

REINVENTING DOWNTOWN PINE BLUFF

Task Force
on
Urban Growth
&
Development

UABR
URBAN
STUDIES
&
DESIGN

Nelson
Architectural
Group, Inc.
Pine Bluff

APRIL 2003

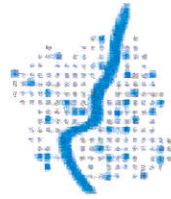
PINE BLUFF

REINVENTING DOWNTOWN

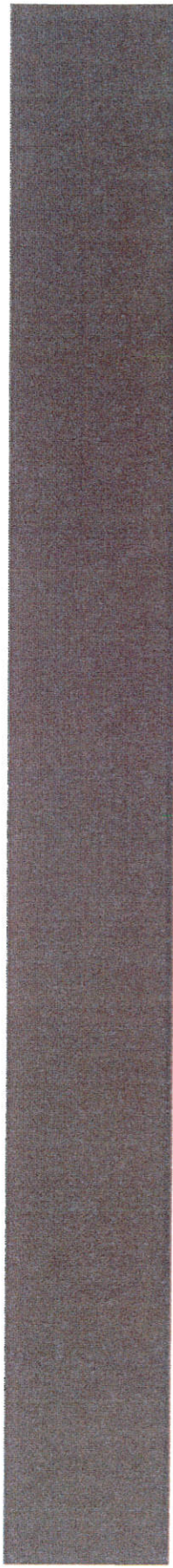
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I. INTRODUCTION

A year-long 4-phase planning process



This report completes a year-long, four-phase planning process conducted by planners George Wittenberg and Steve Rousseau from the Urban Studies and Design Program of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and A.W. Nelson of Nelson Architectural Group, Inc., Pine Bluff. It began when Wittenberg met with local leadership and recommended they set goals and objectives for Downtown Pine Bluff. This they proceeded to do with the assistance of a facilitator. The result of this process led to the decision by community leaders to initiate a new plan for Downtown Pine Bluff.

The Alliance's Task Force on Urban Growth and Development (the Task Force), a local voluntary group of leaders and stakeholders in the downtown is composed of members of two organizations, The Economic Development Alliance of Jefferson County (The Alliance), and Pine Bluff Downtown Development, Inc. These organizations served as 'client' on behalf of the downtown. The ensuing process, described at greater length below, included public and Task Force review meetings (the Task Force using the public's input) at the conclusion of each of the four phases. In all there were six Task Force meetings, attended by fifty members, and five public meetings, involving over one hundred citizens.

The planning effort was named Reinventing Downtown Pine Bluff. The process schedule included monthly review meetings with the Task Force and the public at large. The entire planning process took one year and included four phases:

- Phase I - THE VISION**
- Phase II - FRAMEWORK PLAN**
- Phase III - STRATEGIC PROJECTS**
- Phase IV - ACTION PLAN**

Four areas of the Downtown were identified as unique in character and designated as Sub-Areas of the Downtown. They include the following (listed from north to south along Main Street):

THE LANDINGS - the Lake Pine Bluff area

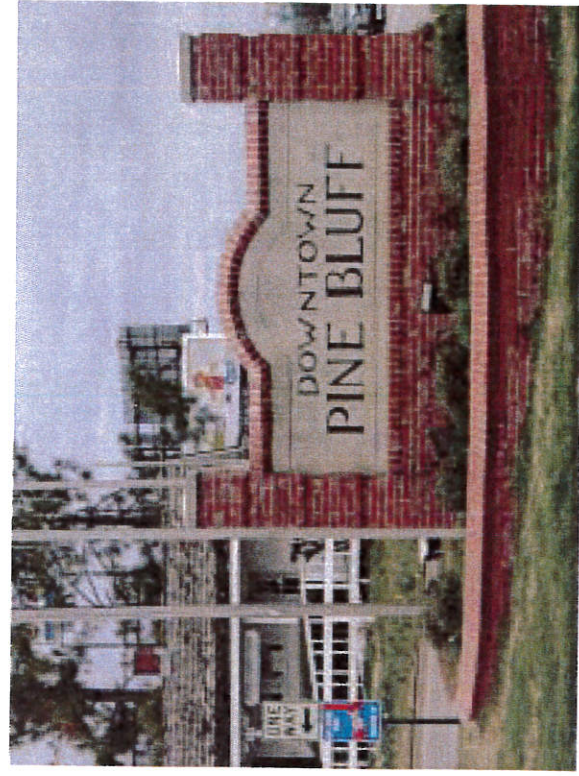
OLD TOWNE - the historic area centered around the Jefferson County Courthouse

BUSINESS SUB-AREA - the commercial center

CIVIC CENTER - the government and convention center area



Public Presentations



Sign at a downtown entry gateway

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II. BACKGROUND

Local leaders invite planners to exploratory discussions about future direction for downtown

The **Alliance's** Task Force invited the Urban Studies and Design program to Pine Bluff to assist in a discussion about the future of the downtown. At that discussion in August 1999, were many stakeholders of the downtown, including persons representing organizations such as the City, County, Pine Bluff Downtown Development & The Alliance. The planners presented work they had done with the Little Rock Downtown Partnership to revitalize downtown Little Rock. They had learned, from the development of Downtown Little Rock's River Market, that it was essential for certain basic political and organizational structures to be in place; these were also, they noted, required for success in Pine Bluff:

- An organized core group of downtown stakeholders to champion the downtown;
- An organization able to spend time on the promotion and management of downtown;
- Persons with a vested interest in downtown to work doggedly with the downtown organization to pursue redevelopment strategies; and
- City government committed to the plan for redevelopment and willing to support various redevelopment plans with public investment of time and dollars.

By the end of this first exploratory meeting, it was clear that among the leadership were many different ideas for the redevelopment of downtown. Before a planning process could begin, they needed to narrow the focus and establish a direction. They agreed that the best way to settle on a new direction for downtown redevelopment was to hire a professional facilitator with planning expertise. Such work would help the group itself to coalesce, and also set the stage for the planning process to come. They decided to hire group facilitator Chris McGhetrick and also asked George Wittenberg to participate. Chris and George set Fall, 1999, for a facilitated session in Pine Bluff.



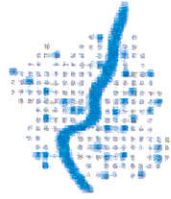
Leonard Boyle, a UALR student, reviewing presentation



Architects and planners reviewing public presentation with A.W. Nelson



Architects and planners reviewing public presentation



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The Brainstorming Meeting: establishing what stakeholders want for a new downtown

A group of committed leaders and downtown stakeholders assembled in November, 1999 to discuss their hopes and desires for the downtown and how to get there. Chris, with George assisting, facilitated this 'Pine Bluff Goals and Vision Workshop'. Chris's complete report is available by calling The Alliance. Summary points of her report are as follows:

- 1. Downtown Redevelopment**
 - develop a farmers market
 - improve linkage of downtown to University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Lake Pine Bluff, Jefferson County, & Jefferson County Regional Park
 - landscape Martha Mitchell Expressway
 - develop a University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Learning Center
 - develop historic district
 - rehab Hotel Pines and other significant buildings
 - develop a financial district
 - create a tourist attraction like a Bass Pro Shop
 - revitalize downtown neighborhoods
 - improve transportation
 - build better political rapport
 - maintain a government center downtown
- 2. Lake Pine Bluff**
 - create one administrator for the lake
 - assess the lake's environmental conditions
 - develop an amphitheater on the lake
 - study the possibility of a lakeshore drive
 - improve Martha Mitchell Expressway
- 3. Neighborhood Revitalization in Older Areas Adjacent to Downtown**
 - create a needs assessment
 - provide seed money to residents for improvements
 - strengthen code enforcement
 - develop a land-use plan
- 4. Transportation Improvements**
 - build a walkway across Martha Mitchell Expressway
 - add landscaping to main downtown streets
 - improve several streets, especially Harding Avenue and Hazel Street
- 5. Interstate 530 Greenbelt**
 - protect the scenic quality of the corridor
- 6. Infrastructure Improvements**
 - improve all sidewalks
 - improve several streets
- 7. Vision for the Community**
 - "Downtown is the physical linkage between University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Downtown, Lake Pine Bluff, and the Regional Park, creating a vibrant innovative atmosphere for growth."



Public participation

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“Brainstorming” meeting decides to create urban design plan for downtown

The group decided:

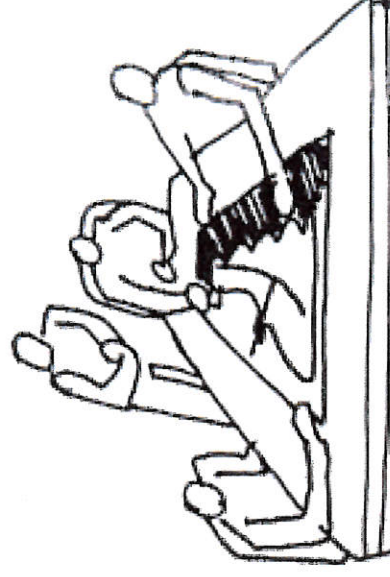
- (1) to use this information as the beginning of a new plan and
- (2) to establish an organization to manage the planning process. They established a task force from among the leaders who had participated in this brainstorming session. This effort gave birth to a planning process, involving the public and resulting in a new plan for the downtown.

A third result of the session was that the group decided to advertise a request for proposals for the services of a planning consultant. Co-chairs of the Task Force of Urban Growth & Development - Fred Reed, president, Reed Architectural Firm; Joy Blankenship, director of Downtown Development, Inc.; and Donald Sampson, director of the Department of Economic and Community Development for the City of Pine Bluff assisted with the selection and hiring of the planners. They subsequently met with a planning team that included the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Urban Studies and Design program and A.W. Nelson of Nelson Architectural Group, Inc.

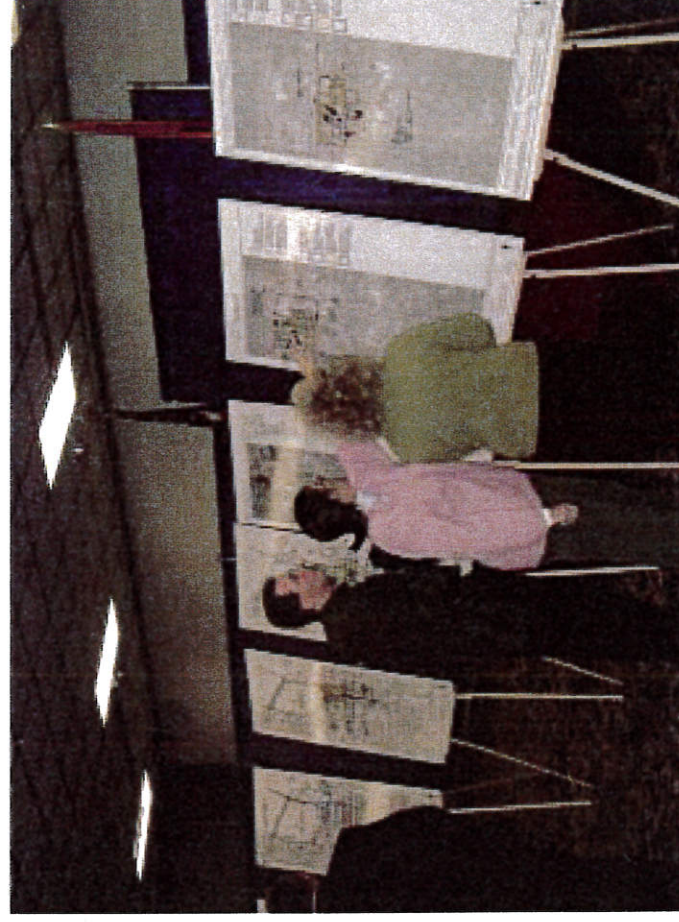
The Community Support Group of local leaders, chaired by Tommy May, Chairman of the Board of Simmons First National Bank Corporation, agreed to find funding for the planning proposal. Selection of the team, and commitment to raise funds to pay for their services, really initiated this new effort to address the needs of downtown Pine Bluff.

Planners asked to create planning process

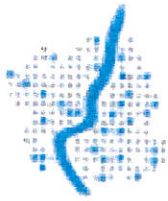
The planners' charge, as urban designers, was to use information from this brainstorming meeting to establish a planning process that would meet the goals of the Task Force and work best for Pine Bluff. Key to this directive was involving the public and basing proposals on sound, realistic and doable strategies. Their challenge was how to obtain information from the public, demonstrate that the information had been heard, and sustain the public's involvement over the course of a long planning schedule.



Planning Sessions brought together public officials, community leaders and professional planners



Citizens reviewing plans in meeting



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III. THE PLANNING PROCESS

The urban design process: focus on Strategies and Actions

A focus on action helped establish the direction for the planning effort. This planning process would have three components:

- Establish a planning direction,
- Define a planning process based on realistic redevelopment and development strategies, and
- Initiate projects.

First Step: Task Force agreed to govern the planning process

As agreed in previous “brainstorming” meetings, the leadership established a committee to oversee the planning process. Its members were selected by The Alliance and the Downtown Development to represent a cross section of downtown stakeholders and leaders. Its role, as “The Task Force,” would be to act as ‘clients’ on behalf of the downtown, and as such would:

- provide information about the downtown for the planners; and
- review planning concepts presented by the planners;
- make decisions about the urban design concepts and redevelopment strategies presented by the planners.

Members of the Urban Growth & Development Task Force and their related institutions or businesses:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Mr. Charles Berry—Pine Bluff Commercial | 31. Mr. Frank Lightfoot—White Hall Journal |
| 2. Dr. Robert Steven Bianchi—Bianchi Associates | Reverend R. J. Lightsey II—Office of Congressman Mike Ross |
| 3. Ms. Joy Blankenship—Pine Bluff Downtown Development, Inc. | Mr. Tom McDonald |
| 4. Ms. Shirley Bondon | Ms. Eva McGee—UAPB Development and Planning |
| 5. Ms. Seshé Brewer—Jefferson County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office | Mr. Jack McNulty—Bridges, Young, Matthews & Drake, PLC |
| 6. Mr. Danny W. Brown—Planters Cotton Oil Mill | Mr. Richard Metcalf—Pine Bluff National Bank |
| 7. Mr. Earnest Brown, Jr.—Earnest E. Brown, Jr., PLLC, Attorney at Law | Ms. Mary Midgett—Washington Demilitarization Company |
| 8. Mr. William Allen Brumett, P.E., LUTCF—Brumett Agency, Inc. | Mr. David Moore—A. G. Edwards and Sons |
| 9. Mr. Lloyd Carter—International Paper | Ms. Billy Jean Murphy—Pine Bluff Arsenal |
| 10. Honorable Booker Clemons—State Representative | Mr. A. W. Nelson—Nelson Architectural Group |
| 11. Mr. Jim Crider—The Economic Development Alliance | Ms. Judi Norton—The Economic Development Alliance |
| 12. Mr. Mike Dennis—Bridges, Young, Matthews & Drake, PLC | Ms. Monica O’Briant—Volunteers in Public Schools/PBSD |
| 13. Mr. Jimmy Dill—Pine Bluff Title Company | Ms. Jean Painton |
| 14. Mr. Roy Finley—Finley’s Restaurant | Ms. Rebecca Pittillo—Jefferson Regional Medical Center |
| 15. Mr. Jack Foster—Pine Bluff City Council | Mr. Fred Reed—Reed Architectural Firm |
| 16. Mr. Billy Freeman—SEARK Community Development | Ms. Donna Renfro—Simmons First National Bank |
| 17. Ms. Jerre George—UAPB/ERDC | Ms. Jennie Rowland—JCCS Head Start |
| 18. Mr. Henry Golatt—UAPB/ERDC | Mr. Jarrod Russell—Ramsay Bridgforth Harrelson & Starling LLP |
| 19. Ms. Kathy Graves—Pine Bluff Arsenal | Mr. Donald Sampson—City of Pine Bluff Econ. & Community Dev. |
| 20. Honorable Brenda Gullett—State Senator | Ms. Valla Seel |
| 21. Ms. Letrece Harris—Windows on Main | Dr. Phil Shirley—Southeast Arkansas College |
| 22. Dr. Cortez Henderson—UAPB | Mr. Allan Skinner—Southeast Arkansas Regional Planning |
| 23. Ms. Irene Holcomb—Pine Bluff City Council | Mr. Neal Stephens—Eilers, Oakley, Chester & Rike, Inc. |
| 24. Mr. Eugene Hunt—The Hunt Law Firm | Mr. Clyde Toney |
| 25. Mr. Craig Hunt—Simmons First National Bank | Mr. Garland Trice—Amoel Bed & Bath |
| 26. Ms. Marilyn Kearney—PBUC Clean & Beautiful Commission | Rev. Jesse Turner—Interested Citizens for Voter Reg., Inc. |
| 27. Mr. Mike Kelley—Doc’s Resale Shop | Ms. Lori Walker |
| 28. Mr. Jackie Kirby—Pine Bluff City Council | Mr. Feral West—Rental Service Corporation |
| 29. Mr. M. H. Levine—Neighbor to Neighbor | Ms. Kandy White—The Pines Mall/General Growth Mgmt., Inc. |
| 30. Ms. Linda Lewis—Southeast Arkansas College | Honorable Hank Wilkins IV—Arkansas State Senate |
| | Mr. Carl Redus—Premier Events |
| | Ms. Liz Rinchuso—Jefferson County Treasurer |
| | Ms. Stephanie Johnson—The Economic Development Alliance |

Planning objective established in Task Force meetings

The planners’ objective was to arrive at a realistic approach for the downtown. A framework plan, combining several elements of redevelopment strategies, design issues and infrastructure needs would help establish a realistic planning process, and an overarching approach to redeveloping downtown.



Final public presentation

Creating the framework plan included evaluating possible actions (planning strategies for redevelopment) and evaluating ways of applying them to the physical form of a possible downtown. This is what good urban design does - it combines development strategies with how the clients want their city to look.

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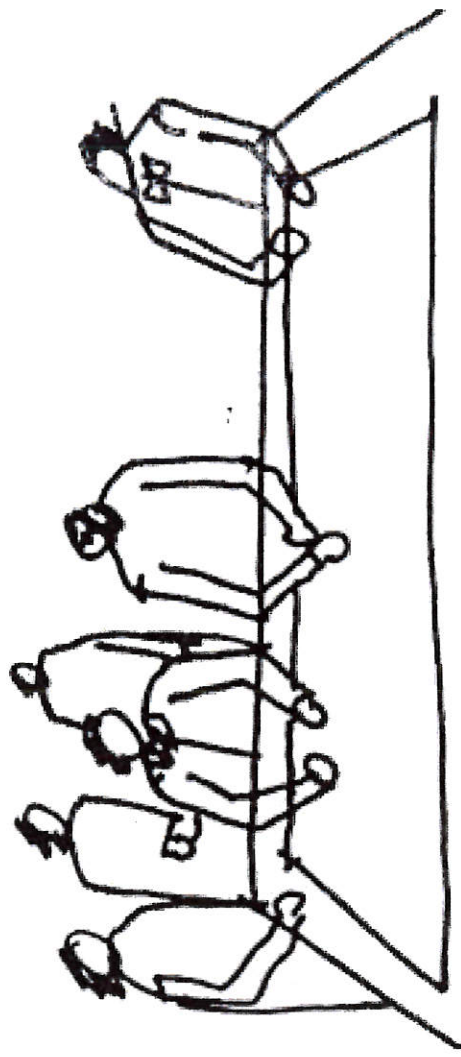
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Developing the plan: four phases established

The planners presented a four-phase planning process, which the Task Force approved.

