LORAY VILLAGE AREA PLAN

City of Gastonia
North Carolina

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Introduction & Background

LORAY VILLAGE **AREA PLAN**

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Introduction and Background

The redevelopment of the Historic Loray Mill offers a unique opportunity for Gastonia see significant continued reinvestment in the city's west central area. It is an opportunity of a level that occurs once over multiple decades, if ever. Thus, Gastonia is in a unique position to capitalize upon this opportunity to spur further reinvestment in the surrounding area.

The purpose of this plan is to set forth a series of public and private sector strategies designed to see a total revitalization of the Loray Mill Village, the West Franklin corridor, and remaining areas of the plan area. The plan area can be described roughly as bounded on the north by the Norfolk Southern Railway, on the east by the York Chester Historic District, on the south by Garrison Boulevard and on the west by Linwood Road. The plan is divided into six sections covering generalized topical or functional areas. It should be emphasized that these functional areas interrelate and overlap. For instance, business revitalization along the Franklin corridor is heavily related to transportation, particularly pedestrian issues. The six sections are as follows:

1. ***Living in the Village:*** How do we revitalize housing and the village as a neighborhood?
2. ***Doing Business in the Village:*** How do we revitalize the Franklin Boulevard corridor, specifically around Greasy Corner, the Trenton intersection, and other business areas within the plan area?
3. ***Getting Around the Village:*** What do we do to address the needs of all forms of transportation used to get to and through the Loray area, including personal vehicles, walking, bicycling, and public transportation?
4. ***Staying Safe in the Village:*** What do we do to make sure Loray is a safe place and perceived as a safe place?
5. ***Having Fun in the Village:*** What do we do to improve parks and recreation opportunities for people of all ages and abilities in Loray Village?
6. ***Serving the Village:*** What improvements need to be made to water, sewer, electric utilities, and to street lighting in Loray Village?

Phase I of the Loray Mill redevelopment project is due for completion by the end of 2014. Phase I will include 190 luxury Class A loft apartments, nearly 80,000 square feet of business space (retail, restaurants, offices) and nearly 40,000 square feet of development amenities. Assuming market success of Phase I, Phase II, the smaller of the two phases, will begin work within two years according to the development partnership. Principals in the development partnership, Loray Mill Redevelopment, LLC include William Hughes, Joseph Lenihan, and John Gumpert. Tax credit investors include Chevron and Anthem Blue Cross. An FHA insured mortgage was made by Berkadia Commercial Mortgage for the project

debt. Phase I represents a $45 million investment. In terms of physical size, the total redevelopment of the Loray Mill will be the single largest historic redevelopment project under one roof in the history of North Carolina.

Renovation of the historic mill did not occur without much effort, failed attempts and a long wait. Participation by Preservation North Carolina (PNC), the City of Gastonia and Gaston County were vital to the project. In 1993, Firestone Fibers and Textiles moved most of their operations to a new plant in Kings Mountain. Following that move Mayor James Garland appointed a committee headed by the current Mayor John Bridgeman to seek a new life for the famous mill. In 1996 Charlotte Developer, Jim Gross proposed a condominium project but when he failed to presale sufficient units, he abandoned those plans.

Also in 1996, the city undertook a charrette based planning project for the Firestone (Loray) Village. Following the failure of the first redevelopment attempt it appeared that the mill would likely face demolition. Then, Preservation North Carolina stepped in and proffered to Firestone that they donate the historic mill to PNC so that the nonprofit could find a private redeveloper to renovate and adaptively reuse the mill. From 1999 through 2001, prominent statewide historic redevelopers Murray Gould and David Rogers proposed renovation of the mill for mixed use but ultimately abandoned those plans to focus on other projects. Around 2002, the current redevelopment team began to explore redeveloping the mill and how create a financing structure, the single biggest challenge. In 2005, in response to the research and persuasion of PNC, North Carolina General Assembly passed the Historic Mills Tax Credit program, which added an additional 20% state income tax credit for renovation costs of eligible properties. The Loray Mill was truly a poster child for the bill, which was introduced by Gaston's Senator David Hoyle. This measure was key to financial feasibility. After working on several versions of financial structuring the project was nearly ready to close by late 2007, early 2008. But then the Financial Crises occurred, which ultimately resulted in the "great credit crunch." In 2009, with no suitable conventional credit available, the development team began to seek an FHA insured mortgage for the debt portion of financing, roughly half of project cost. After more than two years of the FHA lending process the project finally closed in April, 2013, and construction was under full swing by the summer. Key to financial structuring of the project was the city and county agreeing to "backstop" about half of the leasable commercial space, as well as the city's participation in underground wiring.

West central Gastonia has suffered from both decline and lack of new investment for well over fifty years. Overall, the western side of Gastonia has not seen the growth in new

residential areas, shopping centers, services and amenities that eastern and southeastern areas of the city have seen. However, over the last ten years there has been some new investment in the overall western side of Gastonia in terms of a few new housing developments and new retail development. Given its unique and historic character and location, the Loray Mill redevelopment represents the greatest opportunity to restore a lasting vitality to west central Gastonia. The greatest opportunities for the Loray Mill project to catalyze new reinvestment lie in two geographic areas: (1) the Historic Loray Mill Village—a National Register Historic District; and, (2) the Franklin Boulevard business corridor between Downtown Gastonia and Greasy Corner-- the historic commercial center for Loray Village. The first noted opportunity is largely a residential one, and the second one represent commercial and community amenity opportunities.

The rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the historic mill, along with revitalization of the historic mill village and the West Franklin commercial corridor, are of major importance to Gastonia for several reasons:

1. ***The economic and physical health of a city is only assured if all of its geographic areas enjoy vitality.*** The mill revitalization, when combined with additional public and private investments, will catalyze continued revitalization of the mill village and the Franklin corridor. The finishing of Phase I Loray Mill renovation is the perfect time to begin coordinated interdependent efforts.

2. ***Important to the success of the Loray Mill project will be revitalization of its surrounding area.*** The historic mill does not exist as an island. While this major investment is fully expected to generate a greater sense of stability and help lower economic risk on nearby streets, it too is dependent on the vitality of the surrounding area. The economic futures of the renovated mill and its immediate area are inextricably linked.

3. ***The Loray Mill and potentially Loray Village will attract new residents to Gastonia that will contribute to its economic health, urban vitality and diversity.*** Notably among these new residents will be members of the "Creative Class," a term used by urban and regional economist and noted author Richard Florida. Creative Class members seek urban living, particularly in historic and authentic places such as Loray. Some members of the Creative Class are engaged in employment that allows them to work largely over the Internet. Many also get involved with startup businesses. Partially overlapping the creative class are young Millennials. The majority of this generation is showing different housing preferences than previous ones. This includes preferences toward urban living, mixed use areas, city center historical areas—away

from the suburban aspirations of previous generations. Some members of the Creative Class can live (and build their businesses) wherever they choose. Therefore the fact that a community's appeal is a significant driver of its prosperity cannot be understated.

4. ***Finally, but not least of which, is the historic value of the Loray Mill, the Loray Village and the role they play, both existing and potentially, in defining Gastonia's "sense of place"—what makes one community different from another.*** This has been attributed to two noted American writers: "If you don't know where you are, you don't know who you are." Change is certainly inevitable but the destruction of a community's identity, its unique character, those elements of the built environment that help define it from other places, is not inevitable. Historic places, such as the mill and village have helped define Gastonia for over a century—some good, some not so good, but helped define it nonetheless. Imagining Gastonia without Loray would be like imagining New York without Times Square. There are a number of reasons why Loray Mill and Village are so important historically and here are several:

    a. **More than any other single event, building of the Loray Mill (1900-1902) signaled the "coming of age" of Gastonia and Gaston County's textile industry.** Far bigger than any other mill, its opening signified Gastonia could compete globally in textiles, particularly yarn. The "City of Spindles" became nationally recognized as a textile industrial center. The mill, founded by J.F. Love and G.A. Gray (whose last names formed "Loray"), became a source of civic pride and community achievement. In 1919, it was bought and then expanded by Jenckes Spinning Co (later Manville-Jenckes) of Providence, Rhode Island. But unfortunately, the mill was never much of a financial success until after Firestone acquired it in 1935. Unlike most mills in Gastonia who were in the business of making yarn, the Loray (and later Firestone) Mill was always a fiber to fabric plant.

    b. **The mammoth size of the Loray Mill alone makes it historically significant. Dubbed, the "Million Dollar Mill" when built, it was clearly the largest textile mill under one roof in the South, and perhaps the largest in a greater geography.** When later it temporarily lost that distinction, it regained it with the 1922 expansion. Much has been written about its impressive red brick architectural character but most significant is its immensity. Looming over the city, it is visible miles; and, for first time viewers the edifice with its distinctive tower leaves quite an impression.

c. **Thousands and thousands of people over several generations worked in the mill and lived in the village.** So many people living in Gaston County and so many people who have family roots here have some connection to Loray and Firestone. In Gastonia, having grown up "under the shadow of Loray (Firestone) Mill" has been both a badge of distinction and proof of Gastonia nativity. Also, there was such a demand for workers that people were recruited from rural areas, particularly the mountains of North Carolina, to come work here. The mill and the growth of textiles in Gastonia represent a huge early Twentieth Century regional migration trend that became a part of the history of many families with ties to Loray. The mill, the village and its families were a tight-knit nurturing community. They not only shared a common workplace, but they also looked out for each other and their families, they were active in neighborhood churches together, their children attended the same schools, they recreated together, and they shared good times and sad times together. It was a community itself, within the larger city of Gastonia.

d. **Then, of course, there are the tragic events of 1929 surrounding the historic Loray Strike.** These events have been captured in various media from historical accounts, to scholarly works, to fiction, to song, and to drama. The role here is not to recount what is already highly documented but to simply state the significance. The events around, and aftermath of the Loray Strike spurred long-term opposition to unions statewide, and probably the greater South. It has been cited as a seminal event causing North Carolina, yet today to have the lowest percent in union membership in the USA (USDOL-BLS 2008). Organizers of the Communist affiliated NTWU (a national rival to the AFL affiliated UTW) found fertile ground at Loray where new management, with orders from northern owners, had slashed wages, reduced the workforce and increased demands upon workers. Began on April 1, the strike effectively ended in the wake of the fatal shooting of Police Chief A.F. Aderholt on June 7. Of the seventy-two arrested, sixteen were brought to trial. During the strike and its aftermath a reign of terror loomed over the city between strikers and opposing vigilantes, which ultimately resulted in the murder of strike supporter and balladeer Ela May Wiggins, on September 14. The strike, the trials and related events gained both national and international attention in large part due to Communist involvement. And the strike has been chronicled as a significant event, both in North Carolina history and American labor history.

The historic Loray Mill and its surrounding village can serve to boost the tourism economy of Gaston County. The renovated mill will attract visitors because of its architecture, its historic story, and the new uses it will house. The mill will feature a public interactive history center and digital archive. Travel and tourism is one of the world's largest industries supporting 266 million jobs and making up 9% of global GDP. Its annual output in the USA is $1.7 trillion. Eighty percent of trips greater than 50 miles in the USA are cultural related, and studies show that cultural tourists travel further, stay longer and spend more.

So the renovation and adaptive reuse of the Loray Mill, together with a successful revitalization of the mill village and the corridor connecting Loray to Downtown Gastonia, will again make Loray a source of community pride. And, it will offer opportunities for new prosperity in a Twenty-First Century economy.

Living in the Village

Housing & Neighborhood Strategies

LORAY VILLAGE **AREA PLAN**

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GOAL
long term

A fully revitalized Loray Village, sustained long term, which will be manifested by:

- Robust property values that reflect a neighborhood with strong demand for homeowners seeking the neighborhood's unique historic and positive physical character.
- The overwhelming majority of single-family homes are owner-occupied.
- Good to excellent overall property conditions throughout the village, reflecting pride of ownership as well as neighborhood pride and cohesion.
- The neighborhood is seen as a desirable and economically secure place to become a homeowner and attracts buyers because of its unique character, diversity of residents, livability, proximity of the restored mill, and a vital neighborhood center offering of urban living activities, leisure, work and lifestyle.
- The neighborhood reflects a strong sense of community and identity.

GOAL
short term

Successful revitalization of several targeted blocks to the extent that it positively affects market conditions within those blocks and provides "market momentum" that spreads revitalization to adjoining blocks and continues "organically" throughout the Loray Village.

History, Current Conditions and Major Issues

The Loray Village began construction with the Loray Mill in 1901, and continued to be expanded during the early years of the mill's existence. Thus, most of the housing stock is not only over a century old, but it is also historically significant

Typical mill house style in Loray Village

in context of the village. Initially, most of the homes did not have indoor toilets and bathrooms but during the early part of the Twentieth Century bathrooms and other updates were made. From 1935 to 1941, Firestone began selling the mill houses to workers due to rising maintenance costs. The pace of sales to workers increased in the post war years. This pattern of mill housing selloff was consistent with mill villages throughout the South. The Firestone cottages were sold to the worker occupants for the price of $500 per room, plus an additional charge of $200 if the bathroom was located indoors.

Through the 1970's, most of the home occupants were either Firestone plant workers or retirees; however, over the years most these occupants either moved away or passed on. As this process went on, increasingly the housing stock became investor-owned to the point where today, only approximately 150 (30%) of the total nearly 500 single-family homes are owner-occupied. When the additional 71 apartment units are added to the total housing stock, the percent of total rental dwelling units increases to 74%.

Each of those three eras of the neighborhood should be viewed as distinctively different, while taking into consideration the context of differing housing expectations of differing times. Over the last thirty years, the housing conditions of the neighborhood have varied. Prior to the mid 1970's, housing

conditions were probably fairly good as there was a predominance of homeownership; and, in the two decades following Firestone's housing selloff, the new homeowners continued to make investments in their homes such as, siding, roofs, foundations, and interior modernizations, as well as plumbing, electrical, and HVAC updates. Starting in 1976, the City used Community Development Block Grant funding and other federal funding to assist owners with home repairs and rehabilitation. In the late 1970's to mid-1990's investors began to acquire single-family homes for rental purposes and new apartments were built for low income rental. Lower levels of housing code enforcement during this period only served to exacerbate an apparent decline in overall neighborhood conditions. In the mid 1990's the City ramped up its code enforcement (and engaged in programs of "systematic" neighborhood targeted code enforcement). This

has served to stabilize and improve overall rental housing conditions. However, a more recent two-thirds cut in code enforcement personnel has reduced code enforcement actions to only the worst (and mostly complaint-generated cases). Furthermore, the passage of limitations on "periodic inspections" (NCGS 160A-424) by the General Assembly in 2011, makes systematic code enforcement programs nearly impossible. Experience has shown that the inability to carry out an appropriate level of code enforcement will only serve to diminish overall neighborhood conditions where there is a predominance of rental housing.

Rental rates indicate that houses rent at levels affordable to households of low to low-middle income. Rents will vary according to micro-location and immediate surroundings, house size, bedrooms and baths, and overall condition. Monthly rents vary from $400.00 per month for a poor condition, barely habitable house to $700.00 for houses that appear to be in good to excellent condition. Most of the active, rentable houses rent in a range of $550.00 to $675.00 according to recent rental comparables reviewed. Apartments (on neighborhood streets, not at the Loray Mill) likely rent at the lower range, given that those in the Loray neighborhood are small and the type of apartments that do not command higher rents.

