



Public Workshop # 1

High Street Baptist Church

5:30-7:30PM | 09.25.25

BENCHMARK



Agenda

- Project Presentation 30 min
- Interactive Feedback 30 min
 - History & Culture
 - Public Spaces & Streets
 - Economic Development
- Report Back 30 min
- Next Steps 5 mins

A Few Words from the City



Project Overview

Study Area

Dan River Falls

Riverfront Park

Riverwalk Trail

Main Street

Memorial Dr

Poplar St

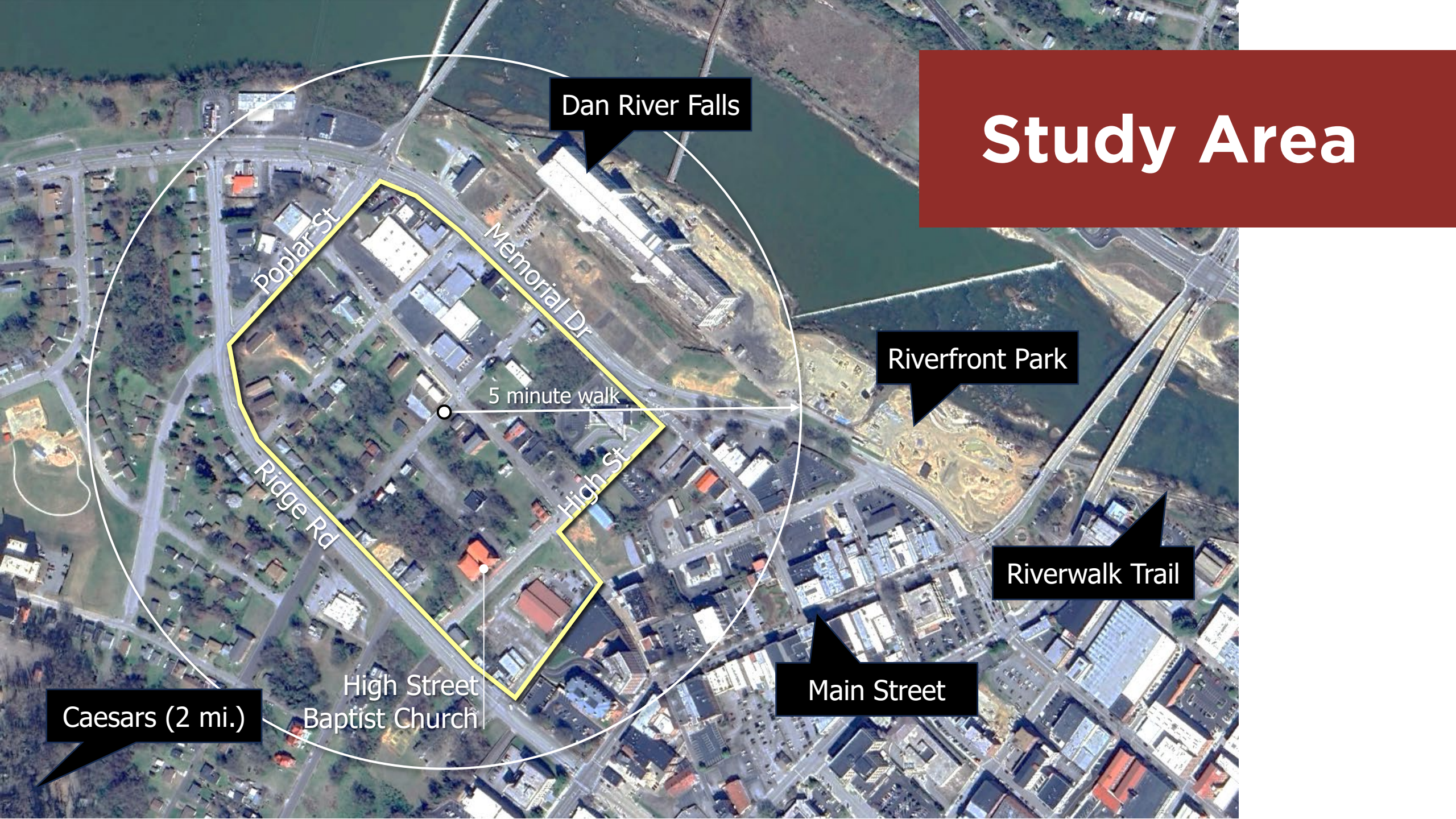
Ridge Rd

High St

5 minute walk

High Street Baptist Church

Caesars (2 mi.)



Purpose & Goals

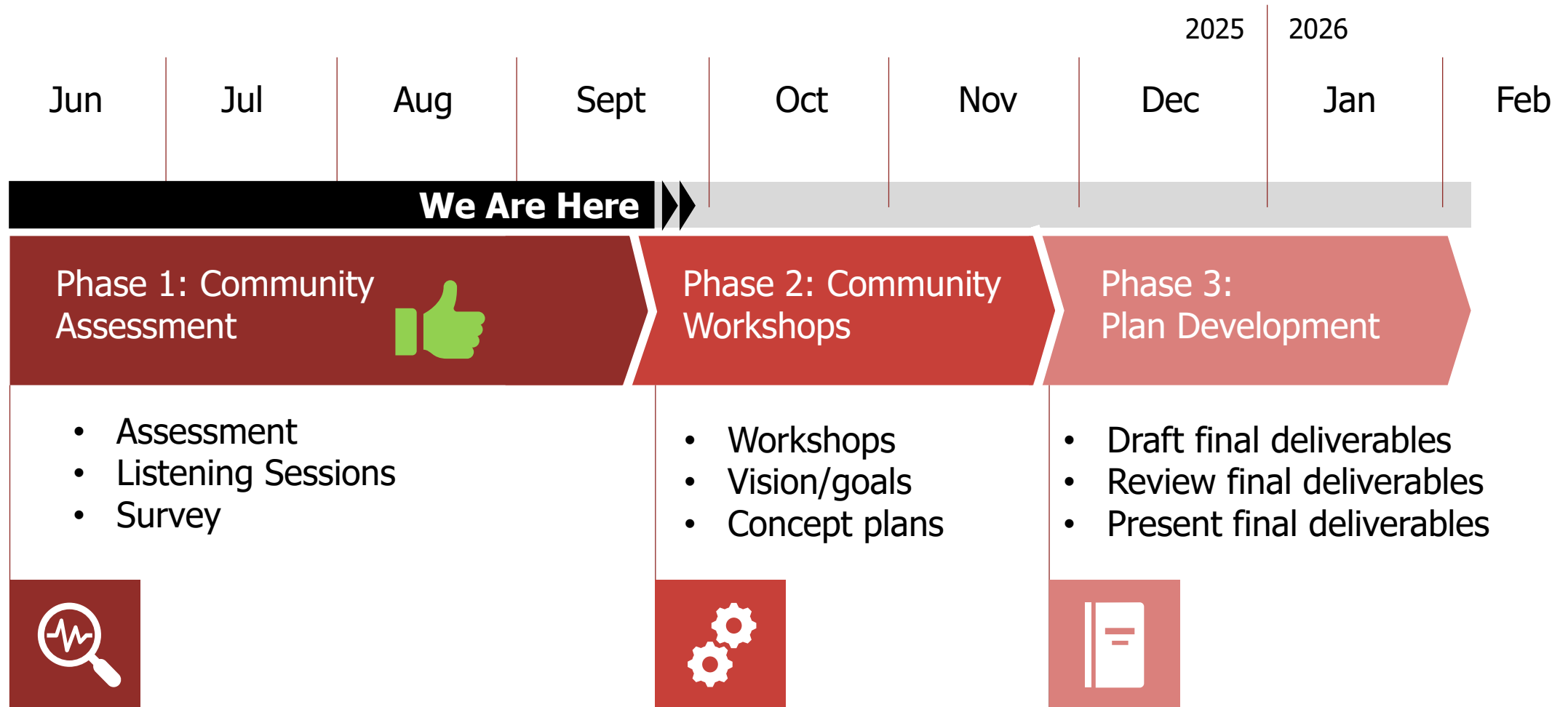
- Produce a clear vision and direction
- Reinvigorate & transform Mechanicsville
- Preserve and elevate the area's history
- Combine technical expertise & community input
- Continue growth of the River District as a thriving hub
- Bolster the city and downtown as a regional economic driver

PLAN Danville Comprehensive Plan Summary

The core values guiding recommendations of PLAN Danville are:

- **Embracing Diversity:** Fostering "mutual support, recognition and respect" within the community.
- **Warm, Inviting Community:** Extending to "every one of us who calls Danville home."
- **Uplifting, Empowering, and Strengthening Bonds:** Manifesting in "streets and schools, parks and businesses, homes and neighborhoods."

Schedule



Summary of Key Findings

Community Assessment

Key Findings – Previous Plans

- The **PLANDanville Comprehensive Plan** Mechanicsville vision:
 - more mixed use and walkable
 - integrating historic character
 - improving gateways
- Housing Study:
 - Market increased in sales but less than other parts of the state
 - Sales prices remain lower
 - Younger / first-time buyers remain slightly priced out of the market
- Appears to be demand for more single family and multi-family housing in Danville, especially workforce housing
- River District is only area that has seen multi-family housing development without a subsidy

Key Findings – Planned Improvements

- Improvements recommended for Mechanicsville and the River District via previous plans:
 - Improved sidewalks, crosswalks, and other active transportation infrastructure
 - Additional street trees and enhanced street lighting
 - Parking wayfinding signage
 - Parklets, seating, and bus shelters
 - Public art and landscaping
 - Buildings with active uses and improved canopies (frontages)

Key Findings – Development

- Development and redevelopment projects in the River District and adjacent to Mechanicsville
 - Dan River Falls
 - The Morotock Building
 - Apartments in River District
- Public investments in the vicinity
 - Riverfront Park
 - Memorial Drive Improvements
 - Whitewater Plan
- While the City as a whole has experienced slow to no population growth, the River District has seen marginal population growth
- Significant public transportation connections through Mechanicsville (City and regional connections)

Key Findings – Economic Trends

- Manufacturing seen decline across US and in Danville,
 - But it remains a viable industry in the City,
 - Employs almost **2x** more than comparable communities
 - Wages **2.5x** above average
- Other significant employment industries in Danville
 - Accommodation and food services, retail trade, health care and social assistance
- Housing remains much more affordable in Danville than in the State but occupancy remains around 85% (lower than State)
- Potential for more housing demand due to job growth in the area

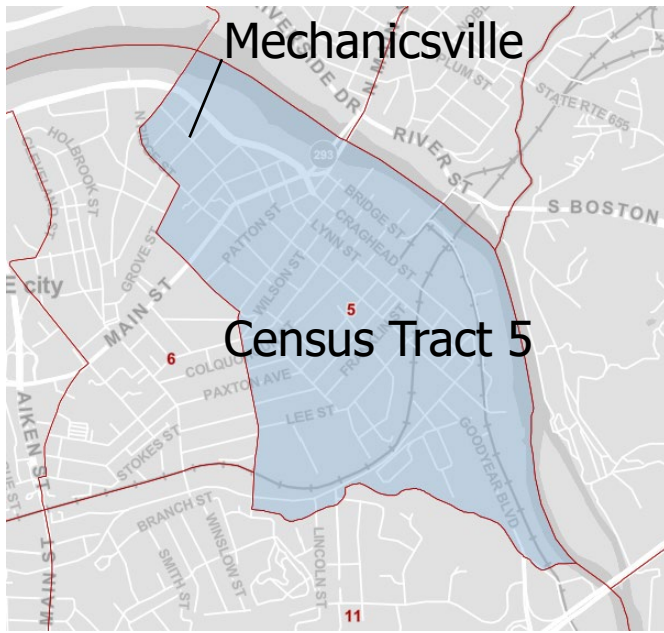
Key Findings – Socioeconomic Trends

- Residents in and around Mechanicsville have low household and per capita incomes but they remain higher than Danville as a whole
- Population in the region, and within 5 miles of Mechanicsville, is slowly dropping, but the population directly adjacent to Mechanicsville has grown (almost 12% from 2020 – 2024); anticipated to keep growing
 - Seeing general shifting of population from suburban to more central areas
- Almost 80% of housing units in the Mechanicsville area are renter-occupied and 66% are apartment buildings
- Almost 60% of homes built before 1939; few built after 1990
- Housing turn-over appears to be high.

