



## Areas of Analysis - Districts



## AREAS OF ANALYSIS - DISTRICTS

The contextual analysis of Downtown Chapel Hill revealed the need for a finer-grained observation of the study area. The prior 1993 Chapel Hill Streetscape Master Plan outlined six different downtown ‘districts’ as areas of study, of which five fall within the current study area: the Central Business District, University Square District, West Franklin Street District, East Rosemary Street District, and West Rosemary Street District. To maintain relevance to the prior Master Plan, these five district designations were adopted for the current study as each aptly describes the distinction between the different areas within the Downtown District.

Franklin Street connects three study areas: the Central Business District, the University Square District, and the West Franklin Street District. Rosemary Street is divided into two districts: the East Rosemary Street District and the West Rosemary Street District. The following chapter defines the boundaries of each of these study districts and describes the character, conditions and potential issues that are unique to each of these areas.

### Photos of Downtown Districts



West Rosemary Street



East Rosemary Street



West Franklin Street



University Square



Central Business District



# LEGEND

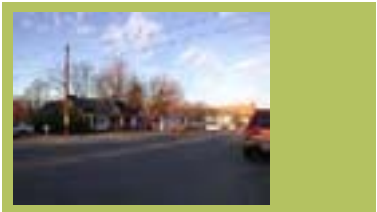
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|---|--|
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span> Central Business District   | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> East Rosemary Street District      |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:cyan; border:1px solid black;"></span> University Square District    | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:olive; border:1px solid black;"></span> West Rosemary Street District       |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:blue; border:1px solid black;"></span> West Franklin Street District | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:lightcoral; border:1px solid black;"></span> Prior Master Plan Improvements |





## OVERVIEW OF DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS

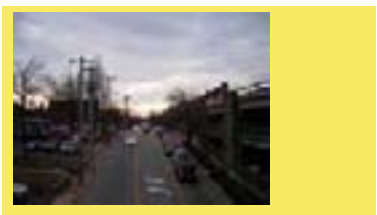
Below is an overview of the five districts within the Downtown Study Area. Rosemary Street is comprised of two districts, West Rosemary and East Rosemary. Franklin Street is comprised of three districts: West Franklin Street, University Square, and the Central Business District.



### West Rosemary Street District

The West Rosemary Street District includes the area along West Rosemary Street from the North Columbia Street intersection to Merritt Mill Road. It is comprised of a diverse mix of residential and commercial building types, parking lots and varied setbacks with narrow or discontinuous sidewalks. It is the least uniform in character of the districts studied within the Master Plan. With the least improvements completed compared to the other districts, West Rosemary presents a large area of opportunity for intervention.

*Percentage of sidewalk completed in 2003: 8%*



### East Rosemary Street District

The East Rosemary District represents the one block along Rosemary Street between Henderson and Columbia Streets. With one on-grade Town-owned parking lot and two parking decks, this district provides a supporting role for the Central Business District. It also includes several restaurants and bars, as well as two banks. This District has larger, more dominant buildings, including the Bank of America building.

*Percentage of sidewalk completed in 2003: 30%*



### West Franklin Street District

The West Franklin Street District extends from Kenan Street to Merritt Mill Road and includes restaurants, specialty stores, the Chapel Hill Newspaper, as well as service establishments. One of the district's notable characteristics is the canopy of large willow oaks on the north side of the street. The area has less pedestrian traffic than the Central Business District, lending it a quieter small town character.

*Percentage of sidewalk completed in 2003: 30%*



### University Square District

The University Square District begins at the 100 block of West Franklin Street and extends to Mallette Street. The buildings are fewer and larger and tend to be set back from the street. The street here has five lanes, wider than elsewhere in the Master Plan area. It has no on-street parking, and the sidewalk is lined with wide planting strips. Enhancing pedestrian presence in this vehicular-dominated area will be an important initiative in future improvements.

*Percentage of sidewalk completed in 2003: 25%*

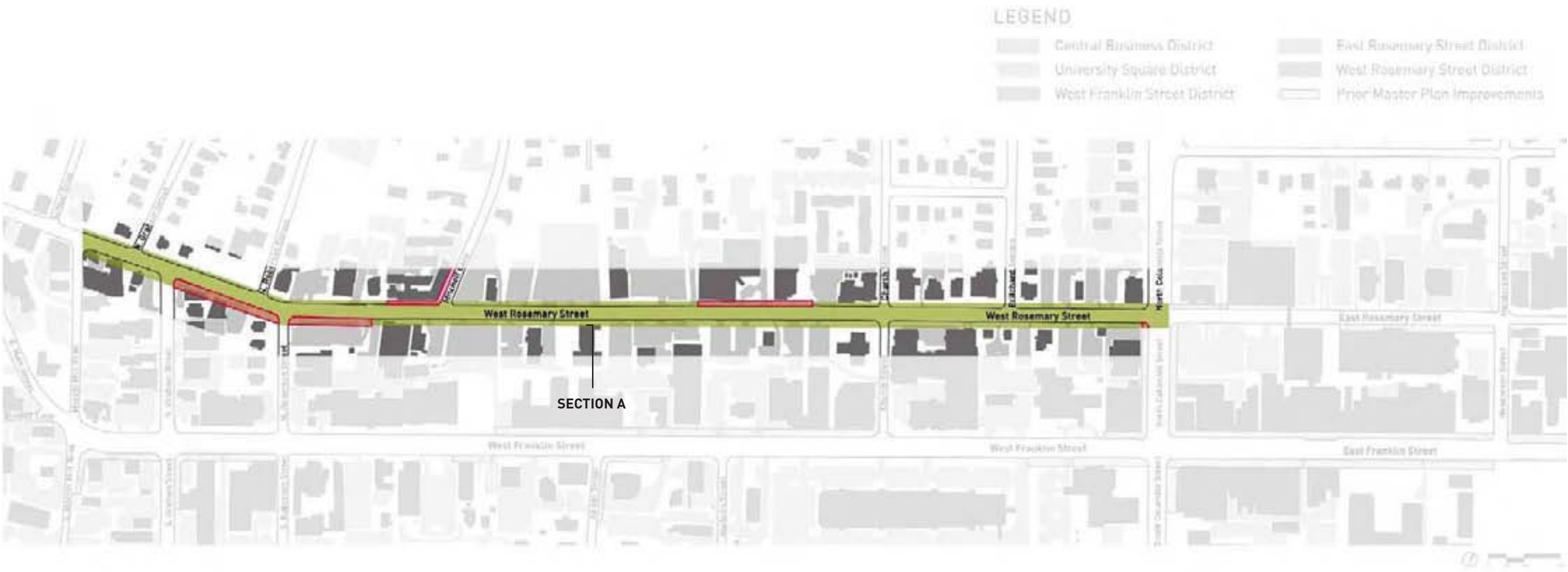


### Central Business District

The Central Business District includes the 100-block of East Franklin Street and North Columbia Street, as well as a portion of the 100-block of West Franklin Street. This district is characterized by small eating establishments and retail shops that cater to the University community. Streetscape improvements including lighting were installed from 1998 to 2003.

