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# RUTHERFORD COUNTY - BECHTLER HERITAGE PLAN

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# RUTHEFORD COUNTY-BECHTLER HERITAGE PLAN

Prepared for

**Rutherford County**

129 N. Main Street  
Rutherfordton, NC 28239

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### Context

Rutherford County is an attractive, prospering community that is rich in American history, culture and natural resources. Nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, this beautiful North Carolina County is centrally located among three major metropolitan areas; Rutherfordton, the County seat, is a mere 45 miles from Asheville, 70 miles from Charlotte, and 35 miles across the state line from Spartanburg, SC.

### Project Initiation

The overall landscape of the County varies from mountains in the western and northern portions of the area to lush, green rolling hills and spectacular mountain vistas in the eastern and southern portions. The average temperature is a magnificent 59.9 degrees due to the isothermal effect of the surrounding mountains; newcomers are drawn to Rutherford County for these reasons as well as its rural charm and its small towns offer an uncanny hometown appeal. Today, Rutherford County is prepared to capitalize on its historic, cultural and natural resources.

As Rutherford County's population increases and interest from visitors continues to expand, Rutherfordton and Rutherford County both seek to reinforce the identity of its respective regions. Therefore, two plans have been initiated to preserve each area's assets by drawing on the historical, cultural, and natural assets. The first plan (referred to as the 'Rutherford County-Bechtler Heritage Plan') connects and solidifies the history and heritage of the County, the Bechtler family's, influence encompassing the original Bechtler Mint and mine site, the Bechtler house, and the family's distinction as the minters of the first gold dollar ever minted in the nation. The Heritage Plan also encompasses Gilbert Town's significance in the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War, various histories and the culture and heritage of the County. This plan proposes a Rutherford County History and Heritage Center to showcase, among other things, the art collection of Andreas Bechtler and tell the story of mining, minting and gold in the County's history, the extensive collections of the Genealogical Society of Old Tryon County often described as the largest private collection west of Raleigh, as well as artifacts and relics from the Rutherford County Historical Society and other groups, individuals and organizations who have played a significant role in the County's history and heritage and are representative of the County's culture and tradition. The second plan (referenced to as the 'Rutherfordton Master Plan') focuses on the Town of Rutherfordton, with an intent to create a destination that is alive with recreational activities, restaurants, shops, and residences. Together, both plans create a comprehensive report to organize future development, resurrect cultural resources, and promote the area's history.

Understanding and defining the Study Area proved to be imperative to developing the process both plans effectively. (See Figure # 1 to view the Bechtler Area Map in detail.) This Area Map encompasses the Bechtler Mint



*Original Bechtler Mint Site*

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### GOALS:

- Celebrate and capitalize on historical, cultural and natural resources
- Establish the identity of downtown
- Identify the Bechtler museum site
- Create recreational opportunities within downtown
- Engage in communication between various downtown entities
- Provide adequate and efficient parking
- Create visual appeal through streetscape
- Promote the idea of downtown living
- Provide restaurants and entertainment
- Create walk able downtown



*Main Street in downtown Rutherfordton*



Public Meeting as part of a 2-day charrette.



Input from advisory committee during 2-day charrette.



A mural in Rutherfordton's downtown announces upcoming events

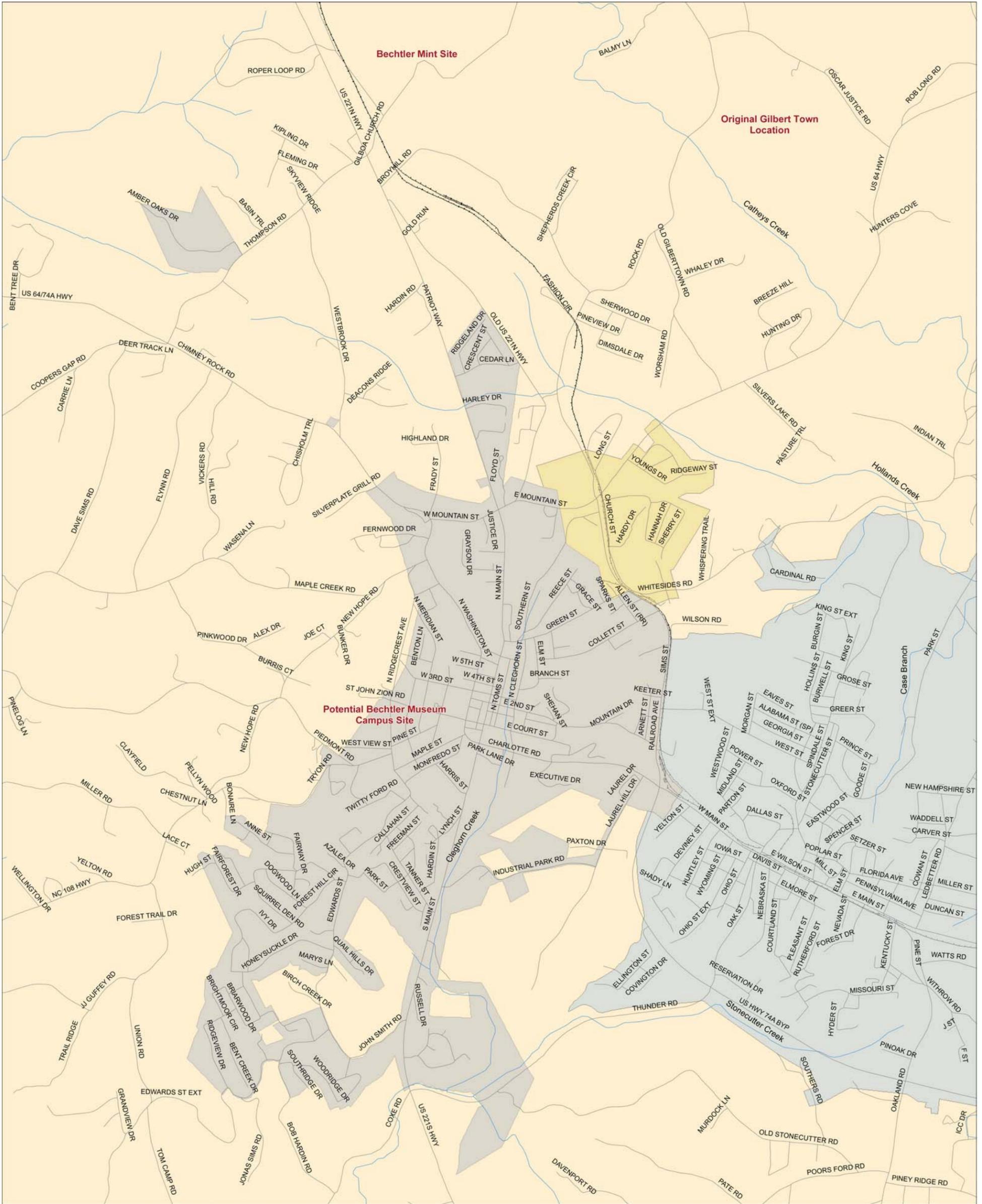
Site, the potential Rutherford County History and Heritage Center, the Gilbert Town site, and the Rutherfordton Master Plan Study Area.

**Process**

The Rutherford County-Bechtler Heritage Plan along with the Rutherfordton Master Plan, was developed throughout a five-month process that involved stakeholder interviews, advisory committee meetings, a two-day charrette, and multiple public meetings. A ten-member Advisory Committee, which represented a wide cross-section of the community, provided the guidance to ensure that the final plans truly reflected the expectations of the County and the Town. In addition, interviews with various stakeholders were conducted over a two-day period. The stakeholders, who consisted of a wide cross-section of residents in the Study Area, were able to provide input based on their knowledge and experiences. (For lists of stakeholders interviewed and Advisory Committee members, see the Appendix A3 and A4, respectively.)

**Organization of the Report**

The Rutherford County-Bechtler Heritage Plan is organized according to the necessary components such as the Study Area's History and Heritage Center and Bechtler Mint Site Plan; these sections describe existing conditions, the issues related to it, and a series of recommendations. The remaining portions of this report entail the Implementation Plan, the Rutherfordton Master Plan and the Market Analysis.



# Rutherford County - Bechtler Heritage Plan Area Map

RUTHERFORD COUNTY, NC

FIGURE I



## 1.1 History

Rutherford County is filled with a fascinating history that dates back to the 1500s. The county's broad past encompasses the culture of Native Americans, politics of the early United States, the Revolutionary War, and industrial-era industries such as textiles, mining and minting.

During the 1500s, Native Americans inhabited areas to the east and west of Rutherford County. For nearly two hundred years, they had utilized the land as hunting grounds as evidenced by artifacts and historical accounts. By the mid-1700s, white men began to settle and conflict encouraged by the British began to occur in the area, particularly with the Cherokee Indians. This friction led to continued assaults by the Cherokee on the white settlers. As a result, forts were constructed as safe havens for the settlers against the Cherokee's invasions. The locations of these forts are now identified by historical markers. In 1776, General Griffith Rutherford began to amass some 2,000 men, including those from Rutherford County and led a campaign to eradicate Cherokee towns and villages to the west. When Rutherford County was formed from part of Tryon County on April 14, 1779, it was named in honor of General Rutherford.

Located in the center of what is Rutherford County today was a small village of log homes including a courthouse, tavern and other buildings, known as Gilbert Town. The property was owned by William Gilbert and was named after him. Part of Gilbert's property has been designated as a historic district and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Not only was it the site of the first county seat and county courthouse, it was an early center of commerce and as the county seat of old Tryon County in 1769, it is the oldest documented county seat in all of Western North Carolina. Gilbert Town remained the county seat for Rutherford County until 1787 when it was then moved to a more suitable geographic location and renamed Rutherford Town (Rutherfordton). A new courthouse was constructed at a site on the corner of present day Court Street and North Main Street two blocks south of the current courthouse site.

Gilbert Town played a significant role in the County's Revolutionary War history. The Overmountain Men Victory March of citizen soldiers assembled starting in Tennessee and adding recruits as they continued across what are now nine western North Carolina counties, marched through Rutherford County on October 3-5, 1780. On October 7, 1780, these citizen soldiers, including those from Rutherford, met and defeated Major Patrick Ferguson and his Tory troops at the Battle of Kings Mountain. The battle is considered the turning point of Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War and the March is commemorated in the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail under the auspices of the National Park Service. It is described as a linear historic park spanning from Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina and is an important and popular historic site. Gilbert Town is the only site in this Campaign, other than Kings Mountain, where both Loyalists and Patriot forces encamped. Major Patrick Ferguson camped there and the British bivouacked there for several weeks. The



The town's history ties back to now disappeared Gilbert Town. Historical markers such as this one (First Courthouse) can still be found throughout the town.



Ferguson's Ridge



Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail (National Park Service)



Coin Minted by the Bechtler Mint



*Bechtler House*



*Civic uses such as the County Courthouse are significant employment anchors within downtown.*



*Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail Marker*

Overmountain Men camped there on their way to and from the Battle of Kings Mountain and early in 1781, following their brilliant victory at the Battle of Cowpens. The Patriot troops came to Gilbert Town to tend the wounded and confine their prisoners. Gilbert Town's role in the history of this Revolutionary War Campaign is distinguished by the exceptionally large number of troops who passed through. It too is made prominent by the notable Revolutionary figures who are documented as being at Gilbert Town.: John Sevier, Isaac Shelby, Daniel Morgan, William Washington, Francis Marion, Andrew Pickens, Patrick Ferguson, Banastre Tarleton, Griffith Rutherford, Benjamin Cleaveland and Felix Walker.

After the Revolutionary War, the hill country to the west and north of Rutherfordton led the United States in the mining of gold. Raw gold was abundant but no reliable, reputable or accurate way to sell or exchange gold for goods and services existed. State and federal currency was square and gold nuggets and gold dust were used to purchase goods. Merchants and miners often kept a set of pocket scales for weighing gold to use or receive as payment.

In 1829, the German family of Christopher Bechtler, his son Augustus and nephew Christopher Jr., who were experienced German metal workers, came to America. They first settled in Philadelphia but in 1830 they moved to Rutherfordton and opened a jewelry store. It was at that time that they realized the need for a reliable means of economic exchange. In 1828, the United States Congress had rejected a proposal by Samuel Price Carson to have a branch of the United States Mint established in Rutherfordton. Therefore, the Bechtlers decided to coin gold themselves and began the most important private mints ever operated in this country located approximately three and one-half miles northwest of Rutherfordton. In July 1831, using hand-crafted dies and presses, the Bechtlers began striking coins in at least two denominations - \$2.50 and \$5.00 pieces - and soon they coined the very first \$1.00 gold coins in America. They eventually produced three denominations; \$1, \$2.50, and \$5, and the coins were struck in three finenesses; 20 carats, 21 carats, and 22 carats. The coins were of honest weight and any variation in fineness was due solely to the limited technology at the time. The Bechtlers also manufactured necklaces, earrings, brooches, rings, buttons, cuff links, watches, and a variety of firearms including several types of pistols sold in their store in Rutherfordton. In late 1831, the Bechtlers produced the first gold dollars in the United States. This was eighteen years prior to the first striking of a \$1 coin at the Philadelphia mint.

The Bechtler coins were so well accepted for commerce in general that during the Civil war that monetary obligations of the Confederacy were specified as payable in "Bechtler gold" rather than Union or Confederate or state currency. The Bechtlers minted approximately \$2.25 million in currency and fluxed an additional \$1,384,000 in raw gold between 1831 and 1840. They handled

more North Carolina gold during the period than the Philadelphia Mint and the Charlotte Branch Mint (founded 1837) combined. The death of Christopher Bechtler, Sr. in 1842 and the decline of the gold industry in North Carolina following the discovery of gold in California in 1848 resulted in the closing of the Bechtler Mint. In 1863, the Bechtlers moved to a home located on North Washington Street in Rutherfordton. The home, on 6th Street, is one of a cluster of homes found in Rutherfordton which attracts visitor as examples of antebellum architecture.

The Bechtler family clearly was an influential factor in the history and culture of Rutherford County and the Town of Rutherfordton. Additionally, national recognition is given to the Bechtler family's contributions. They are revered for the quality and care with which they both assayed gold and minted their coins and for their importance to the nation's development during the formative years. A portion of the town's history is forever preserved elsewhere as the original Bechtler Coin Press is located in the American Numismatic Society Museum and the Bechtler Mint Rollers are displayed in the Smithsonian Museum.

