



chapter 2:
vision framework

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The Vision Framework establishes the blueprint for how Center City Charlotte will grow and evolve over the next decade and beyond. It answers questions such as: What are our core values as a community? How do those values translate to a commonly held vision for the future? What should the physical environment of Center City look and feel like? And how should Center City function, so that it is an attractive place that also makes us happy, healthy and productive?

The Vision Framework reflects community input collected throughout the planning and design process. Guided by this framework, the remainder of the 2020 Vision Plan articulates big ideas and bold moves, as well as specific recommendations for policies, projects and programs necessary to achieve the desired vision, support plan goals and direct future development decisions for Center City.

The Vision Framework is built upon the foundation of the 2010 Vision Plan, including an **Enduring Vision** cultivated during that planning process. The Vision Framework is also predicated on a set of **Values**, which express what community members consider to be Center City’s most intrinsic and treasured characteristics. The **2020 Vision**, stemming from the 2010 Vision, articulates how the community envisions the future pattern of physical, economic and social development for Center City. A set of **Goals** describes the direction for future policies, projects and programs to fulfill the vision. Finally, these items are integral to the **Vision Framework Diagram**, which illustrates the Goals and sets up the plan structure, including Transformative Strategies and Focus Areas that will bring about tangible change in the coming years.

2010 Enduring Vision

An “enduring vision” for Center City was established in 2000 during the 2010 Vision Plan process. Transcending any given community process or planning horizon, **this overarching vision is timeless and will always be critical to the success of Center City.** The 2010 Vision Plan’s recommendations are based on a vision “to create a livable and memorable Center City of distinct neighborhoods connected by unique infrastructure.” The enduring vision is:

Center City is **viable, livable and memorable.**

- Make Center City Charlotte more attractive by stimulating its street activities, creating interesting urban spaces and architecture, and by enhancing its role as a destination.
- Make Center City Charlotte more sustainable by promoting growth and jobs of different types.
- Make Center City Charlotte more livable by linking neighborhoods, creating or better defining neighborhood centers with stores, services and open spaces.
- Make Center City Charlotte more diverse and affordable by providing a wider range of housing options. Make Center City memorable and easily recognizable by emphasizing bold, ambitious moves such as capping the I-277 freeway loop.
- Support the uniqueness of existing neighborhoods, but also recognize the value in distinct neighborhoods such as a sports and entertainment district.

The 2020 Vision Plan builds on the 2010 Vision, continuing the momentum of past investments and accomplishments while incorporating the aspirations, needs and values of today's community.



Values

Values articulate the **characteristics, aspirations and moral attributes the community desires**. The Vision Framework is grounded in the following set of values expressed by Charlotteans and commonly agreed to during the planning process (listed in alphabetical order).

Accessibility. People of all ages, genders, races, incomes, sexualities and physical abilities can participate in Center City’s offerings.

Affordability. A variety of live, work and play options for people of all income levels.

Aspiration. A strong desire for a better future.

Business Friendly. Policies, practices and a skilled workforce that make doing business in Center City attractive.

Connectivity. Strong physical and programmatic connections with few barriers between all Center City neighborhoods and key destinations.

Culture. The unique way of life, customs and beliefs of Charlotteans, as well as access to various forms of art, theater, performance and music.

Diversity. Celebration of the differences between individuals and groups in Center City.

Ecological Sustainability. Stewardship of the environment and the capacity of Center City’s ecosystems to maintain their essential functions, processes and biodiversity over the long-term.

Economic Stimulation. Generation of job opportunities, retail and other income-producing activities.

Education and Learning. Formal and informal opportunities for lifelong learning and intellectual growth.

Entrepreneurship. Willingness to initiate new and innovative business ventures.

Family Orientation. Housing, schools, dining, venues, recreation and programming for everyone.

Fun. Activities and events that provide amusement, entertainment and enjoyment.

Great Design. Aesthetic, functional and architectural excellence in the public and private realms.

Historic Preservation. Maintenance, rehabilitation and/or adaptive reuse of historic properties and landmarks.

Inclusivity. Options for living, working and participation for people of all ages, genders, races, incomes, sexual orientation and physical abilities.

Innovation. The pursuit of new ideas, methods or approaches.

Memorable. Intriguing and remarkable people, places and events unique to Charlotte.

Neighborhood Character. Preservation of the defining qualities abundant in Center City’s neighborhoods.

Pride. Charlotte’s strong feeling of worth and respect for Center City and its users.

Resiliency. The ability and willingness to thrive in the face of adversity.

Urban Life. Promotion of character, attractions and activities that result in an energetic, interesting and entertaining environment.

Walkability. A consistently positive pedestrian experience characterized by visual interest, comfort, safety, ample amenities and a high density of destinations.

Welcoming and Gracious. Hospitality and a sense of belonging afforded to new residents and visitors.

2020 Vision

The 2020 Vision advances the 2010 Vision by incorporating sustainability as an integral part of Center City’s present and future. Sustainability relates to our environmental and ecological health, as well as to our social and economic vibrancy. The long-term viability, livability and memorability of Center City will depend on Charlotte’s success in becoming more sustainable. As such, recommendations to create a more sustainable Center City are integrated throughout the Plan and across all framework elements. The 2020 Vision is:

Charlotte’s Center City will be a **viable** and **livable** community whose extraordinary built environment, interconnected tapestry of neighborhoods and thriving businesses create a **memorable** and **sustainable** place.