*Percentage of sidewalk completed in 2003: 100%*

WEST ROSEMARY STREET DISTRICT



# WEST ROSEMARY STREET DISTRICT

## existing character

The West Rosemary Street District is framed by North Columbia Street on the east and Merritt Mill Road on the west. This district encompasses the largest geographical area of the five districts and as such, is composed of a diverse mix of residential, commercial and mixed-use developments, along with several public and private parking lots.

## opportunities

### sidewalks

The greatest challenge in this district is addressing the discontinuous sidewalks along West Rosemary Street, as it limits pedestrian presence along the street and poses a potential safety concern for pedestrians who must walk in the roadway. The 1993 Master Plan set forth the goal of acquiring right-of-way in order to establish more sidewalks along Rosemary. In general, the existing right-of-way is less than 12” behind the curb on either side of the street. A continued effort to further establish the pedestrian right-of-way is important to the future development of West Rosemary Street and paves the way for implementing additional streetscape improvements.

The condition of existing sidewalks along West Rosemary Street varies considerably but overall presents opportunities for improvement. The vast majority of walking surfaces on West Rosemary are concrete, some of which is cracked, eroded or uneven. Most of the sidewalks are edged with a narrow mulch bed or lawn strip (up to three feet wide). With the exception of the trees planted in front of the multi-family residence across from the UNC parking lot near the intersection of Mitchell Lane and West Rosemary, these mulch beds contain little or no planting. These areas represent an opportunity to capture additional width for the paved, walkable portion of the sidewalk or to install additional plant material. Recommendations for addressing these opportunities are outlined in [Section 7.0: Sidewalks](#), as well as under [Section 5.0: Plant Palette](#).

### lighting

Currently, lighting is only installed on the south side of West Rosemary Street. Due to this limitation, the majority of lighting conditions along West Rosemary Street are not compliant with Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) standards. Lighting improvements are important to maintaining pedestrian safety. An assessment of lighting requirements and subsequent recommendations is described in [Section 6.0: Lighting](#).

### planting

West Rosemary Street has limited street tree plantings due to lack of right-of-way, and as a result, the vegetation has inconsistencies in habit and character. Acquisition of additional right-of-way will provide opportunities for new planting that can enhance the visual character of the street. These planting strategies are part of the long term vision for the street and not necessarily for immediate implementation. A long term goal is to bury power lines such that they will not be in conflict with future canopy tree plantings.

In addition, conflicts between existing trees and overhead utility lines (see section on following page) indicate a need for improved maintenance and pruning, as well as a consideration for specific tree types to be planted as additional trees are added along West Rosemary Street. Plant maintenance strategies are delineated in [Section 5.0: Plant Palette](#). A long-term plan for Rosemary Street

### nano parks

This district does not currently include public open space. However, it may include possibilities for implementing small ‘nano parks’, planted open spaces that have direct public access from the street. These include a new space that may be publicly accessible at the new Greenbridge multi-use development now under construction at the western boundary of the study area. Nano park opportunities are described in greater detail in [Section 8.0: Nano Parks](#).





Restaurant (foreground) and Mid-Rise Apartments



Area without Pedestrian Right-of-Way



Low Lighting at Night; No Fixtures on North Side (right)



