



# PLAN BATON ROUGE PHASE II

MASTER PLAN UPDATE AND ECONOMIC STRATEGIC PLAN



AUGUST 2009



*The Honorable Melvin L. "Kip" Holden  
Mayor of the City of Baton Rouge*

Dear Baton Rouge,

The Plan Baton Rouge Master Plan continues to be a tremendous asset in the development of Downtown Baton Rouge. The City has been diligent in the plan's implementation and has completed 80 percent of the recommended projects. These accomplishments can be seen throughout downtown and across its skyline.

Now, after ten years, it is my distinct pleasure to share Plan Baton Rouge Phase Two, an economically-based urban design vision and implementation plan for the next phase of development in Downtown Baton Rouge. Plan Baton Rouge Phase Two builds upon the original Plan Baton Rouge with the overarching goal of making downtown a more vibrant place to live, work, shop, dine, learn and play.

The Plan recommends alternative development incentives to encourage investments that will support, enhance, and leverage new projects, as well as introduces new strategies for incentivizing different types of development. It recommends specific residential, commercial, mixed-use, public space and infrastructure developments. It includes strategies for adding housing downtown, improving regional mobility and access, and "greening" downtown. It also calls for the enhancement of existing cultural and social hubs, as well as identifies new assets that will help attract more people to downtown.

As Mayor, I encourage each of you to take ownership in this project and claim it as your own. Working together, we can build upon the current momentum and continue down the path to making Baton Rouge America's next Great City.

Sincerely,

Melvin L. "Kip" Holden  
Mayor-President

PREPARED FOR:



The Honorable Melvin L. "Kip" Holden



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Parish of East Baton Rouge

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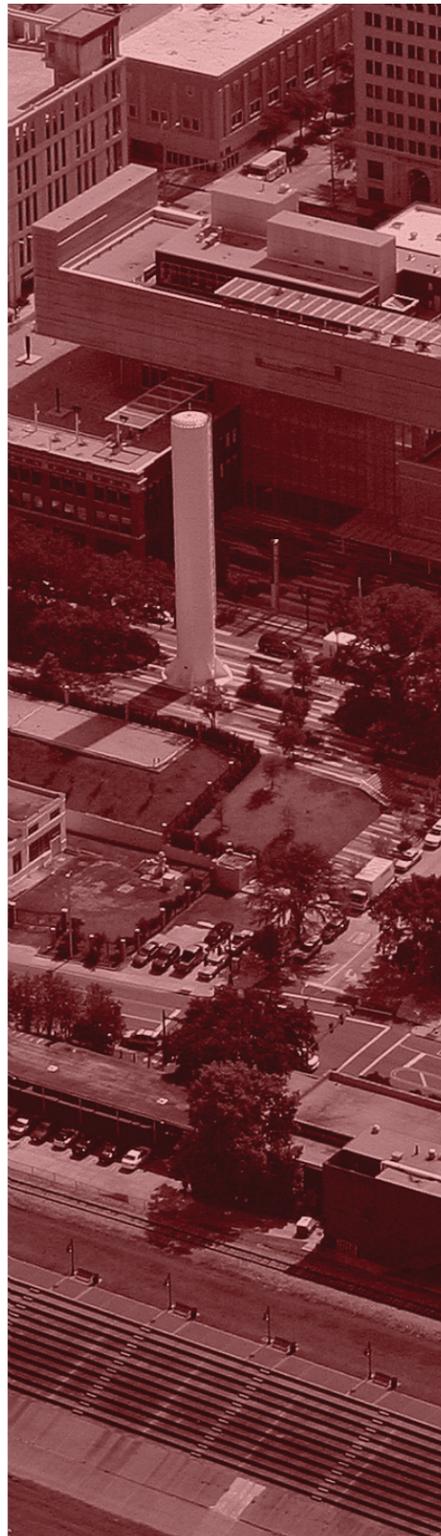
# PLAN BATON ROUGE PHASE II: MASTER PLAN UPDATE AND ECONOMIC STRATEGIC PLAN

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Executive Summary



*Plan Baton Rouge*, now in its eleventh year of implementation, attracted nearly universal enthusiasm for the task of recasting Baton Rouge's downtown as a more active, livable, enjoyable place. A large number of the Plan's proposed projects have been realized, and eagerness for further wise planning and investment has only grown. Downtown Baton Rouge today is a much more vibrant, successful place – but it still awaits the initiatives and improvements that would make it a truly remarkable city center, and source of pride throughout the greater metropolitan area. The purpose of this plan update – *Plan Baton Rouge II* – is to maintain the momentum created by *Plan Baton Rouge* (PBR); to fulfill some of its yet to be realized aspirations; and to establish a more robust set of implementation strategies to facilitate the continuing improvement of the downtown and its adjoining neighborhoods.

Among *Plan Baton Rouge's* 1998 recommendations was the creation of 300,000 square feet of new commercial and restaurant space along the Third Street corridor, in part to help catalyze construction of considerable additional downtown housing. While several new restaurants, the Shaw Center, and the Hilton Hotel have answered that suggestion and helped to transform the downtown, too little downtown housing or retail space has followed. It has become clear, even preceding the current economic downturn, that the City must offer new financial incentives and regulatory mechanisms to fulfill the goal of creating more residential, commercial and entertainment uses for the downtown.

A still broader mix of businesses, residents and attractions in Baton Rouge's downtown will invigorate the regional economy and local economies. Urban centers with a rich mix of uses, that cater to pedestrians with well-maintained and plentiful amenities, drive economic growth by attracting new businesses, increasing consumer spending, drawing additional residents, and holding

visitors for longer visits. A more successful downtown will make a better economic, commercial, cultural and civic center of both the East Baton Rouge Parish and the larger region.

Downtown Baton Rouge is already a significant regional asset. It serves as the center of state and parish government with approximately 20,000 workers associated with both government entities. The City should further integrate these employees into the downtown with attractions that appeal to them during the day and evening. The State continues to expand Capitol Park with the planned construction of the State Department for Economic Growth adjacent to Spanish Town, and should be encouraged in further

expansions to move its resources towards the downtown.

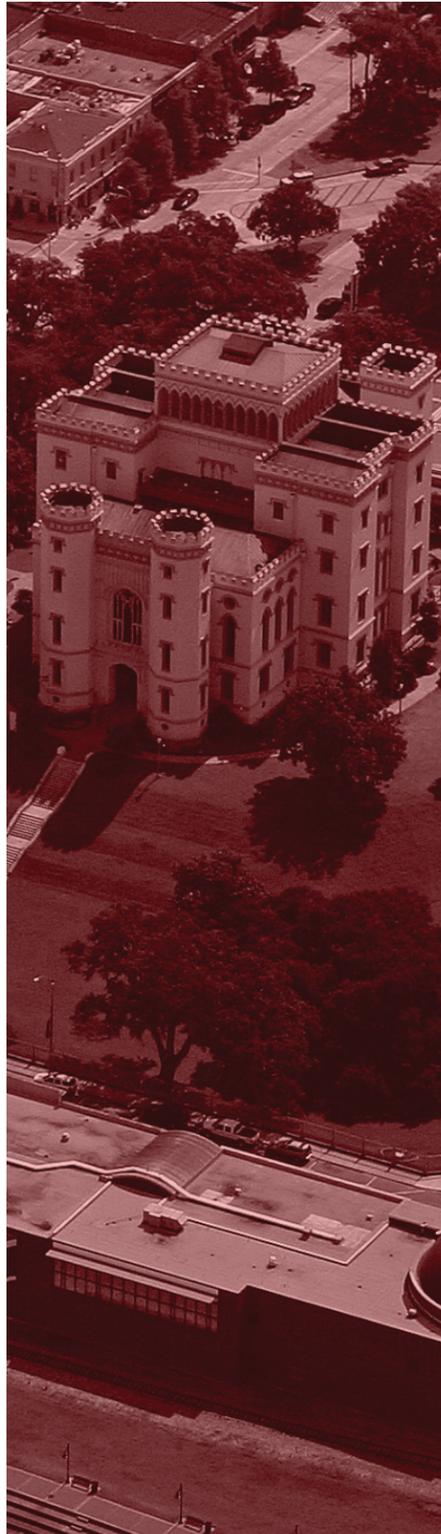
Two great universities and two casinos supply Baton Rouge with a steady stream of potential visitors. The City must do more to capture these visitors, extend their stay and invite them to partake of other attractions in the downtown. Furthermore, the universities, with their faculties, staffs, and students, represent both a consumer base for the downtown, and a generator of professional expertise and innovation for the local economy. Ties to the two campuses should be strengthened both through physical connections and through joint venture projects that could bring academic, research and/or athletic functions closer to the downtown.



Baton Rouge Parish map

*Plan Baton Rouge II* builds on the success of the first plan but is also informed by the many planning efforts that have been underway since 1998. Many of the unrealized recommendations from those plans warrant new consideration, and indeed have made their way into this document. *Plan Baton Rouge II* also relied on six months of public participation in various forms, including interviews with stakeholders, a public lecture by Alex Krieger, and public presentations and workshops.

	INITIATIVE/GOAL	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT TERM ACTIONS STEPS [1-2 YEARS]	MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS STEPS [3-5 YEARS]	LONG TERM ACTIONS STEPS [5-10 YEARS]
GREEN	PLAN AND MAINTAIN AN URBAN FOREST	Public Works/ DDD	STREET TREE CONDITIONS SURVEY	INITIATE STREET TREE PLANTING PROGRAM	COMPREHENSIVE OVERALL STREET PLANTING
		City/DDD	DEVELOP URBAN FOREST MAINTENANCE PLAN		SUSTAINABLE URBAN FOREST
		City/DDD	DEFINE DDD ROLE IN CLEAN AND GREEN AND INCREASE BUDGET TO ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES		
		City/DDD	OVERSIGHT OF ALL NEW INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH URBAN FOREST GOALS		
	CENTRAL GREEN UNIFICATION	City/DDD	DESIGN DEVELOPMENT FOR CENTRAL GREEN WITH FIRST PHASE COORDINATED WITH RIVER CENTER EXPANSION, HOTEL AND GARAGE DEVELOPMENT		
		City/DDD	SUPPORT RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT AND ADJACENCIES	PURSUE ACQUISITION OF WATERWORKS SITE OR EASEMENT TO RIVER	BRIDGE CONNECTION FROM SHAW CENTER TO RIVER
	CAPITOL PARK EXTENSION INTO DESOTO PARK	DDD/Public Works/State	RIVER ROAD NARROWING AT STATE COMPLEX		
		Public Works/State	EXTEND CAPITOL LAKE DRIVE TO DESOTO PARK		
		City/State/Army Corps of Engineers	EXTEND THE LEVEE TOP PROMENADE TO DESOTO PARK	PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION AT STATE CAPITOL VISITORS CENTER TO DESOTO PARK	ALIVE PROJECT TO ACTIVATE WATERFRONT
	ACTIVE	DOWNTOWN-WIDE MIXED-USE, HOUSING, AND RETAIL STRATEGY	City/DDD	MEZZANINE FINANCING VEHICLE	DEMONSTRATION MIXED-USE PROJECTS
City/DDD			SURVEY AND COORDINATE EXISTING PARKING, IMPROVE SIGNAGE, AND DEVELOP STANDARDS FOR PARKING LOTS. CITY OWNED TRAFFIC MODEL	CONSTRUCTION OF SHARED PARKING RESOURCES IN DOWNTOWN, AND PROMOTE SHARED USE OF PUBLIC STRUCTURES	LIBERALIZE USE OF STATE GARAGES FOR OTHER USES. CONSTRUCTION OF GARAGES AS PART OF NEW MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS
City/DDD			TAX ABATEMENT	EXPAND TAX ABATEMENT TO OUTLYING AREAS	ASSESS OUTCOMES AND REEVALUATE TAX INCENTIVE PROGRAMS
City/DDD			DDD DESIGN OVERSIGHT ON DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT	ADOPT BASIC ZONING CODES TO REINFORCE DOWNTOWN RETAIL AND GENERAL VISUAL QUALITY	ESTABLISH PROFESSIONAL DESIGN REVIEW CAPACITY WITHIN DOWNTOWN
3RD STREET ANCHOR PROJECT		DDD	MARKETING OF EVENTS AND ATTRACTIONS, STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS IN THIRD STREET		
		DDD	ARRANGE DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE AND PREPARE RFI		
VICTORY PARK NEIGHBORHOOD		City	ACQUIRE POST OFFICE SITE	RFI FOR REDEVELOPMENT OF POST OFFICE SITE	INITIATE DEVELOPMENT: PARK, HOUSING & OFFICE SITES
CONNECTED	RE-CONNECT DOWNTOWN TO THE RIVER	Public Works/DDD	FLORIDA AT GRADE CROSSING ON RIVER ROAD	RECONSTRUCT. OF OTHER INTERSECTIONS ON RIVER ROAD	
		Public Works/DDD	RIVER ROAD NARROWING AT LASM,	EXTEND CAPITOL LAKE DRIVE TO DESOTO PARK	BRIDGE BETWEEN SHAW CENTER AND LASM
	RE-CONNECT DOWNTOWN TO ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS	Public Works	TWO-WAY CONVERSION OF ST. FERDINAND AND ST. LOUIS (WITH HOTEL AND CONVENTION CENTER EXPANSION)	SOUTH BLVD. ACQUISITION FOR FUTURE REDEVELOPMENT	TWO WAY CONVERSION OF REST OF TWO-WAYS STREETS BUT NORTH AND MAIN STREETS
		Public Works/DDD	TWO-WAY LAUREL STREET TO MID-CITY CEMETERY		IMPROVEMENTS OF GOVERNMENT STREET
		Public Works/DDD	SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS UNDER-HIGHWAY ENVIRONMENT (LANDSCAPE, LIGHTS, ART)	SELECTIVE REDESIGN OF I-110 RAMPS/MAINLINE/ FRONTAGE ROADS	RECONFIGURATION OF I-110 EXPRESSWAY AT END OF USEFUL LIFE (2020-30)
	PLAN DOWNTOWN FOR FUTURE TRANSIT	City/LSU	LSU WHEELED SHUTTLE TO DOWNTOWN	TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR NICHOLSON DRIVE	
		City/AMTRAK/CATS			RELOCATION OF CATS BUS TRANSFER FACILITY
City			LEED STANDARDS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT (BIKE PARKING) IMPROVE BIKE CONNECTIONS	RESEARCH INTERSTATE RECONSTRUCTION OPTIONS TO REDUCE BARRIER I-110	



## Critical Themes and Initiatives

As a result of the public interaction and the team's analysis, three overarching, interrelated themes guide Plan Baton Rouge II:

### - A Greener Downtown

The future of downtown Baton Rouge as a livable city center depends in no small measure on improving its public open spaces, streetscapes and places of public gathering. This includes not only the improvement and development of parks, of which the downtown has few, but also an increase in the general tree cover to both enhance the enjoyment of residents during hot summers and improve air-quality. To be 'Green' also means embarking upon more sustainable development standards from buildings to landscapes. This often begins with ensuring that stormwater is collected, filtered, and used rather than drained off buildings and paving.

### - A More Active Downtown

Currently the central downtown has fewer than 2,000 residents. Any city wishing to increase its vitality must lure more residents downtown. Baton Rouge (with a relatively small downtown as defined by the interstate highway system) must add residents to adjacent neighborhoods, such as Mid-City and Old South Baton Rouge, to activate the downtown. A healthy city requires the housing of diverse populations and income levels. Land values in the downtown make it difficult to accommodate substantial quantities of affordable housing. The City and State must consider financial mechanisms to combat the negative impact of land prices on the development of housing in and around the downtown.

### - A Downtown Better Connected to Its River and to its Neighborhoods

The barriers that separate downtown Baton Rouge from the

Mississippi River--both flood control levees and roadways--deprive the City of a major asset. Without concerted efforts to reconnect the City to the Mississippi River, as called for in a number of prior plans, the river's ability to attract people and investment will remain lost, and a great waste. Revitalized riverfronts have increased tourism in cities from New York to Austin. Extending streets and certain pedestrian paths to the river, narrowing the streets running parallel to the river and improving their pedestrian crossings, will help reintroduce the Mississippi into the daily lives of Baton Rouge residents.

The highway system not only separates downtown Baton Rouge from its river but also from its adjoining neighborhoods, whose populations could support a more active downtown. Overcoming these barriers will take concerted efforts to improve streets, sidewalks and mitigate the unsightly conditions under the highway overpasses.

## Priority Actions

The following initiatives will advance the primary goals of Plan Baton Rouge II: creating a greener, more active, and cohesive downtown.

### 1. Promote a Central Green and Plant an Urban Forest

Usable parks in downtown Baton Rouge are scarce. The collection of parks and plazas around City Hall, River Center, Galvez Plaza, Repentance Park and the Old State Capitol, lack coherence and are not particularly attractive or inviting and, therefore, are underused. Mature trees grace the historic grounds around the Old State Capitol, but the grounds are not easily accessible. The grounds adjacent to the River Center and City Hall Plaza are largely paved surfaces that offer little respite from the sun. Numerous barriers, from fences and planters to walls and stairs, limit movement through these spaces and

constrain use. Creating a Central Green will require removing these barriers; adding trees; and knitting the parks together with generous paths. The result will be an inviting series of outdoor living rooms surrounded by a variety of cultural destinations. This Central Green will accommodate a variety of uses from casual recreation to picnics or fairs; its value will become more evident as more residents live downtown. Indeed, new parks will attract new residents. With the development of DeSoto Park, and its connection to the State Capitol Grounds, the Central Green will be one of two preeminent riverfront parks benefiting the downtown. Replanting the street trees that once graced Baton Rouge will augment these parks, spreading beauty and cool shade throughout the downtown, and creating a strong visual and experiential connection between them.

Public investment strategies will help make the Central Green a reality. Funding for the important public institutions around this asset and funds to integrate the Green with its surrounding neighborhood will be essential. First steps include a comprehensive programming study to determine current and future uses of a unified park and necessary connections to adjacent cultural uses. This must be followed by a design phase that will position the City for funding opportunities to be coordinated with the River Center Expansion, Louisiana Art and Science Museum expansion, and future replacement of the Baton Rouge River Center Arena.

### 2. Make Third Street an Entertainment Corridor

Downtown Baton Rouge has an exciting, but small, cluster of museums and restaurants. The downtown needs several additional arts and entertainment anchors, such as a jazz club, movie theater or culinary museum, to attract and entertain visitors from the rest of the City and the region. Third Street, the downtown's historic shopping street, offers an excellent setting for

new cultural and entertainment venues, as its commercial energy will help extend the excitement of new attractions.

In particular, the intersection of Third and Main streets awaits a cultural or entertainment anchor. This is already an active development area: the Kress development is newly completed; the Capital One and the Commerce buildings are all in line for redevelopment in the near future. Developing a cultural anchor in this area would activate both ends of Third Street, creating a retail-entertainment spine for the downtown.

The public sector must lead this effort by acquiring sites for development, recruiting appropriate developers and operations, and initiating a wide range of support functions that will make Third Street inviting, safe, clean and supportive of a major cultural or entertainment anchor. Making the state-owned garages available for after-hours public parking will be vital to the success of any new entertainment venues, restaurants, and other retail and cultural elements of the new Third Street corridor.

**3. Make the Downtown Clean and Safe**

Any downtown development strategy requires a commitment to public safety and sanitation. Failure to make the downtown safe and clean will squander any investment in the City. In Baton Rouge, this responsibility should reside with the Downtown Development District (DDD). To ensure public safety, many cities employ an unarmed security staff that patrols downtown neighborhoods twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and is connected to the police by radio. These officers also serve as ambassadors for the downtown, offering directions and advice to visitors. Similarly, the DDD, working closely with the City, should procure sanitation services for the downtown, operating seven days a week. The DDD should be expanded and funded

to provide this service, as other similar agencies do in successful downtowns across the country.

**4. Create Financial Incentives for Developing Downtown Housing**

Developers undertaking downtown housing projects face high land prices and abundant regulations and the result is high-cost housing or none. Landowners may be risk-averse and prefer the assured revenues of surface parking, which detracts from the downtown. A revolving loan fund will provide pioneering residential developers with the low cost capital they need to supplement existing financing sources, and may allow certain pioneering projects to attain feasibility and proceed to development. Such financing support is critical to overcome the barriers to downtown housing development.

**5. Establish an Integrated Public Parking Policy and Agency**

A city must balance the enhancement of attractions downtown with market expectations such as the availability of an inexpensive parking supply. Without affordable parking, downtowns cannot compete with new development in the suburbs, where parking is plentiful. The City and the DDD should take a more active role in managing the parking supply downtown; facilitating the availability of public parking; and making the parking system coherent and accessible to visitors. Just adding to the parking supply is not sufficient. A comprehensive plan must address efficient parking management strategies, various urban design improvements, better pedestrian environments, the eventual possibility of transit, and mixed-use plans in which parking can be shared.

To accomplish this, a Downtown Parking Division should be established within either the Department of Public Works, or the DDD. A Parking Division will continuously monitor and update the

parking inventory, evaluate the effectiveness of various strategies, and provide the dynamic response appropriate for future development scenarios.

Such an entity can enforce on-street parking regulations and allow the monitoring of joint-use parking areas and leased public parking spaces on private lots. The additional parking staff will also enable the City to implement the improved parking management plan.

The City should work with the State to better utilize the existing parking garages between North Street and Main Street. Currently, the original bonds that financed the structures restrict the public use of the excess parking spaces in the garage. As these bonds expire, the City, or the DDD, and the State should document the utilization of the spaces and enable the possibility of the excess spaces to be shared by the public, including long-term leases for new infill development in downtown.

The city can immediately and cheaply increase public parking downtown by making shared-use agreements with the owners of private parking lots that have excess capacity. The city should also monitor opportunities for public parking or shared parking in new and proposed developments. The City may lease or buy rights to additional or shared parking spaces.

Church-owned parking lots present an excellent opportunity for shared-use agreements that would allow public parking on the six days per week that they are not used to capacity. For instance, a shared-use agreement with any number of downtown Churches can be used in conjunction with a free valet program to support the parking needs of Third Street. Tenants and building owners together with the DDD can help put together a valet service that would cater to downtown visitors.





# I. INTRODUCTION

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**1. *PLAN BATON ROUGE I*: ACHIEVEMENTS AND UNREALIZED POTENTIALS**

**2. RECENT PLANNING INITIATIVES: ACHIEVEMENTS AND UNREALIZED POTENTIALS**

**3. OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES OF PLAN BATON ROUGE II**

**4. THE PUBLIC PROCESS FOR PLAN BATON ROUGE II**

# 1. PLAN BATON ROUGE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND UNREALIZED POTENTIALS

## Introduction



*Plan Baton Rouge*, now in its eleventh year of implementation, inspired agreement and enthusiasm among many constituencies for the vision of a more livable downtown. As a result of that shared enthusiasm, many of the Plan's recommendations have been realized and Baton Rouge has partly transformed towards that goal.

For example, *Plan Baton Rouge* called for the reuse of the "Auto Hotel" as a cultural center for the downtown. The resulting Shaw Center for the Arts opened in 2005. The 125,000 square-foot facility features the LSU Museum of Art and the 325 seat Manship Theatre, two state-of-the-art black box theatres, as well as a contemporary art space gallery. Also located within the Shaw Center is the LSU School of Art Gallery, the LSU Museum Store, a coffee shop, and three premiere restaurants. Recently, the Shaw Center has expanded towards Third Street with loft apartments and a restaurant on Third Street. The Shaw Center has revitalized the downtown with a mix of facilities that attracts a wide range of users during eighteen hours of the day.

With the help of the City, the Wilbur Marvin Foundation, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, and local banks, Commercial Properties Realty Trust restored the historic Heidelberg Hotel at a cost of over \$70 million in renovations. The Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center, as it is now called, boasts 290 rooms, a ground floor restaurant and bar. Like the Shaw Center, and in close proximity to it, the hotel supports activity 18 hours a day.

The Kress at Third and Main and One Eleven developments have come to offer new residential options in the downtown. However, *Plan Baton Rouge* envisioned drawing far greater numbers of residents to the downtown. It advocated more downtown infill housing, but did not provide the financing guidance needed to make the vision a reality. Although some downtown housing renovations have been initiated, it is unlikely that large quantities of new construction will continue without further financial incentives.

*Plan Baton Rouge* advocated the improvement of the downtown's streets, parks, and sidewalks as part of a system of public places. The City completed the recommended streetscape improvements on 7th Street to link Spanish Town to Beauregard Town and a small parcel was purchased and cleared for the proposed "square" at 7th and Convention Streets. However, *Plan Baton Rouge* showed a larger parcel that would ease the transition from Seventh Street across Convention Street to Royal Street in Beauregard Town.

*Plan Baton Rouge* proposed narrowing Government Street from four to two lanes to create a more livable Beauregard Town Center. Today, the number parking structures at the River Center and Catfish Town with primary interstate access off of Government Street, make this proposal ever more difficult to realize. Rather than narrowing Government Street, short term improvements may have to focus on incremental pedestrian crossing enhancements until larger roadway network issues are resolved and traffic can be distributed to other corridors.

*Plan Baton Rouge* recommended that 300,000 square feet of new commercial and restaurant space be created in the downtown along the Third Street corridor. This much new retail use has not yet materialized. Only a few new restaurants and some small retailers have opened in the last few years. As with downtown housing, financial incentives appear to be necessary to realize the full potential of commercial and entertainment uses downtown.

### Why Invest in Downtown?

A strong downtown supports the entire regional economy. Successful downtowns serve as economic, commercial, cultural, and civic centers for their respective regions. Urban centers which are mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly, and well-maintained drive growth by attracting businesses, residents and visitors. Baton Rouge can maximize the public's return on its investments downtown by focusing on these symbiotic goals:

**- Critical Mass**

Denser forms of development support more workers, residents and visitors, to whom new and specialized uses can then be marketed. Public projects should be sited where they have the greatest ability to catalyze additional development. Downtowns hold the greatest potential for this cross-pollination; and downtown Baton Rouge is particularly well positioned between the State government center, LSU, the River Center, major arts and gaming attractions, and historic residential neighborhoods.

**- Continuous Activity**

A successful downtown district delivers vibrant activity across all hours of the day by joining residential and commercial uses with cultural and entertainment ones. Connecting these assets with actively programmed public spaces, high quality shopping and dining, and additional cultural and entertainment offerings will encourage government workers, business visitors, and Sunday churchgoers alike to spend more time and money downtown. Live-work-play amenities will also drive the growth of nearby residential uses; and strong commercial and cultural anchors often become regional destinations, generating additional activity.

**- Workforce Attraction**

A healthy, walkable downtown attracts and retains a creative and competitive labor pool, particularly a younger workforce. Downtown Baton Rouge’s lifestyle and amenity offerings will affect the decisions of candidates considering positions at LSU, State government or local businesses. The quality of the labor pool is in turn often the most important factor for attracting high-value businesses and creating industry clusters.

**- Public Revenues**

All municipalities face critical decisions about how to best target limited financial resources. Baton Rouge is already benefiting from its investments in the River Center, Shaw Center, Louisiana Art and Science Museum, and Hilton Baton Rouge through increased property values in their vicinities and additional

spending at nearby businesses. If sited properly, all new developments can be leveraged for the public good via taxes that take advantage of rising business revenues and property values. Increased public revenues, in turn, allow the city to invest in job creation, business incubation, housing development, streetscape improvement, zoning code adjustments, and support of entertainment and cultural attractions.

**- Connectivity**

The integration of commercial, residential and lifestyle uses into a seamless urban fabric blurs the lines between different uses and neighborhoods, creating a vibrant tapestry of activity. A vibrant downtown unleashes the economic potential of the entire city by serving as a unifying point and as the entryway to other neighborhoods. Enhancing car, bike, and pedestrian connections to downtown will ensure that the entire Parish reaps the benefits of investment.

**- Identity**

The offerings of a downtown exhibit the personality of a city. From Charleston to Austin, the master planning, building design, streetscape, open spaces, and leisure activities in downtown form the basis of a memorable brand for the entire city. Baton Rouge’s many historic buildings and growing cluster of museums and restaurants create the basis for a unique experience for visitors and a unique image to present to the rest of the nation.

**Downtown’s Core Assets**

Downtown Baton Rouge has significant core assets that, if properly cultivated, could add immeasurably to the success of the city.

**- The Center of Government**

Baton Rouge serves as the center of state and parish governments, hosting approximately 20,000 employees related to both governments. As the two governments fuel demand for downtown office space such as the newly constructed Two City

Plaza at 4th and Convention, more workers will arrive. The State continues to expand Capitol Park with the planned construction of the State Department of Economic Development adjacent to Spanish Town. Baton Rouge should further integrate these workers into the downtown with attractions that appeal to them during the day and evenings.

**- The Casinos**

Downtown Baton Rouge is also home to two of the casinos within the Parish. These two casinos, framing the downtown, bring thousands of regional visitors to Baton Rouge, and raise millions of dollars in taxes for the Parish. The City needs to do more to capture these visitors, extend the stay periods and attract gamblers to other venues downtown.

**- The Universities**

Two great universities lie within a few miles of downtown Baton Rouge: Southern University and LSU have student populations totaling over 38,000 that represent a strong consumer base for the downtown. Additionally, the two schools’ administrations and faculties, offer both a wealth of professional expertise and potential innovation for the local economy. Ties to the two campuses should be strengthened through physical connections to the Universities and through joint venture projects that could bring academic or athletic functions closer to the downtown.

**- The Downtown Development District**

Since its inception two decades ago, the DDD has provided services to support \$2.3 billion of public and private projects, and has driven far-reaching planning processes for Baton Rouge. Plan Baton Rouge II seeks to build upon these success by further activating development, enhancing the pedestrian experience, and promoting greater vitality downtown. The DDD continues to have a central role in shaping and energizing the downtown.



Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center



River Center Extension



Kress Building



One Eleven residential/office space and renovation of the Stroube’s Building



Shaw Center for the Arts

## 2. RECENT PLANNING INITIATIVES SINCE PLAN BATON ROUGE I

### Introduction

#### Plans consulted:

- Baton Rouge 2000 report & update, 1983 and 1987
- Baton Rouge Riverfront Development Plan, 1990
- Capitol Park Master Plan, 1990 and updates
- Capitol Park Interpretive Plan, 1999
- Plan Baton Rouge, 1998 updated 2002
- Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan, 2001
- Master Plan for the New River District of Baton Rouge, 2003
- Riverfront Master Plan and DeSoto Park Concept, 2003
- Downtown Visitor Amenity Plan, 2003
- Baton Rouge Riverfront Master Plan, 2006
- Old South Baton Rouge Master Plan
- North Boulevard Town Square, 2008
- Horizon Plan. Comprehensive Land Use and Development Plan [2007 update]

East Baton Rouge Parish has spent at least two decades seeking visions for a renewed downtown Baton Rouge. During this time, a variety of stakeholders have initiated numerous planning efforts, including the highly successful *Plan Baton Rouge* of 1998. Those planning efforts have galvanized appreciable improvements in downtown Baton Rouge. They have also promoted and kept alive many good ideas that have not yet been realized. Plan Baton Rouge II endorses many of these unrealized visions, while also presenting new ideas.

#### Vital Concepts

In 1990, a series of four alternative growth scenarios for Baton Rouge--both city and parish--were presented for public discussion. These scenarios illustrated varied patterns and intensities of development projected to the year 2010, and the anticipated effects of that development on land use, transportation, infrastructure, environment, population distribution, and quality of life. The Coordinating Committee and Steering Committee evaluated these four scenarios and chose a Preferred Growth Scenario. The resulting Horizon Plan, *Citizens Planning the Future*, identified a variety of goals, policies and objectives for sustainable development within the parish. The plan identified downtown Baton Rouge as a Major Regional Growth Center of the Parish, an importance it retains today. The plan also called for more affordable housing, better transit, and shared parking. These ideas, seconded by both *Plan Baton Rouge* and *Plan Baton Rouge II*, remain critical to the success of downtown Baton Rouge.

Several initiatives undertaken in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita offer valuable recommendations to Baton Rouge. The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan combined the efforts of local, state and federal partners to guide recovery and growth in the state of Louisiana over the next 50 years. The Plan emphasizes the need

to “Recover Sustainably,” “Grow Smarter,” and “Think Regionally.” Of particular note to Plan Baton Rouge II, was the perceived need to create more affordable housing options to alleviate the overcrowding that overwhelmed the Parish as a result of the hurricanes. While this problem has diminished in the last few years, affordable housing remains a Parish-wide concern.

Over the years, other plans have focused more narrowly on making downtown Baton Rouge a more comfortable, inviting environment, pointing out the need for more parks, for street furniture, street trees and other amenities to pedestrian comfort. Plan Baton Rouge II concurs in these important goals.

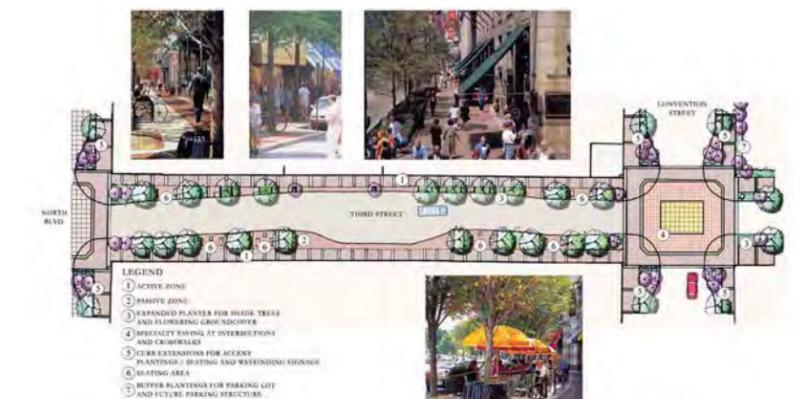
#### The Mississippi Riverfront

Throughout their planning, the citizens and civic leaders of Baton Rouge have eagerly sought a vision for the Mississippi riverfront. At least two plans of the last decade dealt with the ambitious goal of reconnecting the downtown to the river. Some enhancements to the riverfront have been made: a promenade atop the levee was completed as far as LSU. However, the riverfront remains a work in progress. The most recent plan, the Baton Rouge Riverfront Master Plan of 2006 remains entirely unrealized. It called for the creation of a major destination along the riverfront. It also proposed major modifications to Repentance Park and the Old State Capitol to unite these two spaces with a more continuous landscape treatment. The plan also reiterated one of the primary recommendations of The Master Plan for the New River District of Baton Rouge, 2003: to narrow River Road and add landscape along the levee.

In addition, the 2006 Riverfront Master Plan envisioned DeSoto Park as an extension of the Capitol complex where residents could access the River in a park setting. In the absence of an improved



Baton Rouge River District Master Plan



Downtown Visitors Amenity Plan



Proposed Repentance Park  
 AMERICA ST WALK  
 ADA ACCESSIBLE ROUTE  
 PATH + GATE TO OSC  
 GROUNDS  
 FOUNTAIN  
 (WITHOUT A POOL)  
 FOUNTAIN  
 SLOPED SHINGLES  
 SHADE-PROVIDING GROVE W/  
 CAFE/RESTAURANT PAVILION



Key Projects location and Gateways

- |                                    |                                     |  |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 01. Clements - River Park          | 07. Bogan Fire Station              | 13. Onyx Building                      |
| 02. Hollywood Casino               | 08. 5th and Laurel development site | 14. North Boulevard Town Square        |
| 03. New LED office in Capitol Park | 09. Richoux's                       | 15. River Center Expansion /Hotel      |
| 04. State Amphitheater             | 10. BREC Seventh Street Park        | 16. Garage and Hotel on St. Louis      |
| 05. Gracie district                | 11. LASM Expansion Site             | 17. One/Two Maritime Plaza Buildings   |
| 06. Richard Preis                  | 12. Water Works Site                | 18. Elementary and Police Headquarters |
|                                    |                                     | 19. New 19th Judicial Courthouse       |

DeSoto Park, the plan proposed a large city-owned park to be constructed above the River on pilings. The constraints of the railroad and lack of funding have created challenges for the City and State to implement a vision for creating DeSoto Park. In late 2008 a regional entertainment destination was proposed for the site in a bond Issue. This bond issue failed, but the site is still under consideration for a similar venue in future bond issues.

