

DOWNTOWN FREDERICK POST OFFICE SITE DESIGN WORKSHOP

Summary Report

A Community Site Design Workshop for the United States Post Office site in Downtown Frederick

September 20th and 21st 2016

MAHAN RYKIEL
ASSOCIATES INC

+ Hybrid Development Group LLC.



This project is a partnership of:



With design, analysis, and planning support from:



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INTRODUCTION

At 3.83 acres in size, the United States Post Office (USPO) site in Frederick, Maryland, represents a significant land area at a primary downtown gateway. While there currently are no plans for the USPO to relocate away from this site, the facility no longer operates at the capacity it once had. The urban site also creates significant challenges for postal trucks and postal employees entering and leaving the facility. There may be a time in the future when the post office chooses to relocate its distribution function to a larger site that is better served by roadway infrastructure. Should that be the case, this site would represent a significant redevelopment opportunity for Downtown Frederick.

PURPOSE

A site design workshop was organized to facilitate a proactive approach to considering the potential redevelopment of the USPO site, should it ever relocate in the future. It should be noted that any potential future relocation of the distribution function will not negatively impact local postal service, and the retail

function of the facility will remain in Downtown Frederick in either scenario. This proactive approach allows the City and downtown stakeholders to guide changes to the site rather than needing to react to unanticipated development proposals. Specifically, this workshop was the beginning of a conversation that started to explore the following:

- » Stakeholder opportunities and concerns
- » Important planning and design parameters for consideration
- » Contextual relationships and important connections
- » Site opportunities at an important downtown gateway
- » Current market realities

PROCESS

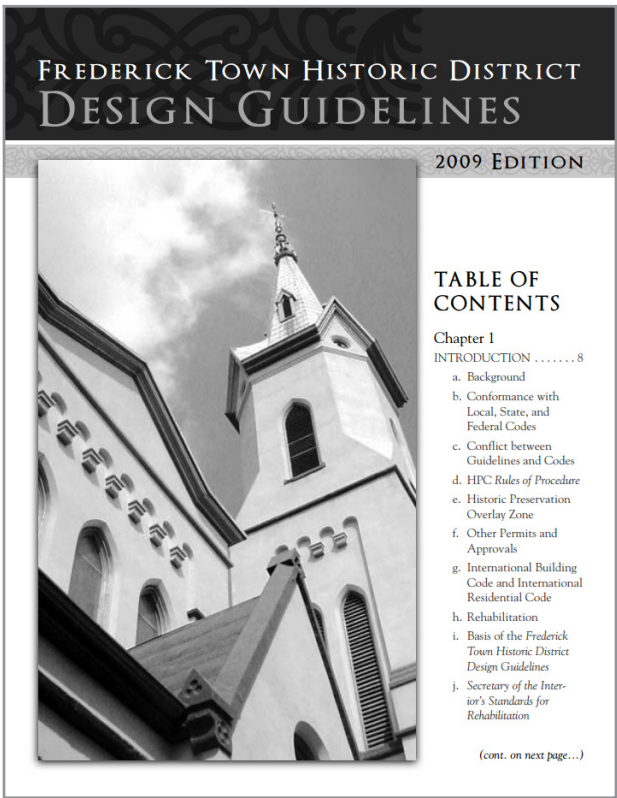
Downtown Frederick Partnership (the “Partnership”) issued a Request for Proposals in early 2016. Out of five respondents, the Partnership selected a team of Mahan Rykiel Associates and Hybrid Development to undertake the

work session. In May 2016, team members met with public stakeholders, such as the City of Frederick Department of Economic Development, and the City of Frederick Planning Department. These meetings provided background information and a foundation for the work session held on September 20th and 21st, 2016.

The work session began with two public input sessions, which included nearby residents, downtown businesses, City officials, and others. The team then met with several key adjacent property owners. Using the input from these meetings, coupled with professional experience, the team then prepared a concept plan and a high level market analysis that were presented back to the public on the evening of September 21st. The content of the presentation is summarized in this report.



The Post Office property includes two parcels: the parcel with the Post Office facility is 3.06 acres and the parking lot (south side of East Patrick Street) is 0.77 acres.



Market Snapshot	
Within 15 Minutes from Downtown	
Population	123,513
Employees	90,167
Households	47,086
Average HH size	2.57
Family Households	81.60%
HH w/kids under 18	35.80%
Rate of home ownership	60.90%
BS or Graduate Degree	40.00%
Median age*	35.7
Millennials*	24.20%
Average HH income*	\$82,136
HHs with income over \$100,000	34.20%
Average home value	\$320,434
Recent investment in Bio/life sciences	\$1.5 B
Development in the pipeline	2.5M+ SF
*Citywide	

Snapshot, excerpt from the Riddle Company, 2016, p. 4.

IMPORTANT NOTES

It is important to note the following considerations with regard to this design work session as they relate to the Post Office function and downtown redevelopment in general:

Post Office

- » Currently, there are no plans for the post office to relocate. The focus of the work session was to explore the potential for the site in a proactive manner, should the time ever come when the post office wished to relocate.
- » Should the post office seek relocation, the “retail post office” function (that is, the space where customers can purchase stamps, find their P.O. Box, ship packages, etc.) would remain on-site or in close proximity.
- » There will be no negative impact on current postal service.

