Midtown-St. Albans Area Plan

Confirmation Group Meeting

June 4, 2020

Today's Discussion Points

- Status update
- The revised Plan document.
- Next steps and the Group's role going forward
- Q&A. This is a chance to talk about the process or other questions the Group has
- 5:30. Wrap-up

Status Update

- Review and adoption process is beginning!
- Delay due to COVID, but moving forward
- The report will be on the June 16 City Council agenda
- Requested action is to refer the report and Comprehensive Plan amendments to the Planning Commission
- Staff will provide a presentation with an overview of the plan and input process
- Likely not major discussion from Council
- Next steps are Planning Commission review and Council public hearing

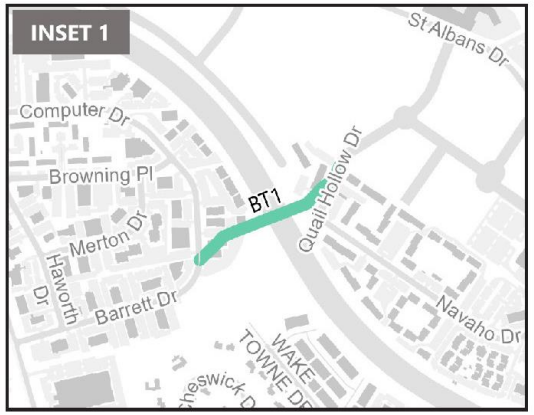
Status Update

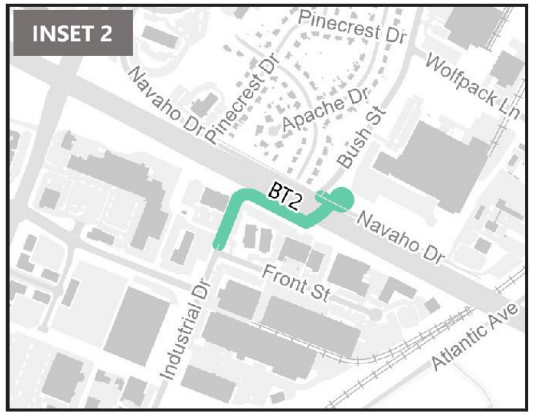
- Actions during the delay
- Used the time to rework the document
- The report is now split into two sections:
  - Walkable Midtown: The Big Picture
    - Executive summary and highly visual summary of Seven Big Moves
  - Walkable Midtown: Detailed Analysis
    - More in-depth technical analysis

Final report:
Crossing the Beltline

A 440 bridge provides the opportunity to create a gateway to Midtown (left); example of a pedestrian-bicycle bridge (below).

Figure 3: Bridge Projects

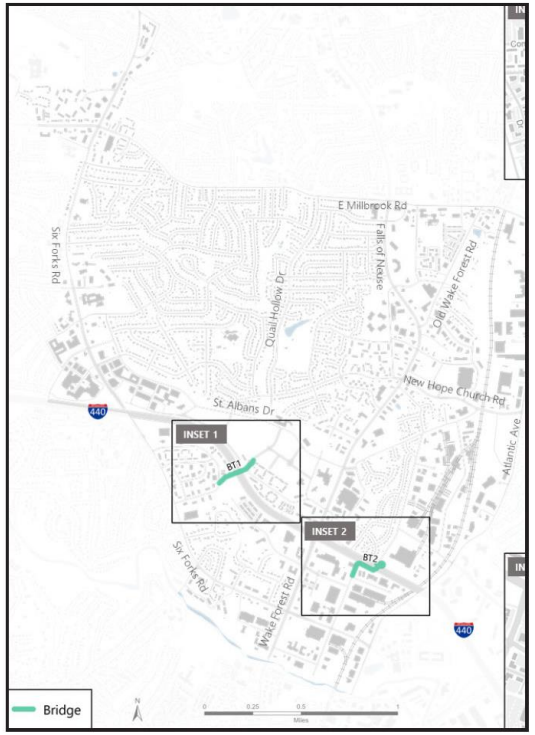




Bridge Project

BT1 - Multimodal bridge connecting Barrett Drive and Navaho Drive

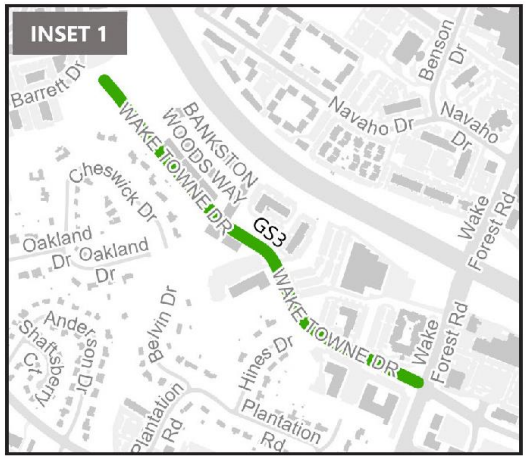
BT2 - Pedestrian bridge connecting Industrial Drive and Bush Street

