

# Site Overview



## SITE OVERVIEW

In developing the Streetscape Master Plan, the process began with a rigorous inventory of the existing conditions of the Downtown area. The findings encompass commercial land use, parking and traffic conditions, and other factors affecting pedestrian and bicycle accessibility.

In addition, Downtown Chapel Hill was examined within its larger context, how it relates to surrounding landmarks and greenways, what bicycle and vehicular connections occur through or adjacent to the study area, and how these then relate to the major pedestrian corridors in the heart of Downtown. The traffic and parking analysis was also important for understanding the condition of vehicular activity and the movement of people within, to and from, and through Downtown.

The following conditions have been investigated in the diagrams in this chapter:

- Existing Parks and Green Spaces
- Existing Bicycle Routes
- Walking Distances from Major Landmarks
- Buildings and Land Use
- Major Pedestrian Corridors
- Vehicular Circulation
- Parking

These diagrams are intended to give a broad, contextual overview of Downtown Chapel Hill. In later chapters, these issues will be discussed in greater detail and will serve as the basis for streetscape design strategies.



EXISTING PARKS AND GREEN SPACES



mikyoung kim design

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Site Context

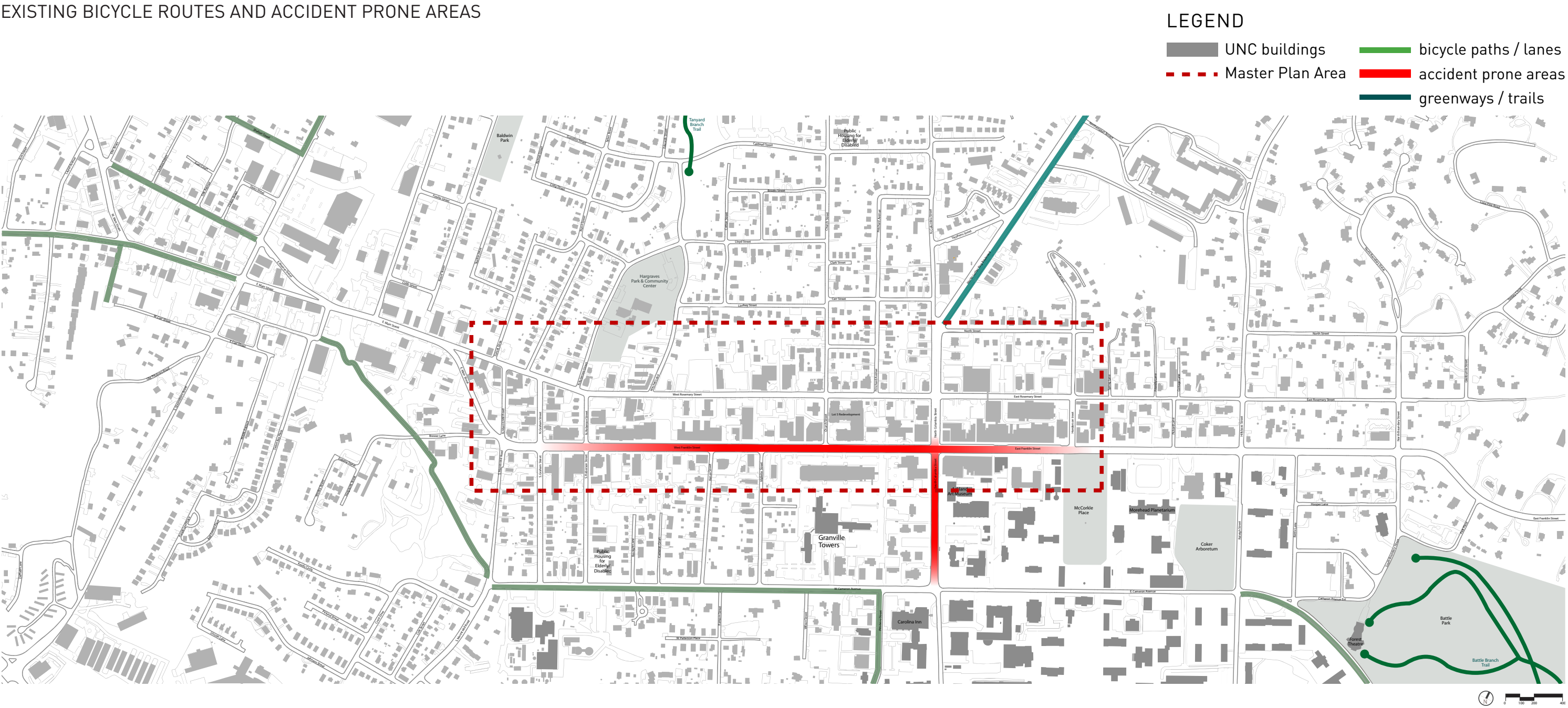
Chapel Hill Streetscape

Master Plan

The downtown district is adjacent or in proximity to several parks and green spaces, including McCorkle Place on the UNC campus, which faces East Franklin Street, as well as a series of smaller open spaces along Franklin Street. However, farther from the UNC campus, towards the western portion of the Downtown Study Area, there are very few of these open green spaces or plazas. The Master Plan will address the potential for having additional green spaces along Franklin Street.



