



Town of Siler City Downtown Master Plan Report

March 8, 2013

Prepared by:





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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND PROCESS

BRIEF HISTORY OF SILER CITY

Siler City is located in Chatham County in Central North Carolina. The County was formed in 1771 and its commerce developed from a mixture of industry and agriculture. The town's major industries have included textiles, furniture, hosiery, and food processing.

Located at a prominent crossroads of stage routes, one from Raleigh to Salisbury (east/west) and Greensboro (formally Martinsborough) to Fayetteville (north/south), Siler City was known as Matthews Crossroads around the year 1842. Around 1880, Sam Siler operated a mill and a store on Loves Creek near its present junction with south Chatham Avenue. In 1884, the railroad (the Cape Fear and Yadkin Lines) included Siler City (then known as Siler Station) as a regional stop between Greensboro and Sanford. Sam Siler donated land for a depot and laid out the town's street pattern on his land with the depot as the center. The Town incorporated in 1887, and the limits were established from the depot as a mile square aligned north-south.

Siler City is the County's largest municipality, located on the western side of the County between the Triangle and Triad regions (at the junction of US 64 and 421). As of the 2010 census, Siler City's land area is 6 square miles with a population of 7,877 within the corporate limits and 12,610 including the ETJ. Siler City's Latino population is 49.8%, compared to 8.4% state-wide. The homeownership rate for the town is 55%. The median household income is \$30,281.

VISION AND PURPOSE OF THE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

In June of 2010, Siler City was accepted into the NC STEP (Small Town Economic Prosperity) program, a program through the NC Rural Center. The STEP Leadership Team began working to create a long term economic development strategic plan and implementation strategy. The Leadership Team, comprised of a cross section of Siler City's area citizens, developed a plan focusing on four broad strategies with multiple projects under each strategy as part of the Economic Development Strategic Plan and Implementation Strategy, adopted in 2011. These four strategies include:

- Strategy 1: Business Development
- Strategy 2: Marketing Siler City
- Strategy 3: Further Develop and Build on Existing Downtown Arts Community
- Strategy 4: Siler City as a Retirement Destination

This downtown master plan and report is a project through Strategy 1: Business Development, and was lead by the Downtown Master Plan Committee, a sub-committee of the overall STEP Leadership Team. The downtown development

CHAPTER 1

BRIEF HISTORY OF SILER CITY

VISION AND PURPOSE OF THE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

PROCESS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

master plan follows the goals outlined in Strategy 1, and is a guide for redevelopment. This master plan and the demonstration projects in Chapter 4 of this report are not construction drawings, nor is this document a regulatory document. This plan provides a guide and framework to be utilized to ensure development decisions will be made and potential projects reviewed with the plan as the guide. This report also provides guidance on implementation strategies and potential funding sources. This document was created by solicited community feedback and is the town's document. The responsibility of implementing this master plan and the success of it, will be lead by the proactive community and town staff.

This plan provides developers with guidance, not restrictions on development. Private developers are much more likely to invest in a community where its members facilitated a vision, invested in projects themselves, and have committed to a coordinated revitalization plan. Public funds (matching or grants,) most often require a master plan to apply for funds. This plan includes demonstration projects for items such as streetscape improvements, an infill building, facade improvements, and visions for a downtown park. Projects such as these, private or publicly funded, will spur downtown revitalization and continue the guiding vision of this master plan.

There have been previous town studies developed for Siler City. The Siler City Design Development Plan was completed in December of 1980, by North Carolina State School of Design Students. The plan analyzed the entire town including the existing industry, residential development, recreation, and the central business district. The plan's recommendations included entrance signage, streetscape improvements, new park development, and façade improvements. Siler City also adopted a Land Development Plan (LDP), in 2003, which was an update of a similar plan from 1989. The Plan's purpose is to guide future land use and development decisions in Siler City. The 2003 Plan called for specific updates to land use and development, and an analysis of existing and man-made factors effecting land use. The plan identified the major land use issues facing the community, recommended the development of a conceptual land use plan, and the creation of land development policies.

This current master plan and report focuses specifically on the downtown area. It is an update to the two previous plans as demographics and land use have changed in the past 33 years. Chapter Two of this report provides additional detail about the LDPs recommendations for the downtown specifically, what has been accomplished to date, and how this master plan can be used for the future.

This current downtown master plan's goals are to improve the aesthetic quality of downtown Siler City and to provide incentives which spur additional economic development. This can be accomplished by encouraging downtown development through initiatives such as but not limited to:

- Improving aesthetic appearance of existing buildings and providing guidelines for new buildings and renovations,
- Providing development incentives,
- Increasing pedestrian comfort and safety through improved public environs,
- Revising town codes and ordinances to facilitate economic growth and opportunity.

The vision the plan provides and the example projects will ultimately improve the standard of living and quality of life for the town's residents, and facilitate additional public and private investments into the town and vicinity. These two items help to attain the 4 STEP strategies listed above for a comprehensive goal of evolving the life of downtown Siler City. The town's residents, public leaders, and private land and business owners must continue to be passionate and work together to improve the quality of downtown Siler City.

As part of the current Downtown Master Plan process, a vision statement for the plan was formulated by the Master Plan Committee.

Siler City Downtown Master Plan Vision Statement:

To create a vibrant downtown that honors traditions and encourages innovation, enabling residents, businesses, and tourism to flourish. Siler City – Delightfully Unexpected.

PROCESS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The process for the production of this current study and plan recommendations was lead by Coaly Design and Clarion Associates. Coaly Design worked closely with the Downtown Master Plan sub-committee to guide this process, facilitate public input, develop the master plan, and recommend priority projects for implementation.

A project kick off meeting was held on July 24, 2012, where the committee developed the vision statement for the project. After field studies and site analysis were conducted in the downtown study area by the consultant, a community meeting was held in the evening of August 23rd, 2012. Information about downtown and about the planning project was presented by Siler City Director of Planning and Community Development, Jack Meadows, followed by an overview of existing land use patterns, issues, and opportunities by Kimberly Siran with Coaly Design. Following this information, consultant team member Roger Waldon with Clarion Associates, conducted an inquiry of participants about downtown opinions and preferences. Twenty seven questions were posed to about 25 participants. Each member of the audience was given a keypad, allowing participants to indicate an answer or preference to each question.

