

3.0 COMMUNITY CHARACTER & DESIGN



Abstract

Ashland has always maintained a small-town character with a tradition of walkable neighborhoods and a unique sense of place. The look of our small town and the feeling it gives residents is part of what makes Ashland Ashland. The Town seeks to draw from this foundation as the new development occurs.

The Community Character & Design chapter of the Plan strives to enhance the form, character, and aesthetic appeal of the community by:

- Ensuring that a high level of design and quality construction is maintained on all projects within the Town borders.*
- Promoting design characteristics that are consistent with the current architecture and nature of the Town.*
- Encouraging sustainable development that utilizes eco-friendly construction materials that are high quality.*
- Encouraging sensitive infill and redevelopment to create a cohesive Downtown area and preserve the historical nature of the Town.*
- Maintaining and enhancing the Town's relationship with Randolph-Macon College.*
- Enhancing the identity of Downtown through the promotion of the arts.*
- Providing for the maintenance and replanting of the Town's trees to ensure the green quality of the Town in the future.*

From its early history, Ashland has always maintained a small-town character with a tradition of walkable neighborhoods and a unique sense of place. The look of our small town and the feeling it gives residents is part of what makes Ashland unique in the region. Our small town character within a larger metropolitan region is why many residents have chosen to move here and stay here. In the course of this history, Ashland has experienced physical growth. Through new neighborhoods and new shopping areas, the development of an interstate highway, and a series of annexations, Ashland has expanded the Town's area from one square mile to more than seven square miles. This chapter precedes the chapter on Land Use, as an expression of Ashland's essence. The desire for tradition, beauty and for maintaining the Town's character is part of the Guiding Principles that are the foundation for the entire Plan.

Today, Ashland occupies an important location between Richmond and Northern Virginia. While this location offers dynamic opportunities for economic vitality, it also brings with it tremendous development pressures that have the potential to alter the Town's character. The Comprehensive Plan seeks to preserve Ashland's small-town character while taking full advantage of its regional role and central location. The Plan supports a strong, understandable image of Ashland as a distinct community. Moreover, the Plan shall speak to areas just beyond the Town's political boundaries to encourage compatibility in character and design.

This chapter of the Plan contains policies related to the form, character, and aesthetic appeal of the community. The chapter organizes the characteristics that have made us what we are and those that we aspire to by focusing on the four areas that have created the appearance and feeling that we cherish: the residential neighborhoods, the Historic Districts, the College and our prevalent green landscapes. Other areas in Town included in this chapter are the commercial and industrial areas. The intent of this plan is to guide development to ensure that future growth is grounded in the Guiding Principles that are part of what makes Ashland *Ashland*. Provided in this chapter are the general character elements and design standards. More specific design standards will be presented in the individual neighborhood planning area studies and in a separate updated design guidelines document.

Character areas:

Residential Neighborhoods

The Downtowns:

Historic Downtown

England Street

Thompson Street

Randolph-Macon College

Mixed Use Commercial

Interstate Service Area

Industrial Areas



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This chapter supports the Plan's Guiding Principles as follows:

1. Preserve Ashland's Small Town Character

- Provide design guidance that ensures the present character is preserved in existing neighborhoods and replicated as the Town expands.

2. Protect Ashland's Unique Features

- Recommend measures to preserve the historic character of the Downtown.

3. Manage and Enhance Our Green Town

- Utilize specific recommendations for tree preservation and landscaping to ensure that the green spaces of Ashland are conserved for future generations.

4. Encourage Continued Variety within Ashland

- Establish appropriate development patterns while ensuring that development caters to the various needs of the community.

5. Promote Continued Economic Development

- Ensure through development guidelines that new construction and improvements/renovations meet a high level of quality as determined by the updated design guidelines handbook. The recommendations should be reasonable and not cost prohibitive so as to deter economic growth.

6. Provide a High Level of Government Services

- Adopt a specific plan of action to see that the development guidelines are implemented as requirements rather than suggestions.

3.1 SMALL TOWN CHARACTER

A common thread that ran through the citizen comments at the community workshops was the desire to preserve the small town character of the Town of Ashland. This small town feeling comes from our safe neighborhoods, the ability to walk to the post office, to church, school and shops, and to have parks close to home. It is also the landmarks and the familiar built environment that provides the sense of place we refer to as home. A few of the treasured resources that lend to our small town character are the historic districts, the varied historic architecture, the train, Cross Brothers Grocery, the trees, the coffee houses, and walkability of the neighborhoods. While change is inevitable, with the proper measures and protections, the Town can ensure that new development continues in a harmonious manner and maintains the existing small town character.



It is possible that there are buildings within the Town that are eligible to be included as part of the National Historic District but are not currently included. One example is Town Hall. Among other criteria to be considered, eligible buildings are generally at least 50 years old. The original nomination was completed in 1983. Therefore the nomination was based on the buildings age at that time. It is possible that in the future, further nominations may be considered.

Policy CD.1 Aspirations for Quality and Design in Construction

The Town of Ashland strives to have a high level of design and quality construction on all projects within its borders. To facilitate this desire, the Town shall define clear, simple design standards and principles to ensure that the Plan’s guiding principles are reinforced. This can be accomplished with the updating and further developing of the 2004 Development Guidelines Handbook. The guidelines shall be addressed in terms of the desired results of visual character and quality instead of minimum acceptable standards. This same quality design and quality construction should be followed on all public projects completed by the Town to set a positive example for private development.

While the 2004 Development Guidelines Handbook does include some design standards for the Town, these guidelines should be strengthened regarding the desired results for the future visual character of the Town. The updated design guidelines document should address alterations to existing buildings, including additions; new construction, landscaping and site features, setback, form and scale, materials, roof form, fenestration, as well as guidelines for demolition. Other factors to be considered are type of foundation, presence or absence of porches, placement of garages and accessory buildings, and the use of fences. The updated design guidelines document should specifically address the neighborhood planning areas individually. Well-written design guidelines will allow property owners to know what is expected of them, while also providing the framework for the Town staff and planning commission to make objective and consistent decisions.

Policy CD.1.1 Town-wide Building Maintenance Code

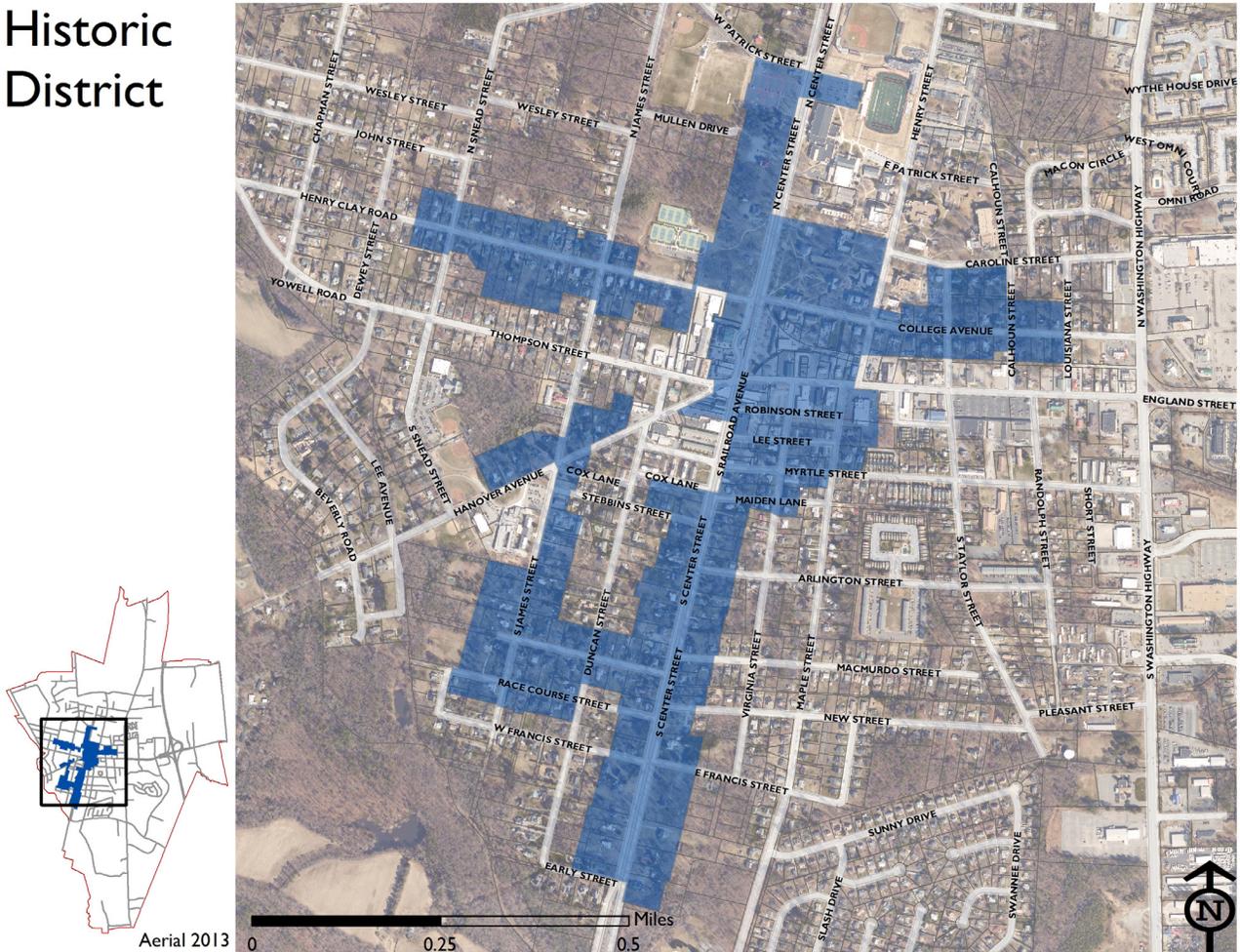
To achieve the goal for Ashland as a welcoming, safe environment for residents and visitors, further investigation into adoption of a local building maintenance code should be conducted. Building maintenance has a direct tie to property values and overall revitalization goals of the downtown. Public comments received during the Comprehensive Plan review supported enhancing enforcement efforts on building upkeep throughout the Town.

Policy CD.2 Local Historic District Ordinance

Our Town is fortunate to have two recognized State and National Historic Districts: Ashland Historic District and the Randolph-Macon Historic College Complex. These are cherished resources that as a cohesive district help tell the story of the community’s past and its development. Historic resources build pride, community identity and contribute to economic development by attracting visitors interested in our Town’s heritage. However, listing on the National Register is largely honorific

and provides no preservation protections. By establishing a local historic district ordinance, the Town would create a mechanism to allow the review of actions that could affect the cohesiveness of the historic district. Other goals of a local historic district ordinance can include the

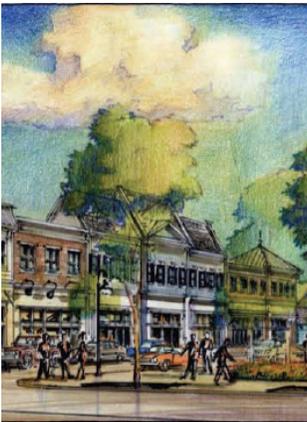
Historic District



Map CD-1

protection of the Town’s quality of life, the promotion of tourism, stabilization of property values and the education for residents on local history and heritage. The local historic district ordinance should be in the form of an overlay district and should provide for the review of new construction and demolition within the district. It can generate public dialogue and create an organized process to protect the Town’s resources from inappropriate change. The ordinance would be meant to manage change, not prevent new development. The boundaries of the historic district are shown on Map CD-1.

