

W E T U M P K A, A L A B A M A

Downtown & Riverfront Revitalization Plan



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PLAN SUMMARY



BACKGROUND

This plan for Wetumpka’s historic downtown and riverfront takes a comprehensive view of the study area by considering it in a holistic manner. Utilizing the National Main Street program’s “four point approach,” it addresses the key issues of organization, design, economic restructuring, and promotion. This plan also builds upon a 2012 planning effort for the area and, in particular, relies on the findings of that project’s market analysis with respect to what types of land uses and businesses might be economically viable. A steering committee of ten diverse stakeholders oversaw this planning project.



A charrette process was used to guide the public in creating the plan’s key ideas in a hands-on manner that generated strong citizen buy-in.

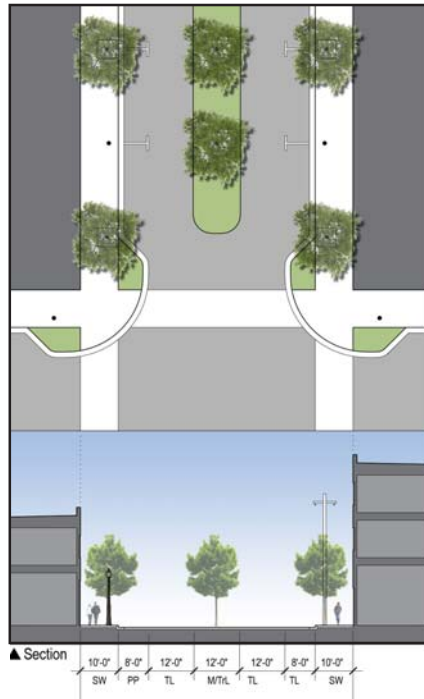
PHYSICAL PLAN

The physical plan, illustrated in part by the urban design plan at right, addressed a wide range of topics, including streets, streetscapes, parking, public spaces, and buildings. A concise summary of the key ideas are provided on the following page:



PLAN SUMMARY

SAMPLE STREET DESIGN: Main Street



Buildings

- Make the rehabilitation of the former hotel and the two Court Street buildings (below) a top priority.
- Ensure that the design of new infill buildings is compatible.



Streets, Streetscapes & Parking

- Provide raised crosswalk areas with specialty pavers on Main and Commerce Streets.
- Redesign the intersection at Bridge, Hill and Company Streets
- Develop a roundabout at Company and Orlene Streets.
- Provide “pedestrian bulbs” and crosswalks at main intersections.
- Redevelop key streetscapes to include projecting tree planters.
- Enhance existing parking lots, create new lots, and build a garage.

Public Spaces

- Make various improvements at Gold Star Park, and extend the trail to Fort Toulouse / Fort Jackson.
- Develop a plaza and fountain on the west side of the Court House.
- Make Court Street more pedestrian-friendly, and develop a small plaza in front of the Chamber fronting Main.

ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

- Make the retention and expansion of existing businesses that fit this plan’s optimal tenant mix the top priority.
- Create a recruitment team and a marketing package to court new businesses.
- Recognize the downtown’s identity or “brand” and adopt a graphics package, including a logo.
- Employ centralized retail management (CRM) techniques like those used by suburban malls.
- Improve storefront designs, and utilize special events as a way to attract new visitors.
- Better leverage area attractions, such as the river, casino, crater, and Forts Toulouse/Jackson.



IMPLEMENTATION

- Establish a downtown revitalization entity with a director, board, and issue-based committees.
- Revise the B-3 zoning to allow desired uses, preclude incompatible uses, and adjust the district boundaries.
- Establish a historic preservation program to include an ordinance, commission, historic district, design guidelines, and a review process.
- Institute a parking management program.
- Promote existing financial incentives, such as state and federal investment tax credits for historic building rehabilitations.
- Adopt new incentives, such as property tax abatements, facade grants/loans, and fee waivers for the most desired project types.
- Adopt this plan, make future updates, and implement it with flexibility.

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PLAN PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to provide the City of Wetumpka with a blueprint for revitalizing the downtown and riverfront areas. As summarized in the City's request for proposals (RFP) prepared for this project:

"The outcome of the planning grant will be to complete planning for and prepare for implementation of improving the living and economic conditions of Wetumpka by revitalization of the downtown area."

This plan will be holistic in that it will not focus on any one specific facet of the study area, but rather it will consider it in a comprehensive manner - physical, economic and social.



The Coosa River provides a dramatic gateway to Downtown Wetumpka for those approaching the area from the west. It is a tremendous amenity in need of greater leveraging.

"I think it will help the town to prosper. It will help the folks around here to prosper as well, but it will just bring some life back into downtown. It will be an exciting place to come to visit. I mean we got the river, we got a lot of great things already going on in this downtown. Just to revitalize it would add to that," said Eric Hyde with the Chamber of Commerce.

- Alabama News Network - September 28, 2013

STEERING COMMITTEE'S ROLE

To help oversee the preparation of this plan, the City has appointed a ten-person Project Steering Committee (see members listed on this plan's "Acknowledgements" page). Members represent a diverse set of stakeholders, including public officials, property owners, business owners/operators, economic developers, and preservationists. While the projects consultants have provided technical guidance for the plan, the Committee has provided the overall direction and

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tone for the plan. Committee members represent the various interests of the study area and will be critical to the future implementation of the plan.

PROJECT STUDY AREA

As illustrated in the map at right, this plan's study area is the core of downtown as defined by the following boundaries:

North Boundary: Green Street

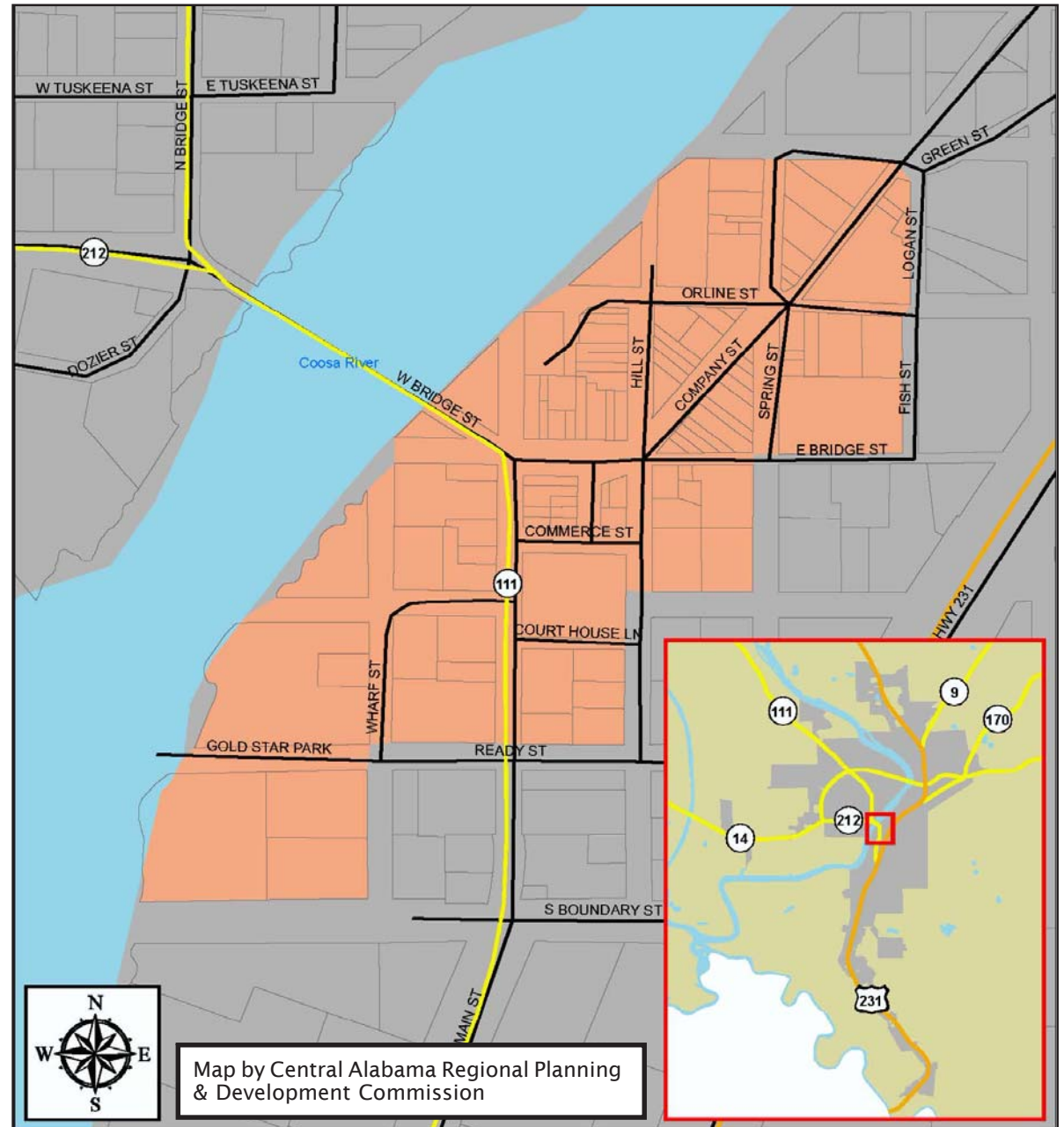
South Boundary (varies):

- E. Bridge Street
- Former ROW of E. Commerce Street
- Ready Street
- S. Boundary Street

East Boundary (varies):

- Fish/Logan Streets
- Spring Street
- Hill Street
- Warf Street

West Boundary: Coosa River



BUILDING ON PREVIOUS WORK

In 2012 the City commissioned a “Downtown & Riverfront Development Plan,” and this 2013 effort builds upon that earlier work. Below is a summary of the differences between these two planning projects, which are strongly intergrated with one another:



The 2012 plan focused on:

- Broad planning principles
- Key activity zones
- Catalyst projects
- Precedents from elsewhere

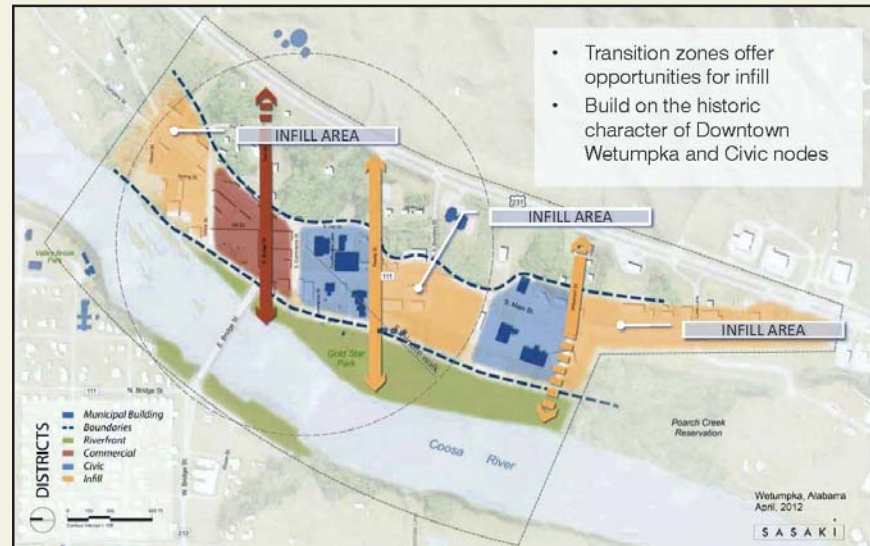
This 2013 plan focuses on:

- Building upon 2012 plan
- Much greater detail for specific subjects

Specific topics that this plan addresses include land uses, urban design, streets and parking, and key development projects. It also addresses market-based strategies and public policies amendments to help implement this plan.

A key concept of the 2012 plan is to divide the study area into three zones, as shown at right. The zones in blue reflect Civic Zones for City and County governments, the red zone represents commercial activity, and the beige zones illustrate infill development areas. It is noteworthy that the 2012 plan extended further south than this plan’s study area.

2012 Plan’s Proposed Zones: Historic, Civic, Transition



While not going into much detail, the 2012 plan includes a series of catalyst projects, including housing, offices, retail, dining, and lodging. There are also a few special uses, such as an amphitheatre and a marina on the riverfront. The catalyst projects are indicated by corresponding symbols on the map at right.

2012 Plan’s Catalyst Projects



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PLANNING PROCESS

This plan was created through the following four key steps, which are explained in more detail below:

- Task 1.0: Research & Analysis
- Task 2.0: Charrette & Concept Plan
- Task 3.0: Draft Plan Preparation
- Task 4.0: Plan Presentation & Revisions

Task 1.0: Background Research & Analysis

This initial task served as the research and diagnostic phase on which the balance of the work relied. The Project Team performed the sub-tasks described below during a one (1) day trip to Wetumpka, as well as through work conducted prior to and following this trip:

Task 1.1 Review of Background Information

Prior to making the initial trip to Wetumpka, the Project Team gathered and reviewed key information to gain insights into the project's context. Such information included: existing land uses, zoning and development regulations, previous plans and studies (including the 2012 downtown and riverfront plan), economic and demographic data, real estate market information, base map data, aerial photo maps, historic resources (historic sites inventory, historic photographs, etc.), and information related to the casino.

Task 1.2 Kick-Off Meeting & Study Area Tour

This meeting with the Project Steering Committee fine-tuned the project details and allowed the Project Team to gain additional insights from Committee members. The study area tour was led by City staff, with additional follow-up work by the Project Team as part of Task 1.3.

Task 1.3 Physical Analysis

As part of the initial fieldwork for the project, the Project Team documented and evaluated the study area's general physical characteristics through mapping, measurements, field notes and photography. Based upon that field research and existing data, the Project Team conducted an evaluation of Downtown Wetumpka's existing conditions, with an emphasis on:

- Existing land uses
- Buildings/sites with potential for enhancement
- Buildings/sites with potential for redevelopment
- Streetscapes
- Streets and parking
- Existing/potential public spaces
- Pedestrian circulation

Task 1.4 Economic & Policy Evaluation

The economic component of this evaluation relied heavily upon the economic and market analysis conducted as part of the City's 2012 plan. The Project Team communicated directly with the economist who completed that earlier work to gain additional insights to his work. Key components of this task addressed:

- Overall economic context
- Optimal tenant mix
- Potential to leverage the gaming market

- Zoning and development regulations
- Parking requirements and management
- Relevant entities that are (or could be) part of downtown's organizational structure

Task 1.5 Public "Kick-Off" Meeting

This interactive evening forum featured the following components:

- Introduction of Committee/City representatives and the Project Team
- Explanation of the project process and objectives
- Identification of the study area's challenges and opportunities
- Identification of other model downtowns

Task 2.0: Charrette & Concept Plan

Although the project methodology was designed to encourage strong public input throughout the life of this project, Task 2.0 offered the single greatest opportunity for meaningful hands-on involvement of downtown stakeholders - including the Project Steering Committee, public officials, business and property owners, residents, and the public in general. The goal of the charrette process was to provide a forum for the public to achieve a consensus on the future of Downtown Wetumpka. The most tangible outcome of the charrette was *a realistic and implementable Vision for the study area - the Concept Plan*. This four (4) day task required strong teamwork between the Project Team and the City/Steering

Committee, as the City recruited and scheduled all public participants with the guidance of the Project Team. The following sub-tasks occurred:

Task 2.1 Studio Set-Up & Follow-Up Field Work (Day 1 - morning & afternoon)

This task gave Project Team members another opportunity prior to the evening Public Workshop to build on previous impressions of the study area gained during Task 1.0. In particular, examples of land uses, development and urban design features in Downtown Wetumpka that “work” and “don’t work” were identified. Also, field information not previously obtained, but since recognized as necessary, was gathered as part of this task.

Task 2.2 Public Workshop (Day 1 - evening)

Prior to Task 2.0, the City recruited participants to be involved in the Public Workshop. Participants were key stakeholders representing a variety of interests in the study area. Among the stakeholders, the Project Steering Committee and City officials were well-represented. The Project Team and Public Workshop participants gathered at the charrette facility and achieved the following steps over a roughly 2.5 hour period:

Workshop Orientation

The Project Team presented the following items:

- Workshop Purpose & Overview
- Background Research Findings
- Results of the Public Input

Planning Session

Participants were split into teams of approximately ten (10) members each, and each team created their own concept plan for the study area. The concept plans were

created on “existing conditions” base maps with the help of colored markers coded to particular land uses and/or design issues.

Workshop Team Presentations & Wrap-Up

Following the completion of the Planning Session, the Workshop Teams reassembled into a single group and one or more members of each team briefly presented their plans and/or ideas for Downtown Wetumpka. After each presentation, there was time for questions and comments. Following the Workshop Team presentations, the Project Team consultants concluded the evening by identifying common elements between the various ideas, and suggested how those ideas might be combined to form the basis for the Concept Plan that the Project Team consultants produced as a prelude to the ultimate revitalization plan.

Task 2.3 Concept Plan Development (Day 2 through Day 4)

Based upon the Task 1.0 background research and findings, and the results of the Day 1 Public Workshop, the Project Team developed the Concept Plan. It included an illustrated plan map and schematic renderings. The Concept Plan addressed the following key issues:

- Historic resources
- Land uses
- Transportation and parking
- Buildings and urban design
- Public spaces and pedestrian realm
- Economic, market-based and public policy strategies
- Riverfront - access, improvements and uses
- Linkages between downtown and the

surrounding context

Task 2.4 Concept Plan Presentation (Day 4 - evening)

Similar to the Task 1.5 public “kick-off” meeting, this evening meeting was widely-publicized to encourage a strong turn-out and included the following components:

- Opening Comments & Project Methodology
- Overview of Existing Conditions
- Explanation of the Public Input Results
- Presentation of the Concept Plan

The majority of time was dedicated to the Concept Plan, as opposed to the background information. Because of the importance of public interaction, a generous amount of time was provided for an open discussion.

Task 3.0: Draft Plan Preparation

Based upon the public’s and Project Steering Committee’s response to the Concept Plan presented during Task 3.0, a detailed draft plan was prepared to provide *a roadmap to implement the community’s Vision*. Key components of the plan included the following:

Task 3.1: Summary of Existing Conditions

This plan section is based upon the Task 1.0 background research and addresses all of the issues noted for that task.

Task 3.2: Public Input Results & Planning Principles

The public input results were based upon the Task 1.0 public kick-off meeting and the input solicited during the Task 2.0 charrette public workshop. Prior to the charrette, a

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set of draft planning principles were prepared by the Project Team and tested on the public participants during the charrette workshop prior to their planning session. These principles served as a “guiding light” for the plan.

Task 3.3: Illustrated Physical Master Plan

This illustrated plan constitutes a formalized version of the Concept Plan and includes the following components:

- Graphically coded land plan (to factor in land uses, density and character for each land classification)
- Urban design plan illustrating streets, sidewalks, public spaces, parking and buildings (distinguishing between existing buildings and proposed infill development)

Task 3.4: Buildings: Historic Rehabilitation & Infill Development Design Principles

This plan section contain as general set of design principles addressing, in both text and graphics, principles for historic and new buildings. Principles for historic buildings are based upon federal preservation standards. The following considerations apply to proposed new “infill” buildings:

- Building heights and setbacks
- Building scale and massing
- Facade design - openings, materials, etc.
- Roof forms

These design principles are general and do not constitute detailed guidelines that could be used for a formal design review process for development approval, although they could serve as a foundation for such guidelines to be prepared at some point later.

Task 3.5: Mobility & Parking Strategies

The issues addressed in this plan section include:

- Street layout and connections
- Street and streetscape cross-section designs
- Potential gateway locations and treatments
- Traffic calming opportunities
- On-street and off-street parking: amount, location, design and management

Task 3.6: Streetscapes & Public Spaces Design

This plan section addresses the issues of pedestrian circulation, as well as public space concept designs for any proposed parks, plazas and/or markets. The streetscape portion of this section addresses sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, and streetscape furnishings. Products for this task include streetscape cross-sections and plan segments, in addition to prototypical streetscape furnishings.

Task 3.7: Economic Restructuring & Marketing

As noted previously, this topic relies heavily upon the economic and market-based recommendations from the 2012 downtown plan. It addresses issues such as the optimal tenant mix, approaches to business development, branding/identity development, and marketing strategies such as special events. It also offers suggestions for leveraging the area’s gaming market.

Task 3.8: Plan Implementation Strategy

This final plan section addresses the various tools to implement the plan, including

general recommendations to revise the existing zoning and design standards. An implementation matrix summarizes each key recommendation of the plan organized by issue category, reference page numbers within the plan for more detail, and suggest each recommendation’s sequencing within a general range (short-term, mid-term, long-term).

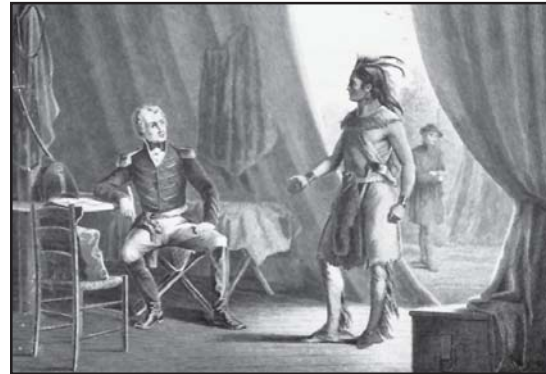
Task 4.0: Plan Presentation & Revisions

Following sufficient time for the Client’s review, key members of the Project Team presented the draft plan in a public forum, which was followed by a thorough question and answer session to engage the community. Based upon a review of the draft plan by the Project Steering Committee and City, input from the public presentation, and the Committee’s/City’s submission of a single “red-lined” copy (serving as a composite of all comments) back to the Project Team for revisions, the draft plan was revised and submitted.

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DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

The name Wetumpka is derived from Indian words for rumbling water, which refers to the Creek description for a prominent point in the Coosa River where the rapids raced across the river rocks. Nearby Fort Toulouse was constructed in 1714 by the French and abandoned in 1763 when it fell into British hands. In 1798, it became part of the US territory, and during the War of 1812 the fort was improved by Andrew Jackson and re-named Fort Jackson.

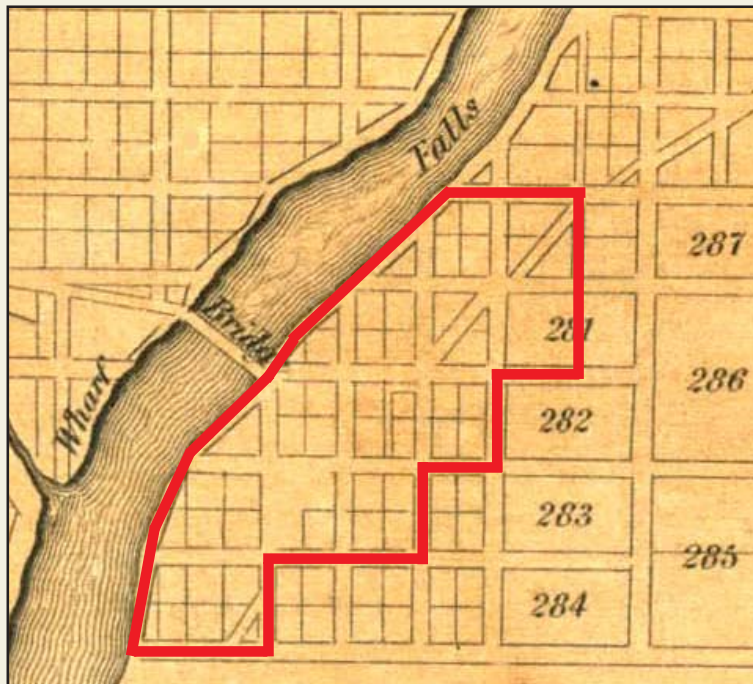


Chief Red Eagle (William Weatherford) surrenders to General Andrew Jackson at Fort Jackson in 1814.

When the Alabama Territory was created in 1817, Wetumpka was part of the area. Counties were established in 1818, and the west side of the river was in Autauga County, while the east side was in Coosa County.

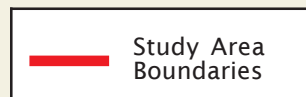
The town was incorporated in 1834, with the east side of the river being incorporated on January 17 and the west side being incorporated on February 18. By 1836, the population was 1,200. At that time an eastern newspaper asserted that Wetumpka, Alabama, and Chicago, Illinois, were the two most promising cities of what was then called “The West.” In 1839, the two halves of the city were incorporated jointly. Also in 1839, the town was chosen as the site of the State Penitentiary, which was completed in 1841. In 1845, when the decision was made to move the State Capitol from Tuscaloosa, both Wetumpka and Montgomery were in contention for the honor, but Wetumpka lost by a small margin.

Wetumpka continued to prosper despite large fires in 1845 and 1852 which razed entire blocks of downtown. The Civil War was economically and socially devastating to the community, but in 1866 Elmore County was created and Wetumpka was chosen as the site for the County Courthouse. The community suffered two natural disasters in 1886 - a flood and an earthquake.

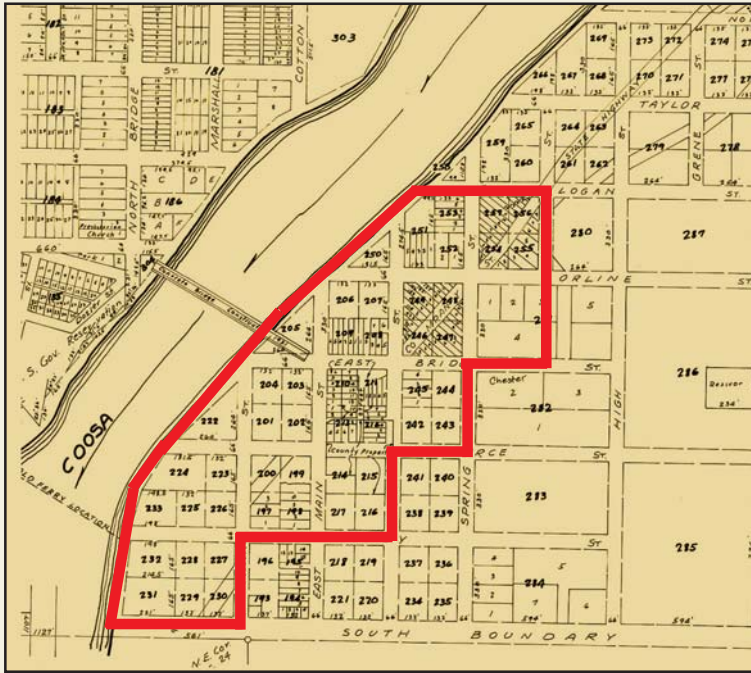


1837 Map of Wetumpka
This excerpt of an 1837 map of the community highlights this plan’s study area boundaries. When compared with the study area map on page 2 of this plan, it is evident that property boundaries have changed, but the basic pattern of public rights-of-way have not.

Source: Historical Maps of Alabama collection - University of Alabama Department of Geography



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1932 Map of Wetumpka
This excerpt of a 1932 map of the community highlights this plan’s study area boundaries. When compared with the 1837 map on page 7 of this plan, the most significant changes are the numerous small lots created along Company Street, and the movement of the bridge slightly to the north. The current bridge is labeled “concrete bridge constructed 1931.”

Source: S. J. Cumming - 1932



These two photographs depict Downtown Wetumpka during the early-1900s. The image above looks north down Court Street, while the one below looks in the opposite direction from Bridge Street.



