Technical Assistance for Sustainable Communities: Building Blocks

Technical Assistance Tool: Walkability Audit
Salisbury, MD

To: JaLeesa Tate, Department of Planning, Zoning and Community Development, City of Salisbury – Wicomico County
From: Kelly Morphy and Robert Ping, Walkable and Livable Communities Institute
Date: August 15, 2014
Re: Shaping the Built Environment to Revitalize Downtown and Facilitate Active Transportation: Report and Suggested Next Steps

Introduction

The following memo summarizes the Walkable and Livable Communities (WALC) Institute’s observations and recommendations from a recent visit to Salisbury as part of Smart Growth America’s EPA Building Blocks technical assistance program. These initial recommendations are based on the findings of a two-day walkability workshop with walkability and bicycling audits in June 2014 and should not be considered exhaustive. They do provide a strong starting point, however, in identifying some short-term and longer-term initiatives that will strengthen the local economy, better protect the environment, and improve quality of life for all residents through a better built environment.

Taken as a whole, the recommendations can be implemented to increase walkability, strengthen community connections, and enhance retail and social life in the heart of downtown. They can also serve as a model for investments and changes in the broader community.

Background – Context for the Technical Assistance Workshop

There is much to applaud in Salisbury. The City, led by Mayor Jim Ireton and City Council President Jake Day, has demonstrated a clear commitment to downtown revitalization with the $8.5 million Main Street Master Plan initiative that’s getting under way this year. In addition to replacing water and sewer pipes, the City wants to create design standards for everything from benches and street lights to street trees and signage to give the area a consistent look and feel. Salisbury is building on progress sparked by its recent West Main Street improvements, which have begun to transform downtown with streetscape elements, pedestrian and bike facilities, and other investments that are bringing back businesses, residents, and visitors, and reinvigorating this historic neighborhood.

Salisbury is getting off to a strong start by sprucing up the pedestrian-friendly stretch of Main Street known as the Downtown Plaza, a section that accommodates one-way automobile traffic but also clearly prioritizes pedestrians in its look, feel and design. As new restaurants and shops open in the plaza, it has become the hub for monthly Third Friday gatherings of the arts community downtown, with live entertainment, food, art displays and other activities.
Last year brought the opening of Salisbury University Art Galleries – Downtown Campus as another highlight of the City’s Arts & Entertainment district, and the momentum continues with the ongoing redevelopment of the historic firehouse into what’s been renamed Headquarters Live, a live music venue.

But Salisbury hasn’t stopped there. This spring, the City launched the next phase of its Main Street improvements, turning its attention to the stretch of East Main Street that runs from Division Street to U.S. Route 13 Business. The goal is to make similar changes there and create an extended walkable corridor, developing standards for everything from street trees and landscaping to sidewalks, streetlights, and street furniture. In an effort to calm traffic and make crossings safer for pedestrians, the City will build curb extensions and add high-visibility crosswalks. Other elements include information kiosks, outdoor dining, and paver stones to define a street furniture zone—all toward the goal of creating a more walkable, livable downtown.

Even with all of these changes in motion, City leaders say the best is yet to come. Salisbury has mapped out a bigger-picture blueprint for its downtown that could usher in large-scale housing and commercial development while also reducing runoff into the Wicomico River and Chesapeake Bay. The City’s revitalization blueprint, “A Plan for Transformation, 2012 – 2020,” spells out these goals in the context of major redevelopment opportunities with municipal parking lots that sit in the heart of downtown.

As part of its work with Smart Growth America to provide technical assistance through the EPA Building Blocks program, the WALC Institute assessed existing conditions in downtown Salisbury during a pair of walkability and bike audits in June 2014. The findings and recommendations discussed here reflect the observations and input of all who participated, including City and state officials, planning professionals, and bike and pedestrian advocates.

We begin with an overview of basic conceptual elements that should anchor the City’s revitalization efforts as they evolve over time, providing an enduring foundation for walkability and livability.

