



## Implementation and Maintenance



# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The Site and Landscape will be realized through several different types of projects and programs.

- The largest and most vital components of the implementation of the Master Plan will be the installation and upgrades of the site lighting and a series of discrete streetscape projects.
- Many improvements will be carried out as part of new developments, site utility or street construction projects. Recent examples of street projects that incorporate landscape improvements include the Columbia/Franklin sidewalk improvements, which create a new sidewalk experience for the surrounding buildings at the intersection in the Central Business District.
- Other improvements can be incorporated into ongoing maintenance and replacement operations. Rather than remove all existing benches and bicycle racks to make way for new standards, for example, the Town may install the proposed furnishings to compliment or replace existing ones, as needed. Similarly, the Town may work with the NCDOT for gradual upgrades to streets as described in [Chapter 7.0](#).
- Two projects that are related to the Streetscape and Lighting Master Plan call for additional public open spaces and should be studied in a larger context of program needs. These are the nano parks proposed in [Section 8.0](#).
- Finally, there are projects that address developing needs outside the Franklin/Rosemary Street corridor, in particular the recreational and pastoral parks north of Rosemary Street. Development of connectivity analysis and site plans for these areas will require input from the Town and stakeholders in the area.

## I. Project Phasing Strategies

Each of the priorities described below has been designed to provide tangible benefits without exceeding what the Town of Chapel Hill can achieve in a single summer’s construction. The projects are phased in rough order of importance and priority, but the order is flexible and should not deter the Town from taking advantage of other opportunities as they arise.

Proposed projects fall under the following priorities:

- restore the core of the Town, including the intersection of Church Street and West Franklin Street and East and West Rosemary Streets
- reduce potential conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles
- enhance connections among different parts of the town
- additional improvements to specific spaces

Phases can be combined if funding allows, but should generally not be broken down into smaller projects than those described. In particular, each phase that affects parking should be completed as a whole in order to avoid “temporary” parking deficits or surpluses that could become institutionalized.

In particular, the phasing of landscape improvements should be coordinated with the Town’s schedule for future construction projects. Phase 1, for example, could easily be implemented as part of the construction of Church Street along the 140 West Franklin development, if funding and timing allow.

The Phasing for the implementation of the Master Plan shall be determined and coordinated with the Town Council and Department of Public Works, based on proper construction sequencing and available funding. The commonality to each new phase will be the inclusion of the following elements:

- restoration of tree canopies
- construction of walkable ADA-compliant surfaces
- installation of site lighting
- installation of site furnishing
- selective omission of inappropriate or declining trees
- construction of new and improved site drainage facilities
- installation of irrigation (only in highly visible locations, i.e. intersection of East Franklin and South Columbia Streets)



## II. Streetscape Care and Protection

### Spatial Infrastructure

One of the strengths of the Chapel Hill downtown is its clear spatial structure. Within the frame of the surrounding streets, Chapels Hill’s downtown blocks fit together like the rooms in a building. The planning of new buildings and landscape improvements should respect this structure and spatial typology of retail/commercial proximity to street, campus green setbacks, civic plazas and urban gardens. Improvements to spaces and developments such as the new 140 West Franklin Plaza and Greenbridge should enhance their established street character rather than try to impose a new one.

### Protecting Trees from Encroachment and Damage

Plantings should be selected and established as described in [Section 5.0](#). The Town of Chapel Hill should establish a multi-year pruning program, including “limbing up” street trees that are planted at grade, removing lower limbs gradually to ensure that pedestrian views are not obstructed.

To avoid damage by building, landscape and utility projects, all construction projects should include a tree protection program including tree protection fences, which should be erected before construction begins and maintained until construction is complete. Tree protection fences should be located as far away from trees as possible, and if space allows, outside the drip line of the canopy.

The mulched surfaces and planted beds should be phased out of the tree maintenance program with the Town. The Town has a large number of mulched areas adjacent to the street that are unsuitable as a walking surface and provide minimal protection and insulation for the surface roots of the trees. The implementation of expandable trees grates will provide tree surface roots with a physical barrier from injury.

### Managing Exposed Roots and Tree Health

In the case where mature street trees have exposed roots, the town should invest in root pruning to remove as many of the surface roots as possible without compromising its structure. Raising and realigning the sidewalk to protect the roots is not recommended due to existing conditions as they relate to grading and accessibility along Franklin and Rosemary Streets. Altering the existing condition to realign the sidewalk could alter the environment to an extent that the tree may not be able to adapt to, such as access to water, proper oxygen exchange for roots, and soil compaction issues. It is important for the Town to balance the overall health and maturation of the tree with maintaining safe and secure sidewalk conditions without obstructions.

The Town should carry out the following procedures in managing root health:

- 1) Have a certified arborist review existing conditions of root growth.
- 2) Remove existing pavement that is adjacent to the tree. Use air spade to assess current growth and root prune tree such that structural integrity and tree health is not compromised.
- 3) The arborist will then determine removal or preservation steps for the existing tree.

### Long-Term Maintenance

A clear maintenance and tree protection plan should be in place prior to any future street tree planting. It is suggested that a private arborist be contracted to inspect future street tree installation. The Town of Chapel Hill should monitor any tree species known to be especially vulnerable to insects or disease, and treat them as needed. In particular it should monitor all existing American Elm (*Ulmus americana*) and Native Dogwood (*Cornus florida*). Once they are planted, the trees should be assessed yearly by a private arborist.

Finally, the Town of Chapel Hill should continue its current policy of prompt replacement of any declining tree that is removed. Replacement trees need not always match the removed trees exactly in species or location, but should be selected to fit with established plantings. Such replacements will assure that the downtown area’s tree canopy will not be a relic of a single heroic planting, but an evolving plant community of varied ages and species.

## III. Conclusions

Restoring the downtown core between Rosemary and Franklin is a long term project that requires an ongoing commitment of resources and care. Hundreds of trees must be planted, site lighting must be upgraded and installed, and a permanent program of tree maintenance and replacement must be put in place.

This commitment begins with an annual allocation of resources to landscape improvements, tree planting, and related infrastructure improvements. Given the half-century it takes trees to mature, the work described in this report should begin as soon as possible. The costs will be significant, but these projects are an investment that will be repaid handsomely as the landscape matures and generations of students, residents and visitors come to know Chapel Hill as a greener and more welcoming place. Moreover, the Town’s urban landscape is a legacy that each generation of resident, city worker and Town Council member passes on to its successors. The level of investment in the plant life and lighting today will determine what kind of town welcomes Chapel Hill’s current residents a generation from now when they return with their children.

STREETSCAPE VISION PLAN



# LEGEND

- roads
- parking lots
- brick paved areas
- concrete paved areas
- existing trees
- proposed trees
- planted areas



The Streetscape Vision Plan offers a long-term vision for the extent of the Downtown Area, indicating the presence of planting, crosswalks and open spaces as they will appear 20 years in the future. As already improved areas decline or are in need of replacement, the guidelines for new sidewalks and tree plantings will be implemented in these locations, resulting in a more cohesive, visually consistent streetscape.