In conjunction with a local historic district ordinance, Virginia code §15.2-2306 provides for the creation of an architectural review board. The architectural review or advisory board (AAB) would serve in an advisory capacity on matters regarding the historic district. The AAB is a



resource during the renovation and alteration of historic structures to achieve the highest level of design standards and quality construction within the Historic District. The AAB can promote historic preservation by providing community education opportunities and/or preservation workshops. These events could include the identification of historical architectural styles and features, funding sources for National Register properties, maintenance of historic homes, or techniques of historic renovation. Advisory information can be provided to citizens who own historic property along with information on decreasing the carbon footprint of historic properties.

Policy CD.3 Compact form

Compact form refers to the physical layout of the Town. As was historically typical in many neighborhoods and downtowns, the compact form of development created a pedestrian oriented environment with a mix of uses and reasons for residents to walk. This compact form still exists today in the Downtown and the residential areas surrounding Downtown. These areas with the many historic homes and businesses are a treasured feature of Ashland. The homes are closely situated with neighbors nearby. These same homes are located very near Downtown and England Street making it possible for residents to walk and patronize our local downtown businesses.

The plans for future neighborhoods should continue to be built in this pattern, with generally straight streets that are laid out in walkable blocks, with walkable street and sidewalks. The houses are usually close together, and close to the streets; suggested dimensions that accomplish this are noted on the following illustrations. This neighborhood pattern is a basic part of the town's overall compact form.

This idea of compact form stems from the larger concept of Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND). TND is a planning concept that follows the design patterns of early 20th century villages and towns that was developed as an alternative to sprawling, suburban neighborhoods. The intent is to create pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods with a mix of housing types, commercial and residential uses and public spaces for socializing. There are accommodations made for the automobile, with adequate parking and efficient circulation, but the car is not meant to dominate the landscape. Many tools are available to create a comfortable pedestrian environment. Streets in a grid pattern are utilized over cul-de-sacs or curvilinear streets as the grid allows for better pedestrian circulation and more direct routes to destinations. Buildings are oriented to the street. For commercial uses, buildings have entrances right off the sidewalk and large display windows and residential buildings have prominent front

doors and front porches. It is important to note that TND is not meant to be superimposed over all areas of town but it meant to supplement the existing neighborhoods and offer a variety of housing options for residents in different stages of life i.e. singles, seniors, young couples and families.

In order to reinforce and enhance the pedestrian nature of our Downtown area, infill development within the Downtown should be constructed at the sidewalk with retail uses and large display windows at the ground level. Downtown infill development is described in further detail in Policy CD.7 and CD.9.

Residential Neighborhoods

Development of the residential areas of Ashland spans well over 150 years. With the earliest neighborhoods developing between 1850-1860 along Virginia and South Center Streets to more recent townhomes on Myrtle Street, Ashland has a remarkably consistent character within a diverse collection of residential neighborhood types. As noted above, a topic mentioned consistently throughout the community workshops was a desire to maintain the qualities of small town living. Residential neighborhoods are one area where this quality can be easily observed, particularly in the Town's historic residential areas. The following general guidelines can maintain this small town way of life in the existing neighborhoods and create that same quality of life in the new neighborhoods as they develop.

Note that these recommendations are based on the existing characteristics found in the historic and other neighborhoods throughout Ashland. This set of recommendations applies not only to houses themselves, but to the neighborhood streets as well. In setting these standards, the plan identifies a vision of not only what Ashland is today, but of what Ashland can be in the future and recommends that these standards are applied throughout the current and future neighborhoods:

Policy CD.4 Residential Infill and Development

- There should be an intermixing of home size, lot size and house setbacks within each block.
- Houses should be situated close to each other and to the street to allow for interaction with the neighbors or passers-by.
- The houses should face the streets, with doors on the front, and porches big enough for sitting or front stoops with sheltering roofs, all of which connect the homes to the neighborhood.
- Garages should be located to the rear of the structure and accessed by a narrow drive between the houses. In the case of smaller, clustered lots, attached, front-loading garages may be permitted if recessed a minimum of 1 foot behind the front fa-





gade.

- Small structures such as in-law suites or sheds are important to the variety of our neighborhoods. They should be constructed with the same care as the home and located to the rear of the main structure.
- Durable and high quality building materials are strongly encouraged. Examples of these materials as found in the Historic Districts include bricks, painted wood and precast siding, painted wood and PVC trim, windows with real mullions, and shutters that hinge.
- Four-sided architecture should be implemented, meaning, no side of any building should be constructed with materials that are inferior to any other side.
- Every lot should have shade trees and landscaping to provide cooling in the summer.
- New construction should meet EarthCraft or LEED equivalent building standards, or future equivalents.

Policy CD.5 Residential Street Design

The combination of the homes closely situated to the street, the narrow travel lanes, and the sense of enclosure created by street trees gives our residential streets the feeling of an outdoor room. This design encourages traffic to move slowly allowing people of all ages to walk and cycle through our neighborhoods both on the sidewalks and on the street. These attributes give our neighborhoods a small town feel and create a comfortable space for neighbors to interact and children to play. This character should be continued in new residential developments. Newly constructed streets should be provided with curb, gutter, and sidewalks in most cases. If sidewalks are included, the planting strip between the street and sidewalk should be of an ample width to accommodate street trees.

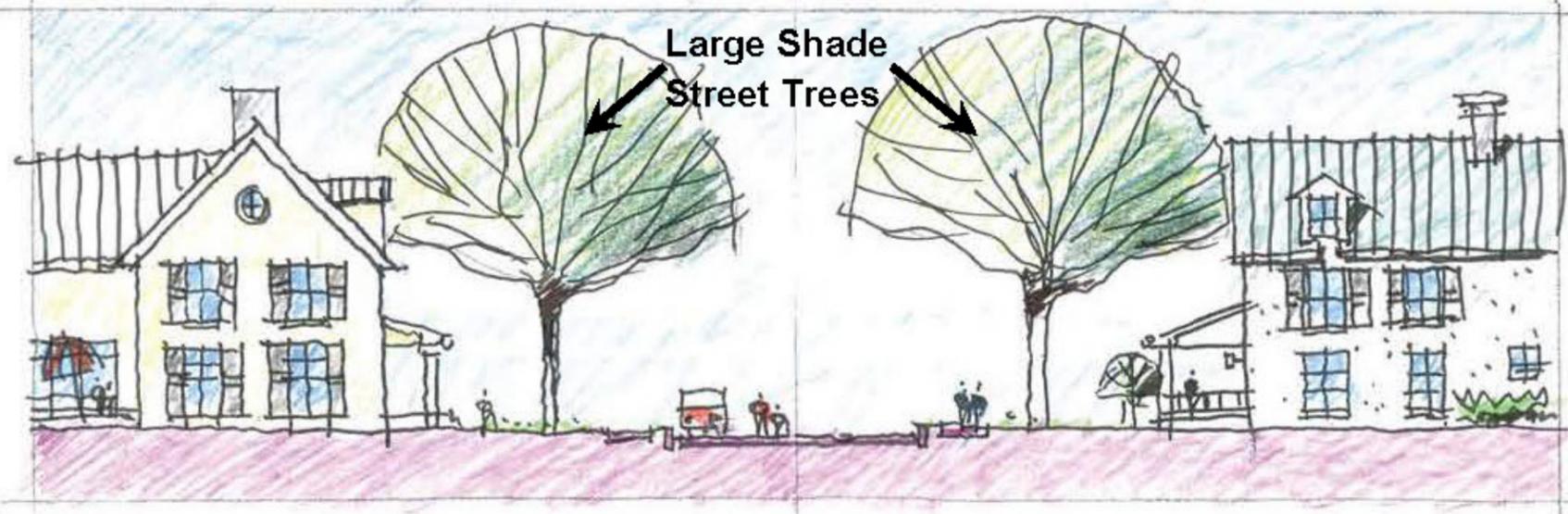
Policy CD.6 Residential Street Trees and Landscapes

As noted in the Guiding Principles, Ashland's green quality is valued by its citizens. All part of this green quality are the shade trees along the streets, the private gardens that face those streets, and the native tree stands. Our neighborhood street trees are deciduous species large enough to spread across the street, frame the views of homes and provide comfort from the heat. The street trees and this green quality are just one of the reasons that visitors to Ashland admire the beauty of our Town. New developments within our Town should strive for this same green quality. Street trees and landscaping shall be included in all new developments and should be chosen and planted according to the updated design guidelines document. Note the recommended locations and

Parking: Side or Rear (Garages Set Back Min. 50')

Sidewalks

Front Door/ Porch/Stoop



Large Shade Street Trees

This sketch reflects the desired design for new residential streets. The sketch indicates the desired setback for homes, garages and street trees as a method to continue the existing character of the compact neighborhoods of Ashland.

spacing shown on the attached sketch. Trees should be close enough to the street, and to each other, to provide the desired sense of enclosure and shade from the summer's heat. Information regarding the placement of trees in situations where utility lines are present is located in Chapter 8, Environment, Policy E.2.

Downtowns: The Historic Downtown, England Street and Thompson Street

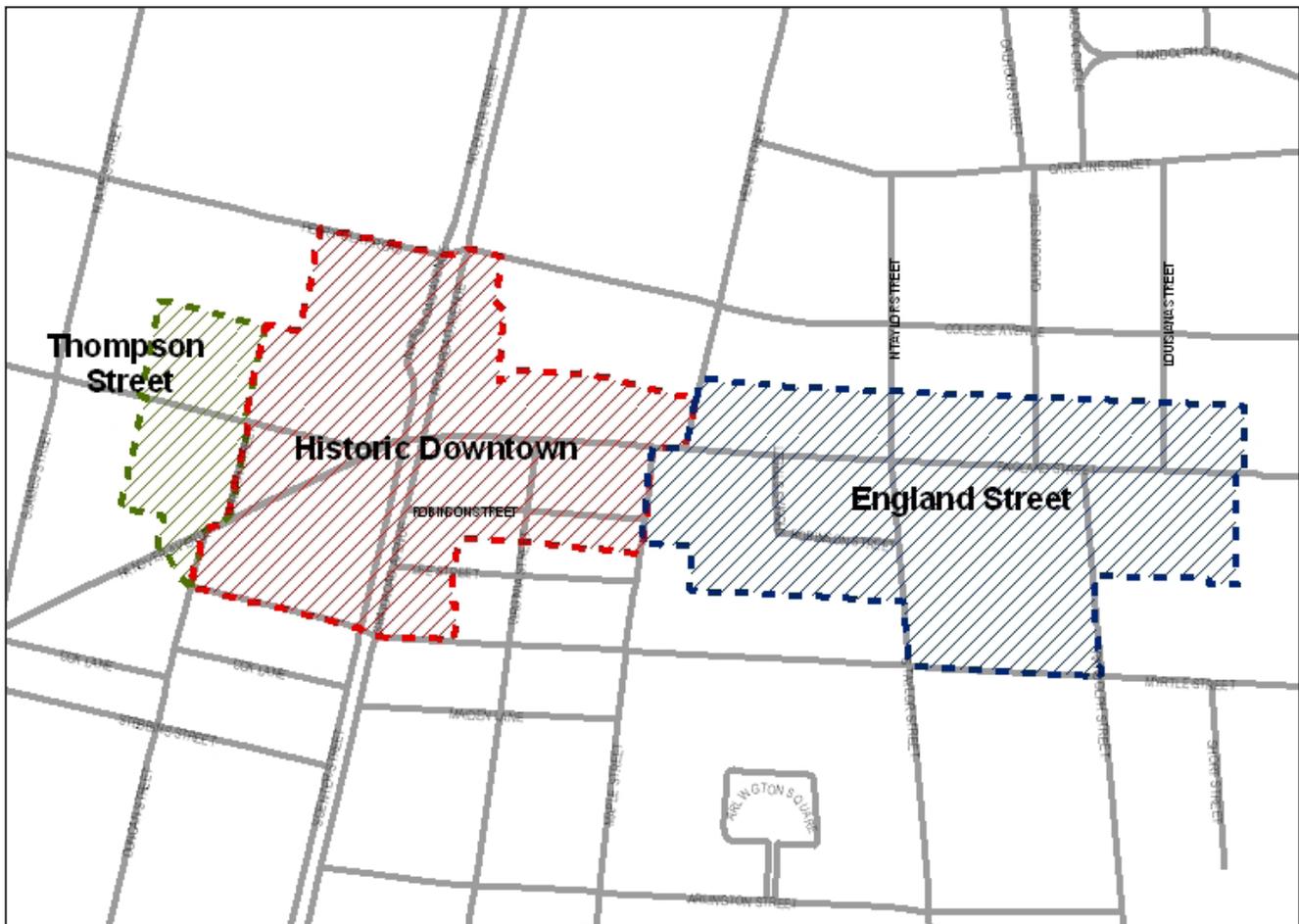
One of the strengths of the Town and the heart of our small town character is Ashland's Historic Downtown. When people picture Ashland, they often have Historic Downtown in their minds. There are specific details such as walkable, retail-lined streets, historic buildings built on a human scale, easily accessible parking and a train running through Downtown that make this area cohesive and memorable to residents and visitors alike. The charm and character are an important part of marketing the businesses here.

