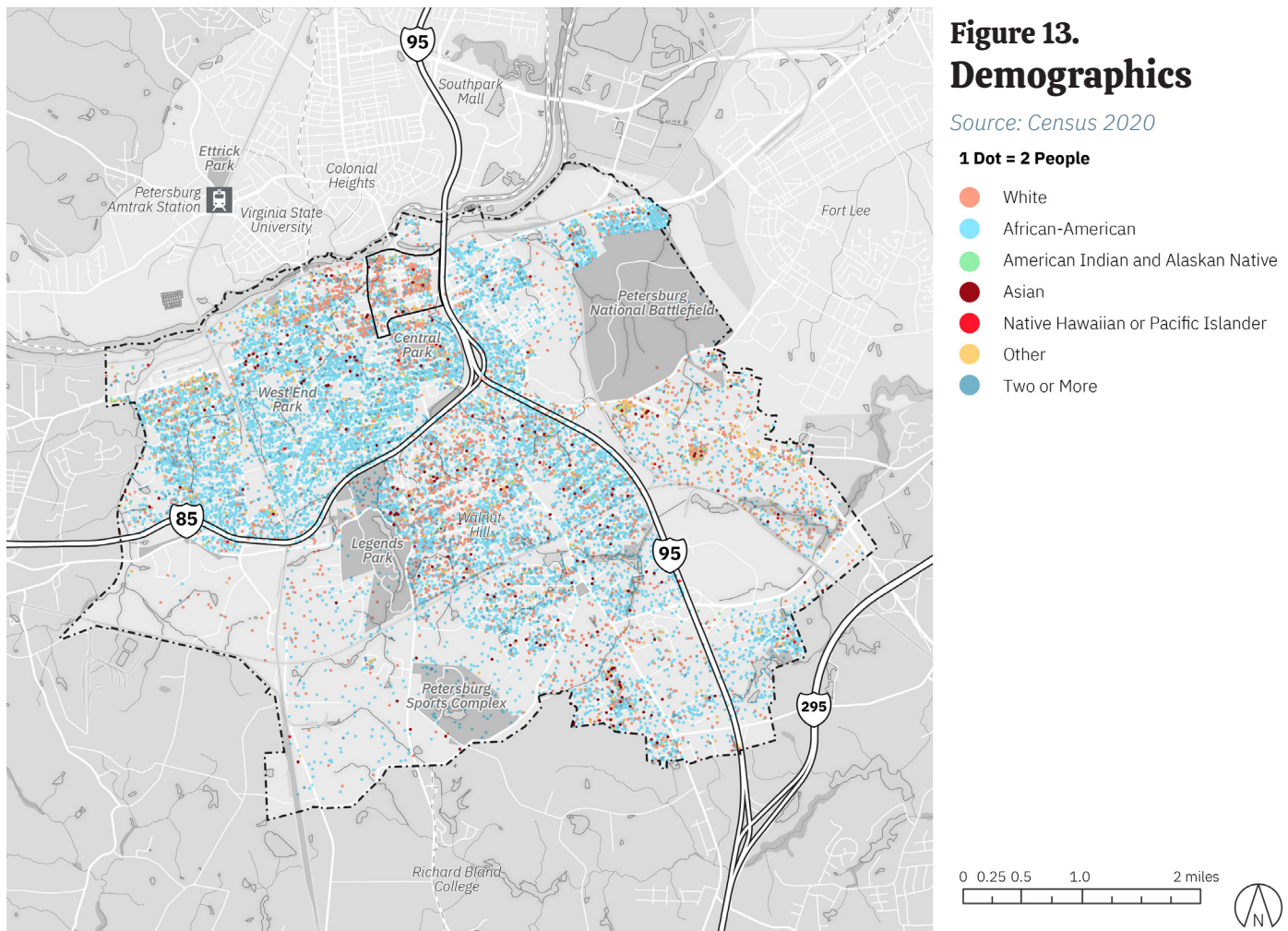
- quote from survey

<sup>10</sup> Food Marketing Institute, Mastercard

## Downtown is Petersburg’s mixing ground, and while “spectacularly diverse,” some do not feel welcome or at home in Downtown.

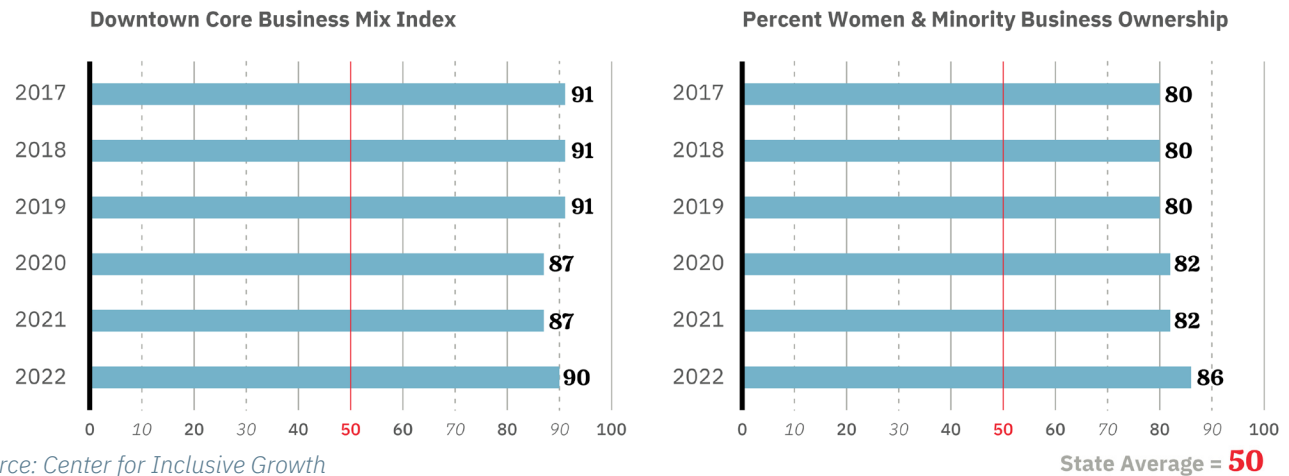
Beyond adding new residents, another way to broaden the customer base is to ensure that everyone in the City or region feels welcome in Downtown and sees something for themselves among Downtown’s retail, restaurants, entertainment, services, and open space offerings. The City of Petersburg is 77% African American, but Downtown’s population is 51% Black, 39% white, 1% American Indian, 1% Asian, 3% people who identify as another race, and 5% people who identify as two or more races. Like the residential community, Downtown’s business community is also diverse and diversifying. Compared to the Virginia average, Downtown has significantly more diversity in business type and much higher instances of women and minority-owned businesses than elsewhere in the Commonwealth.<sup>11</sup>

Many proudly describe the Downtown community as diverse and tight-knit, stating, “it’s like Cheers, everyone knows your name and the people are friendly,” and, “the ambiance of Downtown offers a hometown feel and the vast diversity of a city.” Others, however, are quick to recall the lasting legacies of the Jim Crow era when Downtown establishments were off-limits to Black residents who found





## Diversity of Downtown Businesses Compared to Commonwealth of Virginia



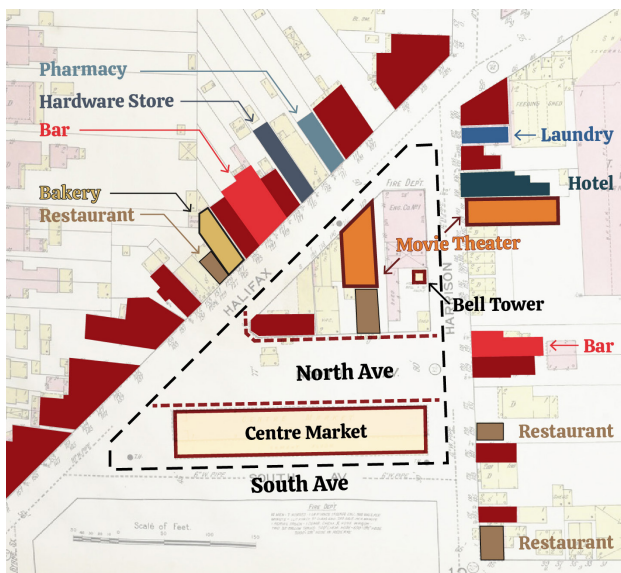
Source: Center for Inclusive Growth

community along The Avenue to the south near today's Halifax Triangle. Though much has changed and the clientele at many Downtown businesses is a diverse reflection of the City of Petersburg and the Downtown community, the fact remains that some residents of the city and region do not make a habit of going Downtown. This decision could be one of convenience, one driven by lack of awareness of Downtown's offerings, one driven by history, or by more recent experiences. Regardless, it points to a need to better cultivate and celebrate Downtown businesses, events, and programming that truly speak to and attract a diverse audience, locally and regionally.



*Put in businesses that will draw everyone, not just a select group of people.*

- quotes from public engagement



Businesses near Halifax Triangle, Source: Sanborn Map, 1957

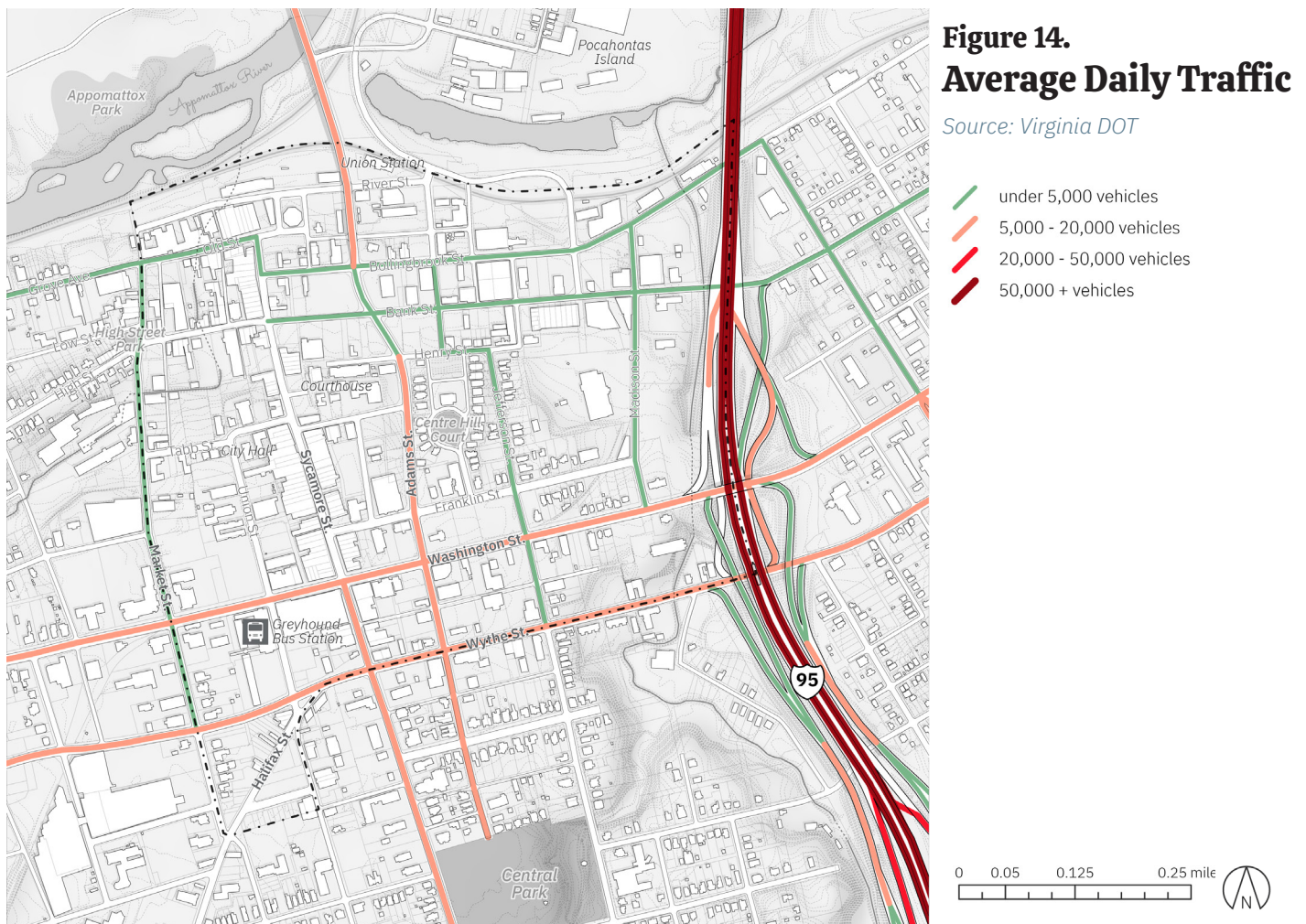


Photos of Halifax Triangle today (above left) and yesterday (above)

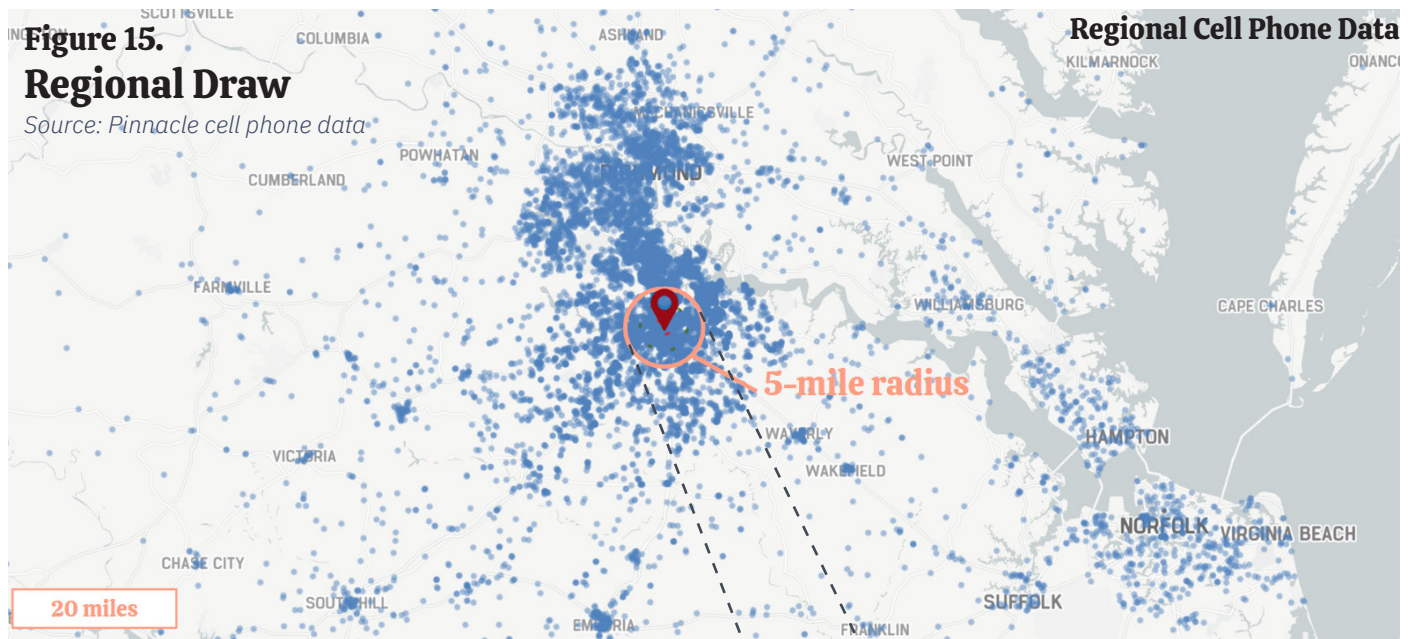
## Despite good highway access and major destinations in the region, Downtown Petersburg is not quite on the mental map of many visitors to the region.

Downtown is missing out on potential visitors and visitor dollars for several reasons. There is no signage directing travelers along I-95 toward Historic Downtown Petersburg, and first impressions upon exiting the Interstate at Washington fail to impress. The wide and auto-oriented thoroughways along Washington, Wythe, and Adams carry the most traffic in and out of Downtown, and while Adams has had recent streetscape improvements that dress up the crosswalks and streetscape elements, the Washington and Wythe street corridors do not communicate to drivers (or visitors to the Petersburg National Battlefield) that there is a downtown district worth exploring nearby, nor do they require that drivers slow down to a speed compatible with a pedestrian-friendly Downtown.

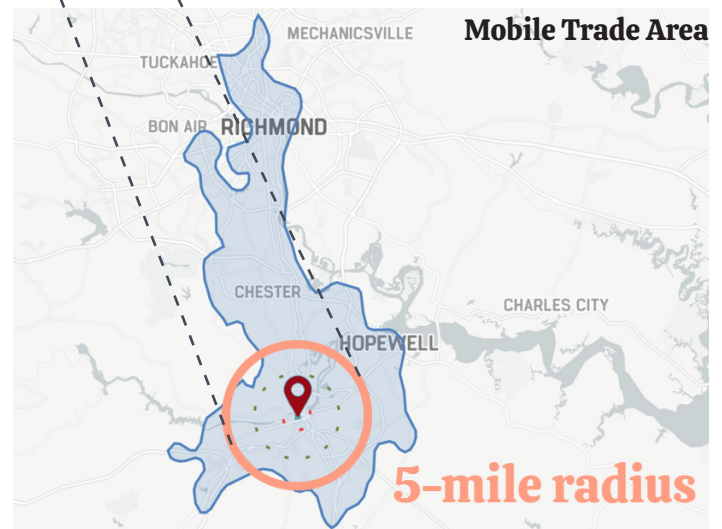
Beyond issues with signage, a lack of gateways, distressed and vacant properties, and few public realm improvements along these key corridors leading to and from Downtown, there is a shared sense that much of Petersburg's history or histories remain unknown to many passersby. There is a physical and perceived gap between the main heritage tourism sites in the region, most notably Petersburg National Battlefield, and the wealth of historic sites within and surrounding Downtown.







Cell phone data illustrate that Downtown has a regional draw, attracting people from Ashland south to Dinwiddie and from coastal areas near Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Hampton, and Williamsburg. However, 70% of visitors come from within the “Mobile Trade Area” that covers a much tighter geography, reaching north to Richmond but otherwise hugging a roughly a 5-mile radius from the center of Downtown. Taking a closer look at the cellphone data confirms that at present, Downtown fails to attract a significant portion of the student and soldier markets and that a very small fraction of Battlefield visitors make it to Downtown.<sup>12</sup>



Historians and historic preservationists underscore that Downtown is a destination rich with multiple stories to tell -- African American history, Civil Rights history, Civil War history, Revolutionary War history, colonial history, and industrial history, among others. Downtown’s history and architecture are among the most prized qualities of Downtown Petersburg, so the challenge becomes raising awareness about Petersburg’s historic sites and narratives, better weaving them into the Downtown experience for visitors, and creating stronger connections through cross-marketing with other historic destinations in the region in an effort to attract visitors who may be more apt to spend their time and dollars in Richmond, for example, until Petersburg convinces them otherwise.

*Make Downtown less car-centric!*

*There is so much below the surface.*

*- quotes from survey*

<sup>12</sup> Pinnacle cell phone data

**Downtown’s public realm is awash in contradictions: it is beautiful and charming, but in need of investment; it has a river but struggles to connect to the water; and though Downtown is a meeting place, there is no central gathering place.**

As an historic urban center, Downtown’s DNA is inherently walkable. Its network of streets, alleys, courtyards, and walkways offer those traveling by foot many options for exploring Downtown. Hidden interior courtyards provide elements of surprise to the curious, and the backs of buildings often have their own entrances and their own stories dating back to pre-Civil War times when enslaved people came and went through different doorways. Made from a mix of brick, cobblestone, and concrete, and suffering from lack of resources for maintenance, the pedestrian paths in Downtown have started to crack and crumble. Sidewalks in some places are narrow by today’s standards, and curbs are often uneven and inaccessible for those with limited mobility. A top priority for community members is to improve basic maintenance -- the accessibility, appearance, and cleanliness of the sidewalks and crosswalks that form the backbone of Downtown’s public realm.