**General Recommendations**

In general, downtown neighborhoods that aim to improve the ability of people to walk, bicycle, socialize, and “age in place,” should adopt the following:

1) **Lower Vehicle Speeds.** Downtown is the destination. Reduce posted speeds and “design” speeds; instead of speeds being determined based on the efficiency and comfort of drivers, they should be based on safety and comfort for all users by setting an appropriate “target” speed. Destinations that serve as popular gathering spots—such as Main Street—require low, safe vehicle speeds. Like many other places across the country, vehicle speeds in Salisbury have crept up over time. The trend stems from the tendency to focus public investments and urban design on vehicle flow and driver efficiency, to the exclusion of people who want to walk, bike or use other active modes of transportation. With excessive vehicle speeds and noise, walking and biking become uncomfortable and even feel dangerous in some places.

2) **Narrower Vehicle Lanes and Roads.** The wider a roadway, the faster cars tend to travel, decreasing safety for all users. Wide lanes and roads also make for wide crossings, increasing the amount of time a pedestrian is exposed to the threat of being hit by a car, and the amount
of time drivers have to wait for the crossing to be completed. A large proportion of pedestrian fatalities occur on overly wide suburban roadways with five or more lanes.

Throughout downtown Salisbury, there are opportunities to reduce the width of vehicle lanes to 10-feet, which should be the City’s default lane width. If necessary, such as when there are high numbers of large trucks on the road or significant curves, cities can permit wider lanes, but the narrower lane should be the default. In addition to lowering speeds, it saves on materials, reduces environmental impacts and provides space for wider sidewalks, bike lanes, or buffers between sidewalks and vehicular traffic. The narrower lanes also make intersections more compact and efficient and they are proving to be as safe as wider lanes, improving motorists’ vigilance. When it comes to the width of vehicle lanes, less can be more.

3) **On-Street Parking.** The City’s approach to parking, with spaces available for free or at very low cost on the sprawling lots located a block from Main Street, works against downtown revitalization. Salisbury should augment its plans to redevelop those parking lots with more on-street parking, which calms traffic and enhances safety by creating a physical buffer between pedestrians on sidewalks and the cars passing them. It also shifts the emphasis away from parking lots, which eat up valuable space (requiring two to three times as much land as on-street parking.) Off-street parking creates more stormwater runoff; adds to heat gain; and takes up space that would otherwise go to buildings needed to house the people and jobs that make downtowns successful. And urban parking lots are often unsightly.

Add on-street parking wherever appropriate and change policies to set a maximum for off-street parking with new development, instead of requiring a minimum. Even better, consider not setting a minimum or maximum at all. Refocusing on on-street parking will help preserve important buildings and facilitate infill investment. In addition, look into the practice of “unbundling” parking from residential dwellings in real estate transactions (so that residents do not pay for parking unless they want to purchase it as an option.)

4) **Buildings that Front the Street.** Buildings and homes should “front” the street—instead of being set back far from the street—to create a pedestrian-scale landscape that puts “eyes on the street” so that people feel watched over. Establish maximum allowable setbacks for homes and commercial buildings in places of emphasis. Encourage placement of buildings and homes so that they create natural surveillance and maximize opportunities for people to meet or say hello, which is especially important near schools and parks, and within the civic and commercial areas that define Salisbury’s downtown. The City’s Downtown Plaza provides a good model.

5) **Shade and Greenery.** Vertical walls of green have a traffic-calming effect, holding down vehicle speeds and creating a pleasant walking and biking environment. Salisbury should provide for planting, replacing, and maintaining shade-producing street trees, planted in tree wells between every three-to-five parking spaces where right-of-way is limited. Streets lined with trees are safer for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists. And downtowns with shaded streets generally yield higher retail sales, with consumers spending up to 12 cents more on the dollar in forested business districts, according to one published study (PDF).

Try conducting a shade-mapping party after training a group of citizens (as the first in a series of suggested mapping initiatives described below). In addition, a tree farm could be a good
project for developing or enhancing partnerships among the City, schools, volunteer organizations and businesses.