Downtown Redevelopment

- » Adherence to the [Frederick Town Historic District Design Guidelines](#) and the [Land Management Code](#).
- » Accommodate the [Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Program](#) (MPDU).
- » Build upon the recommendations of the March [2016 City of Frederick Retail Market Report](#), prepared by The Riddle Company.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

As was expected, the conversations with stakeholders revealed many commonly shared thoughts, as well as some differing opinions and individual ideas.

BROAD THEMES

While many ideas and concerns were discussed among stakeholders, the broad themes that resonated included:

- » **Make downtown work for residents first.** If the planning and design of both this site and downtown is prioritized to serve residents (both existing and new), it will result in an attractive environment for visitors.
- » **Maintain the right balance of uses.** The site should include a mix of uses, but needs to consider the right balance of new retail uses that complement and support the strength of the existing mixture of independent businesses in Downtown Frederick.
- » **Make connections.** Use the redevelopment of this site, which can be a barrier, to create strong

connections between Market Street, Everedy Square & Shab Row, East Frederick, and Carroll Creek.

- » **Improve the walkability and bike-ability of the area.** Use the redevelopment of this site to improve upon the pedestrian experience, particularly along the west side of East Street. Walkability includes a safe, comfortable, and active sidewalk.
- » **Protect the quality of life,** particularly for the East Church Street Neighbors, by controlling and limiting adverse impacts of development for the adjacent properties.
- » **Address traffic circulation in the area.** With any new development, consider alleviating problematic traffic maneuvers that are a result of the current site configuration.

THE RIGHT BALANCE OF USES

There was considerable discussion related to the types of desired uses for the site, should the post office distribution function ever relocate. Among the uses identified by many stakeholders, were the following:

- » Mixed-Use development.
- » Retail uses that expand the offerings that currently exist — complementing, rather than duplicating, existing businesses, and continuing to emphasize unique, independent businesses.
- » Food market and/or farmers market.
- » Residential product/form that currently does not exist in Downtown Frederick. Specifically, a product that would appeal to young professionals, and a product that would allow residents to stay downtown as they age and might need elevator access (providing elevators would improve mobility for residents of all ages).
- » Outdoor public space and amenities.



Additional uses that were mentioned, but only identified by one person, or only a few people included:

- » Community space (such as a learning center or community meeting space).
- » Significant park space.
- » Medical office uses.
- » Boutique Inn (atop the existing post office building).
- » Bowling alley, movie theater or other “attraction” use.

PROTECT THE QUALITY OF LIFE

In addition to the potential uses on the site, there was considerable discussion of important resident concerns — all of which were related to “quality of life” characteristics. Specifically, the concerns shared by most of the stakeholders included:

- » Privacy for the residents living along Church Street, particularly related to views into their homes and rear yards. Some indicated that any new development should be treated with two “front doors,” meaning the

rear of the development should be designed with equal consideration as the front, street-facing façade of the development. Some suggested any design should avoid rear balconies that look out onto the Church Street properties (one participant attendee suggested that for any new development at the rear façade should be blank, with no windows).

- » Access to light and shade. New development should not block light to the existing Church Street homes.
- » Control for nuisance uses that produce noise and smells.
- » Appropriate location of service areas.
- » Parking impacts. Any new development should incorporate some on-site parking to accommodate the new development and not place additional pressure on the already limited parking resources along Church Street.

Additional concerns and opportunities were limited to specific geographic areas,

or elicited strongly divergent viewpoints. Among those thoughts:

- » Opportunity to “buy-back” some of the post office property which had encroached into the properties of adjacent residences. This specific request was made by some residents living at the eastern end of Church Street, where their yards were shortened when land was purchased for the post office site. There is a desire by some to have the opportunity to purchase some of that land to increase their yard sizes.
- » Access to rear yards. Several residents along Church Street expressed a desire for an alley to be incorporated into any redevelopment. An alley would provide rear access to properties, offer the ability to build a garage or parking pad, and/or assist residents to better accept deliveries. There were other residents, however, who were strongly opposed to any kind of alley, due to potential

compromised privacy (i.e., they did not want people walking past their rear yards).

- » Architectural quality. While there is a common feeling among stakeholders that anything developed needs to be sensitive to the character of the historic district, what that meant varied greatly among stakeholders. Some felt that any new construction should appear as if it was constructed 100 years ago, while others felt that the architecture can be sensitive to adjacent historic buildings without trying to replicate historic architecture and creating a false sense of history.

DOWNTOWN POST OFFICE SITE DESIGN WORKSHOP

TWO-DAY EVENT:

**Tuesday, September 20th to
Wednesday, September 21st**

Join us and provide your design input on the **POST OFFICE** site* in Downtown Frederick. The workshop will begin the initial conversations to discuss the site's opportunities and the community's vision.

*Any redevelopment would retain the retail post office, and this project will in no way negatively impact current postal service.

