

# NORTH MAIN STREET, DANVILLE

Danville, VA



## About the Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission: shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and the Asia Pacific region, with members in 80 countries.

More information is available at [uli.org](http://uli.org). Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

## About ULI Virginia

ULI Virginia serves Hampton Roads, Richmond, and Charlottesville and has over 400 members. As a preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI Virginia facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among local, and regional leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places.

### ULI District Council Leadership

Frank Grosch  
Senior Vice President, AGM Financial Services  
District Council Chair, ULI Virginia

Muriel Rodriguez  
Chair for Mission Advancement, ULI Virginia  
Vice President, Schnabel Engineering

Sal Musarra, PLA (NC, VA) LEED AP  
TAP Committee Chair, ULI Virginia  
LA Consulting Services

### ULI Advisory Services: National and Global Programs

Since 1947, the ULI Advisory Services program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for complex land use challenges. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services. National and international panelists are specifically recruited to form a panel of independent and objective volunteer ULI member experts with the skills needed to address the identified land use challenge. The program is designed to help break through obstacles, jump-start conversations, and solve tough challenges that need an outside, independent perspective. Three- and five-day engagements are offered to ensure thorough consideration of relevant topics.

An additional national offering is the project analysis session (PAS) offered at ULI's Fall and Spring Meetings, through which specific land use challenges are evaluated by a panel of volunteer experts selected from ULI's membership. This is a conversational format that lends itself to an open exchange of ideas among diverse industry practitioners with distinct points of view. From the streamlined two-hour session to the "deeper dive" eight-hour session, this intimate conversational format encourages creative thinking and problem solving.

Learn more at [americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services/](https://americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services/).

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Distinct from Advisory Services panels, TAPs leverage local expertise through a half-day to two-day process.

### Technical Assistance Program: (TAP)

Since 1947, the Urban Land Institute has harnessed its members' technical expertise to help communities solve difficult land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)

provide expert, multidisciplinary, unbiased advice to local governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use and real estate issues in the Tampa Bay area. Drawing from our seasoned professional membership base, ULI Tampa Bay offers objective and responsible guidance on various land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The sponsoring organization is responsible for gathering the background information necessary to understand the project and presenting it to the panel. TAP members typically spend two days developing an understanding of the problem, coming up with recommendations, and contributing those findings and recommendations to the sponsoring organization.

The focus of this TAP program for Woodberry aligns with the Urban Land Institute's Net Zero Imperative, a multiyear program providing research and technical assistance to public and private-sector leaders to accelerate decarbonization in the built environment through a combination of technical panels and long-term engagement. The goal of the effort is to help owners, cities, and other relevant constituents reduce or eliminate carbon emissions by providing concrete ideas and strategies to the beneficiaries of the panels and the general public.

## Acknowledgments

ULI Virginia is grateful to the River District Association and City of Danville for inviting ULI to explore strategies for revitalization of the North Main Street corridor study area. Special thanks to leadership for planning and assistance to the TAP team before and during the exercise, especially the following individuals:

- o Diana Schwartz - CEO - River District Association
- o Lashawn Farmer - Programs and Services Director - River District Association

ULI VA Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Team  
The TAP panel was selected from Urban Land Institute (ULI) membership based upon their unique qualifications, subject matter expertise, and project experience relative to the problem statement. For Danville's North Main Street program, the following subject matter expertise was the basis for panel selection:

- Economic development
- Community Planning
- Land Planning and Site Design
- Transportation Planning
- Landscape Architecture
- Community Engagement

### North Main Street Technical Assistance Panel Members

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# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## A. CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVE FOR THE STUDY

The River District Association (RDA), serving as the TAP sponsor, requested the ULI Virginia Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to develop a vision for the study area and recommendations to inform future development of a Small Area Plan to guide redevelopment of the area. The RDA sought recommendations and ideas to overcome barriers to redevelopment and reinvestment in the study area, and to encourage coordination and partnerships between stakeholders, including property representatives, non-governmental organizations, and the city.

## B. SUMMARY OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

### OPPORTUNITIES

- To create a neighborhood organization and engage committed partners from the public and private sectors to create a vision for the North Main Street community and to guide redevelopment that is economically viable and culturally authentic to the history of the community.
- To enhance a key neighborhood gateway and better define a brand consistent with its history, culture, and the community's vision for the future.
- To create a planning framework and economic development strategy to attract investment toward creation of better and more affordable housing options, more sustainable commercial land uses, a vibrant arts and cultural hub, and a more connected community.
- To improve transportation infrastructure to create a more walkable, safe pedestrian environment, more aesthetically pleasing public realm framing the commercial blocks, and improved connectivity to the River District and important neighborhood amenities beyond the study area.

### Challenges

- An aging building inventory and blighted properties.
- Lack of coordinated community engagement.
- Limited city engagement with community issues due to constraints (real or perceived) on funding, staff capacity, and vision for the community due to competing interests of other economic development opportunities outside the study area.
- Lack of functional, and meaningful, public green space.
- High volume traffic on Main Street and wide street sections that are barriers to a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Lack of convenient and cost-effective access to goods and services such as healthcare, employment centers, healthy and affordable food options, art and culture related activities, and youth development programs.
- Lack of a common community vision and barriers to cooperative efforts among multiple property owners, including absentee owners.

**To build and reknit holistic neighborhoods requires a new approach, one that:**

- taps into the power of small and incremental changes,
- leverages partnerships between big and small actors,
- harnesses a community vision, and
- emphasizes robust community engagement\*

**\*CNU: Building Local Strength – Emerging Strategies for Inclusive Development**

## C. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary Comments:

The panel felt strongly that there are some critical table-setting activities and decisions to be made prior to embarking upon a Small Area Plan process. There are many well-intentioned organizations and individuals with interest in revitalization of this neighborhood, but a lack of collaboration and commitment to creation and implementation of a plan. It is very important to establish an organizational framework for stakeholders to come together around a broad vision and realistic goals for the community, and to bring some structure to this effort, including identification of leadership from within the community.

### 1. Critical Path Action Items and High Priority Recommendations:

Action items related to creating a formal structure with accountable leadership and community representation are among the highest-level recommendations of the panel.

#### a. Convene a meeting, or series of meetings, with city and community leaders, and strategic planning partners (private and public sector) to advance several key objectives:

1. To create a shared commitment to the revitalization of North Main Street.
2. To connect partners from the public, private, non-profit sectors with community leaders around key assets and opportunities.
3. To create, develop, and maintain an active North Main Street Community Alliance comprised of key stakeholders, neighbors, and strategic partners to guide visioning and future development.
4. Develop and implement an equitable and inclusive community organizing and engagement plan rooted in building trust and relationships within the community.

### 2. Priority Action Items:

#### a. Physical Improvements

- Implement small, public-facing and achievable projects (small, early wins i.e. green space enhancements; wayfinding) that address safety and quality of life issues as signs of commitment to the community.
- Develop a transportation, mobility, and pedestrian safety plan, including improvements

at key intersections to calm traffic, reduce pavement and create safer pedestrian environments.

**b. Activate City-Owned Assets**

- Develop / Occupy existing buildings in the 600 block.
- Inventory all city owned properties within the study area and develop a plan for timely disposition of those properties (sale / occupy / etc).
- Evaluate potential improvements associated with city-owned properties for enhanced connectivity to the waterfront and downtown

**3. SUPPORTIVE ACTION ITEMS:**

**a. Policy**

- Designate the N. Main Street Corridor as an Old and Historic District.
- Amend zoning ordinance to establish a new zoning or overlay district for N. Main Street, potentially including form-based code elements.
- Review maintenance practices of public property and ROW to address visual impact of unkept areas within public view.
- Include a strategy for N. Main Street redevelopment and infill opportunities in the city Comprehensive Plan.

