

# **PLACEMAKING AND REVITALIZATION IN MONROE WARD**

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PROFESSIONAL PLAN  
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MASTER OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING PROGRAM  
L. DOUGLAS WILDER SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

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# Placemaking and Revitalization in Monroe Ward

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*\*cover photos of Bryant Park, NYC and East Clay Street, Richmond, Virginia by author 2015*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This planning document was completed to fulfill the requirements of Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) Master of Urban and Regional Planning program. It was developed under the guidance of VCU faculty and the City of Richmond, Virginia's Department of Planning and Development Review. This plan is concerned with revitalization and placemaking efforts for the Monroe Ward Neighborhood in Downtown Richmond. The history of the area, in addition to current demographic, economic, and physical characteristics, was examined to form the goals, objectives and strategies needed to compile a complete vision and planning trajectory. Analyzing the area over time, from inception to modern day, provided several insights that formed the basis of the plan and its goals.

Monroe Ward is one of several historic neighborhoods comprising the City of Richmond's Downtown. Today, the area displays characteristics of central city decay and is, in many ways, under-utilized despite being centrally located in the downtown area. Analysis of the area indicates central city decay coupled with a long-standing lack of area-specific planning, which has encouraged the abundance of surface parking and structure-less lots in the area. Recent increases to the population base due to VCU's nearby student body should be utilized while simultaneously fostering a neighborhood identity to encourage more than transient residents to the area. This plan recommends strategically locating new civic spaces as a means of encouraging infill development, downtown circulation and mixed-use density. The body of this planning document is divided

Map 1 – Satellite View of Monroe Ward Boundary



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data, October 2015.



into two main parts – an existing conditions analysis and the resulting vision and planning recommendations. Both parts contain a set of subdivided topical sections, summarized in the following outline to provide an overview, analysis findings and plan recommendations

## Part I : Existing Conditions and Analysis

- ▶ History of Monroe Ward in Downtown Richmond
- ▶ Planning and development efforts in Monroe Ward
- ▶ Master plan guidelines

The section topics above cover how decades of history and planning efforts have informed the current state of the neighborhood. Central city decay in the Mid-twentieth century was spurred by the increasing popularity of the personal automobile as well as the parking and interstate infrastructure that came along with it. These advancements transformed the neighborhood from a wealthy, urban, residential area into a predominantly auto-centric office park with a historic district designation. Focused planning efforts in the area have been virtually non-existent, with the current form and character of the area being shaped by a somewhat broad “urban center” classification and permissive zoning guidelines geared toward general business use.

- ▶ Neighborhood geography, zoning and character

An examination of Monroe Ward’s geography, zoning and overall character seeks to explain how these elements encourage business development and

Figure 1 - Historic Jefferson Hotel Yesterday and Today



Source: Historic Jefferson Hotel photo courtesy of the Valentine Museum. Present-day photo by author October 2015.

patronage. The defined neighborhood is less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a square mile in total land area and is centrally located in Richmond's downtown near the James River. A B-4 (Central Business District) zoning designation occupies the most area, though B-3 (General Business) and M-1 (Light Industrial) are also prominent. Several overlay districts offering financial incentives for locating in the area are also present, such as Enterprise Zone III and the Arts District near Broad Street. Remaining historic buildings and an abundance of surface parking lots have come to characterize the neighborhood – both remnants of history and change over a period of more than 100 years. Transportation surfaces (alleys, bridges, driveways, medians, overpasses, surface lots and sidewalks) account for 42.24% of the land area for the defined neighborhood, while surface lots alone account for 14.29%. Gaps in streetscape continuity and the prevalence of office and institutional building fronts that do not engage the pedestrian have also become mainstays of the neighborhood's characterization.

#### ► Neighborhood accessibility and interconnectivity

This section of the analysis investigates the degree to which Monroe Ward's desirability results from its location and accessibility. In the context of both the city of Richmond and its downtown, this neighborhood is centrally located and has ample roadway access on three sides in the form of principal arterials and an expressway. The street pattern is a grid with predominantly one-way traffic that is most intense during the daily commute to and from offices in the Central Office neighborhood of Downtown. One-way traffic patterns were intended as a convenience for

suburban commuters; in achieving this convenience, commuter routes that do not cater to business or pedestrians and bicycle traffic were also created. Bike lanes have not been incorporated into Monroe Ward's streets, and the few commercial businesses along the main east-west routes are mostly trying to attract patrons driving one-way to or from Downtown attractions. Finally, the ample street, surface and deck parking available in the neighborhood is attractive for high-density office and residential uses, but is not conducive to attracting interaction and visitation of the area when outside of a personal vehicle.

#### ► Residential and commercial presence

Analysis of recent demographic and industry information outlines the makeup of residential and commercial entities and gives insight to demand in the area. Between 2000 and 2010, population increases and commercial investments have taken place both in Downtown Richmond as a whole and in Monroe Ward. Downtown Richmond has seen billions invested in residential, office and commercial in the past 15 years with residential spaces averaging higher rents than their counterparts outside of Downtown. Monroe Ward has held steady for several decades regarding the development of additional office and commercial space, with increased multifamily residential development to accommodate the growing college-aged demographic dominating the residential makeup of the area. In addition to the development of these multi-family housing units, Monroe Ward has been a site for major institutional buildings by VCU within the past 10 years.

### ► Community input

In order to garner insight into the developmental preferences of the general public, an online survey was designed and distributed through neighborhood advocacy groups. The survey was solicited online via the Storefront for Community Design and the Downtown Richmond Residents Association – organizations that have an audience concerned with Monroe Ward. Posed questions were meant to both qualify the respondents' relationships with Downtown and Monroe Ward and to gather specific opinion-based information pertaining to desired future development in the area. Over 85% of respondents reside within city limits, while less than 10% live in Monroe Ward itself. The survey resulted with a majority response in the affirmative for additional public park space, and further affirmative responses for additional owner-occupied residences, mixed residential and commercial and shopping/retail development in Monroe Ward.

## Part II : Vision and plan

### ► Vision

Monroe Ward is a neighborhood in Downtown Richmond with a growing population, an advantageous central location and unmet potential. New public spaces and attractions tailored to the area will extend daily life in Monroe Ward into the evenings and weekends. Residents, visitors and those working in this reimagined neighborhood will enjoy the benefits of a walkable and compact urban area that offers a variety of living, working, shopping and recreational options within a

small footprint. Density and activity in Downtown Richmond will emanate from Monroe Ward and support the adopted *Riverfront Plan* (2012) by increasing the neighborhood audiences surrounding one of the city's most valuable attractions – the James River.

### ► The plan

The impetus for analyzing Monroe Ward in a planning context was a perceived conflict between its potential and its current physical state and degree of social activity. In examining the neighborhood, with attention to its physical and functional role in the greater downtown area, past and present characteristic data revealed focal points for potential developmental improvements. Goals and objectives for the neighborhood have been derived from this analysis to address design, land-use and connectivity in Monroe Ward. Revitalization is meant to occur through attracting infill development, social activity and more varied forms of use and traffic to the area. Three goals have been outlined, each with its own objectives and implementation strategies, as a means of making progress toward revitalization and placemaking in Monroe Ward. These goals, objectives and strategies are displayed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1 - Goals, Objectives, and Strategies Listing**

<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Promote neighborhood design continuity</b>
Objective 1.1	Improve existing streetscape
Strategy 1.1.1	Implement form-based code set for the neighborhood
Strategy 1.1.2	Discourage surface parking
Objective 1.2	Encourage infill of structure-less parcels
Strategy 1.2.1	Create demand for infill development
Strategy 1.2.2	Introduce strategic neighborhood attraction(s)
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Attract a variety of development</b>
Objective 2.1	Accommodate variety of residents/visitors/patrons
Strategy 2.1.1	Make Monroe Ward a destination
Strategy 2.1.2	Create a multi-purpose civic space
Strategy 2.1.3	Create pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor/district
Objective 2.2	Create an identity for the neighborhood
Strategy 2.2.1	Adopt a specific neighborhood plan to guide use and form
Strategy 2.2.2	Brand and market Monroe Ward
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Leverage Monroe Ward for downtown interconnectivity</b>
Objective 3.1	Capitalize on Monroe Ward's central location
Strategy 3.1.1	Bike/ pedestrian-oriented corridors between neighborhoods
Strategy 3.1.2	Connect new public space to VCU and the riverfront area
Objective 3.2	Support balanced streetscape exposure
Strategy 3.2.1	Targeted conversions to two-way traffic patterns
Strategy 3.2.2	Narrow lanes of traffic to ensure minimum speeds

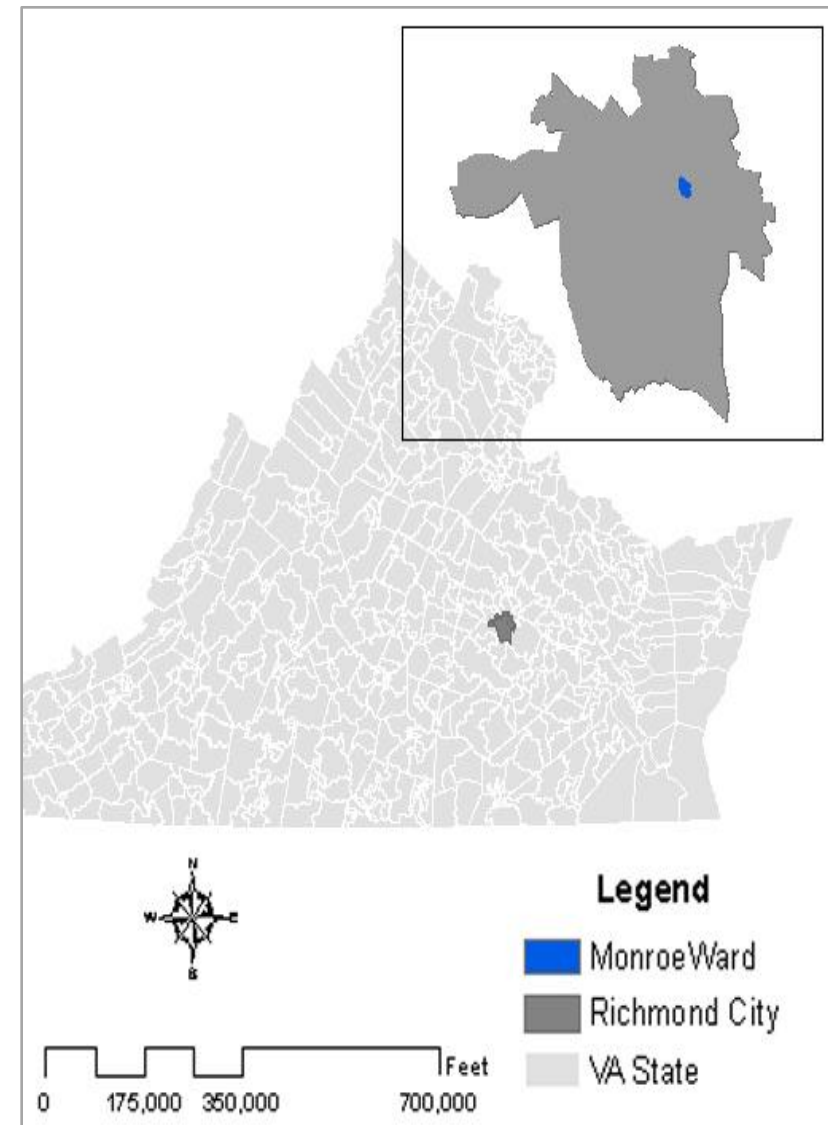
## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose and client**

The purpose of this plan is to revitalize the Monroe Ward neighborhood by encouraging infilling of structure-less parcels and attracting additional commercial and residential density. A once sought-after residential neighborhood in Downtown Richmond, this area is, at a glance, rife with open lots and surface parking. Through placemaking and revitalization efforts, the ultimate goal is to provide a platform in the neighborhood that will encourage a denser, more active and pedestrian-friendly neighborhood. The central location and current under-utilization of the Monroe Ward neighborhood provides an opportunity to increase circulation and patronage throughout all of Downtown Richmond with special consideration for the invaluable Riverfront District. Appropriate developmental efforts in Monroe Ward will serve to foster needed infill, extended terms of residency and mixed-use programming in the study area and those neighborhoods immediately surrounding it. Additionally, presenting Monroe Ward as a destination is meant to attract residents from the greater metropolitan area and beyond.

Due to its central location downtown, this area in particular can serve as a connective link between the Riverfront, VCU's Monroe Park Campus, the Broad Street Corridor and the City Center. Long-term, this plan will create a dedicated pathway from VCU to Downtown and Riverfront areas that is designed and programmed to provide a permanent, prolonged and varied form of interaction with the city. Monroe Ward stands to benefit

Map 2 - Monroe Ward in the City of Richmond



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data, October 2015.



from a long overdue address of its unfocused existing land uses. An appropriate new form or use can help reverse existing urban decay and potentially create a buffer between the Downtown Expressway and any future neighborhood developments.

This project was completed for the City of Richmond's Department of Planning and Development Review with direct oversight from the department director, Mark A. Olinger. The DPDR was chosen as client due to the integrated and connective nature of this proposal, and to ensure that the vision set forth in the master plan and any recent planning efforts were used to inform the project. The study area itself was not under scrutiny or being considered by the city for planning efforts during the completion of this project. This plan was also informed by local neighborhood advocacy groups including the Downtown Richmond Residents Association, Venture Richmond and Storefront Community Design via direct contact and, in some cases, online surveying of their contact lists.

In conjunction with several local boards, commissions, programs and initiatives, the Department of Planning and Development Review works to guide the built environment of the city through permitting, inspections, code compliance, preservation and short- and long-term plan oversight. The department has a stated mission to:

*Act on the genuine belief that we care about creating and maintaining the best quality of life for Richmond's citizens, businesses, and visitors. To that end, we provide excellent*

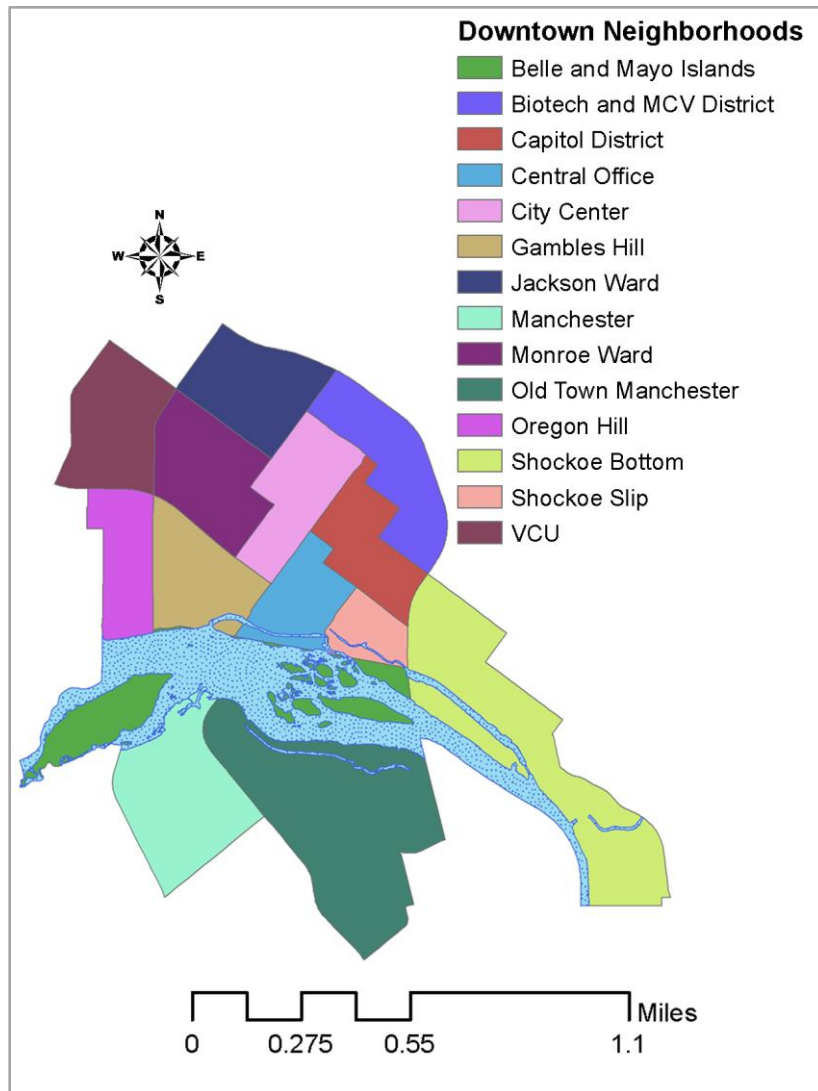
*planning and enforcement services to enhance our city's built and natural environments.*

The keystone-planning document for the city is the *Master Plan* (2001), which is required by law and must be reviewed once every five years. According to the City Charter, the *Plan* serves as a guide “for the physical development of the city to promote health, safety, morals, comfort, prosperity and general welfare”. In 1996, the city adopted its own mission statement as part of a new direction. This mission statement expressly communicates that the City of Richmond is to be a “world class city,” with emphasis on high-functioning superiority in governance, community and business. Additionally, the downtown area has its own master plan, which was adopted in 2009.

In outlining the visions and goals for the city, The 2001 *Master Plan* states, among other things, that Richmond will continue to be a city of healthy, safe, desirable and diverse neighborhoods. The proposal outlined for the Monroe Ward neighborhood in this planning document is meant to uphold the city's vision, while serving citizens, businesses, visitors and both the built and natural environments. Additional planning documents for neighboring areas include the *Monroe Park Plan* (2008), *Shockoe Bottom Plan* (1999), *Riverfront Plan* (2012), *VUU/Chamberlayne Neighborhood Plan* (2014), *Hull Street Corridor Revitalization Plan* (2013), and the prescribed guidelines for historic districts and urban design (2015).

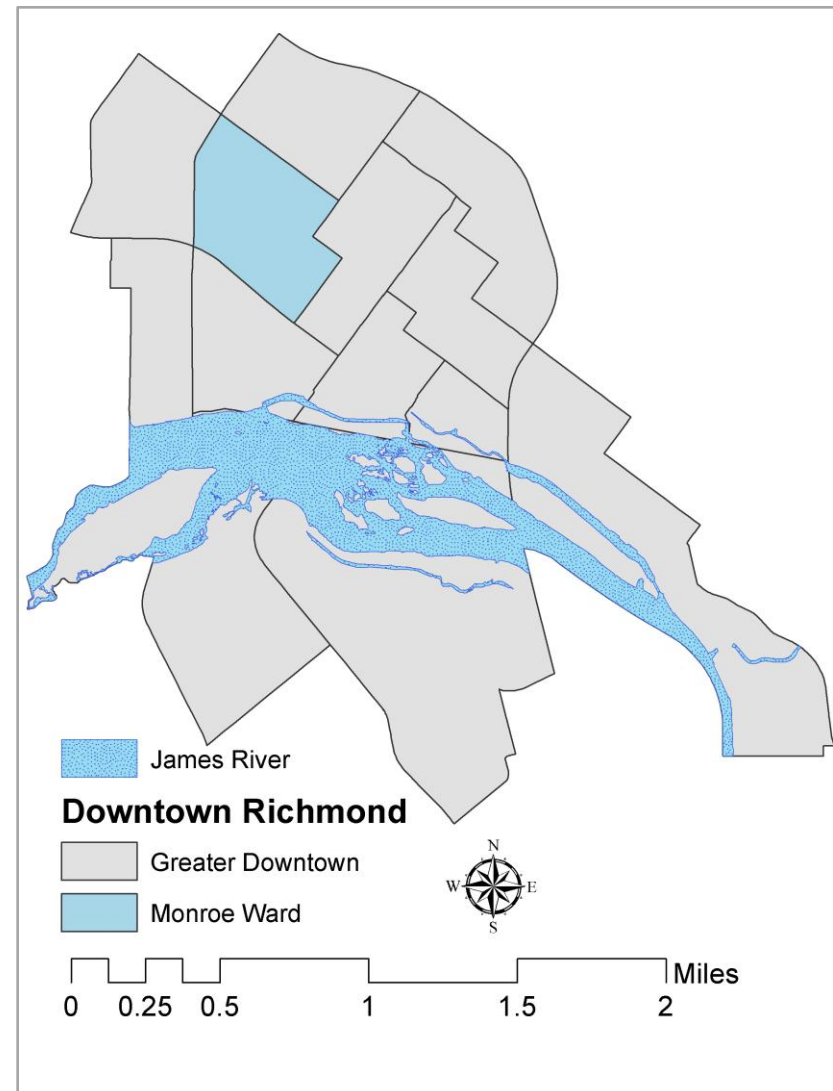


Map 3 - Downtown Richmond Neighborhoods



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data, October 2015.

