City Council Retreat - 9/18/26

Downtown Safety and Quality of Life



Agenda

1. Purpose
2. Public Safety
3. Transportation
4. Parks
5. Housing
6. Next Steps



Purpose

Addressing Downtown Safety and Quality of Life....

Where we stand,
What we are doing,
What's next



Public Safety

- Additional officers in the transit center? how many?
- Supplemental Security Services at GoRaleigh Station
- New RPD presence on Hargett Street
- Supplemental Security Services at Moore Square
- Micro- mobility (E-bike and Scooter sidewalk safety)
- Cameras
- DRA ambassadors



Quality of Life

- Parks and Activities
- Performing Arts and Conventions
- Events (avg. 100 = +/- 1M attendees)
- Museums (Marbles, Natural Sciences, History, City of Raleigh)
- Access to Public Transit
- Daily Cleaning and Maintenance
- Affordable Housing Investments
- South Park Heritage Trail
- Chavis – Dix Strollway



MSD Roles and Responsibilities

City Services

Biohazard Remediation	Street Sweeping	Pressure Washing	Minor Sidewalk Paver Repair
Fixture Maintenance	Weed Control	Leaf Removal	Graffiti Removal



MSD Roles and Responsibilities

DRA Services

- Safety Ambassadors
- Economic Development
- Visitor Marketing & Communication
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Conflict Resolution



Positive Economic Indicators for Downtown

- **$8.5 billion in projects planned, under construction, or completed since 2015**
- **Strong apartment demand**
  92.5% stabilized occupancy rate with more than 6,500 units planned, proposed, or under construction
- **31% increase in Class A Office inventory since 2020**
- **Hotel room sales up 4.6% year over year**
- **Significant investments in major cultural and recreational amenities**



Public Safety

Public Safety Background

Where We Stand

Downtown has gone downhill in the last 6 years. I live within walking distance and just stopped going due to being harassed for money and seeing fights.

I understand it's easier said than done and respect the complexity of it but , the unhoused situation in downtown is quickly growing to a breaking point.

Until you deal with crime, aggressive homeless, and drug problem; I guess good luck



Public Safety

Where We Stand

In recent months, there has been a notable decrease in crime within the downtown area. This positive trend reflects efforts to enhance public safety and improve the overall environment for residents and visitors.

The Raleigh Police Department remains committed to addressing ongoing concerns, particularly in areas such as the Transit Mall and Moore Square. By working closely with multiple law enforcement partners, the department continues to strengthen its response to challenges and foster a safer community.



Public Safety

Where We Stand

Fayetteville Street, 201 S Blount Street, and 214 S Blount Street





Public Safety

Where We Stand

Crime is down

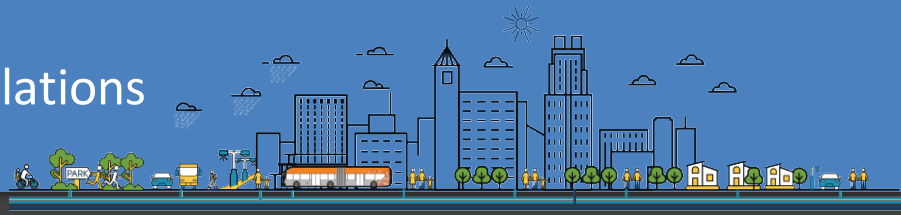
20%

reduction in violent crime YTD

27%

increase in Quality of Life Violations

The increase in violations is a positive indicator of RPD projects to address QOL concerns.



Public Safety

What We're Doing

- Formed the TRACE Unit
- Closed the Wilmington St. tunnel
- Added supplemental staffing for patrols on Hargett St. and Wilmington St.
- Addressed issues with our alcohol establishments with ABC and ALE.
- Used mobile cameras to feed data to Real Time Crime Center
- Held quarterly meeting with all security elements (DRA included)
- Coordinated ACORNS Connect Events
- Moved headquarters back downtown



Public Safety

What's Next

- Adjust Patrol Schedules for Downtown District (0-3 months)
- Extend ACORN hours to align with TRACE unit hours
- New Technology to provide presence (2 years)



Transit & Parking

GoRaleigh System
Where We Stand

Service area: Raleigh, Fuquay-Varina, Garner, Knightdale, Rolesville, and Wake Forest



34 routes

7.5M
Annual ridership

363/365
Operational days

- 120 buses make 1400 stops
- Highest ridership on major arteries
- Supports the hub-and-spoke model
- One-third of routes are cross-town connections

