



Winchester Downtown Master Plan

Winchester, Tennessee

Adopted September 19, 2011

Acknowledgments

Client

Winchester Downtown Program

- Sean Crabtree
- Glen Grant
- Sonja Wenger
- Josh Tenpenny
- Ron Bailey
- Janet Torstenson
- Brooks Lynch
- Beth Rhoton
- Danny Kilpatrick Jr.
- Parker & Susan Sherrill
- Joe Ford
- Brian Smith
- Kath Spencer
- Glen A. Isbell
- David Cowan
- Margaret Lynch
- Randall Crownover
- Jimmy Goins
- Eddie Wenger
- Hammer Family
- Blake Burleyson
- Zachary Rowe
- Joe Herd
- Judge Thomas Faris
- John Burleyson
- Sue Watson
- Ann Sisk

Planning Consultant

Looney Ricks Kiss Architects
 Frank Ricks, AIA
 Chuck Downham
 Steve Auterman
 Greg Tidwell
 Saumil Mevada

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the summer of 2008, Looney Ricks Kiss Architects (LRK) of Memphis, TN was commissioned by the Winchester Downtown Program, Winchester, TN to study the potential revitalization of the downtown.

In August 2008, LRK met with stakeholders and the public in Winchester for a three-day work session to brainstorm ideas for the improvement of the area. Following a review of the site analysis and a slide show of the elements of a great downtown, a preliminary master plan along with a list of initiatives for public and private improvements were identified that could become short-term goals. These initiatives, along with the master plan showing potential infill and streetscape improvements, were shared with the public during a community presentation. The improvements at the Courthouse Square, opportunities for infill development, streetscape improvements and the suggestion for a new greenway linking downtown with the Tims Ford Lake were met with the greatest enthusiasm.

Following the design workshop, the LRK design team refined the Master Plan based on input given by the community and worked to define the major initiatives in greater detail while in discussion with the client group regarding the timing and steps required to kick off the major initiatives.

Downtown Winchester has a tremendous collection of traditional buildings, an attractive Courthouse and Square, and has the potential to become even more special through the efforts of the community. This Book documents the outcome of the design workshop and Master Plan, and recommends action items that can be undertaken to make the initiatives a reality.

By using this Master Plan as the road map for the first steps along the way, we are confident that Winchester will become a city that is unique, attractive, safe, vibrant and a desirable place to live, work and play. It is our sincere hope that the enthusiasm coming out of this Master Planning process be converted into momentum going into the next phases of development.

RESOLUTION OF THE WINCHESTER, TENNESSEE MUNICIPAL-REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

WHEREAS, the City of Winchester was chosen for the Courthouse Square Revitalization Pilot Project Act and subsequently selected the Winchester Downtown Program Corporation to administer revitalization efforts in the downtown area; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Program endeavored to study and gather public input in order to create a Downtown Master Plan to guide its efforts; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Program requested that the Winchester Municipal-Regional Planning Commission consider the Downtown Master Plan for adoption; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission conditionally adopted the Winchester Downtown Master Plan subject to revisions at its meeting held April 18, 2011; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that it is in the best interest of Winchester to adopt the vision expressed by the revised Downtown Master Plan.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Winchester Municipal-Regional Planning Commission that the Winchester Downtown Master Plan is hereby adopted in its revised form on this the 19th day of September, 2011.