The first set of questions was designed to understand the characteristics and demographics of those in the room. The second set of questions was aimed at learning what associations participants had with downtown, such as opinions and patterns for downtown improvements related to retail, business, and entertainment options. The third set of questions designed to get opinions about what is important about the vitality of downtown, and what implementation strategies should be pursued to improve downtown such as a downtown tax district, a downtown improvement corporation, developer incentives/responsibilities, and funding sources.

The survey was also offered in a paper and online form. The survey's website link was provided to over 3,600 Siler City residents in their water bill. Other notifications of the survey and community meetings were publicized in The Chatham News, The Chatham Journal, La Conexion, Que Pasa, and on WNCA. Approximately 400 people were notified through direct email and updates were posted on the Town of



Community meeting – August 2012



Community meeting – August 2012



Community meeting – August 2012



Community meeting – August 2012

Siler City's website, on Exploresilercity.com, and the NC STEP Facebook page. The survey was available in both English and Spanish languages.

A few of the survey questions elicited a near unanimous response.

Examples:

- How important is it to provide additional services Downtown?
79% – *Very Important*
- How important is it to improve the appearance of existing buildings Downtown?
81% *Very Important*
- Should a portion of Town funds be spent to improve Downtown?
90% – *Yes*
- Should revisions be made to ordinances to facilitate improvements to Downtown?
90% – *Yes*

The community survey also supported the need and desire for additional shopping, restaurant, civic, and entertainment venues in downtown Siler City. The survey also reflected that the majority of respondents would utilize these venues if available. Survey results indicated 69% of the respondents use the US 64 Bypass corridor or use the Greensboro/Burlington area to shop. The survey also indicated 49% of respondents use the US 64 Bypass corridor to eat at a restaurant, and 60% of the respondents go to either the Raleigh/Durham area or the Greensboro/Burlington area for entertainment.

This valuable community feedback provided the guidance and direction to create the downtown master plan. The master plan will aid in facilitating land use changes to respond to the community's preferences. Planning staff will utilize this master plan to direct developers to properties and buildings downtown for reuse to the uses listed above. The survey and master plan also support additional or revised town code updates to also facilitate the implementation of the master plan.

Based on this survey information indicating the community's preferences, along with existing land use patterns, existing conditions of downtown, and direction from the master plan committee, a master plan for downtown Siler City was developed.



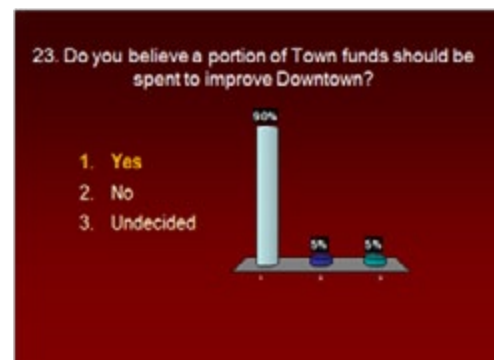
Community meeting survey results



Community meeting survey results



Community meeting survey results



Community meeting survey results



CHAPTER 2: STUDY AREA SITE ANALYSIS

REGIONAL CONTEXT AND LAND USE

The Town of Siler City is in the western part of Chatham County and is the largest municipality in the county. For the purpose of this study, Downtown Siler City is defined by a nine block area from Third Street to the north, Beaver Street to the south, Birch Avenue to the west, and Third Avenue to the east.

Siler City has a rich agricultural heritage which is still very much part of the culture today. Siler City's oldest business, Farmers' Alliance Store, resides in Siler City's downtown at the southern end of Chatham Street. It has been in operation for 125 years, since 1888, and continues to be a valuable asset to all the citizens of Chatham County. Clapp Brothers Tractor, in business since 1937, is also reflective of the agricultural heritage of Siler City and Chatham County. In recent years, Siler City has seen the closure of two poultry processing plants, Townsend and Pilgrim's Pride.

Downtown Siler City also offers a variety of retail establishments in downtown such as general stores and tiendas, a book store, pharmacies, a hardware store, and the post office. Services provided in downtown today are a travel agency, beauty salons, auto service stations, a furniture store, and a variety of professional offices/businesses.

The northern end of Chatham Avenue is the cultural center of Siler City anchored by the NC Arts Incubator (NCAI). This private non-profit organization was founded in 2002, by the small business development director at the Central Carolina Community College with local artisans. NCAI and the Town have collaborated on rehabilitation of several buildings into artist studios, retail and exhibit galleries, an outdoor courtyard and a private coffee shop. Until recently the Community College rented space to offer ceramics and sculpture programs to the community. The Incubator provides competitive rent, communal equipment, galleries, a supportive artist community and marketing and business planning assistance. Several artists have invested in additional galleries around the Incubator creating a community of painters, sculptors, potters, weavers, leather and fiber artists, blacksmith, woodworkers, stained glass and jewelry artists and a world renown guitar maker. The Courtyard and Rotary Stage, owned and managed by NCAI, have become the 'town square' hosting not only the regular Third Friday Artwalks and gallery openings, but also most community parades and festivals. The Courtyard Coffee shop is downtown's daily social center with informal meeting space and free WiFi.

EXISTING LAND USE ANALYSIS

Downtown Siler City's existing land uses and context, Appendix Map B, provide impressions of the town that are reflective of its history and diverse community. The agricultural heritage, local business establishments, arts district, and the emerging

CHAPTER 2 REGIONAL CONTEXT AND LAND USE

EXISTING LAND USE ANALYSIS

RESEARCH AND UPDATE OF THE SILER CITY 2003 LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN



South Chatham Avenue



NCAI Courtyard and Rotary Stage

trend of the Latino demographic of the town add to the culture, diversity, and creativity of the downtown. The diverse retail services that are offered provide residents with venues for goods such as appliances, farm equipment, art, pharmaceutical products, convenience stores, and hardware. There are also a diverse mix of services offered in the downtown area such as salons, banks, insurance and law firms, professional businesses, and a coffee shop.

