

Town of Amherst

Downtown Pedestrian Safety and Walkability Study

Welcome!

Today's meeting is part of a study to identify street improvements that will make it safer and easier to walk in downtown Amherst--particularly along S Main St (US 29 Business) between 2nd St and US 60.

This study builds upon the recommendations of the Amherst Town Development Area Study, completed earlier this year.

Primary Study Corridor: South Main St



Study recommendations will primarily focus on S. Main St. between the stoplight at 2nd St and the traffic circle at US 60.

Town of Amherst Central Business District



Pedestrian activity along Main St. is being considered within the context of the full Central Business District, roughly defined as the area within and surrounding Main St, US 60, Washington St., and 2nd St.

Benefits



SAFETY

One of the primary benefits of these improvements will be the enhancement of pedestrian safety. Many residents of the town have reported feeling unsafe when crossing Main St. due to the speed of vehicles and inattentive drivers.

Pedestrian safety is a serious matter. Consider the following statistics:

- A pedestrian is hit by a car on an average of once every eight minutes in America.
- 841 pedestrian deaths were recorded in Virginia from 2003 to 2012.
- 21% of pedestrian fatalities are people 65 years and older.

ACTIVITY

Another primary benefit of these improvements will be the increase of pedestrian activity in downtown Amherst.

From a business perspective, this increased activity is likely to increase the number of people visiting their stores. Research has found that increased levels of walkability are associated with **significant increases in retail sales and rents for retail space.**

From a resident attraction perspective, these improvements are likely to make Amherst a more desirable place to live. **81% of millennials and 77% of "active boomers"** say that convenient transportation alternatives to the car are at least somewhat important in deciding where they will live and work.

OTHER BENEFITS

Enhancing walkability provides many other benefits as well, including:

Improving health by increasing levels of physical activity.

Decreasing living costs by providing low-cost transportation alternatives to the automobile.

Increasing opportunities by allowing people with limited mobility (such as the elderly, youth, the disabled, and those with low incomes) greater access to jobs and services.

Improving environmental quality by reducing the emissions and resource consumption associated with automobile travel.

Street Elements

Many factors contribute to the walkability of a street. Four major elements considered by this project include:

Pavement Width

A wide road permits high speeds of vehicle travel and increases the distance and time of pedestrian crossings.

Measures such as narrowed travel lanes, curb extensions, and median islands enhance walkability by slowing traffic and decreasing crossing distances.



Access Ramps

In order for a sidewalk to be accessible for elderly and disabled residents, all street crossings should begin and end with access ramps that permit a smooth transition between the street and the raised sidewalk.



Crosswalks

Pedestrian crossings should be well marked and offer a clear line of sight between drivers and pedestrians.

Enhanced pavement markings, textured crosswalk surfaces, curb extensions, and flashing indicator lights can all be used to make a crossing more visible to drivers.



Sidewalks

Cracked or uneven surfaces, narrow widths, and obstructions can all diminish mobility on a sidewalk.

Ideally, a sidewalk should be a minimum of four feet wide, have a level surface, and provide a walking path that is free from obstructions.



Town of Amherst Downtown Pedestrian Safety and Walkability Study Phase One

Phase One of the improvement recommendations will consist of the installation of missing pedestrian infrastructure immediately prior to the resurfacing of Main St in the summer of 2017. This will include the addition of sidewalk ramps at street crossings where they are currently missing, which are pictured below. It will also include the installation of pedestrian crossing signals at the intersection of S. Main St and 2nd St, as shown at the bottom of this page.

Missing Sidewalk Ramps

S. Main St
at
2nd St



S. Main St at Court St



S. Main St
(Bank of the James
driveway)



Missing Pedestrian Signals

S. Main St
at
2nd St



Downtown Amherst Main Street Pedestrian Enhancements Phase 2



Town of Amherst Downtown Pedestrian Safety and Walkability Study Phase Three Renderings

The sidewalk improvements included in Phase Three of the study recommendations could include curb extensions, resurfacing, and sidewalk widening in some places. Phase Three "B" includes optional additional elements such as new lighting, street furniture, and landscaping features.

