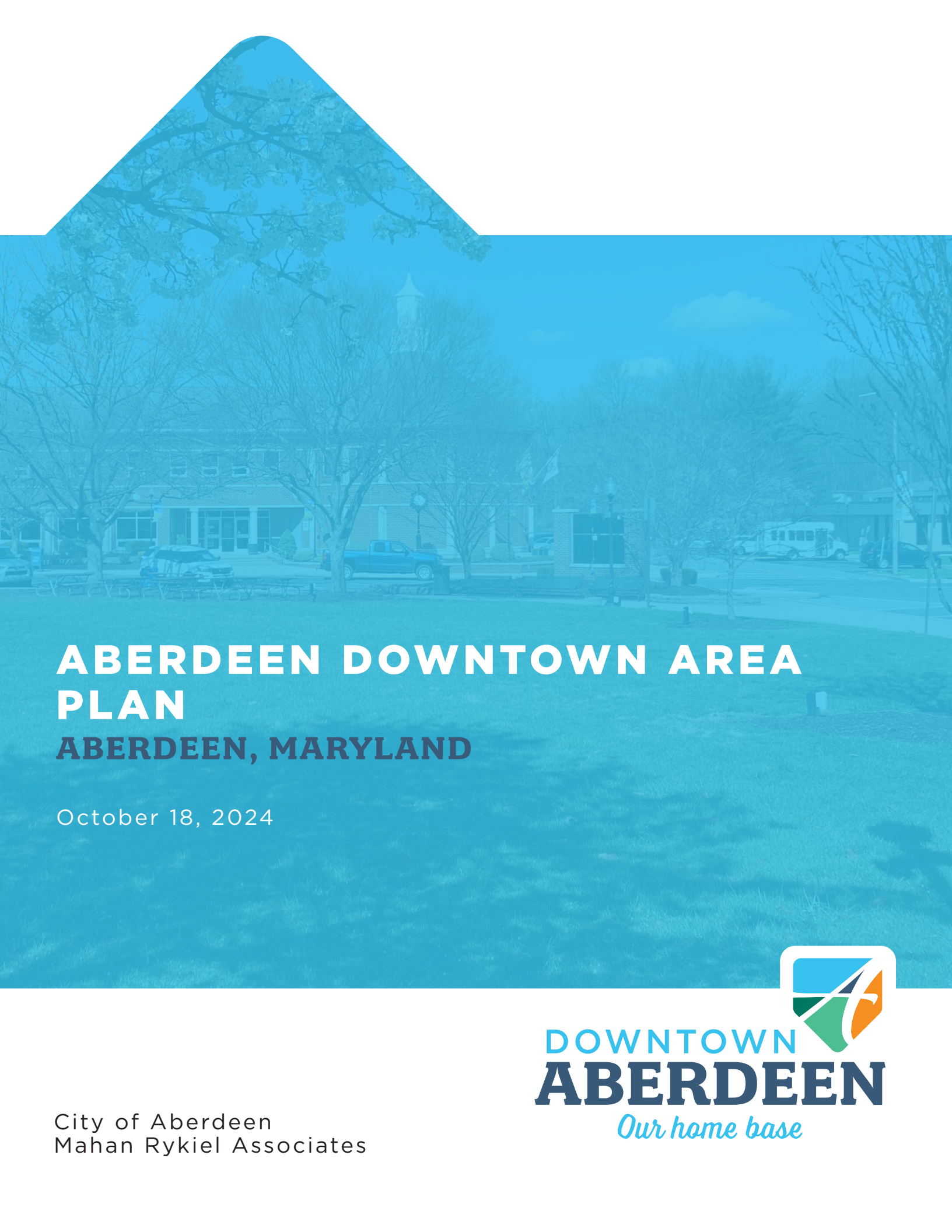




ABERDEEN DOWNTOWN AREA PLAN

ABERDEEN, MARYLAND

October 18, 2024

City of Aberdeen
Mahan Rykiel Associates



**ABERDEEN
DOWNTOWN AREA PLAN
ABERDEEN, MARYLAND**

PRESENTED TO:
City of Aberdeen

PRESENTED BY:
Mahan Rykiel Associates

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Local Businesses
Property Owners
Residents of Aberdeeen and the
Surrounding Communities



CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Scope
- 3 Process

7 ASSESSMENT

- 7 Location & History
- 8 Background Review
- 13 Existing Conditions
- 13 Public Spaces
- 15 Streetscape & Connectivity
- 17 Work Session 1 - Summary of Input

21 VISION *and* RECOMMENDATIONS

- 21 Vision
- 21 Recommendations
- 21 Connectivity & Streetscapes
- 24 Alley Project Centennial Lane & Cypress Shared Street
- 28 Festival Park Enhancements
- 31 Private Property Improvements

35 IMPLEMENTATION

- 35 Implementation

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the City of Aberdeen has been actively exploring opportunities to make the town a more inviting place to live, work, and play for residents and visitors alike. Most notably, the City updated its comprehensive plan, Plan Aberdeen, in 2022. Additional efforts have included the Main Street Marketing, Communication, & Design Plan (2022), Safe Streets and Roads for All projects (ongoing), a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) master plan for the train station area (2012), and development plans for properties in the Main Street Area. (These plans are summarized in greater detail



FIGURE 1. Four Thematic Areas

in the background section of this assessment.)

This Aberdeen Downtown Revitalization Plan builds upon recent planning projects as a targeted effort to address opportunities for placemaking and design enhancements within the Main Street area—specifically, within the Festival Park, Howard Street, Centennial Lane, and Cypress Alley area. The purpose of this effort is to help establish Aberdeen as a welcoming and inclusive destination. In early 2024, Aberdeen Main Street hired Mahan Rykiel Associates, of Baltimore, MD, to guide the development of a Downtown Revitalization Area Plan to assist the City of Aberdeen in continuing to realize its important location along the Northeast Corridor.

SCOPE

Development in Downtown Aberdeen is mainly occurring within the City’s Festival Square area, but the City is interested in spreading investment throughout the Main Street, especially toward West Bel Air Avenue. Community

members, likewise, are interested in seeing revitalization downtown, as revealed in feedback gathered during city-wide surveys and community input meetings for the 2022 Comprehensive Plan. According to these public input opportunities, community members consider the appearance of downtown to be a critical issue.

The intent of the Aberdeen Downtown Revitalization Plan, therefore, is to form a plan that will identify opportunities to create a sense of place, enhance the pedestrian realm, and promote investment within downtown Aberdeen. Specifically, this plan focuses on the following four thematic opportunity areas:

- Physical improvements related to public spaces and gathering spaces, particularly areas that would connect Festival Square to West Bel Air Avenue and areas that front publicly-owned real estate.
- Improvements to publicly-owned surface parking lots on Walnut Alley.
- Public investment strategies that would bridge development from Festival Square to West Bel Air Avenue and key destinations beyond.
- Potential use of the Façade Improvement Program.