- **Phase I – THE VISION:** a statement about the goals and directions envisioned for a new downtown
- **Phase II – THE FRAMEWORK:** a planning strategy comprising elements of city infrastructure, of history, of development strategies
- **Phase III– THE STRATEGIC PROJECTS:** projects whose type and placement will influence further development
- **Phase IV – THE ACTION PLAN:** an implementation strategy consisting of policies and actions

The planners went on to define the planning process in greater detail and presented schedules to the Task Force, which included public review meetings after each planning phase.



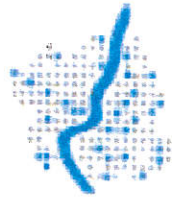
Planning Team



Steve Rousseau and Fred Reed



George Wittenberg at the public meeting



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IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Special effort to inform the public

Because public participation was such an important part of the planning process, the planners paid special attention to keeping the public involved. They wrote and mailed a newsletter after each phase to a mailing list created from a sign-up list of attendees at the public meetings. Each issue summarized progress made in the previous meeting and a set of directions for the next one. Photography, used to reinforce public involvement and record keeping, went into the newsletters.

A public process to promote public buy-in and elicit information for the plan

The planners carefully organized the timing and planning of public meetings. These meetings were important not only because they allowed expression of public concerns and ideas, but also because they conveyed to the community that this was an open and inclusive planning process.

At each meeting there was lively debate and conversation about the downtown. The Task Force witnessed in these public meetings a dedicated desire to see real change occur in the downtown. Discussions included needs for social, as well as physical, programs. The planners noted all issues and concerns and, to the extent they determined them to be feasible, attempted to include them in the plan.

These meetings proved to be an excellent way to communicate with the broader public, as reports of these sessions were carried in the newspaper and on television.



The public meeting: a citizen comments



Leonard Boyle & citizen attending the public meeting



Attendants of the public meeting

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V. HISTORY & GROWTH

Pine Bluff's growth began on the Arkansas River and grew toward the south in concentric arcs

This river city, first settled in 1819 above the river's flood plain on the higher Pine Bluff, began becoming a town officially when county government was established in 1830. Shortly afterwards, parcels of land were laid out and sold to residents and the first grid of streets was established. By the beginning of the Civil War, Pine Bluff had grown to be a major river port and center of river/cotton commerce.

By the 1870's and '80's, Pine Bluff's utility and road infrastructure had been established and homes were being constructed west of Main Street. The commercial center and residential neighborhoods grew south from the river according to a grid pattern. Front, Baraque and Main Streets represent important historic streets of the period.

Pine Bluff's modern growth determined by traffic circulation

Concentric rings of growth following development of roadways mark phases in the city's 20th Century expansion. This is typical of the growth of American cities, and Pine Bluff is no exception. Beginning with the streets of the original city, adding major new roads out from this core, and connecting them with more streets up to the present-day Interstate 530 (I-530) encouraged growth away from the center.

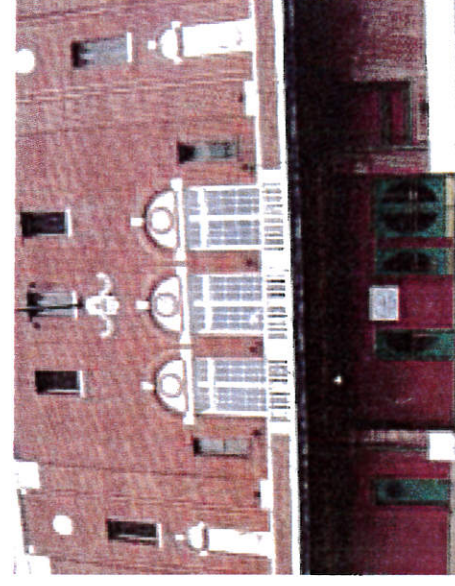
Streets and connecting major arterials that cross the grid of streets lead to and from the historic center of downtown. An important question for the planners to study was how to use these circulation patterns to benefit new growth.

The new I-530 impacted downtown

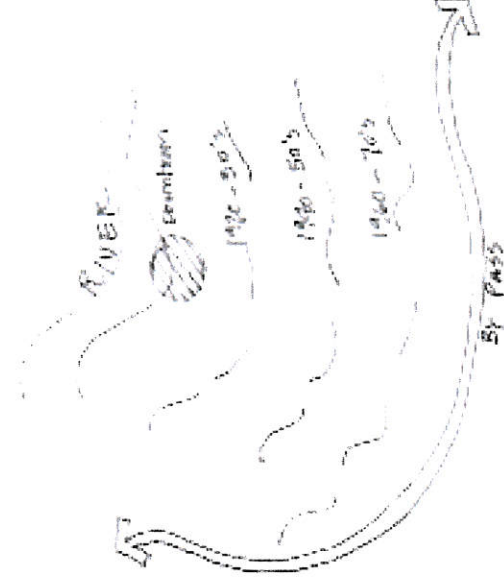
The I-530 Bypass expressway has impacted the use and perception of the historic downtown:

- it encourages motorists to "bypass" the original city – the downtown
- its easy flow of customers in cars attracts commercial growth to the perimeter
- its perceived convenience attracts subdivisions to this further new edge

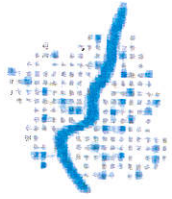
Each successive circular bypass encourages more people to live out on the newer edge of the city and farther away from downtown. Shoppers and commercial developers are drawn farther away from the center, and business and commercial uses leave downtown (if they haven't already done so). Instead of enticing visitors to exit the highway and visit the historic downtown, the Bypass routes visitors around the city without their knowing it even exists. For these reasons, the Bypass affects redevelopment strategies for the downtown – a reality that must be considered.



Historic Saenger Theatre



Circulation and growth patterns: through history



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Past efforts to help downtown inform current efforts

As far back as 1983, in its report on Pine Bluff, Midwest Research Institute noted that “further deterioration of the inner city will ultimately have negative impacts on economic development efforts.” For the past 15 years, Pine Bluff Downtown Development, Inc. has worked to establish several programs to encourage revitalization of the Central Business District. ‘Partners for a Better Pine Bluff’ adopted as a community goal: ‘To create a more attractive city.’

In June, 1999, the Economic Development Alliance of Jefferson County organized a Task Force on Urban Growth and Development. They worked in cooperation with Pine Bluff Downtown Development, Southeast Arkansas Regional Planning, the City of Pine Bluff’s Community and Economic Development Department, then-Mayor Jerry Taylor, Alderman Bill Brumett and the late Alderman J.C. Jeffries. The purpose of the task force was “to accelerate the quantity and enhance the quality of the development in the inner city and to assure excellence of development along major traffic corridors where growth will occur.”

Decisions need to be made about the form of the city

Growth patterns of the past and recent changes in development have affected the form of the city. Typical of American cities, growth in Pine Bluff has become more dispersed, often without regard to the downtown center. The city of Pine Bluff needs to make decisions about its form and what “shape” downtown should take as a part of Pine Bluff’s future. This means developing comprehensive land use and zoning plans for the total city with new plans for downtown central to that plan. Decisions need to be made about what form the downtown will take and what part the downtown will play in a future comprehensive plan. This plan, Reinventing Downtown Pine Bluff, should lead the way.

The Task Force held a community visioning and planning retreat in late 1999. During this retreat, they decided that:

- (1) Pine Bluff needed to focus initial redevelopment efforts in the Central Business District; and
- (2) Pine Bluff needed to hire urban planning professionals to lead the downtown redevelopment process, if funding could be obtained.

Downtown projects need to interconnect

Located too far from each other, recent important downtown projects can’t interact or benefit each other. Development of the Arts and Science Center of Southeast Arkansas and Civic Center along Eighth Avenue east of Main Street in the late 1960s communicated to the public that cultural institutions belong in the downtown. Unfortunately, it is too far from the other institutions to gain the benefit of pedestrian overlap. It is not easy or simple to visit the Civic Center or attend a conference and also drop by the Art Center for an exhibit. Filling gaps and connecting destinations with “people spaces” is one strategy planners used for the downtown plan.

These past efforts lacked an overall strategic approach to building a successful downtown. Projects were not connected one to the other, and each development action and decision stood alone. Interaction of people and events, which is what should happen in a town center, was made impossible. The mural project, which extends throughout the downtown, begins to connect the areas of the downtown using public art, but more needs to be done.

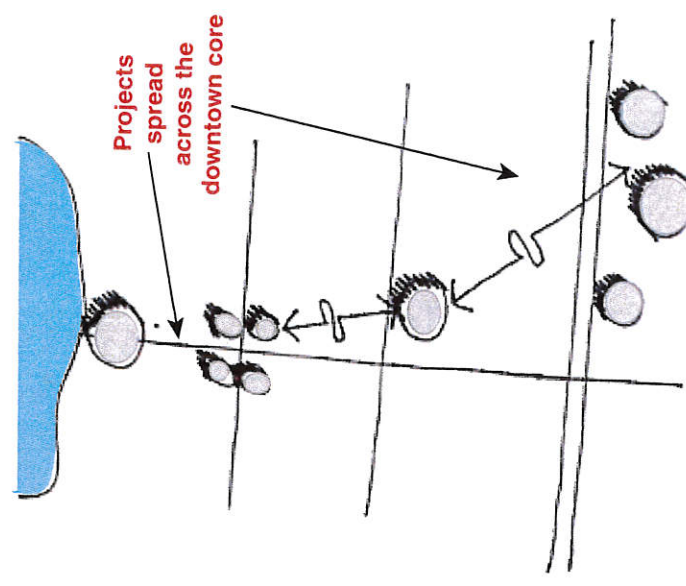


Diagram of projects in downtown showing lack of connectivity

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VI. PLANNING PHASES

PHASE 1 - THE VISION

First Task Force and public meeting discusses vision for Downtown's future

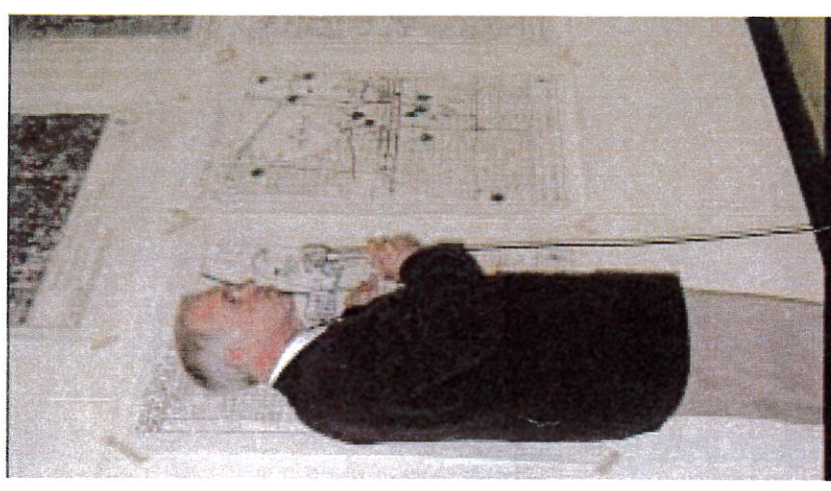
Phase one was to establish a **VISION** for the downtown.

Among many issues and ideas, discussion concentrated on what downtown needs and the concerns about it as a totality, including the role it can or should play to satisfy the community. Will it be a center to provide social services and training for youth? Will it be a new type of business center that includes loft-style residences? These were a few of the ideas for the new downtown. The planners wrote down all issues and ideas to incorporate in planning strategies.

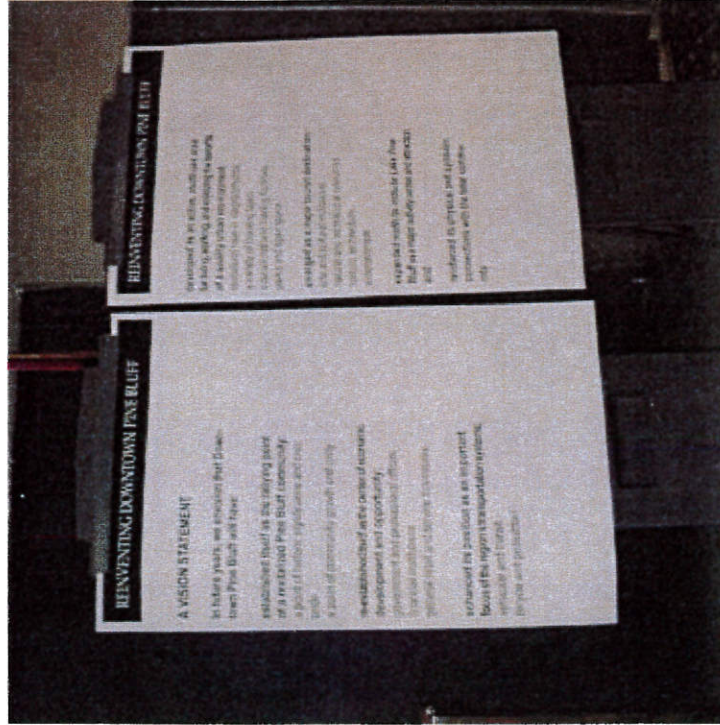
A data collection phase and analysis of the data preceded the first public meeting. It was important for the planners to have knowledge of past and current planning efforts and to educate the public review meetings about them. And so planners reviewed maps; studied existing zoning; read past reports; and recorded visual surveys, including photography.

Analysis of the data helped establish where the downtown is now, what its present development trends are, and what the prospects for its future are if current trends of unchecked growth to the suburban edge continue.

Altogether, this process helped define the context for the **VISION** and illuminated potential strategies for making it happen.



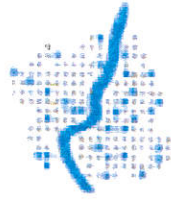
Urban designer, Steve Rousseau presentation of the plan



Vision Statement on display in public meetings



George, Steve, & Fred reviewing the plan



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The following is a summary of items discussed at the initial public meeting:

Note: During the discussion, citizens often referred to issues that related to the community as a whole, not just to the downtown. Facilitation of the public meeting process, and the leadership of the planner, helped keep the focus on needs of the downtown.

- Parking may be a problem that we need to consider in the planning process. We need to make new downtown projects accessible. A parking deck may need to be built in the downtown area.
- It would be nice if we could incorporate a Bass Pro Shop with Lake Pine Bluff. We also need a large fountain, as an attraction, in the lake.
- We need an annual Train Festival in the downtown area to highlight Pine Bluff's long history with the railroad industry.
- We need a Blues Festival and a Gospel Festival in the park at Third Avenue and Main Street.
- We need to develop more visibility for the downtown murals guided tour program. The program needs to be expanded.
- We need to give downtown property owners incentives to rent their buildings, for example, tax incentives for downtown development. Property owners need to keep their property clean and their buildings painted.
- We need to advertise/market/promote the existing low-interest loan program for façade improvements.
- There is a perception that downtown is unsafe. We need to work with the Pine Bluff Police Department to eliminate this perception.
- We need an information kiosk in the downtown area.
- Working with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, we need to ensure that Lake Pine Bluff is maintained for fishing and stocked with fish. We used to be called the "Bass Capital of the World" with tournaments along the Arkansas River. We need to reclaim this title and to promote it.

- Our theme for this process is Reinventing Downtown Pine Bluff. When I was young, downtown was a special place to visit. We need to do what we can to "recreate" that special feeling of downtown. It needs to be a unique place – a place to go for special events and celebrations.

- Will our existing zoning laws allow for multi-use buildings downtown? I would like to see loft apartments and residential development downtown.
- We should convert old school buses into downtown transportation buses. They could be used to transport tourists to different sites.
- We need to develop entertainment site options for people who cannot afford the Pine Bluff Convention Center.
- We need to make the route from University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff to downtown accessible and attractive.
- We should develop Downtown Pine Bluff to be a "Delta Cultural Hub." We should enlist the downtown theaters and museums to make "Delta Culture" our theme.
- University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff has an Information Technology program that has received much praise and attention from other universities across the country. We should establish an Information Technology hub downtown.
- We need to make a connector from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff campus around Lake Pine Bluff and to the downtown.
- We need to assess the situation of what will happen if we do nothing. (For instance, if we don't do any planning for downtown, X, Y, and Z will happen to the downtown.)
- We must send a strong message to area businesses that they NEED to be downtown.
- We need our local and state governments to make investments downtown. If public entities would commit infrastructure dollars, private businesses will be more likely to relocate or invest in the downtown.
- The government needs to relocate more of their offices downtown.
- Everyone needs to buy into our vision for downtown, or it's not going to work. We need everyone to give their input so they will buy into the program.

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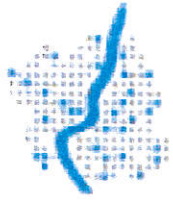
Vision statement emerges

The meetings, and all the issues articulated by participants, generated the content for a **VISION** Statement. After they listened for several sessions and reviewed drafts of statements with the Task Force, the planners presented a final **VISION** statement at the second public meeting. It was accepted after inclusion of several suggested modifications.

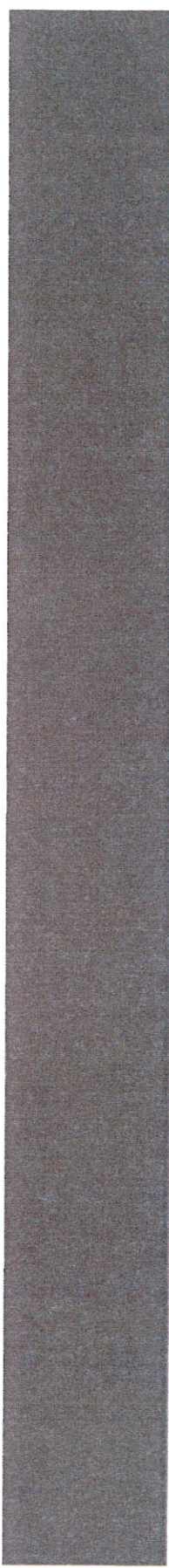
The **VISION** statement:

In future years, we envision that **Downtown Pine Bluff** will have:

- established itself as the rallying point of a revitalized Pine Bluff community:
 - a point of historic significance and civic pride
 - a point of community growth and unity
- re-established itself as the center of economic development and opportunity:
 - government and professional offices
 - financial institutions
 - general retail and service businesses
- enhanced its position as an important focus of the region's transportation systems:
 - vehicular and transit
 - bicycle and pedestrian
- developed as an active, multi-use area for living, working, and enjoying the benefits of a quality urban environment:
 - revitalized near-in neighborhoods
 - a variety of housing types
 - educational and training facilities
 - parks and open space
- emerged as a major tourist destination:
 - arts and cultural institutions
 - natural and recreational resources
 - historic architecture
 - entertainment
- expanded north to include Lake Pine Bluff as a major activity center and attraction, and
- reinforced its physical and symbolic connections with the total community.