By the early-1900s, the town was again prosperous, despite fires in 1902 and 1908. Electricity and public water arrived in 1905, and in 1906 the L&N Railroad built a new depot. The first Model T Ford arrived in 1909, and cement sidewalks replaced planks in 1911. In 1913, the Fain Theater brought the “stars of the silver screen,” Growth slowed during World War I, but soon resumed. The Bibb Graves Bridge was completed in 1931 and the Elmore County Courthouse in 1932. The first traffic light was installed in 1935, and

the downtown post office completed in 1937. In 1938, another devastating flood occurred. Progress again faltered from 1941 to 45 during World War II, but by 1946 the community began to rebound. The Community House (now Fain Center) was completed in 1947, and by 1948 most of Wetumpka’s streets had been paved. A City Planning Board was formed in 1950 and the National Guard Armory was completed in 1957.

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EXISTING CONDITIONS: PHYSICAL FEATURES OVERVIEW

The aerial photo map at right provides a good overview of many of the study area's physical features. The study area is outlined in red and it includes the downtown core. The key features include the Coosa River and the Bridge Street bridge, the relatively undeveloped riverfront area, the westerly steep slopes that also preclude much development, the grid street system, and development associated within a well-defined block structure. The following pages address specific issues within this broader spectrum of physical features, including:

- River, Floodway & Floodplains
- Topography
- Blocks, Lots & Buildings
- Land Uses
- Street Grid
- Street Functions & Traffic



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EXISTING CONDITIONS: RIVER, FLOODWAY & FLOODPLAINS

The map at right illustrates two distinct sets of information. The “effective” floodway and floodplain are shown in blue lines, while the “preliminary” floodway and floodplain are shown in green lines. The preliminary designations will take effect in the summer of 2014 per FEMA’s latest analysis. The text below will address the preliminary data.

River

The Coosa River is about 280 miles long and is one of Alabama's most developed rivers. It begins in Rome, Georgia, and ends just south of Wetumpka where it joins the Tallapoosa River to form the Alabama River. Alabama Power maintains seven hydroelectric power dams on it.

Floodway

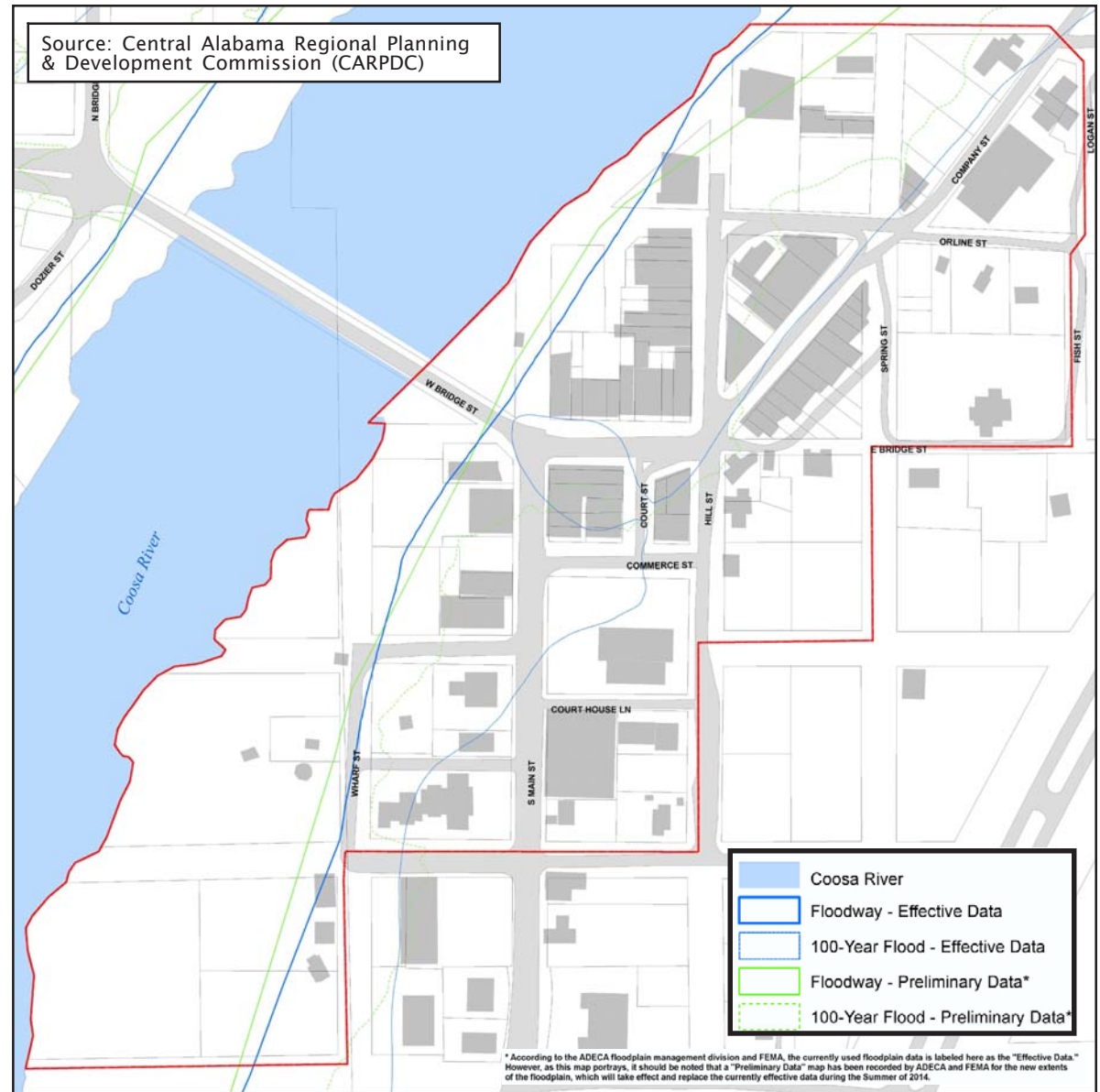
While FEMA has a more complex definition, the floodway is essentially the area within and adjacent to a stream where floodwaters will travel during a flood. The delineated floodway along the east bank of the Coosa roughly forms a tangent along the most westerly extents of the downtown street grid, and there is little development here.

Floodplains

The 100-year floodplain extends a substantial distance east of the floodway, including

as far east as Court Street and nearly to Company Street within the north half of the

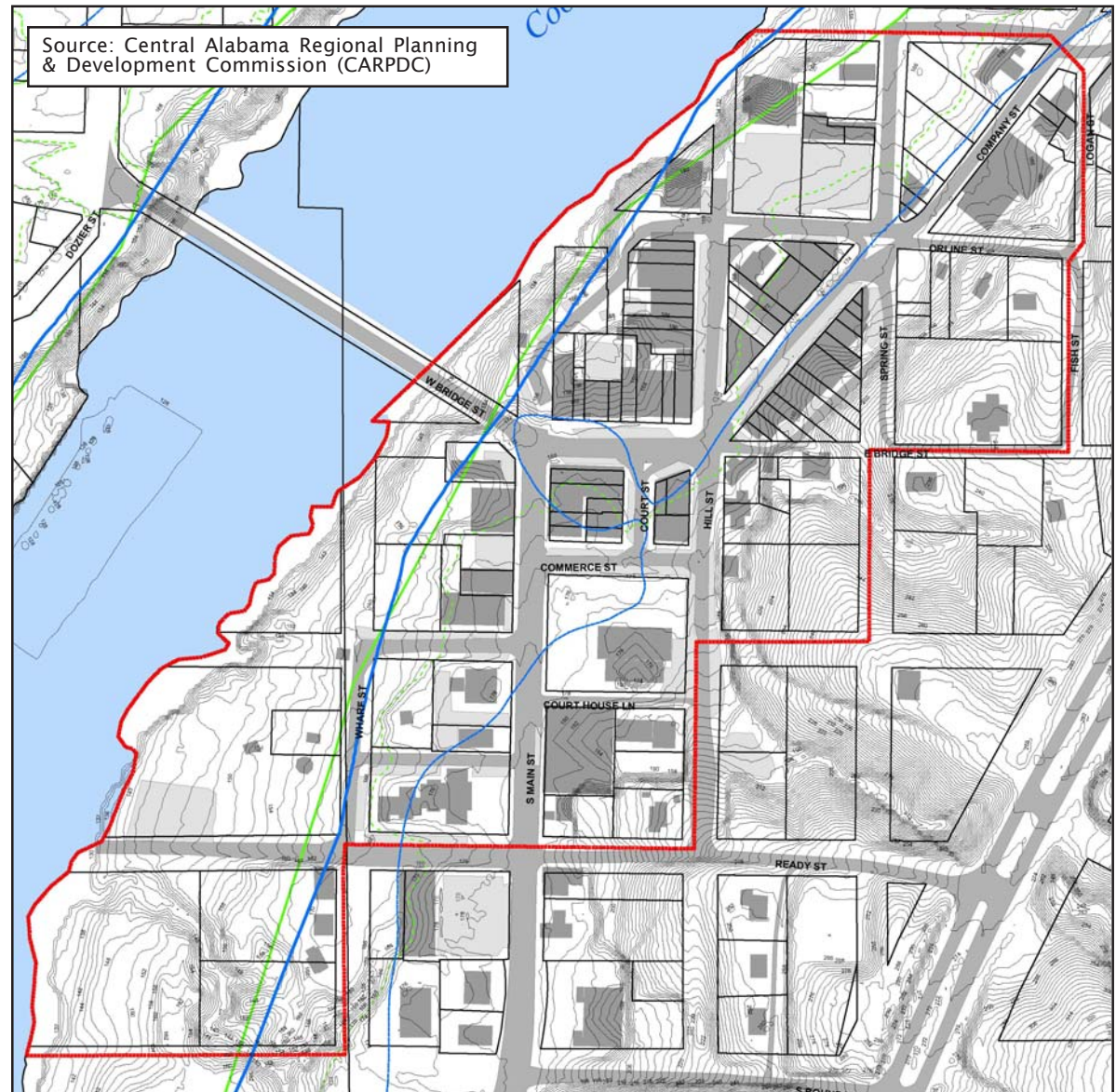
study area. The last major flood in Wetumpka was in March of 1990.



EXISTING CONDITIONS: TOPOGRAPHY

The contour lines illustrated on the map at right represent points where an additional two foot rise occurs in elevation. Elevations range from a low of 130 feet above sea level along the edge of the river to a high of roughly 270 feet along the most easterly portion of the study area. While this 140 foot elevation climb from one side of the narrow downtown to the other might imply a downtown with challenging topography, the most developed core area is relatively flat. For example, Wharf Street has an approximately 168 foot elevation, while the intersection of Bridge and Company Streets is at only 170 feet. The slope is relatively gentle until Hill Street and just east of Company Street, when the topography gets very steep as one travels east because of the geological rim created by the impact crater millions of years ago. Another area of severe topography is along the stretch of riverfront north of the bridge.

A result of the downtown's topography is that the downtown is relatively narrow and long, and it has a main axis parallel with the river. One potential benefit is that these natural constraints may encourage infill development where it should occur rather than sprawling out to peripheral areas.



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EXISTING CONDITIONS: BLOCKS, LOTS & BUILDINGS

The map at right illustrates the block, lot and building footprint patterns that comprise the downtown. Below is a summary:

Blocks

Downtown's gridded street pattern results in a series of rectilinear blocks that are approximately 300 ft. by 300 ft. in size. However, there are several exceptions. For example, Court Street splits the block otherwise bound by Commerce, Bridge, E. Main and Hill Streets. Also, diagonal streets like Bridge and Company create irregularities in the street grid. Company Street creates a series of triangular-shaped blocks in the northeast portion of the study area.

Lots

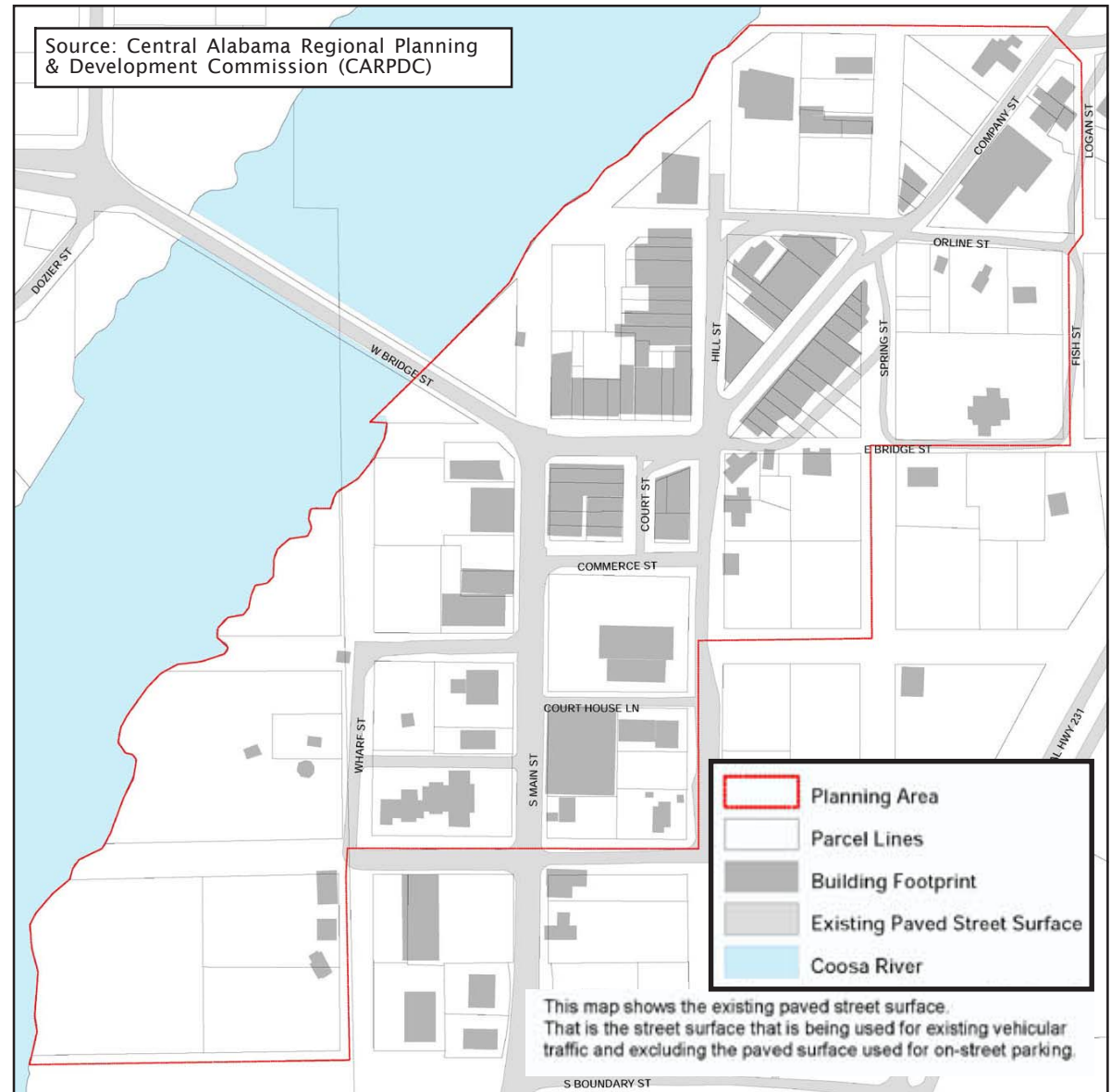
Lots are rectilinear in shape. A comparison of the 1837 and 1932 maps reveals the evolution of a slightly more fine-grained lot pattern as subdivisions have occurred over time. The lots flanking Company Street have the deepest and most narrow lots within the downtown.

Buildings

Most of the buildings in the study area are rectilinear in shape, as with the lots and blocks. Most buildings are built close to the street and adjoin adjacent buildings

along their side walls. There are some stand-alone commercial buildings, particularly peripheral to the downtown, and there are a

few large stand-alone civic buildings, such as the County and City buildings.



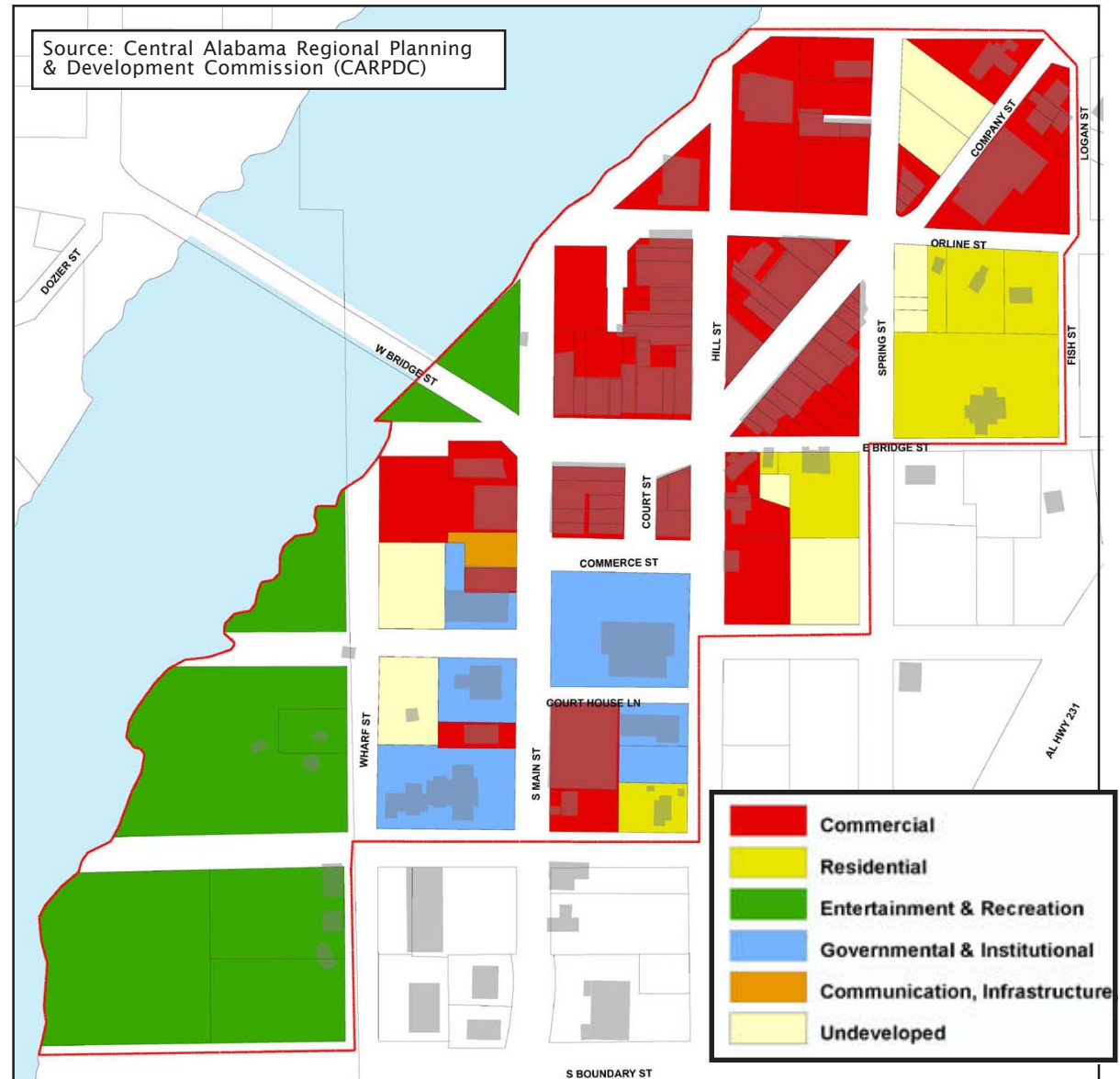
I. BACKGROUND

EXISTING CONDITIONS: LAND USES

As with most downtowns, Downtown Wetumpka hosts a rich mixture of land uses, as reflected by the map at right. However, many of those uses are geographically clustered, as summarized below.

- **Commercial** - These uses are concentrated primarily in the northern half of the downtown, particularly along Company Street.
- **Residential** - This land use is limited to the most easterly portions of the study area where the commercial uses fall off and the grade elevation increases.
- **Entertainment & Recreation** - This land use is found only along the western edge of the downtown, as it is riverfront park lands.
- **Governmental & Institutional** - This use is concentrated in the south-central portion of the study area and features various City and County buildings, including the Elmore County Museum on S. Main.

It should be noted that, in the case of multi-story buildings, the map indicates the ground floor use, even though upper floors might be residential in a few instances.

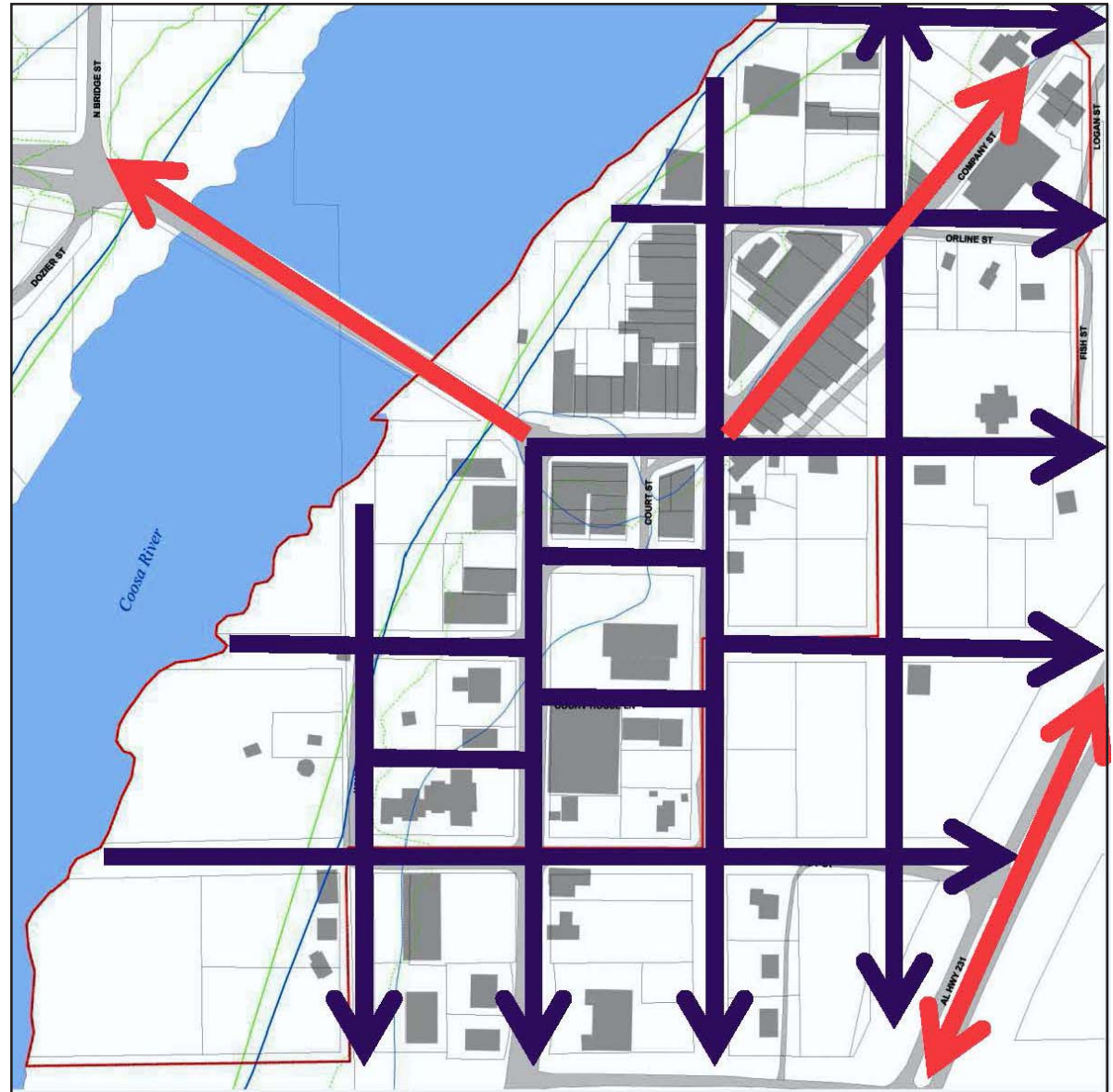


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EXISTING CONDITIONS: STREET GRID

The map at right highlights the downtown's street grid system. Parallel and perpendicular streets that create the interconnected grid are colored in dark blue, while the diagonal streets are in red. The only two diagonal streets within the study area are the segment of Bridge Street that crosses the river and Company Street. While Hwy. 231 is diagonal to the downtown grid, it is located just east of the study area boundaries.

While it is not critical that a downtown feature a rectilinear grid street pattern to provide efficient traffic distribution and a pedestrian-friendly environment, it is important that it have an interconnected street system to achieve such benefits. Therefore, it is vital that no segments of the current system be vacated in the future, and any opportunities for new connections not currently existing should be explored.



I. BACKGROUND

EXISTING CONDITIONS: STREET FUNCTIONS & TRAFFIC

Because there is a strong correlation between a street's designated function and associated traffic volumes, the map at right illustrates both. Below is a summary of this map, which conveys street functions with color coding and the number of average daily trips (ADTs) by automobiles with the numbers in a white oval:

Principal Arterial (red line)

The only road with this designation is Hwy. 231, which is just east of the downtown. It has an ADT of 42,700 vehicles. Because this level of traffic bypasses the downtown rather than passing through it, this road fails to contribute to the economic health of the downtown and instead results in competing strip commercial development.

Minor Arterial (green line)

There are two streets with this designation - Bridge Street as it crosses the river and Main Street. It experiences 14,100 ADTs on the bridge and 16,500 ADTs on Main at the intersection with Wharf Street.