Raleigh

GoRaleigh Station

Where We Stand

Renovated in 2017 with Federal grant funds



65 buses per hour

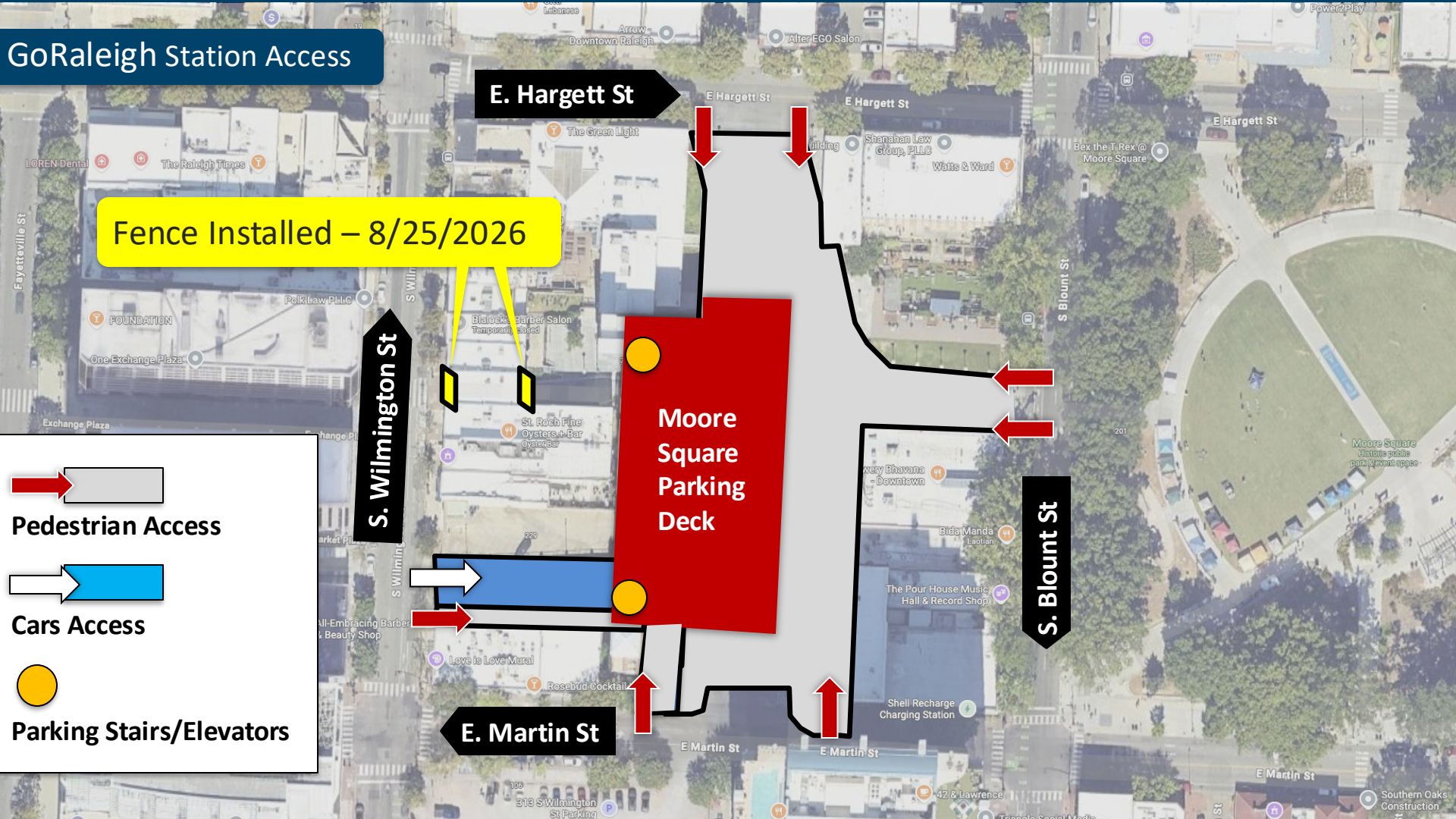
649 parking spaces

14K - 17K
People per day

4 a.m. - 12:30 a.m.
Operations

Raleigh

GoRaleigh Station Access





View from GoRaleigh Station

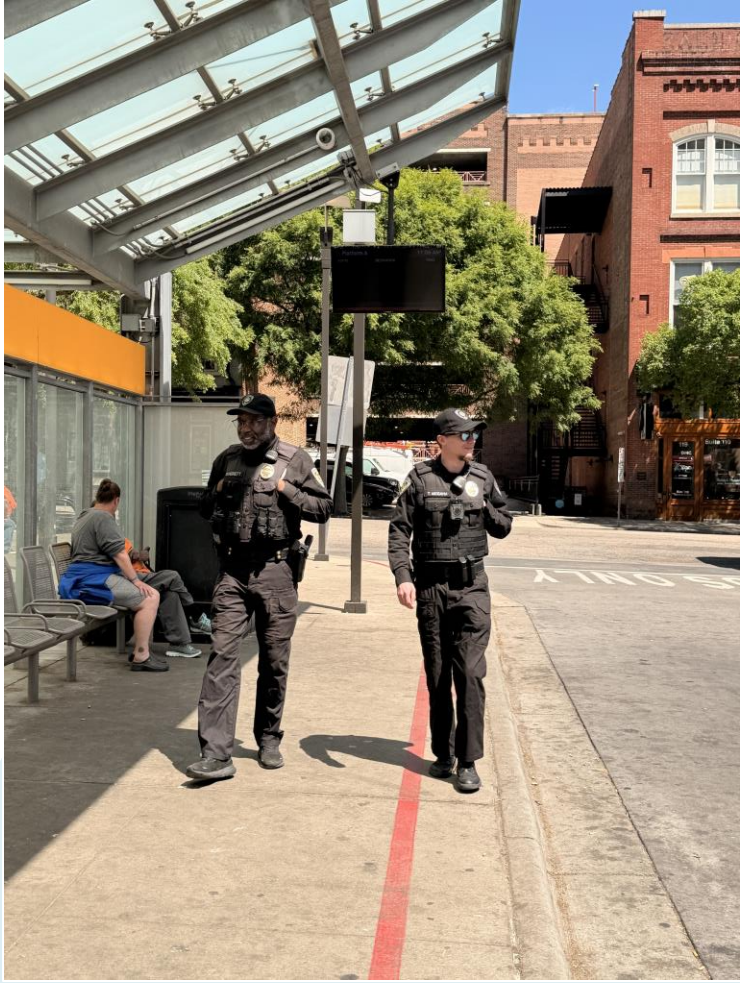


View from Wilmington Street

GoRaleigh System

What We're Doing

- GoRaleigh Station Bathroom Renovations
- Collaboration with Raleigh Police
- Coordination with Contracted Services



GoRaleigh System

What's Next



- Transit Ambassadors
- GoRaleigh Mobility Hubs Study
- Wake Transit Plan – Growth
- R-Line Reenvisioning

Raleigh Parking

Where We Stand

Aging assets = Increasing needs



Elevators ($1.018M)

Waterproofing ($445K)

Power washing ($206K)



Raleigh Parking
What We're Doing

- **Safety**
- **Garage Cameras**
- **Lighting**
- **988 Signage**
- **Equipment Upgrades**
- **Technology**



