

The Department of Community Development
City Hall, Lynchburg, VA 24504 434-455-3900

To: Planning Commission
From: Planning Division
Date: August 22, 2018
Re: **Downtown 2040 Master Plan**

I. PETITIONER

City of Lynchburg, Planning Commission, 900 Church Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504

Representative(s): David Hill, Hill Studio; Tom Martin, AICP; City Planner, Rachel Frischeisen, Planner II; Anne Nygaard, Planner II.

II. LOCATION

The Downtown 2040 Master Plan encompasses the area of Downtown Lynchburg from 5th Street to the Carter Glass Bridge and the James River to Court Street. The plan also makes recommendations for key properties located adjacent to the Downtown, corridors leading into Downtown, and Citywide transportation systems that affect the growth of Downtown.

III. PURPOSE

The purpose of this petition is to adopt the Downtown 2040 Master Plan as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan 2013-2030. The new plan builds upon the successes achieved by the *Downtown & Riverfront Master Plan 2000*.

IV. SUMMARY

- The Planning Commission initiated the Downtown 2040 Master Plan by resolution on April 26, 2017.
- The Downtown 2040 Master Plan builds upon the successes of the *Downtown & Riverfront Master Plan 2000* and provides a blueprint and direction forward for Downtown over the next twenty years.
- The City's *Comprehensive Plan 2013-2030* recommends a "Downtown" use for the area.

The Planning Division recommends adoption of the Downtown 2040 Master Plan

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. **Comprehensive Plan.** The *Comprehensive Plan 2013-2030* recommends a "Downtown" use for the area. Downtown is governed by the policies and recommendations of the Downtown and Riverfront Master Plan 2000 which is incorporated by reference into the Comprehensive Plan. Downtown is the central commercial core of the City and appropriately contains a mix of retail, entertainment, restaurant, office, employment, residential, public parks and institutional uses. The area should retain its urban character. Demolition of historic buildings and erection of suburban style, low-density/intensity development is inappropriate (*p. 76*).

The Downtown 2040 Master Plan would replace the *Downtown & Riverfront Master Plan 2000* and establish new goals and a new vision for Downtown. Adoption of the plan would establish a more fine-grained future land use for the Downtown area by amending the Future Land Use Map.

2. **Zoning.** The majority of the study area is zoned B-4, Urban Commercial District. B-1, Limited Business District, zoning lines Court Street. B-3, Community Business District, B-5, General Business District and I-3, Heavy Industrial Districts are also on the fringe of the study area. Adoption of the Downtown 2040 Master Plan would not amend the existing zoning.
3. **Surrounding Area.** There have been a couple of items requiring Council approval concerning the area:
 - On May 22, 2001, City Council adopted the *Downtown & Riverfront Master Plan 2000*.
 - On April 26, 2017, Planning Commission initiated the revision of the Downtown & Riverfront Master Plan 2000.
4. **Site Description.** The primary study area encompasses the land from 5th Street to the Carter Glass Bridge and the James River to Court Street. In 1757, John Lynch established a ferry near the base of what is now 9th Street. Lynchburg was incorporated as a town in 1786 and the City grew in land area by a series of annexations with the last being in 1976.

Downtown is characterized with steep terrain and a series of bluffs with an elevation rise of two hundred twenty (220) feet from the James River to Court Street. The Downtown is rich in history and architecture.

5. **Community Outreach & Participation.**

- Web Page – Downtown 2040.com
- Online Survey
- Living in the Heart of VA – August 8, 2017
- Kick Off Event – August 9, 2017
- Listening Sessions – August 10, 2017 (all day)
- Pop Up Event (Walmart) – August 10, 2017
- Pop Up Event – (Bank of the James) – August 11, 2017
- Pop Up Event – (Kroger) – August 12, 2018
- Pop Up Event – (Library) – August 15, 2017
- Pop Up Event – (5th Street) – August 16, 2017
- Pop Up Event – (Cheers to the Weekend) – August 18, 2017
- Pop Up Event – (Community Market) – August 19, 2017
- Pop Up Event – (Randolph College) – August 24, 2017
- Pop Up Event – (Lynchburg College) – August 24, 2017)
- Pop Up Event – (CVCC) – August 25, 2017
- Pop Up Event – (LU) – August 28, 2017
- Pop Up Event – (VUL) – August 29, 2017
- Design Workshop – August 30, 2017
- Design Workshop – August 31, 2017
- Draft Plan Released – July 23, 2018
- WLNI Interview – July 30, 2018
- Downtown Lynchburg Association – August 3, 2018

- Public Meeting – August 6, 2018
- Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance Breakfast – August 8, 2018
- Planning Commission Work Session – August 8, 2014
- Lynchburg Morning Rotary – August 9, 2018
- Parking Authority – August 14, 2018
- Pop Up Event – (Movies in the Park) – August 17, 2018
- Planning Commission Public Hearing – August 22, 2018
- Pop Up Event – (Lynchburg Hillcats) – August 30, 2018
- Pop Up Event – (Get Downtown) – September 7, 2018
- Rotary Club of Lynchburg – September 11, 2018
- Council Work Session – September 11 or September 25, 2018
- Council Public Hearing – Tentative October 9, 2018

9. Plan Synopsis.

Vision: In 2040, Downtown Lynchburg will be a bustling and thriving urban core; the economic, social, and cultural hub of Central Virginia – a destination for visitors and a livable neighborhood for residents. Both locals and tourists alike will enjoy a diverse offering of retail, restaurants, and recreational activities set in a downtown rich with historic architecture, unique topography, and vibrant public spaces. This is the exciting atmosphere that makes Downtown Lynchburg the heart of the region.

