

3 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Downtown Chapel Hill, the symbolic heart of the community, is both an economically and culturally vibrant place.

One of the many influences on the Downtown Study Area is the University of North Carolina campus, adjacent to the downtown area to the southeast. Student foot traffic to and from campus makes up a large part of the downtown’s pedestrian traffic. The students also represent a distinct market for goods, which has a significant influence on the downtown retail mix.

The Study Area generally includes lots/properties fronting on Franklin and Rosemary Streets bounded on the west by Merritt Mill Road, and on the east by Hillsborough/Raleigh Street. (See Map of Study Area on Page 15) Downtown edge areas include the neighborhoods adjacent to the main study area. Study area data does **not** include information for the edge areas; only the information for the main study serves as the basis for the goals, objectives and strategies enumerated in the plan.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMICS

Based on 2000 data, there are approximately 2,349 permanent residents in the Downtown Study Area, (See Table 1) and the area contains 23 group quarters and 119 dwelling units. In 1995, the number of people employed in the study area was about 1,033. This number is projected to increase to approximately 1,223 persons by the year 2020 (Source: 1995 Housing and Employment Survey, Town of Chapel Hill).

The Downtown Tax District is roughly bounded to include Rosemary and Franklin Streets between Merritt Mill Road and Henderson Street. Therefore, it does comprise a smaller area than our current Downtown Study Area. However, it is useful to look at information regarding this tax district

TABLE 1: RESIDENTS IN DOWNTOWN STUDY AREA (2000)

Housing	Group Quarters	Residents
Granville Towers	1	1,409
Greek Housing	20	549
Interfaith Council Shelter	1	48
Abundant Life Center	1	28
<i>Subtotal</i>	23	2,034
	Dwelling Units	Residents
The Warehouse	55	175
Other Units	64	140
<i>Subtotal</i>	119	315
TOTAL	NA	2,349

Source: Town of Chapel Hill Planning Dept.

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TABLE 2: ASSESSED VALUATION (1997)

Shopping Area	Assessed Valuation
Downtown Tax District	\$ 99,399,234
University Mall	\$19,880,892
Chapel Hill North	\$16,888,898
Village Plaza	\$ 7,496,596
Eastgate Shopping Center	\$7,269,392
Glenwood – Glen Lennox Shopping Center	\$6,757,011
Rams Plaza Shopping Ctr	\$ 6,687,068
Galleria Shopping Center	\$ 2,094,702
Total	\$166,473,793

Source: Orange County Economic Development Commission

to get a picture of the health of the downtown area.

Table 2 shows how the January 1997 assessed valuation of the Downtown Tax District was \$99,399,234, as compared with other shopping centers in Chapel Hill below.

The Downtown Tax District equals 60 percent of the total assessed valuation of commercial/shopping areas in the Town of Chapel Hill as of 1997 (See Figure 1).

The vacancy rate for commercial space in downtown Chapel Hill is quite low. Since demand for commercial space is high, owners can weigh their options when making lease decisions. According to the Orange County Economic Development Commission, the Orange County vacancy rate (which includes all jurisdictions within the county) is 1.9 percent, while Chapel Hill/Carrboro’s is 1.6 percent. In general, the vacancy rate in downtown Chapel Hill is roughly one half of that for the

TABLE 3: RENTAL RATES

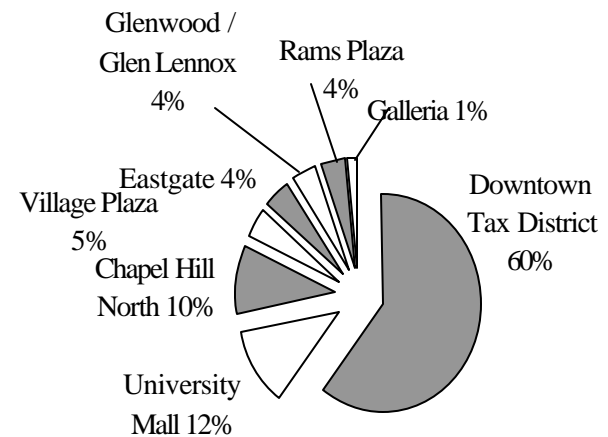
Area	Average
Downtown Chapel Hill	\$22/sq. ft.
University Square	\$19/sq. ft.
Carrboro	\$16/sq. ft.
Eastgate	\$16/sq. ft.
Ram’s Plaza	\$12/sq. ft.

Source: County Economic Development Commission

County as a whole, or 0.5-1.0 percent (February 2000). In the Triangle area, a vacancy rate below 10 percent is considered healthy.