Adopted this 19th day of September, 2011

Lee Brannon

Lee Brannon, Chairman

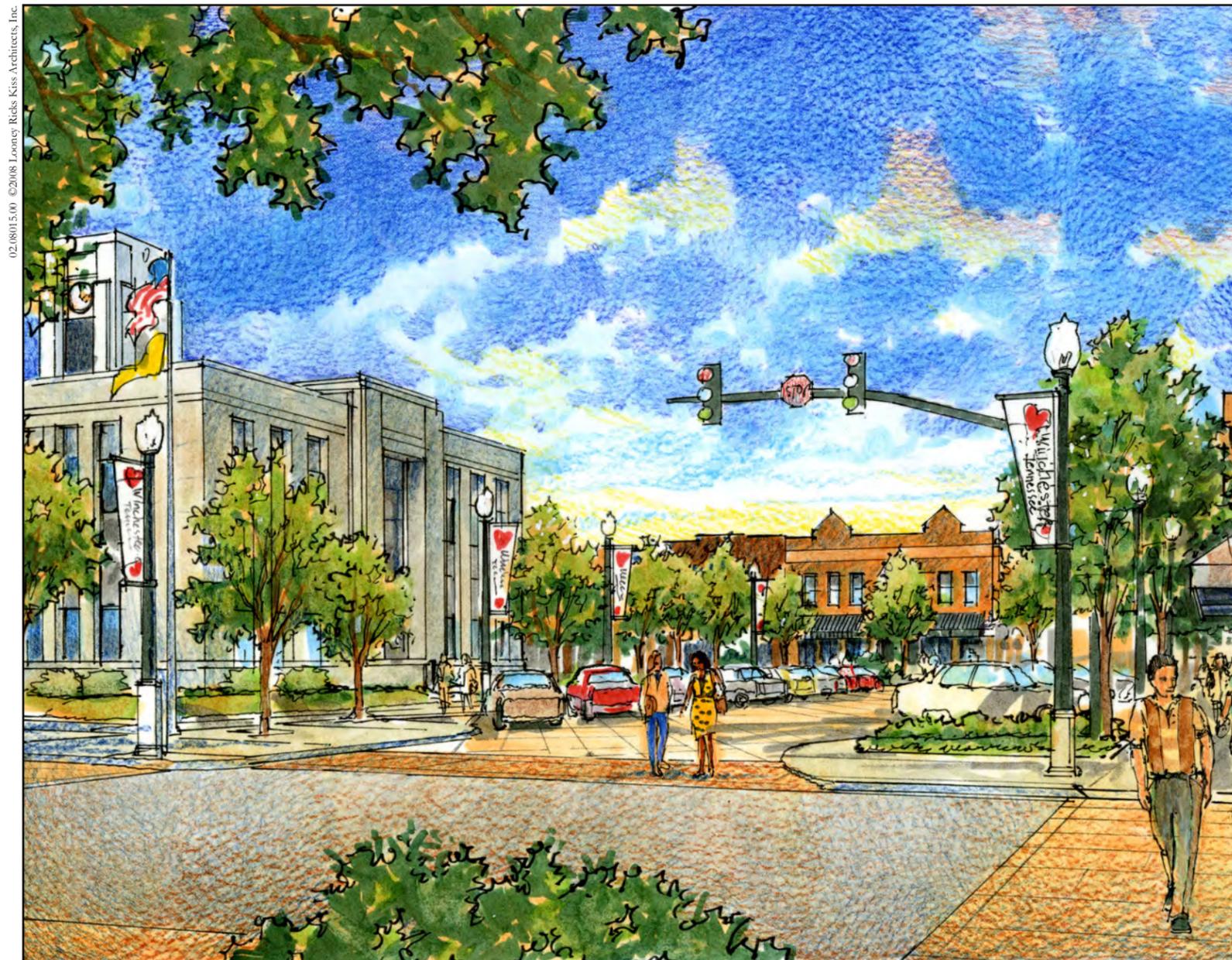
Warren Christiansen

Warren Christiansen, Secretary



175 Toyota Plaza, Suite 600
 Memphis, Tennessee 38103
 Telephone 901 521 1440
 Fax 901 525 2760
 Internet: www.lrk.com
Memphis Nashville Princeton Dallas
Celebration Rosemary Beach Jacksonville
 Architecture Planning Interiors Research

© 2008 Looney Ricks Kiss Architects, Inc. All rights reserved.



02.0801.5.00 ©2008 Looney Ricks Kiss Architects, Inc

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: The Master Planning Process & What Makes a Great Downtown 5
CHAPTER 2: Site Analysis 13
CHAPTER 3: Master Plan Initiatives & Development Opportunities 27
CHAPTER 4: Action Items. 43
CHAPTER 5: APPENDIX 49

**The Master Planning Process &
What Makes a Great Downtown**



INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2008, Winchester Downtown Program in Winchester, TN engaged the firm of Looney Ricks Kiss Architects (LRK) to conduct a Master Planning process for the improvement of Downtown Winchester through the grant awarded from the Courthouse Revitalization Pilot Project Act. The Master Planning process was designed to help clarify the goals of the group, and to identify critical projects that would have an immediate impact on the quality of the core of the city.

GENERAL HISTORY

Winchester is located in Middle Tennessee, about 90 miles south of Nashville and 70 miles west of Chattanooga, TN and 45 miles northeast of Huntsville, Alabama with a population of 8,530 (2010 Census). Winchester was established as the county seat of Franklin County in 1809. The city was named in honor of General James Winchester, a soldier in the American Revolution, first Speaker of Tennessee Legislature, and a Brigadier General in the War of 1812.

Winchester, which became known as the “only town of any importance” along the stagecoach road extending from Nashville to settlements in East Tennessee, was incorporated as a town on August 20, 1822. Through this act of incorporation, the municipal council was given the power to enact those ordinances necessary to govern the town. In 1835, the General Assembly authorized the mayor and alderman “to lay out the town into four wards and to provide for the election of a constable and two aldermen in each ward”.

By 1833, the town of Winchester had grown to a population of seven hundred people and offered a diversity of opportunity for its citizens. As early as 1830, there were known to be three hotels, as well as a diverse business, professional, and religious base in the town of Winchester. An early study of the period revealed seven lawyers, four doctors, one Methodist church,

one Baptist church, one Presbyterian church, one academy for boys, and one for girls. There were eleven stores, four taverns, six carpenters, four cabinetmakers, four bricklayers, two hatters, twelve tailors, four shoemakers, fourteen blacksmiths, one silversmith, three carriage and wagon makers’ shops, one coppersmith, two painters, two tanning yards, two saddlers’ shops, and three groceries.

COMMERCE

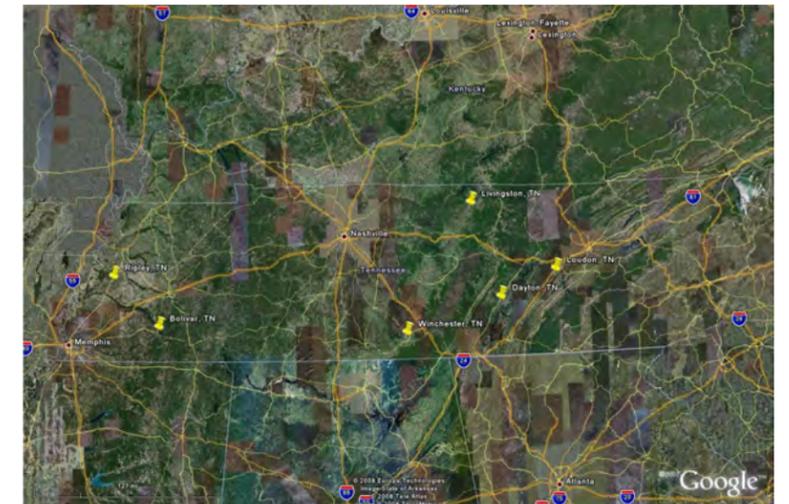
Since it was first settled, Winchester has had a business and professional community that is highly diversified. The first merchant was Thomas Wiggins, who sold a variety of goods out of a log cabin. Daniel Eanes and his son opened the first saloon in 1810 and by 1820, Winchester had three doctors. Winchester’s first buildings were located on the bluff overlooking Boiling Fork Creek. In 1811, there were several buildings constructed on the south side of the present square, and by 1830, the Ballard House opened its doors as a hotel. Between 1810 and 1840, commerce and the mercantile community grew steadily; however, it was the 1850’s that proved to be a time of prosperity in Winchester. In part, the prosperity that Winchester enjoyed was due to the area’s status as a leading cotton producer, the presence of Carrick Academy, Mary Sharp College, and the Winchester and Alabama Railroad, which ran through Winchester.

