



BROADWAY CULTURAL GATEWAY FINAL REPORT



Center for Craft



UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA
ASHEVILLE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Center for Craft commissioned the Broadway Cultural Gateway project and report as part of its property development initiative at 67 Broadway, which includes the National Craft Innovation Hub. This initiative will turn the Center’s historic 1912 building into an urban creative campus that puts craft in the context of other creative disciplines. The project connects makers, artists, designers, scholars, students, creative sector entrepreneurs, and the general public through galleries, co-working/shared workspaces, event spaces, and a makerspace. The renovated building will provide regional, national, and international convening opportunities for the field in a space specifically designed to inspire what’s possible for the future of craft.

The Broadway Cultural Gateway project was supported in part by a grant-funded partnership with UNC Asheville.

Advisory Board

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Dane Barrager, Local Resident
Stephanie Brown, Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority
Glenn Cox, Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority
David Feingold, Blue Ridge Public Radio
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Stefanie Gerber, Asheville Area Arts Council
Susan Harper, Asheville Community Theatre
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Mike Marcus, Center for Craft
Stephanie Moore, Center for Craft
Shenika Smith, Date My City

Creative Intervention

Sponsors & Contributors*

Arthur R. Edington Center
Asheville Buskers Collective
Asheville Design Center
Asheville Downtown Association
Asheville GreenWorks
Asheville Makers
American Myth Center
BeLoved House
The Big Crafty
Blue Ridge Public Radio
Buchi Kombucha
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City of Asheville
Date My City
Diamond Brand Gear
Earth River Productions
Echoview Fiber Mill
League of Creative Interventionists
MountainTrue
Penland School of Craft
Roots + Wings School of Art and Design
Ultimate Ice Cream
UNC Asheville*

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** This event is made possible through the generous support of UNC Asheville, the Center for Craft, and the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority.*



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For many visitors to Asheville, the intersection of Broadway and Woodfin Avenue provides a first impression of downtown, with an average of 17,500 cars traveling through it each day.¹ However, this northern gateway to the downtown district presents many challenges for both vehicular traffic and pedestrians, and lacks key wayfinding and placekeeping features such as signage and public art.

The Center for Craft intends that their development of a National Creative Innovation Hub at 67 Broadway will serve as an anchor point to help connect the northern gateway to the heart of downtown. By leveraging the arts, the Center hopes to bring attention to Asheville's stimulating and unique downtown cultural district.

Since August 2017, the Asheville Design Center (ADC) has worked with the Center for Craft, UNC Asheville, a local consulting artist, a nationally-recognized creative placemaking expert, and key stakeholders to facilitate a creative placekeeping-based visioning process for the city block defined by Broadway Street, North Lexington Avenue, West Walnut Street, and Woodfin Street in downtown Asheville (herein, Study Area). Key stakeholders included Study Area property and business owners, residential tenants, cultural leaders, downtown advocacy groups, UNC Asheville, and the City of Asheville, all of whom were represented on the project Advisory Team.

In order to identify the issues that most impact the Study Area, ADC engaged stakeholders to better understand where the design team should focus its efforts. ADC quickly discovered that there was consensus around a number of issues pertinent to Broadway Street, Carolina Lane, and Woodfin Avenue. The design team directed less effort towards Lexington Avenue and Walnut Street, as stakeholders expressed fewer concerns and opportunities along those thoroughfares.

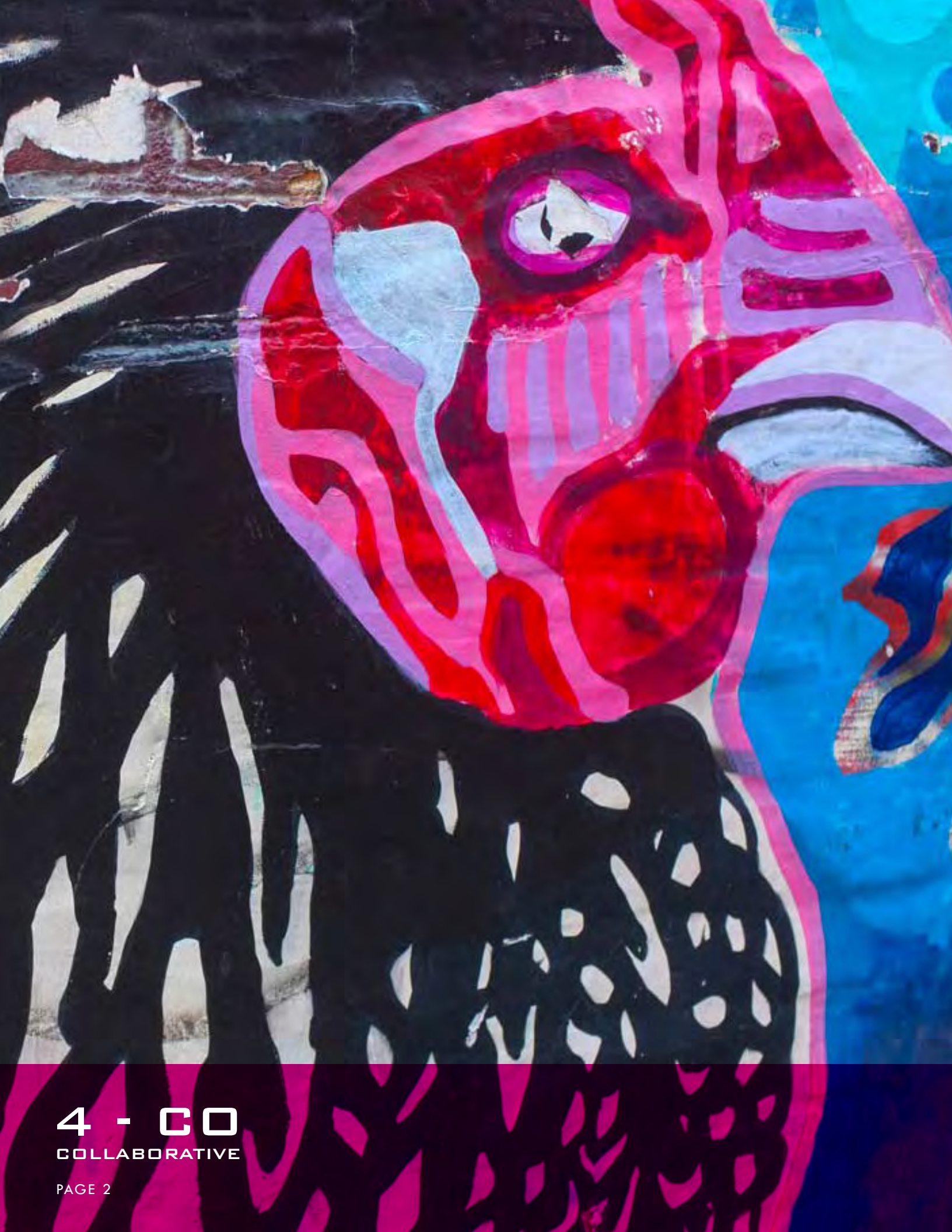
Having identified the issues within the Study Area, ADC's team set out to test a number of potential design solutions during a Creative Intervention event within the Study Area on May 5, 2018. An estimated 1,000 people attended the event and 318 participants completed surveys that helped inform the design team's recommendations. In this summary report, ADC proposes design recommendations to address the following:

- Creating a Gateway into Downtown
- Improving the Pedestrian Experience
- Activating the City's Alleyways

The report also includes extended appendices containing a collection of maps, reports, designs, and relevant materials from other communities.

¹Annual Average Daily Traffic. (NCDOT 2017).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



PROJECT SCOPE + GOALS

The Broadway Cultural Gateway project provides an opportunity for Asheville to build on its national reputation as a cultural destination by integrating the arts into civic engagement and urban planning practices in order **to preserve and revitalize the creative sector and built environment.**

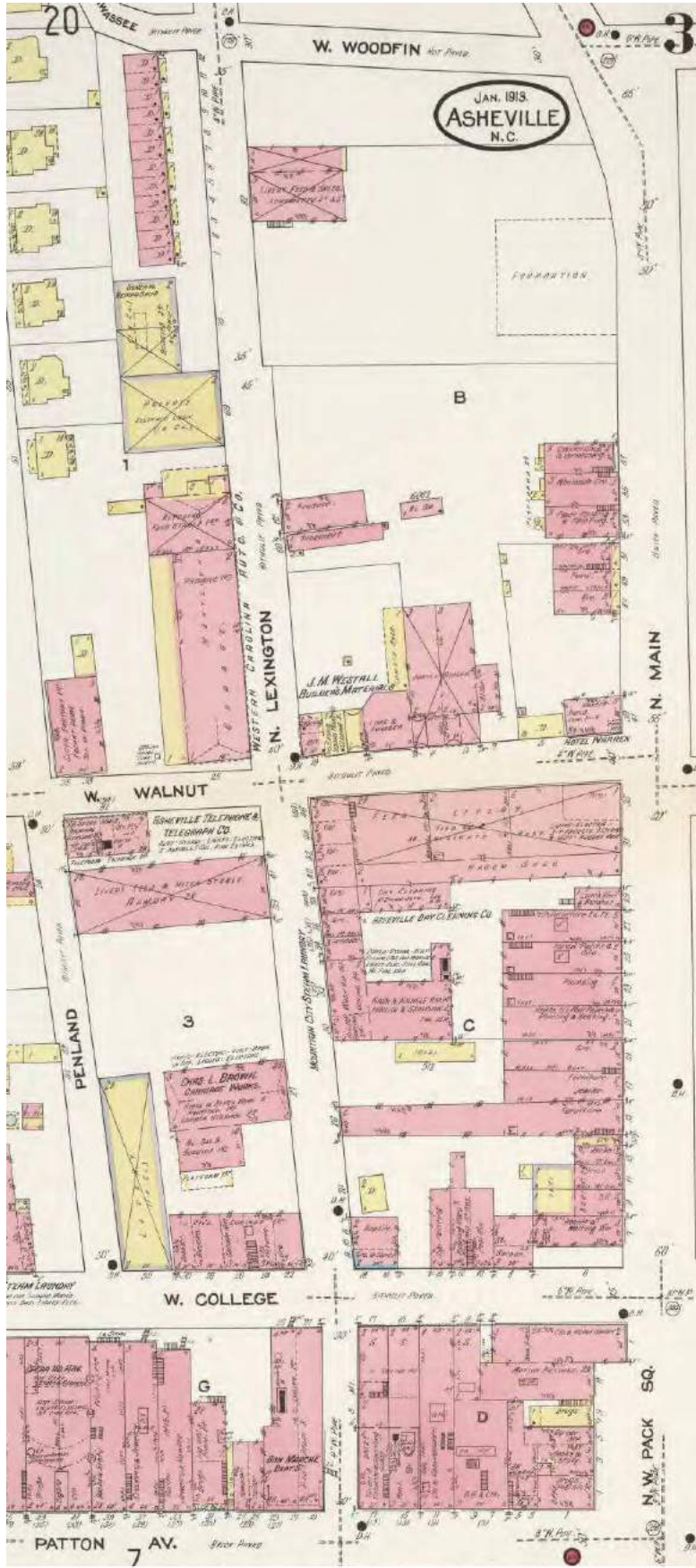
Since August 2017, the Asheville Design Center (ADC) has worked with the Center for Craft; UNC Asheville; Cortina Caldwell, a local consulting artist; nationally-recognized creative placemaking expert Hunter Franks of League of Creative Interventionists; and key stakeholders **to facilitate a creative placekeeping-based visioning process** for the city block defined by Broadway Street, North Lexington Avenue, West Walnut Street, and Woodfin Street in downtown Asheville (herein, Study Area). Key stakeholders included Study Area property and business owners, residential tenants, cultural leaders, downtown advocacy groups, UNC Asheville, and the City of Asheville, all of whom were represented on the project Advisory Team.

The project scope included strategic planning and coordination with key stakeholders and the broader community **to inform a long-term vision for the Study Area with the primary goal of activating Broadway Street, Carolina Lane, and Chicken Alley through the arts.**

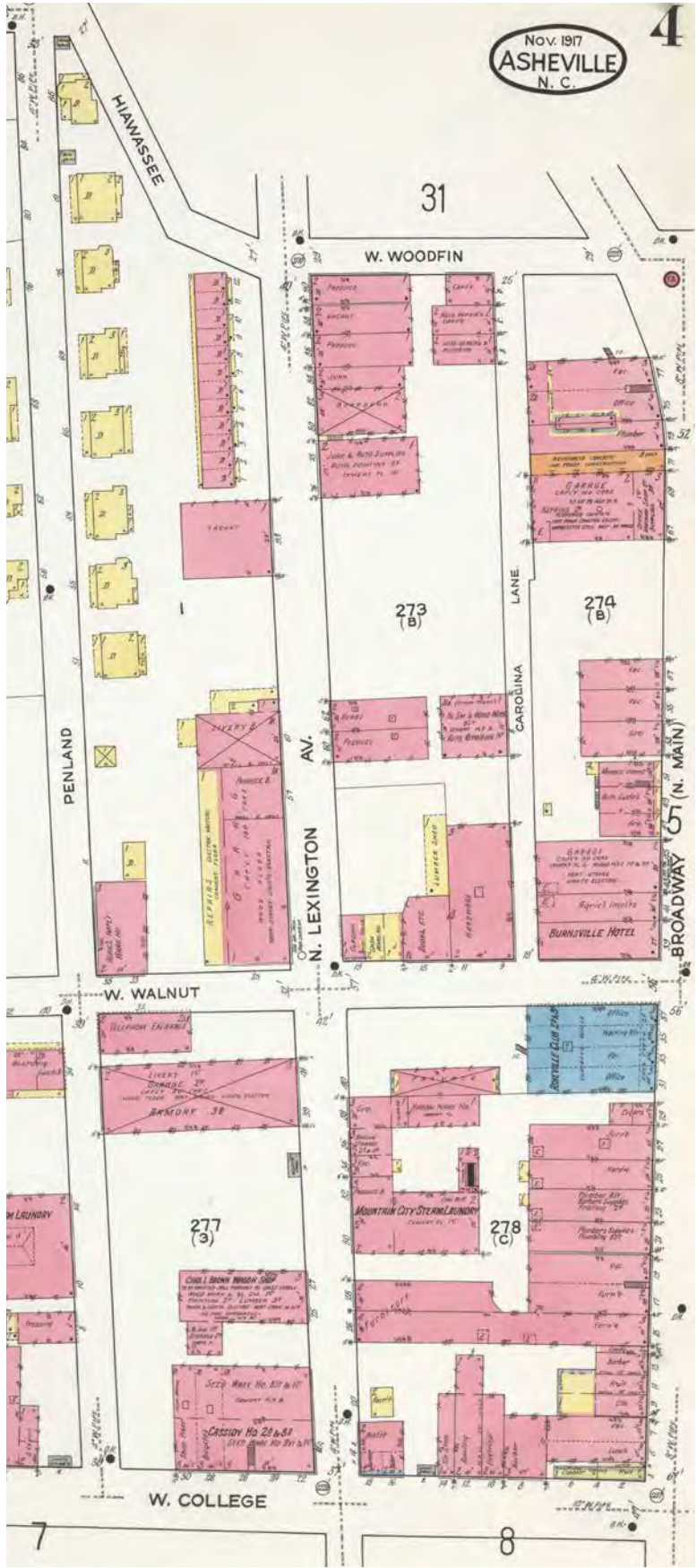
In addition, ADC worked with stakeholders to identify opportunities for temporary installations **to enliven the Study Area and suggest appropriate permanent uses on the site over time.**

ADC used a multi-layered creative placekeeping process **to honor the unique history of the Study Area, the underlying cultural systems, ecological opportunities, stakeholders' visions for the future, and applied learning opportunities** for UNC Asheville students. The results of this process demonstrate thoughtful analysis of existing conditions along with articulate, imaginative, and practical recommendations. The resulting design studies serve as an effective communication tool **to garner community support and attract future grant funds for implementation (local, regional, and national).**

ADC also worked with a Caldwell, Franks, local stakeholders, students and the UNC Asheville Steam Studio to produce a Creative Intervention event in Summer 2018 that prototypes appropriate permanent uses to inform the design recommendations.