The primary focus of this effort will be on the Main Street Area along with the adjacent streets and their destinations, such as the Aberdeen Amtrak station off South Philadelphia Road and Harford Lanes along Custis Street.

PROCESS

The two-part process for developing this Downtown Revitalization Plan includes an assessment phase and a recommendation development phase. It is important that the plan is realistic and is authentic to Aberdeen. A vision for the future of downtown must evolve from a formal process that is informed by previous community input collected along with the input provided by the project team. Throughout this effort, the Mahan Rykiel Associates project team is engaging a coordinating team, consisting of members of the Aberdeen Department of Planning and Community Development, Main Street Design Committee, and Economic Development Commission.

Assessment Phase

During the assessment phase, the project team built upon the work completed during the Main Street Marketing, Communication, & Design Plan’s. The assessment phase generates an overview of existing conditions (physical) and, more importantly, overall takeaways that provide direction for the development of recommendations.

The project team conducted a physical review of downtown Aberdeen, including

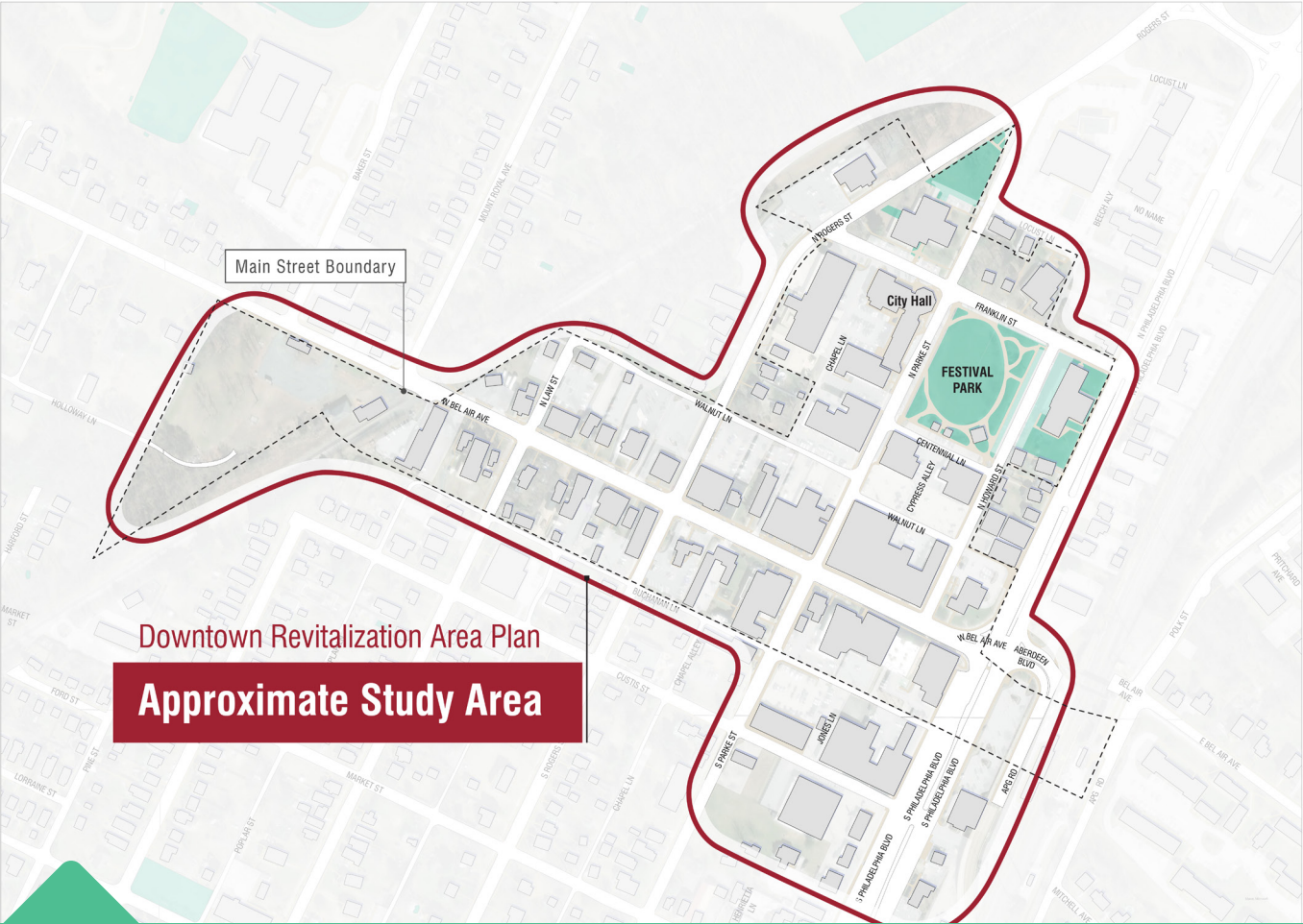


FIGURE 2. Approximate Study Area

an approximately half-mile length of West Bel Air Avenue bounded by Route 40/Philadelphia Boulevard to the east and the Historic B&O Railroad Station at Baker Street to the west. The Team also reviewed several blocks to the south of West Bel Air Avenue, investigating the best possible connections between Festival Park to destinations like Harford Lanes, a local bowling alley.

In addition to the project team’s background materials review, walking tour of downtown Aberdeen, and site analysis, this assessment has been informed by small interest group conversations (business owners; property owners and management companies; residents; and civic, non-profit, youth organization representatives). The purpose of the small group conversations was to further understand challenges and opportunities as they relate to streetscape and transportation, property improvements, façade improvements, and projects currently underway. Taken together, the assessment efforts serve as a foundation for the development of recommendations.

Recommendation Development Phase

A meeting with the broader public will occur later in the process, as preliminary recommendations are developed. Participatory exercises will involve community members and solicit their reactions, thoughts, and preferences regarding recommendations, which will then be refined for the final report.

