

Exhibit 3: Downtown Districts

Physical Assessment

Downtown Districts and Study Area

Downtown State College is very linear as it has grown from the center at Allen Street along College Avenue, keeping pace with the campus as it grew. More recently, with the growth of the West Campus, there is the potential for downtown to grow on the west side of Atherton Street. Recognizing this, the Borough had commissioned a master plan for this area known as the West End. The linear nature of the downtown naturally lends itself to subdividing into smaller districts and has, in fact, done that over the years. These sub-districts include: the “Downtown Core,” the “Garner District” and “East Gateway” to the east and the “West Gateway” and “West End” to the west of the core. On the macro scale, these districts can be summarized into three broader character/functional districts: the “Traditional Downtown” in the core, “College Town” to the east and emerging “Urban Village” to the west. Refer to *Exhibit 3: Downtown Districts* on previous page.

Transportation Network

With the presence of the University and the high student population, downtown State College is able to enjoy a range of transportation choices. While the predominant mode of transportation is the automobile, there are high levels of pedestrian activity, bus usage and bicycle usage. In particular, the Borough and Penn State University have been expanding bicycle facilities incrementally over the past several years. There are opportunities to enhance all modes of transportation in downtown, however, with a continued emphasis on reducing the need for automobile trips. Following is a review of transportation network.

Automobile Transportation

Downtown State College is primarily served by State Route (SR) 26, which forms a one-way couplet in the downtown District. The westbound section of the couplet is known locally as College Avenue and the eastbound section of the

couplet is known locally as Beaver Avenue. State Route 26 is functionally classified as an urban principal arterial highway in Downtown State College. College and Beaver Avenues are characterized by curbed roadway cross sections, on street parking, two travel lanes, traffic signals, transit, pedestrian and bicycle interactions.

In the Fall of 2012, vehicular traffic on College Avenue was measured at approximately 10,000 average daily traffic (ADT). Vehicular traffic on Beaver Avenue was measured at approximately 11,000 ADT. Both corridors have seen substantial reductions in vehicle volumes since 2004 where the volumes on College and Beaver Avenue were 15,000 and 15,000 respectively.

Regionally, Downtown State College is accessed by Business Route 322 (SR 3014) which provides access to Interstate 99 north of downtown. SR 26 also intersects with Interstate 99 to the east of State College. Interstate 99 is an important regional interstate which provides direct access to I-80, US Route 322, SR 22 and the PA Turnpike.

The Planned Intersection Safety Improvement Program (2010) developed a safety rating of every intersection within the Borough of State College based on intersection characteristics and past crash history. The study also included a detailed engineering review of the top five intersections of concern, with recommendations developed to improve safety. One intersection within the downtown was selected as a top five intersection of concern for a detailed engineering study. College Avenue and Atherton Street was evaluated through a road safety audit (RSA) and recommendations were developed for improvements. The recommendations are being implemented through the Atherton Streetscape project which is planned for construction in 2013.

Need for Traffic Signals

No intersections have been converted to traffic signal control in the last ten years in the downtown. Currently, thirteen traffic signals operate in the downtown corridors of College and Beaver Avenues. The most recent major traffic signal

project was the reconfiguration of the traffic signal at Beaver Avenue and Fraser Street as part of the Fraser Streetscape project completed in 2011.

Concerns have been raised about the lack of pedestrian accommodation at the intersection of College Avenue and High Street. Currently, pedestrian access between the downtown and Penn State University facilities is limited in the eastern side of the corridor. Illegal and dangerous pedestrian crossing activities have been observed at College Avenue and High Street, and this issue is exacerbated by the locations of apartment and University residential halls on either side of College Avenue. A study is on-going to evaluate whether improved pedestrian accommodation could be provided at College Avenue and High Street, potentially with a signalized intersection.

The intersection of Beaver Avenue and Locust Lane is included in the Comprehensive Pedestrian and Bicycle Program (2008) as a top five intersection of concern for pedestrian safety. In addition to the recommendations in the report, a traffic signal warrant study should be performed to determine if the pedestrian warrant is met for the current Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

The Borough of State College completed a traffic signal retiming project in 2005 which optimized traffic flows and installed a leading pedestrian interval (LPI) at downtown traffic signals. The project showed the new traffic signal timings resulted in a 35% decrease in travel times on the College and Beaver Avenue Corridors during the P.M. peak hour. Traffic flow was significantly improved as the number of vehicle stops on the corridors was also decreased by 70%. Pedestrian service was improved by providing shorter traffic signal cycle lengths and LPI installation. The LPI was intended to provide pedestrians a 3-second advance start to use the crosswalk prior to vehicular green indications. LPI's have been shown to reduce conflict between pedestrians and turning vehicles. In a detailed before-after pedestrian crash study completed in Downtown State College, the LPI's were shown to reduce pedestrian – vehicle crashes by 37% due to their installation.

The LPI installations in 2005 were some of the first installations in central Pennsylvania. As such, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation wanted to review their effectiveness prior to approving them in other locations. Following the encouraging results from the before-after study, LPI installation is recommended for other traffic signals with high pedestrian volumes. As part of the planned Atherton Streetscape project (2012 – 2013), LPIs are proposed for the intersections of College Avenue & Atherton Street and Beaver Avenue & Atherton Street. All other Downtown intersection currently have LPIs.

The State College Borough is updating traffic signal timings to meet current vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle demands through a traffic signal retiming study. Implementation is anticipated in 2013.

Alley Circulation and Calder Way

Alley circulation is generally poor as alley widths are generally less than streets in the downtown. The most prominent alley in the Downtown is Calder Way. Calder Way primarily functions as a service alley providing loading and unloading for businesses along College Avenue. It is generally signed as one-way traffic from east to west throughout the Downtown. Pedestrian activity is also notable along Calder Way, particularly adjacent to commercial and residential land uses that have developed along its limits. Because Calder Way is a lower function street, it is stop controlled at every cross street which does not lend to traffic flow or cut-through on Calder Way.

Stakeholders have repeatedly identified Calder Alley as an important pedestrian space in downtown. While there have been suggestions to convert Calder Alley to pedestrian only activity, the service function is very important, particularly as it relates to the Borough's work to improve service and loading along College Avenue (described below). In addition, Calder Way is an important access route to rear parking areas for many businesses.

Loading/Unloading Zones

In the past ten years, the Borough of State College has made

improvements to loading and unloading zones along College and Beaver Avenues. Prior to 2005, loading and unloading in the travel lanes was common throughout the Downtown and contributed to significant traffic congestion with the close traffic signal spacing and limited capacity of the Downtown Streets. Problem areas were addressed and innovative traffic calming techniques, such as chicanes, were installed along Beaver Avenue between Fraser Street and Allen Street to create a loading zone and reduce traffic speeds in the Downtown.

Parking

Off-street parking is provided throughout the Downtown in the Pugh, Fraser and Beaver Avenue Garages, the McAllister Deck and surface lots, most notably the large surface lot at Garner Street and Calder Way. A parking study is planned for 2013 to evaluate projected demand and existing capacity of the public parking system operated by the Borough of State College. There are approximately 1768 off-street public parking spaces in downtown State College located within parking lots and parking decks.

On-street parking is provided via metered spaces throughout the Downtown and total 398 spaces. College Avenue has on-street parking on the north and south sides currently. Access from the north-side parking to the sidewalk system is limited by the vegetation and fencing that currently exists between the curb line and sidewalk. A narrow, non-ADA compliant concrete buffer area is provided for pedestrians to reach the nearest sidewalk or cross walk.

On-street parking is restricted between the hours of 2:00 AM and 6:00 AM throughout the Borough. This is done to prevent the warehousing of cars on the street and to accommodate street cleaning. Refer to *Exhibit 4: Downtown Parking and Bus Stops* (on following page).