EXISTING BICYCLE ROUTES AND ACCIDENT PRONE AREAS



Existing bicycle routes connect to the UNC campus but no bicycle routes, whether they are designated bicycle lanes or wide right lanes to accommodate bicycles, currently exist in Downtown Chapel Hill. Yet according to the Chapel Hill 2005 Mobility Report Card, the Franklin Street corridor experiences the highest number of pedestrian/bicyclist accidents each year, more than twice as many accidents as occur in any other major corridor studied from 2002-2005. The report also cites South Columbia Street as a corridor that has a higher than average number of accidents per year.

Along the major corridors in Chapel Hill, an average of 13 accidents occur each year involving pedestrians or bicyclists. A bicycle route through Downtown will help to protect bicyclists from vehicular accidents. In addition, traffic calming measures can play a significant role in reducing potential accidents.

WALKING DISTANCES FROM KEY LANDMARKS



A study of walking distances from major landmarks indicates that the area from the 100-blocks of West Franklin Street and East Franklin Street are most accessible to students, as they are within five minutes walking distance of major residences and classroom buildings on the UNC campus. In addition, the Wallace Parking deck, the largest public parking facility, is within walking distance of the area from Lot 5 to the eastern boundary of the Downtown Study Area. Though West Rosemary and Franklin Streets are located further from the campus, they are within walking distance of the Chapel Hill Visitor's Bureau.



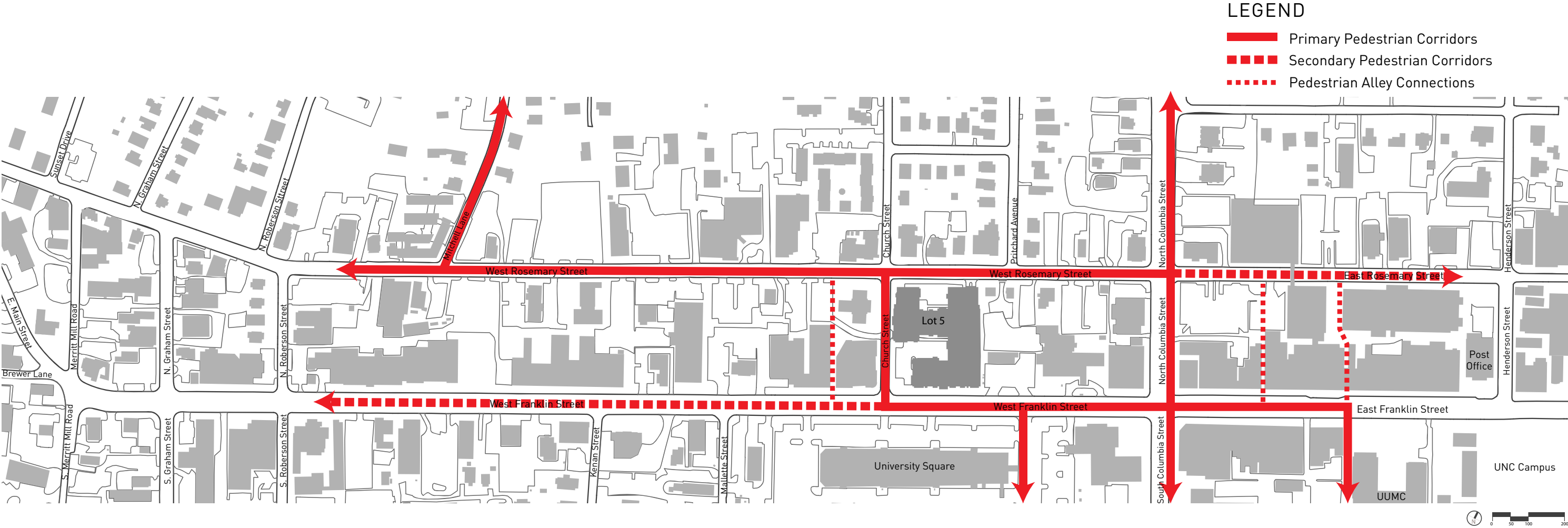
BUILDINGS AND LAND USE



Franklin Street is primarily comprised of restaurants, bars and retail establishments, alongside key public and institutional land uses, including University buildings, churches and public services. Rosemary Street, by contrast, has a much higher concentration of residential development, with several restaurants and very few retail establishments. In addition, the 100-block of East Franklin Street, from North Columbia Street to Henderson Street, has the densest development and the greatest diversity of land uses in one block. This is undoubtedly the busiest, most thriving area of Downtown Chapel Hill.