From a design perspective, there are three distinct parts of this downtown: the historic downtown, England Street, and Thompson Street. The Town must aspire to link these distinct areas together to make one place. England Street must become the gateway to Downtown from the east and Thompson Street must become the gateway from the west. These two places will require dramatic transformations to create a cohesive Downtown.

Our larger Downtown area serves many functions. Significant public buildings are located here including Town Hall, the Post Office and Library. Locally owned restaurants, stores and professional offices complete the mix. The combination of retail, business, and civic uses is enhanced by special events such as the Fourth of July parade, Ashland Street Parties, Inc. summer concerts and the weekly Farmer's Market. These elements reinforce the importance of Downtown's role in the community.

The Town has enlisted the assistance of the Ashland Main Street Association on design characteristics for the Downtown district. Ashland Main Street is an affiliate member of the Virginia Main Street program. This program follows the National Trust's Main Street Four-Point Ap-





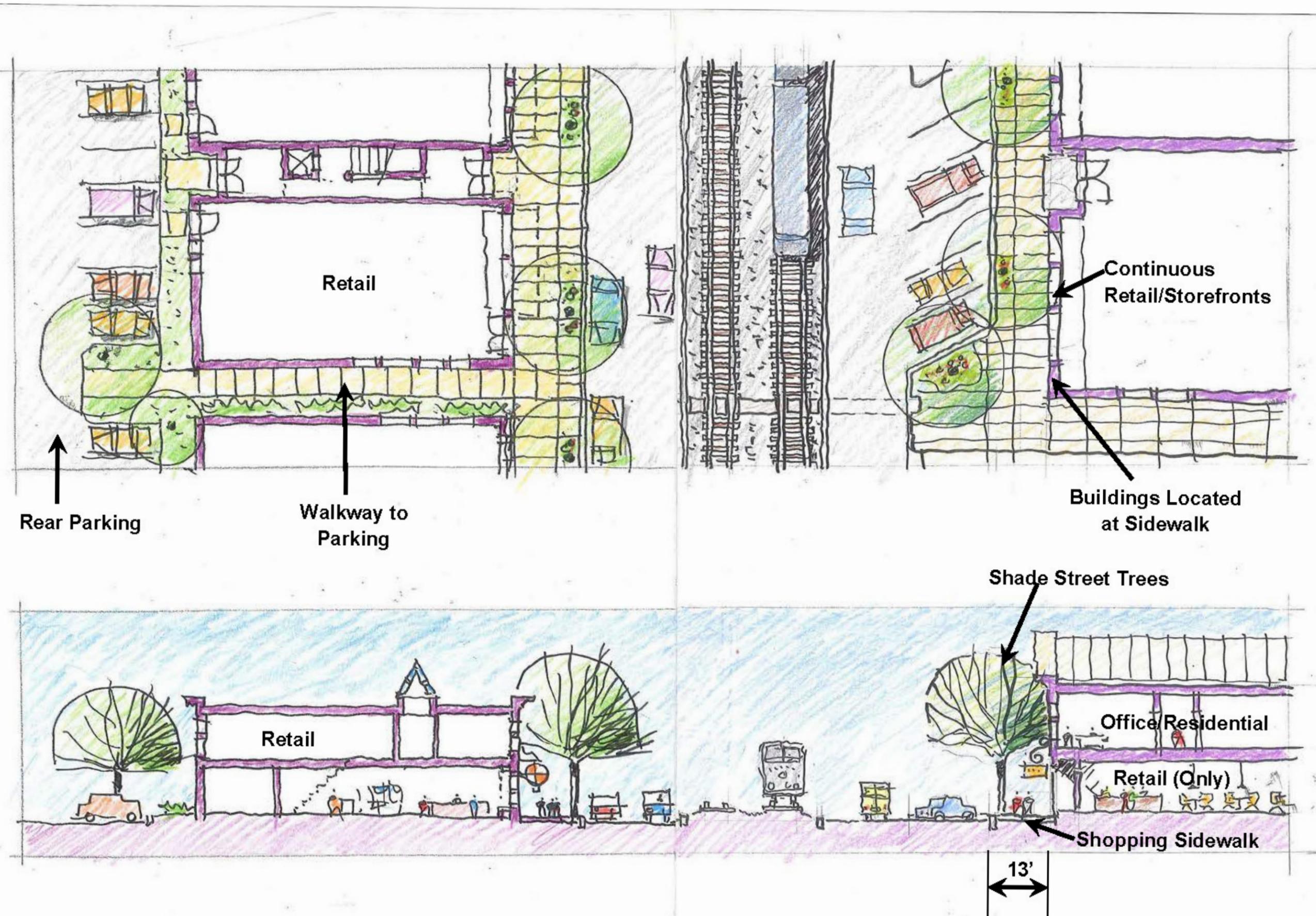
Three Distinct Parts of Downtown: Thompson Street, Historic Downtown and England Street

proach[®], which is a community driven, comprehensive strategy used to revitalize downtown business districts. One of the four points of focus is district design. Ashland Main Street will contribute research and design information on many of the topics covered within this section including lighting, sidewalks, crosswalks and landscaping within the Downtown.

Historic Downtown

Policy CD.7 Historic Downtown Infill and Redevelopment

- Infill development should maintain the compact and walkable form of our Historic Downtown, including both sides of the tracks, up England Street to the Post Office and down Thompson Street to Town Hall.
- Shops with large windows and signs line the sidewalks, almost continuously. This is an important characteristic of successful downtowns and should continue this way. Both redevelopment and new constructions should follow the appropriate pattern for the specific location within Downtown. Within the historic Down-



This sketch indicates the desired placement for new construction and redevelopment of the Historic Downtown. These details will best maintain the current character as new development or redevelopment occurs in the future.

town, structures should be constructed up to the sidewalk and have the look of a retail space on the lower level with the large front display windows.

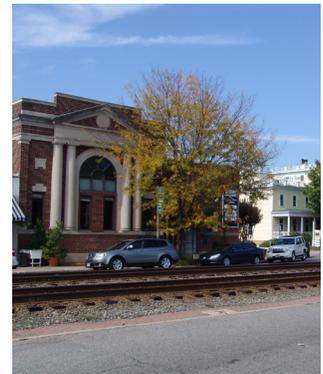
- Parking should be within walking distance of shops but not located between the storefront and the street.
- Business signs along the streets of Downtown can and should vary in design. The signs should be colorful and illuminated from the outside. These signs should reflect the pedestrian scale and character of this place. See the updated design guidelines document for recommendations regarding business signs.
- Downtown has a handsome variety in its architecture. The buildings are small in size, like the whole of Downtown. New structures need not replicate the historic architecture, however new structures should be compatible to the existing surroundings in many ways by matching size, scale, massing, fenestration, rhythm, setbacks, materials, and landscaping. See the updated design guidelines document for more details regarding this issue of character. A few examples of this character are: all of the buildings in this area are made of masonry (bricks, stone, and sometimes stucco); the building's column and window spacing along the street are always about 25 feet to 30 feet apart; there are often large office and residential windows on the upper floors. The Town should emphasize the use of well proportioned design, of quality materials and quality workmanship in all construction to ensure the continuity of Downtown into the future.

Policy CD.8 Historic Downtown Structures

Older commercial structures that are of historic interest within the area should be preserved. The Town should encourage property owners of historic structures to renovate to their original historic façade. The Town could provide incentives to property owners for exterior renovations.

A benefit of being a commercial building located in a district listed on the State and National Historic Register is the availability of state and federal rehabilitation tax credits. The rehabilitation tax credit programs provide private citizens with incentives for private investment in preservation. This private investment results in substantial advantages to the public in the form of public pride and enhanced neighborhoods. As suggested in Policy CD.2, an architectural advisory board could assist in educating citizens about possibilities for use of the rehabilitation tax credits.

The Town should consider reinstatement of the Façade Improvement Grant Program once funds become available. This program should be established specifically within the Ashland Main Street area of Down-



town. These boundaries shown in the map below are essentially England and Thompson Streets from Route 54 to South James Street and Railroad Avenue from Myrtle Street to College Avenue. Specific criteria should be defined as to what improvements are applicable for inclusion in the program.

