CITY OF PINE BLUFF

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

DRAFT:

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

This page is intentionally blank.

2.1
LAND USE

1984 Land Use Plan: Notes

- In 1984, the Land Use Plan acknowledges that the population has declined since the 1970 census, but attributes that loss to "many persons moving out of the City…locating in the fast growing urban area directly south and southwest of the City limits." Further, the plan acknowledges that Pine Bluff's growth "has been haphazard and without regard for the long-term effects." But goes on to say that since the adoption of Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, the City "has experienced a planned and orderly growth."
- The 1984 Plan Growth Objectives include encouraging inward growth including the revitalization of downtown and insuring the preservation of parks and open space within the city.
- The 1984 Plan Growth Policies include those that would only allow "appropriate" development within flood plain. It also includes 8 policies related to its housing problems and the desire to improve housing conditions, which are still valid today. (Pages 6-7) In particular, this housing policy stands out: "…the City will protect existing neighborhoods as it would any valuable resource. Plans should be discouraged that would result in a substantial reduction or devaluation of existing housing units, when they meet the housing and building codes."
- The 1984 Plan's Land Use Policies are typical for their time; they seek to protect each type of land use's individual characteristics, discouraging interaction between land uses. Further, the policies seek to separate residential from other uses through the use of green space buffers, and discourage transportation plans from including "through traffic" on neighborhood streets. These two objectives isolate residential areas from their surroundings and discourage alternate means of transportation, such as bicycling or walking by creating dead end, circuitous, or other disconnected street networks. In this play, higher density housing is pushed to "major thoroughfares and/or community shopping facilities". Single-family residential is "oriented away from arterials; single-family detached dwelling units should front on local streets." Mixed-use zones

are mentioned in commercial land use policies, but through the filter of separated uses being the best approach. These approaches were widely accepted during the time in which they were written. However, many cities have suffered the unintended consequences of such policies, which have resulted in road with more congestion, commercial areas that are subject to en masse decline, and auto-oriented communities that offer few opportunities for social interaction, identifiable public spaces, or community character.

- The Transportation Planning section of the 1984 Plan shifts emphasis from new construction of roadways to reconstruction of existing roadways. It was written amid rising fuel costs as a result of fuel shortages, but still plans around the concept of functional classification: highways, arterials, collectors, and local streets. Notable among the existing transportation problems listed in the plan include the network having an abundance of offset intersections, an inadequate system of collector streets, inadequate access control along arterial streets, and local and collector streets thought to be too narrow to accommodate emergency vehicles. This sentiment remains today. This section also calls for an enhanced system for public transit as well as for bicycles and pedestrians.
- Three barriers to growth in Pine Bluff are identified: flood plains, the Arkansas River, and soil limitations.
- The city's drainage system is described in detail on pages 49-50, along with a call for a Master Drainage Plan, to include flow rates, existing drainage easements and designation of easements to be acquired, complete topographic maps, and a hydraulic budget with stream predictions.
    - Eleven soil types that occur within the planning area are described, some of which are somewhat unsuitable for urban development.
- Definitions include the following descriptions of Residential Land (see page 60):
    - Standard: units with no defects, or only slight defects which are corrected during regular maintenance
    - Deteriorated: Need more repair that in the course of regular maintenance; have defects of an intermediate nature which must be corrected if the unit is to offer safe and adequate shelter. These defects indicate neglect which will lead to serious structural deterioration.
    - Dilapidated: The unit has deteriorated beyond the point at which repair is economically feasible. In its present condition it endangers the health, safety, and well-being of the occupants. The defects are of a nature so critical or widespread that the structure should either be extensively repaired or demolished.
- The 1984 Plan includes housing conditions maps by census tract. See pages 64-88.
- In the 1984 Plan, population projections remained in an upward trend, predicting the year 2000 population to be 65,650.
- Additional sections focus on Future Land Use, Urban Economic Trends, Environmental Assessment, and Historic Preservation Assessment

1984 Land Use Plan: Assessment

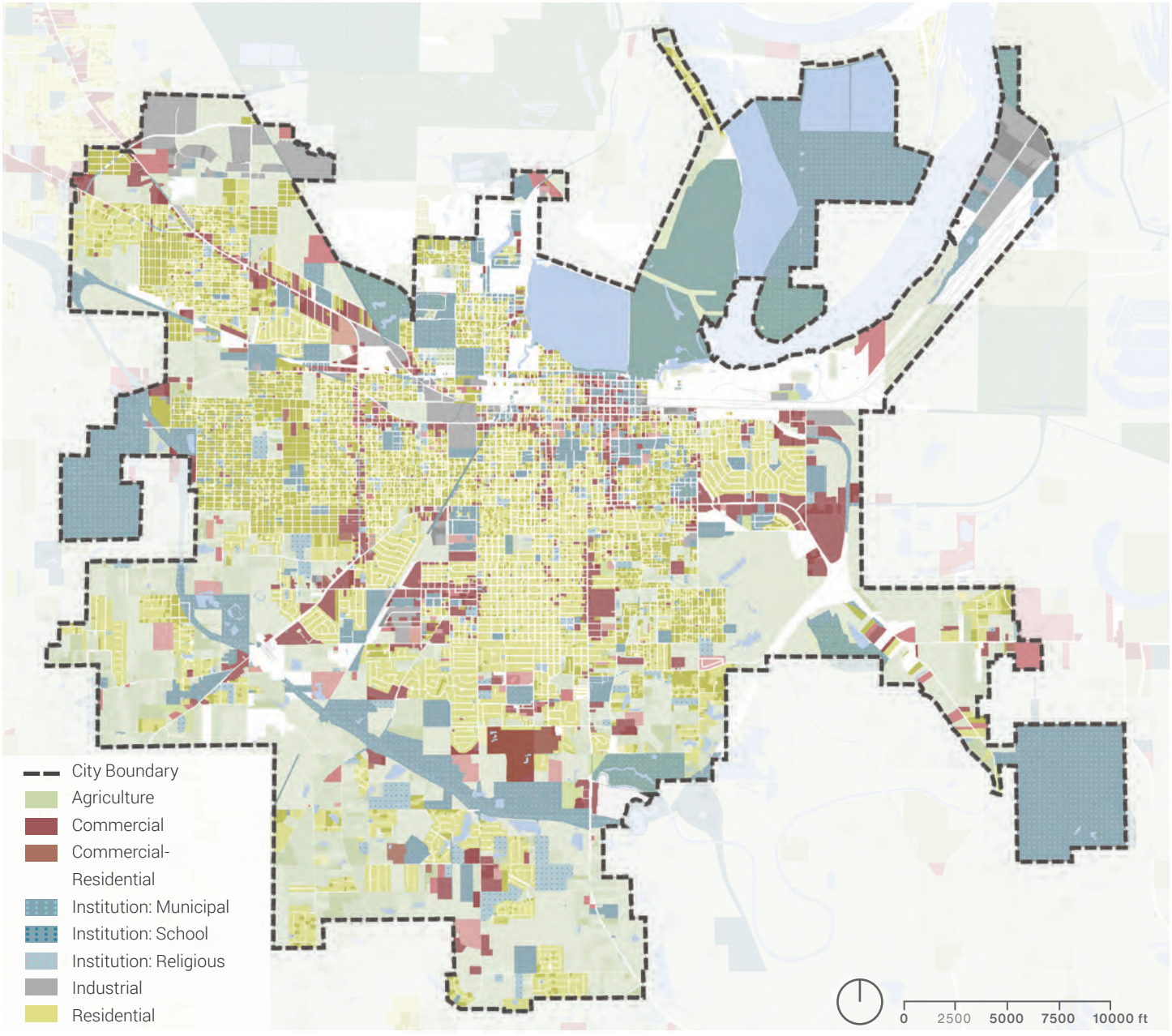
The 1984 Land Use Plan contains pertinent background information on several topics, including demographics, land use, utilities, transportation, parks and recreation, barriers to growth, energy, economics, and the environment. It also provides goals, objectives, and policies to several of these areas. However, it was focused around growth and expansion, and trends in Pine Bluff have changed dramatically over the past 40 years, and was in desperate need of an update to address the issues relevant in Pine Bluff today.

LAND USE
CURRENT CONDITIONS

The progression of growth in Pine Bluff over time is evident by changing approaches to land use and development. The more complex interrelationship of land uses in the core of downtown gives way to broader swaths of isolated residential developments surrounded by linear commercial developments along major corridors. This development pattern is not unusual in cities of this size that developed during similar time frames.

Of greater note is the proportion of land in the city dedicated to various uses. Pine Bluff has a high percentage of Government land (19%); more than the 18% improved residential land. Government land includes City, County, State, and Federal holdings. These lands do not contribute to the City's tax base.

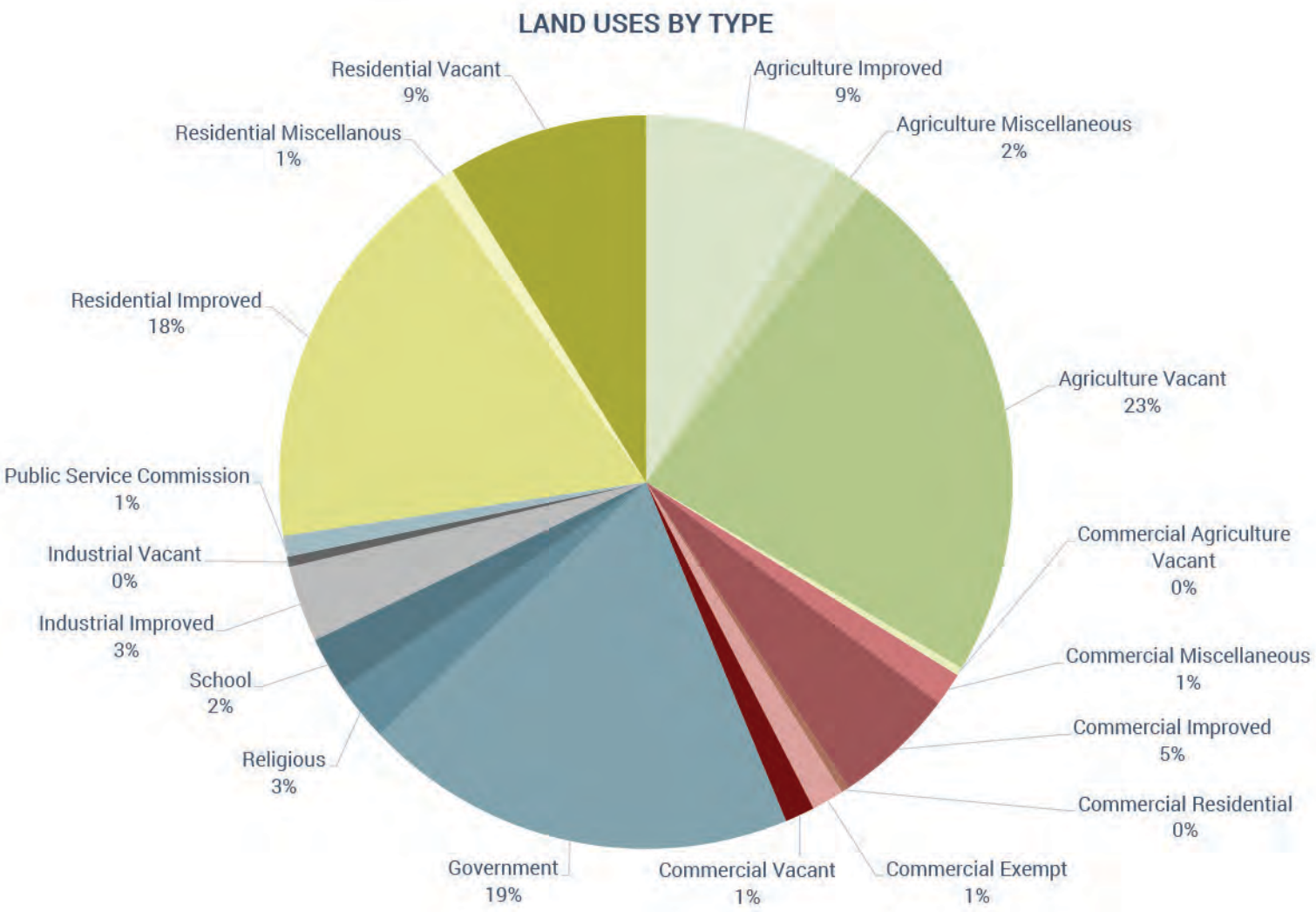
Vacancies are another notable land use trend in Pine Bluff that needs to be effectively addressed. Nine percent of all of Pine Bluff's land is vacant residential (whether developed and dilapidated, vacant, or abandoned, or never developed at all). Twenty-three percent of property in the city limits is vacant agriculture land. While there is plenty of land for future growth and expansion, however, careful consideration will need to be given to the unintended consequences of further outward expansion to existing neighborhoods closer to the city center.



The existing land use assessment is based on the land designations as determined by the Jefferson County Tax Assessor for property tax purposes. This data also includes vacancy status as well as total assessed value per acre, per the and indicates notable increased values in the following areas:

- Nodes: Downtown and the retail developments at the 530/ Bus 63 interchange (WalMart). Also notable surrounding JRMC.
- Neighborhoods: south Pine Bluff, surrounding Pine Bluff Country Club. Also notable east of downtown surrounding Broadmoor Elementary and J.C. Jeffries Memorial Park.
- Corridors: Blake/US79. Traffic volumes may be driving land values up along Blake, however, it is notable that the existing commercial uses along Blake would not lead one to the conclusion that this is an economically-productive corridor.

Much of the center of the city does not rank highly on this scale, with a large percentage of properties in this area not having an assessed improvement value (structure), i.e., a vacant lot.

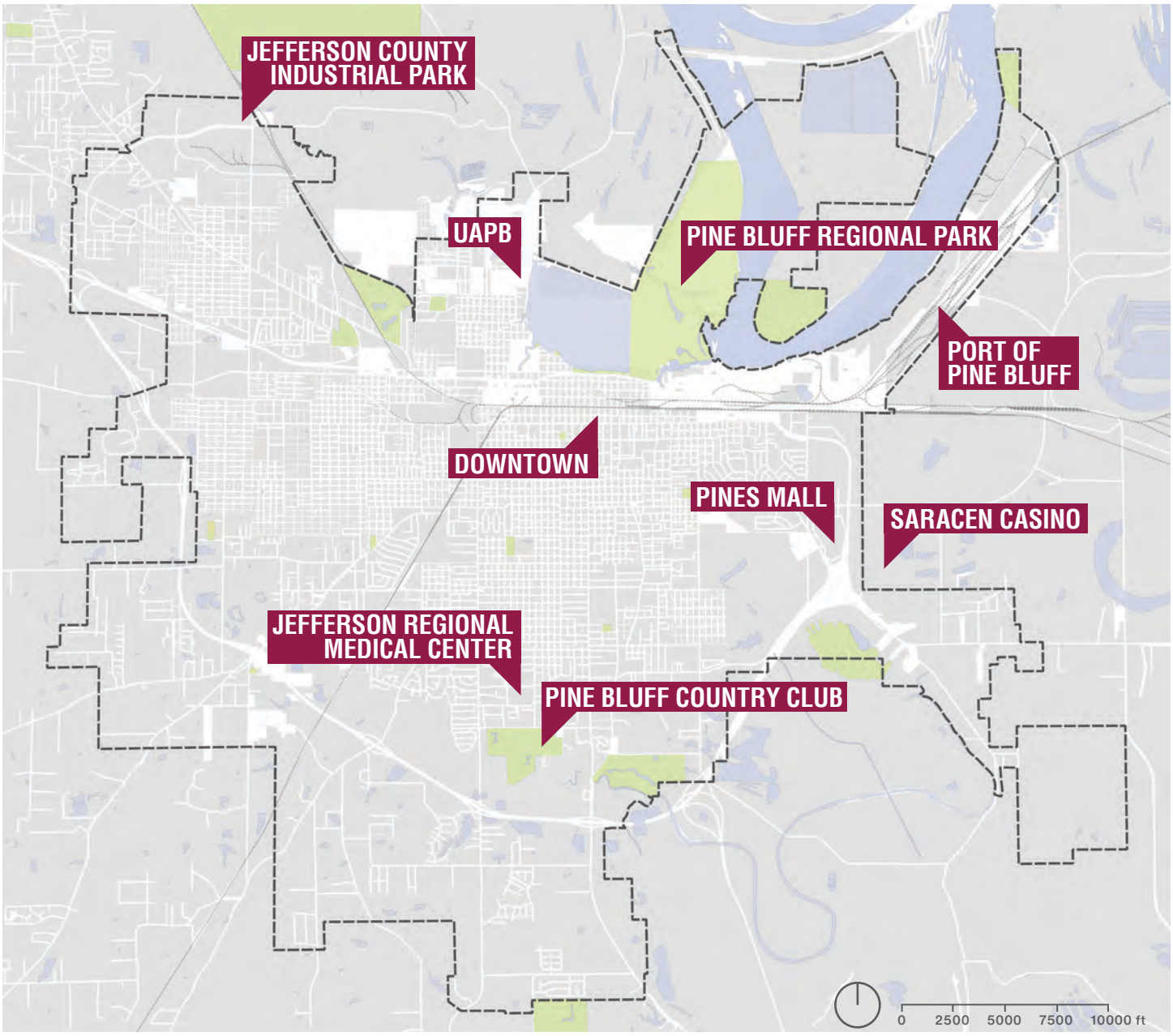


Future land use changes around the proposed Casino will pull the economic center of the city to the East. New chain restaurants, service stations, and retail outlets will create competition for downtown businesses. The City of Pine Bluff must make a physical and psychological connection between the Casino area and the Downtown. If visitors to the casino use Martha Mitchell Expressway there will be an increased need to connect Downtown to Saracen Landing.

The bottom has not occurred yet.

Deterioration of commercial properties have created a downward pressure on investment that push shoppers to other safer, more attractive locations. This trend, coupled with the rise of online shopping trends, creates a situation where more commercial buildings will become vacant, and existing vacant buildings will continue to deteriorate with very little potential for redevelopment. As new shops open near the casino, existing commercial businesses will close, leaving more empty storefronts.

Existing downtown businesses and property owners will need the support of the City of Pine Bluff, The Alliance for Economic Development and ALL property owners to align economic opportunities with the potential benefit of future development from Casino traffic.



Example Policies

1. Downtown businesses will have priority over new development adjacent to the Casino Development.
2. Active downtown businesses will receive support/ incentives to draw Casino traffic through downtown.
3. Casino Traffic and tourist will find Downtown Pine Bluff extremely accessible, open, clean, and enjoyable.
4. New Orleans-Style Hospitality is the expectation.
5. The "welcome" to Pine Bluff will by extraordinary and thoroughly on brand.

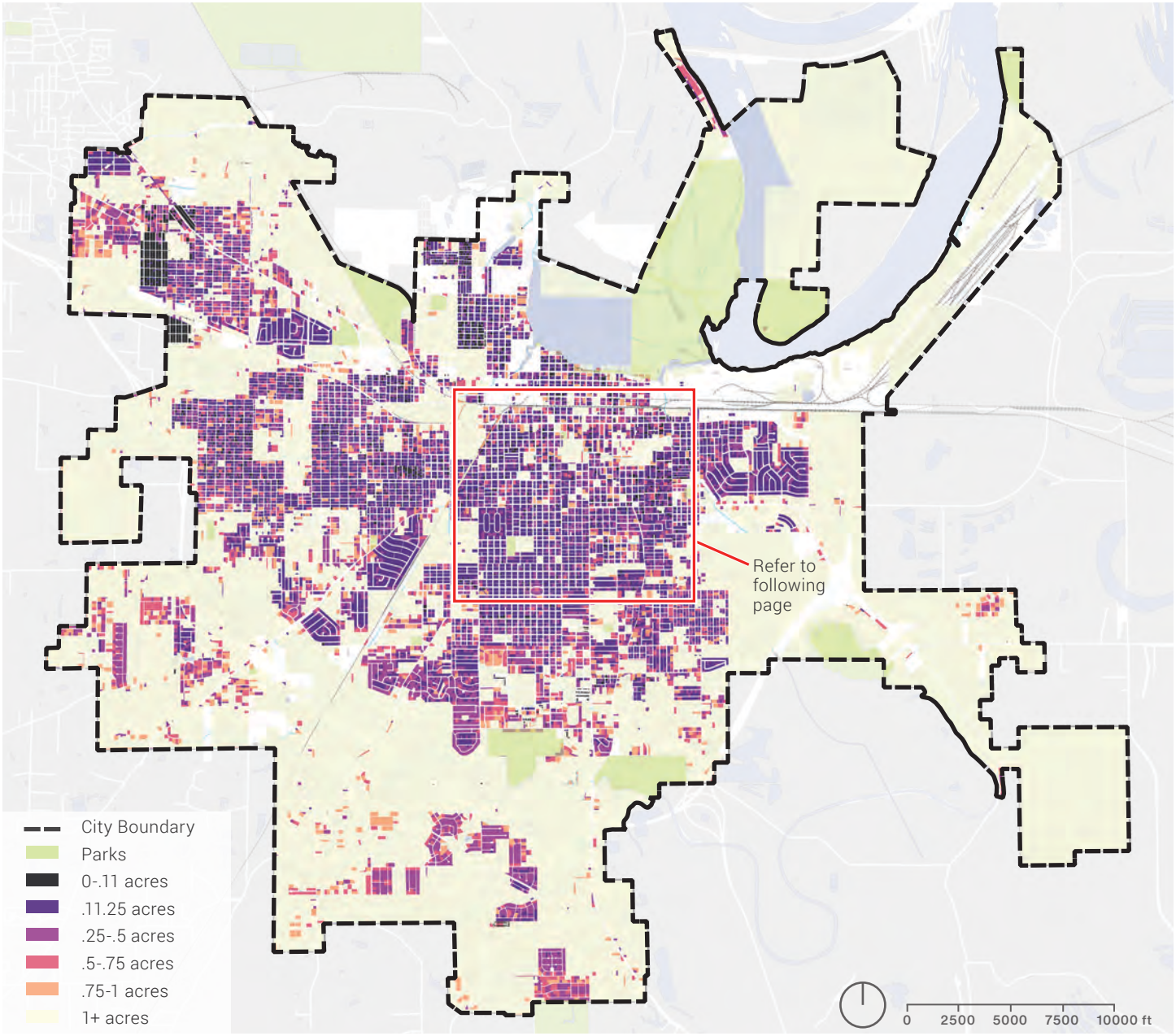
Future residential redevelopment should be focused near downtown, the Casino, Lake Saracen, Elementary Schools, and existing commercial intersections first before more sporadic infill occurs in adjacent areas.

Commercial development along Blake and 530 bypass have created a competitive environment that is depressing the potential of downtown.

Aside from the development of the Casino, there is presently not significant demand for changes in land use due to the lack of development opportunities.

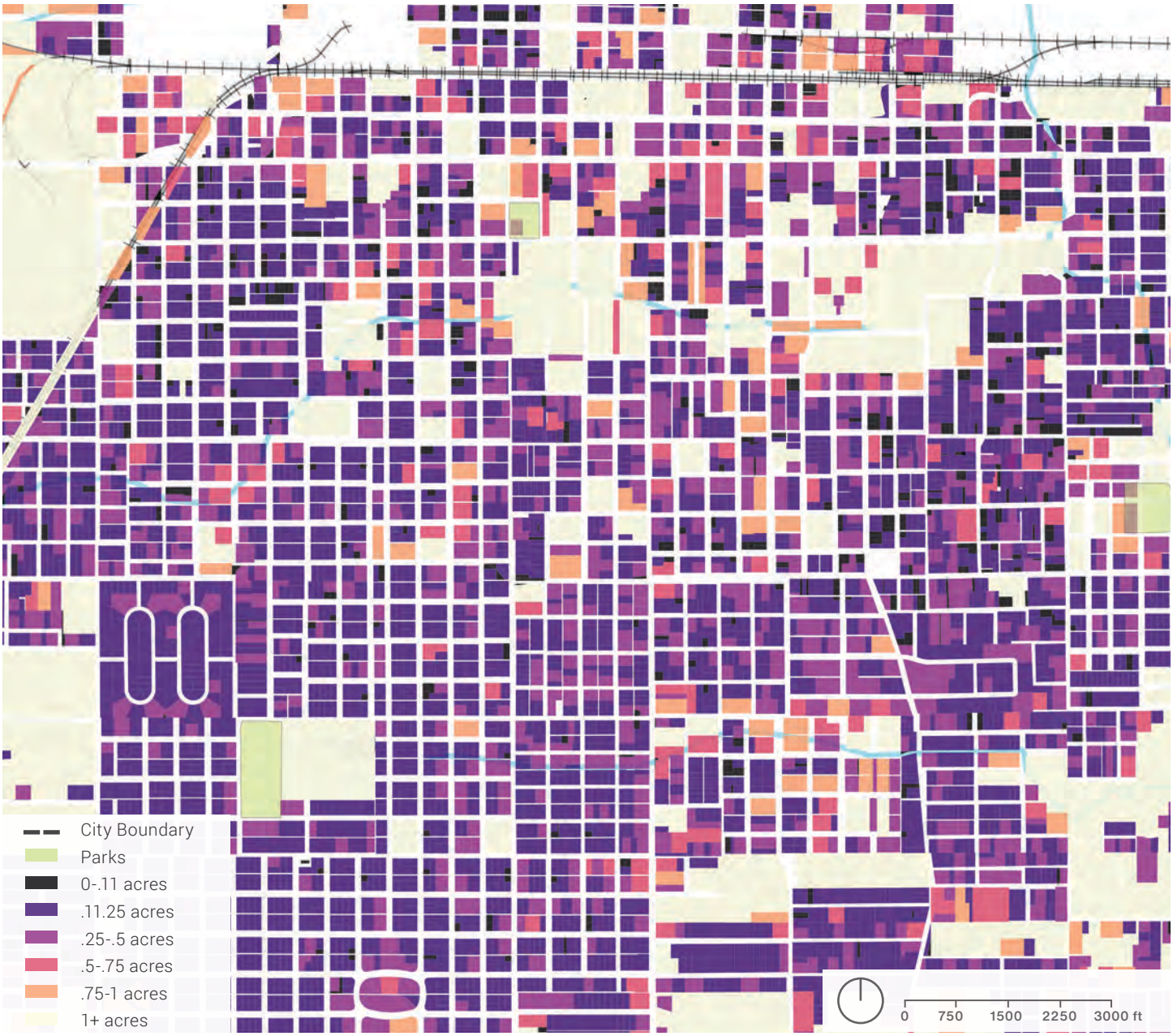
Often parcel size variations determine the character of different portions of a city, and one neighborhood from another. While there is parcel size variation in Pine Bluff, it is not clearly differentiated as in many other cities. To some extent, properties located further from the city's historic core are a little larger on average than those closer to the core. But the difference is not clearly pronounced. This map also illustrates ways in which the city is divided, principally by industrial properties to the west of the historic city core. Pine Bluff's growth leapfrogged many previously active industries isolating pockets of the community. To the outside of I-530, disconnected growth promoted by the city's subdivision regulations are apparent. These areas are further isolated from the city as a whole.

Additionally, the south and southeastern fringes of the historic core city demonstrate a lack of cohesiveness, divided by larger properties which erode community cohesion. Near the northwest corner, the Northside area stands apart from the remainder of the community, as does the West End. These two parts of the city should be analyzed apart from the core of Pine Bluff, needing their own identity to reflect their separation. The inner-West End is also separated from the core, yet more directly connected. It stands neither apart from the core, nor entirely part.



Going forward, strengthening the relationship between these outlaying and semi-outlaying communities and the core will be important. Some outlaying areas are substantial in size, able to assemble community identity within their current boundaries. But those areas outside of I-530 are a different condition. Continued growth in this haphazard pattern is not recommended. Rather they should be encouraged to be completed, as satellite communities which hold a clear identity.

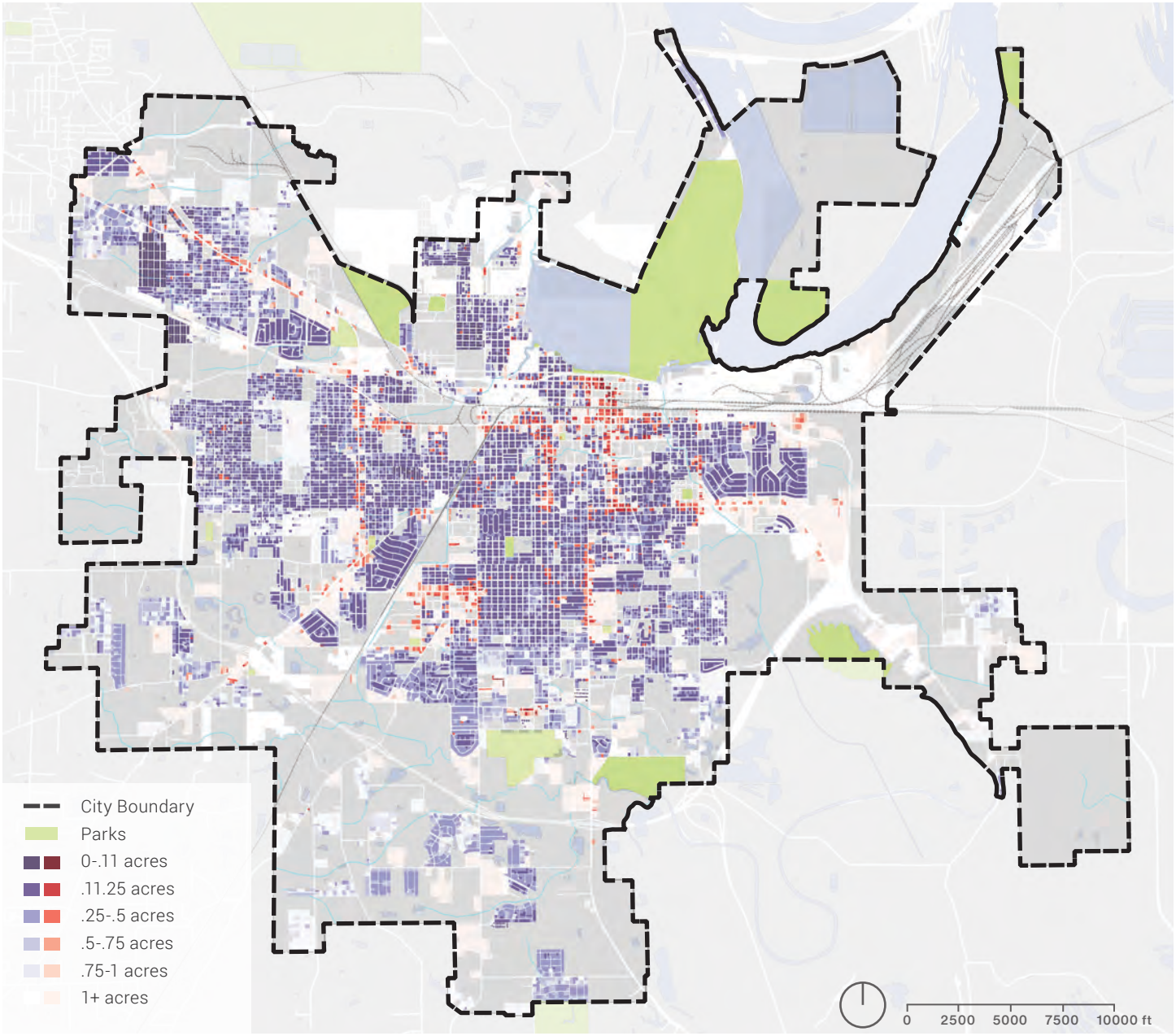
Focusing on the core neighborhood area of the central city, parcel sizes show no more clarity in pattern than across the city in general. Earlier additions to the historic city core reflect similar lot sizes and mixtures of lot sizes as later additions. For instance, the area including Circle and Cypress Drives is a later addition, filling-in a large property after the areas around it had been developed. This development is a clear change in block structure from surrounding areas, however the pattern of lot sizes is fairly similar. This general lack of clarity in lot size differentiation reflects an overall lack of clarity in neighborhood boundaries and definition.



LAND USE
RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL ACREAGE

Similar to overall parcel size, the breakdown residential and commercial parcel sizes show very little consistency of pattern. Along the commercial corridors within the core of Pine Bluff, parcel size varies substantially. The only areas of greater consistency are at the edges of town, such as E Harding and S Camden Roads near I-530. In these areas, commercial parcel size is consistently large, as is common in most commercial areas built within the past 40 years.

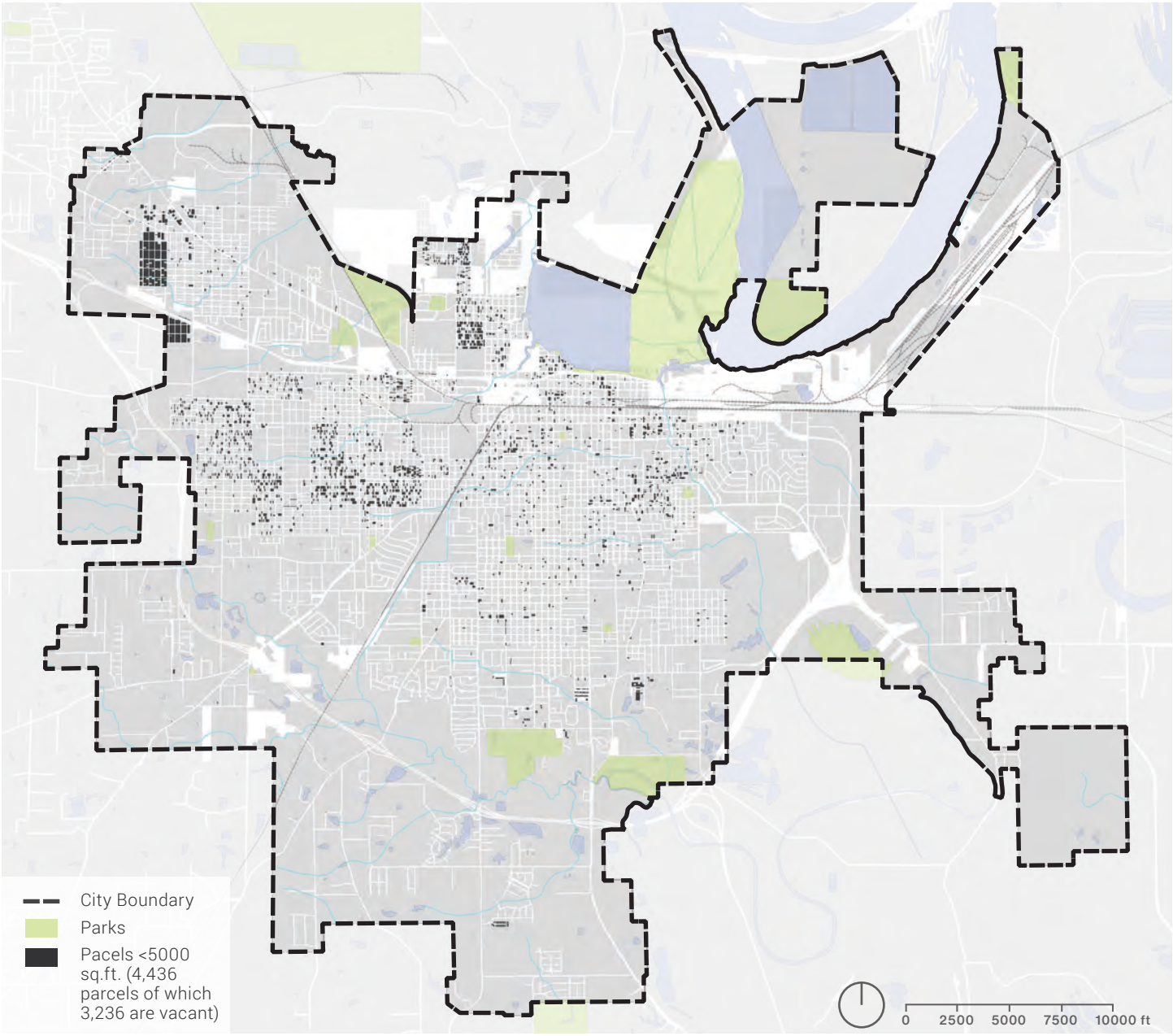
In comparison, most parcels within the City's older commercial corridors tend to be somewhat smaller in size, as was typical historically. However exceptions are found throughout both areas. Residential parcel size patters are varied overall with a tendency towards smaller lots nearer to the city core and larger lots towards the far periphery. However this variation is not consistent and is relatively minor compared to most other cities.



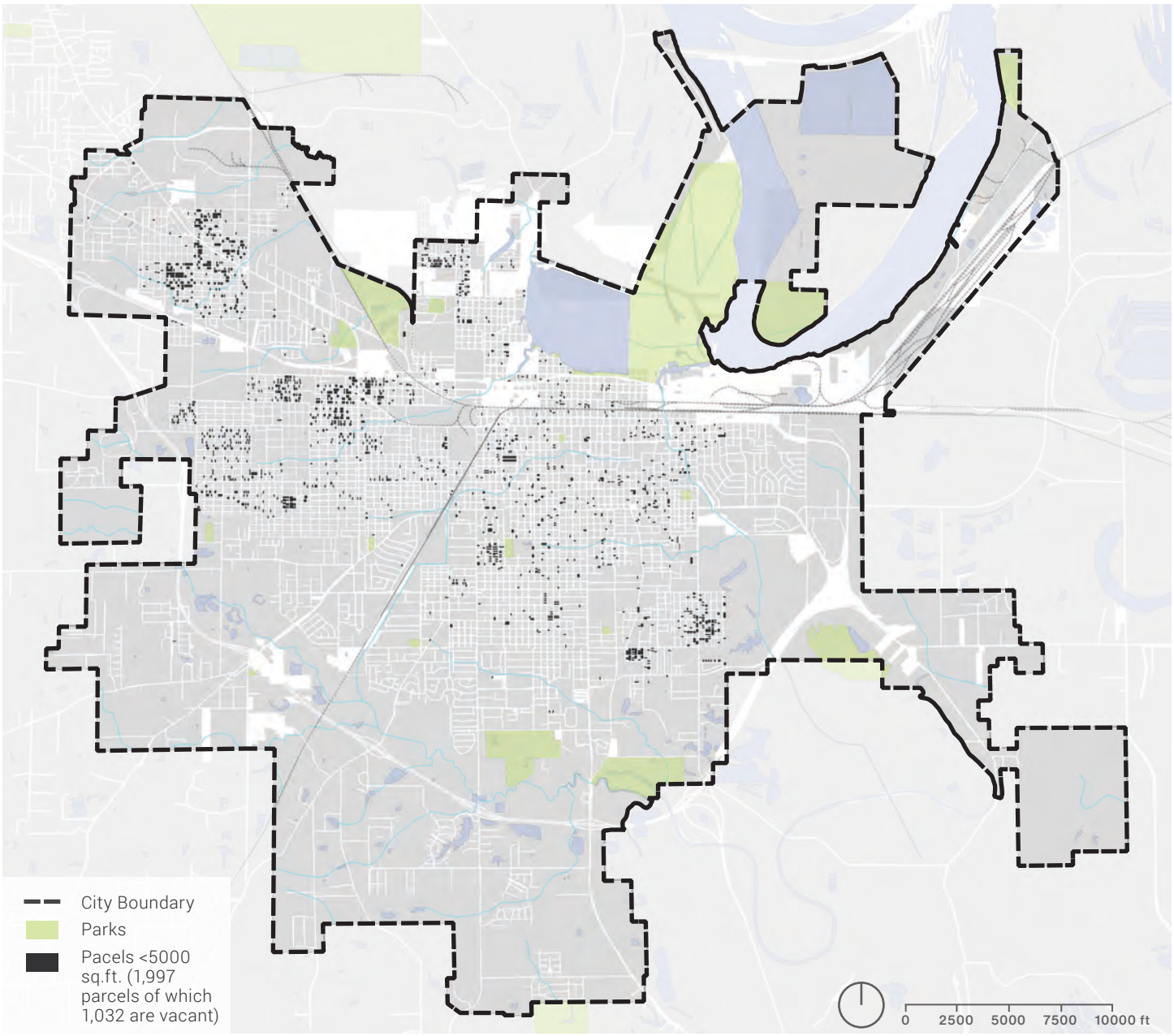
The zoning code and subdivision standards have made the properties identified in this diagram illegal. The minimum lot size across the entire city is 5,000 square feet. However, around 2,000 existing properties are below 5,000 square feet, made illegal by these codes from 1981. In many cities, minimum lot size has been used to erase the value of properties, often owned by communities of color. In Pine Bluff, the pattern of illegal lots is fairly sporadic, occurring nearly everywhere, with a few clear areas of concentration.

A minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet has no relationship to the history of Pine Bluff, nor does it further the health, safety, or welfare of the population. As far back as 1901, Sanborn fire insurance maps illustrate numerous historic properties well below 5,000 square feet in area. While many of these houses have since been demolished, the minimum size standard has no basis in Pine Bluff as a place. Further, properties less than 5,000 square feet are common across the United States, and often play an important role in providing housing diversity, affordability, and housing type options.

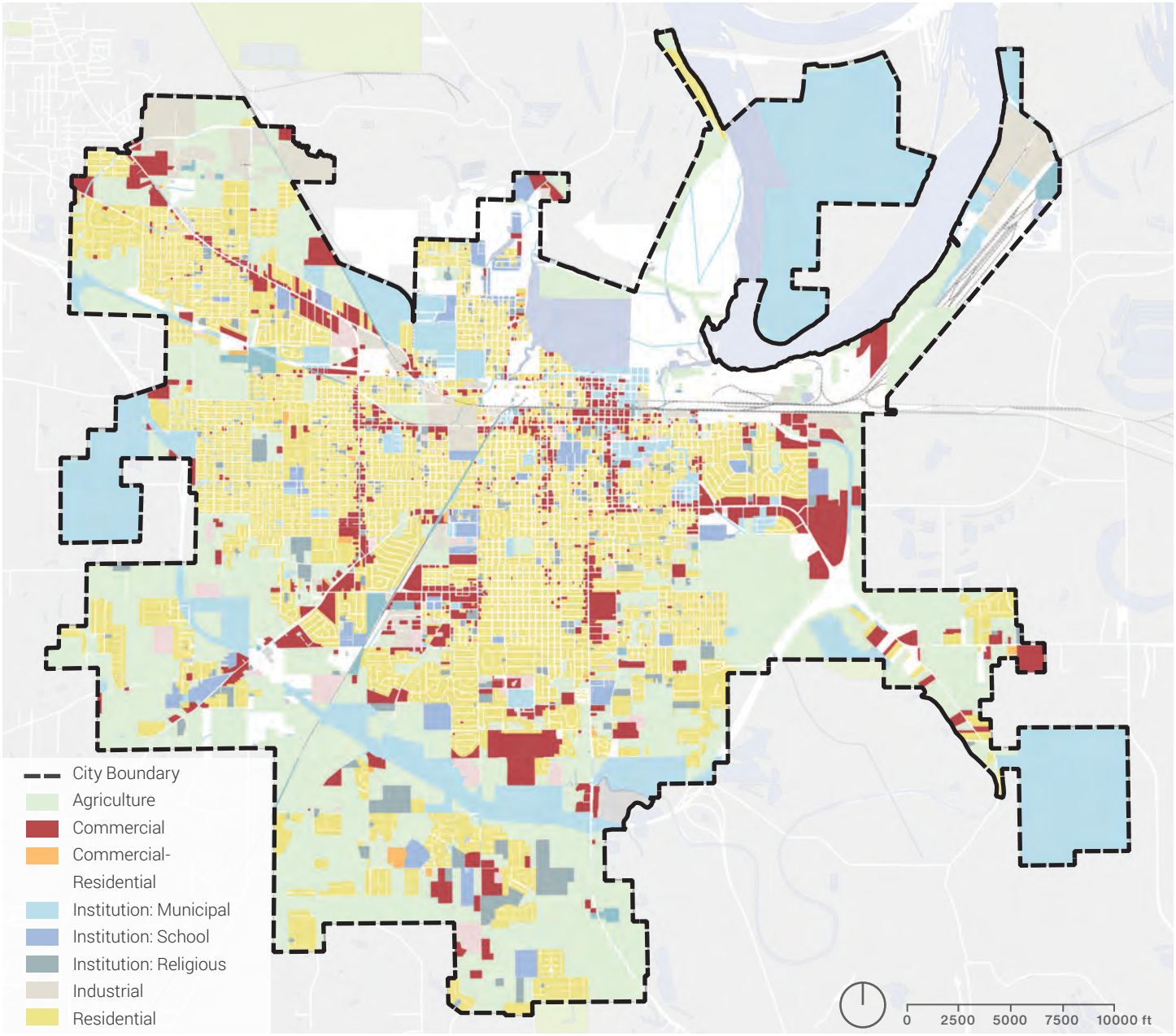
Economic stagnation and downtown and neighborhood decline are both influenced by making thousands of viable properties illegal. These properties are no longer able to be developed, sold, or substantially maintained, leading to deterioration.



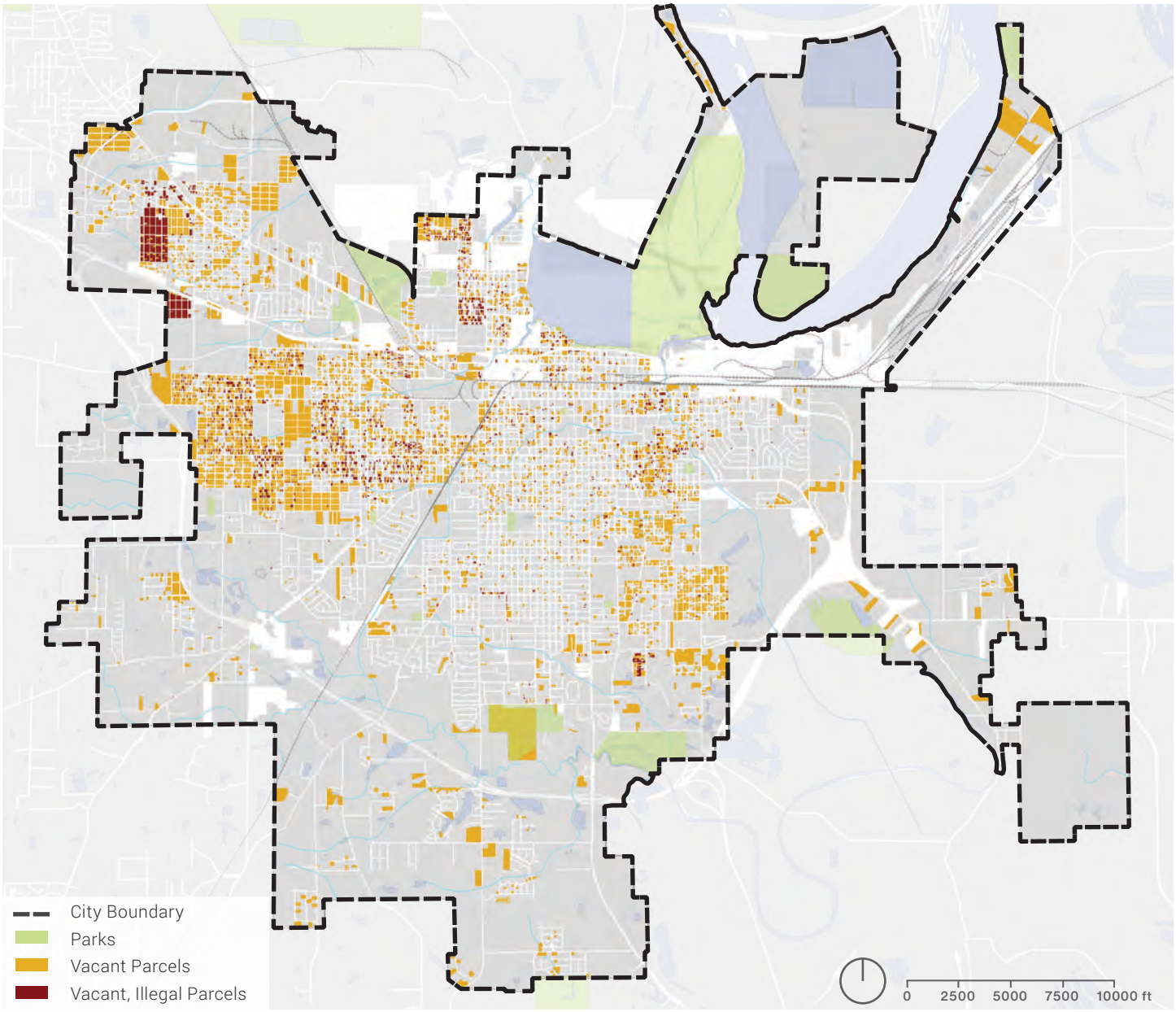
To further prove the point that 5,000 square feet is an inappropriate minimum lot size standard for Pine Bluff, this map indicates those properties which are between 5,000 and 6,000 square feet, which can be interpreted as being at the minimum lot size. There are fewer properties at the minimum lot size within the city of Pine Bluff than there are illegal properties below the minimum lot size.



This simplified existing land use map is aimed at exposing an overall structure of the City, which is further refined in the assessment section on neighborhoods. The downtown, primary commercial corridors, and later large-format commercial areas are evident. Interestingly, a number of commercial uses are also distributed amongst many residential areas. Some of these may be evidence of former streetcar stops, such as S Cherry St between W 25th and W 26th Avenues. Institutional uses are distributed widely throughout the community, with significant variance in size. While the legacy of large industrial properties remains across the community, few of these are active industrial uses. Generally industry has migrated to the northwest edge of the community and the industrial park, with a few located along the 4th Ave railroad corridor. Residential uses are spread broadly throughout the City. Closer to the core, residential properties are sited in a relatively continuous fabric while at the edges, outside of I-530, they are located sporadically among agricultural uses. Within the I-530 loop, there are a number of smaller properties that are identified as agricultural that are in fact just large residential properties. The remainder of agricultural uses identified within the loop are floodplain areas. Outside of the loop, the agricultural land use is also generally misleading. Most of these areas are either low intensity rural residential or undeveloped properties. Very little active agriculture remains within the City.

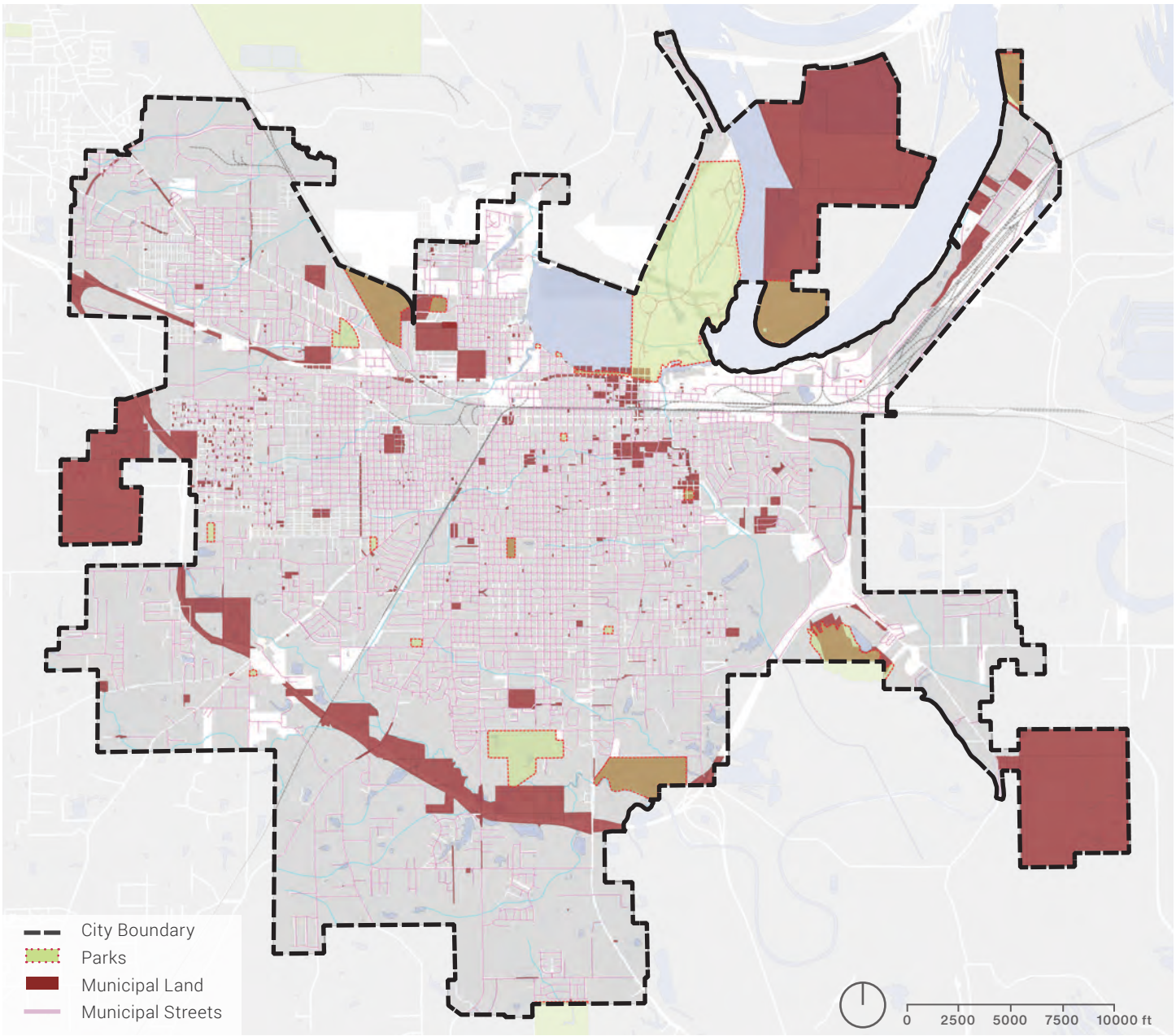


While vacant parcels are a serious concern overall within Pine Bluff, the pattern of where and how they occur is important to understand and consider for future opportunity. A number of vacant parcels have been made illegal by the zoning and subdivision ordinance, particularly in the historic core city and the northwest. The greatest abundance of vacant parcels is located to the west of the core city, areas cut-off by railroad tracks and industrial development, and generally impacted by high volume and high speed regional roadways. Additionally, the southeastern area, just outside of the historic core city includes a high concentration. This area is heavily impacted by wet and flood-prone land, and development historically occurred haphazardly. As such it is difficult to establish a clear identity for the area and deal with flooding problems. The other area of clear concentration is around First Ward as well as around E Harding between Georgia and Ohio. These areas have a strong physical structure, able to more easily support a cohesive neighborhood fabric. Presently there are too many areas to attempt to recover and not enough demand, funding, or focus to be successful everywhere. Focus is an invaluable tool when addressing issues of this magnitude. The City's core must be bolstered in order to influence areas further out. The areas where vacant parcels are concentrated are clearly towards the edged of the community. Movement from these areas to the core are of significant concern. North of 20th Ave, deterioration of the historic core neighborhoods will have a more significant long-term impact than that of areas further out. Re-investment in the core neighborhoods, however, can change the perception and pace of blight, growing from the inside out.



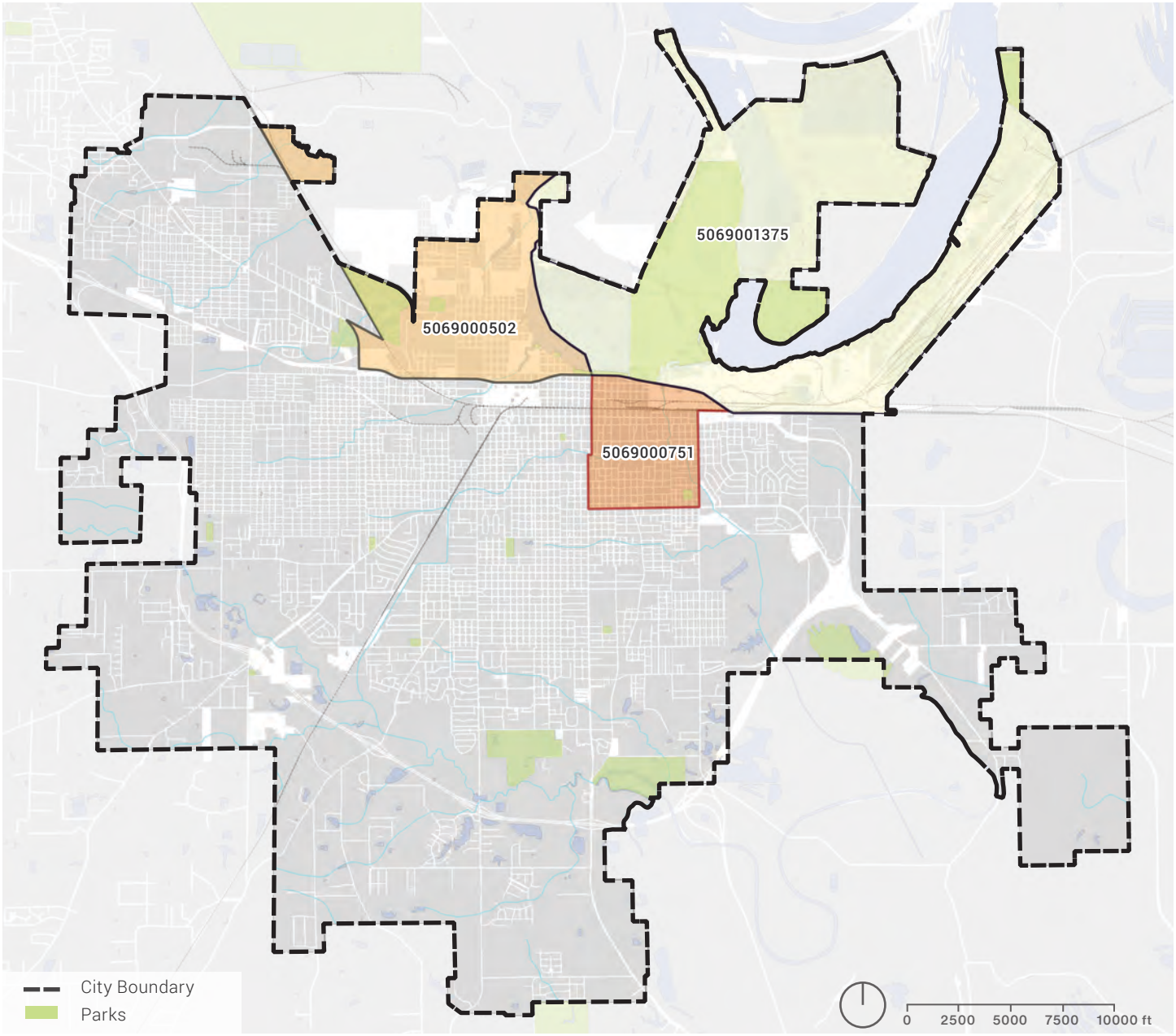
Government-owned parcels represent a significant portion of Pine Bluff's land and are for the most part undeveloped or undevelopable. Larger sized portions of this land lie in the flood plain to the north across Arkansas River and to the south, straddling Interstate 530. Another large parcel of argicultural land is located by the Pine Bluff Regional airport to the southeast. Other municipal parcels lie interspersed throughout the City, consisting of government functions such as the City Hall, the library and other civic institutions.

While some of this municipal land may seemingly provide additional development opportunities, re-investing in the core neighborhoods and supporting existing municipal functions within those neighborhoods will create a more robust and sustainable development structure in the long term. Additionally, since all city streets are considered municipal land, ensuring that strategic focus goes to developing and maintaining appropriate streetscape, particularly in the Downtown area and core neighborhoods can greatly enhance Pine Bluff's character and functionality.



Three Opportunity Zones have been mapped within the core of Pine Bluff. One of these zones covers the river park and industrial areas, which are expected to continue into the future as industrial areas. The other 2 zones cover the greater Downtown and Civic Center area and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and surrounding Townsend Park. Both of these Opportunity Zones are well placed to support redevelopment, both in areas well located to boost growth for Pine Bluff. However these areas require a clear plan for the future; currently the zoning and subdivision codes provide little positive direction for these districts.

Additionally, there is some skepticism concerning the use of Opportunity Zones as a means to accelerate the negative aspects of gentrification. By planning for the future of these districts, the City can clarify its' goals and expectations, which are likely to be reflected by new development. Without a clear plan, however, even well meaning investment can detract from the City's potential. Both the Downtown and UAPB opportunity zones should be special focus areas of the Comprehensive Plan.



Previous Plans

Downtown Pine Bluff has been the subject of several documents and studies, from the 1984 Land Use Plan, Go Forward Pine Bluff (2017), Reinventing Downtown Pine Bluff (2003), Downtown Main Street Master Plan and Design Guidelines, and Re-Live Downtown Pine Bluff (2018).

Each of these studies shares a common desire to stabilize, redevelop, and re-energize the core of the city. They all employ different approaches: community-driven strategic planning, detailed site design for streetscape improvements, or comprehensive design studies for redevelopment in downtown. Each approach serves a purpose. The comprehensive plan will seek to reinforce the values already established and will explore how the success of downtown impacts the success of the city as a whole.

In each of the previous studies, the assumption made (although not always blatantly expressed) is that the existing structural fabric and integrity of downtown Pine Bluff must first be stabilized, then each plan proceeds with its outlined task of looking toward the future.

Assessment Purpose

This assessment seeks to understand the rapid change and continuing decline of downtown buildings. This assessment is not a structural inventory. Access to buildings has not been sought nor granted. This assessment merely attempts to understand which buildings may be at risk of continued decline and instability. Declining roof conditions are a strong sign of building decay, if not remediated quickly.

The series of drone and street-level photographs on the following pages were taken in May through June, 2019. Buildings with missing or severely damaged roofs, as well as buildings which have been demolished have been compared to historic aerial photography available through Google Earth to gain an understanding on timeline of events.


WALNUT ST
BARRAQUE ST
CHESTNUT ST
Visable Roof Damage
Building Shell Only


SARACEN LANDING
SAENGER THEATER
PINE ST
DONALD W. REYNOLDS COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTER
CHESTNUT ST
MARTHA MITCHELL EXPY
BARRAQUE ST
2ND AVE
WALNUT ST


BARRAQUE ST
PINE ST
MAIN ST


WALNUT ST
CHESTNUT ST
COMMUNITY THEATER
SAENGER THEATER
2ND AVE
PINE ST
BARRAQUE ST
JEFFERSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE
SARACEN LANDING
MAIN ST

The buildings between Barraque and 3rd vary greatly in condition. Some have been maintained and renovated, some have been demolished, and others are in varying states of care.

Between Barraque and 2nd, one building has been demolished since 2015, with only remnants of its facade remaining. Its neighbor to the south appears to have received a roof upgrade since 2016.

Of note is the Saenger Theater. Aerial views don't immediately indicate roof damage, but inspection from the inside clearly indicates water damage.

The theater's neighbor to the east has little roof remaining.

Between 2nd and 3rd, one building appears to have standing water and the potential for future roof damage as a result.

Most of the buildings in this three-block area appear to have in-tact roofs.

Although Burt's has been renovated and maintained, the building immediately to its north is beginning to show signs of possible roof damage. It appears to be in stable condition and one which is not beyond remediation.

One building, near 3rd Street, has been demolished between 2016 and 2018.

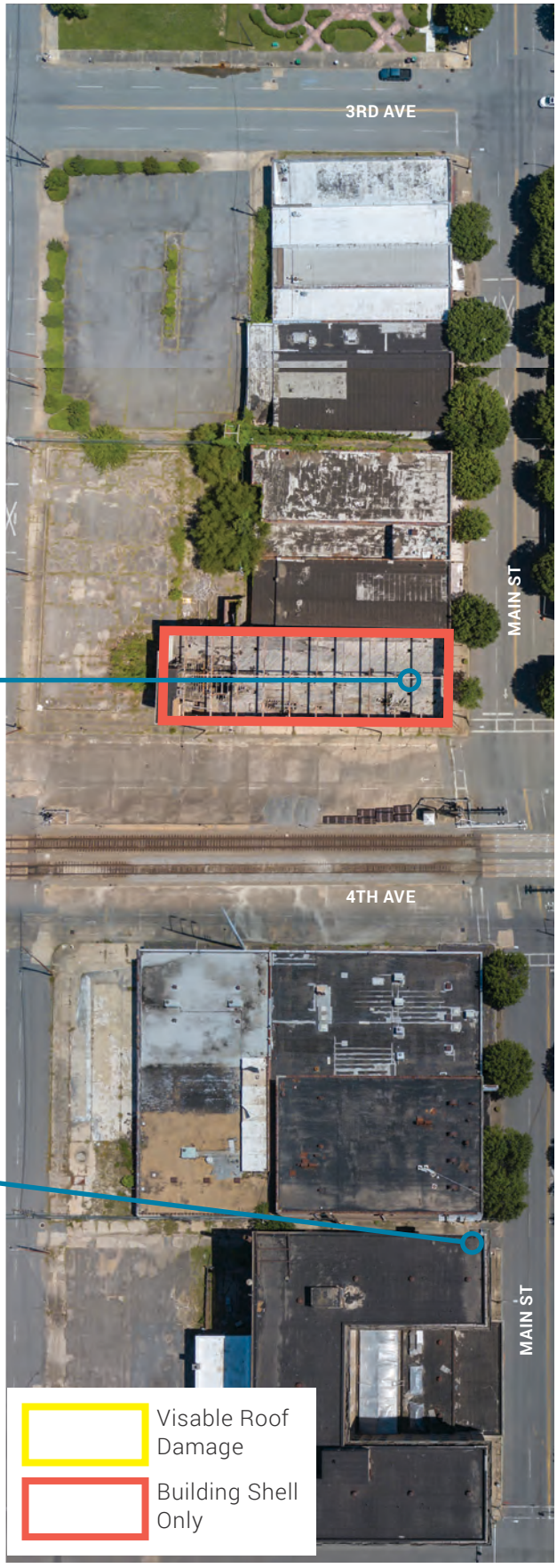
Visable Roof Damage

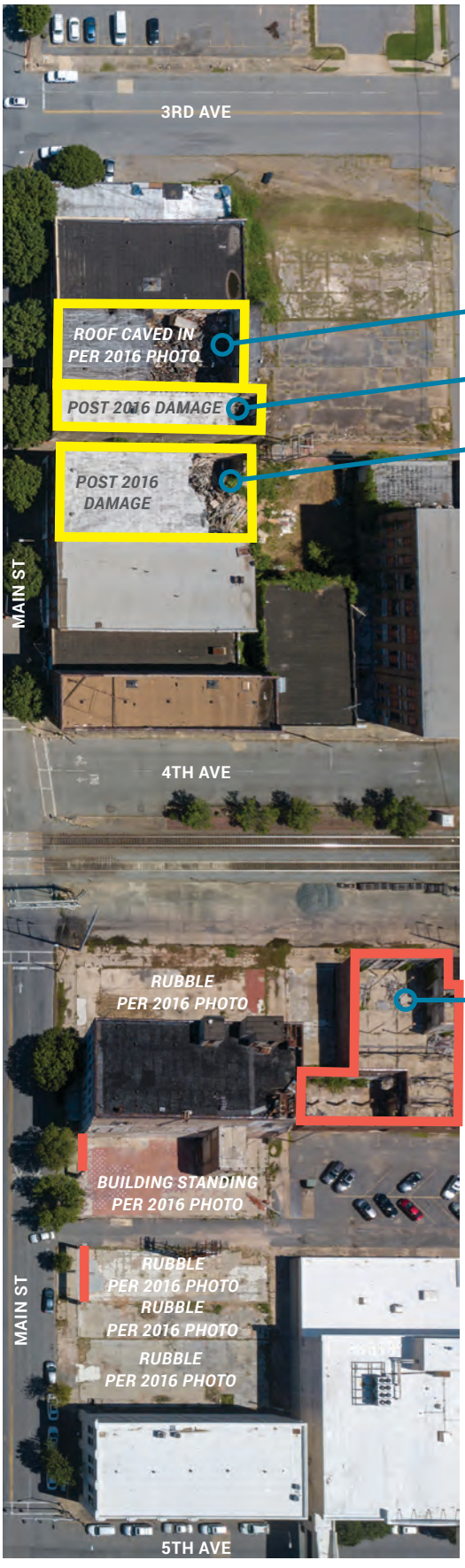
Building Shell Only

Most of the buildings along the west side of Main between 3rd and 5th are intact today.

Of note is the building at the northwest corner of 4th and Main. In 2014, the building had a Kress Building Restoration sign along its facade. By 2019, the roof is gone, with damage penetrating to the ground floor.

Below: The Pines Hotel





Roofs on the east side of Main Street between 3rd Ave and 4th Ave appear to be in tact as of 2013. By 2015, the northern highlighted building (the old department store) has significant roof damage.

The two buildings south of the caved roof show significant signs of roof deterioration in 2016. Both have since caved in.

Today, the southern highlighted building and it's neighbor to the south (beauty supply) both have facades being propped to hold them up.

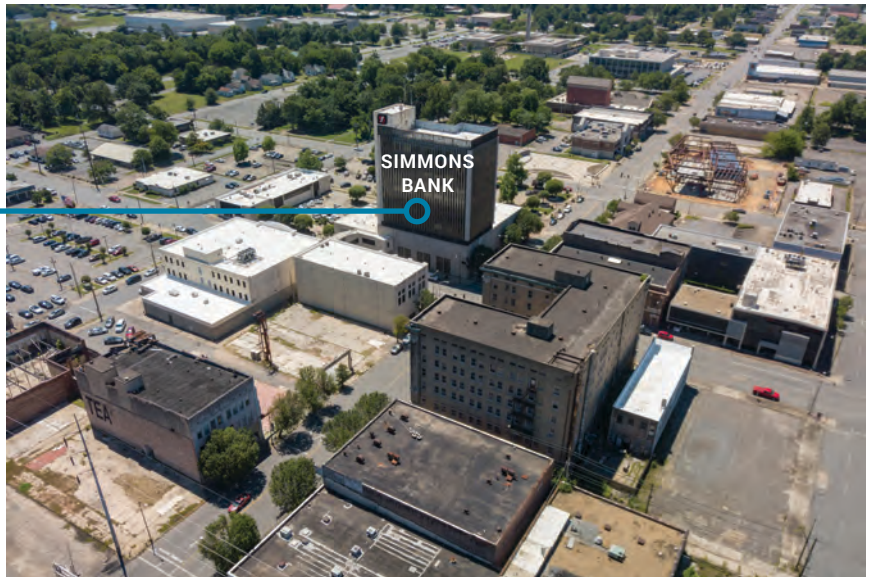
Further south, the block between 4th and 5th has fewer standing buildings than demolished ones. Two building facade remnants remain from the four buildings that originally stood.

These buildings began showing signs of roof damage by 2013, and progressively worsened until they were reduced to rubble in 2016. The building at the corner of 4th and Main began showing significant signs of roof decline by 2006.

Remaining buildings between 5th and where 7th would have connected to Main appear to have stable roofs.

The new library is underconstruction on the southwest corner of 6th and Main in this photo.

One building has been demolished in this area, near the southern end of this section. That building appeared to have a stable roof in 2013. By 2015, the rear half of the roof had been substantially compromised. By 2018, the building was demolished. This again reinforces the importance of roof maintenance.



Building roofs in this area appear to be in fine condition. The plaza at 6th and Main was home to a building in 2009. The building is gone by 2010 and was used for parking until 2018, prior to the construction of the plaza.

Visable Roof Damage

Building Shell Only

Building roofs in the block between where 7th should connect to Main Street and 8th appear to be in fine condition. Two buildings closer to 8th may have received roof repairs or upgrades since 2016.

Visable Roof Damage

Building Shell Only

The block between where 7th should connect to Main Street and 8th houses one building on the east side, the Arts and Science Center for Southeast Arkansas. It is newer construction and appears to be in good condition.

This page is intentionally blank.

2.2 REGULATIONS & CODE REVIEW

Chapter 20 - Planning and Development

Notes

- Establishes planning director, assistant, zoning administrator, and associated responsibilities.
- Establishes the City Planning Commission (9 members, 3 year terms)

Chapter Assessment

Chapter 20 is quite concise and uncontroversial.

Chapter 22 - Signs and Advertising

Notes

- 22-27 Temporary signs.
  - This should be revised to clarify that the minimum height across public rights-of-way is a minimum clearance height.
- 22-29 Lighting
  - The CBD and potentially other areas of the city may need to require that sign illumination be achieved by lights external to the sign, not internally illuminated.
- 22-34 - 22-35 Signs permitted in various business districts
  - The means of measuring the maximum sign area, 15% of the building elevation, is not a good predictor of what is appropriate as it is tied to the size of the building such that a taller building could achieve more signage. It is recommended to restrict individual sign sizes, as is currently done, and either:
    - a) Restrict the total number of signs per tenant and number of other signs such as building signs and directories, or
    - b) Restrict the total area of signage, but separate the ground floor (and mezzanine) from the remainder of the building where the ground floor may include much more signage than the other floors in aggregate.
  - Distinctions between 22-34 and 22-35 seem minor, not requiring a separate section.

Chapter Assessment

Chapter 22 is generally reasonable and appropriate. Modifications are recommended with a specific eye to calculating the area of business signs. Overall recommended modifications are minor.

Chapter 24 - Streets and Sidewalks

Notes

- 24-2(c) prohibits playing basketball in streets, which is odd as a restriction on local streets, particularly in a place with limited public parks.
- 24-62 requires all property owners to construct and maintain a sidewalk and curbing at their property in accordance with 24-66 standards. This is a typical requirement but has clearly not been enforced and is not reflected in Chapter 25 sidewalk requirements.
  - 24-65 specifies that sidewalks should extend from property lines to the curb. This requires more nuance or modification to account for planting strips (street lawn) which are common across most of the city. There is no apparent location where this requirement has been enforced.
- 24-126 specifies a numeric visibility triangle based upon 25 feet measured along the right-of-way line. This requirement is a shortcut to actual sight line analysis which may permit structures and other potential obstructions to be located nearer to a corner. This is particularly important when constructing downtown / main street buildings, townhouses, and other zero-lot-line conditions. An alternative compliance should be permitted which allows the use of actual sight line analysis based upon the position of drivers within designated travel lanes, as is customarily specified in DOT standards. However, subsection (2) does provide relief which allows zoning setbacks less than 25 feet to exempt buildings from this standard.
- 24-152(c) limits curb cuts to 14 feet maximum for any one house or lot. This is a good base standard. However section (d) which follows sets an extremely low bar for exceeding 14 feet.
- 24-161 includes a number of requirements for block parties which ensure that no block party will ever happen if they were to follow the rules.
  - (a) sets a $100 application fee for block parties. It is recommended that this fee be removed entirely

in order to promote community events. Other cities have removed block party fees for this reason.

- (b) requires liability insurance in the amount of $300,000.00 per incident and $1,000,000.00 in aggregate. It is recommended that the city research and adjust if necessary their public liability coverage in order to alleviate this requirement from applicants. It is absolutely unthinkable to require residents to furnish insurance for block parties.
- (c) sets forth application requirements which are for the most part reasonable. It is recommended that a standard form be created and made available. Items 10 and 11 should be removed from application requirements, or only required for block parties with a minimum number of vendor and potential attendees.

