

Top right: Interactive public art, as seen in this photograph from Denver, CO, affords users the opportunity to become further involved in the experience of downtown.

Bottom right: Opportunities for public art, such as this from London, England, may exist on building facades in Calder Way.

THEME 3 – CONNECTING TO THE DISTRICT: CREATING A COMFORTABLE, COHESIVE AND ATTRACTIVE DOWNTOWN

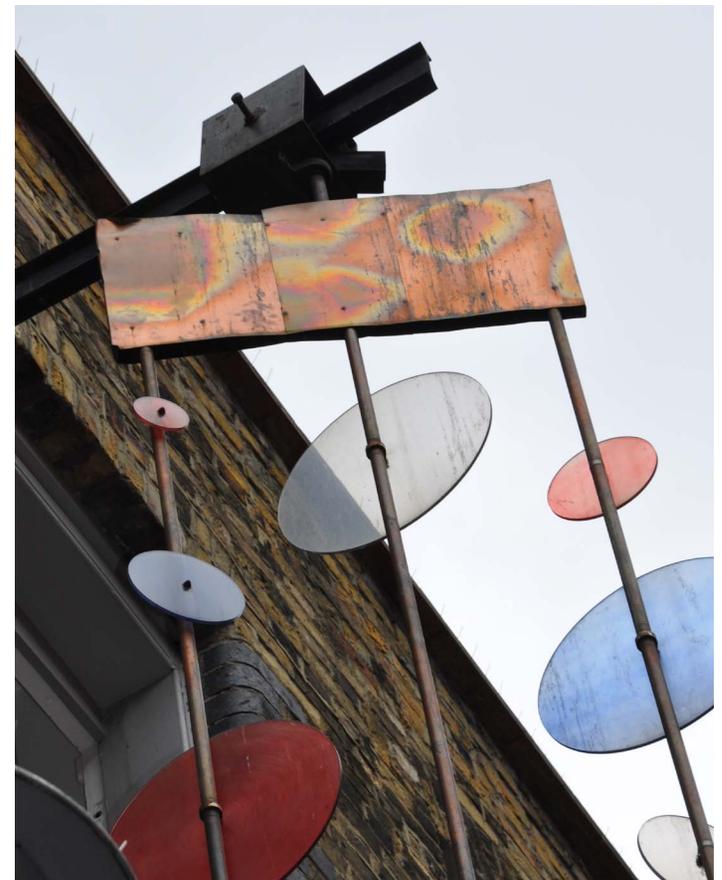
Overview

An attractive, vibrant public realm is critical for a successful downtown, not only in terms of aesthetics, but, more importantly, in terms of creating an environment where people prefer walking, further reducing dependency on the automobile. Public realm enhancements play an important role in the transportation-related recommendations as described under Theme 2, particularly in terms of connecting visitors to parking resources and supporting transit and bicycle usage. In addition, they are vital in supporting goals of enhancing the town-gown relationship between downtown and the Penn State campus.

It is important to understand that the elements that contribute to an attractive public realm are many and include great open spaces, vibrant streetscapes, public art, programming of activities and attractive architecture. This section of the report describes recommendations as they relate to public art, architectural design, open space opportunities and streetscapes. Vibrant streetscape environments are particularly important for State College which, with the exception of the University campus, lacks a significant open space network found in many downtowns. The streets, therefore, are the open spaces and should be very attractive and comfortable places for people to be.

Recommendations

For the recommendations listed below, the primary implementation partners (the organizations that takes the lead in implementation) are bolded and other potential supporting partners appear unbolded.



3-A: Downtown Public Art Program

Using the initial recommendations outlined in this plan and the PSU Public Art Master Plan as a guideline, develop a detailed master plan and strategy for providing downtown public art.

Implementation: Borough of State College, Design Review Board, Art in Public Places Committee

Penn State's Palmer Museum has expressed an interest in having more interaction with downtown and there is the opportunity to develop a public art master plan for downtown, similar to the one for campus. A master plan for public art might include the following elements:

Locations for Public Art: The plan should identify a hierarchy of locations for public art along with appropriate format (sculpture, mural, pavement, facade, etc.). Emphasis should be on highly visible sites that are at key pedestrian nodes/crossroads—particularly for art that is more iconic—as well as less public spaces such as building entrances and courtyards. Refer to *Exhibit 16: Proposed Open Space Network*.

