

**Action Requested/Required:**

- ☒ Vote/Action Requested
☐ Discussion or Presentation Only
☐ Public Hearing
Report Date: _____
Hearing Date: _____
Voting Date: _____

Department: Community Development **Presenter(s) & Title:** Bethany Watson
City Engineer

Agenda Item Title:

Discussion and Possible Action on approval of the Downtown Master Plan

Summary:

Approval of the Downtown Master Plan as presented by Modern Mobility Partners

Budget Implications:

Budgeted? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Total Cost of Project: _____ Check if Estimated ☐

Fund Source: General Fund ☐ Water & Sewer ☐ Sales Tax ☐ Other: _____

Staff Recommendations:

Staff recommends approval of the Downtown Master Plan

Reviews:

Has this been reviewed by Management and Legal Counsel, if required? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Attachments:

Canton Downtown Master Plan

CANTON



DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

AUGUST 2024





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INTRODUCTION



The vision and goals of this plan were developed based on the Transportation Master Plan (2023). This plan also integrates the eight Canton Tenets that guide the city's decision-making and governance processes.

Image Source: Modern Mobility Partners, 2023

Plan Overview

In May 2023, the City of Canton and the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) began the development of the Canton Downtown Master Plan (DMP). This plan is intended to:

- Identify a comprehensive package of transportation improvement projects at an engineering concept level.
- Provide guidance on the continued development and preservation of Canton's Downtown while creating economic development opportunities.
- Develop strategies to help the city gain national recognition for their downtown and main street.

The study area for the DMP is shown on the map to the right. This boundary is intended to guide this plan's analyses and recommendations, but by no means restricts the content of this plan. Some recommendations and data points regarding surrounding neighborhoods, developments, or other parts of the City may impact Downtown and vice versa.

The study focuses on movement to and throughout Downtown's historic center and commercial corridors, Main Street and North Street, as well as the properties and roadways immediately surrounding those streets.



Previous Plans and Studies

Notably, this DMP was first recommended in the 2023 Transportation Master Plan (TMP). The bounds of this TMP recommendation, TMP-1, are shown in the map to the right. The recommendation broadly called for reconfiguration of Main and North Streets in downtown to improve vehicular traffic and pedestrian flow. The project description included a list of potential strategies that could be implemented here, such as flex zones along the curbsides and conversion of the streets to two-way roadways.

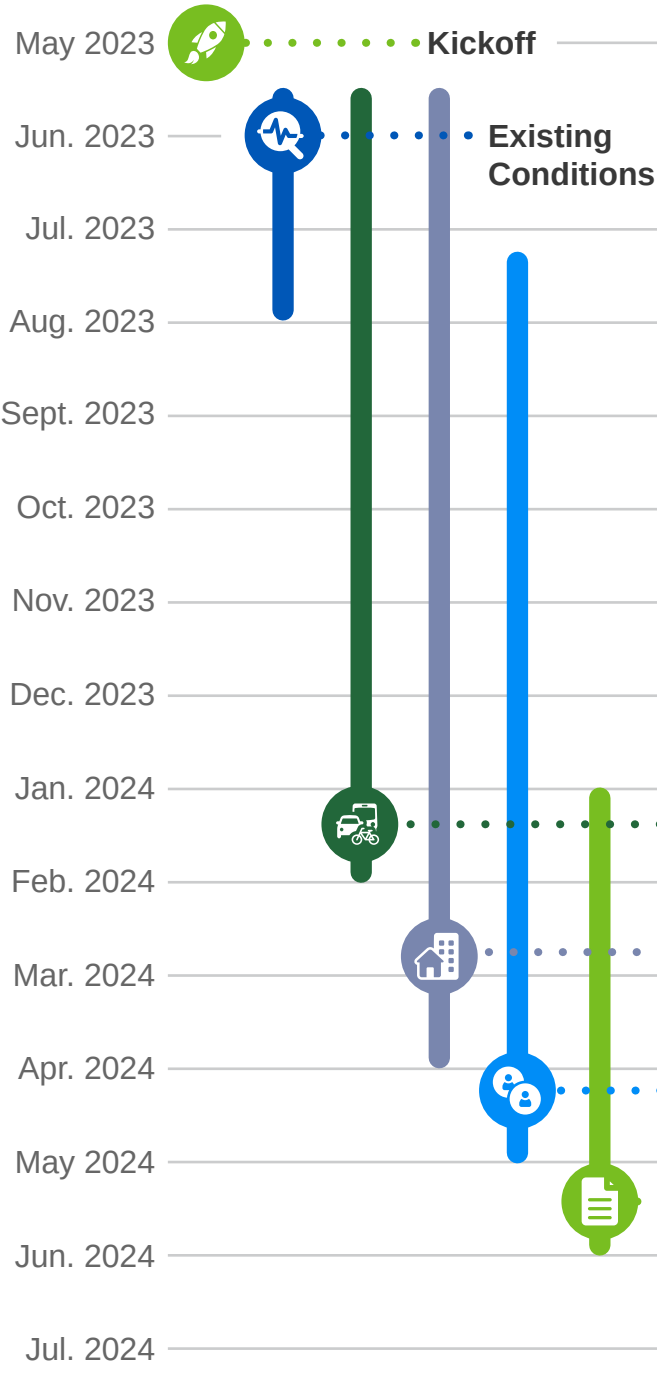
The DMP builds upon this TMP recommendation, as well as other plans' recommendations for the Downtown area, to provide a holistic analysis and set of recommendations for improving the core of the City. Other studies and plans that were reviewed to understand existing efforts that the City of Canton has made for development and capital improvements within the Downtown area include:

- 1. Canton Transportation Master Plan (2023)
- 2. Cherokee Moves: Cherokee County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2022)
- 3. Canton Housing Needs Assessment and Market Study (2020)
- 4. Canton 2040 Comprehensive Plan (2019)
- 5. CantonForward Livable Centers Initiative (2016)
- 6. City of Canton Residential Market Analysis (2016)



Plan Timeline

The timeline for the development of the DMP is shown below. Public and stakeholder engagement occurred throughout the entirety of the planning process, even as the plan document was being produced.



Vision & Goals

The Canton DMP's vision and goals are based on the vision and goals of the TMP. In the first and second meetings for the DMP steering committee, they reviewed the TMP vision and goals and tailored them to reflect their desired outcomes for this plan. The DMP's vision statement is shown in the purple box below.

Vision Statement

Provide the residents, business owners, and visitors of Downtown Canton, with a plan that:

- 1. Outlines safe access and enhanced connectivity to neighborhoods, recreation facilities, local businesses, and natural resources;*
- 2. Envisions future transportation solutions that ensure sustainability and implementable action steps; and*
- 3. Creates a vibrant, mixed-use Downtown celebrating the city's small-town charm and character.*

Plan Goals

The DMP has goals tailored to its two core focus areas: **Transportation and Master Planning**. These goals are listed on this page.

Transportation Goals

Connectivity & Accessibility

1. **Infill** and **improve** sidewalk connections
2. **Increase** sidewalk capacity
3. **Explore** sustainable practices

Wayfinding

1. **Identify** potential wayfinding locations

Multi-Modal Commute Options

1. **Provide** more transportation and commute options
2. **Identify** potential bike facility locations

Roadway Improvements & Safety

1. **Identify** road network improvements
2. **Enhance** roadway safety using technology solutions
3. **Review** and **evaluate** downtown traffic adjustments
4. **Provide** design solutions to reduce vehicular speeds
5. **Incorporate** crime prevention design strategies

Community Engagement

1. **Improve** communication channels and practices
2. **Provide** regular engagement opportunities

Master Planning Goals

Downtown Character

1. **Preserve** the hometown feel and charm
2. **Enhance** streetscapes

Land Use

1. **Support** small and independent and local businesses
2. **Provide** a range of land use options as infill and redevelopment opportunities

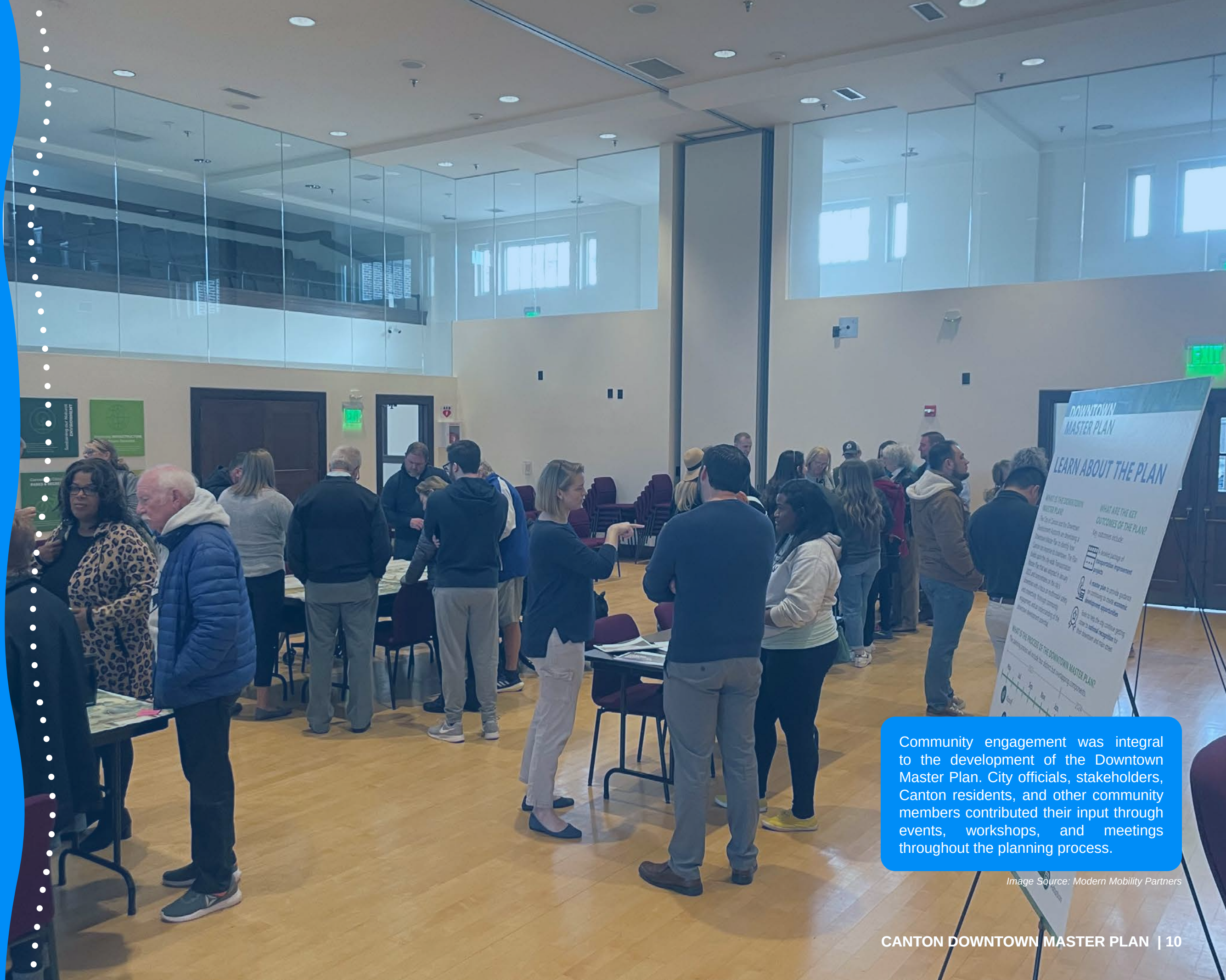
Public Space and Connections

1. **Provide** a variety of active and passive public places
2. **Enhance** pedestrian connectivity



Canton City Hall
Source: Modern Mobility Partners, 2022

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Community engagement was integral to the development of the Downtown Master Plan. City officials, stakeholders, Canton residents, and other community members contributed their input through events, workshops, and meetings throughout the planning process.

Image Source: Modern Mobility Partners

Engagement Overview

Stakeholders and community members were engaged during the development of the DMP. After a year of plan development, the DMP team...