Chapter Assessment

Chapter 24 is mostly focused on the construction of streets, however a few requirements are detrimental to future development and community-centric activities. A small number of modifications are needed.

Chapter 25 - Subdivisions

Notes

- Definitions
  - Building Line - essentially the setback line recorded on a plat, yet this is overridden by the zoning ordinance. The building line does not permit encroachment.
  - Rural Improvements - these exclude curb & gutter, sidewalk, and street lights
  - Subdivision - begins at 2 or more lots and includes multi-structure apartment developments
  - Minor Subdivision - up to 5 lots approval is by the zoning administrator
- 25-12 directs development containing floodplains to the floodplain section of the city ordinances.
- 25-13 directs the ability to obtain land for public use
  - (a) Indicates that the land use plan or master plan may indicate properties to be purchased or condemned for public uses.
  - (b) Indicates that the master parks plan or comprehensive plan may indicate properties to be purchased or condemned for the construction of a park, school, community building, or off-street parking.
  - (c) Allows the purchase of historic, scenic, or otherwise publicly beneficial properties to be purchased under (a)
- 25-14 on industrial and commercial subdivisions requires a minimum right-of-way of 60 feet be used for local streets, and otherwise meet standards for major and secondary streets directed by the master street plan.
- 25-15 prescribes the same conditions for multi-family apartment developments as specified in 25-14.
- 25-16 mobile home park subdivisions
  - (e)(2) Should be modified to avoid cul-de-sacs.
  - (e)(3) Should consider modifications to the screening requirements.
  - (f) Standards require large lots, which essentially create normal residential subdivisions, yet require additional storage space outside of the lots. In aggregate this may be excessive.
  - (g)(3) establishes minimum roadway requirements:
    - 27 feet for entry drives where parking is on one side, 24 feet where no parking is allowed
    - 22 feet for other drives
- 25-86 indicates the rural improvements apply to subdivisions where all lots are 2 acres or greater.
- 25-87(a)(1) indicates that a standard collector street has a pavement width of 36 feet.
- 25-96 on monuments includes an orphaned section which establishes centerline radius for streets:
  - Arterials - 10 degrees = 573.5 feet
  - Collectors - 15 degrees = 383 feet
  - Commercial, industrial - 20 degrees = 288 feet
  - Local - 40 degrees = 146 feet
  - These standards are fine, but they are oddly located.
- 25-99 Lot Design Criteria
  - (b) Requires a minimum lot size of 5,000 sq.ft. except within PUDs.
  - (c) Requires a minimum lot width of 50 feet or lot size of 5,000 sq.ft. in order to be served by public sewers.
  - (e) For R-1, establishes a 25ft setback from all streets and minimum corner lot width of 75 feet to accommodate a 25ft setback.

- (g) Requires a 10ft landscape buffer from arterials and other "disadvantageous uses", which further restricts driveways.
- (i) B-2 lots are not required to front public streets.
- (k) For commercial and industrial, establishes a 40ft setback from all streets.

Assessment

Overall the lot design criteria creates a low density pattern of development and includes standards which should be in the zoning ordinance. Requirement (c) on sewer access by lot size is especially restrictive and provides no alternative via PUD. And requirement (b) on minimum lot size gives relief for PUDs, which indicates a lack of understanding of smaller lot sizes and where they should be located. Together these requirements are problematic and more appropriately handled through zones and the zoning ordinance. Additionally, the 5,000 square foot lot area restriction makes approximately 4,000 properties illegal while there are only approximately 2,000 properties between 5,000 and 6,000 square feet.

Notes

- 25-100 Block Design Criteria
  - (b) Establishes minimum block size requirements:
    - 2,000 feet maximum block length
    - 500 feet minimum block length
    - 1,000 feet along arterials

Assessment

Overall the block design criteria creates developments that are not walkable and have no connection to the city's history or evolution. Block length requirements are the primary source of this issue, of which all numeric standards are too large. While there is not overall consistency in the city's platting, most of the original and pre-1930s blocks measure approximately 250x320 feet. This size is very walkable, comparable to Portland's famous 300x300 grid.

Notes

- 25-101 Easements
  - (e) Requires a 10ft public utility easement for power and telecom on the front, rear, and potential other lot lines, where necessary for the utility locations.
  - (c) Requires a 5ft public utility easement at all rear lot lines and potentially along side lot lines.

Assessment

Utility easement requirements similar to these have become common. These requirements are problematic in more compact areas, especially with townhouses and commercial developments. Power, telecom, and other utilities should be located within the public rights-of-way, not on private properties, except where necessary due to right-of-way constraints.

Notes

- 25-102 Sidewalks
  - (a) Requires sidewalks on only 1 side of the street to service schools.
  - (b) Sidewalks may be required on 1 or 2 sides of collectors where necessary to access schools, parks, playgrounds, and places of public assembly.
  - (c) Allows the CPC to require more or wider sidewalks near schools, parks, playgrounds, places of public assembly, and commercial areas.
  - (d) Establishes minimum sidewalk widths:
    - 3.5ft wide in residential areas
    - 5ft wide in nonresidential areas

Assessment

Overall the block design criteria creates developments that are not walkablGenerally these requirements are insufficient. Where Chapter 24 expects all property owners to construct and maintain sidewalks, this section exempts most properties from having sidewalks at the time of subdivision construction. Additionally the minimum sidewalk widths are significantly below common practice standards.

Notes

- 25-118 General Street Requirements
  - (c) Suggests that minor streets be configured to discourage through traffic and that as few minor streets as possible are built.
  - (d) Suggests that curved streets are preferred and that a grid is discouraged.
  - (h) Requires dedication of additional right of way if a subdivision is along a street less than 50 feet in width.
  - (l) Requires a 25ft radius of corner property lines.

- (m) Requires a minimum curb radius of 25ft.
- (p) Restricts alleys from use in residential subdivisions except where substantial evidence is provided to indicate their need.

Assessment

Generally this section requires a disconnected system of streets within subdivisions comprised of larger lot single family homes in a format that prefers automobile access over pedestrian access.

Notes

- 25-119 Street Design Criteria
  - (b) Encourages disconnected streets and separated residential subdivisions with limited entry roads from collectors and arterials.
  - (d)(1) Minimum right-of-way width: (all reasonable)
    - Controlled access / highway: 200ft
    - Principal arterial: 80ft
    - Minor arterial / major collector: 70ft
    - Minor Collector: 60ft
    - Local, loop, cul-de-sac: 50ft
    - Alley: 20ft
  - (d)(2) Minimum pavement width, back-of-curb to back-of-curb:
    - Highway / arterials: per the master street plan
    - Major collector: 47ft
    - Minor collector: 35ft
    - Local, loop, cul-de-sac: 27ft
    - Alley: 20ft
  - (e) Standard Streets
    - Local, loop, cul-de-sac:
      - 2,500vpd, 25-30mph, 2x 12ft lanes, no parking, 1x 3.5ft sidewalk
    - Principal arterial:
      - 17,600vpd, 40-45mph, 4x 12ft lanes, no parking, 51ft paved, 90ft ROW at intersections, 2x 3.5ft sidewalks
      - At 20,600vpd it requires a continuous 12ft left turn lane
    - Minor arterial / major collector:
      - 12,200vpd, 35-40mph, 4x 11ft lanes, no parking, 80ft ROW at intersections, 2x 3.5ft sidewalks
    - Minor collector:
      - 4,000vpd, 25-30mph, 2x 11ft lanes, 1x 10ft parking provided but not striped, 1x 3.5ft sidewalk

Assessment

Generally this section requires a street layout and street design that is oriented towards vehicular movement at the expense of other roadway users. These standards do not support walkable neighborhood or main street development, they are generally suburban in nature.

Chapter Assessment

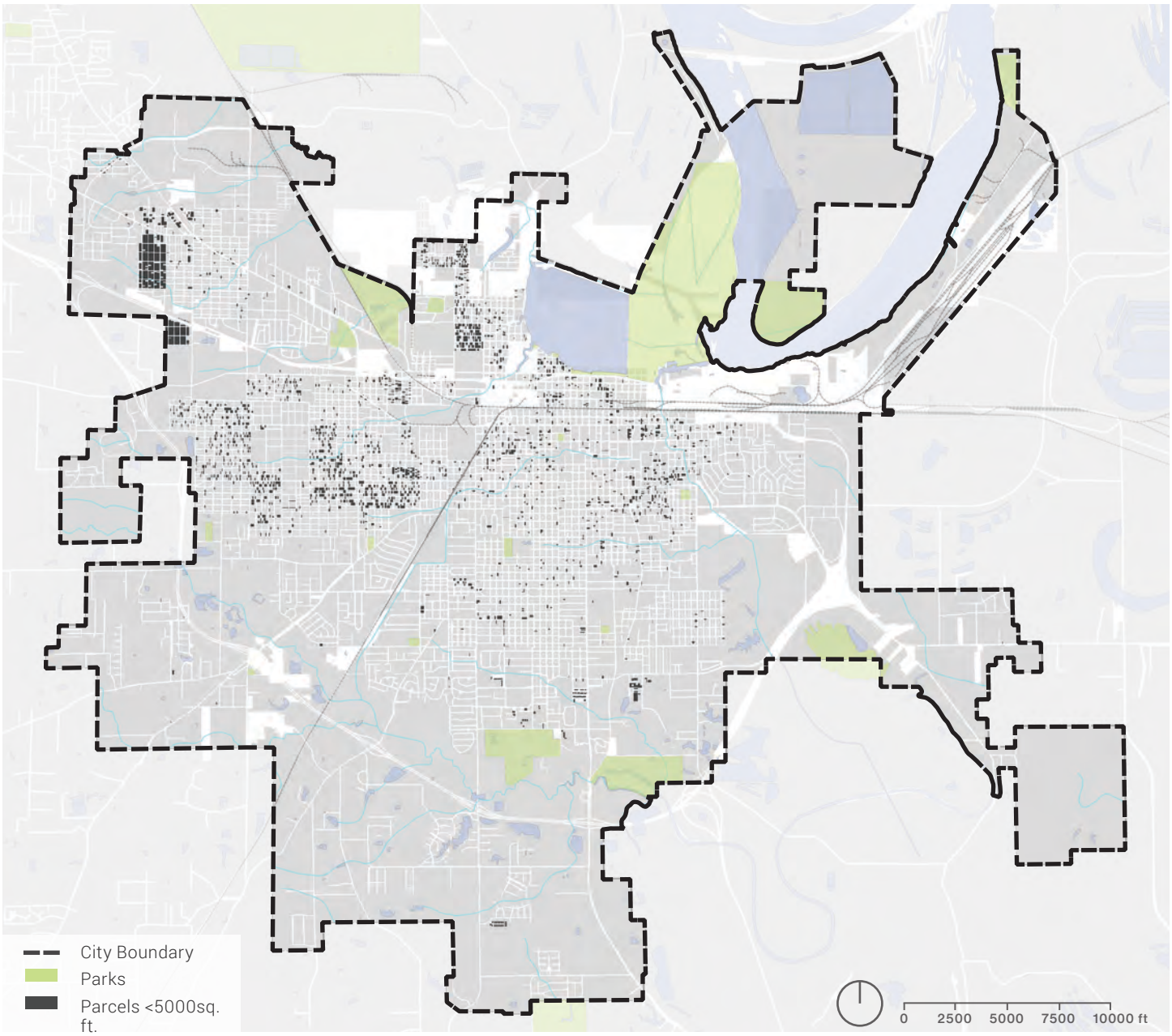
As is common with most subdivision standards, Chapter 25 duplicates requirements that should be in zoning, and through its lot, block design, and street standards requires that new development be unwalkable and suburban in nature. Substantial modification to Chapter 25 is necessary in order to promote more viable, compact, and desirable forms of development which the current chapter expressly prohibits.

We are particularly concerned with the 5,000 square foot minimum lot size, which is also reflected in the zoning code. See separate comment specific to this issue on the following page.

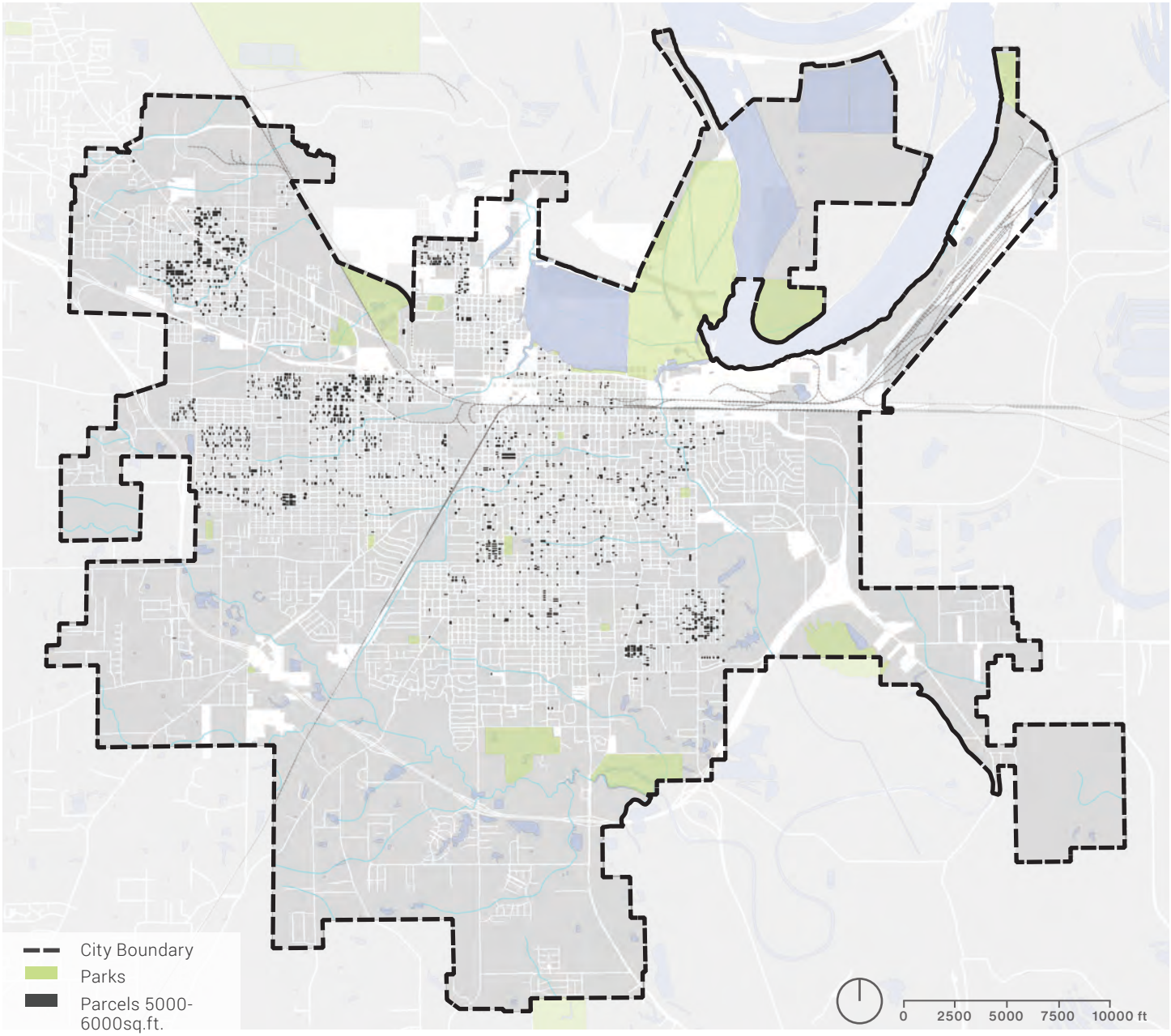
Minimum Lot Sizes

Both the subdivision requirements and zoning code have set a minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet across the city. These documents use strong language and have serious consequences for properties that are less than 5,000 square feet. We've determined that approximately 4,200 properties, residential and commercial, are presently illegal. The zoning code has strong language about nonconformities, especially Section 29-60 on noncorforming use of land. We are concerned about this requirement for two reasons, which follow.

First, lot size restrictions have been used to disenfranchise communities of color in numerous instances. While we are not aware of the history of Pine Bluff's regulations, other similar restrictions have been established in the same period (1980's) in other cities, specifically to erase the value of properties and structures owned by african americans. The fact that 4,200 properties are illegal within Pine Bluff is alarming given this history. In comparison, there are fewer than 2,000 properties between 5,000 and 6,000 square feet, which cannot explain why 5,000 square feet should be chosen as the minimum standard.



Second, the minimum lot size is too large. While 5,000 square foot lots may be a good average for Pine Bluff, it should not be the minimum. Traditionally, detached single family homes have occupied lots as small as 3,000 square feet, and attached single family homes (townhomes) are typically smaller than 3,000 square feet. Similarly the minimum lot area per family for multi-family housing essentially makes multi-family housing impractical. Together these restrictions rob Pine Bluff of desirable housing options widely known as Missing Middle Housing.



Chapter 26 - Traffic

Notes

- Definitions
  - Some standards are in definitions, such as the width of an alley.
  - The CBD area is defined here which may need to be modified following comprehensive plan recommendations.
- 26-112 Speed Limits
  - This section permits the traffic director to increase speed limits but does not also provide the power to decrease speed limits. This should be modified to permit the director to decrease speed limits to 20mph in residential areas and 15mph within the CBD or other similar.
  - State law reference, reducing speeds: 27-51-206(a) gives broad local authority to reduce speed limits.
  - State law reference, maximum speeds:
    - 30mph in urban districts
    - 50mph for 1.5 ton capacity trucks
    - 60mph for other vehicles in other locations
- 26-114 One-way streets designated
  - This section may need to be modified following comprehensive plan recommendations.
- 26-145 Unlawful to sell merchandise from parked vehicles
  - This section may prohibit food trucks and other such vendors.
- 26-151 Parking on the southeast corner of Pine Street and Third Avenue
  - This section restricts parking in one public lot to two hours. This is unnecessary as other requirements in this section instruct that time limits can be enforced by signs. This restriction should be enforced by signs and removed from the code.
- 29-196 Parking prohibited from 1:00a.m. to 4:00a.m.
  - This section may need to be modified following comprehensive plan recommendations.
- 26-251 Obedience to traffic-control devices. (cyclists)
  - Consider adopting the Idaho stop for cyclists.
- 26-253 Riding on roadways and bicycle paths.
  - This section should be modified to give cyclists the right to use the full width of the vehicular lane that they are riding within. This may be limited to locations where a sharrow is provided, however it is recommended that this be the general practice rather than the current practice which directs cyclists towards the right-hand side of the roadway.
- 26-258 Parking (cyclists)
  - This section should be modified to allow cyclists to park bikes along poles and other permanent fixtures of the roadside where there are not available bicycle parking spaces, with the exception of intersection control signs. A statement should accompany limiting parked bicycles from obstructing a minimum clear and ADA-compliant pathway along the sidewalk.

Chapter Assessment

A number of sections are recommended for modification in this chapter. Overall recommended changes are minor and would result in the ability to make safer streets and more reasonable conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. Some sections are identified for their potential modification, dependent on comprehensive plan recommendations which are not yet known.

Chapter 29 - Zoning

Notes

Article 1. In General

- Definitions
  - Too many uses are defined, the list of uses should be minimized and generalized. Additionally, some definitions may be omitted to utilize their generally accepted definition.
  - Definitions include many requirements. For instance, Day Care facility regulations should be in supplemental regulations like home occupations. Similarly additional requirements and regulations for specific uses should not be located in definitions.
  - Variances and similar administrative tools should be detailed in a specific code section, not in the definitions.
- Penalties for violation
  - Clearly junkyards (automobile salvage yards) have been a problem historically.

Assessment

Generally, this section requires modifications to remove standards from the definitions of terms and uses, and to be reduced by generalizing use categories.

Article 2. Administration and Enforcement

- 29-37 - Amendments and uses permitted on review
  - (b) Uses permitted on review (UPOR) is the equivalent of conditional uses for Pine Bluff.
- Nonconformities
  - The subdivision regulations set the minimum lot size to 5,000 sq.ft. There are 4,200 residential lots under 5,000 sq.ft. which is more than double the number of lots between 5,000 and 6,000 sq.ft. In other cities, the minimum lot size has been used to disenfranchise communities of color by making their properties nonconforming, essentially erasing their property value. This section on nonconformities is otherwise typical of other such section, but in the light of minimum lot size, it creates a serious problem.

Article 3. Districts Generally; Official Zoning Map

- 29-81 Schedule of district regulations
  - Generally zoning districts are organized into residences, businesses, and industry per state legislation. A few additional categories have been added for planned unit developments, recreation areas, mixed-use areas (R-B), and agrarian settlements (A-R). The residential, business, and industrial districts are organized by intensity as is common practice in euclidean zoning, however only the order of the residential districts is clearly according to intensity, the other zones only differentiate by intensity and are not ordered by intensity.
- Zoning Map
  - The zoning map illustrates that zones have been applied retroactively, essentially describing development rather than grouping development to promote responsible growth and compatibility. RMF zones exemplify this condition as they are applied to individual properties. Zones should be applied more broadly, not to properties on an individual basis. Similarly, the business zoning is inconsistent and fragmented. Interestingly, B-3's zone description suggests it should not be applied in a stip-manner, but this is exactly how B-3 is mapped in many conditions around the city as it is along University, Blake, and Harding.

Article 4. Districts Regulations

- 29-X - General district comments
  - Overall the way the districts are written results in repeated text which makes it difficult to understand the differences from one zone to another. Observing the definition of districts and their application across the city, it appears that the districts were created to encapsulate the character and history of development at the time, not to direct the future of the city. As a result, the districts are applied in a very fragmented nature many of which apply on a parcel-by-parcel basis. None of the zones as they are currently written are able to establish and promote the types of downtown, downtown-adjacent, and close-in neighborhood development that has become desirable across the country, which also reflects the development that was common in Pine Bluff prior to WW2.
  - Permitted uses
    - (b)(4) in R1 and R2, (b)(5) in R3, etc - permits lots that are smaller than the minimum to be zoned to the zone in question (R1, R2, etc) by discretion of the zoning administrator, however the nonconformities chapter does not account for this. Also, a lot size is not a use so the title is confusing.
  - UPOR
    - Garage apartments should be allowed for non-relatives.
  - Height regulations
    - It is not recommended to have height in feet for height restrictions, story restrictions, which exist in the code, are preferred.
    - Height measurement notes in district standards are not fully clarified.
  - Space regulations
    - Lot coverage is low for R3

- 29-105 R-MF multifamily residential district
  - (f)(5) & (f)(6) lot area per family and open area
    - Both the lot area per family and minimum open area are excessively large, making it impossible to build normal multi-family buildings. As it is related, the density numbers are too low for normal multi-family housing.
  - (f)(2) minimum 25ft setback on all sides of the property; this is too large, out of character with a multifamily district.
  - (h) Screening - note that the language used suggests that multi-family housing is not residential.
  - Generally the R-MF zone is designed to discourage multi-family housing, requiring too much property and open space per unit.
- 29-106 R-HR residential high-rise district
  - (d)(2) Requires 900 sq.ft. of lot area per unit, including parking area.
    - This regulation is too high and makes an assumption about how parking will be provided for a high-rise. As a result, it discourages high-rise buildings.
  - (d)(3) Yard requirements are too large, discouraging high-rise buildings.
- 29-107 R-PUD
  - Typically PUD processes are not described in the requirements for that zone.
  - The non-residential restrictions are excessive, 5% gross area is low and the distance restrictions are significant for the limited uses that are allowed in an R-PUD.
- 29-10X - Business districts generally
  - The uses are very specific and limited, they should be simplified and reduced to general categories. There tend to be a lot of uses in UPOR that should be more broadly available.
  - Screening requirements apply to being across the street from residential districts which could result in requiring a fence or hedge along the front of the B-1 property.
- 29-108 B-1 neighborhood business district
  - The impact of uses on adjacent residential may be better controlled by maximum tenant size or other means rather than restricting the uses to only a few.
  - (2) Area requirements include a 10ft grass strip at the front of the lot, which is incompatible with business district form.
- 29-210 B-3 highway commercial
  - The zone description states that it should not be applied in a strip manner, however this is the way that much of the B-3 zone has been applied.
  - Setbacks are excessive.
- 29-211 B-4 general commercial
  - This zone is described as a transition from intensive commercial areas to other areas, but it is not necessarily applied in this manner. Additionally, as a transition multi-family housing should be permitted by right.
  - (e)(2) Setbacks are excessive, and a 10ft grass strip is required in the front setback, which is incompatible with the character of the zone.
- 29-212 B-5 central business district
  - (c) Multi-family above the ground floor requires UPOR.
  - (d) No off-street parking is required for existing buildings, this is a good standard to see. However it is not clear how parking is managed for new buildings, which should also not be required to have parking.
  - (e)(2) FAR is not a recommended standard for use in zoning, however the FAR limitation is reasonable.
- 29-113 CI-PUD commercial-industrial planned unit development
  - Like the R-PUD, it is odd to have the process and requirements listed within a zone.
  - Unfortunately the R-PUD does not allow off-street parking requirements to be reduced by the planning commission.
- 29-118 R-R recreational
  - The minimum size of recreational properties is 15 acres, which is excessively large.
  - (f)(2) It is odd that no maximum lot coverage is specified for this recreation district.
- 29-119 R-B residential-commercial district
  - The name of this district is misleading and its purpose is very strange. The district is intended to allow commercial intrusion into residential areas because those residential areas are in decline. In the end, this district erodes neighborhood fabric

further, making decline permanent. This district is not widely applied and does not appear to be effective where it is zoned.

- 29-121 A-R agricultural-residential district
  - This district is intended to transition from agricultural uses to residential uses in the typical 5-acre lot method. While we know that this eventually erodes agricultural areas, it appears to have already either completed this process or simply been over stepped by the application of R-1 to agricultural areas. Very few properties are currently zoned A-R.
- 29-122 HD-1 5th Avenue historic district
  - (h)(2) It appears the minimum lot size (60ft wide) does not match many of the existing lots within this district.

Article 5. Supplemental Regulations

- 29-136 Height regulations
  - This is just exemptions to height. The zones do a poor job of defining how height is measured, and there is no definition provided for height.
- 29-137 Public buildings and public utilities
  - The planning commission has review rights and the ability to impose restrictions on public buildings and public utilities because they fall under UPOR. This is not necessarily normal but it is a good power to retain.
- 29-138 Fences
  - (b) Visibility at intersections; this points to the subdivision standards. As described in the review of subdivisions, the technical means of analyzing visibility at intersections is preferred over the method used in current standards.
  - (c)(5) General standards; this section includes some very simple and effective standards.
  - (c)(6) Approved fence materials; chain link is permitted in front yards in R-4.
  - (c)(7) Residential fence standards; overall a good collection of requirements.
  - (c)(8) Commercial and industrial fence standards; Generally okay, but they need some clarity on side street yard fencing for downtown and neighborhood commercial areas.
- 29-139 Home occupations
  - Definitions and (b)(2) performance standard - consideration should be given within the minor impact home occupation business to businesses which have a small number of out of home employees but do not have customers who visit the home business. The changing nature of work has increased this type of business arrangement, which has a similar, minor impact on the neighborhood. Current definitions would consider this a major impact home occupation business, however that category contemplates both out of home employees and customers visiting the business.
  - Note that there are two subsections (b)
  - (b) Performance standards; generally a concise and well defined set of rules.
  - (c) & (d) are seemingly overly specific about the business types, which may be more effective if generalized.
- Division 2. Off-street Parking and Loading
  - 29-156 (b) This paragraph includes a number of standards and is hard to read as such. Two modifications are otherwise suggested. (1) that multi-family housing within mixed-use districts should be allowed to have parking provided within 600 feet as is permitted for non-residential uses. (2) that on-street parking along property lines count towards required parking for multi-family and non-residential uses.
- 29-157 Number and size of spaces
  - (1) Residential
    - Apartments - generally these numbers are high for multi-family, where studio and 1-bedroom apartments often use 0.75 spaces per unit, and larger units increase from there. Further, the efficiency apartment category is specified at 1.5 spaces per unit, which should be 0.5 or 0.75.
      - Additionally a requirement is specified for apartments that 30% of the property is required to be green area. This is incompatible with many forms of multi-family, further discouraging this use. It is also inappropriately located within the code.
    - Elderly housing units - the reduction is capped at 0.6 spaces per unit but it should be 0.5 spaces per unit.
    - Overall the residential requirements are a little bit higher than they should be; minor modifications should be made.

- (2) Commercial
  - (a)&(b) Neighborhood and Community shopping centers - required parking spaces are too high at 5/1000 sq.ft.
  - (c) Retails sales by size - generally these standards are okay, however their overlap with other requirements is unclear. For instance, the sizes includes those size categories defining (a) and (b).
  - (d) Convenience stores and grocery stores and (i) Personal services - required parking spaces are too high at 5/1000 sq.ft.
  - (j) Gas stations - required parking spaces are too high.
  - (k) Bowling alleys - required parking spaces are too high.
  - (o) Beer parlor, nightclub - required spaces are significantly high at 15/1,000 sq.ft.
  - (p) Restaurant and (q) Restaurant, pick-up only - required spaces are too high at 13.5/1,000 and 15/1,000 sq.ft.
  - (r) Default standard others - required spaces are too high at 5/1,000 sq.ft.
  - (s) Drive-in stacking requirements are confusing.
  - Overall the commercial requirements are too high. Additionally the categorization is unnecessarily complex as the standards are limited to a small number of variations. The requirements should be significant reduced and simplified.
- (3) Industrial
  - Generally okay
- (4) Education and day care facilities
  - Generally okay
- (5) Medical
  - Generally okay, may be a little high for medical offices.
- (6) Public Buildings
  - (c) Public utilities - 2.5/1,000 sq.ft. may be too many depending upon the utility.
  - (e) Government offices - 5/1,000 sq.ft. may be too many depending upon the service.
  - Generally okay, requiring minor modifications.
- (7) Other uses
  - (c) Hotel/motel - the restaurant requirement at 10/1,000 sq.ft. is too high given the likelihood of patrons staying at the establishment.
  - (f) Community buildings and social halls - requirements are too high at 20/1,000 sq.ft.
  - Generally okay, requiring minor modifications.
- (j) Joint use is allowed but only by variance; also note that there are not standards for the reduced capacity required.
- Overall the number of parking spaces required should be reduced for most land uses, some more significantly than others. This is typical of most zoning ordinances. Additionally, joint use facilities should be permitted by right, however they still require agreements and standards to ensure proper use. The requirements may also be significantly reduced overall as many similar standards repeat between land uses. Present emerging practice has removed parking regulations from municipal specification, allowing owners and operators to determine their own needs. This should be considered given the city's limited capacity.

- 29-159 Improvements
  - (b) Sets screening requirements to residential areas, which includes a minimum height of 8ft and allows for chain link.
  - (d) Requires curbing for off-street parking areas.

Article 6. Antenna Arrays and Telecommunications Towers

- No comments

Article 7. Secually Oriented Businesses

- No comments

Other, Minor Items

- Chapter 13-3: We generally consider it unreasonable to require that individuals register and pay a fee for holding a yard sale. Limiting the number of sales, durations, and times is okay.

Overall Assessment

Overall, Pine Bluff's zoning code appears to have been established in order to describe the approximate character of existing development as of 1981, thereafter modified. The official zoning map illustrates this condition in the way that zone boundaries are located, and the overall fragmentation of the zoning map. Many zones are applied on a property-by-property basis, rather than defining and overall character for areas such as neighborhoods and corridors. As a result, zoning locks the city into its present condition, permitting little growth or evolution without substantial modification.

One distinct advantage of Pine Bluff's zoning code is its brevity. The code overall fills just 119 pages and avoids many unnecessary requirements found in the codes of other communities. This could be further decreased by combining information that is repeated from one zone to the next, and simplifying the collections of uses and parking requirements associated with those uses. However the length of the code comes with a cost: there are no guarantees concerning the character or quality of buildings in any district other than the historic district. The downtown Community Foundation / Children's Advocacy Center is such an example. While the use is important to the city, and the building's design is acceptable, the siting of the building on its' property is detrimental to the future of the downtown district. In order to direct the future character of Pine Bluff, additional, yet minimal, requirements concerning building siting and character are needed.

The core problem with Pine Bluff's zoning code is derived from the zones, their mapping, and that numerous standards aim to make building multi-family housing impractical. At first glance, the collection of zones appears clear and organized, with the letter referring to a general area of the city (per state law) and a number presumably associated with the intensity of that area. However, when reading the zone descriptions and standards it becomes clear that the number is not associated with intensity differences, at least not clearly, and a few additional zones have been added to the mix over time. These zones are not too far from being a well organized hierarchy, but they have somehow become a bit jumbled. A few zones would be better applied as overlays, such as the historic district and the two PUD zones. But even clearing up this detail would not solve the other core problem of the zone mapping.

The zoning map is extremely fragmented, as discussed previously. This indicates that the zones themselves may not clearly recognize the form of the city, or that decisions were made to actively halt the city's progress, perhaps due to the increasing crime rates during the period that zoning was taking hold in Pine Bluff. Whatever the historic causes, presently the city's zoning map is problematic due to its fragmentation.

We've found that elsewhere in Arkansas and across the US, these has been an increasing and sustained desire for housing types which have been made illegal in most jurisdictions through zoning. Pine Bluff's zoning code fits the national trend where smaller lot single family, attached single family, duplexes, multi-family, and mixed-use housing is made illegal or very difficult to accommodate. Sources of these issues in Pine Bluff's code are found in: minimum lot sizes, permitted uses versus UPOR, open space requirements, setbacks, and parking requirements. In a previous section we've discussed the minimum lot size issue, which is perhaps the most significant of all problems. But together the remaining issues are also holding development back.

Parking requirements also need to be discussed specifically. Most municipal parking requirements reflect a mysterious set of numbers that appear to be scientific yet tend to have little basis in reality. Through decades of zoning code revisions, we've chipped away at the minimum off-street parking numbers, in each case reducing them through a number of different mechanisms to get to the lowest possible number that is politically acceptable. Recently a number of municipalities across the country have taken a leap to simply not worry about off-street parking capacities. In the end we will determine what is politically feasible for Pine Bluff, but we recommend that the city take the progressive step to allow the market to determine parking needs.

Beyond the zoning code, Pine Bluff's subdivision standards require significant modification. These standards were written in a time where city living was rejected in favor of developing the countryside with large, single-family homes. They actively despise aspects of planning that allow cities to function, such as an interconnected street grid, a diversity of housing options, and adjacency between where people live, work, and shop. In portions of Pine Bluff and the rest of the US, standards like these have created social isolation, crises in public health, and have robbed municipalities of value. Modifications to zoning along are not sufficient to address Pine Bluff's regulations. The subdivision standards must be significantly changed.

Other code chapters reviewed require little modification if any. The bulk of needed changes are within the zoning and subdivision chapters.

This page is intentionally blank.

2.3 PEDESTRIAN FRONTAGE ASSESSMENT

Frontage elements help shape the pedestrian experience, retail success and town identity.

General Observations

Whether throughout the downtown area, the unviersity, connecting corridors, or the neighborhoods, the pedestrian experience throughout Pine Bluff is first and foremost determined by the quality of pedestrian frontage. High quality frontages include active and pedestrian scaled building facades that face the street, sidewalks and intersections that are intact, crosswalks that are striped with functioning signals, shaded and furnished streets. These elements support well designed pedestrian networks which meaningfully connect useful destinations. This section outlines areas where Pine Bluff has opportunity for strategic frontage quality improvement.

Areas of Focus

Downtown Pine Bluff

Downtown's pedestrian frontage quality is especially vital to the overall experiential and economic health of the City. Defined by Martha Mitchell Expy. to the north, Texas St. to the east, 6th Ave. to the south and Walnut St. to the west, the Downtown area currently contains a high number of demolished and vacant properties, unshielded parking lots, and buildings in need of major and minor restoration. To transform Downtown into the vibrant and active core it has been in the past, the pedestrian experience must be excellent. Improvements within Downtown should be located to capitalize on connecting areas of good pedestrian frontage to each other, creating an uninterrupted high-quality experience.

University of Arkansas Pine Bluff

With more than 2,500 students and situated on over 300 acres, University of Arkansas Pine Bluff serves as a major anchor not only for the City, but also the immediate region. UAPB is located away from Downtown, and is able to support a high-quality main street nearby to serve students, faculty and staff, and the surrounding community. Presently the surrounding streets and businesses fall short of fulfilling this need. Improvements to zoning and pedestrian frontage would significantly improve the quality and walkability of the UAPB area, which includes consideration for ways in which the university physically engages surrounding neighborhoods.

Jefferson Regional Medical Center

Situated south of the City Core, Jefferson Regional Medical Center serves over 280,000 residents of 11 counties in Southeast Arkansas. Given its regional prominence and serving as a vital economic hub within Pine Bluff, the medical center and its extensions are an opportune area for more strategic neighborhood transitions and a center of supportive services that would benefit the neighborhood, visitors, and hospital staff. Frontage quality plays a crucial role particularly to the surrounding neighborhoods and the campus' integration within those neighborhoods. At the moment, frontage quality tends to degrade as it becomes more institutional in nature and the focus of design shifts from pedestrians to cars. Similar to UAPB, there is insufficient supportive commercial areas, a problem of both zoning and frontage quality.

Good Frontage

Good frontage quality is defined as frontage that is active and attractive, supporting a pleasant pedestrian experience. Retail is typically on the sidewalk edge and is visually and physically accessible, interesting and inviting. Sidewalks are appropriately wide, shaded, furnished with benches, lighting and landscaping. Parking does not dominate the street frontage, but if present it is appropriately screened. Pine Bluff has some good and active frontages that serve as examples for reactivating middling and potential frontages.

Potential Frontage

Not unlike middling frontage quality, potential frontage quality is also defined by the existing structure's design, placement on the lot, and upkeep. Pine Bluff has a good number of potential frontage improvements, particularly in the downtown core area. While it may need work for pedestrian reactivation, the cost of doing so is relatively low.

Middling Frontage

Middling frontage quality is defined by the building setback, overall design, and the ability to reactivate it with some effort. For example, a building with 'good bones' that is close to the street that is neither active nor destroyed, perhaps with poor sidewalk quality, can be reactivated through concentrated and strategic efforts. Successful activation typically requires a moderate amount of investment.

Poor Frontage

Poor frontage is typically defined by its lack of activity, character, pedestrian engagement, and is usually uninviting visually and experientially. It's often represented by crumbled buildings, blank walls or facades, parking lots, and building set far back on their lots. Poor sidewalk and intersection quality and design also contribute to the overall pedestrian experience. Successful activation typically requires substantial investment.

Pedestrian Accommodations

A good quality pedestrian realm encompasses many elements including appropriate sidewalk widths and their upkeep, street tree and awning shading, sidewalk furnishings, crosswalks and signage, or any other elements that contribute to the overall pedestrian experience and safety whether downtown or in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Appropriately sized sidewalks respective to their location (e.g. wider in the downtown area) that are maintained are crucial to the pedestrian experience. Wider sidewalks in downtowns and main streets allow for an array of street activity such as outdoor dining, seating areas, and art displays. Sidewalks in neighborhoods should be sided to meet the level of pedestrian demand, but at no point less than sufficient for wheelchairs and strollers. Often, utility poles and signs block sidewalks. This is severely detrimental to the pedestrian experience, especially for those in wheelchairs and strollers.

The pedestrian experience is also vastly improved when appropriate shading is present, especially in hot summers. Heat relief through tree shade not only keeps the sidewalks and adjacent buildings cooler during the day, but also results in cooler ambient temperatures at night. Awning shade is also beneficial and in addition to sun and heat relieve, it can provide building and retail identity through appropriate awning signage and placement.

Pedestrian scaled lighting is important throughout the community. A higher level of lighting is necessary in Downtown and main streets, while less frequent lights are beneficial within neighborhoods. Pedestrian lighting serves a purpose separate from roadway lighting. Typical roadway lighting tends to contribute to a poor pedestrian experience.

Frontage Buildout

Frontage buildout is the amount of lot frontage is lined with active building facades. In higher density settings such as the downtown, it's best to avoid interruptions along the blockface. In most situations, 70-80% buildout is desirable and anything less than 60% results in poor and interrupted pedestrian experience. Frontage buildout is also important in multifamily and townhouse developments. Higher intensity housing should present an urban building frontage to the sidewalk, minimizing semi-public space and hiding parking areas.

Downtown areas are best served with wider, shaded sidewalks and active, interesting storefronts.

Sidewalks and crosswalks with signage or utility obstacles greatly deminish the pedestrian experience.

Building Transparency

Building transparency is as vital for the pedestrian experience as it is for the retail success within the building. The ground floor glazing should be large, appropriately proportioned and provide an onlooker with a clear view into the building's activities, both in commercial and residential settings. Transparency helps provide an active and interesting streetfront and serves as a great retail catalyst. Commercial buildings should have glazing covering 60% of more of the ground floor facade. Reflective, mirrored, and thermal glass block views into buildings, making the sidewalk less safe and discouraging customers. When these elements are missing, pedestrians become disengaged from the very buildings they pass by, and without eyes on the street, the sidewalk space becomes less safe.

Buildings without transparency limit pedestrian interaction and visually block out retail potential.

Activation

Activated frontages keep pedestrians engaged and attract customers, they also help provide a greater sense of security through a constant human presence and eyes on the street. When occupied, mixed-use buildings in downtown areas help keep a 24/7 cycle of activity. Additionally, active storefronts with retail transparency that display appropriate signage and products also increase the passing pedestrian's level of interest and retail interactions.

Activated frontages provide a more welcoming and interesting pedestrian experience.

Materiality

Material selection along building facades and sidewalks affects pedestrian experience. Finer-grained materials such as brick, stone, terra cotta, and wood provide a sense of scale and visual interest. Artificial materials and large panels, such as EIFS and metal panels, degrade easily and lack a human-relatible scale.

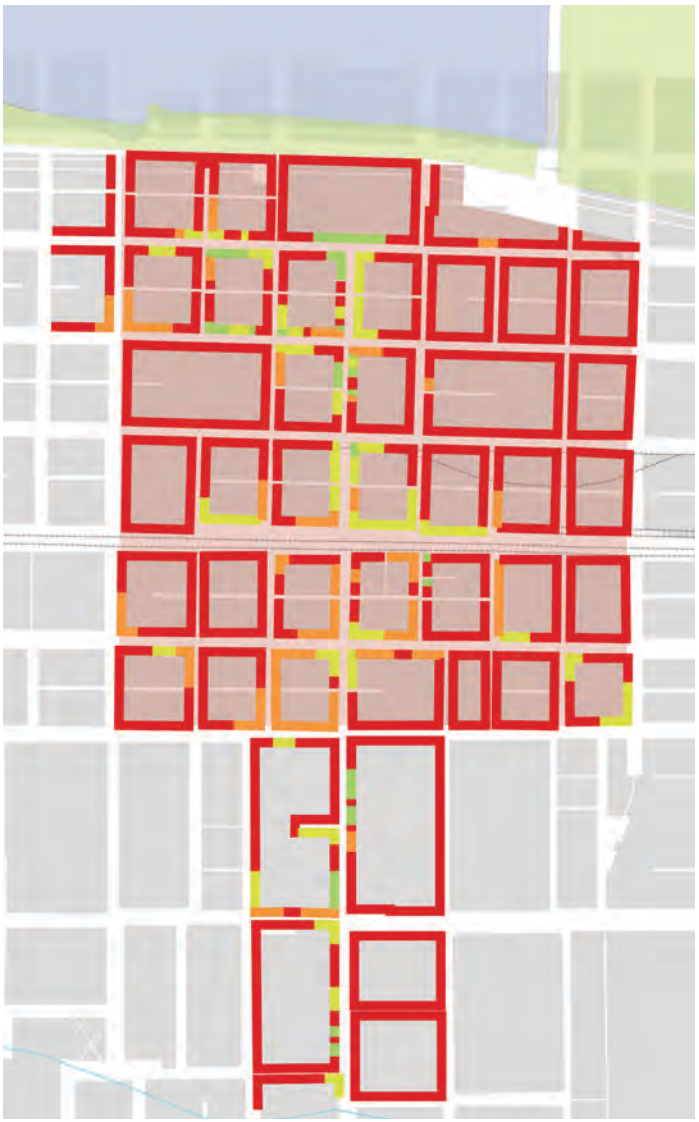
PEDESTRIAN FRONTAGE ASSESSMENT
DOWNTOWN

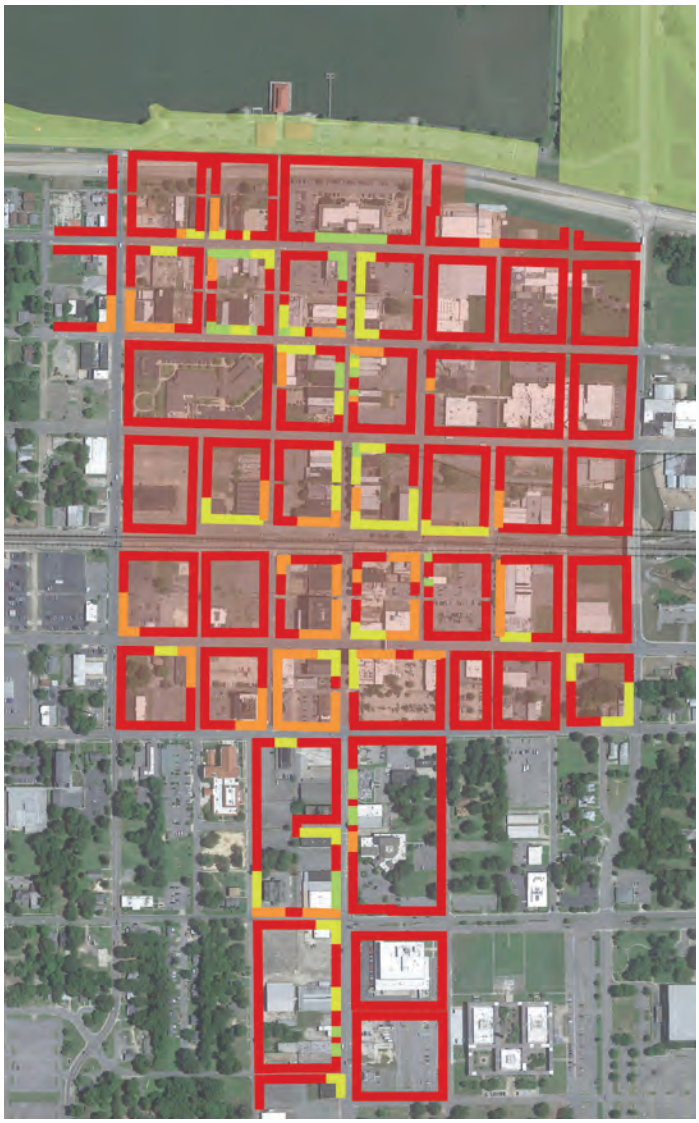
A number of facades have been restored, resulting in a more active and pleasant downtown experience.

Overall, pedestrian frontage quality throughout the Downtown area is poor. Main street hosts the most good and potential frontages, with a few additional pockets along Barraque, 2nd Ave, and 4th Ave. Most of the Downtown area suffers from demolished buildings and unshielded surface parking lots. Some new buildings have been set back from the street too far, eroding the character of the Downtown district.

To create an active downtown, the pedestrian experience must be good along an uninterrupted trajectory, ideally creating a loop. Areas that are separated from each other by missing and deteriorated buildings lose out on the synergy created by a collection of active businesses. For instance, the businesses at Chestnut and Barraque are separated too far from Main Street. As a result they are a destination that is distinct from the other Downtown destinations. Priority should be given to filling in the gaps, making a continuous quality pedestrian experience.

In a Downtown district, not all streets can support retail. Multi-family housing and offices are essential components of a successful downtown, creating 24 hour activity, and supporting food service during the lunchtime and dinner settings. A Primary Retail Corridor or loop should be identified within the Downtown where buildings are held to a high standard for frontage quality and retail activation. Development along other streets still require quality frontages, but may include ground floor housing, lobbies, and offices.





Assessment

This diagram represents the existing pedestrian frontage quality assessment for the downtown area. Readily visible is the majority of 'poor' quality frontages, largely due to vacant or collapsed buildings and those that have been demolished or turned into parking lots. There are a number of 'potential' and 'middling' opportunities along Main Street which also includes the highest concentration of 'good' frontage quality structures and streetscape elements. Downtown revitalization efforts should concentrate on connecting the green areas by improving potential, middling, and poor frontages, resulting in an active Primary Retail Corridor.

- Poor
- Middling
- Potential
- Good

PEDESTRIAN FRONTAGE ASSESSMENT
DOWNTOWN

Poor
Poor frontage quality is assigned to unrecoverable vacant buildings, crumbled buildings, unshielded parking lots, buildings set far back from the street, and buildings with blank facades facing the street.

Middling
Frontages that have 'good bones', are generally close to the street and are neither active nor destroyed but can be recovered with some effort.

Potential

These buildings have reactivation potential and can readily enhance the pedestrian and commercial realm throughout Pine Bluff's downtown.

Good

Active and maintained frontages that relate to the street provide character to Pine Bluff's downtown, greatly ehnacing the pedestrian and commercial experience. These frontages serve as good examples for future development and restoration work for existing buildings.

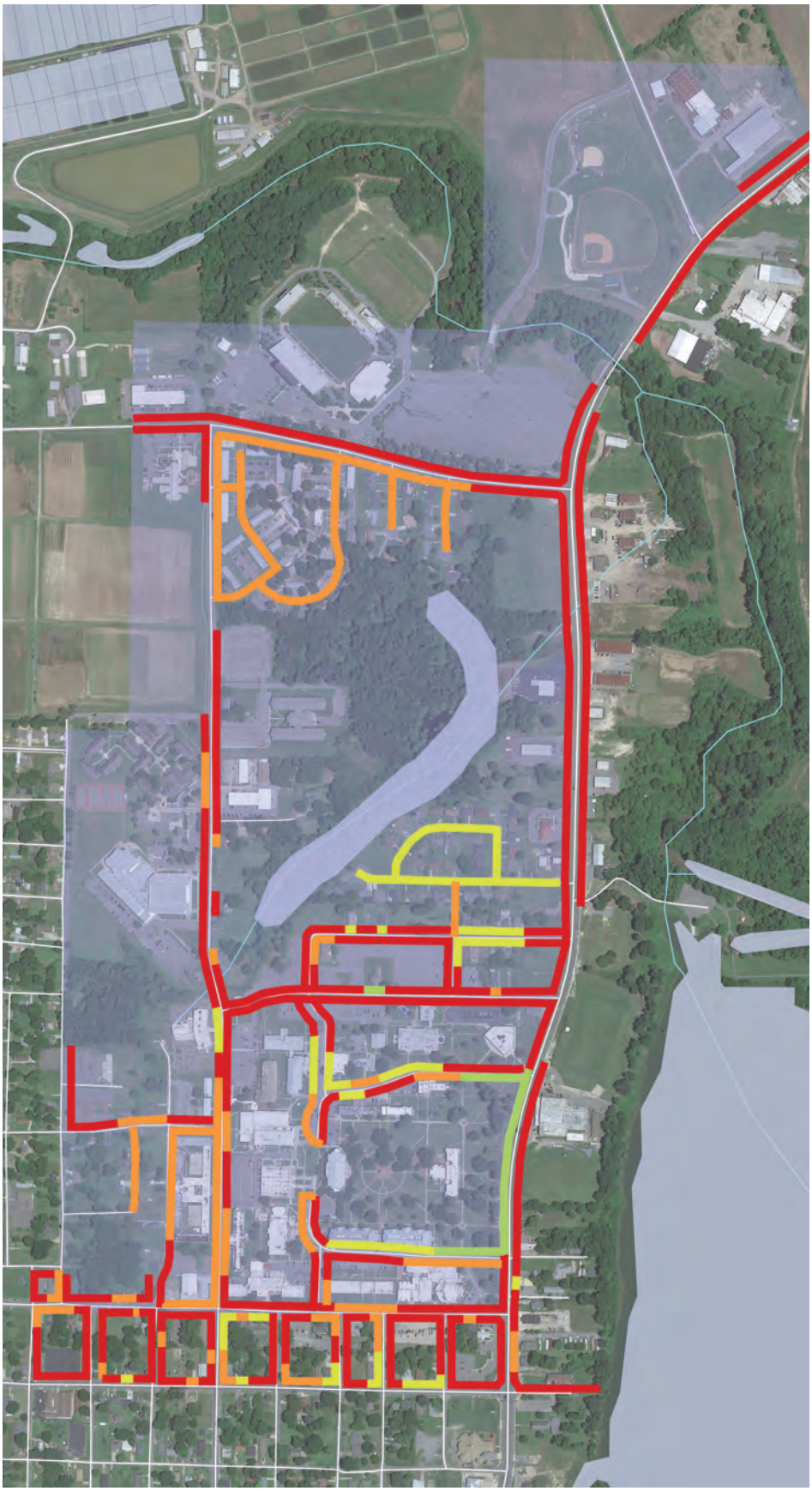
PEDESTRIAN FRONTAGE ASSESSMENT
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS PINE BLUFF

A number of facades have been restored, resulting in a more active and pleasant downtown experience.

University of Arkansas Pine Bluff has a rather dispersed campus with a number of auxillary buildings and student dormitories that do not typically have active or good frontages. Although most are older, there are a few newer structures, particularly along L A Prexy Davis Dr. that engage the street more than their counterparts.

University Drive serves as UAPB's primary access highway and is dominated by car-oriented retail and industrial businesses that are not conducive to pedetrian access or activity, especially UAPB's access to the lake.

Given the university's student and staff population, it could easily support active main streets and nearby housing. Both University Drive and West Reeker are clear opportunities, along with L A Prexy Davis Drive. Currently the area is a mix of randomly located buildings, businesses, industry, housing, and many surface parking lots. With UAPB's influence, this area could change significantly in character, supporting the university, its history, and influence.



Assessment

This diagram represents the existing pedestrian frontage quality assessment for the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff area. While there are a number of good quality frontage areas proximal to the main campus, majority of frontages are either middling or poor due to parking lots, lack of sidewalks, fencing, blank walls or a combination of the above.

0' 200' 400' 600' 800' 1,600'

- Poor
- Middling
- Potential
- Good

Poor

Poor frontage quality around the UAPB campus and surrounding neighborhood transitions are primarily found along Univeristy Dr. and the southern neighborhood connections. Auxillary buildings and a number of dormitories are located far from streets, have blank walls or are fenced in.

Middling

Frontages that have 'good bones', are generally close to the street and are neither active nor destroyed but can be recovered with some effort.

Potential

There are a number of structures throughout the area with great frontage potential. Although the streets they're on are far too wide with fast traffic flow, these buildings can potentially provide a welcomed break to the pedestrian and the nearby neighborhoods.

Good

Active and maintained frontages that relate to pedestrian activity and help engage the street or neighborhood centers and intersections. There are a few areas of good quality frontage around the campus while the internal campus has a good quality pedestrian-only circulation network.

PEDESTRIAN FRONTAGE ASSESSMENT

JEFFERSON REGIONAL MEMORIAL CENTER

A number of facades have been restored, resulting in a more active and pleasant downtown experience.

Jefferson Regional Memorial Center's campus and the surrounding neighborhoods currently do not provide a pedestrian-accessible environment. There are large gaps of missing sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes and other crucial connections to and from the neighborhoods. Institutional buildings are typically set back behind large parking lots and majority are designed to be accessed by car.

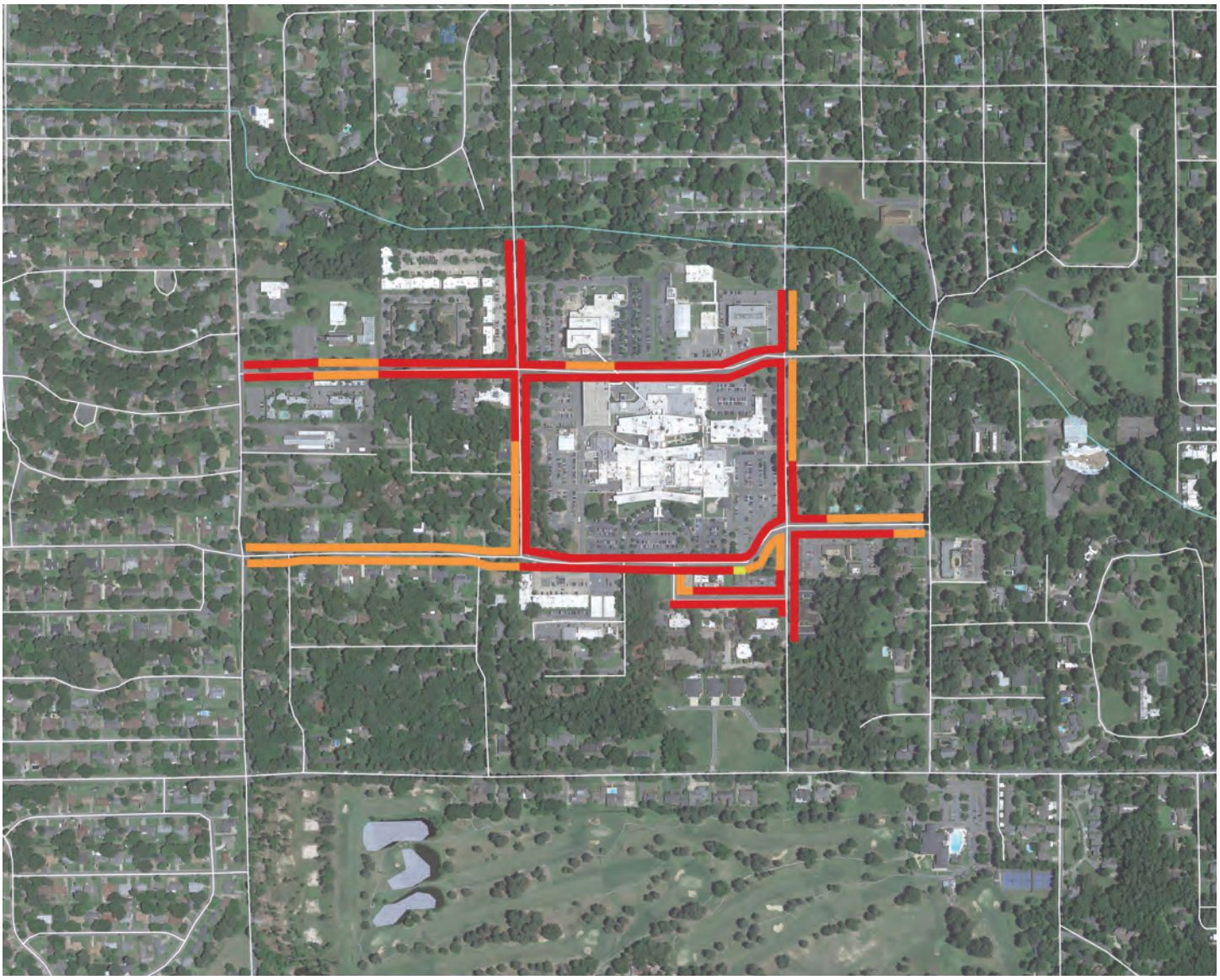
Despite the lack of potential or good frontages on the main medical campus and its auxilliary buildings, there are good frontage single family homes that can be found in the immediately adjacent neighborhoods.

Further study into key connections, transitions, and neighborhood seams can provide the campus and neighborhoods the walkability and access that would be beneficial and serve both.

Most hospitals built in the past 60 years have been inwardly focused, surrounding a sprawling complex with parking lots and typically confusing wayfinding systems. However, this use of land is often inefficient, with space available to change the character of the campus edge, and provide services like food service and hospitality which can serve the hospital and surrounding community.

PEDESTRIAN FRONTAGE ASSESSMENT

JEFFERSON REGIONAL MEMORIAL CENTER



Assessment

This diagram represents the Jefferson Regional Memorial Center's pedestrian frontage quality. As described on the prior page, majority of the frontage quality is either poor or middling due to parking lots, blank walls, or lack of sidewalks or crosswalks.

PEDESTRIAN FRONTAGE ASSESSMENT

JEFFERSON REGIONAL MEMORIAL CENTER

Poor

Poor frontage quality is primarily found at the edges of the medical complex and the surrounding neighborhood seams. The complex is designed and built with blank walls, outward facing parking lots and little to no pedestrian amenities such as sidewalks or crosswalks.

Middling

While some frontages have opportunity, most of the sturctures are set behind parking and do not encourage pedestrian activity. There are also opportunities for improving pedestrian connections such as crosswalks and sidewalks.

Potential

Highest potential in the hospital area for activated frontages includes older homes that have been used as professional offices. These engage the street the most and can provide a more appropriate neighborhood seam with the hospital.

Good

Good frontages are primarily found in the surrounding neighborhoods among single family homes that have appropriate entrances, massing, access and that avoid large front driveways and oversized garage facades.

This page is intentionally blank.

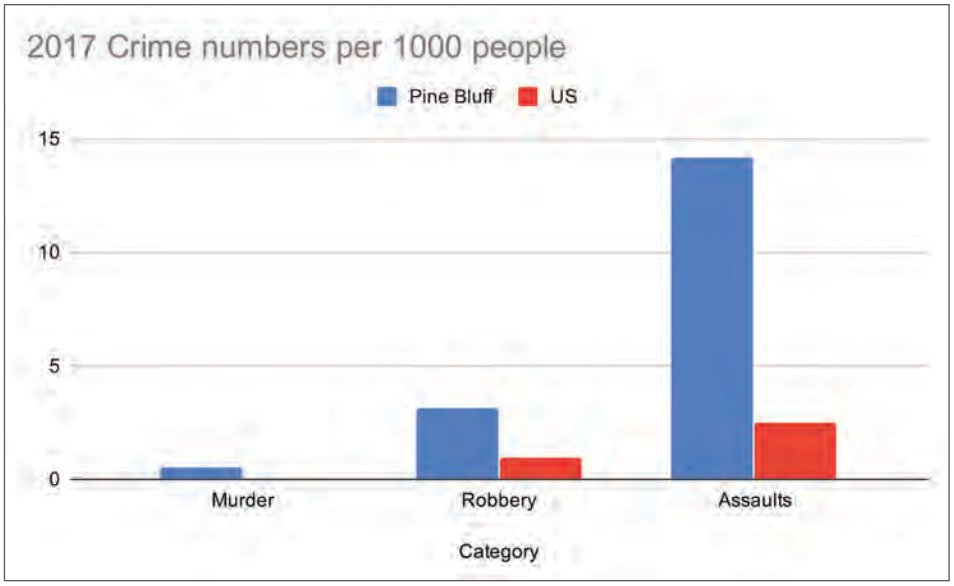
2.4 PUBLIC SAFETY

Overview

Pine Bluff has a reputation as a high-crime community. While the statistics bear this out, the numbers in many ways miss some important information that provide context and offer hope for improvement.

Our assessment is based on on-the-ground observation (including a retired Dallas Police Officer); conversations with the Chief of Police; observing a police officer on patrol; and discussions with several city leaders and citizens; and various forms of data analysis. Based on this, several themes have emerged:

- Most homicides and other violent crimes are either transactional (drugs, stolen property, etc.) or between between people who know each other. While this does not diminish the severity of violent crime, the pattern shows that people are rarely attacking bystanders
- Most misbehavior is not in the public realm. Even loitering has become rare in Pine Bluff.
- Most of the most serious crime is gang related in some way.
- Criminals are employing minors for illegal activities, because they do not have the same legal consequences as adults.
- Crime has become more geographically concentrated in a few areas, rather than spread throughout the city.
- Officers feel as though they have a good rapport with the community.
- The low level crime and drug sales tend to stay out of sight with little on street criminal activity.
- Equipment failure is an issue. Most in-car computers don't function properly and most checks are made over the radio.
- While starting pay is fairly reasonable, the Police Department is unable to give raises as regularly as other departments. For this reason, it is difficult for them to maintain a critical mass of good officers.
- The high crime statistics, compared to other cities in the US, is somewhat deceptive. As a medium-sized city of less than 45,000 people, Pine Bluff's dynamics are different than larger cities with similar crime rates, for at least two reasons:
    - These cities represent larger "sample sizes;" featuring both low-crime and high-crime areas. For that reason, Pine Bluff's highest crime neighborhoods are not comparable to those of larger cities.
    - A tiny number of people are responsible for more serious crimes. For example, informal police estimates are that there are perhaps 100 people driving most of the crime, with 20 or so being the truly dangerous element. This is similar to other high-crime cities of similar size, and it means that much of the crime challenge may be addressed on the level of individuals and small groups.



911 Calls

About 20% of Pine Bluff's 911 call workload is traffic - an unusually high number. A second issue is the extremely high number of false alarms. A vast majority of those calls are false alarms, however, each one must be handled as though they are a possible break in and fully investigated. That eats up a good amount of time that could be used for other police functions. Many cities require permits for monitored alarm systems. If there are too many false alarms, the owner is forced to pay a fine.

The nature of these calls reflect other opportunities to potentially save resources, particularly given the dearth of police officers available.

One category of entries (including Assists, Meet Complainant, Accident Property Damage, Info, and Noise Complaint) tend to be "functionary calls". Typically, no real police work is needed. Much of the calls such as these could be handled by Public Safety Officers (PSOs), official employees that perform some police functions but do not have peace officer licensing.

A second category of entries (Attempt to Locate, Welfare Check) are more social service in nature. These calls can be simple and cleared quickly, or, drain an entire shift depending on its nature. A peace officer is not generally needed to handle most of these calls unless a death or possible foul play is suspected after initial contact. Social service providers could aptly handle most of these calls. Also, doing this may open up more avenues of funding for such providers depending on the scope and perimeters of services.

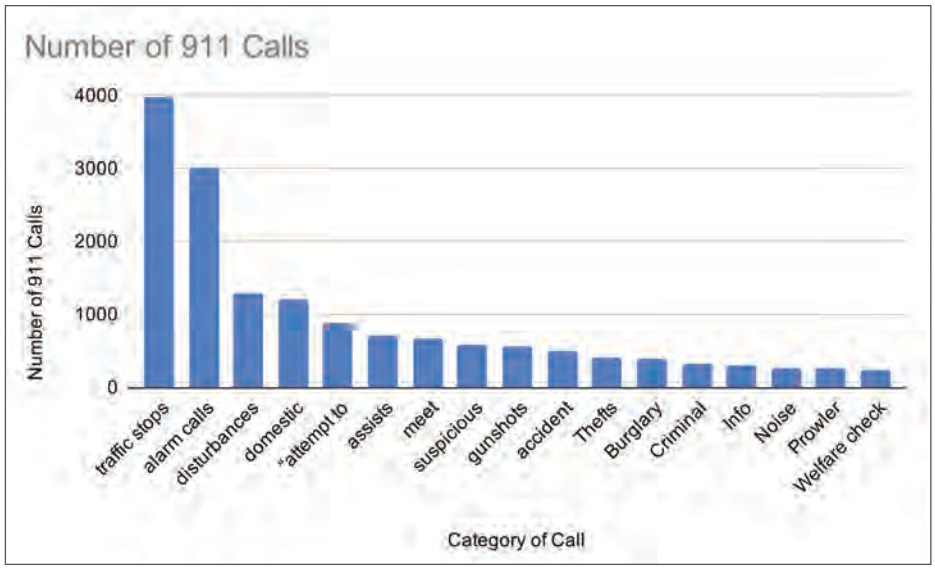
Prisons

Prisons are a significant industry in Pine Bluff, employing more than 1,400 people. Unfortunately, it is also likely a source of problems for the city. Within city limits, State of Arkansas units hold a total capacity of 1,216 inmates. PIne Bluff is also the nearest city of significant size to several other prison units, including the Varner Supermax, the Cummings Unit, the Tucker Unit, and the Maximum Security Unit. These four units have a total capacity of 5,198 inmates.

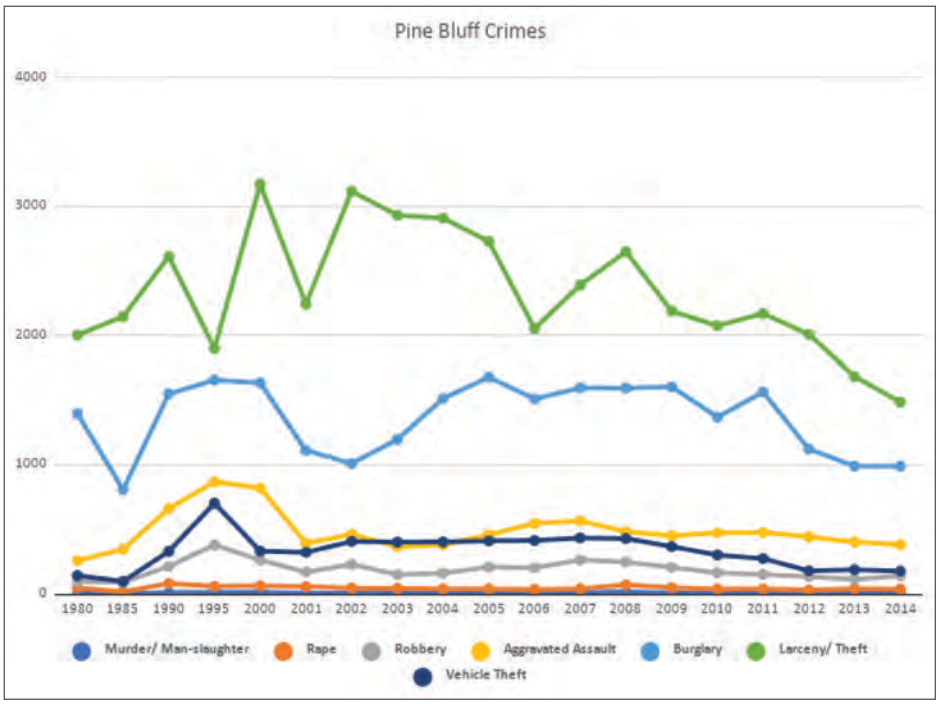
Local prisons often leave newly-released inmates with little plan for their release, or resources to get back home. Our team is conducting further investigation to determine the extent to which newly-released prisoners from other parts of the state tend to stay in Pine Bluff. Additional areas of potential concern may be visitors to the prison system committing crimes, or gang activity which spans both within and outside the prison system.

Police Calls

Our team has assembled and mapped a variety of service call information from the City of Pine Bluff. We are working on an assessment to identify hot spots. However, we need to clarify reporting practices; many of the heaviest clusters may be jail or department addresses, rather than incident locations, thus skewing the map.



Assessment of 19,689 Total calls (January 1-May 15, 2019)



Trends over time

TO BE ADDED: Police Response Time

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED, pronounced "sep-ted") is a multi-faceted approach to work strategically with the built environment to enhance public safety. CPTED is rooted in the principle that, while police are essential for reducing crime, they are not sufficient. Potential offenders must know that their behavior can be seen by citizens about their daily tasks; that citizens care when illegal activities happen; and that the difference between public and private spaces are obvious.

While CPTED strategies are best deployed in conjunction with more traditional "target hardening" strategies, the two are different. A high fence which is difficult to climb is a part of a target hardening approach, while a small, easily-climbable fence which distinguishes public from private space represents a CPTED approach. Principles of CPTED include:

- Natural Surveillance (or "eyes on the street): Criminal activity typically goes where it cannot be seen. Natural surveillance strategies include two basic elements: attracting people to a place throughout various times of the day and night, and ensuring that there are few nooks and crannies (including poorly-lit areas) in which activity cannot be seen. This is particularly crucial for well-used sidewalks, public spaces, parking areas, and entrances.
- Natural Access Control: This principle involves using design of elements such as streets, sidewalks, gateways, planting, and signage to "guide" people toward appropriate (public) spaces of high visibility, while minimizing reasons to go into less visible areas.
- Territoriality: The differences between public, semipublic, semiprivate, and private spaces should be clear and well-delineated. Landscaping, signage, fencing, and other shifts in design features should clearly indicate the difference between these types of spaces, eliminating potential excuses for trespassing.
- Maintenance: Deterioration, blight, and poor states of cleanliness send a clear signal to potential criminals: few people care about this place, and therefore criminal behavior is unlikely to be reported (the Broken Window Theory). A strategy that focuses on maintenance is mutl-fold—to include code enforcement, strategic maintenance of City-owned resources, and design features that limit the need for maintenance.

CPTED strategies need to be context-sensitive. In a quiet residential neighborhood, it may make sense to encourage porches, stoops, and greater use of neighborhood parks. In a downtown context, on the other hand, the strategy may focus on well-lit sidewalks, active storefronts, and the attraction of visitors at different times throughout the district.

Throughout Pine Bluff, vacant parcels, lots, and storefronts (discussed elsewhere in this section and document) create a variety of CPTED challenges. For example:

- Natural Surveillance - the lack of owners on these properties create "gaps" in which there are few eyes on the street, as well as hiding spaces for potential criminals. In addition, vacant buildings often host illegal activities.
- Territoriality - without people occupying these spaces, there is no real territoriality, unless the owners, police, or neighborhood groups constantly check on the properties.
- Maintenance - large numbers of vacant parcels suggest disorder, and can help make a neighborhood a target for criminal elements.

A vacant parcel strategy must deal with these issues in a thoughtful and realistic way, realizing that the demand for either new development opportunities or public spaces must be filled strategically - and cannot currently scale to the extent of the issue. For the majority of properties, the City may need to partner with neighborhood community groups to help with native plantings, cleanup, maintenance, and other basic issues to help create a basic appearance of upkeep.

Other CPTED issues that have been observed in Pine Bluff include:

- Lighting - there are lighting issues in neighborhoods and parks throughout the city. While some of these require new investments in lighting infrastructure, others are simple maintenance issues
- Overgrown Streetscapes
- Litter
- Lack of programming and events in parks

It should be noted that CPTED-related infrastructure investments have to be made strategically, in places that are most important or most likely to have the largest impact. These can be done in conjunction with enhanced police strategies, focused on key blocks or crucial locations such as schools, parks, and community centers.

Downtown Pine Bluff is one key area which serves as a common focal point for the entire city. As has been noted elsewhere, the current state of downtown includes many inaccessible sidewalks, vacant storefronts, poor lighting, glass on sidewalks, and other indicators of neglect. On a positive note, there have been substantial new public and private investments in the downtown. There is a strong opportunity to make incremental improvements in these areas, beginning with community cleanups, storefront display improvements, internal lighting, and other lower-cost indicators of revitalization.

Parks, a major asset for the city, are another area which can be improved. It is recognized that the city has a very limited park budget; maintenance must be focused on strategies which offer the greatest return on investment, while programming will likely require strong partnerships with groups throughout the city. It is recommended that the City begin with a focus on a few key parks, such as Central Park, ensuring that basic elements such as lighting are maintained and that there are a variety of activities available. This can be done in conjunction with a series of PR-related special events, potentially attended by city leaders and police staff.

Fire Department Monthly Report Summary

Note: 2019 data is as of July.

From the 2019 data, the majority of the incidents reported in the District 1 are intentional/ arson.