The Civil War halted the commercial growth of Winchester until the early 1890’s, at which time the town began to regain its commercial strength. It was during this period that Winchester began to flourish again, largely due to the introduction of the nursery industry. One early newspaper account written as early as 1925 observes that more trees, shrubs, and roses have gone out of Winchester to make the South more beautiful than any other town below the Ohio River. By 1890, Winchester had a population of twenty-five hundred, two banks, two factories, two sawmills, one large commercial flouring mill, marble works, and “many industrial establishments of lessor note.” It should be noted that during this period Franklin County had the oldest

commercial club in Middle Tennessee, outside of Nashville. Similar to today’s Chamber of Commerce, the commercial club’s purpose was to induce businesses and people to settle in the community.

Winchester’s commercial pinnacle was reached in the years between 1890 and 1930. This era revealed the opening, closing, and re-opening of many businesses on the square, and the construction of new commercial buildings, causing the eventual saturation of the local market. It was during this period that the merchants began to use the local newspaper, The Franklin Truth, to advertise their goods. Winchester, like many other American cities, has had its periods of prosperity and recession. Winchester was able to rebound from periods of recession, in large part, due to the town’s active and imaginative citizens who had a vision and were willing to take necessary risks to see their town prosper once again. It was around the turn of the century when Winchester was introduced to the Tourism Industry. It was then that Winchester promoted the healing powers of the “cure all” mineral water springs that were abundant in the area. Visitors from throughout the world vacationed at these well-publicized healing mineral springs. Today, Winchester’s citizens still realize the potential benefit from tourism, as they host many special events throughout each year and readily welcome all to their little town to “Discover More By The Lakeshore!”

Winchester idealizes the Old South with its beauty and southern hospitality. It also embraces today’s south that emphasizes leadership with a vision for the future. If it had not been for the vision of its citizens, the “Town of Winchester” would not have achieved such significance as the site of an early co-educational school and as the site of the first female college in the nation to require Latin and Greek for its graduates. Winchester further became known as a center of the southern nursery industry, as well as, having four of its citizens elected as governors of the State of Tennessee. Winchester can again have a flourishing business and economic community, if its citizens are willing to recapture the vision of those early settlers and entrepreneurs in the late 19th century.



Map showing location of the six cities that received the Grant.



Hundred Oaks Castle

Excerpts from: “Winchester at a Glance”

Credits:
 Middle Tennessee State University: May 1981 Historic Preservation, Historic Zoning Report
 Here and Growing: A Collection of Deberl’s past.
 Historic Winchester Walking Tour: Middle Tennessee State University



First County Courthouse



Public Presentations

CHANGE IS COMING

The future of Franklin County is bright and set to change in the coming years as a result of several factors. The community of existing historic buildings and small businesses in the downtown area provides a strong foundation for renovations and recruitment. The current TDOT Courthouse Square infrastructure improvement project is revitalizing the appearance of streetscapes in the most critical downtown area. These road and streetscape improvements along with the ongoing recreation development potential of Tims Ford Lake promise great commercial- and tourism-oriented development opportunities for the entire region, and Winchester is poised to take advantage of them because of its location.

Despite all the potential, there is also the danger of automobile oriented development along highly congested roads. Growing evidence between Winchester and Decherd is indicating that a such pattern is unsustainable over the long term and results in lower quality of life and decreased economic competitiveness for the community. With thoughtful planning and firm commitments from civic and business leaders, the mistakes of the past can be avoided.

COMPETITIVENESS

The challenges the design team heard from the business leaders and Steering Committee included the need to attract new businesses to bolster the destination appeal of downtown. Downtown merchants expressed a desire to grow and thrive by leveraging their unique location to create an experience different than the commercial corridor between Winchester and Decherd on US Hwy 41. Issues such as wayfinding, parking, traffic, vacant storefronts, and safety were all expressed in meetings with stakeholder groups. Implementation costs were raised as a concern among stakeholders. Small business owners expressed the need to keep private costs and interruptions to daily business at a minimum.

THE MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

The process the design team embarked upon with the participation and support of the community leaders was to review the existing conditions

of the study area, analyze the patterns of land use, study the history of the town and come to understand the underlying reasons why Winchester is what it is today.

The team then came to Winchester to conduct a public design workshop, sometimes called a ‘charrette,’ to imagine the possibilities for revitalization of the study area. A presentation was made to key community leaders about the essential qualities which make a great downtown, as an introduction to the workshop topics to be examined.

A series of meetings were conducted with key stakeholders to solicit input for the designs. At the conclusion of the two-day workshop, the team presented its recommendations at a public meeting attended by community leaders, elected officials and members of the public.

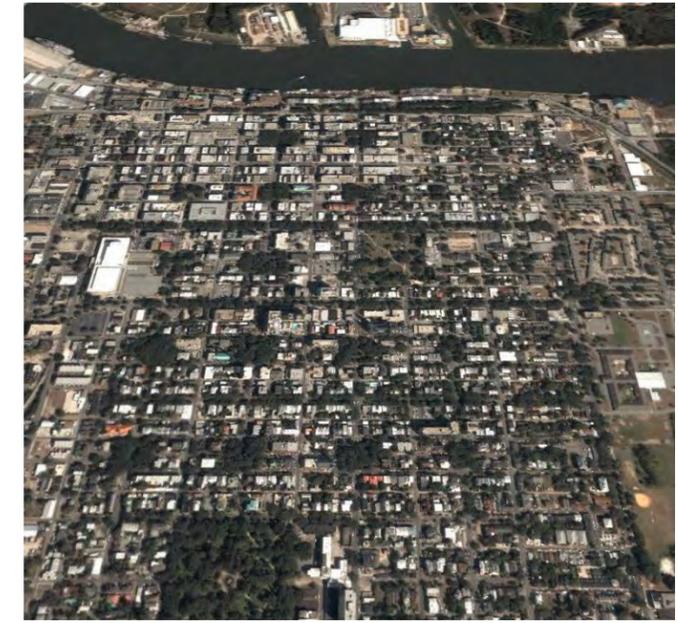
Following the workshop, the team prepared this Master Plan documenting the workshop and worked with the group to draft the beginnings of an implementation plan which would act upon the recommendations that were made. A final presentation of the master planning process will be made shortly, and this document will be presented.