Local Historic District: In order to protect its greatest assets, its architecture and character, Downtown Lynchburg will be a local historic district. Downtown-specific guidelines that allow for new and modern building types will ensure the long-term protection of Downtown’s history by preventing inappropriate treatment and demolition. Vacant and underutilized historic buildings will see new life through adaptive reuse.

Parks: Significant open space and recreation destinations will attract visitors, encourage growth, and enhance the livability of Downtown. Downtown will be connected by trails and streetscape improvements to adjacent neighborhoods and the City as a whole. Streets will be treated as important public spaces with landscaping, seating, public art and other elements that make them great places, foster public life, and spur economic development.

Parking: Visitors and residents will park once, leave their cars and explore Downtown’s walkable streets. As identified in four separate studies, Downtown does not suffer from a parking problem but rather a perception and communication issue.

A wayfinding system will clearly indicate locations of on-street and off-street public parking. Paid on-street parking will create turnover in the most convenient and desirable spaces near destinations. Public off-street lots will offset paid on-street parking by providing free 1-2 hour parking with paid longer-term parking. Downtown will continue in its successful revitalization by maintaining its market-driven approach to parking, allowing development without requiring parking.

Future new and renovated parking garages will be mixed-use buildings that contribute to the street environment. A side effect of Downtown success will be a struggle to accommodate a parking space for every Downtown visitor, resident or employee. Transit with reduced headways, mobility hubs with park and ride options, bike share, and transit-oriented housing will provide options to travel Downtown without a car.

Economic Development: The City will work to attract and direct business investments to ensure that Downtown contains businesses and tenants that fill current retail gaps, drive employment, and activate vacant storefronts.

Mobility and Accessibility: Downtown streets are where people meet, sit, eat, socialize, conduct business, explore, play, and more. Downtown streets will be “complete,” moving more than just cars. They will move people on foot, bikes and transit while creating a welcoming atmosphere.

- **Walkability:** Everyone is a pedestrian. Whether they drive, bike or take transit—everyone becomes a pedestrian eventually. Walking is the most critical component of Downtown revitalization and will be reinforced with every project.
- **Vehicular Circulation:** Downtown is the place people go to, not drive through. Two-way streets slow traffic, provide for pedestrian safety, improve circulation and provide every business the equal opportunity to be seen. Deliveries can be accomplished easily with strategically located and timed delivery zones that can be converted to on-street parking at different hours of the day. Two-way traffic improves circulation and accessibility as construction on Downtown waterlines continues.
- **Transit Facilities:** Transit facilities that people want to ride will help unlock Downtown growth as less space will be needed for parking. Transit will both move people efficiently up Downtown’s steep hills and connect Downtown to neighborhoods, colleges and regional transportation hubs.
- **Multimodal Options:** Whether people, walk, bike, ride the bus, or drive a car, each type of transportation will be interconnected to give visitors and residents options to travel to, from, and within Downtown. People will have the option to walk a trail, share a bike, ride a bus, or hop in an autonomous vehicle to get where they need to go.

Utilities, Streetscape, Refuse and Safety:

- **Utility Replacements:** Downtown will have updated, well-functioning utilities that can accommodate significant growth. Replacement schedule and project construction will be methodical, well-communicated and cause the minimal disruption necessary.
- **Streetscapes:** Streets will be rebuilt to accommodate amenities that create a vibrant street environment and incorporate authentic, high-quality materials that showcase Lynchburg’s past.
- **Refuse:** Downtown will have a more organized and orderly trash and recycling program that creates a clean and enjoyable environment.
- **Safety:** Downtown will be known as a safe, well-serviced, and inviting area of the city.

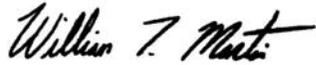
Connecting Communities:

- **Gateways:** Significant entrances to Downtown will create exciting and memorable arrival experiences and invite travelers to reach the area by a variety of travel modes.
 - **Neighborhoods:** Lynchburg’s neighborhoods will be better connected to Downtown.
 - **Colleges:** Both Downtown and the college communities will benefit from enhanced transportation connections, student-oriented amenities, and physical presences.
 - **Regional Transportation:** Downtown will have direct connections to Amtrak, Greyhound, and the Lynchburg Airport to facilitate visitor access.
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VI. PLANNING DIVISION RECOMMENDED MOTION

Based on the preceding Findings of Fact, the Planning Commission recommends to City Council adoption of the Downtown 2040 Master Plan as part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan 2013-2030 including amending the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) as shown on page 39 of the Downtown 2040 Master Plan.

This matter is respectfully offered for your consideration.



William T. Martin, AICP
City Planner

- pc: Ms. Bonnie M. Svrcek, City Manager
Mr. Reid Wodicka, Deputy City Manager
Mr. Walter C. Erwin, City Attorney
Mr. Kent L. White, Director of Community Development
Mr. J. Lee Newland, City Engineer
Mr. Don Deberry, Transportation Engineer
Ms. Cynthia Kozerow, Lynchburg Police Department
Captain Thomas Goode, Fire Marshal
Mr. Doug Saunders, Building Official
Mr. Kevin Henry, Zoning Administrator

VII. ATTACHMENTS

- 1. Downtown 2040 Master Plan**