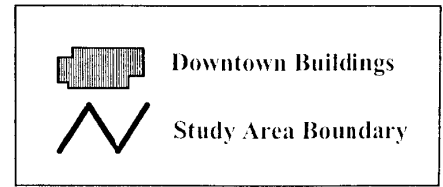
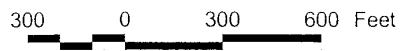
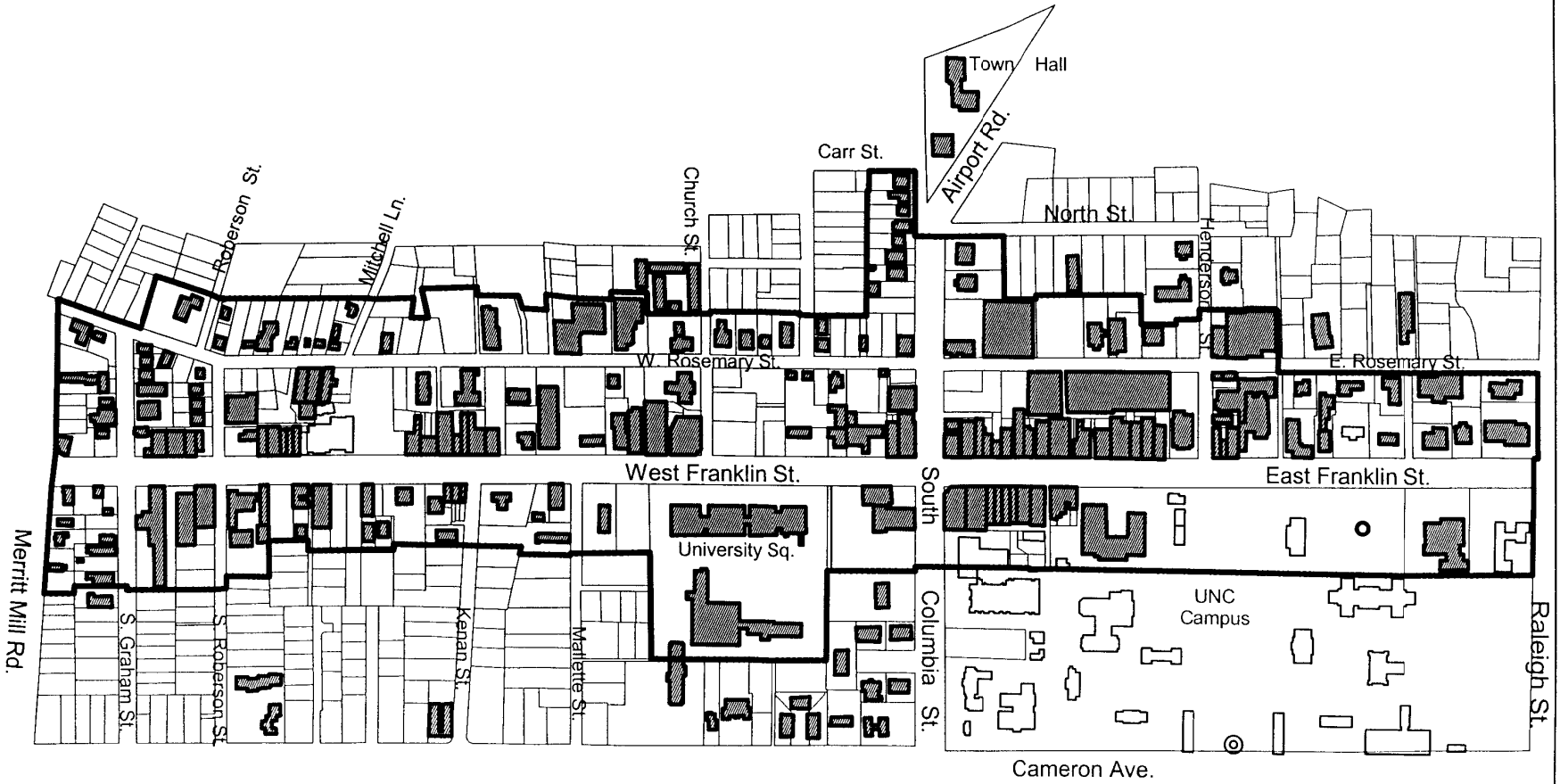
Downtown Chapel Hill has the lowest vacancy rate and the highest rental rates per square foot of commercial space of all commercial areas in and around the immediate Town limits. (The buildings in Table 3 are along Rosemary and Franklin Streets, between Merritt Mill Road and Henderson Street.)

FIGURE 1: ASSESSED VALUES



Source: Orange County Economic Development Commission

Downtown Small Area Plan The Study Area Chapel Hill, N.C.



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There are quite a few downtown Chapel Hill businesses that are located in buildings that they own (See Table 4). Other downtown property owner-occupants include the University of North Carolina, numerous churches, Orange County Government, and the Masonic Lodge.

LAND USE

The downtown study area contains approximately 4,754,091 square feet (109 acres). Fifteen percent of the study area lies within Historic Districts. (See Zoning and Historic Districts Map on Page 19.) The University of North Carolina owns 11 percent of the properties within the study area. (See Land Use Map on Page 21.) Currently, land uses are mainly commercial (retail), with some office, institutional and residential uses (See Table 5).

CHARACTER/APPEARANCE

Physically, the downtown study area is oriented in a lengthwise fashion, east to west, along Franklin and Rosemary Streets. Within this linear downtown area, there are several distinct districts and key features, each unique according to use, building type, building setback, and the method by which ameni-

TABLE 4: BUILDING/BUSINESS OWNERS

Business	Location	Business	Location
Sephora	119 E. Franklin	The Avid Reader	462 W. Franklin
University Florist	124 E. Franklin	Chapel Hill Tire	502 W. Franklin
Ye Olde Waffle Shop	173 E. Franklin	Chapel Hill News	505 W. Franklin
Hector's	201 E. Franklin	Centura Bank	101 E. Rosemary
Walker's Funeral Home	120 W. Franklin	BB&T	143 E. Rosemary
McFarling Exxon	126 W. Franklin	BellSouth	207 E. Rosemary
The Bookshop	400 W. Franklin	Tate Realty	342 W. Rosemary
McDonald's	409 W. Franklin	Oriental Garden	503 W. Rosemary
411 West	411 W. Franklin	Investor's Title	115-123 N. Columbia
Yates Motors	419 W. Franklin	Joseph's Hairstyling	205 N. Columbia
Chapel Hill Cleaners	422 W. Franklin	Page & Page	210 N. Columbia

Source: Orange County Economic Development Commission

TABLE 5: LAND USES IN STUDY AREA

Land Use	Acres	% of Study Area	Land Use (Cont.)	Acres	% of Study Area
Office	8.2	7.5%	UNC	11	10.1%
Commercial	25.3	23.2%	Parking	14.2	13%
Institutional	8.3	7.6%	Vacant	0.3	0.3%
Residential	13.2	12.1%	Mixed Use	5.2	4.8%
Roads/Alleys	24.4	22.4%	TOTAL	109	100%

Source: Chapel Hill Planning Department

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New construction on West Franklin Street.

ties (or lack thereof), such as sidewalks and other features, have evolved. (See Key Features Map on Page 23.)

