

An aerial photograph of a city street during a festival. The street is decorated with vibrant blue and green painted paths that wind through the space. Several green wooden benches are placed along these paths. A central planter box is filled with various plants and flowers. People are seen walking, sitting at outdoor tables with blue canopies, and interacting with a food truck on the left. A street sign for 'MAIN STREET' is visible in the upper right. The overall atmosphere is festive and community-oriented.

Damascus

Placemaking Festival

AFTER ACTION REPORT
JANUARY 2025

Design
Collective



“I most enjoyed how the festival encouraged us to think of downtown as a more walkable, connected destination, and the decorations and greenery made the place feel much more special.”

-DAMASCUS RESIDENT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Main Street and Downtown Damascus hold significant potential for growth and future improvement. Damascus remains a gem within Montgomery County; celebrated for its rural charm, close-knit community, and strong sense of identity. This character has made it a desirable place to live and residents are committed to preserving its unique appeal. The Damascus Placemaking Festival represents an important step toward transforming Main Street into a more walkable, pedestrian-friendly town center. By reimagining this block as a vibrant, people-centered space, we can help reestablish Main Street as the heart of Damascus—a place where residents and visitors alike can gather, celebrate, and connect. This initiative lays the groundwork for broader revitalization efforts and positions Main Street to thrive as a cornerstone of the community's identity and future growth.

This study was a six month intensive community outreach and engagement effort. This process identified and engaged local stakeholders, including residents, business owners, and community organizations. Surveys, meetings, events and ultimately the placemaking festival itself were all used to gather feedback from the community and stakeholder groups.

This feedback and data helped identify key areas for future improvement. Our analysis of the data highlighted a shared vision for a revitalized Main Street that would foster social interaction and economic growth. This inclusive process helped to identify specific design elements which align with the broader goal of creating a walkable and vibrant town center. These elements include enhanced pedestrian pathways, trees and planting, and social public spaces.

This document outlines proposed recommendations for incremental public improvement along this downtown segment of Main Street. These recommendations reflect needs and desires of the Damascus community and are coupled with the professional recommendations of Design Collective. They are also consistent with the 2006 Master Plan for Damascus and can be strategically phased to accommodate budget cycles and multi-jurisdictional coordination. These recommendations are intended to re-establish Main Street as a critical link in Damascus town center and to encourage controlled future growth that will preserve and enhance the proud small town charm of this community.

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GOALS & APPROACH





GOALS & APPROACH

GOALS



WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?

Placemaking is a community-driven approach for shaping public spaces utilizing temporary pedestrian scale interventions, placemaking helps connect people and their environment. It requires collaboration to design and manage spaces in ways that reflect the needs, desires, and unique character of a community. Beyond urban design interventions, placemaking focuses on making spaces not just livable, but loved. Using tools like public art, local materials, and unique way-finding elements, we can spark conversation and inspire a sense of ownership and identity. Ultimately, it's about creating places where people feel safe, connected, and inspired whether they live, work, or play.



Volunteers helping with Community Build Day

DAMASCUS MAIN STREET

For years, residents and local business owners have voiced their desire for revitalization efforts in Downtown Damascus, Maryland. Main Street is an important physical, cultural, and social connection in Downtown Damascus with a long and rich history as the host of community parades, events, and festivals—a tradition that many hope to see restored. Nearby high speed state highways serve as connections between Damascus, Germantown, and Gaithersburg. Historic use along Main Street has been commercial with shops, restaurants, and at one point a movie theater; the now cherished historic Druid Theater. Today Main Street is characterized as a major vehicular-prioritized corridor. According to local stakeholders, speed limits are often exceeded because of the wide lanes, minimal traffic, lack of traffic calming measures, and straight orientation. Main Street is considered to be unsafe for pedestrians and as a result, retail along this corridor has seen steady decline since the 1950's.

Local business owners, community leaders, and stakeholders have highlighted the need to revitalize Downtown and Main Street. This feedback aligns with the vision outlined in the 2006 Master Plan for Damascus, which emphasized transforming Main Street into a vibrant town center that serves as the heart of the community.

PROJECT PURPOSE

This vision for Main Street includes the incremental transformation from a dangerous, fast-moving vehicular corridor into a vibrant, walkable, and pedestrian-friendly town center. The revitalized town center will ultimately attract visitors, support local business, and provide residents with a welcoming space to gather and connect. These improvements will not only enhance the quality of life for the community but will also bolster economic growth in the area. These improvements should be publicly funded by the state and/or the County. This report finds the opportunity to pursue funding and support for these improvements. By investing in the revitalization of Main Street, Damascus can position itself as a model for sustainable, community-centered progress while maintaining its cherished rural character. With guidance and support, the community can explore potential funding options to turn this vision into reality and ensure Damascus thrives for generations to come.



Photos by Kenneth Visser

LEAD AGENCY

Montgomery Planning uses placemaking as a tool to connect with the communities they serve. This work helps to strengthen and create vibrant, inclusive public spaces that are a reflection of these communities. Since 2018 the department has led several of these types of projects. Planning staff works in close cooperation with neighborhood leaders to explore an underutilized community space and realize some short-term on-the-ground public space improvements, through a community festival. These festivals help both to demonstrate to residents what fully implemented plan recommendations can do and to build capacity among community members to continue placemaking efforts going forward.

KEY PARTNERS

The Damascus Placemaking Festival was made possible through the partnership of M-NCPPC Montgomery Planning, state & county partner agencies, and local community organizations. This collaboration brought together the expertise, creativity, and resources needed to create a successful, community-focused engagement process. By working together, these partners helped demonstrate the potential for Main Street to become a vibrant, welcoming space for residents and visitors. The festival not only celebrated the unique charm of Damascus but also highlighted the value of community-driven placemaking efforts in shaping the future of this beloved town center.

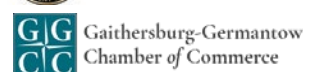
Montgomery Planning



Picture with partners and volunteers during festival cleanup

PARTNER AGENCIES

- Montgomery Parks
- Montgomery County Recreation
- Montgomery County department of transportation (MCDOT)
- The Upcounty Regional Services Center
- Montgomery County Police Department
- Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration
- Prince George's County Planning Department
- Gaithersburg - Germantown Chamber of Commerce



DESIGN CONSULTANT TEAM

The design consultant team, included Design Collective, a multi-discipline design & planning firm, and Graham Projects, a public art & placemaking firm focused on tactile urbanism.

DESIGN COLLECTIVE, INC. is a planning and design firm specializing in creating innovative, sustainable spaces that enhance community vitality and character. Their expertise in urban design supports planning processes by incorporating local input to ensure projects reflect the unique character and needs of the community.

**Design
Collective**

GRAHAM PROJECTS is a Baltimore-based design-build firm making cities more inclusive and livable through public art, placemaking, and civic engagement. Building on backgrounds in public art, urban design, ecology, and neighborhood advocacy, Public Artist Graham Coreil-Allen and team produce participatory projects in the service of pedestrians and places.

**Graham
Projects**

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Local community groups and members were instrumental in providing feedback and support for the planning and building of the placemaking festival.

- Damascus Heritage Society Museum
- Damascus Lions Club
- American Legion
- Senior Center
- PTAs of local High School, Middle School, and Elementary Schools
- Arena Graphics
- Ruppert Landscape