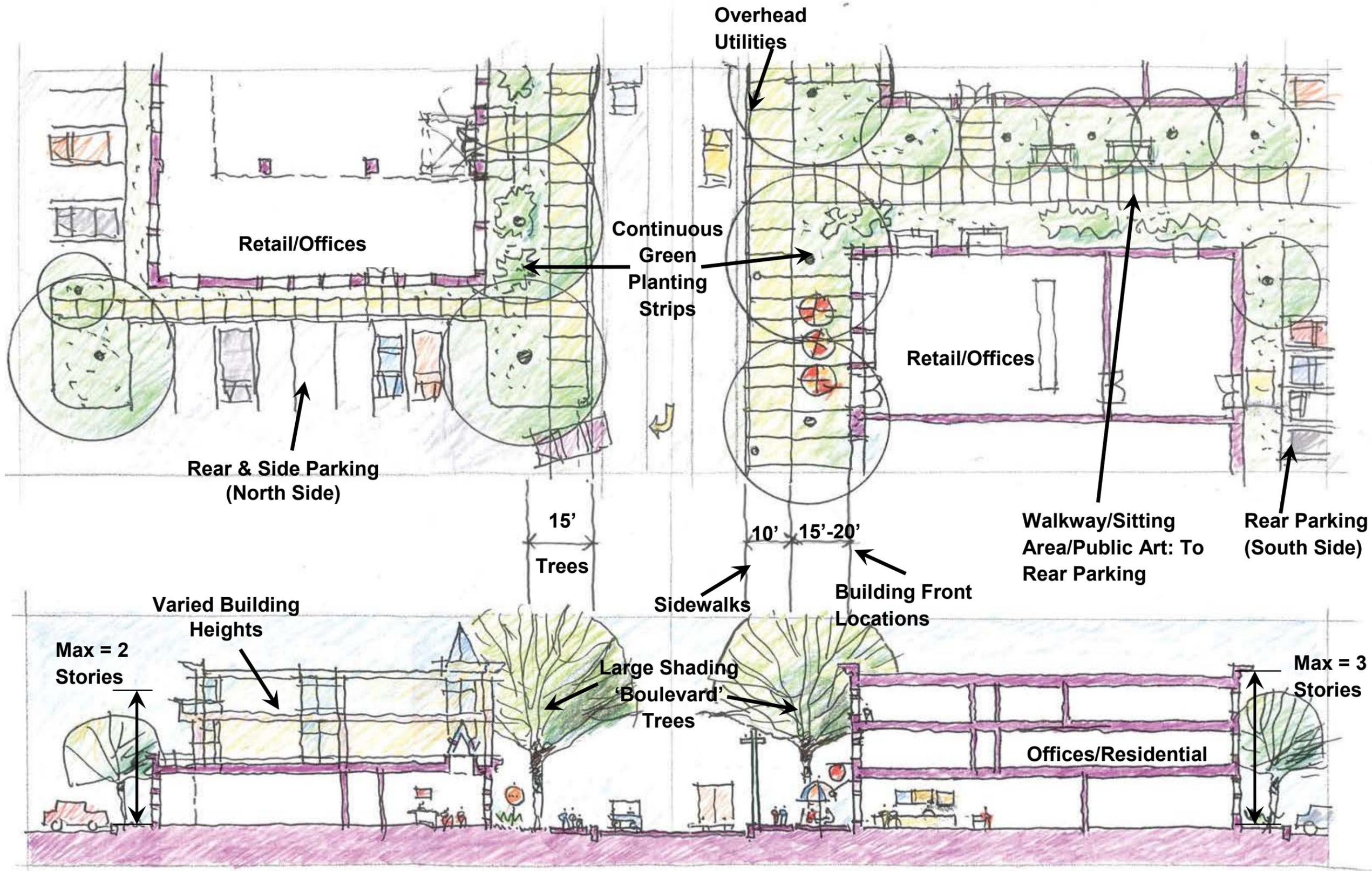
England Street, The Eastern Transition

As shown in the above sketch, the future vision for England Street is that of a lively retail environment, bustling with pedestrians. England Street will serve as a tree-lined entrance to the center of Ashland. Where possible, the sidewalk will be widened and small green oases will be created. The addition of street trees will create a dramatic visual enhancement as well as shade for the sidewalk. New buildings will be constructed adjacent to the widened sidewalk and green space creating a feeling of enclosure for the pedestrian and a unifying streetscape. The inclusions of lower level retail-style windows and canopies for rain protection contribute to the human-scale of the streetscape. The widened sidewalks allow for the placement of tables and umbrellas in outdoor dining areas, planters, benches, and bike racks. These features contribute to an active street life and enhance the pedestrian environment.

Policy CD.9 England Street Infill and Development

- Along England Street, structures should be constructed with small setbacks, consistent with the Police Department building at the intersection of England and Randolph Streets. The intent is to create a pedestrian-oriented boulevard.
- A mix of retail and services should be located on the street level with office and residential uses on the upper floors. Structures should have the look of a retail space on the lower levels, with large retail-style front windows.
- The north side of England Street has lot depths of 200 feet. Some parking may be located to the side of the building with a continuous green hedgerow separating the sidewalk from the parking lot. Buildings should be a maximum of two stories and adequate landscaping shall be provided, designed so as not to interfere with the adjacent residential character.
- The south side of England Street has lot depths of 300 feet. Parking should be located to the rear of the building with a continuous green space along the sidewalk from the parking lot to the building front. Three stories should be the maximum building height as the south side of England Street is adjacent to a higher density residential district.
- Both sides of England Street should have a sidewalk at least 10





This sketch depicts the desired design for the future appearance of England Street. The desire is for Retail and Office at street level with residential space above. Building should be located at or near the sidewalk to enhance the pedestrian atmosphere.

feet wide and a green space of equal width. A ten foot wide green space will accommodate the planting of shade trees.

Policy CD.9.1 England Street Redesign

England Street has become an impediment to achieving the vision of a connected, walkable, and safe area. With the successful streetscape improvements along Railroad Avenue, further study needs to be conducted to establish a redesign plan for England Street to make it a beautiful, walkable, and memorable street. This policy is compatible with additional policies for England Street which include: building design and layout (CD.9), crosswalks (CD.10), sidewalks (CD.11), parking (CD.12), and signage (CD.36).

Thompson Street, The Western Transition

Serving as the entrance to Downtown from the west, the two blocks of Thompson Street between Railroad Avenue and South James Street, should be designed in the same manner as the north side of England Street. The observation was made that these lots are approximately 200 feet in depth and mostly back to residential neighbors. By following the same design guidelines as described in Policy CD.9 for the north side of England Street, the boulevard quality of England Street will be extended and provide a connection between downtown and the historic bungalow neighborhood to the west.

Street Design in the Downtowns

Policy CD.10 Downtown Crosswalks

Pedestrian safety is a priority for the Town. As part of our walkable community, safe pedestrian crossings of major roadways should be provided. Crosswalks should be easily visible to both the pedestrian and the driver. This can be accomplished through a change in paving materials and/or surface treatment. As the crosswalk design repeats through the district, it serves as a unifying factor visually tying the area together. Well-marked crosswalks could be located on the England and Thompson Street portions of Downtown and on Railroad Avenue at the rail crossing boardwalks. A variety of crosswalks have been studied by Ashland Main Street and the various types should be included in the updated design guidelines document. As part of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan update, a study should be completed to determine exactly the best crosswalk locations and establish a priority list for crosswalk installations.

Policy CD.11 Downtown Sidewalks

Ashland Main Street has conducted a study of the types of sidewalks that should be considered for Downtown. The options considered including high quality concrete, brick trim, and brick pavers, will be eval-



uated in the updated design guidelines document. It must be noted, however, that the arrangement of sidewalk ownership within the Downtown area has made it difficult for the Town to proceed with necessary sidewalk maintenance. With the successful completion of the downtown streetscape improvements along Railroad Avenue, the Town should pursue the extension of streetscape improvements along England Street and Thompson Street, as articulated in Policy CD 9.1. Continuing to involve the participation of property and business to show that sidewalk repair and reconstruction can be completed with little disruption to the building occupants and no damage to the buildings is a primary goal of this process. The existing Sidewalk Replacement Plan should be updated as current projects are completed. The priority list included in the Sidewalk Plan should be used to determine a location for the test project.

Policy CD.12 Downtown Parking

In order to maintain the compact form of Ashland, careful thought should be given to the treatment of parking throughout the Town. Throughout the Downtown and along some parts of Thompson and England Streets, parking should not be provided in front of buildings between the building and the street but along the side or to the rear of the building depending on lot size. A reduced parking requirement may be appropriate in this area.

Within the Downtown, parking should not be provided for individual uses, but should be provided on-street and at shared lots. The Town currently has one municipal lot referred to as the McKinney Lot between Hanover and South Center Streets. This lot is owned by the Town. There is also public parking available at Town Hall on Duncan Street. In addition, the Library lot is often used for multiple purposes. One additional lot could be added at the former site of the Duke house. This potential parking lot, located at the corner of Thompson and Duncan Streets, could serve as an interim use until a Town Hall Annex is constructed.

The shared use of parking lots should be encouraged in both the commercial and Downtown areas. For instance, an example of a shared parking lot may be the use of the lot by an office during the day, a restaurant in the evenings and a church on Sundays. Another example is that of two or more merchants permitting general shopper parking on what are usually private lots. A shared use agreement, signage alerting the public and notification to customers by participating businesses should be sufficient to ensure this arrangement is successful.

As a result of all these possibilities and expectations for parking in the Downtowns, an overall parking study should be prepared, which analyzes walking patterns, driving access patterns, employee parking needs, and a predicted total demand by the customers for all the businesses located here. This is especially true since many merchants have raised concerns



over the years about the need to fully resolve the parking issue. This parking study is addressed further in Chapter 7, Transportation, Policy T.17.

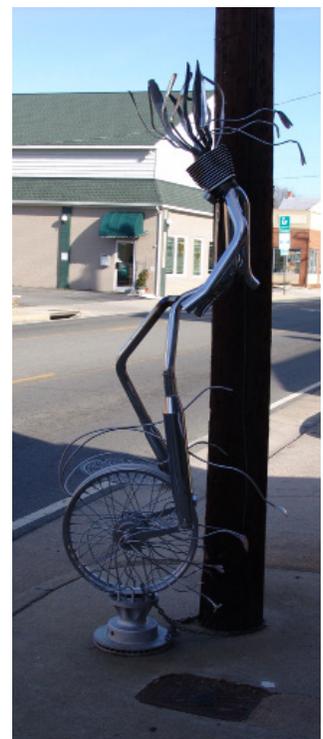
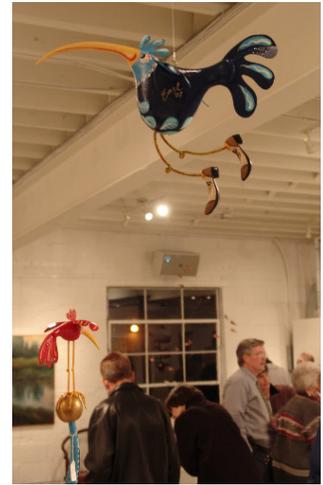
Downtown Identity

In 2009, at the request of the Ashland Main Street Association and with the cooperation of the Town, a study was conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) to examine the viability of encouraging the arts as a way to enhance and help define the character of Downtown Ashland. The market analysis, entitled “A Downtown Enhancement Plan,” states that “Ashland already has diverse arts and cultural resources, which could be organized and expanded upon to help downtown businesses thrive.” Existing opportunities for residents and visitors to experience Ashland’s creative environment include live music at local venues, art exhibits in both permanent and temporary galleries, dance and music lessons, and public events at Randolph-Macon College. Hanover Arts & Activities Center (HAAC), a valuable part of creativity and arts in Downtown since 1969, provides rental space for musicians, artists and teachers of the arts, as well as producing and presenting the annual *Hanover Idols Competition*, the *Children’s Summer Theater Program* Musical, and numerous other special events and performances. Its biennial production of the *Ashland Musical Variety Show*, which showcases over 300 performers from the community, must be held at Blackwell Auditorium at Randolph-Macon College to accommodate the more than 2,000 attendees. In addition, the Town of Ashland is home to many professional artists working in diverse mediums such as jewelry-making, photography, painting, sculpting, pottery-making and woodworking. Other artists include dancers, writers, musicians, actors, and graphic designers.