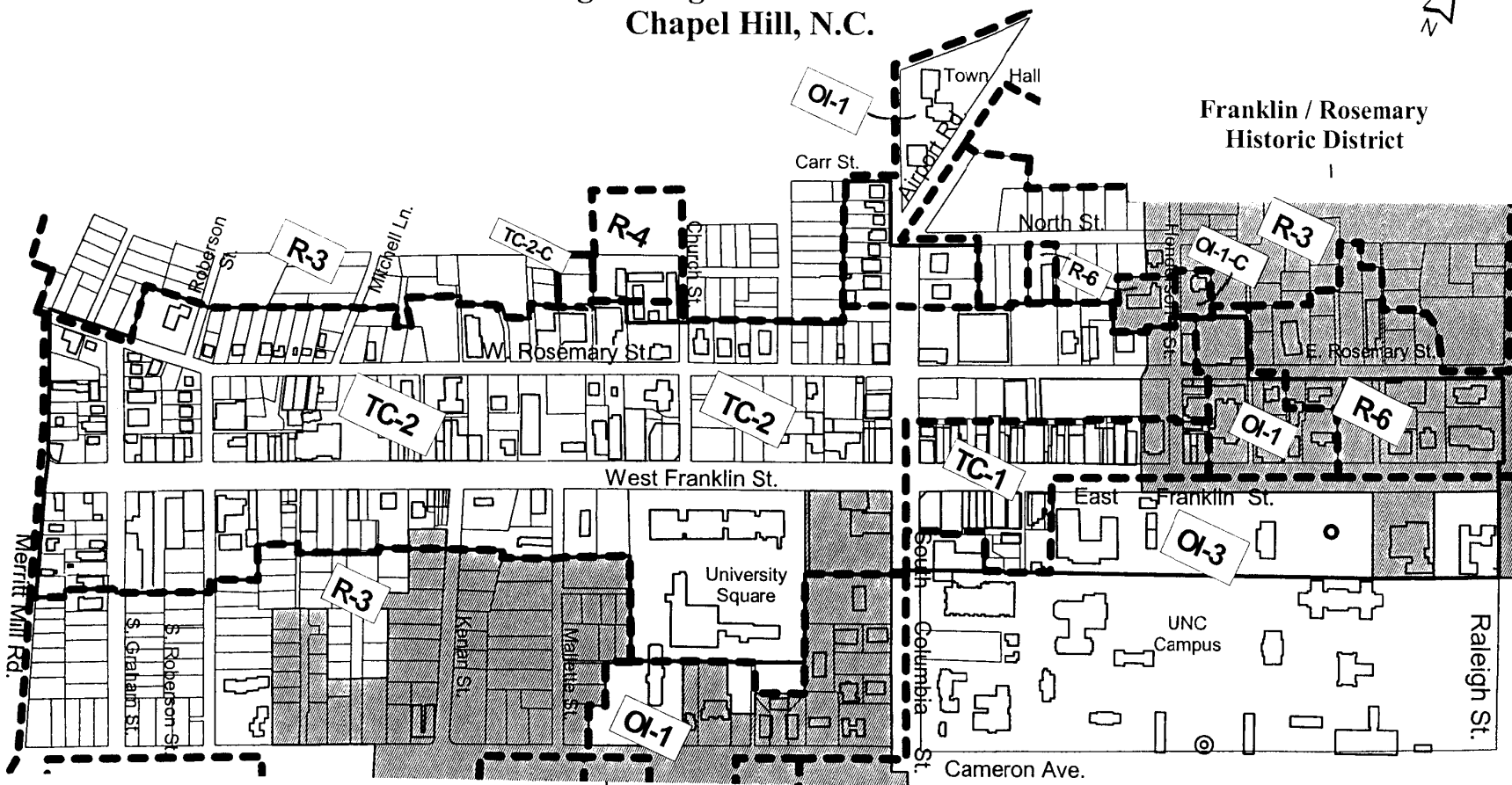
Overall, buildings are in good condition in the downtown study area. A windshield survey, conducted in February 1998, found that 89 percent were in good condition, with 5 percent in fair condition and 6 percent in poor condition. Fair condition was defined as buildings with problems limited to appearance (paint, gutters, broken windows). Poor condition referred to those buildings with

structural problems.

Chapel Hill retains a pedestrian oriented environment and a small town character in its central downtown area. Adjacent historic residential areas, the presence of many mature street trees, the scale of most commercial buildings and a variety of awnings and other architectural details, support the general “village” character of the downtown. This character is also reflected in downtown’s predominant vernacular architectural style.