Criteria: The plan should establish criteria related to quality of the public art and, in particular, require relevance to the site. “Plop art”—art that is put down simply to fulfill a requirement with no relation to context—should be avoided. Art that incorporates use of recycled materials and promotes sustainable practices should be encouraged.

Committee: The plan might outline an implementing organization in the form of a public arts committee. This could be an off-shoot of the existing public arts committee for Penn State or it could be a separate organization. If a separate organization, it should coordinate efforts with Penn State's committee to encourage opportunities to strengthen the town-gown relationship. The committee could include graduate students, art education students, merchant representatives, artists from the Centre Region and residents.

Several communities across the country (Bend, OR;



Left: Public art in Greenville, SC exemplifies materials compatible with those of the streetscape and are appropriately located so as to not inhibit pedestrian flow along the sidewalk.

Opposite: Exhibit 16 illustrates recommendations for improving and expanding the downtown open space network, taking into account key pedestrian nodes, proximity to public transit stops and opportunities for public art.

Austin, TX; and Greenville, SC) have an Art in Public Places Commission that is appointed directly to review art placement and design with an overarching goal to foster quality art in the community. Each of these communities' programs could be explored for model guidelines.

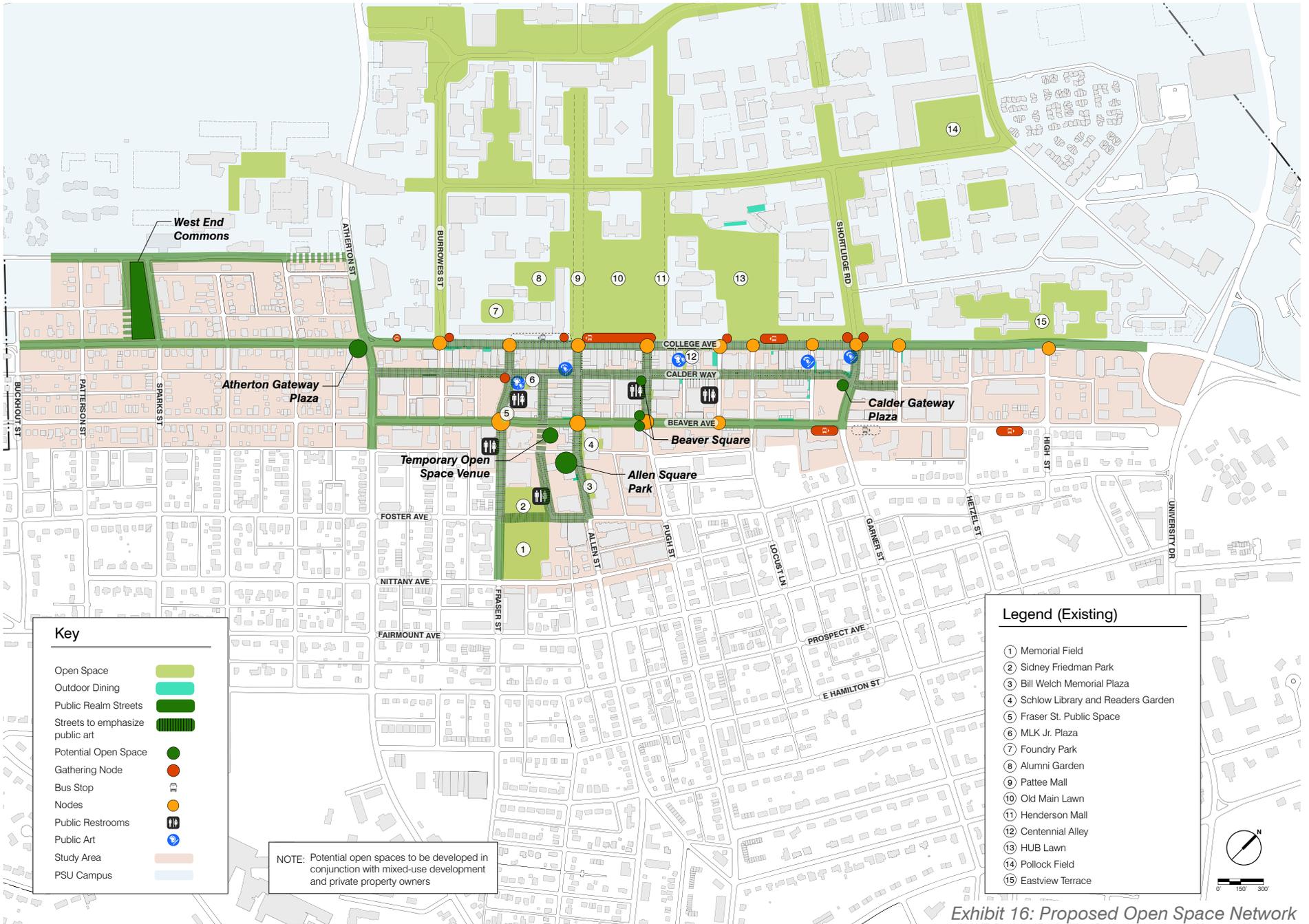
3-B: Downtown Open Space Network

Explore opportunities to incorporate a network of small gathering places downtown.

Implementation: Property Owners

Few opportunities exist in Downtown State College to create a significant and successful open space or “town square.” Additional open spaces and gathering spaces should primarily be achieved through the creation of bulb-outs at street intersections, expanded sidewalks where possible and through the use of “shared space”—streets that emphasize the pedestrian can be closed for special events or during certain times of the week.

Consider short and long-term opportunities to continue to expand the downtown open space network with the addition of pocket parks, plazas and courtyards that connect with the public sidewalk network. As these spaces are developed, there is an opportunity to use these spaces as showcases for sustainable practices and may include innovative storm



Key

- Open Space
- Outdoor Dining
- Public Realm Streets
- Streets to emphasize public art
- Potential Open Space