The diverse mixes of activities are also reflective of the interest and passion being fostered in downtown. It is important to also note the monthly and annual activities that take place in Siler City. The town has an active merchants association and popular events such as the 3rd Friday ArtWalk, Siler City Alive, Milo Holt's Western Film Festival, and National Night Out, to name a few.

While there are many thriving businesses and events in downtown it is important to note the vacant buildings and under-utilized land as opportunities for growth, adding to the diversity of businesses, and improving the physical appearance of downtown. The downtown study area is lacking in areas of land use such as a public park, entertainment venues, a civic space, housing options, and restaurants/entertainment venues.

As part of the existing land use analysis, a map was generated to highlight the under-utilized land and buildings in the downtown study area. This map in the Appendix-Map C, indicates land that is currently vacant, used as surface parking or storage, and which has the potential for higher density development and a greater tax value for the town. The approximate total of this underutilized land is 237,409 sf or 5.45 acres. These are the properties highlighted in purple. Current land uses are also noted that are recommended to remain as the current land use, but have the opportunity for improved aesthetic appearance. These properties could also be candidates for an organization or redesign of the current land use.

This map also indicates vacant or underutilized buildings in the downtown focus area. The approximate square footage of the underutilized buildings is 67,600. These buildings are highlighted in yellow on Map C.

The downtown focus area currently has a diversity of land uses and a diversity of services. The history and cultural diversity of downtown is reflected in those land uses and services. By providing a vision for the future, the downtown master plan outlines aesthetic, economic, and cultural improvements for the downtown Siler City.



Tienda en el centro



Clapp Brothers Tractor



Gang of cowboys – Milo Holt Film Festival
(Photo credit unknown)



RESEARCH AND UPDATE OF 2003 LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

As part of the current downtown master plan research, the 2003 Siler City Land Development Plan (LDP), was analyzed to establish past projects, ideas, and implementation goals. The 2003 Land Development Plan highlights goals and objectives focused on downtown land use and building improvements. The LDP categorizes the goals as commercial, mixed use, and downtown. The LDP also emphasizes the need for additional land uses and a reuse of buildings in the downtown.

A summary of the 2003 goals that pertain to downtown are:

Commercial Goal

- Continue commercial, retail, services, and office development of the central business district
- Allow residential and mixed use developments
- Promote shared parking and off street parking for requirement
- Flexible zoning standards – new zoning category or overlay districts
- Development guidelines or standards for downtown CBD
- Adaptive reuse of buildings, historic guidelines, site standards, and amenities

Mixed Use Development Goal

- Allow for planned, mixed use development in downtown
- Encourage the reuse of the buildings in the area to the west of the CBD
- Reuse of buildings encouraged for office/retail/residential uses
- Reuse of vacant space for open space

Downtown Goal

-Promote downtown as an active, attractive community that accommodates multiple uses such as the arts, small business and residential.

The plan also listed items for improvement to the downtown such as street trees, signage, code revisions, civic center, parking study, etc.

It is important to note the 2003 plan also listed action items that have been implemented or are active projects. Examples of this include:

- Converting vacant industrial property into an active “arts market” to provide marketing space and take advantage of a growing arts community.

This has been accomplished with the NC Arts Incubator, galleries, and studios that have opened in downtown. The potential for more economic generation exists.

- Visually define the downtown area through unified signage and landmarks.

This effort is currently underway through the NC STEP committee to implement wayfinding signage and improve the branding of Siler City.

- Conduct downtown parking study and improve availability of downtown parking.

Additional downtown on-street parking has been implemented with an estimated 250 spaces available in downtown.

The 2003 Land Development plan also recommended other improvements, some of which have been targeted to be action items with this current downtown master plan. Examples of these include:

- Recommend revisions to the town zoning ordinance to include residential uses in the commercial area which is owner occupied and supportive of live-work-production uses.
- Recommend streetscape improvements and intersection improvements that increase pedestrian comfort and safety, provide street trees, improve sidewalks functionally and visually, and increase accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- Recommend current buildings for reuse and facilitate new mixed use infill buildings on current vacant land
- Reuse vacant space for open space or community gathering places
- Recommend shared parking and additional on-street parking

Items recommended to be pursued in the future, as other strategies are implemented are as follows:

- The creation of a downtown development association or business improvement district (DDA or BID)
- The application of Siler City to the North Carolina Main Street program
- The creation of an “Urban Design Manual” to help guide development decisions, guide land use and architectural design, and to allow for a user-friendly experience with the town ordinance.
- To establish a Design or Community Appearance Commission to recommend to the Planning Board / Town Commissioners. Currently, the STEP Facade Improvement Committee has been active in improving the appearance of many downtown buildings. Moving into the future, this committee could take on the role of the Community Appearance Commission as a sub committee of the Planning Board. This committee would help developers interpret the town code or urban design guidelines to follow the guidance the master plan provides. Examples of facade improvements initiated by the STEP Facade improvements are included on this page.



“Before” photograph of former Hardees Bld, Second Avenue



“After” photograph of former Hardees Bld, Second Avenue



“Before” photograph of 115 and 117 South Chatham Avenue



“After” photograph of 115 and 117 South Chatham Avenue



CHAPTER 3: DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

The creation of the downtown master plan utilized the land use analysis information, the community survey, and feedback from the community and master plan committee to recommend proposed land and building use changes, town ordinance revisions or additions, and aesthetic improvements.

The downtown master plan map is attached in the Appendix, Map E. A draft plan was presented by the consultant to the committee on October 2, 2012. Feedback and recommendations from the committee were incorporated into the plan and a list of projects were determined for concept plan design development as demonstration projects.

DISTRICTS OF DOWNTOWN

Existing land use patterns were discovered when looking at the current land uses in the downtown focus area, Appendix, Map B. The Downtown Districts Map, Appendix, Map D, indicates 4 areas of downtown with common land uses within those areas. This map highlights the existing retail or service venues in downtown and gives each “district” an identity. This can help to facilitate economic development in downtown by providing prospective business owners or developers with an idea of the types of establishments and culture in downtown. This map can be used along with the downtown master plan to facilitate and guide land and property use decisions. The map can also be utilized as a marketing tool for visitor information and guides to orient new-comers to the diversity of services and retail downtown has to offer.