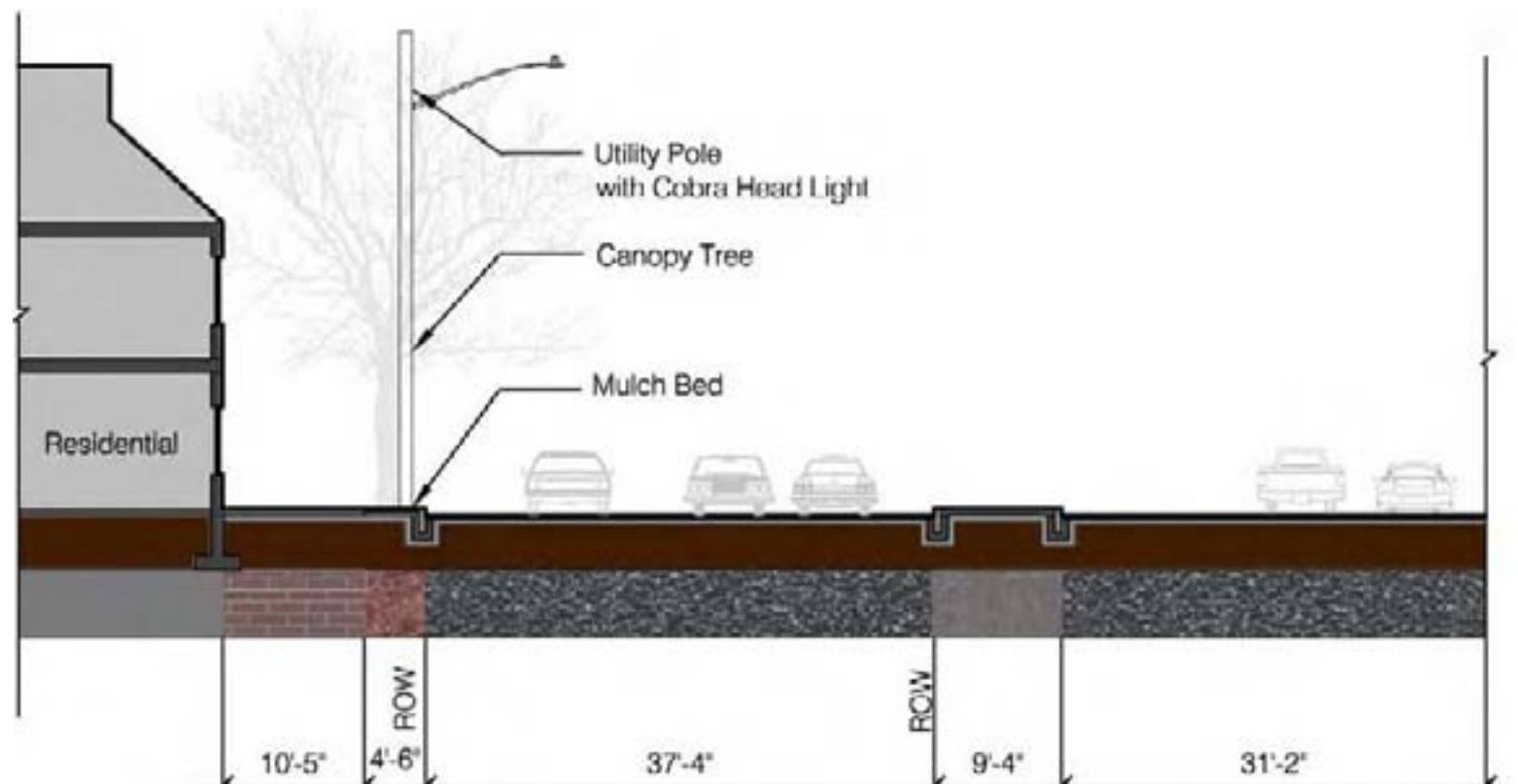
Residential Character



West Rosemary Street District: Typical Section of Existing Conditions

The section below shows an example of the existing condition of the street and sidewalk along West Rosemary. A brick sidewalk and canopy tree on the south side of the street represented a portion of the limited length of completed sidewalk within this district. Most lights in this district are cobra head lamps affixed to utility poles on the south side of the street. There are no street lights on the north side of the street.

The UNC parking lot indicated on the north side of the section is a potential location for a nano park. There is a small paved area on the street side of the parking lot that could be adapted to include seating and plantings. This opportunity will be examined in [Section 8.0: Nano Parks](#).



Section A: Section through West Rosemary Street Looking West

Scale: 1/16" = 1'-0"

EAST ROSEMARY STREET DISTRICT





## EAST ROSEMARY STREET DISTRICT

### existing character

The East Rosemary District is framed by Henderson Street on the east and Columbia Street on the west. Dominated by parking lots and parking decks, this district fulfills a portion of the parking needs for the Central Business District. Larger buildings, such as the Bank of America Building, give East Rosemary a different spatial character from the more residential West Rosemary Street District.

### opportunities

#### **sidewalks**

This district includes lengths of brick sidewalk as well as concrete sidewalk. The sidewalks in general are in better condition than those of West Rosemary, with fewer crumbled or cracked areas of pavement, though consistency of paving material is an issue of concern in establishing visual continuity with the Downtown as a whole.

The width of the sidewalk also varies considerably, from areas that offer ample walking surface, such as the wide setback at the RBC Centura Bank at 101 East Rosemary, to narrow portions of sidewalk as little as three feet wide, such as the north sidewalk across from the Wallace Parking Deck.

#### **lighting**

The lighting situation on East Rosemary is slightly better than that on West Rosemary due to the presence of parking lot light fixtures that help to illuminate adjacent sidewalks. There are areas that do not meet Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) standards; these are described in the lighting analysis under [Section 6.0: Lighting](#).

#### **plantings**

Few canopy trees have been planted on East Rosemary due to the lack of right-of-way, though there are shrub plantings located alongside the Wallace Parking Deck. Acquisition of additional right-of-way or sidewalk easements will allow more opportunities to establish a consistent palette of planting.

#### **nano parks**

This area does not currently have small parks or open spaces. However, an opportunity exists on Town-owned property at the southwest corner of East Rosemary and Henderson Streets to capture as a site for a future nano park. This park would be accessible from the post office and pedestrian ways extending to the south of the site, though it would be elevated above the road and sidewalk at its northern boundary. Opportunities to establish small open spaces will be further delineated in [Section 8.0: Nano Parks](#).



Imposing Architecture: Bank of America Building



Narrow Sidewalk (left); Parking Garage (right)



