



West Main Street

STREETSCAPE & URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS MEMO

City of Charlottesville, VA

West Main Street is an emerging, mixed-use corridor that has seen significant private reinvestment in recent years. This investment has led to an increase in the number of people who live on, work on, and visit West Main Street. Currently, the street lacks cohesiveness, a coherent image, and a thematic idea that ties the street together. The Street serves as a vital link between two of the most famous public spaces in the Commonwealth of Virginia— The Downtown Mall, designed by Lawrence Halprin in the 1970s, and the University of Virginia (UVA), designed by Thomas Jefferson in the 1800s. Both designers were visionary in their time. It seems only appropriate that the link between them be equally as important and visionary for our time – the beginning of the 21st century – when we are re-examining the potential of our urban corridors and making strides to treat them as important parts of the public realm and not only as conduits for vehicles.

This report summarizes the conditions currently found along West Main Street, from Jefferson Park Avenue to the Ridge McIntire intersection. This analysis provides the context for identifying the range of issues that will need to be addressed in developing a streetscape and urban design framework for West Main. It will help define a range of actions needed to encourage this corridor to realize its potential as a place that provides both economic and community benefits for the street and the City. The existing conditions data was obtained through:

- Review of previous reports, plans and studies
- Detailed field work
- Stakeholder meetings, and
- An open, public workshop

Corridor Context

Overall Function

Facilities are inadequate and no longer meet the needs of either this growing district or the City.

West Main Street is an important urban mixed-use corridor in the City. The street provides direct access to a number of businesses and also serves a vital link to adjacent neighborhoods. As an important multi-modal corridor for the City, the street accommodates a wide range of transportation modes. Currently, West Main Street has a 60-foot wide right-of-way that consists of one travel lane in each direction with on-street parking, bike lanes, and sidewalks on each side of the street.

LEGEND

Vehicle Zone	Sharrow	Mural	Building	Driveway	Signalized Crosswalk	Overhead Utility Line	Bicycle Parking
Sidewalk	Crosswalk	Bus Stop	Signalized Intersection	Curb Cut	Building Entrance	Tree	Marked On-Street Parking
Bike Lane	Public Art	Building Proposed / Under Construction	Parking Lot	Non-Signalized Crosswalk	Parcel	Park	



Although the street has facilities to accommodate bicyclists, pedestrians, vehicles and transit, they are inadequate and no longer meet the needs of the growing district and City. The growth of businesses and residents along the corridor has increased the demand for wider sidewalks for pedestrians; facilities to support alternative transportation options; and efficient parking resources to ensure patronage of businesses.

The Street Zone

There are a number of elements that detract from the overall visual appearance of the Street.

The pedestrian realm of the street includes character-defining elements such as trees, varied building facades,

and a mix of uses. Murals on the facades of buildings along the corridor allude to the importance of arts and culture on the corridor and provide stimulating moments for visitors; while street trees provide shade in the hot summer months. Beyond the immediate pedestrian realm, buildings provide important “walls” along the corridor creating a rhythm of store fronts and open spaces. There are also a number of elements that detract from the overall visual appearance of the street. In many areas along the corridor, overhead utility poles dominate the street, creating impediments for pedestrians and visual clutter from overhead wires. Outdated and tired furnishings such as benches, trash receptacles, light fixtures, and transit shelters are uninviting to patrons along the corridor and detract from its potential as a vibrant civic place.

Street trees have likely reached their full growth due to less than adequate root zones. In addition, many trees have developed surface roots that have displaced sidewalks creating tripping hazards for pedestrians and impediments for visitors with disabilities. Also there are several trees along the corridor with canopies limited by overhead utilities and in poor health. The trees are mainly Zelkova Serrata and represent a large monoculture here. Monocultures can be vulnerable to infection, with the possibility of a single virus, fungus, destructive insect, or other disease wiping out all of the trees at once.

Existing Conditions Map



Elements that Detract from the Appearance and Function of the Street

Narrow Sidewalks



Narrow Bike Lanes and Potential for "Dooring"



Pedestrian Groups constrained by Narrow Sidewalk



Uninviting Bus Shelters



Uplifted Pavement Due to Constrained Tree Box



Monoculture of Trees Vulnerable to Disease



Unsightly Overhead Utilities



Outdated and Deteriorated Street Furnishings



Character Zones

The Norfolk-Southern Railroad traversing north-south through the City bisects the West Main Street corridor. To the west, the character of the street has been heavily influenced by UVA and its growing campus (Zone 1). This zone extends from Jefferson Park Avenue to the West Main Street Bridge, and serves as a gateway to the UVA campus from the east. Over the past few years, the urban form in this zone has evolved to include larger and taller buildings to accommodate student housing, hotels, the University hospital, and other University support facilities. On the western end of this zone, Clark Park and the Battle Building Plaza enhance the pedestrian experience of West Main Street at the UVA campus.

Major challenges of this zone include narrow sidewalks — many of which are in disrepair and obstructed by utility poles; an inconsistent pattern of street trees— some of which are in poor health; overhead utilities that detract from the visual clarity of the street; transit shelters that are in disrepair; and a lack of appropriate and safe pedestrian and bicycle accommodations at intersections.

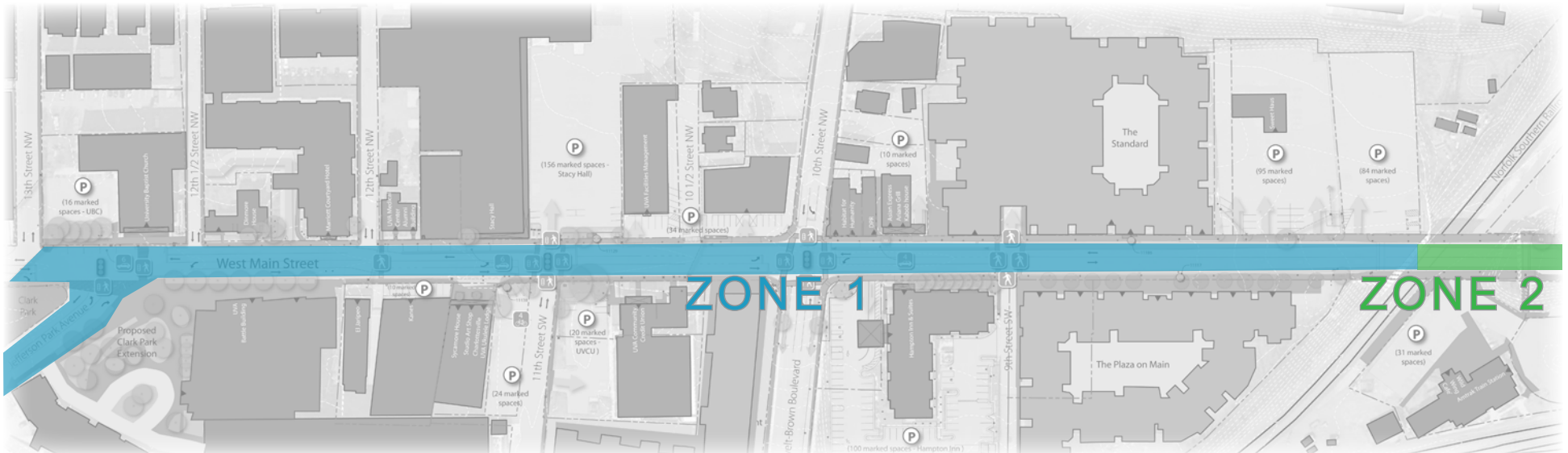
Zone 2 includes the West Main Street bridge. The bridge spans the Norfolk-Southern Railroad and provides pedestrian access to Charlottesville's Amtrak station. As the highest location on the corridor, spectacular views out to the adjacent mountainside can be observed from

the bridge. However, the full potential of this zone has not been realized. Pedestrian areas on the bridge are narrow, leaving little space for pedestrians to stop and enjoy the spectacular views from this location.