Senior Community Meeting On June 27 At The Senior Center

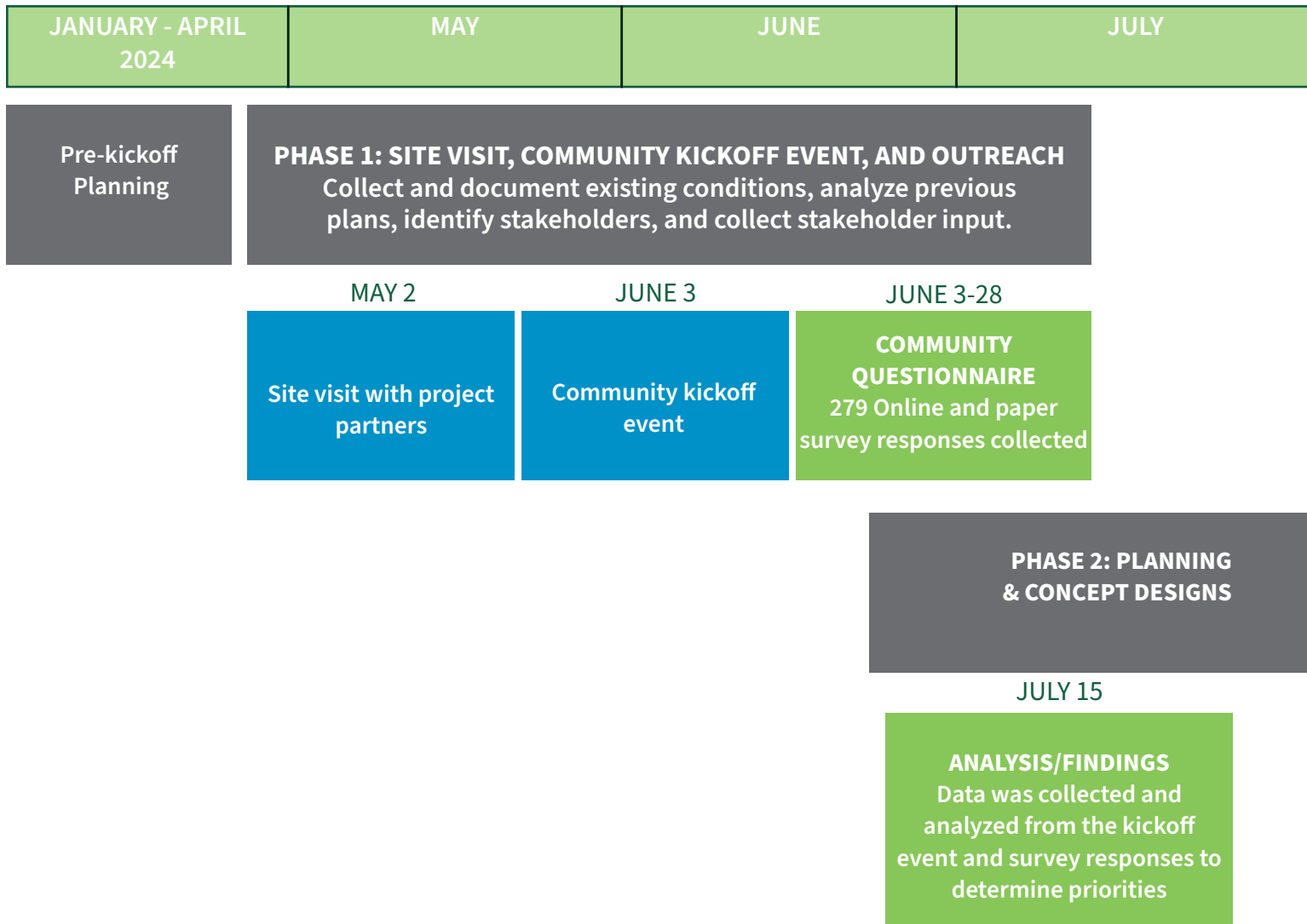


Initial site visit with partner agency on may 2nd



Stakeholder meeting on June 27 at the Hornet's Nest

PROJECT SCHEDULE & SCOPE



AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER-JANUARY 2025
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FINAL REPORT



JANUARY 2025

Analyze community feedback, establish festival programming, and develop a festival schematic design.

AUGUST 12

SCHEMATIC DESIGN

Using the findings, the design team developed a schematic design plan for the festival

PHASE 3: FESTIVAL PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION

Planning team collaborated with community members to identify local partners and vendors and create a volunteer network for the festival.

OCTOBER 17-18

COMMUNITY BUILD DAYS

OCTOBER 19-20

DAMASCUS PLACEMAKING
FESTIVAL



Meeting at Senior Center



Community build day



Festival day

OUTREACH, PLANNING, & DESIGN





COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY KICK-OFF EVENT



Damascus High School



Monday
June 3, 2024



98 community members in attendance



18 small groups for interactive activity

Welcome Stations: Community members were welcomed with five display boards highlighting placemaking concepts and future goals for Main Street, where they used dotted stickers and sticky notes to indicate their favorite ideas and provide feedback.

Model Exercise: Community members were invited to model their future vision for Main Street and how it can be applied to a two-day festival. This activity involved fun and flexible materials to inspire active engagement within small working groups.

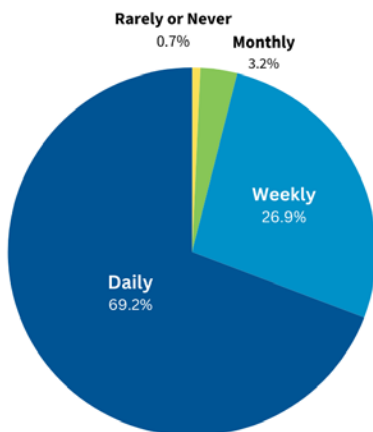
Report Back: At the end of the kickoff event working groups reported back ideas for festival activities and possible long term solutions. Some of the common themes expressed included pedestrian safety, public space and the need for increased activation in downtown Damascus.



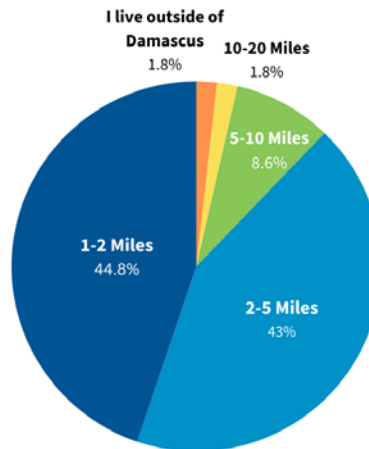
Photos from community kick-off event at Damascus High School

QUESTIONNAIRE

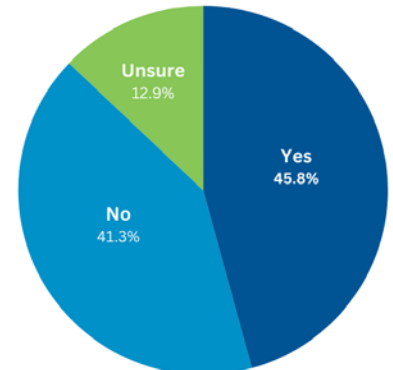
HOW OFTEN DO YOU COME TO MAIN STREET?



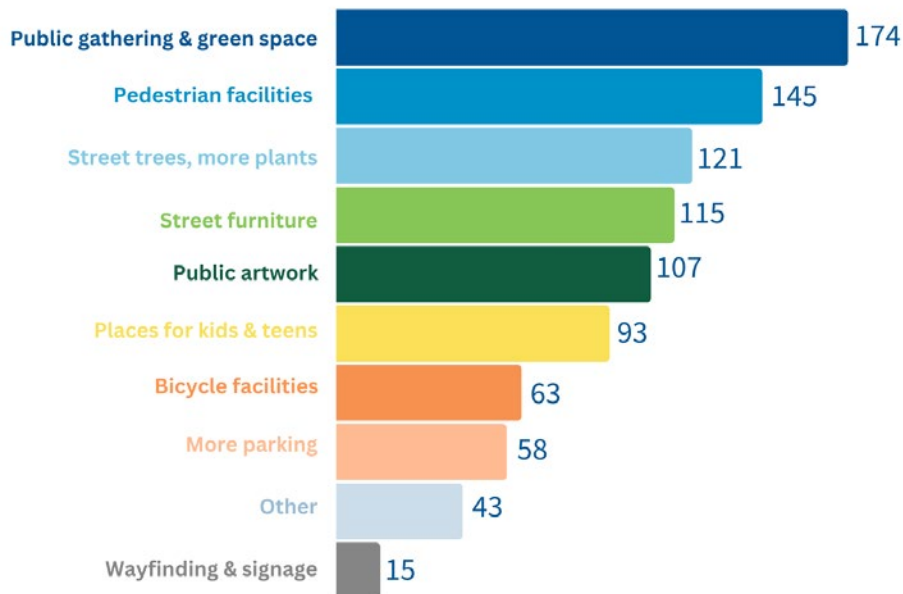
HOW FAR DO YOU LIVE FROM MAIN STREET?



DO YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE WALKING OR RIDING A BIKE ON MAIN STREET?



WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF NEAR AND ALONG MAIN STREET? (SELECT UP TO 4)



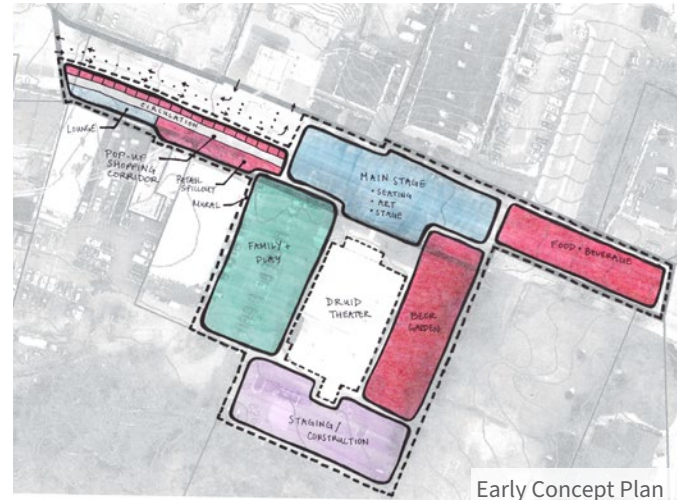
KEY THEMES:

- Participants want to **reduce vehicle speeds** and **increase pedestrian and bicycle connections** to allow **better access** to Main Street.
- Increase **greenspace**, spaces for **kids and teens**, and spaces for **arts and music**, with particular interest in seeing the **Druid Theater refurbished or re-purposed**.
- Fill vacant storefronts with a **variety of dining and retail options**.

