

**Proposed revisions to 1/2/09 Draft Downtown Master Plan based on stakeholder input**

Asheville Downtown Master Plan planning team 2/12/09

Quoted text from the 1/2/09 draft Downtown Master Plan is shown in *italics*. Specific new text proposed is shown in *italics and underlined*. A version of the revised plan will be made available noting specific changes from the 1/2/09 draft.

Comments below are organized into an initial general category followed by a category for each of the seven strategies.

The comments and response to items in Strategy 4 (building height and massing) are generally more technical in nature than many other items below, and so tend to have more detail.

<i>Ref #</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Response in proposed final Downtown Master Plan</i>
<b>General Comments</b>		
G.1	Need accountability for plan implementation.	New implementation matrix indicates parties with key responsibility for action steps.
G.2	Make clear that the plan addresses disparate and opposing views, and that while few people may like everything in the Plan, everyone should be able to accept most elements of the plan – this should be the measure of its appropriateness. The DMP is in effect a “treaty” among diverse downtown stakeholders for cooperation around shared interests.	Add a chapter explaining this and documenting public process.
G.3	Avoid including detail in main strategies that may complicate/prevent City Council approval of overall plan concepts, that may need periodic revision in the future (i.e. after pilot period for DMP elements), that distract from the main DMP concepts and/or represent examples of initiatives as opposed to specific recommended initiatives.	Relocate secondary-level detail from main strategy chapter to the associated appendix (applies mostly to dimensions for building massing and design guidelines in strategies 4 and 5, but also ideas like outdoor security cameras that are examples of potential actions rather than core recommendations; and to specifics such as priority streets for Bicycle plan implementation in 2B).
G.4		Graphic layout and font styles in Executive Summary will be applied to whole document to improve coherence and legibility

<b>Strategy 1 - Cultivate Downtown’s essential cultural and historic resources</b>		
1.1	While the plan rightly addresses individual artists, it should also devote more attention to major downtown arts institutions and creative entrepreneurs/businesses.	In overview and goals section, add mention/emphasis of institutions (including the Asheville Art Museum and Diana Wortham Theatre) as important anchors of Asheville’s strong reputation in the arts. Also added mention of commercial galleries. Under description of the Artist’s Resource Center (ARC), note its importance to established artists and creative industries as well as emerging artists (consolidate action steps 1E and 1C). Note Community Improvement District (CID) role (Strategy 7) in helping/incubating creative industries.
1.2	Make stronger case for increasing support for the arts in Asheville.	Add recommendation to benchmark Asheville arts support on per-capita basis relative to peer cities, and similar metrics.
1.3	Expand list of important partner organizations for the arts.	Add Convention & Visitors Bureau, A-B Tech, UNCA, Pack Square Conservancy
1.4	Note the significance of planned renovation/expansion of the Asheville Art Museum and Diana Wortham Theatre.	Note these as important catalyst projects for downtown and the Pack Square Cultural District
1.5	Address public art more effectively, including mention of the Public Art Board’s work on the Public Art Master Plan.	Advocate city support for these; address public art placement and funding opportunities more explicitly through Strategies 3 and 7 respectively
1.6	Provide more explicit arts funding strategy.	Add direct reference to Strategy 7’s Community Benefits Program as an important new revenue source. Emphasize importance of budgeting for sustained support of programs/facilities.
1.7	Downtown already has gallery crawls.	Advocate “expanding,” not “holding,” these.
1.8	Advocate high-quality new architecture as important manifestation of the arts.	Note this in Strategies 1, 4 and 5.
1.9	Note Asheville’s “Preserve America Community” status.	Added to mention of “Destination of Distinction”.
1.10	Note additional partner organizations for preservation.	Add mention of roles of/partnership with Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County, and Blue Ridge National Heritage Area.
1.11	The Downtown Commission, in role of providing project design review, needs representation from the preservation community.	Add this recommendation to action steps 1M and 6G.

