

**Monroe**  
revitalization initiative  
— concord avenue area —

*Concord Avenue Area  
Master Plan*

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**City of Monroe** - North Carolina

August 2015

prepared by:

**Kimley»Horn**

prepared for:

**City of Monroe** - North Carolina

concord avenue area master plan  
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## preface

The Concord Avenue Area Plan is an important first step toward revitalization with particular emphasis on identifying, preserving, and enhancing community features valued by residents and business owners. Overarching goals of the plan include improving safety and aesthetics, promoting private investment, encouraging quality development in targeted locations, and protecting neighborhood integrity.

The intent of the Plan is to create an attractive place for private investment so that collaboration can more effectively occur. The Plan offers general guidance for locations where existing development patterns are appropriate but lack coordination. It also gives specific direction in locations where more significant investments are required to create the sense of place desired by local residents and community leaders.

The proposed Plan brings a sense of continuity between urban design and infrastructure design. Specifically, the Plan provides a development framework, form and massing, aesthetic enhancements, gateway treatments as well as streetscape improvements and road connectivity that will help develop a “sense of place”.

### Advisory Committee:

Gustavo Arevalo  
Rausel Arista  
Isabelle Gillespie  
Freddie Gordon  
Brian Johnson  
Pat Kahle  
Drew Lawrence  
Rev. Larry Leake  
Denise Leon  
John Looney  
Dottie Nash  
Allan Small  
John Wiggins

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# existing conditions

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## existing conditions

The following chapter offers background information regarding observed conditions in the Concord Avenue study area . The section is not intended to be an exhaustive documentation of existing conditions. Rather, it serves as a foundation for understanding what we have prior to identifying what we want.

The existing conditions assessment includes:

- area of consideration
- study area boundary
- existing framework
- existing conditions

## Area of Consideration

The planning process began with considerations for a larger study area. This area stretched north across US-74 and included Euclid Street and Wilkes Drive. Following the initial meeting with the Advisory Committee and discussions with stakeholders, the large study area was reduced to a smaller area that better represented where change likely could occur and have the greatest impact on surrounding neighborhoods and the city as whole.



## Study Area

Bound by Patton Avenue and King Street to the south, US-74 to the north, Stafford Street to the east, and Stewarts Creek to the west, the study area encompasses over 135 acres of land. Approximately 30% of the total acreage (~36 acres) contains existing neighborhood developments. The study area has regional draw due to the existing shopping mall located just outside its northwest quadrant.

### Study Area Characteristics

- Dead-end streets
- Lack of connectivity
- Lack of bike/pedestrian accommodations
- Underutilized retail buildings/centers
- No community core ("Main Street")
- Many residences in study area core in disrepair
- Stable and positive surrounding neighborhoods





The study area includes buildings of various condition—stable single family neighborhoods, multi-family developments in a variety of conditions, as well as several commercial buildings nearing the end of their useful lives. Many parcels are underutilized and undeveloped indicating potential for redevelopment.



## Existing Environmental Conditions

- Jurisdictional streams exist near study area
- Streams running through middle of the study area are not considered jurisdictional at this time
- Western portion of the study area is constrained by Stewarts Creek buffer and utility easements
- Majority of the area lies within the Yadkin River Basin
- 100 and 500 yr floodplains are outside of the study area



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# planning process

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## planning process

A series of meetings and public workshops were conducted in coordination with the general public and the Advisory Committee to better understand local values and objectives. The activities facilitated during the public events ultimately contributed to a redevelopment strategy for the study area. The activities included:



preservation

community **vision**

*compatible design*

*funding*

**development** pattern

**gateways**

**desirable** land uses

**safety**

During the first advisory committee meeting, committee members were asked to participate in the following exercises:

- Strengths and Weaknesses
- Redevelopment + Reinforcement = Revitalization
- Priority Pyramid
- P2 Index

Strengths	Weaknesses
The majority of the neighborhood wants a safe place to live, especially for the children	Should focus in on a smaller area
People that have lived in neighborhood who have watched the decline and want it improved (safe place)	Up-keep of properties
Established Businesses	Empty vacant lots and closed down businesses
Increased community growth	Dilapidated buildings in need of paint, repairs, maybe even demolition. Many houses and yards in need of repair/improvement.
Many small family-owned businesses invested in the community with loyal customers	Very little green areas and landscape design
High pedestrian traffic around the area. Many children walking and on bikes.	Rents will go up
Strong economy and businesses	Low property values for people that own their homes due to high amount of rental stock that is not kept presentable
Love to hear stories of how neighborhood used to be from neighbors who have lived here for generations	Language barrier in some communities can put damper on improvement (requires more teamwork)
Near other prominent areas- mall, Concord area, downtown	High number of calls for police services
Good mixed land use with lots of room for infill opportunities	Maintenance issues (forgotten and low income areas)
Several avenues to educate the citizens about improvements	Horrible first impressions of Monroe (especially Secrest shortcut/ Kerr area/ Skyway)
Citizens that care about their communities and their neighbors	Deteriorating housing and businesses as well as crime
BP Station bought the Gentleman's Club parcel and closed it down	Housing code enforcement for rental property (owners don't seem to check on houses)
Convenience of businesses to neighborhoods	No sidewalks where people can walk- dangerous with high amounts of traffic
The area will have good transportation	Residential housing is primarily rentals
Diversity of housing options	Small dense area with no sidewalks
Changes are going to be made	Too many differing businesses in the area such as construction depot at the corner of Patton and Secrest Shortcut
Improve the streetscape and determine the proper mix of development	Some citizens do not know about the activities, shopping, dining, etc. available within the community forcing them to go elsewhere instead of investing here
Street system (infrastructure and traffic flow), access (hwy 74 & 601), and mix of uses	More connections to key areas. Sprawl problem.
Strong sense of community	Disconnected traffic patterns, negative housing conditions, unstabilized areas, deterioration of property, lack of investment, lack of pedestrian facilities in some areas
New building zoning	Lack of connectivity
Vision for the future of the Kerr community. Changes are going to be made to upgrade it.	Need additional parks and street trees in Concord Ave. area
	Seemingly lack of cohesive purpose or plan (vision and direction for the future)
	Lack of parks and play areas for children
	Sidewalks that do not connect. Large pedestrian volume, but lack of adequate facilities.
	Need a safer way to exercise (sidewalks)
	Lack of strategically placed sidewalks

## Strengths and Weaknesses

During this exercise participants were asked to consider the existing conditions as well as the geography of the study area and offer a series of observations regarding the immediate study area environs. Afterwards, they selected statements/topics to write down on index cards. Each participant was then asked to decide if their observations were a strength or a weakness when considering the study area. The result was an inventory of perceived strengths and weaknesses. The results of this exercises follows in the table to the right.

# redevelopment + reinforcement = revitalization



## The Philosophy

The philosophy of Redevelopment + Reinforcement = Revitalization was introduced to the Advisory Committee. This concept simply seeks to identify places where redevelopment would be welcome by the community. These were defined as select locations that are considered underutilized or the current conditions are less than desirable to carry forward into the long-term future. They generally represent places where if given the chance, an exchange for more development intensity would likely yield higher quality development and community amenities. The reinforcement refers to community features that should be preserved and where continued public investment is encouraged. The single family neighborhoods in the vicinity are a great example. They are stable and well-maintained and generally well-occupied. They offer a degree of affordability and include a mix of owner occupied and for lease houses. While there are many commercial properties in the immediate vicinity there is little integration (connectivity, or design queues) that suggest they are coordinated or well connected with the surrounding community. While these are positive contributions to the local economy, they also are locations where future development is encouraged.

### Priority Pyramid

The Advisory Committee was given a description of a variety of planning themes that would be considered during the planning process. These six themes were discussed as they related to the study area. Afterwards, participants were asked to rank the six categories in order of importance effectively building a pyramid to express the opinion on each theme's importance (three on the base, two in the middle, and the most important on top). The results of this exercise are tallied in the table to the right.



Economic Vitality	Community Design	Safety	Community Facilities	Neighborhoods	Transportation
3	2	1	1	1	2
2	2	3	1	1	1
3	2	1	1	1	2
1	1	3	2	1	2
3	1	1	2	2	1
3	1	1	2	2	1
1	1	3	2	2	1
2	1	2	1	3	1
2	3	1	1	1	2
1	3	1	2	1	2
2	1	2	3	1	1
2	3	1	1	2	1
2	3	1	1	2	1
3	1	2	1	2	1
3	2	1	2	1	1
1	3	1	2	1	2
<b>37</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>24</b>

## p 2 index

The Advisory Committee was asked to discuss the importance of revitalization within the context of the entire community. This included a candid discussion about how the study area compares to the other needs in the community as well as what the opportunity for revitalization might mean for the city as a whole. They also talked about how aggressive/progressive the plan and corresponding implementation strategy would need to be in order to achieve successful revitalization. Numerous barriers to success were discussed and participants were asked to consider the results of the Strengths and Weaknesses exercise before answering the following questions:

- How important is this project / issue when compared to other projects / issues in the City? (Prominence)
- How practical or progressive should the recommendations and implementation strategies be? (Progressive)

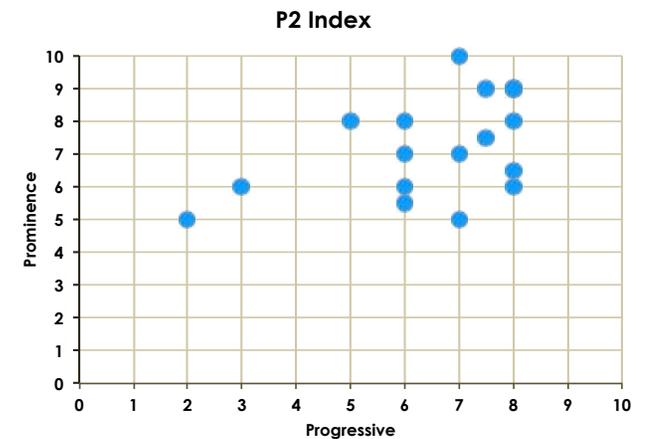
The committee members were given one vote each to express their responses to the questions. The results of this exercise were later plotted on an index chart and referred to as the P2 index. The resulting scatterplot of results clearly indicated that the committee believes the revitalization of the area is very important to the City of Monroe (not just the neighborhood) and that a fairly progressive method of involvement by the City in conjunction with private investment will be necessary for revitalization to occur.

Some direct takeaways from this activity were that revitalization would not happen without intervention in the market. This is likely for a number of reasons, including an abundance of available undeveloped land in the vicinity to accommodate new development; fragmented property ownership; difficulties associated with lot consolidation; lack of connectivity; current appearance; and lack of incentive for existing owners to invest. These facts are balanced with the fact that the study area has good access to US-74 (two interchanges), is the primary gateway to downtown, and is bordered by a successful retail center (the mall, with high occupancy).

### P2 Index (scale of 1 to 10)

Prominence: How important is this project / issue when compared to other projects / issues in the City?

Progressive: How practical or progressive should the recommendations and implementation strategies be?



During the first public workshop, a presentation was given. Afterwards, attendants were asked to participate in the following planning exercises:

- Thought Wall
- Investment vs. Problem Mapping
- Visual Preference Survey.

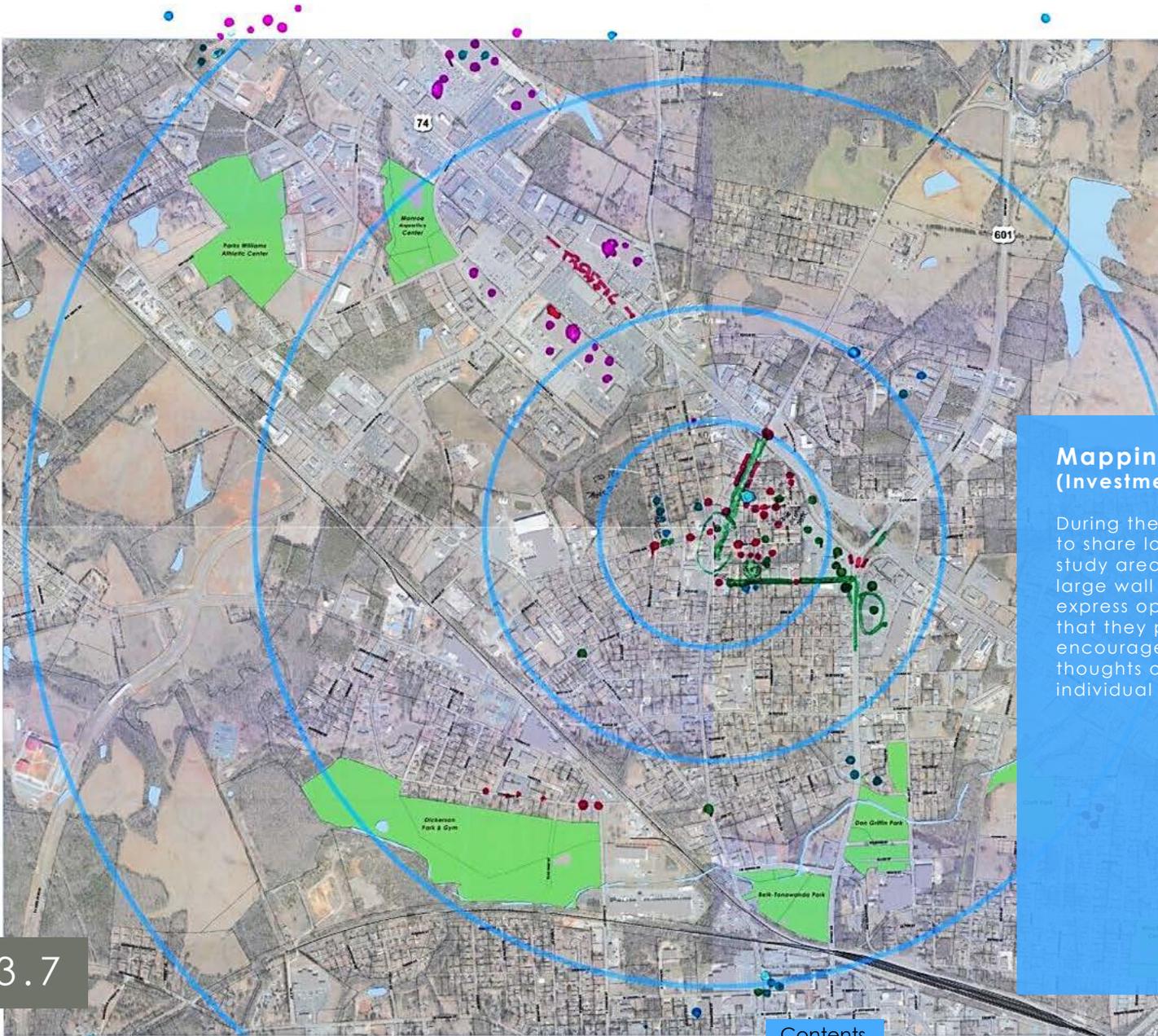
The activities and subsequent results are summarized on the pages that follow.