**b. Economic Development**

- Conduct some ecosystem mapping of assets at regional, local, and micro/ neighborhood-level to inform a N. Main Street economic development strategy.
- Evaluate business clustering opportunities (i.e. food / art / music / maker-space) to encourage development that reflects the history and culture of the community.

**c. Long Term Organization & Open Engagement**

- Promote locally-owned, long-term ownership and investment around a shared vision for N. Main Street, guided by leadership across all stakeholders.
- Evaluate the use of community action grants as a funding tool.
- Reconvene, celebrate wins with the community, and document your progress along the journey.



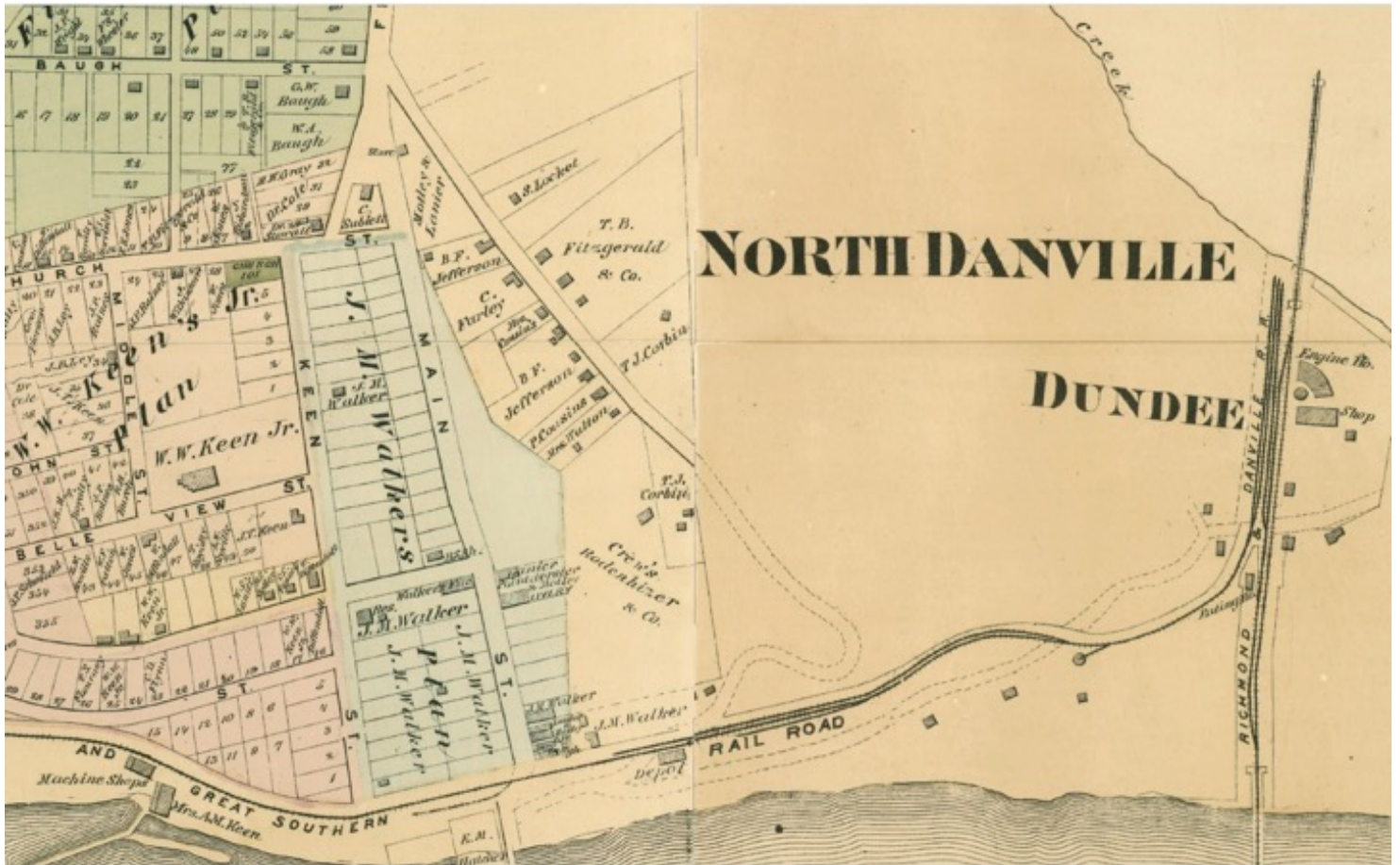
## II. THE CHALLENGE: FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY AND THE TAP PROCESS

The study area for the North Main Street TAP is roughly bounded by West Thomas Street to the north, Worsham Street to the east, Riverside Drive to the south, and Keen Street to the west. The area is defined by a north/south corridor along Main Street that climbs steeply from the Dan River to an identifiable node at the intersection of Main and Church Streets, and includes a mix of commercial, residential, and ecclesiastical structures. The study area also overlaps with the North Danville Historic District, which has been recognized on the National Register of Historic Places.

Figure 1: North Main Study Area



Figure 2: North Main Street Neighborhood 1877



### A. CITY VISION AND TAP OBJECTIVES

The River District Association served as the program sponsor, requesting the ULI Virginia Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to consider some guidelines for development of a Small Area Plan and redevelopment strategies as a catalyst for revitalization of the historic North Main Street community. The city desires a plan for the community that maintains its cultural identity and enhances the unique assets and characteristics of the community within any redevelopment strategies. They seek to encourage redevelopment that exhibits the following characteristics:

- A mixed-use pattern of development that is safe and pedestrian friendly.
- Workforce housing, grocery stores, public open spaces and arts and entertainment venues.
- Streetscape and traffic improvements that provide for safe bike and pedestrian connectivity and unified design standards for the public realm adjacent to active street-level uses.
- Small neighborhood gathering spaces and more urban landscaping.
- Locally owned businesses, and a potential arts cluster to create a destination with creative placemaking and that references the cultural history of the area.

Some of the observed advantages of the study area identified by the TAP sponsor include the following:

- Proximity to the Dan River and River District.
- Recent activity to reinvest in existing, aging properties.
- Unique history and culture of the area.
- Availability of some funds for planning activities and minor property upgrades.

The study area does present real, or perceived, challenges to investment and some inherent disadvantages in the TAP application and by the TAP panel from stakeholder input including the following:

- Aging structures
- High volumes of traffic on Main Street and wide street sections, creating challenges to establish a harmonious, pedestrian-friendly environment.
- A culture of non-governmental agencies and faith organization efforts to support those in need within the community, but a lack of cooperation among those groups to maximize results.



Image 3: North Main Facades. Existing Storefront

The city of Danville is prepared to develop a Small Area Plan to guide future development within the study area. The stated goal of the Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) was to provide guidance for development of that plan and for strategies to catalyze redevelopment and improve community engagement in the planning process. The city has previously used a national Main Street program approach successfully to implement incremental improvements with a priority focus on a limited areas as a catalyst to drive long-term improvements. This should be a continued part of a plan for North Main Street.

**Questions for the ULI TAP Panel:** The ULI TAP panel was asked to specifically address the following issues:

1. Develop a list of goals and objectives for a Small Area Plan process.
2. Suggest an approach for meaningful community engagement. Include recommendations for acknowledging and integrating the culture of place into a successful plan.
3. Provide a conceptual plan for priority improvement area with appropriate land uses and urban form.
4. What are the recommended short term and long-term next steps?
5. What are some public infrastructure improvements or enabling projects that might benefit all parties and spur redevelopment?