NEXT STEPS

The next steps that need to be taken by the group is to identify and embark on individual action items that came out of the master planning process. It is at this time that the first steps are being taken to identify the scope of the items, the timing and resources required, and to assemble the teams that will enable the projects to move forward. First, however, it pays to understand the essential characteristics of great downtowns, so as to understand the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT DOWNTOWN

It has been our experience that nearly every successful community that was settled prior to World War II included a downtown area that, if it hasn't been damaged, shares the same essential qualities. Across the country, the most vibrant and sustaining communities have a center that exhibit the elements described in more detail on the following pages.



CONCENTRATED VARIETY OF USES

The essence of a downtown or neighborhood center is that within a short distance, a wide variety of uses and activities predominate. The proximity of offices, retail shops, services, government, entertainment, dining and living is what makes a business district valuable and desirable. The concentration of different activities, all within walking distance, is essential to any downtown area and is opposite to single-use office parks that are typically suburban in location.

DENSITY - MIXED USE BUILDINGS

In parallel to concentrating varied uses into a single area is that in downtowns most buildings have a variety of uses within the one structure. A building that is primarily offices will have a restaurant on the ground floor. A set of retail shops will have residences above. In major developments retail, residential, office and parking may all be found in one structure. The land in downtown is too valuable to devote to single uses.

CLEAR ORGANIZATION OF STREETS

The settlers who laid the original plans for new American towns often did so by laying out a sensible and clear pattern of streets. Savannah, GA and countless other communities were planned around a simple grid of blocks, with streets that often lead directly to the waterway or railroad lines where commerce was centered. A well organized pattern of streets and blocks permit flexible development and activities to occur.



0248015.00 ©2008 Looney Ricks Kiss Architects, Inc.



WELL PLACED PARKING

Parking is an essential element of every community that is required to bring people to an active place. The critical component, however, is the placement and arrangement of parking that will not detract from activity and the visual qualities of the place, because the objective is to design places which make people, not cars, the primary focus.

CIVIC OPEN SPACES

At the centers of communities are public spaces set aside for the common civic good. In earliest settlements, this was intended for common grazing lands, later taking the form of Courthouse Squares and common public parks. Charleston, S.C. is a prime example of a city designed with a set of public squares set aside for common use, within the grid of the city streets.

CONNECTIONS TO NATURAL PLACES

Nearly every city has been founded at a location that has some natural feature or significance, the banks of a river or lake, a safe port, a defensible bluff, crossing of two prominent paths, etc. The most dynamic cities have a direct and powerful relationship between the urban environment and the natural environment. Many successful cities are situated where one can be just minutes from one extreme to the other.



STREET LEVEL ACTIVITY

Downtowns experience activity on an everyday basis, and although much takes place within the private confines of the office, cities are most vibrant at the street level. It is here that people meet, shop, dine, enter and leave. The safest and most sustainable downtown areas have significant amounts of activity on the ground floor of buildings, facing streets that are filled with people at all times throughout the day.

DOWNTOWN LIVING

The aspect that many people find surprising about downtown areas is that they can be very attractive places to live. Proximity to work, cultural activities, transportation and nightlife make them desirable to young singles and couples, empty nester couples and others. Many cities are finding that having a large residential population downtown provides a built-in level of activity, safety and security that single-use office or retail areas simply cannot provide.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Among the varied activities included downtown are recreation and entertainment. Particularly when coupled with civic or natural open spaces, recreation can become an important factor in making downtowns livable for both workers and residents.



RECOGNITION OF HISTORY

At the center of our communities lie a constant reminder of the people who came before and the places and historic structures they left behind. The thoughtful preservation and celebration of our history is appropriate through historic sites, museums, festivals, and the continued use of historic structures.

PEDESTRIAN ORIENTED

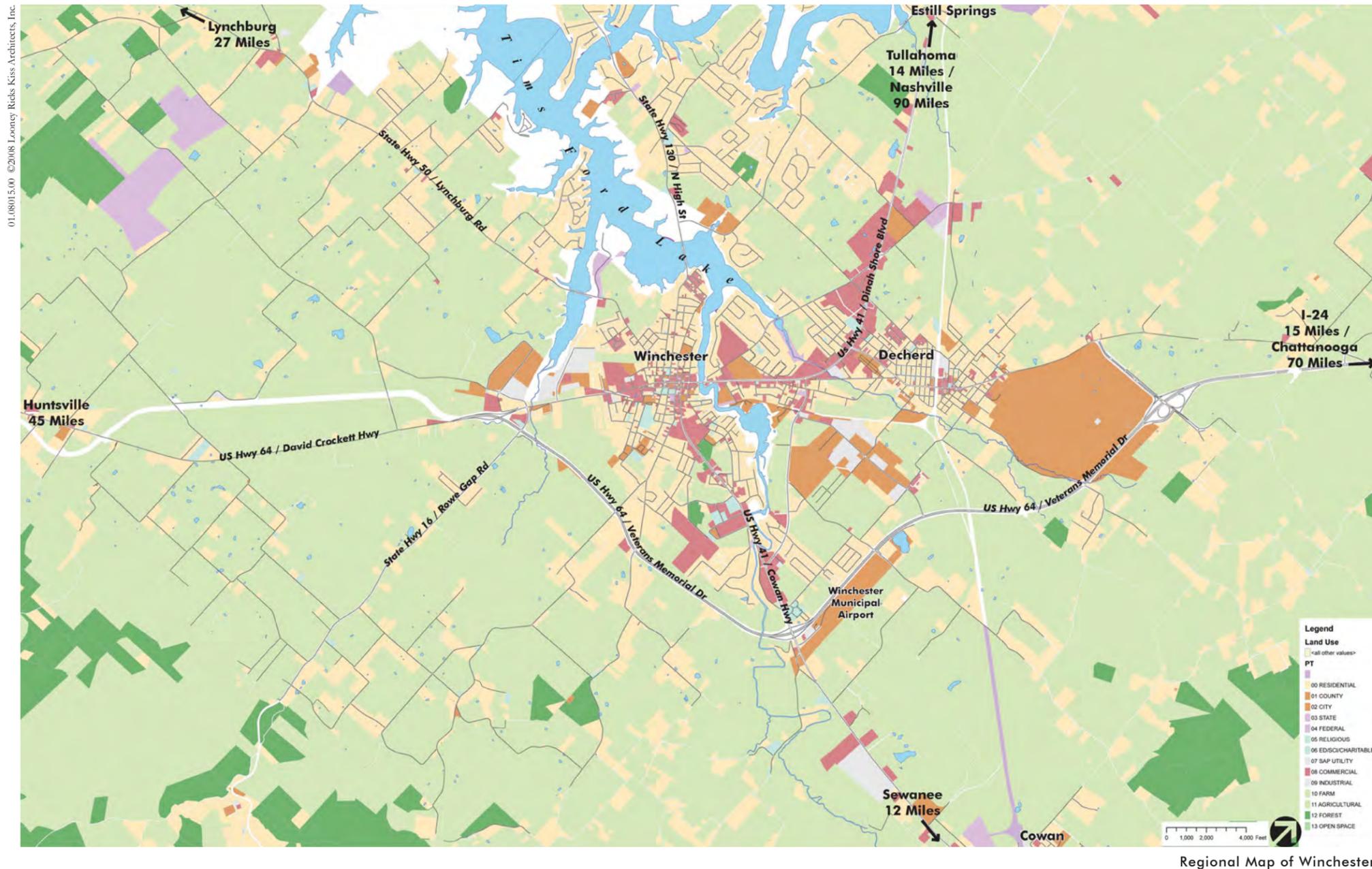
It is important that the design of downtown areas be oriented primarily to the pedestrian, while accommodating the car with the proper placement of parking. It is people, not automobiles, who have feelings and choose where to go, shop, dine or walk and consequently the qualities of materials, details, the streetscape and other elements should be designed for the comfort and delight of people.

