RAILROAD AVENUE COMMUNITY PLAN
DRAFT VERSION AUGUST 19, 2014

INTRODUCTION

On February 10, 2012, Brevard City Council adopted the following VISION statement for the City of Brevard, as well as the following STRATEGIES to achieve the vision:

> Vision:
> Brevard is a safe, friendly, family-oriented city with small town charm, outdoor recreation, arts & culture that bring investment opportunities, environmental consciousness, and economic diversity.
>
> > Strategy: Foster Economic Development
> > Foster economic diversity while enhancing the quality of life in an environmentally friendly way by creating an environment that promotes and encourages businesses, and business owners, attracted to and utilizing our natural assets of woods and water and our cultural/historic assets of music, arts, and outdoor recreation
> >
> > Strategy: Enhance Quality of Life
> > Enhance the quality of life in our community by bringing people of all ages together through physical connections within our community and to our natural assets of woods and water and personal connections to each other and to our cultural/historic assets of music, arts, and outdoor recreation

This vision and its associated strategies provide a broad framework for the evaluation of future, public policy decisions and investments in public infrastructure and services within the City of Brevard. Community planning, or "small area planning", is a is a process through which citizens, the Planning Board, City Council, City Staff and other stakeholders collaborate to translate the vision and strategies into action at the neighborhood level.

This Railroad Avenue Community Plan sets forth the public policies and investments that the City of Brevard will employ in support of private sector investment, revitalization and redevelopment efforts in the Railroad Avenue community. The geographic extent of this Plan is depicted upon Map 01: Study Area Boundary, below.

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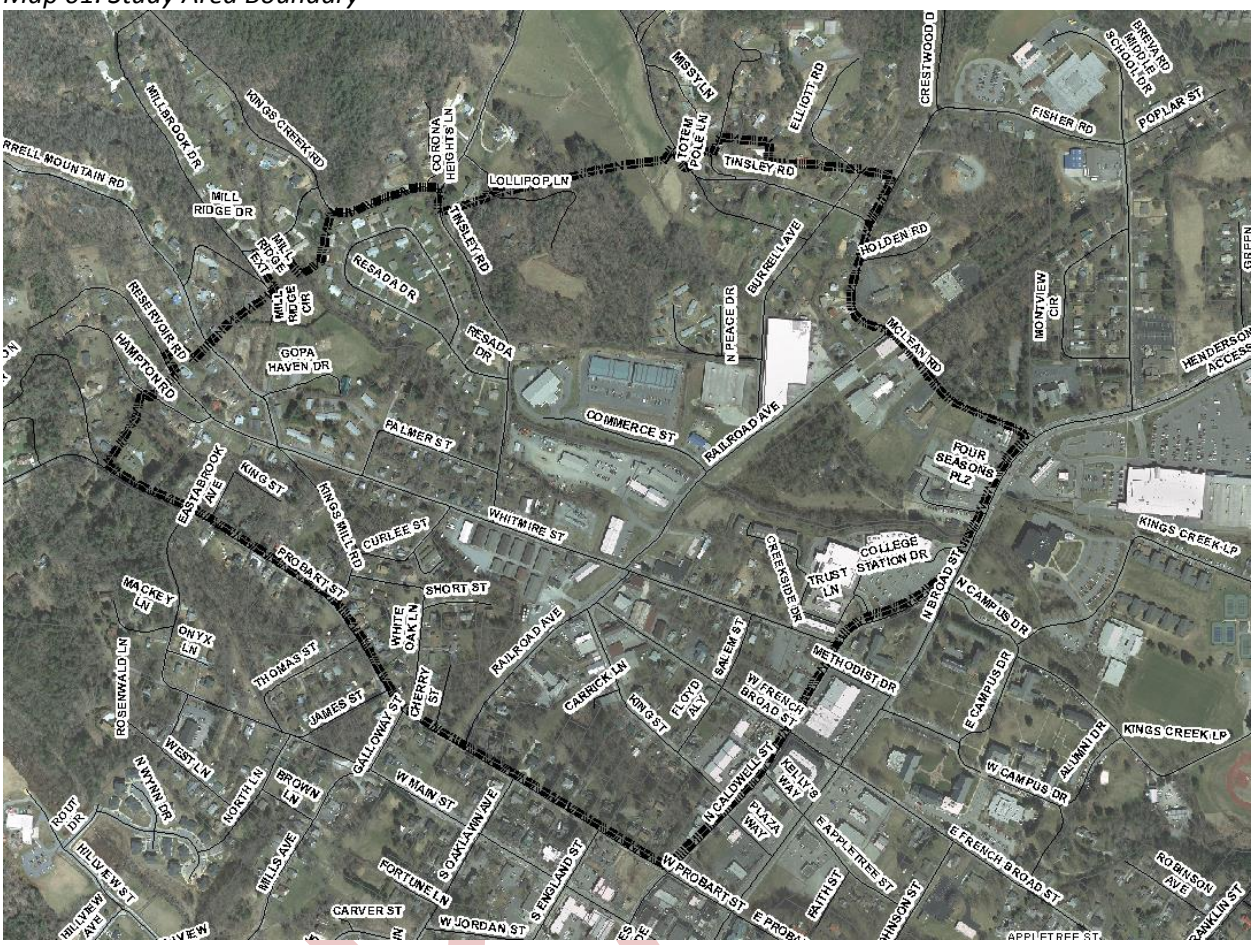
Map 01: Study Area Boundary



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BACKGROUND

Change has been a constant factor in the Railroad Avenue community. The community was the original "downtown" Brevard. It began as the site of King's Mill, where farmers came to grind grains and trade news.

A thriving residential and commercial center emerged, particularly after the establishment of Brevard's train depot in the community. The depot served passengers, commerce, and the county's tourism industry until rail service was discontinued.

After "Downtown" Brevard shifted southeast with the construction of the Transylvania County Courthouse, the community remained a center of industrial activity. Despite the decline of industrial activity, this history is still visible in the physical character of the community, from the mill houses along Whitmire Street, to the warehouses at the Lumber Yard (former Brevard Lumber Company site).

Today, a new community is emerging. Reinvestment in distressed residential properties has increased. Public input reveals a perception that the community is poised to become a center for music and the arts. In fact, during the development of this Plan, a number of important art-oriented investments have occurred:

- The Brevard Lumber Company site, now known as the Lumber Yard, was purchased and is now undergoing rehabilitation with an emphasis upon the arts
- The Haen Gallery, a gallery specializing in fine art and sculpture, has opened at the Lumber Yard
- 185 King Street, a music venue located along King Street, has opened and would appear to be successful
- George Peterson, a local artist, has opened the Circle Factory, a sculpture studio and gallery.

However, these private sector investments are occurring within a challenging environment. While reinvestment in residential properties is occurring, many properties remain dilapidated and are a deterrent to further investment. Public infrastructure within the community – streets, sidewalks, underground utilities – is among the oldest in the City, and in dire need of improvement.

This Plan will identify actions that will improve the investment environment in the Railroad Avenue community.

