

# GRIFFITH STREET CORRIDOR PLAN



Approved  
November 12, 2002



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## INTRODUCTION

Some town residents can still recall “kids and pigs playing in the street” during the early part of the twentieth century when Griffith Street was just a dirt road on the west side of Town. Other than adding pavement, the street changed very little until 1976 when I-77 was constructed and an interchange, exit 30, was provided at Griffith Street. While the interchange drastically altered the character and function of the street, significant development interest did not occur until several years later. I-77 exits closer to Charlotte, such as exits 28, 25 and 23, received much more development pressure. Over the years, the once rural landscape around these interchanges has slowly been converted into shopping malls, office parks and apartment complexes, bringing with it traffic congestion of nightmarish proportions.

We have an opportunity to do something very different at exit 30 in Davidson: to show that development around an interchange can be done in a pedestrian oriented manner and consistent with the character of a small town, such as Davidson.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Serve as a guide for evaluating future development
- Provide recommendations for future street improvements

As a result, implementation of this document’s recommendations will enhance the Griffith Street pedestrian environment and establish Griffith Street as a memorable gateway to the Town and College.



*Intersection of Griffith Street and Beaty Street*

## PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

On January 14, 2002, a group of approximately 80 interested citizens and property owners gathered in the Town of Davidson boardroom for a *Griffith Street Visioning Workshop*. After a brief presentation by staff outlining the current physical conditions on and uses of the one-mile corridor, the participants split into four groups. Each group gathered around a 1" = 100' scale map of Griffith Street, drawing and writing comments about their hopes for and concerns about the corridor. After about forty-five minutes of brainstorming, a representative from each group presented the group's ideas to the rest of the participants. As a result of the *Visioning Workshop* sixteen people volunteered to serve on the *Griffith Street Stakeholders Group*. The group's task was to develop a comprehensive plan for the future of the corridor.

### Stakeholders:

Irvin Brawley  
Shelley Clark  
Monroe Cowan  
Audy Dover  
Buzz Foster  
Ed Harris  
Ron Kennerly  
Rodger Lentz

Geri Lubash  
Robert Mahood  
Tom McCarthy  
Jill Nierenberg  
Dick Sanderson  
Mary Short  
Chuck St. Clair  
Tom Thrower, NC DOT

### Town Staff

Warren Burgess,  
Planning Director  
  
Meredith Judy,  
Town Planner, Project Manager  
  
Andrea Lytle,  
Planning Department Intern

### Goals of the Plan:

1. To enhance Griffith Street as the principal gateway to the Town of Davidson and Davidson College
2. To develop a safe pedestrian environment along Griffith Street to the village center.
3. To provide for a mixed use, pedestrian oriented development pattern.
4. To support the land use needs of a future rail line and/or bus system.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE CORRIDOR

Griffith Street consists of three distinct districts based on existing land use and roadway character:

- District #1: Davidson Landing to Jetton Street (including the Jetton intersection)
- District #2: Jetton Street to Beaty Street (including the Beaty intersection)
- District #3: Beaty Street to Main Street
  - A. Beaty Street to Watson Street
  - B. Watson Street to Jackson Street
  - C. Jackson Street to Main Street



## HISTORY OF GRIFFITH STREET

*Excerpts from a document written by Mayor Griffith's granddaughter, Ms. Patricia Butler, and her parents Anne Griffith Cleary and Daniel J. Cleary, Jr.*

Griffith Street was named to honor the memory of former Davidson mayor, Thomas Moore Griffith, who served from 1933 until July 1940. Mr. Griffith, a Davidson resident since 1919, was recognized for his no nonsense, straightforward and fair approach to business and in relationships with people.