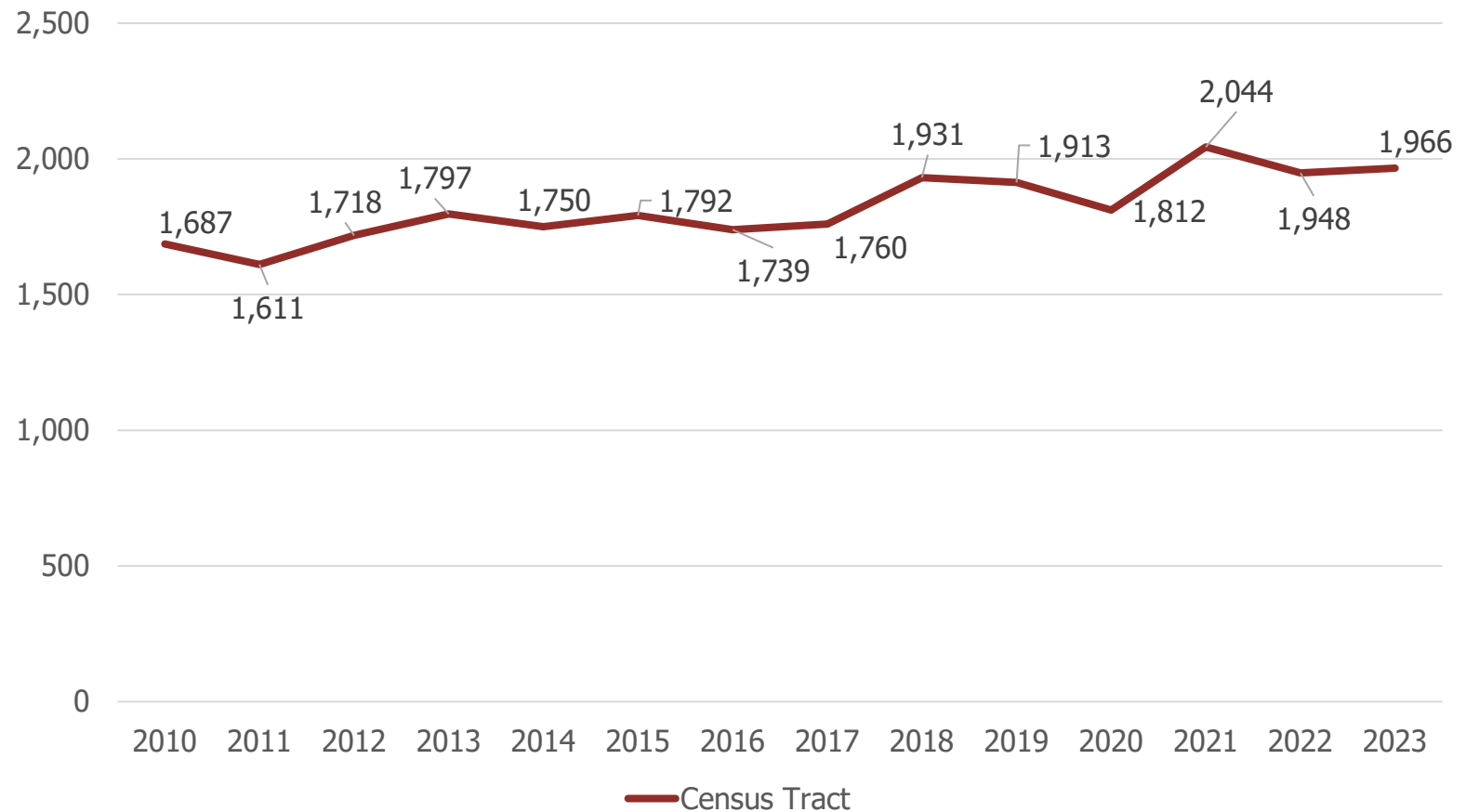
Summary of Demographics & Housing

Population Trends

- The area including Mechanicsville has grown slightly over the past decade



Historic Population Change in Downtown and Surrounding Area



Employment in Census Tract 5



54.1%
of population over 16
is in the workforce



7.7%
unemployment rate
(2-3% higher than city)

- **This area is an employment hub**



59.5%
drive alone to work



18.0%
carpool to work



7.2%
take public transport. to work



4.0%
walk / bike / other to work



11.4%
Work from home

Household Incomes - CoStar

For populations within 1, 3, and 5 miles of Mechanicsville

- Majority (~75%) are \$75,000 and below
- Housing cost is abnormally large % of monthly expenses

2024 HH Incomes	1 Mile	3 Miles	5 Miles
< \$25,000	37.3%	37.2%	33.4%
\$25 - \$50,000	27.5%	25.9%	25.6%
\$50 - \$75,000	13.6%	15.5%	17.2%
\$75 - \$100,000	6.6%	7.8%	8.0%
\$100 - \$125,000	4.2%	4.4%	6.2%
\$125 - \$150,000	5.7%	4.1%	4.4%
\$150 - \$200,000	1.8%	2.1%	2.2%
\$200,000 +	3.3%	3.0%	3.0%

Age of Housing - CoStar

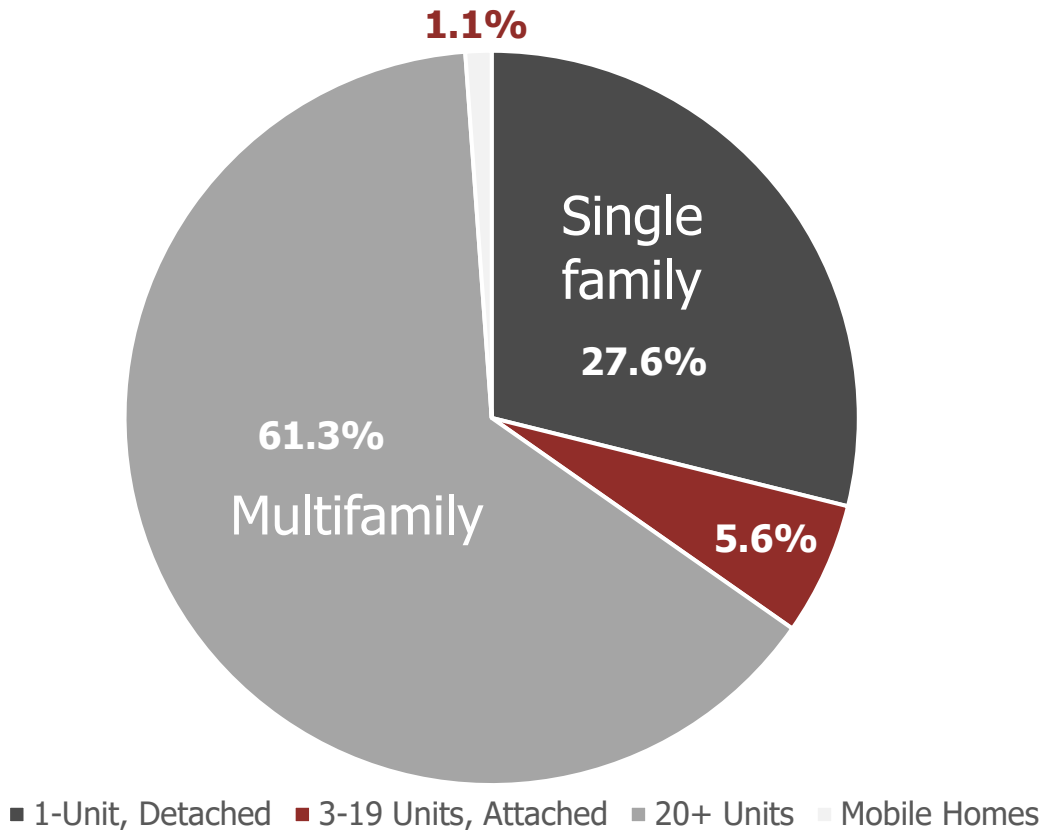
For populations within 1, 3, and 5 miles of Mechanicsville

- Lots of housing built in 2010 or after within 1 mile of Mechanicsville

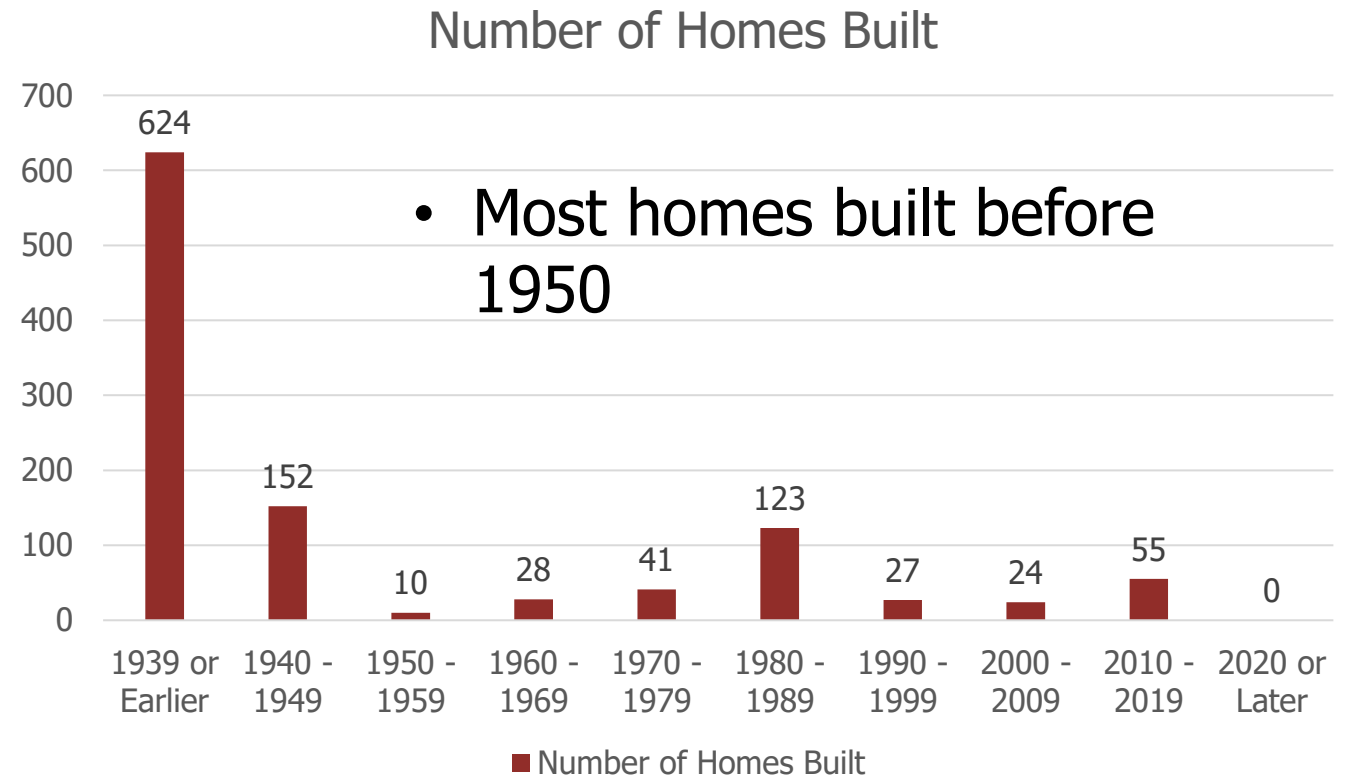
2024 Housing	1 Mile	3 Miles	5 Miles
Built < 1949	8.1%	4.4%	4.7%
Built 1950 – 1959	1.8%	2.6%	4.0%
Built 1960 – 1969	1.5%	5.0%	7.9%
Built 1970 – 1979	3.6%	5.5%	8.8%
Built 1980 – 1989	10.5%	16.1%	17.8%
Built 1990 - 1999	9.9%	14.4%	14.0%
Built 2000 – 2010	15.9%	20.6%	17.8%
Built 2010 +	48.7%	31.4%	25.0%
Median Year Built	1950	1958	1964

Housing of Census Tract 5 (2023 ACS)

