The Urban Land Institute - Charlotte District Council

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL Report Downtown Waxhaw



Waxhaw, NC – October 2018



Serving Charlotte, Piedmont and Western North Carolina



1300 Baxter Street, Suite 360 Charlotte, NC 28204 704-940-7388 charlotte@uli.org http://charlotte.uli.org

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INTRODUCTION

ULI - THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE



The Urban Land Institute (ULI) was established in 1936 and has more than 42,000 members from more than 80 countries. ULI is one of America's most respected sources of information and knowledge on

urban planning, growth and development.

ULI is a nonprofit research and educational organization. Our mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. To encourage an open exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences, ULI membership crosses a variety of backgrounds and professions representing the entire spectrum of land use and development disciplines in private enterprise and public service. Among the members are developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, and students.

ULI CHARLOTTE



ULI Charlotte is a District Council of the Urban Land Urban Land Institute. The District Council offers ULI services and benefits at a regional level. The mission of ULI Charlotte is to complete the ULI experience at a local and regional level through education, research

and the exchange of ideas and experiences.

One of the services provided by ULI Charlotte is the Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program. TAP panelists are volunteer members who seek to further the objectives of ULI and make authoritative information available to those seeking knowledge regarding the long-term use of urban land.

CLIENT/SPONSOR



ULI Charlotte was engaged for this TAP program by / leadership from the Town of Waxhaw (the Town). The Town's governance structure is comprised of a Board of Commissioners, which includes a mayor, a mayor pro-tem and four commissioners. The

Town Board appoints the Town Manager, whose role includes implementing the Board's policies and managing day-to-day operations for the Town. The Town Board and Town Manager work collaboratively to seek new ways to stimulate economic growth in Waxhaw, while honoring the Town's history and enhancing quality of life for all of its residents and visitors.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL PROGRAM

TAP OBJECTIVE

The Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program is offered by ULI Charlotte to provide local municipalities and community-based nonprofits objective and responsible advice on land-use planning, development and redevelopment issues.

DESCRIPTION

The District Council TAP is a service offered as part of ULI's National Advisory Services program. Since 1947, the Advisory Services program has assisted communities by bringing together real estate, planning and development experts to provide unbiased, pragmatic advice for addressing complex landuse planning and development issues.

The ULI Charlotte TAP program provides similar services to local governments, private developers, community development corporations, and many other organizations. Once a project is designated for a TAP, ULI Charlotte's District Council assembles a panel of volunteers with expertise in areas that are necessary to focus on the sponsor's problem or issues.

Because of the District Council members' diverse expertise, a broad array of issues can be evaluated. Members' expertise is available on commercial retail, office, industrial, residential, and mixed land uses in a multiplicity of urban forms.

Under ideal circumstances, a TAP will focus on issues surrounding a particular site. The scope of the analysis is intended to benefit a specific site in a neighborhood or community. Analysis will typically be organized around defining site characteristics and limitations, identifying and assessing community and neighborhood goals, considering alternative land-use strategies in the context of preliminary feasibility analysis, and making recommendations for next steps.

The sponsoring organization is responsible for gathering the background information necessary to understand the project, and presenting it to the panel. TAP members typically spend a day and a half developing an understanding of the problem, coming up with recommendations, and presenting those findings and recommendations to the sponsoring organization.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

COMMITTEE CHAIR

ULI Charlotte's TAP Committee is chaired by Craig Lewis of Stantec. The committee is responsible for the marketing, review and implementation of the Technical Assistance Panels.

TAP PANELISTS

Members of ULI were selected to provide a wide variety of experiences. Panelists for the Downtown Waxhaw Study included:

PANEL CHAIR

David Malcolm, RLA Director, Planning + Design McAdams Co. Planner – Landscape Architect

PANELISTS

Nicole Frambach Land Acquisition Manager NVR, Inc. (Ryan Homes)

Zachary D. Gordon, AICP Planning Director City of Kannapolis

Dennis Richter President Richter Development / Solterra Partners

Jessica Rossi Planner Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.

Developer

Developer

Planner

Planner - Economist

Ashley Bonawitz (Asst. Panelist) Stantec

Urban Designer

Full biographical sketches are included in the Appendix to this report.

PROGRAM SUPPORT/MANAGEMENT

Theresa Salmen Executive Director ULI Charlotte Program Manager

Lisa Rubenson

Contract Writer

LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS

On October 1 and 2, 2018, the panel interviewed the sponsor and other stakeholders involved in the project. Invitations to stakeholders were extended and arranged through the sponsor. Interviewees included town officials, property owners, business owners, and community leaders. *NOTE: The Waxhaw mayor and Town Board of Commissioners were also given questionnaires to fill out ahead of the TAP sessions. Panelists were given copies of their responses, which were then taken into consideration as part of the stakeholder feedback.*

Sponsor Briefing

- Greg Ferguson (Town Manager, Town of Waxhaw)
- Matt Hubert (Town Engineer and Development Services Director, Town of Waxhaw)
- Curt White (Downtown Development Manager, Town of Waxhaw)

Additional Staff in Attendance

- Dena Sabinske (Parks and Rec Director, Town of Waxhaw)
- Lisa McCarter (Zoning Administrator, Town of Waxhaw)

List of Stakeholders Interviewed

- John Maida (Business Owner, Developer)
- Don Fisher (Former Main Street Chair)
- Johnny and Cathy Balatsias (Restaurant/Property Owners)
- Holly Stewart (Store/Property Owner)
- Brett Diller (Former Commissioner, Business Owner, Downtown Resident)
- Lee McShane (Restaurant Owner)
- Susan Davis (Main Street Chair)
- Karen Johnson (Waxhaw Business Incubator President)
- Tim Giovanniello (Property Manager, Land Owner, Committee Member)
- Roy Sansbury (Business Owner, Property Owner)
- Peter Fridrich (Downtown Resident)
- Bobby Haulk (Assistant Chief of Police)
- Terry Settle (Former Main Street Committee, Downtown Resident)

The sessions were held at the Niven-Price building at 216 W. N. Main Street.



KEY ISSUES FOR STAKEHOLDERS

Briefing materials, interviews with sponsors and stakeholders, and written comments from the Town Board, provided ULI panelists with valuable insights. A summary of unattributed comments from participants is presented below.