Map 4 - Monroe Ward in Downtown Richmond



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data, October 2015.

## **Study area**

Monroe Ward is one part of an expansive and interconnected grouping of distinctive neighborhoods that make up Downtown Richmond (Map 3). For the most part, the names and character traits of each neighborhood help residents and visitors distinguish their differences and attractions. Downtown includes a portion of VCU's Monroe Park Campus and Oregon Hill on the west and stretches to Rocketts Landing on the east – with the Broad and Grace Street Corridor, Monroe and Jackson Wards, City Center, Capitol District, Central Office District, VCU MCV Campus, Shockoe Slip and Shockoe Bottom in between. Moving south, Downtown also includes island areas in the James River District as well as the Manchester neighborhood. Map 4 shows the relative location of Monroe Ward in downtown as it is situated centrally with its southeastern corner in close proximity to the James Riverfront area via the Gambles Hill neighborhood. These distinct neighborhoods that make up Downtown Richmond attract a variety of businesses and residents, though they function with varying levels of activity and success.

## **Information gathering and methodology**

Required information for this proposal is multifaceted. Appropriate placemaking and revitalization efforts require that this document address questions and issues concerning the perceived need and usefulness for the proposed plan, existing conditions in the study area, current land use and ownership, accessibility and traffic flow, public opinion, project costs and development phasing. This document describes the history and current state of the study area, it makes a compelling case for the need to develop in the neighborhood and it explains how

the intended location will connect VCU, Downtown, and the Riverfront. Additionally, it analyzes parking and traffic flow for cars, bikes and pedestrians, and considers potential costs and benefits – all while adhering to the principles of the master planning documents adopted by the City. Stakeholder input was garnered through online surveying with distribution assistance from downtown advocacy organizations including Richmond's Storefront for Community Design organization and The Downtown Richmond Resident's Association. The feasibility of this project relies on a clear explanation of the potential virtues of this proposal over a continuation of the status quo, and how well, and to what degree, the plan accounts for and mitigates any major and minor obstacles.

This plan is based on rational comprehensive planning theory spanning several planning domains, and is meant to encourage neighborhood advocacy, placemaking and revitalization through planning efforts aimed at increased density, walkability and infill. This plan will be specific in describing how the area should function and look, with ample support for any land use suggestions put forth. It is an example of functional normative theory in that contents of the plan are based on how planning in this area should progress. Goals, strategies and implementation phasing all direct the plan, though outcomes are very much dependent on political climates, public perception and public participation. As stated above, the optimal solution for this placemaking and revitalization effort in Monroe Ward requires clear goals and objectives, study area research, commercial market and housing research, input from the public, SWOT analysis, explanation of design elements and implementation and phased scheduling.

Determining the need, scope and final forms of potential revitalization efforts in Monroe Ward will be based on several determining factors. Understanding the mechanisms behind the negative impact that central city decay has had on Monroe Ward may uncover modern methods for its repair. In addition to the visual assessment of the area as blighted with excessive structure-less lots and surface parking, comparative property value analysis will likely show benefits of introducing a new, functional use to the area that is rooted in placemaking, walkability, neighborhood identity and mixed-use infill. In addition, the input provided by neighborhood residents and business owners will help to illuminate their understanding of the negative aspects of the environment and which developmental solutions they would support.



## **PART I : EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS**

Figure 2 - 2<sup>nd</sup> and E. Franklin Streets looking East, circa 1897



Source: Courtesy of the Valentine Museum

### **History of Monroe Ward in Downtown**

*How has history informed the current state?*

Over the past 200 years Monroe Ward transformed from a scattering of dwellings in the early nineteenth century, to an elegant residential quarter in the late nineteenth century, to a commercial district by the mid-twentieth century (Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 1999) and finally to its current non-descript form and use. The neighborhood followed suit with many other urban areas in the U.S. that experienced decline due to suburban flight, and has yet to experience revitalization.

During its tenure as home to the wealthy and notable, the neighborhood generated row upon row of elaborate, period-style dwellings resulting in an inventory of two centuries worth of classical building types and styles (Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 1999). The surviving Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Federal, Neo-Classical, and Colonial Revival structures, along with the legacies of their former inhabitants, became the impetus for the Monroe Ward Historic District nomination in 1999. As was common in the mid-twentieth century, the city's public transportation gave way overwhelming popularity of the personal automobile and subsequent suburban sprawl, leading to the eventual construction of the Downtown Expressway in 1976. This major roadway acts as southern boundary for the entire neighborhood. These highway systems created boundaries and borders for the downtown area that have (with assistance from surface and garage parking) contributed to neighborhood decay and a proliferation of structure-less lots as seen in Appendix A. If not planned for or mitigated properly, downtown expressway construction is apt to destroy neighboring residential areas by creating undesirable borders.

In analyzing the pros and cons of 1956 National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, renown City Planner Jeff Speck states that these highway systems (like the ones constructed in Downtown Richmond) were "clearly bad for the central cities and it got even worse when the big-city mayors, desperate for jobs, amended the act to include an additional six thousand miles of inner-city expressways. These highways, most of which gutted minority neighborhoods, were never imagined in the original measure" (Speck, 2012). The author goes on

to correlate the prevalence of stagnant urban property values in the U.S. with municipal spending on highways and expressways.

In its 1997 nomination documents for historic district status, Monroe Ward is said to have been showing the effects of “center-city decay” as early as the second decade of the twentieth century, while prior to its nomination many buildings in the neighborhood were “swept away by the combined demands to service cars and to replace decayed homes with modern offices” (Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 1999). In short, the expressways removed public transportation, ushered in more cars and parking lots and worked overtime to give city residents easy access to suburban areas, moving jobs and residences away from the central city. For Monroe Ward, what remained was ample surface parking and parcels without structures – an unfortunate defining characteristic of much of the neighborhood to this day.

### **Planning and development efforts in Monroe Ward**

*How have past and recent development efforts informed the current state of the neighborhood?*

Monroe Ward itself has seen little in the way of official planning for its form and function as an individual neighborhood. It can be surmised that a lack of focused planning effort allowed the local zoning regulations and developers to dictate what has become the current state of the neighborhood. The area is included in the city’s Downtown Plan as a neighborhood but has yet to receive the dedicated attention that the Riverfront, VCU or Shockoe have seen in recent years.

One somewhat notable planning project from the 1980s near the study area was the 6<sup>th</sup> street Marketplace with its iconic Broad Street-spanning pedestrian bridge. This urban public space lasted a little over 20 years but ultimately failed and was incrementally shuttered. The iconic bridge was removed in 2003. Additionally, in 1997 the Historic Richmond Foundation worked with the Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture of London on an assessment of the neighborhood entitled “Rebuilding a Downtown Neighborhood”. This document illuminated the Ward’s past glory as an upscale residential neighborhood, recognized the central city decay brought on by the post-war suburban flight and interstate construction, and pointed out the lack of community organization. It also called for residential infill, allowances for new civic buildings, reductions of high-speed through traffic, encouraged use of the expressway and organized public spaces (Prince of Wales Architecture School, 1996).

In the early 2000s, VCU expanded its Monroe Park Campus across Belvidere and into the western side of Monroe Ward for the first time (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013). The multi-block addition to the engineering school and renowned Brand Center advertising school now anchor the south-western corner of Monroe Ward – but there are no firm plans for future VCU development in the area other than a feasibility study for a southern addition to the new engineering school. VCU has also erected more than one multi-story parking garage without first-floor commercial facility in Monroe Ward in the past 5 years. Recent demographic data analysis in this document indicates

that the majority of the neighborhood residents are likely to be VCU students.

Finally, the development taking place in several surrounding downtown neighborhoods is worth noting. Many nearby parts of Downtown have seen a resurgence in residential interest and in-migration in the past decade with several warehouse and historic building renovations taking place - including those on Tobacco Row in Shockoe, the John Marshall Hotel and Miller and Rhoads Condominiums in City Center and more recently the First National and Central National Bank buildings in the Central Office and City Center. A Downtown profile completed for the city by VCU found that over \$3 billion was invested in developmental projects between 2000 and 2010 (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013). Additionally, a nearby Riverfront Plan was adopted in 2012 and a Bus Rapid Transit system is planned for the City that will service the VCU, Broad Street and Rocketts Landing portions of the greater Downtown area in 2017. This BRT transit system is slated to operate within a half mile pedestrian-shed of the Monroe Ward neighborhood offering improved public transport to an area that is both primed for increased density and near the Riverfront amenities.

### **Master plan guidelines**

*How do official planning guidelines inform the development options?*

Monroe Ward is a product of guidelines that allow a variety of land uses intended to represent four different character distinctions – civic, general urban area, urban center, and urban core. Current uses include:

commercial, residential, governmental, industrial, institutional, mixed-use and office, with the resulting built environment displaying a lack of continuity in many places. Vision and character goals exist for Downtown Richmond as whole, but there is no specific vision for form and function of Monroe Ward.

The City of Richmond has both an adopted *Master Plan* (2001) and an adopted *Downtown Plan* (2009). The *Master Plan* describes Downtown Richmond as the largest business and employment area in the region with its own set of opportunities and complexities. It also points out that Richmond is one of the most rapidly growing metro areas on the East Coast in spite of the population decline in the central city that took place in the decades leading up to the 2001 *Master Plan* adoption. The visions and goals set forth in the plan pertain to standard topics such as improvements to, and the continued quest for: quality of housing, land uses and economic prosperity. The vision definition also states that Richmond will continue to be a city of neighborhoods with focus on its image, reputation and multi-modal transportation systems. Some of the strategies for achieving these goals include implementing short and long-term bus and rail systems, filling gaps in public park inventories, aggressively marketing the city's older neighborhoods as preferred living locations and focusing on gateway and image corridors.

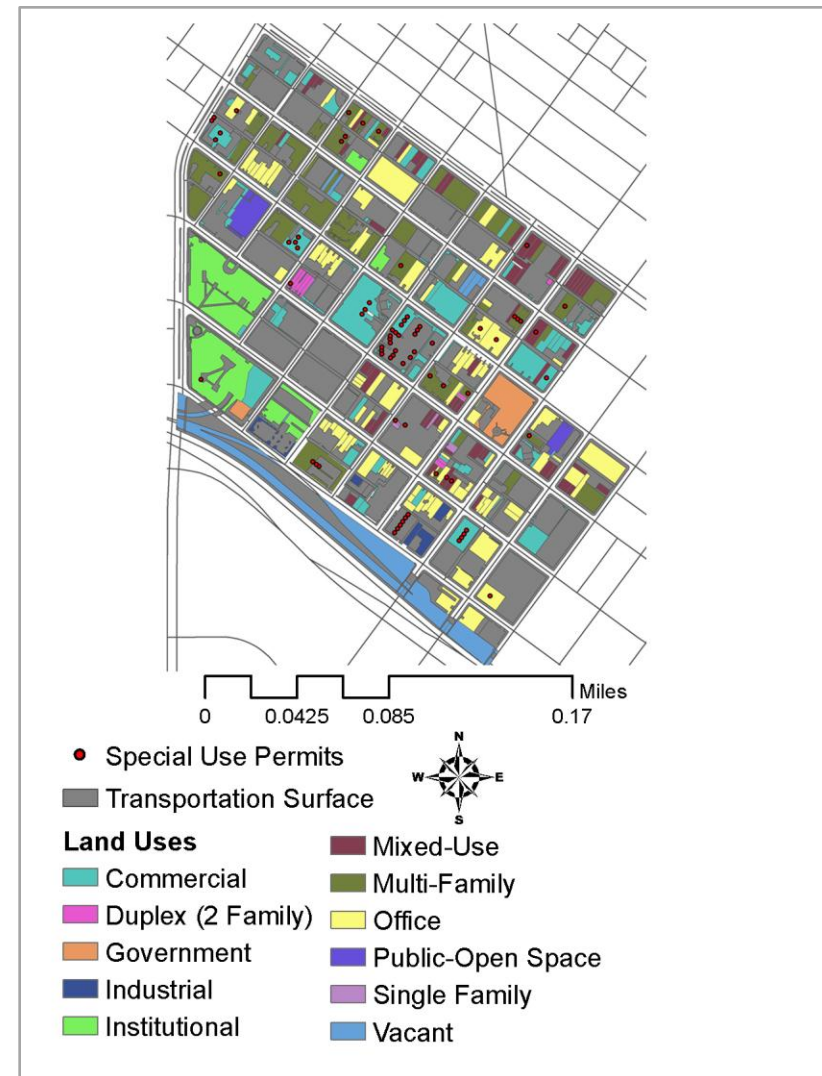
Land use planning in the city is divided into 8 separate district plans (downtown is separate) with zoning and land use patterns remaining mostly unchanged over the past 50 years. The plan indicates “minimal need for significant land use changes” (City of



Richmond, 2008). The plan also points out that the city is almost completely developed, that industry is generally located in one of four main areas (including parts of Downtown) and that residential is the most prominent land use type in the city. As illustrated in Appendix B Appendix B taken from The Downtown Plan (2009), similar uses throughout the entire city have grouped together by way of conventional zoning techniques creating “pods of single-use development.” As seen in Map 5, Monroe Ward itself displays a disjointed pattern of land uses and special use permits, with a proliferation of transportation surfaces scattered throughout.

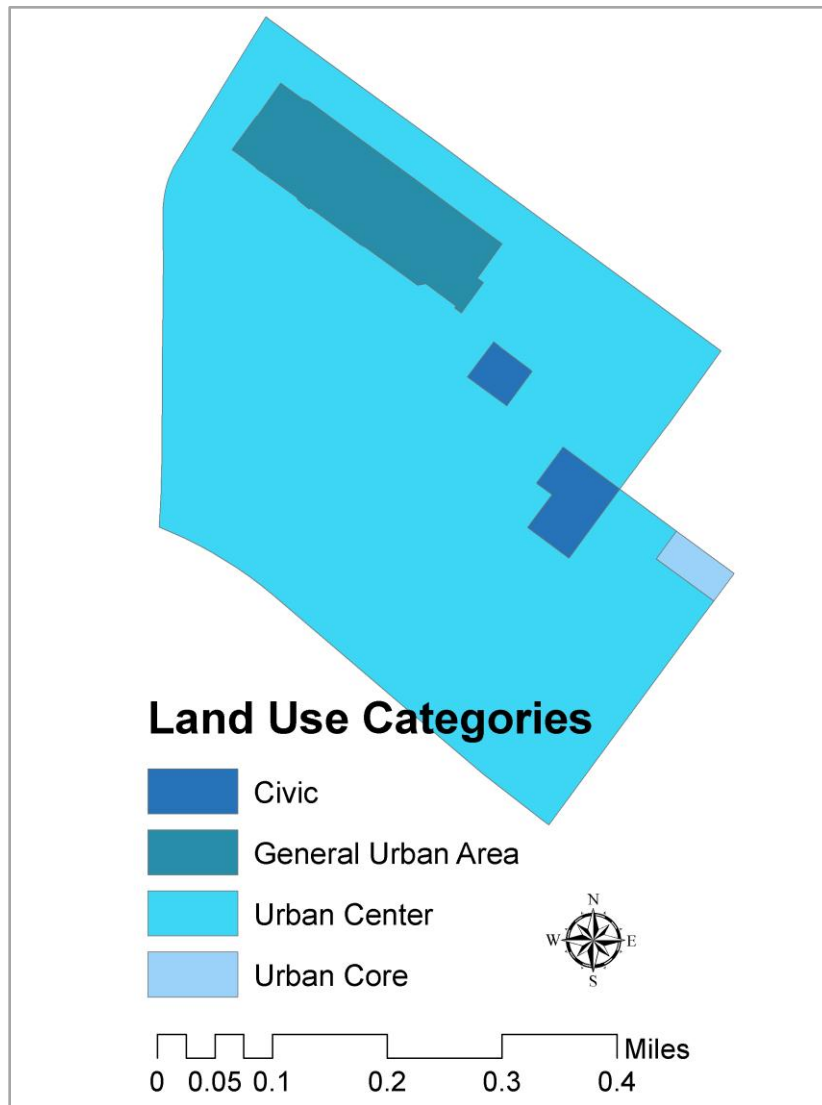


Map 5 - Monroe Ward Land Use Patterns



Source: City of Richmond GIS October Data 2015

Map 6 - Monroe Ward Land Use Category Overlay



Source: City of Richmond GIS October Data 2015

The *Downtown Plan* (2009) further describes and sub-divides Downtown Richmond into its distinct neighborhoods and lays out land use allowances and patterns. Downtown is separated into seven character areas that are meant to inform future development in the area, as seen in Appendix C taken from the plan. These character distinctions include civic, natural, general urban, urban center, urban core, municipal infrastructure and future development. Out of the four character areas present for the neighborhood, the majority of Monroe Ward is designated as urban center which is characterized by “higher-density, mixed-use development typically arranged on a fine-grained street network with wide sidewalks, regular tree planting and minimal set-backs” (City of Richmond, 2009). Map 6 illustrates how the *Downtown Plan* physically laid out its vision for characteristic development types in Monroe Ward.

It is important to note that the public participation portion of the *Downtown Plan* revealed that residents hoped for a “greener” downtown. This feedback resulted in the plan making considerations for additional downtown park spaces that are small, nearby to residents, clearly identifiable, pedestrian-oriented and easily accessible.

## Neighborhood geography, zoning and character

*How do geography, zoning and the current built environment encourage or discourage patronage and development?*

Monroe Ward has the advantages of an accessible and central location in the greater Downtown area and a variety of zoning allowances to encourage a mix of potential uses. Consequently, traffic flows freely through Monroe Ward from the West End of the city to Downtown and surface parking allowances are prevalent for accommodating density-prone uses such as multi-family residential, office, institutional and commercial. While liberal zoning offers development options, it does not expressly prohibit certain development types or patterns. As a result, the area currently displays a wide variety of uses with a lack of streetscape continuity or discernable identity.

As defined by the City of Richmond, Monroe Ward extends from Belvidere Street to 4<sup>th</sup> street, west to east and from Broad Street to the Downtown Expressway, north to south, with the exception of four blocks in its northeast corner. Map 7 shows Monroe Ward's boundaries within the context of the greater Downtown area. The neighborhood spans approximately forty city blocks within .21 square miles of land area. As previously stated, the area is characterized by an inset historic district, a mix of uses and a proliferation of surface parking throughout with several large pockets of surface parking. The neighborhood is generally flat though it does slope downward as it approaches the James River in the southeast corner at 4<sup>th</sup> and Canal streets. The total elevation range in Monroe Ward is 90 feet as displayed in Map 8.