Beyond the Bechtler's contributions to Rutherford County are many other treasures, relics and artifacts demonstrating the County's heritage and history. For example, the Genealogical Society of Old Tryon County has been described as the largest private collection of genealogical information from original land grants to family histories west of Raleigh. The Rutherford County Historical Society has collected artifacts, vintage photographs and other items worthy of recognition as display. Numerous individuals, organizations, towns and communities have other treasures in need of preservation for future generations. The collections, artifacts and relics collected need to be housed in a place such as the proposed Heritage Center. This would be an excellent way for the people of Rutherford County to show their devotion to Rutherford County's history, heritage, and culture.

*Recommendations:*

The Heritage Plan seeks to retain Rutherford County's vibrant history, sense of place, and community pride. The Heritage Plan identifies opportunities for Rutherfordton and Rutherford County by leveraging history and heritage with art and innovation.

- A. Celebrate the history, heritage, and culture of Rutherford County and Rutherfordton with the creation of:
  - i. A Rutherford County Heritage Center and Bechtler Museum that depicts various aspects of the County's history and heritage
  - ii. Heritage trails which encompass the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail, Rails to Trail, Purple Martin Trail and other trails to provide connections to other historic destinations.
- B. Formally establish the identity of the County that may be linked to the



*Christopher Bechtler, an immigrant from Germany started his minting operation at a site roughly 3 1/2 miles away from downtown Rutherfordton.*



*Smoky Burgess, legendary baseball player; memorabilia.*

- county's history.
- i. Conduct a study to clarify the targeted identity of the area and how it should be effectively communicated.
  - ii. Coordinate with the Town of Rutherfordton to create a brand for the town/downtown that can be communicated through signage.
  - iii. Coordinate with the Town of Rutherfordton to design and implement a way-finding system that reinforces the identity while it orients and guides visitors through the town and identifies key destinations in the process.
- C. Consider establishing a local historic district that would encompass historically significant buildings in the town area. (This district may extend beyond the National Register district.)
- i. Conduct a study to define the boundary of the district.
  - ii. Develop guidelines and policies for historic properties.
  - iii. Appoint a local commission to review: a) applications for altering historic properties and b) issues certificates of compliance.
- D. Enhance tourism as a key component of the local economy.
- i. Encourage development within the county and town that support tourism.
  - ii. Actively market the Bechtler Mint/Mine site, other historic sites, trails, the Heritage Center and Bechtler Museum Campus as a destination.
  - iii. Establish a town website that will highlight of town's assets and lifestyle and provide linkage to existing county, state, regional websites to reinforce as a tourism destination.
  - iv. Create multiple destinations within the area that will lengthen and enhance the visitor's overall experience.
  - v. Market the town and other historical areas and trails to potential visitors such as the neighboring towns and cities.
  - vi. Identify and enhance existing and potential destinations that will extend the duration of visitors' trips.
    - a. Establish lines of communication between Rutherford County and Rutherfordton to create the Rutherford County Heritage Center/Bechtler Museum component as another key destination (see Heritage Plan).
  - vii. Market Rutherford County's history, heritage, culture including the Bechtler history and Revolutionary War History as a heritage resource at the regional, state, and federal governmental levels.

The citizens and government of Rutherford County have expressed an interest in opening a History and Heritage Center to celebrate the region's rich cultural history. This Center would include exhibits depicting the history of Gilbert Town and the creation of the county seat, the history of the area including the Bechtler gold legacy, the textile industry and regional genealogy. Also included in the Center would be the potential art collection of Andreas Bechtler. Several cities have been considered as possible locations for this art museum, including Charlotte and Rutherfordton. The Rutherford County History and Heritage Center would be in addition to the main museum in Charlotte. It would be one of a few places that would display the artwork on a rotational basis.

A descendent of the Bechtler family, Andreas Bechtler has collected a phenomenal array of 20th Century modern and contemporary art. Mr. Bechtler's collection includes a large number of sculptures, paintings, original prints and artist illustrated books. Although this collection is not directly related to coin minting, it represents how prominent the Bechtler family became as a result of the Bechtler Mint's success.

The proposed location of the History and Heritage Center is downtown on North Washington Street. There are several advantages of choosing this specific location, including its close proximity to Main Street. The entrance of the proposed History and Heritage Center will be aligned with 1st street, which is envisioned as a major pedestrian connection between the east and west sides of downtown. This pedestrian route will connect the proposed YMCA and amphitheater on the east side of downtown, through Main Street Park, to the entrance garden of the Center Complex. The Center site is also near the proposed Tanyard Creek Greenway, which could be a great asset to bring residents and visitors to the Center location by providing a convenient pedestrian connection.

The proposed project could be a catalyst that would bring back some of the prominence that is deserved by North Washington Street, which has declined in recent years, specifically between 4th Street and Maple Street. The North Washington Street location has enough open space to accommodate the proposed Center as well. Although the North Washington Street location currently houses the town's Public Works Department and auto repair shops, these facilities could be relocated to a more suitable area. Along with displaying the Bechtler art collection, the proposed Center could also house the Rutherford County Genealogical Society and the Rutherford County Historic Museum.

The layout of the proposed Rutherford County History and Heritage Center (RCHHC) has been carefully planned to complement and enhance the Master Plan. The Center is arranged around a central formal open space (garden) anchored by the Museum building to the north, an open pavilion as a terminus vista to 1st Street, and the relocated Bechtler house (or any other house from



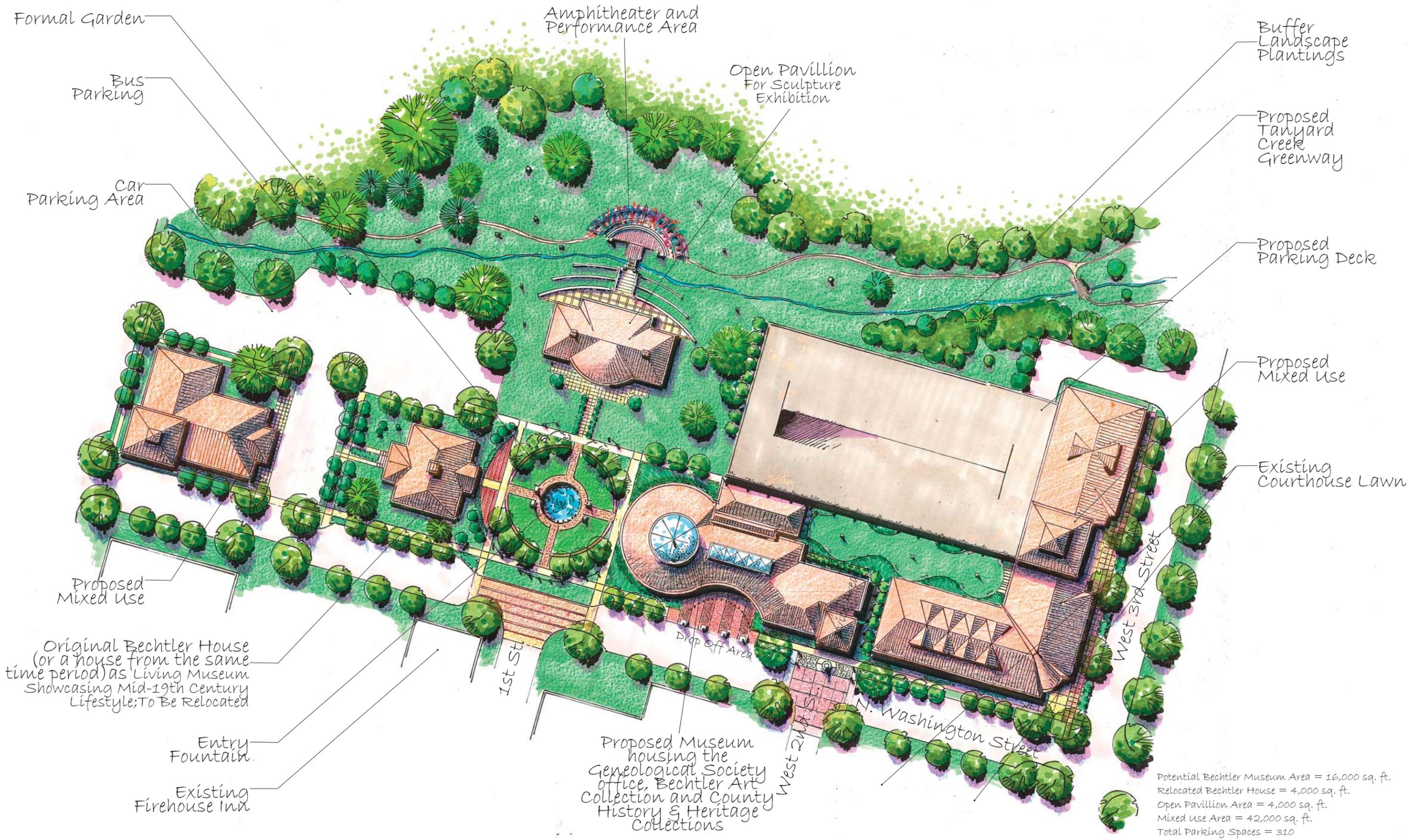
*Bechtler Mint Coin*



*Original Bechtler House*



*Sculpture: Andreas Bechtler Collection*



that era) to the south (See Figure #2). Due to the fact that the proposed site is so close to a widely used public street, careful consideration will be necessary to create a transition zone between the street and museum. This can be accomplished using a variety of trees and flower beds. Additionally, the museum entrance will be separated from the main road to avoid a traffic conflict with the public entrance to the museum. A drop off area designed for cars and/or tour buses is provided on North Washington Street between 1st Street and 2nd Street. This area will provide a convenient sidewalk access to the front entrance that opens up onto the formal garden between the museum and the relocated home from the 1800s.

The 16,000 square foot museum building is envisioned to be constructed respecting the scale of the surrounding buildings while maintaining a unique design and form. The internal layout of the building will be designed to meet the needs of varying museum exhibits. Since some of the exhibits in this museum could be displayed on a rotational basis, flexibility on the display walls will be necessary. Heights of the display room could vary anywhere from 16' to 23' depending on the size of the artifacts. The height of the building could vary between one and two stories to accommodate the Genealogical Society use, which could be located on the second floor with a separate entrance from North Washington Street. Furthermore, the building will be designed for to the possibility of future expansion to accommodate museum growth. The current layout allows for expansion between the museum building and the outdoor pavilion, as shown on the site plan. Parking for the museum facility could be accessed from both the parking deck as well as surface parking lot which is south of the outdoor pavilion and west of the relocated house. Bus parking is located west of the relocated house in the surface parking lot. The service entrance will be on the back side of the building, which is accessible from the parking deck. The following basic functions are to be accommodated in the entirety of the new museum facility:

- Museum curator office which will perform the functions related to collection preservation, identification, documentation, study and restoration.
- Display area which will house the actual artworks organized in a way that will tell a story to the visitor. This area could be divided into smaller spaces depending on the types and categories of artifacts.
- Display preparation area that will provide space for storing artwork and preparing the artwork for display.
- Educational and public functions spaces such as a lecture hall, library and meeting room where various artists or interested groups could meet.
- Support facilities including janitorial uses and rest rooms.



*Potential site for Bechtler Museum Campus currently houses uses that range from auto shops to the public works department.*



*Original Bechtler Mint Location*



*Rail to Trail Near Original Bechtler Mint Location*



*Front entrance of Charles M. Schulz Museum. The entrance respects human scale and articulates the gateway into the building with interesting form.*



*Genealogical Society of Berks County, PA provides space to do research and store information.*



*Outdoor garden as part of the Ormond Memorial Art Museum & Gardens, Florida.*



*Historic Brattonville, SC. Bedroom of the McConnell House showcasing the lifestyle from the early 1800s.*

The open pavilion will be a 4,000 square foot facility using architecture that will be a unifying element between the museum and the house. This can be achieved by using colors, building material and articulation of form, which will compliment nearby historic buildings such as the Courthouse and the Firehouse Inn. The Plan depicts an outdoor sculpture garden to the West of the open pavilion that could potentially display sculptures. These sculptures could come from a variety of sources including the Andreas Bechtler art collection. The site for the open pavilion is located next to the proposed Tanyard Creek Greenway, which will allow for a beautiful, natural setting (see illustration of outdoor sculpture garden on next page). Included in the Center will be an amphitheater that will be used for various activities, including discussions of artists and small performances.

In this proposed layout of the Center, the original Bechtler house will be relocated to the southern end of the open garden. This location will create an ideal setting for the living museum that will showcase the lifestyle of its inhabitants from the mid 19th Century. If the original Bechtler house could not be relocated, any other house from that time period could be moved to this location.

A mixed-use development (approximately 42,000 square feet) at the northern and southern ends of the Center will allow for commercial and residential uses, making the area more active. This mixed use area may include opportunities for County-related uses (i.e. County Offices) and high-density residential development. The proposed parking deck built in collaboration with private developer could be used for Center parking, County parking and residential parking. Between the parking deck and surface parking lot, approximately 310 parking spaces could be created. This will help accommodate the parking requirements for County uses, especially during peak hours when court is in session.

The proposed Rutherford County Heritage Center would serve as the home to celebrate the vast array of county artifacts, stories and history. The Center will be organized under several themes to guide visitors through the depth and breadth of this area's heritage.

Proposed thematic areas include: People, Places, Music, Conflict, Sports, Education, Trails/Transportation, Mining, Rutherford County Historical Society, and traveling exhibits.

Rutherford County's surviving artifacts do not have home at this time. They are scattered, with some being in private local homes, some outside the county and others in temporary storage in county-owned buildings. The Heritage Center will consolidate those existing artifacts and provide a permanent facility for future donations and acquisitions. Not having a permanent facility has been a major detriment to the county being able to accept and safely house artifacts. The range of county history to be displayed at the Heritage Center is too large to detail for this report, but several examples give a flavor of what a visitor may learn on a tour of the Center.

## CONCEPTUAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEMES IN MUSEUM CENTER





*Outdoor Sculpture as Part of Sculpture Garden*



*Tanyard Creek Greenway Trail*



*Internal Directional Sign*

Under the 'People' theme the county is proud to claim as one of its own Robert McNair. McNair is currently the owner of the Houston Texans of the National Football League and Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the McNair Group which manages a multitude of investments. He is the founder of Cogen Technologies Energy Group which he sold in 1999. Fortune Magazine estimates McNair's net worth at \$1.5 billion. McNair is a graduate of East Rutherford High School and later graduated from the University of South Carolina. McNair has stayed involved in Rutherford County even though his business operations are centered in Texas. He has established a scholarship and mentoring program at East Rutherford High School funded by the Robert and Janice McNair Foundation ([www.mcnairfoundation.org](http://www.mcnairfoundation.org)).