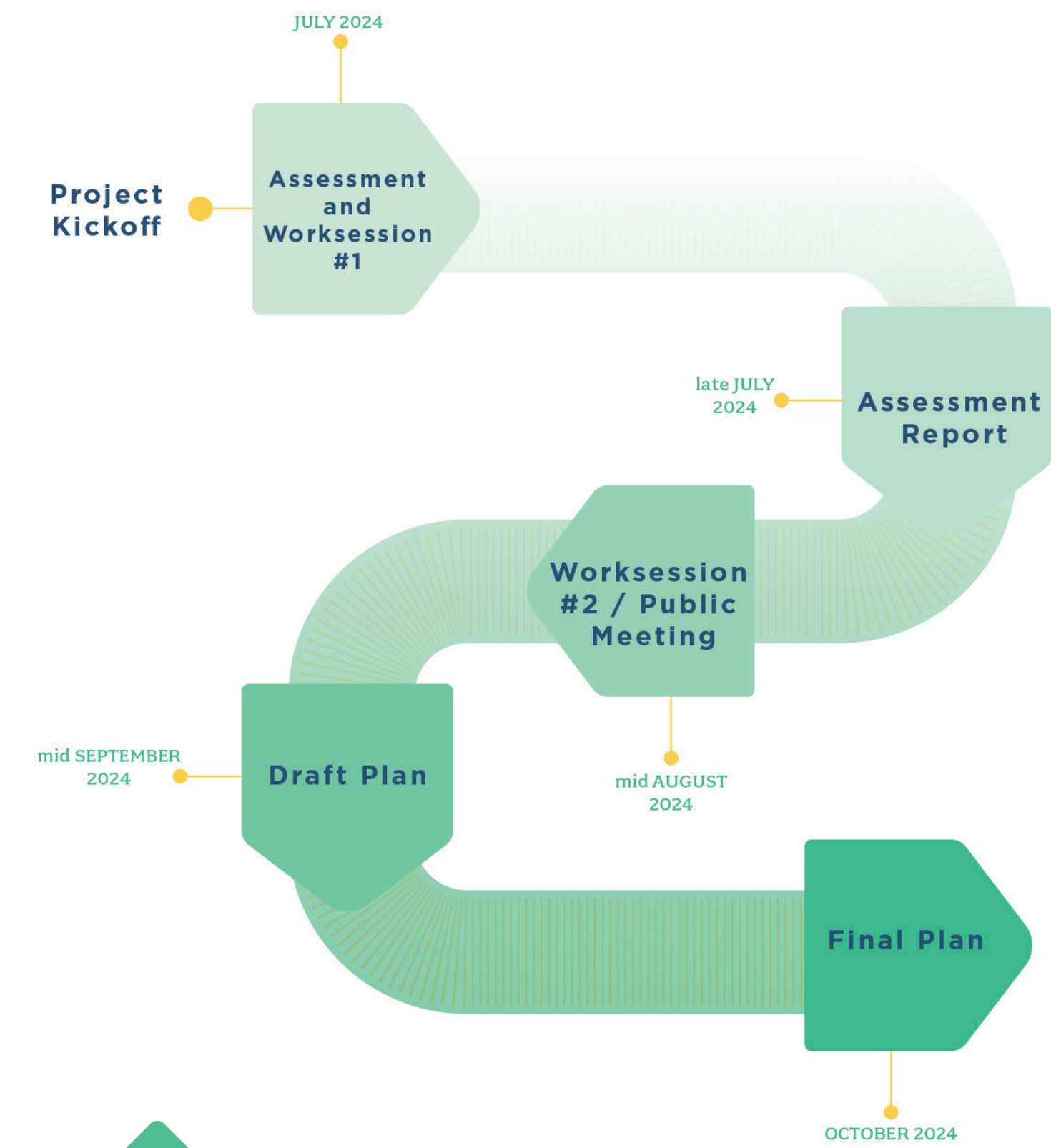


FIGURE 3. Schedule Diagram

ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT

LOCATION AND HISTORY

Within the Swan Creek Watershed of the Mid-Atlantic and tucked along the water, Aberdeen is the largest municipality in Harford County, Maryland. Aberdeen has historically been connected to destinations along the East Coast by train lines that border the downtown—CSX (and the old B&O Railroad line) to the northwest and, to the southeast, Amtrak's

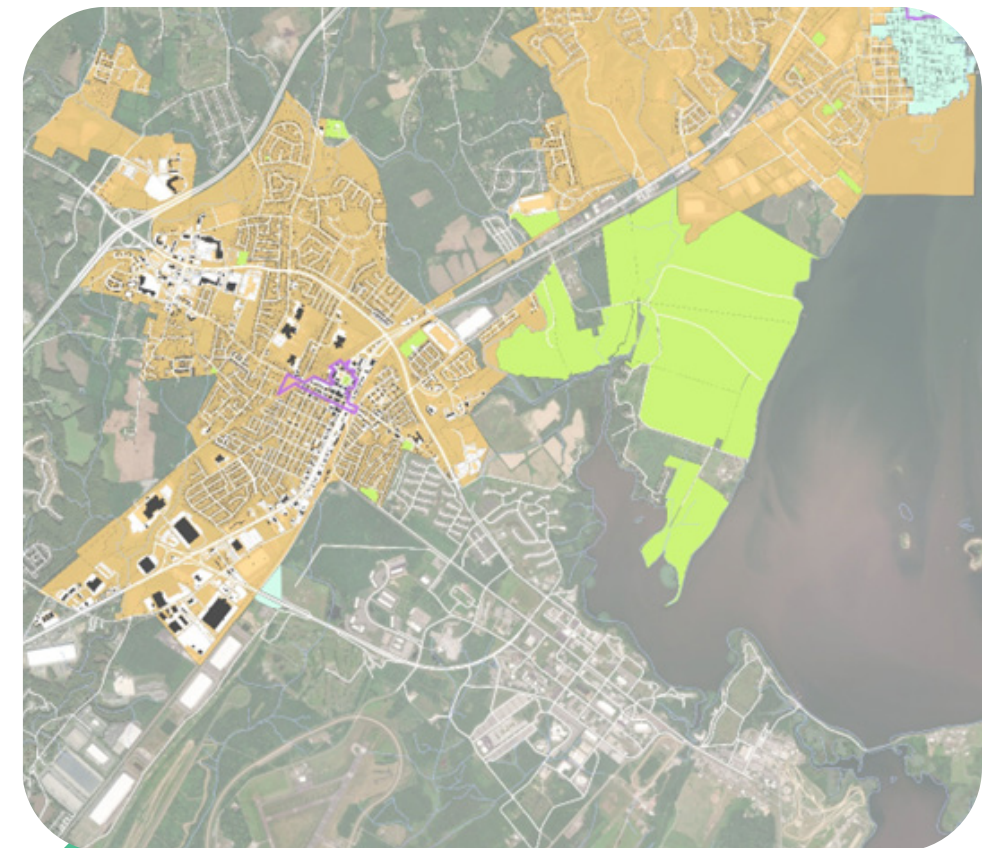


FIGURE 4. Aberdeen, Maryland Context

northeast corridor main line and the MARC line, which both connect commuters to Baltimore and Washington, DC. Downtown Aberdeen, additionally, is adjacent to Aberdeen Proving Grounds.

Aberdeen received Maryland Sustainable Community Designation in April 2022. Downtown Aberdeen is located in Growth Tier 1 and Growth Tier 2 (see the 2022 Comprehensive Plan).

BACKGROUND REVIEW

To ensure that the recommendations of this plan are not developed in a vacuum, the project team conducted a review of relevant projects and initiatives, summarized below.

Recent Investments and Improvements

The City has recently received grant funding to acquire and improve properties within the study area, including 22 Howard Street and 18 Law Street.