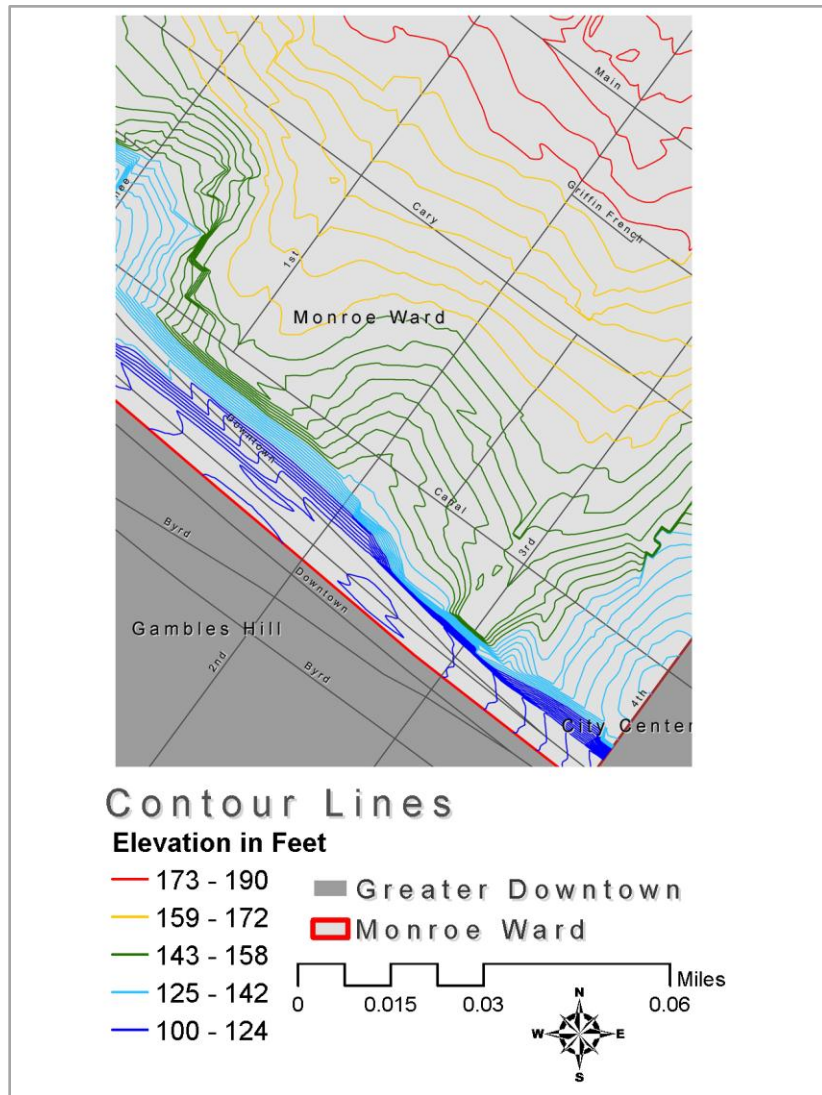
Map 7 - Monroe Ward Boundary Satellite Image



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015

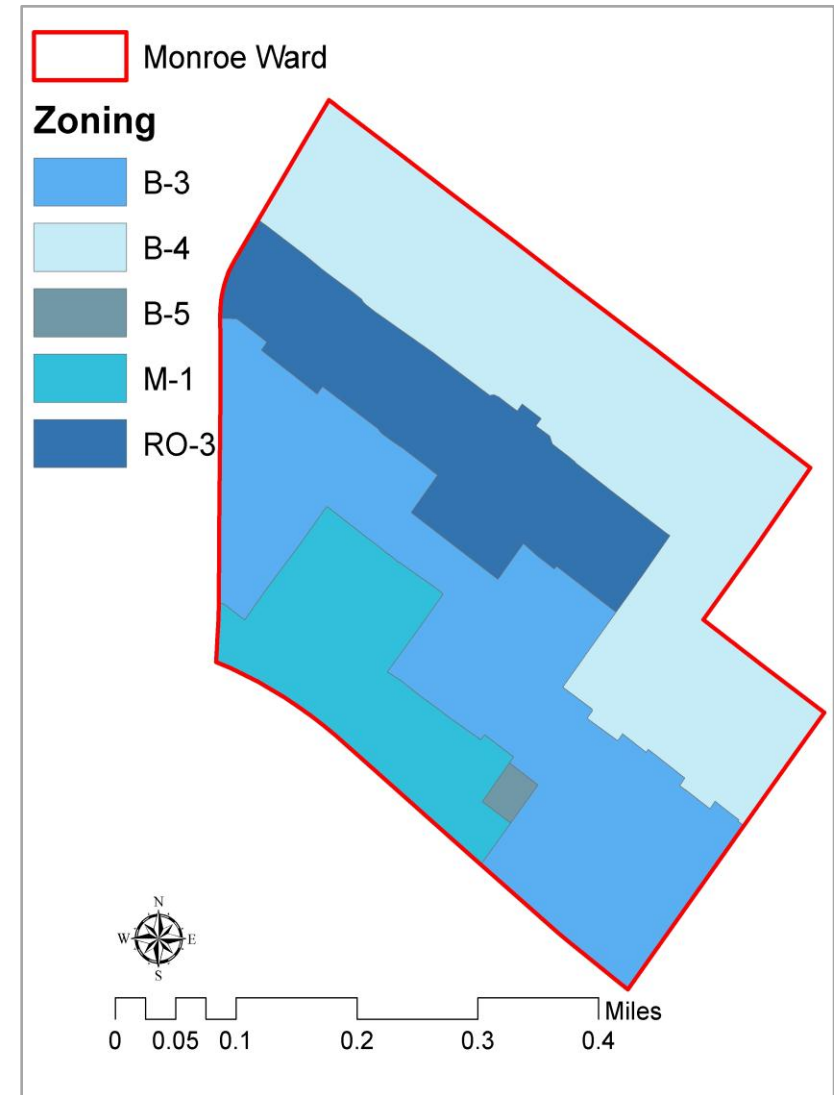


Map 8 - Southeast Corner Contour Map



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015

Map 9 - Monroe Ward Current Zoning Map



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015

Using data provided by the City, current zoning patterns are shown in Map 9. Monroe Ward shows B-4 (Central Business District) as the zoning type that covers the most area though B-3 (General Business), B-5 (Central Business District), M-1 (Light Industrial) and RO-3 (Residential Office) are all present, as are several permitted special uses. These existing zoning allowances relate to the *Downtown Plan*'s "urban center" characterization in that they allow for a wide variety of uses for commercial endeavors. The resulting land use occurrences for each neighborhood parcel can be seen in Appendix D and shows that commercial, multi-family and office-use types top the list with 170, 103 and 92 occurrences respectively according to current data from the City of Richmond.

Related to zoning and development, portions of the neighborhood lie in several of the city's special district designations including Enterprise Zone III, CARE, Broad Street Arts and Cultural District and the Arts Incentive District. In Richmond, Enterprise zones are concerned with providing financial incentives to qualified commercial and industrial users as an extension of the State of Virginia's Enterprise Zone Program. These incentives include, among others, real estate tax abatements, employment assistance grants and developmental fee rebates (City of Richmond Economic and Community Development). The Broad Street Arts and Cultural District, created through a community-city partnership in 2012, is meant to encourage economic development and revitalization in the designated area. Again, financial incentives including funding for marketing and promotion, expedited permitting and developmental fee rebates are offered for developing in

the area (City of Richmond Economic Development Authority). A portion of the Jackson Ward Commercial Area Revitalization Effort District (CARE) also overlaps Monroe Ward and similarly offers financial incentives for qualified rehabilitation efforts in the area. Appendix E shows several overlay districts for the neighborhood.

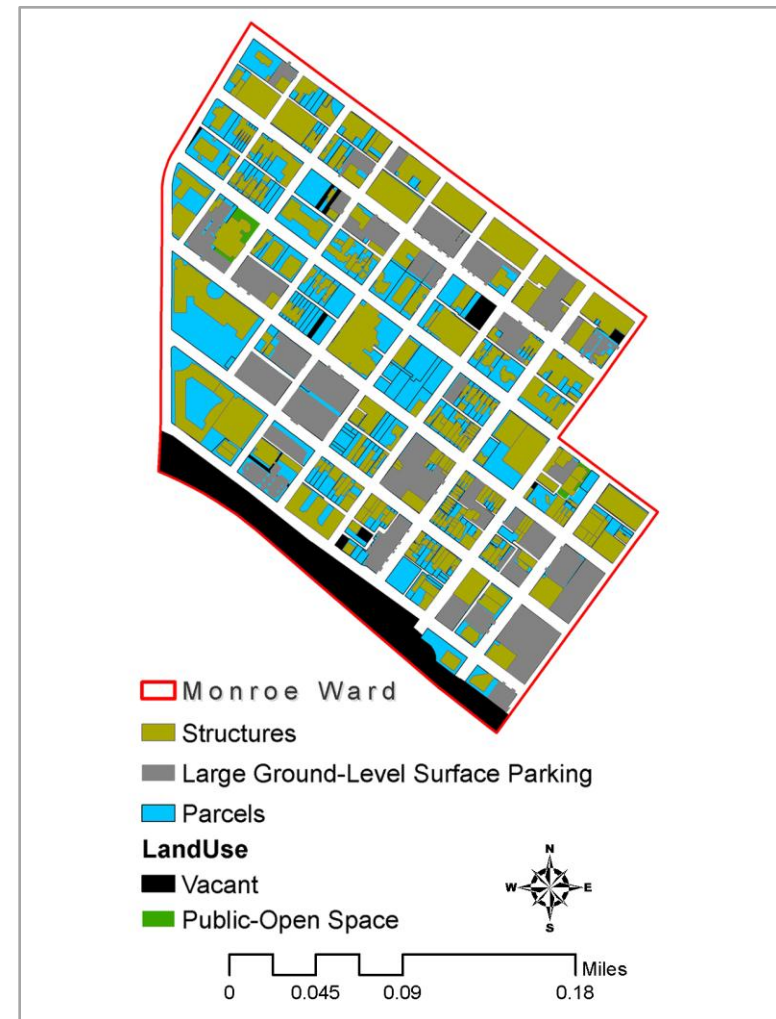
The current building stock in Monroe Ward varies substantially in age and appearance, diversifying the character of the neighborhood. Within this .21 square mile area are the remnants of its historic residential era, its mid-twentieth century commercial and office era and subsequent decline and the more recent investments in high-rise apartments and VCU buildings. Appendix F displays the myriad of building types and conditions present today with empty surface-parking lots more common than dilapidated or run-down structures. Map 10 displays the relationship of structures, parcels and large surface parking lots in the area, illustrating a lack of streetscape continuity with the exception of the northern Broad Street border. Most of the parcels (in blue) that do not contain a structure are also used for surface parking as opposed to being totally vacant lots.

Apartment buildings of various sizes makeup the bulk of the neighborhood's density and provide the majority of housing options with only four existing single-family home parcels. The existing housing unit configurations are convenient for students of the nearby VCU Monroe Park and MCV campuses. Residential rental structures range from 2 and 3 story single-family home conversions to the 18 floor high-rise Monroe Park Towers with its 187 units. As shown in Figure 3, street scale in Monroe Ward is occasionally characterized by:

partially tree-lined, two-lane, one-way streets with parking on both sides, wide sidewalks, minimal building setbacks and over-head traffic signals. This is consistent with the prescribed “urban center” physical characterizations set forth in the *Downtown Master Plan* as visualized in Figure 4 taken from said document, with exception to the absence of trees in certain areas.



Map 10 - Structures, Parcels and Parking in Monroe Ward



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015



Figure 3 - Typical Monroe Ward Streetscape at East Cary and First Streets



Source: Photo by author October 2015



Figure 4 – Aerial Streetscape Visualization for Monroe Ward



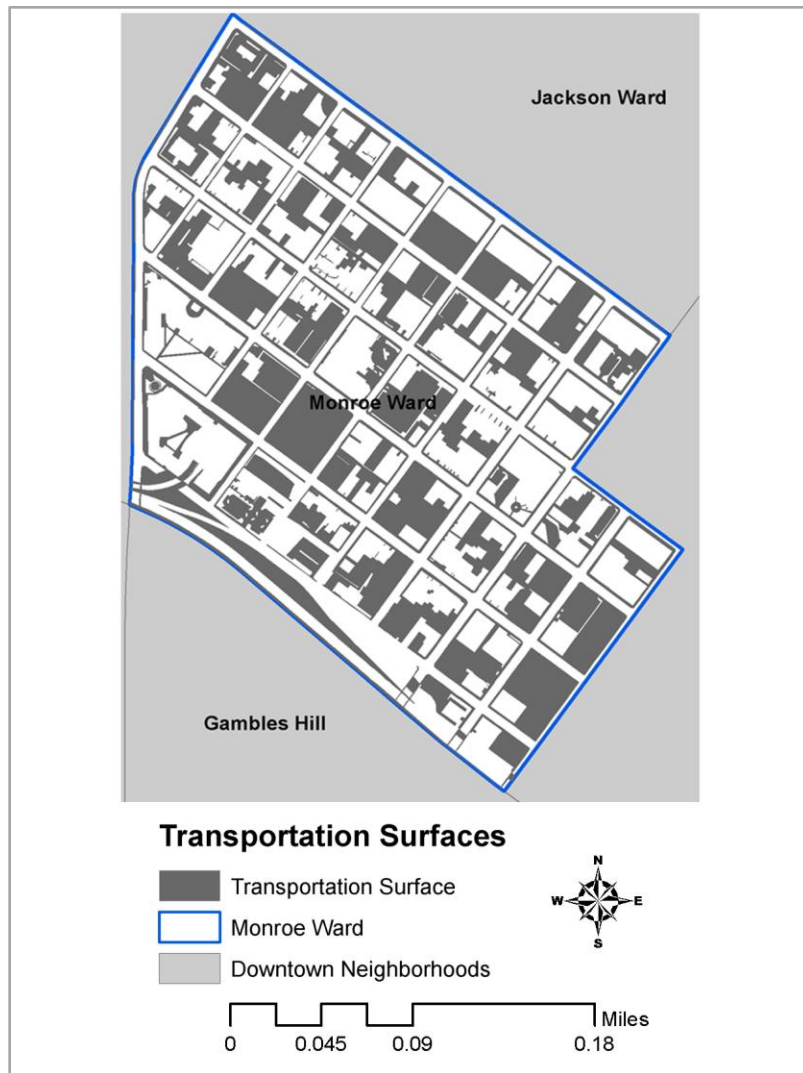
Source: City of Richmond Downtown Plan (2009)

Though Monroe Ward is home to many remaining historic structures, its most distinguishing characteristic from the air and at ground level is parking of all types, but especially surface lots. A satellite view of the area, seen previously in Map 7, is decidedly asphalt-colored with nearly 50% of the 15 blocks that border the Downtown Expressway between Main and Canal streets reserved for surface parking. In several cases all or nearly all of an entire city block is used for surface parking. The same Satellite imagery of the neighborhood

illustrates how the area is separated from adjacent areas by major roadways on three sides, providing ample access points. GIS data and mapping efforts show the transportation surfaces as they exist in Monroe Ward using the most recent shapefile data from the City of Richmond, as seen in Map 11.



Map 11 - Transportation Surfaces in Monroe Ward



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015

Transportation surfaces (alleys, bridges, driveways, medians, overpasses, surface lots and sidewalks) account for 42.24% of the land area for the neighborhood, while surface parking lots alone account for 14.29%, as seen in Map 12. For comparison, of the five Downtown neighborhoods with the most surface parking, Monroe Ward has the second-most land area devoted to surface parking behind the smaller Shockoe Slip district. Table 2 displays surface parking prevalence in the five Downtown neighborhoods with the greatest amounts of surface parking. Structures occupy 26% of Monroe Ward's .21 sq. mile area while open public space and vacant lots account for 8% of combined land area in the neighborhood with Library Park behind the Public Library on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street taking up only 11,078 sq. ft. Map 13 illustrates public park spaces in and immediately surrounding the Monroe Ward neighborhood.

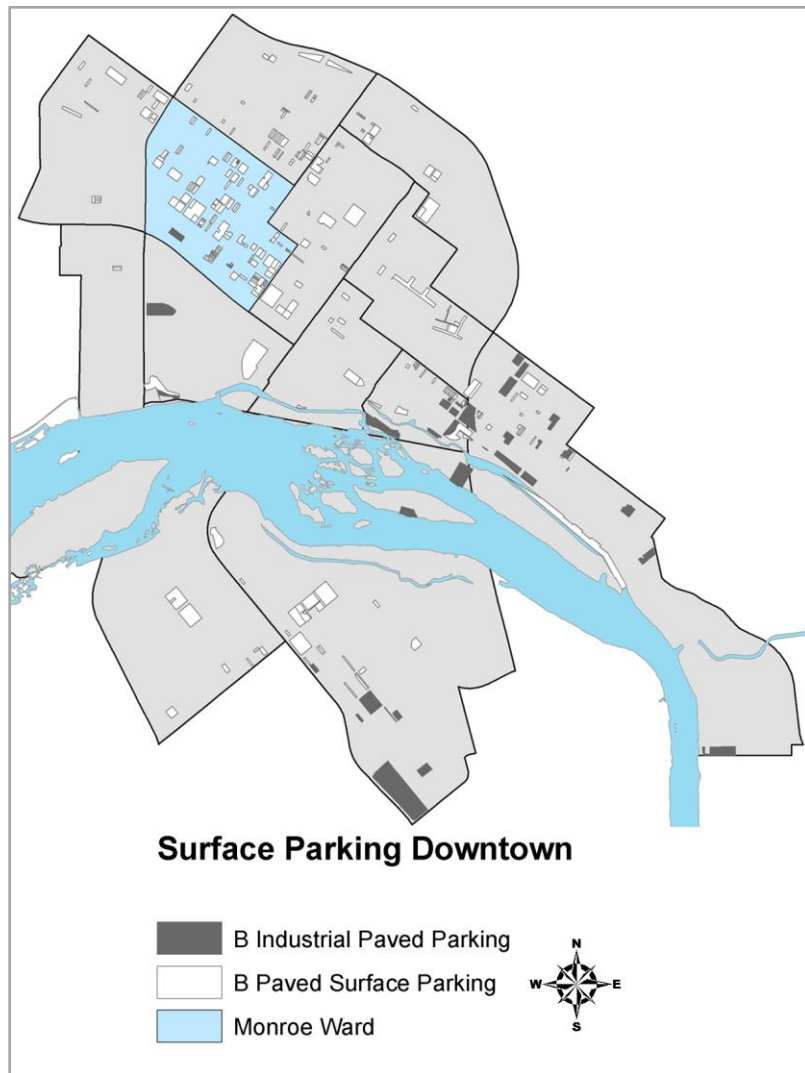
Table 2 - Downtown Neighborhood Surface Parking Prevalence

Neighborhood	Area (Sq. Mi.)	Surface Parking Area (%)
Shockoe Bottom	.53	7.55%
Manchester	.32	12.5%
Monroe Ward	.21	14.29%
City Center	.17	5.88%
Shockoe Slip	.08	25%

Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015

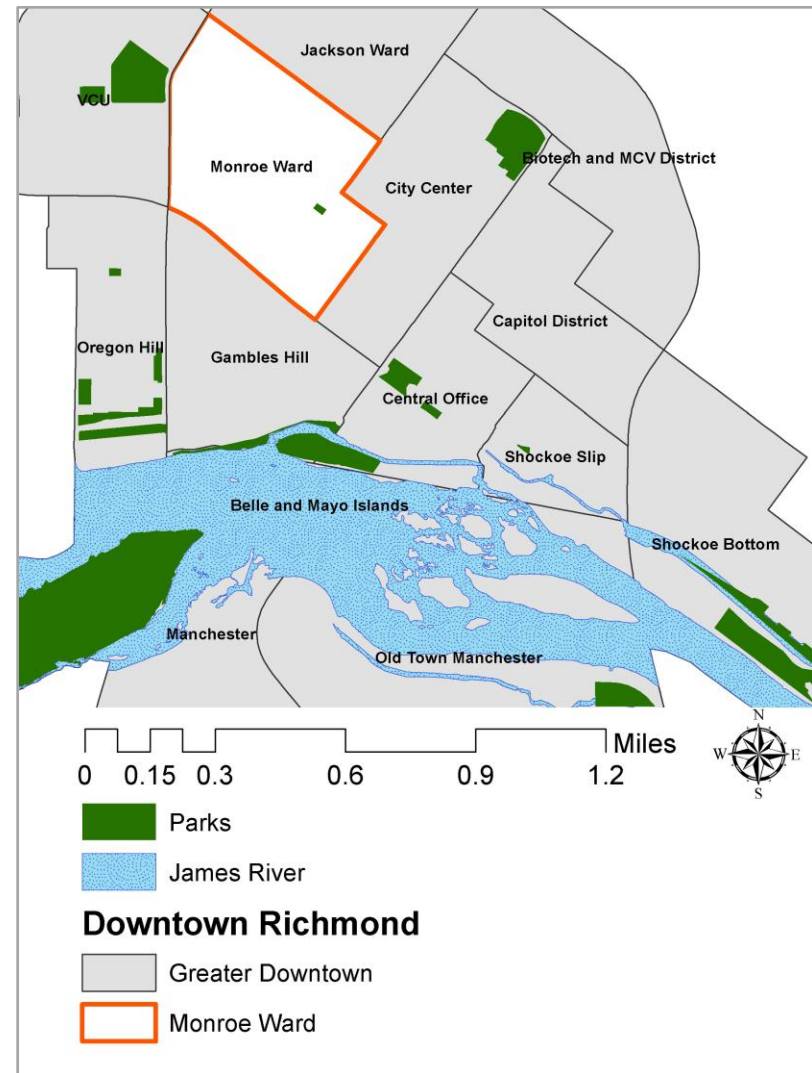


Map 12 - Surface Parking Areas in Downtown



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015

Map 13 Park Space in Monroe Ward and Downtown



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015

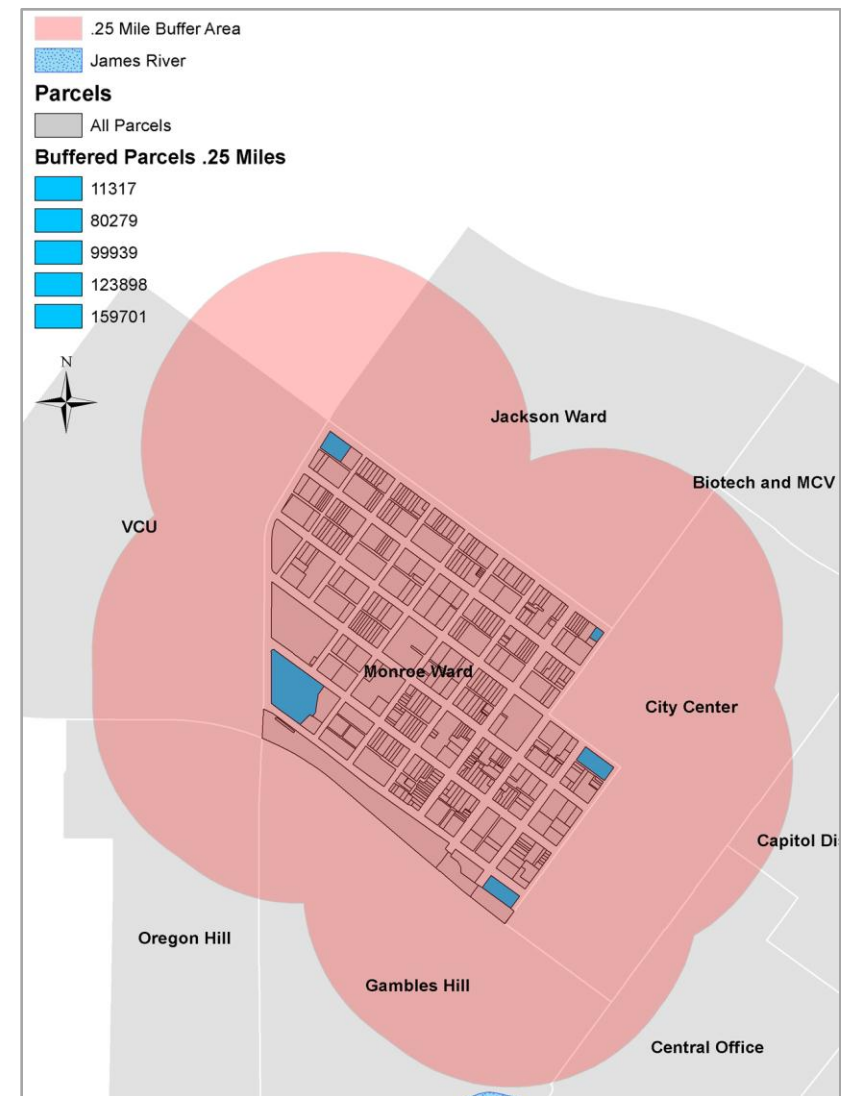
## Neighborhood accessibility and interconnectivity

*Are location and accessibility an asset for the neighborhood?*

Monroe Ward is central to the downtown area and therefore central to the city as a whole. Though not as geographically centered in Downtown as is the “Gateway” area a few blocks east in City Center, Monroe Ward provides a central location with a less urban core characterization. The southeastern corner of the neighborhood is roughly three blocks from the accessible riverfront area, while its other edges directly connect to VCU, Jackson Ward, City Center and Historic Broad Street, a walkable or bike-able distance for most of Downtown Richmond. Its location between Richmond’s western residential density and eastern urban center office buildings has positioned it as a thoroughfare for the daily home-to-work migration, though its proximity to VCU makes it walkable for the Monroe Park Campus student body. Map 14 displays a .25-mile buffering around the corners of Monroe Ward as an indication of nearby walkable distances.