To the east of the bridge, the urban form of the street has maintained a traditional "main street" character (Zone 3). This zone is characterized by an eclectic mix of small scale (primarily 1-3 stories) buildings and large street trees. While the urban form of Zone 3 creates a strong sense of place, streetscape elements such as furnishings are outdated; bike and pedestrian amenities are constrained; and parking is largely unmanaged, ultimately detracting from the appeal of the street.



West Main Street is comprised of three character zones: the Western Zone, the Bridge Zone, and the Eastern Zone. Each has a unique character that is largely unappreciated given current street



Land Use

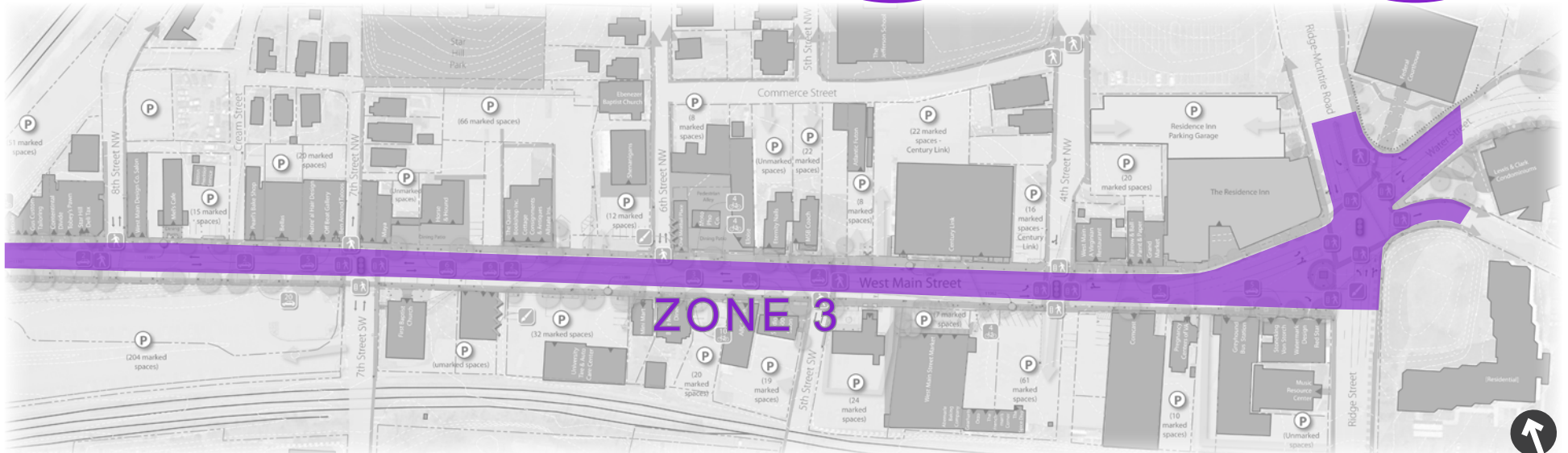
Existing land uses on West Main Street represent the diversity of activities that one would hope to capture on a mixed use corridor including retail, office, medical facilities, multi-family residential, food service, hotel, places of worship, and other uses that serve the public and promote commerce. This mix of land uses makes West Main Street an economically diverse corridor that offers a range of services for citizens living along the corridor; in adjacent neighborhoods; and in other areas of the City and region. Some concern has been expressed regarding the growing concentration of student residences on West Main Street, and the need to maintain a main street thoroughfare that appeals to the broader community.

Relationship Between Land Uses and the Street

On West Main Street, however, the constrained configuration of the pedestrian right-of-way, the dominance of fast-moving vehicular traffic and the lack of public realm amenities provide few incentives for people to come to the street...

There is a symbiotic relationship between land use and street vibrancy. Great land uses attract people to a street, and great streets (as public places) bring people into the restaurants, shops, offices, and housing along them. A great street is a place where people want to

be- to live, to work, to visit with friends, to shop, and to spend time. Throughout the world, walkable and bikeable streets provide the economic engines for successful communities. On West Main Street, however, the constrained configuration of the pedestrian right-of-way, the dominance of fast-moving vehicular traffic and the lack of public realm amenities provide few incentives for people to come to the street to spend time, spend money, meet with people, and window shop.



Historic Context

West Main Street has a storied past with its beginnings as a significant Eighteenth-Century Virginia transportation route-- the "Three Notch'd Road" that connected the Tidewater to the Shenandoah Valley. By the early Twentieth-Century, West Main Street had emerged as an important commercial center and the principal hotel district of the City due to its proximity to the railroad station. The immediate area also developed as the institutional core of Charlottesville's African-American community, including the Delevan and Ebenezer Baptist Churches and Jefferson School. Over time, Vinegar Hill quickly grew to become a primary commercial center for the African American community. By the early 1930's West Main Street was the principal east-west route through town. Activity on the corridor gradually declined through the mid-20th century due to

the emerging popularity of suburban areas. However, like many urban areas across America over the past 10-20 years, the center-city, including the West Main Street corridor, has reemerged as a place to live, shop and work.

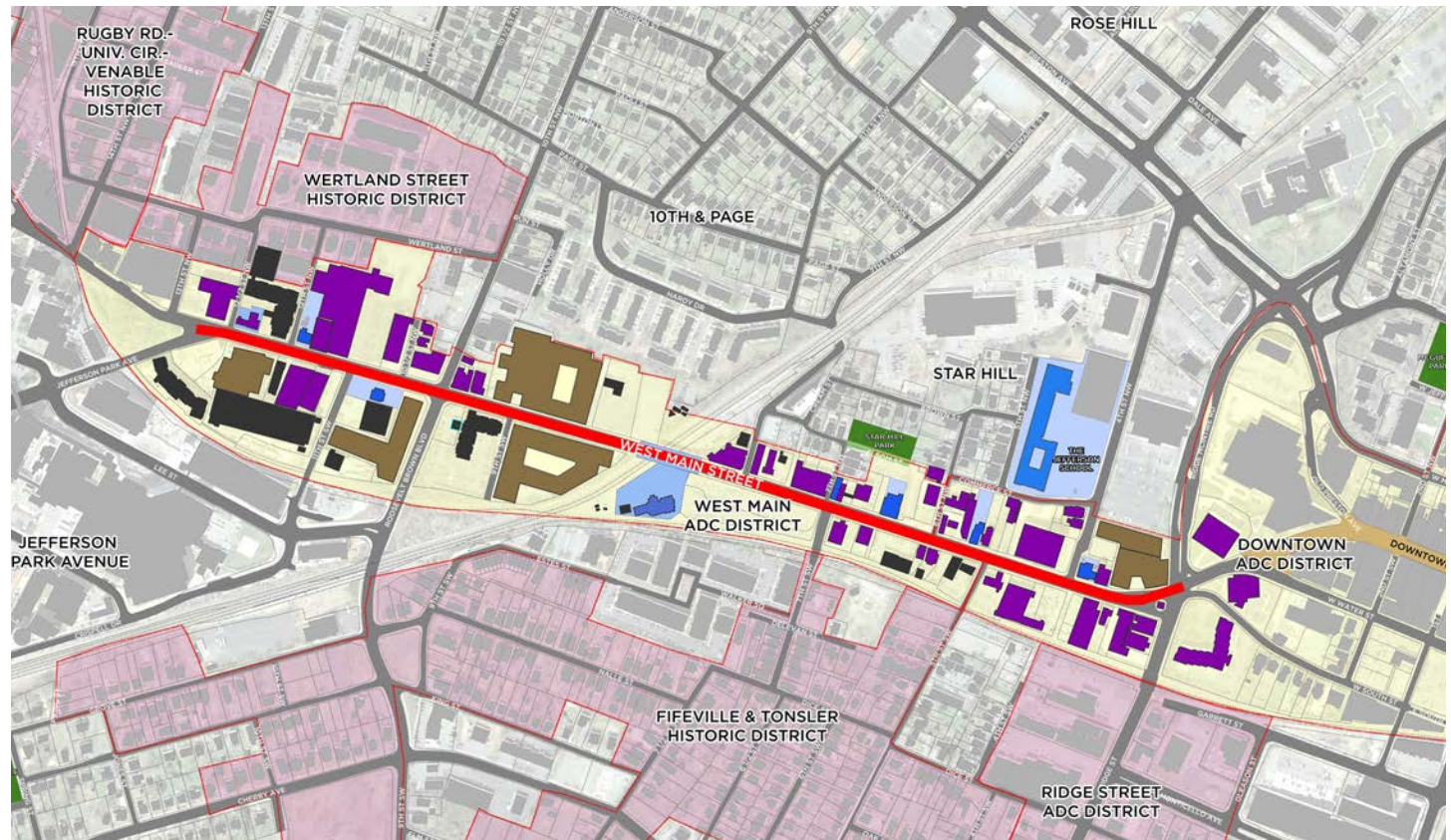
A result of the street's historical context, there are a number of historically significant structures along the corridor. West Main Street is a designated Architectural Design Control (ADC) District. The goal of local designation is to identify and preserve buildings, structures, landscapes, settings, neighborhoods, places, and features with historic, cultural and architectural significance; to protect visible reminders of the historic, cultural, architectural, or archaeological heritage of the city; to ensure that new buildings, additions, and landscaping will be in harmony with the existing