A direct outcome of The Baton Rouge Riverfront Master Plan of 2006 was the further development of the east end of North Boulevard at Town Square. This project will make improvements to the street and surrounding sidewalks in an effort to unify and enhance North Boulevard between the public library, the Old State Capitol, and the Shaw Center. Future improvements to Galvez Plaza are anticipated as part of modifications to the River Center in conjunction with a new hotel and convention center expansion.

**Concrete Achievements**

In response to the planning initiatives of the last two decades, Baton Rouge has seen major redevelopment triumphs, along with smaller, but important, park and street improvements, such as the provision of signs and information kiosks. (For a complete list of plans and their lessons see the Appendix) The creation of the highly successful River Center brought new facilities and expanded old ones. The state of Louisiana built new State Capitol offices and parking structures in Capitol Park, as recommended in the Capitol Park Master Plan of 1990. The Shaw Center for the Arts, Hilton Baton Rouge, and Louisiana Art and Science Museum are all new or expanding, making important contributions to downtown life.

**Current Activity**

Directly surrounding downtown and beyond the highways bordering downtown, two neighborhoods are poised to become more active and integral to the future success of downtown. Mid City, as a result of recent planning, has become the site for several new projects in early planning stages. To the east of Spanish Town several tens of acres lie fallow awaiting future redevelopment. Current proposals call for a number of residential dwellings, office space and parklands. North of the Hollywood Casino, John Clements has recently proposed a mixed-use project on 36 acres of waterfront property with up to 1,200 condominiums, a hotel and destination retail.

South of Downtown, the City has embarked upon a comprehensive community planning effort, resulting in the Old South Baton Rouge Master Plan (2007), for the hundreds of acres south of I-10 and north of the LSU campus. This area offers enormous potential for additional housing that will support both the downtown and the needs of LSU to house more students. The plan calls for higher density housing along Nicholson Boulevard that would support future light rail transit between the University and the downtown. Redevelopment of existing neighborhoods, such as the Hope VI developments, has begun the transition with infill housing and a new branch library.

At this writing, the Louisiana Art and Science Museum, is in the process of developing a master plan for expansion of the museum towards the north. This plan, still underway, will relocate the main entrance to the foot of North Boulevard, and extend the building to Convention Street. The expansion will primarily be for additional lobby and restaurant space, with a terrace over the existing parking areas. The terrace is intended to be publicly accessible with views to the River.



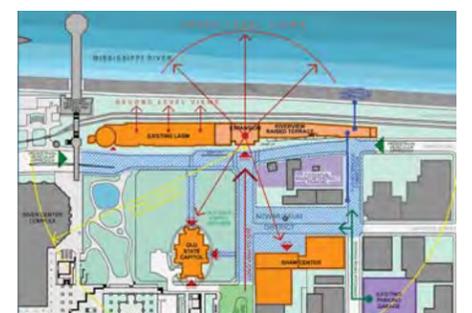
New 19th Judicial Courthouse (19)



New LED office in Capitol Park (03)



Phase III River Center expansion: convention space, hotel and parking garages (15)



LASM expansion (11)



Clements - River Park (01)

### 3. OVER-ARCHING OBJECTIVES OF PLAN BATON ROUGE II

#### Introduction



The challenge of Plan Baton Rouge II is to broaden the scope of *Plan Baton Rouge* and provide a compelling vision for the next phase of the downtown's revitalization.

The objectives of this planning endeavor include:

- Expand the notion of 'downtown' as Baton Rouge's "city center".
- Develop a comprehensive plan for downtown streets and public spaces focusing on design recommendations and programmatic opportunities.  
Advocate for open space and maximize public access to the riverfront.  
"Green" the city center by restoring tree canopies and park space and advancing environmental stewardship.  
Use the Mississippi River to catalyze new development by improving riverfront connections to downtown Baton Rouge.
- Develop a concentration of regionally significant mixed-use anchors, and enhance existing cultural and entertainment amenities.  
Increase residential population downtown area and commit to making the city center a great place to live.  
Enhance downtown's capacity to attract convention and tourism business, using the River Center campus as an asset to drive new development.  
Expand the employment base downtown.
- Develop, improve, and fund government's institutional capacity to execute plan recommendations.

- Develop financial strategies and investment incentives for bringing housing and other investment downtown; find incentives for private financial institutions to keep capital flowing. Assess the impact of differing economic strategies on downtown activity and development.

- Increase transportation options for downtown residents and visitors; improve the pedestrian's experience; and position downtown for future transit system development.  
Enhance links between downtown and abutting neighborhoods, and forge strategic connections to LSU and Southern University.

- Establish protocols and assign an agency to better manage long-term parking supply.

- Learn from previous planning initiatives, and ground development in the history of the city to preserve its heritage and shape its future around the city's unique identity.  
Plan Baton Rouge, the Downtown Visitor's Amenity Plan, the New River District Plan and the Riverfront Master Plan among others include different recommendations still pertinent for the downtown improvement.

The planning process for Plan Baton Rouge II began in October of 2008 with a series of stakeholder interviews to acquaint the team with local issues and concerns.

A public lecture at the Manship Theatre by Alex Krieger, FAIA, on November 20th, followed two rounds of stakeholder interviews. The team made its first presentation in December at the Louisiana State Museum, inviting public comment on the team's comprehensive analysis and preliminary observations. That analysis included the predominance of surface parking, the lack of downtown housing and green space, and the poor connection to the riverfront. The team presented various solutions to these problems, as well as examples of successful solutions in comparable cities for public consideration and comment. Discussion and public comment followed. Public input supported the goals of *Plan Baton Rouge* and encouraged the current team to continue on course.

The team made a second presentation in February at the Louisiana State Museum, to describe emerging concepts of the plan. A workshop followed, in which attendees formed groups to work collaboratively on specific topics such as downtown housing, public environment, entertainment, and transportation.

On March 30th, the team presented its final recommendations at the Old State Capitol and solicited comments from the public. Comments supported the plan's general recommendations. Full public comments can be found in the Appendix.

# 4. PUBLIC PROCESS FOR PLAN BATON ROUGE II

## Stakeholders/Leadership Groups Consulted

### Office of the Mayor-President

- Melvin L. "Kip" Holden, Mayor President
- Mike Futrell, Chief Administrative Officer

### East Baton Rouge Parish Metropolitan Council

- Jerry Michael "Mike" Walker, Sr., Mayor Pro Tem
- Trae Welch
- Ulysses "Bones" Addison
- Chandler Loupe
- Scott Wilson
- Ronnie Edwards
- Donna Collins-Lewis
- C. Denise Marcelle
- Joel Boe'
- Tara Wicker
- Alison Cascio
- Rodney " Smokie" Bourgeois

### Downtown Development District

- Davis Rhorer
- Jake Holinga
- James Andermann

### Baton Rouge Area Foundation

- John Davies
- John Spain

### Center for Planning Excellence

- Elizabeth "Boo" Thomas
- Rachel DiResto
- Jennifer Stenhouse

### Downtown Development District Commission

- Van R. Mayhall, Chairman
- Cheri Ausberry, Vice Chairman
- Christine Nichols, Treasurer
- Norman Chenevert, Secretary
- Derrell Cohoon
- Fran Gladden

### Downtown Business Association

- Gayle Carhahan
- Debbie Mire
- Kerry Ruiz

### Baton Rouge Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

- Paul Arrigo

### City Parish Planning Commission

- Troy Bunch, Planning Director
- Herb Gomez, Chairman
- Kathleen Callaghan
- Ervie Ellender
- Frank Muscarello
- W.T. Winfield
- Roxson Welch
- Laurie Marien
- Audrey Neighbors Jackson

### Department of Public Works

- Pete Newkirk
- Ingolf Partenheimer
- Melissa Guilbeau
- Dan Rosenquist
- Cyndi Pennington
- Steve Schurtz
- Greg Bivin

### East Baton Rouge Parish Redevelopment Authority

- Walter Monsour
- Mark Goodson
- Susannah Bing

### Baton Rouge Police Department

- Chief Jeff Leduff

### Louisiana Secretary of State

- Jay Dardenne

### State of Louisiana Office of Facility Planning & Control

- Jerry Jones
- Billy Wilson

### East Baton Rouge Parish Library System

- David Farrar

- Dan Reed

### Louisiana State University

- Chancellor Michael Martin
- Eric Monday
- D'Ann Morris
- Jason Soileau

### Southern University

- Chancellor Kofi Lomotey

### Other Stakeholders Groups:

- Businesses and Attractions Committee
- Developers/Real Estate Committee
- Major Tenants Committee
- Municipal Committee
- Financial Committee
- Arts and Entertainment Committee
- Neighborhoods Committee
- Transportation/Parking Committee

### Other:

- East Baton Rouge Mortgage Finance Authority
- Capital Area Transit System
- Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development
- Mid City Redevelopment Alliance
- OSBR Partnership
- Baton Rouge Area Chamber
- Black Chamber of Commerce
- Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge
- Spanish Town Civic Association
- Beauregard Town Civic Association
- Baton Rouge Green
- Foundation for Historical Louisiana
- Capital Region Planning Commission
- River Center
- BRASS
- North Boulevard/Town Square design team

What should be the focus of Plan Baton Rouge II? (Please rate according to importance)

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
Increased housing supply	8.6% (114)	21.6% (288)	30.9% (409)	37.9% (502)
Arts & Entertainment District	3.2% (43)	13.6% (181)	35.2% (468)	47.3% (628)
Riverfront development	4.0% (54)	11.0% (147)	28.2% (377)	56.5% (757)
More open spaces/green space	5.6% (74)	24.7% (324)	37.2% (488)	32.0% (419)
Streetscape improvements	4.0% (52)	20.6% (270)	39.7% (520)	35.1% (460)
Attract retail development	3.5% (47)	7.8% (104)	26.7% (356)	60.8% (810)
Traffic/parking issues	2.8% (37)	14.3% (191)	30.7% (409)	51.7% (688)

Focus Area	Percent	Count
More nightlife	28.9%	391
More green space	41.4%	540
Convenient parking	48.8%	637
Neighborhood atmosphere	56.8%	741
Movie theater	33.2%	433
More arts-related events	22.1%	289
Retail amenities (supermarket, pharmacy, etc.)	78.8%	1,027
<b>answered question</b>		<b>1,304</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>85</b>

Which of the elements below do you believe contribute most to a successful downtown?

Element	Response Percent	Response Count
Affordable living spaces	30.4%	423
Cleanliness & safety	48.0%	638
Great public parks	21.2%	285
Arts & Culture (museums, events, dining, etc.)	37.5%	510
Free parking	24.8%	345
Pedestrian friendliness	32.2%	448
Nightlife	28.1%	371
Retail amenities	34.1%	474
All of the above	48.0%	638
None of the above	1.3%	18
Other	2.9%	41
<b>answered question</b>		<b>1,391</b>

DDD Survey, January 2009

The Downtown Development District recently conducted a survey of downtown residents, merchants and landowners to determine those issues that most concerned or affected their outlook on the downtown and issues they wished to be addressed in the Plan Baton Rouge II process.

The results of the survey reveal concern over all of the issues addressed in the plan. The public considers Riverfront development and the desire for more retail downtown to be priorities.



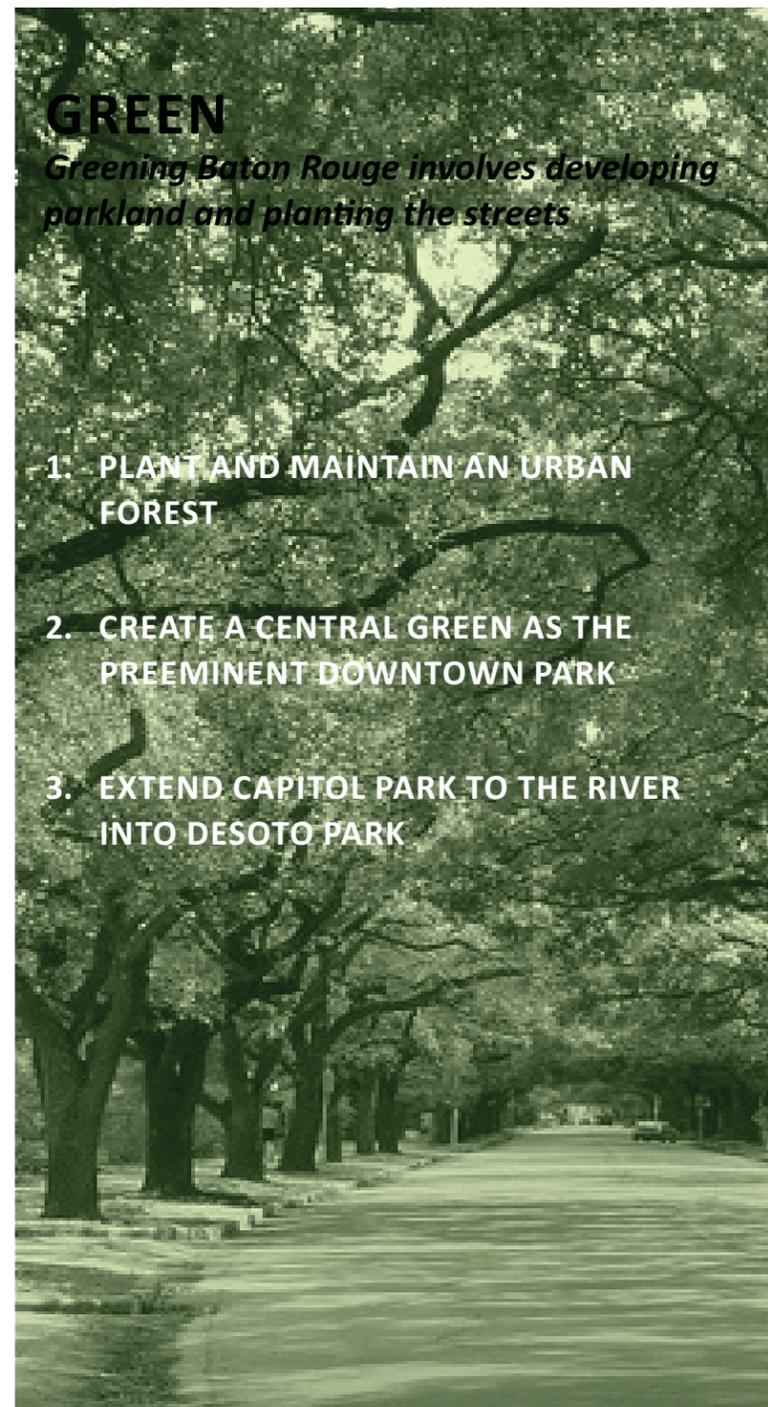
## II. THREE CRITICAL THEMES AND CORRESPONDING INITIATIVES

Recommendations in this section are organized into three general goals: to make the downtown Green, Active and Connected.

The reader should note that all three categories are interrelated. For example, a pattern of tree planting along certain downtown streets will better connect neighborhoods and will also make Baton Rouge greener.

The initiatives needed to reach each goal are broken down into implementation steps. These implementation steps include financial, physical and, in many cases, administrative recommendations.

Where possible, chapter three assigns each implementation step to an appropriate agency or entity.



# OVERVIEW

## Green

### Greening Baton Rouge involves developing parkland and planting the streets



- Complete loop trail around Capitol Lake
- Ensure publicly accessible riverfront at new development
- Improve DeSoto Park in advance of an “Alive” project to ensure connections from Levee Promenade to the north and east
- Narrow and landscape River Road to better connect the downtown and the riverfront
- Reforest the streets in the central downtown to improve pedestrian experience and reduce heat island effect
- Place a new urban park near Seventh and Convention Streets
- Integrate the series of disconnected open spaces around the Old State Capitol into a larger comprehensive Central Green that will unite the River Center, Shaw Center and the LASM into one large green park space
- Redevelop the Police Headquarters site with some open space for neighborhood uses

The future of downtown Baton Rouge as a livable city center lies in a comprehensive greening of the city: improving its parks and public open spaces and planting its streets with trees. Both strategies will make Baton Rouge more attractive and will enhance the enjoyment of residents and visitors during hot summers. Sustainable development standards for buildings and landscapes will also make for a more comfortable, less polluted Baton Rouge. Cities commonly begin their efforts at sustainability by filtering storm runoff to reduce the pollution that runs from street surfaces into rivers during and after rains. Baton Rouge may also capture stormwater and use it to irrigate an urban forest.

Downtown Baton Rouge has two historic neighborhoods in Spanish Town and Beauregard Town, which are lushly forested despite recent hurricane damage. However, the remainder of the downtown from North Boulevard to North Street lacks large or mature trees that characterize many memorable southern cities, such as Savannah, Charleston, or Houston.

#### Street Trees

A mature tree canopy will improve and transform Baton Rouge, with its semitropical climate, into an oasis of cool shade—attracting visitors and improving residents’ quality of life. Ensuring the success of the urban forest, however, requires significant investment in the infrastructure required to support healthy tree growth, and in maintaining the forest once it is planted.

#### Two Riverfront Parks

The visitor finds few usable parks in downtown Baton Rouge. Nor do those parks meet the needs of residents or workers. The current need for flexible open space—to accommodate a variety of uses from pickup frisbee games to picnics or fairs—will only become greater as more residents live downtown. Indeed, new parks will attract new residents. Plan Baton Rouge II envisions the development of two preeminent riverfront parks to enhance the city and serve a variety of uses: a Central Green and Capitol Park West.

*The Central Green.* The parks and plazas around City Hall lack coherence and are underused. Some mature trees grace the historic grounds around the Old State Capitol, but the adjacent



Green Areas in Downtown



Birds Eye View of the overall greening proposal

grounds of the River Center and City Hall Plaza are largely paved, with little respite from the sun. Numerous barriers limit use of, or movement through these spaces--from fences and planters to walls and stairs. Removing these barriers, adding trees, and knitting the park together with generous paths will create a "Central Green" for Baton Rouge residents: a gracious setting in which to spend an afternoon or evening—one surrounded by a variety of cultural destinations.

*Capitol Park West.* The magnificent State Capitol grounds, designed for viewing and strolling, could accommodate greater use. Linking the grounds to the Levee Promenade and an improved DeSoto Park would draw more people to the capitol grounds. Extending the Levee Promenade through DeSoto Park, across

River Road, and on to the formal State Capitol grounds will create a second new park: Capitol Park West, a system of green spaces worthy of a state capitol.



State Capitol Park Grounds



Pentagon Barracks and DeSoto Park



Arsenal Museum and Park



Old State Capitol Grounds

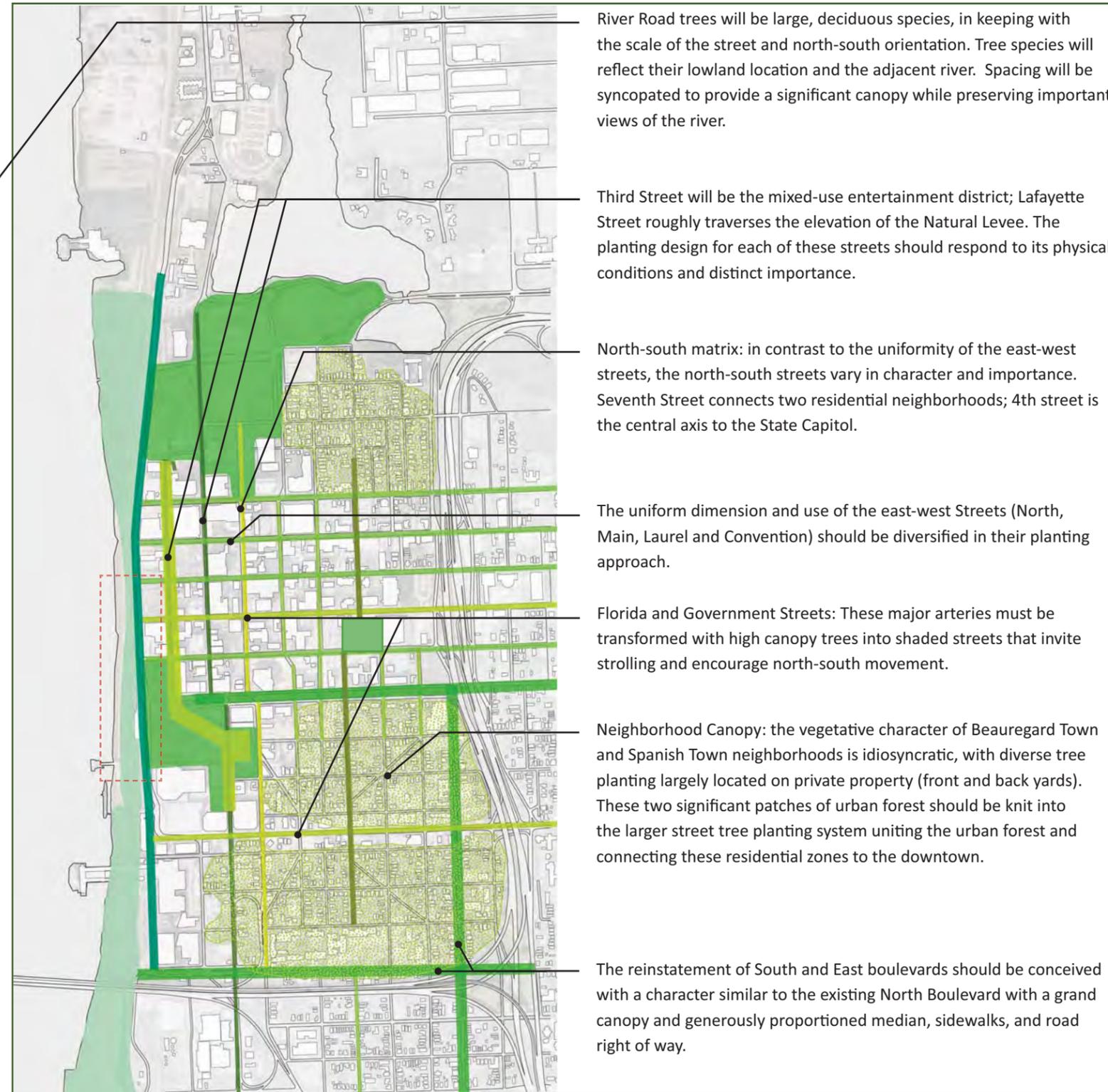


Plaza in front of Shaw Center for the Arts

# 1. PLANT AND MAINTAIN AN URBAN FOREST

## Green

### Pervasive Tree Planting of Streets and Parks



River Road trees will be large, deciduous species, in keeping with the scale of the street and north-south orientation. Tree species will reflect their lowland location and the adjacent river. Spacing will be syncopated to provide a significant canopy while preserving important views of the river.

Third Street will be the mixed-use entertainment district; Lafayette Street roughly traverses the elevation of the Natural Levee. The planting design for each of these streets should respond to its physical conditions and distinct importance.

North-south matrix: in contrast to the uniformity of the east-west streets, the north-south streets vary in character and importance. Seventh Street connects two residential neighborhoods; 4th street is the central axis to the State Capitol.

The uniform dimension and use of the east-west Streets (North, Main, Laurel and Convention) should be diversified in their planting approach.

Florida and Government Streets: These major arteries must be transformed with high canopy trees into shaded streets that invite strolling and encourage north-south movement.

Neighborhood Canopy: the vegetative character of Beaugard Town and Spanish Town neighborhoods is idiosyncratic, with diverse tree planting largely located on private property (front and back yards). These two significant patches of urban forest should be knit into the larger street tree planting system uniting the urban forest and connecting these residential zones to the downtown.

The reinstatement of South and East boulevards should be conceived with a character similar to the existing North Boulevard with a grand canopy and generously proportioned median, sidewalks, and road right of way.

The downtown already has well established green pockets in its historic neighborhoods and capitol grounds. A continuous tree canopy along principal streets will improve the pedestrian experience and promote biodiversity. A well-developed urban forest will bring comfortable shade, reduce temperatures, carbon monoxide, and noise, and help clean the air of fine particles.

The urban forest is a living system that is part of several city infrastructures: energy, biological, mechanical, cultural, social. But like other infrastructures it is a technical system that operates most effectively at maturity. To achieve an optimally functioning urban forest requires careful analysis and design, quality construction and long-term maintenance through the employment of skilled workforce.

#### Technical Challenges of Tree Planting

Securing adequate space for tree planting while maintaining an adequate right of way for pedestrians requires a tree planting strategy developed with input from a diverse team of experts, including landscape architects, arborists, traffic engineers, and city public works staff. In some cases curbs may have to be moved and lanes reduced. In other cases, such as Laurel Street, simple modifications can be made to work with the existing right of way and curb locations. However, the most costly part of planting trees is in the largely invisible infrastructure necessary to support a healthy and long-lived urban tree. Most urban trees live less than 5 years, and never have the opportunity to grow to maturity because of insufficient soil depth, constricted root zones, or inadequate irrigation and drainage.

Baton Rouge will not see a mature tree canopy on its urban streets without proper planting techniques designed for the urban condition, including a well-designed irrigation system.

#### Design Diversity

A comprehensive planting design for the downtown streets needs to be developed to guide implementation and ensure that the result is coherent and successful. Specific design considerations to be addressed include: shade; solar orientation; traffic volume; varied building conditions, canopies and setbacks; varied sidewalk



Improvements in Laurel Street: increased tree cover and sidewalk dimension

widths; programmatic requirements of buildings including visibility of storefronts; existing utilities; and infiltration of stormwater. Responding to these specific conditions will create a diverse mosaic throughout the city, shading downtown's streets and expressing the unique qualities of Baton Rouge's downtown.

**Priority Streets**

Specific streets for immediate improvement are River Road and Laurel Streets. Both the New River District Master Plan of 2003 and the Riverfront Master Plan of 2006 identified the importance of enhancing River Road. Both plans called for narrowing the street to one lane of travel in each direction, on-street parking and adding street trees on both sides of the street.

Laurel Street is also a prime candidate for greening and conversion to two-way travel. Additional width may be needed to ensure healthy tree growth. This will not be known until subsurface utility

information is understood. Both St. Ferdinand and St. Louis Streets are also slated for two-way traffic and improvements to these streets should include additional tree cover and sidewalk improvements.

**IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS**

**SHORT TERM ACTIONS**

- Map existing street trees and note their conditions
- Elaborate an urban forest plan
- Expand the arborist department and staff
- Oversee all new infrastructures to ensure compliance with urban forest goal

**MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS**

- Initiate the phased planting of the urban forest: Plant trees along Laurel Street, River Road, St. Ferdinand and St. Louis Streets

**LONG TERM ACTIONS**

- Plant street trees along all downtown streets
- Include open space for neighborhood uses in the future redevelopment of the Police Headquarters site



In order to achieve a healthy tree canopy, equal consideration must be given to the below ground growing requirements of a tree as to the above

**BEST PRACTICES:**

*Chicago*

Led by the efforts of the Urban Forest Research Unit of the USDA, city leaders across the US have made significant pledges over the past decade to expand their urban forests. The pioneering work by Mayor Daly in Chicago, and Mayor Bloomberg in New York, has established a clear model for defining, managing, expanding and maintaining our urban forests. Chicago's Urban Forest Agenda 2009 and a comprehensive Urban Forest Management Plan published in 2009 is already recognized as a critical resource for cities developing their own policies for urban forest management.

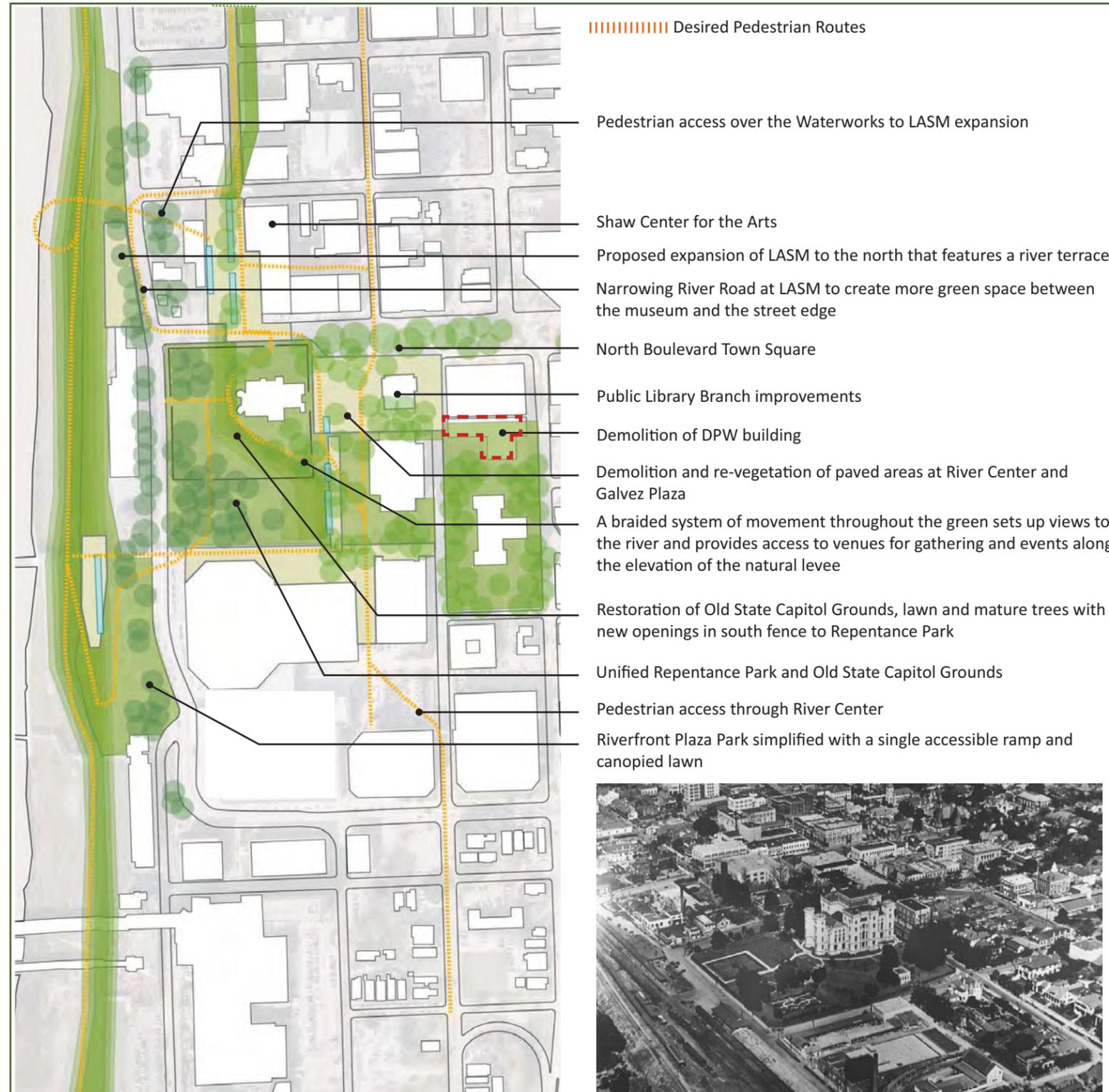
*Boston*

A report generated out of Boston's 1995 Urban Street Tree Planting Symposium remains one of the leading texts on the physical and biological requirements of trees. The recommendations were incorporated with more contemporary practices in the standards developed for the MassPort Commonwealth Flats and are a good model of prototypical urban planting standards developed for specific site conditions, soil and climate. The ongoing work of landscape architects and soils scientists in refining urban planting details and specifications continues to expand the understanding of both the challenges and benefits of planting in urban environments.

## 2. CREATE A CENTRAL GREEN AS THE PREEMINENT DOWNTOWN PARK

Green

### Unified Open Spaces Around the Area's Civic and Cultural Institutions



The Central Green draws its significance from the aggregation of cultural and civic buildings that surround it, including City Hall, the Public Library; The Old State Capitol; The Shaw Center; The Louisiana Art and Science Museum; The River Center; The 19th Judicial District Courthouse; The Theatre for the Performing Arts; and the two existing and three proposed downtown hotels. The distinct and fragmented grounds of these institutions, along with public parks of Galvez Plaza, and Repentance Park, hold great potential as a unified system of green spaces.

#### Design Components

This unique assembly of civic and cultural institutions surrounding the Central Green will be united by a number of targeted design moves aimed at unifying the space and identifying this area as the heart of downtown.

- A braided system of movement throughout the green sets up views to the river and provides access to venues for gathering and events along the elevation of the natural levee.
- The landform of the natural levee of the river, expressed most clearly at the terraces of the Old State Capitol, extends through the green to connect different elevations and provide level areas for gathering.
- A continuous ground plane of lawn throughout the Central Green unifies the formerly disconnected open spaces, stretching from the Courthouse on the Eastern boundary to the river at the west edge.
- Large canopy trees provide shade and populate the upper elevations of the green, and frame views of the river.
- At the lower elevation along River Road trees will bridge the “declivity” and will be scaled to allow views of the river both over the tree canopy and through carefully designed view corridors.
- Linear water elements will move along the upper elevation of the natural levee relating to the existing water features in the Shaw Center and orienting people to the river.

#### Linking the Natural and Man-made Levees

Perhaps the greatest barrier to reconnecting downtown to the river at the Central Green is traversing River Road and the railroad tracks to gain access to the river. This design issue was addressed in previous riverfront plans, which call for narrowing River Road



The Central Green will feature a viewing terrace over the Mississippi River

and developing additional pedestrian accommodations such as crosswalks, wider sidewalks, and fewer travel lanes. This plan endorses the Riverfront Master Plan proposal to simplify the Riverfront Plaza Park and replace its complicated steps and ramps with a single accessible ramp and canopied lawn. In addition, LASM has recently advanced a proposal to extend the Museum to the north with a river terrace that will be open to the public and accessible from River Road and North Boulevard. This additional access point will help to unify the Central Green and bring visitors closer to the river.

Within the Central Green, the waterworks site offers the only point along the upper elevation of Lafayette Street to directly view the river from the existing Shaw Center Plaza. The plan recommends converting this site to open parkland to preserve this view corridor and utilizing the Shaw Center Plaza as the location for a pedestrian bridge, spanning over River Road to the proposed LASM river terraces and the Levee Top Promenade.

**The Public Library**

This facility is a key adjacency to the Central Green and Town Square. This plan recommends further enhancements to be

considered when the library is refurbished in order to ensure the fully integration with the overall scheme.

**Re-use the Arena Site**

Long range planning should consider the eventual reuse of the Arena at the Baton Rouge River Center. The facility is in need of replacement with a larger venue for important concerts and sporting events. At such time as the arena is relocated other uses should be considered that will better animate the southern edge of the Central Green with active ground level uses on a more regular basis.

**IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS**

**SHORT TERM ACTIONS**

- Embark upon more detailed design and programmatic study of the River Center landscape to include Repentance Park and Galvez Plaza, the Old State Capitol Grounds, and new hotel and garage
- Support LASM river terrace expansion
- Redevelop library with ground level uses
- Narrow and landscape River Road at LASM
- Simplify the Riverfront Plaza with a single accessible ramp and canopied lawn

**MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS**

- Initiate Waterworks site improvements
- Demolish the Municipal Building and make it a part of the Central Green

**LONG TERM ACTIONS**

- Proceed with Pedestrian bridge from the Shaw Center to LASM



Rendering of proposed River Road at LASM

### 3. EXTEND CAPITOL PARK TO THE RIVER INTO DESOTO PARK

Green

#### A Missing Link in the Open Space Network



As more residents move into downtown the need for open spaces, particularly along the Mississippi, will only increase. Currently the levee top areas in the downtown are highly constrained, and largely paved, spaces between active rail lines, steep banks of the river and gambling boats. The largest single remaining undeveloped area along the Mississippi River within the downtown is DeSoto Park— long discussed as a potential new park for the downtown.