The character of downtown changes as one moves west from the 100 block of Franklin Street towards University Square on the south side of the 100 block of West Franklin. Here there are fewer buildings and they are set back further from the street in conjunction with large on-grade parking lots. Buildings typically are newer than those in the Central Business District, and are not vernacular in style. The University Square area has a more open spatial character than the rest of the study area, which, with its lack of historical architectural details, makes it appear suburban in character.

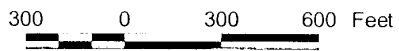
Downtown Small Area Plan Existing Zoning and Historic Districts Chapel Hill, N.C.



Franklin / Rosemary
Historic District

Cameron / McCauley
Historic District

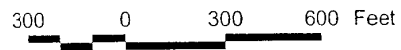
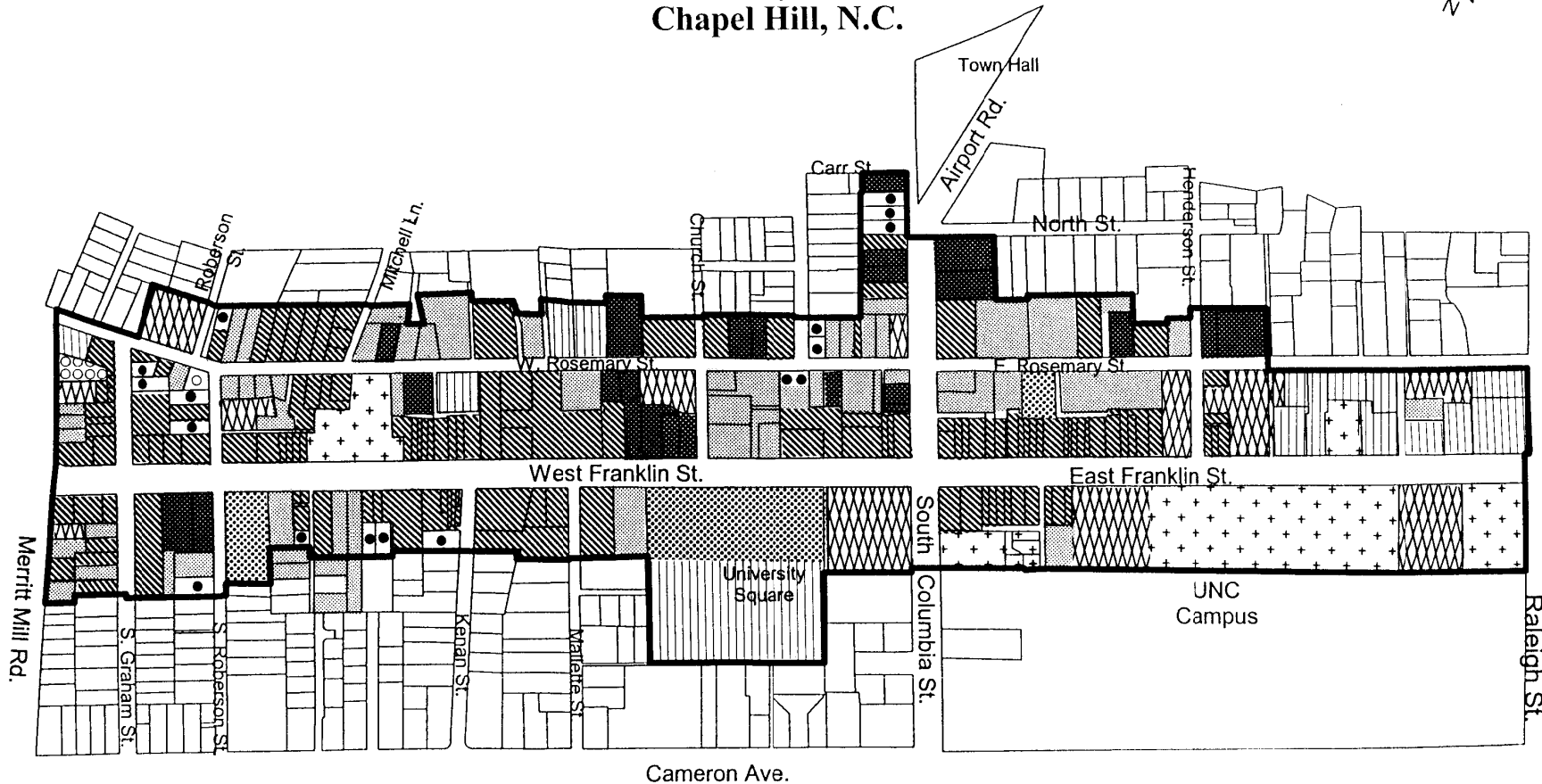
Zoning Districts	
TC-1	Town Center 1
TC-2	Town Center 2
OI-1	Office Institutional 1
OI-3	Office Institutional 3
R-3	Residential, 7 units/acre
R-4	Residential, 10 units/acre
R-6	Residential, 15 units/acre
-C	Conditional Use













