



BROADWAY CULTURAL GATEWAY FINAL REPORT



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Center for Craft commissioned the Broadway Cultural Gateway project and report as part of its property development initiative at 67 Broadway, which includes the National Craft Innovation Hub. This initiative will turn the Center's historic 1912 building into an urban creative campus that puts craft in the context of other creative disciplines. The project connects makers, artists, designers, scholars, students, creative sector entrepreneurs, and the general public through galleries, co-working/shared workspaces, event spaces, and a makerspace. The renovated building will provide regional, national, and international convening opportunities for the field in a space specifically designed to inspire what's possible for the future of craft.

The Broadway Cultural Gateway project was supported in part by a grant-funded partnership with UNC Asheville.

Advisory Board

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Creative Intervention

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Asheville Design Center
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Asheville GreenWorks
Asheville Makers
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Earth River Productions
Echoview Fiber Mill
League of Creative Interventionists
MountainTrue
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** This event is made possible through the generous support of UNC Asheville, the Center for Craft, and the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority.*



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COLLABORATIVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For many visitors to Asheville, the intersection of Broadway and Woodfin Avenue provides a first impression of downtown, with an average of 17,500 cars traveling through it each day.¹ However, this northern gateway to the downtown district presents many challenges for both vehicular traffic and pedestrians, and lacks key wayfinding and placekeeping features such as signage and public art.

The Center for Craft intends that their development of a National Creative Innovation Hub at 67 Broadway will serve as an anchor point to help connect the northern gateway to the heart of downtown. By leveraging the arts, the Center hopes to bring attention to Asheville's stimulating and unique downtown cultural district.

Since August 2017, the Asheville Design Center (ADC) has worked with the Center for Craft, UNC Asheville, a local consulting artist, a nationally-recognized creative placemaking expert, and key stakeholders to facilitate a creative placekeeping-based visioning process for the city block defined by Broadway Street, North Lexington Avenue, West Walnut Street, and Woodfin Street in downtown Asheville (herein, Study Area). Key stakeholders included Study Area property and business owners, residential tenants, cultural leaders, downtown advocacy groups, UNC Asheville, and the City of Asheville, all of whom were represented on the project Advisory Team.

In order to identify the issues that most impact the Study Area, ADC engaged stakeholders to better understand where the design team should focus its efforts. ADC quickly discovered that there was consensus around a number of issues pertinent to Broadway Street, Carolina Lane, and Woodfin Avenue. The design team directed less effort towards Lexington Avenue and Walnut Street, as stakeholders expressed fewer concerns and opportunities along those thoroughfares.

Having identified the issues within the Study Area, ADC's team set out to test a number of potential design solutions during a Creative Intervention event within the Study Area on May 5, 2018. An estimated 1,000 people attended the event and 318 participants completed surveys that helped inform the design team's recommendations. In this summary report, ADC proposes design recommendations to address the following:

- Creating a Gateway into Downtown
- Improving the Pedestrian Experience
- Activating the City's Alleyways

The report also includes extended appendices containing a collection of maps, reports, designs, and relevant materials from other communities.

¹Annual Average Daily Traffic. (NCDOT 2017).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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PROJECT SCOPE + GOALS

The Broadway Cultural Gateway project provides an opportunity for Asheville to build on its national reputation as a cultural destination by integrating the arts into civic engagement and urban planning practices in order **to preserve and revitalize the creative sector and built environment.**

Since August 2017, the Asheville Design Center (ADC) has worked with the Center for Craft; UNC Asheville; Cortina Caldwell, a local consulting artist; nationally-recognized creative placemaking expert Hunter Franks of League of Creative Interventionists; and key stakeholders **to facilitate a creative placekeeping-based visioning process** for the city block defined by Broadway Street, North Lexington Avenue, West Walnut Street, and Woodfin Street in downtown Asheville (herein, Study Area). Key stakeholders included Study Area property and business owners, residential tenants, cultural leaders, downtown advocacy groups, UNC Asheville, and the City of Asheville, all of whom were represented on the project Advisory Team.