Clearly, the predominance of rental occupancy on neighborhood streets is associated with overall neighborhood physical conditions. It is also believed that the past trend from owner to rental occupancy correlates with overall neighborhood decline. While a certain level of renter occupancy in single-family neighborhoods has little effect, a predominance of rentals will negatively affect overall physical conditions and significantly reduce the appeal of a neighborhood to potential buyers, particularly for the purpose of homeownership.

In 2001, the Loray Mill Village was designated a National Register Historic District by the National Park Service. It was expanded in 2006 to include mill homes north of Franklin Boulevard. This provided two benefits: (1) Special honor

and distinction, and (2) The ability to use Federal and State tax credits to offset some of the cost of rehabilitation or to generate investment equity (as was the case with the Loray Mill project). Use of the tax credits requires all rehabilitation to meet approval of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). While these tax credits were absolutely necessary to finance the Loray Mill project, they have had little to no effect on the mill homes. This is probably due to three main reasons (1) Usually the extra difficulty in meeting tax credit requirements are not justified on small projects such as a mill cottage; (2) SHPO rehabilitation standards may be too constraining for the owner/investor (e.g., removal of existing vinyl siding) and (3) Federal tax credits can be claimed only on investment properties—they cannot be claimed for owner-occupancy properties (homeowners).

The existing situation creates several major issues:

1. The neighborhood is overwhelmingly rental. With 74% of the neighborhood dwelling units being rentals, this has a negative market impact on sales to potential owner-occupants. In order to create homeowner market demand, it will be necessary to reverse the owner-to-rental trend to a rental-to-owner trend. Reversing the trend will not be easy; however, investment incentives geared to generate more homeowners, combined with the positive impact of the Loray Mill project can intervene to stimulate the desired new market trend.

2. Housing conditions, while not deplorable, are such that they exist as an impediment to a return of predominantly owner-occupancy. From street view property conditions are overall better than what one may think. However, there exists on almost every street segment one to several homes that negatively affect the overall block. The better-than-expected housing conditions are likely due to the City's vigorous program of housing code enforcement over the past twenty years. A walking curbside evaluation revealed the following breakdown of overall conditions as noted below. (Note: This was strictly a visual evaluation of the structure and site from the curb. Since no interior evaluations were undertaken, a full inspection of the dwelling might have resulted in a different rating). Each property was rated

from "1" to "5" with "1" being considered good to excellent condition (i.e., no evident deficiencies) and "5" showing signs of severe deterioration (and often vacant).

1- (#193) 39% Rental 96, Owner-occupied 97
2- (#149) 30% Rental 117, Owner-occupied 32
3- (#85) 17% Rental 70, Owner-occupied 15
4- (#49) 10% Rental 46, Owner-occupied 10
5- (#20) 4% Rental 20, Owner-occupied 4

3. As expected, there is a strong correlation between owner/renter occupancy and property condition. Owner-occupied dwellings tended to be in much better shape than rentals. This is evidenced by the breakdown listed in Paragraph 2 above. This coincides with the general perception that rentals are not as well cared for as owner-occupied homes. This phenomenon is probably more apparent in low-and moderate-income neighborhoods, and likely becomes even more evident when rentals dominate the neighborhood housing stock as it does in Loray.

The property conditions survey revealed owner-occupied single-family dwellings had an average ranking (according to the scale in Paragraph 2 above) of 1.43, while rentals had an average score of 2.08. This means that, basically rental units tended to have one or more deficiencies (seen from the curb), while (on the average) owner-occupied units were more likely to have no visible deficiencies. It is therefore assumed that with a trend toward predominately homeowners in the Loray neighborhood, will see a corresponding trend to better housing conditions.

4. With few exceptions rental versus owner-occupancy exhibits no patterns or clusters in the neighborhood. A few street sections have clusters of nearly 50% homeownership: Fourth between Dalton and Millon, east side of King between Franklin and Second, Dalton near

Second and west side of Highland just north of Second. Others are nearly all rental such as Vance and Weldon. Given the dispersion of owner-occupancy throughout the neighborhood, there is no owner-occupied cluster large enough to provide an "anchor" on which to build a strategy based on an existing cluster.

5. The value of single-family homes in the neighborhood is extremely low. Prior to the real estate value bust of 2007-08 the average home sales value in the Loray Village was around $30,000 for the five years preceding, a comparatively low value for single-family homes. This may have been reflective of a number of factors: (1) the dying and moving away of the original homeowners of the 1950's with the consequential trend toward rentals; (2) deteriorating conditions of some houses; (3) easy affordability and easy loan qualification for new(er) homes (in the 15 years prior to 2008); and, (4) the nearly 20-year wait for the Loray Mill redevelopment and consequential interim property conditions. Since the economic events of 2008, sales show another one-third loss in market value. An examination of the 22 neighborhood sales of single-family homes (as indicated by County records) in the two years prior to February 2014 showed a mean sales price of $21,000 and a median of $20,000. For those sales that indicated buyer occupancy of the home, the average was $28,333. Sales varied from $8,000-$12,000 for dwellings in bad shape to $67,000 for a house that appeared to be in very good condition with additions and located on a street with about half owner-occupancy. This sale was an anomaly by a large difference. A look at listings in June 2014 still showed asking prices of typically $13,000, $15,000, and $20,000, all for houses that appeared to need a lot of work to make them habitable.

6. While the neighborhood housing sales prices may appear to be bargains for those in the buy-rehab-flip business, the challenge will be to sell for a price that recovers not only the purchase price and rehab costs, but also a reasonable expected return. In Loray, despite expectation that the Mill project will help spur a positive market trend for nearby

property, the business of "flipping" in the neighborhood is not without risks. Existing problems of a predominance of rental, varying housing conditions, and a history of low values increase risk for such endeavors. The "market" will need to begin to look at the neighborhood in a different light and this can best be accomplished on a "block-by-block" basis while relying on the ultimately $60 million Loray Mill project as the anchor and catalyst. Giving a targeted area a concentrated "market push" is needed to spur overall area market change that will hopefully continue to spread "organically."

7. The ability to do systematic/periodic code enforcement in the neighborhood has been significantly constrained by the 2011 action of the NC General Assembly; however, it does not mean that code enforcement cannot be done in the neighborhood with special priority. This can be done with a combination of special curbside attention given by inspectors, public information, and neighborhood and property owner organization, (especially the Community Watch). Currently, the most significant constraint on increasing emphasis in code enforcement is the City's reduced staffing in code enforcement personnel.

8. In recent years Gaston County Schools has proposed closing of York Chester Middle School; however, this proposal has met with opposition from the York Chester Historic District and parents within the attendance zone. While there is currently no active plan to close this school, the 2011 proposal is subject to being renewed, given budgetary constraints. If the school closes, the site and building complex will present new challenges to both York Chester and the Loray historic districts.

OBJECTIVES

There are three primary and interdependent objectives:

- *Significantly improve housing and overall neighborhood conditions.*
- *Significantly increase the percent of homes that are owner-occupied.*
- *Significantly increase property values of homes.*

It is necessary to point out that each of the three objectives above are linked to each other and are mutually interdependent. Unless strategies are undertaken to address all three objectives, none of the objectives will be substantially met. This interdependence of the three objectives cannot be understated.

STRATEGIES

1. Establish targeted programs, policies and partnerships to effect the rehabilitation of houses, encourage owner-occupancy and increase property values in the plan area.

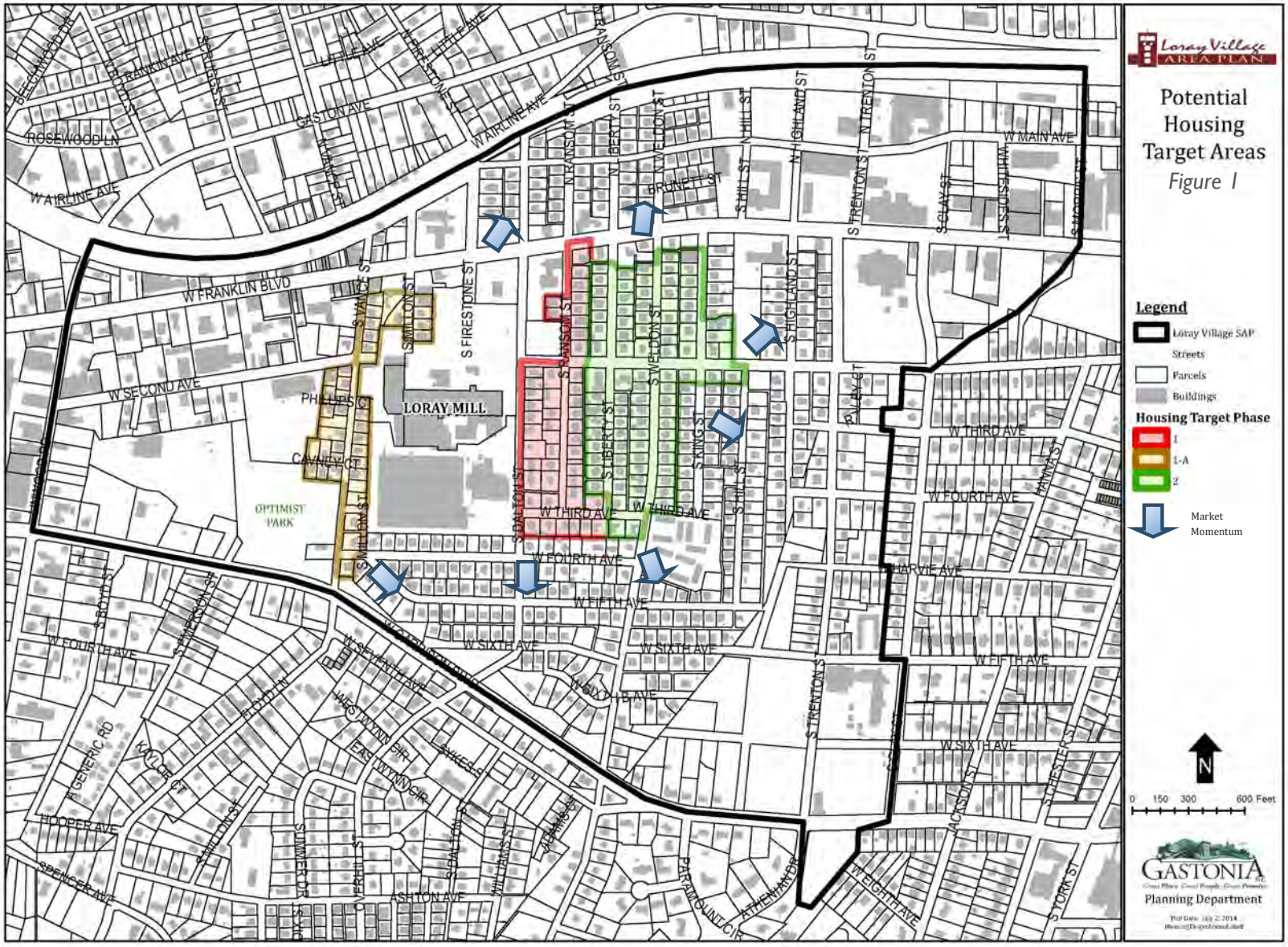
Successful revitalization of several targeted blocks to the extent that it positively affects market conditions within those blocks and catalyzes a continued progression of further revitalization of neighboring blocks so that revitalization objectives continue to progress through the Loray Village.

The end result of this is expected to achieve the three interdependent objectives:

- *Significantly improve overall housing conditions in the targeted area.*
- *Significantly increase the percent of owner-occupancy in the targeted area.*
- *Significantly increase the property values of homes.*

The highest expectation of success with the first one or two targeted areas is that it spurs an increase in potential after-rehab property values in surrounding blocks. However, a second and potentially third phase may be necessary to create a sustainable positive upward trend in property values. Important in initial program deployment is that it:

- Begin with aggressive promotion, possibly with interested investors identified.
- Occur as soon as possible upon completion of Phase I of the Loray Mill project.
- Be implemented with a “can do” spirit and a focus on eliminating any regulation that hinders achievement of goals.


Loray Village AREA PLAN
Potential Housing Target Areas
Figure 1
Legend
Loray Village SAP
Streets
Parcels
Buildings
Housing Target Phase
1
1-A
2
Market Momentum
N
0 150 300 600 Feet
GASTONIA
Planning Department
LORAY MILL
OPTIMIST PARK
W FRANKLIN BLVD
W SECOND AVE
W THIRD AVE
W FOURTH AVE
W FIFTH AVE
W SIXTH AVE
W SEVENTH AVE
W AIRLINE AVE
W MAIN AVE
GASTON AVE
ROSEWOOD LN
PHILLIPS CT
CAVNEY CT
S FIRESTONE ST
S RANSOM ST
S LIBERTY ST
S WELDON ST
S KING ST
S HILL ST
S HIGHLAND ST
S TRENTON ST
S DALTON ST
S MILLON ST
S VANCE ST
BRUNETT ST
N HILL ST
N HIGHLAND ST
N TRENTON ST
S CLAY ST
WHITESIDES ST
HARVIE AVE
HANNA ST
S BOYD ST
S EMERSON ST
FLOYD LN
WESTWYNN CIR
EASTWYNN CIR
AYKES ST
A GENERIC RD
KAYLOR CT
HOOPER AVE
SPENCER AVE
ASHTON AVE
SUMMER DR
OVERHILL ST
S DALTON ST
WILLIAMS ST
JOHNS ST
PARAMOUNT CIR
ATHENIAN DR
W EIGHTH AVE
JACKSON ST
S CHESTER ST
S YORK ST

Recommended characteristics of these efforts include the following:

A. The targeted area(s) should be highly focused to a few blocks. The first target area should be large enough to generate interest but small enough to maximize impact with a small area. The most critical goal is to increase home property values within a small area so that a trend is generated to spread organically to surrounding blocks. Figure 1 on the preceding page shows the recommended target areas.

Area #1 is recommended for top priority because it is closest to the Loray Mill and the positive influence of the Mill project is expected to have the greatest effect initially on the blocks closest to it. In essence, this area being adjacent to the Loray Mill project will give it the greatest chance of success and desired effect of market momentum for the overall Loray Village.

Area #1A is the Vance Street area, which is on the west side of the Loray Mill project. While this area is sort of "off to itself," it has a history of problems and those problems have had a negative effect on the overall Loray Village. This area should be included within the initial phase, along with Area #1, if one or two coordinated investors are found to take on Area #1A for buy-rehab-sell for owner-occupancy. But before undertaking Area #1A, it should be coordinated with the Loray Mill developers because some properties in this area may be needed for parking for the second phase of the Mill project.

Target Area #2 is to the east of Area #1. It should be undertaken only if sufficient market momentum is not achieved in Area #1. If market momentum is achieved with Area #1, expansion into Area #2 may not be needed.

B. Efforts should remain flexible to accommodate unforeseen or special circumstances such as unknown market realities, structural issues and the potential for multiple properties deals.

2. Identify a bank that will work with potential home buyers in the FHA 203(k) home loan program. Through a 203(k) loan, a buyer can obtain financing to acquire a property and have it repaired in a single transaction. If no local bank is currently involved with FHA 203(k), either work to cultivate a local bank's involvement or identify one that is active in the program regionally.