character; to maintain property values; and to promote tourism and quality of life.

This West Main ADC District includes all properties along West Main Street from 14th Street to 5th Street SW. A few structures in the ADC District are listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and/or the National Register of Historic Places. All properties designated within a local ADC district are subject to review by the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) for any exterior changes including demolition. This ensures a public notification and review process before changes can be made to a protected property. Historic properties may also be recognized on the Virginia Landmarks Register or the National Register of Historic Places. State or National designation is an honorary recognition that, unlike local designation, does not impose any review restrictions.

Historic Properties Map

- Contributing building
- Non-Contributing building
- Building / property listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register & National Register of Historic Places
- Building / property eligible for listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register & National Register of Historic Places
- Historic district listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places
- Local historic district / overlay
- Building proposed /under construction
- Study corridor
- Ex. Building
- Ex. Parcel
- Ex. Road
- Ex. Park
- Ex. Pedestrian Mall



The Vehicular Zone

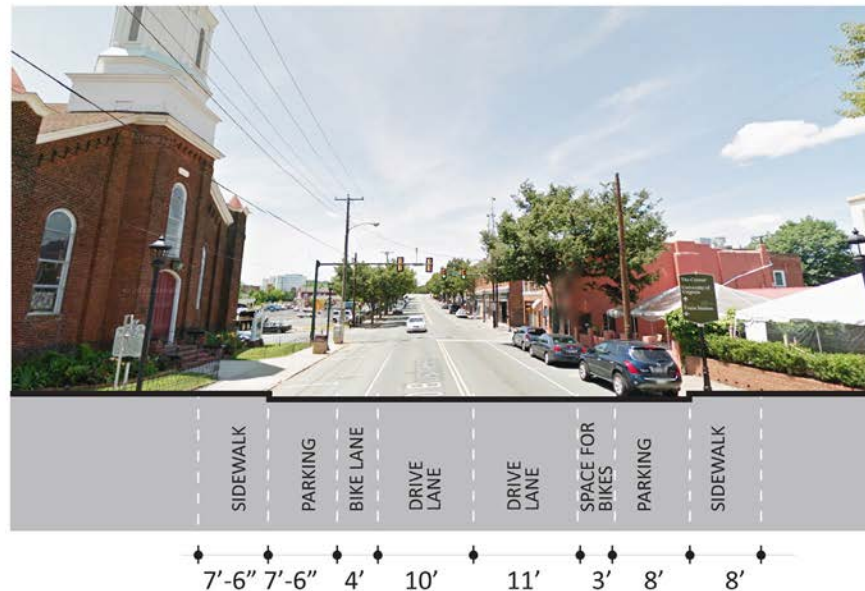
Given the narrow right-of-way of the street, streetscape elements such as sidewalks and bike lanes have a narrower-than-optimal width.



Existing Right-of-Way Cross Section



Existing Right-of-Way Cross Section



Existing Right-of-Way

West Main Street maintains a 60-foot right-of-way throughout the length of the corridor, which is comprised of one travel lane in each direction with on-street parking, bike lanes, and sidewalks on each side of the street. Given the narrow right-of-way of the street, streetscape elements such as sidewalks and bike lanes have a narrower-than-optimal width. Travel lanes are roughly 12', but are occasionally pinched, causing challenges for buses, trucks, and other large vehicles. Designated loading zones for trucks delivering to local businesses along the street are inadequate, with delivery trucks "double parking" in travel lanes, resulting in traffic and transit delays and increased conflicts for vehicles, transit and bicyclists.

Designated bike lanes vary between 4' and 5' in width, with no protective buffer between bicycle lanes, travel lanes, or parking lanes. Narrow bike lanes adjacent to narrow parallel parking areas present hazards to bicyclists, increasing the risk of "dooring" by motorists exiting their vehicles. Sidewalks are narrow as well, ranging from 5' to roughly 7' in width in most areas. Compounding this problem are utility poles, street trees, signage and street furnishings that become obstacles for pedestrians, and make it difficult to walk with strollers, in wheelchairs, in pairs or in small groups.

Transit

Transit service must be direct, reliable, easy to use, logical, attractive and dignified.

Charlottesville has wisely chosen to prioritize transit use and facilitate services to attract not only transit-dependent riders, but so-called “choice riders” – travelers who have the personal resources to own and operate a private vehicle but who may choose transit for its convenience and cost benefits. Promotion of transit can reduce vehicle volumes, decrease household transportation costs (allowing more money to be saved for other purposes or spent in the local economy), reduce greenhouse gas emissions and overall fuel consumption, in addition to other benefits. Accomplishing this, however, means that transit service must be direct, reliable, easy to use, logical, attractive and dignified.

West Main Street is one of the busiest transit corridors in Charlottesville. At present, it carries two CAT (Charlottesville Area Transit) routes – the Route 7 and the Trolley. These lines form the backbone of the entire Charlottesville transit system and connect the two primary transit hubs -- one located at the east end of the pedestrian mall and the other located at the primary employment center and destination of the UVA Hospital.

Together, these two lines alone generate 64% of the transit system’s annual ridership. The Trolley line has an average of 2138 daily rides, while the Route 7 line has an average of 2475 daily rides. Transit services are also provided on the two parallel routes of Preston/Grady Avenues and Cherry Avenue with connecting service on 10th Street/Roosevelt Brown Boulevard. However ridership and frequencies on these routes are only a fraction of that on West Main Street.

The recently completed Charlottesville Transit Study recommends realigning some routes to improve efficiency, service and legibility to riders. This realignment could result in additional bus routes and services on West Main Street. Although alternative vehicle routes do exist and do carry transit service, for the above reasons it is NOT recommended that transit service be relocated off of West Main Street to any alternative routes. Doing so would decrease transit system performance, reduce connectivity and degrade services for riders. Additionally, the realignment of the 4th Street NW intersection will allow better transit access for the Jefferson School and Recreation center.