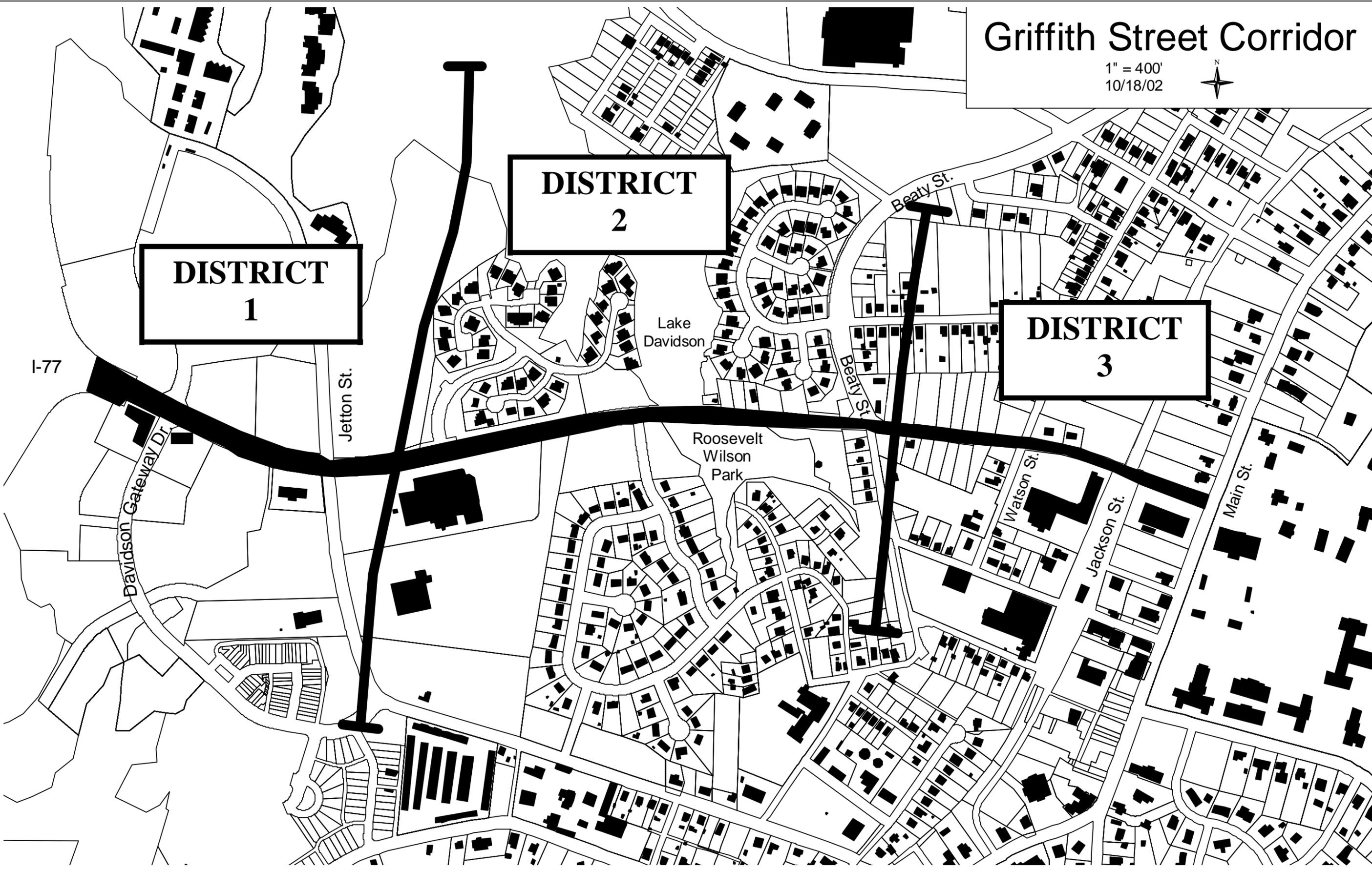
The town of Davidson in the late 1920s and early 1930s was centered around the intersection of Davidson-Concord Road and Main Street. By that time, several different housing communities had been established around the town. One of these residential areas was situated to the west of Main Street, straddling the railroad tracks, and generally viewed as the poorer section of town. An unpaved road, later to be known as Griffith Street, led westward from near the college entrance on Main Street to reach this community. From this unpaved road, other pathways branched off to various dwellings, occupied predominantly by mill worker and minority families. These small to medium sized frame homes were not far from the adjacent cotton mill, asbestos mill and Southern Cotton Oil company facility where many of these citizens worked.

When the town of Davidson undertook to name some of their streets after mayors some years later, representatives of the town approached Mr. Griffith's widow, Mrs. Mabel Griffith, to ask if the unpaved side road to the west of Main Street at the north end of the business district could be named for Mayor Griffith. She approved this choice for her husband had worked to improve all regions of town and to provide services to the residents of this community.

As the years passed and Davidson's population grew, the town expanded. Griffith Street was eventually paved and extended through the open land into the undeveloped outskirts of town. In the 1960s, the waters of Lake Norman rose, followed by the arrival of Interstate 77 in the 1970s. When the exit for Davidson was included along I-77, Griffith Street was extended to link the heart of Davidson with the newly constructed north-south I-77. This once-humble street had, through the years, evolved to be the gateway to both Davidson College and the town of Davidson.

# Griffith Street Corridor

1" = 400'  
10/18/02



**DISTRICT**  
1

**DISTRICT**  
2

**DISTRICT**  
3

**District 1: Davidson Landing to Jetton Street**  
**Existing Conditions**

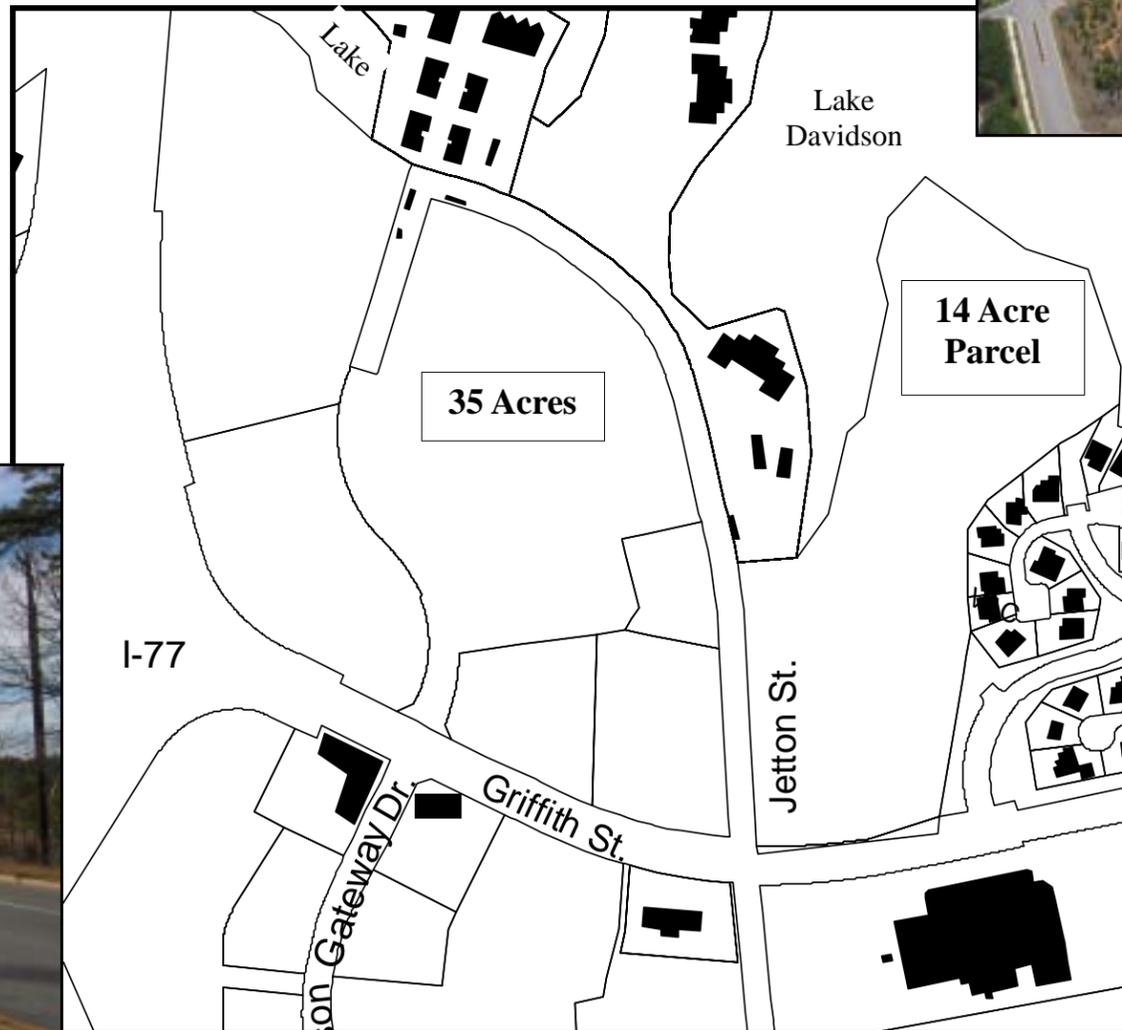
This district contains the largest amount of undeveloped land in the corridor and provides a significant opportunity to establish a strong image of Davidson at this gateway location. This interchange with I-77 is the principal means of access for people coming to Davidson and it is critical that new development follow a pedestrian oriented model, instead of the highway oriented model that characterizes most interchanges. The most significant development opportunity exists at the northeast quadrant of I-77 and Griffith Street where a 50 acre parcel is still undeveloped. 35 acres of the parcel is between Jetton St and I-77. This land is relatively flat and has no significant tree cover. Another 14 acre, heavily wooded site exists east of Jetton Street adjacent to Spinnaker Cove and has .3 miles of shoreline on Lake Davidson.

