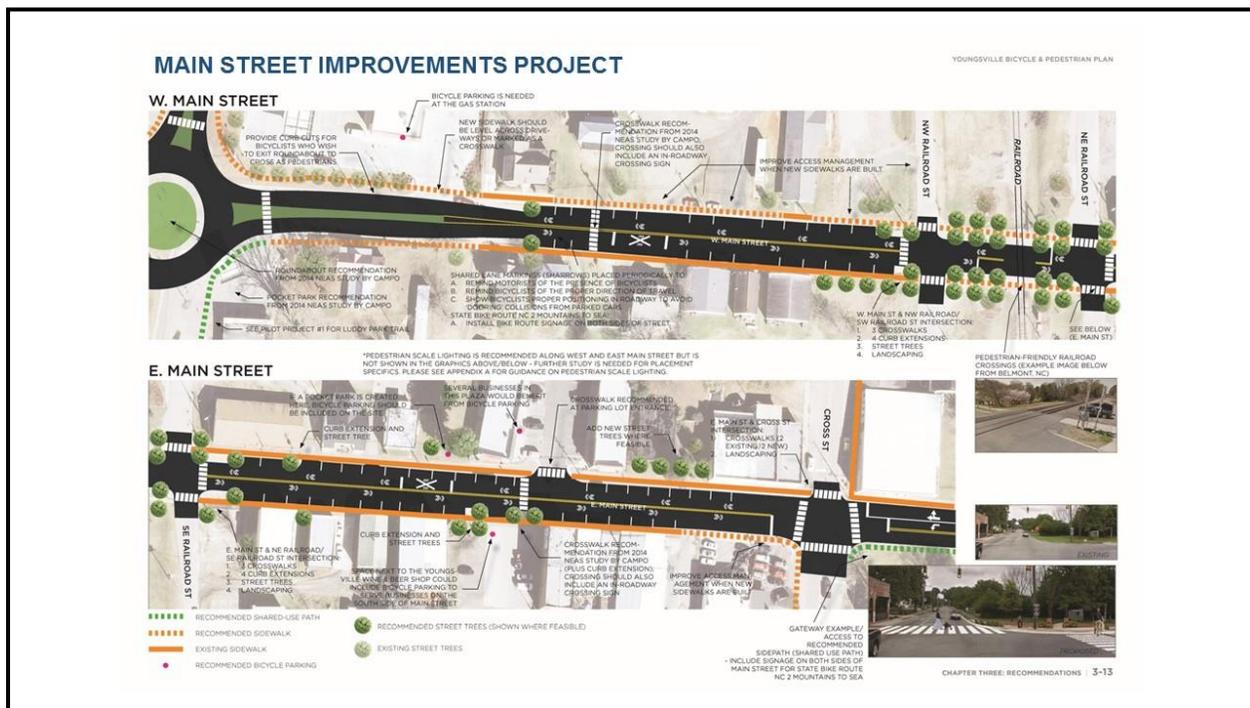


# Towards a 'Livable Community': Youngsville Strides Ahead

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On December 11, 2015 the Town of Youngsville adopted its first [Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan](#)\*. Following the 2013 completion of [Envision Youngsville](#), the Bike/Ped Plan is intended to be the next foundational element of a comprehensive Land Use Plan for the Town.

Youngsville (population 1,262) began as a railroad town, incorporated in 1875 when a train depot was constructed to serve local production and warehousing of tobacco and cotton. Located in southwestern Franklin County, Youngsville shares borders with booming Wake Forest and Wake County. The Town is growing over 9% annually – about the same rate as Wake Forest and Cary, according to state estimates.



Like many rural communities in North Carolina, Youngsville's Main Street is a State Highway. NC-96, which connects US-1 and US-401, carries 7,000 vehicles per day through the downtown, 20% of it truck traffic. Main Street is also a segment of NC Bicycle Route #2, and southern Franklin County is a popular area for local cycling clubs. Through *Envision Youngsville*, Town citizens expressed a desire to balance the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians. However, pedestrian mobility is difficult - high traffic volume and a fragmented, incomplete sidewalk system are hampering downtown revitalization and new investment. Large trucks are causing safety problems and creating operational issues at key intersections.