Raleigh Parking
What's Next

Parking Study

- Asset conditions/ strategy
- Rates
- User Experience
- Curbside



Non-Event Garages
City Hall (G)
Wilmington (I)
Moore Square (F)
Blount Street (A)
City Center/Red Hat (D)

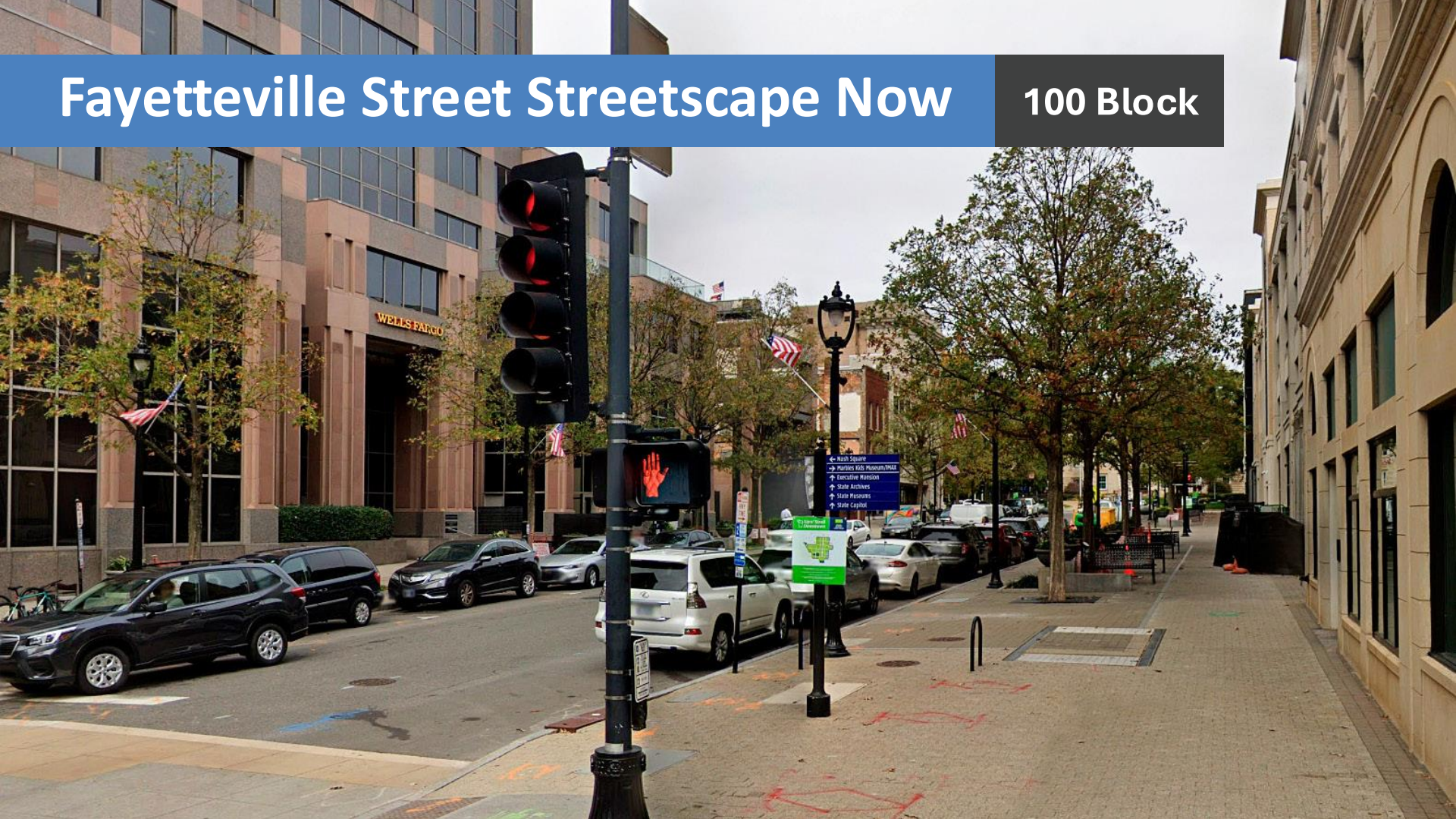
Event Garages
Cabarrus (B)
Convention Center/Charter (C)
Performing Arts (H)