### Thought Wall

During this exercise, participants were given four white notecards and one orange. Participants were asked to consider the planning themes used in the priority pyramid exercise (Advisory Committee exercise) and identify their most important issues, concerns, or opportunities and write them on the cards. They were instructed to write the item that was most important to them on the orange card. Once this task was complete, they were asked to place the cards on the wall under the planning theme that was most appropriate to represent the content of what they had written. The result was a wall of information that captured the opinions of those in attendance. This exercise identified the planning themes with the most comments (frequency), the planning theme that received the most orange cards (importance), and the detail provided in writing by the workshop participants. Over 100 individual comments were received during this exercise. A brief summary table is provided to the right.



Community Design		Community Facilities / Services		Economic Vitality	
14	8	14	3	15	2
Neighborhoods		Safety		Transportation	
12	7	19	2	17	0



### Mapping Exercise (Investment vs. Problem Locations)

During the workshop participants were asked to share locational information regarding the study area. This information was captured on a large wall map where colored dots were used to express opportunities for investment and locations that they perceived were problems. They were encouraged to offer details by writing their thoughts on the map's edges. In total, over 120 individual data points were collected.

- My Map**
- Home
  - Work
  - Shop
  - Invest
  - Problem



## Visual Preference Survey

During the workshop a series of precedent image boards were presented for three different elements: Housing, Community Design, and Transportation. Identifying the design preferences of participants helped to create a vision for the "sense of place" desired by the community. Participants were given a set of voting dots for each category and then asked to express their visual preference by selecting from the images on the boards. The result was over 350 individual votes. This information helped the team focus in on design elements, building forms, infrastructure features and context elements. When considered in combination with the earlier exercises and the market study (see technical appendix), it pointed to the desire to create a walkable, mixed-use environment somewhere within the study area.

## assessment

The Charlotte region is in the midst of a strong recovery following the economic recession from 2007-2009. Employment in the region has increased at a faster rate than the nation. Gains in healthcare, education, and professional and business services have more than offset losses in manufacturing and construction in the last five years. Following suit, Union County has added over 2,000 jobs in the last year. As the county seat, the City of Monroe hosts nearly 50% of the total jobs in the county.

Carrying approximately 50,000 vehicles per day, the US-74 corridor is the commercial spine of Union County. The Concord Avenue study area's visibility from this corridor makes it especially marketable for retail, office, and hospitality uses.

### Market Assessment

The market assessment compiled and analyzed economic data from a variety of sources covering employment, local demographics, and larger macro-level trends in the region to inform the planning scenarios. Three development scenarios were created to demonstrate variations on use mixture, intensity, and design. While the market informed all of the scenarios, the selection of the preferred design was ultimately driven by the public.

## Market Observations

The City of Monroe acknowledged the importance of including a market assessment to inform the development of the planning scenarios. This assessment, which is included in the appendix, considers local and regional market forces and assesses the potential for redevelopment in the study area. The market component of this analysis informed size and scale of the preferred scenario as well as the most appropriate location for various development types. This process reconciles the full market potential of the Concord Avenue area with the improvements needed to foster success.

## o b s e r v a t i o n s

One of the key components of the market assessment was the identification of the Concord Avenue study area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). A complete listing of the items identified in the SWOT analysis is included in the technical appendix, but highlights include:

### strengths/opportunities

- Excellent visibility from US-74
- Gateway into Downtown Monroe
- Proximity to Monroe Mall
- Access to Wingate University

### weaknesses/threats

- Multiple property owners
- Limited street connectivity
- Aging retail inventory with low rents

SWOT

## o b s e r v a t i o n s

The compilation of information generated during the planning process led the Advisory Committee to the following conclusions:

- The study area is experiencing a concentration of crime activity.
- There are many underutilized / vacant commercial buildings in the area (low lease rates, unoccupied, and/or incompatible).
- The existing commercial construction lacks the quality desired by the community.
- Concord Avenue is a spine of the neighborhood but lacks a sense of place or "center".
- The intersection of Concord Avenue and Secret Shortcut Road requires a design enhancement.
- There is a lack of quality multi-family housing product.
- Strategic parcels have been slow to develop or redevelop.
- Aside from Pedro Street there isn't a strong connection between Concord Avenue and Skyway Drive.
- Skyway Drive is a primary gateway to Downtown Monroe but lack visual appeal.
- Existing property ownership patterns makes land assemblage difficult in some areas.
- Existing single family neighborhoods are stable and in good condition but lack quality community amenities.
- The walkability of the area is poor.
- Commercial development in the vicinity lacks a cohesive and integrated pattern.

### Opportunity Statement:

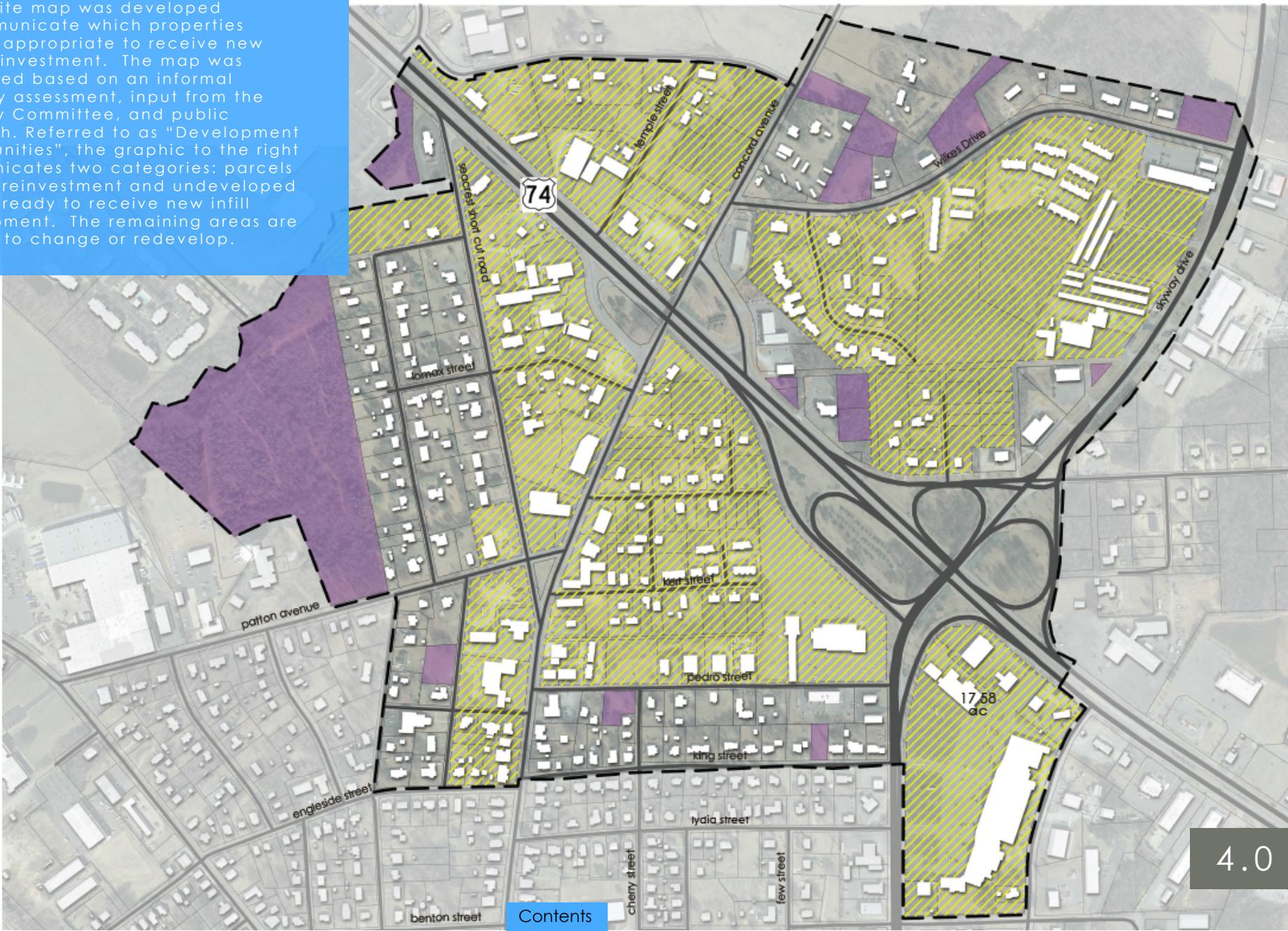
The opportunity exists to promote positive change in the study area by creating improved conditions for private investment with an emphasis on job creation, quality retail, integrated diversity of housing, and the creation of improved gateways to the City of Monroe.

# scenario development

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## Development Opportunities

Before building each scenario, a composite map was developed to communicate which properties may be appropriate to receive new growth/investment. The map was generated based on an informal property assessment, input from the Advisory Committee, and public outreach. Referred to as "Development Opportunities", the graphic to the right communicates two categories: parcels ripe for reinvestment and undeveloped parcels ready to receive new infill development. The remaining areas are unlikely to change or redevelop.



## Scenario Development and Evaluation

Three planning scenarios were developed in response to observations and opportunities. Each scenario explores a different form, style, and intensity of potential development within the study area. The scenarios are summarized on the following pages.

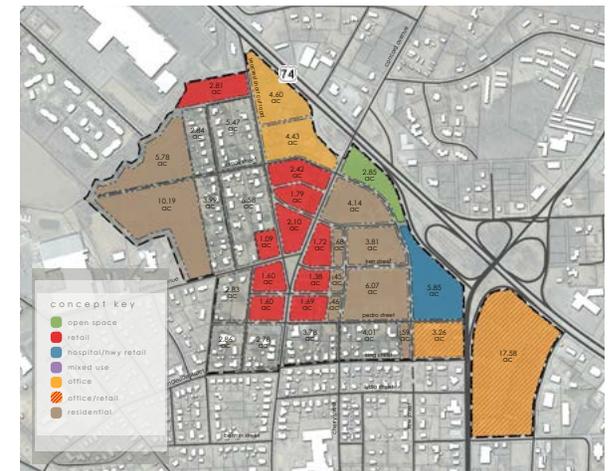
Concept A (Leverage US 74)



Concept B (Mixed Use Main)

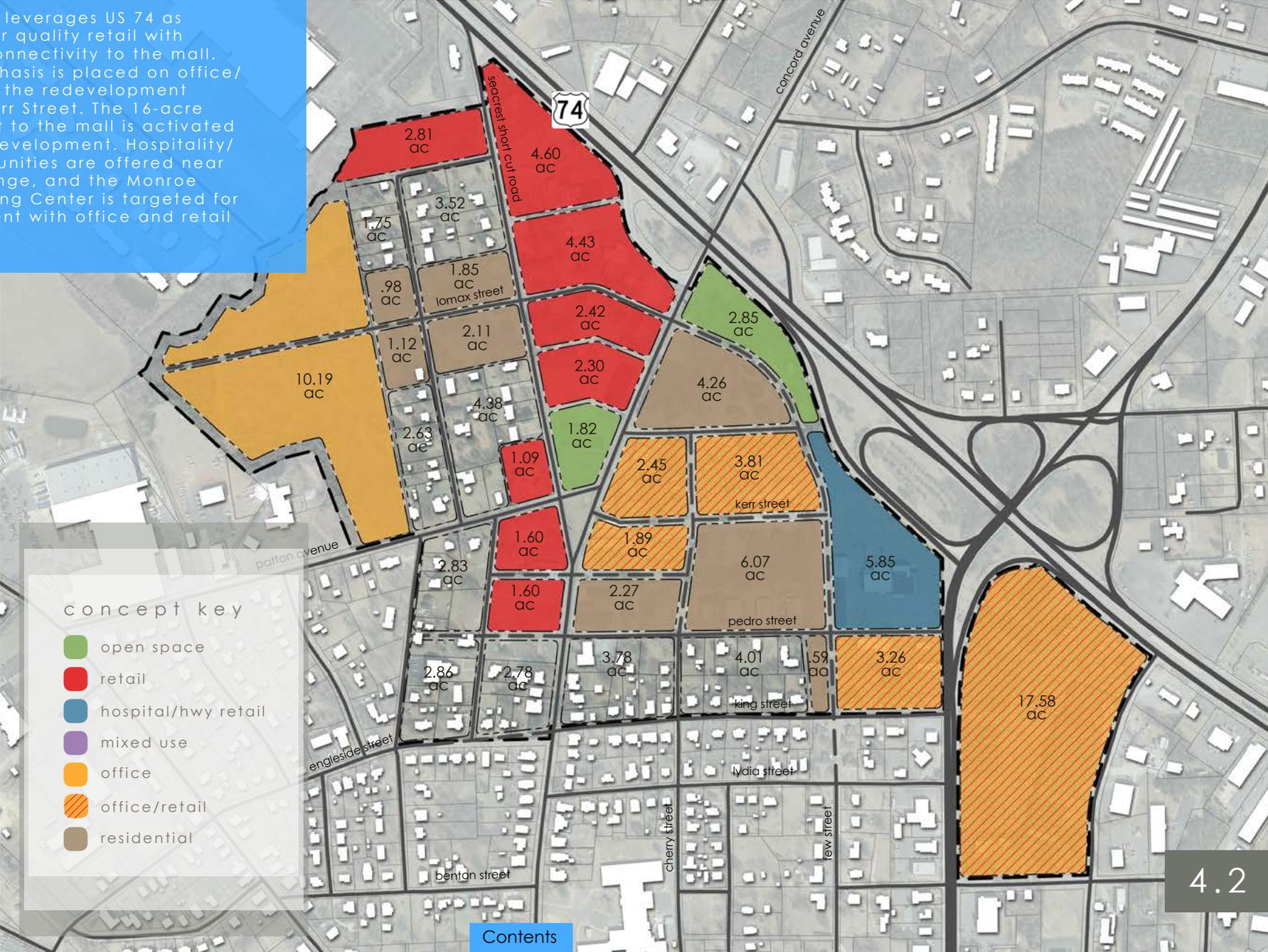


Concept C (Conventional Planning)



Concept A (Leverage US-74)

This concept leverages US 74 as a location for quality retail with enhanced connectivity to the mall. Greater emphasis is placed on office/retail uses in the redevelopment area near Kerr Street. The 16-acre site adjacent to the mall is activated with office development. Hospitality/hotel opportunities are offered near the interchange, and the Monroe Plaza Shopping Center is targeted for redevelopment with office and retail uses.