3. Work with local financial institutions to form a multi-bank loan pool to finance homeowner purchases and rehab in the Loray Village. One incentive for banks to participate is to help them meet their Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) obligations.

4. Make use of existing City HOME and CDBG homeownership oriented programs to help increase the percentage homeowners in Loray Village and to help keep owner-occupied properties in owner-occupancy status. The existing HOME funded Home Buyers Assistance Program may be able to assist certain home buyers to purchase certain dwellings for owner-occupancy by providing up to $5,000 toward down payment and closing costs. The home buyer must meet income and residency requirements and the home to be purchased must meet certain Housing Quality Standards (HQS), including the absence of chipping lead-based paint.

5. Explore with the Hope 4 Gaston organization the potential for a neighborhood repair program for Loray Village. This faith-based nonprofit has successfully implemented five neighborhood projects in Gastonia, bringing together churches, businesses and local government to successfully address home repairs and other necessities of residents in targeted areas.

6. Explore with Gaston Habitat for Humanity the potential for targeting habitat housing projects in Loray Village. Habitat projects target homeownership for well-deserving lower income families. In the past, Habitat has focused entirely on new construction; and, there are vacant lots in Loray Village that offer new single-family construction opportunities. However, there is an increasing interest by Habitat, particularly nationally, on housing rehabilitation for home ownership. Habitat for Humanity's national Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative is a response to tremendous challenges facing urban communities; therefore, Habitat affiliates are expanding the way they address housing needs to include repair and rehabilitation. Over the past year, there have been in Loray Village low-to-no cost house acquisition opportunities available to charitable organizations.

7. Establish a public-private paint-a-house program that would be applied immediately throughout the village to (1) assist homeowners who need assistance in painting their homes, and/or (2) address dwellings in most need of painting.

8. Pursue a strategy for comprehensive marketing and neighborhood identity for the Loray Village. This is an area with hundreds of property owners, which makes private sector marketing insufficient for overall neighborhood needs. This is also coupled with the fact that there is very little property owner organization in the area, except for Community Watch. The Loray Mill project, itself is being aggressively marketed by the project owners/ developers which will positively affect the surrounding mill village. In fact, the success of marketing the Loray Mill project and

the Loray Mill Village are inextricably linked. Until there exists some type of self-funded private organization for neighborhood marketing (e.g., the York Chester Historic District Neighborhood Association), the City will need to play a core role in neighborhood marketing. The City should also seek partners in neighborhood marketing including the Loray Mill Development, Gaston Association of Realtors®, and a much-needed future neighborhood organization. Some initial strategies for marketing are listed below:

- ***Develop a brand and logo for Loray Village. Branding is critical for identification and marketing.*** The logo used for this plan is a good start or could be used itself. The City and the Loray Mill development may wish to partner in development of a common brand and logo.

- ***Promote the formation of a neighborhood association.*** While this is a general strategy itself, it is also essential for long-term marketing and neighborhood cohesion.

- ***Promote Loray Village as a National Register District because it adds distinction and offers the potential investment tax credits for investors (and homeowners if the N.C. tax credits return) who may find them helpful in structural restoration.*** Examine the feasibility of adding all of Greasy Corner to the National Register District, which may facilitate rehabilitation by qualifying these commercial structures for tax credits.

- ***It is recommended that at some future time Loray Village be designated a local historic district.*** However, at the current time it is doubtful that there exists sufficient support for this action. Furthermore, if the initial objective is to attract for-profit investors who are in the business buying, fixing and "flipping" houses to owner-occupants, some of them may be deterred, given current risk factors. This is despite the fact that: (1) "Flippers" have been known to take on houses in Gastonia's existing local historic districts, and (2) Gastonia's has a history of fairly lenient application of historic district standards. Local historic districts are established as a zoning overlay and only govern exterior changes to structures and grounds. Certain changes are exempt and the major of applications can be handled by staff approval. A number of research studies show that local historic districts contribute much more to increased property values than National Register listing. In Gastonia, most observers over time would agree that this has been the case with the two here--York Chester and Brookwood. While National Register distinction and potential tax credits may be helpful, it is the protection to homeowners provided by the local district that helps reduce risk and increase confidence

Figure 2: Potential sign toppers and conceptual decorative banners could be hung in the neighborhood

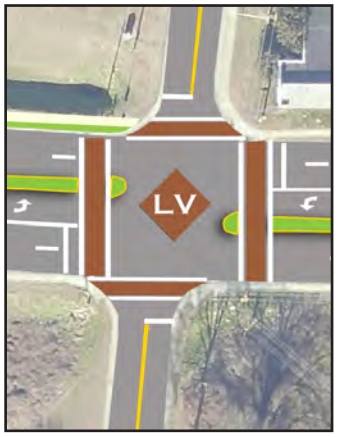


Figure 3: Illustration of stamped logo at key intersections

Figure 4: Creative re-use of the old water tower

in these older areas, which in turn stimulates market demand and the consequent increase in property values. Establishment of a local historic district will become vital when all of these factors are evident: (1) sufficient market momentum toward neighborhood revitalization as earlier described; (2) a core of homeowners in the neighborhood willing to marshal support for it; and (3) an active and supportive neighborhood organization.

- ***Install attractive identification signage within the National Register district. These measures include:***
  - Street sign blade toppers such as those installed for York Chester and Brookwood neighborhoodsm, illustrated in Figure 2. These topper blades should incorporate the logo and district name, simply "Historic Loray."
  - Neighborhood entrance signs at key entrances identifying Historic Loray with the brand/logo.
  - Embed the brand and logo into the pavement at important intersections using methods such as thermal plastic application along with stamped asphalt pavement pattern, as shown in Figure 3. This is most appropriate for one or more intersections such as the center point of arrival or gateway points, and/or where the City will be installing crosswalks with color stamped pattern into asphalt.
  - If financially feasible, painting the old City water tank at Hill and Fifth with the Historic Loray brand and logo would make a huge marketing statement, as illustrated in Figure 4.

- Historic Loray should have a website to promote the neighborhood. Initially, the City may have to assist in this measure, but long term, it should be a neighborhood association project.

- Develop a long term comprehensive marketing plan that can be amended and adjusted to changing conditions.

9. The City should support keeping York Chester Middle School open because doing do is supportive of both the York Chester Historic District and Historic Loray Village.
Neighborhood schools act as neighborhood anchors. There is considerable opposition from the neighborhoods and parents to closing the school. But if Gaston County yet decides to close it, the city should work with Gaston County and Gaston County Schools to find appropriate reuses that will allow the abandoned school buildings and site to continue to make a positive contribution to the neighborhoods. A long term building abandonment should be considered unacceptable.

10. Undertake the following Code Enforcement strategies:

A. Housing code enforcement activities must be conducted clearly consistent with limitations established by the General Assembly in 2011 and codified in GS 160A-424. These limitations impose restrictions on "systematic" or periodic code enforcement, which targets geographic areas or properties based on tenancy. However, it does not limit structural code enforcement based on evidence seen by the code officer from the street, or code enforcement inspections initiated by complaint, whether by the tenant or some other person. GS 160A-424 also allows an inspector to initiate an inspection on any dwelling that is owned by someone who has had more than two code violations within Gastonia in the previous 12 months. These restrictions do not apply to nuisance codes.

B. In order to do more than a minimal level of housing and nuisance code enforcement it will be necessary for the City to increase housing code enforcement inspectors from the current staffing level of one and one-half positions. Prior to 2009, the City had four or more code enforcement inspectors, which was consistent with workload demands. Gastonia's history has shown that inadequate housing code staffing results in substantial deterioration of housing conditions, particularly in older and predominately rental housing areas such as Loray. An appropriate strategy would be to add one more full time housing inspector in FY15, and another early in FY16, whether by reassignment of existing personnel or new hire(s). While this strategy is designed to address an overall citywide shortage of housing and nuisance code enforcement inspectors, it is submitted in this plan because adequate code enforcement for Loray Village cannot be provided without restoring code enforcement staffing to previous levels.

C. We must recognize that Minimum Housing Code enforcement, by itself, does not turn around neighborhoods. It is a tool to address specific types of

housing environmental, structural and other building systems problems in dwellings only. It is focused primarily on health and safety problems. It has no authority to deal with nonresidential structures and its ability to deal with housing is limited. Neither is it empowered to deal with purely aesthetic or certain lifestyle issues such as parking off driveways in front yards. However, it is a valuable and essential tool to deal with the most acute housing problems, and a tool that requires owners to maintain residential properties to a specified minimum standard if they want to hold them. For the worst residential properties it can be an effective tool in ultimately achieving desired results. Also, it can act to stimulate the sale of a property that is in poor condition to an investor who will repair it as an investment, either for sale or for rent.

D. Once Neighborhood Watch groups are consolidated for the Loray area, meetings should have a code enforcement inspector in attendance. These meetings can be a valuable source of information about specific housing situations. The same strategy should be incorporated for any overall Loray Village neighborhood association that may be formed (see Strategy #8).

E. Continue to maintain positive contacts with potential investors (particularly those in the business of buying-fixing-reselling with intent of profit). When an existing rental property owner does not wish to do the required work to bring the house up to minimum housing code, often another investor may see potential profit in doing so. Referring an existing owner to potential buyer-investors can often result in overall repair. If the investor is seeking to potentially resell the dwelling to a new owner-occupant, there will likely be a level of upfit considerably higher than simply meeting minimum code.

F. Continue to use measures that work with the repairing owner to fix up a dwelling with less risk of theft or vandalism. One example that has been used is to allow the repairing party to partially repair the dwelling (including the exterior). Then, while the City holds off on court filing, the owner can put the property up for sale. Once a buyer is contracted, the remaining work is completed by the selling owner. Utilities (except for construction purposes) stay disconnected and occupancy is prohibited until all repairs required by minimum code are completed.

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Doing Business in the Village

Commercial & Corridor Strategies

LORAY VILLAGE **AREA PLAN**

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GOAL

Commercial areas in the Loray Village plan area, and particularly West Franklin Boulevard, undergo total revitalization, which is characterized by a preponderance of thriving businesses and quality institutional uses, making the area a community destination that offers a variety of activities including shopping, services, dining and entertainment and recreation; while emphasizing a people-friendly pedestrian-oriented atmosphere of a unique, diverse, historic and authentic place.

History, Current Conditions & Major Issues

The planning area has been defined to include an area larger than what is generally viewed as Loray Mill Village, most notably to include areas on the east and west of the historic mill village between the Norfolk Southern Railroad and Garrison Boulevard. The main commercial area is the Franklin Boulevard corridor from the Gaston County Police Department (at the western edge of Downtown) to Linwood Road. This encompasses about 70% of the length of the West Franklin corridor between Downtown and Myrtle School Road.

No other road corridor conjures one's image of Gastonia more than Franklin Boulevard. Originally a two-lane street, it was widened twice, once to four lanes and finally to six lanes. To allow for the six-lane widening, store buildings at Loray Square were shortened from the front resulting in removal of the historic storefronts. There was also on-street parking before the first widening. Until 1948, a street car ran in the middle of Franklin from near Firestone Street to the 600 block of East Franklin where it switched to the P&N Rail corridor. Numerous businesses developed along the entire route of Franklin because it became Gastonia's main transportation corridor.

"Loray Square" from circa 1920s

A retail hub that met the neighborhood needs of the Loray community developed along Franklin east and west of its intersection with Vance Street. Originally known as Loray Square it quickly became known as "Greasy Corner." There are several stories in local lore as to how this nickname came about, but newspaper reports refer to it back to at least 1912. Today, the remnants of Greasy Corner have suffered from age, deterioration and vacancy. However, this business cluster still has potential to be revitalized as a neighborhood commercial and activity center.

Near downtown at Franklin and Trenton, Sears built a large retail store complex in 1963 along with large parking lots. Across Franklin from Sears, the Gastonia YMCA (today, the Gaston County Family YMCA) built its facility in 1955. It underwent a major expansion and remodeling in 1990. Sears, the YMCA, and other retailers and institutions in the immediate vicinity served as an activity cluster from the 1950's to 1990's. Sears abandoned the West Franklin Store in the mid 1990's when it moved to Eastridge Mall. The building and site have vacant since that time, and thus, have taken on a problematic appearance. While the YMCA remains an important activity center for West Franklin, the building is in need of updates and there is uncertainty that it will remain at this site.

West Franklin Boulevard is the designated routes of US-29 and US-74. In Gaston County it generally parallels I-85, and acts locally as its emergency reliever. While, through the plan area Franklin Boulevard has six lanes (three in either direction), the traffic counts are relatively low for that many lanes. Franklin traffic counts at Loray in 2012 were only around 10,000 ADT, which represents less than half that of 25 years ago. Since 1989, traffic counts have steadily declined from around 24,000 ADT. Further west on Franklin, the building of a Walmart Supercenter in 2004 served to increase traffic volumes somewhat in the store's immediate vicinity, as well as spark development of some additional new retail nearby. East of the planning area Franklin has been reduced from six to five lanes (four in either direction with a center turn lane), which has served to improve both functionality and safety.

It has been long been observed that the six-lane configuration of Franklin Boulevard, combined with its traffic volumes being only a fraction of its capacity, contribute to it taking on more of a "highway" feel, as opposed to being a multi-functional urban street or "complete street." And in so

Central YMCA on Franklin Boulevard

"Complete Streets" concept

Moss Drugs fronting Franklin Boulevard

Save A Lot Grocery Store on Franklin Boulevard

Looking east towards Greasy Corner

being, it acts as an impediment to development of urban-style retail. The term "complete street" means a street that is planned, designed, operated and maintained in a form that allows for safe, convenient and comfortable use by all persons regardless of age, ability or legal mode of transportation. This includes people driving personal motor vehicles, walking, bicycling, riding public transportation or delivering goods. This plan does not propose a bike lane on Franklin (in order to maintain two through lanes in both directions), so the proposed configuration would not be fully, a "complete street." However, bike accommodations are proposed for Second Avenue, which parallels Franklin, one block south.

The current character of West Franklin Boulevard from downtown to Linwood Road can best be described as an area suffering from moderate urban blight, while experiencing some emerging new investment; and, having great potential for major reinvestment. The largest single category of commercial land use is automotive related (20) -- service and repair shops and used car sales. There are successful eateries (particularly Firestone Grill), a long-standing successful independent pharmacy, a relatively new small discount chain supermarket, and various businesses involved in, or supportive of, the construction trades. There are two tattoo shops and two pawn shops. Further west of the planning area, there are three chain drug stores, three chain auto parts stores, a large chain gas mart/convenience store/eatery, local and chain eateries, an old shopping center with the types of businesses that occupy old shopping centers, and a busy Walmart Supercenter. Within the planning area and west of it there are a number of smaller convenience stores. There is also a budget motel and a seafood market/distributor. Also included are several well-maintained office uses, mainly in the Finance-Insurance-Real Estate (FIRE) category. There are a number of vacant storefronts, mainly concentrated around the Greasy Corner area.