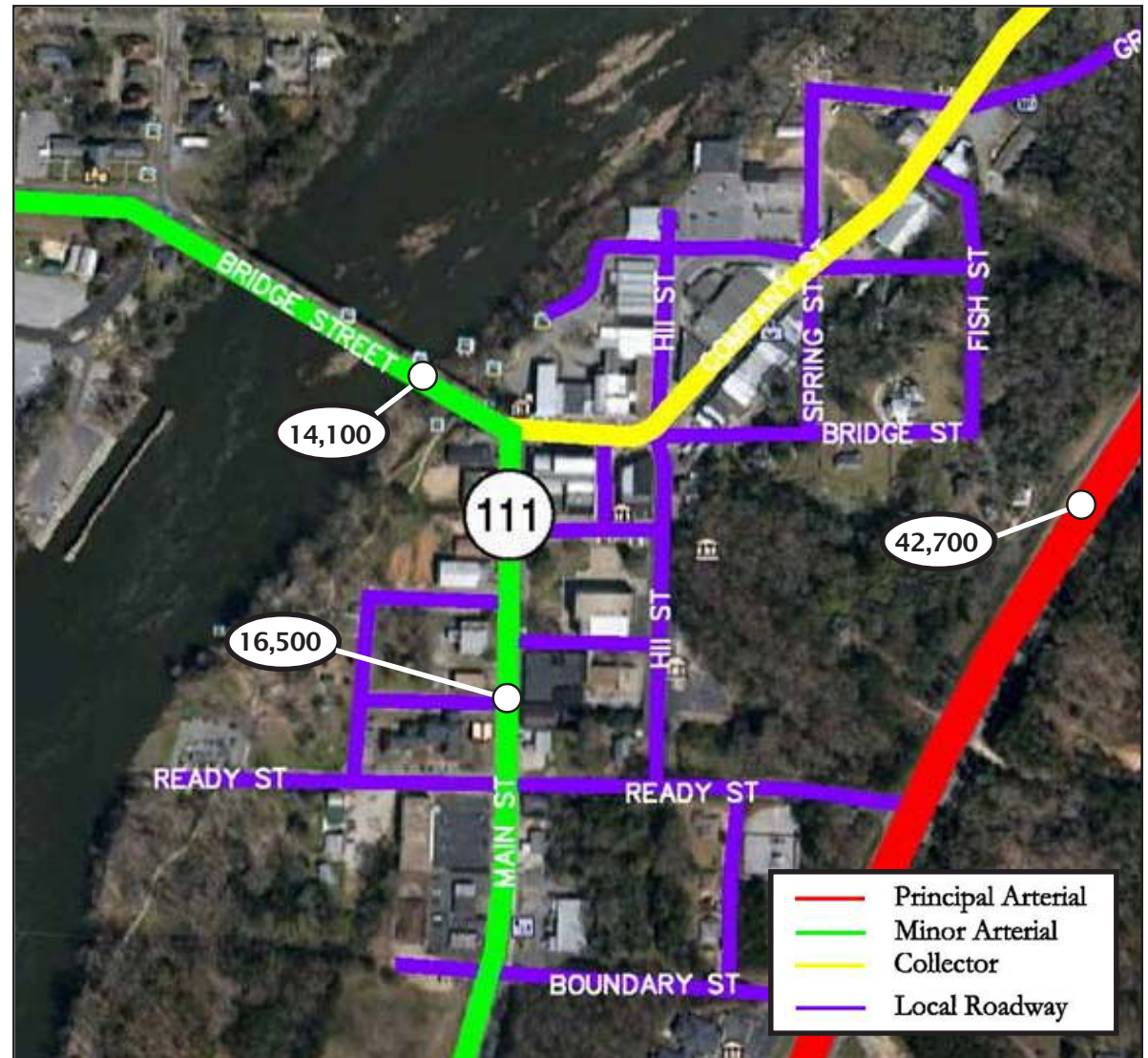
Collector (yellow line)

The only two streets within the downtown study area identified as collectors are Bridge from Main to Hill and Company Street.

Local (blue line)

The balance of the downtown street network, which constitutes the majority of

streets, features a relatively low level of traffic.



I. BACKGROUND

EXISTING CONDITIONS: PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

The map at right conveys land ownership for downtown and it is summarized below:

Privately-Owned Land

Private Owner

These lands in light green are owned by various individuals. They are scattered throughout the downtown, but are particularly prevalent in the northerly and easterly portion.

Business/LLC & Bank

These properties are owned by business entities (salmon color) or, in only one example, a bank (darker green). They are located in roughly the same spatial pattern as the “private owner” lands.

Alabama Power Company

APC owns a great deal of land along the Coosa because of its hydroelectric power operations. Within the study area, it owns roughly 70 percent of the river’s frontage.

Publicly-Owned Land

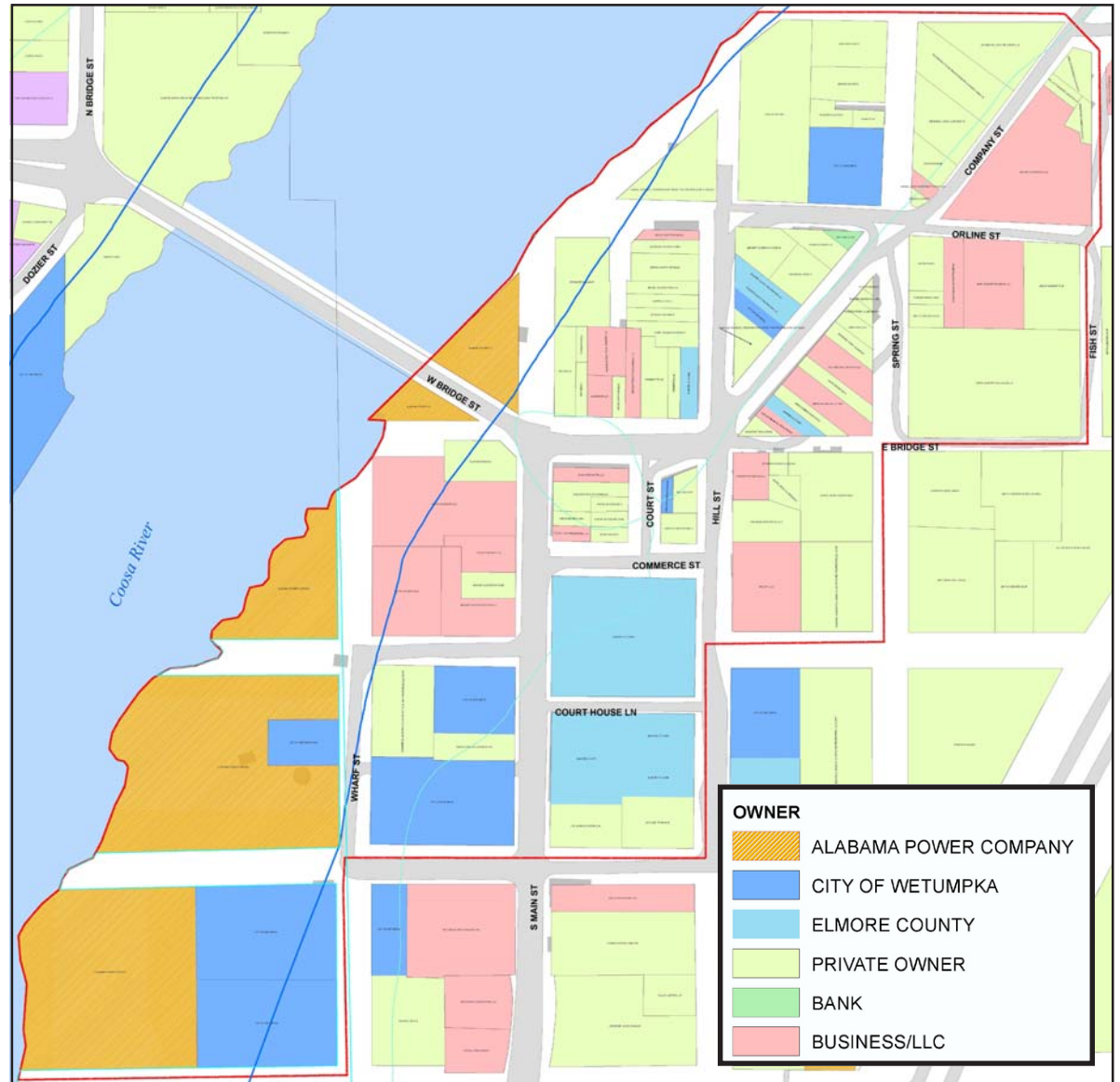
City of Wetumpka

Depicted in the darker blue color, City lands are scattered, but the largest parcels are in the southwest portion of the downtown.

Elmore County

Shown in light blue, most of the County’s lands are at or near the Courthouse area,

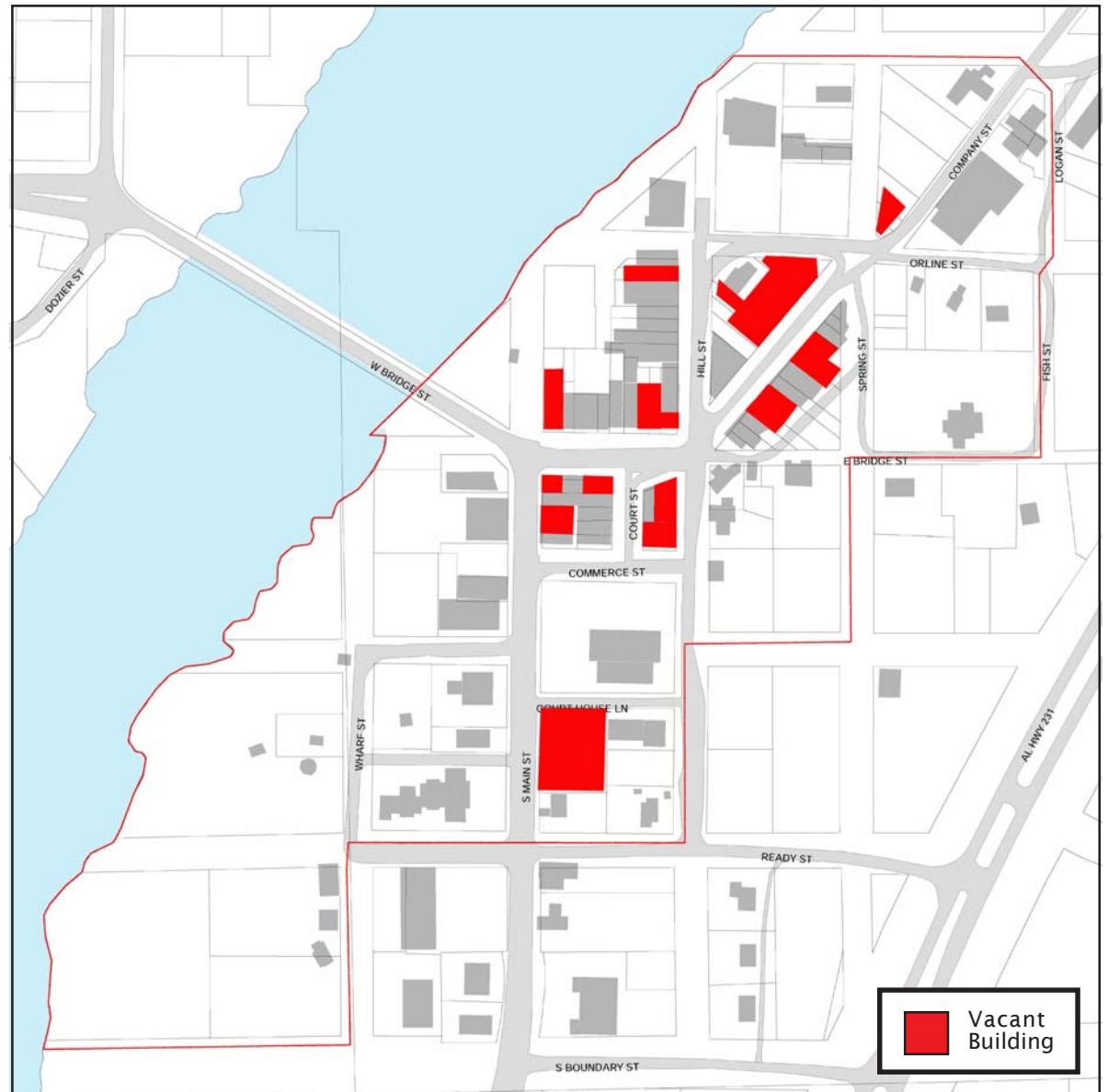
while three smaller properties are located on Bridge and Company Streets.



I. BACKGROUND

EXISTING CONDITIONS: VACANCIES

This map illustrates vacant buildings in red based upon a field survey conducted for this project. A comparison with the property ownership map on the previous page reveals that vacant buildings are both privately and publicly owned. The largest vacant publicly-owned building is the County-owned building on the southeast corner of Main and Court House Lane. That building is reportedly planned for demolition. Other key vacant buildings include the former hotel on the southwest corner of Court and Bridge Streets, the theatre building on Bridge, the two Chamber-owned buildings on Court Street, and several buildings along Company Street.



I. BACKGROUND

EXISTING CONDITIONS: ZONING

Within the downtown study area, there are only two zoning districts, and each is summarized below:

B-3: Central Business District

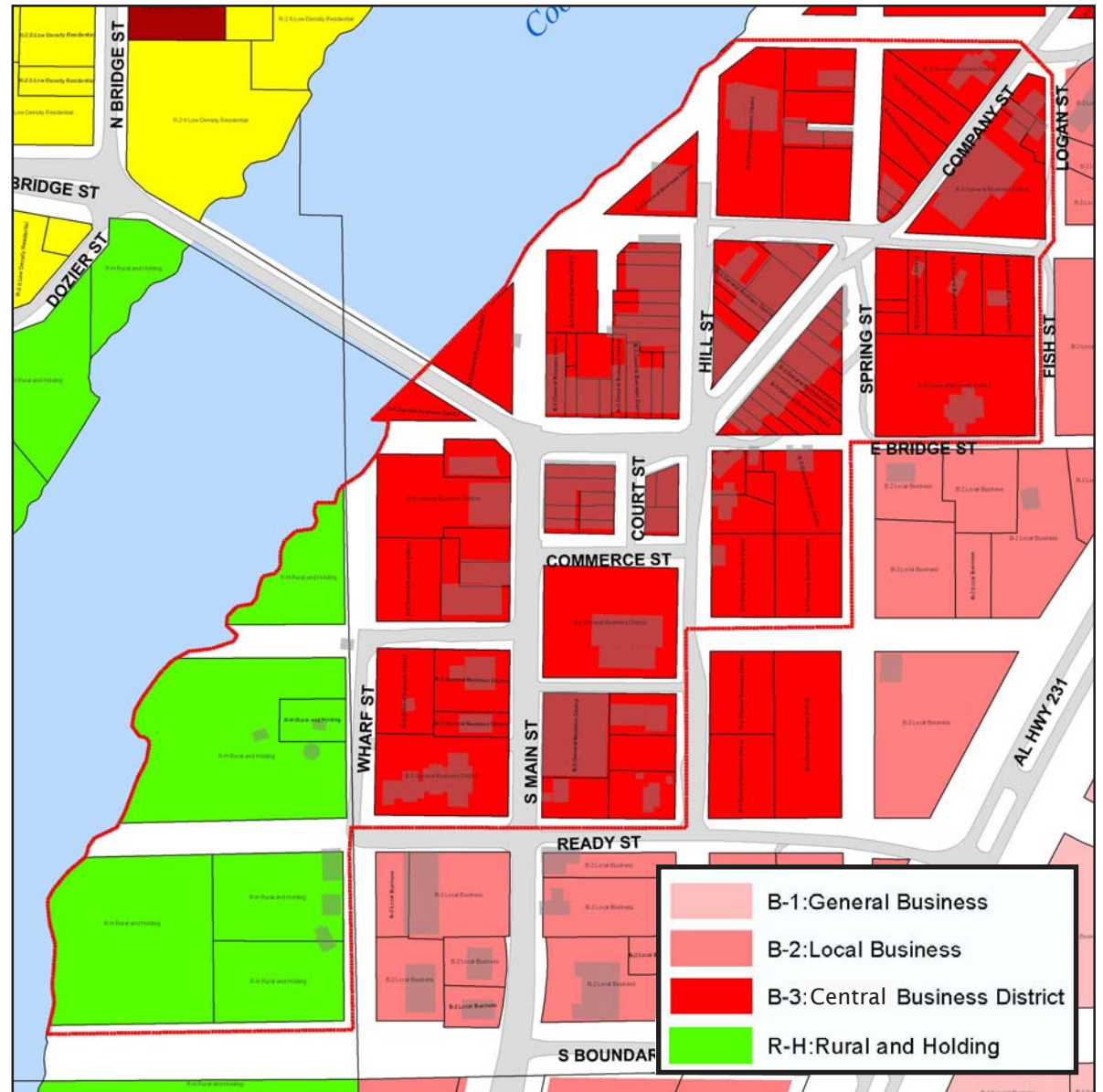
This district is the downtown core of Wetumpka and it is relatively sympathetic toward a historic downtown. Permitted uses include retail, office, banking, insurance, government, food service, personal services, and upper-story residential uses. Development within this district *“should be compatible with the context, character, scale, and density of adjacent activities, which typically are characterized by lot line to lot line construction, lack of on-premise, off-street parking for all but residential uses, and combined uses within buildings and properties.”* These same ideas are reflected in the other parts of the ordinance relating to land uses, parking and bulk standards.

R-H: Rural and Holding

Although this district is intended primarily for agricultural areas, it is *“also intended to serve as a holding district for future development.”* Permitted uses are typical of rural zoning and are limited to very low-density housing, agricultural uses, public facilities, and similar uses. While this district is not ideally suited for a riverfront park, it more

closely meets the needs of such a place than any of the other existing district categories

in Wetumpka’s zoning ordinance.



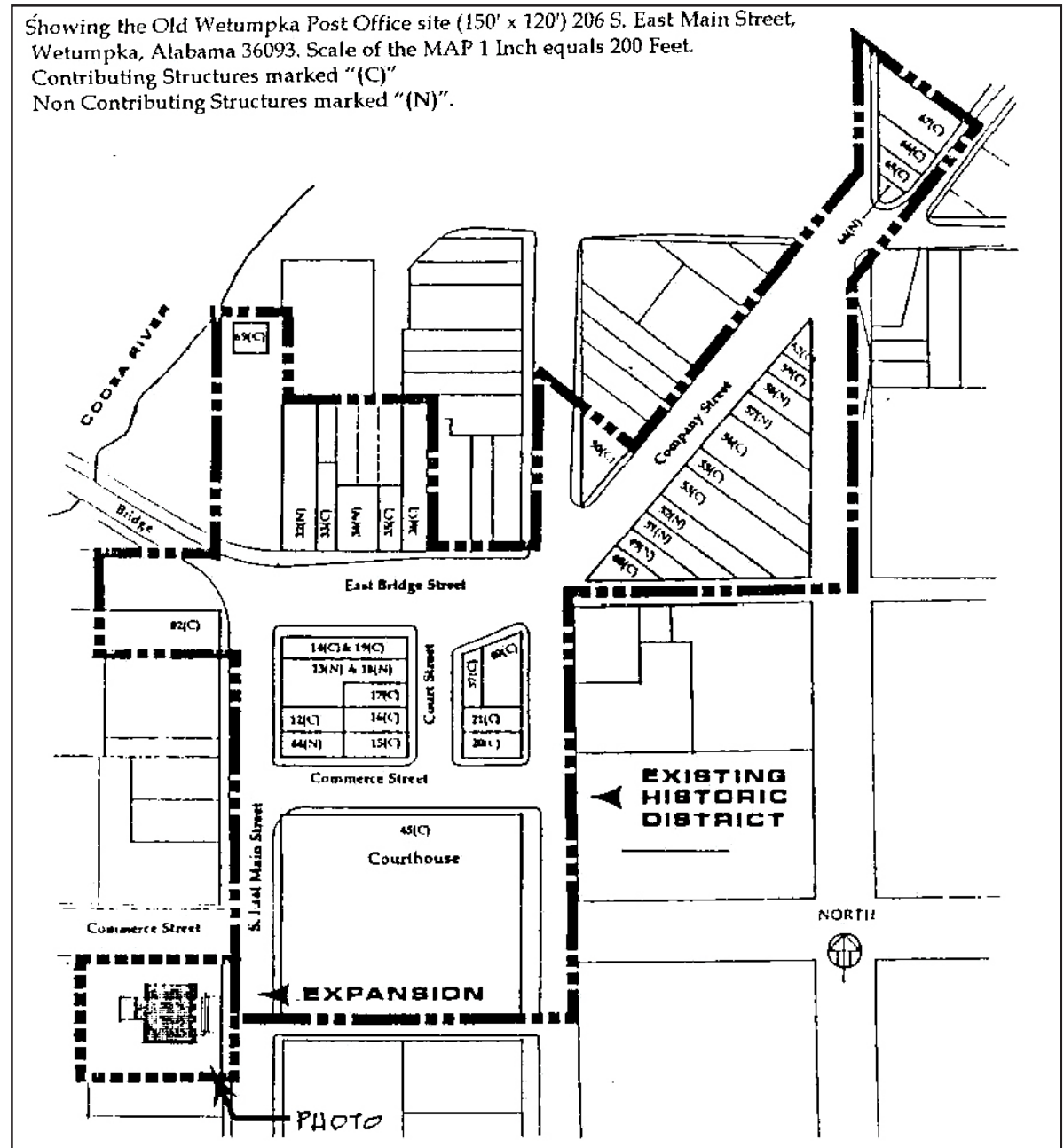
I. BACKGROUND

EXISTING CONDITIONS: HISTORIC DISTRICT

In addition to conventional zoning, the downtown has National Register of Historic Places designation as a historic district, as illustrated by the map at right. It is referred to as the “East Wetumpka Commercial Historic District.” National Register (NR) designation provides financial incentives for qualified building rehabilitations via both state and federal investment tax credits. It also offers, in some instances, protections related to federally funded or licensed activities through the Section 106 Review process per the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. However, this federal designation provides no real protections from private property owners altering or even destroying buildings within a National Register district.

The map at right distinguishes between “contributing” and “non-contributing” structures, with contributing structures being those considered architecturally significant and contributing toward the overall historic character and integrity of the district. This map also reflects the most recent expansion of the district to add a parcel in the southwest corner of the area to add the 1938 post office building (now the Elmore County Museum).

Showing the Old Wetumpka Post Office site (150' x 120') 206 S. East Main Street, Wetumpka, Alabama 36093. Scale of the MAP 1 Inch equals 200 Feet.
Contributing Structures marked “(C)”
Non Contributing Structures marked “(N)”.



I. BACKGROUND

EXISTING CONDITIONS: BUSINESSES

The following inventory of existing businesses is organized by business type and is depicted on the map at right. It only covers the core business area.

RETAIL

1. We-2 Gifts and Awards
2. The Gazebo
3. The Company Store
4. Vault Variety Shop
5. Austin's Flower Shop
6. Valerios Used Tires

DINING

1. Coaches Corner
2. 2 Guys Bakery
3. Coffee Shop and Eatery

PERSONAL SERVICES

1. Jerry's Barber Shop
2. Top Nails
3. Rumbling Water Health Club
4. S.O.S Workout Club
5. Knights of the Square
6. Ren's Taekwondo
7. Fas Break Auto
8. Singletons Alignment & Mufflers
9. Daniels Stewarts Barber Shop
10. The Upper Cut
11. City Barber Shop
12. Blue Ridge Chiropractic
13. Sweet Smile Photography
14. Andy Heating and Air
15. The Gab Salon and Spa
16. Curves
17. Stephen P. McCulloch Dentistry

OFFICE/PROFESSIONAL

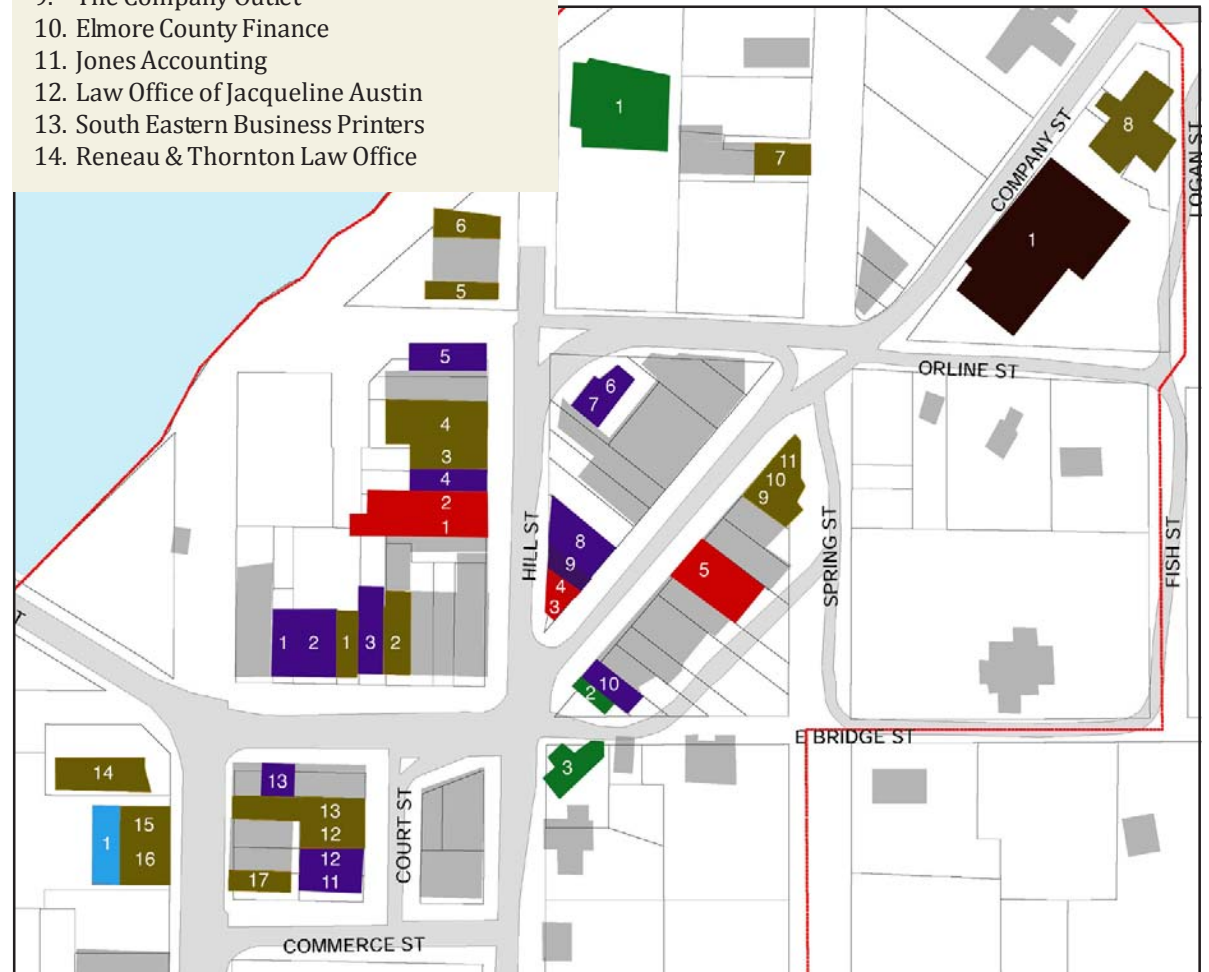
1. Edward Jones
2. Land Bank
3. Regina Edwards Law Office
4. Foresters Developer LLC
5. Bailey & Poague Law Office
6. Cousins Insurance Agency
7. Progressive Insurance
8. Long Run Shop
9. The Company Outlet
10. Elmore County Finance
11. Jones Accounting
12. Law Office of Jacqueline Austin
13. South Eastern Business Printers
14. Reneau & Thornton Law Office

OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL

1. Tulotoma Outdoors

LIGHT INDUSTRIAL

1. Elmore Scrap Metal



EXISTING CONDITIONS: ECONOMIC & MARKET

In 2012, the City of Wetumpka commissioned the “City of Wetumpka Downtown & Riverfront Development Plan.” This plan included a market analysis to identify market opportunities for Wetumpka’s downtown and riverfront. Since this current planning effort is a continuation of the 2012 project and builds upon that previous work, this plan avoids repeating work already accomplished by revisiting the 2012 study area analysis. The full market analysis is contained in Appendices #1 of this plan. The market supportable “potentials” listed at right indicate the potential new building space and housing units, in addition to the existing inventory of development. These figures are elaborated on below for certain issues:

Lodging

One of the key justifications for hotel rooms within the downtown and/or nearby area is to support the existing civic center. However, these numbers were generated before the announced casino expansion to develop 285 hotel rooms. Regardless of the number of hotel rooms recently built, the potential demand for the 20 to 30 boutique hotel rooms is still relevant since that is a distinct product and market from the broad-

FIVE YEAR POTENTIALS PER THE 2012 PLAN – “targeted” demand levels

- *Limited-Service Hotel:* 70 - 120 rooms
- *Boutique Inn:* 20 - 30 rooms
- *Professional Office:* 30,000 - 50,000 SF
- *General Retail & Restaurants:* 25,000 - 35,000 SF
- *Market-Rate Residential:* 75 - 150 units



Artist’s rendering of the 20-story Wind Creek Wetumpka Hotel, which is the state’s largest casino hotel.