#### Capitalize on the Unique Batture Ecology

Distinct from the ceremonial quality of the State Capitol Grounds, the active recreation afforded by Victory Park, or the civic importance of the Central Green, DeSoto Park's situation within the batture is ideal for a park focused on the unique ecology of the Mississippi River. Spaces for wildlife habitat, nature walks, and smaller developed areas would provide downtown Baton Rouge with a distinctive park more common to rural or suburban locations.

#### Occupy the Batture

While only a major financial investment would render this site suitable for a building such as the ALIVE project, a smaller investment would create parkland capable of withstanding periodic inundation by the River. Many parks upriver, in Louisville, Nashville, Memphis, and Columbus have been designed to operate in a flood zone. Portions of DeSoto Park could be used soon for a public park with relatively low costs, and still be suitable for future development of a major attraction at a later date.

An initial intervention to activate and provide access to the batture will allow the site to be accessed at little cost to the city or state until such time as additional development or funding is available to more fully develop park resources. At a future date, more developed programs, such as buildings, an amphitheater, lawns or play areas, could be installed.

#### Complete the Levee Promenade

Of particular importance for Baton Rouge is the link that DeSoto Park could provide in resolving the northern terminus of the Levee Promenade, which begins at LSU in the south, and linking it to



Extend a pedestrian corridor from Spanish Town Road through Capitol Park to DeSoto Park with a pedestrian bridge over River Road

the State Capitol Grounds the Hollywood Casino and proposed riverfront developments to the North. Currently, the lack of a developed DeSoto Park represents the last gap in that continuous walkway linking important destinations in Baton Rouge. This northward extension would connect the Levee Promenade to the thousands of patrons of the Hollywood Casino, and future hotels, retail destinations and 1,200 new residents planned at River Park. Discussions with rail operators will have to be conducted to determine the exact design of the Levee Promenade extension in proximity to the existing active tracks.

**Cross River Road to the Welcome Center**  
From DeSoto Park an eastward pedestrian connection across River Road (either above the tracks or at-grade) would connect the Levee Promenade to the Capitol Park Welcome Center, the Capitol Grounds and Spanish Town to the east. Spanish Town Road will become an ever more important link from Mid City as future development adds new housing and office uses to the areas east of I-110. An elevated pedestrian route over the tracks may be required for emergency access and egress at this location should the ALIVE project proceed within DeSoto Park in the future. An elevated bridge structure at this location would provide views to the River and the City and be an ideal location for interpretive signage and wayfinding.

### IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

#### SHORT TERM ACTIONS

- Narrow River Road at State Complex
- Extend Capitol Lake Drive to DeSoto Park
- Support ALIVE project in DeSoto Park, and make the initial landscape improvements on the site
- Extend Levee Promenade from North Street to DeSoto Park
- Ensure publicly accessible riverfront at River Park development

#### MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS

- Establish a pedestrian connection at Capitol Park Welcome Center to DeSoto Park over River Road
- Implement River edge trails on pilings at DeSoto Park

#### LONG TERM ACTIONS

- Support the ALIVE project in DeSoto Park
- Complete loop trail around Capitol Lake



Louisville Riverfront Park designed to withstand annual flooding from the Ohio River

## OVERVIEW

Active

### An active, vital downtown is busy on weekdays, evenings and weekends

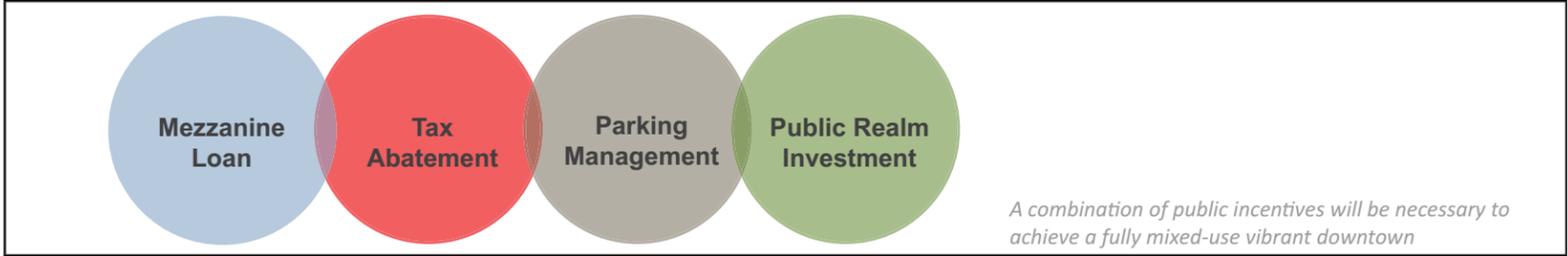


Currently, the central part of Baton Rouge has fewer than 2,000 residents. Any city that desires an active, vital downtown needs more downtown residents. Given the relatively small size of the downtown area bounded by the interstate system, adjacent neighborhoods such as Mid City and Old South Baton Rouge will play an important role in revitalizing downtown by accommodating new residents. The downtown's success depends on improving connections to these nearby neighborhoods.

An active downtown must include a mix of uses within a small area. It must offer residents a good quality of life, and visitors a good experience. Baton Rouge must have more restaurants and shops, fewer bars, and an affordable way to park new residents to provide the quality of life or visiting experience that will invite people downtown. More management and regulation will be needed to ensure a welcoming place for residents, workers, and visitors.

High land and construction costs obstruct the efforts of many cities to provide a diverse range of uses in their downtowns. Downtown development costs more than development in suburban areas where land is cheaper and constraints fewer. Those high construction costs drive many landowners to leave their land as parking lots—which are very profitable with little investment. Therefore, if Baton Rouge seeks to attract additional housing or mixed-use development downtown, the city must address these very real hurdles with inventive city policy and financial incentives.

No single incentive will transform those surface parking lots to building projects. Rather, the City will need to employ a group of incentives that aim to lower development risk and reduce costs sufficiently to attract private developers and landowners. The City needs to increase capital spending and offer tax abatements and other tax incentives to developers and landowners. It must work with private financial institutions to offer low cost loans and subsidize debt. It must invest in the parking supply and increase its resources to maintain downtown parks, streets, and sidewalks. The resulting private investment will eventually generate a market that can support itself, thereby benefiting the parish and the region for decades to come.



An effective management structure is needed in Baton Rouge to support public and private investment. Sister cities—such as New Orleans or Shreveport, Louisiana— have better funded central bodies to coordinate downtown development efforts and provide day-to-day management of the public realm. Baton Rouge needs to assign this type of comprehensive management programming for the public realm to the DDD in cooperation with other City agencies.

Baton Rouge must also think beyond the traditional boundaries of the downtown as defined by I-110 and I-10. Larger land areas are available in close proximity to downtown. These areas have lower land values and will be less expensive to develop. If properly connected to the downtown, close-by neighborhoods can help to revitalize the downtown by providing additional residents within a few minutes' walk or drive of the downtown. Old South and Mid-City neighborhoods should be viewed as places for significant new housing outside of the downtown.

Downtown has an exciting, but small, cluster of museums and restaurants. It still needs several additional arts and entertainment anchors, such as a jazz club, movie theater or culinary museum, to attract visitors from the rest of the city, and the region.

In addition, downtown's public spaces need to be activated with daytime and nighttime programming for people of all ages and backgrounds from weekday government workers to Sunday churchgoers. Although 20,000 people work downtown each weekday, there are few pedestrians to be seen except at rush hour. Downtown needs inviting and exciting streets that will encourage downtown's large workforce to venture out of their offices into the city during lunch hours and after work to events such as the Alive after Five Concert Series.

Downtown Baton Rouge has benefited from a significant amount of new and innovative redevelopment in the past few years. The expansion of the Convention Center at River Center, the Shaw Center for the Arts, Hilton Baton Rouge, Louisiana Art and Science Museum, and the Louisiana State Museum are all new or have expanded. There is an opportunity to extend the energy and excitement of this cluster northward towards Capitol Park through the downtown by cultivating a new commercial-entertainment corridor along Third Street. The intersection of Third Street and Main Street is already in transition—the Kress Building development is newly completed and the Capitol One Building and the Commerce Buildings are all poised for redevelopment in the near future. Developing a cultural venue at Main Street would activate Third Street, and anchor the northern end of downtown's historic shopping spine.

Baton Rouge has persevered through many challenges to invest in its downtown, laying the groundwork for these exciting next steps. With key public sector interventions, Baton Rouge can become a vibrant and wonderful place to live, work, or visit.



The Shaw Center is notable for its variety of land uses in one small area



The Kress Building, a recently renovated historical structure at the confluence of Third and Main Streets, is a mixed-use development including retail, restaurant, office space, apartments, and for-sale condominiums.



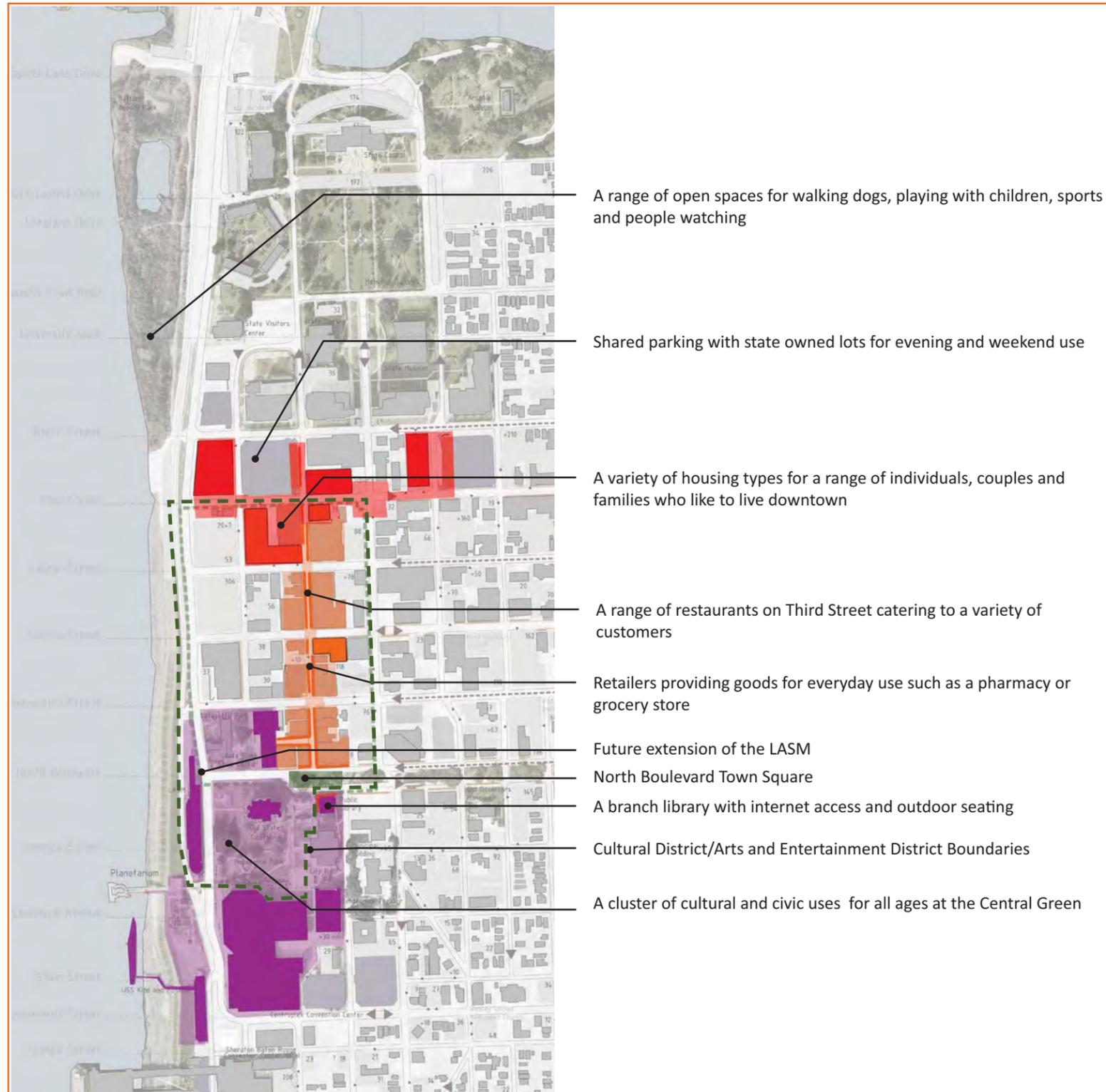
Third Street should be strengthened as an entertainment corridor

## 4. CREATE A MIXED-USE CORE IN DOWNTOWN, CENTERED ON THE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

### Active



### Third Street will be the Heart of a Cultural District that Welcomes Residents and Visitors



Continued investment in the Arts and Entertainment District will vitally enrich the city's future. Downtown Baton Rouge has begun to position itself as a regional arts and entertainment hub: the Louisiana Art and Science Museum (LASM) is currently one of the city's top attractions; the Shaw Center for the Arts was recently completed; a Capitol Park amphitheater is in the planning process; and renovations to the River Center are also underway. The ALIVE project would be a major addition to this inventory of attractions, as would new investments in parks and open space in the downtown core and along the river.

*Plan Baton Rouge II* considers the growth of the Arts and Entertainment District, specifically along Third Street, an important priority. The Plan calls for a new entertainment or cultural anchor at the north end of Third Street, and for new incentives to support investment and programming along Third Street that will complement Third Street's stores and businesses and bring more people downtown during the day, in the evenings, and on weekends.

#### Third Street

Third Street has been the core of downtown Baton Rouge for decades. However, downtown stores such as those along Third Street, patronized by employees of government and downtown businesses, receive only a modest share of the regional retail pie. With the downtown's share of regional employment declining, shopping revenues may decline further, making investment in arts and entertainment venues essential to bring people downtown.

Third Street currently offers a limited range of nighttime and weekend entertainment venues such as the numerous bars that mostly cater to late night entertainment. The city needs to build on the success of the Shaw Center and manage the downtown's transformation from a narrow entertainment focus into a broader regional destination for the arts, culture, shopping, with continued entertainment, and more local residents.

The areas immediately surrounding Third Street, and extending from Fourth to Lafayette Street, should become a vibrant center of arts and culture--but one designed and managed to be compatible

with a growing residential population. An increase in residents in the downtown, beyond those already living in Spanish Town and Beauregard Town, should spur the creation of additional services such as a pharmacy or a grocery store catering to small households. These improvements will come eventually with increasing numbers of residents, but the City can encourage earlier development with site assistance. Too many entertainment venues with late night noise will work against the goal of a mixed-use downtown.

The priority investments described in this section, and listed in Section III, support the growth of the Arts and Entertainment District, specifically along Third Street. They all work together. The creation of a new Central Green, linking the Old State Capitol grounds with the River Center and City Hall Plaza open spaces, will complement the city's new attractions. Keeping downtown clean and safe is critical to the Arts and Entertainment District and protects the City's investments in downtown. Financial tools and administrative actions will also strengthen the Third Street commercial-cultural corridor. In particular, the expansion of the DDD activities; the creation of a financing tool to catalyze housing development; and establishment of a parking management entity will strengthen and connect arts and entertainment assets while promoting a thriving downtown.

#### **A Clean and Safe Downtown**

Maintaining orderly and appealing streets, sidewalks, trees, and public spaces profoundly improves the experience of residents and visitors downtown. The workforce, visitors and tourists must feel comfortable downtown. No amount of investment in buildings can overcome systemic, ongoing under-investment in the quality of the public realm. A commitment to public safety and sanitation is an essential element of any downtown development strategy. Today, visitors to downtown Baton Rouge often perceive it as dirty and potentially unsafe. This perception deters businesses from locating in the downtown and prevents visitors from frequenting attractions downtown. Investment in the downtown will be squandered if not supported by a comprehensive "clean and safe" program. Sanitation services should be provided seven days a week.

To address security issues, many downtowns also employ a 24-7 unarmed security staff that patrols the neighborhood connected by radio to the police. These officers also serve as ambassadors to downtown and can offer directions and advice to neighborhood visitors. They make downtowns notably safer and improve law enforcement by their presence on the streets.

#### **Encouraging Façade Improvements**

Façade improvements are an essential element of a successful public realm. The street-front façade of any building should consist primarily of transparent doors and windows on the ground floor, along with well-designed and maintained signs, awnings, and lighting for businesses. Even buildings that do not have primarily retail or service uses should contribute positively to the character of the street. The DDD currently offers a five-year property tax abatement on improvements. The DDD should expand this program.

Many downtowns offer incentive programs to encourage new retail uses, and may target specific types of retail such as grocery. Incentive programs for new businesses can take several forms:

- Reimbursing commercial tenants for their build-out costs when they locate downtown;
- Waiving construction licenses and permit fees to lower start-up costs for new businesses;
- Loaning capital at low interest rates to new businesses.

Poorly maintained properties detract from the downtown's overall aesthetic. They discourage and undermine public and private investment. While streetscaping and façade incentive programs encourage the highest standards of maintenance, some development authorities also choose to penalize violations of city's the various applicable health, safety and design codes and ordinances. Some cities manage a proactive program of code assistance to increase enforcement in a less punitive way. Privately hired public safety officers, discussed above, can also provide information and oversight for buildings downtown. If the DDD decides to implement strict code enforcement, it must be applied in a consistent, fair and timely manner, and should cover excessive noise, trash, graffiti, boarded and painted over windows, improper signage, construction permitting, and other forms of insufficient building maintenance.

## **IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS**

### **SHORT TERM ACTIONS**

- **Empower and properly fund the DDD to manage the public realm within the downtown**
- **Establish a "clean and safe" program**
- **Establish a façade improvement program**
- **Create incentives to lure retail and grocery stores downtown**
- **Enforce building, safety, health, and design codes and ordinances downtown**
- **Manage and coordinate parking**
- **Promote LEED-certified developments to ensure sustainable growth**
- **Proceed with the River Center Expansion**

### **MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS**

- **Invest in streetscapes, tree planting and parks**
- **Consider future uses for the Civic Arena Site**
- **Allow shared use of state-owned parking garages**

### **LONG TERM ACTIONS**

- **Develop new parking supplies as needed**
- **Redevelop the Police Headquarters in Beauregard Town**

## **BEST PRACTICES:**

### *New Orleans*

The New Orleans Downtown Development District dedicates \$2.4 million each year to its clean and safe programs. To keep Downtown clean, the DDD performs services including litter abatement, pressure washing, graffiti removal, street fixture and furniture maintenance, and planting and maintenance of trees and flowers. In 2008 the New Orleans DDD was empowered by the City to enforce some building, zoning and related codes. In the first six months, 198 warnings were issued, of which 124 were immediately addressed by property owners.

### *Washington, D.C.*

The city of Washington DC passed a supermarket tax exemption act in 2000, to exempt owners from sales taxes on building materials and equipment for construction or rehabilitation of supermarkets. The business is also exempt from license fees, personal property taxes, and real property taxes for 10 years.

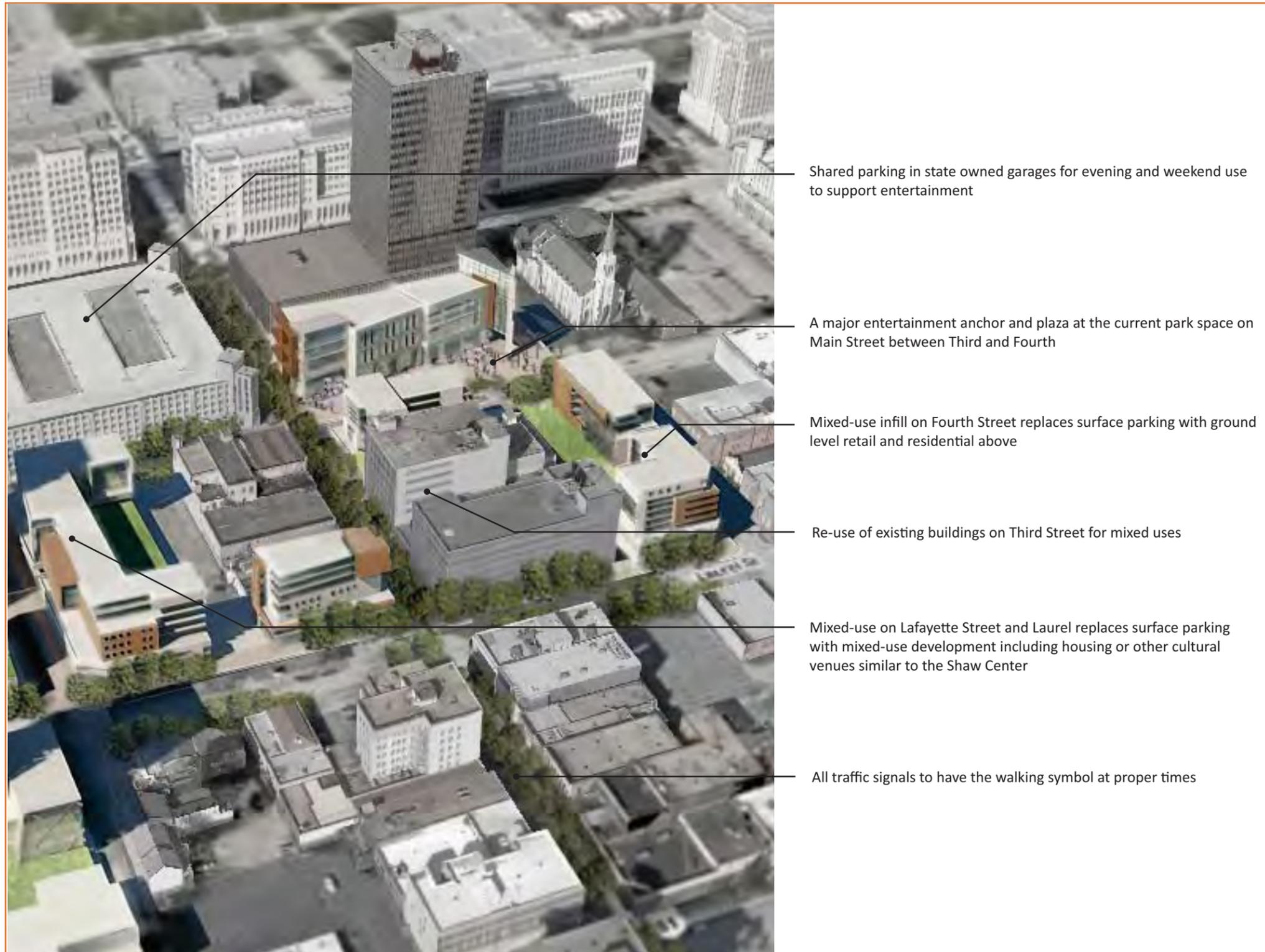
### *Nashville*

The Downtown Nashville Partnership employs a team of "ambassadors" who wear yellow shirts and work on foot, bicycle, and Segway to keep an eye out for situations requiring police or emergency services and quickly communicate with the appropriate dispatchers. Downtown ambassadors are trained to give visitors directions and information on downtown attractions. The ambassadors also pressure wash sidewalks, remove graffiti and handbills, and remove litter and trash.

## 5. MAKE THIRD STREET AN ENTERTAINMENT AND SHOPPING CORRIDOR

Active

### Cultural and Entertainment Offerings will Enrich and Enliven the Downtown



The intersection of Third Street and Main is already an active development area: the Kress development is newly completed; the Capital One and the Commerce buildings are all poised for redevelopment in the near future. Developing a cultural anchor in this area would activate both ends of Third Street, the downtown's historic shopping street, drawing more people and more commercial investment to this retail spine.

#### Programming

Programming activities in existing public spaces will also draw people downtown. Programmed activities should address the interests of people of all ages and backgrounds, from weekday government workers to Sunday churchgoers. Programming should focus on the authentic history, lore, traditions, or cultural resources of the city, and should feature site-specific events with local artists and vendors. Programming efforts are best applied in parks and open spaces, local arts and cultural institutions, galleries and shops, and public buildings and empty lots with capacity for events and exhibitions. Successful events, such as the Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans or the Newport Jazz Festival, become top tourist attractions that draw millions of visitors and generate millions of dollars in economic activity each year.

#### Streets

The most important open spaces in cities are their streets. Attractive streets that are pleasant and easy to walk provide the vitality and convenience that make urban living appealing. As Baton Rouge greens its downtown, a network of key pedestrian streets should be developed, including Third Street. Making Third and Lafayette streets greener, prettier, and more comfortable places to walk, will reinvigorate this historic shopping district by encouraging pedestrian traffic, inspiring property owners to invest in their storefronts, and supporting the entertainment uses envisioned for this corridor.

Great streetscapes that support entertainment and retail venues focus on sidewalks and abutting buildings. They typically include:

- Wide sidewalks
- Shade from regularly planted street trees
- A consistent street wall of attractive building and storefronts



Initial visualization of the North Anchor at Third with Main Street

- Street furniture, including seating areas
- Public art by local artists
- Screened parking lots, loading and dumpster areas
- Traffic lights timed for frequent pedestrian crossings
- Pedestrian scale and mood lighting

**Branding and Marketing**

An integrated branding and marketing program will publicize the area to locals and visitors and encourage multi-site visitation by creating the sense of a unified downtown district. A strong brand should promote individual attractions as well as the district as a whole. The effort should engage local institutions to work together to integrate their marketing efforts and coordinate their activities.

Comprehensive branding requires combined strategies, including media advertising, a web presence, signage and print materials. The DDD is already working hard and successfully at branding. The DDD has a strong web site, and should continue to highlight attractions and upcoming activities for workers, residents and visitors. In 2008 the International Downtown Association recognized the DDD for its excellent wayfinding program. Expanding the wayfinding should be a priority for the DDD. Developing, and regularly updating, maps and brochures to promote attractions and activities and identify nearby amenities, such as hotels and restaurants, is also important.

The DDD may also want to develop sample itineraries for families



Existing buildings on the Third Street North terminus

with children, history buffs, and others. In particular, these itineraries could focus on encouraging convention attendees to spend more time enjoying the downtown. Many cities offer visitors all-inclusive pricing that incorporates a discount for visiting more than one site and/or unlimited use of recreational activities. This practice accustoms visitors to moving around downtown and spending an entire afternoon or day in the area. Additional programming of the Arts and Entertainment District may require additional staff and funding at the DDD.

The City should engage local artists to develop and market the district, including the brand logo, signs, and all related materials discussed above. The DDD has already worked with local artists on its most recent wayfinding project and should continue this successful collaboration. Local artists can be employed to create streetscape materials and public furniture; this strategy was extremely successful in revitalizing the Rope Walks district of Liverpool, and in promoting the Golden Gate National Park.

**IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS**

**SHORT TERM ACTIONS**

- Establish unified marketing and programming for events and attractions
- Time traffic signals within the Arts and Entertainment District for pedestrians' convenience
- Arrange a developers' conference
- Secure a site at the north end of Third Street for a mixed-use entertainment anchor
- Plan the site's redevelopment
- Solicit developers

**MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS**

- Consolidate improvements on Streetscape on Third Street
- Allow shared use of state owned garages in Main Street

**LONG TERM ACTIONS**

- Codify the branding and identity of the district

**BEST PRACTICES:**

*Shreveport*

Downtown Shreveport offers a combination of incentives for building improvements, including a restoration tax abatement (RTA) that freezes property taxes for up to 10 years; low-interest loans for rehabilitation of small buildings, 10-year loans are offered at 3.5% for up to \$100,000; and façade rebates that pay 50% of owner costs up to \$5,000.

*Franklin, Virginia*

Downtown Franklin instituted a façade program in 1985, offering 4% loans for interior and exterior improvements. This, and clean and safe, streetscaping, and downtown marketing and business recruitment efforts, has led to 200 building renovations, 101 new businesses, and a decrease in the commercial vacancy rate from 47% to 3%.

*Ardmore, Oklahoma*

Downtown Ardmore began its incentive program in 1989, offering \$1,000 façade grants as well as low-interest loans for building rehabilitation projects. The town also invested \$1.2 million in streetscaping. These investments have resulted in \$11 million in private investment, including 160 building renovations, 76 new businesses, and a decrease in the commercial vacancy rate from 9% to 1%.

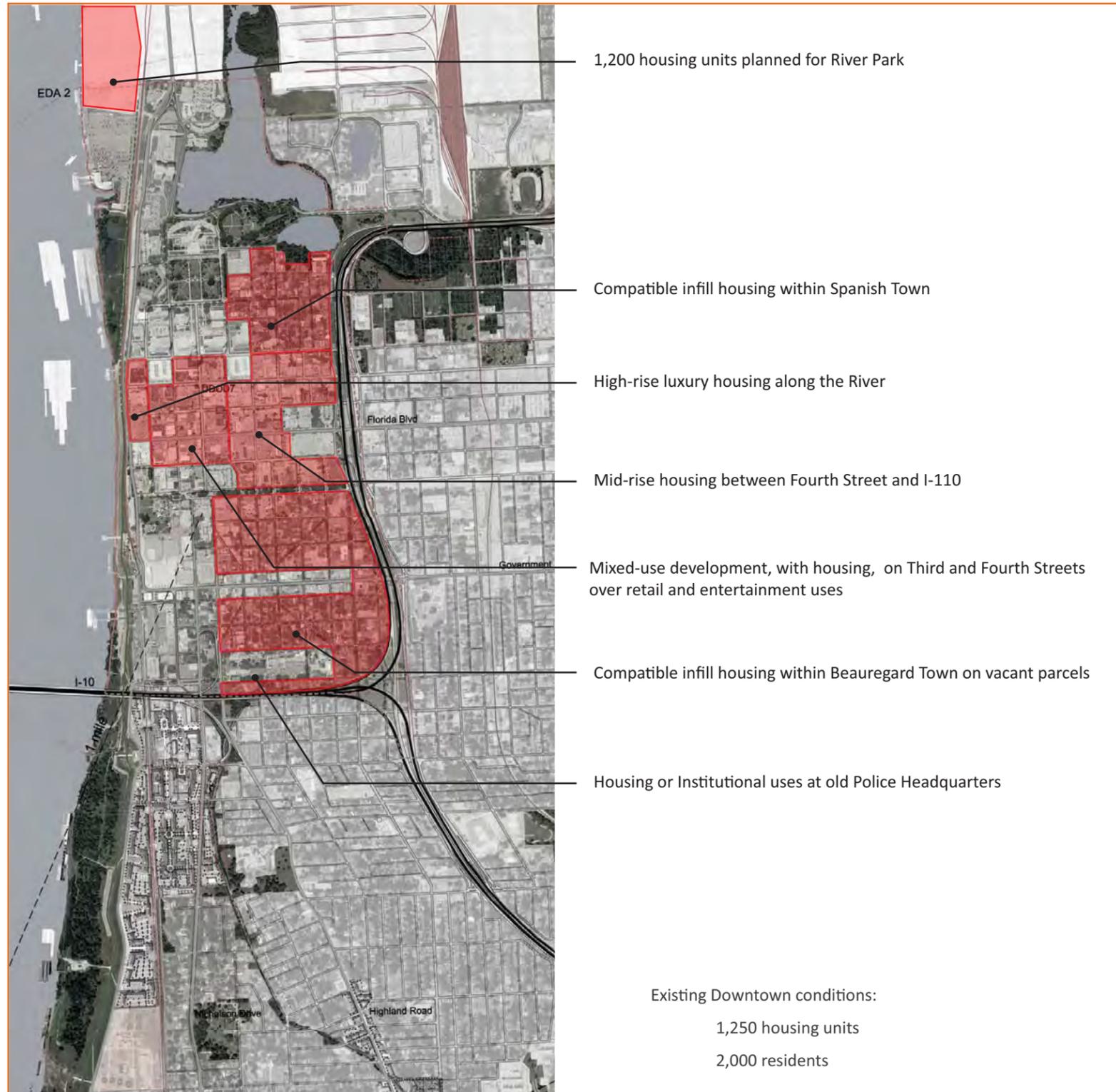
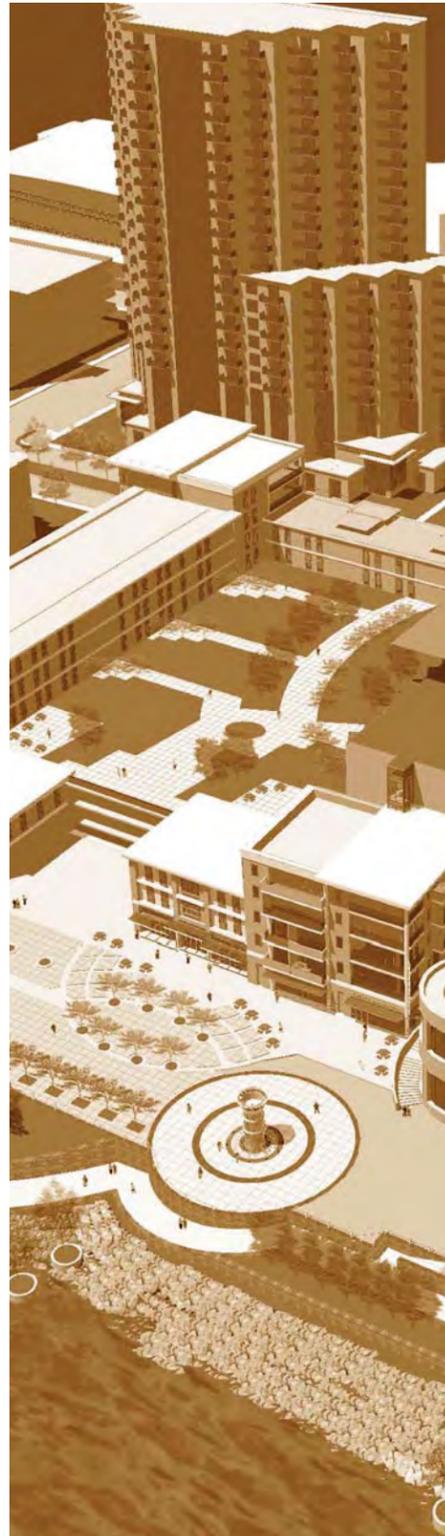
*La Crosse, Wisconsin*

In 1993, the city-created downtown TIF [part of its City Vision 2000 Master Plan] has helped implement 65 blocks of streetscaping and wayfinding, assisted 100 building restorations through its loan pool, designated 96 buildings as historic, and rebuilt the Levee and Riverside Park Riverwalk. These investments have catalyzed \$125 million of additional public/private investment, including 170 new residential units. Property values have also increased \$26M within TIF district and \$40M throughout downtown.

## 6. CREATE MORE DOWNTOWN HOUSING

Active

### Attracting New Housing to the Downtown will Require Public Intervention



An assessment of the downtown housing market, in particular land and development costs, reveals that the City must intervene to attract housing development to the downtown. Land available for residential development is expensive, as are construction costs downtown, resulting in expensive housing that would not compete well with housing elsewhere in the Parish. Some day, Baton Rouge's downtown may have the cache required to pass these higher development costs on to home buyers but, at present, it does not. Homes downtown cannot cost more than buyers are willing to pay. The City and State must make up the difference between high development costs and the lower home sale prices needed to attract residents.