UNITS IN STRUCTURE



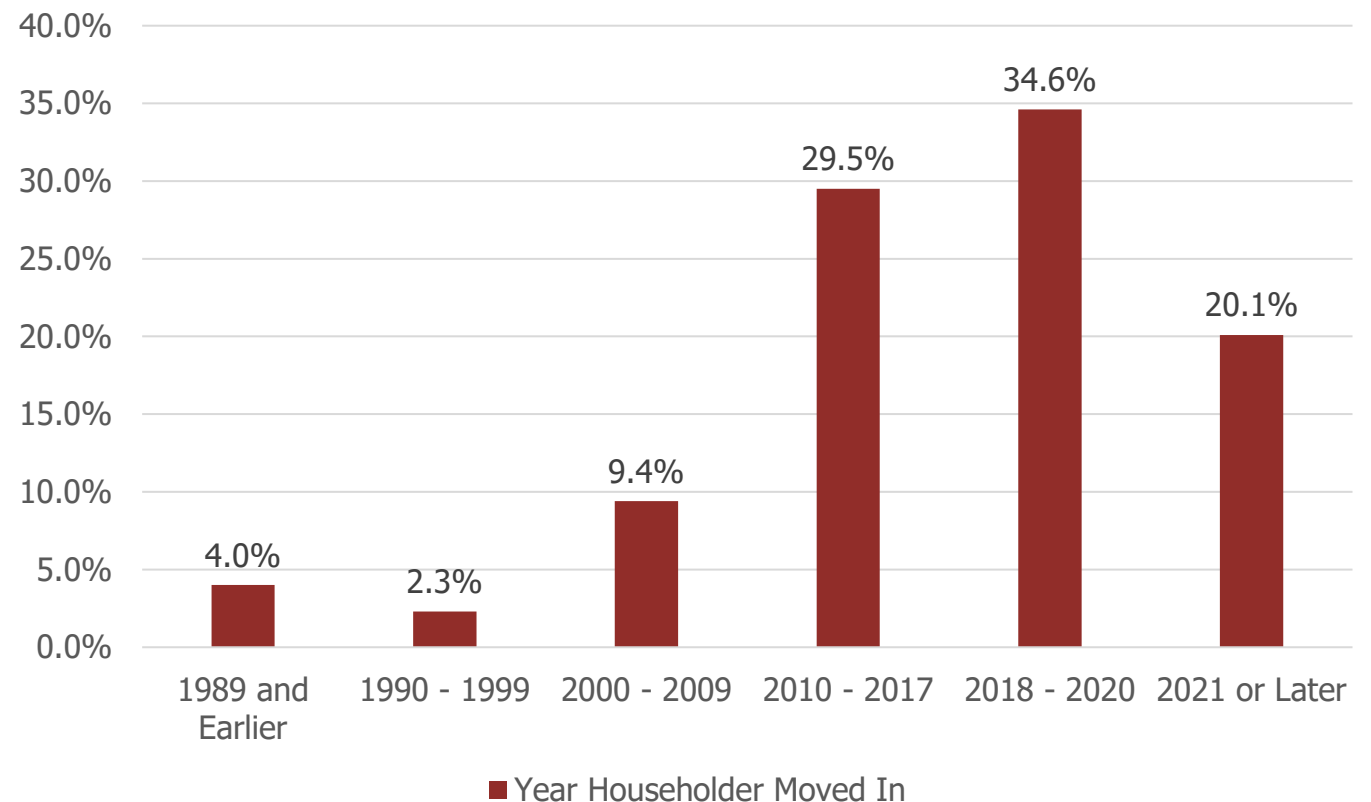
YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT



Housing Characteristics of CT 5 (2023 ACS)

- Despite the age of the housing units, household turnover appears to be high
- Almost 85% of residents have moved in since 2010

YEAR HOUSEHOLDER MOVED IN



Current Community Survey Snapshot

Survey is Ongoing...Please take the Survey Today!



70%

Somewhat familiar with Mechanicsville

30%

Never visit Mechanicsville

80%

Visit River District several times per week

80%

Mechanicsville could use some help

60%

Somewhat familiar with history of Mechanicsville

75%

Support development of moderately or affordably priced housing here

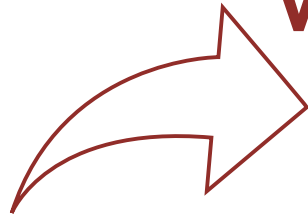
80%

Improvements in Mechanicsville are important for success of River District

If new housing were developed in Mechanicsville, would you consider living there?

55%

NO

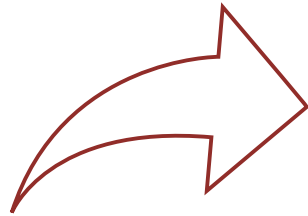


Why?

83% "Already own a home"

30%

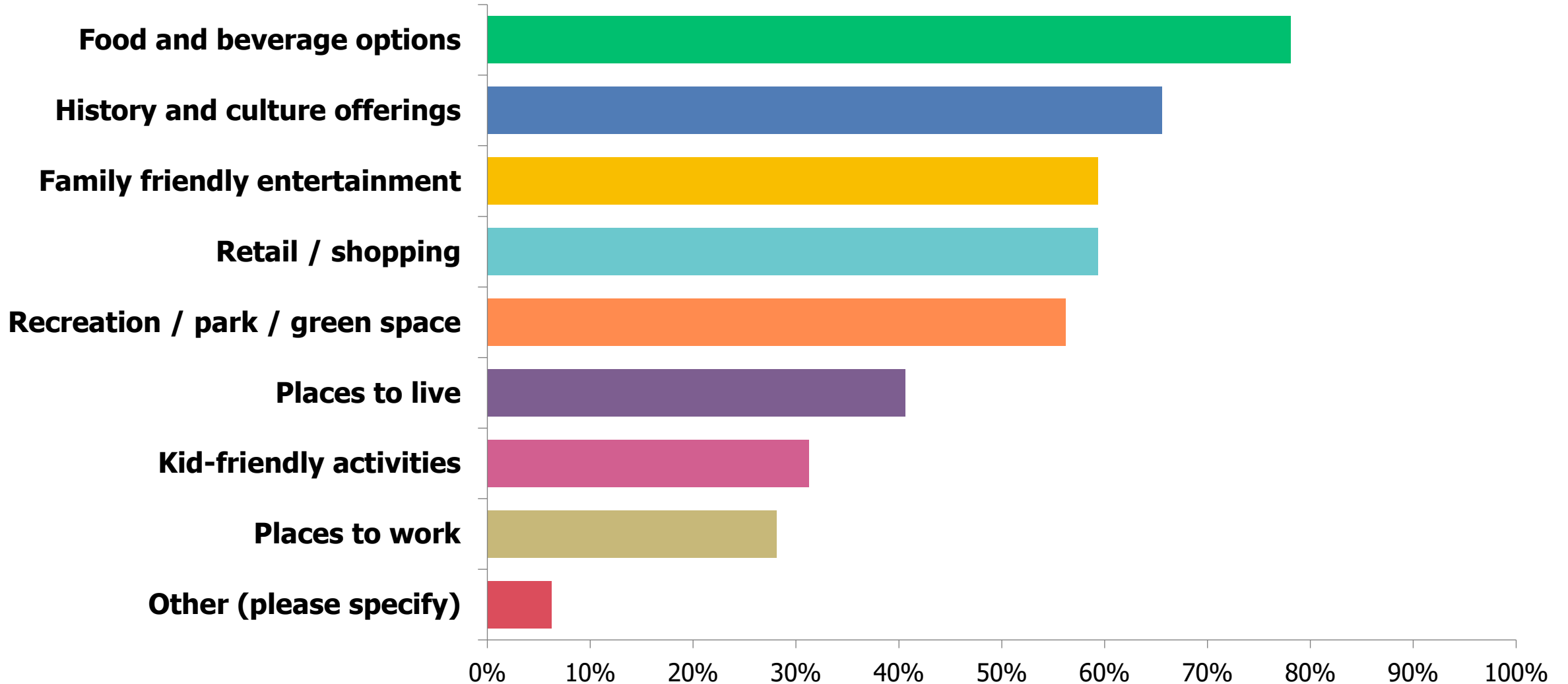
Maybe



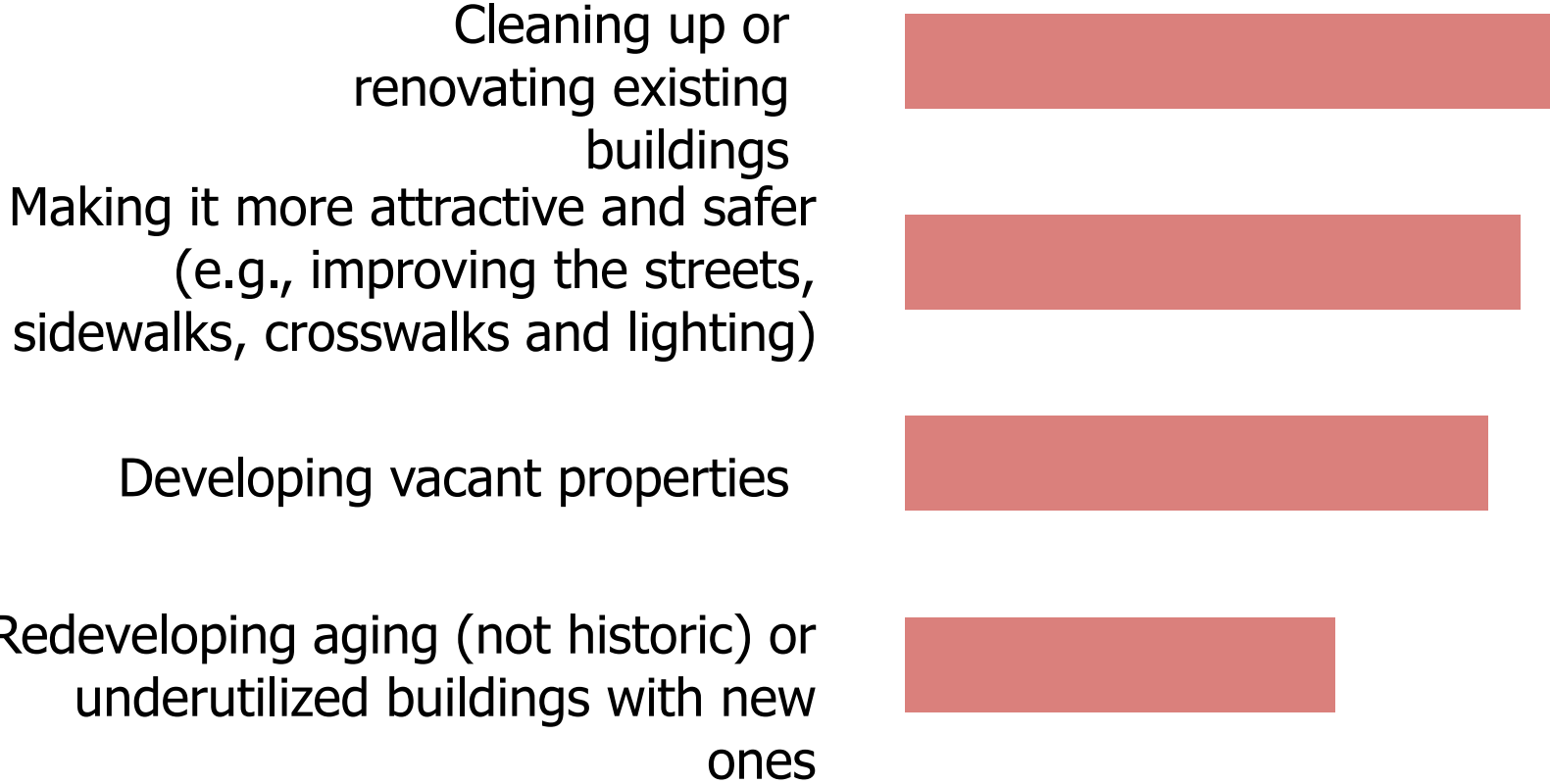
- It's a **very cool** area. Love the **White Mill**.
- If I were younger and single, and it was a **desirable neighborhood with new retail and housing** I might would have considered a **townhome or condo**
- I might move out of state soon. If not, I would definitely consider **downsizing to a loft** or similar home in Mechanicsville.

"I would be happy to live anywhere in the river district that had sufficient dining and shopping opportunities"

Which of the following would you like to see more of in Mechanicsville?



Which potential improvements in Mechanicsville are most important to you?