The project scope included strategic planning and coordination with key stakeholders and the broader community **to inform a long-term vision for the Study Area with the primary goal of activating Broadway Street, Carolina Lane, and Chicken Alley through the arts.**

In addition, ADC worked with stakeholders to identify opportunities for temporary installations **to enliven the Study Area and suggest appropriate permanent uses on the site over time.**

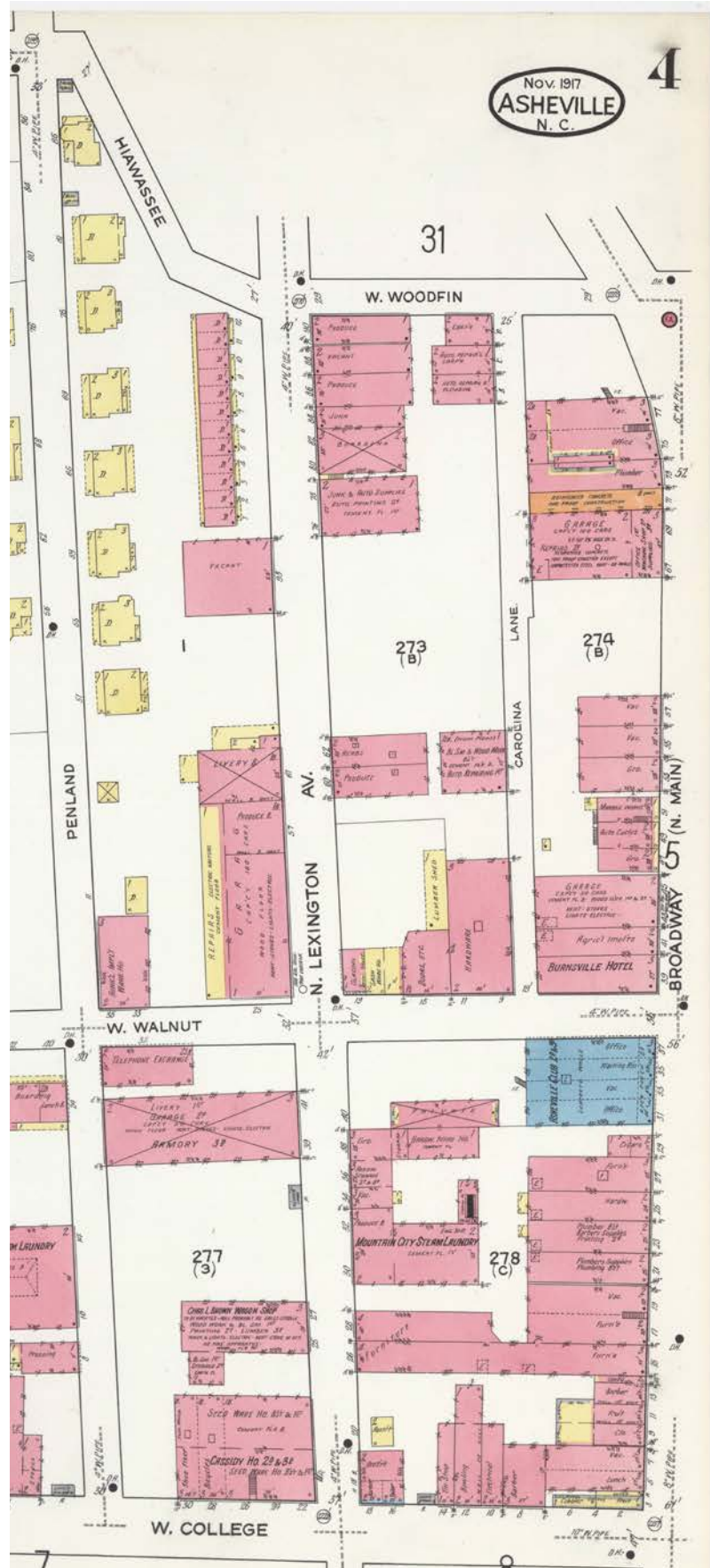
ADC used a multi-layered creative placekeeping process **to honor the unique history of the Study Area, the underlying cultural systems, ecological opportunities, stakeholders' visions for the future, and applied learning opportunities** for UNC Asheville students. The results of this process demonstrate thoughtful analysis of existing conditions along with articulate, imaginative, and practical recommendations. The resulting design studies serve as an effective communication tool **to garner community support and attract future grant funds for implementation (local, regional, and national).**

ADC also worked with a Caldwell, Franks, local stakeholders, students and the UNC Asheville Steam Studio to produce a Creative Intervention event in Summer 2018 that prototypes appropriate permanent uses to inform the design recommendations.