-  met with a steering committee of **20+** stakeholders three times,
-  engaged over **100** businesses, residents, and community members across **5** in-person engagement events,
-  and received over **100** responses to a **27**-question survey.



Design Charette
Image Source: City of Canton Facebook, 2024

Steering Committee

The steering committee met three times: August 2, and December 6, 2023, and March 7, 2024.

In the first meeting, the committee reviewed existing conditions and answered questions on what they wanted to **preserve, change, create, and connect** in Downtown Canton. Key feedback included:

- Preserve** Canton's character and historic charm, as well as public and community green spaces Downtown.
- Change** on-street parking to more flexible or active uses, curb appeal along North Street, and slowing down traffic to make Downtown more pedestrian-friendly.
- Create** placemaking, opportunities for pedestrians and visitors to interact with businesses, and more greenspace.
- Connect** neighborhoods to Downtown.

In December, the committee finalized the plan's vision and goals, discussed project recommendations, and prepared for the design charrette.

In March, the committee reviewed the final scenarios as well as the plan's policy recommendations and draft development concepts.

Tour of Businesses

Nine businesses participated in the Tour of Businesses, where one-on-one interviews included restaurants, nonprofit organizations, commercial developers, and retail establishments. Interviews were conducted in person, virtually, and via email.

Businesses were asked about how they operate, why they chose to locate in downtown, if they get a lot of foot traffic, if they were aware of customers or employees having issues with parking or transportation, challenges the business may face regarding connection to Downtown, short- and long-term goals, and recommendations for what they would like to see changed or preserved downtown.

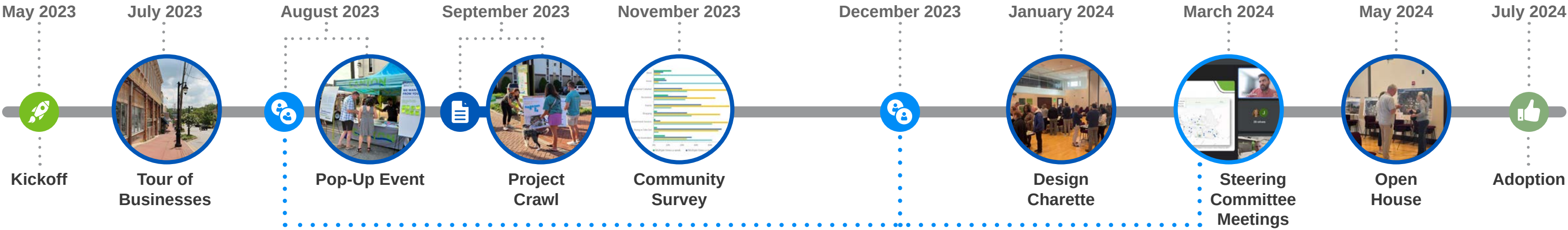
Business owners liked the **visibility, walkability, and proximity** to other businesses and City of Canton Government and amenities like parks that being located Downtown affords them. Businesses receive limited "walk-in" traffic, and **signage updates and better connectivity** between the Mill and Downtown could increase pedestrian traffic to businesses. Most businesses downtown have shared or public parking, and events and construction cause disruptions for patrons and employees. Business owners wished for more community events, but to make sure that

events do not disconnect businesses from the rest of Downtown. Business owners wanted to preserve Downtown's **walkability, historic architecture and charm**, and public space and events. They wanted older infrastructure to be renovated; investment in streetscapes, parks, and public art; and encourage walkability and ensure space for all modes to move safely through Downtown.



Businesses on E Main Street
Source: Modern Mobility Partners, 2023

Engagement Timeline



Public Engagement Activities

The first engagement event open to the public was a **Community Pop-Up Event** during the *Georgia Downtown Conference* on August 22, 2023. Participants were able to learn about the plan, point out areas of interest and improvement in Downtown, and comment on Downtown’s biggest successes and ongoing challenges.

The **Project Crawl** was the second engagement event open to the public, held on September 28, 2023, at Cannon Park in Downtown. Four stations were set up in the park, asking community members what they wished to **preserve, change, create, and connect** in Downtown.

An online **Community Survey** was made available to the public from September to November 2023. Respondents were asked about how often they visit Downtown, for what purposes they visit, what transportation mode they take downtown, which activities they engage in, and what changes they would like to see in Downtown.



Pop-Up Event at the Georgia Downtown Conference



Project Crawl

The **Design Charette Open House** was held on January 10, 2024 after a day-long design workshop. The design workshop included stations for *Roadway Reconfiguration, Active Transportation and Greenspace, and Infill and Redevelopment Opportunities*. The subsequent open house included stations for community members to give feedback on potential project alternatives specific to each workshop station. In addition, there were two visual preference boards where community members could indicate their visual preferences and share comments on street typologies, sidewalk and curb configuration, street furniture, public spaces, public art, and wayfinding signage.

The **Open House** was the final community engagement event, held on May 9, 2024. Attendees were able to review a series of boards with plan recommendations and ask the consultant team questions about the plan. Six boards were set up in the room, which included information such engineering concept of the layout of all transportation and roadway recommendations, West Main Street at North Street realignment, and East Main at North Street roundabout; a rendering of the proposed improvements at East Main Street and Church Street; a comparison of existing conditions to the rendered improvements at East Main Street and Church Street; and a rendering layout of downtown, including all transportation, roadway, and development improvements.

Community Pop-Up Event

Participants suggested sites for redevelopment, areas of major safety concerns, and desires for new businesses Downtown.

Attendees: 10-15

Downton Successes: events, public space, and general community atmosphere

Downtown Challenges: parking, traffic, diversity of businesses Downtown, and lack of nightlife

Project Crawl

Participants suggested what they wanted to preserve, change, create or connect in Downtown.

Attendees: 20+

Preserve: walkability, connectivity, historic charm, public events

Change: better wayfinding, safer sidewalks, welcoming storefronts

Create: economic development, safer streets

Connect: green spaces, bike paths, new storefronts

Community Survey

Community members were asked about how they get to Downtown, what they like to do Downtown, and what they would like to see improved.

Participants: 100+

People usually walk or drive to Downtown

Want to see more dining, shopping, and public space

Many people feel that Downtown Canton feels like a community

Design Charette Open House

An open house was held after a day-long design workshop held by the DMP team. Community members could review and comment on draft recommendations regarding on Roadways, Active Transportation and Greenspace, and Redevelopment.

Attendees: 60+

Roadways: reconfigure intersections, reimagine parking, keep existing flow of traffic

Greenspace: more public art, connect existing pedestrian and greenspaces

Redevelopment: maintain historic buildings, infill

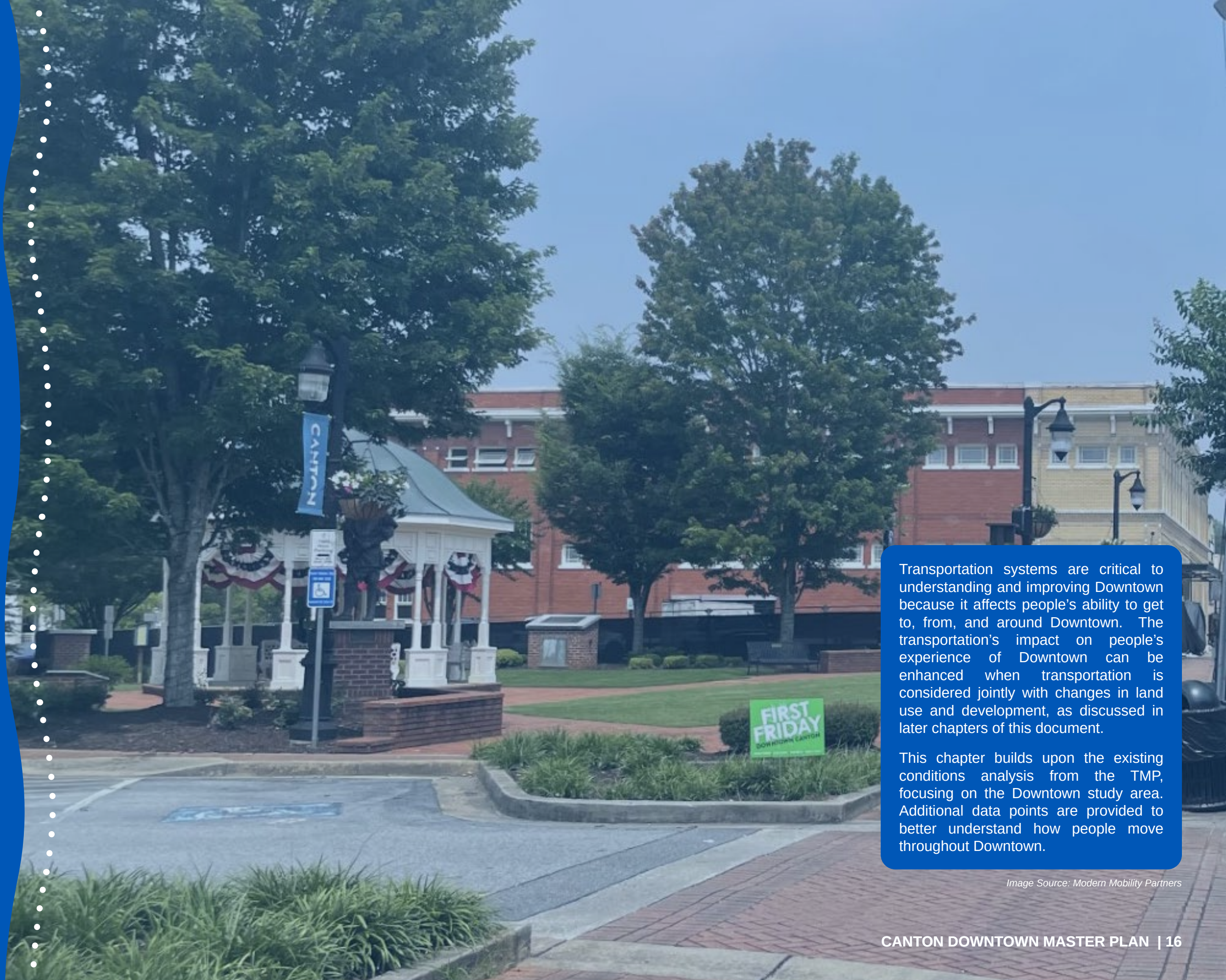
Open House

Attendees were able to view draft engineering concepts and renderings of plan recommendations.

Attendees: 20+

Recommendations presented included the Main Street road diet, intersection redesigns, and potential development concepts.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS



Transportation systems are critical to understanding and improving Downtown because it affects people's ability to get to, from, and around Downtown. The transportation's impact on people's experience of Downtown can be enhanced when transportation is considered jointly with changes in land use and development, as discussed in later chapters of this document.

This chapter builds upon the existing conditions analysis from the TMP, focusing on the Downtown study area. Additional data points are provided to better understand how people move throughout Downtown.

Image Source: Modern Mobility Partners

Previous Plans' Recommendations

The map to the right shows transportation projects in the downtown area that come from other plans and studies that have already been adopted prior to the conception of the DMP. The projects shown are sponsored by the City of Canton and are all short-term projects slated to be implemented within the next ten years. The following five projects have entered the design or implementation phases:

- 1 Downtown Vehicle and Pedestrian Improvements:** Convert intersections to roundabouts or make other safety and operational improvements
- 2 West Main Pedestrian Bridge:** Bicycle and pedestrian bridge to connect Downtown to the Mill on Etowah, eliminating the need for vulnerable road users to cross Railroad Street and the rail line
- 3 West Main Street Pedestrian Corridor:** Convert W. Main Street to one way westbound with angled parking and widened sidewalks
- 4 North Street Restriping:** Convert parallel parking to angled parking and add westbound left turn lane
- 5 Etowah River Pedestrian Bridge:** Connect the planned bicycle and pedestrian trails on both sides of the Etowah River (TMP-33)
- 6 Etowah River Trail Extension:** Bicycle and pedestrian trail to connect Harmon Park and Etowah River Park (TMP-30)

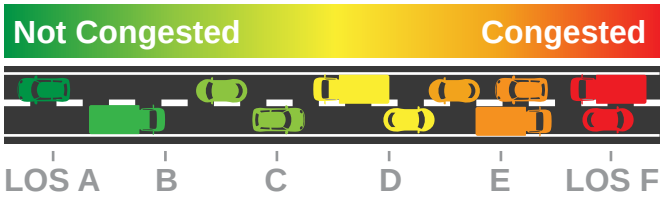


Traffic Patterns and Congestion

The primary arterial roadways that serve Downtown Canton include Waleska Street, North Street, East Main Street, and West Marietta Street. Additional local roads offer a small but established grid network in Downtown Canton.