SENSE OF ARRIVAL

The first impressions of visitors upon reaching a town are often the most lasting. It is imperative that the environment at the points of entry be of the highest quality. Sign boards, public art, streetscape elements and buildings should be carefully designed to create a grand sense of arrival.

Site Analysis





Regional Map of Winchester

THE DISCOVERY PROCESS

The first step towards developing a Master Plan for any community is to try to understand the place and the people who have lived there all their lives. By uncovering the underlying physical patterns that have developed over history, we can hopefully create informed plans for the future.

The site analysis portion began with the assembly of base maps, photographs, and other information to document the conditions and uses of land and buildings. From these maps it was possible to begin analyzing the street and block patterns, seeing where they led, and uncovering the history or reasons why they are where they exist today.

SITE ANALYSIS

The design team started the process of site analysis by traveling to Winchester and documenting the use of the buildings and lands, and compiling them into a color coded base map. A large set of photographs was taken to document the setting for further study.

From these base maps, the design team discovered evidence of the town's beginning, not the least of which is that the city was originally settled on the bluff overlooking the Boiling Fork Creek. The team also realized an understanding of Winchester's original city block pattern. Much like the cross-sectional growth rings on a tree's trunk, the growth of downtown can be measured by changing grid pattern rings around the Courthouse Square.

The Franklin County Courthouse is located in the middle of Courthouse Square at the southern corner of 1st Ave NE and South College Streets. A significant civic structure, the Courthouse is still used today for County functions. Much of the daily activity in downtown is related to what is happening at the Courthouse on that day. Some of the other government related buildings (like Post Office and City Hall) are also located nearby.

On all four sides of the Courthouse Square is an almost completely intact collection of late 19th century and early 20th century buildings. Although modified from their original form with replacement storefronts and

several boarded-up windows on upper levels, the grouping around the Courthouse Square clearly evokes the feeling that Winchester has always focused around the Courthouse. These buildings also continue along 1st Avenue NE and other streets for one or two blocks beyond the Square.

The Oldham Theater is a notable example of the Art Deco style and continues to be used as a movie theater. This theater supports the style of the Franklin County Courthouse, the most notable example of Art Deco architecture in Winchester. A collection like this is an asset that many communities are trying to replicate but never will be able to; Winchester is fortunate to have this collection.

The size and arrangement of the streets and blocks are very regular in the core of the downtown area, from 3rd Ave NE to 3rd Ave SW, between North Porter Street and South High Street. In this area, each block is of the same size, except the Courthouse Square and the blocks parallel to it. Courthouse Square is smaller and centrally located, while the blocks parallel to it are narrower in one side. This core consisting of 15 blocks also represents the most historic part of the town. As Winchester grew, the street network was extended, with the block sizes varying slightly, north of 3rd Avenue NE than the historic core. More recent developments “required” large block sizes and as a result the street network and block sizes became more discontinuous and irregular especially at schools and residential areas.

The small block size in the downtown makes the area walkable. Most of the downtown fits within a 1/4 mile radius around the Courthouse Square. In five minutes, a pedestrian can walk across the entire nine block study area. In ten minutes, a pedestrian can walk from N Cedar Street to the bank of Boiling Fork Creek and from 4th Avenue SW to 4th Ave NW. This walking radius covers most of the downtown commercial area around the square leading into the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Similarly, one can walk to several churches, the Public Library, the Federal



Aerial Map of Downtown Winchester



LEGEND

- █ Historic Grid
- █ First Expansion

As Winchester grew, the historic pattern of streets and blocks was expanded, thus major central streets are interconnected and connect to other places.

Building, the Board of Education and City Hall all within five minutes of the County Courthouse.

As we go further out, the patterns of streets and blocks become less regular but still are interconnected. It is not insignificant that many of the major streets of downtown continue beyond the core and connect various parts of the city to the center. This is a critical aspect of keeping a downtown center active.



Tims Ford Lake



Original buildings around the Square.

LAND USE PATTERNS

The next step in the site analysis process is to look at the patterns of land uses, in particular the residential neighborhoods, retail/commercial areas, parks and institutions, industry and natural areas.