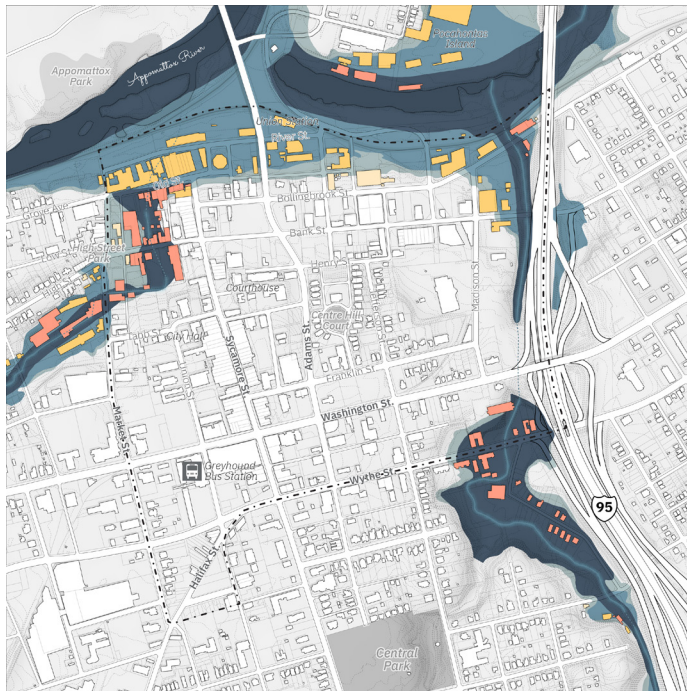
The Downtown community is also clamoring for investments in open space. The Appomattox River forms Downtown’s northern edge, and the Appomattox River Trail will soon traverse that edge, providing a new multi-use path for leisure and recreation along the waterway. With that opportunity, comes the opportunity to reconsider, program, and improve the green spaces between River Street and the rail lines west of Adams, and along the Harborfront, east of Adams. These sizable swaths of land, partially in the Floodway, have been known to flood in the past. In their current state, they do not serve their full



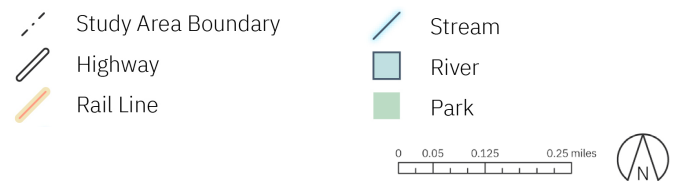
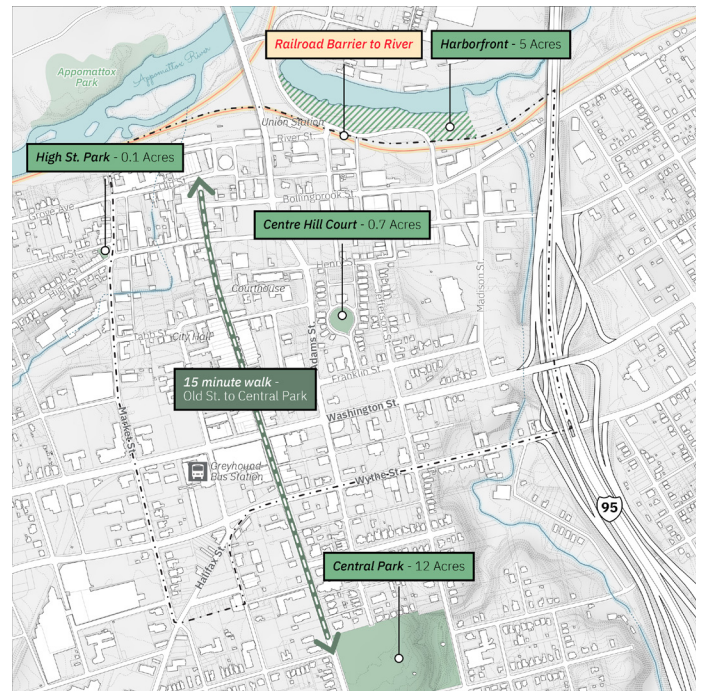
*Photos of Downtown streets, sidewalks, alleys, and riverfront*



**Figure 16. Floodplain**



**Figure 17. Parks & Open Space**



potential either to absorb flood waters through Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) or to provide a regular Downtown destination save for occasional events, such as the wildly popular Fourth of July fireworks show that now takes place at the Harborfront. Brickhouse Run and Lieutenant Run reach into the Downtown, drawing the Floodway and flood risk inland along Downtown’s eastern and western edges. As the land uses along these waterways continue to evolve, there may be opportunities to establish new green-blue trails that connect people to the banks of the River.

While the green space along the Appomattox has immense potential as a public space that has captured the imagination of many as an improved green space, play space, performance space, and starting place for visitors, there are also opportunities within the core of Downtown to create a new central gathering space that benefits Downtown businesses, properly frames key views and important architecture, and makes space for community life to take shape in new ways, right in the heart of Downtown, along Sycamore Street.

*Accessibility is an issue; sidewalks, parking, make it feel welcoming for all.*

- input from public meeting

*We’ve got a river, but we act like it doesn’t exist!*

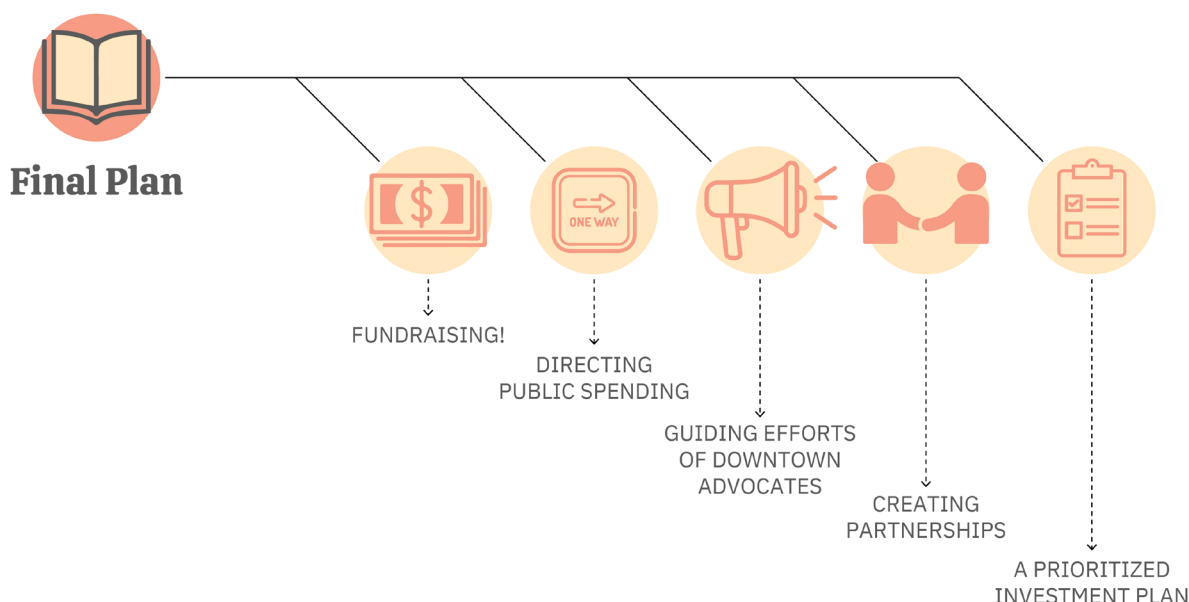
- quote from interview

## The opportunity to rebuild Downtown, restore its building stock, and reframe its narrative, comes with a need to rebuild capacity to drive change.

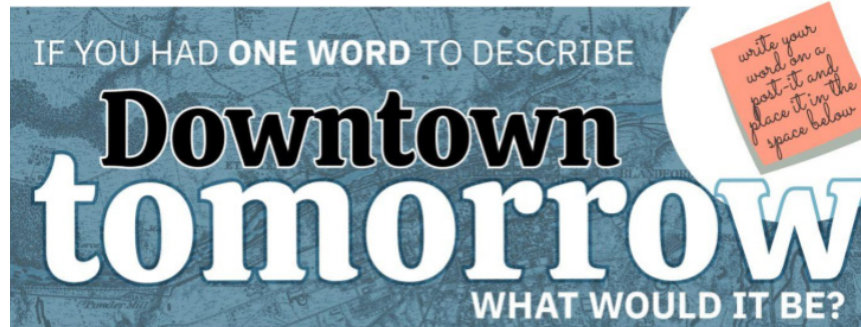
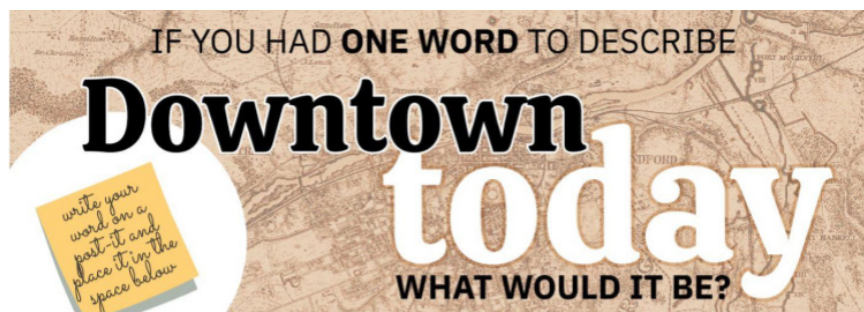
Downtown has great bones and much to build on, but the to-do list is long and challenging. Sustaining progress will require a range of financial resources -- local, state, and federal, private, and philanthropic -- as well as people power in the form of public-private partnerships, non-profit support, and volunteer efforts. Following the City's 2016 financial crisis, Petersburg has come a long way toward rebuilding its financial footing and economy. The case for Downtown's continued role as a driver of economic and residential development is strong, and therefore investments in Downtown's public realm and development potential merit serious consideration as the City determines how best to allocate its budget and leverage debt going forward.

Equally important, is to recognize that while piece-meal change may continue to unfold in Downtown, advancing projects here and there, the real opportunity is to focus dedicated resources and staff time toward targeted, holistic implementation efforts to push this plan's vision forward. The piecemeal approach has served Downtown well as the catalysts that brought Downtown to this moment. Going forward, the City will benefit from a collaborative partnership with a strong Downtown organization structured by a clear delineation of roles. Likewise, leadership in the public and non-profit sectors must also seek opportunities to delegate some implementation responsibilities to community groups, individuals, and private entities playing to their strengths, passions, and interests. This work will take many minds and many hands.

### ONCE THE PLAN IS DONE *what is it for?*



The Downtown Plan's vision on the following page builds upon these words from Petersburg's community.



### Input from the Public Visioning Event in June 2023



# Vision & Goals

## VISION

Downtown is a **thriving** symbol of Petersburg's resurgence, ready to realize its **potential once again**. Downtown is **proud of its history** and its present-day - the **people, local businesses**, and **opportunities** that together create a **hometown feel** with the **diversity of a city**. Downtown is **a place and a community** that is committed to **balancing history** with **growth and change**.

*As a place*, we will continue to preserve Downtown's **charming scale**, its historic **texture** with a **modern twist**, the **intimate pedestrian experience**, and the **unique** collection of **local restaurants and stores** that make Downtown a **destination**. As we re-grow Downtown as a full-service **neighborhood**, we will also grow **greener** and **healthier**.

*As a community*, we will work to remain a place that is **warm** and welcoming, that celebrates and lifts up our **Black heritage and culture**, with **inclusive** spaces and **events** that draw people from across Petersburg and the region - a regular favorite for residents, **families with young children**, **college students**, service members, tourists and others who spend time in Downtown Petersburg.



*All the words or phrases in **bold** came directly from the community.*



## GOALS

Five key goals organize the strategies to guide change in Downtown Petersburg through 2040 and beyond.

- 1 Open for Business:** Support Downtown's business community, and restore Downtown's economic vitality and building stock
- 2 Right at Home:** Develop Downtown as a livable neighborhood with parking as part of the mix
- 3 Wander and Wonder:** Foster lush and lovely connections throughout Downtown, to the River, and farther afield that encourage people to walk, bike, and explore
- 4 On the Map:** Grow Downtown as a destination for residents, students, service members, and visitors, and a place that people know about (and know how to find!)
- 5 Positioned for Success:** Build capacity for implementation and stewardship over time.

The remaining chapters detail the Downtown Plan's strategies or action steps to be taken to make the vision become reality. The final chapter includes an implementation matrix that identifies early, mid, and long-term actions, key partners, and potential resources.

# Strategies for Change

## OPEN FOR BUSINESS

1. Provide smaller-scale grants for temporary installations that uncover windows and activate storefronts with art
2. Subdivide large ground floor spaces to create a multi-tenant retail hub
3. Encourage property owners and businesses to utilize facade improvement grants
4. Build a pipeline of new local businesses
5. Attract and retain anchor office tenants
6. Carefully cultivate new retail programming, and explore a small format grocery

## RIGHT AT HOME

7. Adopt design standards for new construction
8. Maintain existing residential homes and structures, and encourage continued adaptive reuse
9. Build new homes, of different types, including townhomes
10. Coordinate to convert the vacant upper floors on Sycamore Street to housing
11. Partner with developers to build a new mixed use development and parking garage to service others

## WANDER & WONDER

12. Enhance Downtown's alleys as part of a network of pedestrian routes
13. Maintain and beautify streetscapes and sidewalks
14. Test design scenarios that activate the public realm
15. Create a central public plaza and gathering space on Sycamore in front of the Courthouse
16. Consider activating Sycamore Street as a pedestrian-first street
17. Invest in a connected green space along the River
18. Implement a road diet on Washington and Wythe

The **Petersburg Downtown Plan** has 29 recommendations or action steps organized by five key goals. All of the recommendations are in alignment with the City's new Comprehensive Plan, **Petersburg Next**.

## ON THE MAP

19. Partner with the National Park Service to draw visitors from the Battlefield
20. Complement regional tourism destinations with investments in local attractions that tell lesser known histories and foster memories made in the present
21. Increase marketing to a range of audiences, including Petersburg residents
22. Host regular events and programs that draw people from a variety of backgrounds and interests
23. Create a stronger presence for VSU Downtown
24. Invest in gateways with signage and wayfinding
25. Monitor and support the development of new, boutique lodging options in and near Downtown as tourism continues to grow

## POSITIONED FOR SUCCESS

26. Formalize the local Main Street organization with paid staff to support implementation and focus on Downtown initiatives in coordination with City leadership
27. Build the network of volunteers engaged in Downtown's future
28. Secure new revenue sources to invest in Downtown
29. Consider updates to zoning and policy to support plan implementation

# Open for Business

## ACTION ITEMS:

**01**

Provide smaller-scale grants for temporary installations that uncover windows and activate storefronts with art

**02**

Subdivide large ground floor spaces to create a multi-tenant retail hub

**03**

Encourage property owners and businesses to utilize facade improvement grants

**04**

Build a pipeline of new local businesses

**05**

Attract and retain anchor office tenants

**06**

Carefully cultivate new retail programming, and explore a small format grocery

**Support Downtown's Business community, and restore Downtown's economic vitality and building stock.**

The strategies under this goal aim to reactivate ground floor spaces, provide small business support, retain a mix of office tenants, and cultivate retail development and recruitment.

**01**

Provide smaller-scale grants for temporary installations that uncover windows and activate storefronts with art

Sycamore Street has the greatest concentration of ground floor retail spaces, but more than 60% of these storefronts are currently vacant presenting a blank window to the street. Some of the active businesses have beautiful storefront displays that engage passersby and add to Downtown's character, but others mostly obscure their storefront windows with signage and advertisements that prevent people from seeing in or out of the store. Taken together, the empty and obscured storefronts create a first impression that this key retail street is struggling. Two early-action programs geared toward business owners, building owners, and artists can help activate Sycamore's storefronts and send a clear message that Downtown Petersburg is, indeed, very much open for business.

*Clean up the litter, create a sign ordinance to take full window cover posters down.*

*- quote from survey*

Retain a storefront designer to work with existing businesses to refresh their storefront windows and signage - Downtown's existing businesses are one of its greatest assets. Start there, reaching out to business owners whose storefronts have room to improve, and recruit an initial group to participate in a storefront improvement project that could include window clearing and cleaning, new display strategies for merchandise, lighting, and signage. These improvements, focused on restoring sight-lines into the stores and highlighting merchandise in new ways require less planning, time, and resources than a full facade improvement grant focused on the storefront's structure. Virginia Main Street would be an important partner for this initiative.

Commission artists to create and install temporary exhibits in empty storefronts - The installations -- which could feature new work, custom-designed for the space, existing pieces arranged to be visible, lights or video to animate the windows at night, or decals that use the windows themselves as a canvas -- can paint the vacant storefronts in a new light, share a story about the area's history, draw foot traffic to Downtown, and attract the attention of potential tenants. First, identify a group of empty storefronts with large, visible windows. Meet with building owners, invite them to participate in the program, and request an on-site visit to see the space. Check to make sure each of the chosen sites is clean (or can be cleaned), has lighting and electricity, and can be accessed for the installation.

The Petersburg Area Arts League can help develop a Call for Artists and market the opportunity to local artists. A grant from Virginia Main Street may be able to provide artist stipends as well as technical assistance. The role of the City's Department of Economic Development and/or the local Main Street organization should be to encourage building owners to participate and generate buzz about the new art experience once it is on display in Downtown's newly designated Arts and Cultural District.



*Existing vacant or obstructed storefront windows*



*Existing empty storefront window well suited for artwork*



# CASE STUDY:

## Windows of Opportunity

Main Street America offers guidance on how to put vacant storefronts to work telling a visual story, promoting pop-up retailers in temporary locations, and infusing art, beauty, and visual interest to activate the pedestrian experience without a permanent business tenant in place.

[www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)



Storefront window installation in Milwaukee  
Photo credit: Retailworks, Inc.



Figure 18. Rendering of Storefront & Public Realm Improvements



## 02

### Encourage property owners and businesses to utilize available facade and commercial interior grants

While storefront improvements provide a strategy for quick, relatively affordable, and high-impact investment in the sidewalk, shopping, and dining experience in Downtown Petersburg, some buildings require more substantial investment in their facades or interiors as a precursor or complement to storefront improvements. The City's Department of Economic Development currently offers two incentives for building owners within the Central Business District: a Facade Improvement Grant that can equal up to 50% of the cost of facade renovations with a maximum award of \$5,000, and an Architectural Assistance Grant that can equal up to 50% of the cost of interior renovation design plans for commercial buildings with a maximum award of \$2,500.

Given the importance of Downtown's historic building stock in Petersburg and the value they bring to the Downtown experience, coupled with the high costs of materials and construction, the City and its partners should find ways to make these existing programs more appealing. Identify additional funding to increase the grant amounts and/or ratio of costs covered by the grant award. Retain an architect to provide facade improvement and interior renovation drawings at a reduced rate to program participants. Conduct targeted outreach to the owners of key properties in need of ground-floor facade improvements or interior renovations that will help make their spaces move-in ready or rentable over the long-term. Aim to complete one or two of each project type per year, and where these grants improve empty storefronts, provide follow-up support to find a suitable tenant.



*Examples of well restored facades along Sycamore Street*



## CASE STUDY:

### Agora Market - Harrisonburg VA



The Agora Downtown Market in Harrisonburg is a great example of a multi-tenant retail arrangement that brings vintage goods, handmade bags, fair-trade goods, zero-waste products, clothing, toys, ceramics, art, and freshly roasted coffee under one roof. Together, the vendors create a unique shopping experience, and the shared space and access to a shared customer-base supports small and emerging local businesses.

[www.shopsatagora.com](http://www.shopsatagora.com)

*A food court, like  
Union Market in DC.*

*- quote from public event*

## 03

### Subdivide large ground floor spaces to create a multi-tenant retail hub

Some of Downtown's ground floor commercial spaces are quite large and deep, which can pose a challenge in finding viable commercial tenants who can afford to rent the entire ground floor. Explore a multi-tenant retail model to bring a new shopping experience to Downtown powered by a collection of emerging entrepreneurs. Similar to pop-up markets, these shared space strategies subdivide large ground floor spaces into smaller units, renting each unit to a different vendor, maker or designer. Together, these small businesses can activate the space, afford the rent, and benefit from a brick and mortar presence as well as each other's foot traffic.

Lessons from examples such as the Agora Market in Harrisonburg include:

- Reach out to local artists, makers, and entrepreneurs who may currently focus on online business or work out of their home
- Seek out small businesses that may appeal to the student market with smaller goods or goods offered at a range of prices
- Aim to include a coffee shop or other purveyor food and drink that can attract daily customers; consider adding a few tables and chairs for students who may like to study in the space

Beyond retail, the shared-space model can be applied to food related businesses -- as demonstrated by the food hall concept currently under construction at 106 Ktchn & Mrkt, which will host six to eight local food vendors as well as fresh locally-grown produce -- or co-working space, such as the Metropolitan Business League's new City Point Innovation Resource Center at 325 Brown Street.

## 04

### Build a pipeline of new local businesses

Work with Virginia Main Street, the local Main Street organization, the Metropolitan Business League, and the VSU Center for Entrepreneurship to develop a targeted small business support program that offers micro-loans, marketing assistance, business coaching, networking, and mini-grants for businesses interested in locating in or remaining in Downtown. Find ways to connect participants in VSU's Minority Small Business Launch Center<sup>13</sup> (a program of VSU's Center for Entrepreneurship) with Downtown business support programs and available retail spaces as graduates prepare to take the next step in their business development.