6) **Complete Streets.** Streets that work for everyone are called “complete.” More than 600 communities across the country—and over 23 states—have adopted policies in support of completing their streets, and Salisbury’s City Council is considering its own Complete Streets resolution. For downtown, Complete Streets policies would help ensure that anytime a street is resurfaced or reconstructed, it is also redesigned and/or restriped to improve the ability of people to walk, bike, and drive safely and comfortably.

**Context-Specific Recommendations**

In addition to the broad guidance noted above, Salisbury has many specific opportunities to greatly improve walking and biking conditions in various pockets of downtown, which are summarized here as recommendations. Some can be accomplished quickly at little cost, while others require a more elaborate process, additional funding, and/or a longer timeframe.

**Contextual Observations**

Salisbury, a historic city founded in 1732 that became an active seaport in Maryland in the 1800s—second only to Baltimore—is better known today as the home of poultry giant Perdue Farms. It ranks as the largest city on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, with a population of 33,000, and serves as the Wicomico County seat.

Home to two of Delmarva Peninsula’s top institutions of higher education and medicine—Salisbury University and Peninsula Regional Medical Center, both of which sit in close proximity to downtown—the fast-growing city saw its population surge 28 percent in the 2000s, and it continues to grow. Salisbury’s Downtown Revitalization Plan aims to steer more of that growth into the downtown core, creating places to live, work, and play in a setting where people can readily choose to walk or bike for transportation.

There are plenty of signs that change is coming. Downtown has seen new restaurants and retail stores opening and City leaders have embraced the launch of Phase II of the downtown revitalization plan, which will bring the same sort of streetscape and safety improvements to East Main Street between Division Street and U.S. 13 that residents have seen on the Downtown Plaza. The overarching goal is also the same—to turn the area into a pedestrian magnet—and the City is turning its attention to bike facilities as well. At the end of May, the City council established a bicycle and pedestrian advisory committee, and work will begin soon to add or improve bike lanes in several locations.

Downtown Salisbury has a state-designated Historic District and an Arts & Entertainment District, and it has been recognized by the state as a Sustainable Community as well, all of which have laid the groundwork for coordinated strategic planning and access to various state tax benefits and other incentives that support downtown revitalization.

A key factor in gauging the City’s prospects for creating a prosperous new hub of activity downtown likely lies in its parking lots—or whatever replaces them. Salisbury has an over-abundance of free and cheap parking available in surface lots downtown, much of which consumes otherwise valuable land that separates Main Street from the riverfront. The City has set
out to transform this expanse of asphalt—as well as another large lot by the courthouse—into a vibrant, mixed-use urban center, taking advantage of its proximity to Main Street, the City’s top employers and the Wicomico River to create a place where hundreds will live, work, shop, play and gather for city-wide events. Salisbury’s existing downtown parking garage would meet demand for the surface parking it has targeted for elimination, based on data collected by City parking personnel.

Success in pursuing this redevelopment potential—the goal is to attract 300 jobs, 500 housing units and 750 new residents—would rank as one of the most high-impact steps the City can take to revitalize its core. Such development could benefit the Wicomico River as well, by reducing impervious surfaces and runoff, particularly with the use of green stormwater infrastructure.

Overall, the City of Salisbury is laying a solid foundation for active living, a robust local economy, and broad-based environmental and quality of life improvements with its vision for a newly vibrant downtown. The WALC Institute sees “good bones” and assets in this newly dynamic city. A growing number of Americans of all ages and means seek communities that celebrate their downtowns; it is what lies at the heart of any city and defines its livability. In Salisbury’s case, the downtown revitalization plans show great promise.

Next Steps

Following is a discussion of how the City can build on that base and become more pedestrian- and bike-friendly based on the five elements that make a good street: a sense of enclosure (for pedestrians); transparency (with windows watching over the street); image-ability (with street furniture and other defining characteristics); human scale (in the street and buildings that line it); and complexity (a palette of color, textures, tones, building heights, etc.) And keep in mind the related keys to success: sense of security; efficiency; convenience, comfort, and a feeling of welcome.