This does not coincide with the 2018 911 call data, where most of the arson calls are in the District 3 or District 5. 2019 data shows that most of the District 3 calls are residential accidental fires, and the District 5 calls are a combination of intentional and unintentional fires.

- 50%+ of all fire calls each month are for medical emergencies
- 18%-27% monthly calls are for "Other"
- 2%-10% monthly calls are in response to alarms

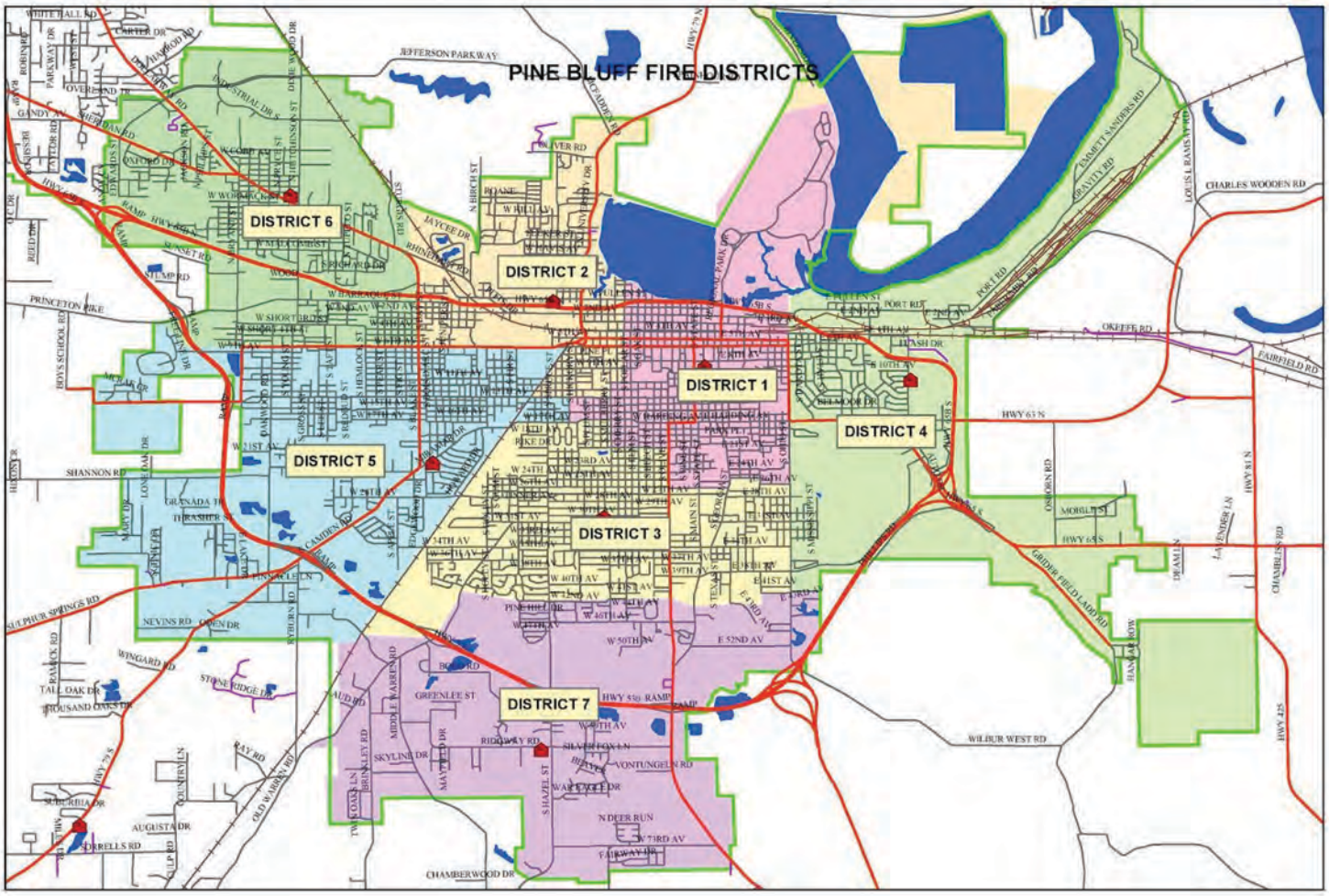
Note: Per the Fire Chief, about 70% of incidents requiring responses involve medical emergencies, while only 30% are fire and miscellaneous incidents

The number of calls vary between 400-500 calls a month, with an average of 436 a month for 2018

Medical emergencies sloped Jan-March, slowly rose April-October, slumped in November, and skyrocketed in December. This pattern, or slight variations form it, hold throughout the year, with July the peak month for calls.

The Pine Bluff Fire Department has been highly proactive with its educational efforts, with outreach to a cumulative total of 67,052 people in events in 2018. This is particularly striking in light of the fact that the Fire Chief has emphasised a need for more resources to educate the public on safety issues. Outreach is split evenly between shift A, B, and C with large community events as the most popular and smaller venues (schools, churches, etc...) attracting a smaller crowds.

The most popular events were held during the summer or autumn/ winter holiday season.



Top 5 prevention activities:

1. Total inspections (631)
2. Burning permits (195)
3. Smoke alarms (151)
4. Fires investigated (110)
5. Home survey (73)

Other notable incidents and activities

- Site plan review (34)
- Fire Deaths (2)
- Citation (1)

Fire Department Staffing

According to information submitted by the Pine Bluff Fire Department, the average annual salary of a Pine Bluff firefighter from 2017 was $31,306, with a minimum of 25,045. This ranks 21 out of 31 for which data exists in Arkansas. For a city of 20,000-44999, the average is $36,227, with a minimum of 28,650. At the next range (45,000+), the average is $43,709, with a minimum of $34,967.

For this reason, many firefighters have trained with the PBFD, earned certification, and taken jobs in different parts of the state; approximately 20 firefighters have done so in recent years. It costs the City $25,000 to do the initial training.

Because they are losing so much staff, the PBFD is not filling its available slots; there are 87 total staff, out of 100 slots available. This is leading to a variety of negative consequences. As one example, the Fire Department has smaller vehicles which could be used for the majority of trips (As already noted, 70% of their incidents involve medical emergencies, while only 30% are fire and miscellaneous incidents). However, with a limited staff, the Department has to deploy most of its personnel in larger trucks, in case the heavy equipment is needed for firefighting. A larger staff would allow them to send more small vehicles—thus increasing their overall efficiency.

Fire Response Time

The Fire Department has a consistent average response time of 3-5 minutes, which is in line with departmental goals. While this is reflected in currently-available reports, our team has recently requested geographically-based data in order to identify any specific trouble zones.

Need for Data Analysis

Currently, both the police and fire department suffer from a lack of reliable data analysis. As an example, the fire department creates monthly reports featuring, among other factors, the numbers and types of incidents. Based on these reports, it is clear that PBFD has prioritized data gathering and analysis. However, there is no assigned staff research staff for this, and the department has no GIS-related resources or other way to easily map data. This limits the ability to assess hot spots for accidents and incidents, areas with delayed response times, or locations which should require additional stations or other resources.

The fire department has specific planning needs which require better data. For example:

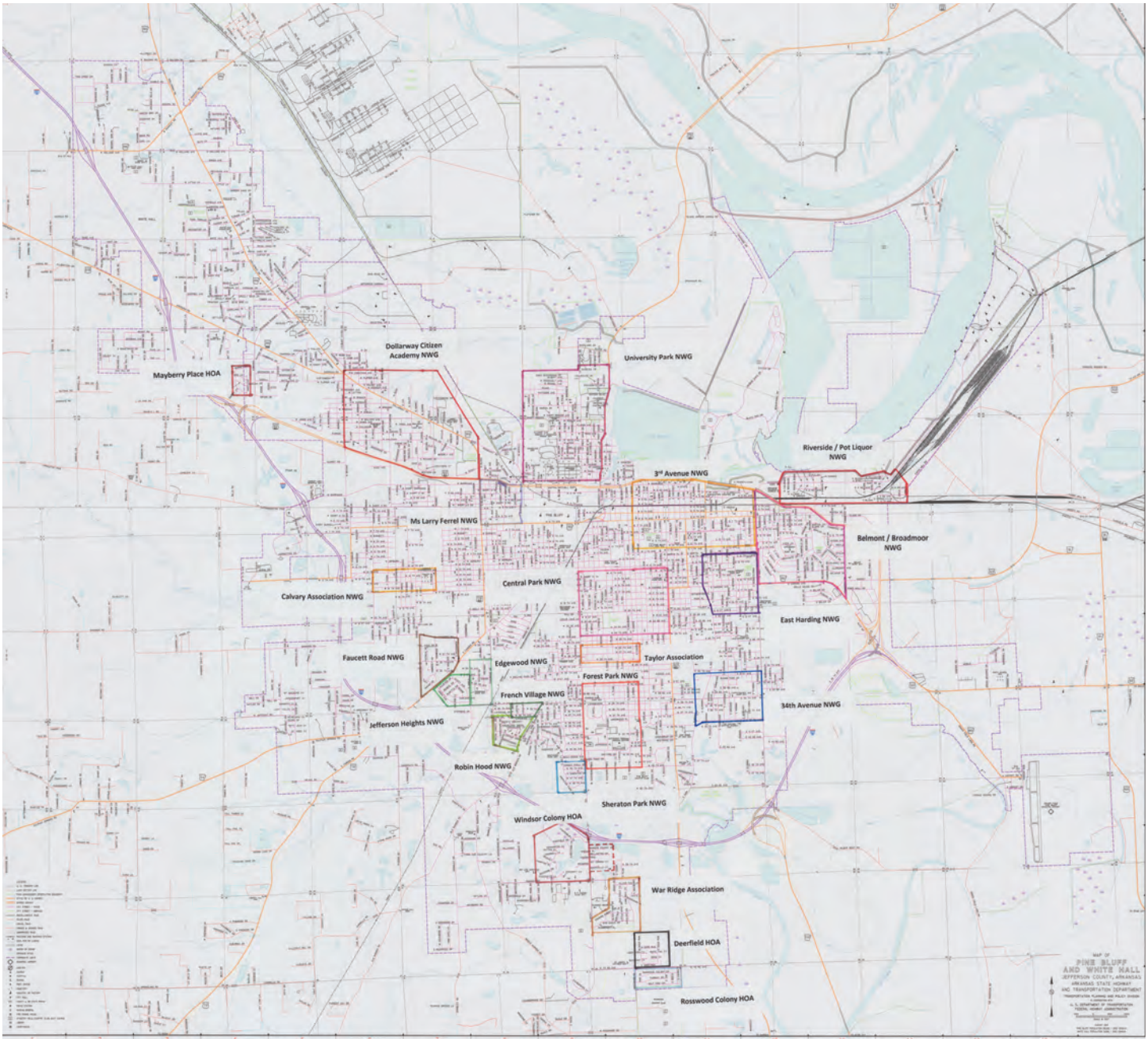
- Fleet replacement is done on an ad hoc basis, with the city being petitioned for new trucks as needs arise; the Fire Department needs to do a comprehensive assessment to allow for better planning.
- The department needs to know where any new stations are needed, particularly due to the upcoming casino
- Having a heat map of fires would allow the department to better allocate equipment and personnel.
- The water line system is dated; fire hydrant data exists, but it is not yet displayed in a useful form.

Ultimately, either an improved City IT department or an additional staff person in both the police and fire departments can help to bridge that gap. In the meanwhile, this comprehensive plan process can help provide a foundation of useful data which may be a resource for these departments.

Neighborhood Watch

The City of Pine Bluff has 19 Neighborhood Watch Groups (see map below) and four Homeowners Associations (HOAs). In addition, the PBPD has a neighborhood watch coordinator on staff. Given the span of these groups over large swaths of the city, they offer a strong opportunity to support social cohesion and help the community address public safety issues.

Unsurprisingly, discussions have revealed that there are different levels of enthusiasm and participation between these groups. However, the existence of so many is itself a key resource. The City may consider teaching classes on subjects such as CPTED in order to better involve these individuals. Where participation is greater, groups may consider an "adopt-a-block" (or "adopt a park" approach, taking responsibility for maintaining high-quality common spaces in a small geographic area. By targeting these strategically, it may be possible to begin making tangible improvements within 23 distinct neighborhoods throughout the city - and heavily publicize any wins.

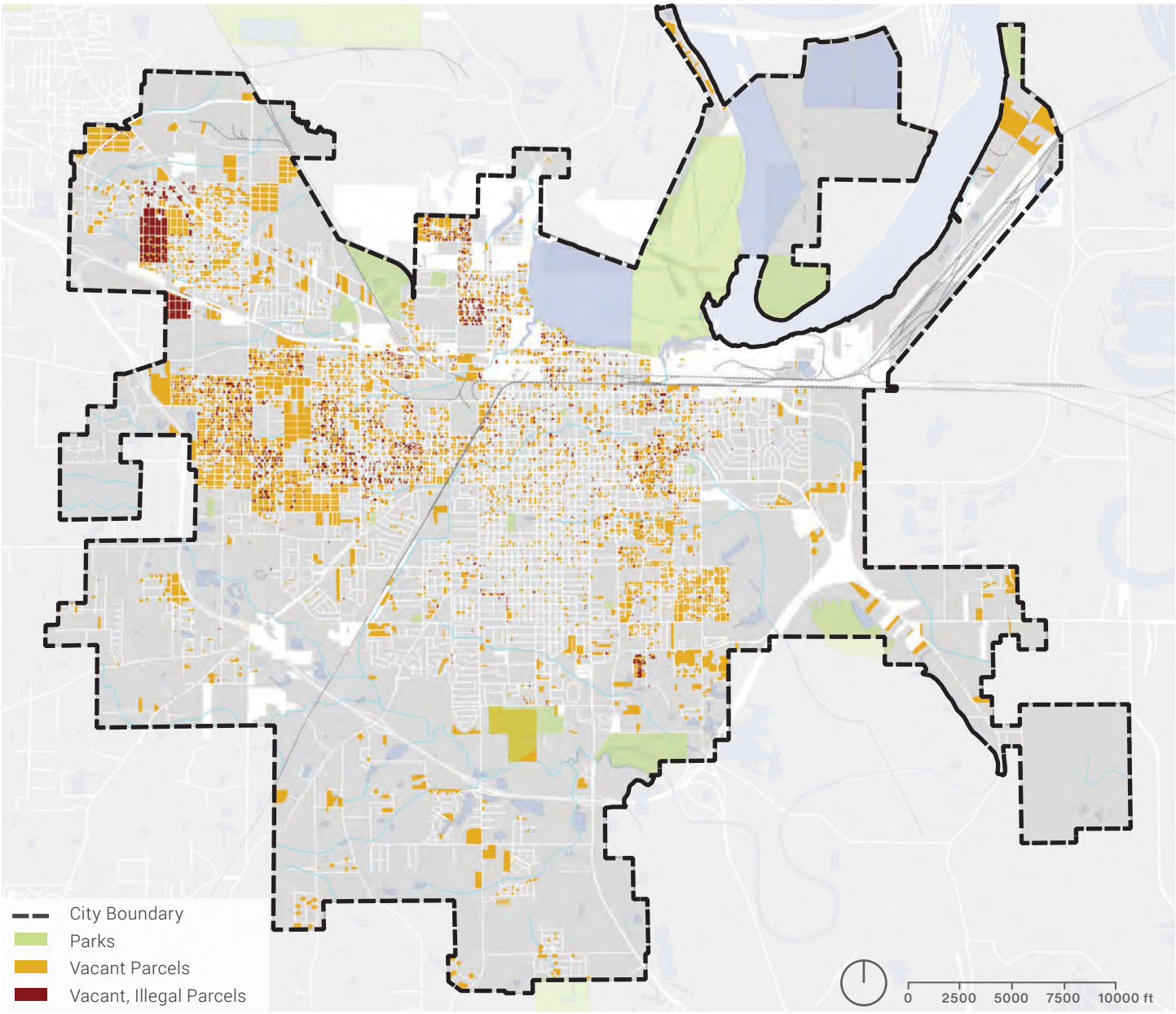


Vacant and Dilapidated Properties

As noted elsewhere in this document, 9% of all property in Pine Bluff is vacant residential (compared to 18% of all property as residential properties with improvements). To put it another way, about a third of all residential lots in Pine Bluff are vacant. While some of these properties are clustered together and were never developed, others represent abandoned parcels in developed residential neighborhoods. In addition, there were over 600 dilapidated properties reported in a July 2019 news article.

For obvious reasons, these properties represent an area of key interest for both the police and fire departments. They tend to encourage and host illegal activities, and the fire department often needs to respond to incidents in vacant buildings. Long-abandoned structures represent an ongoing public safety issue. From the perspective of CPTED, these abandoned lots represent several major challenges.

Our team has worked in the context of vacant parcel strategies before, and we know other teams on this master plan are working on the issue. We are prepared to give specific recommendations as needed.



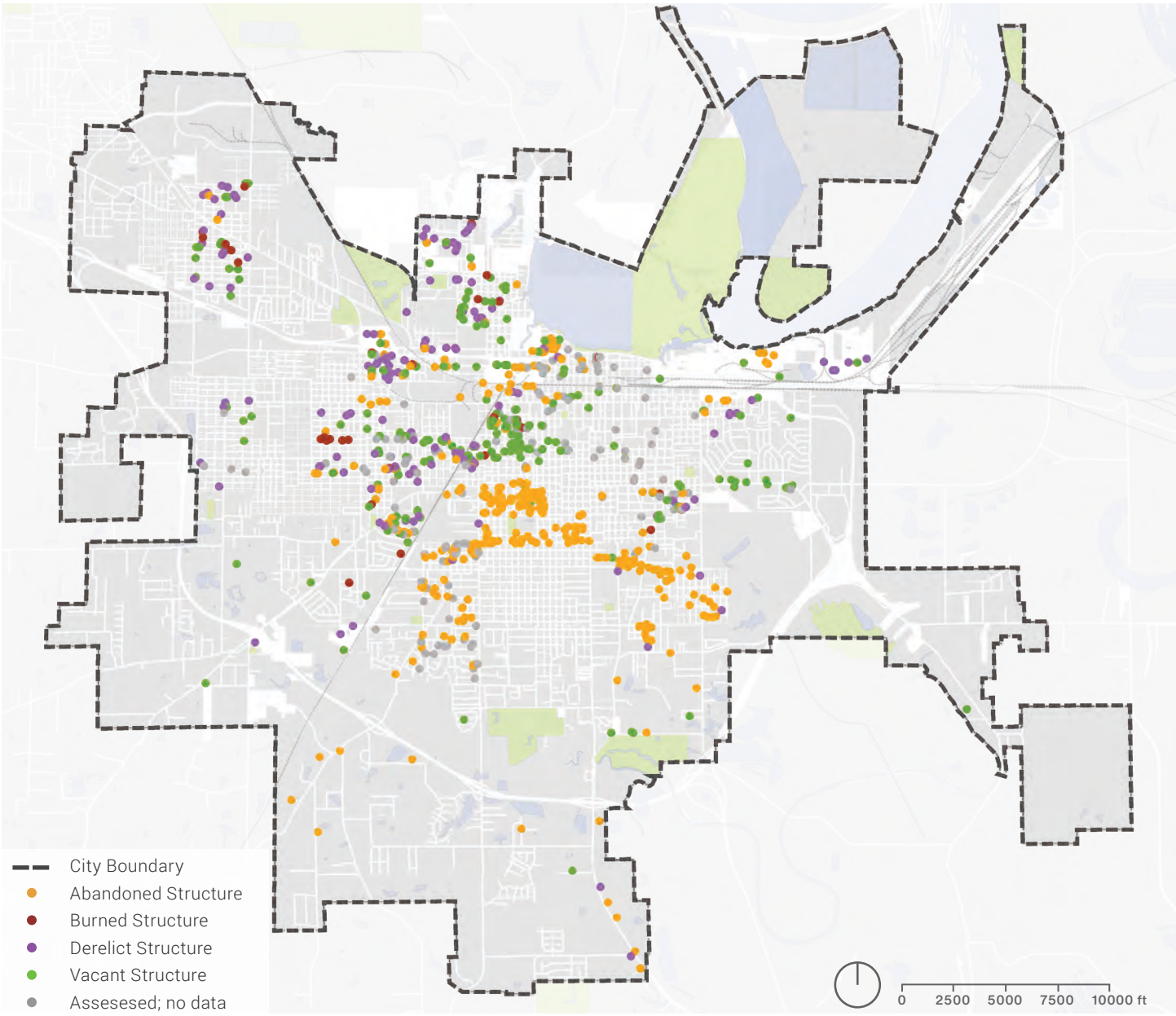
Structures Assessment

The Fire Department inventories properties that are potential fire hazards throughout the city. The database contains 931 properties as of July 2019. These structures are mapped below, and coded as follows:

Condition: Current condition of structure

- (B) Burned;
- (V) Vacant-currently unoccuplied but is in livable condition such as for sale or rent;
- (A) Abandoned - unoccupied for several months, boarded up, yard unkept, more important to ladder crews, it is not maintained;
- (D) Derelict - Structure is run down and dilapidated that is extremely dangerous. Firefighters should not operate on top of (or from within) these buildings. We often think derelict structures are not occupied, however, it isn't that uncommon to find lived-in houses to fully functioning businesses that are not maintained or that do not adhere to building codes.

Source: City of Pine Bluff Fire Department



This page is intentionally blank.

2.5 PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Notes

- A history of parks planning in Pine Bluff is provided, indicating a history of planning for parks and recreation facilities with little follow through on implementation, primarily due to a lack of funding or inability to purchase land due to increasing land prices.
- The historic approach to parks planning has followed best practices of each plan's era, specifically the National Recreation and Parks Association's (NRPA) previous approach of level-of-service (LOS) based recommendations for both park land as well as recreation facilities based on current and future populations. While this LOS-based approach has merit in gauging future demand, it does not speak to the context in which parks occur in the overall function neighborhood development. In other words, park planning that considers parks as a stand-alone element, comprising a parks system that is deemed successful based on a total number of acres, is short-sighted in expressing parks' vital role in neighborhood cohesion and community well-being. As a result, the NRPA has recognized these aspects and no longer recommends a standards-based approach to parks planning in more recent years.
- The plan identifies existing parks and their condition in 1974, as well as existing parks, their condition, inventory, and classification (as regional, city, neighborhood, or playground parks) in 2001. This demonstrates the evolution of the City's parks inventory through time.
    - There is no digital (GIS-based) inventory of parks in Pine Bluff today. Upon investigation of the sites listed in the 2001 plan, two sites are vacant (9th and Gum Street Park, 3rd and Plum Street Park), and one has not been located (Packingtown Park).
- An interim report in 1980 built upon a series of recommendations from the 1974 plan, including the following items:
    - The establishment of a network of neighborhood parks throughout the City
        - The 2001 plan indicated that 8 new neighborhood parks were added to the network, and one undeveloped park had been sold to a developer, however, the western, southwestern, and southern portions of the city remained park deficient.
    - Creation of a Park/School Agreement
        - The 2001 plan indicated that there were three joint-use agreements in place, each one for specific use of sports facilities or gyms, but not general joint-use agreements for the use of schoolyard playgrounds to serve as neighborhood park facilities.
    - Adoption of a Flood Plain Ordinance to restrict development along drainage ways
        - The 1976 flood hazard prevention program outlines requirements for developing within the 100-year flood plain, but does not prohibit such development.
    - Adoption of an Ordinance requiring mandatory dedication of park land in new subdivisions
        - Although a traditional parkland dedication ordinance is not in place, which requires developers to dedicate land or pay an in-lieu fee to accommodate adequate park land to serve the development, the 2001 plan indicated that the City does have a requirement within its Subdivision Regulations. They "provide that whenever a tract of land is to be subdivided, and a site which is contained as part of the Master Parks Plan…is located within the area to be subdivided, the developer must give the appropriate public body a forty-five day period in which to express its interest in the site. The land can either be dedicated for public use, purchased, or eminent domain procedures applied, but dedication of the site is not mandatory." This effectively only requires notice to the City that a park site had been previously planned on a property that is moving through the development process.
    - Development of a Regional Park
        - The Regional Park site had been purchased prior to the 1974 plan and developed since the 2001 plan.
    - Planning of a future City Park in the southern portion of the Pine Bluff SMSA
        - None as of the 2001 plan.
    - Formation of an open space system along floodways and drainage easements
        - No formal system has been developed, however the City does own some land in the area, and ARDOT owns several mitigation areas in conjunction with the development of the southern bypass.
    - Continued maintenance and improvement program
        - There is no dedicated funding source from

the City for parks maintenance, nor a capital improvement program.

- Rehabilitation of parks
  - This is still an issue today, as many of the parks have fallen into disrepair, house old playground equipment, and are not ADA-compliant. See the previous point.
- Development of new parks in southern and western Pine Bluff
  - Only private facilities have been developed in this area, refer to points above.
- Lack of adequate community centers
  - Today, two community centers remain, Chester Hines and Merrill. Renovation plans are currently underway at Merrill.
- Handicapped accessibility
  - While some parks have been retrofitted for handicap accessibility, and newer construction and renovations accommodate handicap accessibility or provide special facilities, the majority of older parks with older equipment are still in need of retrofit or replacement.
- Lack of senior citizen's centers
  - Senior Citizen's Centers have faded as an expected responsibility of a city parks department. The 2001 plan stated that the senior citizen facility at MLK Park, operated by the Area Agency on Aging, had just been constructed through the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program
- Aquatic facilities
  - Completed with the opening of the Pine Bluff Aquatics Facility in summer 2019.
- Lack of covered facilities
  - Identified as a priority in the 1980 report in an effort to extend the seasonal life of swimming and tennis facilities, neither have been covered. However, the new aquatics center includes indoor facilities.
- Access to the River
  - Boat ramps, docking piers, and fishing piers in Regional Park provide access to the river.
- Increased Demand for Urban Recreational Facilities (new park land, more facilities, and expanded recreational programs)
  - The 1980 report recommended providing new parks in areas where new residential and commercial areas were expanding, with the thought that people "move up" and leave deteriorating neighborhoods for better ones. There appears to be little focus on stabilizing declining neighborhoods and maintaining the public facilities located within them.

- The 2001 plan did NOT include a survey of Pine Bluff residents for their recreational trends and preferences. Rather, the plan referenced the 1995 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and its survey findings. Unfortunately, this survey was conducted by the then Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism which assessed the preferences of all Arkansans, not Pine Bluff residents. Further, the 2001 plan extracted preferences based on race and age. Again, these were not based on surveying the residents of Pine Bluff.
- The 2001 plan examines Pine Bluff demographic data, and appears to draw conclusions comparing the demographic data with the 1995 SCORP survey results.
- The 2001 plan laid out a series of more appropriate, overarching goals that address quality of life issues, protection of natural resources, coordination between recreation and land use patterns, new methods for anticipating recreational needs, creating a unified park system, and preservation of historical heritage. However, the connection between parks, neighborhoods, and schools is not addressed specifically.
- The traditional approach of classifying park land and developing standards of park land, size, and distribution was utilized, but again, seems short-sighted as it did not directly consider the use trends and preferences of its residents.
- Notable and necessary implementation steps included the following:
  - Prepare a long-range capital improvements program for the park system. As of 2019, this is still not in place.
  - Prepare a maintenance program that provides for the Parks Department's most beneficial use of time and resources. Also necessary, but does not seem to be formalized as of 2019.
  - Prepare a year-end performance audit. This is another very beneficial action item that does not appear to have been implemented as of 2019.

- Prepare a city-wide recreation plan.
- Continue development of the Pine Bluff Parks and Recreation website. Today, the City webpage directs users to explorepinebluff.com. Although some information can be found there, it is not the type or extent of information that was outlined in the 2001 plan.
- Develop a marketing plan

Assessment

Goals and priorities have been established in parks plans since 1959, with varying degrees of success in implementation. Rather than singling out parks' purpose in terms of personal health and recreation, parks should be viewed as part of the larger picture in neighborhood and community health, stability, and reinvestment. This includes understanding the ways in which residents currently use, or would like to use, parks in the future.

The plan covers the history of parks planning in the City, and strives to reiterate the goals that were still applicable in 2001. However, the plan's greatest shortcoming is the lack of community input. Unfortunately, it was based on statewide trends, rather than assessing the desires of the citizens of Pine Bluff. In addition, while parks were associated with issues such as floodplains and the natural environment, little emphasis was given to the role of well-programmed parks to the overall strength and identity of a neighborhood.

Park Types

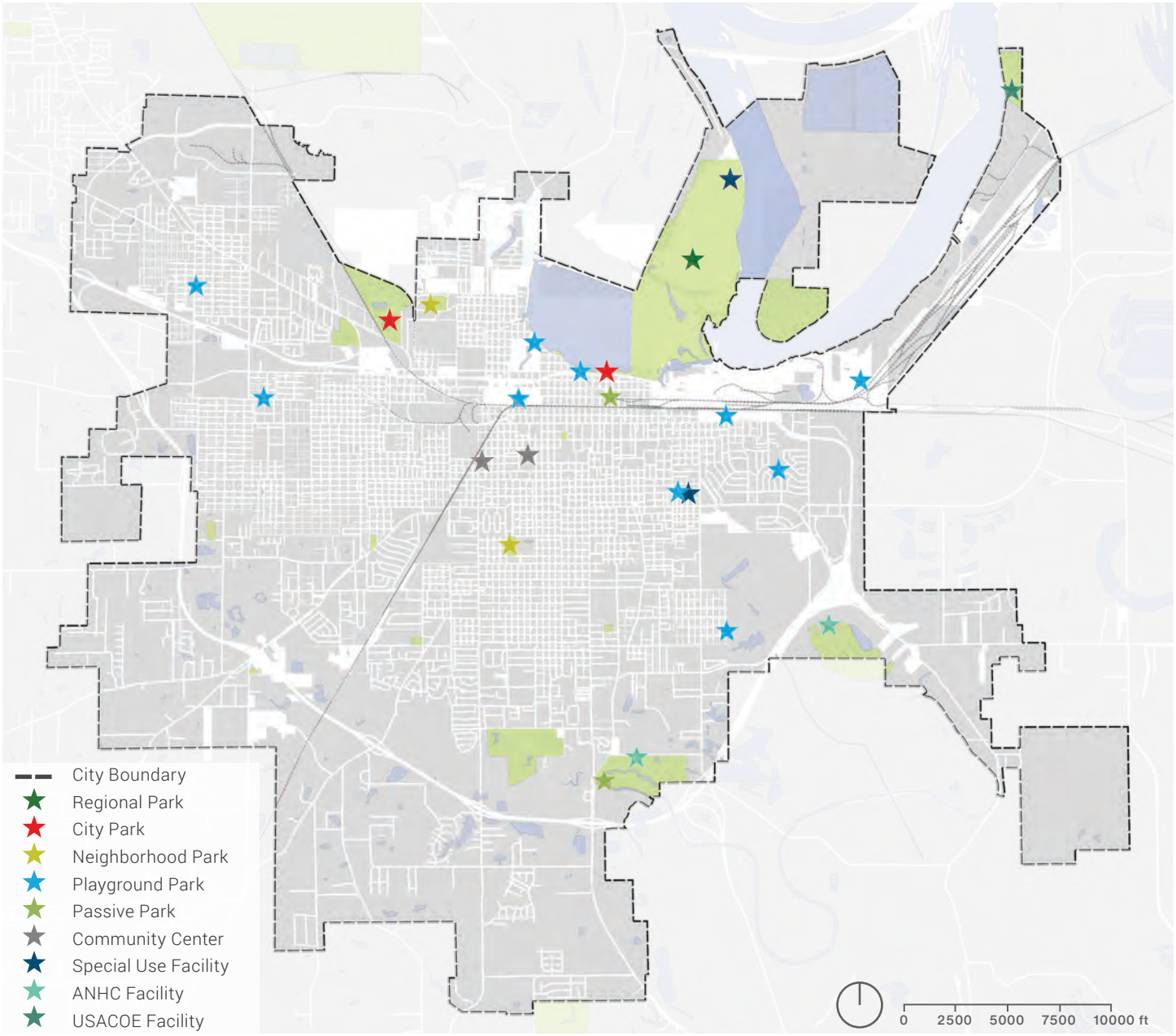
Today, there are 26 parks, recreation facilities, and other public recreation facilities in the City of Pine Bluff. Twenty-three of these are operated by the City, two are operated by the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, and one by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

These parks are categorized as follows:

- **Regional Parks** - the largest of the park types, these parks not only serve the residents of Pine Bluff, but also those of nearby communities. These parks usually include large amounts of natural open space, and both passive as well as active amenities. Pine Bluff Regional Park is the City's one park of this type. Regional parks are usually over 200 acres in size, but the amenities located within them are generally more of a determining factor of a regional park rather than the amount of land that it occupies.
- **City Parks** - City parks are smaller than regional parks, and include amenities that serve the entire city and may not be located in smaller park types. They are often home to a variety of amenities, including sports facilities, destination playgrounds, special facilities, and other signature features. Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and Saracen Landing are both city parks. These parks usually range between 20-50+ acres in size.
- **Neighborhood Parks** - these parks are arguably the most important of the park types. Designed to serve several surrounding neighborhoods, these parks often house playground facilities, open play fields, courts, and occasionally a multi-purpose sports practice field. Neighborhood parks are great opportunities to reinforce neighborhood and cultural identity. Such parks are usually 1-5 acres in size. Townsend Park and Central Park are two neighborhood parks in Pine Bluff.
- **Playground Parks** - the smallest of the park types, these are typically under 1 acre in size. In addition to playgrounds, these parks should also include simple comforts (shade, seating, and water), and should include open play fields as space, topography, and tree cover allows. Playground parks with ample tree cover should not be sacrificed for open play fields. Pine Bluff is home to twelve playground parks.

- **Passive Parks** - passive parks can take several forms, but their common factor is programmed space for passive, rather than active, use. Rather than playgrounds and sports facilities, these parks are programmed for people watching and interaction with nature. Such parks may include plazas, natural areas, and water access points.
- **Community Centers** - the City of Pine Bluff currently operates two community centers: Chester Hynes and Merrill. These facilities are programmed to accommodate a number of activities, from sports programs to dance classes, after school programs, and other specialty classes.
- **Special Use Facilities** - Specialized facilities, or other natural areas not operated by the City, are placed within this category. This includes two facilities operated by the City: Taylor Field and the RV Park, as well as two facilities operated by the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (Taylor Woodlands and Byrd Lake) and one facility operated by the US Army Corps of Engineers (Ste. Marie Park).

As noted in the 1974, 1980, and 2001 park plans, the City is inadequately served by park land and facilities in the southern and western areas of town. Most parks, as shown below, are located in the northern and eastern areas of the city.

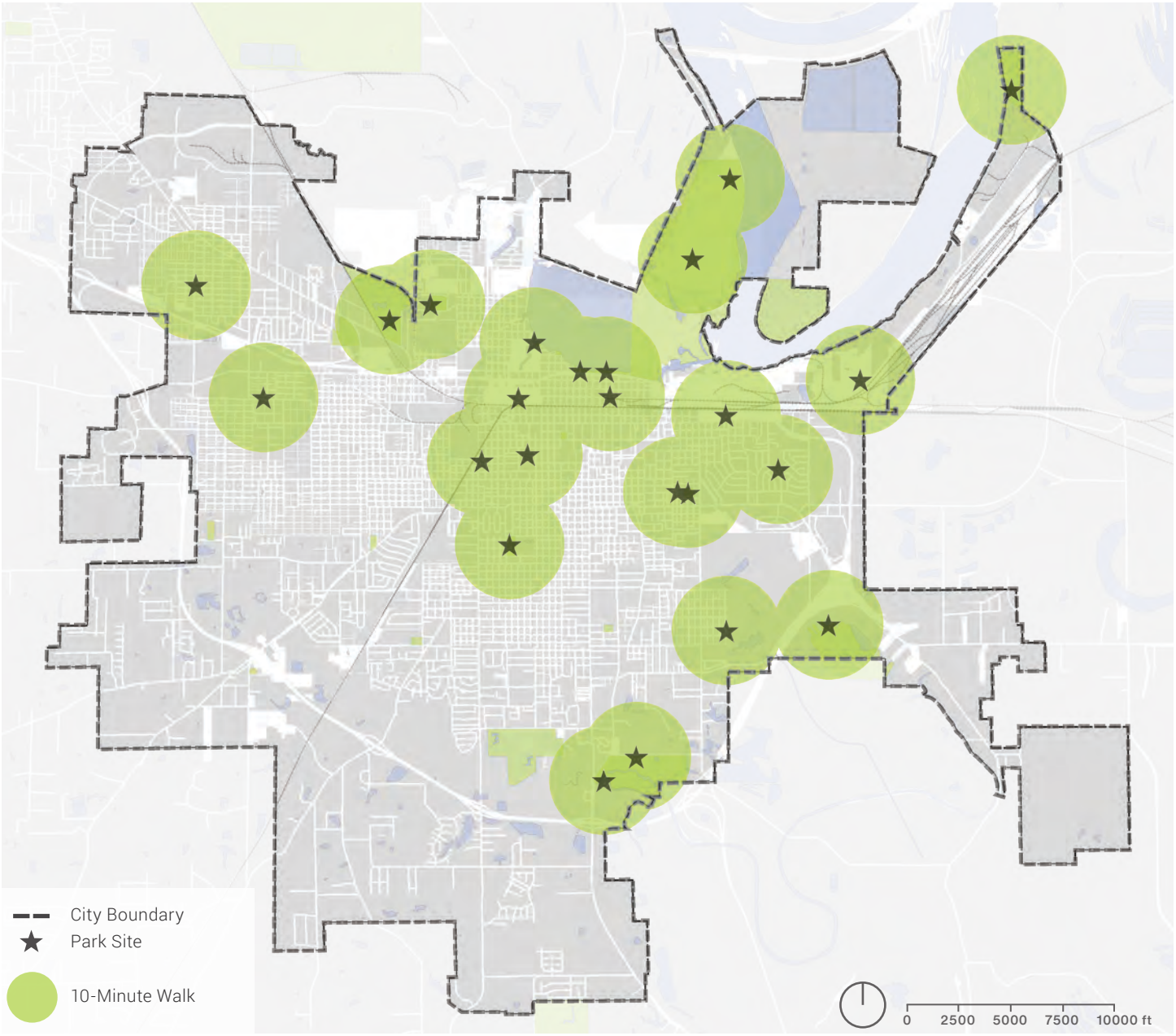


Parkland Distribution

Two factors are critical in developing a well-functioning parks system: appropriate park sizing and programming within the context of their surroundings, and the distribution of these parks around town to provide equitable access for all residents.

When considering the latter, parks may be shown with walk radii surrounding park properties to yield a general idea of walkable distances to each. For this project, the radius is a 10-minute walk, or ½ mile. This walk radius is most applicable to parks that have neighborhood-oriented amenities and function well as walk-to parks. Such amenities include simple comforts (shade, seating, and water), playgrounds, open play areas, pavilions, courts, etc.

Applying these radii reinforces the apparent lack of park land and facilities in southwest Pine Bluff, as shown below.



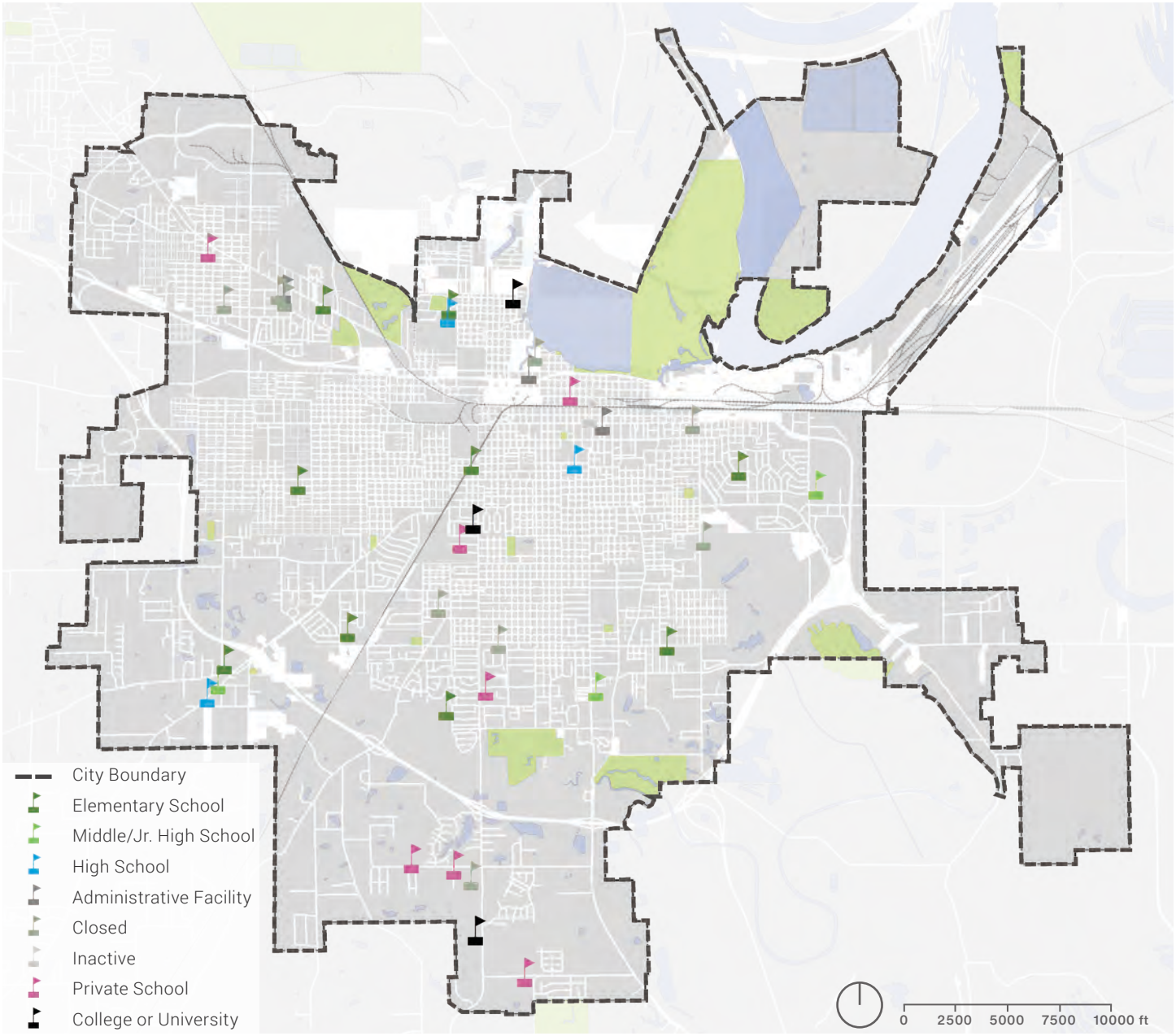
Interrelationship Between Parks & Schools

Both schools and parks provide open spaces for recreation, have traditionally been walk-to facilities, and have served as important anchors in neighborhood development over the past century.

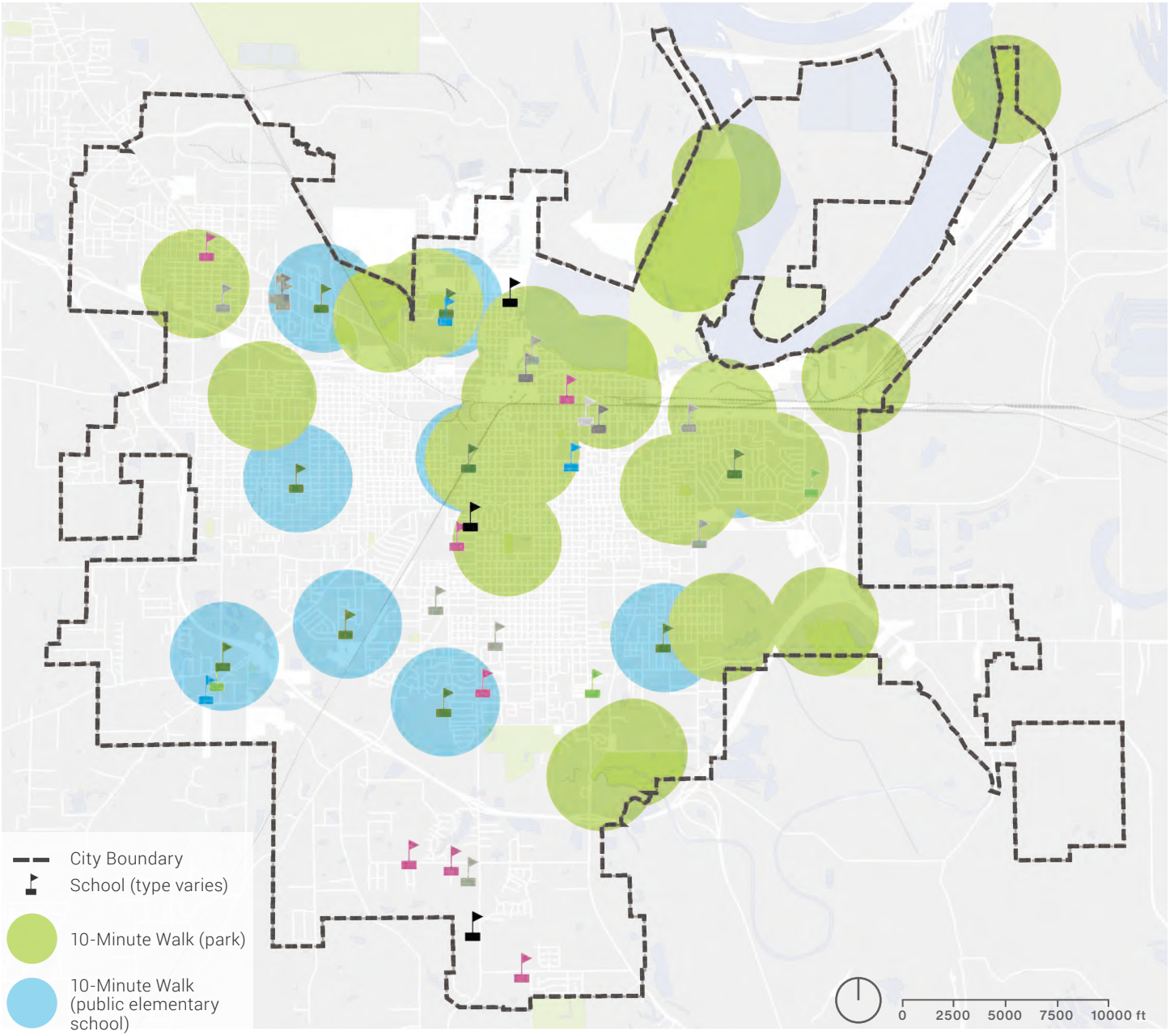
There are 30 school campuses in the City of Pine Bluff. These include public and private elementary, middle, junior high, and high schools, as well as colleges and universities.

In addition to these 30 schools, there are 11 campuses that have been closed and one that is inactive. The graphic below depicts the locations of each type of school.

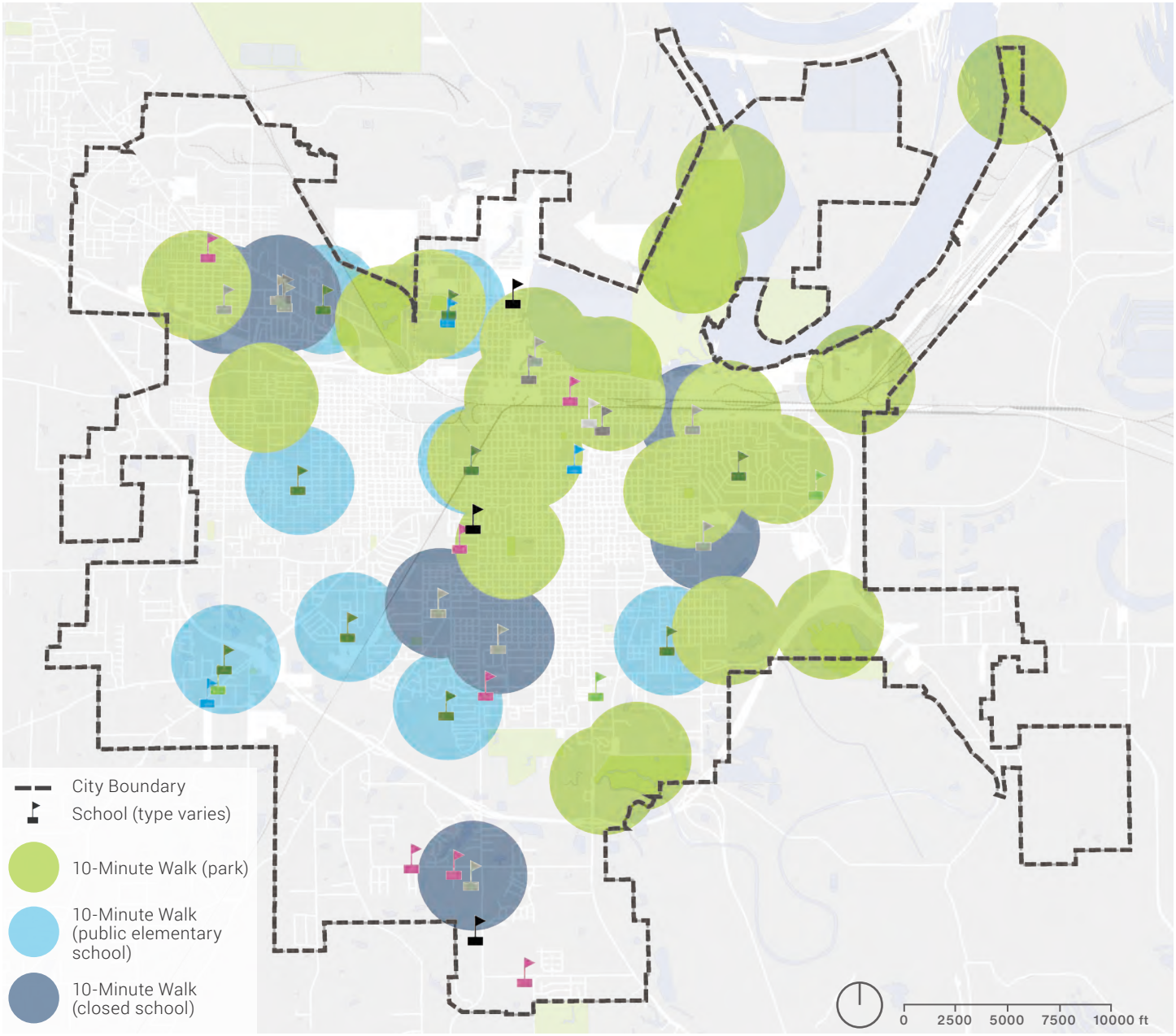
Why is this relevant to parks? Most public elementary schools have play yards that include similar amenities as those desired in neighborhood and playground parks: simple comforts, playgrounds, courts, and open play fields for pick-up games and unstructured play.



This graphic denotes public elementary schools with a 10-minute walk radius (½ mile) in blue. If these school yards served as neighborhood parks (via a joint-use agreement between the corresponding school district and the City of Pine Bluff), the distribution of parks begins to improve in the southwest area of the city.

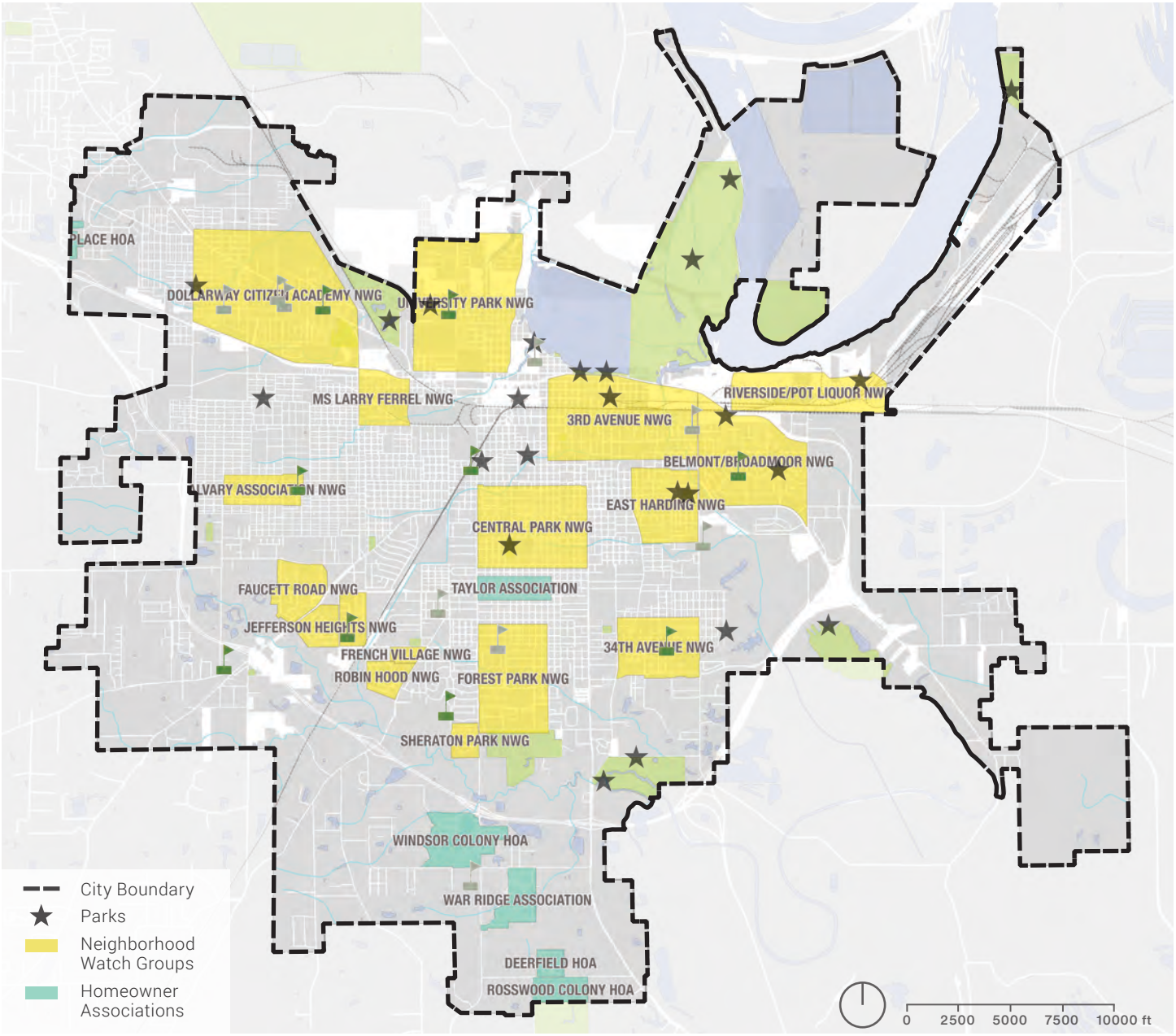


In addition to public elementary schools, closed school properties can also serve as neighborhood parks, if sited appropriately. Appropriate remediation to buildings on-site would be necessary to stabilize them and free them of asbestos, lead, and other contaminants, if the buildings are not demolished. However, if these properties are appropriately located within existing neighborhoods, they should be considered good additionsl to the parks system. The ½ mile, 10-minute walk radius around closed school campuses is shown in dark blue, below.



Parks as Neighborhood Centers

Parks play a larger role than providing recreational facilities. They aid in defining the structure of a neighborhood, creating opportunities for socialization, community health, and neighborhood cohesion. Parks that are not located in areas that are visible and walkable to adjacent neighborhoods should be re-assessed for their effectiveness in their current condition and location. Many parks have aging facilities, limited access, and poor ADA compliance. Re-situating parks to more suitable areas that can result in higher levels of use as well as positioning neighborhoods for change is a win-win. The abundance of vacant lots may lend an opportunity for re-distributing park land, if advantageous.



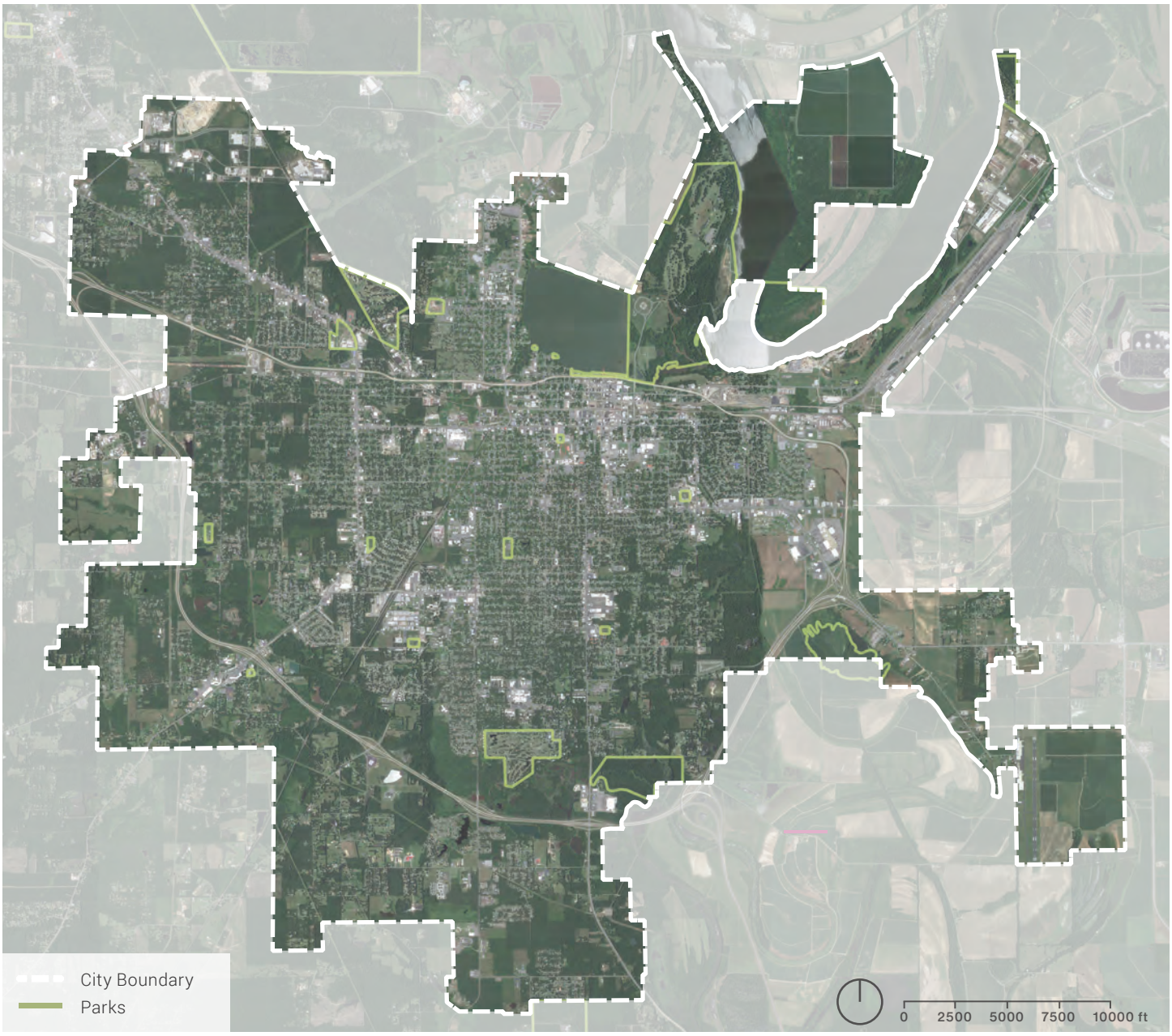
This page is intentionally blank.

This page is intentionally blank.

2.6 COMMUNITY & NEIGHBORHOOD REGENERATION

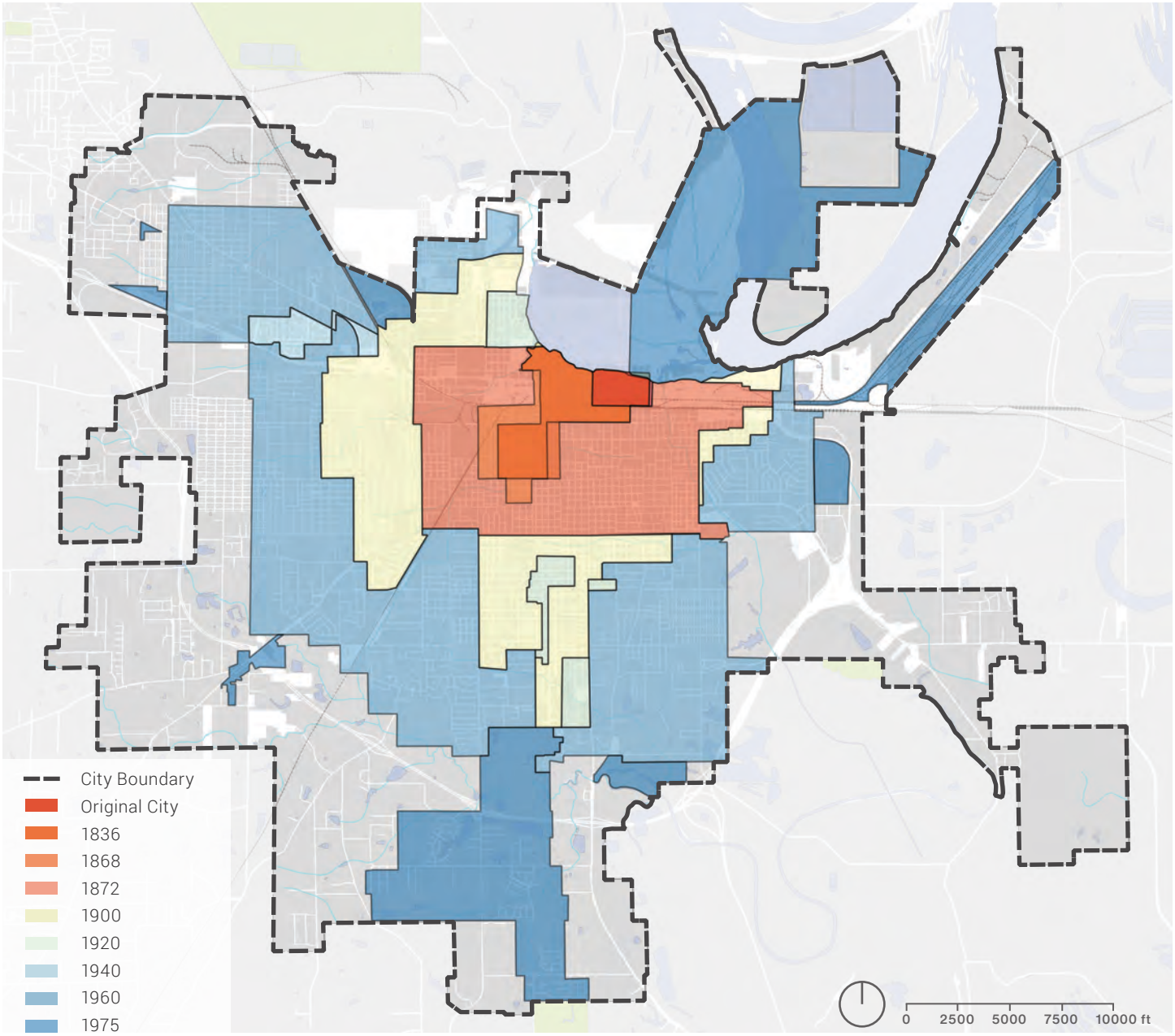
From above, Pine Bluff is a difficult place to understand, diagrammatically. Due to its history of growth, its' age, and its' industrial economy, the city does not easily divide into centers, neighborhoods, and corridors. As Pine Bluff evolved, historic waterways and destinations like the race track created impediments to growth which funneled the city's trajectory, later to be filled-in. Close-in industries were leap-frogged by expansion, now seemingly in the middle of the city when they were once on the edge. And through Pine Bluff's incremental expansion, few plans were laid to structure the city comprehensively. Pine Bluff had no City Beautiful plan in the 1920's, despite its growth at the time. As a result, centers, neighborhoods, transportation, open space, and hydrological systems have little coherence. In other, larger cities of a similar period, planners and landscape architects like Daniel Burnham and Fredrick Law Olmstead laid out intentional systems around which the city's future growth would be accommodated.

As we look to stabilize and reverse Pine Bluff's decline, an opportunity is afforded to provide such forward-looking systems. Our eye to the future should be a city that is liveable, loveable, economically successful, uplifts its' residents, and looks hopeful towards a this new century which is otherwise fraught with strife and concern. To look forward, we first look back, discern pattern from noise, and work towards a lasting structure that will support Pine Bluff's successful future.

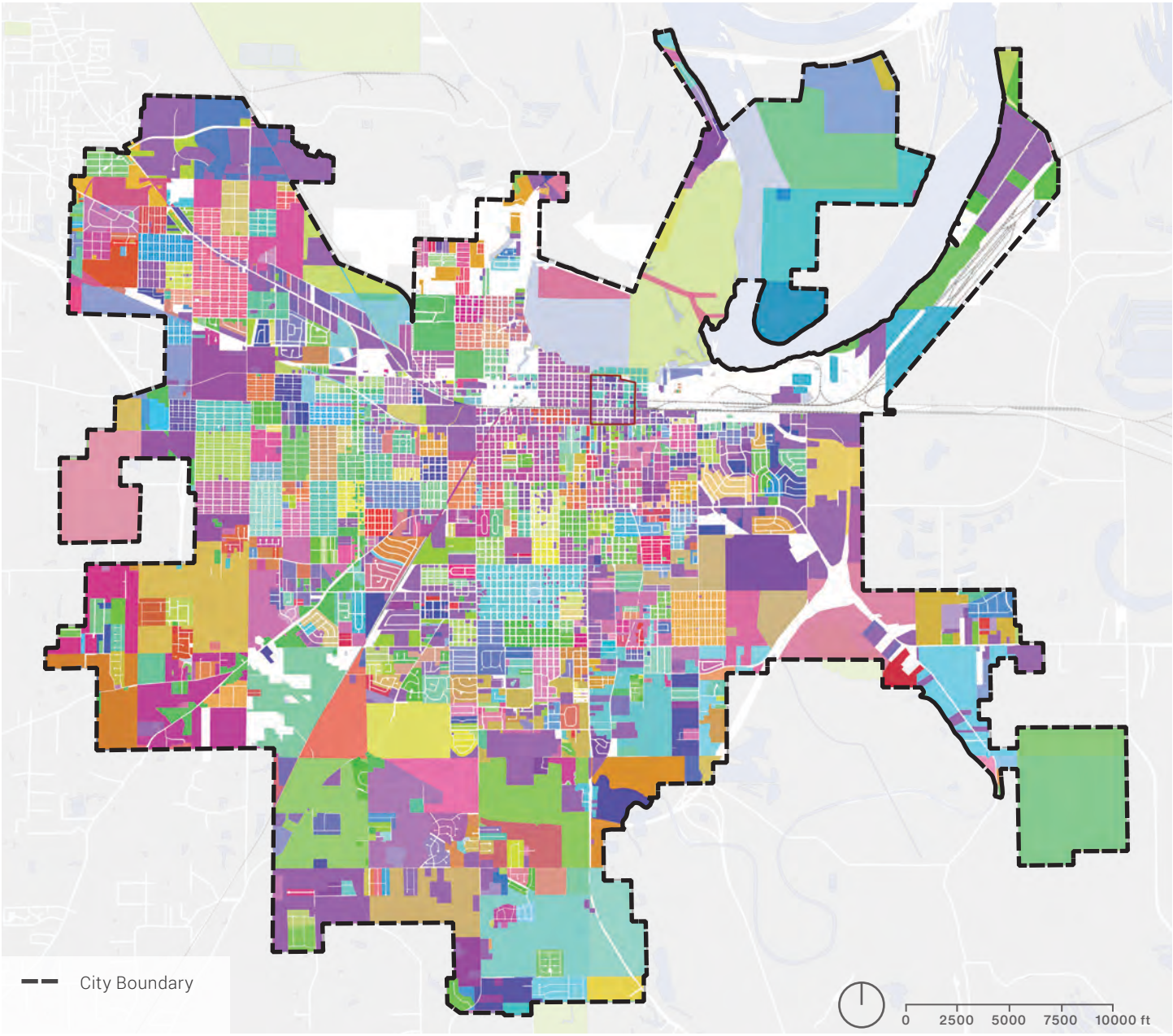


Pine Bluff's early growth was influenced by the Arkansas River and railroad, both early fixtures establishing the town's trajectory. Over time, the river moved, swallowing some of the historic settlement and then changing course to leave behind Lake Saracen. In the mid-1800's, along with the country's post-Civil War railroad expansion, Pine Bluff began growing to the south, away from the river. Early on, southern expansion was limited by Harding's Lake, which development surrounded before eventually being filled in by the 1920's. These early patterns of growth retained a fairly regular block pattern, disrupted by natural barriers, like the lake and various bayou, rail lines and industry, and the race course. Due to their incremental development, blocks are often mis-aligned and areas of later development, such as Harding's Lake, were subdivided more haphazardly.

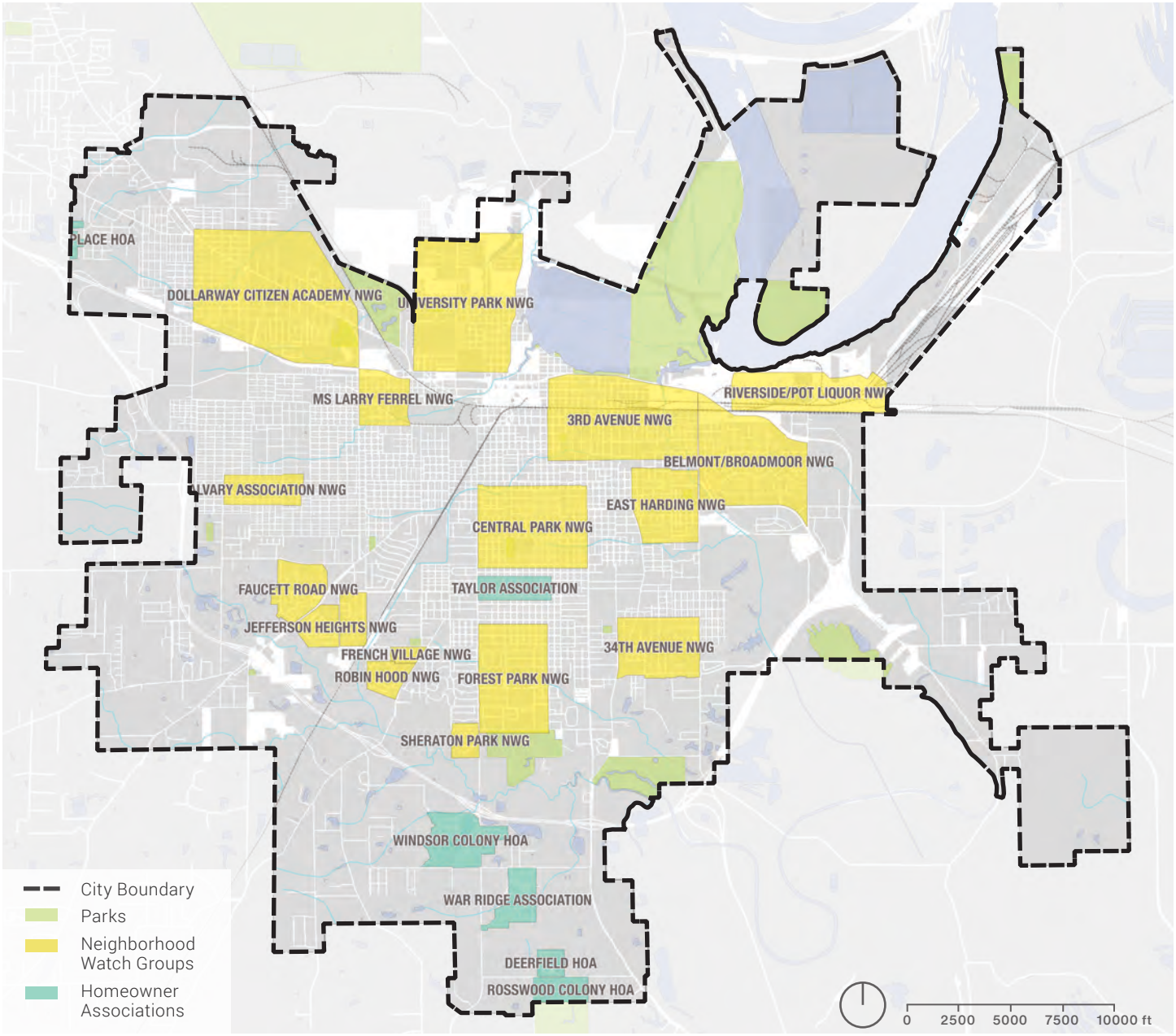
Early postwar development expanded further west and south, limited by swamplands to the north and lowlands near to the west and south near Bayou Bartholomew. These areas retain a relatively consistent block pattern, disrupted by canals, railways, and industrial properties. Later 20th century development expanded all around the city, up to Bayou Bartholomew, later I-530, including many low laying and flood prone areas. Much of this late development occurred in small pockets, disconnected from surrounding development. Most recently, development following the 1980's zoning and subdivision regulations has occurred in a more disconnected and random pattern, towards and beyond the extent of the city.



Presently, neighborhood boundaries are not clearly defined, owed in part to the city's growth patterns over time and also to its incremental decline in population. The neighborhood boundaries shown below are derived from available GIS parcel data, which is primarily related to the process of land subdivision. In recent decades, subdivisions are frequently used to define a neighborhood. These are not based upon any particular scale or daily relationship between neighbors, rather by the somewhat random process of incremental growth. Subdivisions result in hundreds of slightly different places which vary greatly in scale, from just a few blocks to quarter sections. Experientially, neighborhoods are more readily defined by the location of schools, parks, and nearby commercial corridors.