The southeast quadrant is largely undeveloped, however a master plan has been approved and upon buildout will include over 300 residential units, 250,000 square feet of commercial use, a restaurant and a 5-story, 150 room hotel. To date, only two-office buildings and 120 residential units have been constructed. Additional development consists of a 36,000 square foot office building at the southwest corner of Davidson Gateway Drive and Griffith Street, and a gas station/convenience store at the southwest corner of Jetton and Griffith Streets. A two-story gas station/ convenience store has been approved for the southeast corner of Griffith Street and Davidson Gateway Drive.



*View South Over District 1*

As is typical of interstate interchange design, Griffith Street is significantly “overdesigned” with an excessively wide street and large radii on the on and off ramps. Drivers exiting at Griffith Street and driving east towards downtown Davidson have their own lane of travel through this entire district. As a result of the 63’ wide street, the long merge lane, and large turning radius, many cars maintain a high level of speed when exiting onto Griffith Street. Provisions for pedestrians are poor with only a 5’ sidewalk adjacent to the street on the south side, and no sidewalk on the north side of the street. The high traffic speeds and the lack of pedestrian accommodations make district one a very dangerous environment for pedestrians.



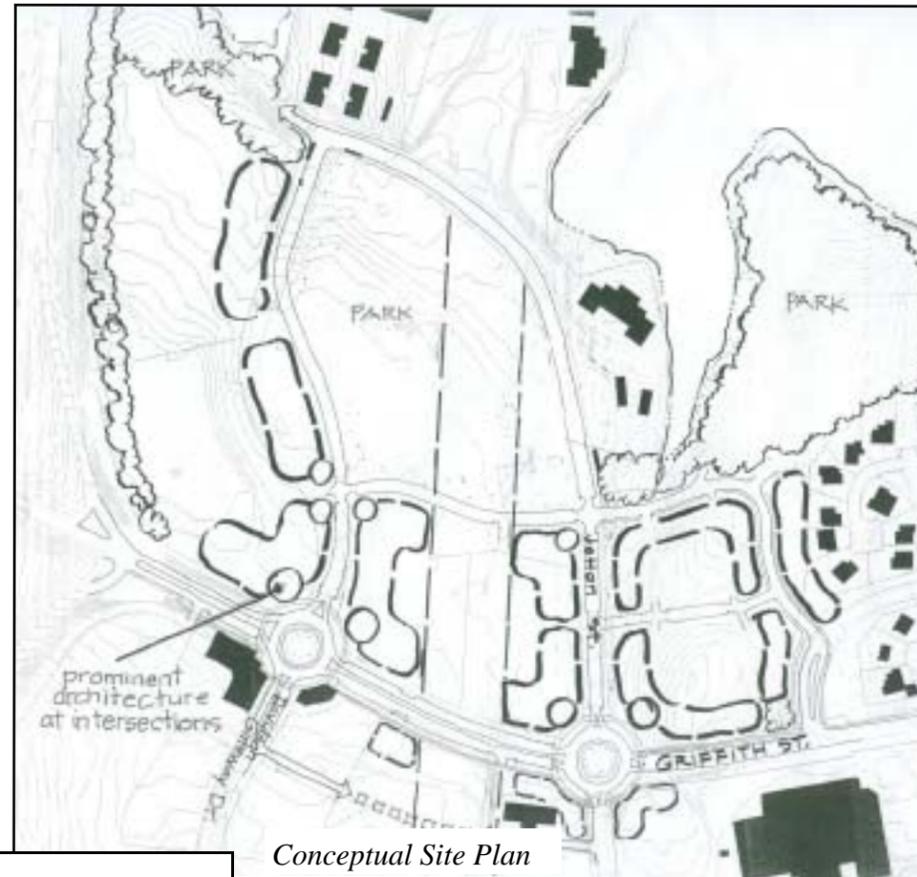
*View West of Griffith's intersection with Jetton Street*