Event Venues
Red Hat
Convention Center
Performing Arts Center

Fayetteville Street

Fayetteville Street Streetscape Now

100 Block



Fayetteville Street Streetscape After

100 Block

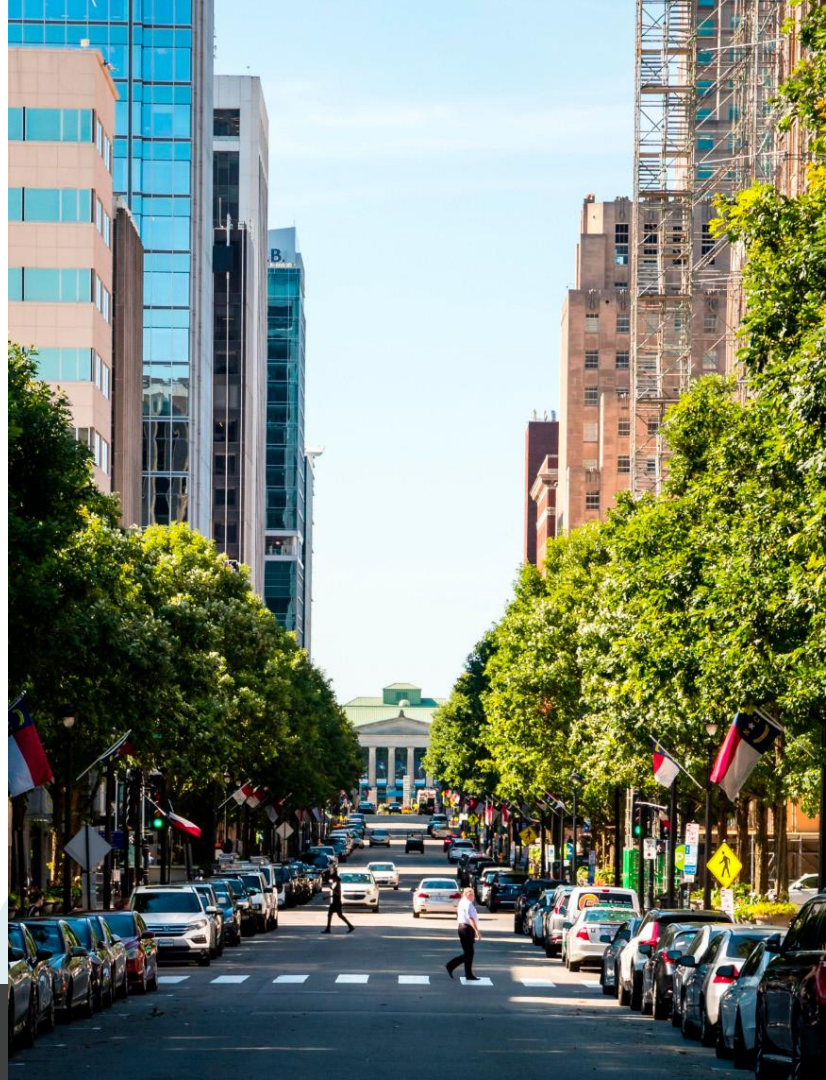


Fayetteville Street Improvement

What We're Doing

Project Scope: $1M allocation by City Council

- **Reconfigure Outdoor Seating**
- **Modify Horizontal Planters**
- **Introduce Additional Public Art**



Seating Concepts









Artist Concepts



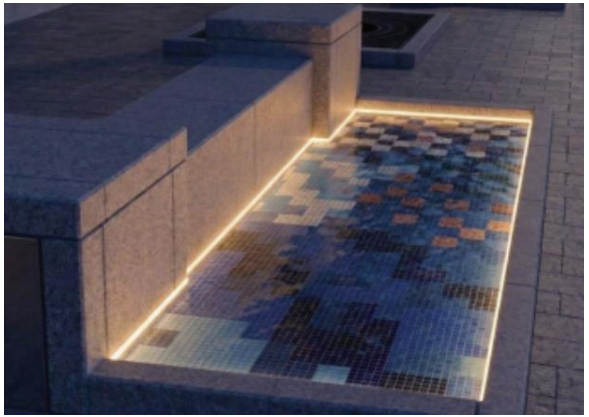
Concept Designs | Matthew Mazzotta



Concept Designs | Max Dowdle



Concept Designs | Taylor White



Raleigh Parks Updates:
Moore Square and Nash Square

Moore Square

Where We Stand

- **Neighborhood context and adjacent developments impact the character and function of the Square**
  - **The Good:** Marbles Museum, Moore Square Magnet Middle School
  - **The Less Good:** Vacant block; three large surface lots; two parking decks; the bus station; high vacancies in City Market; limited residential development/foot traffic.

- **Passive vs Programmatic Visitation**:
  - Moore Square has high and growing event and program visitation, *especially weekends and evenings*
  - Low passive foot traffic, *especially weekdays*



Moore Square

What We're Doing

Growing visitation through:

- Significant increase in events and programming
- Consistent café service
- Partnerships (DRA, Marbles, etc.)
- Top-level maintenance
- Increased security



Moore Square

What's Next

- Existing play area improvements
- New play features
- Initial concepts presented today



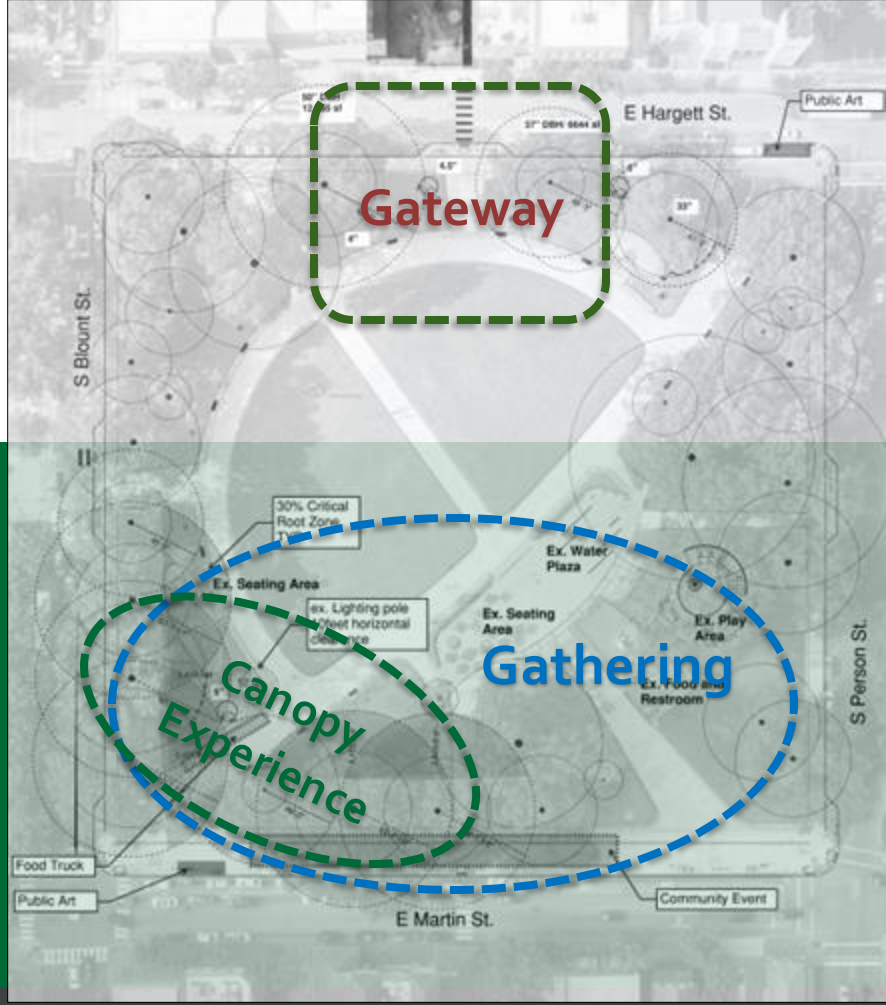
Moore Square

New Play Experience

Framework = Marbles - Gateway - Canopy Experience - Gathering

Design Considerations:

- Character
- Trees
- Integration
- Flexibility

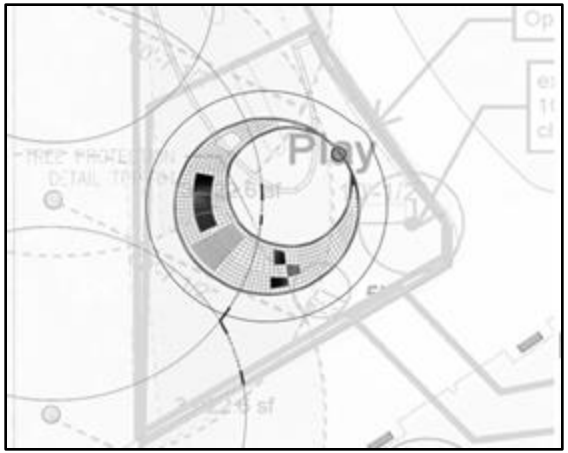


Moore Square

New Play Experience

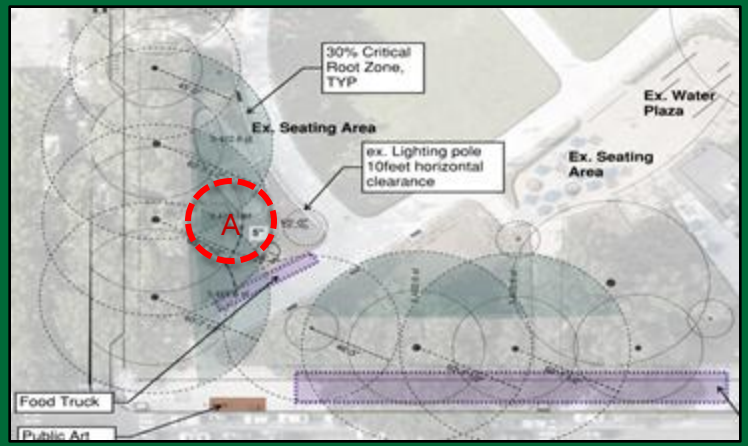
OPTION 1

Ground Discovery





- Landscape-focused
- Ground-level, lowest visual impact
- Good for younger families
- Organic sculptural forms
- Fits beneath canopy
- Cost: $1.5M–$1.8M

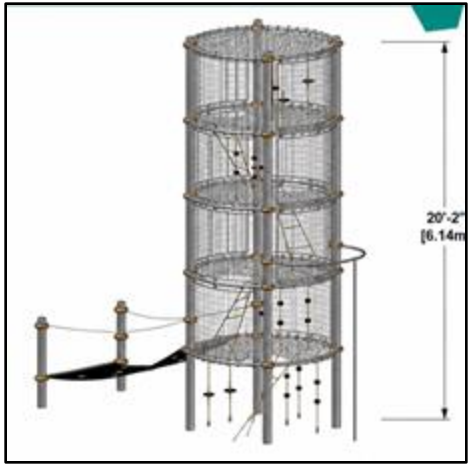


Moore Square

New Play Experience

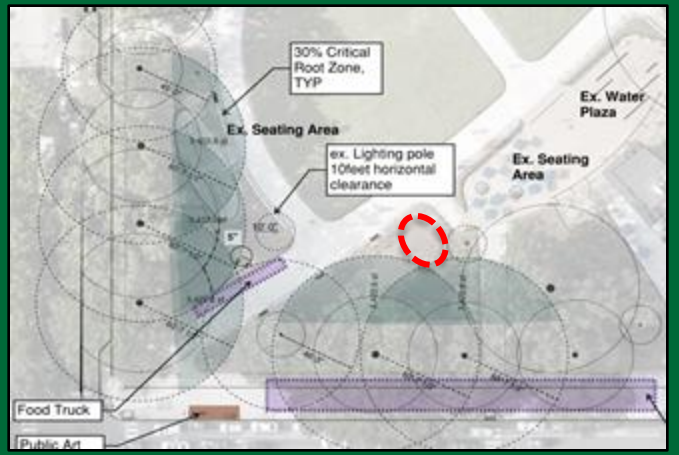
OPTION 2

Canopy Tower





- Signature vertical landmark
- Highly visible from Marbles
- Minimal root-zone impacts
- Rope bridges create elevated experience
- Cost: $800K–$1.0M



Moore Square

New Play Experience

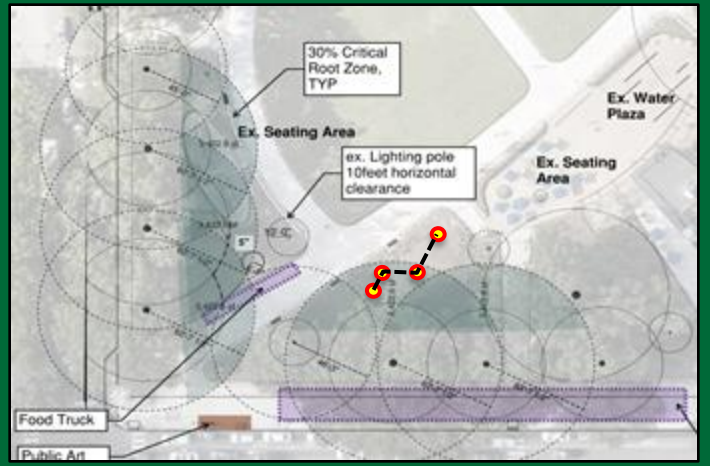
OPTION 3

Canopy Journey





- Elevated canopy experience
- Post-supported / reduced ground disturbance
- Continuous enclosed rope tunnel
- Alignment can adapt around mature trees
- Cost: $1.5M–$1.8M