Plan Baton Rouge II identifies six districts in downtown Baton Rouge as potential housing development zones. The team determined the potential capacity of these areas by analyzing vacant and underutilized sites and maximum allowable zoning for these sites. The results of this maximum density analysis reveal that downtown could accommodate a very significant increase of roughly two thousand new housing units. Realistically, a goal of increasing housing units by 50% over the next ten years, and 100% over 25 years, should be established and pursued.

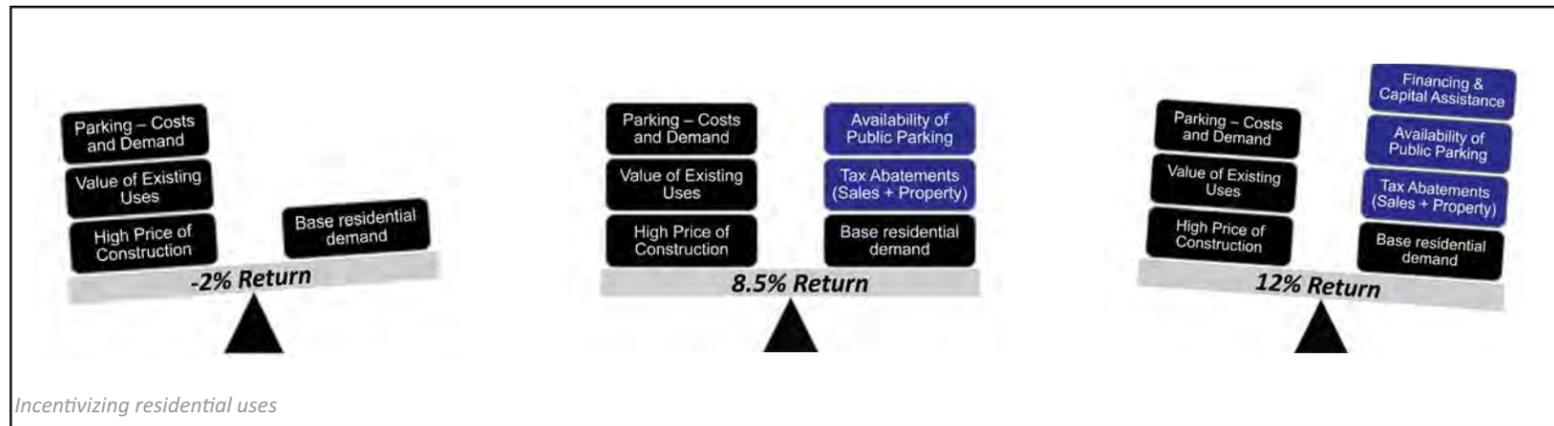
#### Government's Role

The City and Parish governments can play an important role in supporting downtown development—both economic development and real estate, particularly the private development of market rate and affordable housing. Working in partnership with other organizations such as the Redevelopment Authority, the City and Parish must support new housing development through four important policies.

- A tax abatement package for developers
- A medium term revolving loan fund
- A well-coordinated, publicly-funded parking system
- Investment in the public realm

#### Property Tax Abatement

Developments in downtown Baton Rouge pay property taxes for many different services, and help finance the operations of the



Incentivizing residential uses

local and regional government entities. However, these taxes add to the overall expense of operating any potential new residential development and can affect its underlying development economics. The abatement of all or a portion of the property taxes for a period of time should be considered a potential tool with which to stimulate development.

**Low-Interest Loans to Developers**

Another potential tool is low-interest-rate, mezzanine financing. A revolving loan fund could provide pioneering residential developers with low-cost capital needed to supplement existing financing sources, and may make certain marginal projects feasible. This financing would be secondary to any primary mortgage and enable developers to reduce up-front equity demands and the overall cost of capital. Parking is a significant cost of downtown development. To entice people to move from their suburban homes to downtown, accessible and affordable parking must accompany housing.

**Urban Advantages**

Urban living has recently enjoyed resurgence as people have rediscovered the pleasures of living in dense, amenity-rich cities like New York where workers have decided that proximity to work and cultural offerings increase their quality of life. Downtown living requires, however, that some of the luxuries of the suburbs are relinquished; urban dwellers do not have spacious yards,

driveways or personal garages. The same money buys less living space downtown than in the suburbs. Prospective home buyers can rationalize these sacrifices only if the downtown offers its own unique benefits.

**IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS**

**SHORT TERM ACTIONS**

- Establish revolving loan fund (low interest financing) for developers
- Package tax abatements for developers of multifamily housing
- Consider tax abatements for other developers
- Create publicly-funded, shared parking programs
- Waive construction license and permit fees for developers

**MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS**

- Invest in the city’s public realm to improve the experience of residents and visitors

**LONG TERM ACTIONS**

- Sunset financing when no longer needed to generate housing

**BEST PRACTICES:**

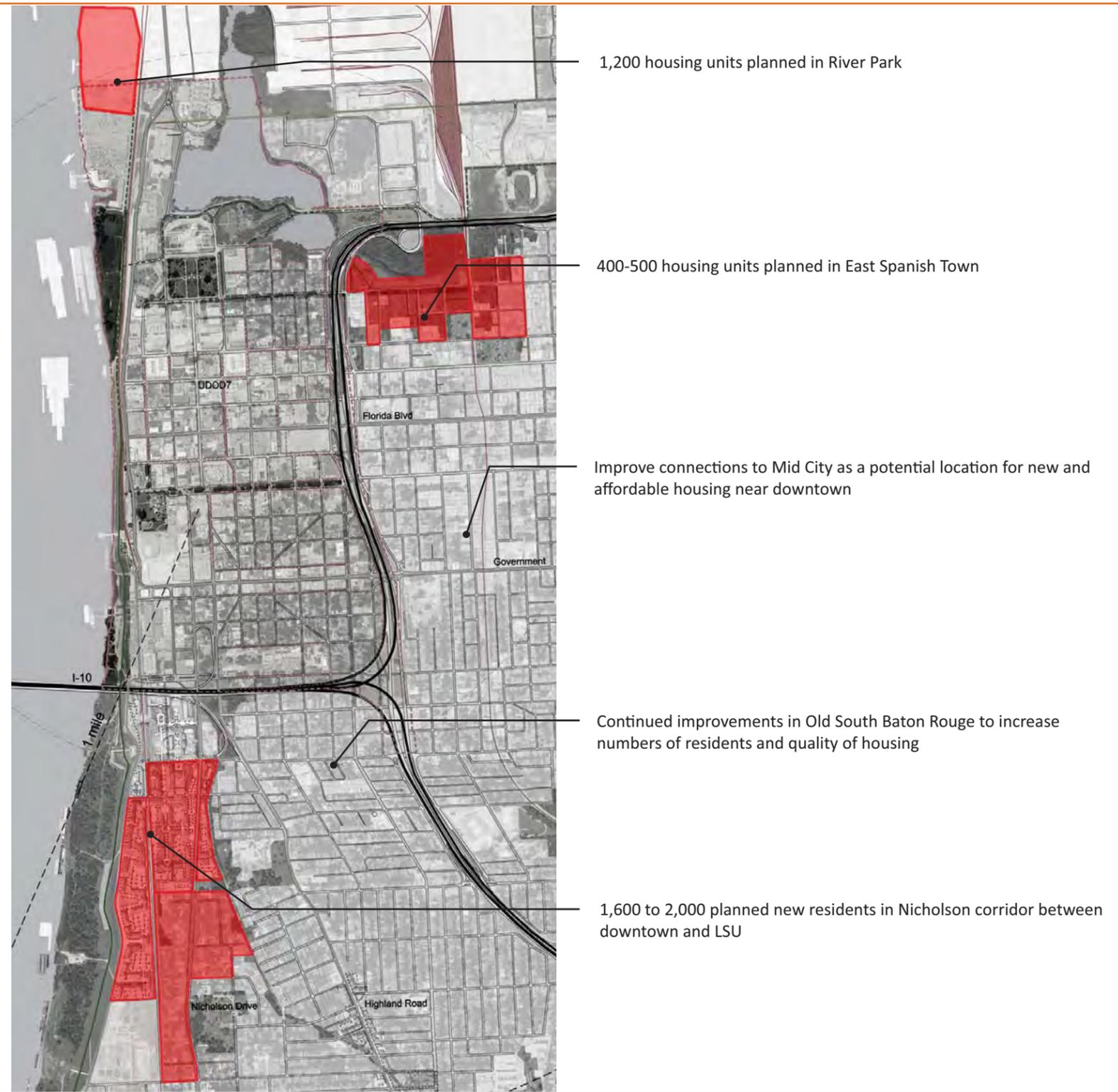
**Brookline, MA**

The Town of Brookline prohibits overnight parking on its public streets to ease street cleaning, snow removal, reduce crime and to discourage excess car ownership in this college community. This prohibition presents hardships in dense areas of the Town where older apartments were built without parking. The Town has several hundred overnight parking spaces in public lots that are primarily used by commercial and retail patrons during business hours. These spaces can be rented by the month to residents who have no offstreet parking within buildings. Cars with a sticker may park from 8 p.m. to 9 a.m. Monday through Saturday and all day on Sundays and Holidays.

## 7. CREATE HOUSING ON THE EDGE OF DOWNTOWN

Active

### Peripheral Housing is Cost Effective and Attainable to More People



The Baton Rouge area urgently needs housing that young singles and families can afford. Most of this housing will not be developed in the downtown. Downtown already faces hurdles to create market-rate or even luxury housing, much less assist in the need for affordable housing in the region. Just outside the downtown, to the east and south of the interstate highways wide swaths of former neighborhoods and industrial areas are available for redevelopment to provide more affordable (if not income limited) housing for young state office workers, young families, and others making average incomes for the area. These new neighborhoods are in good locations near employment and transportation and, most importantly, their proximity to downtown will enable their residents to help revitalize the downtown.

Producing housing downtown costs considerably more than producing housing at its periphery. Housing built on the expensive land downtown would require public subsidies of half the cost of each housing unit to make housing attainable to a family earning the region's median income. This is an extravagant way to provide attainable housing. By contrast, housing in the immediate vicinity of downtown would require only a 20 percent subsidy to put each unit within reach of a median-income buyer. In these peripheral locations, public development subsidies could create three times as many units as could be created in the downtown. Given the proximity to services, transportation and schools, these areas may also be more attractive to median income residents.

Despite downtown's small size, land prices vary significantly within the district. Riverfront land has a premium price and land costs steadily decline moving east. Projected sales prices and rents match this trend. In order to understand the significance of this effect to development financing, three proxy areas were created.

The geographies of the proxy areas within the Downtown area are:

- Area A: River Road to N. Fourth / St. Ferdinand St.
- Area B: N. Fourth / St. Ferdinand St. to I-110
- Area C: East of I-110

The planning team gathered information regarding potential and asking costs for land, rents, sales prices and values within each of



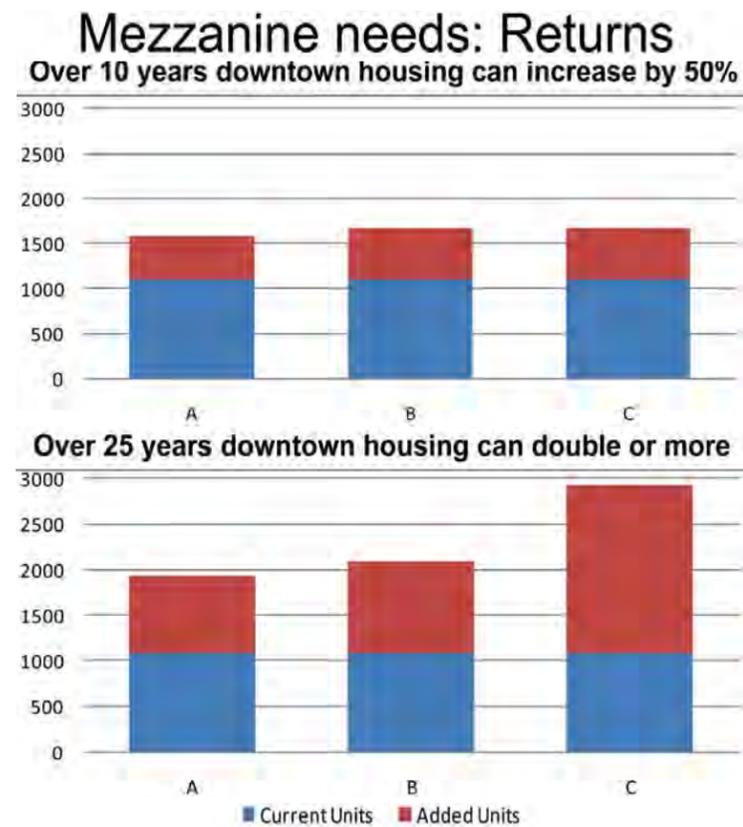
Proxy areas in the downtown and immediately to the east of downtown

the areas to estimate the potential cash flow and returns needed for feasible development. The amount of mezzanine financing per unit needed to attain feasibility was estimated, given the cost and operating structures for current developments assuming the enactment of all other suggested tools. The listing below illustrates these amounts by geographic area.

- Area A: \$65,000
- Area B: \$55,000
- Area C: \$35,000

The accompanying graphic (above, right) illustrates the magnitude of new development that a combination of mezzanine financing tools could facilitate in ten and twenty-five years, respectively. Clearly more units of housing are generated if the fund is invested in lower cost areas B and C. The twenty-five year projection illustrates more clearly the difference in the potential impact of that decision, in terms of number of units.

However, the number of units generated should not be the only factor considered when deciding how best to allocate the fund. While riverfront units require a greater subsidy, activating vacant



lots along River Road may well serve to catalyze downtown development in a dramatic way. Investing in a larger number of units located in lower cost areas on the outskirts of downtown would increase the downtown resident population from a numeric standpoint, but may have more subtle impacts on the physical character of the downtown. The following chart illustrates the potential effects of using the development tools over a twenty-five year period.

## IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

### SHORT TERM ACTIONS

- Establish revolving loan fund (low interest financing)
- Tax abatement packages for developers of multifamily housing
- Tax abatements
- Publicly funded shared parking programs
- DDD meets with local banks to start a low interest loan pool

### MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS

- Invest in the public realm

### LONG TERM ACTIONS

- Sunset financing when it is no longer needed to generate housing



ECONOMICS OF STRUCTURED PARKING	
Costs	
Estimated \$18,000 - \$20,000 per space	
Additional soft costs- architects, engineers, etc	
Challenges	
Water table forces parking above grade	
Construction techniques differ between garage and other uses	
Ventilation and other requirements	

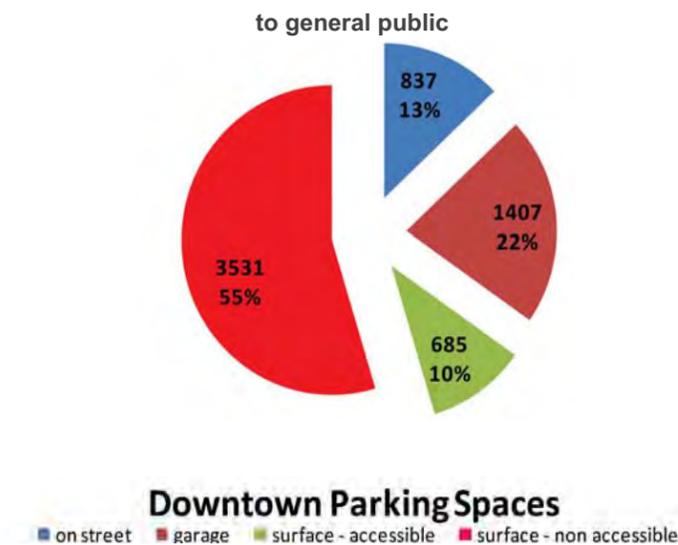
ECONOMICS OF SURFACE PARKING	
Hypothetical 1 acre (145 space) surface parking lot	
\$215,000 net revenues x 7.5% cap rate = \$60 psf value	
Value equivalent to development @ \$50-\$100 psf	

Lastly, the City or an agency of the City could finance the construction of new parking decks for new residential and mixed-use developments. This option should only be used when it allows larger, denser residential development to occur (i.e., over four stories) and can be applied to multiple development projects, as applicable.

The quality of the downtown pedestrian's experience depends on acceptable walking distances and conditions. Almost any distance between available parking and a destination is perceived as an impediment when the environment is uninteresting or unpleasant. An improved public realm can do much to lessen the need for employees or visitors to park in immediate proximity to their destination. If walking several blocks is a pleasant experience, additional parking supplies are expanded and the perception of limited parking is lessened. Signs and wayfinding are also essential to familiarize new users to available public parking supplies.

## Economics of surface parking

Over **50%** of all spaces downtown are not available to general public



## IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

### SHORT TERM ACTIONS

- Survey private parking use to determine opportunities for shared parking
- Improve public realm to encourage walking downtown
- Implement stricter aesthetic controls on surface parking
- Negotiate with the state to obtain access to state-owned parking structures
- Implement a better sign system for parking
- Create a city-owned traffic model
- Establish parking function within DPW or DDD
- Increase enforcement capacity
- Put wayfinding signage in public parking garages

### MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS

- Develop evening and daytime time-limited leases and permits for maximum shared parking in public structures

### LONG TERM ACTIONS

- City constructs public parking as part of mixed-use high density developments

## BEST PRACTICES:

### *Santa Monica, California*

Six municipal garages surrounding the Third Street Promenade, provide all parking for employees and visitors, enabling denser, commercial development that can be explored on foot.

### *Dartmouth Parking Garage, Hanover, New Hampshire*

The parking structure at 7 Lebanon Street was a joint venture between the town of Hanover and Dartmouth College, and also leases spaces to local businesses and nearby residents.

### *Scarsdale, New York*

Business and residential owners can elect to pay fees to a parking fund in lieu of providing on-site parking spaces. The parking fund is used for public parking and transportation improvements. In addition, publicly- owned lots are divided among time-limited commuter permits, residential permits, merchant parking, and hourly parking to maximize the efficiency of spaces.

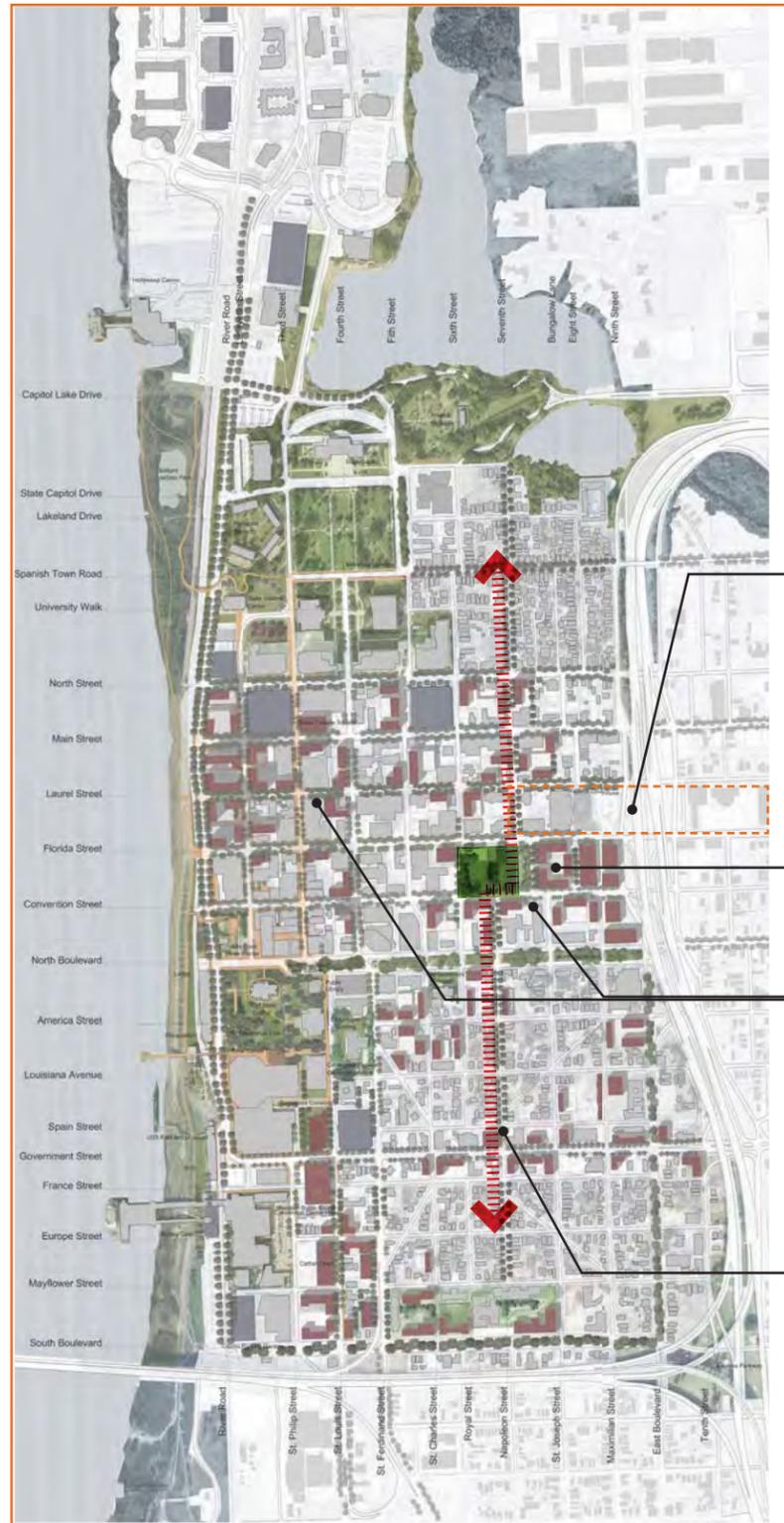
### *Auburn, Washington*

The city of Auburn allows a 25% reduction of off-street parking requirements in downtown. An additional 15% reduction is allowed for uses near the transit center.

## 9. CREATE A NEW VICTORY PARK NEIGHBORHOOD

Active

### Link Spanish Town to Beaugard Town along Seventh Street



Images of Victory Park, courtesy of the Foundation for Historical Louisiana

Previous site of Victory Park, pictured above, constructed in 1919 on the site of the old Louisiana State Prison grounds. The eight-acre park originally included a pergola, a memorial fountain, flower beds, a fishpond, a bandstand, and later a public pool and bath house. Years later BREC built a recreation center. Over time, other uses were located in the park: the old library, the post office, the old court house. Finally Interstate I-110 divided it and the Federal Court House and its parking lot occupied the remainder of the park by 1989.

Site of the existing Post Office and possible urban park and mixed-use development

Areas for redevelopment into housing and mixed-use district

Route of Seventh and Napoleon Streets, the proposed pedestrian connection between Spanish Town and Beaugard Town in *Plan Baton Rouge*

*Plan Baton Rouge* identified the need for a pedestrian link between Spanish Town and Beaugard Town. The plan identified Seventh and Napoleon Streets as the most suitable streets for this connection, and proposed a small pocket park west of the Post Office. This site has been acquired by the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC). If the opportunity arises to redevelop the adjacent, four-acre Post Office site across the street, the new park could be considerably larger. A larger park could catalyze a residential and mixed-use development on the remainder of the Post Office site, in this area of downtown between Spanish Town and Beaugard Town that has not attracted new offices, shops or housing in many years.

A new park here would be nearly on the site of the historic Victory Garden, demolished in 1940, and could accommodate a variety of active recreational uses, with amenities such as playgrounds (for use by adjacent day care centers), playing courts and fields, fountains, dog walking areas, as well as seating and lawns for passive recreation. DeSoto Park is presently the only other park downtown with the potential to host active recreation.

Another potential benefit of redeveloping the Post Office site would be the chance to improve this eastern gateway to downtown. Currently Florida Street is the most important east-west street in Baton Rouge, connecting downtown to its eastern suburbs. Improving the look of Florida and Convention Streets from the I-110 East to 4th Street would dramatically improve perceptions of downtown Baton Rouge. A new signature park, housing and office development would be a dramatic improvement to the under used buildings and open parking lots that visitors see today. The current post office branch should be retained on this site to continue to serve the downtown, but peripheral operations, such as the vehicle maintenance facility, could be relocated to other sites outside the downtown.



Proposed image for the new Victory Park Neighborhood

**IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS**

**SHORT TERM ACTIONS**

- Acquire site control of Post Office site for future redevelopment
- Establish guidelines for future development on the Post Office site

**MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS**

- Improve the condition of the Seventh and Napoleon Streets corridor

**MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS**

- Initiate redevelopment of park, housing and office sites

**BEST PRACTICES:**

**Bryant Park, New York City**  
 Bryant Park had suffered a severe decline in conditions in the 1970, and was known as a dangerous place. The park was renovated and reopened in 1991 with a budget six times greater than before. In warm weather months, the park typically now hosts over 5,000 business people during lunch hours, and counts 20,000 visitors by the end of the day. Bryant Park Corporation (BPC) is a not-for-profit, private management company and a cooperating Business Improvement District (BID) of neighboring property owners that oversees the amenities of Bryant Park, including a large lawn, a carousel, a boule board, chess tables, the Bryant Park Grill, and free wireless access, as well as 2,000 moveable chairs. The BPC also programs live music, hosts a fair of holiday shops in the winter, and shows movie screenings on the lawn in the summer.

Downtown Baton Rouge, historical image showing Victory Park



## OVERVIEW

### Connected

#### Better connections among the downtown, the river, LSU, and adjacent neighborhoods will add exciting new dimensions to Baton Rouge



Both flood control levees and roadways separate downtown Baton Rouge from the Mississippi River, depriving residents and visitors of the River's wonders. Without concerted efforts to reconnect the City to the River, as called for in previous plans, including *Plan Baton Rouge*, the river will likely continue to recede from the City with additional barriers. Extending streets to the River, narrowing streets such as River Road, and improving pedestrian crossings of those streets will all be necessary to reunite Baton Rouge residents and visitors with the Mississippi.

The City should also more carefully review future development proposed for the riverfront to protect views and access to the River. The City presently lacks this type of professional design oversight. A combination of design guidelines, codes, and an active and qualified agency will be necessary to ensure quality development along the riverfront in the years to come.

Similarly, the existing interstate highway system separates the downtown and River from nearby Baton Rouge neighborhoods. The highways isolate the downtown from the very neighborhoods that will be necessary to support a more active downtown. Overcoming these barriers will take concerted efforts to improve streets, sidewalks and mitigate the unsightly conditions under the many highway overpasses.

The presence of the highways also led, some years ago, to the conversion of many downtown streets to one-way operation. This has only made the downtown more difficult to navigate and less attractive as a destination. A new generation of engineers and city planners now agree that earlier decisions of this kind served suburban commuters at the expense of the downtown environment. Many downtown streets could be converted today to two-way traffic with very little impact on traffic flow. This action would improve and clarify access between neighborhoods and the downtown. It would also be an opportunity to reconstruct sidewalks and add trees and other features to streets that would improve the quality and sustainability of the downtown and the comfort of those traveling there, by car or on foot and support local retail uses.

The City's Bikeway System (shown at right) is an important component in connecting LSU and other historic neighborhoods, such as the Garden District, to the riverfront and the downtown. It serves not only as a recreational amenity but also encourages and more sustainable Baton Rouge's by offering alternatives to car use. The Bikeway Plan designates 7th Street and the Levee Promenade as the primary north-south connections within the downtown. North Boulevard and Capitol Lake Drive are considered important east-west connections between the downtown and Mid City neighborhoods. Like *Plan Baton Rouge*, the plan notes the importance of building a connection between DeSoto Park and the State Capitol Grounds as part of a linked network of recreational and commuter trails for cyclists and pedestrians.



Old image from the waterfront



Downtown image from the bike path linking with LSU



Main metropolitan Bikeways



The diagrams above illustrates the existing condition in Baton Rouge, where the high ground that was the city's natural defense against the Mississippi is shown in yellow. Subsequent to years of flooding, and from a desire to develop more land, the Army Corps of Engineers constructed levees, shown in purple, to protect vulnerable low-lying areas such as the site of the Louisiana Art and Science Museum. In addition, the CSX railway and River Road were constructed along the same corridor. These barriers hide the river completely from River Road.



Plan Baton Rouge II stresses the importance of increasing awareness of the river, as have other plans. The diagram above, illustrate the potential for a comprehensive network of connections to the river from the downtown. Later pages illustrate methods for connecting the city to the river. These include constructing more pedestrian bridges over the rail tracks; improving at-grade crossings; and narrowing River Road.

## 10. RE-CONNECT DOWNTOWN TO THE RIVER

Connected

### The “Braid”, a System of Pedestrian Riverfront Movement along Downtown’s Unique Landform

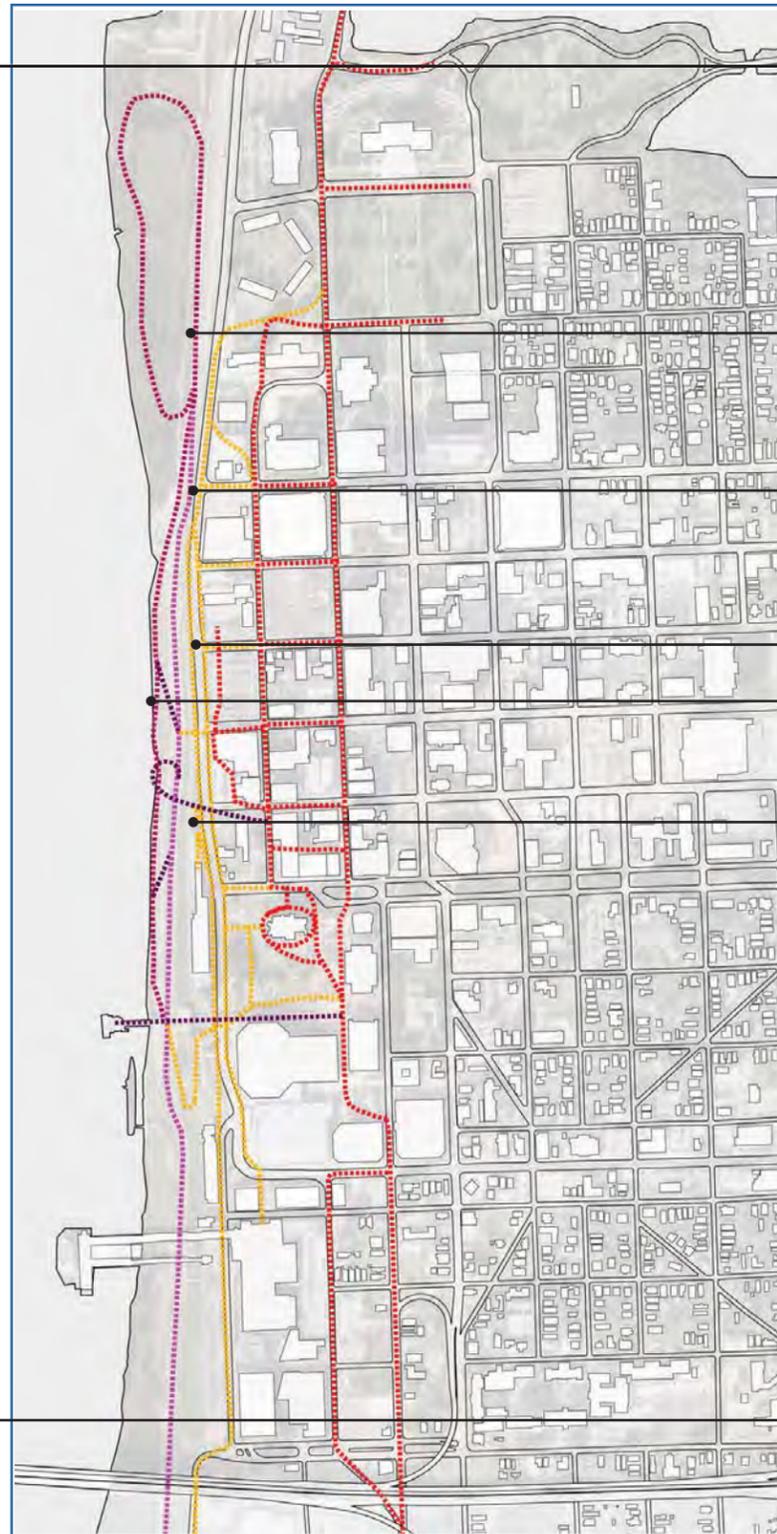


Diagram of the “Braid” concept derived from natural river channels illustrates the inspiration for multiple connections between the original high ground of Baton Rouge and the River that sits behind levees

Bridge or at-grade connection between DeSoto Park and the Welcome Center

At-grade pedestrian crossing improvements at North Street

At-grade improvements at Florida Street and River Road

Boardwalk trail, at times moving out over the river and encouraging a much more direct engagement with the water

Future bridge from Shaw Center to River at LASM expansion area

A rendering of possible future connection between the Shaw Center and LASM over the Waterworks site that is currently off-limits to the public

This plan, like many before it, recommends connecting downtown to the Mississippi Riverfront as a goal of primary importance to Baton Rouge. Previous plans recommended narrowing streets and building bridges and at grade crossings.

This plan braids a system of paths that weaves together the river’s natural edge with the Army Corps levees, bridging the gap between them. The braided system of paths mimics the channels of the river itself, and creates a new park zone for the pleasure of residents and visitors, encompassing the entire edge of the downtown.

#### Lafayette Promenade along Natural Levee

The mixed-use district of Third and Lafayette Streets roughly follows the alignment of the natural levee at the edge of downtown. To the south, the district continues through the Old State Capitol grounds, where the levee is expressed as lawn terraces, and extends to the City Hall and River Center plazas.

#### Narrowing River Road and Improving Crossings

River Road, the railway, and the levee effectively bar people strolling downtown from the waterfront. Narrowing River Road will mitigate this barrier. Improved pedestrian crossings at North Street and Florida Boulevard are priority actions, but this plan also urges improving all street crossings of River Road—with clear roadway markings and traffic signals timed for pedestrian convenience. The Riverfront Master plan also made these recommendations.

#### Capitol Park West and DeSoto Park

At the State Capitol Grounds, River Road and the railway tracks once again discourage crossing to the river. And while DeSoto Park is undeveloped, downtown visitors have little incentive to seek the river. Future plans to locate a major attraction here will necessitate radical changes to the landscape and infrastructure. In advance of an ALIVE project, various improvements to DeSoto Park and River Road could connect the river and the city, including, possibly, a pedestrian bridge over the railway. The pedestrian bridge plan appears on page 25. This could be required for an ALIVE Project for emergency access. Extending the Levee Promenade north to join a new DeSoto Park and the State Capitol Grounds would aid

pedestrian circulation, enlivening the waterfront and bringing more people downtown.

**A Bridge as Civic Art**

The more difficult connections to the river are south of Florida Street where the levee is raised, the railway descends, and the LASM sits between River Road and the river. Here, conditions warrant the use of bridges to reconnect the upper level of the natural levee and the top of the Army Corps levee. The bridge at the River Center, for example, allows pedestrians to avoid crossing River Road and the railway, and to enjoy excellent river views. This existing bridge should be enhanced as called for in the Downtown Visitors Amenity Plan of 2003.

*Plan Baton Rouge II* proposes a second bridge—envisioned as a work of civic art emblematic of the city’s reconnection to the river—extending from the Shaw Center plaza over the Water Works site, to the future expansion of the LASM and the Levee Promenade. In addition, the plan envisions pedestrian connections to the riverfront as part of the LASM expansion. Exterior stairs and ramps, and stairs in the museum’s proposed lobby, should give access to the proposed terrace with views of the river.

**Batture Boardwalk**

In addition to strengthened connections to the Levee Promenade, a great opportunity exists to provide access to water’s edge in the narrow strip of batture at the base of the Army Corps levee. The plan proposes the introduction of a boardwalk trail, at times moving out over the river and encouraging a much more direct engagement with the water.