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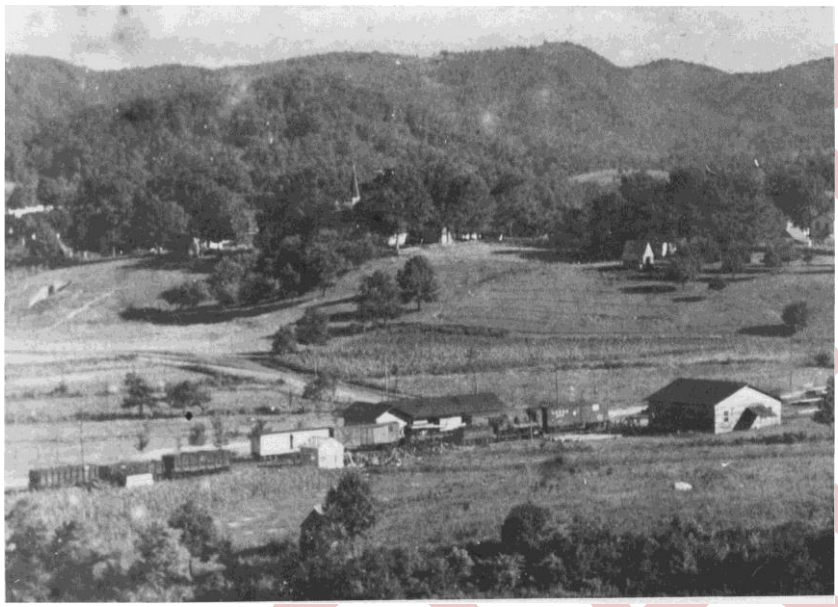
A BRIEF COMMUNITY HISTORY

The Railroad Avenue community is Brevard's original downtown. It was home to Brevard's rail depot, numerous boarding houses, Pisgah Mills, lumber and stock yards, and residents all along the socioeconomic scale. In Fact, Leander Gash was reported to have built his trading post at the intersection of what is now Railroad Avenue and Probart Street in what is now the Red House Inn, because it was at a vital crossroads for trade in the area[1].



View from the Brevard Davidson River Presbyterian Church on Probart Street of the train arriving in the early 1900's (Courtesy of the Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room, Transylvania County Library)

The Brevard Depot was located at the corner of Railroad Avenue and Whitmire Street. The plans for a rail line from Hendersonville to Brevard came to fruition in the mid 1890's, when the Whitmire family provided the Town of Brevard the land necessary to build a depot; land was provided upon the condition that there was continuous rail use at the depot, and that the depot be constructed within two years[2]; when the land was no longer used to provide rail service, the property was intended to revert back to the heirs of the Whitmire family.

The Brevard Depot was constructed by 1895 as the railway was extended 22 miles from Hendersonville to Brevard at a cost of approximately $130,000. This extension provided enough service to pay the debt of the line construction and a net profit of approximately $2,500 per year by the turn of the century[3]. Over time, the rail line was extended to Lake Toxaway, and the Brevard Depot became one of 17 depot or flag stops in Transylvania County[4].

The original depot was destroyed by fire on November 12, 1913 and, according to local recollection, was rebuilt roughly a year later[5].

Trains came daily with passengers, freight, and the trunks that children would use to store their belongings while attending area summer camps[6].

A train arriving at the Brevard Depot with hackneys waiting to transport cargo and passengers (Courtesy of the Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room, Transylvania County Library).

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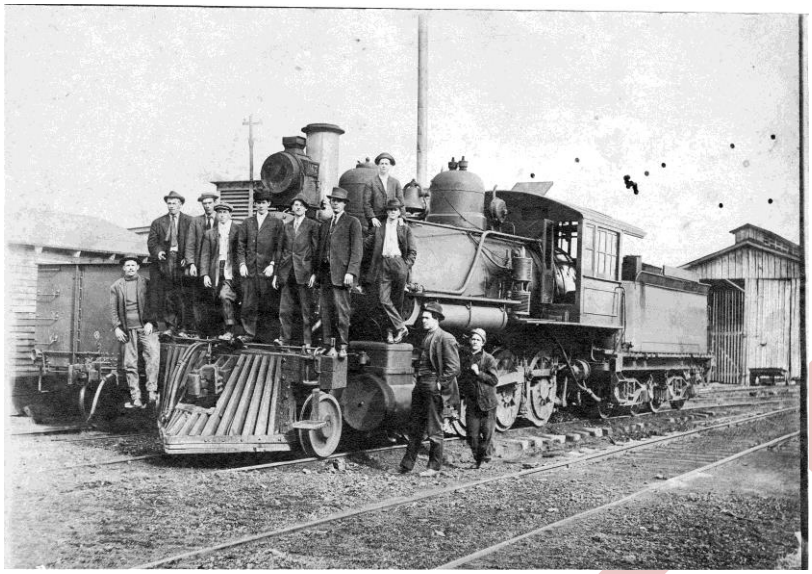


A Baldwin Engine arrives from Hendersonville in the early 1900's (Courtesy of the Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room, Transylvania County Library).

Passenger rail service within Transylvania County was discontinued in 1968, after nearly 75 years of service. This came at a time when passenger rail was on the decline nationwide as a result of State and Federal investments in roads and highways, and the emergence of the interstate highway system. The depot was torn down in 1981[7]. Ironically, before the structure was demolished, both City and County governments were approached with the possibility of acquiring the property for use as a farmer's market or a venue for the Brevard Little Theatre[8].

The Railroad Avenue community was home to a number of other important businesses and activities. In fact, it was such a busy area that the streets going from the depot to Caldwell Street were some of the only paved streets in Brevard until the 1920's; the only other paved streets were in the immediate vicinity of the Courthouse[9].

There were grist mills and feed stores like W.S. Ashworth & Sons on King Street, planing mills like Thompson's Millworks, and grocers such as Flave Holden[10].

The Brevard Depot Station before it was torn down (Courtesy of the Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room, Transylvania County Library).

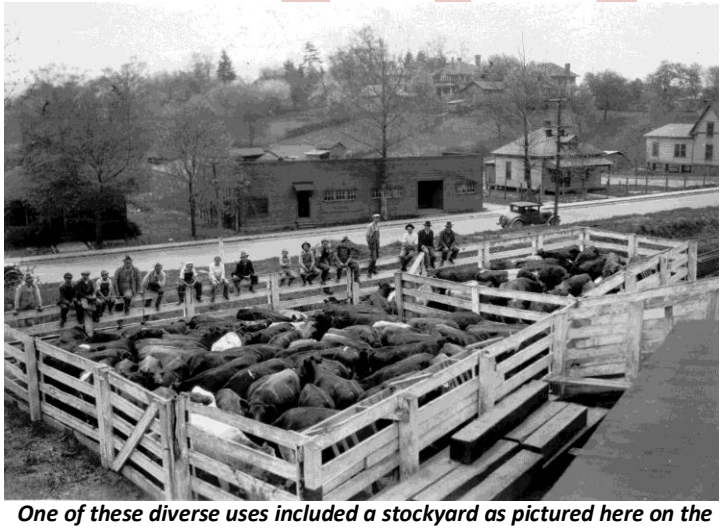
The area was also home to the Brevard Lumber Company, founding in 1910 by Frank Jenkins[11]. The company acquired Stone Lumber Yard in 1914 and continued to expand, adding onto operations over the years, carrying 250,000 board feet of stock into the 1970's[12]. Brevard lumber Company was purchased by Westhall Chandley in 1988 and closed in 2008.

There were grocery stores and general stores like Curlee's Store and Smith's Grocery, where the Smith family lived above the grocery and, and where one might see muskrat skins drying outside. There was Perkins Oil Company and Hamilton Well Drilling, Bridges Coal & Oil Company, and a concrete plant. The Railroad Avenue community may not have been considered affluent, but it was a vibrant and active community with a wide diversity of businesses and industries[13].

View of one section of the Brevard Lumber Company from King Street (Courtesy of the Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room, Transylvania County Library).

Jonathon King and his family operated a grist mill in the area that is now Millbrook Estates. King built the mill in 1840 and produced everything from flour and cornmeal to lumber for fine furniture. Unfortunately, the mill did not survive the Flood of 1916 and was never rebuilt[14]. However, the King family's influence lives on as the creek that powered the mill is now named King's Creek.

Pisgah Mills was another prominent industry in the neighborhood. Originally constructed in 1906[15], the mill made industrial yarn on a twenty-four hour basis, according to Brance Grogran who went to work at the mill at the age of twelve, earning forty cents a day[16]. The mill was sold a number of times before a South Carolina cotton broker turned its management over to his son, Felix Montgomery Jr. in 1959; the younger Montgomery was apparently known for his white plantation suit, white shoes, and white car, but not for his business acumen. The mill closed a year later, in 1960[17].



One of these diverse uses included a stockyard as pictured here on the left which was located on Railroad Avenue (Courtesy of the Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room, Transylvania County Library).