For more information, please refer to the Downtown Frederick Partnership website: <http://www.downtownfrederick.org/policies>

Please direct questions to mainstreet@downtownfrederick.org or 301.698.8118

PUBLIC INPUT SESSIONS

(whichever is best for you)

A | Tuesday, 8:30 am

B | Tuesday, 6:00 pm

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

Wednesday, 6:00 pm

@ **Delaplaine Visual Arts
Education Center**
40 S. Carroll Street, 27101

This process is a partnership of:



PLANNING AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Following the gathering of stakeholder input, the planning and design team identified important considerations to be balanced with stakeholder input. These included market/economic considerations, as well as physical and design-related elements.

MARKET CONSIDERATIONS

As the work session occurred over a two-day period, it is important to note that a detailed market analysis could not be developed; however, the team reviewed the March 2016 *Retail Market Report* (see summary at right) and identified a number of assumptions, certain uses that would be most realistic than others, and challenges associated with some of the uses identified by stakeholders during the work session.

Assumptions

- » The public sector is helping to facilitate this process; however the expectation is that any redevelopment plans would be developed by private sector funding.
- » Redevelopment needs to consider

the costs involved in purchasing the site and relocating the post office distribution function. While the cost for completing this process is unknown, a recent similar scenario in Baltimore cost approximately \$12 Million, as an example.

Realistic Uses

- » There is demand for additional downtown residential options, and a different product type would expand options for both empty-nesters and young professionals. Additional residential within downtown is also a goal of the [Comprehensive Plan](#), and a key goal of the Partnership's [Strategic Plan](#).
- » Residential uses with retail/active uses on the ground level are more easily financed than office uses. This approach is critical to achieve the assumption of privately financed development.
- » Additional downtown residents are needed to support some of

THE CITY OF FREDERICK RETAIL MARKET REPORT (HIGHLIGHTS)

March 2016, the Riddle Company

The Riddle Company prepared a detailed retail study for the City in March 2016. Below are some of the highlights relevant to this site design workshop.

Short-Term

- » Think outside the box and explore creative retail concepts for Downtown Frederick.
- » Encourage short-term leases for businesses to activate vacant space and introduce complementary uses to those that currently exist, such as seasonal businesses, yoga, etc.
- » Explore “pop-up” retail to introduce and test new concepts and merchandise.

Long-Term

- » Expand retail opportunities by providing some newer, larger footprint space.
- » Continue to court experienced retail/mixed-use developers.
- » Incubate local retail businesses.
- » Continue to leverage the strong food-culture in Frederick and nationwide and build upon the cottage food industry. Consider developing “food accelerators.”

the desired retail uses (e.g., a food market).

- » Non-retail ground level active uses could include meeting/gathering space, or a limited amount of office space.
- » On-site parking would need to support the proposed uses as well as provide some public parking.
- » There is a trend for new mixed-use developments to creatively incorporate a food market component into projects.

Challenges Related to Some Suggested Uses

- » Larger users, such as grocery stores, bowling alleys, etc., require significant amounts of parking as well as clear circulation patterns for delivery trucks and customers, which is challenging to achieve on this site.
- » Medical office uses require a high amount of on-site parking and tend to favor more suburban locations or locations near hospitals. For

Downtown Frederick, the most feasible location would be near the hospital.

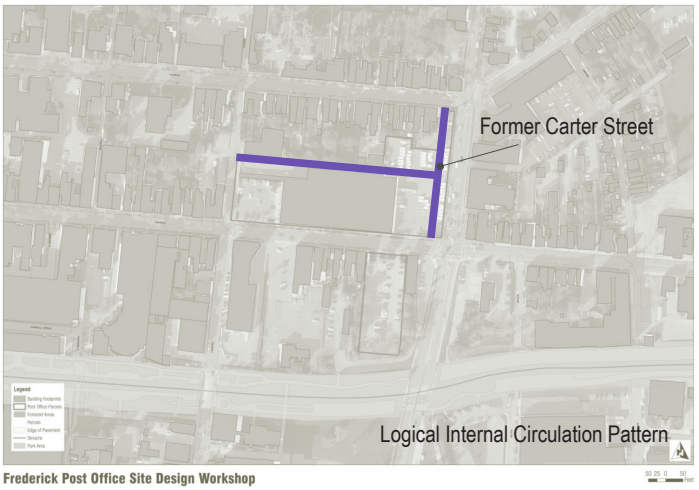
- » A predominant public use, such as a park, requires significant public investment. For example, a three acre park could cost from \$4 to \$10 million, depending upon the level of passive compared to actively programmed space included.
- » Nearby Carroll Creek Park represents a significant investment in open space. Efforts should focus on maximizing this investment and leverage additional development to further activate the park.
- » Efforts also should also focus on uses and development patterns that maximize the potential to connect Market and Patrick Streets with Everedy Square & Shab Row.

Other Challenges

- » Construction costs versus potential sales/lease rates are imbalanced. The costs of designing and constructing a new development in Frederick are no different than

the cost in nearby larger markets that can command higher sales and lease rates than projects could in Frederick.

