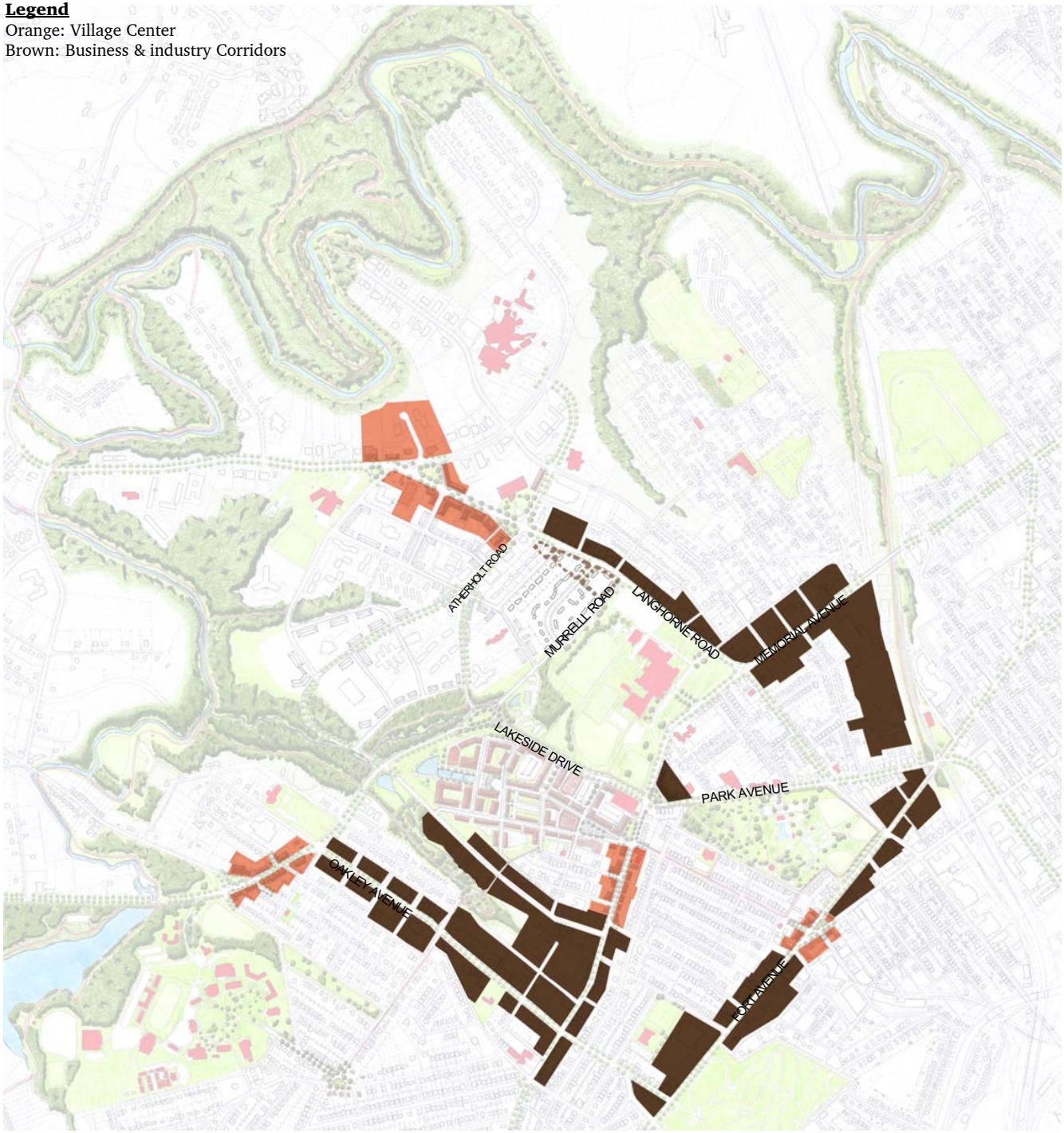
# special places 4

# CHARACTER AREAS

The Illustrative Master Plan for Midtown Lynchburg is a synthesis of six*"**Character Areas**"*, each with its own distinct attributes and special qualities. The areas are organized as 1.) Village Centers, 2.) Neighborhood Conservation, 3.) Neighborhood Infill and Redevelopment, 4.) Medical Arts District, 5.) Business and Industry, and 6.) Green Network. The character areas combine to form a cohesive vision that will guide growth in Midtown Lynchburg for generations to come. This chapter describes the various character areas and details the special places of Midtown.