PROMOTING APPEARANCE AND AESTHETICS DOWNTOWN

The 2013 Downtown Master Plan builds on active initiatives, programs, events, and passion of the community. With such an active arts community and a diversity of cultures in downtown, two programs could be initiated to build momentum for the implementation of demonstration projects. The City of Portland, OR, has a program called City Repair. It is a local non-profit where community residents paint neighborhood street intersections and transform them into public art. This program is successful based on the passion and interest of the communities. The City of Portland passed an ordinance in 2001, to facilitate and manage the intersection art.

Another program that Siler City could immediately implement is producing art using vacant storefront windows as the canvas. Temporary installations can be constructed from materials such as plywood which serves as the canvass. Art or sculpture could also be hung or placed in the empty windows. Existing downtown business owners should encourage this program as it engages the street, provides visual interest, depicts a sense of community pride, and raises awareness to retail or commercial needs in downtown. This program could be a partnership between the Town of Siler

CHAPTER 3

DISTRICTS OF DOWNTOWN

PROMOTING APPEARANCE AND AESTHETICS DOWNTOWN

PROPOSED DOWNTOWN LAND USE



Portland’s City Repair program



Street painting art festival – engages kids and adults



Example temporary storefront

City, the building owner, and Siler City's established artist's community. It would be a great way to showcase the passion and talent for art in the community, and an inexpensive way to beautify the pedestrian environment. Residents and visitors will see pride in the town and interest will be generated to participate or sponsor a storefront.

PROPOSED DOWNTOWN LAND USE

An inventory and analysis of the downtown land use, properties, buildings and demographics revealed patterns and established needs and priorities. With the communities feedback and the master plan committee's guidance the downtown master plan was created. The plan recommends proposed land uses and action items for strategic improvements in 9 categories. These categories are:

Streetscape Improvements

Façade Improvements / Property Improvements

Proposed Commercial Buildings (new construction or upfit of existing buildings)

Proposed Restaurant or Entertainment Venues

Proposed Open Space or Park land

Proposed Mixed Use Buildings (new construction)

Proposed Intersection Improvements / Repair

Proposed Residential (new construction or upfit of existing buildings)

Proposed Civic Building



Art Gallery in the Arts District



| Legend | |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| | Siler City Overpass |
| | Project Boundary |
| | Clear |
| | Rebuild |
| | Proposed Property Improvements |
| | Commercial |
| | Restaurant/Entertainment |
| | Building |
| | Mixed Use Residential/Commercial |
| | Open Green Space |
| | Intersection Repair |
| | Residential |
| | City |
| | Rebuild |
| | Parking |

Siler City Downtown Master Plan

Map E: Downtown Master Plan
Siler City, NC October 10, 2012
Revised February 2013





CHAPTER 4: DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Using the overall list of action items from the downtown master plan, the master plan committee recommended four demonstration projects for the consultants to provide detailed concepts plans.

The demonstration projects are as follows:

- Open Space improvements to the area along the 100 block of North Birch Avenue and the railroad right of way.
- Façade improvements for the Budd Tire Building on the 200 block of Chatham Avenue
- Streetscape improvements for the 200 block of North Second Avenue
- Proposed mixed use building at Beaver Street and South Chatham Avenue

The four concept plans are detailed and described in the next chapter. The plans, maps, and additional photo manipulations are attached in the appendix.

There are also additional demonstration projects described as well. They follow the 4 demonstration project action items recommended in the downtown master plan. These are projects which could be implemented in the future as downtown Siler City grows and develops. These improvements are an evolving process and as economic development is spurred by the implementation of the demonstration projects, it will facilitate additional projects, funding, and strategies.

CHAPTER 4

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

ADDITIONAL DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS AND IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS



DEMONSTRATION PROJECT - 100 Block of North Birch Avenue

The Birch Avenue Rail Walk includes the land adjacent to the Norfolk Southern rail line along Birch Avenue, between Raleigh Street and Second Street. The area is currently vacant and was once used for surface parking and storage for lumber. There is existing on-street parking on both sides of Birch Avenue.

The concept includes public Right-of-Way streetscape improvements for Birch Avenue including the installation of a sidewalk and street trees. Internal to the site, a walking path with wooden observation platforms and landscape material would provide a pleasant experience and allow users to view downtown and the rail corridor. The walking path is proposed to be 6' wide, and can be a paved surface such as concrete or asphalt, or can be a natural surface such as fine compacted gravel. The path is handicap accessible and improvements are recommended to accommodate persons with disabilities at the existing corners and sidewalk connections. The wooden platforms would be at the same elevation as the walking path and provide a sitting area with benches to view the trains and downtown streetscape. The platforms would cantilever slightly as the natural grade extends to the rail line. Art is recommended to be installed that is reflective of Siler City's industrial, agriculture, transportation, or cultural heritage. The plant material is recommended to include native and drought tolerant species, and provide seasonal interest. The street trees would provide shade and pedestrian scale. This area could be actively maintained by a garden club, community group, boy/girlscout troop, school group, etc, to establish community involvement and pride. Community gathering / public spaces such as these provide pockets of activity that are often the catalyst for other development such as retail spaces, restaurants, and entertainment venues.

This concept can be repeated south along Birch Avenue and the rail corridor to Bray Park and the Loves Creek greenway, providing a pedestrian connection consistent with Siler City's greenway plan. This concept also promotes public health by providing transportation alternatives and a recreation venue for all ages. An agreement between the Town of Siler City (property owner,) and Norfolk Southern Railroad (Right-of-Way owner,) would need to be coordinated.



Existing conditions along Birch Avenue



Existing condition of property



BIRCH AVENUE RAIL WALK

SILER CITY, NORTH CAROLINA

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT - 118 E. Third Street

This building is located at 118 E. Third Street and faces North Chatham Avenue. The building is currently used as tire storage and is a metal shell building. This plan does not recommend the current use to change. The adjacent building, also located on the property is brick with large windows facing North Chatham Avenue. Other adjacent buildings and buildings located across the street are also constructed with brick. The improvements recommended would create a consistent brick facade along this section of Chatham Avenue and provide improved scale and architectural details.