Baton Rouge can also bring the Mississippi closer by offering well-framed and well-directed views of the river. Three currently vacant parcels between River Road and Lafayette Street will eventually be developed. When this occurs, design controls must be established to ensure that development provides the public with adequate views of the river, adequate access to the river, and clear enhancement of the river experience for pedestrians on River Road, the levee, or Lafayette Street. To ensure this, the City must establish guidelines for development that mandate active street frontages, screening of parking structures, provision of mid-block views of the river, and carefully planned locations for unobtrusive vehicle access.



*Riverfront development in Baton Rouge should preserve views of the River*

**IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS**

**SHORT TERM ACTIONS**

- Proceed with River Road narrowing
- Reconstruct Florida and North Street intersections with River Road
- Extend Capitol Lake Drive to River Road
- Support LASM river terrace expansion plan with oversight to ensure public access
- Establish design controls to maintain views of the river, and preserve public access to the riverfront
- Extend the Levee Promenade to connect with the River Park development
- Improve the Spanish Town pedestrian corridor

**MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS**

- Acquire rights of way to construct a bridge between Shaw Center and LASM
- Reconstruct other intersections on River Road as part of narrowing and greening initiative
- Construct the boardwalk trail along the river shore
- Develop DeSoto Park
- Enhance the pedestrian bridge at City Center as proposed in Downtown Visitors Amenity Plan

**LONG TERM ACTIONS**

- Construct bridge between Shaw Center and LASM



*Proposal for at-grade crossing at River Road from Riverfront Master Plan, 2006*



*An example of a landscaped pedestrian bridge in Germany*

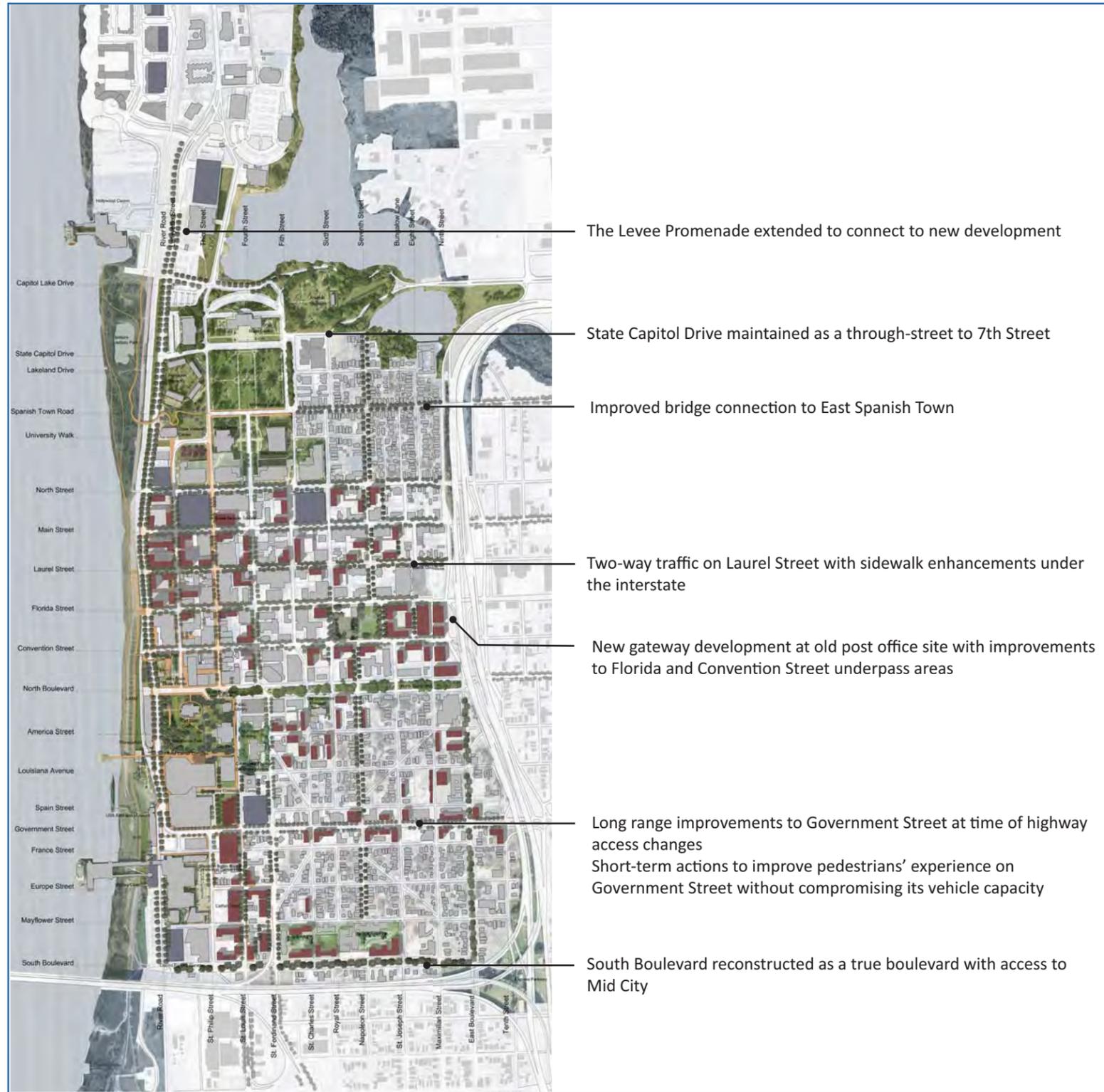


*An example of a pedestrian bridge in Spain*

# 11. RE-CONNECT DOWNTOWN TO ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

## Connected

### Convert One-way Streets to Two-way



Many Baton Rouge streets were converted to one-way traffic flow many years ago. This was viewed as a necessity to permit easy travel for suburban residents coming to work at downtown office buildings. This Plan accepts current urban design practice that emphasizes a different role for downtown. Current planning promotes a mixture of uses, including housing, shopping, and restaurants. A system of high speed, one-way streets does not support a lively mixture of uses because it does not support a comfortable pedestrian experience and is inconvenient for visitors and retail customers.

Preliminary analysis of traffic levels in the downtown suggest that nearly all of the one-way streets could be converted back to two-way traffic without any impact to traffic performance: traffic levels are simply not that great except on Government, North, and Main streets due to the location of the I-110 ramps and the large parking structures that feed these streets.



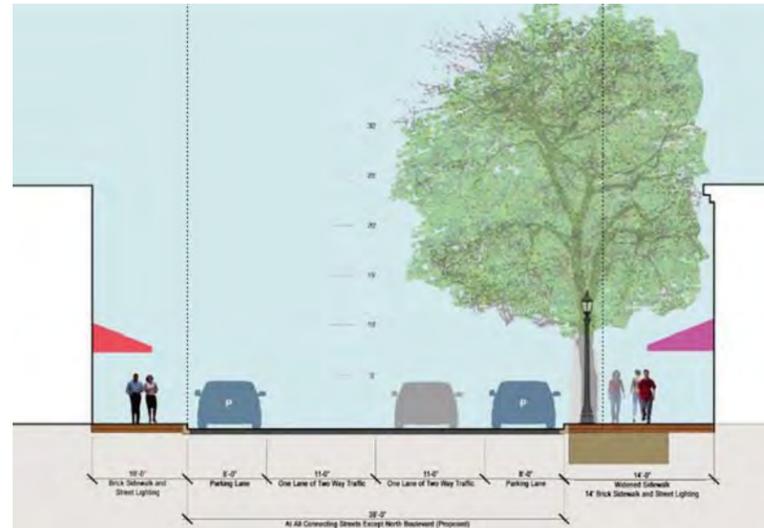
Proposal for two-way traffic on St. Louis and St. Ferdinand



Typical underpass condition at I-110 that discourages pedestrians

Laurel Street is particularly attractive for conversion as it connects the Mississippi to Mid City and the Magnolia Cemetery and is not as well-connected to the Interstate ramps as other streets. This suggests that it could be converted to a lower speed, two-way, neighborhood connection with on-street parking, a bike lane, and more generous landscape features. Improvements could be made to the under-bridge environment below I-110 to improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

Two other streets are candidates for two-way conversion: St. Ferdinand and St. Louis Streets, currently operated as a one-way pair in the north-south direction, have direct ramp connections to the I-110 approach to the Horace Wilkinson Bridge. These two streets will need to be converted to two-way traffic to accommodate new parking decks as part of the River Center expansion and proposed hotel project. This modification would also improve the complex circulation system that now fails to connect the downtown to Old South in a rational or easily understood way. Cars on both Nicholson and Highland Road are forced onto one-way streets once they enter the downtown. Currently, inbound and outbound drivers are forced onto four one-way streets and awkward turns. Northbound drivers are forced into the heart of Beauregard Town at St. Charles Street, inundating this neighborhood with through-



Images from the Master Plan New River District, by M. Van Valkenburg

traffic. At Catfish Town, Southbound traffic is force onto St. Phillips Street. Two-way traffic on St. Ferdinand and St. Louis would not necessitate any changes to the interstate ramp system, but would greatly improve navigation between Old South and the Downtown by eliminating many confusing turns. In the future, Nicholson Drive and Highland Road would simply extend as two way streets into the downtown.

Lafayette Street, currently one-way southbound, could also be converted to two-way traffic in the near future that would improve access to proposed developments. The King Hotel renovation, currently underway at the corner of Lafayette and Convention Streets, would benefit from northbound traffic on Lafayette Street for drop-off and parking operations.

South Boulevard is another street that could better connect the riverfront to neighborhoods in Mid City. Expansion of South Boulevard to a width similar to North Boulevard (there is evidence that this was once the case) would also relieve pressure on Government Street in the future. Reduction of traffic volumes on Government Street is essential if this street is ever to be improved with on-street parking to support mixed use. South Boulevard modifications should occur in coordination with re-use of the Police Barracks.

## IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

### SHORT TERM ACTIONS

- Redesign and reopen St. Ferdinand and St. Louis streets for two-way traffic
- Redesign and reopen Laurel and Lafayette Streets for two-way traffic
- Improve under-highway environment at Laurel Street and I-110
- Time traffic signals to aid pedestrians crossing the streets
- Improve the under-highway environment
- Restore Capitol Lake Drive

### MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS

- Rebuild South Boulevard into a full boulevard similar to North Boulevard
- Improve the I-110 bridge connection to Spanish Town

### LONG TERM ACTIONS

- Make remaining downtown streets two-way except for North, Main and Third
- Improve Government Street pedestrian experience



Metropolitan bike networks



The recovery of the older South Boulevard layout could relieve some of the traffic from Government Street and provide connections to the riverfront from Mid-City

## 12. PLAN DOWNTOWN TO SUPPORT FUTURE TRANSIT

### Connected

### Baton Rouge can Prepare Now for Future Transportation Alternatives



**B**aton Rouge is not a dense city. Average density in the Parish is less than 3,000 persons/sq. mile (compared to Los Angeles at 12,000 persons/sq. mile). This low density makes transit difficult to operate with efficiency from both a cost and service point of view. While the private vehicle will be with Baton Rouge for the foreseeable future, some efforts can be made right now, to prepare the city for a future where light rail, or bus rapid transit could operate on an affordable basis.

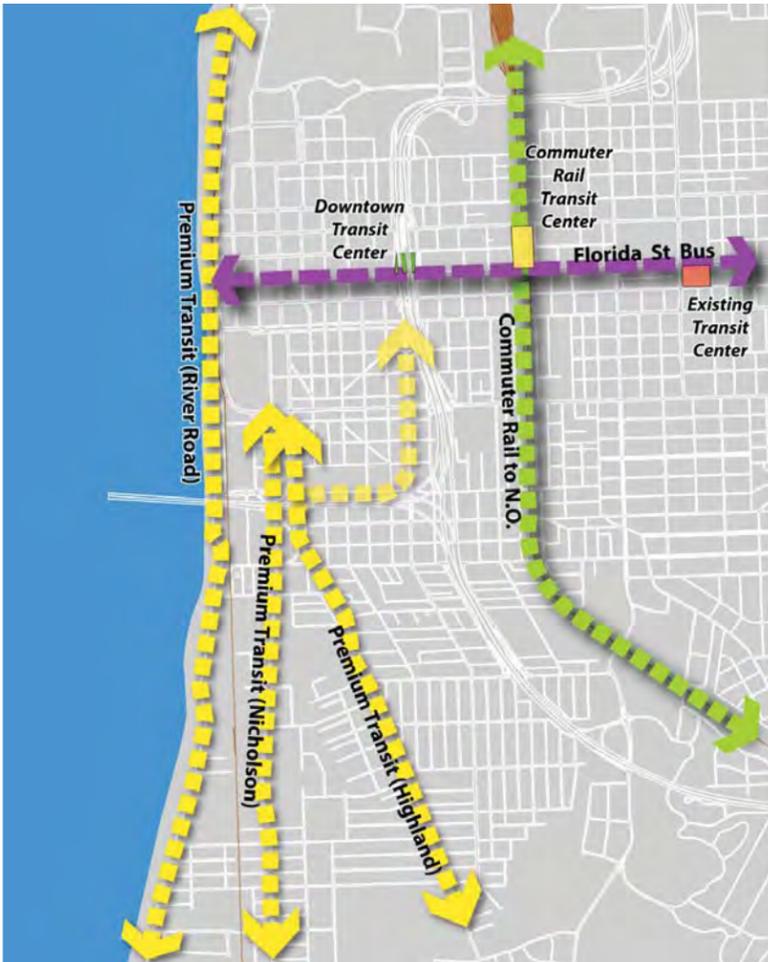
The primary target audience for transit should be workers and students. Due to the Parish's diffuse land use patterns, only one corridor appears to be a viable transit corridor for a first phase trial. This would connect Downtown with LSU along the Nicholson Corridor. LSU is already developing higher density, transit oriented development along this corridor. This policy should continue so that some time in the future, light rail (or bus rapid transit) will be able to serve this corridor. Plan Baton Rouge II also supports the inter-city rail system now under consideration. That system could also be designed to bring visitors close to the downtown.

#### Bus Service and Facilities

Existing bus service in Baton Rouge is provided by CATS, and the current bus transfer facility is located at Florida Street and 22nd Street, nearly two miles from the central business district. That facility could be moved closer to downtown, in Mid City or under I-110, to anchor the emerging district in East Spanish Town. Relocation of the transit center provides an opportunity for CATS to make its main transfer facility a part of downtown, located within convenient walking distance of employment and entertainment opportunities. This is also intended to allow circulator routes serving downtown to cover a shorter distance, thus reducing overall operating costs and/or allowing CATS to operate more frequent shuttles.

#### Alternative Transit Centers

Plan Baton Rouge II proposes an alternative transit center at the intersection of the New Orleans commuter rail line and Florida Street. As this commuter service would need a station serving Baton Rouge anyway, this location is useful as it connects with CATS existing Florida Street bus service and potential future high-



Transit options

frequency buses, connecting the station to downtown. The second location could be at Florida Street and East Boulevard, taking advantage of surface space located under the I-110 elevated spans. This would offer reasonable walking distance to the downtown employment core.

**I-110 Replacement**

Long range planning should continue to focus on the impact of the I-110 elevated highway. This highway will, at some point, need to be reconstructed. At that point, consideration should be given to eliminating all the off-ramps that currently complicate the east west streets of downtown. A simpler solution would be to have a single entrance point at each end of the downtown with a surface



Long-term reconfiguration of ramp access from I-110 to downtown streets to concentrate access at key points, and allow the I-110 roadway width to be reduced.

boulevard on either side of the highway that would conduct traffic to the appropriate cross street. This would eliminate weaving movements on the highway and allow the width (and impact) of the highway on the city to be reduced. This model has been used on I-71 in Cincinnati.

**Bicycles**

Building sustainable cities means providing bike trails and bike parking. Baton Rouge’s riverfront provides the perfect venue for bike paths. The bike path that now connects the downtown and LSU should be extended northward. Bike paths can be connected to quieter city streets to guide cyclists downtown. Bike parking should also be available at all transportation depots and at future transit stops along the corridor between LSU and downtown.

**IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS**

**SHORT TERM ACTIONS**

- Invest in interim shuttle services from LSU to downtown until bus service can be provided

**MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS**

- Establish special bus service on Nicholson Drive between LSU and Downtown
- Plan future transit mode for Nicholson corridor, possibly light rail
- Create bike trail connectors
- LEED Standards for New Development [bike parking, etc.]

**LONG TERM ACTIONS**

- Research interstate reconstruction options to reduce the barrier of I-110
- Relocate CATS bus transfer facility closer to downtown



Existing transit lines



Underbridge arts and lighting in Richmond, VA



### III. CRITICAL STEPS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION

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Plan Baton Rouge Phase II is charged with updating the vision of *Plan Baton Rouge*, but also with identifying specific actions that will advance implementation goals from both plans. This section identifies the specific actions, such as public-private partnerships and investments, financing tools and administrative actions that are necessary to advance a vision to reality. The Twelve Priority Actions, listed below include immediate steps that are to begin within the next two years.

#### **PRIORITY PUBLIC-PRIVATE INVESTMENTS**

- 1. THE CENTRAL GREEN**
- 2. THE THIRD STREET CORRIDOR NORTH ANCHOR**
- 3. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**
- 4. A NEW VICTORY PARK NEIGHBORHOOD**
- 5. CONNECTIONS TO THE RIVER**
- 6. CONNECTIONS TO THE NEIGHBORHOODS**

#### **PRIORITY FINANCIAL TOOLS**

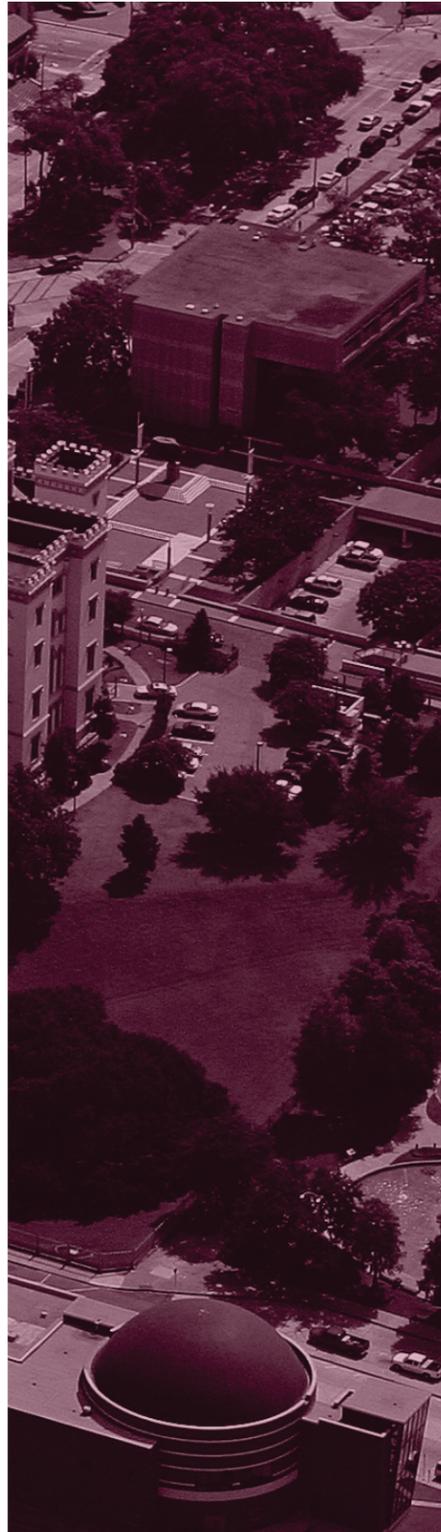
- 7. MEZZANINE FINANCING TOOL FOR MIXED-USE**
- 8. RETAIL INCENTIVES**

#### **PRIORITY ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS**

- 9. A CLEANER, SAFER, BETTER MAINTAINED AND MORE ATTRACTIVE DOWNTOWN**
- 10. COORDINATED PARKING MANAGEMENT**
- 11. NEW ZONING, DESIGN STANDARDS AND CODE ENFORCEMENT IN THE DOWNTOWN**
- 12. MARKETING AND BRANDING THE DOWNTOWN**

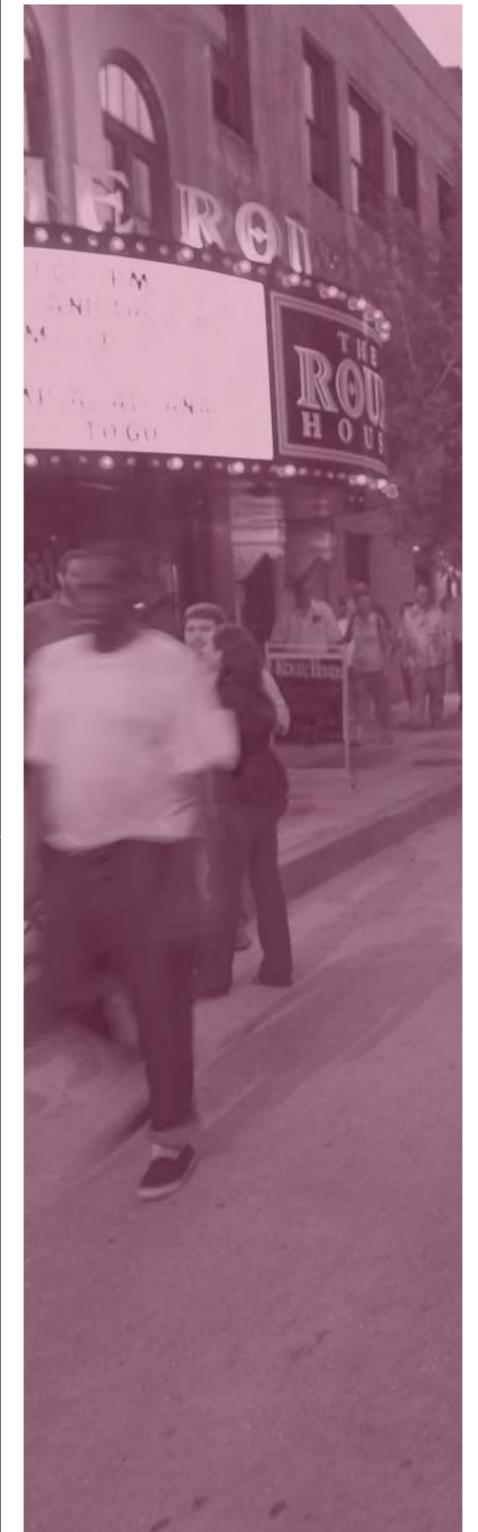
## PRIORITY PUBLIC-PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

### IMPLEMENTATION



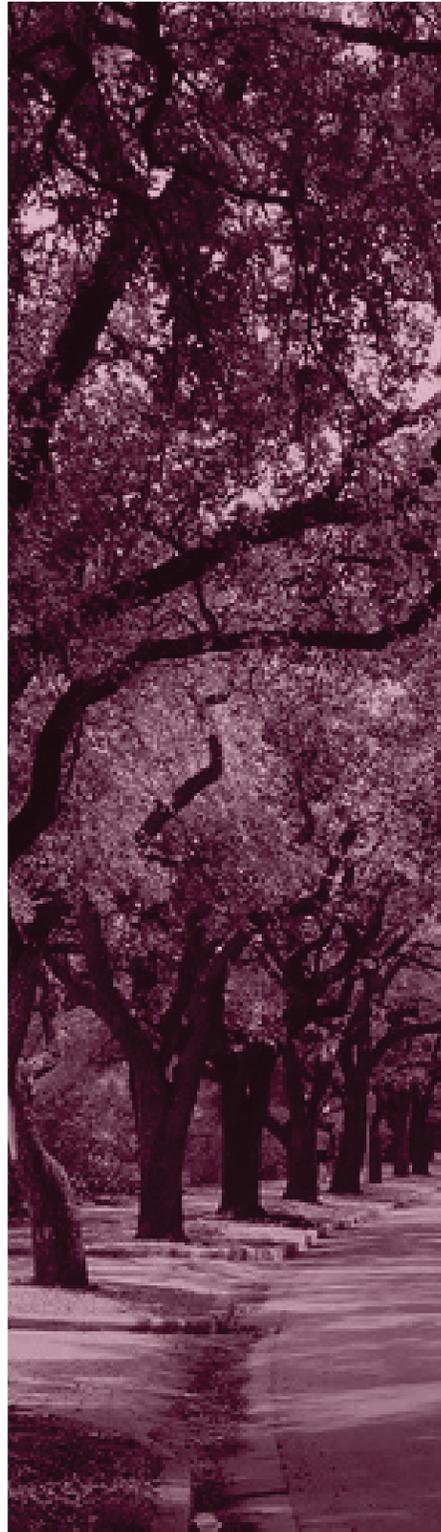
GOAL & ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING
<p><b>1. THE CENTRAL GREEN</b></p> <p><i>The collection of parks and plazas around city hall lack coherence and are under utilized. The historic grounds around the Old State Capitol are graced with some mature trees, but the adjacent grounds of the River Center and City Hall Plaza are largely paved surfaces with little respite from the sun. Numerous barriers to movement, from fences and planters to walls and stairs, limit movement through the space and constrain use. Removing these barriers, adding trees and knitting the park together with generous paths will create a “Central Green” for Baton Rouge residents: a place to go for an afternoon or evening that is surrounded by a variety of cultural destinations.</i></p> <p><b>1.1. Redesign of the Central Green</b></p> <p>The unique assembly of civic and cultural institutions surrounding the Central Green will be united by a number of targeted design moves aimed at unifying the space and identifying this area as the heart of downtown. Strategy for Phased Implementation.</p> <p>Landscape architectural services in schematic design are required for the development of the Central Green concept – the new urban park that will unify and connect the strategic cultural, civic and governmental buildings around a shady green open space that identifies the heart of Downtown.</p> <p><b>1.1.1. Programming Study</b></p> <p>This first phase will investigate the current and future needs of all adjacent stakeholders, evaluate site conditions and program opportunities and resolve the programming needs that will guide the development and implementation of future phased improvements within the project area. By elaborating on events, circulation and parking, arrival and access requirements, landscape on structure, vistas of the river, planting and lighting, this effort will ensure the ultimate realization of the goals and ambitions of Plan Baton Rouge II and the previous Riverfront Master Plan through discrete project development.</p> <p><b>1.1.2. Schematic Design</b></p> <p>The schematic design will set forth a scheme for the organization and character of the Central Green and will illustrate the components of landform, paving and steps, water features, vegetation, lighting and furnishings, drop off and service access, and ADA compliance. The process shall establish a rational and iterative development of alternatives to arrive at a preferred scheme. Consultant shall prepare a preliminary construction cost model of the preferred scheme, organized by logical units of discrete improvements as well as project wide items of work.</p> <p><b>1.1.3. Defining the Decision Making Body</b></p> <p>The project requires identifying a committee representing the city and adjacent institutions that will exercise authority to approve concepts and, with the design team, galvanize the community around the schematic design plan.</p>	<p>City/DDD It will elicit community input and will engage appropriate agencies including CPEX, DDD, DPW, and BREC.</p> <p>City/DDD</p> <p>City/DDD to issue RFP</p> <p>City/DDD</p>	<p>City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>No funding required</p>

GOAL & ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING
<p><b>1.2. Modifications to River Road at the LASM</b> Perhaps the greatest barrier to reconnecting downtown to the river at the Central Green is traversing River Road and the railroad tracks to gain access to the river. This design issue was addressed in previous riverfront plans, which call for narrowing River Road and developing additional pedestrian accommodations such as crosswalks, wider sidewalks, and fewer travel lanes. In addition, LASM has recently advanced a proposal to extend the LASM to the north with a river terrace that will be open to the public and accessible from River Road and North Boulevard. This additional access point will help to unify the central green and bring visitors closer to the river.</p> <p><b>1.3. Waterworks Site</b> Once the vacant parcels along the waterfront are fully developed, the Waterworks Site will offer the only point along the upper elevation of Lafayette Street to directly view the full expanse of river. The plan recommends converting this site to open parkland to preserve this view corridor and utilizing the Shaw Center Plaza as the location for a pedestrian bridge, spanning over River Road to the proposed LASM river terraces and the Levee Promenade.</p> <p><b>1.4. River Center Library Branch Surroundings and Related Open Space Improvements</b> Exterior modifications to be coordinated with Central Green and Town Square plans. This plan recommends further enhancements to be considered when the library is refurbished in order to ensure the fully integration with the overall scheme.</p> <p><b>1.5. Riverfront Plaza</b> Simplify access and extended tree canopy.</p>	<p>DDD and the City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>BRAF and the City can negotiate with the Baton Rouge Water Works.</p> <p>Library Board/City/DDD</p> <p>City/DDD</p>	<p>City of Baton Rouge and Federal Appropriations</p> <p>Negotiations with Waterworks should proceed to secure air rights for public use over the Waterworks facilities. No cost.</p> <p>Library Board/ City</p> <p>City of Baton Rouge</p>
<p><b>2. THIRD STREET CORRIDOR NORTH ANCHOR</b> <i>Downtown Baton Rouge has benefited from a significant amount of development in the past few years. The River Center Convention Center, Shaw Center, Hilton Baton Rouge and Louisiana Art and Science Museum are all new or expanding. Each is concentrated at the southern end of Downtown. This important node needs to be complemented by an anchor project at the northern end. The intersection of Third Street and Laurel is already an active development area—the Kress development is newly completed and the Capital One, and the Commerce buildings are all poised for redevelopment in the near future. Developing a cultural anchor in this area would activate both ends of Third Street, downtown’s historic shopping street, creating a retail spine for the downtown.</i></p> <p><b>2.1. Secure Site Control for Mixed-use or Entertainment Anchor</b> The City should obtain site control of a parcel or a number of parcels, preferably by securing options that determine the price and the timing of potential acquisition by a developer. The site should be of sufficient size to accommodate the necessary program. That program should include an entertainment anchor, such as a small movie complex, a jazz club, or similar venue that can attract a range of patron from the region in the evening hours. The program should also include appropriate ancillary retail, with an emphasis on food and beverage and perhaps a bookstore. Housing is a desirable but not necessary component.</p>	<p>City Redevelopment Agencies</p>	<p>Financial Incentives and private investment</p>



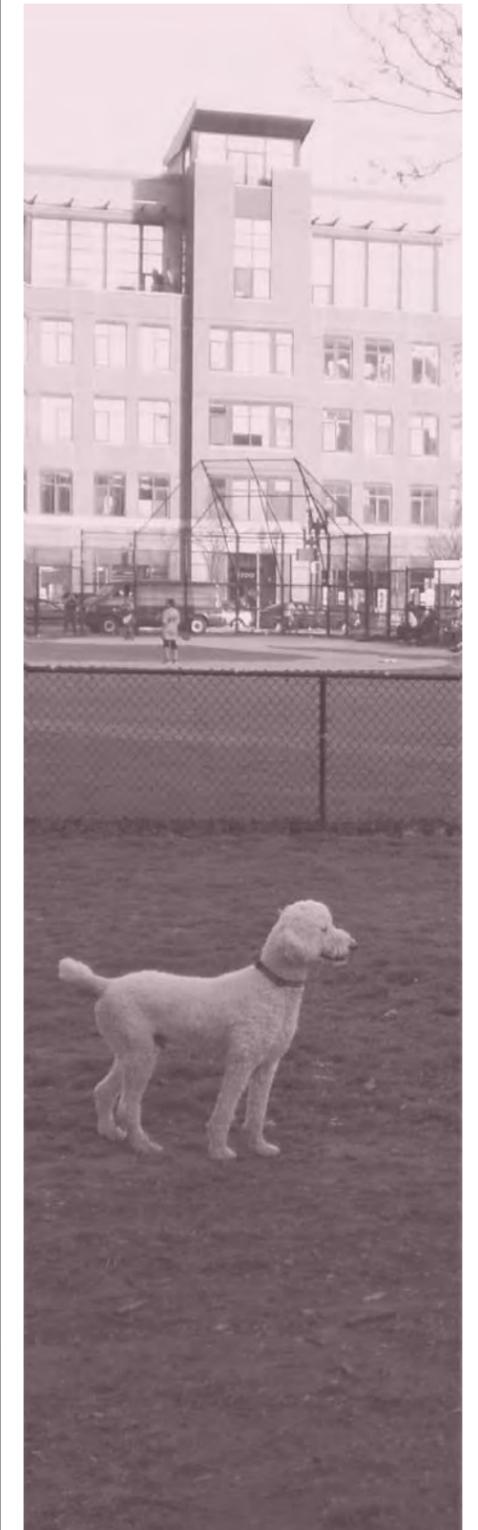
## PRIORITY PRIVATE/PUBLIC INVESTMENTS

### IMPLEMENTATION



GOAL & ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING
<p><b>2.2. Prepare a Redevelopment Plan for the Site</b>                      A team including urban designers, retail architects, and real estate advisors should prepare a redevelopment plan. That plan should present a compelling vision for the site and its role in the future of Downtown. The plan should also refine the program, prepare design guidelines, and address parking requirements. Of equal importance, the plan should consider the economics of the redevelopment plan, including assembling the requirement economic development incentives, including New Markets Tax Credit allocations, prior to the issuance of a developer solicitation. Consultation with local developers should be included in this process.</p> <p><b>2.3. Developer Solicitation</b>                      A Request for Proposals should be prepared and issued seeking a developer for the site. Respondents should be required to present design concepts, a refined program, and a economic proposal generally consistent with the guidelines provided in the RFP. A professional review of each proposal should be conducted leading to a recommendation for a selection by senior policy leadership. This process should be completed within 18 months.</p>	<p>DDD</p> <p>City/DDD/CPEX</p>	<p>No funding required</p>
<p><b>3. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE</b>  <i>Re-establish a pervasive tree canopy coverage for Baton Rouge’s downtown. All analysis and design proposals will be based on the understanding that the urban forest and urban water systems are inherently linked and must be treated as companion systems.</i></p> <p><b>3.1. Commission Mapping to Assess and Diagram Existing Conditions</b>                      Document all streets and walks, including below grade utilities, to use as the essential base for tree planting design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Existing canopy coverage (location, species, planting design, and health of all existing street trees);</li> <li>- Existing impervious surface (coverage, composition, contaminants), and other existing stormwater conditions;</li> <li>- Street traffic patterns (vehicular and pedestrian);</li> <li>- Dimensioning of streets and sidewalks (including structures within the right-of-way);</li> <li>- Built adjacencies (program implications and physical relation to the street);</li> <li>- Known or desired patterns of spontaneous use.</li> </ul> <p><b>3.2. Design a comprehensive urban forest</b> planting plan [tree palette and planting standards] that builds on existing inventory where applicable and includes recommendations for three levels of intervention: removals, upgrades and new planting. We understand this to be an aesthetic pursuit in part, but one with highly technical underpinnings and challenges that must be met to create a healthy urban forest that functions successfully as one of many interwoven city systems.</p> <p><b>3.3. Pursue a phased planting of the Baton Rouge urban forest</b> as outlined in the design plan and coordinated with planned street improvements such as Laurel Street, River Road and St. Louis and St. Ferdinand Streets. Annual/maintenance costs -- assume an average \$100/tree</p>	<p>DDD/City/Baton Rouge Green should be assigned the role of advocate and maintenance coordination.</p> <p>City/DDD</p> <p>City/DDD</p>	<p>City/DDD funds as part of increased budget for agency to oversee downtown</p> <p>City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>City of Baton Rouge</p>