This board presents rendered images that illustrate what these improvements could look like from a street view. **These are conceptual images only. The exact features and geometries would be subject to change pending the final design process.**

S. Main St at 2nd St
(Facing North)



Downtown Amherst Rendering 1 - Scenario 1



Downtown Amherst Rendering 1 - Scenario 2



Near S. Main St at Star St
(Facing South)



Downtown Amherst Rendering 2 - Scenario 1



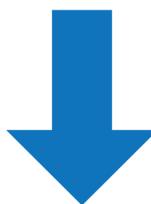
Downtown Amherst Rendering 2 - Scenario 2



Existing
Conditions



Phase Three



Phase Three "B"

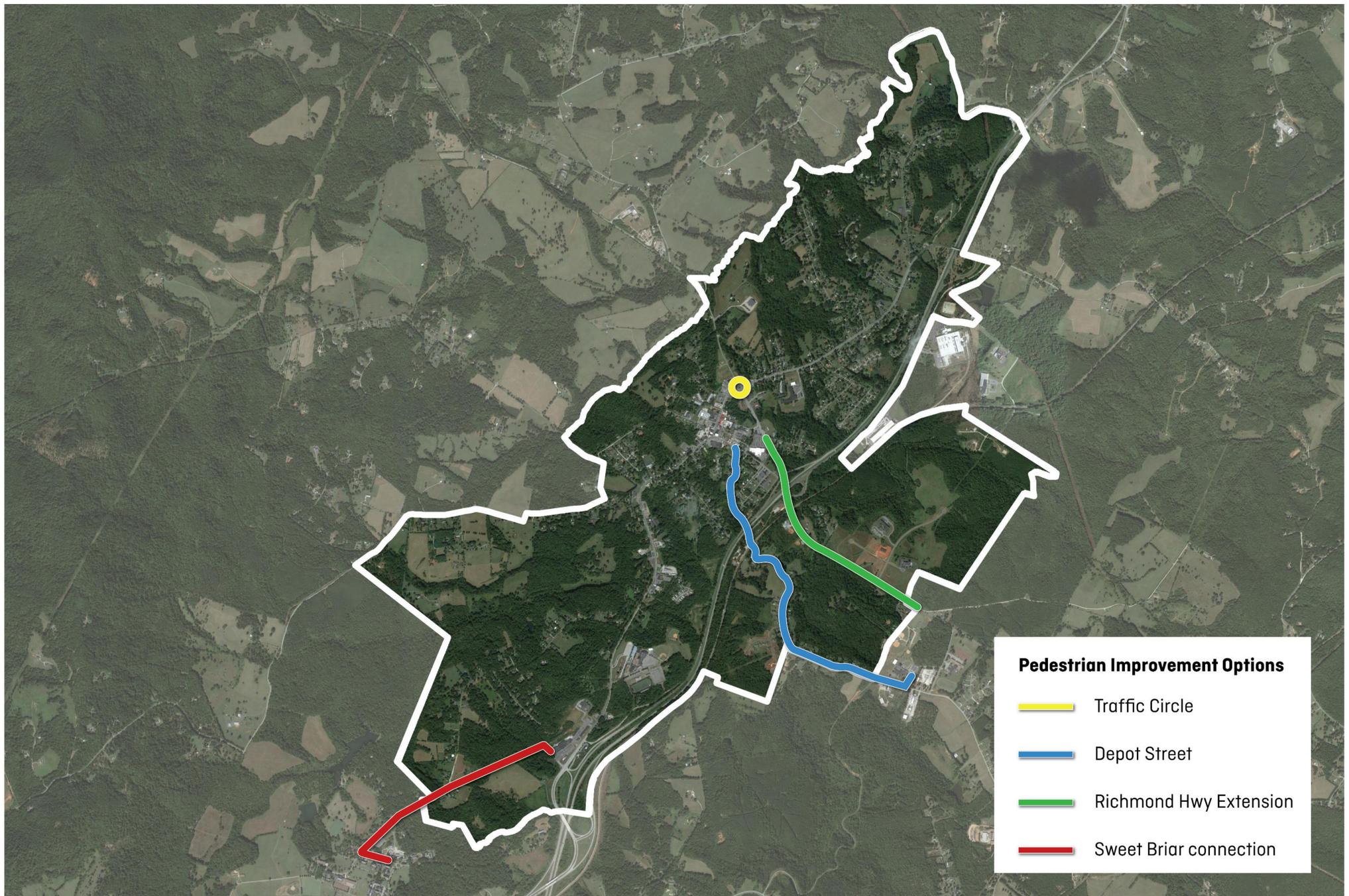
The Amherst Town Development Area Study, which was completed in June 2016, included several renderings of possible improvements to the intersection of Main St and 2nd St. These renderings, which are shown below, include many of the same features recommended in Phase Three. Once again, these images are provided for illustrative purposes only.