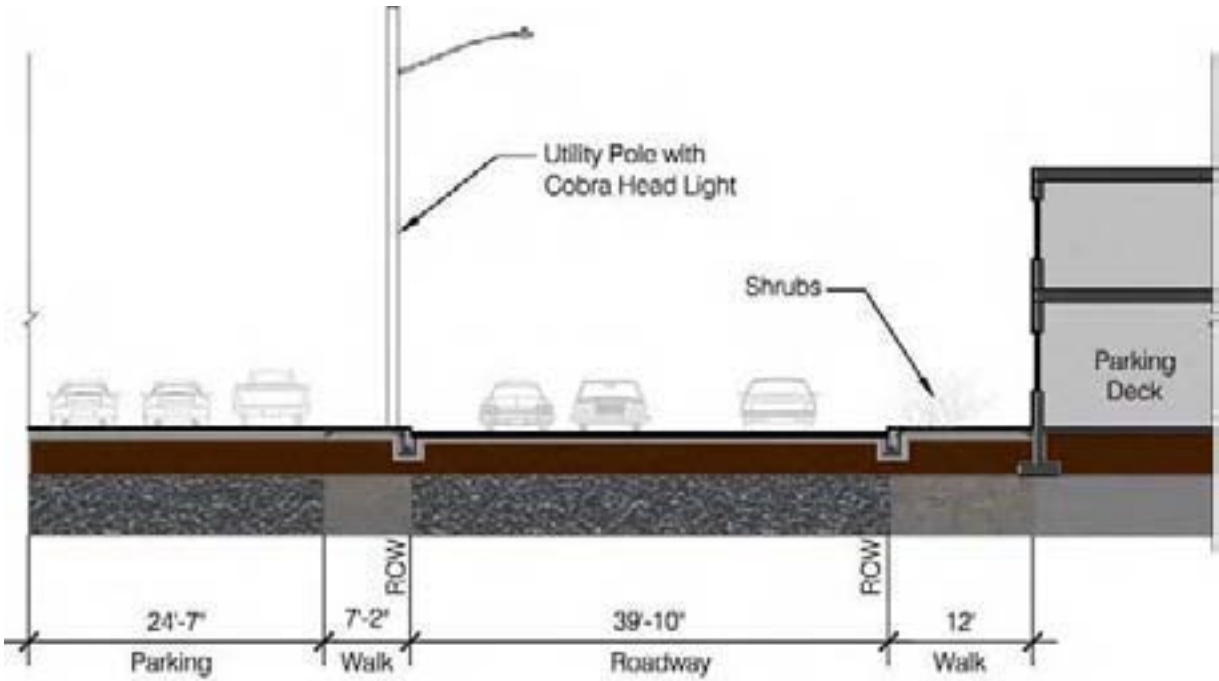
Busy Intersection at Columbia Street



East Rosemary Street District: Typical Section of Existing Conditions

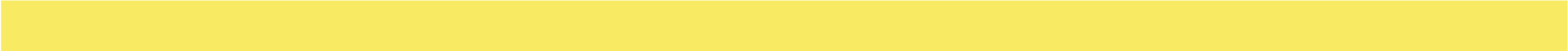
The section below shows an example of the existing condition of the street and sidewalk along East Rosemary Street. At this particular section of the street, there are no street tree plantings on either side. Shrubs have been planted alongside the parking deck. Both sides of the street have concrete sidewalks, though in other areas along the same block, brick sidewalks have been laid down as well.

The parking lot on the north side of the section is a potential location for a nano park. There is a small paved area on the street side of the parking lot that could be adapted to include seating and plantings. This opportunity will be examined in [Section 8.0: Nano Parks](#).

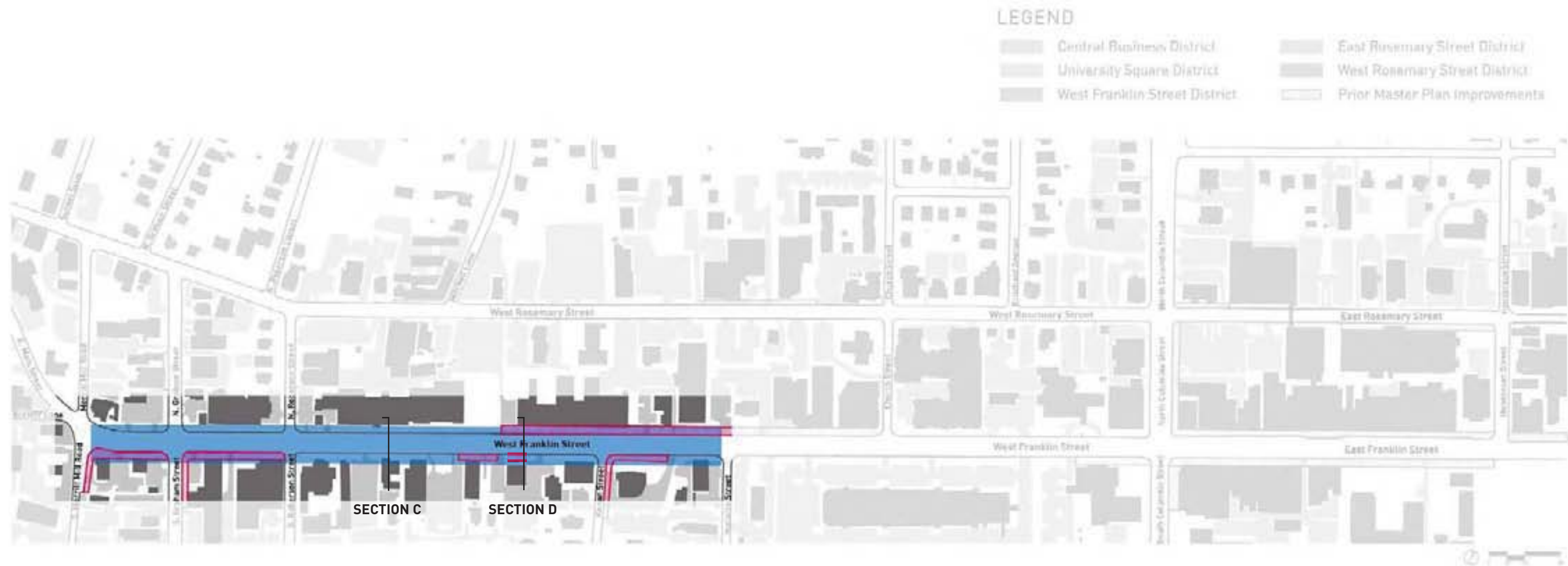


Section B: Section through East Rosemary Street Looking West

Scale: 1/16" = 1'-0"







## West Franklin Street District

### existing character

The West Franklin Street District extends from Kenan Street to Merritt Mill Road and includes restaurants, specialty stores, the Chapel Hill News, and service establishments. One of the district’s notable characteristics is the canopy of large willow oaks on the north side of the street. The area has a greater density of businesses and pedestrian activity than East and West Rosemary Streets but has less pedestrian traffic than the Central Business District, lending it a quieter small town character.

### opportunities

#### **sidewalks**

In general, the sidewalks along West Franklin Street are spacious and are adequate in width (greater than 10 feet wide) to accommodate typical pedestrian traffic. Maintenance is a concern, as planter walls show signs of wear, including loosened or chipped bricks and pavers, and planting beds are degraded.

Approximately one-third of the sidewalk has been recently improved, presenting a consistent language of brick sidewalk alongside the street with concrete sidewalk adjacent to businesses and storefronts. Other areas of the sidewalk are comprised entirely of brick or entirely of concrete with mulch beds at curbside. These areas represent an opportunity to establish continuity between recently improved areas and future improvements.

#### **lighting**

Lighting is inconsistent in areas of West Franklin. In front of the Franklin Hotel, lighting is comprehensive and offers ideal illumination based on light meter readings on the site that meet or exceed IESNA recommendations for safety and security. In other areas of West Franklin, however, outdated mercury vapor light fixtures and obstructions from tree branches prevent enough light from reaching the sidewalks.

#### **plantings**

The large spreading oak trees that enhance the historic character of West Franklin Street are in many cases in decline. These trees will most likely require removal and replacement in the next decade. These declining trees leave opportunity to establish a new canopy that will tie in the with the Downtown streetscape.

#### **nano parks**

This district includes one public open space, at the front entry of the Chapel Hill and Orange County Visitor’s Bureau, which was recently renovated to include seating. Additional opportunities for establishing public spaces include the front of the Town parking lot between 411-419 West Franklin and the new plaza that will be installed at the 140 West development at Church Street. These nano park opportunities will be investigated further in [Section 8.0: Nano Parks](#).