In addition to our more ambitious mid-term and long-term suggestions, we recommend pursuing some short-term goals as a starting point. Determine what actions the City and/or its residents can take immediately to build some momentum in the first 100 days. Make the most noticeable, low-cost improvements first, such as moving dumpsters or other unsightly things off the street and restriping crosswalks and bike lanes. Then, move on to bigger “to do” items with a commitment to prioritizing those actions in phases. When money is tight, budget whatever level of funding is possible to maintain momentum.

Short-Term Recommendations

In the next 100 days, Salisbury should challenge itself to:

• Embrace Complete Streets. The Salisbury City Council should move quickly to adopt the proposed Complete Streets resolution now under review and commit to a timetable for policymaking and implementation. By finalizing the resolution, and then adopting and implementing appropriate policies, the City will make considerable progress toward its downtown revitalization goals. Complete Streets policies ensure that streets are designed, built and/or improved to work equally well for automobiles, bicycles, pedestrians, and people of all ages and abilities. In implementing these policies, the City should look at all funded capital
improvement projects and programmed highway funds, and adopt appropriate planning, design, operations, and maintenance practices. Studies have shown that such practices lead not just to safer and more comfortable streets for all, but also to lower overall operating costs.

• Map Downtown’s Pros and Cons as a Place to Live, Work and Play. To identify immediate opportunities for action, conduct a series of mapping exercises that focus on the qualities people most appreciate about downtown, as well as any features that make them feel uncomfortable or insecure. With a fun event, train advocates and leaders—including youth and seniors—to participate. The goal should be to create several distinct sets of downtown maps to serve as planning overlays, which can be combined to identify voids and help prioritize changes that will make the greatest difference.

Consider mapping some of the following features:

1. Existing tree canopy and landscaping, and areas where green space is most needed.
2. Aesthetically appealing streets or blocks, and those locations marred by dumpsters or other ugly features;
3. Areas that illustrate a sense of security, specifically with window transparency and signs of neighborhood pride, vs. those that induce fear or anxiety with cracked windows, trash, and/or other signs of neglect;
4. Streets and blocks where people like to linger and can find a place to sit, and those that lack public gathering spots or benches to take a break.

• Create Wayfinding Signage. Salisbury has many assets—existing and planned—to draw residents and visitors downtown, from historic buildings and art galleries to the growing number of shops and restaurants. There are seasonal and special events as well, such as the monthly 3rd Fridays, which celebrate the arts.

With so many destinations and activities, the City ought to create a wayfinding system to help boost foot traffic for local businesses and build community pride. Develop maps and signs with estimates of walk time to various destinations, as well as information on transit and bike facilities. Consider using thematic colors or logos and place these signs on signal boxes and at other locations where they improve the streetscape. Post signage on special events as appropriate.

• Maximize Sidewalk Width and Access Downtown. For all new construction downtown and near schools, set the default sidewalk width at eight feet, the necessary width for two adults to be able to walk comfortably side by side and allow others to pass. Make the best of existing, narrower sidewalks until there’s funding to widen them by eliminating any obstacles for pedestrians.

Many sidewalks in downtown Salisbury are only five feet wide, and some are functionally even narrower. The parking meters along the sidewalks of North Division and East Main Streets can crowd pedestrians, for example. One solution would be to replace them with a multi-space, metered pay station in a central location, where people use cash or a credit card to buy a ticket for the dashboard; or relocate the meters to the grassy space behind the walkway. Another
example of a problem with a simple solution can be seen at the crosswalk that takes pedestrians across Division Street to the Downtown Plaza on West Main. The crosswalk ends at an oversized flower planter that sits just off the curb in the middle of the sidewalk, forcing people to try to get around it after crossing the street. The flower pot would be easy to move to the side, as would other items such as the easel-style signs merchants sometimes place in the sidewalk.