**District 1: Davidson Landing to Jetton Street**  
**Recommendations**

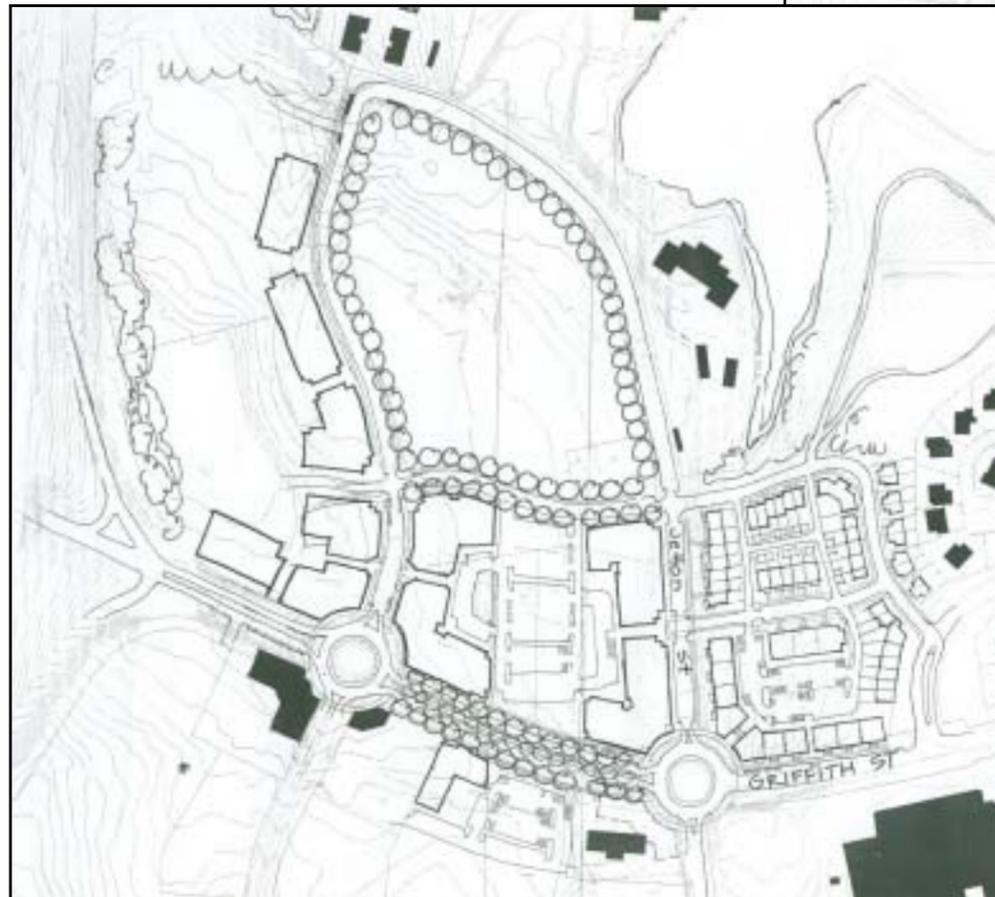
Site Plan Recommendations:

The 35 acre parcel in the northeast quadrant should be developed as a distinct, mixed use, pedestrian oriented village as follows:

1. Buildings located at the back of the sidewalk. These buildings should have façade articulation, detailing, and movement as described in section 9.1.3.5 of the Town's *Planning Ordinance*.
2. 3 and 4 story large footprint workplace buildings, some with ground floor, street oriented retail. The tallest buildings should be located adjacent to I-77.
3. 2-3 story live/work units
4. 2-3 story residential units
5. A well-defined center: either a plaza, green or square with a variety of active uses that enclose it.