By encouraging new arts and entertainment venues in Ashland, expanding art education instruction, creating more evening entertainment choices, and attracting additional professional artists to live, work and share their art in our community, there are opportunities to better define the identity of Downtown and promote Ashland as a unique destination for visitors and residents. The VCU analysis concludes that these kinds of efforts could be beneficial to all Ashland businesses and attractions by increasing foot traffic and general use of Ashland’s historic downtown area.

Policy CD.13 Public Art

The use of public art as a landmark enhances the visibility of arts and culture in the environment. As part of Creativity and Arts in Downtown and England Street, this area can serve as an on-going outdoor art exhibition using sculpture in open spaces. Public art should be displayed throughout the town, at places such as Town Hall, the Ashland Town



Center, local parks, and on busy downtown streets such as England Street and South Railroad Avenue.

By locating art in significant areas throughout Downtown, a positive visual message is conveyed that Ashland is a town that supports the arts and its local artists. The Town should encourage Ashland Main Street to determine appropriate locations, a maintenance routine, and develop a request for proposal to solicit art for display.

An additional method of highlighting creativity and arts in Downtown and on England Street is to feature art in businesses throughout town. This may be the artwork of local artists or area students. To enhance the Town's appearance, art can also be displayed in vacant storefronts throughout Downtown. These connections and arrangements for the display of artwork in businesses should be made by Ashland Main Street.

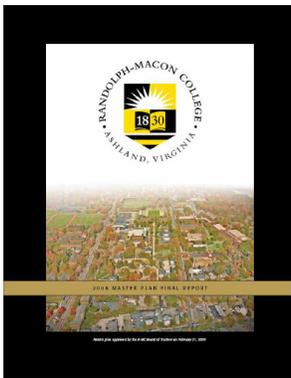
Policy CD.14 Live/Work Space

In an effort to establish new uses in the Downtown area that will complement existing businesses while enhancing the arts and culture environment, the creation of affordable mixed-use, live/work spaces in Downtown should be considered. Increasing affordable live/work space, as well as gallery space, in the Town is attractive to, and convenient for, artists and helps to strengthen an arts and cultural district. These mixed-use developments should be sited at prime locations along the England Street corridor in order to increase visibility and vitality of the arts and culture environment in Downtown Ashland. Financing opportunities for development may be available through Virginia Housing and Development Authority's Mixed-Use/Mixed Income program.

Randolph-Macon College

Randolph-Macon College (R-MC) is a small nationally known undergraduate liberal arts college with an enrollment of approximately 1,200 students. The campus, located near the center of Town, is beautiful and green with spreading trees and handsome brick buildings framed by well-groomed lawns. The mostly brick buildings face out onto the public streets, creating a visual integration with the homes in the surrounding neighborhood. Public streets run right through campus allowing for interaction between residents and students. The beauty of this campus and its quiet liveliness are an important part of the character of Ashland.

The College sponsors special and community events including sporting events, performing arts presentations, and lectures, all open to the public. The Keeble Observatory, which contains a 12-inch reflecting telescope, is the only observatory in Central Virginia that is open to the public. Three of the original College buildings, built in the 1870s, still exist and are included in the Randolph-Macon Historic College Complex designated by the State and National Historic Registers. The College has been a major



factor in the Town’s development and continues to be an integral part of the community.

Policy CD.15 Randolph-Macon College Master Plan

While the Town of Ashland and Randolph-Macon College have coexisted for many years and the College is a beautiful part of Ashland, Ashland is still a “town with a college” rather than a “college town”. The Town and College will continue to work together to become more incorporated and build a stronger relationship.

As acknowledged in the R-MC Master Plan, adopted in 2009, the master plan principles seek to “Foster strong connections through porous edges and thresholds” and “Strengthen relationships throughout Greater Ashland to encourage potential partnerships.” The Town should continue to work with R-MC on goals such as better connecting the campus to Railroad Avenue and England Street intersections, strengthening physical connections to Downtown by streetscape improvements and opening up the campus edges to Downtown pedestrian activities while discouraging geographical expansion of the campus outside its current boundaries. Infill development within the current R-MC footprint should be encouraged.

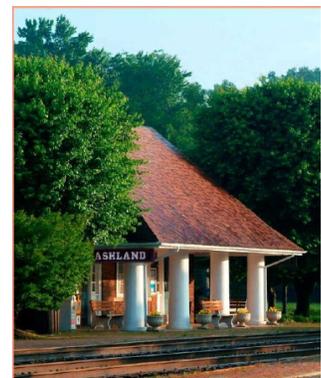
Public Parks, Landscapes and Open Spaces

As part of Ashland’s green quality, the Town contains a number of small neighborhood parks, as well as some open space and a growing trail network. Ashland’s neighborhood parks are lush, green spaces that allow residents to relax, experience nature, and interact with users of all ages. The Town’s parks are used primarily for informal, non-organized activity. These parks generally range from one to eight acres in size and mainly serve the residents who live within walking distance or a short driving distance. Hanover County provides regional parks that are designed for larger group activities and recreational events for all of the Hanover County residents. Ashland’s neighborhood parks, combined with Hanover County’s larger community parks, offer a wide range of amenities. More information on the Town’s parks is included in Chapter 8, Parks and Recreation.

In addition to the public parks, several tree stands or small forests remain in various parts of town, often as wetlands. These stands are precious, both as native environments and as part of the character of Ashland. Every effort should be made to ensure that the minimum number of trees are removed when new development takes place such as the use of alternative stormwater management practices.

Town Landmarks

Landmarks enable people to orient themselves with a place and recognize where they are. Landmarks contribute to the uniqueness of a



place. Our Historic Train Station is one of the more recognizable landmarks in region. It is a key identifying location within the community and a point of orientation for those passing through on the train. Ashland is fortunate to have many valued landmarks. Some examples of other landmarks within Ashland are: the active railroad at the center of town, the Plaza, the Green in front of Town Hall, Cross Brothers Grocery, and Frank E. Brown Fountain Plaza on the R-MC campus. The historic and cultural past of Ashland is integral to its sense of place and community; its economy; and its attraction to visitors. These landmarks, among others, must be protected and maintained as they are an important part of the overall fabric of the Town.

3.2 CHARACTER OF SURROUNDING AREAS

Mixed Commercial Use (includes Office, Retail and Hotels)

Ashland has long existed as a small town in a rural landscape. The Town's development has followed that of the north/south travel routes with increasing commercial development as the transportation system grew. These changes have left the Town with both aging and struggling commercial areas and newer retail concentrations. Retail businesses provide approximately 39 percent of the jobs within Ashland and provide a necessary service for both residents and visitors alike.

Equally important to Ashland's status as a regional employer and potential growth in this area is the office market. Currently Ashland has approximately 487 acres zoned for Office (B-1, B-2, B-4 & POB) which is 11 percent of the total area. The 2008 Ashland Market Analysis prepared by Urban Partners found that most office space in the Town is located in small repurposed buildings, and/or one story commercial or flex buildings. As mentioned in Chapter 4 Land Use, there is a need for Class A, multi-story office space. The Business Owners and Managers Association International defines Class A office space as "the most prestigious buildings competing for premier office users with rents above average for the area. Buildings have high quality standard finishes, state of the art systems, exceptional accessibility and a definite market presence."

Note, however, that in spite of the importance of these areas to the economy and life of Ashland, they never have had the character that makes our small town so beloved by its residents. Therefore, the recommendations here are made with the aspiration to raise the quality of the character and design in these places, so that they can join the rest of the town as special and uniquely Ashland.

The mixed-use commercial areas include several distinct places, each of which has its own needs, and therefore should have its own character.

There are three such areas:

- Route 54 east of Route 1 is the hospitality and retail core of the mixed-use zone;
- Route 1 is an aging, auto-oriented corridor that requires a transformation;
- The rest of the areas east of Route 1, Hill Carter Parkway, East Ashland, etc., are a wide-spread set of varying uses, and are not as compact and potentially distinct as Routes 54 and 1.

Though each is a distinct place, the following policies address the shared characteristics that apply to all three places.

Policy CD.16 Encourage Commercial Building Design that fits Ashland's Character

Commercial buildings shall use building designs that are consistent with the character of Ashland and its Downtown and avoid prototypical designs used throughout the region. Through amendments to the zoning code and an updated design guidelines document, standards should be developed that address maximum setbacks (build-to lines), roof forms, massing, and fenestration as appropriate within each specific neighborhood planning area.

Policy CD.17 Redevelopment

The Town should encourage redevelopment of older commercial building and parcels. As part of the redevelopment process, improved site design should be considered in relation to placement of buildings, parking lots and landscaping and how these relate to the pedestrian.

Policy CD.18 Mixed Commercial Use Structures

The Town should encourage high-quality construction in both new construction and renovations of buildings. Building architecture in new construction, renovations and additions should provide visual interest relating to the user on a human scale. Special attention should be given in the updated design guidelines document to roof forms, fenestration, massing, the use of quality materials, quality workmanship and consistency with surrounding development. Four-sided architecture shall be implemented, meaning, no side of any building should be constructed with materials that are inferior to any other side. Also, mechanical equipment, dumpsters and loading zones shall be screened from public view.

Policy CD.19 Redevelopment of Mixed Commercial Use Parking

Property owners and developers should be encouraged to reconfigure existing large parking areas. As commercial properties redevelop,

construction of additional infill buildings closer to the street, along with enhanced landscaping should be utilized to break up massive parking areas and better define the edges of the parking lot. It also may be appropriate for the Town to reduce parking requirements to allow for these improvements to occur. Alternatively, the Town may also consider the use of maximum parking requirements in a move away from minimum parking standards. As mentioned in Policy CD.12, shared parking should be encouraged including the use of shared lots.

Policy CD.20 New Development Site Design and Parking

Site development for new commercial uses should be designed with the pedestrian in mind. Buildings should be located close to the street. Buildings should locate parking to the side, or at the most provide one row of parking in front. Big box users that desire additional parking in front should use design alternatives, such as facing buildings sideways, or providing outparcels in front. If this is still not possible, a large amount of landscaping should be provided within the parking area. It may be appropriate to reduce parking requirements for certain uses. Alternatively, the Town may also consider the use of maximum parking requirements in a move away from minimum parking requirements. As mentioned in Policy CD.12, shared parking should be encouraged through the use of shared lots.

Policy CD.21 Trees and Landscaping in Mixed Commercial Use Areas

Parking lots and setbacks shall be well-landscaped. Vegetated islands should be dispersed throughout parking areas. A variety of plantings should be provided including shade trees which should be used whenever possible to offset the heat island effect produced by the increase in hardscaping in a commercial project. Front setbacks should be provided with a mix of low growing shrubs, street trees, and ornamental trees as directed in the Town’s updated design guidelines document.

Policy CD.22 Curb, Gutter and Sidewalks in Mixed Commercial Use Areas

Curb, gutter, and sidewalks should be provided across the frontage of newly developed commercial sites and retrofitted as redevelopment occurs.

Policy CD.23 Route 1 Design Overlay District

Route 1 (Washington Highway) is an aging but still important north/south corridor through the Town of Ashland. Until the development of Interstate 95, this was the main east coast thoroughfare. Much of the development along this corridor occurred in a sporadic manner without much long-range planning or vision for the area. Relationships between

adjacent properties were not given consideration. This has given the corridor a disjointed appearance. Therefore, the Town seeks a real transformation.