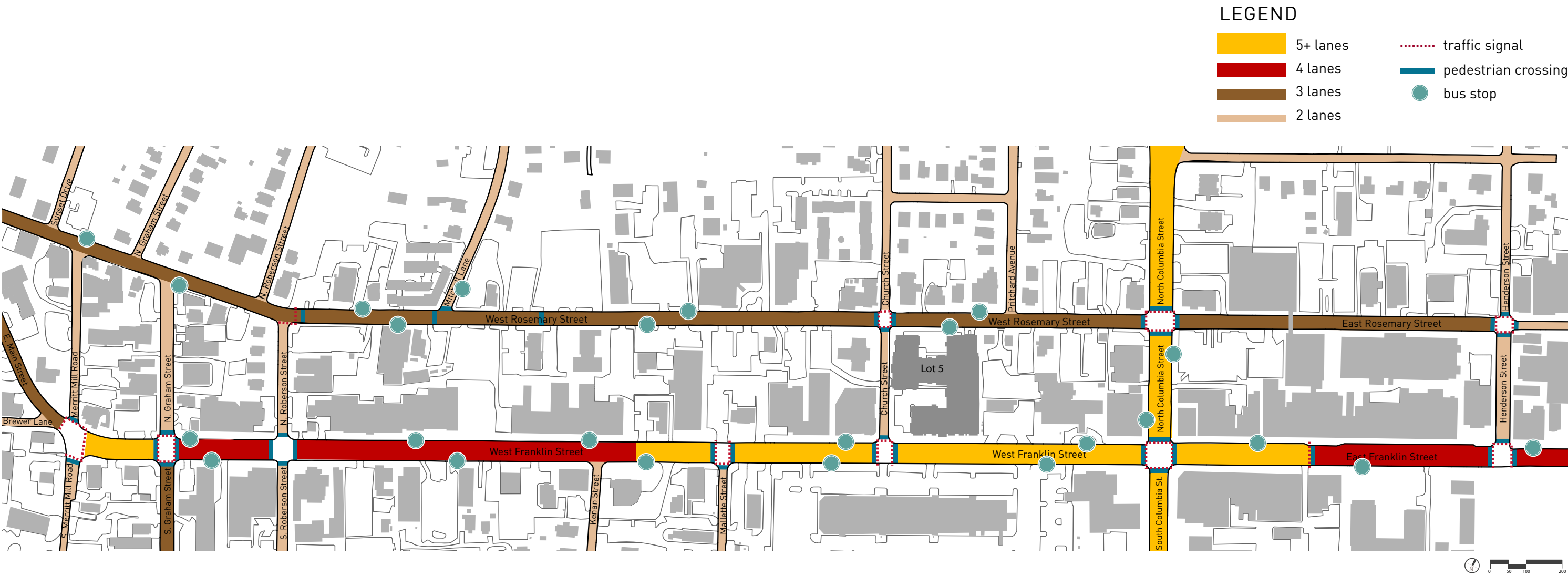
MAJOR PEDESTRIAN CORRIDORS



Major pedestrian corridors have been identified based on data from the “Transportation” chapter of the *2007 Chapel Hill Data Book*, as well as on observational evidence from site visits. UNC students comprise a large percentage of the pedestrian activity along primary pedestrian corridors, which connect the UNC campus and residential neighborhoods with the Downtown area. Accommodation of pedestrian traffic in these areas is particularly important in devising strategies for the Streetscape Master Plan.