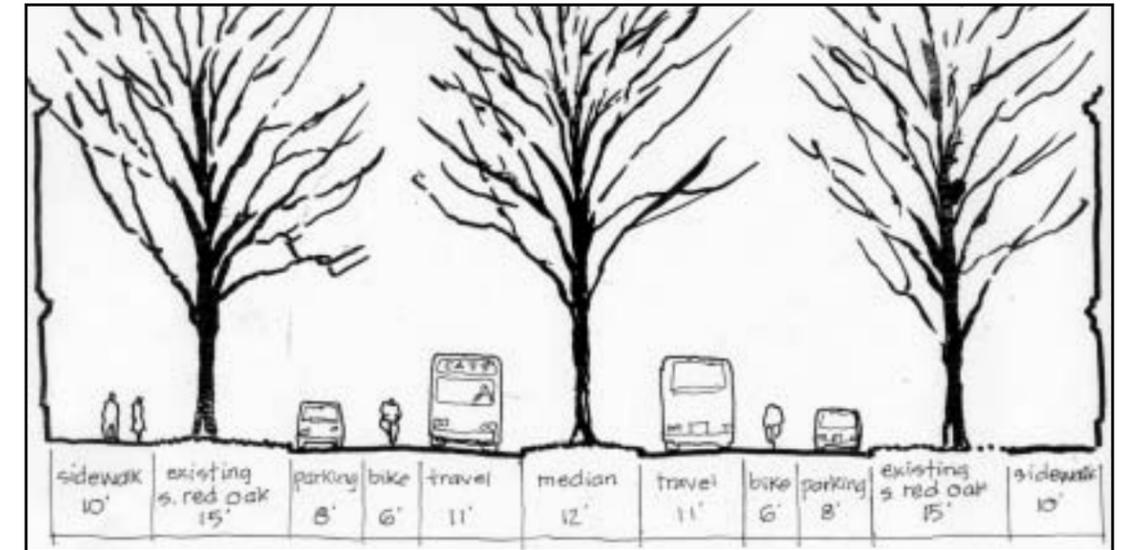
*Conceptual Site Plan*



*Illustrative Site Plan*

6. An open space network that connects a variety of open spaces with a continuous pedestrian/bicycle network.
7. A bus rapid transit station incorporated into new development and accommodations for a shuttle service to downtown Davidson.
8. Implementation of traffic management devices at the I-77, Davidson Gateway and Jetton Street intersections. (Will be reevaluated after a traffic analysis is completed.)
  - a. Realign the I-77 north-bound exit ramp to create a "T" with Griffith Street.
  - b. Construct a roundabout or "leftover lanes" at the intersection of Griffith and Davidson Gateway Drive.
  - c. Make Jetton and Griffith the dominant intersection in this district. Construct a roundabout at Jetton Street in order to allow all traffic movements.
  - d. Place a traffic signal at the Jetton/ Griffith intersection until a roundabout can be studied and constructed.
  - e. Pending installation of a roundabout or leftover lanes, request a "no left turn" sign at the intersection of Gateway Drive and Griffith Street.

- f. Install a "no left turn" sign at the exit from the medical building parking deck onto Griffith Street.
  - g. Install a continuous median from the top of the east side of exit 30 to Jetton with the exception of a possible roundabout or leftover lane at Gateway Dr.
9. The entire wooded 14 acre parcel east of Jetton Street represents an excellent opportunity for a public park. The southern portion of this parcel, however, could be developed with 2-3 story buildings with lower density development adjacent to Spinnaker Cove.



Cross Section Recommendations:

1. Reconfigure Griffith Street as demonstrated in cross section. The existing curbs and existing street trees will be incorporated into the design. Please note that the street dimensions may change following a professional traffic study.
2. Install 12' tall pedestrian scale lights on both sides of the street.
3. Provide sidewalks and safety railings on the bridge over I-77.



*Vision for the Griffith and Jetton Intersection, Looking West*

**District 2: Jetton Street to Beaty Street  
Existing Conditions**

District 2 consists of the 3.5 acre Roosevelt Wilson Park, Elox light industrial Corporation, Spinnaker Cove subdivision and at least two potential development sites. The Town of Davidson owns a two-acre parcel of land at the southwest corner of Griffith Street and Lakeside Drive. The Davidson Masonic Lodge and Davidson College own a total of .9 acres fronting Griffith Street behind The Woods at Lake Davidson subdivision.



*View East of Griffith Street District 2*



*Griffith and Beaty/ Sloan Intersection*

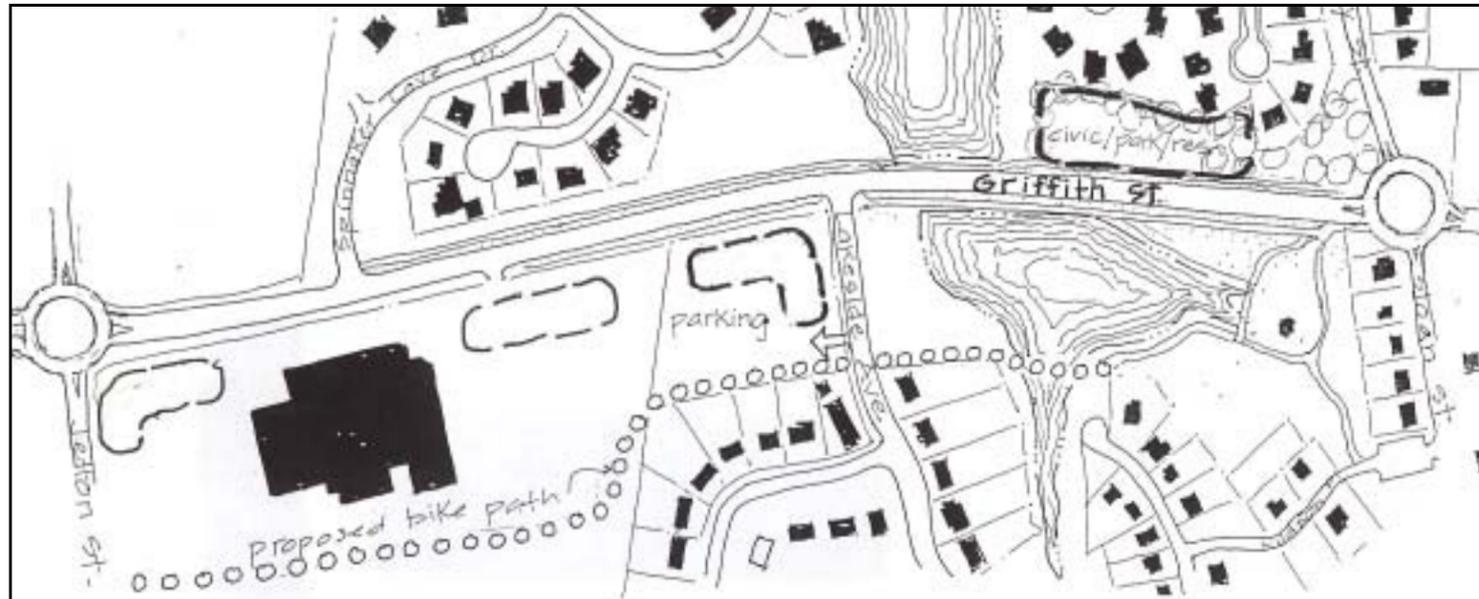


*View East on Griffith Street*

Griffith Street is 40-44' wide in this section with on-street parking allowed on both sides in the vicinity of Roosevelt Wilson Park only. Sidewalks exist solely on the south side of the street. While there is a well-used, unsignalized pedestrian crosswalk near the Beaty/Sloan Street and Griffith Street intersection, it is extremely dangerous due to driving speeds along the corridor. Additionally, left turns off of Beaty Street and Sloan Street onto Griffith Street are very difficult due to the high rush hour traffic volumes.