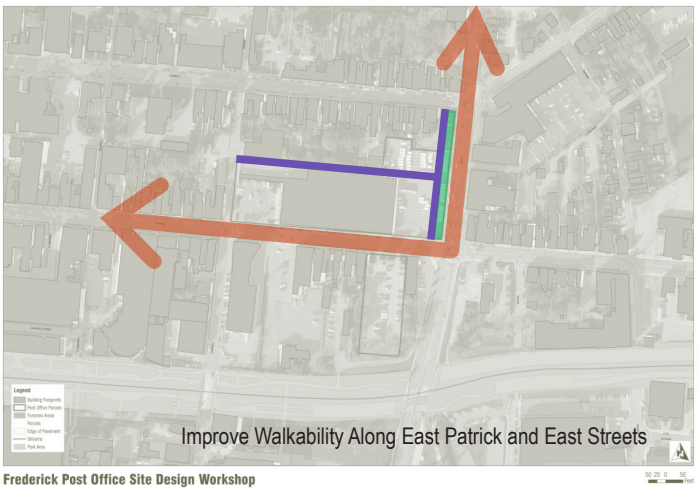
- » Mixed-use developments require a certain number of residential units to make the project viable — typically around a minimum of 125 units.
- » Subdivision of the site (suggested in one of the stakeholder meetings) would make the site less attractive to private investment.
- » Ability to include “loss leaders” (such as subsidizing funding of a certain use to make the project more attractive) requires either significant public investment or a private investor with “deep pockets.”



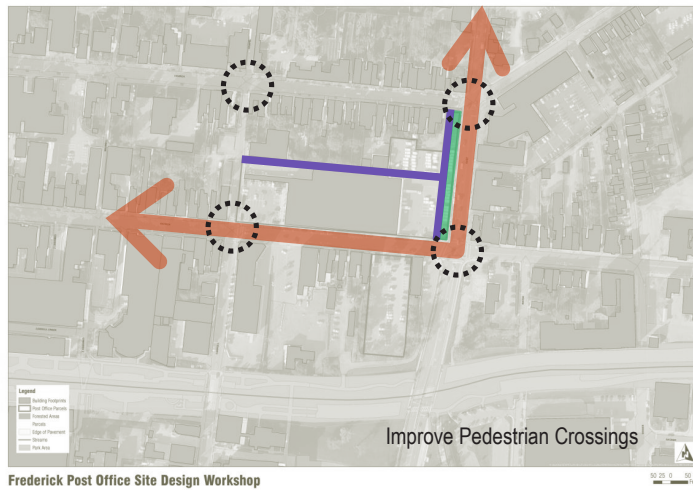
1 Logical Internal Circulation Pattern



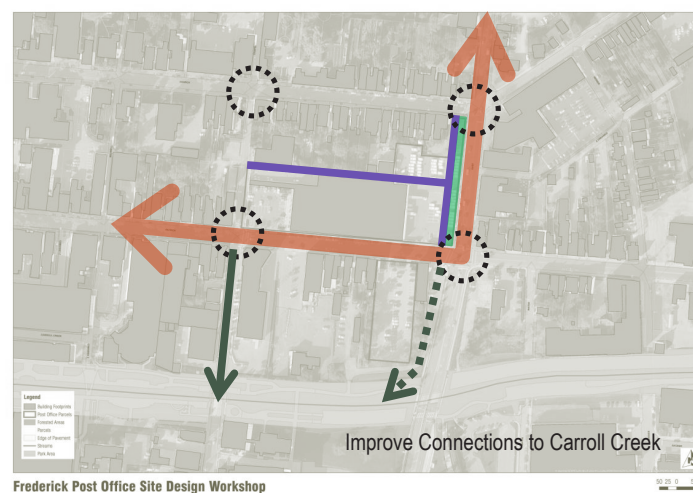
2 Potential for Linear Public Space



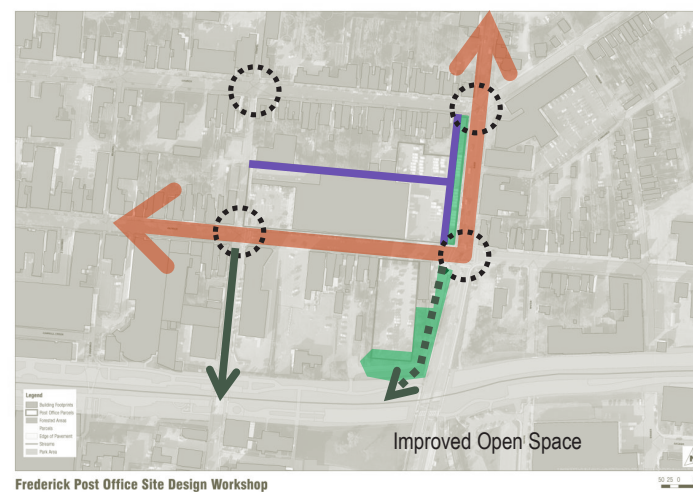
3 Improve Walkability Along East Patrick and East Streets



4 Improve Pedestrian Crossings



5 Improve Connections to Carroll Creek



6 Improved Open Space

SITE CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to balancing market considerations with stakeholder input, it is important to understand the physical opportunities and limitations of the site. The following are some key elements that the planning and design team took into consideration:

- 1. Internal Circulation:** The site is large enough to warrant its own internal circulation system. Many of Frederick's blocks are divided by an alley, which would make sense for this site as well. An east-west alley or drive could provide access to the on-site parking and service areas as well as provide access to the residential properties along Church Street, should that be desired. At one time, Carter Street ran parallel to East Street along the site's eastern edge. There is an opportunity to reinstate this "street" as a pedestrian promenade and emergency access drive.
- 2. Linear Public Space:** With the re-introduction of Carter Street, an

opportunity exists to create a narrow linear park along East Street. This park will provide a more comfortable building setback from the road and an improved environment for pedestrians.