Existing condition of Budd Tire Building

The façade improvement recommended for this metal building is to construct a brick or similar face for the building to provide a more consistent streetscape appearance along the street. Other possible materials that could be used for the improvement would be stucco or EIFS. Stucco is a non-insulating material, similar to concrete, that consists of an aggregate, binder, and water. EIFS, or exterior insulation finishing system, is a lightweight synthetic wall cladding that includes foam plastic insulation and a thin synthetic coating. These are suggested options with a range of materials and costs to provide a vision for facade improvement. Another option would be to create a mural on the face of the building. This would utilize the current non-brick surface in a positive way and highlight this area in the arts district. A design competition for the mural would be one way to solicit ideas and generate interest and excitement for the project. The specifics of how the façade improvement is constructed and the material specification would need further detail and recommendations from an architectural engineer.



Existing condition of Budd Tire Building



Budd Tire Building

Proposed Facade Improvements





Siler City Downtown Master Plan

Draft Master Plan
Siler City, NC / December 2012



CLARION

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT - Streetscape Improvements 200 N. Second Avenue

This block of Second Avenue is bounded by Third Street to the north and Second Street to the south. The pavement cross-section is currently two vehicle travel lanes heading north, two vehicle travel lanes heading south, with a turn lane dividing the two travel lanes. This wide Right-of-Way and number of travel lanes was designed when Hwy 421 needed to handle a heavy volume of traffic prior to the construction of the bypass.

Current conditions include an existing 4'-5' sidewalk on both sides of Second Avenue with a 2' grass strip separating the travel lane of the street from the sidewalk along most properties. There are a number of businesses located in this section of Second Avenue with many undefined curb cuts and access points to the businesses and parking lots. The existing condition of these curb cuts leads to an ambiguous and unsafe pedestrian environment. The wide cross section of the street leads to high traffic speeds which also leads the pedestrian to feel unsafe. The intersections lack cross walk striping and accommodations for curb cuts for persons with disabilities.

The proposed improvements include restriping the lanes to accommodate on-street parking and bike lanes. The striping allows for one travel lane in each direction with the middle turn lane maintained. Bike lanes are proposed adjacent to the on-street parking and travel lanes and curb bump-outs are proposed to provide a separation zone for the parking and bike lanes at intersections. The lane reduction and addition of bike lanes is consistent with the 2011 Chatham County Bicycle Plan. Many of the curb cut driveway access points are recommended to be scaled back to accommodate two way traffic (24' wide) and truck traffic.

To encourage pedestrian scale and safety, the curb radii at the major intersections have been extended to provide a pedestrian and bicycle safety zone area and to accommodate ramps for persons with disabilities. The sidewalk area can be improved by widening the sidewalk to remove the 2' grass strip by using this area for sidewalk. Street trees are recommended to be planted at the back of curb of the street using decorative tree grates and signage for existing or proposed buildings is encouraged to be projecting identification signage that is oriented perpendicular to the building, facing the pedestrian.

Streetscape improvements such as these have been shown to increase public health. When transportation alternatives such as biking and walking are provided in a safe pedestrian manner, these alternatives can influence activity levels of communities. Providing these alternatives in a safe pedestrian zone provides the option of walking or biking and can influence commercial development.

This concept for the 200 block of N Second Avenue can be continued south through the downtown study area to south of Beaver Avenue as Second Avenue transitions out of the central business district. Additional streetscape, roadway, and pedestrian safety improvements will be proposed throughout downtown and Siler City when the NC DOT Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan is initiated in March of 2013.

The concept plan for the streetscape improvements and additional photo manipulations are included on the next page.



Existing condition of Second Avenue at Chatham Monument Company, Inc



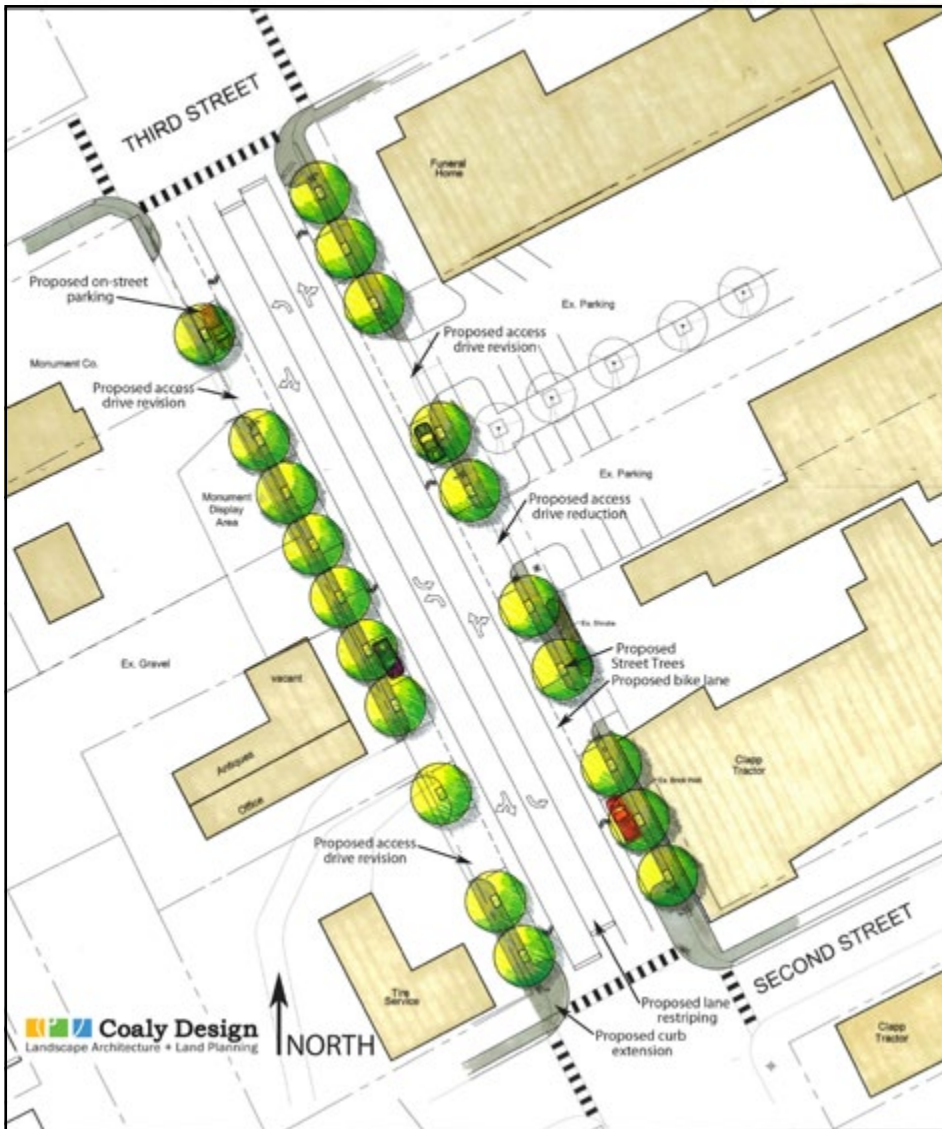
Proposed improvements at Chatham Monument Company, Inc



