Background:
On April 16, 2013 City Council held a work session at the Carver Recreation Center that focused on the real and perceived conditions on Downtown Mall. The meeting was attended by members of the North Downtown Resident Association (NDRA), the Downtown Business Association Committee (DBAC), concerned residents, City Council, the City Manager and relevant staff. During the meeting it was determined the most efficient way to explore the issues and develop recommendations was to develop four workgroups: Law Enforcement, Physical Plant, Human Services, and Economic Development. Individuals self-selected into groups and there were no restrictions on how many groups an individual could join.

The workgroups have met numerous times during the past four months. The meetings were well attended and the groups utilized a number of relevant reports (which are attached to this report) to identify the issues and develop recommendations.

Discussion:
Representatives from each group will present their recommendations

Community Engagement:
Over the past four months, multiple open meetings were held to discuss issues and develop recommendations for City Council’s consideration

Alignment with City Council’s Vision and Priority Areas:
This aligns of the City Council’s 2025 vision statement which includes, Economic Sustainability, a Community of Mutual Respect and Smart Citizen focused Government.
Recommendations for Consideration:
This section will provide an abbreviated description of each group’s recommendation. A more detailed description by the individual groups is attached.

I. Human Services Workgroup
The NDRA Study on the Deterioration of the Downtown Mall pointed out community challenges with issues that involve the homeless, panhandlers and transient populations on the downtown mall. The work group discussed the issues raised in the report and developed the following list of recommendations for consideration:

A. Improve connection to existing services – The City of Charlottesville has a number of services that are offered by the City, non-profits, faith-based organizations and other community based organizations, but one of the challenges is ensuring that individuals have the most recent information on accessing these services.
- Ensure and strengthen human services training opportunities for the downtown ambassadors;
- To facilitate the development of relationships, provide opportunities outside of the downtown mall for the ambassadors to interact individuals who frequent soup kitchens and utilize other services;
- Development of a simple guide that provides schedules and maps of soup kitchens, and other services and ensure consumers, providers and the general public can easily access this information;
- Establish a social worker or case manager position that is focused on providing service connection and coordination for the homeless population in the downtown area;

B. Enhance Service Delivery – The Human Services Workgroup recognizes that while services are available this is an opportunity to improve service delivery for those most in need.
- Decrease the reliance on emergency medical care by exploring the creation of satellite medical services and medical reserve corps resources;
- Mental Health Co-Responder programs in which a mental health counselor responds in conjunction with the police department on calls where an individual or individuals may be in crisis;
- Funding for a year round shelter for women and families;

C. Workforce Development – Workforce development is a critical component on the path to self-sufficiency and the group recommends that City Council consider the following:
- Explore the establishment of the work opportunities desk concept which would be housed at the Haven and provide day labor opportunities, center based opportunities and access to community services possibilities;
- Establish regular downtown community clean ups and engage all
persons who frequent the mall to help create a sense of ownership;

D. Public Education - The group supports consideration of positive giving and public education campaigns. One option used in other communities is meters (similar to parking meters) used as an alternative for charitable giving. Text to give, QR codes, and credit card giving are other potential options.

E. Additional Ideas the Require Further Exploration –
   • Changes in Federal and State mandates regarding providing services to the homeless have the potential to improve our local planning, coordination and service delivery efforts;
   • Housing Navigator – A number of communities have found success by having a housing navigator who works with organizations and the homeless to rapidly locate and rehouse individual;
   • While some individuals in need of services are known to the provider community, there is also a more transient group that will require more research regarding best practices and potentially a different approach to engage these individuals.

II. Economic Development Workgroup

The Downtown Mall is one of the most important economic engines within the City of Charlottesville and members of this workgroup spent their time exploring ideas that would ensure the long term prosperity and sustainability of the downtown mall. To that end the workgroup has proposed the following for Council’s consideration:

A. Establish a Business Improvement District (BID) – A BID district for businesses within a defined area of the mall would ensure additional and reliable funding that would enable a comprehensive approach that includes marketing, event programming and service provision similar to that used in many shopping centers and pedestrian districts elsewhere.

B. Establish Dedicated Funding from Parking Meter Revenue – Establish parking meters in the inner core of the City and utilize the revenue to assist in marketing event planning and service provision.

The workgroup believes that $400,000 would be necessary to make the desired impact, which would allow the hiring of a staff person dedicated to managing the success of the downtown mall and support several events and a comprehensive annual marketing effort, along with potentially funding the Downtown Ambassador program if it moves beyond the pilot phase.