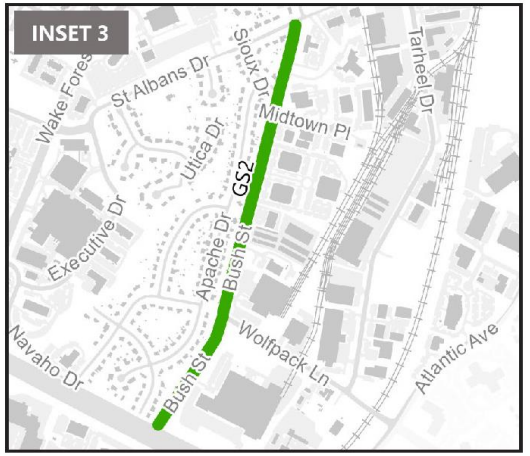


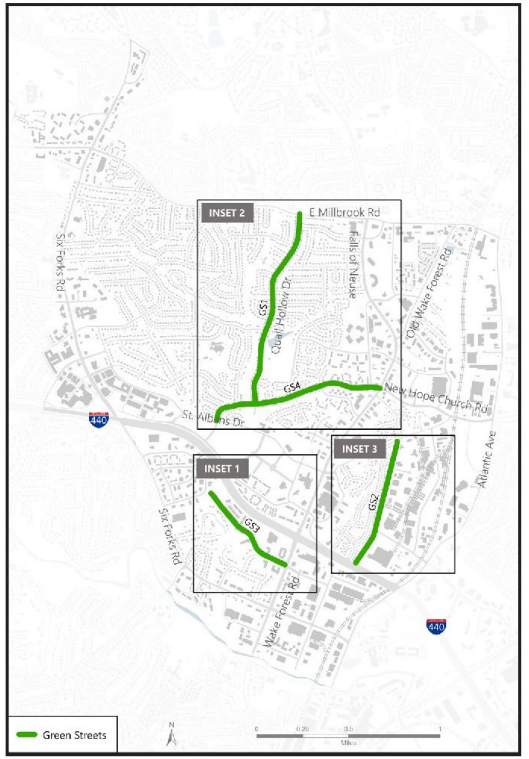
Final report: Green Streets

Green Streets Benefits: Stormwater, Traffic Calming, Safe Places for Walking and Biking

In-street stormwater infrastructure absorbs runoff before it can cause flooding (diagram, right). It also can slow vehicles on neighborhood streets and create safer places for people walking and biking (below)







Green Streets

GS1 - Quail Hollow Green Street

GS2 - Bush Street Green Street

GS3 - Wake Towne Drive Green Street

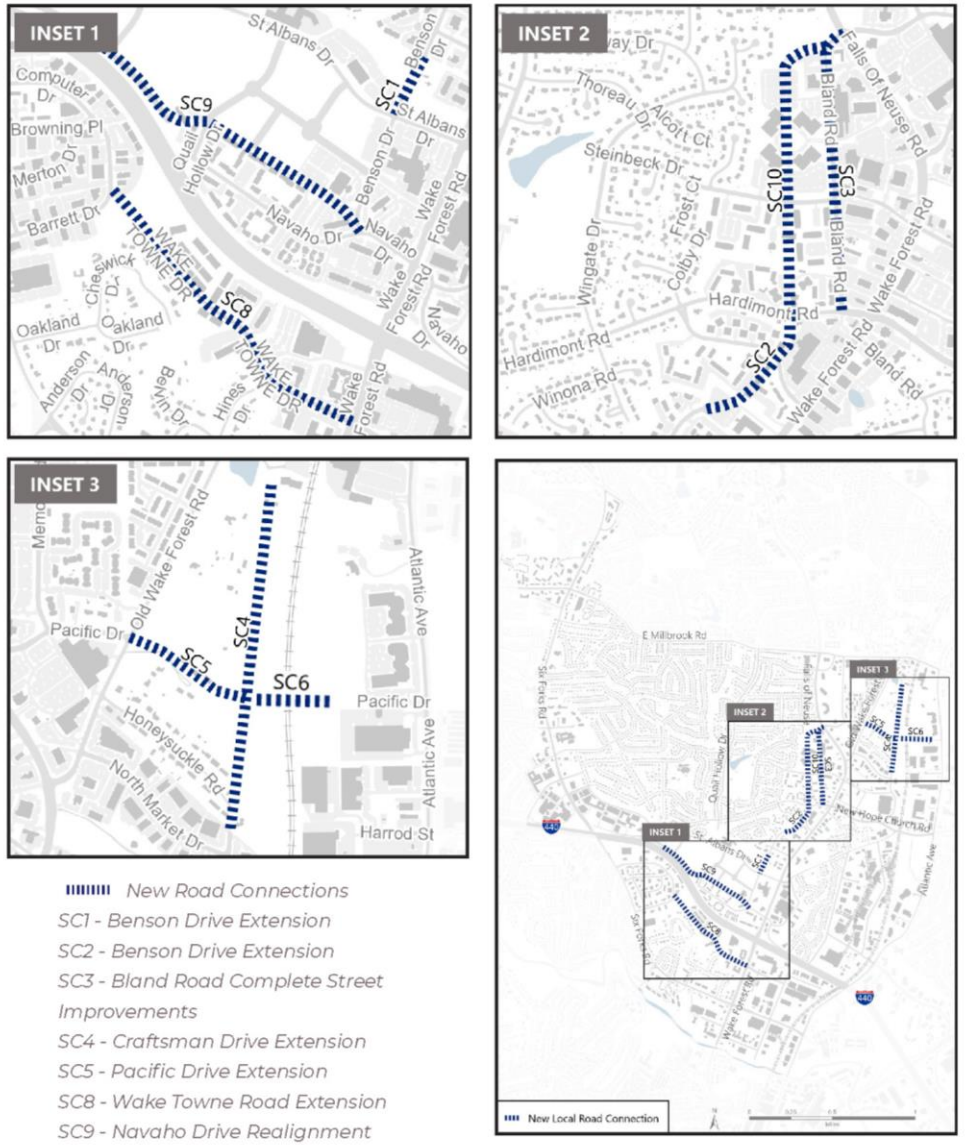
GS4 - Hardimont Green Street

Final report: Connected Streets

Pedestrian-scaled streets improve safety and comfort for people walking and biking.

In locations where very wide streets exist, pedestrian overpasses can provide a solution.

