

# DOWNTOWN EAST

Conceptual Plan  
City of Gastonia, NC

Submitted 7.01.2023



METROCOLOGY



# GASTONIA

## UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE UPGRADE

### CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN "DOWNTOWN EAST"

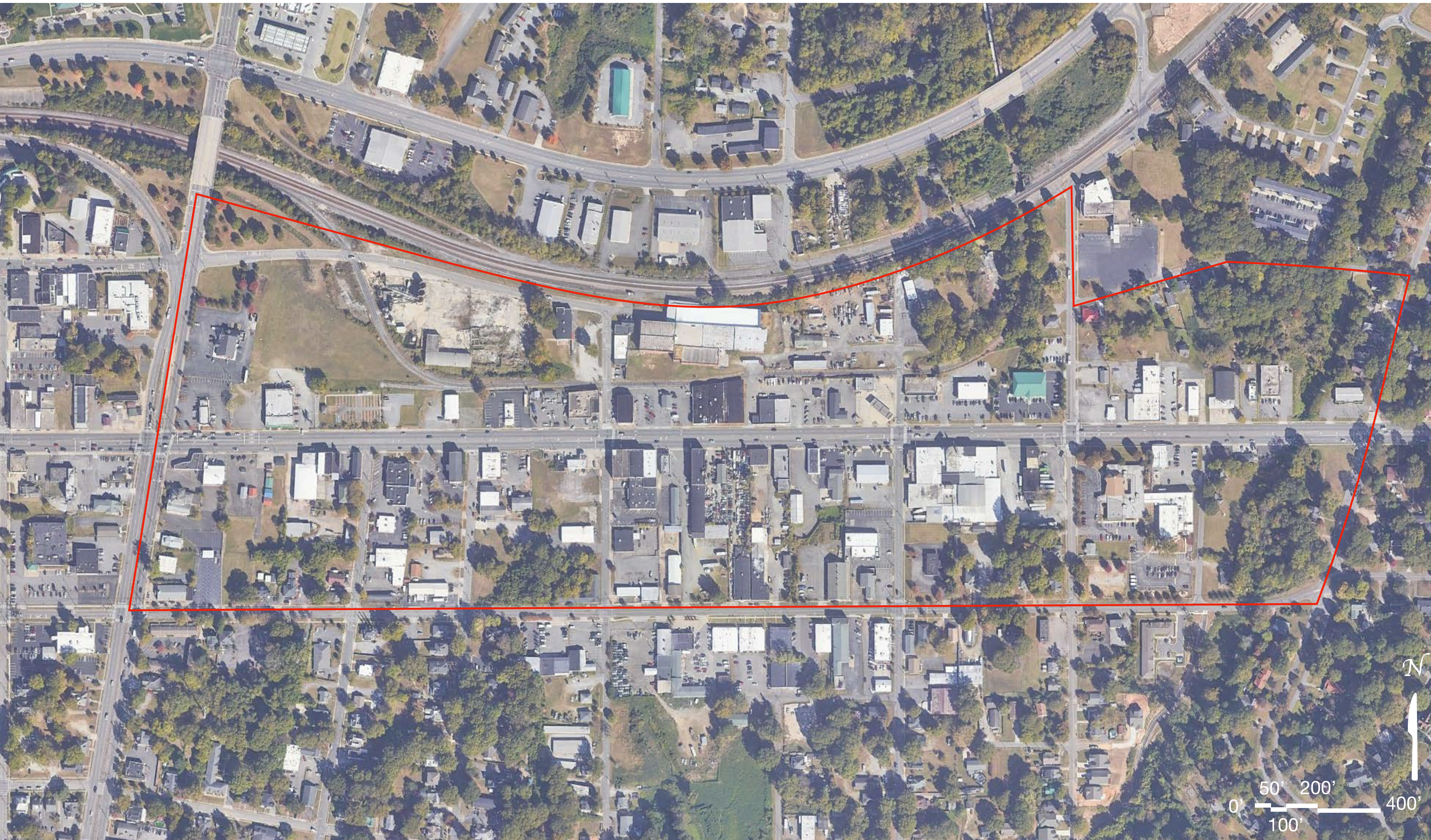
Presented to the Planning & Zoning Commission

7.1.2023



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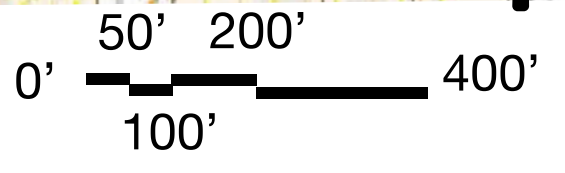
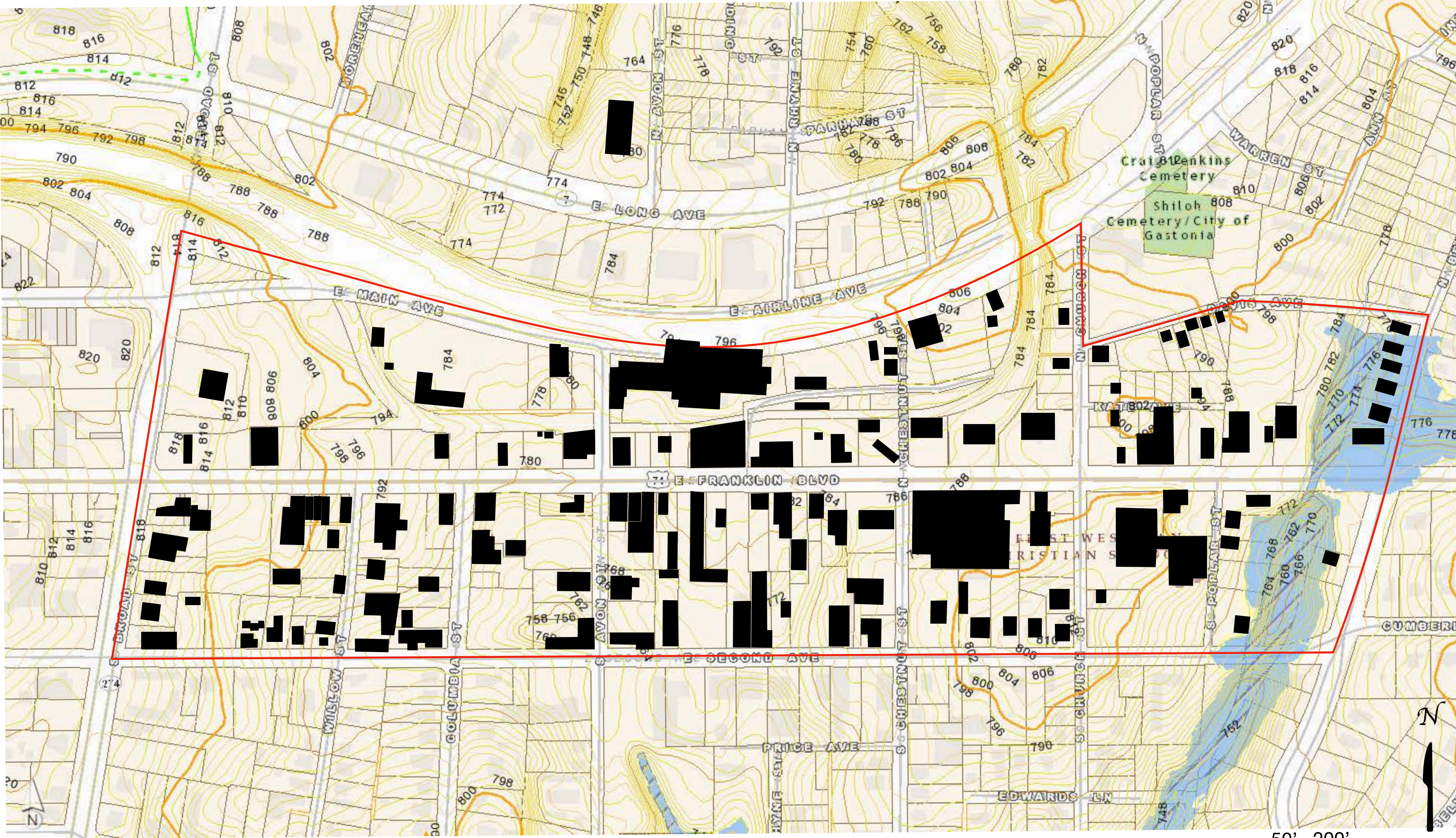
# CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN EAST Gastonia, NC



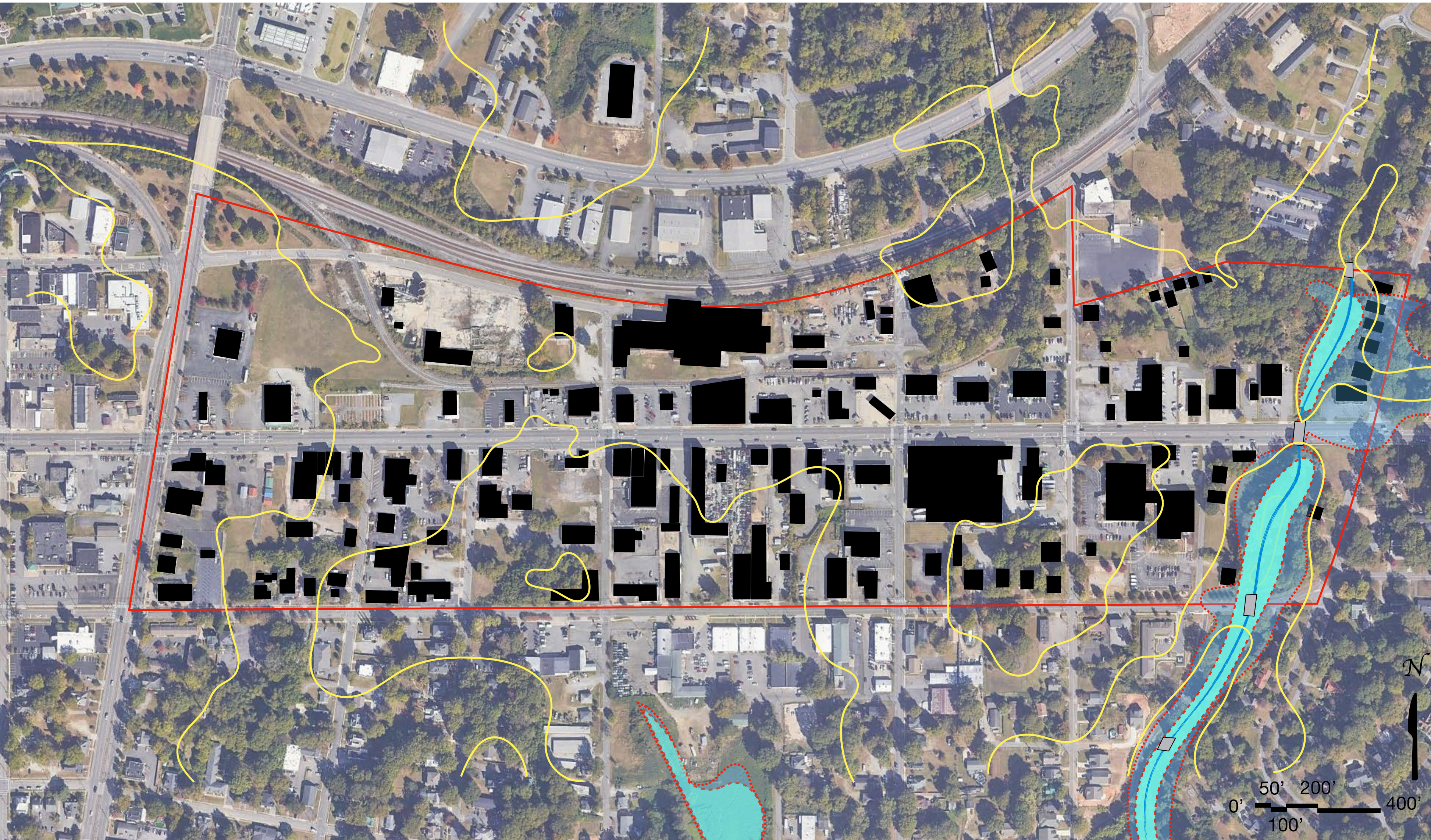
The redevelopment of Downtown East would serve as the eastern gateway into the central City. The current mix of land uses and underutilized properties across approximately 90 acres, makes the corridor a prime area for re-investment.

# CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN EAST Gastonia, NC

The stretch of E Franklin Blvd that bisects the small area plan is mostly flat, to slightly rolling. Elevation changes are slight and no significant flood zones impact the redevelopment potential of the properties within the study area.



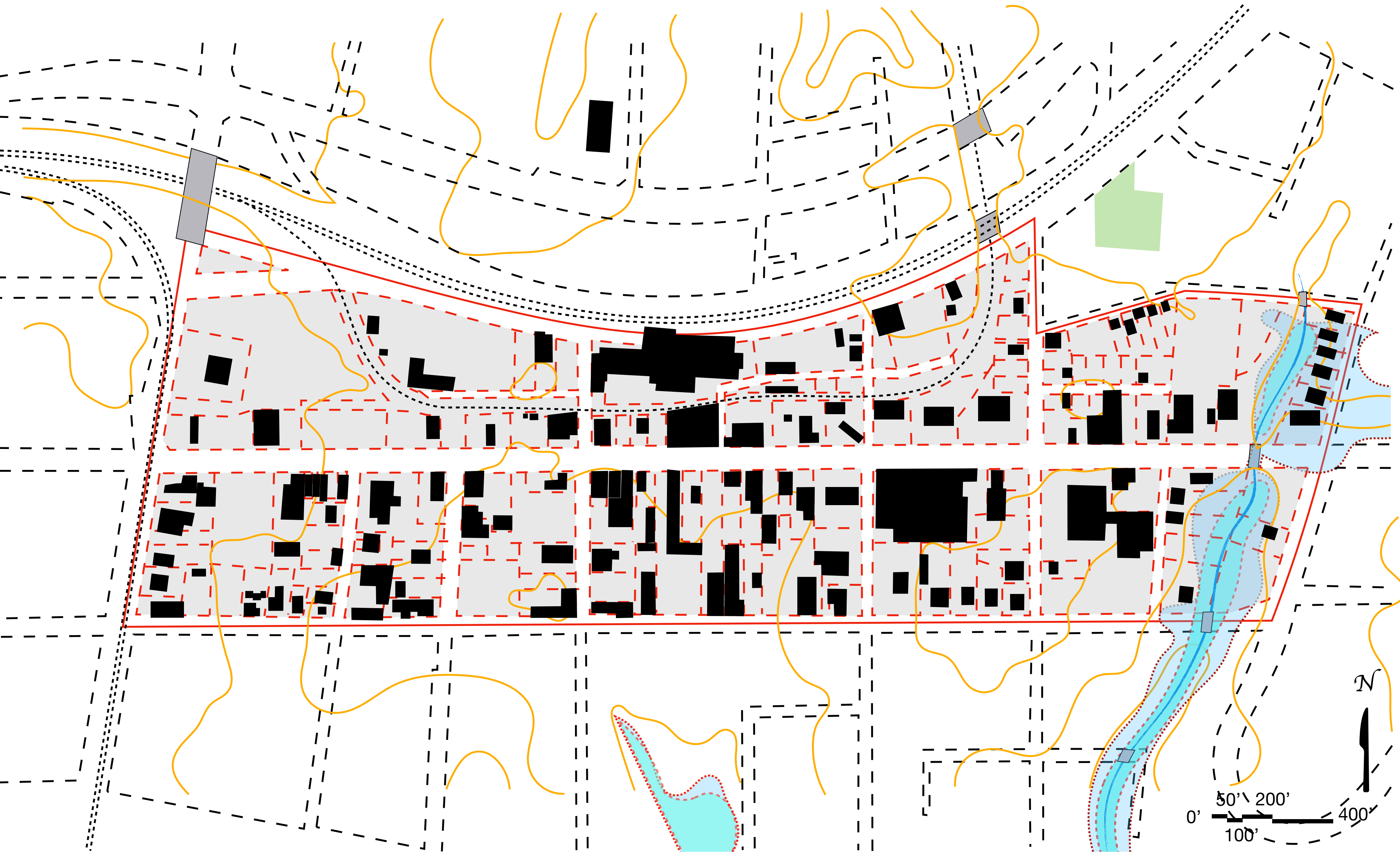
# CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN EAST Gastonia, NC



The figure ground study overlaid on the aerial photograph reveals that over 65% of the study area consists of vacant properties, parking lots, and storage lots. Tree cover is very limited, comprising nearly 10% of the land area, concentrated almost entirely along an existing creek and flood zone on the extreme eastern end of the study area, and areas of grade change along railroad infrastructure.

# CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN EAST

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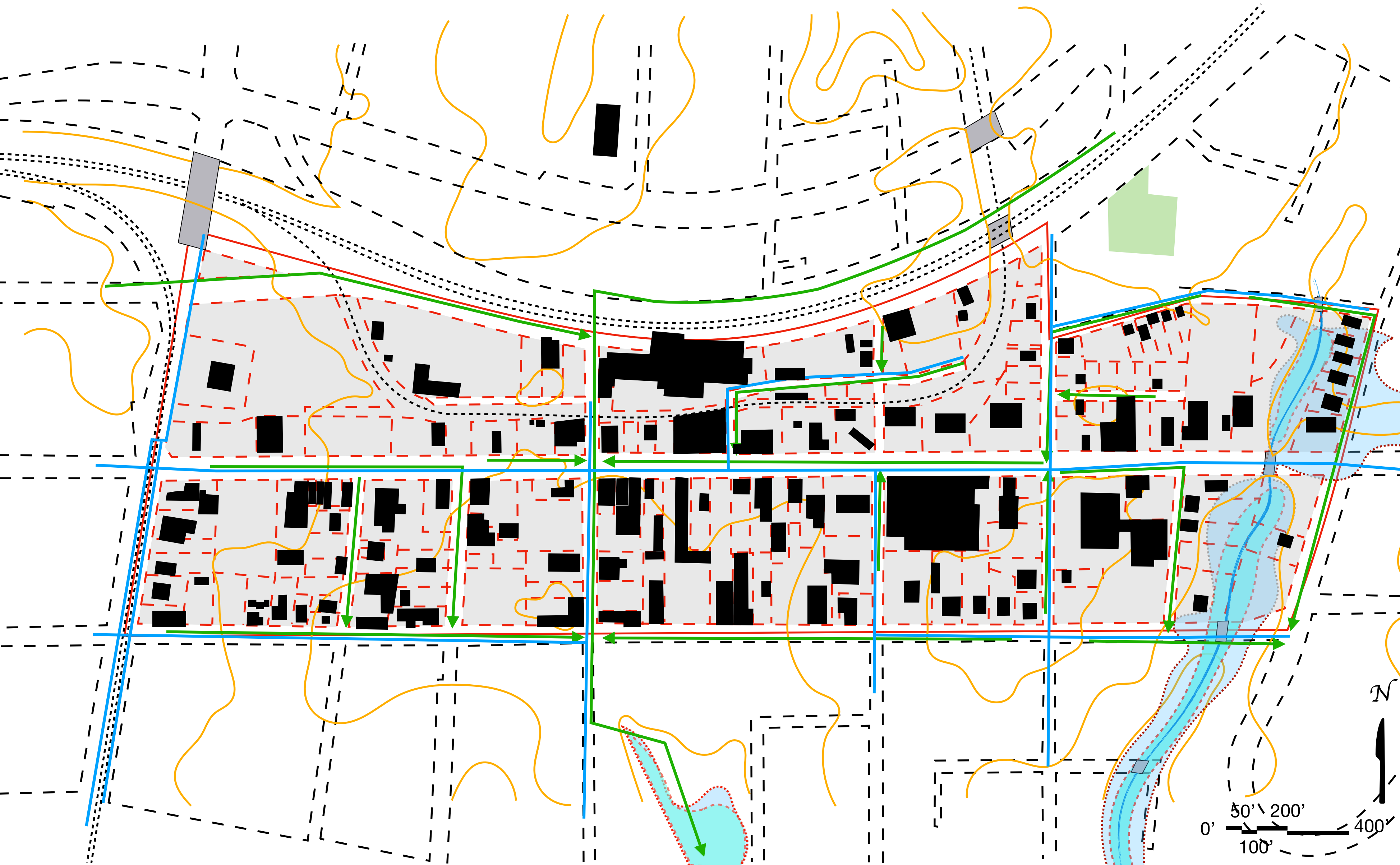


Property ownership within the Study Area is a mix of small medium and large lots. The pattern lends itself to both pedestrian scaled incremental development and redevelopment in the short term, permitting small and medium levels of investment to participate in the growth of the corridor.

Assembly of property is possible and will be required to allow for mix of building projects. Such projects would be feasible in the mid to long term.

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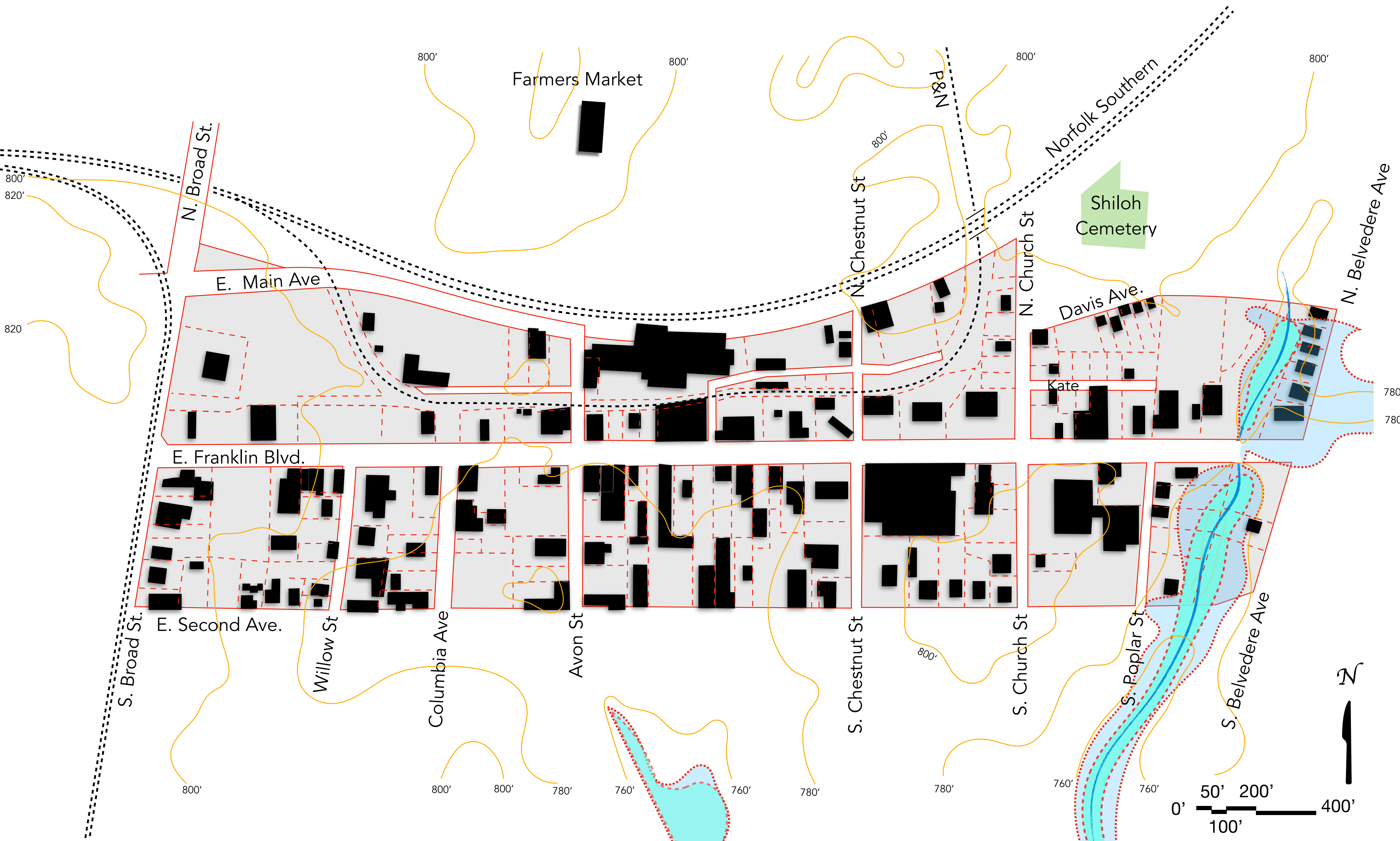
Gastonia, NC



The corridor is adequately serviced by water, sewer and electric utilities. The gradual decline of the corridor over the last several decades has most certainly left an over capacity that can be taken advantage of.

# CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN EAST

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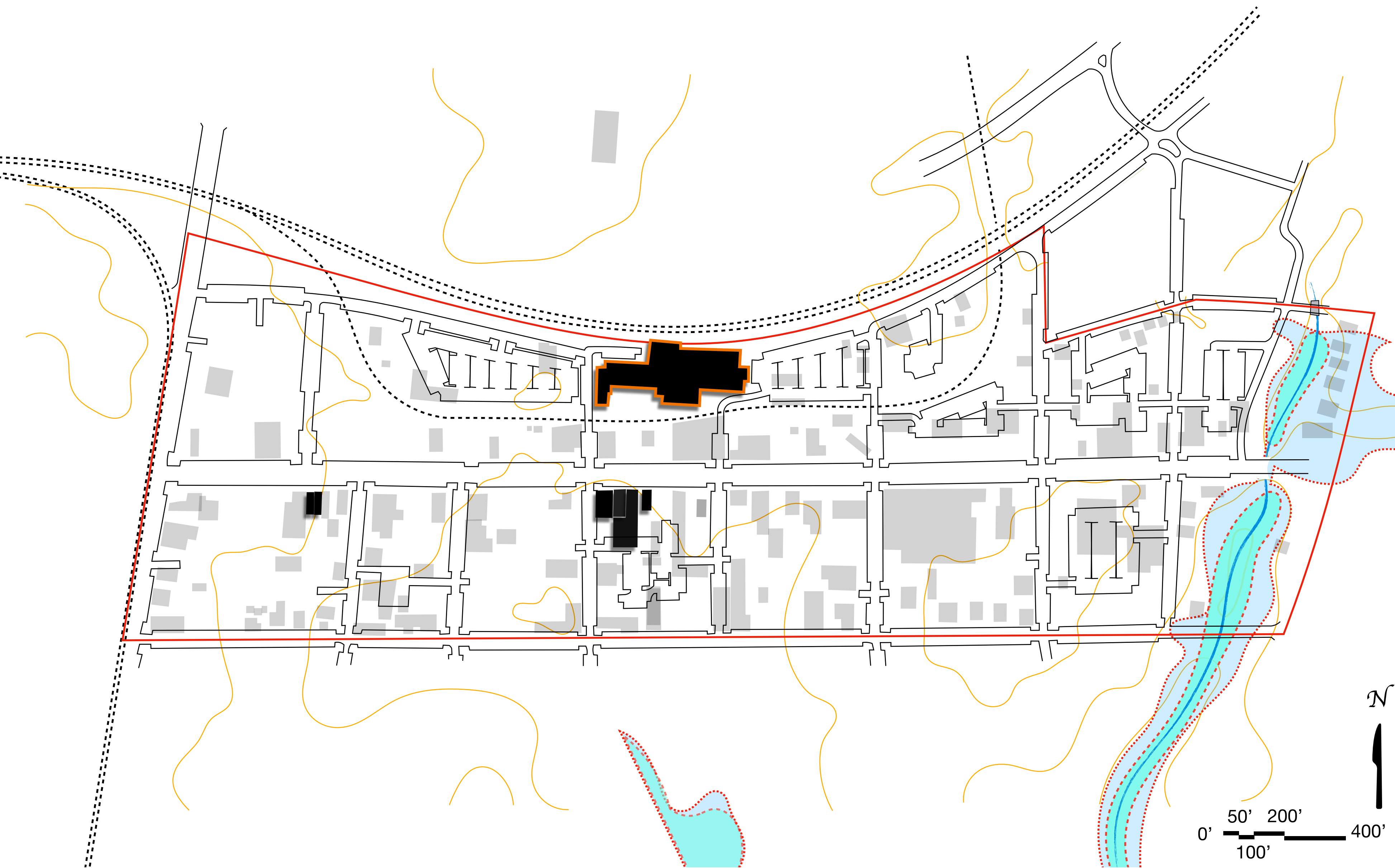


The block structure is ideal for supporting a vital and walkable pedestrian focused main street. Blocks are not overly long and rail infrastructure offers opportunities for future re-purposing to urban open space and pedestrian only connections between and within blocks.



# CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN EAST

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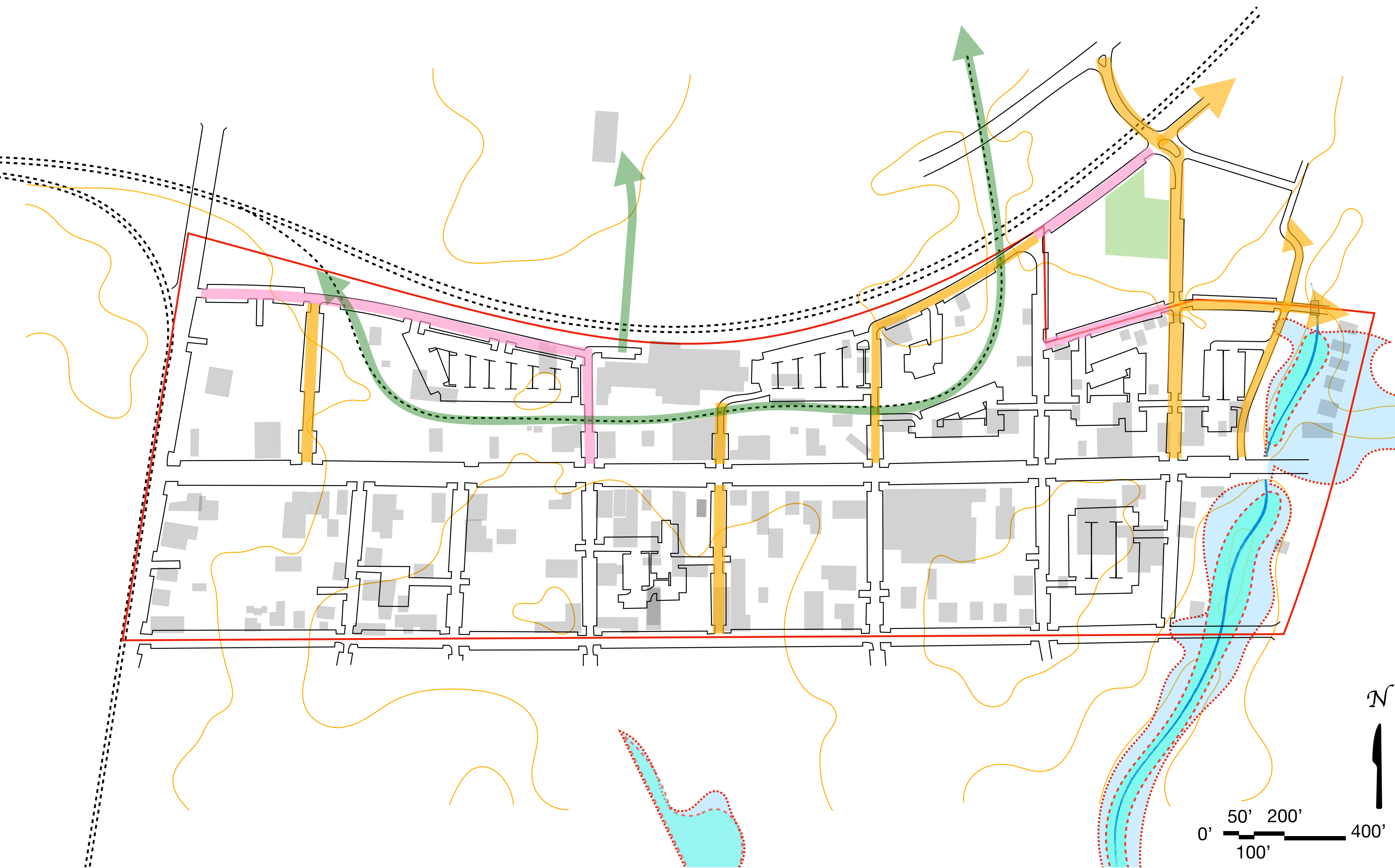


While there are several older structures along E Franklin that are worthy of preservation and re-use, the most significant building within the Study area is the Avon Mill (outlined in orange). Portions of this large structure represent classic mill building architecture from the turn of the century and are worthy of preservation as part of a comprehensive redevelopment plan to repurpose the building in the future.

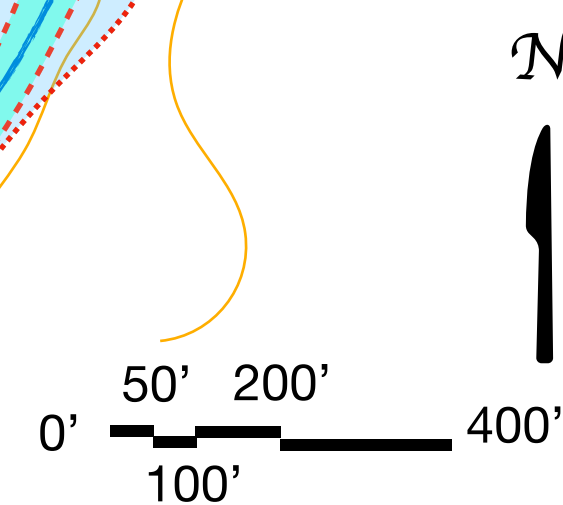
The location of the Avon Mill is centrally located within the study area and would serve as one of three proposed anchors along the repurposed rail corridor which traverses four of the six existing blocks to the north of E Franklin St.

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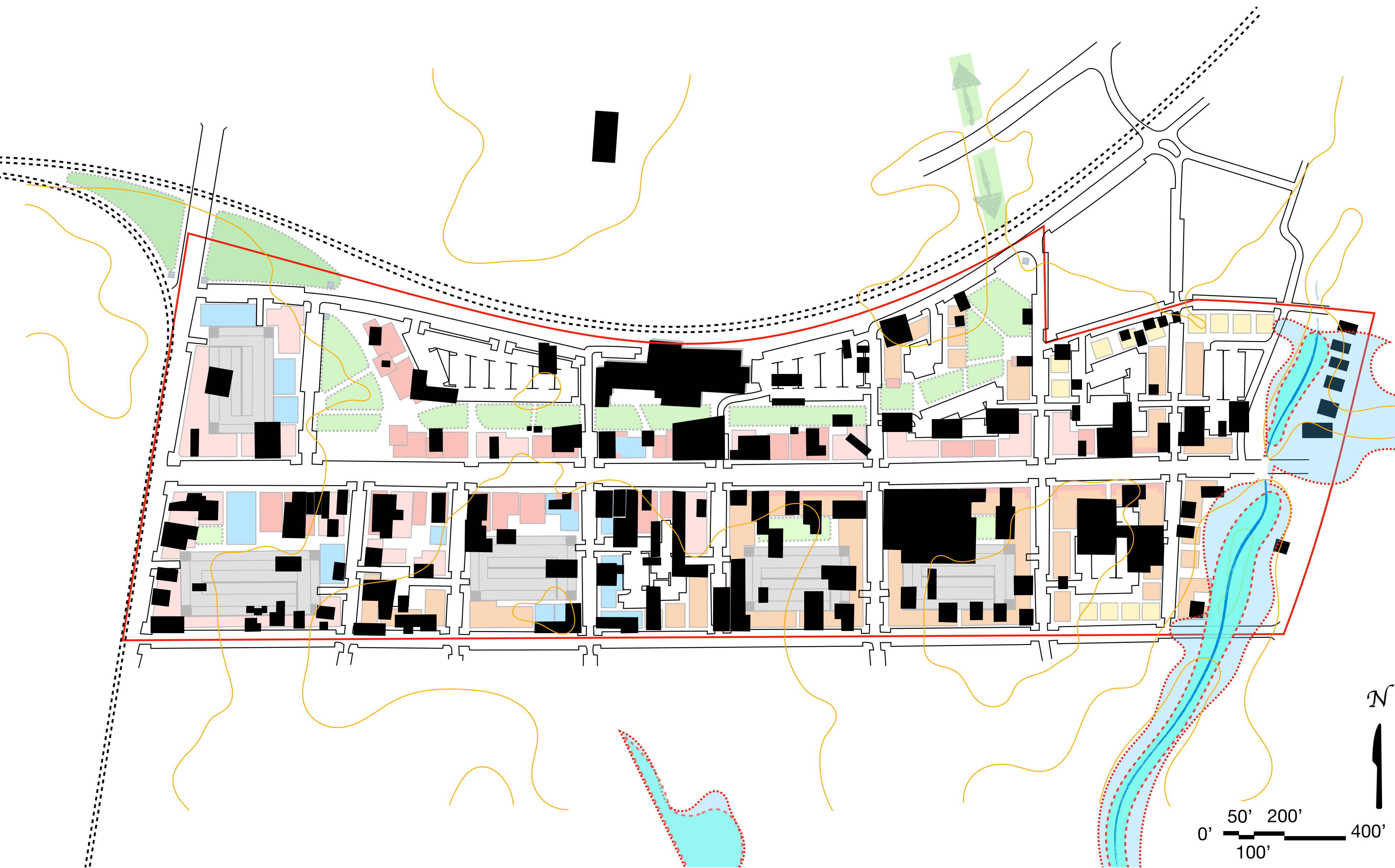