The 'Places' theme of the Heritage Center will bring to light a variety of unique stories. Those stories range from the more formal histories of Cleghorn and Foxhaven Plantations to homesteading in Golden Valley and on to the various mill villages established in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Small communities with colorful names like Ayr, Frog Level, and Cuba have their own stories to tell. Brittain Presbyterian Church is documented as the oldest chartered church west of the Catawba River. Lake Lure in the western part of the county lives up to its early 20th Century chosen name.

Harris' own Snuffy Jenkins headlines the musical heritage of the county. Jenkins' three-finger picking style, known locally as the Broad River style, was cemented over the more than 50-year run of the Hollis Fiddler's Convention. The Ellenboro Fiddler's Convention comes to Rutherford County the Saturday before Thanksgiving.

The county's history of conflict ranges all the way back to the namesake of the county, Brigadier General Griffith Rutherford who led a campaign against the Cherokee Indians known as the Rutherford Trace. It is the county's Revolutionary War heritage, however, that has the deepest roots. The story of Gilbert Town and the Overmountain Men, outlined earlier, forms a distinctive thread through the county to America's independence from Britain.

The county has a rich history in sporting endeavors, particularly in the sport of baseball. Rutherford County's most famous ballplayer is Smoky Burgess. Burgess, born in Caroleen in 1927, had a storied career in the Major Leagues including helping the Pittsburgh Pirates to a World Series victory in 1960. Over the course of his 18-year major league career (1949-67), Burgess hit .295 and was a five-time All-Star. Burgess was a career catcher, but is best known for his prowess as a pinch-hitter. When Burgess retired, he was the all-time leader in pinch-hits and in pinch-hit home runs. Those records stood until 1979 when Manny Mota topped Burgess. As a pinch-hitter, Burgess hit a remarkable .286 for his career. He was the catcher for Harvey Haddix's famous 12-inning perfect game when the pair played with the Pirates in 1959. He later coached in the Atlanta Braves system.



*Janice and Robert McNair, owner of Houston Texans. Mr. McNair is a graduate of East Rutherford High School.*



*Gilbert Town has recently been included in the National Register of Historic Places*



*Example of the interior space of a museum displaying paintings and sculptures.*



*Smoky Burgess, legendary baseball player, was a graduate of Tri-High School*

Burgess was a graduate of Tri-High School and continued to live and work in Rutherford County during and after his baseball career. His local investments included a gas station and a Dodge dealership. He was a regular attendee at Hollis Springs Baptist Church. He died in 1991 at Rutherford Hospital.

Other themes include trails and transportation which will celebrate stagecoach routes, railroads and other modes of transportation used by locals and by those passing through or delivering goods. Another proposed section of the museum would house rotating exhibits of the Rutherford County Historical Society. The Society actively researches and updates the county's history. This section of the museum would highlight those efforts.

*Recommendations:*

- A. Establish partnerships with various organizations to preserve the Bechtler heritage and take advantage of its marketability.
  - i. Partner with American Numismatic Association (ANA) to market the RCHHC to its members. Utilize the upcoming opportunity of ANA's 2007 convention that will be hosted in Charlotte, NC by marketing the Center and its contents to the convention's participants.
  - ii. Partner with Rutherfordton to assemble the parcels and develop the site for RCHHC. Work with Rutherfordton to integrate the Tanyard Creek Greenway with the outdoor sculpture garden. This component includes an outdoor amphitheater and display area for the sculptures that can further promote the Center and Study Rutherfordton.
- B. Assemble parcels for the Center and immediate area
  - i. Assemble the necessary 3.7 acres for the Center as indicated in the Master Plan (See Figure #10).
    - a. Work with the Town to relocate organizations that are affected by the proposed acquisition; this includes the town's Public Works Department and the auto repair shops.
  - ii. Create a parcel plan that subdivides the assembled tract into three parts: one part is dedicated for the Center and two parts are earmarked for the two mixed-use components at the northern and southern end of the site. Identify and market the latter two parts to private developers.
  - iii. Phase the redevelopment of this area. This could be executed in a variety of methods:
    - a. Redevelop it simultaneously in joint partnership with private developers
    - b. Redevelop the Center portion of the site and solicit proposals from developers the mixed-use components.
  - iv. Enter into a joint venture with private developers to construct the parking deck that serves the needs of the Center, the County,



*Organization of Genealogical information at Marshall County Historical Society, Kansas*



*Use of artificial light at Ormond Memorial Art Museum and Gardens, Florida*

and the mixed-use buildings.

- C. Obtain further consultation for areas that need extensive design
  - i. Issue an RFP to engage a consultant to produce design plans for the RCHHC that would include the architecture of all buildings:
    - a. Museum building
    - b. Open pavilion
    - c. Mixed use buildings and parking deck (if joint venture)
  - ii. Issue an RFP for the Architectural design of the Museum Center:  
Architectural design shall address programming of the building:
    - a. The programming should consider the future showcasing of the Bechtler art collection as well as historic artifacts from the following: Bechtler Mint, Rutherford County, and the records of the Genealogical society museum.
    - b. Layout of various functional spaces such as lobby, sales and information center, office-workroom, workshop, reserve collection room, display galleries, lecture room, furniture storage space, cloak room, toilets and washrooms, HVAC room and janitor closet.

Rutherford County encompasses a number of important landmarks that are imperative to United States' history. A proposed Heritage Trail Network offers connectivity between a number of sites such as the proposed Bechtler's Museum Campus, Bechtler Mint, and ruins in Gilbert Town. (See Figure # 5) This trail network will create a non-vehicular connection among the various places of interest. The trail will not only enable pedestrians and bicyclists to travel uninterrupted and safely, but it will also capitalize on the significant heritage sites. This is especially true of those historic sites, including Gilbert Town and the Bechtler Mint, as it connects Rutherford County's community with its historic foundation.

Although the original Bechtler Mint site has remained relatively unscathed by development over the past century, it has, unfortunately, been victimized by events such as logging, unregulated gold mining, and farming. Rutherford County embraced the site as a historical landmark and, has since, offered to share its historical wealth with visitors and other interested parties. In doing so, a plan has been derived that would maximize its exposure beyond the Heritage Trail Network. This plan involves a maintenance-free, self-interpretive facility that will evoke a sense of scale as well as the experience of reliving Rutherford County's history.

The Mint is located to the east of the quiet Gilmer Edwards Road. A gravel parking lot offers a soft approach and smooth transition into a park-like setting which could be considered a resting place for the original Bechtler Mint. Other visitors may prefer to engage in an afternoon stroll along the recently developed Rail-To-Trail that operated as the region's transportation lifeline. (See Figure #3) Either approach will provide a tranquil emergence into the past. Visitors will recognize the site immediately as monumentation will mark an enticing entrance into the three-plus acres. (See Figure #3 and Figure #4) Walking into the park, visitors will find themselves surrounded by lush vegetation and shadowed by the tree cover. A network of trails allows each visitor to choose a different path, and therefore creates a different set of experience upon each visit (see typical sections of trails on the next page). Deep into the site, an element of surprise is offered with an array of architecturally interesting informational panels. Although the native-material-panels will offer a separate educational lesson, when comprised, the information will enlighten visitors with the Bechtler Mint story. Beyond the trail system, visitors will arrive at the Bechtler Mint ruin which is comprised of ornamental plantings, built piers, and tunnel-heads. The latter of the previously mentioned attributes encourage visitors to become inquisitive as to where the tunnels are physically located. A nearby map showcases the composition of the network and a view into the tunnel (see typical display of such implementation in the form of a kiosk on next page). The position of the Mint creates an opportunity for visitors to circulate easily around the ruins, therefore changing view sheds with ease. (See Figure #4). Guests may be shocked to learn that the Bechtler farm, mint, house, and

#### SIGNAGE:

*Informational panels can clearly relay information that is critical to understanding any given space. A hierarchical system of information can effectively communicate to a visitor what is important based on the size, location, and title of the signage.*



*This example illustrates signage that may be used to initially greet a visitor at a designated trailhead or to highlight important information that should not be overlooked. The sign itself is at eye-level with the viewer and should be visible from distances within a fifteen foot range. This form of signage would be an example of a primary level on the hierarchical scale.*



*The above example shows how signage often used by the National Historic Trust to represent an area of interest. The panels are often used to describe the importance of a site through verbiage and a title. This form of signage would be an example of a secondary level on the hierarchical scale.*



The image above offers a similar feel with a stand-alone panel at waist height and should be visible at distances within a 5 foot range. This form of signage would be an example of a tertiary level on the hierarchical scale.



**PATHWAYS:**

A pathway would connect visitors to a network of trails which would aid them in the discovery of the Mint's ruins. Pathways such as those illustrated provide visitors with a tranquil transition into the site from outside the park-like setting. Natural materials such as stones and pebbles will create a softer landscape feeling rather than asphalt or concrete. The trails will also meander throughout the site which will offer visitors a variety of compelling viewsheds as they turn each corner.

gunsmith business were all ventures undergone in the same building. As visitors expand their knowledge of the Bechtler Mint and Rutherford County alike, they can also find additional resources in the downtown Rutherfordton. Signage will establish the connection between the Rutherfordton and the Bechtler Mint site to inspire guests to further their discovery as the mint has been replicated to provide visitors with the original settlers' experience.

The details of the Bechtler Mint are vast. Guests of the site may choose to visit for a variety of reasons. Henceforth, it will be important to include a plethora of information in the signage that will be pertinent to all visitors. Factual information should include details such as, but not limited to: over two million dollars was minted at this site, the mint eventually migrated from Rutherfordton to South Carolina, the generational evolution of ownership within the Bechtler family, and the original dimension of the edifice in terms of square footage, materials, and other relative information. The type and amount of information needed to clearly communicate the history of the site needs to be obtained and analyzed prior to implementation; this is especially important as a carefully crafted story should unequivocally represent the Bechtler family and their legacy.

The method by which the site's information is portrayed is equally as important as what is communicated. There are several techniques that can be used to communicate to visitors and the general public. Below are examples of how historically important sites have been honored:

Benjamin Franklin's Home - Philadelphia, PA.

In the heart of Philadelphia, PA visitors will find Benjamin Franklin's iconic home that offers insight into the life of the legendary American. The house, itself, offers a variety of methods to communicate the history of the site through means such as self-interpretive signage. Although the setting of this historic site is quite different by virtue of its location in a historic, yet, urban than the remote location of the Bechtler Mint site, the idea is essentially similar – which is recreating and showcasing the life and history of a prominent figure from a time period that dates back to the middle



of 18th century via the suggestive recreation of the physical form. Located on Market Street between 3rd and 4th Street, this heritage site contains the "Ghost Structure" which outlines the original skeleton of Ben Franklin's house by using metal frames in an articulated fashion. This provides a sense of scale to the visitors while exhibiting the remaining foundation of the original house. Throughout the site, plaques have been strategically positioned to further communicate the home's importance. The signage displays the home's original sketch and brief narratives that express the type of construction techniques and

building material that were applied to Franklin's home. The entire site, which also encompasses a trail, unfolds in a series of experience that "walks" visitors through various sections of the house. The is utilized to ties all pieces of the home's history together.



Historical Plantation - Beaufort, SC

Places such as Beaufort, SC have established creative methods to illustrate the original ruins its community without altering its historical presence. Preservation of Beaufort's plantation ruins is imperative to maintaining its sense of history. Although only the foundation of the plantation home is still remaining, the site has been listed as a Historical Landmark. The details of the site and its story are effectively communicated through various techniques. In this example, a sign was created that communicates the importance of the site and its original structural appearance. Visitors can step back from the sign and align its transparent panel with the ruin to visually outline the historic structure. A similar idea may be relevant for the Bechtler Mint. This would maintain the original site, but offer a glimpse of how the site may have appeared over a century ago.



*IMAGERY: Historically based images depict an interesting time in Bechtler's history. Photos can be attached to signage to further educate visitors about the specific details of a site. The image shown above illustrates two miners relaxing outside after a shift in the mining tunnel.*

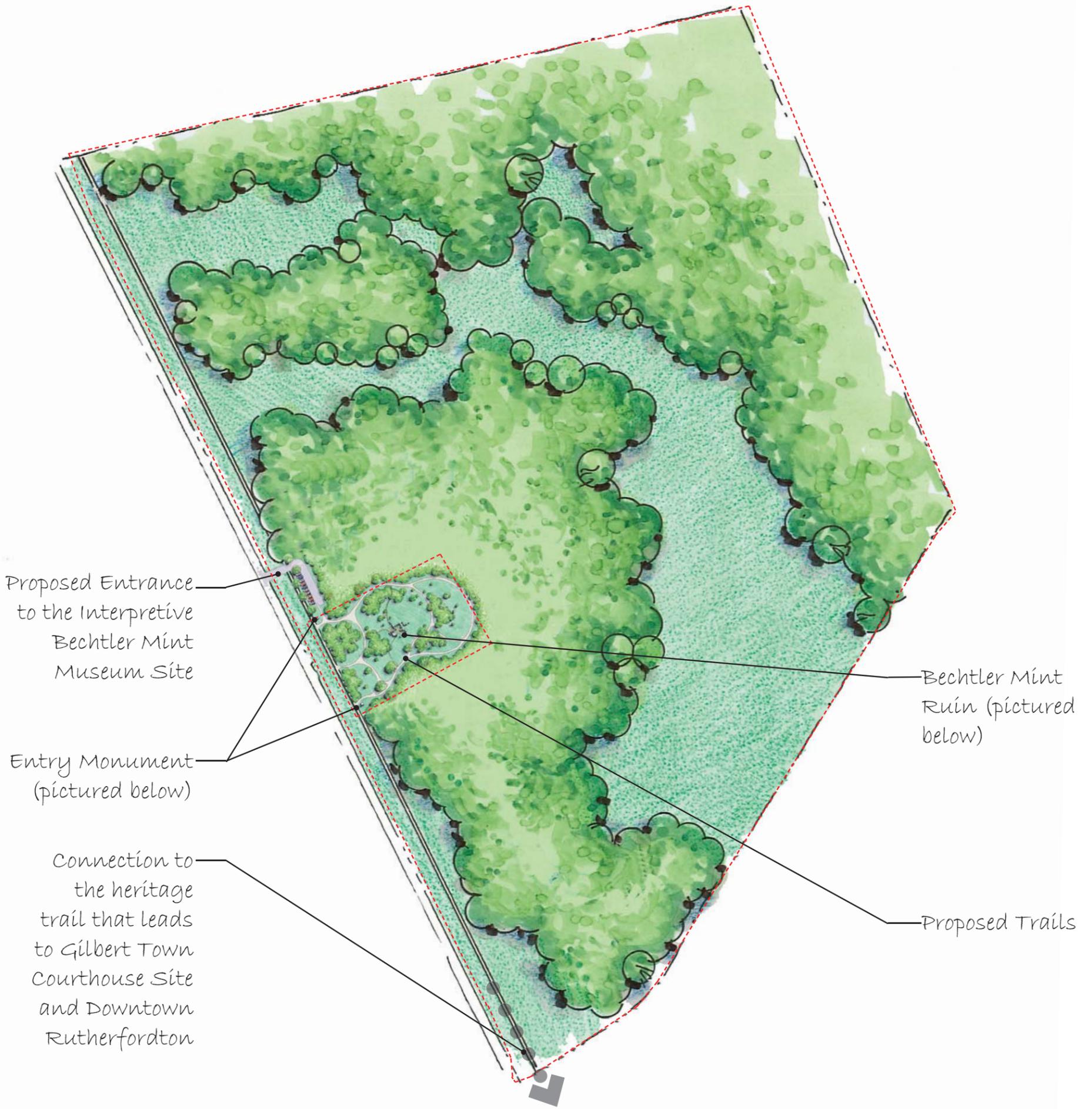
Bethabra Historical Park - Winston-Salem, NC