1913 SANBORN MAP



1917 SANBORN MAP

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

According to the National Register of Historic Places Inventory, there are 41 historic buildings within the Study Area, most of which were constructed in the 1910s and 20s.

The earliest recorded history available for the Study Area emphasized Broadway and the north-south corridor connecting to Biltmore Avenue as an important Cherokee trading route.

“In 1794, John Burton . . . laid out a street following an old [Cherokee] Indian path, first known as North and South Main Street, and later Biltmore Avenue and Broadway.”²

By the early 1900s, much of the land in the Study Area was owned by the Investors Land Company. Around 1910, they began to auction off their holdings, spurring development. The north end of Broadway (then known as Main Street) was anchored by the construction of the Enterprise Machine Company (now Center for Craft) in 1912, the Scottish Rite Cathedral and Masonic Temple in 1913, and Eagles Home (now Blue Ridge Public Radio) in 1914.³

Carolina Lane was established in 1917, and for decades the alley hosted numerous businesses, including the Asheville Postcard Company from 1930-77. Writer J.L. Mashburn describes their location as a “nook in an alley in a weather beaten establishment.”



Carolina Lane, 1976



Masonic Temple Construction, 1913

²National Register Of Historic Places Inventory (1974).

³National Register Of Historic Places Inventory (1974).



Center for Craft, 1977



Minico Cleaners, 1920



APC Exterior, 1977



APC Interior, 1977



Broadway Avenue, 1977



"The Wrap", 1980

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Chicken Alley, immortalized by artist Molly Must's 2011 mural, appears to have been created sometime in the 1920s. The mural is a testament to the chicken processing plant owned by Sam and Argie Young for which the alley is named, as well as the Asheville farmers market and many farm-supply shops that used to be located there.

The Great Depression of the 1930s hit Asheville hard and led to a period of decline downtown. The Study Area faced many challenges during this period. In the 1980s, the Study Area was almost completely demolished to build a new mall complex. In an effort to preserve the historic district, residents and artists formed the Save Downtown Asheville organization, and on April 19, 1980 they "wrapped" a large portion of downtown. Using pieces of cloth tied together, they outlined the proposed footprint of the new mall complex. Due to these efforts, they were able to effectively stop the proposed development by encouraging voters to reject the \$40 million bond that would have helped finance the proposed \$117.5 million mall complex.

Since the early 2000s, this area has been in a period of renewal and is poised for a major period of growth. As the area moves into this new phase, it is important that stakeholders consider creative placekeeping best practices in order to preserve the history of the area and create an authentic, welcoming space.



Broadway Street, 1920



Chicken Alley, 1976

⁴J. L. Mashburn. *Asheville & Buncombe County... Once Upon a Time*. (Enka, NC: Colonial House Publishers, 2012).

⁵Asheville Mural Trail (Asheville, NC, 2011).

⁶C. Cowart, C. Hurt, and M. Whalen. *The Wrap of Downtown Asheville*. (Asheville, NC: UNC Asheville Digital Archives, 2015).



CREATIVE PLACEKEEPING BEST PRACTICES

PLACEMAKING OR PLACEKEEPING

Placemaking utilizes art and culture to develop the social and physical landscapes of communities. As the field of placemaking has grown, it has been criticized for causing gentrification by revitalizing neighborhoods and increasing real estate costs without providing ways for long-term residents to remain in the places they call home. Placekeeping has arisen as a rebuttal to placemaking, and focuses on preserving the cultural history of a place while providing local residents the ability to remain and thrive in their community. Placekeeping is important because it demonstrates that it is people who make a great place. It is not economics, amenities, or cleanliness, but rather stories, histories, and culture that shape the places we love. Placekeeping is defined heavily by the process involved in a project.

PLACEKEEPING BEST PRACTICES

The following is a brief outline of placekeeping practices that can be implemented for any project to be informed by the history and culture of a neighborhood, to honor the stories of a place and people, and to create solutions with residents that provide lasting economic and cultural benefits. These practices became an integral part of the process for the Study Area.

LISTEN

Listening is an act of love. When beginning any project, create time to ask residents, business owners, and visitors what they love about a place and what they want to see change.

Understand the history of the place and spend time in the place before making any changes to it. This listening and observing process is extremely valuable to creating relationships and building trust within the community.

BE FLEXIBLE

Keep your project flexible. This will allow you to be able to listen closely to the community and adapt your project as you go. Providing space for growth and transformation throughout the project will result in the community being able to truly co-create a project that serves a distinct need for them and that will last far into the future.

DEVELOP LOCAL LEADERS

There are passionate residents in every community who simply need support and access to resources to discover their leadership. Find these folks by expanding outside of your normal networks. By working with local residents and paying local artists, you are helping to support the local economy and ensuring that the social fabric of a place remains intact.

LASTING IMPACT

Ensure that your project can result in long-term impact for a place. Create regenerative systems that will continue to produce economic or social value for a community. This is often the most challenging aspect of placekeeping, and is more easily achieved by ensuring that the previously mentioned practices are implemented.

Adapted from Placekeeping Best Practices by Hunter Franks

WHAT IS CREATIVE PLACEKEEPING?



LEADERSHIP PROCESS

In keeping with creative placekeeping best practices, ADC’s visioning process included a lot of listening. The ADC team worked with multiple stakeholders to ensure the project’s authenticity to people and places within the Study Area. ADC also allowed the project to remain flexible, letting design concepts emerge based on community input.

ADVISORY TEAM

In cooperation with the Center for Craft, ADC recruited a Broadway Cultural Gateway Advisory Team to serve as a sounding board for concepts, and to provide additional avenues of public outreach. The Advisory Team included local business owners, residents, artists, cultural leaders, downtown advocacy groups, UNC Asheville, the City of Asheville, the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, and Date My City. The Advisory Team initially met in October of 2017 to provide feedback on the project’s scope of work. The group reconvened in February and September of 2018 to provide feedback on outreach methods and help further refine the design recommendations.

DESIGN TEAM

ADC recruited a multidisciplinary team of volunteer designers including artists, architects, landscape architects, graphic designers, engineers, urban designers, arts and culture planners, community health professionals, and demographers with past experience in facilitating public visioning processes.

CONSULTING ARTIST

ADC contracted with a Local Consulting Artist, Cortina Caldwell, to work with the ADC team and stakeholders to identify opportunities for temporary installations to enliven the Study Area and suggest appropriate permanent uses on the site over time. The Consulting Artist played a critical role in supporting the project manager and design team to ensure that all aspects of stakeholder and community engagement were grounded in the arts through an equity lens and leveraged creative methods and approaches whenever possible.



LEADERSHIP PROCESS

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING EXPERT

ADC contracted with Hunter Franks of the League of Creative Interventionists to host a site walk of the Study Area with key stakeholders, and to produce an educational speaking event on creative placekeeping as part of the Building Our City series in April 2018. The speaking event explored best practices and local opportunities for how art and design can be integrated into community planning and engagement processes to achieve increased quality of life and a more authentic sense of place. Franks consulted on community engagement methods for the May 5th Creative Intervention, as well as the post-event analysis and consultation on the long-term creative placekeeping implementation plan for the Study Area.

UNC ASHEVILLE

As a key partner in the May 5th Creative Intervention, UNC Asheville staff and faculty met with ADC's design team on 11 occasions for brainstorming and coordination meetings, as well as several site walks with UNC Asheville classes. Over 150 students across nine departments contributed to the May 5th Creative Intervention, bringing vitality and a new perspective to the event.





FEEDBACK COLLECTION METHODS

Creative Intervention

Creative Intervention was a one-day event held on May 5, 2018 with a range of focal points, including: experimenting with unique public art installations and culturally diverse creative activities, potential streetscape changes, and infrastructure improvements. The purpose was to gather community feedback and momentum for permanent change to take place in a way that satisfies local community members, property owners, business owners, and residents. Participants were given multiple opportunities to share input through discussions with design team members, chalkboards at either end of Carolina Lane, and a survey postcard.

Interviews, Community Meetings + Focus Groups

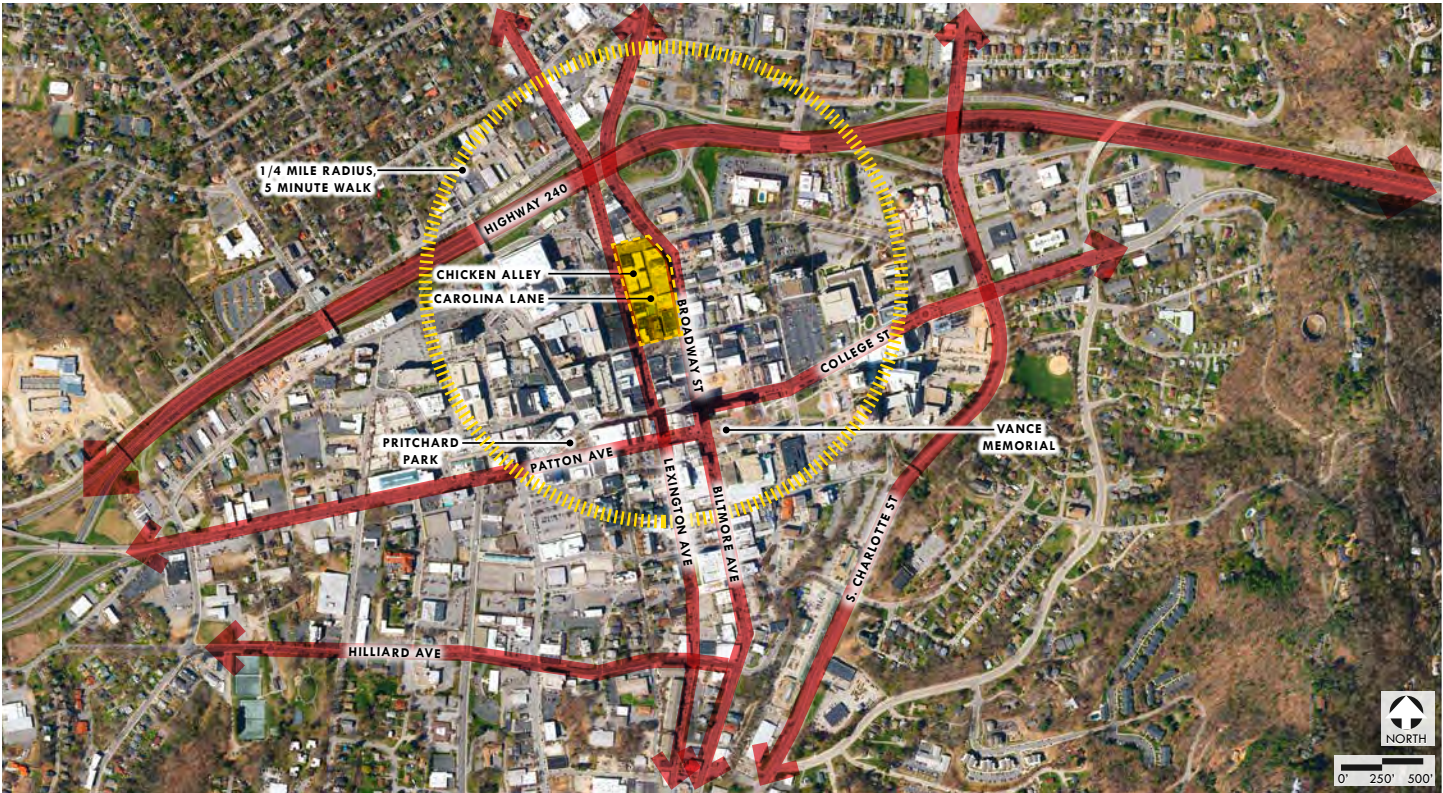
Interviews were conducted with primary stakeholders, including Study Area property owners, business owners, and residents, to assess obvious and underlying issues within the area. Community Meetings were also held with area stakeholders, and emphasis was put on fostering equity and inclusivity. Lastly, discussions with focus groups were conducted to review different design solutions, and to explore how this area might be better utilized to promote arts and culture in downtown Asheville. Focus groups included the advisory team, residents and property owners, business owners, and representatives from the downtown arts and cultural sector.





CONTEXT: CITY SCALE

To initiate the design process, the ADC design team documented existing conditions within the Study Area and conducted a thorough site analysis. ADC analyzed the Study Area and created several maps displayed in this section.