Type of Development Desired

- Need more retail, more restaurants, more reasons to come to this side of Main Street.
- There's good residential development on west side of downtown. New bridge crossing.
- We have enough residential, not enough revenue-producing product; residents don't feel compelled to come into town and stay.
- A boutique hotel could help make Waxhaw an appealing overnight destination.
- Sell off Niven-Price building, keep the parking lot but consider a serviceable, paved lot.
- Define the corner lot, put a brick wall, shrubbery around it, maybe a water feature?
- Must factor in that downtown development is constrained by noise ordinance.
- To help with visual interest, you could install a water feature or "something special" connecting McDonald house to Main Street.
- Ideas like Asheville's Arcade building would be interesting concept.
- Keeping Niven-Price building as a government entity would not help attract people to downtown or add to the vibrancy.
- Preserve intimate atmosphere for small businesses, dining, entertainment options.
- Model Waxhaw after Davidson, Hendersonville, Greenville, Brevard, Blowing Rock.
- Need DENSITY. Blur division between Old Waxhaw/New Waxhaw.
- Public/Private partnerships would be welcome.
- Market forces should drive development but within reason; should be limits.
- Should government own property? Many said no; prefer an oversight role vs. ownership.
- The corner lot is a key property, our visual identity; should establish as a gateway.
- The incubator is successful; we need a place to co-exist to work and network, etc.
- Town Hall should not be located on corner lot, too congested.
- We have a nice diversity of age; let's pause residential and professional office development.
- Let's start small, test drive some solutions, make adjustments as we see results.
- Would have to bury infrastructure if we undertake significant redevelopment; public/private partnerships could help offset costs.
- Need a more diverse tax base; need better mix of retail and office to drive tax revenues.

KEY ISSUES FOR STAKEHOLDERS

The Importance of Civic Space

- Define "Town." Staff and commissioners change; who will be the stewards of these ideas?
- Farmers market: we need a commercial kitchen, more permanent place for market.
- Good business brings business; need government oversight to attract best partners.
- Need more community space; residents don't know what's available or where to go.
- Need a "hang-out" area, flexible structure to enable concerts, fairs, general walkability.
- The train, skate park, farmer's market are assets we need to leverage them more.

Historic Preservation – Small Town, Main Street Feel

- Historic preservation is key, keep it charming, unique; restore Niven-Price façade.
- Honor Main Street Advisory initiatives; update Vision Plan
- If Niven-Price building is sold, work in covenants to ensure renovation integrity.
- Let's not increase density of residents in town; instead, improve quality of what we're offering downtown, preserve the small-town feel.
- Keep in mind that there are not too many towns where you can go and see open land; need something that can attract visitors year-round.
- Town should work with a developer who knows historic preservation.

Parking, Traffic, Pedestrians

- Need proper infrastructure that would lead to dynamic walkability.
- Parking is a big issue, especially with events; explore satellite options.
- Put railroad under Rt. 16? Need to get people to walk or park blocks away from businesses.
- Safety, traffic, maintenance are issues; limited resources, only 6 full-time officers.

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

SCOPE OF PROJECT

The Town of Waxhaw asked the ULI Charlotte District Council to conduct a TAP that would assist Town leadership in determining the highest and best use for several municipally-owned properties in the historic downtown district. Panelists were asked to study the potential land uses and economic viability of four "core" parcels, as well as five additional "peripheral" parcels that either serve a civic function for the Town or sit adjacent to other valuable parcels under consideration for redevelopment.

STUDY AREA

The core parcels that comprise the panel's "Study Area" (listed below) are situated in a U-shaped area of downtown, bordered by McDonald Street to the north, W. North Main Street to the south, Broome Street to the east and Hicks Street to the west.

4 Core Parcels

These parcels in the center of downtown Waxhaw are an integral part of the historic Main Street environment and hold the most potential for strategic redevelopment. They were the primary focus of the TAP recommendations:

- 216 W. North Main Street (Niven-Price Building): The 0.70-acre parcel has a 9500-sf +/- structure, was constructed in 1913, and is currently used by a business incubator and a hair salon. The site also has an anterior gravel parking lot for approximately 40 vehicles.
- 115 McDonald Street: The 0.15-acre parcel has a rehabilitated 1888 house, currently used by Waxhaw Parks and Recreation as a meeting space.
- ▶ Parcel 05113029A: This parcel is the site of the Waxhaw Water Tower.
- Parcel 05113032: This 0.45-acre parcel is currently a vacant corner lot, utilized throughout the year for town events.

5 Peripheral Parcels

These parcels, which sit vacant or are currently in use for civic purposes, are key pieces in what the Town calls the "chessboard" of contiguous or semicontiguous properties that are both important to the community and proximal to privately-held parcels that could be targeted for future redevelopment. They were the secondary focus of the TAP. While the panel did not outline specific recommendations for these parcels, it did consider each one's potential role in the phased implementation outlined for the Study Area. Once the Town determines a course of action for the core parcels, the panel recommends that the Town revisit development scenarios for these parcels as well. Parcel 05115026: This is a 9.9-acre vacant parcel originally slated for development as a downtown park.

- Parcel 05115021: This is a 0.65-acre parcel currently used by the Waxhaw Skate Park.
- > Parcel 05115023: David G. Barnes Children's Park
- 317 N. Broome Street: The 2000-sf building on 0.28 acres houses the Waxhaw Parks and Recreation Department.
- ➤ 316 N. Church Street: The 1600-sf building on 0.30 acres is a storage facility for the Town of Waxhaw.

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

QUESTIONS FOR THE PANEL

The ULI panel was asked to consider the following questions:

- How should the Town leverage the Niven-Price Building for downtown 1. economic development?
 - Should the Town keep the building and continue renting it a. out?
 - b. Should the Town divest itself of the building? If so, does the Town renovate first or require historically appropriate renovation as part of a developer agreement? C.
 - How does the parking lot come into play?
- How do we provide adequate civic space downtown? Specifically, we need to 2. continue to put on town events and we will also need a new town hall facility in the next few years.
- 3. What opportunities for public/private partnership might we consider, specifically as it relates to parking, building redevelopment, or development of civic spaces?