Moore Square
New Play Experience

Comparison

Option	Project Cost	Key Advantages	Considerations
Concept 1 **Ground Discovery**	**$1.5M–$1.8M**	• Sculptural destination experience • Transparent design • Fits beneath canopy	• High investment • Larger ground-level footprint and impervious play surfacing
Concept 2 **Canopy Tower**	**$800K–$1.0M**	• Visible vertical structure • Broader age play appeal • Smallest footprint and impervious • Lower investment	• Limited play experience • Enclosed play spaces may attract adult loitering or unintended use
Concept 3 **Canopy Journey**	**$1.5M–$1.8M**	• Elevated canopy experience • Integrating with mature trees • Flexible alignment • Smaller impervious play surfacing	• High investment • More complex design • Final layout dependent on tree root constraints • Enclosed play spaces may attract adult loitering or unintended use

*Planning-level project cost ranges for concept comparison. Final costs will vary with detailed design, permitting, site conditions, and procurement.

Moore Square

New Play Experience

Gateway Enhancement Opportunities

The north entrance is the primary connection between Marbles Kids Museum and Moore Square. This connection encourage families to enter the park, stay longer, and continue exploring Downtown Raleigh.









Range of Potential Art Investment:

- *Ground art: $15k–20k*
- *Small sculpture: $50k–100k*
- *Medium installation: $100k–250k*
- *Large signature sculpture: $250k–$1M+*

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Nash Square

Nash Square

What's Next

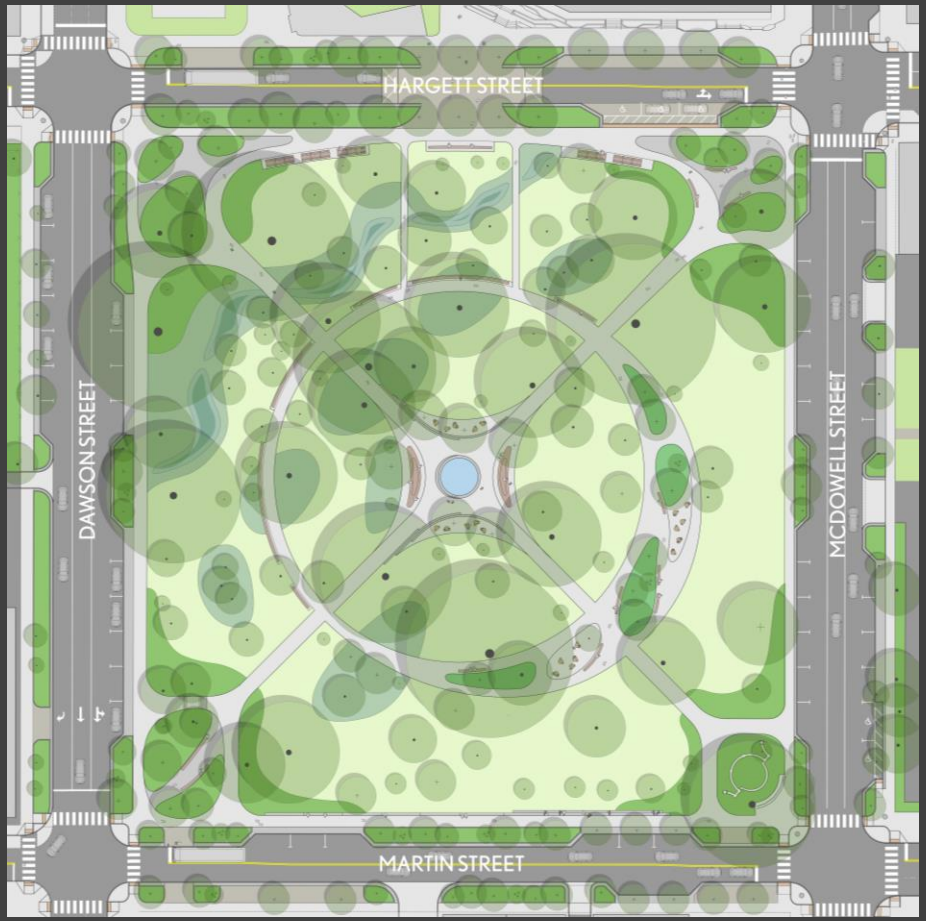
Public Realm Plan

Top Community Priorities

- Protect & Renew Tree Canopy
- Extend the Square
- Reimagine Hargett Street
- Preserve Historic Character
- Support Flexible Everyday Use







Raleigh

Existing Conditions

Proposed Draft Plan

Nash Square

What's Next

Public Realm Plan

Next Steps & Areas for Further Study

- NC Firefighters Memorial
- Stormwater & utilities
- Site furnishings, lighting, and safety
- Cost estimates for design & construction



Downtown Housing & Homelessness Investments

Downtown Housing & Homelessness Investments

Where We Stand

Urgent affordability and homelessness challenges are on the rise, in Raleigh and communities across the country.

Raleigh's Housing Crisis By the Numbers

1,000+
people experiencing homelessness

80+
encampments

60,000
rental unit shortage in Wake County

50,000+
households with housing cost burden

Raleigh

Sources: PIT Data, Parks via CoR Unsheltered Response Strategy, American Community Survey, NC Chamber of Commerce

Downtown Housing & Homelessness Investments

What We're Doing

Downtown Housing Investments

411
affordable homes

$13.1
million



Source: City of Raleigh Affordable Housing Program, FY15–16 through FY25–26

Downtown Housing & Homelessness Investments

What We're Doing

4,000 Housing Units Added to Downtown Since 2020



16,800 Raleigh residents living downtown



Projected to reach 23,000 residents by 2030



11,379 total housing units downtown

Raleigh

Source: DRA.