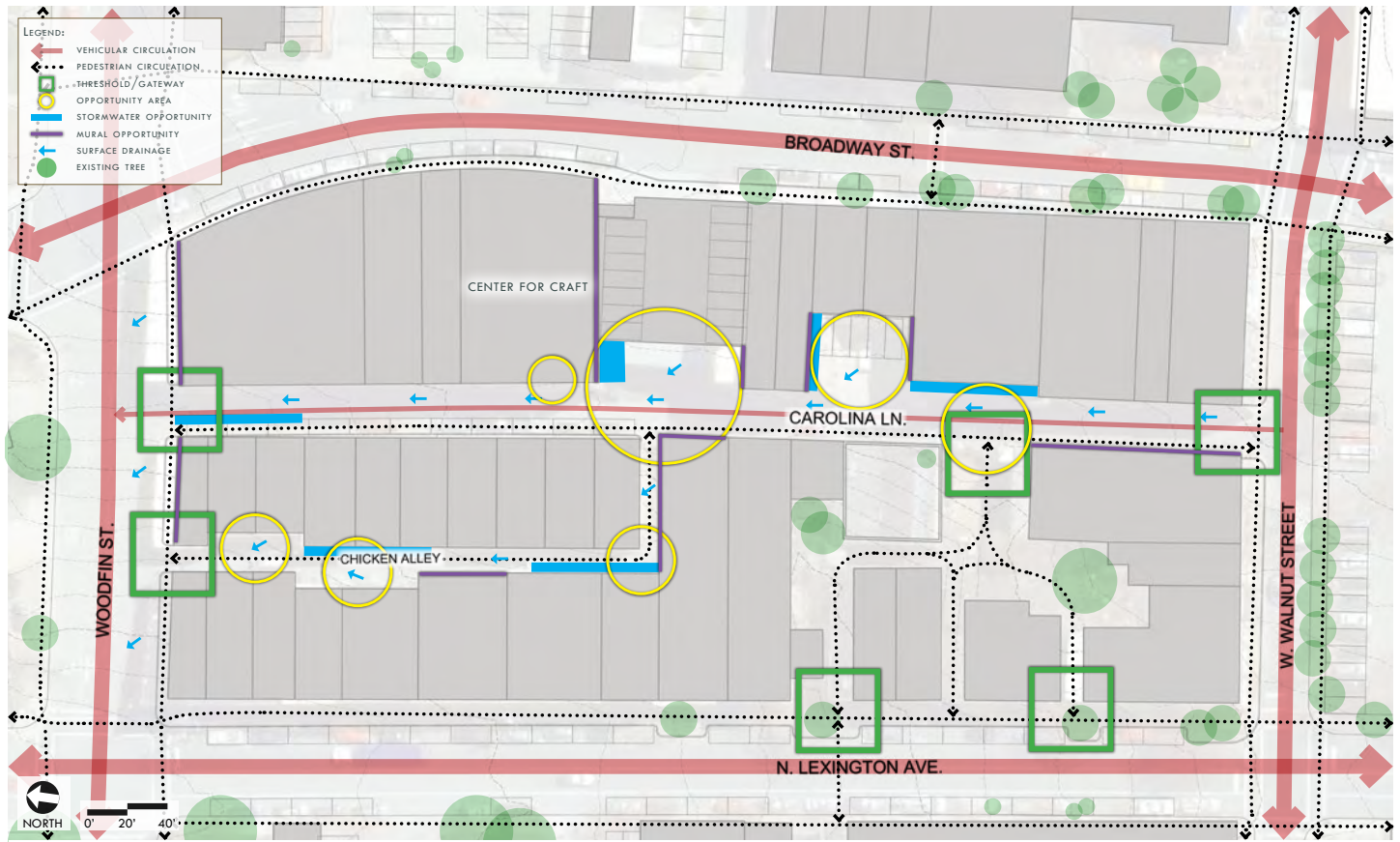


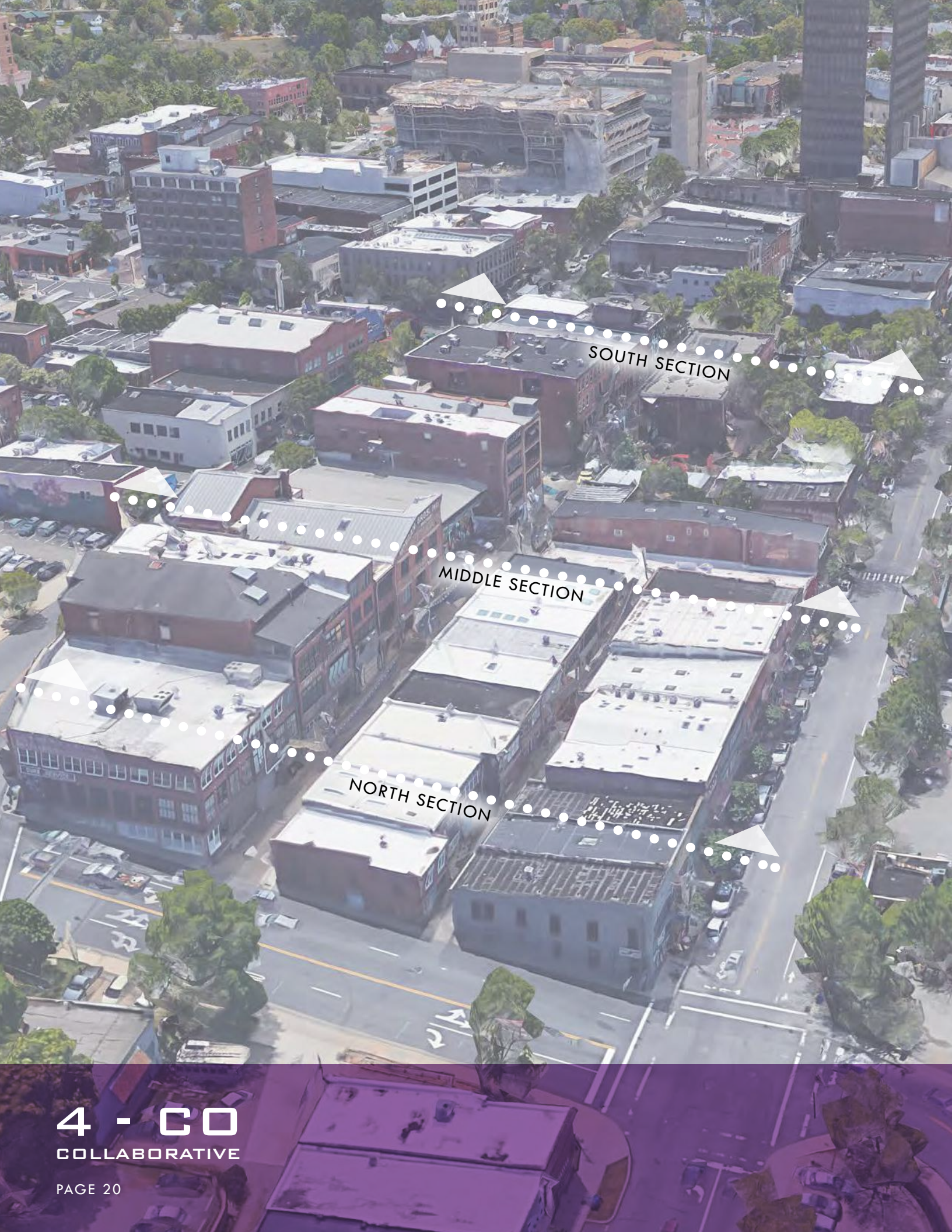
The map above locates the Study Area in the context of the city. Note the location of the Study Area in relation to other downtown areas of interest and street networks. The extent also reinforces the Study Area as an important gateway into downtown from the north at Broadway Avenue and Lexington Avenue.



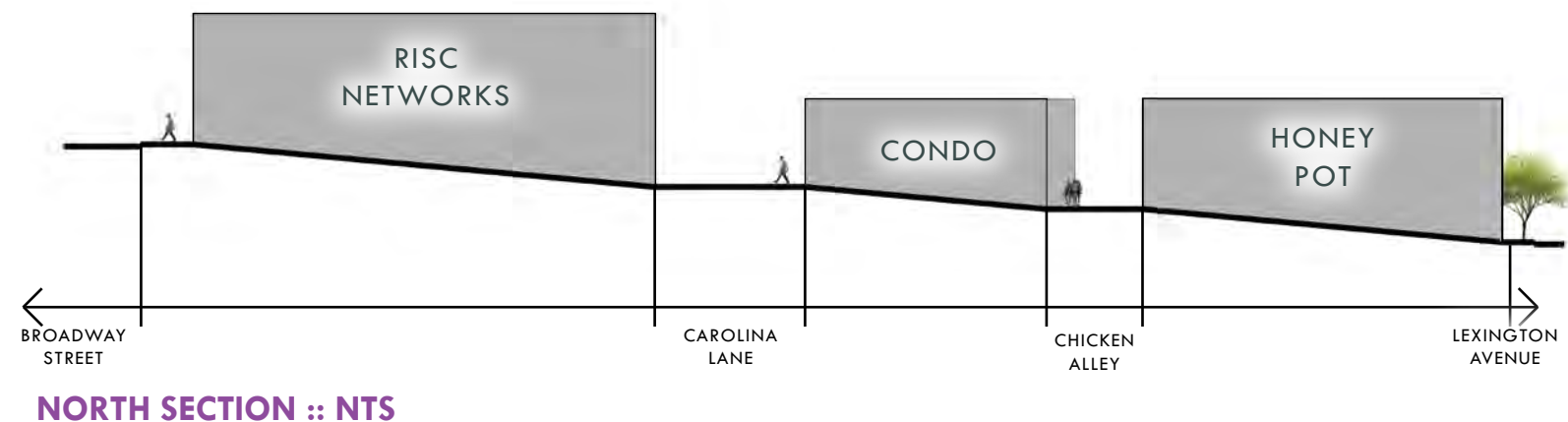
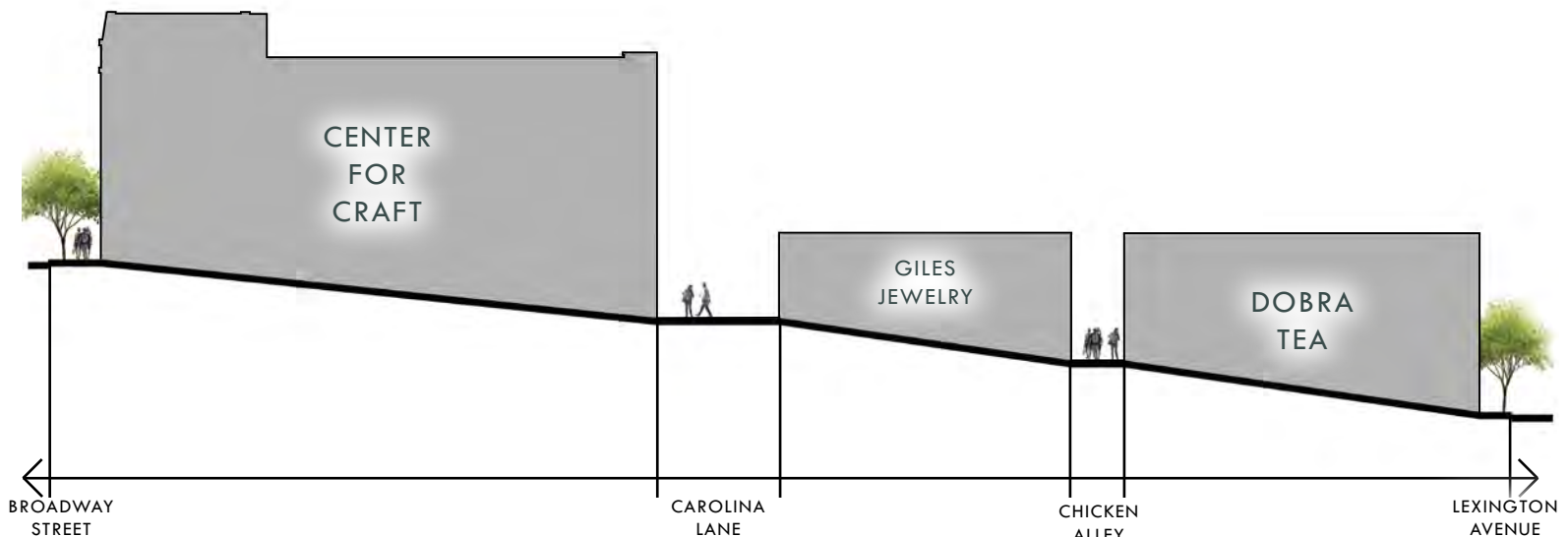
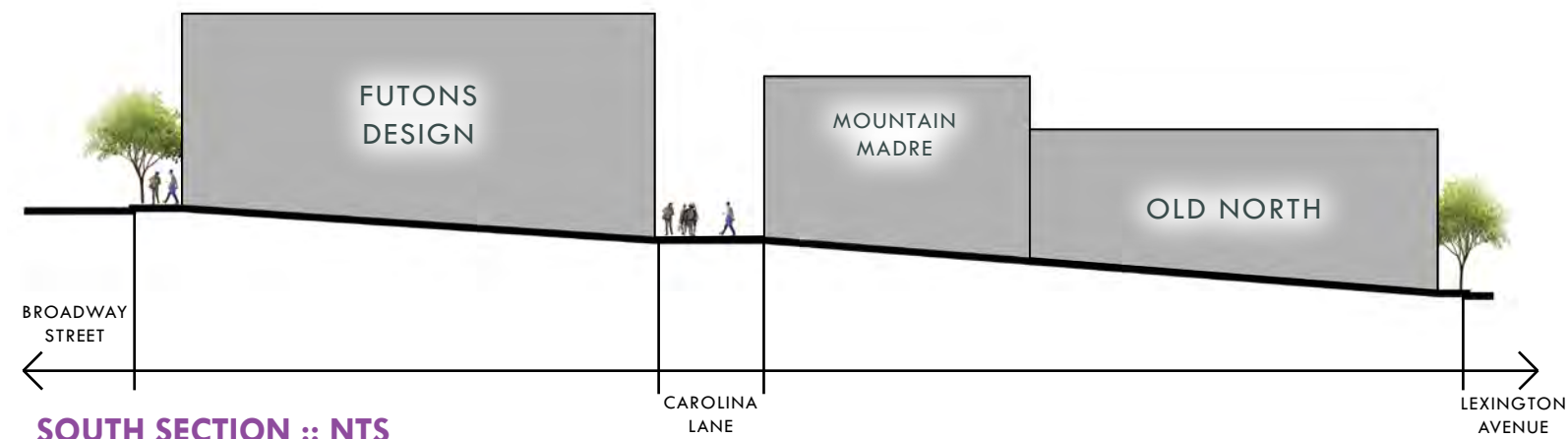
OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

The opportunities and constraints diagram provides a synthesis drawing of the various aspects of the Study Area. The existing conditions are defined as are those potential opportunities for site improvements.