THE TAP PROCESS

SPONSOR PRESENTATION

On Monday, October 1, the ULI panelists assembled in the main hall of the historic Niven-Price building at 216 W. North Main Street for a presentation by the sponsor. Leading the session was Downtown Development Manager for the Town of Waxhaw, Curt White. Curt walked the panel through the relevant research contained in the advance briefing materials, bringing the panel up-to-date with any new information, reiterating the panel's scope of work, and fielding questions. Town Manager Greg Ferguson, as well as Development Services Director and long-time Town Engineer, Matt Hubert, were also there to provide insight to the current land-use opportunities in the study area.

TOUR OF STUDY AREA AND RELEVANT LOCATIONS

The sponsor and panelists then took a walking tour of the study area, heading out the front of the Niven-Price building, proceeding south across W. North Main Street toward David G. Barnes Children's Park. After walking through the playground and continuing south through the skate park, the group returned to S. Main Street to observe various downtown commercial properties. They then turned north and crossed over the wooden pedestrian bridge, before stopping at the end of N. Main to view the wayfinding signage and ask questions about the privately-owned parcel of land located to the east. The group then turned left to continue along N. Main, turned north on Broome Street, then left on McDonald Street to observe the Water Tower Lot, the Water Tower site, and to walk through the historic McDonald House. The tour ended with the group crossing N. Church Street, walking through the gravel parking lot behind the Niven-Price building, and returning to the main room of the building.



THE TAP PROCESS

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

On the morning of October 2, panelists again convened in the Niven-Price building and began meeting with stakeholders. The first session involved a private developer who had submitted a letter of intent to the Town about redevelopment concepts. The second and third sessions were comprised of Town staff and officials, business and residential property owners, developers and other area residents, all of whom had volunteered to provide feedback. A summary of their comments is included in this report.

PANEL DELIBERATIONS

Following the stakeholder sessions, the panel met briefly with the sponsor to address questions. They then held a panelist-only working lunch, during and after which they reviewed significant findings, addressed focus areas, identified opportunities and challenges, and developed recommendations for an initial presentation to the sponsor to take place that afternoon.

PRESENTATION

The panel presented an overview of its findings and recommendations at 5:15 pm on Tuesday, October 2nd , in an open session to the TAP sponsor and stakeholder held at the Waxhaw Police Department Community Room at 3620 Providence Road South. Panelists then took questions and comments.

REPORT PREPARTATION AND RELEASE

The TAP report was prepared under the leadership of ULI Charlotte and offers a summary of the activities during the program, key findings and panel recommendations.

STEADY GROWTH

Thanks to comprehensive briefing materials provided by the sponsor, the panel was able to learn about Waxhaw's history and its trajectory from a farming and mill town, to an antiques destination, to its current reputation as one of Union County's fastest growing, safest and most desirable communities. Not only is the Town experiencing exponential residential growth, its range of dining, entertainment and arts attractions and an eclectic mix of retail continue to draw visitors from the Carolinas and beyond.

Of particular interest to the panel was the fact that Waxhaw, first named as a Small Town Main Street Community in 2009, recently earned a spot in the nationallyacclaimed and accredited Main Street America[™] program. This designation put Waxhaw in the company of 1,200 +/- other small towns across the country that had met criteria for certain preservation-based revitalization efforts in their downtown neighborhoods. This status also connected the Town to additional resources, funds, and support at the national level, which allowed Town leadership to refocus its strategic planning on several fronts.

Waxhaw now has its own Main Street Advisory Board, with a mission to stimulate economic vitality in downtown, as well as to initiate and make recommendations on economic development policies and programs that affect the Town's core. As stated in the sponsor briefing materials, the Main Street Advisory Board is currently working on three focus areas that overlap and inform the ULI panel's goal for the TAP assignment:

- Improve downtown walkability to support foot traffic and business recruitment and retention.
- Preserve and enhance the historic character of downtown in support of cultural events and activities.
- Utilize Downtown Waxhaw as an economic and place-making engine.

The briefing materials also showed how the Town has built off of various impact studies and vision plans that had been approved over the past decade. The panel read background on the following, which it then factored into to its discussions regarding the current challenges at hand:

- 2010 Transportation Plan
- 2012 Pedestrian Plan
- 2012 Park and Recreation Master Plan
- 2012 Downtown Zoning Repair Report
- 2012 Lawrence Group's Downtown Waxhaw Vision Plan 2012.

This extremely comprehensive look at Waxhaw – its past, its conditions and aspirations in 2012, and its recommendations for the future – was particularly useful for the panel's current assignment. The report details development priorities and issues that are still shaping the Town's strategic conversations. The panel noted how many of the recommendations in the Vision Plan had been acted upon and how much progress had been made in the key subject areas. Issues that were important then are important now, and the panel agreed that the Town leadership should be commended for its implementation of recommendations regarding:

- Mobility
- Parking and Wayfinding
- Marketing and Strategic Positioning
- Civic Investments
- Infill and Redevelopment Strategies
- Regulating Plan and Coding Strategies



Other key facts from the briefing materials that the panel factored into its deliberations:

- The Town is roughly 65% of the way through the design phase of a TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) Grant.
- Waxhaw has 470 parking spaces, 350 of which are public.
- Two infill projects were completed in 2017, totaling almost 80,000 sf
- There is a new mixed-use development to the east of downtown, Mill on Main, which consists of 63 apartments, a restaurant, and offices.
- There is a new retail and office development to the east of downtown, Millview, which features 10 new small businesses.
- New apartments are under construction on N. Church Street and will add over 200 residential units to downtown.
- A \$1 million pedestrian and bicycle improvement project is underway downtown, with construction planned for 3rd quarter 2019.
- Tax Revenues are 93% derived from residential; 7% commercial/industrial.
- Average home prices are currently in the \$280,000 to \$320,000 range.

RETAIL CONDITIONS

The retail market in the Town of Waxhaw can be divided into two distinct nodes: retail in the north of downtown that caters to national retailers; and another node in the heart of Waxhaw's Main Street that caters to local retailers.



Node A: National Retailers

Characterized by high population numbers, large road corridors, expansive parking fields, other similar retail nearby, visible signage, updated utilities and infrastructure.