Figure 5: New Local Road Connections



New Road Connections

SC1 - Benson Drive Extension

SC2 - Benson Drive Extension

SC3 - Bland Road Complete Street Improvements

SC4 - Craftsman Drive Extension

SC5 - Pacific Drive Extension

SC8 - Wake Towne Road Extension

SC9 - Navaho Drive Realignment

SC10 - Benson Drive Extension

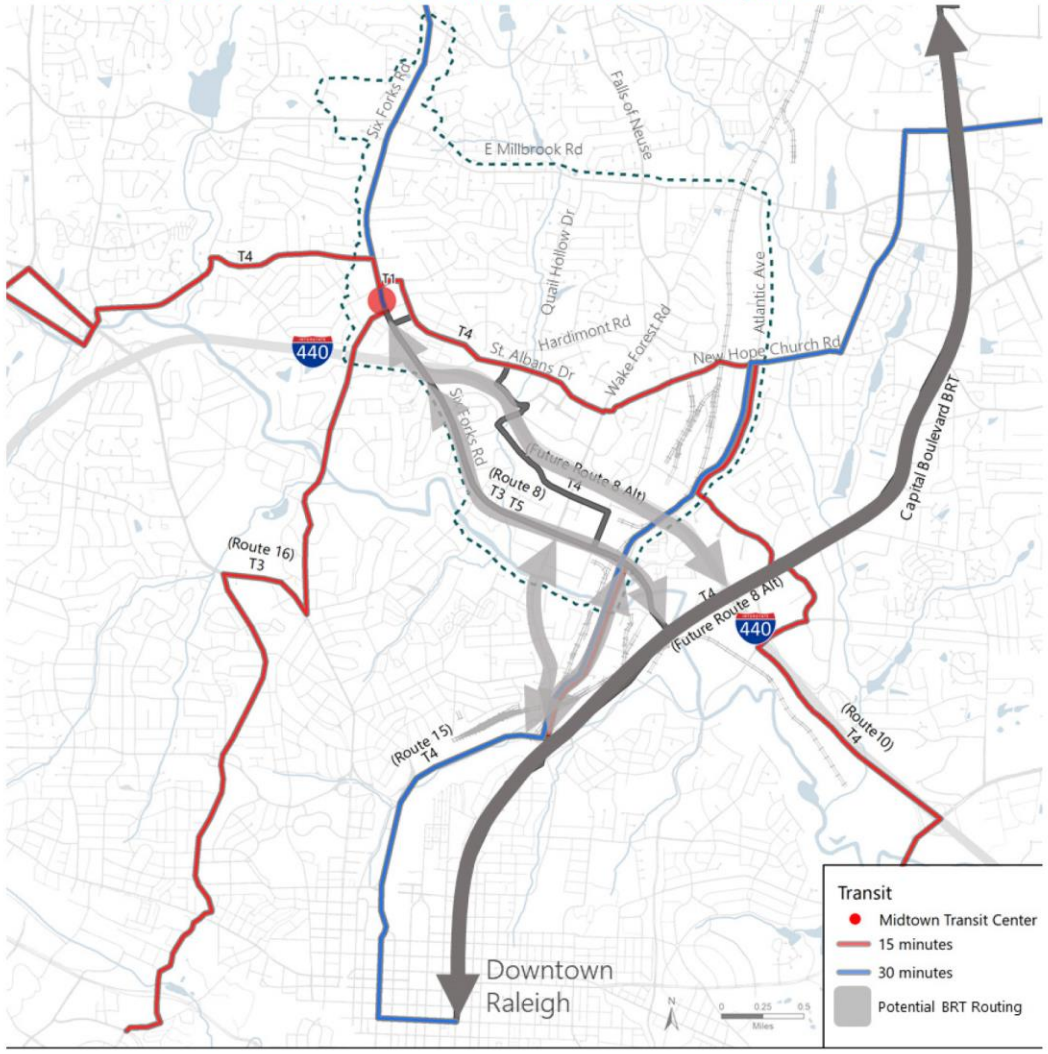
Final report: Serious Transit

The first phase of the plan's approach to transit involves multiple high-frequency routes running through Midtown (GoRaleigh bus shown on facing page).

The second phase calls for study of bus rapid transit, or BRT, to Midtown (example station shown above).

For all forms of transit, enhanced crosswalks and other amenities are critical to provide safe places for riders and other pedestrians (right).

Figure 12: Transit Recommendations, Expanded



T1 - Transit Center
T2 - Bus Stop Improvements
T3 - Expansion of bus service
T4 - Transit Route Realignment
T5 - BRT Extension

Final report: Midtown Ring

In Your Words: Midtown 2040

"Easy to navigate, on car and on foot. Safe. Full of trees and benches."

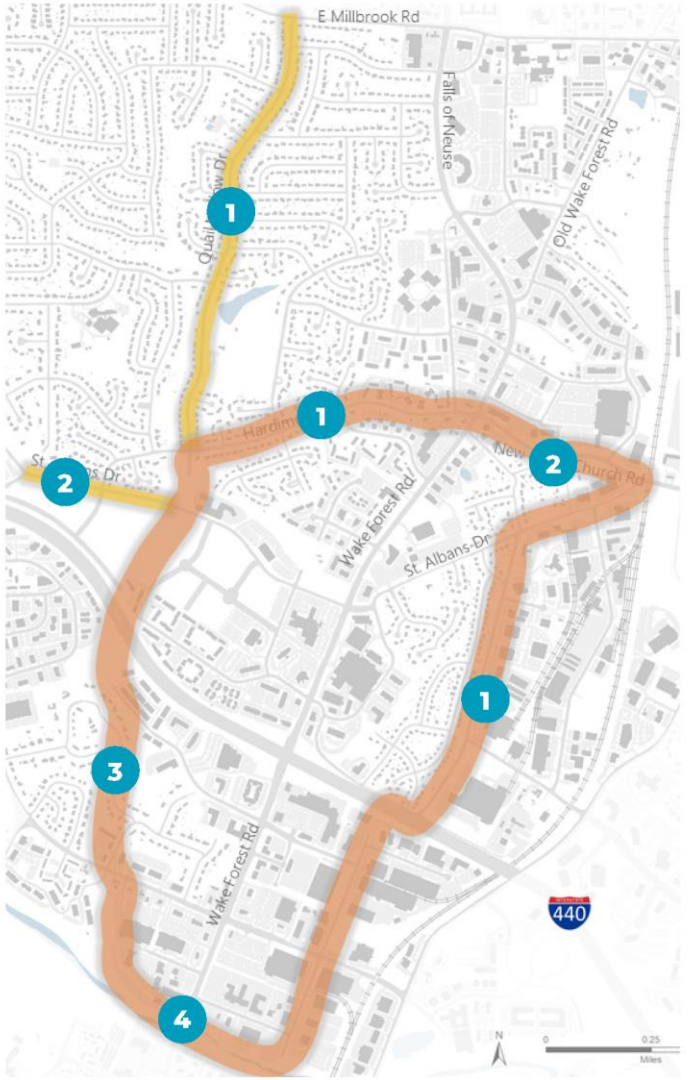
Figure 13: Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure in the Midtown Ring