The ULI TAP program is designed to provide a valuable resource for communities to inform future planning efforts related to important land use issues. The TAP process for North Main Street was a partnership between the River District Association (RDA), ULI Virginia, and the ULI member panel selected specifically for this challenge. The process included a review of background materials provided by the sponsor prior to the team's arrival, followed by a two-day program working locally near the study area.





## B. THE TAP METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH TO THE CHALLENGE

The ULI TAP program is designed to provide a valuable resource for communities to inform future planning efforts related to important land use issues. The TAP process for North Main Street was a partnership between the River District Association (RDA), ULI Virginia, and the ULI member panel selected specifically for this challenge. The process included a review of background materials provided by the sponsor prior to the team's arrival, followed by a two-day program working locally near the study area.

The general outline of the two-day program for the North Main study was as follows:

## ULI TAP PROGRAM AGENDA

### Tuesday September 5, 2023

10:30 – 10:45 am	Team arrival and set-up
10:45 – 12:00 pm	Site Tour: TAP team + RDA Staff
12:00 – 5:00 pm	Stakeholder Interviews

- Lashawn Farmer – River District Association
- Earl Reynolds - Deputy City Manager
- Renee Burton - Director of Planning and Zoning
- Amanda Paez - Chief Equity Officer, Assistant to City Manager
- Corrie Bobe: Director of Economic Development and Tourism
- Brian Dunevant - Public Works Engineer
- Susan McCulloch - Housing Development Division Director
- Kelvin Perry - Assistant Director of Economic Development
- Pastor Jessica Hearne – Grace and Main Fellowship
- Shakita Clark - business owner and property owner
- Bryant Hood - City Councilman
- Wayne Allen - business owner and property owner (North Theatre)
- Pastor Tommy Crews – Pastor, Righteous Christian Church
- Cindi Poteat - Community Health worker
- Kelly Wyatt - Dan River Nonprofit Network
- Ashlyn 'AKA - Blondie' - Resident of North Danville and property owner

### Wednesday September 6, 2023

8:30 – 12:00 pm	Panel working session
12:00 – 1:00 pm	Working lunch
1:00 – 5:00 pm	Panel working session
5:00 – 6:00 pm	Presentation of recommendations to sponsor and guests
6:00 pm	Program Close

The panel findings and recommendations were presented to representatives from the RDA and invited members of the public to conclude the two-day TAP program. This report documents the overall process, observations, and the final recommendations of the panel.

### III. SUMMARY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

The summary of existing conditions was developed based upon various inputs to the ULI TAP team prior to, and during the program including the following sources of information:

The summary of existing conditions was developed based upon various inputs to the ULI TAP team prior to, and during the program including the following sources of information:

- review of background materials provided by the city and River District Association
- observations made while touring the study area during the program
- direct conversation with stakeholders during the program

Background materials provided for review by the panel prior to the program included historical context, applicable regulatory and planning guidelines, and physical site conditions of the subject properties. Resources included links to the city Comprehensive Plan documents, physical maps, transportation plans, zoning, economic development reports, history background, and housing market studies. Touring the site and surrounding areas gave the ULI panel context for existing land uses and important land use relationships beyond the study area. Stakeholder interviews with RDA staff, city staff and administration, local community and non-profit leaders, and property owners provided further ideas around visions for the area, major concerns, and a sense of potential resources to implement change.



Existing Storefronts





The study area for the North Main Street TAP is roughly bounded by West Thomas Street to the north, Worsham Street to the east, Riverside Drive to the south, and Keen Street to the west. The area is defined by a north/south corridor along Main Street that climbs steeply from the Dan River to an identifiable node at the intersection of Main and Church Streets, and includes a mix of commercial, residential, and ecclesiastical structures. The study area also overlaps with the North Danville Historic District, which has been recognized on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **1. Physical Site Characteristics**

- a. There are some significant structures of historic or cultural significance to the community fronting Main Street. Many structures are in poor condition, but some have been renovated to varying degrees to support new uses.
- b. The North Theatre is a visual landmark for the corridor.
- c. The public realm, from street curb to building façade, is lacking some of the amenities that make for safe and inviting pedestrian zones such as consistent design vocabulary of paving materials, site furnishings, landscaping, canopy trees, lighting, and wayfinding. The width of Main Street and heavy traffic volume contribute to a less than ideal pedestrian experience.
- d. Existing parking inventory appears sufficient under normal conditions. However, inventory may be stressed in the future if development activity increases, prompting a need for better designations for public parking and delineation of on-street spaces.
- e. There is a lack of significant public open space but there does exist a few opportunities to create small pocket parks or public gathering spaces within the study area including the triangle formed by North Main and Worsham Street, North Main and Keen Street, and the city property at North Main and US 58.

### **2. Regulatory Framework**

The 2030 Comprehensive Plan is relatively silent regarding future land use changes within the study area except for a general statement about protecting and enhancing existing legacy neighborhoods. The Plan Danville process is incorporating significant public engagement to develop recommendations for all areas of the city. That process should help inform the future Small Area Plan process as well.

### **3. Access / Transportation / Connectivity**

- a. Key intersections of Main at Keen and Worsham are extremely wide and difficult to navigate for pedestrians or cyclists. There appear to be opportunities for reconfiguration to improve the geometry of these conditions to make for safer streets while creating some additional space for landscaping.
- b. Public transportation includes a city bus route on Main Street, but lacks east-west connectivity into the adjacent neighborhoods. The bus stops are not inviting, but there are active plans to improve them.



View from N Main looking up to North Danville

View from N Main looking to River



#### 4. Market Conditions

a. There was no market demand data specific to the study area but overall demand in the city for workforce housing seems to be strong. Quality housing with the study area is needed but the amount of housing inventory, new or renovated, requires some additional study. What is clear is the location of housing is not in close proximity to employment opportunities, suggesting a combination of needs for public transportation and attracting new business to the community.

b. The panel received no market data regarding office or commercial uses, beyond anecdotal input from stakeholders regarding recent activity and interest in the area. While there is some interest, it seems like potential investors are in a wait and see mode, not anxious to make the first move.

#### 5. Other Notable Existing Conditions

a. The auto repair shop adjacent to the North Theater is in the heart of the community and while it may not be an ideal land use, it is a place that exhibits community activity, full of conversation with locals conversing on their “front porch” view of the neighborhood. While the planning temptation may be to assign other uses to that property, it does reflect a sustainable community gathering place with some character.

Auto Shop



## IV. ISSUE IDENTIFICATION: KEY ISSUES, CHALLENGE, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Issue identification for the ULI TAP panel typically results from the exploration and discovery process including information extracted from the following sources of information:

- review of sponsor background materials
- a tour of the physical study area assets
- stakeholder interviews.

The identification of key issues and recommendations focused on the following Guiding Principles as a framework for discussion:

- Identify land uses that are appropriate for the study area with respect to scale, community character, market viability, and relative to adjacent development patterns.
- Uses should be consistent with the city goals for mixed-use development, for creating a fully functional neighborhood, and supporting community objectives to respond to the history and culture of place.
- Focus on land uses that are market-driven to ensure long-term viability and sustainability.
- Consider improvements that create or enhance opportunities for improved connectivity within the study area, to the River District, and to neighborhood services beyond the study area with infrastructure for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists, as well as improved connections to public transportation facilities.
- Following is a discussion of key issues and a summary of key challenges and opportunities, all of which serve as the basis for the panel recommendations that follow.