- Lowes, Walmart, Harris Teeter, other box stores, national franchises
- National concepts typically follow other national concepts.
- Larger projects demand higher rents to offset development costs and utility and road improvements.

These large projects are created for mass trip generation in the most convenient way possible.

Node B: Downtown Retailers

Characterized by lower rents that make space more accessible to emerging concepts; older buildings that allow a retailer to "make their mark" on the look and feel of the community; walkable foot traffic and word of mouth marketing due to signage constraints; smaller footprints for a more intimate shopping environment; large front windows to display product and encourage client engagement from the sidewalk.

- Brewery, local restaurants, provisions, bike shop, coffee shop, specialty goods
- Mix of local and regional operators
- Older buildings encourage tenants to undertake their own improvements while maintaining a low market rent.
- Local operators have a vested interest in the longevity and growth of the area as a whole.



	Waxhaw	Downtown	Downtown % of Total
Number of Retail	81	25	31%
Number of Office	75	46	61%
Number of Eating/ Drinking Establishments	40	18	45%

The panel supports the position of the sponsor and many stakeholders that downtown Waxhaw needs more retail. Some stakeholders expressed concern over the amount of service-based retail that could be placed on the ground floor – the thought being that this kind of product does not encourage foot traffic throughout the day.

When determining the appropriate retail mix for an area like downtown Waxhaw, it is important to note that stability comes with a daytime employment sector that can, in turn, provide a customer base for the surrounding restaurants and stores. Ideally, there would be an option to move some of these retail "office" spaces to a second story location.



Currently, however, there is minimal second floor space in the downtown corridor – let alone space that is available, accessible and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant.



Having a mix of product and service offering is important when taking into consideration the growing number of people moving into nearby infill residential projects. These individuals and families are moving to a more pedestrian-friendly location to have close proximity to the goods, services and entertainment that they desire or have experienced elsewhere.

IF YOU BUILD IT, WHO WILL COME?

While an influx of new restaurant and specialty shopping can and will attract weekend visitors and tourists, the Town should not underestimate how important it is to engage the local population. These neighbors – those new to the area and the ones that have been here for generations – need places to spend their disposable income, to fill prescriptions, to pick up groceries and pet food, and go-to options for medical services and other necessities.

In reviewing the retail mix, the Town should keep in mind the range of ages and life stages it will need to attract. The vibrant residential communities aren't attracting just one demographic class, but are bringing in millennials to retirees from near and far. Some of these new residents may have a longer commute to work, but others will be seeking work and business ventures within the same downtown corridor where they live and play. The challenge is determining where to put these additional services, new concepts, and restaurants when there is so little commercial vacancy and planned development currently in downtown Waxhaw.

Population	2010 Census	2017 Estimates	2022 Projections	Percent Change	
				2000-10	2017-22
Total Population	30,423	39,666	47,903	124.2%	20.8%
Median Household Income	\$72,848	\$79,958	\$93,862	31.0%	17.4%
Education					2
Bachelor's Degree	28.3%	30.6%	31.2%	218.3%	26.6%

Who is the future demographic, given these realities?

- Mix of young professionals, families and retirees are living in and visiting the area.
- Waxhaw currently has a small employment base with limited office space; that is changing.
- Locals and visitors are all currently driving, but increased infill growth will create a population that is walking.

Considerations for future growth:

- Concepts like the Coffee Roaster, Incubator Space (Waxhaw Entrepreneurs) and Kid Coders were successful; should consider these in future public/private partnership conversations.
- What is keeping people and spending in town?
- How do you increase your daytime and foot traffic population?
- Where does your future small shop retail go?
- The retail mix targets discretionary spending, but what about prescriptions, pet goods, medical facilities, and other necessities?
- Where are the people working that want the lifestyle with the close proximity to an urban center?

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

After an in-depth review of the sponsor briefing materials, stakeholder feedback, and its own observations regarding the Study Area and scope of work, the panel identified seven guiding principles. These principles provided a framework for the TAP recommendations and suggestions for phased implementation:

- 1. Enhance downtown as a destination for residents and visitors
- 2. Promote daytime activity
- 3. Preserve downtown's historic character
- 4. Return town-owned property to private use
- 5. Prioritize parking
- 6. Expand open space opportunities
- 7. Focus on priority phasing



1 - SHIFT OWNERSHIP AND MINDSET

... From Town-Owned to Privately-Owned

In reviewing the history of the 216 W. North Main building, the panel considered the fact that Waxhaw Entrepreneurs (also known as the Incubator) has been a stable tenant. The Incubator has provided a launching pad for innovative concepts, such as the local coffee roaster and Kid Coders. The Niven-Price building has also been a convenient, welcoming place for visitors, as well as community and special interest groups. Yet, with the increasing demand for retail space in the downtown corridor, it is the panel's consensus that the Incubator – a non profit organization– is not the highest and best use for this building. By **transitioning to private ownership**, the building could generate a market rent and allow for future investment in the downtown retail environment.



" Municipalities must first take inventory of their competitive advantages, sincerely want to transform, be willing to take on some risk, and use innovative public/private partnerships, said Thomas Murphy, ULI senior resident fellow and a former mayor of Pittsburgh.' There is always money somewhere; it's the vision of where you want to go that's important. ... The conversation must begin with the community making a choice of what it wants to be.'" - From an April 28, 2016 article, "How Three U.S. Cities Are Building on Public/Private Partnerships," by Mike Sheridan for Urban Land Magazine, wherein Sheridan summarizes a panel on public/private partnerships at ULI's Spring 2016 Meeting in Philadelphia. Of the three cities discussed, Greenville, South Carolina featured prominently as a good example of what can happen when local leadership leverages its city's/town's brand to attract private business interests.

2 - BEST FACE FORWARD

... Facade Improvement and a Public RFP for Niven-Price Building

Given that the Town has a strong sentiment toward the future look-and-feel of 216 W. North Main, the panel agrees that façade improvements should be made to the entire frontage of the Niven-Price building. The timing of these improvements is, of course, negotiable and depends on market conditions and the financial feasibility for the Town. The panelists propose the following chronology:

1. Town solicits precise cost estimates on a full façade renovation, one that properly meets the architectural requirements set forth in the zoning standards.