1 On-street one-way separated bike path and sidewalk

2 On-street two-way separated bike path and sidewalk

3 Off-street multi-use path

4 Greenway

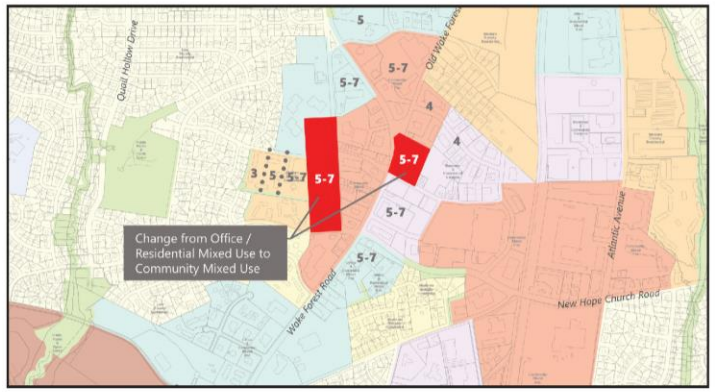


The Ring will include both off-street (above) and protected off-street segements (below).

The Little Sugar Creek Greenway in Charlotte

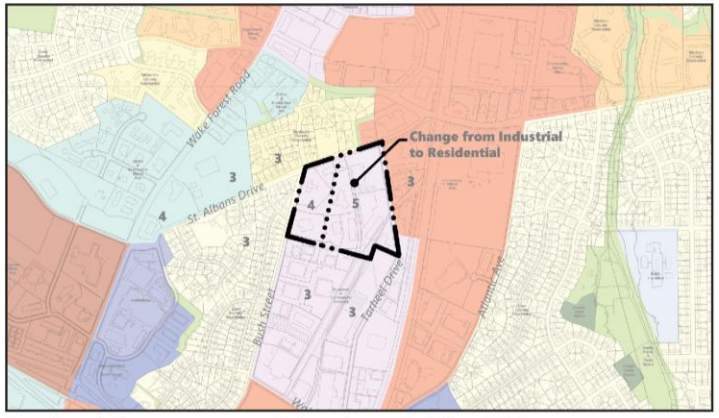
Final report: Midtown Living/Midtown Works

Figure 16: Wake Forest Area Land Use Recommendations



Numbers indicate recommended maximum building height.

Figure 17: Atlantic and St Albans Land Use Recommendations



Numbers indicate recommended maximum building height.

Building frontage defines the relationship of buildings to the street. It significantly determines not just the appearance of an area, but whether it is likely to be used by pedestrians.
Much of the mixed-use and commercial portions of the Midtown area are characterized by buildings set far back from the street, with large parking areas in between the street and sidewalk (opposite page). This tends to create uncomfortable spaces for pedestrians. The Six Forks corridor study recommended a different approach. In larger mixed-use areas, it recommended a more urban approach (see above); in other areas, a more landscaped frontage is recommended (below).