Plan Aberdeen (2022 Comprehensive Plan update)

Plan Aberdeen is the official, long-range policy, adopted and amended by formal resolution by the City Council. It serves to guide the comprehensive decision-making process and works in coordination with Harford County and

the State of Maryland’s Smart Growth goals and objectives. Plan Aberdeen incorporates strategies that support a sustainable and active community and outlines goals related to community facilities, land use, municipal growth, housing, transportation, economic development, environmental resources and sensitive areas, water resources

The Plan Aberdeen was recently released as an update to the 2011 Comprehensive Plan. It includes a considerable summary of demographics of residents throughout Aberdeen. Additionally, this plan was deeply rooted in public participation. Public participation opportunities included public meetings, surveys, workshops, and online feedback tools, which collected insights from residents and stakeholders, including local businesses and organizations. A few common themes arose from the public input that was collected, these include:

- Revitalized downtown, including more sit-down restaurants, green spaces, community activities
- Improved quality of life
- Better infrastructure (upgrades to roadways, bridges, public facilities) and a desire for improved

maintenance and modernization of existing infrastructure

- Improved Public Services (waste management, public transportation options, and recreational facilities)
- More community-oriented development (parks, community centers, and activities that foster a sense of community)
- Economic development, such as support for small businesses, job creation, and attracting new businesses
- Enhanced Safety
- More environmentally-friendly initiatives (better green space management, increased recycling, sustainable development)
- Affordable housing

Main Street Marketing, Communication, & Design Plan (2022)

The Aberdeen Main Street Marketing, Communication, and Design Plan, completed in June 2022, is a comprehensive initiative aimed at revitalizing downtown Aberdeen by creating a unified and attractive community identity, improve downtown navigation and appearance, and foster economic development through strategic branding and marketing efforts. The project was led by Mahan Rykiel Associates and Arnett Muldrow Associates, who collaborated with the City of Aberdeen and various stakeholders to develop a cohesive community identity, marketing strategies, wayfinding systems, and gateway designs.

The proposed community identity for

Aberdeen includes a new color palette, typefaces, a position statement, and a brand identity/logo. Additionally, the plan outlines brand extensions and applications such as advertisement templates, web page designs, and social media strategies to ensure consistent and effective communication.

The plan recommends a future wayfinding system to improve navigation and enhance the visitor experience in downtown Aberdeen. It also proposes designs for downtown gateways and improvements to Festival Park.

Mahan Rykiel Associates was also a part of this prior effort.

Aberdeen TOD Master Plan (2012)

In 2012, the Aberdeen TOD Master Plan was prepared by Kittelson & Associates, Inc., and Cho Benn Holback & Associates, Inc. for the City of Aberdeen and the Maryland Department of Transportation. This master plan presents a vision for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in downtown and offers a framework for land use and transportation improvements, noting the potential of the train station, one of the most valuable assets in the City of Aberdeen.

To overcome barriers to TOD, the plan proposed a series of recommendations, organized around themes of policy changes, partner coordination, and major capital projects.

Feasibility Study for the Transit Oriented Development – Festival Square Area in Aberdeen, MD (2018)

In 2018, The Chesapeake Group, Inc., prepared a TOD feasibility study in



FIGURE 5. HISTORIC IMAGERY OF ABERDEEN

which they evaluated the goals (and progress since completion) of the 2012 TOD Master Plan. This study took into consideration market trends and estimated future demand for housing, retail, employment, and office space.

From its assessment, the plan outlined opportunities for the TOD area—both generally (in terms of quantity/square foot demands) and site specific (where opportunities might be located within Aberdeen). Additionally, the plan identified a series of priorities, which included:

- Focus on perception of safety
- Focus on market-rate residential in the TOD area
- Create anchor activity with broad appeal
- Expand of Non-sports Event Activity
- Promote the Farmer’s Market
- Recruit developers and investors
- Increase food service activity

Aberdeen Station Square Feasibility Study (Current)

A plan is in development to introduce improvements to Station Square Plaza. These improvements would improve safety, security, visibility, and accessibility of the station, and include a new pedestrian underpass and terraced plazas to connect the west and east sides, removal of the existing pedestrian overpass, accessibility improvements throughout, and the creation of a portion of US-40/Philadelphia Road as a “Green Boulevard” at Station Square.

Façade Improvement Grant Program (Current)

The Aberdeen Façade Improvement Program is a dollar-for-dollar matching grant assistance program for property owners to make exterior improvements to their commercial buildings. Any properties within the Aberdeen Sustainable Community Area that are commercially-zoned and currently or planned as commercial use are eligible to apply for the funding assistance.

Development and Physical Improvement Plans (Current)

In addition to the large-scale planning efforts noted above, the following ongoing development projects and their specific improvements have informed this effort:

ABERDEEN MARC STATION CONNECTIVITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT (UNDERWAY): Sidewalk improvements, crosswalks, ADA improvements, landscaping, lighting, streetscape elements surrounding the Aberdeen MARC Station and Transit Stop.

CENTENNIAL LANE AND CYPRESS ALLEY RECONFIGURATION (STATUS): Includes decorative bollards, planter beds/boxes and an outdoor seating and food truck area along Centennial Lane, adjacent to Festival Park.

RENOVATIONS OF 115 NORTH PARKE STREET (COMPLETED): Recent renovations of an existing structure for a defense contractor.

RESIDENCES AT FESTIVAL SQUARE (UNDERWAY): Planned infill development of three lots on Franklin Street for new mixed-use.

34 NORTH PHILADELPHIA BOULEVARD (UNDERWAY): Phase II and Phase III of renovations underway at the former high school building.

SAFE STREETS AND ROADS FOR ALL STUDY (CONCURRENT): Evaluating the conditions of the following intersections: West Bel Air Avenue at Bush Chapel Road and Beards Hill Road West; Bel Air Avenue at Middleton Road West Bel Air Avenue at U. S. Route 40; Carol Avenue and U. S. Route 40; James Avenue and U. S. Route 40; MD 22 at Old Post Road.

Draft Revitalization Design Standards

The City of Aberdeen shared the draft Design Standards (2020, rev. 2024) with the project team. This document, which serves as a complement to the existing zoning code requirements, defines architectural standards within the designated Main Street area that preserve and enhance the existing character of downtown Aberdeen.