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The **VISION** statement was written as a response to the public conversation. Here is a point by point interpretation.

In the future Pine Bluff's downtown will be several new things:

It will be the place where in the community where public events occur and where, because of its special identity, citizens can feel pride and where the city expresses its history.

It will be the place of the centers of economic opportunity where offices, public institutions and retail shops once more coexist.

It is the place various transportation systems cross, where all modes of movement interact with the downtown.

It is where a quality environment exists, an environment conducive to people living, working and playing.

Interesting cultural and artistic sites will develop downtown, sites that visitors will want to experience.

Lake Pine Bluff, the natural feature, will be linked to the downtown and be an integral part of it.

And, downtown will be redesigned to link to the entire community both physically and symbolically, so that all citizens will once again relate to it as the community's "living room".



View of historic Hotel Pines

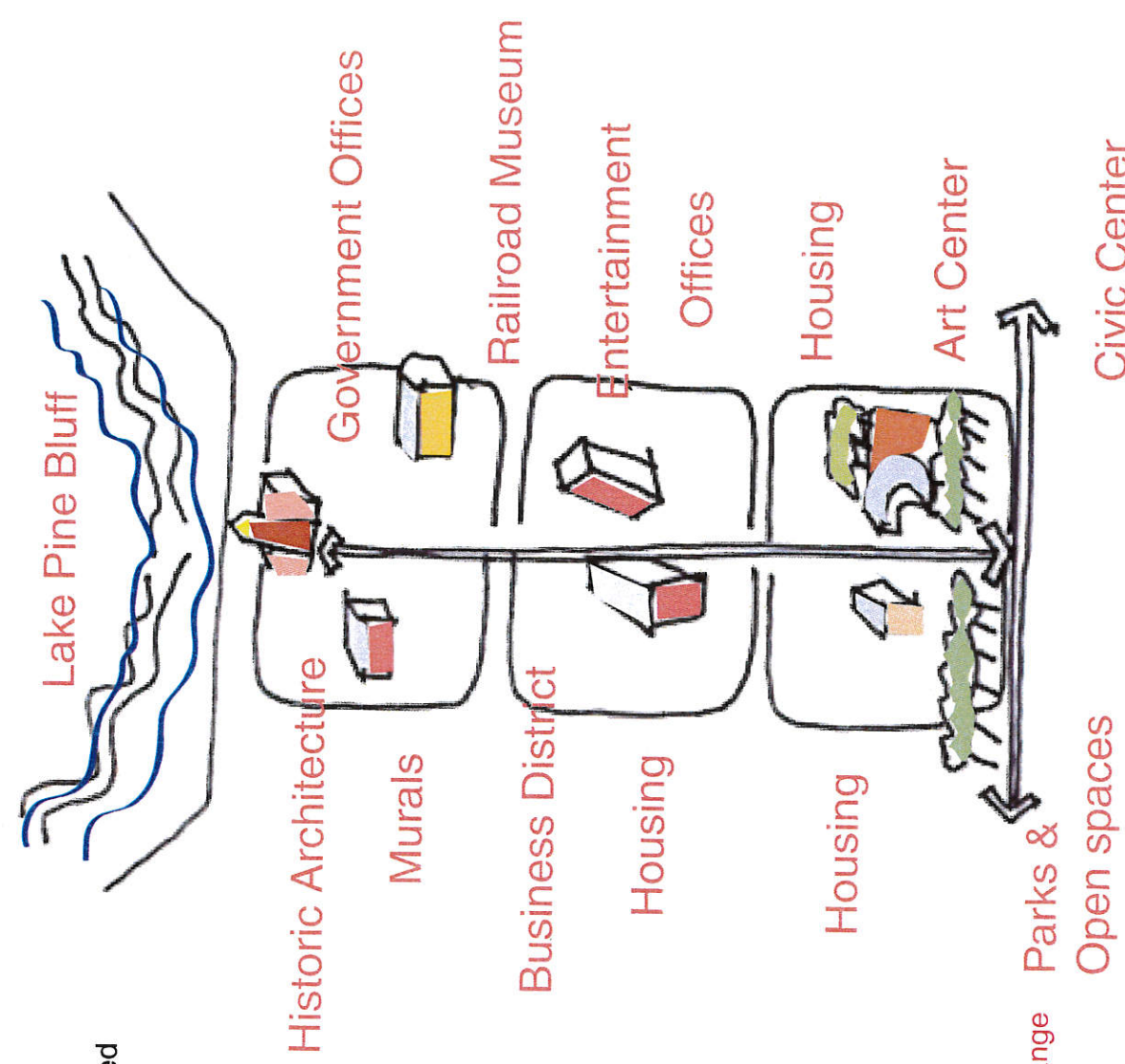


Diagram illustrating a wide range of proposed and existing land uses in the downtown

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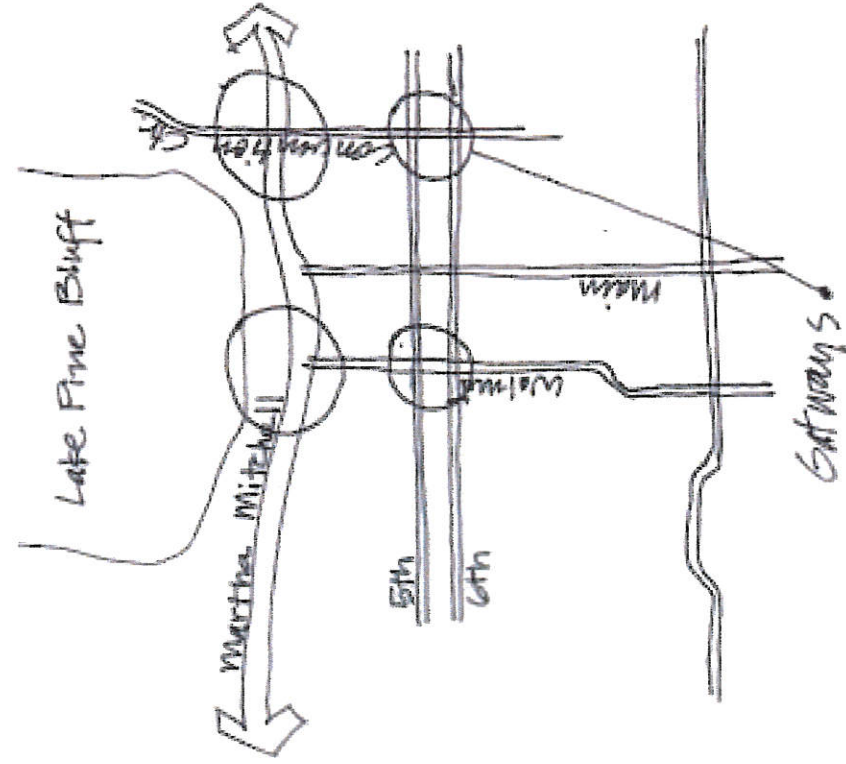
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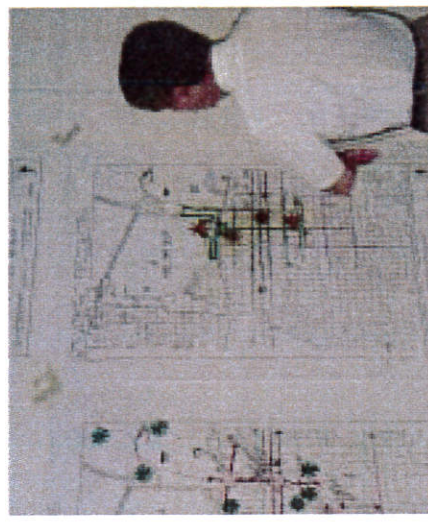
Building with small mural in proposed Old Towne



Aerial view of downtown Main Street



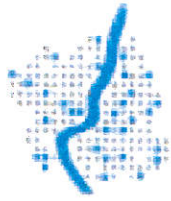
Proposed gateway locations in to the downtown



Citizen reviews plan



Initial public review meeting



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PHASE 2 - FRAMEWORK PLAN

A. Concepts for the Plan

The framework planning concepts were derived from analysis and evaluation of the following conditions:

-Existing uses

The types of uses in the downtown today are commercial: mainly banking and limited private businesses; public: the courthouse, city offices, the Judge Jack Jones Juvenile Justice Center, the Convention Center (public-private); cultural: the SEAR Arts & Science Center, Saenger Theatre; and a few smaller organizations; industrial and residential on the edge of downtown's core.

-Physical conditions

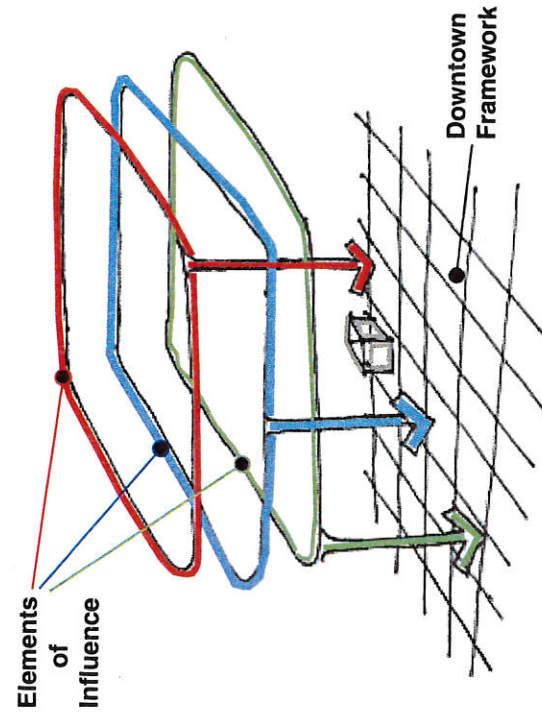
The building fabric is a mixture: buildings in good condition, some recently built; stable, older buildings, mothballed and ready for rehabilitation; and deteriorated older buildings, not suitable for renovation. The infrastructure of the downtown is good, but typical of older downtowns, needing repairs and upgrades throughout.

-Circulation

Too many one-way streets through the downtown encourage through traffic and lessen opportunities for casual stopping. While the number of streets through the downtown are adequate, they encourage speeding (the Martha Mitchell Expressway and the 5th and 6th Avenue one-way loop) and lack identifiable arrival points. The number of rail routes and the traffic will always be a problem, but as downtown improves, there will be new opportunities to address the railroad's use of the area.

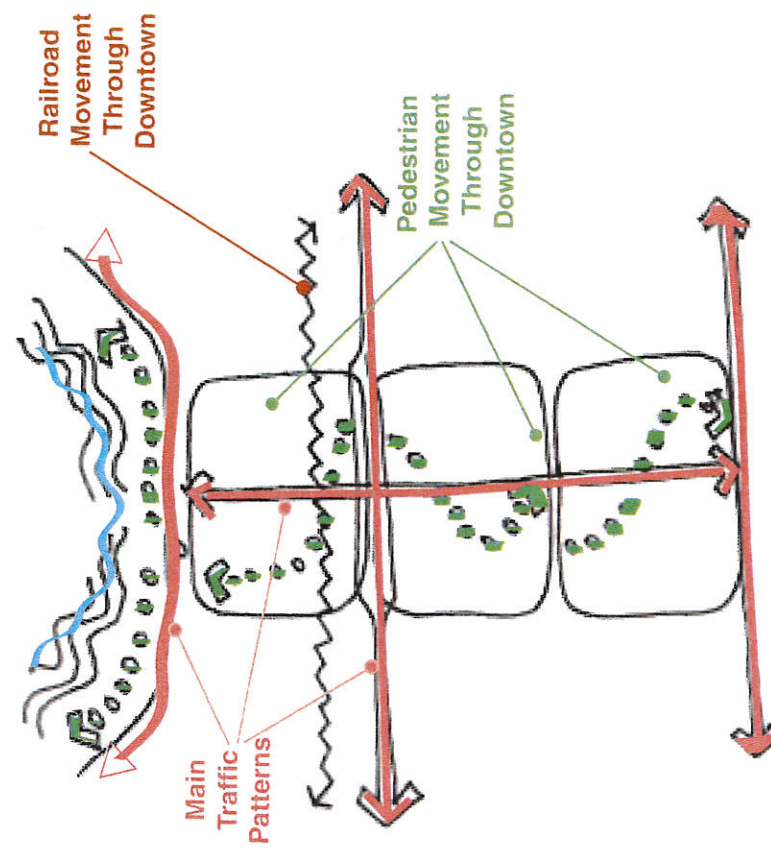
-Points of public significance and history

The Jefferson County Courthouse is the most historically and symbolically significant structure in the downtown. It conveys a presence of public importance and history. Its gold cupola is a visual symbol of the downtown—both as the physical beginning of Main Street and the historical beginning of Pine Bluff. Other significant areas exist, but get ignored, or do not connect well to the center (the Pine Bluff/Jefferson County Historical Museum in Union Station), or are not expressed at all (the once important Old Towne District).



Elements of influence over the downtown

Note: The image maps on the facing pages were developed before the final report was written and use titles that were being considered at the time. For example, page 27 refers to a "cotton district". The titles in the report's text are final.

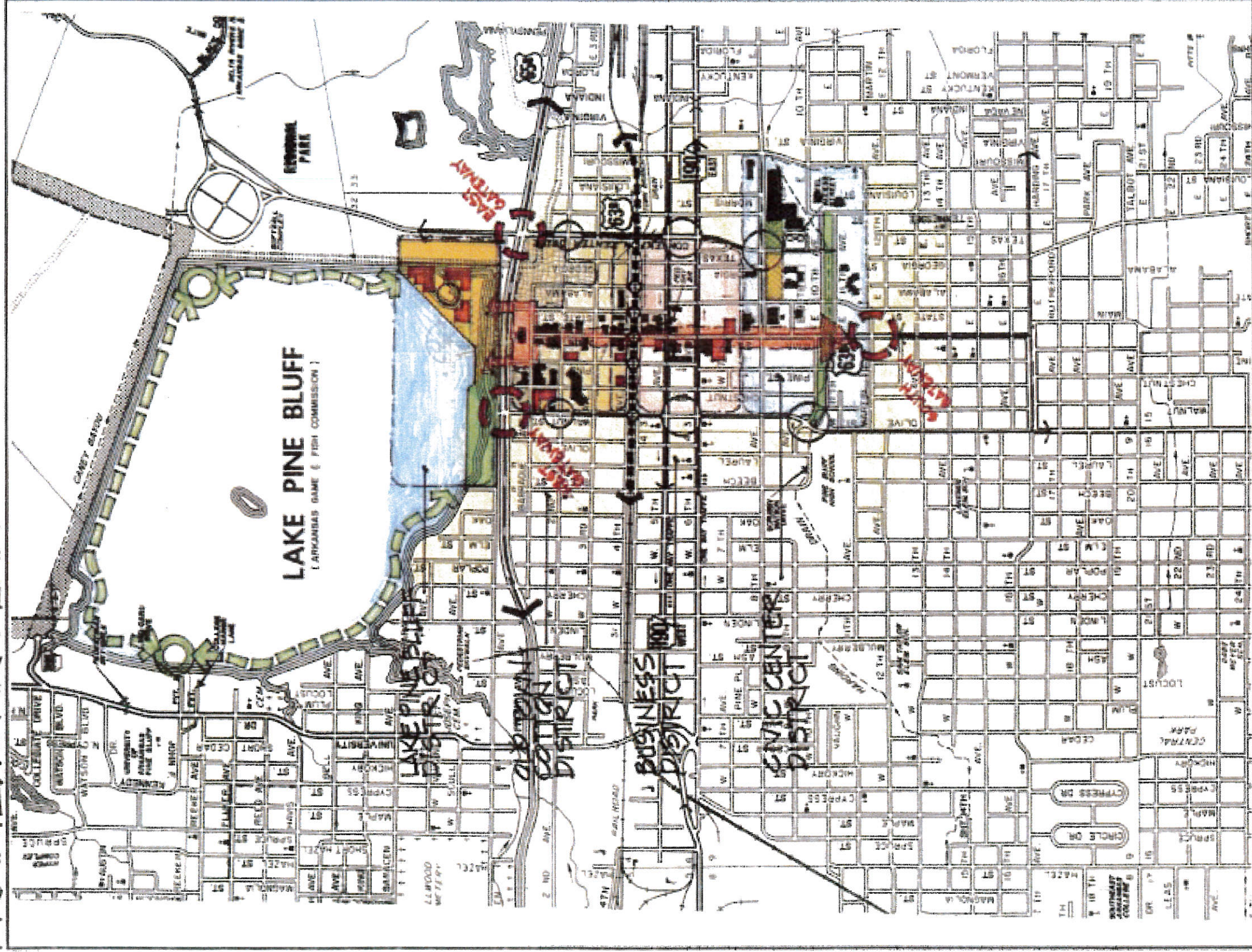


Automobile and pedestrian movement patterns in the downtown

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Downtown
Pine Bluff

DOWNTOWN FRAMEWORK PLAN



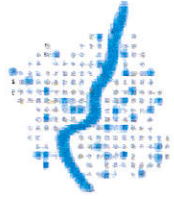
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B. Elements of the Plan

Plan Background

The framework sees the downtown as an area divided into sub-areas. The plan discussed ways to capitalize on each sub-area's unique identity and strengths, within the context of the overall framework. How each sub-area is linked and connected, one sub-area to the other, is also important to the strategies and recommendations for each sub-area.

The planners offered two primary concepts:

1. Devise redevelopment strategies based on the unique potential of each sub-area, and
2. Interconnect sub-areas so they work as a cohesive whole and knit together as successful neighborhoods.

For the sub-areas to work together successfully they must reinforce each area's identity; support each area's development strategy; and provide diversity and options for development. Examples of urban design elements that when used properly can "knit" areas together are:

- Focal points—the Courthouse spire, the Arts Center entry court
- Movement patterns—north entry from Martha Mitchell Expressway, south entry at South Main at Martin and east-west access along 5th and 6th Avenues
- Public points of significance—the murals, open/green spaces, public art (Millennium Art Project)
- Streetscape on streets—light standards, trees, benches, paving textures, etc.

Each sub-area has its own character that was important in developing concepts for each area:

- Lake Pine Bluff—the lake and regional park provide a natural environment which can serve as a backdrop for future development
- Old Towne—historic buildings and its location as the city's point of origin provide a historic context for development and redevelopment
- Business District—it provides, in its modern high-rise buildings and long-time history as a business center, a context for commercial and business-related development
- Civic Center—major public buildings and green spaces provide the setting for a civic focus in the downtown

Each sub-area has unique development opportunities. The framework plan identifies strategic projects that capitalize on them. You will find a discussion of development opportunities in the sections on each sub-area. Pages 24-31.