Final report: Waterfront District

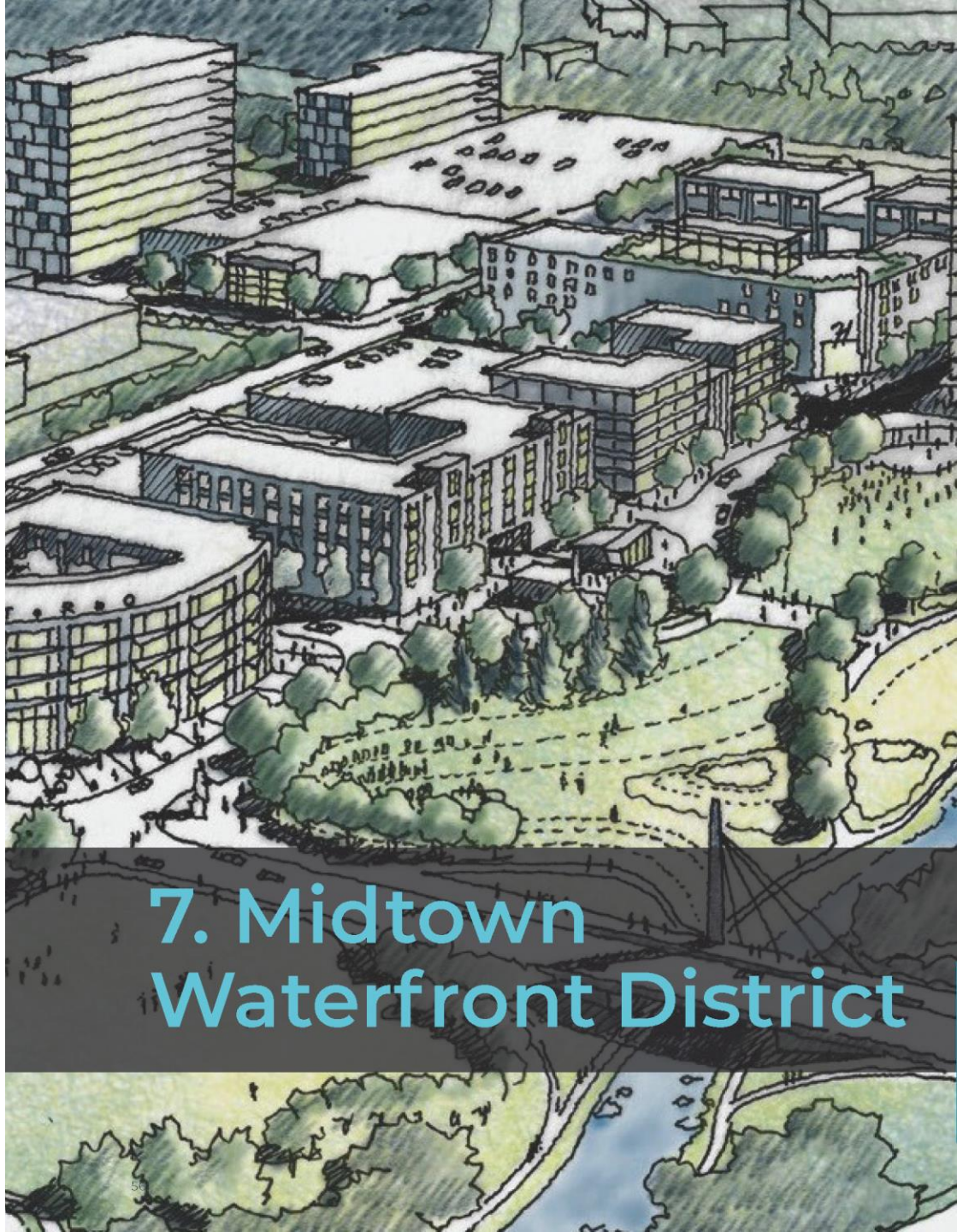
The Midtown Waterfront District

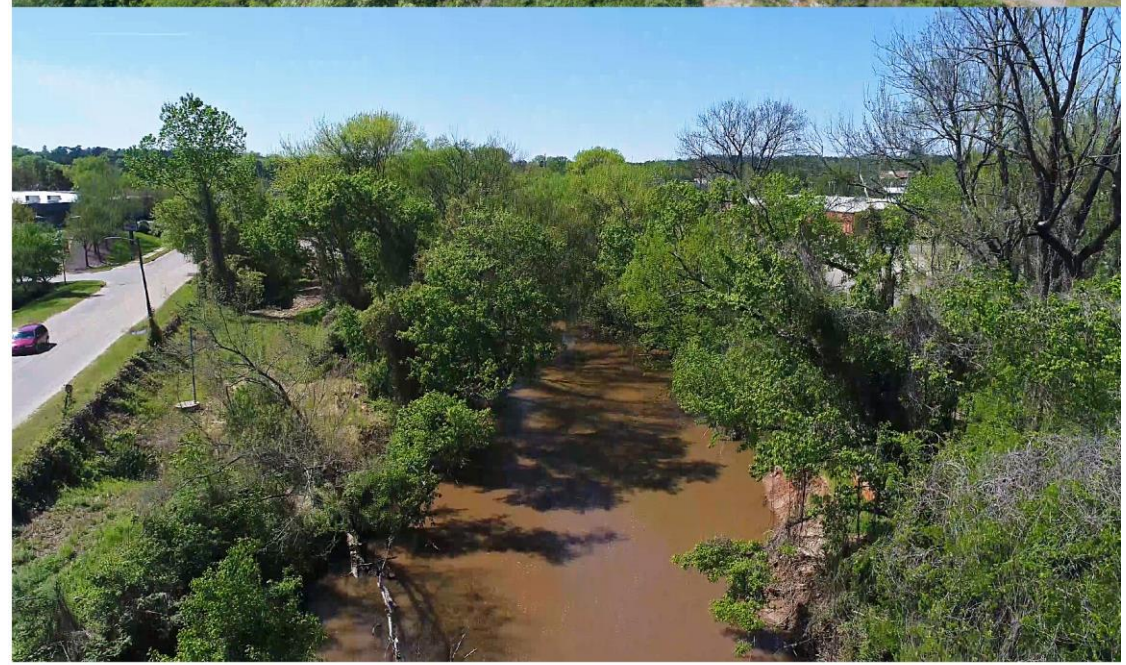
The decision to locate the state's capital on a backwoods farm instead of the bustling Town of Fayetteville means Raleigh has long been a city without a waterfront. However, a perfect opportunity exists along the banks of the Crabtree – a waterway larger than many of the state's rivers – to change that fact.

The Midtown Waterfront District is where urban life and activity occur along the water's edge, a place that serves as a destination for Midtown residents and beyond. New crossings of the Crabtree, a restored and opened-up waterway, and a storm-resistant and runoff-absorbing park combine with housing and retail to make a place unlike any other in the City.

In Your Words: Midtown 2040

"A fun and exciting place to live."





Three views of the Waterfront District

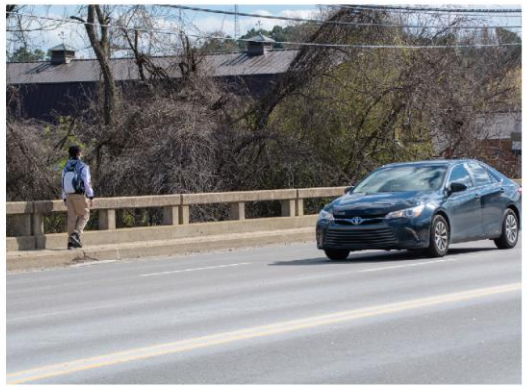
The district is currently characterized by large-format retail uses and warehouses. It turns its back to the Crabtree, which is bordered by vacant lots and overgrown vegetation. This plan recommends reorienting the district to connect with the waterway.