Bethabra Park is an iconic historic figure for historians and visitors alike. The site encompasses relics of the 18th century Moravian ruins. Today, the Park offers tours, cultural learning programs, and educational facilities; all of the amenities that are offered at Bethabra align with the Park's overall goal which is to "preserve, acquire, and interpret cultural and natural history to ensure a better future." The type of activities that are offered at the site encourage future visitations to learn more about the heritage and history. There are also a wide variety of individual and scheduled group tours that offer information regarding different programs such as birding, architecture, and vegetation. Bechtler's Mint site has similar possibilities. The Mint site could be marketed beyond its architecture and historic interest to encompass educational programs and the natural beauty of the grounds.



*Recommendations:*

- A. Develop partnerships with various organizations
  - i. Partner with the American Numismatic Association (ANA) to market the original mint site to showcase the rich heritage associated with Bechtler coins. Utilize the upcoming opportunity of ANA's 2007 convention in Charlotte, NC by capitalizing on regional proximity and marketing the original mint site and its ruins as package tour.
  - ii. Coordinate with the Genealogical Society, Rutherford County Historical Society, Andreas Bechtler, and the National Trust to raise awareness of the historical & cultural nature of the Bechtler collection.
  
- B. Design the Bechtler Mint Historic site
  - i. Acquire additional land required for parking and vehicular access through negotiations with adjacent land owners. Acquire roughly 0.5 acres of additional land at the northern end of the mint site to satisfy the necessary parking requirements.
  - ii. Prepare design development and construction drawings for the site elements based on the refinement of the concepts expressed in the Plan. This includes circulation, parking, and site amenities such as seating, lighting, and interpretive signage or other features.
  
- C. Establish pedestrian connections
  - i. Establish a trail connection between the site's trails and the existing rail-to-trail to allow for pedestrian access.
  - ii. Identify a direct route within the Heritage Trail Network that connects the downtown area to the Bechtler Mint site and allows museum visitors to connect directly via a pedestrian route. (See figure #5)
  
- D. Educate visitors about nearby cultural and historical assets
  - i. Create a self-interpretative, outdoor, minimum maintenance facility near the old Gilbert Town to inform visitors about the role of Gilbert Town in the region's history.



Proposed vehicular entrance and parking for the Bechtler Mint Site

Proposed Bechtler Mint interpretive ruins (pictured above)

Entry Monument (pictured above)

Proposed primary walking trails paved with pebble

Connection to the heritage trail leading to Gilbert Town Courthouse Site and Downtown Rutherfordton

Proposed secondary trails to be constructed with stone from local rock quarries



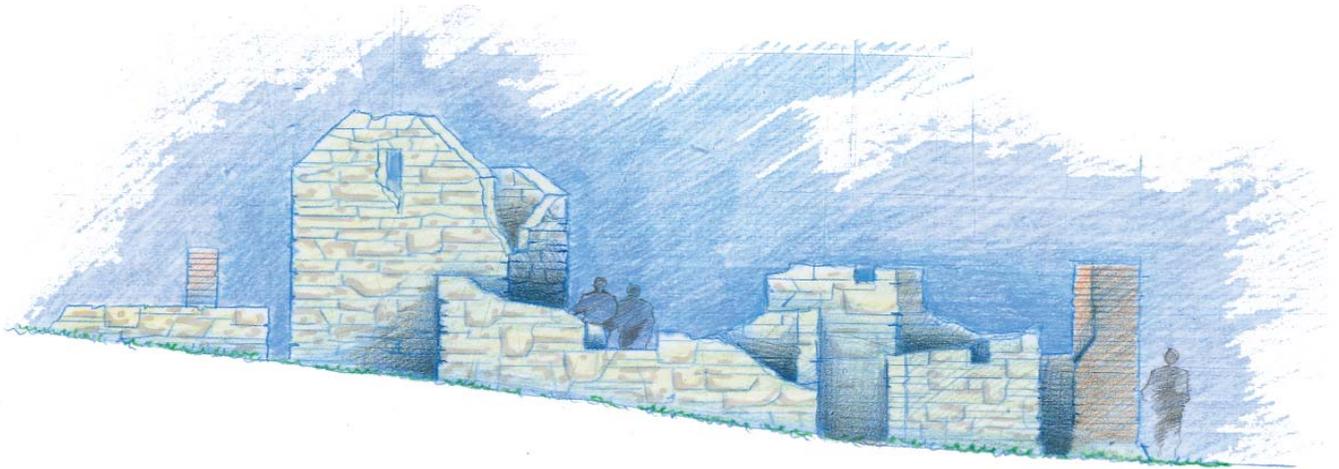
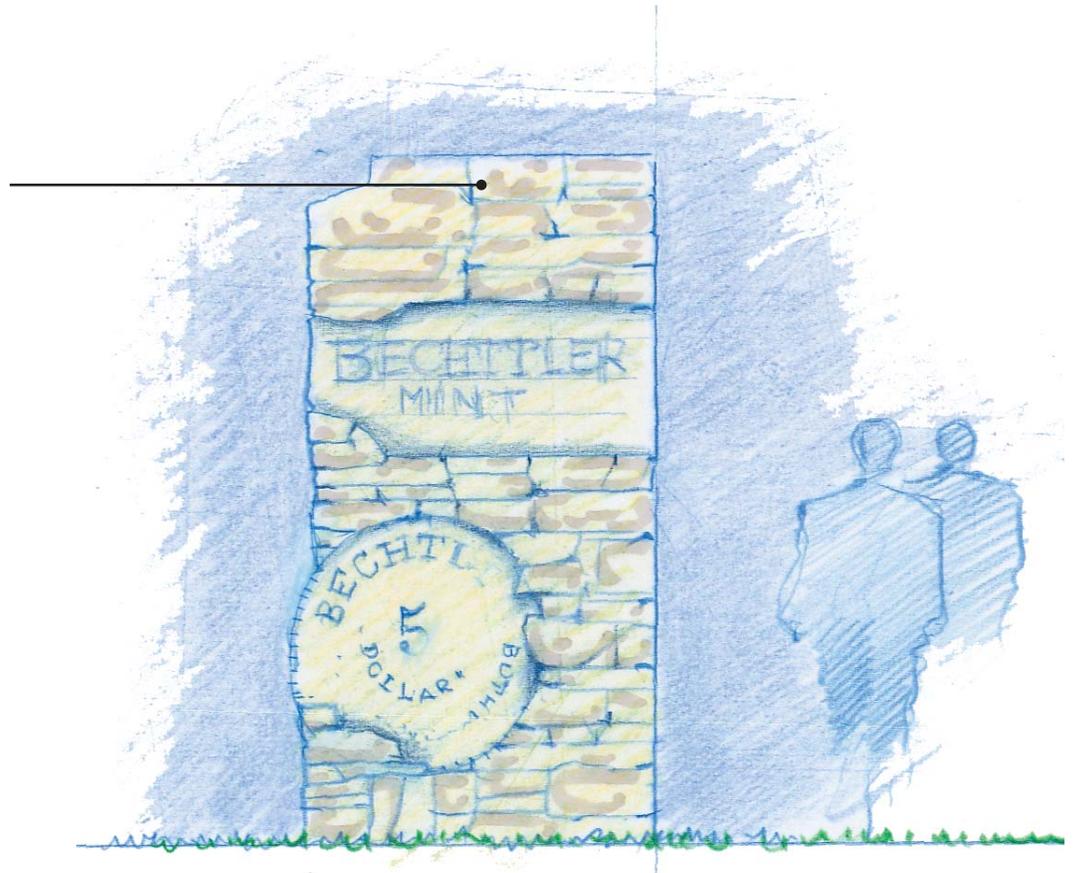


*Proposed Bechtler Mint Ruin as Self-Interpretive Structure  
(Option 1\*)*

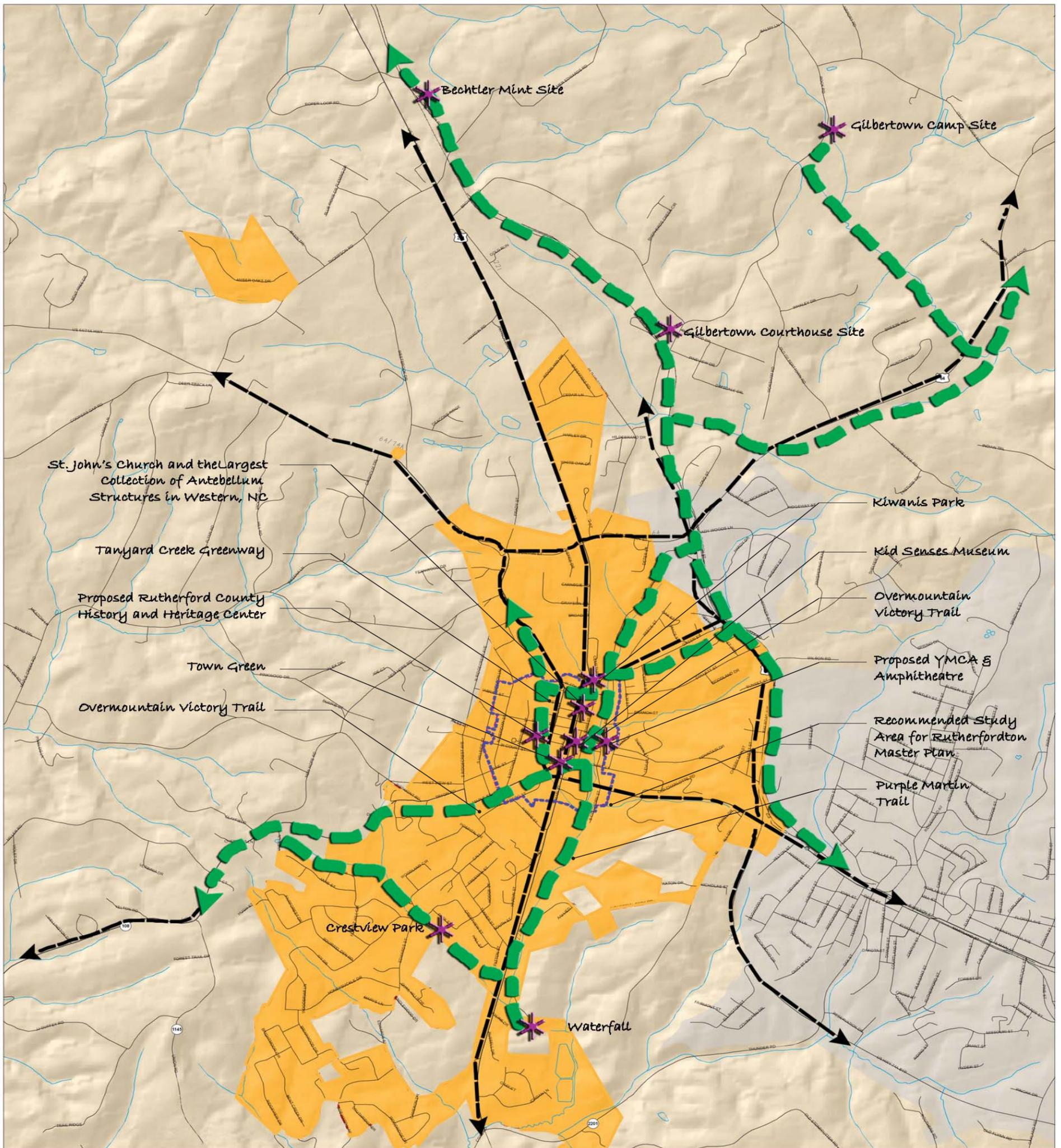


*Entry Monument at  
Trail Head  
(Option 1\*)*

Entry monument  
at Trail Head with  
Bechtler Mint Logo  
and Inset with an  
Oversized Coin  
Replica  
(Option 2\*)



Proposed Bechtler Mint Ruin, a Self-interpretive Structure  
Suggesting the Original Foundation (Option 2\*)





*Typical Section Along Primary Trail*

*Internal Directional Sign on Primary Trail*



*Informational Kiosk*



**A 1.1 Land Use**

Rutherfordton has an identifiable, quaint appeal that entails boutique shops, restaurants, and prominent civic and institutional establishments. (See Figure #7). Rutherfordton's character is primarily conveyed by its small-town appeal; this is a tremendous allure to longtime residents and visitors alike. The Town has a wide mixture of retail and office uses, as well as recreational opportunities in the form of parks, trails, and a golf course. A majority of the open space, with the exception of Crestview Park, lacks activity and is widely considered to be underutilized.

Downtown Rutherfordton offers a variety of retail opportunities such as an old hardware store, a bookstore, a musical instrument shop, niche stores, bars and restaurants. Most of the buildings along Main Street are commercial structures from the turn of the 20th century, characterized typically with one and two-story brick facades. Some of these structures have been renovated while others have retained their original detail and character. Participants in the preliminary meeting identified the preservation of these structures as a priority. Maintaining these buildings will create a more viable Main Street for local business owners as well as showcase it to visitors. In recent years, private developers have been adapting and reusing a portion of the Town's key historic properties for new uses; ultimately, this has renewed interest in downtown and its preservation.