CONTEXT: SECTIONS



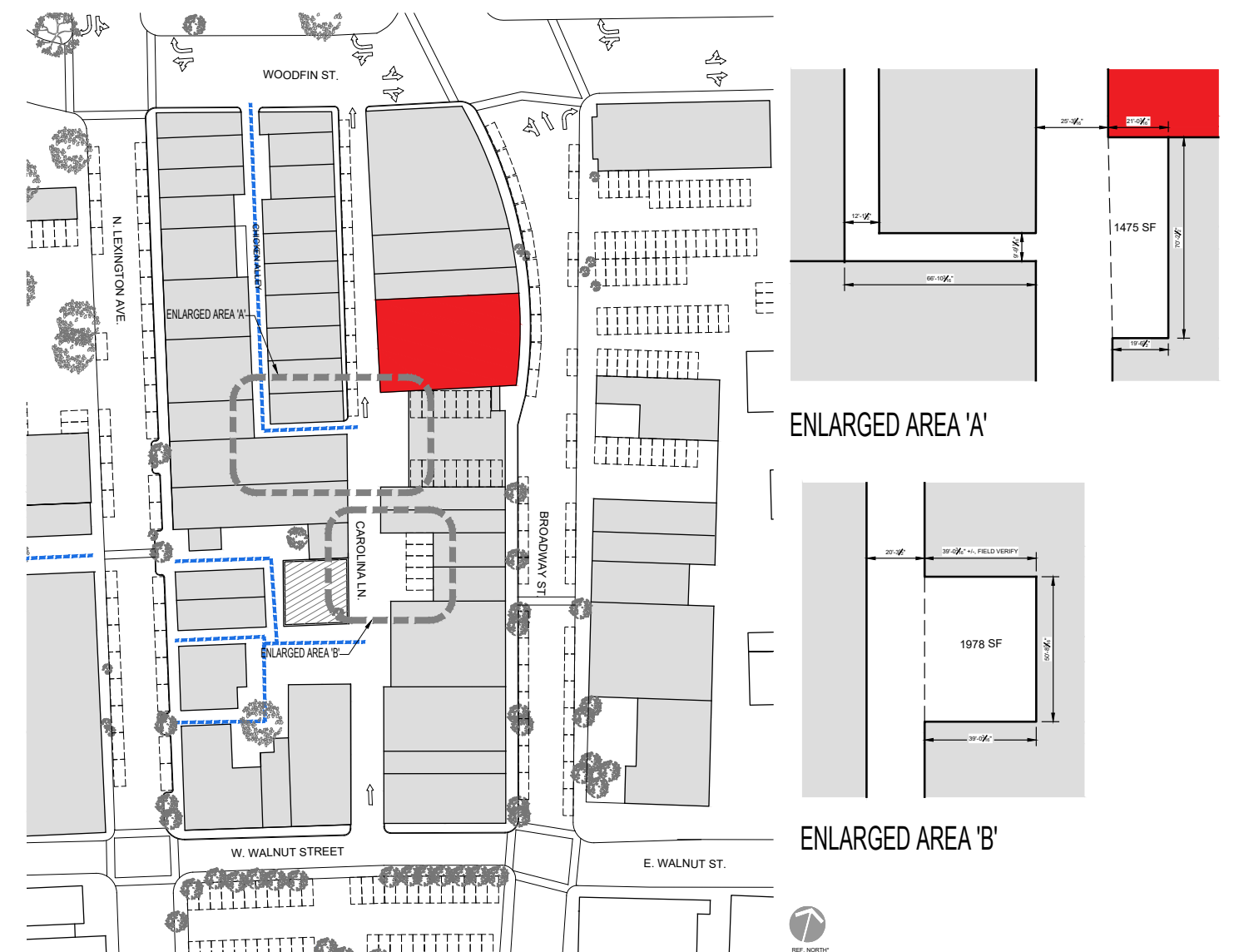
SITE ANALYSIS



ENLARGED AREAS

The intersection of Chicken Alley and Carolina Lane is detailed in one of these enlarged sections. Cars are often parked in Chicken Alley, blocking the flow of traffic. This alleyway is very eroded from the heavy amount of stormwater that flows through this area, making it a potential location for creative stormwater improvements.

The rear parking area of L.O.F.T. is another enlarged study area. Cars are often double-parked here. There is a thin triangular gap between the southern edge of the L.O.F.T. building and the building adjacent to it. Currently, the space functions as storage for metal piping and occasionally serves to provide overnight shelter for people experiencing homelessness.



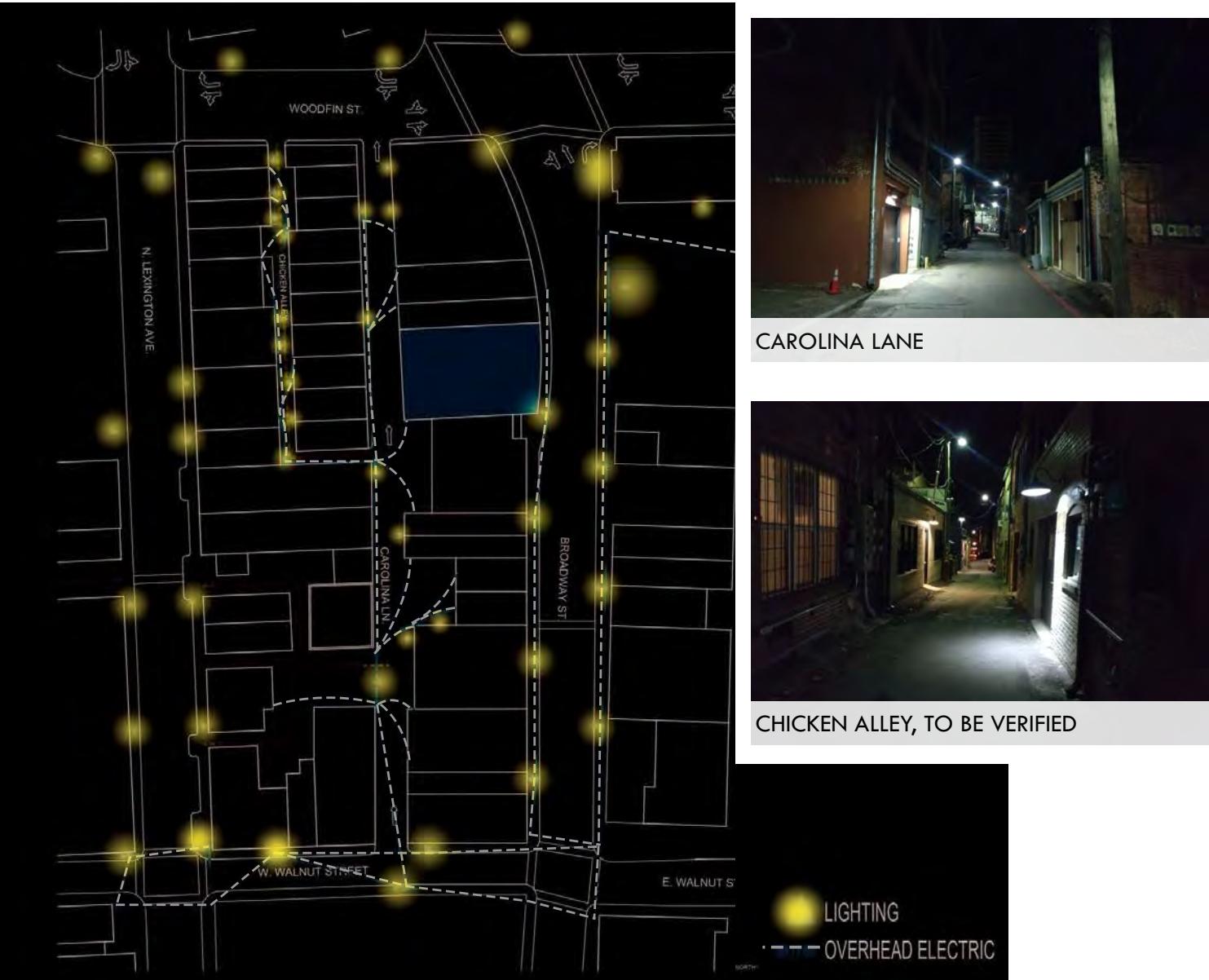
EXISTING MURALS, GHOST SIGNS, & POTENTIAL ART

There are multiple murals within the Study Area, and several more in the immediate vicinity. Faded advertisements (ghost signs) are also fairly common. Some local stakeholders have expressed interest in restoring these signs.



LIGHTING AND OVERHEAD UTILITIES

Despite the fact that light fixtures are plentiful along Carolina Lane and Chicken Alley according to our lighting assessment, it can feel quite dark at night. Many fixtures only illuminate the area immediately in front of unit entrances and do very little to light the street or sidewalk. Light fixtures in Chicken Alley bear similar characteristics to each other, which creates a more unified character in the alley.



DOWNSPOUT LOCATIONS

Almost all rainwater collected on the roofs of buildings fronting Lexington Avenue and Broadway Street is funneled down to Carolina Lane and Chicken Alley, causing severe runoff issues for these ground-floor units. Furthermore, the lack of ground gutters and storm drains results in streets that are filled with water even in small rainstorms. In addition, downspouts often stop abruptly two or more stories above the ground, sending water pouring down onto garbage bins or the street.



UNDERGROUND WATER MAINS

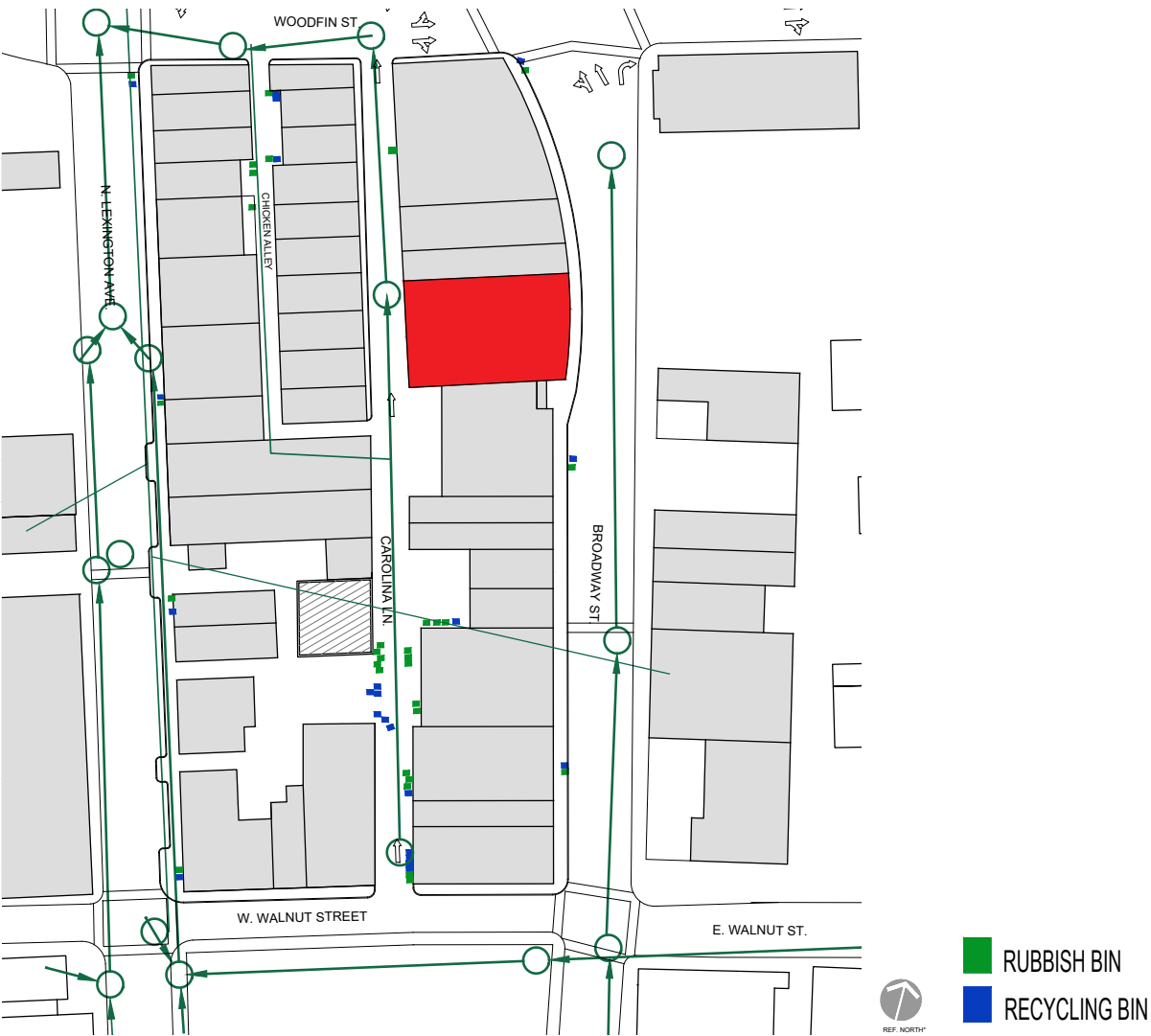
Larger water mains run under Broadway Street and Lexington Avenue. Smaller mains run beneath Walnut Street, Carolina Lane, and Woodfin Street. No water mains exist beneath Chicken Alley.



SANITARY SEWER, GARBAGE + RECYCLING

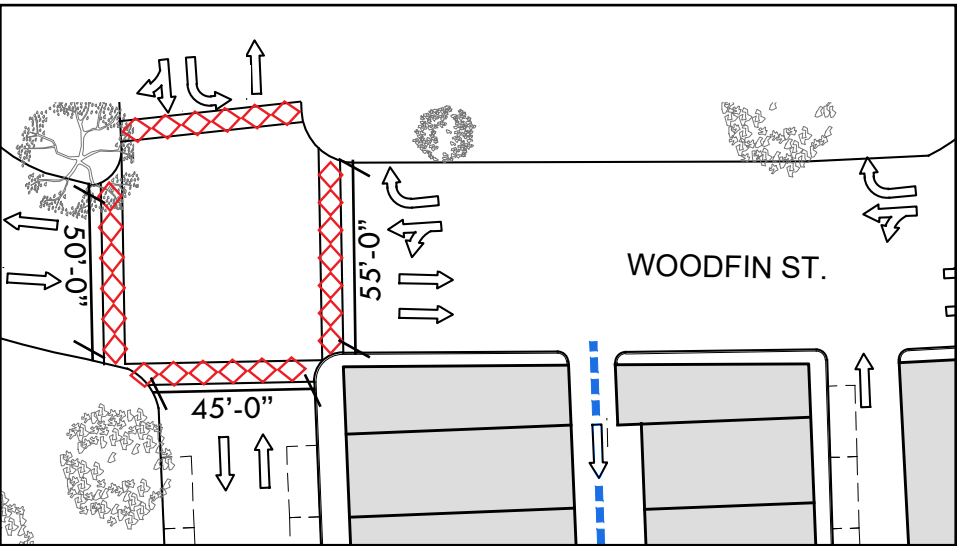
Sewer lines run beneath or next to every street in the Study Area. An additional sewer line crosses from Broadway Street under Carolina Lane at 15 Carolina Lane and flows to the pipes under Lexington Avenue.

The City has placed garbage and recycling bins at consistent intervals along Broadway Street and Lexington Avenue. Carolina Lane has a collection of garbage, recycling, and grease bins that line the entrance to the street from Walnut Street. Carolina Lane functions as a service alley, so while these bins are immediately noticeable, it is unlikely that they will be relocated. Chicken Alley has a few garbage and recycling bins closest to the short-term rentals near the intersection of Chicken Alley and Woodfin Street. As with many alleys, unsanitary conditions, including animal waste and refuse, exist at times.

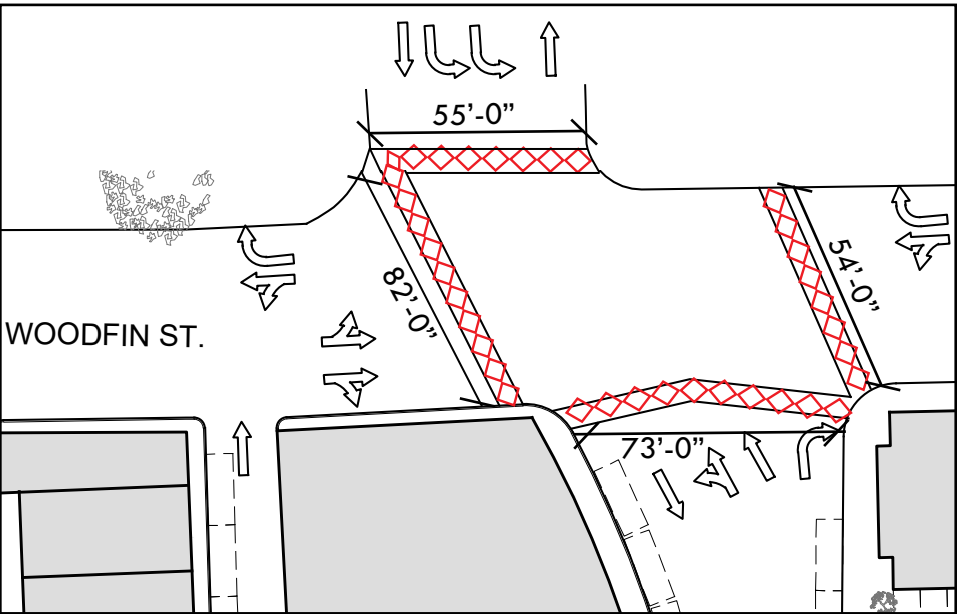


PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS FOR SAFETY

The two exhibits shown below highlight how these intersections are currently not safe for pedestrians attempting to cross the vehicular travel ways.