The mill employed over fifty workers at the time, who were generally housed in company housing on Whitmire, Palmer and Curlee streets, as well as King's Mill[18]. Many of the homes were sold to the employees of Pisgah Mills when the company closed in 1960. Until the late 1980's, former mill employees gathered every year for an annual reunion.

There was a church located at the corner of King Street and Railroad Avenue; the Second Baptist Church was founded in 1939 by Reverend F. B. McCauley of Greenville, SC, who noted that, "no town should have only one Baptist Church"[19]. The building, which still stands today, was built on a lot bought at auction for $10 and was used until the church outgrew the building. The

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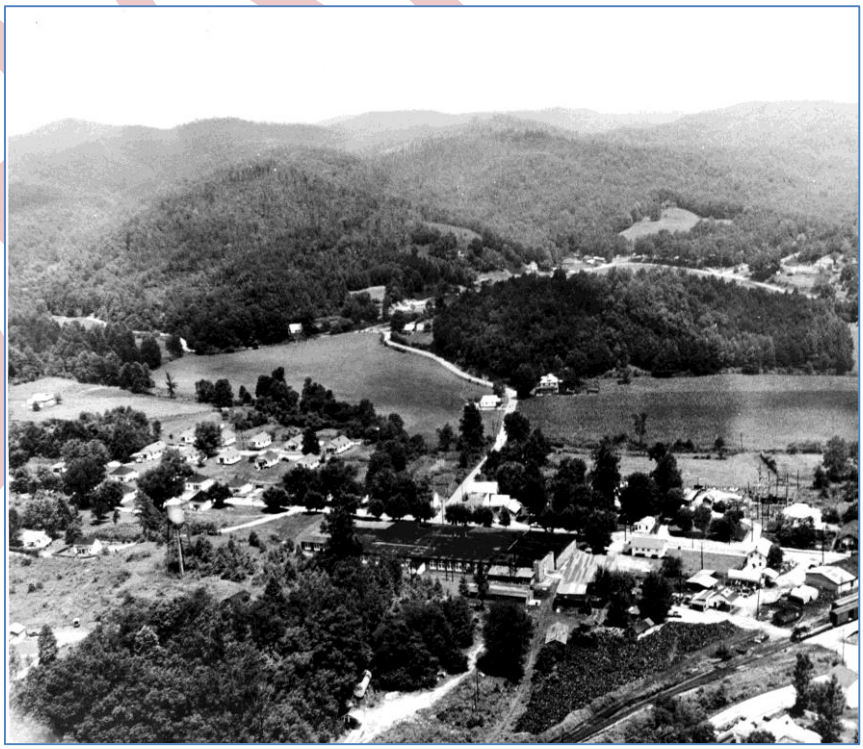
King's Mill (Courtesy of the Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room, Transylvania County Library).

congregation moved Outland Avenue in 1964, and become Morningside Baptist Church[20]. There are several older houses still standing in the neighborhood that have been in continuous use for a century or more, including the cooper house, which was constructed in 1890 on Whitmire Street; the Townsend House on Probart Street, which was used as a boarding house until 1905; and the Norwood House, built in 1920, which was once used as a hospital[21].

The William Breese House was built in 1890 on the corner of Caldwell and Whitmire Streets. The house was used as a popular resort around the turn of the century, as a girl's dormitory for the Brevard Institute and Brevard College, and even as the Sharing House in the 1980's before it was torn down in 2003[22].

Another notable house, the Red House Inn, was built in 1851 by Leander Gash. It served as a trading post on the route to Charleston, SC, and sold everything from venison, hides and feathers, to chestnuts, wild honey, and vegetables[23]. W. Probart Poor ran the store, which eventually became known as Poor's Store. Probart Street was originally named Poor Street in honor of W. Probart Poor. The Red House also served as a rail station at one time, the first County Courthouse, and the first Post Office[24]. Leander Gash was one of three men who donated fifty acres for a town site prior to the county's incorporation. One of the stipulations of the county charter was that the permanent county seat had to be located within one third of a mile from Poor's Store[25]. Main Street was then load out on the boundary line between the Gash and England holdings[26]. The Red House also used as a hotel favored by Low Country gentry and as a girl's school, the Brevard



View of Pisgah Mills. The Brevard Depot can be seen in the lower right. (Courtesy of the Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room, Transylvania County Library).

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Institute[27], before becoming a residence. Today, it is a bed and breakfast inn.

Today, there is a resurgence of interest in the Railroad Avenue community, indicators of which include the following:

- Since 2010, there has been significant reinvestment in existing residential properties within the study area. In the 2010-2014 (year to date) timeframe, structure valuations within the study have risen from $46,636,395 to $82,957,600.

- The Lumber Yard (formerly Brevard Lumber Company) was purchased by real estate investor Josh Leder in 2012; since that time Leder has invested over $300,000 in improvements to the site, has recruited the successful Haen Gallery to the site, and is actively seeking other tenants in the arts and entertainment sectors to locate upon the site. When complete, the Lumber Yard will be a major anchor and driver of redevelopment in the community.

- In 2011, Jackson Wine opened 185 King Street, a night club and music venue. At the time, area residents expressed concern that the club would introduce noise, traffic and crime that would be a detriment to the neighborhood. However, the club has proven to be a successful venture that adds vibrancy and energy to the neighborhood.

Janet Grant and her grandfather pictured in front of Pisgah Mills' company housing (Courtesy of the Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room, Transylvania County Library).

Major William Breese House was located at 500 North Caldwell and is shown here with an England delivery cart in front in the early 1900s (Courtesy of the Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room, Transylvania County Library).

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A school picture of the students of the Epworth School, which later became the Brevard Institute (Courtesy of the Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room, Transylvania County Library).

The Red House after several additions and renovations (Courtesy of the Rowell Bosse North Carolina Room, Transylvania County Library).

INSERT MODERN DAY REDHOUSE PHOTO

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INFRASTRUCTURE

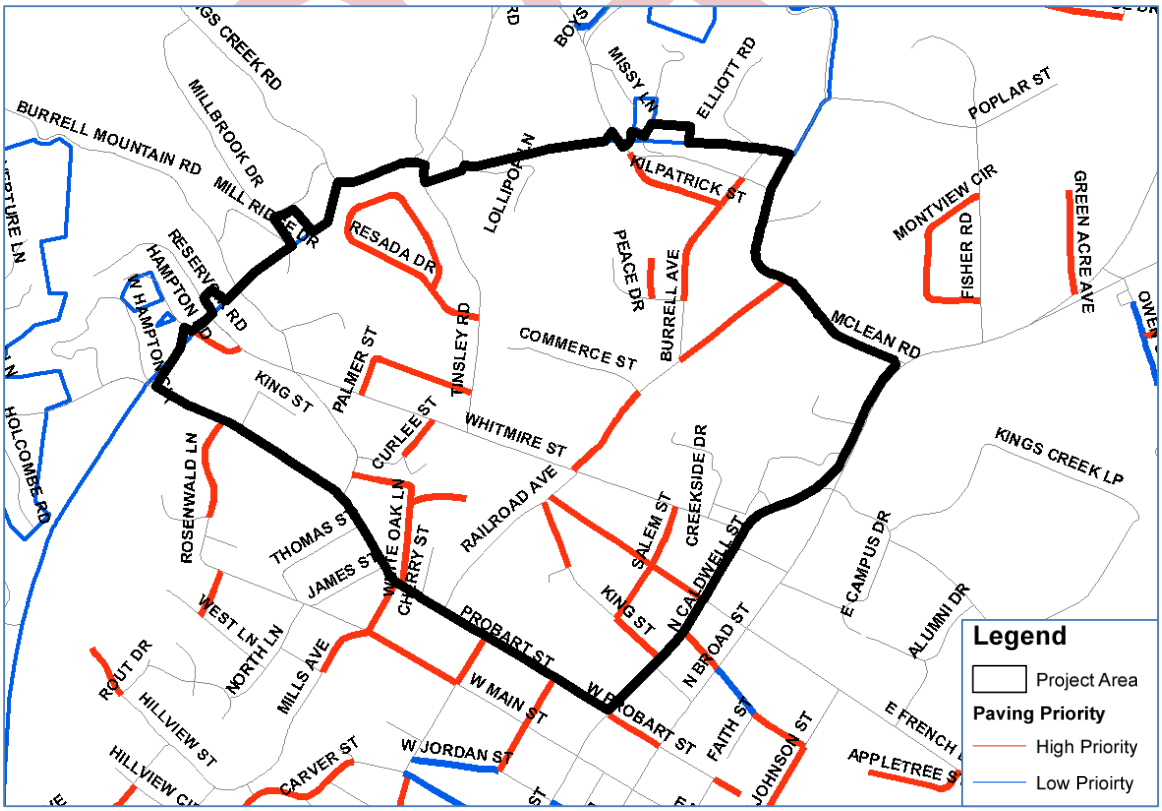
Infrastructure Challenges & Opportunities