- **Improve Pedestrian Safety at Intersections.** Some intersections in downtown Salisbury have well-marked crosswalks and signage, but they’re inconsistent. Paint crosswalks where they’re missing or faded—in ladder style, with two wide, bold, edge lines—and install signs to further increase visibility, especially in areas with high pedestrian counts and vulnerable populations, such as near schools. In addition, enhance existing signal heads by using post-mounted traffic signals like those at Division and Main Streets. Post-mounted lights improve safety by drawing motorists’ eyes to a level where they more readily see pedestrians while also gauging gaps in traffic. Overhead signals are more difficult for such multi-tasking and often introduce solar glare. Motorists in downtown districts should focus on the people who are on foot and safe gap assessments when making turns. Post-mounted signals help.

- **Reduce Lane Widths.** Many vehicle lanes are overly wide, encouraging motorists to exceed posted speed limits, including those in the heart of downtown. An easy, short-term win is to take inventory of overbuilt streets and repaint them to bring speeds down. Use bold striping to narrow vehicle lanes to 10 feet and dedicate the remaining space to bike lanes, on-street parking, or a wider shoulder to buffer sidewalks.

- **Create More Bike Lanes and Repaint Existing Lanes.** The City is set to restripe bike lanes on Riverside Drive at six-feet wide and should consider colorizing the center lane to further calm traffic. Other popular cycling routes would benefit from similar improvements. On low-truck/freight volume streets where there is at least 30 feet of road width, 6-foot wide bike lanes can be striped, leaving 18 feet for two-way motor vehicle travel.

- **Eliminate the Center Line on Roads with Low Traffic Volumes.** There are stretches of low-traffic volume, two-way streets downtown where the center line is unnecessary and should be considered for removal. When drivers pass a cyclist or a person getting out of a parked car on such roads, they’re often inhibited from crossing over the double-yellow line to maintain a safe distance from the bike or pedestrian, creating an unnecessary risk. Center lines should be considered for removal on roads where they’re unnecessary, such as certain stretches of Division Street. By removing the center yellow line and painting bold edge stripes to set the road’s width at 18 feet, the City can best ensure that cars pass bikes and pedestrians safely. Such a practice also prevents the road edge from wearing as quickly, and it provides drivers with better sight lines and turning radii.

**OTHER 100-DAY ITEMS TO CONSIDER**

- **Improve Bicycle Access Downtown with More “Sharrows.”** Consider marking more streets that are appropriate with “sharrows,” which should be painted in the center of the lane rather than on the edges as some are in Salisbury. When placed in the center, sharrows clearly indicate that lanes are to be shared by bikes and cars, and they remain visible for longer periods of time. (See Arlington County, VA’s FAQ for more sharrows information.)
Enhance Bicycle Parking. Identify opportunities for additional bicycle parking downtown and at schools, neighborhood parks and other public spaces. Consider on-street bike racks, which can accommodate up to 10-to-12 bikes per parking space, and design elements that would tie into Salisbury’s downtown branding. Install bike racks that feature two points of contact, such as “staple” or “inverted U” racks. Many cities now include at least two parking locations for each side of each block in downtown settings.

Install Bike-Friendly Storm Drainage Grates. The grates that serve as inlets for drainage should be designed to allow storm water to drain without trapping bike wheels, as happens with grates that have parallel bars. The latter, some of which can be found downtown, have slots wide enough to trap bike wheels. Ideally, the drainage inlets are recessed under the curb or installed along the curb face, rather than on the street surface. The City can replace parallel-bar grates with those using a “vane,” “herringbone,” or “honeycomb” design.

Convert Alleys into Places for People. Downtown alleys can be made more inviting with paint, street furniture, landscaping and/or other improvements after clearing any trash or debris. Alleyways can become popular gathering spots, and they’re being repurposed all over the country into retail and social assets that enhance economic vitality. They can serve both as outdoor living rooms and as pedestrian corridors, as the City of Fort Collins, CO, has demonstrated with its Downtown Alley Enhancement Project.

Transform Sidewalk Areas into Compelling Destinations. Allow sidewalk seating for downtown cafes and restaurants, and install period lighting to improve safety and enhance sense of place. Consider promoting “parklets” on some blocks. Parklets are small spaces—typically the size of one or more parking spaces—that extend out from the sidewalk to the width of an adjacent on-street parking space, providing simple amenities that can transform downtown blocks into destinations and bring businesses more customers. UCLA has created a downloadable Parklet toolkit, titled Reclaiming the Right of Way.