In May 2023, vehicle (traffic) counts were collected using turning movement counters across 12 Downtown intersections. From these counts, Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) values were calculated for Downtown’s streets, as shown in the map to the right. AADT is highest on North Street, Waleska Street, East Main Street, and East Marietta Street.

Level of Service (LOS) compares a given roadway segment’s traffic volumes to its traffic capacity. An LOS of A indicates free flow traffic whereas an LOS of F indicates congested roadways with little movement.



Roadway congestion is low in Downtown Canton, echoing findings from the TMP. A few Downtown road segments operate at LOS B or C. Only two road segments operate at a failing capacity, LOS F, in Downtown for only a short time in the afternoons:

- A small segment of West Main Street just before Downtown’s only traffic signal.
- A segment of Railroad Street just before its junction with Waleska Street.

Overall, most road segments operate at LOS A, even during peak periods, indicating low traffic congestion Downtown.



Roadway Safety

Between 2018 and 2022, there were 93 crashes in the study area, although none of these crashes resulted in traffic-related fatalities.

The highest-crash intersections, shown in the map to the right, were:

- 1 Waleska Street & Railroad Street: 29 crashes
- 2 Main Street & Church Street: 11 crashes
- 3 North Street & Cannon Park northbound parking lot: 7 crashes

Comparing crashes to their relative traffic volume can provide clues regarding the risk of crashes for each trip on that road segment. Intersections that have the highest crashes per 1,000 trips include:

- Waleska Street & Railroad Street: 3.73
- W Main Street & Church Street: 2.97
- Archer Street & Academy Street: 2.40
- Archer Street & Church Street: 2.10
- E Main Street & Dupree Street: 1.56

Analyzing crashes by traffic volume highlights safety concerns on Archer Street that are not otherwise apparent by the number of crashes alone. Relative to the number of vehicle trips that occur on Archer Street, there is a high crash risk at the intersections of Church Street and Academy Street (note that an all-way stop was implemented at Archer and Academy as of 2022). Similarly, examining the number of crashes per 1,000 vehicle trips indicates that E Main Street and Dupree Street have a concerning crash rate. The intersections of Waleska and Railroad Streets and W Main and Church Streets pose the most significant safety concerns Downtown.



Pedestrian Access and Activity

Pedestrian counts were collected at most intersections within the study area. Counts were collected during morning and afternoon peak periods (6 AM to 9 AM and 3 PM to 6 PM, respectively) in May 2023. Pedestrian activity is greatest in the afternoon. Pedestrian activity is greatest at E Marietta Street and E Main Street, Elizabeth Street and E Main Street, Elizabeth Street and Archer Street, and Lee Street and North Street.

Most streets in Downtown have sidewalks. There are gaps in the sidewalk network, especially in residential areas with limited through-traffic. Sidewalk gaps in residential areas may prohibit residents from safely walking to Downtown, potentially limiting pedestrian access and decreasing overall foot traffic to businesses.

Some sidewalks at roadway intersections do not meet standards set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and need to be upgraded with curb ramps or raised crosswalks. However, intersections at the convergence points of North Street, Main Street, and Waleska Street have detectable warning and appear to be up to ADA standards. Any roadway improvements should ensure compliance with ADA and improve access for people of all abilities to get around and enjoy Downtown.



Sidewalk at the intersection of North and Dupree Streets that is broken and does not have an ADA-accessible curb cut.
Image Source: Modern Mobility Partners, 2022



Bicycle Access and Activity

Bicycle counts were collected similarly to pedestrian counts. Bicyclist activity is minimal, but there is activity on Academy Street and Waleska Street.

There are no existing bicycle-only facilities in Canton, but there are some recommended routes for cyclists along North Street, Main Street, Marietta Street, and Waleska Street based on road quality and traffic volume. There are existing multi-use trails in Heritage Park, just north of the study area, and previous plan proposed multiuse trails along the west side of the Etowah River, south of Heritage Park. However, these trails do not connect to or go through Downtown. The Canton TMP identified multiple planned bicycle and pedestrian routes along North Street and near the proposed Mill on Etowah development.

Canton's topography makes cycling and walking more challenging, as there are hilly streets throughout Downtown.



Transit Services

Cherokee Area Transit System (CATS) provides fixed-route bus transit services via two routes across the city. In Downtown, Route 1 operates along North Street, with 628 total passenger trips in June 2022. Route 2 operates along E Marietta Street and had 328 total passenger trips in June 2022. The two bus routes mostly serve central Canton and connect to major commercial centers and downtown. There is one bus shelter in the study area at the Brown Park bus stop, which is served by both fixed routes. There are two other bus stops in the study area both of which are on North Street and are served by Route 1. Neither of these stops have a bus shelter, but there is a bench at the stop near the intersection of North and Dupree Streets.

CATS also offers paratransit and vanpool to many popular destinations within Cherokee County. These services are on-demand options for riders who may want or need to be picked up from locations not serviced by fixed routes. On-demand ride services must be scheduled in advance. All CATS services operate Monday through Friday from 8AM to 4PM.



Engineering Concept

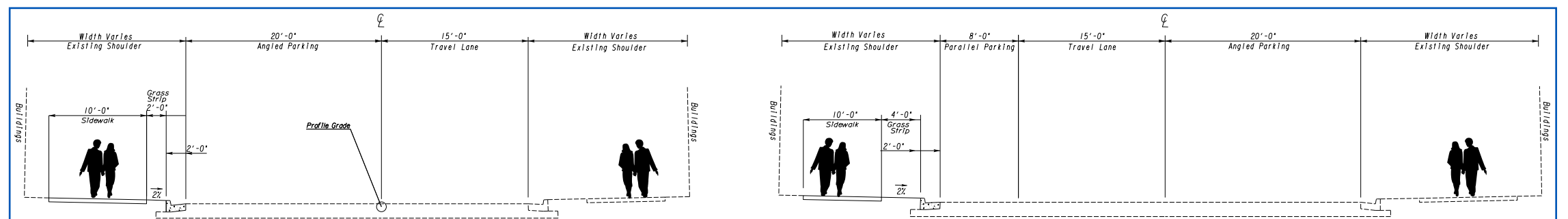
After thorough transportation analysis and receipt of feedback from stakeholders and the public, the DMP team developed a set of transportation recommendations for this plan. The process for developing these recommendations is briefly referenced in the Community Engagement chapter and given more detail in the Implementation chapter of this plan.

When developing these recommendations, the DMP team worked with City of Canton staff to identify transportation solutions that address the concerns and needs identified in the Existing Conditions analysis (described in earlier pages of this chapter) and by community members and stakeholders during community engagement.

From these recommendations, a detailed engineering concept was developed for Downtown, shown to the right. Some of the improvements include:

- A roundabout at the eastern terminus of North Street
- A redesigned intersection where North, Main, and Waleska Streets converge
- Wider sidewalks and increased pedestrian right of way
- Signalized intersection at Waleska and Railroad Streets
- Reconfigured parking and on-street flex spaces
- More public space

More details about all transportation recommendations, as well as redevelopment improvements, are included in the Implementation chapter of this plan.



LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN

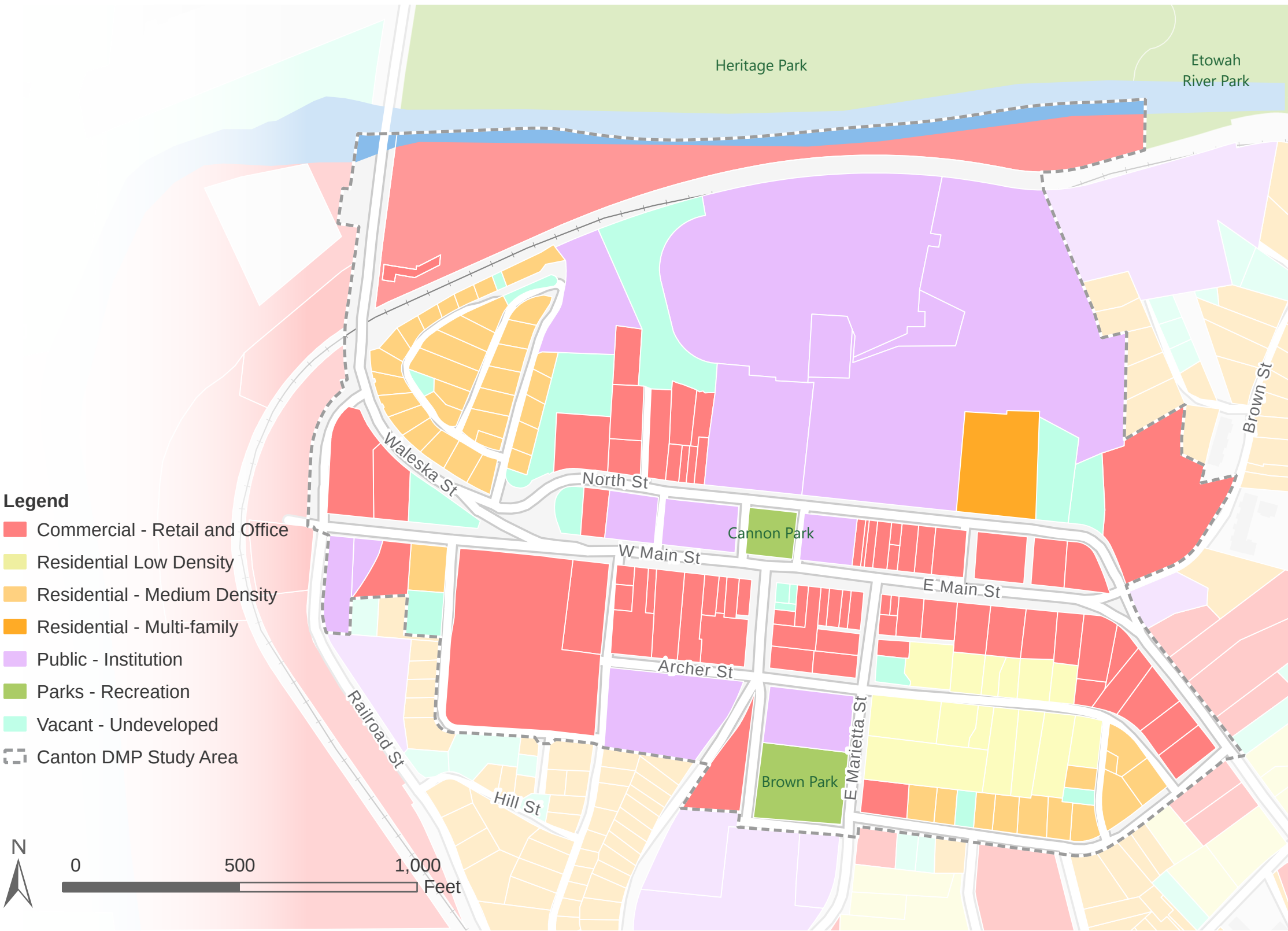
Land use and urban design are the essential fabric of Downtown. Land use, or the type of properties available, affect the activities people can take part in when visiting Downtown. Urban design, or the style of the physical buildings and other features Downtown, affect the comfortability and aesthetics of the community.

The combination of both land use and urban design is important for a vibrant Downtown where people can work, live, shop, and enjoy the City, while celebrating Downtown's historic features and fostering a sense of community identity.