The Study Area presents a variety of civic uses that are utilized by the County such as the courthouse, jail, and governmental offices. These civic uses provide significant employment opportunities within the Study Area. Other public uses, such as the Town Hall, post office, community hall, library and elementary school, have also been credited for some of downtown's development. Surrounding the Study Area are several residential neighborhoods that are in various stages of development and redevelopment.

Other major land uses within or on the periphery of the Study Area include the Rutherford Hospital, medical offices, and law firms. The hospital is currently searching for space to expand its business services division and it seeking to develop more housing options for some of its employees; ultimately, this would be integrated with the Study Area's land uses. Even though the Rutherford Hospital is located along the fringe of the Study Area, it has influence over the growth and redevelopment of downtown Rutherfordton.

The Study Area has a strong historical presence and encompasses several significant buildings of which many are churches and residences. Some of the churches date back to 1846 and contribute to the large concentration of antebellum structures. Many of these churches are considered the social fabric of the Town and neighboring communities. As mentioned, the Study Area also contains historic and architecturally unique residential structures dating back to 1832. The housing styles vary, with structures ranging from Greek Revival to



*The land use of Kiwanis Park and adjacent parcels are not optimally utilized.*



*A variety of churches can be found in the Study Area.*



*Municipal Golf Course is not utilized to its fullest potential and could be developed further.*



*Example of a historic home located in the study area.*



*Main Street Downtown*

late Victorian and Queen Anne style. The homes that are located along North Washington Street and to the north of the Study Area are of particular interest, especially Christopher Bechtler's abode.

The Study Area consists of a decent mix of uses ranging from institutional to retail. However, this land use type does not include a residential component, especially near to Main Street. In order to become a vibrant center in the community, the downtown must continue to develop and introduce an improved mix of land uses. The proposed Master Plan illustrates (Fig #10) the types of land uses which is further supported by the Market Study (See A1).

Achieving the desired mix of uses depends on future investment, especially from the private sector. Several related actions, noted in the following recommendations, are imperative to achieving the vision of the Master Plan.

*Recommendations:*

The Study Area already has a good mix of uses ranging from institutional, retail and office. Currently, this mix does not include a residential component, especially near Main Street. To become a vibrant center in the community, the downtown must continue to develop and introduce a greater mix of uses. The Proposed Land Use Plan (See Figure #9) illustrates the types of land uses that are appropriate and for which the Market Study indicates support (See the Downtown Rutherfordton Market Study, which is included in this report, conducted for this project).

- A. Encourage a development pattern in the Town that is consistent with the pattern depicted in the Town-Wide Land Use Concept (See Figure # 8) and that stabilizes, maintains, or enhances existing neighborhoods.
  - i. Concentrate commercial development in key locations where access and infrastructure is adequate.
  - ii. Maintain and improve the quality of development along major corridors that serve as entrances into downtown Rutherfordton. These corridors include US Highway 221, Charlotte Road, North Washington Street, NC Highway 108, and Edwards Street.
    - a. Follow the recommendations brought forward by the US 221 Bypass Study for the Charlotte Road corridor.
    - b. Modify the zoning ordinance to include corridor overlay districts for the above mentioned roads as shown on the plan that will address a variety of design standards, including front setbacks, placement of parking lots, building orientation, etc. The standards for each corridor may vary; the requirements set forth in each overlay district should acknowledge the unique conditions of the corridor that future development should emulate because such conditions contribute to the character of the corridor.



*The Firehouse Inn was remodeled into an Inn from an old firehouse.*



*Residential Area*

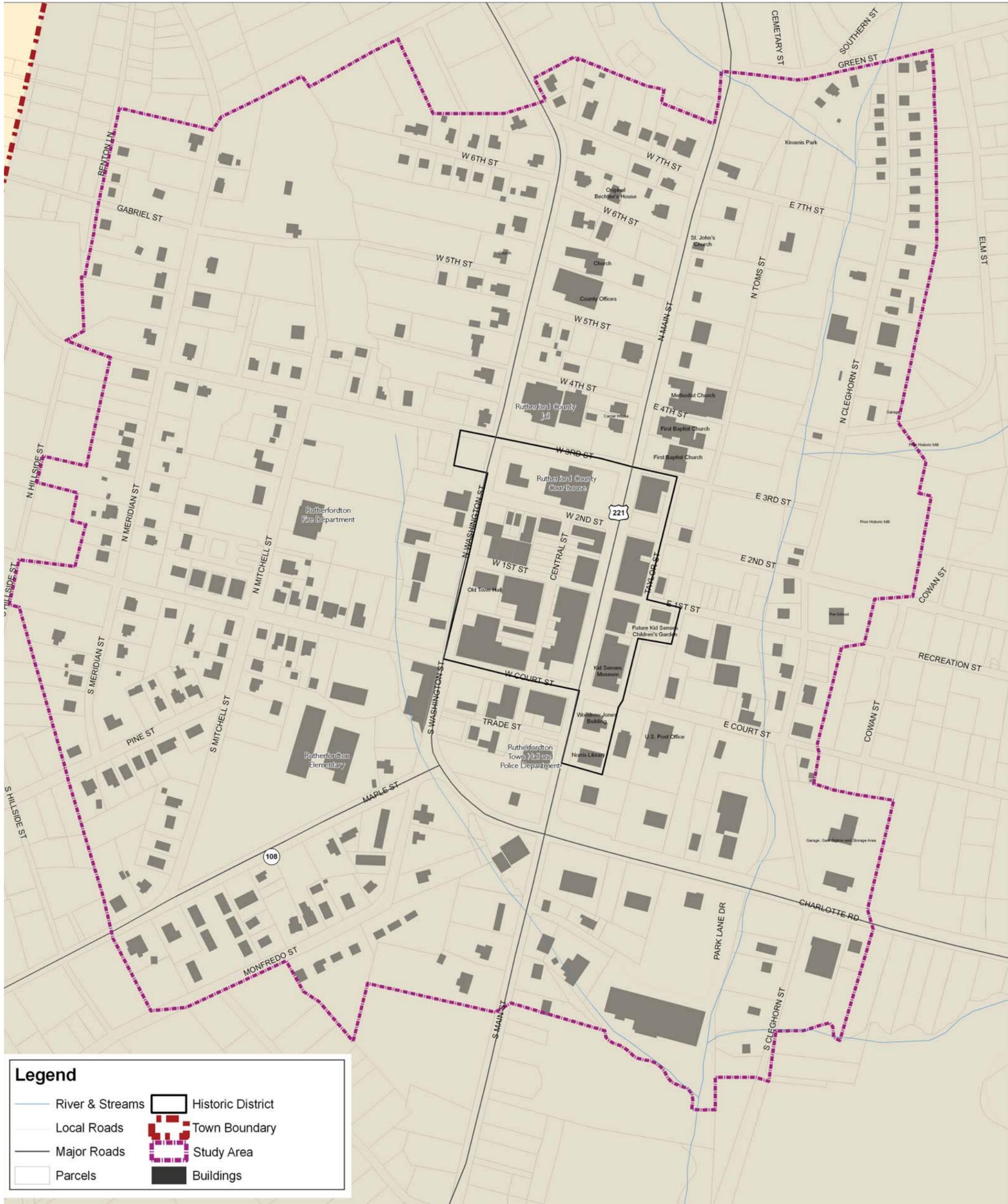
- B. Encourage development and redevelopment in and at the edges of downtown, particularly that which involves private sector participation, that support the vision for downtown as depicted in the Proposed Land Use Plan (See Figure # 9).
- i. Support the incorporation of the wide range of uses within the Study Area as shown. (Note: The uses illustrated reflect the findings of the Market Study.)
    - a. Allow residential uses to meet the demand for in-town living options. See Market Study for the types of residential uses that can be supported in this market including the following:
      - Modify the zoning ordinance to allow multi-family residential, condos as 'permitted' uses by right within the CI zoning district in the study area. Attached residential units in the form of apartments (may include second floor space above first floor commercial space along Main Street), townhomes, and condos could cater to various demographic groups such as retirees, young professionals and hospital employees.
  - i. Encourage a variety of retail uses to be oriented along Main Street to reinforce this portion of downtown as the retail center. Such uses could include but not be limited to the following: existing retail (i.e. hardware stores, antique shops, etc.); niche/specialty retail, particularly that which is related to the tourist destinations located in downtown; a green grocery; both casual and fine dining restaurants, with outdoor dining space where practical.
    - a. With Rutherford County Hospital as key employer close to downtown, encourage the development of office uses in downtown. This will strengthen the connection between hospital and downtown, as doctors and business services may occupy office space in this location.
    - b. Pursue opportunities to locate or relocate civic uses in appropriate locations on or close to Main Street where they can be found easily by citizens, particularly those that must be relocated to accommodate key plan elements (i.e. the proposed Town Green shown in the Master Plan, See Figure # 14). Some key uses include the Genealogical Society, the Economic Development Commission, and an office of the Tourism Development Authority. These uses give citizens and visitors another reason to come into the downtown area, thereby generating more regular traffic needed for the success of downtown. Opportunities may include joint ventures with

- private investors interested in the implementation of the plan.
    - b. Integrate open spaces, such as small parks and plazas, into or adjacent to new development and redevelopment. Such spaces should accommodate small events and programs and provide a place for community members to gather and recreate.
  - iii. Support existing and attract new destination uses and other anchors that will enhance the visitor and resident experience. KidSenses is an example of a destination that draws 40,000 visitors per year. Complementing this museum with other destinations that add to the variety of activities will likely lengthen visits to downtown.
    - a. Attract YMCA to open a branch in downtown Rutherfordton.
    - b. Create a Bechtler Museum Campus that will house a variety of exhibits related to the Bechtler history, County heritage, and art work.
  - iv. Use the Plan as a communication tool to convey the expectations of the Town regarding future development.
    - a. Disseminate information to encourage private sector participation in redevelopment that is in keeping with the Master Plan. Achieving the desired mix of uses heavily depends on the willingness of the private sector to buy into the vision.
    - b. Establish a process to communicate the plan and its recommendations to the broader Rutherfordton community including the various organizations that operate within the region (i.e. Economic Development Commission, Tourism Development Authority, etc.).
    - c. Communicate with the County to establish short-term and long-range goals that are mutually beneficial, and include the County in first year implementation actions and efforts to monitor progress.
  - v. Encourage redevelopment that will also have positive impact on adjacent areas, such as stabilizing and reinforcing surrounding neighborhoods.
    - a. Redevelop - or facilitate the redevelopment of - key properties with transitional, complementary uses. Consider condos, patio homes and single-family residential uses as part of the mix in these areas.
    - b. As redevelopment occurs, pursue opportunities to strengthen physical connections (i.e. streets, sidewalks, greenways, etc.) between downtown and these

- neighborhoods, which may facilitate positive changes beyond the downtown area.
- vi. Conduct an analysis of the long-term feasibility of maintaining the municipal golf course. Should the findings of the study reveal a need to redevelop the property for another use or uses, create a preliminary master plan to define a basic set of expectations of the future use of the property. To ensure development of the site that is consistent with the master plan, issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) and invite developers to submit proposals for the use and design of the site. Through this process, the Town can select a developer with whom it can negotiate the sale of the property. Revenues generated from the sale of this property should be allocated to support a catalyst project or other downtown redevelopment activities (i.e. land acquisition).
  - vii. Should the Rutherfordton Elementary School move to a location outside downtown, the Town should be proactively ensure that the redevelopment of the site is in accordance with the Master Plan.
    - a. Coordinate with County to discuss potential uses of the site and reasonable controls for directing the use of the site by potential buyers (i.e. private investors).
    - b. If the County chooses to transfer the site to the Town (through a sale or land swap), the Town should create a preliminary master plan to define a basic set of expectations of the future use of the property. To ensure development of the site that is consistent with the master plan, issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) and invite developers to submit proposals for the use and design of the site. Through this process, the Town can select a developer with whom it can negotiate the sale of the property. Revenues generated from the sale of this property should be allocated to support downtown redevelopment activities, including those that advance the goals of the Town and the County, such as land acquisition for the Bechtler Museum.
  - viii. Maximize the investment in the existing Community Clubhouse by maximizing the use of the building itself. In doing so, consider one of the following:
    - a. Relocate the building to a site that is better suited for the types of events that are likely to take place in this building.
    - b. Actively program the building and the site in its current location.
  - ix. Establish an organization whose primary focus is downtown

revitalization. "Friends of Rutherfordton" could serve as an umbrella organization that would bring all like-minded groups with overlapping missions to a central place to maximize efforts. Alternatively, this group could complement the other organizations while functioning as the one organization whose sole focus is downtown revitalization.

- x. Facilitate the implementation of the plan through land acquisition. Identify and acquire key parcels that are in public or private ownership to achieve the desired control over redevelopment of such properties. The key parcels include:
  - a. The block bounded by South Main Street, Court Street, Central Street and Trade Street.
  - b. The block bounded by North Washington Street, Charlotte Road, Main Street, Trade Street, Central Street and Court Street.
  - c. The parcels that front on North Washington Street between West 3rd Street and East Court Street for the Bechtler Museum campus.
  - d. Rutherfordton Elementary school site, as determined when the Rutherford County School system moves the school from its current location to the new location and it becomes available for other use(s).
  - e. The parcels that front on North Cleghorn Street, between Green street and Seventh Street, and those that front on Green Street, between North Cleghorn Street and Kiwanis Park, to create better park edge. It will also better delineate the area known as the Overmountain Victory Trail.