1.12		Clarify meaning of “retro-fit tax credits”.	Expand text to clarify that this refers to the growing need for a new cycle of renovation/repairs to the historic buildings renovated in the 1980’s era, through tax-credits and/or other incentives.
1.13		Development of new structures atop historic buildings has had mixed results.	Deepen required setback atop historic structures from 10 to 40 feet.
<b>Strategy 2 - Expand convenient choices for downtown access and mobility</b>			
2.1		Wayfinding signage should reference businesses as well as major public destinations.	Add this to mention of wayfinding in 2E.
2.2			Consolidate/clarify action step hierarchy: combine 2D (curb cuts) with 2C (walking network); fold 2G (shuttle-parking coordination) into 2A (shuttle study); and fold 2H (shared-car parking) into 2F (parking efficiency, convenience etc)
<b>Strategy 3 - Inaugurate an urban design framework to extend Downtown’s sense of place and community</b>			
3.1		The concept of “rooftop vista parks” seems impractical.	Clarify text to encourage private rooftop restaurants, observation decks and similar private facilities offering the public access to views.
3.2		Directly call for plans for neighborhoods and corridor areas adjacent to downtown.	Text will do this in 3C.
3.3		Need to more directly address the need for/value of quality streetscape.	Add action step in Strategy 3 specifically addressing streetscape, and advocating more attention to achieving and updating goals of the Asheville Pedestrian Thoroughfare Plan and Downtown Streetscape Plan; cross-reference with action step 2C.

Strategy 4 – Shape building form to promote quality of place			
4.1	Overall/General	Make the cumulative layers of height and massing regulations more understandable.	Add diagram that summarizes height control mechanisms and their order of application.
4.2		Improve justification for tallest height zone.	Clarify that the tallest building category can be appropriate in areas of low and high topography alike.
4.3		Street type names (active, gateway, neighborhood, etc.) should be coordinated with the current Asheville terminology.	To reflect the language used in the 2002 Center City Plan: 1) Refer to “Active/gateway streets” as “ <u>gateway corridor streets</u> ” in the Plan. 2) Refer to “Active streets” as “ <u>primary streets</u> ” in the Plan. 3) Refer to “Neighborhood streets” as “ <u>secondary streets</u> ” in the Plan. 4) Still refer to “Service streets” as “service streets” in the Plan. 5) Refer to “Priority walkable streets” as “ <u>key pedestrian streets</u> ” in the Plan.
4.4		Height should reflect Context Transition Edge first, Height Zone second, and Max. Street Edge Height last (in order of precedence).	Reorder and revise text to clarify precedence of height regulations.
4.5		Adjust public view corridors: Add west-view locations such as Patton at Otis or Haywood St at Montford Avenue, College Street at the Tunnel edge for a key view of downtown. Views to the north-west at ground level are limited at MLK Park, Stephens Lee and at McCormack Field.	Adjust the View Corridors diagram to reflect these suggestions.
4.6		Use street hierarchy maps to encourage building frontages along Gateway Corridor and Primary streets and service entrances along Service Streets. In the event that a development fronts on more than one street, the service entrance will be situated along the less prominent street and should be screened to the extent possible.	Add a recommendation under Street Orientation that reads: “ <i>Where possible, main building entrances are located along Gateway Corridor and Primary streets, while service entrances are located Service Streets. In the event that a development fronts multiple streets, the service entrance should be located along the less prominent street and should be screened to the extent possible.</i> ”
4.7		Show an example of what could have been built on the BB&T site, according the proposed guidelines.	Add an example of what could have been built on the BB&T site to the Appendix for Strategy 4, along with the massing modification examples of the BB&T building and the Renaissance Hotel building.