Image Source:: City of Canton

Zoning

Nearly all the land in Downtown Canton is currently zoned as part of the Central Business District (CBD), which allows for a mix of retail, office, entertainment, residential, and civil uses. There is a small section on the southeast quadrant of the study area zoned for Single Family Residential (R4) and the stretch north of the railroad is zoned for General Commercial. Future zoning maintains the CBD/urban core areas, while converting existing residential to a historic neighborhood and the northern General Commercial zone to a natural area. Most existing land uses in Downtown Canton are Commercial – Retail and Office use (39.76%) and Public – Institutional use (35.29%). Remaining parcels are Residential (16.10%), Vacant (6.82%), or Parks (2.02%). Residential units are mostly low- to medium-density, and there is limited presence of multifamily residential parcels. There are many parcels in the CBD that are publicly owned, either by the county or the city. Some of these parcels are vacant or underdeveloped and provide opportunities for future development.



Development Potential

Different properties within Downtown were assessed to determine potential sites for development or redevelopment.

Publicly-owned properties and properties owned by the DDA are indicated in the map to the right. The City of Canton has much more influence and reduced costs to redevelop sites that it owns. If the right opportunity arises, the City could also partner with Cherokee County or the DDA to redevelop properties either of those entities own in order to create more productive, inviting properties downtown.

There are multiple opportunities to activate sites to better serve Downtown and Canton residents. While there is an existing mix of uses throughout Downtown, there are also properties that are underutilized or vacant that can be turned into productive sites to benefit the community.

Vacant, undeveloped parcels do not generate economic activity and do not serve as locations for people to spend time for recreation or gathering. Therefore, these undeveloped properties do not serve the community well and, in some instances, can be a burden on the community. These sites can instead create opportunities for residential, commercial, or mixed-use developments through infill development.



Vacancies and Infill Opportunities

There are opportunities throughout Downtown for redevelopment and infill development to address property vacancies and underutilization. The map to the right is a figure-ground map which can give a sense of open and developed space in Downtown. Black polygons represent existing and occupied buildings. The purple outlines indicate parcel boundaries. Parcels without any buildings on them are properties that are vacant or undeveloped. This map helps to show where land is underutilized Downtown, not only on vacant lots, but also on lots that already have some development on them. Underutilized spaces identified in the map are prime opportunities for infill development.



Development Challenges

Topographic Challenges

While much of Downtown across North and Main Streets is relatively flat, there are significant changes in grade along the outer edges of Downtown and in the immediately surrounding area. For development, such large shifts in topography can be expensive and labor intensive. Thus, it can be more difficult for developers to make a profit on developments on properties with significant changes in elevation.

Flooding Challenges

The map on this page indicates the flood risk zones. The areas of higher risk include areas along Riverstone Parkway and the Mill at Etowah. Within the DMP study area, much of the land within the flood zone is currently vacant and undeveloped. Fortunately, due in part to its higher elevation, most of Downtown is not at risk for flooding. While there is some flood risk Downtown along Etowah River, it is unlikely to impact infill or development potential Downtown.



Natural and Historic Resources

The Etowah River flows through Canton and abuts the northern border of Downtown. There are two city parks within the study area. Brown Park is a 1.2-acre city park immediately south of the Cherokee County History Center. Brown Park has a children's play structure along the south end and bench seating throughout the park. Historic Downtown Canton Cannon Park is situated in the geographic center of downtown between North and Main Streets. It is a 0.4-acre public green space with a large gazebo in the middle. It is surrounded on three sides by on-street parking and is across the street from the Historic Cherokee County Courthouse. Smaller greenspaces, such as Canton Rotary Park, are scattered throughout the study area.

Etowah River Park and Heritage Park are two large greenspaces just north of Downtown across the Etowah River. Etowah River Park has over 58 acres of public greenspace. Heritage Park is a 48-acre park with sports fields and playgrounds. Etowah River Park connects to Heritage Park via a mile-long paved greenway. Both parks connect to the Etowah River Trail, which is a multiuse trail that fronts the Etowah River and connects parks throughout the city.

The Historic Cherokee County Courthouse is on the National Register of Historic Places. Since 1984, the National Register also recognizes the Canton Historic Commercial District, which spans from the south side of Main Street between Cannon Street and E Marietta Street, and on both sides of E Marietta Street between Main Street and Archer Street. The Georgia Historical Society recognizes three historical markers in the study area: "Cherokee Gold" at the Historic Cherokee County Courthouse, "Cherokee County" at Cannon Park, and "Joseph Emerson Brown" at Brown Park.



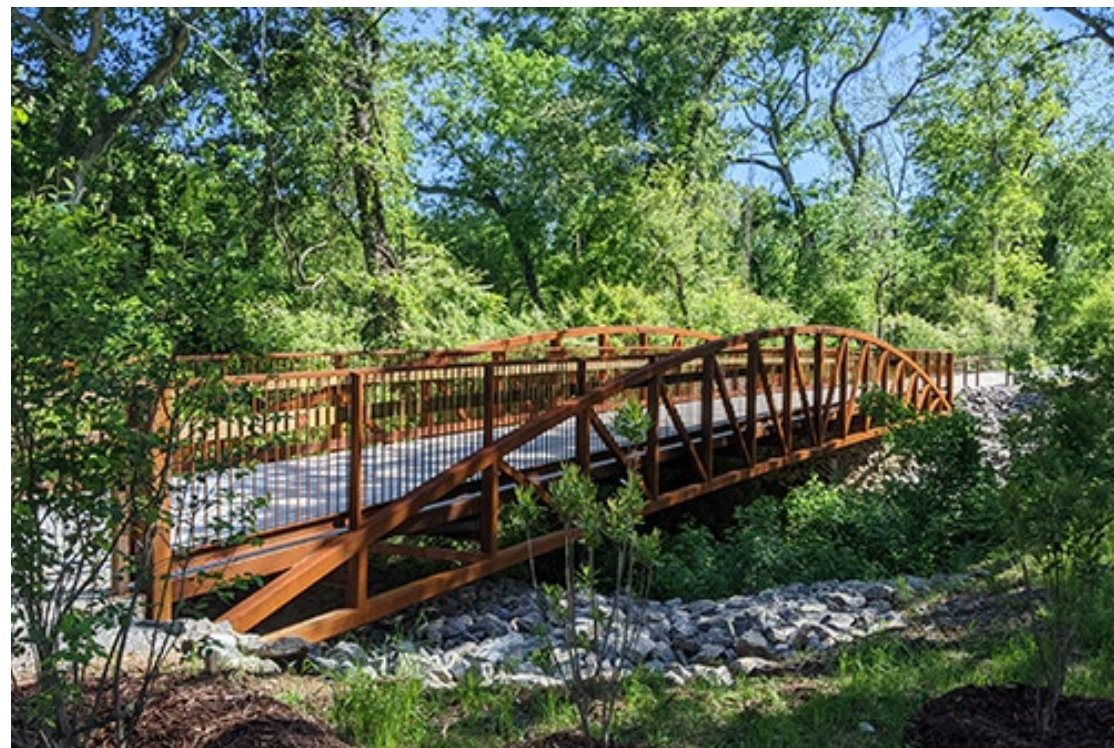
Cannon Park

Image Source: Wikimedia Commons, 2016



Brown Park

Image Source: Explore Canton, GA, 2024



Multiuse Bridge in Etowah River Park

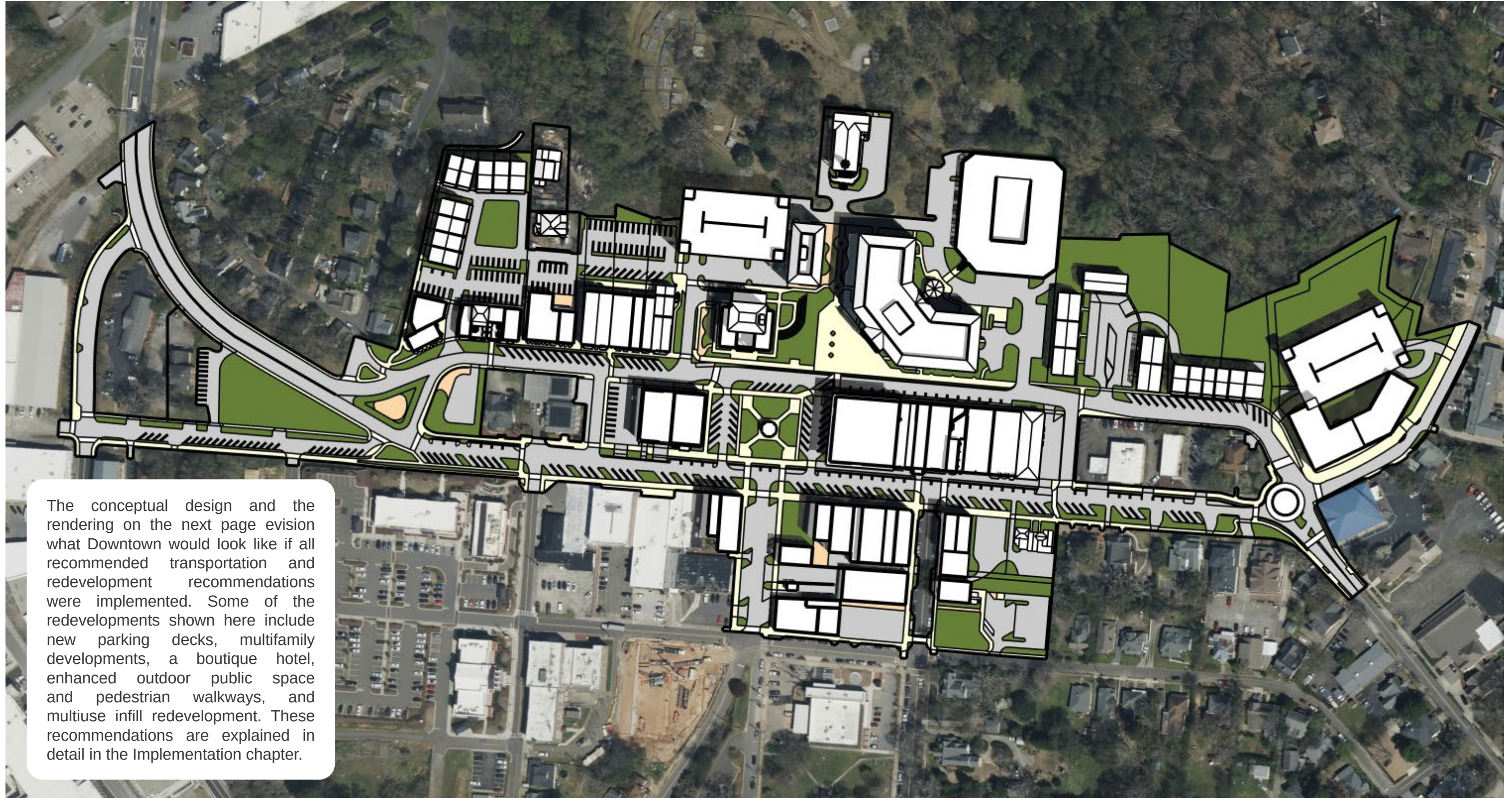
Image Source: Destination Cherokee, 2019



Historic Cherokee County Courthouse

Image Source: Wikimedia Commons

Conceptual Design



The conceptual design and the rendering on the next page envision what Downtown would look like if all recommended transportation and redevelopment recommendations were implemented. Some of the redevelopments shown here include new parking decks, multifamily developments, a boutique hotel, enhanced outdoor public space and pedestrian walkways, and multiuse infill redevelopment. These recommendations are explained in detail in the Implementation chapter.

Design Concept

This rendering shows improvements at the intersection of East Main Street and Church Street, looking east.

The improvements shown, as well as the recommendations described in the following chapter, reflect the steering committee's vision for Downtown and comments received throughout the public engagement process.

- Improvements like wider sidewalks and reduced roadway width improve safe access for all people moving Downtown.
- Improved facilities for people walking, biking, and driving will increase access and visibility for local businesses along Main Street.
- The multiuse trail and activated public spaces increase opportunities for recreation, leisure, and access to natural resources.
- Providing for a mix of transportation uses contributes to a more sustainable and vibrant Downtown.
- Development and transportation recommendations reflect and enhance the existing development style of Downtown, celebrating Canton's small-town charm and character.



IMPLEMENTATION

NOTES

Through a review and analysis of this plan's efforts — community engagement, transportation planning, and master planning — a set of recommendations were identified to bring the vision and goals of this plan to fruition.