## 05

### Attract and retain anchor office tenants

In addition to the retail and restaurants that activate Downtown's ground floor spaces, Downtown also hosts a range of office jobs that provide important professional services, while also driving foot traffic and dollars to local businesses. Though the upper floors of Downtown's historic buildings have proven adaptable as offices for attorneys, insurance brokers, real estate developers, and many others, the creation of new, Class-A office space with modern amenities could attract major new tenants such as pharmaceutical office operations seeking to establish a Downtown presence to complement their research, development, and manufacturing facilities at the southeastern edge of the city. Other uses suited to modern office space in Downtown include primary or urgent medical care services, which are much needed, particularly where conveniently located for patients.

The strategy for Downtown office space is not based solely on the private sector, however. Downtown's day-time population swells with necessary jobs at City Hall and the Courthouse complex, which hosts Petersburg's Circuit Court, General District Court, and Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court as well as the Sheriff's Department and Police Department.



<sup>13</sup> <https://www.minoritysmallbusinesslaunchcenter.com/>



A judicial court order has mandated the construction of a new Courthouse, and current conceptual designs for the development include, among other uses, a new City Hall within the Courthouse complex, which would enable the consolidation of City functions currently divided between the existing City Hall at 135 North Union Street and the City offices at 30 Franklin Street. These facilities, proposed as part of a larger mixed-use development at Bank and Adams streets with new office and residential components, will support new efficiencies in government operations.



*Partial view of site poised for redevelopment*



## 06

Carefully cultivate new retail programming, and explore a small format grocery

Local businesses are a hallmark of the Downtown Petersburg shopping and dining experience, and as business recruitment efforts move forward, it will be important to protect and preserve a predominantly local business mix -- even, if possible, when it comes to anchor retail opportunities such as a new small format downtown grocery store. Here, too, for long-term viability, seek a tenant that offers a blended merchandise mix, such as the IGA/TruValue or Bassett's in Port Clinton, Ohio, which offers both grocery and hardware store items. Ensure that delivery through Instacart or another provider is an option for Downtown residents who may not have a car as well as a competitive advantage over other larger chain stores in the region that may not offer convenience services.

With retail recruitment, Downtown's market niche at present is dining, and there is an opportunity to promote and continue to build upon and build out that sector with programming such as Restaurant Week or coordinated marketing through brochures or an app.

*Will this mean we start getting more chains and lose the local business character that makes up Downtown?*

*- quote from interview*

*Would love to have a grocery store.*

*- quote from survey*

## CASE STUDY:

The Market @ 25th -  
Richmond VA



The Market @ 25th in Richmond, VA is a 27,000 square foot grocery store that is part of a larger mixed use development project with apartments, a health center, and a culinary school. The produce section features locally-grown fresh goods, prepared foods for grab-and-go, and bakery items made by local entrepreneurs as well. The store also includes an independently-owned and operated pharmacy. Interior design and signage includes extensive references to local history, landmarks, community leaders, and African-American business owners from the Church Hill neighborhood where the store is located.

[www.themarketat25th.com](http://www.themarketat25th.com)

# Right at Home

## ACTION ITEMS:

07

Adopt design standards for new construction

08

Maintain existing residential homes and structures, and encourage continued adaptive reuse

09

Build new homes, of different types, including townhomes

10

Convert the vacant upper floors on Sycamore Street to housing

11

Partner with developers to build a new mixed use development and parking garage to service others

## **Develop Downtown as a livable neighborhood with parking as part of the mix.**

The strategies under this goal aim to introduce new housing and supporting land uses to grow the residential population with homes of different types and price points.

07

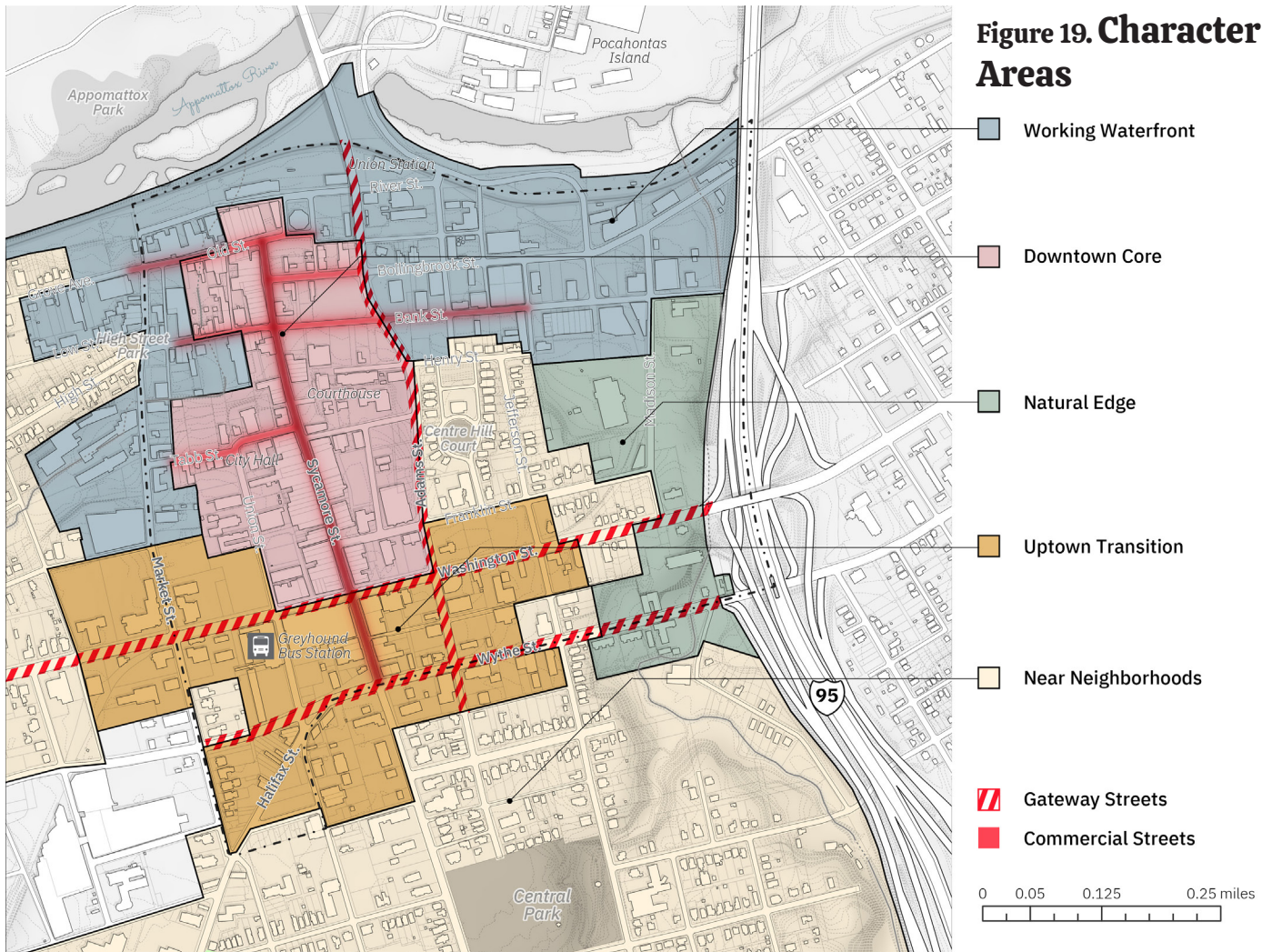
Adopt design standards for new construction

Much of Downtown's charm and appeal is due to its historic building stock, and preservation of historic building facades that contribute to Downtown's character is critical. However, the character of Downtown's streets varies block-to-block, and in many places the loss of historic buildings to vacancy, surface parking, or non-contributing buildings detract from the Downtown pedestrian experience. As investment interest and development momentum builds, bringing opportunities for new construction, it will be important to provide guidance on how to blend historic architecture with contemporary building practices and materials that complement the historic look and feel but allow for growth, change, and more contemporary features. New buildings in different character areas within Downtown can and should be treated differently.

*If I could change one thing about Downtown, I'd change the insistence on keeping the buildings looking one specific way.*

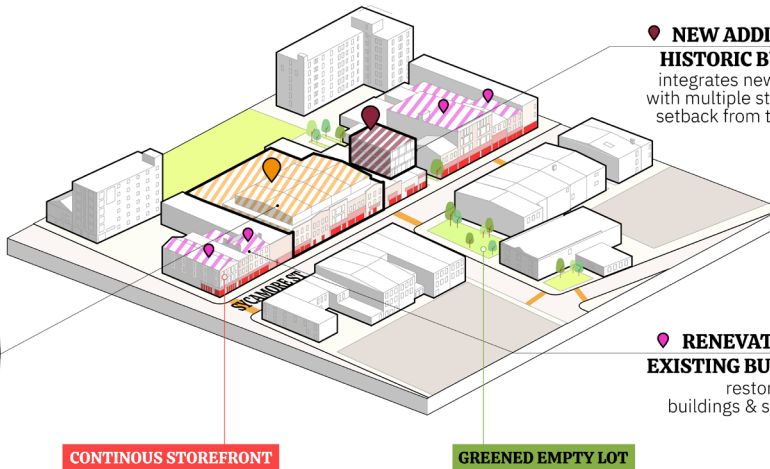
- quote from survey





**Downtown Core** - Within the Downtown Core, with the most traditional mixed use historic building stock, renovate existing facades where possible. Encourage density here, but seek designs that step back vertical additions from the original facade. New construction should respect the surrounding building scale and integrate common materials, but modern designs should be supported, allowing for elements that give the Core a modern feel within the historic Downtown Core.

**NEW CONSTRUCTION** respects the building scale of adjacent context, has an upper floor setback, and keeps a consistent material palette in a modern way.



**NEW ADDITION TO HISTORIC BUILDING** integrates new with old, with multiple storeys, but setback from the facade

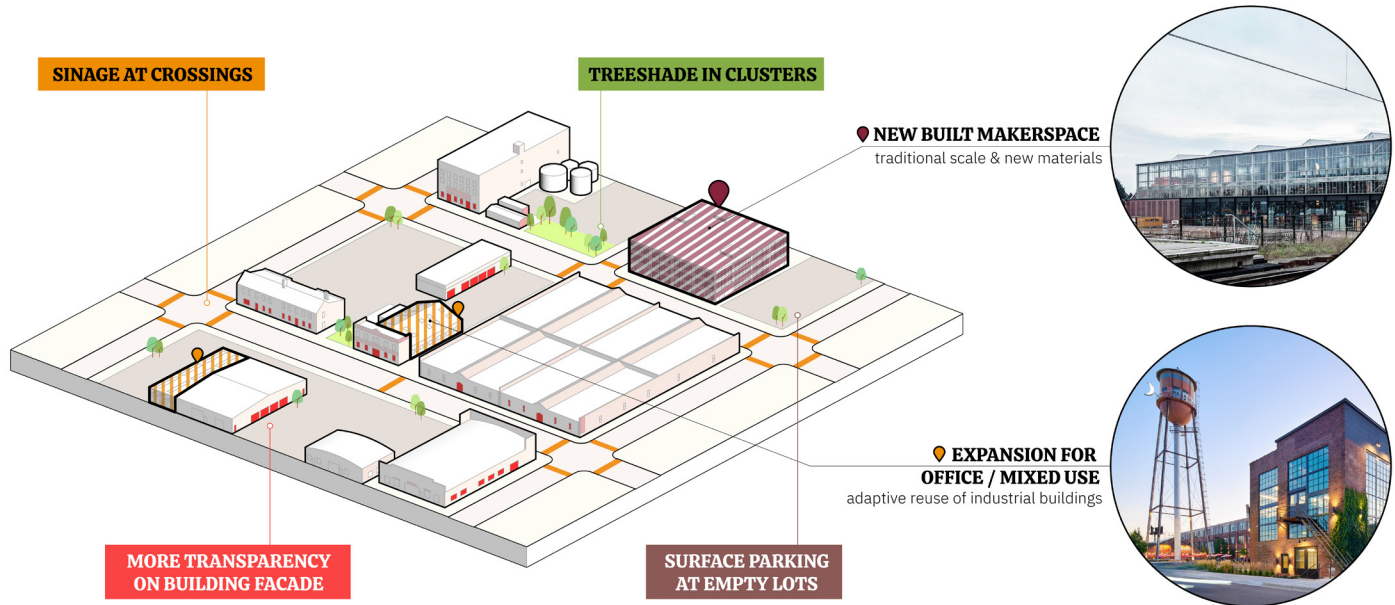
**RENOVATIONS OF EXISTING BUILDINGS** restore existing buildings & storefronts



*Suggested design practices in the Downtown Core*

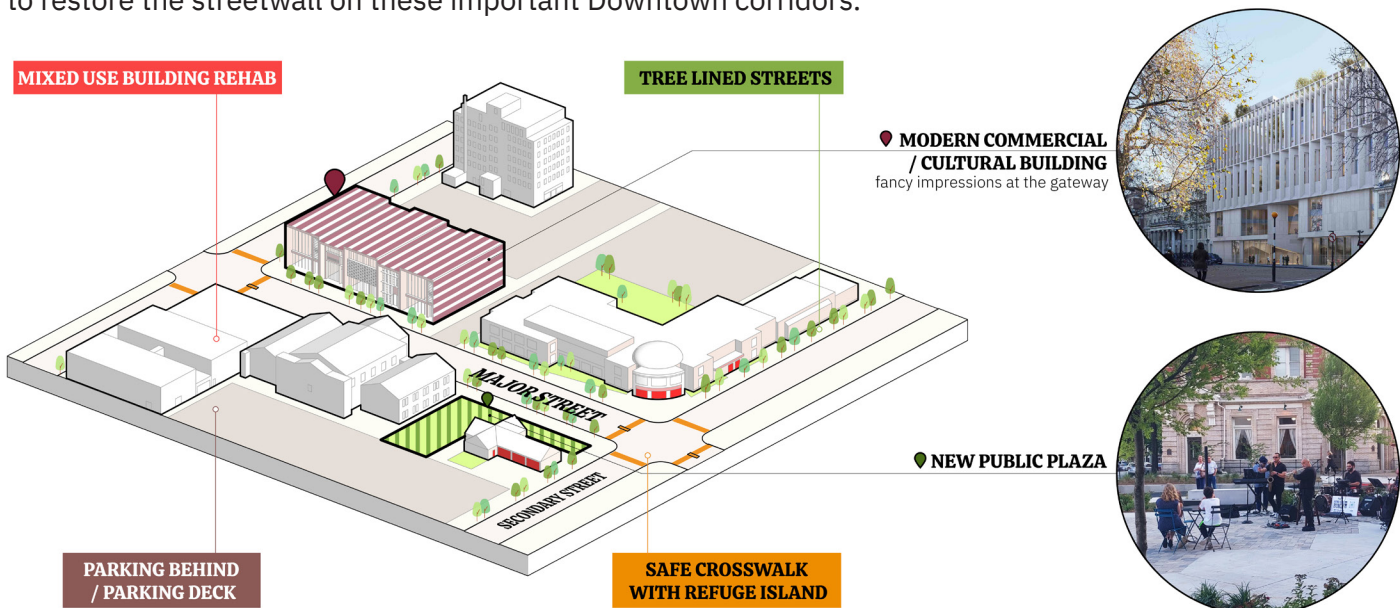


**Working Waterfront** - The formerly industrial buildings within the Working Waterfront character area make this zone the most appropriate for incorporation of modern architecture and design features that complement the design quality of nearby adaptive reuse projects that include lofts, breweries, cafes, restaurants, and public realm improvements that give this section of Downtown a hip and youthful feel.



*Suggested design practices in the Working Waterfront area*

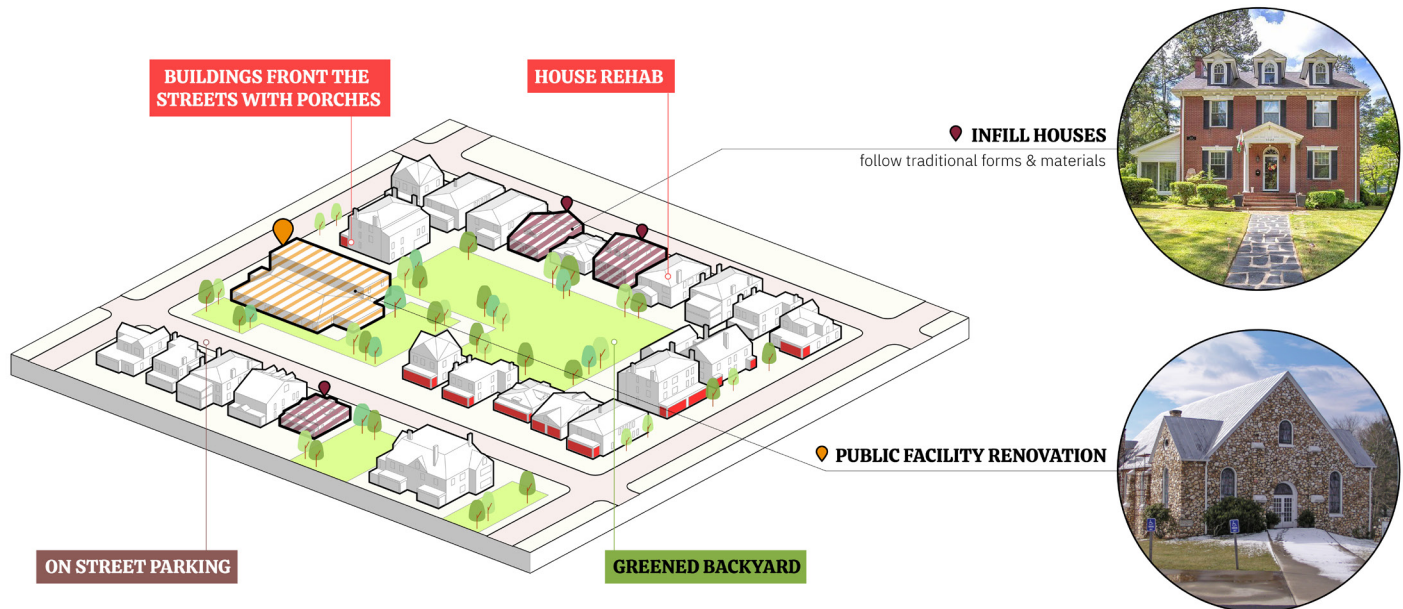
**Uptown Transition** - The Uptown Transition zone flanks Washington and Wythe, extending south to include the Halifax Triangle area. This character area has a collection of notable religious institutions and important public buildings including the library. There is also a fair amount of sizable vacant properties along these key corridors that lead drivers to and through Downtown. As improvements to these auto-oriented corridors proceed, there will be opportunities to welcome a mix of new land uses and higher density development in this area. Designs must consider key corners for their visibility with investments in materials and gateway features. Where possible, welcome designs that tuck parking behind the buildings to restore the streetwall on these important Downtown corridors.



*Suggested design practices in the Uptown Transition area*



Near Neighborhoods - Within the near neighborhoods, where possible, strive to preserve the remaining historic housing stock. Where vacant lots present opportunities for new construction, welcome designs that respect the scale and set back of adjacent homes, echo the forms and materials of historic homes with design features such as porches and roof lines.



*Suggested design practices in the Near Neighborhoods*

## 08

### Maintain existing homes and structures, and encourage continued adaptive reuse

The historic preservation of Downtown's building stock is critical, both for the City of Petersburg's potential as a tourism destination and to the community's identity. Support the ongoing adaptive reuse of formerly commercial and industrial buildings within Downtown as loft apartments and modern living space. These efforts breathe new life into aging structures and welcome new residents into important buildings that tell the story of Petersburg's development, commerce, and industry throughout time.

Additionally, wherever possible, avoid the demolition or further deterioration of the existing historic homes Downtown, found primarily in Centre Hill and along Jefferson and Franklin Streets. These structures contribute to the character of Downtown and provide charming and spacious housing options within the walkable Downtown. Work with Historic Petersburg Foundation to build awareness of existing resources, such as State tax credits available for rehabilitation of owner-occupied as well as income-producing properties. Consider expanding preservation-related programming and resources to include educational workshops and trainings for homeowners or investors, a tool library, advocacy efforts targeting vacant properties at risk of demolition by neglect, and capital improvements within Downtown's Historic Districts.

## CASE STUDY:

### Historic Macon's Fading Five List Macon GA



The Historic Macon Foundation annually announces a top five list of historic homes threatened by neglect or possible demolition. The group uses the campaign to raise awareness of these significant structures, raise resources, and force action before it is too late. Since launching the Fading Five initiative in 2015, Historic Macon has put 18 significant properties on the list, and to date, 13 of them have been saved and protected, while only one has been lost.