Buses on West Main Street suffer from traffic delays, which affect travel time and reliability. The eastbound stop at 11th Street NW, has a pull-out area where buses

can stop without blocking traffic, however bus operators have reported either challenges in getting buses all the way to the curb or a desire to only partially exit the travel lane lest the bus have difficulty getting back into traffic.

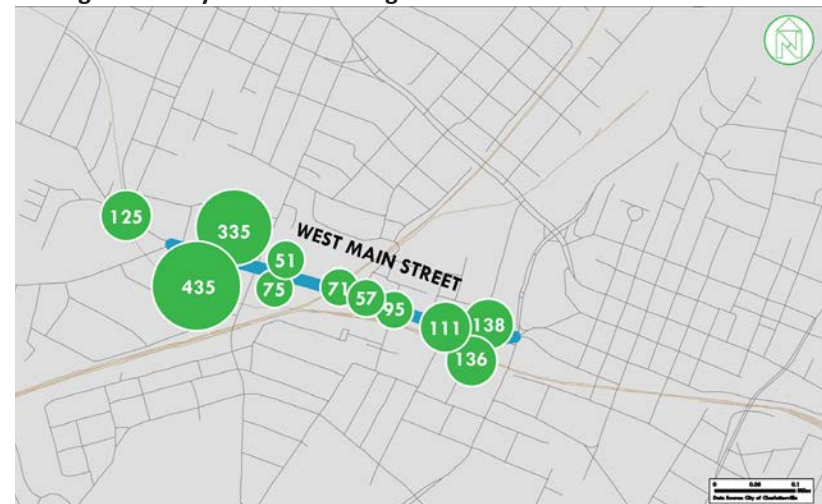
West Main Street is also responsible for 12% of all bus stop boardings in Charlottesville. The corridor is home to two of the city’s busiest bus stops-- one at West Main and 11th Street NW and the other at West Main at 4th Street NW. The stop at West Main and 11th Street NW has 335 boardings westbound and 435 in the eastbound direction. The next busiest stop, at West Main and 4th Street NW, has 138 westbound boardings and 136 eastbound boardings.

Amenities for riders at transit stops along the corridor vary widely. Transit stops at 11th Street both have covered shelters set back from the sidewalk with seating, as well as trash receptacles and newspaper boxes. At other transit stops along the corridor, benches are commonly provided at minimum, but these stops have no covered waiting areas. Nor is there adequate space on existing sidewalks to accommodate improved bus stop facilities. To the extent possible, transit service should be enhanced on the corridor by expanding stop areas for greater depth and improved amenities, and extending curbs at bus stops to the travel lane to permit buses to stop and load in the travel lane.

Average Weekday Transit Ridership



Average Weekday Transit Boardings



The Pedestrian and Bike Zones

Pedestrian Zone

Despite the high amount of foot traffic, the pedestrian environment on West Main Street is lacking....Compounding the lack of sidewalk width are utility poles, street trees, signage, and street furnishings which become obstacles...

As a conduit between the University of Virginia and downtown Charlottesville, West Main Street carries a considerable amount of pedestrian traffic. Pedestrian counts are highest at the western end of the study area, near the university grounds, the hospital, and The Corner, a student-oriented commercial district. An estimated 1.69 million pedestrian trips take place at the intersection of West Main Street and Jefferson Park Avenue each year. There are an estimated 1.03 million annual pedestrian trips at the intersection of West Main and 4th Street NW, and 1.20 million trips at West Main and Ridge McIntire Road, closer to the downtown pedestrian mall.

Despite the high amount of foot traffic, the pedestrian environment on West Main Street is lacking. Accommodating the present and future volumes of pedestrian traffic on the street is and will continue to be quite difficult due to the narrow sidewalk widths along the corridor. Compounding the lack of sidewalk width are utility poles, street trees, signage, and street furnishings, which become obstacles for pedestrians, and make it difficult for pedestrians to walk with strollers and in clusters. Numerous curb cuts along the corridor increase the number of potential conflicts between pedestrian, bicyclists, and vehicles. Many intersections along the corridor lack crosswalks on all legs which creates barriers and increases travel time for pedestrians. At signalized intersection, pedestrian push-button signals are available to activate the walk

signal, allowing pedestrians to legally cross the street. Street lighting is poor, which leads to a perceived unsafe environment at night.

There are no viable alternatives to having excellent pedestrian facilities on West Main Street. Pedestrians are vital to the health, safety and prosperity of the corridor. Sidewalk dimensions today are insufficient to allow pedestrians to walk comfortably two abreast, preclude most opportunities for outdoor dining or retailing, and virtually no opportunities to support the social life/public gathering typical of an urban corridor.

A comfortable pedestrian environment, especially in a southern climate, requires both light and shade and therefore adequate space must be found to provide for pedestrian zone clear of obstacles and a distinct furnishing zone to accommodate adequate pedestrian lighting and trees.

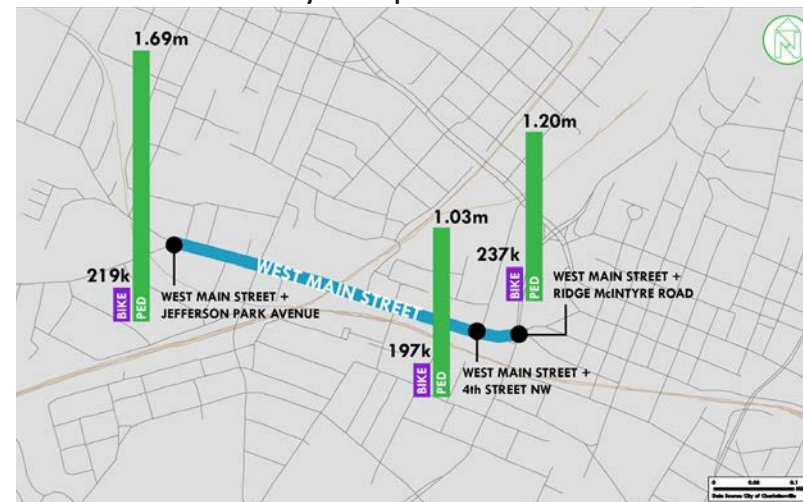
Bike Lanes

Bike lanes ...are often too narrow to facilitate safe passage.

West Main Street is one of the busiest bicycling corridors in Charlottesville, with the highest bike traffic counts at Ridge McIntire Road, closer to the Downtown Mall. An estimated 237,000 bicycle trips occur there each year. The second highest traffic counts are at Jefferson Park Avenue next to the University of Virginia, where there are an estimated 219,000 bike trips annually. Additionally, in the central portion of the study area; the intersection of West Main and 4th Street NW has 197,000 bike trips each year.

There are limited bicycle facilities on West Main Street. Currently, there are only 12 bike racks within a 600 foot walk of the corridor. Bike lanes exist along most portions of the corridor, but the width is inconsistent, and they are often too narrow to facilitate safe passage. In all locations along the corridor where parking is provided, bike lanes are located between the parking lane and the general traffic lane, creating a significant hazard for bicyclists. The location of the bike lane increases the risk of bicyclist being “doored” by drivers and passengers existing parked vehicles. Drivers and cyclists alike have expressed both frustration and fear in cohabitation on the corridor – both generally with regard to the narrow

Annual Pedestrian and Bicyclist Trips



A Turning Bicyclist in Mixed Traffic



passage between parked cars and travel lanes, the volume of bicyclists given the condition of this facility, and the limited sight lines at intersections caused by constrained conditions and topography.