Within the planning boundary there are also a number of important institutional or community uses supportive of the area, including several churches (Loray Baptist, West Avenue Baptist, Covenant United Methodist and Liberty Baptist), Central YMCA, Chamber of Commerce, Adult Recreation Center and Little Theater of Gastonia. Off Second Avenue and east of Linwood Road is the West Gastonia Boys and Girls Club, which has and continues to play a vital role in youth development for a broad area within Gastonia.

The following issues are important considerations for business development within the planning area:

1. The renovation of the Loray Mill presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to catalyze further commercial development on and near West Franklin Boulevard. The project will bring 190 "Class A" loft apartments with Phase One, opening soon; and, will bring most likely another approximately 100 loft apartment units with Phase 2. The Loray Mill project will feature about 80,000 square feet of commercial space. Examples of potential businesses include restaurants, a brewery, coffee shop, health club and offices.

The Gastonia Police Department will house its Western District headquarters at the Loray Mill.

2. The full completion of the Loray Mill, together with the expected revitalization of homes in the Village and existing vibrant residential communities (such as the York Chester District) will create new retail and service market opportunities for both the Loray Mill area and Downtown Gastonia.

3. Redevelopment of West Franklin through the project area will ultimately depend upon willingness of the private sector to make such investments. This will largely be based upon several interrelated factors, such as, perceived business risk, commercial market potential, and ability to obtain favorable project financing. Clearly,

quality private sector redevelopment along the corridor will not and cannot take place without the market and lending factors that enable it. The public sector can play a supportive role with public works investments and favorable development codes, along with new public facility investments that contribute to the quality of life in the neighborhood and the city as a whole. The public sector can also play a role in assisting private projects by bridging the gap of financial feasibility. This will likely be needed most with initial projects that can catalyze a new market environment, which in turn, reduces micro-area risks to enable additional fully market driven projects.

4. Given the fact that commercial redevelopment will largely be dependent on private initiatives, the City will need to maintain a flexible approach in facilitating such development. This will mean flexibility as to location and flexibility with respect to what necessary supportive actions it might take. And, what works for one project might not work for another. Public actions will necessarily be project-specific driven, and only those public actions absolutely necessary to enable a project should be taken. The commonly known adage of ***"but for"*** should always be followed with respect to public support for private reinvestment. That is, ***"but for"*** the proposed public supportive action(s) the project cannot feasibly and/or financially happen, and will not happen. Thus, any public supportive action must be tailor-made to the minimum necessary to make a project happen with projected success. Furthermore only projects deemed desirable from the public standpoint and in conformity with the goals and objectives of this plan should be candidates for city enabling assistance.

5. With a five-decade history of disinvestment, West Franklin Boulevard (in the project area), may still be viewed by financial institutions as high-risk for institutional commercial lending, despite the evident emerging opportunities.

6. Since the Great Recession, institutional lending for commercial development has undergone greater scrutiny and tightening than before the recession.

7. With exception of the newest developments, commercial properties, both land and existing buildings, tend to be of comparatively lower value within the plan area. This is likely due to multiple factors, such as: (1) the overwhelming shift of retail to the eastern and southeastern areas of town; (2) socio-economic shifts within Gastonia and its environs whereby higher income households gravitated to the east and south; (3) a somewhat natural trend of Gastonia to "grow toward

Charlotte;" (4) a decline of textile industry employment and abandonment of numerous employment sites in western Gastonia; (5) a corresponding physical and economic disinvestment in commercial properties, combined with the occupancy by lower rent tenants because properties could not command higher rents; and, (6) other forces, actions, inactions that happen in almost all cities that cause undesirable investment and disinvestment outcomes. In other words, West Gastonia's developmental problems are rooted in circumstances that go back to the 1950's and 1960's, resulting in a downward spiral fueled by market and investment trends (from local to global) that favored an eastward growth pattern. But there is hope and enormous potential for a turnaround. Local examples include the revitalization of York Chester, the Loray Mill project, and the reemergence of successful retail at the western edge of town. Strategies must be geared toward building off these positive and hopeful reinvestments.

8. For over three decades there has been a national trend of "returning to cities." While this trend has only been clearly evident for the last 15-plus years, it has been clearly documented by Census data, plus the see-it-for-yourself physical evidence in city after city. It represents a renewed attraction of downtowns and older nearby neighborhoods to a diverse group of middle, upper middle, and higher income households, especially young professionals and business people. This trend has been amplified by Millennials who are known for shunning suburbs in favor of a trendy urban scene. This trend has been documented in numerous books such as The Rise of the Creative Class, by Richard Florida, and The Great Inversion, by Alan Ehrenhalt. One only needs to look at almost any major US city to see that this trend. Areas that were in the 50's through the 70's shunned by middle income persons are now revitalized trendy areas attracting professional, business persons and even families. Regionally, excellent examples are found in Durham, Greenville SC, Asheville, and even Charlotte. There are also many examples in smaller communities such as Spartanburg, Belmont, Black Mountain and Hendersonville.

9. New development, redevelopment and business openings that are of poor quality or detrimental to this plan's development goals will remain a viable market option, as long as property values remain low.

10. If existing property owners who are interested only in hoped-for windfall values instead of reinvesting themselves and hold their property indefinitely for want of a sale far in excess of market value, very little reinvestment will happen. Reinvestment happens when a redeveloper takes

ownership of a property and starts a project. As well-informed buyers, reinvestors are typically unwilling to pay a vastly inflated price for a potential property. At the end of the day, the reinvestment project must be financially feasible. To enable projects to happen, property owners not interested in being redevelopers must be willing to sell property for true market value.

11. West Franklin traffic volumes of 10K/day make the area comparatively less attractive for new development (compared to other major thoroughfares with available property). However, the Loray Mill and the further revitalization of West Franklin should serve to increase volumes. (The two-phased mill project itself should increase volumes by at least 3,000 ADT.) Fortunately, West Franklin has so much excess capacity that there is ample room for volume growth, while at the same time converting the Boulevard to four through lanes, with dedicated left turn lanes will provide both better functionality and better safety.

12. Micro-targeting or focusing on one, or preferably two, nodes of redevelopment is the way to begin a reinvestment process with the highest degree of expected success. It will lessen risk and create market activity clusters for the private sector. And for the public sector, it will allow for the focusing of limited resources for greatest impact. Success in two micro-targeted nodes should serve to catalyze reinvestment in areas between nodes and beyond nodes.

13. Additionally, future developers may want to rehabilitate and adaptively reuse historic industrial buildings located on Linwood Road at either side of its intersection of Second Avenue. These areas can provide low cost spaces for artisans, antique shops and antique malls, craft breweries, offices, and other services and retail. The larger historic buildings might even be suitable for additional loft housing. Also, there is revitalization potential for properties along Second between Vance Street and Linwood Road.

OBJECTIVES

The following are developmental and redevelopment objectives for business areas within the planning boundary. On West Franklin this includes the corridor between Oakwood Cemetery and Linwood Road; on West Second from Vance to Linwood; and on Linwood from the NS Railroad underpass to Garrison Boulevard.

- Successfully initiate private redevelopment at two nodes on West Franklin within two years and see substantial redevelopment progress of multiple properties at each node within five years to the extent that market dynamics change to see entirely self-generative, fully self-supportive private reinvestment.

- Within ten years, the two initial node areas are essentially redeveloped and other areas between and beyond the nodes are experiencing significant private redevelopment.

- A real estate market dynamic is created that dramatically increases commercial property values. With higher property values comes higher quality development.

- Redevelopment occurs in a manner that is pedestrian friendly and creates a lively, interesting, people-friendly urban style form of development along West Franklin between the Greasy Corner and Downtown.

- Aesthetically pleasing, well-designed development occurs within the spaces of both public and private realms to help make it a place to attract people for shopping, entertainment, and leisure activities.

- Where historic buildings are present, they are rehabilitated and preserved for a future built environment that is historic and authentic, consistent with the rehabilitation of the Loray Mill and the residential mill village.

- New construction near the Loray Mill and along Franklin from the Greasy Corner area to King Street is designed, built and placed in a manner that is sensitive to the Loray Village historic character.

- As West Franklin begins to revitalize, reinvestment and adaptive reuse of nonresidential buildings emerges along West Second Avenue between Vance and Linwood.

- Increased local government revenues are generated by reinvestment and growth in property values from business development. This will include property tax, sales tax, increase in population-driven revenues, and increased utility sales. These revenues are necessary to support municipal services within the planning area and the city as a whole.

STRATEGIES

1. Promote and facilitate a development node on West Franklin Boulevard centered on historic Greasy Corner and further east along Franklin to Dalton Street. Figure 1 below shows conceptually how a revitalized Greasy Corner could look. Figure 2 provides an aerial view of potentially how the area could redevelop.

2. Determine the feasibility of adding Greasy Corner to the Loray National Register District and if it appears to be feasible, engage a historic properties consultant to prepare and submit the necessary documentation to the SHPO. This also includes designating as many of the historic buildings as possible as "contributing" to the historic district. This designation would qualify eligible rehabilitation costs for tax credits to incentivize investment and/or generate equity capital.

Figure 2: Greasy Corner potential redevelopment scenario

Figure 1: Conceptual illustration of a revitalized Greasy Corner

3. When or if Firestone Fibers & Textiles decides to move its tire cord treating and warehouse operations from behind the Historic Loray Mill, new development opportunities will present themselves. One potential new opportunity, presented herein (and previously known as "Firestone Green") could be alternative to, or incremental of the Greasy Corner development node. If Firestone abandons its 9.28 acre site behind-the-mill, it is assumed that the land would be available for purchase by the Loray Mill development. This property would provide slightly more land than currently being provided for parking at the Loray Mill. This could potentially free up some land constructed for parking areas along Firestone and Millon Streets to allow for additional development between the historic mill and Franklin. Additional property could possibly be acquired along the south side of Franklin between Millon and Dalton. This land assemblage would allow for the creation of a "town center" type development patterned after the "Firestone Green" development proposal (hereinafter referred to as "Loray Green') that was a product of a 1996 community planning charrette. Figures 3 and 4 show this concept as proposed in 1996.

No doubt, the 1996 plan would need to undergo a number of changes to piggyback onto base framework of the existing Loray Mill site development. This development could take on various forms but the 1996 proposal as seen in Figures 3 & 4 showed ideas including:

(a) a central green or commons open space spanning the space from the west side of Firestone Street to the east side of Millon Street and from Second Avenue to Franklin (imagine looking from Franklin across a splendid urban "green" to the dramatic mill tower);
(b) Millon would run from Franklin to what was Second Avenue;
(c) new storefront commercial on the east side of Firestone and the west

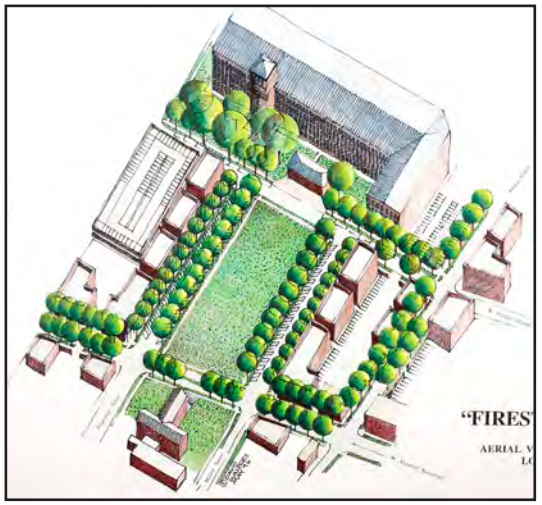


Figure 3: Axiometric view of the Firestone Green proposal

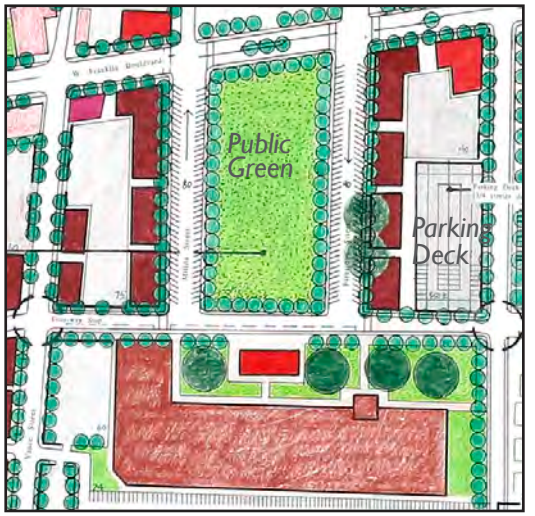


Figure 4: Aerial view of the Firestone Green proposal showing new storefronts along Firestone and Millon Streets along with diagonal parking along both sides of those streets.

side of Millon spanning the distance from Second to Franklin, to be constructed architecturally sensitive to the historic area);

(d) on-street diagonal parking on either side of Firestone and Millon Streets;

(e) a parking deck

(f) new storefront commercial buildings along Franklin that would "build off" a rehabilitated urban fabric at Greasy Corner and the proposed new storefront commercial buildings on Firestone and Millon Streets; and

(g) potentially added housing in second stories of the new storefront commercial.

Such a development would have a dramatic effect upon the Historic Loray area and significantly increase its attraction as a center for urban activity. Its feasibility would depend on the ability of the area to absorb the added commercial development, and thus, it would most likely be a development phase that would take place at least ten years out. It is assumed that it would be undertaken by the Loray Mill development and potentially additional commercial development partners. And, since this potential alternative is dependent upon a number private players (not the least of which are the Loray Mill development and Firestone), it is presented purely as an alternative, and as a potential future development phase beyond what is proposed at this time by those key players.

4. Ensure that development occurs within the Greasy Corner to Dalton node in a manner that keeps the Loray Mill as the visual focal point from Franklin. (i.e., keep the Mill tower as the view terminus from Franklin).

5. Promote and facilitate a development node in the area surrounding the intersection of Trenton and Franklin, including at least one block in either direction. This would primarily focus on redevelopment of the former Sears site. The Sears site has been vacant for at least fifteen years and consists of three tracts totaling six acres. Potential redevelopment opportunities for the Sears site are shown on illustration x on the following page. Generally, this large urban site would best be redeveloped as mixed use including both housing and commercial. There are also opportunities for office employment (including large tenants) and institutional uses.

The site can most efficiently be developed as a single tract, which may require the closure of West Main Avenue through the site. The site could also be more efficiently developed if it included the site of the older motel adjoining on the west side. This would provide a singular, nearly square, over nine acre tract (assuming closure of Main Avenue and Highland Street) with nearly 600 feet of frontage on West Franklin, midway between downtown and Firestone Street. The site's

only developmental constraint is that it backs up to the Norfolk Southern main line. (However, land near the railroad can be used for parking.)

Another development alternative proposed for the old Sears site (together with the motel site) has been a small venue sports stadium to host the Gastonia Grizzlies. There is some excitement in Gastonia about the potential of building in the central city a stadium that would accommodate the Grizzlies and other events. Figure 5 shown on the following page shows how this could be accomplished with a lesser amount of commercial development. Under this idea, the front one-fourth of the site would be devoted to mixed use, including urban storefront uses, while the back three-fourths of the site would be used for the stadium. This has the advantage of keeping year-round, daily activities at the urban street (Franklin), which serves to promote active street life and urban vitality. Stadium usage is event based, and while they contribute immensely to urban life in the public realm at event times, during times when there are no events they become essentially "dead" space. Therefore, it is best to put stadiums in center block or back block locations rather than directly fronting along a street where the objective is to promote daily vitality and pedestrian activity along the public street. If the stadium is developed it will be necessary to host other year-round events (when Grizzlies are not playing home), since their regular season is only about 11 weeks.