Above: Looking south, the downtown skyline is visible in the backgroud, with the Crabtree defining the southern border of the district.

Facing page, top: Looking northwest, underused properties visible in the foreground, with Duke Raleigh Hospital (upper right) and North Hills (upper left) visible in the background.

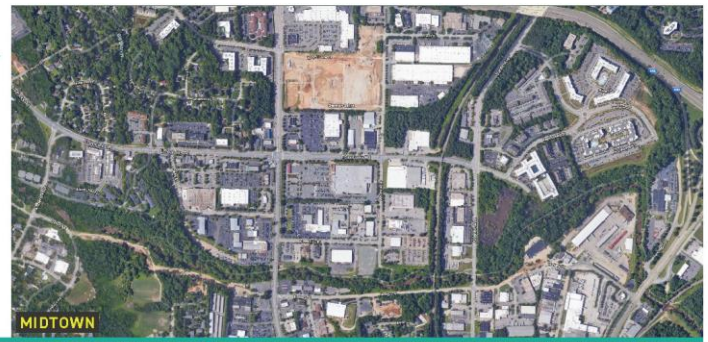
Facing page, bottom: The Crabtree itself is wide and scenic, but in need of a restoration effort.

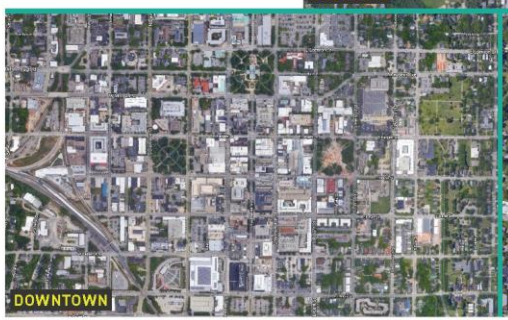
The Midtown Waterfront District: Street Grids and Walkability

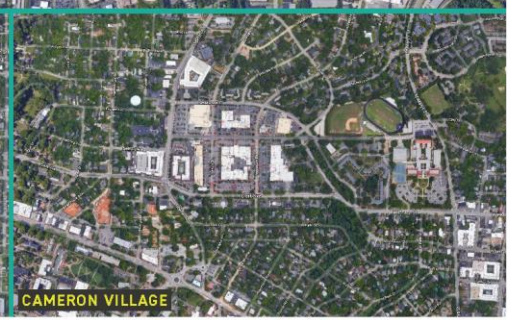


Street Grids

The images show the Midtown Waterfront District at the same scale as downtown and Cameron Village. Midtown today has a street network that reflects industrial and large-format retail uses: major streets connect to the highway, with few other streets and little grid. In Downtown and Cameron Village, more urban mixed-use areas of the city, tighter street grids handle transportation demand on smaller blocks with more pedestrian-friendly streets.

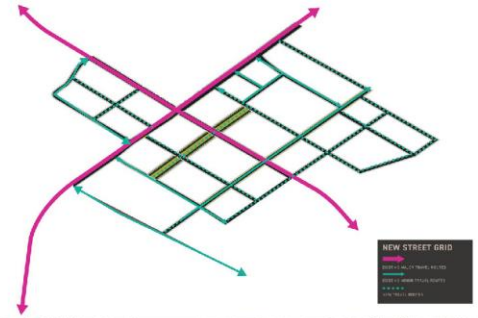






Creating the Grid

The images below show the existing Watefront District grid (below), and a new, connected street grid (right and below right). Industrial Drive becomes the new "Main Street" of the area, similar in function and form to Fayettville Street in downtown Raleigh (above). It connects to the Crabtree Greenway in the south and across 440 in the north via a new pedestrian bridge. Smaller streets begin to break up the large blocks over time.



Re-envisioning the Crabtree Waterfront

The Crabtree watefront edge currently (above). The current conditions suggests the outlines of a place where water, greenway, and urban space all meet.

Rapids on the Crabtree (right). A waterway restoration project can improve the health and flow of the waterway and can include aesthetic improvements as well.

Buffalo Bayou Trail in Houston. The design connects to adjacent amenities, providing areas for observation and interaction with natural resources adjacent to urban places. h-gac.com

Historic Fourth Ward Park in Atlanta, GA. The park's 2-acre lake also acts as a stormwater retention pond. This design feature addressed flooding issues.. beltline.org