Revitalized downtown, including more sit-down restaurants, green spaces, community activities

- Improved quality of life
- Better infrastructure (upgrades to roadways, bridges, public facilities) and a desire for improved maintenance and modernization of existing infrastructure
- Improved Public Services (waste management, public transportation options, and recreational facilities)
- More community-oriented development (parks, community centers, and activities that foster a sense of community)
- Economic development, such as support for small businesses, job creation, and attracting new businesses
- Enhanced Safety
- More environmentally-friendly initiatives (better green space management, increased recycling, sustainable development)
- Affordable housing

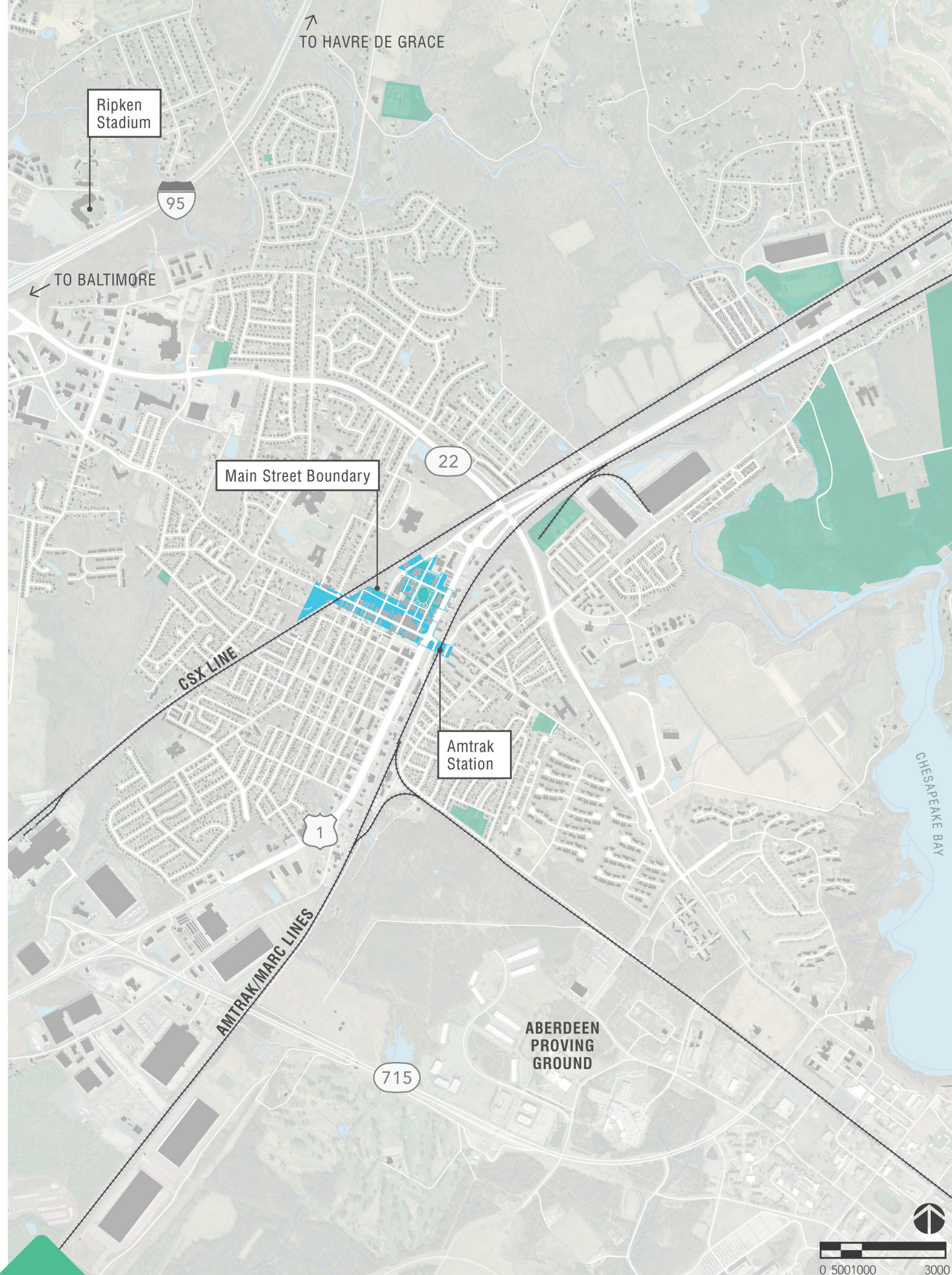


FIGURE 6. CONTEXTUAL MAP OF ABERDEEN, MARYLAND

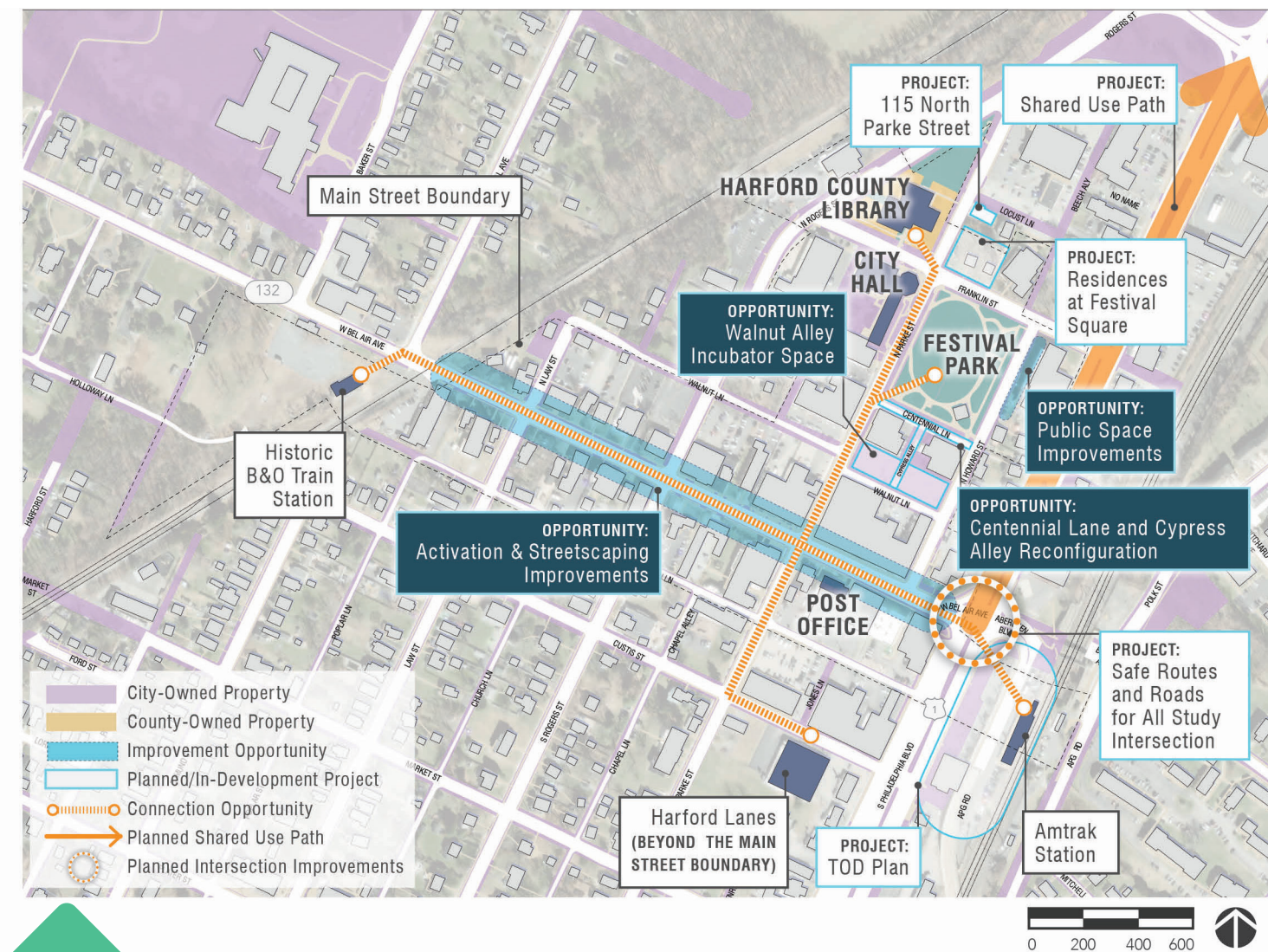


FIGURE 7. IMPROVEMENT PLANS FOR ABERDEEN

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Aberdeen Downtown Revitalization Plan is primarily focused on an area that includes the three blocks bounded by Franklin Street at the north, Walnut Alley to the South, Parke Street to the west, and Howard Street to the east. The very popular, well-programmed and well-used Festival Park is a strong asset for the City of Aberdeen. Festival Park is located on the block furthest north while the two blocks to the south currently are home to local businesses, the Aberdeen Historical Museum, a future brewery (in development), and two City-owned parking lots.

PUBLIC SPACES

Festival Park is an asset. The playground and the chess and checkers tables are well used and liked by the community. As evidenced by the recent addition of a concrete pad and general wear on the lawn along Parke Street, heavy foot traffic has increased in this area and more hardscaping may be



FIGURE 8. THE TEAM CONDUCTED A FULL SITE WALK WHEN VISITING ABERDEEN.

needed to accommodate this increase. At the southern edge of the park, the restrooms—along with the existing utilities, walls, landscape, and fences—block pedestrian access to the park from Cypress Alley; this forces pedestrians to enter the park from the corners at either Parke or Howard Streets. Existing Conditions Analysis

The City is currently evaluating the potential to transform the publicly-owned spaces south of Festival Park by limiting vehicular access and creating designated pedestrian space along Centennial Lane and Cypress Alley. This proposal would create a large outdoor public space that connects Festival Park to the businesses on Parke and Howard Streets, and link Centennial Lane to Walnut Alley. The current layout of the two City-owned parking lot is not as efficiently designed as they could be. During the first work session, the project team explored different ways of adding vegetation, parking spaces, and a small

incubator “village” to the parking lots which, together, would help activate the streetscape and strengthen the connections to West Bel Air Avenue and beyond.

STREETSCAPE & CONNECTIVITY

While the Festival Park block has ample tree coverage, a generous lawn, and amenities (including a playground, stage, and restrooms), the two blocks south of the park lack the same public amenities. Those two blocks have no tree canopy or green space. Sidewalks are generally narrow and obstructed by signage and utility poles, making the connection between the park and West Bel Air Avenue, at best, non-inviting for pedestrians and inaccessible at worst.

Stakeholders have also expressed interest in continuing the proposed pedestrian connection at Cypress Alley (mentioned above) southward and across West Bel Air Avenue, all the way to Harford Lanes on Custis Street. However, the project team observed that the alleyway connecting Walnut Alley to West Bel Air Avenue (between 19-25 W. Bel Air Avenue) is extremely narrow and peppered with utility poles, further limiting the width of usable space and making this connection non-compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. The project team believes the best connection to Harford Lanes is along West Bel Air Avenue, Parke Avenue, and Custis Street.