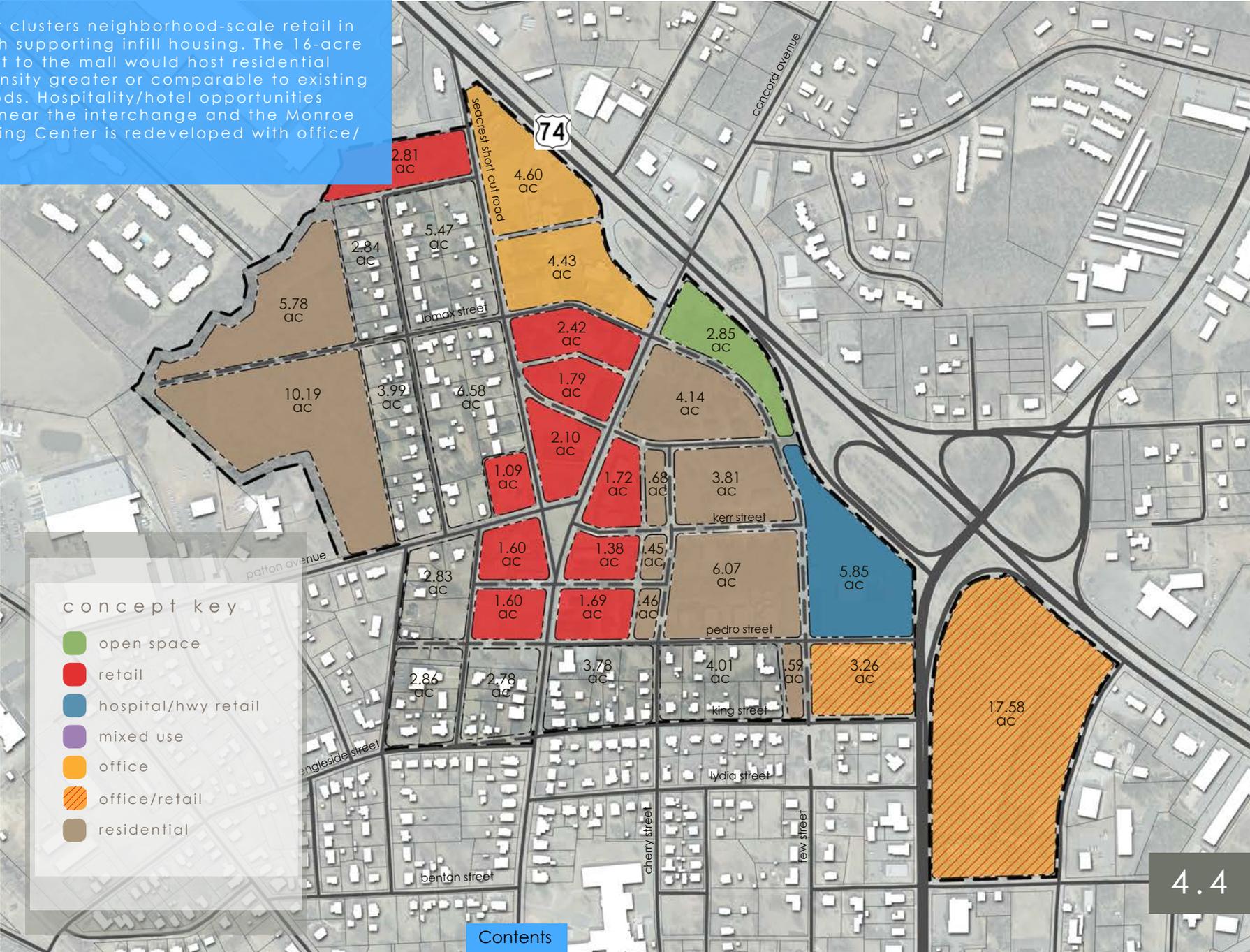
concept key

- open space
- retail
- hospital/hwy retail
- mixed use
- office
- office/retail
- residential



## Concept C (Conventional Planning)

This concept clusters neighborhood-scale retail in the core with supporting infill housing. The 16-acre site adjacent to the mall would host residential uses at a density greater or comparable to existing neighborhoods. Hospitality/hotel opportunities are offered near the interchange and the Monroe Plaza Shopping Center is redeveloped with office/retail uses.



concept key

- open space
- retail
- hospital/hwy retail
- mixed use
- office
- ▨ office/retail
- residential

	Concept A		Concept B		Concept C	
	Leverage US 74		Mixed Use Main		Conventional Planning	
	Acres	Pct	Acres	Pct	Acres	Pct
Open Space	4.6	3.8%	2.9	2.4%	2.9	2.4%
Retail	19.7	16.6%	14.7	12.5%	16.9	14.3%
Hospitality / Highway Commercial	5.9	4.9%	5.9	5.0%	5.9	4.9%
Mixed-Use	0.0	0.0%	8.0	6.8%	0.0	0.0%
Office	16.0	13.4%	16.0	13.5%	9.0	7.6%
Office / Retail	29.0	24.4%	20.8	17.6%	20.8	17.6%
Infill Residential	19.3	16.2%	25.3	21.4%	32.2	27.1%
Protected Residential	24.6	20.7%	24.6	20.8%	30.9	26.1%
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>118.8</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>118.1</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>118.6</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\*Differences in total acres due to rounding.

### Scenarios at a Glance

Each Scenario has a different mixture of land uses and leverages various aspects of the study area. The resulting land use program for each scenario is laid out on the table to the left.



### Scenario Evaluation

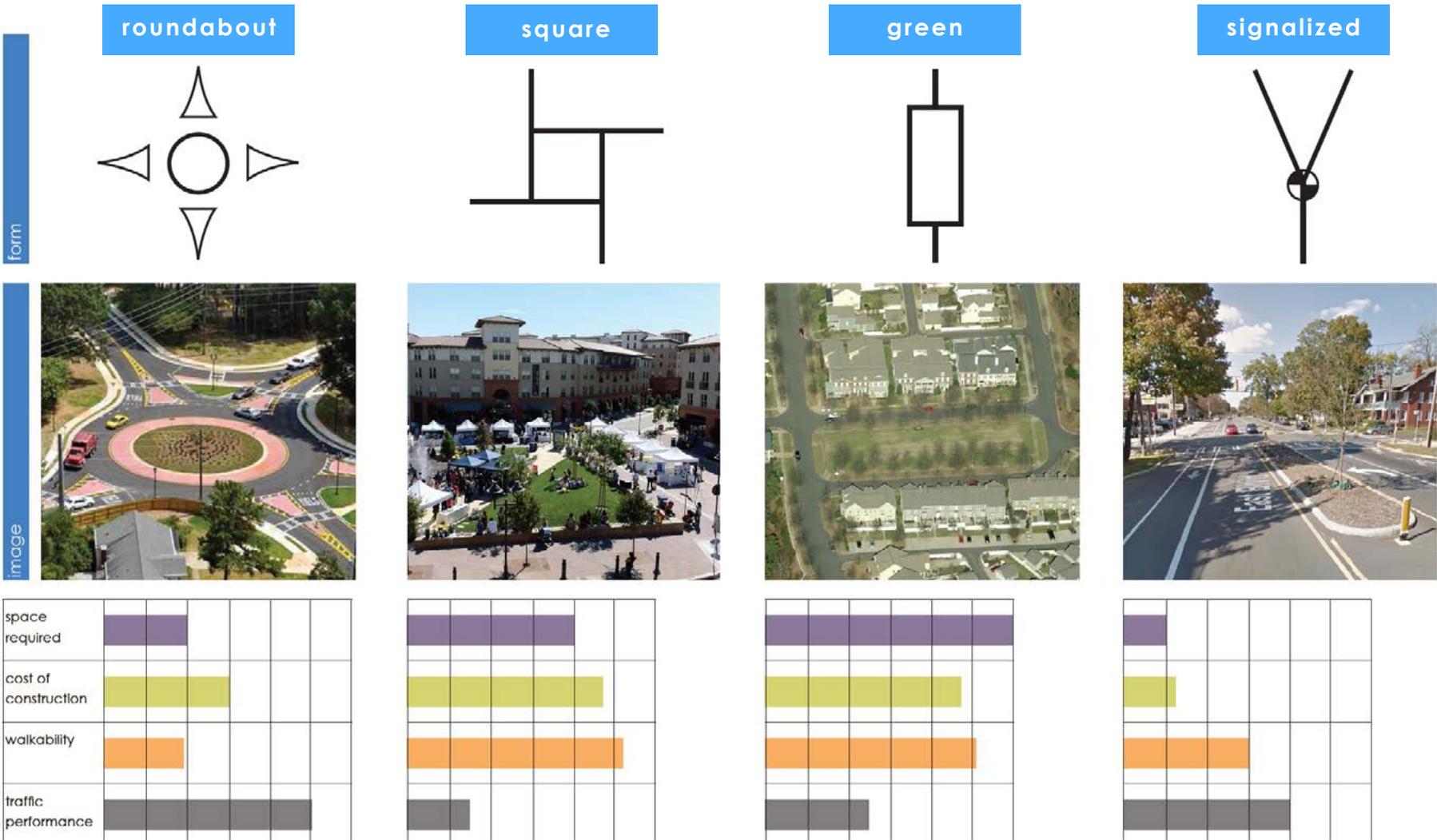
The Advisory Committee evaluated each scenario and compared them with the project objectives and desired outcomes. After careful consideration, Concept B was selected as the preferred option to serve as a framework for the Master Plan. As a concept of a mixed-use main street, Concept B best exemplified the vision for this study area. The partnership between quality housing and prime real estate near interchanges for hotel, office, and service-related uses provides the ultimate balance of a neighborhood center that is also a regional destination.

This scenario also offered an opportunity to explore options for the 16-acre undeveloped property adjacent to the mall for either office or residential uses. While scenario B designated this area for office development, it was determined that the potential for market absorption was limited. Furthermore, the adjacency to existing single family homes, lack of connectivity to other office and service uses, and the limited visibility of the site lead the Advisory Committee to the conclusion that this area was best suited for complimentary residential uses. This change is shown on the final master plan. Details are included in the Phased Master Plan chapter.



# intersection alternatives

The intersection of Secrest Short Cut Road, Kerr Street, Concord Avenue and Patton Avenue became a concern for many during the planning process. The confluence of these roads creates some confusion and visual clutter. It also is the center of the neighborhood and the focal point for the motoring public. For this reason, traffic engineers were asked to review traffic data to identify options for potential intersection reconfiguration. A series of options were presented to the Advisory Committee, and general consensus was that two intersection types would be appropriate given the geometry and travel patterns of the area. The mast arm signalized intersection configuration was the most popular, but a roundabout was also investigated. Considerations that influenced the selection included: space required for construction, likely cost, walkability (pedestrian experience and safety), and traffic performance. The Intersection Alternatives exhibit summarizes the characteristics of each intersection configuration.





### Transportation Investment Opportunities

The choice to show the signalization option in the master plan graphics was influenced by its walkability characteristics and likely ease of endorsement by NCDOT given its traditional design characteristics. In addition to the intersection, an exhibit was prepared that inventoried other high priority transportation locations. These locations are displayed in the Transportation Investment Opportunities exhibit to the left.

- The **ORANGE** highlighted roadway opportunities emphasize opportunities for streetscape enhancements, walkable streetscapes, underground utility relocations, street trees, improved sidewalks, and in some cases, potential for new roadway connections.
- The **YELLOW** area highlights the need for an improved intersection in the way of either a signalized intersection or a round-a-bout.
- The **GREEN** areas highlight opportunities for interchange enhancements, including landscaping treatments and gateway monumentation.

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# master plan

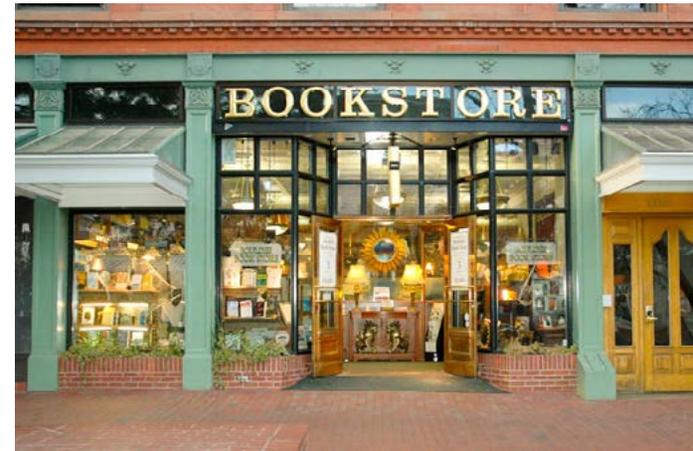
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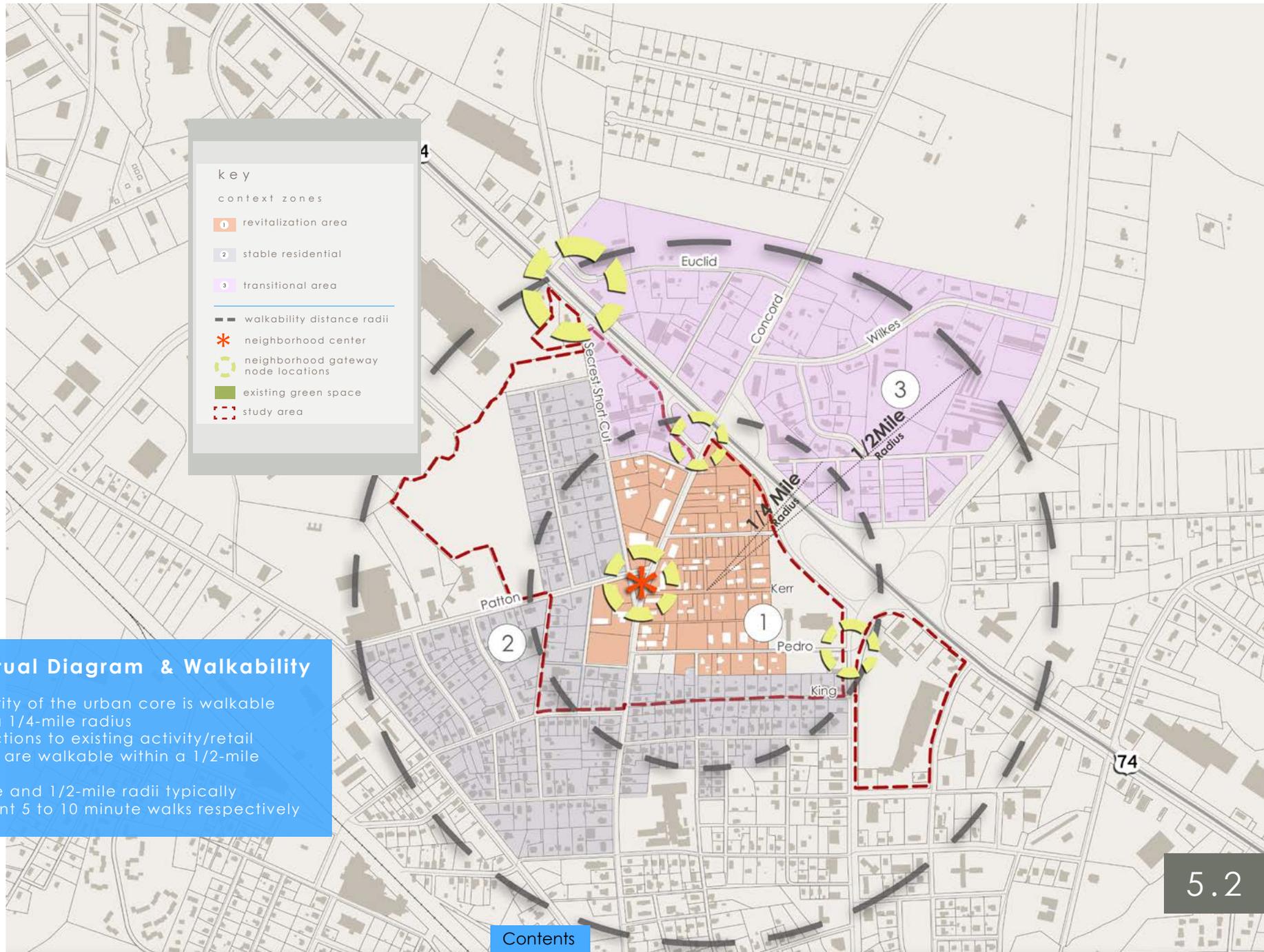