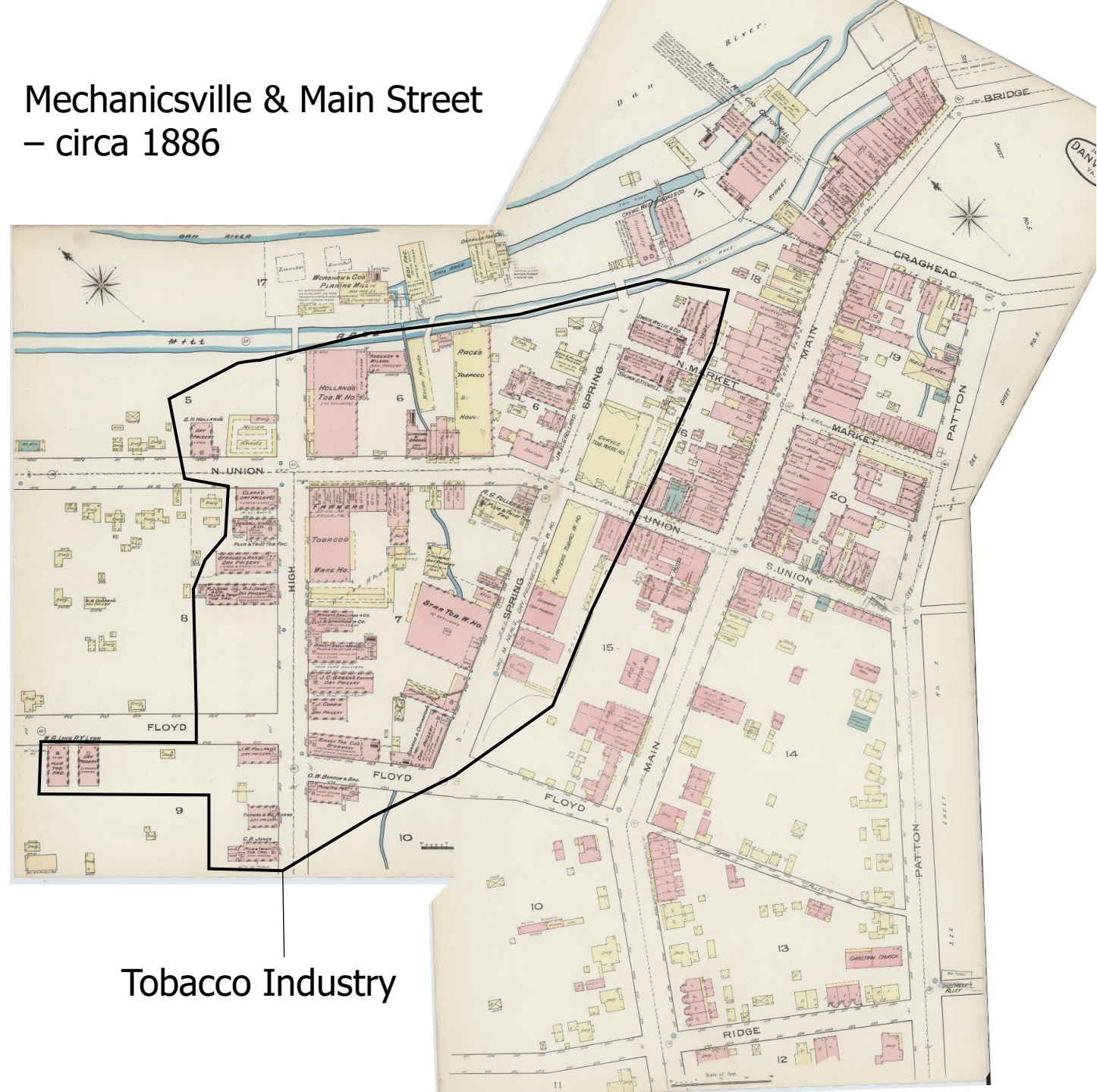


History & Culture

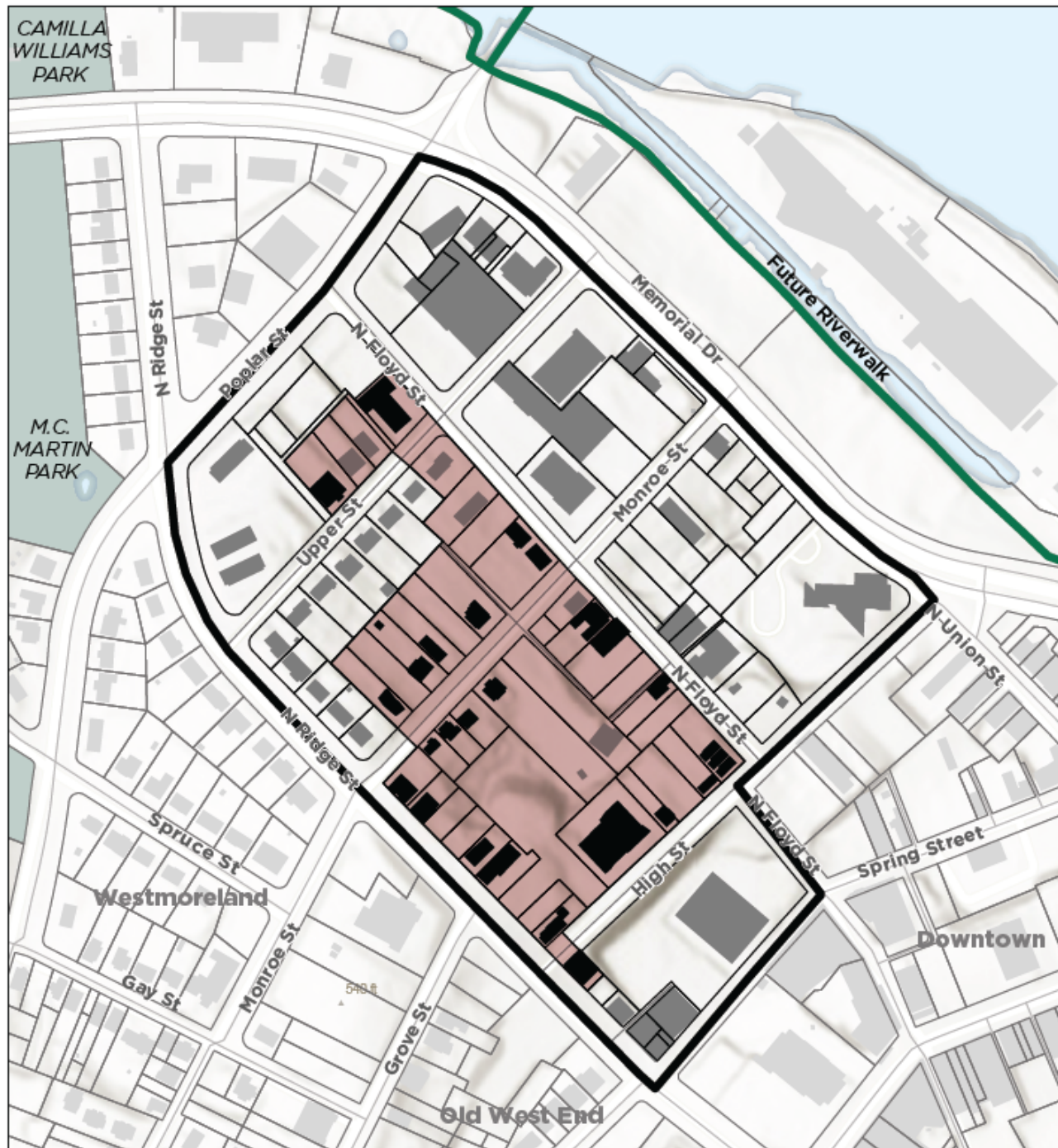
Why is Mechanicsville historically significant?

Mechanicsville & Main Street – circa 1886

- Many buildings in Mechanicsville supported tobacco industry
- Sparse dwellings west of High St







Tobacco Industry



The Mechanicsville Historic District developed between 1880 and 1963. The district is primarily residential, with a mixture of detached row houses, duplexes, an apartment, and single family detached homes; representing the varied socioeconomic levels of residents.

As Mechanicsville grew, churches and social halls were built, including the High Street Baptist Church and a YMCA, both located along High Street and serving as anchors for residents.

Legend

-  Study Area
-  Parcels
-  Mechanicsville Historic District
-  Contributing buildings

White Mill Under Construction – circa 1920



Job 5362.
8-16-20.