Eclectic Storefronts



Inconsistent Tree Plantings



Upscale Dining Establishments

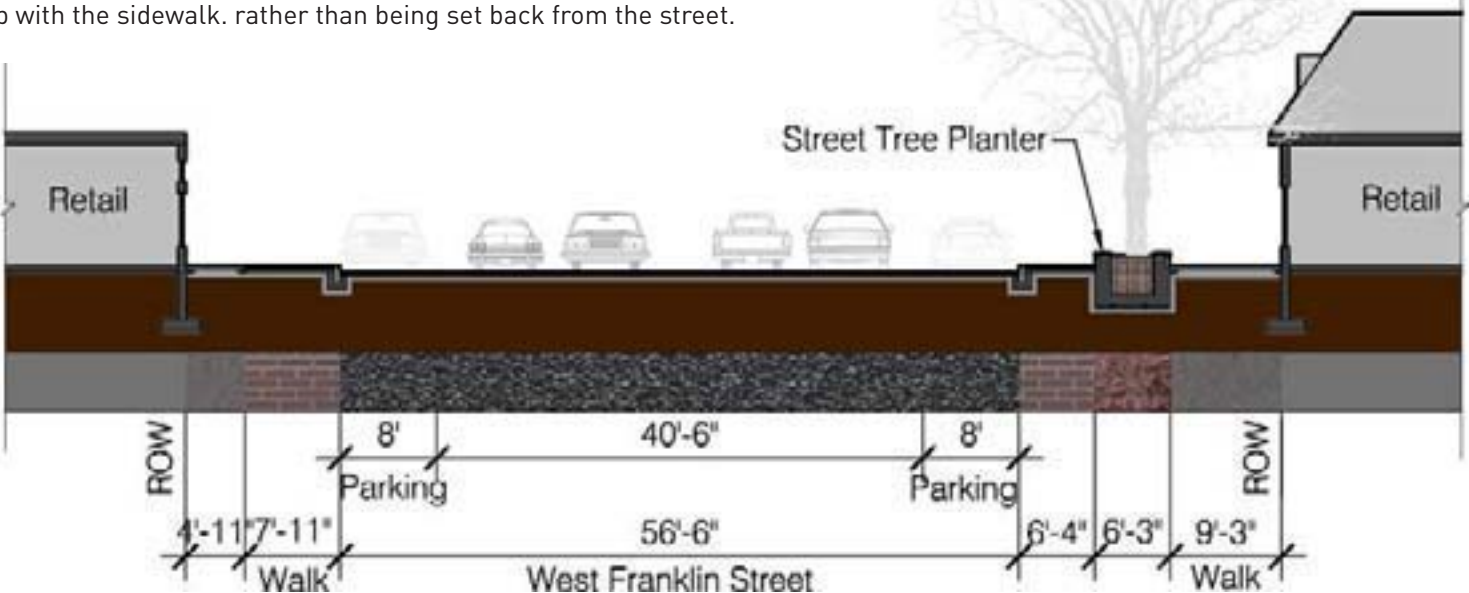


McDonald's: Separate Relationship from Street



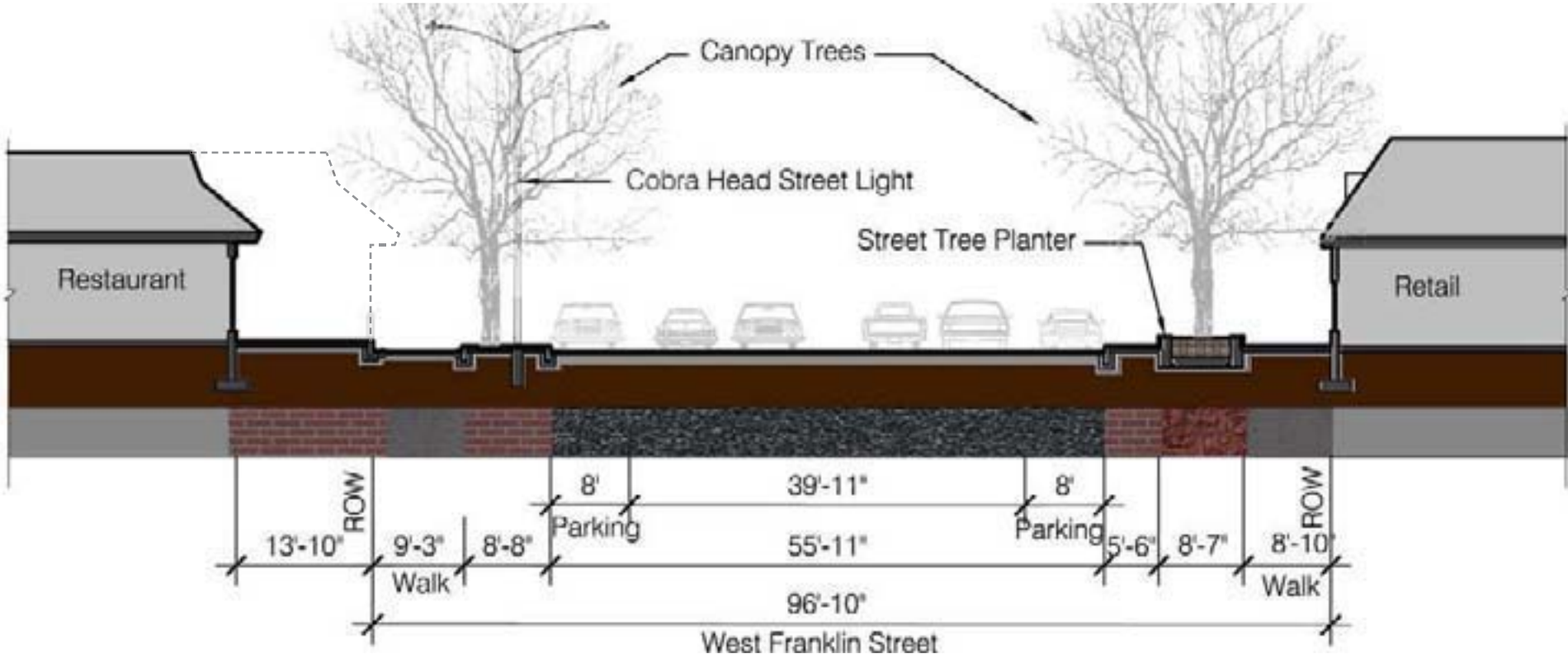
West Franklin Street District: Typical Section of Existing Conditions

The sections below offer examples of the existing condition of the street and sidewalk along West Franklin Street. A significant portion of this district has been recently improved and therefore contains raised brick planters, brick sidewalks at curbside and concrete sidewalks along storefronts and building entries. Recent improvements have benefited the streetscape by promoting the continuity of the relationship between building and sidewalk. What was previously a private raised terrace at the McDonald’s restaurant has now been replaced with a building expansion. This allows the building to have a direct relationship with the sidewalk, rather than being set back from the street.