	Historic Districts
	Zoning Districts
	Downtown Buildings
	Study Area Boundary

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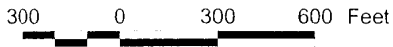
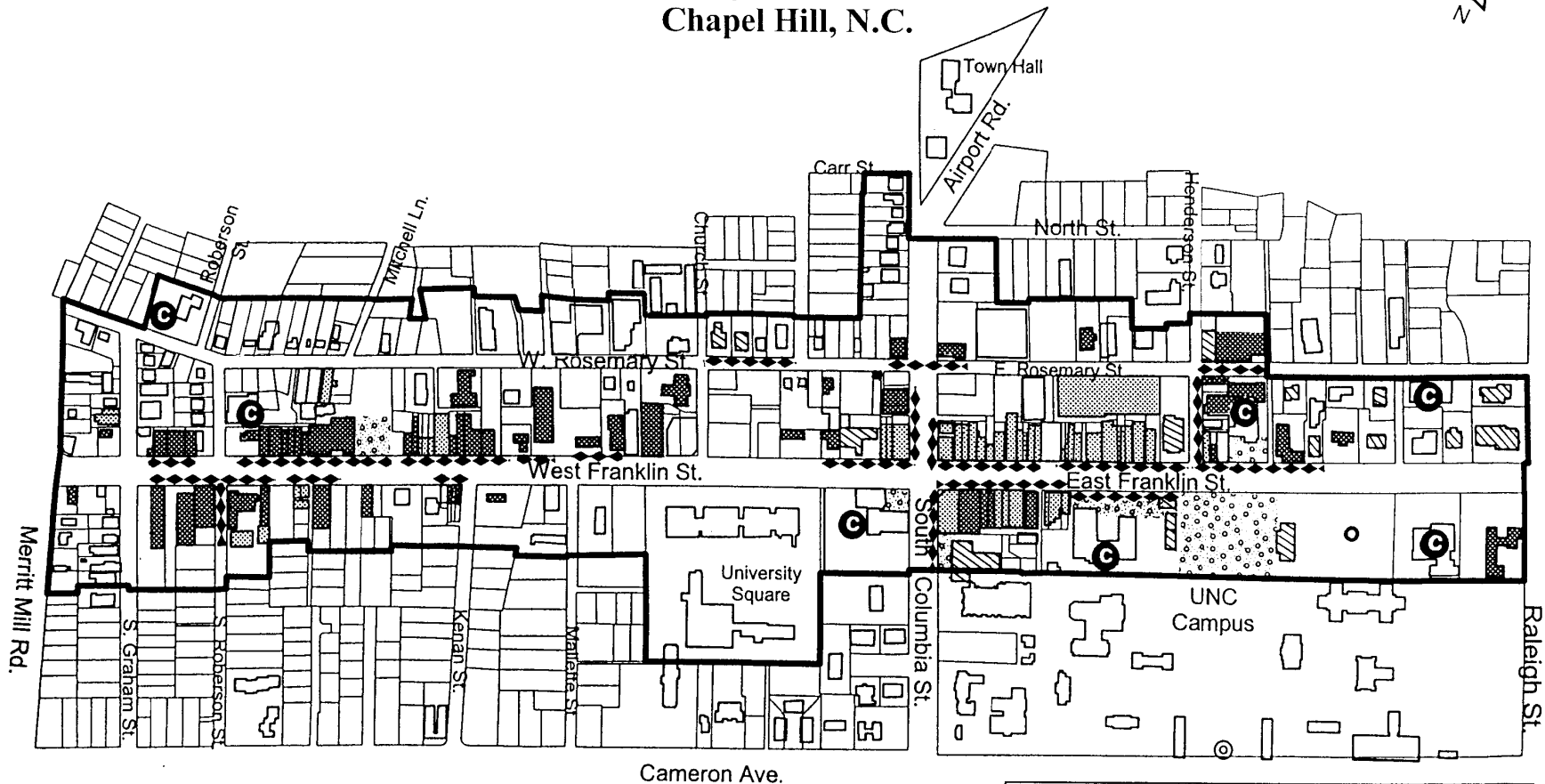
Downtown Small Area Plan Existing Land Use Chapel Hill, N.C.



	Retail		Residential / Single Family
	Office		Residential / High Density
	Mixed Retail / Office		Parking
	Institutional		Parks / Open Space
	University		Vacant Land

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Downtown Small Area Plan Key Features Chapel Hill, N.C.



	Williamsburg Style
	Vernacular Commercial Style
	Historic Buildings
	Churches
	Streetscape with Compatible Scale
	Significant Greens / Open Spaces

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Between Kenan Street and Merritt Mill Road, buildings typically move forward to the right-of-way once again. Architecture varies considerably, with some being of a vernacular style. Distinctive to this part of the downtown study area are plantings that are adjacent to the sidewalk, and the established canopy provided by large willow oaks along the north side of the street.

On West Rosemary, the streetscape is visually dominated by overhead utility lines on wooden poles on the south side of the street. Trees, where they exist, are typically set back in yards. Very little canopy exists to shade the street or sidewalks.

TRANSPORTATION

Pedestrians

There are five lanes of automobile traffic, including turn lanes, at the intersection where traffic from NC 86 (Columbia Street) and US Business 15-501 (Franklin Street) converge. Pedestrian traffic is very heavy at this intersection, and it is generally perceived as intimidating by those crossing the street.



Gargoyle figure perched atop Pepper's Pizza entrance.

Sidewalks are complete along Franklin and Columbia Streets. Sidewalks are incomplete along West Rosemary Street, especially on its south side. Grade changes directly behind the curb force pedestrians to walk in the roadway between some sections of sidewalk. (See Sidewalks, Bus Stops Map on Page 27.)

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THE PLAN SAYS

Consistent with one of the principal goals of the Comprehensive Plan, it is not the Town’s objective to provide long-term, all-day parking, but rather to provide short-term parking.

There are two pedestrian crosswalks, with traffic signals, along the 100 Block of East Franklin Street. There are no protected pedestrian crosswalks along West Franklin Street, or on Rosemary Street.

Bicycles

Bicyclists are not permitted on the sidewalks in the downtown study area where they would conflict with pedestrians. There are no separate bike paths or lanes, and traffic lanes are narrow in places, allowing small room for error. There are thirty bike racks on Franklin Street in the Downtown Study Area. Each rack accommodates two to eight bikes. Bicyclists often use parking meters and sign posts to lock their bikes as well.