The central goal of this plan is to guide public policies and investments that will support private sector investment, revitalization and redevelopment efforts in the community; robust, high-quality public infrastructure is the single most important tool that the City of Brevard can bring to bear to achieve that goal. Public infrastructure includes streets, sidewalks, and greenways; parks and recreational options; water for fire suppression and human consumption; sanitary sewer; public parking; and curb and gutter, drop inlets, and underground piping to collect and convey storm water. Private infrastructure, including natural gas and telecommunications infrastructure, is not addressed in this plan.

At the present time, it cannot be said that the City of Brevard is providing robust, high-quality public infrastructure within the Railroad Avenue community. The following infrastructure challenges and opportunities are recognized by this plan:

1. In 2012, the City of Brevard conducted a city-wide pavement condition rating survey. Streets were evaluated based upon the severity of their condition and ranked as "High", "Medium" and "Low" priority for resurfacing. Map: 2012 Street Condition Survey illustrates the high priority streets throughout the city, including within the study area. Virtually every street in the study area was identified as a high priority for resurfacing. Since the completion of the survey, Resada drive has been resurfaced, but many other streets in the study area remain in need of resurfacing, and deterioration will accelerate without attention.

Map 02: 2012 Street Condition Survey



2. Potable water and sanitary sewer infrastructure within the study area is among the oldest such infrastructure within the City of Brevard, and most of such infrastructure has never been accurately mapped. Long stretches of the main water line that exits the City's reservoir off Reservoir and Hampton roads (just west of and outside the study area) and serves the entire study area and much of the rest of the city, is situated literally beneath homes along Hampton Road and Whitmire Street; this makes it virtually impossible to maintain the water line, and is a major encumbrance to property owners.

   Water pressure within the portion of the study are that lies between Railroad Avenue and Caldwell Street (Whitmire Street, French Broad Street, and King Street) is limited; it is unlikely that a modern commercial fire suppression system would be adequately served, which is an impediment to economic development.

   Much of the sanitary sewer within the study area is conveyed through very old cast iron or terra cotta pipe; camera inspections reveal that these pipes are crumbling, creating openings where surface and ground water is entering the pipes and overwhelming the Neely Road sewer pump stations during rain events (known as "Inflow & Infiltration", or "I&I"). This creates sanitary sewer overflows, which are environmentally harmful and result in the City receiving fines from the State of North Carolina, not to mention frequent and negative media attention. The City of Brevard has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to reduce I&I in the King's Creek basin, but more investment is needed to address this problem.

3. Storm water infrastructure within the study area is limited to non-existent. Resada Drive, located within the newest development within the neighborhood, has limited storm water infrastructure in place. A short section of Whitmire Street west of Railroad Avenue, and a short section of King Street east of Railroad Avenue, is served by very old, undersized, and failing storm water infrastructure. Otherwise, the study area is devoid of a cohesive, functional underground storm water system.

   Further, many of smaller residential streets in the study area (i.e., Curlee St., White Oak Ln., Burrell Ave., Kilpatrick St.) were built with adjacent ditches to convey storm water; these ditches have not been adequately maintained; culverts are filled with sediment or have been crushed, and ditches have filled in with sediment and vegetation.

   As a result of these conditions, many of the streets and private properties experience localized flooding during rain events; in some cases property damage is the result. Also, these conditions contribute to an overall sense of dilapidation within the study area.

4. The location and condition of existing pedestrian infrastructure in the study area is shown on MAP 03: Existing Sidewalks. Existing sidewalks within the study area are failing; in many locations they are hazardous and unusable. With the exception of Whitmire Street, which has a crumbling and often obstructed four-foot wide sidewalk, sidewalks are nonexistent west of Railroad Avenue. The southern terminus of the City's greenway system is located at the intersection of Mclean Road and Railroad Avenue, on the northern boundary of the study area. Pedestrians and bicyclists frequently walk or ride on Railroad Avenue enroute to or from Ingles Grocery or the greenway, often intermingled with motor vehicle traffic. Residents of Resada Drive must walk on Tinsley Road, which has limited sight distance and no shoulders on which to escape a speeding vehicle.

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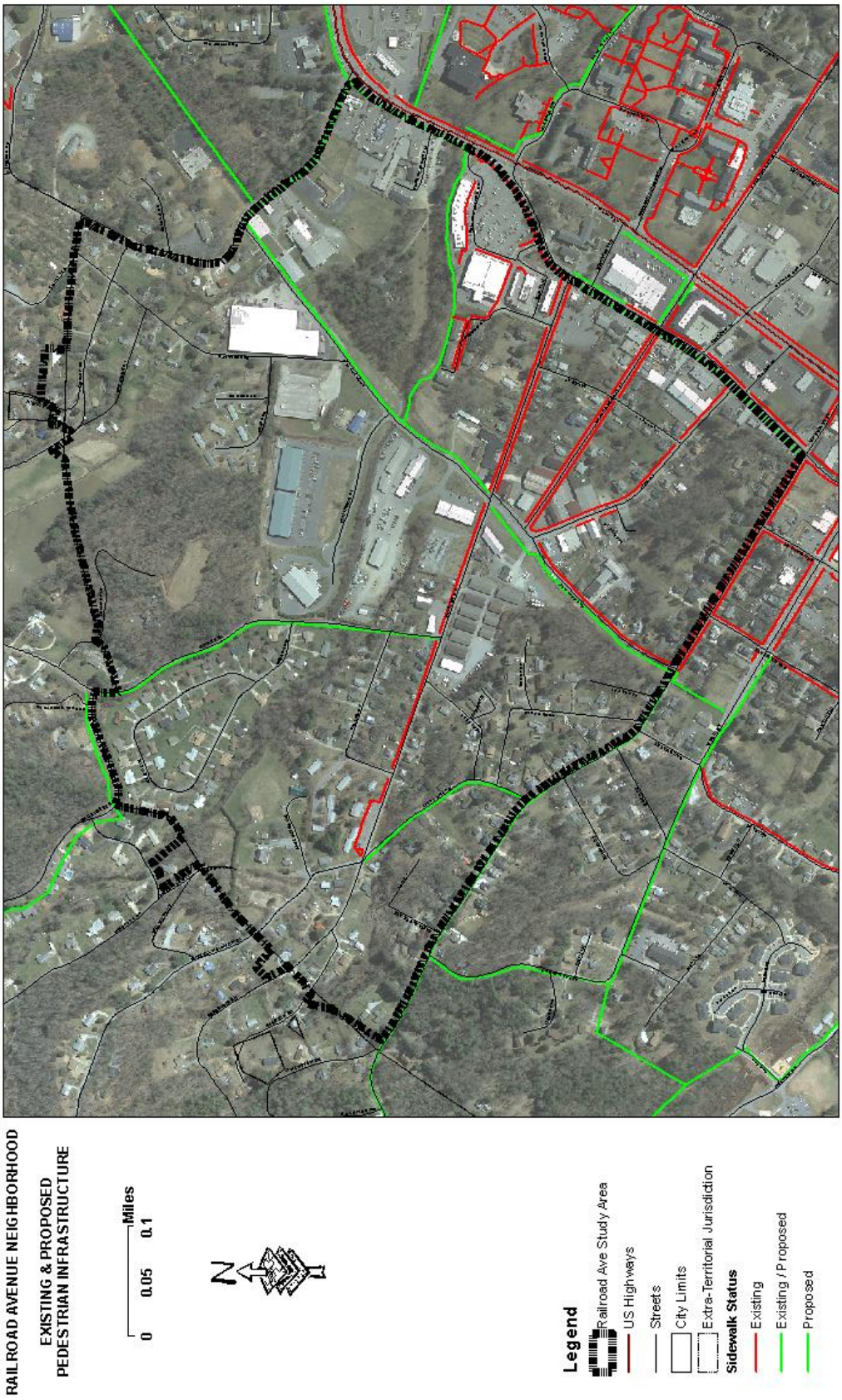
Map 03: Existing & Proposed Pedestrian Infrastructure



Given its location in proximity to downtown Brevard, Brevard College, Brevard Middle School, and the businesses and services along Asheville Highway, the neighborhood should be viewed by the City as an opportunity to transform the neighborhood into a model for walkability.