If this site were to redevelop as entirely a mixed use project it would be essentially a private development venture. If the site involved a stadium, it is most likely that the stadium portion would be developed by the public or non-profit sectors. There are several other strategic developmental considerations concerning this node:

a. If the Central YMCA decides to move from its 60-year site at Franklin and Trenton, new challenges will be presented to this node and the overall area. The Y is a major activity center for central Gastonia and serves to bring people to the immediate area that might not otherwise come. This tract of nearly six acres includes almost all of the block bounded by Franklin, Trenton, Second and Clay; and, has about 350 feet of frontage on Franklin. Several different alternatives for the site's reuse would serve the objectives of this plan:

ii. Private mixed use development for commercial, office and housing.

iii. Perform upgrades, repairs and alterations to the building (or a substantial portion of it) and use it for a new Adult Recreation Center (ARC). This alternative is further addressed in the section, "Playing in the Village." Examples of other public uses that could be incorporated with the Adult Recreation Center are: (a) classrooms for continuing education and arts/hobbies learning; (b) classrooms for

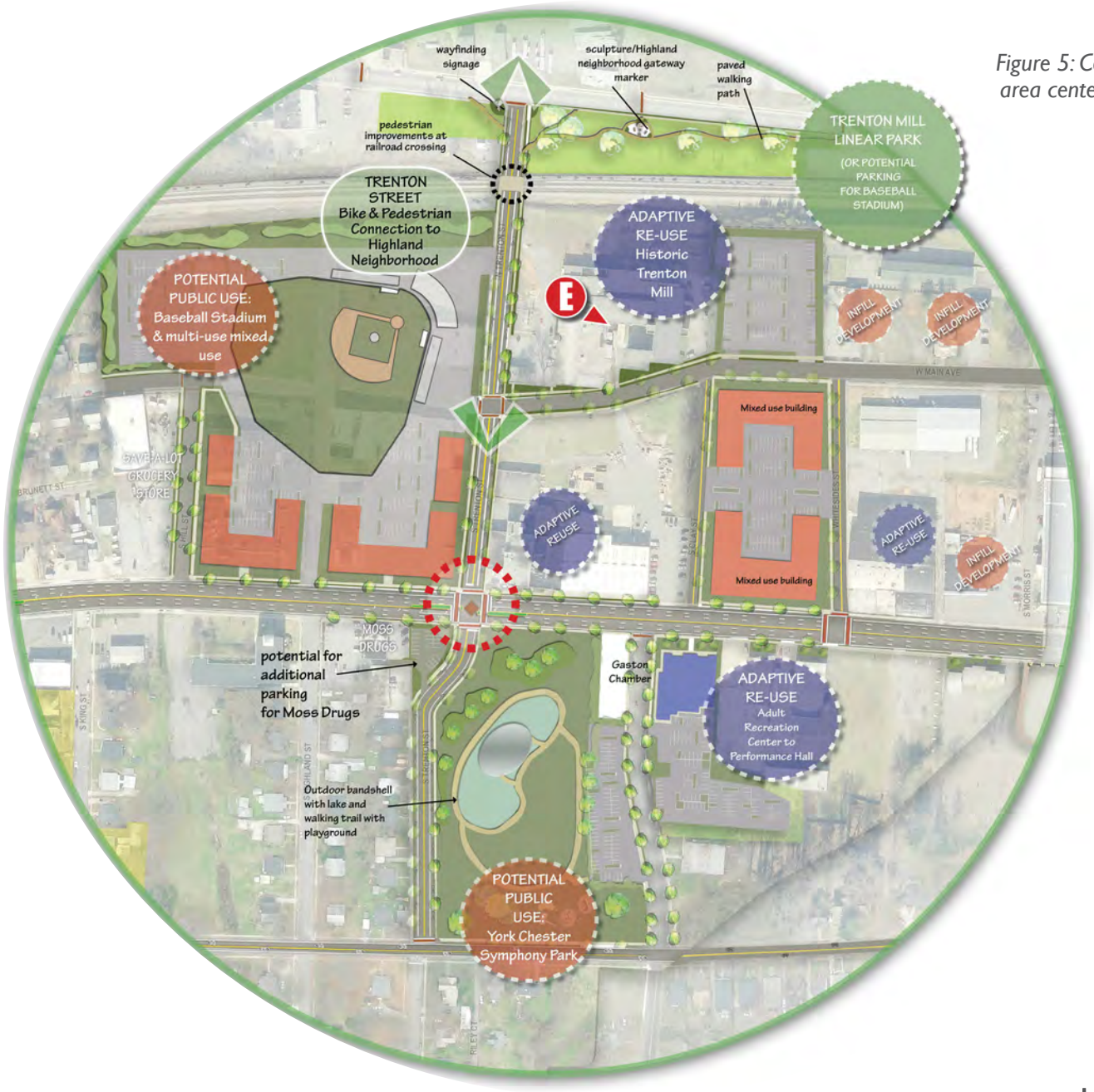


Figure 5: Conceptual illustration of a revitalized area centered around theTrenton St / Franklin Boulevard intersection

adult healthy living; (c) spaces for exercise, yoga, and Tai Chi, and self-defense classes; (d) classrooms for distance learning for both degree or professional related purposes, and personal enrichment; and, (e) classes directed to serving populations that may not have transportation access to locations more distant from the central city (e.g. pregnancy health and parenting classes for low income mothers). If this option is chosen, then the City would need to find a new use for the historic old armory building (existing Adult Recreation Center). One alternative would be to evaluate its potential to be adaptively reused as a small entertainment or similar activities venue.

iv. Construct on the site a new community performing arts facility, which could include an auditorium and/or an outdoor performance venue. This alternative is shown on Figure 5.

v. Use this site to build a sports stadium for the Grizzlies and other events. This could be done on either the YMCA site alone or in combination with the existing ARC and Little Theater of Gastonia land along with closing Clay Street from Franklin to Second. If the ARC and Little Theater sites are incorporated into this option, then those facilities should be replaced, either as (preferably) part of an overall Trenton-Franklin redevelopment node, or elsewhere in the central city.

b. The historic Trenton Mill, located at Trenton Street and Main Avenue offers a potential for rehabilitation for adaptive reuse. Promoting and facilitating the adaptive reuse of this historic and unique structure should be a key revitalization component for this node. The Trenton Mill structure is the oldest cotton mill still standing in Gastonia. While its proximity to the tracks of the Norfolk Southern main (less than 200 feet) presents reuse challenges, it remains an intriguing cotton mill building that allows for creativity in adaptive use design. There is no doubt that this important structure would qualify for the National Register of Historic Places. Its construction in phases (dating as early as 1893) with multiple entrances make it adaptable for mixed-use. It may be adaptable for partial residential use if design can work around the railroad sound issue. But the primary uses would most likely be one or two restaurants, offices, business start-ups. It is indeed a unique building in the way it was built—it varies from one to three stories and its U-shape creates space for a courtyard. A 2005 study commissioned by the Gaston County Economic Development Commission (on adaptive reuse of old mills) featured this historic mill in its report. Figure 6 was extracted from that report. The building is currently partially occupied by a floor covering dealer.

c. The old masonry part of the former Coca-Cola bottling plant may someday present an opportunity for historic preservation through rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.

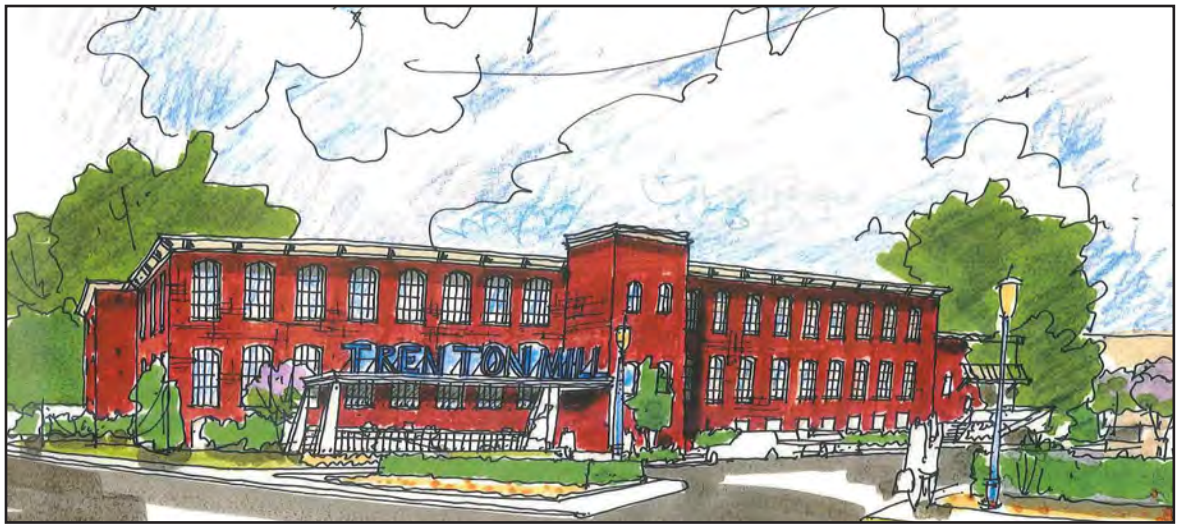


Figure 6: Conceptual illustration of a revitalized Trenton Mill included in the Gaston County Economic Development Commission Report on adaptive reuse of old mills

However, at this time the complex is occupied by Fab-Tech, a local industry engaged in machining and metal fabrication, employing over 30 people.

d. Two businesses fronting Franklin in this immediate vicinity are Moss Drugs, a locally owned and operated pharmacy serving the community for nearly 75 years, and Save-a-Lot supermarket (a subsidiary chain of the SuperValu grocery conglomerate), which opened in 2012. Save-a-Lot is hard discount, limited assortment, smaller footprint supermarket chain. This store was a particularly welcomed addition to an area that could be tagged a "food desert." Both of these businesses provide a vital service and are necessary basic retail outlets for the Loray Village and surrounding areas. Thus, their existence is supportive of public health by providing access to basic necessities for areas of low-and-moderate income.

6. As revitalization occurs on Franklin the City should explore ways to facilitate the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse along Second Avenue between Vance Street and Linwood Road. Strategies should also be employed to encourage adaptive reuse of historic manufacturing buildings along Linwood at Second Avenue. These particular buildings may ultimately qualify for historic rehabilitation tax credits and may well be suited for mixed use including residential and nonresidential uses. These buildings, along with the buildings along Second could ultimately become a small "warehouse district," where buildings once used for warehousing and small manufacturing uses take on new lives as spaces for new uses, such as craft breweries, artists and craftsman spaces, offices, antique sales, specialty shops, eateries, pubs, and housing. All of this could tag on to the new life of the Loray Mill and the Greasy Corner area. In order to support a vibrant street life along this stretch of West Second

Avenue, it will be necessary to install a wide sidewalk on the north side of the street and widen the sidewalk on the south side. Where possible the northern sidewalk should replicate the wide tree lawn on the south side. Tree lawns should be planted with appropriate trees.

7. In order to support the overall attraction and revitalization of the Loray Village Area the City should encourage, support and facilitate the location of basic and enhanced retail and services, particularly along the Franklin corridor and within the targeted development nodes. Of particular concern and priority are those retail and service establishments that are necessary for public health. These include:

a. Primary health care providers
b. Sellers of unprepared foods (groceries) at competitive prices, especially fresh produce.
c. Pharmacies

Strategies for these specific concerns are as follows:

a. Primary Health Care: There is no primary healthcare provider within the Loray Village boundary; however, there are providers within a short distance drive of the neighborhood. Those providers are (distance measured from Franklin Boulevard at Firestone Street):

i. Anthony Medical Clinic, 0.9 mi. east on Third Ave.
ii. Highland Health Center (includes pharmacy), 1 mi. north on Highland Street
iii. First Care Medical Clinic, 1.1 mi. east on Third Ave.
iv. Carolina Mercy Medical Clinic (Osteopathic Physician) 1.1 mi. west on Franklin
v. Gaston Family Health Services at Gaston County Health Department (includes pharmacy) 2.4 mi. south on Hudson Boulevard

The City should strive to attract at least one, multi-practitioner primary healthcare provider within the planning area, preferably at either one of the proposed development nodes or within the Loray Mill itself. This should be done in conjunction with a major healthcare provider system such as CaroMont Health.

b. Groceries: While Save-a-Lot was a welcomed addition to the Loray Planning Area, offering groceries at attractive prices, it is nonetheless, an edited selection store. A market study should be done to determine whether the area's demographics can justify a full service supermarket. The general area still appears to be underserved in terms of groceries. Sales traffic at Save-a-Lot appears to be brisk, given the store size. The Walmart Supercenter, 1.4 miles west seems to do a high volume of grocery sales. These stores seem to have proven the obvious—that there is a strong grocery market in West Gastonia. Ideal locations for a full service supermarket might be the old Sears site at Trenton and Franklin or the former Parkdale Mill site at Garrison and

Webb Street. While the Parkdale site is only 300 feet west of the Loray Village Area boundary, it offers the distinct advantage of frontage on both Franklin Boulevard and Garrison Boulevard. It is easily accessible to all areas of West Gastonia. Another potential grocery location is on land being prepared for retail near the intersection of Franklin and Bessemer City Road, which could have access to both of those thoroughfares. This site is 0.4 mi. from the planning area boundary and 0.8 mi, west of the intersection of Franklin and Firestone. It also closer to the Walmart Supercenter. Recruitment of a full service supermarket to the West Franklin corridor in or near the planning area would continue to fulfill the grocery needs of the immediate and wide surrounding area.

Another strategy, supplemental to a major full service supermarket would be to encourage the location of a specialty foods store within the Loray Mill.

The City should coordinate with the Loray Mill developers in establishing a satellite farmers market on the site of the Historic Loray Mill. Even if the market operated only one day per week in season, it would serve to attract additional people to the Loray Mill as well as provide local produce access to residents of the mill and the neighborhood. If the market is held outdoors it will be necessary to provide shelter from the sun and other elements for the vendors and their produce. The idea of a farmers market has been suggested by one of the development partners.

c. Pharmacies. Pharmacy stores appear to be adequate. Moss Drugs is located within the Loray Mill Planning Area. Outside the planning area, CVS and Walgreens stores are 0.9 mi west of Franklin and Firestone. Then, another half-mile west is a Rite Aid store, plus the Walmart Supercenter includes a pharmacy. There is also a pharmacy at the Highland Health Center. If a full service supermarket locates in the area, then it is assumed that it will include a pharmacy.