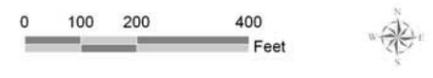


**Legend**

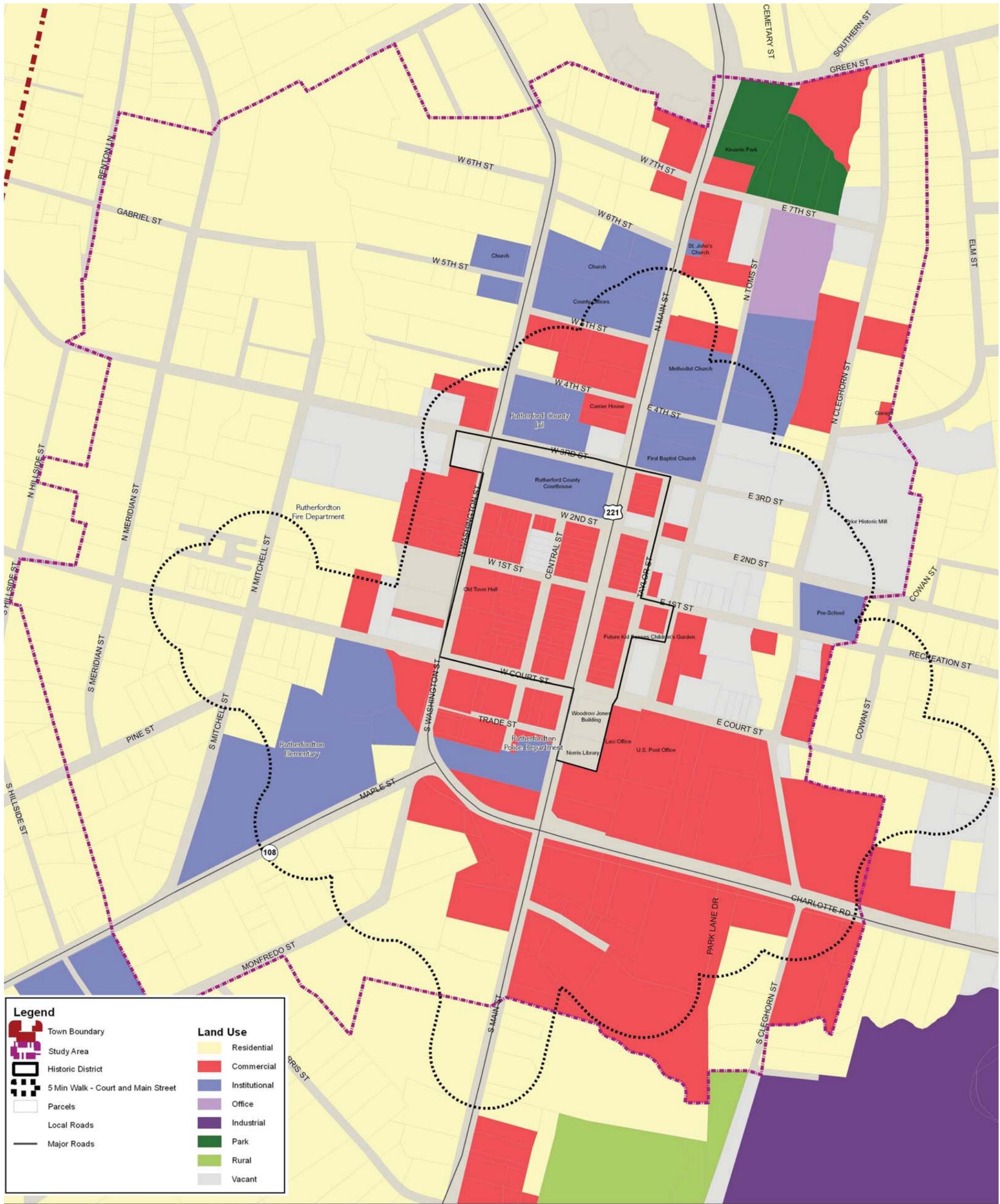
- River & Streams
- Local Roads
- Major Roads
- Parcels
- Historic District
- Town Boundary
- Study Area
- Buildings

LandDesign  
 222 North Graham St  
 Charlotte, NC 28202  
 Phone: 704.333.0125  
 Fax: 704.333.2222

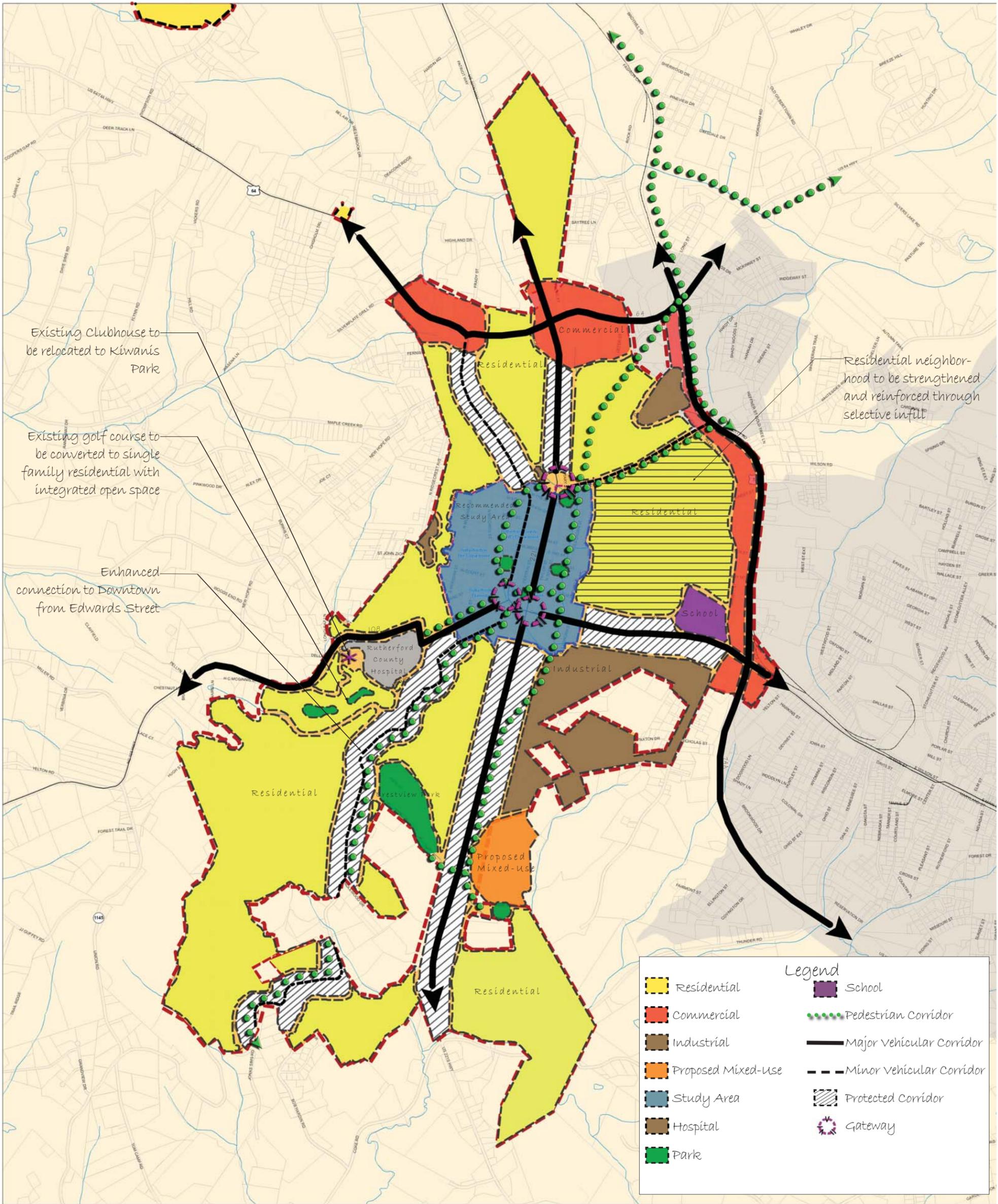
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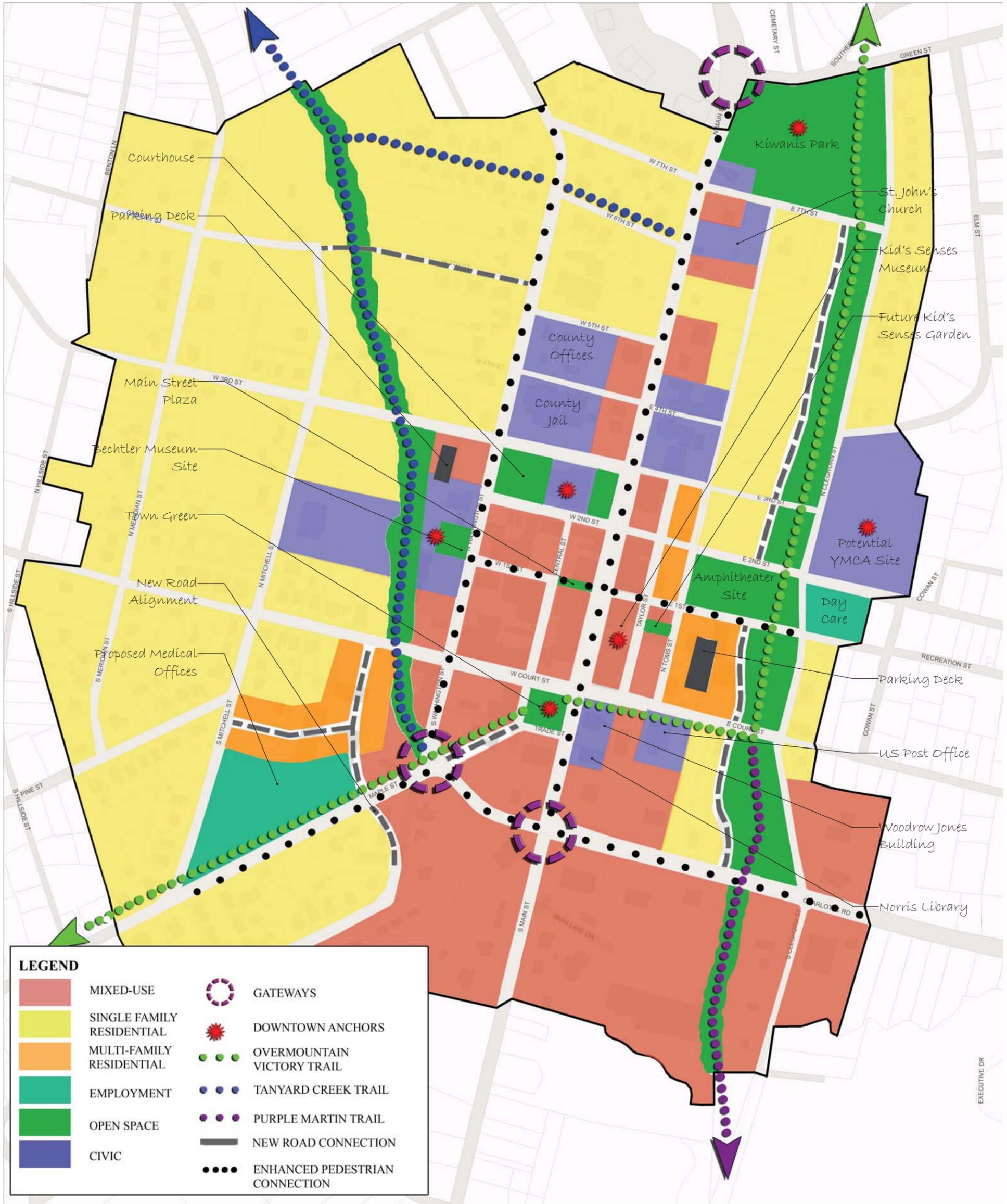


**STUDY AREA MAP**  
 TOWN OF RUTHERFORDTON, NC  
 FIGURE 6



**EXISTING LAND USE MAP**  
 TOWN OF RUTHERFORDTON, NC  
 FIGURE 7





# PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN

TOWN OF RUTHERFORDTON, NC

FIGURE 9



### AI.2 Open Space and Greenways

Rutherfordton is blessed with a plethora of natural resources; it is located near the Blue Ridge Mountain which offers viewsheds to gorgeous landscapes full of rolling hills and open spaces. The lush environment provides a picturesque transition into the quaint small-town setting. Prior to a visitor's arrival, the outskirts of the Town's boundaries are noticeable due to its low-density rural development, open pastures, and wooded, undeveloped land. Within the Study Area major portions of open spaces can be located, particularly along creek systems, plazas (i.e. Main Street Park), the Courthouse Green, and Kiwanis Park. Additionally, a number of heritage trails, such as the Overmountain Victory Trail and Purple Martin Trail, have been previously proposed to connect through the Study Area and are currently in the development phase.

The need for green space will create a variety of opportunities for the community. List below are benefits that additional open space will provide:

- Historically significant trails and parks (i.e. Kwanis Park) need to obtain space to harness potential and presence in the community
- Recreational opportunities such as biking and hiking can be encouraged if people are given the opportunity. Such a possibility is only feasible through open space acquisition.
- Greenways and, especially, heritage trails will connect various destinations within and outside the Town. It will also allow residents and visitors to access places with alternative modes of transportation (i.e. bikes). Ultimately, this will connect people back to their roots and history in a more exploratory manner and will additionally create opportunities for the Town to showcase its cultural assets.
- Providing open space within close proximity to downtown will provide a location for its residents and visitors to gather. Open space in highly trafficked areas such as downtown could host a variety of events and activities such as: fairs, festivals, marches, parades, musical performance, etc.

Open spaces play a vital role in the overall development of Rutherfordton's community. Open spaces can be utilized as gathering places and recreational areas and can define the character of the community simultaneously. The Town and the Study Area contain a variety of open spaces that perform different roles. The following issues were identified within the Study Area's open space.

- The current open space land use needs programming for specific purposes
- Some areas tend to be perceived as potentially unsafe such as Kiwanis Park
- Current open space needs to be utilized more effectively by neighboring parcels and developments.

As shown in the Master Plan (See Figure # 10), a trail on the original Overmountain Victory Trail is proposed to be built adjacent to Cleghorn Creek. The trail will



*Cleghorn Creek*



*Main Stret Park is currently underused mainly because of lack of visibility and relationship with surrounding uses.*



*Potential Greenway Site*

interconnect with residential land uses, a YMCA, and an amphitheater. A network of new roads will provide easy access and safety for trail users. A similar trail is proposed along Tanyard Creek which will integrate the outdoor sculpture garden and a small amphitheater located on the proposed Bechtler Museum campus.

*Recommendations:*

The overall open space vision is to create a network of trails, greenways, and parks; this can be accomplished through the improvement of existing parks and the development of future connectors.

A. Improve existing open space in the Town.

i. Enhance the Kiwanis Park:

- a. Increase capacity via expansion of the park's acreage. The Market Study indicated that an expansion of the park would greatly benefit the surrounding areas through property value and direct investment.
- b. Improve visitors' safety by creating viewsheds from residential areas to the park which will create a natural park-watch program. This will create a more visible and safer area.
- c. Improve amenities that could elevate the usage of the park such as picnic shelters, fountains, trails, restroom facilities, benches, trash receptacles, luminaries.

ii. Enhance the Main Street Park by creating greater access into the park from neighboring buildings. This will improve the level of activity within the park and will also integrate the land uses more effectively.