At the intersection of Lexington Avenue and Woodfin/Hiawasse Street, the crosswalk at Woodfin Street is 55-feet across four lanes of traffic. Woodfin Street does not have a bike lane going up the hill, making for a difficult multi-modal connection.



At the intersections of Broadway Street and Woodfin Street, numerous pedestrian crossing challenges exist that make this a very unsafe multi-modal intersection. As indicated, long stretches of pedestrian crosswalks are around 73' at the south side of Woodfin Street and Broadway Street and about 82' at the west side of Woodfin Street and Broadway Street. Visibility with existing grades at these intersections also contributes to these crossing and traffic challenges.



URBAN3 SITE ANALYSIS

Urban3 conducted a value-per-acre analysis of the Study Area, as well as county-wide and city-wide analysis for context. A sampling of these images shows the economic value of land per acre in 2015, the most recent data available.

The Study Area contains some of the most valuable properties in Buncombe County and is on par with much of the rest of downtown Asheville. Property values within the study area range from \$1M to over \$7.5M per acre. The sunken courtyard at 15 Carolina Lane is noticeably lower value than all other parcels in the Study Area, which may change with the redevelopment of this property.

In addition, Urban3 identified parcels most suitable for redevelopment, including the Center for Craft’s parking deck, the parking lot on Broadway Street adjacent to the Masonic Temple lot, and the properties on Carolina Lane (where two of the three properties identified, 15 & 17 Carolina Lane, are currently under construction).

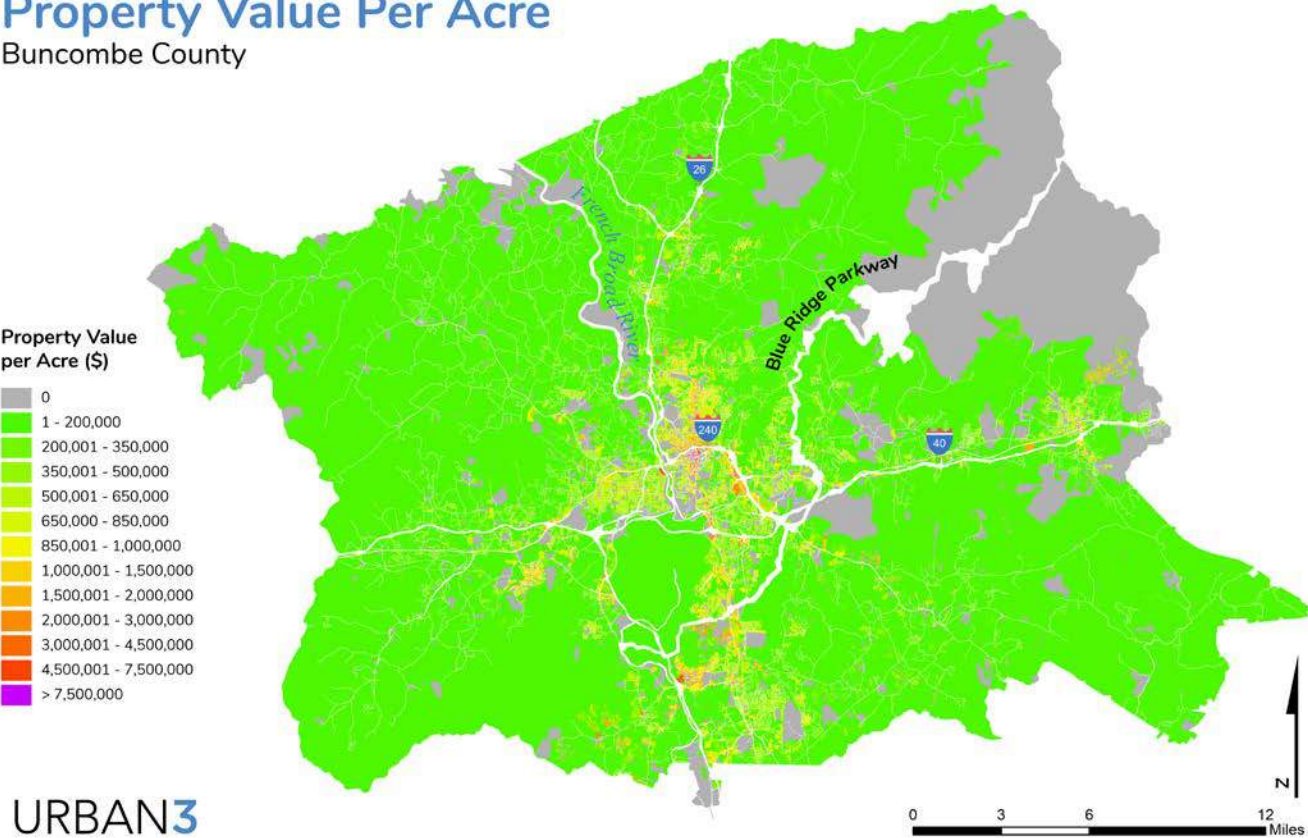


URBAN3 SITE ANALYSIS

MAP ONE

The illustration of Buncombe County’s basic value per acre provides a good overview of the fact that the focus of property value in the county is Asheville’s downtown.

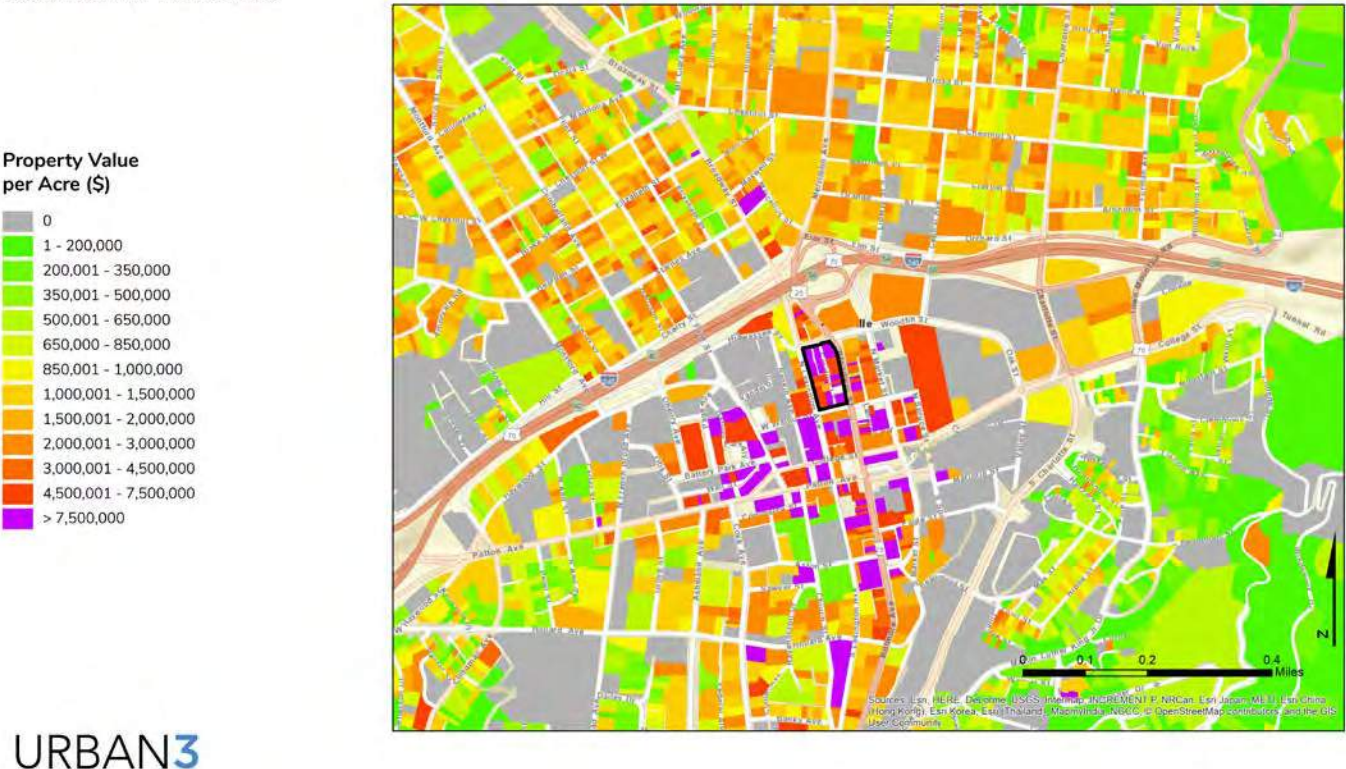
Property Value Per Acre
Buncombe County



MAP TWO

Similar to Map One, this diagram offers an enlarged view of downtown Asheville. With Carolina Lane outlined, this shows the Study Area is among the most valuable property in the county when viewed by acreage.

Property Value Per Acre
Downtown Asheville

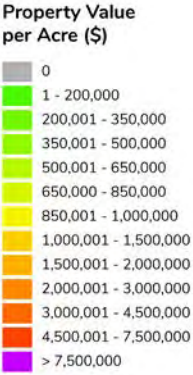


MAP THREE

The map below provides a closer view of the value per acre of individual parcels in the Study Area.

Property Value Per Acre

Carolina Lane



URBAN3

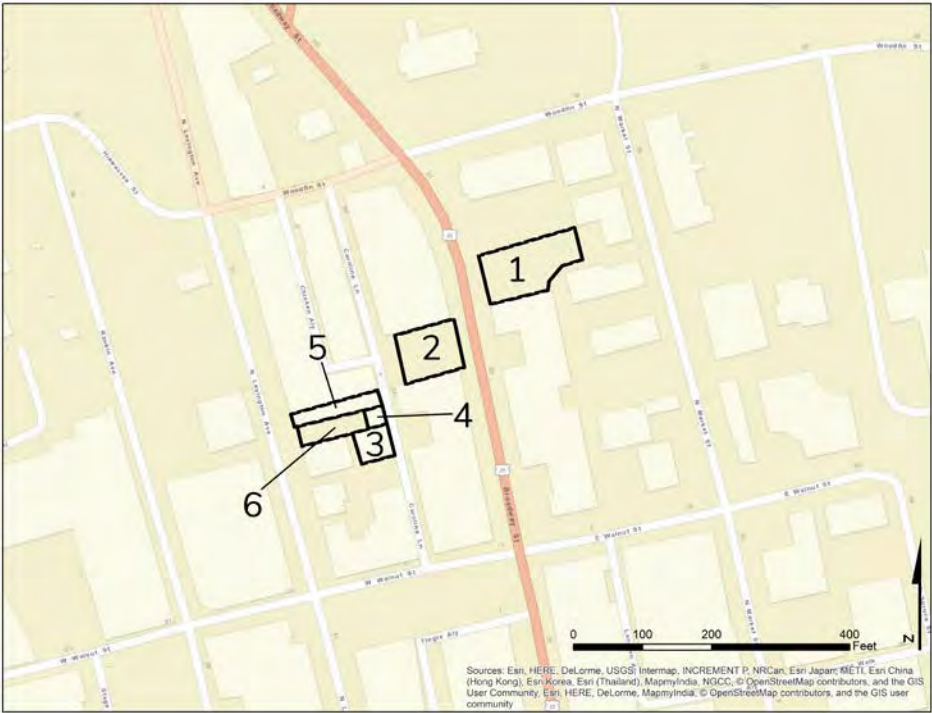
MAP FOUR

This diagram indicates future redevelopment opportunities that are likely to happen in the next few years. These potential projects will impact this corridor and will require a thoughtful and integrated response.

- 1. BPR Properties, LLC :: hotel/condo development, 30 residential units, 150 lodging units, 3,000 sf of office space, 2,000 sf of retail, and 107 parking spaces.
- 2. Center For Craft :: parking garage extension of Center For Craft
- 3. Leslie and Associates :: mixed-use redevelopment
- 4. Leslie and Associates :: mixed-use redevelopment
- 5. Leslie and Associates :: mixed-use redevelopment
- 6. Leslie and Associates :: mixed-use redevelopment

Redevelopment Opportunities

Carolina Lane

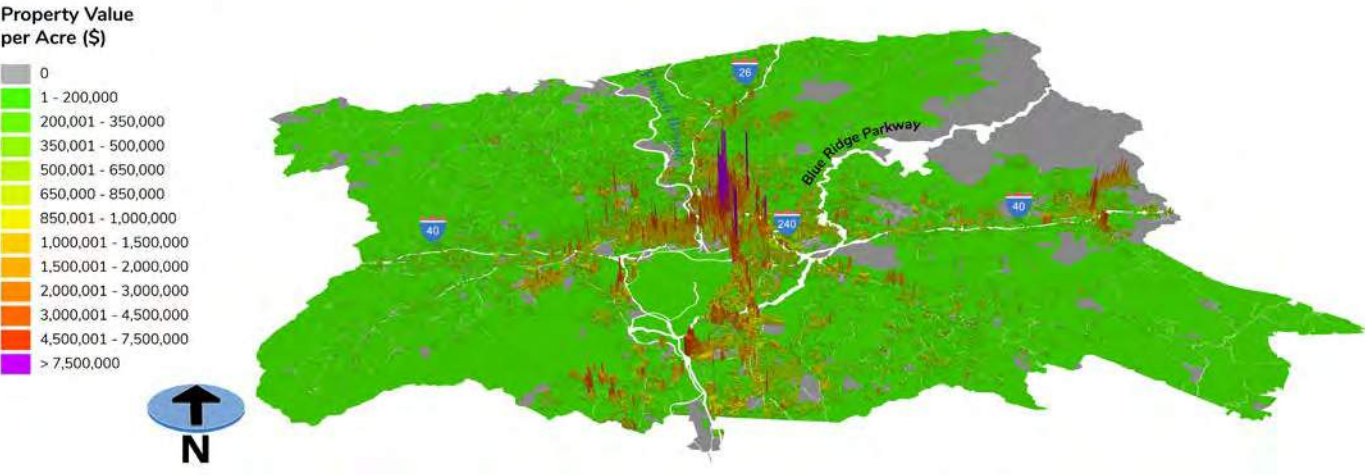


URBAN3

MAP FIVE

Below is a three-dimensional illustration of Map One’s basic value per acre. This view more clearly identifies the differences in property values between the county, city, and downtown.