Downtown Housing & Homelessness Investments

What We're Doing

Unsheltered Homelessness Response Pilot Downtown Cohort

Five people living outside in the downtown area enrolled in April 2025.

One participant is now taking Peer Support classes and will soon be a Certified Peer Support Specialist.

One participant is now working as a Recovery Engagement Specialist at Healing Transitions.

Downtown Housing & Homelessness Investments

What We're Doing

Local Funds Leveraged for Homelessness Prevention, Diversion, and Rapid Exit Program

$75k carved out for diversion in the Downtown Area through contract with Triangle Family Services.

59
households assisted

$1,200
average cost to divert someone from homelessness

Raleigh

What's Next

2026 Proposed Housing Bond: $101.5 Million

With estimated investments in:

$57.6M
Housing Development & Preservation

$10.4M
Homebuyer Assistance & Preservation

$12M
Homelessness Response

$21.5M
Major Project Development

Thank you

Next Wake @ Home

Raleigh



Wake at Home will prevent and eliminate street sleeping through a targeted rehousing strategy.

Building on the success of the Pilot, W@H closed its first encampment this month.

WRAL NEWS

33 people move from Raleigh encampment into housing

Wake County's Wake at Home initiative connected 33 people living at a Raleigh encampment with housing and support.

Posted 7:07 PM Sep 1, 2026 — Updated 7:45 PM Sep 1, 2026

"Organizers say this is only the beginning."



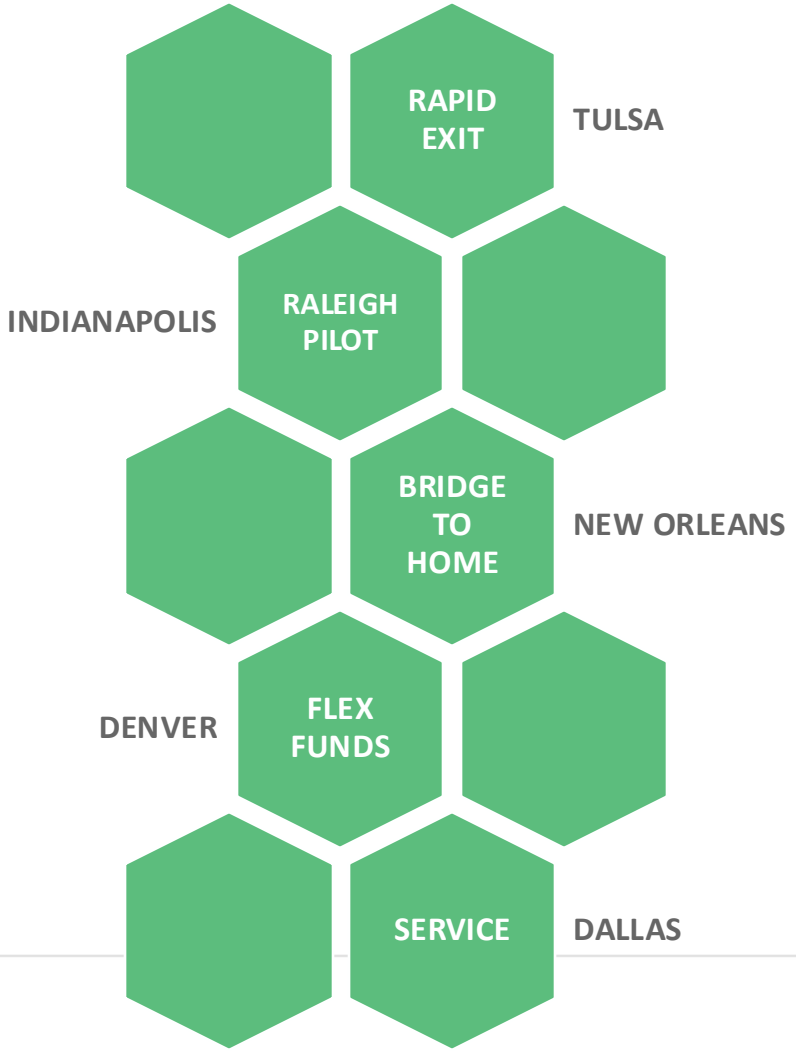
W@H uses a three-part strategy.

Reduce Encampments & Prevent New Street Sleeping

Speed Up Help for First-Time Homelessness

Expand Care for People with Complex Needs

Local and national proof of concept.



90%

of participants are no longer sleeping outside

Dix Park, 2026







This proven approach to reduce unsheltered homelessness supports:

Community

Families

Environment

This proven approach to reduce unsheltered homelessness supports:

Community

Families

Environment

Encampment resolution improves downtown safety, supports businesses, and boosts tourism.





This proven approach to reduce unsheltered homelessness supports:

Community

Families

Environment

Housing stability strengthens families, improving health outcomes and supporting reunifications.



This proven approach to reduce unsheltered homelessness supports:

Community

Families

Environment

The Eliza Pool encampment closure was one of Parks' largest removals.





Raleigh Parks plays a pivotal role in restoring this public space to public use.





Early Joint Investment Determines Success

2-Year Surge 2026 - 2027

$22M

- 400 Households Direct to Housing
- 1,000 Households Rapid Exit from Shelter
- Targeted Complex Case

$22 million

Joint initial investment

$16M
Public funds

$6M
Funding gap



Wake County
Provides services and Bridge 2 Home

+



City of Raleigh
Provides rental assistance

Continued Joint Investment Sustains Progress

Sustain Progress 2028+

~$23M/Year

- 360 Direct to Housing
- 1,440 Rapid Exit from Shelter
- Behavioral Health Integration

What's the Alternative?