Monroe Street – circa 1920



032921-7

BUILT BY
A BERTHAW



High Street & Union Street – circa 1940

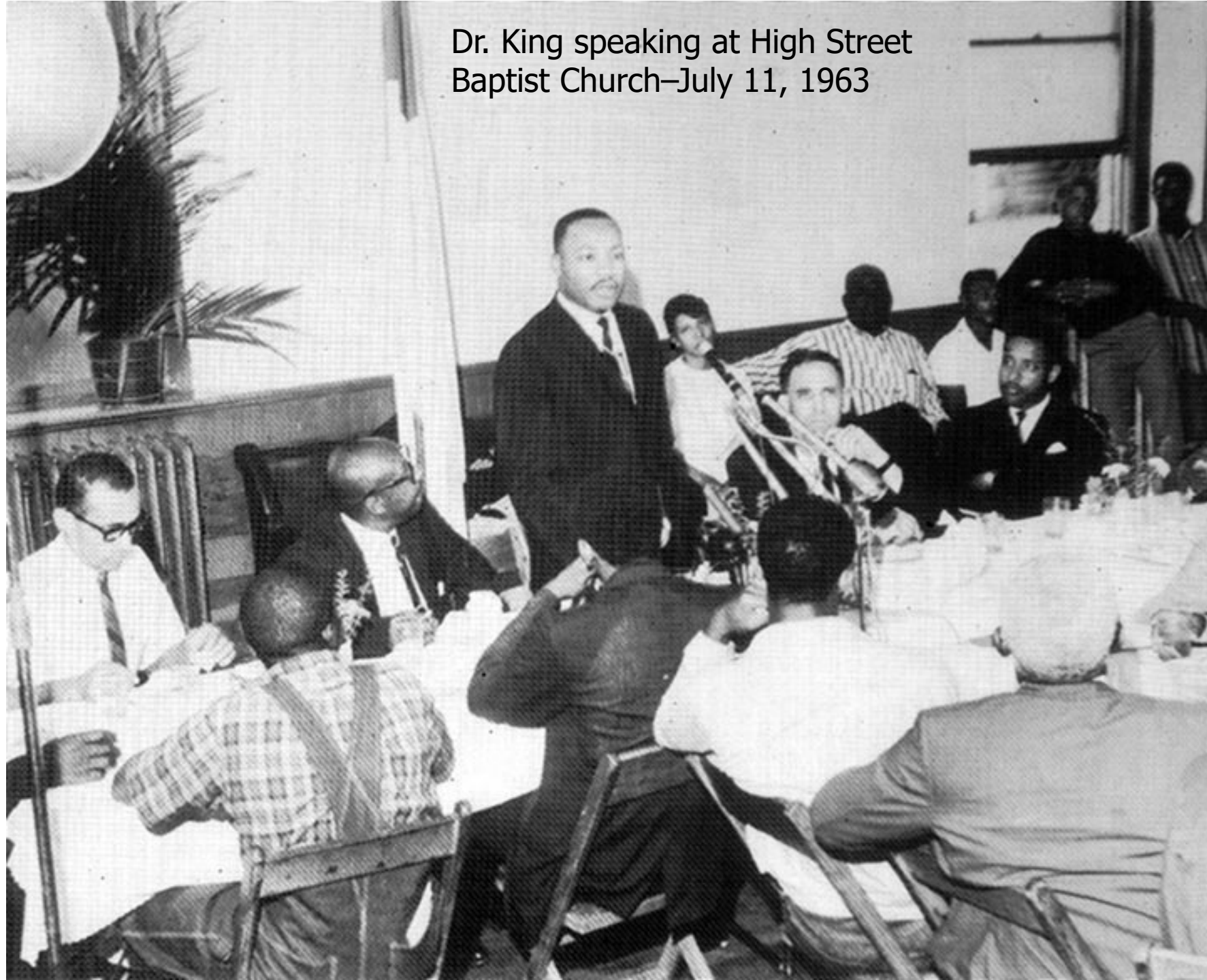


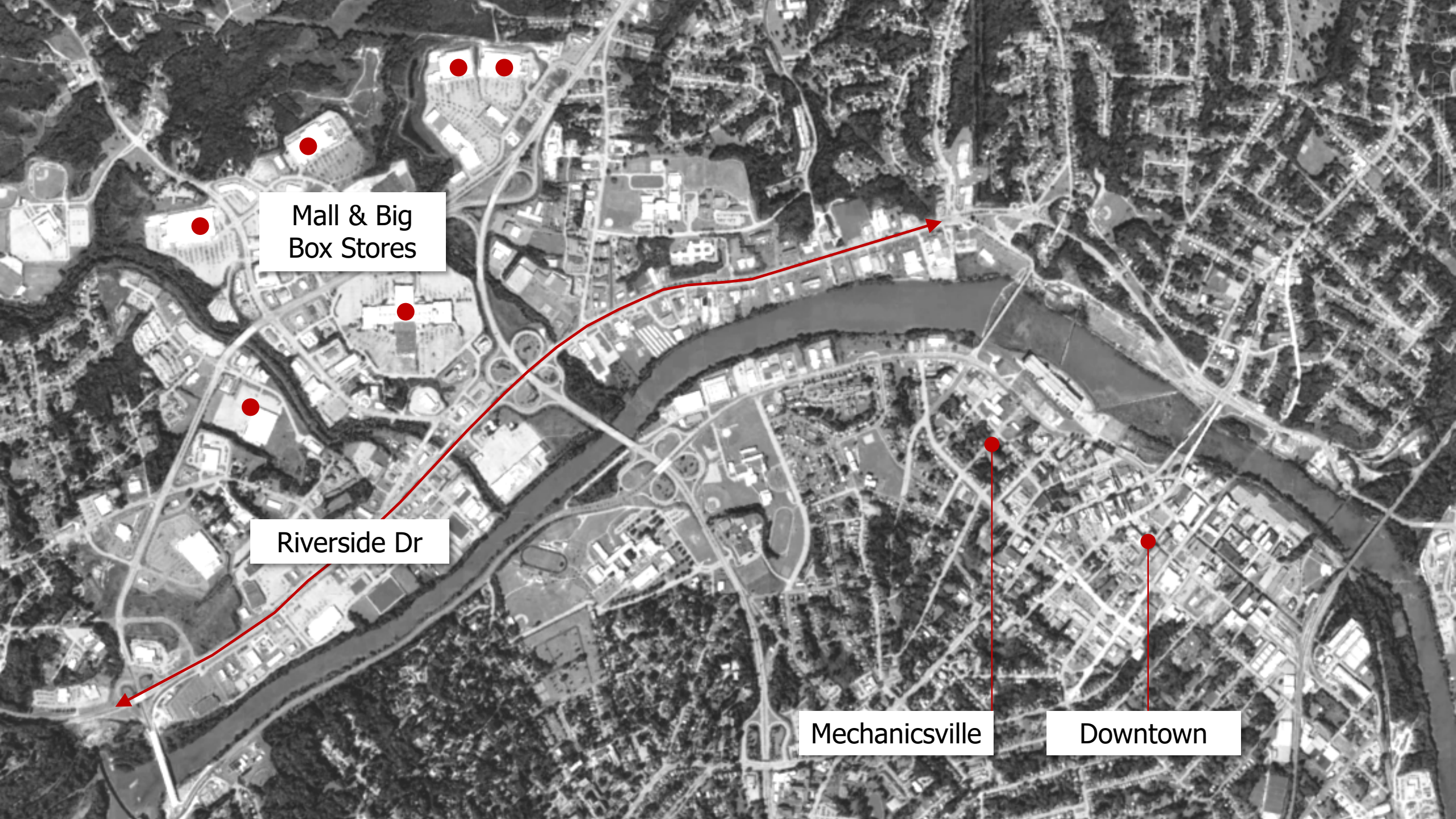
High Street & Union Street – circa 1940





Dr. King speaking at High Street Baptist Church—July 11, 1963





Mall & Big
Box Stores

Riverside Dr

Mechanicsville

Downtown

Listening Sessions Takeaways

Cultural and Historical Significance

- **“Black Wall Street” in Mechanicsville**

- Spring / Floyd intersection to Union,
- Key institutions included the first and only African American YMCA, Augustino’s Theater (Ritz Theater), Southern Aid Building (first Black insurance company), and Movement Bank

- **National Register Historic District**

- Critical need to save buildings in the historic district or lose the NRHP designation

- **Low Name Recognition**

- Despite historical significance, familiarity with ‘Mechanicsville’ name is low
- This presents a branding and identity challenge

- **Mechanicsville Central to Danville History**

- Area's history intertwined with broader Danville events, including the Danville Riot of 1883, the rise of the Black Business District on Union in the 1920s and 1930s, Civil Rights movement later

Listening Sessions Takeaways

Arts, Culture, and Makerspaces

- **Cultural District Potential:**

- Arts and Culture Plan completed. Leverage art and history (also industry and culture) to create unique character in the district, attract energy

- **Reviving Forgotten Cultural/Social Venues:**

- Interest in bringing back “Augustino’s Theater” and / or the Ritz Theater
- Also, the original black YMCA

- **Makerspaces and Industrial Arts:**

- The name “Mechanicsville” lends itself well to makers’ spaces
- Metal working is historically relevant in Danville; artists/makers need space

- **City Auditorium Rehabilitation**

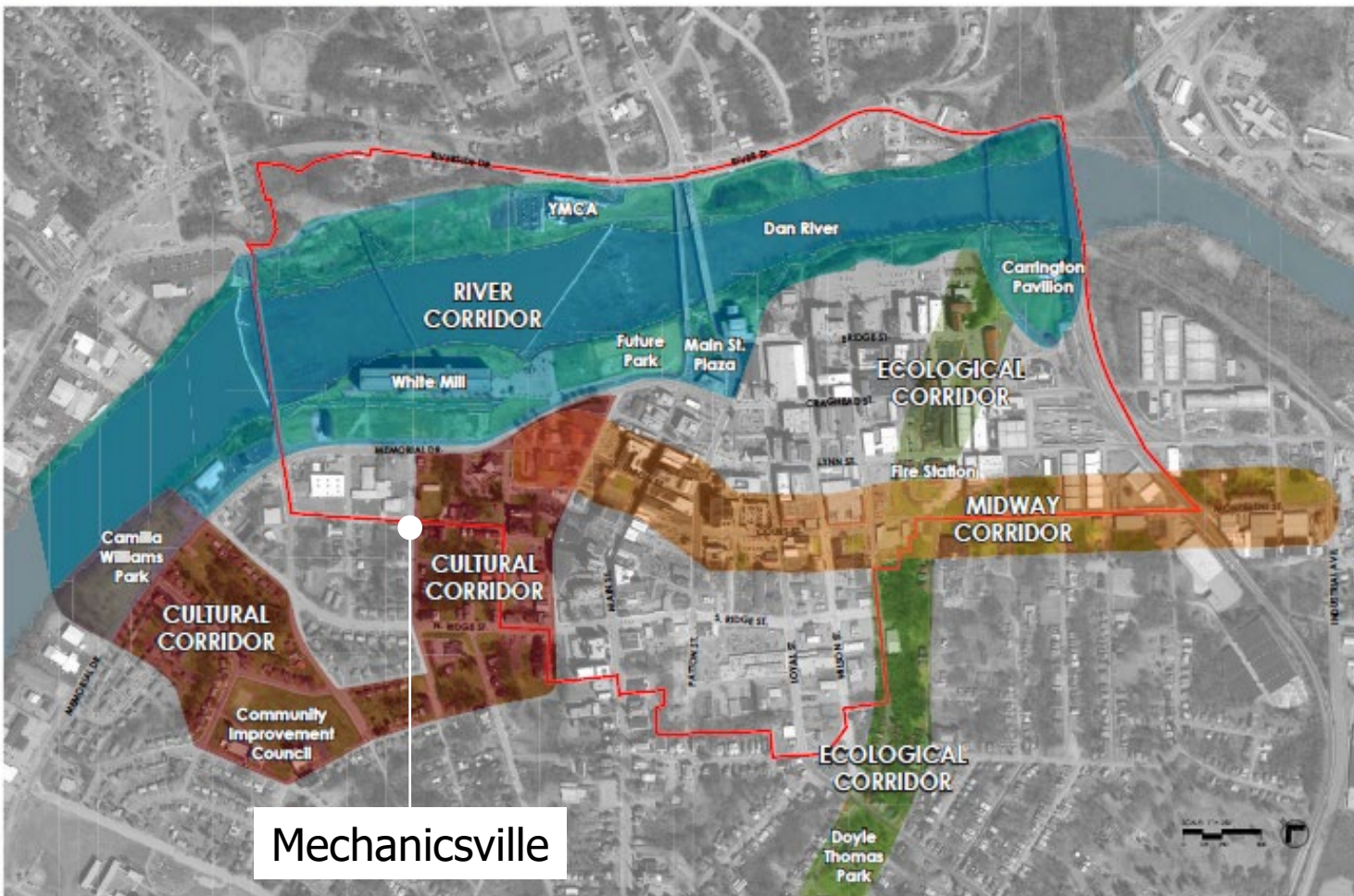
- A grant for a feasibility study on renovating the building recently received

Public Spaces / Streets

How can we improve the aesthetic appeal of Mechanicsville?

River District Green Space Plan (2017)

Focus Corridors - Entire District



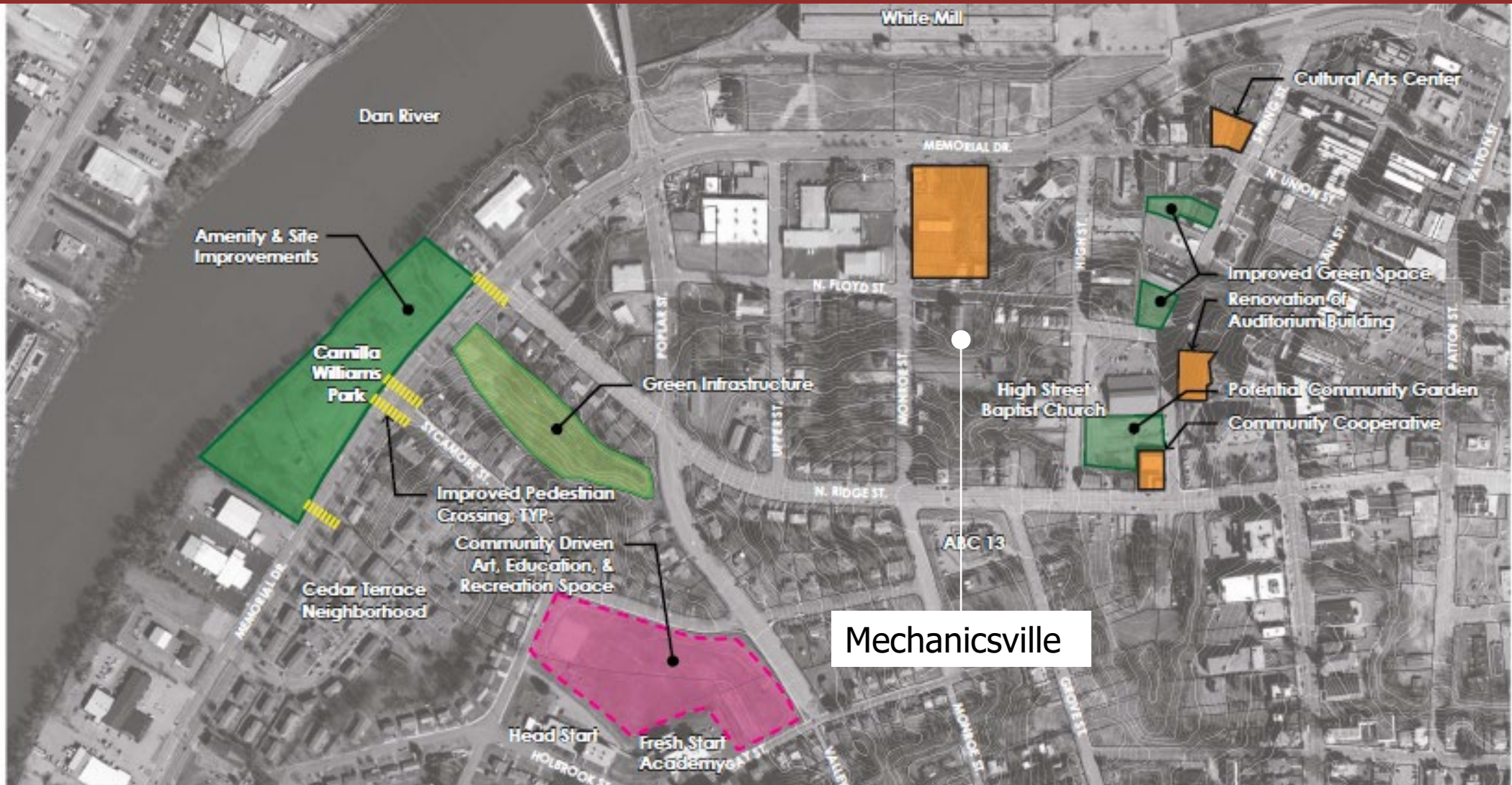
Cultural Corridor:

Links Camilla Williams Park with Union Street business district. Rich history and culture should be celebrated and explored (interpretive markers, community garden, seniors-focused park, cultural arts center, cultural heritage park)

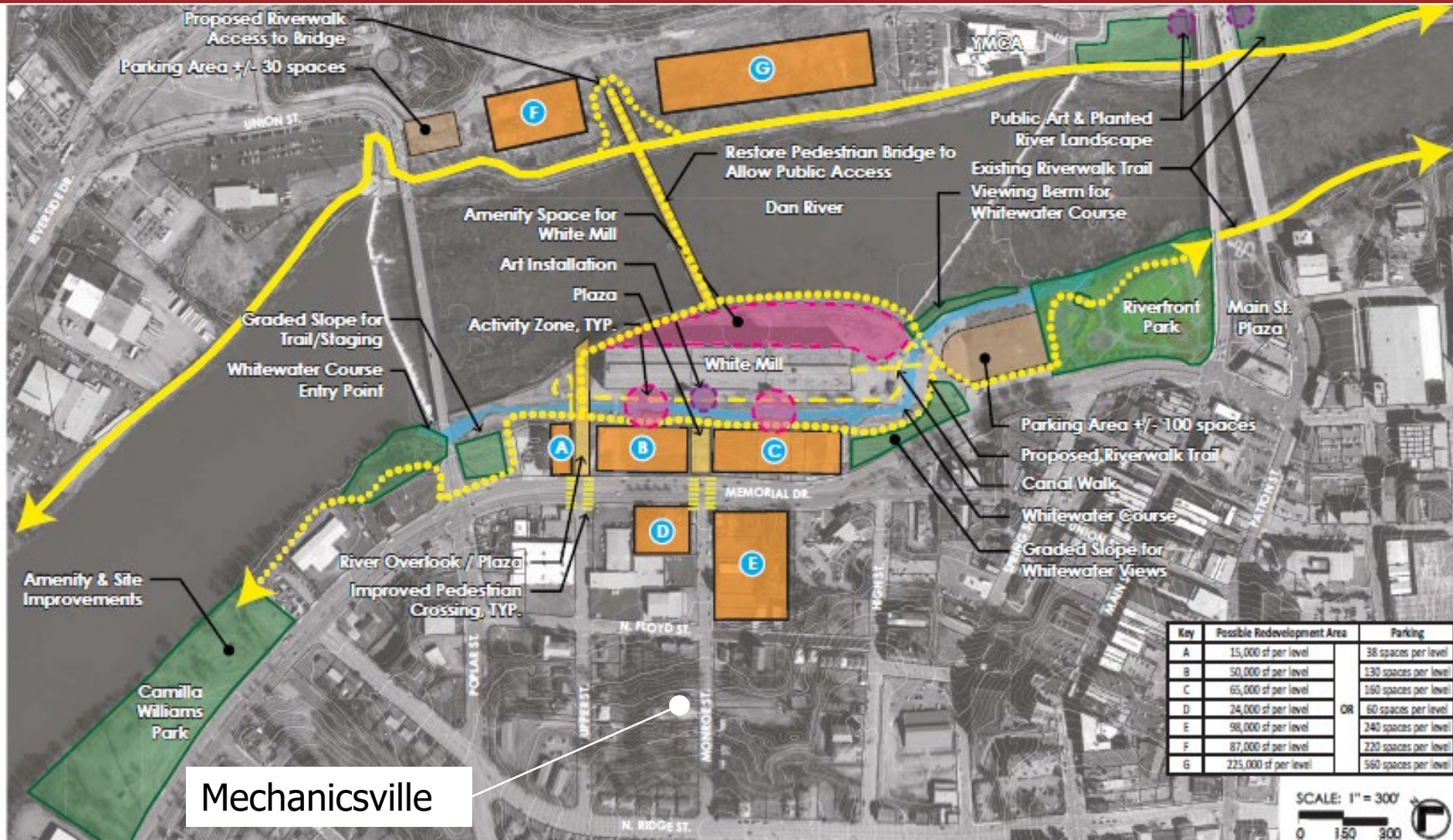
River Corridor:

River District's primary focus corridor – intended to drive citizens and visitors to the City's main attraction – the River

River District Green Space Plan (2017)

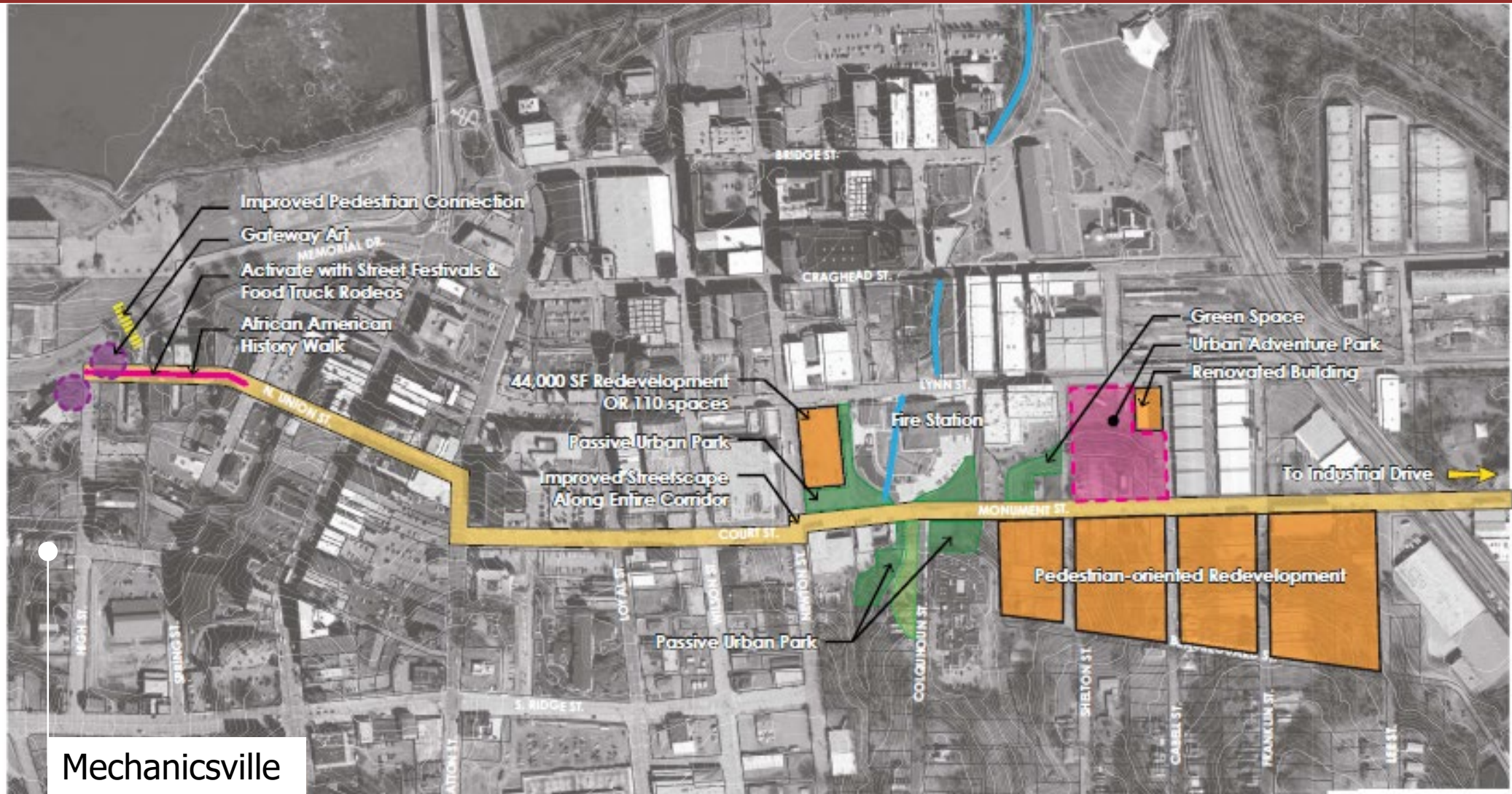


River District Green Space Plan (2017)

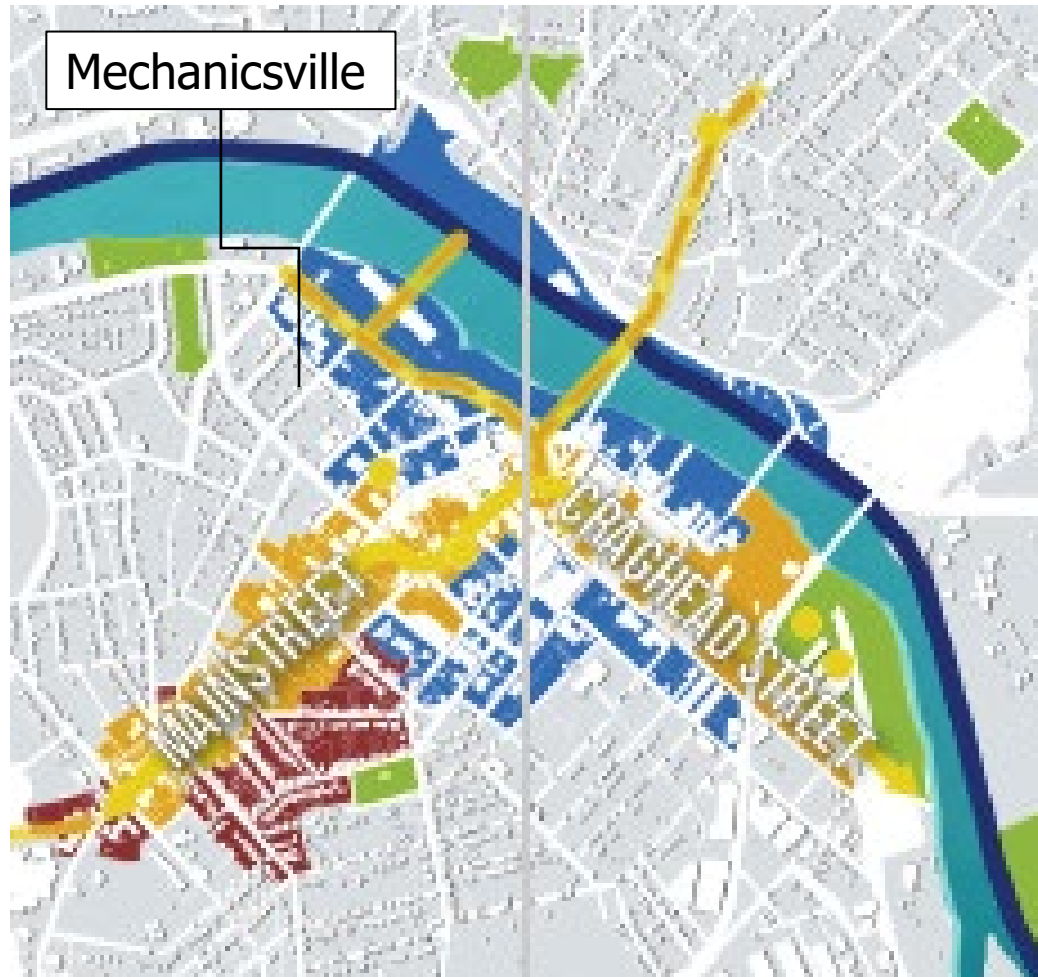


Mechanicsville

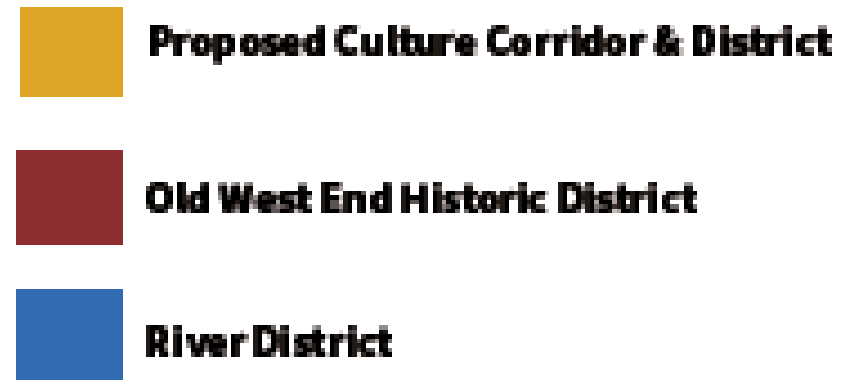
River District Green Space Plan (2017)