FESTIVAL PLANNING & OUTREACH

PLANNING & LOGISTICS

Early on it was decided that the festival should mostly take place in and along Main Street, from Ridge Road to Woodfield Road. This would require early and thoughtful coordination with the Maryland State Highway Administration, Montgomery County Department of Transportation, and Montgomery County Police Department. Early options were studied and evaluated including a partial road closure (2-lane temporary closure), a half block road closure (temporary closure from Woodfield drive to the Druid Theater, and a full temporary road closure. For an event of this size, scale, and duration it was unanimously decided that a full temporary closure would be best for public safety.



Early community feedback also indicated the cultural significance of the old Druid Theater, so this guided the team to centralize the festival around this landmark building. This required planning and coordination with this private property owner and their current tenant, who all graciously allowed access and use of their parking lots for the event.

Key logistical drivers of the project included the temporary street closure, event parking, bus shuttle service required permits, and establishing vendor partnerships for pop-up retail, food/beverage and entertainment. Community and agency partnerships were essential to cost effectively share resources for most logistical components of the project.



PERMIT PROCESS

The festival required several permits:

- SHA Special Events Permit
- MCDOT Special Event and Public Right of Way Occupancy Permit
- DPS Special Events Permits

Each vendor participating in the event also complied with various temporary licensing requirements.

OUTREACH

The Damascus Placemaking Team conducted extensive outreach leading up to the festival to promote the event, build excitement, and ensure strong community participation. Efforts included promotional signage around town, the distribution of flyers at local businesses & organizations, and attending community events to help spread the word. The placemaking team also worked directly with local businesses and community members, to share vendor opportunities and to encourage their involvement. Over the course of several months an extensive network was established and eventually used to help promote the project.

OUTREACH EVENTS

- 5/6:** UCAB Presentation
- 6/11:** GGCC Networking Breakfast at the Hornets Nest
- 6/28:** Info Session for Local Businesses @ Hornets Nest
- 6/28:** Ice cream Social at the Senior Center
- 7/11:** Virtual Info Session with Main St Business Owners
- 7/12:** Celebrate Damascus Parade
- 8/6:** Pop-Up at Upcounty National Night Out
- 9/3:** Virtual Community Planning Meeting
- 9/6:** Pop Up Damascus Community Fair
- 9/14:** Weis Block Party
- 10/5:** GGCC Pop Up Germantown Oktoberfest



Promotional Flyer



Meeting at Senior Center

THE DESIGN PROCESS

EXISTING CONDITIONS



- Vacant and underutilized areas along Main Street
- Minimal activity and engagement opportunities
- Lack of pedestrian-friendly spaces and community gathering areas
- High-speed vehicular roadway



EARLY CONCEPT PLANNING



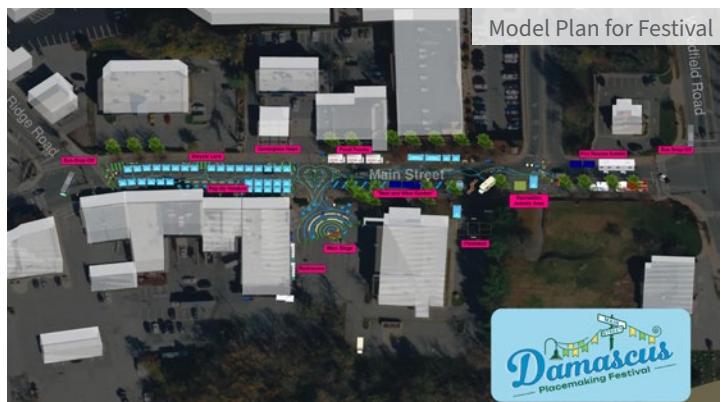
- Initial plans to incorporate temporary infrastructure, including murals, a stage, and vendor spaces
- Design ideas focused on creating interactive and inclusive public spaces
- Community feedback was used to identify key activation areas



SCHEMATIC DESIGN PLAN



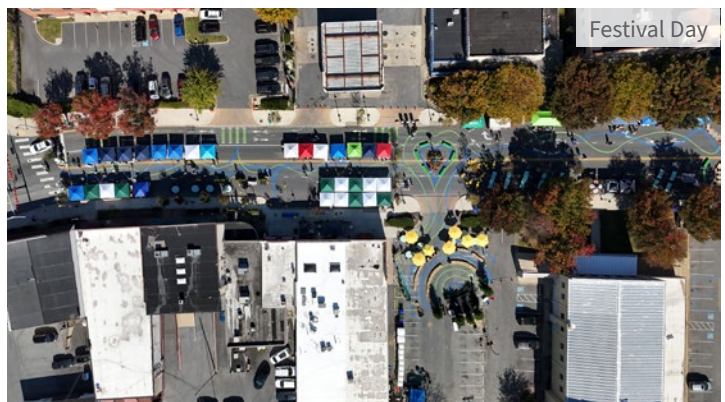
- Pedestrian pathways and way-finding strategies integrated into the layout
- Layout of major festival elements
- Allocation of zones for recreation, food vendors, and seating



TEMPORARY FESTIVAL INSTALLATION



- Temporary street enhancements
- Over 26 vendors featuring local artisans, food, and small businesses
- 2 days
- Community group performances

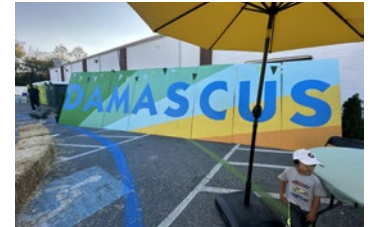




- 20'x20' stage
- 5+ performances
- Live Music



- 32' long mural
- Community participation prior to the festival



- Chess Set
- Pickle Ball Court
- Flex Lawn for fitness classes and performances



- Over 20+ vendors
- Local artisans
- Crafts, Jewelry, Candies, and more



- Multi cultural cuisines
- 4 Food Vendors



- Local to Damascus
- Winery, Cidery, and Brewery



Design renderings & photos during the placemaking festival

COMMUNITY BUILD DAYS

Community members were asked to participate as volunteers for community build days and also to help operationally run the 2-day festival.



BUILD DAYS

THURSDAY OCTOBER 17, 2024

FRIDAY OCTOBER 18, 2024



FESTIVAL DAYS

SATURDAY OCTOBER 19, 2024

SUNDAY OCTOBER 20, 2024



Setup Roles

- Signage & Way-finding
- Vendor Assistance
- Entertainment Setup
- Planting & Trees Setup
- Structures & Public Art



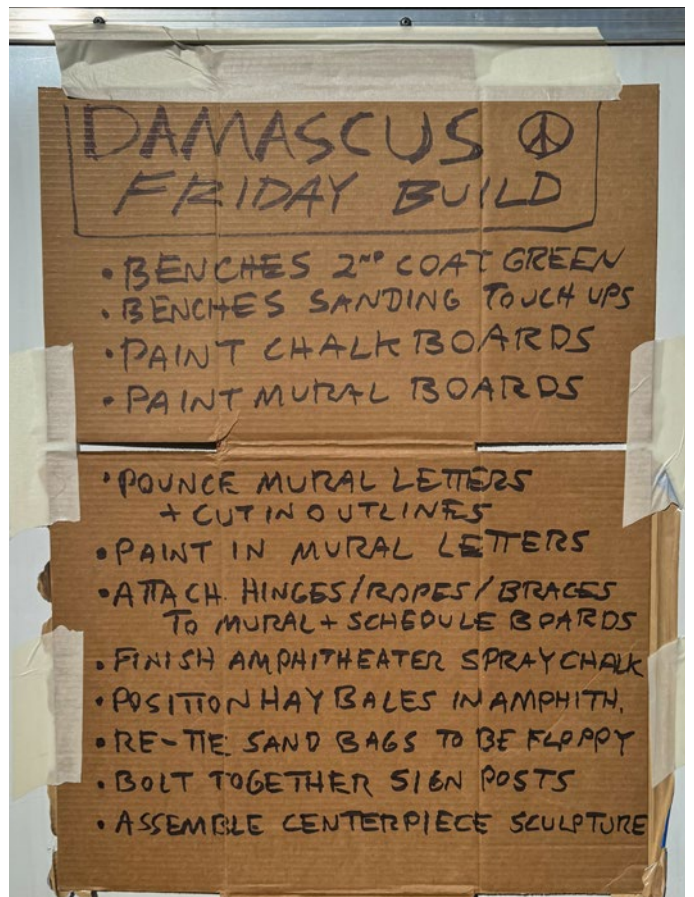
Festival Support Roles

- Bus Stop Assistants
- Parking Liaison
- Vendor Assistance
- Entertainment Assistance
- Information Table
- Feedback Station Staff