Alternative Transportation

Bus Lanes and Stops

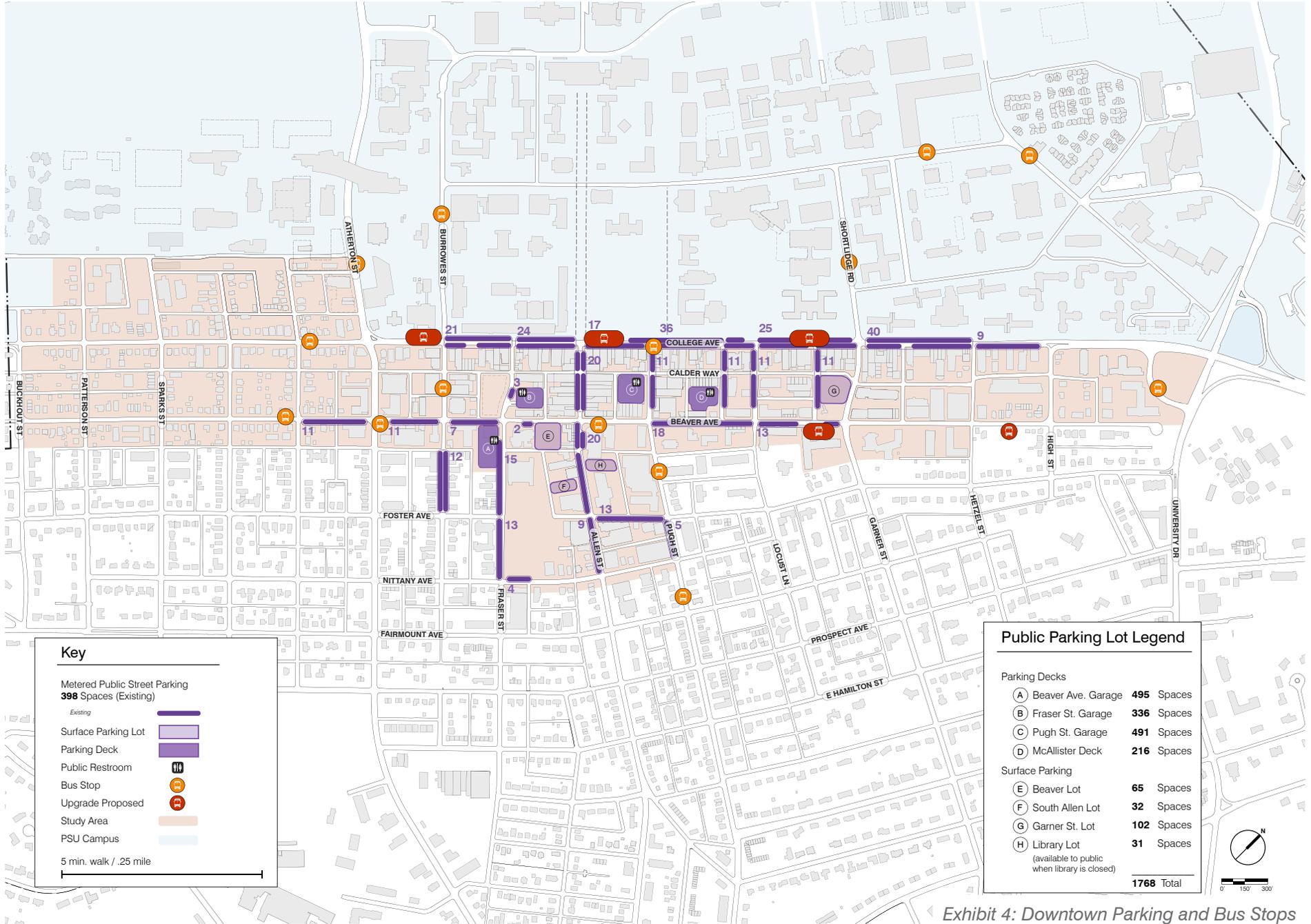
The Downtown area is served by the Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA). Refer to *Exhibit 4:*

Downtown Parking and Bus Stops (on following page). Bus stops are currently provided throughout the Downtown area. The stops on Penn State's campus and downtown make up the hub of a hub-and-spoke transit system. This is a system that emphasizes linkages to and from the University but may not always be convenient for workers and young professionals who need to get from one part of the region to another without having to go through the campus. Bus stop locations should be coordinated with the Borough of State College to ensure the locations meet the needs of users and also reduce conflicts with traffic on Downtown streets. The Downtown traffic would benefit from bus stop configurations that include bus pull-offs at each stop so traffic flow is not impeded. College and Beaver Avenues have opportunities for permanent bus pull-off configurations and these improvements could be implemented in future capital improvement projects.

In particular, stakeholders have expressed a need to enhance three bus stops along College Avenue, located near Burrowes, Allen and Heister Streets. These enhancements need to include longer bus pull-offs, wider bus pull-offs (Heister Street) and improved amenities including transit shelters. Two bus stops along Beaver Avenue near High and Heister Streets are also in need of amenities including transit shelters.

Bicycle Facilities – Bike Lanes, Shared Paths, Bike Parking

Bicycle transportation in Downtown State College is exclusively share-the-road. All exclusive bicycle lanes from Penn State University streets and from State College Borough streets terminate prior to the core Downtown streets. In a share-the-road configuration, bicyclists must operate within vehicular lanes and traffic control devices. The volume of vehicular traffic and the lack of exclusive bicycle lanes Downtown could be a deterrent for additional bicycle travel. Challenges to developing exclusive bicycle travel lanes in the Downtown include limited right-of-way (ROW) widths, competition with parking for ROW and no specific studies exist on cost / benefit of exclusive lanes in Downtown State College.



Key

- Metered Public Street Parking
398 Spaces (Existing)
- Existing
- Surface Parking Lot
- Parking Deck
- Public Restroom
- Bus Stop
- Upgrade Proposed
- Study Area
- PSU Campus
- 5 min. walk / .25 mile

Public Parking Lot Legend

Parking Decks	
(A) Beaver Ave. Garage	495 Spaces
(B) Fraser St. Garage	336 Spaces
(C) Pugh St. Garage	491 Spaces
(D) McAllister Deck	216 Spaces
Surface Parking	
(E) Beaver Lot	65 Spaces
(F) South Allen Lot	32 Spaces
(G) Garner St. Lot	102 Spaces
(H) Library Lot (available to public when library is closed)	31 Spaces
Total	1768



Exhibit 4: Downtown Parking and Bus Stops

While an east-west bike route is designated along Foster Avenue, there is a need for an east-west route closer to College Avenue. Bicyclists have indicated that the slight topographic change and distance between College and Foster Avenues is enough to deter people from using that route unless they are already in that location. Additionally, there is a need for the Bike Route designation to continue along Allen Street between Foster and College Avenues, as the Pattee Mall is designated as a shared-use path on campus. Similarly, Garner Street, between Foster and College Avenues is a “missing link” between the Garner Street bike lanes to the south and the bike route along Shortlidge Drive on campus. Efforts should be made to complete these gaps and explore opportunities for additional bike routes downtown. Refer to *Exhibit 5: Existing Bicycle Network* (on following page).

Walkability

Level of Service – Adequacy of Sidewalks

Pedestrian volumes were measured at each signalized intersection in the Downtown in Fall 2012. The midday peak hour was the highest volume pedestrian period of the day. Pedestrian levels of service (LOS) were calculated for the south College Avenue sidewalk and both north and south Beaver Avenue crosswalks. Pedestrian LOS is a function of peak pedestrian volume and the average amount of sidewalk space available for travel, “A” being best and “F” being worst. Sidewalk space is determined by width, less any obstructions such as poles, trees, trash cans, benches and storefront seating. Refer to *Exhibit 6: Pedestrian Level of Service and Safety*.

Overall, pedestrian LOS for Downtown sidewalk sections is good—LOS B or greater. Several locations exhibited poor pedestrian LOS due to restrictions in the average pedestrian space. The sidewalk section along College Avenue between Garner Street and Pugh Street exhibited poor LOS due to sidewalk obstructions from several large trees along College Avenue. The sidewalk section along College Avenue between Fraser Street and Burrowes Street exhibits poor pedestrian LOS. High pedestrian volumes coupled with

sidewalk constrictions from trees, storefront seating and ADA access ramps all contribute to reduced pedestrian LOS at this location. Since the overall LOS ranges are acceptable during the peak hour of pedestrian traffic, spot improvements should be investigated to remove current obstructions.

As significant streetscape projects are considered, however, opportunities to expand pedestrian zones is desirable, particularly along College Avenue.

Safety

Areas of concern for pedestrian safety were evaluated during the Comprehensive Pedestrian and Bicycle Program (2008). The study included a review of Borough of State College pedestrian-vehicle crashes for the period 1989 through 2007. A prioritized list of areas (intersections) of concern was developed based on five statistical safety analysis methodologies. The top five intersections of concern for pedestrian safety are all located within Downtown:

- Beaver Avenue & Atherton Street
- College Avenue & Atherton Street
- College Avenue & Allen Street
- College Avenue & Burrowes Street
- Beaver Avenue & Locust Lane

At each of the top five locations of concern, a detailed engineering study was performed to review existing conditions and develop recommendations to reduce pedestrian-vehicle crashes. Recommendations for Beaver Avenue & Atherton Street and College Avenue & Atherton Street are planned for implementation through the Atherton Streetscape project (2013). Improvements at College Avenue and Burrowes Street have been implemented by Borough maintenance forces. Improvements at College Avenue and Allen Street would require coordination with the bus stop / pull-off that is currently located at this intersection. These improvements should be considered as part of the overall College Avenue and Allen Street streetscape improvement projects described in Section 4 of this report. Improvements at Beaver Avenue and Locust Lane are currently programmed on the CIP. Refer to *Exhibit 6: Pedestrian Level of Service and Safety* (on following page).