Source: Hndak Bobo Group

er limited service hotel category. One potential location for this hotel that was identified in the 2012 plan is the former hotel building that now sits vacant at the corners of Court, Bridge and Main Streets.

Housing

The 2012 plan indicates that “New market-rate housing requires amenities such as river views, high-quality finishes, and supporting services such as convenient retail as well as supportive markets (i.e., people willing to live downtown).”

Financial Feasibility of Development

Despite there being potential market demand for a variety of uses in the downtown area, there is a significant hurdle to both new

development and the rehabilitation of existing buildings. Based upon current rent levels, new development and rehabilitation do not “pencil out.” In other words, the income to be generated would not cover the development or rehabilitation costs. Thus, new development and rehabilitation will need some form of subsidation via financial incentives to be viable. At present, the only existing such incentives are those for the rehabilitation of income-producing historic buildings that are listed on or eligible for the National Register. Such projects require a “substantial” rehabilitation (exceeding the adjusted cost basis) and federal preservation standards must be followed.

I. BACKGROUND

EXISTING CONDITIONS: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

One of the most critical factors in successful downtown revitalization is an organizational structure that will support and spearhead revitalization efforts. Below is a summary of the existing structure for Downtown Wetumpka.

City of Wetumpka

Of the many local partners involved with revitalization of the downtown, the City is the key entity. It is the sponsor of this plan and it is an important downtown property owner, as City Hall, the library, and the associated offices and meeting spaces are major draws to the downtown. The City also recently established the new position of City Planner, a significant step forward.

Elmore County / ECEDA

The County is the other local government having a strong presence in the downtown. Its multiple properties serve as traffic-generating anchors, particularly the iconic Court House building. Likewise, the Elmore County Economic Development Authority (ECEDA) can be a critical partner for downtown revitalization efforts.

Wetumpka Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber is the primary organization at the local level focused on business develop-

ment and it is housed downtown in a very significant historic building - a former bank. The Chamber is also in the process of pursuing the stabilization and rehabilitation of two deteriorating historic buildings adjoining the rear of the Chamber building.

Elmore County Historical Society

This non-profit organization promotes local history and historic preservation, and it operates an important downtown civic anchor - the Elmore County Museum.

Central Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission

CARPDC assists communities within their region with various planning initiatives, including this downtown planning project.

Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs

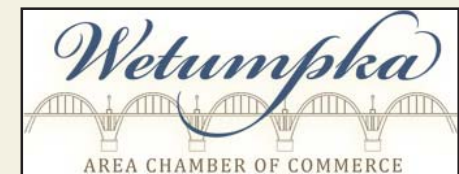
ADECA is a key funder of local community development projects, including their funding of this downtown planning project.

Alabama Historical Commission

AHC is the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and provides a broad range of preservation services to communities. AHC provides technical support to property owners seeking state and federal investment tax credits for historic building rehabilitations, and they can help Wetumpka become a Certified Local Government (CLG) if the City decides to pursue a formal historic preservation program (historic district, guidelines, commission, etc.).



Wetumpka is relatively small with respect to its population and financial resources to be able to establish a stand-alone downtown revitalization entity. However, the Wetumpka Chamber of Commerce is the most likely candidate to fill that role and to birth a downtown revitalization program at some point in the future.



PUBLIC INPUT

Public input is a critical component of any community planning project, as it is important that the ultimate plan reflects the perspectives and preferences of the area's stakeholders. Because of the public input that was achieved relatively recently as part of the 2012 downtown plan, a more abbreviated input process occurred for this particular plan. Below are the key elements:

Project Steering Committee:

The members of this group are listed in this plan's Acknowledgements page. They represent a broad range of perspectives, including public officials, property owners, business owners, and other stakeholder types. Their function is to provide input, communicate back to their constituent groups, provide direction for the project and plan, and promote the plan's adoption and implementation.

Meetings:

The following meetings were held:

- Committee Kick-Off Meeting - 8.16.13
- Public Kick-Off Meeting - 8.16.13
- Charrette Public Workshop - 11.4.13
- Charrette Committee Meeting - 11.5.13
- Concept Plan Public Presentation - 11.7.13
- Draft Plan Public Presentation - tbd

Public Comments Public Kick-Off Meeting: August 2, 2013

OPPORTUNITIES

- Lots of plans
- Alabama Historical Commission
- Leveraging the river and crater to bring in more visitors
- State recently passed legislation offering incentives for historic building rehabilitations
- Local tax incentives are in place
- Leveraging the park

CHALLENGES

- Poor cell phone service
- Lack of funding
- Creating an organization to incentivize businesses locating downtown
- Focusing on local businesses instead of chains
- Better communication with the City on this project
- Better communication in general
- Achieving timeless street details
- Getting owners to invest in buildings

Model Downtowns

Meeting participants were asked about other downtowns they had visited that might have some aspect worth immulating in Downtown Wetumpka, and the following models were offered:

- Madison, Georgia
- Hartselle, Alabama
- Fairhope, Alabama

- Sylacauga, Alabama
- Florence, Alabama
- Athens, Georgia

Specific issues noted included continuity of leadership for Fairhope, streetscape and public spaces for Sylacauga, and walkability and outdoor dining for Florence.

I. BACKGROUND

PUBLIC INPUT (continued)

On November 4, 2013, a public workshop was held, kicking off the first evening of a four-day charrette. A “charrette” is an intensive multi-day brainstorming process in which the public is actively engaged in creating a plan for a particular geographic area. The public workshop included the following key steps:

- 1) Participants were split into 8 teams of 8-10 people.** Participants included a broad range of downtown stakeholders (property owners, business owners, residents, public officials, etc.), as well citizens in general. Each team was assigned to a table.
- 2) Each team was given a base map of the study area, supporting information, and colored markers.** Supporting information included aerial photo maps, existing land use maps, and environmental constraints maps.
- 3) Each team developed a plan for the study area.** The teams were led through the process by the consultants by addressing specific issues in sequence.
- 4) All participants reconvened and presented their plans.** Following the presentations, the consultants identified common denominators among the plans.



KEY IDEAS

Although there were numerous ideas generated by the participants, below are some of the most popular ideas presented:

- Roundabouts at key intersections
- Riverfront amphitheatre
- Farmers market / antique mall
- Riverfront restaurants
- Extend greenway to Ft. Toulouse
- Preserve historic buildings
- Housing (upper floors & new bldgs.)
- Redeveloped streetscapes
- More retail and dining options





II. PLAN OVERVIEW

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Once all of the background research has occurred for a downtown and riverfront plan, an intermediate step is necessary before the actual planning process can begin. Before launching into specific ideas for a plan, a much more general set of ideas should be developed. By creating a set of broad goals or “principles” for the plan, consensus building can typically occur more readily. Once stakeholders agree on the most basic ideas, more specific ideas on how to achieve those ideas can be explored, evaluated, and decided upon.

Based upon the public input that preceded the creation of this plan for Wetumpka, including the 2012 planning process, a set of principles were created. These principles, listed at right, were presented to the public during the charrette public workshop and confirmed as accurately representing the collective perspectives and preferences of study area’s many stakeholders. They will serve as the foundation of this plan.

- 1) **Preserve and enhance historic and natural resources – especially the river.**
- 2) **Land uses should be diverse and physically integrated - horizontally and vertically.**
- 3) **Buildings should have a human scale.**
- 4) **Downtown’s architectural past should be respected.**
- 5) **Provide inter-connected streets that are pedestrian-friendly (“complete”).**
- 6) **Streetscapes should be attractive, safe and interesting.**
- 7) **Accommodate parking without degrading downtown’s appearance/function.**
- 8) **Provide a generous amount of public space in a variety of forms (events).**
- 9) **Offer a variety of housing alternatives - by types and cost.**
- 10) **Provide a rich mixture of shopping, dining, entertainment, etc.**
- 11) **Offer a variety of civic, cultural, educational and recreational opportunities.**
- 12) **Create an environment that will allow businesses to succeed.**

II. PLAN OVERVIEW

PROPOSED LAND USES, FORM & CHARACTER

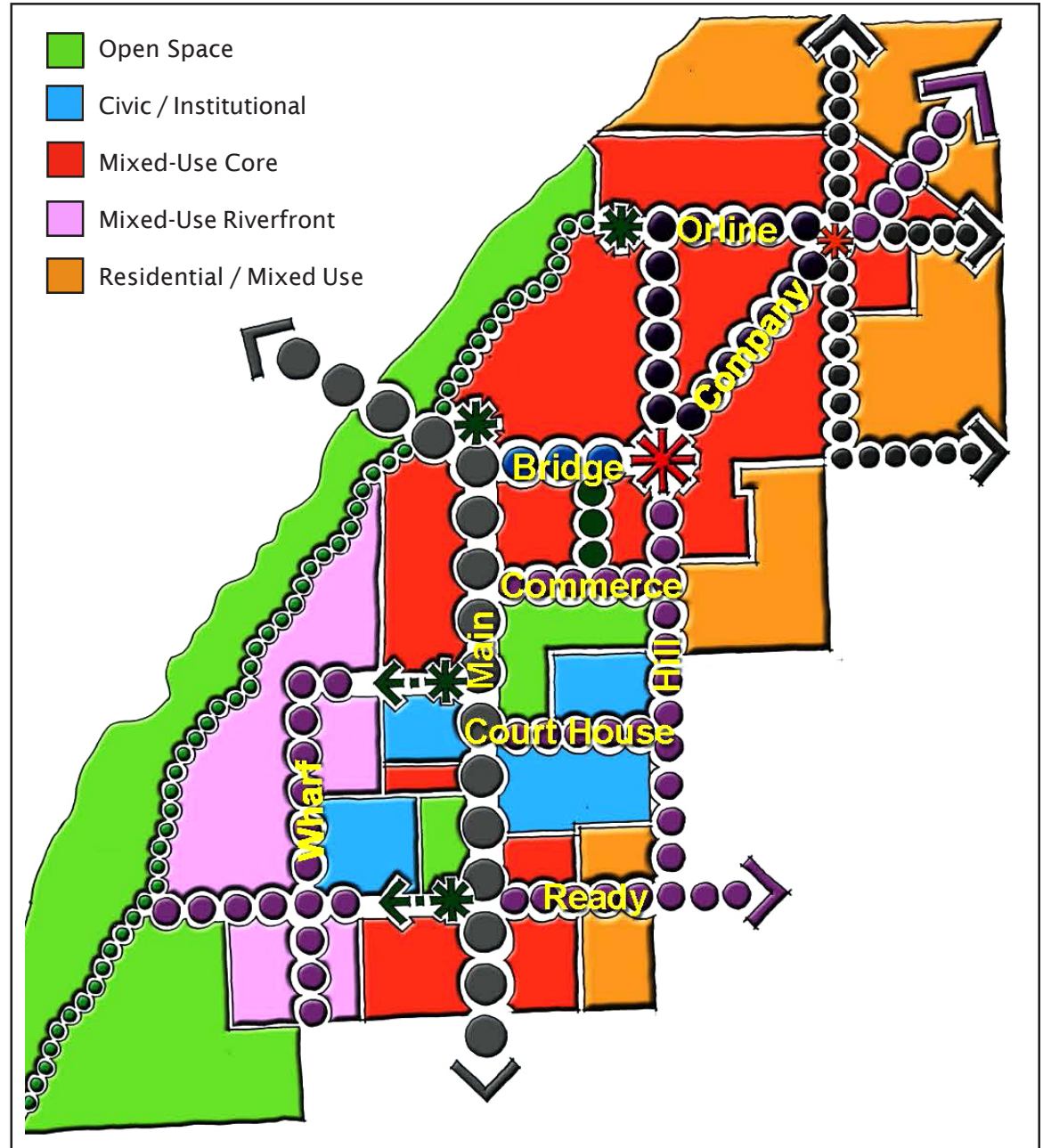
The plan map at right illustrates the proposed land uses, physical form and character for the overall study area. The categories assigned to each area feature a combination of considerations rather than solely land use. While three of these categories propose a mixture of land uses, each mixed use category has a particular predominant land use and/or character. Existing streets and the riverfront trail are also highlighted on the map at right. Below is an overview of each of the five areas illustrated here:

Open Space

There are three areas depicted as being essentially undeveloped as public open space, although improvements either already exist or should exist to make them more user-friendly (paved surfaces for walking, parking, seating, landscaping, lighting, etc.). The three areas include the riverfront, the lawn on the north and west sides of the Court House, and the lawn fronting City Hall and Library on Main Street.

Civic / Institutional

Not surprisingly, the governmental and similar civic areas highlighted in blue are often spatially associated with the open space described above. These areas include the City



II. PLAN OVERVIEW

Hall and Library, the County complex, and the Elmore County Museum on Main Street. While these three areas are not the only properties within the downtown that are civic in nature, other such properties are smaller in scale and physically integrated within the other mixed-use areas that are dominated by other uses and building forms.

Mixed-Use Core

Highlighted on the map on the previous page with red color-coding, this area constitutes the traditional mixed use downtown portion of the study area that is relatively central to the area geographically. Although it is predominantly commercial in both building types and existing uses, there are some residential and institutional uses within this context. The ground floor street frontage is dominated by commercial storefronts, and most of the buildings are clad in brick and old enough to be considered historic (50 years or older). Most of the buildings are either one or two stories in height, with two being three stories - the Chamber-occupied former bank and the former hotel.

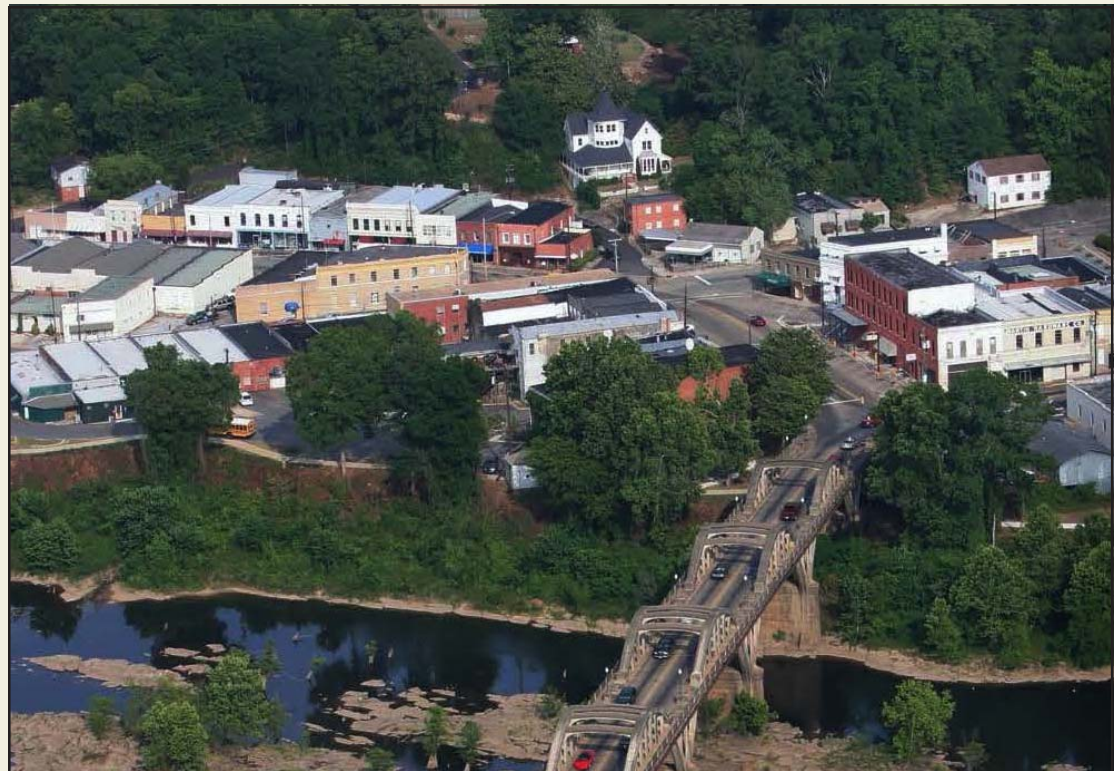
Mixed-Use Riverfront

Although current land uses and development do not strongly reflect the concept for this area, it is intended to serve as a transitional area between the riverfront Open Space area and Mixed-Use Core for lands located

south of the bridge. This area should take advantage of riverfront views and proximity with uses such as outdoor dining, kayak rentals, and similar uses.

Residential / Mixed Use

This area defines the downtown's north and east boundaries where the topography steepens on the east. An increase in housing units is critical to downtown's economy.



This photograph illustrates four of the five sub-areas delineated on the previous page's map. Along the river's edge in the foreground is the Open Space area. Just to the right of the bridge is the northerly corner of the Mixed-Use Riverfront area. Beyond the riverfront area and occupying most of the photo is the Mixed-Use Core. In the far background is the Residential / Mixed Use area. The green areas in the foreground and background also reveal where steep topography exists that creates a natural boundary for the east and west edges of the downtown.



III. PHYSICAL PLAN

III. PHYSICAL PLAN

URBAN DESIGN PLAN

“Urban design” is the collective layout and three-dimensional design of the most fundamental components of an urban environment, including streets, parking areas, public spaces, and buildings. While many of the components of this urban design plan have non-design facets, below is a summary of each and a reference to pages for details.

Street Intersection Improvements

Streetscape improvements are often a measure that needs to be phased in over time as funds become available. However, one relatively “quick fix” is to focus on street intersections, as their transformations can greatly improve a downtown’s aesthetics and pedestrian-friendliness. The four most significant proposed intersection redesigns are: 1) Commerce & Main to connect to the proposed plaza on the west side of the Court House; 2) Commerce & Court as an extension of the existing plaza on the north side of the Court House; 3) Bridge, Hill & Company - the most significant intersection in the downtown; and 4) Company & Orline, with a proposed roundabout.

Street Redesigns

Key streets such as Bridge, Main, Court, Hill and Company should be redesigned to maximize on-street parking and to enhance the streetscapes to be more pedestrian-



friendly. Main is proposed to feature a landscaped median to greatly improve the street’s appearance and function.

Stronger Connections from Downtown to the Riverfront

The best opportunity exists at Commerce Street, which seemingly ends on its apparent western end at Main Street, but then continues further west along a different alignment to Wharf Street from Main where it features a “dog leg” at Main. It is proposed that the segment of Commerce between Main and Wharf be redesigned to feel more like a formal urban street, including having a strong pedestrian orientation. It would connect from Main to the Court House via a new plaza and paved pedestrian walkway.

Enhancement of Court House Lawn

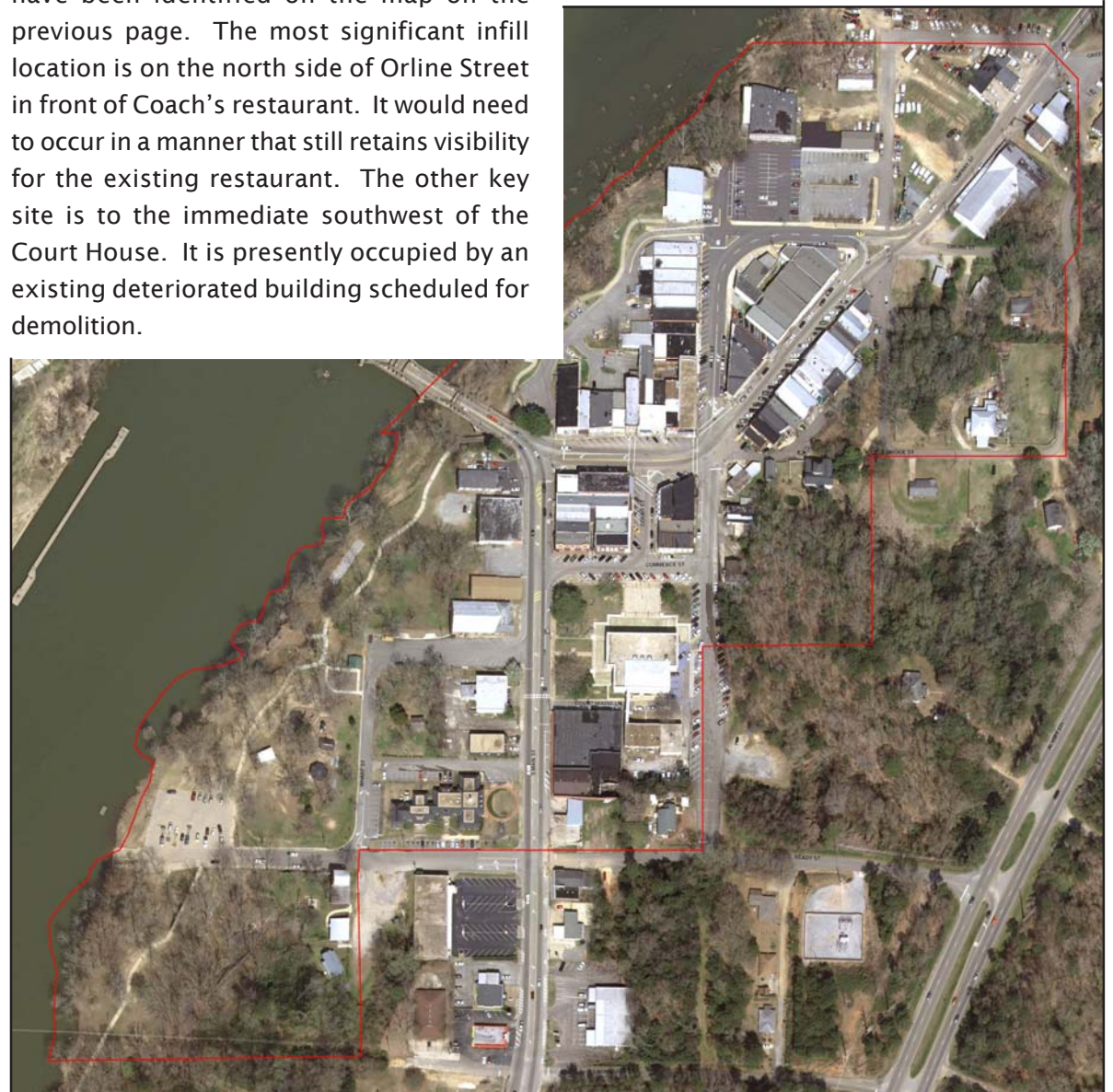
It is proposed that a plaza and fountain be added to the west side of the Court House with a paved pathway that extends west to Main and continues west to Wharf Street as part of a redeveloped Commerce Street.

Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings

Relative to new “infill” construction, it is recommended that the rehabilitation of existing historic buildings be the top priority. There is too much existing vacant space to warrant new development, and without subsidations it is not financially viable at present.

Compatible Infill Buildings

A few key opportunities for infill development have been identified on the map on the previous page. The most significant infill location is on the north side of Orlene Street in front of Coach’s restaurant. It would need to occur in a manner that still retains visibility for the existing restaurant. The other key site is to the immediate southwest of the Court House. It is presently occupied by an existing deteriorated building scheduled for demolition.



III. PHYSICAL PLAN

URBAN DESIGN PLAN - RENDERING



STREET INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

Summary of Key Intersections

Even if streetscape improvements for the full length of key downtown streets is not financially viable within the immediate future, improvements at key street intersections can make a tremendous improvement for aesthetics and pedestrian-friendliness. The four most significant proposed redesign of intersections are (see identifying numbers on map at right):

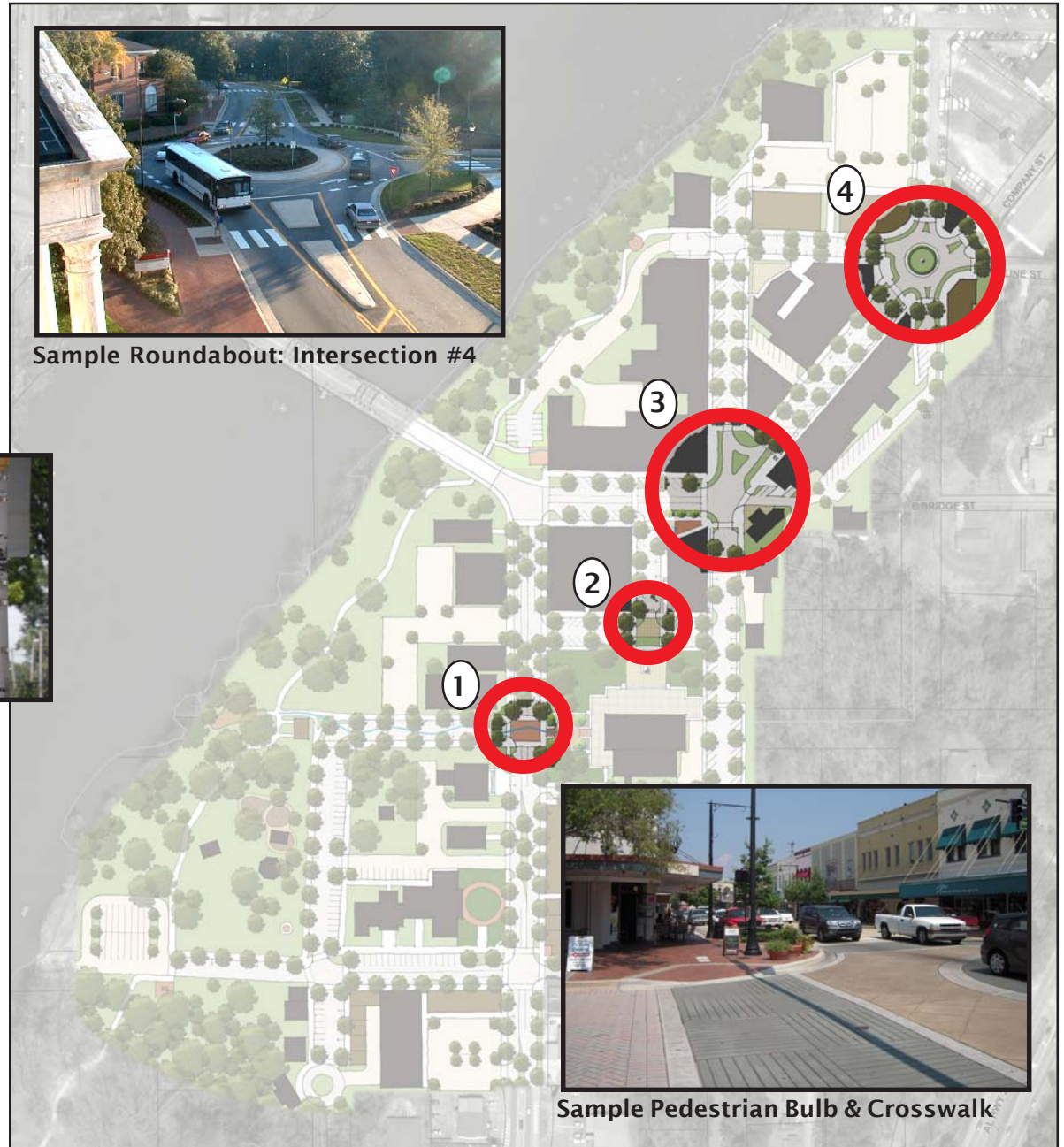
- 1) Commerce & Main
- 2) Commerce & Court
- 3) Bridge, Hill & Company
- 4) Company & Orlin



Crossing Signal

Design Interventions

- *Pedestrian bulbs* - will protect the end parked vehicles and will decrease the street crossing distance.
- *Tighter curb radii (where pedestrian bulbs are not used)* - will slow down turning movements for “traffic calming” benefits.
- *Crosswalks* - will delineate where pedestrians cross and slow traffic (drivers will feel the different paving treatment under their tires).
- *Pedestrian crossing signals* - will clarify safe times to cross streets.