Breakdown Roles

- Collecting & Sorting Materials
- Deconstructing
- Cleaning & Trash Removal
- Collecting Community Feedback



COMMUNITY BUILD DAYS



Photos from the community build days

PLACEMAKING FESTIVAL

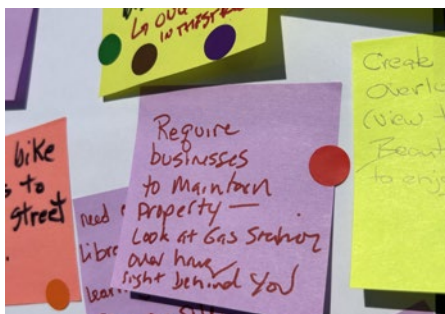
The Damascus Placemaking Festival brought the community together to re-imagine Main Street as a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly town center. Featuring live entertainment, food and beverage vendors, and pop-up shops, all sourced through local partnerships, the event celebrated the town's unique character. Interactive activities gathered community feedback, fostering collaboration and shared vision. This transformative effort highlights the power of local connections, aiming to enhance quality of life, support businesses, and create a welcoming space for residents and visitors.



Informational Towers: Attendees were invited to provide written feedback specifically about their festival experience.

Feedback Boards: These interactive boards allowed participants to share ideas for Main Street improvements. Using dotted stickers, attendees highlighted the elements they deemed most important in re-imagining the town center.

Surveys: Festival-goers received paper surveys and postcards with QR codes linking to an electronic survey. These were collected by the design team to gather additional insights as attendees departed.



Photos of festival attendees giving their feedback



Festival Days: Amphitheater, Mid-Block Crossing, Gateways, Public Art, Seating

FINDINGS & RESULTS

The feedback received through early community engagement and outreach was used to determine which placemaking interventions the team would test on Main Street during the Placemaking Festival. The result was placemaking in action - with temporary streetscape improvements, public art, and social gathering that residents could readily engage and react to. Feedback received at the festival was then analyzed to develop long-term recommendations for improvements that reflect the needs of Damascus. Feedback from the festival was collected through:

128

Info Tower
Comments



184

Share-Your-Thoughts Post-
it Comments

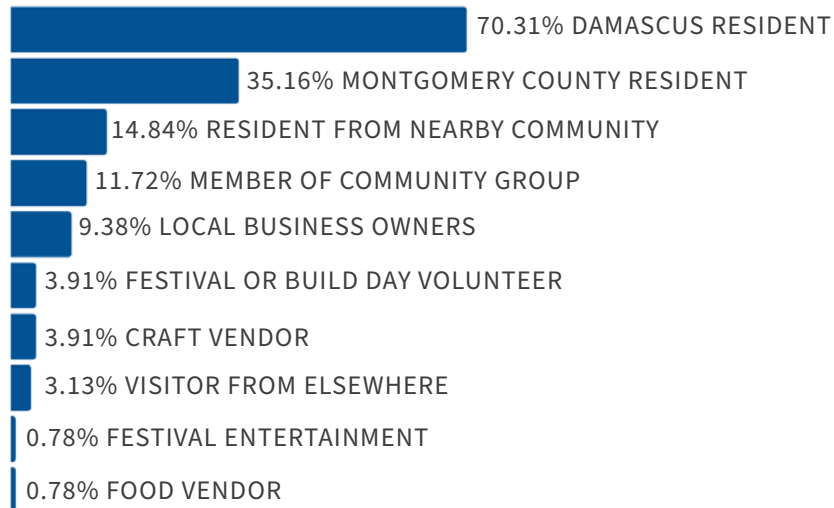


1,576

Rating Dots



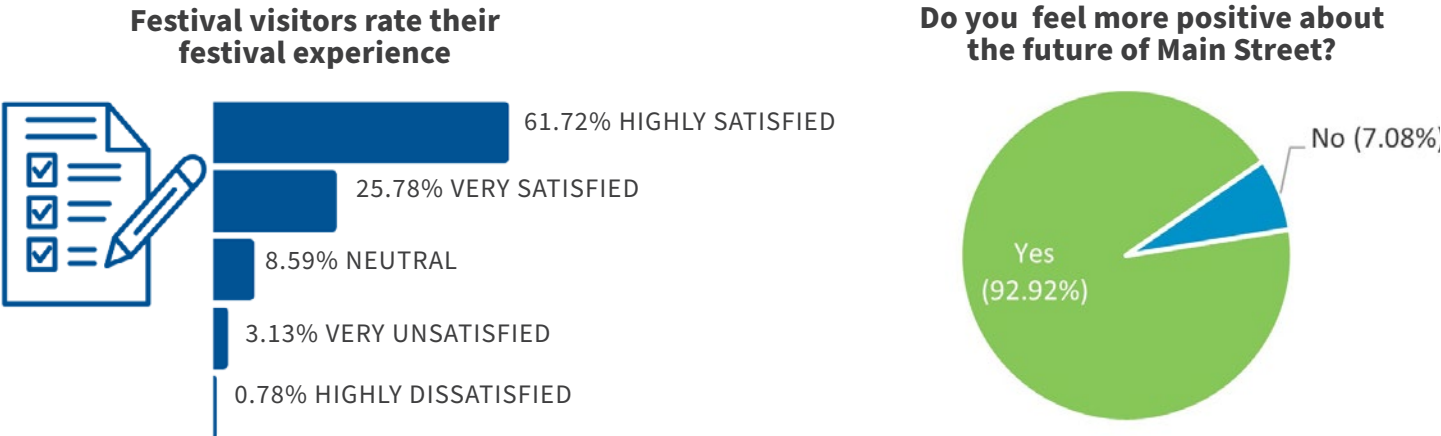
129 Survey Responses



The majority of respondents (70.31%) were Damascus residents, with 9.38% identifying as local business owners and 14.84% as residents from nearby communities.

Most attendees were highly or very satisfied with the festival experience (87.5%), with 92.92% reporting that the event made them feel more positive about the future of Main Street and Downtown Damascus. Participants included volunteers, vendors, and members of the community.

OVERALL FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE



The festival offered a vibrant mix of activities and amenities, ensuring something for everyone. Music and entertainment drew lively crowds, while diverse food and beverage options satisfied every palate. Families enjoyed multi-generational activities, fostering connections across all ages. Attendees relaxed in welcoming outdoor gathering areas and admired the thoughtfully designed landscaping and planters. Public art installations provided visual inspiration, and retail & craft vendors showcased unique, handmade goods. Accessibility and convenience were top priorities with pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and temporary bike access and infrastructure. Thoughtful branding, way-finding, and signage ensured a seamless experience, making the festival not just an event but a memorable celebration of community and creativity