Medium-Term Recommendations

Launch Complete Streets Policymaking and Adopt a Street Design Manual. With the adoption of a Complete Streets resolution, the City Council should move immediately into policymaking to ensure that upcoming transportation projects conform to the goal of designing streets to serve every user. Start by convening an advisory group to review Complete Streets policy options drawn from the growing number of communities that have adopted them nationwide.

In the near-term, adopt a street design manual on a temporary basis with a commitment to making necessary changes to finalize it. Model Complete Streets policies and a policymaking workbook are available at the National Complete Streets Coalition’s website. Additional sources for models include Los Angeles County’s Model Design Manual for Living Streets, the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Street Design Guide, and NACTO’s Urban Bicycle Design Guide.

After adopting Complete Streets policies, the City must incorporate them into capital improvement plans, review every CIP project, and provide training for City engineers.

Convert One-Way Streets Downtown to Two-Way Traffic. Salisbury has one-way streets that can be converted to two-way traffic, making them safer with slower speeds and greater
vigilance by drivers. In addition to getting rid of one-way streets, the City should try to eliminate as many traffic signals as possible, designing streets so that motorists naturally watch out for and yield to pedestrians.

One-way operations might be an asset, however, on the short segment of West Main Street known as the Downtown Plaza, which was a pedestrian-only zone until the City reopened it to one-way traffic in the early 1990s in the effort to draw people back downtown. Salisbury has been working to maximize on-street parking on this stretch and plans to reverse the flow of one-way traffic to the opposite direction as part of the Main Street Master Plan. City officials should reexamine the question of one-way vs. two-way traffic over the coming year to determine what’s most beneficial.

For any roads that the City wishes to keep as one-way streets, intersection crossings should be no wider than 14 feet before there is a refuge island, sidewalk or other safe place for pedestrians and bicyclists to wait for an opening in traffic. In addition, many downtown traffic signals were created in response to increased motor vehicle traffic and speeds, but conditions have changed. With narrower downtown streets and low speeds, many intersections with traffic signals could be redesigned to shorten pedestrian crossings, making streets safer and easier to cross.

- **Install Curb Extensions and Pedestrian Islands.** Reduce crossing widths and calm traffic by building curb extensions and/or pedestrian islands, starting with the downtown core and moving out into residential neighborhoods over time. The City’s plans to build curb extensions along East Main Street from Division Street to U.S. 13 will provide a good model for other locations. Salisbury should examine the need for safe mid-block crossings on its longer blocks as well, such as the block running the length of Camden Street by the municipal parking lot, which has been targeted for redevelopment. When blocks exceed 400 feet in length, pedestrians tend to cross mid-block. Mid-block pedestrian crossing islands provide a good solution.

- **Rethink Downtown Parking.** As the City embarks on its pursuit of high-density, mixed-use development for the municipal parking lots downtown, it should provide as much on-street parking as possible wherever it can, with head-out, angled parking being the preferred choice. Local leaders might have to mollify some downtown retailers who worry about the short-term challenge of losing the parking lots’ free and low-cost parking spaces. It’s important to get retailers to understand that with more shops, restaurants and housing in a more walkable downtown, they are far more likely to gain shoppers than lose them. Bring in a parking expert to help develop a parking management strategy. Establish “true cost parking,” which helps to incentivize additional street life, safety and downtown investments.

- **Create and Take Advantage of Terminating Vistas.** As the City works to revitalize its downtown with vibrant streets that serve as magnets of activity, think about the role of a terminating vista. Motorists respond to what they see ahead, and streets can be designed to calm traffic based on the view they present of street trees, a well-landscaped pedestrian island, and/or a neighborhood gateway. Likewise, pedestrians are drawn to an attractive terminating vista on streets and sidewalks, be it a public square, an interesting architectural feature, or a scenic river view.
• **Prioritize the Redesign of Problem Intersections.** Salisbury has many opportunities to improve intersections that are too wide for pedestrians and cyclists to cross safely and hinder the smooth flow of traffic. They also detract from any sense of place the City might derive from its historic buildings, scenic riverfront, and other features. Prioritize the redesign of problem intersections, including: East Main Street and U.S. 13; West Main Street and Fitzwater Street; and Riverside Drive, Camden Avenue, and West Carroll Street where they meet just south of downtown. Begin the redesign process by considering roundabouts and road diets, as described below.