TABLE 6: DOWNTOWN TRANSIT USE

Location	Boardings/Day
Franklin at Carolina Coffee Shop	601
N. Columbia at Lizard & Snake	244
W. Franklin at Caribou Coffee	156
N. Columbia at Copytron	73

Source: Chapel Hill Planning Department

Transit Service (Bus)

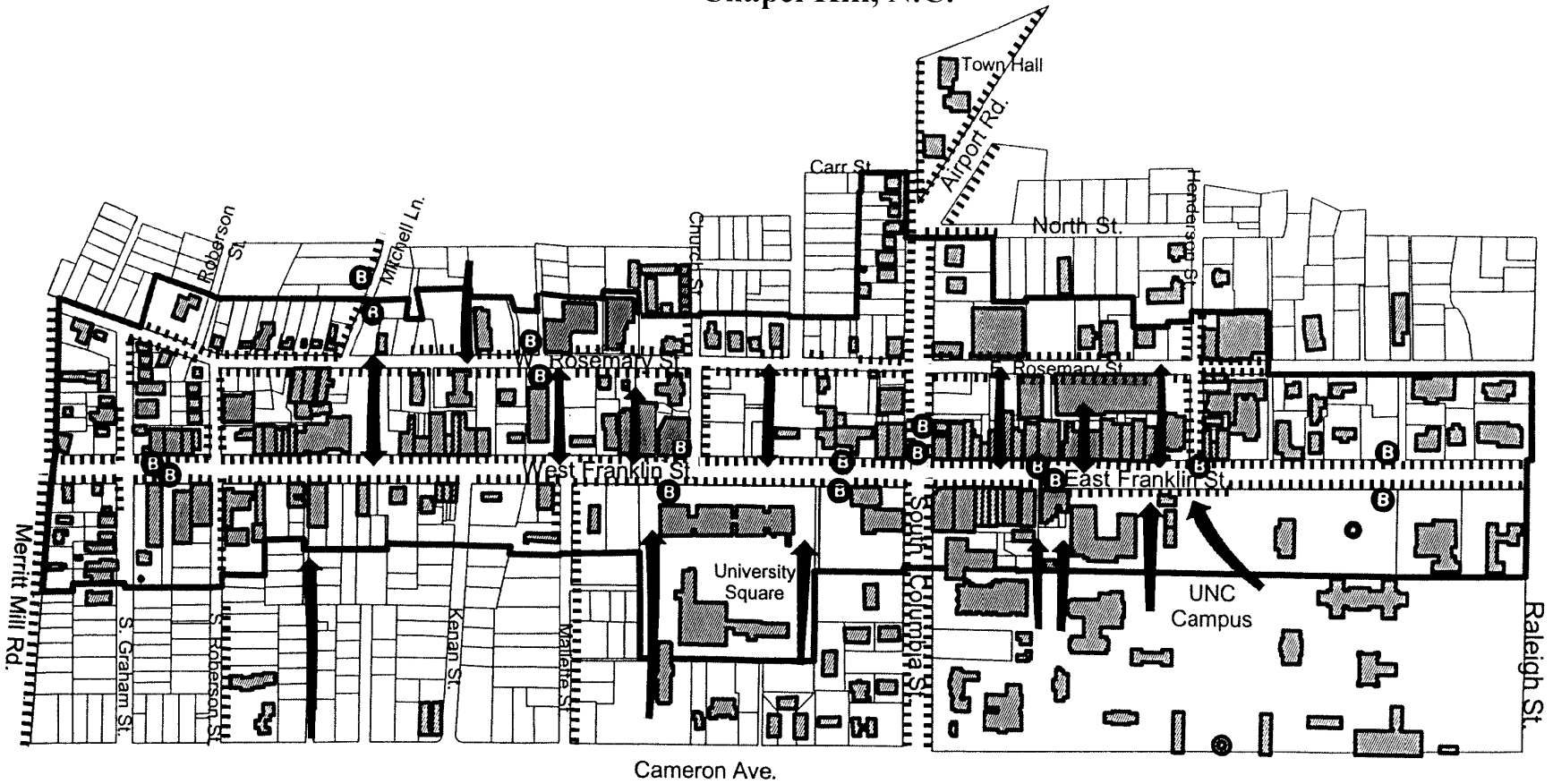
All of the fifteen transit routes provide service to downtown with approximately 14,000 riders per day. The main routes for buses coming through the downtown area are along Franklin Street and Columbia Street. Boarding counts taken in October 1998 (See Table 6) show that some of the more popular bus stops in the Downtown Study Area.

Parking

The Town’s Department of Transportation manages off-street parking. Consistent with one of the principal goals of the Comprehensive Plan, it is not the Town’s objective to provide long-term, all-day parking, but rather to provide short-term parking.