NOTE: The panel reviewed the construction quote provided by Lakeside Project Solutions and agrees the estimate is reasonable. However, it may be necessary to revisit the scope of work to ensure the entire frontage is included in any estimate. The Town should therefore consider competitively bidding these improvements.

- 2. Town asks the building appraiser to provide two assessments of the building: one with and one without the proposed façade improvements.
- 3. Town looks at both appraisal scenarios, compares competitive quotes for façade improvements and determines whether or not it is financially advantageous to the Town to proceed with the improvements before beginning the RFP process.



Note: Panelists suggest that these renovations and façade improvements be made ahead of the RFP process. This would allow the Town to oversee project costs and control the quality of the work. It would also send a strong message to potential developers that the site has been well-prepared for purchase and that the Town is involved and invested in the success of future projects.

4 Engaging in these improvements would, as industry research suggests, likely improve the marketability of the building ahead of the public RFP process. If the Town decides not to undertake these improvements ahead of the RFP, it should consider how to facilitate grant funding for a prospective buyer who would then do it.

The panel agrees with the majority of stakeholders that the Niven-Price building should remain a vital part of Waxhaw's historic downtown. Therefore, the Town should play an oversight role in its redevelopment efforts – not as owners of the building, but as stewards of the Town's history and economic interests.



Once this key piece of the metaphorical "chessboard" moves, other possibilities for downtown redevelopment can shift forward. An important caveat in the panel's recommendation to sell the Niven-Price building to a private owner is to **keep the surface parking lot in back**. This is the first of many ways the Town can invite strong public/private partnership opportunities. Keeping the parking lot as a municipally-owned parcel creates permanent infrastructure that can be activated in different ways as demands shift over time.

As shown in the sketches, the panel's consensus is that the Niven-Price building is ideally suited for a retail use. The market conditions outlined earlier in the report reflect a need for more specialty retail outlets. The adjacent parking – the access to which would be negotiated with the Town – is a benefit that would appeal to any retail owner.

3 - REV UP PARKING

... Retain and Resurface Niven-Price Lot, Establish Network of Multi-purpose Overflow Lots

The divestiture of the Niven-Price building at 216 W. North Main and the retention of the rear parking lot would bring new capital and ongoing tax revenues to the Town. These funds could then be directed toward future redevelopment projects. It is the panel's strong recommendation that the Town make necessary improvements to the lot, which would include resurfacing the existing gravel to asphalt and a more strategic design of spaces to add capacity.

As seen in the panel's sketch overlays, additional downtown parking options should be explored. The yellow "P" symbols on the sketch denote **potential new parking lots** that could be owned by the Town or contracted out for financial benefit. They are located:

- ▶ Behind the Niven-Price building, as noted above.
 - This property could remain a surface lot or, in preparation for a potential mixed-use development on what the Town calls the Corner Lot (see recommendation 5 below), it could be transformed into a two-story structured lot for both public and private use.



- The north-facing (or back) half of the Corner Lot, or the rectangular space created by the 90-degree angle of McDonald Street to the north and N. Broome Street to the east.
 - This lot should be formalized as a paved surface parking lot and re-landscaped with more secure boundaries to increase pedestrian safety during events.
 - The rectangular space could be extended to the east, forming the tall end of a sideways L-shape that edges the Water Tower to the south and runs behind the historic McDonald House. If improvements are made to the McDonald house that bring more civic uses (see recommendation 4 below), this L-shaped lot would provide additional parking for a variety of needs.
 - If the lot is not paved, it could serve a dual purpose as an alternative site for community gatherings.
- Two new lots behind the skate park, in front of the 10-acre parcel of land just south of Givens Street.
 - It was also discussed that this 10-acre parcel, if grassed over, could serve multiple purposes: overflow field parking, a community space for outdoor events; and, picking up on its original intended use, an extension of the Town-owned David G. Barnes Park that could be modeled after Greenville, <u>SC's Falls Park on the Reedy</u> (see recommendation 4 below).
- ► NOTE: The gray "P" signs on the sketch denote **existing parking lots**, which would remain intact, but whose municipal agreements warrant future discussion

The Town's ongoing investments in the downtown grid would be well-served by these new parking solutions, and the panel feels the current TAP Grant will provide many of the necessary improvements to link pedestrians to and from street and overflow parking. Where possible, peripheral parcels that could be used for remote parking during crunch times and special events, should be activated.

In all cases, the new parking solutions should be incorporated into the Town's existing wayfinding system – both onsite and online.

4 - MORE COMMON GROUND

... Increase Number of Community Spaces

Sponsors and stakeholders – across a range of perspectives – emphasized the need to preserve and improve downtown Waxhaw's available community spaces. Neighbors want to see each other, talk to each other, and not just in line at the grocery store. Visitors want to feel like they are part of the Waxhaw experience, albeit if only for the day. Farmers' markets, festivals, concerts, art shows, parades and other "pop-up" entertainment opportunities are just some of the uses that Waxhaw residents and visitors enjoy and have come to expect in the downtown district.

Given that the TAP Grant is already in progress, the Town can look forward to wider sidewalks in some areas, more pedestrian-friendly thoroughfares, improved driveway egresses, and additional green spaces and alleyways that will promote connectivity among the "chessboard" of downtown.

The panel saw three significant opportunities to pursue the highest and best use of existing parcels, which would also formalize three distinct – yet flexible – community spaces.

1 – The E. Main Street retail corridor, or the area that currently runs east from Broome Street and stops in front of the wooden pedestrian bridge:

- The panel sees this area as a potential "Plaza" space that could be activated at various times throughout the year – or times of day – to bring people together to enjoy the dining, entertainment, retail offerings, as well as any special event programming.
- The Town would want to keep the retail and dining focus, as well as the hardscaping and angled parking (the panel does not want to subtract any parking from the downtown footprint!), but maximize walkways and close off the street at key times by simply putting up barricades and bollards when and where it was necessary.
- Given the upcoming improvements from the TAP Grant, which will lead to wider sidewalks, this street could become an exciting/ dynamic attraction in the downtown district. Like the Niven-Price building, it holds the potential to unlock other chess pieces in the area, such as parcels that are now privately owned but that could be purchased in the future.