Sample Roundabout: Intersection #4

Sample Pedestrian Bulb & Crosswalk

III. PHYSICAL PLAN

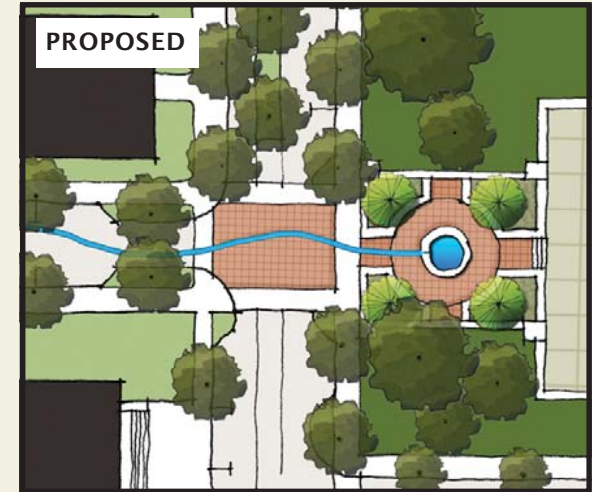
STREET INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

COMMERCE & MAIN

This intersection needs to provide a stronger visual connection between the proposed plaza on the west side of the Court House and the riverfront. The proposal is to:

- Provide a special paving design within the intersection.
- Extend an artistic statement from the proposed plaza fountain toward the riverfront.

The special pavers in the intersection will serve essentially as a large pedestrian crosswalk. See [page 44](#) for more on the associated plaza's design.



COMMERCE & COURT

This intersection needs enhanced pedestrian safety and a visual connection between the existing plaza on the north side of the Court House and the proposed redeveloped Court Street, which can double as a public street when vehicular traffic is precluded during special events. The proposal is to:

- Provide a special paving design within the intersection.
- Add pedestrian bulbs (north side of Commerce only) and crosswalks.

See [page 45](#) for more on the proposed improvements for Court Street.



STREET INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS (continued)

BRIDGE, HILL & COMPANY

This intersection needs to provide clearer routing for vehicles, safety for pedestrians, and have greater visual prominence given its important location. A traffic roundabout was considered, but there is insufficient right-of-way (ROW) space. Thus, the proposal is to:

- Enhance corners with pedestrian bulbs and crosswalks.
- Create a pedestrian space in front of the Chamber with special pavers and an iconic statement (sculpture, etc.).
- Consider providing a special paving design within the intersection.*



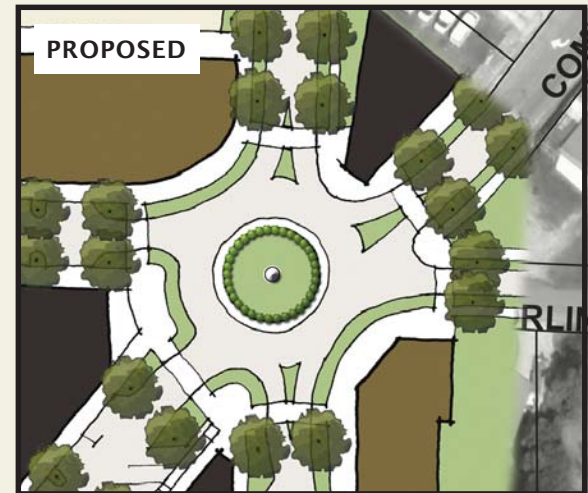
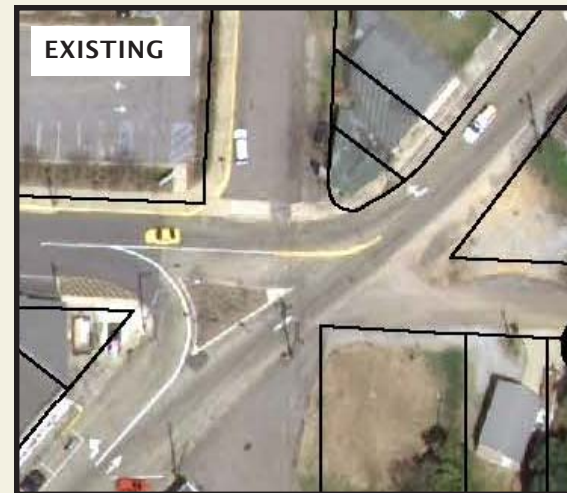
* This is a low priority, so it is not depicted above.

COMPANY & ORLINE

This intersections needs greater definition for drivers and a sense of arrival to the Downtown. Consequently, a traffic roundabout is proposed because it will:

- Clean up this intersection by providing better definition of traffic flow for drivers.
- Provide a gateway landmark to orient visitors.

The roundabout could be designed to make a strong visual statement by including public art or a fountain. See page 31 for a photograph of a sample roundabout.



III. PHYSICAL PLAN

KEY STREET IMPROVEMENTS

Summary of Key Streets

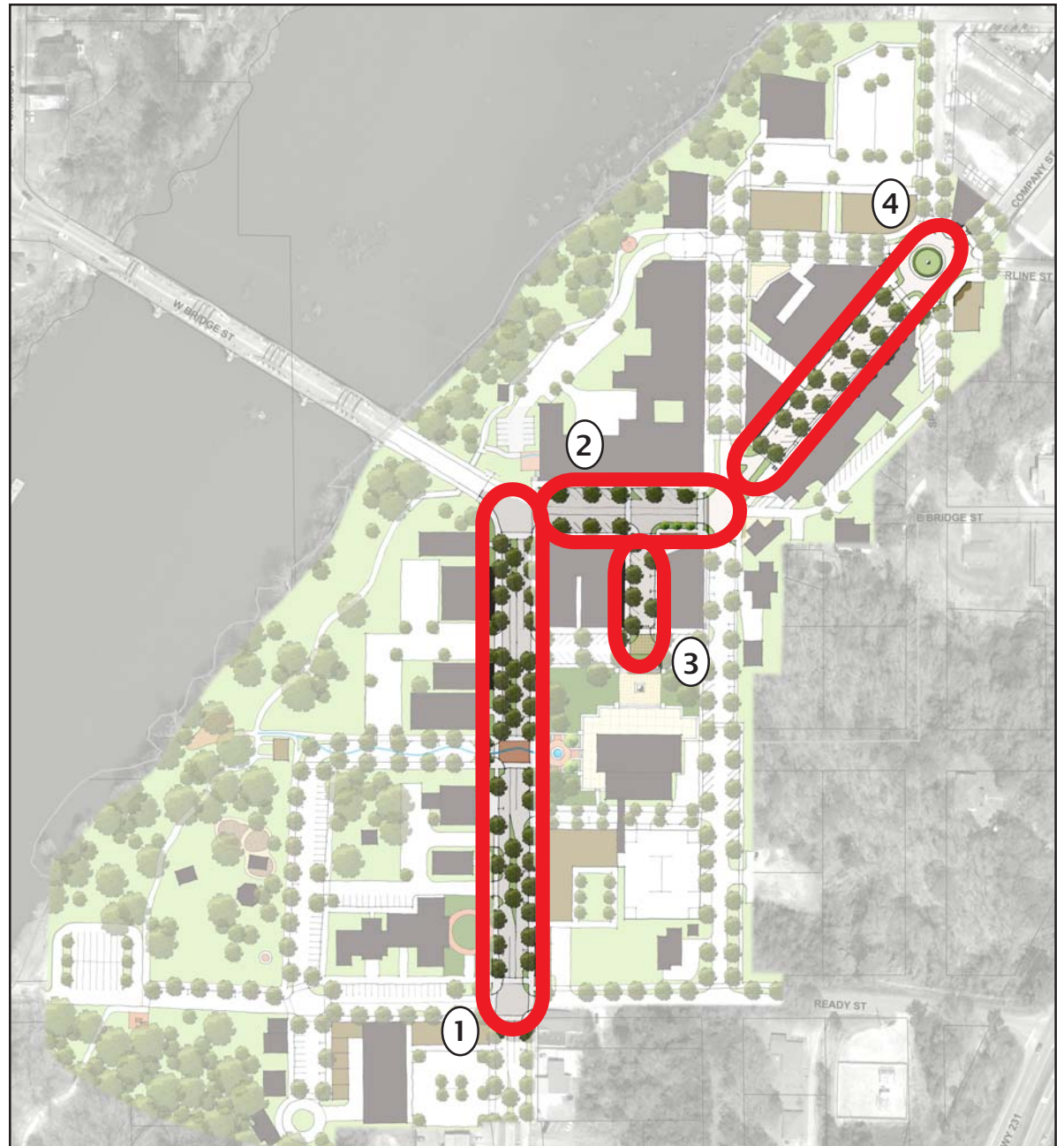
Downtown Wetumpka has several different streets, and an ideal scenario would allow for the physical enhancement of all of them. However, given the reality of limited funding, it is recommended that the greatest priority be placed on four streets in particular (see identifying numbers on the map at right - they do not indicate a priority ranking):

- 1) Main Street
- 2) Bridge Street
- 3) Court Street
- 4) Company Street

Design Principles

The following principles have been applied to the recommended street improvements on the next four pages:

- *Maximize On-Street Parking* - Provide angled parking where possible, and parallel parking where space limitations require.
- *Avoid Excessively Wide Driving Lanes and Unnecessary Turn Lanes* - Asphalt should only exist where needed for vehicles.
- *Minimize the Frequency and Width of Driveways* - Driveways disrupt pedestrian safety and streetscape aesthetics.
- *Provide Sidewalks and Street Trees as Needed* - Put pedestrians on an even footing with cars.

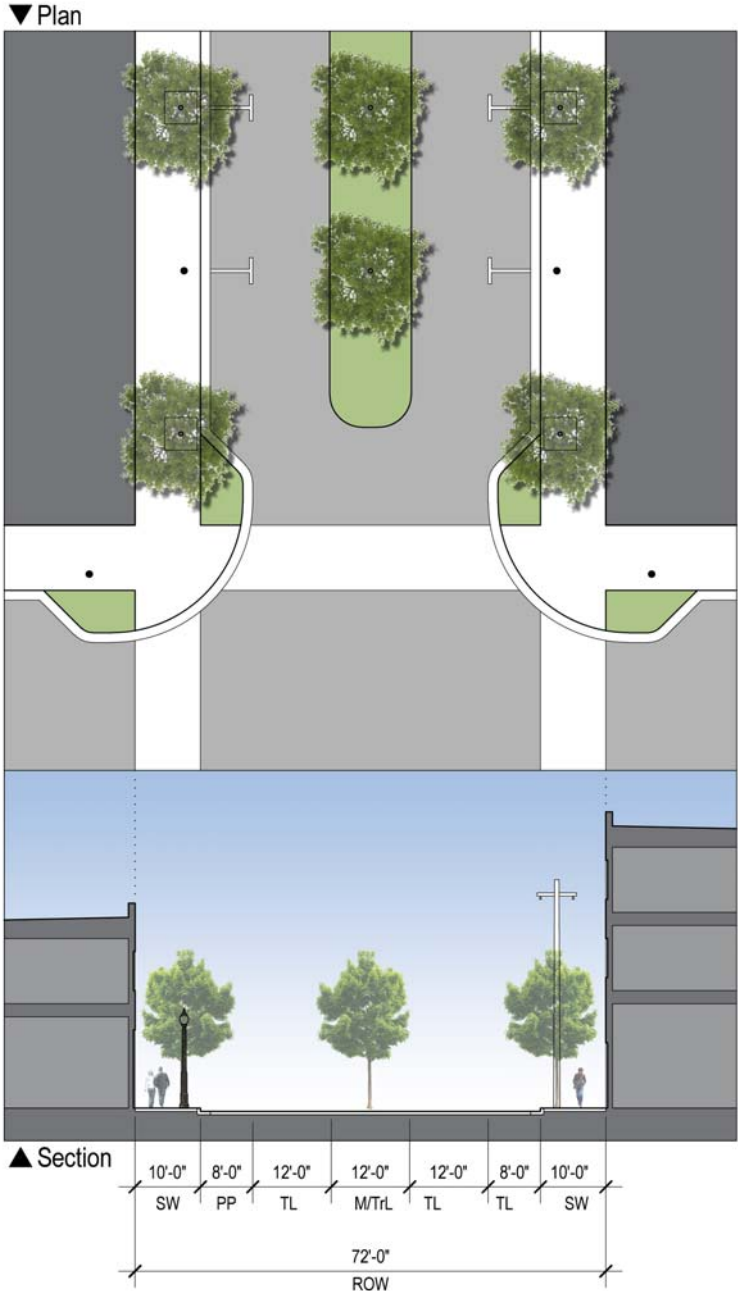
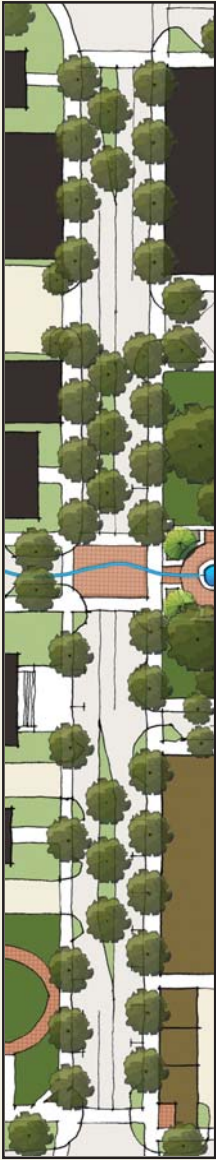


III. PHYSICAL PLAN

KEY STREET IMPROVEMENTS: MAIN STREET

Recommended physical enhancements to Main Street include the following:

- Landscaped median where the continuous turn lane is not needed
- Pedestrian bulbs at intersections and an expansive crosswalk at the proposed new Court House plaza
- Sidewalks and street trees everywhere except at cross streets and necessary existing driveways
- Human-scaled historic looking street lights

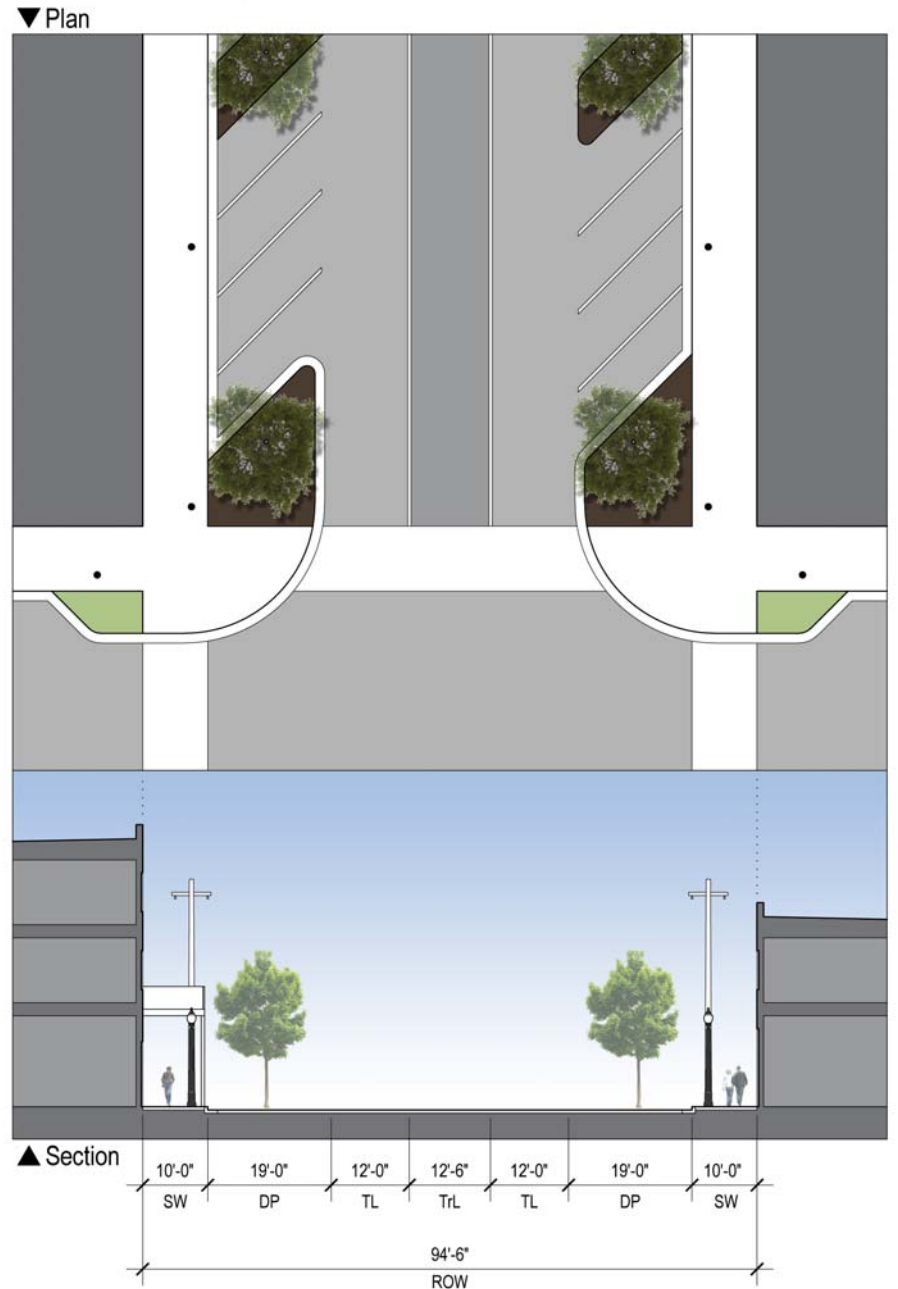
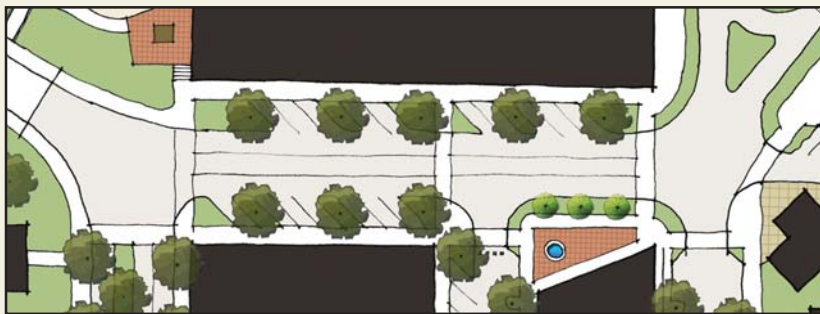


III. PHYSICAL PLAN

KEY STREET IMPROVEMENTS: BRIDGE STREET

Recommended physical enhancements to Bridge Street include the following:

- Retain angled on-street parking
- Human-scaled historic looking street lighting
- Pedestrian bulbs at intersections and curbed landscape projections with street trees (see [page 39](#) for more details)
- Pedestrian crosswalks at all street intersections
- Consider a specialty paver for the central turn lane

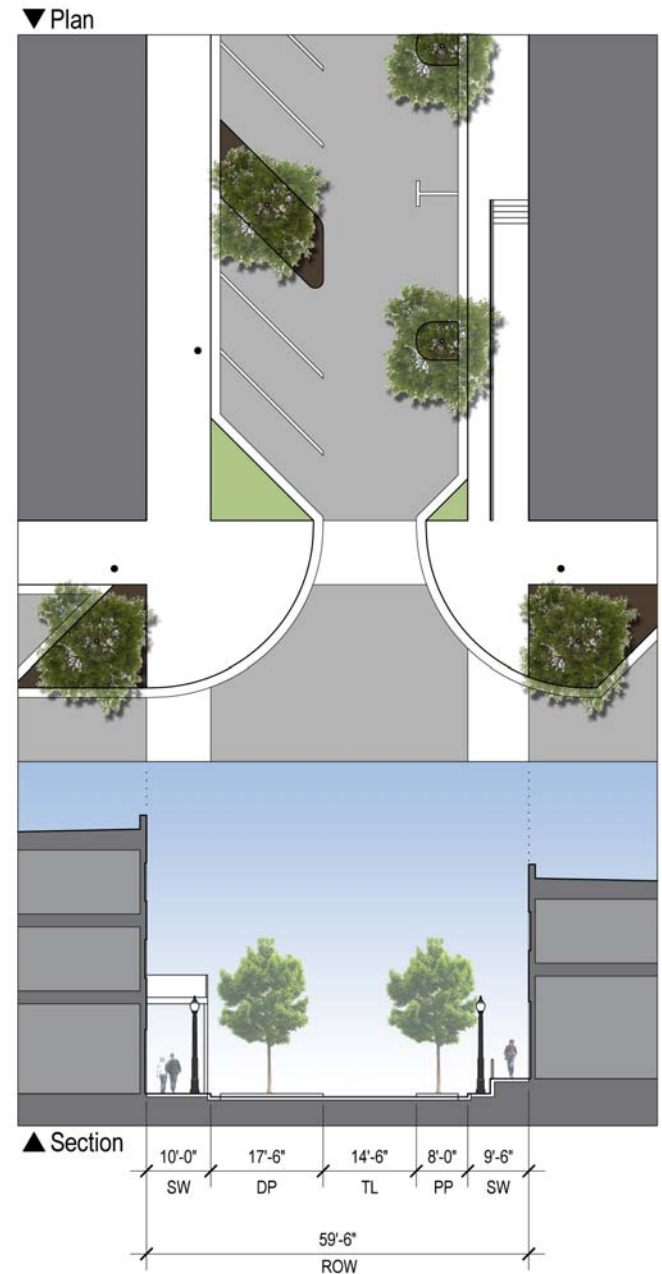
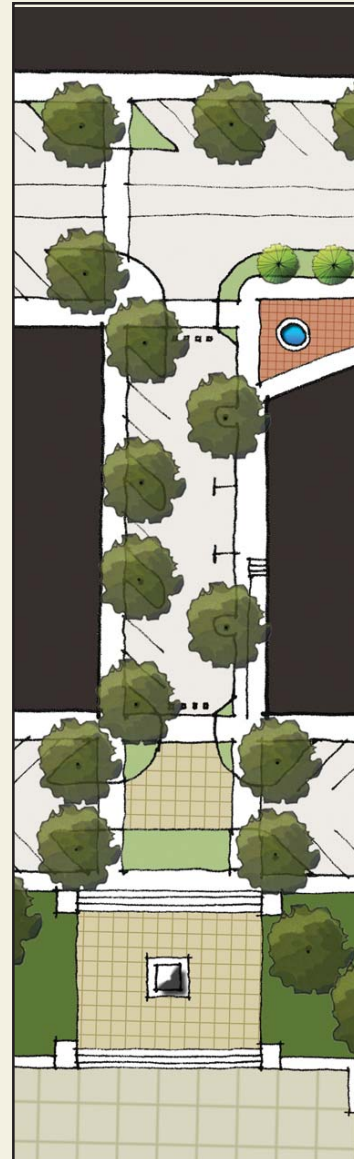


III. PHYSICAL PLAN

KEY STREET IMPROVEMENTS: COURT STREET

More than any other street in the downtown, Court Street should have a very strong pedestrian orientation. This idea was proposed in the 2012 plan and continues to make sense. While this plan does not recommend the prohibition of vehicular traffic on a regular basis, it should be an option for special events and perhaps during select days and evenings if closely monitored for impacts on businesses. Recommended improvements include:

- Retention of current on-street parking alignments
- Human-scaled historic looking street lighting
- Pedestrian bulbs at intersections and curbed landscape projections with street trees (see [page 39](#) for more details)
- Sidewalk improvements as needed to address grade changes (see [page 41](#) for details)
- Pedestrian crosswalks at both street intersections
- Removable bollards for both ends of street (see [page 45](#) for more on Court as a public space)



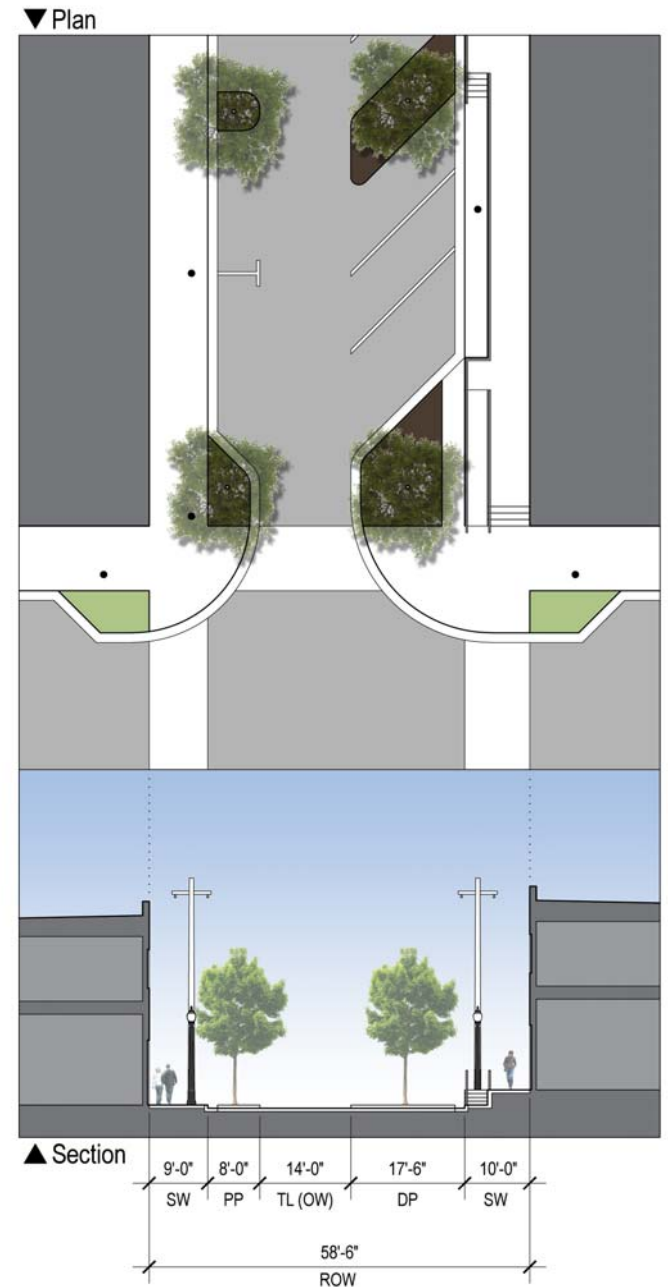
III. PHYSICAL PLAN

KEY STREET IMPROVEMENTS: COMPANY STREET

Recommended physical enhancements to Company Street include the following:

- Retention of the current parking alignments
- Human-scaled historic looking street lighting
- Pedestrian bulbs at both intersections (Bridge and Orlin Streets) and curbed landscape projections with street trees (see [page 39](#) for more details)
- Sidewalk improvements as needed to address grade changes (see [page 41](#))
- Pedestrian crosswalks at street intersections

The idea of converting this street to two-way traffic flow was explored but deemed not viable for a variety of reasons.