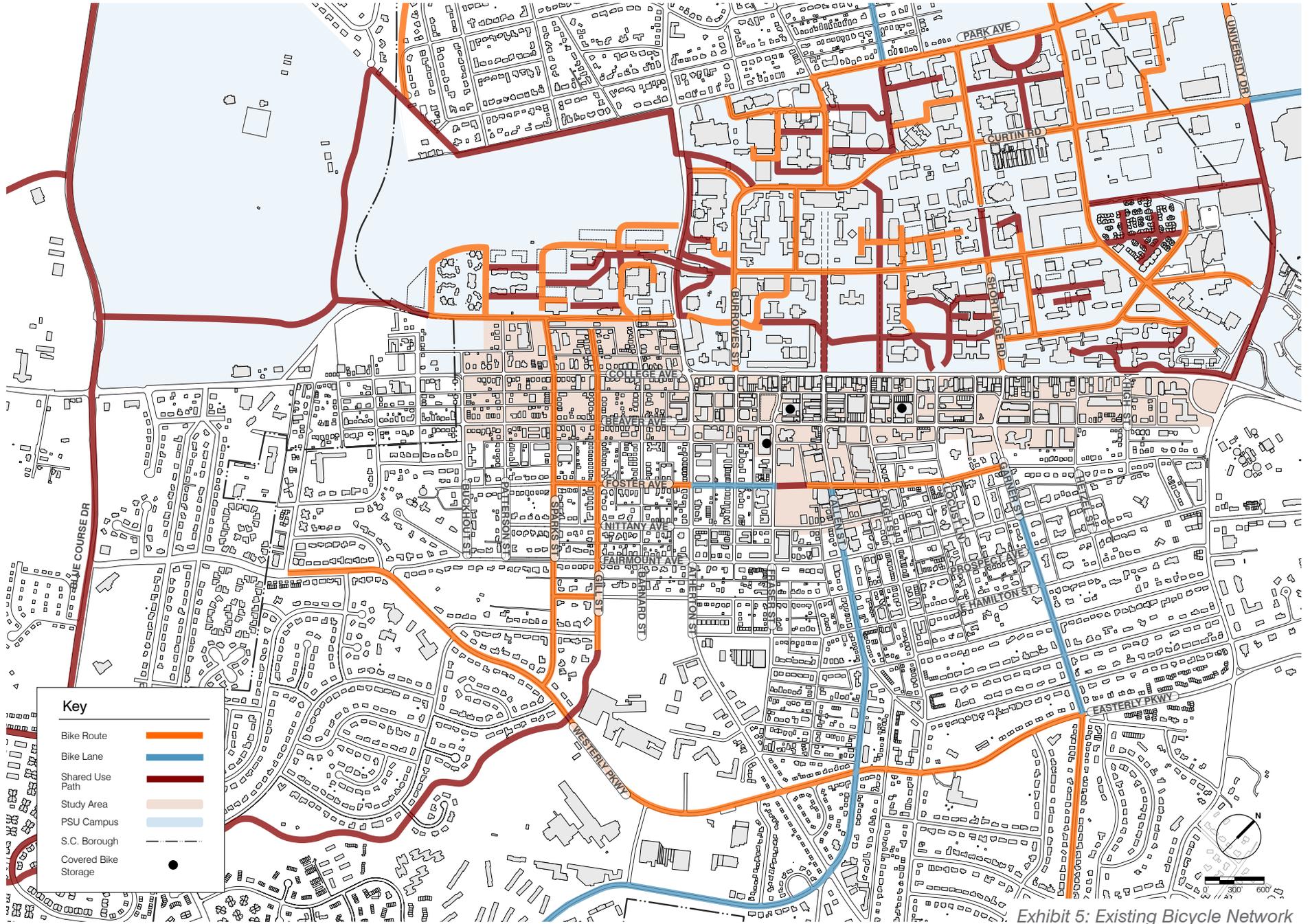


Exhibit 5: Existing Bicycle Network

Pedestrian volume

In the Fall of 2012, peak hour pedestrian volumes were measured at each downtown signalized intersection. The maximum peak hour total intersection pedestrian volume was observed at the intersection of College Avenue and Allen Street where 1,950 pedestrians were counted in the crosswalks during the peak hour midday. Due to the proximity of downtown to Penn State University facilities, significant pedestrian volume is observed throughout the downtown area.

Crosswalks

Crosswalks are provided at major street crossings for all signalized intersections in Downtown State College. Along College Avenue, efforts have been made to install crosswalks on the east side of the intersections to reduce

conflicts between vehicles turning left from the side streets. Currently, the College Avenue and Allen Street intersection is the only signalized T-configuration that also has a west-side crosswalk. The Borough of State College has taken steps to reduce crosswalk distance by installing bulb-outs (pedestrian nodes, or curb extensions). Bulb-outs are beneficial features of the urban environment because they provide additional space for pedestrians to queue at the intersection and they allow for shorter intersection crossing distances. Shorter crossing distances results in less pedestrian – vehicle exposure time and aids in keeping crash rates low. Bulb-outs should be installed everywhere feasible within the downtown environment; typically a parking lane adjacent to an intersection provides the necessary space for a curb extension. Several locations are planned for future bulb-outs and these locations are identified in the Comprehensive

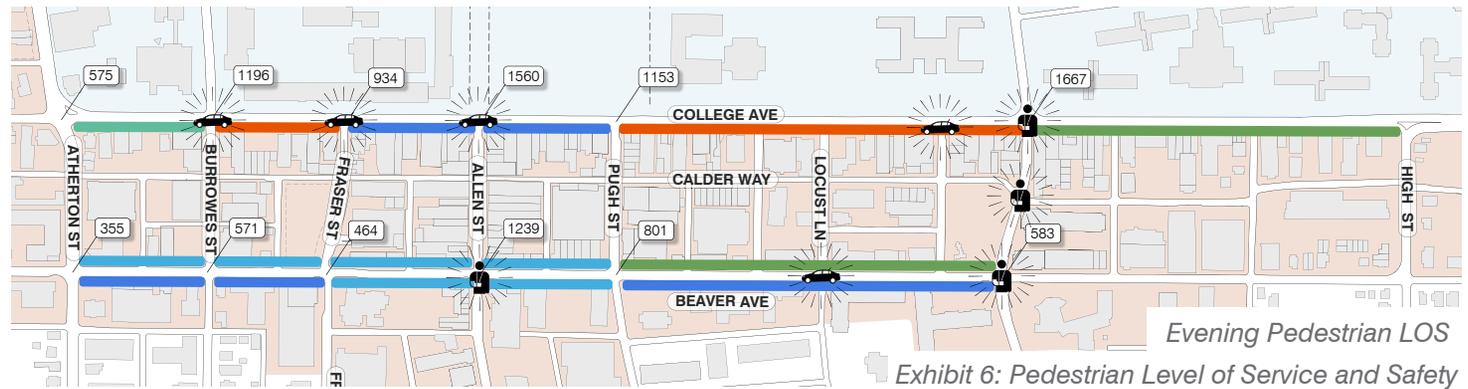
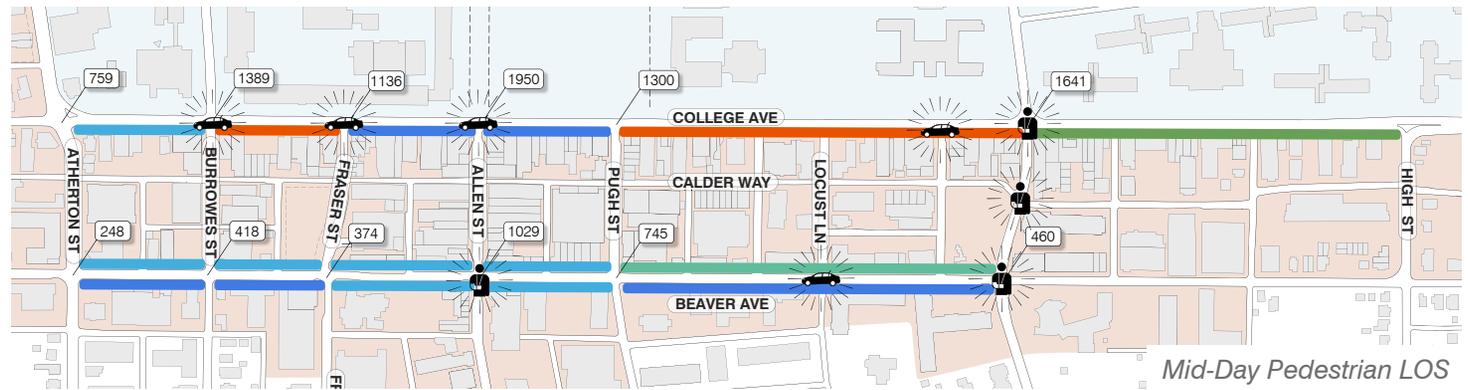
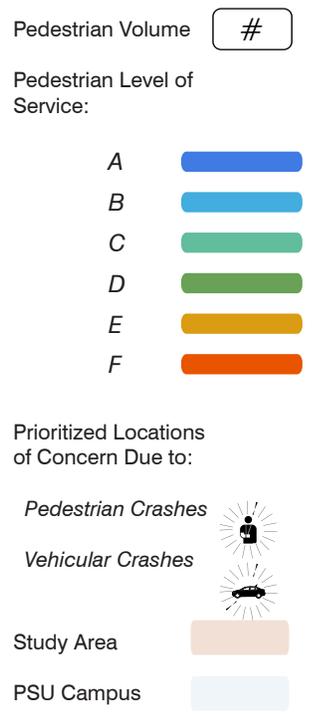


Exhibit 6: Pedestrian Level of Service and Safety

Pedestrian Bicycle Program (2008). The Borough has high-visibility piano-key crosswalks installed at all signalized intersections in the Downtown corridor. It has been noted that crosswalk paint fade often results in diminished visibility of the crosswalk location several times per year. More durable crosswalk markings could provide reduced maintenance costs and improved year round visibility.

ADA compliance

The Borough has upgraded intersections to ADA curb ramp compliance when the intersection is part of a capital improvement project. The Borough also has capital improvement funding allocated to ADA curb ramp improvements in a systematic plan. Because the Downtown intersections receive the greatest pedestrian volumes of any Borough intersections, Downtown ADA improvements should receive the highest priority. The Borough has also installed an accessible pedestrian signal (APS) at the intersection of Beaver Avenue and Allen Street. The APS provides an audible indication when a visually impaired pedestrian can cross the street. APS is an effective strategy for visually impaired pedestrians, particularly in the Downtown district with the LPI implemented. Since no adjacent vehicular sound cues exist during the initial 3 second advance walk interval, visually impaired pedestrians do not receive the same advantage as other pedestrians at traffic signals in the Downtown. Increasing APS installation, if warranted, would provide the same level of benefit with the LPI.

Utilities

To varying extent, utilities are present on all downtown streets and alleys with certain streets managing the majority of the overhead utility load. Electric, gas, phone and non-signal related communication lines are privately owned. The Borough's system includes storm drainage, sanitary sewer, street lights and signalization infrastructure. While not always feasible, as utility improvements are identified and planned, opportunities to coordinate with the streetscape projects described later in this report should be explored.

The major east-west roadways (College Avenue and Beaver

Avenue) have limited sanitary sewer infrastructure. There are a few sections of Beaver Avenue that have a collection system in the roadway that, within a short distance, redirects flows to Calder Way. Calder Way is the main sanitary collector for the downtown area and has parallel sanitary sewer line that runs the entire length, with manholes spaced approximately every several hundred feet. The manholes are 50/50 precast or brick. Capacity is adequate for the downtown collection system.