### A. KEY ISSUES

#### i. LACK OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FOCUS

There appears to be a lot of good intentions directed at efforts to revitalize the North Main community, but those efforts are muted by a lack of organizational structure and leadership to effect change. In essence, there is a lack of ownership to advance a coordinated effort for improvement across the many stakeholder groups with vested interest in the community. This includes residents, religious-based organizations, non-profits, the city of Danville, private developers, and the RDA.

There is a real need to establish a formal structure to develop and guide a vision and change for the area and, in the absence of that structure, there is no mechanism for addressing the critical issues effectively.

Understanding the city has plans for a Small Area Plan development, the panel firmly believes that formulation of a lead neighborhood organization with leadership from within the community is the first critical step to guide visioning for the community prior to development of a physical plan.



## ii. LACK OF A COMMUNITY VISION AND COORDINATED PLAN

A Small Area Plan, with the proper neighborhood organizations in place, is certainly a key tool for guiding future redevelopment efforts. The lack of such guidance can be a barrier to redevelopment, and having a good plan gives the city a tool for encouraging good development and a basis for formal review of development plans. Adopted Small Area Plans provide the development community and investors a vision, and some assurances that proposals consistent with these guiding documents should be met with some level of community support, thus reducing some risk in the development process. Finally, the Small Area Plan process must be rooted in community engagement. When properly executed, the result is a plan that reflects the community needs and vision, with support from community leadership.

A well-functioning neighborhood requires that employment and recreation opportunities, neighborhood-serving retail, schools, public gathering space, and affordable housing are all available within a walkable, transit-oriented environment.\*

\*CNU: Building Local Strength – Emerging Strategies for Inclusive Development

## iii. NEED FOR IMPROVED TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

Safe pedestrian crossings, excessive street sections, and poor connectivity to key destinations beyond the neighborhood are key issues relative to encouraging redevelopment of the study area. Some of the key transportation issues include the following:

- **Street Sections:**

North Main Street exhibits the characteristics of streets in many older communities that give preference to the automobile, resulting in a less appealing, and less safe, pedestrian environment. Narrow sidewalks, lack of urban tree canopy, and wide intersections that are difficult to cross are urban design elements that can be addressed with thoughtful design modifications. The intersections at Main and Worsham, and Main and Keen are particularly challenging but offer some opportunity for improvement. Consideration should be given to “Complete Streets” and “Context Sensitive Design” concepts that emphasize right-size streets (minimal pavement sections) and incorporate safe, multi-modal options for pedestrians and cyclists.

## Worsham at Main



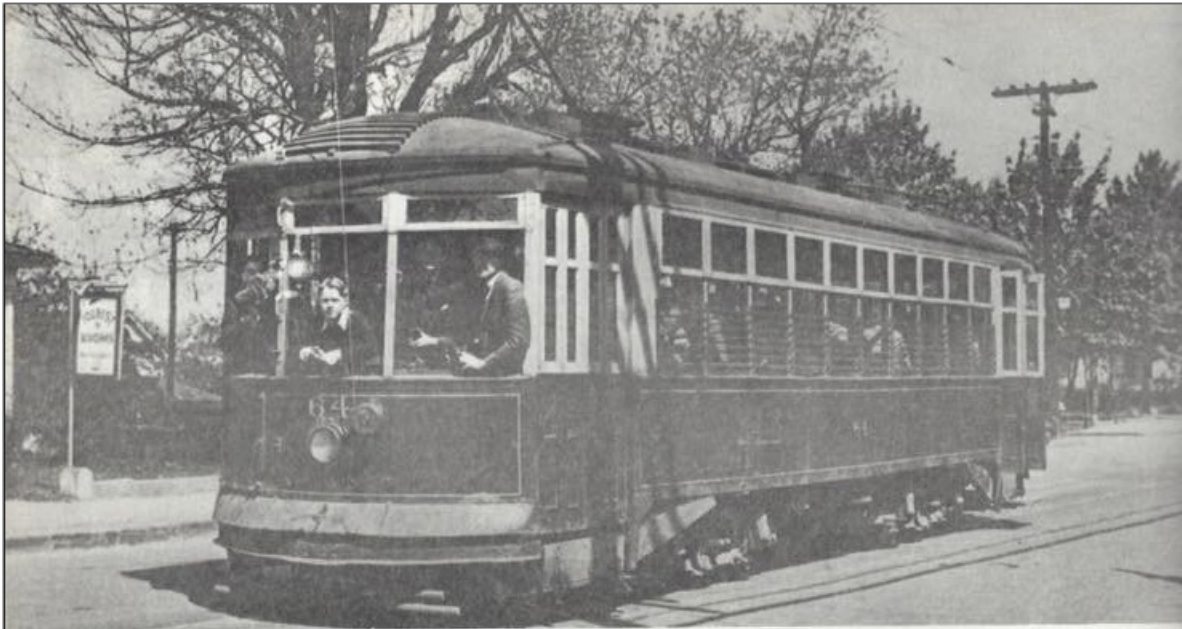
- **Parking:**

The current parking inventory within the study area includes limited surface parking and on-street parking along the commercial blocks. Redevelopment plans should reassess parking requirements based upon new development, potential shared use parking between commercial and residential uses, and the impact of improved multi-modal facilities for walking, biking, and public transportation on parking demand.

- **Transit**

North Main Street is a transit corridor with stops located within the study area. Existing stops need to be upgraded to properly serve transit users, and additional routes, or improved pedestrian accessibility, into the residential areas feeding into the corridor should be evaluated.

## 10 N Main Street Trolley circa 1938



6 (Top) Car no.64, at end of line in North Danville, date probably April 1938. (Stephen D. Maguire)  
 (Bottom) Car no.66, at end of line in North Danville, date probably April 1938. (David F. Burnette)

- **Connectivity:**

The study area corridor is very walkable, although improvements to the street section and public realm would create a better pedestrian experience. Connectivity to the River, the River District, and community services beyond the study area would benefit from improved pedestrian paths, bike lanes, and transit services.

#### **iv. URBAN FORM and THE PUBLIC REALM**

The study area exhibits traditional suburban residential patterns of development and maintains the original scale and urban form of small-town main streets with single-story structures, limited surface parking, narrow walks, and minimal landscaping or tree canopy. The commercial frontages offer some interesting architectural styles, including the iconic North Theatre marquis, but there is a general need for varying degrees of renovation and maintenance. There is little placemaking or destination feel to the area.

North Theatre



## B. KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The panel developed the following list of key challenges and opportunities resulting from our site tour and stakeholder interviews. The list is not in order of importance, and further prioritization of issues is more specifically addressed with recommendations in Section V of this report.