B. Create other types of open spaces to add to the variety and expand the open space system in downtown:

i. Create a Town Green in accordance with the proposed Plan (Figure #5)

- a. Coordinate with the National Park Service to create an outdoor monument/kiosk in the Town Green that will showcase the relevance of Overmountain Victory Trail in the Revolutionary War history and Gilbert Town's role.
- b. Create a physical monument in the Town Green at the terminus of Maple Street. This will create a focal point and anchor the roadway as well.

ii. Create an outdoor sculpture garden as part of the Bechtler Museum Campus.

iii. Create an amphitheater in accordance with the proposed plan to provide opportunities for outdoor performances.

C. Link various open spaces, existing and proposed, via a network of trails.

- i. Create a Heritage Trail Network map that identifies various trails and provides relevant information about the history and

heritage of the County and the Town. This effort is already undertaken by a formal committee whose feedback has been reflected in the proposed trail map shown in Figure #5.

- ii. Build Overmountain Victory Trail in accordance with the proposed trail map and commemorate its history and heritage.
- iii. Establish the Tanyard Creek Greenway and Purple Martin Trail in accordance with the Master Plan. Tanyard Creek Greenway needs to be integrated with the Bechtler Museum Campus' outdoor sculpture garden.

### AI.3 Circulation

The Town of Rutherfordton enjoys optimal connectivity via major roadways to metropolitan areas such as Charlotte, Asheville, and Spartanburg. Specifically, US 74 and US 64 provide east-west connectivity to major destinations from the southern and northern ends of the Town. US 221 and NC 108 provide access to downtown and the Study Area. State highway 108 connects downtown Rutherfordton to Columbus, Tryon and Saluda, whereas US 221 connects Spartanburg, SC to the recreational destinations of Boone and Blowing Rock. US 221 significantly impacts downtown and the Study Area by offering economic gains to businesses along the roadway corridor.

A significant number of downtown retailers rely on traffic from US 221; this roadway showcases Rutherfordton's assets as visitors drive along its corridor. In recent years there has been discussion regarding the development of a bypass to US 221. NCDOT is currently conducting preliminary studies for various alternative routes for the bypass. However, previous plans indicate the roadway may eventually evolve into an expressway. The bypass (and potential expressway) will impact the overall health of the Study Area, especially downtown, and must be taken into consideration.

The street network within the Study Area is strongly interconnected and reflects a preserved grid pattern that is considered to be of unparalleled stature in the Western North Carolina. Rutherfordton's street grid is compact with only one or two blocks located off of Main Street. The widths of the blocks augment in direct correlation with the distance from the downtown's core. This creates a problem as some disconnections among streets at the north-west portion of the Study Area. Specifically, 4th, 5th, and 6th Streets do not connect westwards, and East 7th Street does not protrude beyond Cleghorn Street. Enhancing these connections will improve connectivity to the outlying residential areas drastically. Amplifying this area will prove to be critical for vehicular and pedestrian mobility as well as for downtown's viability.

Although minor streets are not as fundamental in the development process of downtown, such roadways are imperative for circulation reasons. North Washington Street and Charlotte Road are minor arterials that provide access to and from the Study Area and feed local traffic to the surrounding arterial systems. Collector streets such as Court Street, 3rd Street, Meridian Street and Cleghorn Street are low-volume, low-speed streets that provide local access and mobility within the Study Area. Therefore, each provides limited connectivity to the outlying residential areas.

Pedestrian activity is also an issue that needs to be addressed. Non-vehicular circulation is a critical component of the Plan. Pedestrians and bicyclist should be able to travel safely and easily. Currently, sidewalks exist in patches which create confusion for pedestrians and are also unsafe travel patterns. The Town has ample space to improve this situation.



*Regional US 74 is one of the major east-west connectors near the Town.*



*Maple Street, or NC 108 is one of the Gateway streets into downtown.*



*Court Street (East) is one of the oldest streets in the downtown area.*



*Although Central Street is a local street, it actually functions as a back street.*

#### Recommendations:

Currently, the downtown utilizes a grid system that reaches to the outer limits of Rutherfordton's perimeter. Although the grid system is effective, there are some areas that could be further improved. For instance, parking spaces and structures for vehicles (See Figure # 13) are vital for a downtown in terms of accessibility for motorists (See Figure # 12).

#### A. Improve downtown's vehicular circulation:

- i. Improve the east-west connectivity by extending 7th Street to Cleghorn Street.
- ii. Extend Maple Street to the Town Green
- iii. Create a safer crossing at the intersection of South Washington Street and Maple Street as shown in the plan (See Figure # 10).
  - a. This intersection could also be designed as a round-a-bout.. Coordinate with North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to conduct a study regarding the feasibility of such improvement.
- iv. Create a parallel road along Cleghorn Creek to provide north-south connectivity.
- v. Extend West 5th Street westwards to connect to North Mitchell Street.
- vi. Realign Monfredo Street with the proposed roads in the Rutherfordton Elementary School site as shown in the plan. This will not only improve the intersection of South Washington Street and Maple Street, but will also enhance connectivity through the re-development of the Elementary School site.

#### B. Establish and coordinate a non-vehicular transit support system.

- i. Establish bicycle and pedestrian facilities to encourage convenient alternatives to vehicular means of transportation throughout the downtown area.
- ii. Extend the trail network beyond the downtown area to connect to surrounding neighborhoods.
- iii. Improve sidewalks in disrepair and encourage streetscape elements that enhance pedestrian experience.

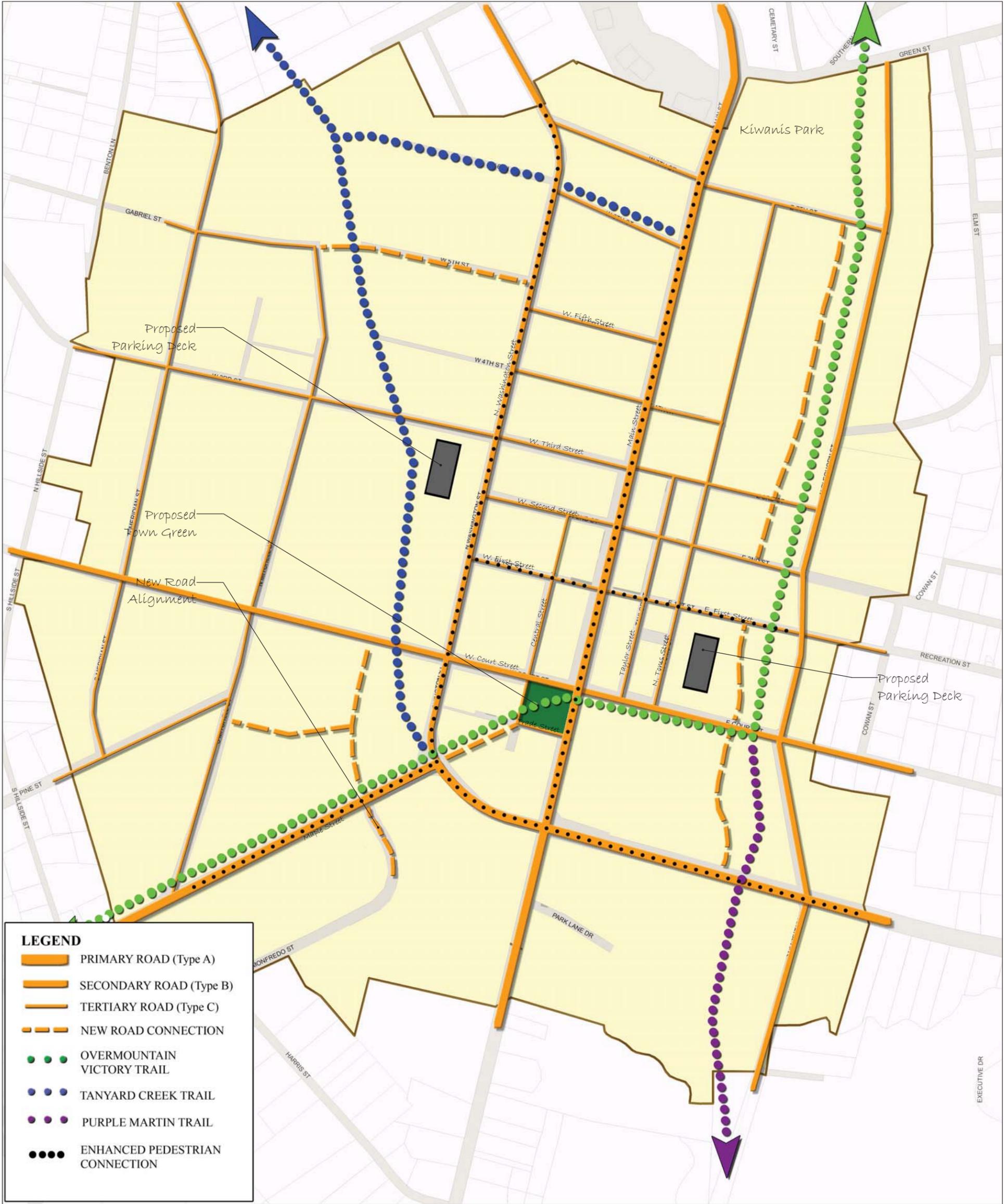
#### C. Establish parking alternatives

- i. Consider developing parking structures through a private-public venture at locations that serve the demand of private development as well as the needs of visitors.
  - a. Provide two locations for the parking structures, one in the block bounded by East Court Street, North Toms Street, and East 1st Street, and the other as part of the Bechtler Museum campus. These parking structures could be developed through joint ventures between the Town, County, and / or private entities.

#### D. Provide space for tour buses.

- a. Locate bus stops near the proposed town green (directly in front of

the town hall) and other core areas of downtown. Stops should include transit facilities such as shelter, benches, signage, etc. These stops should be easily recognized and signal that an important destination (in terms of cultural and historical significance) is nearby. An example of the stop is KidSenses which has attracted 60,000 visitors in the past 18 months.



# ROAD TYPOLOGY

TOWN OF RUTHERFORDTON, NC  
FIGURE II

### AI.4 Streets & Streetscapes

Compared to all of the streets within the Study Area, Main Street provides the most amount of amenities and character. However, the street, itself, lacks a sense of scale due to its width, presence of parking, and inadequate landscaping; other streets lack similar amenities and are further challenged by the topography such as North Washington Street, Cleghorn Street, Charlotte Road and Maple Street. All of these roadways portray signs of disinvestments and appear to be distressed areas. Some streets have evolved over time to create an interesting, but solvable problem. Central Street and Taylor Street are an excellent case-in-point. These streets have different roles for each side of the street; each of these two roads serve as the 'back' of the buildings on one side of the street, and are utilized for the 'front' of the buildings on the other side. Therefore, Central Street and Taylor Street both have mixed purposes as each is an ally and a primary roadway simultaneously.



Main Street Section



Typical Section of Side Streets



Main Street, wide cross-section along with lack of significant sized trees make Main Street appear out of scale.



Central Street, back of buildings facing Main Street on the left are right across the front of buildings facing Central Street.



Poor pedestrian conditions and lack of streetscape improvements mark many streets in downtown.



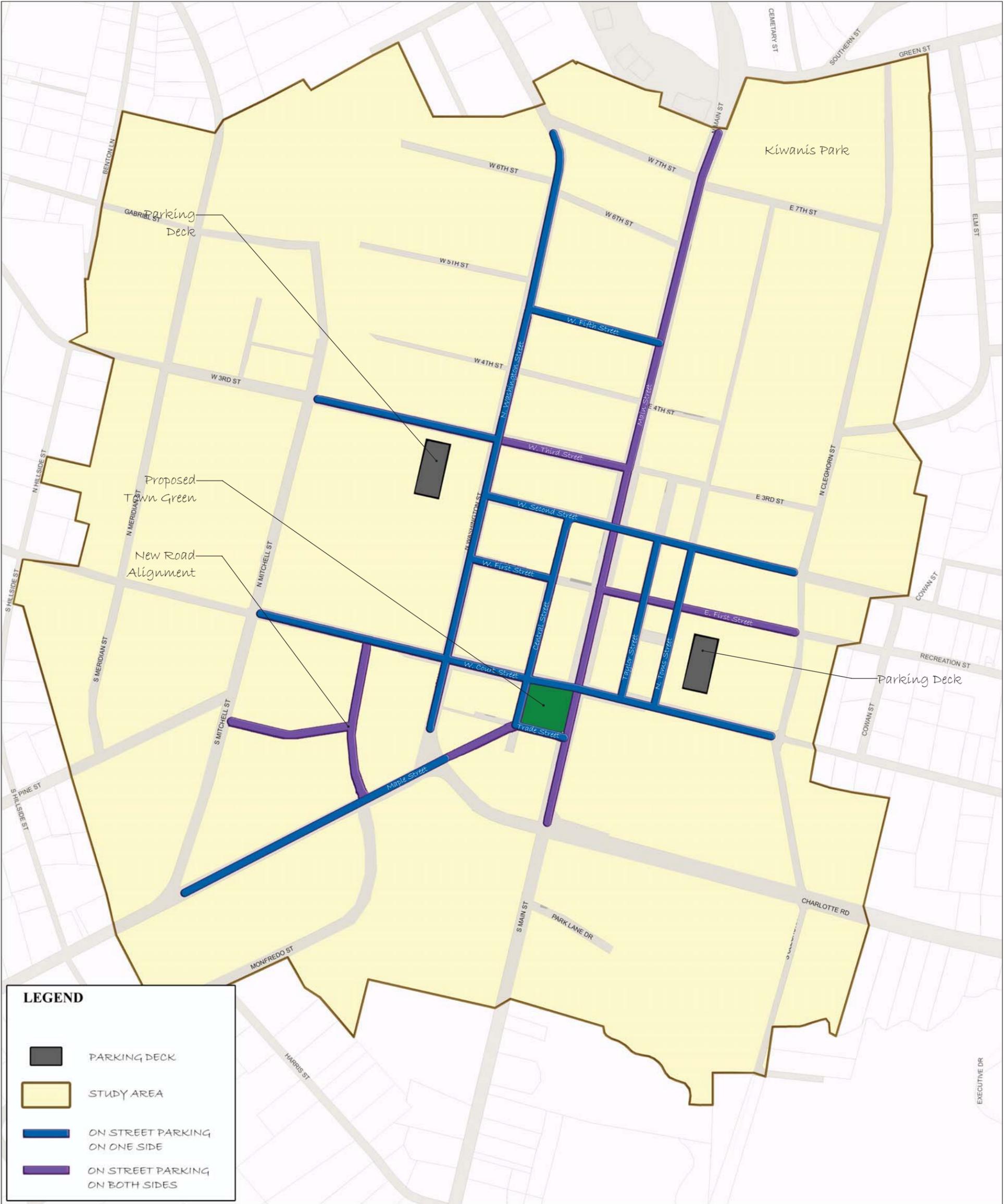
Washington Street near the potential Bechtler Museum campus lacks the streetscape to make it a comfortable pedestrian environment.