3D Property Value Per Acre
Buncombe County

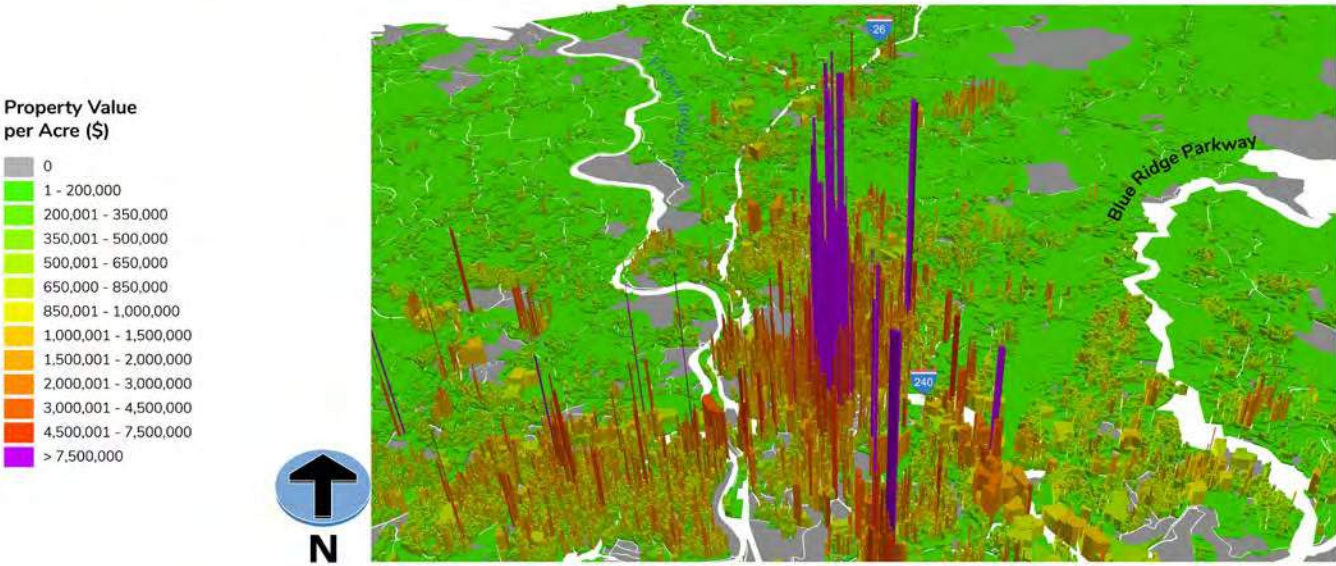


URBAN3

MAP SIX

This diagram is a close-up image from Map Five showing downtown Asheville.

3D Property Value Per Acre
Asheville Downtown & Surroundings

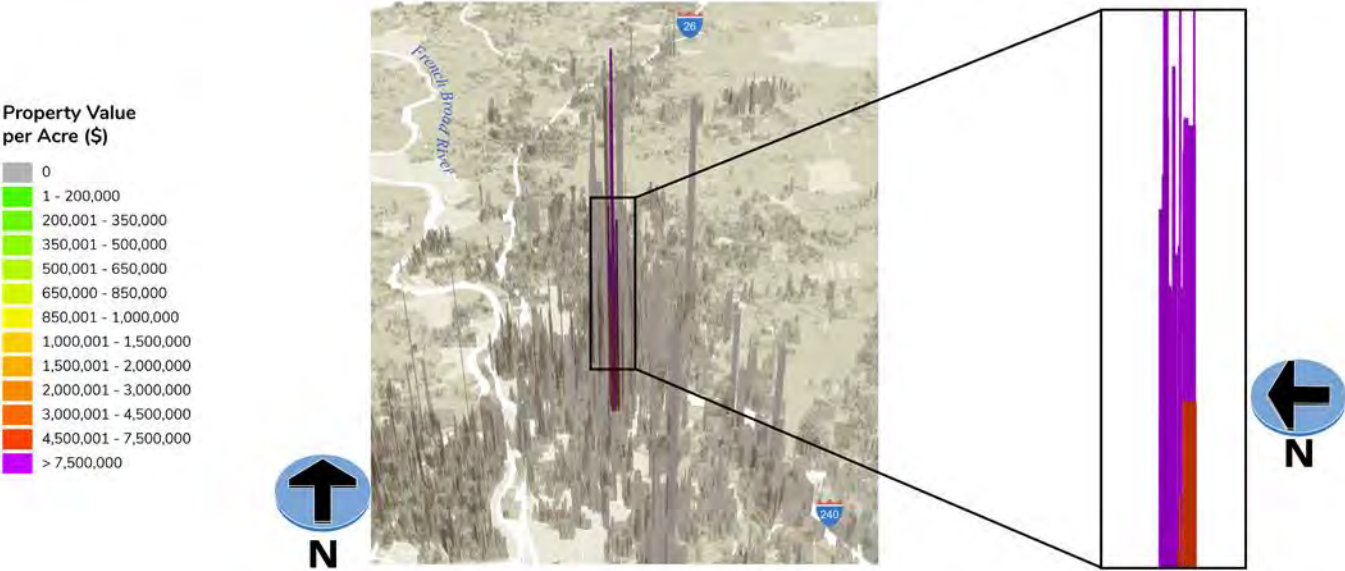


URBAN3

MAP SEVEN

The Carolina Lane Study Area is isolated here to show its relationship with the rest of downtown. The inset provides a close-up from another angle to display the fact that though all of the properties are quite valuable, there is a large amount of variation.

3D Property Value Per Acre
Carolina Lane

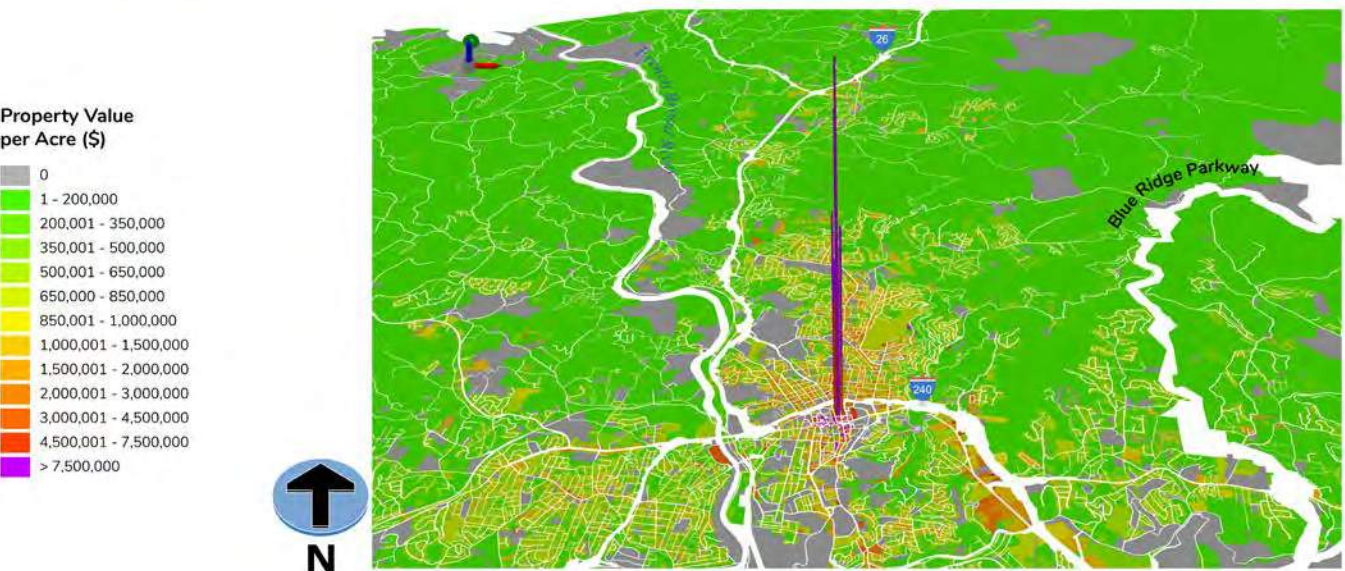


URBAN3

MAP EIGHT

This diagram illustrates another isolated view of Carolina Lane's property value per acre.

3D Property Value Per Acre
Carolina Lane

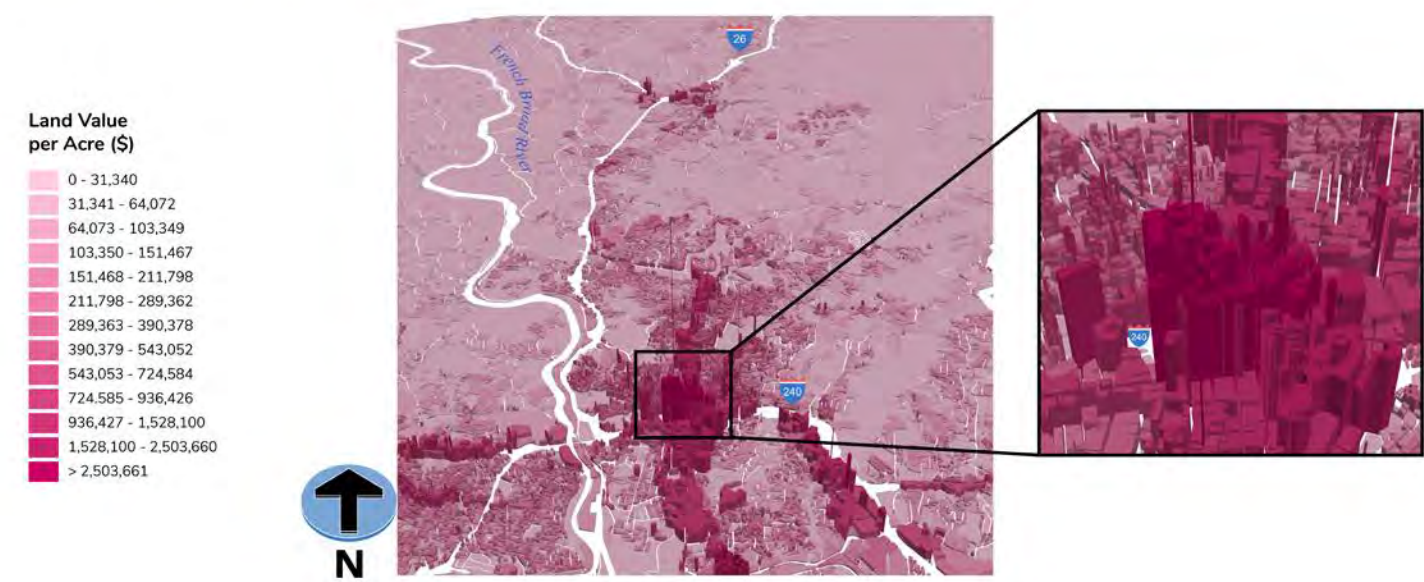


URBAN3

MAP NINE

The map below provides a three-dimensional view of the land value per acre.

3D Land Value Per Acre
Asheville Downtown & Surroundings



URBAN3

MAP TEN

This page shows the land value per acre of the Carolina Lane Study Area isolated from the rest of downtown. Though the land values are among the highest in the county, they are on par with the rest of downtown.

3D Land Value Per Acre
Carolina Lane



URBAN3



CODE REVIEW

ADC reviewed relevant codes and regulations that may affect activity during special events and/or during longer-term activities that might occur in the Study Area.

FIRE LANE

Carolina Lane must have an open fire lane running the length of the street. The width of this fire lane must be an unobstructed 15 feet. This raises some interesting questions about the loading zone parking spaces on Carolina Lane and whether these will be allowed to continue long term due to the diminished spaces in the street for the fire lane. Chicken Alley is not accessible to fire vehicles.



DUKE ENERGY

ADC representatives walked the street with a Duke technician. The technician stated that Duke requires a 7.5-foot buffer from primary wires. Secondary wires, which are thinner and often run from poles to buildings, only require a 5-foot buffer.

The Duke technician indicated that poles can be coated or wrapped in different materials (e.g. yarn), but added that if a technician needed to access a pole, the wrapping would be removed and reinstalled.



STREET OWNERSHIP

Broadway Street is a state road and is therefore run by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). In discussions with NCDOT, ADC determined that any overhead installations must be at least 14-feet above the street. Furthermore, NCDOT requires any overhead activity to remain 10-feet away from high-voltage electrical lines. If a person or organization would like to produce an art or creative installation above Broadway Street or in the right of way (ROW), an encroachment agreement with the NCDOT would be required.

Regarding Carolina Lane, the City of Asheville's primary concern is maintaining the fire lane and service capacity on the street. Installations that encroach on the ROW will need an encroachment agreement.



CODE REVIEW

Chicken Alley is collectively owned and maintained by the various private property owners, but recommendations from the City will be key as plans move forward. The alley offers incredible opportunities for creative approaches to stormwater management and long-term art installations. ADC recommends that any proposed activity in the alley is discussed with the City to confirm what can occur here long term, and to allow temporary access to utility companies. It may be possible to close the street, yet property owners may prefer removable or movable bollards that allow occasional temporary access.



LIGHTING

Any lighting changes would need to comply with the City’s lighting ordinance (Section 7-10-11 of the Unified Development Ordinance). This typically means that all outdoor lighting must be full-cutoff (no light emissions higher than 90° above the bulb).

Alleys are excluded from lighting, spacing, and placing requirements, but are lit by private security lights and full-cutoff wall packs, as seen in Section 7-10-11(h)4v. There are also lighting codes that regulate the brightness of the lighting, as determined by neighboring uses. Because the Study Area has a mix of commercial and residential uses, these requirements may vary based upon exact location.



BUILDING HEIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The entire Study Area is in the Intermediate Height Zone in the Central Business District, according to City development codes seen in Section 7-8-40(f)7, which means that buildings may be at most 145-feet tall and at least two stories in height (24-feet).



COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Residents and property owners have seen the area transition from a place that is affordable for locals to a place where it is increasingly difficult to stay long term due to rising costs. This has specifically affected people from the creative community: artists, craftspeople, and musicians. It has also led some stakeholders to remark on how the Study Area used to have more of a neighborhood feel. There is concern that the Study Area is becoming less and less of a space for locals, which parallels the general public's opinion of downtown Asheville as a whole.

This transition has led some local stakeholders to view the short-term rentals on Carolina Lane and Chicken Alley unfavorably. Stakeholders have had negative experiences parties hosted by short-term renters occurring on these back streets late into the night, disturbing the peace that locals desire. However, these short-term rentals do bring life to these streets that might otherwise be overlooked by locals.

African American community members, though excited about the activation of underutilized spaces in downtown, admitted to being uncomfortable with the downtown scene. Places like Eagle-Market now seem congested, and the authentic culture has been lost in similar areas of downtown. Goombay is a big draw for African Americans in downtown, but the groups questioned how to create events downtown with the same “flavor,” as one participant put it.

Musical artists of color expressed difficulty finding venues to play downtown. From hip hop to jazz, artists sought small venues that welcomed their acts.