		<p>Following the proposed guidelines, just over 200,000 square feet of development could be built on the BB&amp;T site—with more sensitive massing than the existing building, which is approximately 150,000 square feet. Height would be reduced from 18 to 12-stories; however, by taking advantage of the western (Lexington Avenue) side of the parcel, that square footage could be more than compensated. Floorplates above the 75-foot height threshold are limited to 30% of the site area (just under 8,000 square feet per floorplate). Building length above the 75-foot height threshold is limited to 150-feet in its longest dimension (parallel to Broadway). Of the two options available under the Front/Side Stepback requirement, it would be most beneficial for the developer to provide for Option One (10-foot front stepback above the established streetwall). Streetwall height would be limited to: 55-feet along Patton; 45-feet along Lexington and College; and approximately 70-feet along Broadway. At the maximum 145-foot height, shadows do not impact Pack Square until after 2:00 pm on the equinox. Taller portions of the streetwall (“<i>one-third of the total façade length may be double the height of the established streetwall</i>”) are located near the most prominent intersection, Broadway and Patton. The site does not fall within any view corridors, but since the project is over 75-feet in height, “before and after” photomontages or illustrations would need to be provided from the designated vista points.</p>
<p>4.8</p>	<p>Add a requirement that eliminates surface parking lots along Primary Pedestrian Streets.</p>	<p>Add a recommendation under the Street Orientation section of the Design Review Checklist that reads: “<u><i>Along Gateway Corridor, Primary, and Secondary streets, surface parking lots are masked from the street by a habitable building. (See the Street Hierarchy diagram for clarification of street types.)</i></u>”</p>

4.9		Add a requirement that creates an active ground floor use for parking garages along Primary Pedestrian Streets.	Add a recommendation under the Street Orientation section of the Design Review Checklist that reads: <u>“Along Gateway Corridor, Primary, and Secondary streets, the first-story of any parking structure is masked by a habitable liner building and the decks above are be screened from view by a designed facade consistent with the overall building design. (See the Street Hierarchy diagram for clarification of street types.) (UDO)”</u>
4.10	Context Transition Req.	To clarify the Context Transition Edge, there should be a change to allow a two-story minimum structure on the site.	Add an exception to the Context Edge requirement of the Design Review Checklist that states: <u>“Regardless of the Context Transition Edge, two-stories of height are allowed where permitted by current zoning.”</u>
4.11		In addition a 15-foot setback should be required along the shared parcel side directly adjacent to residentially zoned properties... to be consistent with the residential districts surrounding downtown.	Add text to the Context Edge Requirement of the Design Review Checklist so that if <u>“the site abuts a residentially zoned property, a 15-foot setback from that property is provided.”</u>
4.12	Height Zone Req.	Clarify the depth of location of height zone boundaries where they cross a parcel, since the exact location will be important (Req. 1 - Height Zone)	Modify the Building Height Zones diagram to show clearer boundaries between the height zones. In some cases, height zone boundaries follow existing property lines, and will be noted as so. In other cases, height zone boundaries are set back 40-feet from the adjacent right-of-way and will be noted as so.
4.13		Since the height is continuously referenced across a site then the tops of buildings will have to be adjusted upward or downward to reflect the height change as well. It may be helpful to create a width module for situations when the height must transition such as 30' to provide a useful floor width.	Add wording to read <u>“Where the topographic change across a site exceeds 30-feet, the maximum allowed streetwall height may be exceeded on the low side by one-story.”</u> It is important to note that where topography does vary across a site, the practical building height may be lower than the allowable streetwall height along the high side.