## master plan

The preceding portion of this workbook sets the stage for the development of detailed design alternatives for land use, urban form, and transportation. The resulting master plan is inspired by an established set of guiding principles and the land development program of Concept B. The supporting exhibits communicate design details for a variety of elements within the plan. Specifically, this chapter contains:

- **Precedent Images** intended to offer the reader a better feel of the types of environments that being sought
- **Conceptual Diagram** communicating key context zones and features for revitalization with particular attention to walksheds and walkability
- **Bubble Diagram** that translates Concept B with corresponding annotation
- **Future Framework** that displays illustrative building forms and future street connectivity
- **Land Use Program** communicating the intended uses within each of the building forms shown on the framework exhibit
- **Comprehensive Master Plan** as a complete representation of a potential revitalization of the area
- **Transportation Enhancements** described in a map with supporting typical cross-sections, intersection schematics, and representative





**key**

context zones

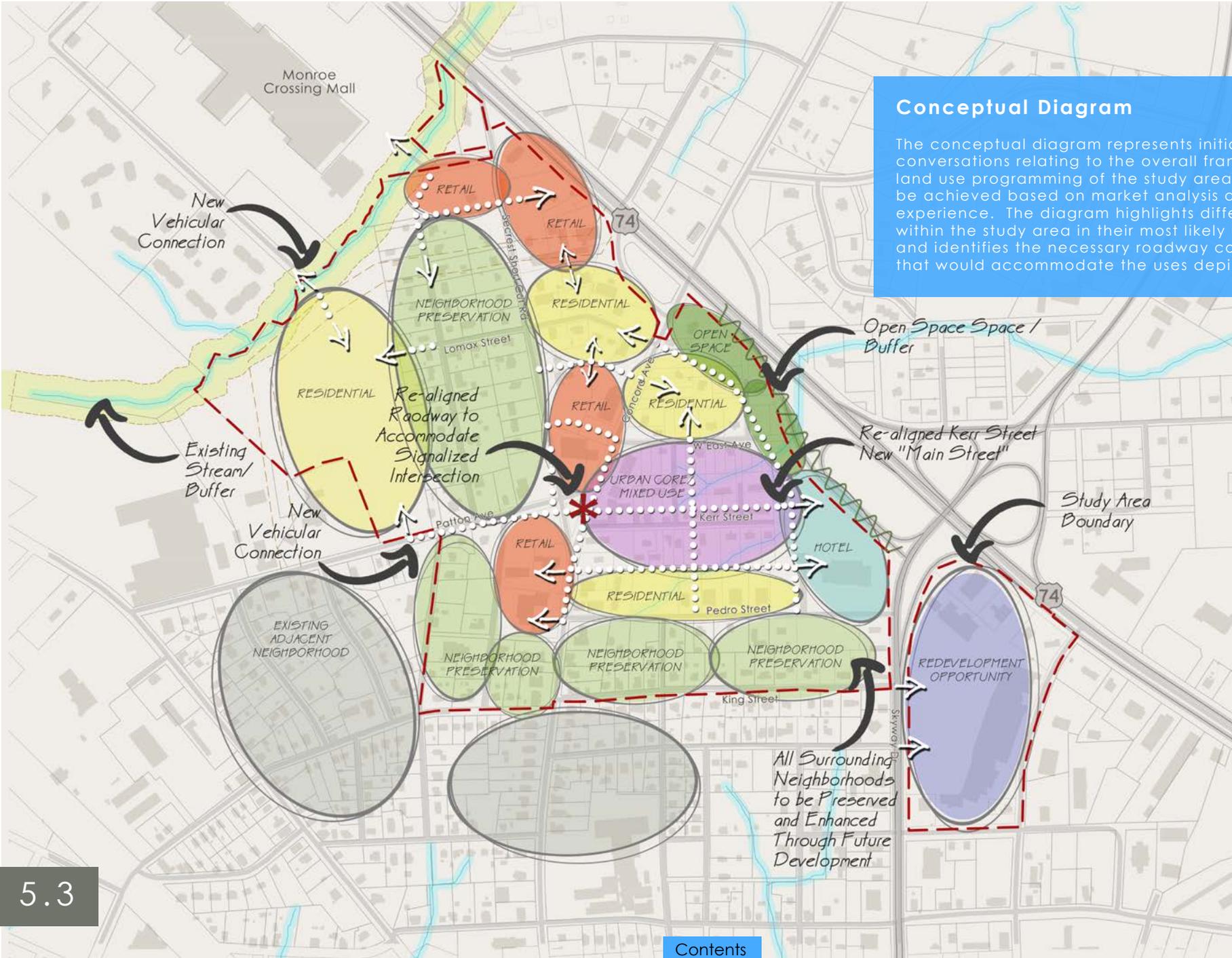
- 1 revitalization area
- 2 stable residential
- 3 transitional area

---

- walkability distance radii
- \* neighborhood center
- neighborhood gateway node locations
- existing green space
- study area

**Conceptual Diagram & Walkability**

- A majority of the urban core is walkable within a 1/4-mile radius
- Connections to existing activity/retail centers are walkable within a 1/2-mile radius
- 1/4-mile and 1/2-mile radii typically represent 5 to 10 minute walks respectively



**Conceptual Diagram**

The conceptual diagram represents initial conversations relating to the overall framework and land use programming of the study area that could be achieved based on market analysis and prior experience. The diagram highlights different uses within the study area in their most likely locations and identifies the necessary roadway connections that would accommodate the uses depicted.



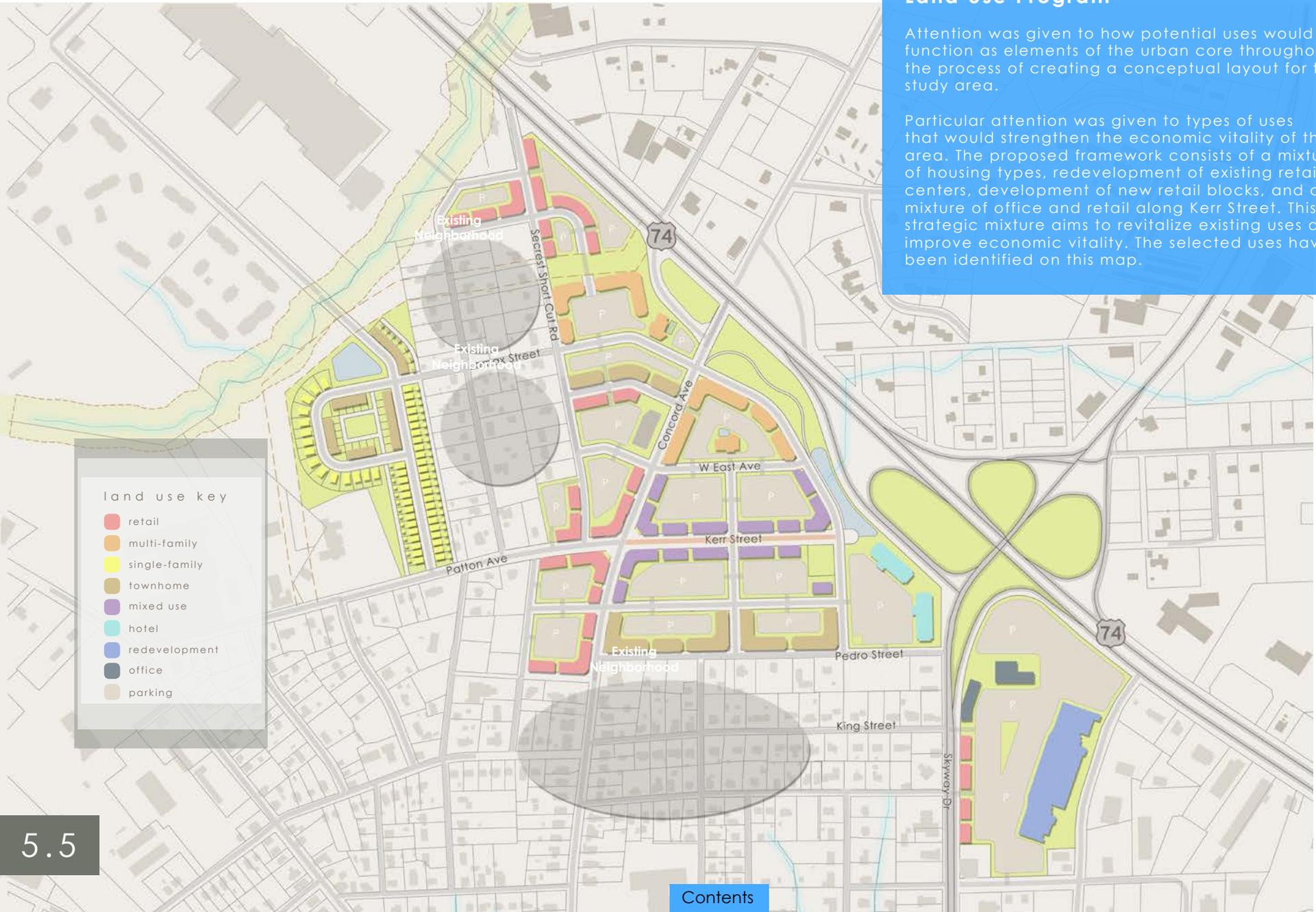
## Future Framework

Based on the conceptual diagram and the future framework plan shows the needed roadway improvements and a strategically places buildings and infrastructure to support a walkable, vibrant urban core. The focus of the future framework plan was to revitalize Kerr Street to become the new "Main Street" for the Concord Avenue Area.

## Land Use Program

Attention was given to how potential uses would function as elements of the urban core throughout the process of creating a conceptual layout for the study area.

Particular attention was given to types of uses that would strengthen the economic vitality of the area. The proposed framework consists of a mixture of housing types, redevelopment of existing retail centers, development of new retail blocks, and a mixture of office and retail along Kerr Street. This strategic mixture aims to revitalize existing uses and improve economic vitality. The selected uses have been identified on this map.



**land use key**

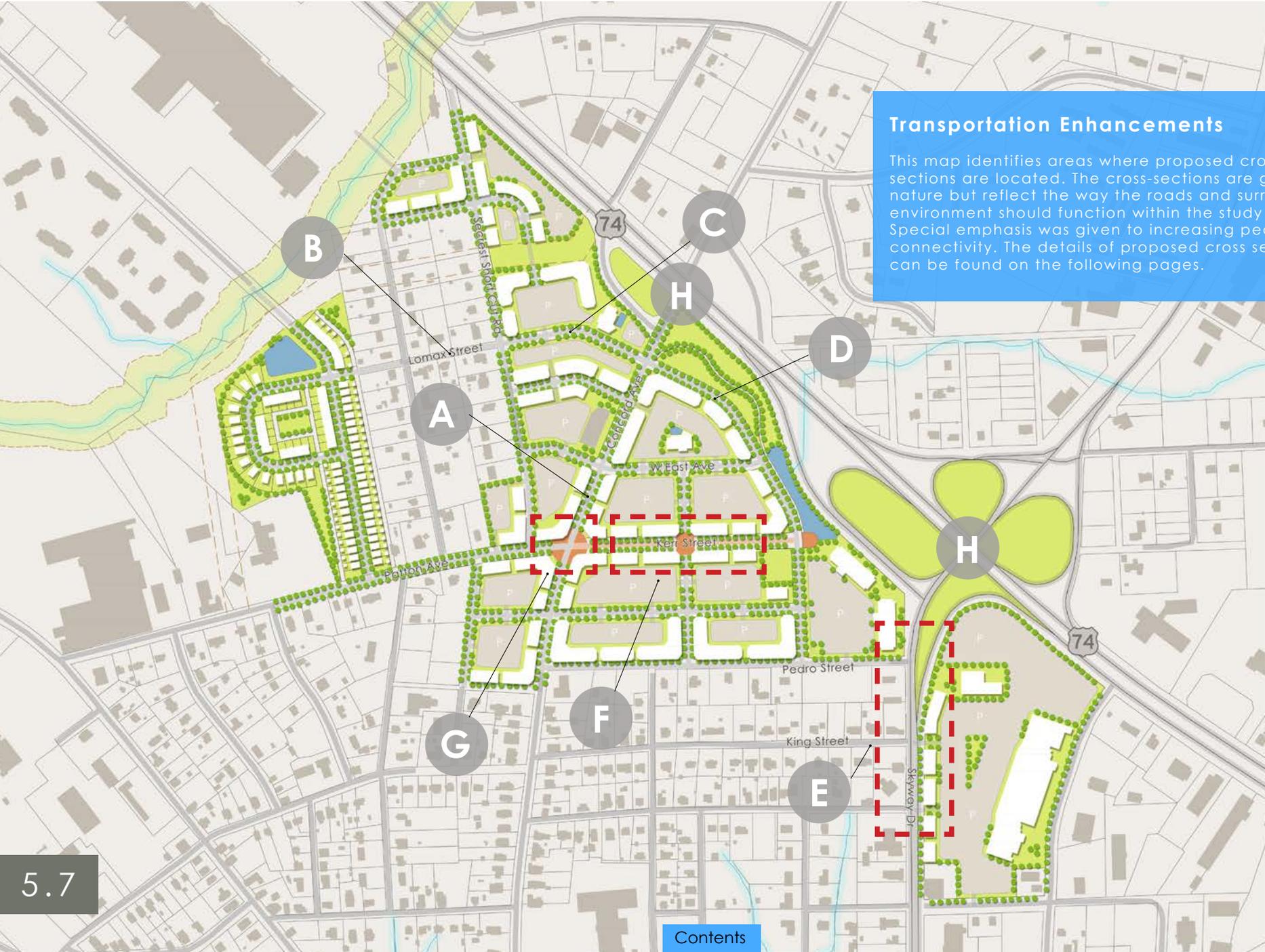
- retail
- multi-family
- single-family
- townhome
- mixed use
- hotel
- redevelopment
- office
- parking

## Comprehensive Master Plan

Once the future framework and land use program were established, a comprehensive master plan was created. Highlights of the master plan include:

- Strengthened vehicular connectivity
- Enhanced pedestrian corridors and access
- Streetscape enhancements such as: street trees, widened sidewalks, on-street parking, bicycle accommodations, and improved intersections
- Buildings that directly face and address the streetscape and pedestrian zones
- Interior and shared parking
- Amenitized storm water solutions
- An emphasis on the urban core by creating a "Main Street"
- Realigned roadway network to accommodate a signalized intersection at Kerr Street and Concord Avenue
- Creating a public green space for events and community gatherings
- Redevelopment of existing dilapidated retail centers
- Preservation and enhancement of existing stable neighborhoods within and adjacent to the study area





**Transportation Enhancements**

This map identifies areas where proposed cross-sections are located. The cross-sections are general in nature but reflect the way the roads and surrounding environment should function within the study area. Special emphasis was given to increasing pedestrian connectivity. The details of proposed cross sections can be found on the following pages.