Section C: West Franklin Through Restaurant and Retail Area Looking West

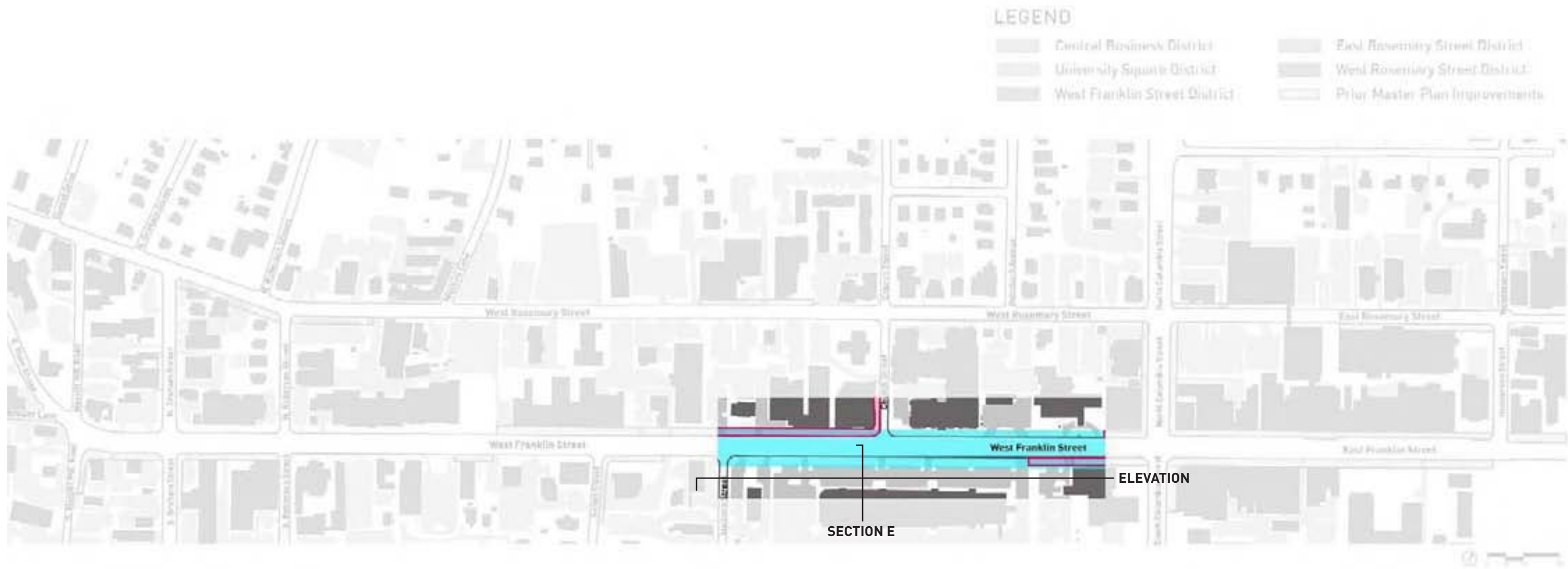
Scale: 1/16" = 1'-0"



Section D: West Franklin Through McDonald's Showing Extent of Expansion and Retail Block Looking West

Scale: 1/16" = 1'-0"





# UNIVERSITY SQUARE DISTRICT

## existing character

The University Square District begins at the 100 block of West Franklin Street and extends to Mallette Street. The buildings are fewer and larger and tend to be set back from the street on the south side. The street here has five lanes, wider than elsewhere in the Master Plan area. It has no on-street parking, and the sidewalk is lined with planting strips 4.5 to 7 feet wide.

## opportunities

### **sidewalks**

In general, the sidewalks on the south side along University Square are spacious and are adequate in width to accommodate typical pedestrian traffic, at least 8 feet wide in all areas. However, long planting beds along the sidewalk present a maintenance challenge: because plantings require continual care and maintenance, the vast majority of these planting strips have been maintained as mulch beds with no plant material. The mulch beds underutilize the potential of these sidewalks to contribute to the urban character of the streetscape.

The sidewalk material varies from brick to concrete. In recently improved areas, a standard brick sidewalk at curbside and concrete sidewalk along storefronts contributes to the visual continuity of the streetscape. Not yet improved areas offer opportunities to continue this language. Though the raised planters add a formality to the sidewalk that is beneficial in some areas, steep grade changes along the street result in awkward placement of the planters, as their walls emphasize the steep grade.

### **lighting**

Lighting is generally adequate in the University Square District, though a few areas of improvement have been identified in the lighting recommendations (see Appendix A-3). A variety of lighting fixtures have been installed in this District, some of which are outdated and present opportunities for replacement with fixtures that will fit with a new standard fixture for Downtown. These opportunities are identified further in [Section 6.0: Lighting](#).

### **plantings**

Plantings consist of smaller tree species such as Bradford pear trees, as well as a mix of tree species in the planters on the north side of Franklin Street. Declining trees and unplanted portions of the sidewalk represent opportunities to establish a more consistent planting palette for the Downtown streetscape.