### CHALLENGES:

- Food insecurity – access to healthy, affordable groceries
- Housing insecurity – access to affordable, quality, and safe living conditions
- Lack of trust among residents and property owners resulting from a pattern of disinvestment and lack of attention to systemic problems
- Large number of blighted properties
- Difficulty engaging the community consistently and in organized manner. Lack of community champions.
- Lack of opportunities for local youth participation and youth advocacy
- Limited access to transportation, libraries, employment centers, healthy and affordable groceries, goods and services
- The large number of property owners, including absentee owners, is a challenge to implementing vision and coordinated action plan
- Pedestrian safety concerns at key intersections
- Perceived public safety and security issues
- Lack of visual continuity, branding and wayfinding to delineate neighborhood boundaries



**OPPORTUNITIES:**

- Vacant and underutilized commercial space fronting Mian Street
- Location within the City Enterprise Zone designation
- Enhancements to the Public Realm
  - Develop design standards for streetscape to apply throughout the study area
  - Create wider sidewalks
  - Increase overall pervious area
  - Add shade and design rhythm with major street trees, lighting, and street furnishings
  - Improve bus stops
- Infill, densification and mixed-use
  - Consider additional height and intensity appropriate for adjacent land uses
  - Infill with a mix of affordable residential products
  - Economic Development strategy to attract a mix of uses, including residential, professional offices, entertainment, maker space, and the arts.
- Leverage the proximity to downtown to attract a commercial cluster around existing, successful destinations – ex: Moon River Thai Bistro; North Theater
- Improved Transportation and Connectivity
  - Reconfigure the geometry of intersections at Keen and Worsham to calm traffic and provide safer pedestrian crossings
  - Enhance pedestrian connectivity to the riverfront amenities
  - Add or enhance green space/open space to create a “sense of place”
  - Integrate more public art into public spaces



Worsham at Main green space

### C. OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

Opportunities for change are an expression of the potential for change based upon specific conditions of assets that might present a path to change with the willingness or partnership among landowners, developers, the city, and other stakeholders. The ULI TAP panel considered properties or assets that seem to represent potential, short-term opportunities for change. This typically includes conditions such as the following:

- Vacant or blighted properties
- City or development authority owned properties
- Undeveloped land
- Under-utilized properties
- Properties held by absentee owners
- Property for sale, or with a willing seller

It is important to note that an opportunity for change does not necessarily indicate a willing property owner or suggest any active plans regarding change of use or ownership. Within the study area, the panel identified some interesting opportunities for change:

#### 1. Redevelopment Opportunity Site: The 609 Keen St property between Church St. and the North Theatre.

This represents one of the largest parcel in the study area and a potential redevelopment opportunity that could frame revitalization for the community, visually and from a land use perspective. The site is large enough to accommodate a multi-family, or mixed-use product, some open space, and shared parking solutions. It could provide additional housing to activate the streets, support local businesses, and enhance the urban form along the corridor.

Keen Street opportunity site.



**2. City-owned (IDA) property at the 600 block of Main Street = 620, 624, 628**

These are critical commercial storefronts that could help catalyze reinvestment if activated with appropriate uses.

**3. Intersection and Green space at Main and Kushner and US 58**

This roughly 2.5 acre site is city-controlled and critically located at the gateway into the neighborhood. It should be evaluated for enhancement as public green space or any redevelopment options not in conflict with its current public works functions.

**4. City-owned Intersection at Main and Worsham**

A small oasis of open space could be expanded with some modifications to the street section and intersection geometry to create a more meaningful community space. Reduced roadway width and realignment of how Worsham meets Main Street may reduce pavement and give back some real estate to the open space.

**5. Improved transit stops**

This opportunity is already on the city's radar and related to overall improvements to transit service in terms of routes and reduced headways.

## V. A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION: RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES

This section provides a framework for an action plan including key recommendations and priority action items.

The recommendations are focused on actionable items related to creation and implementation of a long-term vision for the SW quadrant of Danville Circle. All recommendations are viewed as important, and connected, but some are deemed a higher priority as they are time-sensitive or represent enabling projects or actions necessary to set the table for other actions.

The Priority Recommendations represent the panel's suggested order of importance for the top three priorities. The Additional Recommendations do not imply a chronological order of action, but may occur concurrently in support of the priority actions, assuming they do not distract focus or drain resources away from those priorities.

Inclusive development is about building communities, not just housing. A holistic vision for community development is missing from many long-neglected neighborhoods. It's hard to focus on the big picture when the problems are immediate and severe—yet without that vision, neighborhoods may be caught in long-term poverty cycles or waves of displacement. A community vision—addressing cultural, social, health, and economic concerns, formed through robust community participation—is a necessary part of a successful revitalization effort.\*

\*CNU: Building Local Strength – Emerging Strategies for Inclusive Development

### A. HIGH PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS and CRITICAL PATH ACTION ITEMS

The panel's Highest Priority Recommendations encourage a focus on developing a community engagement plan, identifying community leadership, and creating a formal structure to focus on the future of the North Main Street community is the highest priority recommendation from the panel. All future planning efforts should reflect guidance from this structure, including development of a Small Area Plan or initial infrastructure improvements. A critical first step would be the development of a North Main Street Alliance, or similar entity, that has shared commitment and ownership to the revitalization of the neighborhood and co-lead community engagement efforts. A steering committee model, composed of individuals from within the neighborhood, could be an effective way to assign representatives and champions charged with engaging various parts of the community (e.g., youth, families, seniors, etc.).

The following action items are considered high priority, enabling actions to set the table for future planning efforts. They should be considered as interdependent of one-another, but item 1 below is a necessary first step.

1. **Convene a meeting with City, RDA, community leaders, and additional planning partners to:**
  - a. Create a shared commitment to the revitalization of North Main Street, and to
  - b. Connect partners and champions around assets and opportunities

2. Create, develop, and maintain an active North Main Street Community Alliance comprised of sector stakeholders, community champions, and strategic allies
3. Develop and implement an equitable and inclusive community organizing and engagement plan rooted in building trust and relationships with the North Main Street community

## **B. RECOMMENDED PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS:**

**PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS** are also deemed as vital to any success but are somewhat dependent upon the table-setting actions above. This is not to say that they must be executed or considered in a particular order. Market conditions will often reveal opportunities that may require some urgency but there should be some caution to making decisions or physical improvements that are not yet supported by prior guidance from the groups established to guide activity in the community. For example, any immediate opportunity to activate space on the 600 block with appropriate uses (all uses may not be appropriate) should be seriously considered as part of an early win and catalyst for other positive moves in the area.

### **1. Activate City Assets**

- Redevelop/ Occupy existing buildings at 600 block (ASAP)
- Create an inventory and strategize plan for disposition of vacant city owned properties and for improved connectivity to waterfront.

### **2. Physical Planning - Implement public facing achievable projects (small, early wins!)**

- Implement public-facing, achievable projects that enhance the neighborhood aesthetic and address needs that do not require long lead times or large private investment (ex. Bus stop improvements; wayfinding; Green space renovation at Main and Worsham)
- Develop a transportation, mobility, and pedestrian safety plan. This plan should assess opportunities such as the following:
  1. reduce road sections, thereby reducing pervious area
  2. improve pedestrian crosswalks
  3. add bike lanes
  4. improve bus stops
  5. add wayfinding

### **3. Small Area Plan Development:**

Creation of the Small Area Plan will create a long-term vision, help build reinvestment interest in the area, give the community a stake in the vision, and give the city another tool for guiding and reviewing development proposals.

## **C. RECOMMENDED SUPPORTIVE ACTION ITEMS:**

**SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS** are no less important recommendations, but may have longer time horizons associated with implementation and measures for success.

## 1. Policy

- a. Designate N. Main Street Corridor as Old and Historic District
- b. Amend zoning ordinance to establish a new zoning district, or overlay district, for North Main Street including possible form-based code elements.
- c. Consider conditions and building permit exceptions to promote maker-space, locally-owned and artist clusters as a means of attracting activity and urban pioneers that often can be catalyst for revitalization.
- d. Review maintenance practices of public property and ROW to address visual impact of unkept areas within public view.
- e. Include North Main Street redevelopment and infill opportunities in the city Comprehensive Plan.

## 2. Economic Development

- a. Perform an ecosystem mapping of assets at regional, local, and micro/neighborhood-level to incorporate into a North Main Street economic development strategy. Any strategy must be market-driven to provide the greatest chance of success.
- b. Evaluate business clustering opportunities as an economic development strategy (i.e. food / art / music / maker-space)

## 3. Long Term Organization & Open Engagement

- a. Pursue Community Action Grants for businesses and community groups to implement their own projects in the area.
- b. Create a neighborhood services department
- c. Reconvene, celebrate your wins, and note progress for public consumption

## D. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS and BIG IDEAS

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS from the panel are offered as ideas worth consideration to supplement the overall vision for the neighborhood. Some of these recommendations represent “big Ideas” – potential moves that require creativity, collaboration, funding resources, and perhaps a little luck – but can be accomplished with enough commitment and partnerships across all stakeholders.