There are 181 on-street parking meters, and 674 off-street spaces, some of which are leased. In addition, parking is provided in paved and unpaved areas by various businesses in the Downtown Study Area. Thirty-seven percent of the total area within the Downtown Study Area is devoted to parking (See Parking Areas Map on Page 29). Parallel parking lanes on both sides of East Franklin and the west side of North Columbia accommodate short-

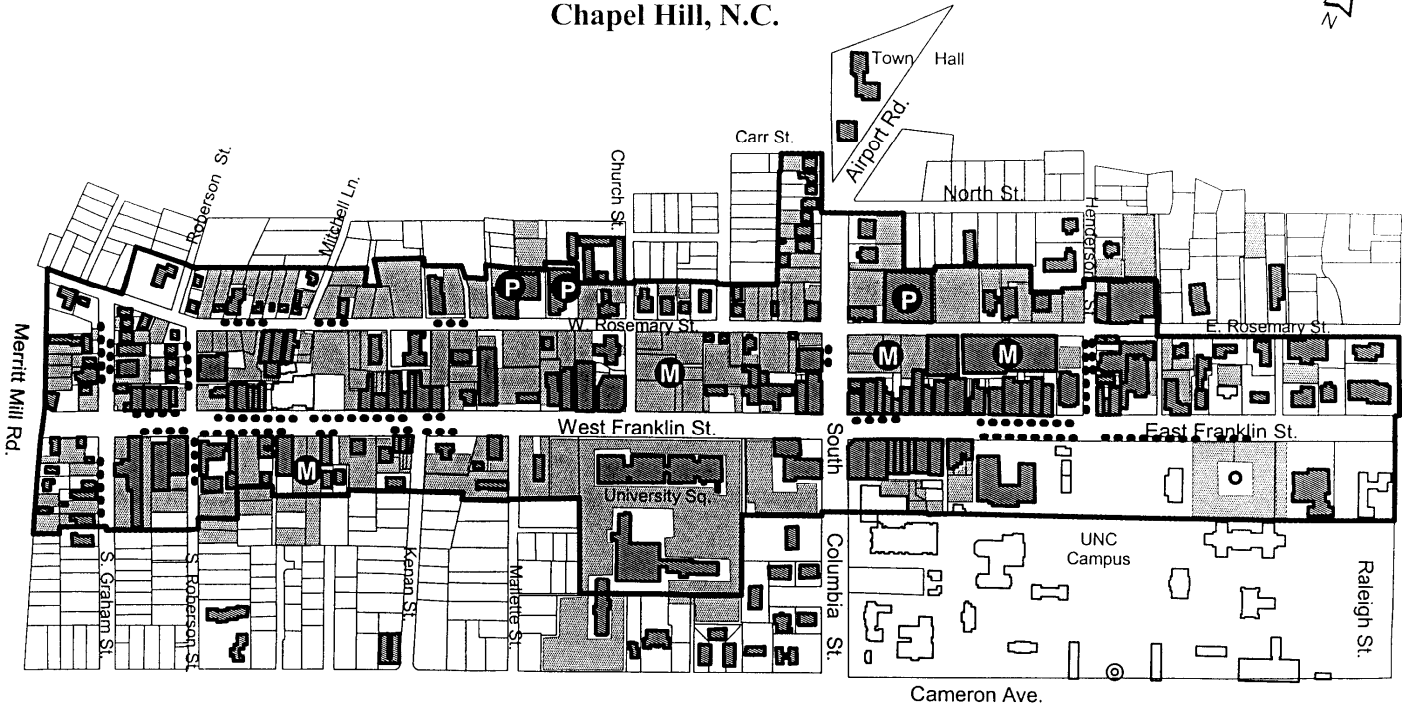
Downtown Small Area Plan Sidewalks, Bus Stops and Pedestrian/Bicycle Corridors Chapel Hill, N.C.



- Sidewalks
- ⓑ Bus Stops
- ← Pedestrian / Bicycle Corridors

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Downtown Small Area Plan Downtown Parking Chapel Hill, N.C.

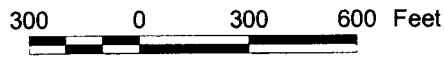
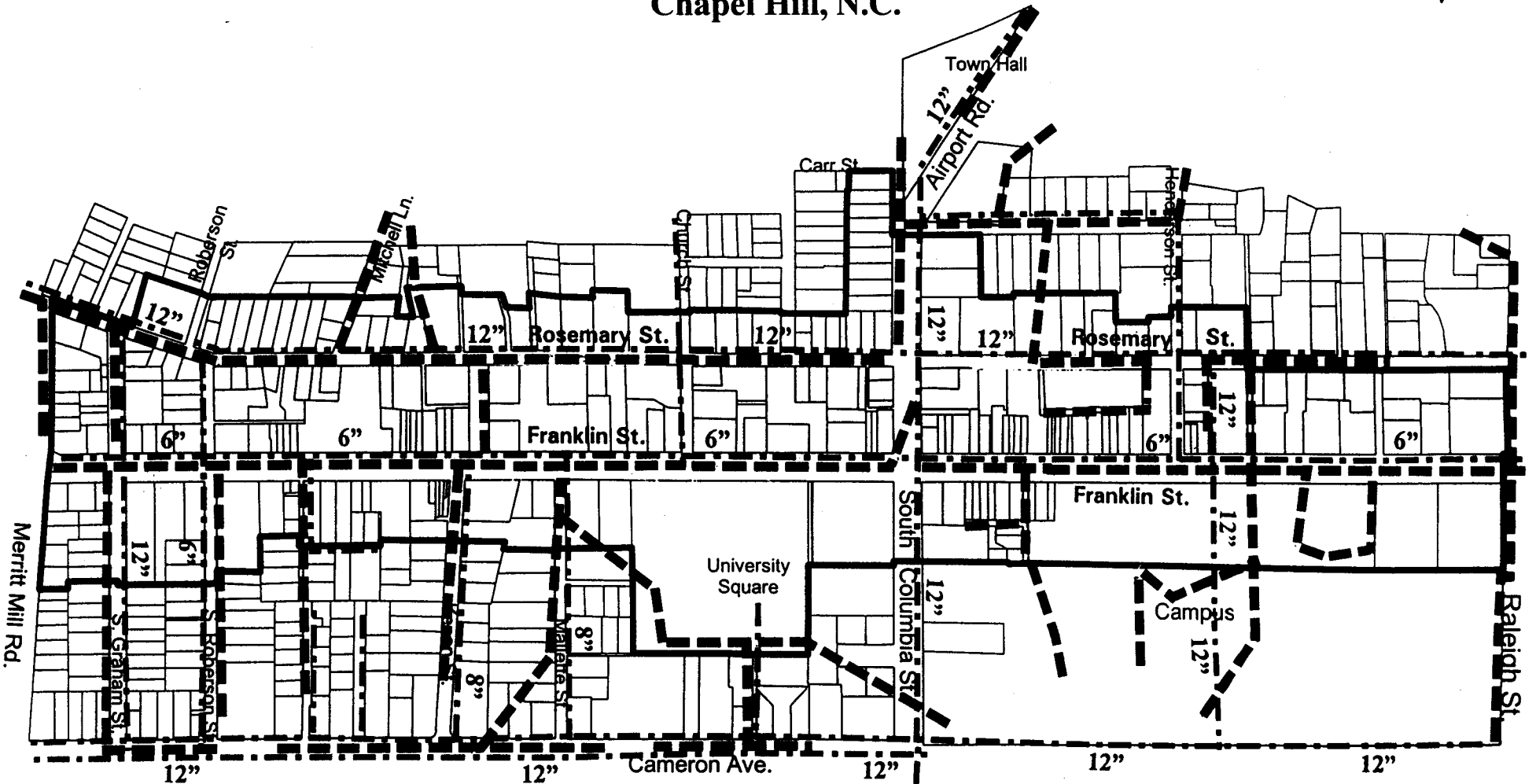