5. Recreational infrastructure is nonexistent within the study area. The close recreational amenity is the City's greenway system, the southern terminus of which is located at the intersection of Mclean Road and Railroad Avenue, on the northern boundary of the study area.

6. The Railroad Avenue Bridge over King's Creek is failing; the North Carolina Department of Transportation has inspected the bridge on behalf of the City, and has determined that the bridge must be replaced by 2016, or it must be condemned and closed. Given that Railroad Avenue is a major corridor for commercial, industrial and local commuter traffic, closure would have dire transportation and economic consequences.

   The North Carolina Department of Transportation has committed 80% of the funding for bridge replacement, with the City of Brevard responsible for the remaining 20%. Engineering and design is occurring as of July 2014.

7. The 2007 Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan and the 2007 Transylvania County Transportation Plan call for the construction of the "West Loop" and the extension of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure from the southern terminus of the City's greenway system at Mclean Road, to Main Street. The West Loop is a road that will extend from approximately Blue Ridge Community College to Rosman Highway, generally following Railroad Avenue and the former Norfolk Southern Railroad Line; its purpose is to provide an alternate route for local traffic so as to relieve congestion on Asheville Highway from the Huddle House to Food Lion (this stretch of highway has been identified as functioning over its designed capacity as of 2007).

   The North Carolina Department of Transportation has committed future funding for the installation of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure along Railroad Avenue, and there is a strong possibility that future funding will become available for the West Loop, as well.

8. The 2007 Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan recommended the installation of a greenway connecting Brevard College to Railroad Avenue along King's Creek. The City has acquired a majority of the right-of-way necessary to construct this greenway. Remaining challenges include funding, minor right-of-way acquisition near the Railroad Avenue Bridge over King's Creek, and the major challenge of getting bicycles and pedestrians across Asheville Highway.

9. The intersections of Railroad Avenue, King Street, Whitmire Street, and French Broad Street are poorly aligned, poorly defined, and dangerous.

10. There is insufficient public parking to support commerce within the commercially zoned area surrounding the Lumber Yard, and on-street parking along Whitmire, French Broad and King streets is undefined and occurs in a haphazard, hazardous manner.

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Infrastructure Actions

The City will take the following actions to address the aforementioned infrastructure challenges and opportunities:

- Infrastructure Action # 01: A Land Surveyor will conduct an inventory of, and accurately map, all existing underground public infrastructure. [Note: this action is currently funded and is under way as of July, 2014.]

- Infrastructure Action # 02: A Civil Engineer will develop an infrastructure rehabilitation master plan that will identify the means and sequencing for comprehensive infrastructure rehabilitation. It will prioritize and coordinate the incremental replacement of underground and above ground infrastructure so as to achieve efficiencies and economies of scale. It will break study area-wide improvements into phases that are small enough that City Forces will be able to implement the improvements. However, if funding becomes available, multiple phases will be bundled together and offered for bid to private sector contractors. This action includes programming the installation of new underground storm water infrastructure, replacing sanitary sewer infrastructure, improving water pressure to support fire suppression in the area between Railroad Avenue and Caldwell Street, and relocation of the main water line from the Reservoir along Whitmire Street to the public right-of-way. [Note: master planning elements of this action is currently funded and is under way as of July, 2014.]

- Infrastructure Action # 03: City Staff will develop a ditch line rehabilitation plan and implementation schedule for those streets currently without curb and gutter.

- Infrastructure Action # 04: A Civil Engineer will develop a streetscape template for King Street, Whitmire Street (east of Railroad Avenue), and French Broad Street. This template will identify the design of the streetscape, which will be implemented as part of construction projects identified by Infrastructure Action # 02. It will include the width of travel lanes, the style of curb and gutter, the design of landscape planting strips, sidewalk placement and materials, street light style, and any street furniture (benches, etc.). [Note: this action is currently funded and is under way as of July, 2014.]

- Infrastructure Action # 05: The City will replace the Railroad Avenue Bridge over King's Creek. In doing so, widen and realign the bridge to accommodate the future West Loop and bicycle / pedestrian infrastructure. [Note: this action is currently funded and is under way as of July, 2014.]

- Infrastructure Action # 06: The City will employ a Civil Engineer to engineer and design "West Loop Phase I", from Main Street to Mclean Road; this will include a new intersection at West Main Street, revised intersections at Probart Street and Mclean Road, and intersection realignment and overall improvement at the Railroad Avenue / King Street / French Broad Street / Whitmire Street intersection. Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure will be included in this design. The City will adopt a right-of-way map that will identify and preserve future West Loop right-of-way. The City will secure any needed right-of-way through property acquisition. The City will advocate for the project to be included for funding upon the North Carolina Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). [Note: As of July, 2014, a conceptual design of the west loop is currently under development, and Staff is shepherding the project through the process for inclusion on the STIP.]

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- Infrastructure Action # 07: The City will construct and operate a small, neighborhood park. This park will be ½ to 1 acre in size, and will include play equipment for small children, general open space for play, and a small shelter for picnics. It will also include interpretive signage addressing neighborhood history. The neighborhood park will be located in the immediate vicinity of the Railroad Avenue / King Street / French Broad Street / Whitmire Street intersection, and will be situated adjacent to public parking.

- Infrastructure Action # 08: The City will establish an off-street parking lot in the vicinity of the Railroad Avenue / King Street / French Broad Street / Whitmire Street intersection. This parking lot will be designed to accommodate approximately 50 automobiles, as well as motorcycles and bicycles. Also, the City will delineate on-street parking spaces along the commercially zoned portions of King and French Broad Streets. [Note: As of Jul 2014, the on-street parking portion of this action is funded and under development.]

- Infrastructure Action # 09: The City will extend new bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure along Railroad Avenue from Mclean Road to Main Street [Note: the timing and design of this action will be determined by Infrastructure Action # 06], and along Tinsley Road from Whitmire Street to Tinsley Road [Note: the timing of this action will be determined by Infrastructure Action # 02]. Also, the City will rehabilitate all existing sidewalks in the study area [Note: the timing of this action will be determined by Infrastructure Action # 02].

- Infrastructure Action # 10: The City will incorporate "festival" infrastructure within the streetscape within the commercial area in the vicinity of the Lumber Yard. This will include outdoor garbage and recycling receptacles, potable water connections, and outdoor power outlets. [Note: the timing of this action will be determined by Infrastructure Action # 02].

- Infrastructure Action # 11: The City will acquire right-of-way to support a greenway along King's creek as part of the right-of-way acquisition process for the West Loop. The City will engage NCDOT regarding the challenge of getting greenway users across Asheville Highway to Brevard College. Funding to implement this action will be determined by City Council as part of a future budget.

Funding for these public infrastructure investments will be addressed in the IMPLEMENTATION section of this plan.