2 – The McDonald House, its east-facing grounds, and part of the Water Tower Lot:

- While the McDonald House is currently used for municipal and community events, including its use as a historic museum site for visitor and school groups, the panel agrees that this space – plus the side-yard to the east and part of the Water Tower Lot – could be leveraged even further for private functions. Ideas such as "Weddings Under the Water Tower," concerts, family celebrations, and art events were discussed.
- The Town would benefit from increased revenues, which could help offset maintenance and landscaping costs.
- By increasing the McDonald House's visibility as an intentional albeit more formal, income-producing – community space, the Town provides yet another alternative to the current situation, wherein the valuable Corner Lot parcel is kept vacant most of the year. This space will also benefit from efforts to enliven pedestrian traffic at times along E. Main, and vice versa.



3 – Ten-acre parcel to the south of the skate park and the proposed new parking lots:

- As discussed above in recommendation 3, if this lot is cleared and planted with a grass surface, its purpose could be three-fold:
 - Overflow parking
 - A new community space for outdoor events
 - Redevelopment as a multi-dimensional public park with walking paths and water features, etc. as it was originally intended
- This blending of the park and the urban is something the panel recommends the Town continue to explore in its master-planning efforts. Looking for opportunities that could drive economic development – a permanent structure for farmers market (see examples in Roanoke and Asheville), an amphitheater, ropes course, camps, etc., – could be lucrative. The goal is to bring a sense of permanence to the urban core, without losing a sense of creativity and innovation.
- Again, Greenville, SC's <u>Falls Park on the Reedy</u>, is an excellent example of a city park that was designed for maximum daytime use for people of all ages. Visitors come to Falls Park, spend the night in the area, and make significant investments in the local retail and dining economy.



5 - MIXED-USE ON MAIN

...Explore Gateway Development Potential. By transitioning some of the community spaces from the Corner Lot to the back half of the Water Tower Lot and the McDonald House, and by creating opportunities for community to gather at strategic times along E. Main Street, the Town could further unlock the downtown chessboard in pursuit of mixed-use development.

The addition of commercial space is crucial for the Town. At the time of this TAP, there were only two commercial vacancies in downtown Waxhaw. Furthermore, the tax revenue that could be generated by commercial entities



is much needed. As noted, currently 93% of the Town's tax revenue comes from residential sources, while just 7% comes from commercial sources.

The panel looked at many different usage scenarios for the Corner Lot, agreeing that its current status as a gathering space was not its highest and best use – nor was it necessarily pedestrian-safe. Panelists discussed the fact that, for most small and medium-size towns like Waxhaw, the corners are the most important pieces to secure. Investors may be fine seeing parking or green spaces near corner lots, even on Main Street, but they tend to prefer buildings on corners. This is especially true for those corners that serve as gateways to a downtown corridor, as seen in Waxhaw at the corner of N. Broome and N. Main Streets.

Therefore, the panel recommends that the current Corner Lot be divided into two parcels (see recommendation 3 above). The northern parcel at McDonald and N. Broome Streets becomes the parking and community space, as discussed, while the southern, corner parcel at Broome and N. Main



goes to an RFP for development.

This is the ideal corner for a "Main on Main" mixed-use concept, meaning it's the most visible and viable location to function as an economic driver and to serve as a gateway to the larger community. The panel concurs that the Town should explore a range of options, but that the ideal configuration would be a two-story or three-story structure garnering as much as 6,500 square feet of retail on the ground floor and 14,000 square feet of office space in the two floors above, or in the three-story scenario.

This corner has the potential to:

- Connect the east and west sides of downtown; create a more uniform/even storefront district.
- Create new, more modern, retail spaces which could be attractive to a wider array of potential tenants; low vacancy rates indicate that there is pent up demand for additional space in downtown (see Economic Indicators, Retail section).
- Help stimulate daytime activity: including upper levels for office users would increase daytime activity for downtown Waxhaw, while increasing spending potential for surrounding/existing retailers. A mixed product that included civic office spaces and Town services would drive daytime traffic, as well.
- Invite more strategic public/private partnerships first through a managed RFP process; later, through potential lease agreements for municipal office space and parking options.
- Allow for new commercial suites that could differ in size, space, and capacity from existing product.
- NOTE: The office market in Waxhaw is not presently robust enough to be an attractive speculative-build market. However, a reliable anchor tenant would reduce risk for developers. Government anchors have been increasingly leveraged to fill this need, especially in smaller markets.



"Older urban areas tend to have streets that bring the community together and create a larger shared identity for residents, something that many suburbs lack. Streets set the stage for how we interact and the people we interact with. Density offers significant environmental, social, cultural, and economic benefits if its energy can be focused in ways that support the community and deliver culturally vibrant, meaningful public spaces." – Ryan Call, Founder of Urban Design – from Call's November 27, 2017 article for *Urban Land Magazine*, "<u>Creating Streets People Can Identify With.</u>" Call is associate principal and director of urban design at ELS Architecture and Urban Design in Berkeley, California.

Development Potential for Mixed-Use Building

With regard to an RFP, the panel recommends the Town take the following issues into consideration ahead of the bid process:

Investors will want to know that the proposed site has an anchor, has adequate parking provided (or that it is affordable to secure); and that zoning has been addressed.

Mixed-Use Development Could Mean:

- New Event / Community Gathering Space
- New Office / Retail / Municipal Space
- ▶ New Retail Space (6,500 sf)
- Public / Private Office Space (14,000 sf)

Leading to Significant Benefits:

- Addresses Retail Deficiencies
- Alleviates Office Space Demand
- Potential for Municipal Office Anchor
- Office Space Brings Daytime Traffic
- Increased, Diverse Tax Revenue
 - By pre-leasing the private and/or civic space, and actively recruiting a core of other tenants, the Town can better entice investors. Then, in a public/private partnership, both entities can proactively begin to recruit for retail.
 - Parking for this building could be situated behind the structure, in the surface lot designated for civic use at N. Broome and McDonald, as well as in the Niven-Price lot and overflow lots in other parts of downtown. If the Town retains control of the Niven-Price lot, as is the panel's recommendation, plans to add a second level of parking there could be explored. A costeffective, over/under/pre-cast structure with 100 +/- spaces would allow for increased capacity, while complying with any Town ordinances for height restrictions.
 - Whether the structure is one, two or three stories, the panel determined that all three options would still be in compliance with existing codes and ordinances (though the Town may want to take this opportunity to revisit those in light of new development strategies).
 - See below for examples of this kind of corner-lot mixed-use product in a small-town context: Baxter Village in Fort Mill, SC and downtown Davidson, NC are shown.