RESIDENTIAL

Around the fringe of the downtown area, established neighborhoods are located in all directions of the core. These areas are often comprised of one- to two-story single family residences, and appear to be generally in good repair. Lawns are mowed, trees and flowers are planted, and the streets seem safe.

Interestingly, there exists little or no residential within the downtown commercial area. It has been our experience that one way of energizing a downtown area is by reintroducing residential into the core, in the form of townhouses, apartments above shops, or even loft-style dwellings in former warehouses. Accommodating a built-in population downtown helps keep the area active 7 days a week, not simply between 9 am and 5 PM.

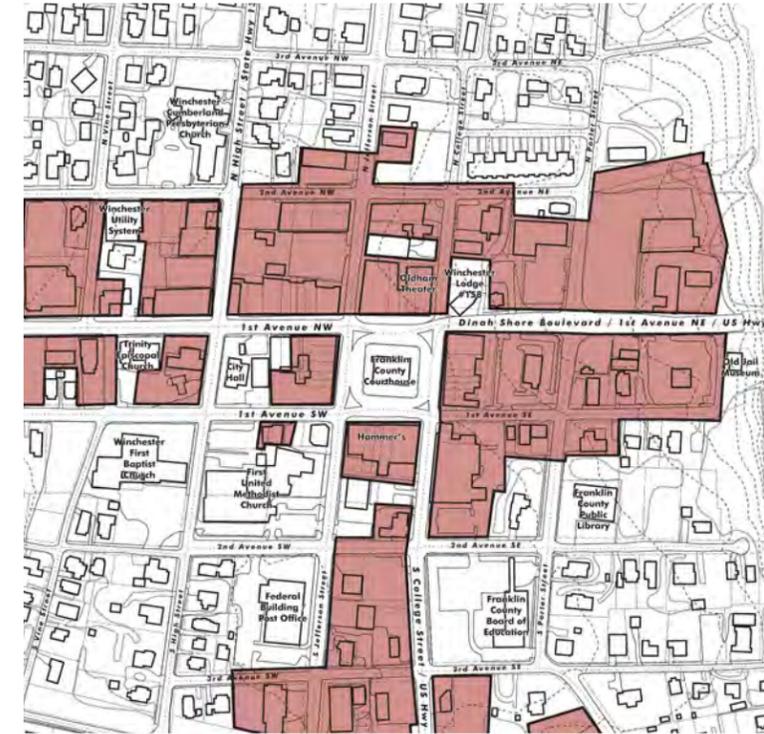
COMMERCIAL

Downtown Winchester is typical of other downtowns, it is where commercial and retail uses predominate, and that is evidenced by the Commercial land use map. Commercial uses surround the County Courthouse, and extend east-west along 1st Avenue NW.

Winchester had a thriving downtown commercial center throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These buildings were typically two-part commercial structures with large storefronts of plate glass and details such as brick piers or cast iron pilasters. Masonry upper facades were often embellished with brick corbelling at the roof line and had arched or rectangular one-over-one sash windows. The majority of storefronts in the downtown area have been extensively remodeled and few buildings retain original elements.



Residential



Commercial



Craftsman Bungalows



Italianate Farmhouse



San Miguel Coffee Company



Oldham Theater



Parks and Institutions



Tree Cover

Buildings along 1st Ave NE east of downtown are typical strip development consisting mostly of chain restaurants, banks and gas stations, that are set back about 40-60 feet, with drive-thrus and parking lots. These buildings exhibit no relationship to the historic commercial buildings and surrounding context.

PARKS AND INSTITUTIONS

The downtown area is home to several institutional buildings. These include churches, civic, and government buildings such as the City Hall, Public Library and Old Jail Museum. The most dominant public building is the Franklin County Courthouse constructed in the 1930s in Art Deco style to replace an earlier courthouse that was demolished.

Downtown Winchester lacks much needed public parks and common open spaces for recreation and gatherings. Currently, the city closes selected streets to accommodate large events such as the Dogwood Festival. Opportunity for a city park exists along the undeveloped bank of Boiling Fork Creek.

TREE COVER

The viability and health of an active downtown is greatly influenced by the amount of landscaping and vegetative cover. Trees that provide shade from the hot summer sun promote pedestrian activity and window shopping. Aesthetically, trees in a downtown environment provide beauty and celebrate the changing seasons.

Over the history of expansion and growth, Downtown Winchester has unfortunately lost much of its' vegetative cover. Specifically, the commercial core within the nine block study area is devoid of any significant tree cover. Most significant trees in the downtown area remain in small clusters around church yards and institutional buildings at City Hall and the County Courthouse. Larger stands of tree cover encroach downtown from the surrounding residential neighborhoods and along the banks of Boiling Fork Creek.



Franklin County Courthouse built in the 1920s



City Hall



First United Methodist Church



Public Library

FIGURE/GROUND

A Figure/Ground study is a graphic tool used by planners to very quickly understand the relationship of buildings to open spaces. Buildings are shaded in black and surface parking areas are shaded in gray. The remaining white space, or ground, indicates areas devoid of built form such as public rights-of-way, streets, parks, private lawns, etc.

The Figure/Ground study of Downtown Winchester illustrates a well defined center with intact building mass around all four sides of the Courthouse Square. This study also illustrates how building density is gravitated toward the commercial center and gradually fragments to a less dense pattern at the residential neighborhood edges. This pattern is typical of small towns across America.

Contrary to the common opinion of a lack of available parking, the Figure/Ground study illustrates the vast, yet fragmented amount of land utilized for parking lots in the downtown area. An opportunity exists to provide better signage and definition of public parking areas.