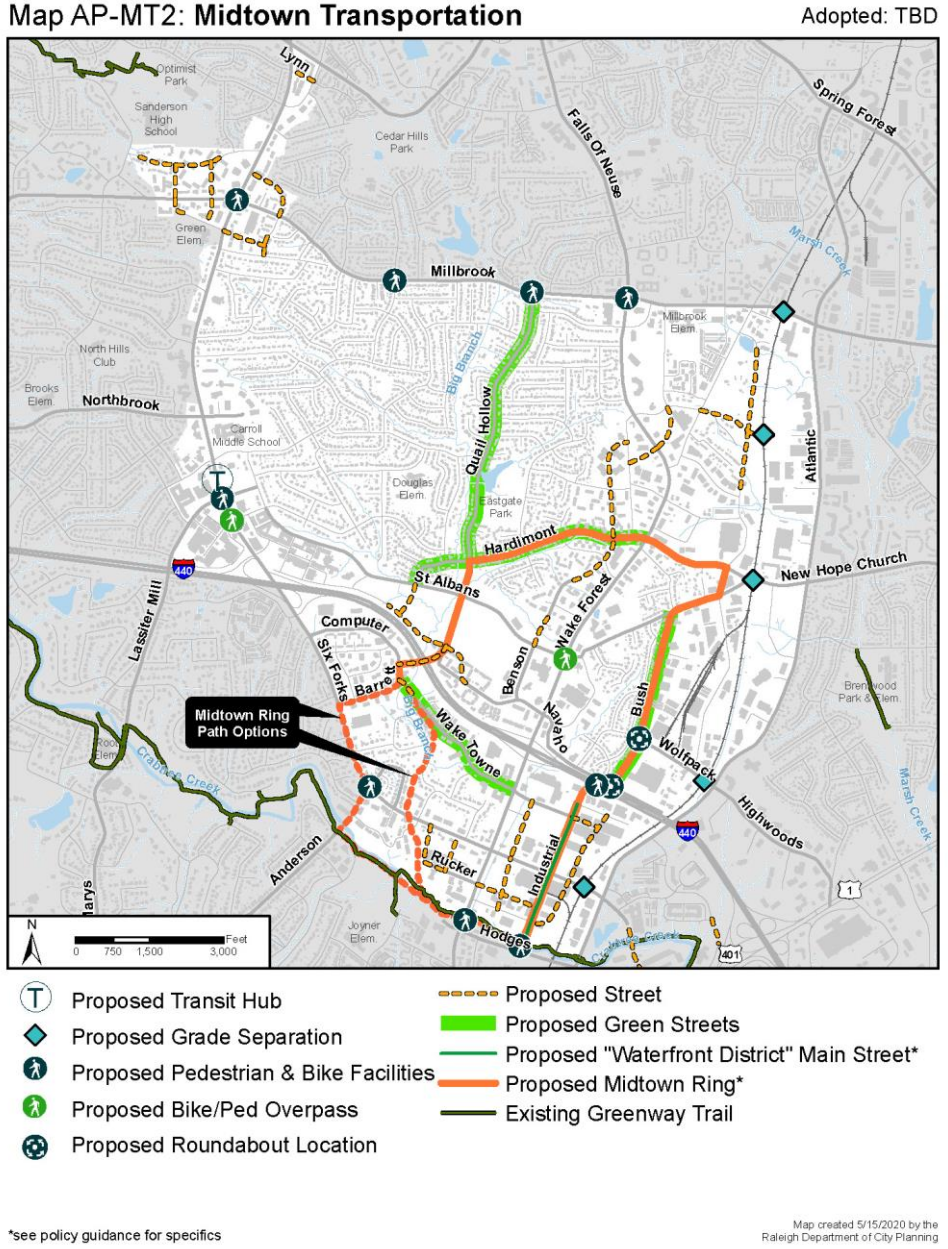
Tanner Springs Park in Portland. Active/ passive spaces layered on top of rainwater infiltration and detention wetlands.

Manayunk Canal Towpath in Philadelphia,. Buildings embrace the greenway and incorporate active and passive spaces.


Existing Greenway and future connection to North Hills
Wake Forest Road
Six Forks Road
PedestrianBridge
Creekside Drive
Waterfront Park
Industrial Drive "Main Street"
Greenway-facing restaurant and retail
Crabtree Greenway
South Side Greenway (future)
Pedestrian Bridge
The Midtown Waterfront District

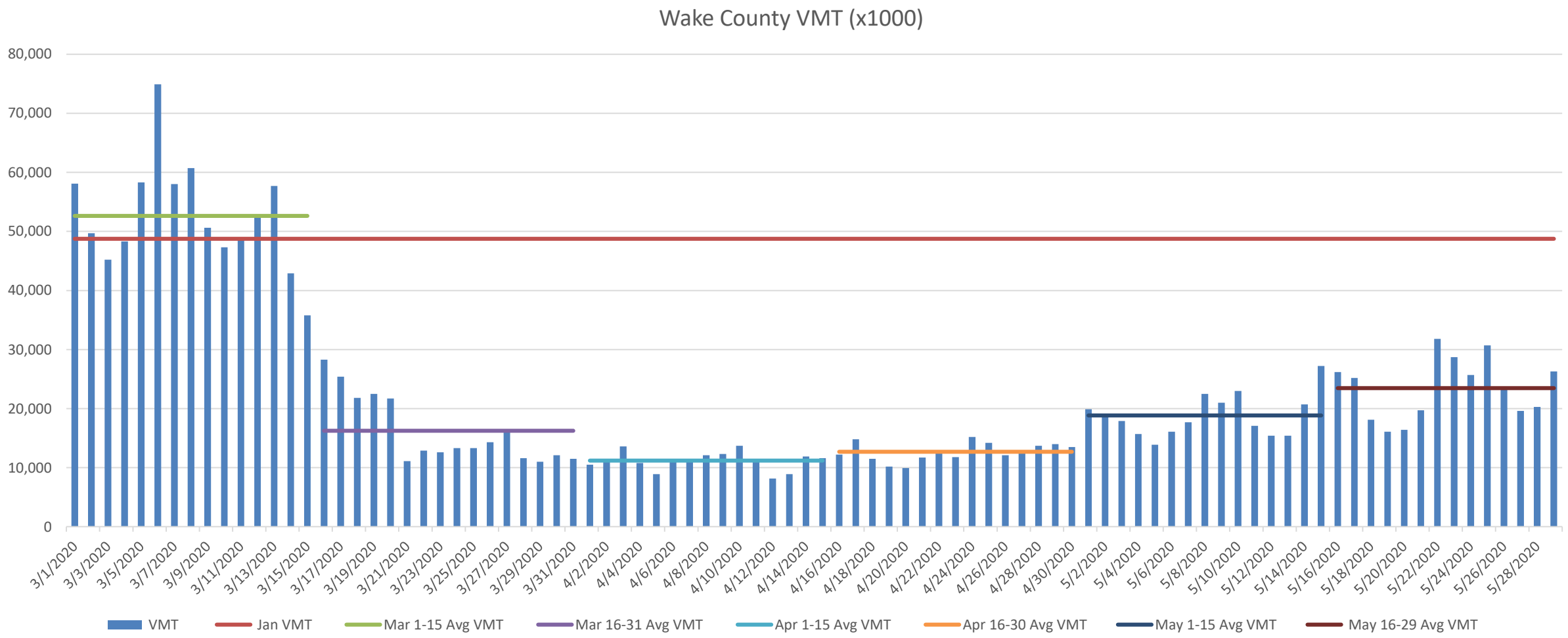
Comprehensive Plan Amendments

- Primary way of implementing the policy sections of the report
- Embedded into the Comprehensive Plan
- A new “Midtown” section will be added to the Plan
- Several maps will be amended