The framework phase of the planning process investigated options and possibilities for new development but did not at that point identify specific projects. Therefore, planners identified both primary and secondary development in each sub-area, and made priority rankings in order to get a sense of the real development potential of a particular site. (The Strategic Projects section of the plan discusses specific proposed projects.) Pages 32-37.



View of Courthouse looking north

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Reinventing Downtown Pine Bluff



Near-in Neighborhoods

While the four sub-areas constitute the core downtown, a major factor in the health of downtown is the character and vitality of its near-in residential neighborhoods, and also of the South Main area. For the purpose of this study we defined and diagramed them on study maps as

1. Neighborhood East
2. Neighborhood West
3. Neighborhood South
4. South Main Area

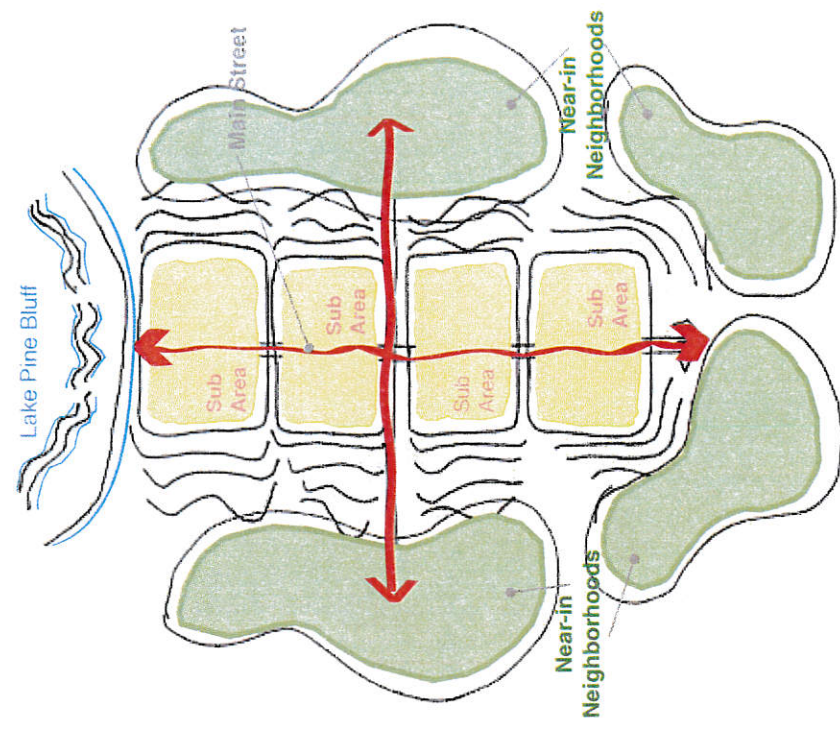
Note: We had to separate discussing the near-in neighborhoods from our focus on the core due to limitations of time and scope, even though they are important to the downtown core. General statements about the course of their future redevelopment came up in presentations. We suggested consideration of the following concepts for the near-in neighborhoods:

Housing maintenance programs:

- New housing units
- Neighborhood infrastructure improvements
- Parks and recreational facilities
- South Main Street

The area is roughly defined as along Main from Martin to Harding. We recommended that there be improvements, but that the existing uses should remain, such as:

- Auto-oriented uses
- Neighborhood general business and services
- Streetscape improvements and guidelines



Near-in neighborhoods diagram



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C. Major Public Facilities & Circulation

Public facilities recognized as major components and investments, which have community identity, are noted on the plan and include facilities such as the Courthouse, the Saenger Theatre, Hotel Pines, Arts Center and Convention Center.

Circulation patterns are used as the backbone of future key development. The key routes into and through the downtown are:

- Martha Mitchell Expressway
- Convention Center Drive
- Walnut Street
- 5th-6th Avenue one-way loop
- Main Street

These are significant intersections and gateways. These points of entry to the downtown can provide defining edges for downtown. There are East, West and South Gateway intersections, and as gateways these intersections will require special design attention, with features such as monumental light posts, arches over streets, landscaping, special graphics, etc.

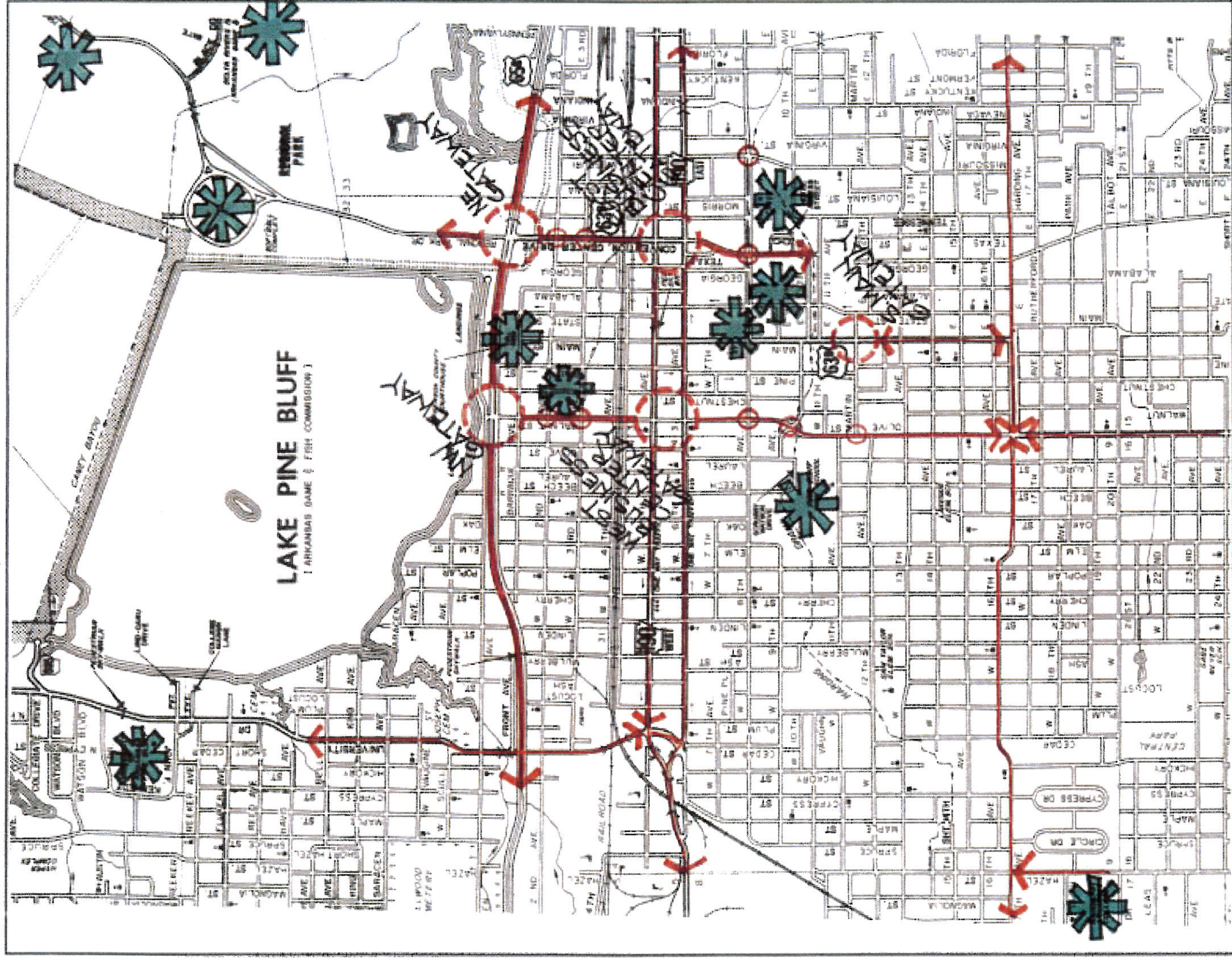
It is also important to note here that all four sub-areas center on Main Street. It is the historic and structural spine that links them together. Design approaches to Main Street are in our discussions of each sub-area. However, Main from Martin to Harding is not viewed as part of the business core. Here it is more of a commercial auto-orientated strip, south and adjacent to the original 1950's business core.



View of Downtown Pine Bluff

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MAJOR PUBLIC FACILITIES AND CIRCULATION



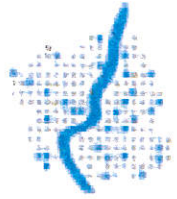
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D. Sub-Areas

We defined sub-areas on the basis of land use, physical conditions, geographical boundaries and their actual and potential developmental character. The following summarizes existing conditions and development opportunities of each of the four downtown sub-areas identified in the proposed Downtown Pine Bluff Framework Plan. (Phase 2 of the Plan) Pages 16-17.

The Framework Plan envisions each sub-area as having a separate/distinct character and offers a set of development strategies directed at promoting that unique character.

The four sub-areas are:

The Landings Sub-Area—the southern edge of Lake Pine Bluff and its junction with the Jefferson County Regional Park;

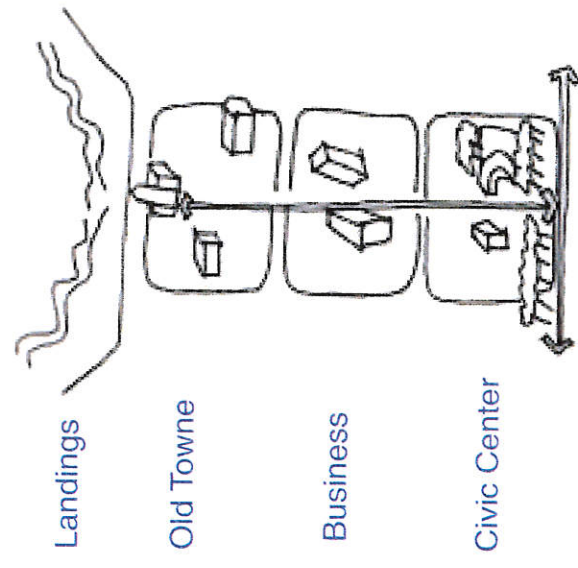
The Old Towne Sub-Area—the historic business section bordered by Martha Mitchell Expressway, Convention Center Drive, Fourth Avenue, and Walnut Street;

The Business Sub-Area—the current business/financial area bordered by Fourth Avenue, Convention Center Drive, Eighth Avenue, and Walnut Street;

The Civic Center Sub-Area—the area containing city government offices and the Convention Center bordered by Eighth Street, Missouri, Martin and Olive Streets.

The Downtown Framework Plan looks to promote development in the various sub-areas in a coordinated manner, to build connections that link the districts and support their interaction, and to signify and enhance external linkages to other areas and institutions in the city.

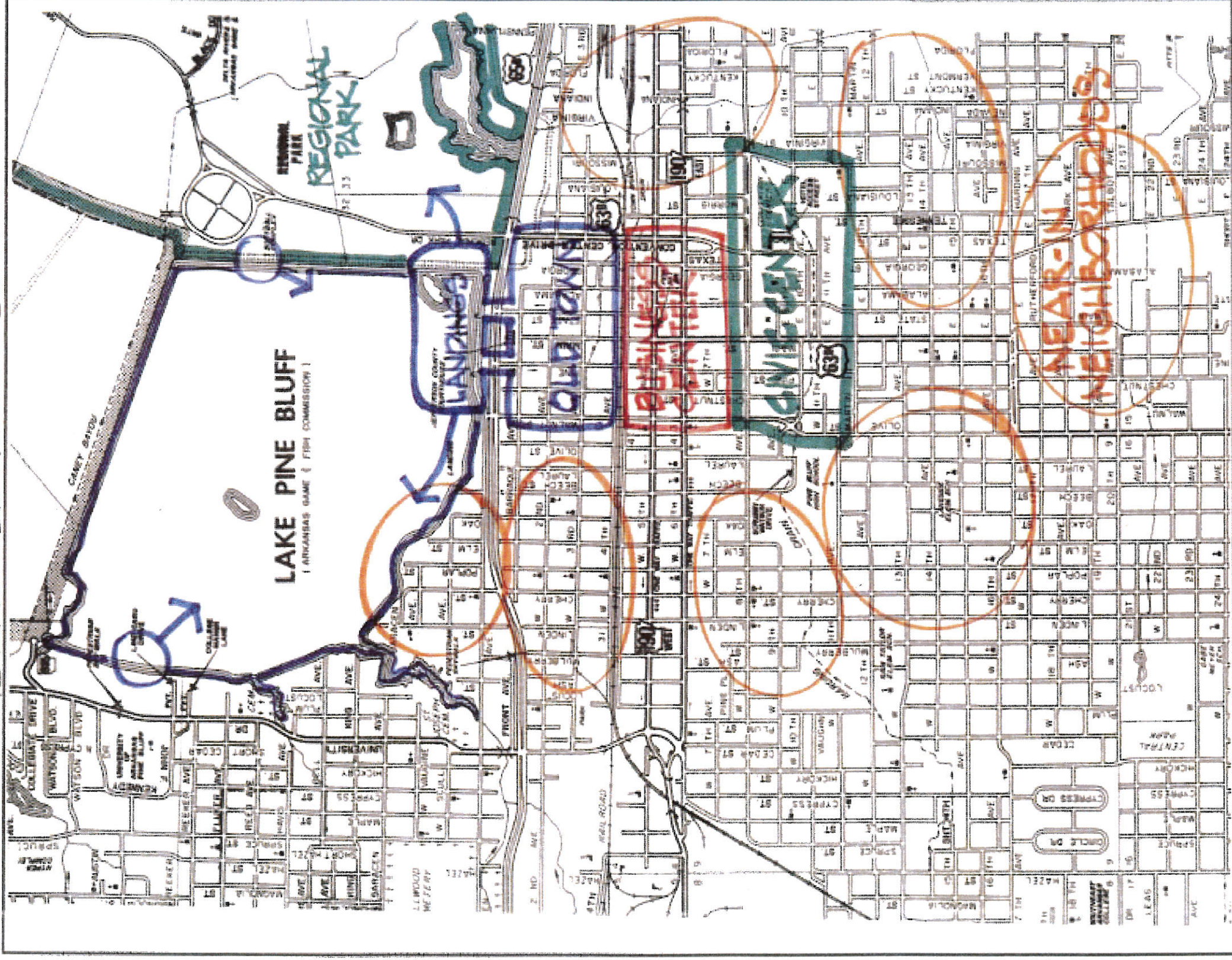
A specific discussion of each sub-area, its potential for development, existing conditions, development objectives and opportunities follows.



Sub-Area diagram; top to bottom:
Landings, Old Towne, Business,

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DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT SLB-AREAS

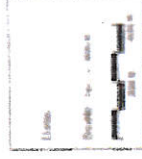


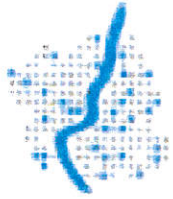
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1. The Landings Sub-Area

Its potential for development is inherent in its obvious connection to recreation, its close proximity to the downtown, and its simple expressway access. Its major limitation is its separation from downtown by the expressway and its distance from any existing pedestrian activity.

Existing Conditions

- An historic location on the site of the original riverfront, now Lake Pine Bluff
- An area with a narrow strip of land between highway and lake shore, which imposes a development limitation
- Parking areas do exist and are connected by Regional Park Drive
- A small fishing pier used by local residents
- A levee on the eastern edge, containing a low marsh area between levee and Regional Park Drive

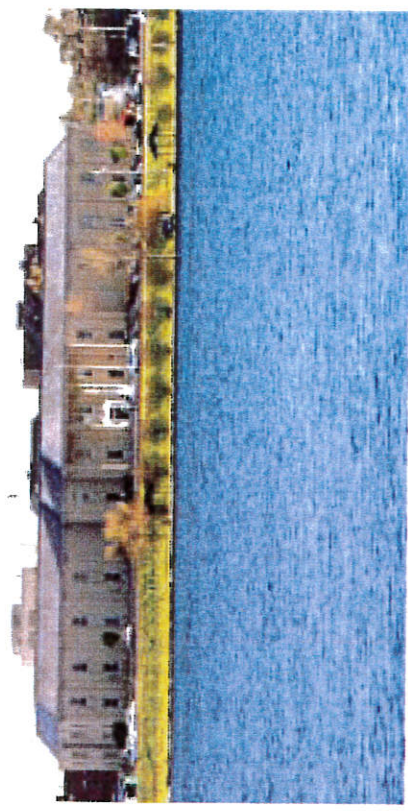
Proposed Development

Development objectives for The Landings:

- Create an attraction that will reconnect Downtown Pine Bluff to its river heritage;
- Give citizens an exciting reason to come downtown;
- Stimulate tourism;
- Increase awareness and utilization of the Regional Park's programs and amenities;
- Promote revitalization of the adjacent Old Towne District and residential neighborhoods.

Development opportunities identified for the area include:

- Utilize an outdoor recreation theme for new development related to the park and lake
- The lakefront as improved recreational space and with links to other areas
- Proximity to freeway access and downtown for new development (a major commercial facility of 20,000–40,000 square feet)
- Access and parking utilizing the Regional Park
- The lake for water features and increased recreation (a water park)
- Regional Park for enhancements
- Open spaces for entertainment venues
- Spaces for public art with historic river themes
- Access for pedestrians across Martha Mitchell Expressway at Jefferson County Courthouse
- A Landings Gateway built feature to mark the area's location at the north edge of downtown and its connection to the historic Old Towne District.



View of Lake Pine Bluff and Courthouse

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'THE LANDINGS'

THE LANDINGS' PUBLIC/PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT

OUTDOORSMAN'S PARADISE

- HUNTING
- FISHING
- BOATING
- ARCHERY

LAKEFRONT PARK

- PARK
- WATER ACTIVITIES
- RIVERBOAT EXHIBITS
- PUBLIC PLAZA

COURTHOUSE

- LAKE FRONTAGE
- PEDESTRIAN ACCESS
- PLAZA

REGIONAL PARK

- ENTRY FEATURE
- PARKING
- OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES
- ACTIVITIES/FACILITIES
- SIGNAGE

Other labels on the plan include: LAKEFRONT PARK, LANDINGS PLAZA, COURTHOUSE, PRIMARY PARKING 1500, OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AREA, REGIONAL PARK/LANDINGS ENTRY FEATURE, PRIMARY PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION TO COTTON DIST. AT PINE ST., TEMPORARY TENANTS, PRIMARY TENANT \$80,000#, and a street grid with labels: COTTON ST, PINE ST, CHESTNUT ST, GORGE ST, and W. MAIN ST.

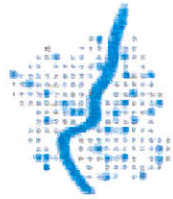
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2. Old Towne Sub-Area

This area, site of the city's beginnings, has an historic connection to the river. It has the best collection of historic structures in the downtown, such as the Hood Building, the railroad station and the Saenger Theatre. It includes a good mixture of small buildings providing good "small grain" texture to the area.