Illustrative Master Plan for Midtown Lynchburg




## VILLAGE CENTERS

An assortment of small, mixed-use village centers will continue to make-up the social and economic heart of Midtown. These important village centers should contain a variety of uses in a compact area, easily accessible by surrounding residential neighborhoods. The village centers identified in the plan are to include the Medical Arts District, the gateway to Lynchburg College, a portion of Memorial Avenue near the Plaza, and the intersection of Wadsworth Street and Fort Avenue. Each center should continue to evolve as centerpieces of Midtown life, similar to the Village Center on Rivermont Avenue adjacent to Randolph Macon Woman's College.

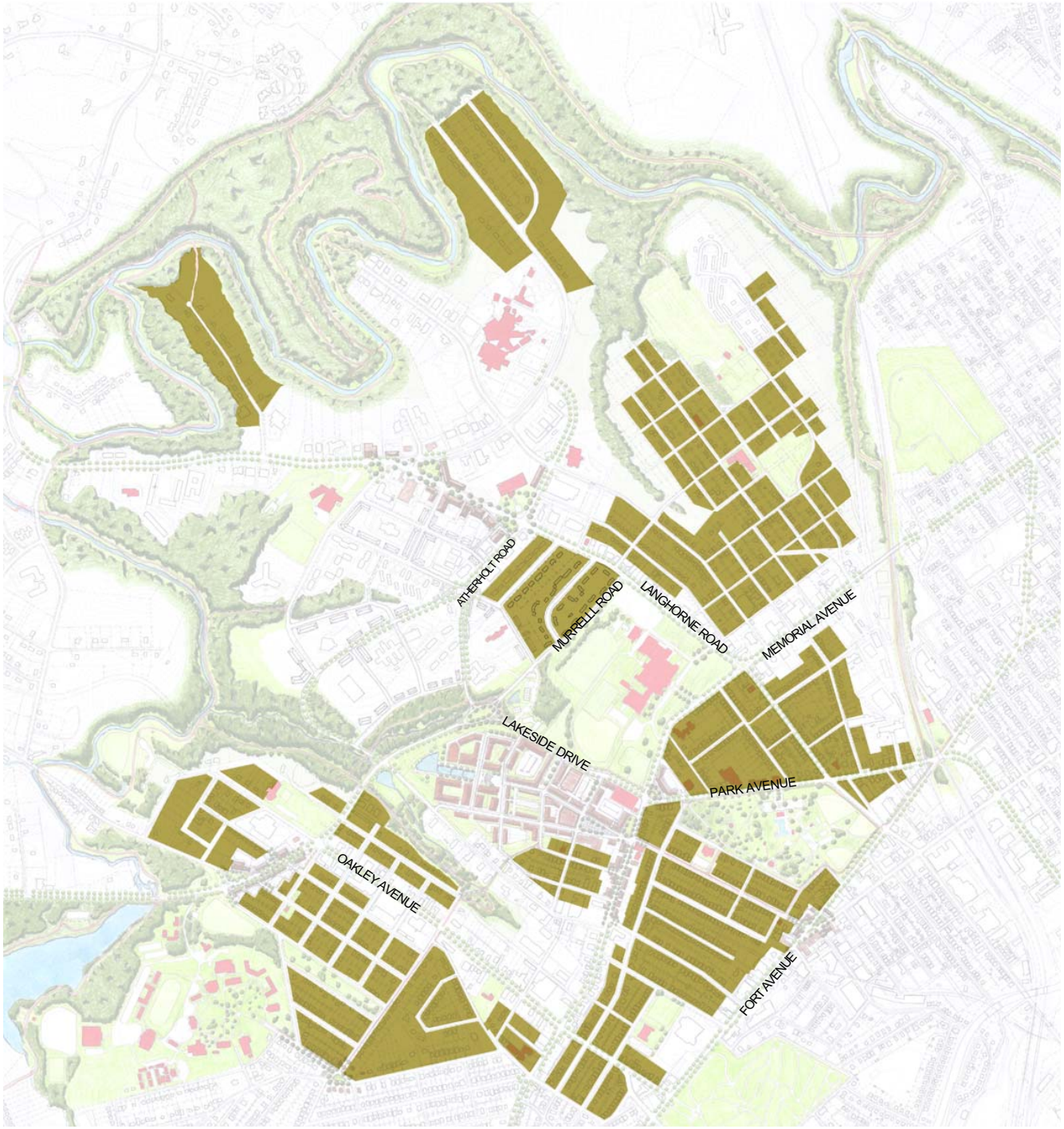
## BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY CORRIDORS