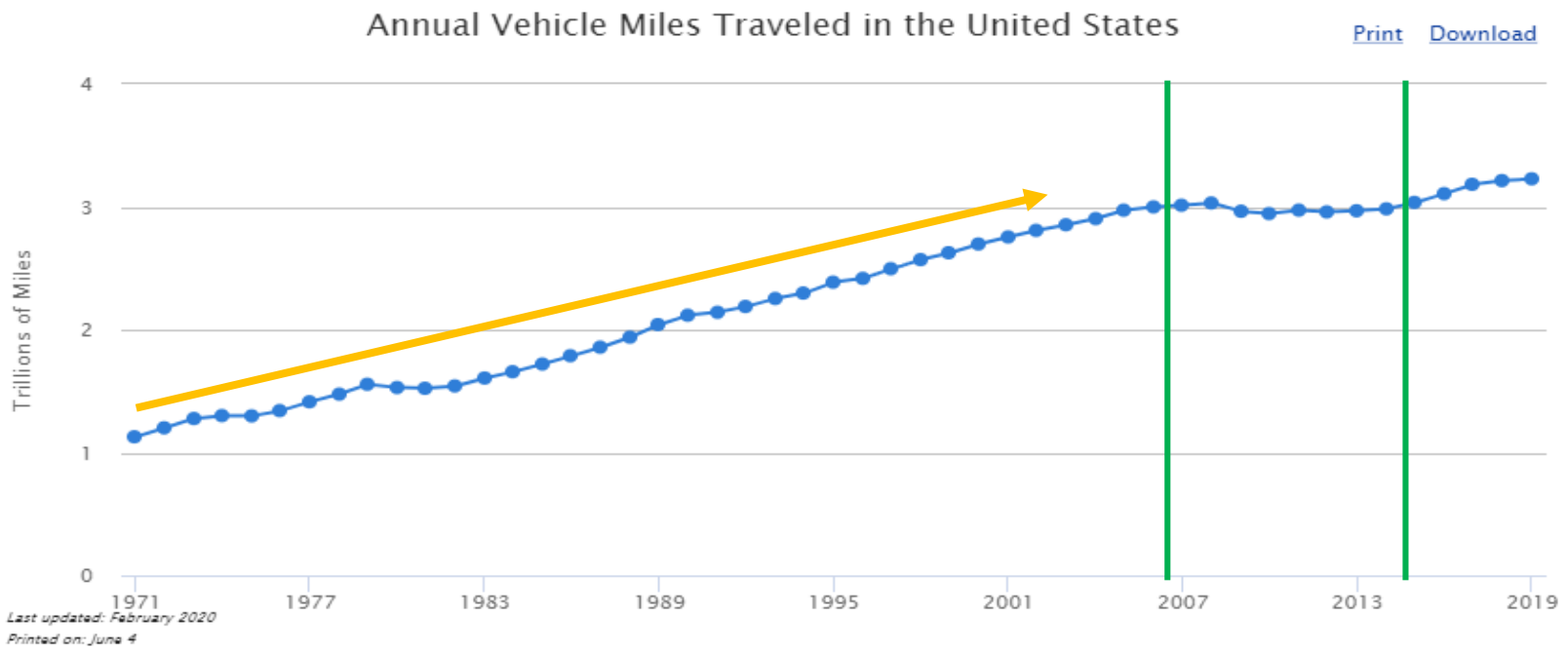
Post-COVID: What we know, what we don't know

- Travel is substantially down



Post-COVID: Travel

- What happened to travel during the Great Recession?



Source: Federal Highway Administration monthly Traffic Volume Trends reports.

This chart shows trends in total vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the United States (expressed as a moving 12-month count) from 1971 through 2019. The long rise in VMT has seen three periods of flattened growth or decline, triggered by the oil price spikes of 1974, 1979, and 2008. The VMT flattening that started in 2008 continued long after oil prices recovered, largely because of an economic recession. Starting in 2012, VMT began rising again largely because the U.S. economy recovered and petroleum prices remained relatively low. The rate of increase has been lessening over the last three years.

To view more details, notes, and acronyms, please download the Excel spreadsheet.

Post-COVID: City budget

- Proposed 20-21 city budget projecting 2.2% decrease in revenue
  - Property tax 1.2 percent increase
  - Sales tax 5.6 percent decrease
- 2021-onward: Difficult to project

Post-COVID: Current Situation

- More people walking and biking (for recreation?)
- More people working remotely
- Vehicle and transit use down
- Non-essential activity down
- Vehicular travel is likely to remain lower for some time – how quickly will it rise?

Post-COVID: Unknowns/Questions

- To what extent does remote working become more common?
- Office space trend has been less space per worker – will that be reversed?
- How is Raleigh positioned compared to other cities?
- Will interest in active transportation be sustained?
- Is this a preview of future disruption from climate change?

Post-COVID: Implications for Midtown

- Most big projects address current needs in addition to long-term vision:
  - Waterfront Park
  - Greenways/green streets
  - Midtown Ring
  - Street connectivity, intersection improvements
- Not clear that any other projects aren't still warranted, but …
- More driving-oriented projects may await a clearer picture of post-COVID travel behavior
- This likely will be a topic during review/adoption process
- May not affect *priorities*, but could impact *timing*
- Any additional study would be at the direction of Council

Next Steps and Group role

- June 16 meeting
- Planning Commission review
  - On agenda in June, but for deferral
  - Actual review likely to begin on August 11
  - Likely more than one meeting before recommendation to City Council
- City Council will hold a public hearing. Date uncertain

Discussion/Q&A