Downtown Aberdeen is a dense area, which would allow for short walks

between destinations. However, although it’s a seemingly walkable community, it often lacks the infrastructure to support walking safely. As a result, pedestrians end up walking in places where they shouldn’t be—like in the roadways. Many streets throughout downtown Aberdeen’s Main Street area have sidewalks—at least on one side of the road. However, on many streets, even where sidewalks do exist, utility poles, sign posts, and the occasional stoop obstruct travel. Additionally, many curb cuts that provide access to parking lots, interrupt pedestrian movement. This is common on West Bel Air Avenue, west of Parke Street. Some side streets are missing sidewalks which would enhance pedestrian safety.

Recently-completed intersection and streetscape improvements along West Bel Air Avenue have introduced safety features, such as corner bulb-outs, pedestrian crossing signals, and a stamped asphalt crosswalk treatment for crossings over West Bel Air Avenue. Crosswalks on the side streets, because they are local roads, did not receive the same stamped asphalt treatment as West Bel Air, which is a state road. On West Bel Air Avenue and throughout the Main Street area, curb ramps are present at most intersections. Most curb ramps throughout the Main Street area (with the exception of the recently-installed ramps along West Bel Air Avenue) are depressed corner curb ramps which point directly toward the center of the intersection rather than toward the opposite curb, a curb ramp style which offers a limited sense of direction for visually-impaired users.

Vehicular traffic in the area is heaviest on Route 40, with an annual average daily traffic count of between 20,001 and 50,000 vehicles, according to the 2022 comprehensive plan (Map 7-2). West Bel Air Avenue sees an average of between 5,001 and 20,000 vehicles daily. In addition to these major roadways, travel to and through Aberdeen is aided by a number of transit lines (Map 7-3 in the Comprehensive Plan), including the Amtrak and MARC train lines, multiple Harford Transit LINK stops in the main street area, and both LINK and MTA Commuter routes along Route 40.

Currently, Route 40 is the only posted bike route in the Main Street area, but there are no signs or markings indicating it as such. The Harford County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan has identified opportunities for complete street improvements surrounding the Amtrak Station and a proposed shared use path along US 40. Most roads in the Main Street area have a low bicycle

level of stress (LOS 1). Some streets (West Bel Air, Franklin, Beech Alley) have LOS 2, Rogers and Route 40 (North of West Bel Air) have LOS 3, and Route 40 south of Bel Air to Custis has LOS 4. Finally, only the stretch of Rogers Street north of Chesapeake Bay Dental has LOS 5.

WORK SESSION 1 - SUMMARY OF INPUT

During the first work session, the project team met with stakeholders and representatives from four special interest groups: business owners; property owners and management companies; residents; and civic, non-profit, youth organization representatives.

Business Owners

Safety of West Bel Air Avenue, citing pedestrian safety when walking along roadways throughout town without sidewalks, safety when crossing, and roadway safety, noting particularly dangerous intersections, the frequency of speeding vehicles, and the nuisance of truck traffic. Additionally, some business owners have observed negative activities along West Bel Air Avenue (unhoused individuals and individuals who appear to be suffering from substance abuse disorders).

The group discussed a seeming lack of “third places”—places, other than the home or workplace, where people can gather and connect with others—throughout the downtown area. There was discussion of potential demand for a coffee shop or small plates café/restaurant.

Much of the discussion came back to the potential opportunities that could arise if business owners became more engaged in Chamber of Commerce meetings and in collaborations and cross-promotions with other businesses. Some business owners noted that they felt out-of-the-loop with ongoing in around town.