- Gathering Node
- Bus Stop
- Nodes
- Public Restrooms
- Public Art
- Study Area
- PSU Campus

NOTE: Potential open spaces to be developed in conjunction with mixed-use development and private property owners

Legend (Existing)

- 1 Memorial Field
- 2 Sidney Friedman Park
- 3 Bill Welch Memorial Plaza
- 4 Schlow Library and Readers Garden
- 5 Fraser St. Public Space
- 6 MLK Jr. Plaza
- 7 Foundry Park
- 8 Alumni Garden
- 9 Pattee Mall
- 10 Old Main Lawn
- 11 Henderson Mall
- 12 Centennial Alley
- 13 HUB Lawn
- 14 Pollock Field
- 15 Eastview Terrace



Exhibit 16: Proposed Open Space Network

water management practices, rainwater capture from adjacent buildings (particularly if the open space is created in conjunction with new development), use of recycled materials, native plantings and educational interpretation. Opportunities for significant spaces are limited and related to redevelopment of private property, however, the following should be considered, as described below and identified on *Exhibit 16: Proposed Open Space Network* (previous page).

Allen Square Park: This site is located at the southwest corner of South Allen Street and West Highland Avenue. Currently it is occupied by the former Verizon Building (owned by the Borough) and a bank. While the bank has no plans to relocate, this property should be considered in the long term. It connects with Schlow Library and the Municipal Building, it is located at the high point along Allen Street so could be visible from College Avenue and it could be activated by future development on the post office property and the Beaver Avenue surface parking lot. In addition, it could also provide a connection to Sidney Friedman Park. This concept is illustrated in theme four.

Beaver Square (Potential): This site is located at the southwest corner of Beaver Avenue and Pugh Street where the existing CVS and parking lot are located. The site is connected to College Avenue along Pugh Street and is visible from College as well as centrally-located within the downtown. This site also has great potential as a redevelopment site for mixed-use development on its own or in conjunction with the Pugh Street Garage site and will be examined during Phase II of the master plan. Should this site be utilized for future development, consideration should be given to the potential for a small gathering space at the corner of Pugh and Beaver in conjunction with the development as illustrated in Theme 4. Similarly, any redevelopment of the Pugh Street Garage site should consider integrating a small gathering space, potentially at the corner of Beaver and Pugh or Pugh and Calder Way, also illustrated in Theme 4.