- 3. Improved Walkability along Streets:** In addition to the linear park along East Street, the East Patrick Street frontage also needs to be enhanced to improve walkability. In addition to broad sidewalks, it will be important to provide street trees for shade and active uses along both streets.
- 4. Improved Pedestrian Crossings:** Building upon improved walkability, the four intersections bordering the block need to be enhanced for pedestrian safety.
- 5. Improved Connections to Carroll Creek:** In addition to improvements to East Patrick and East Street, stronger pedestrian connections to Carroll Creek need to be considered. Due to traffic volumes on East Patrick Street, these pedestrian connections should connect at the intersections of South

Carroll Street and East Street. The pedestrian connection parallel to East Street could tie directly into the linear park space described previously.

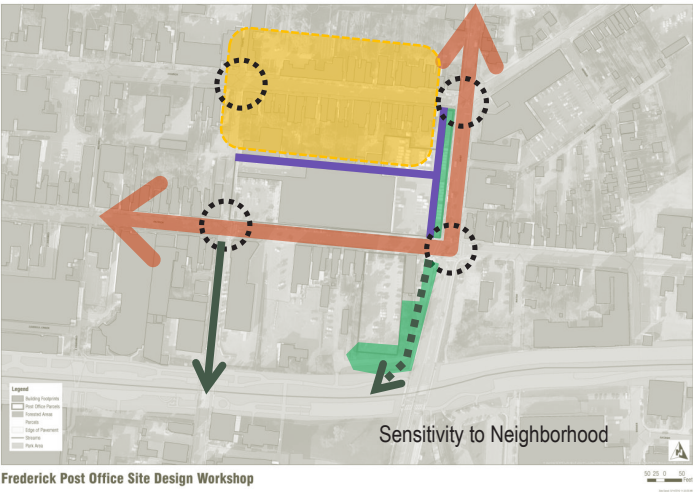
- 6. Improved Open Space at Carroll Creek:** There also is an opportunity to improve the existing open space at Carroll Creek by making sure any new development on the post office parking lot site (south side of East Patrick Street) relates to and activates the open space.
- 7. Sensitivity to Neighborhood:** Redevelopment needs to be sensitive to the adjacent East Church Street neighborhood. This sensitivity can be achieved by locating less intensive uses, such as surface parking or an alley access drive, adjacent to the rear yards, and by considering views into and out of the site to maintain privacy for neighbors.
- 8. Location of Development:** Building development should be located at the street edge. While this reinforces the traditional urban development patterns, it also locates the buildings

furthest away from the existing homes on East Church Street.

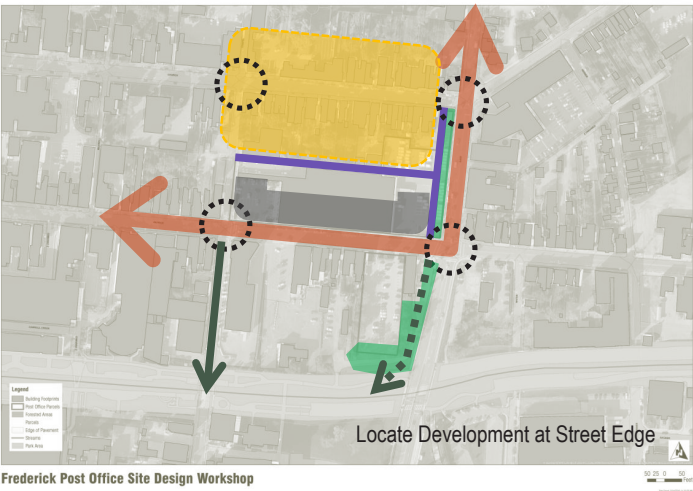
9. **Surface Parking.** Create an area of surface parking north of the building footprint. This area will not only create buffer from the adjacent Church Street residents, but it will also provide a parking resource for the development that can potentially benefit nearby residents.
10. **Location of Decked Parking:** The natural grade on the south side of East Patrick Street allows for development to be constructed over one level of parking. The first level of development and associated outdoor spaces (over the parking) therefore, could connect directly to Carroll Creek Park at the level of the existing walkway.
11. **Potential to Expand Backyards:** The “saw tooth” nature of the existing post office property line (at the north) allows for the potential for some land to be sold back to adjacent neighbors. There would be no real loss for the site’s development potential, as this current configuration does not allow

for an efficient layout of the post office site.