Part of the long-term solution has already been identified. The [2014 Northeast Area Study \(NEAS\) by the Capital Area MPO](#) provided a concept design for a roundabout at US-1A and NC-96. The roundabout would include 'Complete Streets' and other operational improvements to help relieve congestion and potentially reduce the number of trucks

\* Large file - please be patient as the download may take several minutes.

passing through downtown. The concept also calls for ‘context-sensitive’ streetscape improvements including trees, high visibility crosswalks, pedestrian level lighting, gateway monuments, signage and wayfinding improvements, and pocket parks. However, completion of the full Youngsville Roundabout project would be cost-prohibitive for the Town to undertake on its own.

The Youngsville Bike/Ped Plan presents an incremental approach that would connect the future roundabout with two relatively short-term, affordable ‘Pilot Projects’, both of which emanated from the *Envision Youngsville* report. The [Luddy Park Trail](#) would directly connect the Town’s largest park, its library, and Youngsville Elementary School, and improve access to downtown and adjoining residential subdivisions. The LPT would also be the first step in building a system of trails and greenways connecting southward towards the Wake Forest system, and by extension, to the larger Triangle greenway network. [The Main Street Improvements](#) project is basically the Youngsville Roundabout project without the roundabout itself, and focuses on the streetscape improvements identified in the NEAS. *(Editor’s Note: the design phase of the Main Street Improvements project will commence in March 2017, with construction scheduled to begin in late 2017/early 2018. Please contact the Town for updates or more information.)*

After the draft Bike/Ped Plan was presented in August, and with Town Board approval, Youngsville staff pursued funding for both projects through both the Strategic Prioritization (SPOT 4.0) process the FFY2017 LAPP (Locally Administered Projects Program) funding cycle. Both projects, if approved, would entail costs of approximately \$1 million, with the Town responsible for 20% of the total.

A \$200,000 commitment from a small town like Youngsville is a bold step, and the Town Board vigorously debated the potential benefits and liabilities of such an investment, especially on the details of the Main Street improvements. There were concerns about loss of on-street parking, reduction in road capacity, and even the need for such an outlay for a “downtown with a highway running through it.” In the end, the Town Board’s unanimous approval was motivated by input from staff, the design team from [Alta Planning+Design](#), and the Bike/Ped Plan Steering Committee that emphasized the long-range aspects of downtown investment, marketability, and economic development, along with the basics of walkability, safety, and connectivity.

Adoption of the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan is a major achievement for the Town of Youngsville’s comprehensive planning efforts. In addition to the prospects of near-term funding and implementation of the Pilot Projects, the Plan provides a framework for a long-term capital investments strategy, identifying 16 projects totaling over \$13 million, including completion of a downtown core sidewalk network, a rail-trail associated with the future [Southeast High Speed Rail](#), and ‘cross-country’ trails paralleling [pipeline easements](#).

The Plan is already influencing development of new residential subdivisions within Youngsville. Three segments of the eventual Richland Creek greenway system were committed to by private developers by the time the plan was actually adopted – evidence that homebuilders recognize the premium value of residential developments that provide more bike-friendly, walkable environments and are willing to pay for it.

Ultimately, the Town wants to capitalize upon the status of becoming the northern terminus of the Triangle regional trail network (similar to [Clayton’s position as the eastern terminus of the Neuse River Greenway Trail](#)), with the potential for positive returns from regional bicycle tourism and increased property values associated with the ‘quality of life’ befitting a pedestrian-oriented and bicycle-friendly town.

Youngsville is also inspired by other Main Street/Complete Street program successes, and with the initial build-out from the Plan – streetscape improvements and completion of the sidewalk network along Main Street – Town leaders hope to [achieve the success experienced by West Jefferson, NC](#), where similar efforts have revitalized the downtown.

With the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan now an official Town initiative, Youngsville is positioned to implement [NCDOT’s Complete Streets policy](#) and enable new residential and commercial development aligned with [Smart Growth](#) and [Livable Communities](#) principles.