CULTURAL GATEWAY

Among stakeholders, there is little consensus around what constitutes the northern gateway into downtown. Some acknowledged that the intersection of Woodfin Street and Broadway Street marks the entrance into downtown, while others felt that the murals under I-240 on Lexington Avenue served as more of a gateway. Still, others pointed to the I-240 Merrimon Avenue off-ramp as a possible gateway. Regardless, there was consensus that those entering downtown along Broadway Street should be immersed in art throughout the corridor, signaling a robust art and culture presence. Our analysis also revealed that travelers heading north on Broadway Street would benefit from a visual terminus to anchor the end of the view corridor and invite people to continue walking to Woodfin Street, thus improving pedestrian circulation.

STORMWATER

Infrastructure issues are some of the more readily noticeable features within the Study Area. Stakeholders often comment on stormwater problems such as broken downspouts, defective rain gutters, and a lack of storm drains. As a result, rainwater runoff flows unimpeded down Carolina Lane and Chicken Alley.



COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Some properties have experienced flooding in their basements; others have witnessed erosion at the foundations of their buildings. Stakeholders noted that the downspouts have been used occasionally as showers by itinerant populations, creating a potential health risk.

OVERHEAD UTILITIES

Most stakeholders asked about the opportunity to bury the overhead utility lines that cross over Carolina Lane and Chicken Alley. It is worth noting that some residents and property owners are not offended by the power lines and feel they contribute to the gritty feel of the alleyways.

BROADWAY STREET AND WOODFIN STREET INTERSECTION

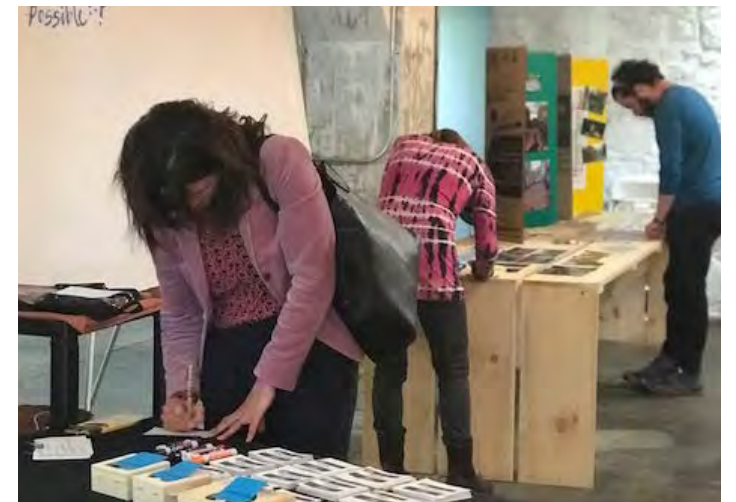
Several stakeholders discussed the intersection of Broadway Street and Woodfin Street as needing improvement. They remarked about the intersection's unfriendly nature for pedestrians and confusing traffic pattern for drivers entering downtown southbound on Broadway Street from I-240. Business owners expressed interest in any improvements that can be made to this intersection, to create a more welcoming gateway into downtown Asheville.

Potential gateway enhancements at the Broadway Street and Woodfin Street intersection may also include sidewalk improvements on Woodfin Street between Broadway Street and Lexington Avenue. Stakeholders commented on how pedestrian traffic often spills out into the eastbound right lane heading up the hill.

This is especially true when there are large groups walking together, garbage bins on the sidewalk, or people taking pictures of the small “fairy houses” along the wall next to the sidewalk.

PARKING

Business owners expressed interest in additional customer parking and in using current parking areas for green spaces and events to activate the area.





CREATING A GATEWAY INTO DOWNTOWN

“Gateway Projects welcome people to areas. Artworks may be used to enhance the character and distinction of an area by either marking or defining boundaries and/or entrances into the city, unique/significant districts, individual neighborhoods, and into the mountains. Gateway Projects offer an opportunity to signify and identify places and enhance, enrich, and orient the community’s landscape.”⁷—City of Asheville Public Art Masterplan

ADC recommends working with the City of Asheville and Explore Asheville to see if this project might meet their criteria.

CELEBRATING OUR CREATIVE CULTURE

Public Art can also be used to define a destination, such as the Chicken Alley mural by Molly Must mentioned in the historical context on this report. Over the years, the mural has brought significant attention to this area and to the history of the alleyway.

WELCOME TO ASHEVILLE

An average of **17,500** cars travel through the intersection of Woodfin Street and Broadway Street each day, according to NCDOT estimates. Of those, nearly **10,000** use this intersection as an entryway into downtown.⁸ Adding signage and public art to this area would help define and enhance Asheville’s unique downtown cultural district.

According to a report by Americans for the Arts, “public art directly influences how people see and connect with a place, providing access to aesthetics that support its identity and making residents feel appreciated and valued.” Public art also “encourage[s] attachment to a location for residents [and visitors] through cultural and historical understanding, and by highlighting what is unique about the places where people love, work, and play.”¹⁰

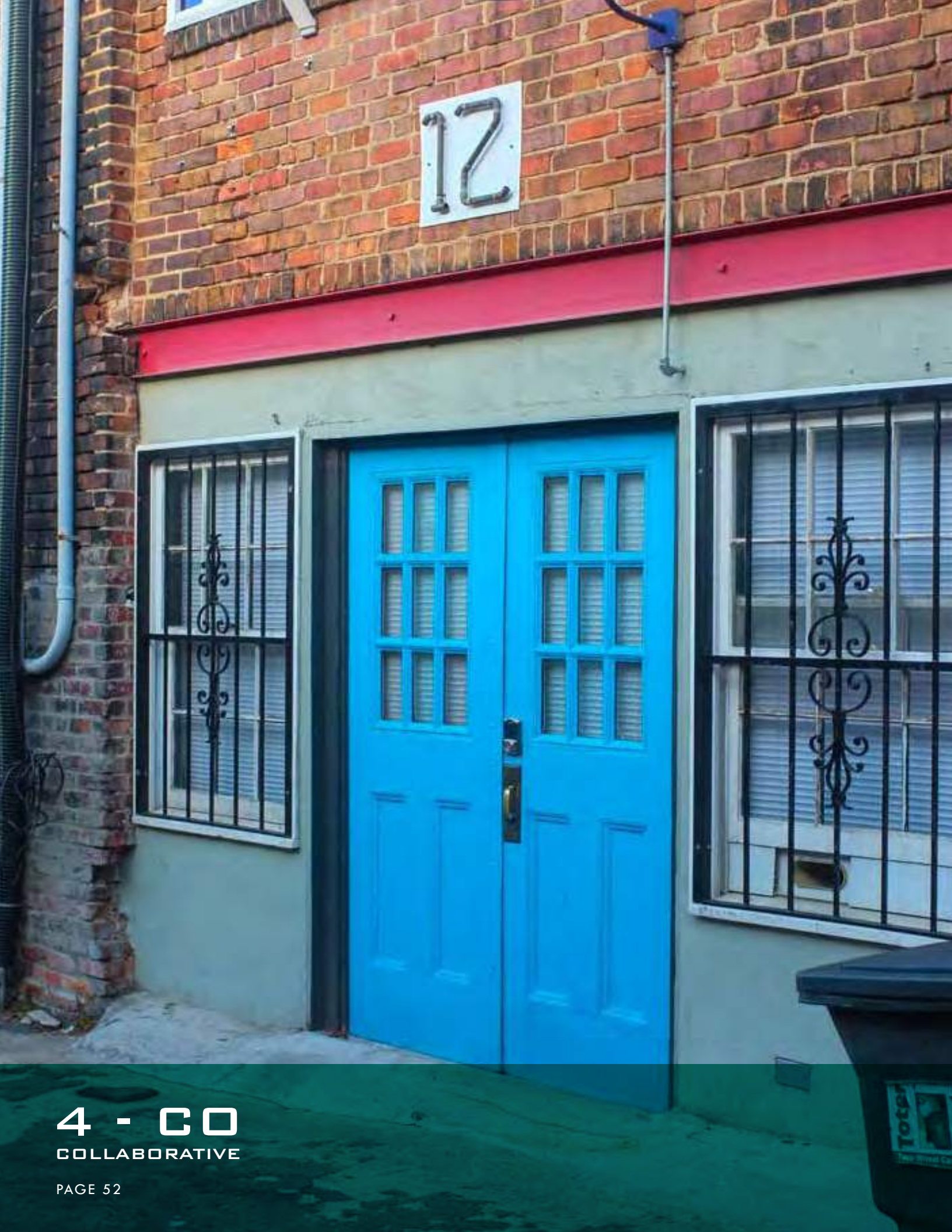
BENEFITS OF SIGNAGE

Signage can give less prominent districts and destinations a much-needed boost. It adds distinct definition to an area, further announcing arrival into downtown for both residents and visitors. Signage can also help reinforce an area’s defining culture and history.

Adding public art near the intersection of Woodfin Street and Broadway Street, near the I-240 off-ramp onto Merrimon Avenue, or somewhere in between, would offer a distinct cultural identifier for the northern end of downtown and serve as a defining entry point into the City’s cultural district.

Initiatives like Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau’s Wayfinding Signs Program recognize the importance of these features, and aim to enhance “the destination’s sense of place as well as the region’s history and character.”⁹ One approach the program uses is gateway and district identification signage.

⁷Public Art Masterplan (Asheville, NC: City of Asheville, 2001).
⁸Annual Average Daily Traffic (NCDOT, 2017).
⁹Wayfinding Signs Program (Explore Asheville, n.d.).
¹⁰ Why Public Art Matters (Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts, 2018).



IMPROVING THE PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

“Walkable streets encourage people to experience an area on foot and provide a comfortable, enjoyable, and safe pedestrian experience, including those with disabilities. Sidewalks, marked crosswalks, lighting and street trees in Asheville should contribute to the pedestrian experience but should be contextually appropriate based on adjacent streets and land uses.”^[7]¹¹—Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan

PROBLEM AREAS & RECOMMENDED PEDESTRIAN SAFETY MEASURES

Sidewalks and crosswalks within the Study



INTERSECTION OF BROADWAY STREET AND WOODFIN STREET

The intersection of Broadway Street and Woodfin Street includes very long crosswalks, over 80-feet long on two sides. Additionally, traffic turning right often pulls past the stop bar in order to gain better visibility and/or fails to yield to pedestrians making their way across the intersection.

Push buttons on the southeast corner for traffic signals are also not accessible locations for pedestrians with mobility restrictions.¹² In addition, nighttime visibility is a concern. In the short term, NCDOT might consider adding “Stop Here on Red” and “No Right Turn on Red” signage, and improving the intersection for pedestrian safety and accessibility. One approach might include a roundabout, which would slow traffic moving into downtown and create mid-crossing medians.

Another method might be to create a pedestrian scramble, which stops the flow of traffic in all directions for a short period, allowing pedestrians to cross the intersection in any direction without having to worry about motorists.



¹¹Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan (Asheville, NC: City of Asheville, 2018).

¹²Asheville Road Safety Audit 3 (Asheville, NC, 2015).

PRIMARY FOCUS AREAS



IMPROVING THE PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

SIDEWALK ALONG WOODFIN

The sidewalk along the southern edge of Woodfin Street is only 4-feet wide, while Downtown Design Review Guidelines mandate that sidewalks should be at least 10-feet wide.¹³ It is also impossible to navigate when garbage containers are hauled to the curb, and can be extremely dangerous for pedestrians with mobility issues.

ADC recommends widening the sidewalk by reducing Woodfin Street between North Lexington Avenue and Broadway Street to three lanes, with a shared middle turn lane for left-turning traffic.



NCDOT should consider adding a more visible crosswalk mid-way between this crosswalk and the Broadway Street and Woodfin Street intersection, as well as installing in-street yield to pedestrian signage. Pavement marking in advance of crosswalks would also make it more visible. Lastly, reflective markings and additional lighting should be installed to make the crosswalk more visible at night.



BROADWAY CROSSWALK

According to N.C. General Statute 20-173, at mid-block crosswalks with no traffic signal, drivers must yield the way to pedestrians in the crosswalk. However, the crosswalk between L.O.F.T .and HENCO is often ignored. It can be difficult to see during the day, and nearly impossible to see at night. For this reason, many drivers are not yielding to pedestrians.

¹³Downtown Design Review Guidelines (Asheville, NC: City of Asheville, n.d.)



THE PARKLET

Another way to enhance the pedestrian experience in the Study Area would be to add a parklet. According to an article by Michelle Birdsall in the ITE (Institute of Transportation Engineers) Journal, parklets provide “an economical and eye pleasing solution to the need for increased public space where people can reconnect with the environment and each other in their community.”¹⁴



While NCDOT has yet to permit the installation of a parklet on a state highway, parklets “are becoming a tool to change public policy in areas that have promoted cars over pedestrians, bringing back elements of an era where people interacted face-to face with their neighbors on the street.”¹⁵



ADC recommends a pilot parklet be added in front of Center for Craft through a public/private partnership between the Center, NCDOT, and the City of Asheville.

¹⁴ M. Birdsall, M. Parklets: Providing Space for People to Park...Themselves. (ITE Journal 83(5), 36-39, 2013).

¹⁵ Birdsall, Parklets.





WHY ADDING A PARKLET IS GOOD BUSINESS SENSE

The increased seating and sidewalk space afforded through parklets has actually helped businesses by expanding access to storefronts.

“A parking space usually serves **one person** for an hour, and what a parklet does is it turns that space over to **10 people** for that very hour,” notes Ariel Ben-Amos, of the Philadelphia (PA) Mayor’s Office.¹⁶

San Francisco (CA) found the addition of a parklet on Divisadero Street resulted in an increase in the number of parked bikes to an average of 10 at a time during weekday afternoons. “[Parklets] **have an unbelievable amount of value in bringing vibrancy to the street life there.** They’re a place where people linger, where they stop, chat and gather, and that really activates the street,” said Alexis Smith of the San Francisco Planning Department.¹⁴

Businesses in Long Beach (CA) saw upticks in sales that led to staff expansion after sponsoring a parklet on their street.¹⁴

Businesses tend to be the primary sponsors of most parklet proposals in cities offering formal programs, because they see a worthwhile return on investment.¹⁴



¹⁴ M. Birdsall, M. Parklets: Providing Space for People to Park...Themselves. (ITE Journal 83(5), 36-39, 2013).
¹⁵ Birdsall, Parklets.
¹⁶ Parklet Policy Toolkit. (San Francisco, CA: Smart Growth America, 2013).



PARKING

Parking was a concern raised by some business owners in the Study Area.

There are a number of parking areas close to the Study Area, including the Rankin Street deck, the Civic Center deck, the Lexington Park surface lot, the West Walnut Street surface lot, the Broadway Street parking deck at the AC Hotel, the surface lot behind Renaissance Hotel, and on-street parking throughout the area.

ADC identifies three potential additional parking areas. (1) The surface lot on West Walnut Street could add a second level with entry from Broadway Street, effectively doubling the size of the lot. (2) The Lexington Park lot on the corner of North Lexington Avenue and Hiawasse Street could be better utilized to offer additional parking capacity. (3) HomeTrust Bank has a larger surface lot adjacent to unused property that was previously an I-240 off-ramp onto Woodfin Street. This area would make an ideal location for a parking deck.