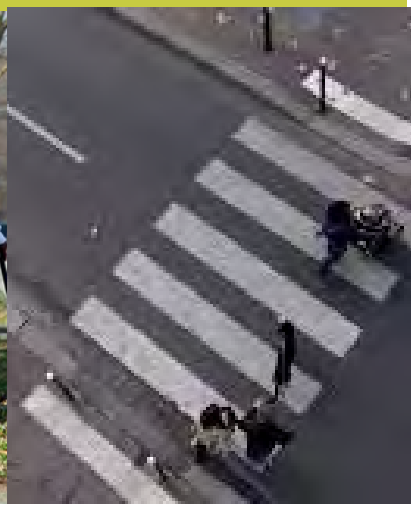
8. Implement the street enhancing strategies for the business areas that are described in the transportation section of this report (Getting Around the Village) and the public works section (Serving the Village). These sections outline a set of improvements that will help to enhance these business areas by helping to create urban vitality and a “people place.” These improvements propose expanding the historic light poles and signal masts/arms to other parts of the Franklin corridor, provide for enhanced crosswalks, LED street lighting, changing the lane configuration on Franklin to four plus left turn lanes, sidewalk improvements, street trees, and other enhancements.

9. Establish design standards for new commercial development within the plan area, especially the Franklin Boulevard Corridor. Example standards to consider could include:
(1) “Build-to lines” which minimizes parking between the building and the street, and emphasizes placement of most

parking to the side and rear of buildings;
(2) emphasizing new commercial buildings be faced with natural materials such as brick; (3) emphasizing an entrance and adequate fenestration for building streetfronts; and
(4) appropriate architectural detailing, especially on front facades. New buildings constructed in historical areas (i.e., historic near the Loray Mill and Greasy Corner) should be constructed in a manner that is sensitive the area's historic character.

Getting Around the Village

Transportation Strategies



LORAY VILLAGE **AREA PLAN**

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GOAL

To move safely, efficiently and comfortably within and through Loray Village as a unique place, whether it be by walking, bicycling, personal motor vehicle or public transportation.

History, Current Conditions and Major Issues

Franklin Boulevard, originally Mill Street, is the main drag that runs that runs east-west through the heart of Gastonia and no discussion of transportation in the Loray Village Plan Area can be undertaken without a focus upon this major street. In a sense, Franklin is "Gastonia's Main Street." Its prominence in Gastonia is such that no other corridor or street contributes more to the community's image and "place identity." Franklin runs near the northern edge of the plan area. Franklin's numbered routes through Gastonia are US Highways 29 and 74. Before the Interstate Highway System, as US 29 and 74, Franklin served as one of North Carolina's major highway corridors providing a main route from Charlotte to Greenville-Spartanburg and Atlanta, as well US 74 being the connector between Wilmington, Charlotte, Asheville and Chattanooga. With the advent of I-85, Franklin began to function largely as a local cross-town thoroughfare street as opposed to a major inter-city and inter-region connector. Originally a two-lane street, a streetcar running to Loray was added in 1911 (and discontinued in 1948). The street was widened in conjunction with the construction of Wilkinson Boulevard in the late 1920's, North Carolina's first four-lane highway. In the 1950's, Franklin was widened again, this time resulting in removal of front sections of commercial buildings including those on Greasy Corner.

Through the plan area Franklin Boulevard has a six-lane configuration with three through lanes in either direction, curb and gutter, sidewalks. But its configuration changes within either ends of Gastonia. Immediately west of the

Franklin Boulevard 6 lane configuration

Loray plan area the configuration is also six lanes; however, at major intersections the inside lanes become dedicated left turn lanes. Immediately west of Myrtle School Road the configuration changes to a four-lane highway with a wide planted median and left turn pockets for major intersections. Immediately east of the plan area and through downtown the configuration changes to a modified version of a five-lane urban cross section (having a middle bi-directional left turn lane), but the center lane turns into single direction dedicated left turn lanes at major intersections. And at certain intersections, left turns may be prohibited. Franklin's posted speed limit through the plan area is 35 mph. Franklin is a relatively uncongested street except when there is an incident on I-85 in which through traffic is diverted onto US 29-74. During the past fifteen years traffic volumes on Franklin have actually ***declined*** to where today they are around 10,000 to 13,000 average daily traffic (ADT). While it is hoped that the Loray Mill redevelopment and the strategies set forth in this plan will help to increase activity in the area, and thus consequentially traffic counts, Franklin Boulevard will be able to absorb additional volumes within its substantial excess capacity. It should also be pointed out that Franklin's existing well-synchronized signal system is a significant contributor to throughput.

Franklin Boulevard within the Loray area is a harsh place for pedestrians. Average vehicle speeds probably exceed the posted speed, sidewalks are narrow, typically close to travel lanes and lack street trees, and crossing is difficult. *Making the area more accommodating for pedestrians was a significant public concern expressed at the initial public drop-in event for this plan.*

Except for the walking dependent population one sees few pedestrians along this stretch of Franklin Boulevard. For walkers, instead of an "urban street" feel, Franklin gives the feeling of an urban highway. To make a street pedestrian friendly and to be an attraction for discretionary pedestrians-- *those who choose to walk*, four principles must be addressed: (1) **safety** for pedestrians; (2) pedestrians must feel **comfortable** (at ease) walking; (3) walking must be an **interesting** experience; and, (4) there must be **destinations** within easy walking distance. Strategies in this plan are intended to improve the street's ability to efficiently and safely handle motor vehicles while adding some measures to improve pedestrian safety and comfort. It cannot be over emphasized that the deficit presented by West Franklin Boulevard is accommodation for pedestrians, particularly the discretionary pedestrian. Making the street accommodating to pedestrians can be accomplished by two ***interdependent*** sets of strategies: (1) physical improvements to pedestrian accommodations (sidewalks, crosswalks, street "comforts" and aesthetic enhancements) and (2) introduction of businesses that contribute to a lively pedestrian environment.

As stated, vehicular "throughput" at the posted speed of 35 mph is not an issue now, nor with projected volumes over the next 30 years. Whether it remains having three or two through lanes in either direction, the street will have ample excess capacity. Measures that have the effect of decreasing speeds to the posted 35 mph (such as street trees) will not impede capacity or throughput. And, neither will measures to make the street more accommodating to pedestrians, such as the installation of enhanced crosswalks that include mid-crossing pedestrian refuge islands. In summary, Franklin's deficit in walkability can be substantially resolved without sacrificing vehicular throughput at the posted speed of 35 mph.

About eight years ago the City obtained Federal Transportation Enhancements funding to install new street lights and historic-looking pedestrian scale lighting on Franklin from Ransom to Vance Streets. The project also included the installation of signal masts and arms at the Firestone and Vance Street intersections. These improvements need to be extended through the plan area.

The neighborhood streets of Loray Village were laid out in 1900-02 on a traditional grid pattern. While the grid pattern went out of style in the post-World War II years, the value of "the grid" has been re-appreciated in recent years and is now a central principle of the New Urbanism movement of city and town planning. Grid (and "modified grid") street systems allow for more efficient use of land, more efficient delivery of services, enable more social and economic interaction, and serve to distribute traffic more equally among streets.

A number of the neighborhood streets suffer from pavement deterioration as shown on Figure 1 on the following page. Depending on the severity of conditions the streets may be in need of crack filling, full depth patching, resurfacing or a combination of treatments. Given that these streets have been resurfaced several times, some may require milling of old pavement to resurface. Vance Street was resurfaced in the program financed by the 2010 street bonds. Generally, neighborhood streets are wide enough to accommodate on-street parking, which is common throughout Loray Village. On-street parking helps reduce speeding on neighborhood streets.

Originally, streets were dirt but sidewalks were concrete. Back then, most residents of the village walked to work, school, church, visitation, recreation, stores, and to the nearest streetcar stop. Loray Village is fortunate to be one of the few neighborhoods in Gastonia to have sidewalks on both sides of most streets. Sidewalks on neighborhood streets are four feet wide, while sidewalks on Franklin Boulevard are generally five feet wide except at Greasy Corner where most run from storefront to curb. Sidewalk conditions in the neighborhood are generally fair to good, given their age.

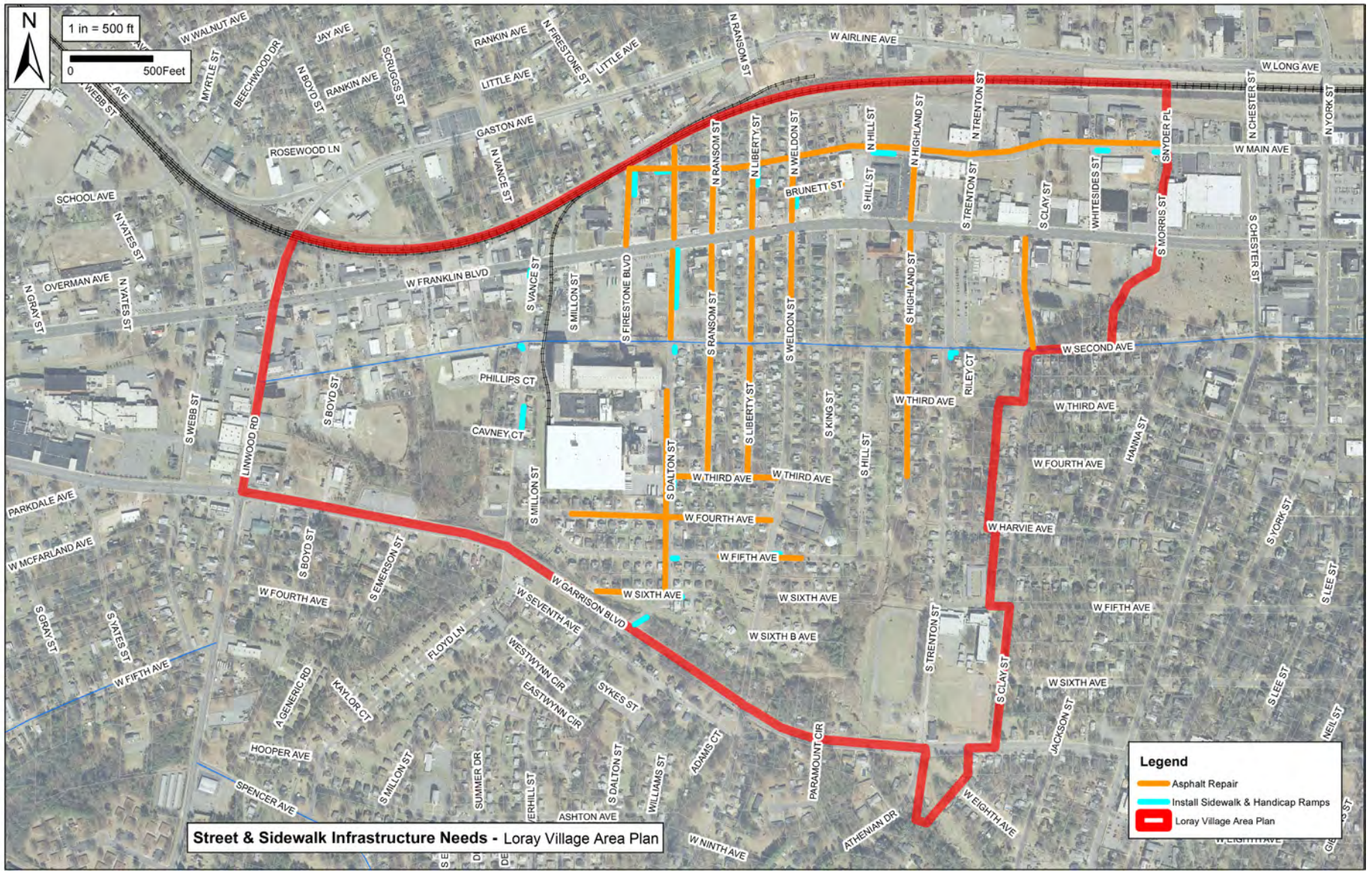

Figure 1: Street & Sidewalk Infrastructure Needs in the Loray Village Area

There are a few missing sections of sidewalks as noted in the strategies to follow in this chapter; and, there are numerous corners that lack ramps. Common sidewalk deterioration problems in Loray are similar to other older areas: weed and soil encroachment; cracking; and, buckling.

The redeveloped historic mill and the historic mill houses, together with the village time-honored grid street pattern and sidewalks, combine to provide the "bones" of a neighborhood with remarkable potential for market attraction, given public and private efforts to spark and continue a revitalization trend.

OBJECTIVES

- Improve pedestrian comfort and safety on Franklin Boulevard, both alongside and crossing, without impairing the street's capacity to comfortably handle projected traffic volumes.
- Provide safer measures for pedestrians to cross Franklin Boulevard.
- Off Franklin Boulevard, improve pedestrian crossings at key intersections.
- Provide for safer, more efficient traffic flow on Franklin while keeping speeds at or below the posted speed.
- Eliminate poor intersection alignments, particularly Trenton at West Franklin.
- Improve aesthetics along West Franklin Boulevard, especially by softening harsh or unsightly aspects.
- Improve and harmonize street lighting and signal infrastructure.
- Reduce speeding traffic on thoroughfares and neighborhood streets.
- Assure street pavement conditions are well-maintained.
- Ensure safe and comfortable pedestrian movement is maintained and facilitated on neighborhood streets.
- Provide for safe bicycle routes and facilities in and through the neighborhood and interconnect destination points with on-and off-street bicycle/ pedestrian facilities.
- Improve transit connections to and from Loray Village.

STRATEGIES

Streets

1. ***Make targeted improvements to West Franklin Boulevard, which will improve appearance, incent quality reinvestment, make it more pedestrian friendly, improve overall safety and moderate speeds to posted limit (35 mph), while preserving ample capacity for existing and future traffic volumes.***

2. ***The City should select one or two Franklin intersections near the Loray Mill to install brick pattern crosswalks that include standard median pedestrian refuge areas.*** At these intersections left-turns are made from dedicated left-turn lanes, while two through lanes are maintained in either direction. (There is a similar traffic pattern presently at the Franklin/Linwood intersection, although in this configuration a median is added in space that is not used for traffic movement.) The median provides landscaping as well as a midway pedestrian refuge. New pedestrian signals are also added. Selected intersections should include signal masts and arms, if not present. This configuration is shown on Figure 2. Bi-directional access to businesses is maintained either directly by cross access, or by turning onto intersecting side streets where driveways exist. Efficiency of vehicular movement is actually ***improved*** by taking left-turning traffic out of through lanes and putting it into dedicated left turn lanes. Two through lanes in both directions remain unobstructed by left turning vehicles. Slaloming of vehicles is greatly reduced, as is breaking and speed variations. The Franklin Boulevard Corridor Master Plan, done in 2007 by Renaissance Planning Group and MAB Engineers, reported that the efficiency of the street in handling traffic would be ***improved*** (versus the existing configuration), especially as traffic volumes ***increase*** over

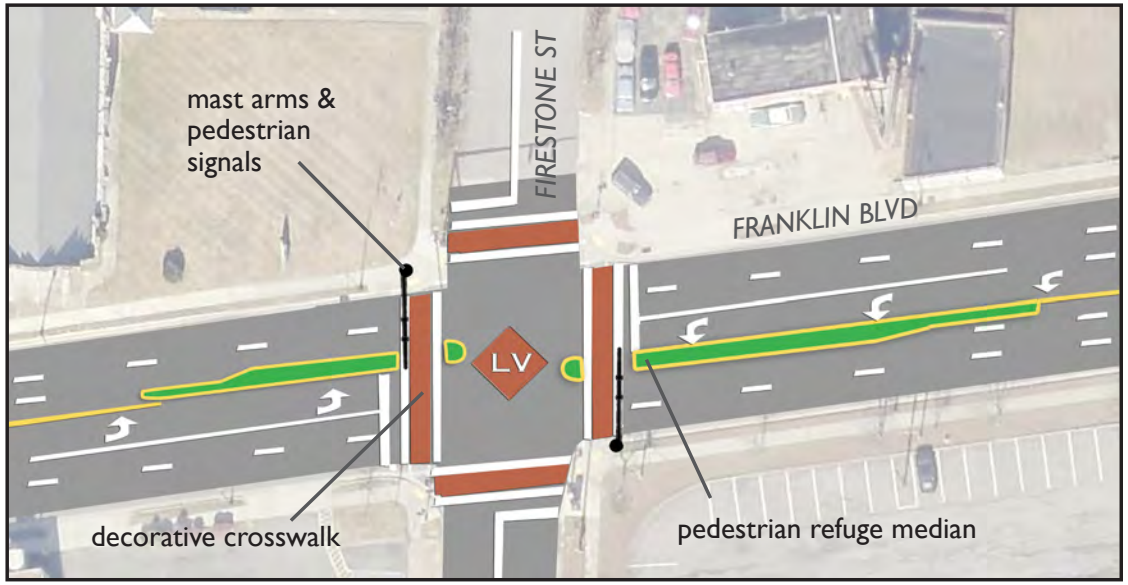

Figure 2: Proposed Firestone Street & Franklin Boulevard intersection improvements

the existing 10-13K ADT (with two through lanes plus dedicated left turn lanes in either direction).