GOAL & ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING
<p><b>3.4.</b> To ensure <b>durability and longevity of the Baton Rouge urban forest</b> it is necessary to empower the appropriate agency with regulatory authority to monitor adherence to planting and management standards, and to oversee implementation and long-term management and maintenance of the plan. Given the complexity of these systems and limited city resources, serious consideration should be given to having a third party entity maintain public parks, plazas and streets within DDD oversight.</p> <p><b>3.5.</b> The <b>expertise of Landscape Architects</b> in the design and technical requirements of living urban systems, and the coordination of diverse consultant teams required to achieve success, is invaluable to the realization of a coherent expression of our public spaces. Landscape Architects must be required partners on any team working within the DDD on projects which impact the public realm</p>	<p>City to allow DDD to oversee contract</p> <p>City/DDD to issue RFP</p>	<p>City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>No funding required</p>
<p><b>4. VICTORY PARK NEIGHBORHOOD</b></p> <p><i>A new residential neighborhood in the central portion of the downtown is desired. The existing Baton Rouge Post Office, which occupies nearly 4 acres of land on either side of Convention Street is a possible candidate for redevelopment. This site could offer a range of land uses, and park space, that would catalyze a new residential neighborhood between Spanish Town and Beauregard Town.</i></p> <p><b>4.1. Acquire Post Office Site for Future Redevelopment and/or Open Space</b> At the appropriate time, the City (or EBRRA) should commission an appraisal of the site. An offer to acquire should be made to the USPS based upon that appraisal.</p> <p><b>4.2. Establish Guidelines for Future Development on Post Office Land</b> That will enhance the gateway to the City on Convention and Florida Streets. A team including the disciplines of urban design and real estate economic should prepare a program for the site. That program should determine the use of the site, including but not limited to open space, continued presence of USPS, retail, and residential. The team should also prepare urban design guidelines for the redevelopment of the site that are consistent with the emerging plans for the future of Spanish Town, Beauregard Town, and a new residential neighborhood linking these two anchors of Downtown’s residential life.</p> <p><b>4.3. Redevelopment</b> An RFP should be prepared and issued for the preparation of more detail landscape for the public park space that would be the centerpiece of the new neighborhood.</p>	<p>City Redevelopment Agencies</p> <p>City/DDD</p> <p>City/DDD</p>	<p>City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>City of Baton Rouge</p>
<p><b>5. CONNECTIONS TO THE RIVER</b></p> <p><i>Reconnecting downtown to the Mississippi Riverfront is a primary goal of this plan and many plans before it. Previous plans recommended a variety of street narrowings, bridges and at grade crossings. This plan seizes the opportunity presented by the two topographic features that define the river’s edge— the natural and Army Corps levees— by constructing a network of pedestrian</i></p>		



## PRIORITY PRIVATE/PUBLIC INVESTMENTS

### IMPLEMENTATION



GOAL & ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING
<p><i>movement that weaves together the upper elevations of these two landforms to bridge the divide between them. The concept of a braided system expands the notion of physical connections to the river to include a zone encompassing the entire edge of downtown, between the upper elevation of the natural levee to the river's edge.</i></p>		
<p><b>5.1. Extend the Levee Promenade to DeSoto Park</b>, and further north to reach the River Park development.</p>	City/DDD	City/State/Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)
<p><b>5.2. Lafayette Promenade along Natural Levee</b> Develop a common set of materials for consistent use along the Promenade that extends from River Center to North Street. This expression of the “Braid” concept will be a natural outcome of materials and treatments developed for the Central Green and should be established in design guidelines for future development on Lafayette Street.</p>	DDD	
<p><b>5.3. Spanish Town Corridor Pedestrian Connection</b> At the State Capitol Grounds, River Road and the railway tracks are at the upper level of the historic “platform”, but the width of River Road and the tracks discourage crossing to the River and DeSoto Park is undeveloped. Future plans to locate a major attraction here will necessitate radical changes to the landscape and infrastructure. In advance of an ALIVE project, a variety of improvements made to DeSoto Park and River Road could connect the River and the City, including a pedestrian bridge over the railway (this could be required for ALIVE emergency access) and extension of the Levee Promenade north to join a new DeSoto Park and the State Capitol Grounds along the alignment of Spanish Town Road. This will also help increasing the usage of the Capitol Park Welcome Center by improving surrounding grounds, building access, etc.</p>	City/DDD/State	City/State
<p><b>5.4. River Road Narrowing</b> The plan recommends a reconfiguration of River Road from Florida Street north to the Capitol complex to convert its existing four-lane section to three lanes (two travel lanes and a left turn lane). Because the west side of River Road is primarily the riverfront, this left turn lane is usually for southbound movements only.</p>	City/DDD/State	City/State
<p><b>5.5. River Road Crossings at Florida Street and North Street.</b> Narrowing River Road will help to reduce the perceived divide caused by the road, the railway line and the raised levee. Improved pedestrian crossings at North Street and Florida Boulevard are priority actions, but improving all street crossings of River Road with pedestrian cycles and clear roadway markings— recommendations made by the Riverfront Master plan— are endorsed in this plan.</p>	City/DDD/State	City/State
<p><b>5.6. Extend Capitol Park to DeSoto Park and the river</b> through a pedestrian bridge in the continuation of Spanish Town Road.</p>	City/DDD/State	City/State
<p><b>6. CONNECTIONS TO THE NEIGHBORHOODS</b></p>		





GOAL & ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING
<p><b>8. RETAIL / ENTERTAINMENT INCENTIVES</b></p> <p><i>Many downtowns offer incentive programs to encourage new retail uses, and may even target specific types of retail such as grocery. Incentive programs for new businesses can take several forms. Other incentives target building improvements that can increase the viability of existing businesses or help to offset the cost of improving buildings for new retail tenants.</i></p> <p><b>8.1. Allowances or reimbursement for tenant build-out costs</b> help meet the financial gap between property owners and new commercial tenants. Such programs typically have square footage and cost caps, such as Miami’s \$23/SF reimbursement for up to 100,000 SF.</p> <p><b>8.2. Waiver of construction license and permit fees</b> will also lower start-up costs for new businesses.</p> <p><b>8.3. Low-interest Loans Provide Low-cost Capital for New Businesses</b></p> <p>These are often subordinated direct loans from the local development corporation, but also require private sector leverage (eg. some percentage of bank financing as well). Some loan programs also have a forgiveness clause if the business stays in operation for a certain period, such as three years. Because it has a low cost to the public sector, many cities offer financing in addition to matching grants. Revolving loan funds can effectively reduce finance costs to the borrower, while recouping some of the lending costs over time. The DDD could either buy down the interest rate from a lender or manage their own loan pool, which has higher administrative costs. Other cities have tried more innovative forms of public financing. The Wichita Façade Improvement Program offers a forgivable loan for 25% of the project cost up to \$10,000; the loan does not have to be repaid if the improvements are completed within five years. Business owners can finance the remaining 75% through a fifteen-year special assessment against the real property.</p> <p><b>8.4. Façade Improvement and Building Rehabilitation</b></p> <p>Façade improvements are an essential element of a successful public realm. Street fronting building faces should consist primarily of transparent doors and windows on the ground floor, along with well-designed and maintained signage, awnings and lighting for businesses. Even buildings that do not have primarily retail or service uses should contribute positively to the character of the street. The primary component of most façade improvement programs is a grant to match some portion of the total cost, with a maximum grant amount per project. A typical program in a small city may cover 25-50% of project cost, with a maximum as high as \$15,000 to \$20,000 per project. Increasing the percentage of cost covered would incentivize all buildings to participate, while increasing the total maximum grant would incentivize owners of larger and older buildings.</p>	<p>City/DDD</p> <p>City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>DDD</p> <p>The DDD currently offers a five-year property tax abatement on improvements.</p>	<p>Local Banks</p> <p>City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>Finance Authority and other public or private sources</p> <p>City/grants</p>





GOAL & ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING
<p><b>10.1. Establish Downtown Parking Function within Either the Department of Public Works, or the DDD</b> A Parking Division is expected to continuously monitor and update the parking inventory, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies, and provide the dynamic response appropriate for future development scenarios.</p>	City/DDD	City of Baton Rouge
<p><b>10.2. Increase enforcement capacity</b> to improve coverage of on-street parking and allow the monitoring of joint-use parking areas and leased public parking spaces on private lots. The additional parking staff will also enable the City to implement the improved parking management plan.</p>	City/DDD	City of Baton Rouge
<p><b>10.3. Shared Use Agreements</b> A cost-effective and immediate approach for the City to increase the short-term public parking inventory in Downtown will be through the addition of public parking spaces through shared-use agreements of private parking lots that have excess capacity. Proactively develop a shared-use program with existing parking lot owners and proposed new development. The goal of a shared-use parking program is for the City to maximize the use of existing resources and encourage the planning and development of projects that provide public parking spaces as part of the new development. There is an opportunity to enter into agreements with private property owners to manage their lots more efficiently, in particular there appears to be possible a better use of church-owned parking lots which are only at capacity one day a week. In some cases, the City may be limited to the acquisition of a leasehold interest only rather than the fee-simple interest.</p>	City/DDD	City of Baton Rouge
<p><b>10.4. Valet Parking</b> Any additional parking supply acquired for management by the City or the DDD can be used in more creative responses to the downtown's parking needs. For instance, a shared-use use agreement with any number of Downtown Churches can be used in conjunction with a free valet program to support the parking needs of 3rd Street. Tenants and building owners together with the downtown organizations can help put together a valet service that would cater to Downtown visitors.</p>	City/DDD	No funding required
<p><b>10.5. Shared State Parking Garages</b> Work with the State to better utilize the existing State parking garages between North Street and Main Street. Currently, the public utilization of the excess parking spaces in the garage for long-term leases is restricted by the original bonds that financed the structures. As these bonds expire, the City, or the DDD, and the State should document the utilization of the spaces and enable the possibility of the excess spaces be used in a shared use scenario and long-term leases for new infill development in downtown.</p>	City/DDD	Costs related to after hour operations could be provided by third party entity and users. City/State
<p><b>10.6. Institute beautification and maintenance standards for parking lots</b> and improve its physical relationship with the street and the rest of downtown.</p>	City/DDD	No funding required
<p><b>10.7. Unified Signage for Parking</b></p>	City/DDD/State	City/State
<p><b>10.8. Shared Car / Zip Cars, etc.</b></p>	City/DDD	No funding required
<p><b>11. NEW ZONING, DESIGN STANDARDS AND CODE ENFORCEMENT IN THE DOWNTOWN</b></p>		



## PRIORITY ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

### IMPLEMENTATION



GOAL & ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING
<p>To direct future private investment in the downtown, sufficient oversight in design must be established to ensure a quality environment. Controls on surface parking, structured parking and preserving view corridors must be identified with standards and guidelines and enforced by appropriate entities.</p> <p><b>11.1. Historic Districts Protection</b> Spanish Town, placed on the National Register in 1978, enacted Design Guidelines in 2008 under the review of The Historic Preservation Commission. Beauregard Town, placed on the National Register in 1980, should consider pursuing enactment of a Design Guidelines process similar to Spanish Town, to promote and protect its unique neighborhood character.</p> <p><b>11.2. New Design Guidelines</b> Downtown has 2 separate areas, The Arts &amp; Entertainment District and Spanish Town, each with its own Design Guidelines process. Downtown should consider a coordinated Design Guidelines process for the entire DDD area. Downtown Design Guidelines should focus on the quality of street level facades, upper level massing, streetscape elements, and maintenance. In coordination with the Planning Commission, DDD will assist in creation of additional design guidelines for downtown district. City will adopt zoning and/or design guidelines for enforcement. City will establish design review entity to interpret and enforce design guidelines as part of comprehensive design review procedure for downtown projects.</p> <p><b>11.3. LEED Standards for New Developments</b> As sustainability trends become ever more developed and an attractive distinction for progressive municipalities, Downtown should consider how future construction can benefit both its urban ecosystem and urban brand. Downtown should adopt the LEED Green Building Rating System and promote its use via Design Guidelines.</p> <p><b>11.4. Views to the Mississippi River</b> Downtown needs to enhance its visible connections to the River. View corridors down east-west streets should be protected from obstruction. As feasibility allows, new development should be oriented perpendicular to the River to limit blockage of adjacent views. Riverfront developments should access the views with an array of balcony, terrace, and rooftop amenities.</p> <p><b>11.5. River Road Developments</b> Riverfront sites should optimize their unique position with high-profile, signature developments that enhance the riverfront experience and contribute to branding the Downtown image. River Road should be a landmark green esplanade with significant landscape treatment fronting buildings along its eastern edge. To both enhance the visual appearance and ease traffic flow, curb cuts should be limited along River Road, and prioritized to perpendicular side streets.</p> <p><b>11.6. Retail Uses on Lafayette Street</b> While 3rd Street is designated as the primary attraction corridor of the Arts &amp; Entertainment District, Lafayette Street holds a critical</p>	<p>City/DDD</p> <p>DDD/Planning Commission/City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>City/DDD</p> <p>City/DDD</p> <p>City/DDD</p>	<p>City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>DDD/City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>City of Baton Rouge</p> <p>City of Baton Rouge</p>

GOAL & ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING
<p>position. It needs a more inviting pedestrian-oriented character, and should be prioritized with commercial on the ground level for any new construction on the current parking lot sites.</p> <p><b>11.7. Code Enforcement</b> Downtown needs improved maintenance standards to optimize its image and maximize its appeal to further investment. Downtown should consider implementing a strict code enforcement policy, to be implemented in a fair and timely manner. The specifics of code enforcement could be part of the overall Downtown Design Guidelines or a separate format.</p>	<p>City/DPW</p>	<p>City of Baton Rouge</p>
<p><b>12. MARKETING AND BRANDING THE DOWNTOWN</b> An integrated branding and marketing program will publicize the area to locals and visitors and encourage multi-site visitation by creating the sense of a unified downtown district. A strong brand should promote individual attractions as well as the district as a whole. The effort should engage local institutions to work together to integrate existing marketing efforts and coordinate activities.</p> <p><b>12.1. Branding.</b> Comprehensive branding requires combined strategies, including media advertising, a web presence, signage and print materials. The DDD is already working hard, and achieving success, in regards to branding. The DDD has a strong web site, and should continue to highlight attractions and upcoming activities for workers, residents and visitors. In 2008 the DDD was recognized by the International Downtown Association for its excellent wayfinding program. Expanding the wayfinding should be a priority for the DDD. Developing, and regularly updating, maps and brochures to promote attractions and activities and identify nearby amenities, such as hotels and restaurants, is also important. The DDD may also want to develop sample itineraries for families with children, history buffs, and others. In particular, these itineraries could focus on encouraging convention attendees to spend more time enjoying the downtown.</p> <p><b>12.2. Local Art.</b> Local artists should be engaged to develop and market the district, including the brand logo, signage, and all related materials discussed above. The DDD has already worked with local artists on its most recent wayfinding project and should continue this successful collaboration. Local artists can be employed to create streetscaping materials and public furniture; this strategy was extremely successful in revitalizing the Rope Walks district of Liverpool, and in promoting the Golden Gate National Parks.</p> <p><b>12.3. Integrated Ticketing.</b> All-inclusive pricing incorporating a discount for multi-site visitation and/or unlimited use of recreational activities will get visitors accustomed to moving around downtown and spending an entire afternoon or day in the area.</p> <p><b>12.4. Events and programs.</b> Programming should focus on authenticity and use site-specific events with local artists and vendors. Programming efforts are best applied in parks and open spaces, local arts and cultural institutions, galleries and shops, and public buildings and empty lots with capacity for events and exhibitions. Successful programs in other cities, such as the Boston CyberArts Festival, Memphis in May, the Syracuse International Film Festival, and Port Moody Festival of the Arts, are top tourist attractions which draw millions of visitors and generate millions of dollars in economic activity each year.</p>	<p>Expanded role for the DDD, Baton Rouge Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge.</p> <p>City/Arts Council/DDD</p> <p>DDD/Attractions</p> <p>City/DDD</p>	<p>DDD/City</p> <p>City 1% for art programs.</p> <p>No funding required</p> <p>Public and private sources</p>





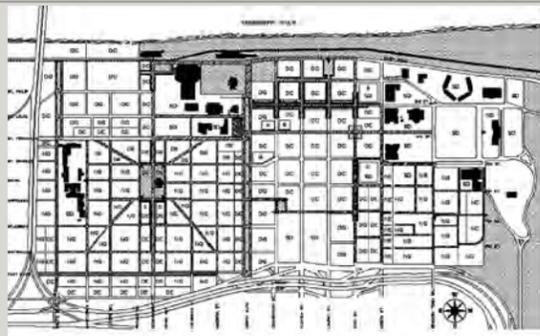
## IV. APPENDIX

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1. RELEVANT RECENT PLANS AND THEIR LESSONS
2. MARKET ANALYSIS
  - DOWNTOWN BATON ROUGE
  - WORKERS, RESIDENTS, AND VISITORS
  - HOUSING MARKET ANALYSIS
  - RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS
  - ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND EVENTS MARKET ANALYSIS
3. EVALUATION OF EXISTING INCENTIVE PROGRAMS
4. THE BATON ROUGE URBAN FOREST: A SUCCESSFUL MODEL FOR SOUTHERN CITIES.
5. TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
7. DDD STRATEGIC PLAN

# 1. RELEVANT RECENT PLANS AND THEIR LESSONS

## Appendix

	Capitol Park Master Plan, 1990 & updates Post Architects	Capitol Park Interpretive Plan Eskew+ and Post Architects	Plan Baton Rouge, 1998 updated 2002 Andres Duany, F. A. Coates, A. Garvin, R. Gibbs, W. Kulash
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Centralize the state government agencies to the State Capitol grounds.</li> <li>- Obtain as much property as possible to allow for future growth.</li> <li>- Integrate the new facilities into the fabric of the city of Baton Rouge [placing the parking structures into the city to allow for dual and multiple uses].</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify main boundaries of the site and gates of entrance for potential visitors.</li> <li>- Modify /Expand Interpretive contents in Pentagon Barracks Museum, Arsenal Museum, State Library.</li> <li>- Install Architectural and Landscape Design Guidelines for all constructions and maintenance within the Capitol Park.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish the Downtown as a cultural center.</li> <li>- Take advantage of the Mississippi River.</li> <li>- Create a 24-hour city: a place for living, working, shopping and recreating.</li> </ul>
Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintaining the large park-like grounds around the capitol.</li> <li>- The Capitol growth has brought more than 3000 state workers to downtown.</li> <li>- It has created more than 2 million square feet of new class 'A' office buildings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Renamed "The Capitol Complex" to "Capitol Park"</li> <li>- Furthered concept development of Visitors' Center &amp; State History Museum</li> <li>- Interpretive Signage and Public Art installations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plan Baton Rouge has served as a comprehensive master plan and reference able to inspire later planning initiatives, and the collaboration of institutions and individuals under a common objective</li> <li>- Consolidation of the Old State Capitol surroundings as a cultural anchor.</li> <li>- Mixed use Parking Garages</li> </ul>
Unrealized Potentials to be developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responding to their different edge conditions with adequate scales of development.</li> <li>- Creating more interaction/complementary uses with the central area of downtown.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthen linkages with other major amenities in the downtown.</li> <li>- Install a comprehensive network of visitor amenities throughout the Capitol park.</li> <li>- Construct the Riverfront Park along batture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Update the qualitative evaluation of the existing retail, restaurant, and entertainment uses to offer a well grounded strategy for their consolidation and expansion.</li> <li>- Continue exploring housing opportunities [design, regulations, tax incentives]</li> <li>- Redefine and strengthen continuities and links among major assets, enhancing the pedestrian experience [corridors] and the open space vitality.</li> </ul>
Images	 <p>FINAL MASTER PLAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. State Capitol</li> <li>B. State Museum</li> <li>C. State Library</li> <li>D. Capitol Annex</li> <li>E. Pentagon</li> <li>F. New Court Building</li> <li>G. New Office Building</li> <li>H. New Parking Structure</li> <li>I. Visitor Center</li> </ul>	 <p>Key landmarks: North Campus, Capitol Complex, South Campus, Riverfront, Arsenal, State Library, State Museum, State Capitol, Visitor Center, State History Museum.</p>	

<b>Master Plan for the New River District of BR, 2003</b> Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates with Dana Nunez Brown	<b>Downtown Visitors' Amenity Plan, 2003</b> WHLC Architecture, Eskew, Reich	<b>Baton Rouge Riverfront Plan, 2006</b> Hargreaves Associates	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unify and establish an Identity for River District</li> <li>- Implement a New Urban Landscape</li> <li>- Simple and pragmatic framework that can be implemented incrementally over time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop City's visual identity: enrich visitors' orientation, user access and experience, tourist marketability.</li> <li>- Connect pieces by urban design signage, lighting, streetscape components.</li> <li>- To provide a conceptual plan of coordinated amenity improvements to complement public and private sector developments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve accessibility/connectivity to the Riverfront.</li> <li>- Improvements in River Road: increase pedestrian permeability.</li> <li>- Improvements in the main green open spaces in the downtown.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased awareness of River Road's importance and potential</li> <li>- Spurred the creation of 3 lanes for the City's portion of River Road. ( State's portion still to be done )</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extensive inventory of public realm / streetscape elements emphasizing history / heritage as a tourism amenity.</li> <li>- Established program and concept for North Boulevard Town Square.</li> <li>- Wayfinding and Signage Program phase 1 completed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Placing the river as a major asset for the downtown and showing its capacity to foster development.</li> <li>- Rigorous analysis of the current condition and potential developments of the eastern area of downtown.</li> </ul>	Achievements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- River Road and Lafayette Street as connective spines linking existing and proposed cultural and landscape amenities.</li> <li>- River Road as a robust tree-lined boulevard.</li> <li>- Lafayette Street as a beautiful and vibrant pedestrian-oriented street, fostering year round activity and social interaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further public space enhancement. Capitalize on work already in progress, and the extensive inventory of major features in downtown.</li> <li>- Streetscape lighting upgrades.</li> <li>- Future signage program phases: Downtown entries, Interpretive signage, Heritage Trail, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bringing development along River Road and improving accessibility</li> <li>- Addressing the need of programming open space to maximize the opportunities for its use.</li> <li>- Targeting key parcels for early implementation in key locations to foster private /public development around.</li> </ul>	Unrealized Potentials to be developed
			Images

## 2. DOWNTOWN BATON ROUGE MARKET ANALYSIS

### Appendix



### Downtown Baton Rouge

Downtown Baton Rouge has an increasingly important role as a regional economic and cultural center; a series of recently completed projects have fueled growth by generating excitement and activity and bringing more people downtown. The Shaw Center, cultural and gaming attractions and a growing population of government workers serve as a base for private developments, including the One Eleven and Kress projects. There are also a new courthouse close to completion, and plans for an amphitheater within Capitol Park, a new government office building, the convention center expansion, and, of course, the development of Plan Baton Rouge II.

Workers, residents, and visitors are all vital to the revitalization of downtown, supporting a variety of businesses and creating round-the-clock activity. Baton Rouge's role as the center of Parish and State government creates a regular influx of daytime office workers. There is also a notable residential presence concentrated in two historic neighborhoods. Major cultural attractions, casinos and hotels serve as anchors for downtown by attracting visitors and supporting an emerging entertainment district. Together these three groups, workers, residents, and tourists, provide the basis of demand for a vibrant downtown core.

TABLE I. DOWNTOWN EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR		
SECTOR	EMPLOYMENT	%
Public Administration	10,179	49%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	1,766	9%
Professional and Technical services	1,726	8%
Finance and Insurance	1,417	7%
Transportation and Warehousing	1,094	5%
Accommodation and Food Services	905	4%
Health Care and Social Assistance	848	4%
All others	2,770	13%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20,705</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Workers, Residents, and Visitors

Downtown Baton Rouge is first and foremost a government center, with over 10,000 public employees that create demand for additional products and services. Approximately 2,000 people also live downtown. While the Baton Rouge MSA has recently benefited from an influx of people displaced by Hurricane-Katrina, the downtown population has remained fairly steady, due in part to a lack of housing. The tourism and convention businesses in Baton Rouge, however, have experienced a boom in recent years.

**Workers.** The downtown study area is home to 1,300 businesses and 35,000 employees. As the state capital, public administration is by far the largest employer, followed by the service sector, consisting primarily of entertainment and legal/business services to support the public sector<sup>1</sup>. Overall job growth has been steady, approximately 1.2% per year since 2004<sup>2</sup>, and is concentrated in several sectors. While the total number of public jobs has remained fairly consistent, professional and technical service jobs have shown strong growth, as have accommodation and food, arts and entertainment, and transportation and warehousing. By contrast, the retail and construction sectors remain stagnant, with low

employment and minimal growth since 2004.

**Residents.** A demographic analysis of the downtown population compared to the City of Baton Rouge and Louisiana State reveals several key differences. While the downtown population has been declining, the population in the MSA has been increasing, with 40,000 new residents projected to settle permanently by 2016 (after a predicted outflux of 15,000 hurricane-displaced people returning to their homes<sup>3</sup>). The population in the MSA is younger, more likely to have an advanced degree and has a significantly higher household income than the population in the downtown. In order to maximize the success of specialty retail and cultural and entertainment destinations downtown, the greater Baton Rouge population must be encouraged to visit the downtown regularly.

The downtown residents constitute an active workforce, with both lower unemployment and a higher percentage of its population in labor force than the city overall. Downtown residents also have a shorter commute and are more likely to walk; 11% of people walk to work downtown, compared to 3% and 1% in the city and state.

<sup>1</sup> Claritas, 2008 (based on SIC codes, data not shown).

<sup>2</sup> Downtown Development District Employment Data, 2004-2007 (based on NAICS codes, data shown in chart).

<sup>3</sup> Baton Rouge Visitor Market, ERA, 2007

A Claritas, 2008

B American Community Survey, 2006

TABLE 2. POPULATION KEY INDICATORS				
		DOWNTOWN <sup>A</sup>	BATON ROUGE <sup>B</sup>	LOUISIANA <sup>B</sup>
DEMOGRAPHICS	Total Population	2,000	225,000	4,288,000
	Median Age	38	32	36
	% High School Educated	83%	84%	79%
	% Higher Degree	17%	31%	20%
EMPLOYMENT	Population in Labor Force	70%	64%	61%
	Unemployment	6%	10%	8%
	Travel Time to Work	20	22	25
	Walking to Work	11%	3%	1%
	Median HH Income	\$27,000	\$36,000	\$39,000
	Population below the Poverty Line	24%	27%	19%

**Visitors.** The event and convention center markets are small but growing in Baton Rouge. Traditionally Baton Rouge has been a secondary destination for visitors who were also visiting New Orleans. Recently Baton Rouge has become a destination in its own right, attracting 1.7 million visitors a year. Baton Rouge is now positioned to enhance its profile and capture a greater share of the convention and event market, and to play a bigger role in attracting visitors to the region in general. The hotel market in Baton Rouge is booming, with up to 2,000 rooms planned in new developments. Despite the fact that Baton Rouge has a lower Average Daily Rate (ADR) and only 40% of the total demand of New Orleans, the hotels have higher occupancy, indicating potential unmet demand.

TABLE 3. 2007 HOTEL MARKET [JANUARY- JULY]		
	BATON ROUGE	NEW ORLEANS
Monthly Room Demand	200,000	500,000
Arts, Entmnt. Recreation	\$80	\$110
Avg Occupancy	68%	58%

In 2005, Baton Rouge confirmed 93,000 room nights and hosted 135,000 delegates – contributing \$107M to the economy. This visitation was fueled by 233 conventions, 44 sporting events/meetings, 11 national conferences, 16 regional meetings, and 4 military reunions. Notably, the American Bowling Congress brought approximately 70,000 bowlers and an additional 70,000 of their friends and family to Baton Rouge, generating a \$75M economic impact<sup>4</sup>. The convention will be returning in 2012 and is expected to create 60,000 room nights annually<sup>5</sup>.

Downtown Baton Rouge is also home to ten major churches, which draw over 3,000 people downtown on Sundays. If churchgoers could be encouraged to stay downtown to visit cultural attractions, eat out or shop, the city could enjoy significant economic impacts.

4 Intercept Interview of the American Bowling Congress, S.C.I. Research, 2005

5 2005 Annual Report, Baton Rouge Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

### Housing Market Analysis

A critical mass of residents is needed to create demand for retail and energize the downtown. However, residential development is very challenging under current market conditions. Currently the downtown is dominated by surface parking lots which generate significant cash flows for the land owners and represent little if any financial risk<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, residential development has been constrained, resulting in a lack of housing downtown. There are significant market and logistical factors limiting the potential development sites, therefore supporting infill development and strengthening connections with developments in the greater downtown will be essential to supporting an active downtown.

The single-family home market is stronger outside of downtown, particularly along interstates 10 and 12 and east of downtown. However, the condo market is growing. Conversations with stakeholders indicated that despite the demand for rental units, condos are the most financially feasible product in this market. Several rental properties have been converted to condominiums, with prices ranging from \$113 to \$173 PSF. Prices for newly-constructed condos are in a similar range, with prices ranging from \$121 to \$144 PSF. Notable new developments downtown include River Park, Kress at 3rd and Main, One Eleven and River Place.

As noted in the Old South Baton Rouge Plan, there is a significant lack of new affordable housing in the downtown. The median household income downtown, \$27,000, makes it apparent that existing residents need very moderately priced housing. New developments downtown are priced far above the market value of the existing housing stock, which primarily consists of multifamily rental units built before 1980. The median home value in Baton Rouge is \$117,000, whereas recently constructed two bedroom condos in the same area start at \$450,000. The same is true in the

1 Stakeholder interviews

rental market where median rent is \$670 but newly constructed two bedroom rental units start at \$2,350. Unfortunately, the market realities make the development of affordable housing in the core downtown area extraordinarily challenging and may require significant public investment to resolve.

**Historic Structures.** Downtown Baton Rouge also has many historic structures, and Spanish Town and Beauregard Town are designated historic neighborhoods. The Old South Baton Rouge Plan (2006) found that building conditions are declining in many older neighborhoods and small investment in renovation could make a significant impact on home values. The study also recommended that contiguous areas of vacant and blighted properties be used for multifamily infill development or small parks.

It is also worth noting that a small housing preservation industry is growing in Baton Rouge, and creates jobs at a range of skill levels.

TABLE 4. HOUSING STOCK			
	DOWNTOWN	BATON ROUGE	LOUISIANA
Total Housing Units	1,100	100,000	1,838,000
% Built after 1980	7%	25%	42%
% Units in Multifamily Structures	65%	36%	17%
<b>Owner-Occupied</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>68%</b>
Vacancy Rate	-	0.5%	1.5%
Median Home Value	\$117,000	\$132,000	\$115,000
<b>Renter-Occupied</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>32%</b>
Vacancy Rate	-	5.7%	6.4%
Median Rent	-	\$667	\$618
Renters paying >35% of Income	-	27%	36%

## 2. DOWNTOWN BATON ROUGE MARKET ANALYSIS

### Appendix



### Retail Market Analysis

The presence of a variety of retail is an essential factor in lively streets, the hallmark of a successful downtown. There are currently many empty spaces and underutilized storefronts along 3rd Street, such as a design business occupying a first floor prime retail space. While downtown will never be a major retail hub that competes with regional malls, there should be enough specialty retail to support office workers, residents, and tourists alike.

#### Commercial Challenges

Downtown has a growing office market; there are three existing and one planned office building with rents ranging from \$22.50/SF to \$27/SF depending on building age. Retail rents are, however, prohibitively high. Retail businesses also suffer from a parking system that makes it difficult to access downtown. Office and retail businesses find parking issues to be a major impediment to locating in the downtown. A majority of the surface parking downtown is not open to the public. The parking that is available is felt to be expensive to Baton Rouge residents who are unaccustomed to paying for parking. Many companies in the downtown subsidize their employee parking. Numerous business owners explicitly cite the cost of parking as a reason for locating in the office parks outside downtown Baton Rouge. Downtown loses businesses, and the employees who would shop in downtown during the workday, because of parking considerations. Other shoppers may similarly be put off by the price of parking, which they are not accustomed to paying for at shopping malls and other retail destinations. Retail businesses suffer as their customer base, both daytime office workers and other shoppers, declines due to parking constraints.

#### Retail Supply

Retail and merchandising analysis shows a significant oversupply of stores and goods in almost all submarkets of Baton Rouge. In fact, there is a \$45 M surplus in the study area and a \$2B surplus in a 10-mile radius. A surplus (in parentheses below) indicates that

the total sales are greater than the total spending power in the same area, meaning people are actually traveling into Baton Rouge to shop, primarily for eating and drinking, motor vehicle sales and repairs, electronics and appliances, building material, and specialty retail. It is a positive trend that more money is spent downtown than the spending power of downtown residents, who do not currently generate the minimum level of demand.

#### Unmet Demand

Because the downtown population is small, there is not significant unmet demand within the downtown study area. The data suggests some opportunity exists for general merchandise stores such as department stores, and grocery and wine/liquor stores.

#### Commercial Opportunities

In conversations with Baton Rouge stakeholders, many people indicated the need for small niche retail to support the office workers, such as a dry cleaners, drug store, small grocery store, and a clothing store with professional attire. It was also suggested

that childcare for downtown workers and support staff would be an excellent amenity that could attract new business downtown. For their part, existing local business owners said that they would benefit from cultural attractions staying open later at night (for after work activities), improved bike paths, additional walking paths, better connections to the levee, and free parking. The Live after Five programming on Fridays provides a good model for this type of activity.

### Arts, Entertainment, and Events Market Analysis

#### Current Market

The continued growth of Arts and Entertainment District is at the core of Plan Baton Rouge II. Downtown has begun to position itself to be a regional arts and entertainment hub. The Louisiana Art & Science Museum is currently one of the top attractions in Baton Rouge; the \$65M Shaw Center for the Arts was recently completed, and new cultural attractions planned include the Knock Knock

TABLE 5. RETAIL DEMAND		
Gap/Surplus by Type of Establishment	Study Area	10 Mile radius
General Merchandise, Apparel, Furniture and other	(\$2,719,000)	(\$675,072,000)
Motor Vehicles and Parts Dealers	(\$16,328,000)	(\$546,652,000)
Gasoline Stations	(\$603,000)	(\$415,684,000)
Food service and Drinking Places	(\$16,411,000)	(\$410,164,000)
Electronics and Appliance Stores	(\$2,574,000)	(\$229,591,000)
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	(\$722,000)	(\$168,394,000)
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	(\$533,000)	(\$159,993,000)
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music Stores	(\$877,000)	(\$132,632,000)
Food and Beverage Stores	\$840,000	(\$85,055,000)
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	(\$4,785,000)	(\$83,352,000)
Health and Personal Care Stores	(\$429,000)	(\$53,181,000)
Building Material, Garden Equip Stores	\$3,216,000	(\$41,816,000)
General Merchandise Stores	\$3,216,000	\$40,553,000
Electronic and Mail Order	(\$2,402,000)	\$222,516,000
TOTAL	(\$48,463,000)	(\$2,738,517,000)

Children’s Museum in City Park (\$15M), an amphitheater in Capitol Park (\$2M), and renovations to the River Center (\$16M). ALIVE would be a major addition to this inventory of attractions, as would be new investments in parks and open space in the Downtown core and along the river.

Popular visitor destinations in Baton Rouge include:

- Museums: Louisiana Art & Science Museum, Louisiana State Museum
- Historic Attractions: Old Governor’s Mansion, Old State Capitol, USS Kidd, Old Arsenal Museum, Spanish and Beauregard Town
- Visual and Performing Arts: Shaw Center for the Arts, Baton Rouge River Center, LSU Museum of Art, Manship Theatre
- Gaming: Belle of Baton Rouge Casino, Hollywood Casino
- Other: Main Street Market, Live After Five, Weekly Afterwork Run and Beer (Happy’s)

**Unmet Demand**

ERA’s attractions study found that 30% of the Baton Rouge population, or ~82,000 households are likely to visit a museum at least once a year. As of 2007, there is unmet demand for nature, art, historical and children’s attractions. There is also demand for an event space within a future project/museum. Alternative cultural anchors are also possible, such as a niche movie theater.