Calder Gateway Plaza (Potential): This is the southwest corner of Garner Street and Calder Way and has been



Milford, PA (top right) offers an example of a small plaza space/pocket park.

identified in previous master plans as a plaza opportunity and “gateway” to Calder Way. It would need to be incorporated into plans for the private development of that site and incentives might be offered to make it feasible for the property owner.

This site would be highly visible and well connected to College and Beaver Avenues. With the addition of bike lanes along this block of Garner Street, as discussed above, a small plaza area here should consider bicycle accommodations. This plaza will be explored further in Phase II as part of a redevelopment concept for the entire site. This concept is further illustrated in Theme 4.

West End Commons: The West End Revitalization Plan identified several alternative approaches to creating a park commons north of College Avenue in the vicinity of Sparks Street and West Campus Drive. This is a valid recommendation to create a central focus to the West End, particularly when considering that State College lacks any kind of “town square” space like this. The recommendation of this master plan is to continue to include this open space in the revitalization of the West End.

Atherton Gateway Plaza: New mixed-use development is planned for the southwest corner of Atherton Street and College Avenue. With this highly visible corner, there is an opportunity to work with the property owner to incorporate a small plaza area at the corner.

Temporary Open Space Venues (Potential): The existing Beaver Avenue surface parking lot, on the south side of Beaver Avenue and west of Allen Street, is quite pleasant with the abundant tree cover throughout the lot. This space could be an attractive venue for downtown events.

3-C: Cohesive Design

Adopt a cohesive family of design elements to use throughout the downtown streetscapes.

Implementation: *Design Review Board, Property Owners*

Design elements should be appropriate to the streetscape type (described above) to reinforce the downtown identity and establish continuity within the public realm. State College is already using many standards and these should be formally adopted. These and other recommended standards are described in Appendix C: Design Guide and should be incorporated into the DRB's design guide update.

3-D: Streetscape Typologies

Establish a hierarchy of street typologies to incorporate into the DRB's design guide update and help guide streetscape design decisions and priorities.

Implementation: *Design Review Board, Property Owners*

While the public realm of all downtown streets is important, this hierarchy recognizes that all streets should not be treated equally in terms of pedestrian function and design. The most important streets should receive the highest level of investment while less important streets should receive a base level of design. The ultimate goal, however, should be that all streets are clearly part of a cohesive public realm network, regardless of their level in the hierarchy. Below is a summary of the proposed hierarchy, which is also illustrated in *Exhibit 17: Streetscape Typologies (page 100)*. A detailed design description for each typology is provided in Appendix C: Design Guide.

Type A: These streets are the most important in terms of establishing the downtown public realm image and framework and receive the highest level of design treatment, going above and beyond what has already been completed downtown. This category includes the core of College Avenue (Between Atherton Street and University Drive) and Allen Street (between College and Beaver Avenues). Conceptual design for "Allen Street Promenade" and the core of College Avenue are illustrated and described in detail on the following pages

Type B: These streets are important streets that define the downtown core. Some streetscapes along these streets have already been completed (portions of Allen and Fraser Streets and portions of Beaver Avenue) or are in the process of being implemented (a portion of Atherton Street and a portion of Pugh Street) and have set the materials standard for all of downtown. The following additional street segments should also receive this same or similar treatment to complete the downtown core network: portions of Beaver Avenue (between Atherton and Garner Streets), Fraser Street (between Beaver and Foster Avenues), Pugh Street (between Beaver and Foster Avenues) and Garner Street (between College and Beaver Avenues). A design concept for Beaver Avenue is illustrated and described in detail on the following pages. Additionally, recommendations for refinements to the Pugh Street streetscape are also illustrated and described in Recommendation 3-K.

Type C: These streets represent the east and west extensions of College and Beaver Avenues (and the connecting portions of High and Buckhout Streets) but are outside of the downtown core and do not warrant the same level of design as Type A and B above. They should, nonetheless, be compatible in design.