The neighborhood (and much of Downtown) is known for its predominant one-way street grid pattern and, although Grace Street was converted for two-way traffic in 2015, this characteristic pattern remains an obstacle to properly experiencing the area. In his book *Walkable City*, noted city planner Jeff Speck explains how in an effort to get suburban workers in and out quickly, many downtowns were converted to one-way traffic patterns. This was meant to speed vehicles through the urban area by eliminating left turns across traffic. Side effects of this include faster traffic, destruction of the urban public realm, retail that thrives or dies dependent

Map 14 - 1/4 Mile Buffers Around Neighborhood Extents

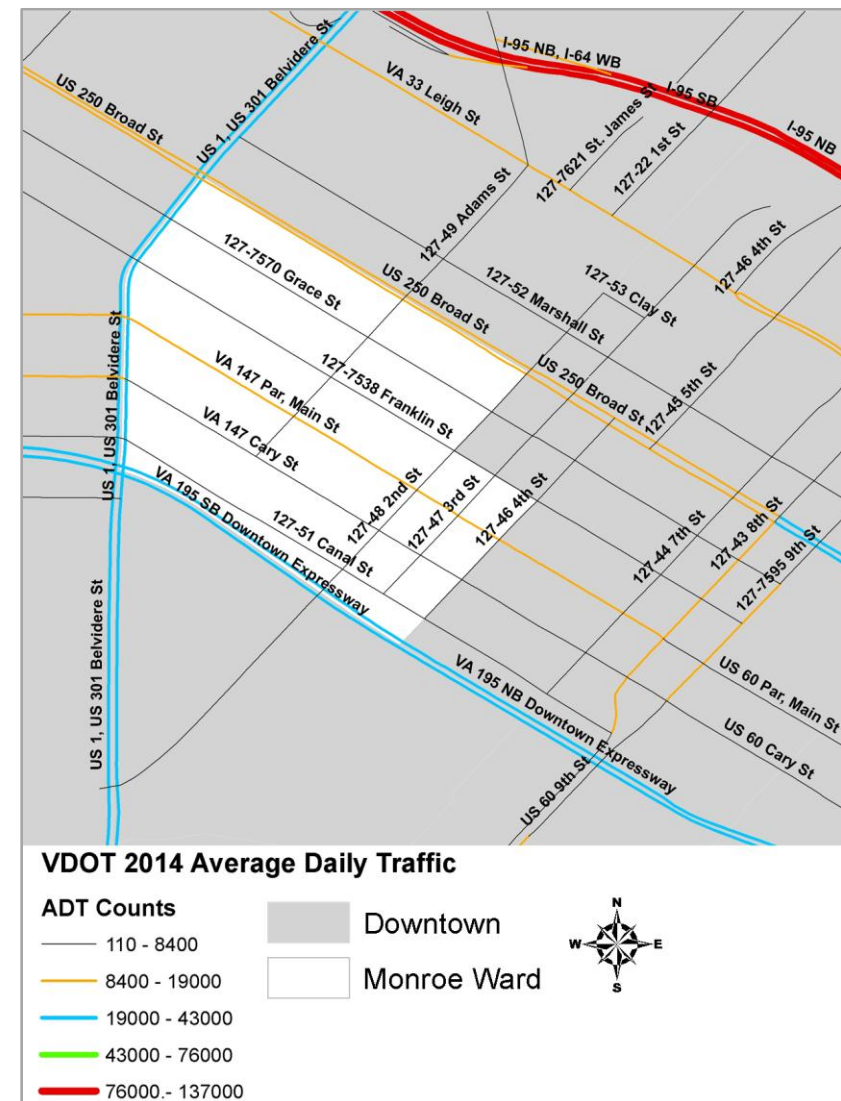


Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015

on its position in relation to the commuter route and ultimately “less reason to live downtown” (Speck, 2012). Consequently, traffic flows mostly east and west through Monroe Ward, in and out of the downtown area as many employees of the City Center choose city neighborhood streets over the expressway as their preferred method to and from work and the surrounding areas. This route avoids expressway tolls and perceived interstate traffic for those living nearby or those who take Cary Street east toward Downtown. Existing roadways in the neighborhood are predominantly classified as minor arterial, though North Adams Street and Canal Street are “major collectors”, Broad Street and Belvedere are “urban other principal arterial,” and the Downtown Expressway is classified as “other expressway.” These classifications determine the design elements of the roadways including speed and acceptable congestion levels.

The Virginia Department of Transportation provides daily traffic volume estimates for appropriate lengths of roadways within the city. This data describes weekly averages, workweek averages and peak-hour information for several classifications of vehicles. The road segment inside the neighborhood that receives the most average daily traffic is Main Street with two lanes of one-way, west-bound travel out of Downtown through the middle of Monroe Ward. According to VDOT’s 2014 AADT report, Main Street receives an average daily (Sat-Sun) traffic count of 9,500 with 98% of the vehicles having 2 or 4 wheels, an estimated 8.7% of this traffic occurring during the segment’s peak hour (K-factor), and an estimated 60% of peak traffic occurring in the peak direction. Data from this report

Map 15 - VDOT Average Daily Traffic for Monroe Ward 2014



Source: City of Richmond and VDOT GIS Data October 2015



also shows weekday (Mon-Thur) traffic count for this same segment as slightly higher at 10,000 (VDOT, 2014). Map 15 shows ADT for Monroe Ward and surrounding areas with Main Street centered in Monroe Ward. This visual shows how average daily traffic flows in and around the study area with Main Street being the one-way, westbound street in Monroe Ward with the highest ADT count. This 10,000 ADT count is nearly ½ of the minimum count of the next busiest roadway type, indicating that it is not being over-burdened and that traffic in Monroe Ward could be distributed to the parallel minor arterials if needed.

Bus service in the city is provided by the Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC). Several daily routes travel through and around Monroe Ward and are defined as either frequent or less-frequent “medium” routes with varying levels of service on the evenings and weekends. The neighborhood’s northern border, Broad Street, sees the most bus activity and has the most bus stops. Additional routes travel along Grace, Franklin and Canal Streets in an east-west direction while routes 70 and 71 travel north on 4<sup>th</sup> street. Appendix G displays the Downtown inset of GRTC’s citywide system map.

Building code standards for office, residential and commercial structures affect the land use in Monroe Ward in terms of parking requirements for these uses. To accommodate its mixed uses, the neighborhood needs an amount of parking that is appropriate for its densities while not being a detriment to the overall character. Appendix H displays some common building uses and a chart detailing their corresponding parking requirements. Office space, aboveground floor dwellings, grocery stores and restaurants are common permitted uses inside of the neighborhood’s residential office (RO-3), business

(B-3) and central business (B-4) zoning. Based on zoning ordinances, a 3,000 square foot office building would require 13 off-street parking spaces, while a 6,000 square foot office building would require 31 spaces. A standard multi-family dwelling would require at least one off-street parking space per dwelling unit, a 187-space requirement for the previously mentioned Monroe Park Towers high-rise apartments on West Franklin Street.

Currently, Monroe Ward has 19 parking lots or decks available to the public, most of which do not offer daily or hourly rates, but cater to office workers. This lack of hourly rates is likely meant to simplify operation procedures for lot owners as there are too few retail entities in the area and sufficient street parking for those that do exist. Table 3 shows data provided by the Ride Finders division of the GRTC that accounts for 1,151 spaces available in these lots at an average monthly rate of \$55.68. A physical map of these locations can be seen in Appendix I. It should be noted that there are several special circumstances for parking requirements – some documented in the zoning ordinance and some handled on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, in B-4 and B-5 zoning districts off-street parking spaces “shall not be required for uses other than dwelling uses, hotels and motels” (City of Richmond, 2013). B-4 zoning covers the largest area in Monroe Ward meaning that future uses may not carry off-street parking requirements depending on their nature.

**Table 3 - Public Parking Pricing and Availability in Monroe Ward**

Lot Location	Monthly Rate	Spaces	Type
Grace, between Adams & Jefferson	\$70.00	151	Surface
Adams & Grace St - NE corner	\$75.00	68	Surface
1st & Grace St	\$50.00	126	Surface
SW Corner-Grace & Jefferson St	\$75.00	51	Surface
Adams & Grace St - SW	0	50	Surface
Grace & Foushee St	\$65.00	90	Surface
Belvidere & Main St	\$39.00	118	Deck
3rd & Main St	\$65.00	32	Surface
Adams & Main St	\$60.00	200	Surface
Main & Foushee	\$50.00	135	Surface
217 E Main St	\$55.00	37	Surface
3rd & Cary St, NW Corner	\$75.00	40	Surface
301 E Main St	\$68.00	48	Surface
302 E Cary St	\$68.00	95	Deck
318 E Main St	\$68.00	86	Surface
1st & Canal St	\$30.00	50	Surface
1st, between Cary & Canal St	\$30.00	22	Surface
2nd St, between Cary & Canal St	\$35.00	8	Surface
300 E Cary St	\$80.00	144	Surface
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$55.68</b>	<b>1551</b>	

Source: GRTC Ridefinders September 2015

A parking plan completed for the city in 2002 by Desman Associates showed that Monroe Ward had 1,490 public off-street spots available that were only utilized at 50% of their operational capacity (Desman Associates, 2002). A more recent and comparable study does not exist, however little has changed in the neighborhood that would affect public lot usage and availability. The study went on to explain that for all of Downtown Richmond, public, private and restricted parking was utilized at 72% of its functional capacity. These figures can be seen in Appendix J.

## Residential and commercial presence

*What types of residential and commercial entities are attracted to Monroe Ward and are they appropriate for the area?*

Though this study is focused on the Monroe Ward neighborhood, it is worth noting recent population changes and development investment for the Greater Richmond Area. According to U.S. Census data compiled in a 2013 Downtown profile study, the MSA, City and Downtown saw positive percent changes to their overall populations from 2000 to 2010 as seen in Table 4 (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013) Table 4. The Downtown area gained 60 more blocks of area within those 10 years and also saw a 40% increase in population – 37.8% more than the City as a whole. A regional definition of the Richmond MSA can be seen in Appendix K.

**Table 4 - Population Changes 2000 to 2010**

	MSA	City	Downtown
<b>2000 Pop</b>	<b>1,096,957</b>	<b>197,790</b>	<b>6,117</b>
<b>2010 Pop</b>	<b>1,258,251</b>	<b>204,214</b>	<b>10,244</b>
<b>Change</b>	<b>+14.9%</b>	<b>+3.2%</b>	<b>+40%</b>

Source: (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013)

The same study done by VCU for the City of Richmond in 2013 states that in the 2000s Downtown alone saw over \$3 billion in development investments that resulted in over 4,000 new residential units and 6.9 million sq. ft. in usable space (Virginia Commonwealth

University, 2013). Between 2010 and 2012 the average rental price for residential space was \$1.31/sq.ft. and \$.72/sq.ft for Downtown and the City, respectively, making rental space in Downtown 45% higher. These costs would result in a \$531 higher rent for a 900 sq.ft. apartment space in the Downtown area. Additionally, Downtown itself had over 14.5 million sq.ft. of total office space available in 2010. Large firms and corporations such as MeadWestvaco, McGuire Woods and Williams Mullen have all occupied new high-rise office buildings in the Central Office and Gambles Hill neighborhoods in the past 10 years. Additionally, Venture Richmond's 2015 Downtown Development Guide boasts over \$1 billion dollars in completed or pending development projects relating to over 2,000 lofts, more than 1.9 million sq. ft. of commercial space, 481 hotel rooms and housing for over 460 VCU students. Venture Richmond's guide for the previous year (2014) outlined a very similar scenario with reference to nearly 2,500 new parking spaces.

Beyond the few long-term households that do lie in Monroe Ward, the neighborhood itself has not catered to single-family owner-occupied residences for decades. The transient VCU student population dominates the residential density base and has helped to dictate the housing structures and their accompanying needs. Retail has yet to show signs of its former glory in the area, and office space continues to be a prevalent use in the area. That said, the incongruous land use pattern for this .21 sq. mi. neighborhood also houses a Public Library, YMCA, VCU institutional buildings, the Historic Jefferson Hotel, historic landmarks, a brewery, 3 automotive repair shops and a handful of art galleries. Most restaurants are located close to Broad Street, while

the high-rise apartment buildings favor the western side of the neighborhood closer VCU's Monroe Park Campus.

Data from the U.S. Census American Fact Finders program describes demographics of the Monroe Ward neighborhood when married with corresponding Census Tiger shape files at the block level. Comparative data from 2000 and 2010 illustrates the recent demographic changes in the area. Table 5 displays basic comparative demographic data. Total population based on block data grew by 26% with an increase of 610 people. In 2010, the predominant age group of the residential base was the college-aged 18 to 24 year-old and the correspondingly low \$21,134 median annual income.

**Table 5 - Recent Demographic Changes in Monroe Ward**

	<b>Total population</b>	<b>Density Sq. Mi.</b>	<b>Predominant age group</b>	<b>Median income</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>2,318</b>	<b>11,038</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>2,928</b>	<b>13,943</b>	<b>18-24</b>	<b>\$21,134</b>
<b>Change</b>	<b>+610</b>	<b>+2905</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

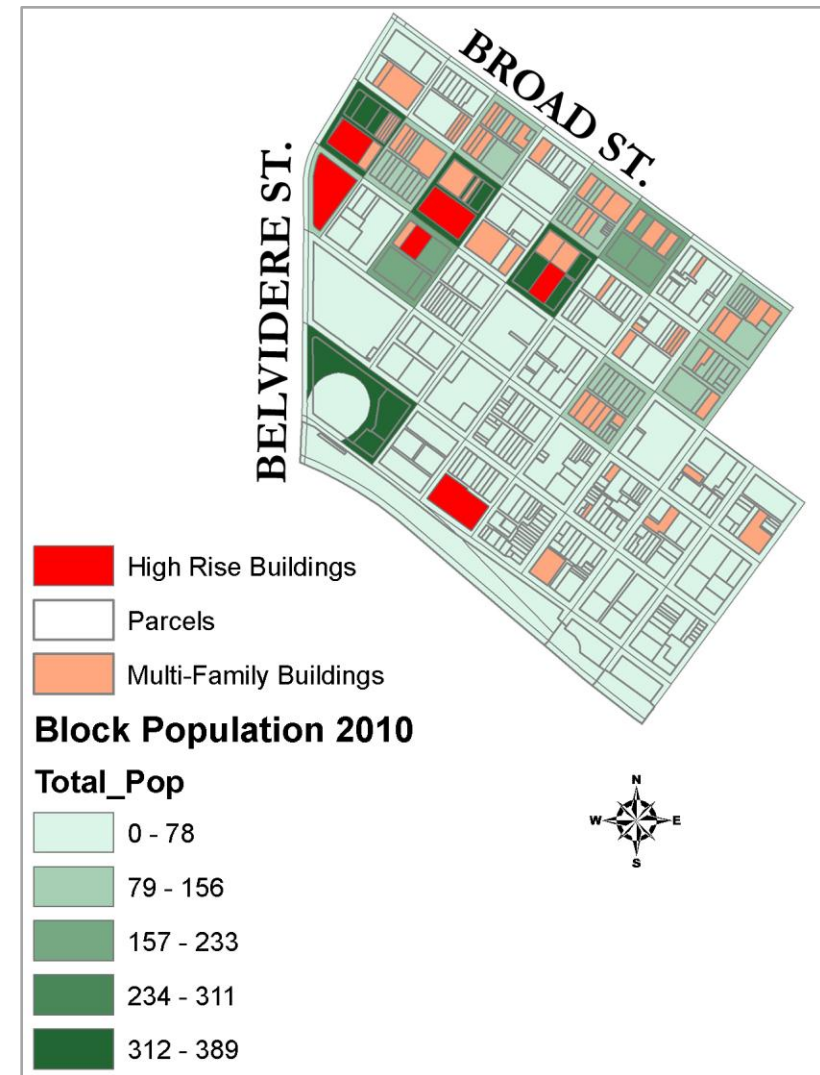
Source: GRTC Ridefinders September 2015,  
(Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013)

Residential population in Monroe Ward for 2010 is displayed in Map 16, and shows how the population is concentrated per block and is unsurprisingly related to those blocks that contain high-rise apartment buildings and/or multi-family units. The most densely populated blocks house up to 389 residents. Density has increased from 11,038 per sq. mi. in 2000 to 13,943 per sq. mi in 2010. As of 2010, Monroe Ward was the downtown neighborhood with the second largest stock of renter-occupied units, and had not seen any non-rental

residential built since 1949 (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013). These statistics illustrate how the neighborhood is attractive to college students and how development of new and renovated apartment units is an attractive venture in the area.

As previously mentioned five types of zoning are prevalent in Monroe Ward and allow for a variety of uses. Related to the commercial presences in the neighborhood, the total land use percentages of commercial, office, mixed-use, and industrial entities are 36%, 20%, 13%, and 1%, respectively. These figures were derived from the most recent parcel data provided by the City of Richmond and can be seen in Appendix D. According to VCU's 2013 Downtown Profile Study Monroe Ward accommodated between 2000 and 5000 employees, less than 30 retail employees and 100 restaurant employees in 2010. The neighborhood had 1,068,313 sq. ft. of B and C class office space in 2010, the fifth most for Downtown, and 96 office buildings as of 2010, the most individual buildings of all the downtown neighborhoods. Major development has been relegated to mostly additional or renovated multi-family housing with the notable exceptions of VCU's School of Engineering extension and Brand Center, and the newly completed Quirk Hotel and Art Gallery on Broad and Jefferson. Other apartment configurations have come online in large part due to available historic rehabilitation credits and their accompanying tax abatement credits made possible by the stock of historic buildings and the Arts District overlay.