ACTIVATING THE CITY'S ALLEYS

“Alleys are places of drama-enticing in their narrow linearity, exciting in their perceived risk, and scaled as stage sets, where the human body figures large against a constrained backdrop and directed lighting. Alleys are also quintessentially about movement, whether by individuals perambulating and pedaling, vehicles accessing business backdoors, or water flowing from rooftops to drains. With this excitement, potential for human encounter, and utility in moving people, merchandise and water through the urban fabric, alleys possess compelling potential to produce a vibrant secondary public realm that might also help to repair the ecological performance of our cities.”¹⁷—Seattle Integrated Alley Handbook Activating Alleys for a Lively City

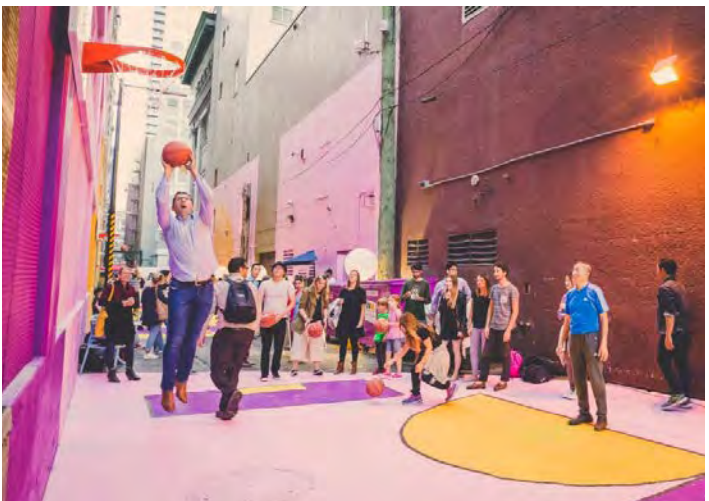
DID YOU KNOW?

“Alleys can contribute around 50% of additional public space to the city, creating a new network for pedestrians.”¹⁸

Alleyways provide an opportunity for an enhanced pedestrian experience, but they also offer so much more, including:

- A More Walkable City
- Places for Green Infrastructure
- Intimate and Personal City Spaces
- Additional Store Frontages For a Greater Economy
- Places for Children and the Elderly
- Off-street Spaces for Festivals and Cultural Activities
- Unique Experiences

ADC worked with multiple stakeholders to create design solutions for some of the top concerns. The following is an overview of the issues that were addressed.



¹⁷M. Fialko and J. Hampton, J. Seattle Integrated Alley Handbook Activating Alleys for a Lively City. (Seattle, WA., 2011)
¹⁸Fialko and Hampton. Seattle Integrated.



ACTIVATING THE CITY'S ALLEYS

LIGHTING: CAROLINA LANE

Survey results from the Creative Intervention, in addition to stakeholder sentiment, favors café string lighting for Carolina Lane. Any lighting installations would have to comply with the City's Outdoor Lighting Ordinance, which is currently under review. See Part II, Chapter 7, Article XI, Section 7-11-10 of the City's Code of Ordinances.



ROAD SURFACING

It is readily evident that Carolina Lane needs to be resurfaced. Ongoing construction in the alley has further deteriorated road conditions, which are magnified during a typical rain event. ADC has provided the City with cost estimates for resurfacing Carolina Lane using a mix of permeable and paved surfaces. See [Appendices: Carolina Lane Improvements - Cost Estimates].



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT: CAROLINA LANE & CHICKEN ALLEY

Because the Study Area lacks storm drains, all stormwater drains to Lexington Avenue before reaching a storm sewer. As such, many property owners and tenants complain of water inundation during typical summer storm events. Many property owners have constructed small berms in front of their landings to try and prevent stormwater from entering their premises. ADC has provided the City with cost estimates for resurfacing Carolina Lane. See [Appendices: Carolina Lane Improvements - Cost Estimates].



ACTIVATING THE ALLEYWAY



ACTIVATING THE CITY’S ALLEYS

GARBAGE COLLECTION: CAROLINA LANE & CHICKEN ALLEY

Stakeholders consistently identified solid waste disposal as the most pressing issue in Carolina Lane. It is also evident that Carolina Lane will continue to serve as a service alley well into the future. Initially, the ADC design team explored the idea of creating screened garbage can enclosures at several locations in Carolina Lane. However, conversations with the City’s Solid Waste Disposal Department revealed that screened enclosures would not be practical in Carolina Lane. Businesses would have to remove their garbage cans from these enclosures the evening prior to garbage collection, as municipal workers would not be expected to remove the cans themselves. In addition, the enclosures tended to encroach into the fire lanes.

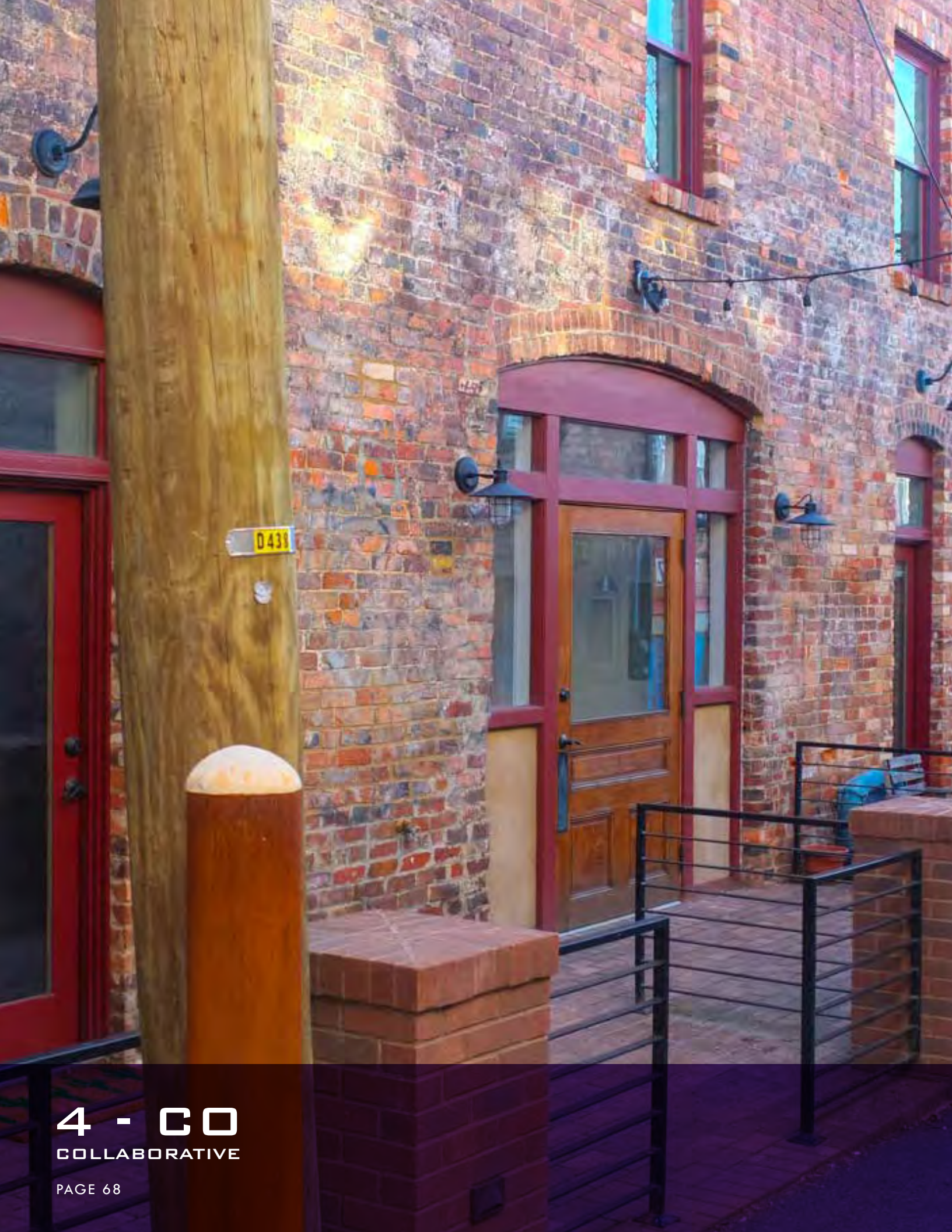
Another course of action might be to install centrally located compactor systems, which businesses and residents would access by fob key. There is interest from the City in piloting this program, but it may still require some additional private funding. There are some additional cost-sharing methods that should be explored, such as a pay-as-you-throw program, which would enable the compactor owner to charge residents and businesses for trash services based on the amount of trash they throw away (usually employing a pay-per-bag system).



POCKET PARK: CAROLINA LANE

A pocket park is a small park accessible to the general public. Pocket parks are frequently created on a single vacant building lot or on small, irregular pieces of land. The ADC team explored different design approaches for a potential pocket park behind Center for Craft’s parking deck on Carolina Lane. Overall, 57.7% of survey participants said they would like to have a community space with greenery. These findings are also in line with the preferences of Study Area property owners, business owners, and residents.





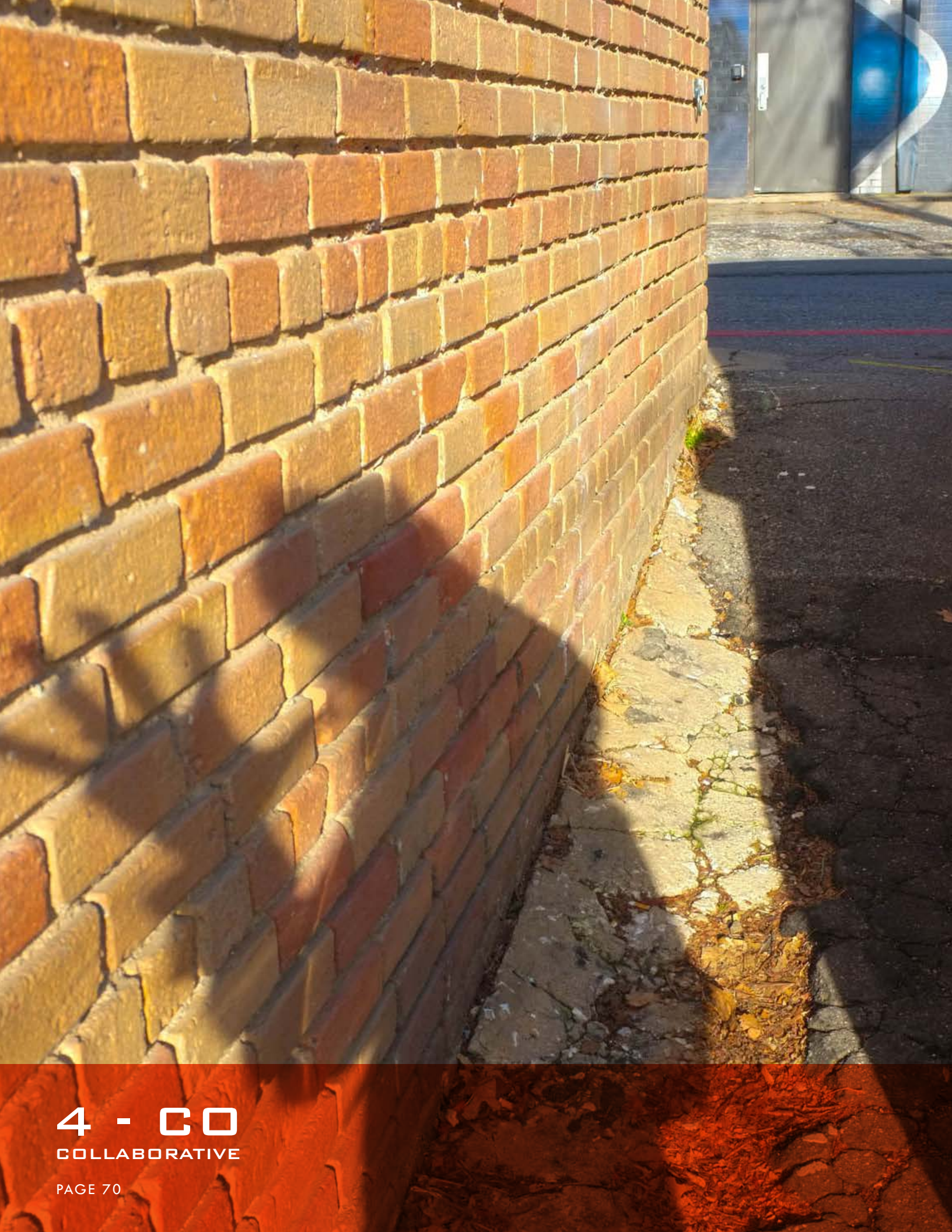
ACTIVATING THE CITY’S ALLEYWAYS

PUBLIC ART: CAROLINA LANE & CHICKEN ALLEY

Remnants of the alley’s historic past vitality can still be found and are worth preserving. Though City sign ordinances make the restoration of advertisements that could be deemed “current” difficult, there are still many “Ghost Signs” that might be worth restoring.

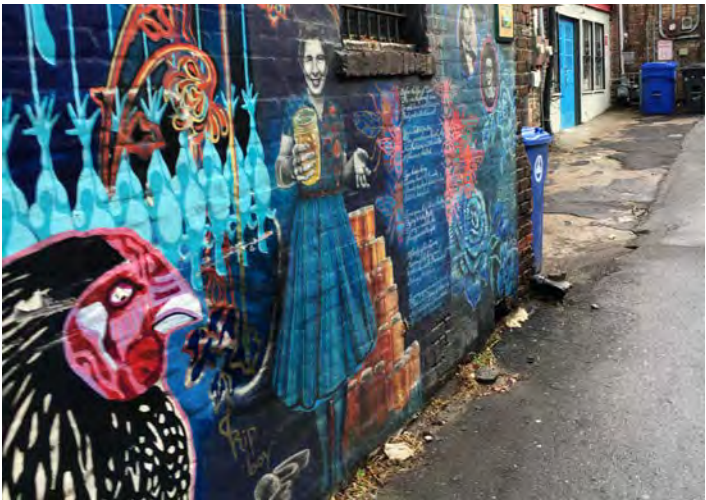
ADC also identified several potential areas for artist installations. These efforts would need to be approved and coordinated through individual property owners. ADC recommends prioritizing local artists for these installations, particularly those with a connection to the Study Area and/or artists of color in order to create an authentic and welcoming space.





CONCLUSION AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The intent of this report is that the results of this visioning process will have a lasting impact on the Study Area and other areas within downtown Asheville. By using creative placekeeping best practices, ADC was able to develop design concepts that were authentic and in keeping with the unique character of the area while addressing issues and limitations. In addition, ADC believes that the creation of a northern gateway into downtown, improved pedestrian experience within the Study Area, and activated alleyways like Carolina Lane and Chicken Alley would be important steps toward enhancing the vibrancy of Asheville’s downtown district.





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