INTRODUCTION



1913 SANBORN MAP



1917 SANBORN MAP

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

According to the National Register of Historic Places Inventory, there are 41 historic buildings within the Study Area, most of which were constructed in the 1910s and 20s.

The earliest recorded history available for the Study Area emphasized Broadway and the north-south corridor connecting to Biltmore Avenue as an important Cherokee trading route.

“In 1794, John Burton . . . laid out a street following an old [Cherokee] Indian path, first known as North and South Main Street, and later Biltmore Avenue and Broadway.”²

By the early 1900s, much of the land in the Study Area was owned by the Investors Land Company. Around 1910, they began to auction off their holdings, spurring development. The north end of Broadway (then known as Main Street) was anchored by the construction of the Enterprise Machine Company (now Center for Craft) in 1912, the Scottish Rite Cathedral and Masonic Temple in 1913, and Eagles Home (now Blue Ridge Public Radio) in 1914.³

Carolina Lane was established in 1917, and for decades the alley hosted numerous businesses, including the Asheville Postcard Company from 1930-77. Writer J.L. Mashburn describes their location as a “nook in an alley in a weather beaten establishment.”



Carolina Lane, 1976



Masonic Temple Construction, 1913

²National Register Of Historic Places Inventory (1974).

³National Register Of Historic Places Inventory (1974).

INTRODUCTION



Center for Craft, 1977



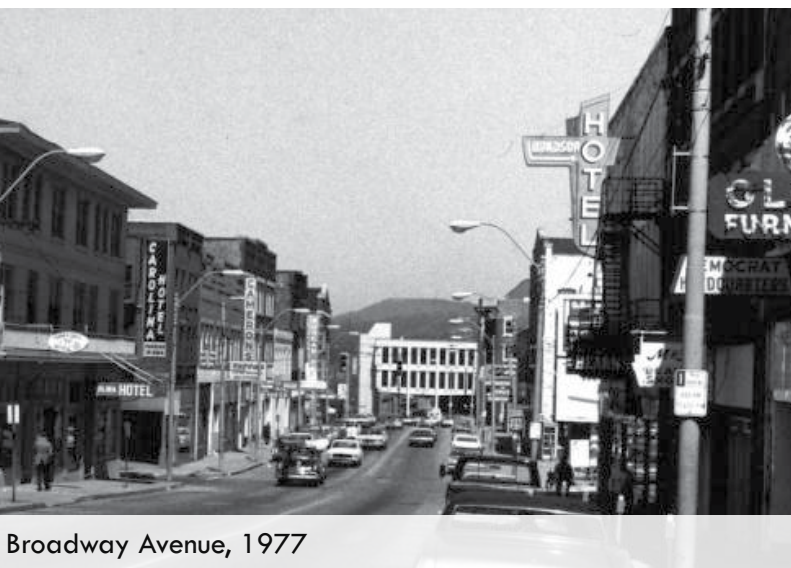
Minico Cleaners, 1920



APC Exterior, 1977



APC Interior, 1977



Broadway Avenue, 1977



"The Wrap", 1980

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Chicken Alley, immortalized by artist Molly Must's 2011 mural, appears to have been created sometime in the 1920s. The mural is a testament to the chicken processing plant owned by Sam and Argie Young for which the alley is named, as well as the Asheville farmers market and many farm-supply shops that used to be located there.

The Great Depression of the 1930s hit Asheville hard and led to a period of decline downtown. The Study Area faced many challenges during this period. In the 1980s, the Study Area was almost completely demolished to build a new mall complex. In an effort to preserve the historic district, residents and artists formed the Save Downtown Asheville organization, and on April 19, 1980 they "wrapped" a large portion of downtown. Using pieces of cloth tied together, they outlined the proposed footprint of the new mall complex. Due to these efforts, they were able to effectively stop the proposed development by encouraging voters to reject the \$40 million bond that would have helped finance the proposed \$117.5 million mall complex.

Since the early 2000s, this area has been in a period of renewal and is poised for a major period of growth. As the area moves into this new phase, it is important that stakeholders consider creative placekeeping best practices in order to preserve the history of the area and create an authentic, welcoming space.



Broadway Street, 1920



Chicken Alley, 1976

⁴J. L. Mashburn. *Asheville & Buncombe County... Once Upon a Time*. (Enka, NC: Colonial House Publishers, 2012).

⁵Asheville Mural Trail (Asheville, NC, 2011).