STREETSCAPES

Streetscape Objectives

Streetscape improvements for Downtown Wetumpka should further the following objectives:

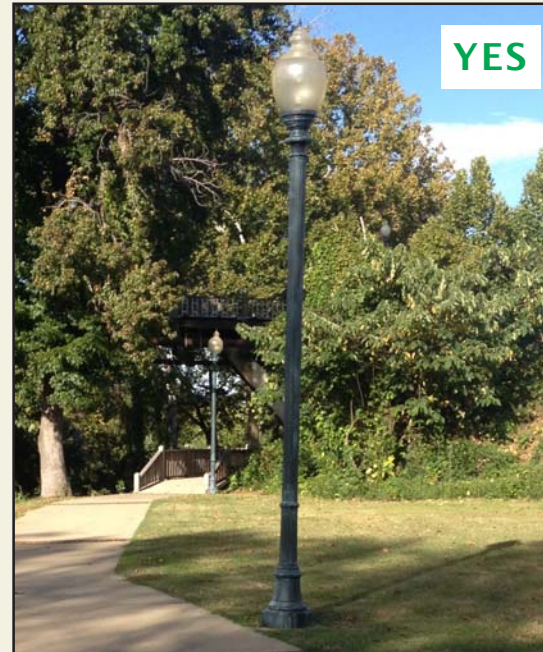
- Easy pedestrian and handicapped access
- Shade and shelter from the weather
- Attractive appearance
- Reinforcement of historic character

The previous several pages have addressed street intersections and overall street improvements. Those pages have already addressed most streetscape issues, including driving lanes, parking lanes, intersection pedestrian bulbs, crosswalks, sidewalk dimensions, landscaping and lighting. This section elaborates on the proposed curbed projections for street trees (below), streetscape furnishings (at right), and sidewalk paving and grade issues (both on the following two pages). See Appendices A for information on potential costs of burying overhead utilities.



Downtown Northport, Alabama, provides a good model for the curbed projections for street trees recommended for Wetumpka.

STREETSCAPE FURNISHINGS



The existing lighting along Wetumpka's riverfront trail should be used throughout the entire downtown.



The existing trash receptacles (above) should be replaced with a more historic style.



While the particular style of bench is not critical, it should be consistent, comfortable, durable, and have a generally traditional character.



III. PHYSICAL PLAN

STREETSCAPES (continued)

Paving Design & Materials

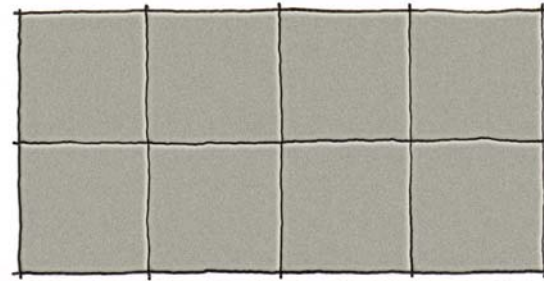
Paving treatments offer one vehicle for tying together a diverse range of architecture into a more visually cohesive district. This page contrasts existing paving features with proposed paving.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

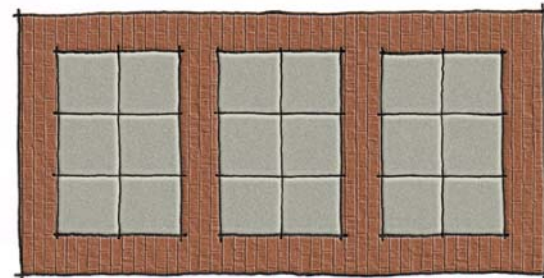
The photographs at right illustrate a range of paving materials and conditions. The top image reveals a patchwork quilt of concrete that has experienced various repairs over time. The middle image features a segment of all brick sidewalks along Main. The bottom photo shows a reliance upon paint striping alone to delineate pedestrian crosswalks, as opposed to brick pavers used in many downtowns.



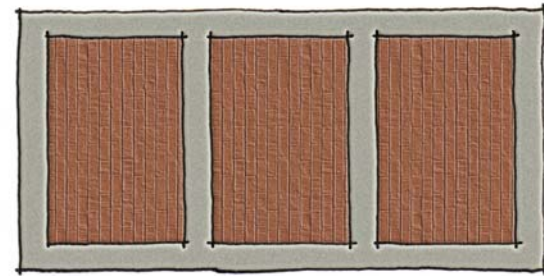
PROPOSED PAVING OPTIONS



Option A: All Concrete



Option B: Concrete with Brick Accenting



Option C: Brick with Concrete Accenting

This alternative is clearly the most cost-effective and might be used for less traveled streets peripheral to the downtown's core, such as Orlin and Hill.

By offering a relatively even mix of concrete and brick, this option allows for some use of the richer material, without incurring the costs of all brick.

This third option uses the highest percentage of brick and might be reserved for the most pedestrian-intensive streets, such as Bridge, Court and Company Streets.

STREETSCAPES (continued)

Grade Issues

One “wrinkle” for any streetscape plan is a grade challenge that requires steps and ramping for accessibility. Two areas in particular that feature such challenges are on the east side of Court Street and the southwest side of Company Street. Design interventions for such areas are offered here.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The treatment here on Company Street includes a stepped system for most of the street frontage (see far left in photo). At a few points it also includes a ramp and a rather unattractive rail, as illustrated for most of the frontage.



Company Street - Downtown Wetumpka

MODELS

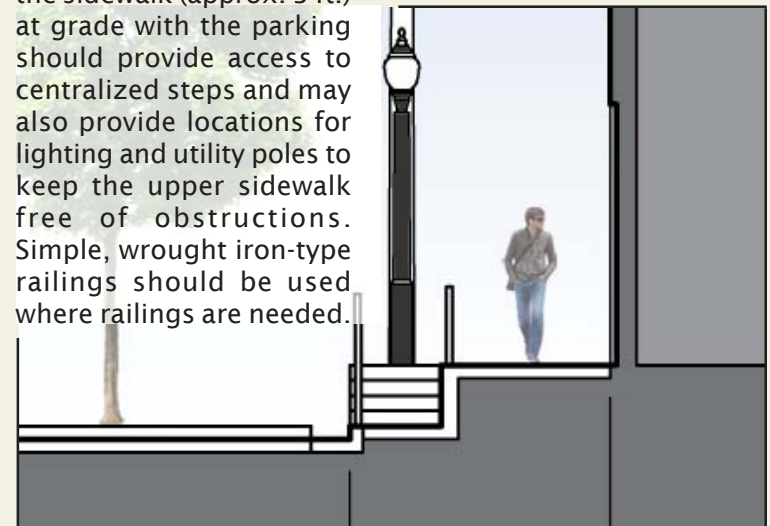
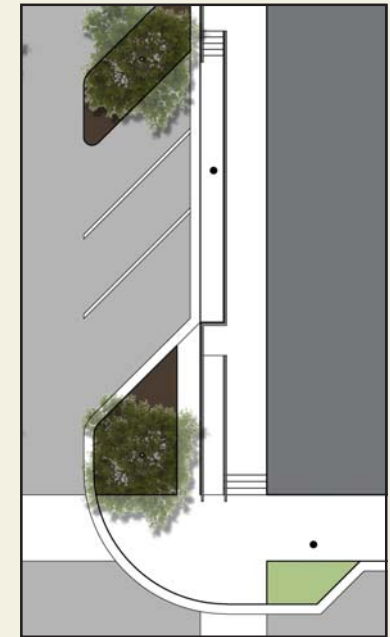
Auburn and Opelika offer models for the grade issue. Rather than using expansive stepped areas across the street frontage as on Company Street, these models limit the steps to key points and also feature more attractive rails.



Railroad Avenue - Downtown Opelika, AL

PROPOSED DESIGN

Right: On-street accessible spaces should be near intersections with direct, protected access to crosswalks and sidewalks. Needed ramps should be near intersections when possible. *Below:* Existing sidewalks are about 10 ft. wide. If this width cannot be increased in order to maintain on-street parking, care must be taken to address grade changes. For example, the width of the sidewalk adjacent to buildings should be maximized (approx. 7 ft.). The remaining portion of the sidewalk (approx. 3 ft.) at grade with the parking should provide access to centralized steps and may also provide locations for lighting and utility poles to keep the upper sidewalk free of obstructions. Simple, wrought iron-type railings should be used where railings are needed.



III. PHYSICAL PLAN

PUBLIC SPACES

Overview

Public spaces are a critical element of any successful downtown and riverfront area as a means of providing venues for events and leisure activity, as well as urban design focal points that help to orient visitors. Below is a list of key public spaces in the study area, and the associated numbers are labeled on the map at right.

- 1) Goldstar Park & Riverwalk
- 2) City Hall Lawn
- 3) Court House Lawn
- 4) Court Street & New Plaza

The following pages feature recommendations for their enhancement.

Propose Trailheads

Trailheads are locations along a greenway (or “trail”) where access to the trail occurs from a street or some other public right-of-way. They are often enhanced with features such as informational kiosks, benches, water fountains, parking lots, and restrooms. Most trailheads are much more “Spartan” and have only a few such features, if any. Although the topic of the existing Riverwalk is addressed on the following page, proposed trailhead locations are illustrated on the map at right.



PUBLIC SPACES (continued)

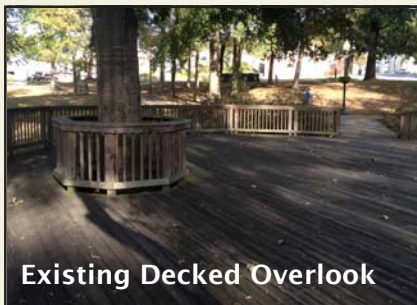
GOLDSTAR PARK & RIVERWALK

Goldstar Park is the existing riverfront park that extends behind the City Hall and the Riverwalk traverses the full length of the study area's riverfront. The Riverwalk consists of a well-maintained and lighted concrete trail with boardwalks and bridges at several points to cross low points and ravines where ever they occur. There are other various improvements, including an expansive decked overlook, restrooms and similar features. The following recommendations are offered:

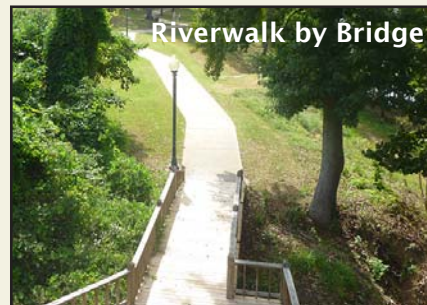
- Improve maintenance of the existing public restrooms and redesign the exterior to create a civic-looking visual focal point. Relocating the restrooms building is another option to open river views.
- Develop the trailheads with kiosks and benches as designated on the map on the previous page.
- Extend the Riverwalk south all of the way to Fort Toulouse.
- Strengthen the linkage between the park and Riverwalk and the balance of the downtown via the leg of Commerce Street between Main and the riverfront (see the following page for more detail).



Model Trailhead



Existing Decked Overlook



Riverwalk by Bridge

CITY HALL LAWN

Although there are two primary administrative offices for the City of Wetumpka - both on the west side of Main Street - the ceremonial City Hall and adjoining public library is located on the northwest corner of Ready and Main Streets. The existing front lawn is relatively undeveloped and features some historic styled lights, a few benches, and a circular shaped brick pathway. Although this area reads on a map as a public space, its small scale and frontage directly on a segment of Main Street that feels like a highway will likely always preclude its extensive use by the public. No significant changes are proposed, but the symbolic importance of this space will always call for a high level of maintenance.



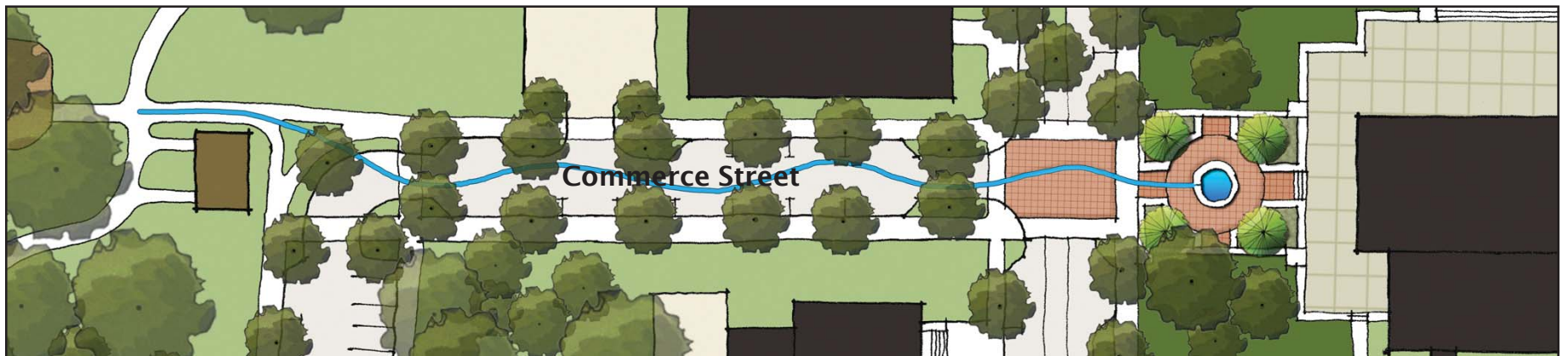
Existing City Hall & Lawn

III. PHYSICAL PLAN

PUBLIC SPACES (continued)

COURT HOUSE LAWN

The west side lawn of the Court House is presently designed in a manner that contributes very little to the aesthetics and function of the downtown (see photo at top right). It is proposed that a hardscaped plaza be developed as illustrated in the graphic at the bottom of this page. The plaza would be anchored by a fountain and a slightly raised intersection with brick pavers to draw attention to the area, slow drivers, and create a stronger visual link with an improved Commerce Street as it extends west from Main Street toward the riverfront. As revealed by the graphic below, an artistic statement might be used to symbolically link the fountain's water with the river's water by using a wavy blue line or a similar treatment.



PUBLIC SPACES (continued)

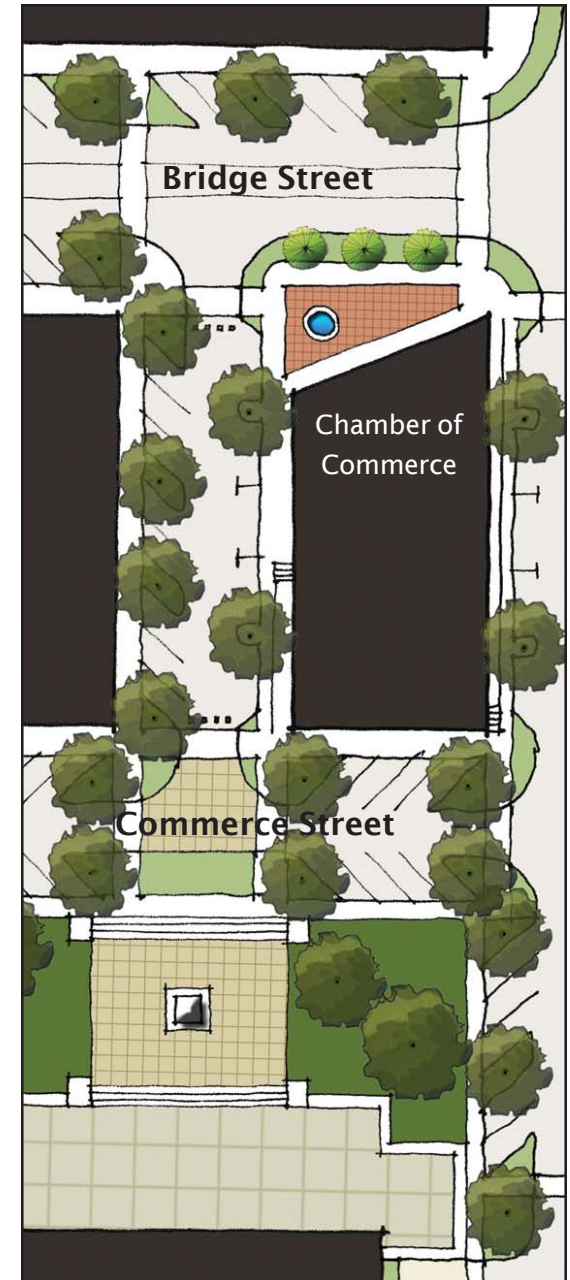
COURT STREET & NEW PLAZA

One major idea from the 2012 downtown plan was to transform Court Street into a much more pedestrian-oriented space. That idea has been expanded upon here. While it is proposed that the existing on-street parking remain, new street trees and redeveloped sidewalks would occur. The south end of the street would be anchored by a slightly raised intersection with special pavers, and the north end would feature a new small plaza in front of the Chamber offices. This new pedestrian space would be created from space currently used by vehicles. Although it is not recommended that the street be permanently closed to

traffic, removable bollards could be occasionally installed during special events. Also, the new plaza in front of the Chamber might feature public art, such as an obelisk, as a focal point (see the design at right).



Court Street is a relatively narrow one-way street that will need to remain so, but should be much more pedestrian-oriented.



Clarksville, Tennessee's, monthly "Jammin in the Alley" event occurs in a space similar in scale to Court Street. It attracts hundreds of participants and raises funds for revitalization.



Removable or retractable bollards can be used at both ends of Court during special events to block off traffic.

III. PHYSICAL PLAN

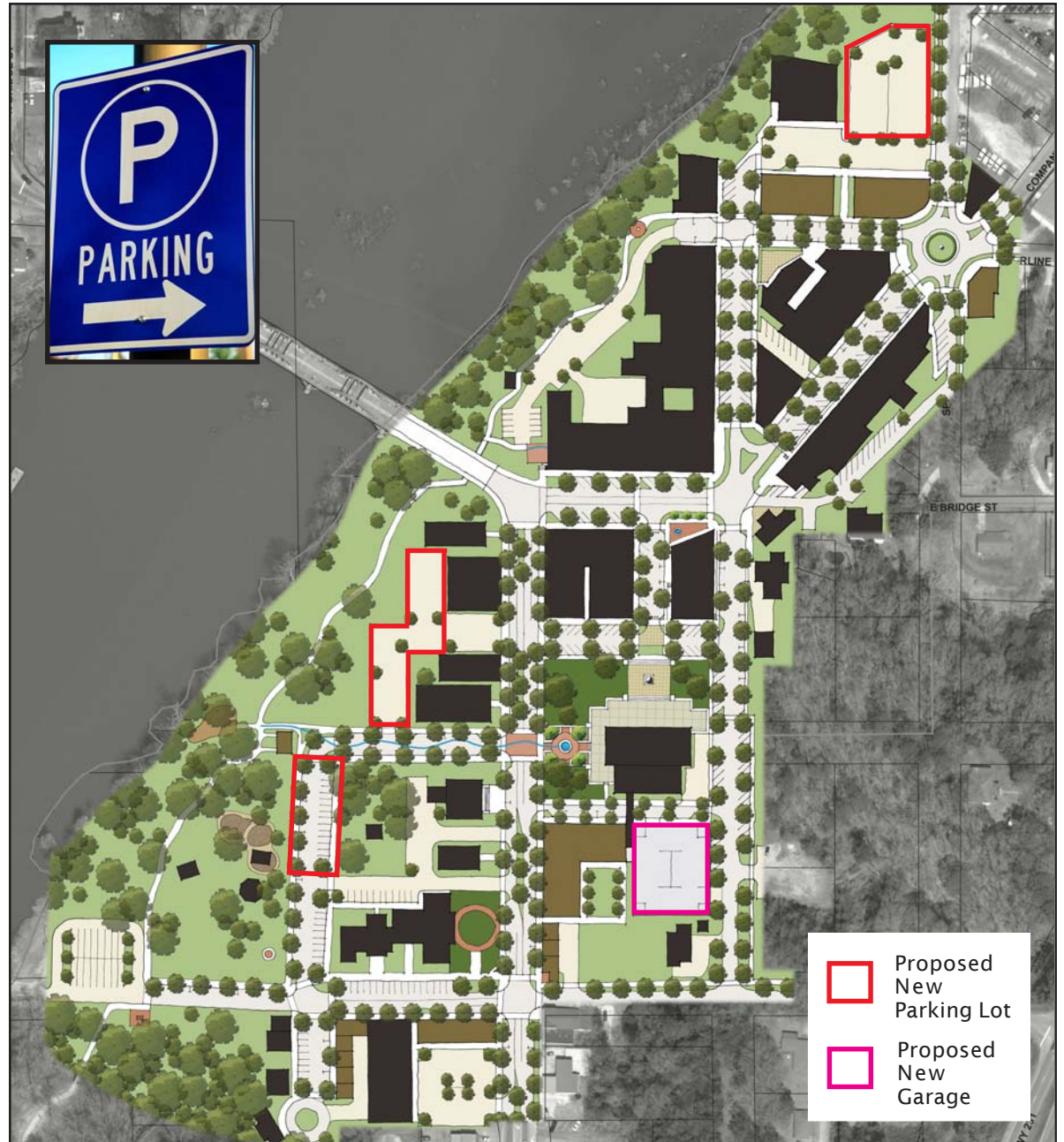
PARKING

Whether a true parking undersupply exists or not, the issue of parking is always a key issue for any downtown. For those downtowns lacking a parking problem, getting one is typically an inadvertent goal, as that means the downtown is economically prosperous. Consequently, it is a primary goal of this plan to ensure that parking is available to serve the needs of downtown patrons in the optimal locations.

On-Street Parking

This plan's previous section on "Key Street Improvements" on [pages 34-38](#) addresses the location and design of on street parking. As reflected there, on-street parking should be provided along any street frontages that will accommodate it. Furthermore, where street widths allow for angled parking, it should occur to maximize the number of spaces, with parallel parking being the fallback.

At present, no parking management is occurring. This situation may not currently be a problem. However, as revitalization success is achieved and parking demands increase, management will be needed. Management does not require parking meters, but it should require that vehicles be limited to two to three hours for on-street



III. PHYSICAL PLAN

PARKING (continued)

parking. In the meantime, the merchants should ensure that they and their employees are not parking on-street so that shoppers have convenient parking.



Parking Lots

The enhancement of off-street parking lots is recommended, as such changes would enhance the overall customer experience and increase the likelihood of repeat visits. Below are examples of measures that can enhance parking lots:

- Relocate and screen dumpsters.
- Provide landscaping and shade trees any-

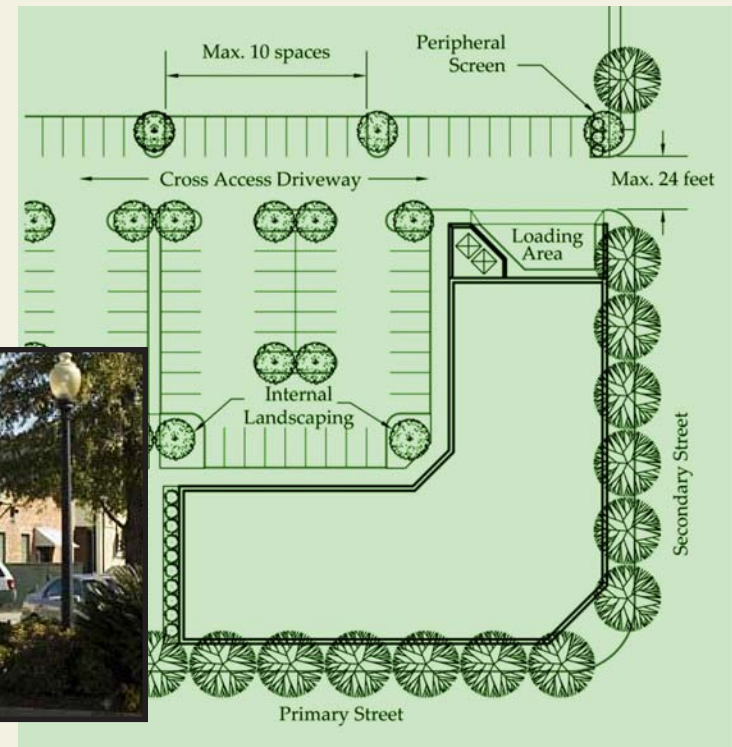
where that vehicles are not intended to drive.

- Provide human-scaled lighting to increase safety and perceptions of safety.
- Clearly delineate parking stalls with paint-striping to maximize efficiencies and the number of stalls.
- Enhance the connections between parking areas and streets with lighting and other improvements.

- Provide directional signage to parking areas along key streets, such as Bridge, Main and Company Streets.

Of course, parking lots should always be located behind buildings, when possible. When parking lots face streets, it should be secondary streets, and lots should be visually screened through landscaping, low fencing, and/or low walls. The site plan below illustrates these concepts.

The sample site plan at right and the photograph below illustrate how to properly screen the periphery of a parking lot and enhance the interiors with landscaping and lighting. Corner parking lots should also be accessed off of the secondary street.



III. PHYSICAL PLAN

PARKING (continued)

Parking Garage

The recommendation to develop a parking garage is not urgent, but will help the downtown once more revitalization occurs and parking demands increase over time. A garage located on the southwest corner of Court House and Hill Streets would take parking pressures off of the on-street park-

ing near the Court House, including on Commerce and Court Streets. That improvement, would in turn, help retail and service businesses in the downtown core. The garage would also help to avoid needing a parking lot on the corner of Main and Court House Streets to replace the building slated for demolition. To take advantage of this site's topography, the first floor level of the

the two-story garage would be accessed off of Court House Street, while the second level would be accessed off of Hill Street. By avoiding a ramp system, the development costs would be lessened and more parking spaces could result. The total number of parking spaces would be approximately 100, and it might be funded jointly by the City and County.



Parking Garage Design

For most new garages proposed in a historic downtown, the design is a critical issue to be sure that the street level facade does not create a “dead spot” on the street and to be sure the design character does not undermine the downtown’s aesthetic quality. However, because of its location, this proposed garage’s design is less significant. Hill Street is on the very periphery of the downtown and the grade to the immediate east discourages development. The south and west sides do not front a street, so the Court House Street facade is the only one that will have much visibility, and it is not a retail street. While the facade design should be adequate, it does not need to meet the highest standards of compatible design and accurately replicate historic building facades like many downtown garages do today, nor does it need to have ground level retail space.



GATEWAYS

It is important that those entering a downtown are keenly aware that they have arrived to a special place. Otherwise, the concept of “branding” the downtown and creating a strong sense of place is not being optimized. Gateway treatments can help to make a strong first and last impression. Below are recommendations for specific locations and designs for gateway treatments within the study area.

Locations

Gateway locations should only be designated on the major corridors leading to the subject area and at locations where the development typology becomes visually distinct and is in keeping with the subject area. In the case of a historic downtown, such areas are typically at the point where urban development patterns begin. Below are the recommended gateway locations:

- 1) Bridge Gateway: The bridge is the most obvious gateway even “as is.”
- 2) South Main Gateway: Main is a primary entry and departure corridor for traffic coming or going from the south via Hwy. 231.
- 3) Company Street Gateway: A substantial amount of traffic from the north arrives on this important street.