Both College and Beaver Avenue are free of overhead electric, phone and communication lines. Calder Way carries most of the overhead electric, phone and cable on wooden poles and provides service to the rear of most properties along Beaver and College. Wooden pole supported overhead utilities are also present on approximately half of the connecting streets between College and Beaver. Buried conduits on College and Beaver serve street lights and signals.

Storm sewer collection for Beaver, College and connecting streets is concrete curb and inlet, while Calder Way has a reverse crown with inlet grates in the middle of the road. A large storm sewer collector pipe runs the length of Calder Way. This collector pipe was recently repaired with a cementitious lining in 2010 and has adequate capacity for current flows. The downtown area also contains two rain garden/bioretention areas near the intersection of Allen Street and Beaver Avenue.

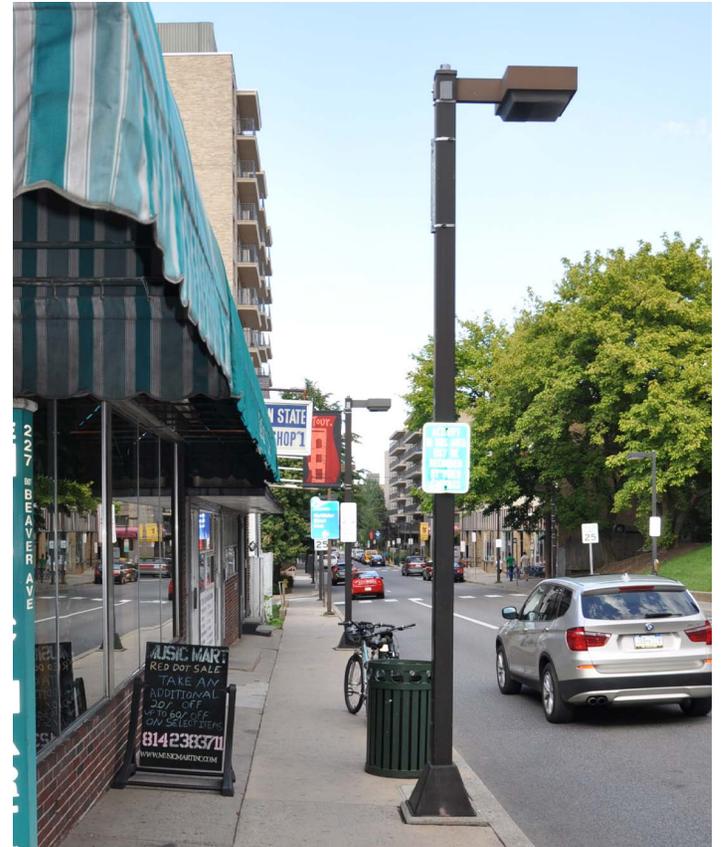
Street lighting is a combination of shoe box, acorn, shepherd hook and cobra head fixture styles. Cobra head fixtures are present on the utility poles on Calder Way. Shoe box style fixtures are present on sections of Beaver, College and most connecting streets. Acorn fixtures have recently been installed in selected sections of Beaver and College and are present on Fraser and Allen streets within the downtown area.

Surface and overhead utilities (poles, street lights, manholes, etc.) are the most obvious to the casual

Right: Calder Way carries the majority of the overhead electric, phone and cable lines for downtown on wooden poles.

Top far right: View from Beaver Avenue looking northwest across the intersection with Fraser Street showing new Borough standards for pedestrian lights, street lights and signal arms.

Bottom far right: View along Beaver Avenue showing a "shoebox" light fixture.



observer and therefore will be the most affected by potential downtown modifications. Due to the complexity of the existing overhead utility network, it would most likely be cost-prohibitive and infeasible to move the network underground. Aesthetic modifications are a possible alternative.

Decorative post wraps as shown here can provide a visual change to the standard wooden utility pole. There may also exist certain isolated locations where underground installation may be feasible and specific poles could be removed.

Existing street lighting currently has the infrastructure in place to service modifications or replacements as part of a lighting standardization process. Several connecting streets only have lighting on one side and may require additional conduit and cable to allow installation on both sides of the street. However, modifications or additions to the service for street lighting is fairly non-restrictive (especially during a sidewalk or curb replacement project).

The storm and sanitary manholes, grates and curb inlets are all standard. In most cases, any replacements or minor modifications can be accomplished with little or no conflict to the system. Repairs and future life cycle replacements are a normal part of any storm and sanitary system and must be considered when planning surface modifications to the streetscape.

Physical Design and Placemaking

The physical design and placemaking for downtown State College is defined by the character-giving elements that set State College apart from other places. These elements include the topography, the surrounding environment and views to the mountains; the architecture and variety of uses; and the public realm – the streetscapes, parks, plazas and special places that knit the uses together and provide venues for gathering and social activity. For downtown, the character is particularly distinguished by the contrast between the broad lawns, historic gates and architectural landmarks that define the Penn State campus and the small town qualities that define downtown. Similarly, the contrast

between downtown and the leafy historic neighborhoods of Highlands and Holmes-Foster enhance downtown’s unique sense of place.

For State College, this “sense of place” and contrast between downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods is particularly enhanced by the topographic changes. The area between College Avenue and Highland Avenue is spatially enclosed by the landform that rises in each direction and the ridge along Highland Avenue clearly separates the downtown core from areas to the south. Refer to *Exhibit 7: Elevation Study*, following page.

Park/Open Space Network

Downtown State College has a limited park and open space network when compared with other similarly sized downtowns and lacks a traditional “town square.” That being said, many consider the campus open spaces to be downtown’s open space. There exists a number of popular, smaller spaces throughout the downtown. These are illustrated in *Exhibit 8: Existing Open Space Network* (page 45), and include:

- Sidney Friedman Park
- Bill Welch Memorial Plaza, located in front of the Municipal Building
- Schlow Library plaza areas along Beaver Avenue and Allen Street frontages
- Schlow Library “Reader’s Garden”
- MLK, Jr. Plaza, adjacent to the Fraser Street Garage
- The Fraser Street Public Space, created as part of the Fraser Street realignment. This space is set to be further enhanced once the Fraser Centre is developed
- Centennial Alley, adjacent to the Tavern Restaurant
- Proposed open space on Sparks Street as part of the West Side Revitalization Plan

Important campus spaces near the downtown include:

- Pattee Mall and the Allen Street Gates
- Henderson Mall
- Old Main Lawn, including the Old Main Wall frontage

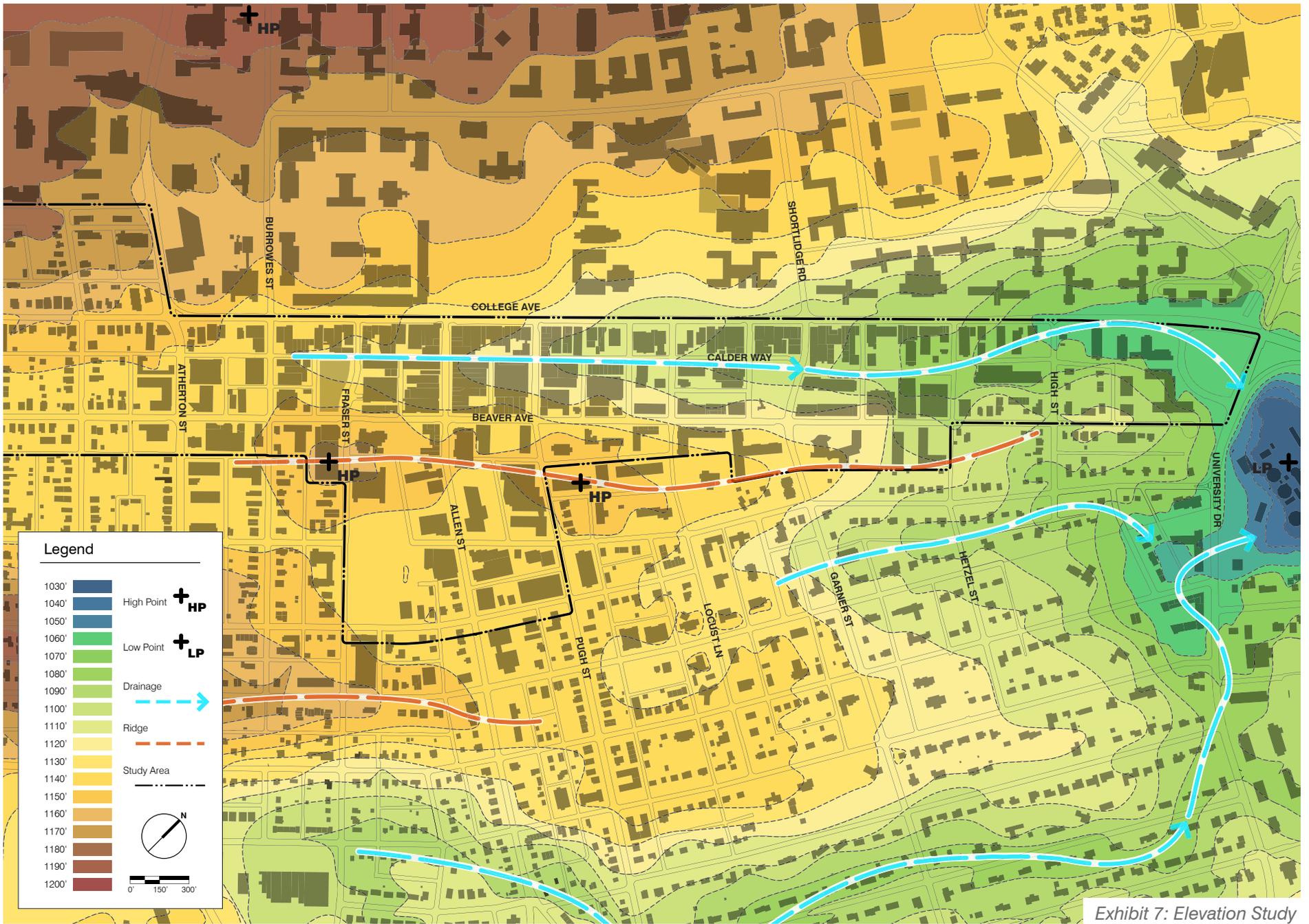


Exhibit 7: Elevation Study

- HUB Lawn
- Alumni Gardens/Foundry Park
- Open spaces associated with Henderson, South Halls and Eastview Terrace
- Expanded sidewalk “nodes” at the intersections of Burrowes and College; Pattee Mall and College; the south terminus of Henderson Mall; bus stop areas at Burrowes and Heister (as well as that in front of the Old Main Wall); the Shortlidge and College intersection; and the Eastview Terrace gateway at High Street.