300 0 300 600 Feet

- M** Municipal Parking Lots and Deck
- P** Public Parking Deck - Privately Owned
- Customer/Employee Parking Areas
- Metered Street Parking
- Buildings

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Downtown Small Area Plan Water and Sewer Systems Chapel Hill, N.C.



Sewer Lines
Water Lines
12" Water Line Size
Study Area Boundary

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term parking for shoppers, as well as bus, fire, and loading zones.

West Rosemary Street is two lanes wide with some turn lanes and limited parallel parking. There is no parallel parking on East Rosemary.

Traffic

Franklin, Rosemary and Columbia Streets are main arteries through the Downtown Study Area. Traffic counts conducted in 1997 showed average daily traffic counts over a 24-hour period. Results for downtown locations were:

- West Franklin Street = 17,400 ADT
- Columbia Street (between Franklin & Rosemary) = 15,000 ADT
- Columbia Street (between Franklin & Cameron) = 17,500 ADT
- East Franklin Street = 19,000 ADT

Consistent with this is the fact that the highest percentage of traffic accidents in the downtown area occurs at intersections along these streets. In the period from 1996 to 1999, 733 traffic collisions occurred within the Downtown Study Area. Of these 733 traffic collisions, 17 (2%) involved pedestrians and 30 (4%) involved bicycles. The intersections with the highest percentage of traffic collisions are shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7: COLLISIONS AT DOWNTOWN LOCATIONS (1996-1999)

Location	# of Collisions
Franklin/Columbia	177 (23%)
Franklin/Henderson	120 (16%)
Franklin/Roberson	53 (7%)
Rosemary/Columbia	78 (11%)
Other	323 (43%)
TOTAL:	733 (100%)

Source: Town of Chapel Hill Police Dept.

UTILITIES/SERVICES

Water/Sewer - The downtown study area is served by Orange Water and Sewer Authority (See Water/Sewer Utility Layouts Map on Page 31).

Solid Waste - The Town Public Works department operates garbage collection and two compactors in the downtown area. Collection is two times per week, or four times per week, subject to additional fees. Public Works also provides clean-up for spe-

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cial events. There are 34 dumpster, 25 commercial recycling and 89 rollout locations within the downtown study area. Control of garbage is not centralized. Currently, there is no plan in place for shared use of facilities.

Police – There has been a 27 percent decrease in violent crimes downtown and a concurrent 14 percent increase in building break-ins between 1998 and 1999. State enabling legislation, which bans open containers of alcoholic beverages, has had a positive impact, as well as an increase in downtown staffing. There are now 32 officers that provide foot patrols, bike patrols, take calls for service and community policing in the downtown area. The predominant offense in the downtown area is alcohol abuse in the late evenings.

Community policing efforts also have a positive effect on the downtown area. There are 11 officers in the neighborhoods in town, many of which border the downtown area. Security Monitors, a part-time workforce of 20 people, also work in the downtown area. They worked a total of 6,844 hours in 1998 and 7,700 hours in 1999. The monitors, who carry walkie-talkies, do not have specific routes, but are assigned to a specific area depending on activities

scheduled on the street on a particular evening and staffing available.

There are two substations located within the Downtown Study Area. One is located on North Graham, between Franklin and Rosemary, and another is located at the Bank of America Plaza. Neither is staffed full-time, but operate as check-in stations for officers. Table 8 contains some crime statistics for the Downtown Study Area.

**TABLE 8: CRIMES REPORTED
DOWNTOWN 1998, 1999**

Crime	# in 1998	# in 1999
Sexual Assaults	1	1
Robbery	32	23
Aggravated Assaults (involving injury or weapon)	38	28
Break-ins (buildings only)	70	80

Source: Town of Chapel Hill Police Dept.