⁶C. Cowart, C. Hurt, and M. Whalen. *The Wrap of Downtown Asheville*. (Asheville, NC: UNC Asheville Digital Archives, 2015).

INTRODUCTION

CREATIVE PLACEKEEPING BEST PRACTICES

PLACEMAKING OR PLACEKEEPING

Placemaking utilizes art and culture to develop the social and physical landscapes of communities. As the field of placemaking has grown, it has been criticized for causing gentrification by revitalizing neighborhoods and increasing real estate costs without providing ways for long-term residents to remain in the places they call home. Placekeeping has arisen as a rebuttal to placemaking, and focuses on preserving the cultural history of a place while providing local residents the ability to remain and thrive in their community. Placekeeping is important because it demonstrates that it is people who make a great place. It is not economics, amenities, or cleanliness, but rather stories, histories, and culture that shape the places we love. Placekeeping is defined heavily by the process involved in a project.

PLACEKEEPING BEST PRACTICES

The following is a brief outline of placekeeping practices that can be implemented for any project to be informed by the history and culture of a neighborhood, to honor the stories of a place and people, and to create solutions with residents that provide lasting economic and cultural benefits. These practices became an integral part of the process for the Study Area.

LISTEN

Listening is an act of love. When beginning any project, create time to ask residents, business owners, and visitors what they love about a place and what they want to see change.

Understand the history of the place and spend time in the place before making any changes to it. This listening and observing process is extremely valuable to creating relationships and building trust within the community.

BE FLEXIBLE

Keep your project flexible. This will allow you to be able to listen closely to the community and adapt your project as you go. Providing space for growth and transformation throughout the project will result in the community being able to truly co-create a project that serves a distinct need for them and that will last far into the future.

DEVELOP LOCAL LEADERS

There are passionate residents in every community who simply need support and access to resources to discover their leadership. Find these folks by expanding outside of your normal networks. By working with local residents and paying local artists, you are helping to support the local economy and ensuring that the social fabric of a place remains intact.

LASTING IMPACT

Ensure that your project can result in long-term impact for a place. Create regenerative systems that will continue to produce economic or social value for a community. This is often the most challenging aspect of placekeeping, and is more easily achieved by ensuring that the previously mentioned practices are implemented.

Adapted from Placekeeping Best Practices by Hunter Franks

WHAT IS CREATIVE PLACEKEEPING?

LEADERSHIP PROCESS

In keeping with creative placekeeping best practices, ADC's visioning process included a lot of listening. The ADC team worked with multiple stakeholders to ensure the project's authenticity to people and places within the Study Area. ADC also allowed the project to remain flexible, letting design concepts emerge based on community input.

ADVISORY TEAM

In cooperation with the Center for Craft, ADC recruited a Broadway Cultural Gateway Advisory Team to serve as a sounding board for concepts, and to provide additional avenues of public outreach. The Advisory Team included local business owners, residents, artists, cultural leaders, downtown advocacy groups, UNC Asheville, the City of Asheville, the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, and Date My City. The Advisory Team initially met in October of 2017 to provide feedback on the project's scope of work. The group reconvened in February and September of 2018 to provide feedback on outreach methods and help further refine the design recommendations.

DESIGN TEAM

ADC recruited a multidisciplinary team of volunteer designers including artists, architects, landscape architects, graphic designers, engineers, urban designers, arts and culture planners, community health professionals, and demographers with past experience in facilitating public visioning processes.

CONSULTING ARTIST

ADC contracted with a Local Consulting Artist, Cortina Caldwell, to work with the ADC team and stakeholders to identify opportunities for temporary installations to enliven the Study Area and suggest appropriate permanent uses on the site over time. The Consulting Artist played a critical role in supporting the project manager and design team to ensure that all aspects of stakeholder and community engagement were grounded in the arts through an equity lens and leveraged creative methods and approaches whenever possible.

LEADERSHIP PROCESS

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING EXPERT

ADC contracted with Hunter Franks of the League of Creative Interventionists to host a site walk of the Study Area with key stakeholders, and to produce an educational speaking event on creative placekeeping as part of the Building Our City series in April 2018. The speaking event explored best practices and local opportunities for how art and design can be integrated into community planning and engagement processes to achieve increased quality of life and a more authentic sense of place. Franks consulted on community engagement methods for the May 5th Creative Intervention, as well as the post-event analysis and consultation on the long-term creative placekeeping implementation plan for the Study Area.