As the long-term future of development is considered, there is opportunity to achieve a transformation. To achieve a sense of order and unity along the corridor, the Town should consider a design overlay district as an appropriate solution to guide future development. Currently, the development is typified by deep setbacks from the roadway, buildings of varying characteristics and conditions fronted by large parking areas, sporadic landscaping and limited pedestrian access. The new recommendations should suggest one-to-three story buildings located closer to the right-of-way with major parking areas to the side and rear, with only small limited parking between the building and roadway. The inclusion of street trees, sidewalks, and signaled crosswalks will contribute to an enhanced pedestrian experience. This transformation will therefore create an overall parkway appearance that makes the road seem more like part of Ashland, and will at the same time increase the value of the land for business and development. Route 1 is a major gateway to our town, and must be developed to the highest standards.

The character of the corridor that results from these recommended design conditions, as illustrated in the attached sketch should provide for a distinctive and handsome overall appearance, more efficient use of land and in specific portions of the corridor, promote economic development and a pedestrian friendly environment. The fundamental purpose of a Route 1 Design Overlay District is therefore to enhance both the image and the functionality of the Route 1 corridor. The Design Overlay District will provide clearly articulated streetscape, site, and building design guidelines and recommendations. This will not only apply to new development but will provide guidance for the renovation and expansion of existing uses. The streetscape design is specifically intended to create the desired overall appearance, and to increase safety, enhance connectivity and improve pedestrian and vehicular access to shopping, services, nearby neighborhoods and employment. It may be appropriate for the Town to look at short-term strategies to improve the roadway and areas immediately adjacent to encourage future development.

The Route 1 Design Overlay District should run the length of Route 1 within the Ashland borders. As further addressed in Chapter 4, Land Use, this should be a district with a mix of commercial uses including office, hotel and retail. This mix of uses can reinforce each other, and by design coexist. Office workers can eat and shop in the restaurants and retail and hotels can serve the offices. Tourists using the hotels will benefit from the close proximity of the retail and restaurants as well. This mix of uses can occur in separate buildings or mixed in single buildings.

Policy CD.24 Route 1 Crosswalks

With the completion of the VDOT improvement to the Route 54 and Route 1 intersection, signaled crosswalks have been provided at the intersection. Further study should be conducted to identify locations along Route 1 to (1) enable residents to safely cross from the residential neighborhoods to the retail shopping areas and (2) to walk safely along the new Route 1 sidewalks. Some features that should be considered in the design are: countdown and audible pedestrian signals; in-street “yield to pedestrian signs”; high visibility crosswalk striping; curb extensions; pedestrian-friendly slip lanes; and reduced corner radii.

Route 54 (Interstate Service Area)

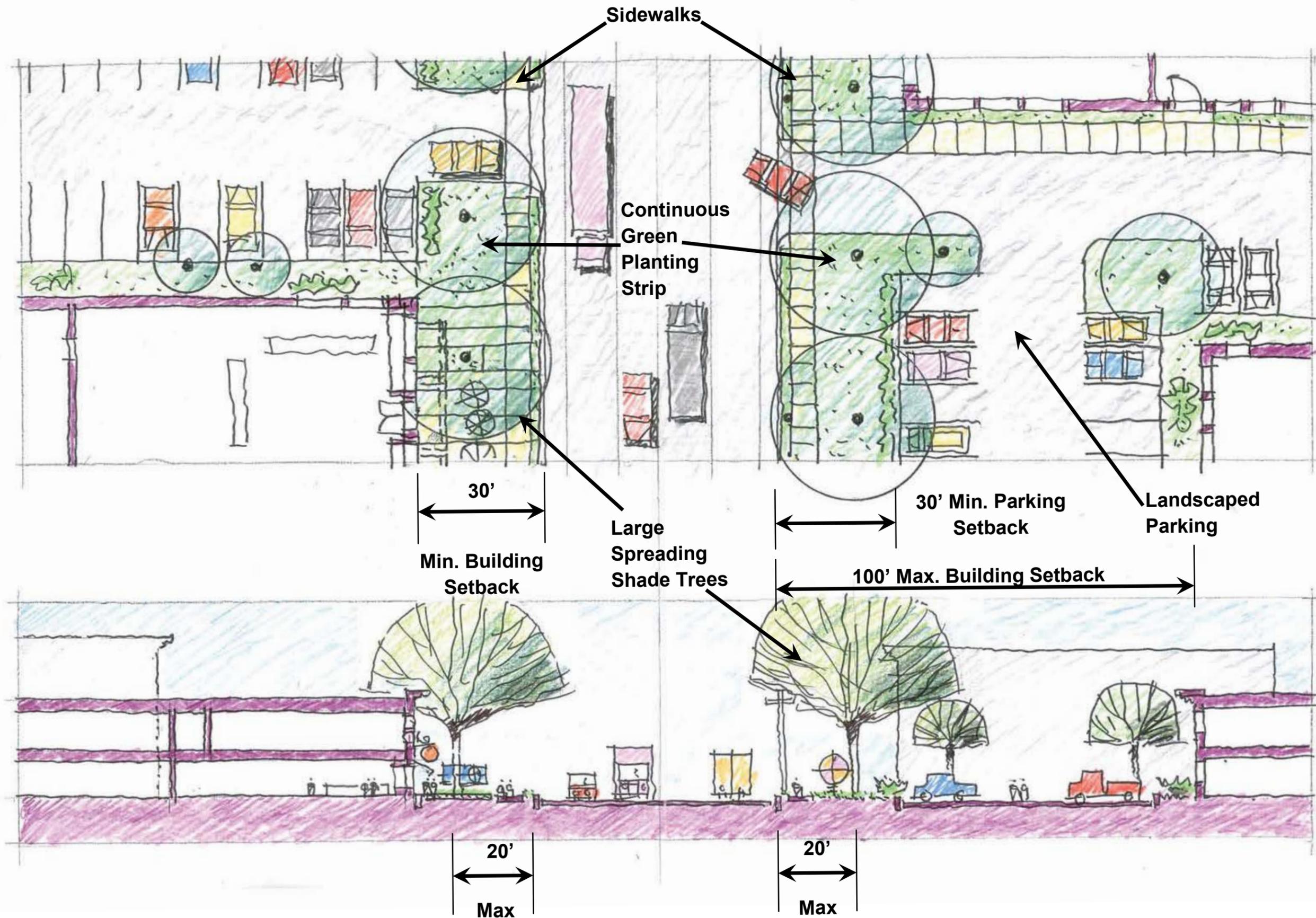
For many visitors to our Town, this is their first view of Ashland. This area includes various retail businesses, service stations, restaurants, fast-food locations, hotels, motels, and convenience stores. These are both highway oriented businesses and neighborhood commercial serving a wide range of users including interstate and regional through travelers, motor freight carriers, local residents and tourists visiting Downtown and nearby attractions.

Policy CD.25 Interstate Service Area Improvements

The interstate Service Area needs to be aesthetically pleasing to maintain its attraction to tourists especially as development continues at Hanover County’s Lewistown exit only three miles away. The Town should encourage continued reinvestment by existing businesses and investment by new businesses in the visual appearance of Route 54 and Hill Carter Parkway within the Interstate Service area. The Town should itself continue to participate in reinvestment in the visual character of this area, as has been done with the landscaping and specific service signage along the corridor. Public/private partnerships should be sought to support both the installation and long-term maintenance of improvements. The Town should continue to maintain and enhance the landscaping along this corridor and signage welcoming visitors to Ashland, while also clearly directing them to our landmarks. These improvements and partnerships should be considered as part of a long-term economic development strategy for the Town.

Policy CD.26 Route 54/Route 1 Intersection

As noted above in the Route 1 policies, an equally important intersection is that of Route 1 and Route 54/England Street. This section of England Street should serve as the red carpet to Downtown and the development here should reflect this. New development on the two western corners should be encouraged closer to the street. Currently both of these corners are underutilized. Better utilization of these



This sketch shows the desired design for Route 1 in the future. Building setbacks and parking lot placement are indicated with the intention of creating a transformation of the character of Route 1.

parcels would create a powerful centerpiece at this key intersection thereby drawing business enhancements down England Street toward the historic Downtown providing a positive domino effect of improvements.

Industrial Areas

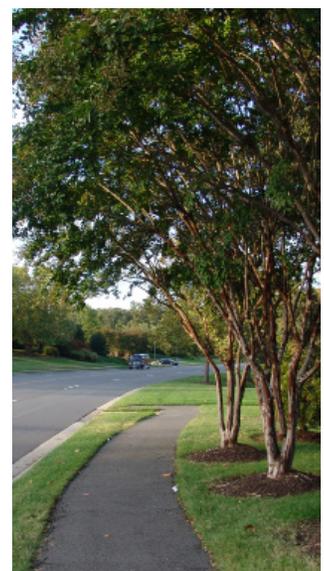
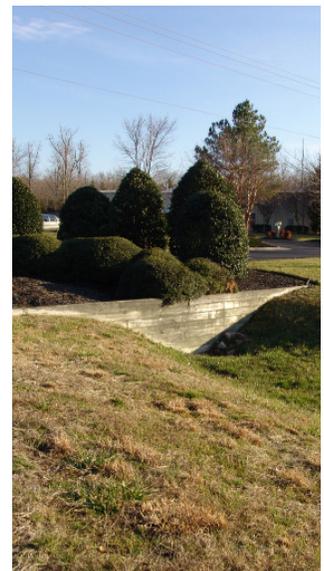
The Town of Ashland, as a regional employer, has and can support a large proportion of industrial land. Currently the Town has approximately 1,150 acres zoned industrial which is 27% of the total land area. Just as residential and commercial must be buffered from industrial uses; the industrial zoning must be protected as well. This industrial development and the employment it provides is a critical part of the Ashland economy.

Policy CD.27 Landscaping for Industrial Development

Because the industrial areas have such a wide variety of uses and have developed over a long period of time, there is a very disjointed appearance from the locations fronting on the southern portion of Route 1 to the new Hill Carter Parkway. As Route 1 is a major travel corridor, industries located along this corridor shall provide for landscaping that enhances the Town's appearance. A good model to follow is Hill Carter Parkway. A significant landscaping investment was made both in the publically maintained and privately maintained areas. This is the appearance that should be strived for. Industries located off the main thoroughfares may require a much lower level of landscape enhancement and should provide what is appropriate to the context of their location. The landscape ordinance in the Town Code should be updated to include landscaping within the industrial areas. This landscaping should include large deciduous trees used as street trees, understory plantings, and shrub areas giving an overall green appearance.

Policy CD.28 Industrial Parks

Industries in Ashland are generally located as freestanding facilities. Ideally there will be future opportunities to consolidate parcels for the formation of one or more industrial parks. The advantage of industrial parks is that it gives the Town the opportunity to direct development in a more planned fashion. Industrial parks typically include provisions for better traffic flow, improved landscaping, sufficient parking and the provision of buffers from surrounding uses. To the extent possible the Town should encourage industrial parks over other locations for industry. This same idea applies to office parks. Both should be considered as part of an economic development strategy for the Town.



3.3 OTHER DETAILS OF THE TOWN’S CHARACTER

Street Trees

As mentioned numerous times throughout the Plan and in the Guiding Principles, the value of the green quality of our Town is an important part of what makes Ashland *Ashland*. This green quality is made up of the shade trees lining the streets, the private gardens that fill the yards and the native trees stands throughout the Town. Considering the importance of street trees to the Town, specific recommendations are given for street trees in the various residential and commercial sections of this chapter. The focus here is how the tree canopy impacts our Town.