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COMMUNITY

Community Challenges & Opportunities

The following community challenges and opportunities are recognized by this plan:

11. Public input indicates an interest among study area residents to develop a stronger neighborhood identity and sense community. Older neighborhood residents perceive a lack of connection with newer residents. The City can support this goal by fostering communication and collaboration among neighborhood residents.

12. Public input indicates a concern that crime is on the rise in the neighborhood. While vandalism and minor property crimes are noticeable in areas of the neighborhood, crime report statistics do not reveal any unique crime trends in the study area. However, but this fact is largely irrelevant; a perception that crime is worse in an area can have almost as much negative impact as actual crime. Perceptions impact the peace of mind of neighborhood residents, and can have a depressing effect upon property values and real estate investments.

13. Some business owners in within the commercially zoned section of the study area have expressed an interest in neighborhood branding. This could create a unifying identity for the neighborhood and enhance marketing opportunities for business owners.

14. Long-time neighborhood residents have expressed concern that the history of the neighborhood is being "lost" or forgotten. Dialogue with newer residents indicates a lack of awareness of the neighborhood's rich history.

15. The neighborhood has a disproportionally high concentration of dilapidated or abandoned structures, abandoned or neglected vacant lots, and properties with excessive uncontrolled vegetation, trash and debris, abandoned vehicles, and other nuisance conditions. These conditions contribute to an overall sense of dilapidation within the study area, and have a depressing effect upon the peace of mind of neighborhood residents, property values and real estate investments.

16. Despite recent investments in housing stock rehabilitation, many of the homes within the study area are in a deteriorated state and are in need of repairs to maintain safe living conditions. In some cases, low to moderate income homeowners are unable to afford basic improvements. In other cases, problems are the result of inattentive landlords.

17. Recent improvements to residential properties and the opening of new businesses in the neighborhood have been well-received. However, conversations with lower income residents within the study area reveals a concern that, over time, such improvements will have a "gentrifying" effect upon the neighborhood; growing demand for properties in the neighborhood, coupled with increased commercial activity, will cause an increase in real estate and rental properties that will eventually "push out" lower income residents as well as some existing commercial tenants.

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Community Actions

The City will take the following actions to address the aforementioned community challenges and opportunities:

- Community Action # 01: The City will take the lead in forming a neighborhood organization. This will initially take the form of organizing a neighborhood watch organization to support Police Department efforts to address crime. This organization will then be expanded to include neighborhood cleanup work days and neighborhood events (block parties, etc.), and to serve as a liaison between residents and City government. This organization will be a standing conduit of information between the City and the neighborhood, through which the City can secure advice and feedback regarding planned public improvements and provide information on the schedule and implications of ongoing or upcoming projects in the neighborhood.

- Community Action # 02: Using a qualified consultant, the City will support a neighborhood branding process involving the organization identified in Community Action # 01. This process may result in unique district name or brand, and may inform signage and other graphic communication, and may provide a structure around which to organize and brand the "arts district" concept addressed in the ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT section of this plan, below.

- Community Action # 03: The City will develop and install historical signage within the neighborhood.

- Community Action # 04: The City will aggressively pursue code enforcement action to address the numerous nuisance conditions within the neighborhood, as well as minimum housing code violations. The City will also organize community work days in collaboration with the organization identified in Community Action # 01, and pursue voluntary cleanup of certain nuisance conditions.

- Community Action # 05: The City will pursue Community Development Block Grants, and employ its own Affordable and Work Force Housing Trust Fund, to support housing improvements by low to moderate income homeowners. Also, the City will identify and participate in opportunities to create new affordable housing opportunities with partners such as Western Carolina Community Action, the Community Land Trust, Habitat for Humanity, and private developers. Finally, the City will encourage the Brevard Housing Authority to rehabilitate and maintain the safety and viability of public housing within the neighborhood.

Funding and the timing of these public infrastructure investments will be addressed in the IMPLEMENTATION section of this plan.

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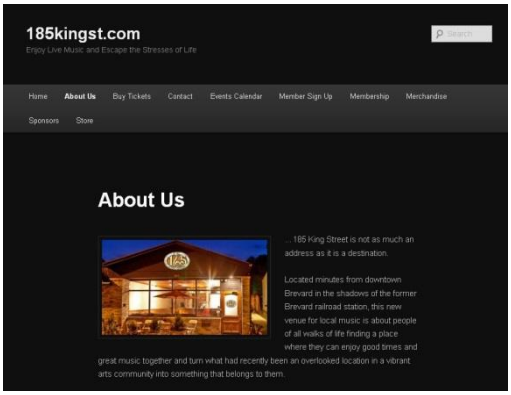
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development Challenges & Opportunities

The following economic development and opportunities are recognized by this plan:



18. As mentioned in the INFRASTRUCTURE section of this plan, the condition of existing infrastructure is an impediment to economic development within the study area.

19. As mentioned in the INFRASTRUCTURE section of this plan, public parking is insufficient to support commerce in the study area.

20. Due to their age and condition, many of the existing commercial structures within the study area are in need of significant investment. These structures are particularly challenged with respect to fire suppression and handicapped / disability access; while these are important life-safety issues, they can be costly to address and can be barriers to entry for smaller businesses. At the present time, neither the City of Brevard nor Transylvania County offer any type of small business incentives to address these issues, and state and federal resources generally target larger manufacturing businesses that can demonstrate larger job creation numbers.

21. Feedback from commercial property and business owners indicates that there is great potential for the commercial section of the study area to evolve into an "arts district". However, important infrastructure (such as "festival" infrastructure) is missing, and there is no cohesive identity or brand around which to organize and market this concept. See Community Action # 02, above.

22. Feedback from manufacturing property and business owners indicates concern over the potential closure of the Railroad Avenue Bridge over King's creek and the impacts that that may have vehicle access. Also, the intersection of Railroad Avenue and Mclean Road is poorly aligned, making large truck turning movements difficult and dangerous; and Mclean Road itself, from Railroad Avenue to Asheville Highway, needs widening and improved alignment to better support truck traffic.. Finally, residents along Whitmire, King and French Broad streets have expressed concern about a perceived increase in large truck traffic along those streets, a concern that might be addressed by improving large truck movements onto and along Mclean Road.

Economic Development Actions

The City will take the following actions to address the aforementioned economic development challenges and opportunities:

- See Community Action # 02, above, regarding branding and arts district development.

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- See Infrastructure Actions, above, regarding parking, festival infrastructure, Railroad Avenue Bridge replacement, and other planned public infrastructure investments that will support economic development.

- Economic Development Action # 01: The City will establish a "building reinvestment grant and revolving loan" program. This program will fund limited improvements to commercial properties to incentivize their reuse and lower barriers to entry by small businesses. Funding will be address in the IMPLEMENTATION section of this plan.