Type D: This street type represents alleys designed as shared space, with a heavy emphasis on accommodating pedestrians. The street type is anchored by Calder Way (between Atherton and Sowers Streets), Kelly Alley and D Alley (between West Highland Alley and Foster Avenue). Should the Beaver Avenue parking lot be redeveloped,

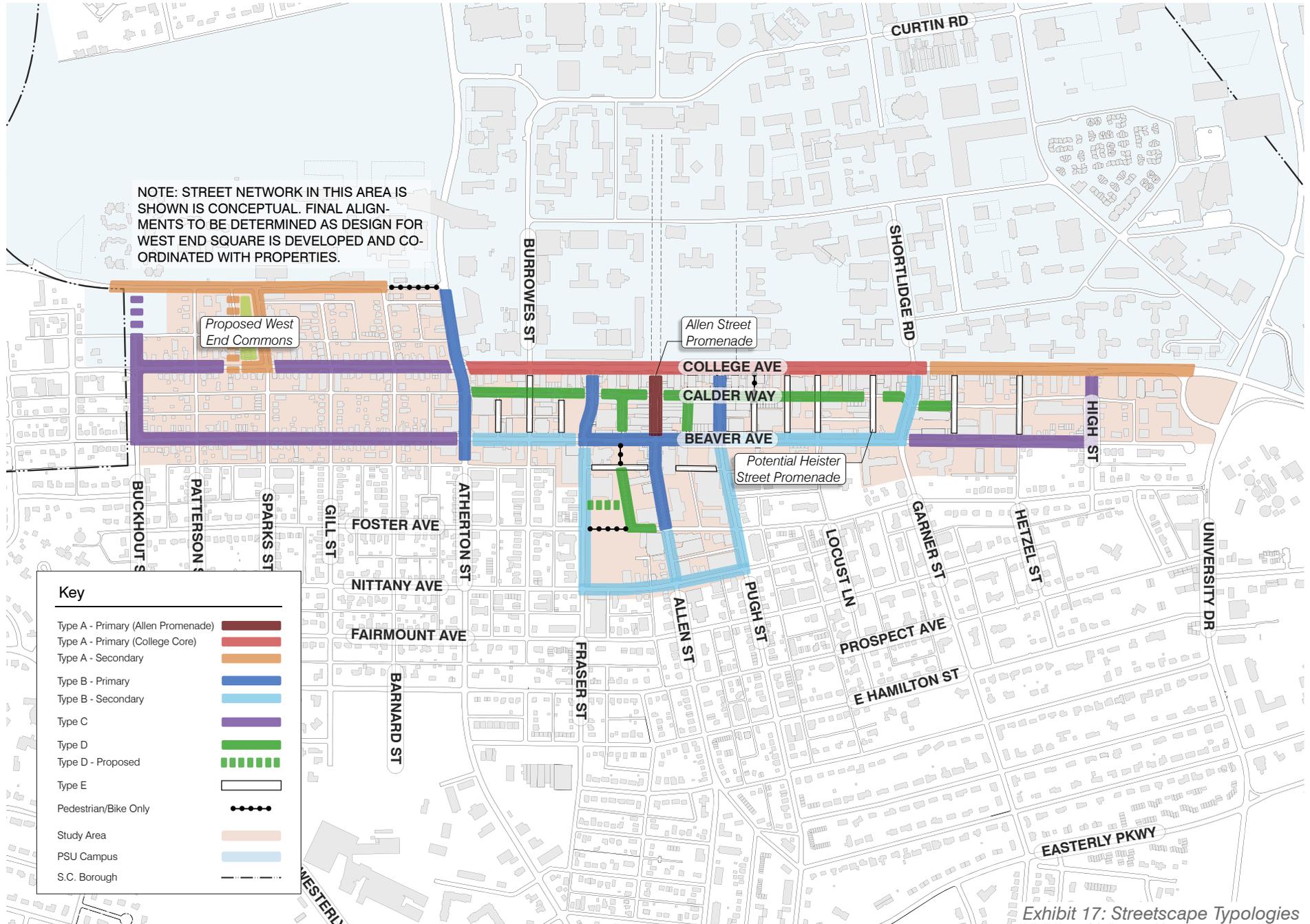


Exhibit 17: Streetscape Typologies

Opposite: Exhibit 17 shows the recommended streetscape typologies for downtown. Establishing a hierarchy for downtown streets as it relates to pedestrian function and design will help focus improvement efforts and guide design decisions.

consideration should be given to providing a pedestrian link connecting Kelly and D Alleys. A design concept for Calder Way is illustrated and described in detail on the following pages.