Due to the limited street network, there are few alternate routes and connections to other areas for bicyclists. Dedicated bike lanes are provided on Preston Avenue. Preston Avenue does exist as an alternate parallel route – although this high speed, higher traffic corridor can be somewhat unappealing to more novice bicyclists. The assumed connection from this corridor to West Main Street is 10th Street NW connecting to the bike lanes provided on Roosevelt Brown Boulevard south from the corridor. However 10th Street NW is narrow and experiences heavy traffic volumes which create conditions unfavorable to more novice bicyclists. Community bicyclists reported finding the lower speed and lower traffic volumes on 8th Street NW and this street is the preferable connector between the two corridors.

Similar to vehicle traffic, much of the bicycle traffic on the corridor is through traffic with origins and destinations beyond the immediate limits of West Main Street. Research has shown, however, that bicycle facilities on commercial corridors do have positive effects on retail and food service sales and, therefore, should be encouraged and accommodated.

Service Deliveries

West Main Street has nine loading and delivery spaces. The need for loading comes primarily from commercial uses along the corridor and occurs during the morning period when deliveries are a key element of business activity. Additionally, on street loading zones are important for the food and beverage industry to facilitate trash collection in the early morning. However, existing loading spaces are poorly marked and regulated, leading to delivery trucks double parking in travel lanes, causing backups.

Transportation Conditions

Current Traffic Conditions

West Main Street's position as the only direct connection between UVA and downtown for vehicles, transit, bicyclists, and pedestrians has created significant travel pressure on the corridor. The constrained multimodal travel conditions along the street have contributed to an unsafe environment for all users. The segment between Jefferson Park Avenue and Ridge McIntire Road carries an average annual daily traffic count (AADT) load of 14,000 vehicles. This is a significant volume of traffic for a two lane corridor.

Intersections

There are traffic signals at the intersections of West Main Street and Jefferson Park Avenue, 11th Street NW, 10th Street NW/Roosevelt Brown Boulevard, 7th Street NW, 4th Street NW, and Ridge McIntire Road.

Major intersections occur at Jefferson Park Avenue, 10th Street NW, 4th Street NW, and Ridge McIntire Road. All four intersections have left-turn lanes. The intersection of Jefferson Park and West Main is Y shaped, while two smaller streets, 13th Street and 12 ½ Street, enter West Main Street perpendicular near this intersection.

The 10th Street intersection is conventional, and comprised of four-legs with controlled movements in all directions. The West Main and 10th Street intersection currently operate a "B" level of service. The 4th Street intersection is a T-shaped, with the entrance to a surface parking lot forming the fourth leg.

The terminus of West Main Street with Ridge McIntire Road presents a complicated, multi-legged intersection. The West Main Street and Ridge-McIntire intersection currently operates a "C" level of service. West Main Street is divided around the Lewis and Clark Monument as it approaches Ridge McIntire Road. The southern leg contains a parking lane and a right-turn lane from eastbound West Main to southbound Ridge McIntire. The northern leg contains one left-turn lane for eastbound traffic headed northbound on Ridge McIntire, and a left-turn/through lane for traffic continuing east on West Main, or crossing the intersection and bearing right toward South Street West. It also contains one westbound lane.

Safety

Safety and efficiency concerns demand a reworking of the West Main Street right-of-way to better accommodate all modes of travel along the corridor.

The West Main St. and Ridge McIntire Rd. Intersection



The West Main St. and Jefferson Park Ave. Intersection



Safety and efficiency concerns demand a reworking of the West Main Street right-of-way to better accommodate all modes of travel along the corridor. Wider travel lanes, bicycle lanes and sidewalks can only be constructed through intelligent management of the ROW, which necessitates a comprehensive analysis of on-street and off-street parking. Stakeholders from the residential communities abutting the corridor, the

Parking

At present there are roughly 85 public on-street parking spaces on the corridor itself and several more on adjoining and nearby streets. These parking spaces are largely unmarked and unmetered. Turnover is encouraged through a two-hour maximum time limit,

In addition to these on-street resources, a handful of two or four-hour public parking spaces are available in an off-street lot adjacent to the Albemarle Hotel on the 600 block of West Main Street. Complementing on-street resources are a tremendous number of parking spaces within roughly a block of the main corridor (about 600') – over 4,000 in fact. Nearly all of these parking resources are privately held and dedicated to a single user.

Parking needs and demands vary along the corridor. Retail customers want immediate access and proximity to their destination. Dining customers want reliably convenient access, but may be willing to walk a short distance and enjoy other aspects of the corridor. Daytime workers want longer parking periods while evening workers need safe connections to their vehicles. Workers, patrons and visitors across the board wish to avoid tickets and penalties for serving and accessing the many amenities and destinations of West Main Street.

While off-street parking alternatives exist, the value and importance of on-street parking should not be underestimated. On-street parking provides an important buffer for pedestrians, a calming element on the street, vital loading space for retail establishments, and, of course, an inviting resource for retail and

Parking Spaces Within Proximity to West Main Street



commercial patrons. The National Main Street Center has estimated that a well-managed on-street parking space can generate between \$100,000 and \$300,000 in annual commercial sales that are typically not recaptured when these spaces are relocated to off-street locations. HOWEVER, that statistic assumes that curbside spaces are well-managed and efficiently utilized with frequent turnover and reliable availability. That is not the case on West Main Street where parking is neither efficiently turned over nor reliably available.

Efficient utilization of the on-street spaces – typically by way of metering with a demand-responsive pricing structure – could more than triple the productivity of these spaces, thereby tripling the effective supply. This means that by employing better on-street parking management, West Main Street could reduce some quantity of on-street parking while still increasing on-street parking access and availability.

This, combined with shared parking agreements for parking resources throughout the corridor and implementation of public assisted parking services could significantly increase the available parking supply at comparatively minimal cost. This could be even further enhanced through clear wayfinding to parking locations and a localized smartphone app of legal and available parking locations. A further analysis of current parking conditions can be found in the recently completed parking study.

Utilities Infrastructure

Not all utilities need to be relocated or replaced. For those that need to be upgraded, however, placing them underground at the time of road reconstruction eliminates the eyesore of utility poles and overhead wires, and lowers the cost that would be incurred by undergrounding these at a later date.

The West Main Street corridor is severely congested with numerous private utilities that share the public space, many of which are located overhead. These overhead utilities greatly detract from the visual appearance of the street. As is true for the strategic location of public utilities, there is an opportunity to place private utilities underground, eliminating them from view. Although this cost will be substantial and borne by the City, locating utilities into a well-planned and strategically located underground system will eliminate this eye-sore and maximize the visual effect of any proposed streetscape improvements. Planned underground utility infrastructure can be equipped to accommodate future utility providers (i.e. Google Fiber).

An additional benefit to relocating utilities underground as part of the streetscape project is to preserve constructed elements from future damage. If the relocation is postponed until after streetscape

improvements are made, the replacement of surface elements demolished during utility replacement will degrade the intended appearance. Also, if underground utility work is performed in coordination with the streetscape work, the overall relocation cost will be significantly lower due to taking advantage of the requisite traffic control and mass excavations associated with the road work, as well as being able to resolve conflicts through a collaborative design effort.

Sanitary sewer, water and gas are public utilities located along the corridor. The existing sanitary sewer line is in good working condition and does not require replacement. However, water and gas lines along the corridor have reached the end of their useful lives and need to be replaced. As with the relocation of private utilities underground, it is most cost effective and efficient to replace these utilities as part of the streetscape project.

Existing Overhead Utilities



The City of Charlottesville Department of Public Utilities (DPU) also requires that the location of these facilities maintain minimum clearances between other utilities and specific streetscape elements such as trees or other green infrastructure elements. With these minimum standards in mind, and the fact these lines need to be replaced, an opportunity is created to evaluate the ideal location for these relocated lines and include them as a part of the streetscape project. This will not only satisfy the replacement needs of DPU, but also allow for greater flexibility with locating trees and sustainable practices that would have otherwise been a significant challenge with meeting spacing requirements.