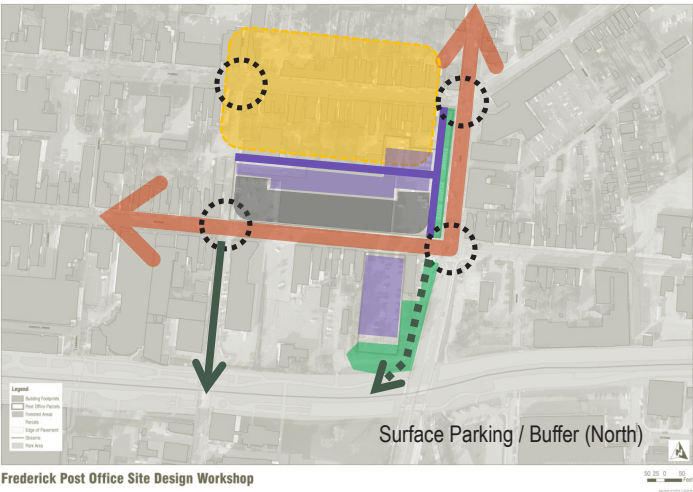
12. **Gateway Opportunity:** New development should take advantage of the gateway corner (from the south, along East Street, and from the east, along East Patrick Street) and utilize articulation in the architecture to respond to the corner. Due to the existing building setback, the current Post Office building does not block the view of the spire at Saint John the Evangelist from this corner. A new building that addresses this key intersection would obstruct the view, even if only one story in height. The view of the spire along Carroll Street, therefore, should be a more important focus.



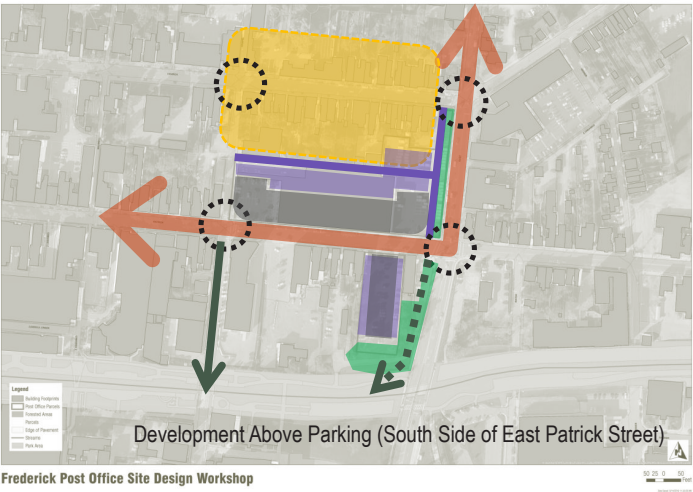
7 Sensitivity to the Neighborhood



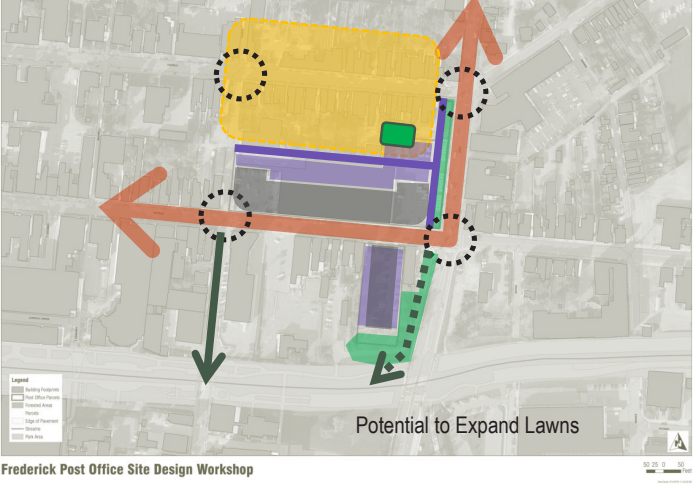
8 Local Development at Street Edge



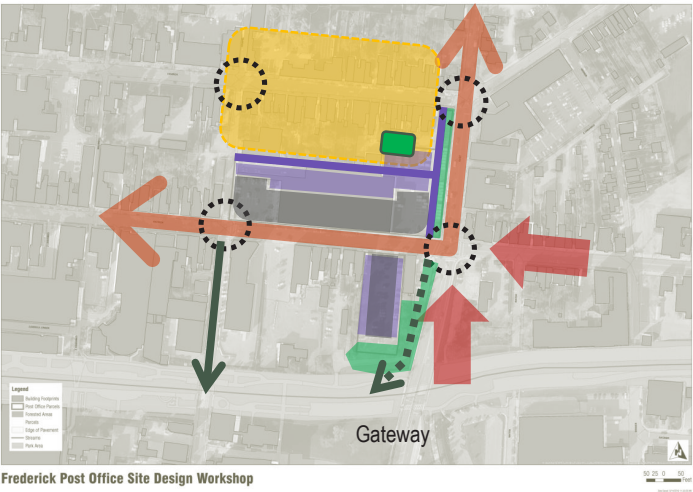
9 Surface Parking/Buffer (North)



