

GASTONIA REIMAGINED

A REVITALIZATION PLAN FOR
DOWNTOWN GASTONIA



INTRODUCTION

GASTONIA REIMAGINED: A REVITALIZATION PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN

On behalf of Shook Kelley, I am pleased to submit this GASTONIA REIMAGINED revitalization plan for downtown Gastonia, culminating efforts shared with the leadership of the Gaston Business Association, the City of Gastonia, and Gaston County.

“While it will be complex in its creation, I am confident it will be worth it for my hometown.”



Charles Terry Shook FAIA

The plan consists of a series of analyses, explorations, insights, and recommendations all focused upon one central question: *What is next for downtown Gastonia?*

There are three sections:

1. **Process** - Review of current downtown conditions, past planning efforts, and stakeholder perspectives
2. **Vision** - Prepared as a public facing “roadmap” for a reimagined downtown Gastonia
3. **Strategy** - Critical for fulfillment of the vision

GASTONIA REIMAGINED PROCESS

NYC ST

NYC ST

WILMAN AVE

WILMAN BLVD

SECO ST

FRANKLIN BLVD

PROCESS

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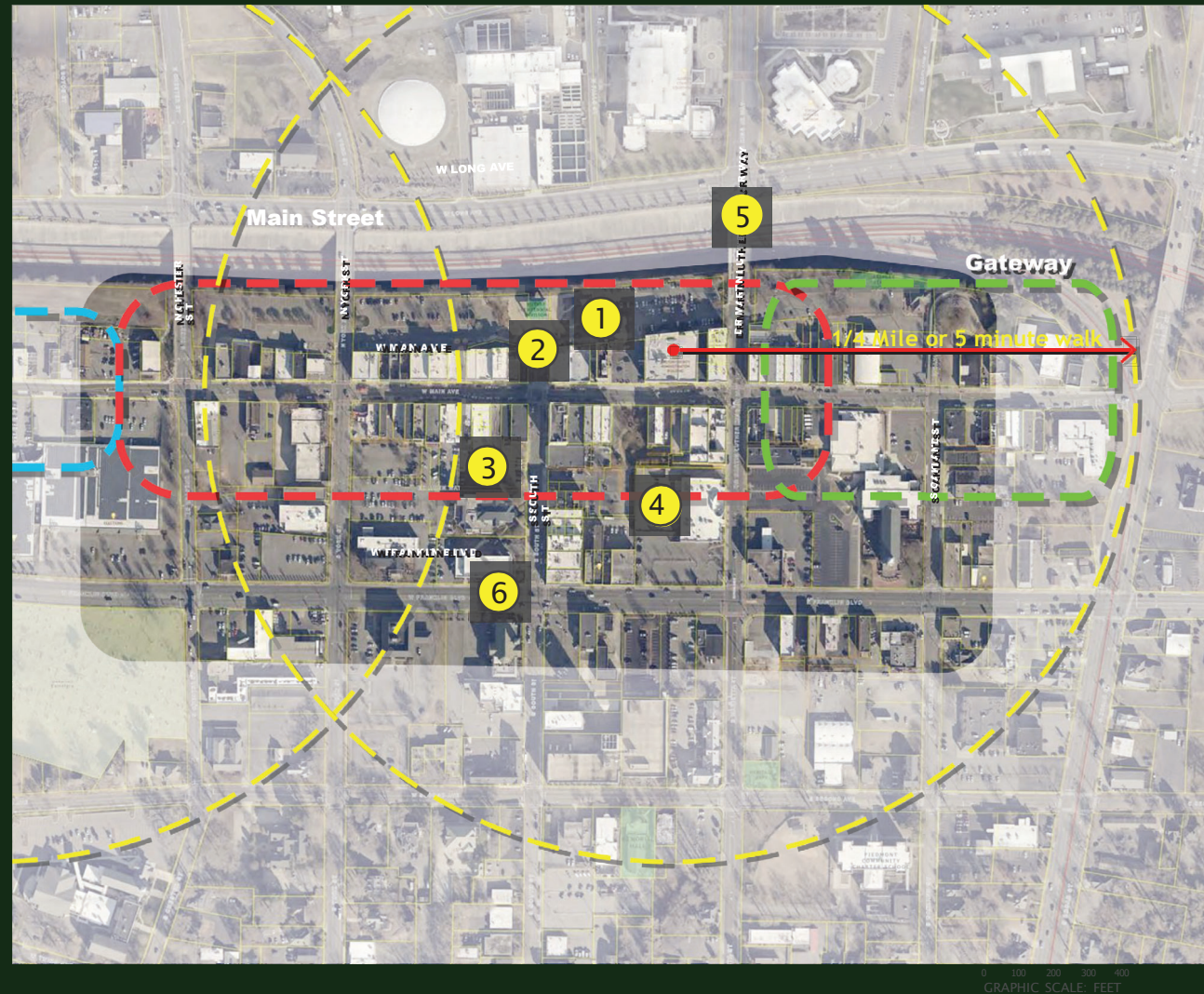
Drivers:

- Envision the next phase of downtown Gastonia's transformation
- Reflect a significant public-private partnership dedicated to meaningful change
- Utilize information from various existing plans, particularly Gastonia's 1999 Downtown Masterplan
- Gather industry feedback from developers

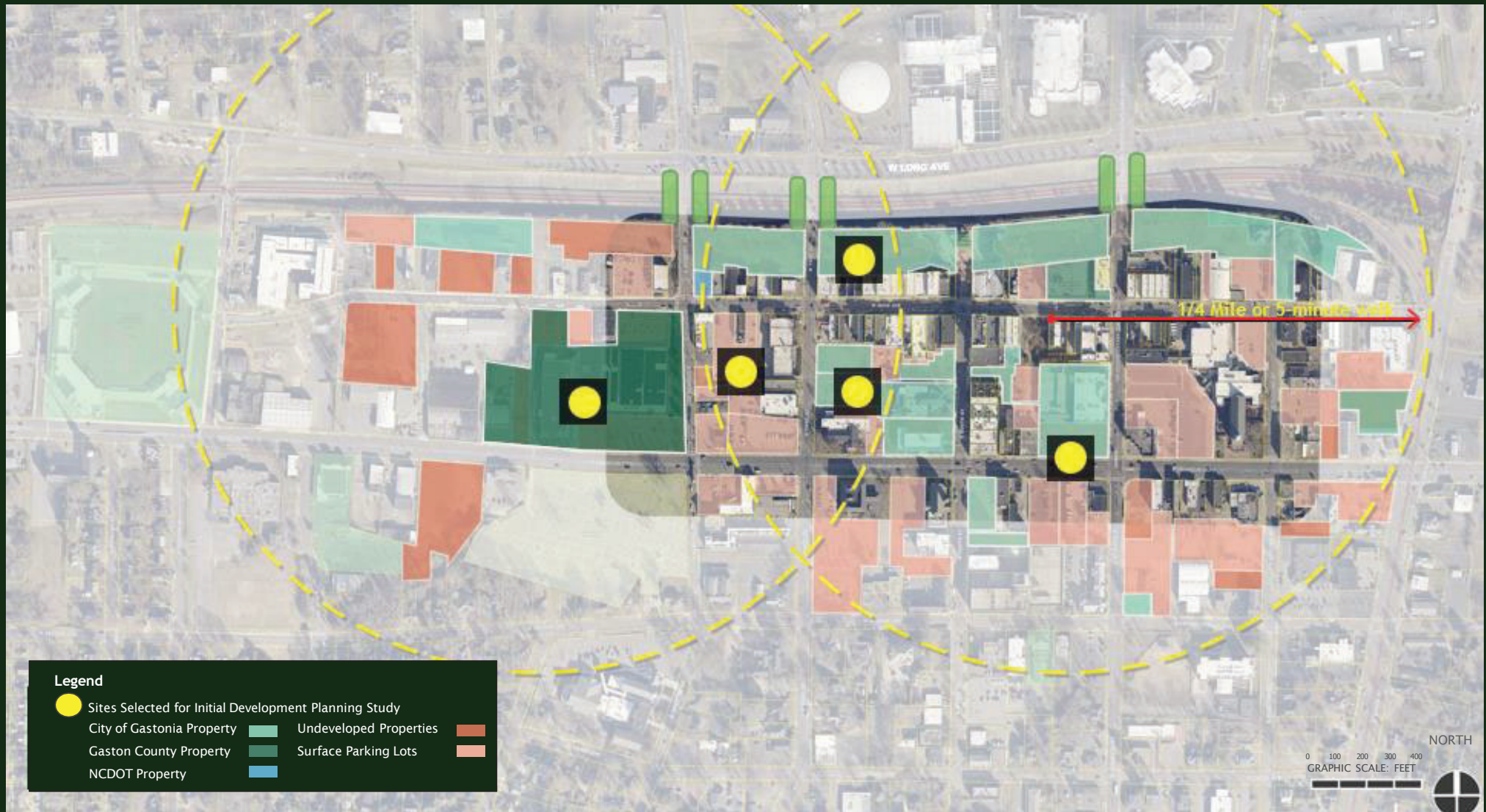


1999 Downtown Gastonia Masterplan - Accomplishments

- 1 Lawyers Building now The Esquire Hotel
- 2 Main and South has become the “center” of Downtown with the Rotary Pavilion
- 3 Former Gaston County Courthouse saved and redeveloped into the Garland Business Center
- 4 Construction of a public parking deck
- 5 MLK bridge improvements
- 6 Navigational and parking signs added
 - Street trees have been installed
 - Facade grant program created
 - Installed banners on poles in downtown
 - Center City Crossings designed to honor existing buildings
 - Enhanced light poles and signal poles
 - Downtown has underground electric
 - Screening in place for dumpsters
 - Downtown a registered Historic District