[www.historicmacon.org/macons-fading-five](http://www.historicmacon.org/macons-fading-five)

## 09

### Build new homes, of different types, including townhomes

The adaptive reuse of mixed use and formerly industrial buildings into modern-day apartments with historic charm and unique character has put Downtown on the map as a neighborhood. As a next step, adding new housing types to the Downtown market will be key to efforts to grow the Downtown neighborhood. The proposed mixed use development at Adams and Banks includes 196 new apartments in a new construction building, which will offer a different product in terms of design and amenities than the existing rental mix Downtown.

During the planning process, residents expressed interest in new homeownership opportunities in Downtown as well, in particular attached townhomes, which can maintain the denser urban fabric typical of a downtown with smaller lots requiring less maintenance and cost compared to one of Downtown's historic single-family homes. For this type of development, seek blocks with lower traffic counts and slower speeds where a front door and on-street stoop will be more comfortable and appealing, such as segments of Franklin and Hinton streets.

Both of these housing products are likely to add housing choices for renters and buyers in the upper end of the market.

# 10

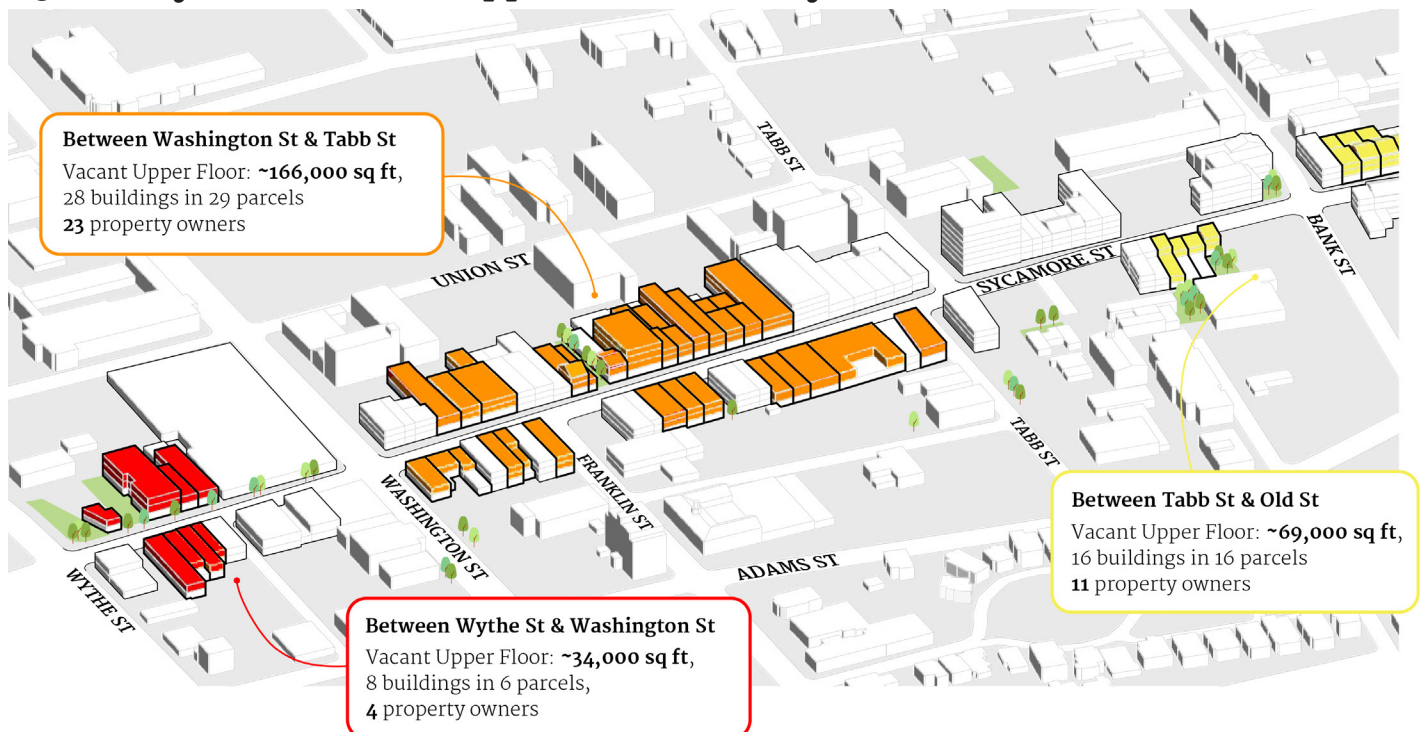
## Coordinate to convert the vacant upper floors on Sycamore Street to housing

The 250,000 to 270,000 square feet of upper floor vacancy along Sycamore Street is problematic for two reasons: it contributes to visual signals that Downtown is struggling, and it threatens the long-term health of signature buildings and blocks in Downtown. Based on a sidewalk survey and analysis of building footprints, approximately 150 to 200 additional housing units could be added in Downtown through the rehabilitation of vacant upper floors along Sycamore Street. These projects, however important, will be costly, as the buildings and their infrastructure are aging, and structures that did not previously include housing will require elevators. There are several potential paths for incentivizing a coordinated effort to transform the upper floors of Sycamore, particularly between Washington and Tabb.

Consider retooling the Facade Improvement Program and / or the Architectural Assistance Grant to also include grants to support some of the cost of conversion to residential such as ADA, fire code, or developing Historic Tax Credit applications.

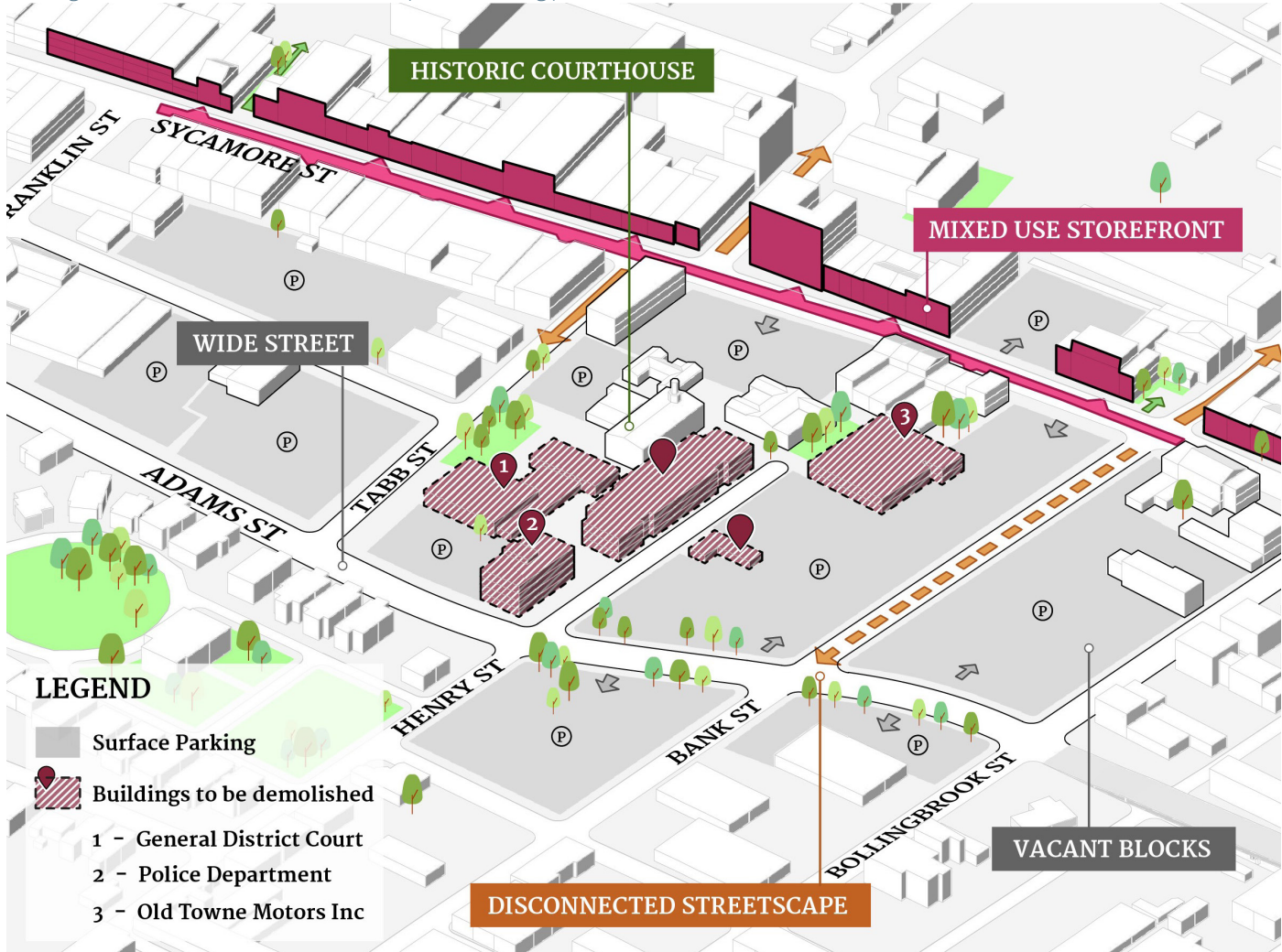
Organize a meeting among the multiple property owners to evaluate current incentives such as the City Assessor Real Estate Rehab Tax exemption and whether it needs adjustments, as well as future options for combining properties such as pooling, a Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT), or potentially a condominium structure to pursue tax credits and other forms of capital in an effort to move away from piecemeal redevelopment and make a greater impact.

**Figure 20. Sycamore Street Upper Floor Vacancy**



*Study of potential and opportunity for upper floor residential conversion*





## 11

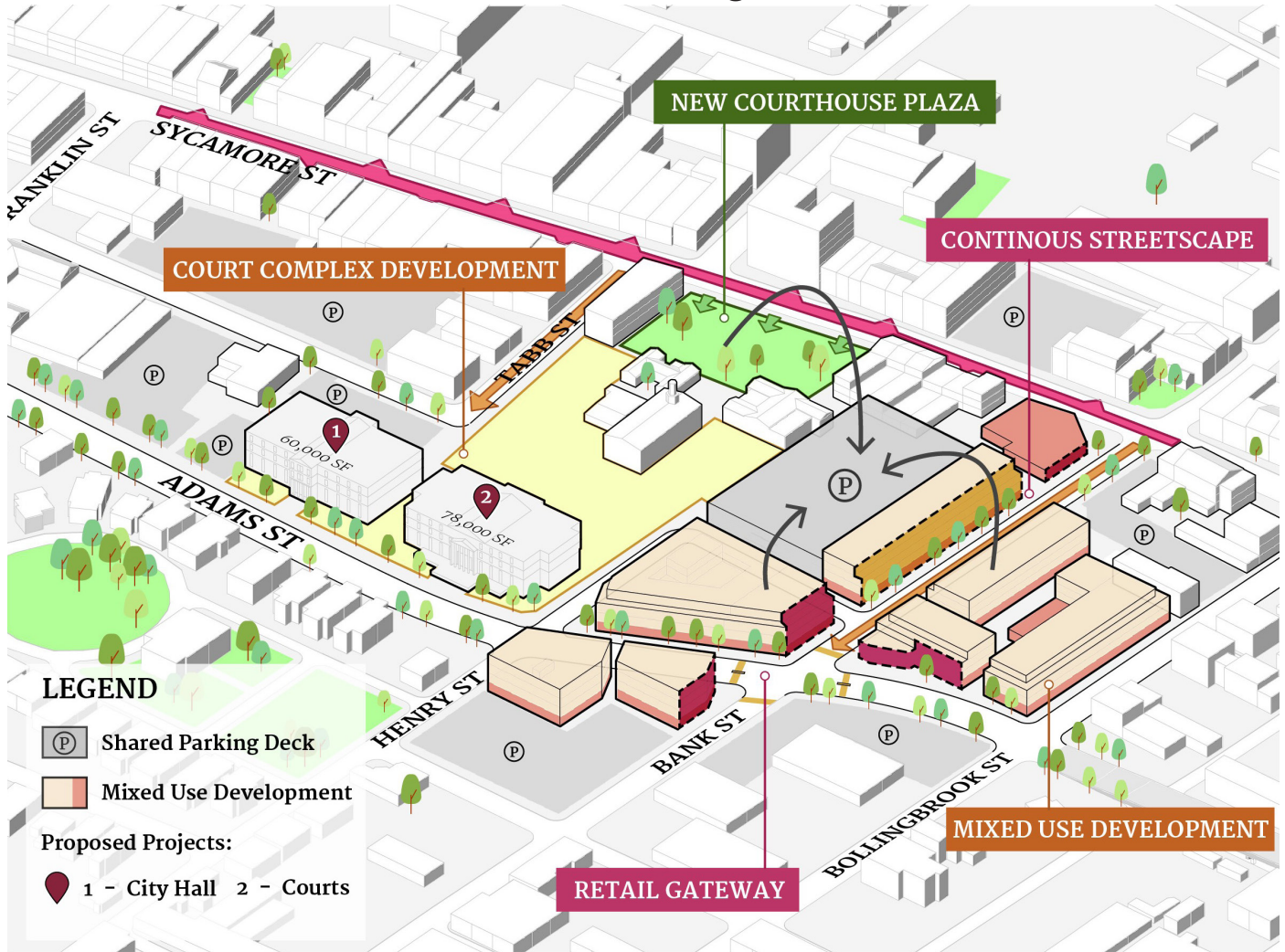
Partner with developers of the new mixed use development to build a parking garage that benefits Downtown as a whole

As the City evaluates development proposals that aim to add new uses and new residents to Downtown, it will be important to preserve elements of Downtown living that contribute to quality of life, parking and park space among them. The new mixed use development proposed at Adams and Bank streets includes a stacked parking

deck to be shared by a range of users: visitors to the Courthouse complex, residential, office, and commercial tenants, and the public at large. This site is well located and within a five-minute walk of most of Downtown. As the development moves forward:



**Figure 21. Courthouse Complex Mixed Use Design Considerations**



Conduct a formal Downtown Parking Study to assess the true need of additional or improved parking to serve existing and future residents and businesses, and how best to share parking spots throughout the course of the day and between land uses and properties to ensure maximum use and avoid over-paying for the development of unnecessary parking spaces. Development of the new parking deck can likely free-up existing surface parking elsewhere in Downtown for development or for a new gathering space at the footsteps of the Historic Courthouse - arguably the most iconic forecourt in the Downtown, with potential to add to Sycamore Street's streetscape and Downtown's livability for near neighbors.

Carefully design the details to make sure that the scale, materials, and design of the new parking garage is appropriate for the historic Downtown; that to the extent possible, parking is tucked at the center of blocks and active uses wrap the parking deck on key block frontages; and that the parking resource includes modern technologies and public assets such as electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and bicycle parking.

# Wander & Wonder

## ACTION ITEMS:

12

Enhance Downtown's alleys as part of a network of pedestrian routes

13

Maintain and beautify streetscapes and sidewalks

14

Test design scenarios that activate the public realm

15

Create a central public plaza and gathering space on Sycamore in front of the Courthouse

16

Consider activating Sycamore Street as a pedestrian-first street

17

Invest in a connected green space along the River

18

Implement a road diet on Washington and Wythe

**Foster lush and lovely connections throughout Downtown, to the River, and farther afield that encourage people to walk, bike, and explore.**

The strategies under this goal aim to activate Downtown's alleyways, re-engage with the River, and create a constellation of new public spaces where people can gather. To complement these open spaces, additional strategies focus on the streets as an equally important part of the public realm, aiming to slow traffic, add shade, and ensure that Downtown's streets and sidewalks are safe, beautiful, comfortable, accessible, and cohesive in their design.

12

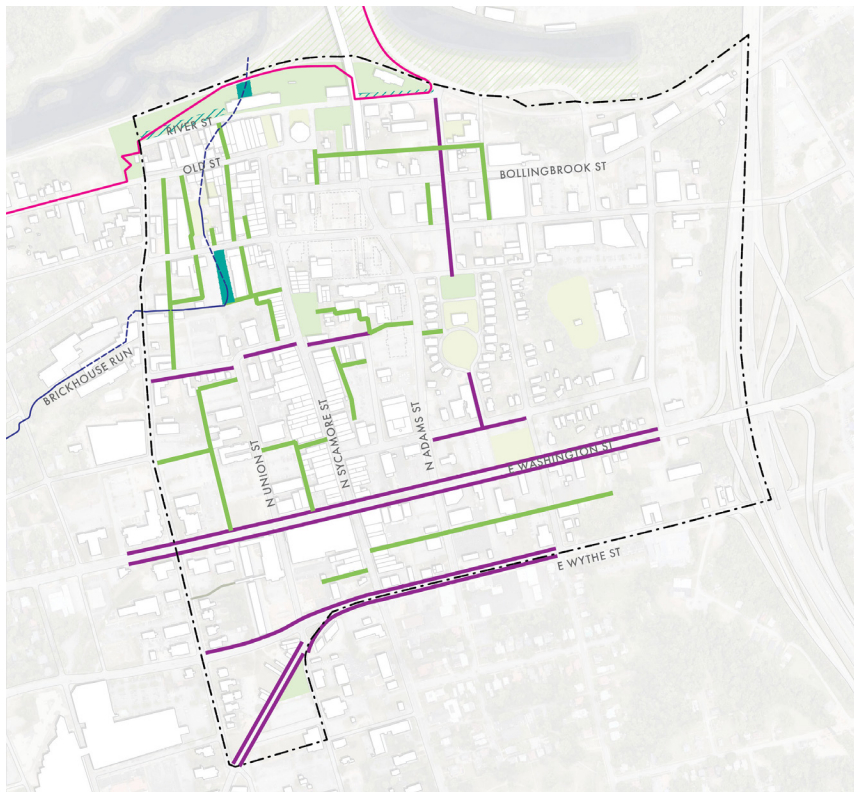
Enhance Downtown's alleys as part of a network of pedestrian routes

One of the unique characteristics of Petersburg's historic Downtown is its network of pedestrian-scale alleys, which encourage people to explore Downtown on foot. At present, these slightly hidden walkways are largely unrecognized assets, often used for waste removal and parking access, or hardly used at all. These paths can and should be improved with art and lighting, and--where space allows--plantings and street furniture to serve adjacent businesses, as done by Buttery Baking House on West Old Street in the alley that leads to the Appomattox Ironworks rear courtyard.



*View toward Buttery Baking House along the Ironworks alleyway*





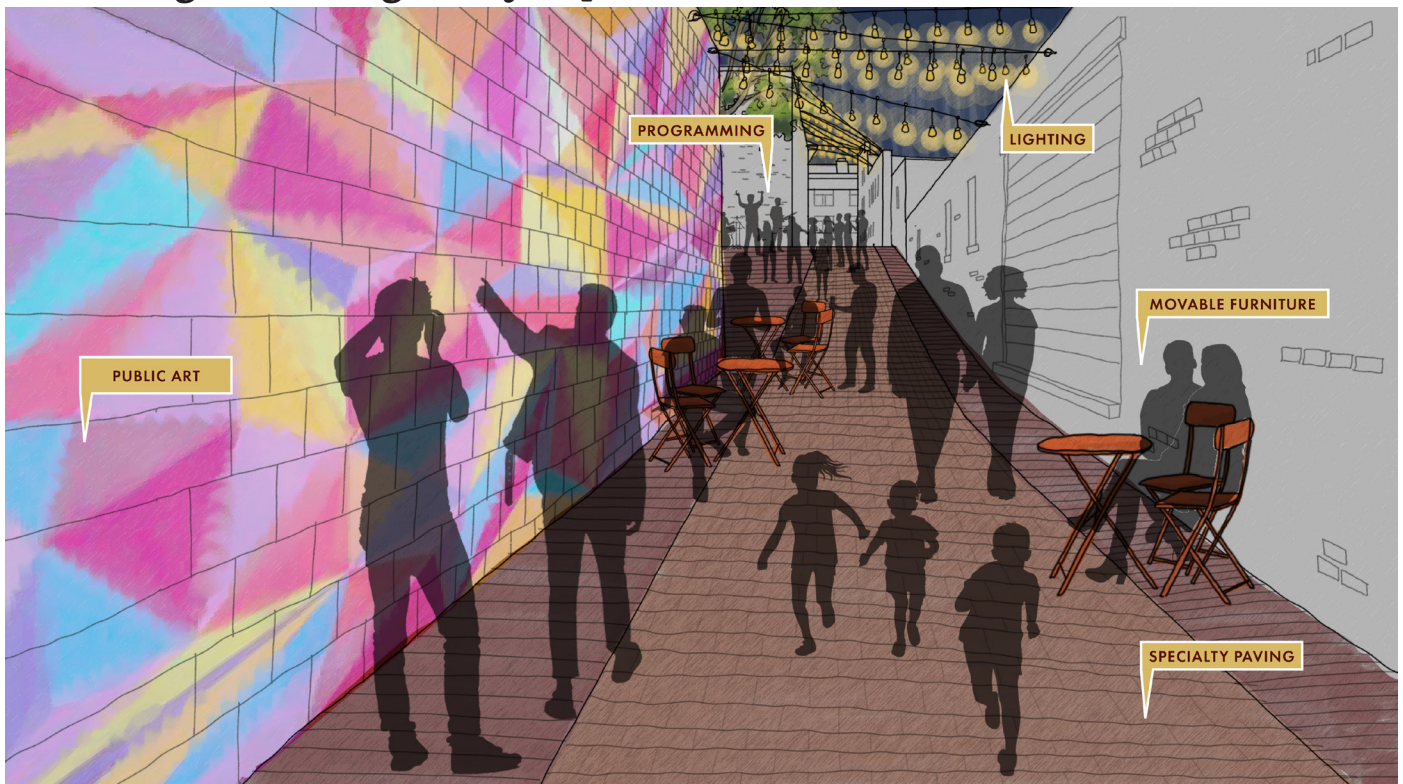
**Figure 22. Pedestrian Routes**

- Alley Network  
*Improvements and activations*
- Sidewalk Improvements  
*To enable pedestrian connections*
- Appomattox River Trail
- Daylighting Brickhouse Run Opportunity
- /// Rain Gardens and Stormwater Management

While the alley network is extensive and could be expanded to trace the Brickhouse Run and Lieutenants Run as they course through Downtown, several locations worthy of consideration for early action include:

Exchange Alley between Old and Bank streets, which is a narrow, steep section of roadway with a human scale. It should be improved with public art and string lights overhead to encourage passersby to travel this alternative route through Downtown.