**Opportunities**

Studies and stakeholder interviews identified several key issues that present opportunities to bolster the cultural and entertainment market downtown. First, a better parking strategy could encourage multi-site visitation, rather than one-stop visits. Second, attractions should better market to LSU students and government workers answering a growing demand for drinking and dining out, and live theater and concerts. Lastly, casino visitors should be encouraged to stay the night and attend other attractions in Baton Rouge.

**Existing Incentive Programs**

Current incentive programs are insufficient to meaningfully impact the feasibility of new development and new businesses.

**Tax Increment Financing**

While there is an applicable TIF statute, existing TIFs have been used for individual properties such as State parking lots and the Hilton Hotel, rather than for an entire neighborhood or area. The Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center is a non-traditional TIF as it is supported by incremental increases in the EBR Parish hotel/motel occupancy tax rather than by incremental property taxes. Low property tax rates in Baton Rouge make traditional TIF financing less powerful. For example, according to conversations with DDD officials, one prime downtown development parcel, which is currently a surface parking lot, pays less than \$5K in property taxes per year. Given these low assessments, and the abundance of tax exempt properties downtown (all government property is tax exempt), implementing a TIF in the near term may still be advisable as it would capture the enhanced value of the properties as the downtown is developed and eventually would grow to be an effective development tool.

**Economic Development Zone Status**

The DDD was designated an Economic Development Zone (EDZ) in 2005; from 2006-2008, businesses received \$17M in sales and use tax abatements. The benefits of an EDZ are:

- \$2,500 tax credit for each new job,
- Rebate of state and local sales taxes on material used to construct or expand a business, as well as machinery and equipment used exclusively on the site,
- An additional \$2,500 tax credit for employees currently receiving tax credits under AFDC.

**Capital Improvements**

Baton Rouge offers 5-year property tax abatements on improvements to structures in the downtown, historic, or economic development districts. The DDD also offers a storefront grant program.

**Historic Structures**

Eligible buildings in Baton Rouge can receive a State commercial historic tax credit for 25% of eligible rehabilitation costs, as well as a Federal historic rehabilitation tax credit for 20% of costs.

## 4. THE BATON ROUGE URBAN FOREST: A SUCCESSFUL MODEL FOR SOUTHERN CITIES

### Appendix



Led by the efforts of the Urban Forest Research Unit of the USDA, and city leaders including Mayor Daly in Chicago, and Mayor Bloomberg in New York, cities across the US have made significant pledges over the past decade to expand their urban forests.

Encouraged in part by the mounting data of the measurable benefits of urban forests compiled by the USDA, the list of cities making such pledges is growing. While the presence of southern cities participating in the discussion is increasing, Baton Rouge remains uniquely positioned to be a leader in developing a successful model for development of an urban forest in southern cities.

Today downtown Baton Rouge lacks a healthy tree canopy, and will benefit greatly from establishment of a pervasive tree canopy over downtown's streets, parks and parking lots. Street trees are indispensable to the attractiveness, comfort and safety of the urban experience. Street trees provide comfortable shade, delineate boundaries between pedestrians and cars, slow vehicular speeds, and provide a hierarchy and diversity within the street grid. A pervasive tree canopy also carries significant intangible benefits such as local cultural resonance, generational ties to place and seasonal variety.

In addition, it is now accepted that there are measurable benefits of a healthy urban canopy— trees improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce the urban heat island effect, and provide wildlife habitat. They can also aid in management of stormwater, reduce noise, facilitate energy conservation by reducing heating and cooling demands and increase property values.

The urban forest is a living system that is part of several city infrastructures— energy, biological, mechanical, cultural and social— and as such, it is a technical system that operates most

effectively at maturity. Planting trees in an urban environment is both an aesthetic pursuit and one with highly technical underpinnings and challenges. These technical aspects must be met to create a healthy urban forest that functions successfully with the many interwoven city systems. To achieve an optimally functioning urban forest requires careful analysis and design, quality construction and long-term maintenance through the employment of a skilled workforce.

The research of horticulturalists, soil scientists, urban foresters and landscape architects is greatly expanding our understanding of both the challenges and potential benefits of planting in urban environments. Given extreme soil compaction, lack of available water, insufficient biologic function to restore nutrients, lack of access to oxygen, intense temperature fluctuations, and repeated disturbance from utility excavation and sidewalk repairs, it is generally accepted that the average life of a tree planted in the urban environment is 7-15 years.

In order to achieve a healthy tree canopy, and in turn to reap the ecological potential we know exists, equal consideration must be given to the below ground growing requirements of a tree as to the above ground aspirations of ultimate scale and character. Provision must be made for adequate rooting space, watering, aeration and drainage for tree plantings to be successful and sustainable.

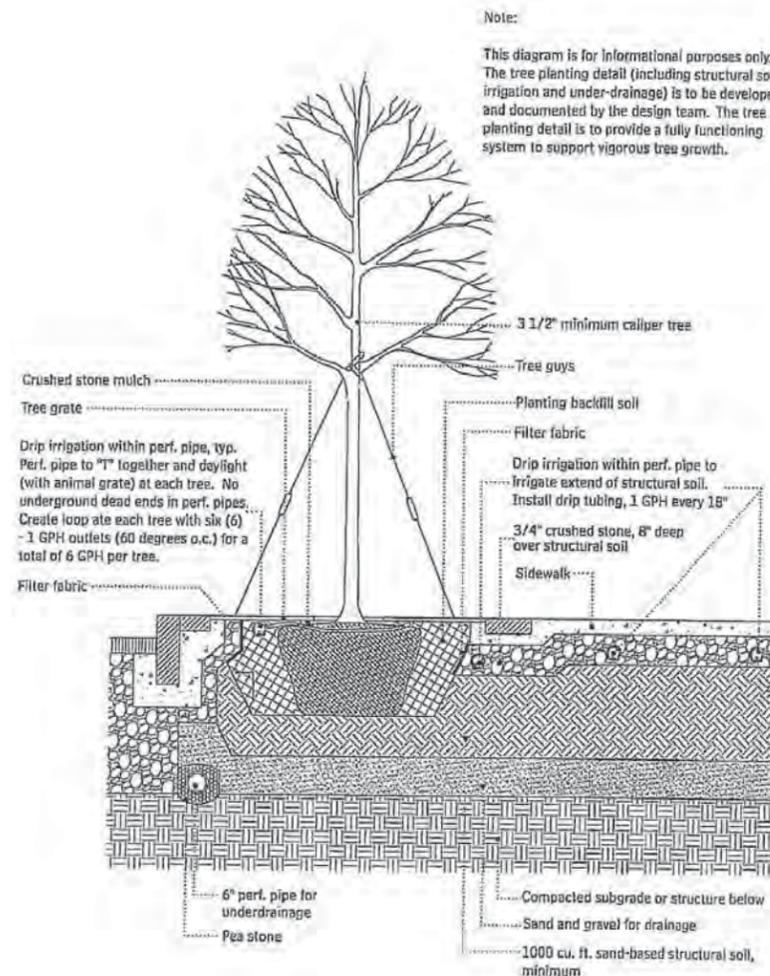
The varied conditions of Baton Rouge's downtown require detailed mapping and analysis as a base to develop a comprehensive urban forest planting design. Mapping of all streets and walks in the downtown must be completed, including: below grade utilities; existing canopy coverage (location, species, planting design, and health of all existing street trees); soil conditions; existing impervious surface (coverage, composition, contaminants); existing stormwater conditions; street traffic patterns (vehicular



Prototypical sections

and pedestrian); dimensioning of streets and sidewalks (including structures within the right-of-way); built adjacencies (program implications and physical relation to the street); and known or desired patterns of spontaneous use. Beyond observational and GIS mapping, an Urban Forest Effects (UFORE) model should be pursued to accurately project the structure and benefits of urban vegetation.

Once the conditions are catalogued, the design of a diverse and comprehensive urban forest planting, that builds on existing inventory where applicable and includes recommendations for removals, upgrades and new planting will be completed. The plan will: identify a varied and innovative species palette specific to Baton Rouge; consider strategies to decrease stormwater runoff by integrating water and vegetation systems; identify opportunities to decrease impervious surfaces with planting insertions and increased use of pervious pavement; detect opportunities for asymmetrical street planting to accommodate existing street widths and solar orientation; develop greening proposals for streets too narrow to receive trees; and define a phasing strategy to prioritize above actions.

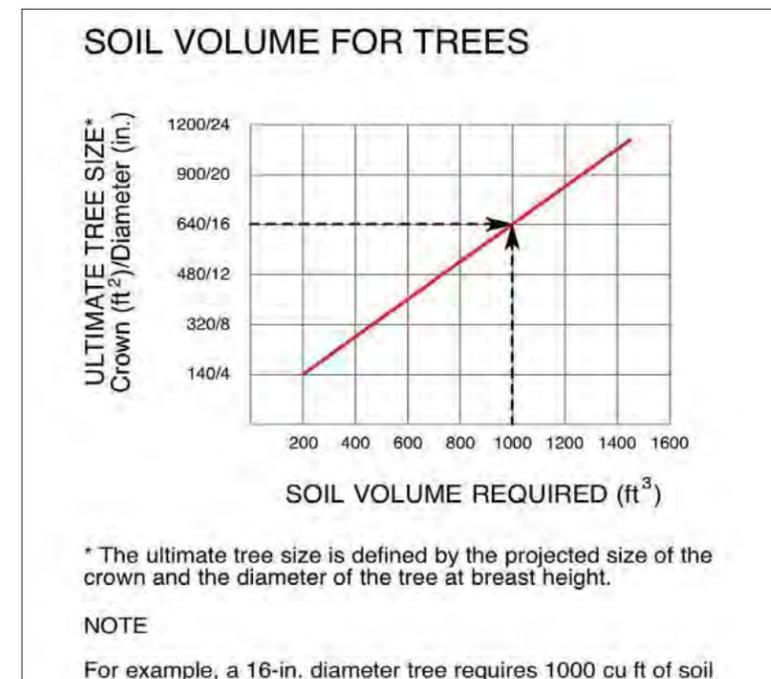


At the Commonwealth Flats in Boston, standard tree planting details were developed with minimum soil resource criteria based on research concerning the correlation between available soil resources and ultimate tree size.

To guide phased implementation of the plan, the city must also develop standard tree-planting details tied to prototypical conditions identified in the comprehensive mapping. Tree standards should include minimum soil volume and composition standards, minimum tree caliper, provisions for aeration and irrigation, and drainage requirements as a guide to designers working within the DDD. In addition to making our plantings sustainable through well-designed standard details, trees have the ability to perform

significant functions in the urban environment that can be regulated with performance guidelines. Minimum shade criteria, organic management regimes, stormwater management and surface contaminant removal strategies, should be developed into guidelines to ensure maximized benefit of Baton Rouge's urban forest.

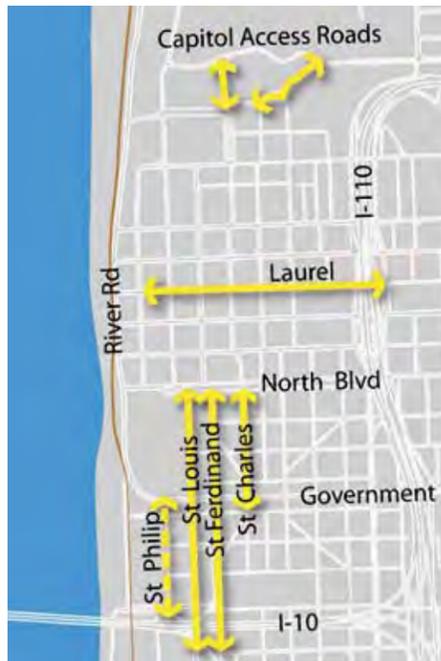
To ensure durability and longevity of the Baton Rouge urban forest it is necessary to empower the appropriate entity with regulatory authority to monitor adherence to planting and management standards, and to oversee implementation and long-term management and maintenance of the plan. Given the complexity of these systems and limited city resources, serious consideration should be given to the privatization of maintenance of public parks, plazas and streets within the DDD.



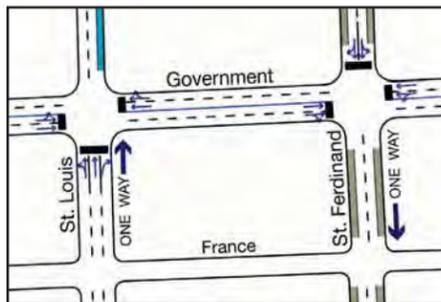
## 5. TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Appendix

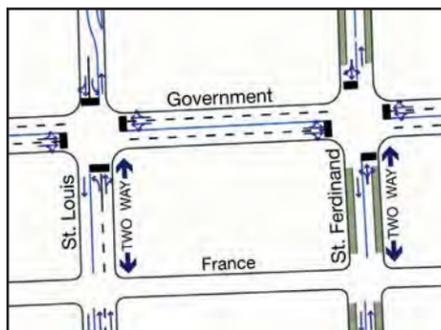
#### Transportation / Streetscape improvements



The primary two-way street conversions are: Laurel Street in the central business district; St. Ferdinand and St. Charles Streets in Beauregard Town; and St. Louis and St. Philip Streets around the River Center.



Existing crossings



Crossings in two-way street conversions

Investments in transportation infrastructure should yield more than the movement of traffic or even the movement of people: they should also create a framework to support the land use future envisioned for a community and should contribute to the public spaces so vital to the vibrancy of successful urban areas. The transportation recommendations for downtown are made expressly with the four goals for the future of downtown Baton Rouge in mind: they focus on improving the livability of the transportation system to enable a successful integration of residential, employment and entertainment land uses; they promote a green vision for downtown by adding street trees and landscaping in the public right-of-way; they allow the existing cultural resources of downtown to be accessible to downtown users through multiple modes of travel and connected to the rest of the region; and they promote stronger connections from downtown to the adjacent districts of central Baton Rouge.

These recommendations are organized here in two major categories: the modifications and enhancements to existing transportation infrastructure to support these goals, and the articulation of a long-term transit-ready vision for downtown. Certain elements of these recommendations contribute to the realization of the focused places of the overall downtown vision discussed in previous sections of the plan. These are identified throughout this section by their specific relationship to these places.

#### 1. IMMEDIATE TWO-WAY CONVERSIONS

In downtowns across the United States, an emphasis on street capacity and vehicle mobility to and from employment centers has led to the configuration of one-way traffic flow on streets. These do provide an addition of vehicle capacity, but this capacity comes at the expense of other fundamental elements of urban areas: safety and comfort in walking between places, the visibility and accessibility of street-level businesses, and general navigability of

the street network. Downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods have many opportunities for conversion from one-way traffic to two-way, helping to calm traffic and mitigate dangers to the pedestrian posed by fast-moving vehicles, to increase round-the-clock visibility for businesses and to allow downtown workers, residents and especially visitors a clear understanding of how to move around downtown.

#### 1.1. St. Louis and St. Ferdinand Streets

St. Louis and St. Ferdinand Streets carry traffic between the Baton Rouge CBD and the south of the city, and they also provide downtown's primary southern access to the expressway system. However, by a conventional engineering-based assessment, the two do not function as a couplet: each feeds into a different primary corridor, and neither is part of a couplet that continues unimpeded into downtown. These two appeared to be candidates for conversion due to their ties to major corridor streets leading into southern Baton Rouge: Nicholson Drive (continued from St. Louis) and Highland Road (continued from St. Ferdinand).

St. Ferdinand is another opportunity for a relatively simple conversion from one-way to two-way traffic, as current traffic volumes do not greatly exceed the capacity that a single lane can carry. A two-way conversion of this street is also particularly beneficial to downtown connectivity in that it currently moves one-way traffic between two two-way sections of street: Fourth Street to the north and Nicholson Drive to the south.

The transition from St. Ferdinand to Highland under the Interstate 10 bridge and ramps is also relatively uncomplicated, as the on-ramp to westbound I-10 now exits St. Ferdinand from the right lane. In other words, a two-way conversion of this street would not affect this movement, though it does suggest that use of the entire block between St. Ferdinand and St. Louis for a ramp could

be substituted with a simple exit ramp directly from St. Ferdinand. Northbound traffic from St. Louis can use street network to reach the ramp, potentially allowing that block to be returned to development and taxable property.

This two-way conversion also requires the reconfiguration of the St. Ferdinand/Penalver intersection. Presently, St. Ferdinand is a two-way street south of Penalver, which siphons northbound traffic from St. Ferdinand and distributes it to St. Charles, continuing north to become 5th Street in downtown. A fully two-way St. Ferdinand would need to allow traffic to safely continue north from Penalver, meaning the forced separation of the two streets would need to be modified through curb relocations. Penalver can remain a one-way street to facilitate on-street parking, though this would allow one lane of vehicular travel and consequently calm traffic on Penalver entering into the Beauregard Town neighborhood.

St. Louis forms a couplet, at least in part, with St. Philip Street, although it is the only part of this couplet continuing into downtown from Beauregard Town: St. Philip Street has been shortened by the River Center and Old State Capitol complex, and southbound traffic from downtown reaching the St. Louis-St. Philip couplet uses River Road. The primary function of St. Philip is to carry southbound traffic to Nicholson Drive, as St. Philip has no direct connection to the I-10 access ramps.

The main complication of a two-way conversion of St. Louis is the existing roadway geometries in the Nicholson 'split' under the I-10 bridge and ramps, Nicholson's northbound lanes continue north as St. Louis, where its southbound lanes branch to the west and link to St. Philip Street. This split has seemingly been designed with the construction of the I-10 bridge approach in mind, and the bifurcation of the two occurs around a support column for the bridge.

This has implications for turning both into two-way streets. Nicholson’s two northbound lanes continue north to South Boulevard, where a left-turn lane is added at the intersection. St. Philip continues south of South Boulevard, turns to the east, and merges to the south to become the two southbound lanes of Nicholson. Any modifications to the roadway geometries would affect the location of the existing bridge support column. This plan does not recommend such an action, but it does allow a single southbound lane to continue from St. Louis onto Nicholson, which would then transition into Nicholson’s current four lane section south of the I-10 bridge overpass. From a traffic analysis perspective, this can be accomplished without any changes to curb-to-curb dimensions (and thus without affecting the bridge support column), but it requires different lane modifications at the three primary intersections between downtown and Interstate 10 (North Boulevard, Government Street and South Boulevard).

These are described in the following points:

- Nicholson -St. Louis at South Boulevard. Currently, northbound St. Louis adds a left turn lane at South Boulevard. To convert to two-way without curb relocation, this left turn lane would become the southbound travel lane and follow the curb line. What today exists as the middle lane of St. Louis, which is designated as a through-only lane, would be restriped to be a northbound lane sharing through movements and left turns. The right-most northbound lane would share through movements and right turns.
- St. Louis at Government. Currently, the right-hand northbound lane on St. Louis is dropped as a right turn lane. Two travel lanes continue northward on St. Louis north of Government. Instead of this configuration, the southern leg of the intersection would be one northbound left turn lane, a shared through-right turn lane, and one southbound through lane. This same configuration would be used on the northern leg of

the intersection so that left turn movements could be offset, though this requires having to shift lanes slightly from the main configuration further north.

- St. Louis at North Boulevard. A single northbound and a single southbound lane share all left turns, right turns and through movements. The jog in St. Louis/3rd Street’s alignment may require a longer signal cycle, especially in clearance time for all phases, due to offset left turns and visibility issues with crossing traffic.

St. Louis Street can be converted without significant increases in intersection delay, but conversion of St. Philip Street to two-way operations would likely mean closing the section of St. Philip below South Boulevard. Traffic moving between Nicholson and St. Philip would use the one block of South Boulevard connecting these two streets to make this transition.

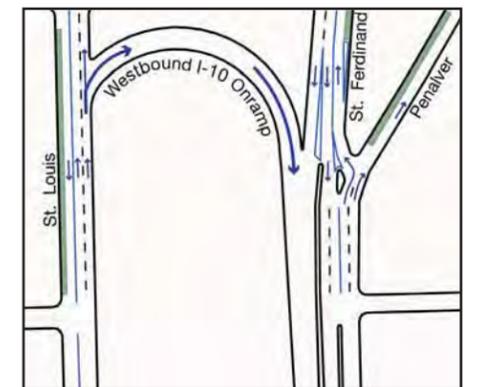
**1.2. Laurel Street**

Presently, Laurel is a one-way westbound street with two full travel lanes and on-street parking. The travel lanes share turning movements with through movements, though most streets that Laurel crosses in downtown Baton Rouge also carry one-way operations. As a result, in only a few intersections do both of Laurel’s lanes need to share turning movements.

Laurel Street is seemingly ‘orphaned’ in the east-west traffic distribution system of downtown. North and Main form a conventional one-way couplet to its north; indeed, related traffic infrastructure decisions (such as the configuration of the Interstate 110 access ramps and placement of downtown’s two main parking structures) have been made with couplet operations on these two streets in mind. To the south, Florida Street is the spine street of Baton Rouge, extending from the Mississippi River to the eastern end of the city as a two-way street.

Perhaps due to this configuration of traffic flow, Laurel is not fully used to its capacity. Existing intersection turning volumes show its intersections to be operating in the morning peak hour at levels of service (LOS) A and B, a condition usually associated with intersections in rural and suburban environments where essentially all traffic volume is on one street (and traffic signals can be timed accordingly to facilitate this movement). In an urban environment such as downtown Baton Rouge, such intersection performance on a CBD-bound one-way street in the morning peak hour suggests that the street has ample capacity to handle its traffic.

Another factor that supports the conversion of Laurel to two-way operations is that it provides additional eastbound capacity for the PM peak hour commute out of downtown. The analysis described above did not assume any redistribution of trips, although such redistribution is likely as downtown drivers who do not need to use Main Street for exiting downtown may opt to use Laurel’s new eastbound lane instead. This is especially notable given that downtown’s two main parking garages are designed to distribute exiting traffic onto Main Street, and the peak-hour loading of Main from the two blocks containing the garages accounts for the majority of its traffic at East Boulevard. Motorists leaving downtown from other locations understand that a major reason for Main Street congestion is the traffic added from the garages, and a two-way Laurel gives an opportunity to avoid this congestion (and thus reduce the congestion that does occur from having lower volumes queue). Even with an assumption that at least half of this Main Street traffic would choose to use Laurel Street for an outbound commute instead, Laurel’s intersections still performed at acceptable levels of service.



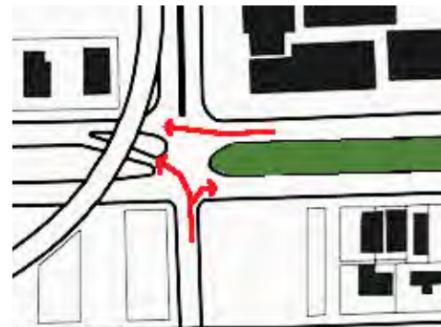
*The two-way conversion of St. Ferdinand Street would require a revised design for the St. Ferdinand-Penalver split. This is needed to allow two-way traffic to continue north on St. Ferdinand.*

## 5. TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

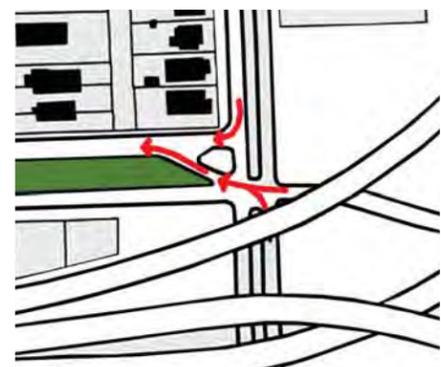
### Appendix



In the long term, downtown should pursue the two-way conversion of 5th, 6th and Convention Streets.



The proposed design for the intersection of East Boulevard and St. Ferdinand Street



The proposed design for the intersection of East Boulevard and a restored South Boulevard divided section.

### 1.3. North and Main

Though these two streets are also a primary one-way couplet, it is not a recommendation of this study that they be converted due primarily to engineering constraints. The main reason for this is the geometries of exiting lanes from the two downtown parking structures: these entry points have been designed for westbound left turns from North Street and for left-turning exits onto Main Street. The Main Street exits in particular have dual exiting lanes, allowing larger volumes of traffic leaving the garage to be added to Main Street. Conversion of this couplet would also require a much larger traffic study to extend east of I-110, as both streets are in one-way operations as far east as 22nd Street.

### 2. LONG-TERM ONE-WAY TO TWO-WAY CONVERSIONS

#### 2.1. Fifth and Sixth Streets

5th and 6th Streets are another pair of one-way streets not functioning as a traditional couplet due to ‘uneven’ ends of the two streets, or the termination of one street before the termination of the other. They do provide access from downtown and the State Capitol complex to Beauregard Town. However, 6th Street in downtown is Royal Street in Beauregard Town, which terminates at the central square of the district’s 1806 plan. These streets are not needed to serve a vehicle mobility function and as such should be used for the long-term livability of downtown.

#### 2.2. Convention Street

With the conversion of Laurel to two-way traffic, Convention Street becomes an ‘orphaned’ one-way street between two prominent thoroughfares (Florida Street and North Boulevard), both of which carry two-way traffic. At present, its conversion to two-way traffic does not affect the core area of downtown, but in the long-term it offers an added lane of eastbound capacity and increases the potential for development to be successful.

### 3. ROAD “DIETS” AND STREET NETWORK RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION

#### 3.1. River Road “Diet”

The plan recommends a reconfiguration of River Road from Florida Street north to the Capitol complex to convert its existing undivided four-lane section to three lanes (two travel lanes and a left turn lane). Because the west side of River Road is primarily the riverfront, this left turn lane is usually for southbound movements only. Where no northbound turn opportunity exists, the space that would accommodate this movement at the intersection can be gained as a landscaped strip serving pedestrian’s flow and protection. This improves street aesthetics and reduces the street’s overall footprint of impervious surface.

This diet also recommends the extension of curbs at key corners to reduce pedestrian crossing distance. This curb extension implies that some existing on-street parking may be eliminated on those points, but overall the intervention adds on-street parking throughout the extent of River Road .

In general the level of service for the corridor is not reduced by removing the second travel lane from each direction. Current traffic volumes in both peak periods can be accommodated by a single travel lane, and the need for southbound left turns is met by providing turn lanes at intersections (thus keeping left-turning traffic from holding a travel lane, as occurs in a four-lane undivided section). A major reason that this does not impact level of service at River Road intersections is that many of the streets intersecting with River Road do so without traffic signals, thus ensuring a relatively free flow of River Road traffic.

#### 3.2. Restoration of South Boulevard

South of downtown, the restoration of South Boulevard presents an opportunity for enhancing the aesthetics of Beauregard Town

and adding a civic amenity to an area near the Interstate 10 bridge approach. This restoration can be accomplished between St. Ferdinand Street and Maximillian Street by extending a dual carriageway street section across existing surface parking lots serving the Baton Rouge Police Department facilities. This does require the removal of small structures presently on the site, but does not impact the primary buildings of the police department complex.

This plan proposes to continue the divided boulevard section to just west of the East Boulevard intersection, but not through the intersection due to the location of two houses at the northeast corner of East and South. Should future land use change lead to the removal of these houses, the section should be constructed across the intersection then, but in the immediate term an intersection design allowing the boulevard to begin only on the west side of East Boulevard can be developed. A conceptual design for this intersection is provided in the diagram: westbound traffic on South Boulevard would move through the intersection and bear right around the South Boulevard median; northbound left turns from East Boulevard to South Boulevard. Southbound right turns can use a slip lane aligned with the outer curb line of the South Boulevard westbound lanes.

#### 3.3. St. Charles and Napoleon Street Extensions

In the event of redevelopment of the police station site, St. Charles and Napoleon streets could be extended through the block currently bounded by St. Ferdinand, Mayflower, St. Joseph and South Boulevard. This creates additional street access to allow development on a scale compatible with its context, the historic Beauregard Town neighborhood.

**3.4. Riverfront Street**

This recommendation calls for a new road through DeSoto Park. The alignment of this road is already established through an existing unpaved road; this formalizes that existing dirt road and allows connection to the riverfront development site under construction at Wendell Drive .

At the north end of this street, a rail underpass currently under construction would allow this street to access River Road near the new development.

**3.5. Restoration of Capitol Lake Drive**

Capitol Lake Drive, located behind the State Capitol building and Arsenal Park, is configured partly for one-way westbound flow to bring commuting traffic to the Capitol. The plan recommends that this street be restored to two-way flow and extended to River Road, both to take advantage of the street as a means of strengthening full connectivity around the Capitol complex and to restore its character to better fit with the landscaped environment of the capitol park. From a traffic operations perspective, this is particularly important in that it greatly improves access to the interstate from the industrial employment base north of the capitol and reduces travel demand on River Road.

**3.6. Street Network Preservation**

The purpose of road diets and additional street connections is to enhance the quality of the pedestrian, bicycle and transit environments, while improving the efficiency of vehicle circulation and raising quality of life in Downtown Baton Rouge. To that affect, it is critical that the City continue to not only look at opportunities to create new connections; but, the City must ensure the preservation and the integrity of the existing street network and not be tempted by well intended but misguided development opportunities that require closure of various streets.

Street closures present a myriad of problems associated with successful urban design. Street closures create “super blocks” that decrease system efficiency and introduce additional vehicle miles of travel, increased turning volumes, and increased pedestrian and vehicle conflicts. Street closures redistribute traffic and begin a cascading negative effect on circulation patterns and perceptions that are difficult to quantify. One-by-one these closures appear innocuous; but, in fact these street closures one-by-one begin cumulative impacts that concentrate traffic, erode the integrity of the network and negatively affect the quality of the pedestrian environment.

The primary strategy outlined in this report is to increase connections and reduce block size in Downtown Baton Rouge. Street closures by their very definition decrease connections and increase block size, a suburban not urban solution.

Street closures present a very slippery slope to policy makers in any City and it is the strong recommendation of this analysis of Downtown Baton Rouge to deny any street closure from occurring regardless of the existing street’s form and function. Once a street closure request is granted, it becomes increasingly difficult to stop additional requests from occurring, further degrading the quality of Downtown.

For example, the current development proposal for new State Department of Economic Development Building will close State Capital Drive, between North 5th and North 6th Streets. At cursory glance, this abandonment appears harmless and in fact advantageous to better position the building to appear within Arsenal Park.

However, further investigation reveals that this abandonment request presents several negative impacts on the Spanish Town Neighborhood that if ignored, or dismissed, can quickly cascade from a headache in the Spanish Town Neighborhood to a problem for all of Downtown Baton Rouge. Specifically this abandonment raises concerns about:

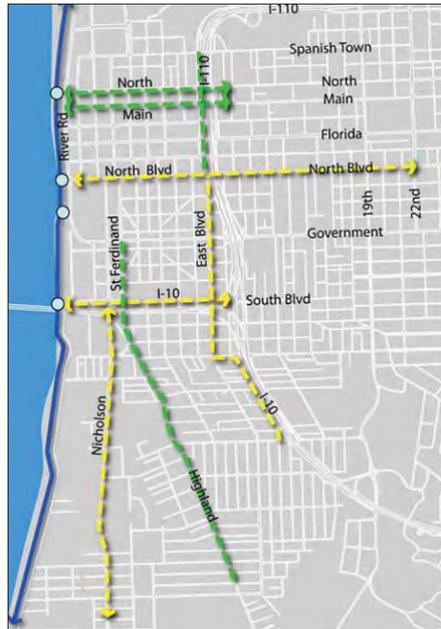
- 1) Increased traffic along Lakeland Drive and possible Spanish Town Road – State Capitol Drive provides an access route to and from the Spanish Town Neighborhood. It is acknowledged that these are very low vehicle volumes; however, it is a circulation route. The closing of State Capitol Drive will increase traffic on Lakeland Drive and, as a result of the out of direction travel for people needing to go north, likely increase of traffic on Spanish Town Road. Maintaining State Capitol Drive will provide an alternative route in and out of Spanish Town as well as for additional traffic generated by the new LED Building, decreasing traffic pressure on any single roadway. Spanish Town is an urban residential neighborhood.
- 2) Change the Character of 7th Street from a street to a driveway, or alley, and limiting the redevelopment potential for properties on 7th Street – The closing of State Capital Drive will change the character of 7th Street north of Lakeland Drive from that of a street to that of a driveway, or alley. This change in character will impact adjacent properties from an access and visibility perspective, limiting the development opportunities.
- 3) Decreases personal sense security. The closing of State Capitol Drive will decrease the walkability of 7th Street by eliminating the “eye on the street” provided the possibility of vehicle traveling down the street. One personal sense of security will be eroded by creating an unwatched and hard to patrol portion of the City that will invite individuals interested in unlawful behavior. Basic crime



*New network recommendations as described in Section 4.3. In green are streets to be added in the event of redevelopment of their sites. In blue are streets involving a primarily public lead in implementation.*

## 5. TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Appendix



On-street bicycle lanes [yellow] and shared streets [shared-use arrow markings in green]. Current grade crossings at North Street, North Boulevard, Louisiana Street and South Boulevard to allow connections to a new riverfront multi-use trail [dark blue]



The use of mid-block bulb-outs can help to add street trees without reducing sidewalk width. In the top diagram, existing trees are located in tree wells in the sidewalk. Substitution of select on-street parking spaces with bulb-outs (middle diagram) can allow for a relocation of street trees from behind the curb onto the bulb-outs (lower diagram), still providing shade for sidewalks while maximizing their width for walking and other active street uses.

prevention through environmental design principles suggest a pattern of development that invites “eyes to the street”, increasing routing options and escape route for potential victims, and allowing the area to be easily patrolled. The closing of State Capitol Drive complicates, not complements, this areas security concerns.

Note that this evaluation of the Capital Lofts project is related to the street closure request and not the residential project. Downtown Baton Rouge needs more development initiative like the Capital Lofts; However, well intended project's if poorly designed can have unintended negative consequences.

#### 4. BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NEEDS

Part of enhancing downtown’s livability and attractiveness as a recreational destination is accommodating non-vehicular transportation, especially to be used for short trips from adjacent neighborhoods.

##### 4.1. Enhance the Pedestrian Environment

Throughout downtown and its adjacent neighborhoods, pedestrian access and walkability are key component to viable street-level businesses, the use of transit as a commuting option and a successful mixture of land uses. As such, the pedestrian environment must be enhanced to allow downtown residents and visitors to walk comfortably.

The diagrams shown here illustrate three of the key principles in achieving this end: the use of street trees, the expansion of sidewalk space, and the preservation of pedestrian safety through calming of downtown traffic.

Street trees, in addition to improving street aesthetics and adding value to downtown as an urban environment, improve the pedestrian experience in that they provide shade and protection

from the elements. They also constitute a physical separation between pedestrians and traffic, delineating the pedestrian ‘zone’ of the street (the actual walking path of the sidewalk) and encouraging more prudent driving behavior and slower speeds through their proximity to the moving vehicle lanes.

One important way of realizing this vision for a greener urban landscape through street trees is the substitution of existing on-street parking with bulb-outs, or curb extensions. Sidewalk widths throughout much of downtown are narrow by themselves; any addition of street trees should seek to avoid constraining this sidewalk width any further. The diet of River Road as discussed earlier in this chapter provides one example of how this works: instead of maintaining the existing curb dimensions, curbs are moved closer to the center line of streets, thus allowing additional space for street trees without needing to consume sidewalk space. This same principle can be applied mid-block and does not need to consume significant amounts of downtown parking: one parking space can be substituted for a bulb-out, or if an opportunity exists to reconfigure the use of curbside space for parking, shorter bulb-outs can be applied between groups of parking spaces to optimize on-street parking yield.

##### 4.2. Enhanced Pedestrian Conditions along Government Street

Government Street serves multiple important functions within downtown Baton Rouge: it is one of the main routes connecting West, and crosses Beauregard Town, one of the two historic neighborhoods in Downtown, from East to West. Unfortunately, its design does not properly balance its commuter function with its neighborhood responsibility serving pedestrian connectivity.