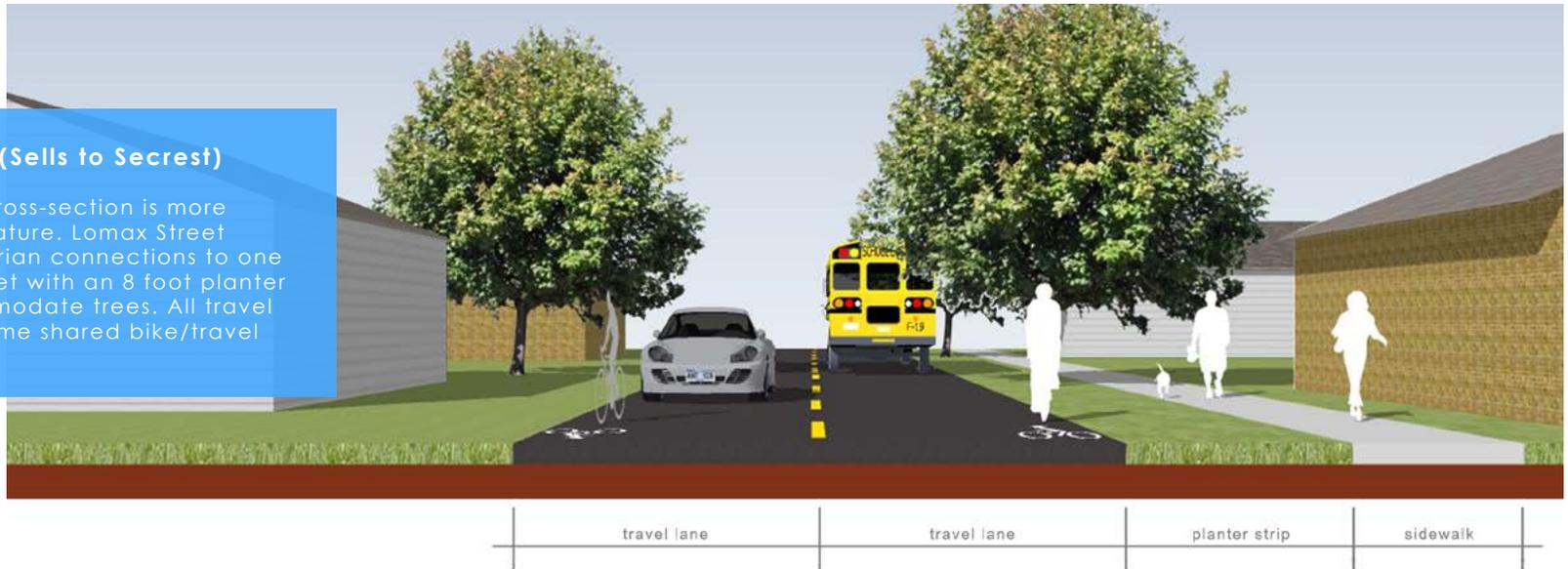
**A** **Concord Avenue**

The Concord Avenue cross-section highlights building faces on both sides of the streets, creating an urban edge placed strategically behind sidewalks. Trees and pedestrian lights will line the sidewalks. Utilities are planned to be moved underground. A center turn-lane allows vehicles to access parking behind buildings without restricting moving traffic. All travel lanes will become shared bike/travel lanes.



**B** **Lomax Street (Sells to Secrest)**

This two-lane cross-section is more residential in nature. Lomax Street focuses pedestrian connections to one side of the street with an 8 foot planter strip to accommodate trees. All travel lanes will become shared bike/travel lanes.



\* Locations for the cross sections, interchange improvements, and intersection improvements are referenced on sheet 3.7.



**C Lomax Street (Secret to Concord)**

This cross section represents the new ring road that will be emphasized through the urban core. At this location of the Lomax Street extension, 8 foot planter strips and 6 foot sidewalks will line each side of the street. Additions to the pedestrian environment include street lights and trees. Travel lanes will include sharrows to indicate a shared bike/travel lanes.



**D Lomax Street (Extension)**

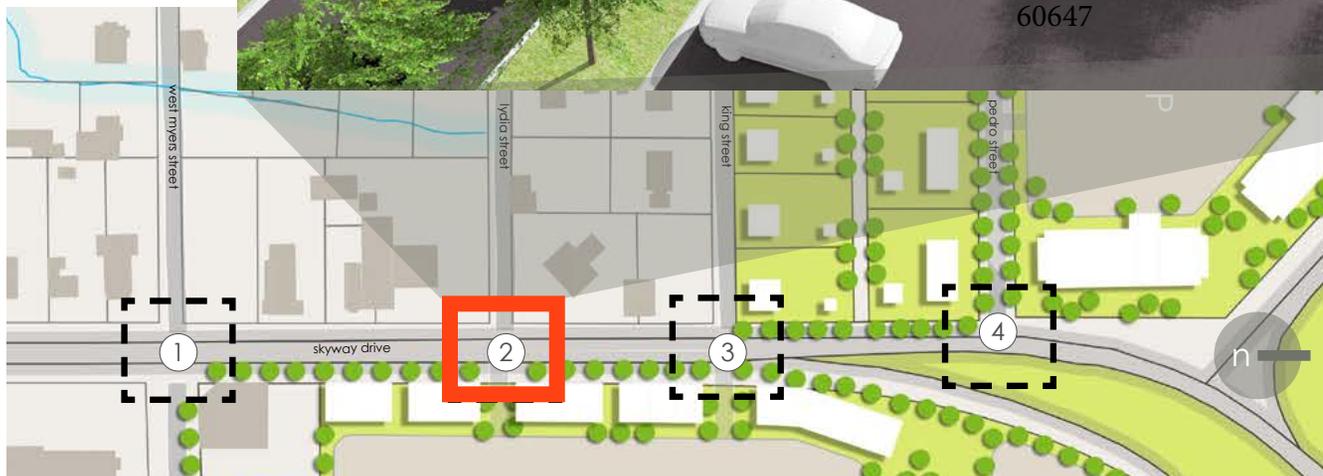
At this Lomax Street extension location, one wide sidewalk is provided at the back of the curb. Street trees and pedestrian street lighting are provided within the sidewalk. The travel lanes are shared bike/travel lanes. A center turn lane is provided for easier access to parking lots in the surrounding developments.



\* Locations for the cross sections, interchange improvements, and intersection improvements are referenced on sheet 4.7.

## E Intersection Improvements

The network shown below highlights four intersection and location improvements along Skyway Drive located at the western edge of the urban core. Areas 1, 3, and 4 emphasize aesthetic treatments, including enhanced pedestrian connections, street lighting, and trees that line the roadway. Area 2 focuses on signalized intersection improvements at Lydia Street as shown in the rendering to the left. The schematic intersection perspective for Area 2 includes enhanced pedestrian accommodations as well as mast arm traffic signals, pedestrian crossing signals, and the movement of existing utilities underground. It is vital to address these intersections as they will provide access connections for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles from the surrounding neighborhoods to study area as well as the urban core.



\* Locations for the cross sections, interchange improvements, and intersection improvements are referenced on sheet 4.7.

**F** Kerr Street

The revitalized Kerr Street will act as a catalyst for economic development in the urban core. The Concord Avenue area's new "Main Street" will showcase wide, walkable pedestrian zones with room for outdoor seating as well as trees and street lighting. Buildings will sit directly on the designated setbacks and face Kerr Street. This will provide a more walkable environment that promotes pedestrian access to ground floor retail as well as nearby office space. The buildings that face Kerr Street should be in between two and three stories tall. If these guidelines are met, particularly the healthy mix of office and retail space, Kerr Street will improve its sense of place and its overall identity.



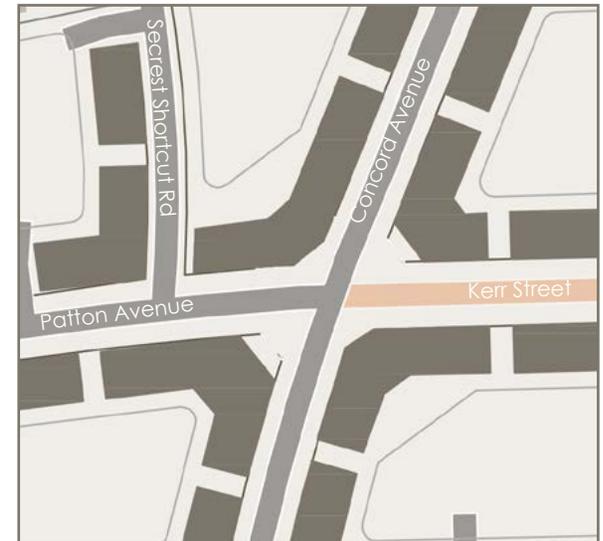


**G Concord Ave / Patton Ave Re-Alignment**

The existing intersection of Concord Avenue and Patton Avenue became the focus of the proposed framework plan. The current alignment of Patton Avenue, Concord Avenue, and Kerr Street create a void, an unfocused space (upper left image). The renderings shown here provide an example of signalized intersection treatments. Two options were considered for the preferred intersection treatment. Ultimately, the option for the typical intersection was chosen due to its more efficient use of available space. Realignment of these roads to a more typical intersection can not only improve pedestrian connections but will provide more viable retail opportunities (lower left image). Kerr Street will align directly at the new intersection and create a vista into the core's new "Main Street".



existing framework



proposed framework

\* Locations for the cross sections, interchange improvements, and intersection improvements are referenced on sheet 4.7.



## H Landscaping/Gateway Opportunities

The interchanges located at the northern boundary of the study area on US-74 provide many opportunities for a grand entrance and gateway that travelers will experience as you enter the revitalized urban core (See Exhibit 4.7). Enhancements include gateway monumentation, decorative bridge treatments, landscaping treatments, as well as improved pedestrian and vehicular lighting. Examples of landscaping treatments for the interchanges are shown in the image to the right.



# action plan

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## Action Items

The Concord Avenue Area Plan is intended to be referenced by the City as public and private decisions are made regarding development, redevelopment, capital investment, and economic development. The following action items align with the planning themes established early in the planning process with the explicit purpose of guiding future decisions. They are presented in the pages that follow in one of four categories—**plans**, **programs**, **policies**, and **projects**.

## action plan plans • programs • policies • projects

The Concord Avenue Area Master Plan began with the intention to collect, refine, communicate, and execute a vision for the study area. The resulting strategy represents the contributions of the community, Advisory Committee, and local staff. Successfully implementing the plan will require active and enduring partnerships among these same groups. This concluding chapter provides a broad set of recommendations grouped into four categories—Plans, Policies, Programs, and Projects. Once introduced, the recommendations are represented in a Strategy Board that provides additional detail on phasing, responsibilities, costs, and funding sources.

It's emphasized that implementation of the plan does not require all recommendations be completed in unison. A successful approach promotes flexibility and emphasizes the partnerships between the City, community advocates, stakeholders, and the development community. This approach allows for incremental implementation as new development occurs and funding sources become available. At its core, the Strategy Board emphasizes that partnerships can be leveraged to ensure strategic and timely investments. With persistence and patience, this critical area of the city will experience rejuvenation.

## plans • programs • policies • projects

Completing the Concord Avenue Area Master Plan is the first step in revitalizing this important area of the City. A variety of plans, some underway and some to come, will ensure the community vision carries forward.

- **Adopting the plan** | The first step in fulfilling the vision of the Concord Avenue Area Master Plan is the most fundamental: determine what to do with the plan. The most deliberate action would be for the City of Monroe to adopt the plan. While adoption will not make the content of the plan legally binding, it will serve as a formal acceptance of the planning process and outcomes.
- **Coordinating with other planning efforts** | Just as the Concord Avenue Area Master Plan included a review of previous plan, it should provide guidance to future planning initiatives that touch the study area. Ongoing plans should reference the outcomes of the plan and previous plans should be amended where necessary to demonstrate the master plan's vision. In particular, the City should incorporate the revitalization strategy into Forward Monroe, the ongoing city-wide land use and transportation planning effort. Because Forward Monroe includes a Comprehensive Transportation Plan component, it can help position Monroe to receive funding from the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO) for identified capital improvements. Regional plans such as the US-74 Revitalization Study, a multi-jurisdictional effort between Union County, the City of Monroe, and neighboring towns, should be monitored to determine if their goals and actions align with the Concord Avenue Area Master Plan. Where possible and necessary, the City should request amendments and modifications.

### Action:

Receive recommendation for adoption from Planning Board and adoption from City Council.

### Action:

Incorporate the revitalization strategy into Forward Monroe and monitor future planning efforts for consistency.

**Action:**

Conduct a branding study and execute its recommendations to fully leverage the Concord Avenue area's preferred identify.

**Action:**

Conduct a wayfinding study with design schematics for gateway treatments, signage, and destination markers.

**Action:**

Identify high-priority sidewalk connections that increase bicycle and pedestrian accessibility within the Concord Avenue area and to other destinations such as downtown.

**Action:**

Promote the inclusion of community spaces in the study area and throughout the city as part of the Forward Monroe Land Use and Transportation Plan with consideration for how these spaces are accessed by surrounding neighborhoods.

- **Establishing a neighborhood identity** | A uniform identify would include the creation of a brand statement and graphics for the Concord Avenue area. The identity should be applied to specific marketing strategies and collateral for future development (and incorporated into the work plans of various groups promoting the City of Monroe). The development of a neighborhood identity should include a high level of public participation and be complimentary to (rather than in competition with) downtown Monroe.
- **Improving wayfinding** | A comprehensive wayfinding plan that describes gateway treatments and directional signage for primary gateways, identity signage, and destination markers. The plan should include a sign schedule showing design, content, and location of all wayfinding signage. All wayfinding should incorporate a unique and unified brand identity for the Concord Avenue Area. Wayfinding will become particularly important as revitalization of the study area commences.
- **Providing transportation choices** | The master plan advocates for thoughtful incorporation of land use and urban design throughout the study area to support a more efficient transportation system. Linking land use, urban design, and transportation decision-making processes promotes the livability of the area, measured for transportation by shortening the distance between destinations and providing more travel mode choices.
- **Promoting community spaces** | Distinctive places in a community often are its open spaces, whether built or natural. These places provide community gathering space through the creation of publicly accessible locations of varying size. Community spaces can be developed directly by the City, exclusively through private development, or by way of public-private partnerships.

## plans • programs • policies • projects

Achieving the community's vision for the Concord Avenue area will require commitment and determination from a variety of individuals and groups both within the City and from external partners. A variety of programs will be necessary to instigate and support the plan's recommendations.

- **Identifying a champion** | Locations where a city identifies an internal champion are often more successful at implementing a plan. This often is accomplished by hiring a specific individual as the "CEO for the Plan". Through the assignment of this role, the City is effectively saying that implementing the Plan is a priority. It also holds an individual responsible for advancing the initiatives set forth in the plan. For this project, the designated role would be responsible for monitoring progress, reporting to Council on incremental initiatives, and supporting the other advocacy roles of implementers (private sector) and residents.
- **Acquiring property** | To protect key parcels within the Concord Avenue study area, the City of Monroe should consider the development of an acquisition policy for properties that become available or are not maintained to minimum housing code. A working inventory of key parcels should be maintained by staff.