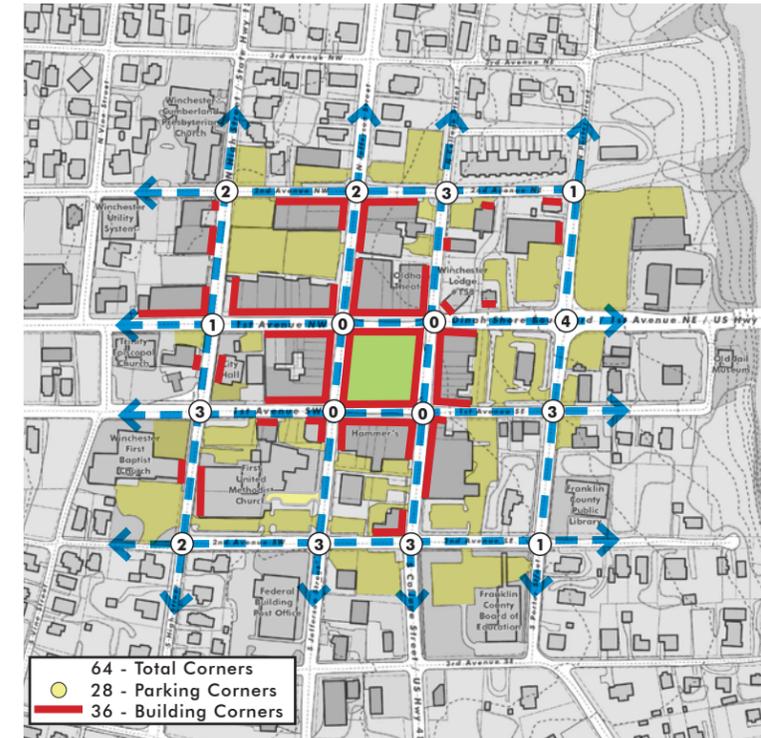
PARKING

With the exception of the Courthouse Square, all intersecting streets in the study area have corner lots currently used to park automobiles. These corner lots are the most valuable real estate assets for commercial store frontage in the downtown area and therefore should be redeveloped for commercial or mixed-use buildings. Commercial activity will flourish at these highly visible street corners. Parking lots should be placed to the rear of buildings facing primary public streets, (east-west streets) in Downtown Winchester.

On-street parking is available on many of the streets in the study area. Convenient on-street parking, either angled or parallel, is crucial to the viability of commercial activity and success in a downtown area. On-street parking also provides a safety buffer between moving traffic on the street and pedestrians on the sidewalk.



Figure/Ground Study



Street Corner Parking Lot Analysis



There is no distinction between the street and parking lot



Corners are for shops, not for parking



Parking lots need to be screened from street views



Vacant corners provide opportunity for commercial infill

01.0801.5.00 ©2008 Looney Ricks Kiss Architects, Inc



Land Use Map

LAND USE PLAN

As a result of the process to discover the underlying patterns of development that have led to Winchester's being what it is today, the team prepared a Land Use map which codes the various land uses with different colors. This map enables the team to prepare designs based upon the strengths and weaknesses of the area.



Aerial photo of Courthouse Square

SITE ANALYSIS - COURTHOUSE SQUARE

The four sides of the Courthouse Square form what one could call the four walls of the Winchester living room. Within this space is the heart and soul of the community, the Franklin County Courthouse, surrounded on four sides by the walls of the room formed by the facades of the historic brick buildings on 1st Ave NE, South College St., 1st Ave SE, and South Jefferson St.

The design team toured the area as critical observers, noting where the environment was healthy, and where there was a need for improvement. The following pages depict the existing conditions that we found. In all, what we found was exquisite historical architecture that is very valuable and difficult to replicate.

The northwest side of the Square, along 1st Avenue NE, is lined by a continuous row of brick buildings facing the street. All buildings are two-story in height, although many upper stories are unused or boarded-up. The restored Oldham Theater at the corner of 1st Avenue NE and N College Street serves as a welcoming gateway building to the Courthouse Square. A large, three bay building at the corner of 1st Avenue NE and N Jefferson Street is currently vacant with murals painted on the storefront windows and boarded-up second story windows. A few storefronts along this facade have been replaced with punched window openings and residential entrances uncharacteristic of a vibrant commercial downtown.

The northeast side of the Square, along South College Street is lined by a continuous row of brick buildings facing the street. These buildings are a mix of one and two story in height. Some storefronts and signage/transom window areas have been changed from the original design. Some upper story window patterns have been changed to be uncharacteristic of the historic facade.

The Southeast side of the square, along 1st Avenue SE is occupied by Hammer's. Although the business attracts many visitors and creates much needed commercial activity, the building is not in keeping with the character of the Square. A challenge presents itself for this facade to support the vision of the Courthouse Square while maintaining a unique identity as an established regional icon.



Facade Condition - North of 1st Avenue NE at Courthouse Square.



Facade Condition - East of South College Street/US Hwy 41 at Courthouse Square.



Facade Condition - South of 1st Avenue SE at Courthouse Square.

01.0801.5.00 ©2008 Looney Ricks Kiss Architects, Inc.



Facade Condition - West of South Jefferson Street at Courthouse Square.

The southwest side of the Square, along South Jefferson Street, is lined by a continuous row of brick buildings. All buildings are two-story in height, except for Sam Miguel Coffee Company which is three-story in height. Most of the buildings have an active storefront with offices above, while others have boarded-up windows and unused upper floors. A few storefronts along this facade have been replaced with punched window openings and residential entrances uncharacteristic of a vibrant commercial downtown. The building next to Sam Miguel's is a modern replacement to the original building/facade destroyed in a fire and is not in keeping with the character of the other buildings. One of the buildings has added a red metal roof that is historically inappropriate. Due to the lack of a rear service alley in this block, several utility meters are located on the front facade.

SITE ANALYSIS - 1ST AVE NW

Both sides of 1st Avenue NW between N High Street and N Jefferson Street have similar elements as those surrounding the Square.

The south side of 1st Avenue NW is lined by a continuous row of brick buildings facing the street. All buildings are two-story in height with the exception of a narrow one-story, alley infill building currently occupied by an art gallery.

The side-wall of the building at the corner of N Jefferson Street and 1st Avenue NW lacks street level windows and presents an uncomfortable blank wall along the streetscape that separates the west end of this block from the Courthouse Square. A large portion of this street wall lacks appropriately scaled windows and entries along the street level.