This chapter describes these recommendations, which include transportation network improvements, development concepts, and policies.

Image Source: Modern Mobility Partners

Identifying Recommendations

In January 2024, the DMP team held a day-long design charette to collaboratively identify recommendations to improve Downtown Canton. During the charette, the team set up three separate stations, each with a roll plot of the DMP study area and some drawing materials. Each station was designated one of the following focus areas: Roadway Reconfiguration, Active Transportation and Greenspace, and Infill and Redevelopment Opportunities.

At each station, DMP team members proposed recommendations for Downtown that address needs identified in the existing conditions analysis for transportation and master planning as well as through feedback received during stakeholder and public engagement. Throughout the day, additional city staff and members of the DDA and steering committee dropped in and observed the development of recommendations. They commented and asked questions when they were at each station, enabling team members to make edits and additions on the fly. During this time, the visual preference boards were also available for staff and committee members to respond to.

The recommendations were revised by the end of the charette to be easily understood by community members in time for the subsequent open house, described in the Community Engagement chapter.



Design charette and open house
Image Source: Modern Mobility Partners, 2024

Recommendations

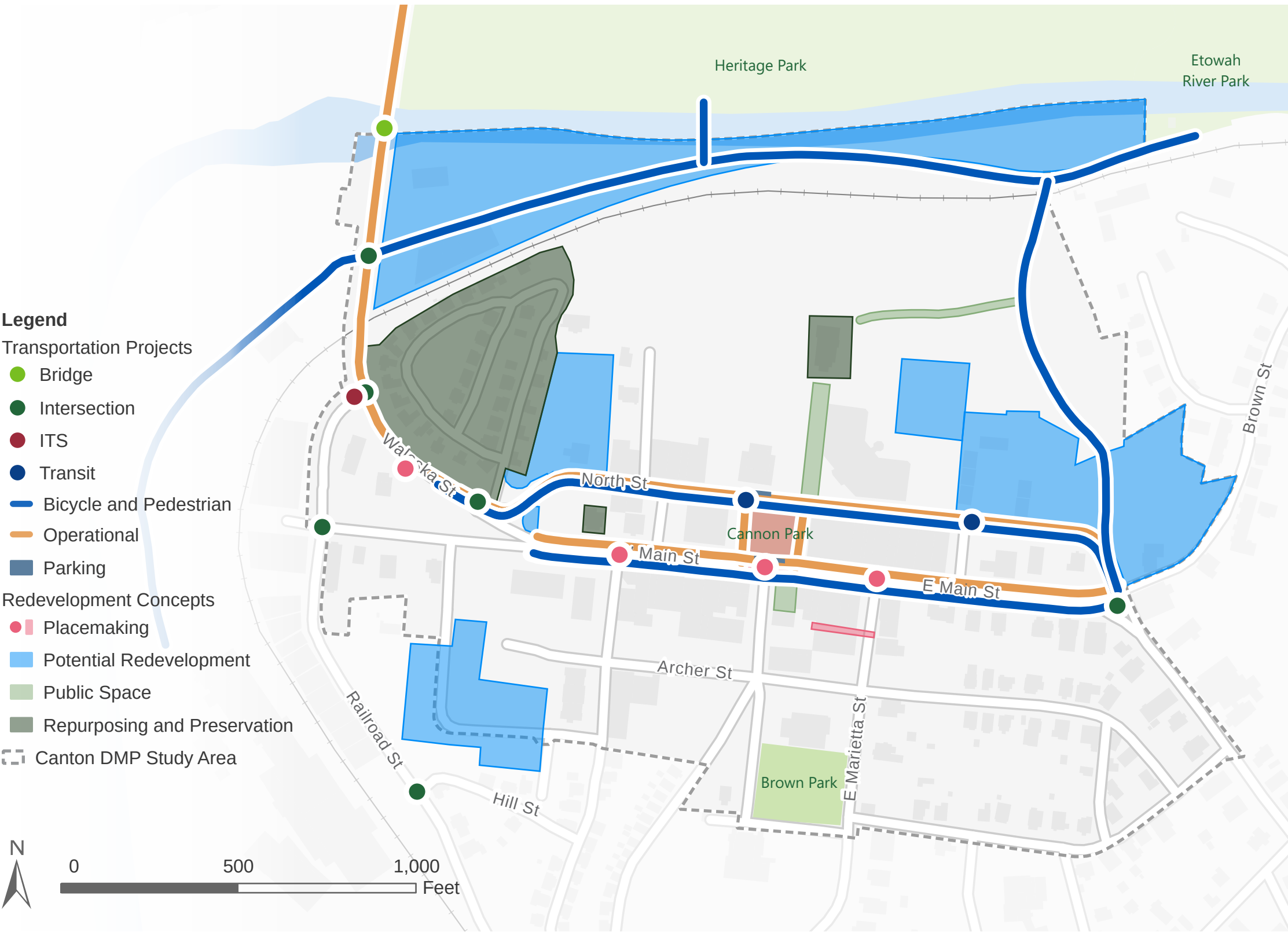
Projects were identified for implementation in this plan closely following the implementation identification framework from the TMP.

There are 43 recommendations identified in this plan. These projects have either a short- or long-term implementation timeline, as indicated in the tables on the following pages.

There are 20 transportation recommendations. They are categorized as Bridge (1), Intersection (6), ITS (1), Transit (1), Bicycle and Pedestrian (6), Operational (4), and Parking (1). Nine of those projects are carried over from the TMP.

Sixteen locations were identified for redevelopment concepts including placemaking (3), potential redevelopment (8), public space (3), or repurposing and preservation (2).

Seven policy recommendations were identified as part of the plan. These are projects where the City of Canton may work independently or partner with another organization to implement based on availability of resources, time, and the nature of the policy.



Transportation Projects

Transportation projects for Downtown are listed in the table below.

Transportation Projects

DMP ID	Type	Project Name	Timeframe
1		Downtown Trail Bridge	Long-term
2		Etowah Trail Extension Northwest	Short-term
3		Etowah Trail North	Long-term
4		Main Street Multiuse Trail	Long-term
5**		Main Street and North Street Bike Lanes	Short-term
6		North Street Trail	Long-term
7		Pedestrian Signal Priority	Short-term
8**		Waleska Street Bridge	Long-term
10		Downtown Gateway	Short-term
11*		E Main Street Roundabout	Short-term
12		Mill Entrance on Railroad Street	Short-term
13**		Railroad Street at Waleska Intersection Improvements	Short-term
14		Railroad Street and West Main	Short-term
15*		Realignment of Main, North, and Waleska Streets	Short-term
16		Cannon Park Reconfiguration	Short-term
19*		Main Street Road Diet	Short-term
21*		North Street Road Diet	Short-term
22		Waleska Street Reconfiguration	Short-term
23*		Downtown Flex Zones	Short-term
50		North Street Bus Stop	Short-term

This plan’s short-term projects can be implemented within a 10-year timeframe, taking into account current priorities and available funding. Long-term projects in this plan are recommended but may not be feasible with a ten-year timeframe. Long-term projects include those that are larger in size, may take more time to implement, or require more funding than is currently available.

Project Type Legend

-  Bicycle and Pedestrian
-  Bridge
-  Intersection
-  Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)
-  Operational
-  Parking
-  Transit



*Indicates projects from the TMP

**Indicates projects from the TMP and Cherokee County Comprehensive Transportation Plan

Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects

Recommended bicycle and pedestrian projects are focused on improving overall safety and mobility for pedestrians and cyclists in Downtown, as well as connecting to existing and planned infrastructure across Canton. TMP projects are included in the map for reference as many of the DMP projects will connect to the citywide bicycle and pedestrian projects.

Short-term Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects

DMP ID	Project Name	From	To	Description
2	Etowah Trail Extension Northwest	Mill at Etowah	Waleska St	Multiuse trail along Reformation Parkway to connect the Mill on Etowah to the proposed Etowah Trail North and the proposed multiuse bridge west of the Waleska St Bridge.
5	Main Street and North Street Bike Lanes	West Main St/North St	Brown St	Parking protected bike lanes (one lane on each road, following the direction of traffic) along Main St. and North St.

Long-term Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects

DMP ID	Project Name	From	To	Description
1	Downtown Trail Bridge	Proposed Downtown Trail	Heritage Park	Construct a multiuse bridge from the proposed downtown trail to Heritage Park on the north side of River.
3	Etowah Trail North	Waleska St	Oak St/ Brown St	Multiuse trail between the Etowah River and the railroad starting at Waleska Street and following the railroad east to the proposed trail at Shipp St.
4	Main Street Multiuse Trail	West Main St/North St	Brown St	Create a multiuse trail from the east end of downtown to the proposed Etowah Trail extension through the DDA owned property.
6	North Street Trail	Brown Street at Main Street	Etowah Trail	Create a multiuse trail from the east end of downtown to the proposed Etowah Trail extension through the DDA owned property.



Dashed lines indicate bicycle and pedestrian projects that are already planned and programmed.



Bridge Projects

Recommended bridge projects are focused on repairing existing facilities which may need additional investment and improving existing or creating new bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Long-term Bridge Projects

DMP ID	Project Name	Extents	Description
10	Waleska St Bridge	Crossing: Etowah River	When the bridge is no longer sufficient and needs to be replaced, ensure the bridge replacement accommodates all modes of travel including a multi-use path.

There are no short-term bridge projects.



Waleska Street Bridge
Image Source:The Cherokee Tribune



Intersection Projects

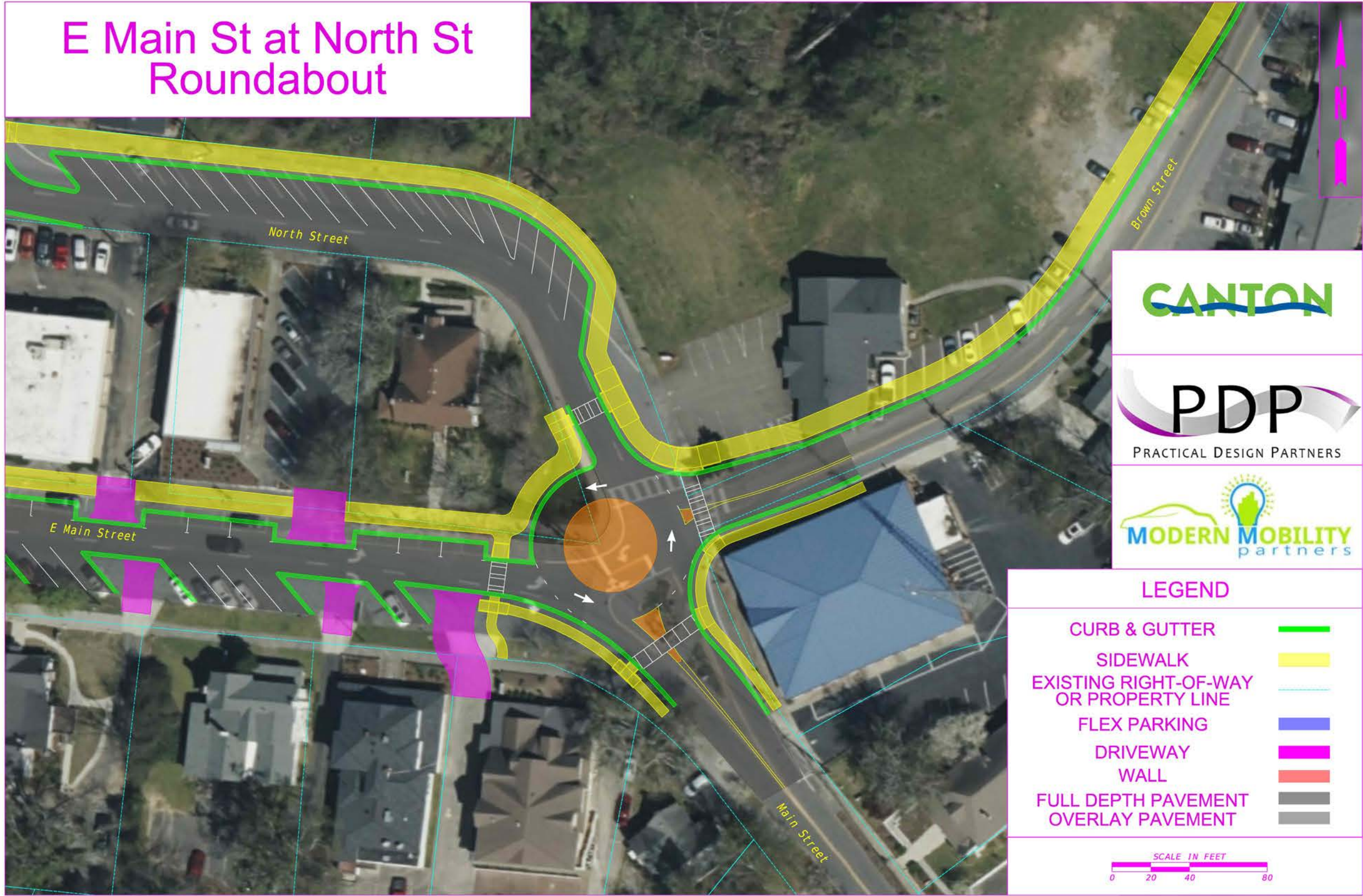
Recommended intersection projects are focused on reconfiguring or redesigning existing intersections to improve traffic flow, pedestrian and bicyclist safety, and operational efficiency. Engineering concepts for two of these projects, DMP-11 and DMP-15, are included on the following pages.