To improve circulation and connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods the Small Area Plan proposes several new streets (orange) and improvements to several existing streets (pink), as well as a pedestrian link (green), utilizing the existing rail line corridor. A pedestrian bridge over the Norfolk Southern Rail corridor would connect the Avon Mill redevelopment to NC-7, Avon St., and the Farmers Market.



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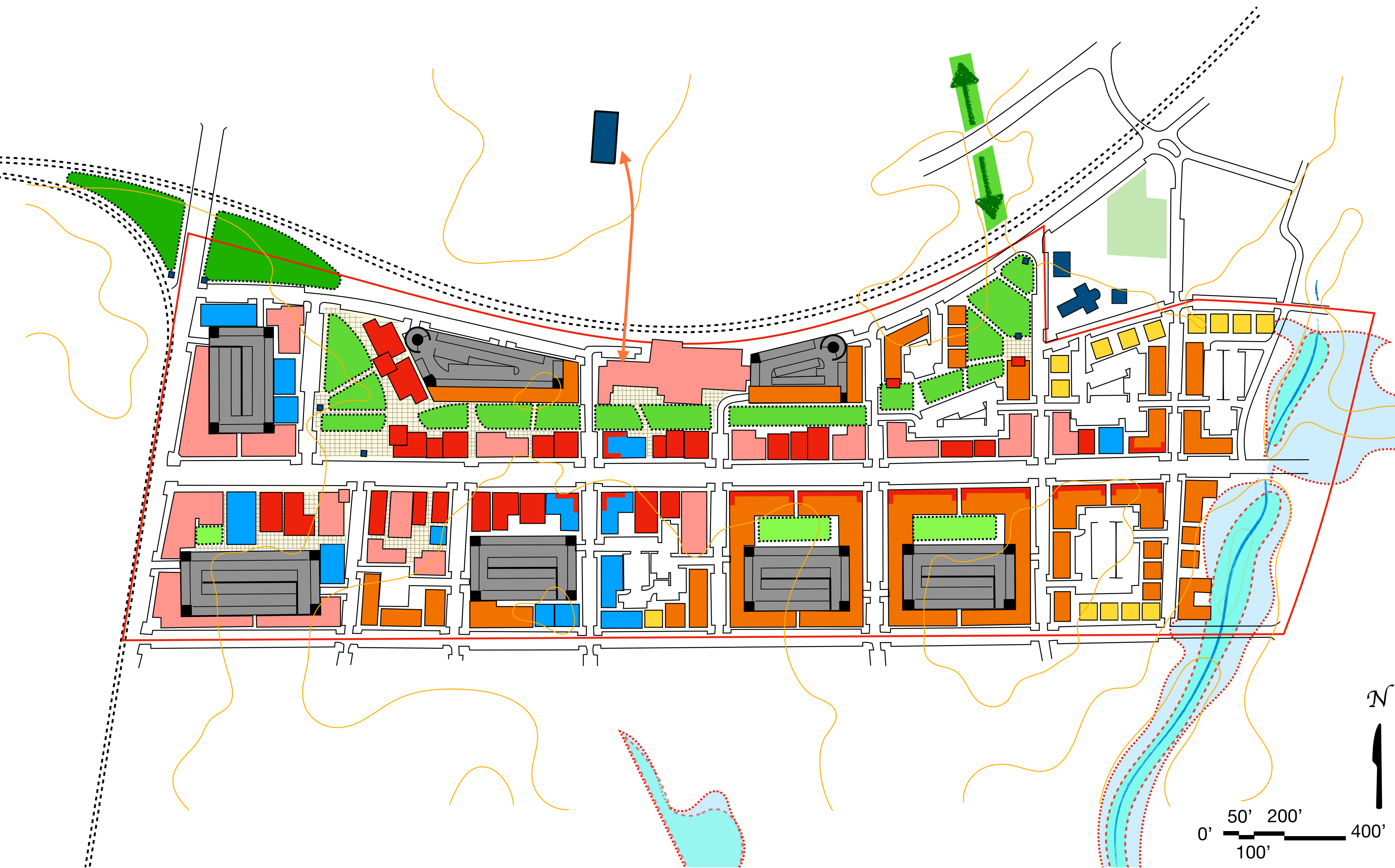


The block structure is ideal for supporting a vital and walkable pedestrian focused main street. Blocks are not overly long and rail infrastructure offers opportunities for future re-purposing to urban open space and pedestrian only connections between and within blocks.











Proposed redevelopment is superimposed under the existing building inventory to show the significant amount of new construction that is possible under the new UDO regulations governing mixed use, multi family and commercial uses.

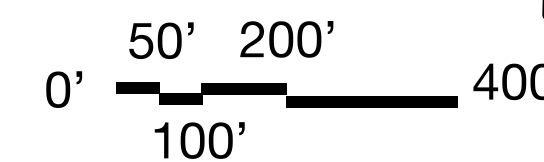
# CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN EAST

## Gastonia, NC



The redevelopment of Downtown East would dramatically increase the City's tax base, employment and increase the study area population by several thousand residents. The densities illustrated by the plan are average for medium sized City commercial main streets in the United States. Building heights would range from 1 to 7 stories.

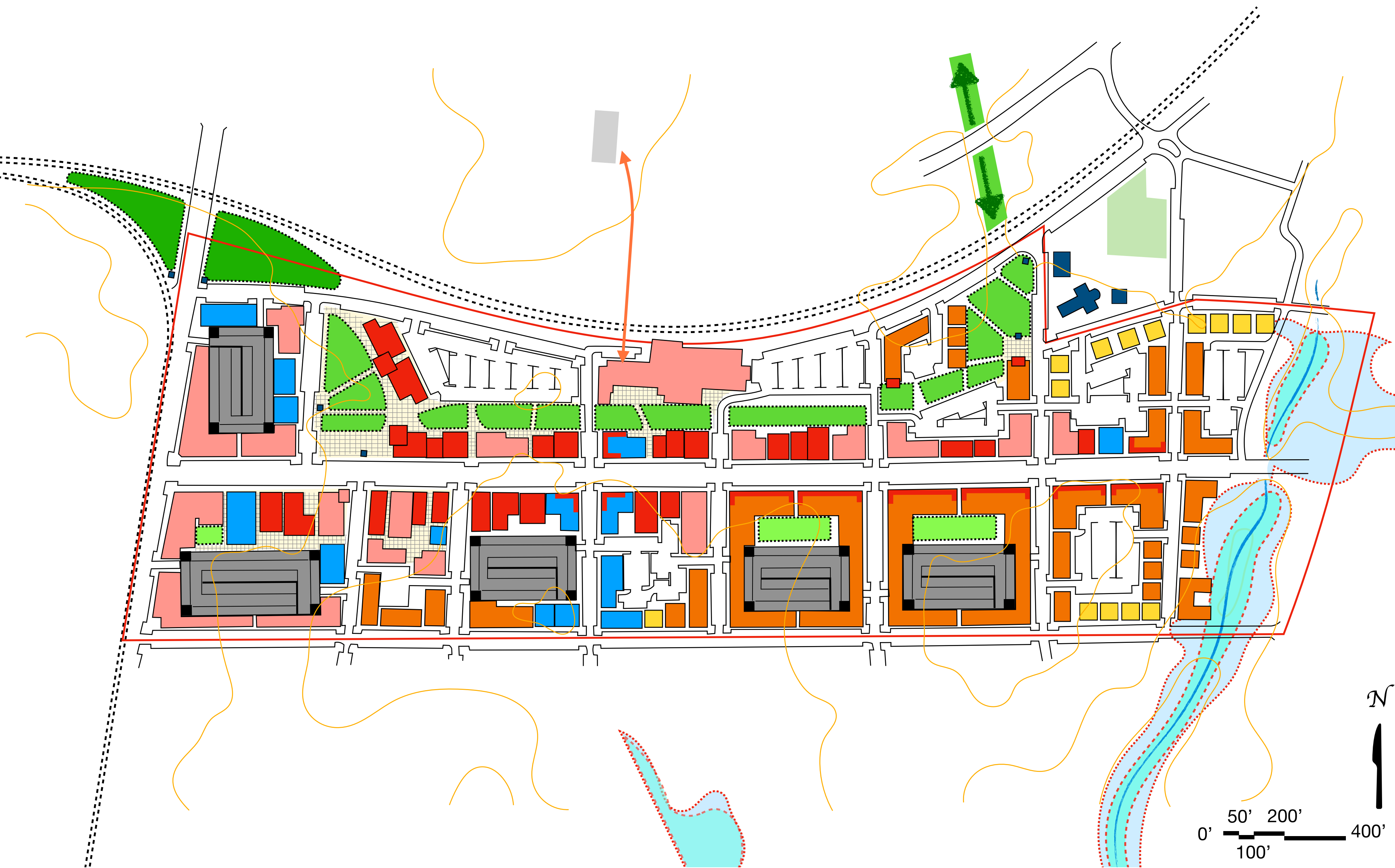
	Retail	100,000 ft <sup>2</sup> - 200,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
	Mixed Use Commercial/ Residential	1,000,000 ft <sup>2</sup> / 500units
	Office	50,000 ft <sup>2</sup> - 100,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
	Light Industrial	-
	Civic	-
	Public Open Space	10 - 15 acres
	Private Open Space	3 - 5 acres
	Multi-family	1,000 - 1,500 units
	Single Family Attached	28 - 42 unites
	Parking structured	4,500 - 6,500 spaces
	Parking on-street	700 - 820 spaces
	Parking surface	300 - 400 spaces





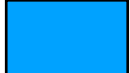







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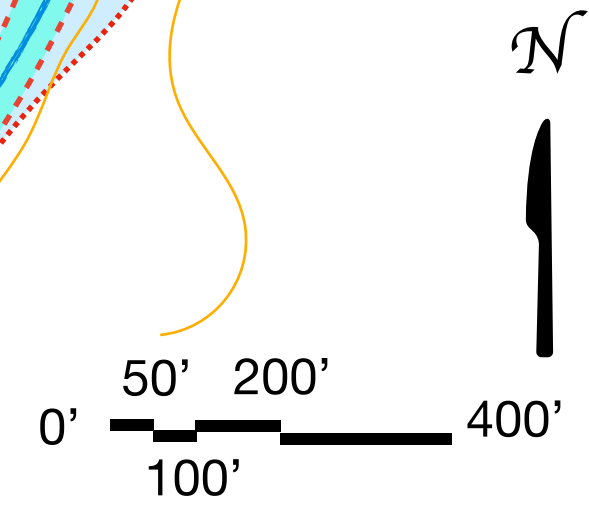


# CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN EAST Gastonia, NC



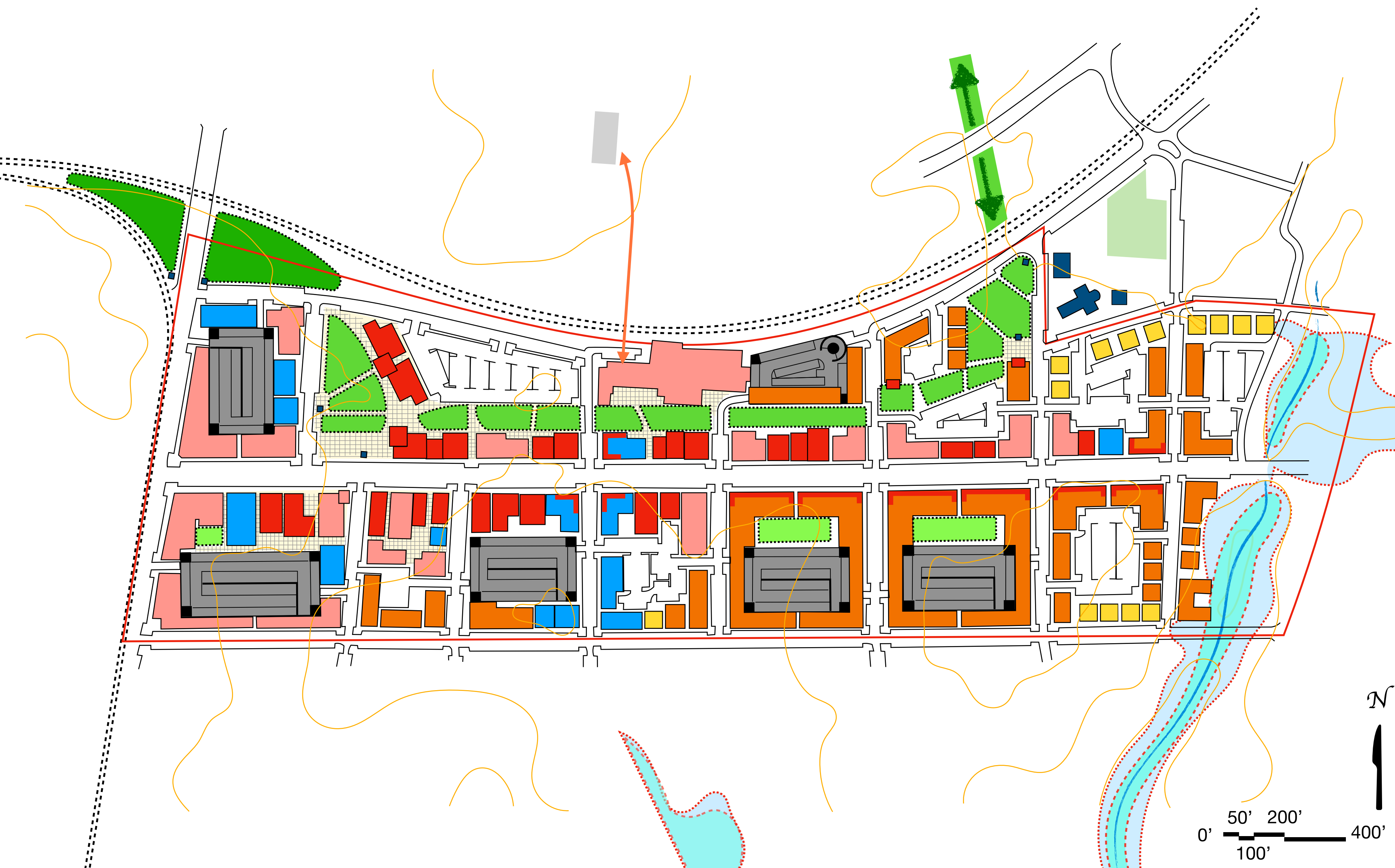
Avon Mill developed at a minimum using surface parking only.

	Retail	100,000 ft <sup>2</sup> - 200,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
	Mixed Use Commercial/ Residential	1,000,000 ft <sup>2</sup> / 500units
	Office	50,000 ft <sup>2</sup> - 100,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
	Light Industrial	-
	Civic	-
	Public Open Space	10 - 15 acres
	Private Open Space	3 - 5 acres
	Multi-family	800 - 1,200 units
	Single Family Attached	28 unites
	Parking structured	3,000 - 4,500 spaces
	Parking on-street	700 - 820 spaces
	Parking surface	600 - 750 spaces













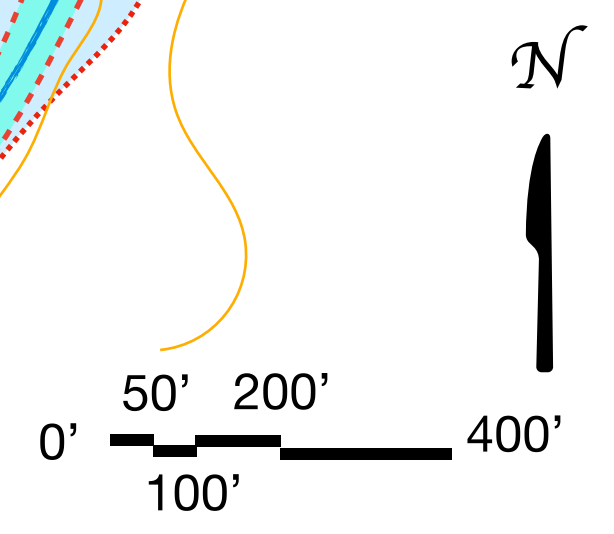
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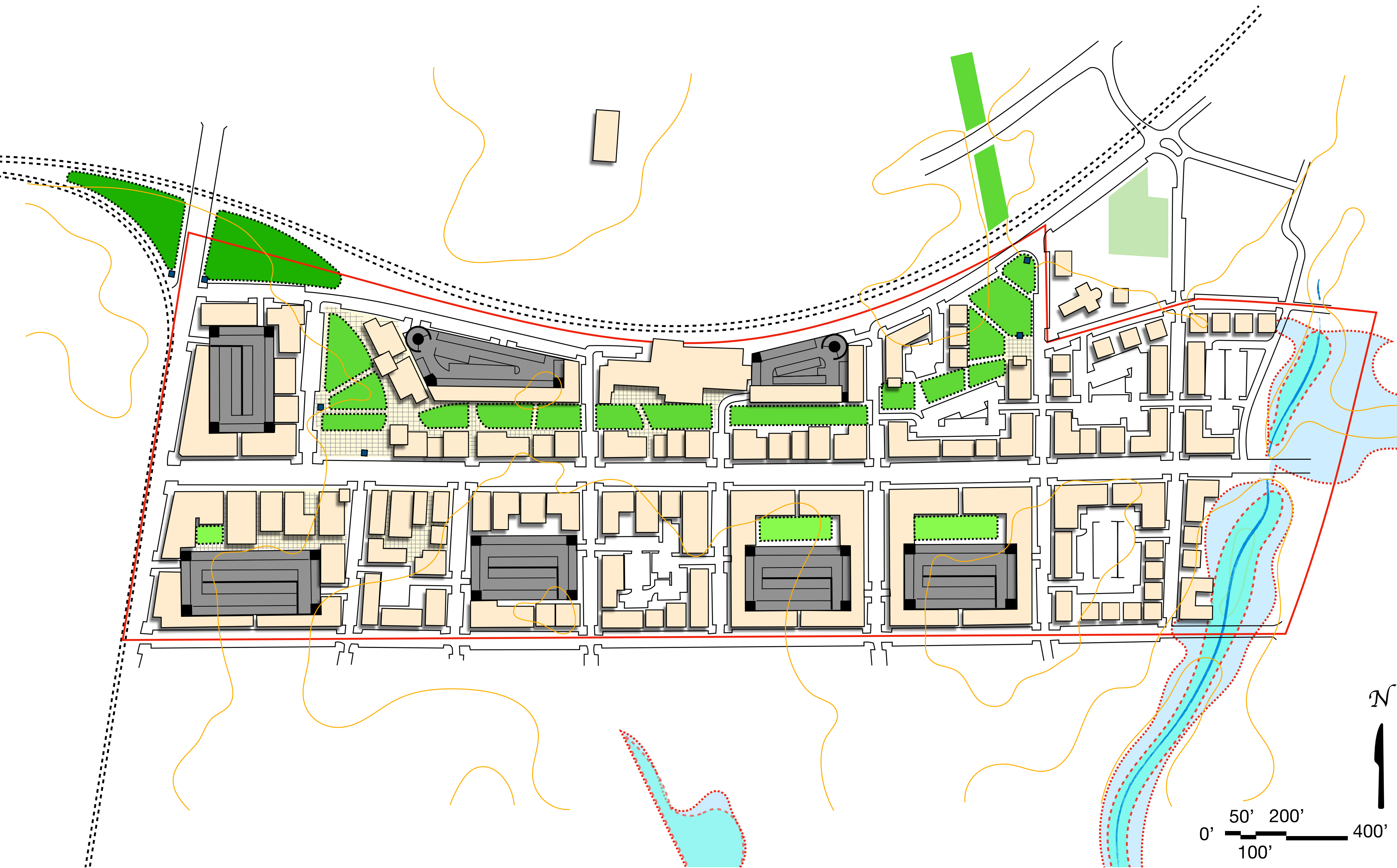
Phasing of the Avon Mill could begin with surface parking and transition with structured parking as demand and financing warrant.

	Retail	100,000 ft <sup>2</sup> - 200,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
	Mixed Use Commercial/ Residential	1,000,000 ft <sup>2</sup> / 500units
	Office	50,000 ft <sup>2</sup> - 100,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
	Light Industrial	-
	Civic	-
	Public Open Space	10 - 15 acres
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	Multi-family	800 - 1,200 units
	Single Family Attached	28 unites
	Parking structured	3,000 - 4,500 spaces
	Parking on-street	700 - 820 spaces
	Parking surface	600 - 750 spaces