**Figure 23. Rendering of Exchange Alley Improvements**







*View of visible stretch of Brickhouse Run along Exchange Alley with potential for public realm improvements*

Exchange Alley between Bank and Tabb streets, where the alley opens up, creating a unique space flanking a visible segment of Brickhouse Run. There is a small landscaped area where the grade changes, and the building backs meet to frame an intimate corner in Downtown that could host some street furniture looking toward the waterway and adjacent greenery. Investments here should include improved landscaping on the hill and along the Run.

Pelham Alley between Trapezium Brewing and Cockade Alley, which has the potential to connect loft housing and businesses on the east side of Downtown with Old Towne under the Adams Street bridge. The pathway can be improved with ground stone, lighting, a mural and some wildflowers in the summertime.



# 13

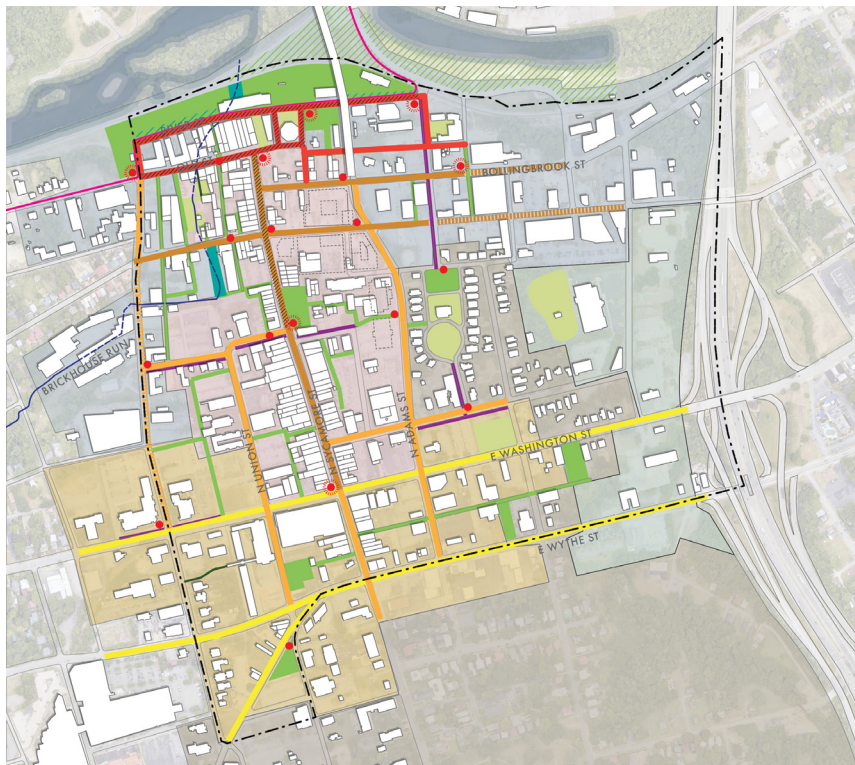
## Maintain and beautify streetscapes and sidewalks

Downtown’s aging infrastructure is apparent at surface level, with cracked and narrow sidewalks and uneven curbs that pose a challenge to pedestrians--especially those with limited mobility or sight. Throughout much of Downtown, there are significant stretches of sidewalk that lack shade trees and pedestrian lighting, resulting in sun exposure during the hot summer months and dark evenings for patrons leaving local restaurants and bars after the sun goes down. As development and rehabilitation efforts move forward in Downtown, take every opportunity to improve the basics -- replacing curbs and sidewalks, adding pedestrian scale lighting, and integrating trees for added greenery and shade.

Use the sidewalk and crosswalks to provide design cues tied to particular locations in Downtown, with the Riverfront area retaining its cobblestone streets and brick sidewalks and other Old Towne streets retaining a Historic look with fully brick sidewalks. Elsewhere in Downtown, adopt a “Historic Light” approach that uses brick as an accent along sidewalks and crosswalks, but allows other materials to meet the street. For consistency, select the same style of pedestrian lighting and other street furniture (benches, trash cans, wayfinding signage) to deploy throughout Downtown. Wherever space allows, introduce planting strips and trees.

### ***MORE TREES!***

*- quote from public meeting*

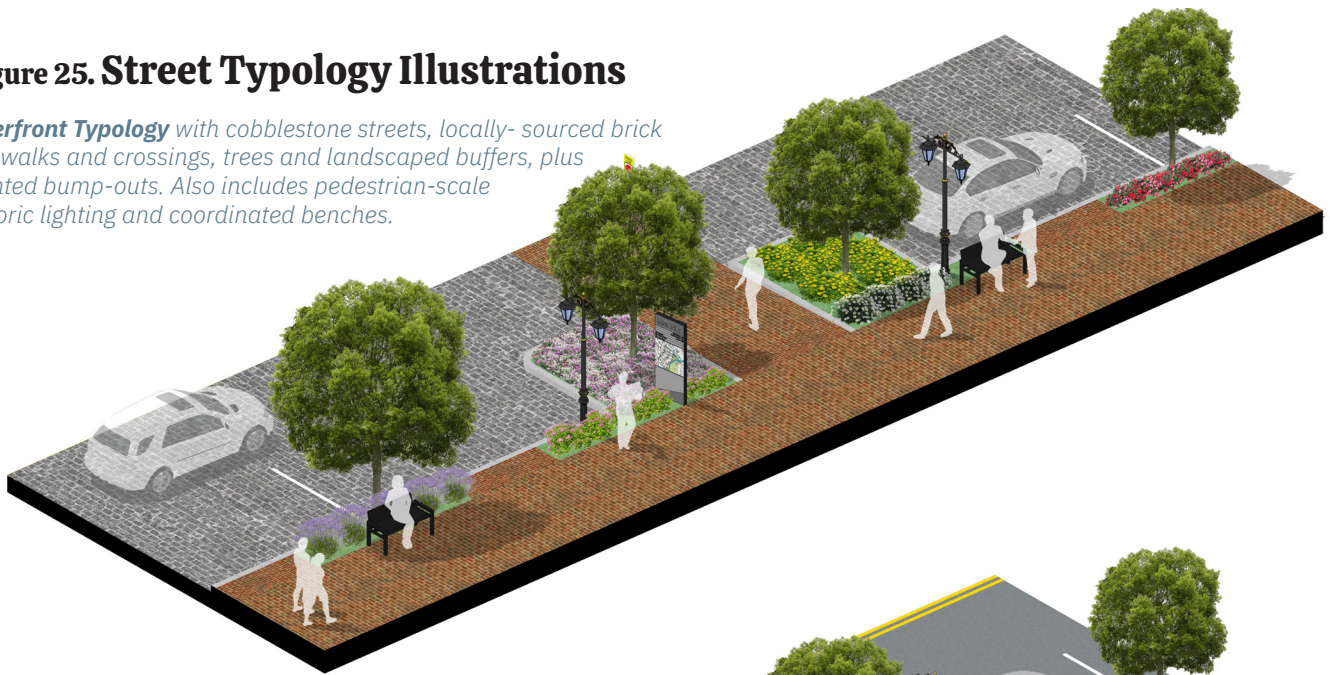


**Figure 24. Street Typologies**

- Riverfront
- Historic
- Historic Light
- Road Diet Redesign
- Sidewalk Improvements
- Wayfinding & Cultural Signage
- ⊙ Gateway Signage
- /// Street Closure and/or Pedestrian First Zone
- Existing Open Space
- Proposed Open Space & Alley Network

## Figure 25. Street Typology Illustrations

**Riverfront Typology** with cobblestone streets, locally-sourced brick sidewalks and crossings, trees and landscaped buffers, plus planted bump-outs. Also includes pedestrian-scale historic lighting and coordinated benches.



**Historic Typology** similar to Riverfront, but with asphalt street paving.



**Historic Light Typology** similar to Historic, but integrating concrete as a complementary sidewalk material in between brick accents. Bricks for sidewalk accents should be locally-sourced.



*More lights and better sidewalks.  
Infrastructure can bring a place up.*

- quote from survey



## 14

### Test design scenarios that activate the public realm

Streetscape improvements to upgrade curbs and sidewalks, install additional pedestrian-scale lighting and street furniture, introduce gateway signage and public art, and bury utilities where opportunity presents involve costly capital projects with design, engineering, and construction phases. To make improvements in the near term, seek opportunities for quicker, but impactful -- and often temporary -- projects to test ideas that will improve the public realm, reclaim asphalt for people or shade trees, slow road-ways, and build excitement about more permanent changes to come.

Cities across the nation, including Petersburg during the COVID-19 shut-down, have had success with outdoor pop-ups atop underutilized land and within right-of-ways that can be temporarily closed to cars. Beyond greening and temporary-road-diet improvements, opportunities to test-drive public realm improvements in the near-term include:

Halifax Triangle - In the 1950s, there were two movie theaters in the Halifax Triangle, which is now mostly open and un-programmed. Before district-specific planning for reinvestment and formal public space design moves forward in collaboration with neighbors and community members, consider a temporary drive-in (or BYO lawn chair) movie theater to welcome families back to the space with regular programming.

Flexible Outdoor Dining Tables - Efforts to upgrade vacant lots in close on or near Sycamore with shared outdoor seating for customers who have ordered take-out from Downtown restaurants; an ideal location for this type of shared outdoor dining area would be on a lot that is not adjacent to an existing food or beverage destination that might otherwise be able to offer outdoor table-service, which is a nice option to have in Downtown.

## CASE STUDIES:

### Pop-Up Beer Garden Philadelphia PA



The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) creates seasonal gardens and hang-out spaces with seating, shade, and plantings. With to-go food options near by and beer on tap, these spaces are a major summertime attraction.

### Monroe Street Drive-In Detroit MI



In partnership with Bedrock and Emagine Entertainment, the City of Detroit reactivated a paved area in Downtown with a drive-in pop-up movie theater that offered showings Thursdays through Sundays. This winter activity transforms into an outdoor roller rink in the summer months.

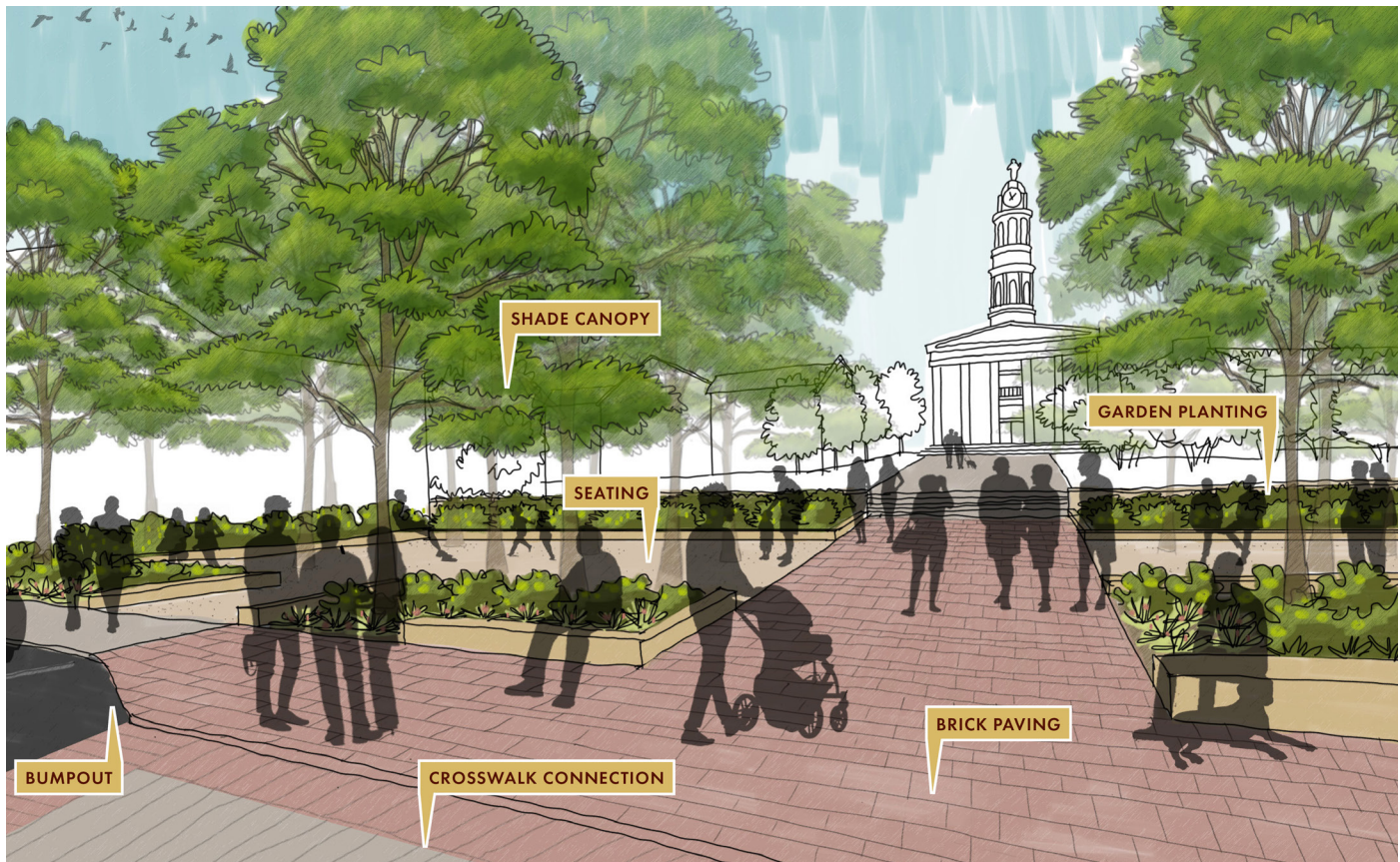


# 15

Create a central public plaza and gathering space on Sycamore in front of the Courthouse

Efforts to bring a permanent public open space to the heart of Downtown should focus on a catalytic opportunity to transform the parking lot in front of the historic Courthouse with a well-designed plaza fit to frame this iconic building, host events, and provide a relaxing space along Sycamore Street. Though the planned investments to the Courthouse complex include some green space tucked behind the Courthouse, it will be elevated, invisible from main corridors, and thus only lightly used by the public. Redirecting those design dollars to this parking lot will bring new activity and energy to Sycamore Street, and the proposed parking garage that will accompany the new Courthouse will more than replace lost parking spaces.

**Figure 26. Rendering of Courthouse Steps Plaza**



*This plaza should be designed with green stormwater infrastructure that helps capture rainwater, slowing its path to the aged sewers.*

More outdoor seating  
for people.

- quote from public event

*At present, the historic Courthouse, set atop a hill, steps down to a parking lot that occupies a prime stretch of Sycamore Street frontage and the most iconic view in Downtown.*





# 16

## Consider activating Sycamore Street as a pedestrian-first street

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Downtown community rallied in support of local businesses and closed a segment of Sycamore Street to cars, instead inviting restaurants and bars to serve their patrons outdoors in the street and inviting people to walk freely within a small stretch of Downtown. People loved it and want to bring back a pedestrian-oriented zone on the stretch of Petersburg’s main street between Tabb and Old streets. While temporary measures can close the street for special events, consider redesigning Sycamore Street as a pedestrian-first street in the long-term.

Brick paving across the street at the same level as the sidewalk can send a signal to drivers to slow down as they carefully navigate this unique space designed for pedestrians, but retaining the flexibility to allow through-traffic and deliveries for adjacent businesses. Use bump-outs to add greenery and shade, which will add beauty, comfort, and extra character to this shared street.

*Existing view looking north on Sycamore Street*



**Figure 27. Rendering of Sycamore as a Pedestrian-First Street**



*Likewise, the planted beds should incorporate green stormwater infrastructure to lessen the burden on Downtown’s aging sewers.*



# 17

## Invest in a connected green space along the River

The project that most captured the community's imagination during the planning process is the opportunity to create a multi-functional series of connected green spaces along the Appomattox River and Harborfront at the northern edge of Downtown. Designed to welcome locals and visitors, people of all ages, for individual or small group visits as well as large events, the conceptual site plan includes, from west to east:

A trailhead for the Appomattox River Trail

A small but formalized parking area to augment the new planned parking garage, which will be within a five minute walk of the riverfront park

Rain gardens to absorb rainfall and floodwaters and opportunities to daylight Brickhouse Run

A destination playground to draw families from across Petersburg and the region

A Visitors Center within South Side Depot

An event lawn and stage for musical and theatrical performances

Gathering terraces where people can sit and relax

A formalized plaza for the farmers market complete with a covered pavilion to protect against sun and rain

A plaza for City events in front of Union Station that connects to trails, harborfront boardwalks, and an event center and flexible great lawn at the Harborfront

**Figure 28. Conceptual Site Plan of a Downtown Riverfront Park**





**Figure 29. Rendering of a Downtown Riverfront Park from Adams Street Bridge**



This large-scale and long-term investment will require significant design, phasing, and resources, but it promises to anchor Downtown's social life, improve its resiliency to head and flooding, encourage healthy activities for residents who come to exercise, to exhale, or to connect with nature and fellow community members.