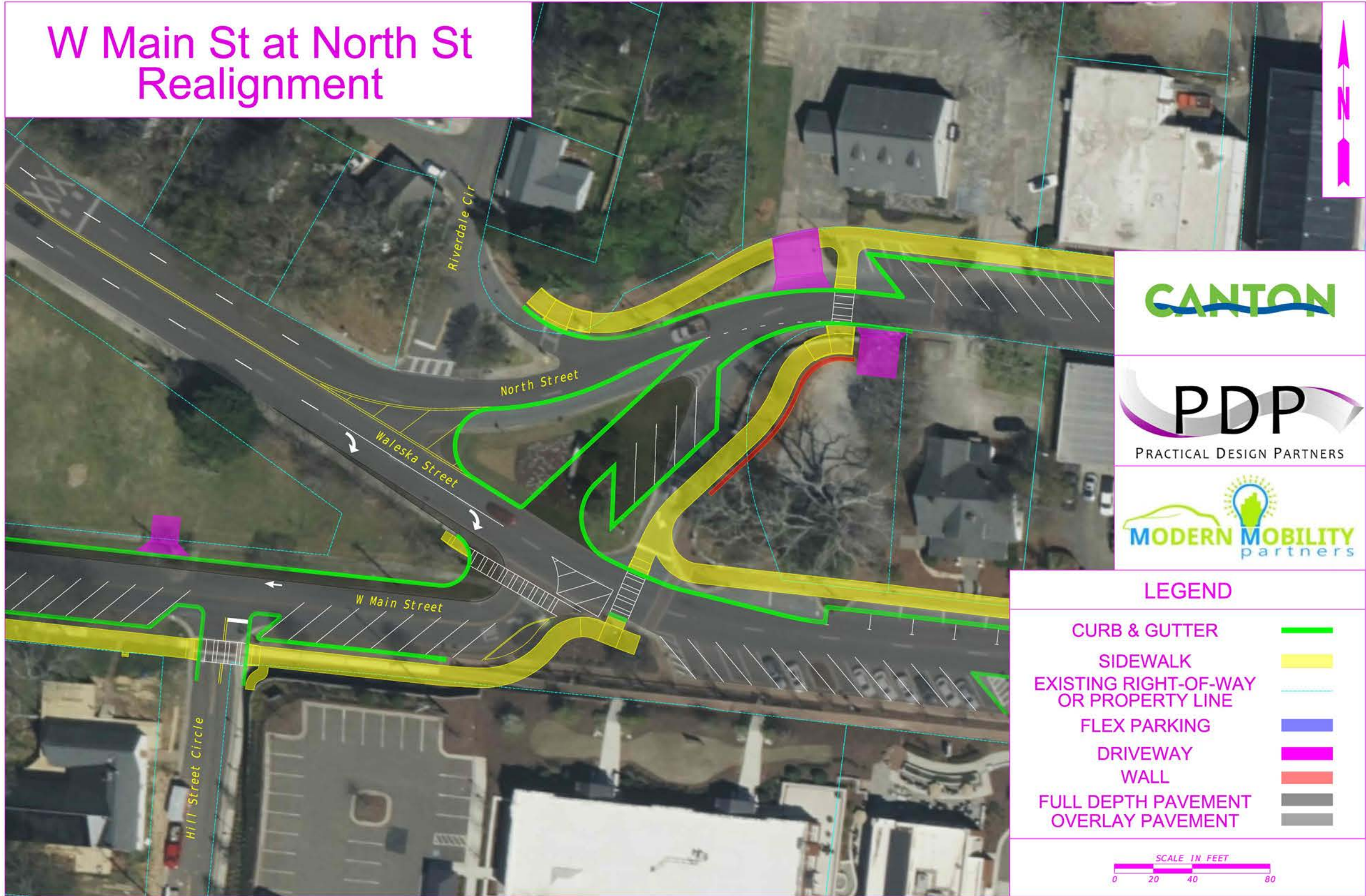
Short-term Intersection Projects

DMP ID	Project Name	Crossroads	Description
10	Downtown Gateway	Waleska St and Reformation Parkway	Redesign intersection into a complete intersection to facilitate the safe and slow movement of people walking, biking, and driving into Downtown, to and from the Mill, and to the proposed Downtown Trail. Include design and placemaking elements to treat the intersection as a gateway to Downtown Canton.
11	E Main Street Roundabout	North St and Brown St	Reconfigure the East Main Street intersection to a roundabout to facilitate safer, more efficient, and easier navigation of the intersection.
12	Mill Entrance on Railroad Street	Hill St and Railroad St	Improve the intersection to an all-way stop with improved sightlines to increase safety and visibility of all users.
13	Railroad Street at Waleska Intersection Improvements	Waleska St and Railroad St	Railroad Street at Waleska Inte Intersection improvement with signalization. Include detection to coordinate with the railroad signal. If right-of-way and configuration allows, consider including pedestrian refuge islands to facilitate safe crossing of pedestrians.
14	Railroad Street and West Main	West Main St and Railroad St	Improve the intersection to an all-way stop with improved sightlines to increase safety and visibility of all users.
15	Realignment of Main, North, and Waleska Streets	North St, Main St, and Waleska St	Realign North Street at Waleska Street to West Main. From the southbound approach of North Street, one lane will merge onto Waleska westbound, and one lane will align with West Main to allow for straight travel onto West Main or left turn onto East Main. Improve safety, connectivity, and sightlines for all modes. May convert to all-way stop or maintain North and West Main Streets as the only stop-controlled approaches.

There are no long-term intersection projects.







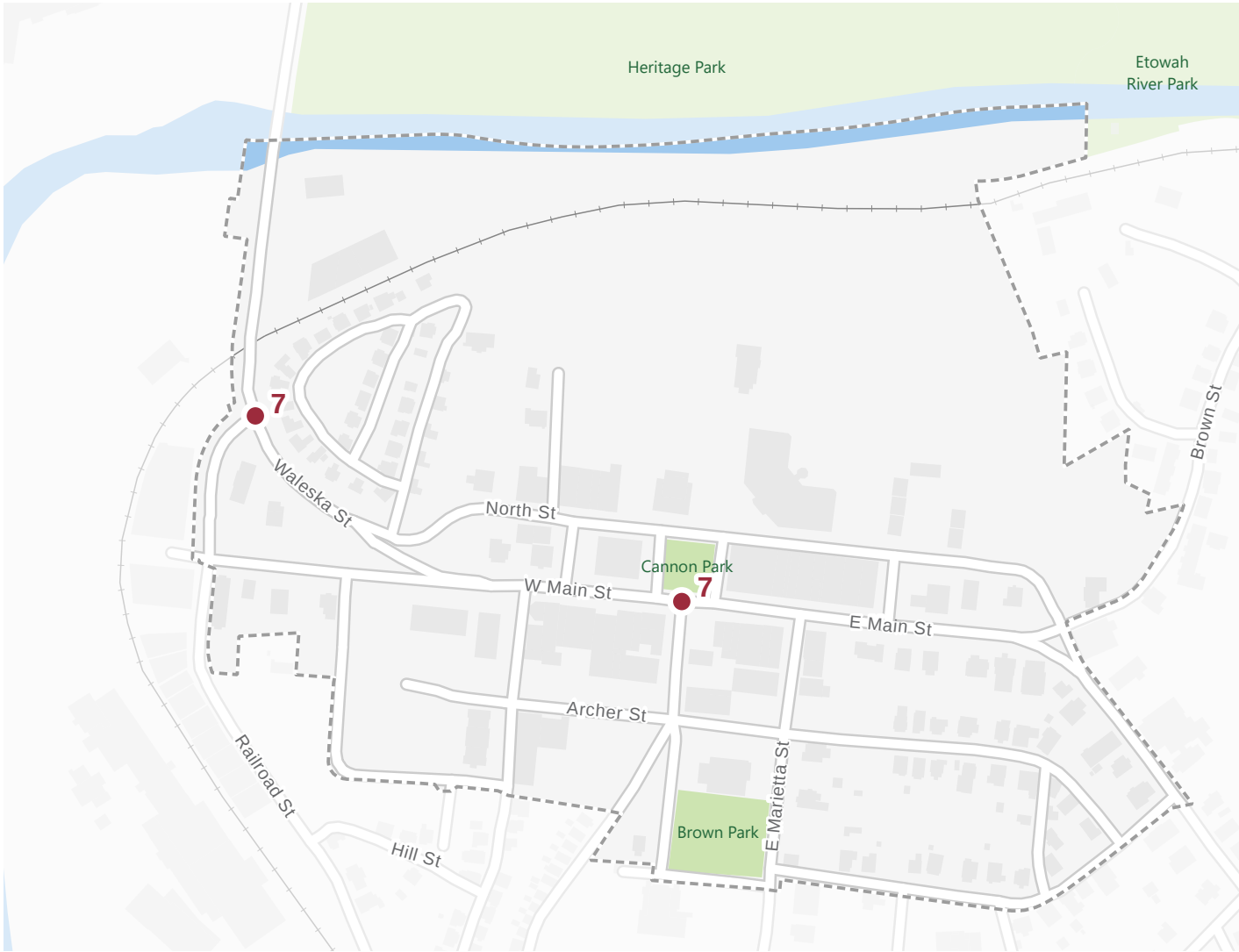
 ITS Projects

Recommended ITS and emerging technology projects make existing signalized intersections safer and more efficient for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicle operators. In this plan, the ITS recommendation is to include pedestrian signal priority at signalized intersections Downtown. This recommendation helps to make pedestrians visible to drivers before drivers enter an intersection, therefore reducing the incidence of collisions with pedestrians.

Short-term ITS Projects

DMP ID	Project Name	Description
7	Pedestrian Signal Priority	Install pedestrian signal priority (leading pedestrian intervals or LPIs) at signalized intersections on North St and Main St, and any future signalized intersections Downtown.

There are no long-term ITS projects.



Operational Projects

Recommended operational projects focus on traffic reorientations or reconfigurations to optimize roadway, bicyclist, and pedestrian safety and mobility. The map on this page shows the extents of these operational improvements. To see more details about the configuration of these improvements, refer to the engineering concept in the Transportation Systems chapter.