Sidney Friedman Park, the only true park space downtown, is just far enough away from the downtown core to prevent integration with the retail environment. It is not surrounded by active uses and it is on the “other side of the ridge” so feels further disconnected. Stakeholders indicated that events there do not often result in people spilling over into the downtown core and supporting local businesses. The park does enjoy close proximity to Discovery Space, Memorial Field and the Bill Welch Memorial Plaza and starts to reinforce an open space network and family, rather than student, area. West Foster Street and “D” Alley are important streets that link these spaces and attractions together. With the lack of a significant downtown open space there is added importance for the sidewalk areas and streetscapes to function as open space. Indeed, great streets make great open spaces. Many expanded sidewalks in downtown already function well in this capacity, allowing for outdoor seating, small gatherings and outdoor dining. Allen Street (100 block), in particular, feels like a special “place.” This can be attributed to it being a natural extension of Pattee Mall and direct connection to the main campus gates; and the topographic changes to the north and south make this block quite visible and help to enclose and define it. Even the 200 block, between Beaver and Foster, with its relationship to Bill Welch Memorial plaza, mature trees and activity associated with the Municipal Building, feels like a central space, although clearly within a different district than downtown.

Similarly, Calder Way, while primarily a service alley, has emerged as a special “place” within downtown.

Service vehicles, cars, pedestrians and bikes seem to all coexist much like a European street. It is quite active with pedestrians and storefronts have been developed over the years facing onto and activating the alley. While Calder Way is not particularly attractive with its overhead utility lines, crooked poles, service and loading areas, parking and dumpsters, many people have positive feelings about the space; the little stretches of color – murals, flower pots, “fun” facades and, most importantly, the high level of pedestrian activity. It is a vibrant place. Calder Way presents many



Top left: Sidney Friedman Park

Bottom left: Schlou Library
“Reader’s Garden”

opportunities to be enhanced as has been recommended in previous master plans; however, it is important to understand that some of the design quirks of the space add to its charm.

While part of Penn State University, the campus open spaces are an integral part of downtown. Residents and visitors enjoy the spaces and they make a strong visual impact for people using downtown, particularly when considering the southern exposure that keeps the open lawns of the north side of College Avenue in sunshine while the south side is often in shade.

The campus spaces do not really function as downtown public spaces, however. Most of the frontage is separated by

grade changes, low walls, dense plant material and limited places to sit and gather. An exception to this is the Old Main Wall at the base of Old Main Lawn and the walls near Heister Street where many people gather to people watch and wait for the bus. These are important and vibrant places. The small plaza area at the base of the Pattee Mall is also important gathering space and location for public discourse and promoting campus events. It is at the intersection of many pedestrian routes and users of transit, contributing to its vibrancy. There may be an opportunity to work with Penn State to encourage more vibrant gathering areas at important nodes such as the intersections of College Avenue with Burrowes, Fraser, Henderson Mall, etc.

- Open Space 
- Outdoor Dining 
- Public Restrooms 
- Public Art 
- Study Area 
- PSU Campus 

1. Memorial Field
2. Sidney Friedman Park
3. Bill Welch Memorial Plaza
4. Schlow Library and Reading 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 Mall
13. HUB Lawn
14. Pollock Field
15. Eastview Terrace

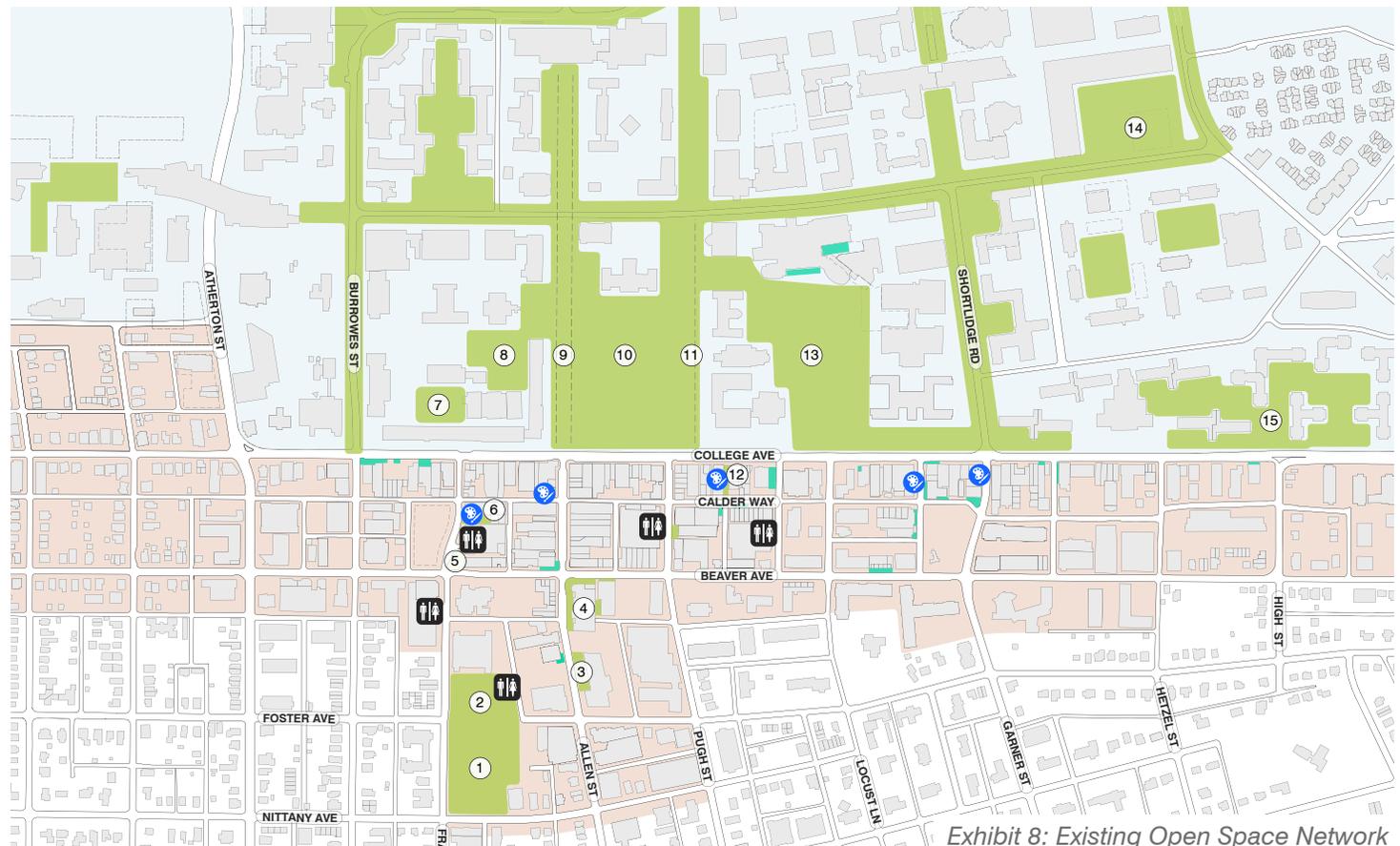


Exhibit 8: Existing Open Space Network

In addition to developing small gathering areas along sidewalks or adjacent to campus walks, there are opportunities to use streets and some surface parking areas as open spaces during special events or on a regular basis depending on peak levels of downtown pedestrian activity. In addition, opportunities to create a more significant open space downtown should be explored, perhaps in conjunction with private development. It will be important that any space be located on the downtown side of the ridgeline that separates downtown from the Highlands. It should also be visible from and directly connected to College Avenue.

The new open space proposed as part of the West Side Revitalization Plan, linking the neighborhood with the West Campus is an important component of that plan and should ultimately be incorporated. The concept of a centralized open space is the most important aspect, not so much the exact location.

Streetscape Network

While the downtown streets within the overall network have technical classifications, as described earlier under Transportation Network, they can also be classified by their streetscape character, level of pedestrian and retail activity and overall hierarchy in terms of the public realm. College Avenue and Allen Street define the primary organizing grid for downtown and their intersection, being the “100% corner,” represents the center of the downtown core. Atherton Street establishes the boundary between Downtown and the West Side. Following is a hierarchy of streetscape networks that seem to divide into primary, secondary and tertiary level of importance in terms of activity and character. These are identified in *Exhibit 9: Existing Primary Street Network and Bus Stops*, following page.