<p>4.14</p>	<p>Max. Street Edge Height Req./Front Stepback Req.</p>	<p>A service street or secondary street should not need to provide a streetwall setback and should allow the continuation of the Gateway Corridor or Primary street edge height to carry around to the secondary street.</p> <p>For corner lots the streetwall of the higher side should be allowed to wrap around the corner of the building to provide a transition to the other side of the building for a distance of so many feet.</p>	<p>Add an exception to the Maximum Street Edge Height requirement that reads: <u><i>“Building edges along service class streets are exempt from this requirement.”</i></u></p> <p>Add text to the Maximum Street Edge Height (streetwall) requirement that reads: <u><i>“For buildings with multiple street frontages, each façade must meet the setback requirement above the streetwall (or their alternatives) accordingly. At street intersections, the taller streetwall height may wrap around the corner for up to 30-feet of the other façade.”</i></u></p> <p>This note will be added: <u><i>“Note: The required setback depth shall be measured from the property line or required façade setback line, if any.”</i></u></p>
<p>4.15</p>	<p>Max. Street Edge Height Req./Front Stepback Req.</p>	<p>A building should be able to provide an alternative to the streetwall setback requirement.</p>	<p>Remove and rewrite the former Side Stepback requirement as an alternative option for the Front Stepback requirement.</p> <p><b><u><i>Overall building height is 75-feet or less:</i></u></b></p> <p><u><i>□ Option One: Where buildings meet the right-of-way, a front setback of at least 10-feet is provided above the established streetwall at public streets.</i></u></p> <p><u><i>□ Option Two: Building mass above the established streetwall height observes a cumulative 40-foot setback from side property lines. The 40-feet may be reached by combining side setbacks amongst the building sides. (i.e.: 20-feet at each side, or combined 40-feet on one side and 0-feet on the second side)</i></u></p> <p><u><i>□ Option Three: Development air-rights have been purchased over the adjacent property, covering an area equal to the above stated side step-back. Building mass may be built directly to the property line above the established streetwall height at adjacent parcels.</i></u></p>

	<p><b><u>Overall building height is greater than 75-feet:</u></b></p> <p><u>□ Option One: Where buildings meet the right-of-way, a front setback of at least 10-feet is provided above the established streetwall at public streets.</u></p> <p><u>□ Option Two: Building mass above the established streetwall height observes a cumulative side setback equal to or greater than the length of the proposed building's primary street-front façade above the 75-foot level (or cumulative façade length for buildings facing multiple streets). The setback distance may be reached by combining side setbacks amongst the building sides. (i.e.: 20-feet at each side, or combined 40-feet on one side and 0-feet on the second side)</u></p> <p><u>□ Option Three: Development air-rights have been purchased over the adjacent property, covering an area equal to the above stated side step-back. Building mass may be built directly to the property line above the established streetwall height at adjacent parcels.</u></p>
--	--

4.16	Could the Jackson Building be built according to the proposed guidelines?	<p>The options described above in item 4.15 would enable construction of the Jackson Building today. A diagram will be added to the Strategy 5 Appendix that uses the Jackson Building as an example of a building that complies with this exception.</p> <p>Instead of complying with Option One of Requirement 5 (10-foot front setback), this building can comply with Option Two (side step-backs equivalent to a length of the façade above the 75-foot level). Of the Jackson Building’s facades that abut public streets and protrude above the 75-foot level, their measurements are approximately 30-feet along S. Pack Square, and 70-feet along Market Street. Since the development fronts more than one public street, these two façade lengths can be added together, to total 90-feet. A side setback equal to the 90-feet must be provided above the 75-foot level, in any distribution, amongst the two sides. A side setback of approximately 40-feet has been provided above the 75-foot level along Market Street. A side setback of approximately 60-feet has been provided above the 75-foot level along S. Pack Square. Combined, this side setback is roughly 100-feet, more than satisfying the 90-feet required.</p>
------	---	--