Property Owners and Real Estate Managers

One remark praised the City of Aberdeen for proactively engaging property owners (anecdotally, such engagement is limited or absent elsewhere throughout the state).

Property owners see the potential in Aberdeen and note that the TOD effort could bring more visitors. In the heart of downtown, property owners suspect that retail trends are shifting. With more people spending their dollars online, the local appeal can be generated through a mix of businesses, focusing on services (which seem to be consistently demanded). Property owners suspect that businesses such as gyms, salons, and interactive retail (i.e., “paint-your-own” businesses) could thrive.



FIGURE 9. STREET AND SIDEWALK ANALYSIS OF DOWNTOWN ABERDEEN.

Residents

The primary focus of conversations with residents was image and safety (that is, safety from both a crime and mobility perspective).

The pedestrian experience, particularly on West Bel Air Avenue, is impaired by truck traffic. Additionally, the residents group expressed concerns over negative activities downtown, such as the presence unhoused individuals and perceptions associated with the location of the methadone clinic and the Parole and Probation Regional Field Office on West Bel Air Avenue.

This group also spent time discussing merits and concerns associated with increased density and the TOD vision for downtown Aberdeen. There seemed to be consensus that building height and density felt appropriate closest to the train station, whereas buildings along West Bel Air Avenue should maintain and complement the existing scale of architecture. There was, however, confusion about where “downtown” began.

Residents desired an active and walkable downtown with a hometown feel, filled with businesses like bookshops and cafes in which to connect with neighbors.

Civic, Non-Profit, Youth Representatives

This group saw a lot of potential in Aberdeen, and championed an approach that celebrates what’s working well in town. This group supported strategically focusing resources downtown, prioritizing re-development over new development outside of the downtown area. Attendees of the conversation have noted, in recent years, a decline in participation among local businesses (a similar sentiment to one expressed during the business owner’s conversation during this same work session). This group also echoed the frustration of not feeling aware of what’s happening with the City of Aberdeen.

Takeaways and Action Agenda

From this initial assessment, the project team gained an understanding of downtown Aberdeen’s greatest opportunities, as well as a few challenges to overcome. In summary, the following key takeaways will inform the development of recommendations for revitalizing downtown Aberdeen.

- Prioritize short-term successes for immediate improvement, particularly related to the alley improvement project.
- Activate West Bel Air Avenue streetscape and storefronts to make it safer and more inviting
- Improve walkability and pedestrian safety throughout downtown
- Foster connection and increase “third places” throughout downtown

- Celebrate and improve the use of Festival Park
- Explore creative economic development strategies

OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
• Very active Main Street Manager and City Mayor who have both made themselves readily available to hear ideas and concerns • Existing businesses are deeply rooted in downtown Aberdeen, as demonstrated by their own financial investments in improving their spaces/properties • Connecting people who come off train to businesses downtown • Festival Park is an asset (many events, e.g., Chocolate Fest, Grace Fest, Mermaid Festival, Oktober fest, etc.) • Business-focused programming (e.g., 1st Fridays, Arts Walks, markets, events at the Train Station, Sunday Street, Pop-Up Events, etc.) • Public/private partnerships and/or City support for public amenities when properties are (re)developed • Existing activity generators in downtown (i.e., Park, Library, Post Office Train Station, Harford Lanes, Brewery (in development) • Third Places, cafes, small plates restaurants, outdoor dining • Design guidelines can help to ensure the appropriate density and character of the development	• Negative image associated with empty storefronts • West Bel Air is a state road, which can limit the City’s ability to make improvements • West Bel Air has electric infrastructure on one side • Harford County Liquor Board and Health Department can present significant hurdles to new businessowners looking to locate in Aberdeen/Harford County • Gaps in walkable infrastructure • Limited communication among businesses



VISION & RECOMMENDATIONS

VISION

Plan Aberdeen Vision

The City of Aberdeen is a destination to work, live, learn, and play with an actively engaged community, diverse neighborhoods, thriving businesses, economic opportunities, transportation options, and a sustainable future.

Downtown Vision

Downtown Aberdeen is a walkable destination within the City where residents, visitors, and workers can actively engage with the broader community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CONNECTIVITY & STREETSCAPES

Reinforce a Walkable Downtown

1. Complete missing gaps in sidewalks, particularly those linking destinations and attractions within the downtown core.
2. Improve streetscape environments to encourage walking by providing more wayfinding signage and shade, particularly among destinations within downtown such as Prost Biergarten, Harford Lanes, the Museum, etc.
 - Destinations Across West Bel Air Avenue: Link Festival



FIGURE 10. DOWNTOWN ABERDEEN IMPROVEMENT AREAS

Park to Harford Lanes Bowling Alley and other destinations on the south side of West Bel Air Avenue along Parke Street as a continuation of an alley connection south of West Bel Air Avenue would be not be ideal. Introduce street trees along the 15 South Parke Street parking lot. Introduce bump-outs near Walnut Alley on North Parke Street. Narrowing the traffic lanes of both Howard and Parke could allow for wider pedestrian circulation, or bump outs could be added for seating, vegetation, etc.

- B&O Depot to Festival Park: Through signage and minor streetscape enhancements, continue to reinforce connections between the historic B&O Depot and the downtown core along West Bel Air Avenue. Consider pavement markers and/or banners to designate a “station to station” connection. Because the sidewalk is in relatively good condition along West Bel Air Avenue, the focus should be on simple improvements such as:
 - Outdoor dining with brightly colored umbrellas, even if just one or two tables.
 - Outdoor merchandise displays.
 - Potted plants.
 - Temporary “parklets” in place of a few on-street parking spaces, in strategic locations where they can support restaurants and provide traffic calming benefits. Outdoor dining in parklets provides color and helps to animate the streetscape. See image below:

LEGEND

- ① Festival Park Improvements
- ② Howard Street Streetscape Improvements
- ③ Building Facade Improvements
- ④ North Parke Street Streetscape Improvements
- ⑤ Cypress Alley/Centennial Lane Improvements & Connection to West Bel Air Ave.
- ⑥ Enhanced Pedestrian Connection to Harford Lanes along Parke Street
- ⑦ Amtrak/MARC Station
- ⑧ West Bel Air Avenue Connection Between Amtrak & Historic Train Depot
- ⑨ Historic Train Depot



**ALLEY PROJECT CENTENNIAL LANE & CYPRESS ALLEY
SHARED STREET**

Build upon impending investment of new downtown brewery and the City’s preliminary plans to create an active public realm south of Festival Park in association with the brewery, other potential new businesses, and existing businesses.