Public and private facilities in the area, i.e., the juvenile justice facility, the courthouse, and industrial businesses, provide a healthy mixture of stable uses.

Existing Conditions

- Historic center of Pine Bluff's commercial activity
- Historic government center, represented by the county courthouse
- Historic buildings scattered throughout the area
- Pine Bluff-Jefferson County Historic Museum in this area
- County government offices and parking lots in the courthouse complex
- A small number of professional offices
- The Saenger Theater and community theatres
- New Donald W. Reynolds Community Services Center (under construction)
- Small-scale weekly farmers' market in season
- Scattered manufacturing facilities
- General business
- Some entertainment in the form of bars and night clubs
- Railroad tracks run through the area

Proposed Development

Development objectives for the Old Towne District Sub-Area:

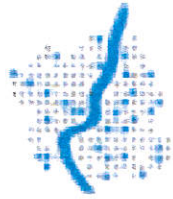
- Create an identifiable area that recognizes its heritage as a center for cotton commerce;
- Give citizens an identifiable district in which they can enjoy contemporary uses within an historic context;
- Stimulate tourism;
- Increase awareness of this unique part of the downtown;
- Promote renovation of the historic buildings and revitalization of the area as a whole.

Identified development opportunities include:

- A popular farmers' market that is under-utilized
- A focus on theater, arts, cultural development
- Saenger Theatre as a redevelopment project
- Artists' housing and studios
- Arts and crafts galleries
- A new African-American Museum
- An expansion of the Arkansas Railroad Museum and annex
- Creation of more public art, including selective placement of more murals
- More entertainment uses
- Specialty retail and general business as new development
- A pedestrian environment enhanced by the addition of streetscape elements
- An improved bus and trolley service
- Need for a police sub-station
- An ordinance providing Historic District designation for the district as a whole
- Parking lot redevelopment
- New Gateway elements placed to identify the Old Towne Sub-Area
- Improvements of designated special intersections.



View of historic buildings and signage



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3. Business Sub-Area

This area remains the commercial and business center of downtown. Built in the mid-20th Century, it includes banking, retail, offices, auto-dealerships, etc. Today a few major institutions, mainly the banks, hold it together, and it has lost most smaller supporting uses. A major supporting use, now closed, is the Hotel Pines, which awaits renovation and possible new uses for this significant historic structure.

Existing Conditions

- A concentration of historic buildings, the Hotel Pines prominent among them
- Major office structures, including several modern structures
- General businesses scattered through the area
- Vacant land and buildings make up a high percentage of the sub area
- Open parking lots surround this sub-area

Proposed Development

- The development objectives for the Business District are:
- To reinforce the identifiable business center with additional business uses;
 - To provide a mixture of uses – traditional and new—as a way to keep the center vital;
 - To encourage loft housing as a new use for older historic building space;
 - To recognize the importance of Main Street in this area by improving it with streetscape; and
 - To promote renovation of the historic buildings and revitalization of the area as a whole.

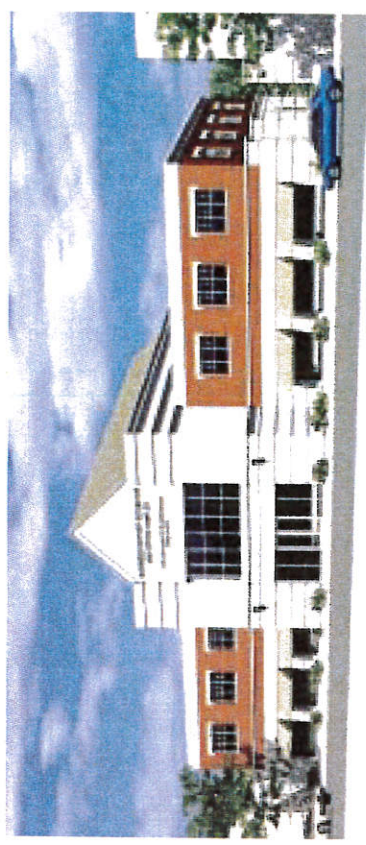
Development opportunities identified for the area include:

- A center (Delta Enterprise Institute facility or campus) as part of a national program that focuses on business training and development for the rural delta economy
- A business incubator program (The UAPB Business Support Incubator project currently underway)
- General business and office uses
- Loft housing
- Urban streetscape for the renovation of Main Street, (possibly achieved by public-private partnerships, project by project, with city design guidelines)
- Special intersections created to identify the “commercial center”



View of Downtown Pine Bluff

BUSINESS SUPPORT INCUBATOR AND OFFICE COMPLEX DOWNTOWN PINE BLUFF



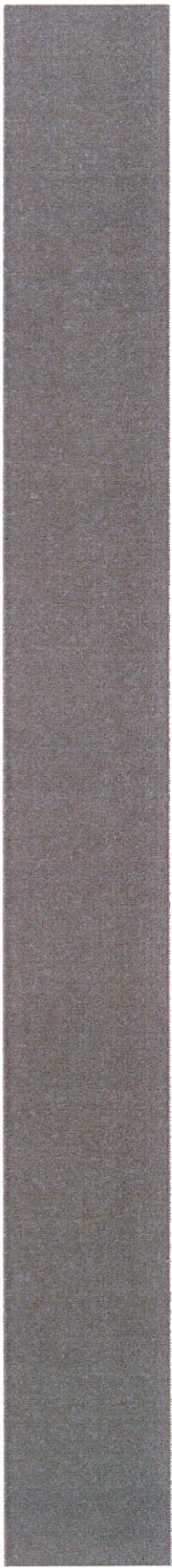
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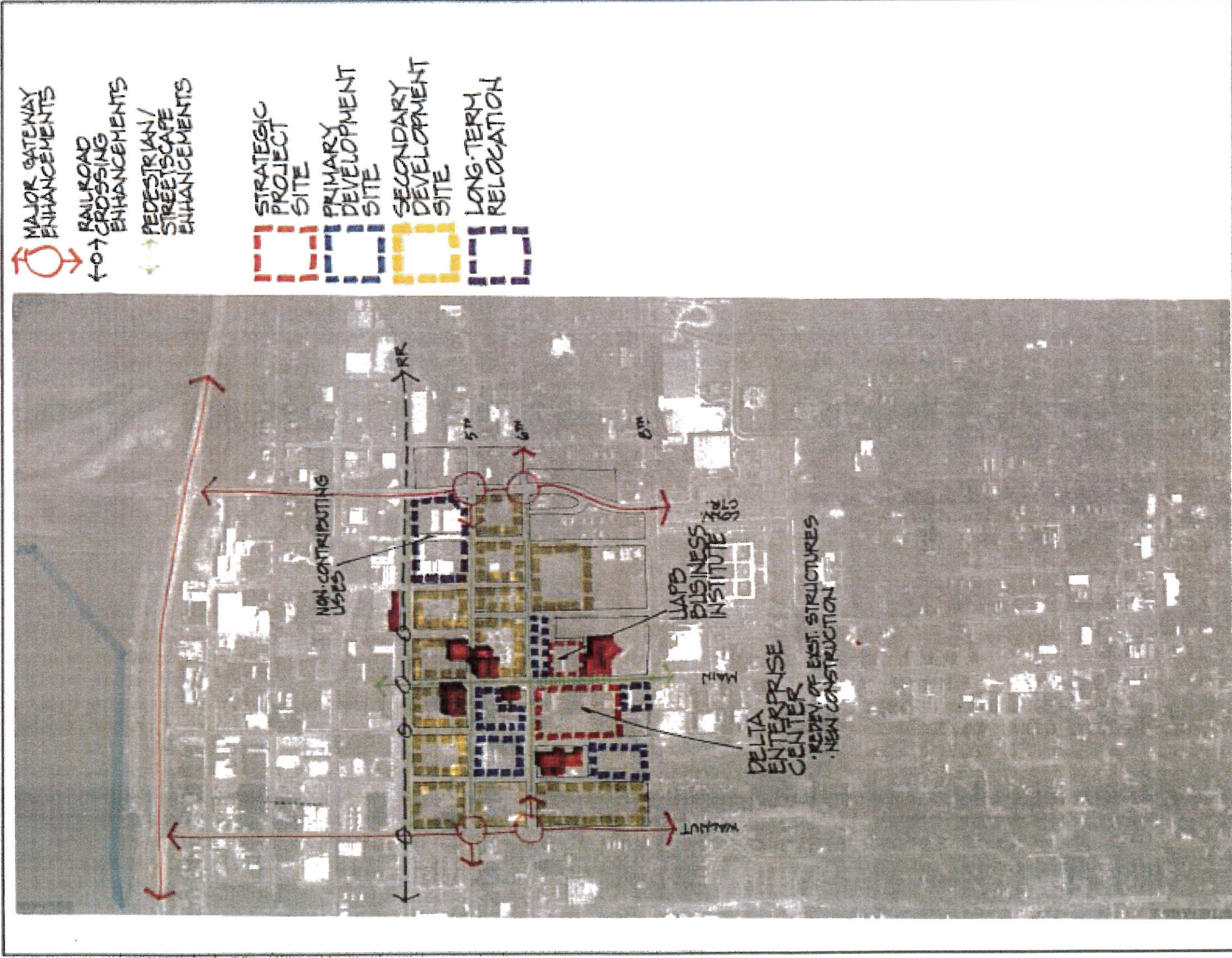
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Architectural rendering of UAPB business incubator project

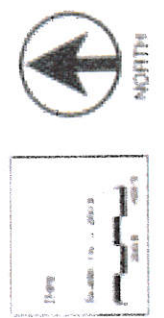
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BUSINESS DISTRICT



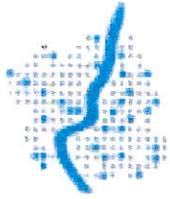
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4. Civic Center Sub-Area

This area was first planned and given an identity by city planners who utilized the federal Urban Renewal program. Their Urban Renewal plan relocated new city offices in a complex known as the Civic Center to its present location. It is an impressive building of unique design created by the noted Arkansas architect Edward Durrell Stone. The area also includes the Pine Bluff Convention Center and hotel and the Federal Post Office as well as other support organizations and private businesses. There was a grand urban design gesture to establish an identifiable area that included green space and prominent buildings as large public architectural icons. This they did. As a part of the same urban design concept for the area, they created 10th and 11th Avenue boulevard that combined easy access and a unifying green space.

Existing Conditions

Public facilities: city offices (including the City Hall, fire and police, city & county public library, etc.), Federal Post Office, Arts and Science Center and Convention Center
Professional offices
Public service agencies
Vacant land
Public open space and boulevards

Proposed Development

The development objectives for the Civic Center are:

- To unify the area and mark its significance as a public area with a new civic open space;
- To add to the built environment by developing some of the open spaces between buildings;
- To mark the intersection of Main and 8th Avenue as a way to connect the area to residential neighborhoods;
- To improve the important intersection at Main and Martin Street as a gateway to the area.

Development opportunities identified for the area include:

- A new Civic Center Plaza for public gatherings, i.e. festivals, concerts, neighborhood celebrations, etc.
- Extension of Eleventh Avenue as a new Civic Center boulevard which connects to Pine Bluff High School
- South Main Street Gateway
- Special intersection designs to signify and identify the area.

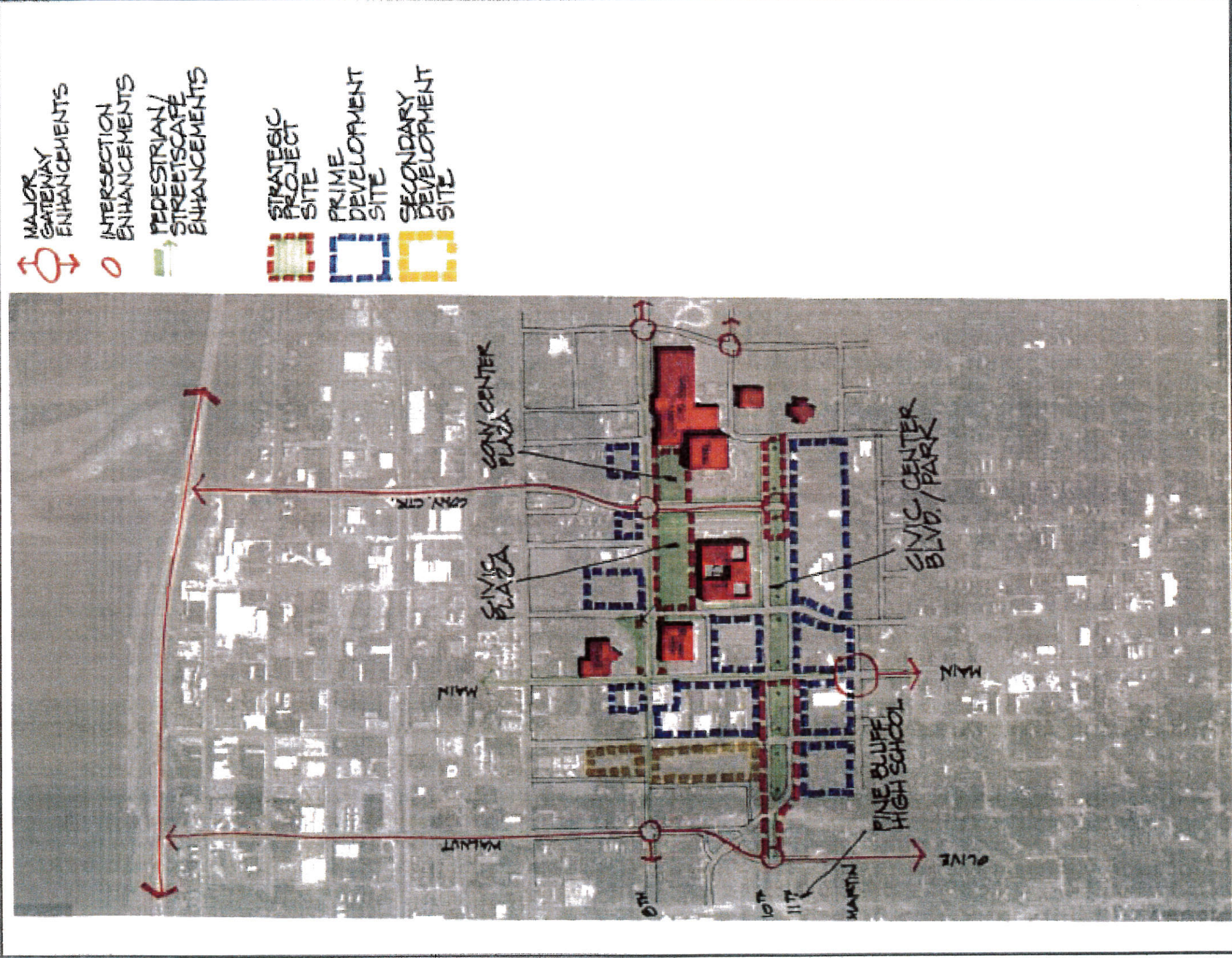


View of Civic Center

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CIVIC CENTER

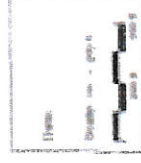


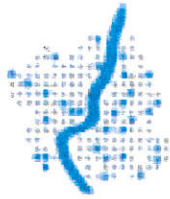
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PHASE 3 - STRATEGIC PROJECTS

The strategic projects are development projects placed in the central downtown core that through their success will cause a “ripple-effect” around them of other projects. This effect is the urban design strategy, which will, over time, cause the revitalization of the downtown. For this strategy to be successful it must involve several factors—the urban design plan, the property location and size—but, most importantly, it should include the hard work and commitment of the citizens who want to see the plan implemented. This is a long-term commitment since the revitalization of the downtown will not happen quickly, but, instead, one block at a time.

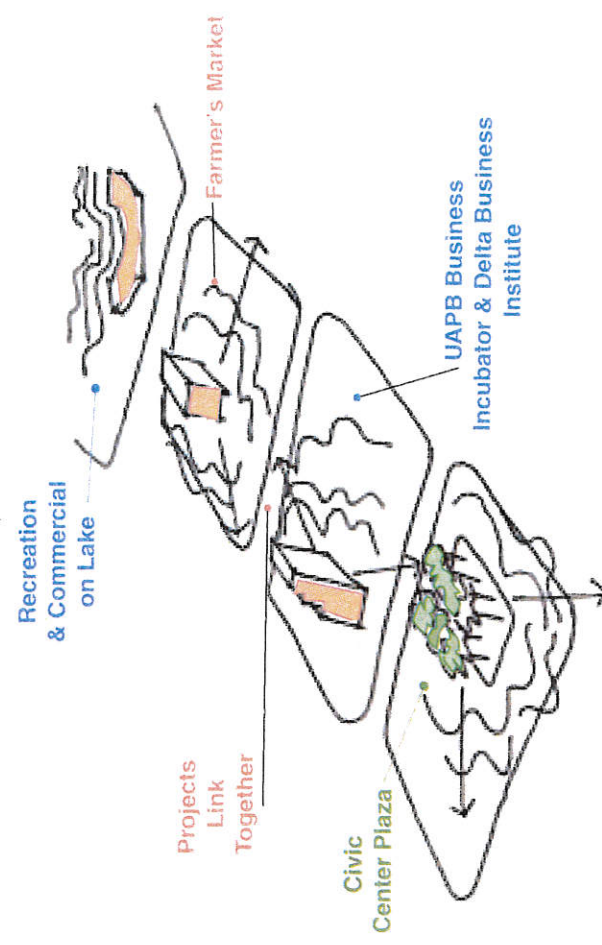
Successful strategic projects are projects that by their location and use create a real estate development critical mass. Their location and type will influence the creation of other development in the vicinity. A large events center, for example, should spawn other related retail and commercial development nearby as a spin-off of the business generated by the center. Therefore, strategic projects need to be substantial enough or important enough by the activity they generate to create the critical mass. A new Farmer’s Market building, for example, placed in the proper location can generate other building usage for related shopping activities. This section describes the proposed development environment in each sub-area of the downtown and its related strategic project.