4.17		A whole building may be set back for certain uses (courtyard example) and then go up without a setback for specific situations. (currently in the UDO)	<p>Include a new <u>Build-to requirement</u> under the Street Orientation section of the Proposed Project Review Checklist that reads:</p> <p><u>“Option One: A maximum setback of zero feet from the right of way line is observed. (UDO)”</u></p> <p><u>Option Two: A publicly accessible courtyard or plaza space is provided in the setback area. (UDO)*</u></p> <p><u>Option Three: An adopted plan or other official document of the city recommends a greater setback. (UDO)*</u></p> <p><u>Option Four: A greater setback has been permitted by the downtown commission as part of a design review process. (UDO)*”</u></p>
4.18	Min. Street Edge Height Req.	Maintain the existing UDO requirement for a two-story minimum as opposed to the 25’ height minimum.	Change text to read: “...height at the street edge is at least <u>two-stories.</u> ” An exception will be added to this requirement to read: <u>“Interior mezzanine floors may be counted as a second floor if they appear as so from the exterior.”</u>
4.19	Min. Street Edge Height Req.	What happens with the required two-story street edge if a building site is adjacent to more than one ROW? (Example: Renaissance Hotel site)	Modify the wording of the Minimum Street Edge Height Requirement to read: <u>“Where buildings approach the street, height at the street edge is at least two-stories.”</u>
4.20	Max. Floorplate Size Req.	Allow floorplates of up to 50% of lot area to be approved by City Council.	<p>Add an exception to the Floorplate Size requirement (applying only to building volumes above 75-feet on sites 20,000 square feet or larger) that reads: <u>“Buildings with floorplate areas of up to 50% of the site area may be approved by the City Council if surrounded by substantial permanent public or private open space that allows for views and access to direct sunlight.”</u></p> <p>Readers will also be referred to a set of diagrams that feature the Battery Park Hotel and the Public Service building as examples of existing downtown buildings that helped form the basis for the 30% requirement.</p>

4.21	Side Stepback Req.	For smaller narrower lots, the side stepback may not be required to be 20-feet each side, but instead can match the building code requirements (lots 60-feet or less)	The former Side Stepback requirement will be changed to an alternative to the Front Stepback above the streetwall. (See comment and response #4.15.) The comment at left no longer applies.
4.22	Tall Building Caps Req.	There should be some criteria to determine the characteristics of a successful building cap and provide example images from Asheville buildings.	<p>Add text to the Tall Building Caps requirement that reads:</p> <p><i>“For buildings that rise above the 75-foot threshold, building caps are provided and they:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>help define the building’s character and scale from the street;</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>use slender building proportions that preserve and/or frame views—no broad slabs block major portions of any views;</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>are designed as attractive landmarks with special forms and materials;</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>are coordinated with building form to distinguish a base middle and top; and,</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>express a character uniquely appropriate to downtown Asheville; and,</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>enhance the overall skyline of Downtown Asheville.”</i> <p>Readers will also be referred to a set of images that feature the Jackson building, City Hall, and the proposed Ellington building as examples of buildings that provide appropriate building caps.</p> </li></ul>
4.23	Max. Horizontal Dimension Req.	Initiate the Maximum Horizontal Dimension requirement above 75’ to coordinate with other requirements.	<p>Alter the Maximum Horizontal Dimension requirement to read:</p> <p><i>“For floors above the established 75-foot height threshold, the maximum horizontal dimension in any direction is limited to 145-feet* for the first floor above the established 75-foot height threshold.</i></p>
4.24	Max. Horizontal Dimension Req.	Asheville has few horizontal dimensions at higher points in existing buildings approaching 150’ so this dimension may be difficult to imagine.	<p><i>* based on the dimension of the longest façade of the Flatiron building”</i></p> <p>Readers will also be referred to a set of images that feature the Flatiron building (145-ft in its longest dimension) and the County Building (approx. 90-ft in its longest dimension) as examples.</p>