Linear Mulch Beds Line the Edges of Sidewalks



Raised Tree Planters Emphasize Slope of Sidewalk



University Square Entrance



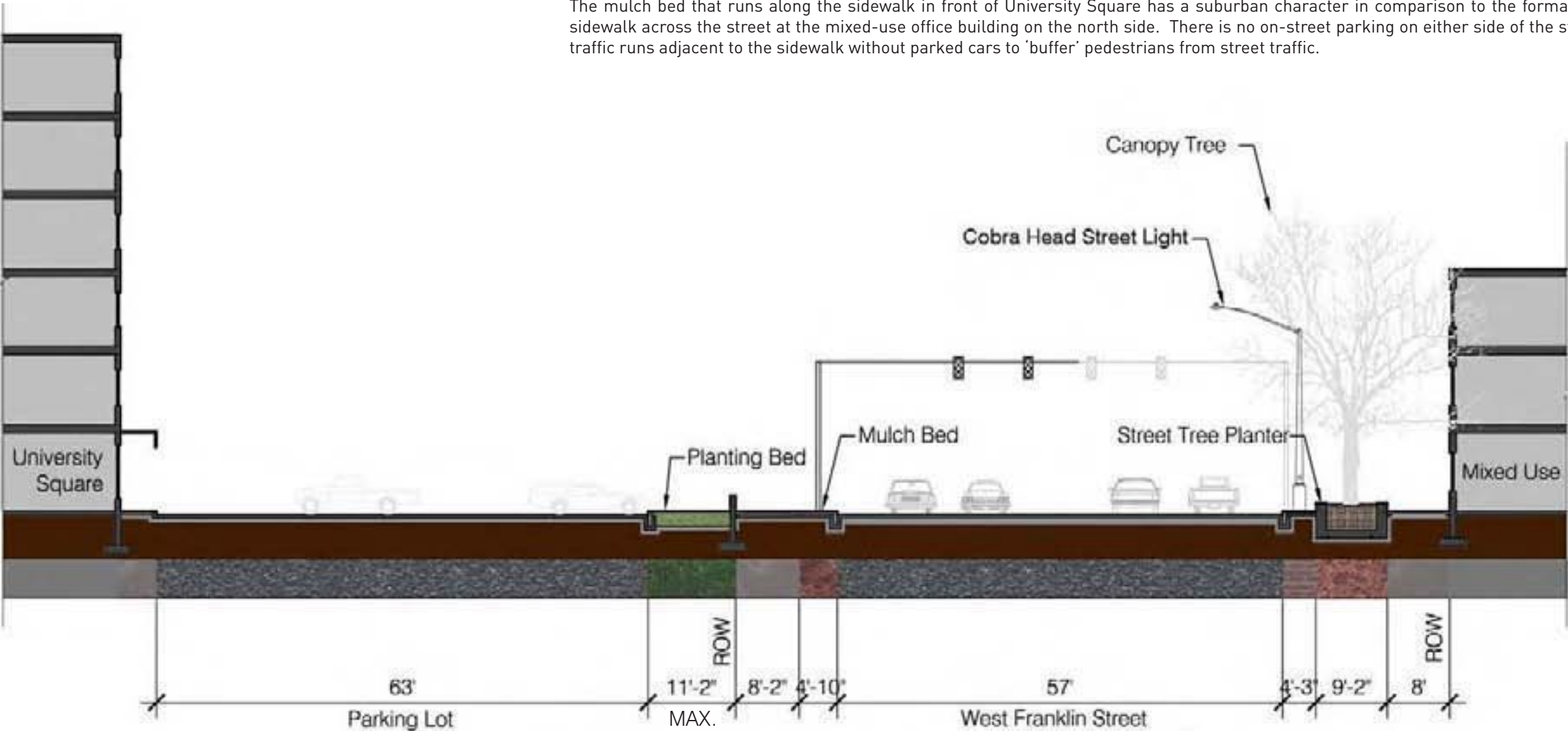
Raised Edges of Planters are Tripping Hazard



University Square District: Typical Section of Existing Conditions

The section below shows an example of the existing condition of the street and sidewalk along West Franklin Street along University Square. A portion of the north side of this district has been recently improved and therefore contains raised brick planters and concrete sidewalks edged with a strip of brick paving. Buildings set back from the street present unique challenges to this district: the University Square development is set back behind a parking lot and brick wall, distancing the building from the street. This represents a shift in the relationship between buildings and the street that affect the continuity of the streetscape.

The mulch bed that runs along the sidewalk in front of University Square has a suburban character in comparison to the formal brick and concrete sidewalk across the street at the mixed-use office building on the north side. There is no on-street parking on either side of the street, such that busy traffic runs adjacent to the sidewalk without parked cars to ‘buffer’ pedestrians from street traffic.

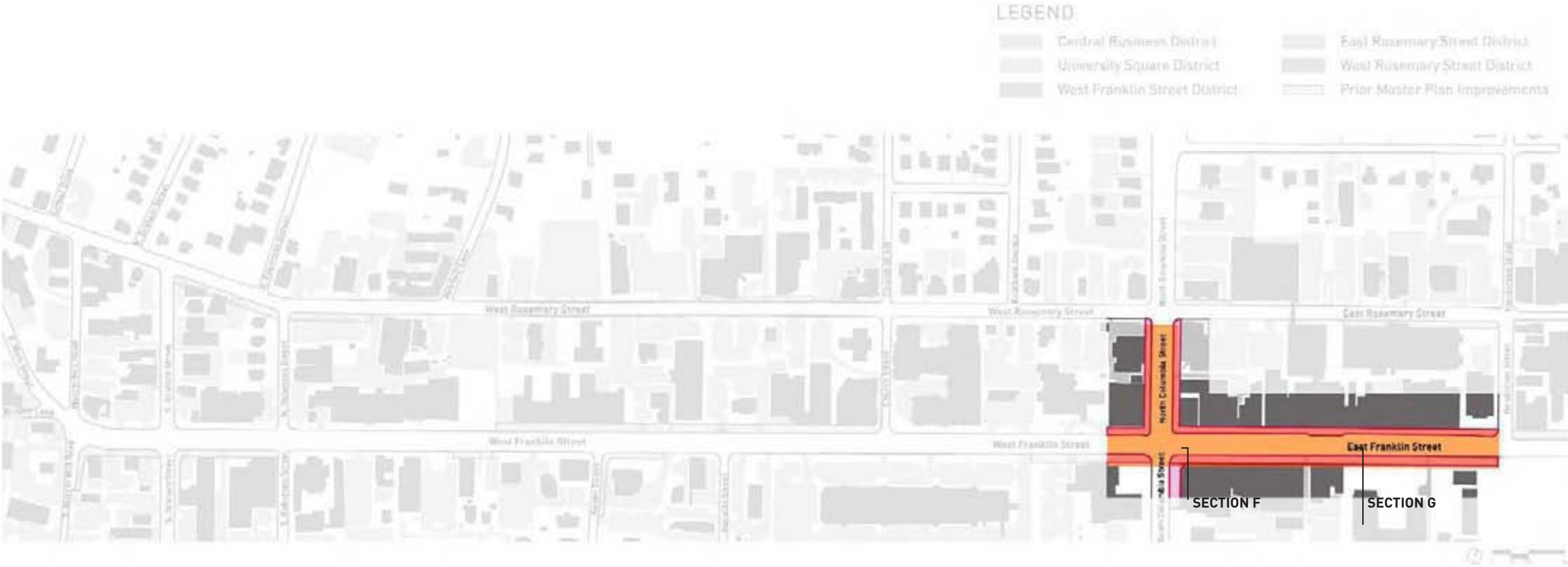


Section E: West Franklin Street Along University Square Looking West

Scale: 1/16" = 1'-0"