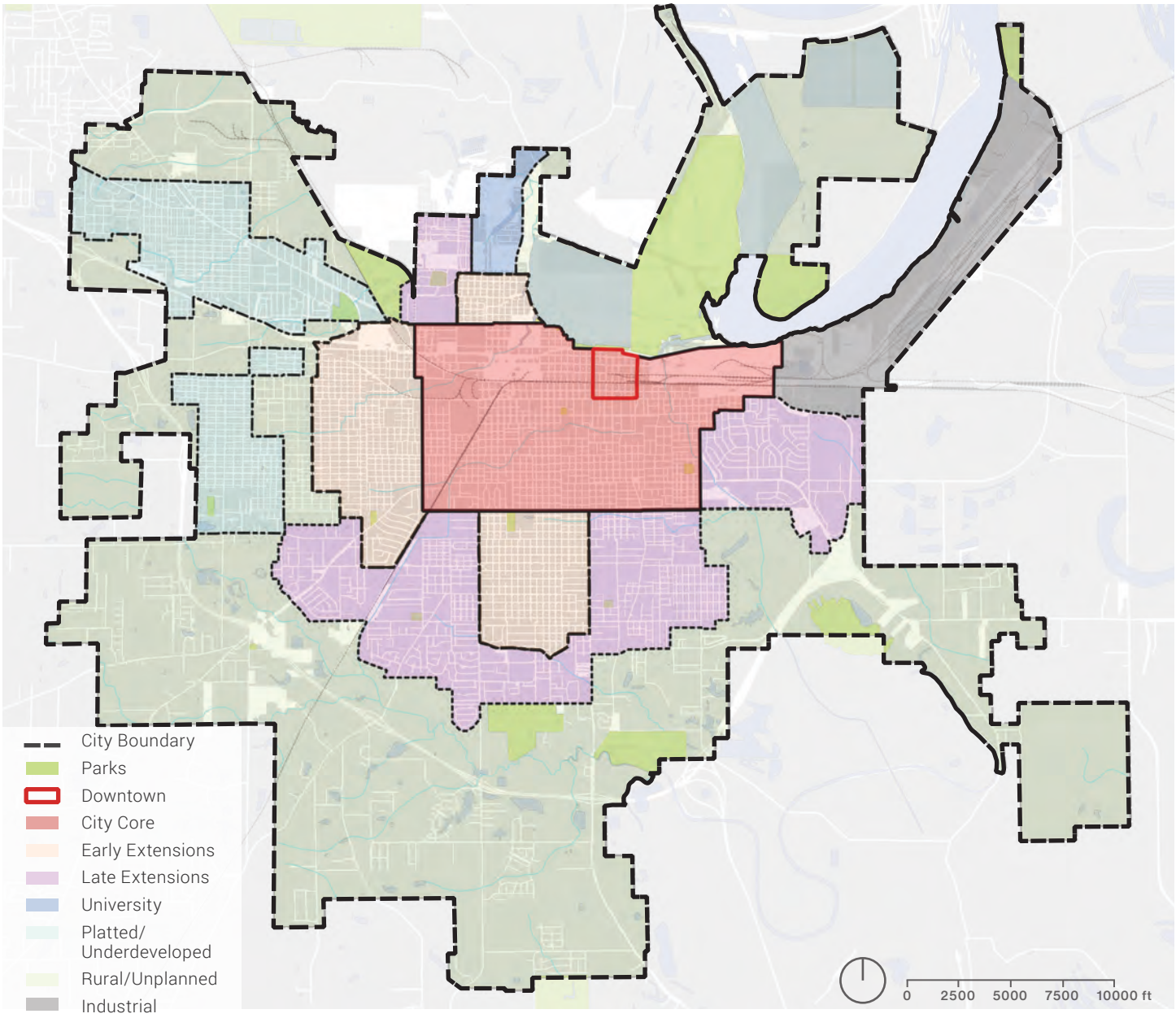


Current neighborhood definition results in numerous holes - areas belonging neither to an association or a neighborhood watch group. This diagram maps existing neighborhood associations and neighborhood watch groups. Each of these vary substantially in size and context, and leave large gaps.



DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE

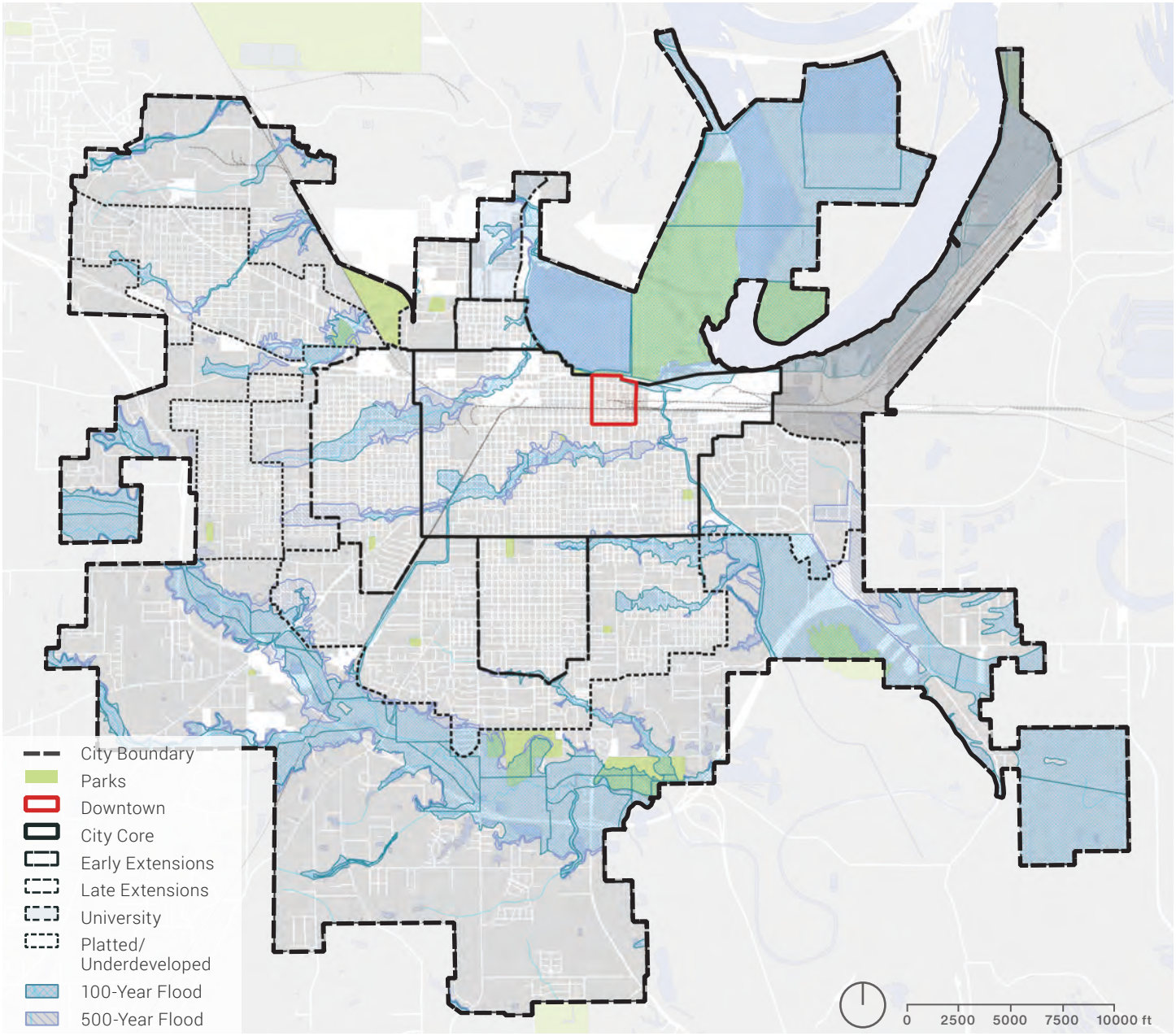
The pattern and character that development takes is influenced substantially by the era of development. This map augments the historic growth map by grouping areas of similar development pattern. For the most part, pattern groupings follow the development timeline. However there are outliers. The City Core reflects the historic growth of Pine Bluff to the 1870's. This portion of the City generally consists of slightly rectangular blocks in a connected but somewhat disjointed grid. As is typical in Pine Bluff, industrial development causes a number of divisions in this fabric, along with natural waterways. For the most part the City Core can be legibly divided into neighborhoods, centers, and corridors. The City's Early Extension areas follow a similar grid pattern as the core, with a few deviations, primarily due to waterways. These areas are similarly able to be legibly divided into neighborhoods, centers, and corridors. The Late Extension areas are generally inconsistent in their development pattern with some cohesive areas, like Broadmoor, but mostly consisting of development fragments which don't clearly assemble into neighborhoods. The Northside and West End are differentiated in that they have a significant amount of platted land in a very regular pattern. While significantly underdevelopment presently, the platting patterns generally follow those of the early City's development. The remainder of the City is described as Rural/Unplanned. These areas consist of haphazard development among otherwise rural or agricultural areas, reflecting the City's current subdivision standards. In general, these areas cannot be assembled into neighborhood, centers, or corridors without focused efforts.



DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE & FLOOD ZONES

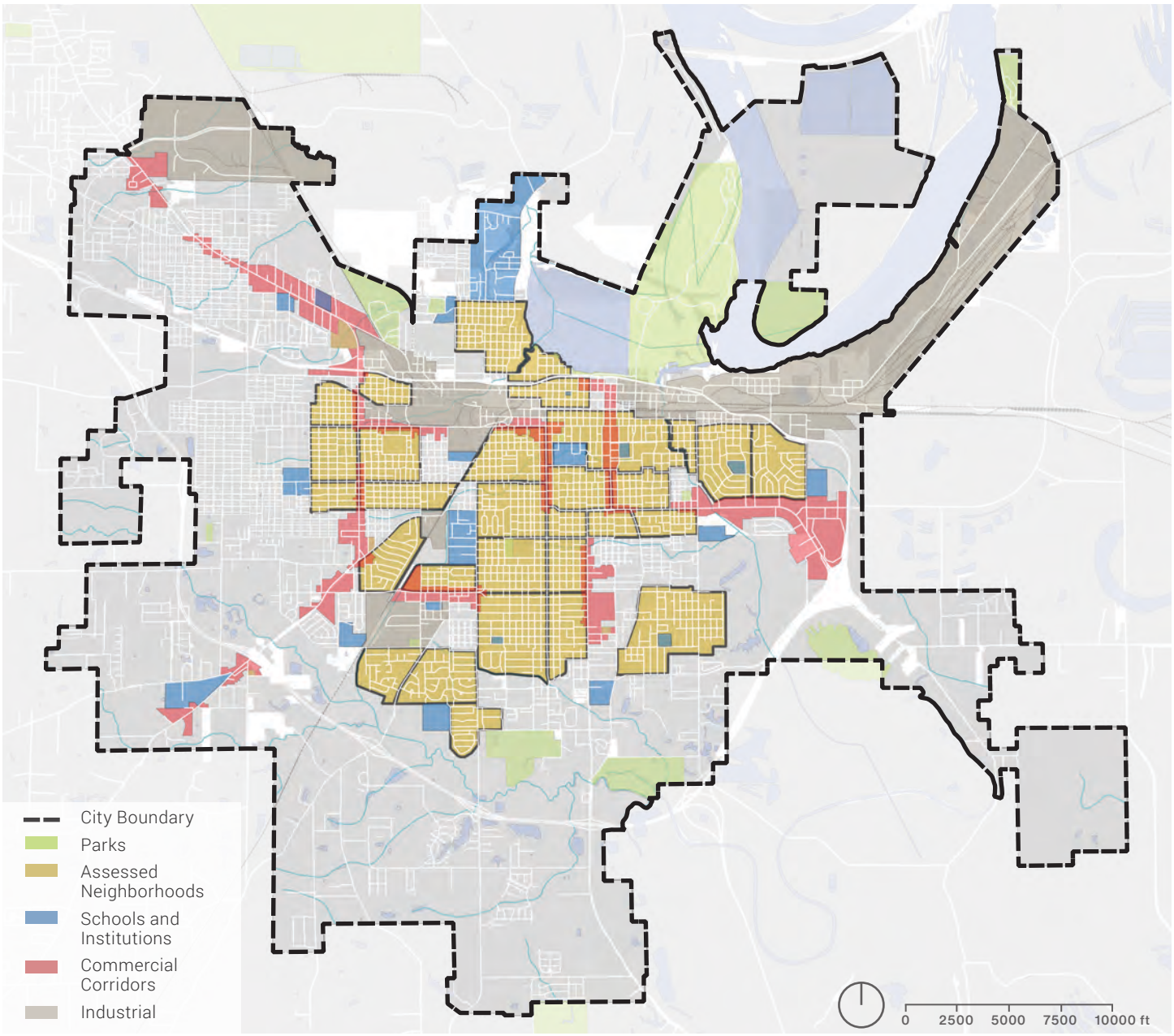
Pine Bluff's history with water has defined its development. Aside from the initial settlement along the former path of the Arkansas River, waterways and flood zones heavily impact each of the City's development areas. While the City Core and Early Extensions preserve some natural waterways and provide for water movement through canals, historic development choices continue to have long-term impacts on flooding. For instance, the High School and Civic Center sit upon a former lake; the lake's removal and piping of the waterway causes upstream flooding. Similarly, industrial development and the 4th Ave rail line constricts water flow, backing up into the West End. In the southeast, development has encroached over Imbeau Bayou, resulting in flooding issues.

Only Bayou Bartholamew is mostly free from development, with a few exceptions in the Late Extensions and Unplanned areas.



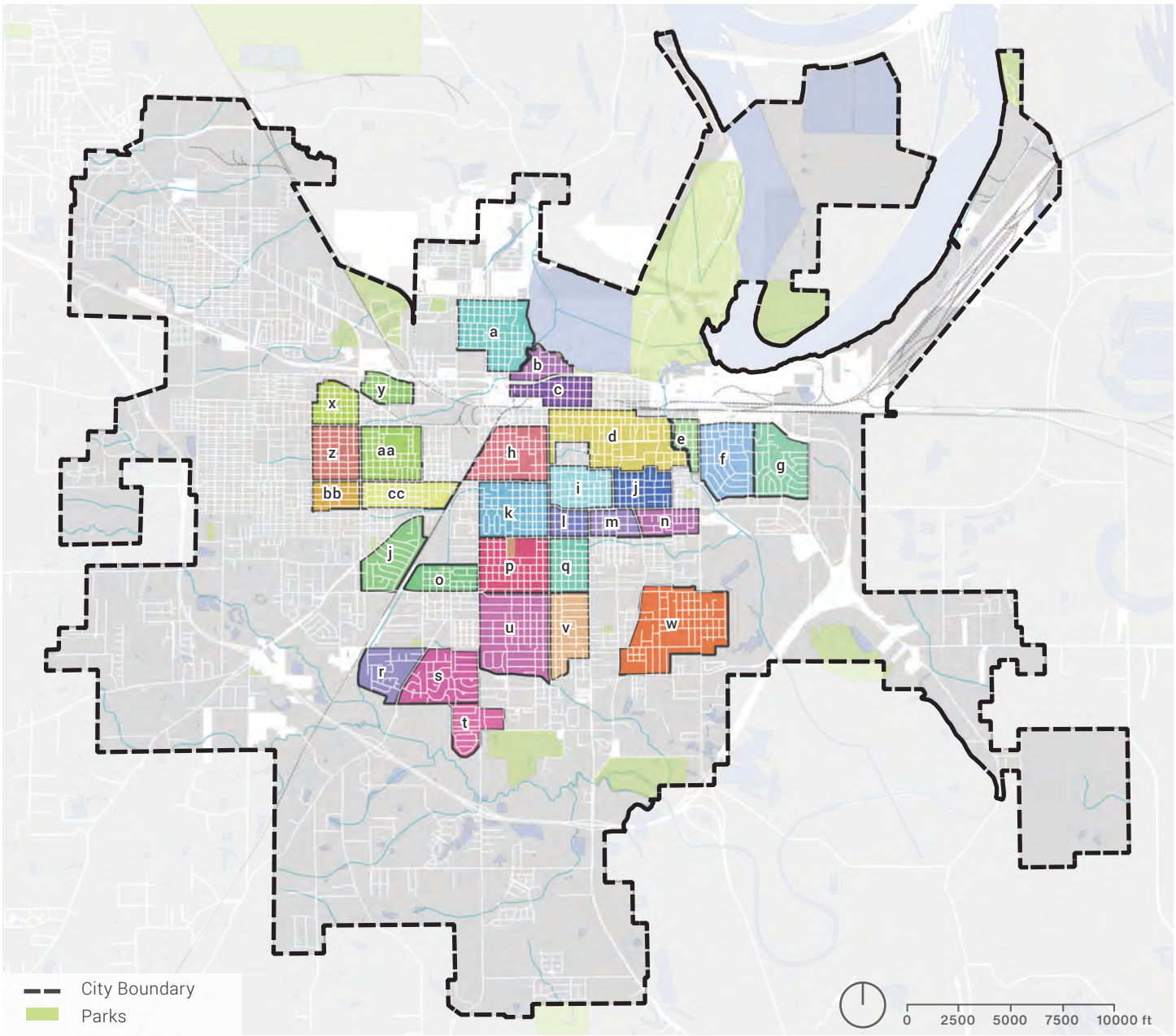
To approach a more clear understanding of Pine Bluff's structure, the following diagram identifies neighborhoods and commercial corridors from a physical standpoint. The yellow areas include neighborhoods or fragments of neighborhoods which are either currently or may become cohesive neighborhoods. There are other areas which may be considered "neighborhoods", but they lack the scale or connectivity required of neighborhood fabric. As a result, our view of Pine Bluff is vastly different from that depicted by land use maps. Significant areas of the City are composed of development fragments which cannot at present create viable neighborhoods.

Commercial corridors are included in this map in order to understand how they may connect or divide neighborhoods. Where these corridors are not surrounded by neighborhoods - the northwest, southwest, and east - they tend to be highway-oriented in nature and may remain so for the foreseeable future. Where commercial corridors are surrounded by neighborhoods, their character should be designed to connect and support the surrounding neighborhood fabric. Unfortunately, at present most of these corridors are designed for automobiles, dividing neighborhood rather than stitching them together.



Pine Bluff's early, unplanned growth created a consistent fabric across much of the city, however land was not set aside for parks, nor were more major corridors designed for future growth. As a result, few neighborhoods have sufficient park access. Most parks have been added later in the City's development, along its' edges. Similarly, without plans for future corridors, arterials have been assigned within the City's fabric, further dividing its' neighborhoods.

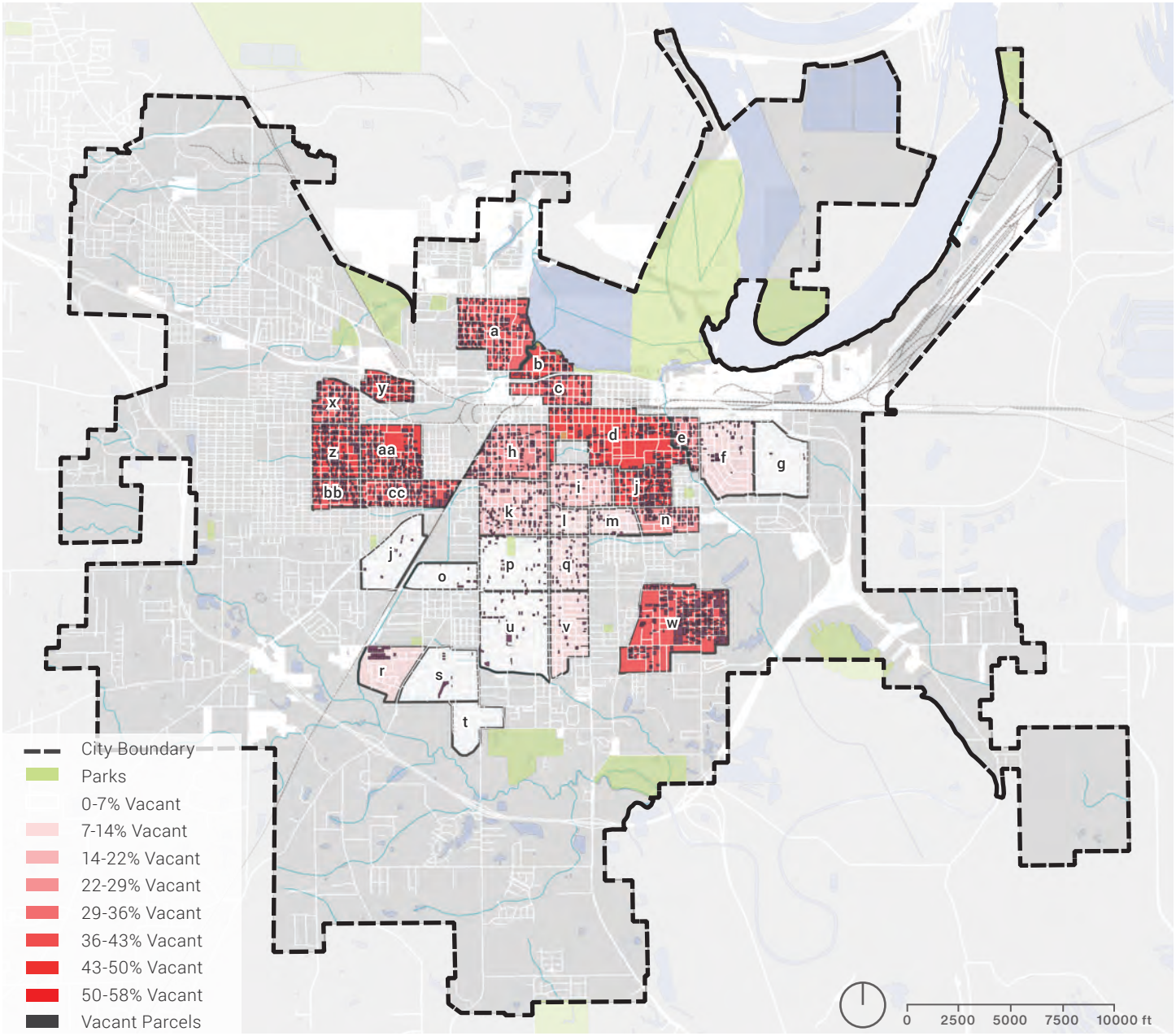
The structure of Pine Bluff is defined more frequently by elements that divide the community than by those which knit it together. Industrial areas and rail lines, canals and natural waterways, and large institutional areas break-up the City. Further, arterial roadways and truck routes create further divides within the City. These later divides are depicted as the black lines along the borders between neighborhoods. In order to heal this fabric, the City Core needs to reverse the role of its corridors and seams, stiching the community together rather than dividing it.



Within the areas able to support a neighborhood structure, vacant land is of particular concern. Already, many of these areas are over 40% vacant. Strategies for addressing vacant parcels should consider the ability of those properties to create a viable neighborhood structure. Generally, neighborhoods should have clear edges and identities, a diversity of housing types and tenure, parks, civic institutions, and destinations along a main street or neighborhood center.

Opportunities to stabilize, complete, and support existing neighborhoods vary substantially across the City. Those neighborhoods to either side of Cherry Street, south of 20th Ave (o,p,q,u,v,r,s,t) are stable, requiring only tactical intervention. These areas would be most effectively supported by focusing on missing neighborhood parks, reviving the historic but degraded neighborhood center at Cherry and 26th Ave, and improving Olive Street and the Jefferson Shopping Center. North of 20th Ave and south of the High School (h,i,k,l,m), neighborhoods need a little more focus on intervention, while they also offer some small opportunities to diversify housing through infill.

To the east and north of the High School (c,d,e,j,n) the neighborhoods and districts require more substantial change, both in redevelopment and in clarifying their purpose and character. Here, the line between residential, commercial,

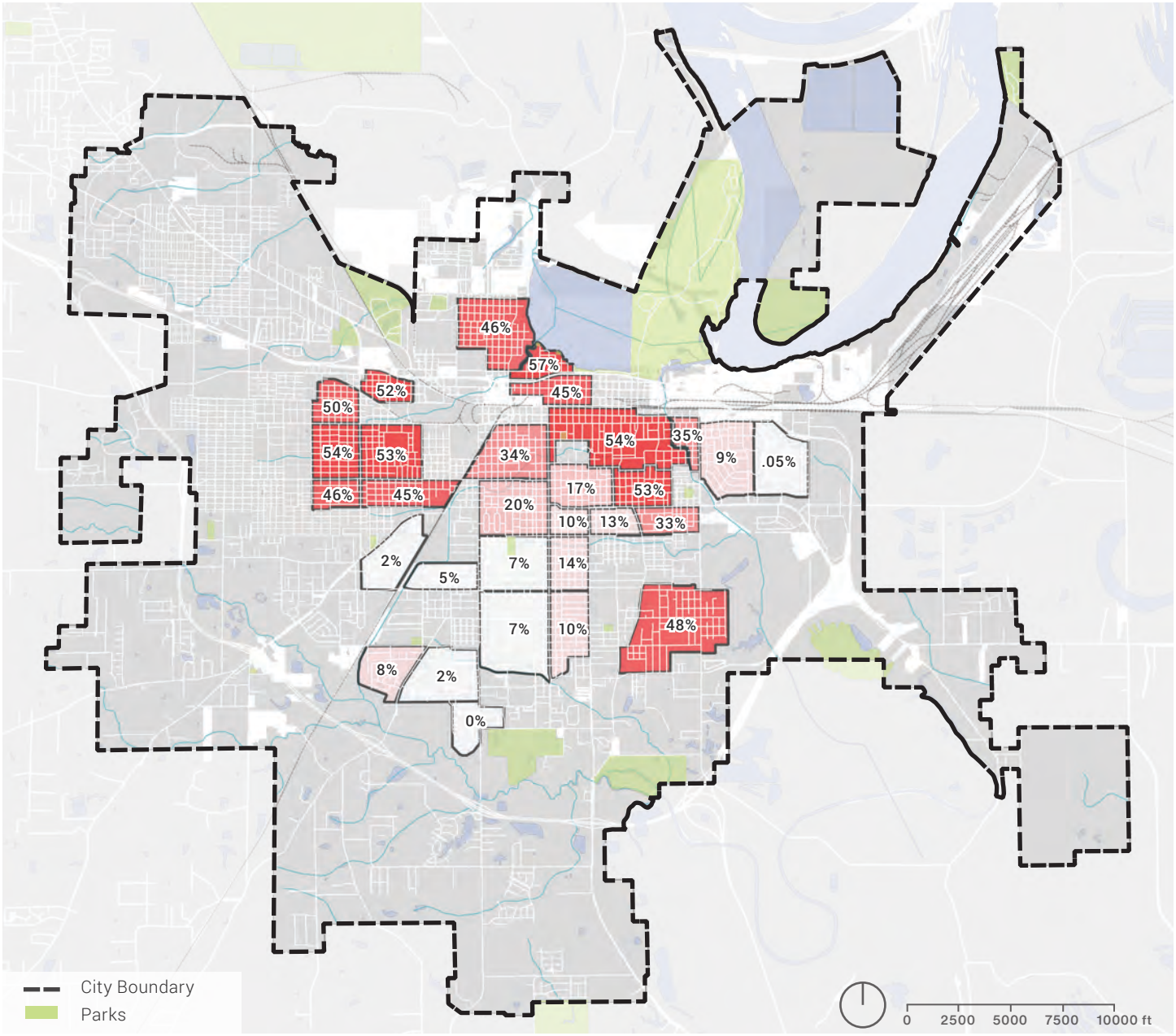


and municipal uses is blurred, and further disrupted and deteriorated by major roadways. There are significant opportunities for infill, which could easily change the character of these areas along with the structure of Pine Bluff.

The area around University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (a) is a special situation. Both residential and commercial areas here are significantly deteriorated, with a high concentration of properties made illegal by the zoning and subdivision standards. This area can be re-positioned as a center, hub for innovation, and neighborhood in support of UAPB.

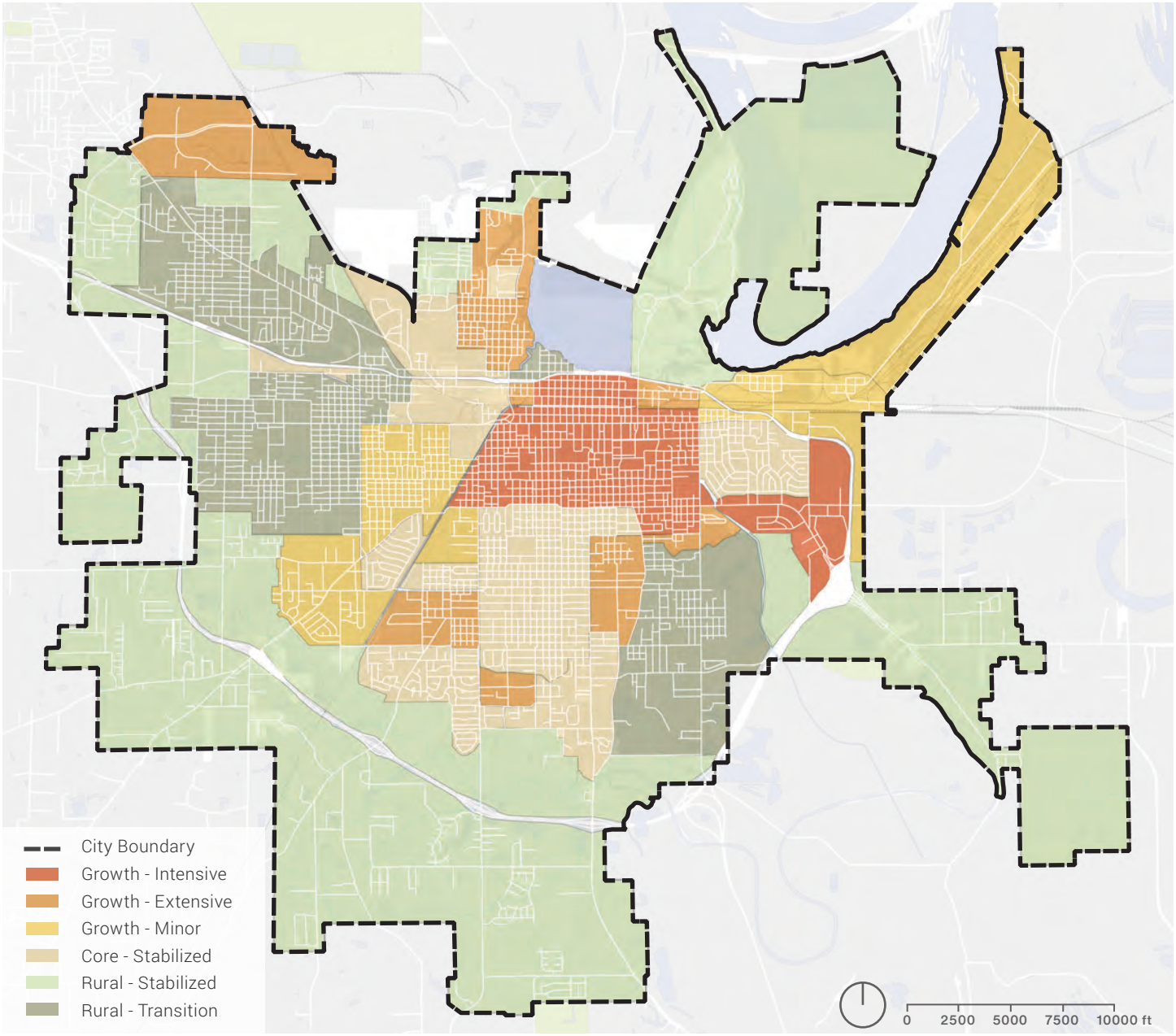
Further away from the core, neighborhoods to the northwest and southeast are significantly deteriorated and unlikely to be recovered in the near future (w,x,y,z,aa,bb,cc). Without sufficient population or funding to go around, strategies here must consider stabilization through means other than infill.

Broadmoor and Belmont Park (f,g) are outliers, being stable yet disconnected from the primary stable neighborhoods. The addition of the Casino will have significant impact on the surrounding area. Changes to zoning and subdivision regulations are needed to direct growth in the area that is likely to follow the Casino's development.



Conceptualizing areas of stability and change in a city that has been shrinking over time is more complex than places experiencing significant growth. Those areas that are stable within the City Core are relatively clear, including neighborhoods with stable populations and structure, and workplaces that are not likely places to see future change. In the more rural areas, stability is mapped and defined as places that should not change substantially in the future. This has a policy implication which is to recommend further development not happen in these places, directing it instead towards areas identified for change.

Areas of change are categorized to describe the relative scale and direction of change. Some areas are more likely to continue to depopulate, shrinking the footprint of the urbanized City. These are described as transitioning towards a more rural condition. Areas targeted for growth are further categorized by the amount of growth and change. Areas of Intensive growth should see changes that are the most substantial, including the addition of public spaces, diversification of housing types, and the overall intensity of the growth. Areas of extensive growth should see changes which affect the character of the place but are not substantial in the future intensity of the land use. Areas of minor growth should see growth which follows the existing character of place, moving towards completion of development.



This page is intentionally blank.

2.7a EXISTING TRANSPORTATION-RELATED PLANS

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION- RELATED PLANS

SECTION CONTENTS

Notes

- Store Front Zone
  - Outdoor seating should be located within the "amenity zone" rather than against the building facade. Railings are not recommended. Exceptions to location in amenity zones and reducing railings are typically accommodated due to state or local liquor laws which in some instances require the consumption of liquor to be directly connected to the licensed establishment.
- Street Lighting
  - Recommend adjusting the height of light posts to 14-16ft.
  - Recommend LED with a maximum color temperature of 3,200 kelvin.
- Benches
  - In relation to the Store Front Zone, benches should be located adjacent to the building facade, as indicated in the photo used on page 30, rather than being located near the curb.
- Street Design
  - Plan (standard street) - We disagree with the recommendation to provide rain gardens along Main Street and continuous planters as depicted along Barraque Street. Main Street should use tree pits with grates, as identified earlier in the design guidelines.
  - Section (standard street) - Accounting for the above comment on rain gardens, additionally the width of a parallel parking space need not be more than 7ft. If curbs are to be moved, then parking spaces should be reduced. However, moving from 8ft to 7ft as the sole reason for moving curbs is impractical.
  - Plan (median boulevard) - A median is not recommended on Main Street. Any additional width should be given to sidewalks.
  - Section (median boulevard) - A median is not recommended on Main Street. Any additional width should be given to sidewalks.
  - Rain gardens - Rain gardens are not recommended along Main Street. They may be incorporated along side streets and at open spaces. In an active Main Street environment, rain gardens accumulate garbage and additionally take the form of planters which are specifically recommended against earlier in the design guidelines.
- Parking Lot Enhancement
  - Throughout the downtown area, the brick walls that are recommended should be used rather than the additional recommendation of a "green edge".

Assessment

Overall the recommendations of the main street design guidelines align with recommended practice. Care should be taken with the location of rain gardens and other LID infrastructure which is not recommended within the core retail district, but may be accommodated along side streets. One primary difference in recommendation is the location of outdoor seating. In best practice, outdoor seating should be located near to the curb, not up against the building, and fencing is not recommended. However, some jurisdictions have liquor laws that require the location and fencing as recommended in the design guidelines. Concerning the street design options, Main Street in Pine Bluff should not have a median, unless it is the only viable way to reduce the width of travel lanes. Rather, curbs should be moved to provide more sidewalk and amenity space. Other recommendations noted above are minor but important.

Notes

- Background on SRTS is a focus on safe walking and bicycling routes to school. Note that pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in Pine Bluff is rare and typically in poor repair.
- Land use patterns clearly summarizes the issues of sprawl and implications they have on public health and safety.
- Key Issues -> Gaps in sidewalk coverage
    - In addition to items described here, the current subdivision regulations do not require sidewalks any many instances. Though this is addressed on Page 33 in implementation.
- Key Issues, Overall
    - This section clearly identifies numerous problems. One issue that is not specifically mentioned but alluded to frequently is the lack of culture promoting walking and cycling over driving and the related respect or lack thereof for people who choose to walk or cycle. This is identified in the sections on cycling etiquette and pedestrian and motorist education, and later in the Five-"E'S". The problems presented in this document run deep in Pine Bluff and require that almost every street in the city be modified in order to have a safe environment for children. While this conclusion is correct, clearly it cannot be accomplished. But the culture can change, and that can lead the way ahead of many physical improvements, which are still needed.
- Engineering
    - Bicycle lanes should not be less than 5 feet wide. Plenty of roadway space is available.
- GIS
    - Note that safe routes and the appendix maps are not available in the City's GIS information, nor are any bicycle infrastructure plans. Unfortunately the appendix maps (sidewalk and bike inventory) are not included in the publicly available SRTS PDF.

Assessment

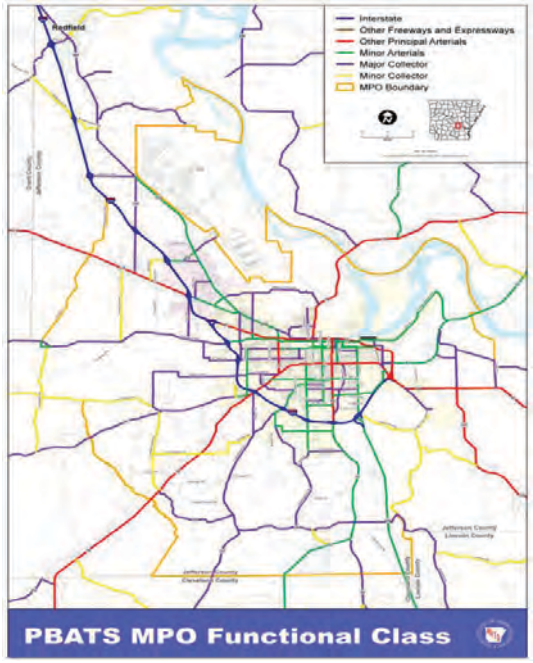
This is an excellent document, the reach of which is hindered by its lack of imagery and graphic design. While those are not required to understanding the issues presented within, every resident should be well aware of the many points which this document effectively and concisely explains. The implementation section is well targeted, but it is overly optimistic in the ability to accomplish its goals within 6 years. Implementation suggestions remain valid and important.

Notes

- Goals -> Access Management
  - Note that most access management goals are associated with highway and arterial design and management and directly conflict with what makes for safe and productive local centers of activity and neighborhoods.
- Inventories and Forecasts
  - Population
    - 2000 census: 84,278
    - 2010 census: 77,443 (-8.1%)
    - 2020 estimate: 74,404 (-3.9%)
    - 2030 estimate: 71,374 (-4.1%)
    - 2040 estimate: 68,344 (-4.2%)(-19% from 2000) (76% of peak)
    - Peak ~90,000 in 1980
  - Employment (2000-2040)
    - Mining & construction: 960 - 1,210 jobs (26% growth)
    - Manufacturing: 8,450 - 8,940 jobs (5.8% growth)
    - Transportation, Comm, Utilities: 1,800 - 2,030 (12.8% growth)
    - Trade: 7,240 - 9,160 (26% growth)
    - Finance, Insur, Real Estate, Bank: 1,220 - 1,170 (-4% growth)
    - Service: 8,370 - 12,140 (45% growth)
    - Government: 8,030 - 8,550 (6.5% growth)
    - Total: 36,070 - 43,200 (19.8% growth)
  - Major employers are distributed in and around the core of Pine Bluff, with an outside cluster at the Department of Corrections.
  - Vehicle registrations projected to grow by 1% from 2000 - 2040.
  - Traffic Volumes
  - In most places ADT has decreased and projects a decrease, except around White Hall which has grown population, I-530, and Walmart.
  - Environment
    - Poor drainage and chronic flooding have proven to be impediments and should be a factor in future decisions regarding land use and growth.
- Land Use, Master Street Plan, and Community Controls
  - Note the image on page 36 illustrating a typical 60ft right of way would result in a poor quality built environment, especially for pedestrians. This illustrates a typical preference in transportation plans giving more space to cars than necessary. However the land use condition is urban in nature with on-street parking, so it indicates a changing understanding. In this particular case, while 1ft could be removed from each travel lane and parking lane, the resulting increase to the roadside from 6ft to 8ft is still insufficient. This indicates the need to design a viable bike network so decisions can be better made between where bikes need dedicated facilities and where they don't, along with decisions for on-street parking and pedestrian needs. It's a delicate balance.
  - Land use within the metropolitan planning area
    - The first paragraph notes the historic compact nature of Pine Bluff and other settlements. Then it notes that I-530 has improved access in the area, however also that it "has had a strong influence on the expansion of low density residential, commercial and industrial developments in the Study Area fringe". The overall paragraph does not clarify whether the influence on expansion has had a negative impact in their mind or not, and how that impact compares to the increase in access. From our point of view, the impact on growth has significantly impacted Pine Bluff in a negative manner, but there are certainly advantages to access. The overall impact is seen as negative, particularly from the standpoint of neighborhoods and local economic development.
    - Report recommends adding greenbelts to separate residential, commercial, and industrial areas. This is an antiquated way of looking at settlement patterns, further perpetuating their problems which are well documented in the Safer Routes to Schools report.

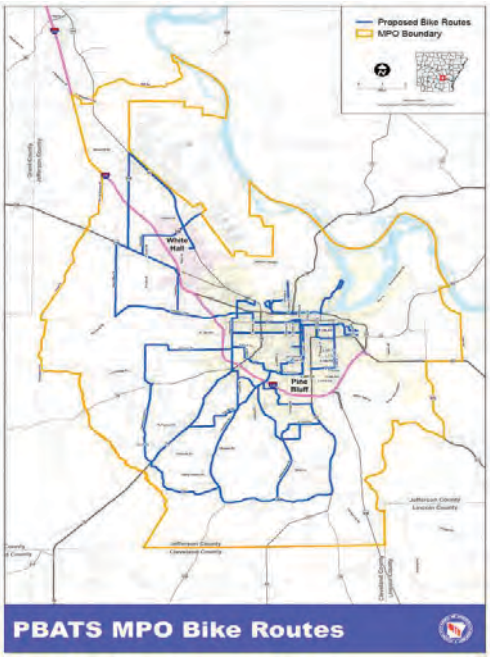
- Decision making for the 2040 Transportation Plan focuses on suburban growth to the southwest of Pine Bluff and in White Hall, and further growth in the east around the airport and industrial areas.

- Functional Classifications
  - Paragraph describing access trade-offs: "Arterial networks emphasize a high level of mobility for through traffic movements. Local facilities emphasize more on the land access function. Collectors offer a compromise between both functions of land access and mobility". While this is a known set of standards, it does lead to question the assignment of an arterial classification for certain constrained streets that pass through the core of Pine Bluff. These streets cannot provide more efficient movement without severely degrading the land use environment around them. The justification for arterial determination in these instances should be questioned, especially in light of their low ADT. There are a significant number of arterials mapped through the core of Pine Bluff.
  - MPO classifications:
    - 1. Interstates
    - 2. Other Freeways & Expressways (Full or partial control of access)
    - 3. Principal Arterials
    - 4. Other Principal Arterials (No control of access)
    - 5. Minor Arterial Streets
    - 6. Collector Streets
    - 7. Local Streets
  - Standard street sections: arterial, collector, and local standards are detrimental to the quality of the built environment within the core of Pine Bluff. In general the travel lanes are too wide and speedy, and parking lanes are too wide when specified or discouraged in conditions, like locals, where they are especially important.



- Access Management
  - The benefits discussed ignore the detrimental conditions imposed by applying suburban access management standards in urban areas. It is difficult to quantify the public health and community cohesion impacts, though the Safe Routes to School plan detailed many of these. Within compact urban areas, access management erodes the land use environment and collapses the economic development basis upon which local economies have been established and thrive. The benefits discussed are applicable only to areas that are not urban in nature.
  - Driveway spacing is one of the few applicable access management principles that is compatible with and important in urban areas.
  - Areas discussed as examples are limited to those in suburban areas near I-530 where access management concerns are appropriate.

- Plan
  - Constrained Plan
    - Most recommendations are concentrated on I-530, Martha Mitchell, and the regional roads that connect to these facilities which surround Pine Bluff. Internal to Pine Bluff are recommendations for widening on Hazel, signal improvements and paving on Olive, and an unclear modification at W 6th Ave and University.
  - Unconstrained Plan
    - Most recommendations are widening or reconstruction outside of the core urban area in Pine Bluff, with the exception of widening on Hazel and East Harding.
  - Bicycles
    - Prior to this plan, no bicycle plans have existed in the planning area, a bicycle plan is included for 2040. The bicycle plan is not included in the Transportation Plan, aside from the bike route map. Significant work is needed to define a connected and complete bicycle network to meet the needs of cyclists with differing needs and skills.



  - Transit
    - Approximately 80,865 bus trips taken in 2014
    - Plan recommends coordinating services and then establishing a Regional Transit Authority.
    - Current routes are hub and loops, with few cross-connections. Requires study.
  - Intermodal Recommendations
    - Pine Bluff is a rare case where the port and rail are near each other and both have room to expand. Represents a good economic opportunity.
  - Trucks
    - Outlines major sources of truck trips in the port, industrial park, and near HW79 along W 6th Ave, all of which are outside of Pine Bluff's core urban area.
    - Recommends a number of policies be analyzed and modified to provide better truck movement and access.
    - Truck route map includes numerous routes though Pine Bluff's urban core which requires further analysis concerning implications of routing trucks in this manner. industrial park, and near HW79 along W 6th Ave, all of which are outside of Pine Bluff's core urban area.
    - Recommends a number of policies be analyzed and modified to provide better truck movement and access.
    - Truck route map includes numerous routes though Pine Bluff's urban core which requires further analysis concerning implications of routing trucks in this manner.

- Pedestrians
  - This section entirely ignores the character of Pine Bluff's core urban area. Suggestions that the CBD and University be studied for pedestrian movement is valid, however the entire core of Pine Bluff north of I-530 should be considered unique from the rest of the county and able to support economic development by re-establishing neighborhood structure, walkability, and local business.
  - This section focuses on new suburban growth and suburban roadways which will have little impact on walking. Clearly land use change needs to lead the way for pedestrian changes.
  - Recommends complete streets policy. While this is positive, few have made significant impacts in practice.
- Trails
  - 3 pedestrian trails are built or in progress.

- Social Equity and Environmental Justice
  - This section suggests that because the area is primarily African American that any projects recommended will benefit communities of color. However it fails to recognize the damage done by "transportation improvements" and the continued damage caused by implementing those same standards to the community's detriment. While the term "adverse environmental impacts" is used, there is no clear understanding of the ways that conventional transportation improvements, as recommended by this plan, have adverse environmental impacts on communities of color.
- Management Systems
  - Areas of congestion:
    - Actual
      - Harding between Olive and Ohio
    - Minor
      - University between Saracen and 3rd Ave
      - Sulphur Springs between Chapel Heights and Camden Rd
      - Martha Mitchell between Blake and Walnut
      - Blake between 4th Ave and Hutchinson St
      - Hazel between 17th and 31st Ave
      - Olive between 23rd and 30th Ave
      - 28th between Hazel and Catalpa
  - Suggests that if land use trends continue - movement from the core of Pine Bluff to the fringes, that congestion will increase in the fringe areas and through connectors, requiring a more complete system of collectors.

Assessment

The 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) focuses heavily on issues relating to the wider Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) study area, proposing solutions which are appropriate in rural and suburban contexts, while also applying the same strategies and standards to the historic urban portions of the City of Pine Bluff, to the severe detriment of the City's future success. In assessing this plan, our point of view is focused on Pine Bluff's current conditions, opportunities, and threats. This situation is common because MPOs, and County and State transportation agencies manage more lane miles of roadway in rural and suburban conditions than they do in urban and historic areas. But rarely has a historic community been criss-crossed by so many arterials as Pine Bluff, to the detriment of its present and future condition.

Overall the 2040 MTP is well written and organized, but its consideration of best practices and growth patterns are outdated. Sections of the report concerning the area's history, growth, economy, and changes in transportation are detailed and helpful for the reader. However, the assumption that the report makes concerning future growth patterns do not reflect overall changes observed elsewhere throughout the US and other parts of Arkansas and nearby Tennessee. In the section on Management Systems, the report clarifies that growth assumptions follow the land use trends established between 1980 and the mid-2000's. That growth will continue within the fringes of Pine Bluff, requiring a more complete system of arterials and collectors in the rural areas, and that the historic core of the city will continue to decline. Elsewhere in Arkansas, Tennessee, and the US, a different pattern has been emerging: historic cities have seen increasing growth with a decrease in growth at the rural fringe. While this change may be occurring slowly in southeast Arkansas, it is notable in northwest Arkansas and around the major cities of Tennessee.

Changing the trajectory of Pine Bluff from a declining city to a stabilized and growing city is a core goal of the comprehensive plan. As the excellent Safe Route to Schools plan points out, there is a chicken and egg problem where changes must be made to the transportation system and growth priorities to allow Pine Bluff to improve, yet the triggers which would cause a change in priorities wait for the city to change trajectory first. In this assessment, we assert that the transportation priorities and assumptions must be changed in order to allow the city to change trajectory. In other words, the transportation system and MTP are holding Pine Bluff back from growth and economic development.

Within the rural and suburban areas of Jefferson County, the MTP's approach and recommendations are adequate. We recommend no major deviations in these areas.

Within the historic and urban areas of Pine Bluff, the MTP's approach is inappropriate, resulting in declines of economic development potential, quality of life, social isolation, public health, and many other items clearly identified in the Safer Routes to Schools report. As the comprehensive plan and planning in general are specific concerned with public health, safety, and welfare, this issue is a clear priority. The core misalignment comes from applying suburban standards for arterial roadways throughout the core of Pine Bluff. Applying these standards directly contradicts the definitions used for arterials, which degrades surrounding land uses. Similarly, truck routes are located indiscriminately throughout the core area, further dividing the community.

Functional classification, which drives the MTP, is a system designed for pure suburban conditions that has been retroactively applied to connected, complex, and compact urban areas. Almost all instances where functional classification has been applied in compact urban areas have resulted in significant degradation in quality of the built environment, its economic success, public safety, and public health. Applying the system results in numerous compromises which are neither good for transportation planning goals nor for the health and prosperity of the urban area. The PBATS MPO Functional Class map and the reality on the ground in Pine Bluff clearly illustrate how completely a transportation planning element built for suburban conditions can destroy an urban area. When cross referenced with the actual ADT, it is clear that these classifications are no longer aligned with usage patterns on many streets. Most streets identified as arterials are under 11,000 vpd, with many below 8,000 vpd, which qualify as major or minor collectors, a more fitting condition for the land use versus through traffic trade-offs.

- Interstate 530: Under capacity
    - Capacity 71,700 vpd, Service Volume 44,800 vpd, 2016 ADT is 27,000 vpd
    - 38% of capacity and 60% of service volume
- Principal Arterials (sampling)
    - Martha Mitchell: Under capacity
        - Capacity 22,800 vpd, Service Volume 17,000 vpd, 2016 ADT is 11,000 vpd
        - 48% of capacity and 65% of service volume
    - S Blake St (Bus-79): At capacity north of Miramar Drive, solutions could be developed at other interchange connections like W Hepburn
        - Capacity 22,800 vpd, Service Volume 17,000 vpd, 2016 ADT is 18,000 vpd

    - 78% of capacity and 105% of service volume
  - S Olive (Bus-63): Under capacity
    - Capacity 22,800 vpd, Service Volume 17,000 vpd, 2016 ADT is 13,000 vpd
    - 57% of capacity and 76% of service volume

Collectors, within the functional classification framework, are described in the MTP as roadways which allow for a compromise between the needs of through movement and access. Consider S Walnut St which is identified as a Principal Arterial in the MTP. This street consists of single family houses with driveways and zero-setback main street type businesses. An arterial designation aims to remove any on-street parking, which is needed for business success, and to eliminate as many access points as possible, which is incompatible with the existing single-family homes. If the goals of an arterial were attempted, both the homes and businesses would decline further. Yet if the roadway were modified to reflect its actual usage of 4,500 vpd, it could support businesses and housing with on-street parking, trees, and appropriately slow moving vehicles. This roadway should be either a collector or a local, designed with context-derived details.

Nearly all of the functionally classified roadways in the core of Pine Bluff could be reduced in width and speed. FHWA suggests that roads with fewer than 20,000 vpd may be considered for road diets. The Transportation Plan makes no recommendations for road diets other than funding through the Transportation Alternatives Program. This represents a failure to understand the land use and economic development potential inherent in strengthening Pine Bluff's local economy. Without a change to the transportation system and its' assumption, neighborhoods and their supportive main streets cannot easily be revived.

Because functional classification as a system cannot be eliminated in the core of Pine Bluff, a separate set of standards for roadways is needed, along with re-allocating classifications. Within Pine Bluff, a major collector should not be subject to the same standards as a major collector in the suburban or rural fringes. Similarly, arterial standards should be different within the city. Changes to roadway classification and standards should be based upon land use considerations which identify neighborhoods, centers, and corridors.

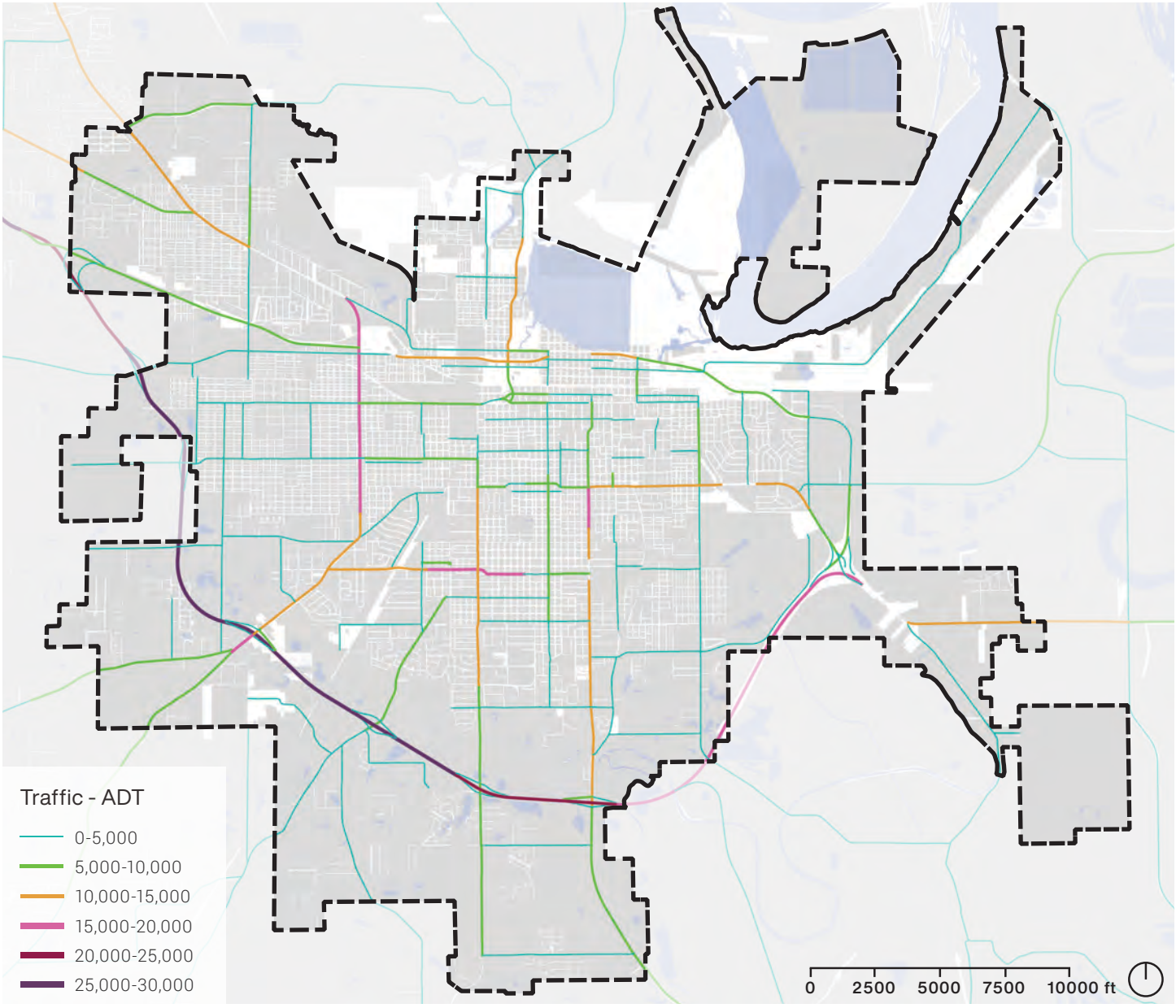
The section on pedestrians clearly reflects the focus of the MTP as discussed above, which is towards the low intensity rural and suburban areas of Jefferson County. This is understandable when considered from the total land area composition of the county. However this point of view levies inappropriate standards and recommendations onto the core urban area of Pine Bluff. The pedestrian section ignores the conditions and opportunities of Pine Bluff's close-in neighborhoods and its early patterns of growth. These areas represent significant opportunities for growth that could change the trajectory of the city. Clearly much of the decision making and analysis that have gone into the Metropolitan Transportation Plan lacks and appreciation and understanding of Pine Bluff's core. This has resulted in decisions that continue to hold back economic development, growth, neighborliness, public health and safety.

Lastly, the section on Social Equity and Environmental Justice ignores the role that transportation projects have had in causing decline and dividing communities. This section suggests that because the area is primarily African American that any projects recommended will benefit communities of color. However it fails to recognize the damage done by "transportation improvements" and the continued damage caused by implementing those same standards to the community's detriment. While the term "adverse environmental impacts" is used, there is no clear understanding of the ways that conventional transportation improvements, as recommended by this plan, have adverse environmental impacts on communities of color.

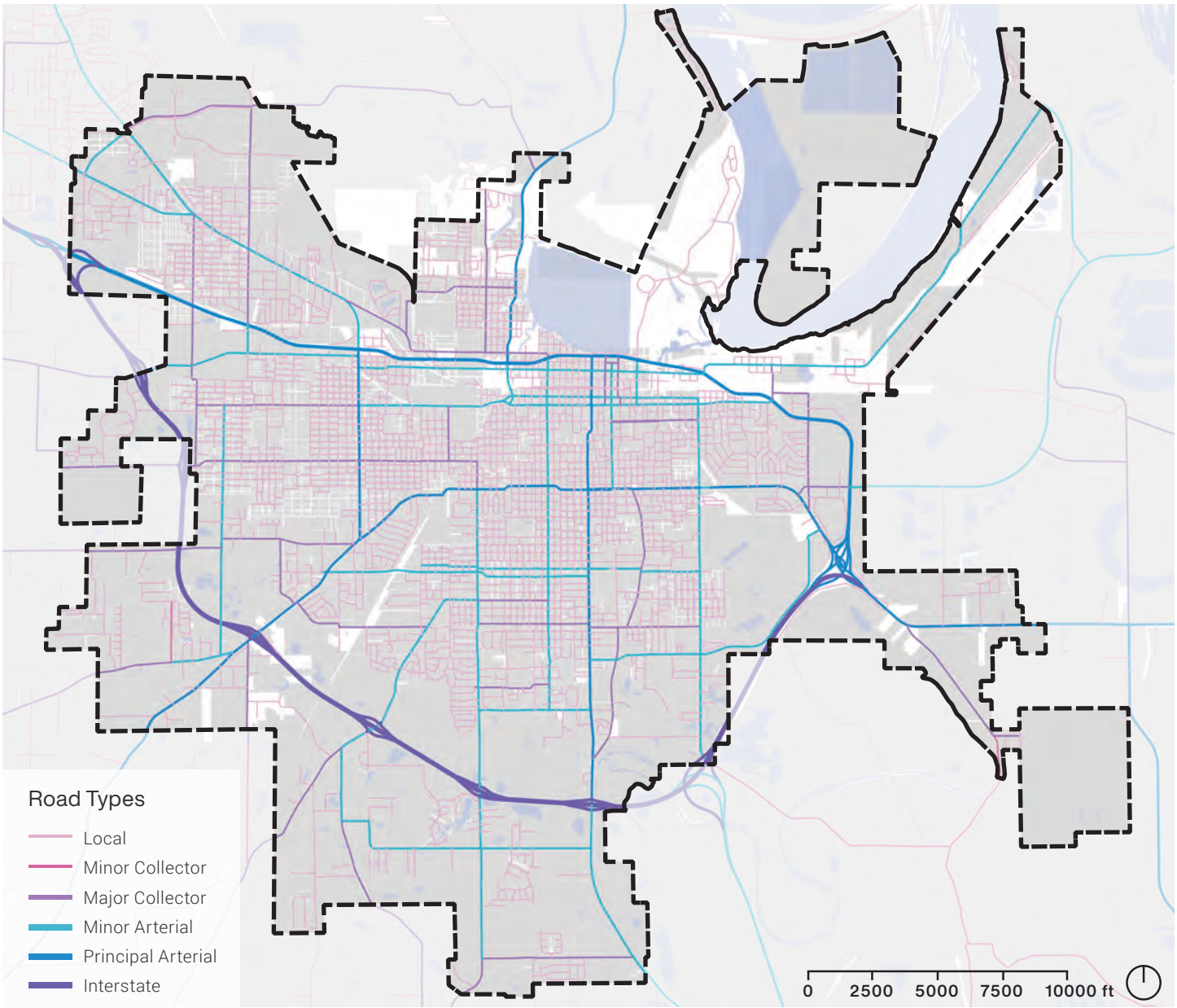
This page is intentionally blank.

2.7b
TRANSPORTATION & TRAFFIC CIRCULATION

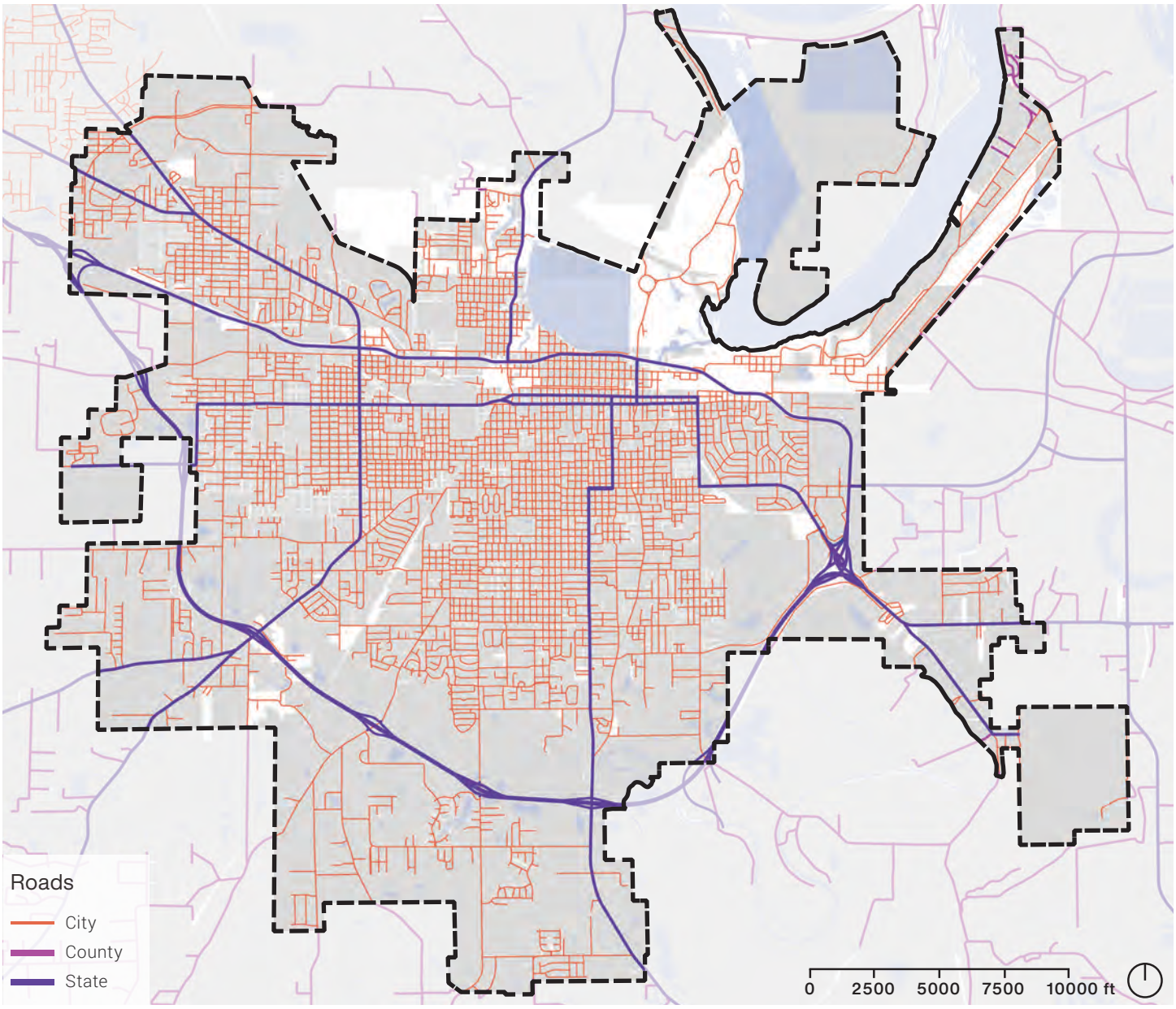
Overall, traffic volumes and backups are not an issue of concern in Pine Bluff. In fact, one goal of this comprehensive plan will be to increase traffic by drawing more people in to Pine Bluff and increasing its' residential population. As is clearly evident in the below diagram, the majority of traffic is along I-530 and those streets which connect at interchanges. While Blake St, W 28th Ave, and S Olive St have relatively high volumes within the core areas of the city with lower volumes towards the edges, these volumes remain low in general. The low overall ADT throughout the City indicates that roadway changes are possible. These may include more roadway space given to pedestrians and cyclists, and converting one-way pairs to two-way traffic which increases the success of adjacent businesses and reduces impact on adjacent housing. There are also a number of locations throughout the City where the pattern of growth has created odd traffic routes, such as W 16th / W 17th / W Harding, which warrant additional consideration.



Along the more major roadways, functional classification is clear and straightforward. However, within the core of Pine Bluff, odd street trajectories, paired streets, and natural and constructed barrier to movement create a relatively unclear system. Additionally, there are numerous locations where street functional classification does not relate well to traffic volumes, which are diagrammed on the following page. For instance, S Olive St is classified an arterial between Martha Mitchell and I-530, however the traffic volume is low and lane configuration modified between Martha Mitchell and Harding Ave. Care must be taken in considering modifications to roadway classifications, to avoid unintended consequences such as Main Street becoming an arterial, which may associate incompatible standards. Of greatest importance is the need to better define the secondary north-south and east-west routes through the core of Pine Bluff. These are extremely inconsistent and disconnected.



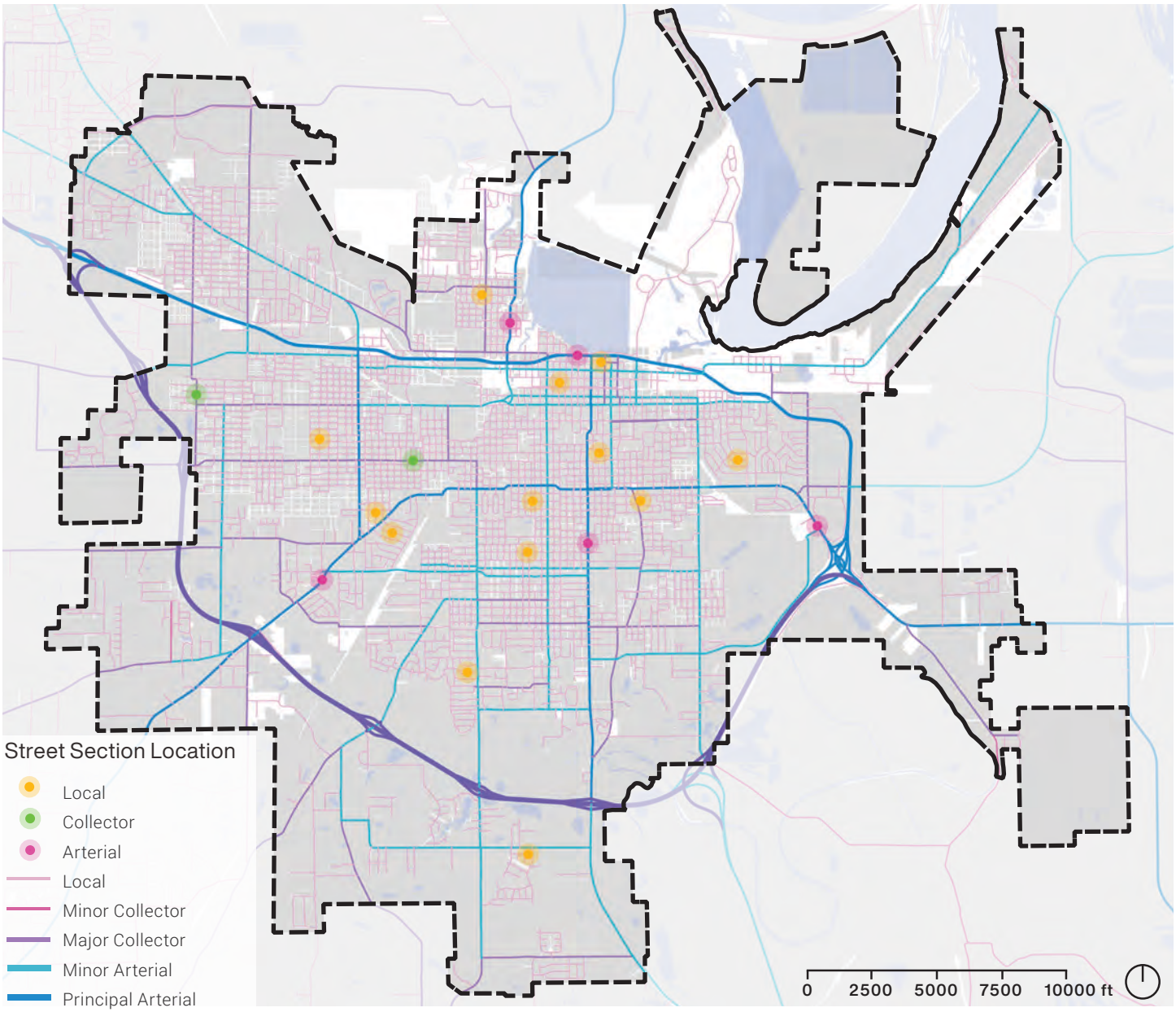
Most streets within Pine Bluff are City owned. This provides easy opportunity for street modifications where needed, including design and speed. However, a few key and potentially problematic corridors within the City's core are State owned, including Olive-Main St, E Harding-Ohio St, 5th/6th Ave, and University north of Martha Mitchell. Aside from Martha Mitchell, most East-West routes across Pine Bluff are inefficient. Adjusting and correcting for some of these inefficiencies may be more difficult given the mixture of ownership needed to solve problems, including otherwise underutilized streets that could be reduces. The one-way pair of 5th/6th Ave is of particular concern, where a potential solution might require 5th Ave returning to local jurisdiction, converting both to 2-way traffic, and extending State jurisdiction along 6th Ave to the intersection with Martha Mitchell. Outside of a few such instances, however, the roadway ownership pattern is straightforward.



In order to better understand the character and variety of streets across the City, a series of sample street sections have been produced. These include local, collector, and arterial streets. Functional classification as a system was introduced well after Pine Bluff was developed, as a result analyzing streets with this method alone is problematic. Without a viable alternative, we are stuck with functional classification for the time being, however street context based on land uses and development intensity should drive decision making.

Overall most of the local streets are narrow, which is good, but most have inadequate sidewalks, few if any street trees, and too narrow planting strips. Collectors lack much consistency, due to the application of functional classification well after the streets were originally built. Of the few commonalities, many collectors have excessively wide travel lanes, which encourages speeding and reduced safety for pedestrians and cyclists. Arterials vary by land use context, as is appropriate, sharing principally a 4 or 5-lane configuration.

Through the comprehensive plan process, additional streets will be analyzed and recommendations made in coordination with land use decisions. This sampling and analysis is intended to inform the comprehensive plan process of the general types and conditions of streets across Pine Bluff.



This page is intentionally blank.