### Action:

Hire an additional planner to represent and support Plan implementation.

### Action:

Establish a property acquisition policy and monitor the status of key parcels.

**Action:**

Establish and empower a community advocacy group to monitor the ongoing implementation of the master plan.

- **Creating a forum for advocacy** | Advocacy often occurs most effectively at the neighborhood level, and places with identified neighborhood leadership and organized advocacy tend to be more successful at ensuring compliance with local plan goals. Often these groups take the form of neighborhood associations or organized citizen groups. These groups best represent the perspective of local residents and are better positioned to ensure compliance with the desired vision and plan initiatives. Most importantly, they remind City Council of the importance of the plan and represent the neighborhood perspective as incremental implementation decisions are contemplated by the planning board and city council. The neighborhood group's presence creates a partnership between the city and its residents on the shared priority of revitalization. The neighborhoods in the revitalization area may require help from the City with organization. In the absence of an existing neighborhood association and/or identified community leader, the City of Monroe may need to assist residents through asset building (investing in people and offering organizational support). This process may be as simple as offering a place for the group to meet on a regular basis or assisting with communication (through email, maintaining a contact database, or web based materials). Assistance from the City could be provided from the designated internal champion described above.

**Action:**

Create a checklist to aid in comparing entitlement applications with recommendations of the Concord Avenue Area Plan.

- **Tracking investments** | The City of Monroe and local stakeholders should monitor and evaluate implementation of recommendations presented in the Concord Avenue Area Master Plan. Staff should periodically summarize progress in the study area for presentation to City Council. A checklist should be created for reviewing entitlement applications to assist with comparison of proposal and plan recommendations.

## plans • programs • policies • projects

- **Monitoring progress** | One way to elevate the importance of plan implementation is to host a regular Implementation Round Table. This meeting could occur quarterly at the outset with less frequency as progress is made. The meetings would be organized by the City and would include a neighborhood representative as well as internal champion; however, emphasis on attendance by local investors, developers, and property owners will be important. The key agenda items would be to discuss implementation progress as well as barriers that are limiting or impeding implementation. The identification of these obstacles will benefit from a collective set of experienced individuals to determine the best methods of overcoming the challenges.
- **Assessing housing demand** | Residential demand is an ever-changing landscape and development styles and preferences often shift. Using sources such as local media outlets, Urban Land Institute, and published datasets generated by private consulting firms, the City of Monroe should monitor national and regional trends in housing. It is possible that shifts in housing trends, could facilitate modifications to densities and unit types demonstrated in the Concord Avenue Area Plan. This action helps the City of Monroe to promote a mixture of housing types in appropriate locations that are responsive to the regional and national market.

### Action:

Host a series of regular Revitalization Round Table meetings.

### Action:

Publish a bi-annual snapshot of residential development trends for local and regional markets with consideration for necessary modifications to the Concord Avenue Area Plan.

Leveraging the momentum created and sustained by the variety of plans and programs, a coordinated set of policies will be necessary to direct community resources and private investment.

**Action:**

Incorporate design guidelines for the study area as part of the upcoming re-write of the City's Unified Development Ordinance, including considerations for new districts that promote compact, mixed-use development and updated standards for parking, setbacks, and signage.

**Action:**

Publish an annual map that documents housing code enforcement in the study area.

- **Creating an efficient and productive land development process** | Land development policies should establish a positive and efficient framework for achieving the vision of small area plans such as the Concord Avenue Area Master Plan. This process represents the first and most tangible step toward forming an ongoing partnership between the City and the private development community. Design standards should be instituted and defended to reflect community preferences and economic development goals. Likewise, unnecessary hurdles that create delay or raise costs during the development process should be avoided.
- **Establishing minimum housing thresholds** | The enforcement of a minimum housing code will help safeguard established neighborhoods within and near the Concord Avenue and protect the interests of future investors. Properties that routinely fail to meet standards should be considered for condemnation and purchase by the City of Monroe.

- **Consolidating lots** | Revitalization of the study area likely will not occur without intervention in the market for a variety of reasons including the relatively small lots with different land owners. To create adequate development pads, the City of Monroe should enforce minimum lot requirements and work with existing land owners to encourage lot consolidation. The process should yield larger, more rational land development opportunities
- **Improving the transportation system through policy** | While the recommended transportation improvements likely will require a coordinated effort among the city, NCDOT, and Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO), the City can begin to recognize the benefits of a coordinated transportation system by implementing policies that enhance connectivity and improve multimodal travel in the study area.

**Action:**

Enforce minimum lot requirements and reward owners who consolidate parcels with parking or setback incentives.

**Action:**

Institute policies that establish connectivity requirements and limit the further use of speed humps in the Concord Avenue area.

plans • programs • policies • **projects**

The plans, programs, and policies provide structure for implementing the necessary physical enhancements to allow the master plan to take shape. These projects include a variety of capital projects mostly related to transportation (e.g. gateways, intersection improvements, new street connections, and new roadway design for existing streets). As shown in the Strategy Board, the private sector will play a role in supporting and/or implementing some improvements. Other improvements would be led by the City and in partnership with NCDOT and the CRTPO for state maintained roadways.



**Concord Avenue—Eastbound US 74 Ramp to Foch Street** (Map Reference A)

**Lomax Street—Sells Street to Secret Short Cut Road** (Map Reference B)

**Lomax Street—Secret Short Cut Road to Concord Avenue** (Map Reference C)

**Lomax Street Extension—Concord Avenue to Kerr Street** (Map Reference D)

**Skyway Drive Intersections** (Map Reference E)

**Kerr Street—Concord Avenue to Lomax Street Extension** (Map Reference F)

**Concord Avenue / Patton Avenue Realignment** (Map Reference G)

**Gateway/Landscape Improvements** (Map Reference H)

## strategy board

A coordinated and intentional approach will be necessary to overcome administrative and market barriers to achieve the vision for the Concord Avenue area. With this in mind, a detailed Strategy Board was created that places the recommendations into three priority tiers: short-term (within the next 5 years), mid-term (6 to 10 years), long-term (10+ years). The Strategy Board also identifies the

- **Type**—Lists each recommendation as a Plan, Policy, Program, or Project
- **Planning Themes**—Shows how each recommendation aligns with the planning themes
- **Responsible Entities**—Identifies the responsible entity or entities charged with leading implementation
- **Recurring/Ongoing**—Distinguishes one-time recommendations with those that will recur often or operate continuously
- **Estimated Cost**—Provides a planning-level cost estimate for applicable recommendations
- **Potential Funding Source**—Offers funding options for applicable recommendations

The tiers represented in the Strategy Board are not static. In fact, the benefit of the Concord Avenue Area Master Plan is its flexibility. With proper leadership, the City can be nimble and flexible in its approach to implementation to allow incremental improvements. The Strategy Board is intended to be dynamic. Unexpected opportunities and unforeseen challenges will occur over time, and some recommendations may change based on these new circumstances. These situations should not compromise the action plan as it is a living document.

## planning themes

A set of planning themes were established early in the planning process to guide the development of the plan. These themes represent six broad categories upon which community input was evaluated, scenarios were assessed, and recommendations were developed.



### Community Design

Signage, landscaping, branding, public art, street trees, architecture



### Community Facilities/Services

Parks, recreation, youth programs, community services



### Economic Vitality

Job creation, job retention, sales revenue, destination, land value



### Neighborhoods

Enhancing existing, housing quality, housing diversity



### Safety

Crime reduction, lighting, safe places, improved streets



### Transportation

Mobility, accessibility, connectivity, walkability, wayfinding

## responsible entities

Realizing the full vision of the Concord Avenue Area Master Plan will require collaboration among a variety of local, regional, and state partners. Land use policy and program initiatives will mostly occur at the local level. The transportation strategies will require coordination with CRTPO and NCDOT, and some improvements will happen as development and redevelopment occurs. The following groups (presented in alphabetical order) have assigned responsibilities for one or more of the recommendations in the Strategy Board.

- **CC:** City of Monroe – City Council
- **CRTPO:** Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization
- **ES:** City of Monroe Engineering Services
- **NCDOT:** North Carolina Department of Transportation
- **P&R:** City of Monroe Parks and Recreation Department
- **PB:** Planning Board
- **PD:** Private Development
- **Planning:** City of Monroe Department of Planning and Development

## estimated costs

The costs indicated in the table are for budgeting purposes. Many are influenced by the level of detail in the design and the timing of when they are achieved. However, the table should serve as one means of establishing an implementation work plan as well as a measure of progress.

## potential funding sources



Funding the recommendations likely will require a combination of sources, including public-private partnerships, grants, capital improvements programs, and NCDOT/MPO programs. In addition, the City could accelerate financing through Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) and Transportation Bonds. Careful examination of the Concord Avenue Area Master Plan shows that changes to the transportation network are vital to fulfilling the community's vision for the area. While significant costs are associated with most of the transportation recommendations, the expected return on investment is significant (both in increased tax revenues as well as quality of life and community vitality). The following funding sources could be leveraged to implement the recommendations as indicated in the Strategy Board.

**General Fund (GF)** The annual budget identifies the general fund expenditures for each fiscal year including the operating expenses of the City. Some implementation action items can occur through regular and ongoing efforts already accounted for within existing department budgets and responsibilities. These are not new funds that need to be identified by the City.

**Municipal Service Districts / Business Improvement Districts (MSD/BID)** A Municipal Service District (MSD), commonly referred to as a Business Improvement District (BID), is a financing mechanism used to provide revenue for a variety of services that enhance, not replace, existing city services. Additional information regarding the limits of these districts can be found at <http://canons.sog.unc.edu/?p=2146>.

## potential funding sources

**Tax Increment Financing (TIF)** Tax Increment Financing (TIF) allows local governments to issue “project development financing” bonds without voter approval to pay for certain public investments needed to attract private development. This type of bond relies on the incremental tax revenues that result from increases in assessed property values. The bonds are considered to be “self-financing” because, if successful, the public improvements they finance will stimulate new private investment and generate tax revenues to pay off the bond debt. More information regarding the administration of these programs can be found at <http://www.sog.unc.edu/programs/tif/>.

**Synthetic TIF (STIF)** Synthetic TIF's are a public/private partnership tool used to advance Economic Development and land use planning goals. Unlike a regular potTIF, a Synthetic TIF does not require the establishment of a TIF district to utilize locally approved financing which often streamlines the process. In a synthetic TIF, the asset (or a portion of the asset) that is being financed or, in some cases, the unit's full faith and credit (general taxing power) is used to secure the loan. The unit expects to repay the loan from the incremental increase in property tax revenue generated within the district due to the increase in property valuation caused by the new development. For more information regarding the difference between the two TIF programs, please see <http://ced.sog.unc.edu/what-is-a-synthetic-project-development-financing-aka-synthetic-tif/>.

**NC Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)** Public-Private Partnership financings have been used to build public infrastructure to encourage associated private development. In addition to the typical projects (e.g. streets, sidewalks, and utilities), public infrastructure projects also have included projects such as convention centers and parking decks. For more examples of Public Private Partnerships in NC, please see <http://www.ncleg.net/documentsites/committees/LSCPPP/1-25-2011/Handout%20from%20Treasurer's%20Office%20re%20Innovative%20Financing%20Examples%20in%20NC.pdf>.

**Capital Improvements Program (CIP)** The City of Monroe has a continuous 5-year capital improvement program (CIP) that assigns funding for equipment and facilities within the City. The City has a history of using the CIP for the purchase of property, transportation improvements, and equipment purchases.

**Transportation Funds (TF)** As a member jurisdiction of the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO), the City can participate in a variety of competitive funding programs including PL104 Planning Grants; Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ); Federal Surface Transportation Program-Direct Attributable (STP-DA) funds; Transportation Alternatives (TA) program; NC Transportation Improvements Program; and Safe Routes to School.

Strategy Board							
Recommendation	Type	Planning Themes	Responsible Entities	Recurring/Ongoing	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source	
Immediate (Within 1 Year)							
Adopt the Concord Avenue Master Plan	Plan		PB CC				
Incorporate the revitalization strategy into Forward Monroe and monitor future planning efforts for consistency.	Plan		Planning PB CC	Ongoing		GF	
Identify high-priority sidewalk connections that increase bicycle and pedestrian accessibility within the Concord Avenue area and to other destinations such as downtown.	Plan		Planning ES			GF	
Promote the inclusion of community spaces in the study area and throughout the city as part of the Forward Monroe Land Use and Transportation Plan.	Plan		Planning P&R PB CC				
Short-Term (2-5 Years)							
Institute policies that establish connectivity requirements and limit the further use of speed humps in the Concord Avenue area.	Policy		Planning PB CC			GF	
Incorporate design guidelines for the study area as part of the upcoming re-write of the City's Unified Development Ordinance.	Policy		Planning PB CC			GF	

Strategy Board							
Recommendation	Type	Planning Themes	Responsible Entities	Recurring/Ongoing	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source	
Short-Term (2-5 Years)							
Hire an additional planner to represent and support Plan implementation.	Program		Planning CC	Ongoing		GF MSD/BID	
Create a checklist to aid in comparing entitlement applications with recommendations of the Concord Avenue Area Plan.	Program		Planning CC	Recurring		GF	
Establish and empower a community advocacy group to monitor the ongoing implementation of the master plan.	Program		Planning CC	Recurring		GF MSD/BID	
Investigate the creation of incentives such as parking, setbacks, or densities to reward owners who consolidate parcels.	Policy		Planning CC	Ongoing			
Conduct a branding study and execute its outcome to fully leverage the Concord Avenue area's preferred identify.	Plan		Planning		\$7,500 to \$15,000	GF MSD/BID	
Conduct a wayfinding study with design schematics for gateway treatments, signage, and destination markers.	Plan		Planning		\$10,000 to \$50,000	GF MSD/BID TF	

Strategy Board							
Recommendation	Type	Planning Themes	Responsible Entities	Recurring/Ongoing	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source	
Short-Term (2-5 Years)							
Host a series of regular Revitalization Round Table meetings.	Program	     	Planning	Recurring		GF MSD/BID	
Establish a property acquisition program and monitor the status of key parcels.	Program	  	Planning CC	Ongoing		CIP PPP	
Lomax Street—Sells Street to Secrest Short Cut Road (Map ID B) – 500ft	Project	    	CC		\$175,000 to \$225,000	CIP TIF/STIF TF PPP	
Skyway Drive Intersections (Map ID E)	Project	    	NCDOT CRTPO CC		\$200,000 to \$750,000	CIP TIF/STIF TF PPP	
Concord Avenue / Patton Avenue Realignment (Map ID G)	Project	    	NCDOT CRTPO CC		\$225,000 to \$635,000*	CIP TIF/STIF TF PPP	
Gateway/Landscape Improvements (Map ID H)	Project	   	NCDOT CRTPO CC		\$50,000 to \$250,000 (per location)	CIP TF PPP	
Publish a bi-annual snapshot of residential development trends for local and regional markets with consideration for necessary modifications to the Concord Avenue Area Plan.	Program	     	Planning	Recurring		GF MSD/BID	

Strategy Board							
Recommendation	Type	Planning Themes	Responsible Entities	Recurring/Ongoing	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source	
Long-Term (6 to 15 Years)							
Concord Avenue—Eastbound US 74 Ramp to Foch Street (Map ID A) – 1,800ft	Project	     	NCDOT CRTPO CC		\$1,000,000 to \$1,500,000	CIP TIF/STIF TF PPP	
Lomax Street—Secret Short Cut Road to Concord Avenue (Map ID C) – 700ft	Project	    	CC		\$225,000 to \$335,000	CIP TIF/STIF TF PPP	
Lomax Street Extension—Concord Avenue to Kerr Street (Map ID D) – 1,800ft	Project	     	PD CC		\$1,250,000 to \$1,600,000	CIP TIF/STIF TF PPP	
Kerr Street—Concord Avenue to Lomax Street Extension (Map ID F) – 1,000ft	Project	     	PD CC		\$800,000 to \$1,700,000	CIP TIF/STIF TF PPP	

\*Influenced by intersection design selection.