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT



## CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

### existing character

The Central Business District includes the 100-block of East Franklin Street and North Columbia Street, as well as a portion of the 100-block of West Franklin Street. This district is characterized by small eating establishments and retail shops that cater to the University community. This district was completed following the 1993 Master Plan, with successful improvements including installation of consistent brick and concrete paving and additional tree plantings. Analysis of this area can help to inform strategies for the remaining areas of Downtown in need of improvement. The opportunities identified below are with a long-term vision in mind that will be implemented in future phases of improvement.

### opportunities

#### **sidewalks**

Sidewalks accommodate heavier pedestrian traffic in this bustling commercial district. Successful improvements such as installation of tree grates have expanded the walkable surface of the sidewalk. To continue this language, future phases of improvement will involve replacing raised planters that fall into disrepair with tree grates. Benches will be installed at bus stops to accomodate any additional need for seating that these changes may require.

This district in several areas includes ramps and hand rails to negotiate the unusual grade changes between building and sidewalk that were historically established. Though these improvements address the particular challenges of these individual sites, future developments in Downtown offer an opportunity to reduce these elevational challenges by siting buildings at a finish floor elevation that relates directly to the existing sidewalk.

#### **street furnishings**

Installation of benches is recommended only at bus stops and public gathering spaces, such as the proposed ‘nano parks’ discussed in Section 8.0. In all other areas, new installation of benches is not supported by the Master Plan, as the sidewalks should be emphasized as a conduit for pedestrian travel and ease of access.

#### **lighting**

A new lighting standard was introduced in this area in a previous phase of improvement, with the installation of the decorative Lumec Domus fixture. Outdated lighting fixtures may need to be replaced in the future, presenting opportunities to bring visual consistency to the streetscape by installing additional Domus fixtures. Comprehensive lighting recommendations are further described in Appendix A-3.

#### **plantings**

The trees vary in size and condition. Along the UNC campus, the trees are stately and offer a broad canopy. In other areas, the trees are less than ten years old; as these trees mature, they will provide a more unified appearance to the streetscape.





Shade Tree and Bench



Handrails on Columbia Street



Crowded Sidewalk on Franklin Street



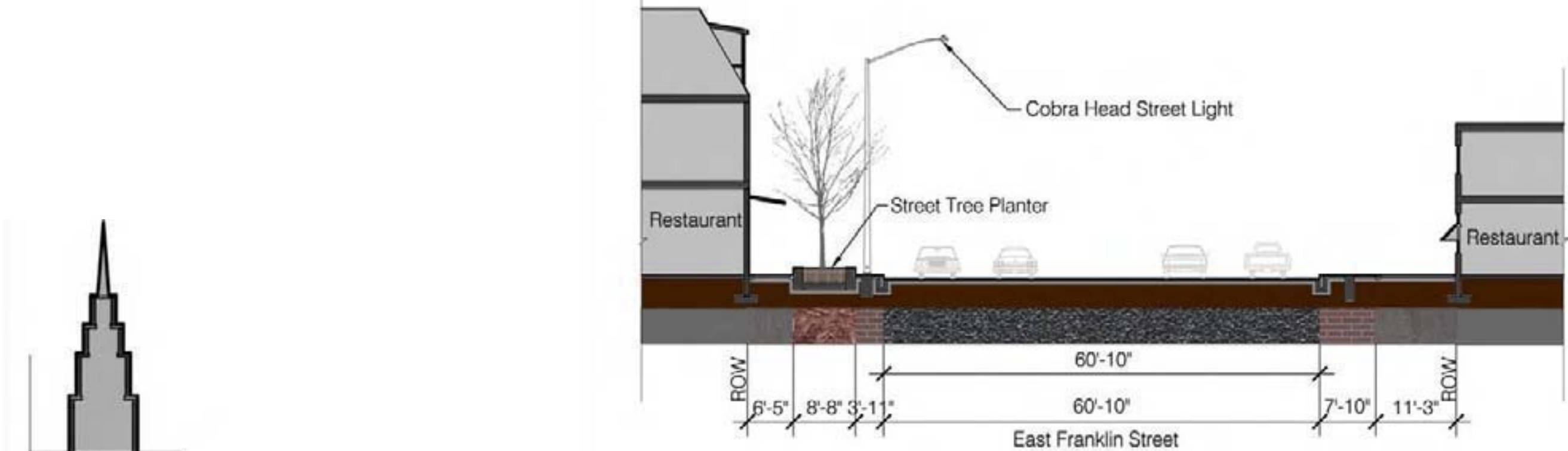
Handrails on Franklin Street





Central Business District: Typical Section of Existing Conditions

The sections below show examples of the existing condition of the street and sidewalk along the 100-block of East Franklin Street. These areas have been recently improved and show a consistency of sidewalk material and lighting. In addition, this area has the greatest concentration of public open spaces. These observations are helpful in developing strategies for other districts within Downtown that will maintain the continuity of the streetscape.



Section F: Through Top of the Hill Restaurant at Corner of Columbia and East Franklin Streets Looking West



Section G: East Franklin Street at University United Methodist Church Looking West

Scale: 1/16" = 1'-0"



STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT PLAN





# LEGEND

- roads
- parking lots
- brick paved areas
- concrete paved areas
- existing trees
- proposed trees
- planted areas
- prior improvements (2006)



The Streetscape Improvement Plan indicates proposed interventions including new planting, traffic medians and brick-paved or raised intersections and crosswalks that will build upon the already completed areas highlighted. Previously completed areas, outlined in orange, include new or refurbished sidewalks, planters, tree grates and lighting. Major priorities of the Streetscape Master Plan include consistent planting and ease of maintenance (Section 5.0), continuity of brick sidewalks (Section 7.0), establishment of open spaces (Section 8.0), and pedestrian and vehicular safety (Section 9.0).