Primary

- College Avenue (Core: Atherton to Garner)
- South Allen Street (100 Block)
- Calder Way (Atherton to Garner)
- Beaver Avenue (Core: Atherton to Garner)

Secondary

- Atherton Street
- Allen Street, from Beaver to Foster
- Fraser Street, from College to Foster
- Pugh Street, from College to Beaver
- Garner, from College to Beaver
- McAllister, from College to Beaver
- Sparks Street, from Beaver to future Campus Drive
- Buckhout Street, from Beaver to future Campus Drive

Tertiary (Lower degree of design aesthetic)

- High Street, from College to Beaver
- Hetzel Street, from College to Beaver
- Sowers Street, from College to Beaver
- Heister Street, from College to Beaver
- Locust Lane, from College to Beaver
- Burrowes Street, from College to Beaver
- Barnard, Gill and Patterson, from Beaver to Future Campus Drive

With the exception of College Avenue and Allen Street, downtown from a placemaking perspective lacks an evident hierarchy of streets. There are no boulevards or parkways (other than in name). While streets function in hierarchical manner, they are not physically distinct as such. There is a lot of “sameness.” It will, therefore, be important to reinforce the subtle differences through materials, uses, appropriate development and programming and the degree of streetscape enhancements.

This is already starting to happen. Pugh and Fraser Streets define the heart of the downtown core and, with recent and planned streetscape improvements, establish themselves as having a higher level of streetscape quality than other streets. Completing the streetscape for the 100 block of Allen Street and the sections of College, Beaver and College between Fraser and Pugh would establish a sense of “completeness” for the heart of the downtown core.

Design Aesthetic

In terms of design aesthetic, sidewalk areas along most streets are narrow, as is characteristic of most northeastern

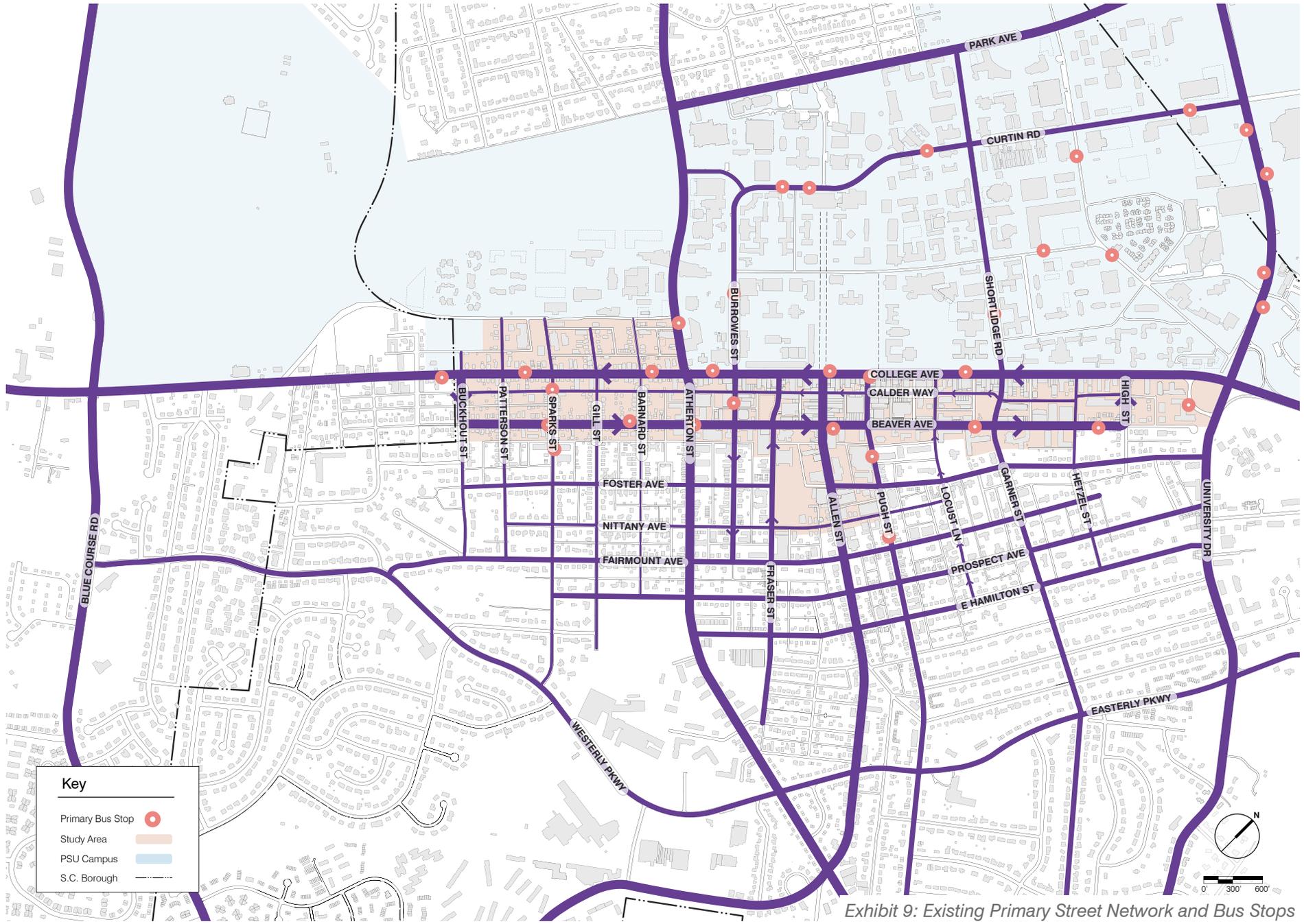


Exhibit 9: Existing Primary Street Network and Bus Stops

downtowns. Streetscape elements include a variety of signal arms, light standards, paving materials, site furniture standards, flower pots and street trees. While there is inconsistency in streetscape design elements, the Borough is doing an excellent job of moving toward a set palette of materials which should continue to represent the streetscape palette. In particular, the signal mast arms, street lights, ornamental pedestrian lights, brick/concrete paving and expanded sidewalk areas used on Fraser Street demonstrate a commitment to high quality streetscape environments. As future streetscape projects are implemented, they should complement this palette; however, flexibility should be considered to emphasize the proportion of brick and concrete in the paving, depending upon the importance of the street.

Consideration should also be given to eliminating the concrete band that runs the length of the center of the sidewalk which seems to divide the sidewalk. This can also create an uncomfortable walking experience when bricks and concrete settle differently.

Over the past decade, the Penn State University has been upgrading the campus grounds. The materials palette includes concrete and brick paving, street lights, contemporary pedestrian lights, post and chain fencing, misc. railings, transit shelters, site furnishing, scored concrete, brick, limestone walls, brick walls and accent materials (such as stone at the HUB). In some areas, umbrella tables and chairs are used to create vibrant outdoor dining and gathering areas. Along College Avenue, a fence, concealed by a hedge, has been used successfully to channelize pedestrian traffic to intersections and crosswalks to reduce mid-block crossings.

The campus improvements reflect a very high design aesthetic and have elevated the image of the campus significantly, particularly along the recent streetscape enhancements for Shortlidge Road and Burrowes Street. Because the materials palette is different on the campus grounds than in the downtown area, the College Avenue streetscape results in a hodgepodge of elements with

little consistency. Because this is the street that joins the University and downtown, it is important that a unified design approach to the streetscape be employed. Opportunities to do this exist through the use of brick paving (which both the downtown and campus utilize) and black poles and site furnishings.

College Avenue is a very important street as it is characterized by the vibrancy one would expect to find in the classic college town; the image of the campus—its sense of tradition and history—is quite strong in some areas, particularly between Allen and Pugh in front of



Top left: Recent streetscape improvements to Fraser Street as seen from the Fraser Street garage.

Bottom left: Streetscape along Allen Street in front of Schlow Library.

The palette of materials represented in each photo—brick and concrete sidewalks and black furnishings—should be part of future streetscape enhancements, particularly in the downtown core.

Pattee Mall and the Old Main Lawn. On the downtown side, significant pedestrian activity adds to the vibrancy, but can feel crowded and uncomfortable during game weekends or other large events. The strong “green/landscape image” on north side, contrasted with urban image on south side is quite distinctive. While street trees on south side help to unify the two sides, there is a lack of cohesiveness; much of the landscape on the campus side blocks views into the campus. Lack of sidewalk adjacent to parking lane on north side, results in dirt strip, dangerous pedestrian conditions. Penn State has made great efforts to maintain the hedge. While attractive, it disconnects the campus from College Avenue, particularly east of Henderson Mall. Numerous signs also contribute to visual clutter throughout the College Avenue corridor, negatively impacting the image of downtown and the campus.

Over the years, there has been discussion related to expanding the sidewalk on the south side of College Avenue. One of the unique challenges to this is the existing roadway crown and grade of the existing sidewalk. In many areas the curb is only 2” high and there is very little slope from the building face to the curb line. Any plans to widen the sidewalk will require innovative solutions to accommodate appropriate curb heights (6-8”) and appropriate drainage.

Beaver Avenue does not have as strong of a sense of place as College Avenue; however, it is an important street from a pedestrian standpoint, particularly when considering the high volumes of students living along the eastern end. While pedestrian levels of service on the north side sidewalk between Pugh and Garner Streets is often at a poor level of service, the problem is compounded by the fact that this area tends to be a large gathering spot for students, particularly during notable events. While it is unlikely that sidewalks can be widened in this area of Beaver Avenue, efforts should be made to establish appropriate gathering areas in this part of downtown.

Architecture

Downtown State College does not have an extensive collection of historic architecture; however, several early

Top right: Streetscape along Pollock Road on the Penn State campus.

Middle right: Bus shelter on Shortlidge Road on the Penn State campus. The shelter represents the campus standard for new shelters.