Three-Story Option

" Density, accompanied by an urban design that embraces connectivity, multiple modes of transit, and human-scaled design, can bring the very best of urbanity to the suburbs. It can bring people and their needs closer together, adding value and creating more time for the things they wish to be doing, rather than commuting. In addition, if the streets are designed as public spaces and are part of the natural flow of the larger city, they can create a communal identity, foster a more inclusive environment, and capture a spontaneity that can make life and places feel more authentic." – Ryan Call, Founder of

CASE STUDY: THE MORGANTON TRADING COMPANY

The Morganton Trading Company was originally constructed in 1882 for the manufacturing of wood products, such as moldings, doors, windows, and dry goods. The mill transitioned to textiles in 1917, and continued this use until Premier Hosiery shut down in 1996. The mill was then purchased by the Morganton Redevelopment Commission.

The Morganton Redevelopment Commission purchased the mill for \$250,000 out of bankruptcy. Prior to the acquisition of the property, the City of Morganton provided \$30,000 for environmental assessments and historic surveys of the property. A combination of \$3.2 million in private funds, state and local tax credits, Community Development Block Grants, and Powell Bill Funds were used for the renovation of the building.





The project was redeveloped in two phases:

- Phase I Began in 1999, completed in late 2001. Phase 1 has approximately 35,000 sf and is occupied by the Morganton City Hall and Morganton Cable.
- > Phase II Added 17,000 sf of office space, 3,000 sf of retail; construction of 43 apartments.

The average 1,076-square-foot apartment unit at Morganton Trading Company rents for \$896, or \$0.83 per square foot. One-bedroom floor plans average 826 square feet, and rent for \$748 monthly, or \$0.91 per square foot. Two-bedroom units range from 1,185 square feet to 1,425 square feet and average \$0.80 per square foot. Amenities include controlled access, electronic perimeter surveillance, reserved parking, storage rooms, and cable and broadband service. Units feature high ceilings, expansive window walls, washer/dryer connections, quartz countertops, and carpet flooring.

OTHER EXAMPLES



The Grove Arcade in Asheville, NC

" Over the past few decades, planners, civic leaders, and anyone interested in great places have come to recognize—or rediscover—the great potential in urban centers and walkable communities. With a tailwind of positive change driven by demographics, walkable downtowns have re-emerged as the ' place of choice' for generations young and old. Every day we read how regional malls atrophy, while we witness Main Streets and neighborhood commercial districts regain their footing through a renewed sense of purpose, hipness, and place." – From "Seeing Small," co-authored by Jim Heid, FASLA, Founder of Urban Green and real estate consultant Samantha Beckerman in the Winter 2018 issue of *State of Main* published by Main Street America



Baxter Village, Fort Mill, SC



The Flatiron Building, Davidson, SC

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

PHASE ONE - IMPROVE, DIVEST, REINVEST

- > Make facade improvements to the Niven-Price Building, then divest.
 - Use the <u>Facade Improvement Grant</u> process to fund exterior renovation.
- Once complete, open a public RFP for Niven-Price building only, keeping control of the surface lot; Town manages or outsources process.
 - Select a developer that will work within the downtown code and honor the spirit of the historical designation when creating new retail space.
- ▶ Use proceeds from this sale to fund subsequent phases.

PHASE TWO – SURFACE LOT IMPROVEMENTS, OVERFLOW PARKING, AND MAIN STREET MAKEOVER

- Make substantial improvements to the Town-owned surface lot behind Niven-Price building.
- Transition surface lot from gravel to paved; clearly mark spaces to increase capacity.
 Establish and properly surface overflow parking lots for civic use and retail; look at options to provide shuttle.
- Work with retailers, restaurants, other municipal departments in the context of the TAP Grant to facilitate streetscape improvements that would help the Town transition the east side of Main Street into a community space for events. Some of this work will have to wait until sidewalks, railings, egresses are addressed, but it's important to get this concept up and going as quickly as possible for maximum resident and visitor engagement.

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

PHASE THREE – MID-SIZED, MIXED-USE FOR CORNER LOT

- Make improvements to the Water Tower Lot, both on the corner of N. Broome and McDonald, as well as the space adjacent to McDonald House, to expand and encourage civic uses.
- > Determine what improvements are needed, if any, for the McDonald house structure.
- Court a developer experienced with historic Main Street redevelopment for RFP on corner lot property to leverage retail opportunities, as well as municipal and professional office space.
- > Actively recruit tenants and public/private partners for this space
- > Consider getting bids for a two-story parking structure on the Niven-Price lot.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Recruit retailers that would specifically appeal to a growing population of young professionals and dual-income families.
- Add parking agreements to existing and proposed lots that would maximize benefit for Town and business owners
- Proactively negotiate first-right-of-refusal agreements when possible for privately-owned parcels located within and just outside of the downtown footprint.
- > Take this time to refresh Town Vision Plan and recalibrate long-term development goals.\
- Simplify and consolidate downtown code ordinances; bring select properties into compliance.
- Continue to work within newly-established Town branding and marketing strategy; incorporate any redevelopment plans or new uses into the wayfinding system, where applicable.

Planner – Landscape Architect

APPENDIX

PANEL CHAIR

David Malcolm, RLA

Director, Planning + Design McAdams Co.

David brings more than 23 years of experience in urban design to his role as director of planning and design for McAdams in Charlotte. Working with experienced landscape architects, engineers, planners, and administrators, David and his team serve clients in both the private and public sectors. His specialties include the design and creation of vibrant public spaces, as well as planning of new communities within urban, mixed-use, resort and destination locations. Recent projects include Waverly, Riverwalk and Pearl Street Park in Charlotte.