UNC ASHEVILLE

As a key partner in the May 5th Creative Intervention, UNC Asheville staff and faculty met with ADC's design team on 11 occasions for brainstorming and coordination meetings, as well as several site walks with UNC Asheville classes. Over 150 students across nine departments contributed to the May 5th Creative Intervention, bringing vitality and a new perspective to the event.



PROCESS

FEEDBACK COLLECTION METHODS

Creative Intervention

Creative Intervention was a one-day event held on May 5, 2018 with a range of focal points, including: experimenting with unique public art installations and culturally diverse creative activities, potential streetscape changes, and infrastructure improvements. The purpose was to gather community feedback and momentum for permanent change to take place in a way that satisfies local community members, property owners, business owners, and residents. Participants were given multiple opportunities to share input through discussions with design team members, chalkboards at either end of Carolina Lane, and a survey postcard.



Interviews, Community Meetings + Focus Groups

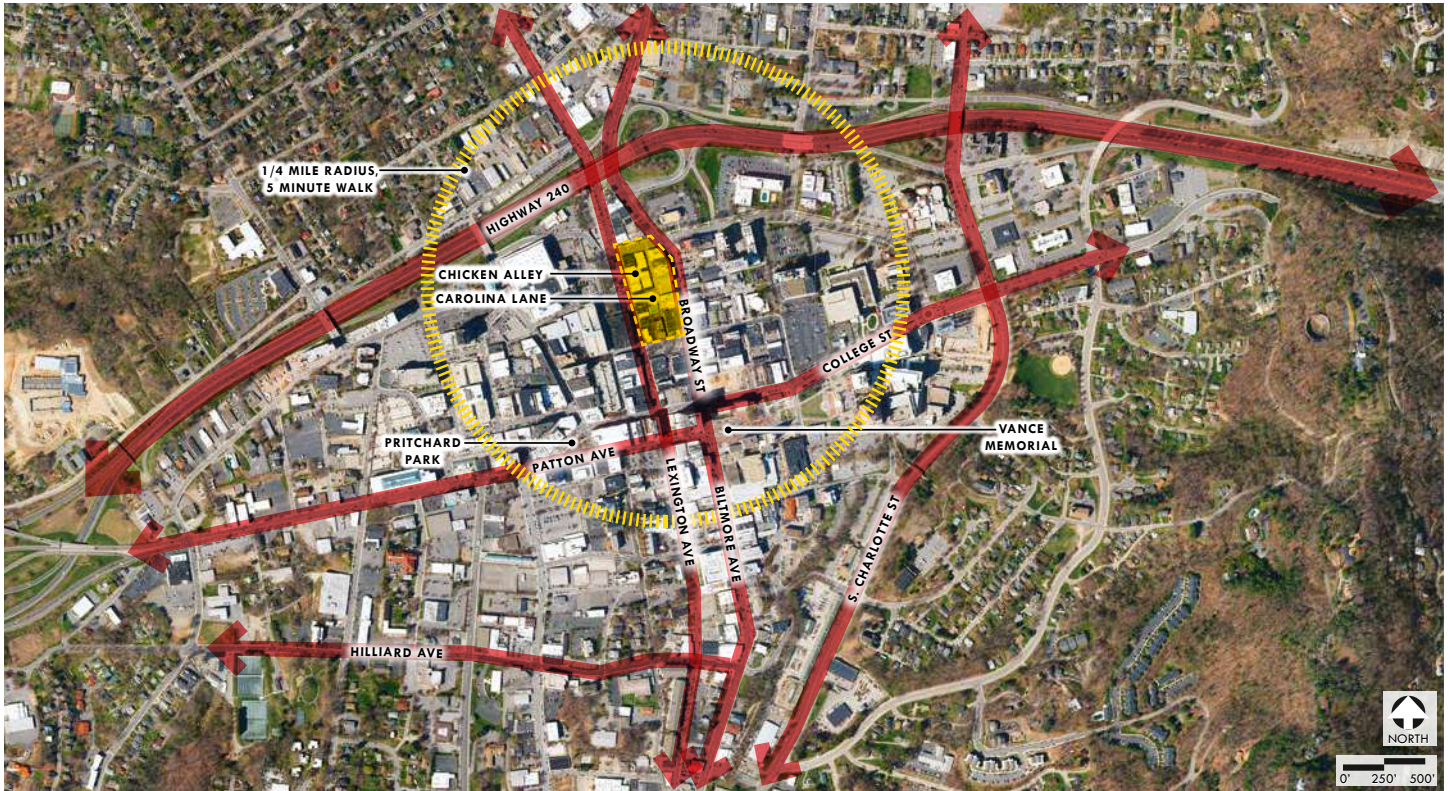
Interviews were conducted with primary stakeholders, including Study Area property owners, business owners, and residents, to assess obvious and underlying issues within the area. Community Meetings were also held with area stakeholders, and emphasis was put on fostering equity and inclusivity. Lastly, discussions with focus groups were conducted to review different design solutions, and to explore how this area might be better utilized to promote arts and culture in downtown Asheville. Focus groups included the advisory team, residents and property owners, business owners, and representatives from the downtown arts and cultural sector.



