



13.0

# Cultural and Seasonal Events



## CULTURAL AND SEASONAL EVENTS

Impressions of a place are defined not only by ordinary day-to-day experiences but also in the special events that have a transformative effect on a place. Street fairs that gather large crowds alter our spatial sense of a place: filled with people, a street seems larger and more lively than before. Seasonal events or visual changes to the streetscape mark the passage of time and become an indelible part of the memory of a place.

### **cultural events and street fairs**

Many residents of Chapel Hill perceive street fairs as an opportunity to bring together community and to showcase the town, as well as attracting new visitors to Downtown businesses. Yet these events have at times carried with them problems in terms of crowd control and the disruption of a neighborhood's sense of community and safety. The following chapter addresses these issues, from strategies for managing the town's continuing event traditions to proposed events and installations that will draw visitors to the town to celebrate its cultural and artistic institutions.

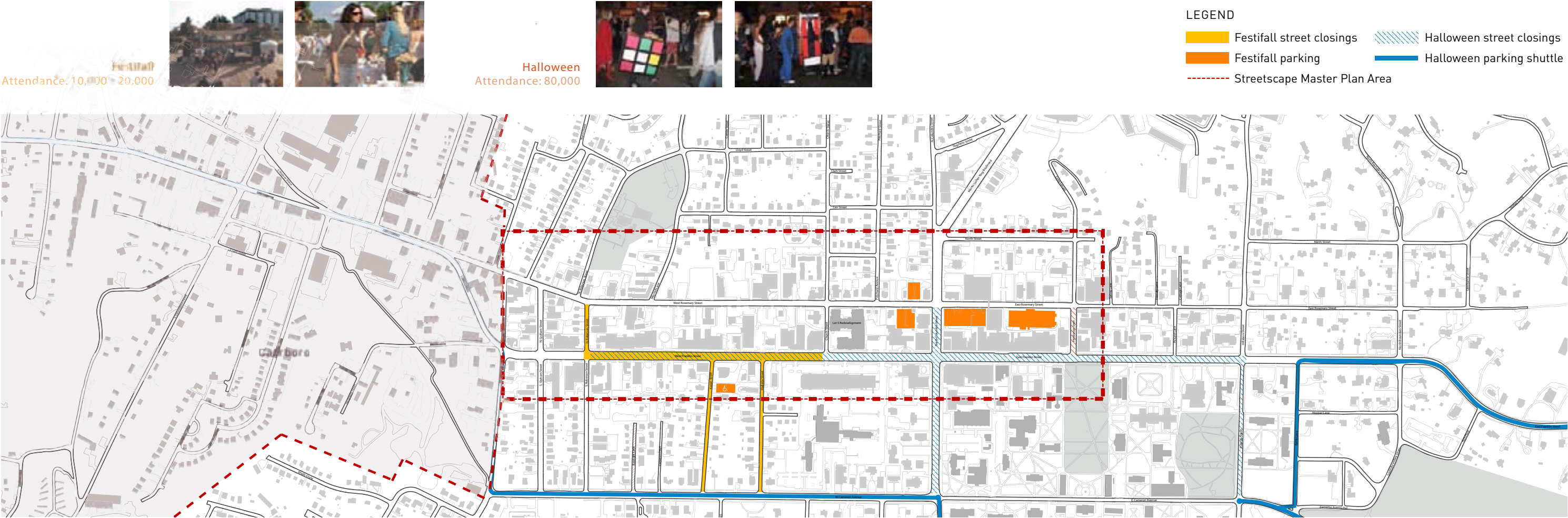
### **sidewalk dining**

The casual use of public space changes through the seasons. Most notably, the warm weather of spring opens the possibility of sidewalk dining. The presence of tables and diners brings a lively character to the street while promoting local businesses. Sidewalk dining should fall within the following guidelines:

- Available space: outdoor dining areas must not create obstructions from pedestrian flow; a minimum 6' passage between the street curb and the dining area is recommended
- Schedule: it will be left to the owner's discretion to determine when to set up outdoor eating environments
- Enclosure: restaurant and café owners must provide fastened, moveable partitions which clearly define the extent of the eating area.
- Accessibility: all pavement must be level and in good repair. Outdoor dining areas must be ADA compliant.
- Security: while the restaurant is closed, it is recommended that all outdoor furnishing and barricades be enclosed in the building or otherwise secured.
- Trash: all rubbish must be stored in the building and disposed of properly, based on the typical operations of the restaurant. Outdoor trash receptacles are not acceptable.

If implemented within the Master Plan guidelines, seasonal sidewalk dining will improve the character of the street by bringing daily activity to the sidewalks. This type of activity will also be beneficial to local businesses by making storefronts and sidewalks appear more open and welcoming to passersby. Changing seasonal activities and special events will bring a richness and diversity to the culture of Downtown Chapel Hill.

EXISTING CULTURAL EVENTS



There are currently two major street fair events held in Downtown Chapel Hill each year: Festifall, typically held in early October, and Halloween, which attracts as many as 80,000 visitors each year. Festifall is typically a smaller event that attracts 10,000 to 20,000 attendees each year. Both events involve street closings, designated parking areas, and in the case of Halloween, bus shuttles that take visitors from parking lots off-site to Downtown Chapel Hill.



## PROPOSED CULTURAL EVENTS

Large-scale cultural events are an important opportunity to showcase the town's cultural and civic amenities, attract tourism, and celebrate the town's heritage. Yet in recent years, concerns have arisen regarding the security and safety of these events. As the town of Chapel Hill has grown, these events have also grown in attendance, attracting large crowds that are difficult to manage.

Proposals for new cultural events should consider restoring the 'small town', community-oriented character that these events are historically associated with. An effective strategy is to host events that are catered to a specific demographic, such that the number of attendees will remain manageable. For example, a book fair sponsored by the Chapel Hill Public Library will appeal to families with young children. An arts festival may appeal to an adult crowd with an interest in cultural activities and performing arts. Rather than having broad, general interest events such as the former Apple Chill Festival, these festivals will draw visitors from afar but from a smaller group that shares similar interests or characteristics.

The images below offer examples of street fairs and cultural events that have a smaller, more community-oriented theme.



Book Fair



Culinary Festival



Outdoor Market

In addition to large-scale gatherings, small-scale outdoor events can also help to promote the Town's sense of community. Opportunities for flexible programming of space should be identified and implemented. Plazas, such as the 140 West plaza under construction, as well as Downtown parking lots, represent opportunities for multiple programmatic uses. For example, weekend farmer's markets can take place at public parking lots. Unlike street fairs, these small events will not require road closings or enhanced security but will serve to attract additional people to Downtown and help to establish a more active street. Parking lots used to host these events can be selected for their proximity to major pedestrian corridors (see diagram, p. 20) as well as for their potential connection to newly-established nano parks. For potential sites, see [Section 8.0: Nano Parks](#).