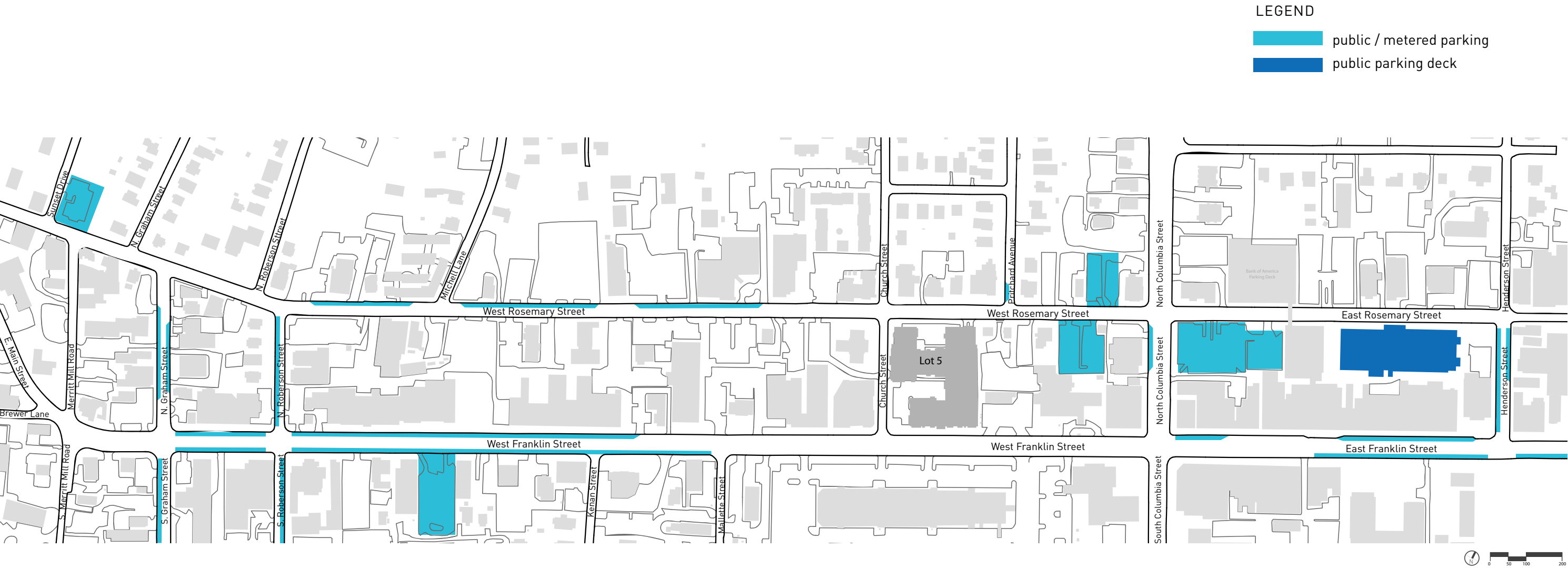
Secondary pedestrian corridors denote well-traveled pedestrian routes with lighter traffic than primary corridors. These include the area along West Franklin Street between University Square and Roberson Street, which includes popular restaurants, retail stores, and the Chapel Hill and Orange County Visitor’s Bureau; as well as the route along East Rosemary extending from the intersection of North Columbia Street to the Wallace Parking Deck, where visitors are encouraged to park before crossing through pedestrian alleys to West Franklin Street. These secondary corridors and alleys are relevant in identifying public space opportunities along pedestrian routes.

VEHICULAR CIRCULATION



Vehicular circulation is a crucial consideration in developing the Streetscape Master Plan, as pedestrian safety must be considered in relationship to vehicular traffic and pedestrian crossings. In addition, ease of pedestrian access to bus stops is an important factor to consider in the design of the streetscape. The blocks surrounding the intersection of Franklin and Columbia Streets are particularly busy thoroughfares, with five lanes of traffic on both streets and a bus route corridor along Columbia Street. The Master Plan will consider traffic calming measures, as well as improved pedestrian crosswalks, to enhance pedestrian and bicycling safety.

PUBLIC PARKING



While the 100-block of East Franklin Street may be the busiest and most thriving area of Downtown, it offers limited street parking. By contrast, East Rosemary Street has several large parking facilities, despite having much fewer commercial establishments. This parking situation of Downtown sets up a relationship whereby parking primarily occurs on Rosemary Street, and visitors then walk to Franklin Street. Rosemary Street becomes the back entrance to the Downtown. The parking situation at the western area of the Downtown District is more balanced with the commercial presence of Downtown, with street parking and a series of private lots to accommodate visitors to the restaurants and retail shops of the area known as ‘West End’ on Franklin Street.



## SITE OVERVIEW: SUMMARY

A broad analysis of the existing conditions of the Downtown area was carried out through research of existing documentation and site observations. The study began with a contextual analysis of Downtown Chapel Hill, including an identification of parks and green spaces surrounding and within Downtown, bicycle routes and safety, and walking distances from key landmarks. This information reveals a concentration of green spaces and established bicycle routes approaching the UNC campus, including the area of Downtown adjacent to the campus. However, the core of Downtown, particularly at the intersection of Franklin and Columbia Streets, has been identified as an accident prone area for bicyclists. Bicycle and pedestrian safety in this area is of particular concern within the Master Plan study.

In addition, the study identified a gradient of commercial activity, from the densely concentrated retail, bars and eating establishments of the 100-block of East Franklin Street to the elegant dining and upscale shops of the quieter West End of Franklin Street. Rosemary, with its narrow street and sidewalks and residential quality had the least commercial presence. This analysis was crucial in understanding the level of pedestrian activity, and the level of streetscape intervention needed, to support the character of this diverse area of intervention.

These diagrams provide a broad overview of Downtown Chapel Hill and issues relating to pedestrian and vehicular circulation, land use and urban context. The next chapter will provide a more fine-grained analysis of Downtown in relation to spatial conditions, lighting and materials that will help to identify design opportunities within the diverse areas of Downtown.