Dallas County Estimated Annual Cost of Managing Homelessness at $194 Million



60.4M
Medical treatments



49.4M
Hospitalizations



33.2M
Emergency sheltering



17.3M
Mental health services



16.8M
Incarceration



16.5M
Emergency room visits

Source: The Cost of Homelessness in Dallas & Collin Counties, November 2024.

Day shelters are stopgap solutions.

Day shelters help stabilize – but housing ends homelessness.

- ✓ Address immediate needs only (safety, hygiene, basic services)
- ✓ Does not reduce unsheltered homelessness or provide permanent housing
- ✓ People often cycle back to encampments after daytime services


WAKE @ HOME

Case Study: Street to Home Initiative
Dallas, Texas

CEO of Housing Forward Dallas Reflects

Tackling Unsheltered Homelessness Downtown

"The result is that we are
resolving street homelessness as opposed to moving it from block to block around the city and around the county."

Sarah Kahn, CEO of Housing Forward, on the Street to Home strategy, January 2026

Dallas has dramatically reduced street sleeping downtown.



Source: *Dallas City News*.

"On a warm June afternoon, the sidewalk in front of the Dallas Public Library — once home to 50 tents — was clear. A grassy hill over the highway was empty of the tarps and construction signs that had once served as ceilings and walls. The people who used to camp downtown were in their own apartments, local officials said. Many had gotten mental health treatment, started jobs and reconnected with family."

-*Washington Post*, September 2025

Dallas Street to Home Outcomes

284
people rehoused in initial operation

80%+
reduction in daily homeless street counts

20%
reduction in crime due to targeted public safety improvements + Street to Home

All downtown encampments remain permanently closed

Donald Wilson once slept on the streets of downtown Dallas—now, he's found stability.

A revamped system helped him:

- ✓ Update documents, including his driver's license
- ✓ Access medications
- ✓ Find transportation to appointments
- ✓ Secure a permanent studio apartment



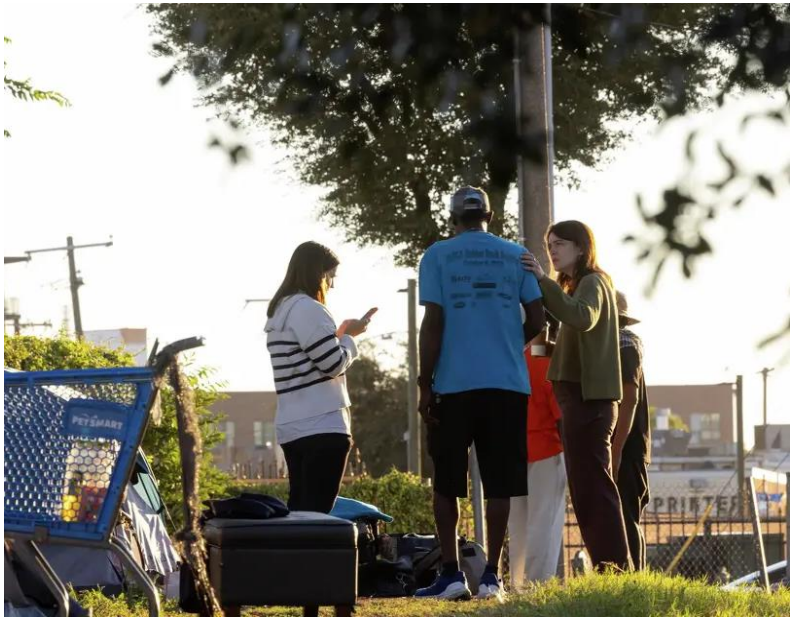
Source: *Washington Post*, 2025.


BEFORE


AFTER

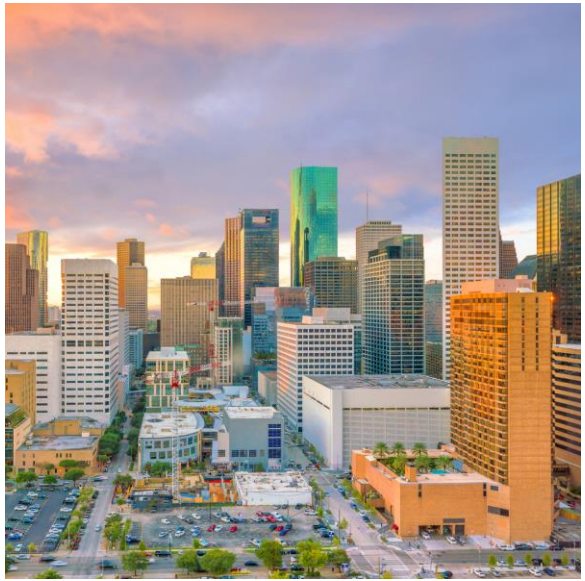
Applying this approach means

- ✓ **Preventing sleeping on the streets of Downtown**
- ✓ Immediate pathways off the streets activated for anyone newly sleeping downtown
- ✓ Public spaces reactivated and revitalized



Source: *Dallas Morning News,* Juan Figueroa/Staff Photographer.

Across the Country



Safe Move Tulsa



New Orleans:
Home for Good



Indianapolis:
Streets to Home

Zone Closures

Treat an entire area like a downtown as an "encampment" that can be closed using direct to housing engagement response.

Rehouse regular sleepers using direct to housing method

Align downtown management districts, private security, PD around shared workflows to maintain closure

Accelerate exits from shelters to provide an immediate pathway off the streets for newcomers

Thank you.

eileen.rosa@wake.gov

Recap of Future Initiatives

1. Extend ACORN hours to align with TRACE unit hours (i.e. nights and weekends)
2. Transit Ambassadors
3. Parking Study
4. Moore Square Improvements
5. Dallas Model



questions