EXISTING LOCALS

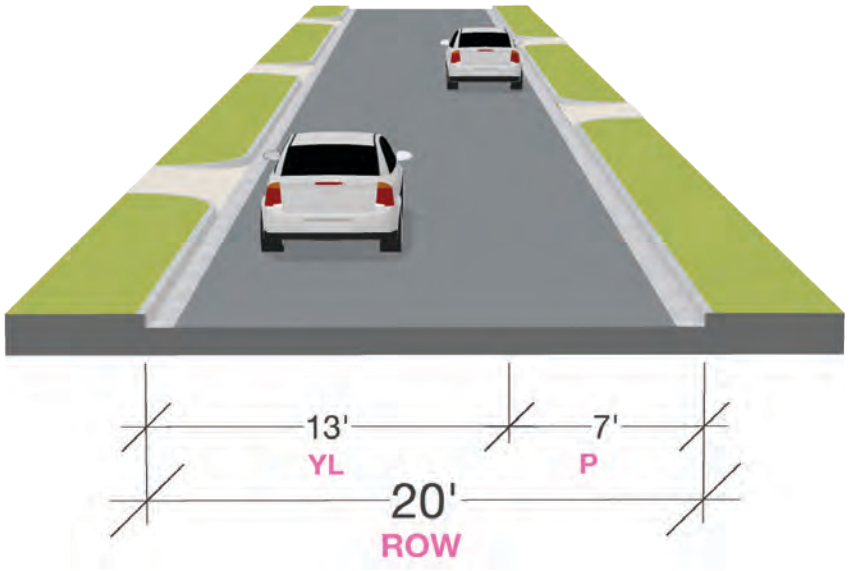
EXISTING LOCALS
SILVER FOX LANE

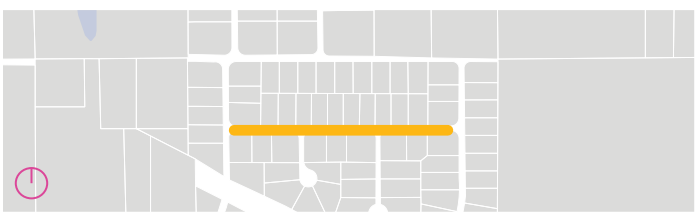
Traffic - ADT

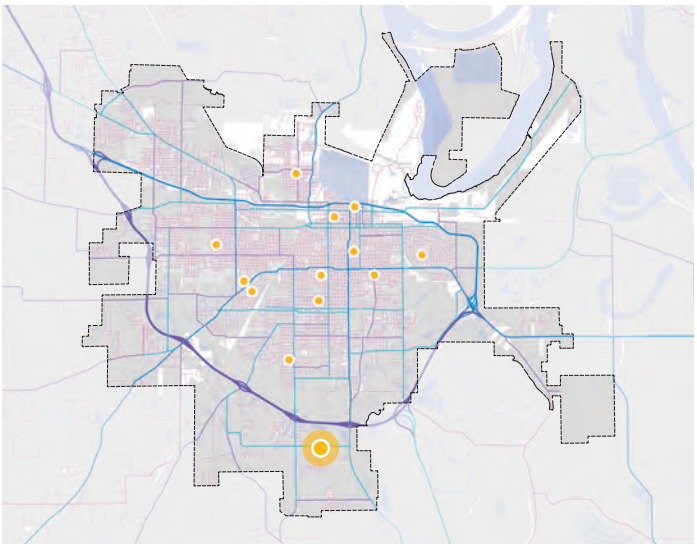
- **291**
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
YL	yield lane
P	parking







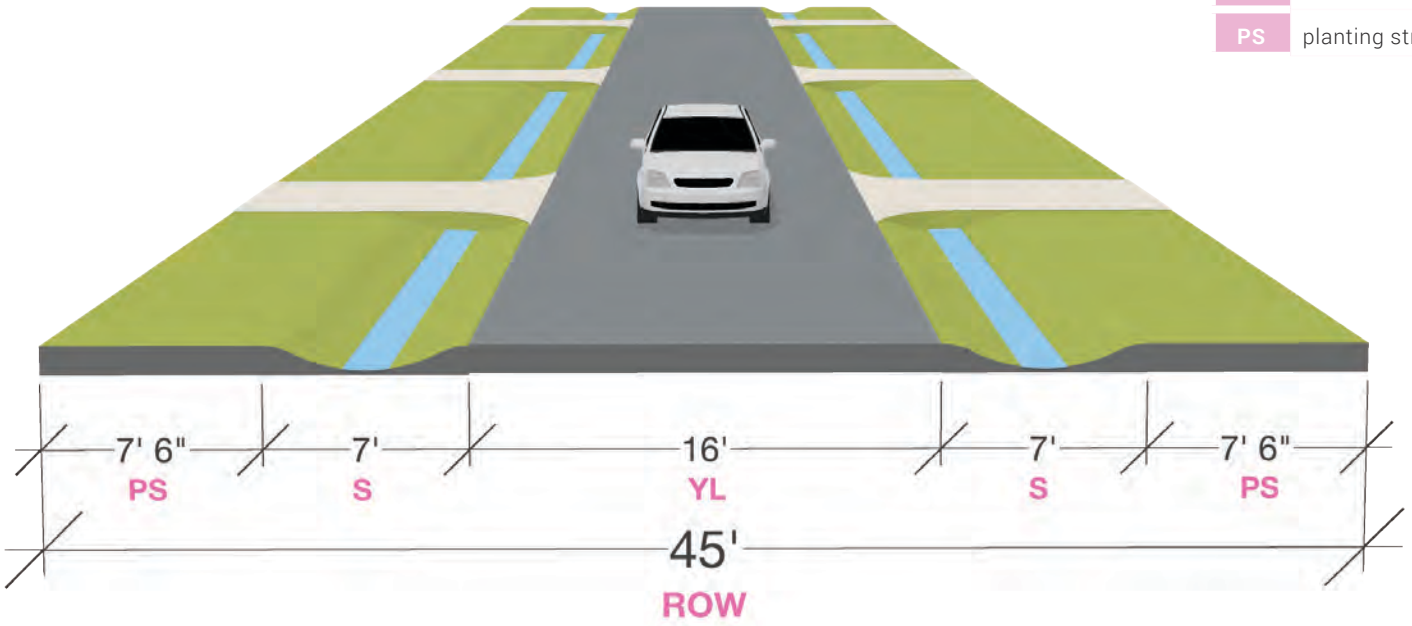
EXISTING LOCALS
SOUTH PERSIMMON STREET

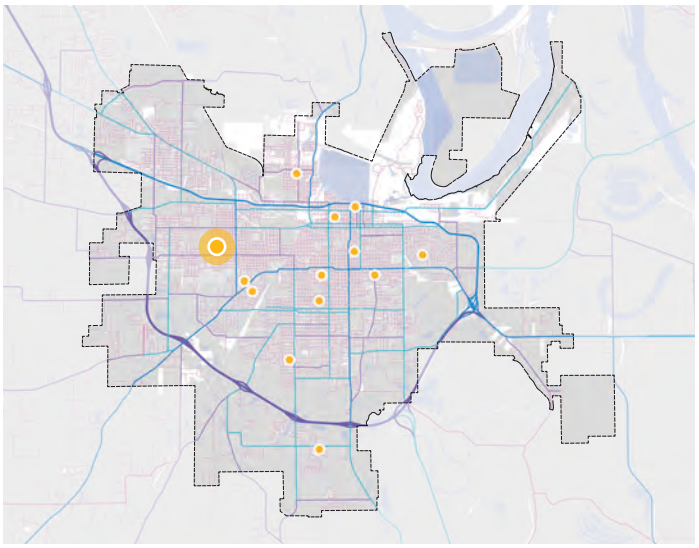
Traffic - ADT

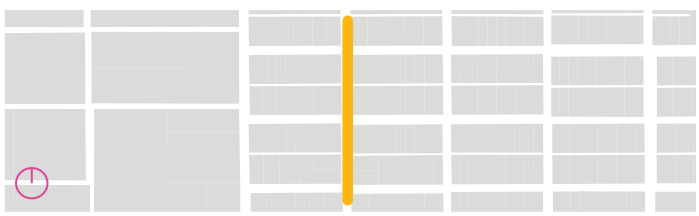
- 229
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
YL	yield lane
S	swale
PS	planting strip







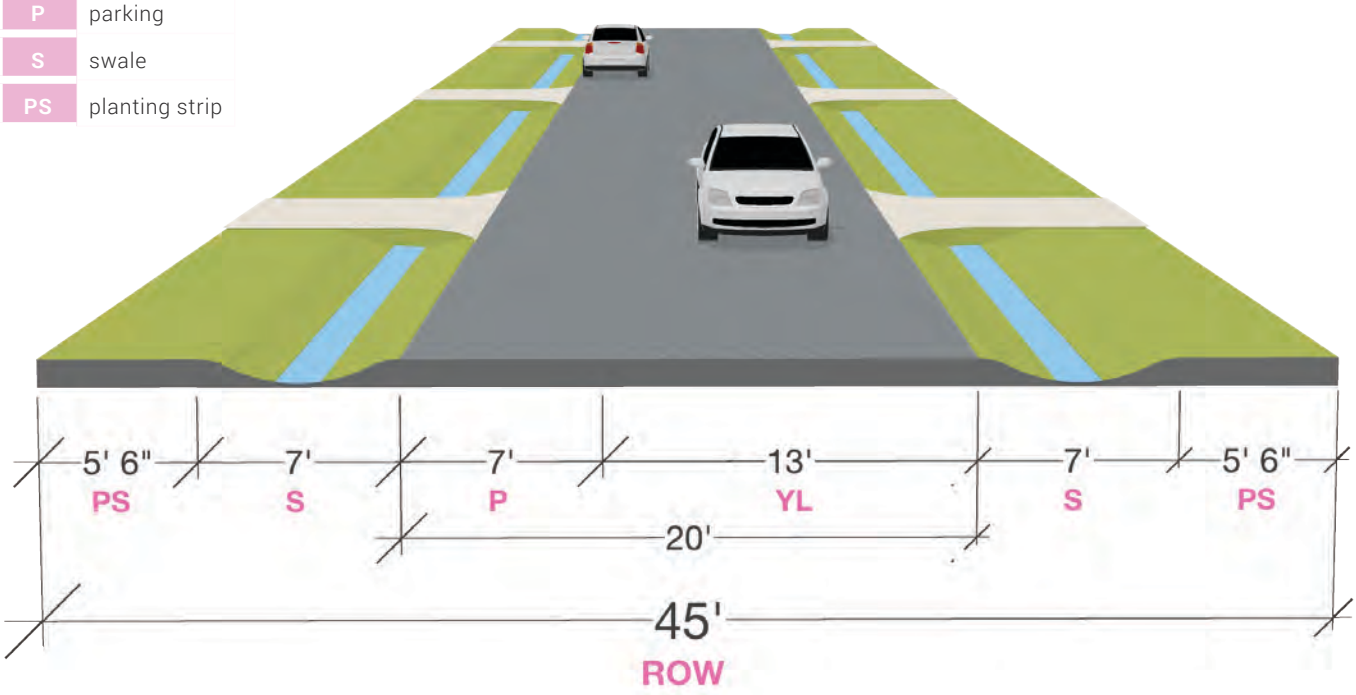
EXISTING LOCALS
SOUTH ANNIS STREET

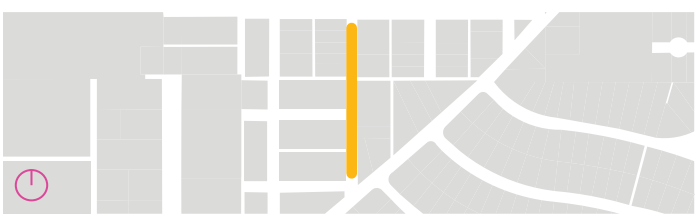
Traffic - ADT

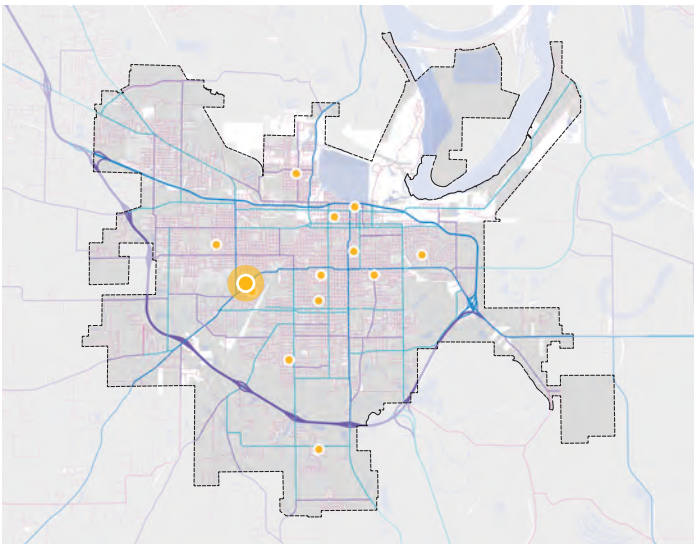
- **518**
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
YL	yield lane
P	parking
S	swale
PS	planting strip





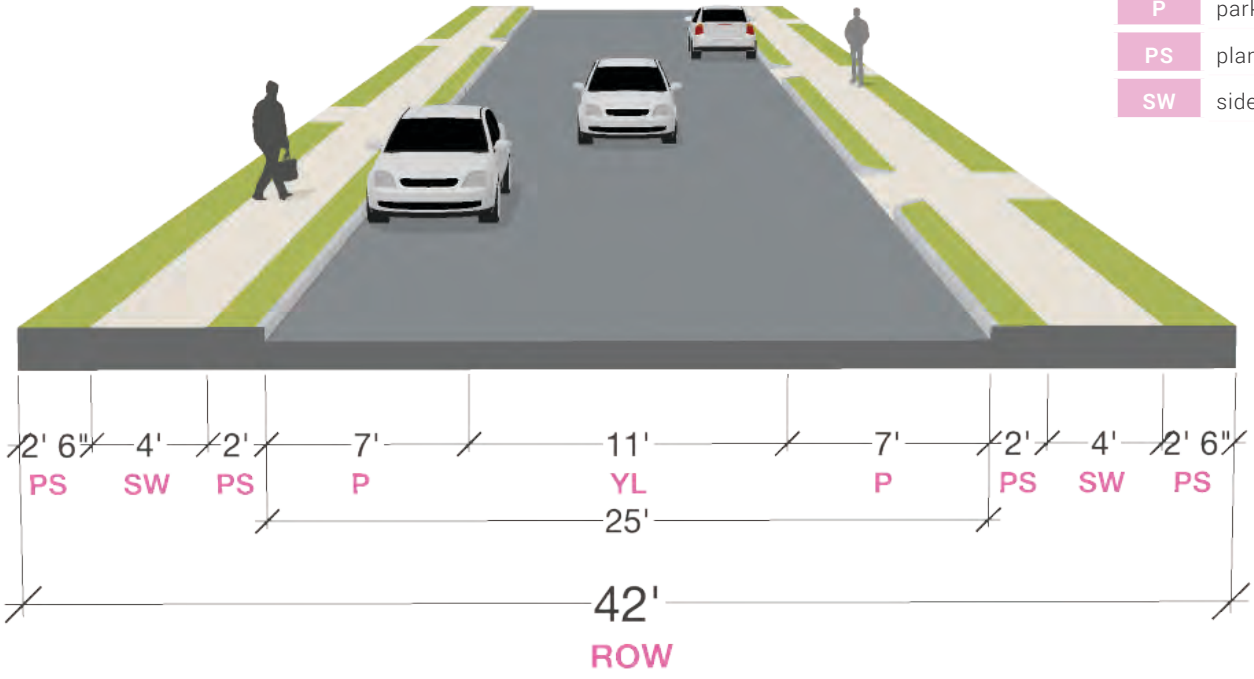


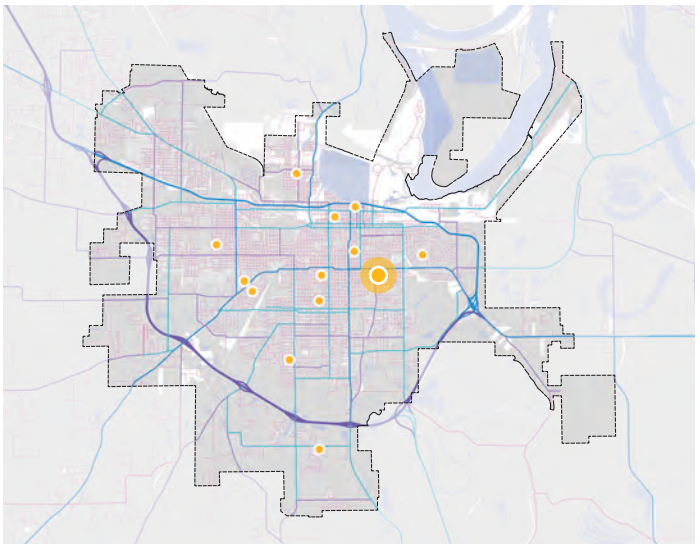
Traffic - ADT

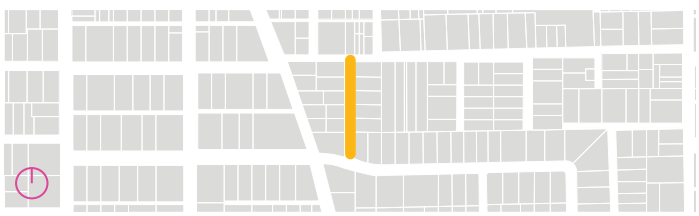
- 102
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
YL	yield lane
P	parking
PS	planting strip
SW	sidewalk







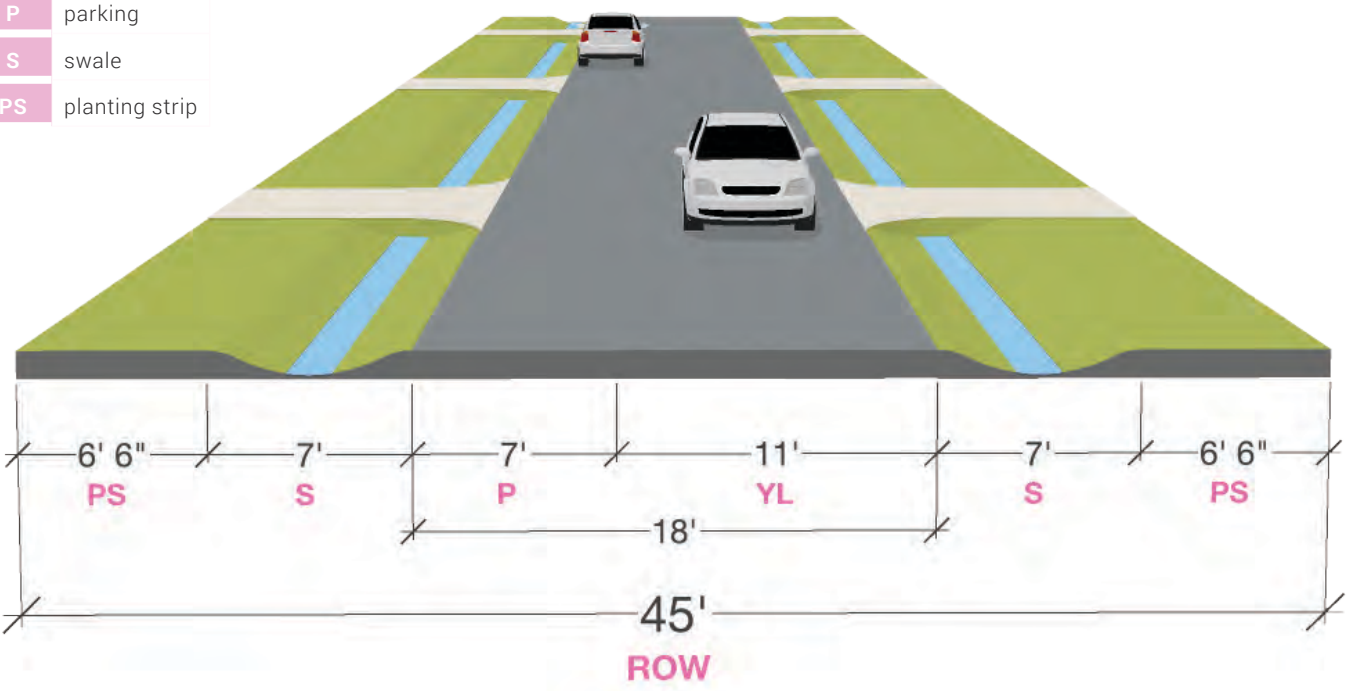
EXISTING LOCALS
REED STREET

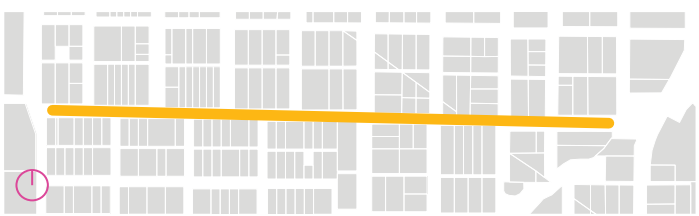
Traffic - ADT

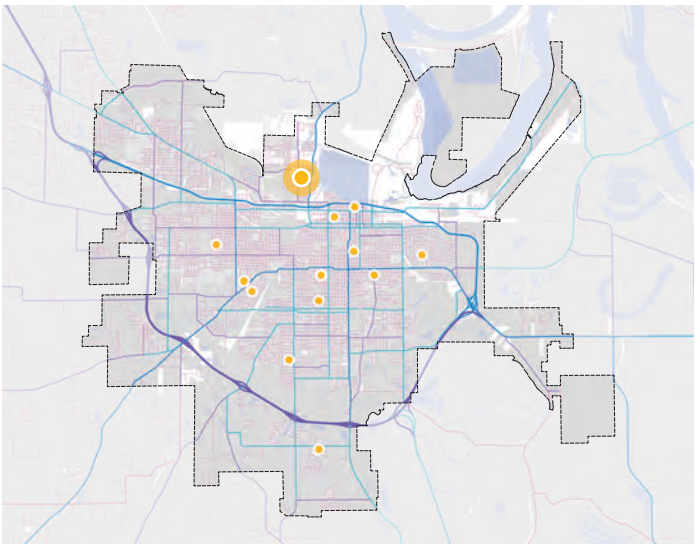
- **336**
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
YL	yield lane
P	parking
S	swale
PS	planting strip







EXISTING LOCALS

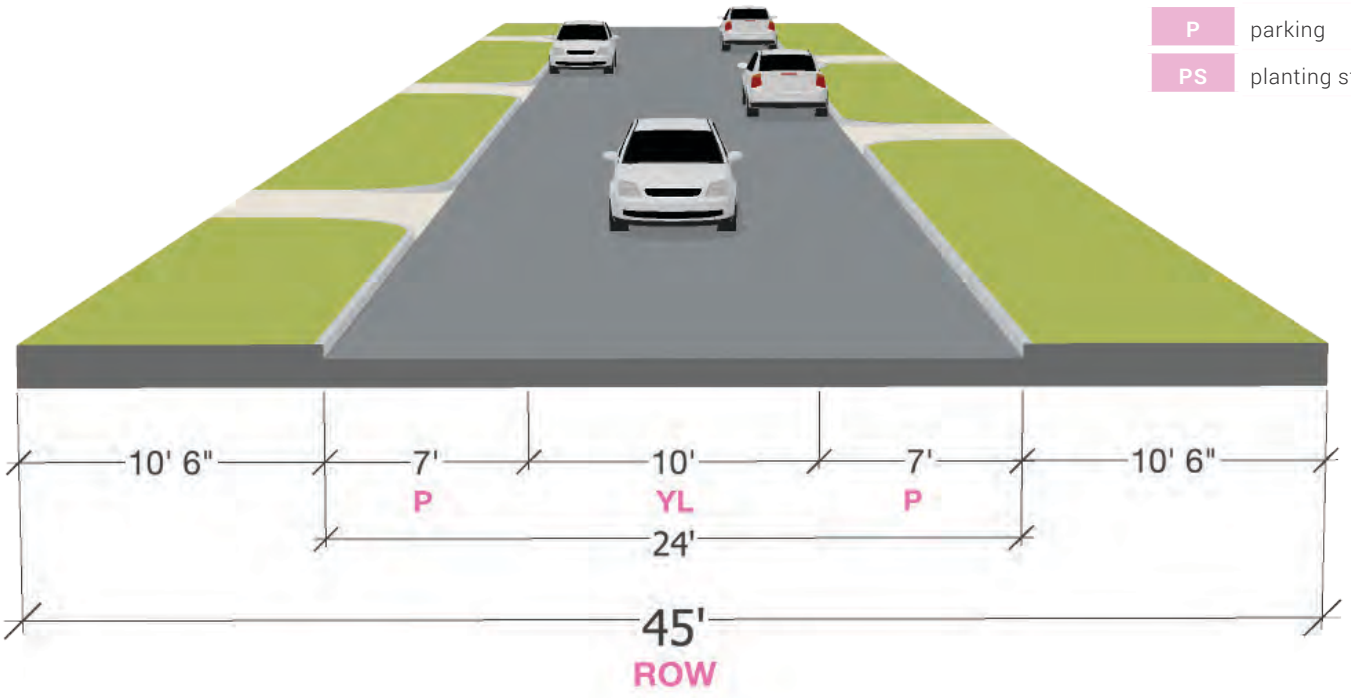
WEST 40TH AVENUE (NEAR SOUTH FIR STREET)

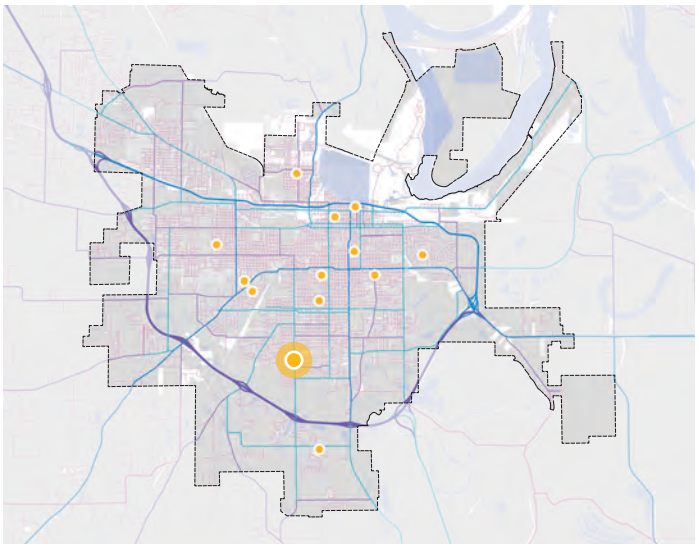
Traffic - ADT

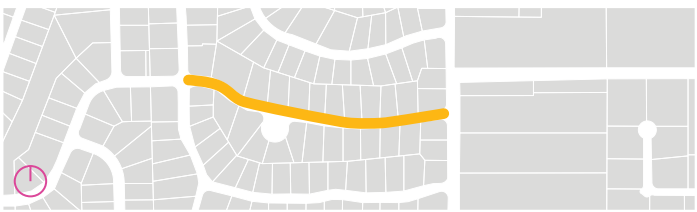
- 169
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
YL	yield lane
P	parking
PS	planting strip







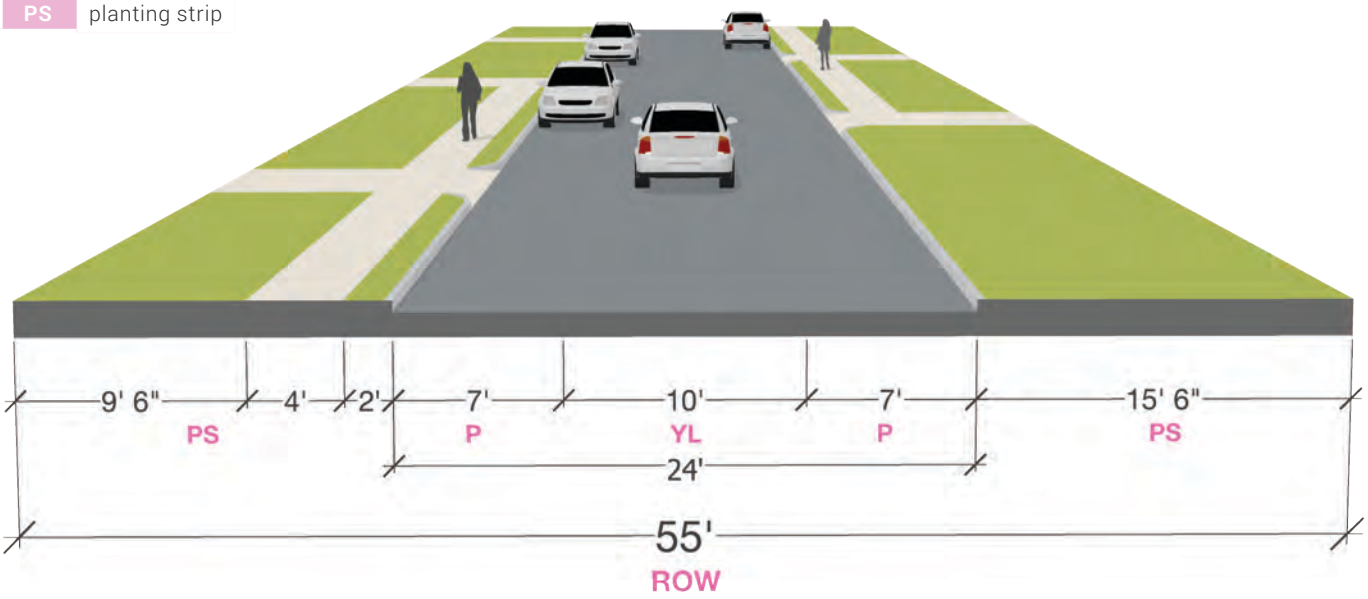
EXISTING LOCALS
SOUTH CHESTNUT STREET

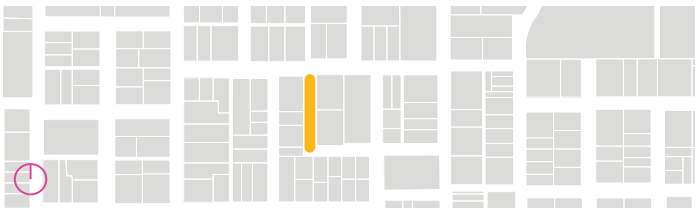
Traffic - ADT

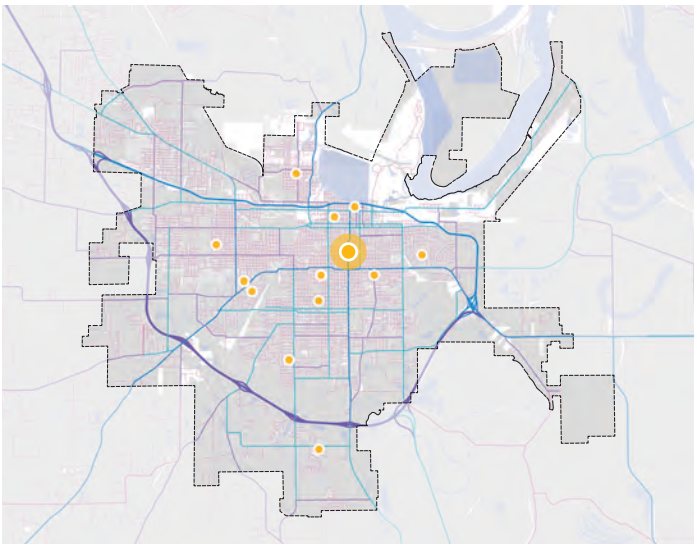
- **55**
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
YL	yield lane
P	parking
PS	planting strip







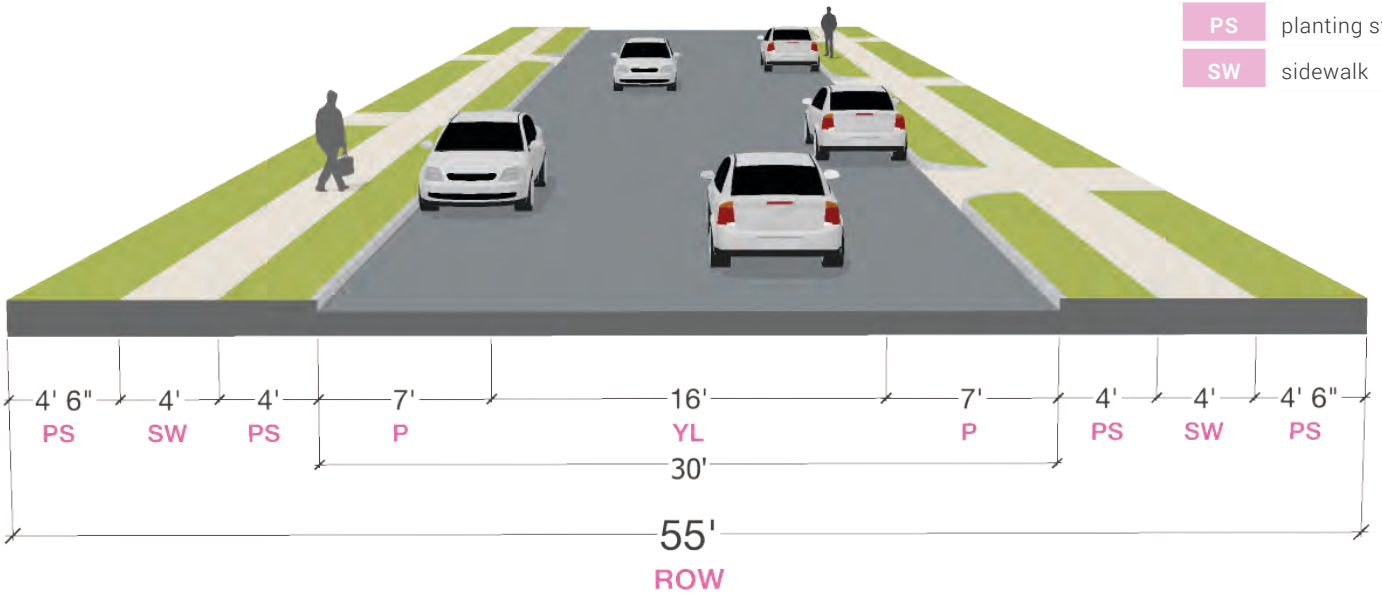
EXISTING LOCALS
SOUTH UTAH STREET

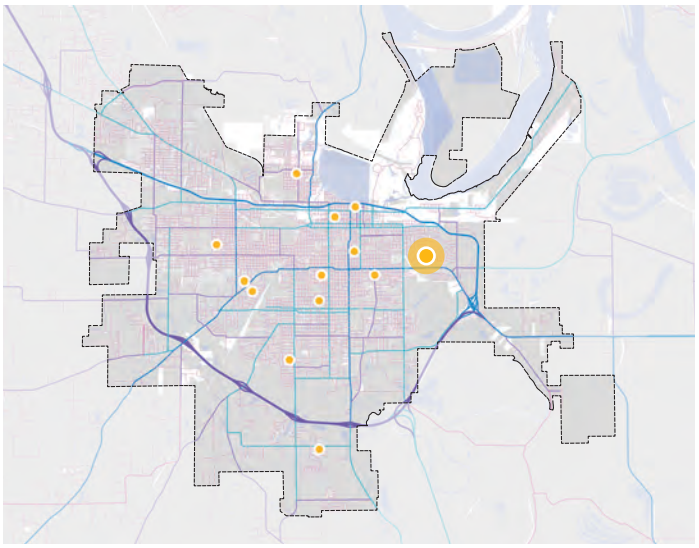
Traffic - ADT

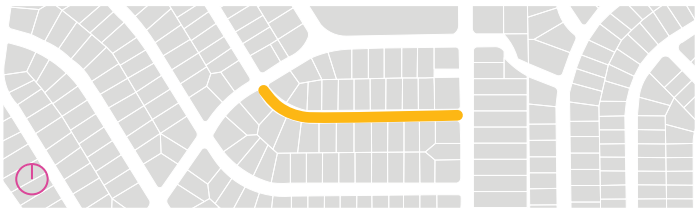
- 678
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
YL	yield lane
P	parking
PS	planting strip
SW	sidewalk







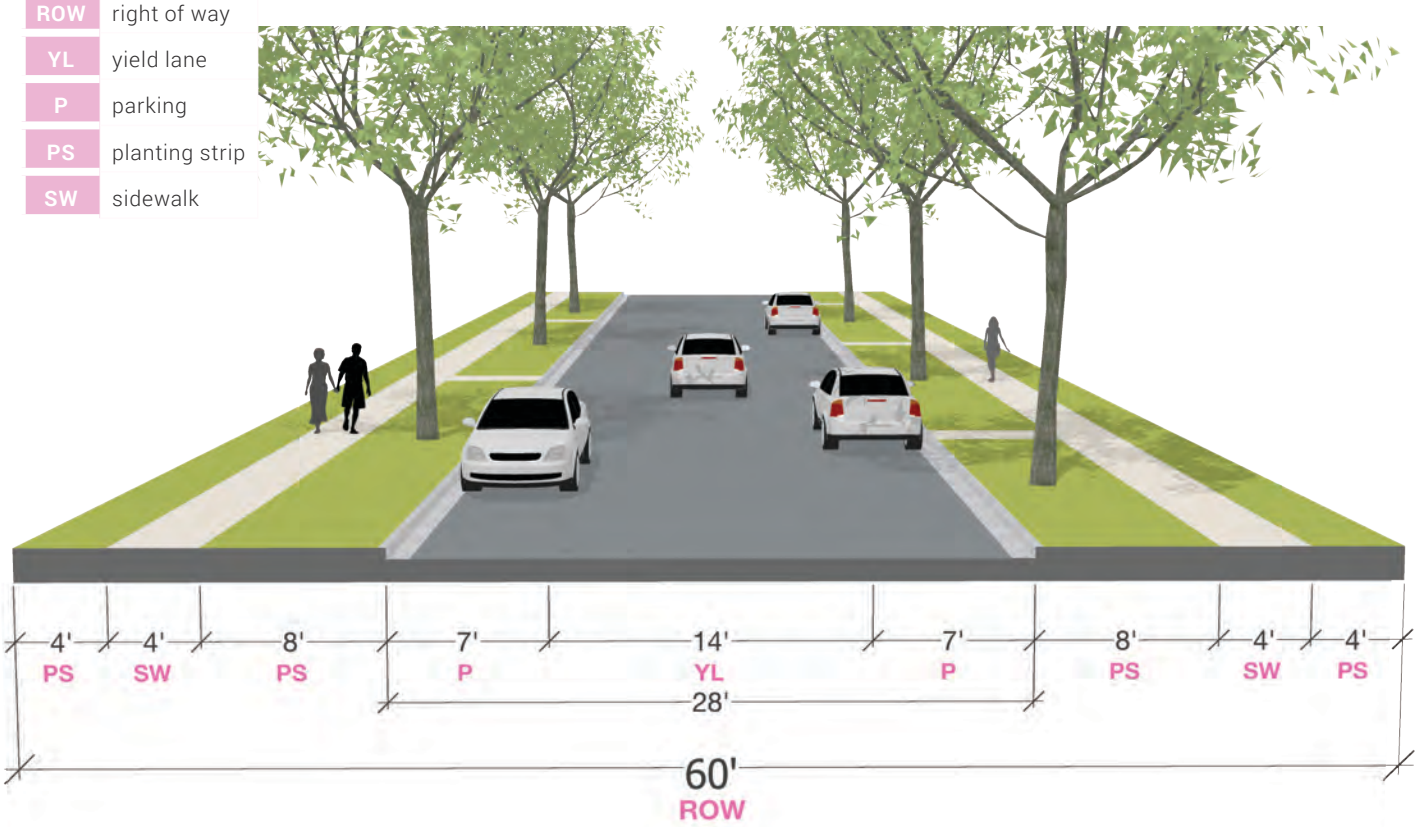
EXISTING LOCALS
WEST 18TH AVENUE (NEAR SOUTH ASH STREET)

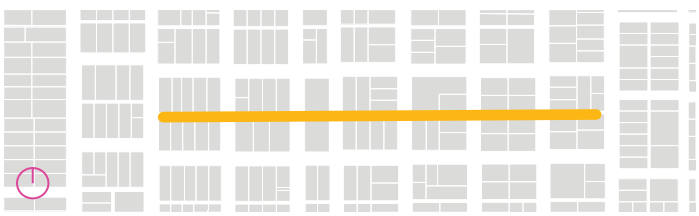
Traffic - ADT

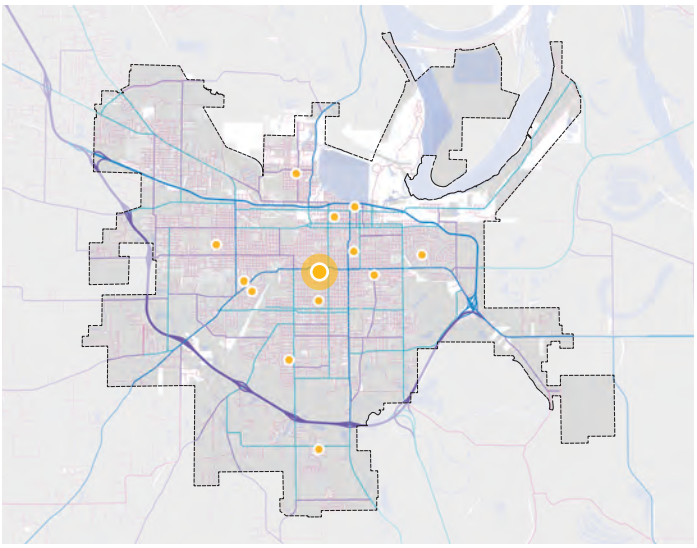
- **285**
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
YL	yield lane
P	parking
PS	planting strip
SW	sidewalk







EXISTING LOCALS

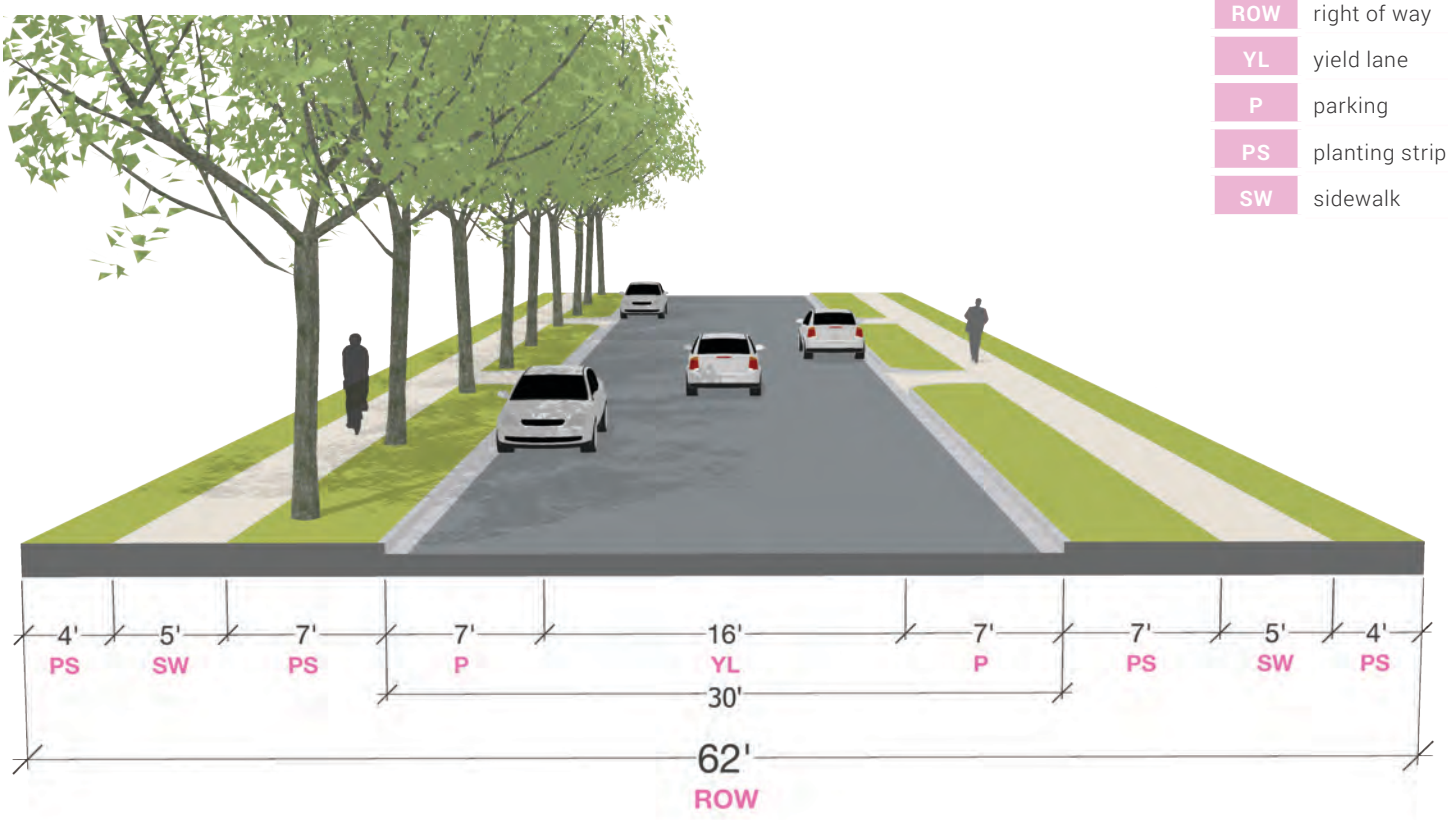
WEST 25TH AVENUE (NEAR SOUTH ASH STREET)

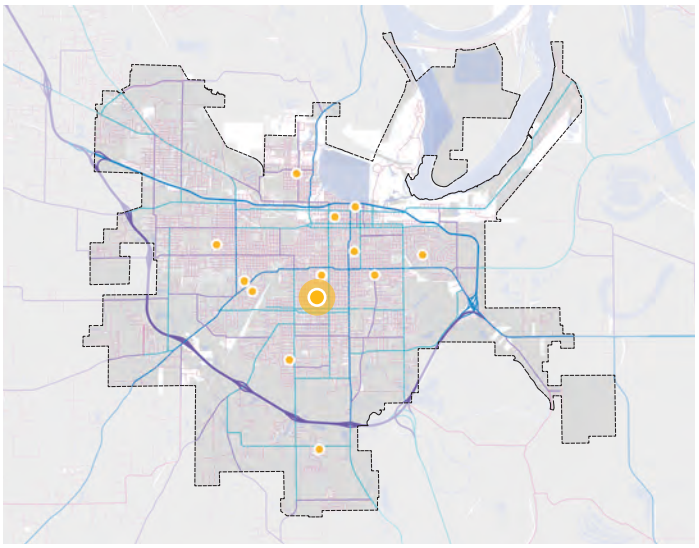
Traffic - ADT

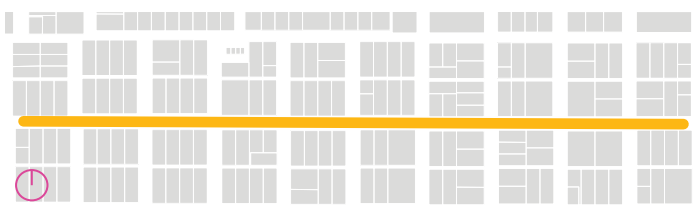
- **889**
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
YL	yield lane
P	parking
PS	planting strip
SW	sidewalk







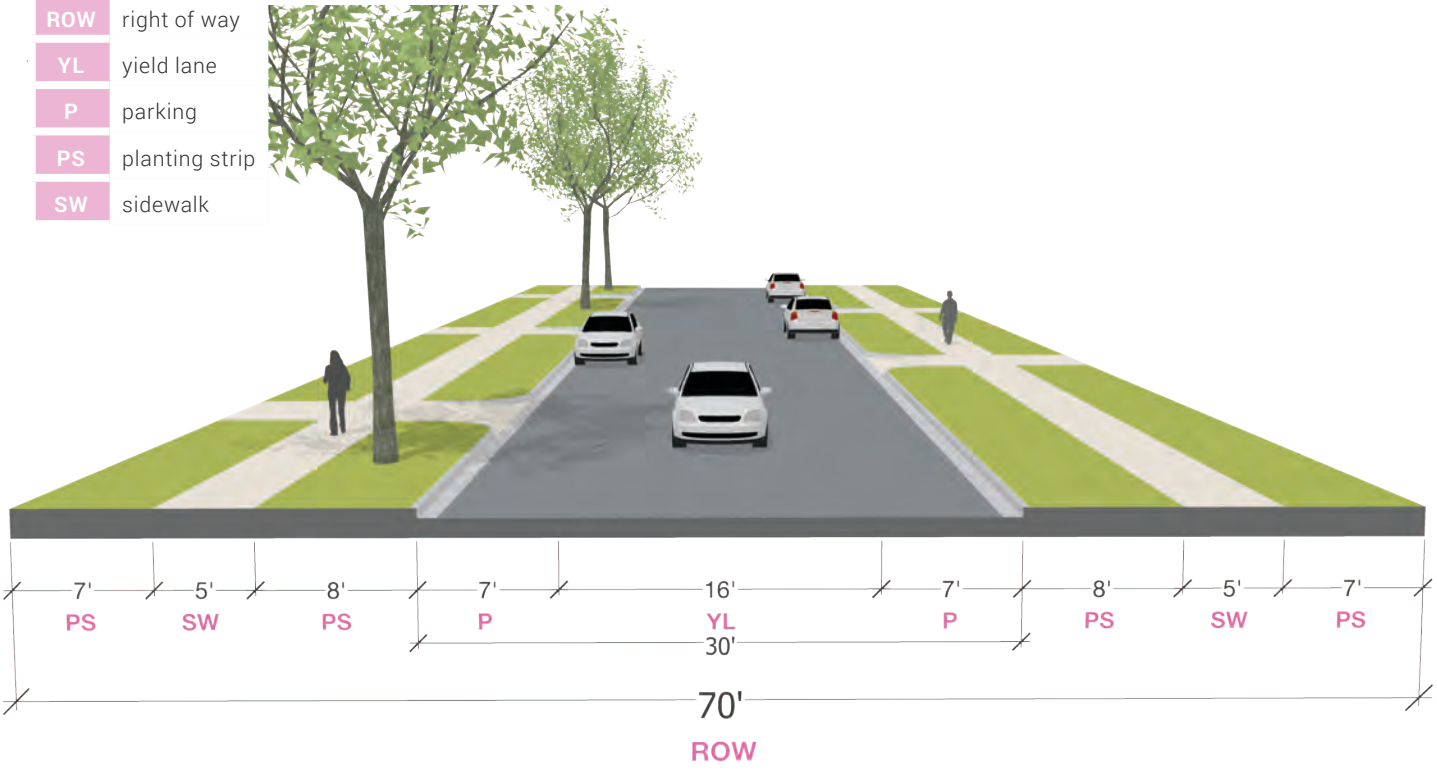
EXISTING LOCALS
SOUTH ELM STREET

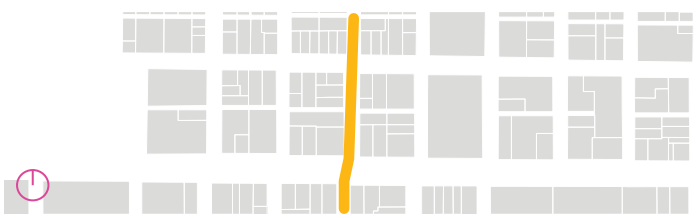
Traffic - ADT

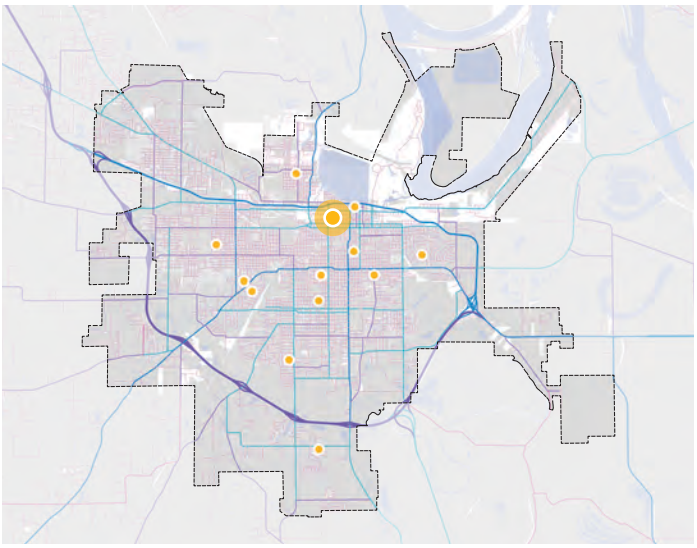
- 223
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
YL	yield lane
P	parking
PS	planting strip
SW	sidewalk





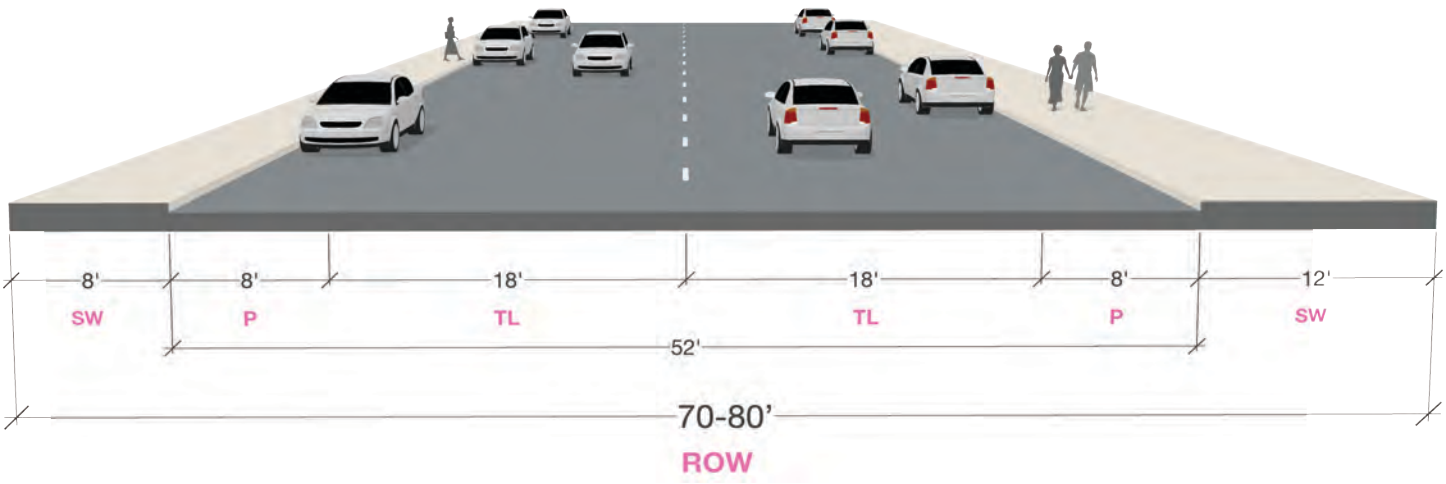


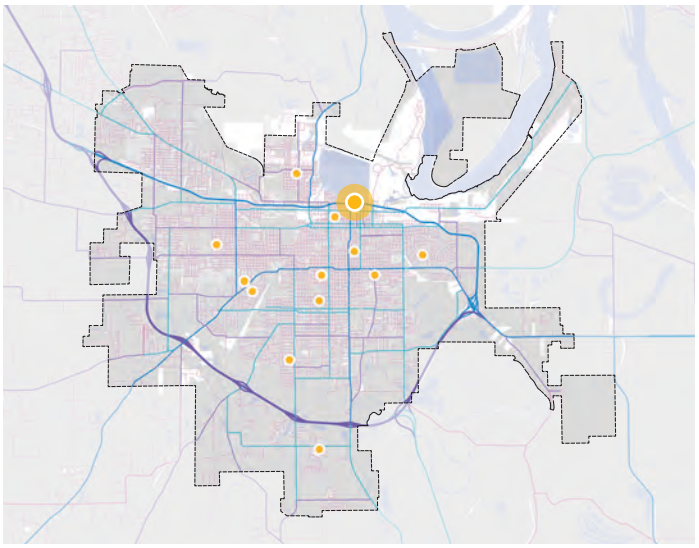
Traffic - ADT

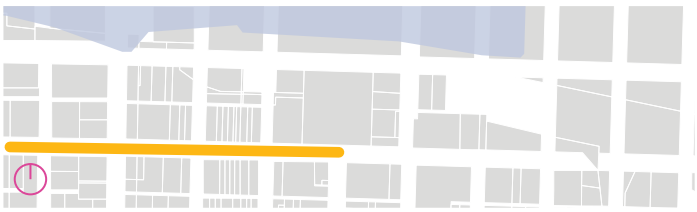
- 710
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
TL	travel lane
PS	planting strip
SW	sidewalk







This page is intentionally blank.

EXISTING COLLECTORS

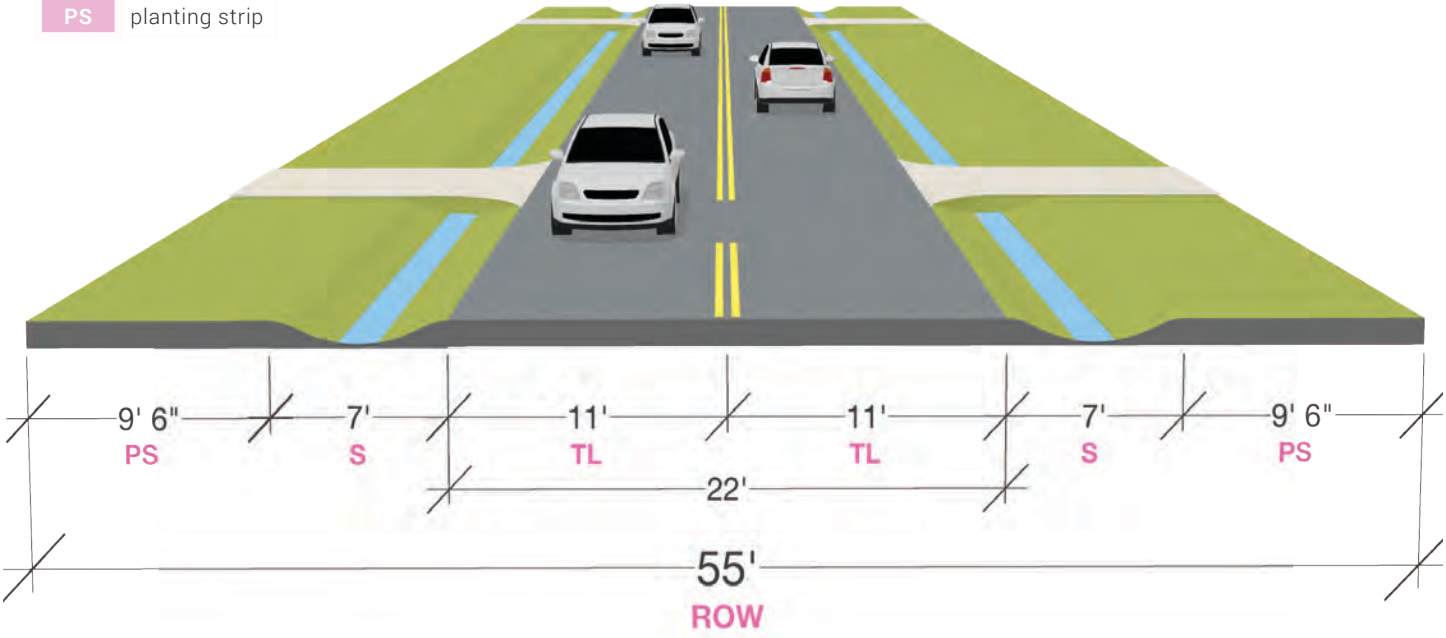
EXISTING COLLECTORS
FRANKLIN STREET

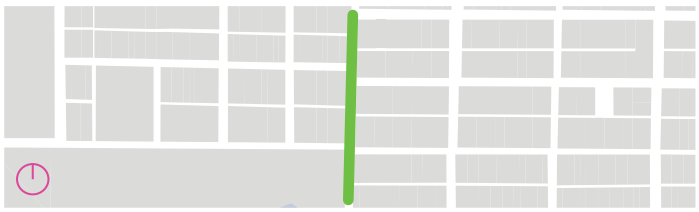
Traffic - ADT

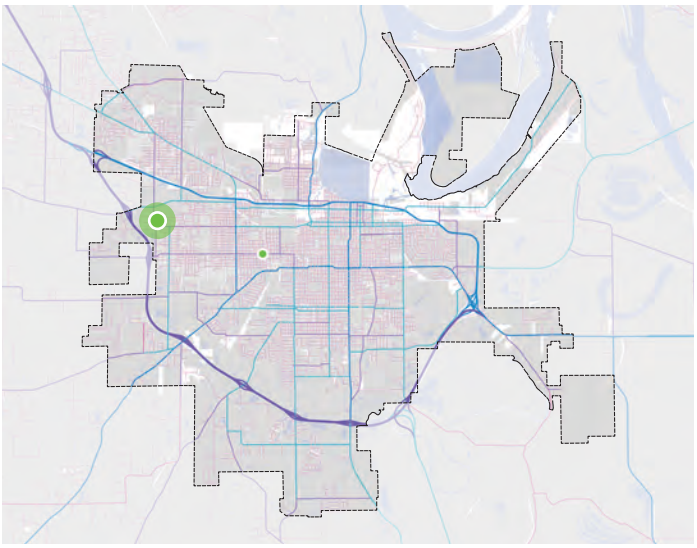
- **2000**
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
TL	travel lane
S	swale
PS	planting strip







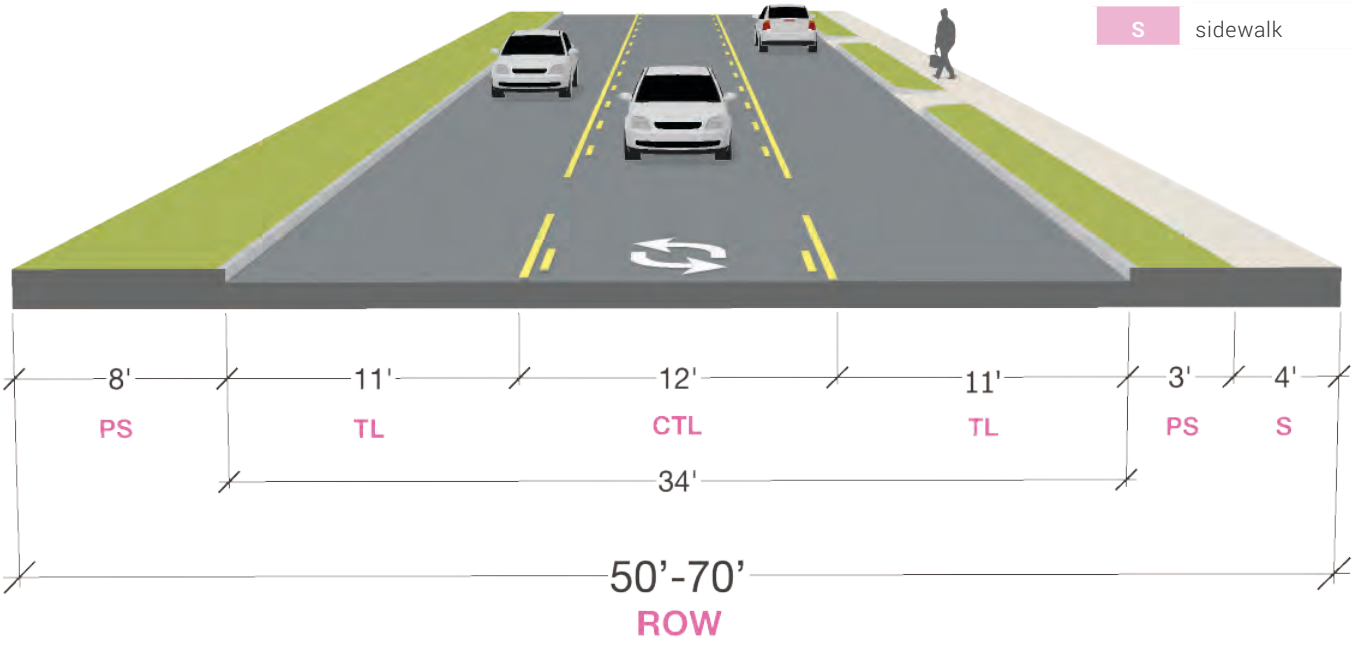
EXISTING COLLECTORS
WEST 13 AVENUE

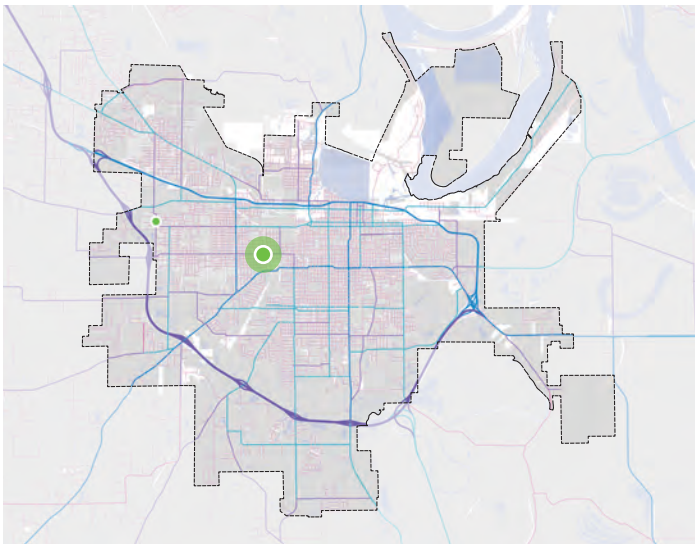
Traffic - ADT

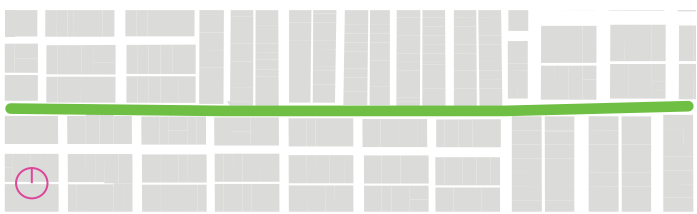
- 0-5000
- **7310**
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
CTL	continuous turn lane
TL	travel lane
PS	planting strip
S	sidewalk







This page is intentionally blank.

EXISTING MINOR ARTERIALS

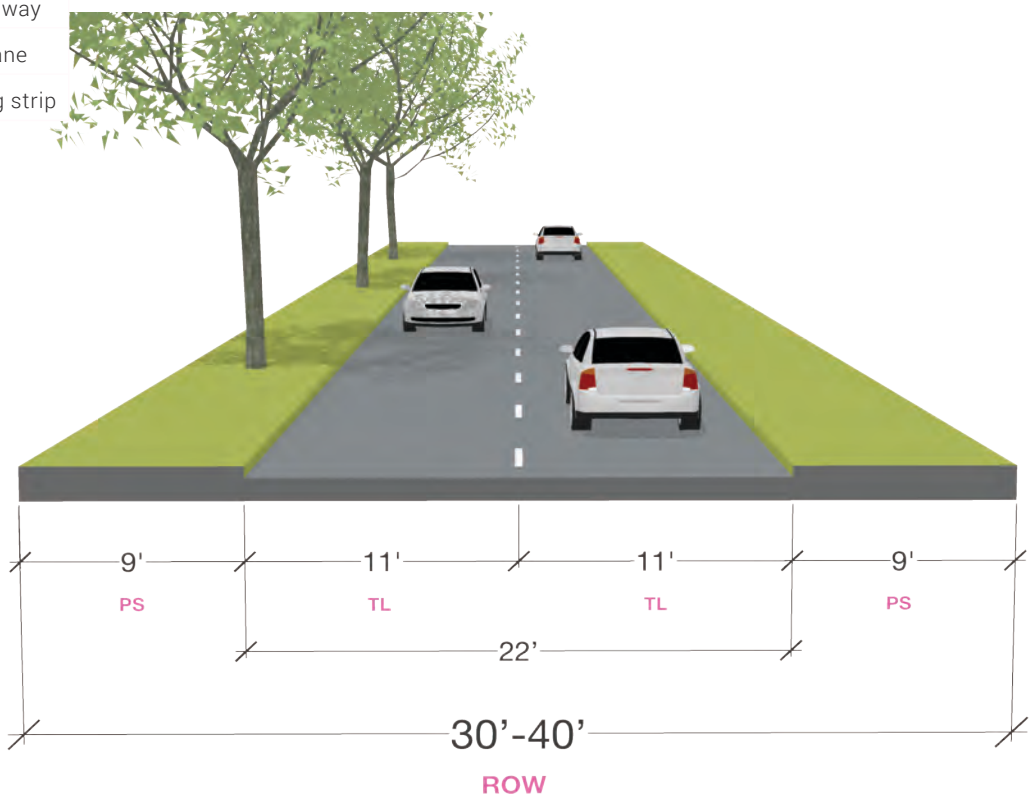
EXISTING MINOR ARTERIALS
COUNTRY CLUB LANE

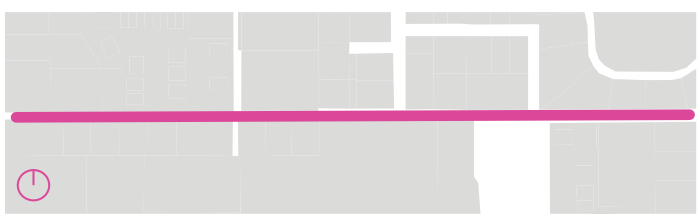
Traffic - ADT

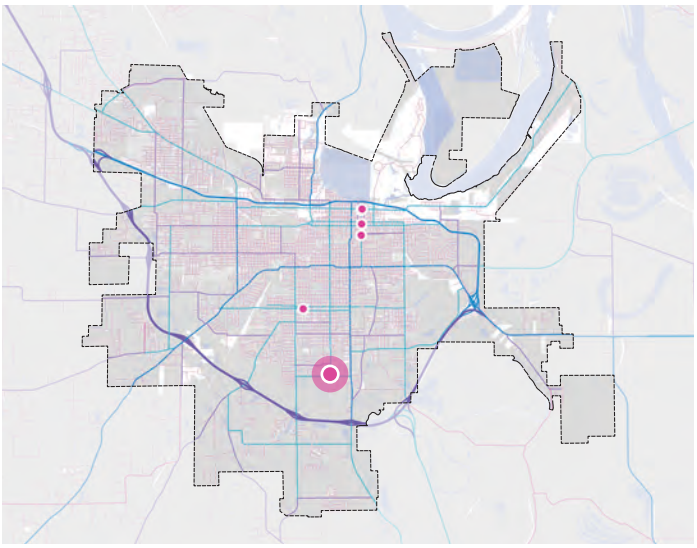
- **3260**
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
TL	travel lane
PS	planting strip







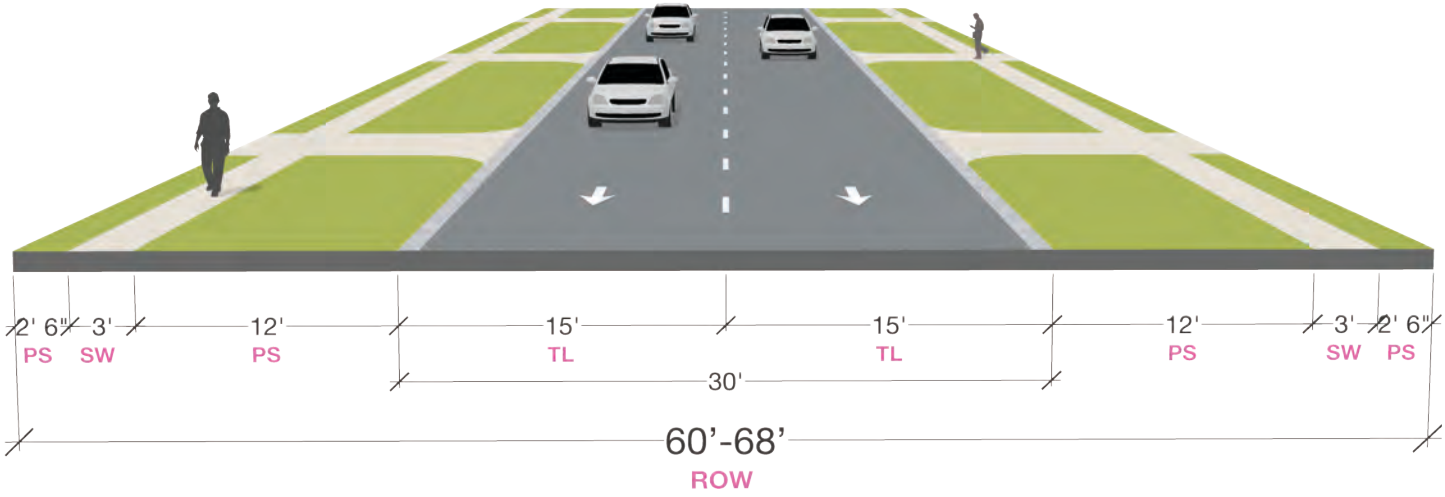
EXISTING MINOR ARTERIALS
WEST 28TH AVENUE

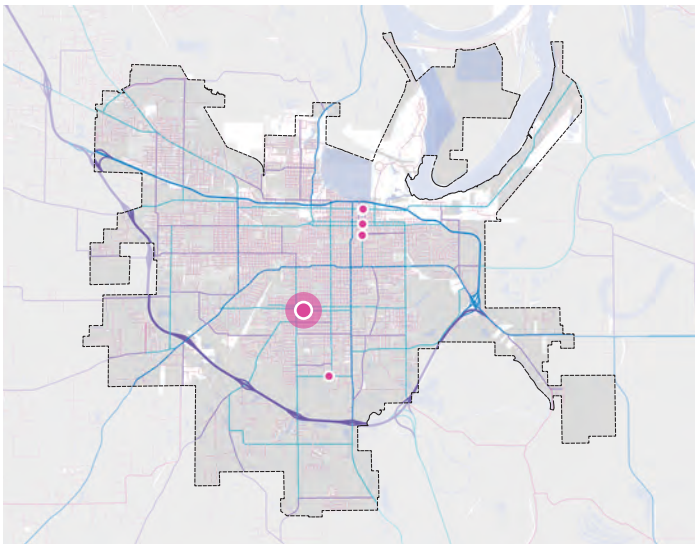
Traffic - ADT

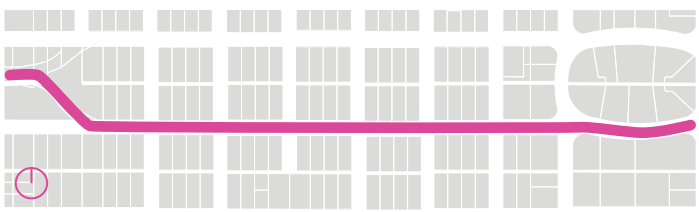
- 0-5000
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- ▶ **16000**
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
TL	travel lane
PS	planting strip
SW	sidewalk







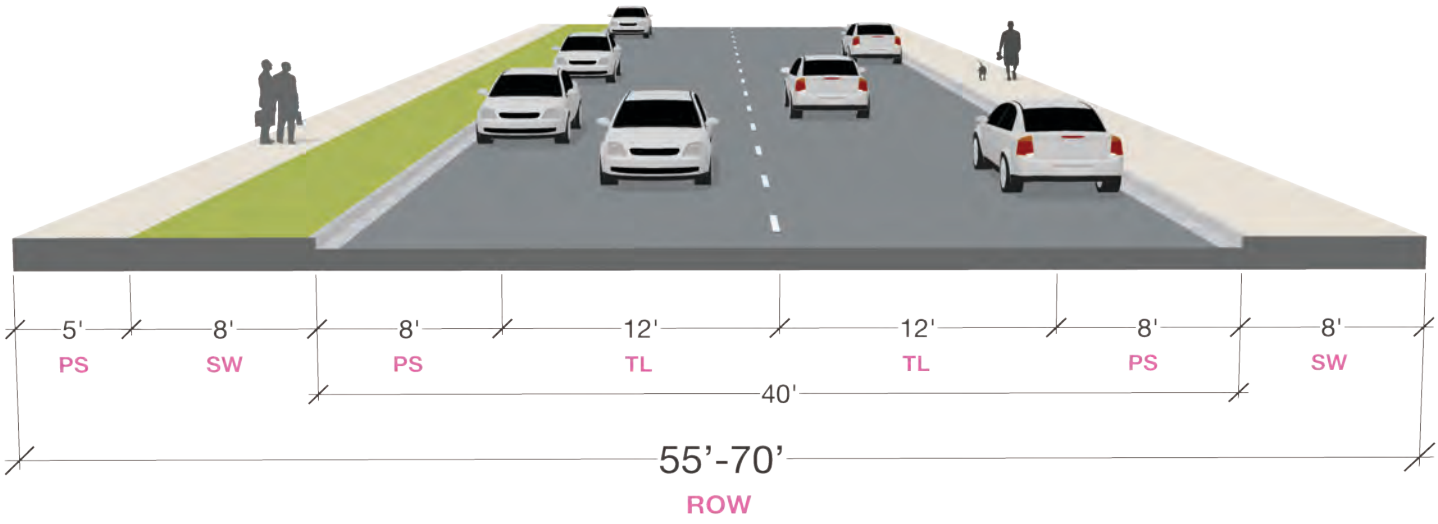
EXISTING MINOR ARTERIALS
EAST 6TH AVENUE

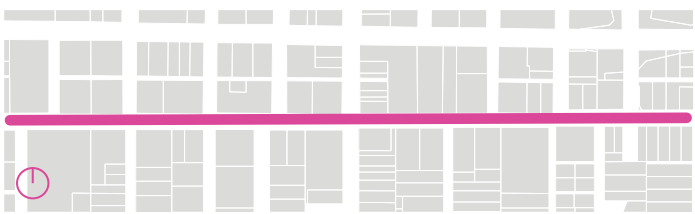
Traffic - ADT

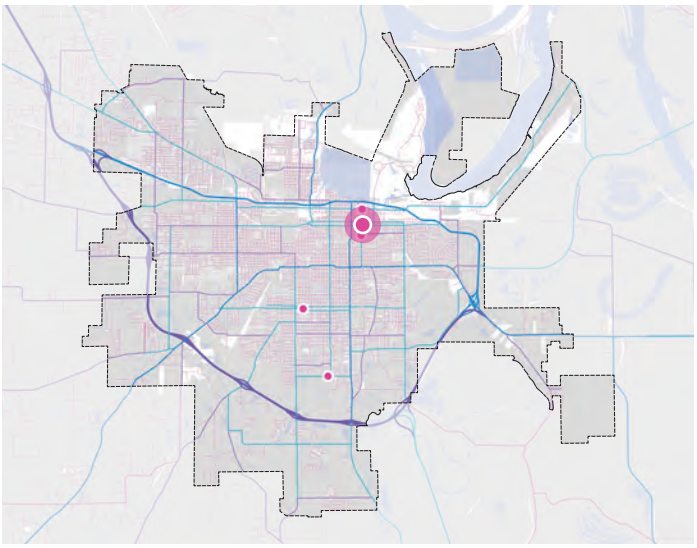
- 0-5000
- ▶ **5078**
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
TL	travel lane
P	parking
SW	sidewalk
PS	planting strip