Existing condition of Second Avenue at Clapp Brothers Tractor



Proposed improvements at Clapp Brothers Tractor



PROPOSED STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS



Existing condition of Second Avenue at Second Street



Proposed improvements of Second Avenue at Second Street



Existing condition looking south on Second Avenue



Proposed improvements - street trees, on-street parking, and bike lanes

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT -Mixed Use Building

This site located at the corner of Beaver Street and South Chatham Avenue was formerly the home to the First United Methodist Church. The structure caught fire in the late 1980s / early 1990s, and the current use of this site is vacant. A 2-story mixed use building is proposed at the corner of Beaver Street and South Chatham Avenue to provide retail, office, restaurant, or entertainment space on the ground floor with residential units on the second floor. This concept of a mixed use infill building in downtown can be applied to other vacant lots such as the corner of Third Street and North Chatham Avenue adjacent to the North Carolina Arts Incubator.

The building would be designed to reflect the architectural details common throughout downtown Siler City. The scale and height of the building would also be compatible and be accommodating to pedestrians. The mixture of uses within the building would facilitate an active downtown by providing retail and commercial space and the addition of residential units in downtown. In concept, the building would include 6 ground floor commercial spaces and approximately 5-8 residential units on the second floor. Parking, in addition to on-street parking, would be accommodated in the rear of the building with alley access using Scott Alley. This lot and alley access would also accommodate service and delivery vehicles. A pedestrian connection is indicated to connect Scott Alley with Chatham Avenue and to provide a public green space. This pedestrian connection also provides an aesthetic improvement to the streetscape along Chatham Avenue while providing a pocket of public gathering space. This green space could include a walking path and benches or accommodate an outdoor eating area if a restaurant tenant occupies the building. The public use of this space will actively engage the street.

Streetscape improvements are also recommended along both Chatham Avenue and Beaver Street as part of the redevelopment of the lot. A new ordinance to allow sidewalk encroachments should be facilitated to allow for outdoor dining for the proposed mixed use buildings, restaurants, and entertainment venues.



PROPOSED MIXED USE BUILDING



Existing condition along Beaver Street



Existing condition along Chatham Avenue



Proposed Mixed Use Building concept-
Beaver Street



Proposed Mixed Use Building concept-
Chatham Avenue

ADDITIONAL DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

These are a sampling of strategic initiatives suggested in this master plan to help provide examples of how aesthetic improvements, code changes, and visioning can help be a catalyst for downtown economic redevelopment.

They include:

- Town Code of Ordinance Revisions / Additions
- Park Land / Open Space Land
- Civic Use Downtown
- Historic Preservation

Ordinance Revisions

An example of an ordinance revision to improve downtown aesthetics would be to create a Downtown District Zone or Downtown Overlay District. The downtown district could guide development and ensure design compatibility. The district could influence outdoor storage regulation, property appearance, building use, architectural features, shared parking, streetscape improvements, and open space.

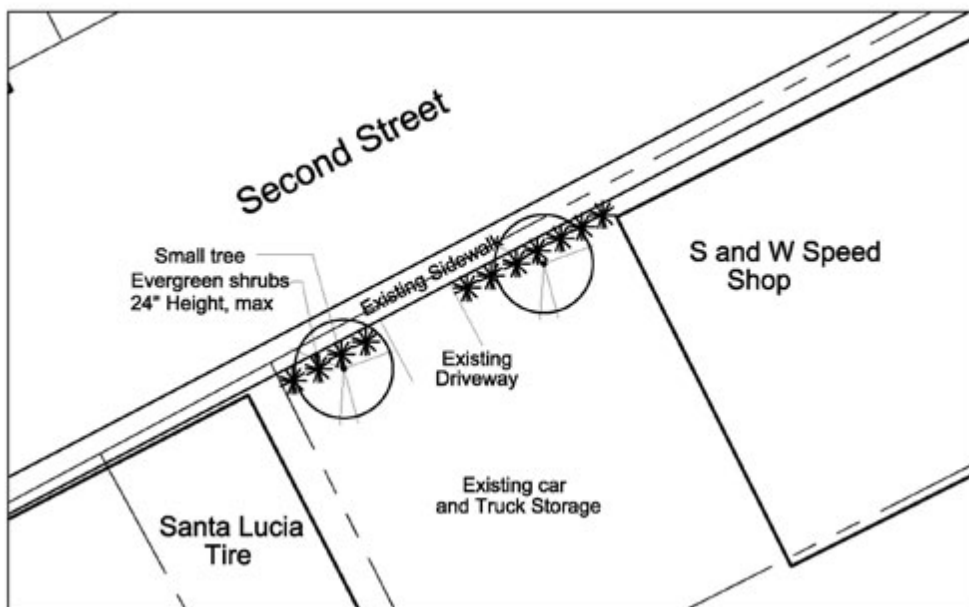
For example, the land behind the Hotel Hadley and Santa Lucia Tire (listed as under-utilized) is used for parking and storage of vehicles visible from Second Street and Second Avenue. An ordinance revision could require this area to be improved by designing a new parking layout, incorporating trees, and by defining drive isles and pedestrian accommodations. This would add value to the property and improve the aesthetics and safety for patrons. Incorporating streetscape and landscape improvements where the driveway to this property accesses Second Street would aesthetically improve the property. Evergreen shrubs would help to screen the property from the public Right-of-Way and provide a natural edge to the sidewalk. Small trees and the evergreen shrubs would be a low cost way to improve the pedestrian experience and safety in this area but not limit access or use.