METHODOLOGY

CONTEXT: CITY SCALE

To initiate the design process, the ADC design team documented existing conditions within the Study Area and conducted a thorough site analysis. ADC analyzed the Study Area and created several maps displayed in this section.



The map above locates the Study Area in the context of the city. Note the location of the Study Area in relation to other downtown areas of interest and street networks. The extent also reinforces the Study Area as an important gateway into downtown from the north at Broadway Avenue and Lexington Avenue.

SITE ANALYSIS

CREATING A GATEWAY INTO DOWNTOWN

“Gateway Projects welcome people to areas. Artworks may be used to enhance the character and distinction of an area by either marking or defining boundaries and/or entrances into the city, unique/significant districts, individual neighborhoods, and into the mountains. Gateway Projects offer an opportunity to signify and identify places and enhance, enrich, and orient the community’s landscape.”⁷—City of Asheville Public Art Masterplan

WELCOME TO ASHEVILLE

An average of **17,500** cars travel through the intersection of Woodfin Street and Broadway Street each day, according to NCDOT estimates. Of those, nearly **10,000** use this intersection as an entryway into downtown.⁸ Adding signage and public art to this area would help define and enhance Asheville’s unique downtown cultural district.

BENEFITS OF SIGNAGE

Signage can give less prominent districts and destinations a much-needed boost. It adds distinct definition to an area, further announcing arrival into downtown for both residents and visitors. Signage can also help reinforce an area’s defining culture and history.

Initiatives like Explore Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau’s Wayfinding Signs Program recognize the importance of these features, and aim to enhance “the destination’s sense of place as well as the region’s history and character.”⁹ One approach the program uses is gateway and district identification signage.

ADC recommends working with the City of Asheville and Explore Asheville to see if this project might meet their criteria.

CELEBRATING OUR CREATIVE CULTURE

Public Art can also be used to define a destination, such as the Chicken Alley mural by Molly Must mentioned in the historical context on this report. Over the years, the mural has brought significant attention to this area and to the history of the alleyway.

According to a report by Americans for the Arts, “public art directly influences how people see and connect with a place, providing access to aesthetics that support its identity and making residents feel appreciated and valued.” Public art also “encourage[s] attachment to a location for residents [and visitors] through cultural and historical understanding, and by highlighting what is unique about the places where people love, work, and play.”¹⁰

Adding public art near the intersection of Woodfin Street and Broadway Street, near the I-240 off-ramp onto Merrimon Avenue, or somewhere in between, would offer a distinct cultural identifier for the northern end of downtown and serve as a defining entry point into the City’s cultural district.

⁷Public Art Masterplan (Asheville, NC: City of Asheville, 2001).

⁸Annual Average Daily Traffic (NCDOT, 2017).

⁹Wayfinding Signs Program (Explore Asheville, n.d.).

¹⁰Why Public Art Matters (Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts, 2018).

PRIMARY FOCUS AREAS

THE PARKLET

Another way to enhance the pedestrian experience in the Study Area would be to add a parklet. According to an article by Michelle Birdsall in the ITE (Institute of Transportation Engineers) Journal, parklets provide “an economical and eye pleasing solution to the need for increased public space where people can reconnect with the environment and each other in their community.”¹⁴



While NCDOT has yet to permit the installation of a parklet on a state highway, parklets “are becoming a tool to change public policy in areas that have promoted cars over pedestrians, bringing back elements of an era where people interacted face-to-face with their neighbors on the street.”¹⁵



ADC recommends a pilot parklet be added in front of Center for Craft through a public/private partnership between the Center, NCDOT, and the City of Asheville.

¹⁴ M. Birdsall, M. Parklets: Providing Space for People to Park...Themselves. (ITE Journal 83(5), 36-39, 2013).