In addition to the Village Centers, several important Business and Industry Corridors are identified in the plan. These well-traveled corridors of Midtown are important locations for business and industry. These central corridors are addresses for many commercial, office, and light industrial businesses, and should continue as prime locations for businesses. Although zoned as commercial properties, these corridors are also candidates for mixed-use development. The areas shaded in brown are either existing businesses or are prime candidates for business and industry. The areas outlined in a dashed brown line could be considered for redevelopment in the future as part of a business and industry corridor. However, property that is vacant, blighted, or aesthetically unattractive should be the first priority. Any redevelopment should be constructed using traditional neighborhood design (TND) principles, outlined in Chapter 3.

## NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION

There are many great neighborhoods in Lynchburg and several of these neighborhoods are located in Midtown. These neighborhoods should be maintained and further improved as high quality residential neighborhoods. This established residential character prevalent in Midtown should serve as an example for the addition of new neighborhoods.  The neighborhoods shaded in light brown are ones that should be conserved.

The neighborhood south of Langhorne Road, between Murrelll Road and Atherholt Road (detailed above),  is not a severely blighted or high-priority redevelopment site, and currently makes a good contribution to the neighborhood. If however an opportunity does arise for the redevelopment of this site, the property must be redeveloped as a mixed-use, traditional neighborhood.



## NEIGHBORHOOD INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

While a strong, stable neighborhood fabric exists in Midtown, a variety of places remain as opportunities for infill development. Neighborhood infill or redevelopment should occur where there are vacant lots, blighted properties, or aesthetically dull structures that are not contributing to the character of Midtown. These strategic infill sites are opportunities to build complete neighborhoods. Any infill or redevelopment needs to follow the traditional planning practices outlined in Chapter 3, such as buildings with doors and windows facing the street and parking in the rear. There are areas in Midtown that are worthy of conservation, however, they could be candidates for infill or redevelopment if, in the future, the market supports higher density residential infill or redevelopment in this area. Vacant or blighted properties should remain first priority for any infill or redevelopment.

If the neighborhood south of Langhorne Road, between Murrelll Road and Atherholt Road (detailed above), is considered for redevelopment, the property must be developed as a mixed-use neighborhood based on traditional neighborhood design (TND) principles.

## MEDICAL ARTS DISTRICT

The Medical Arts District will mark the location of medical services located in Midtown to serve greater Lynchburg. The district is designed to attract all services related to the medical field, in hopes of creating a compact cluster of medical facilities. Maintaining functional links is important to encourage and allow for a pedestrian environment and campus type atmosphere for the district. As a great economic engine for the City, the centerpiece of the Medical Arts District is Lynchburg General Hospital. The district should operate as a unique center by providing a mix of uses to serve this prosperous medical community.

## GREEN NETWORK

The plan for Midtown integrates the physical environment with the natural environment. Fingers of green are intertwined throughout the plan, making parks, open spaces, and trails a centerpiece of Midtown life. The adjacent Blackwater Creek Trail is a tremendous resource for Midtown. This unique resource should be expanded to bring access to more Midtown residents. Forming an emerald necklace of green spaces, the extensive green network can serve for both recreational and scenic purposes as well as an environmental system for water purification and cleansing. A combination of walking and biking trails throughout the green network will help to better connect Midtown with greater Lynchburg.

## CHARACTER AREAS — GETTING THERE

The following steps are necessary to achieve the proposed vision for each Character Area:

a. Amend the City's Zoning Code and create a Form Based Code for Midtown

b. Promote the Midtown Plan at every opportunity.

c. Develop a rehabilitation / adaptive re-use strategy as a mechanism to create additional housing in Midtown.

d. Create an infill development strategy to target locations in Midtown for residential and mixed-use development.

e. Conduct an annual inventory of land uses to compare the supply and demand for specific land uses in MIdtown.

f. Acquire green space to create a complete green network throughout Midtown.

g. Sponsor a pilot project program to encourage private reinvestment in Midtown.