Existing condition along Second Street



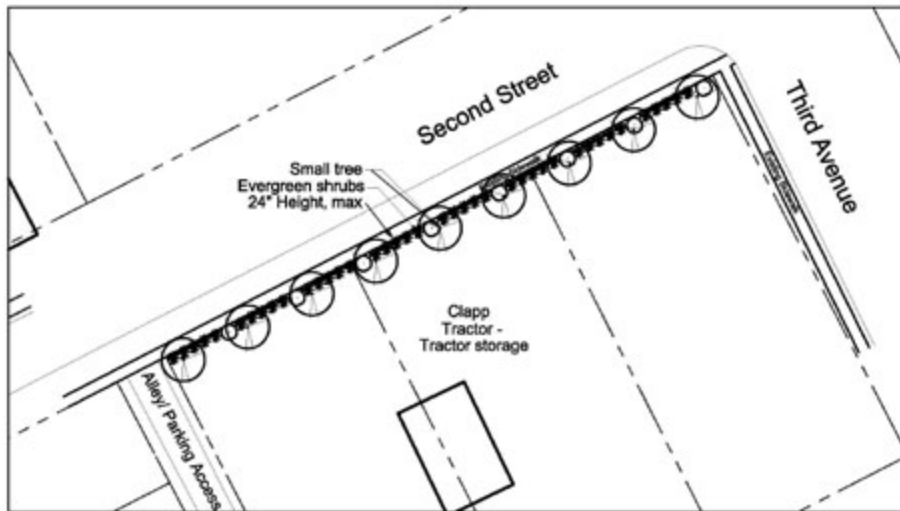
Existing condition along Second Avenue



PROPERTY AND STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS - SECOND STREET

These same ordinance revision example could also can facilitate improvements on Second Street at the Clapp Tractor property at the corner of Second Street and Third Avenue. The use is not proposed to be changed for this site. The additional of small trees and evergreen shrubs would add character to the pedestrian environment and provide a screening buffer to the property. The access to this property would remain open along the alley along Second Street.

The same streetscape improvement could also be implemented along the property frontage on Third Avenue.



PROPERTY AND STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS - SECOND STREET

Building Renovation and Infill / Development of Open Space

The Under-Utilized Properties and Buildings map Appendix Map C, highlights buildings that are vacant or have an under utilized use. The downtown master plan recommends uses for these buildings such as mixed use, commercial, or restaurant/entertainment uses. For example, the vacant building adjacent to the NC Arts Incubator building across from the Budd Tire Building on North Chatham Avenue, could be used as a mixed use building. The ground floor space could be used for retail, office space, or a restaurant, and the second floor space for residential. This building would be a great venue to initiate the temporary storefront art program.

The vacant land behind this building has the potential for a mixed use infill building that could also add to the diversity of uses in downtown. A large part of this site is vacant and borders Third Street, the railroad, and Second Street, where the existing Saturday farmer's market is located. This site could be designed as a public open space and additional programming of the site could be facilitated by a community group or club. The programming and maintenance of a public space is important to facilitate its use and continued success.



Existing condition along Second Street



Existing condition along Second Street



North Chatham Avenue

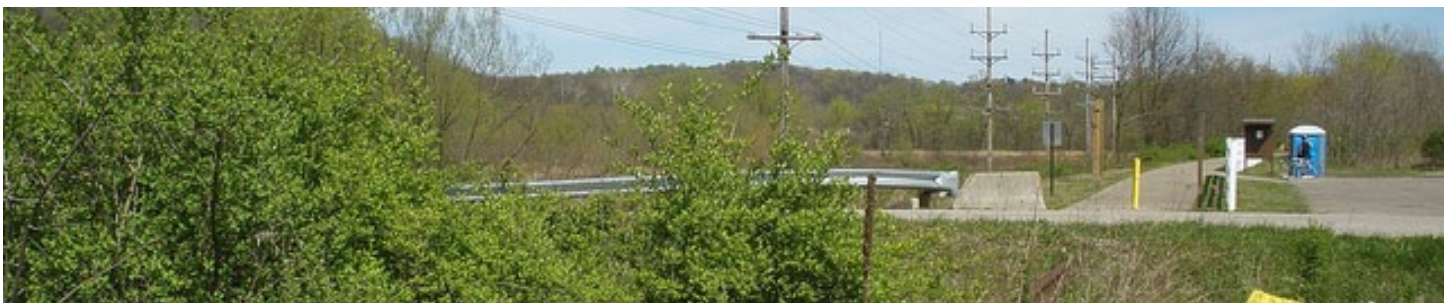


Photo courtesy of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

SILER CITY, NORTH CAROLINA

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

Civic Use Downtown

The vacant residential building at the corner of Third Avenue and Second Street, (229 E. Second Street), could be renovated into a community building or other gathering place.

The property is 1.28 acres and the building is 3,200 square feet. There is a demand for a civic space in downtown that would provide a central location to house meetings, community entertainment events, and private events. The section of the property that fronts Third Street could be designed into an outdoor garden to also host events and be used as a public park or open space. This property would require rezoning to allow for a civic use.



229 E. Second Street

The STEP Economic Development Strategic Plan and Implementation Strategy identified Strategy 4 as: Siler City as a Retirement Destination. As a community or civic use example, this property could be renovated into a Senior Community Center for the town. Programs such as computer skills, yoga, art, or recreation activities could be offered at such a facility to boost this Strategy.