Arts & Culture Plan (2024)



- Proposed Culture Corridor along Memorial Drive
- Proposed Culture District along Spring Street



Riverfront Park Plan (2025)

riverfront concept



Riverfront Area



Spray Plaza

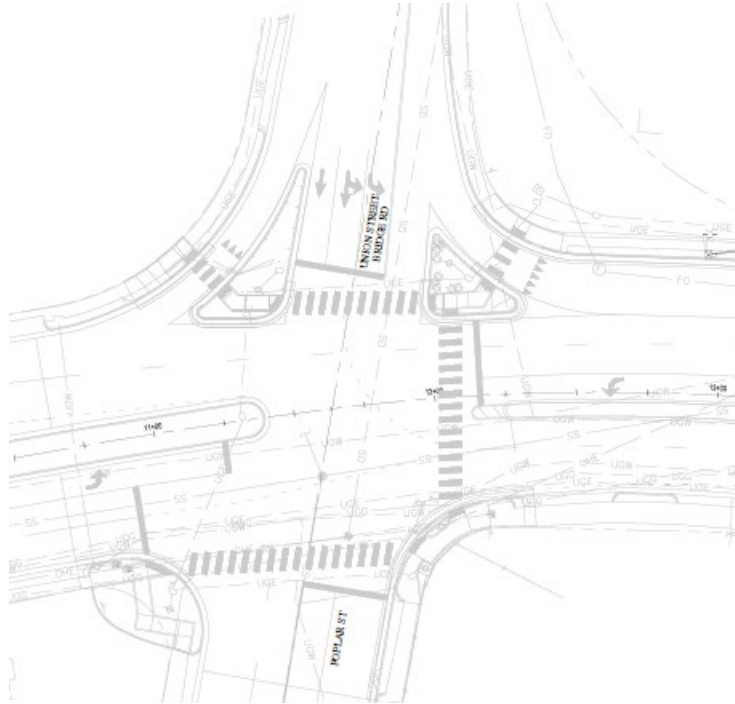


DANVILLE RIVERFRONT PARK

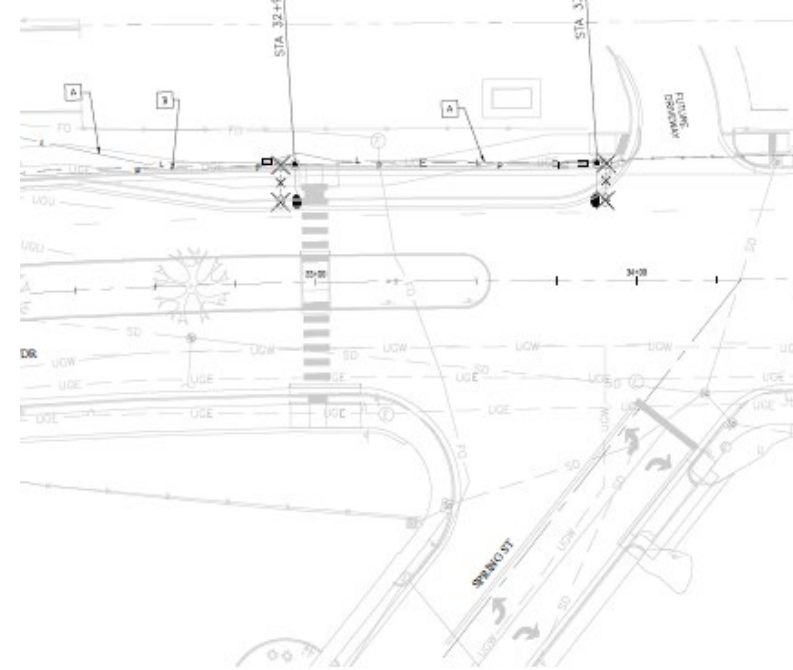
a reimagined waterfront



Memorial Drive Streetscape (~2026)



- Intersection improvements
- Pedestrian safety



- Sidewalk widening
- Mid block pedestrian crossings

Existing Streets

- Some excessively wide
- Lacking street trees, landscaping, pedestrian lighting
- High Street & Monroe Street, last paved ~1988 & 1998 respectively



Sidewalks

- Eastern half has sidewalks
- Western portion lacking
- Sidewalk gaps and lack of pedestrian crossings along Ridge & Poplar Streets



Traffic & Crashes

- High crash intersections Poplar @ Ridge, Memorial
- Few “severe injury crashes”
- Few crashes involving pedestrian outside study area
- Traffic volumes very low for amount of lanes

Crashes (2016-2025)



- Severe Injury
- Visible Injury
- Nonvisible Injury
- Property Damage Only
- Involving Pedestrian



Listening Session Takeaways

Desired Amenities and Public Realm Improvements

- **Green Spaces and Parks:** Desire to link Camilla Williams by River Walk Trail to the Dan River Mill. Pocket park is recommended for area. Riverfront Park will be the premier downtown park. Need things for 12–18-year-olds to do
- **Walkability and Connectivity:** Currently adding wider sidewalks on Memorial. Have advocated for closing Union Street to cars. Pedestrian amenities and similar improvements are identified in the Comprehensive Plan
- **Public Art and Historical Storytelling:** Want to increase public art and historical signage. Doing a mural on a retaining wall along Memorial Drive. Desire to increase signage and markers
- **Community Spaces:** Strong desire to save the old YMCA building – can be used as a community space or small community-based co-op. Interest

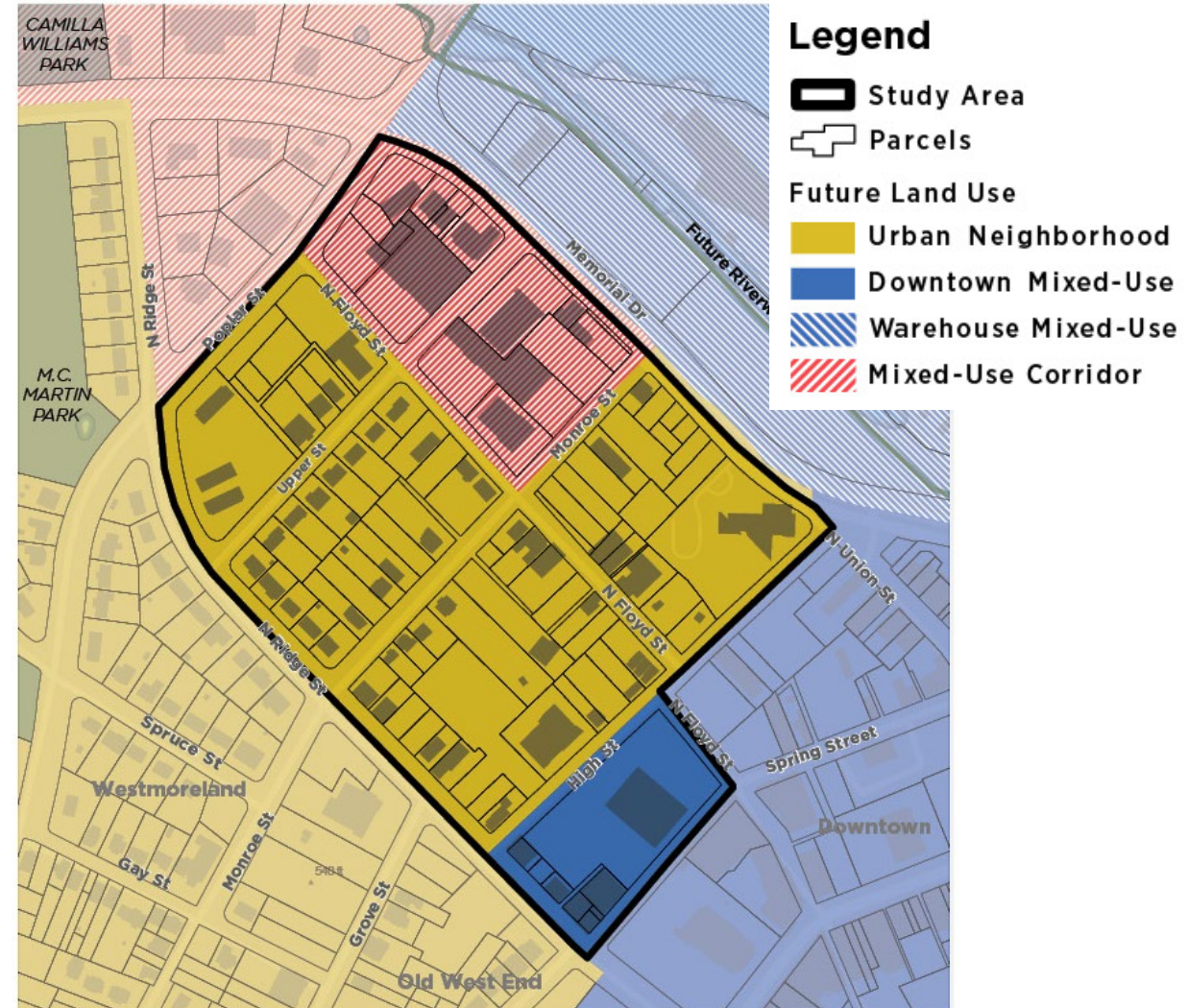
Economic Development

What will create more opportunity in Mechanicsville?

PLANDanville Comprehensive Plan

Future Land Use Guidance

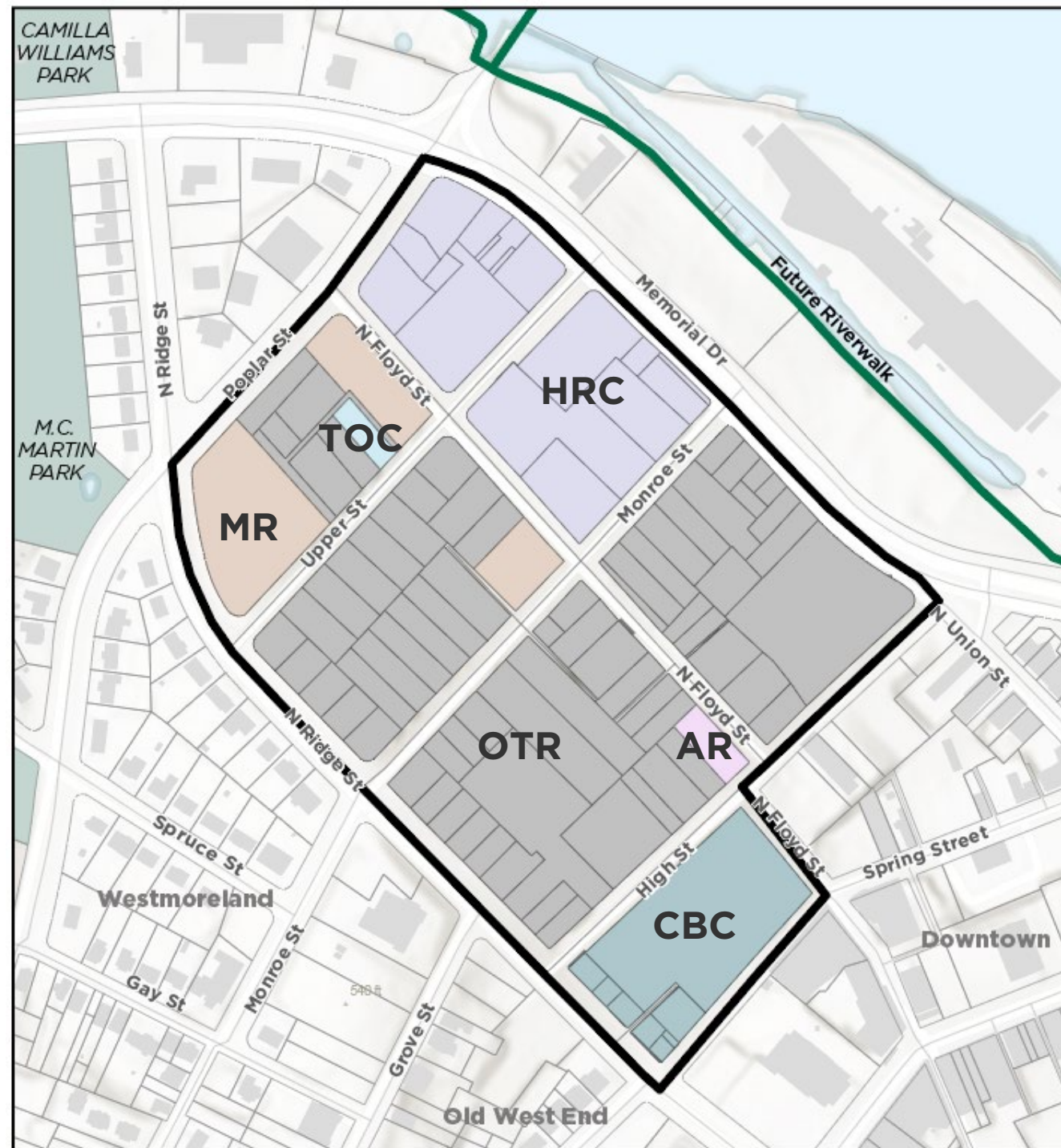
- **Urban Neighborhoods:**
Create more dense housing around mixed-use centers
- **Downtown Mixed Use:**
Historic, walkable center
- **Mixed Use Corridor:**
Enhance gateways and integrate more uses