¹⁵ Birdsall, Parklets.

PRIMARY FOCUS AREAS

WHY ADDING A PARKLET IS GOOD BUSINESS SENSE

The increased seating and sidewalk space afforded through parklets has actually helped businesses by expanding access to storefronts.

“A parking space usually serves **one person** for an hour, and what a parklet does is it turns that space over to **10 people** for that very hour,” notes Ariel Ben-Amos, of the Philadelphia (PA) Mayor’s Office.¹⁶

San Francisco (CA) found the addition of a parklet on Divisadero Street resulted in an increase in the number of parked bikes to an average of 10 at a time during weekday afternoons. “[Parklets] **have an unbelievable amount of value in bringing vibrancy to the street life there.** They’re a place where people linger, where they stop, chat and gather, and that really activates the street,” said Alexis Smith of the San Francisco Planning Department.¹⁴

Businesses in Long Beach (CA) saw upticks in sales that led to staff expansion after sponsoring a parklet on their street.¹⁴

Businesses tend to be the primary sponsors of most parklet proposals in cities offering formal programs, because they see a worthwhile return on investment.¹⁴



¹⁴ M. Birdsall, M. Parklets: Providing Space for People to Park...Themselves. (ITE Journal 83(5), 36-39, 2013).
¹⁵ Birdsall, Parklets.
¹⁶ Parklet Policy Toolkit. (San Francisco, CA: Smart Growth America, 2013).

PRIMARY FOCUS AREAS

PARKING

Parking was a concern raised by some business owners in the Study Area.

There are a number of parking areas close to the Study Area, including the Rankin Street deck, the Civic Center deck, the Lexington Park surface lot, the West Walnut Street surface lot, the Broadway Street parking deck at the AC Hotel, the surface lot behind Renaissance Hotel, and on-street parking throughout the area.

ADC identifies three potential additional parking areas. (1) The surface lot on West Walnut Street could add a second level with entry from Broadway Street, effectively doubling the size of the lot. (2) The Lexington Park lot on the corner of North Lexington Avenue and Hiawasse Street could be better utilized to offer additional parking capacity. (3) HomeTrust Bank has a larger surface lot adjacent to unused property that was previously an I-240 off-ramp onto Woodfin Street. This area would make an ideal location for a parking deck.



PRIMARY FOCUS AREAS

ACTIVATING THE CITY'S ALLEYWAYS

“Alleys are places of drama-enticing in their narrow linearity, exciting in their perceived risk, and scaled as stage sets, where the human body figures large against a constrained backdrop and directed lighting. Alleys are also quintessentially about movement, whether by individuals perambulating and pedaling, vehicles accessing business backdoors, or water flowing from rooftops to drains. With this excitement, potential for human encounter, and utility in moving people, merchandise and water through the urban fabric, alleys possess compelling potential to produce a vibrant secondary public realm that might also help to repair the ecological performance of our cities.”¹⁷—Seattle Integrated Alley Handbook Activating Alleys for a Lively City

ADC worked with multiple stakeholders to create design solutions for some of the top concerns. The following is an overview of the issues that were addressed.



DID YOU KNOW?

“Alleys can contribute around 50% of additional public space to the city, creating a new network for pedestrians.”¹⁸

Alleyways provide an opportunity for an enhanced pedestrian experience, but they also offer so much more, including:

- A More Walkable City
- Places for Green Infrastructure
- Intimate and Personal City Spaces
- Additional Store Frontages For a Greater Economy
- Places for Children and the Elderly
- Off-street Spaces for Festivals and Cultural Activities
- Unique Experiences



¹⁷M. Fialko and J. Hampton, *J. Seattle Integrated Alley Handbook Activating Alleys for a Lively City.* (Seattle, WA., 2011)

¹⁸Fialko and Hampton. *Seattle Integrated.*

ACTIVATING THE CITY'S ALLEYWAYS

LIGHTING: CAROLINA LANE

Survey results from the Creative Intervention, in addition to stakeholder sentiment, favors café string lighting for Carolina Lane. Any lighting installations would have to comply with the City's Outdoor Lighting Ordinance, which is currently under review. See Part II, Chapter 7, Article XI, Section 7-11-10 of the City's Code of Ordinances.