Historic Preservation

The historic Teague and Lambe Building located at 121 North Chatham Avenue are also vacant and under-utilized. The Teague and Lambe Building was constructed in 1904 where Mr. Teague and Mr. Lambe operated a general merchandise store. In the early part of the 20th Century, the building was used for a men's clothing store and a department store. The Lambe Building was once a theater, the Gem Theater, established in 1913. The buildings were most recently used as an apparel store. The architectural features on the building's facade include recessed panels, a corbelled cornice, and a stone parapet proclaiming the names of the buildings. Facade improvements could include window and transom treatments that elevate the historic character of the building. In the near future, this building would also be a great venue to initiate a temporary storefront art program.



121 North Chatham Avenue

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS AND IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

The current STEP downtown master plan committee must work with staff to continue to prioritize options and pursue monies for implementation as downtown Siler City grows. As developments occur or are planned in downtown, projects may change or shift depending on the location and type of development. This master plan should serve as a guide to influence development.

The STEP downtown master plan committee has compiled a list of 28 potential projects for future implementation. These projects are:

Downtown Master Plan Project List

1. Identify Funding Sources – General Fund, Fundraising, and Grants
2. Support a Public Private Partnership
3. Downtown Façade/Streetscape Improvement Program
4. Recruit Food Businesses and Destination Retail Businesses
5. Ordinance revisions – Overlay district and developer incentives
6. Downtown wayfinding signs
7. Open Space/Park/Gathering Place – Birch Avenue and Railroad

8. Open Space/Park/Gathering Place/Farmers Market – Second Street and Railroad
9. Encourage businesses to remain open after 6:00 pm
10. Intersection improvement – Chatham Avenue and Third Street
11. Streetscape improvements – Chatham Avenue
12. Streetscape improvements – Second Avenue
13. Art Displays in Storefront Windows and Public Art Program
14. Streetscape improvements – Raleigh Street
15. Streetscape improvements – Third Street
16. Open Space/Park/Gathering Place – Northwest Corner of South Second Avenue and Beaver Street
17. Streetscape improvements – Birch Avenue
18. Streetscape improvements – Beaver Street
19. Open Space/Park/Gathering Place – Southwest Corner of East Third Street and North Third Avenue
20. Streetscape improvements – Second Street
21. Civic Use/Space – 229 East Second Street
22. Streetscape improvements – Third Avenue
23. Ordinance revisions – Urban design guidelines, Streetscape guidelines, Historic Preservation Commission
24. Funding – Municipal Service District, Bond Referenda, Payment in lieu of providing streetscape or public open space as part of all construction
25. Relocate overhead utilities from the street right-of-way
26. Ordinance revisions – Require developer to provide streetscape or public open space as part of the all construction, Appearance Commission, Outdoor storage
27. Under-utilized buildings and renovation – 121 North Chatham Avenue, 129 South Second Avenue, 130 North Chatham Avenue, 131 South Birch Avenue, 138 North Chatham Avenue, 211 North Second Avenue, 231 North Chatham Avenue
28. Infill mixed use development – former Methodist Church site, former Siler City Mills site, former Boling Chair Site

* Coordinate the streetscape improvements with the Town's Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan.

In the immediate future, Town staff and the committee (along with a consultant in some cases) must work towards the implementation of this master plan and the recommended action items by:

- Setting priorities regarding which demonstration projects in this report are most compelling and/or time-sensitive and/or most feasible
- List and provide detail (including costs) for desired land acquisition and facility construction based on the priorities set
- Explore and identify all reasonable funding sources

There are currently many on-going projects and committee-driven programs that are improving the aesthetics of downtown Siler City and complement this plan.

These on-going programs include the STEP facade improvement grant program, ordinance revisions such as a live/work/production zoning category, an outdoor storage ordinance, as well as the Town / DOT funded Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan for Siler City.

Future projects and programs which can influence implementation strategies and possible funding sources for the implementation of the master plan are:

Projects / Programs / Incentives:

- Creation of a Business Improvement District (or similar association) to guide and provide tax benefits to the businesses within this district
- Pursue grants to help fund the development and construction of the public projects
- Creation of an Appearance Commission to supplement the Planning Board and provide design review and quality control
- Consider amendments to the Town Ordinance to complement the master plan such as urban design guidelines, parking requirement reductions, streetscape guidelines, and a requirement to provide public art
- Provide incentives for developers to build in the downtown area by allowing for density or location bonuses
- Contact DOT to aid in the implementation of the streetscape recommendations (DOT's Complete Streets Program)
- Require new or renovated construction in downtown to provide streetscape or public open space as part of the project
- Hire consultants on a project basis to design, permit, bid, and construct the projects

Special importance should be placed on projects such as Urban Design Guidelines and Ordinance revisions / additions. These two elements are important to pursue and will be important to initiate the implementation of the vision the master plan provides.

Funding Sources / Generation / Partnerships

Much of the improvements recommended in the master plan can come from private property owners and developers of new or renovation construction. The incentives listed above can help guide the development. For public projects such as a downtown park, a civic or community building, streetscape, or the rail line landscape improvements, possible funding can be generated from the following:

- Locally generated general revenues or bond referenda
- Payments-in-lieu generated by development activity
- Donations from individuals and organizations (e.g., fund-raising for a greenway segment, small park or open space, or facade improvement)
- Partnerships with Chatham Hospital for open space or greenways (target projects which improve public health)
- Grant funds – DOT or State programs (streetscape improvements)

Siler City's downtown currently contains a rich and diverse inventory of businesses and services that enhance the quality of life and benefits for residents and visitors. Downtown is highly valued, as demonstrated by the community surveys generated during the preparation of this Downtown Master Plan. The opportunities for expansion and growth of downtown to further provide opportunities for residents such as restaurant, entertainment, open space, and civic services exist. The passion of the community also exists and this social economic development is important to have in a diverse and cultural downtown.

Implementation of these strategies and priority projects will maintain Siler City's downtown master plan vision statement of *creating a vibrant downtown that honors traditions and encourages innovation, enabling residents, businesses, and tourism to flourish. Siler City – Delightfully Unexpected.*