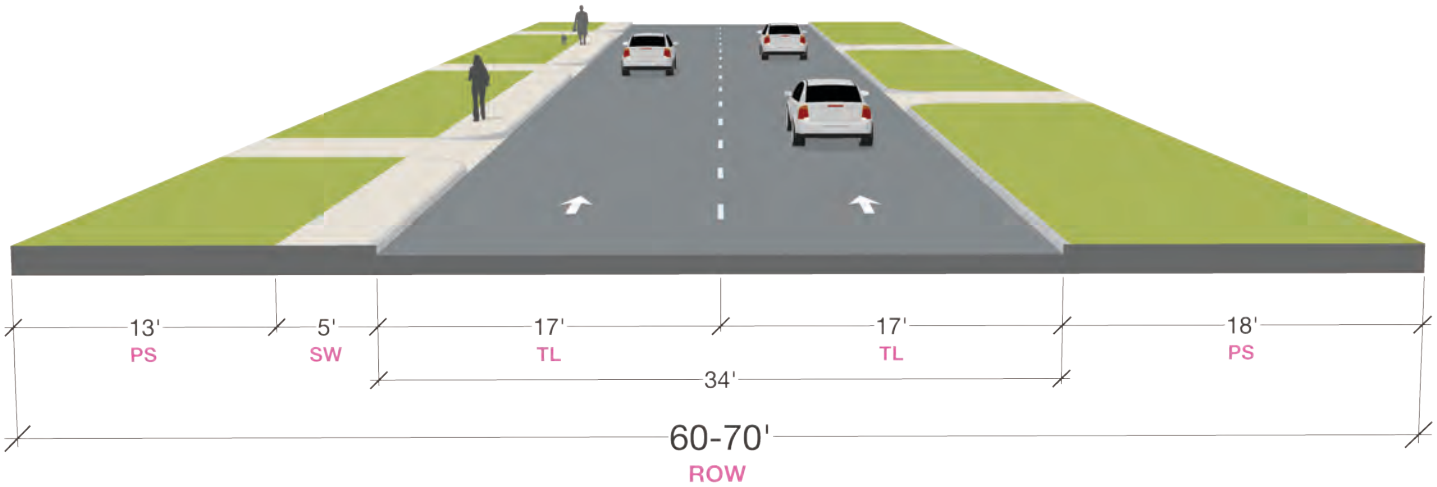
EXISTING MINOR ARTERIALS
WEST 27TH AVENUE

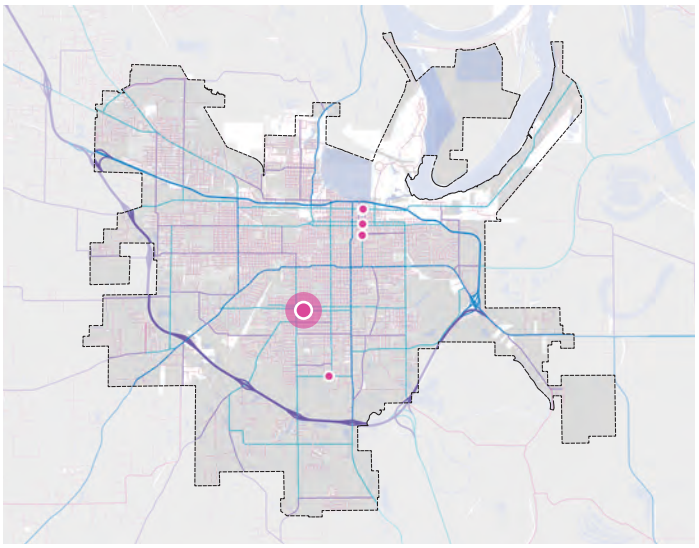
Traffic - ADT

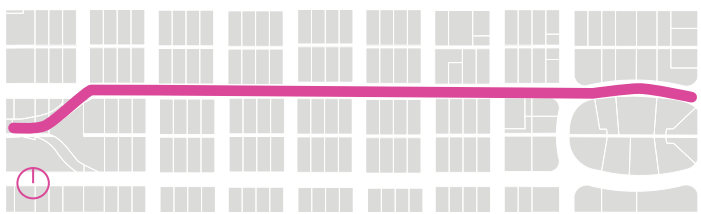
- 0-5000
- **5600**
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
TL	travel lane
PS	planting strip
SW	sidewalk







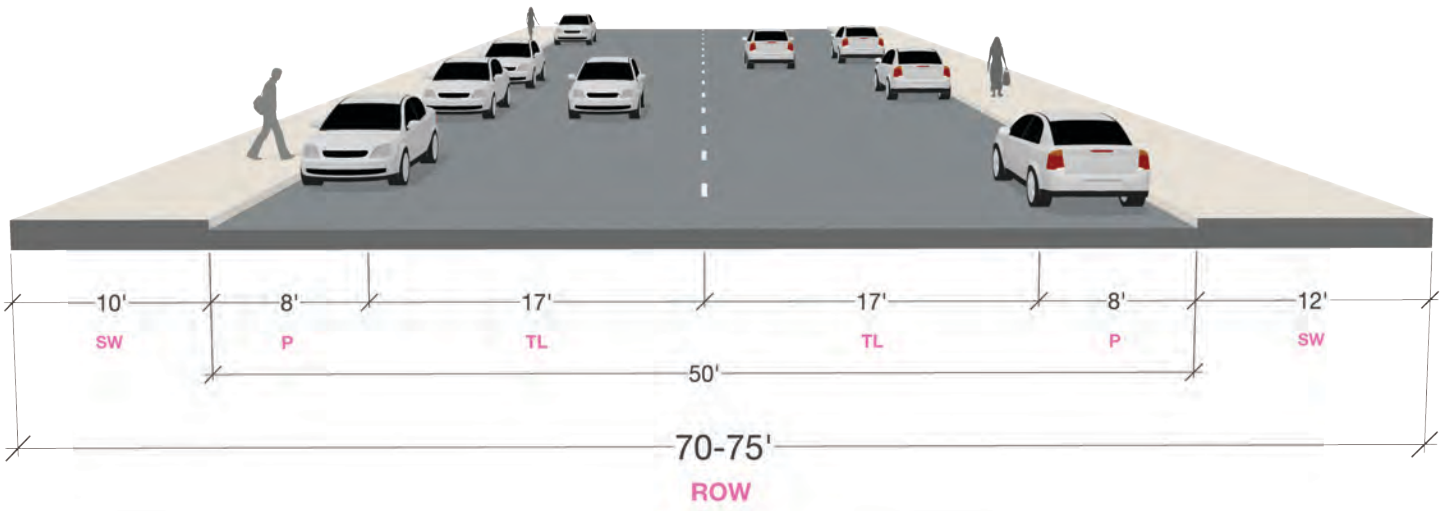
EXISTING MINOR ARTERIALS
WEST 2ND AVENUE DOWNTOWN

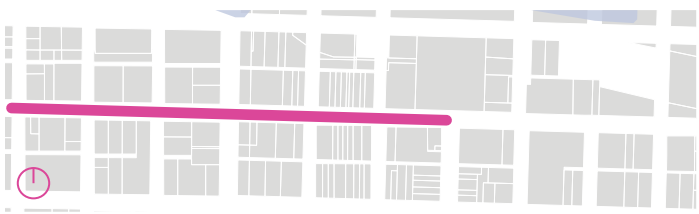
Traffic - ADT

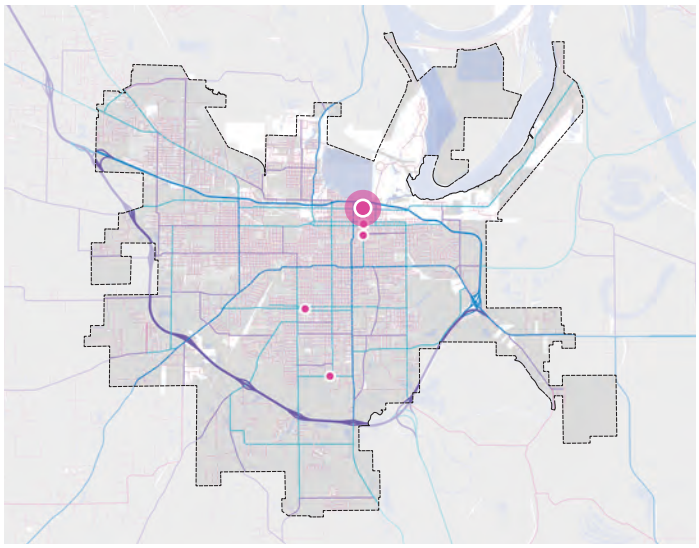
- **980**
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
TL	travel lane
P	parking
SW	sidewalk







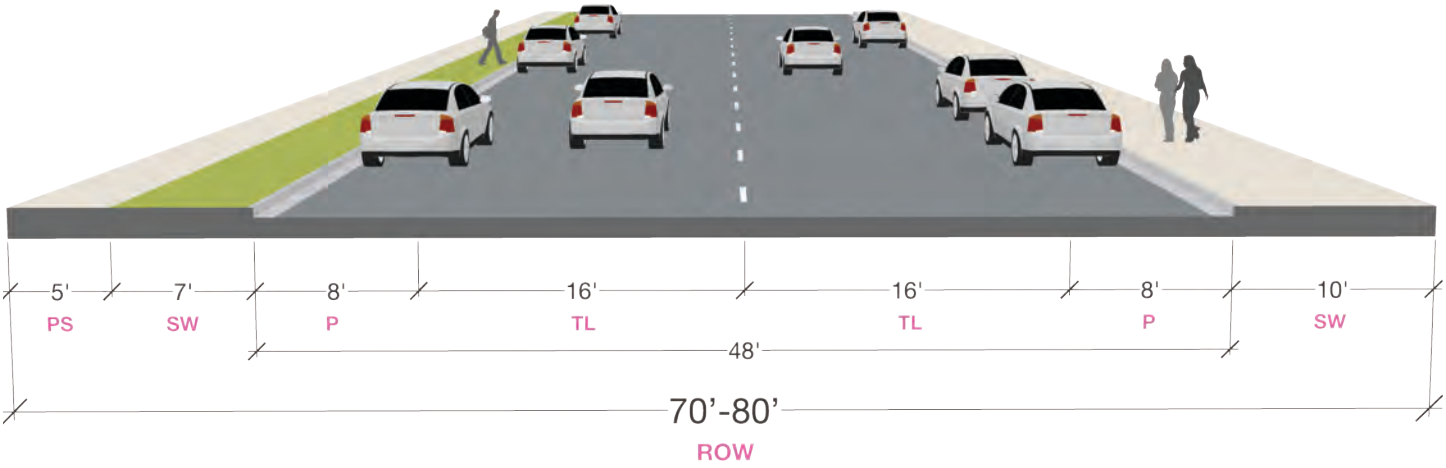
EXISTING MINOR ARTERIALS
EAST 5TH AVENUE

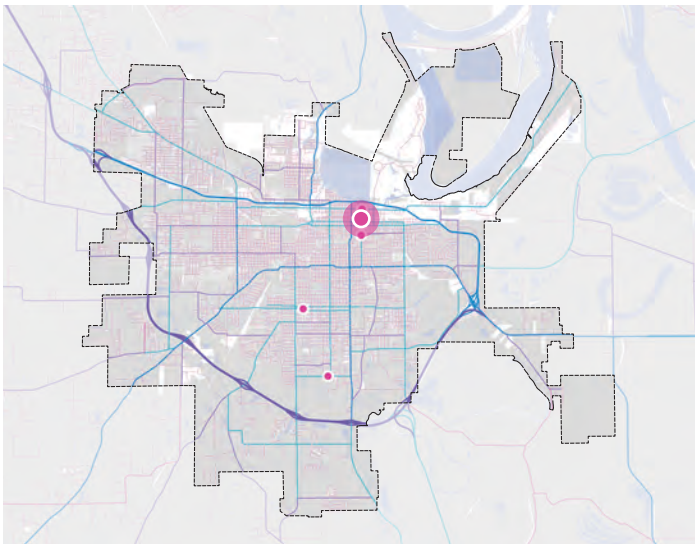
Traffic - ADT

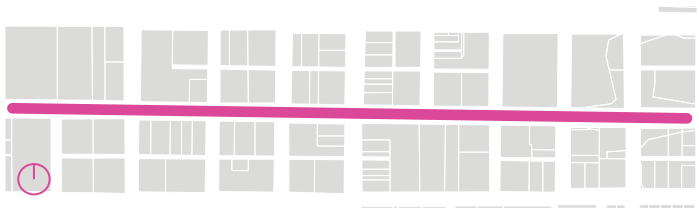
- 0-5000
- **5005**
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
TL	travel lane
P	parking
SW	sidewalk
PS	planting strip







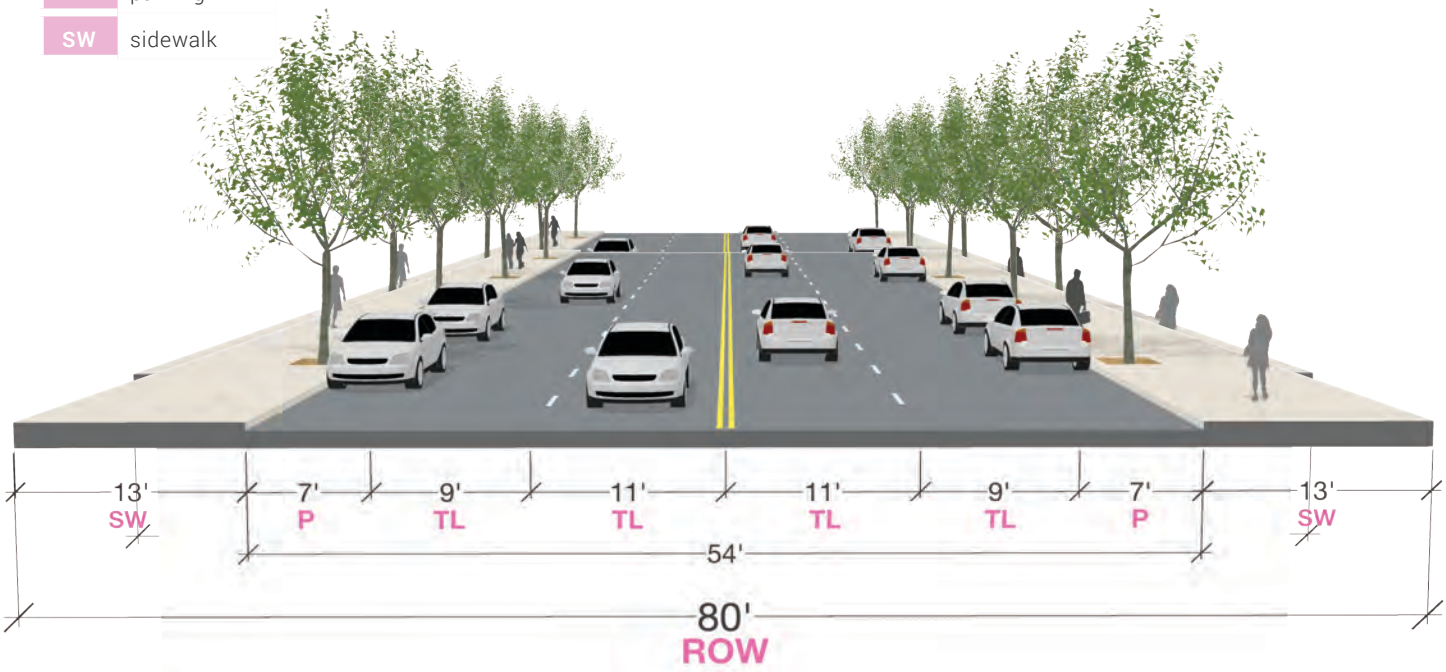
EXISTING MINOR ARTERIALS
SOUTH MAIN STREET DOWNTOWN

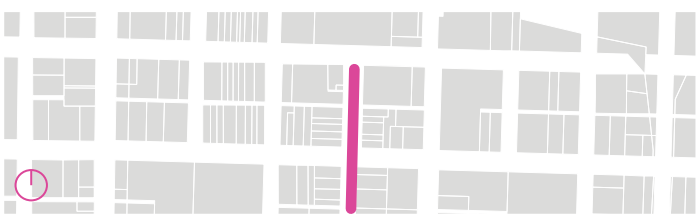
Traffic - ADT

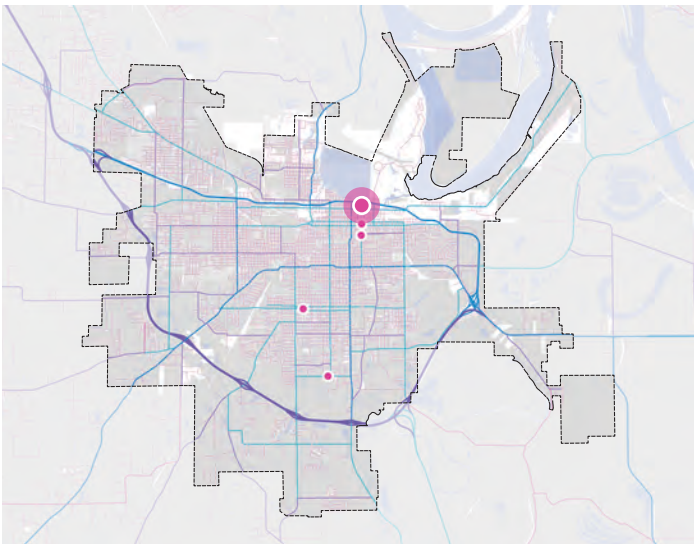
- 1111
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
TL	travel lane
P	parking
SW	sidewalk







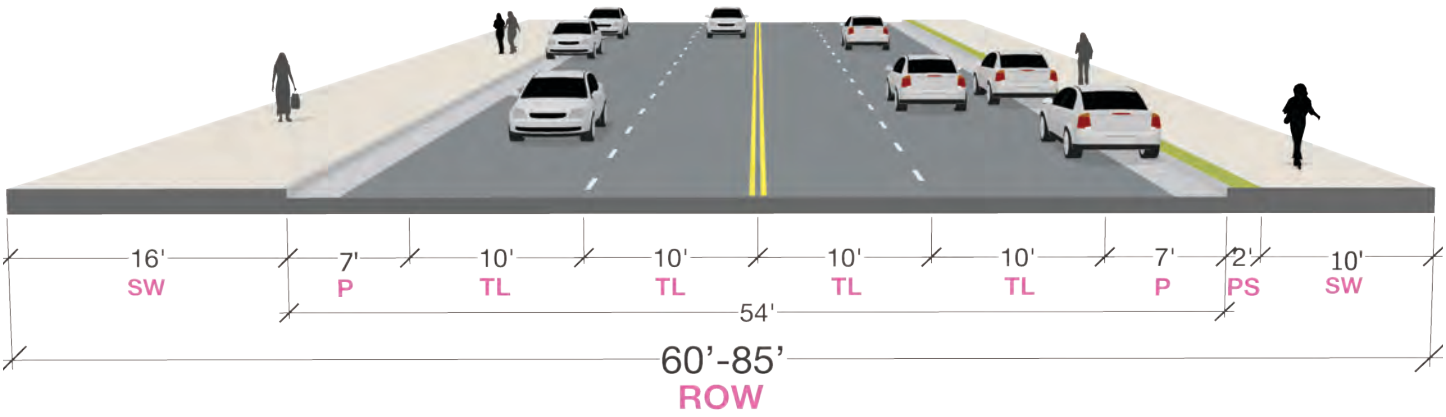
EXISTING MINOR ARTERIALS
SOUTH MAIN STREET (NEAR 8TH AVENUE)

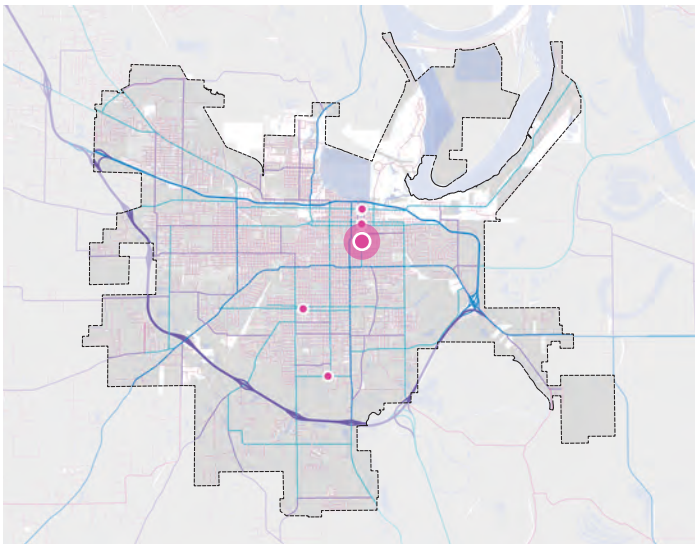
Traffic - ADT

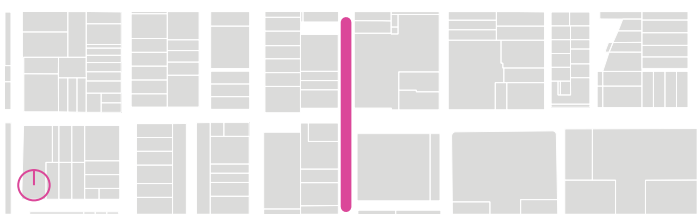
- ▶ **4100**
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
TL	travel lane
P	parking
PS	planting strip
SW	sidewalk







This page is intentionally blank.

EXISTING MAJOR ARTERIALS

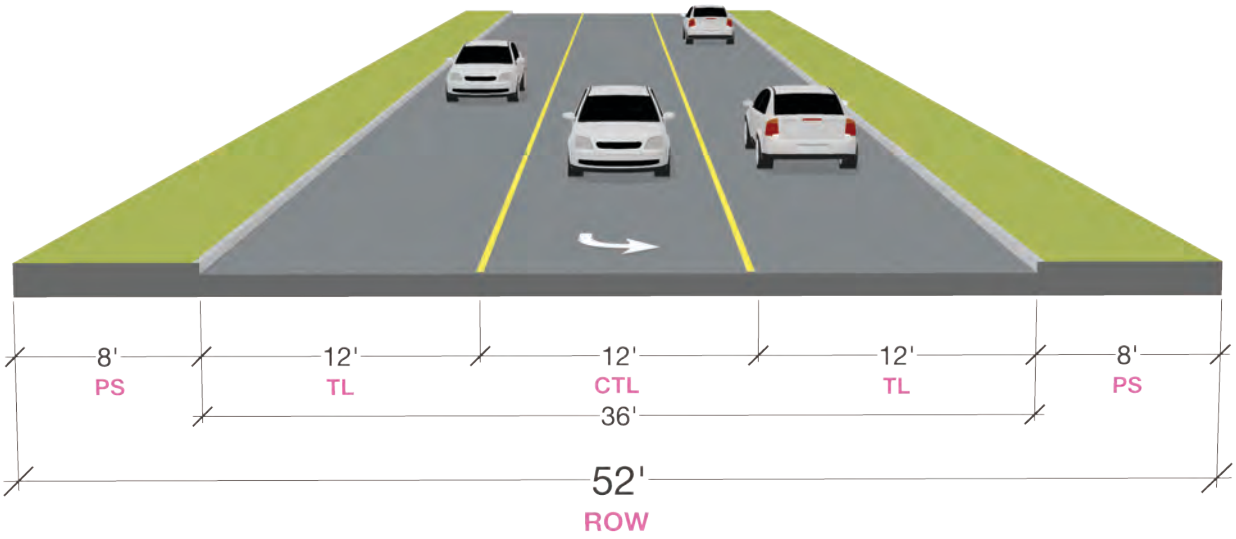
EXISTING MAJOR ARTERIALS
EAST HARDING AVENUE (AT SOUTH MISSOURI STREET)

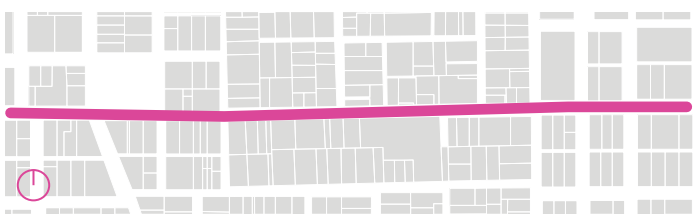
Traffic - ADT

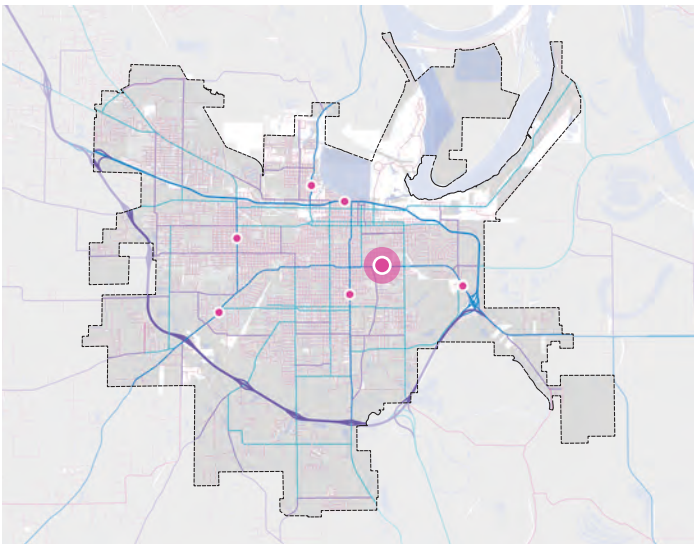
- 0-5000
- ▶ **9387**
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
CTL	continuous travel lane
TL	travel lane
PS	planting strip







EXISTING MAJOR ARTERIALS

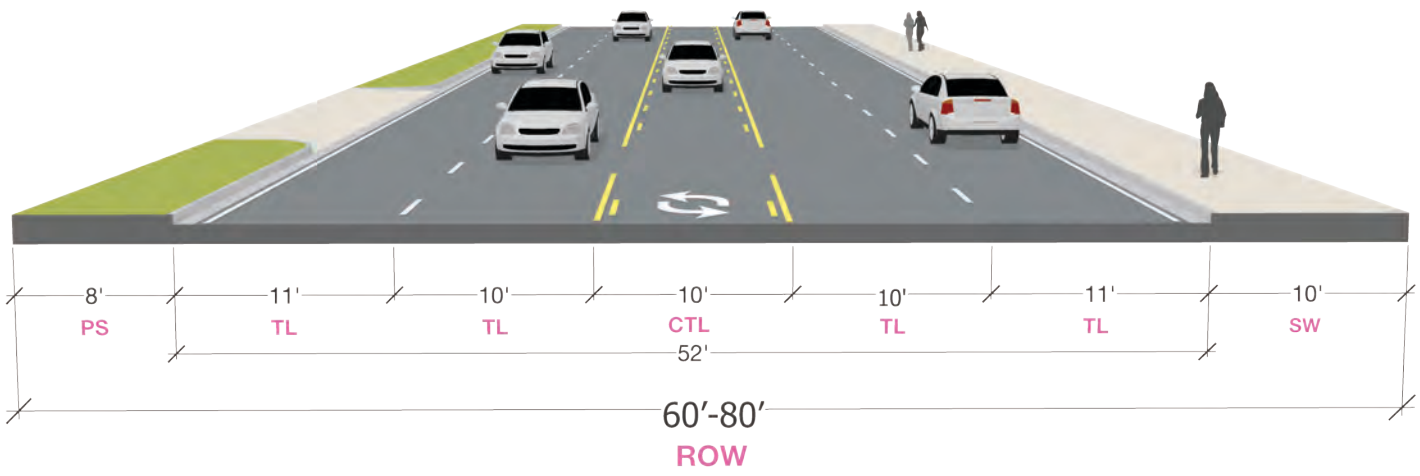
SOUTH OLIVE STREET (NEAR WEST 24TH AVENUE)

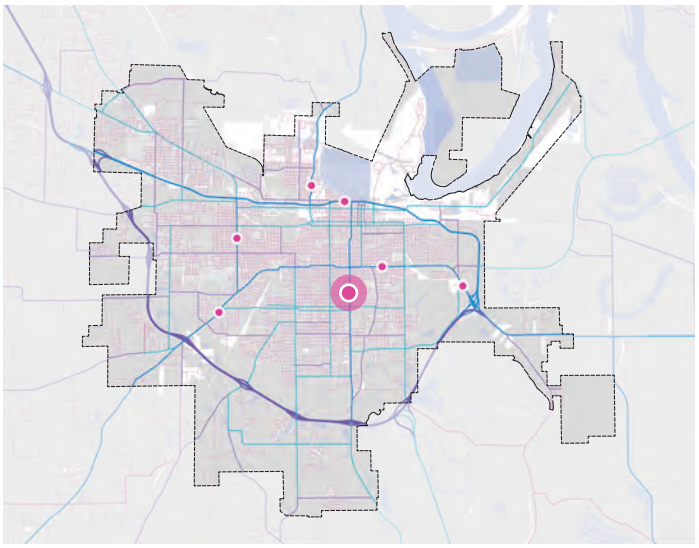
Traffic - ADT

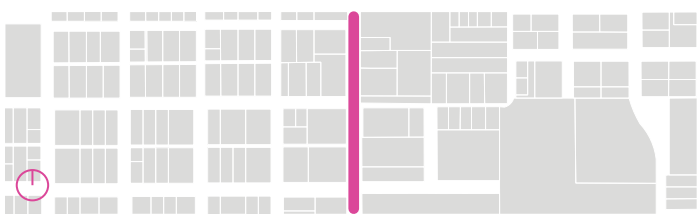
- 0-5000
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- **27241**

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
CTL	continuous travel lane
TL	travel lane
PS	planting strip
SW	sidewalk







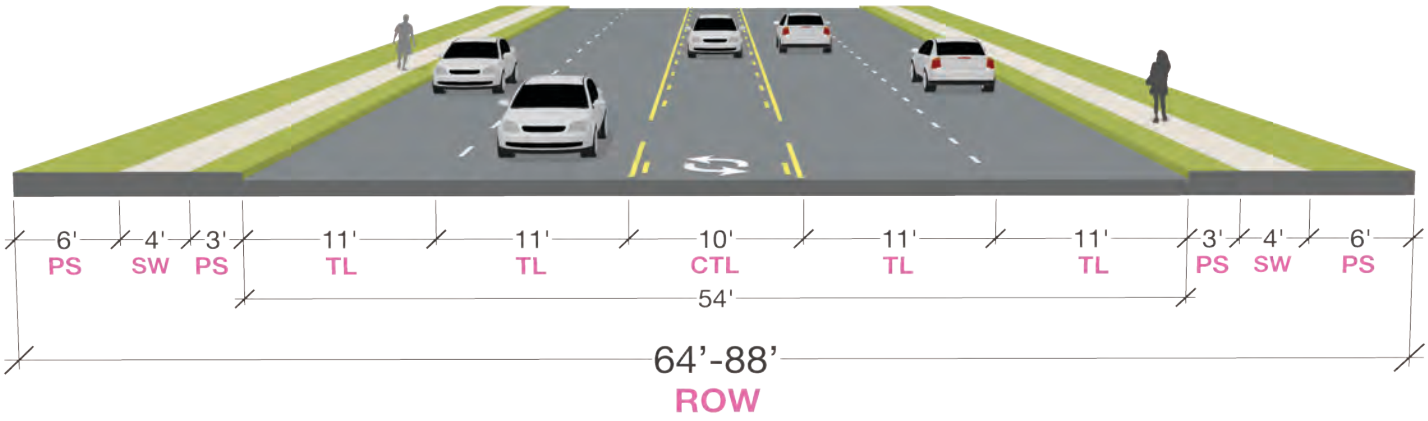
EXISTING MAJOR ARTERIALS
UNIVERSITY DRIVE

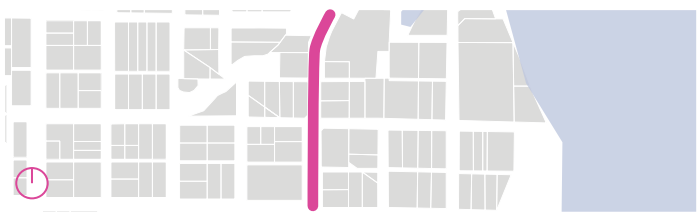
Traffic - ADT

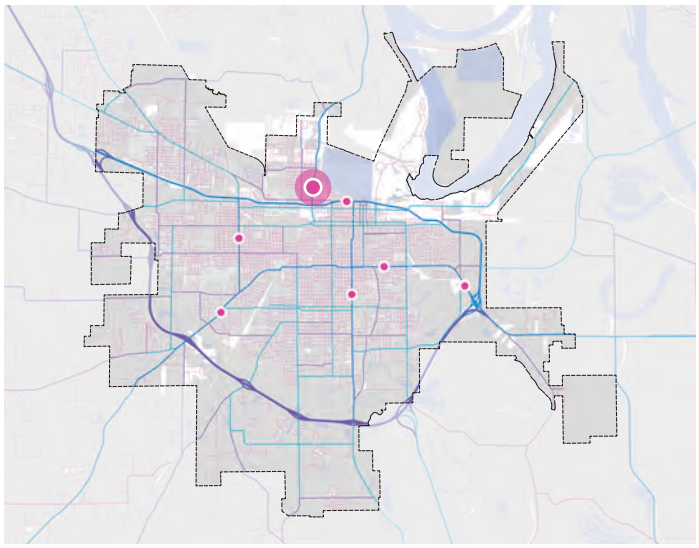
- 0-5000
- 5000-10000
- **11000**
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
TL	travel lane
P	parking
SW	sidewalk







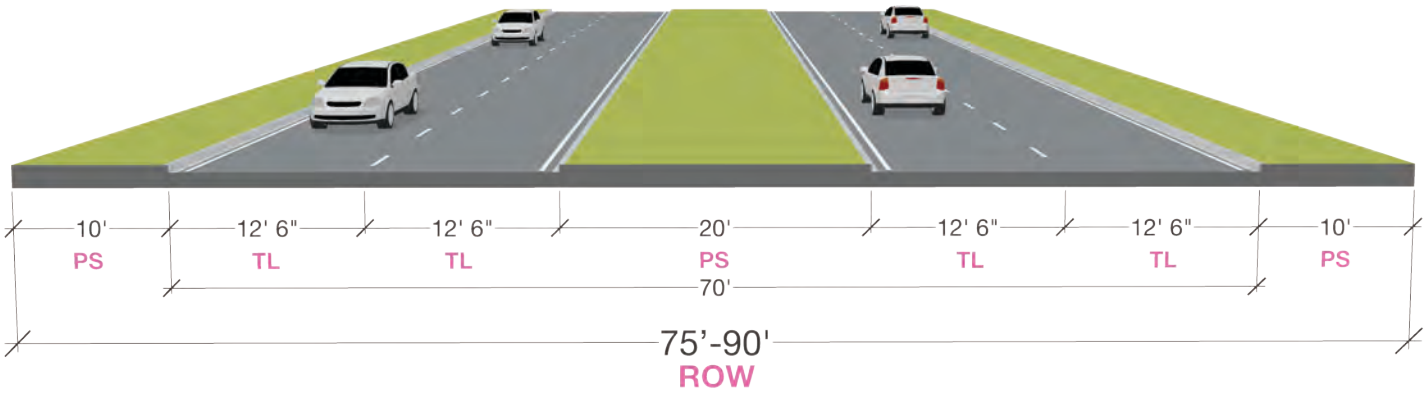
EXISTING MAJOR ARTERIALS
MARTHA MITCHELL EXPRESSWAY

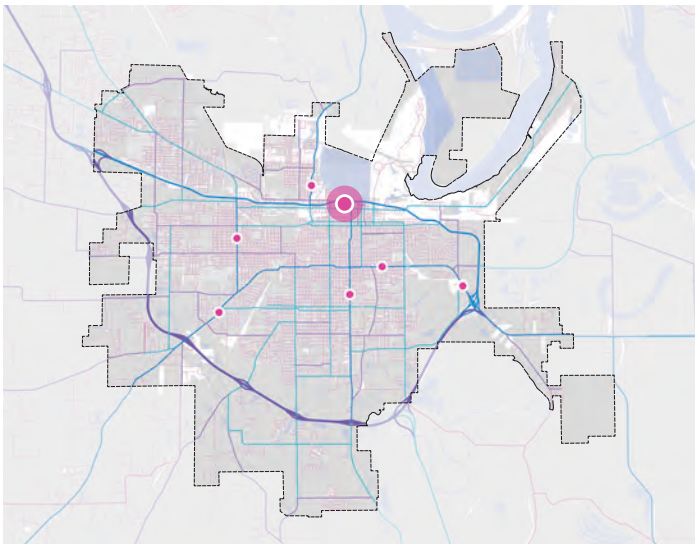
Traffic - ADT

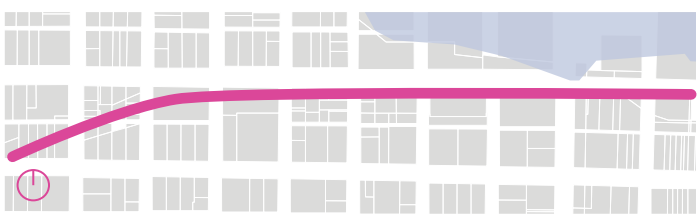
- 0-5000
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- ▶ **15171**
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
TL	travel lane
PS	planting strip







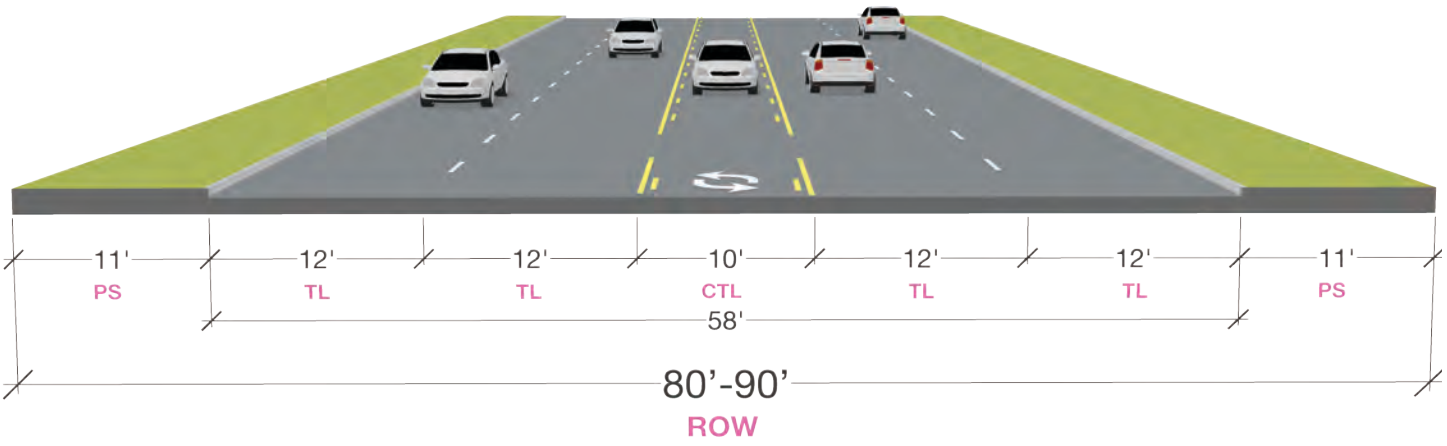
EXISTING MAJOR ARTERIALS
SOUTH BLAKE STREET

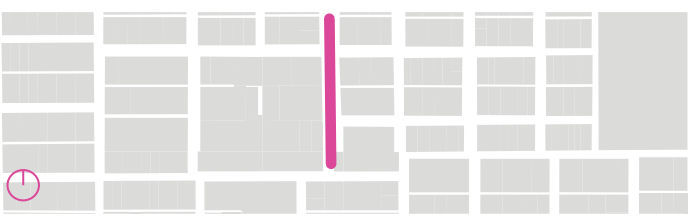
Traffic - ADT

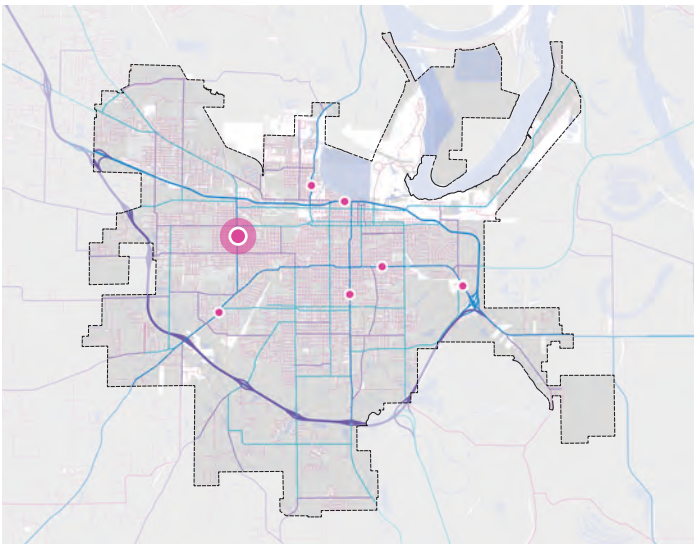
- 0-5000
- 5000-10000
- 10000-15000
- **15000**
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
TL	travel lane
P	parking
PS	planting strip
SW	sidewalk







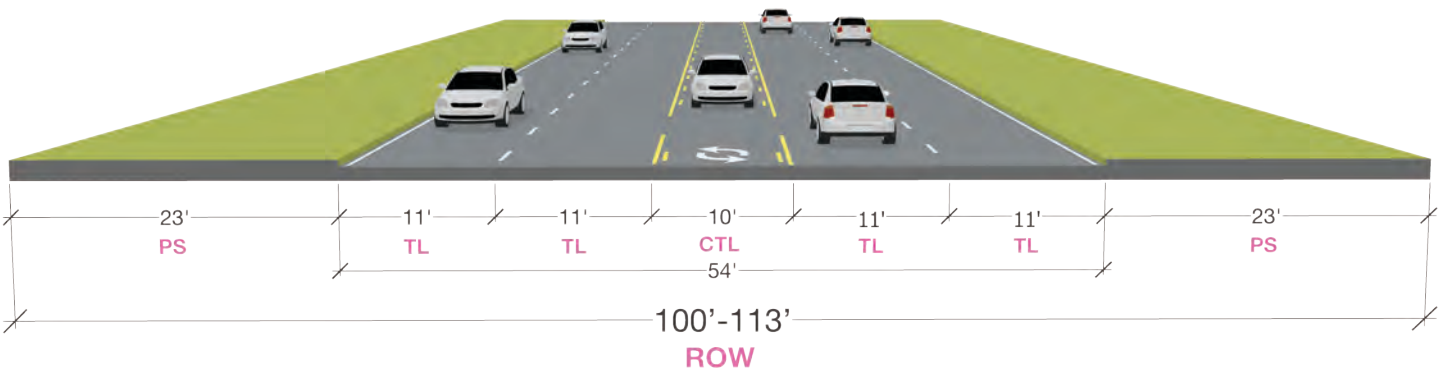
EXISTING MAJOR ARTERIALS
EAST HARDING AVENUE

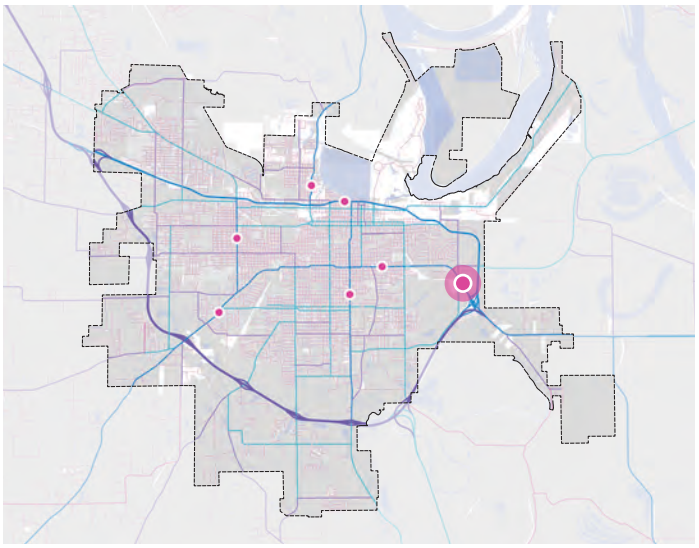
Traffic - ADT

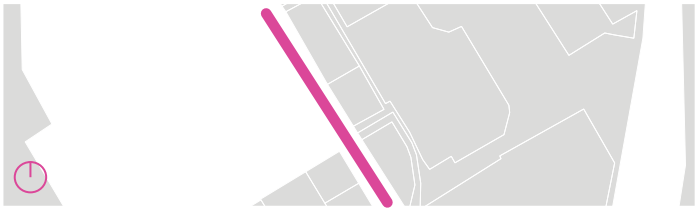
- 0-5000
- 5000-10000
- **11099**
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
CTL	continuous turn lane
TL	travel lane
PS	planting strip







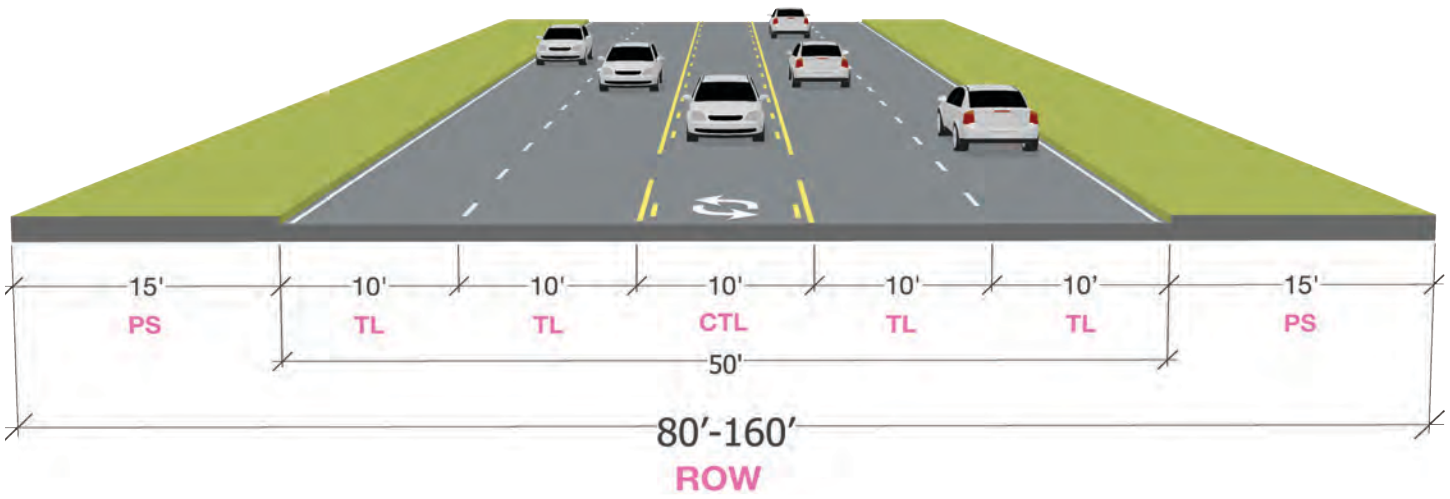
EXISTING MAJOR ARTERIALS
CAMDEN ROAD (NEAR WEST 28TH AVENUE)

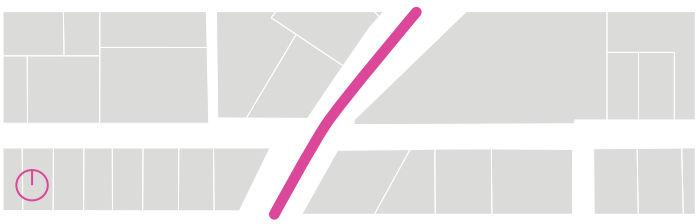
Traffic - ADT

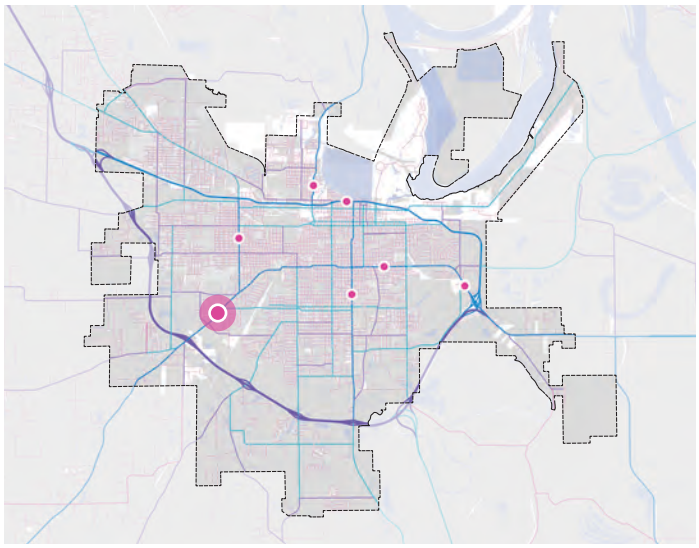
- 0-5000
- 5000-10000
- **14000**
- 15000-20000
- 20000-25000
- 25000-30000

Section Acronyms

ROW	right of way
CTL	continuous turn lane
TL	travel lane
PS	planting strip







This page is intentionally blank.

This page is intentionally blank.

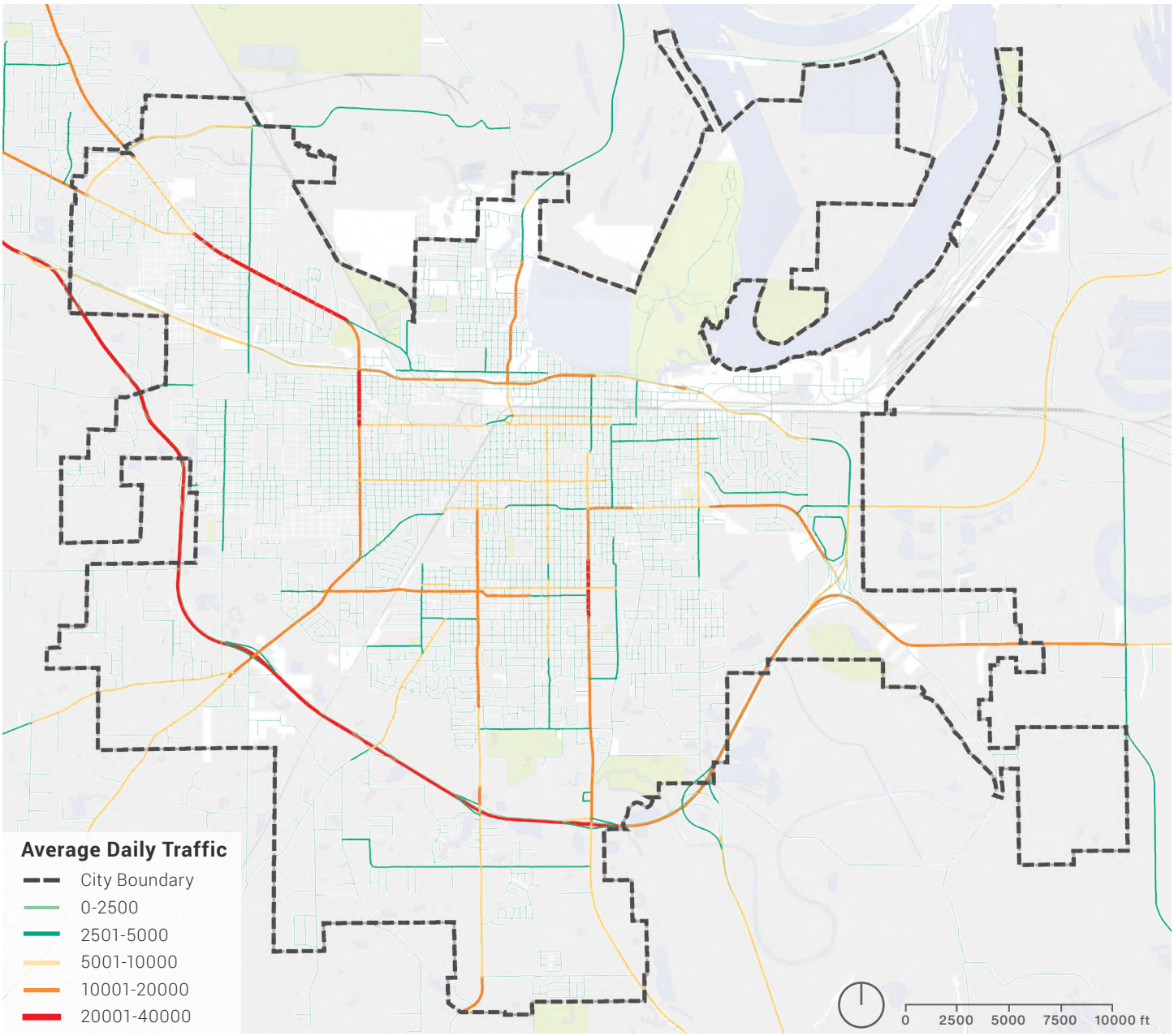
2.8 PUBLIC UTILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

Current Conditions: Street Network Overview

The Pine Bluff street network is predominantly laid out in a grid fashion, with post-war neighborhoods forming islands of suburban (cul-de-sac) street patterns. Several larger collector and arterial streets also follow this network, with some (presumably initiating as older county roads) disregarding this network. Streets with the highest average daily traffic volumes include Interstate 530, Hwy 365/Dollarway Road, Hwy 79B/S Camden Road and Blake St, Hwy 63B/Olive Street, Hazel Street, 28th Ave, and Hwy 190/E Harding Ave.

Existing Plans Review: Pavement Management

- No current plans exist for roadway maintenance and improvements. The City is in a response-only mode to street and infrastructure repairs and maintenance.
- A pavement management plan should be completed, which includes existing pavement condition assessment, prioritization, and future maintenance budgets to inform the City's annual Capital Improvements Program (CIP).
- Evaluate crash data to identify problematic intersections and roadways
- Identify the choke points where existing infrastructure is deteriorating and is plaguing the road network

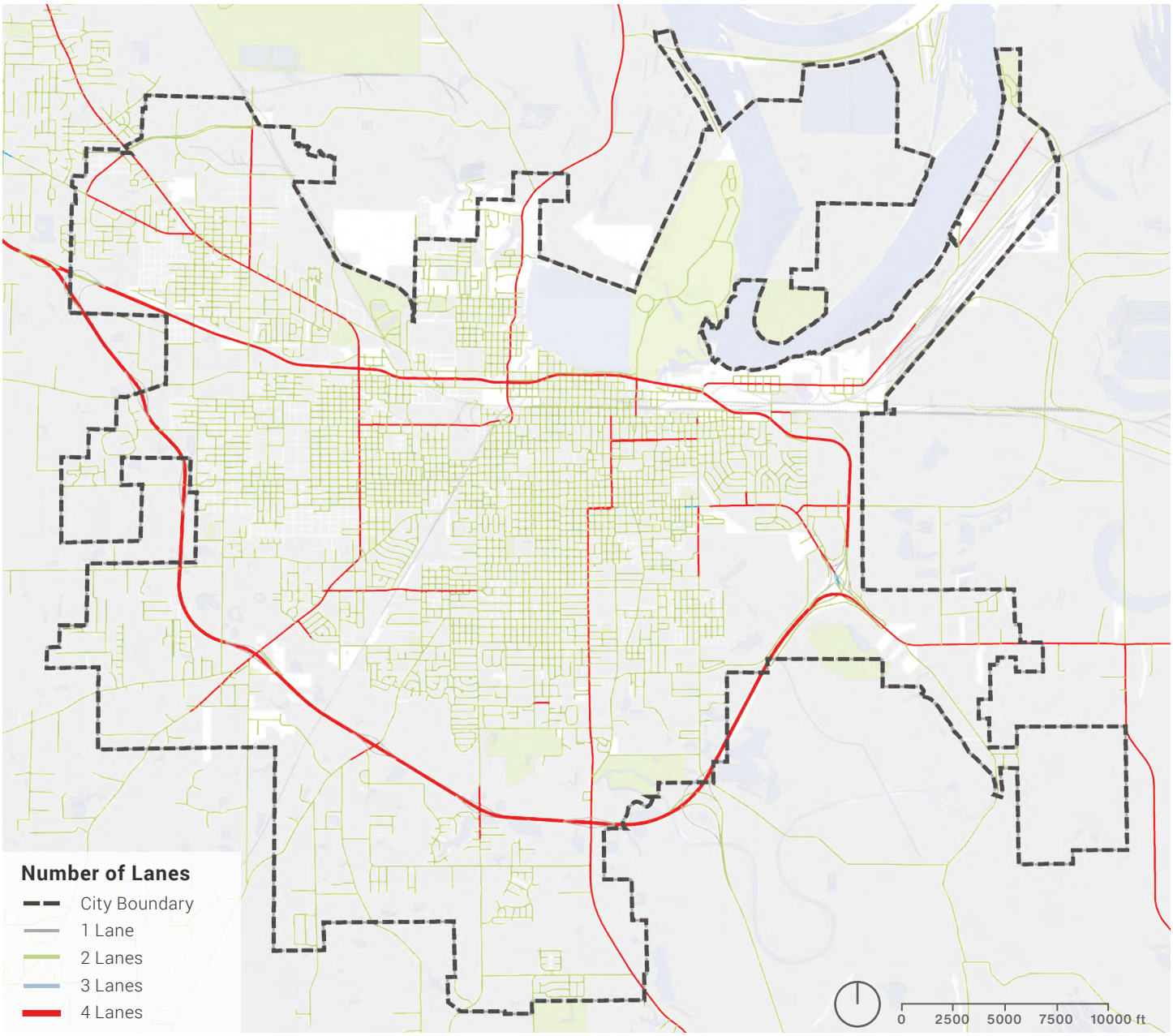


- Analyze effects of the casino and surrounding development on existing utility services on the east side of the city

Needs: Street Maintenance & Improvements

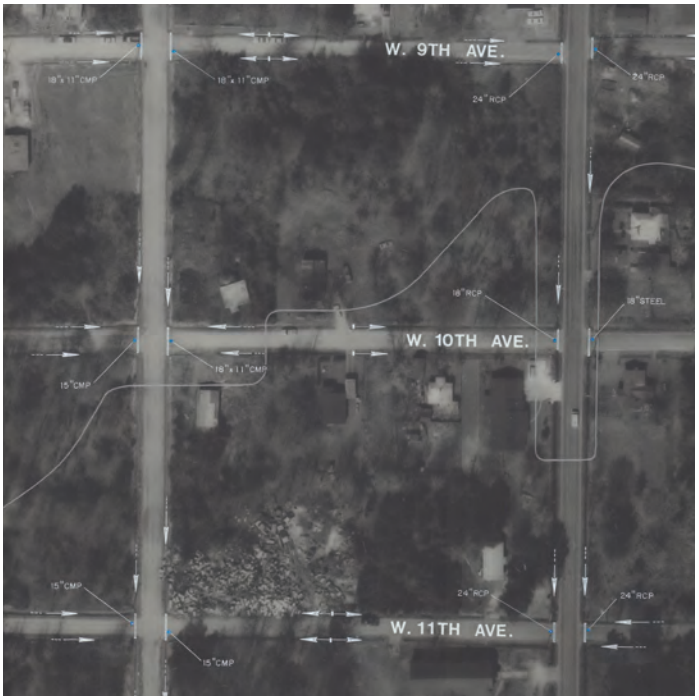
Street improvements are multi-faceted. Within the City of Pine Bluff, it is advantageous to have current traffic (in addition to the ArDOT estimates, which can be slightly outdated) counts conducted along the major thoroughfares for the researching of traffic patterns throughout the City. Additionally, interviewing (or obtaining crash data from) emergency response personnel is beneficial in determining what road segments should be improved for public safety. Traffic counts, along with the accident data, aids the City in compiling a list of improvement projects for both capacity and public safety. The list of improvement projects should ultimately be developed into a Master Street Plan. The Plan should describe the street improvement projects, along with any street reconfigurations needed based on City population projections.

Not all roadways need reconfiguration, but at some point, maintenance will be required on every street. It is advantageous for the City to take an inventory of the street system to assess surface conditions. Upon grading the pavement surfaces, a priority scale should be developed for annual maintenance that should be performed to existing streets. Paving conditions, along with existing storm drainage can be implemented within inventory for future maintenance projects.



Existing Plans Review: Drainage

- Drainage was addressed in 1984 Land Use Plan as follows:
    - The city's drainage system is described in detail on pages 49-50, along with a recommendation for a Master Drainage Plan, to include flow rates, existing drainage easements and designation of easements to be acquired, complete topographic maps, and a hydraulic budget with stream predictions.
    - As of 2019, mapping has not been confirmed with an as-built survey. Mapping should be digitized, and hydraulic budget with stream predictions should be completed.



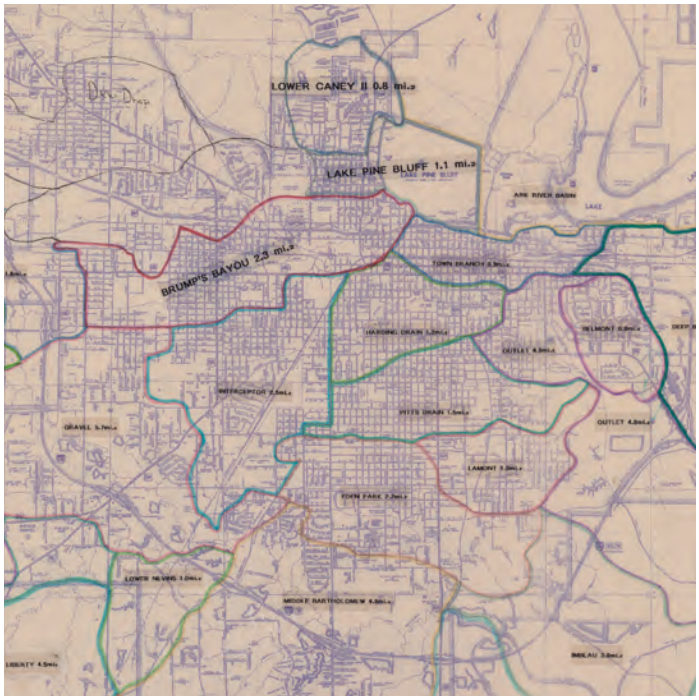
Current Stormwater Drainage Mapping Example

    - The City has a responsibility as part of the National Flood Insurance Program to keep flood mapping updated within their jurisdiction as developments impact and amend flood maps as needed.
- Current stormwater drainage mapping consists of hand drawn preliminary as-built drawings of drainage system showing flow patterns and drainage structure information.
    - These need to be digitized, analyzed, and as-built surveyed to confirm the inventory shown on the hand-drawn maps.
- Watershed Analysis (map below) should be digitized and included as part of the City's GIS system.

Current Conditions: Drainage Assessment

Pine Bluff generally has a flat topography, limiting the effectiveness of surface drainage. When considering drainage routes (piping and open swales) within these topographic characteristics, drainage structures should be appropriately increased in size to accommodate flow rates over a flatter grade. Accommodating flatter slopes and larger-sized conveyances requires larger easement width for City maintenance.

Localized flooding around town after storm events may be due to stormwater drainage system maintenance, debris (litter, sediment), and/or improper sizing of culverts, which may all impede flow. Flow restrictions can lead to localized flooding, though water volume or cross sectional area may not be the problem. Therefore, assessment of the drainage conveyances and proper sizing of drainage facilities may rectify local flooding issues.



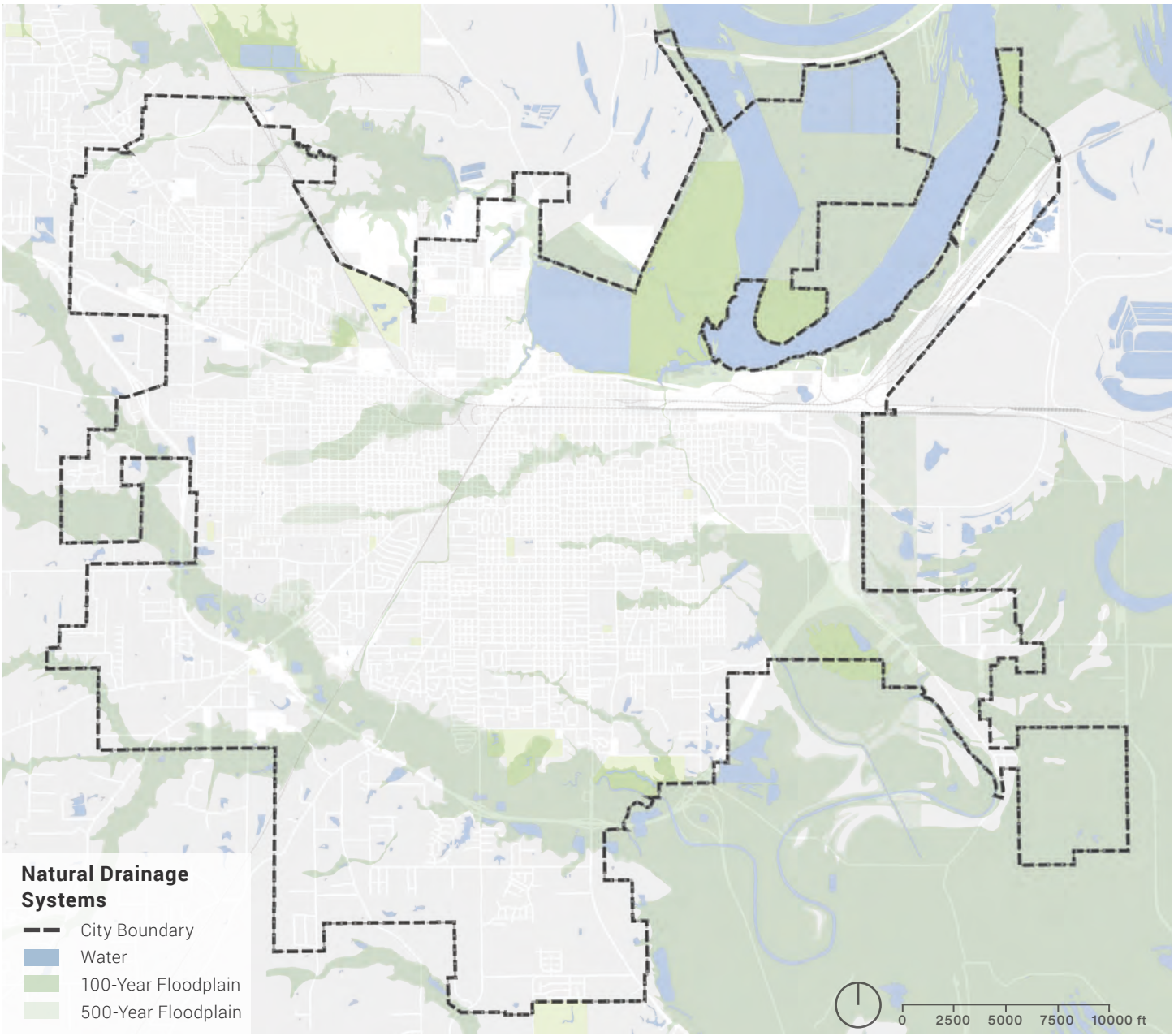
Current Drainage Basin Mapping

Needs: Drainage

Storm drainage is an important aspect of a City's landscape and is ultimately determined by the overall topography. The image below depicts the general drainage basins (watersheds) for the City of Pine Bluff's drainage patterns. Having an idea of the delineated watersheds is important. Since the watersheds have been defined, outfalls and drainage corridors need to be investigated and assessed. Knowing the outfalls

of the watersheds leads to determining the average runoff coefficient of the drainage basin. Determining the surface characteristics (i.e. rooftops, hardscape areas and landscape areas) aids in calculating the volumetric runoff rate for the drainage basin. Once the rate is determined for the specific area, the drainage corridors should be investigated to see if the existing drainage structures are adequate to convey the runoff rate by increasing drainage structure geometries or increasing flatter slopes of conveyances when applicable.

To help alleviate an increase of runoff rates, which in turn require larger drainage structures, low impact development (LID) alternatives can be implemented to help mitigate the stormwater runoff and manage the amount of stormwater that is conveyed through the drainage system. Some examples of LID alternatives are pervious pavements, bioswales, rain gardens and detention areas. When improving streetscapes, LID measures should be considered when developing future street sections. Alternatively, private development could aid in decreasing the runoff rate contribution by having detention and stormwater quality requirements implemented during future endeavors.



Existing Plans Review: Utilities

- Water Utilities addressed in 1984 Land Use Plan (pages 22-27)
    - General Waterworks Corporation was the water supplier
    - Sparta Sand aquifer is the water supply source
    - As of the 1984 plan, General Waterworks had the capacity for increased growth (estimated in 1984 to reach 70,000 population by year 2000)
    - Water line maps were included in the 1984 plan
- No current master water utilities plan or map is readily available (water distributed by third party corporation)
- Sanitary Sewer is addressed in the 1984 Land Use Plan
    - Development and design requirements related to sanitary sewer service and taps are outlined in the plan
    - A small map of sewer facilities is included in the document
- No current master sanitary sewer plan; existing mapping should be digitized and made part of the City's GIS
- Construction details and specifications are available through the Pine Bluff Wastewater Utility website. No map was readily available through this source.

Current Conditions: Utilities Assessment

Liberty Utilities currently operates the water distribution system, which is a part of Algonquin Power & Utilities Corporation. Liberty Utilities provides management of local utility systems for small to mid-sized communities across the country. The management of an outside agency can bring a wealth of knowledge for maintaining a water system through experience. Conversely, local knowledge of the existing infrastructure will always prove beneficial. With the transition from City maintenance to Liberty Utility maintenance, there has been a loss of documentation regarding the existing system. There does not appear to be any city mapping of the existing water distribution and treatment facilities. Additionally, access to meter locations/usage reports are not obtainable.

Within the sanitary sewer realm, Pine Bluff Wastewater Utility maintains the collection and treatment facilities. The sanitary sewer collection system collects and conveys the waste stream to the treatment facility located at Boyd Point. The treatment facility mainly operates using a lagoon system. After reviewing the facility-specific NPDES Permit, it appears that the discharge permit is due for renewal in 2020. The facility does not appear to be under any current consent orders through ADEQ, but there have been some instances of sanitary sewer overflows. To our knowledge, there are no maps for the existing sanitary facilities. The City should work towards producing an Atlas of the sanitary sewer collection system describing the manhole locations, along with elevation data and the associated pipes between each manhole. The pipe characteristics, such as length, diameter and pipe material need to be represented on the atlas.

Implementing documentation for the water and sewer systems will aid the City by completing the first step of being proactive rather than reactive. Documentation will aid in the assessment of current facilities, establish maintenance programs and lead to future planning of extensions based on growth.

Needs: Utilities

City maintained utilities, mainly water and sanitary sewer, are vital to a City's success in future growth. The City's system from water production, distribution to usage should be investigated and quantified. Having an updated atlas of the water system is important to know the location/size of the water mains, valve locations, and hydrant positions that are currently in use. Knowing the location of the existing facilities will aid in future service tap locations, knowing which valves are exercised, and where hydrant flushes are completed. Moreover, the atlas can morph into a water system master plan for future growth. If the City is studied based on census data for growth or if parts of the City are growing at a faster rate, the Master Plan could capture this information and help the City plan for future growth throughout the service area. For example, if the City has a larger development looking to construct a facility requiring an 8" waterline to serve the new facility and the Master Plan calls for a 12" water main to be constructed to serve future use, the City might be able to share some of the cost of the proposed waterline by paying the difference between the cost of an 8"/12" waterline. Cost sharing would help the City promote a "development friendly" mentality for future construction projects.

Sanitary Sewer facilities, on the other hand, should be investigated based on the aspect of collection and treatment. Again, having a Sewerage Atlas would show the existing facility characteristics of the system. City personnel would be able to see the sewer main size, pipe material, invert elevations and manhole data for the system. Knowing the existing information would help by being able to pinpoint any parts of the system where problems were occurring or where parts of the system need to be upgraded to current standards. Records of any sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) need to be obtained to make sure the City's collection system is not suffering from infiltration/inflow problems.

Once the waste stream is collected, treatment is the next focus. Having an existing map of the current wastewater treatment facilities, along with as-built drawings of the treatment facility, will help in determining if the treatment facilities are adequate. In this case, adequate describes the ability to flow the waste stream through the treatment facility while meeting the required discharge parameters set forth by the facility's permit. Records of the discharge monitoring report (DMRs) need to be assessed to see if the treatment facility is treating the waste stream prior to releasing the effluent to waters of the state. Reviewing DMRs on a regular basis will give an idea of how the facility is operating to see if any upgrades are needed and alleviate future consent administrative orders.

This page is intentionally blank.

2.9 SUSTAINABILITY & LID

1984 Land Use Plan

- Natural Barriers to Growth - Floodplain Management (page 47): The document states that the AR River and its floodplain creates a barrier to growth, however,the info presented does not prohibit development in 100 year floodplain, but rather, provides guidelines for development and redevelopment in and around the floodplain.
- Pine Bluff's Drainage System (page 48-50) With Bayou Bartholomew, Pine Bluff has the longest bayou in the world, partially within its city limits. The 1984 Land Use Plan continues to respect the sensitive ecosystems that are present. Brumps Bayou is totally in the urban area of downtown, with the Civil Center and the Convention Center wining the area that were once Harding Lake which is surrounded by commercial and high density development. Other areas of the City have serious flooding issues. These factors all impact the health of the city as well as the aquatic habitats in the Arkansas River and the surrounding bayous.
- Energy - Solar Energy (page 58): Solar energy is mentioned in the document as viable alternative energy options but the City has not shown initiatives in the past 33 years that would suggest the promotion of solar energy or protection of solar access (the availability of sunlight to solar collectors and energy systems).

Downtown Main Street & Master Plan and Design Guidelines

- Sidewalk paving (page 14): Pervious pavers and/or pervious concrete may be utilized to allow for runoff to filtrate through the subsurface for groundwater recharge.
- Amenity zone (page 16): Rain gardens should be located along side streets in the core retail district (including main street) to avoid inhibiting walkability.
- Rain garden planting (page 25-28): Encourage low plant material and/or trees to avoid blocking sight lines. Consider utilizing silva cells for deep root protection and stormwater management.
- Street lighting (page 28): the use of LED fixtures aligns with best practice methodology.
- Street design (page 37) mentions the consideration of permeable paving which would allow for runoff to filtrate through the subsurface for groundwater recharge.
- Street design rain gardens (page 41): Rain gardens should be located along side streets in the core retail district (including main street) to avoid inhibiting walkability.