10 Development Above Parking (South Side of East Patrick Street)



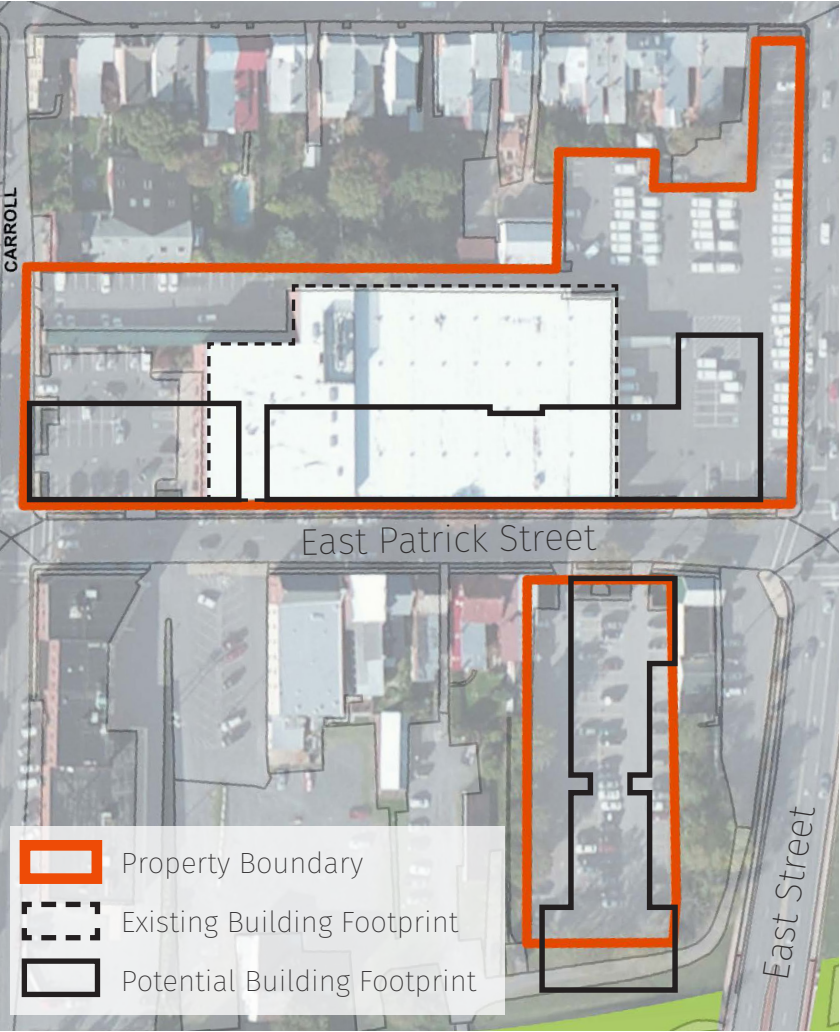
11 Potential to Expand Lawns



12 Gateway

CONCEPT PLAN

The diagrams on the following pages illustrate the potential redevelopment concept for the reuse of the post office site. The Illustrative Plan shows how new buildings, parking, and open space could be designed to respond to stakeholder input, market considerations, and site considerations. Perspective “massing” model views show the concept in three dimensions, emphasizing height and massing rather than specific architectural design.



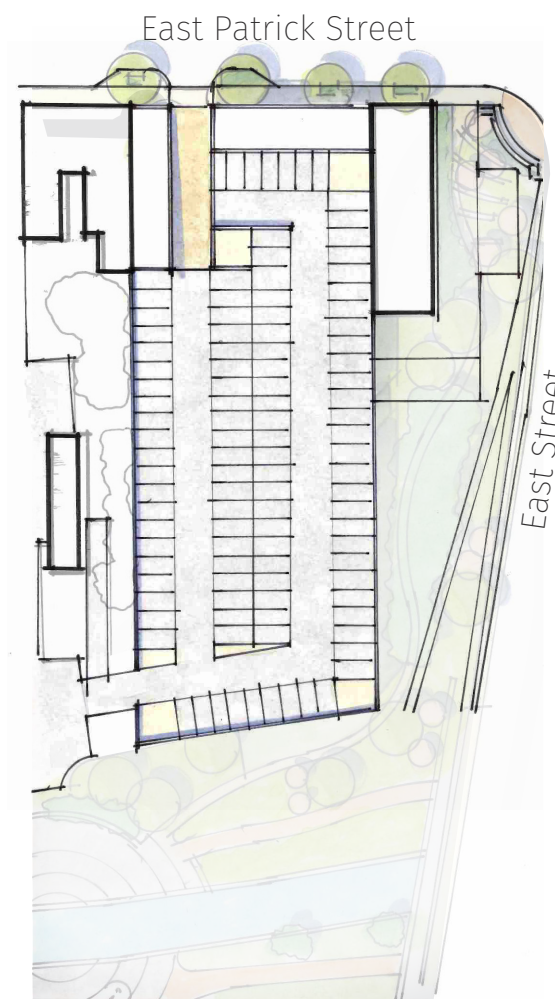
DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY SQUARE FOOTAGE (SF)

North Site (3.06 Acres)