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LAND USE

Land Use & Zoning Challenges & Opportunities

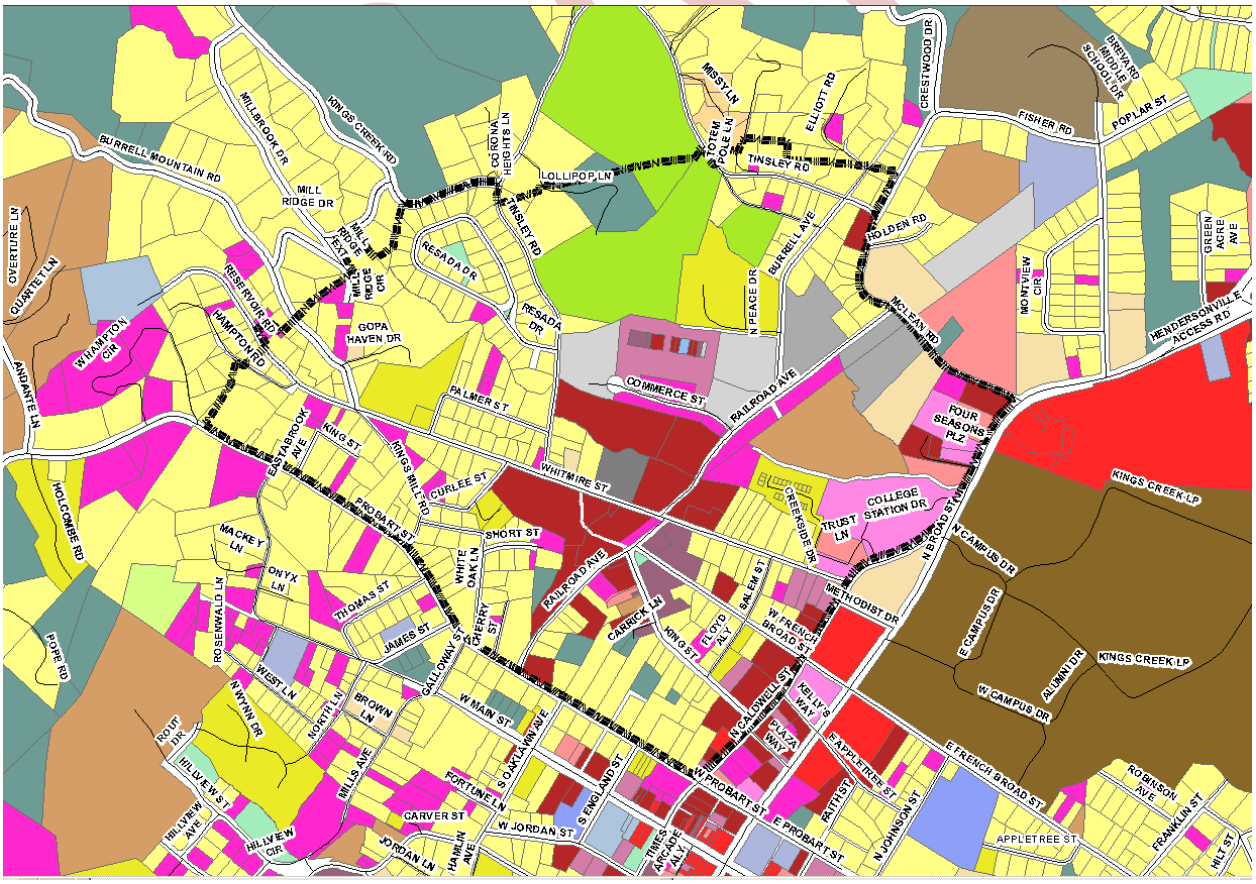
Current land use is illustrated on Map 4, below:

Illustration X: Land Use Map Legend

Current Land Use

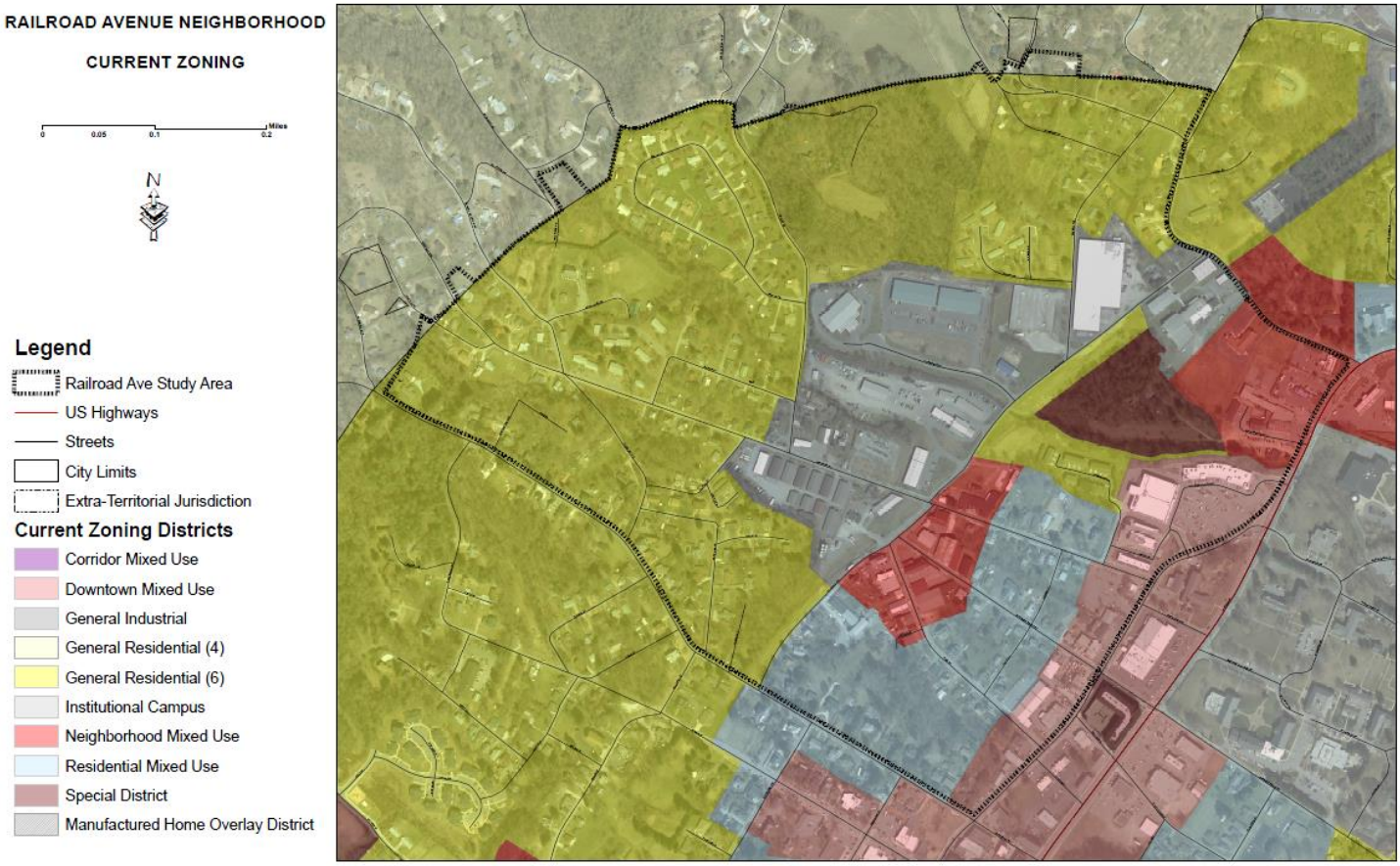
- 11: Single Family
- 12: Multi-Family
- 13: Mobile Home Park
- 21: Manufacturing - Neighborhood
- 22: Manufacturing - Light
- 23: Manufacturing - Heavy
- 31: Agriculture
- 33: Conservation
- 34: Vacant
- 35: Undeveloped
- 36: Developed Recreation
- 37: Water Bodies
- 38: Cemeteries
- 41: Municipal
- 42: County
- 43: Federal
- 44: State
- 51: College
- 52: High School
- 53: Elementary School
- 54: Middle School
- 56: Camps
- 57: Churches
- 58: Other (museums, libraries, etc)
- 61: Retail
- 62: Professional/Service/General Office
- 63: Restaurant/Bar/Night Club
- 64: Parking Lot
- 65: Vacant Commercial
- 66: Mixed Use

Map 4: Current Land Use Map



Current Zoning is illustrated on Map 5, below.

Map 5: Current Zoning



The following land use and zoning challenges and opportunities are recognized by this plan:

23. Age of housing stock & relative low density presents a significant redevelopment opportunity for the real estate and land development community. Topographically speaking, area is conducive to development. The study area is walkable to downtown, services, and jobs. However, the area is fragmented by divergent zones and land uses, and redevelopment is hampered by the condition of existing infrastructure and a perception of dilapidation. Changes in zoning that would allow greater residential density in the area should be considered. Infrastructure and dilapidation challenges are addressed in the INFRASTRUCTURE and COMMUNITY sections of this plan.

24. The commercially zoned section of the study area is populated with older, unique “mill style” structures and warehouses built close to the street and property lines. Public input indicates a desire to preserve these structures and the “industrial” feel of the commercial area; input from business owners indicates a desire to ease restrictions that might impede the reuse of these structures. Under current zoning and architectural design rules, these structures are considered

pre-existing non-conforming; renovation efforts that exceed 50% of the appraised value of these structures may trigger their demolition, rather than restoration.