Overhead Duke Power lines serving the CMUD lift station and the street lights exist along the south side of Griffith Street. Their conflict with existing oak trees resulted in a severe pruning in spring 2001.

**District 2: Jetton Street to Beaty Street  
Recommendations**



*Conceptual Site Plan*

Site Plan Recommendations:

1. Construct a roundabout at the intersection of Beaty/ Sloan Street and Griffith Street. (The NC DOT will partially fund this device through small urban funds.)
2. The .9 acre parcel across the street from Roosevelt Wilson Park could be used for civic or housing development, or could remain as open space.
3. The two acre parcel owned by the Town at the intersection of Lake side and Griffith Streets has been offered to Davidson Presbyterian Church in exchange for their current land on Depot Street adjacent to the Norfolk-Southern Railroad. The Church is currently evaluating the proposal. The Griffith Street site is appropriate for such a civic use, housing, office, or an expansion of Roosevelt Wilson Park.

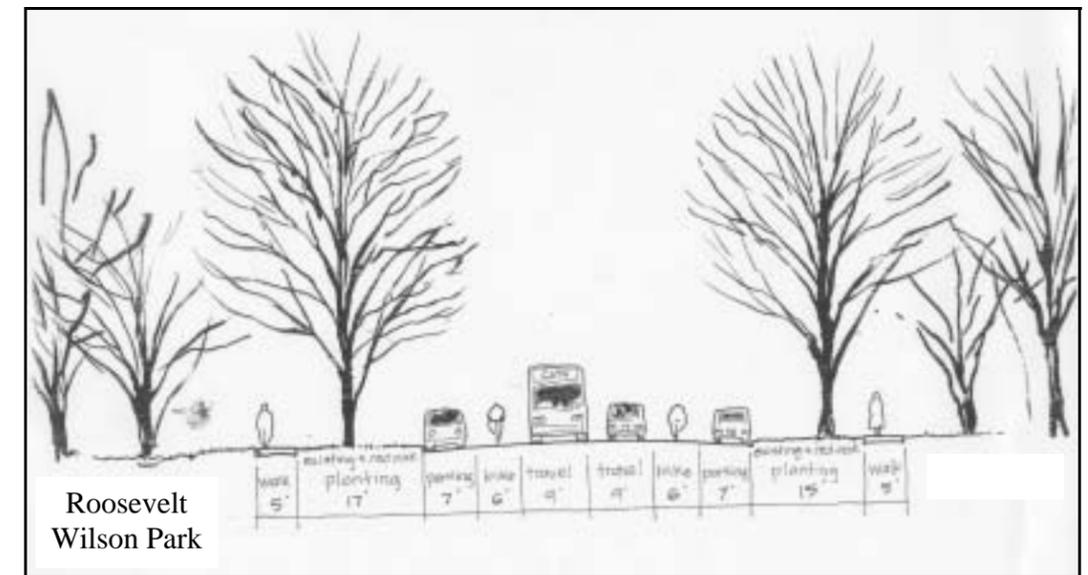


*Vision for Griffith and Beaty Intersection*



Cross Section Recommendations (Jetton Street to Lake Davidson Bridge):

1. Provide a 6' planting strip and build a 5' sidewalk on the north side of the street.
2. Build a boardwalk on the north side of the bridge, similar to that on the south side.
3. Stripe on-street parking on the south side of the street.
4. Stripe a 6' bike lane in each direction.
5. Provide 10.5' travel lanes.