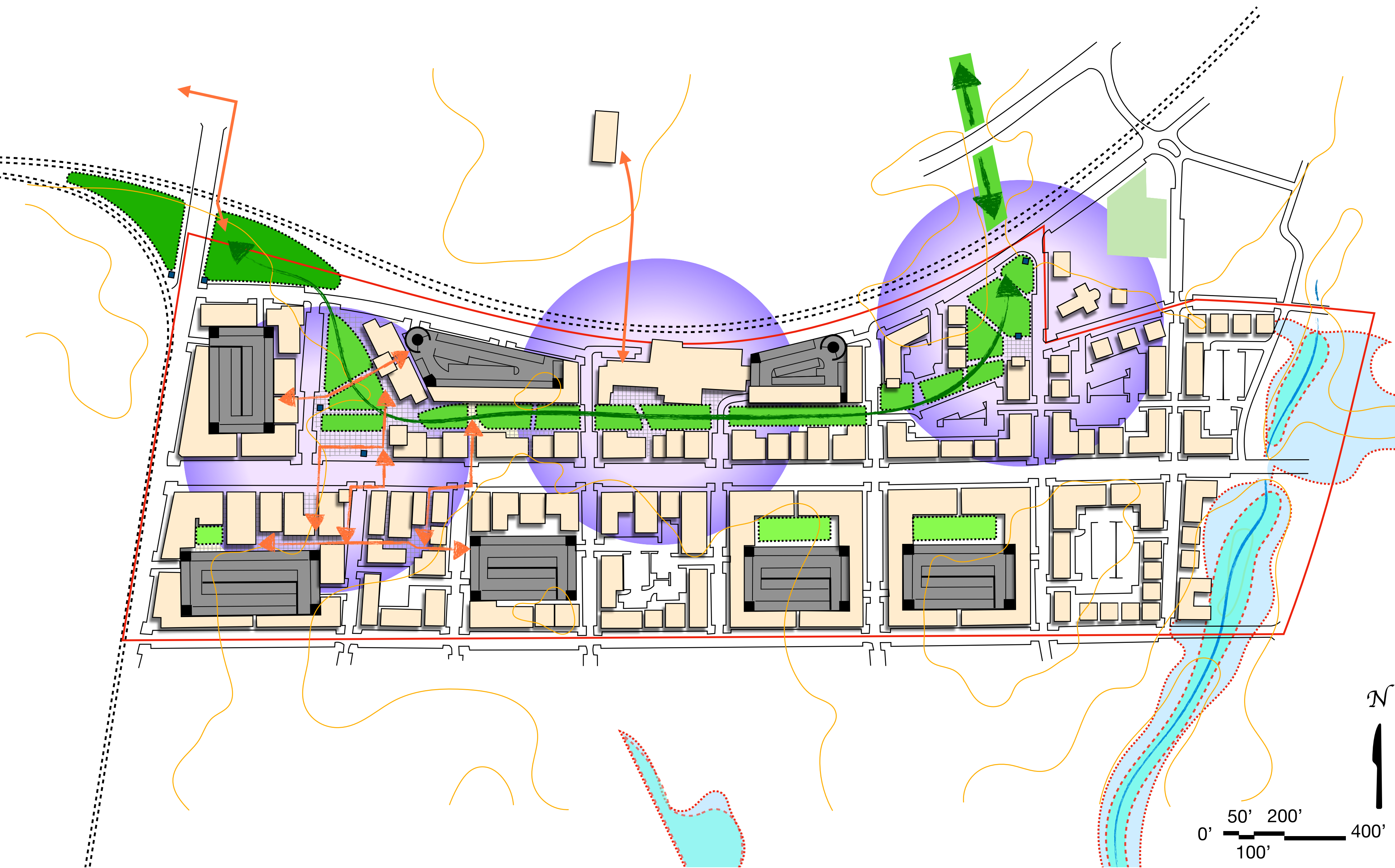


# CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN EAST Gastonia, NC

The Small Area Plan Illustrated



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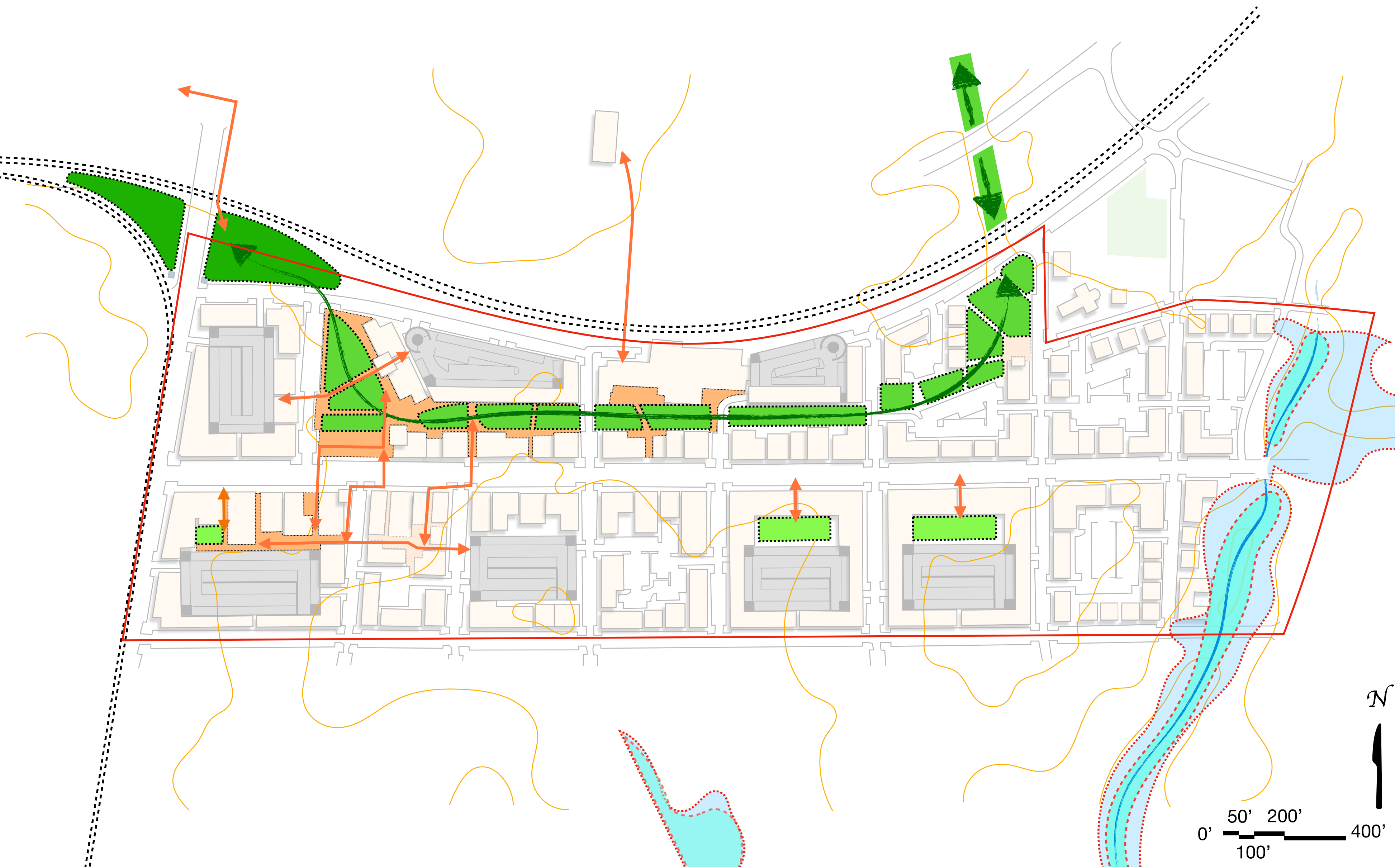


The Small Area Plan proposes three centers along the corridor, focused along the rail to pedestrian way mid block north of E Franklin St. The Avon Mill would serve as the central component of the redeveloped blocks midway between the urban pedestrian plaza center to the west and the less dense neighborhood scaled park center to the east.

The character of the experience would transition from east to west along the pedestrian corridor from a neighborhood centered fabric, of lower scale and mostly residential uses, to an urban mixed use mid scaled fabric closer to downtown Gastonia. The transition point would be at the Avon Mill.



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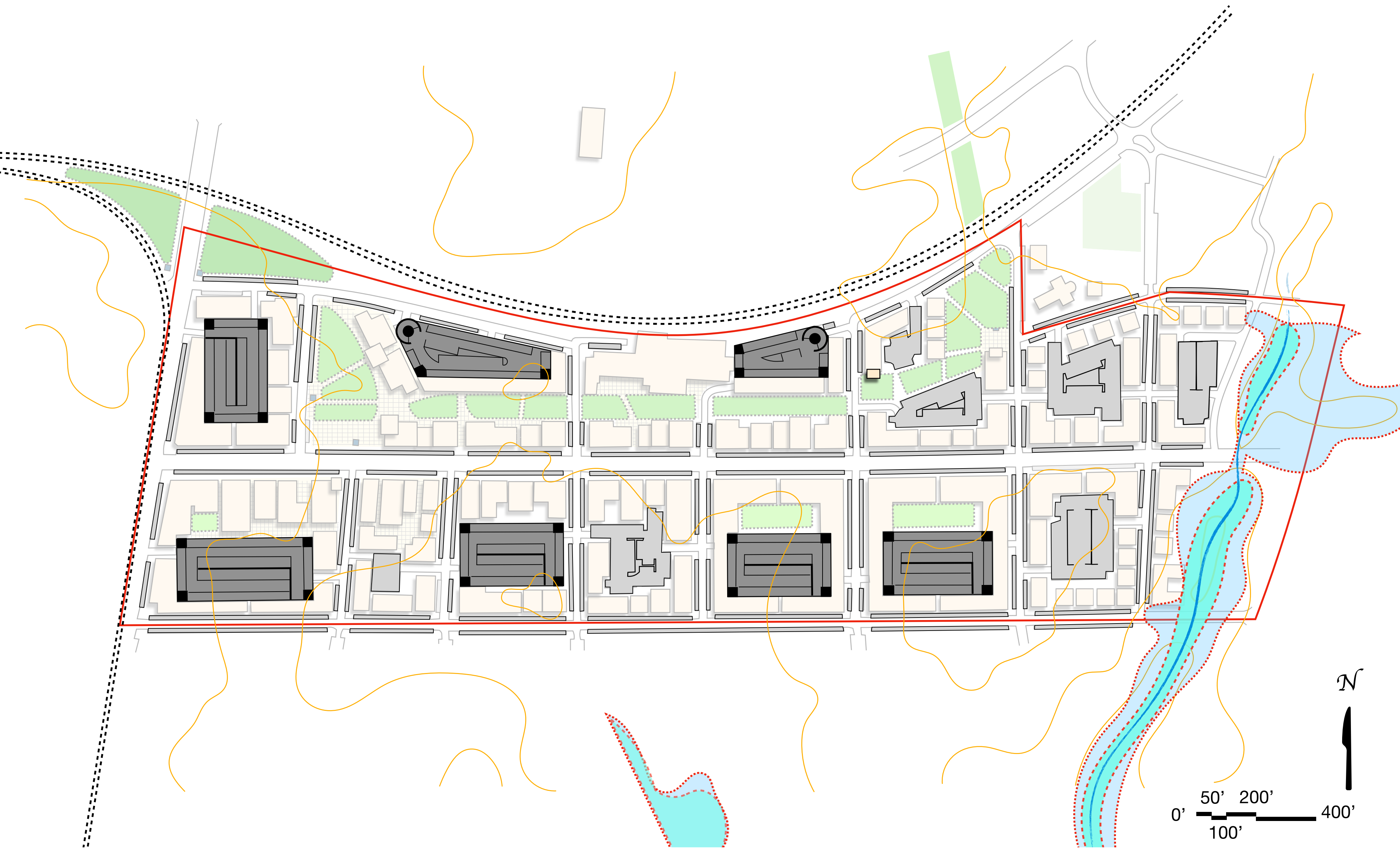
The pedestrian infrastructure would consist of a mix of hardscape plazas and squares (orange) and landscaped parks and lawns (shades of green).

The repurposed P&N rail line comprises approximately 8 to 12 acres of potential open space configured as a series of soft-scaped and hard-scaped pedestrian plazas, squares and lawns, (orange, green and dark green).

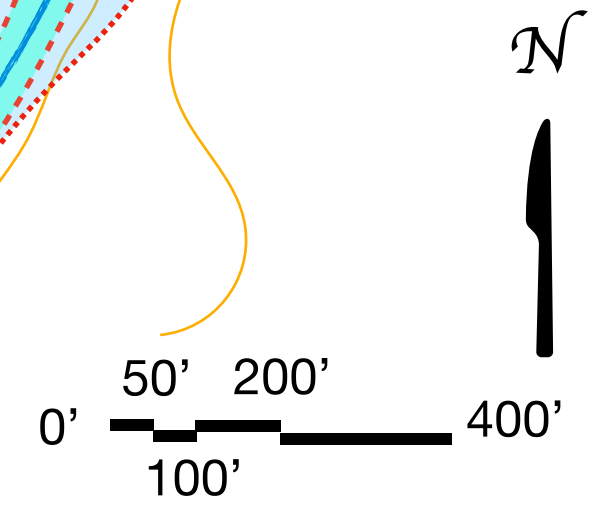
Private open space would be provided as needed for larger multi-family and mixed use projects (light green).