Type E: This street type represents all other streets within downtown and will include base level of treatment. Sidewalk paving would be predominantly concrete and the Borough standards for lights, street furniture, tree grates, etc. would be used.

Focus and Catalyst Projects

Implementation of the public realm enhancements described in this chapter will occur over many years. It is important, however, to establish Catalyst project as an initial phase; one that will make a significant positive impact on downtown. Several streetscape projects are described on the following pages as "focus projects", many of which (or a portion of which) comprise a significant Catalyst project. These focus projects include the Allen Street Promenade (from College Avenue to Beaver Avenue), College Avenue (from Atherton Street to University Drive), Calder Way (from Burrowes Street to Garner Street), Beaver Avenue (from Atherton Street to

High Street), Pugh Street (from Beaver Avenue to College Avenue)and High Street (from Beaver Avenue to College Avenue). Of these focus projects, the following projects or portions of projects are included in the Catalyst project:

- Allen Street Promenade, including the intersection with College Avenue
- Pugh Street, with the exception of the Pugh Street Garage frontage
- Calder Way, between Burrowes and Heister Streets
- Beaver Avenue, between Miller Alley and Pugh Street (sections that are currently incomplete)

These streets have been identified as part of the Catalyst project because of their adjacencies to already completed streetscapes such as Fraser Street, Allen Street (south of Beaver), and portions of Beaver Avenue (between Fraser and Pugh Streets); they were already in design (Pugh Street); their proximity to significant development/redevelopment opportunities (Fraser Centre and Pugh Street Garage) and/or their location within the downtown core. Refer to *Exhibit 18: Focus and Catalyst Projects*, below.

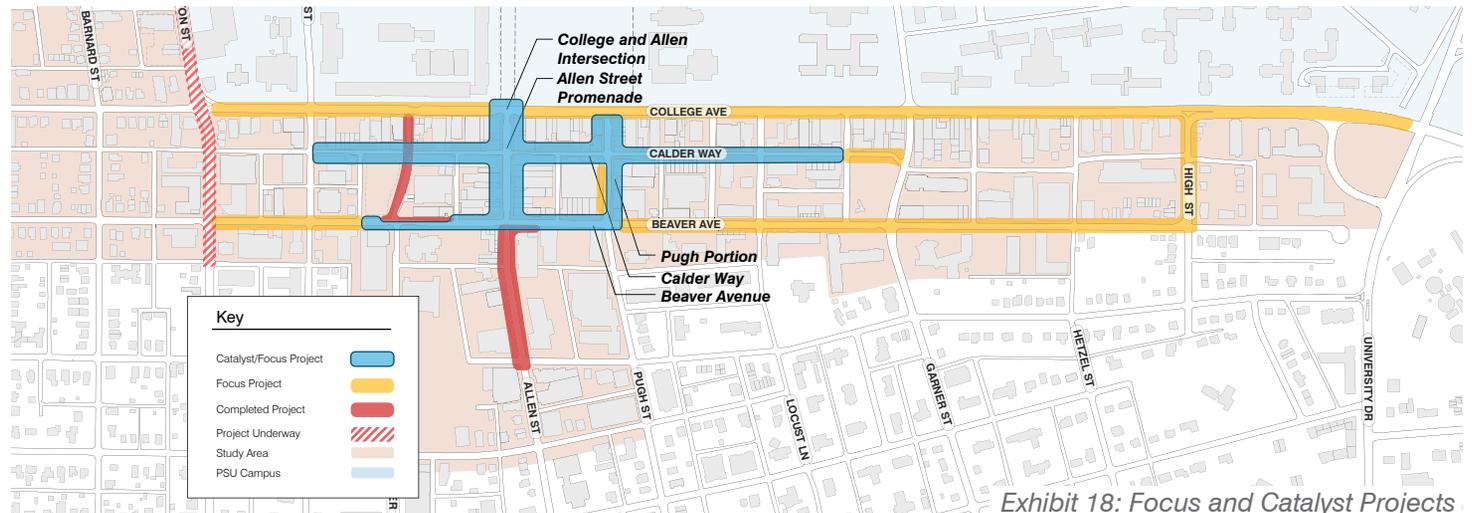


Exhibit 18: Focus and Catalyst Projects