III. PHYSICAL PLAN

GATEWAYS (continued)

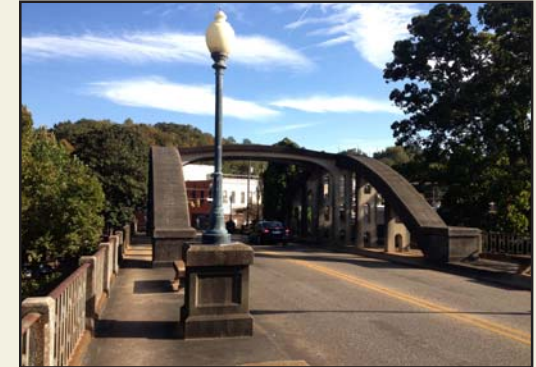
Design

Gateway designs can include a variety of elements, including signage, sculpture, archways, landscaping, flags, banners, lighting, and similar features. The inherent features of the bridge and Company Street make the best design treatments relatively clear, but the options for South Main are less apparent. Consequently, it is recommended that either consultants be hired to determine the gateway treatment here as a stand-alone project or a public design competition be held to make the decision.

BRIDGE GATEWAY

Although the bridge already serves as a gateway in its current state, the following enhancements are proposed:

- *Clean concrete and paint railing* - The concrete should be pressure washed in a manner that avoids any damage. Since the railing is already painted and fading, there should be no historic preservation concerns.
- *Install banners on the light poles* - Such banners should be festive and colorful to add visual interest.
- *Illuminate the bridge* - This is a strategy employed by many communities with iconic bridges and it can help to create a visual landmark. Illumination will require ALDOT approval.



SOUTH MAIN GATEWAY

It is proposed that new infill development (brown color) occur at this intersection with Ready Street to solidify an urban form for a clear identity. One simple treatment might be high-quality signage as with the example at right.



Model Sign

COMPANY STREET GATEWAY

The traffic roundabout already proposed earlier in this plan for primarily traffic flow improvements will also do much to add to the gateway character of this intersection. There will be the potential to add some artistic statement, such as a statue that might relate to Wetumpka's history.



BUILDINGS: EXISTING

All though there are certainly opportunities for new infill development in specific locations, the sensitive rehabilitation of existing historic buildings should be given the highest priority for the following reasons:

- The history and historic character of Downtown Wetumpka is a key element for “branding” the downtown (see more on this in the “Economic & Market-Based Strategies” section of this plan).
- Every dollar spent on historic rehabilitation has a greater local economic impact than the same dollar spent on new development. This principle is based on rehabilitation being more labor-intensive than new construction, while new construction is more material-intensive. Labor tends to be local, while materials generally are not.
- There are more existing financial incentives for historic rehabilitation, such as the state and federal investment tax credits, than there are for new construction.

It is important that all future building rehabilitations in Downtown Wetumpka follow federal standards - the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation - to insure the highest quality work and to meet the standards to achieve the state and federal investment tax credits for historic rehabilitation. See this plan’s “Implementation” section on tax credits.

Historic Preservation Program

A preservation program should be established by the City, to include:

- Local historic district
- Preservation ordinance and guidelines
- Design review commission

See section “V. Implementation” for more detail on a potential preservation program for Wetumpka.



Downtown Wetumpka has such intact historic integrity that it was the backdrop for the 1995 movie “The Grass Harp” (above) and the 2003 movie “Big Fish.”

Potential Building Improvements

Although the example Bridge Street building shown at right is a positive model for historic rehabilitation, there are many buildings in need of work. Typical needed improvements for some buildings include:

- Reopening doors and windows that have been enclosed, including transom windows on storefronts
- Restoring windows and removing snap-on plastic pane muntins
- Removing inappropriate canopies shading the storefront
- Removing non-original façade cladding, such as vinyl siding
- Providing more appropriate signage (scale, materials and placement)



Model Facade Rehabilitation

III. PHYSICAL PLAN

BUILDINGS: EXISTING (continued)

Highest Priority Buildings

Downtown Wetumpka has several historic buildings in need of physical rehabilitation. Because the overall need is greater than available financial resources and immediate market demand, it is important to focus efforts on a few key buildings to achieve success. Two buildings are particularly critical to the downtown's near-term revitalization - The two Court Street buildings and the former hotel bound by Main, Bridge and Court Streets.



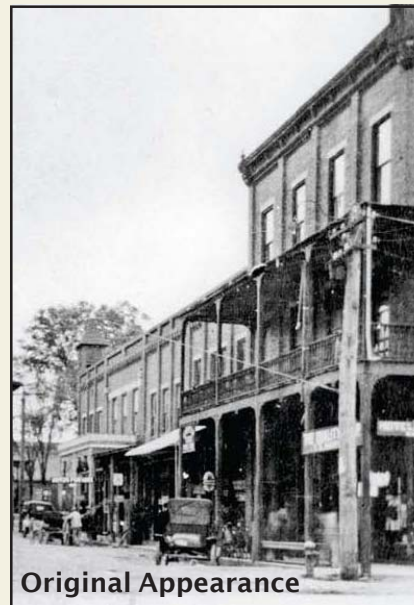
COURT STREET BUILDINGS

Depicted on the previous page in better times during the 1995 movie filming, these two deteriorating buildings are critical to framing Court Street and reinforcing its historic character. Both buildings have roof damage and are in serious need of rehabilitation, but experts have recently confirmed the potential for restoration. The current owners, the Chamber of Commerce, has spearheaded a major fundraising effort for this important project.

FORMER HOTEL BUILDING

This building is highly visible because of its three-story height and frontage on Main, Bridge and Court Streets. Its successful rehabilitation and reuse could go far in sending out a strong statement regarding the downtown's potential revitalization. The 2012 plan's market analysis identified this building as a candidate for the 20 to 30-room "boutique inn" that appears to be supportable. The following recommendations are offered:

- Follow federal historic preservation standards to benefit from the 20 percent federal investment tax credit for historic rehabilitation, as well as the mirroring state tax credit.
- Replace the existing canopy with a design identical to the original two story balcony depicted in the historic photograph at right.
- Recreate the heavy ornate cornice along the top of the parapet facade as illustrated in the historic photograph at right.



BUILDINGS: NEW

As market demand for new development grows in time and existing historic buildings are rehabilitated, new buildings should be constructed. However, as determined by the 2012 plan's market analysis, new development at this point in time is not financially viable without some sort of subsidations. Nevertheless, it is important to be thinking about future infill development for when the time is once again ripe.

Proposed new development is depicted on the map at right in brown. Although some communities see vacant lots as opportunities for parks or parking lots, such an approach should be avoided for Downtown Wetumpka. Parks should only be created in strategic locations based upon sound planning, as opposed to randomly occurring where vacant lots just happen to exist. Similarly, parking lots fronting onto downtown streets are unattractive and create "dead spots" within an otherwise vibrant streetscape needing retail energy.

It is important that new buildings be of a compatible design that reinforces the character of Downtown Wetumpka instead of diluting it. Consequently, it will be important for the City to adopt a formal historic preservation program as suggested



III. PHYSICAL PLAN

BUILDINGS: NEW (continued)

previously on [page 51](#) and as explained in more detail in the “Implementation” section found later in this plan. Such a program will include design guidelines that insure compatible new infill development that is sympathetic to the downtown’s unique character.

Infill Design Objectives

Below is a summary of infill design objectives for commercial/mixed use buildings and institutional buildings.

Mixed Use Buildings

The majority of downtown’s future commercial and mixed use buildings should be one, two or three-story buildings with a brick parapet facade, a flat roof, and a high percentage of groundfloor transparency (door and window glass). They should also have little to no front setback. Locations for this building form are designated on the map on [page 26](#) as Mixed Use Core.

Institutional Buildings

Although excessively large building footprints and expansive unbroken facades should be avoided, institutional buildings (governmental, educational, religious, etc.) can deviate from the norm as a means of underscoring their significance to the com-

munity by having distinctive design features. The map on [page 26](#) that addresses proposed land use, form and character illustrates the existing locations of these sites, although the map should not preclude new institutional buildings in other locations where they do not pose any significant drawbacks.

The following page provides a set of design principles for new infill buildings.



BUILDINGS: NEW (continued)

NO: Inappropriate



Building heights in Downtown Wetumpka should not exceed three stories. The front setback above is too deep, and parking should not be in front of the building.



While Downtown Wetumpka buildings may occasionally have pitched roofs, they should feature roof overhangs rather than the roof edge being encased in a cornice.



This facade's uninterrupted plane fails to achieve a human-scaled massing. It also has a horizontal orientation rather than a more appropriate series of vertical bays.

Height & Setback

Roof Forms

Massing & Facade Design

YES: Appropriate



Buildings in Downtown Wetumpka should be one to three stories. Mixed use and commercial buildings should be built up to the sidewalk.



Flat roofs should be screened with a parapet facade on the building's frontage. The parapet should also screen rooftop equipment.



Pilasters (attached pillars), storefront windows, and cornice line variations on this new building break up the facade into vertically oriented bays.

Height & Setback

Roof Forms

Massing & Facade Design



Institutional buildings can be set back from the street to front onto a lawn or plaza to emphasize their symbolic significance.



Varied roof lines are one tool for breaking up the massing of large structures. These residential roof forms could work in Wetumpka.



This building represents an attached housing type. The projections and recesses are effective in breaking up the facade mass.



**IV. ECONOMIC &
MARKET-BASED
STRATEGIES**

JERRY'S
BARBER
SHOP

TOP

IV. ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED PRINCIPLES

The following principles form the basis for the economic and market-based strategy for the study area:

- *The length of stay of downtown visitors will strongly correlate with the amount of money spent.* However, the correlation is much weaker for some specific uses, such as governmental uses (City Hall, Court House, etc.).
- *It is better to serve multiple market segments simultaneously than to have a singular focus on any one segment.* However, it is important to project a single and cohesive image for the downtown when marketing.
- *Rent is a function of sales.* Downtown landlords should have a strong profit motive to be concerned with their tenants' merchandising and operations, such as business days and hours, marketing approaches, product lines, and window display appearances.
- *More pedestrian street activity is better than less.* "Sidewalk density" can serve as just one indication of economic success in a downtown.
- *Future downtown residents can contribute toward a safe and "lived in" atmosphere* that draws many more people to the area for shopping, services and entertainment. However, the residents will not be a large enough market, on their own, to support downtown's retail sector.
- *People will walk a maximum of approximately three blocks in downtowns of small communities,* such as Wetumpka, to reach a destination before resorting to an automobile. Rainy or hot weather can reduce that distance, as can real or perceived barriers, as well as too many vacant lots and parking lots.
- *A downtown retailer has approximately 6 seconds to attract a window shopper* based upon an average storefront width of 25 feet and pedestrian speeds of 3 miles per hour.
- *A successful retailer's goal should be to always exceed consumer expectations.* For a variety of reasons, it is difficult enough for urban businesses to compete with suburban businesses. However, independently-owned smaller businesses also have more flexibility to follow "opening day standards" every day when conducting business.

IV. ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

MARKET POTENTIALS & OPTIMAL MIX OF USES

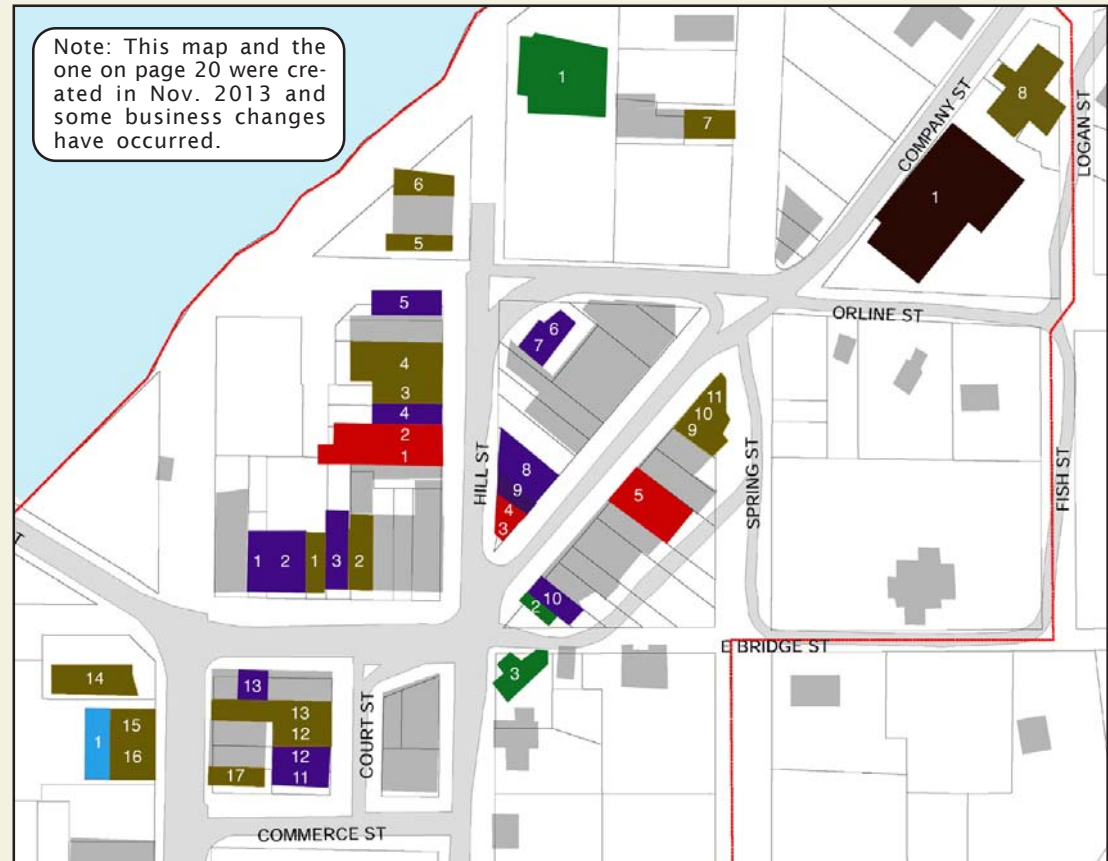
Existing Businesses

At right is a map previously featured on [page 20](#) of this plan. The legend at the bottom reveals that, although the downtown has several personal services and professional service offices, there is an insufficient number of existing dining and retail businesses to create a “critical mass” that will draw more visitors to the downtown. With only three dining/food businesses and six retail shops, it is clear that future business development efforts will need to focus on those types of businesses.

Potential Future Demand

As explained on [page 20](#) of this plan’s Background section, the City of Wetumpka commissioned the “City of Wetumpka Downtown & Riverfront Development Plan” in 2012. That plan included a market analysis to identify market opportunities for Wetumpka’s downtown and riverfront. Because this current planning effort is a continuation of that 2012 project and builds upon its work, this plan avoids repeating work already achieved by revisiting the 2012 study area analysis. The full market analysis is contained in Appendices A of this plan. The market supportable “potentials” listed on the following page indicate the potential

EXISTING BUSINESSES



Page 20 of this plan features a list of each existing business with corresponding key numbers. Because only two businesses were identified within the study area boundaries south of Commerce Street, only the northern half of the study area is featured on this map to make it more legible. Below is a legend indicating each business category, as well as the number of existing businesses within each category (number within the color code block). Upper floor businesses that are not apparent from the street level are not included.

- 3** Dining & Food
- 6** Retail Shops
- 17** Personal Services
- 14** Professional Services / Offices

IV. ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

MARKET POTENTIALS & OPTIMAL MIX OF USES (continued)

new building space and housing units, in addition to the existing inventory of development. With regard to the limited-service hotel, these numbers were generated before the announced casino expansion to develop 285 hotel rooms. Regardless, the potential demand for the 20 to 30 boutique hotel rooms is still relevant since that is a distinct product and market from limited-service hotels.

Optimal Mix of Uses

The list of potential businesses to recruit is based on the City's 2012 market analysis, the existing tenant mix, and what has seemed to work in other downtowns having a similar size and circumstances as Wetumpka. It is recommended that locally and regionally-owned businesses located in other parts of Wetumpka or communities within the region be targeted, as they are much more likely to locate in Downtown Wetumpka than are national chains and franchises. With regard to housing, the City's 2012 plan indicates that "New market-rate housing requires amenities such as river views, high-quality finishes, and supporting services such as convenient retail as well as supportive markets (i.e., people willing to live downtown)."

FIVE YEAR POTENTIALS PER THE 2012 PLAN - "targeted" demand levels

- *Limited-Service Hotel*: 70 - 120 rooms
- *Boutique Inn*: 20 - 30 rooms
- *Professional Office*: 30,000 - 50,000 SF
- *General Retail & Restaurants*: 25,000 - 35,000 SF
- *Market-Rate Residential*: 75 - 150 units



Market Study for 2012 Plan

POTENTIAL TENANTS TO RECRUIT

- **Restaurants** - The downtown could benefit from all types of restaurants, and the more diversity of options the better for creating a destination. Examples of restaurant types to recruit include white tablecloth, ethnic, barbeque, meat-n-three, ice cream, frozen yogurt, and a micro-brewery.
- **Retail** - Retail businesses to pursue include clothing (men's, women's, children's), antiques, hobby/crafts, and other specialty retail not already existing on Rt. 231. Also, if the community can greater leverage the impact crater's market potential in the future (see [page 67](#)), one or more rock and mineral shops might benefit from the Crater theme.
- **Personal Services** - Although any types of personal services that can reinforce a positive image for the downtown should be pursued, there are clearly some that are already heavily represented and do not require recruiting, such as hair salons/barbers and health clubs.
- **Offices / Professional** - Office workers and the customers they attract can greatly benefit the downtown economy. However, it is important that such uses occur on upper floors so that street-level building space can be reserved for more active uses that will activate the streets, such as retail and dining.

IV. ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

It must always be kept in mind that people visit a downtown primarily for the businesses that are located there, as opposed to being drawn by building facades or attractive new sidewalks. Thus, for truly successful revitalization to occur, an emphasis must be placed on achieving a critical mass of desirable businesses.

This plan's Implementation section addresses the recommended new downtown organization that will be critical to many of the economic and market-based strategies within this plan. The overall strategy for business development should focus on a proactive effort to recruit businesses to the downtown to establish a destination business mix that will draw customers from various market segments. Dining and entertainment are keys to this strategy, but there should also be a focus on tourism development and capturing a portion of the potential market for area attractions such as gaming, river-oriented recreation (kayaking, etc.), and Fort Toulouse. Merchandising strategies for individual businesses should also flow from this approach.

Business Retention & Expansion

The first focus should be on the retention and expansion of existing businesses that

are considered to contribute to downtown's success. The recommended downtown organization should take the lead on this front by having a continued dialogue with existing business owners and operators to monitor their success and concerns. For example, if they are facing challenges related to parking, building codes, or landlord relations, the committee should work to find solutions.

Sponsor Events with Business Owners

Sponsor regular informal events that facilitate an ongoing dialogue with existing business owners. The intent is that struggling businesses, as well as those wanting to expand, can be identified and provided assistance. It should be anticipated that business owners will not be explicit about the status of their businesses, so this strategy will require a delicate approach.

Business Recruitment

Although also important, the recruitment of new businesses should be a secondary concern relative to existing desirable businesses. Nevertheless, the following approaches should be followed to attract new businesses:

Establish a Business Recruitment Team

Comprised of existing business owners, among others, this group within the recommended downtown organization would call

on targeted new businesses. As noted previously, businesses to target should be locally or regionally-owned businesses already located elsewhere in Wetumpka or area communities that may be interested in opening in an additional location.

Create a Marketing Package

A marketing package should be created to tout the merits of operating a business in Downtown Wetumpka. In addition to printed materials, other mediums should be utilized, including web-based alternatives.

Conduct Recruitment Fairs

Occasional business recruitment fairs would be intended to showcase Downtown Wetumpka for prospective new business owners.



Previously located here at 100 Company Street, 2 Guys & a Bakery is an example of a downtown business that has chosen to expand within a larger space just a few doors down rather than leaving Downtown Wetumpka.

IV. ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

KEY REHABILITATION OPPORTUNITIES

As noted throughout this plan, Downtown Wetumpka has more rehabilitation opportunities than new infill development opportunities. While many exist, this page highlights some of the most critical and promising. For recommendations on adopting a historic preservation program for the City, see [page 71](#). For tax incentives, see [page 72](#).

Court Street Buildings

Location: Court Street
Ownership: Chamber of Commerce
Current Use: Vacant
Greatest Potential: Groundfloor retail or restaurant with upper floor housing. Offices are a second upper floor option if housing is not viable. These buildings are presently severely deteriorated on the interiors, but the Chamber is spearheading a fundraising effort to rehabilitate them. They would be good candidates for state and federal investment tax credits.



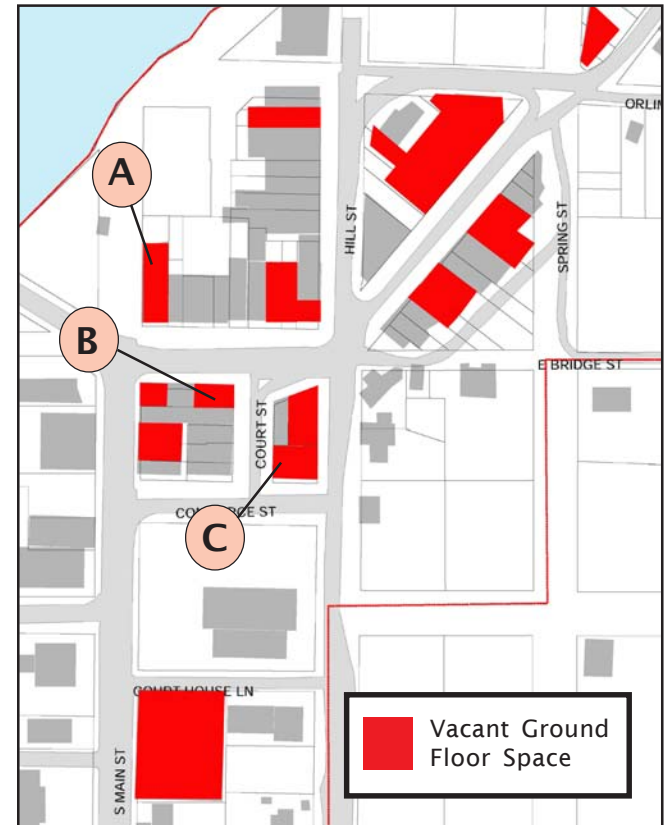
Former Theatre

Location: Bridge Street (by bridge)
Ownership: Local private owner
Current Use: Vacant
Greatest Potential: Plans are currently under way to convert it into a restaurant, to include outdoor dining.



Former Hotel

Location: Bridge & Court Streets
Ownership: Local private owner
Current Use: Vacant
Greatest Potential: Based on the 2012 market study, it has potential as a boutique hotel with groundfloor retail.



IV. ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

BRANDING, MARKETING & PROMOTION

While multiple partnering entities are needed to achieve successful revitalization, branding, marketing and promotional activities should be a key focus of the recommended downtown organization, as well as the Chamber of Commerce. The following branding, marketing and promotion approaches are proposed.

Branding

Like any product to be marketed, a specific identity should be developed for Downtown Wetumpka. Unless a distinct image is created, it is difficult to market the downtown as a product differing from other competing commercial centers and corridors in the trade area. The specific image deemed appropriate typically depends upon the downtown's intrinsic qualities, as well as the targeted market segments for the downtown as determined by market analyses. Because the 2012 analysis did not include a definition of specific market segments, that consideration cannot be factored here.

While it may be useful to consider a broad range of distinct identities as possibilities for a downtown, the image ultimately selected as the one to project usually includes elements of more than one image because

most downtowns, as in the case of Wetumpka, do not fit neatly within any one category. However, attempting to combine too many identities may confuse the public or worse, result in no discernible identity. Also, crafting a single identity does not have to conflict with offering a variety of destinations and activities for a variety of market segments.

Based on the various considerations outlined here, as well as the downtown's characteristics, the following identity or "brand" is recommended for Downtown Wetumpka:

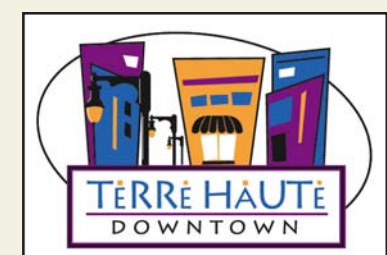
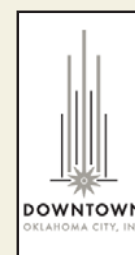
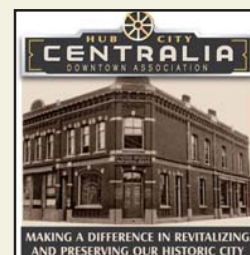
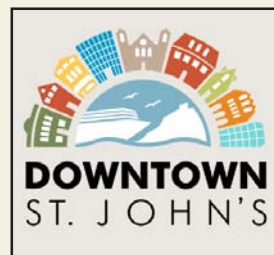
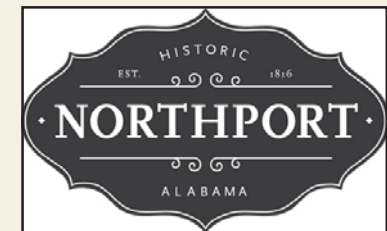
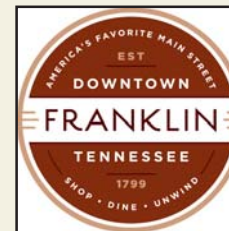
- Authentic Historic Southern River Town -

Another alternative is to play off of the Native American name "Wetumpka," located on

the "Coosa" River (another Native American word), and close to the rich history associated with Forts Toulouse and Jackson. The Creek casino further supports that theme.

The identity ultimately selected should be projected through various means, including a graphics package focused around a single logo. It is recommended that the downtown organization, once established, hire a local graphic artist to develop a logo for the downtown that can be used on street light banners, advertising, shopping bags of retailers, in the letterhead of the downtown organization, and in other ways as they avail themselves.

SAMPLE DOWNTOWN LOGOS



IV. ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

BRANDING, MARKETING & PROMOTION (continued)

Centralized Retail Management

Centralized Retail Management (CRM) is the same technique used by thousands of shopping malls across the country in which the retailers are organized to function as a single unit. CRM includes coordinated days and hours of operation, common area maintenance, a tenant location strategy, merchandising, customer service standards, and joint advertising. In a shopping mall, CRM is simple to execute because there is a single property owner and all tenants leasing space must follow the requirements of that owner as part of their lease agreement. In a downtown of multiple property owners and business operators, a high degree of organization and commitment is necessary for CRM to succeed. The following CRM strategies are recommended for Downtown Wetumpka:

Consistent Days & Hours of Operation

As noted previously, one competitive advantage enjoyed by suburban shopping malls is that mall tenants must comply with consistent days and hours of operation, and shoppers are aware of those days and hours of operation. Downtown retailers need to use the same strategy. A challenge for small downtowns such as Wetumpka's

is motivating retailers to maintain extended days and hours of operation beyond merely weekdays and roughly 6:00 p.m. closing hours. Business operators often explain that the low volume of business cannot justify enduring the costs of staying open on weekends and evenings. They are correct because, as long as the market believes that downtown is closed on evenings and weekends, few people will venture downtown for shopping.