**Map 16 - 2010 Block Population with Multi-Family and High-Rise Apartments**



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015

## Community input

*How does the community view the study area?*

Feedback from the community is integral to any planning document, especially concerned with revitalization and placemaking efforts. Consequently, the opinions of the public were solicited. Monroe Ward as a neighborhood has little in the way of representation but much like its inclusion in city planning documents, it is a consideration of several Downtown community advocacy organizations. These organizations do not exhibit regular activity but do maintain an online presence. Utilizing the assistance of local neighborhood advocacy groups, an online survey was distributed via social media networks of the Storefront Richmond Organization and the Downtown Richmond Residents Association to garner insight from a sector of the Richmond's constituency that would be in contact with these organizations. Community input was achieved by surveying those residents, business owners, workers and visitors of Downtown Richmond and Monroe Ward with questions pertaining to how they currently interact with the area and what changes or improvements they would like to see realized. Complete survey questions and results can be seen in Appendix L and Appendix M.

Survey participants were asked questions to qualify the nature of their residency in the city and their interactions with the Downtown area and Monroe Ward. Twenty-two individual online responses were garnered with all but three being residents of the city. Respondent characteristics can be seen in Table 6.

**Table 6 - Survey Respondent Characteristics**

<b>Respondent Type</b>	<b>Proportion of Total Responses</b>
<b>Lives in the City Limits</b>	<b>86%</b>
<b>Lives in Downtown</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Works in Downtown</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Lives in Monroe Ward</b>	<b>09%</b>
<b>Owens Business in Monroe Ward</b>	<b>14%</b>

**Source: Survey Monkey Online Results October 2015**

Dining, outdoor recreation and work were the top three reasons, respectively, respondents most often visit Downtown, while 50% or more think that both Downtown and Monroe Ward have too few residents. Regarding public park space, respondents view it as a positive and necessary use and agree that there is not enough in the downtown area. Responses show 95% agree that public park space is necessary to attract residents and business while all respondents see it as necessary for long-term success in the downtown area. Over 70% think that downtown is currently lacking in public park space, while 80% agree that this type of use is appropriate for Monroe Ward. Optionally specified "other" responses to being asked what is lacking from the streetscape in Monroe Ward included "greenspace," "public greenspace," and "public spaces that encourage neighborliness." Responses to potential land use options for Monroe Ward were varied with no overwhelming preference. On a scale of importance from 1 to 5, 5 being important, all options except single-family homes averaged 3 or higher, with public space, public green space, owner-occupied residences, mixed residential and commercial and shopping/retail all averaging 4.2 or



higher. Table 7 displays selected survey results for all respondents while Figure 5 shows the weighted response averages for potential uses in Monroe Ward.

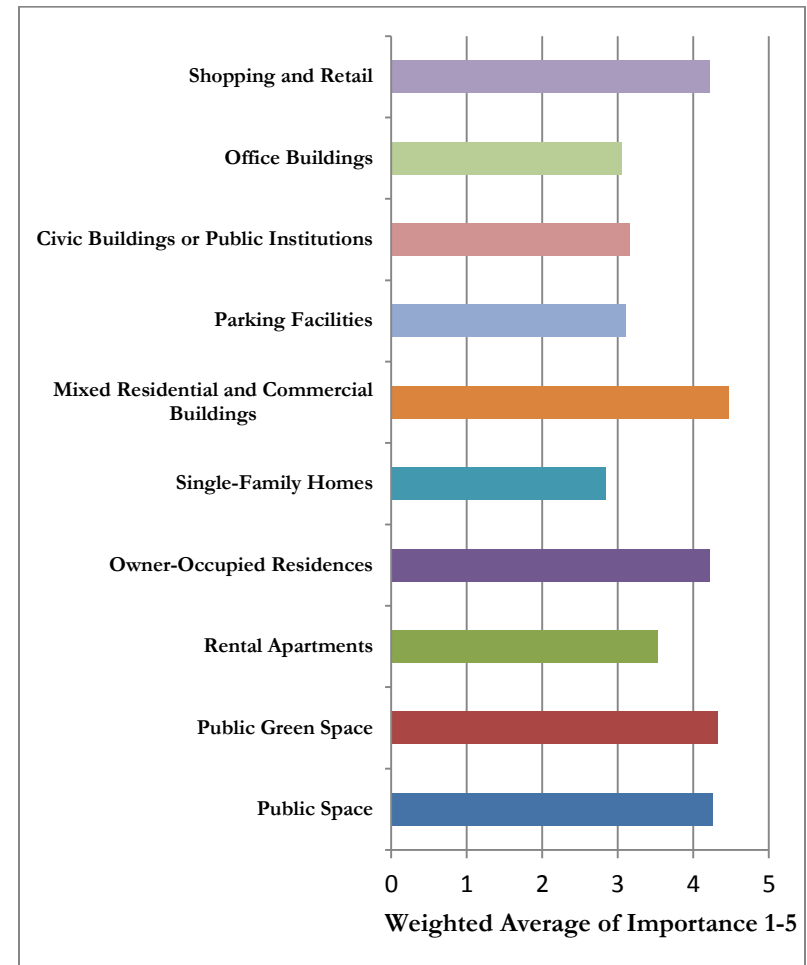
**Table 7 - Selected Survey Result Summary**

%*	Survey Topic
91%	Visit downtown most often for dining
95%	Agree or strongly agree that public park space is necessary to attract residents and business downtown
64%	Visit downtown for outdoor recreation
76%	Think downtown has too few residents
50% or higher	Think Monroe Ward is lacking trees/shade, sidewalk seating, lighting, cleanliness
50%	Think Monroe Ward has too few residents
100%	Think public park space is necessary or very necessary for long-term success of downtown
71%	Disagree or strongly disagree that downtown has an adequate amount of public park space
96%	Agree or strongly agree that public park space benefits nearby residents and business owners
80%	Agree or strongly agree that public park space is an appropriate land use for Monroe Ward

Source: Survey Monkey Online Results October 2015

\* percentage of total survey respondents

**Figure 5 - Monroe Ward Potential Use Preferences**



Source: Survey Monkey Online Results October 2015

## Analysis conclusions

In analyzing the development of Monroe Ward from its historic roots to its current state and role in Downtown Richmond, several characteristics and useful realities were revealed. Drawing from this analysis the strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood can be outlined, as can any future developmental opportunities and liabilities.

Like many American urban areas in the mid-twentieth century, Monroe Ward suffered from the eventualities of residents moving to suburban areas and commuting in and out of downtown areas. This process helped transform the neighborhood's residential and commercial density into an office park surrounded by commuter routes and parking facilities. A lack of focused or form-based planning in the neighborhood, along with the variety of allowable uses realized through zoning allowances and the multi-use "urban center" characterization from master planning documents, have prevented Monroe Ward from establishing an identity within the city. Though the area is centrally located in the Downtown area, this lack of identity has facilitated traffic patterns and auto-centric infrastructure that serve the Downtown commuter more than the neighborhood residents and businesses or the pedestrian at large.

Fortunately, Monroe Ward's central location has positioned it in close proximity to several sizable new and renovated residential developments, a growing VCU student base and several incentive-based overlay districts such as the Arts District in Downtown. Population and density have increased over the past decade mostly due to a growing VCU student base, and consequently

development has mostly centered around additional rental units while the neighborhood continues to rent its existing office spaces.

Lastly, the scheduled outdoor recreation developments laid out in *The Riverfront Plan* (2012) will be within walking distance of the neighborhood. Related to this, community input garnered from this study and from the *Downtown Plan* (2009) indicates that residents and frequenters of the Downtown area and Monroe Ward value public park space and hope to see additional spaces developed.

**Table 8 - Strengths, Liabilities, and Opportunities in Monroe Ward**

Topic	Strength	Liability	Opportunity
Central Location Downtown	X		
Riverfront Proximity	X		
Recent Population Increase	X		
Flexible Zoning Allowances	X		
Overlay District Incentives	X		
Urban Center Characterization	X		
Lack of Attractions		X	
Broken Streetscape Continuity		X	
Expressway Border		X	
Surface Parking Lots		X	
One-way Street Pattern		X	
Lack of Public Outdoor Space		X	
Lack of Focused Planning		X	
Neighborhood Identity		X	
Neighborhood Planning			X
VCU Community Proximity			X
Undeveloped Parcels			X
Historic Landmarks			X
Available Commercial Sq. Ft.			X
Available Residential Sq. Ft.			X
Pedestrian Engagement			X
Downtown Connectivity			X

## VISION STATEMENT

Monroe Ward is a neighborhood in Downtown Richmond, Virginia, with a growing population, an advantageous central location and unmet potential. New public spaces and attractions tailored to the area will extend daily life in Monroe Ward into the evenings and weekends. Residents, visitors and those working in this reimagined neighborhood will enjoy the benefits of a walkable and compact urban area that offers a variety of living, working, shopping and recreational options within a small footprint. Density and activity in Downtown Richmond will emanate from Monroe Ward and support the adopted *Riverfront Plan* (2012) by increasing the neighborhood audiences surrounding one of the city's most valuable attractions, the James River.

## **PART II : THE PLAN**

The impetus for analyzing Monroe Ward in a planning context was a perceived conflict between its potential and its current physical state and degree of social activity. In examining the neighborhood, with attention to its physical and functional role in the greater Downtown area, past and present characteristic data revealed focal points for potential developmental improvements. Goals and objectives for the neighborhood have been derived from this analysis to address design, land-use and connectivity in Monroe Ward. Revitalization is meant to occur through attracting infill development, social activity and more varied forms of use and traffic to the area. Three goals have been outlined, each with its own objectives and implementation strategies, as a means of making progress towards revitalization and placemaking in Monroe Ward.

Promoting neighborhood design continuity as a planning goal is informed by how the current built environment caters to the automobile over the pedestrian experience at street-level. Surface parking prevalence, expeditious traffic patterns and uninviting building frontages have created a public realm more often driven through than enjoyed or explored. Consideration for a form-based code set to improve the character and layout of the neighborhood would be a departure from the more broad set of guidelines that have invited the current land uses.

Analysis also shows that multi-family residences for the nearby VCU student body are on the rise while office spaces continue to be a major presence in the area.

Attracting development of various types as a goal is meant to prevent land use patterns that may further fragment the streetscape in the same way that parking accommodations for office and multi-family uses have. Furthermore, community input has shown that public spaces and parks are desirable uses lacking from the neighborhood. Development of quality public spaces is meant to transform Monroe Ward into a known destination, attractive to uses that would otherwise locate elsewhere.

Finally, the preceding analysis also points to Monroe Ward's central location as a potential area of focus for planning efforts. As previously stated, the area serves parking and passage to Downtown but does not use its central location to attract bike and pedestrian traffic and does not even effectively engage auto traffic with business frontages. Consideration for the planned and potential developments in surrounding neighborhoods, such the Arts District, increases to VCU's student body and the nearby *Riverfront Plan* (2012), has uncovered a need for leveraging the neighborhoods location for improved interconnectivity within Downtown Richmond.

## Goals, objectives and strategies

- ▶ **Goal 1 : Promote neighborhood design continuity**
  - ▶ Objective 1.1 Improve Existing Streetscape
    - ▶ Strategy 1.1.1 Implement Form-based Code Set for the Neighborhood
    - ▶ Strategy 1.1.2 Discourage Surface Parking
  - ▶ Objective 1.2 Encourage Infill of Structure-less Parcels
    - ▶ Strategy 1.2.1 Create Demand Infill Development
    - ▶ Strategy 1.2.2 Introduce Strategically-located Neighborhood Attraction(s)
- ▶ **Goal 2 : Attract a Variety of Development**
  - ▶ Objective 2.1 Accommodate a Variety of Residents, Visitors, and Patrons
    - ▶ Strategy 2.1.1 Make Monroe Ward a Destination
    - ▶ Strategy 2.1.2 Create a Multi-purpose Civic Space
    - ▶ Strategy 2.1.3 Create a Pedestrian-oriented Commercial Corridor / District
  - ▶ Objective 2.2 Create an Identity for the Neighborhood
    - ▶ Strategy 2.2.1 Adopt a Specific Neighborhood Plan to Guide Use and Form
    - ▶ Strategy 2.2.2 Brand and Market Monroe Ward
- ▶ **Goal 3 : Leverage Monroe Ward for Downtown Interconnectivity**
  - ▶ Objective 3.1 Capitalize on Monroe Ward's Central Location
    - ▶ Strategy 3.1.1 Invest in Bike and Pedestrian-Oriented Corridors Between Neighborhoods
    - ▶ Strategy 3.1.2 Directly Connect New Public Space in Monroe Ward to VCU and the Riverfront Area
  - ▶ Objective 3.2 Support Balanced Streetscape Exposure
    - ▶ Strategy 3.2.1 Targeted Conversions to Two-Way Traffic Patterns
    - ▶ Strategy 3.2.2 Narrow Lanes of Traffic to Ensure Minimum Speeds



## **Goal 1 : Promote neighborhood design continuity**

### ***Objective 1.1 Improve existing streetscape***

The streetscape in Monroe Wards is not conducive to drawing the interest of visitors, commuters or pedestrians. The “fine-grained” and “higher-density” aspects of the assigned urban center characteristic of the neighborhood are at odds with the majority of present-day Monroe Ward. To better achieve the streetscape specifics needed to draw additional uses and higher-density, functional and visual consideration is needed for new construction and for improvements to existing assets. Appropriate building heights, frontages, massing and architectural detail, as well as block layout, screening and fencing, lighting and signage should all be addressed as part of an overall design vision for the neighborhood. Structural gaps are common south of Grace Street and along the Expressway border, while building facades are often windowless and uninviting to the public. Continuous breaks in streetscape continuity detract from use patterns and erase any sense of place that might exist along street segments or sections of the neighborhood. The neighborhood needs to implement further character and use guidelines requiring landowners to consider how buildings and lots contribute to overall functionality of the neighborhood. Residents, workers and visitors need to feel safe, comfortable and engaged with their surroundings.

### ***Strategy 1.1.1 Implement form-based code set for the neighborhood***

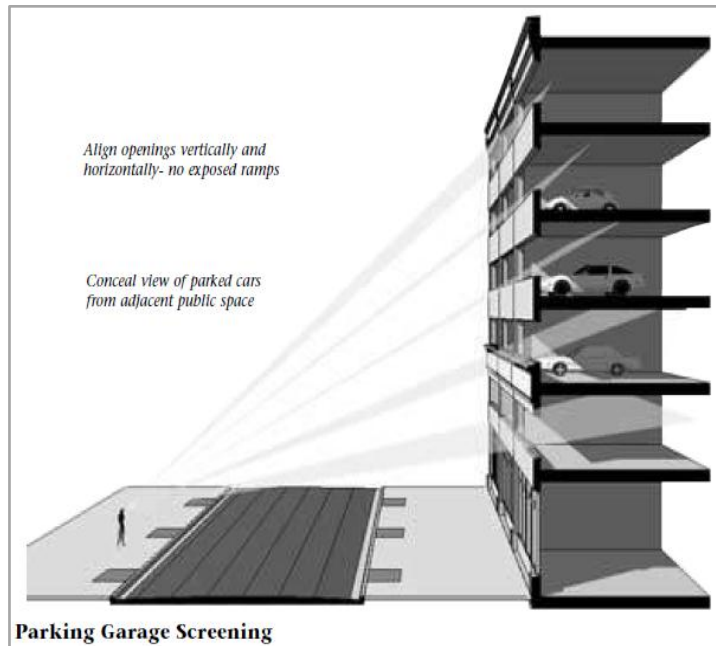
As part of a potential focused neighborhood plan for the Monroe Ward neighborhood, a form-based code set offers the desired outcomes for this

objective. Form-based codes (FBCs) can be characterized as “a response to the past half-century of urban development, when regulations have been more concerned with controlling land uses than shaping the physical form of our communities” (Form-Based Codes Institute - Fostering Time-tested Urban Form, 2015). FBC theory sees traditional land use separations resulting in sprawl and the disappearance of social gathering spaces and argues that implementing more specific guidelines for mixed uses can be successful when tuned to the unique needs of the community. Form-based code sets give added weight to planning for walkability, aesthetic and social interaction by visualizing more specific, required relationships and character traits for buildings, parking, public areas and other community elements. The current *Master Plan* (2001) and *Downtown Plan* (2009) do not account for such a level of detailed form in the neighborhood past its “urban center” characterization.

Many examples of successful FBCs exist in practice. They are normally the product of information gathering and design charrettes fueled by input from the community. Denver, Colorado implemented FBC for its Downtown Commons neighborhood as far back as 1997 intending to guide its future development as a “village on a grand scale”. Proscribed design requirements ranged from targeting sub-area characteristics to recommended street trees and their spacing requirements. The standards set forth in the document also indicated that key buildings should

“maintain lower floor frontage...reinforce pedestrian activity and create a sense of ‘place’” while commercial buildings are meant to have 60-90% of their ground level façade made of transparent materials for pedestrian engagement (Design Workshop, Inc., 1997). Figure 6 illustrates how the guidelines envision a pedestrian would visually interact with a parking deck.

**Figure 6 - Downtown Denver Commons Code Visual Example**

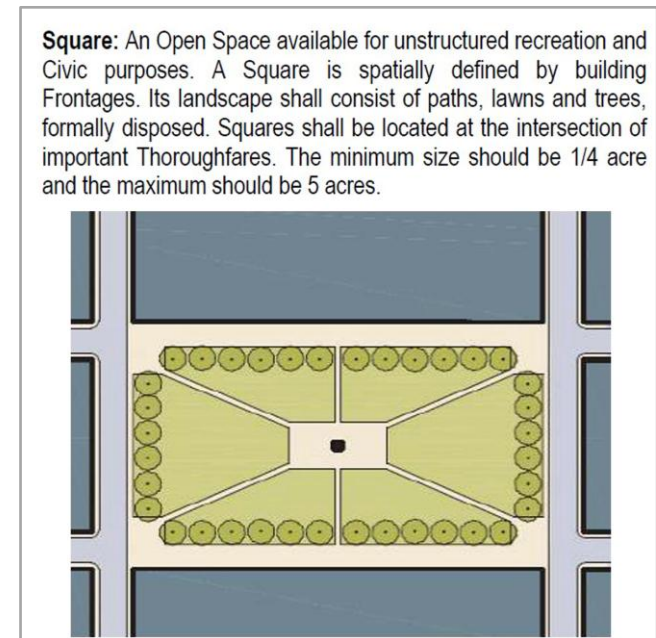


Source: (Design Workshop, Inc., 1997)

More recently in 2011, the smaller city of Bellevue, Kentucky adopted FBC for portions of

its city including the historic downtown area. The code is intended to guide development at the regional level down to the block and building level. Like Denver, Bellevue conducted public information sessions to derive a FBC that suited the area. Resulting ordinances pertain to topics such as thoroughfare standards, public frontages, public lighting, transect zones, parking calculations and civic space design as seen in Figure 7.

**Figure 7 - Bellevue, KY Civic Space Ordinance**



Source: (Bellevue, 2011)

Additionally, Cincinnati, Ohio adopted a form-based code set in 2013 that effectively addressed

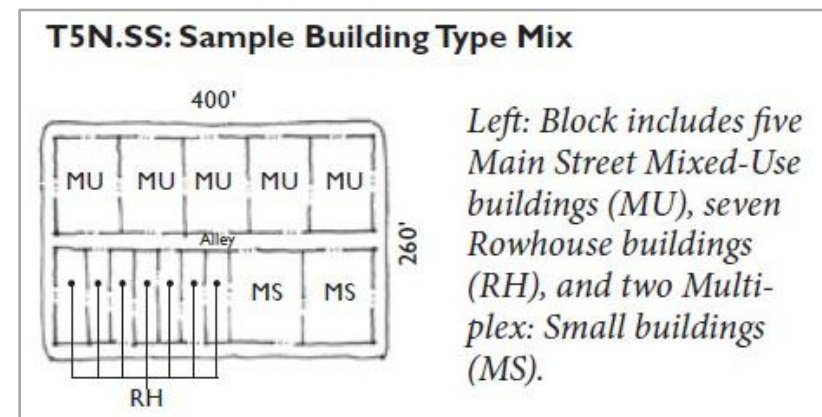
streetscape elements in a scalable format applicable to Monroe Ward. The FBC provides detailed development guidelines for a defined set of area types called transects. Transects have a defined function and form, as well as regulations for how they interact with neighboring transects. Appropriate for Monroe Ward, Cincinnati's FBC offers a "T5 – Neighborhood Small Setback" transect option that outlines, among other things, 8 available building types, 6-story maximums, a variety of frontages, parking facility permits and a requirement that buildings wider than 100' must read as series of buildings no wider than 50' each (Cincinnati, 2013). Figure 8 from the code document provides an illustrative vision of appropriate scale, frontage and massing options. For new development, block layout for this transect type dictates a minimum of 3 distinct building types as illustrated below in Figure 9. Precedent images for streetscape elements that correspond with this T5 transect can be seen in Appendix N.