• **Identify Opportunities for Roundabouts.** Modern roundabouts are safer than four-way signalized intersections, substantially reducing crashes and helping to calm traffic while also ensuring that it flows more efficiently. Roundabouts move 30 percent more traffic through a given corridor, eliminating signal and stop-control delays. They also improve connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists and provide opportunities to create a neighborhood gateway. Salisbury has many candidates for roundabouts or mini-circles, including where West Main Street meets Fitzwater Street to the west, and at the split of Mill Street into Riverside Drive, Camden Avenue and West Carroll Street just south of downtown. Many of the city’s intersections would work well with a single-lane roundabout.

• **Continue to Improve Main Street With a “Road Diet,” and Consider Other Roads for Similar Treatment.** After making planned safety and streetscape improvements to East Main Street from Division Street to U.S. 13, the City should consider doing a road diet farther east, where Main Street becomes a four-lane road heading to Salisbury City Park, Wicomico Middle School and Wicomico High School. The idea warrants further study beyond what the WALT Institute was able to accomplish during its brief visit in June. Consider converting Main Street to three lanes, one travel lane in each direction and a center turning lane, and a cycle track on the remaining unused right-of-way. A road diet could also involve converting intersections to roundabouts. Another good candidate for a road diet might be Waverly Drive, an overly wide street along the western boundary of Peninsula Regional Medical Center that connects the university to downtown.

• **Create an Outdoor Dining Hub at the Western End of the Main Street Pedestrian Plaza.** The western end of the Downtown Plaza ends at a place that could be transformed easily into a popular gathering spot for outdoor dining, people-watching, and live music or other sidewalk entertainment on weeknights or weekends. The area has a lush tree canopy, plenty of windows
watching over the sidewalk and attractive storefronts. Consider installing bollards on West Main Street at Mill Street and on West Market Street at Camden Street to block motor vehicle access to the corner at select times in the evening, on weekends and during street parties or festivals.

OTHER MEDIUM-TERM ITEMS TO CONSIDER

- **Program Stoplights to Give Pedestrians ‘Lead’ Time.** Pedestrians need lead time, especially on busy roads, in order to get partly across the street before motor vehicles start moving. In addition, dedicated left-turn signals can precede (lead interval) or follow (lag interval) the pedestrian phase to further increase safety. There are safety benefits for all (including the motorist) to use the lag (end of cycle), but it is not always possible in some settings.

- **Improve Landscaping for Beautification and as a Safety Buffer.** Emphasize narrow street patterns in the city center and add to the aesthetic appeal of streets by planting trees and other edge-forming ground cover, an attractive ledge, or large potted plants (taking care not to place them in the path of pedestrians.) The greenery will act as a buffer between sidewalks and busy roads, increasing safety and contributing to a sense of place. Increasing green space downtown also heightens the neighborhood’s desirability. Establish a funding mechanism to assist homeowners with sidewalk and landscape maintenance.

- **Comply with ADA.** Redesign sidewalk ramps as needed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Conduct an accessibility audit and create an ADA-compliance map or survey to develop an action plan that prioritizes improvements near medical facilities, schools, senior centers and civic buildings.

- **Allow ADU’s.** Accessory Dwelling Units, or “in-laws” or “granny flats,” are living spaces built within an existing residential property. They typically are very small. Most communities that allow them limit their size to a minimum of 800 square feet, but a growing number of cities are lowering their minimum size to 500 square feet or less. Check your City code and try to change it, if necessary, to allow ADUs. One way to overcome management issues is to require that the owner live in one of the two units. Encourage development of this and other affordable infill housing downtown as an alternative to traffic and sprawl-inducing housing on the edge.