- Leverage *business pitch competitions* from business owners and developers for vacant, blighted, and underutilized properties.
- Facilitate a *re-branding process* to inform design standards, signage, and marketing for the neighborhood. North Danville”; “North Main Street”; “The Hill”; “Fruit Town”; “E Claiborne” – area all names that surfaced during stakeholder interviews but how do residents and local business owners think of the neighborhood? Brand development is not a gimmick but should reflect an authenticity of the places based upon its history, culture, and how it wants to be perceived going forward. The brand must be supported by a plan and an economic development strategy.
- Develop a *public art program* that reflects the history and culture of the neighborhood. Curate art installations through competitions using community residents to jury submittals. Consider a cluster of maker space and regular programming of building and outdoor spaces for art-centric events.

Public Art



- Create and *events calendar* to program outdoor amenity spaces and drive activity to the area.
- Establish *design standards* for the public realm: Improvements should include wide sidewalks, pedestrian-level lighting, landscaping zones, street trees, and street furnishings. Improve pedestrian/bike safety with new crossings and bike infrastructure.
- *Focus on Youth*
  - Co-fund and develop a *youth innovation center* (like the Six Points Innovation Center 6 (PIC) model in Highland Park, Richmond). Foster soft and hard skills around creativity and entrepreneurial mindsets.
  - Connect to *Project Imagine* - community violence prevention program Project Imagine | Danville, VA - Official Website ([danville-va.gov](http://danville-va.gov))
  - Leverage social enterprise models - e.g. church bike drive - train young people to work on bikes in bike shop; landscape public spaces; murals
  - Connect youth to whitewater center and river environmental education - similar to Blue Sky Fund or boat building program by Seaport Foundation in DC
- Identify clustering opportunities to create a unique, local destination (art; food; music; maker-space; start-ups, etc.). Build upon authentic connections to the arts unique to North Main Street, including:
  - Music: local barbershop rap battles
  - Music: local music video production
  - Local culinary arts
  - The North Theater

- Legacy of existing and past public art installations and murals
  - **Lean into Food:** Address food insecurity by building synergy and brand around local food production and sourcing to local restaurants and food banks. Support and connect food systems efforts like Grace + Main garden, and local Free Food Distribution programs by local pastors and Blondie/George's grocery. Develop new community gardens on vacant or underutilized property.
  - **Leverage Grant Opportunities**
    - VDACS AFID Grants - Planning, Infrastructure, Facility
    - Enterprise Zone Grants - Real Property Investment Grant (RPIG)
- Support Housing Nonprofits** and programs to help seniors and residents make improvements to their homes. Consider special incentives for Seniors or people that have lived in the community 10+ years?
- **Offer scholarships** or transportation to Citizen's Academy for N. Main Street St community members so that they can learn how to work with city and about programs
  - **Big Idea:** Revive or reopen Market Garden ballpark as community gathering space for games and events
  - **Big Idea:** Encourage consolidation of parcels at 609 Keen to accommodate redevelopment of a signature mixed-use project. Study acquisition of the site by the City or redevelopment authority to set-up a developer RFP process for purchase and redevelopment of the site.
  - **Big Idea:** Design and construct a dedicated pedestrian crossing from North Main Street across the river to the downtown. A new connection could be associated with the existing Main Street bridges or located near the historical crossing extension aligned with the terminus of Worsham street.

## VI. RESPONSES TO SPONSOR QUESTIONS FOR THE PANEL

### 1. DEVELOP A LIST OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR A SMALL AREA PLAN PROCESS.

The panel strongly recommend that development of the Small Area Plan should follow, and be guided, by a leadership structure that includes a neighborhood organization responsible for future planning efforts and improvements in the community prior to commencement of SAP process. A Small Area Plan should provide the following guidance:

- **Define the perceived community boundaries** – what are the appropriate limits of a fully functional neighborhood for North Main Street? It is important to get community input with respect to the question “ how do people perceive the limits of their community?”
- **Urban Form** – The plan an include aspirational images or sketches to illustrate how building masses should address the street, scale and height, where parking should be located, pedestrian connections, and organization of open space. This guidance is a typical element of form-based codes and becomes an enforcement tool for review of site plan applications.
- **Mobility Framework Plan** - Identify key **connective tissue** between the neighborhood and places beyond the neighborhood, including the riverfront and downtown. There will be opportunities for important connective tissue between the community and key destinations including community centers, downtown, riverfront amenities, shopping and services, schools, healthcare, and employment centers. This should include a Bike and pedestrian framework plan.



- **Transportation framework plan** – this plan should address improvements to the Main Street cross-section, pedestrian zones, intersection improvements, and signage.
- **History and cultural framework plan** – the North Main Street community has an interesting history and story to be told as part of the evolution of Danville as a city. The Small Area Plan can reference this history while providing guidance for branding, urban form, design standards, and land use. Facilitate for youth/young adults to interview neighbors and interpret or retell the story of their community and then share visions for the future.
- **Open space plan** – The plan should identify locations for enhancement of existing open space and incorporation of new public open space where appropriate.
- **Housing Strategies** - Housing Strategies: The Small Area Plan should address the need for more variety in housing products and more affordable options from a land use perspective. That would typically include careful consideration of where residential uses would be permitted, including infill locations, above non-residential uses, and as accessory dwelling units. Provisions for additional height and density would provide some incentive for more affordable housing products. Form-based guidelines promoting buildings at or near rights-of-way limits would help reinforce the traditional main street pattern of development and create a stronger sense of place
- **Zoning** – the plan should establish zoning within the study area. This may validate existing zoning districts, rezoning of some parcels, or creation of a new overlay for the area. An overlay district has the benefit of providing some creativity and flexibility, including potential for some form-based elements, that may give the development community some incentives to bring new products to the area.

It is recommended that a companion piece to the completed plan include a one-page plan abstract that clearly communicates the vision, a framework land use plan, and action items. This is a particularly useful communication tool for communities that historically have not been highly engaged in the planning process or have cultural, or language barriers to engagement.

## 2. SUGGEST AN APPROACH FOR MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. INCLUDE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACKNOWLEDGING AND INTEGRATING THE CULTURE OF PLACE INTO A SUCCESSFUL PLAN.

Prioritize the organization, structure, and creation of a community organization with a dedicated mission for guiding revitalization of the neighborhood. A meaningful community engagement process is rooted in understanding who needs to be at the table. It will be necessary to effectively organize key stakeholders, neighbors, local government, and strategic partners.

Following are some recommended elements of a successful **Community Engagement Plan** for North Main Street:

**Focus on Community Values** as the foundation for a robust Community Engagement Process. Frame engagement around some fundamental values of importance to the community including the following:

## i. Community

1. Understanding what community engagement has already been done and what works best for this community from prior engagement efforts is important. Historically marginalized communities and communities of color are often overlooked during the engagement process or over-engaged without seeing value for their efforts.
2. Reducing barriers to engagement takes effort. Determine the best ways (time of day, day of the week, meeting venues, transportation, etc) to communicate and engage with community in person. Consider childcare, language interpreters, and free transportation among other ways to increase participation. The goal is to get meaningful participation in terms of numbers as well as representation across age groups, gender, race, and role within the community.
3. Identify the most trusted leaders in the community and get them engaged in leadership roles with the process.