## call to action

Community leadership is often left contemplating the best approach after the development of a revitalization plan. The reality is there are multiple paths to consider and all have the potential to result in the desired outcomes of the plan. When considering the Concord Avenue Area Master Plan the choices fall into a combination of the following:

1. **Passive:** adopt the plan
2. **Intentional:** adopt the plan + rezone
3. **Pro-active:** adopt the plan + rezone + redevelop

### The Passive Approach

A Passive Approach doesn't equate to inaction but does involve the least effort and fewest public resources as well as the greatest amount of patience. It begins with the adoption of the plan and the persistence to hold firm on the principles expressed in the plan as incremental decisions are made. The plan is essentially implemented over a long period of time and through traditional channels. It relies largely on the private sector investing in the area at the time when the market is ripe to receive the investment. It also allows public investments to occur through traditional channels (example: incremental improvements through the CIP and the use of grants to achieve certain work tasks). There are numerous examples of this in our immediate region including past plans performed by the City of Monroe and surrounding communities. This approach tends to work fine when the area is in the path of growth.





### The Intentional Approach

This approach assumes the adoption of the plan plus the added step of rezoning the area to reflect the entitlements necessary to achieve the full vision expressed in the Plan. This has the effect of giving notice to the development community that the City is committed to positive change and is willing to engage in a partnership that streamlines their approval process and reduces their exposure to risk. The change in entitlements for the area also has the potential to influence property values which can sometimes influence a property owner's appetite to either sell or invest in their property through redevelopment. This process may require more effort and resources when compared with the passive approach and may also involve the use of public and private partnerships to fulfill some of the elements described in the plan. The tradeoff of this public investment is often a revitalization that closely aligns with the established vision and one that occurs on a faster timeline when compared with the passive approach. This process can take many forms including the use of existing zoning, conditional and special use zoning and the creation of zoning overlays. This same process is being applied within our region. An example is in the neighboring community of Stallings where a zoning overlay was approved to promote development in what will become their future downtown. <http://www.stallingsnc.org/143/UDOTown-OrdinancesPolicies>

## The Pro-active Approach

This approach involves a combination of the previous two options with the added step of the City engaging in development activities. Specifically, some communities take the steps to acquire properties incrementally through a variety of methods and programs. Once rezoned and assembled, the City may elect to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to the development community. The RFP serves as a notice to developers that the City is interested in engaging in a partnership to redevelop the land they have acquired. This approach is not as common given the capital cost of acquisition, the challenges associated with displacement and complexities that are sometimes encountered with existing lease agreements. However, it is the most intentional action, with the greatest certainty of outcomes, and often the most expeditious implementation. It has been demonstrated as an effective tool in places where developer appetites are low as a result of poor market conditions (real or perceived), and/or challenges associated with the target reinvest areas (environmental, crime, access, or disconnect between current development patterns and what is proposed). Processes like this often become the catalyst for additional investment by the private sector once they see the stabilization of an area (as well as increasing demand and values). An example of this is the Southside Community in Greensboro's South End. Before redevelopment in 1995, Southside produced \$400,000 in tax revenues. Now that redevelopment is complete, the total tax revenue generated from the neighborhood is estimated at over \$10 million. <http://www.terrain.org/unsprawl/20/>



## considerations

As the City contemplates which course of action to pursue they should consider:

- How long are they willing to wait for positive change to occur
- How important is seeing the plan implanted exactly as described (or is some investment and redevelopment going to be considered success)
- What is the level of commitment that that the City is willing to make (financial, time, and community resources). Answers to these question will enable to the City to select the course of action that best aligns with their priorities and timeline.

The advisory committee established for this Plan contemplated similar consideration when they participated in the P2 Index activity summarized on page 3.5 of this report.



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# appendix

The City of Monroe has acknowledged the importance of including a market assessment to inform the development of planning concepts. The assessment considers local and regional market forces at play in the potential for redevelopment in the Concord Avenue Area.

The findings contained in this memorandum informed the size and scale of the land use concepts, as well as the most appropriate location for various development types, reconciling the full market potential of the Concord Avenue Area with the improvements needed to foster success.

### Regional Considerations

The Charlotte region is in the midst of recovery following the economic recession from 2007-2009. The region, defined as the 10-county Charlotte MSA, includes Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, and Union counties in North Carolina; and Chester, Lancaster, and York counties in South Carolina. The Charlotte MSA has grown by nearly 650,000 people since 2010, reaching a total population of over 2.4 million in 2014. The strongest growth was experienced in Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Union, and York counties. Union County currently comprises slightly less than 10% of the regional population total.

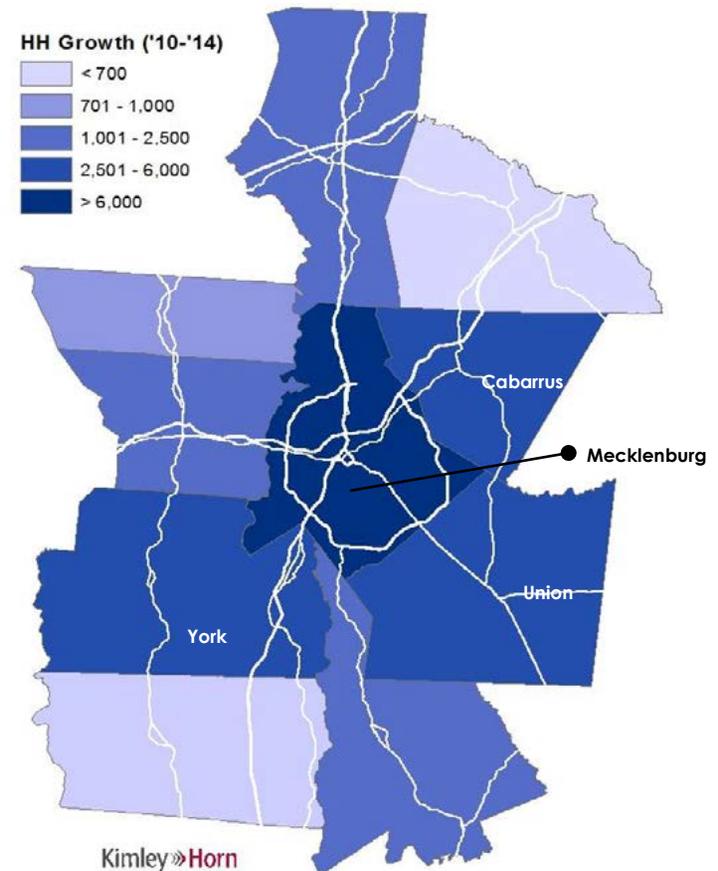
Although growth in the Charlotte region has recently slowed from the rapid pace recorded between 2000 and 2010, it is still one of the fastest growing areas in the United States. Some of the macro-level demographic shifts impacting growth in the region include:

- **Rise of the Millennials.** Born roughly between 1980 and 2000, the Millennials have overtaken the Baby Boomers as the largest generation. This shift will shape the form of development for years to come, particularly in regards to housing, employment, and transportation choices. The Charlotte region reported the 10<sup>th</sup> fastest increase in Millennials in the United States between 2009 and 2012. While many will seek to live in an urban environment, high

housing prices in and near downtown Charlotte will present opportunity for mixed-use developments in more suburban locations to capture a portion of this growth.

- **Stabilization of Household Formation.** Household formation was highest nationally and in the Charlotte region between 2004 and 2006 before falling during the Great Recession. The drop in household formation was partially impacted by young adults living at home longer or relying on roommates. Since 2010, household formation has stabilized, but it is unlikely to reach the same pre-Recession measures.

Household Growth, Charlotte MSA, 2010-2014



- **Decline in Home-Ownership Rate.** Challenges with obtaining financing, coupled with shifting preferences of Millennials, has caused a notable decline in the rate of home-ownership. Growth in new renter households in the Charlotte region has been significant in the last five years, with supply of new multifamily product struggling to keep up with demand.
- **Smaller Household Sizes.** The average household size has gradually declined, impacted by the Millennial and Baby Boomer generations. Single-person households in the region have experienced explosive growth since 2000, and could overtake two-person households as the most common size by 2020. This impacts the demand for a variety of housing types, including single-family detached, townhouses, and multifamily units.

The Charlotte MSA added approximately 14,000 jobs between 2008 and 2013, a growth rate of 1.4%. This represents a stronger performance than the 1.2% loss over the same time period nationally. Mecklenburg County, the regional job center, added significantly more jobs than any other county over the last five years. York and Lancaster counties, both located in South Carolina, also posted gains.

Regional job growth was led by Health and Social Services, Administration, and Accommodation and Food Services sectors. Regional losses were nearly all accounted for in the Construction, Manufacturing, and Transportation and Warehousing sectors; aligning with similar trends demonstrated by North Carolina and the nation. Union County was significantly impacted by declines in the Construction and Manufacturing sectors, during and following the Recession.

Job growth in the region has returned, with 62,000 new jobs added in the last two years. Mecklenburg captured two-thirds of the increase, but nearly all of the counties in the region reported positive growth. The Charlotte MSA's 6.4%

growth over the last two years was nearly double the 3.9% national measure. With a resurgence of development, construction jobs have partially recovered from losses during the Recession.

### **Public Investments and Demand Drivers**

**US-74.** US-74 is the primary commercial corridor in Union County, and provides a direct four-lane connection between Charlotte and Wilmington, which contains North Carolina's busiest port. As an economic engine for Union County, the corridor's vitality is important to future growth and development.

**Monroe Bypass.** The Monroe Bypass is a 19.7-mile toll road planned to begin at the I-485/US-74 interchange in eastern Mecklenburg County and terminate at US-74 between Wingate and Marshville in Union County. The project has struggled through legal challenges, but ultimately received Federal Highway Administration approval. When complete, the Monroe Bypass is expected to improve mobility and congestion along US-74. Construction of the nearly \$840 million project is underway and is scheduled to be completed in late-2018.

**I-485.** The final 5.7-mile segment of the I-485 Outer Loop, extending from NC-115 in Huntersville east to I-85, has just been completed and opened to traffic. The Outer Loop travels 67.6 miles around Charlotte, providing increased access to many suburban areas outside of Mecklenburg County. The construction of the Outer Loop, also increasing suburban accessibility to jobs in Mecklenburg County, has been a driver of suburban population growth. I-485 currently provides a direct route between US-74 and the Charlotte Douglas International Airport, an important consideration for employer siting.

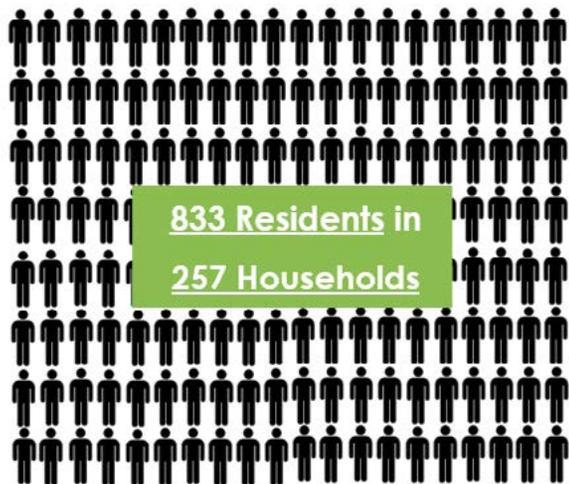
**Wingate University.** With nearly 2,700 students, Wingate University is located 6.5 miles east of the Concord Avenue Area. The City of Monroe is the closest area for students, visiting parents, faculty, and staff to access a wide-variety

of retail goods and services. Although an estimated 85% of the students live on campus all four years, some residential demand is likely to shift to Monroe, especially in unique, mixed-use, and pedestrian-friendly settings. Visiting parents and student recruitment will help support demand for hospitality uses along US-74.

### Local Demographics

Union County demonstrated unprecedented population growth between 2000 and 2010, reporting one of the fastest rates in the nation. Many towns in western Union County, with proximity to jobs and services in Mecklenburg County, doubled or tripled in size during this time period. Located approximately 25 miles southeast of Charlotte, Monroe was not insulated from this phenomenon; however, the pace of growth was more sustainable. Slower population growth in the City of Monroe (as compared to Union County) caused its share of total County population to decline from 21.2% in 2000 to 15.7% in 2014.

Based on current estimates, the Concord Avenue Area has a total population of approximately 833 residents or 257 households. Growth in the Concord Avenue Area has been relatively static, adding approximately 100 net new residents in the last 15 years.



From an age, prosperity, and ethnicity standpoint, the Concord Avenue Area has a diverse collection of residents. The following measures compare the performance of the Concord Avenue Area to the City of Monroe.

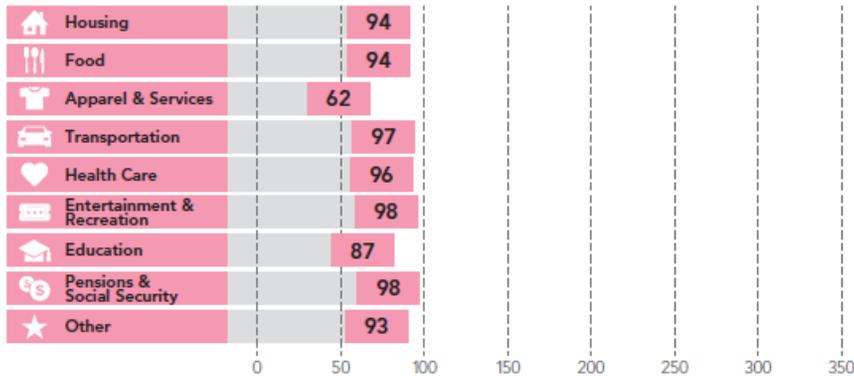
Measure	Concord Avenue Area	City of Monroe	Comparison
Median Age	30.2	33.4	Younger
Household Size	3.24	2.93	Larger
Median Income	\$30,361	\$37,308	Lower
Share Hispanic	44.9%	30.1%	More
Working Residents	90.7%	89.9%	More
Share of Families	72.6%	70.8%	Higher
Renter Households	58.4%	49.3%	More

Tapestry segmentation analysis divides households into 67 distinct groups based on consumer spending patterns and lifestyle attributes. This type of analysis provides insight into the purchasing preferences for housing and other goods, and is being used increasingly by developers, builders, and retail tenants in the site selection and due diligence processes.