Figure 8 - Cincinnati FBC T5N.SS Transect Illustration



Source: (Cincinnati, 2013)

Figure 9 - T5 Transect Block Layout



Source: (Cincinnati, 2013)

***Strategy 1.1.2 Discourage surface parking***

Monroe Ward in particular should implement FBC that specifically targets prevalence of surface parking lots. As indicated earlier in this report, nearly all parcels in the neighborhood without a structure are used for surface parking, but historically at 50% of their operational capacity. Within a potential FBC-based neighborhood plan, building form standards should call for first-floor shop-front parking deck structures and rear-parking as opposed to open surface lots visible from the streets. In the interim, facades such as gating or fencing could be required to detract from the structural gaps when possible. The Denver Commons design standards do not specifically mention surface parking other than an allusion to them in the vision statement that calls for “no visual clutter such as that created by parking lots, utilities, or monolithic, stand-alone buildings” (Design Workshop, Inc., 1997). Bellevue, Kentucky’s FBC relegates surface parking to conditional use only.

***Objective 1.2 Encourage infill of structure-less parcels***

In support of improving the existing streetscape, planning efforts in Monroe Ward should have mechanisms in place to expeditiously encourage infilling structure-less parcels. As evidenced by 42% of Monroe Ward’s land area being transportation surfaces that don’t contain structures, current zoning ordinances have not created an environment that discourages open lots.

***Strategy 1.2.1 Introduce strategically located neighborhood attraction(s)***

The addition of permanent neighborhood attractions will serve to attract additional mixed-use density. Development of future attractions should be positioned so they mitigate or downplay any existing negative features of Monroe Ward. Special attention should be paid to appropriate uses along the Downtown Expressway border that should serve as transitional from an interstate border and can appropriately buffer any nearby residential development. Canal Street between Foushee and Third Streets (Map 17) is well positioned for clustering parking structures for a potential pedestrian-centered shopping corridor along a similar length of West Cary Street. Creating a concentrated demand for parking by means of an attraction can mitigate the undesirable Expressway border area that has a long-standing prevalence of surface parking.





Map 17 – Parking Along Expressway Border and Canal



Source: Google Earth October 2015 / Compositing by Author

These attractions should also be distributed geographically in a manner that will attract infill over as much land area as possible. Infill development should be encouraged over the width of the neighborhood from west to east by installing attractions that will create a prolonged programmatic experience and draw users in and out of adjacent Downtown neighborhoods.

***Strategy 1.2.2 Create demand for infill development***

Planning documents outlining a specific vision for the neighborhood will give developers the tools to understand how the area should function and what role they may play in developing there. Providing planning documents for this neighborhood that speak to increased mixed-use density and placemaking through new destination attractions will create demand for new development overtime. The drafting and adopting of a neighborhood plan early in this process will help to build demand potential throughout the course of this overarching plan. As the implementation timeline progresses over time, existing commercial, retail and residential space will fill. Remaining, sporadic open lots will then become attractive for development that adheres to the design guidelines of a form-based code.



## **Goal 2 : Attract a variety of development**

### ***Objective 2.1 Accommodate a variety of residents, visitors and patrons***

Current zoning ordinances in Monroe Ward allow a variety of uses. The lack of form-based guidelines have resulted in the bulk of commercial uses locating along Broad Street, office uses and surface parking scattered throughout, and high-rise multi-family residential favoring proximity to the VCU student base. Mixed-use development potential should not be overtaken by excessive student/transient living quarters and parking facilities, or surface parking facilities for office uses. To attract and accommodate a healthy mix of residents, employees and visitors the neighborhood should provide a healthy mix of retail, commercial, employment, residential and permanent recreational options.

#### ***Strategy 2.1.1 Make Monroe Ward a destination***

Monroe Ward should have permanent attractions that define it as a desirable area to live, work, and visit. Reputable venues, districts, and corridors for shopping and recreation should exist in tandem with living and working spaces to foster an area that is desirable 24/7 – not just during the workday. Monroe Ward should acquire a marketable identity that is leveraged to attract increased mixed-use density and tourism.

#### ***Strategy 2.1.2 Create a multi-purpose civic space***

Public civic space that is convenient, multi-functional and casual should be developed in Monroe Ward. In an effort to attract and accommodate residents, workers and visitors, the

area should offer excellent outdoor space. This space should act as an extension to the environment that residents and frequenters of the neighborhood can experience. In a 2011 report on rejuvenating neighborhood through parks, the National Recreation and Park Association says that a park is more than just a park when it “serves as a touchstone for sense of community for those who live, work, and play” (O'Sullivan, 2011). Urban space such as Bryant Park in New York City is casual and convenient for patrons as it is properly scaled to its surrounding mixed-use density and has plenty of modular seating and a mix of sun and shade, viewed in Figure 10.

The Center for City Park Excellence's Peter Harnik wrote in a 2003 report for the Trust for Public Land that planners must account for significant physical barriers such as highways and busy roadways and consider access for less able-bodied patrons (Harnik, *The Excellent City Park System : What Makes it Great and How to Get There*, 2003). Locating public space in a potential site, such as the one shown in Map 18 between 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, Main and Canal Streets will satisfy this requirement. This area is accessible simply by crossing neighborhood streets, is also not heavily developed, can potentially accommodate a large amount of patrons, and is only a few blocks from the Riverfront area. Developing civic space on the roughly two-acre city block between Cary, Main, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets (indicated in red in Map 18) would allow appropriate redevelopment of the

Figure 10 - Bryant Park in New York City, NY



Source: [www.betterwaterfront.org](http://www.betterwaterfront.org) October 2015



Map 18 - Potential Public Space Sites



Source: Google Earth October 2015 / Compositing by Author

surrounding surface parking lots. A mix of building types, including high-end residential buildings scaled to the aforementioned T5 transect requirements, will provide the civic space with a desirable perimeter while also fostering it as a focal point for the surrounding uses. Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland, Oregon provides an appropriate precedent image of an urban civic space surrounded by various building types as seen in Figure 11. This roughly one-acre space services a portion of Portland's nearly 13,000 Downtown residents (Population Research Center, 2011). Comparatively, Richmond's Downtown has grown to over 10,000 in 2010 and is projected to continue this trend.

From an economic standpoint, successful civic or park spaces provide financial benefits for both a city and its local residents. According to a 2009 study done by the Trust for Public Land, tax revenue from increased property values of those properties in close proximity to park space, as well as related increases in sales tax revenue from tourism, are quantifiable for the city's treasury. For residents and users, hedonic value is assigned to the area based on the proximity and quality of the space. Time spent in this space is thought of as time and money not spent patronizing similar paid facilities or activities (Harnik & Welle, Measuring the Economic Value of a City Park System, 2009). This same study analyzed the property values of those residences within 500ft of all public park spaces in Washington, D.C. and attributed a conservative 5% in additional annual property tax revenue to the existence of the parks.





Figure 11 - Pioneer Courthouse Square



Source: [www.nwportlandhostel.com](http://www.nwportlandhostel.com) October 2015



***Strategy 2.1.3 Create a pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor/district***

A shopping district should be more concentrated and pedestrian friendly to create a destination for residents and visitors. A portion of Cary Street in Monroe Ward can be re-envisioned as a pedestrian friendly commercial district similar in character to the Downtown Mall in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Expanded sidewalks, minimal traffic, a strategic location and parking facility will aid the success of this new shopping district. Figure 12 shows the character of the Charlottesville Downtown Mall, while Figure 13 shows an appropriate streetscape example from East Clay Street in Downtown Richmond. For pedestrian patrons, the attraction lies in ample walking paths, shade and seating allowing for choice and a measure of privacy in the public realm. Ideally this corridor will be located on Cary Street between Foushee and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets to create an appropriate transitional use from the southern edge of the neighborhood as it borders the Expressway. This shopping corridor should also terminate at a potential new public space indicated previously, thereby creating a prolonged new destination program for the neighborhood as visualized in Map 19.

Furthermore, this area is intended to support, rather than compete with, the nearby Broad and Grace Street commercial corridors three blocks to the north. The building infrastructure already exists along that developing corridor, but public space does not. This additional development is intended to cater more to pedestrian traffic and casual visitation by

offering reduced traffic, ample seating and shade in addition to shopping and proximity to a new public space and the James River. The residential density needed to support commercial vitality for existing and future developments is dependent on the success of public attractions in the neighborhood.



Figure 12 - Downtown Mall, Charlottesville, Virginia



Source: [www.drivingcharlottesville.com](http://www.drivingcharlottesville.com) October 2015

Figure 13 - E. Clay Street Downtown Richmond, Virginia.



Source: Photo taken by author October 2015

**Objective 2.2** *Create an identity for the neighborhood*

Residents of the city-at-large, as well as visitors from out of town, should be able to refer to the Monroe Ward neighborhood with the same built-in sense of place conjured by near-by neighborhoods Carytown and Shockoe Slip. Ideally this identity will be based on future public space attractions drawing increased mixed-uses and creating a vibrant neighborhood that speaks for itself.

**Strategy 2.2.1** *Adopt a specific neighborhood plan to guide use and form*

The process of creating a more focused form with specific new uses in Monroe Ward should start with the drafting and adopting of a new form-based code set that outlines design guidelines based on a future vision for the area. As an initial step towards revitalizing the area, this document would incorporate requests from the community and be undertaken by the City's Department of Planning and Development Review for completion. Both the *Downtown Plan* (2009) and this study have indicated the public would like to see a greener downtown area.

**Strategy 2.2.2** *Brand and market Monroe Ward*

Once new planning documents are established, the City should work with Venture Richmond to establish brand-standard visual and textual elements meant to establish a familiarity with the area based in its current and future strengths. Permanent new attractions in the neighborhood should be used as a platform to identify the

neighborhood as unique and as part of the greater downtown area.

Figure 14 Sample Branding for Monroe Ward



Source: Photo courtesy of [www.drivingcharlottesville.com](http://www.drivingcharlottesville.com) October 2015, logo generated by author

**Goal 3 : Leverage Monroe Ward for Downtown interconnectivity**

**Objective 3.1** *Capitalize on Monroe Ward's central location*

Monroe Ward should take full advantage of its location in Downtown Richmond and its proximity to the Riverfront area. Downtown has existing principle arterial and expressway routes that make the area accessible while moving between adjacent Downtown neighborhoods should easily be done by foot, bike, car or bus. Future development should discourage the use of Monroe Ward as a commuter route for heavy or fast-moving directional traffic over more immersive forms of circulation.

***Strategy 3.1.1 Invest in bike and pedestrian-oriented corridors between neighborhoods***

Deliberate pathways between neighborhoods should be developed and clearly marked. Users need to feel safe walking and biking on pathways with clear destinations. Main bike paths should be installed between the sidewalks and parking lanes, as seen in Figure 15, for a level of protection that can attract more user and decrease pedestrian injury. In his 2012 book *Walkable City*, author Jeff Speck notes that pedestrian injuries have dropped by about a third on New York avenues once they began installing bike lanes (Speck, 2012). If properly executed, infrastructure for increased cycling trips in downtown will allow for fast movement between Downtown attractions without adding to parking needs and eliminating the stigma surrounding a parking in the area that might otherwise prevent visitation.

**Figure 15 - Bike Lane Inside Parking Lane (Brooklyn)**



Source: [www.drivingcharlottesville.com](http://www.drivingcharlottesville.com) October 2015

***Strategy 3.1.2 Directly connect new public space in Monroe Ward to VCU and the Riverfront area***

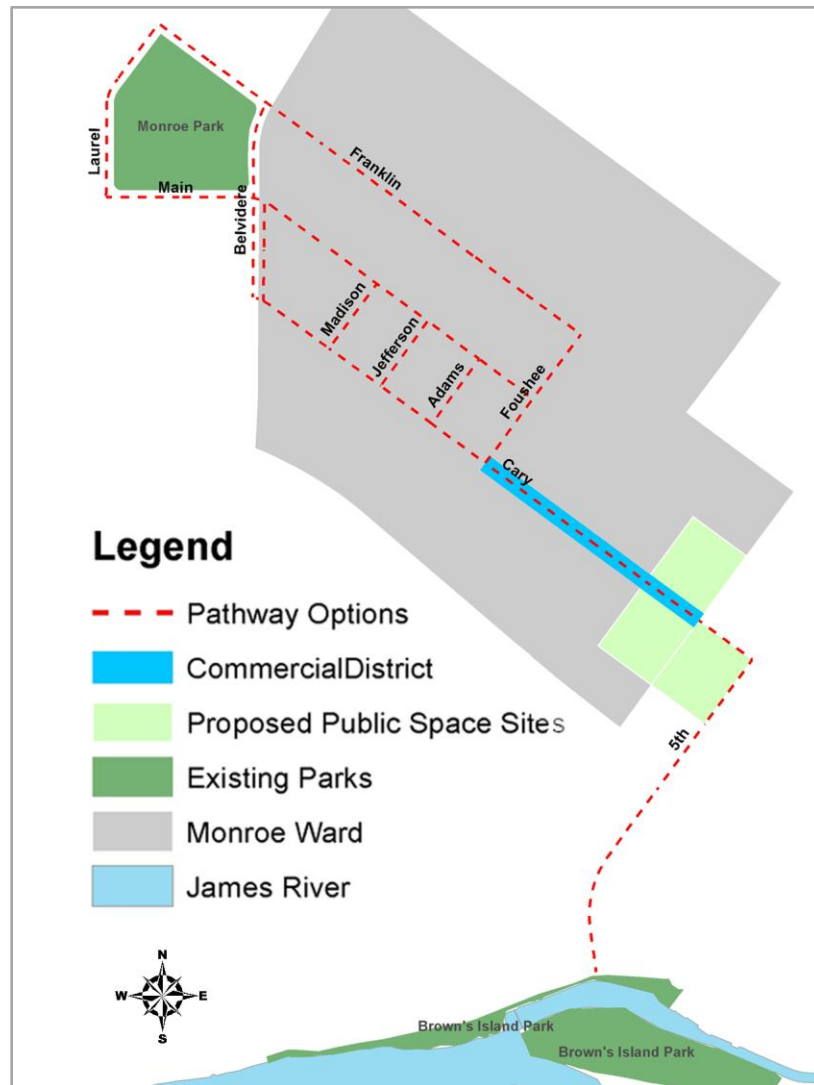
Special attention should be paid to creating a dedicated pathway for bikers and pedestrians between VCU's Monroe Park campus and the Riverfront area. Not only does this encourage circulation between Monroe Ward and the nearby Riverfront, but it also draws the VCU student body from campus through the new shopping and public space in Monroe Ward on their way to developments underway via the *Riverfront Plan* (2012). A more specific incarnation of the previous strategy (3.1.1), this pathway should create a safe, convenient and unobstructed route between these attractions while offering a prolonged visitor experience as illustrated in Map 19.

***Objective 3.2 Support balanced streetscape exposure***

Utilizing Monroe Ward as a commuter route for the weekday work commute in and out of the downtown area is not an advantageous use of its central location. The neighborhood's central location in Downtown should encourage interaction as part of the entire Downtown. Future planning for the area should quest to provide balanced access and exposure for commercial entities along the east-west streets in an effort to vary circulation and interaction patterns.



Map 19 - Potential Connective Routes Between VCU (Monroe Park Campus) and the Riverfront Area



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015

**Strategy 3.2.1** Targeted conversions to two-way Traffic patterns

The City should investigate converting the entire neighborhood or portions of it to two-way traffic patterns. East-west routes such as Cary, Main, Franklin and Grace should be especially considered for this treatment to increase exposure of commercial entities on both sides of the street.

**Strategy 3.2.2** Narrow lanes of traffic to ensure minimum speeds

Speed limits in Monroe Ward are currently set at 25mph, but to ensure these speeds are observed, techniques to narrow the roadways and discourage drivers from speeding can also help them to better observe their surroundings, as opposed to speeding through on their way to work or home. As previously mentioned, the addition of bike lanes and conversions to two-way traffic provide opportunities to narrow the roadways. In *Walkable City*, author Jeff Speck posits that “most motorists drive at the speed at which they feel comfortable” and will slow themselves to mitigate potential hazards. The author also points out that “it is important to remember that, in a robust street network, traffic redistributes itself intelligently, with parallel roads able to pick up the slack” (Speck, 2012).



## Implementation

In order to implement the goals, objectives, and strategies of this placemaking and revitalization plan for Monroe Ward, a timeline of events is required to outline the scope of the project. This overall implementation strategy should consider the necessary agencies, potential costs, and the interactivity of these developmental elements during the overall phasing. Based on the analysis portion of this document, goals for this plan have already been set forth. The appropriate agencies meant to implement these goals, objectives, and strategies are the City of Richmond's Departments of Planning and Development Review (DPDR) and Public Works (DPW) with assistance from a marketing service such as Venture Richmond. Cost and time estimates are based on recent developmental or renovation projects of a similar nature and insight on phase duration was provided by Mark A. Olinger. The goals for this plan surround the creation of new planning documents for the Monroe Ward neighborhood as well as physical improvements and new civic space construction.

The DPDR would handle the administrative duties surrounding updating existing code sets, making recommendations for physical improvements, and drafting a new form-based neighborhood plan for Monroe Ward. New plans and recommendations are meant to take place in the short-term (1-2 years) of this process to lay ground work for the future vision of the area and attract potential development interests. The concept introduction for these new attractions should happen within the intermediate term (5 years), with these projects being completed by the end of the 8 year long-term. During this same time period, Venture Richmond

would make efforts to begin marketing the area with newly created branding standards and materials. As the proscribed construction begins, the DPW will take over streetscape improvements and new construction of the proposed civic spaces indicated in Goal 2.

If possible, the funding of new civic spaces and improvements should be financed by earmarked local tax revenues from the most appropriate sources in an ongoing fashion. Overtime, these developments are meant to add to the local tax base revenue and create a positive cash flow cycle based on how the city and spaces interact. In his book *Happy City*, Author Charles Montgomery shows that Asheville, North Carolina was able to generate 13 times the tax revenue and 12 times the jobs per acre of land by developing a six-story mixed-use building downtown rather than a Walmart on the outskirts of town (Montgomery, 2013). Alternatively, in his book *Public Parks the Key to Livable Communities*, author Alexander Garvin points out that when there is a downturn in the economy, park systems “invariably suffer more cuts than most other agencies”, and that more recently many successful public parks and spaces have been the result of Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) or other forms of public/private partnerships to better ensures prolonged funding for public spaces (Garvin, *Public Parks - The Key to Livable Communities*, 2011).

Being a planned development area around a new civic space near the Riverfront area, a potential development partnership with the City of Richmond would be an option to plan for the upscale residential development that is appropriate as a border for this new

space – with one use complimenting the other and ultimately the benefitting the neighborhood and downtown as a whole. This partnership would be similar to the partnership between the city and private entities such as Dominion Power that is currently funding the renovation of Kanawha Plaza in the Central Office neighborhood. Total costs for land acquisition, streetscape improvements and development of new civic spaces will vary based on the eventual scope and design of these projects, with costs in the millions being appropriate. Recent renovations to Cleveland Square in Ohio, a pre-existing 10-acre public square were priced at \$30 million (Litt, 2014), while locally, the planned renovation costs of Monroe Park (Phase I-III) and Kanawha Plaza in Downtown Richmond are \$8 million and \$6 million respectively (Rhodeside & Harwell, Biederman Redevelopment Ventures, Legion Design, Domingo Gonzalez Associates, 2008) (Moomaw, 2015). Based on these figures, potential costs for strategies 2.1.2 (civic space) and 2.1.3 (pedestrian corridor) are set for \$8 million and \$2 million respectively. An implementation chart and timeline can be seen in Table 9 and Table 10.

### **Concluding thoughts**

Assessing present-day Monroe Ward as an under-utilized and unnecessarily inactive downtown neighborhood inspired this analysis and planning process to help appropriately revitalize the area. Monroe Ward's lack of identity provided the impetus for placemaking efforts to attract a mix of uses and additional density. Upon analysis of the neighborhood and its context in Downtown Richmond, this initial trajectory proved an appropriate means of moving forward with revitalization

efforts. Analysis showed that the current state of Monroe Ward has been shaped by a history of central-city decay, lenient zoning and planning allowances, and more recently the nearby VCU community's housing and institutional needs. Recent trends show that retail and commercial endeavors in the area continue to stagnate while new development in the area is mainly a result of the student-age VCU population's housing needs.

The analysis portion of this project illustrated three main points of interest that subsequently informed the goals of the plan section. Unlike historic planning efforts that formed present-day Monroe Ward, a more form-based vision for the neighborhood can help to improve the streetscape and provide a vision of the future form and function of the neighborhood. To further attract a variety of uses and development, Monroe needs to be seen as a destination with an identity. The lack of public or civic space in the neighborhood provides an area of opportunity to develop and improve upon that is important to the general public. Finally, strategic utilization of Monroe Ward's advantageous central location downtown provides a platform for fostering interconnectivity between neighborhoods and encouraging a more lively social life at the street level.