- Located in the heart of our growing region, Center City remains an **intimate yet cosmopolitan hub** for global business headquarters; educational institutions; medical centers; arts, sports and entertainment venues; and government. Charlotte embraces itself as a modern city while staying true to the core values that anchor its unique feel and character.
- **Economic opportunities abound**, attracting and retaining people and imagination to a region known for its quality of life, affordable living and family-friendly urban neighborhoods. Center City Charlotte is where people live and work who seek to spur innovation, think creatively and build their futures.
- Center City boasts an intricate and accessible system of parks, plazas, greens, complete streets, trails and open spaces, which knit together the urban core and adjacent neighborhoods, making Charlotte **one of the greenest, most sustainable and healthy cities** in North America.
- Fostering strong, cooperative relationships among its four Uptown wards and the surrounding areas, **all of Center City’s neighborhoods are in balance and interconnected** with commercial and social centers, retail services, parks and recreation, access to schools, and efficient transportation. More than the hub of a greater Charlotte community, Center City neighborhoods are its heart.





Goals

The following eight goals serve as the basis for articulating **future design and development concepts** and prioritizing **new policies, projects and programs for Center City**. The goals build upon the community values and were developed in collaboration with community and business leaders, Center City neighbors, and other stakeholders. Goal statements describe how Center City Charlotte will look, feel and function in the year 2020.

GOAL 1


Urban Design and Sustainability



Center City is an attractive, comfortable and **sustainable urban setting** that is easy to navigate and get around, regardless of transportation mode. Private development contributes to a public realm that encourages exploration, communication and innovation. Great design and sustainability are integrated into all aspects of streets and open spaces. From building design, construction materials and stormwater management to purchasing and recycling, Center City reflects an ethic of environmental stewardship. Infrastructure is designed to enhance the public realm and minimize use of nonrenewable resources and waste while supporting green choices.

GOAL 3

Lifelong Learning



Center City offers a **full range of educational opportunities** for citizens at every stage of their lives. Center City’s many outstanding K-12 schools, colleges and universities continue to offer excellent, innovative academics and enhance the human capital of the City and region. An educated and well-trained workforce contributes to Center City’s standing as the economic hub of the region and a major competitor for national and international enterprise and industry. Formal and informal learning opportunities abound for residents and visitors of all ages.

GOAL 2

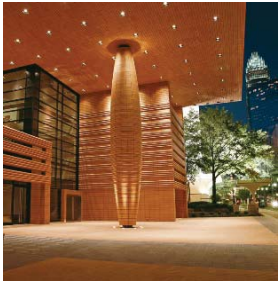
Regional Economic Engine



Center City continues to grow its position as the **primary economic engine and diversified employment hub** of the region. The City’s cultural and entertainment opportunities—along with an affordable cost of living, educational system, climate, cleanliness and strong civic leadership—attract new businesses, entrepreneurs and young professionals. Banking and hospitality institutions continue to serve as the economic backbone, while new technologies and emerging markets bring greater prosperity and investment to Center City.

GOAL 4

Premier Arts, Cultural and Entertainment Destination



Center City remains the region’s major **arts, culture, sports, entertainment and nightlife destination**. Center City is the premier location for artists, museums, performers and venues. Visitors feel welcomed by the hospitality of local residents and businesses, and are presented with a wide variety of unique attractions for all ages. A range of accommodations and amenities supports Center City’s diverse offerings of cultural, entertainment and conference facilities.

GOAL 5 Walkable, Full-Service Neighborhoods



Center City provides **housing and amenities for people and families of all cultures, ages and incomes**. Neighborhoods inside and outside the freeway loop have robust commercial centers, cultural facilities, parks and schools. New residential development—including workforce and affordable housing—reflects the architectural heritage of the City with appropriate density, scale and design located close to public transit, employment opportunities and shopping. Development sensitively transitions from higher- to lower-intensity, respecting the scale, design and intimacy of adjacent wards and neighborhoods.

GOAL 6 Interconnected Natural and Recreational Amenities



Center City maintains an **interconnected system of parks, open space and recreational facilities** that supports healthy and active lifestyles. Parks are within walking distance of all housing, connected by trails, pathways and open spaces. Opportunities are provided to safely and conveniently walk or bike to major Center City destinations. The design of the Center City park system is integrated with that of other urban infrastructure (such as streets and transit), incorporates the most current environmental sustainability practices, and connects with parks and open spaces throughout the Charlotte Region.

GOAL 7 Thriving Retail and Restaurants



Center City offers **distinctive, niche retail and restaurant offerings** that complement and support all that goes on in Center City. Retail shops, groceries, cafés and restaurants serve the daily needs of residents, workers and visitors, making Center City a compact and vibrant 24-hour activity center. A strategic mix of local, regional and national proprietors helps distinguish these unique urban and neighborhood commercial centers from other regional destinations.

GOAL 8 Multi- Dimensional Transportation System



Center City is the **hub of local and regional multi-modal transportation**, including facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, bus, streetcar, light rail, high speed rail, motor vehicles, air and freight. Center City supports existing and new development with well-designed and maintained streets, pathways, transit and end-of-trip facilities. The strategic location of Center City and its abundance of transportation facilities provide seamless access and mobility to all destinations.

Vision Framework Diagram

The Vision Framework Diagram at right illustrates how the Vision and Goals inform and guide the 2020 Vision Plan recommendations. As described, the Vision and Goals are a synthesis of the community input received throughout the planning process. Together they represent the desired future for Center City.

The remaining elements of the Vision Framework Diagram highlight the specific recommendations that are described in detail in the following chapters. The recommendations articulate what, where and how the vision will become a reality. Chapter 3 outlines eight Transformative Strategies that will propel Center City toward achieving the Goals with a collection of specific projects, policies and programs. Chapter 4 details six Focus Areas for future development and redevelopment that will catalyze significant change in support of the 2020 Vision. Together, the elements of the Vision Framework Diagram chart the course for the next decade of growth and prosperity in Charlotte Center City.