Land: Utilization and Public Ownership



SWOT Analysis – Developer Feedback

- Outside developers confirmed development potential
- A walkable downtown core with a compelling history and historic buildings with character
- Multi-family units renting at competitive market prices
 - On-demand public public transportation system through GoGastonia

- Attract next generation/young people to downtown
- Provide workforce housing for teachers, policemen, firemen, nurses, etc.
- Interest in re-use of large County-owned parcel
 - Articulate strategic advantage to developers
 - Shared parking opportunities

- Preconceived perceptions of long-time locals of what Gastonia is and what it can be
 - Some of the downtown's buildings sit empty
- Lack of “it” factor to bring more people to downtown
- Currently, not many people live in the downtown core
 - Market prohibitive for condominium projects

- Franklin Blvd divides walkable downtown from established York Chester Neighborhood to the south
 - The “Ditch” acts as a barrier to the Highland Neighborhood to the north
- Many downtown core buildings remain unimproved
 - Structured parking is expensive to build

An aerial architectural rendering of a city center, likely Gastonia, North Carolina. The image shows a mix of modern, light-colored buildings with flat roofs and older, more varied structures. A prominent modern building complex is situated in the center-left. To the right, there's a large, circular stadium-like structure. The foreground features a mix of older brick buildings and newer developments. A large, open green field is visible on the left. The background shows a dense forest and a body of water. The overall scene is a vision of urban development and revitalization.

GASTONIA REIMAGINED VISION

VISION

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Fundamental Vision Elements:

- Imagines Gastonia as a vibrant regional hub for relaxation, living, and gathering
- Foresees tangible benefits to citizens through the creation of meaningful public spaces:
 - Parks/Greens
 - Plazas
 - Parking Structures
 - Storefront Design
- Envisions supporting adjacent neighborhoods
- Suggests attainable housing options



Key Development Opportunities

1.The City Park - Variety of rental housing, along with retail and a **New Civic Building** bordering an urban park, to catalyze surrounding private development

2.Post Office Square - Market rate rental housing incorporating a reuse of the historic post office. All land other than the post office currently in private ownership

3.Supermarket - Setting at the corner of U.S. 321 and U.S.74 ideal for a food store

4.Center City Central - For sale, diverse price point condominiums wrapped around a parking structure

5.Center City Annex - Stacked, for sale, market rate townhouses

6.Hotel - Leverages City investment in the Conference Center and associated parking deck

7.Gateway - Sites viable as adjacent blocks are developed

8.The Mid-Block Green Thread – Connecting urban trail will arise as each of the associated catalytic developments are built



Historic Commercial District - Sensitive reuse of historic buildings along Main Ave., S. South St., and MLK Way essential to downtown rebirth

York Chester Neighborhood Connector - Area between the neighborhood and downtown positioned for development of for sale and purpose-built rental townhouses

Highland Neighborhood Connector – To limit gentrification, the use of attainable housing strategies should be encouraged

Organizing Principles

Organizing principles guide the preparation of a plan and the development process. To make the vision for downtown a reality, commitment, along with proactive application, must be demonstrated to the following five principles.



1. Leverage the Past for a Better Future



2. Create an Urban Park & Mid-block Placemaking



3. Restore the Public Realm



4. Connect to the Neighborhoods



5. Development attainable housing

GASTONIA REIMAGINED STRATEGY



STRATEGY

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Context:

- Strategies are important for fulfillment of visions and master plans.
- The best are simple in their ability to promote understanding.
- GASTONIA REIMAGINED introduces a bold and proven revitalization strategy.

*Unlock the value of Gastonia's
and Gaston County's
substantial non-performing
assets through public-private
partnerships that leverage them
to achieve intentional results
for the common good.*

Strategic Outcomes

The vision of GASTONIA REIMAGINED highlights conceptual projects focused on targeted public land holdings to achieve the following key strategic outcomes that benefit the public at large:

- 1. A high-quality public realm**
- 2. Housing in type and price for various lifestyles and incomes**
- 3. An infrastructure for the future**
- 4. Beacons leading to better development**





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