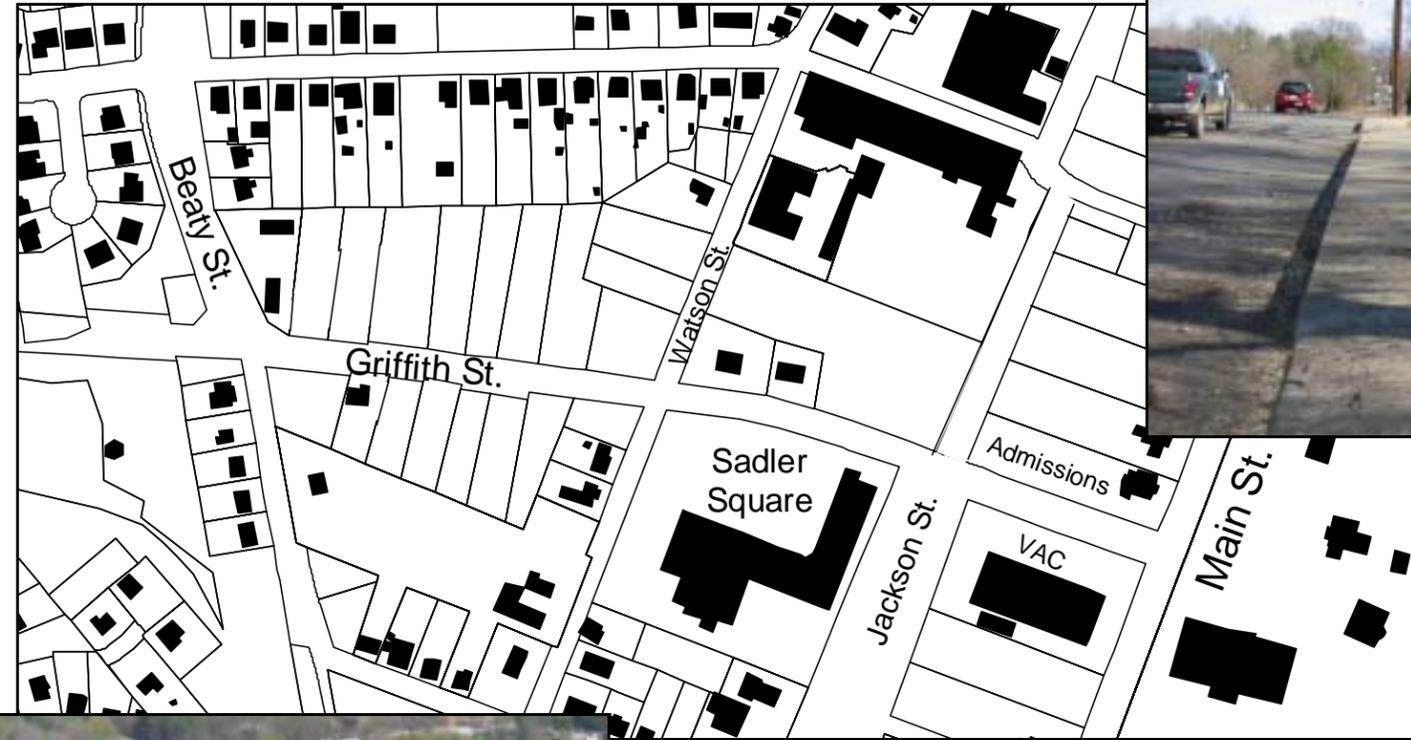


Cross Section Recommendations (Lake Davidson Bridge to Beaty Street):

1. Build a 5' sidewalk on the north side of the street, 15' from the curb, behind the existing trees.
2. Stripe on-street parking on the north side of the street.
3. Stripe a 6' bike lane in each direction.
4. Provide 9' travel lanes.
5. Work with Duke Power and other utility providers to bury the existing overhead utility lines on the south side of the street.

**District 3: Beaty Street to Main Street  
Existing Conditions**

Significant development and redevelopment opportunities exist in district 3. Between Beaty and Watson streets, both sides of the street are vacant except for one house on the south side. All of this vacant property is owned by Davidson College and maintained as open space as part of a “green ribbon” plan for the entrance to the campus. Between Watson Street and Jackson Street, the north side of Griffith contains two businesses (Sadler Industries and a veterinary clinic) and a 1.5 acre vacant parcel with 227 feet of frontage. The south side of this street section contains Sadler Square, a 38,000 s. f. shopping center which also fronts Watson Street and the railroad. Sadler Square occupies a 3.7 acre parcel and represents the most significant redevelopment opportunity along the corridor. Two college properties (the Admissions Office and the Visual Arts Center) occupy the land between Jackson Street and Main Street.



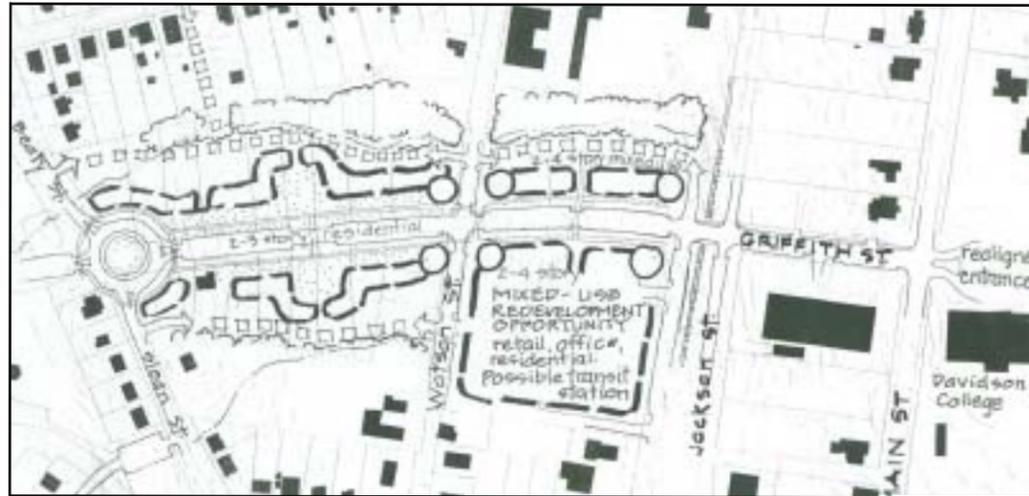
*Sidewalk between Beaty and Watson Streets*

The street is approximately 44’ wide between Beaty and Watson Streets, widening to 55’ at its intersection with Main Street. No on-street parking is marked except for a few spaces on the north side near the Davidson College Admissions office. Sidewalks exist only on the south side, and are separated from the street by a planting strip of various widths.

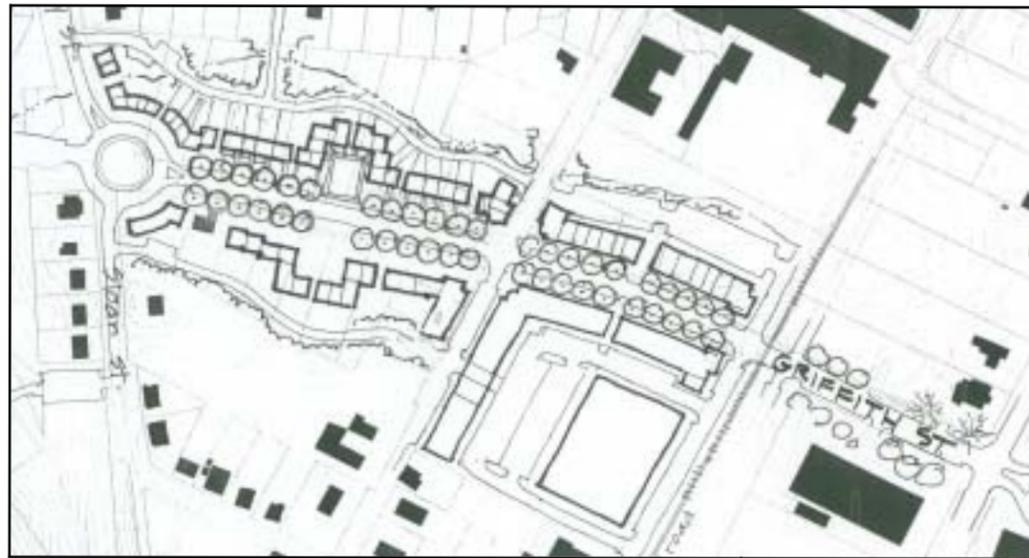


*View West from the Griffith and Main Intersection*

**District 3: Beaty Street to Main Street  
Recommendations**



*Conceptual Site Plan*



*Illustrative Site Plan*

**Site Plan Recommendations:**

1. Work with Davidson College to develop 2-3 story attached and detached mixed-income residences between Beaty/Sloan Street and Watson Street. This development should be set back approximately 50' from the curb and accessed by rear alleys in order to maintain the "green ribbon" into the college and the downtown area.