The north side of 1st Avenue NW is lined by a continuous row of brick buildings facing the street with a prominent stone building, once occupied by a bank, located at the east corner. Most buildings are two-story in height with the exception of two, one-story buildings at the center of the block.

Most of these buildings retain some elements of their original facade detailing. Some of the upper floor windows have been boarded-up and don't appear to be occupied. Metal canopies have been added that are uncharacteristic to the historical character of the buildings.



Facade Condition - South of 1st Avenue NW between S Jefferson St and S High St.



Facade Condition - North of 1st Avenue NW between N Jefferson St and N High St/State Hwy 130.

SITE ANALYSIS - NORTH JEFFERSON ST

The west side of N Jefferson Street is anchored at the south end by a prominent, two-story stone building currently occupied by a restaurant and upper floor offices. The north end of this block is anchored by a one-story brick commercial building.

The middle portion of this block is open to a parking lot that serves this block and others in the downtown area. A shallow infill building opportunity exists in this gap to screen the parking and service areas from street views and connect 2nd Ave NW to the Courthouse Square.

The east side of N Jefferson Street is dominated by the side facade of a building facing the Square which has unique windows along the side, but not at eye level and acts more as a blank facade. The rest of the buildings are one-story and many have metal canopies that are not in keeping with the rest of the area. This is a transition area between the strong two-story character of the Square and commercial uses on 2nd Avenue NW.



Facade Condition - West of North Jefferson Street between 1st Avenue NW and 2nd Avenue NW.

SITE ANALYSIS - 2ND AVE NE

The north side of 2nd Avenue NE is lined by a continuous one-story brick building facing the street that is currently occupied by a fitness gym/Karate studio. This building transitions in grade one full story with a basement level appearing at the east end of the block. A private outdoor plaza fronts the street corner at N College Street. This facade has an industrial character to it with boarded-up windows and a heavy basement wall along the streetscape.



Facade Condition - East of North Jefferson Street between 1st Avenue NW and 2nd Avenue NW.



Facade Condition - South of 2nd Avenue NE between N College St and N Jefferson St.

02/08/15/00 ©2008 Looney Ricks Kiss Architects, Inc.

01.0801.5.00 ©2018 Looney Ricks Kiss Architects, Inc.



Facade Condition - South of 2nd Avenue NW between N Jefferson St and N High St/State Hwy 130.

SITE ANALYSIS - 2ND AVE NW

The north side of 2nd Avenue NW is lined by a continuous one-story brick building facing the street. The facade of this building suggests a rhythm of separate buildings defined by different paint schemes and architectural elements. Most of these storefronts are appropriate for a retail street. A couple of the storefronts have inappropriate detailing, but might be improved without replacement.

The west end of this block is a surface parking lot that does little to define the street corner at N High Street. An opportunity exists for a much needed infill building at this corner.

SITE ANALYSIS - NORTH HIGH ST AND 1ST AVE NW

The west side of N High Street is anchored at the corner of 1st Avenue NW by a prominent two-story brick building. The brick detailing and storefront of this building is appropriate for a downtown commercial facade. The corner of 2nd Avenue NW is fronted by a one-story service station building with a canopy that is currently occupied by a home interiors store. This adaptive reuse works well for the downtown edge transition to surrounding residential neighborhoods. A one-story brick building in the block interior has maintained appropriate storefronts and is fully occupied.

A mid-block opening offers an opportunity for a shallow infill building or landscape treatment to visually screen the parking from street views.

The north side of 1st Avenue NW between N Vine Street and N High Street is anchored at the east corner by a prominent two-story brick building. The brick detailing and storefront of this building is appropriate for a downtown commercial facade. The roll-up garage doors and large industrial windows on this facade offer an opportunity to create a unique indoor/outdoor restaurant dining experience.

The remainder of this block to the west includes a one-story service station building currently used by the neighboring funeral home for a vehicle service facility and a one-story beauty shop.



Facade Condition - West of North High St/State Hwy 130 between 1st Avenue NW and 2nd Avenue NW.



Facade Condition - North of 1st Avenue NW between N High St/State Hwy 130 and N Vine St.

SITE ANALYSIS - GATEWAY ENTRY

The Winchester Downtown Master Plan carefully considers and responds to the context of the surrounding community outside of the official nine block study area. Major thoroughfares connecting the downtown to surrounding cities and neighborhoods are of paramount importance to creating a welcoming experience that encourages tourism and draws repeat visitors.

The existing US Hwy 41 approach to Downtown Winchester from Decherd does little to define a sense of arrival. Although the bridge crossing Boiling Fork Creek defines a physical threshold, the strip-commercial corridor development pattern continues along the highway across the bridge up to the rear of buildings facing the Courthouse Square. The rise in grade approaching the Courthouse Square also conceals building fronts that tell motorists they are approaching a densely populated area. First time visitors are unaware they are approaching a pedestrian friendly historic downtown core due to a lack of visual and tactile clues along the roadway.

Wide street sections along Hwy 41 from the bridge to N College Street do little to slow approaching traffic speeds. The lack of a traffic signal at N College allows incoming traffic to enter the Courthouse Square at highway speeds. A lack of on-street parking, well designed sidewalks, and a building wall close to the street promotes the suburban expectation that pedestrians will not be encountered along the street.

An opportunity presents itself to create a more welcoming gateway by leveraging the city's unique natural and built assets along US Hwy 41. These assets include the US 41 bridge, Boiling Fork Creek and waterfront, the Old Jail Museum, and several commercial/mixed-use infill opportunities fronting US Hwy 41 from the bridge to the Courthouse Square. These elements should be knit together in a walkable, urban fabric that expands the character of the Courthouse Square to the east bank of Boiling Fork Creek.



Existing gateway to Winchester from Decherd along US Hwy 41



Suburban commercial development pattern offers infill and redevelopment opportunities to create a welcoming "gateway" along US Hwy 41



Pedestrian Arrival from Decherd



US Highway 41 Bridge



Old Jail Museum built in 1897



Infill / redevelopment opportunities



Connection to the lake