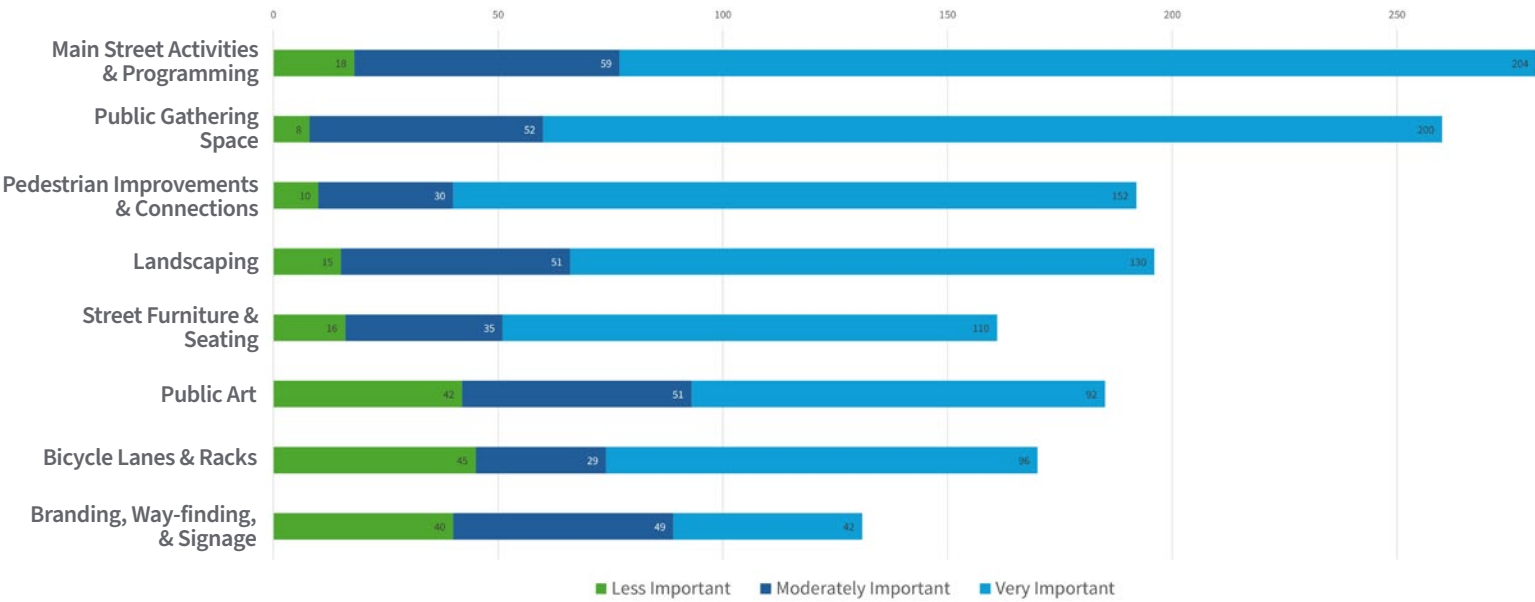
TOP 5 RATED PLACEMAKING ELEMENTS



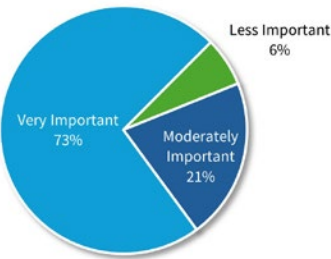
ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The data presented on this page reflects community priorities for the long-term future of Damascus, gathered through interactive activities at the Damascus Placemaking Festival. Participants were asked to prioritize urban design elements—such as pedestrian improvements, public gathering spaces, and landscaping. The activity provided a fun and engaging way to capture residents’ preferences, offering valuable insights into their vision for a vibrant, connected, and visually appealing Damascus. This input will help guide future planning efforts to align with community aspirations.

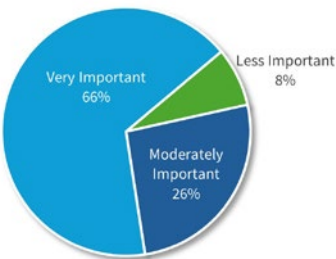
Importance of Elements for Damascus (Overall Frequency of Rating)



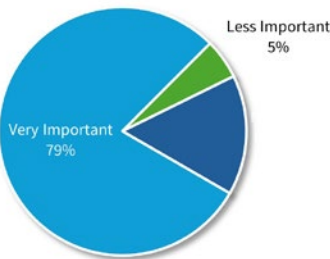
Main Street Activities & Programming



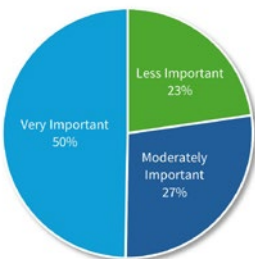
Landscaping



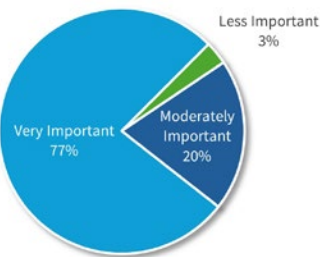
Pedestrian Improvements & Connections



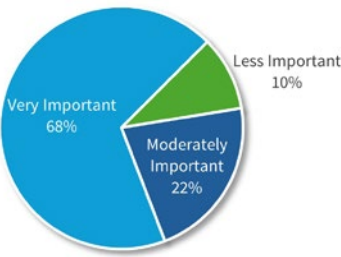
Public Art



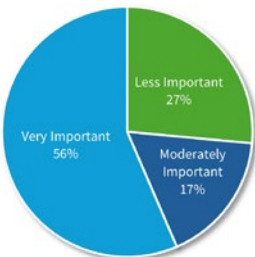
Public Gathering Space



Street Furniture & Seating



Bicycle Lanes & Racks



Branding, Way-finding, & Signage

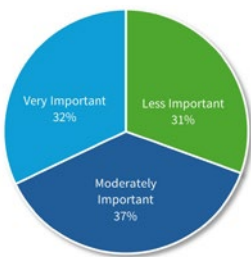
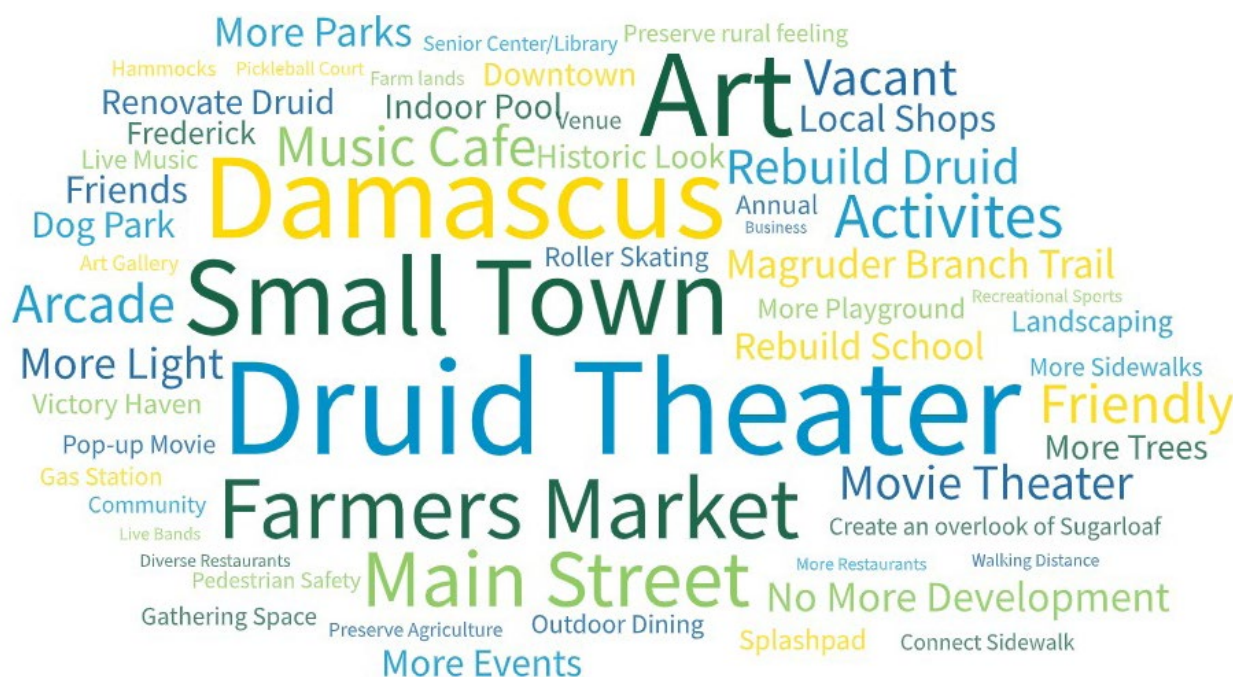




Image of interactive boards at the Placemaking Festival

'SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS!' WORD CLOUD



Source: 'Share Your Thoughts' sticky note boards from both days

INSPIRED COMMUNITY THOUGHTS

- “Would be good to add an external public route to loop down 124 to Ridge, + more watershed friendly surfaces & charging stations”
- “Also: Damascus needs a dog park”
- “Would like a coffee shop/vendor.”
- “Being able to walk Main St.!!! Long term! More permanent pedestrianation of Main St.”
- “Happy we are looking at options to improve the Damascus downtown area to engage local residents & business to be a place to congregate & share vs. just driving through. Thank you!”
- “Bringing vibrancy to Main Street and the community was so special!”
- “Without sidewalks along Rt. 124 from Sweepstakes to Main Street, residents are forced to drive into town. We need sidewalks along 124.”
- “Would like to see permanent improvements, e.g. mural, landscaping, outdoor event space (Xmas tree lighting or ???)”
- “Please keep the special needs community in your minds as you plan. Damascus has always been a welcoming place for special needs individuals (best buddies and allies sports at DHS) and there is a thriving community of young adults with special needs.”
- “I think the most investments should be put into the people and what would draw them downtown... how to mold and shape the current landscape, as well as future learners and leaders. I am proposing an Arts Magnet school for K-12 during the school day.”
- “It gave me a vision of the potential for Damascus. I would like that street closed and made into a pedestrian area, with benches, a fountain, restaurants, possibly a theatre venue in the old movie theater”

Source: Questionnaire responses

FINDINGS

Feedback and analysis from this placemaking process can be used to build excitement and short term solutions and also as evidence to support funding for long-term improvements.



Feedback from this event was overall supportive, productive, and positive. The future of Damascus is important to local residents, and they want to see more social activity and infrastructure improvements, not only on Main Street, but in Damascus as a whole .