4.25		It is more realistic to expect a 10' stepback every 5 floors instead of 2' per floor to reflect standard building methods.	This portion of the requirement was previously removed from Strategy 4, but inadvertently included in the appendix to Strategy 5. The only requirement will be that building height above the 75-foot height threshold be limited to 145-feet (the longest dimension of the Flatiron building). See responses to comments 4.24 and 4.25.
4.26	Shadow Impacts Req.	Could the shadows requirement (for parks) be expanded to include historic buildings as well?	Expand the shadow impact criteria from parks to include <i>“historic resources with features or details that are sunlight-dependant and make such resources significant (i.e.: fine stained-glass windows or sculptural ornaments)”</i> .
4.27	Side Façade Glazing Req.	The side façade glazing requirement (under Façade Materials) should only apply above the 75-foot height threshold.	Alter the Side Façade Glazing requirement to read: <i>“Side façades above the 75-foot height threshold are composed of at least 25% glazing.”</i>
<b>Strategy 5- Update downtown design guidelines to be current, clear, and promote sustainable development</b>			
5.1		Soften the recommendation that multifamily residential buildings provide individual entrances to ground level units; this is a good approach, but central lobbies can be an appropriate approach as well.	Change text to offer options.
5.2		Further condense the proposed design review checklist in the appendix; not necessary to so literally include redundant items from current design guidelines.	Streamline checklist by consolidating similar guidelines.

<b>Strategy 6 - Implement a transparent project review process</b>		
6.1	Developer-sponsored public meetings must be held to standard of providing effective two-way dialogue between developer and community.	Add text noting that city planning/review staff member should attend the developer-sponsored meeting to ensure compliance.
6.2	Note that Downtown Commission members must avoid conflict-of-interest (perceived or actual) in design review capacity.	In 6G, note need for DC members to recuse themselves from review when potential conflict-of-interest occurs.
6.3	Add mechanism for citizens to appeal project review decisions (i.e. by petition)	Clarify and emphasize the capacity of the already proposed changes to accommodate more effective public input sooner in the development review process. Also emphasize the ultimate political accountability of City Council for their appointments of key decision-makers to Planning & Zoning Commission, Downtown Commission and city staff. The effectiveness and legality of adding an official petition-based appeal mechanism is in doubt and undergoing further review by the planning team.
<b>Strategy 7 - Nurture a sustainable and resilient economy to help manage and redevelop downtown Asheville</b>		
7.1	The ADD or CID will impose an unneeded layer of government bureaucracy, cost and frustration, impeding downtown functions and competitiveness. City government not interested in leading/funding the CID. CID takes on major powers but lacks public accountability.	Clarify text on several points to emphasize that the intrinsic CID rationale is that its leadership, and eventually funding, come from outside of government, and instead from property & business owners and other downtown stakeholders. These stakeholders have a vested interest in keeping the CID lean and efficient. In action step 7A, include “property owners” among key constituencies, and remove reference to CID beginning as a direct function of the City. CID leadership should include non-voting representatives of city government and possibly other important organizations (i.e. Chamber of Commerce). The CID is intended to improve effectiveness of existing downtown organizations by improving communications and cooperation among them, rather than adding a redundant level of management or cost. A potential future redevelopment authority role for the CID is not central to its mission, and if pursued, must be closely tied to city government policy and accountability. Appendix to include more detailed description of CID roles, models,

		leadership composition, pursuit group composition, and reference sources.
7.2	“ADD” is an unfortunate name for the downtown management entity	Use instead the generic term CID, for Community Improvement District, to more accurately convey intent of the organization, and to allow for the creative, compelling agency name that Asheville stakeholders will ultimately devise.
7.3	Address potential overlap/role of Downtown Association with CID	Note that the ADA is a good model for many of the functions and the leadership/composition of the recommended CID.
7.4	Better emphasize CID relevance to arts community members	Note major opportunities for CID collaboration with/support of Asheville Area Arts Council., Pack Square Conservancy, arts-related businesses; possible role as business and arts incubator.
7.5	Improve Strategy 7 title statement, which contains two important concepts that are inappropriately joined in the wording	Change wording to “Nurture a sustainable and resilient economy through focused management of downtown”.
7.6	Verify Community Benefits Program funding feasibility. Prevent CBP costs from discouraging development downtown.	Add appendix section detailing potential CBP revenue scenarios and balance of impacts on revenue sources.