Go Forward Pine Bluff

- Quality of Life Pillar - Community Garden & Beautification Project (page 34): The establishment of community gardens can help reduce negative environmental impacts by promoting sustainable agriculture, reduce foot transportation costs and provide fresh produce to underserved areas of town.

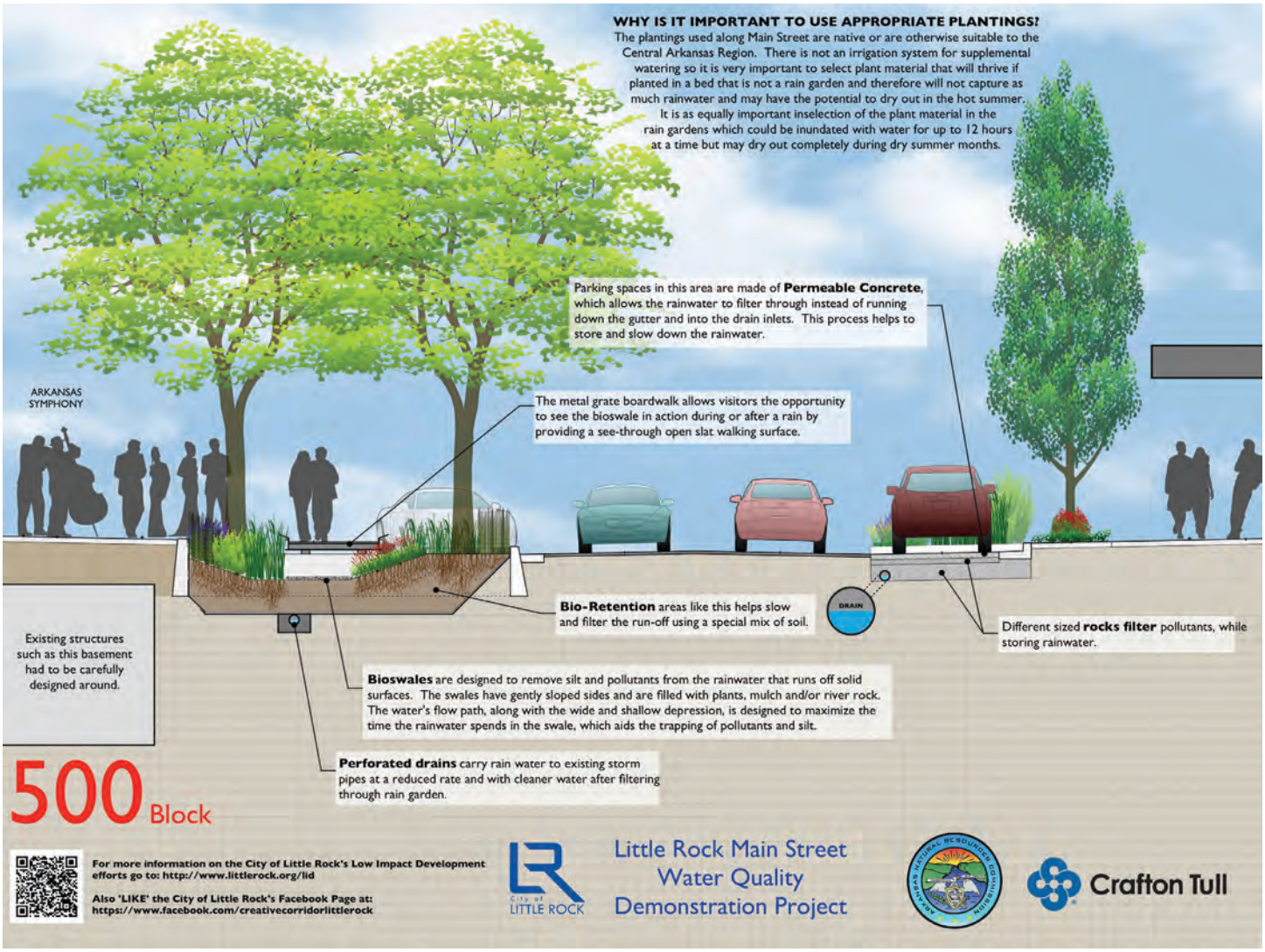
Assessment

So much has happened in the world of sustainability since the 1984 Land Use plan was completed. The term Low Impact Development was unknown not used until 1990. Many of the LID recommendations presented in the Downtown Main Street Master Plan & Design Guidelines are facilities commonly designed today by engineers and landscape architects. The Main Street plan and guidelines only addresses the downtown area, while the Comprehensive Plan seeks to set best practices for the entire city of Pine Bluff. Some of the LID recommendations from the Downtown Guidelines may work in others areas of town, but many of them are urban in nature and may not be applicable in suburban conditions. Others may not be appropriate in a context that differs from the downtown grid with prescribed building setbacks and lack of open space. Go Forward Pine Bluff's Quality of Life pillar touches on sustainable practices, primarily the community garden that is currently in operation. This is a good start to the overwhelming need to make Pine Bluff a more sustainable city.

Pine Bluff does not appear to have many sustainable initiatives currently in place. The exception to this is the existing community garden that was established after the completion of the Go Forward document. The garden, which opened to the public in early April 2019, is located at 11th avenue and Cherry Street. Grants funded the creation of the community garden.

The term low-impact development (LID) refers to man made systems and practices that use natural processes that result in infiltration, evapotranspiration or use of stormwater in order to recharge the groundwater (and aquifers), protect water quality and associated aquatic habitats like nearby Lake Saracen and the Arkansas River. Low impact development practices shown in the documents above are guidelines yet to be realized. The redevelopment of Main Street that will incorporate the Main Street Master Plan and Design Guidelines have been on hold since the completion of the document.

LID practices should be strongly considered in Pine Bluff due to the fact that the City's topography is relatively flat, LID facilities would provide stormwater holding areas (rain gardens) and groundwater recharge that would take some pressure off the aging stormwater system. Silva cells under new street trees in the urban areas would not only provide protection and space for the tree roots but have a distribution pipe to convey runoff into existing catch basins. This drainage would have the benefit of filtration through the cells and roots prior to entry into the stormwater management system. Root shields and moisture barriers can be used within these planting areas to protect adjacent building walls as well.



This page is intentionally blank.

2.10 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1984 Land Use Plan Notes

- Prior plans do not fully assess the economic conditions of Pine Bluff at that time.
- The 1984 Land Use plan does identify the need to appropriately adjust service costs as "Failure to set appropriate prices, especially where the service or production is regulated by the City government."
- 1984 Land Use Plan A. Urban Economics page 118.

Go Forward Pine Bluff Notes

The momentum created by Go Forward Pine Bluff, and previous planning efforts should be continually promoted and referenced when tasks are accomplished. In communities where negative perceptions exist, strong leadership around a few core values is the best method of keeping the conversation on track, and keeping the residents satisfied with incremental forward progress. The identification of; Organizational, Product, Market, Business, and Workforce concepts is a good first step in understanding the complex relationships in economic development. Extra effort should be given to the City of Pine Bluff, its staff, officers, and funding partners to speak as one voice about the efforts being made, and the valuable contribution that each individual contributes to the greater good. Change can be emotionally exhausting. City leaders and employees of partner programs are the primary points of contact for residents who are seeking to understand what is happening in their community, and help them navigate new opportunities.

<u>Economic Development Pillar</u>

- Innovation Hub
  - Confusing or unclear language in the Supporting Parties section does not identify the chain of command for various programs, initiatives, and efforts. An org chart may alleviate the circular nature of the description of the GFPB, ASC, UAPB-ERDC, SEARK, Generator, Hub relationship. Clarification is needed to determine which group is responsible for which activity, and from where their program funding is derived. The simple one page org chart with funding inputs and outputs would clarify and align program mission.
- Employability Training
  - More specifics on training duration, training types, and alignment with industry sectors will be important when communicating with employers. Certification programs should be specifically listed where major employment gaps are identified.
  - Endorse the Renewal of Economic Development Alliance for Jefferson County ⅜ cent sales tax.

Economic Challenges

Population Loss is still a heavy burden on municipal services. Pine Bluff is maintaining all of the same infrastructure as it did 10+ years ago, but now with less population, and less sales tax to support these services.

A negative growth rate reverses the economic clock for potential investment opportunities. Slowing the rate of decline is the priority ahead of new design-oriented plans. Slowing decline can create social and political imbalance that must be handled with clear-eyed awareness of the issues, and strong conviction for policies that are fair and equitable for all residents and business owners.

There may be specific areas of Pine Bluff that will require demolition and abandonment until such time that economic conditions improve. Special care must be taken when exercising Urban Renewal actions to avoid the perception that residents will be involuntarily removed from their home. While this is clearly not a politically viable policy today, historic actions from Urban Renewal authorities from across the United States have made current Urban Renewal activities much more difficult when not planned and communicated appropriately.

Economic Opportunities

Connecting the new casino site with downtown Pine Bluff will be critical to saving the existing structures, and maintaining the viability of the historic district. The casino has the potential to further divide the economic potential of downtown as new development around the casino will offer retail and services that are new and unique. Establishing this physical connection with signage, landscaping, and transportation planning will be critical.

Pine Bluff is a community that must be repopulated with either residents who have left and are willing to return, or new residents who will move into the community. Convincing people to move back will not be easy. Attracting new residents will require a significant economic opportunity that contrasts with their current quality of life. These new residents must establish lasting commitment to the area in order for an economic transformation to occur.

Opportunity Zones offer a new investment mechanism for long term investors. This and the availability of underutilized land are attractive investment opportunities for many industries.

The Urban Renewal Authority should request that ALL properties (present and future) held by the Commissioners of State Land to be deeded to the Pine Bluff Urban Renewal Authority so that local ownership can be maintained. This will create a temporary administrative burden and transparency challenges, but once economic conditions improve, these properties can be patiently administered with local control, free from real estate speculation.

The Union Pacific Railway is an excellent resource and connections to Little Rock and Memphis will increase the potential for manufacturing and shipping connectivity between these cities.

Assessing Employment Sectors and Economic Mobility

Manufacturing, Education, and Public Administration (City and County Governments) account for the existing majority of jobs in Pine Bluff. Seeking diversity in employment, and less stratification between workers and management/executives will require the creation of new businesses and sectors that are parallel to existing manufacturers, but these jobs are not currently located in the region. It is worth considering an national/international appeal to industries that can utilize the Bioplex, vacant warehouse spaces, access to water and rail services that exist within Pine Bluff region.

Employment multipliers 1 are an assessment tool that determines to overall impact of jobs within various sectors within private industries. Lower wage paying jobs that are in greater supply, provide a greater economic impact than higher paying managerial jobs where there are fewer positions available. Additionally, specialized industries such as utilities and mining have higher impacts on total indirect jobs created, but are also difficult to create from scratch without external subsidies. One notable sector of low total indirect jobs is the Accommodation and food services industry which account for approximately 161.2 jobs for every 100 direct jobs, one of the lowest directly ahead of retail trade jobs which account for 122.1 jobs for every 100 direct jobs created.

Job training, career advancement, and employment tenure will be important considerations when marketing Pine Bluff to future employers. Data on these three indicators should be included in economic development marketing materials.

Pine Bluff should focus its employment effort on a combination of advanced manufacturing and durable goods manufacturing, biomedical research and production, information technology, real estate development, construction services and sectors aligning with leading academic programs at UAPB.

Forward and Backward economic linkages have considerable influence on the local economy. Targeting suppliers and manufacturers with similar industry feedstock can provide seamless job growth and increasing wages. Aligning these goals and actions will require a direct working relationship across all agencies, boards, commissions, and city leadership to advance economic opportunity.

Interrelationship between Housing, Employment, Schools, and Quality of Life

The interrelationship between Housing, Employment, Schools, and Quality of life are critical to assessing the conditions of a city. The task is not easy because the measures of success or failure of each element requires vastly differing tools to measure change. The index of each of the elements can be quantified by comparing data collected through the census, and qualified by engaging residents on the topic of relative improvement or deterioration of conditions. In order to understand the impact of declining conditions we must understand what creates the declining conditions and measure to social and capital costs. While it's tempting to look at the cost to government revenues associated with population decline, it's more important to look at the relationship between the loss of population and the key indicators of housing, employment, schools, and quality of life.

As individuals with discretionary income moved out of Pine Bluff they shifted their spending from businesses in Pine Bluff to other communities. This shift is not 100%, but the erosion of support is clearly seen through declining sales tax revenue, property tax collections, and reduction of fees for utility services.

Establishing Measurement Tools

Imprecise measurement and reporting of critical information is a challenge to all municipalities that have not made the digital transformation. Pine Bluff is no exception. The function of government will transform in the next few years into an entirely online and digital presence. This will disenfranchise a large segment of Pine Bluff residents that do not have easy access to the internet.

As Pine Bluff increases and improves its online presence, so to must the access to the internet improve for residents of Pine Bluff. Participating in the community forum must be accessible to everyone irrelative of internet access. Participating in the future of Pine Bluff must be equally accessible and open.

Absentee Landowners

Absentee landowners are not a uniform group. Many owners have inherited property from a family member, and no longer have a connection with Pine Bluff. Others may have once lived in Pine Bluff, but have retired or moved away. Commercial and Industrial property owners are relatively common as absentee, especially for corporate or franchise businesses. No matter the reason for how someone became an absentee owner, the net effect is disconnection between ownership, reinvestment, and market opportunities. Absentee landowners pose a significant challenge to communication and effectiveness of efforts to revitalize Pine Bluff. The use of paper forms mailed to the address of the property owner does not have the impact that personal communication will have regarding future changes to the community.

The housing market became fractured when Pine Bluff residents could not qualify for a home mortgage and were forced to rent. Whether the reasons are attributed to racial proflining by mortgage lenders, limited income, or lack of personal savings, multiple generations of potential property owners have missed their window to purchase a home. For those that did purchase property in the 1970's and 1980's, by the time their mortgages were paid down, market conditons had deteriorated to a point where the decrease in population and reduced income potential left no pool of potential homebuyers.

If absentee owners have income generating properties they are unlikely to return those earnings to the Pine Bluff economy. Where the profits are not reinvested in the individual properties, or the community at large, the economic downward spiral begins to accelerate. As rent potential decreases, so too does the asking price, and therefore the available profit. This choking of the housing market by absentee landowners will not improve until properties are owned and/or managed locally.

Commercial properties that have absentee owners, and are vacant, abandoned, or derelict pose a greater challenge to revitalization. Especially where there is already an oversupply, and little potential for new retail or commercial expansion on the horizon.

The correlation between Absentee landowners and Vacant and Abandoned properties will need to be further investigated to address the negative outcomes that burden municipal operations and establish policies that will position Pine Bluff for success during redevelopment efforts. Furthermore, determining if property owners have any intention of improving their property in Pine Bluff will be difficult since there is no enforcement mechanism related to ownership.

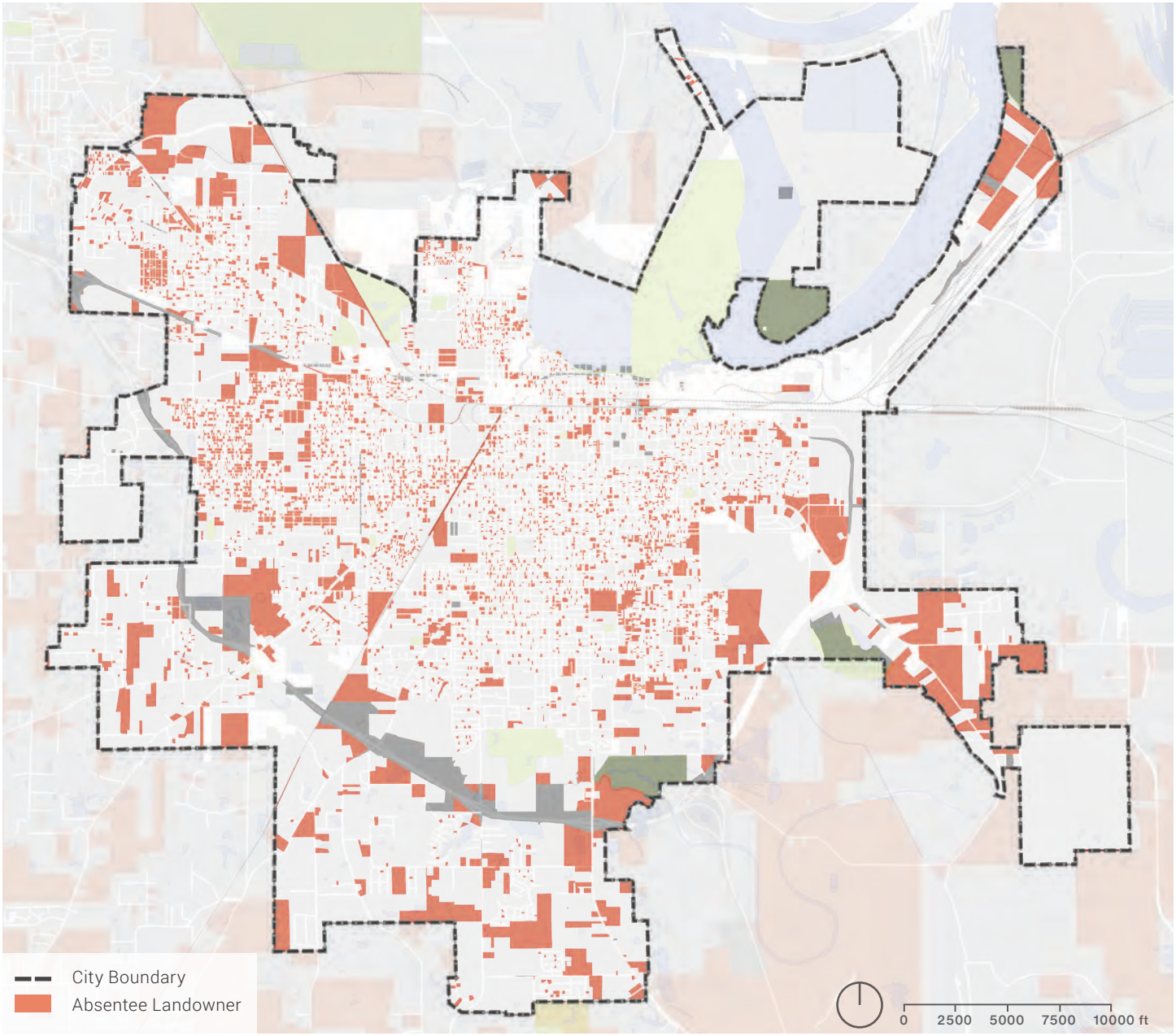
Conclusions

Students at UAPB are the future of the community, and they should be included in the future planning and development of Pine Bluff. As a perpetual resource, they offer the greatest potential for economic prosperity and wage growth. Degree programs in emerging industries and creative fields should be a priority for the City of Pine Bluff to incentivize and try to retain that talent to stay in Pine Bluff after graduation. Interviews with these students will determine if and under what circumstances they would continue to live in Pine Bluff.

Conditions in Pine Bluff could deteriorate further, and create compounding challenges that would undermine the momentum created by the Go Forward Pine Bluff effort.

Access to data, and reporting of economic change will be important to analyze regularly. City administration should incorporate more data science procedures for measuring and reporting success. The digitization of municipal services is advancing rapidly, and Pine Bluff is in a position to use this data to reduce the negative impacts of economic stress, and provide the public an honest assessment of conditions in real time.

https://www.epi.org/publication/updated-employment-multipliers-for-the-u-s-economy/



Though only 8% of Pine Bluff's budget comes from property taxes, there are strong arguments for analyzing the property value of parcels within the city. Property taxes are derived from the taxable value assigned to parcels. Looking at the taxable value of property spatially indicates the locational relationship between concentrations of wealth and pockets of scarcity. Taxable value is also more locally controlled than other forms of municipal revenue such as sales tax.

The taxable value of property is also less susceptible to the influence of national economic trends. Finally, the taxable value of property can be used to create maps that are easily understood and recognizable.

Why Value per Acre?

Urban3's analytic method focuses on the "Per Acre" metric as a unit of productivity. After all, cities and counties are finite areas of land, and how that land is consumed has a direct effect on municipal fiscal health. This metric normalizes overall tax values into a direct comparison, using land consumed as a unit of productivity.

Put another way, different cars have differently-sized gas tanks, so the gallon is used as a measurement of efficiency, not the tank. Therefore, "miles per gallon", not "miles per tank" is common practice to gauge efficiency. We apply the same principle to measure the financial productivity of various development types across a community.

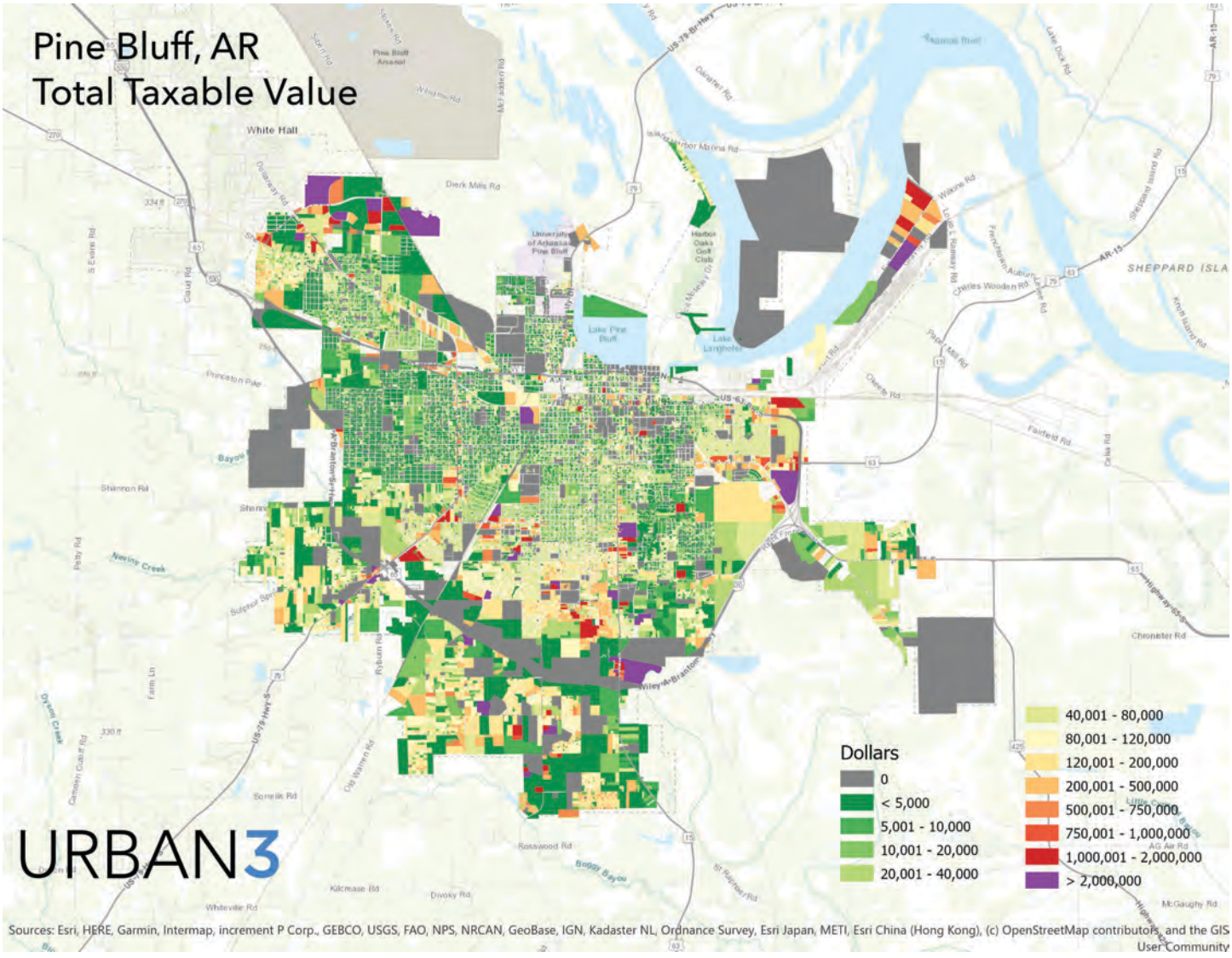
Property taxes are the backbone of municipal revenue. Efficient property tax production has a direct impact on the availability of funds to repair roads, provide quality education, and maintain adequate public services. Identifying development that packs a financial punch is critical to cultivating community wealth.

Property taxes are one of the most spatially relevant means to fund a local government. Real property is a legally defined physical space that has value commensurate with municipal services provided. This simple point has important implications for the way we think about government spending. When the sources of government revenue are geographically specific we can draw quick comparisons to other spatially relevant factors such as patterns of development, demographics, and public investment. Put simply, how land is used has a direct effect on its tax productivity.

Total Value - City of Pine Bluff

Maps of total taxable value tend to show expansive development with large footprints (like a sprawling subdivision) as the highest producers of property revenue. However, these larger tracts of land are typically more expensive to service with public utilities (streets, water and sewer). Thus, examining a development's total taxable value without considering the parcel acreage overlooks the amount of land and other public resources consumed in order to produce revenue. Nevertheless, many cities use a total value map, like the one above of Pine Bluff, to inform land use decisions.

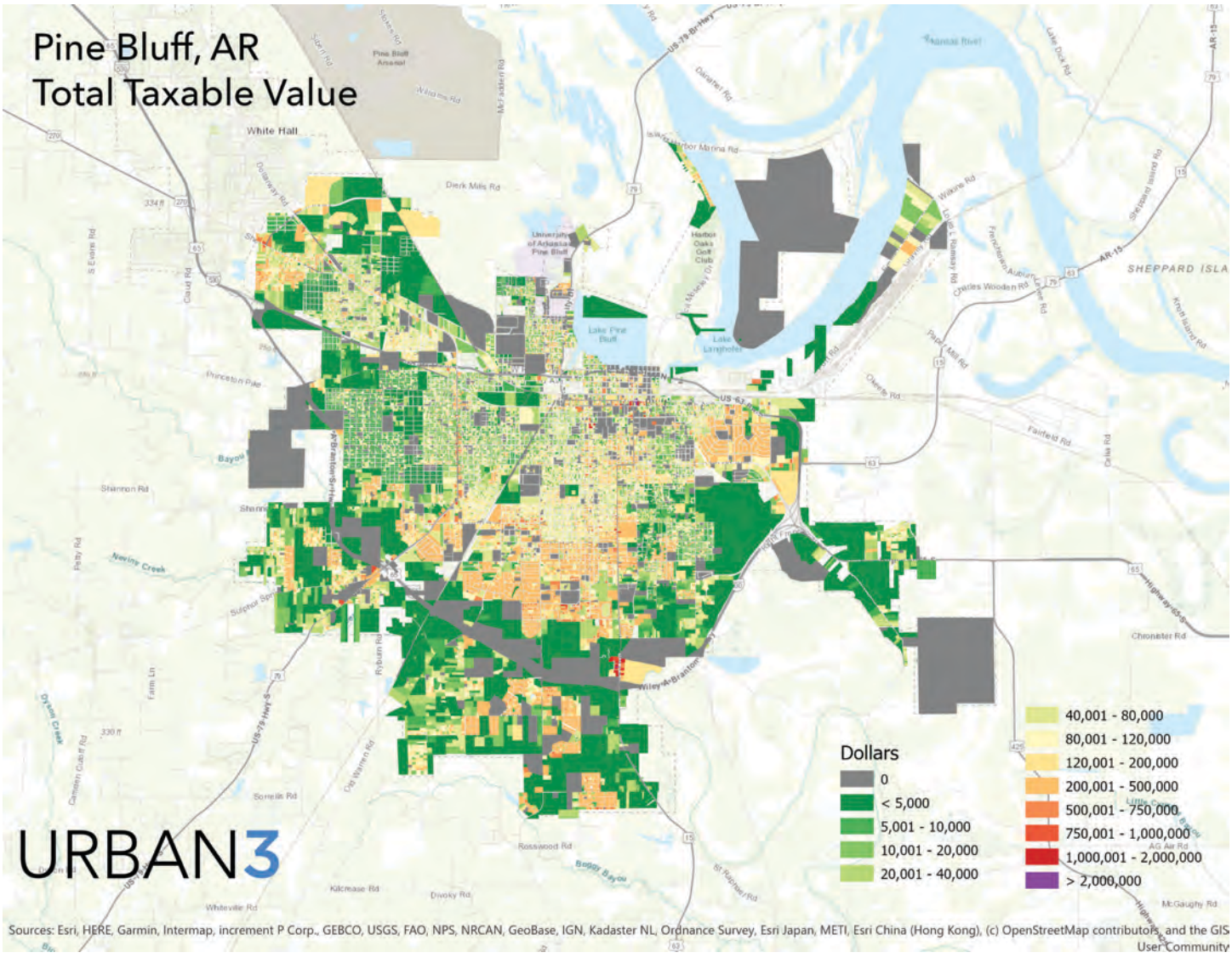
At this level the most valuable parcels are large commercial and manufacturing properties. These include Pines Mall, the 530/Bus 63 interchange (WalMart), Jefferson Square, and the Arcelor Mittal and Tyson Plants. All of these properties are on parcels of 50 acres or more. Most of these properties are located at the fringe of the city.



Value per Acre - City of Pine Bluff

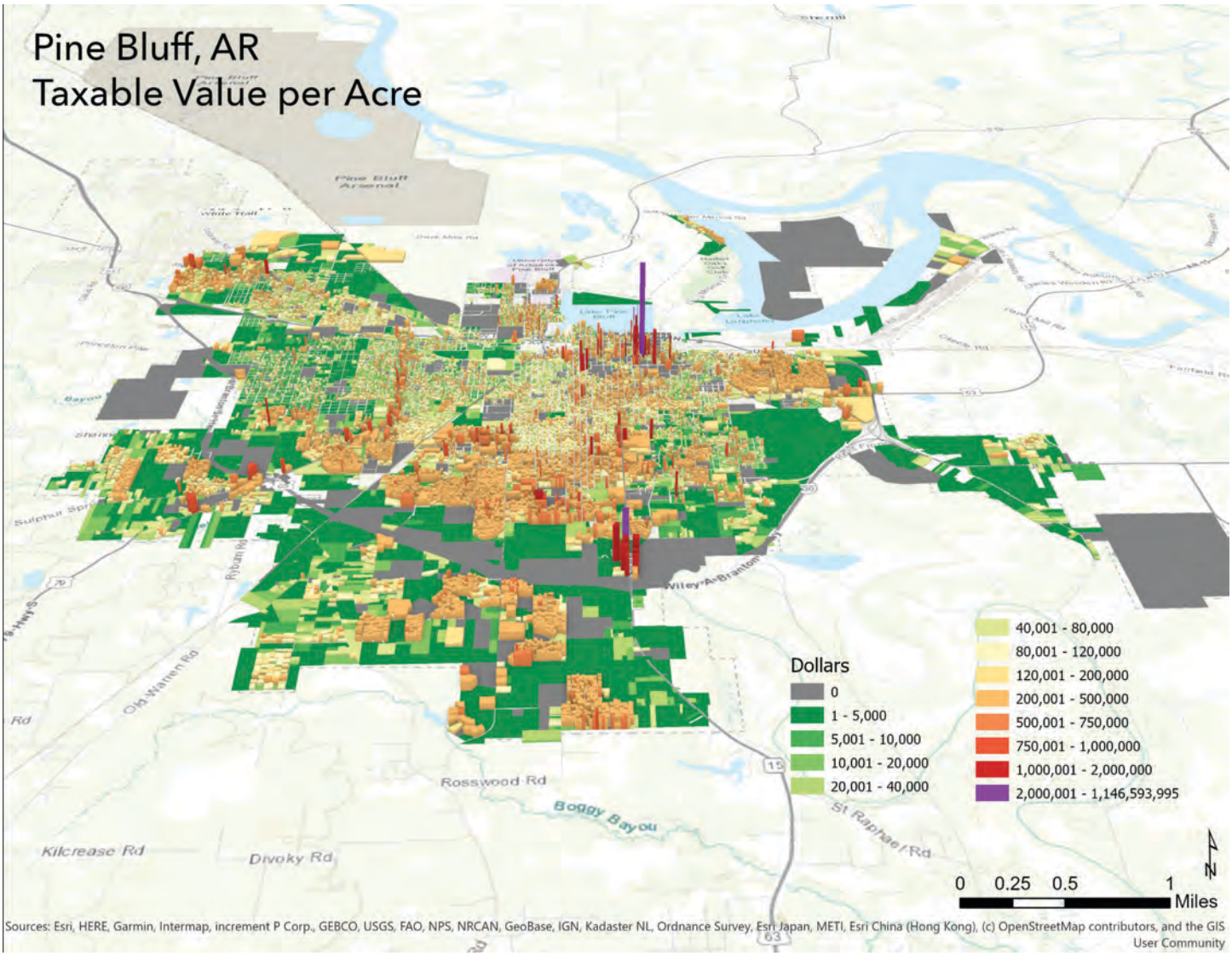
In contrast, the map above illustrates how dividing taxable value by total acreage to get the value per acre, or VPA, identifies the lower-efficiency areas (dark green) near the periphery and the concentrations of higher-efficiency parcels (dark red and purple) near the historic town center. In the case of Pine Bluff, residential areas on the east and south side of town are fairly productive, as are White Hall and the commercial area North of I-530. All of these areas, however, pale in comparison to downtown Pine Bluff. Despite its current underutilized state, downtown Pine Bluff has a large cluster of well-designed, multistory buildings. This dynamic is somewhat hard to see on a flat map, but looking at the same data in 3D will emphasize the potency of downtown.

Thirteen of the twenty most productive buildings are located in either downtown or the the 530/Bus 63 interchange (WalMart). None of these parcels is larger than one acre. Among the highest value per acre properties are The Simmons Bank Building (#1), The adjacent Simmons 1 buildings (#2, #4), The Hampton Inn (#7) and Super 8 in White Hall (#8), and the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (#15).



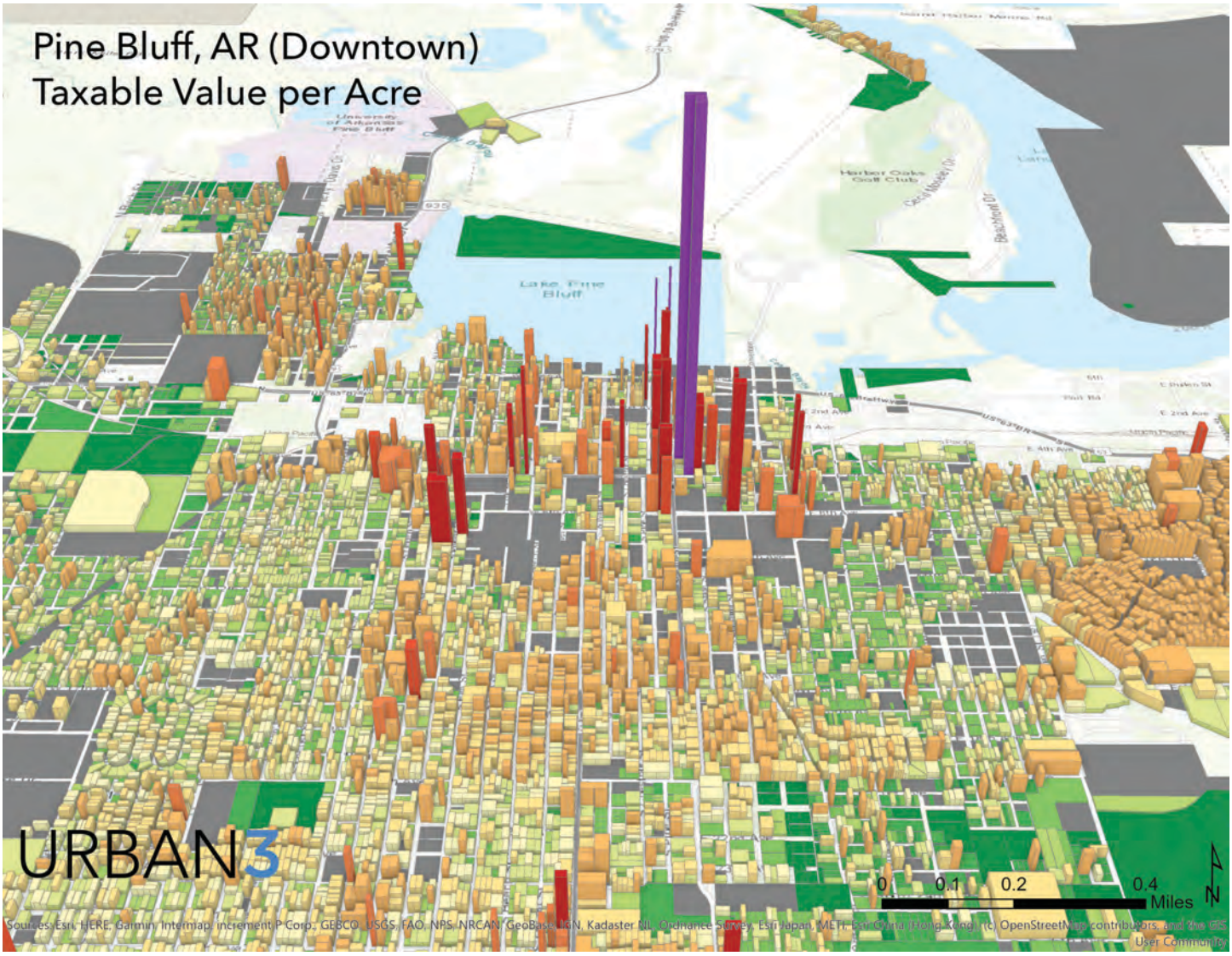
Total Value per Acre 3D - City of Pine Bluff

Even with so many nontaxable parcel, Downtown Pine Bluff is still the most notable feature of the 3D model. The largest spike is Simmons Bank. The bank as the peak VPA is no surprise because multistory buildings are very revenue-to-footprint-size efficient. Of greater interest are the other spikes in downtown. The red spikes you see represent the businesses that are still open in the downtown. Imagine the spike skyline if more vacant downtown buildings were restored and open for business.



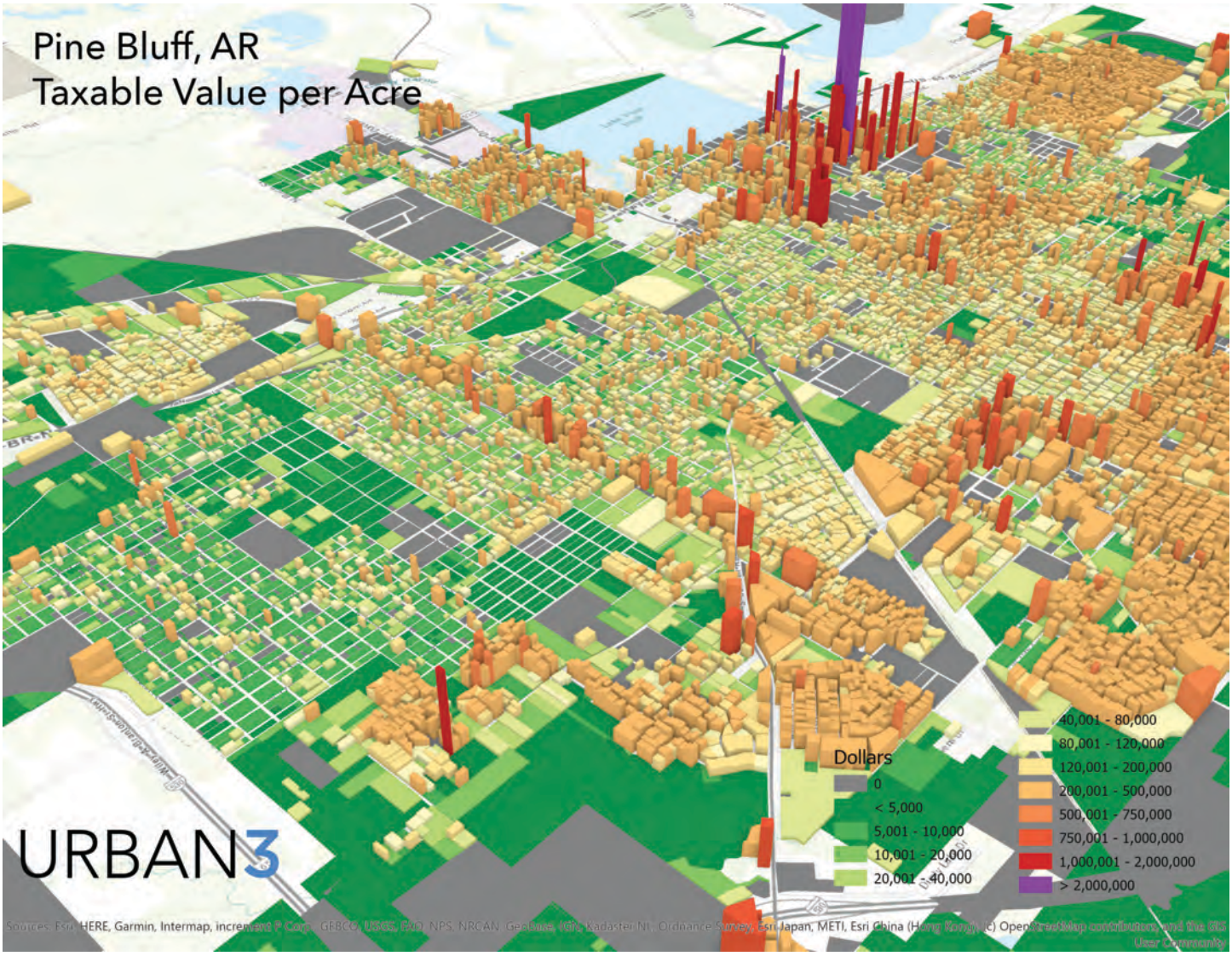
Downtown Area - Property Value per Acre

This close up shows downtown Pine Bluff and the area surrounding areas. The tallest productivity spike is Simmons Bank. One important aspect of this image is the large non-taxable (grey) areas to the Southeast and Southwest of downtown. These are the convention center and Jr High / High School respectively. These large blocks of non-taxable land have the effect of cutting some neighborhoods off from the effects of being near downtown as well as reducing walkability.



Blake St - Property Value per Acre

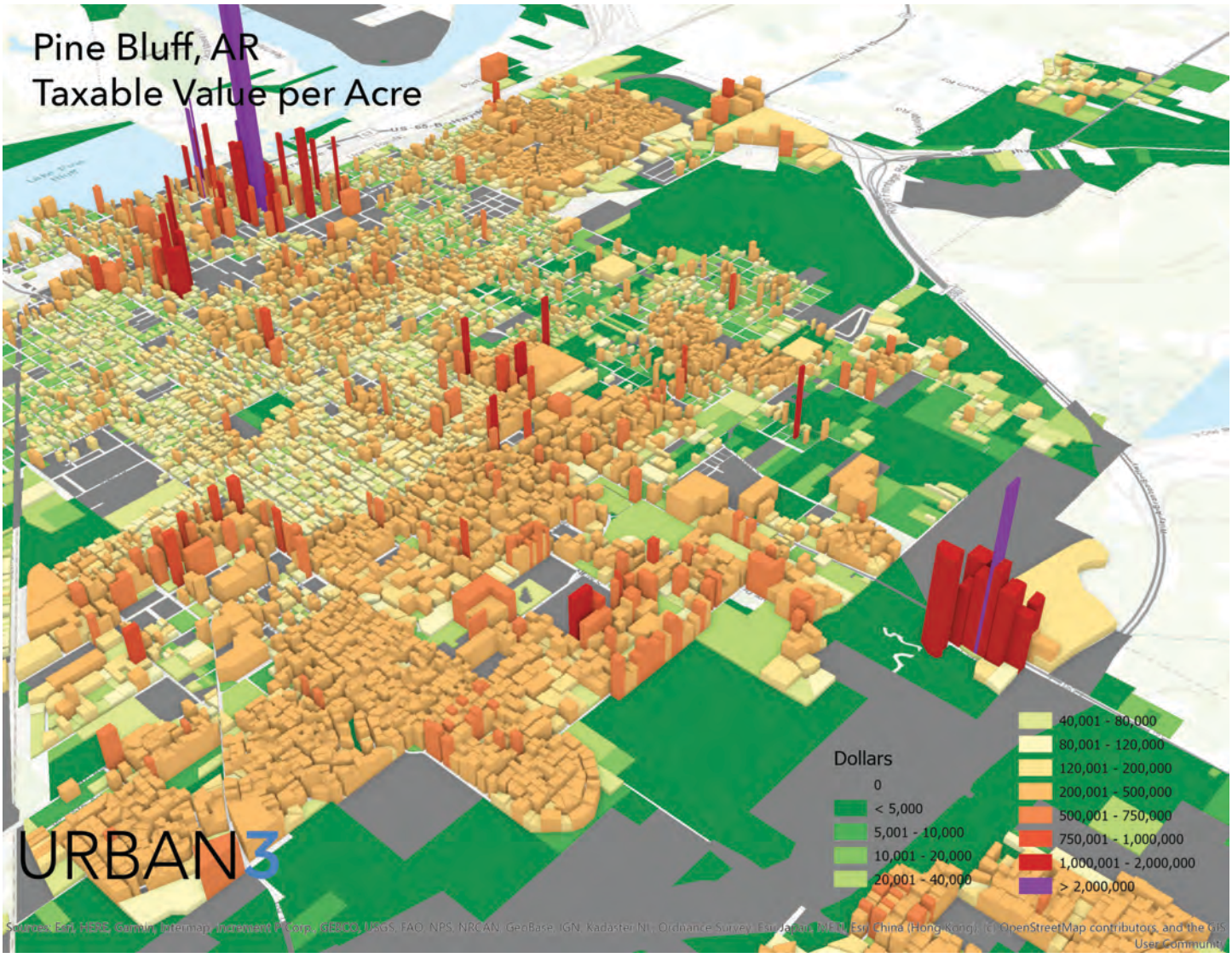
This close up shows Blake St between W 6th Ave and W 28th St. This segment of Blake St show noticeably higher values than the surrounding parcels. Blake St serves as both a center of commerce in West Pine Bluff and a connector between White Hall and Jefferson Regional Medical Center.



Jefferson Regional Center - Property Value per Acre

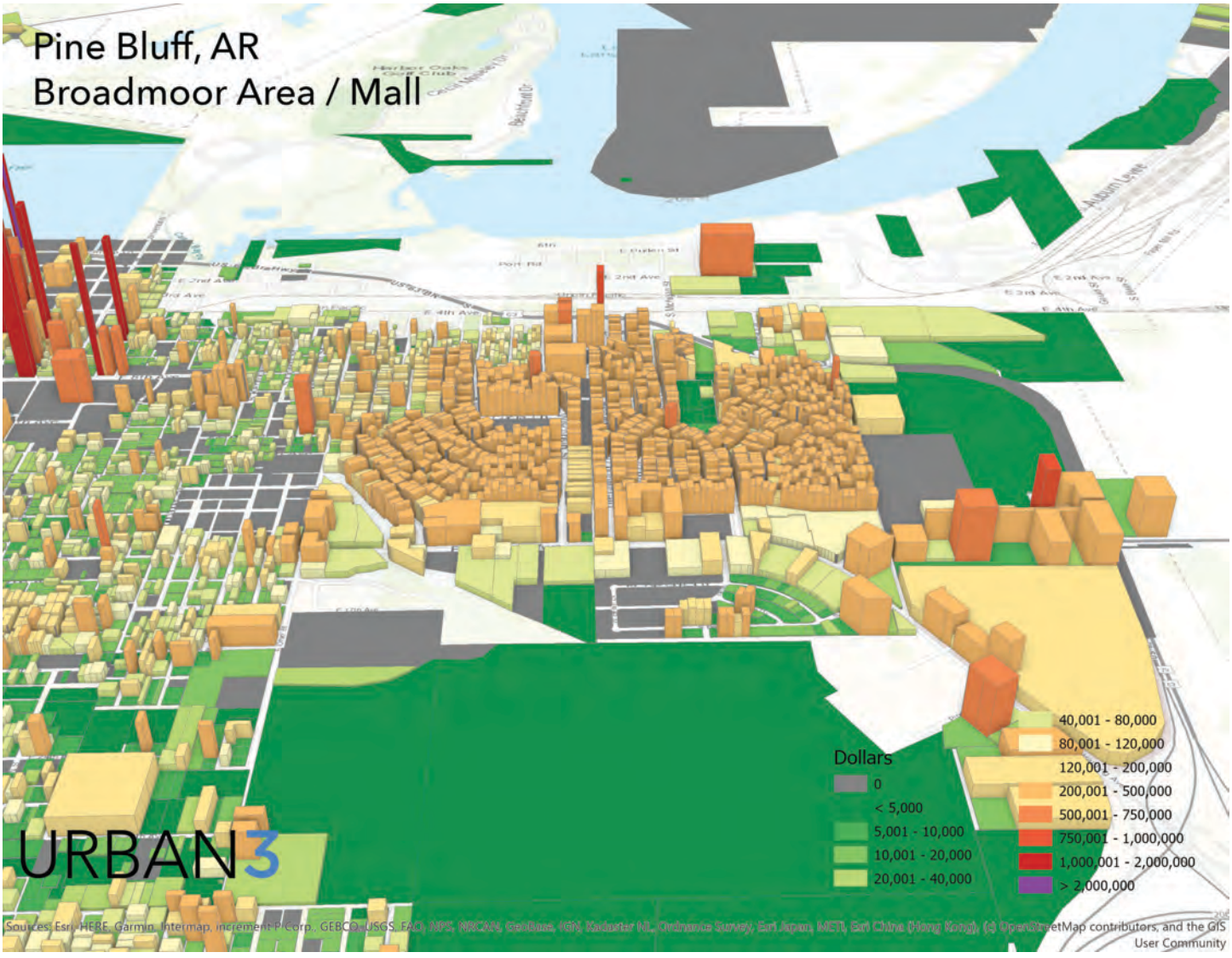
This view is centered on the Jefferson Regional Medical Center. Though the Center itself in non-taxable, the effect it has on surrounding tax values is hard to miss. The entire area surrounding the Center is significantly more productive than the rest of the residential areas of the city.

Also of note, the spikes seen in the lower right side of the image are the Walmart and nearby commercial buildings. Though these represent very high relative value, it is likely they will only decrease in taxable value. This is due to their recent construction and the way property taxes are calculated.



Broadmoor Area - Property Value per Acre

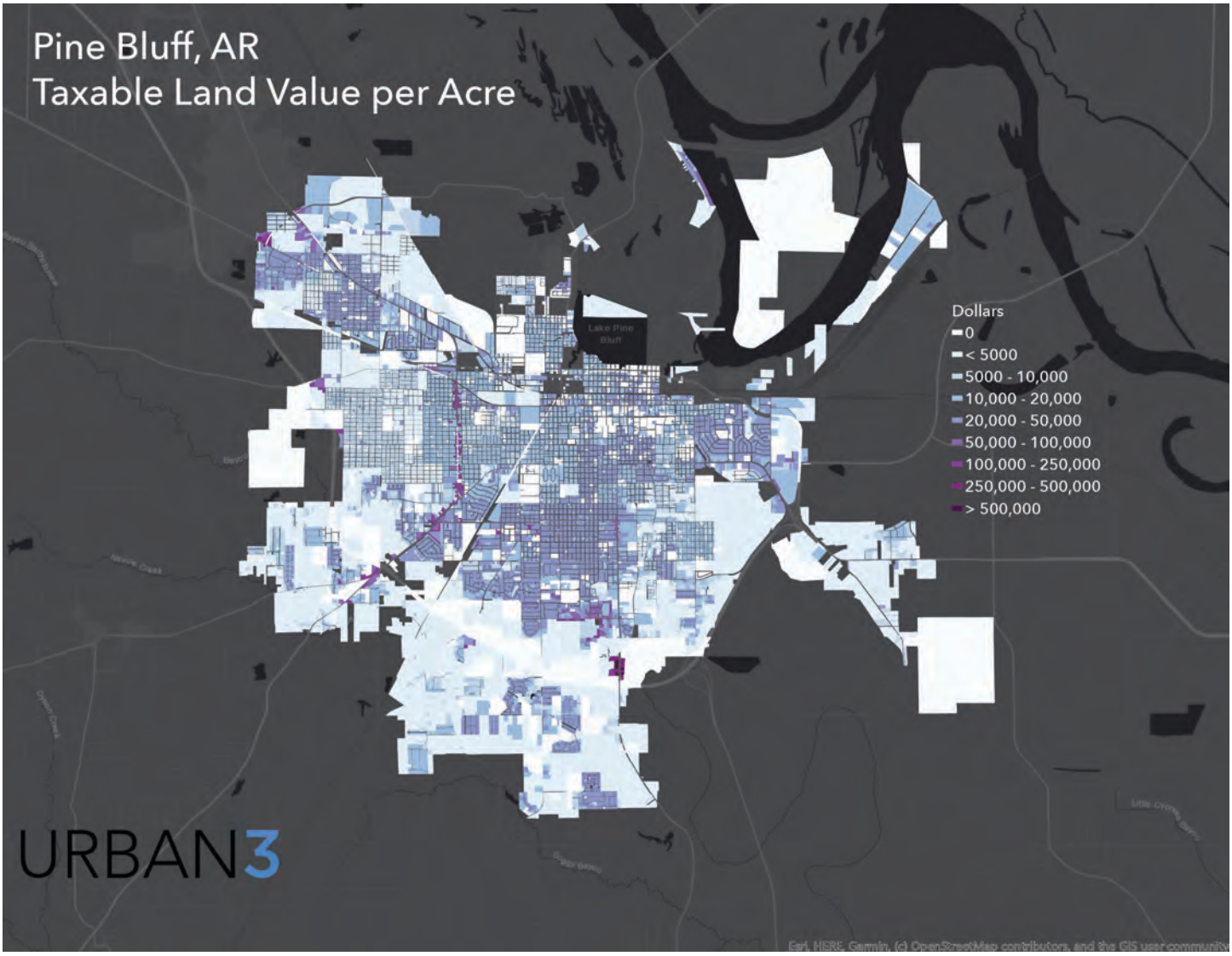
The Broadmoor neighborhood is another notable area in the value per acre model. It shows a remarkable consistency of value compared to other residential areas in the city. It has easy access to schools, shopping, and churches, but the same can be said of the neighborhoods south of downtown. What makes Broadmoor stand apart is it's lack of vacant properties. The consistency of the street fabric in this neighborhood helps increase property values for the entire neighborhood. Market values for houses in Broadmoor average from $10,000 to $50,000 more than those of the neighborhoods directly to the west.



Land Value per Acre - City of Pine Bluff

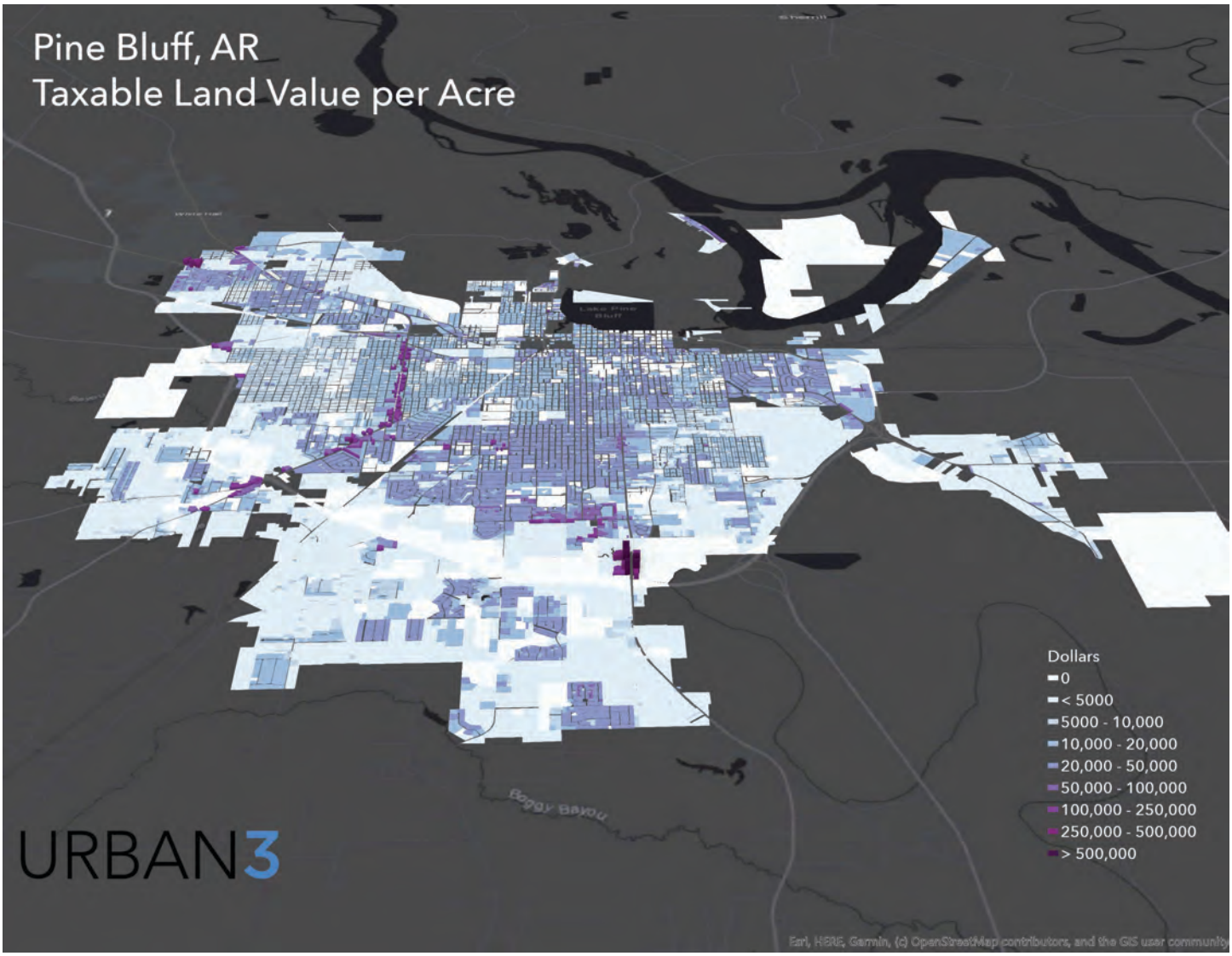
Mapping land value per acre is another good way to understand economic trends in a city. This shows only the dirt value; buildings and improvements are not included.

One trend that is immediately noticeable on this map is the increase in land value South of 24th Ave. This coincides closely with the higher value per acre of the residential areas surrounding the Jefferson Regional Medical Center.



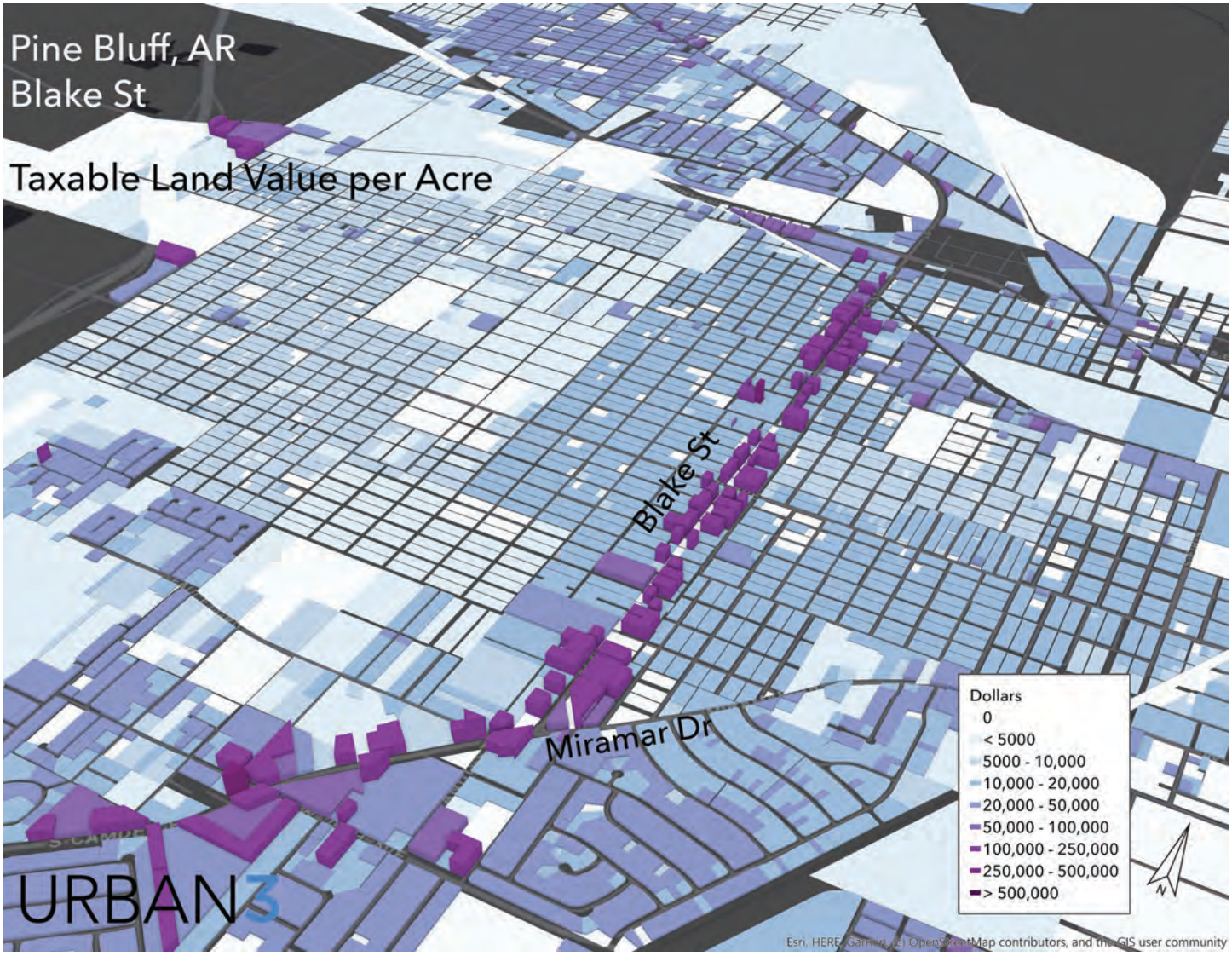
Land Value per Acre 3D - City of Pine Bluff

Here is the same map in 3D. What is immediately apparent is the difference in land value per acre between commercial and residential properties. The highest values are found along Blake St, around the Walmart, and in the northwest near White Hall.



Blake St Land Tax Value per Acre

This is the land value per acre of Blake St. As noted above, the commercial properties are much more productive in terms of taxes.



This page is intentionally blank.

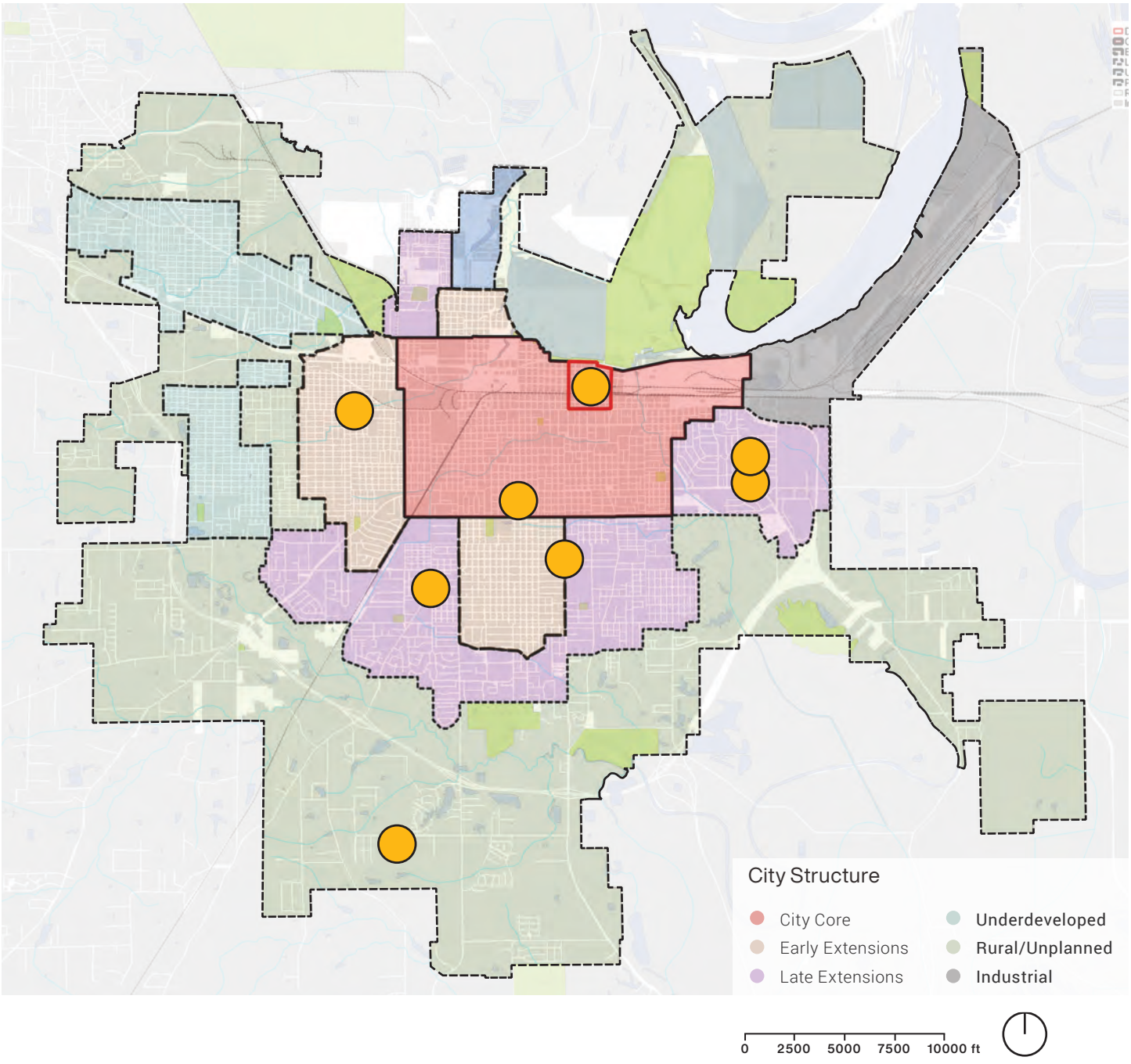
This page is intentionally blank.

2.11
URBAN DESIGN

The pattern of urban design in Pine Bluff has changed over time as the City expanded outwards. This section identifies and analyzes each of the major urban design patterns over time, looking at block patterns, building patterns, and the future potential of that development type.

Overall, the historic structure of the City is best suited to adapt and support viable and sociable neighborhoods. While much of the City core has deteriorated over time, the structure is able to easily accommodate redevelopment to increase the diversity of housing options and tenure, and to support neighborhood centers, main streets, and civic institutions. Because parks are severely lacking throughout the City, vacant land can be used to add neighborhood parks. Redevelopment actives can also be used to correct the mis-alignment between street design and urban design.

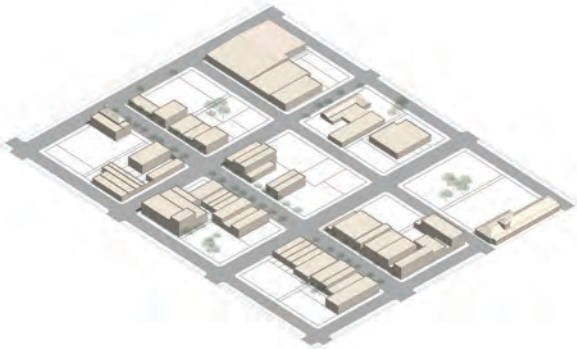
Early extensions follow a pattern that is similar to the City core, yet tend to lack sufficient integration of commercial areas. In some cases, historic streetcar stops are evident in the location of non-residential uses within neighborhoods. The early extensions support infill and redevelopment given



their form, however those areas south of the City core are stable, needing little change.

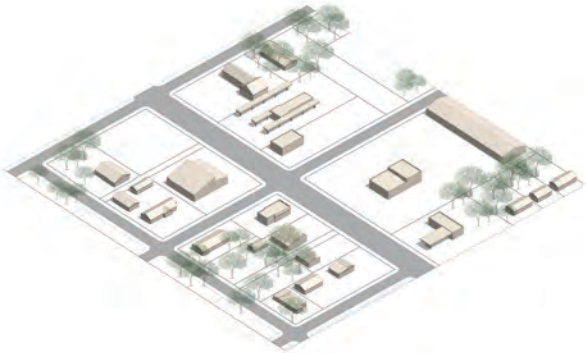
Late extensions vary sustantially in their development pattern. Most have connected street networks but include blocks that are too long. In a few places, late extensions follow a traditional block pattern, interrupted by larger blocks, undeveloped areas, and industries. Most of the late extesion areas are stable. These areas should be supported by redevelopment of nearby commercial areas. Other late extensions are severly fragmented and not likely to reactivate.

The rural areas are unplanned, following the subdivision standards which encourage disconnected and fragmented development. Future development in these areas should be limited and discouraged without detailed planning. The current pattern is a future financial liability.



City Core Commercial

City Core Residential

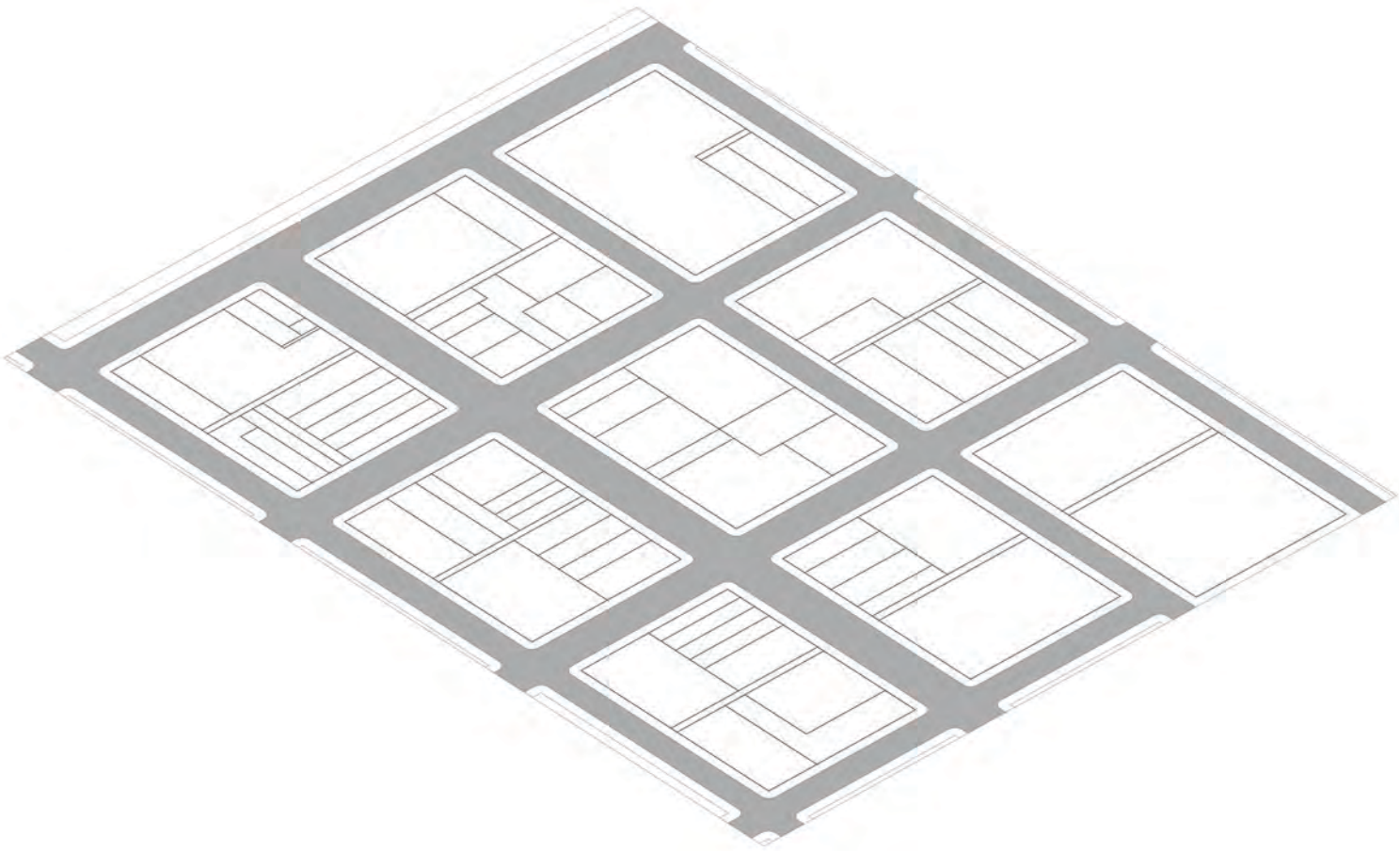


Early Extension Commercial

Early Extension Residential

Late Extension Commercial

Late Extension Residential



Block Pattern

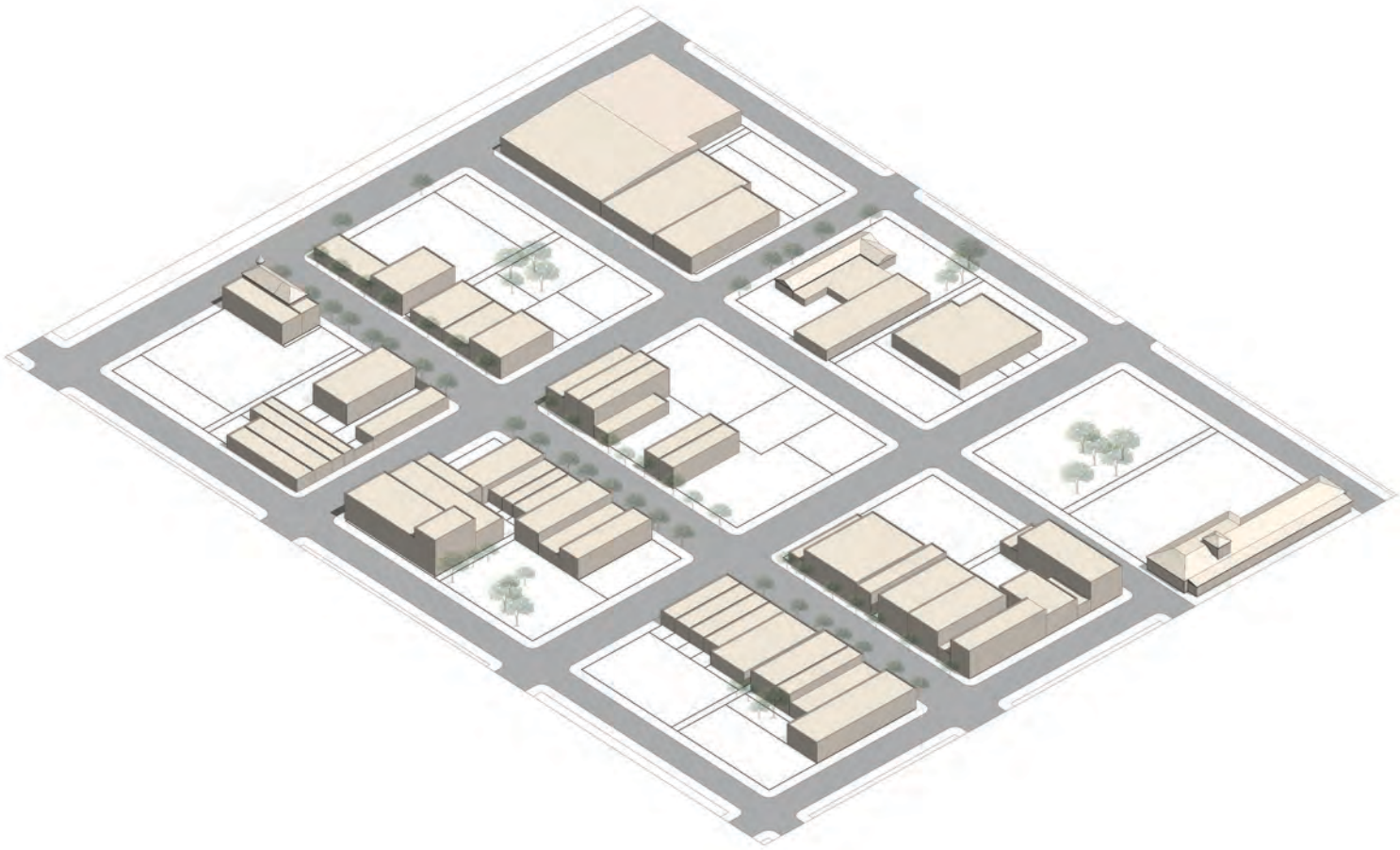
The block pattern in downtown Pine Bluff and its early historic areas consists of slightly rectangular blocks, oriented north-south towards the river / lake. These blocks are approximately 240 feet wide and 320 feet long, with exceptions to accommodate the rail line and later Martha Mitchell. This scale of blocks is small, which is a characteristic of the most pedestrian friendly downtowns in the United States, such as New Orleans and Portland with 300 foot square blocks, which also match Little Rock's historic block pattern. Pine Bluff, New Orleans, and Portland do not have consistent alleys, unlike Little Rock.