KEY TAKEAWAYS & RECOMMENDATIONS





TAKEAWAYS

The Damascus Placemaking Festival showcased how community-driven design can re-imagine public spaces to reflect local identity and aspirations. Community feedback revealed strong support, with 92.2% of attendees feeling more positive about the future of Damascus and Main Street, as a result of this planning effort.

Lessons learned emphasized the critical role of community engagement in shaping meaningful public spaces. Residents expressed a desire for improved pedestrian access, more greenspace, and a variety of retail and dining options to fill vacant storefronts. The festival reinforced the value of temporary interventions, as tools for demonstrating long-term potential. Additionally, it highlighted the need for continued collaborations with the local community, the formation of a dedicated advocacy group, and phased improvements to sustain momentum for revitalizing Main Street as a dynamic, people-centered town center.



Sustained Partnerships

Continued collaboration, advocacy, and phased incremental improvements may be helpful to sustain momentum and collaboration with community and government entities.

- Public partnerships
- Political partnerships
- Community partnerships
- Dedicated staff



Public Realm Improvements

Right-of-way and public realm improvements needed as economic growth catalyze.

- This will attract development opportunities.
- Future growth and long-term potential contingent on an updated vision for Main Street and the surrounding public realm.
- Initial public realm improvements to break stagnant



Public Investment

Public investment is needed to initiate change.

- Limited incentive for property owners to invest in building or site improvements
- Private ownership and local businesses alone may not enact change

SUSTAINED PARTNERSHIPS

Continued collaboration and advocacy between community organizations, residents, local businesses, and government entities will be required to productively move forward. A dedicated liaison role may need to be established, either on the community or government side to maintain momentum and to ensure transparent continued planning process. This liaison would have responsibilities to maintain community/government partnerships. Phased incremental improvements may be helpful to sustain momentum and a continuous positive community-government partnership.

PUBLIC REALM

While initial and subsequent improvements on private property may be important in sustaining or maintaining project momentum, Right-of-Way (R.O.W.) and Public Realm improvements will ultimately be the most critical to initiating sustained private investment. This segment of Main Street currently prioritizes fast-moving vehicular traffic over a space intended for social and cultural gathering. Major traffic-calming efforts are needed to slow vehicular travel, enhance pedestrian safety, and create public space for people. This would represent a significant investment in the street and public infrastructure but would also likely be the catalyst needed to spur future private investment.

PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Private investment alone will not be sufficient to meet the current needs and desires of this community. There is currently limited incentive for existing property owners to invest in private building or site improvements. Storefronts remain vacant, and existing buildings are in need of updates. Feedback from local businesses indicates a lack of initiative from property owners to make improvements, perhaps due to the lack of competition. Growth and development along this corridor are also stagnant. This means that privately funded public realm improvements are unlikely without public or grant financing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Using the feedback received during the planning and analysis of the festival, a combination of short-term and long-term strategies were identified for the revitalization of Damascus Town Center. These recommendations aim to strengthen the area's identity, improve connectivity, and foster community engagement while addressing the needs of the community.

This study was able to gather considerable community feedback by:

- Hosting a variety of outreach and engagement meetings, working sessions, and virtual calls
- Conducting multiple surveys that were live for a total of 10 weeks and had 408 participants across both surveys.
- Hosting a 2-day placemaking festival to temporarily test community-driven pedestrian focused site features.
- Sorting and analyzing feedback from all of these engagement opportunities.

Below are short-term and long-term recommendations, based on the existing conditions, community feedback, and the design team's urban design recommendations. These recommendations are organized into 3 phases, which can be used to frame funding and a timeline for improvement. The strategies below align with the vision and recommendations from the 2006 Damascus Master Plan, highlighting the importance of plan Implementation.

Phase I

Intended to be relatively low cost, fast timeline, and easily achievable. This phase is intended to pickup immediately after this report and should be used to build community interest, energy, and trust.

Recommendation 1: Support the creation of a formal **civic association** to provide feedback for Main Street and Downtown improvements.

Recommendation 2: Establish a paid county or state position who will serve as a part-time **liaison** between the civic association and government entities.

Recommendation 3: Commission **community focused murals**.

Recommendation 4: **Facade and infrastructure improvements**.

Phase II

These recommendations will require a longer period of time to continue community engagement and to design and engineer targeted open space networks. These efforts will require significant public investment but will likely serve as the key trigger to encourage private investment in and along the corridor.

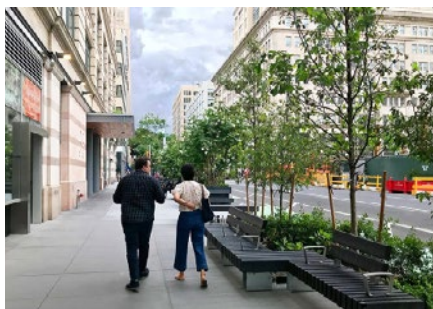
Recommendation 5: **Bike and pedestrian trail enhancements** between the Senior Center, Damascus High School, and future Magruder Branch Trail connection

Recommendation 6: **Streetscape Improvement Plan**

Phase III

This final phase is intended to establish a social and cultural hub within the Town Center and ideally on or in close proximity to Main Street.

Recommendation 7: Provide space for **community gathering and cultural activities**.



PHASE I

Recommendation 1: Support the creation of a formal downtown and main street Civic Association.

Identify a 10-12 person volunteer advisory Civic Association to represent the needs of the community within the Town Center boundary, per the 2006 Damascus Master Plan. The Civic Association should be a diverse mix of individuals representing community institutions and organizations, local businesses, local schools, and Damascus residents. A diverse demographic is also recommended to capture a variety of perspectives, including demographic categories like age, mobility-range, race, ethnicity, sex and gender, and income range.



Recommendation 2: Establish a paid part time County or State position who will serve as liaison between Civic Association and government entities.

Create a new paid part-time position to help facilitate continued public engagement, project timelines, potential grant opportunities, related permit applications, and development of future project recommendations (Request For Proposals). The role would be responsible for advocating on behalf of the Civic Association to help manage expectations and government communication between the Association and government entities.



PHASE I

Recommendation 3: Commission Community-Focused Murals.

During this study, two feasible locations were identified for potential future mural or public art. These included the East facade of 9870 Main Street (adjoining Tobacco Hut) and the West facade of 9890 Main Street (adjoining Style Me Sue Consignments). Preliminary conversations with property owners and/or adjoining business owners have been initiated during this study with favorable feedback, however additional approvals from property owners would be required. Each mural should be identified as a separate RFP, and each would include cost for design, community engagement and implementation. Preference to local artists is recommended.



Location 1: 9870 Main Street



Location 2: 9890 Main Street

Recommendation 4: Facade and Building Infrastructure Improvements.

The newly established part-time project liaison (Recommendation 2) will be responsible for identifying grants and other opportunities, for businesses and property owners along Main Street and within the designated Town Center boundary. These individual efforts have a minimum public funding cost with potentially significant community improvements, through private initiative. These improvements will bring continued community engagement and benefit, with a low budgetary cost and relatively fast timelines.



Existing Conditions on Main Street

PHASE II

Recommendation 5: Bike and Pedestrian Trail Enhancement Plan

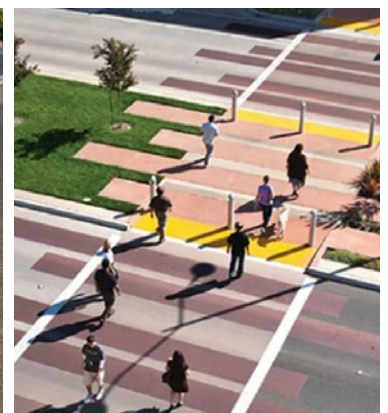
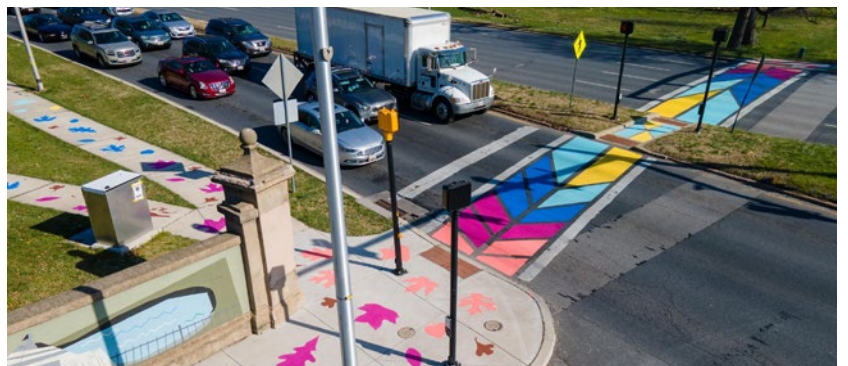
Per the 2006 Damascus Master Plan and in coordination with Montgomery Parks current efforts on the Magruder Branch Trail Improvement and Extension, a comprehensive multi-modal pedestrian and bike trail system should be studied and adopted. This planning document should evaluate and incorporate all existing pedestrian and bike trail infrastructure, within the Town Center boundary, along with any proposed or adopted multi-modal trail studies. This plan should study and analyze existing condition including but not limited to grading, vehicular crossings, and connections to county or regional trail networks. A goal of this plan would be to connect the Damascus Senior Center and Damascus Library, Damascus High School, and future Magruder Branch Trail connections.