**ii. History and Culture** – North Main Street has a unique role in the history of Danville, a role that can inform plans for revitalization. There are residents of the city that have connections to that history and a significant body of documentation recording the evolution from a working community to its present day condition. Recreating history is not the goal, but creating a fully functional neighborhood that recalls the live-work-play conditions of the past is a place to start.

**iii. Storytelling** – Storytelling is important to most every culture, not only for historical reference but to communicate core values and a sense of place for a people and places. North Main Street has stories to tell and collecting and curating these stories can help guide planning efforts and encourage residents to take ownership of the process. It can also help

**iv. Relationships / Social Networks** – Identify those key networks that survive change and hold connections to the history of the place. These networks might contain trusted leaders and offer some insight for getting more people engaged in the process. community issues. Others may be hesitant to respond to meeting notices or perhaps have obstacles to participation due to physical disabilities or poor access to transportation. It is important to identify these people, seek them out, and provide whatever assistance may be necessary to help them get engaged.

**vii. Physical Interaction** – Posting meeting notices on walls and on internet websites is not enough to get quality engagement from some neighborhoods depending upon demographics, income, and education levels. Having a presence at community events, church services, parks, on sidewalks, and old-fashioned knocking on doors is often necessary to get personal connections to people to boost participation or obtain personal stories.

**viii. Self Sufficiency** - A successful engagement process will include significant internal leadership from within the community, in partnership with stakeholders to result in a process that sustains itself. A process that seems forced upon the community will tend to die on the vine, but a community that feels

**ix. Engage the Youth Demographic** – A Small Area Plan is by its very nature, a forward looking document and therefore should be influenced by a younger demographic that does not see the limitations of past planning practices. Young adults and children should have a place

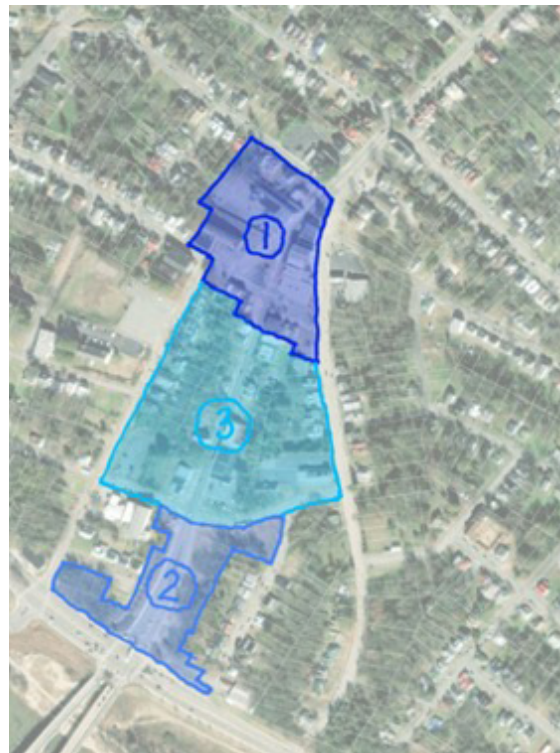
at the table during the process. In addition to participation with the general population, it is often productive to have separate activities targeted to a younger demographic as well.

**x. Follow Through and Feedback Loops** - Critical to any successful engagement process are mechanisms to obtain feedback and then communicate to the community how that feedback is being processed and informing decisions. This level of documentation and transparency assures participants that their time is valued, their input is meaningful and there is tangible follow-through to implement ideas. Ultimately, this approach will build trust.

### 3. PROVIDE A CONCEPTUAL PLAN FOR PRIORITY IMPROVEMENT AREA WITH APPROPRIATE LAND USES AND URBAN FORM.

#### Priority Improvement Area

The Priority Improvement Areas illustrated here are intended to describe areas with interrelated elements and function within the neighborhood and do not suggest a ranking of importance. Areas 1 and 2 are key gateways along Main Street at key intersections. Recommendations for improvements to these areas to enhance the gateway function, improve the green spaces, and make for safer pedestrian conditions are described within this report. Area 2 includes the core commercial frontage blocks and represents the areas most in need of facade improvements, activation of empty spaces, streetscape improvements, and placemaking.



## Conceptual Improvement Area



The exhibit above illustrates some opportunity areas for redevelopment or improvements that could have significant impacts on the urban form and aesthetic of the study area. The exhibit illustrates how redevelopment of the Keen Street opportunity site could strengthen the urban form, address parking needs, and frame an enhanced public green space. Also illustrated is one example of an intersection improvement to calm traffic, resolve the angle of the intersection where Worsham meets Main Street, and enhance the public green space.

#### 4. WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED SHORT TERM AND LONG-TERM NEXT STEPS?

Refer to Section V. above *“A Framework for Action: Recommendations And Priorities”*

#### 5. WHAT ARE SOME PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS OR ENABLING PROJECTS THAT MIGHT BENEFIT ALL PARTIES AND SPUR REDEVELOPMENT?

- **Streetscape Improvements** (sidewalks, bump-outs, lighting, tree canopy)
- **Traffic calming** – reduce pavement sections; curb bump-outs to protect on-street parking; highly visible crosswalks and pedestrian warning lights
- **Open space** – enhance existing; develop new
- **City stormwater site** – enhance with landscaping, signage, and public amenities. Mirror downtown/RDA gateway features at N. Main Street (i.e water fountain, mural, and lighting) to cultivate and signal a sense of connectivity between the two communities
- **Modify key intersections** - reduce overall pavement, reduce length of pedestrian crossings, and convert paving to green space -
- **Evaluate closure of Keen** - create more green space or support redevelopment of large adjacent properties
- **Transit stops improvements**

## APPENDIX: REFERENCES AND CASE STUDIES

### **Appendix A.**

#### **Resource Guide for Community Engagement:**

***“Virginia Community Voice Blueprint”*** [viriniacommunityvoice.org](http://viriniacommunityvoice.org)

### **Appendix B.**

#### **Resource: Inclusive Development (Excerpts from)**

***Cnu: “Building Local Strength – Emerging Strategies For Inclusive Development”***

### **A Holistic Approach**

This disinvestment in many cities and increased development pressure in others, threatens legacy residents with displacement. Providing access to quality, affordable housing is extraordinarily important, yet a singular focus on housing, which is at the core of so many revitalization programs, can fail residents in a number of ways.

A **well-functioning neighborhood** requires that employment and recreation opportunities, neighborhood-serving retail, schools, public gathering space, and affordable housing are all available within a walkable, transit-oriented environment.

To build and reknit **holistic neighborhoods** requires a new approach, one that:

- taps into the power of small and incremental changes,
- leverages partnerships between big and small actors,
- harnesses a community vision, and
- emphasizes robust community engagement

While large-scale projects and big funding sources continue to be important in places that lack affordable housing, incremental development can complement this traditional approach in several ways. Smaller, more gradual changes occur at a pace and on a scale that does not overwhelm the character of a place. Innovation, flexibility, adaptation, and a nimble response are all baked in.

National and local nonprofits, philanthropic institutions, and other non-governmental entities are essential partners in this endeavor. So too are the local leaders, advocates, and residents who hold a wealth of knowledge and know what is needed most acutely. Communities need maximum assistance from these groups who are making investments in hundreds of underserved neighborhoods across the U.S., often investments that are not possible in the for-profit and government sectors.

Cities themselves must also play a critical role by maximizing infrastructure investments to design safer streets and more appealing public places.

Updates to local codes and ordinances can make redevelopment easier and more cost effective. These improvements can encourage the growth of local talent, increase personal stake in revitalization efforts, and spark a local entrepreneurial spirit.