The following provides a summary of utilities along the West Main Street Corridor:

Sanitary Sewer (Public)

The sanitary sewer collection system on West Main comprises of an 8" main located mostly under the centerline of the existing roadway. There is approximately 3,040 linear feet of sanitary sewer line from the intersection of Ridge McIntire Road to the University Avenue/ Jefferson Park Avenue intersection.

Approximately 2,350 linear feet has been rehabilitated (lined). Over 130 linear feet of sanitary sewer line has been replaced with new pipe (located in front of the new hotel near Ridge McIntire Road). The remaining pipe in West Main Street is in satisfactory condition. All connecting sanitary sewer lines on side streets have been rehabilitated, with the exception of the connecting sewer line on 4th Street NW. Service laterals to individual buildings are owned by the respective property owners, and, in many cases, these laterals are old and in need of replacement. Opportunities to improve service laterals where practical should be considered.

Water (Public)

Approximately 2,970 linear feet of existing 10-inch water line were installed in the 1950's. The line would be upsized with a new 12-inch water line to handle additional capacity required as a result of future development.

Also, DPU is currently working on plans to relocate an existing 18-inch waterline that runs down 9th Street SW and crosses the railroad tracks. The line, currently inaccessible under the tracks, is being relocated to West Main Street from 9th Street SW to Roosevelt Brown Boulevard where it will turn south to Grove Street. This is part of a long term plan to replace the entire 18-inch water main, which serves a large portion of the citizens of Charlottesville. This project is being designed separately but in coordination with the West Main project engineer. The 18-inch waterline relocation should be completed prior to or concurrent with any construction on West Main Street.

Gas (Public)

The low pressure gas line in West Main Street was installed prior to 1930. In 1990, the joints on the pipe were encapsulated to prevent leakage. The West Main project would involve replacing approximately 5,000 linear feet of 10-inch cast iron gas main line and 4,710 feet polyethylene gas line and associated services. The gas line does not have any current problems, but Utilities would replace the current gas line with a high

pressure gas line concurrent with the West Main project construction in order to minimize the disruption to the area. The gas line would be replaced from Ridge Street going west to Rugby Road and involve the following side streets: Elliewood Avenue, Chancellor Street, Madison Lane, Rugby Road, Jefferson Park Avenue, and Elsom Street. The replacement of the gas line will better position the City to provide gas service for future development.

Electric (Private)

The existing electrical power service on West Main Street is owned by Dominion Virginia Power. The majority of these lines run overhead on poles, which also contain other utilities, however a portion of these lines were recently undergrounded in coordination with improvements to the Battle Building from Jefferson Park Avenue to 11th Street. A short section of overhead lines remains, from 11th Street to 10 ½ Street, with these lines dropping underground to 8th Street east of the railroad bridge. The overhead lines resume at 8th Street and extend overhead to the Ridge/McIntire intersection, and beyond.

Existing underground lines run on the south side of West Main, however overhead lines are located on both sides of the street in most cases. A request to underground lines on West Main Street under Dominion Virginia's Power's Strategic Underground Program was sent to Dominion for consideration. This request was denied as the lines along West Main Street do not meet the program's guidelines which focuses on service to neighborhoods that are most prone to outages based on a 10-year history. As a result, it is assumed that all cost related to undergrounding power lines and other overhead utility lines on the corridor, would be borne by the City.

Comcast (Private)

Existing communication lines owned by Comcast are located underground west of the railroad bridge, except for the short remaining section of overhead lines near 11th Street. All Comcast facilities are located overhead east of the railroad bridge. There is a major

hub for Comcast located on the south side of West Main near Ridge/McIntire that provides service to all of Charlottesville. The overhead lines located in proximity to the hub will be expensive to relocate.

Century Link (Private)

Existing communication lines owned by Century Link are all underground and located on the south side of the road with stub lines extending to the north. There is a major hub for Century Link located on the north side of West Main near 4th Street that provides service to all of Charlottesville, and beyond. Century Link lines located in proximity to the hub will be extremely expensive to relocate and should be avoided by construction to the maximum extent practical.

Lumos (Private)

Existing communication lines owned by Lumos are located underground west of the railroad bridge with the exception of the remaining overhead lines near 11th Street. These lines continue underground across the bridge to 7th Street where they go overhead to 4th Street. Lumos lines would require underground conduit, and separate junction boxes, if overhead lines are to be undergrounded.

Stormwater Management

The existing street trees and planters are undersized and provide no significant treatment of stormwater runoff in the area. West Main Street and the associated right-of-way (ROW) covers approximately 5.5 acres, the vast majority of which is impervious asphalt and concrete. Surface runoff runs directly into an existing storm sewer system with no facilities for detention or retention. The future streetscape should provide opportunities to intercept this water before it enters the storm sewer system, in order that it be used for more sustainable stormwater management approaches.

Urban Form

...Many participants noted that the ‘eclectic mix’ of buildings and ‘small town’ character of West Main Street should be retained.

West Main Street is comprised of an eclectic mix of buildings, with development along the corridor divided into two zones- east and west of the bridge. West of the bridge, newer buildings such as the University of Virginia Children’s Hospital and The Flats residential building, are taller and bulkier than their historic and contributing neighbors. East of the bridge, more historic and contributing buildings have survived, making for a lower skyline. Currently, a 7-story hotel at the corner of West Main Street and Ridge McIntire is under construction and will increase the urban scale at the eastern gateway end of West Main Street.

Buildings provide an important “structure” to the public realm of the street. The built edge along West Main Street is uneven, with gaps and openings along the entire corridor. These gaps are typically comprised of driveways and parking lots. Buildings located close to

the street create a rhythm of storefronts, porches, and outdoor cafes, all of which activate the street. Buildings such as the First Baptist Church and Amtrak Train Station are notable buildings on West Main and are important landmarks. Many older structures are set back from the street and a number of large parcels along West Main Street are undeveloped or paved as parking lots, creating a number of potential future development sites. The topography of the street also contributes to the diversity of the street. The Amtrak train station is two stories below the bridge, and its adjoining parking lot is also lower than the street. As a result, views from the bridge out to the nearby mountains are preserved.

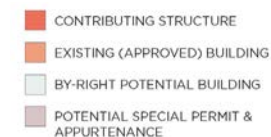
Through the public engagement process, many participants noted that the “eclectic mix” of buildings and “small town” character of West Main Street should be retained. Factors that contribute to this characteristic include the height and mass of existing buildings, as well as the relationship between buildings and the street. The relationship between existing development and larger proposed, new development should be compatible to ensure that the community vision of West Main Street retained.

West Main Street is a changing corridor that is experiencing an influx of new development and redevelopment/revitalization of existing structures. Zoning is a tool often used by communities to guide and manage development. The West Main Street corridor is comprised of two zoning districts-- the north side of West Main Street falls within the “West Main Street North Corridor” (WMN) and the south side falls within the “West Main Street South Corridor” (WMS). Both districts include minimum heights of 40’ for new development but the districts vary in maximum height allowance. The maximum height of buildings is taller on the south side of the street at 70’, and up to 101’ with special permit. The north side of the street includes a minimum height of 40’ with a maximum height of 60’, and up to 70’ with special permit.

Through our analysis and listening to the community, it is noted that the development character along West Main Street changes along the corridor east/west more than north/south. The street today comprises a mix of building styles – from historic to modern – and building shapes and sizes, from modest, two story single family houses to very large, multi-family and institutional structures. The railroad bridge at the mid-point between downtown and The University of Virginia demarcates an approximate dividing line between larger and smaller scale structures on West Main Street: the tallest and newest buildings (i.e. 6-10 stories) are generally west of the bridge, while shorter buildings (i.e. 2-4 stories) are to the east.