David has led public consensus-building efforts for projects ranging from small town revitalization, to large, brown-field redevelopment sites in metropolitan areas. Considered a leader in the area of Main Street and small downtown redevelopment, David is a frequent speaker at planning conferences. He earned his bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from Virginia Tech and is a Registered Landscape Architect (RLA) in North Carolina, Georgia and Florida. David has provided leadership across a range of professional organizations, such as ULI, the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), the Urban Design Commission (City of Tallahassee), and is a past president of his HOA.

PANELIST

Nicole Frambach

Land Acquisition Manager NVR, Inc. (Ryan Homes)



Developer

After many years working in commercial brokerage and development, Nicole Frambach joined NVR, Inc. in 2017 as a land acquisition manager within the Charlotte North Division. Her current focus is strategic site acquisition, which involves extensive market research and consensus building among land sellers, brokers, developers, and municipalities so that each new community may benefit from a timely and cost-efficient development process.

Nicole graduated from East Carolina University with two bachelor's degrees, one in international business and finance, and another in French. She is an active member of ULI and serves on the Programs Committee, the Young Leaders Committee, and the Women's Leadership Initiative. She is a member of the Home Builders Association of Greater Charlotte, the International Council of Shopping Centers and serves on the board of both the Western North Carolina chapter of the Alzheimer's Association and Females in Action (FiA), a peer-led workout group with a mission to make women stronger in all areas of their lives.

APPENDIX

PANELIST

Zachary D. Gordon, AICP

Planning Director *City of Kannapolis* Planner



Zac Gordon has served as planning director for the City of Kannapolis since November 2014. During his tenure, Zac has successfully managed the City's transition from outsourcing its planning services to the creation of a full-service, in-house municipal planning department. As director, Zac oversees all functions of the City's planning department, including development plan review and approval, preparation of long-range plans, and code enforcement activity. Under his guidance, the City has recently adopted the "Move Kannapolis

Forward 2030 Comprehensive Plan," the first such plan since incorporation of the City in 1984.

A native of New York, Zac has served as a professional planner in a variety of locations, including New Hampshire, Rhode Island and North Carolina. Most recently, Zac served as principal planner for the Town of Huntersville from 2005-2014, where he managed the Town's long-range planning function. This included work as the principal author of the in-house "Town of Huntersville 2030 Community Plan," which earned a "Special Projects Award" from the North Carolina chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) in 2012. A long-time member of the APA, Zac previously served as vice president of development for the organization's North Carolina Executive Committee. He is credentialed with the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), and has been a member of ULI for many years. Zac holds a bachelor's degree in political science and geography from the State University of New York at Oneonta and a master's degree in regional planning from Cornell University.

PANELIST

Jessica Rossi

Planner Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.



With more than 13 years of planning, economic development, and real estate experience, Jessica Rossi brings a comprehensive perspective to all consulting assignments. Her involvement provides clients with detailed insights into demographic and development trends, as well as the fiscal implications of different growth scenarios. She works on a wide variety of comprehensive planning and economic development assignments for local governments and regional agencies. Developer and investor clients also rely on Jessica's insight to determine demand

Planner - Economist

for commercial and residential projects and to choose specific concepts to maximize marketability and value.

Jessica holds a bachelor's degree in environmental studies and political science from Alfred University, and a master's degree in community and regional planning from the University of Rhode Island. In addition to being a member of ULI, Jessica belongs to the American Institute of Certified Planners and served as the 2018 immediate past president of Commercial Real Estate Women Charlotte. As a national resource for Kimley-Horne, Jessica participates in assignments across the United States.

APPENDIX

PANELIST

Dennis Richter

Developer

President *Richter Development / Solterra Partners*



Dennis Richter, founder of Charlotte-based Richter Development, as well as Solterra Partners, is active in the solar and real estate development industries. After earning a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of North Carolina Charlotte, Dennis began his career in the Charlotte office of Trammell Crow Commercial (which later became Childress Klein Properties). There, he worked on high-profile commercial projects, such as One Wells Fargo Center,

Charlotte Plaza and the Lake Point Office Park. His career then took him to San Diego, where he worked in commercial real estate for multi-national Cornes Technology USA, forming Hibiscus Investments for the acquisition of commercial real estate assets. While in Southern California, he also earned an M.B.A. from San Diego State University.

Returning to Charlotte in 1996, Dennis joined Tribek Properties before establishing Richter & Associates to focus on urban infill development. His projects then included Latta Pavilion, The Ratcliffe, and the initial development of Camden Dilworth.

In January 2004, Dennis and his family relocated to New Zealand for a year, where his wife Stephanie worked as a pediatrician in the public health system. Upon their return, Dennis joined David Furman at Centro CityWorks as a development partner; the two were responsible for several successful mid- and high-rise condominium projects in the center city. Post-financial crisis, Dennis shifted his focus to the burgeoning renewable energy industry. He helped establish and then served as president and CEO of National Renewable Energy Corporation (NARENCO), a firm specializing in the development, financing, and construction of solar energy facilities. In addition to his work in the solar market, Dennis remains involved in urban housing development in and around Charlotte.

ASSISTANT PANELIST

Ashley Bonawitz (Assistant Panelist)

Urban Designer

Urban Designer *Stantec*



Ashley Bonawitz is an architectural and urban designer who creates context-specific solutions for walkable, vibrant communities. She is passionate about empowering others and influencing social policies on a large, urban scale. Her project experience includes detailed comprehensive plans, small area plans, large-scale vision plans, and corridor studies. She enjoys the collaborative process of designing alongside transportation engineers, landscape architects, planners and the public. Ashley earned a bachelor's of architecture and a master's of

urban design / community and regional planning from the University of North Carolina, Charlotte.





Appendix 1: Downtown Waxhaw Main Street Boundary



WAXHAW DOWNTOWN STUDY AREA

Main Street Boundary



Parcels Included In TAP Study



Appendix 2. Parcels included in TAP study







Proposed Mixed Use

+++ Railroad

Appendix 3: Overall TAP Recommendations



Appendix 4: Core Parcels Existing Conditions: Aerial photo showing existing conditions of the 4 core parcels within the study area





Appendix 5: Core Parcels - TAP Recommendations