3. ***Where absent, install street trees along Franklin.*** In some cases trees will need to be planted in grates in existing wide sidewalks (e.g., eight feet wide), in some cases planted in a three-foot or wider planting strip, and in other cases planted within the right-of-way or (with permission) between the right-of-way and building fronts. Priority should be given to the Franklin section between South Highland and South Vance.

4. ***Repair streets with pavement deficiencies.*** This includes most streets within the Loray Village Planning Area, exceptions being South Vance Street (resurfaced with the 2010 street bonds), South Weldon south of Second, South King, South Hill and South Trenton. Almost all other streets are in need of "full depth patching" or resurfacing due to age and deterioration. Main Avenue is in need of milling and resurfacing. For maximum longevity consider resurfacing at the time of full depth patching.

5. ***Initially target full depth patching (and potential resurfacing) to blocks when and where concentrated housing improvements are targeted.***

6. ***As funding priorities permit, install signal mast arms and poles where absent at Franklin signalized intersections.*** As stated, they already exist at the Firestone and Vance intersections. The three signalized intersections needing mast arms and poles include Trenton, Weldon and Linwood-Gaston. The Whitesides Street intersection would also need this treatment if continuance of the signal is justified. This intersection should be evaluated to determine if signalization is warranted. To the east of the planning area, signal mast arms and poles should be installed at the Franklin-Chester and Franklin-York intersections as proposed in the Downtown Public Realm Plan.

7. ***Make street lighting improvements as noted in the Serving the Village section.***

Pedestrian and Bicycle

8. ***As funding permits, Install missing sidewalk links and wheelchair ramps within the historic mill village area as indicated on Figure 1.*** Repair broken or buckled existing sidewalks as needed to make safe for users. Priority for initial sidewalk work should be given to blocks when and where concentrated housing improvements are targeted.

9. ***Create enhanced pedestrian crosswalks on Franklin Boulevard as noted in Strategy #2.*** All other signalized crossings should include prominent markings and pedestrian countdown signals. Examples of prominent markings include the "Continental" and "Bar Pairs. If Bar Pairs are used they should be supplemented by "Standard" ("Transverse") marking borders. The combination of Bar Pairs and Transverse borders in the same crosswalk is now commonly used by City of Charlotte and Georgia DOT. Crosswalk markings should be well-maintained. Either of the described applications can be applied to avoid wheel paths for greater life.

10. ***Extend the proposed on-street Second Avenue Bicycle-Pedestrian Corridor along West Second Avenue from Downtown to, through and past the Historic Loray Mill and extending to Linwood.*** Priority should be given to the eastern leg from Downtown to the Loray Mill. This improvement includes repairing existing sidewalks (which exist on both sides of Second except as noted) and marking both directions of the street lanes with shared-lane ("sharrow") markings for

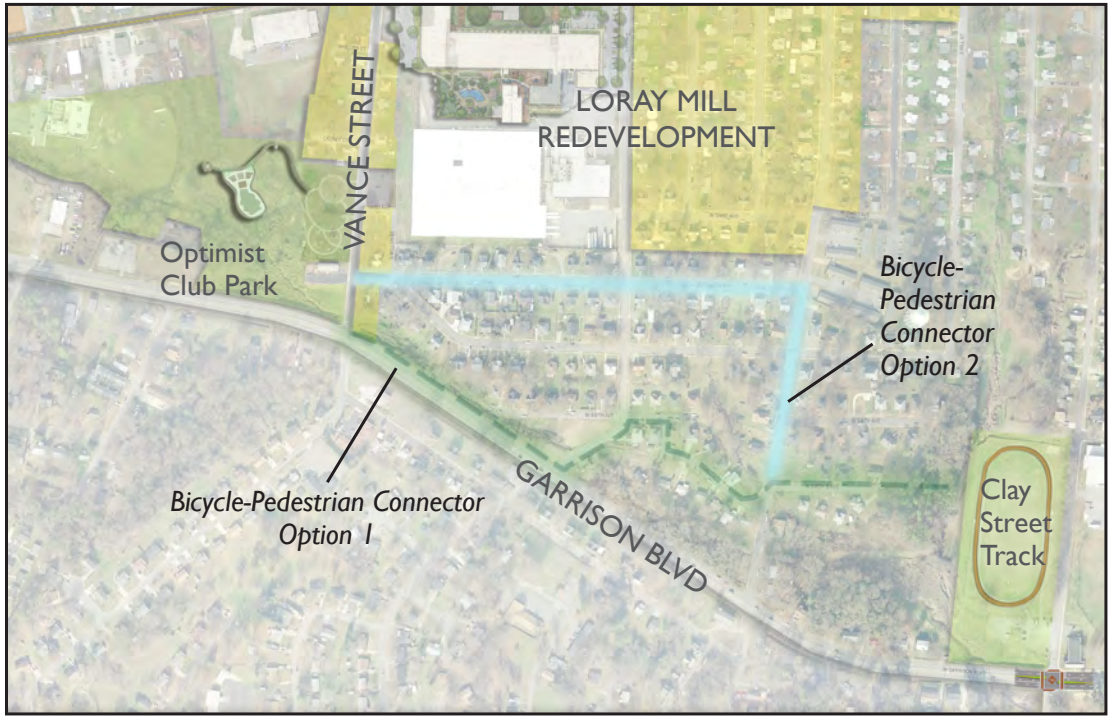

Figure 3: Bicycle-Pedestrian Connector System connecting Optimist Club Park with the Clay Street Track

Figure 4: Conceptual illustration indicating bike sharrows along Second Avenue, extending from downtown to Linwood

bikes, as illustrated in Figure 4. Install sidewalk (for missing link) on north side of Second Avenue between Clay and Trenton. This route should become part of the Carolina Thread Trail system.

11. ***Create an on-street/off-street trail connector from Clay Street walking track (York Chester Middle School Athletic Field) to the historic mill village.*** By using the village street system-- existing street sidewalks for pedestrians and shared-lane markings for bicycles, connections can be made to Historic Loray Mill (along with the Second Avenue Bike-Ped corridor) and to Optimist Park. Figure 3 shows alternatives for the largely on-street routing of this bicycle-pedestrian connector system.

12. ***Create an enhanced pedestrian crossing of West Garrison Boulevard at South Trenton.*** This can also be a crossing for a potential on-street/off-street extension of the Catawba Creek Greenway. This link is shown on the City's Comprehensive Plan.

13. ***Create enhanced pedestrian crosswalks for all four crossings at West Garrison and Linwood Road.*** This intersection has a lot of pedestrian traffic.

14. ***Realign the intersection of Trenton and Franklin so that both north and south legs of Trenton meet face-to-face at 90 degrees.***

15. ***Consider the installation of traffic calming measures on Weldon between Second and Garrison to reduce speeding—a problem identified by residents.***

Public Transportation

16. ***Shift Gastonia Transit Route 5 from Weldon to Dalton (about 500' westward) to run closer to Loray Mill.*** This should be done bi-directionally. But if existing ridership demands allow shifting the route in only one direction, then it should be done for the inbound route to allow for convenient morning access for Charlotte-bound commuters using the CATS 85x express originating at the Bradley Transit Center.

17. ***Consider adding a Downtown-Loray circulator bus when justified by future ridership demands.***

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Safety in the Village

Police & Law Enforcement Strategies

LORAY VILLAGE **AREA PLAN**

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GOAL

Loray Village is a safe place in every respect, on the streets, in homes, in businesses, and in institutions. It is not only safe by actual data, it feels safe and is perceived as safe.

History, Current Conditions and Major Issues

Actual crime incidence and perceptions of the state of public safety often follow socio-economic conditions of a neighborhood. When the historic Loray Village was a community where workers at the Firestone plant lived together, it was a close knit community where people looked out for each other and residents collectively took an interest in instilling community and societal values in their youngsters. The section Housing and Neighborhood section of this plan describes the evolution of housing conditions and homeownership in the community. It is likely that public safety trends have followed a parallel trend. However, it should be made clear that rental occupancy *per se* is not associated with incidence of crime. The vast majority of households who choose to rent, or rent for other reasons are upstanding, law abiding citizens. But in the case with Loray Village, the past acquisition of housing for rental investment purposes, combined with inadequate (or careless) background checks of tenants may have resulted in occupancy of a few houses by persons who bring problems to the neighborhood. Today, three-fourths of the housing units in Loray Village are rental.

It is a fair assumption that with efforts to improve housing and neighborhood physical and economic conditions, and commensurate neighborhood cohesiveness, we will see offensive activity reduced. Those physical and economic objectives (which are highly interrelated and interdependent) include: (1) improve overall housing conditions; (2) dramatically increase owner occupancy of dwellings; and (3) increase the property value of single family homes.

Both actual reported crimes and "calls for service" during calendar year 2013 were examined. Reported crimes were divided into categories of violent, property and Part 2 crimes.

Gastonia's recent Citizen Patrol graduates

Examples of offenses (not necessarily occurring in Loray) falling into the Part 2 category include: simple assault (no injury or dangerous weapon involved), forgery-fraud-embezzlement type offenses, vandalism, prostitution-sex-vice, drug related offenses, violating weapons laws, alcohol and DWI offenses, child and family related offenses, stolen property offences, and a number of other lesser offences. During 2013, reported crimes by category included six violent, 44 property and around 150 offenses in the Part 2 category. Bear in mind that many of these offenses may in no way be related to the neighborhood. For instance, a driver arrested for DWI on Franklin or Garrison Boulevard may be from somewhere else, or someone intentionally writing a bad check at a neighborhood business may be from outside the neighborhood. By in large, crime incidence in Loray seems to be no greater (if as much) as other areas of Gastonia with similar housing and socio-economic characteristics. However, there has been a history of a few street sections, on and off, being "hot spots" of undesirable activity, which required extra policing measures. Beyond the fact that Loray is an urbanized area (but not as "urban" as big city areas), there are a number of factors that affect crime (in the USA) including, population composition particularly youth composition, population stability, poverty and economic conditions, cultural and educational factors, family conditions, law enforcement effectiveness and strategies, other components of the criminal justice system, and public attitudes toward crime and their reporting practices.

Neighborhood Watch organizations are the cornerstone component of citizens and police working together in reporting and solving neighborhood problems. They can become the key citizens-based organization working with police in the modern Community Oriented Policing paradigm. There are three Neighborhood Watch organizations (on record) within the Loray Village Plan Area; however, only one, "Firestone" is actively and organizationally involved with the Gastonia Police Department. An appropriate strategy to improve Neighborhood Watch in the area, as well as overall neighborhood cohesiveness and neighborhood organization, would be to combine them into one organization that covers the entire plan area.

Community oriented, problem solving policing is the overall paradigm of neighborhood-focused policing of the Gastonia Police Department. About eight years ago when the Loray Mill project developers were trying to financially structure the old mill's redevelopment, they saw the need for greater police presence on site. Plenty of space would be available in the renovated mill. At the same time, city officials and the police department saw in this need an opportunity to establish a field office, or even headquarters, for the city's western patrol district. This would be a win-win proposition. What finally evolved out of this this idea was that the police department

would establish its western district headquarters in a section of the old mill located at its southeast end near South Dalton Street. This move will inherently serve to significantly increase police presence in the neighborhood.

OBJECTIVES

- Reduce incidence of crime.
- Provide a fact-based greater sense of security held by neighborhood residents.
- Improve negative perceptions of the neighborhood, as it pertains to crime that may be held by the market and greater community.
- Increase overall police presence in the neighborhood in a way that is viewed positively.
- Enhance dialog and exchange of information between neighborhood residents and police.
- Improve neighborhood organization and partnerships with police in crime prevention, observation and overall neighborhood cohesiveness.
- Businesses and institutions within the plan area are partners with police and neighborhood residents in addressing crime and other related issues.
- Owners, businesses, patrons and residents of the Loray Mill development are involved with police in minimizing crime.

STRATEGIES

1. ***Establish Western District Headquarters at the Loray Mill as soon as facilities are made available.***

2. ***Expand the existing Firestone Neighborhood Watch boundary to cover the entire Loray Village planning area, bounded generally by Clay Street, Norfolk Southern RR, Linwood Road, and Garrison Blvd.*** Consider renaming it to Loray or Loray Village. The neighborhood watch should also involve and include businesses, churches and other community institutions, and the Loray Mill development. This can help create new unity between all neighborhood stakeholders.

3. ***Coordinate with Loray Mill owners in holding community watch meetings at the Loray Mill.*** This will help strengthen ties between the new Loray Mill residents and neighborhood residents who are interested in neighborhood public safety.

4. ***Increase police patrol and presence in Loray Village.*** Much of this can be accomplished incidentally by officers going to and from the new West District Headquarters to be located at the renovated Loray Mill. A simple drive through the neighborhood and an extra loop around certain blocks as they access the headquarters can add extra presence and visibility.

5. ***Employ regular use of Segway's and bicycles in neighborhood patrols in order to increase both police visibility and interaction with neighborhood residents.***

6. ***Convey to all existing and new multi-family, commercial and institutional properties appropriate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) measures that would be advisable for their properties.*** This is part of ongoing CPTED review.

7. ***Continue to focus on monitoring of problem locations***.

8. ***Upgrade and update street lighting throughout the Loray Village Planning Area.*** (Note: this is more particularly described in the Public Works and Utilities Strategies.)

9. ***Ensure measures are employed to keep the new Optimist Park on Vance Street safe and in good repair.***

10. ***Coordinate with Loray Mill owners on parking lot safety, including personal safety as well as potential vehicular related crime.*** This includes patrol, lighting, CPTED and similar site related factors.

11. ***Continue to work with rental property owners on problem properties and problem tenants.*** Employ the Residential Rental Property Remedial Action Program in situations where cooperative efforts do not first correct problems.

12. ***Appropriately employ social media to facilitate community policing outreach and crime prevention.*** However, the use of social media in policing should follow policies and procedures recommended for law enforcement agencies.