Current signalized intersections along the corridor do not properly accommodate pedestrian flows. The transportation data for the segment of Government Street west of Interstate 110 points out

that shrinking the roadway from four-lanes to three-lanes is not an appropriate alternative. Unfortunately, because of right-of-way constraints, many of the pedestrian improvements needed along Government Street will occur over time through redevelopment.

However, the City can promote numerous short-term actions to improve walkability on Government Street without compromising its vehicle capacity. This study recommends substantial enhancements including pedestrian striping, signal timing and geometric improvements to all signalized intersections to better accommodate pedestrian flow on different streets including St. James, St. Phillip, St. Louis, St. Ferdinand, St. Charles, and East Blvd.

In addition, it is recommended that the City include a new pedestrian crossing at the St. Joseph and Government Street intersection. This pedestrian activated signal will reduce the current signal spacing gap of over 1,500 feet to approximately 750 feet providing the residents of the Beauregard Town neighborhood reasonable pedestrian crossing spacing.

##### 4.3. Enhance the Bicycle Network

The recommendations for bicycle additions consist of a combination of on-street bicycle lanes and shared bicycle streets with pavement markings indicating their shared use. The guiding principle on which type of treatment is used is the existing dimensions of the street. Bicycle lanes are added where they fit without impacting necessary travel lanes or on-street parking.

The following bicycle facilities are recommended:

- 9th Street and East Boulevard. East Boulevard adjacent to downtown Baton Rouge and Beauregard Town is located along Interstate 110 and is a two-lane, one-way street north of North Boulevard. The addition of shared-use arrows along the existing travel lanes provides a formalized bicycle connection through this part of the city, connecting to a potential relocation

of the central transit center to be at Florida Street and East Boulevard under the existing I-110 elevated freeway. South of North Boulevard, East Boulevard resumes a divided roadway section that would allow for the placement of on-street bicycle lanes. These would continue south to Terrace Avenue, where the bicycle lanes revert to shared-use arrows and continue south along Thomas Delpit Drive to McKinley High School.

- North Street and Main Street. “Sharrows” are recommended along these two one-way streets to provide a direct bicycle connection into downtown from Spanish Town and neighborhoods east of Interstate 110. The recommended placement of the shared-use arrow marking is in the right-hand lane of the street (in the direction of travel).
- South Boulevard. A restored South Boulevard has ample width to carry on-street bicycle lanes; these can be restriped without impacting existing vehicle capacity. These lanes are proposed to extend from River Road to East Boulevard. The present recommendation for South Boulevard’s restoration would narrow South Boulevard to a two-lane section in advance of the intersection, and at the westbound slip lane from East Boulevard would accommodate the bicycle lanes here.
- St. Ferdinand Street and Highland Road. This corridor would be marked with sharrows due to roadway width and right-of-way constraints.
- Nicholson Drive. Due to Nicholson’s existing width and lack of on-street parking, the street can accommodate on-street bike lanes in the outer lane. These begin at the current four-lane section and go south to serve the LSU campus.

In addition, four existing grade crossings of the rail tracks that parallel the Mississippi River should provide connectivity to the riverfront trail currently being constructed. These occur at North Street, North Boulevard, a point between North Boulevard and Government Street near the River Center, and South Boulevard.

**5. LONG-TERM EXPRESSWAY RECONSTRUCTION**

Interstate 110 was constructed to provide primary access to downtown Baton Rouge, especially the state government offices and capitol complex on downtown’s northern end. In so doing, the expressway’s design offers multiple access ramps to downtown streets, some from the left lanes of each roadway. This requires the physical separation of the two expressway roadways and increases the expressway’s overall footprint. Such a wide expressway footprint consumes valuable downtown land and creates a significant barrier to downtown access from neighborhoods. The plan recommends a long-term reconfiguration of downtown access from the I-110 freeway. In the northbound direction, access would be provided at Government and Florida Streets. In the southbound direction, access is provided at Spanish Town Road. This concentration of ramp access to downtown streets also eliminates the need for a separation of the two expressway roadways: they can be reconstructed and take up less space.

**A Transit-Ready Strategy for Downtown**

In 2007, the Capital Area Transit System (CATS) worked with HDR in developing an assessment of the system’s needs and priorities. This study concluded that CATS generally provides efficient operations when compared to peer transit systems, with a relatively low operating cost per revenue hour/revenue mile and a high farebox recovery of operating expenses. However, other operational and use characteristics suggest that the system is oriented toward serving transit-dependent riders and is limited by budget constraints in providing additional operations.

Guiding the system in its evolution from a service for transit-dependent population to a true component of an urban transportation system requires many fundamental changes, but one that CATS can examine now is how its network of fixed-route bus service is oriented to Baton Rouge’s major employment and activity centers. At present, the location of its primary transfer center at 22nd Avenue and Florida Street is over a mile from the Baton Rouge central business district. This requires commuters from other parts of the city to make a transfer if they wish to use buses to commute downtown, greatly lengthening overall commute times and thus making transit less attractive as an option. A relocation of the transit center closer to the central business district can eliminate this ‘forced transfer,’ allowing walking and/or circulator shuttles operating at higher frequencies than mainline bus routes to complete the trip to downtown.

**INITIATIVES FOR FUTURE TRANSIT**

Current discussions on transit have focused on a commuter rail service between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. This rail service would use existing track located to the east of downtown, aligned north to south between 14th and 15th streets. Within Baton Rouge, Florida Street, which carries CATS busiest route in terms of passengers, has been proposed as a corridor for rapid bus service. Interest in connecting downtown to neighborhoods to the south



*These figures essentially show three similar cities in terms of transit ridership and one with a notably higher level. Yet higher ridership in Madison cannot be explained directly by population, as the city has the same population as Baton Rouge and the metropolitan area is smaller. And while Baton Rouge has similar ridership to Tallahassee, it offers far less direct service from its downtown core to its major university campus, thus suggesting that students account for a lower percentage of ridership. These suggest that Baton Rouge currently has a strong demand for ridership and not through its large university population.*

*Madison’s success comes in part from its more expansive route network and location of four key transfer points throughout the city, allowing commuters to reach core routes to downtown and the University of Wisconsin campus through ‘feeder’ routes serving outlying suburban areas. The core routes of the Madison system are focused on direct service along major arterial streets, and they do not have to follow long, circuitous routes to serve a larger potential ridership. As a result many commuters must transfer to reach downtown, though their transfer time is shortened by a higher frequency of service from the suburban transfer centers into downtown.*

## 5. TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Appendix



has led to discussion of premium transit service from downtown, possibly along the Nicholson Drive or Highland Road corridors. These transit concepts all point to a greater role for downtown and central Baton Rouge as transit-supportive communities and suggest that the transportation recommendations of this plan can help to enable the success of future transit.

The location of transit service to Old South Baton Rouge can follow three alternatives, though each has particular consequences that should be considered. As shown in the diagram, this transit service can follow Highland Drive, Nicholson Drive or River Road. Highland Drive is a direct connection to LSU and the spine of the Old South neighborhoods, though it is also has considerable physical constraints, namely its narrow width. Transit vehicles would need to mix with traffic and additional right-of-way would likely be required to provide station locations.

Nicholson Drive is another 'spine' street through Old South, and its second travel lane in each direction offers more flexibility in mixing transit vehicles with automobile traffic: one lane could be preserved entirely for vehicle movement and the other could carry transit

vehicles. In addition, at its southern end it provides direct service to the LSU campus sports facilities. However Nicholson Drive's development potential is relatively limited, and the transitions from downtown and Beauregard Town to the university area create potential complications for premium transit infrastructure.

The plan recommends using River Road as the transit corridor: it does connect the Old South neighborhoods but also takes advantage of greater potential for transit-supportive development description of how Baton Rouge compares can be found in that study.

For purposes of transit stations and use of service as an element of the transportation system, this plan examined three peer systems in cities similar to Baton Rouge: Columbia, South Carolina; Tallahassee, Florida; and Madison, Wisconsin. Like Baton Rouge, each of these is a medium-sized city in a relatively small metropolitan area (under 1 million), each is a state capital with a large government employment base in its downtown, and each has a large university campus. Each of these systems operates fixed-route bus and demand-responsive transit service only (in other words, none has premium transit). As the intent of this comparison

was to gauge how successfully each served its community, average weekday ridership was used as a comparison. While it is true that each system has a different geographic service area and differing amounts of service, thus affecting potential ridership, this measure nonetheless gives a sense of what amount of a community's overall population is using transit, especially given the broad demographic and employment profiles that each of these communities has in common.

All of the cities except Baton Rouge have transit centers, or primary transfer locations between bus routes, located in their downtowns. However, each has different ridership characteristics, due in part to factors of where transit service is provided throughout the community, how it is tied to transit-supportive land uses and how closely transit is tied to the university campus. The table shows a comparison among the four cities on a range of metrics. In comparison, Baton Rouge currently has only one transfer center, located near (but not in) downtown at Florida and 22nd Streets. Its distance from the Baton Rouge central business district means that transfers are necessary for commuters trying to reach downtown, but commuters must travel longer distances on neighborhood-serving suburban routes to first reach the transfer center. If transit needs to maximize ridership reach in outer neighborhoods of the City, its combination with a required transfer to another route makes downtown commuting by transit a relatively unattractive option.

These general ideas suggest the following for Baton Rouge: to serve as more of a basic community infrastructure component and not simply a service for no-automobile households, transit must work to tie basic origin and destination pairs in a way that makes it competitive with automobile use. Currently CATS is contracted by Louisiana State University to operate transit shuttles serving the campus, but there is only one mainline connection to the University from the transit center.

PEER CITY TRANSIT COMPARISON				
	Baton Rouge	Tallahassee	Columbia	Madison
City Population	229,000	160,000	116,000	220,000
Metropolitan Population	770,000	352,000	716,000	556,000
University Enrollment	32,000	41,000	27,500	40,000
Average Daily Ridership	21,500	20,600	11,700	57,300
Connection to University?	1 route	12 routes and campus shuttle	3 routes	6-8 truck routes, branches
Location of Transit Center	2 mi east of Downtown	Downtown	Downtown	Downtown (State Capitol, main public square)
University Adjacent to Downtown?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Appendix



## 6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

**PLAN BATON ROUGE II**

**GOALS**

- Increase residential population in the downtown area
- Comprehensive plan for downtown streets & public spaces
- Enhance downtown's capacity to attract convention and tourism business
- Develop improved institutional capacity
- Expand downtown's employment base
- Develop a concentration of regionally significant mixed-use anchors
- Increase transportation access to downtown & provide better linkages between downtown and its abutting neighborhoods

**PLANNING PROCESS**

2008

- Oct 22-23 Interviews with stakeholders
- Nov 19-20 Interviews with stakeholders
- Nov 20 Public Lecture
- Dec 10 Public Input Session

2009

- Feb 9 Public Presentation of Concepts
- Mar 30 Draft Report Public Presentation
- June Final Plan Submittal

**BUILDING ON PREVIOUS PLANS**

- Baton Rouge 2000, 1983 and 1987
- Baton Rouge Riverfront Development Plan, 1990
- Capitol Park Master Plan, 1990 and updates
- Capitol Park Interpretive Plan, 1999
- Plan Baton Rouge, 1998
- Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan, 2001
- Master Plan for the New River District of Baton Rouge, 2003
- Riverfront Master Plan and DeSoto Park Concept, 2003
- Downtown Visitor Amenity Plan, 2003
- Baton Rouge Riverfront Master Plan, 2006
- North Boulevard Town Square, 2008
- Horizon Plan. Comprehensive Land Use and Development Plan [2007 update]

**3 CRITICAL THEMES**

<p><b>GREEN</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Invest in the Central Green, Capitol, Riverfront and Victory Park, as the preeminent downtown public open spaces</li> <li>2. Pervasive greening of Downtown streets</li> <li>3. Expand the role of DDD to maintain investments</li> </ol>	<p><b>ACTIVE</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Incentivize housing downtown and near downtown</li> <li>5. Attract an entertainment anchor on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street</li> <li>6. Establish capacity to assist development and manage parking for multiple uses</li> </ol>	<p><b>CONNECTED</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Reconnect downtown and neighborhoods to the River</li> <li>8. Improve connections to Mid-City, Garden District, and Old South Baton Rouge, and LSU</li> <li>9. Establish guidelines to ensure view corridors and pedestrian connections</li> </ol>
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Plan Baton Rouge Phase II, handout for the last Public Meeting [March 30th, 2009]

Public participation and feedback. DDD Web page at: [www.downtownbatonrouge.org](http://www.downtownbatonrouge.org)

Plan Baton Rouge II sought out public input throughout the planning process. During the Public Presentations and afterwards via Comment Cards and the Downtown Development District Website, a number of desired facilities and amenities were voiced. Proposals such a Movie Theatre, History Museum, Labyrinth, and Grocery Store, etc. were introduced by individuals and groups. Plan Baton Rouge II advocates further study of each of these, as the planning and design process for individual sites progresses.

Among the identified needs and desires for the Downtown, the following suggestions gathered a bigger support:

- Improve connections to surrounding communities, extending the idea of the “Downtown” area to include the northern parts up to Choctaw, and East Spanish Town, There is a desire for comprehensive **transit** oriented developments, need for multi-modal transportation system between the downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Consider the possibility to renegotiate with River Road railroad company to improve **permeability between downtown and the river**.
- Increase the offer of **parking** garages, and replace the parking lots with small green parks. All parking should clean and easily accessible to 3rd street and the Shaw Center, in addition to being free after 5 pm.
- Improve the **quality of the open spaces**, and promote diversity of programs and activities they handle:
  - Support to the Baton Rouge Labyrinth Project to dot the Community with various designs of labyrinths, a device for building connection and encouraging development of peacefulness and creativity within a community.
  - Promote more activities after 8 pm.
- **Invest in branding and marketing the downtown** to reach a wider public and share vision outside of downtown. Tourist

info more centrally located; curate downtown for visitors; share stories in the design.

- Increase the offer of **services and amenities**: better selection of restaurants in downtown, a movie theater, a grocery shop to help creating a sense of neighborhood
- Develop Affordable and Market Rate **Housing**, creating a truly diverse community
- Invest in **Infrastructure** upgrades: Bury Power lines in Beauregard Town and Spanish Town (Historic Preservation).
- Facilitate **knowledge infrastructure** for young entrepreneurs / business.
- Invest in **Maintenance**: a litter policy, upkeep of buildings, and all landscaping.
- Explain better the concept of the Northern Downtown anchor on Third Street, its nature, implementation and accountability
- Promote awareness on the **history and natural diversity** of Baton Rouge through different initiatives:
  - The MoBR, pushing forward the idea of a museum of history, in association with existing institutions like the Foundation for Historical Louisiana.
  - Erecting a statue of Zachary Taylor, LA's only President, near the riverfront a “knowledge base” for BR history in planning downtown.
  - Considering a partnership among the Audubon Institute, the Downtown, and LSU on a Natural History Museum, especially a bird exhibit. Dinosaurs and the history of Louisiana's Native Population, river dynamics and coastal erosion ( gives us other sponsorship opportunities like Shell or America's Wetland, and also educates the public about what's happening to the coast).
  - Some good resources are already available on the web [[www.historicalbatonrouge.blogspot.com](http://www.historicalbatonrouge.blogspot.com)]

## 7. DDD STRATEGIC PLAN

### Appendix



### An Expanded Role for the DDD

Downtown Baton Rouge is a significant regional asset. Recent public and private investments have generated increased economic activity. The Shaw Center is bringing new energy to the arts community, while the addition of the Kress and OneEleven developments offer significant new residential options. The convention center is planning a major expansion, consolidating the different venues on Downtown, including the return of the 60,000 attendees for the Bowling Conference.

Baton Rouge has begun to respond to the complex challenge of how to manage the downtown's streets, parks, and sidewalks as part of an urban system of public places. Since its inception two decades ago, the Downtown Development District has provided services to support \$1.6 billion of public and private projects. The Downtown Development District has a central role in shaping the character and strength of downtown. To support the next wave of investment, the DDD needs to increase its services to the downtown community and be provided the requisite budget to support these programs.

In coordination with the Baton Rouge DDD, the Plan Baton Rouge team developed an expanded program for the DDD based on best practices of DDDs throughout the country, with particular attention to successful programs in Louisiana. Our analysis focuses on three main areas of services:

- Managing the public realm
- Working with the private sector
- Branding and marketing downtown

#### MANAGING THE PUBLIC REALM

The experience of downtown is profoundly influenced by the condition of its streets, sidewalks, trees, and its public spaces. Each of these elements of downtown's public realm need to be well maintained, attractive, and orderly so residents, the workforce, visitors and tourists should feel a sense of comfort. No amount of

investment in buildings can overcome systemic, ongoing under-investment in the quality of the public realm that connects those structures. Downtowns thrive when the experience of place is exceptional.

Comprehensive management of the public realm consists of:

- Ensuring that the public realm is clean and safe,
- Creating and maintaining streetscapes and wayfinding systems,
- Maintaining and programming open spaces, and
- Branding and marketing downtown.

#### Clean and Safe

A commitment to public safety and sanitation is an essential element of any downtown development strategy. Today, downtown Baton Rouge is often perceived as being unclean and potentially unsafe. This perception deters businesses from locating in the downtown and visitors from frequenting downtown's attractions.

Investment in the downtown will be squandered if it is not supported by a comprehensive "clean and safe" program. Sanitation services should be provided, closely working with DPW, seven days a week, and should include:

- Sweeping the sidewalks and curbsides, and regularly washing and disinfect sidewalks
- Emptying public litter baskets
- Removing graffiti and stickers
- Painting street furniture, light poles, security gates, fire hydrants and newsstands
- Maintaining historic markers

To address security issues, many downtowns also employ a 24-7 unarmed security staff that patrols the neighborhood connected by radio to the police. These officers also serve as ambassadors to downtown and can offer directions and advice to neighborhood visitors. They also increase the perception of safety and the reality of law enforcement by their presence on the street and their

immediate access to law enforcement. A police sub-station should be located within the Arts and Entertainment district.

#### Open Spaces

Plan Baton Rouge II proposes a significant investment in new parks, a "braid" of green spaces, and downtown landscaping. Open spaces are crucial urban amenities that serve as social and cultural anchors for downtown. While investing in "greening" downtown is the first step, open spaces must be well maintained and actively programmed, giving residents, workers, and tourists a reason to stay and enjoy downtown. This can be achieved by instituting a maintenance program for open spaces, expanding on the success of Baton Rouge's "Live After Five" with additional programming potentially including outdoor movies and events on the water's edge, and adding amenities to make open spaces more usable such as Wi-Fi and chairs and tables.

#### Streetscaping and Wayfinding

The most important open spaces in cities are their streets. Just as a front yard serves as the entry to, and frame for, a suburban home, the street is an integral part of an urban neighborhood. Attractive, easily walkable, streets provide the vitality and convenience that make urban living an appealing lifestyle. As part of Plan Baton Rouge II, a comprehensive greening program has been developed for downtown. A network of key pedestrian streets should be developed as part of this plan. An enhanced streetscape along Third Street, for example, will reinvigorate this historic shopping district, encouraging pedestrian traffic and incentivize private investment in these storefronts. Current capital costs for well-designed streetscapes range from \$2,500-\$3,500 per linear foot.

#### WORKING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Private property must be improved in concert with the public realm. DDD's across the country have found many creative ways of

shaping private market forces to strengthen the downtown, which in turn benefits businesses. DDD's have both "carrots" and "sticks" at their disposal; common programs geared at strengthening the private sector include:

- Façade improvement and building rehabilitation loans and grants,
- Retail and grocery incentive programs, and
- Building code enforcement.

**Façade Improvement and Building Rehabilitation**

Façade improvements are an essential element of a successful public realm. Street fronting building faces should consist primarily of transparent doors and windows on the ground floor, along with well-designed and maintained signage, awnings and lighting for businesses. Even buildings that do not have primarily retail uses should contribute positively to the character of the street.

The Downtown Development District currently offers a five-year property tax abatement on improvements. This program could be expanded to include:

- Matching grants. In the past two years New Orleans has leveraged \$200,000 in private investment, with 20 storefronts improved, with its matching grant program. The primary component of most façade improvement programs is a grant to match some portion of the total cost, with a maximum grant amount per project. A typical program in a small city may cover 25-50% of project cost, with a maximum as high as \$15,000 to \$20,000 per project. Increasing the percentage of cost covered would incentivize all buildings to participate, while increasing the total maximum grant would incentivize owners of larger, older buildings to participate.
- Low interest loan pool. Because it has a low cost to the public sector, many cities offer financing in addition to matching grants. Revolving loan funds can effectively reduce finance costs to the

borrower, while recouping some of the lending costs over time. The DDD could either buy down the interest rate from a lender or manage their own loan pool, which has higher administrative costs. Other cities have tried more innovative forms of public financing. The Wichita Façade Improvement Program offers a forgivable loan for 25% of the project cost up to \$10,000; the loan does not have to be repaid if the improvements are completed within five years. Business owners can finance the remaining 75% through a fifteen-year special assessment against the real property.

- Design guidelines. Many downtown organizations require submission and approval of designs for new businesses. Design guidelines should cover the design, materials, and placement of awnings, signs, doors, lighting, building walls, roofing, plants, street furniture and public art. Submission of designs including materials, color palette and paint samples for the facade, and a maintenance plan should be required.
- Target Third Street. An expanded façade program should focus on the core of the district in particular Third Street. Completing one or two projects per year on key streets would significantly change the downtown's character.

**Retail and Grocery Incentive Programs**

Many downtowns offer incentive programs to encourage new retail uses, and may even target specific types of retail such as grocery. Incentive programs for new businesses can take several forms:

- Allowances or reimbursement for tenant fit-out costs help meet the financial gap between property owners and new commercial tenants. Such programs typically have square footage and cost caps, such as Miami's \$23/SF reimbursement for up to 100,000 SF.
- Waiver of construction license and permit fees will also lower start-up costs for new businesses
- Low-interest loans provide low-cost capital for new businesses.

These are often subordinated direct loans from the local development corporation, but also require private sector leverage (e.g. some percentage of bank financing as well). Some loan programs also have a forgiveness clause if the business stays in operation for a certain period, such as three years.

**Building Code Enforcement**

Poorly maintained properties detract from the downtown's overall aesthetic and discourage and undermine public and private investment. While streetscaping and façade incentive programs encourage the highest standards of maintenance, some DDD's also choose to penalize code violations. Code enforcement facilitates compliance with the various applicable health, safety and design codes and ordinances of the City through a proactive program of code assistance. Public safety officers, discussed above, can also provide information and oversight for buildings downtown. If the DDD decides to implement strict code enforcement, it must be provided in a consistent, fair and timely manner, and should cover excessive noise, trash, graffiti, boarded and painted over windows, improper signage, construction permitting, and other forms of insufficient building maintenance.

**BRANDING & MARKETING DOWNTOWN**

An integrated branding and marketing program will publicize the area to locals and visitors and encourage multi-site visitation by creating the sense of a unified downtown district. A strong brand should promote individual attractions as well as the district as a whole. The effort should engage local institutions to work together to integrate existing marketing efforts and coordinate activities. A comprehensive branding and marketing effort includes:

- Branding. Comprehensive branding requires combined strategies, including media advertising, a web presence, signage and print materials. The DDD is already working hard,



## 7. DDD STRATEGIC PLAN

### Appendix



and achieving success, in regards to branding. The DDD has a strong web site, and should continue to highlight attractions and upcoming activities for workers, residents and visitors. In 2008 the DDD was recognized by the International Downtown Association for its excellent wayfinding program. Expanding the wayfinding should be a priority for the DDD. Developing, and regularly updating, maps and brochures to promote attractions and activities and identify nearby amenities, such as hotels and restaurants, is also important. The DDD may also want to develop sample itineraries for families with children, history buffs, and others. In particular, these itineraries could focus on encouraging convention attendees to spend more time enjoying the downtown.

- Local Art. Local artists should be engaged to develop and market the district, including the brand logo, signage, and all related materials discussed above. The DDD has already worked with local artists on its most recent wayfinding project and should continue this successful collaboration. Local artists can be employed to create streetscaping materials and public furniture; this strategy was extremely successful in revitalizing the Rope Walks district of Liverpool, and in promoting the Golden Gate National Parks.
- Integrated Ticketing. All-inclusive pricing incorporating a discount for multi-site visitation and/or unlimited use of recreational activities will get visitors accustomed to moving around downtown and spending an entire day in the area.
- Events and programs. Programming should focus on authenticity and use site-specific events with local artists and vendors. Programming efforts are best applied in parks and open spaces, local arts and cultural institutions, galleries and shops, and public buildings and empty lots with capacity for

events and exhibitions. Successful programs in other cities, such as the Boston CyberArts Festival, Memphis in May, the Syracuse International Film Festival, and Port Moody Festival of the Arts, are top tourist attractions which draw millions of visitors and generate millions of dollars in economic activity each year.

#### COORDINATING PARKING

In order to sustain economic vitality, there needs to be a balance between the creation of a quality urban environment with market reality within Downtown Baton Rouge. Parking is one of the elements that the City has to ensure for the downtown area to be competitive with new developments within the region.

Parking is a necessary component for all future development initiatives being considered. Parking presents a challenge to the vitality of downtown Baton Rouge. Over 50% of the 6,500 spaces downtown are not publicly accessible, and construction of new parking is limited by high construction costs. This has three primary effects:

1. Public parking downtown is perceived to be limited, hindering visitation and activity;
2. The demand for paid parking results in \$60-65/SF land values for parking lots, making parking a profitable use, and thereby preventing more active uses in downtown sites; and,
3. The cost of building structured, above-ground parking affects the feasibility of new residential uses.

Since parking demand in Baton Rouge does not recognize ownership and jurisdiction, a sustainable parking solution can only be achieved with a coordinated and shared effort of developing and managing public and private parking assets.

The City and the DDD should take a more active role in managing the parking supply downtown, facilitating the availability of public

parking, making the parking system coherent and accessible to visitors. Simply adding parking supply is not the only solution to addressing areas with seeming parking deficit. A comprehensive plan must address efficient parking management strategies, urban design improvements and good land use planning.

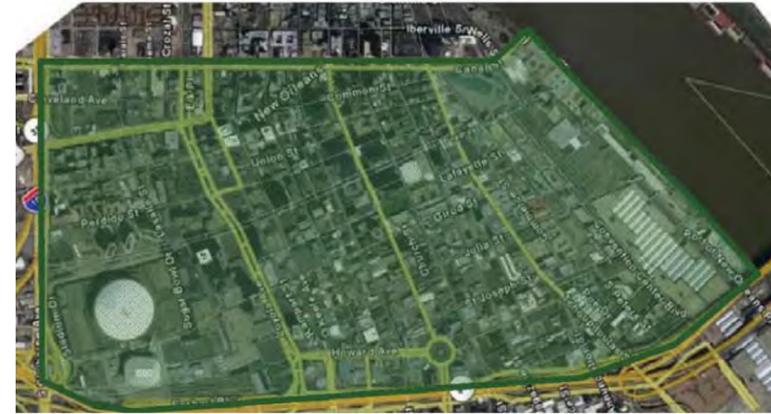
There are many ways a comprehensive parking strategy can work to reshape parking use downtown:

1. More effectively manage public parking supply:
  - a. Establish a parking management capacity within either the Department of Public Works, or the DDD. These managers should be expected to continuously monitor and update the parking inventory, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies, and provide the dynamic response appropriate for future development scenarios.
  - b. Increase enforcement capacity to improve coverage of on-street parking and allow the monitoring of joint-use parking areas and leased public parking spaces on private lots. The additional parking staff will also enable the City to implement the improved parking management plan.
2. A cost-effective and immediate approach for the City to increase the short-term public parking inventory in Downtown will be through the addition of public parking spaces through shared-use agreements of private parking lots that have excess capacity. Proactively develop a shared use program with existing and parking lot owners and proposed new development.

The goal of a shared-use parking program is for the City to maximize the use of existing resources and encourage the planning and development of projects that provide public parking spaces as part of the new development.

- a. A revenue source should be identified to support the City’s “acquisition cost” of the joint-use public parking spaces.
  - b. Enter into agreements with private property owners to manage their lots more efficiently. In particular there appears to be an opportunity to better utilize church-owned parking lots which are only at capacity one day a week.
  - c. In some cases, the City may be limited to the acquisition of a leasehold interest only rather than the fee-simple interest.
3. Invest in Streetscape Improvements throughout downtown. Acceptable walk distances can be “extended” if the environment is more conducive to pedestrian travel. Parking studies show that retail customers are willing to walk from 300 to 600 feet from parking to their destinations while employees are willing to hike from 1,200 to 1,500 feet from their car to their offices. Although these distances are acceptable rules of thumb for design, they are not the absolute constraints when locating parking. Users do not typically know how far they are walking but will definitely notice if the walk appears safer, more pleasant, and easily navigable.
  4. Encourage the city to institute beautification and maintenance standards for parking lots and improving its physical relationship with the street and the rest of downtown.
  5. Provide free valet parking. Any additional parking supply acquired for management by the City or the DDD can be used in more creative responses to the downtown’s parking needs. For instance, a shared-use use agreement with any number of Downtown Churches can be used in conjunction with a free valet program to support the parking needs of 3rd Street. Tenants and building owners together with the DDD and the City can help put together a valet service that would cater to Downtown visitors.

6. Work with the State to better utilize the existing State parking garages between North Street and Main Street. Currently, the public utilization of the excess parking spaces in the garage for long-term leases is restricted by the original bonds that financed the structures. As these bonds expire, the City, or the DDD, and the State should document the utilization of the spaces and enable the possibility of the excess spaces be used in a shared use scenario and long-term leases for new infill development in downtown.
7. Long-term - Develop New Parking Garages downtown. Funding sources of need to be developed to support the development of new parking garages to support new infill development.



Aerial image: DDD New Orleans



Aerial image: DDD Shreveport

8. Long-term – Develop a subsidy system to support the cost of structured parking associated with new residential, commercial, and retail development.

Aerial image: DDD Baton Rouge

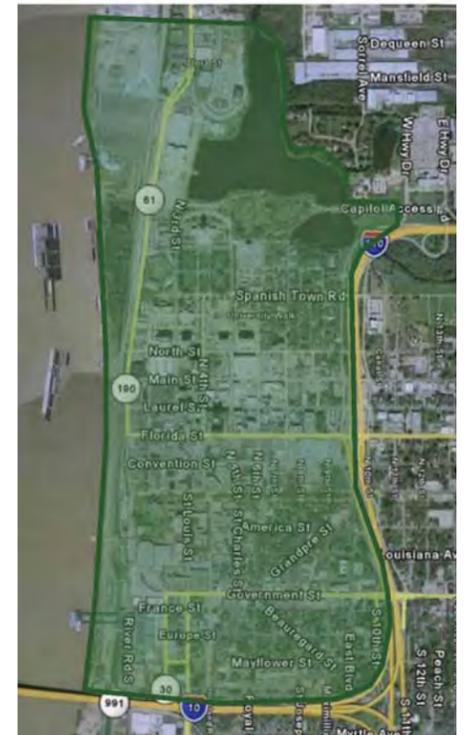


TABLE 1. DDD RESPONSIBILITIES & OPERATING BUDGETS			
	BATON ROUGE	NEW ORLEANS	SHREVEPORT
Clean & Safe		●	●
Open Space O&M		Separate Organization	
Streetscaping		●	●
Wayfinding	●		
Facade Improvement& Building Rehabilitation	●	●	●
Retail & Grocery Incentives			
Building Code Enforcement		●	
Branding & Marketing	●	●	●
Coordinating Parking			●
Staff	4	15	6
Area [acres]	700	640	520
Residents	2,000	9,000	4,500
Workers	20,000	71,000	14,000
Total Budget	\$576,000	\$7,000,000	\$3,000,000

## 7. DDD STRATEGIC PLAN

### Appendix



### Paying for an Improved Baton Rouge Downtown Development District

#### Revitalizing Downtown Requires Significant Funding Increase

Improving the quality of the downtown in Baton Rouge requires significant capital investment, as well as funding for an on-going operating budget. Strategic capital expenditures and an increased operating budget are investments that will generate significant economic benefits to the downtown development district, the city and the parish. A well-focused set of expenditures can lead to a viable residential community; an enhanced commercial center; a more robust retail sector supported by a larger population of residents and workers; and greater attraction of local, out of region and out of state guests. These changes would culminate in establishing Baton Rouge the next great river city.

#### Financial Resources

Downtown Baton Rouge standing by itself, absent support from the broader taxing entities, currently has inadequate resources to finance major improvements to the public realm. Property taxes and sales taxes generate modest revenues. Dedicating an increment of these taxes, a typical downtown funding mechanism, while valuable, would be inadequate to fund major new programs for downtown.

The increment in property and sales tax collections from 2009 to 2010, for example, is less than \$60,000. Dedicating 2 percent of the state's 4 percent sales tax revenues would produce another \$40,000 a year. Increases in existing tax rates also would be helpful, but insufficient by themselves; the tables below show the revenues generated by raising the property tax millage by 2.5 mills on all taxable property within the downtown development district, or raising the city's sales tax rate on all taxable transactions within the downtown development district from 2.0 percent to 2.25 percent. These moderate increases in sales and property taxes would generate approximately \$250,000 a year, an important increment but probably an insufficient amount for financing an expanded DDD program or supporting the newly formed EBRDA. Currently, none of the aforementioned funding mechanisms in isolation generate sufficient funds to support downtown's transformation. These mechanisms should be established because over time, as the downtown develops into a densely developed, vibrant place, these programs will generate meaningful revenues that will allow the downtown to be sustained.

#### Capital Investments

Traditional tax based funding options are clearly inadequate to finance the revitalization of the downtown. Even if Baton Rouge was to implement all of the financing solutions suggested above, less than \$500,000 in additional funds would be collected annually. While this would double the budget of the DDD today, it would not provide funds for the much expanded DDD that is essential to operate a transformed downtown. It is necessary, therefore, for the City and the Parish to commit to providing a larger budget for the downtown. A more robust budget can be developed by forging partnerships with the private sector and pursuing securing federal and state funds available through Section 108 of CDBG, New Market Tax Credits, Louisiana Neighborhood Stabilization Program, Louisiana Recovery Authority's "Louisiana Cottages" housing program, and others. The EBRDA and the DDD will need to coordinate their efforts in pursuing funds. The EBRDA will require an experienced staff with the financial expertise required to understand how to secure and effectively leverage private and public funds, building a financial structure that will support a growing downtown for generations.

PROJECTED TAX COLLECTIONS IN BATON ROUGE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT		
Year	Tax Increases Change in DDD Property Tax Millage from 10 to 12.5 mills	Tax Increases Change in Sales Tax Rate from 2.0% to 2.25%
2008	\$103,441	\$162,500
2009	\$108,096	\$167,375
2010	\$112,960	\$172,396
2011	\$118,043	\$177,568
2012	\$123,355	\$182,895
2013	\$128,906	\$188,382
2014	\$134,707	\$194,033
2015	\$140,769	\$199,855

TAX INCREMENT DISTRICT			
Year	Increase in Property Tax Collections (no increase in millage, just increase over time)	Increase in Local Sales Tax Collections	Increase in State Sales Tax Collections (only on 2%)
2009	\$18,619	\$39,000	\$39,000
2010	\$19,457	\$40,170	\$40,170
2011	\$20,333	\$41,375	\$41,375
2012	\$21,248	\$42,216	\$42,216
2013	\$22,204	\$43,896	\$43,896
2014	\$23,203	\$45,252	\$45,252
2015	\$24,247	\$46,568	\$46,568