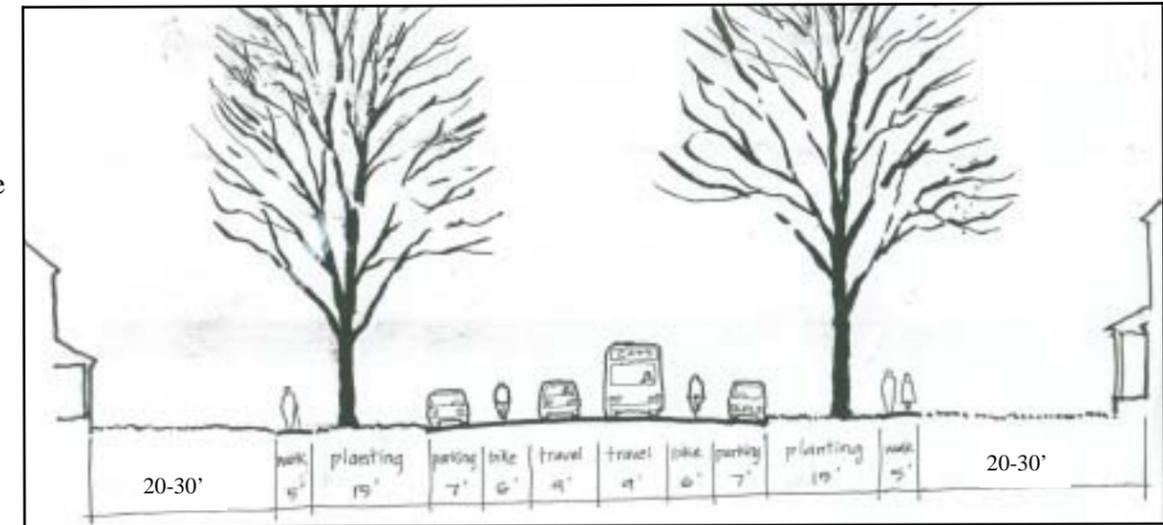


*Vision for Griffith and Watson Intersection, Looking West*

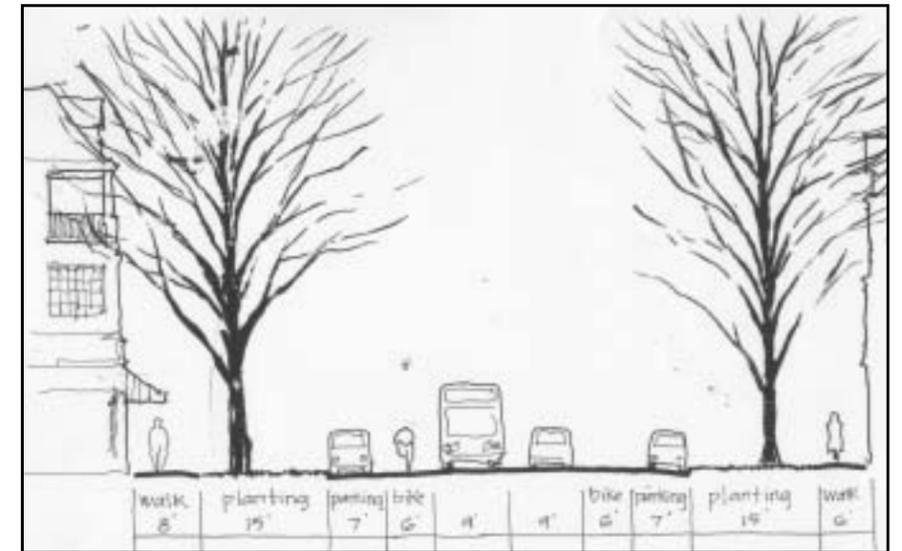
2. Develop 2-3 story mixed-use buildings on the north side of the street between Watson and Jackson.
3. Redevelop Sadler Square Shopping Center as an intense mixed-use development up to four stories in height, with a parking structure to accommodate most of the parking. The predominant orientation should be to Griffith Street and to the railroad, where commuter train service to Charlotte will present an excellent opportunity to provide development activity along the railroad, possibly in conjunction with a train station.
4. Work with Davidson College and NC DOT to redesign the intersection of Main and Griffith Streets. Build bulbouts to provide shorter crossing distances for pedestrians and delineate on-street parking. Provide pedestrian crossing signals and better define crosswalks through use of embedded roadway lights or material changes. The College also plans to align its entrance with Griffith Street.

**Cross Section Recommendations:**

1. Provide a 5' sidewalk on the north side of the street using dimensions shown on the cross sections at right.
2. Between Beaty and Watson Streets move the sidewalk on the south side of the street behind the existing tree line in order to create a planting strip.
3. Provide crosswalks at Jackson Street and mid-block between Beaty and Watson.



*Cross Section between Beaty Street and Watson Street  
Distance between the curb and the buildings is 40-50 feet.*



*Cross Section between Watson Street and Jackson Street*



*Cross Section between Jackson Street and Main Street*