*Existing view  
looking north  
on Sycamore  
Street*



*A smaller-scale outdoor music venue.  
Could have a playground, shaded  
seating, stage, and maybe even a dog  
park nearby.*

*- quote from public event*

*A place to gather, eat, see  
art, listen to live music.*

*- quote from public event*

# 18

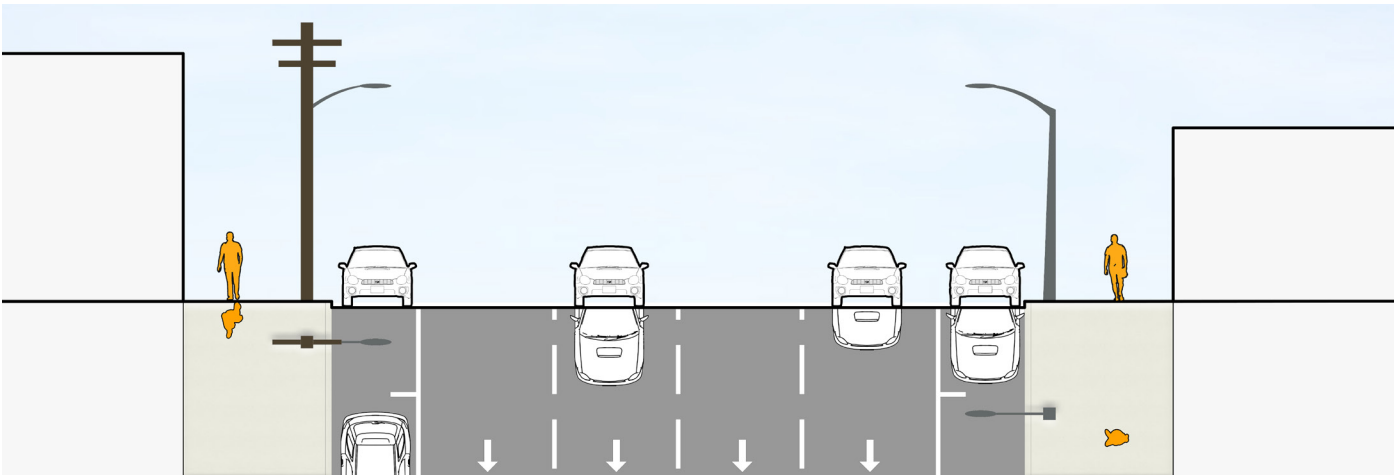
## Implement a road diet on Washington and Wythe

*Slower traffic. Need to stop speeders.*

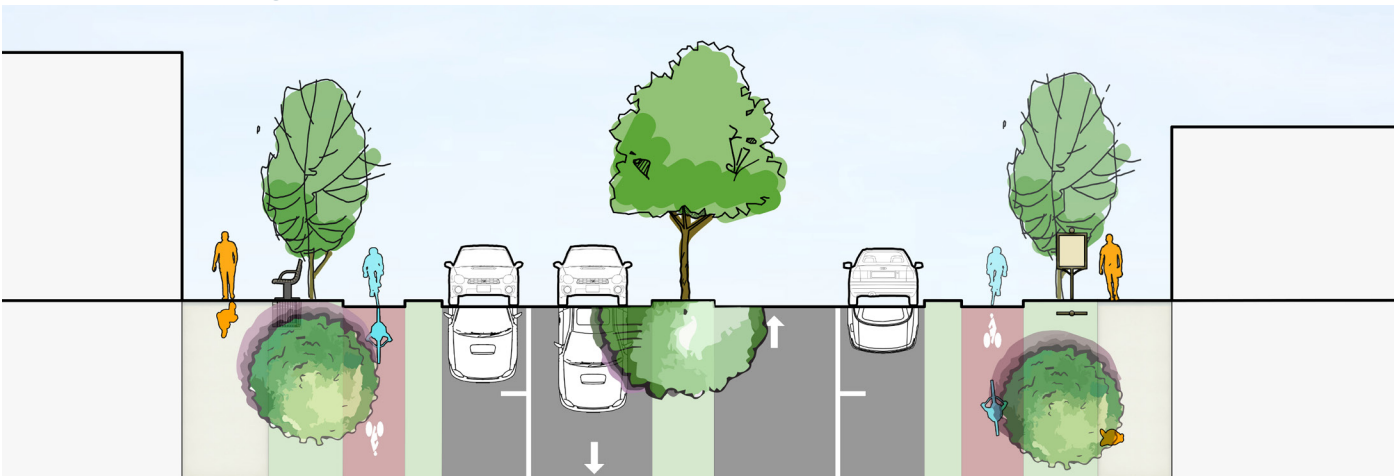
- quote from public event

The one-way, auto-oriented, vehicular thoroughways along Washington and Wythe streets bring high-speed traffic through Downtown, while creating a significant barrier between Downtown and near neighborhoods to the south. The initial design of these wide corridors, which tore through Petersburg's historic Black business district at the Halifax Triangle, created a new pattern of land use and architecture less suitable for the historic Downtown core.

Virginia DOT's ongoing STARS study is evaluating options for improving Petersburg's I-85 and I-95 highway interchange, and with that work, also evaluating potential improvements to Washington and Wythe. A significant road diet for both streets aimed at slowing through-traffic and creating a safer and



Sample section of Washington Street, today; note that corridor varies in width as it traverses Downtown.



**Figure 30. Section of Potential Road Diet for Washington Street**

Potential for Washington Street - a two-way conversion would reduce the road from four lanes to two, with protected bike lanes, on-street parking on both sides of the street, plus a tree-lined landscaped median and planted buffers between the bike lanes and sidewalks

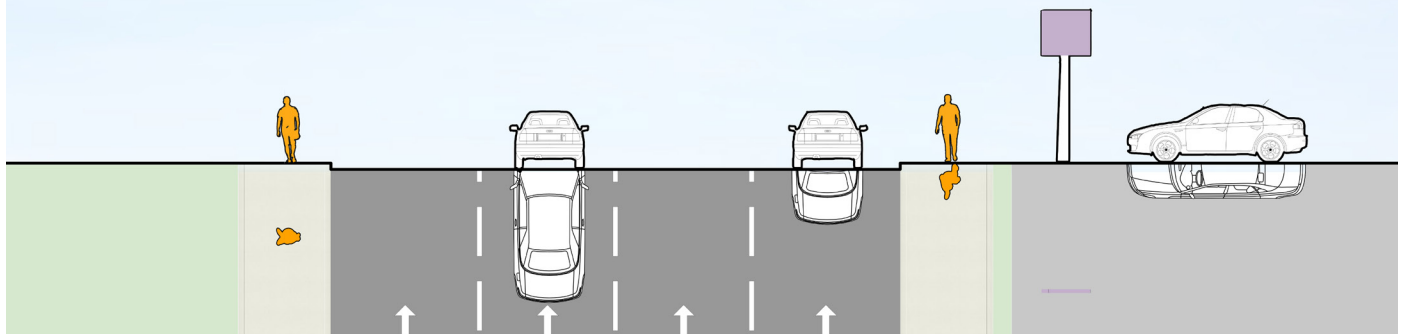


more comfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists is necessary and will help provide a sense of arrival in Downtown. Though designs are still in progress, initial concepts emerging from the STARS study are well aligned with the values and priorities of the Downtown Plan, envisioning a return of both corridors to two-way traffic and a reduction in vehicular lanes to make space for bike lanes, trees, safer sidewalks, shorter crossing distances, as well as room for street furnishing such as benches, pedestrian-scale lighting, trash receptacles, possible bike share stations, and wayfinding signage. Transforming these corridors as multi-modal or “complete streets” will also boost the appeal and thus the land value and redevelopment potential of adjacent property.

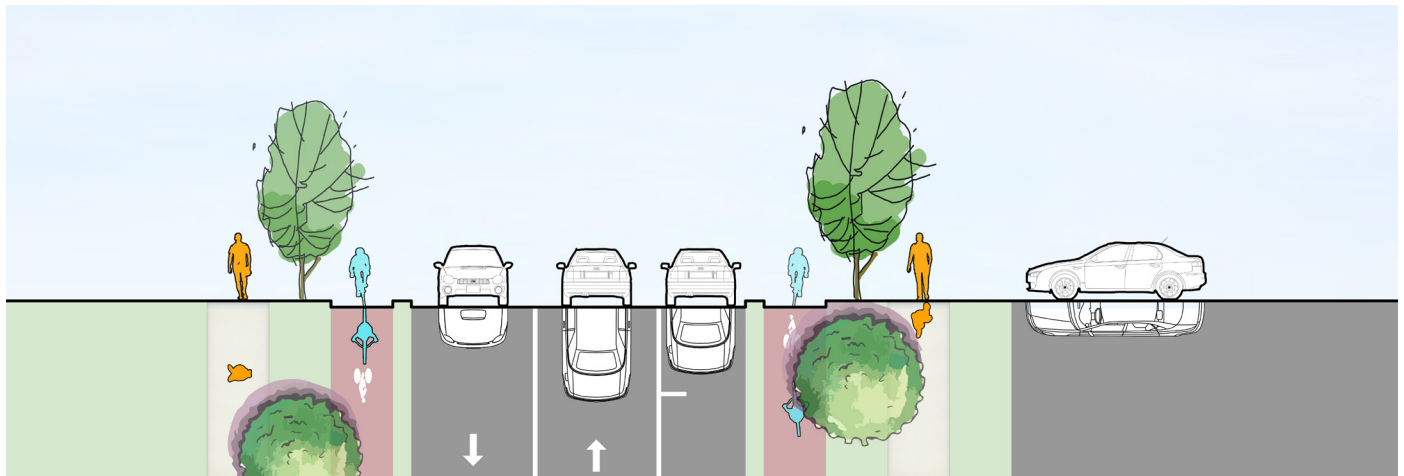
The bike lanes would connect to planned bike lanes along Adams and a potential bike lane on Market Street, both of which would lead cyclists north to the Appomattox River Trail and beyond.



*Precedent images of similar improvements*



*Sample section of Wythe Street, today; note that corridor varies in width as it traverses Downtown.*



**Figure 31. Section of Potential Road Diet for Wythe Street**

Potential for Wythe Street - a two-way conversion would reduce the road from four lanes to two, with space to incorporate protected bike lanes, on-street parking on one side of the street, and trees to add shade coverage for the bike lanes and sidewalks



# On the Map

## ACTION ITEMS:

**19**

Partner with the National Park Service to draw visitors from the Battlefield

**20**

Increase marketing to a range of audiences, including Petersburg residents

**21**

Host regular events and programs that draw people from a variety of backgrounds and interests

**22**

Create a stronger presence for VSU Downtown

**23**

Invest in gateways with signage and wayfinding

**Grow Downtown as a destination for residents, students, service members, and visitors, and a place that people know about (and know how to find!).**

The strategies under this goal aim to draw more residents, students, and visitors to Downtown through new attractions, improved marketing, investments in signage and wayfinding, and intentional programming in Downtown to attract missing markets and increase inclusivity.

**19**

Partner with the National Park Service to draw visitors from the Battlefield to Downtown and vice versa

Petersburg's most notable tourist attraction is the Petersburg National Battlefield, which includes the Eastern Front Visitor Center and Poplar Grove National Cemetery in Petersburg, Five Forks Battlefield in Dinwiddie, and Grant's Headquarters at City Point in Hopewell. A 2009 Boundary Adjustment Study by the National Park Service (NPS) considered adding South Side Depot in Downtown Petersburg to the Petersburg National Battlefield's footprint, suggesting that by locating a contact station or visitors center in South Side Depot, an additional 30,000 to 40,000 tourists would come to Downtown each year. Though the site met all the requisite criteria, the boundary expansion did not occur, and the NPS remains committed to providing visitor services at its main location on the Eastern Front. There remain, however, several critical opportunities to strengthen the connection between Downtown Petersburg, its history, and historic assets with those of other sites in the region of national significance, most notably the Battlefield.



#### Establish a Petersburg Visitor Center in Downtown

- In 2022, the City allocated \$2.4 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to renovate the historic South Side Depot in hopes of creating a Visitor Center to draw tourists directly to Downtown. Though the Park Service does not currently have the staff capacity to have a regular presence at such a satellite location, the NPS is interested in finding ways to collaborate with the City to provide occasional programming (i.e., lectures, tabling at events, walking tours), visitor education, and volunteer training at South Side Depot, along with maps and brochures that provide information about NPS sites nearby. As plans for a Downtown Visitor Center take shape, engage the NPS to determine the specifics of a partnership in program delivery and promotion. The goal should be to staff the center such that it can welcome guests seven days a week, and if the potential arises to co-locate an official NPS and City Visitor Center in Downtown at South Side Depot, such an arrangement would be immensely beneficial for Downtown businesses and tourism, and would likely result in increased visitorship for the Park Service as well.

Pursue cross-marketing opportunities - While the NPS cannot make specific recommendations about regional food, beverage, and other tourist destinations, the brochure racks at NPS Visitor Centers can provide information about the region's offerings. Make sure that materials about Downtown's food, drink, hospitality, and

entertainment venues are up to date, and include information about historic sites clustered in and around Downtown for visitors keen to explore the area's history more deeply. Also review existing NPS materials online and in print and suggest updates to reflect the current Downtown experience. If possible, create a cross-referenced calendar of events that includes special events at the Battlefield and those in Downtown as well.

Strengthen multi-modal connections - currently the best way to travel between Downtown Petersburg and the Battlefield is to drive. Once at the Battlefield, many visitors enjoy walking the 10 miles of trails across the Eastern Front. With investments in the regional trail network coming the Appomattox River Trail and proposed Fall Line Trail, there may be opportunities to extend a bicycle and walking trail connection to the Petersburg National Battlefield Park, which would add to the unique combination of outdoor recreation and historical tourism in the area. In the shorter-term, revisit the plan to establish a trolley loop between the Petersburg Battlefield sites, Downtown, and other historically significant sites nearby, such as Blandford Church and Cemetery. The City and NPS successfully obtained trolleys through the Federal Lands Access Program; now they need to be put to use. Work with NPS to develop a pilot plan, tied either to special events, or specific efforts to increase local community visitorship (i.e., from VSU, from Fort Gregg-Adams, or from different Petersburg neighborhoods) to both Downtown and the Battlefield.

## 20

Complement regional tourism destinations with investments in local attractions that tell lesser known histories and foster memories made in the present

Beyond Petersburg National Battlefield, the City is rich with historic sites. The City currently relies on volunteers to staff Centre Hill Museum and Blandford Church, so visiting hours are limited. The Centre Hill Museum is open on Saturdays and Sundays or by appointment, and Blandford Church, which currently hosts the City's temporary visitors center, is open Thursdays through Sundays or by appointment. Other attractions in the region, such as Battersea, may be open only one day each week, and some, such as the Siege Museum, formerly located in the Merchant's Exchange Building, have been closed.

These local sites, plus others -- among them, a collection of sites with notable African American histories in Downtown and on Pocahontas Island -- tell a rich story of the city. The Historic Petersburg Foundation website provides a good deal of information about many local sites, but

does not include a centralized "plan your visit" page with a map and information about each site's visiting hours or other history-related tourism opportunities, such as the Petersburg History Walking Tours led by Petersburg Company. The Petersburg Area Regional Tourism has a print brochure and a "History Buff Tour" web page which does contain a map and visiting hours for Blandford Church, Centre Hill Museum, Petersburg National Battlefield, City Point National Cemetery in Hopewell, and Pamplin Historical Park & The National Museum of the Civil War Soldier in Dinwiddie, but it does not contain the full collection of local sites of interest. Work with both groups to build out a user-friendly visitor's guide that invites heritage travelers to scratch below the surface and discover the city's lesser known sites and histories during their visit. Also work with the historic sites themselves to align open hours so that tourists can see multiple sites within one trip.



*Photos taken at Pocahontas Island and the Halifax Triangle*



**Figure 32. African American Heritage Assets in and near Downtown**



African American history is United States history, and Downtown Petersburg, is rich with significant historical sites that tell the story of the African American experience. Though various history websites make the more dominant historical narratives easily accessible online, it can be difficult to find information on these lesser known sites and role they played in Petersburg's, and this nation's history, more broadly.

## 21

Increase marketing to a range of audiences, including Petersburg residents

To grow Downtown's business mix, Downtown must grow its customer base not just by adding new Downtown residents, but by attracting more resident visitors from elsewhere in the City and region -- including students, soldiers, and their families -- and capturing the attention of more tourists traveling from farther afield to visit not just the Battlefield and historic sites in the area, but other regional attractions such as the Virginia Motorsports Park in North Dinwiddie and the Keystone Truck and Tractor Museum in Colonial Heights, both of which draw significant numbers of visitors. Cell phone data suggest that Downtown Petersburg is not on the radar of many potential visitors. Different audiences will respond best to different messaging, events, and attractions, but all require clarity in terms of what local offerings are available and when.

Establish a Downtown (and regional) calendar of events as a one-stop information shop that connects regular programming like the River Street Market days, Friday for the Arts!, Wabi Sabi's live music schedule, Trivia Night at Trapezium Brewery, and other social events with special events in the region, such as the Festival of Grapes and Hops, the Independence Day Fireworks Show, VSU's Homecoming, Family Weekend, and Graduation, Fort Gregg-Adam's Graduation Ceremonies.

Increase the local marketing budget and capacity to include different channels that together tell a well-rounded story of Downtown. Beyond established historical narratives, highlight recreational, educational, cultural, and social offerings. Collaborate with the Petersburg Area Regional Tourism bureau to ensure that local efforts complement and expand their regional outreach strategy, rather than duplicate efforts.

## 22

Host regular events and programs that draw people from a variety of backgrounds and interests

Regularly scheduled and special events are an important part of any Downtown's social life. They create reasons for people to come Downtown, meet friends, and support local businesses. Existing events, including the weekly farmers market and monthly art walk, as well as seasonal events such as the Christmas Tree lighting have a faithful following, but there are opportunities to add to Downtown's social calendar and draw more people and dollars to Downtown in the process.

Make sure that students are invited to Downtown early and often, with specific events planned during Freshman and new student orientation. Given the proximity, lead a walk or bike ride from campus to Downtown businesses offering student welcome deals. Design a Downtown scavenger hunt to encourage students to look around. Host a special outdoor concert or festival marketed to students. Exposure to Downtown's businesses will help students see Downtown as part of their college experience.

Diversity program offerings, and aim to host events that are representative of Petersburg's population. During the planning process, some people shared that they do not currently feel welcome in Downtown or do not see events Downtown that are of interest to them. People expressed an interest in more cultural festivals and events that celebrate Petersburg as a majority-Black city. Other cities have hosted music, film, dance, fitness, and nature programs that center Black participants and welcome their allies. With its riverfront, planned trail network, and rich cultural heritage, Petersburg has many opportunities to expand programming along these lines.



Encourage locals to experience Downtown anew with specific events designed to draw residents from across the City. During the planning process, we also heard that while Downtown and Uptown used to be major shopping destinations, many people have fallen out of the habit of visiting. Work with businesses to offer a local discount, to host locals nights at bars and restaurants, and consider an annual outdoor Downtown block party along Sycamore Street, complete with a street closure, music, food, and games. As investments in the Riverfront park or Courthouse plaza progress, the location of the block party can change to welcome the City to Downtown's newest destinations.

2,000 people live Downtown,  
and more than half are  
Black. In most events hosted  
in Downtown, I did not feel  
as a Black woman that it  
reflected all cultures present  
in Petersburg. More cultural  
festivals.

- quote from public event

## In Color Birding - Philadelphia PA

In Color Birding makes birding a positive experience for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) folks and their allies, organizing inclusive outings that bring BIPOC voices, nature lovers, and birders of all levels to parks, waterways, and historically underserved areas.

[www.incolorbirding.org](http://www.incolorbirding.org)

## CASE STUDIES:

### AFRAM - Baltimore MD



AFRAM is a free, family-oriented celebration of Baltimore's African American heritage hosted in a public park over Juneteenth weekend with live music, entertainment, food, activities, and more.  
[www.aframbaltimore.com](http://www.aframbaltimore.com)

### Black Girls Run - nationwide



With local chapters leading neighborhood runs and representing in big race events, the goal of Black Girls Run is to encourage and motivate Black women to practice a healthy lifestyle.  
[www.blackgirlsrun.com](http://www.blackgirlsrun.com)





## 23

### Create a stronger presence for VSU Downtown

Downtowns that function as college towns benefit from the energy and income that students and visiting families bring, and vibrant Downtowns also help universities attract top talent. Beyond a series of welcoming events for VSU students each fall, partner with Virginia State University leadership and faculty to find ways to grow VSU's presence in Downtown. Downtown Petersburg has space to welcome VSU classroom or lab space, student housing for upperclassmen, social space where students can hang out, experience-based learning opportunities through internships and jobs with Downtown businesses and organizations, and civic or community service projects. As such a stronger presence for VSU in Downtown could take the form of real estate development that establishes a physical footprint for the campus in Downtown as well as softer connections forged by private businesses that market to students with prices and products of interest.