More than 50% of the Concord Avenue Area households are classified as *Middleburgs*, often representing families in their first home. *Middleburgs* typically have two workers in the family, contributing to a high labor force and low unemployment. Generally, retail spending by this group is at or below the national average in all categories.

## AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD BUDGET INDEX

The index compares the average amount spent in this market's household budgets for housing, food, apparel, etc., to the average amount spent by all US households. An index of 100 is average. Indexes as shown below, demonstrates consumer spending lower than the national average. Consumer expenditures are estimated by ESRI.



Another one-third of the households in the Concord Avenue Area are identified as *NeWest Residents*, which make up a young Hispanic market with new careers and young families. English is not the primary language for many of these households, leaving them linguistically isolated. Many of these households have only one breadwinner, typically the male, in a blue collar job. Household sizes are high, accounting not only for young children but also for grandparents and extended families. Average retail spending by this group is 40% to 50% of the national average.

### Local Real Estate

**Residential.** There are an estimated 300 residential units in the Concord Avenue Area, representing a mixture of single-family detached and multi-family units. Nearly 60% of the occupied units in the Study Area are renter-occupied, a higher share than the larger City of Monroe. Renter-occupied units encompass not only multifamily units, but also investor-owned single-family detached product. Over 10% of the housing stock is estimated to be vacant, largely comprised of rental property. Owner-occupied housing units in the Concord Avenue Area have a median value of \$173,810, lower than the City of Monroe at \$184,596.



**Concord Avenue Area**  
\$173,810



**City of Monroe**  
\$184,596

At the same time that the Charlotte region has experienced an influx of construction for new multifamily product, Union County has added a limited supply. The most recent completions in Union County are the Monroe Hardware Warehouse lofts in downtown Monroe. These units, as part of a renovation of a historic warehouse building, achieve rents at a significant premium over more traditional, but dated, garden-style product. Union County has one of the lowest multifamily vacancy rates in the Charlotte region, driven by the lack of new product. Units at the Monroe Hardware Warehouse not only demonstrate that apartments in Monroe can achieve competitive rents, but that demand exists for this product. The Monroe Warehouse units have consistently remained at a stabilized occupancy rate.

**Commercial.** Gravitating to access along US-74, retail is the second most common land use in the Study Area, after residential. An estimated 75%-80% of Union County's existing 3.6 million square feet of multi-tenant retail space is located along the US-74 corridor. As of the end of 2014, Union County reported a retail vacancy rate of 10.3%, an improvement from the previous five years.

Union County has over 1.6 million square feet of retail space currently proposed, primarily focused on the western portion of the County where the strongest growth pressures have been. None of the proposed developments are near the Concord Avenue Area. Older retail product in and near the Concord Avenue Area generally achieves lower rents than the Union County average of \$17.25 per square foot. For example, the Monroe Plaza Shopping Center on Skyway Drive currently has a vacancy rate of over 20%, and quoted rents of \$7.00-\$9.25 per square foot. This property, which anchors the Concord Avenue Area to the east, would be a candidate for renovation or redevelopment in a highly visible location along US-74.

## SWOT Analysis

This section outlines the Concord Avenue Area's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats from a market perspective. Concept development considered the following inputs. However, while the market and SWOT analyses informed the concepts, the selection of the preferred design was ultimately driven by the public.

### Strengths

- Excellent visibility and access from US-74
- Gateway into downtown Monroe
- Proximity to Monroe Mall; low vacancy and new retailers
- Proximity to Wingate University
- Concord Avenue acts as "spine" of the community, providing connectivity to other areas of Monroe
- Surrounding single-family neighborhoods are stable
- Direct access via US-74 to Charlotte and Mecklenburg County
- Relative affordability of housing

### Weaknesses

- Multiple property owners
- High rate of rental properties with varying activity by landlords
- Limited street connectivity between Skyway Drive and Concord Avenue
- Aging retail inventory constraining rent growth and impacting vacancy rates
- Concentration of crime
- Lack of visual appeal along gateway entrances into Monroe
- Poor walkability with limited resident amenities

### Opportunities

- Needs for hospitality related to students and parents at Wingate University could drive demand
- Redevelopment in the Concord Avenue Area would strengthen momentum in downtown Monroe
- Completion of Monroe Bypass would relieve congestion on US-74 into and out of Charlotte
- Low rents and occupancy in Monroe Plaza Shopping Center may trigger redevelopment by current owner
- Growth in the Millennial and Baby Boomer cohorts may drive demand for new product types in Monroe
- Active marketing of key development parcels in the Study Area (Motorama, parcel behind Monroe Mall)

### Threats

- Completion of Monroe Bypass could divert pass-by traffic impacting retail potential
- City appetite to acquire land as parcels become available
- Redevelopment could affect housing affordability for current residents
- Negative perception of multifamily development
- Lack of cohesiveness in current retail development could impact design in the future

## Revenue Considerations

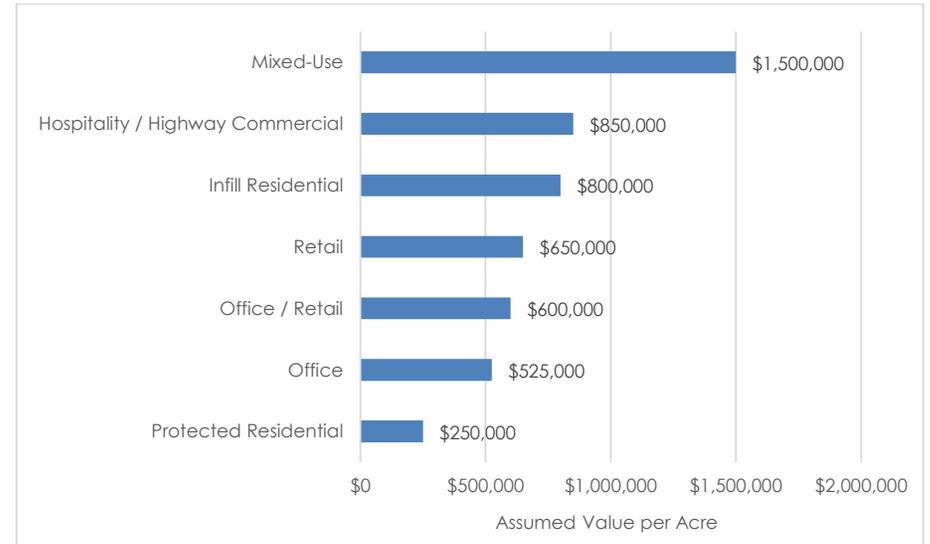
Successful redevelopment of the Concord Avenue Area will require some level of public investment. This could include, but is not limited to the construction of transportation infrastructure, acquisition of parcels for a suitable development site, and wayfinding and beautification efforts. This section provides a comparison of potential real property tax revenue generation by the three concepts that were created during this process:

- Concept A: Leverage US-74
- Concept B: Mixed-Use Main (Preferred)
- Concept C: Conventional Planning

Potential property tax revenue has been estimated based on the forecasted build-out of the Concord Avenue Area for each concept. Property valuations are based on existing tax parcel data for comparable uses by acre in Union County. It is important to note that real property tax revenues estimated in this section are gross, and exclude potential costs that the City of Monroe could incur to serve the developments.

	Concept A:		Concept B:		Concept C:	
	Leverage US 74		Mixed Use Main		Conventional Planning	
	Acres	Pct	Acres	Pct	Acres	Pct
Open Space	4.6	3.8%	2.9	2.4%	2.9	2.4%
Retail	19.7	16.6%	14.7	12.5%	16.9	14.3%
Hospitality / Highway Commercial	5.9	4.9%	5.9	5.0%	5.9	4.9%
Mixed-Use	0.0	0.0%	8.0	6.8%	0.0	0.0%
Office	16.0	13.4%	16.0	13.5%	9.0	7.6%
Office / Retail	29.0	24.4%	20.8	17.6%	20.8	17.6%
Infill Residential	19.3	16.2%	25.3	21.4%	32.2	27.1%
Protected Residential	24.6	20.7%	24.6	20.8%	30.9	26.1%
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>118.8</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>118.1</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>118.6</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Valuation Assumptions.** Real property tax revenue applies the City of Monroe's current tax rate of \$0.5863 to every \$100 valuation of development. The following per-acre valuations have been assumed for the land uses outlined in the three concepts:



Average values per acre assumptions range significantly, from approximately \$1.5 million for mixed-use style development to \$250,000 for single-family detached residential. It is important to note that the form and density that defines the mixed-use land use type equates to the highest valuation. Given the limited amount of vertically mixed-use product in Union County, values from central business districts were reviewed to provide additional support for the assumption.

**Gross Real Property Revenue Estimates.** The existing land uses in the Concord Avenue Study Area have a combined value of \$40.3 million. The Monroe Plaza Shopping Center currently has the highest value of \$3.5 million.

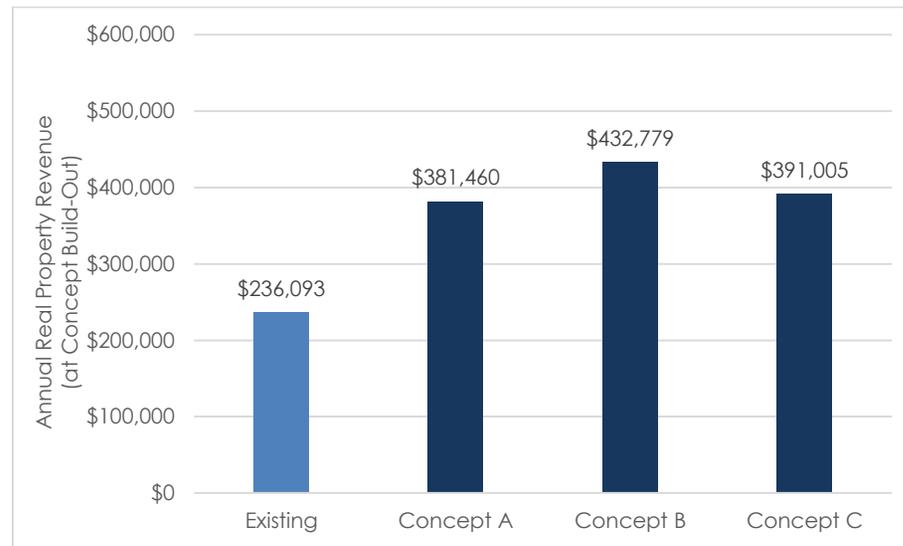
Gross real property revenue estimates for each of the three concepts created for the Concord Avenue Area are demonstrated in the following table. The preferred concept,

representing a Mixed-Use Main, is estimated to have the highest total value at build-out of nearly \$74 million. The other two concepts, which represent variations on single-use forms and densities, have total values of approximately \$65 million to \$67 million. With a total estimated value at build-out of nearly \$74 million, Concept B would represent an 85% increase from the current 2014 value defined by the existing land uses.

	Concept A:		Concept B:		Concept C:	
	Leverage US 74		Mixed Use Main		Conventional Planning	
	Acres	Taxable Value	Acres	Taxable Value	Acres	Taxable Value
<b>Open Space</b>	4.6	\$0	2.9	\$0	2.9	\$0
<b>Retail</b>	19.7	\$12,792,000	14.7	\$9,568,000	16.9	\$11,004,500
<b>Hospitality / Highway Commercial</b>	5.9	\$4,972,500	5.9	\$4,972,500	5.9	\$4,972,500
<b>Mixed-Use</b>	0.0	\$0	8.0	\$11,985,000	0.0	\$0
<b>Office</b>	16.0	\$8,384,250	16.0	\$8,384,250	9.0	\$4,740,750
<b>Office / Retail</b>	29.0	\$17,376,000	20.8	\$12,504,000	20.8	\$12,504,000
<b>Infill Residential</b>	19.3	\$15,400,000	25.3	\$20,264,000	32.2	\$25,736,000
<b>Protected Residential</b>	24.6	\$6,137,500	24.6	\$6,137,500	30.9	\$7,732,500
<b>Total Acres/Value</b>	<b>118.8</b>	<b>\$65,062,250</b>	<b>118.1</b>	<b>\$73,815,250</b>	<b>118.6</b>	<b>\$66,690,250</b>

Based on the current City of Monroe property tax rate of \$0.5863 per \$100 in valuation, annual real property tax revenue at build-out of the three concepts could reach approximately \$381,460 for Concept A (Leverage US-74), \$432,780 for Concept B (Mixed-Use Main), and \$391,000 for Concept C (Conventional Planning).

The Mixed-Use Main concept, which was ultimately selected as preferred, has the highest annual real property tax return to the City of Monroe. This return potential is largely driven by an elevated value per acre for vertically mixed-use product. Existing land uses currently generate approximately \$236,000 annually; the Mixed-Use Main Concept has an estimated build-out revenue stream that is nearly 85% higher. The increase over the existing land uses represents almost \$200,000 annually in additional real property tax revenue for the City of Monroe.



### Key Market Findings

- The Concord Avenue Area represents a strong opportunity to redefine the primary gateway into the City of Monroe, offering visibility and access to US-74.
- Shifting preferences driven by the Millennial and Baby Boomer generations will likely continue to drive demand for a variety of housing types with proximity to employment and retail goods and services, as well as transportation options including pedestrian, bicycle, and transit.
- Millennials are facing the realities of student debt and formerly weak job markets, impacting what they can afford for housing; therefore, the high cost of urban living in the central core of Charlotte could provide opportunities for more suburban areas to reinvent themselves to attract demand by this growing segment of the population.
- The completion of the Monroe Bypass should improve congestion along US-74, reducing commuting times into job centers in Mecklenburg County.
- The Concord Avenue Area's proximity to Wingate University provides opportunities for hospitality and

supportive retail development in Monroe; with its access to US-74, this area should capitalize on demand by students, faculty/staff, and visiting parents.

- Additional retail development in the Concord Avenue Area would not be expected to interfere with the success or momentum in downtown Monroe, but rather improve the visitor experience through enhanced gateways and synergistic uses.
- High occupancy and new tenants at the Monroe Mall will help drive additional retail to the Concord Avenue Area.
- With a 20% vacancy rate and comparatively low rents, as well as an aging façade, redevelopment or renovation of the Monroe Crossing Shopping Center could be a low-hanging catalyst for the Concord Avenue Area; this would be a noticeable impact to Skyway Drive as a gateway to downtown Monroe.
- Concept B, the Mixed-Use Main Concept (preferred), offers the greatest opportunity for increased tax revenue based on the form and density of development; increased revenue could be used to offset public investment to incentivize development.
- Incentives for development would likely be necessary for the mixed-use component of Concept B; the City of Monroe should consider being an active participant in land acquisition and site work to make the deal more attractive to potential developers.
- Providing for flexible and streamlined zoning and approval requirements would reduce the carrying cost for developers.
- Enforcing code violations in the Concord Avenue Area will be important as redevelopment occurs.
- When feasible, the City of Monroe should rely on private partners to share in the cost of transportation infrastructure improvements as development occurs.

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