Downtown Amherst Main Street Pedestrian Enhancements Phase 3



Evaluation of Potential Sidewalk and Trail Extensions



The focus of this study is walkability and pedestrian safety in downtown Amherst. But the study also identified potential extensions to the sidewalk network that the town could consider after the recommended downtown improvements.

The consulting team analyzed four potential extensions: A trail from Sweet Briar College to Ambriar Shopping Center (the exact path would require further study), a sidewalk on Depot Street from 2nd Street to Central Elementary School, improving pedestrian safety at the Route 60 Traffic Circle by connecting the North and South Main Street sidewalks, and a sidewalk on Route 60 from Washington Street to Rutledge Hill Apartments.

The consulting team used a GIS-based tool that calculates multimodal accessibility (MMA) to examine the benefits of each extension. The MMA tool is used to study how well a transportation project improves access to job centers, such as downtown Amherst. The findings for each extension are listed below as the percent increase in access to jobs that can be reached within a 30 minute walk:

- 1. Depot Street:** More than a 30% increase
- 2. Traffic Circle:** 15 to 30% increase
- 3. Richmond Hwy Extension:** Less than a 5% increase
- 4. Sweet Briar Connection:** Less than a 5% increase

Modern

Contemporary

Historical

Benches



Streetlights



Bike Racks



Bollards



Trashcans

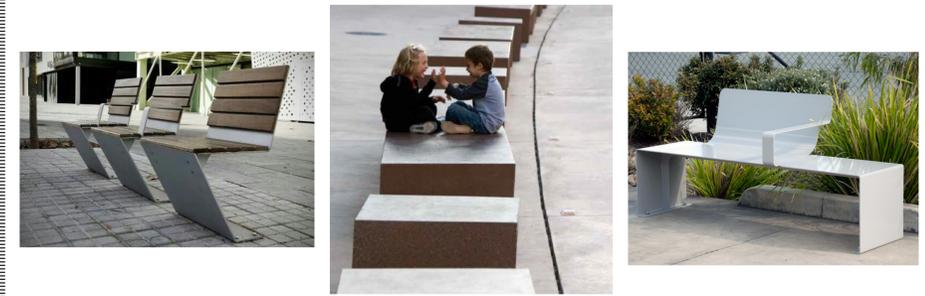


Utility

Artistic

Minimalist

Benches



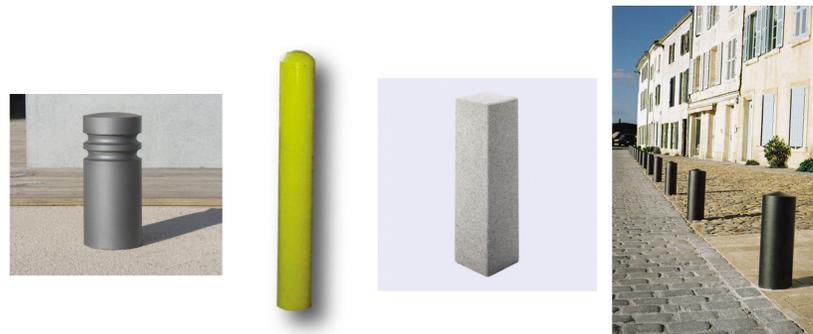
Streetlights



Bike Racks



Bollards



Trashcans