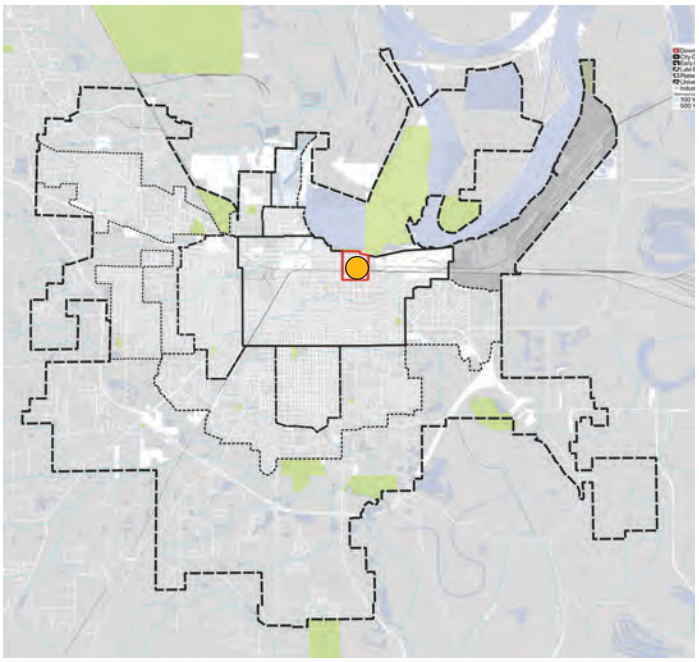
Building Pattern

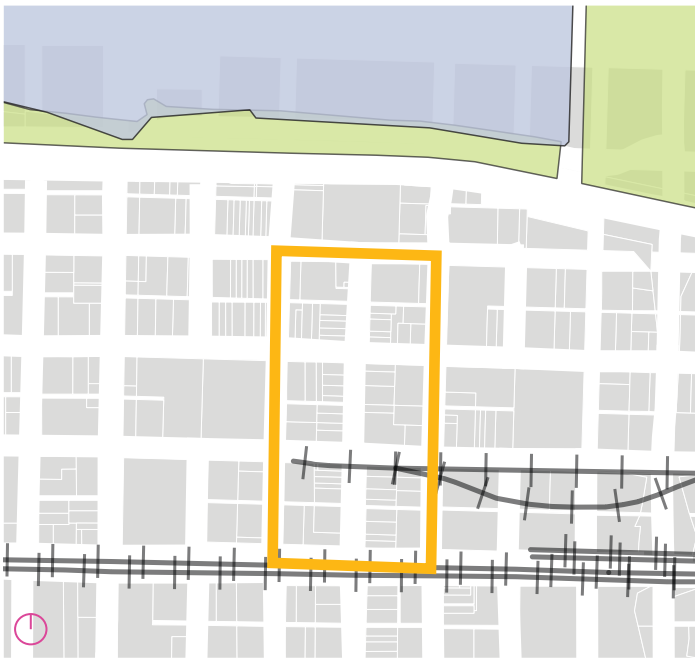
The pattern of buildings is as expected in a historic downtown. Buildings generally occupy the majority of their lot, with zero setbacks at the front and sides. The depth of buildings varies by their historic use. Since most buildings have been demolished, the complete structure of buildings within each block is not fully discernible.

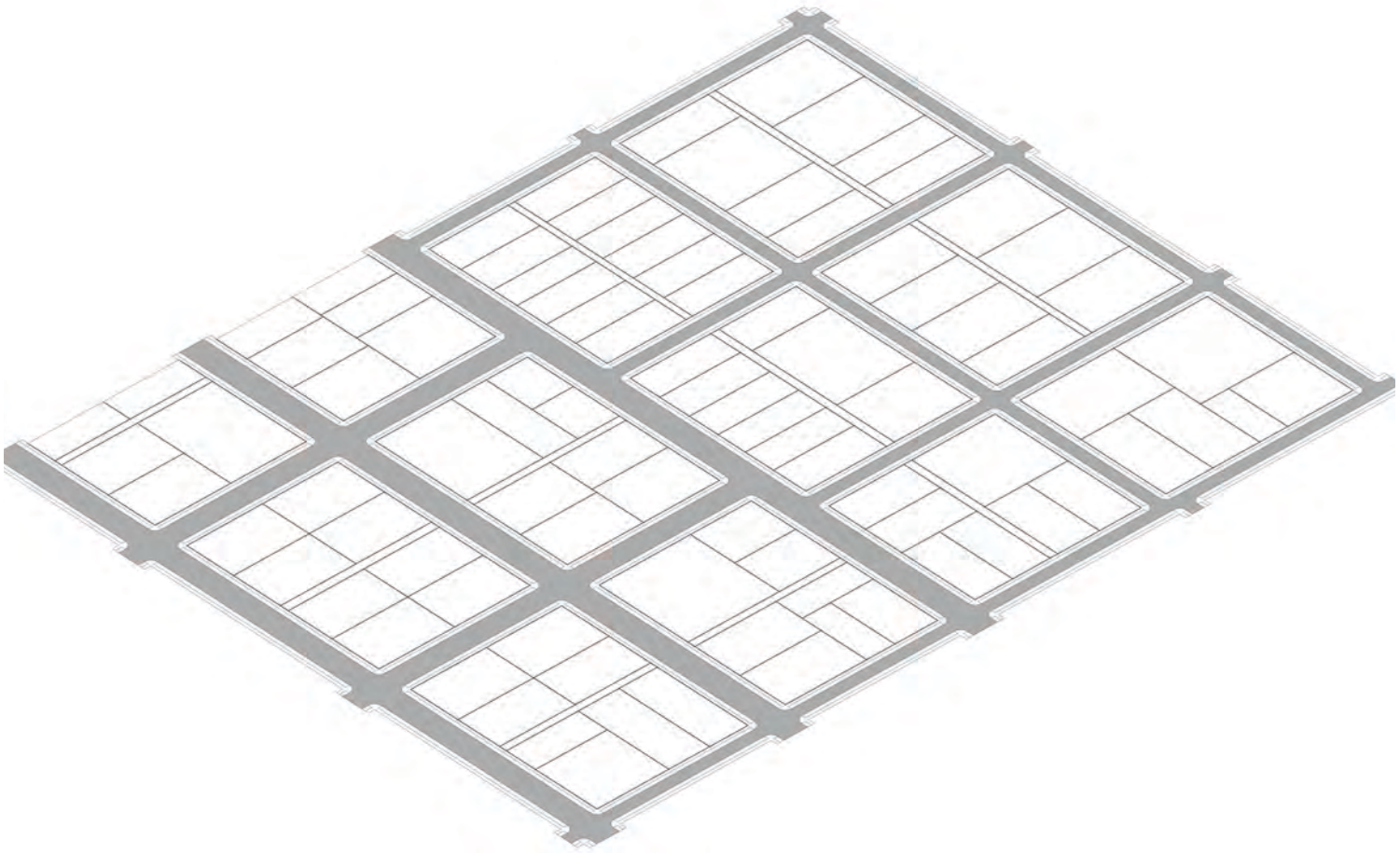
Future Potential

The pattern of design in downtown and nearby historic blocks can easily accommodate infill development to complete the degraded structure. In the near-term, parking is not a concern due to available on-street and surface parking, and the possibility of adding on-street parking through conversion to angled parking in downtown's overly wide streets. In the long-term future, parking supply downtown is constrained by the small block size. This may necessitate city ownership of strategic surface parking lots which could either become future structures or buildings.









Block Pattern

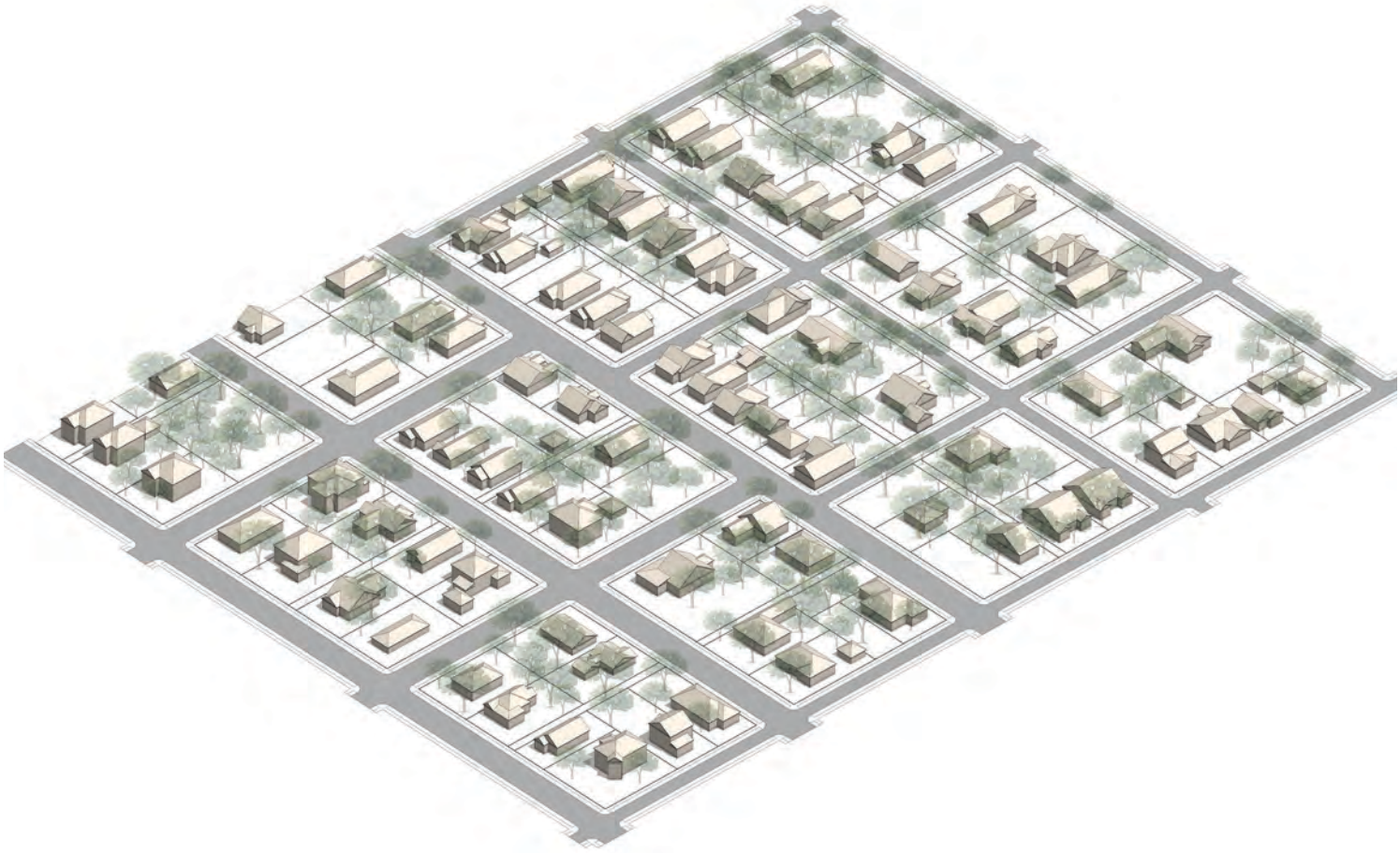
The block pattern in Pine Bluff's close-in neighborhoods consists of slightly rectangular blocks, oriented north-south towards the river / lake, like downtown. These blocks vary in size, most approximately 240 feet wide and 320 feet long mimicking downtown's pattern and others deviating, such as those depicted here at 300 feet square. The scale of the blocks creates a permiable pattern that can be quite walkable and acommodate diverse housing types. The pattern overall is a bit inconsistent with numerous street misalignments, owing to historic incremental development which was done without standards. Blocks typically do not include alleys.

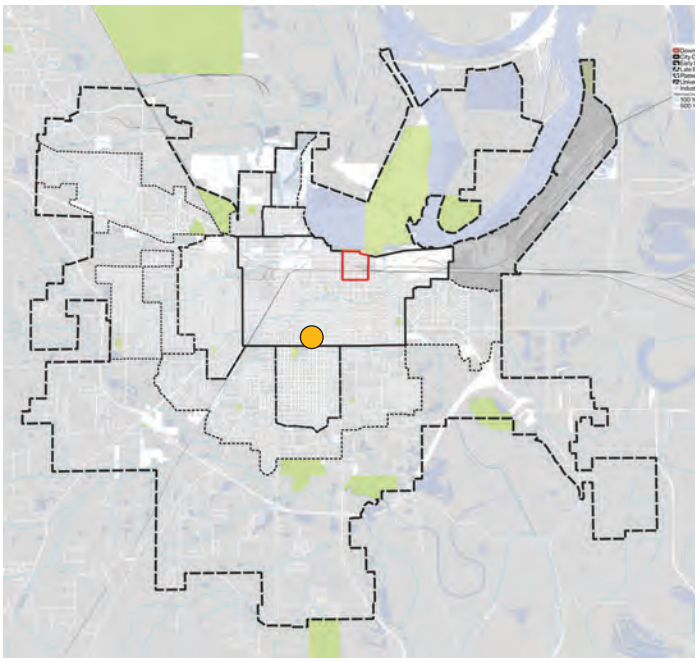
Building Pattern

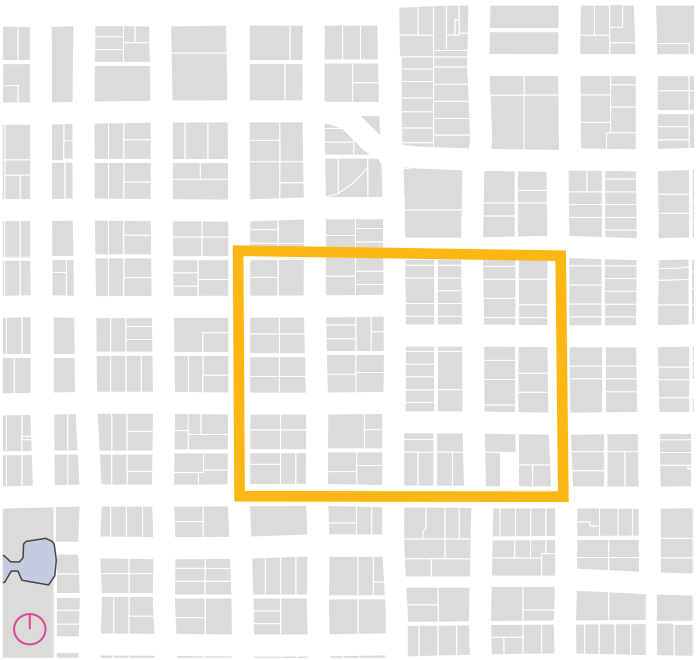
Buildings tend to face onto the north-south streets, with a few buildings filling in on the east-west streets. Occassionally this pattern changes due to extra wide blocks or natural constraints. Building setbacks are inconsistent, ranging greatly between neighboring houses and street to street. Housing character also varies, though most historic homes had porches at one time.

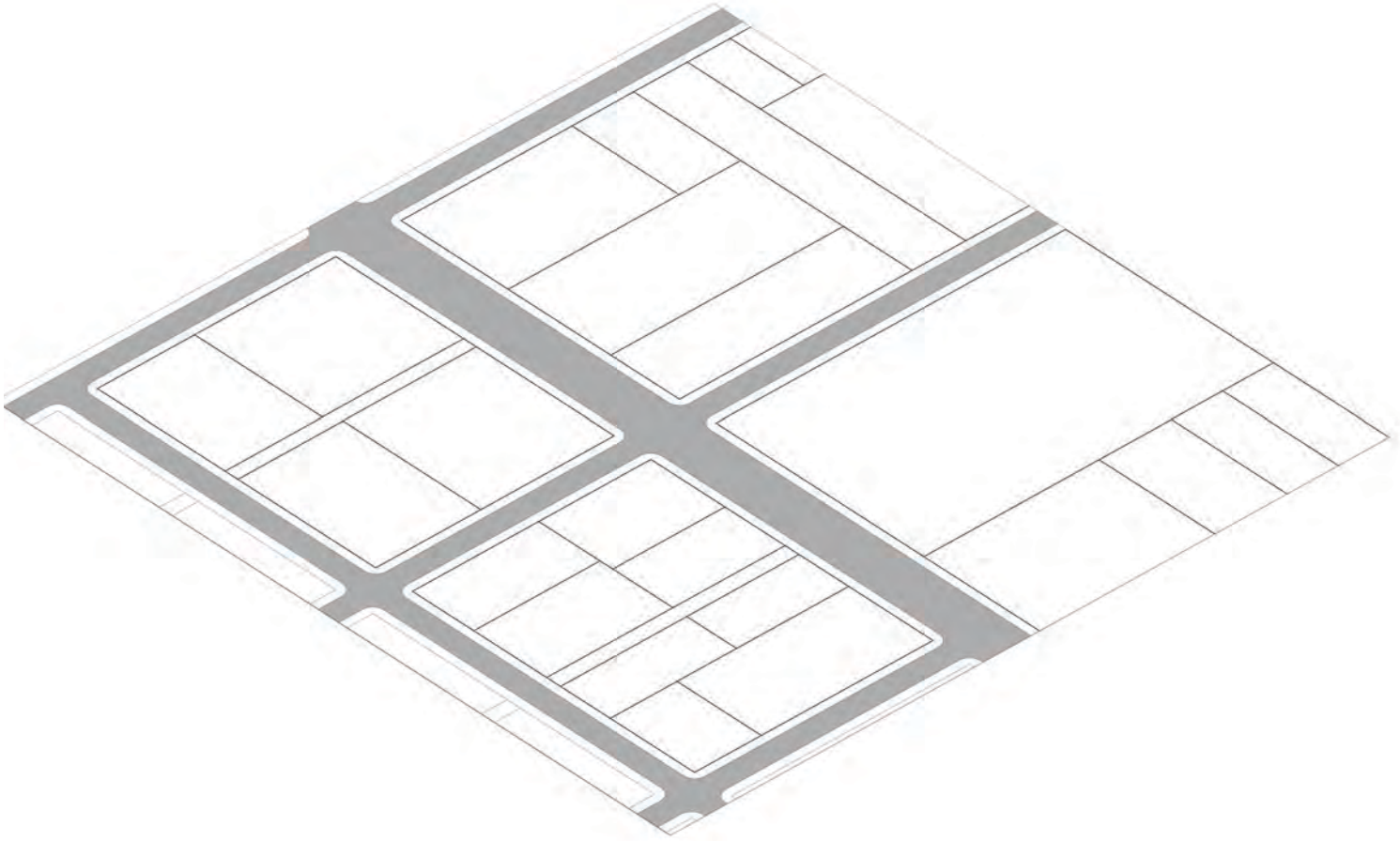
Future Potential

While significant portions of the close-in neighborhoods have deteriorated, the block and street pattern can easily accommodate growth and a diversity of new housing types. However, infilling neighborhoods with new types requires careful placement and consideration of compatibility. Areas which have fewer vacant building and properties require sensitive infill in a similar character, while areas with more substantial vacancies can support more intensive infill.









Block Pattern

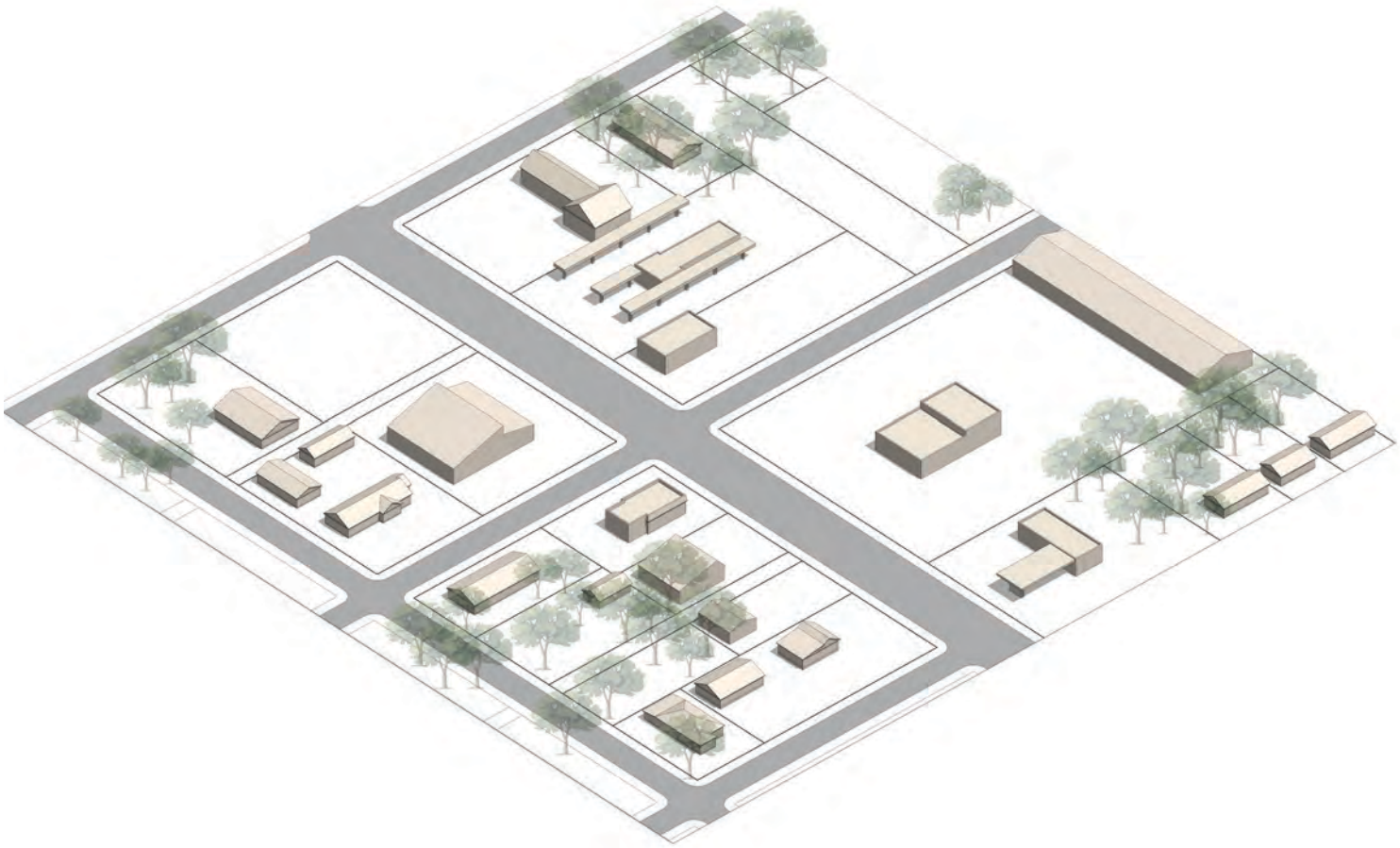
While few commercial areas exist in Early Extensions, those that do continue the surrounding residential block pattern. These areas are integrated into the overall grid. The block pattern in Early Extensions tends to continue the small block pattern of the City Core, with a few interruptions by larger blocks, natural areas, and industries. In some locations, commercial areas span border streets, like Olive, where the block pattern on the west differs from the less consistent block pattern on the west.

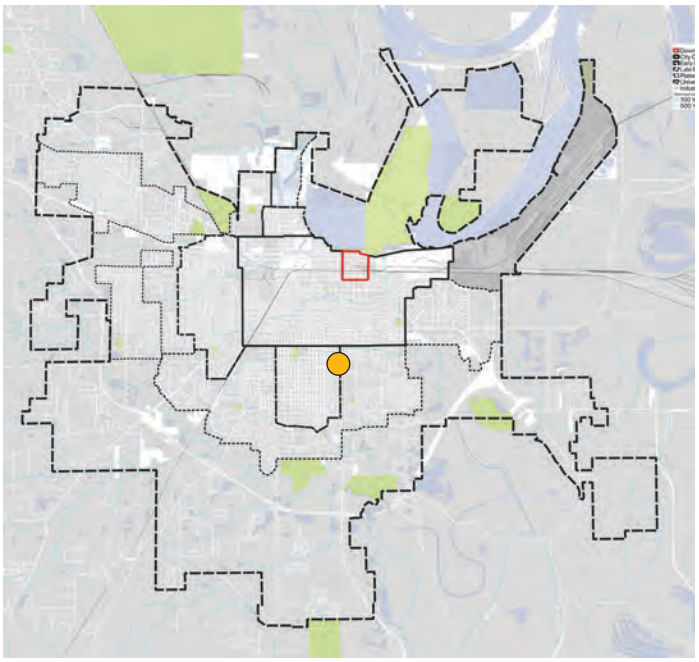
Building Pattern

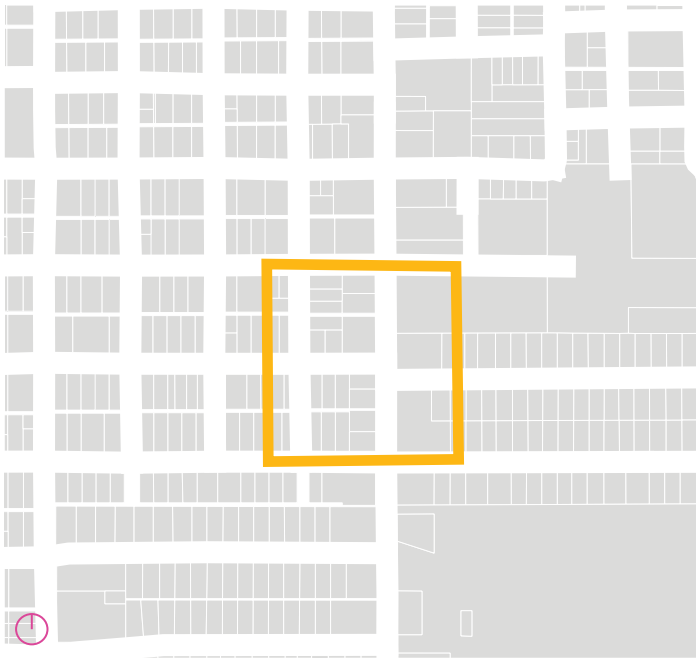
Most commercial areas within Early Extensions reflect the location of historic streetcar stops, as is typical in many cities of a similar age. Few, if any, original buildings remain. Rather buildings follow patterns typical of Late Extensions, most set back from the street and surrounded by parking. What may have originally been main streets and corner markets reflecting some of the character of Downtown now resemble strip commercial development found anywhere else in the country. Most buildings are cheaply built and either currently deteriorated or likely to deteriorate in the near future.

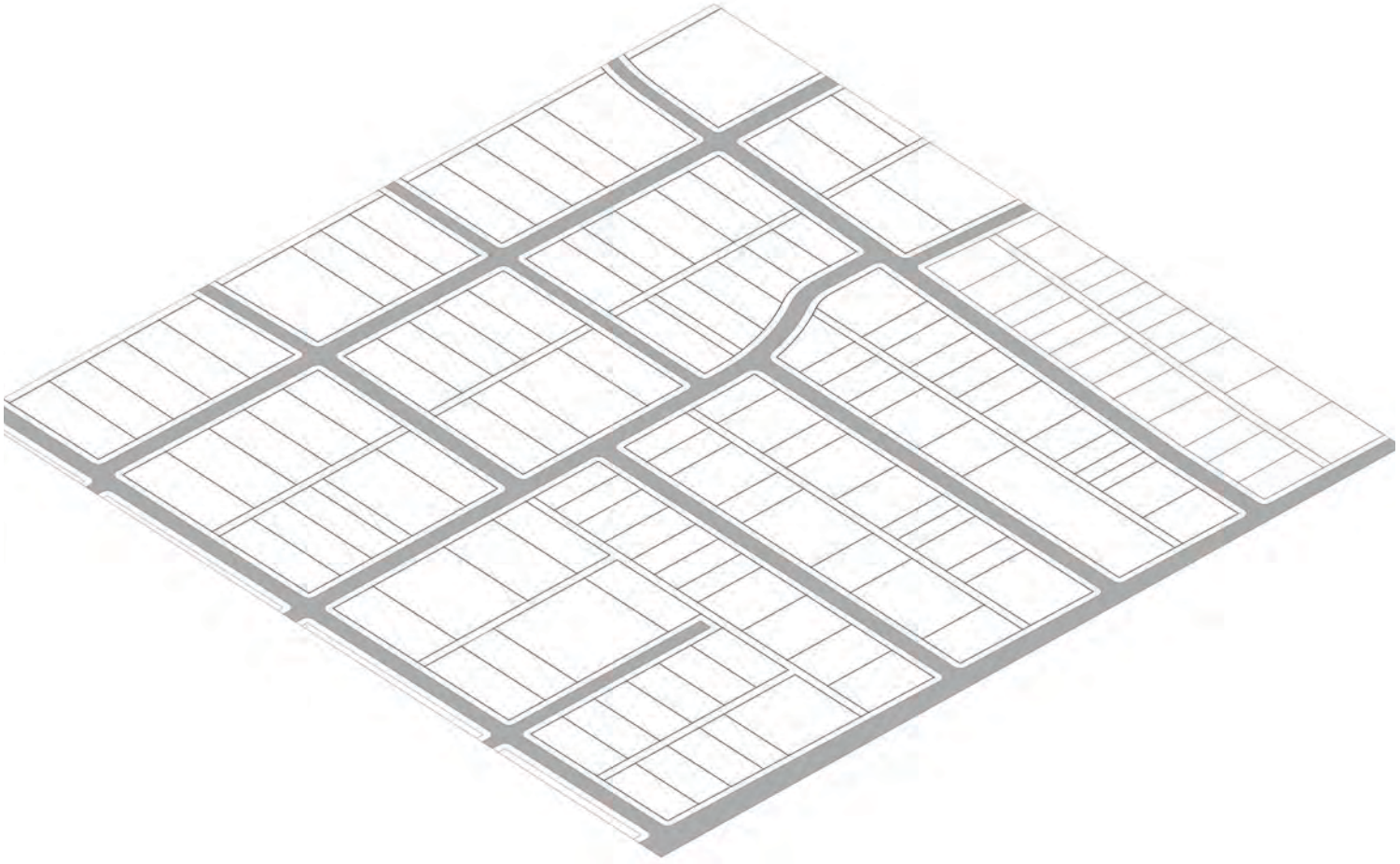
Future Potential

While the form of existing buildings is poor, the block pattern and location of Early Extension commercial areas can serve as neighborhood destinations, focused on serving neighborhoods with daily goods and social spaces. Few of these places exist, unfortunately, but those that do exist present good opportunities to enhance surrounding neighborhoods









Block Pattern

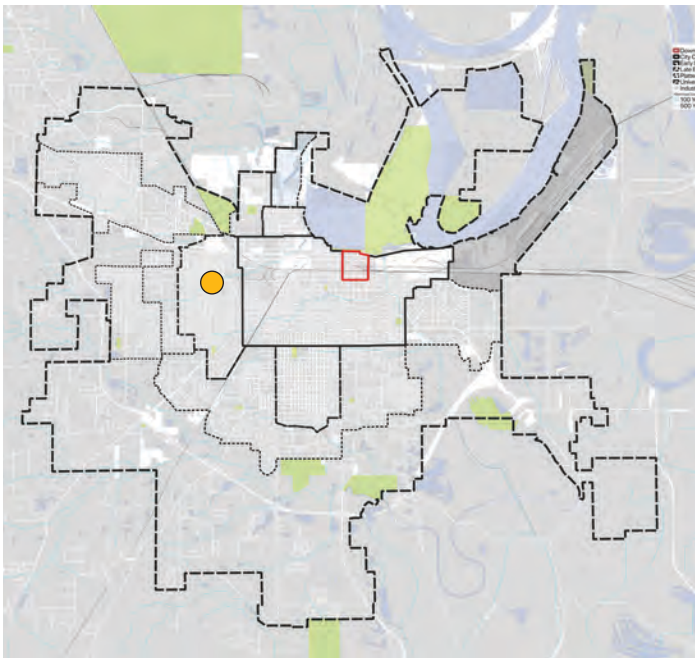
Early Extension areas generally have block patterns that are similar to the Core City areas, yet they include numerous deviations fro the grid. The size of blocks varies substantially, though most remain small, similar to the Core City. Deviations arise for a variety of reasons, many owing to the location of natural waterways, as is the case with this diagram, and others due to the location of rail lines and industries. The result is a mostly connected grid which is interrupted by larger blocks from time to time, with a greater frequency near the rail lines. Like the Core City, there are numerous street mis-alignments, some clearly due to incremental growth while others have unclear origins.

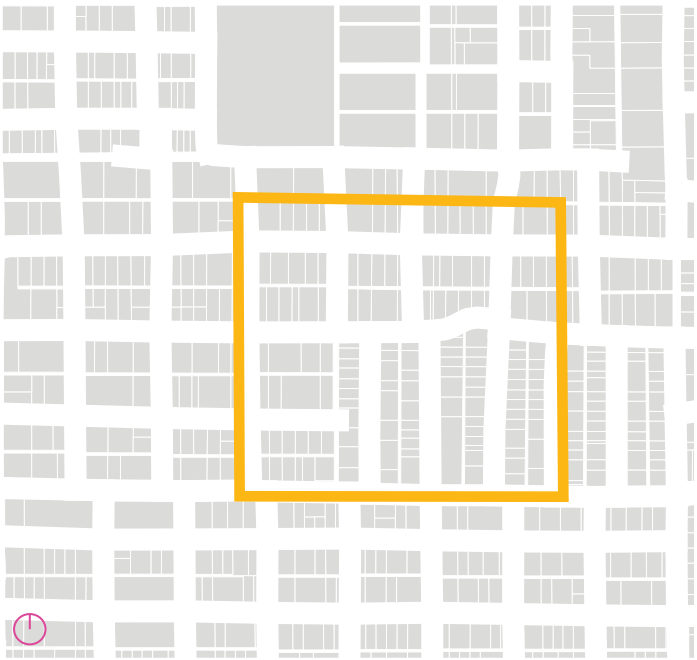
Building Pattern

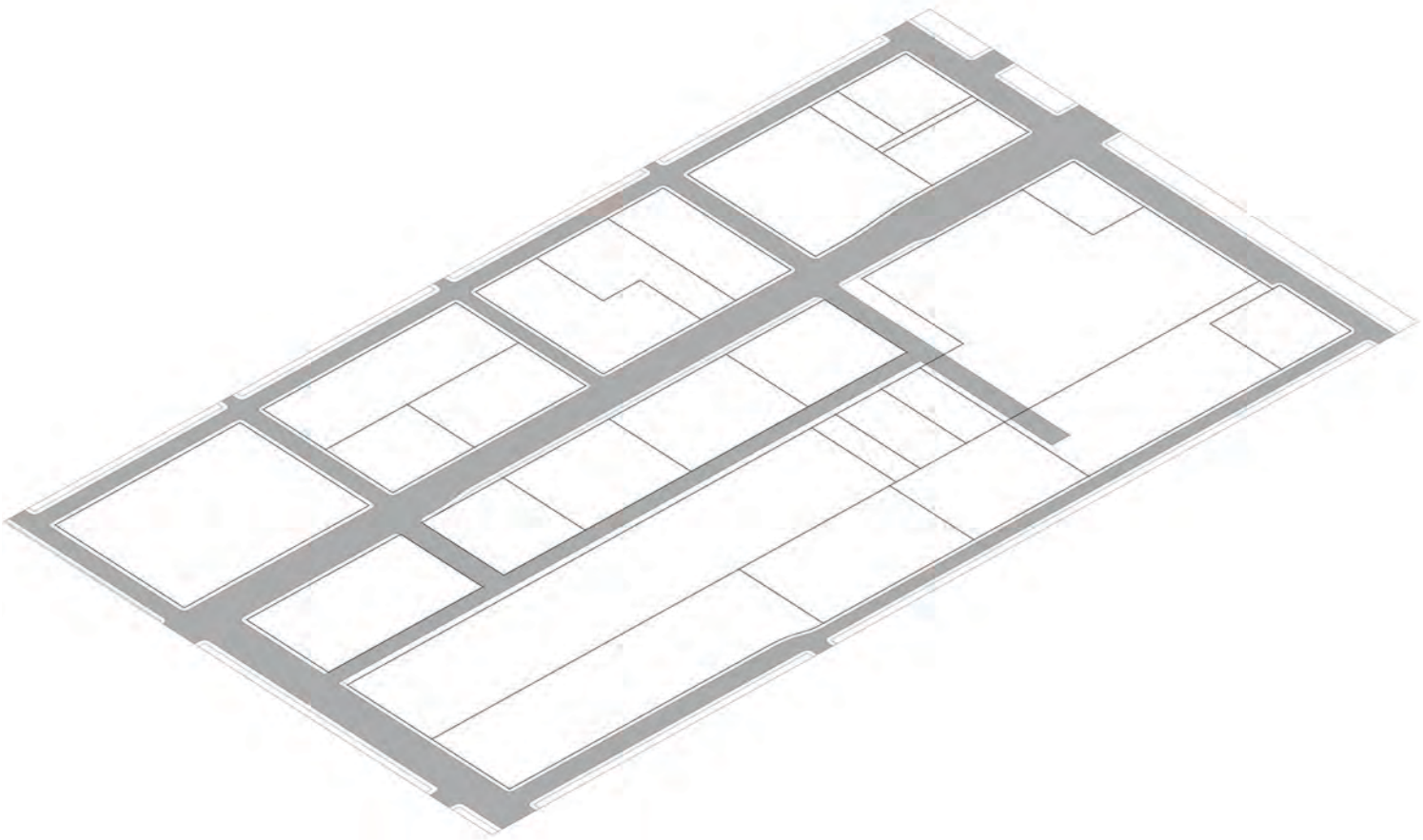
The orientation of houses varies in different early extention areas. To the south of the Core City, houses generally face towards the east-west streets. To the west of the Core City, depicted above, houses face in all directions. Where blocks are longer, houses tend to face towards the long edge of the block, and where block are square they tend to face towards the east-west streets. Overall the housing stock is typical of most working class neighborhoods in historic cities.

Future Potential

Due to a predominantly in-tact block structure, Early Extension areas retain a viable neighborhood structure. Infill opportunities are similar to those within the Core City. However, there are a number of disruptions to the grid which can erode neighborhood cohesion. Some may be easily solved while others, like industrial properties, remain barriers to future potential.







Block Pattern

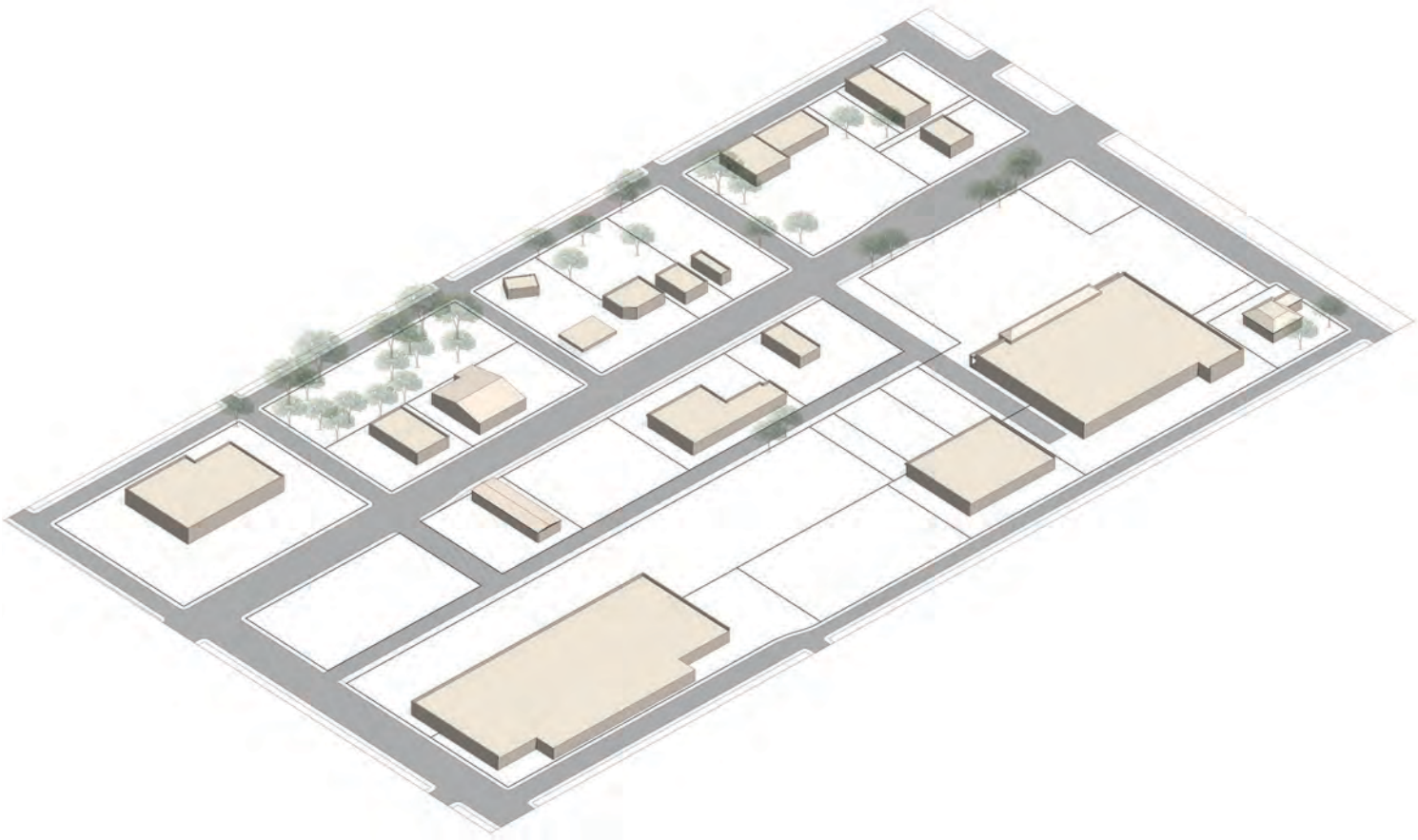
Commercial areas within Late Extensions include much larger commercial parcels than earlier commercial areas, which break from the historic block patterns of Pine Bluff. Two commercial examples are included. The one above illustrates a commercial area which is surrounded by housing that follows the City's typical block pattern. The commercial properties on the south side of 28th Ave create large, unwalkable blocks. On the north side the commercial properties tend to cover an entire block or span from 28th to 27th Ave. The larger commercial blocks deteriorate the surrounding block pattern.

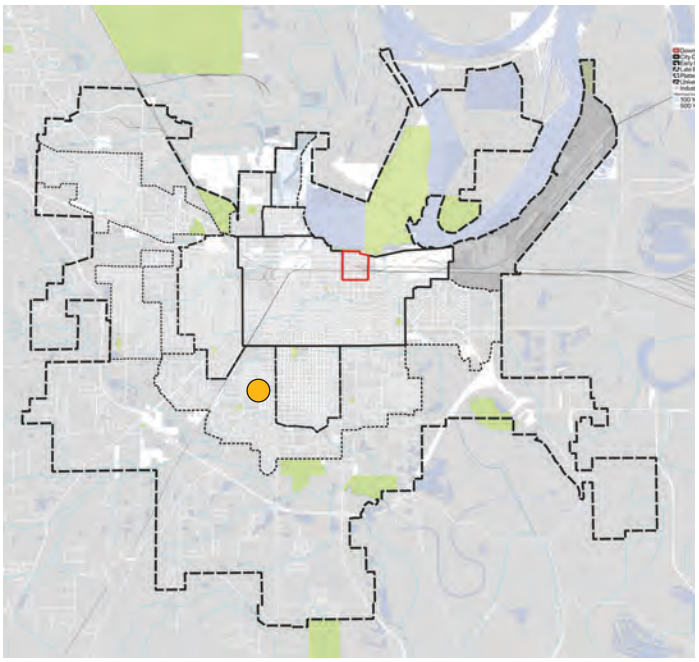
Building Pattern

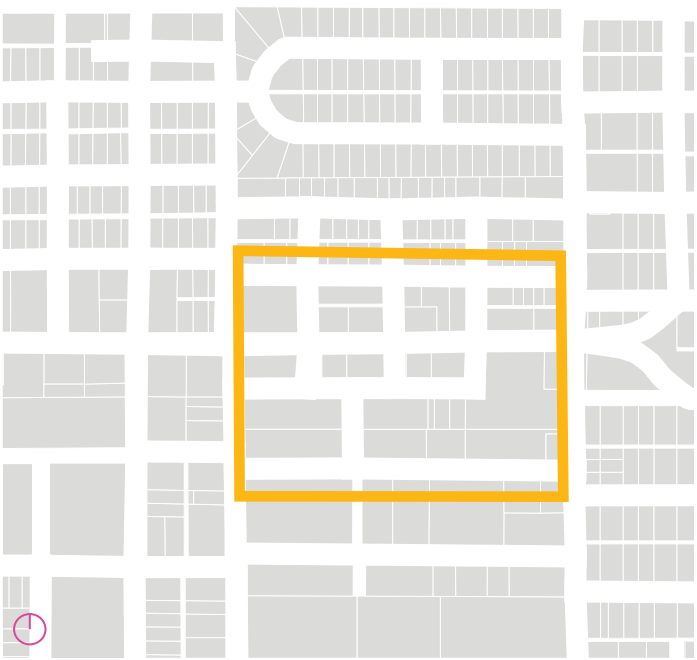
Commercial buildings within Late Extensions follow a typical strip-mall or continuous suburban commercial strip format. This example includes both, with a strip-mall condition along the south side and commercial strip condition on the north. The buildings are generally set back far from the street with parking in front and along the sides of buildings. The buildings are generally designed for a limited life span, many meeting corporate standards, among other older and cheaply constructed structures.

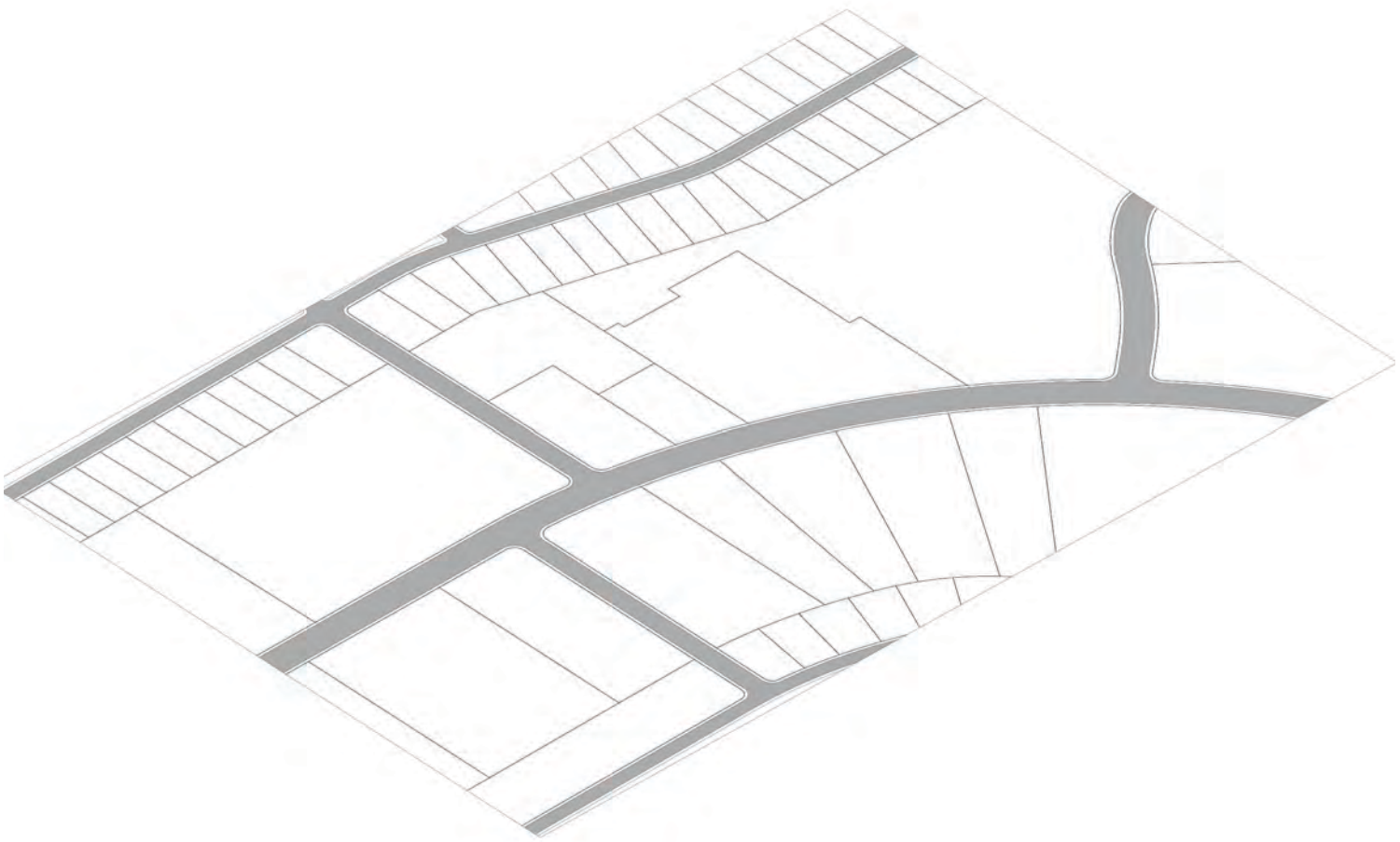
Future Potential

WIthout significant redevelopment, these commercial areas will continue to decline. Some adaptive re-use may be possible, and where adjacent to traditional neighborhood fabric, infill is more viable. But the general pattern of this type of development is to be active when new, then deteriorate while activity moves to newer areas. Because these areas are over-parked, sites have significant infill potential. However they typically lack sufficient stormwater facilities.









Block Pattern

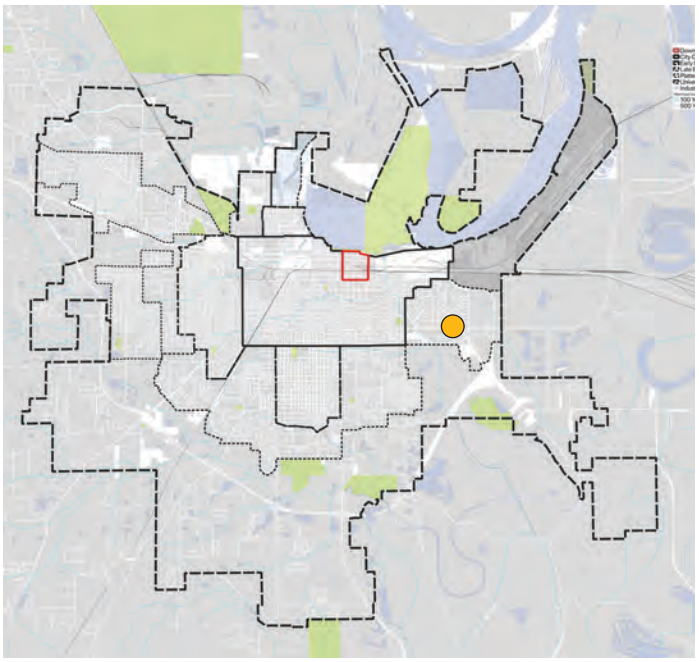
Similar to the prior Late Extension example, the commercial areas in this example include much larger parcels than the City Core commercial corridors. Unlike the prior example, this area was designed without a historic block pattern surrounding it. Neighborhoods adjacent tend to have severely limited access to commercial areas, with only a few neighborhood entrances from the arterial. Overall, there is no block pattern in Late Extension commercial areas similar to this one.

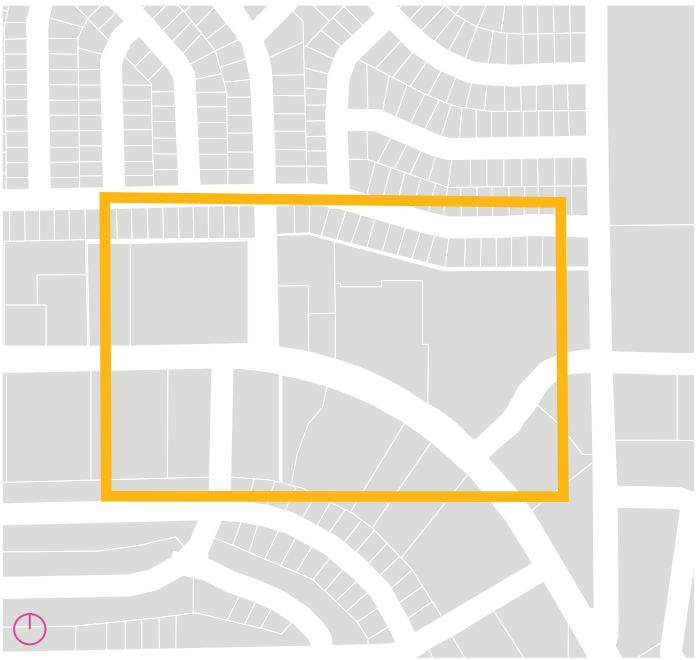
Building Pattern

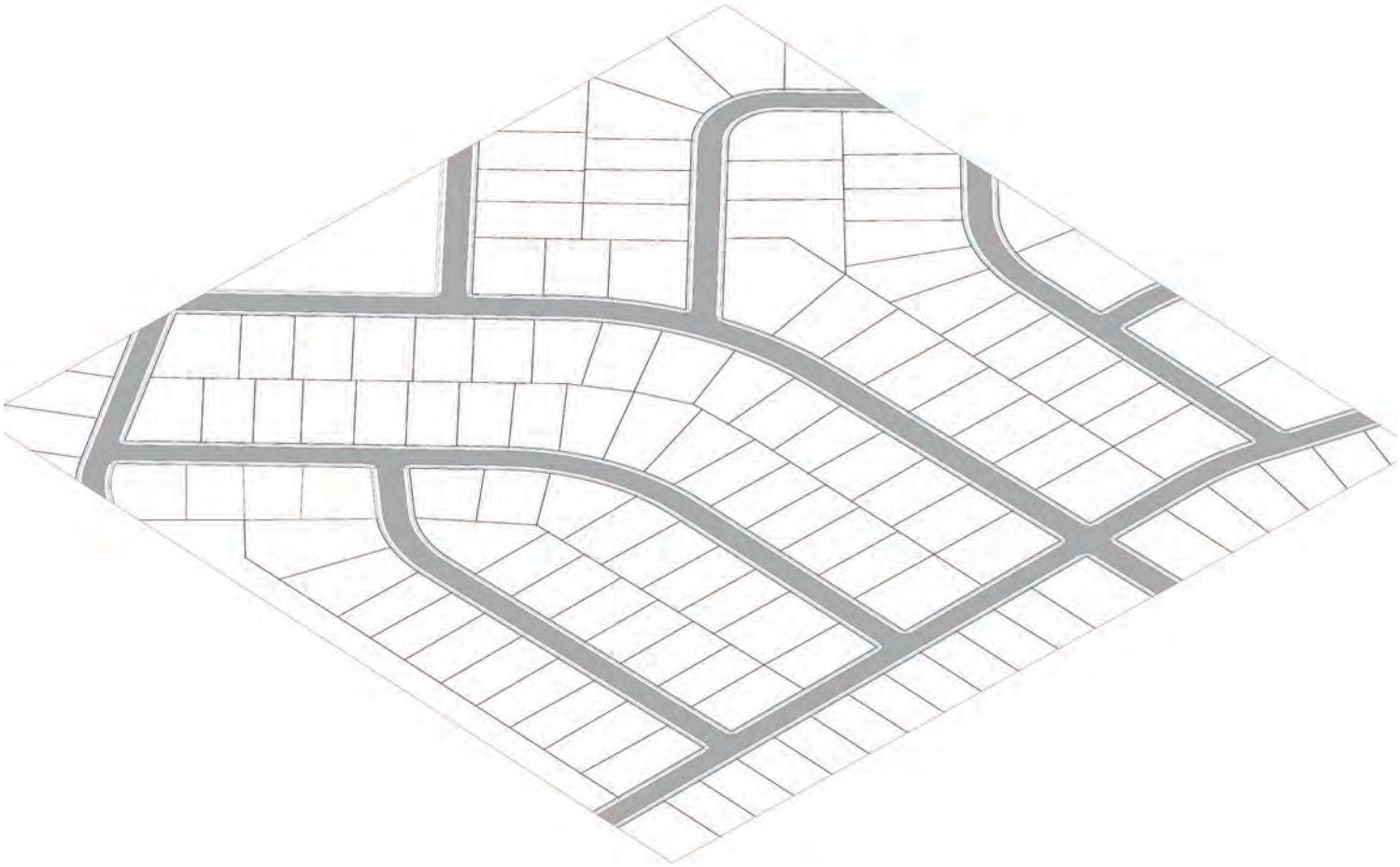
Similar to the prior Late Extension example, commercial building follow a typical strip-mall or continuous suburban commercial strip format. This example includes both, with a strip-mall condition along the north side and commercial strip condition on the south. The buildings are generally set back far from the street with parking in front and along the sides of buildings. The buildings are generally designed for a limited life span, many meeting corporate standards, among other older and cheaply constructed structures.

Future Potential

WIthout significant redevelopment, these commercial areas will continue to decline. Unlike the prior example, this area is not connected to the adjacent neighborhood fabric, requiring more than adaptive re-use to improve. Some larger sites have significant redevelopment potential which requires the addition of housing to be viable into the future. Due to the high-speed nature of the roadway, however, the small commercial parcels are unlikely to be meaningfully redeveloped without assembling multiple parcels.







Block Pattern

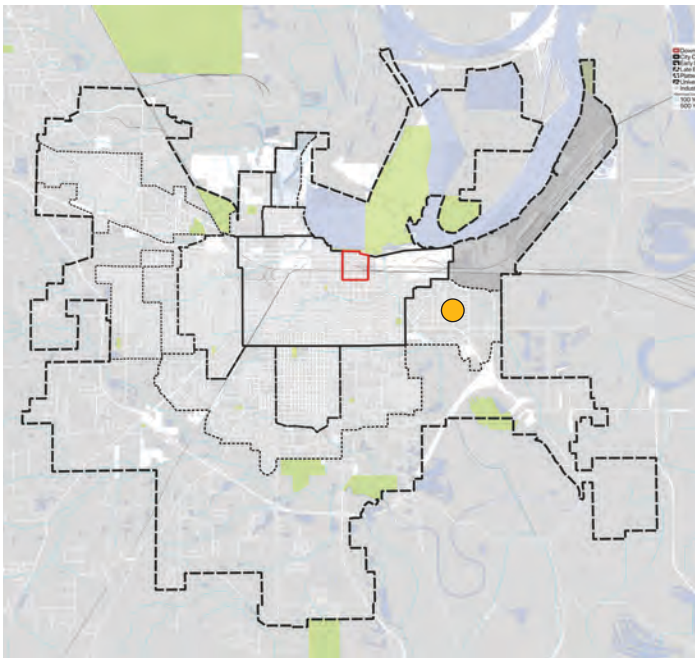
Residential areas in Late Extensions tend to have elongated blocks, many of which exceed 800 feet, making the neighborhoods un-walkable. However, most of these areas are limited in size and able to rely on surrounding areas to provide meaningful destinations and walkable blocks. Streets tend to be slightly curvilinear and blocks generally inconsistent in size and orientation.

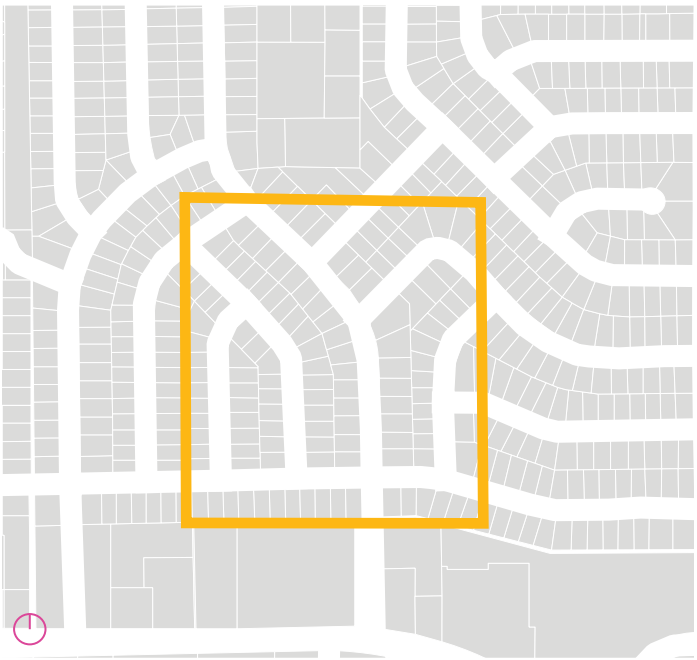
Building Pattern

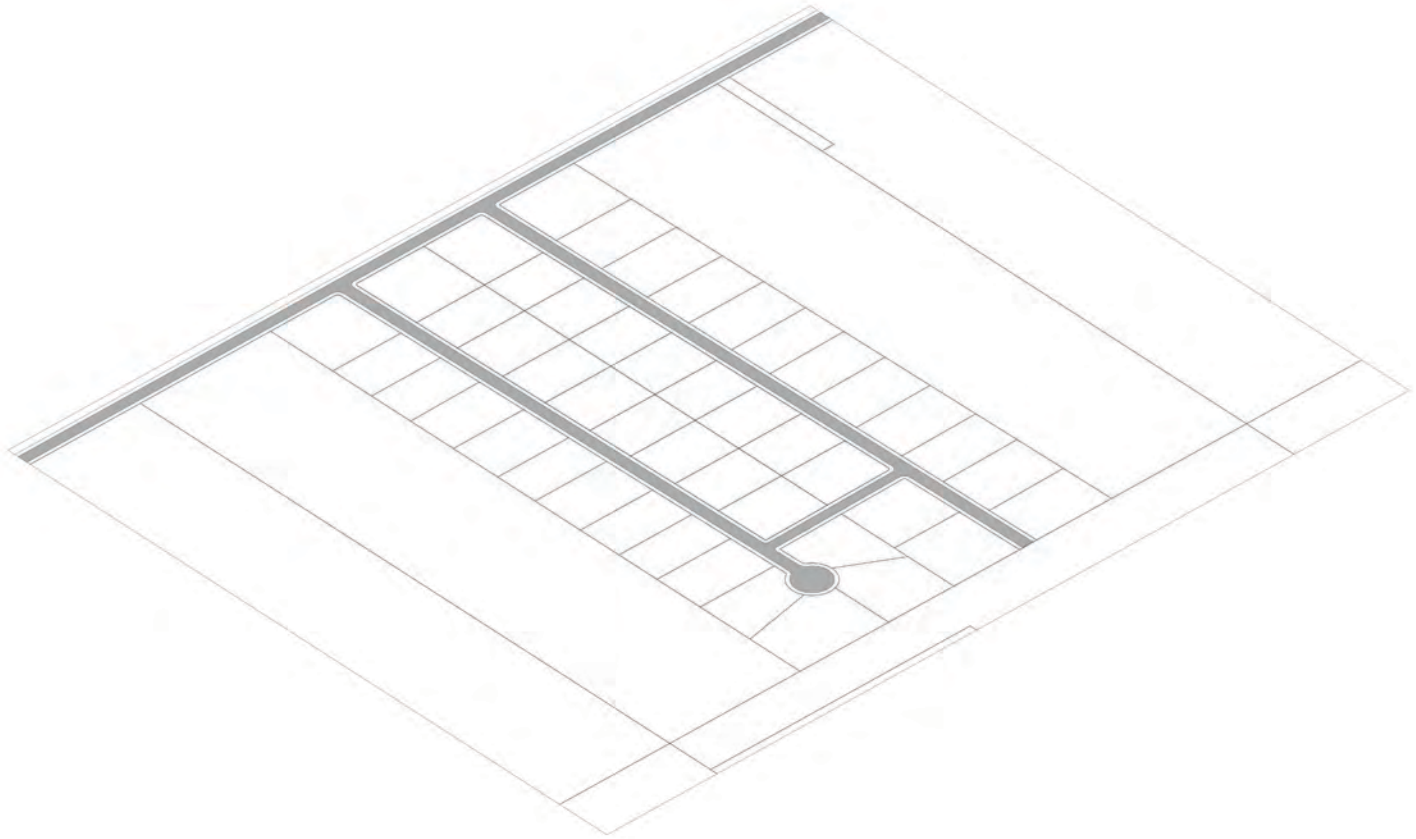
Buildings in Late Extensions are more uniformly oriented and located on their properties than in older areas of the City. Generally, buildings face onto the long-edge of their blocks, with exceptions where blocks take off shapes. The buildings are nearly uniformly set back. Unlike other areas of this age, houses in Pine Bluff tend to have carports rather than garages. This creates a more gentle and inviting streetscape than garages which are forward from facades, typical in most other places. The houses are generally modest in size and are very similar in design.

Future Potential

Most Late Extension residential areas are stable and unlikely to change in the future. However, improving or redeveloping nearby commercial areas will help retain stability. These areas tend to lack sufficient parks; adding park space will help retain stability. While these areas are generally of a single residential unit type, infilling with smaller houses and non-single-family units is not considered politically viable. In time these areas will begin to decline if parks and commercial areas are not improved.







Block Pattern

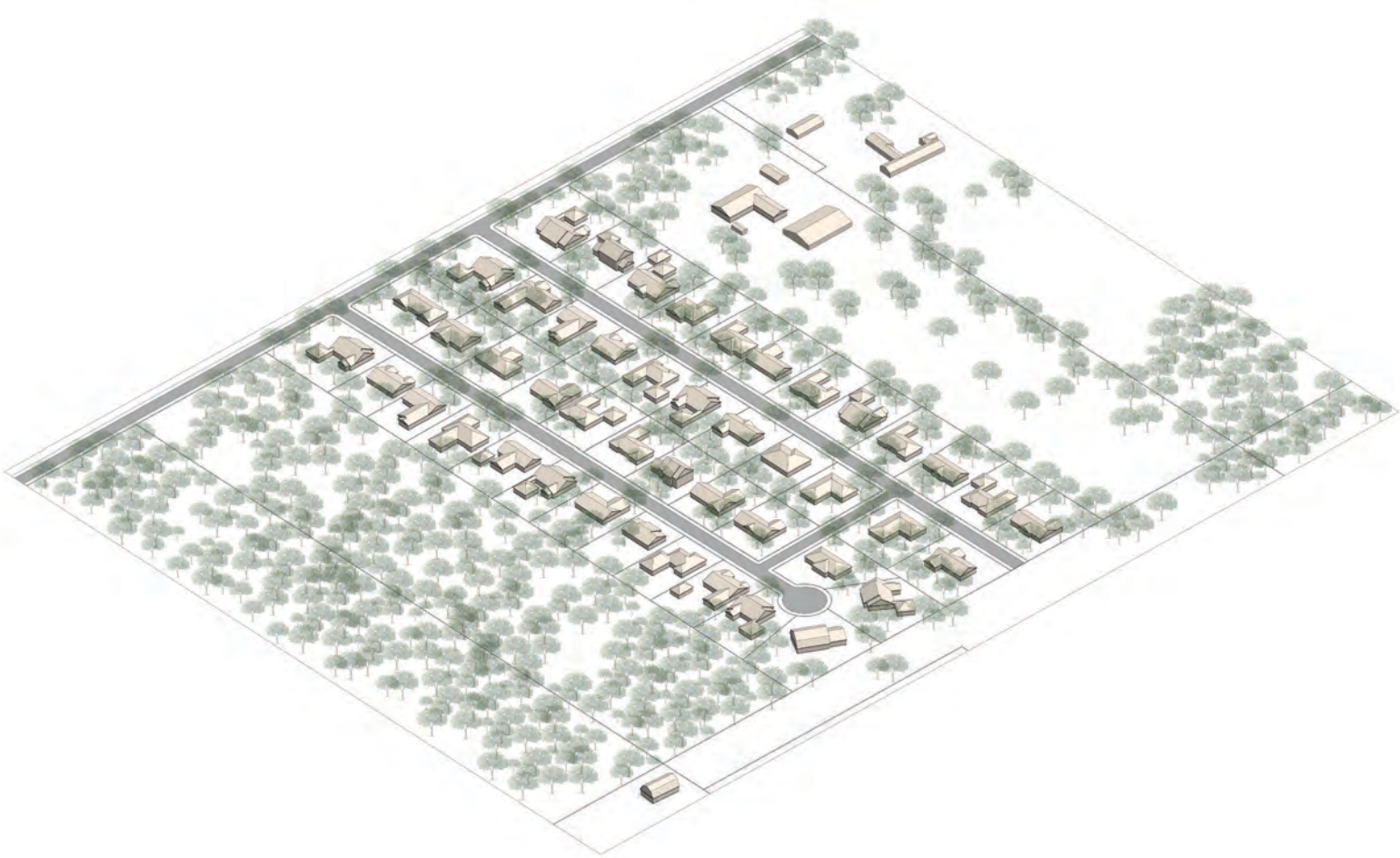
Rural Residential Clusters have little or no block pattern. These areas are typically developed one property at a time, subdivided into a small cluster of housing. Each individual development is not designed to connect to surrounding properties, except where land-locked properties may exist.

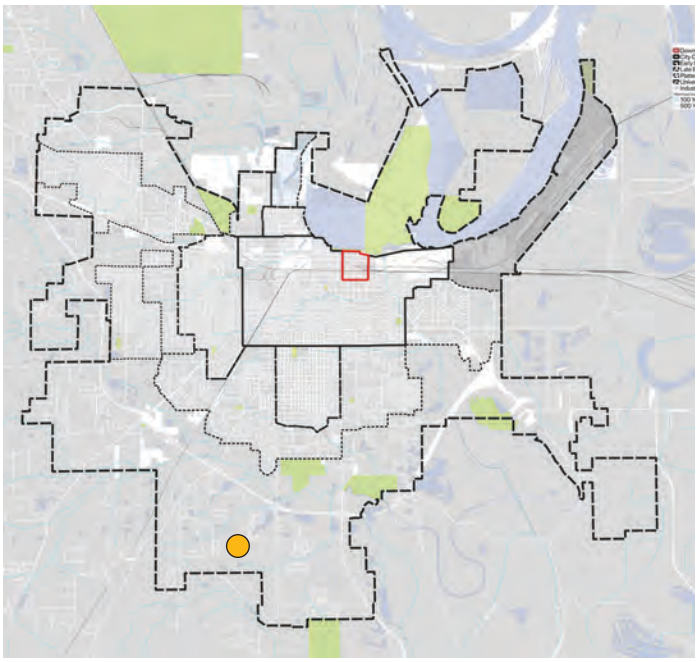
Building Pattern

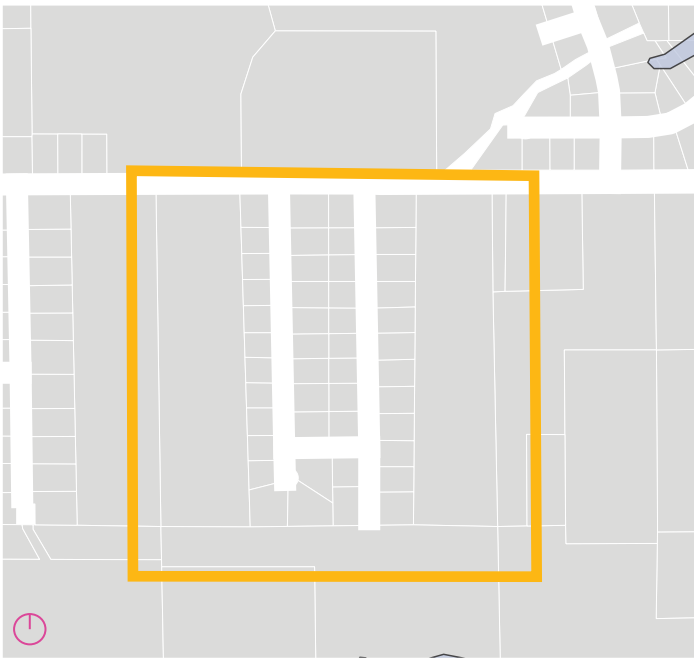
Buildings in Rural Residential Clusters are generally uniform in setback, built in a ranch style. While buildings tend to have a similar disposition, their facades vary in character. Away from the street, buildings differ more substantially, many with wings extended into the back yard, and garages in various positions. In most clusters, garages are pushed back away from the front facade. A few examples include typical suburban "snout houses".

Future Potential

This pattern of development should not be continued. While the housing is newer and generally more expensive, the development pattern does not establish neighborhood or allow for a diversity of housing types. Unplanned, the rural areas outside of I-530 could be subdivided over time following this pattern. This would result in significant traffic increases along existing rural roadways as well as increased along the primary roads accessing the Core City. Additionally, in recent years this pattern has been shown to have an overall negative impact on the tax base of cities. While individual properties may have higher value, the pattern requires more infrastructure than it can pay for, unlike more traditional settlement patterns in the Core City.







Crafton Tull

DPZ CoDESIGN