13. ***Continue to coordinate with City Housing Code enforcement officers where Housing Code and nuisance violations become apparent to police officers.***

14. ***Coordinate with willing faith and other institutions on measures that promote wholesome, neighborly, lawful behaviors and help prevent undesired or unlawful behaviors.*** An example would be the summer "Cruise-In" events sponsored by Bradley Memorial United Methodist church.

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Playing in the Village

Parks & Recreation Strategies

LORAY VILLAGE **AREA PLAN**

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GOAL

To provide convenient access to a variety of recreational opportunities for the neighborhood and its residents of all ages in order to enhance quality of life and to promote public health and well-being.

History, Current Conditions and Major Issues

Years ago, park and recreational facilities for the village were provided first, by the Loray Mill and later by Firestone after it purchased the mill and village in from Manville-Jenckes in 1935. There was a swimming pool, wading pool, playground and community building located in front of the old mill between Second Avenue and Franklin, where today a new parking lot has been constructed between Firestone and Dalton Streets. The 1922 Sanborn map reveals tennis courts at the same location and community buildings across Dalton. By the 1970's, the City of Gastonia was operating the Firestone playground and wading pool. Old maps show an athletic field dating prior to the 1920's at the 400 block of South Weldon Street. At some point in time the ball field became a City recreation facility and then in 1984, the city sold it to a developer who constructed apartments on the land. Soon after the acquisition by Firestone, the company established Camp Firestone on Lake James at the foot of the Blue Ridge.

The playground at Abernathy School also provided a community recreation facility. Clay Street School (later, York Chester Middle School) also had school playground facilities at the edge of Loray Village. Today the "Clay Street Walking Track" on the grounds of York Chester Middle School is a popular quarter mile lighted walking track that is frequented by users from across Gastonia. It is located at the southeast corner of the plan area.

In 1947, the Optimist Club of Gastonia was organized and they created the Junior Optimist Club and constructed a gym and athletic field on South Boyd Street near West Second Avenue at western end of the plan area. Later,

The Boys & Girls Club in the Loray Village

the Optimists contracted with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America to operate the facility and its programs. The Club has achieved remarkable success in youth development with a focus on this area. Its successful programs extend beyond simply sports and recreation to career and education, youth character and leadership development, the arts, and health/life skills.

In 2013, the Optimist Club donated land fronting South Vance Street behind the Boys and Girls Club facility to the City of Gastonia for the construction of a neighborhood park to be called Optimist Park. Funds were raised privately for materials and the City of Gastonia provided construction labor using city forces. By the end of that year, the first phase of the park was opened with great success. A similar public-private effort was undertaken for Phase 2, which is also completed. This park is located in the historic village about one block southwest of the historic mill. A plan of both phases is shown in Figure 1 on the following page.

The city's Adult Recreation Center (ARC) is located within the plan area in the historic old armory building on Franklin Boulevard at Clay Street. About 75% of its patrons are age 60 and above. The building contains a 4,000 square foot social/event hall with a stage, meeting room, lounge, ceramics room, pool room, kitchen and staff offices. It offers a variety of programs such as many types of dance and

The Adult Recreation Center (ARC) on Franklin Boulevard

dance events, instructional programs, arts, travel events, dining events, bingo, cards and table games, volleyball and exercise classes. However, the existing ARC, while well used, is physically limited in what it can offer adults. The need to expand indoor recreational offerings to adults is particularly needed in light an increasing aging population and the active lifestyle desires of the Baby Boomers generation.

The Central and flagship facility of the Gaston County Family YMCA is also located in the plan are, occupying nearly one large block fronting Franklin Boulevard at South Trenton Street. The facility features a large gym, two pools, aerobics gym, a large well-equipped cardiac exercise equipment room, classrooms, daycare, well-equipped free weight

Figure 1: Concept Plan for Phase I & II of the Optimist Club Park on Vance Street

Both phases, after completion

and resistance machine areas; and, fully equipped men's and women's spa-sauna-steam facilities. There is also an outdoor athletic field with jogging track. The original facility was built in the 1950's and underwent a major expansion in the 1980's. In recent years there has been discussion that the YMCA might move its central facility, and perhaps close this site. However, there are apparently no such definite and financed plans at this time. If the Y were to remain at this location the complex would require a number of updates and repairs to existing building systems.

Private recreational facilities will be provide for residents of the Loray Mill and their guests. The recreational amenities will include a large resort style outdoor pool, fitness center, cabanas, barbeque and outdoor entertainment plaza, bocce court, outdoor fireplace, deck area with fire pit, outdoor gathering lounge with fireplace, activity lawn and dog park.

Some of the amenities planned for the Loray Mill residents as shown on the Loray Mill redevelopment site plan

OBJECTIVES

- Restore neighborhood-based park and recreation facilities to the Loray village.
- Improve public health.
- Provide indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities for residents of all ages.
- Provide on-and off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities that link to other bicycle and pedestrian facilities; and, connect to recreation facilities and other destinations.

STRATEGIES

1. ***Compete Phase II of Optimist Park (now completed).*** The second phase includes walking paths, potential connection to the Optimist Boys and Girls club facility and a small "wildlife viewing area" or tiny sylvan event area. This expansion was funded by private donations for materials and labor will be provided by volunteers and City forces.

2. ***Create a trail connector from Clay Street walking track (York Chester Middle School Athletic Field) to the historic mill village.*** This is further described in the transportation section. To the south of the Clay Street track, enhance the Garrison crosswalk at Trenton as part of a planned on-and off-street extension of Catawba Creek Greenway.

3. ***If Gaston County Schools closes York Chester Middle School, the City (in conjunction with Gaston County) should study feasibility of using the grounds for outdoor recreation and potential portions of the building for recreation and/or cultural facilities.*** For instance, could the auditorium be remodeled and used as a community cultural activities venue? Could the gym be used for indoor adult recreation? Explore also the possibility of a joint public-private venture that would involve private reuse of the classroom building for senior apartments.

4. ***If the YMCA abandons its 6-acre Central facility on West Franklin, the City should study feasibility of using all or part of this expansive complex for a new City Adult Recreation Center (ARC).*** The fact that it has two indoor pools (including a therapy pool), indoor gyms/multi-purpose rooms, aerobics floor, spa-sauna-steam therapeutic facilities, and other facilities usable by adults and seniors could potentially make it an ideal adult recreation facility. This would replace the existing adult facility located just across Clay Street in the historic old armory. The outdoor site also offers the ability to accommodate a walking track and senior athletic field. The YMCA building also has the ability to offer several multi-media classrooms or small multipurpose rooms for adult education, such as community and senior college extension courses and degrees, literacy and GED education, life enrichment and healthy living continuing education, and remote learning. The building would require major repairs and updates to most building systems, some remodeling, accessibility improvements (including elevator), and some building systems replacements. While there has been no architectural study of the cost of renovating and adapting the building for a new ARC, the cost is likely to be in excess of two million dollars. But this is likely far less than it would cost to build a new ARC facility that could offer a similar space and facility level and programming opportunities. There is also potential space for Parks and Recreation Department offices.

   Facilities and programs that promote healthy living could seek partial funding from the local healthcare system. There may also be funding from senior programs.

5. ***Another option for the YMCA site would be construct a new stadium type venue to accommodate the Gastonia Grizzlies and other community events.*** There is some excitement currently in the community about the potential of building a facility such as this in the central city. There is potential of such a venture being a public-private venture to reduce public costs. This could be done on either the YMCA site alone or in combination with the existing ARC and Little Theater of Gastonia along with closing Clay Street from Franklin to Second. If the ARC and Little Theater sites are incorporated into this option, then those facilities should be replaced, either as (preferably) part of an overall Trenton-Franklin redevelopment node, or elsewhere in the central city.

6. ***If the ARC moves to a new site and the building is not involved in a stadium development, the City should study reuse alternatives for the historic Armory Building.*** One potential reuse could be a much needed venue for community cultural activities such as performing arts or dances. This could require additions to meet requirements of such functions. The building does have clear span across the auditorium/gym area; and once had a balcony. Note: A similar type of facility is also mentioned in Item 3 and these should be viewed as alternatives.

Serving the Village

Public Works Strategies

LORAY VILLAGE **AREA PLAN**

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GOAL

The efficient provision of quality, modern, and reliable public utilities that meet the day-to-day needs of the residents, businesses and visitors of the Loray Village area and which protect the public health and safety, and enable development.

History, Current Conditions and Major Issues

The first infrastructure works within Loray Village were owned and operated by the mill since the mill investors built the mill and its village just outside of Gastonia. As a textile mill it needed industrial water to make steam engines run and to produce cloth. It also needed clean domestic water for the mill and the homes, as well as a means for removal and treatment of wastewater. So, there was basic system that supplied potable water, and waste water was piped to a nearby lagoon near Garrison Boulevard. Initially the homes did not have bathrooms but had running water via small water lines that ran through the village. Outhouses other crude methods were used for domestic waste. Probably in the 1930's, bathrooms were provided to the homes and domestic sewer lines were ran through the village. The original water lines and sewer mains were often ran behind the homes. Water lines were small galvanized steel and sewer lines were of old time material no longer used today.

In 1911, the management of Loray Mill petitioned the General Assembly for a charter to incorporate a town for Loray. Fearful of being hemmed in, Gastonia opposed this move and not only thwarted the incorporation but convinced the legislature to annex the Loray Mill and mill village into Gastonia, nearly doubling the size of the City. Following annexation the mill-owned infrastructure works were eventually merged into the City's public works system. Over the years, the original mill water and sewer lines deteriorated. Galvanized water lines filled with rust and the old sewer lines began to fail and allowed "infiltration" of surface water. Worst of all, a number of storm drain systems from the old mill complex fed into the public sanitary sewer system (stormwater "inflow"). Therefore, infiltration and inflow ("I&I") has been a historical problem with the Loray Mill and Village.

In the 1970's, most of the old water and sewer lines in the Loray Village were replaced with the City's Community Development Block Grant program. In the 1980's and 1990's, the same funding was used to connect homes to the new water and sewer lines. However, there remain today a small minority of houses that are still connected to the old lines. This is typically discovered when attempts are made to abandon old lines and a house or two are suddenly without service. So, in order to help reduce sewer infiltration, and provide better water quality and pressure, those few remaining homes need to be connected to the newer lines, probably with city

or grant funding. Owners of houses will not typically incur this expense until there is a service line failure, but it is in the City's interest to abandon these old lines as soon as possible. The redevelopment of the Loray Mill is solving the problem of stormwater inflow that is sourced from the Loray Mill redevelopment site. As part of the construction expense, the developers are rechanneling all stormwater to the City's stormwater system. This will eliminate a major source of inflow into the Catawba Creek sewer outfall which has been experiencing this problem.

Street lighting is provided by the Electric Division of the City's Department of Enterprise Services. According to the Electric Division, the placement of existing street lights within Loray Village is adequate. While existing street lights have high pressure sodium luminaires, the trend is to evolve to LED luminaires. Over time, the City plans to convert sodium vapor luminaires to LED luminaires, citywide. LED street lighting has a number of advantages over high pressure sodium vapor—much less energy cost, much longer life (both reducing operating cost), more accurate color rendering, more focused and even spread, less "light pollution," instant turn-on, less insect attraction, fewer electrical losses from other components such as ballasts, reduced glare, and better quality of lighting-- lumen for lumen. Examples of new LED street lighting can be seen along Franklin Boulevard in downtown.

All lighting in the non-public system serving the Loray Mill development will include LED luminaires. About eight years ago the City obtained Federal Transportation Enhancements funding to install new street lights and historic style pedestrian scale lighting on Franklin from Ransom to Vance Streets. The existing LED lighting on Franklin should be extended as soon as possible through the plan area, and the historic lighting on Franklin installed with the Enhancements project should be converted to LED on the same schedule. Combined with the LED lights being installed by the Loray Mill project, this will serve to create more uniform lighting type and color for the overall mill area.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide better street lighting along Franklin Boulevard and other major streets.
- Improve color and quality of street lighting within Loray Village.
- Make color, quality and type of street lighting consistent within the plan area while applying appropriate lighting for particular location types (residential streets versus thoroughfares and business streets).
- Reduce stormwater infiltration and inflow into the sanitary sewer system to minimal and acceptable levels.
- Provide quality and reliable water and sewer service to the plan area.
- Eliminate use of old, substandard water and sewer lines where newer lines are available.

STRATEGIES

Street Lighting

1. Extend LED street lighting on Franklin (as soon as possible) from where it ends now at Trenton Street to at least the western edge of the Loray Village plan boundary (Linwood Rd).

2. Change luminaires in pedestrian scale lighting on Franklin Boulevard (currently installed from Ransom to Vance Streets) from sodium vapor to LED so that the color of lighting is the same as the street lights (assuming #1 above is implemented). LED also provides a more pleasing, natural color and provides a better lighting spread.

3. Designate Loray Village as a pilot project for neighborhood-wide deployment of LED street lighting.

4. The implementation of strategies 1, 2, and 3 above will coordinate well with lighting installed by the Loray Mill project since this project will be using LED lighting for parking lot and other exterior lighting. This coordination will provide for uniformity throughout the area in terms of exterior night lighting.

5. ***Install black pole decorative street lighting along West Franklin Boulevard from Ransom Street, east to where it has been installed in Downtown.*** Also install the double globe historic style pedestrian scale lighting (like existing from Ransom to Vance) along the same segment of West Franklin Boulevard. An option would be to withhold such installation as major new developments are proposed in order to use as a partial incentive for such developments.

Water, Sewer and Stormwater

1. ***Reduce sanitary sewer infiltration and inflow (I&I) in the Loray Village area to acceptable levels.*** A significant portion of this problem will hopefully be eliminated by new stormwater infrastructure being installed as part of the Loray Mill redevelopment. Much of the storm drains from the old mill heretofore went into the sanitary sewer system, a vestige of practices put in place when the mill was built 112 years ago.

2. ***Eliminate any remaining sewer connections to failing old lines by reconnecting them to available newer lines.*** Reconnecting to the updated mains will allow the City to abandon the failing old lines, a source of I&I. Some of these old sewer mains run under structures, which is another reason to take them out of service. The first step is to determine actually where connections to the old lines remain. This will give the City a picture of the extent of the problem and cost. Where it is found that these old lines no longer provide service, they can be immediately abandoned and disconnected from the outfalls.

3. ***Stormwater systems, both built and natural, should be appropriately able to handle the additional stormwater volume, once diverted from the sanitary sewers.*** As part of the mill renovation, on-site underground stormwater detention is being installed.

4. ***Reconnect any structures remaining on old city potable water lines (many of which are in back yards) to updated water mains in the street.*** This is estimated at less than twenty-five homes.

5. ***The old city water tank located near Hill Street and Fifth Avenue is no longer being used; nor is it needed for future water system use.*** However, if it could be painted to brand and smartly identify the Loray Village it could serve to promote and create distinctiveness to the neighborhood. If funding could be found to do this it would create a great asset, and in a sense, a form of public art for the community. If this cannot be accomplished, ultimately the tank should be removed since it will only further rust, deteriorate and become unsightly over the years.

LORAY VILLAGE AREA PLAN

City of Gastonia
North Carolina