- **Support Healthy Living in All Residential Neighborhoods.** Consider creating small parks in unused and underused lots, and plant community gardens where appropriate. Recruit green grocers and healthy food retailers to downtown locations that residents can reach on foot, especially those with lower incomes.

- **Build a Sense of Security.** Increase transparency (windows) requirements for all downtown buildings over time, with an emphasis on key blocks and the goal of reaching 70 percent-plus transparency. Use vintage street lights throughout downtown to improve security and create a sense of place.

- **Support Destinations.** Plan future walkability improvements around specific destinations, and use Walkscore as a tool to evaluate outcomes.
Long-Term Recommendations

- **Engage Stakeholders in Developing the Vision and Concepts for Redevelopment of Downtown Parking Lots.** The City has taken the important step of identifying several municipal parking lots as prime opportunities for mixed-use redevelopment, including a 3.5 acre lot that separates the downtown core from the Wicomico River and a 2.9 acre lot by the District Courthouse and U.S. 13. Both properties present substantial opportunities for additional housing and commercial projects that would bring more retail, services and jobs downtown—as well as up to 750 new residents. At present, they provide only excess surface parking that’s free or very low-cost, creating a mismatch between the land value and the revenue it generates.

Engage the public in discussing appropriate development for these sites in coming weeks. Find out what citizens prefer in the mix of land uses and neighborhood ambience. Evaluate the incentives the City can use to shape proposed development as well, and create design guidelines to achieve the desired look and ambience. While it’s important to achieve high densities, the buildings that front the street and sidewalk should be kept to a human scale of two-to-three stories, with taller buildings being limited to those set behind that frontage. With the lower elevations at the front—and plenty of windows to put eyes on the street—the City can foster a pedestrian-oriented streetscape. It’s important to limit building heights near the waterfront as well.

Build social capital on a broad basis through outreach to stakeholders, advocates, and residents; develop and support partnerships with community groups and businesses.

- **Create Gateways that Herald Downtown.** Identify opportunities to develop high-impact gateways into downtown, with a particular focus on U.S. Route 50 Business and U.S. 13 Business. A gateway at the intersection of U.S. 13 with East Main Street would help create a traffic-calming transition into downtown for those traveling from the university, while gateways on U.S. 50 near its intersections with Mill and N. Division Streets could lure out-of-town motorists traveling to and from the beaches to take a break in downtown Salisbury. Another good location for a gateway would be on South Division Street heading into downtown at the bridge that crosses the Wicomico River.

In addition to creating a sense of place, gateways calm the traffic entering downtown. It’s important to get the design right even if the City can’t build one right away. So, begin the design process early with input from all stakeholders, including community and business leaders, major employers, neighborhood groups and citizens. Work with stakeholders to select potential locations and get their input on everything from the design of signage and landscaping to the use of public art.

**OTHER LONG-TERM ITEMS TO CONSIDER**

- **Improve Connections to the River.** Salisbury has an invaluable amenity and placemaking opportunity in its waterfront, with the Wicomico River wrapping around downtown. Yet, the predominant use of this property has been for parking lots. With the City’s decision to seek redevelopment of these properties, it becomes critical to ensure that the urban design and land uses complement the waterfront and preserve views. It’s also important to orient streets and sidewalks toward the waterfront and develop trails to make it readily accessible.
• **Strengthen Connections between Downtown and the University.** Develop a strategic plan to boost the City’s relationship with Salisbury University. Downtown revitalization efforts should include a process to prioritize transportation improvements that make travel between the two locations more convenient, safe, and affordable, and partnerships to support special events and new amenities for public gathering spots.

• **Develop a Pedestrian/Bike Plan to Better Connect Residential Neighborhoods to Downtown.** The City should begin developing a pedestrian/bike plan that responds to residents’ desire for better connections between downtown and their neighborhoods. Engage community members to build consensus around specific goals touching on everything from bike parking and on-street and off-street bikeways, to safe routes to school and a sidewalk network that connects destinations. Consider developing a [bicycle library](#) or public “Bike Share” system as well.

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