*VSU Education Hub!*

*- quote from public event*

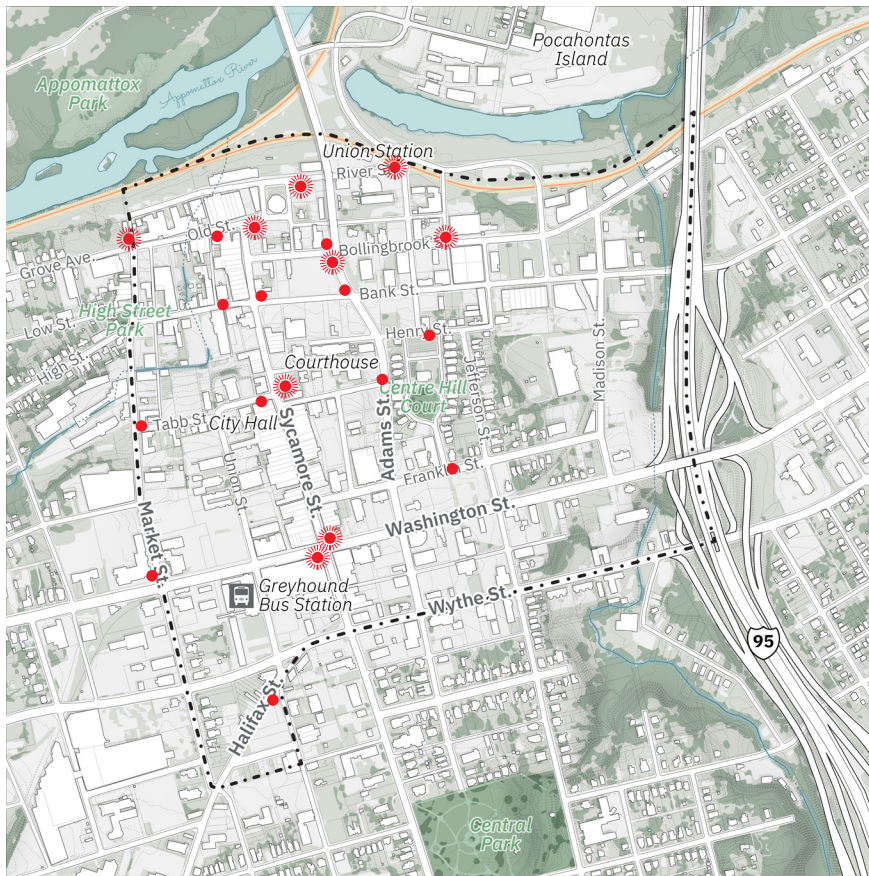
## 24

### Invest in gateways with signage and wayfinding

Most people arriving in Downtown Petersburg from elsewhere approach from Interstate 95. Southbound Exit 52 for Washington and Wythe streets does have signs for Historic Old Towne Petersburg and Petersburg National Battlefield, with smaller signs advising drivers to use Washington Street for Historic Old Towne Petersburg and Wythe Street for the Battlefield. There is also vertical signage that announces arrival in Petersburg at the end of the exit ramp, and some businesses have installed wayfinding that directs drivers toward Trapezium Brewery, Demolition Coffee, and Saucy's Bar B.Q. Another sign on the south side of Washington at Madison says "Welcome to Historic Downtown Petersburg," but that is a full three blocks from Sycamore Street,



*Examples of existing gateway signage*



**Figure 33. Gateways and Wayfinding Locations**

- Wayfinding & Cultural Signage
- ★ Gateway Signage

the main spine of Downtown. There is no signage directing drivers to turn in on Sycamore Street which leads to the heart of Downtown’s historic business district. Similarly for travelers exiting the bus station at Washington and Union; there is little wayfinding support to help newcomers navigate to Downtown’s destinations.

While the streetscape improvements to Washington and Wythe will go a long way toward beautifying the approach to Downtown, slowing traffic, and incentivizing redevelopment for an improved land use mix that better transitions into Downtown, there is a need to add wayfinding signage as a signal closer to Sycamore Street that directs visitors to the Downtown core toward parking resources, restaurants, and stores.

The approach from the Adams Street bridge into Downtown is better than Washington and Wythe, because drivers are treated to a view of Petersburg’s skyline, defined by the ornate top of the Courthouse, as well as an intersection ringed by brick crosswalks at Bollingbrook Street that signals an entrance of sorts into the historic Downtown. Again, however, there is little wayfinding directing newcomers to Sycamore Street or nearby parking resources that would encourage people to get out of their cars and walk.

Work with Virginia Main Street on an early action project to design and deploy visible signage at these key intersections, directing traffic toward Downtown, and specifically toward area businesses and parking opportunities.

## 25

Monitor and support the development of new, boutique lodging options in and near Downtown as tourism continues to grow

According to the Virginia Tourism Corporation, tourism in Petersburg in 2022 generated \$41M in visitor spending supporting more than 520 jobs (direct and multiplier impacts) in the city.<sup>14</sup> This represents an increase in spending of 17% since 2016. Moreover, with its proximity to the Petersburg National Battlefield, the Virginia State University campus, Fort Gregg-Adams, and new pharmaceutical businesses locating in the City, Downtown Petersburg is a tourist, visitor, and business-traveler destination distinct from the Capital district in Richmond or the Hampton Roads region, and local visitors have a significant economic impact that benefits the City and region. The Petersburg National Battlefield generated 180,000 visitors, spending an estimated \$11.9M in 2022.<sup>15</sup> Visitation at the Battlefield has recovered since 2020, but lags behind its historic average of 199,000 annual visitors. Regardless, Petersburg is part of a major tourism region with an estimated 1.5 million visitors.<sup>16</sup>

The area surrounding Downtown does include a new inn and event space at Strawberry Hill and an estimated 300 AirBnb options for guests, as well as a mix of mid-to-value brand chain hotels. However, the closest full-service high-end hotel is on Wagner Road, several miles from Downtown and the City's main attractions. At the time of this plan's writing, a 68-room 4-Star Hilton-affiliated hotel with a restaurant that will offer dinner seven nights a week is under construction, and completing that project should remain a top priority for the City, as it will support multi-day tourism visits, be able to host larger groups, and drive economic growth fueled by Petersburg's tourism potential going forward.

<sup>14</sup> 2022 Direct Visitor Impact for Virginia Localities, <https://www.vatc.org/research/economicimpact/>

<sup>15</sup> National Park Service, 2022. Visitor Spending Effects, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Virginia Tourism Commission presentation, June 29, 2023.





*Rendering of restored Hotel Petersburg, currently under*



*Photo of Strawberry Hill Inn on Hinton Street*



# Positioned for Success

## ACTION ITEMS:

**26**

Build the network of volunteers engaged in Downtown's future

**27**

Formalize Main Street Petersburg with paid staff to support plan implementation

**28**

Secure a new revenue source by reintroducing paid parking and cycling dollars back into Downtown

## **Build capacity for implementation and stewardship over time.**

The strategies under this goal aim to assemble the resources necessary to take sustained action for change in Downtown Petersburg. No one entity will be able to take on all the recommendations in this plan; rather, implementation will require coordination and team-work, such that each partner can play to their strengths. The resources needed to drive implementation include dedicated staff and technical expertise to advance complex projects, coordinate with business and property owners, and marshal volunteers; a robust network of community volunteers ready to help; new revenue sources and grants from government and philanthropic sources, and supporting policies to guide decision making going forward.

## 26

### Formalize the local Main Street organization with paid staff to support implementation and focus on Downtown initiatives in coordination with City leadership

At present, Main Street Petersburg, Inc. is a volunteer organization working to build capacity through the Virginia Main Street Accelerator Program and identify funding for a paid Executive Director position. Without full time staff, Downtown lacks the dedicated staff time necessary to focus on implementing the plan and various programs and projects designed to support Downtown's business ecosystem.

The City's Department of Economic Development has stepped up to lead this Downtown planning effort, but going forward, both of these groups -- the City and a local Main Street organization -- have important roles to play in Downtown's unfolding future. Indeed, to effect change in the near-term, it is critical that dedicated staff be assigned or hired to drive the plan's implementation.

On the City side, responsibilities will include ongoing pursuit of government and philanthropic grants, policy changes, the creation and oversight of incentive programs, land use decisions, and development plan review, among other tasks. A strong, nonprofit Main Street organization is needed to complement the City's efforts with additional fundraising capacity, targeted marketing to elevate the visibility of Downtown and its businesses, hosting of events and programming that draw people to Downtown, conducting outreach to existing businesses in an effort to establish more consistent business hours throughout the Downtown, and organizing training and networking opportunities for existing and new local businesses.

While Main Street Petersburg works through the Accelerator Program in pursuit of Main Street designation, early action items to support the organization's development include hiring a consultant to act as an organizational coach to develop a work plan, support efforts to rebuild the Board, begin to fundraise, and seek sustained funding for a full-time Executive Director position. While the long-term goal will be to build out the paid staff beyond an Executive Director, a Main Street organization also provides great learning ground for motivated VSU interns looking for experience in marketing, social media communications, event planning, fundraising, and other small business and economic development-related tasks.





## 27

### Build the network of volunteers engaged in Downtown's future

Beyond paid staff within the City and a local Main Street organization focused solely on Downtown, implementation will benefit from an all-hands on deck approach. Some strategies -- such as investing in a connected green space along the Appomattox River -- can be advanced through a project-based approach that taps existing partners -- such as FOLAR and the owners of the Harborfront -- to lend energy and expertise and help marshal resources as needed.

Other projects and ideas, however, may be best advanced by passionate individuals or entities interested in taking on a piece of the plan and making it happen. One way to encourage meaningful volunteer work is to engage local philanthropic partners in the design, funding, and administration of a Downtown Challenge Grant program that invites applications from anyone who has an idea that will advance the plan's goals and strategies, thereby incentivizing volunteer participation by providing resources to implement people's passion projects.



*Macon Lights is an example of a successful Challenge Grant project*



Spurred by a sizable philanthropic gift, which is stewarded by a local foundation, the initial commitment of resources can finance projects proposed by community members in the spirit of the plan, which helps maintain momentum and advance smaller-scale efforts as the groundwork is laid for larger developments and capital projects. If such funding can be secured, the process involves a call for proposals, published once or twice a year, that asks for a project idea, a proposed budget and timeline, and narrative description of how the project relates to the plan, how it will be implemented, and by whom. A Downtown Challenge Review Committee and process will need to be developed to select projects for implementation. Be prepared to offer some technical assistance both during the application process and as projects move forward.

## CASE STUDY:

### Downtown Macon Challenge Grant

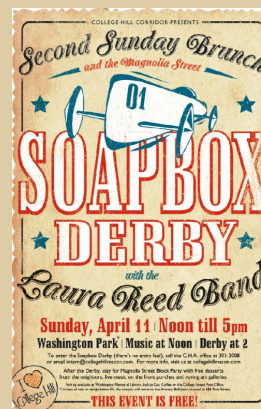


The Community Foundation of Central Georgia, with funding from the Peyton Anderson Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, has administered multiple rounds of a Downtown Challenge Grant program to implement the Downtown Macon Action Plan (MAP). In the first round alone, the program deployed \$3 million over the course of three years to community members committed to bringing ideas from the plan into reality. Grants ranged from \$2,000 to \$50,000 or more, depending on the project budgets pitched by community members.

**[cfcga.org/dtc-grant-announcement](http://cfcga.org/dtc-grant-announcement)**



*Other projects include Gospel Brunch Concerts in the park and a yearly Soap Box Derby, events that bring people together Downtown.*



All in, this plan's strategies will require and investment of hundreds of millions in public improvements, which will yield economic benefits back to the City in the form of additional consumer and tourism dollars as well as associated tax revenue growth through the growth and preservation of Downtown as a place and new energy and excitement throughout the community. Additional investments to modernize Downtown's aged infrastructure will be necessary to support new development and prevent recurring disruptions to Downtown business, services, and social life caused by breakdowns in the sewer system. Different financial mechanisms exist to capture and direct much needed reinvestment dollars to Downtown.

Consider increasing debt utilization - In Petersburg, where the memory of the 2016 financial crisis lingers, commitments of public resources are weighed carefully, as they should be. Today, the City's economic outlook is much stronger, and the City's financial advisors acknowledge that it is important to continue to diversify Petersburg's economy and to invest in parks, in Downtown, and in economic development strategies that can increase wealth and income for the City. With a debt service level of 4.5% of the City budget in 2023 compared to 10%, which is typical of other municipalities and allowed under existing City policy, one option to raise funds for strategic investment is to use more debt capacity and use that debt for key projects or to address needed capital improvements caused by failing infrastructure and increased development.

Consider Tax Increment Financing (TIF) - The time may be ripe to establish a Downtown TIF District, used to capture the increased tax revenue from new development and cycle those dollars back into the Downtown District for continued improvements. With several significant development projects on the horizon and the potential for more, it is not too late in Downtown's renaissance to embrace this strategy. However, a TIF District does require a certain scale of development before the revenue generated for reinvestment is significant.

Consider creating a Tourism Improvement District (TID)<sup>17</sup> - Similar to a BID, a TID is a tourism-related business district created to increase revenue for the specific purposes of destination marketing and capital investment. This is in addition to the already existing Tourism Zone. Tourism businesses like hotels, restaurants, bars, and other attractions in the district agree to levy and manage the usage of an additional quarterly sales tax percentage of 1% to 2% to fund tourism marketing and development, which could include supporting tourism development and experience enhancements in Downtown. With sufficient resources it could also include projects such as a historical interpretation center at South Side Depot, or outdoor recreation destination at the Riverfront, among other uses.

#### Continue to explore Public Private Partnerships

- Also known as PPPs or P3s, public private partnerships emerge with larger-scale developments, like the one proposed at Adams and Bank streets and referenced in Strategy 11, where a combination of City resources (in the form of land or gap financing) plus private capital work together to yield public benefits, such as the proposed parking deck within the project's broader development program.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.vatc.org/TDFP/>



Reintroduce paid parking in Downtown, and cycle parking revenue back into Downtown - With the proposed parking deck bringing paid off-street parking to Downtown, it will be necessary to bring back paid on- and off-street public parking within Downtown to avoid a disincentive to utilizing the new parking deck. Current legislation enabling metered parking both on-street and on off-street lots owned or operated by the City is quite out of date, as is the set rate for parking in a metered space, which is \$0.10 per hour. As part of the Parking Study referenced in Strategy 11, include a pricing assessment to inform updates to the paid parking legislation. Write into the new legislation that some or all of the revenue collected from paid parking in Downtown shall be reinvested in Downtown. Uses could include infrastructure improvements (i.e., sidewalks, lighting, underground utilities) and support for certain Downtown services, which could be provided by the local Main Street organization (i.e., street sweeping, landscape management).

Pursue grant funding from the Commonwealth and Federal government - City staff will need to continue to write grants for state and federal funding streams that become available and align with plan goals and strategies. Examples include:

- The **Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) program** through the National Park Service and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation,<sup>18</sup> which could support elements of the proposed riverfront park.
- **Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)** is a federal grant program through FEMA that supports municipalities undertaking hazard mitigation projects to reduce risk of natural hazards and disasters, including flooding. As open space investments move forward along the riverfront and uphill in front of the historic Courthouse steps, there may be opportunities to use green stormwater infrastructure to absorb rain and flood waters, thereby lessening the burden on Downtown's aging infrastructure.
- Roadway improvements to Washington and Wythe developed through the ongoing STARS (Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions) Study will qualify to apply for implementation funding through the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment's SMART SCALE process. With representatives from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, the SMART SCALE process helps prioritize **District Grants Program (DGP)** funding and **High-Priority Projects Program (HPPP)** funding for transportation projects that improve safety, reduce congestion, increase accessibility, contribute to economic development, promote efficient land use, and support a healthier environment.
- Virginia Main Street **Community Vitality Grant (CVG)**<sup>19</sup> funding through the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which is designed to assist non-designated Main Street communities in achieving downtown revitalization goals.

<sup>18</sup> <https://cityparksalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/NPS-presentation.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/Docx/vms/vms-fy24-grant-manual.pdf>

- Virginia Main Street **Financial Feasibility Grant (FFG)** funding also through DHCD, which allows communities to work with owners of significant derelict buildings toward re-activating non-productive upper floor space. This funding stream provides a good first step for advancing Strategy 10.
- DHCD's **Community Business Launch (CBL)** grants, which funds projects designed to train emerging entrepreneurs and small business owners on business planning practices as they work toward a competition in which they pitch their ideas to a panel of judges; winners receive grant funding and technical support to kick-start their venture. This could be a good fit for a multi-tenant retail hub project, described in Strategy 3.
- DHCD's **Virginia Business District Resurgence Grant (VBDRG)**<sup>20</sup> projects support historically economically disadvantaged communities with organizational capacity building, business support, and technical assistance grants targeted specifically to small, women-owned, minority-owned, and immigrant-owned businesses within a targeted business district.
- And more!

Seek philanthropic support for Downtown programming and new capital projects - Many of this plan's goals and strategies align with the mission and interests of area foundations, which include:

- Improved health and wellness opportunities, supported by investments in Downtown's walkability, shade, and outdoor recreation amenities including trails and playgrounds
- Community and economic development efforts that result in new housing, jobs, and green space
- Historic preservation and conservation efforts that celebrate Petersburg's unique histories and historic assets and protect open spaces and natural resources while encouraging people to reconnect with nature
- Arts and cultural investments that catalyze community revitalization and economic development

<sup>20</sup> <https://dhcd.virginiainteractive.org/sites/default/files/Docx/vms/fy24-resurgence-grant-hta-presentation.pdf>

## 29

### Consider updates to zoning and policy to support plan implementation

*Petersburg Next*, the City's new comprehensive plan includes a future land use map with three main land use categories within Downtown: Community Mixed-Use, Historic Core Neighborhoods, and Conservation and Recreation along the waterways and atop Centre Hill, and these land use designations along with the planning and development principles that accompany them in the comprehensive plan are consistent with the vision of the *Downtown Plan*. The Future Land Use Map further identifies North Sycamore Street, Washington and Wythe, and Halifax Street as Corridors, which should receive consistent streetscape and gateway treatments.

Several land use, zoning, and policy-related strategies within the City's comprehensive plan are worth reiterating here, and they dovetail with recommendations in the Downtown Plan and will support implementation efforts in keeping with this plan's community-driven vision:

#### **For the public realm:**

Prioritize capital improvements such as wayfinding, streetscaping, lighting, and pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure along designated Gateways and Corridors, including Sycamore, Washington, Wythe, and Halifax

Facilitate active and healthy lifestyles through integrating sidewalks, bike lanes, and green space into new development

#### **For development:**

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow for a greater variety of residential types, including accessory dwellings and live/work units, in residential and mixed-use districts

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to support "missing middle" housing; create incentives within the Zoning Ordinance for these types of structures to promote their development

Direct adaptive reuse or infill development on underdeveloped or vacant properties when possible

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to ensure compatible development in designated historic districts and throughout Historic Core Neighborhoods

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to reduce parking minimums and require installation of bike racks at parking areas in multi-family residential, commercial, and mixed-use districts

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to require EV charging stations at all new multi-family residential, mixed-use, commercial, and industrial development based on the number of parking spaces on site

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to bolster requirements and incentives to incorporate low impact development and environmental site design into development applications

Evaluate City fees, including impact and connection fees, to ensure they can adequately generate funding for future infrastructure improvements



# Alignment with *Petersburg Next*, the City's new Comprehensive Plan

Each of the strategies in the *Downtown Petersburg Plan* aligns with at least one -- and often several -- of the strategies proposed in the City's new comprehensive plan, *Petersburg Next*. In fact, recommendation 10.2.2 in the comprehensive plan specifically calls to **"Implement the recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan to create a more attractive, vibrant, and interconnected Old Towne area."** This means that implementation efforts to bring elements of the *Downtown Plan* from vision to reality will, at the same time, advance the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan.

The table on the following pages identifies the specific recommendations within both the *Downtown Plan* and the *Petersburg Next* comprehensive plan that are mutually-reinforcing or overlapping in their desired outcomes. The *Downtown Plan*'s recommendations are listed by goal area in the left column, and the other columns indicate the chapters (column headers) and corresponding recommendation numbers (#.#.#) for the City's new comprehensive plan.

**The select *Petersburg Next* recommendations excerpted here are those most relevant to the *Downtown Plan*.** They are included as a quick reference for the numbered strategies in the Alignment Table on pages 86- 91. **Visit the City's website to view the full comprehensive plan.**

## 3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**3.1.2:** *Work with state economic development agencies, local economic development organizations, and local business partners to market Petersburg to Health Care businesses and manufacturers that would complement the existing businesses in these clusters.*

**3.2.1:** *Expand existing clusters in the Manufacturing, Retail, and Accommodation sectors to represent larger shares of the local economy.*

**3.2.3:** *Focus recruitment efforts on gaps identified in the Economic Development Strategic Plan by identifying and targeting prospective businesses to fill them.*

**3.2.5:** *Direct community-oriented, environmentally sustainable, and well-designed development at the historic Petersburg Harbor.*

**3.3.3:** *In partnership with local economic development organizations, offer two small business forums a year that provide educational opportunities on city processes, support opportunities, and new development in Petersburg.*

**3.3.4:** *Maintain a viable Revolving Loan Fund to assist in microlending to entrepreneurs.*

**3.3.6:** *Facilitate the development of a coworking space in Old Towne as a pilot program for entrepreneurs and remote workers.*

**3.5.1:** *Direct the development of new lodging and dining options around Old Towne and the Interstate 85 and 95 entrance corridors through incentives and Tourism Zone financing opportunities.*

**3.5.4:** *Update the City's social media and tourism website weekly to include information about upcoming events, things to do, and options for lodging, dining, and retail.*

**3.5.6:** *In partnership with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), install branded wayfinding signage to Old Towne Petersburg, Petersburg National Battlefield, the Appomattox River Trail and waterfront, and historic sites from the American Civil Rights Movement Rights Movement, and Pocahontas Island.*

**3.5.7:** *Create a visitor center in the old South Side Depot to serve as a centralized hub for tourism and information.*

## 4 HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

**4.1.4:** Avoid demolition of properties in identified historic districts, pursuing rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, or creative reuse instead.

**4.2.1:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to support “missing middle” housing. Create incentives within the Zoning Ordinance for these types of structures to promote their development.

**4.2.2:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow transitional housing as a by-right use in appropriate districts.