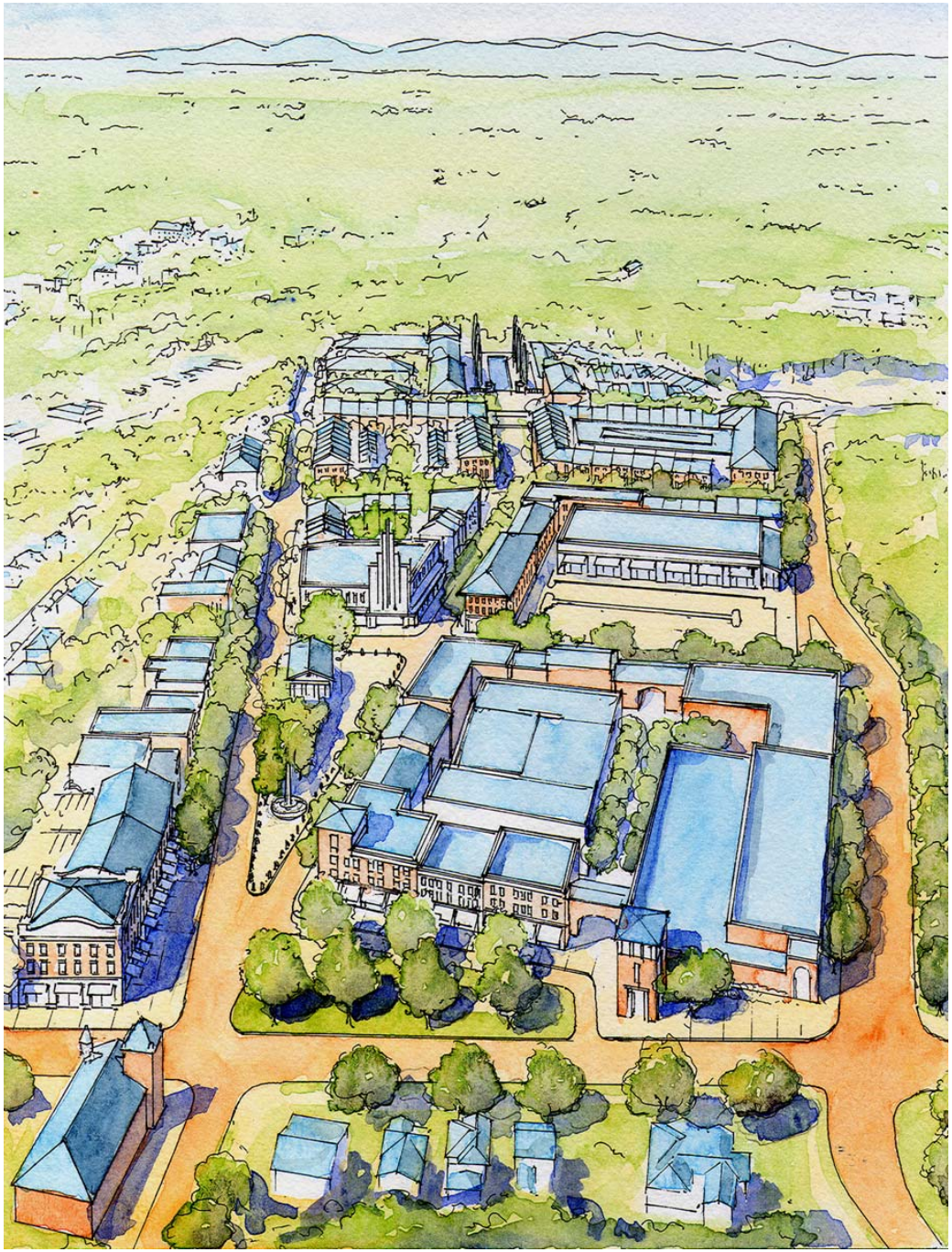
Additional Implementation Strategies are included in Chapter 6.