25. Business owners have expressed concern regarding a perceived incompatibility with the City's signage rules and the business owners' signage needs.

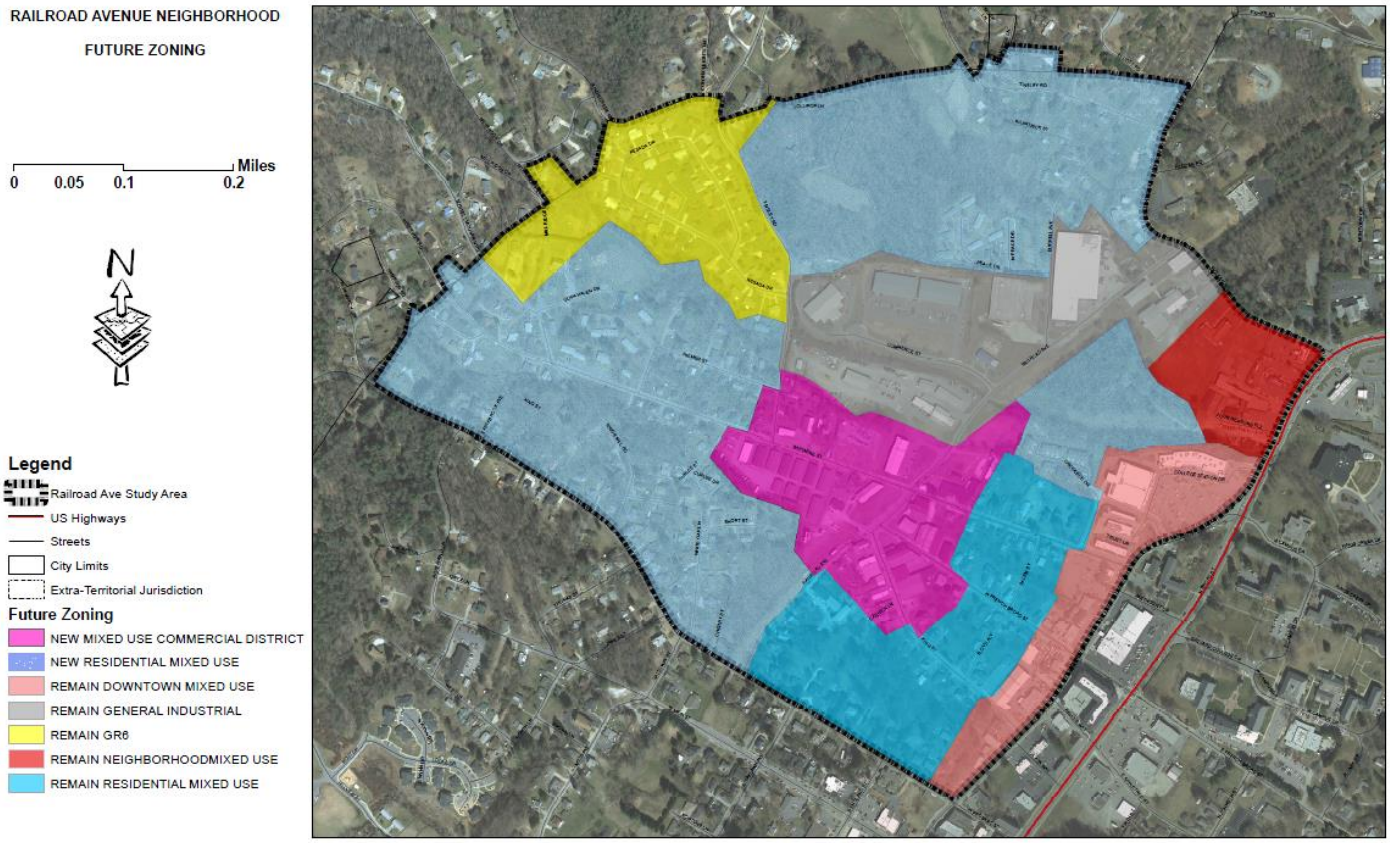
26. The City's storm water rules require, in certain situations, that property owners who are renovating or redeveloping their properties incorporate measures to clean and control storm water to protect the environment and neighboring property owners. However, as previously discussed in the INFRASTRUCTURE section of this plan, there is, for the most part, no public storm water infrastructure to which property owners may connect. This challenge will be addressed in the INFRASTRUCTURE section of this plan.

Land Use & Zoning Actions

The City will take the following actions to address the aforementioned land use and zoning challenges and opportunities:

- Land Use / Zoning Action # 01: The City will adopt a new, official zoning map that incorporates the zoning changes reflected in Map 6: Future Zoning Map.

Map 6: Future Zoning Map



- The following is a summary of the changes incorporated into the preceding, Future Zoning Map;
  - It preserves existing industrial zoning north of King's Creek
  - It increases allowable residential density from 6 to 15 dwelling units per acre in most areas formerly zoned General Residential – 6 (GR6) by rezoning them to Residential Mixed Use (RMX)
  - It creates new, stand-alone mixed use district that allows a blend of light industrial and commercial uses, and that allows most arts and entertainment uses "by right", and would allow zero lot-line development

- Land Use / Zoning Action # 02: Using a qualified professional consultant, the City will write and adopt stand-alone architectural design and signage standards that recognize / allow industrial and "mill" architecture, and that address the unique signage needs in the new commercial zoning district as shown on the Future Zoning Map.

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ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Challenges & Opportunities

The following environmental challenges and opportunities are recognized by this plan:

27. Public input indicated great concern over the lack of storm water infrastructure, and the associated impacts on localized flooding and property damage. This challenge is addressed in the INFRASTRUCTURE section of this plan.

28. King's Creek is a major environmental feature within the study area. However, access to and awareness of the stream is limited. Sections of King's Creek within the study area are impaired by collapsing banks and erosion. The City of Brevard has obtained easements to perform stream bank restoration along limited sections of King's Creek, but these easements are insufficient to support wholesale stream bank restoration.

Environmental Actions

The City will take the following actions to address the aforementioned community challenges and opportunities:

- Environmental Action # 01: The City will secure stream bank restoration easements along King's Creek within the study area, and collaborate with local and state partners such as the Transylvania County Soil and Water Conservation Service, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources to rehabilitate impaired stream banks.

- Environmental Action # 02: As part of storm water system improvements identified in Infrastructure Action # 02, above, the City will identify opportunities to incorporate environmental and / or technological features into future storm water improvements, that will clean and cool urban storm water before it enters into King's Creek.

- Environmental Action # 03: The City will work with the neighborhood organization identified in Community Action # 01, to raise awareness of, and foster stewardship of, King's Creek.

- Environmental Action # 04: The City will continue efforts to repair leaking sewer lines that may lead to sanitary sewer overflows into King's Creek. This will be programmed via Infrastructure Action # 02.

- Environmental Action # 05: The City will create an opportunity for public access to King's Creek for play, education and awareness. This action will occur in coordination with the development of a greenway along King's Creek as identified in Infrastructure Action # 11.

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IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this plan will require dedicated energy on the part of City Council and Staff, and the support and encouragement of neighborhood residents. It will also require consistent and dedicated funding.

The City's limited funding options area as follows:

- Increase the City's overall tax rate to generate new revenues which can be earmarked for plan implementation.

- Establish a municipal service district to generate new revenues which can be earmarked for plan implementation.

- Pursue grants from relevant, Federal and State sources such as the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Based upon public input gathered in the development of this plan, it is clear that there is a distinct lack of public support for the establishment of a municipal tax district. Also, given that streets within the study area are almost entirely City-maintained, it is unlikely that Federal and State grants will provide a significant source of overall funding to implement this plan.

Given these limitations, plan implementation will be slow; the City will implement individual plan elements on a project-by-project basis as funds become available. The City will focus its implementation efforts upon those plan elements that are most likely to qualify for Federal or State grant dollars.

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