The legacy of racist policies continues to shape the built environment in every corner of this country. Providing meaningful paths to engagement and allowing for local knowledge and lived experience to drive a shared vision is perhaps the most important tactic. We must ensure that community members are central to any change.

## THE CHALLENGE

Development pressure is spilling over into long- neglected places, leading to displacement of residents that have endured for decades. It is essential that the benefits of development and investment are shared by residents of all incomes and tenure. Both types of neighborhoods—the perpetually under-resourced and the now gentrifying —were created through a complex interplay of federal and local policies, racism, classism, economic exclusion, cultural and market forces, and neglect over time.

## THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH

For decades, the mainstream approach to revitalization centered on anti-poverty housing programs, fueled by centralized sources of funding and federal support, such as public housing and Housing Choice Vouchers, Low- Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), and Community Development Block Grants. American cities and their residents benefit from thousands of subsidized units created through the programs that offer a critical safety net for families lacking resources to compete for market-rate housing. These large-scale programs remain tremendously important, yet they are not enough to pull neighborhoods out of poverty and decline.

**While many of these approaches have focused almost solely on housing, what is often needed is an effort to revitalize and strengthen the multitude of elements that create a holistic neighborhood, from locally-serving retail to open space. This approach includes an active public realm, streets that are designed for people, access to fresh food, and reliable transportation to employment opportunities.**

At the same time, an overreliance on large- scale programs means that local residents cannot participate directly in building better communities. They do not have the resources to use LIHTC, to build or maintain public housing, or receive big government grants. Influencing national policy is difficult even for city officials, let alone community members. Additionally, community inclusion and public participation efforts are often significantly lacking, resulting in many revitalization programs being carried out absent community input Subsidized affordable housing “excludes the opportunity for wealth accumulation through appreciated real estate.

*Inclusive development is about building communities, not just housing. A holistic vision for community development is missing from many long-neglected neighborhoods. It’s hard to focus on the big picture when the problems are immediate and severe—yet without that vision, neighborhoods may be caught in long-term poverty cycles or waves of displacement. A community vision—addressing cultural, social, health, and economic concerns, formed through*

*robust community participation—is a necessary part of a successful revitalization effort.*

## **BUILDING LOCAL STRENGTH**

“Gentrification starts with telling the young people ‘you want to get as far as you can from that community,’” she says. “The key is to give people reasons to stay. Give them a stake in the community through property and sweat equity.”

***Well-functioning neighborhoods*** provide access to parks, recreation, and open space; pedestrian infrastructure and modes of transit; and amenities like grocery stores and neighborhood-serving retail. These amenities should not be provided solely in affluent areas. Having them within a neighborhood can encourage talented young people to remain.

Doing so can also inspire homegrown talent, context-specific solutions, and a local entrepreneurial spirit that creates and maintains continuous small-scale improvements, which helps create and grow wealth within a neighborhood. This kind of self-directed, locally driven neighborhood change can only happen when residents are given the tools, knowledge, and confidence to define a new trajectory.

Big funding is needed for major projects, such as rebuilding dilapidated housing or constructing multi-family buildings, but support of incremental small-scale efforts is essential for rebuilding whole neighborhoods. Small-scale development offers residents ownership and agency in the revitalization of their blocks, streets, and neighborhoods, providing an opportunity for success that many large-scale strategies lack. Integrating these two approaches can bring targeted investment in a way that reduces or mitigates displacement while creating greater opportunities for all residents, ultimately supporting long term inclusion and equity.

Redevelopment With Many Hands Neighborhoods tend to be most vibrant when they have formed incrementally and organically over time. Using that approach in revitalization efforts is critical to achieving growth that benefits the residents of disinvested neighborhoods. Incremental development allows for the revitalization of neighborhoods using many hands, with multiple owners, on a scale that does not overwhelm the current character and culture of a place. It also provides the opportunity for wealth to be created locally, among many players. In neighborhoods that have seen population and economic decline during the last 50 years, especially historically African American neighborhoods, incremental development can bring back the thriving local businesses that once defined neighborhood character in a way that supports—and does not replace—the existing neighborhood fabric.

## **CNU CASE STUDIES: REPLICABLE STRATEGIES:**

### **Washington, DC - Anacostia Neighborhood**

- Develop an Equitable Development Plan to ensure the needs of legacy residents are addressed.

- Build a coalition of organizations with overlap in mission and service area to maximize impact and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Establish a Community Land Trust to maintain below-market-rate housing while allowing homeowners to gain equity as values rise.
- Focus on wealth building opportunities, not just affordable rental housing, which includes homeownership, workforce development, financial counseling, and small business development

#### **Detroit, MI – Boston Edison and Fitzgerald**

- Provide legacy residents with opportunities for wealth building, such as shared equity in redeveloped properties, including rehabbed rental homes.
- Invest in locally owned businesses by prioritizing contracts with construction, rehabilitation, and landscaping firms based in the city.
- Consolidate vacant land to maximize redevelopment impact while supporting existing residents by providing needed population density.

#### **Desoto, TX – Desoto Market Place**

- Consolidate vacant land to maximize redevelopment impact while supporting existing residents by providing needed population density.
- Make use of existing assets, even automobile-centric buildings, to bring urbanism to aging commercial corridors.
- Build the capacity of small business owners through mentorship, collaboration, and access to tools.
- Convert excess parking to active spaces through creative placemaking, landscaping, and retail uses.
- Work with local officials to reduce regulatory barriers to creative reuse projects, including zoning and building code changes and reduced parking requirements.

#### **Louisville, KY – Portland Neighborhood**

- Acquire inexpensive, dilapidated property to minimize acquisition costs and maximize community benefit.
- Allow neighborhood residents to realize permanent affordable housing through homeownership.
- Target rehab projects that raise neighborhood comp prices, allowing property owners to receive better mortgage rates.
- Use a “one building at a time” approach to repair the most dilapidated properties across multiple blocks.

#### **Atlanta, GA – Historic Westside Neighborhood**

- Use gap financing to create more affordable housing.
- Give current homeowners in distressed neighborhoods relief from rising property taxes that result from increasing home values.



- Form partnerships between the city and nonprofits to work with communities to refurbish existing parks and build new ones at varying scales.
- Leverage corporate and philanthropic funding to permanently ensure housing is affordable for legacy residents.

### **South Bend, IN - Westside Neighborhood**

- Implement a “complete streets” approach to help to break the cycle of decline.
- Facade improvement and home maintenance programs encourage local business owners and residents to have “skin in the game” by investing in their own neighborhood revival.
- Zoning updates and policy reforms, like reducing minimum parking requirements, permitting accessory dwelling units, and incentives for renovation and affordable housing can encourage investment

### **Tools for Implementing Neighborhood Change**

1. Legalize Accessory Dwelling Units
2. Acquire and Aggregate Land for Developer RFP’s
3. Finance through Crowdfunding and Crowd Investing
4. Provide Opportunities for Local Ownership
5. Respect Local History
6. Adopt Inclusionary Zoning
7. Promote Incremental Development
8. Build “Missing Middle” Housing
9. Create an Active and Beautiful Public Realm
10. Create a Philanthropic Fund or Revolving Loan Fund
11. Use Tactical Urbanism

### *Appendix C.*

#### **OTHER CASE STUDIES OF INTEREST**

1. Asheville, NC - River Arts District
2. Virginia Beach, VA - VIBE Creative District
3. Roanoke, VA - Neighborhood Services Department\
4. Norfolk, VA – Neon Arts District
5. Kansas City - 18th & Vine District