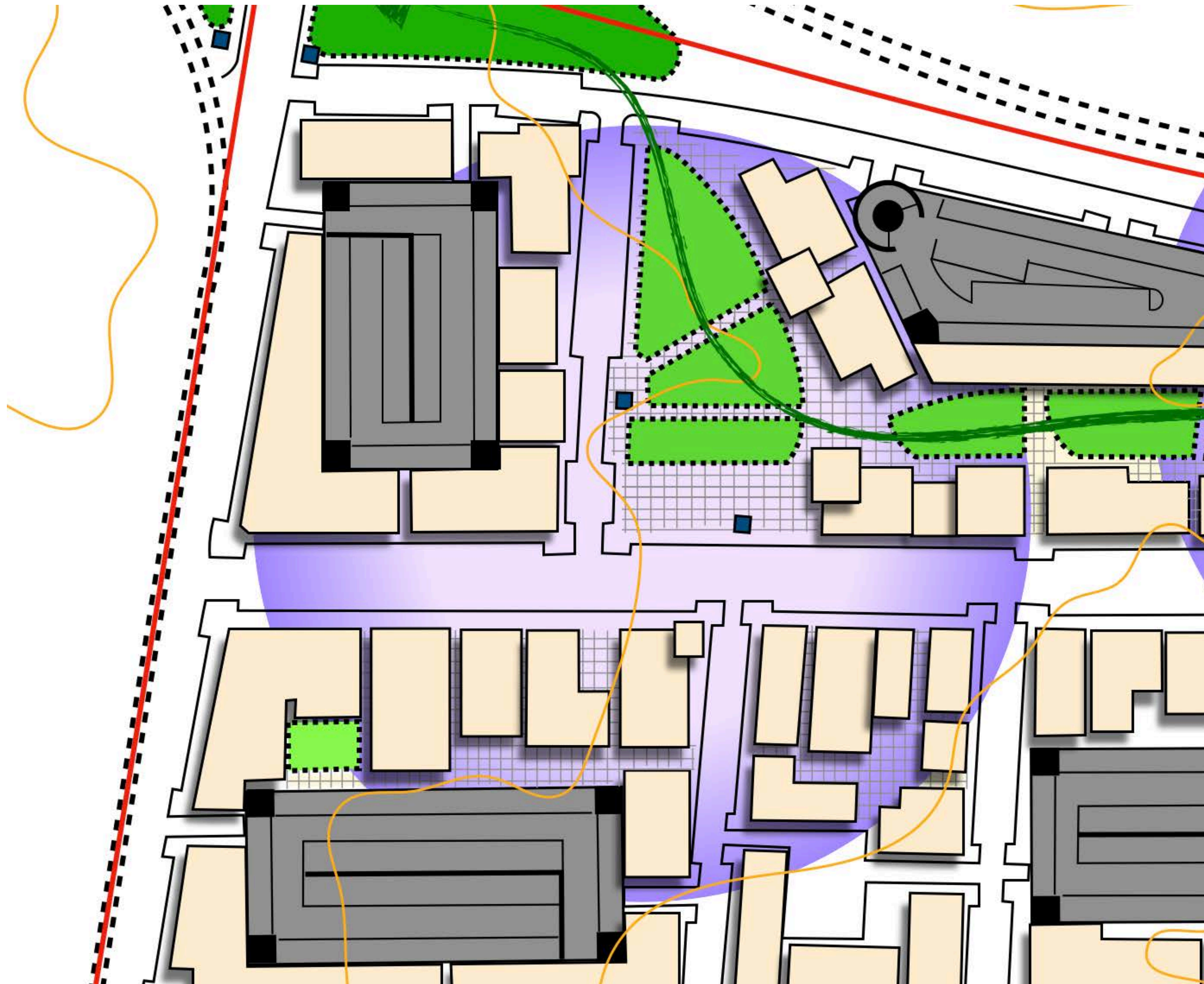
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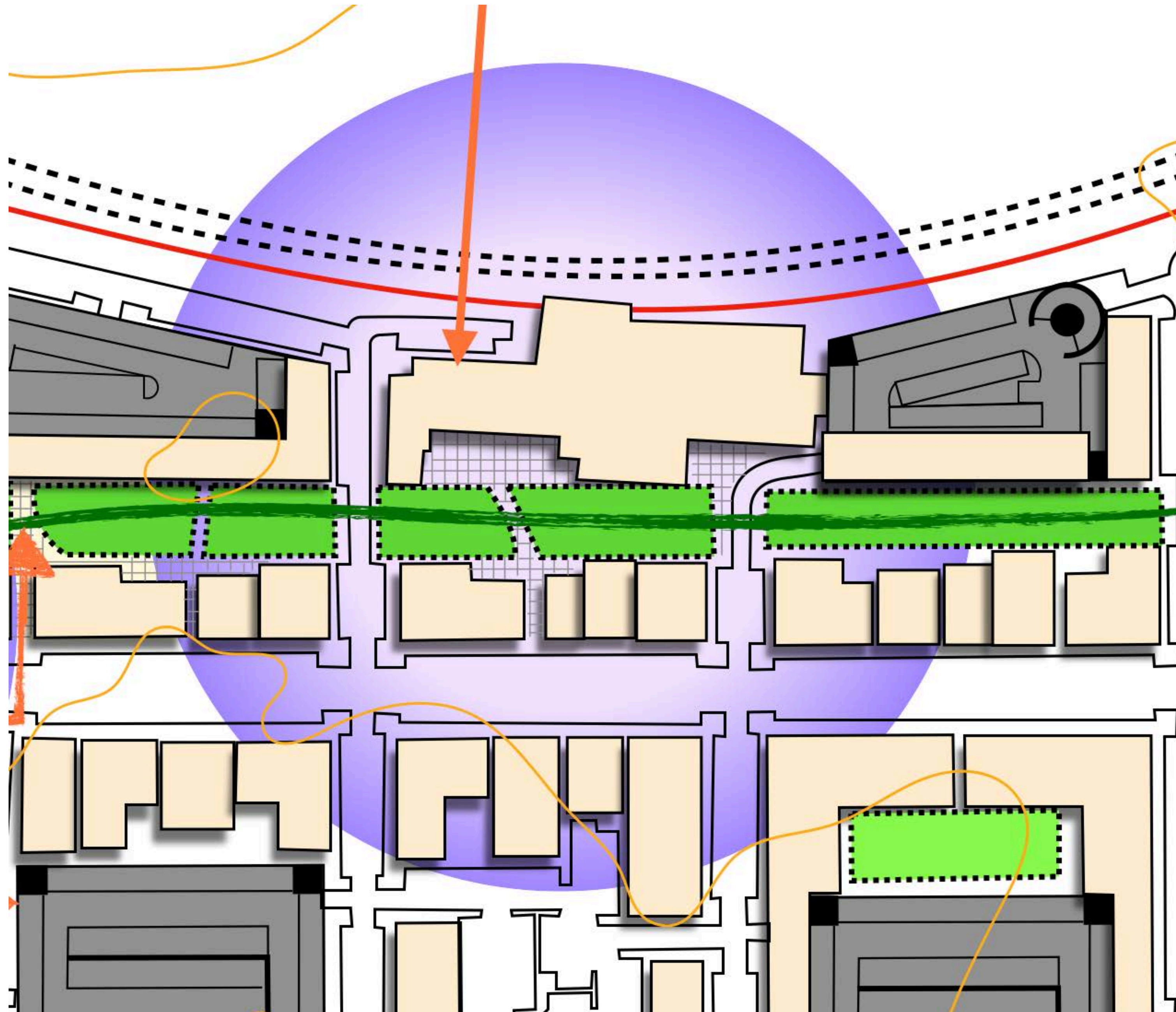


Parking would be located on street, in mid block surface lots, (light grey), and mid block structured parking (dark grey). These would be dispersed along the corridor to provide parking proximate to uses while encouraging walking between parking and nearby destinations. The Small Area plan can accommodate between 5,500 and 7,720 spaces.

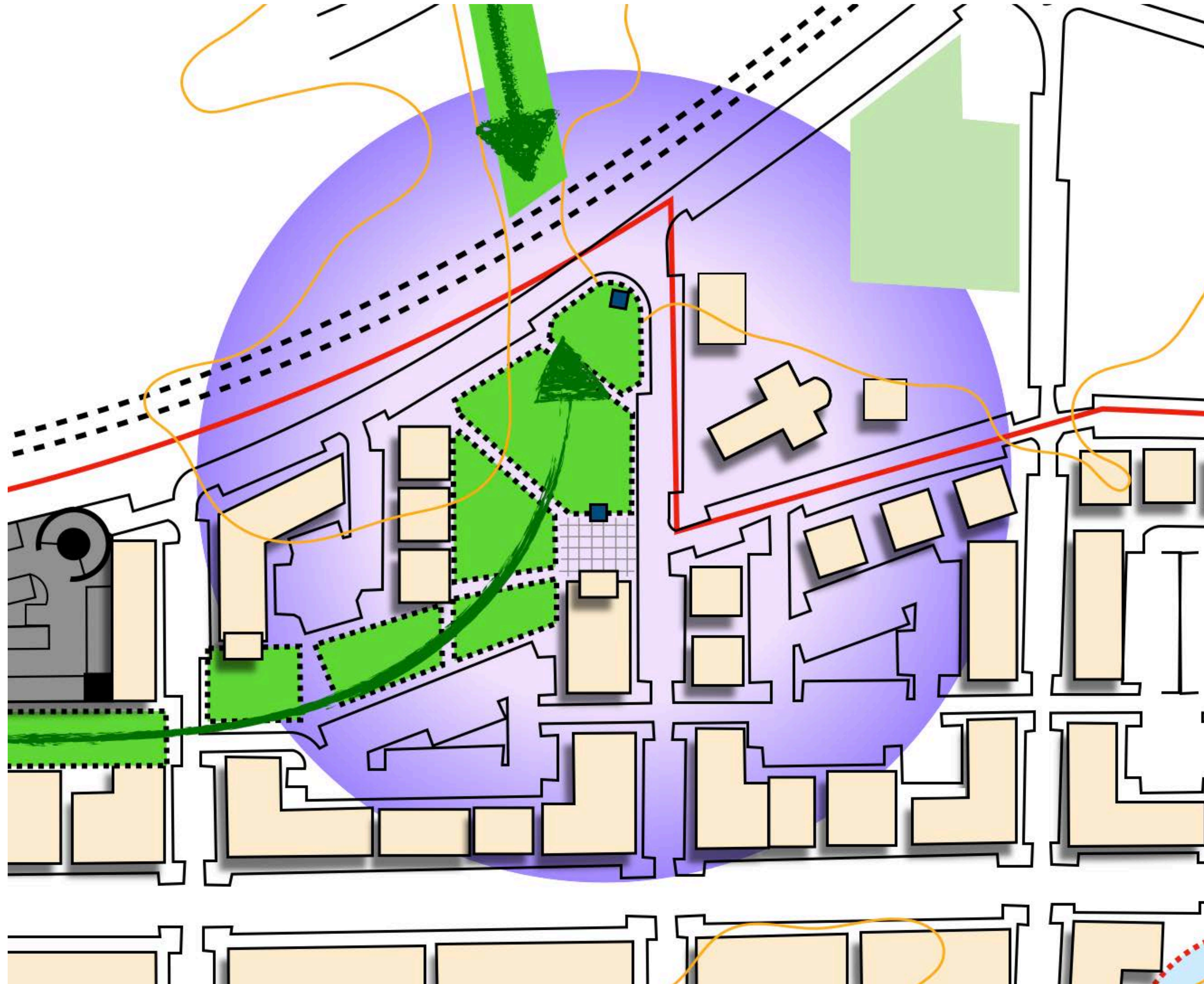




Detail of western plaza and pedestrian courtyards.