## Implementation Chart

Table 9 - Implementation Table

ID	Description	Implementing Body	Term	Cost Estimate
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>promote neighborhood design continuity</b>	-	long	-
Objective 1.1	Improve existing streetscape	DPDR	med	-
Strategy 1.1.1	Implement form-based code set for the neighborhood	DPDR	med	Tier 1
Strategy 1.1.2	Discourage surface parking	DPDR	med	Tier 1
Objective 1.2	Encourage infill of structure-less parcels	DPDR	short	-
Strategy 1.2.1	Create demand for infill development	DPDR	short	Tier 1
Strategy 1.2.2	Introduce strategic neighborhood attraction(s)	DPDR	med	Tier 1
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Attract a variety of development</b>	-	long	-
Objective 2.1	Accommodate variety of residents/visitors/patrons	DPDR	long	-
Strategy 2.1.1	Make Monroe Ward a destination	DPDR	long	Tier 1
Strategy 2.1.2	Create a multi-purpose civic space	DPDR / DPW	long	Tier 3
Strategy 2.1.3	Create pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor/district	DPDR / DPW	long	Tier 2
Objective 2.2	Create an identity for the neighborhood	DPDR	med	-
Strategy 2.2.1	Adopt a specific neighborhood plan to guide use and form	DPDR	short	Tier 1
Strategy 2.2.2	Brand and market Monroe Ward	Venture Richmond	med	Tier 1
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Leverage Monroe Ward for downtown interconnectivity</b>	-	med	-
Objective 3.1	Capitalize on Monroe Ward's central location	DPDR	long	-
Strategy 3.1.1	Bike/ pedestrian-oriented corridors between neighborhoods	DPW	med	Tier 1
Strategy 3.1.2	Connect new public space to VCU and the riverfront area	DPDR	long	Tier 1
Objective 3.2	Support balanced streetscape exposure	DPDR	med	-
Strategy 3.2.1	Targeted conversions to two-way traffic patterns	DPDR	med	Tier 1
Strategy 3.2.2	Narrow lanes of traffic to ensure minimum speeds	DPW	med	Tier 1

DPDR = Department of Planning and Development Review

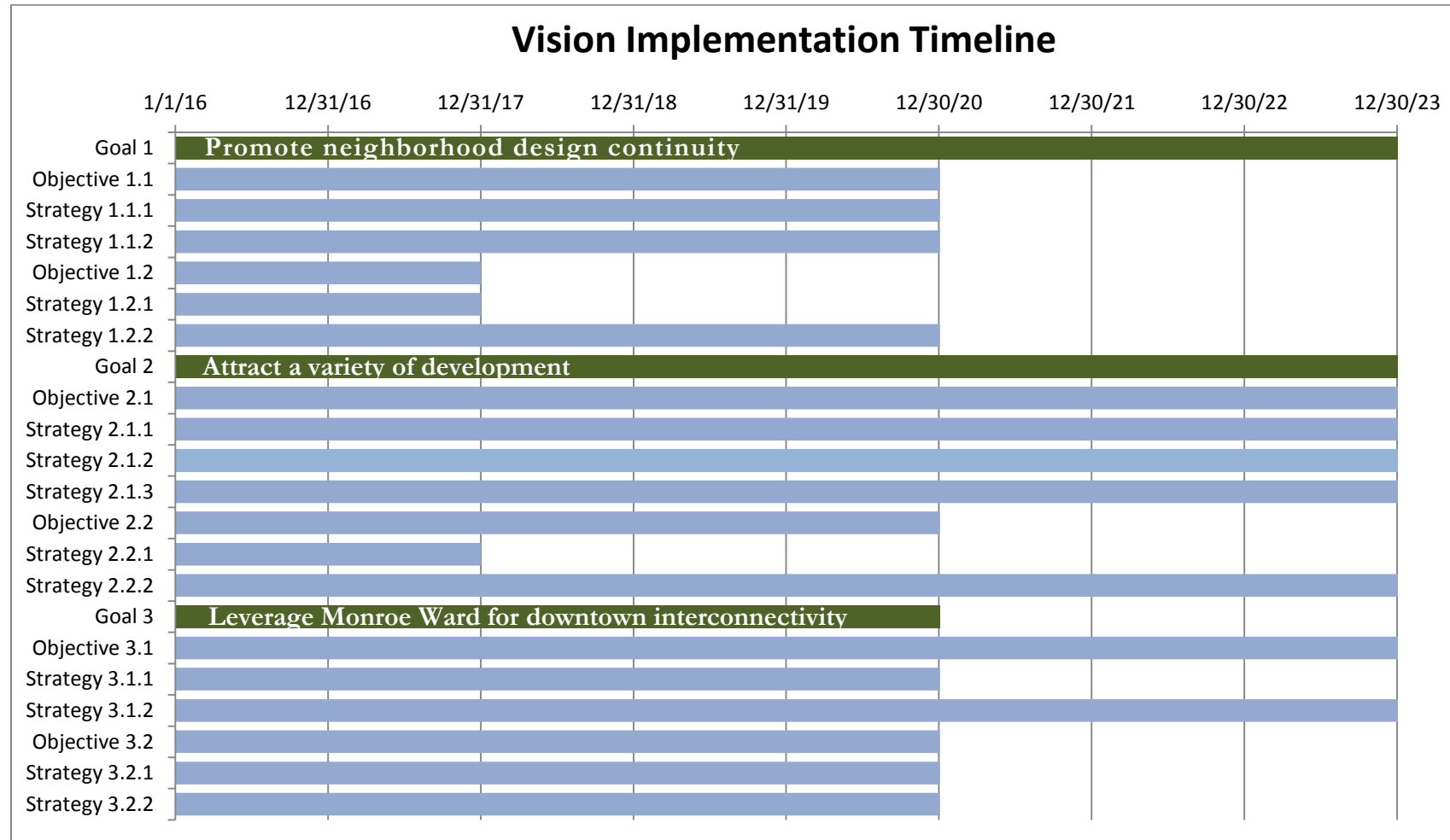
DPW = Department of Public Works

Term = short (2 year or less), med (5 years or less), long (8 years or less)

Tiers = Tier 1 (\$500,000 or less), Tier 2 (\$2 million or less), Tier 3 (over \$8 million or less)

## Implementation timeline

Table 10 - Vision Implementation Timeline



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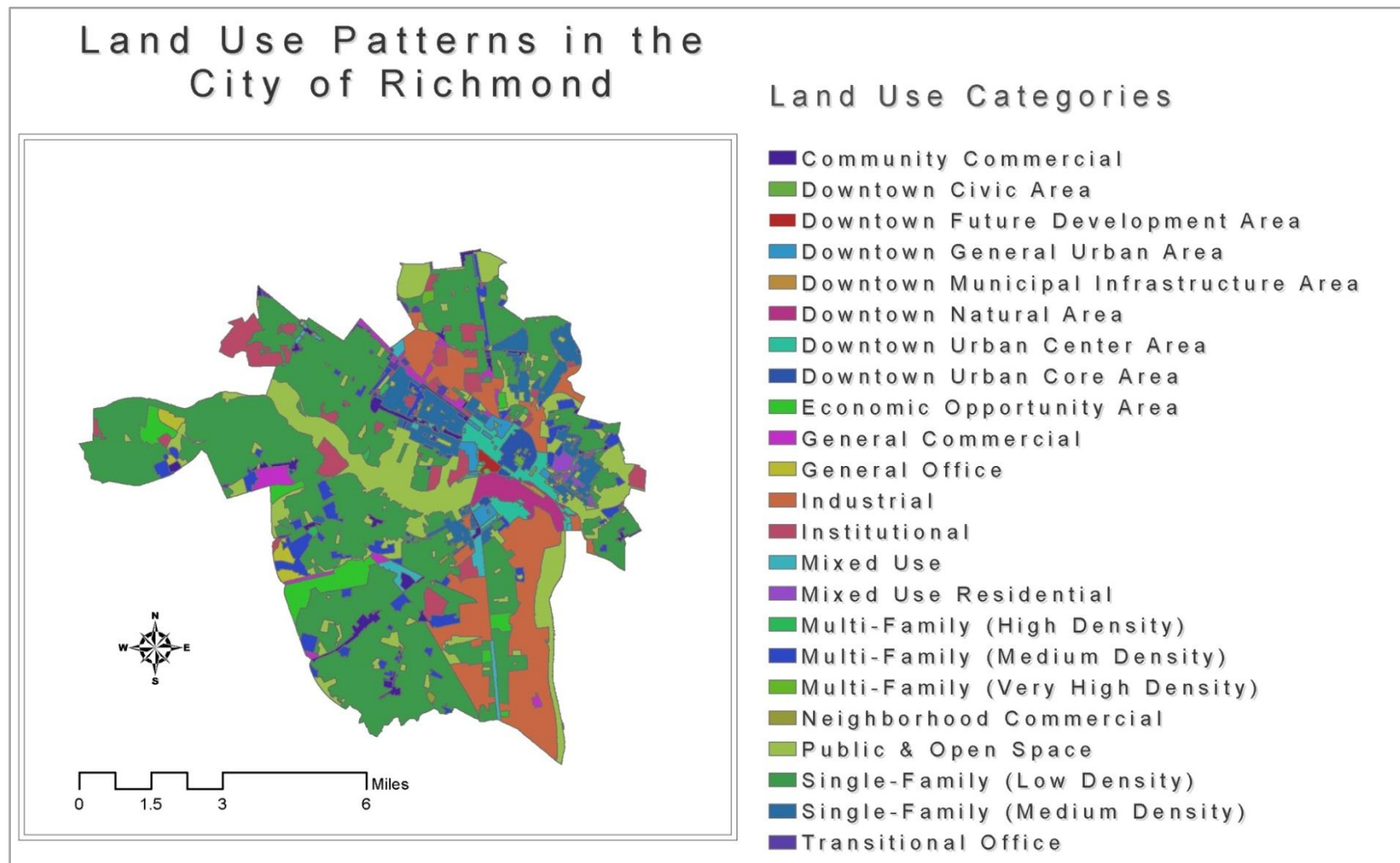
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[http://www.richmond.com/news/local/city-of-richmond/article\\_8df5d2b0-c903-55c9-afc0-548585c4bf68.html](http://www.richmond.com/news/local/city-of-richmond/article_8df5d2b0-c903-55c9-afc0-548585c4bf68.html)
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## APPENDICIES

### Appendix A - Examples of Structure-less Lots or Parcels Scattered Throughout Monroe Ward



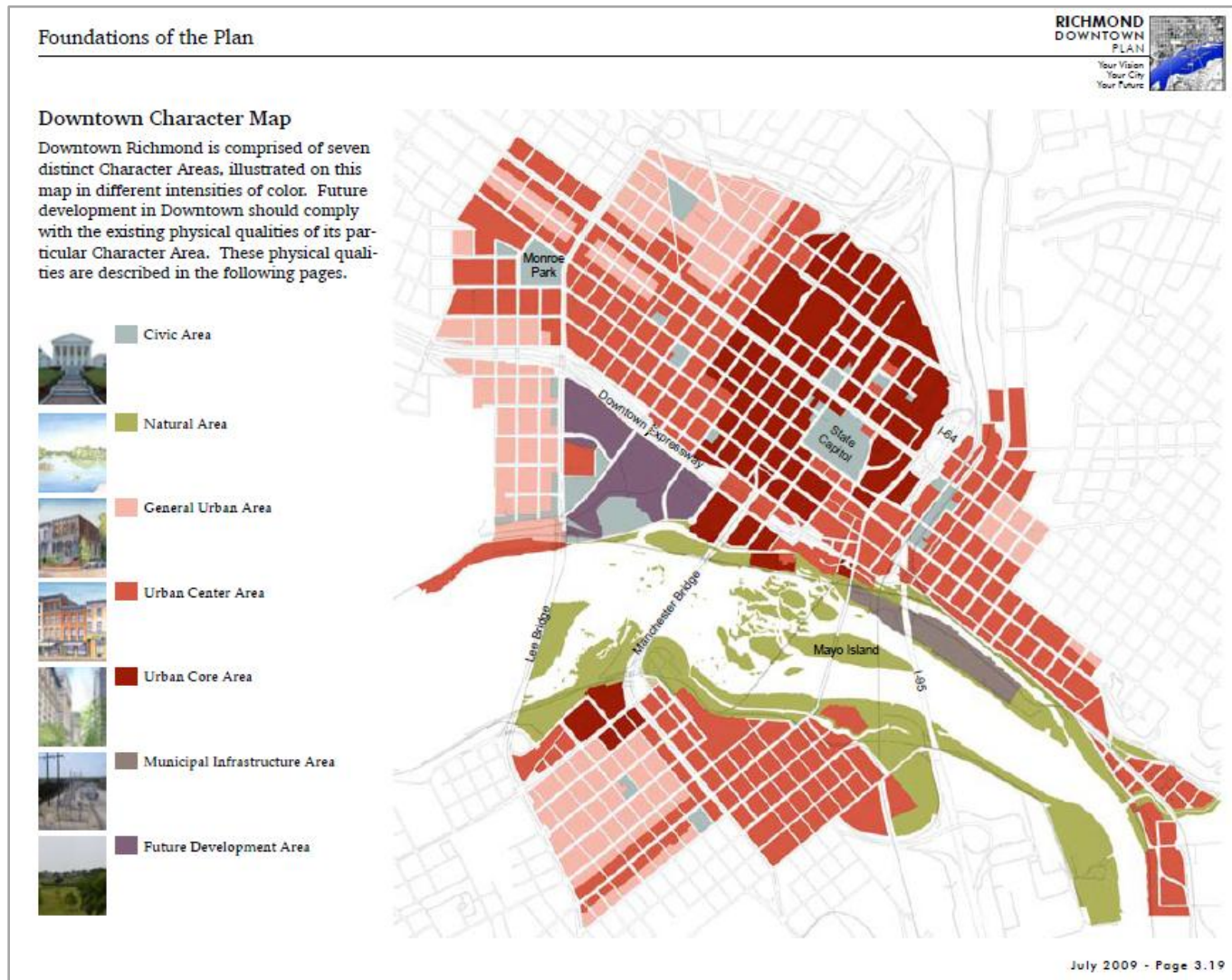
Source: Photo taken by author October 2015



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015

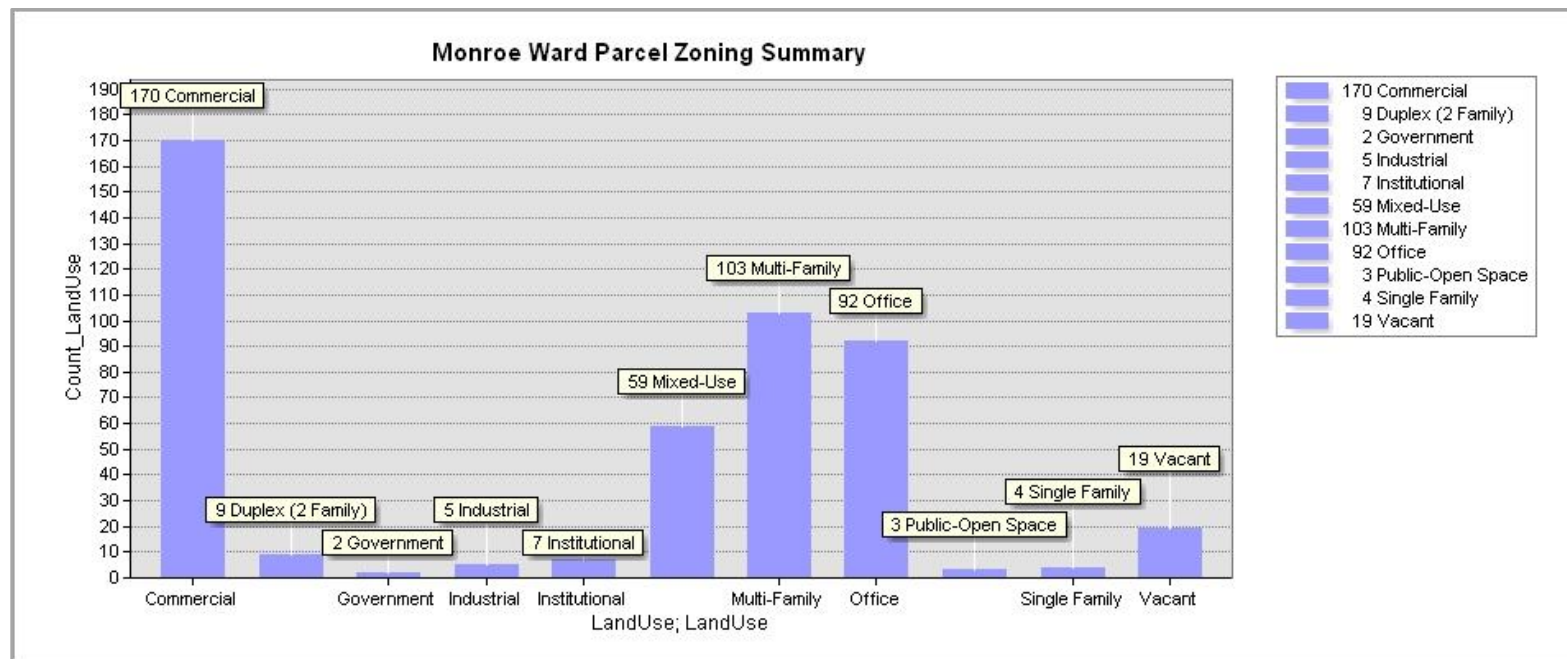


## Appendix C - Downtown Character Designation Map



Source: City of Richmond Downtown Plan 2009

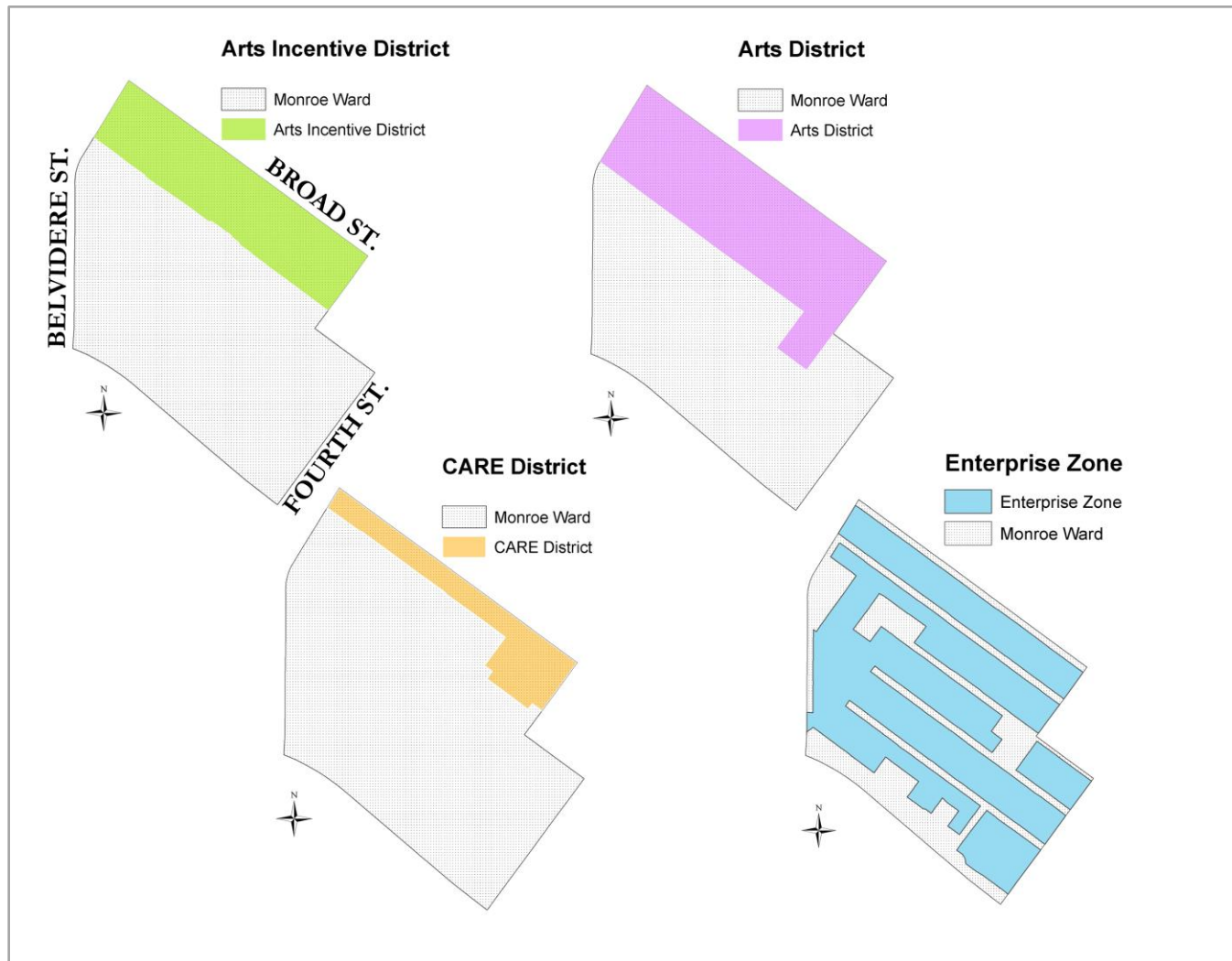
## Appendix D - Monroe Ward Parcel Zoning Summary



Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015

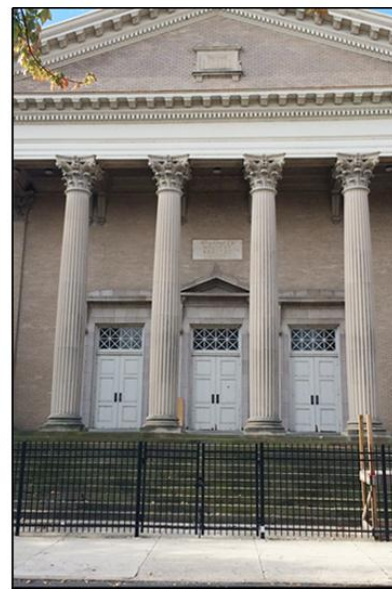
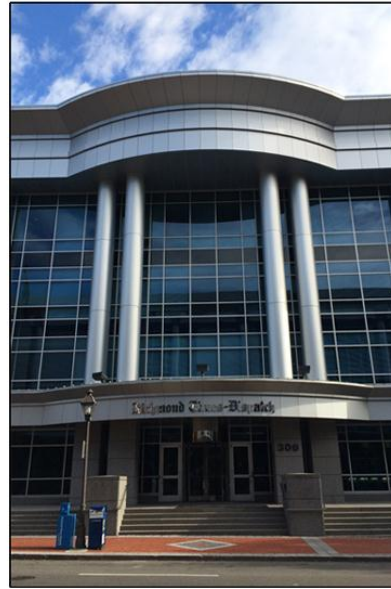
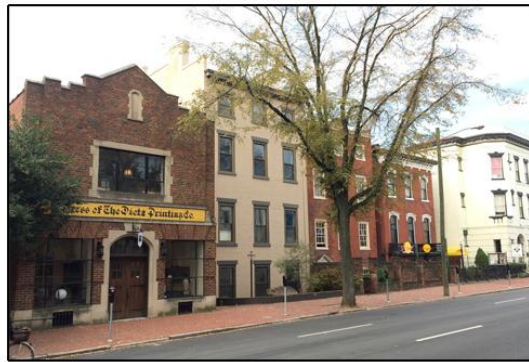


## Appendix E - Monroe Ward Overlay Districts



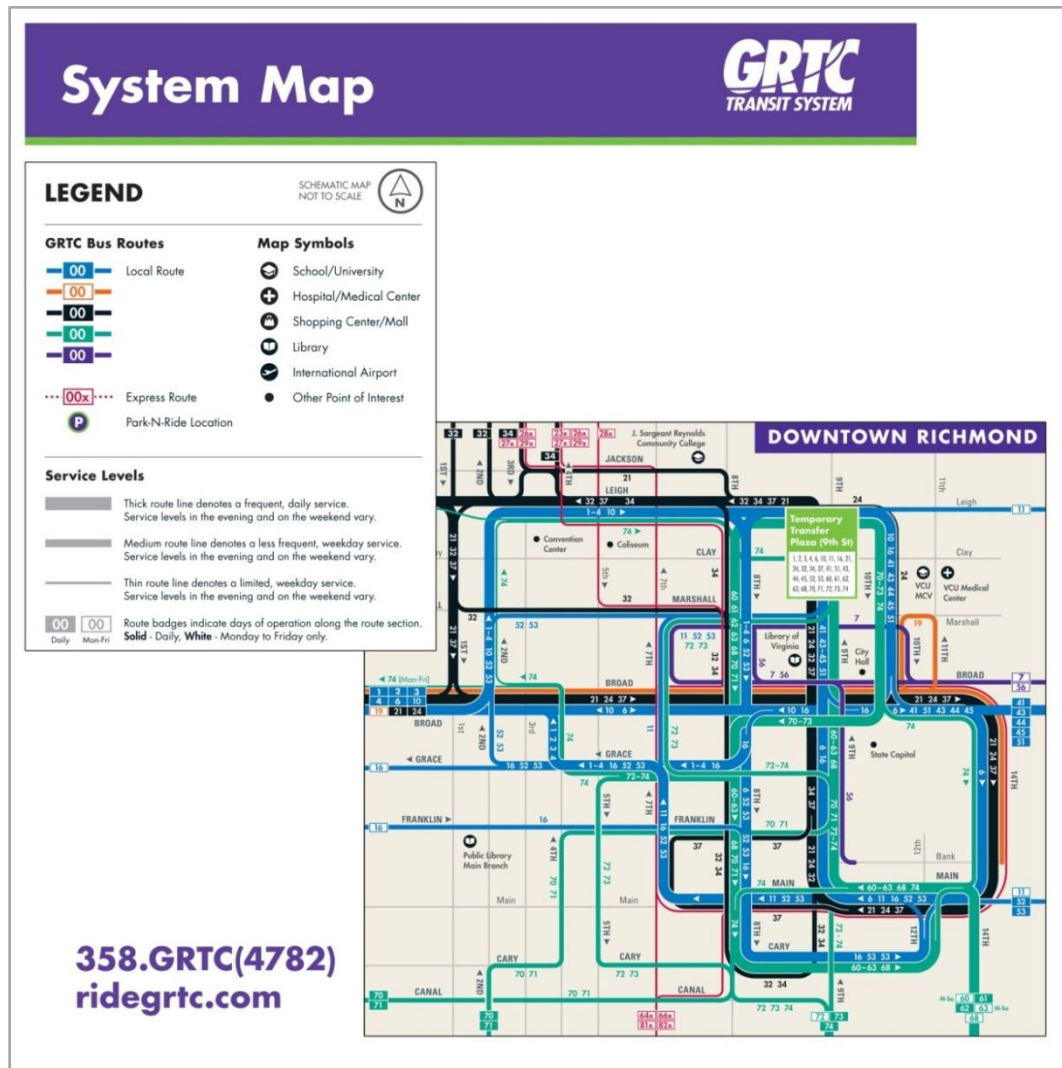
Source: City of Richmond GIS Data October 2015

## Appendix F - Existing Building Styles in Monroe Ward



Source: Photos taken by author October 2015

Appendix G - GRTC Bus Routes in Downtown Including Monroe Ward (Bottom Left Corner)



Source: GRTC Ridefinders October 2015

## Appendix H - Off-Street Parking Requirements

Sec. 114-710.1 Minimum number of (off-street) spaces required for particular uses.	
Use	No. of Space Required
Dwelling, two-family	2
Dwelling, multifamily*	1 per dwelling unit
Church	1 per 8 seats in main auditorium
Office	1 per 300 sq.ft. of floor area up to 1,500 sq.ft. 1 additional for every 400 sq. ft. in excess
Restaurant or similar	1 per 100 sq.ft. of floor area
Grocery Store	1 per 150 sq.ft. of floor area. 1 per 300 sq.ft. if over 5000 sq. ft. floor area
Manufacturing / Processing	1 per 2 employee and for required business vehicles
Retail Establishment	1 per 300 sq.ft. of floor area
*more spaces may be required depending on building configuration	

Source: (City of Richmond, 2013)



# Appendix I - Public Parking Structure with Monroe Ward Boundary in Black



Source: GRTC Ridefinders October 2015



Appendix J - 2002 Desman Associates Data for City of Richmond Parking Plan

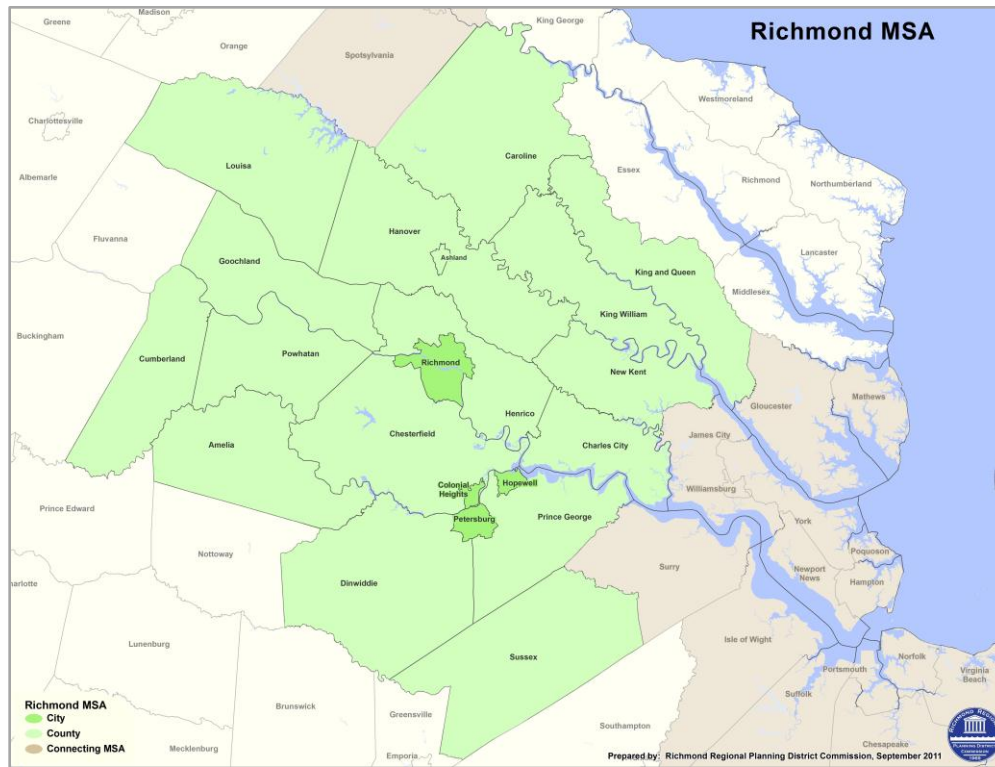
Summary of Off-Street Peak Period Utilization (Surplus or Deficit)					
Publicly Available Parking Table 2a					
District/Ward	Parking Supply	Operational Capacity (90%)	Peak Occupancy	%	Surplus /Deficit
Shockoe Bottom	525	473	273	52%	200
Shockoe Slip	1,953	1,758	1,773	91%	-15
Central Office District	5,215	4,694	4,610	88%	84
Capitol District	2,053	1,848	1,637	80%	211
Biotech/MCV District	4,260	3,834	4,109	96%	-275
City Center	6,454	5,809	4,131	64%	1,678
Gambles Hill	72	65	32	44%	33
Monroe Ward	1,490	1,341	739	50%	602
Jackson Ward	285	257	83	29%	174
VCU District	2,032	1,829	535	26%	1,294
Fan	0	0	0	0%	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,339</b>	<b>21,905</b>	<b>17,922</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>3,983</b>
Private/Restricted Parking Table 2b					
District/Ward	Parking Supply	Operational Capacity (90%)	Peak Occupancy	%	Surplus /Deficit
Shockoe Bottom	1,871	1,684	1,176	63%	508
Shockoe Slip	741	667	500	67%	167
Central Office District	845	761	664	79%	97
Capitol District	3,254	2,929	2,979	92%	-50
Biotech/MCV District	2,092	1,883	1,667	80%	216
City Center	384	346	347	90%	-1
Gambles Hill	1,508	1,357	1,142	76%	215
Monroe Ward	2,411	2,170	953	40%	1,217
Jackson Ward	834	751	319	38%	432
VCU District	1,283	1,155	787	61%	368
Fan	243	219	13	5%	206
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,466</b>	<b>13,919</b>	<b>10,547</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>3,372</b>
Total Public & Private/Restricted Parking Table 2c					
District/Ward	Parking Supply	Operational Capacity (90%)	Peak Occupancy	%	Surplus /Deficit
Shockoe Bottom	2,396	2,156	1,449	60%	707
Shockoe Slip	2,694	2,425	2,273	84%	152
Central Office District	6,060	5,454	5,274	87%	180
Capitol District	5,307	4,776	4,616	87%	160
Biotech/MCV District	6,352	5,717	5,776	91%	-59
City Center	6,838	6,154	4,478	65%	1,676
Gambles Hill	1,580	1,422	1,174	74%	248
Monroe Ward	3,901	3,511	1,692	43%	1,819
Jackson Ward	1,119	1,007	402	36%	605
VCU District	3,315	2,984	1,322	40%	1,662
Fan	243	219	13	5%	206
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,805</b>	<b>35,825</b>	<b>28,469</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>7,356</b>
* Calculations do not include garages where access was prohibited.					

Source: (Desman Associates, 2002)

## Appendix K - Richmond MSA Composite Definition and Map in Green

Amelia County	Caroline County	Charles City County	Chesterfield County
Cumberland County	Dinwiddie County	Goochland County	Hanover County
Henrico County	King and Queen County	King William County	Louisa County
New Kent County	Powhatan County	Prince George County	Sussex County
Colonial Heights City	Hopewell City	Petersburg City	Richmond City

Source: [www.census.gov/population/metro/files/lists/2009/List1.txt](http://www.census.gov/population/metro/files/lists/2009/List1.txt)



Source: Richmond Regional Planning District Commission 2011

## Appendix L - Survey Questionnaire Part 1

1. Do you live or work in Downtown Richmond?	5. Overall, I think it is safe for pedestrians in Downtown Richmond	9. Which of the following do you think are lacking from the existing streetscape of Monroe Ward?
Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)	Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)	Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)
I live and work in Downtown Richmond (0.273) (6)	Strongly Agree (0.227) (5)	Trees and shade (0.571) (12)
I live in Downtown Richmond (0.091) (2)	Agree (0.364) (8)	Sufficient sidewalks (0.333) (7)
I work in Downtown Richmond (0.273) (6)	Neutral (0.227) (5)	Sidewalk seating (0.571) (12)
Neither (0.364) (8)	Disagree (0.182) (4)	Lighting (0.524) (11)
2. Do you live in the City of Richmond but outside of the downtown area?	Strongly Disagree (0) (0)	Safety measures (0.476) (10)
Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)	6. I think it is safe to regularly ride a bicycle in Downtown Richmond	Cleanliness (0.619) (13)
Yes (0.455) (10)	Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)	Other (please specify) (0.143) (3)
No (0.545) (12)	Strongly Agree (0.045) (1)	(1) Greenspace
3. Which of the following describe the reasons you most often visit Downtown Richmond?	Agree (0.364) (8)	(2) public green space
Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)	Neutral (0.318) (7)	(3) Public spaces that encourage neighborliness
Work (0.364) (8)	Disagree (0.273) (6)	10. How often do you go Downtown specifically to visit outdoor public spaces?
Reside (0.136) (3)	Strongly Disagree (0) (0)	Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)
Work and reside (0.227) (5)	7. Do you live in or own a business located in the Monroe Ward Neighborhood?	Often (0.238) (5)
Passing through (0.182) (4)	Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)	Occasionally (0.476) (10)
Outdoor recreation (0.636) (14)	I live in and own a business in Monroe Ward (0.048) (1)	Rarely (0.238) (5)
Shopping (0.273) (6)	I live in Monroe Ward (0.048) (1)	Never (0.048) (1)
Dining (0.909) (20)	I own a business in Monroe Ward (0.095) (2)	11. How necessary is public park space to the overall functioning and long-term success of Downtown Richmond?
Other (please specify) (2) (2)	Neither (0.81) (17)	Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)
(1) live entertainment	Other (please specify) (0) (0)	Very necessary (0.619) (13)
(2) First Fridays, other events, leisure activities	8. How would you describe the density of residents in just the Monroe Ward neighborhood?	Necessary (0.381) (8)
4. How would you describe the overall density of residents in Downtown Richmond?	Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)	Unnecessary (0) (0)
Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)	Just right (0.2) (4)	Very unnecessary (0) (0)
Just right (0.143) (3)	Too crowded (0) (0)	No comment (0) (0)
Too crowded (0) (0)	Too few residents (0.5) (10)	
Too few residents (0.762) (16)	Not sure (0.3) (6)	
Not sure (0.095) (2)	Other (please specify) (1) (1)	
Other (please specify) (2) (2)	(1) growing exponentially	
(1) growing exponentially		
It DRAMATICALLY depends on your neighborhood, but overall, I'm saying too few.		

Source: Survey Monkey Online Survey Results October 2015

## Appendix M - Survey Questionnaire Part 2

12. Downtown Richmond has an adequate amount of public park space for residents, visitors, and those that work in the area
Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)
Strongly Agree (0) (0)
Agree (0.19) (4)
Neutral (0.095) (2)
Disagree (0.571) (12)
Strongly Disagree (0.143) (3)
13. Public park space is necessary for attracting residents and businesses to the downtown area
Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)
Strongly Agree (0.429) (9)
Agree (0.524) (11)
Neutral (0.048) (1)
Disagree (0) (0)
Strongly Disagree (0) (0)
14. Public park space is a benefit for residents and business owners in close proximity to the park space
Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)
Strongly Agree (0.667) (14)
Agree (0.286) (6)
Neutral (0.048) (1)
Disagree (0) (0)
Strongly Disagree (0) (0)
15. Public park space is an appropriate potential use of existing land in Monroe Ward
Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)
Strongly Agree (0.1) (2)
Agree (0.7) (14)
Neutral (0.2) (4)
Disagree (0) (0)
Strongly Disagree (0) (0)
16. The location of public park space is not important as long as it exists
Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)
Strongly Agree (0) (0)
Agree (0) (0)
Neutral (0.105) (2)
Disagree (0.684) (13)
Strongly Disagree (0.211) (4)

17. Public park space in Monroe Ward should be a priority to attract more residents and businesses to the area
Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)
Strongly Agree (0.158) (3)
Agree (0.737) (14)
Neutral (0.105) (2)
Disagree (0) (0)
Strongly Disagree (0) (0)
18. The ability to walk to a public park from my home or place of business is important to me
Answer Options (Response Percent) (Response Count)
Strongly Agree (0.474) (9)
Agree (0.474) (9)
Neutral (0.053) (1)
Disagree (0) (0)
Strongly Disagree (0) (0)
19. Rate the following potential development options for Monroe Ward in terms of how important you think they are for improving the area
Answer Options
Public Space
Public Green Space
Rental Apartments
Owner-Occupied Residences
Single-Family Homes
Mixed Residential and Commercial Buildings
Parking Facilities
Civic Buildings or Public Institutions
Office Buildings
Shopping and Retail
20. Any additional comments here please
(1) Perception of public safety, appearance and cleanliness are critical.
(2) Need for practical, affordable retail (home goods, clothing etc.) not high-end boutique shops
(3) Fewer parking lots and deadlines!

Source: Survey Monkey Online Survey Results October 2015



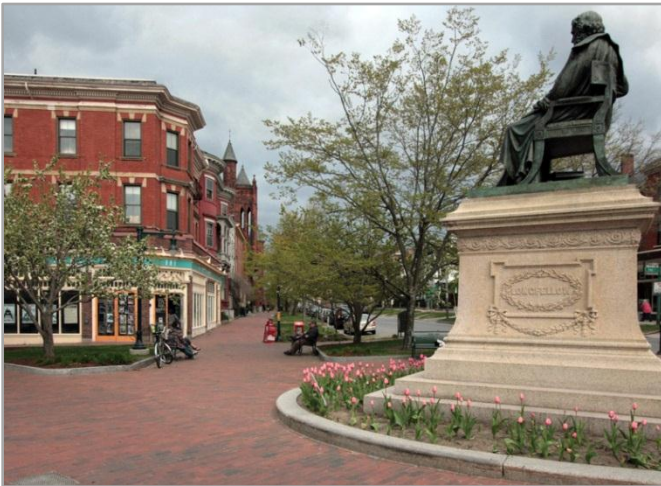
## Appendix N - T5 Transect Appropriate Precedent Images

### Setback, Frontages, Signage, and Lighting – New Orleans, La.



Source: ©Sandy Sorlien from [www.transect-collection.org](http://www.transect-collection.org)

### Civic Space and Building Massing – Portland, Me.



Source: ©Sandy Sorlien from [www.transect-collection.org](http://www.transect-collection.org)

### Upper Limits of Acceptable Building Height – Pottstown, Pa.



Source: ©Sandy Sorlien from [www.transect-collection.org](http://www.transect-collection.org)

### Surface Parking Fencing and Screening – Richmond, Va



Source: Photo taken by author October 2015