In summary, strategic projects should be the ones that stimulate the downtown revitalization. They should have:

- Scale—the critical mass, large enough to make an impact
- Location—the sites should be chosen where the possibility for adjacent property development will occur
- Community support—success depends on the will of the community leadership and in particular the vested interest of the downtown stakeholders
- Linkage—ways to connect one project to the other

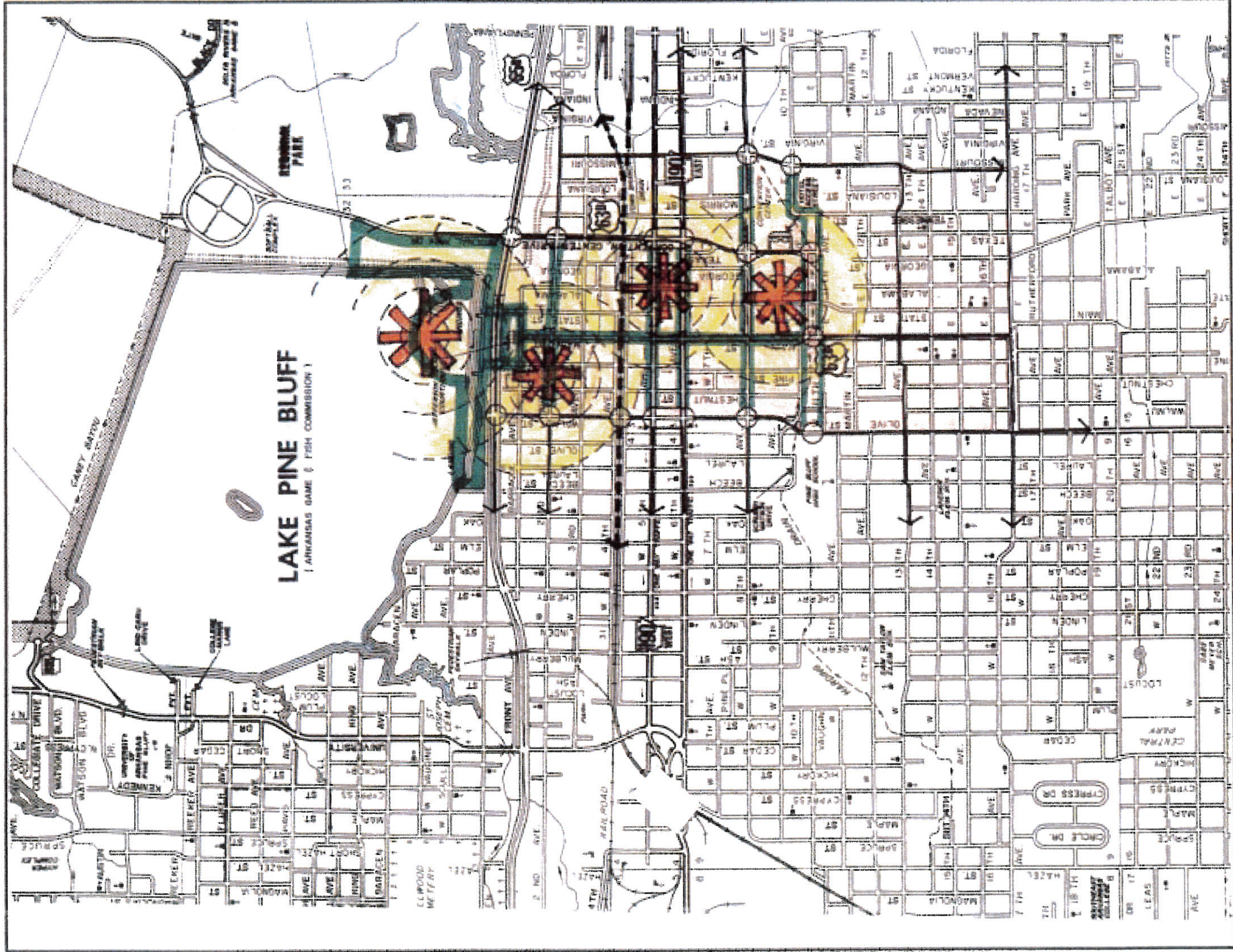


Historic arcade of Hotel Pines



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STRATEGIC PROJECTS



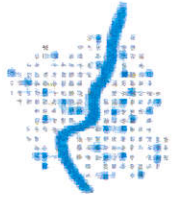
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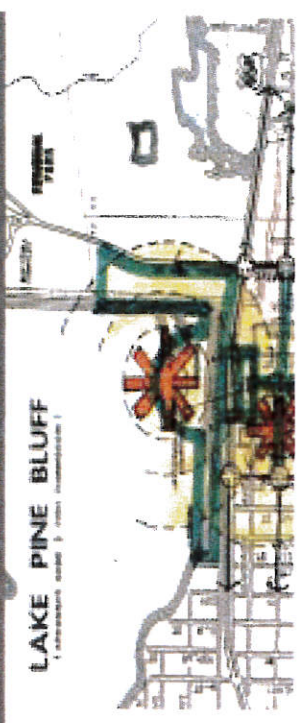
Project: Downtown Redevelopment Public Outreach
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PINE BLUFF FOR DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT, INC.
NELSON ARCHITECTURAL GROUP, INC.





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1. THE LANDINGS SUB-AREA

Proposed environment: a place where one would find

- Outdoor recreational choices, athletic playing fields, golf courses, hunting, fishing, archery, boating, skeet shooting
- Entertainment: a water theme park, outdoor amphitheater for musical presentations
- Lake enhancement: a boardwalk along the lake's edge
- Lake access and activities: fishing, paddle boats, etc.
- Education and history: a facility related to the river's history
- Retail: shopping center, restaurants and cafes

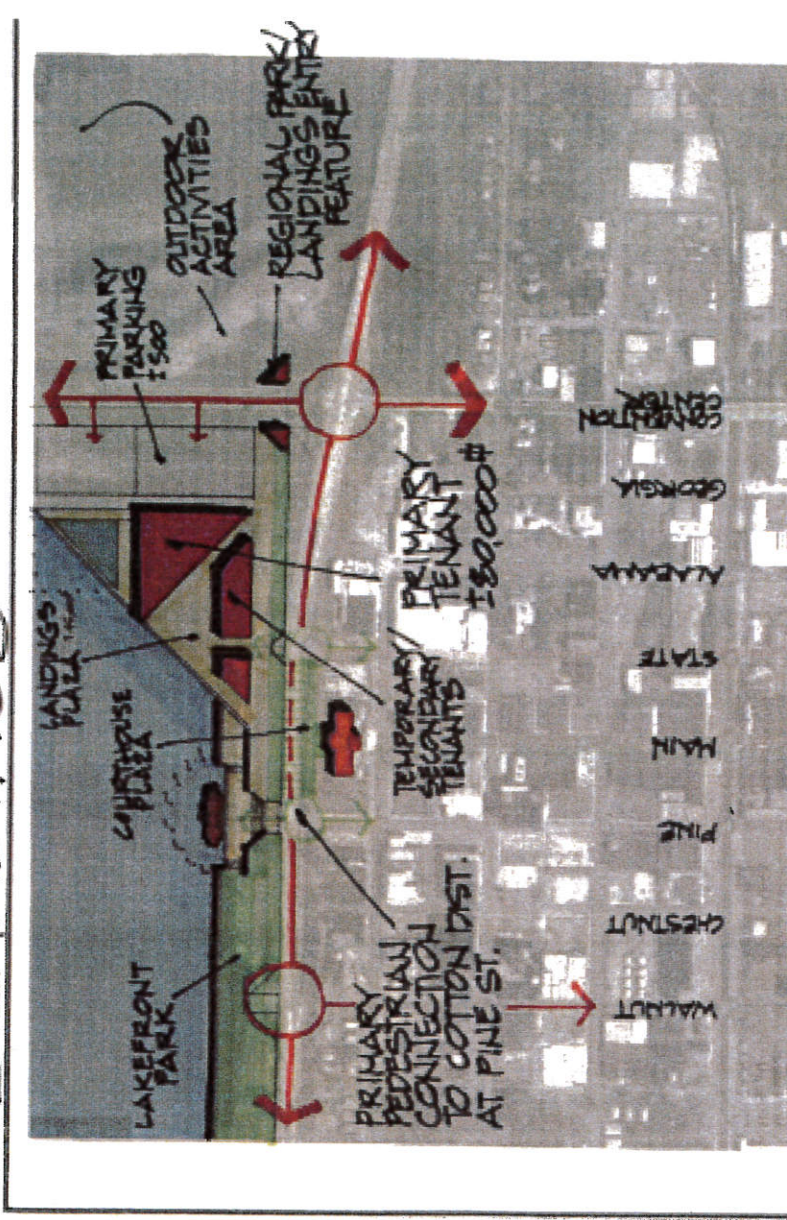
Strategic project: A retail facility based on outdoor recreation with a large anchor tenant.

Note: retail facilities based on recreation such as Bass Pro of Springfield, Missouri or a Prairie Wings of Stuttgart, Arkansas are the type of facility that fit this description for this use.

Why this is a strategic project:

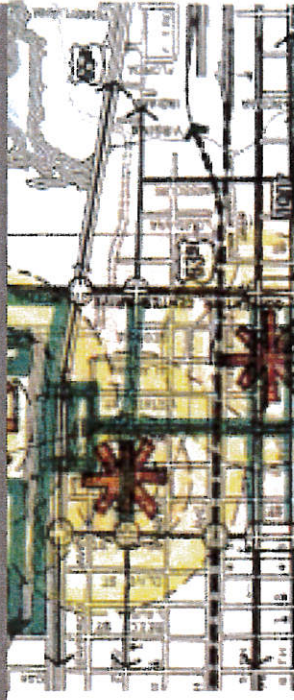
Lake Pine Bluff requires a new use to draw people to it and to establish it as a part of the downtown. There has to be a reason for people to want to go to the lake. A retail center of sufficient size to have impact and draw located on the Martha Mitchell Expressway will have regional visibility and also strong links to the historic downtown (The Old Towne District). The Regional Park with its Nature Center are additional uses to which a new retail center would link. A medium to large-scale retail facility, with related shops and restaurants, will establish this lake location as a new "place" in the downtown. The Landings Sub-area, once established with its unique theme and identity, will be an attraction that will draw tourists from the region and provide another level of economic development.

'THE LANDINGS'



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Reinventing
Downtown
Pine Bluff



2. OLD TOWNE SUB-AREA

Proposed environment: a place where one would find

- Offices and loft housing in renovated historic buildings
- New small buildings built on existing empty lots, integrated with existing historic structures
- A renovated Saenger Theatre
- New African-American Museum
- Sidewalks made pleasant for pedestrians with lighting, benches, public art and good signage – all with a historic theme
- An interpretive center where the history of the cotton exchange era is explained
- Art and crafts galleries
- New murals on buildings—with Old Towne historic theme
- A police substation
- Landscaped and inviting parking lots
- Public art with the Old Towne historic theme

Strategic Project: a new Farmer's Market facility in a new location

Why this is a strategic project:

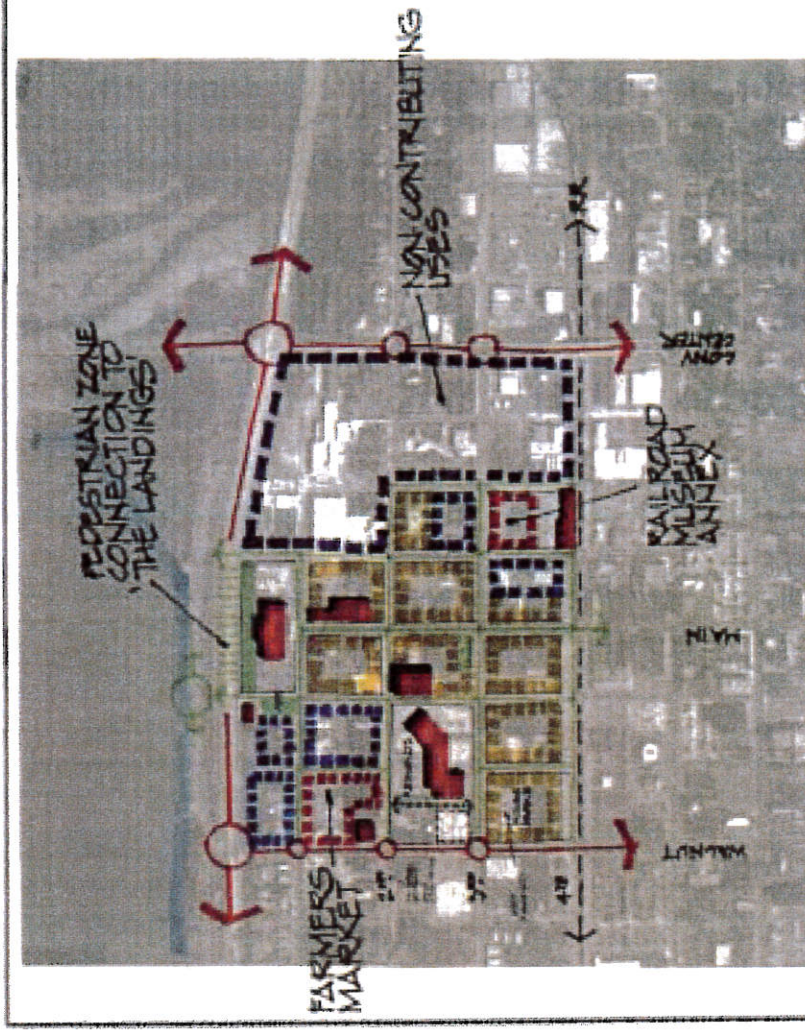
An existing farmer's market operates currently and enjoys a moderate success. It is probably under utilized. (A marketing study should be done as funds become available.) With a strategic new location, a new facility and supportive marketing, the Farmer's Market should help increase downtown activity and establish a new reason to go downtown, expanding the downtown customer base.

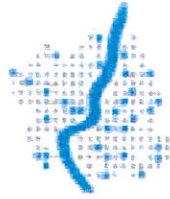
Its strategic influence is based on its use—its potential as an activity generator—not its size. However, its potential to grow into a larger complex of market booths is great, based on the experience of other markets in other downtowns. This project is based on a known entity and a popular one. Erecting a building with “market-style” architecture, should attract more vendors and, likely, customers from throughout the city. This project has the potential to be an influential project of the downtown, without a large front-end capital outlay.

A successful project should include:

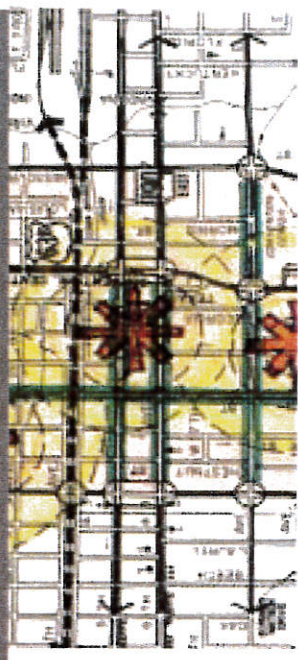
- Phased construction, allowing incremental growth based on demand
- An initial phase large enough for real impact
- A mix of uses (other food-related retail and entertainment) based on the market theme
- A mix of vending areas for farmers and other retail users

OLD TOWN DISTRICT





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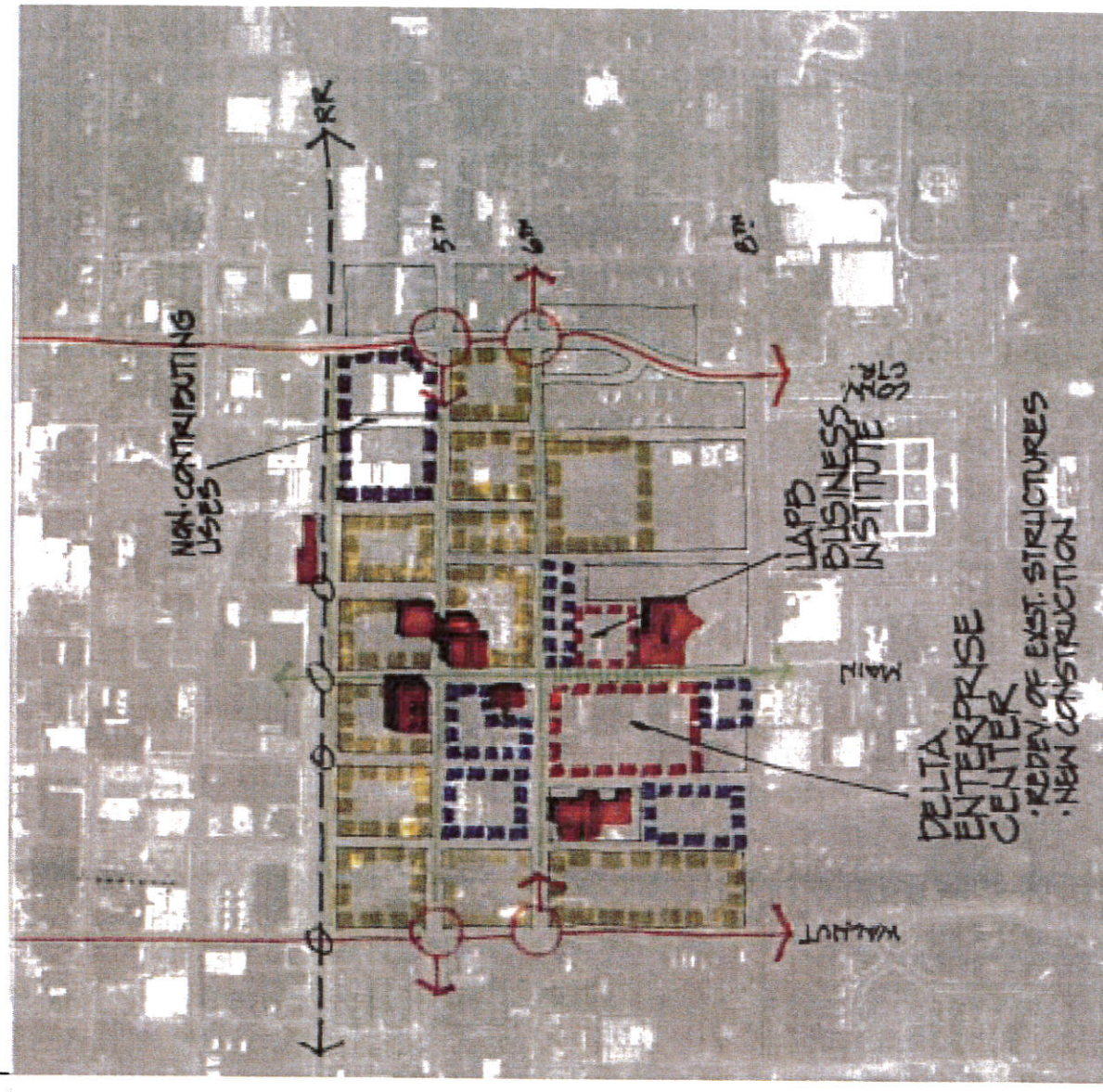
3. BUSINESS CENTER SUB-AREA

Proposed environment: a place where one would find

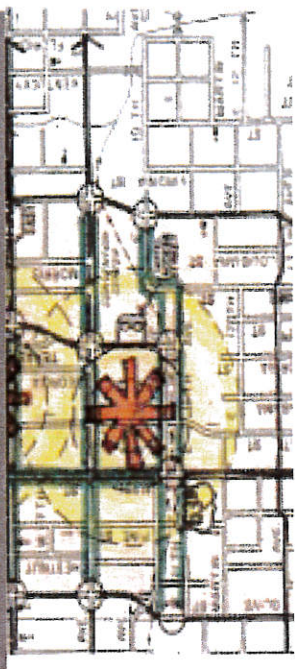
- Professional offices with a range of types and rents
- Economic development programs—such as the Delta Enterprise Institute for education and training
- A new “urban” Main Street renovated by streetscape design—furniture, lighting, public art and landscape
- Loft housing in renovated buildings, probably on the upper floors
- A renovated Hotel Pines, probably used in new ways with a mixture of uses—possibly housing, offices, community and educational spaces
- UAPB’s new Business Support Incubator facility on Main Street
- An expanded financial center
- Service retail

Strategic Project: a Delta Enterprise Institute
This project would establish a new use in the core of the downtown—a use that combines training and education with business. The project would link to existing commercial facilities as well as the new University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Business Support Incubator center. It could link to national programs and grants focused on minority business development. As the center grows it will attract related uses where new businesses can start and trainees can find job opportunities. The location for this project could be adjacent to the Hotel Pines and eventually include that building in its facility planning. This type of strategic project will benefit from the existing business of the business core of the downtown and together with them will help bring new business uses to the area.