- 1. Centennial Lane Partial Closure: Except for emergency access, close Centennial Lane between Howard Street and Cypress Alley to become public gathering space associated with the proposed brewery.
 - Utilize removable bollards at each end of the closed portion of Centennial Lane to allow emergency, service, and food truck access.
 - Maintain flexibility for travel lane to be open during some times when the gathering space is not fully utilized.
 - Provide shade (structures and/or umbrella tables) throughout space to make more comfortable and useable.
 - Consider incorporating outdoor activities (corn hole, ping pong, etc.) within the space over time.
 - Work with property owner at the corner of Centennial Lane and

LEGEND

- 1 Brewery Seating & Programming
- 2 Security Bollards and Modular Planters
- 3 Catenary Lights
- 4 Incubator Buildings/Pop-Up Retail Shops
- 5 Reconfigured Parking Lot Design
- 6 Added Streetscape Plantings
- 7 Modular Plantings
- 8 Proposed Hardscape Improvements
- 9 Pedestrian Alley Connection to West Bel Air Avenue.
- 10 Signature Tree
- 11 Potential Additional Pop-Up Retail/Incubator Buildings



FIGURE 11. ALLEY PROJECT





Parke Street to reorganize parking in rear and provide a signature tree for shade and placemaking

2. Cypress Alley Road Diet: Close the east side of Cypress Alley with bollards to maintain one-way travel southbound from eastbound Centennial Lane.
 - Maintain rear service access to businesses along Cypress Alley.
 - Expand pedestrian zone along the east side of Cypress Alley to accommodate pop-up/incubator retail sheds in combination with parking lot reorganization described below.
 - Explore how Cypress Alley can extend out to West Bel Air Avenue. Opportunities to extend the alley connection across West Bel Air Avenue, mid block, are limited so pedestrians heading south should be directed along Parke Avenue.
3. Public Parking Lot Reorganization: Reorganize public parking lots on each side of Cypress Alley.
 - Utilize perpendicular parking to maintain or gain parking spaces while increasing planting areas for trees and special landscape.
 - Maintain access to dumpsters from eastern parking lot.
4. Cypress Alley Incubator/Pop-Up Space: As described above, experiment with pop-up /incubator space along Cypress Alley.
 - Utilize small portable structures for spaces.
 - Structures can house a downtown location for existing businesses elsewhere in the city or new businesses that, hopefully, can be moved to a brick and mortar location within the downtown area.
 - Enhance space with planters and overhead festival lighting.
 - Incorporate temporary and/or permanent public art along Cypress Alley
 - Maintain flexibility to add additional pop-up structures on west side of Cypress Alley in place of parking spaces if future demand warrants.



FIGURE 12. EXAMPLE OF AN ALLEY AS A CANVAS FOR PUBLIC ART.



FIGURE 13. OPPORTUNITIES TO INCLUDE GAMES AND ACTIVITIES.



FIGURE 14. LIGHTING CAN TRANSFORM A SPACE



FIGURE 15. A SINGLE FEATURE TREE CAN DEFINE A SENSE OF PLACE WHILE PROVIDING COMFORTING SHADE.



FIGURE 17. EXAMPLES OF INCUBATOR VILLAGES



FIGURE 16. EXAMPLES OF INCUBATOR VILLAGES

FESTIVAL PARK ENHANCEMENTS

- 1. Splash Pad: Continue to pursue City plans to develop a splash pad in Festival Park.
 - Preserve central flexible open lawn of Festival Park and locate splash pad as part of park edge.
 - Consider location adjacent to playground to build upon synergies of attractions.
 - Design splash feature so that when not in use, it becomes additional gathering space.
- 2. Park Access: Improve park access from the south (Alley Project) both visually and physically.
 - Maintain memorial but remove vegetation that blocks sightlines into Festival Park from the Centennial Lane and Cypress Alley.
 - Broaden sidewalk access into park to create a more natural flow from Cypress Alley.
 - Replace utilitarian fencing behind restrooms with ornamental black fence.
- 3. Gathering Area: Recognize heavy park usage along the tree line on the west side of the park and improve surfaces.
 - Consider additional paving (ideally permeable).

LEGEND

- 6 Proposed Splash Pad
- 6 Existing Playground
- 3 Event Lawn
- 4 Expanded Hardscape/Mulched Zone
- 5 Restrooms
- 6 Memorial Gardens
- 7 Pavilion
- 8 Howard Street Streetscape Improvements

- 9 Ornamental Fence
- 10 Vegetation Removal for Enhanced Views



FIGURE 18. THE FESTIVAL PARK ENHANCEMENTS



FIGURE 19. SIMPLE SPLASH PAD BECOMES EXPANDED GATHERING AREA DURING THE OFF SEASON



FIGURE 20. MULCH CAN BE USED UNDER TREES WHERE THERE IS EXCESSIVE WEAR AND TEAR ON THE LAWN

- Alternatively, consider broad mulch bed beneath canopies where turf does not survive.
4. Howard Street Enhancements: Partner with the Aberdeen Medical Pavilion owners to enhance the Howard Street frontage adjacent to the park.
 - Reduce excessive roadway pavement while maintaining pull-in parking.
 - With roadway reductions above, incorporate open space and street tree planting along frontage of the medical pavilion.

PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS

1. 18 West Bel Air Façade Improvements: Utilize the façade grant program and design guidelines to improve this highly visible façade along West Bel Air Avenue. Potential improvements include:
 - Paint façade a uniform color
 - Provide an awning along the storefront window
 - Provide clean, simple signage above the awning
 - Consolidate advertisements along the bottom of the display window to remove visual clutter and allow for views in to and out of the storefront.
2. LaBella Pet Boutique: Utilize the façade grant program and design guidelines to enhance this business which is highly visible from North Parke Street and the Alley Project described above.
 - Paint the brick, considering a two-tone approach to create a visual “base” for the building.
 - Utilize larger, more visible signage between the two windows.
 - Consider lighter colored benches to provide more contrast with the building (or paint existing benches)
 - Provide planter pots along sidewalk

BEFORE: EXISTING CONDITIONS



AFTER: OPTION A



AFTER: OPTION B



FIGURE 21. ALL IN ONE MARKET FACADE ENHANCEMENTS

BEFORE: EXISTING CONDITIONS



AFTER: OPTION A



AFTER: OPTION B



FIGURE 22. LA BELLA PET BOUTIQUE FACADE ENHANCEMENTS



IMPLEMENTATION

■ IMPLEMENTATION

Coordination

Work with private property owners to communicate the plan recommendations and identify needs concerns, and improvements to private property to consider.

Vegetation Removal

Remove select vegetation on south side of Festival Park to open up views into the park from the south.

Experimental Road Closures

Before investing in changes to road surface, curbs, etc. test road closures and changes to traffic patterns with traffic cones to work out details before preparing construction documents.

Construction Documents

Engage a consultant to prepare construction documents for the alley improvements.

Additional Amenities

As funds allow and user dynamics are noted, enhance the space with additional amenities on an on-going basis. Amenities may include planter pots, public art, games, seating, lighting, etc.



FIGURE 23. FACADE ENHANCEMENTS



ABERDEEN DOWNTOWN AREA PLAN

ABERDEEN, MARYLAND

OCTOBER 18, 2024