**4.2.6:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow for adaptive reuse, creative reuse, and opportunities for new housing in non-traditional areas (e.g., former shopping centers, former churches and schools, etc.).

**4.4.1:** Update small areas plans for Pocahontas Island, Halifax Triangle, and University Boulevard to further detail broad-based, inclusive visioning and planning for revitalization in these neighborhoods.

**4.4.2:** Collaborate with community groups and partner organizations in tactical urbanism efforts to beautify neighborhoods in the short-term. Evaluate the creation of a Private Property Mural Program as a first step.

**4.4.3:** Apply for grant funding related to infrastructure improvements as a means of supporting quality neighborhoods and economic development.

**4.5.2:** Direct mixed-income residential development in appropriate areas throughout the City, as guided by the Future Land Use Framework and Map

**4.5.2:** Ensure that adaptive reuse and infill development in designated historic districts and Old Towne is complementary to the scale and architectural character of the surrounding area.

## 5 PARKS + RECREATION, ARTS + PRESERVATION

**5.1.4:** Apply for grants and other creative funding sources to install new playground equipment in parks that currently lack facilities.

**5.1.8:** Develop new parks throughout Petersburg so 70% of all residents are within a 10-minute walk of a park.

**5.2.1:** Identify underutilized City-owned properties for reinvestment as multifunctional facility spaces for rentals and events.

**5.2.3:** Identify and evaluate opportunities for increased sponsorship opportunities at major events and parks.

**5.2.4:** Leverage creative marketing and branding to generate interest in recreational programming, assets, and events and drive participation rates.

**5.4.1:** In collaboration with regional stakeholders, invest in park upgrades and facilities at Patton Park, Rotary Park at Pocahontas Island, and Appomattox Riverside/Ferndale Park.

**5.4.2:** Identify opportunities to create additional riverfront park space with piers and docks for water access.

**5.4.3:** As river access increases, install additional wayfinding and safety signage along the riverbank for both land navigation and water access.

**5.5.3:** Actively market Arts and Culture District incentives to entrepreneurs and arts organizations; consider adding new incentives to locate in vacant, underutilized spaces.

**5.5.4:** In collaboration with local stakeholders, organize festivals and events to increase tourism and establish Petersburg as a regional event center.

**5.6.1:** In collaboration with local partners and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), identify creative ways to further educate the community on Petersburg’s diverse history.

**5.6.2:** Build inclusive preservation efforts by identifying and preserving sites/districts associated with historically Black and disinvested neighborhoods.

**5.6.3:** Direct the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic Old Towne properties as a means of increasing downtown population and economic vibrancy.

**5.6.4:** Utilize key design elements from the City’s historic districts to inform new development, especially along major commercial corridors and within transition areas between historic districts and non-historic peripheral areas.

## 5 PARKS + RECREATION, ARTS + PRESERVATION (CONTINUED)

**5.6.6:** Leverage historic preservation and heritage tourism as key elements for a strong and resilient local economy.

**5.6.8:** Create new local historic districts for Pocahontas Island, Walnut Hill, Westover Avenue, and the Halifax Triangle.

**5.6.9:** Provide support, including funding as needed, to ensure the continued operations of Petersburg's museums, such as Blandford Church, Siege Museum, and Center Hill Museum, as tourism drivers and sources of City history and identity.

## 6 COMMUNITY FACILITIES + INFRASTRUCTURE

**6.1.4:** Explore the feasibility of creating a centralized government complex.

**6.3.1:** Develop comprehensive water, sewer, and stormwater improvement strategic plans to determine the highest priority needs for investment.

**6.3.3:** Upgrade stormwater infrastructure in dense residential neighborhoods with histories of spot flooding and ponding issues.

**6.5.5:** Allocate funding for the placement of additional waste receptacles around Old Towne.

**6.5.8:** Recommend approval of rezoning and development proposals for primary, urgent, and emergency medical care land uses in and around the Old Towne, South Crater Road, and Blandford areas.

## 7 PUBLIC SAFETY

**7.4.1:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to adopt community design standards that incorporate principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) – including but not limited to requirements for lighting and landscaping maintenance – in both residential and commercial areas.

## 8 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

**8.3.8:** Preserve available open spaces adjacent to marsh and wetlands to allow for natural protection of water quality, flood mitigation, and the protection of biodiversity and habitat.

**8.4.2:** Locate new development and critical facilities and infrastructure outside of current flood zones and areas projected to be impacted by sea level rise in the future.

**8.5.1:** Reduce the heat island effect by proactively installing new native trees throughout the city, with priority areas determined by using heat mapping data from Virginia State University and the Heat Watch project. Apply for Tree City USA designation to help implement this strategy.

**8.5.2:** Require the use of plants native to the area in all public landscaping, and require or strongly encourage the use of natives for private development through ordinances and invasive species management plans.



## 9 MOBILITY + TRANSPORTATION

**9.1.4:** Complete a parking study/inventory in Old Towne to provide further information about parking surpluses, deficiencies, and maintenance priorities.

**9.1.5:** Complete additional road safety audits along Wythe Street, Halifax Street, and Sycamore Street.

**9.3.2:** Complete a study to assess the feasibility of developing complete streets at the five locations identified (including Washington & Wythe, N Adams, N Sycamore, and Halifax streets) and serve as a foundation for obtaining grant funding.

**9.3.4:** In partnership with CPDC and TCAMPO, complete a greenways plan to identify potential locations for future greenways and steps for acquisition and development.

**9.4.2:** Work with FOLAR and VDOT to develop and locate appropriate safety and wayfinding signage along the Appomattox River Trail and banks of the Appomattox River.

**9.5.1:** Map and record the location and quality of all sidewalks in Petersburg to provide a foundation for data driven, location-based investment over the next twenty years.

**9.5.2:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to reduce parking minimums and require installation of bike racks at parking areas in multi-family residential, commercial, and mixed-use districts.

**9.5.3:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to require EV charging stations at all new commercial or industrial development based on the number of parking spaces on site.

## 10 LAND USE

**10.1.2:** Prioritize capital improvements such as wayfinding, streetscaping, lighting, and pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure along designated Gateways and Corridors.

**10.1.3:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow for a greater variety of residential types, including accessory dwellings and live/work units, in residential and mixed-use districts.

**10.1.5:** Facilitate active and healthy lifestyles through integrating sidewalks, bike lanes, and green space into new development.

**10.2.1:** Direct adaptive reuse or infill development on underdeveloped or vacant properties throughout the City when possible.

**10.2.2:** Implement the recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan to create a more attractive, vibrant, and interconnected Old Towne area.

**10.2.3:** Evaluate all land use applications and capital improvements against the applicable planning and development guidelines of the Future Land Use Map Area Designation.

**10.2.4:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to ensure compatible development in designated historic districts and throughout Historic Core Neighborhoods.

**10.2.5:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to create an overlay district that more specifically regulates development along designated Gateways and Corridors.

**10.3.2:** Ensure water, sewer, stormwater, public safety, and transportation infrastructure is available to support the required level of service for all new development.

**10.3.4:** Market the economic potential of interchanges along Interstates 85 and 95 and recommend approval of appropriate development opportunities, such as hospitality-oriented uses and mixed-use development, in those areas.

## Plan Alignment Table

<b><i>Petersburg Downtown Plan</i></b> <b>Goals &amp; Strategies</b>			
	<b><i>Petersburg Next</i></b> <b>Comprehensive Plan Chapters:</b>	<b>Economic Development</b>	
<b>OPEN FOR BUSINESS</b>			
<b>01</b>	Provide smaller-scale grants for temporary installations that uncover windows and activate storefronts with art		
<b>02</b>	Encourage property owners and businesses to utilize available facade and commercial interior grants	3.5.9	
<b>03</b>	Subdivide large ground floor spaces to create a multi-tenant retail hub		
<b>04</b>	Build a pipeline of new local businesses	3.2.1 3.3.3, 3.3.4, 3.5.1	
<b>05</b>	Attract and retain anchor office tenants	3.1.2	
<b>06</b>	Carefully cultivate new retail programming, and explore a small format grocery	3.2.3 3.3.6	
<b>RIGHT AT HOME</b>			
<b>07</b>	Adopt design standards for new construction		
<b>08</b>	Maintain existing residential homes and structures, and encourage continued adaptive reuse	3.5.9	
<b>09</b>	Build new homes, of different types, including townhomes		
<b>10</b>	Convert the vacant upper floors on Sycamore Street to housing		
<b>11</b>	Partner with developers of the new mixed use development to build a parking garage that benefits Downtown as a whole		

## Alignment with *Petersburg Next* Chapters & Recommendations (#.#.#)

	Housing & Neighborhoods	Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation	Community Facilities & Infrastructure	Safety	Natural Environment	Mobility & Transportation	Land Use
10.2.2							
		5.5.3					
							10.2.1
		5.5.3					10.2.1
			6.1.4 6.5.8				
10.2.2							
	4.2.2 4.5.2	5.6.4					10.2.4
	4.1.4 4.2.6	5.6.2, 5.6.3			8.4.2		10.2.1
	4.2.1 4.4.1		6.3.3				10.1.3 10.2.4
	4.1.4		6.3.3				10.2.1
	4.5.1					9.1.4	10.1.5 10.3.2



## Plan Alignment Table, Continued

<b><i>Petersburg Downtown Plan</i></b> <b>Goals &amp; Strategies</b>			
	<b><i>Petersburg Next</i></b> <b>Comprehensive Plan Chapters:</b>	<b>Economic Development</b>	
<b>WANDER &amp; WONDER</b>			
<b>12</b>	Enhance Downtown's alleys (and waterways) as part of a network of pedestrian routes		
<b>13</b>	Maintain and beautify streetscapes and sidewalks	3.5.9	
<b>14</b>	Test design scenarios that activate the public realm		
<b>15</b>	Create a central public plaza and gathering space on Sycamore in front of the Courthouse		
<b>16</b>	Consider activating Sycamore Street as a pedestrian-first street		
<b>17</b>	Invest in a connected green space along the River	3.2.5	
<b>18</b>	Implement a road diet on Washington and Wythe		
<b>ON THE MAP</b>			
<b>19</b>	Partner with the National Park Service to draw visitors from the Battlefield	3.5.7	
<b>20</b>	Complement regional tourism destinations with investments in local attractions that tell lesser known histories and foster memories made in the present		
<b>21</b>	Increase marketing to a range of audiences, including Petersburg residents	3.2.1 3.5.4	

## Alignment with *Petersburg Next* Chapters & Recommendations (###)

	Housing & Neighborhoods	Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation	Community Facilities & Infrastructure	Safety	Natural Environment	Mobility & Transportation	Land Use
10.2.2							
	4.4.2	5.5.2 5.6.1				9.3.4	
		5.5.2	6.5.5	7.4.1	8.5.1, 8.5.2	9.5.1	10.1.2 10.3.2
		5.5.2					10.1.2
			6.3.1		8.5.1, 8.5.2		10.1.5
	4.4.3					9.1.5, 9.3.2	10.1.2 10.2.5
	5.1.4, 5.1.8 5.2.1 5.4.1, 5.4.2	6.3.1			8.3.8 8.4.2	9.4.2	
					8.5.1, 8.5.2	9.1.5 9.3.2	10.1.2 10.2.5 10.3.4
10.2.2							
		5.6.1, 5.6.2, 5.6.6, 5.6.8, 5.6.9					
		5.2.4 5.5.3 5.6.6, 5.6.8					

## Plan Alignment Table, Continued

<b><i>Petersburg Downtown Plan</i></b> <b>Goals &amp; Strategies</b>			
	<b><i>Petersburg Next</i></b> <b>Comprehensive Plan Chapters:</b>	<b>Economic Development</b>	
<b>ON THE MAP (CONTINUED)</b>			
<b>22</b>	Host regular events and programs that draw people from a variety of backgrounds and interests		
<b>23</b>	Create a stronger presence for VSU Downtown		
<b>24</b>	Invest in gateways with signage and wayfinding	3.5.6	
<b>25</b>	Monitor and support the development of new, boutique lodging options in and near Downtown as tourism continues to grow	3.5.1	
<b>POSITIONED FOR SUCCESS</b>			
<b>26</b>	Formalize Main Street Petersburg with paid staff to support plan implementation and focus on Downtown initiatives in coordination with City leadership	3.3.3	
<b>27</b>	Build the network of volunteers engaged in Downtown's future		
<b>28</b>	Secure a new revenue sources to invest in Downtown		
<b>29</b>	Consider updates to zoning and policy to support plan implementation, in keeping with the City's new Comprehensive Plan		



## Alignment with *Petersburg Next* Chapters & Recommendations (#.#.#)

	Housing & Neighborhoods	Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation	Community Facilities & Infrastructure	Safety	Natural Environment	Mobility & Transportation	Land Use
10.2.2							
		5.2.3, 5.5.4					
							10.2.2
		5.4.3				9.4.2	10.1.2, 10.3.4
10.2.2							
							10.2.2
						9.1.4, 9.5.2, 9.5.3	
	5.6.8					5.6.8, 9.5.2, 9.5.3	10.1.3, 10.2.3, 10.2.4, 10.2.5

# Implementation Approach

The *Downtown Petersburg Plan* includes a range of strategies, some of which are lower cost and relatively straightforward to implement in the near term. Other recommendations are complex and much more costly, requiring substantial time, dollars, and coordination between the City, its partners, and Downtown businesses and property owners. The strategies listed here are well positioned to move forward in the near-term.

The **Implementation Matrix** on the pages that follow provides more detailed notes on each of the recommendations -- short, medium, and long-term. It provides guidance on relative costs, anticipated timeframe, key partners poised to help advance the work, and notes on possible early action steps to make progress on the various strategies.

The plan and its strategies are intended as a living document. Market conditions, physical conditions, grant opportunities, key players, and other factors will change with time. As the City of Petersburg and its Downtown partners work together to implement this plan in the coming years, two guiding questions when evaluating possible projects, investments, and programs should be, **“Is this idea aligned with the spirit of the Downtown Plan?”** and **“Will this investment help advance the plan’s goals?”** If the answer to either question is yes, then it is time to get started!





# Implementation Matrix

		RELATIVE COST	
OPEN FOR BUSINESS			
01	Provide smaller-scale grants for temporary installations that uncover windows and activate storefronts with art	\$	
02	Encourage property owners and businesses to utilize facade improvement grants	\$\$	
03	Subdivide large ground floor spaces to create a multi-tenant retail hub	\$	
04	Build a pipeline of new local businesses	\$\$\$	
05	Attract and retain anchor office tenants	\$\$	
06	Carefully cultivate new retail programming, and explore a small format grocery	\$\$\$	
RIGHT AT HOME			
07	Adopt design standards for new construction	\$	
08	Maintain existing residential homes and structures, and encourage continued adaptive reuse	\$\$	
09	Build new homes, of different types, including townhomes	\$\$\$	
10	Convert the vacant upper floors on Sycamore Street to housing	\$\$\$	
11	Partner with developers to build a new mixed use development and parking garage to service others	\$\$\$\$	

short = years 1&2  
medium = 2-5 years  
long = >5 years

TIME-FRAME		KEY PARTNERS	NOTES ON EARLY ACTION
	Short	Business Owners, Virginia Main Street, PAAL, Dept. of Economic Development	Retain a storefront designer to work with existing businesses to refresh or activate their windows and signage
	Short	Property Owners, Dept. of Economic Development	
	Medium	Property Owners	Identify a potential property and start making connections with the owner and local makers to gauge interest
	Medium	Virginia Main Street, Metropolitan Business League, VSU Center for Entrepreneurship, Dept. of Economic Development	
	Long	Private Developers, Dept. of Economic Development	
	Long	Private Developers, Dept. of Economic Development, Main Street Org	
	Short	City of Petersburg Dept. of Planning, Architectural Review Board	Advance this effort ahead of Bank Street mixed-use development
	Short	Architectural Review Board, Historic Petersburg Foundation, Property Owners	
	Medium	Private Developers	
	Medium	Property Owners, Dept. of Economic Development	Consider expanding the use of the Facade Improvement Program or Architectural Assistance Grant to cover some of the cost of upper floor residential conversion
	Long	City of Petersburg, Private Developer	Continue conversation with developers; make interim improvements to parking lots (signage, gravel) Conduct Downtown Parking Study

## WANDER & WONDER

<b>12</b>	Enhance Downtown's alleys as part of a network of pedestrian routes	\$	
<b>13</b>	Maintain and beautify streetscapes and sidewalks	\$\$	
<b>14</b>	Test design scenarios that activate the public realm	\$\$\$	
<b>15</b>	Create a central public plaza and gathering space on Sycamore in front of the Courthouse	\$\$\$	
<b>16</b>	Consider activating Sycamore Street as a pedestrian-first street	\$\$\$	
<b>17</b>	Invest in a connected green space along the River	\$\$\$\$	
<b>18</b>	Implement a road diet on Washington and Wythe	\$\$\$\$	

## ON THE MAP

<b>19</b>	Partner with the National Park Service to draw visitors from the Battlefield	\$\$\$	
<b>20</b>	Complement regional tourism destinations with investments in local attractions that tell lesser known histories and foster memories made in the present	\$\$\$	
<b>21</b>	Increase marketing to a range of audiences, including Petersburg residents	\$\$	
<b>22</b>	Host regular events and programs that draw people from a variety of backgrounds and interests	\$\$	
<b>23</b>	Create a stronger presence for VSU Downtown	\$\$\$	
<b>24</b>	Invest in gateways with signage and wayfinding	\$\$\$	
<b>25</b>	Monitor and support the development of new lodging options in and near Downtown as tourism continues to grow	\$\$\$	



TIME-  
FRAME

KEY PARTNERS

NOTES ON  
EARLY ACTION

	Short	Adjacent Property Owners, PAAL, Main Street Org	Improve Pelham Street as a pedestrian connector to Downtown with an improved hardscape or gravel path, new lighting, and public art
	Medium	City of Petersburg	Collaborate with local partners and seek grant funding for planting shade trees along North Adams Street to improve the sidewalk experience and comfort for pedestrians
	Short	City of Petersburg, Main Street Org	
	Medium	City of Petersburg, Main Street Org	Engage design consultant to develop conceptual plan and cost estimate for public plaza and use to bid out the work. Close the parking lot to cars and build a temporary installation to test plaza design and use
	Medium	City of Petersburg, Main Street Org, Local Businesses	Partner with businesses to activate the street and undeveloped land on a regular, but temporary basis
	Long	City of Petersburg, FOLAR, Waukeshaw, Main Street Org	Engage design consultant to develop conceptual plan and cost estimate for the event lawn and terraced seating Continue programming, concentrating efforts in the future event lawn area
	Long	VDOT, City of Petersburg, Adjacent Property Owners	Participate in ongoing STARS Study to test feasibility
	Medium	NPS, City of Petersburg, Petersburg Area Regional Tourism, Main Street Org	Continue exploration of possible Downtown Visitor Center at South Side Depot
	Short	City of Petersburg, Petersburg Area Regional Tourism	Build out a visitors guide for a more inclusive and expansive history-related tourism experience
	Short	Main Street Org, City of Petersburg, VSU, Fort Gregg-Adams, NPS	Establish a Downtown calendar of events Coordinate with Petersburg Area Regional Tourism and the local Main Street organization to define marketing roles and responsibilities
	Short	Main Street Org, VSU, City of Petersburg, Property Owners, PAAL, FOLAR	Host the first annual Welcome to Downtown event for new and returning students in the fall Aim to plan and host four new events, one per season to bring people Downtown
	Long	VSU Administration, Faculty, Students	Explore internship opportunities for VSU students with the Main Street organization or other Downtown businesses
	Medium	City of Petersburg, VDOT, Main Street Virginia	Work with Virginia Main Street to design and deploy visible signage at key intersections, directing traffic toward Downtown businesses and parking resources
	Short	Private Developers, City of Petersburg	

## POSITIONED FOR SUCCESS

<b>26</b>	Formalize Main Street Petersburg with paid staff to support plan implementation	\$\$	
<b>27</b>	Build the network of volunteers engaged in Downtown's future	\$\$	
<b>28</b>	Secure a new revenue source to invest in Downtown	\$	
<b>29</b>	Consider updates to zoning and policy to support plan implementation	\$	

TIME-FRAME		KEY PARTNERS	NOTES ON EARLY ACTION
	Short	Main Street Org, Virginia Main Street, Dept of Economic Development	Seek Main Street Designation by DHCD Work on building leadership and capacity for a strong Downtown organization to help advance the plan Explore internship opportunities for VSU students
	Short	Local Foundations, Volunteers	Pursue Downtown Challenge Grant to distribute implementation efforts, energy, resources
	Short	City of Petersburg	Pursue new grant opportunities Include a pricing assessment in the Downtown Parking Study”
	Short	City of Petersburg	