*Recommendations:*

Main Street is the essence of the downtown and needs to exhibit Rutherfordton's energy, appearance, and culture. A successful "Main Street" is well designed. It is defined by a strong building edge, enhanced by lush streetscapes, and is coordinated to enhance pedestrian activity; all of which create a unique and valuable experience.

- A. Improve existing and proposed streetscapes by conducting a detailed streetscape study to set forth design standards that will not only enhance the streetscape but also highlight the street hierarchy.
  - i. Based on the plan, adopt street design guidelines that will help in the implementation of public and private projects.
  - ii. Identify and complete a pilot project to demonstrate the Town's commitment to improving the streetscape and the downtown overall.
- B. Enhance the Main Street.
  - i. Install crosswalks at intersections as well as mid-block locations that to facilitating safe pedestrian movement and add variety to the streetscape. Distinctive paving materials should be applied at the intersections to differentiate such areas from rest of the street.
  - ii. Improve the streetscape with better-defined sidewalk zones which includes pedestrian and outdoor dining zones, planting verge, street trees, and buried utilities (See previous page for illustration).
  - iii. Plant street trees by converting some diagonal parking spaces into landscaped islands. This will not only soften the building edge but will also serve as methods to reduce speeding vehicles for the safety of pedestrians.
  - iv. Provide street furniture that will improve the street esthetics and accommodate pedestrians (e.g., lighting, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, newspaper racks, flower baskets, and street trees).
- C. Enhance other streets to include streetscape elements that, like Main Street, enhance pedestrian experience.
  - i. Improve the streetscape by adding street trees and landscaping to Central Street and Taylor Street. The streetscape should be applied to the side of the street that is utilized as the building's 'face'. The other side of the street, or 'back' of the opposite building, should be maintained for visual appeal by cleaning up the back façade and using appropriate hardscape from the curb to the building edge (i.e. KisSenses building facing Taylor Street).
- D. Establish gateways within the study area that will announce the downtown. Enhance downtown's gateways at the following locations by using landscaping, monuments, hardscapes, and way-finding signs.

- i. Charlotte Road. & Main Street
- ii. North Washington & Maple Street
- iii. Green Street & Main Street
- iv. Modify zoning ordinance to allow use of sidewalks for special purposes such as outdoor dining and merchandize displays.



# PARKING ASSIGNMENT

TOWN OF RUTHERFORDTON, NC  
 FIGURE 12

### AI.5 Development Design/Form

Great urban fabric results from thorough design and architecture. The key to creating a vibrant downtown in Rutherfordton is balancing the built and the natural environment; the formation of the design and development components should preserve Rutherfordton's history, maintain the area's small-town vibe, and promote activity in the area as well. There are a number of new buildings, such as Town Hall, that have established a precedence by which future designs should emulate. These buildings are true to the scale of the area and create a sense of place for passersby.



*Existing Built Form Along Main Street*



*Proposed Built Form Along Main Street*



*Firehouse Inn rear view*



*Existing Built Forms Along Maple Street*



*Proposed Built Forms Along Maple Street*

*Recommendations:*

Rutherfordton's identity will be characterized based upon the appearance of the community's built environment. Hence, future development of the downtown area needs to be consistent with established architecture. Built forms should be considerate of current scale and be comprised of similar building materials.

## A. Develop Downtown

- i. Focus near term public investments, both public and private, to the proposed Town Green area, particularly near the intersection of Main and Court.
  - ii. Promote building heights of two to four stories to support downtown's urban feel. Any new building also needs to respect and complement the scale of neighboring buildings.
  - iii. Create design guidelines for both public and private sector physical improvements to communicate the expectation of the Town to reinforce the character of the downtown. These guidelines will be supplemental to the existing zoning standards.
  - iv. Create a vibrant downtown through improved programming.
    - a. Partner with Isothermal Community College to shift planned events, such as performances and lectures to various locations within the downtown. Locations of specific interest are the proposed amphitheater, Town Green, and Bechtler museum campus.
    - b. Work with bicycle and running clubs to determine feasibility for annual 5K/10K triathlon events that will further promote the downtown and utilize the trail system effectively.
  - v. Encourage compact development to create continuous built forms along the streets. Such edges give streets a more conducive pedestrian scale. Additionally, off-street parking should be located behind buildings.
- B. When it becomes available, promote the re-development of the Rutherfordton Elementary School site in a compact fashion. Specifically, the buildings should border the street, parking should be located behind the buildings, and the edge should be articulated in such a way that respects the surrounding buildings architecture.
- C. Anchor the gateways at the following locations by articulating the built form through architecture and height:
- i. Charlotte Road. & Main Street
  - ii. North Washington & Maple Street

### AI.6 The Core

The Core of the Master Plan is bounded by Main Street, North Washington Street, Court Street, and Charlotte Road; this area consists of civic land uses such the Library and utilizes a limited amount of commercial buildings as well. The Core is the prime location for future development and redevelopment; future monetary allocations should be prioritized within the Core as it needs to improve its mixture of land uses to include residential and more open space.

Although Rutherfordton is identifiable on a regional scale, the downtown area lacks a noticeable center at the town-wide scale. The downtown needs to create an area that would be considered its nucleus this would most likely be defined by a built form. Not only would this enhance the identity of the Town, but it would also provide visitors and passersby with a method by which they could associate themselves with the fabric of the Town.

Downtowns are generally considered to be pedestrian friendly environments. To study this area further, a 'five-minute walk' was computed using a Global Information Systems (GIS) technology to determine if it was considered "walkable". (See Figure # 7) This study revealed that a five-minute walk was, indeed, the actual boundary of the Study Area as defined previously by the client. Although the 'five-minute walk' initially appears to encompass the entire Study Area, it proves to be misleading after further analysis. A critical aspect that is often overlooked from such an analysis is the influence of topography and the "ease" of walk. In this instance, the steep topography of the Study Area generally discourages walking. However, amenities such as tree-lined streets and benches can be provided to encourage pedestrians and other non-vehicular activity.

Another component of the core is the fundamental application of open space. The Plan proposes a well-defined downtown Rutherfordton anchored by a 'Town Green'; this is a multipurpose open space that provides a refuge at the heart of downtown while it lends stability to the surrounding buildings. As shown in the Plan, the Town Green is located at the intersection of Main Street and Court Street. It will celebrate the heritage of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail through monuments and kiosks. This location provides an immediate visual confirmation to visitors that solidifies Rutherfordton's core. Additionally, the mix of uses that is proposed in the redevelopment of this block will reveal 96,000 square feet of developable space, approximately 225 parking spaces, and add a significant tax base to the Town.

The Core will be further supported by a new Town Hall building that will visually enhance the Town Green and Main Street. To the west of the Town Green will be a two-story building that will have a variety of uses, including a 'green' grocery store, outdoor dining, and professional offices. Businesses



*Gently sloping Main Street comprises of one & two story brick facade commercial buildings from the turn of the century*



*Beautiful historic homes converted into a Bed & Breakfast*



*North Washington Street corridor has declined in recent past and is in need of revitalization*

that will be displaced by the creation of Town Green could be relocated to the buildings at the intersection of Maple Street and Washington Street. Many public related uses, such as an Economic Development Commission, Rutherford Town Revitalization, and Chamber of Commerce could be relocated in the buildings at the intersection of Charlotte Road and Main Street. Streetscape and pedestrian improvements at these intersections will provide easy access to various locations. A lively streetscape with buildings accessible by pedestrians defines gateways into the downtown; it is also a sign of a healthy and vibrant downtown community. Defining the center of downtown is crucial in concentrating resources and efforts towards preserving and enhancing the area. Consequently, creating a focal point of downtown has become a critical aspect of this study.

The Town Green will display a map of the entire Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail in the form of walkways. Metal plaques will describe the importance of each key location. The result will be an open museum. A larger and more significant kiosk will provide detailed information regarding Rutherfordton.



## AI.7 Implementation Program

This section outlines an implementation program and notes the action steps that need to be executed in short and long-term. This section will assist the Town with the implementation of the Plan. The Plan is to be implemented by a committee, known as 'Rutherfordton Future,' to oversee and ensure the following actions are executed.

### *Short-term actions:*

1. Establish the 'Rutherfordton Future' committee to implement the components of the Plan. The duties of this committee will include prioritizing the steps listed below and measuring progress throughout the process. The committee members will operate as the Plan's 'Champions'. Within the Rutherfordton Future committee, individuals may create sub-committees to assist the implementation of the Plan in its entirety or, simply, in smaller and more manageable portions.
2. Educate the community about the purpose of the Plan by disseminating the vision, various recommendations, and implementation strategies. Ultimately, this will garner support from various organizations and private entities. Examples of private entities could include private developers, preservation groups, private property owners, neighborhood organizations, investors, etc.
3. Conduct a streetscape plan study and develop streetscape design guidelines for improving visual appeal of streets, providing a sense of scale, and activating the streets by providing pedestrian amenities.
4. Acquire/assemble land at key locations:
  - Sites for relocation of Town maintenance facilities and County offices
  - Town Green
  - Rutherford County History and Heritage Center
  - Rutherfordton Elementary School
  - Overmountain Victory Trail between Green Street and W Court Street
  - Parking deck at the intersection of 3rd Street and N Washington Street
  - Kiwanis Park extension towards N Cleghorn Street\*
5. Establish a formal committee to complete the Heritage Trail Map.
6. Update current codes and regulations to address:
  - Establish corridor overlays as depicted in the Land Use Concept Map
  - Allow multi-family residential, such as condos and attached products within the downtown area
  - Allow outdoor dining and allow merchandise display along store fronts and sidewalks
  - Promote building height of 2 to 4 stories
7. Enhance Kiwanis Park through expansion, better design, effective programming, and improved amenities to ensure a safer and more enjoyable space. Single family residential development overlooking the park will not only make the park safer but will also provide redevelopment opportunities within walking distance from the heart of the downtown. \*
8. Improve Main Street Park by providing openings from adjacent buildings into the Park. The Park can also be improved by softening the hardscape with the use of plants, fountains, etc. An initial project could include the installation of a "bulb out" for the tree planting, street trees in bulb out,

and specialty pavers. Eventually, the following action items need to be addressed as well:

- Install street trees by converting some diagonal parking spaces into landscaped islands.
- Create a coordinated system of crosswalks at intersections as well as mid-block locations to facilitate safe pedestrian movement.
- Improve street aesthetics and fixtures (i.e. benches).

*Long-term actions:*

1. Create development design guidelines to communicate the expectations of the Town to various property owners and private developers.
2. Formally establish the identity of the Town and market it:
  - Create a brand for the Town/downtown that can be communicated through signage.
  - Design and implement a way-finding system that reinforces the identity while it orients and guides the visitors through the Town. The system can also identify key destinations in the process
  - Enhance the local tourism industry as a key component of the local economy. Market the Town and downtown as key destinations within the region
3. Protect the historic assets within the downtown. Establish a local historic district if warranted and supported by the community,
4. Locate or relocate civic uses in appropriate locations on or adjacent to Main Street. Relocate buildings that are instrumental to the success of the Plan and its elements. These buildings include the Genealogical Society, the Economic Development Commission, and an office for the Tourism Development Authority.
5. Support existing and attract or create new destination uses and anchors that will enhance the visitors' and residents' experiences. Examples of anchor destinations include:
  - Rutherford County History and Heritage Center
  - YMCA
  - Town Green
  - Amphitheater
  - Improvements to Kiwanis Park
6. Create mixed use redevelopment opportunities around the new town green which will be anchored by civic uses, specialty grocers, restaurants, and offices.\*
7. Determine the long-term feasibility of maintaining the municipal golf course by conducting a study. If the findings of the study suggest a need to redevelop the property for another use or uses, create a preliminary Master Plan to define a basic set of expectation of the future use of the property. Invite developers by Issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to develop the property based on the principals outlined in the Master Plan.\*
8. Maximize the investment and use of the existing community clubhouse:
  - Actively program the building and the site in its current location to improve usage.
  - Include the club house site in the Master Plan to explore potential site improvements (should the municipal golf course redevelop in the future for another use)

- Conduct studies to discuss the relocation of the clubhouse to a more visible and accessible location
9. Execute transportation improvements:
    - Coordinate with NCDOT to improve the Maple Street and North Washington Street intersection
    - Realign Monfredo Street
    - Extend Maple Street to Town Green
    - Extend 5th Street to Main Street
    - Extend 7th Street to Cleghorn Street
    - Create new road along Cleghorn Creek
  10. Establish additional parking through public-private ventures. These parking locations should satisfy the demand of private development as well as the needs of the visitors. Two locations are identified in the plan:
    - The block bounded by East Court Street, North Toms Street, and East 1st Street. Residential development (townhomes and/or stacked-flat condominiums) wrapping four sides of the parking deck would capture views of amphitheatre and greenway and will create redevelopment opportunities in the east side of the downtown. \*
    - As part of Rutherford County / Bechtler Heritage Campus Plan.
  11. Construct trails and greenways in accordance with the Master Plan to create the interconnected system that will link various key destinations (existing and potential) within and outside of the Town.
  12. Create a Town Green in front of the Woodrow Jones building.
  13. Coordinate with the National Park Service to create an outdoor monument/ kiosk in the Town Green to showcase the importance of the Overmountain Victory Trail in the Revolutionary War.
  14. Coordinate with the County to discuss potential uses of the existing Rutherfordton Elementary School site. Should the Town acquire this site, create a preliminary Master Plan to define a basic set of expectations for the future use of the property. Market Study has predicted a mix of for-sale and rental housing and medical office space as good marketable uses at this location. \*

It is important to remember that despite the Champions efforts, actions suggested in the implementation section will not be visible immediately. Nevertheless, a commitment to change in accordance with the Plan will eventually lead to a realization of the vision in due time.

\*Denotes a catalyst project in Market Study