BUSINESS DISTRICT



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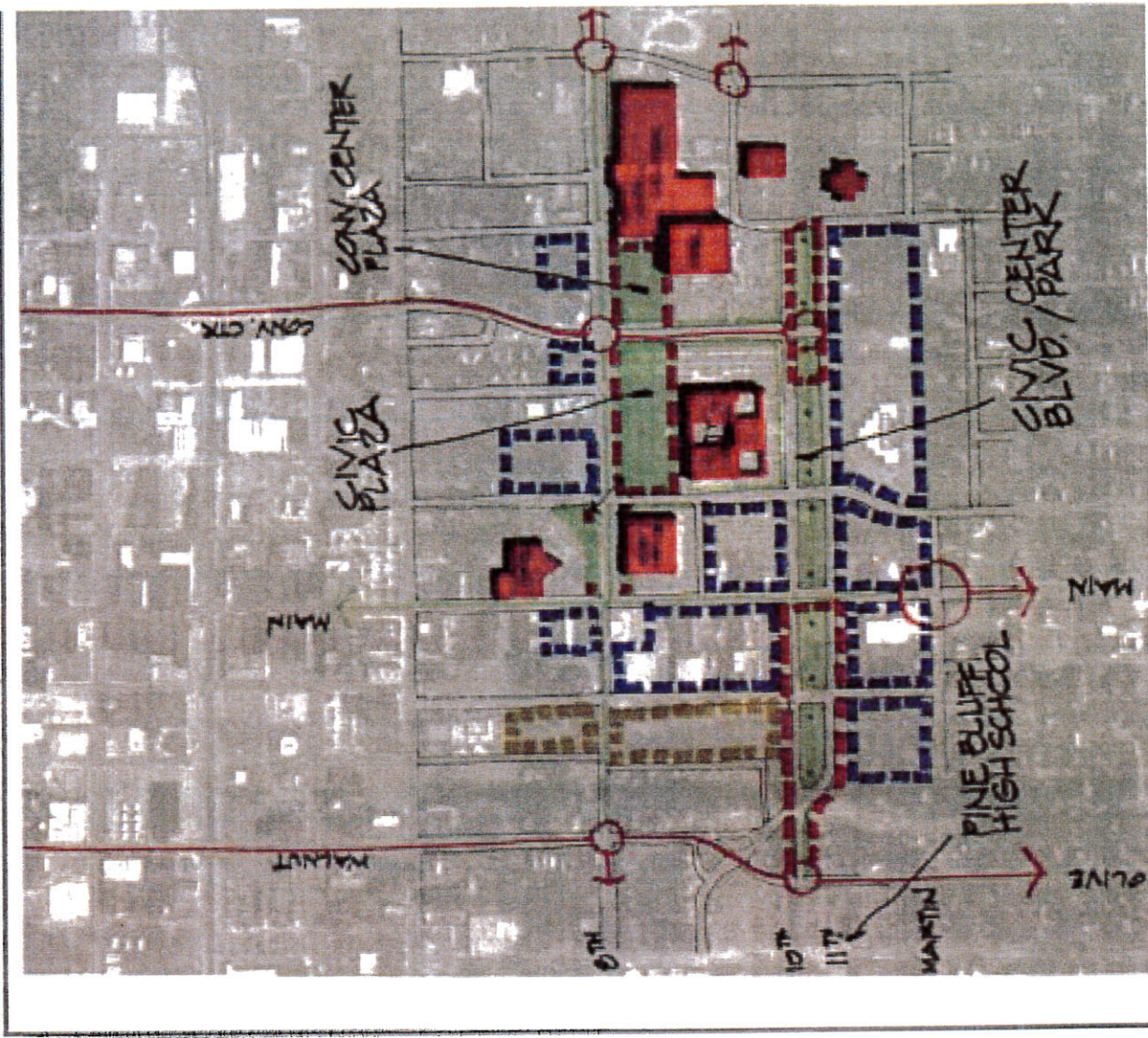
4. CIVIC CENTER SUB-AREA

Proposed environment: a place where one would find

- Landscaped green spaces with walking paths linking buildings and parking lots
- A new public plaza-the center-point and rallying place for the community
- Public art
- A special "gateway" public art feature that identifies the southern entry point into the core downtown area
- Enhanced boulevards
- Public parks and open spaces
- Major public facilities
- Arts and cultural facilities
- Professional offices

Strategic Project: a new Civic Plaza and open space. This project will establish a new grand plaza in the area where grand architectural structures like the Civic Center have been built, but without the focal point the area needs. This new plaza would become that focal point and place where the community can gather for important functions; a place that belongs to the whole community; a place for special events and festivals. Its location among Pine Bluff's main public buildings and its use as a new gathering place will help link those buildings, even attracting new development and expansion of the buildings towards it. Its location will be central to the Convention Center, The Arts and Science Center and accessible from Convention Center Drive and Main Street. This strategy is two fold—providing a civic place to instill pride and a place to help unify the public buildings of the area.

CIVIC CENTER





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PHASE 4 – THE ACTION PLAN

A. Background

We have based this action plan on the premise that actions, in the form of policies and political action, and not just a listing of potential projects are required. The following policies are written as the first step, given acceptance of the concepts, the framework plan and strategic projects. By initiating concepts and igniting political will, they are intended to lead to actions, which, in the course of their development will move the downtown toward the stated Vision.

Policies and actions are written at two related scales one larger, one smaller. General Policies are written at the larger scale –they apply to the overall downtown area and its related total framework for redevelopment Sub-Area Policies are written at the smaller scale—they apply to the particular and individual sub-areas of the downtown, and their particular projects.

Following each policy is an articulated action. Action statements explain procedures and concrete steps that can be (should be) taken to realize a certain policy. All recommended actions are based on a one-to five-year time frame.

B. General Policies for Downtown

POLICY ONE

Lake Pine Bluff

Recognize Lake Pine Bluff as a major natural amenity in the heart of the city, a reminder of the city's river history, and a highly visible opportunity to create a signature development for the Reinvented Downtown.

Further

Reconnect Lake Pine Bluff to Downtown in such a way that its development helps stimulate the revitalization of the adjacent Old Towne Sub-Area.

Coordinate the plan for Downtown, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Campus and the Regional Park to support a unified development approach for Lake Pine Bluff.

Undertake a major public improvement project that will provide sites and infrastructure for the development approach to Lake Pine Bluff.

Financing Options

All policies and actions require funding. Public private partnerships for funding are the standard for urban redevelopment often in the form of incentives such as:

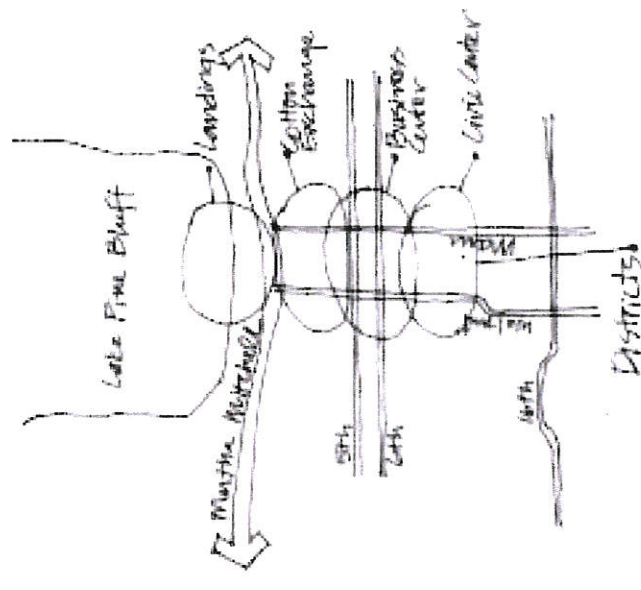
- tax increment financing(T.I.F.F.)
- tax abatements, and
- tax deferrals

Also federal grants of various types need to be researched for any funding concept.

City, county, and state public infrastructure improvements in support of particular projects are also significant financial tools.

Bond issues for particular projects with a public benefit are always an option for consideration.

Each project lends itself to various combinations of financing options. Often the quality of creative financing packages insure successful projects.



Downtown Sub-Areas

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GENERAL POLICIES

Integrate the development of Lake Pine Bluff and the attractions of the Regional Park to create a major regional tourist destination focused on the area's natural environment and the outdoor recreational opportunities it provides.

Utilize the development of Lake Pine Bluff as a stimulus for the private revitalization of lakeside residential areas.

Actions

Create a Lake Pine Bluff Development Committee to oversee the process of obtaining approvals, preparing plans and designs, securing financing, attracting private partners and managing the operations of future lake facilities and programs.

Prepare a Lake Pine Bluff Development Plan and present it for approval to state and local governments.

Identify the components of a Phase 1 Development project and proceed with its design implementation.

POLICY TWO

Economic Development

Reestablish downtown as the economic heart of the region and foster its growth for the benefit of the total community.

Further

Build on Downtown's potential as a tourist destination by developing new facilities, such as Lake Pine Bluff Landings, the Old Towne Sub-Area, and Farmer's Market and closely integrating them with existing attractions and the Convention Center facilities and programs.

Promote Downtown's economic revitalization by building on four major themes: History, Recreation, Entertainment and the Arts.

Establish a basis for immediate and long-term economic growth through the creation of job training and business skill programs aimed at the area's youth and low-income populations.

Strengthen programs to retain existing businesses and attract new businesses to downtown.

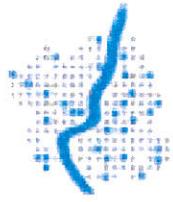
Enhance the livability of downtown and its near-in neighborhoods as an essential component of the city's economic development strategies.



Lake Pine Bluff



View of Downtown Pine Bluff



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Actions

Identify and communicate Downtown's leadership role in achieving the community's economic development objectives, and build public support for implementing its strategies.

Partner with other economic development organizations to target Downtown as an engine for economic growth.

Invest in the development of a limited number of strategic Downtown projects to initiate the economic revitalization of Downtown.

POLICY THREE

Transportation

Maintain and enhance Downtown's accessibility to the city and the rest of the region by improving the arterial network, supporting the use of transit, and clearly identifying routes to Downtown.

Further

Review the pattern of one-way streets, and return streets to two-way traffic where possible.

Increase the use of on-street parking and angled parking to help reduce the need for Downtown surface parking lots.

Encourage the development and use of bike paths connecting Downtown, especially with the UAPB and SEARK College campuses.

Develop special transit vehicles and routes to provide convenient access for tourists and workers within the Downtown Area.

Develop alternative designs for the Martha Mitchell Expressway that will permit pedestrian crossings and barrier-free right-of-way edges in Downtown.

Actions

Review and modify the Pine Bluff Area Transportation Plan as needed to support the City's vision for Downtown.

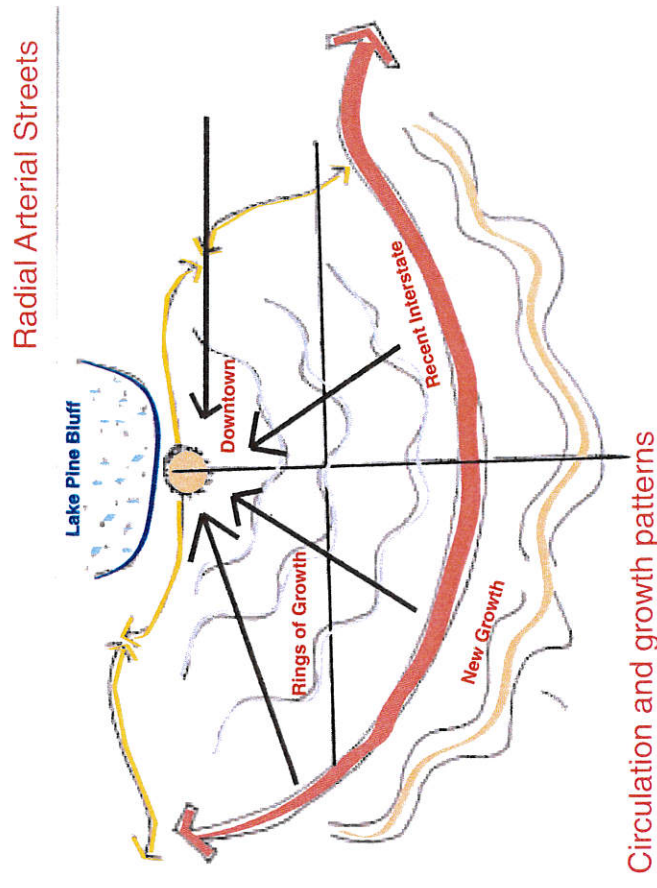
Begin discussions with the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department on modifications to the Martha Mitchell Expressway.

Develop parking plans for each of the Downtown's sub-areas.

GENERAL POLICIES



Public meeting to review general policies



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Reinventing Downtown Pine Bluff



POLICY FOUR

Arts, Culture, and Entertainment

Expand Downtown's role as the region's arts, culture, and entertainment center by building on existing institutions and programs.

Further

Extend the successful Mural Program to outlying areas, perhaps as billboards, to help expand the identity and awareness of Downtown throughout the community.

Increase the presence of the Arts and Science Center of Southeast Arkansas in all areas of Downtown through arts festivals, exhibits and temporary public art installations.

Develop an African-American History Museum as a major community facility, attraction and educational resource.

Promote the renovation of the Saenger Theatre as a focus of performing arts activities Downtown.

Encourage the development of new entertainment venues and build on the city's heritage of blues and jazz performers.

Actions

Explore opportunities to provide living/working spaces for artists in Downtown buildings.

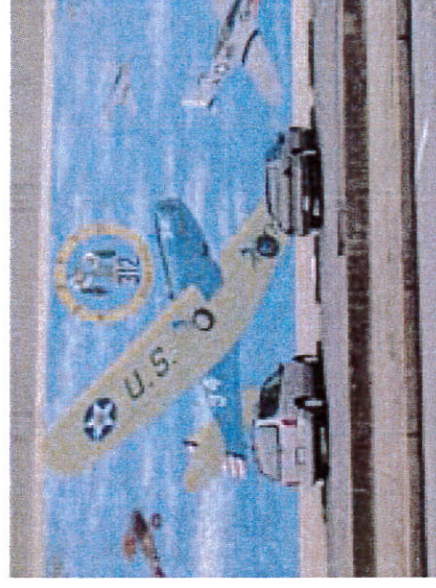
Involve area schools in creating a student art space/place Downtown.

Develop programs to encourage and assist private businesses in the acquisition and placement of public art Downtown.

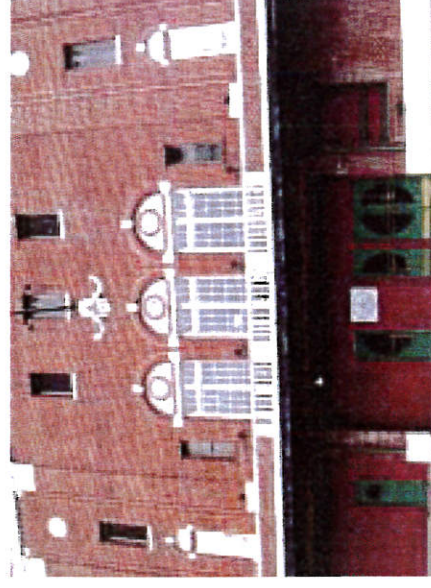
Install banners, signage and graphics as streetscape elements to promote the city's arts related facilities and events.

Identify sites for an outdoor amphitheater facility on Lake Pine Bluff with easy access to Downtown.

GENERAL POLICIES



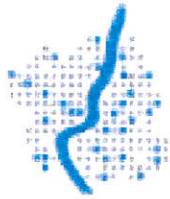
Existing mural



Saenger Theatre



Pine Bluff - Jefferson County Historical Museum



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POLICY FIVE

Historic Preservation

Preserve and restore downtown's historic and architecturally significant buildings and places.

Further

Maintain Main Street's historic character by encouraging adaptive reuse of existing structures and new construction that is compatible with the scale and quality of the existing buildings.

Encourage the maintenance of structures that may not be historically significant but which contribute to the Downtown's historic building fabric.

Provide landowners and prospective developers with information and assistance regarding tax and other incentives for the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

Develop the Old Towne Sub-Area as the city's historic core, using period streetlights and street furnishings that enhance the area's character.

Actions

Prepare a detailed survey of the Downtown's significant structures evaluating their current condition, state of deterioration and risk of loss.

Formalize an organization that monitors the condition of Downtown's historic assets and provides the City with an annual status report.

Analyze the various legal approaches that protect and encourage historic preservation and develop recommendations that support the community's vision for Downtown.

POLICY SIX

Education and Youth

Expand educational opportunities to meet the needs of all citizens, with special emphasis on youth and job training.

Further

Support a Downtown presence for SEARK College and University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff in the form of programs, academic facilities and housing.

Encourage partnerships between education and business aimed at improving opportunities for learning and economic advancement.

Continue supporting UAPB's efforts to establish an information and technology program in Downtown.

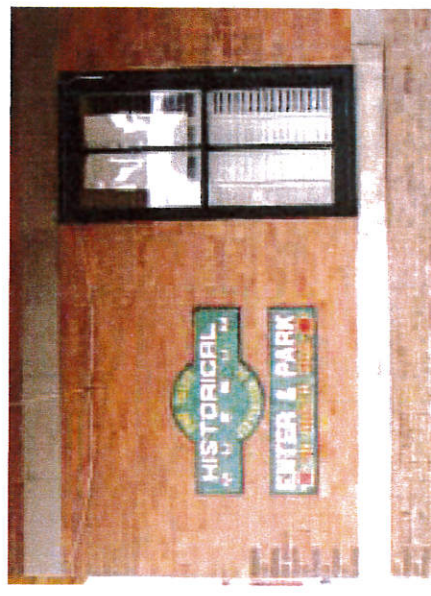
Actions

Develop programs that employ youth in a variety of tasks that support Downtown's revitalization, such as tourism aids, events support and maintenance of a clean and green Downtown environment.

GENERAL POLICIES



View of historic Masonic Temple



PINE BLUFF



GENERAL POLICIES

Explore opportunities for work/study programs involving community businesses and industry.

Develop community recreational programs for youth that more fully utilize the resources of the Regional Park.

Identify existing vocation/technical training programs and evaluate their expansion to Downtown locations.