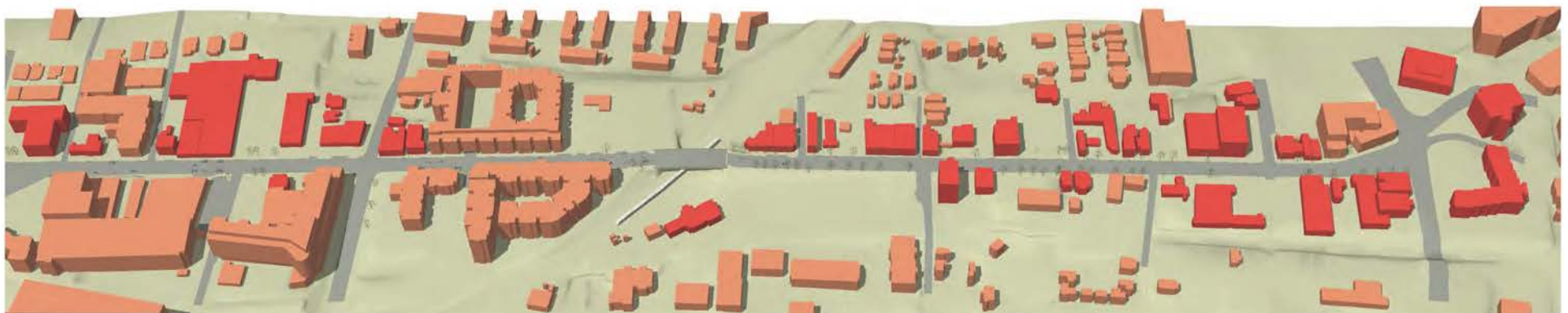
Zoning

Enhanced development regulations can provide standards that improve the overall quality of the street...



KEY

3-D Urban Design Analysis Model



Over the past few years, there have been a number of development projects both proposed and constructed along West Main Street, particularly west of the Bridge. Many of these developments have been designed to maximize height and bulk. Recently, The Flats of West Village, became the first “mega” project along the corridor to be constructed at maximum zoning ordinance and special permit allowances. Many of these developments along the corridor have been perceived by the public as too big, too tall, lacking in open spaces and character, and not compatible with adjacent streets and neighborhoods.

Height

Building height is a major concern of residents, particularly those living adjacent to proposed developments. The West Main Street corridor lies within the greater context of residential areas comprised of shorter-height houses, townhouses and apartments. West Main Street lies on a ridge that transitions to lower residential neighborhoods, which compounds the issue of height for proposed development along the corridor. Residents within adjacent residential neighborhoods are concerned about new developments that “tower” over their neighborhoods. Existing zoning does not transition to residential neighborhoods that have lower height limits. In addition, existing zoning allows negotiation

for additional development height through the use of special permits. While this can, in some communities, yield higher quality buildings and public benefits, it appears that this has not been realized on West Main Street.

Use and Appearance

The existing West Main Street zoning is overly focused on allowed uses. It is challenging to adaptively re-use existing structures, and some flexibility on use may be needed to tenant these structures. The existing development review system relies heavily on “design guidelines” instead of measurable standards which are clear and do not rely on interpretations that can lead to inconsistencies. Also, existing zoning does not require accommodation of bicycle parking through its parking requirements. Providing requirements for bicycle parking will help encourage the use of alternative transportation for visitors and residents of new developments.

Form-Based Code

There is a great need to ensure the types of future patterns of development along West Main that are desired by the community and that will allow for the preservation of the essential design character of the street. New zoning (whether through form-based code

or and traditional zoning ordinance) must improve controls on mass, bulk, and open space. Standards for transitions to adjacent residential neighborhoods must be addressed and the interface of development (street-facing building façade) to adjacent streets must be improved. Enhanced development regulations can provide standards that enhance the overall quality of the street including how windows, doors and blank walls are regulated and even how new development incorporate public amenities such as bicycle parking standards.

These controls will ensure that buildings contribute to both the street and adjacent neighborhoods, and do not overwhelm them. The new development regulations will not only enhance the character of the street but it will also ensure more predictability in the development process as the need for negotiation on every project would be eliminated. This will level the playing field for existing small property owners to contribute to the future of the corridor.

Existing Zoning Map



Input from Public Workshop #1

December 7, 2013

The first public meeting for the West Main Street project was intended to give the community an overview of the project and the areas that are being explored, present existing conditions, and give participants an opportunity to provide input in general and in response to specific questions and themes. The following points provide an general overview of comments expressed by participants:

History

History (both personal history and community/city history) is important to the way that people experience the corridor and it influences the character of West Main Street. It is a historic street that has experienced both gradual and abrupt, disruptive change.

Many participants expressed concern that the desired, historic character of the corridor is disappearing (or already has disappeared), especially in the west side of the corridor. It was suggested that a historical walk (with signage, similar to the existing historic signage) could be a way to keep that history at the forefront of corridor visitors' minds.

Several participants have memories of West Main Street that span from their personal experiences (such as getting married) to shared experiences (e.g., street fairs,

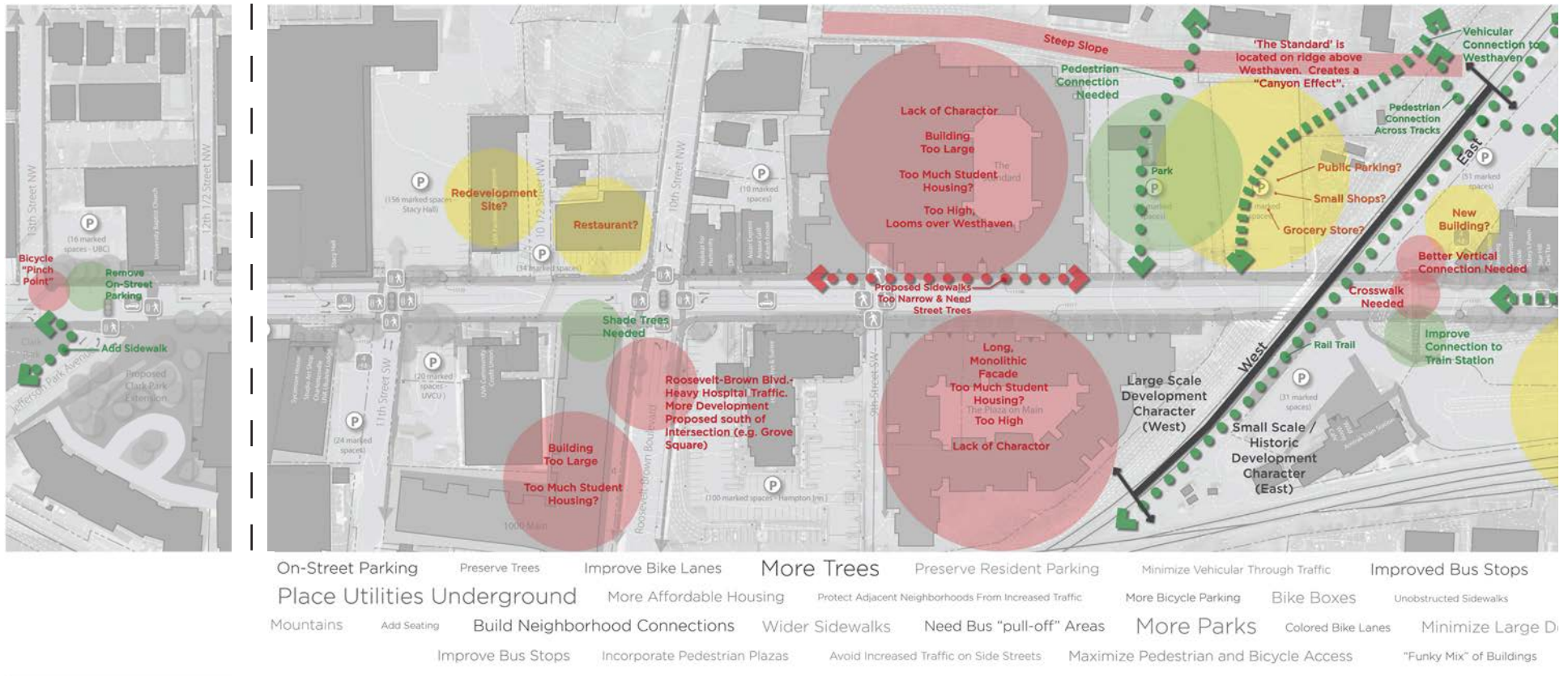
watching the Olympic torch, attending school). They also remember certain stores and the historic character of the street.