Short-term Operational Projects

DMP ID	Project Name	From	To	Description
16	Cannon Park Reconfiguration	North St	Main St	Reorient roadway segments and parking on either side of Cannon Park to match the counter-clockwise traffic flow around Downtown's Main and North Streets to help orient drivers.
19	Main Street Road Diet	Waleska St	Brown St	Maintain one-way eastbound travel on Main Street, but remove one travel lane. Keep lane width at 12 feet. Extend sidewalks on both sides of Main Street, with additional space on the south side of Main Street to allow for outdoor dining.
21	North Street Road Diet	Waleska St	Brown St	Reduce North Street to one travel lane. Convert south (or north in parts) travel lane to angled on-street parking. Include loading zones instead of parking where applicable. Extend sidewalks where feasible to increase walking and outdoor dining space.
22	Waleska Street Reconfiguration	North St	Riverstone Parkway	Realign roadway across the Waleska Street Bridge to remove the sidewalk on the west side and extend the sidewalk on the east side to facilitate multimodal travel.*

**A feasibility assessment is required to confirm modification of the bridge deck.
There are no long-term operational projects.*



Parking Projects

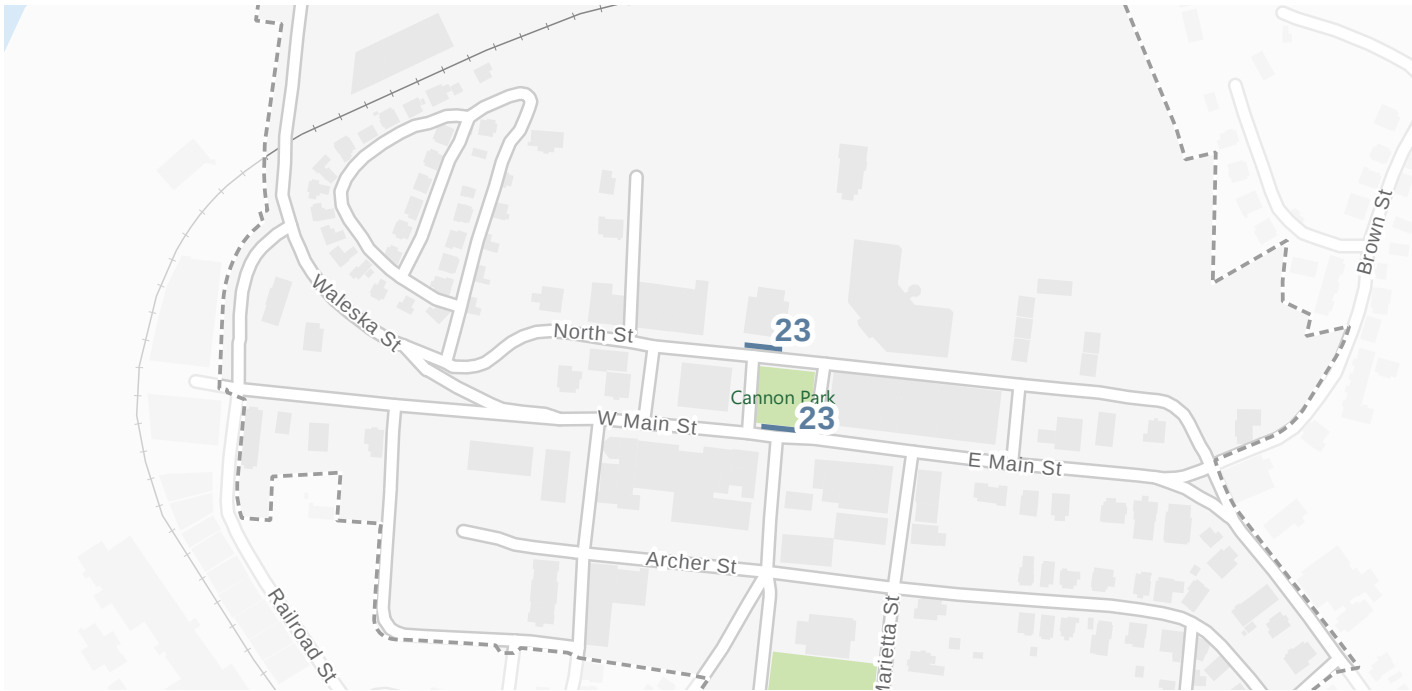
Recommended parking projects are intended to allow for flexible utilization of existing and additional parking Downtown to support and foster community events and engagement.

Short-term Parking Projects

DMP ID	Project Name	From	To	Description
23	Downtown Flex Zones	Railroad St	Brown St	Convert on-street parking to flex zones at designated locations. Potential areas include North Street, Main Street, Marietta Street, Church Street, Cannon Park, and Academy Street. Flex zones can allow for loading zones, outdoor dining, parklets, streetside vendors, or other uses as appropriate. Could incorporate technology, such as colored lights, to indicate temporal shifts in flex zone use. Identify locations that are delivery-only, such as existing parallel parking locations or the utilization of alleyways between North and Main.

There are no long-term parking projects.

Note: The DMP operational and intersection improvements added on-street parking spaces to the Downtown area.



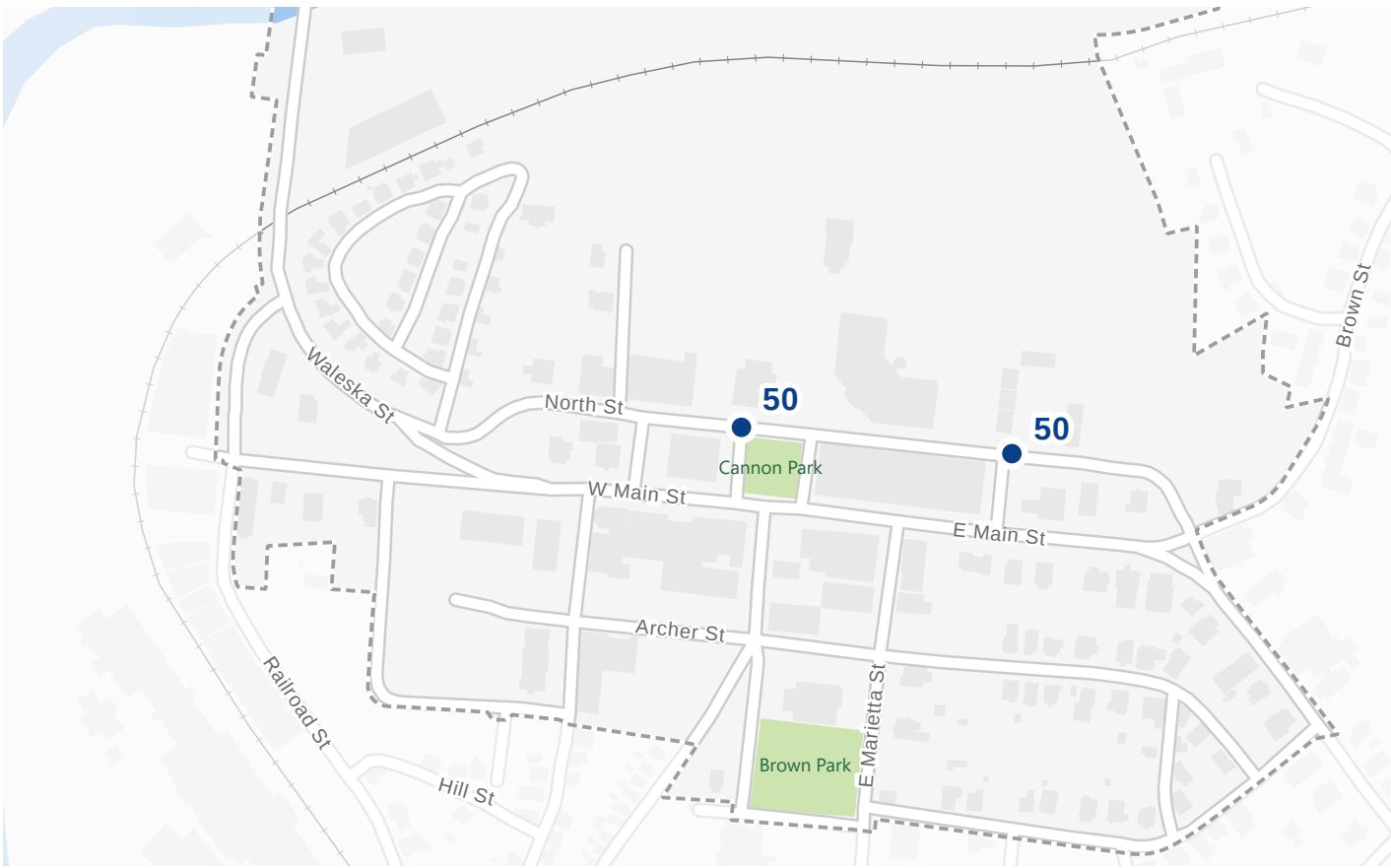
Transit Projects

Transit improvements will aid in the accessibility and attractiveness of bus service Downtown.

Short-term Transit Projects

DMP ID	Project Name	Location	Description
50	North Street Bus Stop	In front of the Cherokee County building and at Cherokee North Apartments	Coordinate with Cherokee Area Transportation System (CATS) to install a shelter with seating, trash receptacles, and route maps at the existing bus stop on North Street to make the stop more visible and more comfortable for users.

There are no long-term transit projects.



Redevelopment Concepts

Redevelopment opportunities for Downtown are listed in the table below.

Redevelopment Concepts

DMP ID	Type	Project Name
24		Cannon Park Pedestrian Connections
33		Church Street Public Space
34		Civic Center Pedestrian Promenade
35		E Marietta Street Artist Alley
37		Riverview Cemetery Trail
38		200 North Street Infill
39		10 North Street
40		Cherokee County Superior Court Expansion
42		Historic Church Civic Center
43		North Street Mixed-Use Redevelopment
44		Riverdale Craftsman Event Space
45		Roosterville Revitalization
46		Sandy Hooks Redevelopment
47		Hill Street Redevelopment
48		North and Waleska Parking Extension
51		Downtown Wayfinding

Project Type Legend

-  Placemaking
-  Potential Redevelopment
-  Public Space
-  Repurposing and Preservation





Placemaking Projects

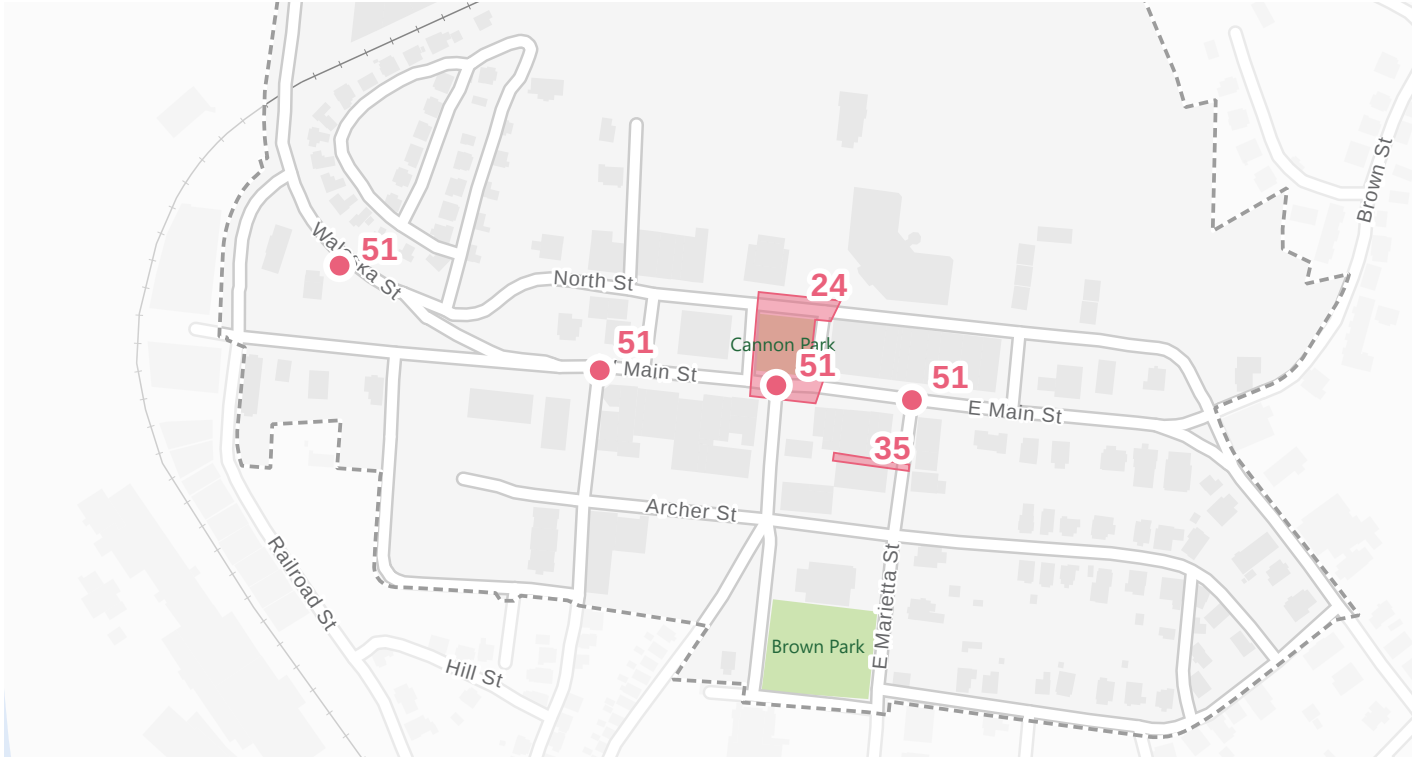
Placemaking projects are focused on activating under utilized public spaces for pedestrians, community activities, and the arts. They are intended to give Downtown Canton a distinct

identity that visitors can easily recognize. Placemaking is thought to improve social connection and create a sense of local identity.