# SPECIAL PLACES

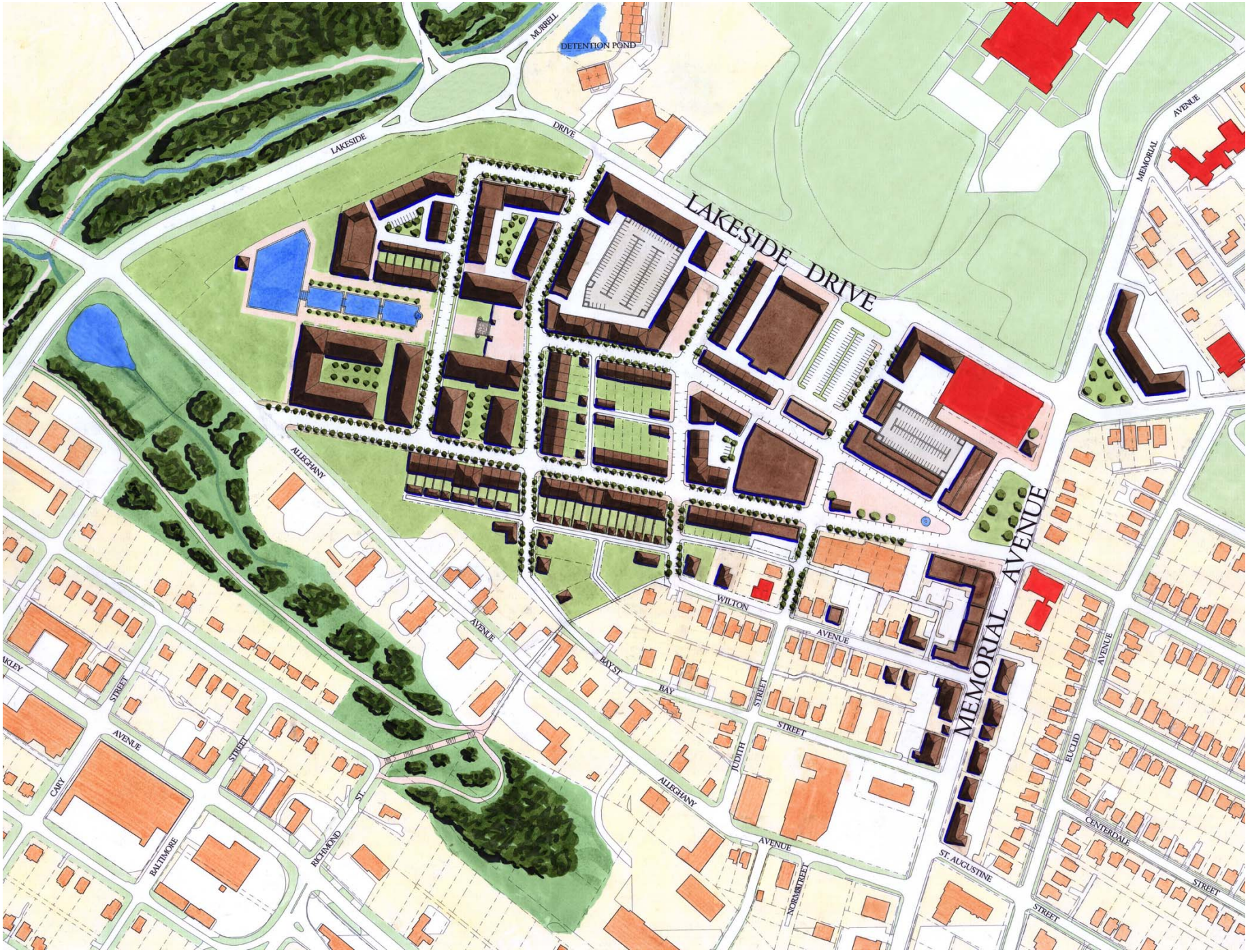
## THE PLAZA

The plan for Midtown includes a conceptual redevelopment vision for the Plaza. The detailed plan for the Plaza shows the location of new blocks, streets, and parking facilities. The single use retail center should be replaced with a new mixed-use neighborhood. A variety of housing options are included in the plan, including mid-rise apartments, rowhouses, and condominiums. Such housing will serve both middle and upper income residents, which will be needed to attract newer types of retail to the Midtown area. Wadsworth Avenue should be transformed into a Main Street of shops, entertainment, and retail opportunities. The Lynchburg Library should remain as a central civic building in the redeveloped Plaza site.

Existing aerial view of the Plaza, looking west from Memorial Avenue.



Proposed aerial view of the Plaza, after redevelopment.