While many streets throughout the Town are tree-lined, there is room for improvement. The Town’s has a landscaping matrix with a priority list of possible street trees for planting within the public right-of-way on key corridors and gateways. The design guidelines provide information and diagrams regarding the proper spacing of trees within the public right-of-way along side streets. Additional tree policies including information regarding tree placement and avoiding conflict with utility lines can be found in Chapter 8, Environment.

Policy CD.29 Plan for Maintenance of Existing Trees

As mentioned in Chapter 8, Environment, as part of the Tree City USA program the Town is required to maintain a tree ordinance. This ordinance should address the retrofitting of existing trees. The Town’s trees should be maintained by a tree crew that is skilled, knowledgeable and capable of a wide range of tree maintenance, from young tree planting to large tree removal. The Town should insist on high-quality tree care guided by a certified arborist. Town staff may be trained to complete this work. Regular maintenance should consist of path/sidewalk clearance, roadway clearance, and sign clearance. All pruning work shall be completed pursuant to International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards. Regular maintenance should also include structural training of young trees, crown cleaning of existing trees as needed and hazard identification for existing trees.

All removed Town-owned trees shall be replaced as appropriate. Any required Town-owned trees or other plantings that die or are improperly maintained shall be replaced with healthy specimens of similar species with the exception of those trees planted under utility lines. New street trees planted under or near utility lines shall follow the guidelines of the Municipal Tree Restoration Program described in Chapter 8, Environment.

Policy CD.30 Tree Inventory

In determining the appropriate trees to recommend for planting both as street trees and for other locations throughout town, the first step is



to complete a tree inventory for the Town. The tree inventory is an important part of maintaining genetic diversity within our tree population. A rule of thumb regarding the appropriate mix of trees, provided by the U.S. Botanic Garden, is no more than 30% of one family, 20% of one species and no more than 10% of one cultivar town wide. This reasoning stems from the past history of huge losses with the spread of Dutch elm disease and loss caused by the structural defects of Bradford Pear trees. Ensuring continued biodiversity within our tree population can minimize plant maintenance needs and losses. There are many tree management software programs available to assist the Town with tracking this information. Following the completion of a tree inventory, a recommended planting list should be created and regularly updated as trees are lost and replanted within the Town. A properly completed inventory will include a map of tree locations throughout Town. Policy E.2 from the Environment chapter regarding the placement of trees in relation to utility lines should be considered when making choices for placement of street trees.

Policy CD.31 Consistency & Variety

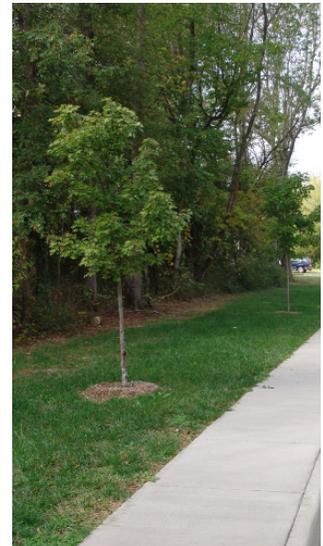
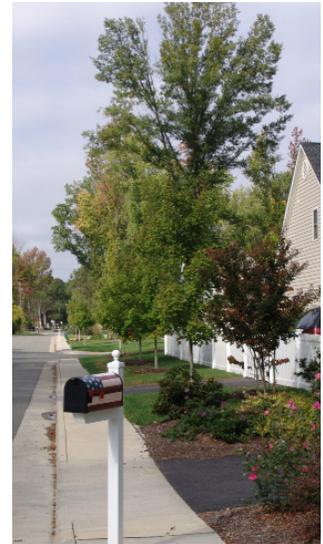
To create a sense of pattern and to help better define districts and their edges, a consistent species or cultivar of street trees should be utilized along any given street, at a standardized spacing. A change in street tree species can help visually define the edge between two districts. In creating this consistency, it is important to keep in mind the diversity of the entire Town in order to prevent spread of plant diseases. While consistency can be maintained by planting several blocks in a row of the same species, some alternation should occur every few blocks, to prevent the potential for entire corridors or large areas becoming devastated by the blight of a species. This pattern of consistency and variety can be organized using the map created in the tree inventory policy above.

Policy CD.32 Trees within New Developments

Street trees should be provided by developers along all newly constructed streets, across the street frontage for all new projects, both commercial and residential, and provided by the Town in conjunction with all major street construction projects as required by the Landscape Plan/Ordinances.

Policy CD.33 The Town's Tree Planting Program

Just as developers must plant in new neighborhoods, the Town should work in existing neighborhoods to infill the streets with new street trees. As this may be cost prohibitive to allow the entire Town to request street trees at once, it may be feasible to work through the Neighborhood Planning Areas one at a time. This could also be accomplished as a matching donation through an "Adopt-a-Tree" program. The resident pays half of



the total cost with an agreement to water the tree for the first two years until the tree is established. This method has two positive results: (1) the Town is able to specify the type of tree according to the tree inventory and (2) existing neighborhoods get replanted.

Signage

Well placed, quality signs promote a visual image of the community and add to the aesthetic character of a building, benefitting both the business owner and the Town. Signs are an accessory use and should not dominate the landscape or building façade. Whether freestanding (pylon or monument) or building mounted, a sign should be compatible with its surrounding buildings and environment in both color and design. If externally illuminated, the sign should be lit from the top down to avoid overspill into the night sky or beyond the immediate environment. Three general sign classifications are noted: wayfinding, commercial as seen from a car, commercial as seen by a pedestrian.

Wayfinding

A good wayfinding system is meant to get visitors into Town, to their destination and back out with as little headache as possible. A good system will project a consistent image for the entire Town and reduce visual clutter. There are several other useful purposes of a wayfinding system such as to highlight key attractions, enhance urban design, reinforce community identity, reduce driver and pedestrian frustration, and improve traffic flow and roadway safety.

Policy CD.34 Street Signage

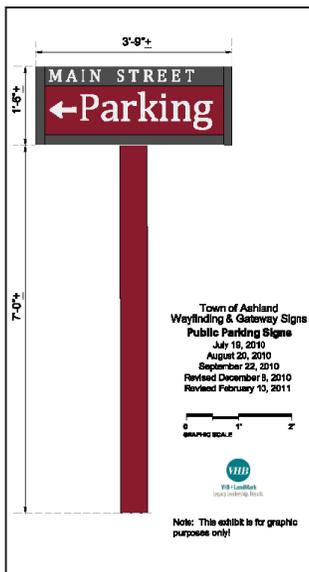
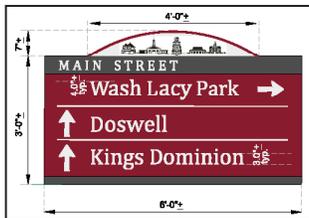
To help create a unique identity for the Town, and assist with wayfinding, the Town is working with VHB Landmark. This process includes new entrance signage for the Town and street signage that will differ between districts including specific signs for the college area. The Town should follow through and implement the wayfinding recommendations Townwide, beginning with key corridors and Downtown.

Commercial signs as seen from a car

Two types of freestanding signs typically used on auto-oriented corridors are pylon signs and monument signs. The lower monument signs are generally preferred as they are better suited for visibility than the tall signs mounted on poles that often compete with the tree canopy. Landscaping around the base of a monument style sign can accentuate the sign if the landscaping is maintained and trimmed appropriately.

Policy CD.35 Mixed Commercial Use Signage

The Town is actively working with business owners to replace non-conforming pylon signs with landscaped monument signs where appropriate.



These are just a few samples of the wayfinding signs approved by Town Council in 2011.

Monument signs can be just as effective, if not more so, because they are at the eye level of the driver. Property and business owners should be encouraged to replace existing, deteriorating and non-conforming signage. Both the freestanding signs and the building mounted signs should coordinate with both the building and surrounding neighborhood design. Provision of some incentives, such as additional building signage in exchange for using a monument sign may be helpful in encouraging this change.

Commercial signs as seen by a pedestrian

In a walkable area like the Historic Downtown and portions of England Street, the signs should relate to the pedestrian. Ideally, these signs should hang or project from a building to add dimension to the streetscape. Creative signs identifying the unique character of each establishment are encouraged. Building mounted signs in pedestrian areas should be externally illuminated. The lighting fixtures should be top mounted and shielded so that the light is directed only at the sign façade.

Visual Clutter

The appearance of the Town is an important part of the foundation for civic pride. Signage is one factor in the appearance of Ashland. The presence of too many signs is uninviting and the clutter can actually be counterproductive in helping people find their way. Reasonable sign controls along with other aesthetic standards can be a magnet for quality businesses with good paying jobs and a stable tax base.

The Town understands the need for businesses, public places and recreation areas to make their location known to the public, to shoppers, to travelers and to tourists. The purpose of the Town's sign ordinance is to promote signage that is orderly and appropriately sized, spaced, illuminated and located for its site. Good sign management improves the ability of the public to find businesses and other locations by reducing sign clutter, motivates them by enhancing overall aesthetic quality and creates a place where people want to spend time and money.

Policy CD.36 Sign Management

It is the Town's goal to minimize sign clutter throughout Ashland. The Town shall conduct a study on all public signs in an effort to create an effective signage system for the Town. Opportunities to combine signs will be sought out; for instance, reducing the number of no parking signs within a single block.



Public Lighting

As was mentioned in several of the community workshops, there is a need for well-designed street lighting both for the pedestrian and the motorist throughout many areas of town. Well-designed lighting assists in creating a safe environment for residents both as pedestrians and in vehicles. As part of preserving Ashland's small town character, it is also important to protect our night skies. According to the International Dark Sky Association, it is the right amount of light, in the right place, at the right time that results in better safety and security not more lights. By following the appropriate guidelines, both the need for resident safety and the protection of the night skies is possible.

Also addressing the need for streetlights is the concept of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design), a multi-disciplinary approach to creating safe environments. One of the CPTED principles is natural surveillance. The overall goal is see and be seen. Lighting plays an important role because a person is less likely to commit a crime if someone will see them do it. As mentioned above, it is the right amount and placement of lighting that is important. Lights that are too bright and improperly placed create bright spots, deep shadows and glare defeating the purpose of security lighting. Pedestrian lighting should be placed at the proper height for lighting the faces of people within the space.

The use of a single style light fixture can create a distinctive design element and provide continuity through the various neighborhood planning areas. Specifics regarding fixtures, placement and suggested corridors for installation are provided in the design guidelines.

Policy CD.37 Streetlights

As part of a joint task force, the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) and the Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) have created a Model Lighting Ordinance (MLO) for public review. This ordinance is created in generic code language for easy adoption into the Town Code and is adaptable to any community situation. This MLO should be reviewed and considered for adoption and use within the Town of Ashland. The Town is in need of a lighting policy to address streetlights on both the auto and pedestrian scale. Any policy created should consider and possibly update the ordinance regarding exterior lighting of buildings and parking lots. This policy should also provide direction in accordance with this Plan using the principles of CPTED and of dark sky compliant lighting.

Policy CD.38 Lighting Selection

Streetlights selected should be dark sky compliant, not cast glare to surrounding areas, and should provide natural appearing light rather than the discolored hues created by older lighting technology. The light fixtures should be low energy, high efficiency and low maintenance.