Placemaking Projects

DMP ID	Project Name	Location	Description
24	Cannon Park Pedestrian Connections	Through Cannon Park and across Main and North Streets	Activate Cannon Park with interactive elements (e.g., sculptures that kids can climb, outdoor seating). Incorporate public art, seating, and lighting to visually and spatially connect the following proposed efforts: Historic Church Civic Center, Civic Center Pedestrian Promenade, Cannon Park Activation, Brooke Park Pool Site Activation, and E Marietta Street Artist Alley.
35	East Marietta Street Artist Alley*	In the alleyway adjacent to Bizarre Coffee with an entrance on Marietta St	Activate alley with seating, lighting, and public art to serve as public space for people to spend time downtown. Could partner with Bizarre Coffee for placemaking or events.
51	Downtown Wayfinding	Throughout Downtown along major roadways	Add additional wayfinding signage to public parking facilities, primarily at west and east entrances to downtown on Main St/ North St and approaching cross streets such as E Marietta, Church, Archer. Could add signage at Dr John T Pettit St and Brown St.

**Indicates properties not owned by the City, County, or DDA. These properties can only be redeveloped if any of these entities acquire them after they become available on the market.*



Photos of placemaking examples.

Potential Redevelopment

Recommended redevelopment projects include opportunities for infill and revitalization. For all properties recommended for redevelopment,

unless they are already owned by the City, County, or DDA, redevelopment can only occur if the property becomes available on the market.

Potential Redevelopment Opportunities

DMP ID	Project Name	Description
38	200 North Street Infill*	There is potential for redevelopment or infill around the 200 North St. property to continue the building façade by moving the parking to the back. There is potential to combine this lot with the lot behind it to accommodate some commercial infill along the street and residential housing in the back.
39	10 North Street	This is one of the potential sites that the City and DDA tested as a part of a hotel feasibility study. On those lines, there is potential to redevelop this site to house a 80-key boutique hotel (as per the feasibility report) along with additional uses such as retail, restaurants, and events space. Adding uses to the boutique hotel will necessitate adding a parking deck to accommodate the parking.
40	Cherokee County Superior Court Expansion	There are plans to expand Cherokee County Superior Court by redeveloping the existing parking deck on the property into an additional building and build a new parking deck atop the surface level parking lot behind the Historic Cherokee Courthouse. The County can add a building along the eastern edge of the parking deck to activate the old church building and adjacent pedestrian promenade.
43	North Street Mixed-Use Redevelopment*	Next to the parcel for DMP-39 are existing low-density apartment homes that could become a mixed-use, mixed-income residences (missing middle housing). The steep drop in topography on the northern edge of this site limits the amount of parking that can be developed, but is sufficient for missing middle housing.
46	Sandy Hooks Redevelopment*	At the northern end of Waleska Street before the bridge, the western edge of the Sandy Hooks property could be redeveloped into a mixed-use gateway into Downtown. Although this site is within the flood zone, low-impact recreational development could serve visitors of Downtown, such as outfitters located at strategic points on the property to facilitate active use of the river. The redevelopment of this site makes the implementation of DMP-3, Etowah Trail North, more feasible.
47	Hill Street Redevelopment*	The lot at 231 W Main Street was zoned for mixed-use multifamily development. The developer has since pulled out of this project, but the permits have already been filed for and approved, so there is an opportunity for another developer to continue this project. This project will add approximately 250 residential units and a parking deck. The parking deck should ideally provide the same number of spaces the parking lot provides right now and accommodate additional spaces from the new development.
48	North and Waleska Parking Extension	At the parking lot at the western end of East Main Street and North Street, expand the parking lot up to the intersection reconfiguration (DMP-15). Requires adding a driveway on North Street and may require the expansion to be added as a “split level” that is lower in elevation than the existing parking spaces.



Indicates properties **not owned by the City, County, or DDA. These properties can only be redeveloped if any of these entities acquire them after they become available on the market.*

Public Space

Recommended public space projects are focused on activating under-utilized spaces or creating new spaces in Downtown Canton where the community can come together to connect and enjoy activities related to art, history, and nature.

Public Space Projects

DMP ID	Project Name	Description
33	Church Street Public Space*	Convert the three undeveloped parcels at the southeast corner of the Church and Main intersection into usable public space. Could include seating for First Fridays, outdoor dining space, public art, or space for outdoor movie nights. Two of the three parcels for this project are owned by the DDA.
34	Civic Center Pedestrian Promenade	Pedestrian promenade between the Cherokee County Courthouse and Historic Courthouse connecting North Street and the old church behind the properties.
37	Riverview Cemetery Trail	Create a pedestrian trail along the terraced edges of Riverview Cemetery to connect to the proposed North Street Trail. Could coordinate with the historical society and the cemetery committee to incorporate interactive historical elements or placemaking features to encourage visitation of the trail and cemetery site.



Photos of public space examples.





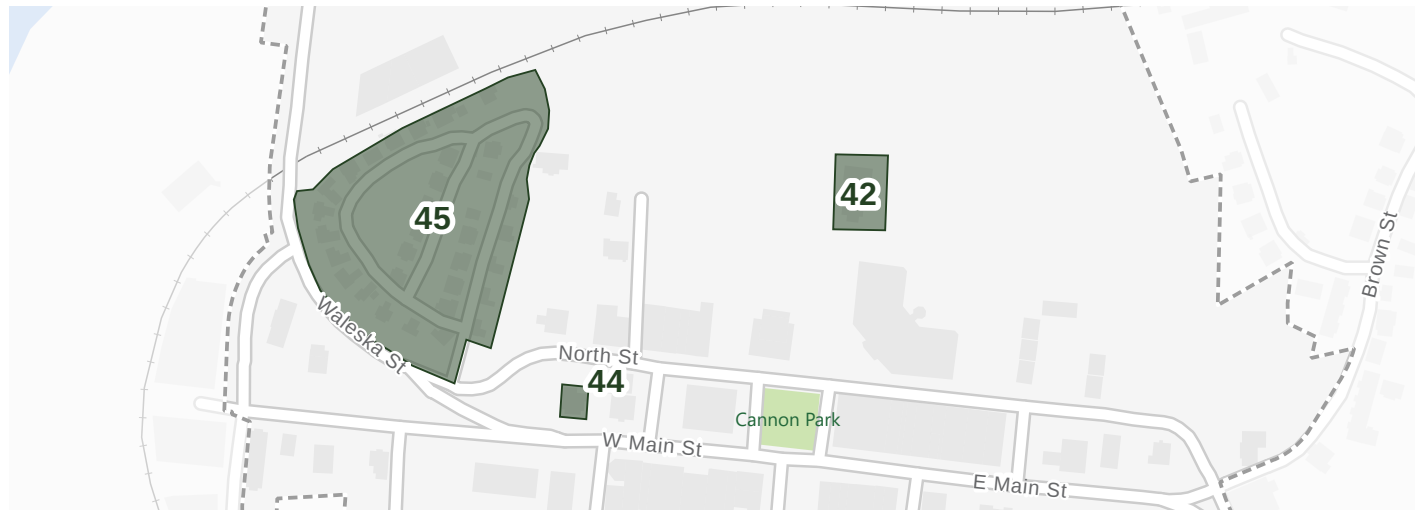
Repurposing and Preservation

Recommended repurposing projects revitalize existng historic properties for community purposes.

Repurposing and Preservation Opportunities

DMP ID	Project Name	Description
42	Historic Church Civic Center	There is an old church building behind the courthouse that can be converted into a civic/community center and event space. This will be the anchor point of a new pedestrian promenade between the existing Superior Court buildings and the building enveloping the new parking deck behind the Historic Cherokee Courthouse.
44	Riverdale Craftsman Event Space*	There is a historical craftsman style home at the western end of North Street that could be converted into an event space or restaurant, with emphasis on preserving the historic identity of the home. This will also emphasize the gravel parking lot in the parcel neighboring it to the west. This recommendation will only be implemented if and when the owner is ready to sell the home.
45	Roosterville Revitalization*	The neighborhood (Roosterville) at the western corner of Downtown, which consists of several old mill worker houses, has potential to be redeveloped into a historic residential district or multifamily housing. This area can also explore vacation and short-term rentals as additional uses. These homes and the neighborhood have historic significance and the City will have to work with a developer who shares the vision of celebrating the history as this neighborhood incrementally develops. The city could support current homeowners with minor repairs and upkeep as well.

Indicates properties **not owned by the City, County, or DDA. These properties can only be redeveloped if any of these entities acquire them after they become available on the market.*



Craftsman home on North Street for DMP-44.
Image Source: Google Maps, 2024.



Policies

Recommended policies are intended to lead to improvements in mobility, equity, safety, affordability, and culture in Downtown Canton. Policies help to implement specific project recommendations and ensure that new projects outside of the scope of this plan meet the vision and goals of the DMP.

DMP ID	Policy Name	Description
25	CATS Improvements	Create a standing coordination meeting or team with CATS to discuss potential upgrades or service changes based on community feedback.
26	Low-Cost Housing Improvements	Partner with the DDA and other local organizations to provide small loans or resources for qualified residents to paint their homes, improve their lawns, or make other small-scale home repairs that improve their curb appeal.
27	Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program	Develop a program to construct low-cost traffic calming interventions on neighborhood streets within and surrounding the downtown study area. This program can help improve roadways for downtown residents and create placemaking and a cohesive sense of community in the area. Examples of traffic calming strategies include speed bumps and tables, raised crosswalks, chicanes, road and lane diets, and roundabouts. This policy recommendation incorporates other project recommendations mentioned in this list.
28	Public Art	Work with local area artists on opportunities to incorporate art installations such as murals, sculptures, painted crosswalks, etc.
29	Residential Historic Preservation	Work with the county Historic Preservation Committee to include residences.
30	Sidewalk Infill Program	Create a Sidewalk Infill Program funded through impact fees and recreation fees to fill in sidewalk gaps. Prioritize equity areas, near schools, near transit stops and along major roadways. This program can also be used to install ADA-compliant curb ramps at crosswalks where there are none already.
31	Trail Coordination	Coordinate with Cherokee County on buildout of trails to ensure appropriate connectivity and explore partnerships.

Image Source: Modern Mobility Partners, 2023



Moving Forward

The DMP's 43 recommendations lay out how the City and DDA can make the plan's visions and goals a reality. The transportation recommendations help to improve sidewalk connections, provide more transportation options, enhance roadway safety, and reduce vehicular speeds. The development recommendations help to enhance streetscapes, support local businesses, provide a range of land use options and public places, all while maintaining Downtown's hometown feel and charm. Policy recommendations aid in ensuring implementation of DMP priorities beyond the lifetime of this plan. All recommendations come together to foster a vibrant, mixed-use Downtown.

Upon this plan's adoption, City staff and DDA members can begin to take steps for implementation of DMP recommendations. Such steps include meeting with project partners and securing funding for projects.

Image Source: Modern Mobility Partners, 2023





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