Detailed plan for redevelopment of the Plaza Site

In addition to its pattern of blocks and streets, the redesign of the Plaza site allows for the creation of a variety of unique public spaces within the heart of Midtown Lynchburg. Park View United Methodist Church will be a focal building for a new Village Green on the corner of Memorial Drive and Wadsworth Street. Streets will be oriented to frame views of the neighborhood church steeples and the Blue Ridge Mountains. The primary street of the neighborhood will connect all of the special public spaces, starting at the Village Green, continuing past the hardscaped plaza and ending at the Overlook Terrace. From the vantage point of the Overlook Terrace, residents and visitors alike will be able to relax while they enjoy views of the Blue Ridge Mountains mirrored in a series of reflecting pools. This variety of public spaces will provide a complete range of spatial experiences within a short walk of each other.

Street views can be terminated by civic buildings, such as church steeples.

**Memorial Avenue *change-over-time*:**

Below, an illustration of how the corner of Wadsworth Street and Memorial Avenue could redevelop over time. The far left picture shows the existing conditions today.

*First Steps*: Utility lines are placed underground.

*Short-term Improvement*: A new mixed-use building with outdoor dining replaces the bank on Wadsworth and Memorial. Street trees and on-street parking are added to Memorial Avenue.

View of the overlook terrace.

*Revitalization Continues*: Improvements made to Park View Methodist Church continue to spur revitalization in the area.

*Long-term Improvements*: New mixed-use buildings are constructed within the Plaza site to complete the new Village Square. The new Square provides a gathering place for residents and is faced by focal buildings including Park View Methodist Church and Lynchburg Public Library.

## THE MEDICAL ARTS DISTRICT VILLAGE CENTER

As Lynchburg General Hospital expands and surrounding properties are redeveloped, a new village center could emerge along Langhorne Road. Restaurants and shops would be able to provide a meeting place for local residents, medical professionals, and hospital visitors and a new hotel on the hospital property would provide accommodations for visiting family members. The proposed Cancer Center, to be located at the northwest intersection of Langhorne Road and Atherholt Road, should become a landmark building for the district. Over time, lost spaces should be reclaimed as redevelopment occurs.

Plan detail of the Medical Arts Village.

**Langhorne Road *change-over-time*:**

These illustrations demonstrate how Langhorne Road through the Medical Arts District can become a pedestrian-friendly village center. The picture above shows the existing conditions today at the intersection of Langhorne Road and Atherholt Road.

*Infill Redevelopment*: The addition of street trees and pedestrian-scaled light fixtures increase walkability though the new village center. Over time, new buildings are constructed along the edge of the sidewalk, with shopfronts and awnings to enhance the pedestrian experience.

*Redevelopment Alternative*: New buildings can become landmarks in the village setting. This illustration depicts additional buildings located at the edge of the sidewalk, completing the walkable environment along the street.

## RECONNECTING LYNCHBURG COLLEGE

Lynchburg College and its students are becoming somewhat isolated from Midtown as a result of an expanding "auto zone" along Lakeside Drive. A non-pedestrian oriented environment has slowly evolved along the most direct link between the College and Midtown. The College is growing and the creation of a village center along Lakeside Drive would make a better welcome to Lynchburg College.

The proposed "College Corner" should be a place where students, faculty, and Midtown residents alike could reach by foot and shop and eat. New mixed-use buildings should be built close to the street with wide sidewalks, on-street parking, and parking areas tucked behind the structures. Overhead wires should be removed, street trees added, and the cobra head lights replaced with streetlamps that are scaled to serve both automobiles and pedestrians.

Existing conditions of Lakeside Drive.

Proposed Village Center on Lakeside Drive near the entrance to Lynchburg College.

Plan detail for Lynchburg College area

## CORRIDORS OF CONFIDENCE

While Lakeside Drive, Langhorne Road, and Park Avenue represent three of the primary streets in Midtown Lynchburg, there is little visual indication of their importance. The borders between public and private space are ill-defined, and a number of properties are in disrepair or are vacant lots. This has resulted in a negative image of Midtown for those who travel these streets on their way to the hospital or points beyond. Plans have been proposed by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to redesign these streets as a part of the Crosstown Connector.

Citizens and city officials expressed concern over the physical appearance of VDOT's redesigned streets. In response to these concerns, the design team produced alternative design concepts at several key locations. In each case, an equal amount of attention was paid to the design of the public and private realms revealing how these streets can become a "Corridor of Confidence" for Midtown.