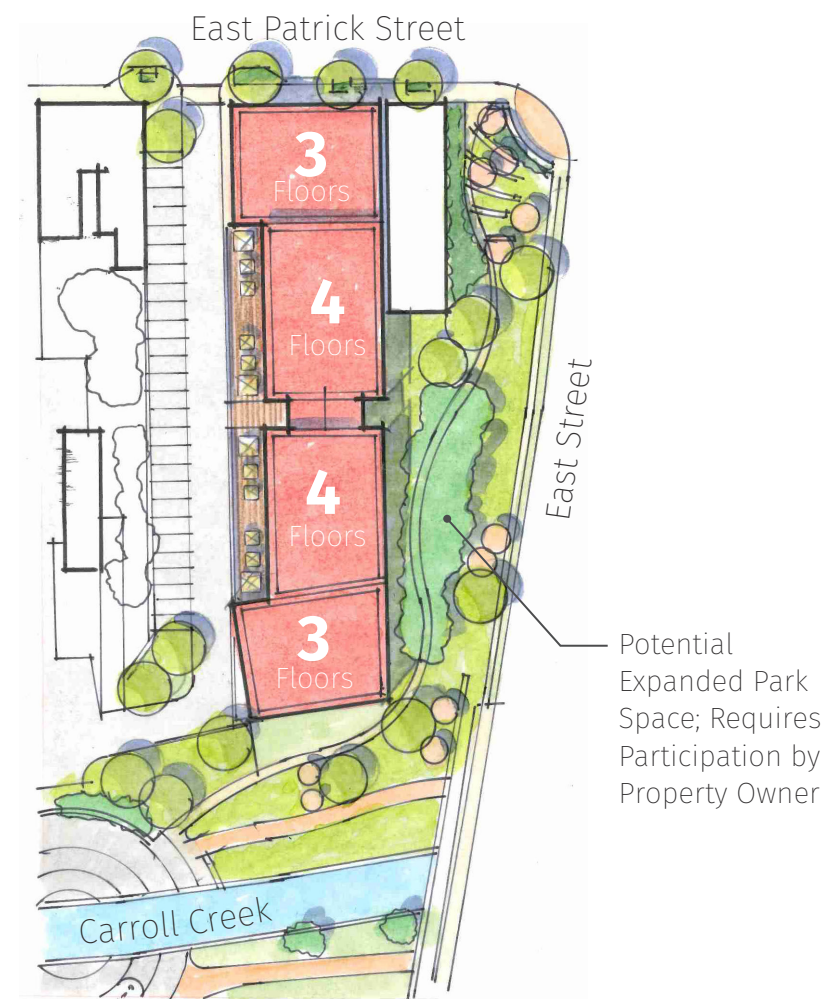
Retail/Active Ground Level Uses	45,000 SF
Residential	92,000 SF
Stacked Townhomes	20,000 SF
Multi-family	72,000 SF (~90 Units)
TOTAL	137,000 SF
North Parking	114 to 124 spaces
Garage Spaces (Stacked Townhomes)	14 spaces
Off-Street	100 to 110 spaces

South Site (0.77 Acres)

Retail/Active Ground Level Uses/Market	22,000 SF
Residential (multi-family only)	51,000 SF (~64 Units)
TOTAL	73,000 SF
South Parking (Off-Street, Below Grade)	105 to 110 spaces



South Site
Lower Level Parking



South Site
Alternative Option with
Expanded Park Space

- A** Potential Area to Sell Back to Adjacent Property Owners
- B** Alley
- C** East Street Promenade (Linear Park)
- D** 11 "Stacked Towns," Townhome-Style Residences with Rear Garage above First Floor Retail
- E** Access to Parking Below
- F** Improved Pedestrian Connection to Carroll Creek
- G** First Floor Retail with Multi-family Residential Above



ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

0 50 100 200 300

1" = 100'



[1] View looking east on East Patrick Street, showing the “stacked towns” residential product at the corner of East Patrick and Carroll Street. [2] View northwest toward downtown. [3] View looking west on East Patrick Street. [4] View northeast.



[1] View looking north, from above Carroll Creek. [2] Image showing the shadow created by a building of this size on the shortest day of the year — December 21st, at 3:30 pm, an hour before sunset. [3] This view captures the same angle as that in Image 2, but with existing and proposed trees.



PRECEDENT IMAGERY



[1] A market in Copenhagen. [2] Shaded parking in Berlin. [3] Residential development in Greenville, SC. [4] A commercial street in Lancaster, PA. [5] Residential development in Baltimore. [6] Development in Frederick.

PROJECT COSTS

Following is a “high level” example of how costs might be considered for the redevelopment of the post office site, based on the potential concept plan developed as part of the work session.

Land Acquisition/Relocation of Post Office	\$7 Million
New Construction	\$40.5 Million
Retail/Active Ground Level Uses (67,000 SF x \$70/SF)	\$4.7 Million
Residential (143,000 SF x \$145/SF)	\$21 Million
Parking (Below Grade and Surface)	\$2.2 Million
Subtotal Hard Costs	\$28 Million
Soft Costs (25% of Hard Costs)	\$7 Million
10% Contingency	\$3.5 Million
Site/Landscape	\$2 Million
Subtotal	\$12.5 Million
TOTAL PROJECT	\$47.5 MILLION
	(Assume 48-52 Million)

NEXT STEPS

As described in the introduction of this summary report, the Site Design Work Session represented the beginning of a discussion regarding the potential for the post office site, should the post office distribution function ever wish to relocate. The concepts described and illustrated in this report will provide Downtown Frederick Partnership, the City of Frederick, East Frederick Rising and stakeholders the basis from which to continue discussions about the potential for this important site. At some point in the future, it will be important to establish a more formalized process for moving forward in more detail and continuing the discussions.