III. Physical Plant Workgroup

The physical plant workgroup reviewed the physical plant of the downtown mall and provide the following recommendations for consideration:

A. Creation of a Business Improvement District (BID)

B. Utilize existing and new resources to address safety concerns
• Establish a network of security cameras on the downtown mall;
• Reviewing lighting on the mall and side streets that lead to the mall and replace as needed with fixtures that meet the requirements of the BAR;

C. General Maintenance and Upkeep of the Downtown Mall

• Investigate a permanent oversight committee and/or an annual evaluation program of services;
• Investigate outsourcing portions of the mall and who within the City should manage mall maintenance;
• Pursue the option of allowing merchants to rent a five foot block of the mall in front of businesses and have them responsible for maintenance of the additional area;
• Establish a central intake for e mail address for mall maintenance;

D. Seating on the Mall

• Future benches should be pleasant but do not encourage extensive loitering;
• City should seek consent of adjacent business owners prior to installation or removal of benches;
• Develop a process for businesses to request additional or removal of benches;

E. Parking

• All entrance corridors to the downtown mall have adequate signage directing people to the Water St. garage;
• Explore the purchase of parking meters with state of the art technology;
• Create a parking map that can be provided as a hard copy or accessed electronically via the internet;
• Provide free parking in the garages on weekends before Christmas holidays;

F. Vendors and Food Carts

• Enforce all aspects of the existing ordinances;
• Examine existing ordinance to strengthen language regarding appearance of vendor spaces;
• Re-examine the appropriate number of vendors on the mall in relation to pedestrian aisles, café spaces and fire lanes;

G. Private Property Maintenance

• The City needs to provide consistent enforcement of ordinances on private property;
H. Improvements

- Establish a Police kiosk on the mall that can also be used by the Downtown Ambassadors;
- Determine a smoking disposal fixture and a source that is approved by the BAR;
- Consider adapting an ordinance that requires restaurants and entertainment venues to provide smoking disposal fixtures;
- Ensure the directory of stores is updated on a regular basis and include a QR link to websites;
- Establish a website for the downtown mall that is funded by the City;

I. Beautification

- Determine a planter and source approved by BAR that property owners can install and maintain;
- Investigate possibility and pitfalls of hanging planter baskets;
- Explore a permanent method of providing lights in the trees on the mall that considers future tree growth, proper light fixtures and other considerations;
- Pursue installation of banners on Market and Water streets informing visitors they have reached the mall;

J. Programming

- Ad Hoc busking – designate space(s) along the mall where this may occur and develop a process that engages affected businesses;
- After Dark Movies – Explore the concept of free movies after dark in the pavilion;

IV. Law Enforcement Work Group

Recognizing that the issues related to the law enforcement group involve individual, human and constitutional rights the City Manager recommended the hiring of a facilitator who could harness the energy of the group, ensure all voices are heard and assist the group in developing tangible recommendations. Members in the group were passionate about the mall and the need to ensure the area continues to grow, prosper and stays a welcoming place for all. Utilizing the data gathered in the “Study of Deteriorating Conditions on the Downtown Mall with Recommended Solutions: North Downtown Residents Association” and the November 19, 2012 City Manager’s report on Downtown Mall enhancements the group began the process of identifying problems and solutions as they relate to perceived and real criminal activity in and around the mall. Each member of the team was provided access to the individual surveys and the City Manager’s report for their edification. The group recognized that there was an additional need for data along with stories from shop owners and residents. To that end, Chief Longo and members of the Police Department provided a trend analysis on crime occurring on the downtown mall (Attachment). The data shows a nearly 40% decline in calls for service on the downtown mall which can be attributed to an operational change in patrolling the mall, the addition of the Downtown Ambassadors and the establishment of closer working relationships with many of the city’s non-profits. Additionally, there was close to a 15% increase in the number of non-
monthly parkers utilizing the garages in 2012 and another solid increase thus far in 2013.

The group also heard from two business owners on the mall and a resident of north downtown. The business owners described the challenges they deal with on a fairly regular basis involving men who sometimes sleep overnight in front of their establishments, and intoxicated individuals who are loud and intimidating. The NDRA residents spoke about the challenge of walking through Lee Park with men who sometimes will leer and make vulgar, threatening and inappropriate comments.

While there is consensus within this group that the downtown mall is an economic force in the City and should be enjoyed by all, the group could not reach consensus on any recommendations and ultimately decided to vote on each recommendation the group discussed. The group believed it was important to not only vote but to make public how they voted on each potential recommendation. Those recommendations and the votes of their members are attached.

**Budgetary Impact:**
The budgetary impact is unknown at the moment and will require further study based on recommendations from City Council

**Alternatives:**
N/A