*Scenario 1*: An inviting streetscape has been created through the introduction of street trees and defined parking lanes and the removal of overhead wiring. Buildings are built close to the street and a new focal building on the current Chamber of Commerce site terminates the view. These improvements allow Langhorne Road to become a contributing member of the "corridors of confidence" and a vital wayfinding link in the Midtown Lynchburg street network.

*Scenario 2*: By narrowing the lanes of Langhorne Road a second row of parallel parking can be added to the street. This additional row of cars functions as a traffic calming device as well as a buffer for pedestrians.

### Langhorne Road Redevelopment:

Langhorne Road is one of the primary routes to Lynchburg General Hospital. Today, gaps in the street wall and poorly maintained properties are located along this route (existing conditions photograph, right). Above are two possible scenarios for redevelopment are illustrated.

## Langhorne Road Streetscape:

This stretch of Langhorne Road lacks a strong definition between the public and private realms. Front yards are poorly defined and overhead wires dominate the view. Narrow sidewalks next to shallow curbs make an unfriendly environment for pedestrian activity.

*Proposed Streetscape Improvements*: Street trees and parallel parking create a more pleasant environment for strolling pedestrians. Fences help create a stronger definition between the public and private realm. The neighborhood residential streetscape allows ample space for emergency vehicle passage. Refer to page 5.6 for additional information on emergency access.

## Park Avenue:

Park Avenue near Miller Park currently has two travel lanes and sidewalks on both sides. A historic wall forms the northern edge of Miller Park. There are few street trees and parallel parking is not well-defined.

*Currently Proposed:* The Virginia Department of Transportation's redesign of Park Avenue calls for the addition of one lane in each direction. In this scenario, the historic wall at Miller Park would need to be razed or relocated. The result would be a wide expanse of pavement that would impede pedestrian activity between Miller Park and the surrounding neighborhoods.

*Alternate Design:* Street trees have been added along Park Avenue and in Miller Park. Utilities have been moved underground and the parking lane has been striped. If additional lanes on Park Avenue in this area is determined to be unnecessary, this pedestrian-oriented design is possible. The neighborhood residential streetscape allows ample space for emergency vehicle passage. Refer to page 5.6 for additional information on emergency access.

## Lakeside Drive:

The existing conditions on Lakeside Drive do not provide a pedestrian-friendly environment. The Plaza buildings turn their backs to the street and their loading docks detract from the beautiful views of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the distance.

*Current Proposal*: The Virginia Department of Transportation has proposed that Lakeside Drive become part of the new Crosstown Connector. The resulting redesign of the road calls for the addition of two travel lanes and a large safety zone. While a new sidewalk would be added along the north side of the street, Lakeside Drive would remain a hostile environment for pedestrians.

**Lakeside Drive *change-over-time*:**

The first step in improving Lakeside Drive would be the removal of overhead utilities. Power and telephone lines can be placed underground thereby reducing the visual clutter along Lakeside Drive.

*Short-term Improvements*: Lakeside Drive is widened to accommodate on-street parking along the south side. A brick safety zone in the middle would be utilized by ambulances making their way to Lynchburg General Hospital. Street trees and a new sidewalk are added. A new fence is constructed along the E.C. Glass High School property.

*Long-term Improvements*: New buildings are built close to the street on the Plaza site. Doors and windows on the street provide visual interest for pedestrians and activate the public realm. Pedestrians and motorists alike are now greeted with a focused view of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

## SPECIAL PLACES — GETTING THERE

The following steps are necessary to implement the vision outlined for the Special Places of Midtown:

a. Amend the City's Zoning Code and create a Form Based Code for Midtown

b. Promote the Midtown Plan at every opportunity.

c. Develop a rehabilitation / adaptive re-use strategy as a mechanism to create additional housing in Midtown.

d. Create an infill development strategy to target locations in Midtown for residential and mixed-use development.

e. For major street and infrastructure improvements, the City should earmark funds in the municipal budget or apply for grants from the federal government.

f. Encourage sidewalks on every street in Midtown.

g. Concentrate retail in Midtown to create a "park once" environment so that patrons can walk to many shops and stores rather than having to drive to each location.

h. Enhance Midtown streets through physical improvements, street modifications, and infill development.

Additional Implementation Strategies are included in Chapter 6.