POLICY SEVEN

The Public Realm and Natural Environment

Celebrate the civic nature of Downtown by supporting good design in all public and private projects, enhancing the appearance of public facilities, keeping the public environment clean and green, and increasing access to parks and nature areas.

Further

Expand and maintain Downtown's public facilities and parks as a visible expression of community pride.

Evaluate the design of all public improvements in terms of their potential to foster private investment and increase land values.

Develop Lake Pine Bluff as Downtown's premier natural amenity and promote its integration into the everyday activities of the area.

Enhance the identity of the Civic Sub-Area as the southern anchor of Downtown and promote its public character through additional parks, plazas and public art.

Create programs that maintain a clean environment Downtown by discouraging littering and providing increased litter removal.

Extend the environmental/educational programs of the Nature Center to other parts of Downtown.

Continue to work with the Federal Railroad Administration to consider ways to reduce noise and other disruptions caused by Downtown railroad traffic

Action

Monitor water quality in Lake Pine Bluff and report on its suitability for fish habitat.

Develop an urban street tree program for Downtown.

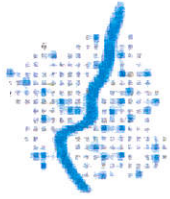
Provide interpretive exhibits throughout Downtown that deal with the history and importance of the region's environment.



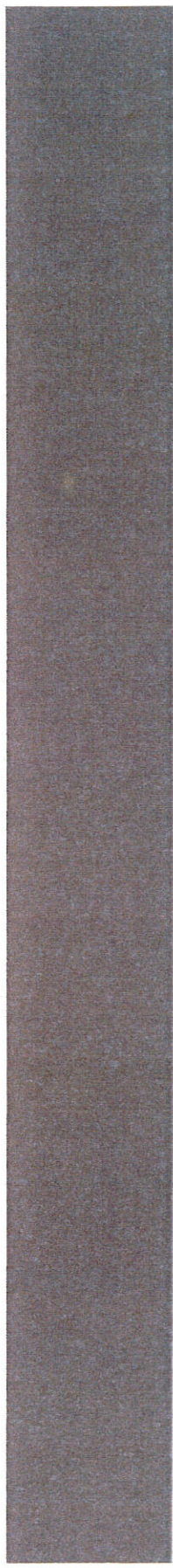
View of Pine Bluff's murals



View of Pine Bluff's murals



PINE BLUFF



POLICY EIGHT

Urban Design

Enhance downtown as an active, 24 hour, livable environment where the community comes to work, play, and celebrate its heritage.

Further

Create a rich and enjoyable environment for pedestrians throughout Downtown, a place to walk, interact and feel a sense of community.

Promote the development of Downtown as a collection of distinct districts, each with its own scale, character and uses.

Develop Main Street as the physical and symbolic linkage that connects the Downtown's districts and supports their interaction.

Signify the entrances to Downtown by developing gateways at major points of access, through the use of landscape, graphics and/or public art.

Encourage Downtown development that results in a dense concentration of buildings and activities, an essential ingredient and distinguishing feature of successful urban environments.

Build a new icon for the community and the new image of the reinvented Downtown through the design possibilities inherent in the development of the Lake Pine Bluff Landings and its relationship to the historic Jefferson County Courthouse.

Actions

Place utilities underground as development opportunities and/or public projects present themselves.

Establish a Downtown walking tour that identifies historic structures, museums and public art and murals.

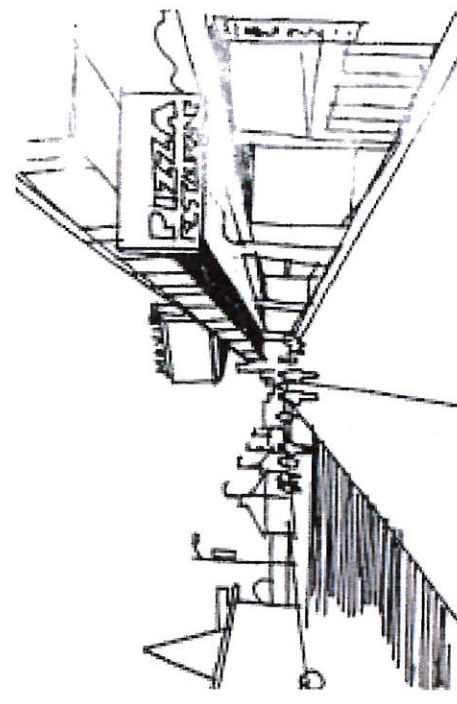
Develop design guidelines that encourage pedestrian activity on the street while providing environmental features that mitigate the seasonal extremes of the weather.

Develop a Downtown Streetscape Plan that specifies paving treatments, street trees, lighting, signage and street furniture for streets of special civic importance.

GENERAL POLICIES

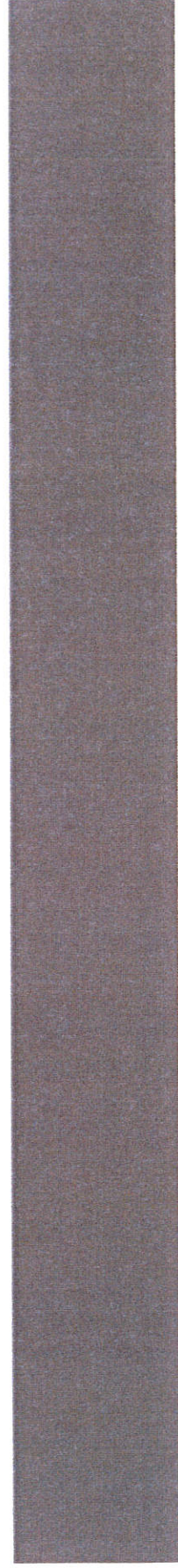


Historic Civil War Memorial at Courthouse



Sketch of urban designing criteria of Downtown Pine Bluff

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POLICY NINE

Housing

Increase the downtown residential population by developing loft housing in underutilized commercial structures and enhancing the desirability of near-in neighborhoods.

Further

Investigate the opportunities to develop student and artist housing Downtown.

Address the problem of Downtown's homeless population.

Recognize that security and the perception of security are major obstacles to attracting people to live Downtown and develop programs that increase the visibility and availability of police in the area.

Actions

Analyze the existing Downtown building inventory to identify and quantify the potential for loft housing conversions.

Work with University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff to identify and quantify the current and projected demand for off-campus housing.

Develop a Housing Plan that identifies strategies and locations for housing initiatives in Downtown as well as the near-in neighborhoods.

POLICY TEN

Plan Review

Annually review the downtown framework plan and report to the City Council on progress toward its vision.

Further

Ensure that the vision for Downtown remains an active concern of the public and of public officials.

Revise the Action plan as necessary to reflect completed projects, new opportunities and changing conditions.

Actions

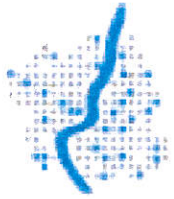
Present the Downtown Framework Plan along with its Action Plan Policies to the City Council for adoption.

Identify the organizations and entities concerned with the Downtown, authorize them to shepherd the plan and provide them with the resources to proceed.

GENERAL POLICIES



Existing streetscape



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C. Sub-Area Policies

Policies and actions are written at two related scales one larger, one smaller. General Policies are written at the larger scale—they apply to the overall downtown area and its related total framework for redevelopment. Sub-Area Policies are written at the smaller scale—they apply to the particular and individual sub-areas of the downtown, and their particular projects.

Landings Sub-Area Policies

The Landings Sub-Area offers tremendous potential as a regional tourism and outdoor recreation attraction, and its development is key to Reinventing Downtown.

Further

Develop the entire perimeter of Lake Pine Bluff as a community recreational amenity, with physical linkages to Downtown, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and Regional Park.

Develop a pedestrian at-grade connection across Martha Mitchell Expressway centered on the Jefferson County Courthouse.

Animate the Lake by providing boat rentals, fishing piers, water features, nighttime lighting, entertainment venues and similar attractions.

Develop The Landings on Lake Pine Bluff as a major retail facility focused on outdoor recreation activities such as hunting, fishing, boating and archery.

Develop parking and other shared facilities for The Landings and the Regional Park in the low areas between Regional Park Drive and the southeast corner of Lake Pine Bluff.

Develop a more expansive South Lakefront Park by increasing the width of the land area between Martha Mitchell Expressway and the existing lake shoreline.

Promote the Nature Center, Softball Complex, Harbor Oaks Golf Course, and Lake Langhofer, along with the proposed Landings project, to create a larger, unified regional recreation destination.

Develop an east gateway to Downtown and to The Landings/Regional Park Complex at the intersection of Martha Mitchell Expressway and Regional Park Drive/Convention Center Drive.

Support the future redevelopment of the area adjacent to and west of Lake Pine Bluff as a medium to high-density residential neighborhood with strong connections to Downtown and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff campus.

Actions

Prepare a survey of Lake Pine Bluff environmental and regulatory conditions in support of a detailed development plan.

Prepare a survey of lakeside neighborhoods in support of a neighborhood development plan.



View of Pine Bluff Lake Front

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Old Towne Sub-Area Policies

The Old Towne Sub-Area's historic character, public significance, and current level of investment are a solid basis for the Sub-Area's future growth and development as the city's arts, culture, and entertainment center.

Further

Develop a permanent Farmer's Market facility in the area north of The Reynolds Center to serve as the initial impetus for the sub-area's revitalization.

Support the creation of a Performing Arts Complex that includes the Saenger and Community Theatres.

Redevelop the property currently used by the Farmer's Market as a public parking facility with a connection north through the western portion of The Reynolds Center site to the new, proposed Farmer's Market facility.

Develop a pedestrian zone with streetscape improvements around the Jefferson County Courthouse that ties Main and Barraque Streets to the Lake Pine Bluff landing development.

Develop a West Gateway to Downtown at the intersection of Martha Mitchell Expressway with Walnut Street.

Expand the Public Art Experience within the Sub-Area by developing public art statements or "art pieces" at the intersections of Barraque Street, Second and Third Avenues with Walnut Street, and develop the railroad crossings on Fourth Avenue at Walnut Street, Pine Street, Main Street and Alabama Street as public art projects.

Develop the north side of Fourth Avenue as a Linear Museum, incorporating the existing historical museum and including a proposed African-American history museum and a satellite facility for the Arkansas Railroad Museum, perhaps in the form of a railroad car interactive exhibit.

Support the redevelopment of existing buildings for entertainment and specialty retail uses on the ground floors and office and loft residential uses on upper floors.

Actions

Create a Farmer's Market Development Committee to begin design and financing plans for a new permanent facility.

Begin discussions with the Jefferson County judge to explore design alternatives for a pedestrian zone connecting the Old Towne Sub-Area and the Courthouse to Lake Pine Bluff.

Begin discussions within the community regarding the creation of an African-American History Museum.

SUB-AREA POLICIES



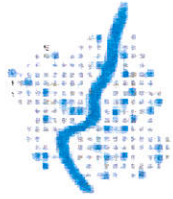
The Reynolds Center site



View of historic Masonic Temple

Begin discussions with the Arkansas Railroad Museum regarding a satellite location in the Old Towne Sub-Area.

Develop design guidelines for the Old Towne Sub-Area that describes the character and qualities to be sought in all public works, new construction and renovation projects in the area.



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Business Sub-Area Policies

The heart of the downtown Business Sub-Area centers on Main Street between Fourth and Seventh Avenues and should be revitalized by developing new institutional, office, residential, and commercial uses within the fabric of the significant existing buildings.

Further

Develop the Delta Enterprise Institute as a nationally sponsored undertaking to create business expertise and economic advancement within the Delta's minority population.

Develop a Downtown Campus environment for the Delta Enterprise Institute that is focused on Main Street between Sixth and Eighth Avenues, possibly including programs like the UAPB Information Technology Program that utilizes existing buildings with new in-fill construction.

Redevelop the Hotel Pines as a mixed-use project and major anchor for the Business Sub-Area's revitalization.

Improve Fifth and Sixth Avenues between Walnut Street and Convention Center Drive with streetscape enhancements that recognize their role as Downtown's primary connections to the community and region.

Prohibit surface parking lots fronting Main Street and the Business Sub-Area's major corridors that are detrimental to maintaining an urban, pedestrian oriented environment.

Actions

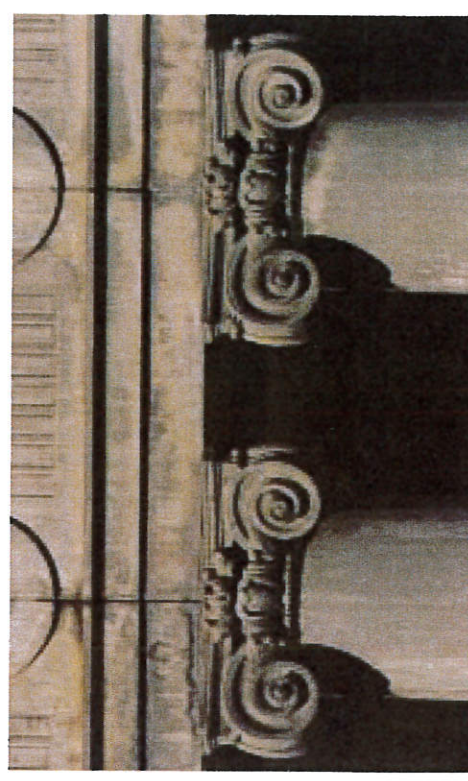
Create a Delta Enterprise Institute Committee to begin developing program descriptions and grant applications for the program and to solicit the support of the state and national congressional delegations in the effort.

Develop design guidelines for new construction in the Sub-Area that recognize the need for density, existing architectural character, and an active street environment.

SUB-AREA POLICIES



View of Downtown Pine Bluff



Detail of Pines Hotel

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Civic Center Sub-Area Policies

The Civic Center Sub-Area should be enhanced as the focus of the community's governmental activities, as a place of public pride, and as a desirable location for new private office development.

Further

Develop a Civic Plaza immediately north of the Civic Center and bordering Eighth Avenue to be the community's most significant public space, linked to Main Street and the Arts and Science Center to the west and to the Convention Center to the east.

Modify the landscaped area at the northwest corner of the Convention Center property to serve as an outdoor extension of the convention facility with strong connections to the proposed Civic Plaza to the west and the convention hotel to the south.

Enhance Eighth Avenue between Main and Missouri Streets with public art and streetscape treatments that recognize its role as the Civic Center Sub-Area's front door.

Develop the Civic Center Boulevard as a major public open space and incentive for private development by extending Tenth and Eleventh Avenue west to connect with Olive and Walnut Streets at Pine Bluff High School and east to the intersection with Tennessee Street.

Support the development of new office projects north of Eighth Avenue and south of Eleventh Avenue.

Develop the intersection of Main Street and Martin Street as the South Gateway to Downtown.

Actions

Develop design guidelines that reinforce the civic character of the Sub-Area and enhance the public significance of its buildings and open spaces.

Begin to utilize the open area of the Civic Center for public events and festivals and to coordinate special activities with the Convention Center and the Arts and Science Center.

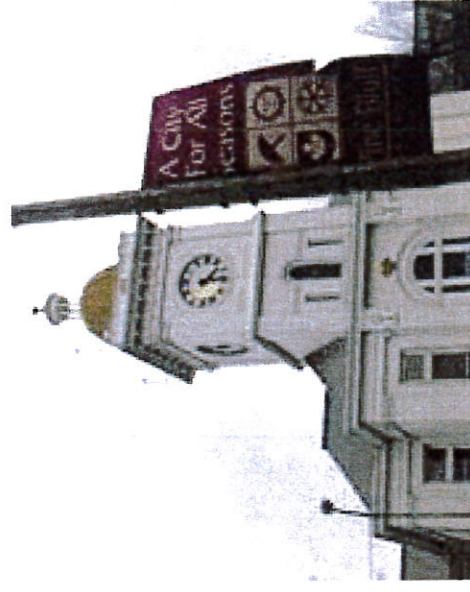
Study alternatives for the extension of Tenth and Eleventh Avenues west of Main Street and discourage/restrict development within the proposed right of way.

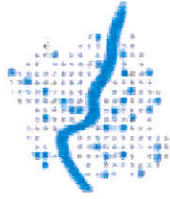
Prohibit the development of any new parking lots fronting Eighth Avenue between Main Street and Missouri Street.

SUB-AREA POLICIES



View of Pine Bluff's Courthouse





PINE BLUFF

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Community Support Group Chair
Community Support Groups are:
City of Pine Bluff
Economic Development Alliance
Fifty for the Future
Jefferson County Quorum Court
Jefferson Regional Medical Center
Pine Bluff National Bank
Simmons First National Bank
Trinity Foundation
Alliance Task Force for Urban Growth and Development
Individual members and their organizations are listed on page 8.

References:

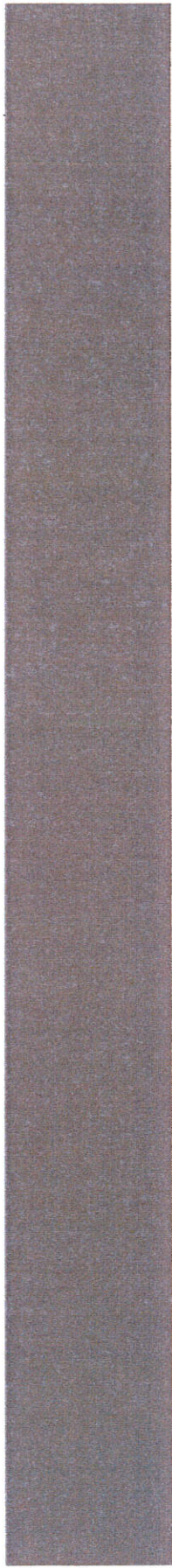
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UALR Urban Studies and Design Staff

UALR Urban Studies and Design is a program of the Department of Political Science of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. It was established with a grant from the Donaghey Foundation, and support from the State of Arkansas.

UALR Urban Studies and Design's mission is to provide academic instruction within the University and education among the broader community about the built environment and how its growth and change can be planned to create a better place to live.

UALR Urban Studies & Design reinforces the interactive mission of UALR as a metropolitan university by providing instruction in urban studies and design through the development of interactive educational projects located in the state's neighborhoods, communities, and regions. Students, professionals, and community leaders collaborate and learn about community design in the urban landscape through collaboration on these projects.

expand the definition and awareness of urban design and studies through demonstration, projects, research and education;

provide opportunities to civic leaders and design professionals to build an awareness of and for the importance of planned physical environment;

provide urban design education and case study research for architecture and urban studies students, and linking the two disciplines to the built environment;

provide a planning and design resource for communities statewide by developing a state-wide Small Towns assistance program; and

encourage interdisciplinary academic work and build community linkages by utilizing the resources of the professional and academic communities while providing technical assistance and research

Nelson Architectural Group, Inc.

The Nelson Architectural Group, Inc. is an established architectural firm committed to providing a variety of quality services to it's clients. The Nelson Group has more than 27 years of experience in the design of many diverse facilities.

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