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT: CAROLINA LANE & CHICKEN ALLEY

Because the Study Area lacks storm drains, all stormwater drains to Lexington Avenue before reaching a storm sewer. As such, many property owners and tenants complain of water inundation during typical summer storm events. Many property owners have constructed small berms in front of their landings to try and prevent stormwater from entering their premises. ADC has provided the City with cost estimates for resurfacing Carolina Lane. See [Appendices: Carolina Lane Improvements - Cost Estimates].

ROAD SURFACING

It is readily evident that Carolina Lane needs to be resurfaced. Ongoing construction in the alley has further deteriorated road conditions, which are magnified during a typical rain event. ADC has provided the City with cost estimates for resurfacing Carolina Lane using a mix of permeable and paved surfaces. See [Appendices: Carolina Lane Improvements - Cost Estimates].



ACTIVATING THE ALLEYWAY

ACTIVATING THE CITY'S ALLEYWAYS

GARBAGE COLLECTION: CAROLINA LANE & CHICKEN ALLEY

Stakeholders consistently identified solid waste disposal as the most pressing issue in Carolina Lane. It is also evident that Carolina Lane will continue to serve as a service alley well into the future. Initially, the ADC design team explored the idea of creating screened garbage can enclosures at several locations in Carolina Lane. However, conversations with the City's Solid Waste Disposal Department revealed that screened enclosures would not be practical in Carolina Lane. Businesses would have to remove their garbage cans from these enclosures the evening prior to garbage collection, as municipal workers would not be expected to remove the cans themselves. In addition, the enclosures tended to encroach into the fire lanes.

Another course of action might be to install centrally located compactor systems, which businesses and residents would access by fob key. There is interest from the City in piloting this program, but it may still require some additional private funding. There are some additional cost-sharing methods that should be explored, such as a pay-as-you-throw program, which would enable the compactor owner to charge residents and businesses for trash services based on the amount of trash they throw away (usually employing a pay-per-bag system).



POCKET PARK: CAROLINA LANE

A pocket park is a small park accessible to the general public. Pocket parks are frequently created on a single vacant building lot or on small, irregular pieces of land. The ADC team explored different design approaches for a potential pocket park behind Center for Craft's parking deck on Carolina Lane. Overall, 57.7% of survey participants said they would like to have a community space with greenery. These findings are also in line with the preferences of Study Area property owners, business owners, and residents.



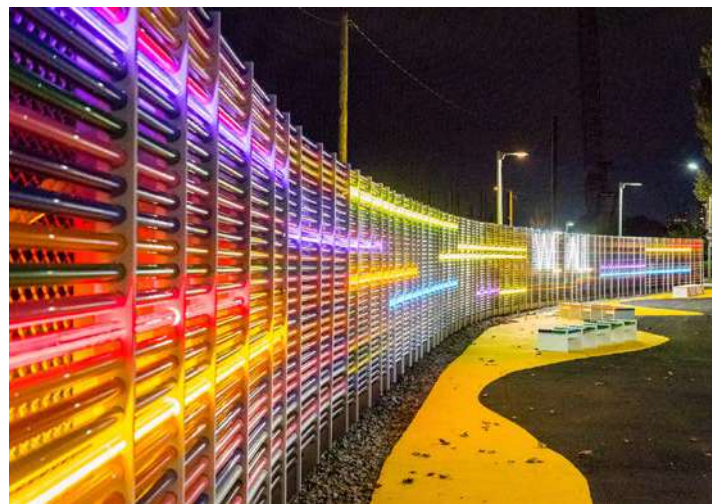
ACTIVATING THE ALLEYWAY

ACTIVATING THE CITY'S ALLEYWAYS

PUBLIC ART: CAROLINA LANE & CHICKEN ALLEY

Remnants of the alley's historic past vitality can still be found and are worth preserving. Though City sign ordinances make the restoration of advertisements that could be deemed "current" difficult, there are still many "Ghost Signs" that might be worth restoring.

ADC also identified several potential areas for artist installations. These efforts would need to be approved and coordinated through individual property owners. ADC recommends prioritizing local artists for these installations, particularly those with a connection to the Study Area and/or artists of color in order to create an authentic and welcoming space.



ACTIVATING THE ALLEYWAY



PRIVATE PARKING
Being Observed
CALL ALL GATE TOWING
FOR PARKING VIOLATIONS
828.236.1131

PRIVATE PARKING
Towing Enforced
CALL ALL GATE TOWING
FOR PARKING VIOLATIONS
828.236.1131

4 - CO
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