Policy CD.39 Light Placement

Similar to street trees, light fixtures should also create a sense of pattern and help better define districts and their edges, particularly between pedestrian and vehicular oriented areas. Pedestrian-style fixtures should be used in more densely developed commercial areas, historic areas, and in conjunction with new residential development. Modern overhead lighting is appropriate in all other areas, when needed for safety. The design guidelines document should be updated and utilized for guidance regarding specific placement.

Policy CD.40 Community Gateways

Immediately upon entering the Town, noticeable differences in the streetscape should be apparent to create a sense of entry and provide a clear edge to the Town limits. Visual cues are an important means to help visitors and residents distinguish areas from one another. Gateways, which can be viewed as the front doors into a community, provide the first impressions of that community. The gateways can either express a community's pride and sense of place or can give the community a poor public image. As the Town works with VBH Landmark to develop a uniform theme of signage throughout the community, special attention should be given to the gateways to reflect the sense of place that is special to the Town of Ashland and to create a sense of arrival to the visitor. Development of attractive entrances into Ashland should include landscaping and lighting with appropriate signage that is part of an overall uniform theme for the Town.

An important edge to plan for in the future is the boundary between the Town and County. The desire to keep the rural appearance of this edge was expressed by participants of the community workshops. The small town feel of our community is affected by the design and uses on our boundaries and edges.

Policy CD.41 Joint-Jurisdictional Planning

The Town should continue to work with Hanover County to ensure the delineation of the border between the Town and County. The County's Comprehensive Plan includes, by reference, several Small Area Plans that provide greater detail and more specific land use and transportation recommendations for certain areas of the County. The Town should participate with Hanover County to jointly develop a Small Area Plan for the newly-established Suburban Service Area immediately surrounding the Town. This could include plans for the Route 54 West / Falling Creek area (including Yowell Road, Elmont Road, Route 54, and areas northwest of Ashland along Blunts Bridge Road) and the Old Ridge Economic Development Zone (encompassing areas northeast of Ashland along Hickory Hill Road and Old Ridge Road, designated for business park development.)

Development of Small Area Plans would allow for significant citizen and stakeholder input, and would send the signal to the development community that the Town and County share the same vision for the ultimate build-out of Ashland and its immediate surroundings.

The character the Town strives for along the entrances to Town can be accomplished in a variety of ways:

- Introducing enhancements to the corridor, such as landscaping, curb and gutter, medians, street lights, and underground utilities.
- Provide contrast in commercial signage through enhanced sign regulations.
- Locate buildings closer to the street with parking to the side, or at the most, provide one row of parking in front.
- Homes should face the main street instead of lining the street with backyard fences.

These changes in the streetscape should continue on and throughout these corridors, and not appear only for the sake of creating satellite edges.

Stormwater Management and its Impact on Character

Policy CD.42 Stormwater Management

Developers should be encouraged to integrate low impact stormwater management techniques and reduce impervious surface coverage, in order to minimize the potential for flooding and water pollution. Stormwater runoff can be managed through a variety of techniques such as permeable paving, green roofs, vegetated swales and sunken median strips along the roadway. Sunken median strips or vegetated swales can absorb runoff as it meets the surface, eliminating non-point source pollution. They provide both a functional and attractive solution to stormwater runoff. Additional landscaping options such as rain gardens and large areas of green open space, can not only reduce pollution collected by runoff, but will also provide an opportunity to beautify the community and create a more comfortable environment for its users. In addition, the use of rain barrels and cisterns provides an opportunity for the reuse of water. The Town should study other jurisdictions to investigate methods of working with developers to achieve desired development outcomes regarding stormwater management.

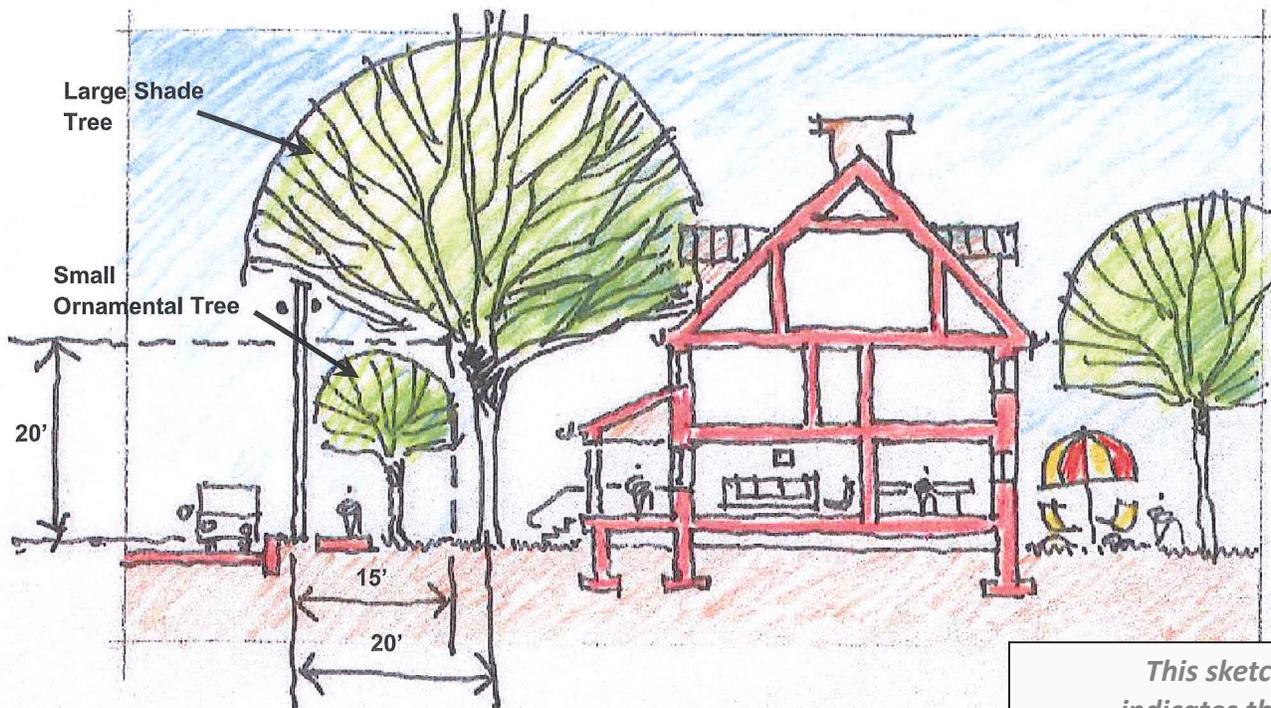
Policy CD.43 Utilities

Although there are more pressing issues than buried utility lines, underground utilities in the Downtown area and along England Street will benefit both the property owners and those who visit the Town. There are two ways of thinking about this issue: screening the wires with prop-

erly selected and located trees, and by relocating utilities from overhead poles to underground.

Because of the likely prohibitive expense of burying wires, the alternative of designing a landscape that masks the appearance of those overhead wires must be considered. One example of this is the block on Myrtle Street where the large shade trees are set back from the right-of-way creating the appearance of a tree-lined street thereby de-emphasizing the presence of the overhead wires. This design is a legitimate possibility in existing conditions where the cost of burying is assumed to be born by the town and the taxpayer. The cost of trees in many cases can be borne by the private development. (See the sketch proposals for England Street and Route 1 that illustrate this possibility.)

If the burying method is used, curb appeal is definitely improved, utilities are less susceptible to storm damage, the neighborhood and corridors are given a cleaner look, more room is allowed for the planting of large shade trees, and the historic look of the entire Downtown area is enhanced. Although the burying of existing lines can be cost prohibitive,



Street Tree Sketch.

This sketch indicates the desired placement of street trees in the presence of overhead wires to avoid conflict of branches and wires in the future.

a public-private partnership should be investigated and priority areas established so that as redevelopment occurs proper procedures will be in place.

A priority list should therefore be maintained by the Town for the undergrounding of utility lines. Undergrounding is the act of removing utility poles and burying wires and equipment in conduits or pipes. This can be incorporated with corridor plans or overlay districts where applicable. This can be considered an opportunity plan that will be ready if the opportunity or funding arises.

In the case of new development, all utilities shall be placed underground. In addition, underground utilities should be strongly encouraged in all redevelopment and restoration projects.

Policy CD.44 Publicly Owned and Maintained Landscapes

As good stewards of our Town, it is the Town's responsibility to maintain and enhance the landscape to the standards expected of others. By investing in targeted visual improvements to public places, the Town can continue to conserve and enhance the green character of Ashland. Because of limited availability of public funding, these improvements should be phased in over time. A plan identifying priority locations and implementation schedule should be developed. This should apply to gateways, medians, and public right-of-ways throughout the Town.



TO DO LIST

1. Update Development Guidelines Handbook and Zoning code:
 - To address desired result of visual character and quality instead of minimum standards.
 - To address desired standards in residential infill and new development including materials, windows, roof materials and pitch, setback, accessory structure placement, street design, curb, gutter and sidewalks
 - To address downtown infill and development including, fenestration, size, scale, massing, rhythm, materials, setback, signage
 - To address commercial building designs including setbacks, material, four-sided architecture, roof forms, massing, fenestration, signage, streetscape, and screening of mechanical equipment as appropriate within each neighborhood planning area. This should include both new construction and redevelopment.
2. Establish a local historic district in the form of an overlay district and create an architectural advisory board for the historic district.
3. Consider renewal of façade improvement program as funds are available. Clearly identify that this program is for the Ashland Main Street area of the entire downtown. Create specific criteria for that program to assure its success in improving the quality of the Downtown Areas, and the overall business environment.
4. Update Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan including a study of crosswalk locations including a priority list for installation.
5. Update Sidewalk Replacement Plan as current projects are completed. Use the priority list in the updated design guidelines document to determine a location for a test project.
6. The Town should examine the parking requirements for the Town including Downtown, and commercial areas considering opportunities for shared parking and shared entrances, possibilities for reducing parking requirements, establishing centralized, shared use lots.
7. A public art plan should be created by Ashland Main Street.
8. The Town and College should work together to become more incorporated and build a stronger relationship, especially regarding the positive impact the college can have on the character of Downtown and the adjoining neighborhoods. Also work with College to accomplish the Master Plan goals.
9. Develop a Route 1 Design Overlay District.
10. Encourage reinvestment in the visual appearance of all of the commercial and retail roadways: England Street, Thompson Street, Railroad Avenue, Route 54 within the Interstate Service Area, as well as along Route 1.
11. Encourage new infill development closer to the street at the intersection of Route 54 and Route 1.
12. Train Town employees to perform proper tree maintenance as defined by a certified arborist.

3: community character & design

13. Maintain a tree inventory with list of appropriate street trees for the Town. Specifically note the various types of distinct tree-lined streets and public parks, note the differing needs for differing trees in each specific location. Create a map showing appropriate planting locations. Use this in conjunction with utility line information to update the design guidelines document and Landscape Plan within the Town Code.
14. Complete implementation of the Town Council approved wayfinding plan.
15. Development of attractive entrances and gateways into Ashland should be continued and maintained including landscaping and lighting with appropriate signage that is part of an overall uniform theme for the Town.
16. The Town should continue to work with Hanover County to ensure the delineation of the border between the Town and County. The Town should participate with Hanover County to jointly develop a Small Area Plan for the Suburban Service Area immediately surrounding the Town.
17. Investigate the methods other jurisdictions use to achieve desired development outcomes regarding stormwater management.
18. Create a plan to identify priority locations and implementation schedule for improvements of public landscapes, while factoring in cost of on-going maintenance.