Zoning

- City currently updating zoning
- Existing zoning may not support mix of uses and new development typologies envisioned

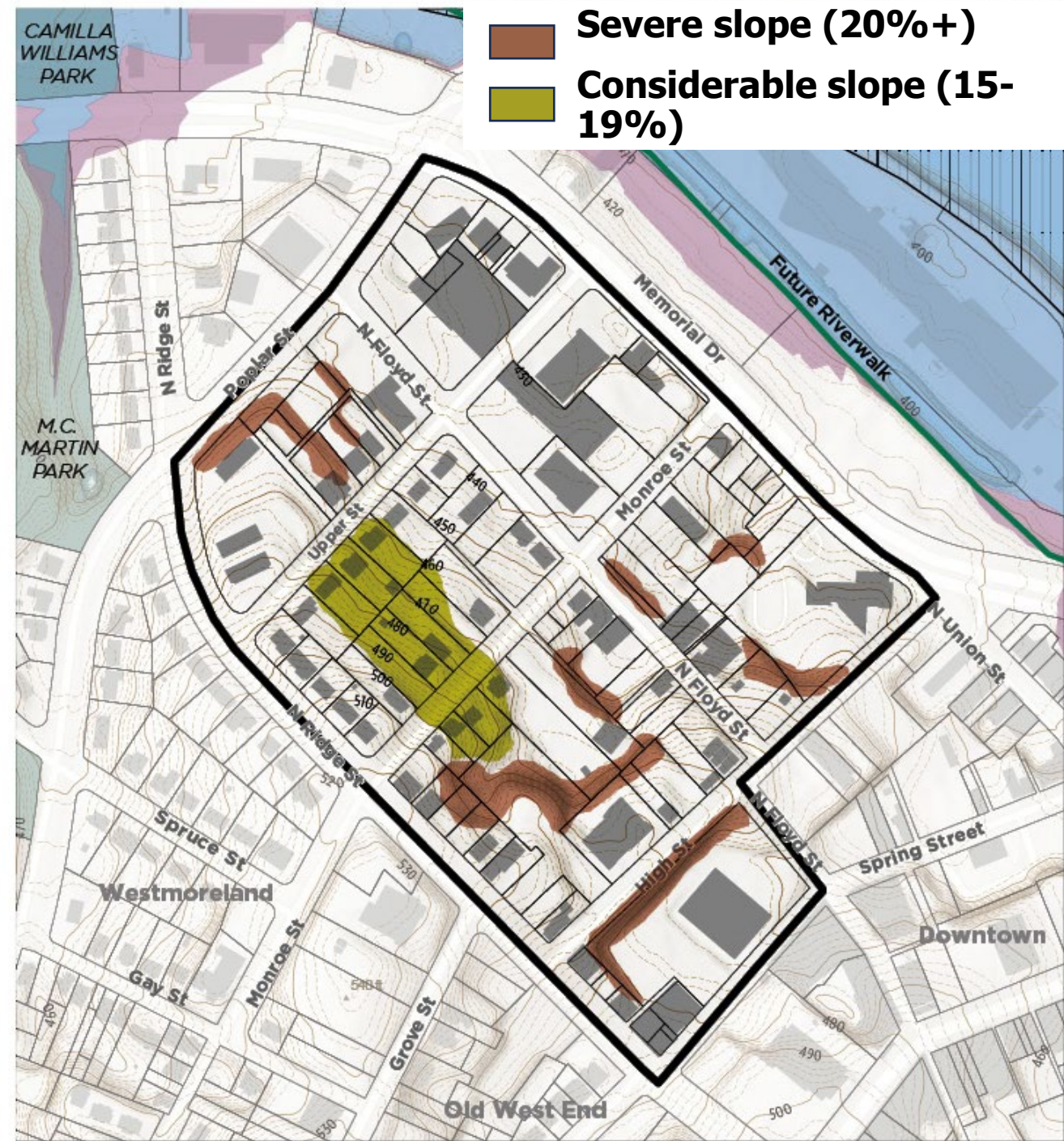
-  OTR - Old Town Residential
-  HRC - Highway Retail Commercial
-  MR - Multifamily Residential
-  AR - Attached Residential
-  TOC - Transitional Office
-  CBC - Central Business District



Sloped Terrain

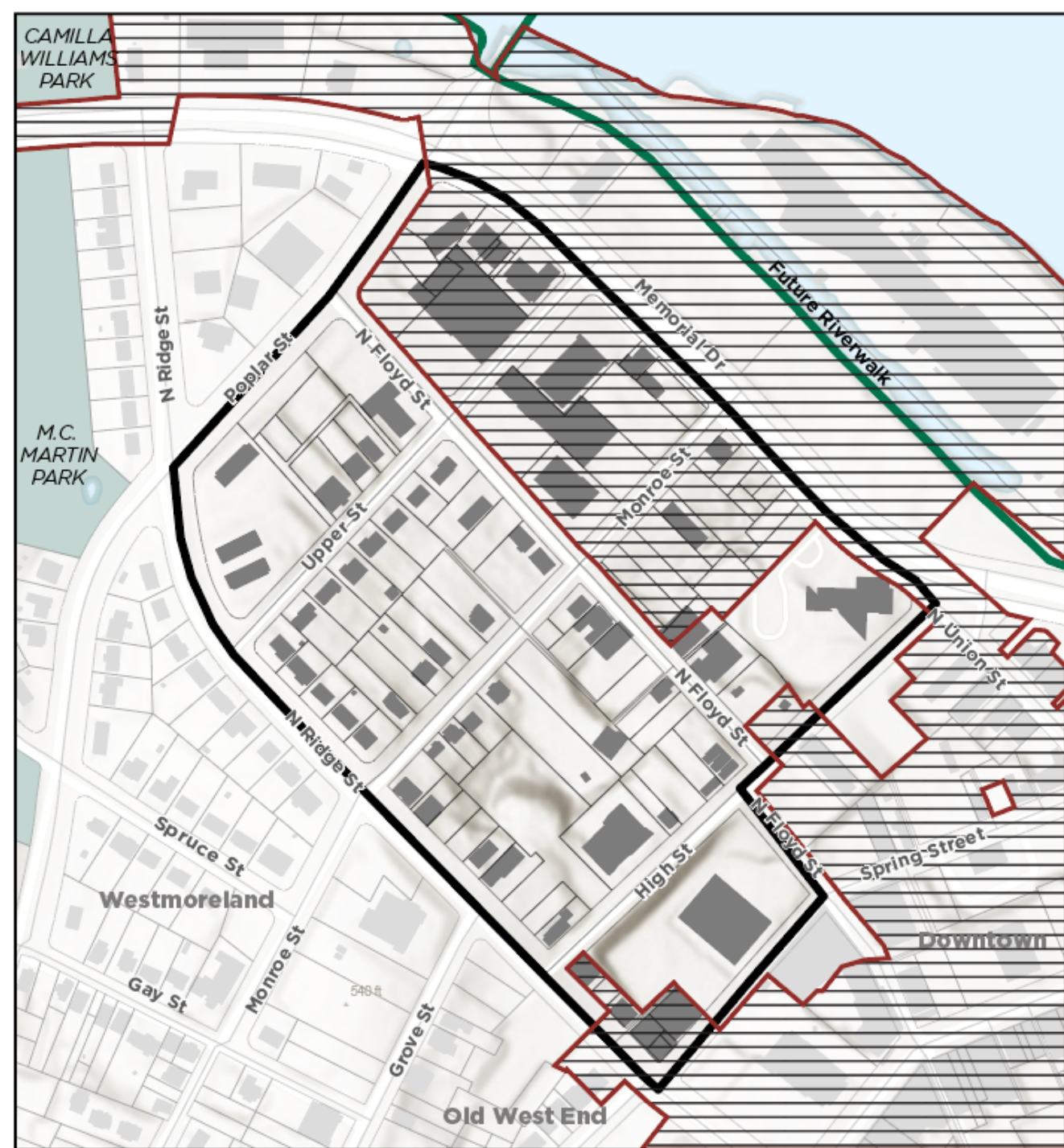


- Drops ~100 feet from Ridge St to Memorial Drive
- Challenging for cycling, walking, ADA accessibility
- Potential construction challenges
- Provides scenic views



Enterprise Zone

- Partnership program between state and local government
- Encourages job creation and private investment
- Provides two grant-based initiatives
 - Job Creation Grant
 - Real Property Investment Grant



White Mill Redevelopment (2020)

Dan River Falls (a.k.a White Mill)

- First floor: 147,000 square feet of commercial (office, retail)
- Floors 2-4: 150 residential units, some income restricted



Morotock Building (~2026)

- Historic building @ Floyd & Spring Streets
- Renovation
- 41 residential units, 20% affordable @ 80% AMI and below



Listening Sessions Takeaways

Development and Economic Landscape

- **High Demand for Residential:** 0% vacancy in the River District – think 2,000 units could easily be absorbed in the next few years
- **Commercial Challenges:** need more residential in downtown area to support existing commercial
- **Existing Policies/Ordinances:** Many incentives and tax deferral programs. Zoning is being modified to allow slightly denser housing but overall, the zoning district doesn't permit significant density in Mechanicsville
- **Existing Development Momentum:** Several development projects underway and/or planned in and around the district in the coming years
- **Cost of Development:** Apartment costs average \$250k - \$365k per unit

Interactive Feedback

History & Culture

Public Space & Streets

Economic Development

History & Culture



- How do we best tell the history & culture of Mechanicsville?
- Should we integrate history & culture into public spaces and streetscapes?
- Do we need a physical location (e.g. museum) to display history & culture?

Please place a dot by your top three (3) preferences for each group below.

Let us know if we missed anything.

Write it here...

Historical Elements



History Trail/Tours



Interpretive Signage



Street Sign Toppers



Historic Markers



Rehabilitation



Museum

Cultural Elements



Art Programs



Cultural Center



Festivals



Banners



Storytelling



Youth Activities

Public Space & Streets



- What would make streets more attractive?
- Do we need places for people to gather?
- Which placemaking elements are ideal?

Let us know if we missed anything.

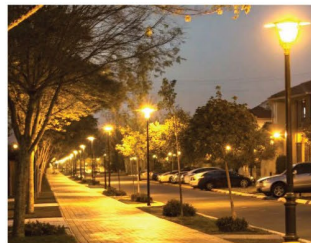
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Please place a dot by your top three (3) preferences for each group below.

Street Elements



Street Trees



Pedestrian Lighting



Street Furnishings



Connected Sidewalks

Public Spaces



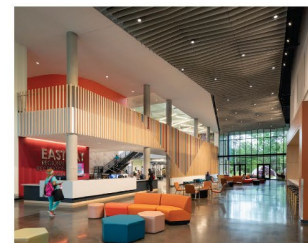
Pocket Park



Play Area



Plaza



Community Center

Placemaking



Murals/Art



Branded Signage



Cafe Seating



Landscaping

Economic Development



- What types of housing are preferred?
- Which kinds of commercial are desired?
- How can we support local, small businesses (e.g., shared spaces, studios, workshops)?

Please place a dot by your top three (3) preferences for each group below.

Let us know if we missed anything.

Write it here...

Housing Types



Urban Apartments



Live/Work



Mixed Use



Townhomes



2-4 Unit Duplexes



Small Apartment Building

Building & Site Design



Auto-Oriented



Walkable



Adaptive Reuse



Workshop/Studio/Makerspace



Small Scale/Local Retail



Strip Center

Next Steps

Can you help spread the word?

Visit:

OurMechanicsville.com

- Online community survey available through September 30!
- Community workshops



**Take the
community
survey now!**



Thank You!

Please Visit: OurMechanicsville.com