2006 Damascus Master Plan Town Center Framework



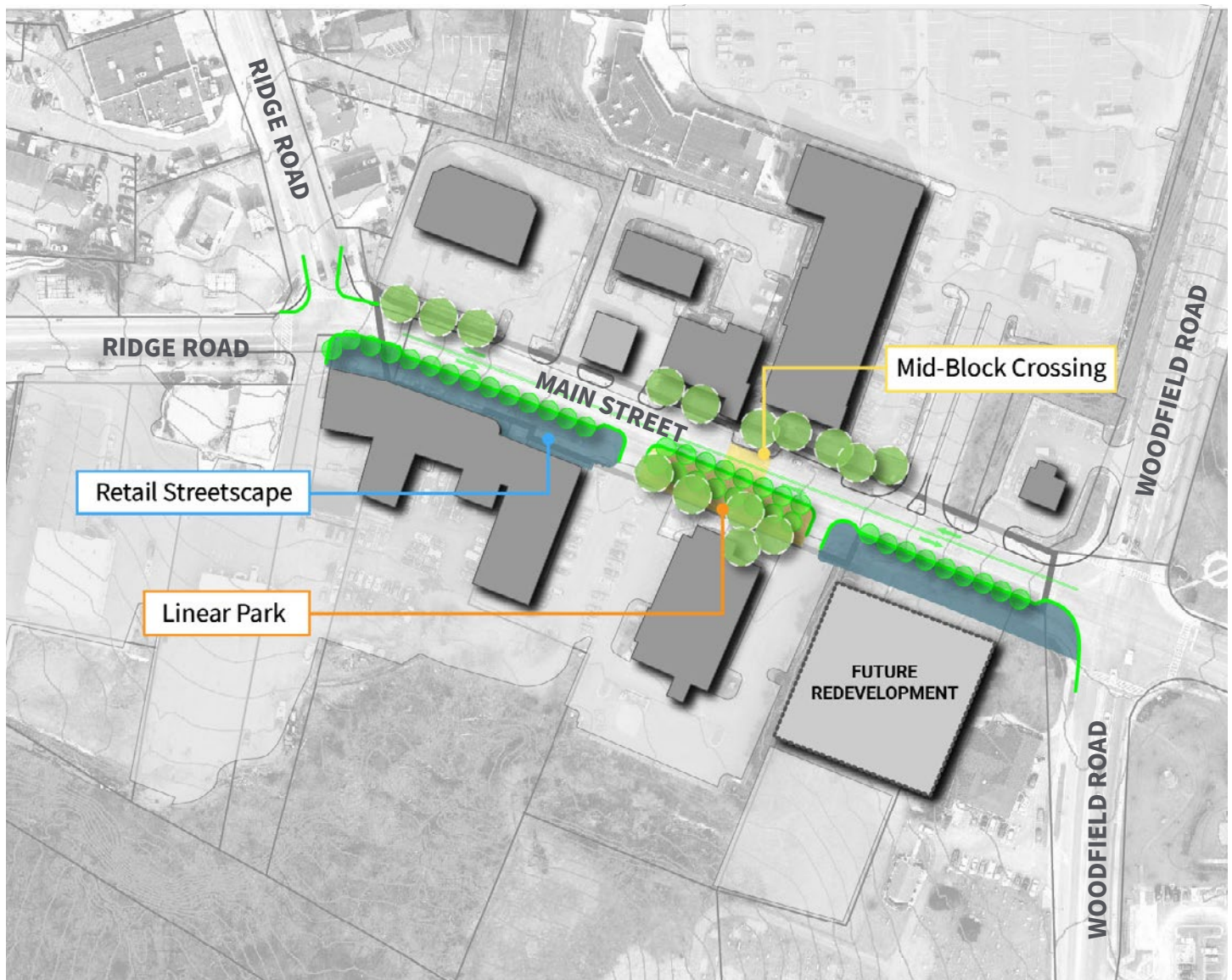
2006 Damascus Master Plan Town Center Framework



PHASE II

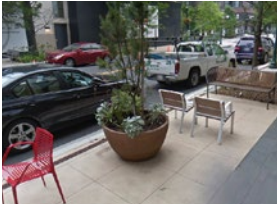
Recommendation 6: Streetscape Improvement Plan

This recommendation focuses on improving pedestrian safety along Main Street by establishing a pedestrian-friendly and accessible downtown streetscape. The proposed plan should study the conversion of two vehicular transit lanes to a pedestrian-oriented streetscape and open space. This should include areas for walking, biking, and socializing, along with additional parking for nearby retail. Reducing road widths and adding green spaces or seating areas will calm vehicular traffic and encourage people to spend more time in the area, contributing to the economic and social vitality of Main Street. This scope of work should include continued community engagement, traffic studies, design and engineering, and cost for implementation. This investment will spur private investment along the corridor and establish Main Street as a core feature within the Town Center.



Conceptual Streetscape Approach

Parallel Parking



Mid-Block Crossing



Lighting



Seating and Furnishing



Multi-Modal Paths



A well-designed, pedestrian-friendly streetscape in Damascus would create a vibrant and inviting environment that supports community interaction and local businesses. Key features could include a safe, walkable retail experience with ample outdoor seating, a central plaza, additional street parking, wider sidewalks for multiple modes of travel, a mid-block crossing, signature lighting, and a linear park. These elements work together to enhance accessibility, safety, and the overall appeal of Main Street, transforming it into a welcoming destination for residents and visitors alike.