Bottom right: Post and chain fencing along Shortlidge Road. The fencing style is used along walkways throughout the campus.



twentieth century commercial buildings define the core of downtown in addition to some earlier buildings. Most iconic is The Corner, particularly when taken in context with the intersection of College Avenue and Allen Street and the Allen Street Gates. Most of the historic architectural integrity of downtown is between Fraser and Pugh Streets, with the heaviest concentration centered off Allen Street. There is also a high degree of integrity in the 100 block of South Allen consisting of mostly one and two story buildings; however, there is one five story building at the corner of South Allen and Calder Way. In addition, there are some iconic buildings between Pugh and McAllister Streets, most notably the Tavern. The apartment building at the corner of Pugh and Beaver is a great example of a classic Art Deco building. Churches throughout the downtown punctuate the skyline. It is important to maintain architecturally significant buildings as they lend a sense of history and place to downtown. These buildings are well designed with attention to detailing, massing, articulation and scale and they exhibit architectural principles that serve as a model for new construction.

Within the past 50 years, there has been a significant amount of construction resulting in multi-story student housing throughout downtown, but particularly in the eastern part of downtown. Many of these buildings are not attractive, with some exceptions, and have a negative impact on the overall image of downtown. Generally, land costs and ease of developing mediocre student housing results in poor architectural quality. For much of the existing student housing, the first floor is the problem with the retail/ground floor level being too short. Additionally, there is often not enough glass at street level, an inconsistent use of signage, undifferentiated facades and the buildings are often comprised of low quality materials. There is a strong need for design guidelines, however because of restrictive Pennsylvania legislation, there needs to be a creative incentive program to encourage developers and property owners to develop higher quality architecture.

Interestingly, however, visitors generally have a positive impression of downtown State College and do not seem to focus on the architecture. Much of this can be attributed



Downtown is characterized by a small core of attractive traditional commercial buildings (top left), a mix of appealing mid-century commercial buildings that have been retrofitted for other uses (middle left) and many less successful student housing complexes (bottom left).



Find your OWN state of mind

The existing brand image and tagline for downtown State College (above) are used on the downtown website, but are not part of a comprehensive marketing initiative. They also lack a dynamism that appropriately reflects the character and quality of downtown.

Examples of public art in downtown include the Pig Statue on Centennial Alley (top right) and the Heister Street mural (bottom right).

to the vibrancy and activity of street life, as well as the Borough's focus on maintaining a high degree of tree canopy which has a neutralizing effect on some of the less-appealing architecture.

Public Art

Public art has been utilized effectively throughout downtown in the form of sculpture and, in particular, murals. The mural on Heister Street is particularly effective as public art as it engages the viewer as it is constantly evolving based on community history. The murals along Calder Way—both obvious and subtle—are effective in activating this space and distinguishing it as a special place. A new sculpture is planned for the front of Schlow Library and will help define the important Allen Street corridor. As new streetscapes and development occur, continued focus should be provided on expanding the public art program.

There is a danger, however, of ending up with “plop-art” that is just put down to fulfill a requirement. It will be important that public art be located in the most appropriate areas where it will make the most impact. Additionally, it will be important for public art to be relevant to its location and site characteristics.

Downtown Brand/Image

Currently, downtown State College itself does not have a distinct brand image. Downtown Improvement District is using a very simple icon with a “D” over a “T” with “own” using a blue and green color scheme (image, above left) . The tagline “find your own state of mind” is used on the website, but is not used in a comprehensive marketing initiative.

It is imperative that both Downtown Improvement District as an organization and downtown State College the destination each have a brand that is compelling, interesting and cohesive. The community is dynamic and deserves a dynamic brand system.



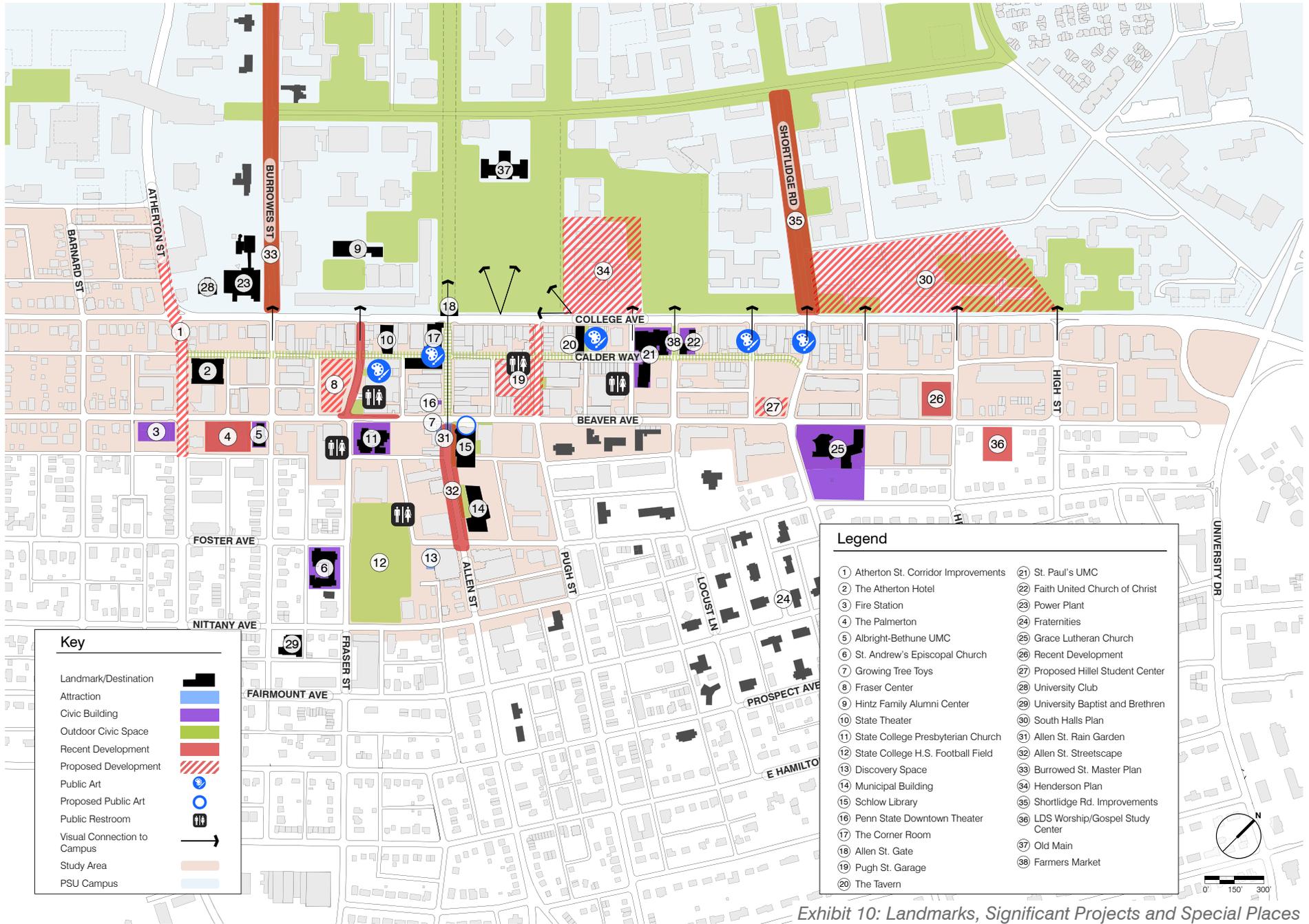


Exhibit 10: Landmarks, Significant Projects and Special Places

Significant Landmarks, Projects and Special Places:

Top right: View of Memorial Field.

Middle right: Nittany Mountain and surrounding mountains are visible from upper floors.

Bottom right: Old Main is an iconic landmark of the Penn State campus.

Significant Landmarks, Projects and Special Places

There are several landmark buildings, views, spaces and businesses that serve as focal points and sources of orientation for visitors of downtown. (Refer to *Exhibit 10: Landmarks, Significant Projects and Special Places*.) Some of these landmarks include the “The Corner,” Schlow Library, Centennial Alley, Calder Way, the 100 Block of Allen Street, Old Main and its lawn, The Tavern and State Theater. Additionally, there have been many recent construction projects in downtown and on the Penn State campus. Some of these have been completed, while others are underway. They include building projects as well as streetscape projects. When coupled with landmarks, they start to comprise areas of importance downtown that could inform priorities for additional projects to tie everything together. For example, the Fraser Street streetscape, planned Pugh Street streetscape, Pugh Street garage redevelopment and importance of the 100 block of Allen Street starts to give better definition to the downtown core. Additional improvements to complete the core would have more impact than isolated improvements that offer no spin-off benefit.