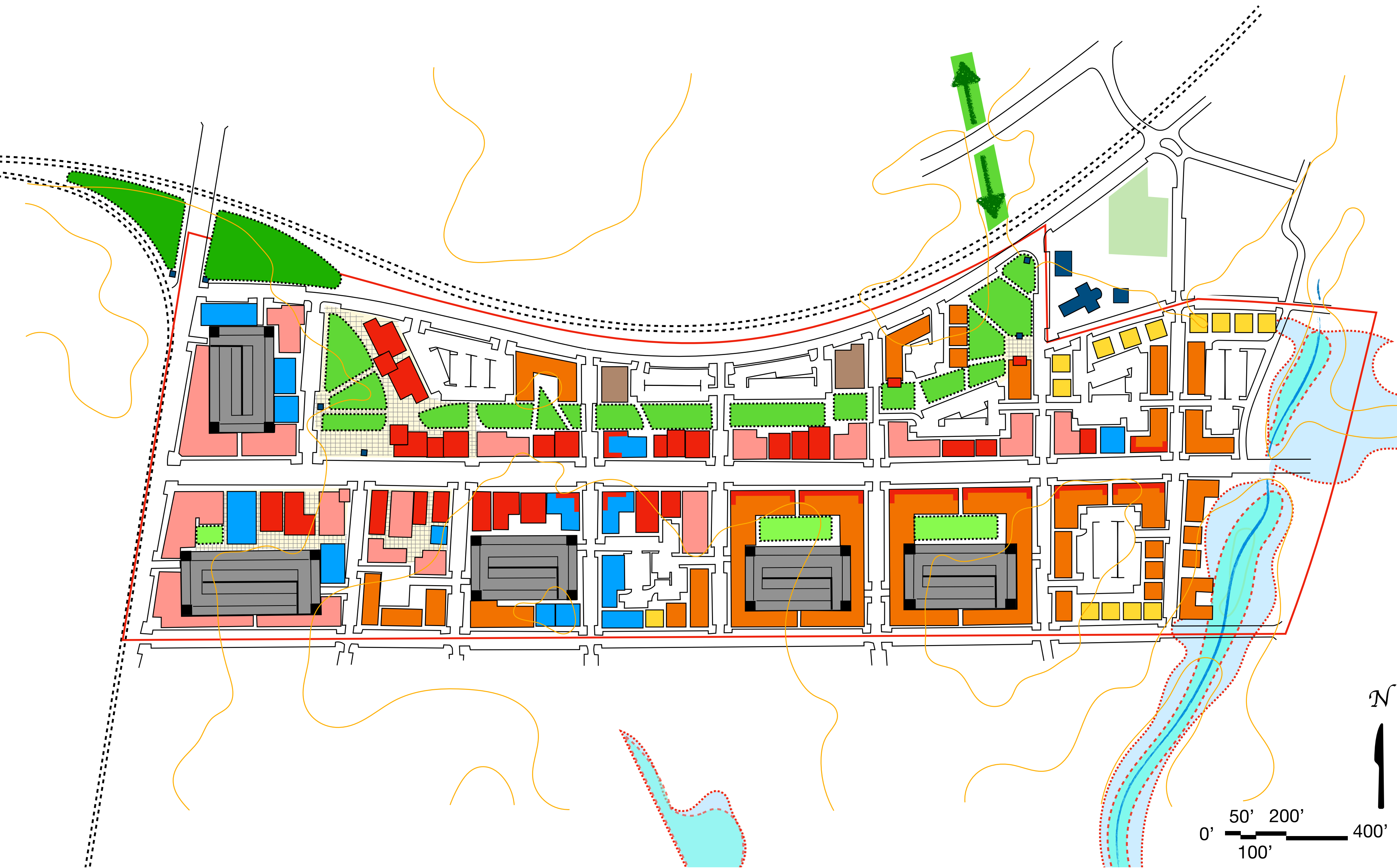
Detail of Avon Mill center



Detail of neighborhood park and civic center.

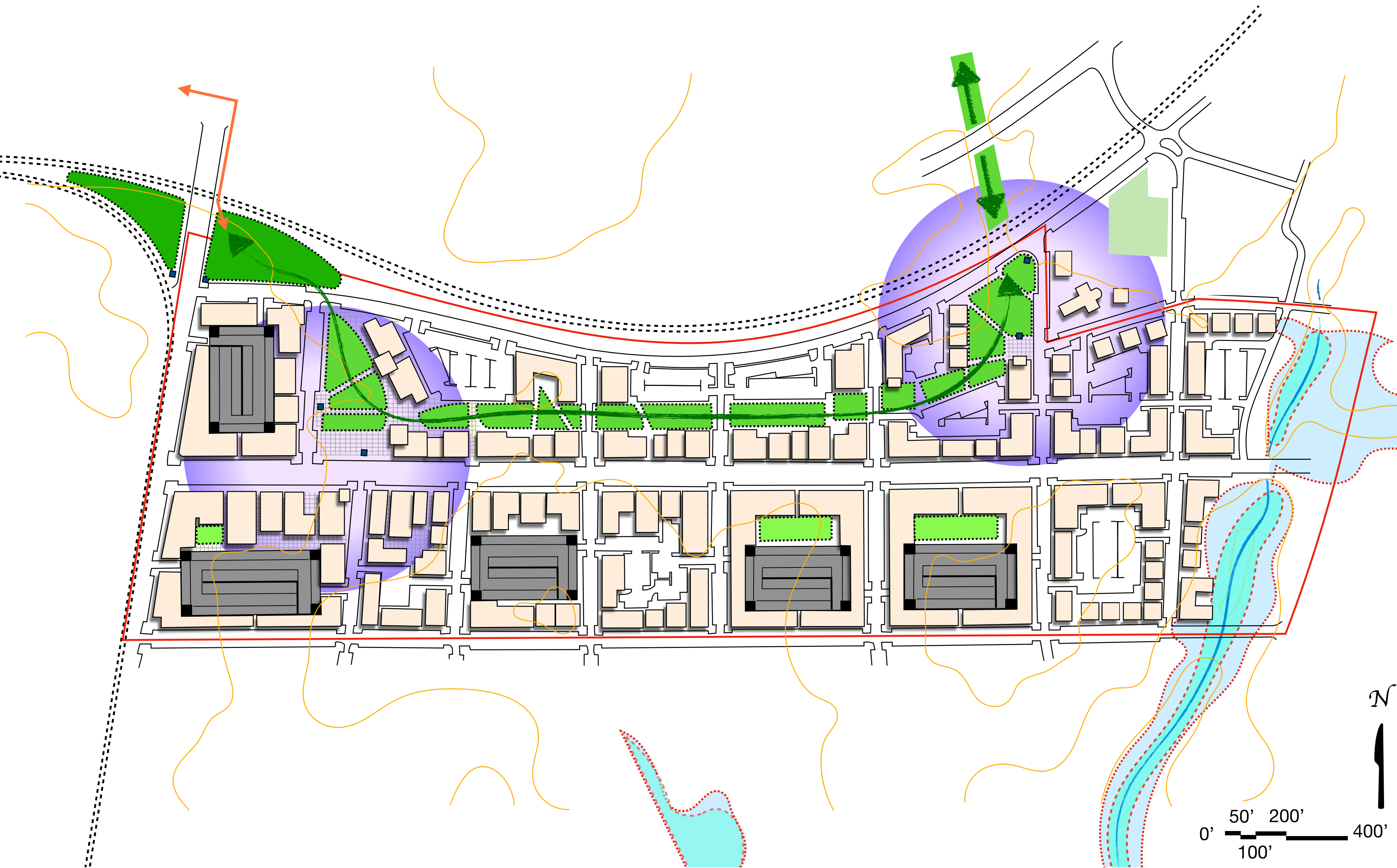
# CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN: DOWNTOWN EAST Gastonia, NC

Illustration showing demolition of the Avon Mill and the Master Plan impacts.



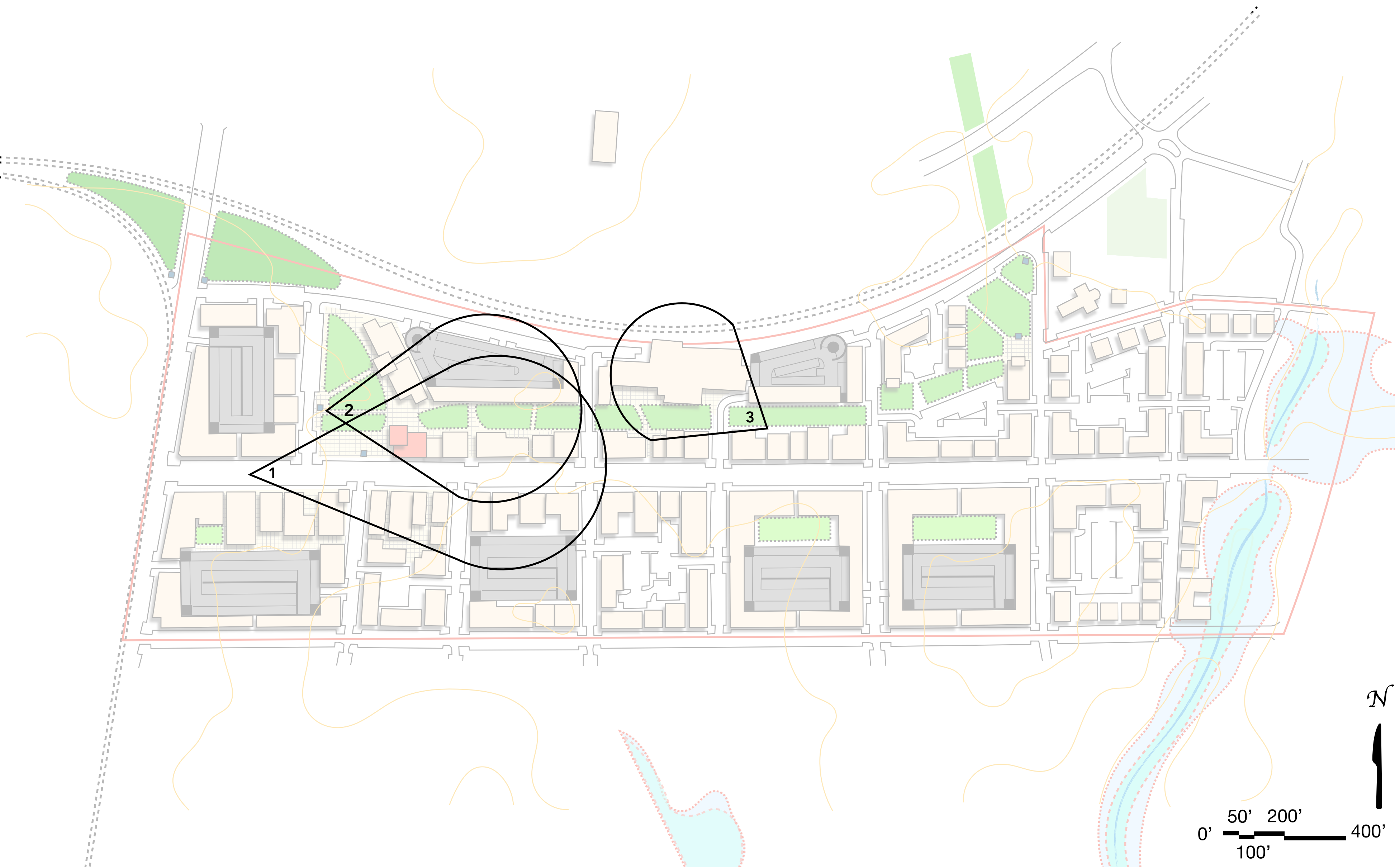
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## Illustrations

The three illustrations depict redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties under the regulations of the new UDO governing higher density, mixed use, and pedestrian supportive projects.

Design criteria for Open Spaces, in the form of parks, squares, and plazas play a major role in the new UDO. The P&N rail corridor, currently active, is re-imagined and repurposed to illustrate the potential redevelopment opportunities the corridor would leverage if pedestrianized. The illustrations show how such redevelopment could occur to create a pedestrian mall paralleling E. Franklin Blvd.

To further support an active and vital addition to the City's economic and tax base, E. Franklin Blvd is also re-imagined. The current section is dictated by NCDOT demands that this "Highway" designated corridor serve as a relief route to nearby I-85. This demand continues to suppress the introduction of higher performing, mixed use, and pedestrian supportive developments along the entire stretch of Franklin Blvd in downtown Gastonia. It is a daily reminder of the significant negative impacts to the City's economy, and a reminder of the misplaced prioritization of automotive convenience over all other forms of economic, social, and environmental performance.





Illustration 1

E Franklin Blvd, looking eastward,  
near Willow St, depicting a re-  
imagined E Franklin Blvd, and P&N  
rail corridor.



Illustration 2

New Plaza and Square anchoring the western end of the Franklin Mall pedestrian corridor along the redeveloped P&N rail line.



Illustration 3

The Avon Mill, the central anchor along Franklin Mall. The redeveloped and expanded Mill would provide retail/office and residential space

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