This district at the heart of Blacksburg is a dynamic nexus between the many parts of Downtown. Central Downtown has several development sites in key locations. The major opportunities are for the creation of a central streetside plaza to serve as a “front door” for the community, architecturally-sensitive redevelopment of sites for active retail and non-student housing, and new transportation facilities along Progress.

EXISTING CONDITIONS
Central Downtown is where Downtown truly comes together. Improving it in ways that are sensitive to context and advance town goals will require great care. The Baptist Church site has great potential as a catalyst site. In the Central Main area on the side east of Wilson Avenue are generally historic. Any new development north of Wilson Avenue would need to integrate elements of a Baptist Church development and historic buildings to the south.

The College Avenue extension provides limited utility as a street and parking area. A town-owned lot presents an opportunity to build structured parking. Progress Street has the greatest potential to provide non-motorized transportation infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The proposed development of the Baptist Church would need to integrate the new site with the old fabric, with opportunity to enhance the interface between Downtown/VT Campus.

The College Avenue extension will be transformed into a central gathering plaza, complemented by smaller spaces with opportunity for public art highlighting the town’s character. New structured parking on the Progress Street Lot will support businesses and enable visitors to “park once” when they come to Downtown. Improvements to Progress will help to form a bike and pedestrian network. New buildings will integrate art, interesting materials, and street furniture to ensure that development is distinctive. Central Downtown should continue to be enhanced as the most vibrant part of Downtown—a place that belongs to everyone.

VISION
The vision for Central Downtown is for it to be the activity hub of the entire Downtown. New residential, office, and retail will help attract and retain young professionals. The College Avenue extension will be transformed into a central gathering plaza, complemented by smaller spaces with opportunity for public art highlighting the town’s character. New structured parking on the Progress Street Lot will support businesses and enable visitors to “park once” when they come to Downtown. Improvements to Progress will help to form a bike and pedestrian network. New buildings will integrate art, interesting materials, and street furniture to ensure that development is distinctive. Central Downtown should continue to be enhanced as the most vibrant part of Downtown—a place that belongs to everyone.

CHARACTER & IDENTITY
- Mixed-use, with a blend of historic and forward-thinking architecture
- Places for local and distinctive national businesses
- Enhanced public space, such as at College Avenue extension
- Support employee attraction and retention
- Investments in walkability and non-motorized transportation
- Better links to Wong Park and Huckleberry Trail
- Capacity for parking

ECONOMY
- Good pedestrian environment/ walkability
- Opportunity to better-connect to Wong Park
- A mix of historic buildings and those of limited architectural significance
- Opportunity to enhance the interface between Downtown/VT Campus
- Better address transportation challenges
- Create a true mixed use environment that targets non-students

PLACE
- Town’s center of walkable retail traffic
- Attractive location for non-student housing, as well as employment
- Low-density townhome infill is not economically feasible
- Redevelopment at higher densities is very visible

POLICY
- Capacity for parking
- Better links to Wong Park and Huckleberry Trail
- Enhanced public space, such as at College Avenue extension
- Support employee attraction and retention
- Investments in walkability and non-motorized transportation

MARKET
- Creative, walkable retail
- Attractive location for non-student housing
- Enhanced public space, such as at College Avenue extension
- Support employee attraction and retention
- Investments in walkability and non-motorized transportation
- Better links to Wong Park and Huckleberry Trail
- New jobs

DOWNTOWN’S SIX DISTRICTS
CHARACTER & IDENTITY
ECONOMY
POLICY
MARKET
PLACE
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