Planters/ Hanging Baskets/Banners



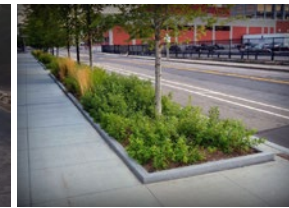
Speciality Materials



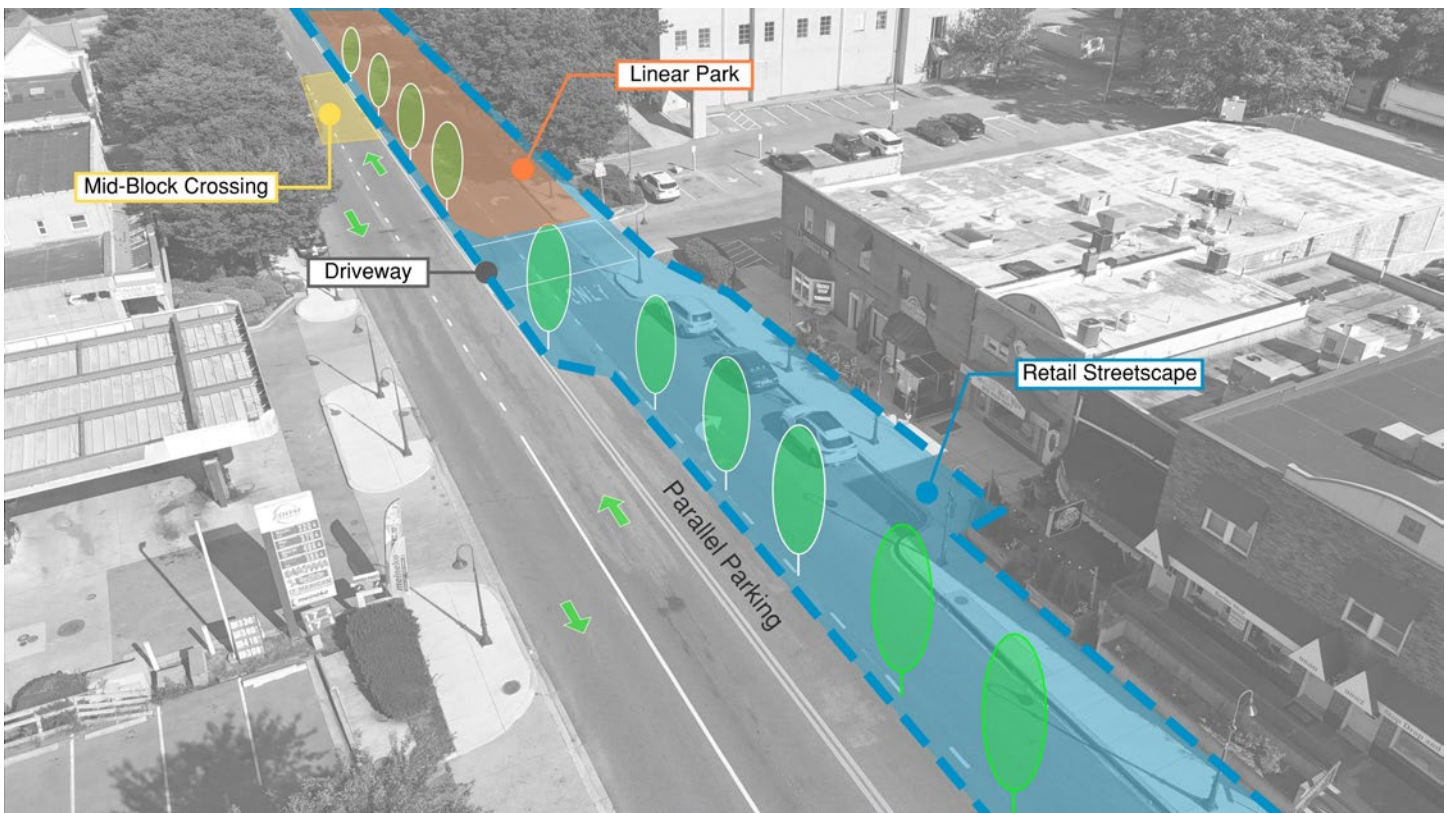
Interpretive Art



Landscape Enhancements



Stormwater Management



Conceptual Streetscape Approach

PHASE III

Recommendation 7: Provide Space For Community Gathering and Cultural Arts

The final phase focuses on establishing a central Community Gathering space. This space should be centrally located in the Town Center boundary and should accommodate indoor and outdoor public recreation opportunities. Opportunities to incorporate existing buildings or sites that hold significant historical, cultural, or social value to Damascus should be explored. Additional public engagement will be needed to identify specific uses and programming for this public facility. It should cater to a wide range of demographics including but not limited to age, race, ethnicity, and financial income. On-site parking should be incorporated for easy access. This project will provide a flexible space for arts, culture, and community events, which is essential for establishing a Town Center anchor and drawing people to Main Street; re-establishing it as a cultural hub. This phase will require careful planning and investment to ensure that the project aligns with the broader vision for a vibrant, people-centered Town Center.





FUTURE VISION

PHASE I

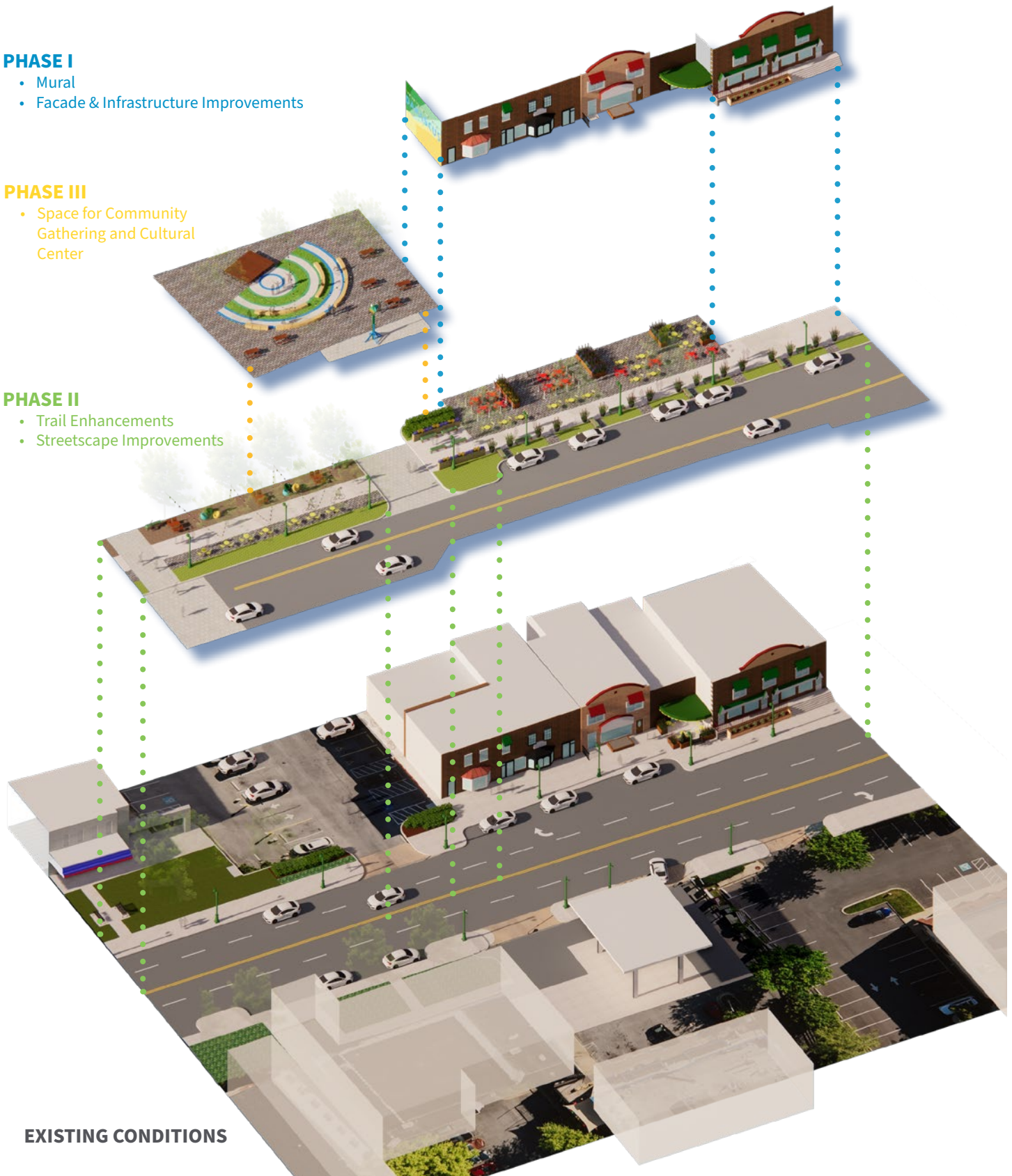
- Mural
- Facade & Infrastructure Improvements

PHASE III

- Space for Community Gathering and Cultural Center

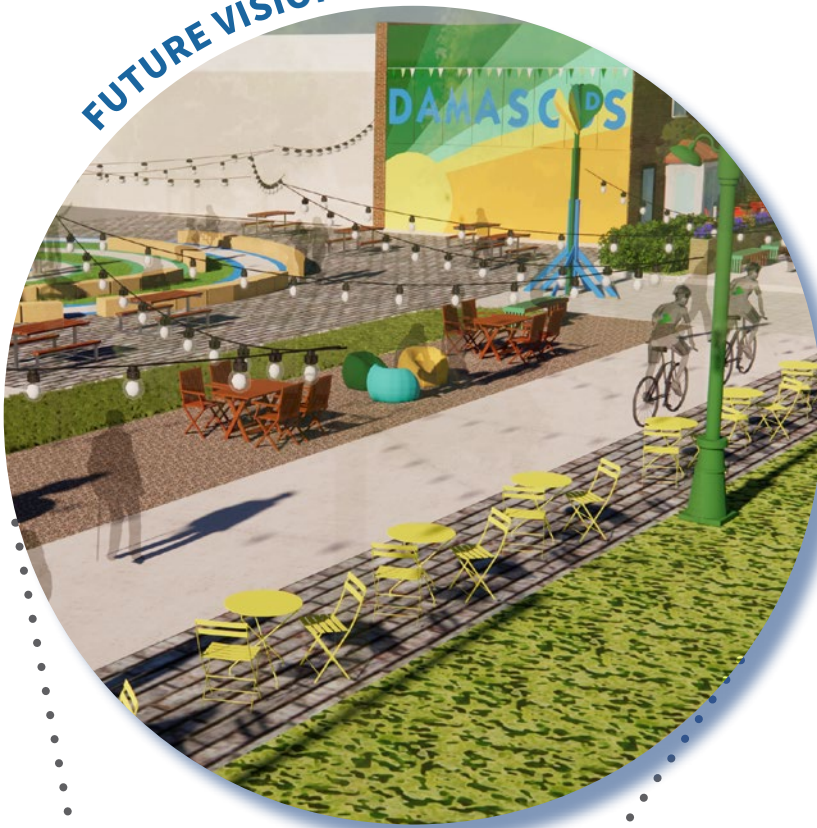
PHASE II

- Trail Enhancements
- Streetscape Improvements



EXISTING CONDITIONS

FUTURE VISION



PLACEMAKING FESTIVAL



FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS





Perspective of existing conditions from Main Street facing Druid Theater parking lot



Perspective of potential gathering space connected to Main Street



Perspective of existing Main Street streetscape



Perspective of potential Main Street Streetscape

STAY CONNECTED

Visit the project website to learn more and sign up for the Damascus E-Letter:
montgomeryplanning.org/damascus-placemaking-festival