Pedestrian and bicycle improvements

There was considerable agreement that both pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure need improvement. There was a lot of support (in precedent images) for wider sidewalks and pedestrian areas that contain places to gather.

ROW design

Participants were encouraged to illustrate their ideal right-of-way (ROW) designs using the online program Streetmix. The idea of utilizing Streetmix was to have participants think about tradeoffs required when



working in a limited ROW. Participants who used taller buildings tended away from transit, while most of the streetscapes with shorter (≤ 3 stories) height limits incorporated a streetcar or other permanent transit modes. Notably, every design incorporated street trees – many with two or more rows on each side of the street, and some in a median.

Parking

Parking is an important issue on the corridor as this is viewed as a viable resource to ensure the sustainability of local businesses. Some expressed concern that many small lots near Main Street are filled by local employees, rather than customers. There were also suggestions to investigate parking strategies such as public/ private partnerships, to utilize off-street parking resources.

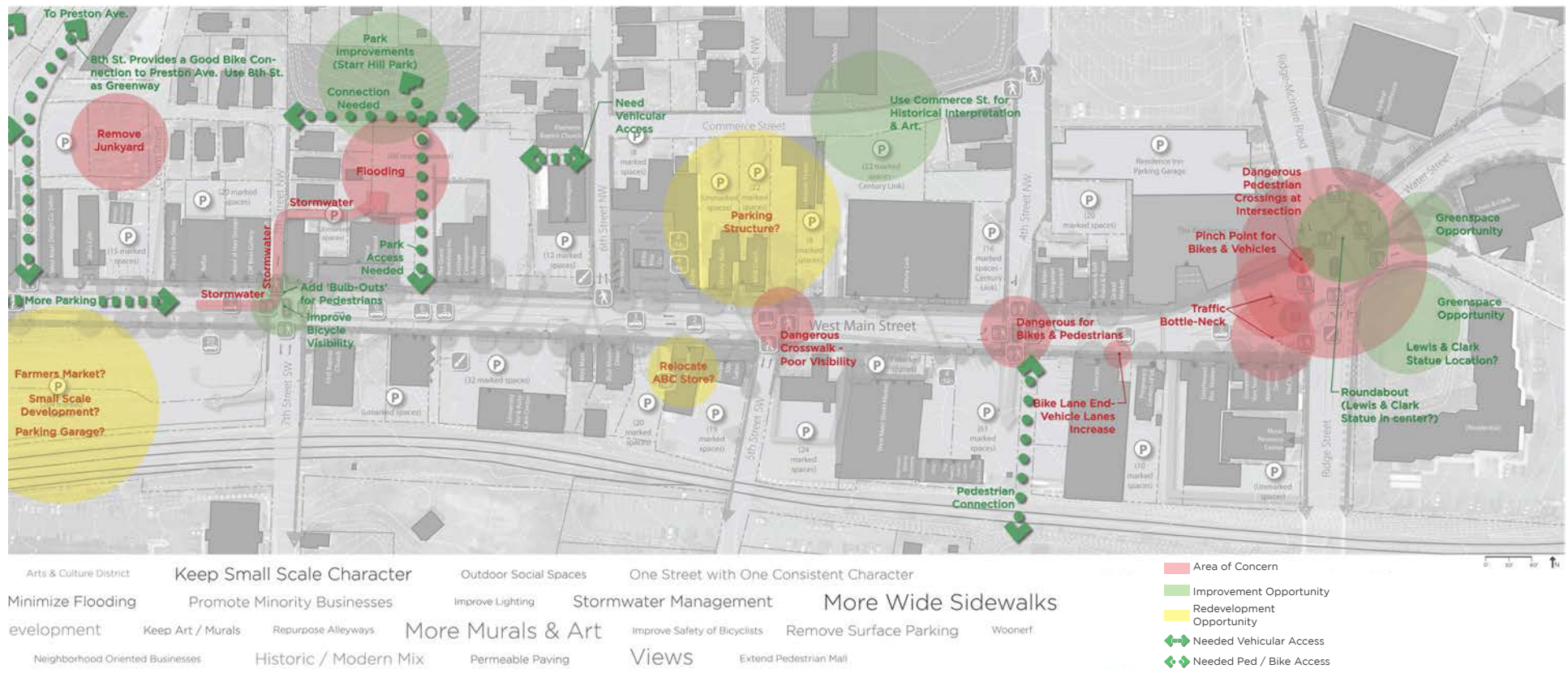
Character

Most participants like the “small town feel” and “eclectic mix” of West Main Street but some fear that this preferred character has become or will soon become lost to new development. There seems to be a particular fear of larger buildings, either in terms of horizontal size (e.g., the length of a block), or vertical size (e.g., anything 5+ stories, or non-pedestrian-scale buildings). There is a fear of losing the view of the mountains.

Urban Design

The large scale of recent/new development is one area of major concern, as people feel it detracts from the historical character of the corridor. Regardless of the type of building being shown to participants through the use of precedents – historic, contemporary, etc. – people

Most participants believed that there are zones and districts that comprise the corridor, with many saying that there two zones... ‘funky’, ‘historic’ character east of the bridge and a more ‘modern’ street character to the west of the bridge.



tended to have more positive opinions about buildings that have a unique design, a generous setback, and a relatively low height. People also expressed support for designs that encouraged a good mix of uses.

Community

There is concern about the character of the corridor in terms of the people who live on/near West Main Street. Some of the new buildings being developed (especially toward the west end) are student housing, and participants expressed concern that having students as the majority of the people living in the community will change the neighborhood character. There was an emphasis on wanting a diverse (economically, racially, etc.) community.

Perceptions of West Main

When asked whether participants view West Main as one street or a series of zones, there were different opinions. Several mentioned that West Main was (or should be) treated as one street, with different opinions on how the character should or should not change along the corridor. Most participants believed that there are zones and districts that comprise the corridor, with many saying that there are two zones/districts, divided by the railroad including a “funky”, “historic” character east of the bridge and a more “modern” street character to the west of the bridge.

Green Streets

There was support for green infrastructure along the corridor. The major takeaway is that people want to see more trees, especially trees that are well maintained. In general, people want to see more “green” along West Main. Infrastructure improvements such as parklets and planting beds received a lot of support through precedent imagery and the Streetmix exercise.

Vision

There were many different ideas for how West Main should look/function in 20 years. Although ideas varied in the details, residents expressed a desire to see

West Main change over the next 20 years in ways that incorporate its history, improve on pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and increase public green space and tree canopy.

Some participants imagined more density and services, while some feared that more density would bring more people and a loss of character. One idea that got a lot of approval from other participants was the rebirth of African American businesses in the community (which was greatly affected by urban renewal). Several ideas supported a mix of people in the neighborhood – a racially, economically diverse community, not just a corridor for UVA students.