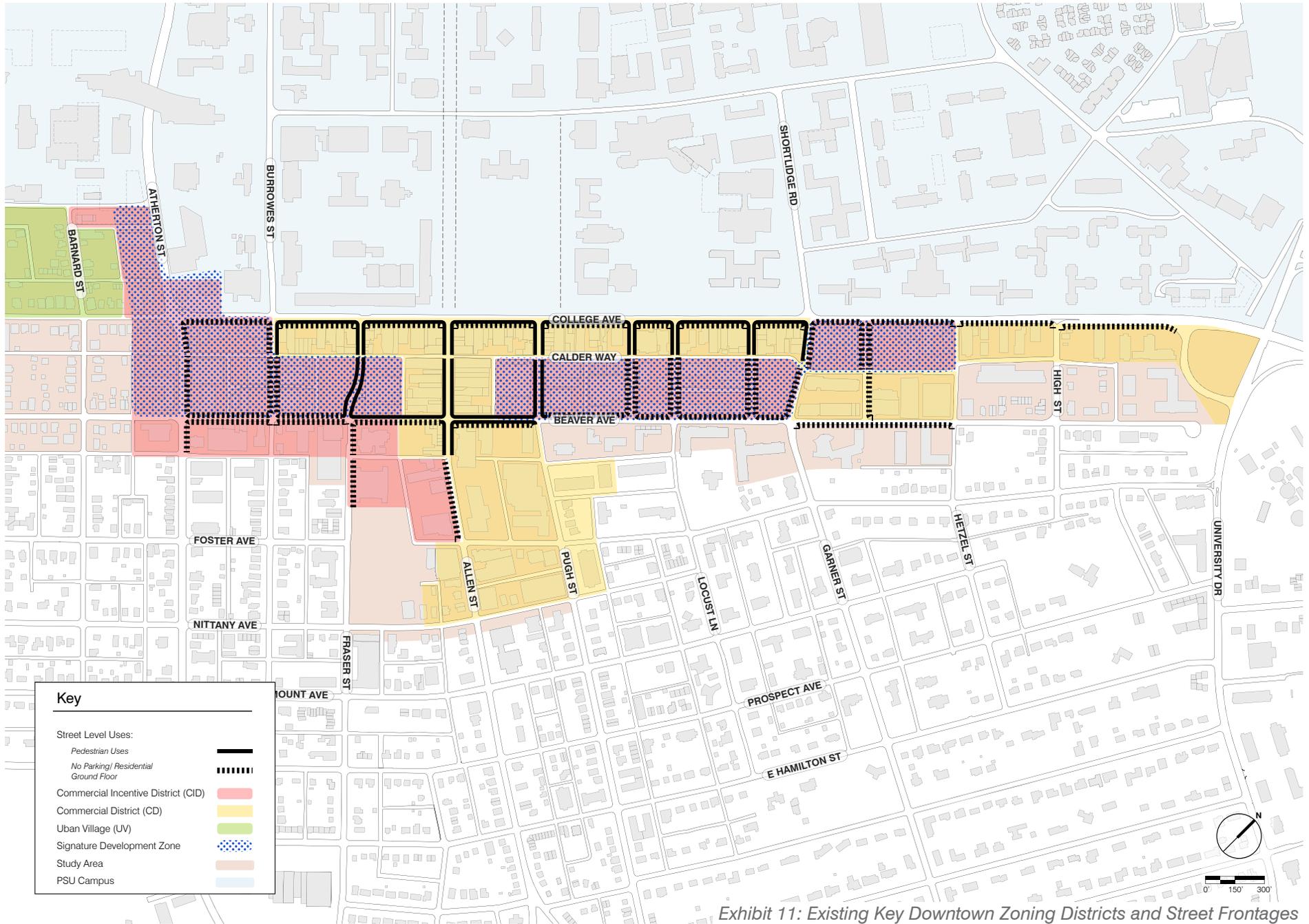


Exhibit 11: Existing Key Downtown Zoning Districts and Street Frontages

Right: An example of an existing 7-story building in State College showing uncomfortably low first floor heights.

Development and Community Sustainability

Zoning Districts

The Commercial District (C District) and Commercial Incentive District (CID District) comprise the majority of downtown land and include a range of building heights and development densities, some associated with incentives. Portions of these districts include “Signature Development” zones which allow for greater development densities and heights provided additional criteria is met. Development in the West End is currently guided by the Urban Village District (UV District).

The C and CID Districts include streets that require frontages with active pedestrian uses or streets where residential and parking uses are not permitted on the ground floor adjacent to key frontages. The intention of this is to activate the ground floors of development along these streets. While the goal of this is good and appropriate along most of the streets, it may make redevelopment difficult for some parcels outside of the primary core and where block dimensions are tight (for example, the block defined by McAllister and Locust). It may be appropriate to consider emphasizing active uses at the corners but allow more flexibility mid-block for some of the north-south connecting streets between College and Beaver Avenues. This is discussed more in Chapter 3.

All of these zoning districts have been updated and amended, some multiple times, resulting in some inconsistencies amongst the districts. For example, building heights are described in some districts by way of maximum number of floors as well as maximum height in feet. In other districts, the heights are only described in feet, leaving open for interpretation how many floors can be achieved within that height limit (described in number of feet). Additionally, the ability to utilize the “Signature Development” provision is only accommodated in the CID District, however, it is described under the C District in the ordinance.

Similarly, some regulations within the zoning districts are not realistic. For example, in the Urban Village District, building

gross square footage cannot exceed 3,000 SF (4,500 SF with bonus); however, a portion of the district allows for building heights of 65’. If the two criteria were applied to a building, the result would be a very tall building with a very small footprint.

Refer to *Exhibit 11: Existing Key Downtown Zoning Districts and Street Frontages*, previous page.

Building Heights

Allowable building heights vary throughout the downtown and typically range from 45’ to 65’ with the ability to go as high as 95’ and 145’ in some areas. Taller building heights are restricted to areas outside the immediate downtown core, preserving the historic scale of the core area along College Avenue and South Allen Street. As mentioned previously, building heights are described in terms of feet and, in some cases, also the number of floors; however, this is not consistent. This could be the reason many residential buildings have uncomfortably low first floors, because it allowed for an additional floor of development. Refer to *Exhibit 12: Existing Maximum Building Heights and Maximum Residential Densities* on following page.



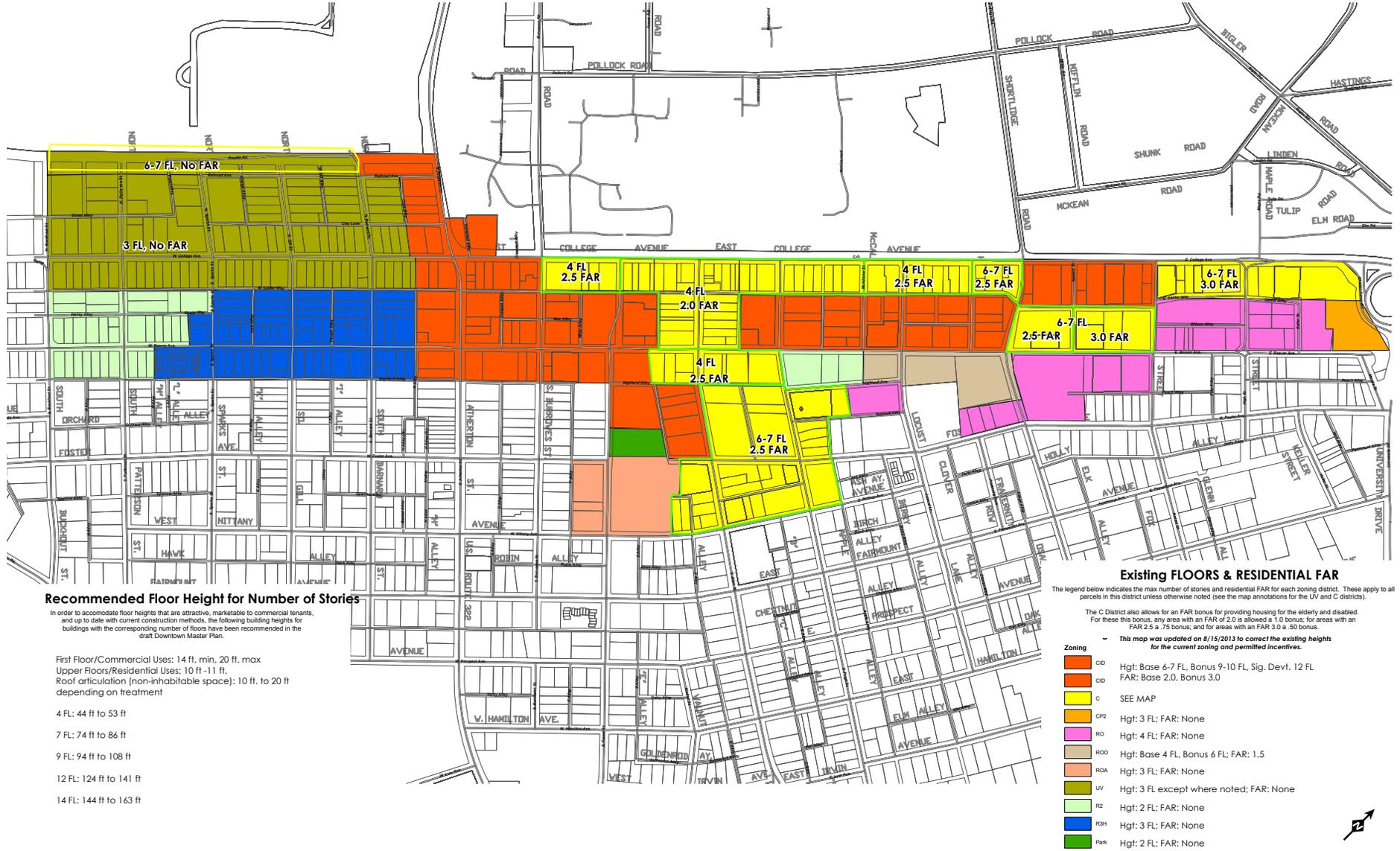


Exhibit 12: Existing Maximum Building Heights and Maximum Residential Densities

Development Densities

Development densities vary by district with total building FAR's going as high as 8.0 for Signature Developments. Residential FAR's are restricted, however, and can only go as high as 3.0 (in certain districts), inclusive of incentives. The description for Signature Developments appears to be the only place in the ordinance where overall site density is addressed. In other instances, the density limits are related to residential, which is an understandable outcome related to the intense development of student housing that State College has experienced over the years.

Because a significant amount of the most intensive development in downtown is also poorly designed, there are many negative perceptions to additional high density development. High density development is important, however, to maintain and enhance walkable environments and transit usage and to support downtown businesses. It is important to note, however, that any additional high density development be well-designed. Recommendations related to this are outlined later in this report in Chapter 3.

Refer to *Exhibit 12: Existing Maximum Building Heights and Maximum Residential Densities* (previous page).