Instead, Downtown Wetumpka's retailers must band together and agree on the specific days and hours of extended operations. A potential starting point is for all businesses to remain open every Friday and Saturday evening, as well as staying open on weekdays until at least 7:00 p.m. to give shoppers a window of opportunity to make purchases after work. Another approach is to target a regularly scheduled special event to extend business hours and then to get the word out through advertising. It may take up to six months of extended days and hours before the market catches on, but the long-term rewards for Downtown Wetumpka may be worthwhile.

Merchandising

Merchandising is the activity of promoting merchandise to potential buyers, including

the selection of specific product lines to sell. It is no surprise that retail businesses that eventually fail after years of relative prosperity are often a victim of their operator's lack of "re-merchandising" to keep pace with constantly changing market tastes and demands. While merchandising is an activity that is the responsibility of individual business owners and a downtown organization can do only so much, the following approaches might be useful:



Merchandising that accurately reflects market demand is important to the future success of Downtown Wetumpka's retail segment.

IV. ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

BRANDING, MARKETING & PROMOTION (continued)

- *Disseminate educational information* on merchandising available from the State and National Main Street programs.
- *Conduct one or more workshops* with a merchandising expert targeted to retail operators.
- *Hire a retail consultant* to visit individual businesses and offer merchandising suggestions.
- *Sponsor a merchants “field trip”* to visit other successful commercial districts (or even shopping malls) to get ideas.

Customer Service Standards

Customer service is one topic that many downtown programs across the county have focused on with measurable success. The quality of customer service in Downtown Wetumpka varies from business to business, yet it is an area in which a concentrated effort can allow Downtown’s businesses to be more competitive. The National Main Street Center advocates the application of “opening day standards” in everyday operations, which simply means applying a keen focus on customer service as if it were the business’s first day of operations. As with the issue of merchandising, Wetumpka’s proposed downtown organization could sponsor

workshops with downtown business operators and employees on how to build strong customer loyalty. Seemingly small gestures, such as knowing the customer’s name, keeping their clothing size measurements and preferences on file, and contacting them when a certain product becomes available, can go a long ways in selling Downtown as the most customer-friendly place in Wetumpka.

Advertising

Because advertising typically comes with a price tag, Downtown Wetumpka should first exhaust all opportunities for free advertising. It will be important for the recommended downtown organization to build a strong relationship with local media professionals who can be helpful in promoting downtown events and positive news stories.

When newsworthy happenings occur or interesting issues arise in Downtown Wetumpka, a press release should be sent to the right people. Likewise, if the media comes through by being helpful, the organization’s appreciation should be strongly conveyed. While most downtown organizations utilize a variety of approaches to advertising, one particular strategy that should be contemplated for Downtown Wetumpka is joint advertising.

Joint Advertising

For most downtown programs, electronic forms of media are reserved for key occasions, such as the promotion of special events. Newspaper advertising, on the other hand, is typically more affordable and lends itself to the collaboration of multiple businesses through joint advertising. Joint advertising is an effective way for small businesses to leverage their limited marketing funds by joining forces with like-minded downtown businesses. Joint advertising is often employed by businesses sharing some common theme, such as restaurants, clothing stores, and antique stores, and the recommended downtown organization would be the obvious entity to spearhead such efforts. It is also an opportunity for the organization to use its



Example of joint advertising from Downtown Fairbanks, Alaska

IV. ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

BRANDING, MARKETING & PROMOTION (continued)

recommended logo to convey the image of a unified commercial entity, much as is done by suburban shopping malls.

Storefront Window Displays

Window displays are one of the most underrated opportunities for downtowns to shine. Storefronts are essentially free advertisements that can run constantly. The five key principles for good storefront window design are quality, simplicity, creativity, illumination, and variation over time. Only the highest-quality merchandise should be used in the display, as quality will attract consumers.

Although displays should not be boring, simplicity can be a virtue. Displays that are too cluttered and busy will confuse window shoppers and dampen their interest. Although creativity is easier said than done, efforts at being clever and different will usually pay off because window shoppers will remember creative displays even if they do not enter the store at that particular time.

Illumination is another critical factor. Lighting should be carefully directed onto the subjects of the display, but glare should be avoided. Illumination should be main-

maintained 24-hours a day to keep downtown looking lively. Storefront lighting is also an important, but often overlooked, means of lighting evening streetscapes. In order to maintain interest, displays should be changed at least every three weeks.



Another technique related to window displays that Downtown Wetumpka's merchants might apply is "cross-marketing." This approach occurs when a window display features the merchandise of another downtown store as part of their display. For example, a stationary store might display stationary as lying on a desk from a downtown furniture store. A small sign can be placed on the merchandise from the other store to advertise that business.

Other Forms of Media

Other forms of print and electronic media either already used or potentially employed to promote Downtown Wetumpka include the following:

Print Media

- Brochures - Either as a series of separate brochures or in combination, the following types of information about Downtown Wetumpka might be communicated: history and architecture, dining and shopping, parking locations, and special events. In addition to placing brochures on downtown at typical locations where tourists go (hotels, restaurants, I-65 rest areas, the casino, Fort Toulouse, etc.), they should also be downloadable on the websites of the recommended downtown organization and the Chamber of Commerce.
- Newsletters - Newsletters have been a long time staple for many non-profit organizations as a means to convey achievements, promote events and provide general information. Most newsletters are now available digitally and are frequently e-mailed to recipients. The proposed new downtown organization for Wetumpka should use such an e-mailed newsletter.

Electronic Media

It will be important that the recommended downtown organization for Wetumpka develop a high-quality website and utilize social media to promote the downtown, such as Facebook and Twitter.

IV. ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

BRANDING, MARKETING & PROMOTION (continued)

Special Events

Special events can be an extremely effective means of bringing people to Downtown Wetumpka who may otherwise never visit. While merchants in many downtowns often complain that few sales occur during such events, the long-term benefit of enhancing a downtown's image is more important. If people come to Downtown Wetumpka and have a positive experience, the odds are greatly increased that they will return at some future point in time to shop and dine. The following recommendations are provided to **make Downtown Wetumpka the community's primary special event venue** as a means of leveraging economic spin-off:

Continue to hold existing special events in the downtown. Examples of some of the key events include the Mardi Gras Parade, the WHS Homecoming Parade, and the COTC Decorations Contest. Generally, the dates of downtown events are spread apart in a manner to keep people coming downtown throughout the year.

Identify local events currently held outside of downtown that might be moved to the downtown. It is important to distinguish here the difference between events held

within the downtown core versus on the downtown riverfront. First, it should be recognized that the top priority is to hold events within the downtown and/or adjacent riverfront relative to other areas of the community. With respect to events held on the riverfront adjacent to the downtown, some are best suited to remain there, but the economic leveraging benefits are more limited than for events held in the downtown core because there are fewer businesses within a comfortable walking distance of the riverfront. Examples of events that might be considered for the downtown core include the Brown Bag Concerts, Scary Movie Night, and some components of Craterfest.

Explore the initiation of new events in Downtown Wetumpka. Specific potential lo-

cations include the Courthouse Plaza/Lawn and Court Street given this plan's recommendations to make that street more pedestrian-friendly to accommodate events. Examples of potential new events include theatrical performances and jazz performances.

Continually monitor and evaluate events. It is critical that the quality of special events be maintained and that the impacts on Downtown Wetumpka - both positive and negative - be continuously evaluated for potential needed changes. Many events in downtowns across the country eventually grow to a point that merchants eventually see them as being more harmful than beneficial to their businesses, so it will be important to make adjustments along the way.



Crater Fest is held every April on the riverfront's Gold Star Park. Sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, it features entertainment, games, arts and crafts, vendors, concessions, and science lectures about the Crater. Attendance figures are typically around 5,000 people.

IV. ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

LEVERAGING AREA ATTRACTIONS

Wetumpka is unusual in having such a strong package of area attractions in light of its relatively small population. The downtown has tremendous potential to leverage these attractions for economic gain that most downtowns are not fortunate enough to have. However, to date, that potential has not yet been fully realized. A key focus of future downtown revitalization efforts should be to leverage benefits from the following four attractions:

- Coosa River
- Wind Creek Casino
- Fort Toulouse / Fort Jackson Park
- Impact Crater

Recommendations for using these tremendous resources to greater advantage are offered here.

Coosa River – The river offers many recreational activities, including fishing and boating. Kayaking is particularly popular. While some kayaking rental businesses have existed in the study area in the past and are no longer operational, others still exist outside of the downtown area. Just as some downtowns attract and become a destination for antiquing, Downtown Wetumpka should pursue such a reputation for kayaking. Existing related businesses should be supported and others recruited. Also, the downtown should be promoted to regional fishing tournaments via marketing materials.



Former rentals in downtown (above) and existing rentals outside downtown (below).



Wind Creek Casino – Wind Creek Wetumpka is an important job provider and economic force within the region. Their recent expansions will only increase its importance to the community. While Wind Creek has a financial incentive to keep gaming patrons at the casino as long as possible, the proposed downtown organization should seek opportunities to attract gaming patrons to Downtown Wetumpka. Obviously, the extent of leveraging that can occur will be largely controlled by the casino's management and their willingness to work with the downtown, but the following are strategies to pursue:

- Discourage the casino's further expansion of selling goods and services that compete with downtown (dining, retail, entertainment).
- Provide the casino with marketing materials promoting the downtown and encourage its distribution.
- Erect signage near the casino's entrance and exit that directs gaming patrons to the downtown.



IV. ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

LEVERAGING AREA ATTRACTIONS (continued)

Fort Toulouse / Fort Jackson Park

Located just south of town at the strategic confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers, this State-owned site includes a variety of features, including an interpretive center, a small recreated Creek village, recreated forts, an Indian mound, trails, boating facilities, restrooms, and parking lots. This site is also the scene of the annual Alabama Frontier Days living history event that occurs in early-November. It is recognized that State-ownership results in limited funding, so it is recommended that the non-profit “Friends of the Forts” be better supported to fund the following needed improvements:

- 1) *Improved interpretation* - For example, the interpretive center presently has conflicting information related to the two forts.
- 2) *Improved care for restrooms* - They need physical enhancements and better cleaning.
- 3) *Improved overall site maintenance* - Some of the wayside exhibits are very weathered and other physical maintenance needs exist.
- 4) *Brochures* - Create “Friends” group brochures and Downtown Wetumpka brochures for distribution at the interpretive center.



Impact Crater

The impact crater, located immediately east of the downtown, was created by a meteor roughly 84 million years ago and it is the only one located in the southeast. The geological results dictated the configuration of Downtown Wetumpka. A body named the Wetumpka Impact Crater Commission was established to promote it. The following two key ideas are offered to better leverage this resource.

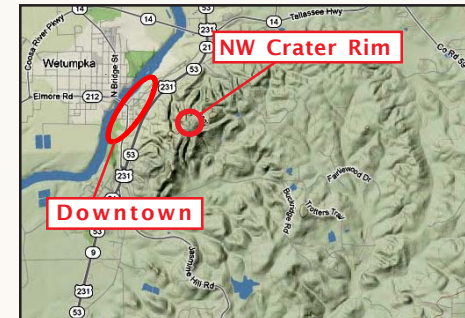
Develop the Interpretive Center Downtown (or at least a center satellite)

Despite past efforts for the proposed site already owned on Rt. 231, consider locating it Downtown. Not only is downtown closer to the crater, but much greater economic leveraging can occur there. Access to *an observation deck that might be built* at the northwest edge of the rim could be accessed in two different ways:

- Shuttle buses up Bald Knob Road
- Hiking up the gas line easement



Existing gas line easement path to crater



Source: Auburn Univ. Dept. of Geology

Leverage the Crater Theme

Many communities that have significant geological attractions, such as Kentucky’s Mammoth Cave and Arizona’s Barringer Crater, have shops open in their vicinities that appeal to the tourist market by *selling rocks, minerals, gems and fossils*. One or more such shops should be encouraged to open in Downtown Wetumpka.



IV. ECONOMIC & MARKET-BASED STRATEGIES

MAINTAINING DOWNTOWN AS AN INSTITUTIONAL CENTER

Although the location of businesses is an issue that the local governments have very limited control over, the location of their own operations is clearly under their complete control. It is critical that Downtown Wetumpka continue to serve as the community's institutional center. Not only are City and County employees important to the financial sustainability of downtown businesses, such as retail and dining, but citizens and business people visiting their offices provide additional support. In addition to being important for economic reasons, downtowns should be their community's institutional center for symbolic reasons that underscore the significance of the downtown. Thus, the following recommendations are offered as part of the downtown's economic and market-based strategy:

Encourage the City and County governments to keep operations downtown. The only exception to this idea would be incompatible uses, such as public works equipment yards, emergency services, and similar uses involving heavy truck traffic, emergency access, unattractive views (outdoor storage), and similar uses. One way to show their commitment to this

objective would be for the City Council and the County Commission to pass resolutions acknowledging their intent.

Encourage other institutions to remain or locate downtown. There are other existing institutions beyond the City and County governments currently located downtown. They should be encouraged to remain, which may include the proposed downtown organization working with such entities to find additional space when their anticipated growth prompts the need. This approach would be identical to that taken with private businesses in need of new space.

Similarly, the proposed downtown organization should be on the lookout for opportunities to attract institutions not already located downtown. Examples might include non-profit organization, State offices, and educational institutions, such as a downtown branch of a community college. Houses of worship can also be a good downtown use if a shared parking approach can be achieved given that peak parking demands of churches are typically the opposite of those for businesses.

EXISTING INSTITUTIONAL ANCHORS



Elmore County Court House



City Hall & Library



Elmore County Historical Museum



V. IMPLEMENTATION

ORGANIZATION

Because most downtowns cannot rely solely on market forces to revitalize on their own, it is important that an organizational infrastructure exist for Downtown Wetumpka to make it happen. The following recommendations are provided:

Establish an organization to revitalize Downtown Wetumpka.

- Hire an Executive Director to manage the recommended downtown organization. Depending upon available funding, this position could be part-time or full-time. Primary funding should come from the City government, although the County should also be approached for participation in the funding given downtown's role as the County seat.
- Establish a Board and committees. A Board of Directors should be created to govern the new downtown organization. It should be a diverse group of well-respected individuals representing a diversity of perspectives, including property owners, business owners, and others with a direct stake in the downtown. There should also be a set of issue-based committees. These committees can include board members

and non-board members, and should be based upon the Main Street Four Point Approach (Design, Economic Restructuring, Marketing & Promotion). The Board of Directors can fulfill the "organization" point of the four points.

- Follow the Main Street Approach. Alabama's Main Street program is currently under-funded and under-staffed, so it is not accepting new Main Street communities. Regardless, there are numerous examples across the country of downtown programs inspired by the Main Street model without formally being part of the program. Therefore, it is recommended that Main Street be the model used by Wetumpka. In fact, the proposed downtown organization can join the National Main Street program and receive the various supporting materials and programs, such as the monthly newsletter, publications, conferences, and similar types of support to the extent that the organization is able and willing to pay for them.



Leverage existing entities and individuals to help support the downtown organization.

- Enlist the Chamber of Commerce to incubate the downtown organization. For smaller communities with limited financial resources it makes sense for the downtown organization to start out under the wing of an existing established organization. The two most likely candidates for Wetumpka are the Chamber of Commerce and the City. However, because downtown organizations are better off being associated with an entrepreneurial-minded entity rather than a more regulatory one from an image standpoint, it is recommended that the downtown organization start off as a sub-unit of the Chamber.
- Utilize the capabilities and resources of other entities. Such groups include the City of Wetumpka, Elmore County / ECEDA, Elmore County Historical Society, Central Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission, Alabama Department of Economic Development & Community Affairs, and the federal Small Business Administration (SBA).

V. IMPLEMENTATION

PUBLIC POLICIES

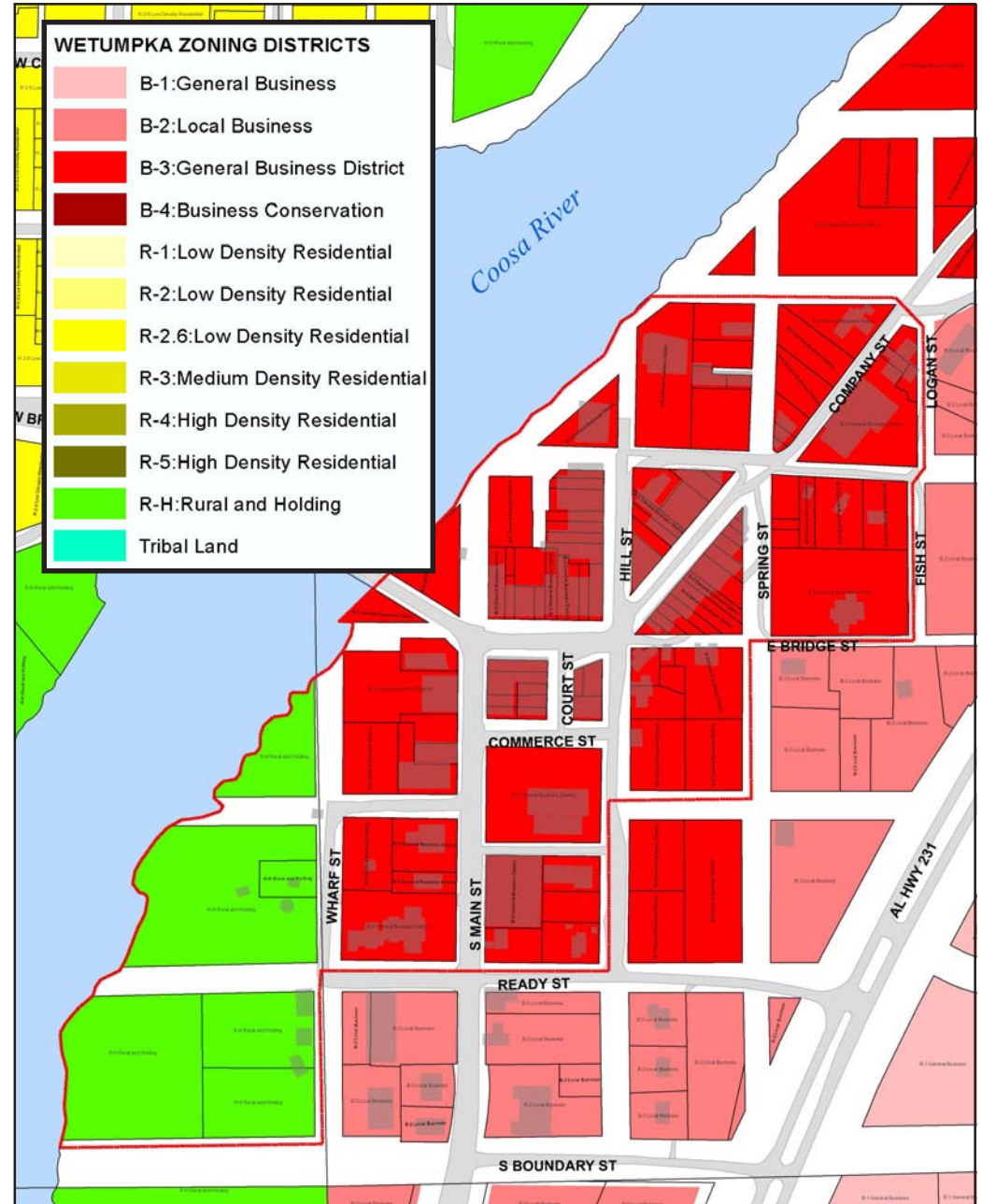
Public policies can greatly impact the viability of downtown revitalization. The three most significant areas for improvement for Downtown Wetumpka relate to the downtown's existing zoning, the potential for a historic preservation program, and the potential for parking management.

Revise the downtown's zoning to implement this plan. As the map at right illustrates, the only two zoning districts currently applied to the downtown study area are the B-3 (General Business District) and R-H (Rural & Holding).

B-3 Zoning Revisions

Below are recommended changes:

- *Allow important uses needed in the downtown.* With regard to housing - a much needed downtown use, the B-3 allows the housing types that are appropriate for a downtown, including upper story apartments and apartment buildings (special exception). However, townhouses should be revised from being prohibited to being a special exception use. Uses currently not allowed that might be made special exception uses include home improvement centers, laundry services, and shopping centers. Although a shopping center would typically be viewed as a very suburban development type inappropriate for a historic downtown, as defined in the ordinance, it could also be urban in form. Thus, as currently defined, it should be a special exception use in the B-3 zone. A use that is currently a special exception use that should probably be permitted by right is motels. It is noteworthy that the acceptability of some uses in the B-3 may hinge on whether a local historic district is adopted in the future to avoid inappropriate physical development. Thus, with a historic zoning overlay in place, the zoning ordinance can be more permissive because of the design review "safety net."



PUBLIC POLICIES (continued)

- *Prohibit uses in the B-3 zone that pose a nuisance* because of the potential for noise, dust, glare, heavy truck traffic, and similar impacts or that are otherwise incompatible with a pedestrian-oriented historic downtown. Uses now permitted in the B-3 zone that should be prohibited (or allowed only as special exception uses) include funeral homes, maintenance services, vehicle service stations, and fast food restaurants. The latter should be special exceptions to avoid drive-through windows or require their design to avoid negative impacts. A special exception use permitted in the B-3 that should be precluded altogether is car washes.
- *Maintain the current B-3 bulk standards*, such as building heights and setbacks since they are generally compatible with a historic downtown.
- *Reconsider the boundaries of the B-3 zone* on the north end of downtown. Commercial zoning for the downtown should be geographically constricted a bit to encourage more historic building rehabilitation and infill development where it is needed in the downtown core rather than new development occurring peripherally. A better use north of Green Street would be relatively high-density housing to increase the nearby residential base to help economically support the downtown. The B-3 zoning east of Hill Street should also be reconsidered for the same reasons, as should the B-1 zoning east of Spring.

R-H Zoning Revisions

Most of the Rural & Holding zone lands within the study area are located within the floodplain. Thus, it is appropriate that the uses permitted in this zone are very limited. The only area within the R-H district that is substantially developed and also outside of the floodplain is the area fronting the west side of Main between Ready and Boundary Streets (see zoning map on previous page). Although zoning boundaries typically follow rights-of-way and property lines, it is recommended that - for this one area - the business zoning be extended to the west of Wharf Street and utilize the floodplain boundary as the R-H boundary so the existing development is not non-conforming.

Establish a preservation program.

Downtown Wetumpka's design character is essentially its "brand," so every time a historic building is destroyed or inappropriately altered, that character that is critical to downtown's marketing is diluted. A preservation program should consist of the following components:

- *Adopt a City Historic Preservation Ordinance to create the public policy infrastructure for a preservation program.* There are numerous good examples to be borrowed from within the state, and key ordinance provisions will include the following:

- preservation commission establishment;
- composition, powers, and terms of the commission;
- criteria to designate historic districts;
- design review process.
- *Designate a local historic district.* This design review overlay would not effect use and density regulations of the underlying base zoning. Boundaries should extend beyond the National Register boundaries.
- *Draft and adopt Downtown Design Guidelines to regulate alterations to existing buildings and new infill development.* As a supplement to the proposed preservation ordinance, detailed design guidelines should be created for the commission to apply in reviewing applications for Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs). The guidelines should be based upon the federal Secretary of the Interior's standards for rehabilitation. It is critical that such guidelines be prepared by qualified professionals to avoid the risk of guidelines that are ineffective and might jeopardize the long-term political viability of the preservation ordinance (see more details in the following page).
- *Establish a design review process to implement the proposed ordinance and design guidelines.* The process should include a COA application in which the required information can be tailored to specific application, a process to deem applications complete before putting them on the agenda, a staff review and report for the COAs, and scheduled monthly meetings.

V. IMPLEMENTATION

PUBLIC POLICIES (continued)

- Pursue Certified Local Government (CLG) status to validate the preservation program and to become eligible for State grants. CLG designation from the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) confirms that a preservation program meets minimum standards and makes the community eligible for annual CLG grants provided by the AHC.

Establish a downtown parking management program.

Parking is not presently a huge challenge for downtown. However, as revitalization occurs, on-street parking demands will increase substantially, which will prompt the need to manage parking. The following strategies are recommended:

- Limit on-street parking to a maximum of three hours. That approach will allow people to dine, shop, meet in offices, and conduct similar short-term activities. However, it will discourage downtown employees from monopolizing parking that should be available to retail customers and similar visitors. Implementation should occur through a City enforcement person and curb-side signage indicating the rules.
- Encourage downtown employees to park in parking lots. This approach will leave the most convenient parking for customers. Some downtown management organizations have gone so far as to issue vehicle stickers to downtown employees to be able to identify the preclude them from parking on-street in prime areas. Hopefully such aggressive tactics will likely be unnecessary in Wetumpka.
- Avoid the use of parking meters to regulate on-street parking. Although some communities employ meters to generate revenue and to regulate parking, meters are not necessary for regulation. There are many other means of monitoring parking, from the “old school” approach of chalk-marking tires to high-tech hand-held devices.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Base Them on Recognized Broad Principles

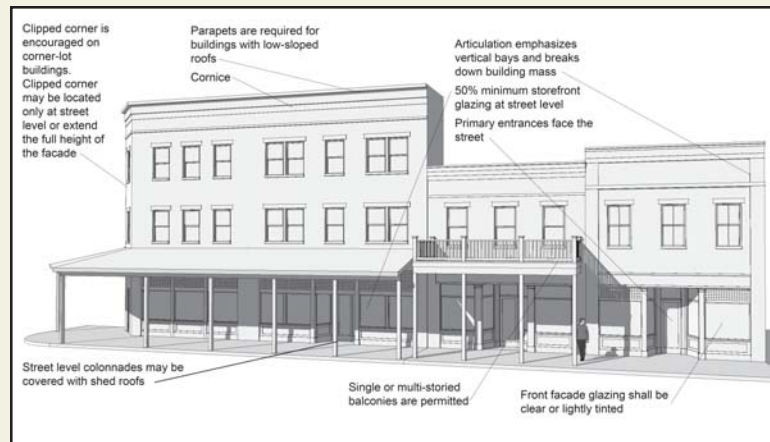
The “Secretary of the Interior’s” standards are adopted by the National Park Service and used by state historic preservation offices, such as the AHC. While they are general in nature, they also serve as the basis for appropriate rehabilitation when a property owner is seeking to qualify their project for investment tax credits. They should be referenced in Wetumpka’s guidelines.



Tailor Them to

Downtown Wetumpka

Although federal standards will put Wetumpka’s standards on sound legal footing, the City will need a set of more detailed standards that fit the downtown’s unique design character (see sample graphics at right)



The counterbalance to managing on-street parking spaces will be to physically enhance, promote, and provide directional signage for off-street parking lots.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Promote the availability of existing incentives and tools for downtown revitalization.

Examples of key existing incentives and tools that are applicable to Downtown Wetumpka include:

- *Federal investment tax credit for historic rehabilitation of buildings.* This incentive is only available for income-producing buildings listed on, or eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places. The credit equals 20% of the building rehabilitation costs and it is an actual credit, as opposed to a deduction in earned income. Consequently, the developer can be refunded 20% of their project costs, which can often be the difference between financial feasibility and a project that fails to “pencil out.” To qualify, the rehabilitation project must follow federal preservation standards (Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines), and it must exceed the property’s adjusted cost basis (amount of money invested in property acquisition and improvements to date). The determination of whether the project meets federal standards is made by the Alabama Department of Archives and History. Although “income producing” properties obviously includes commercial uses, it can also include rental residential.
- *State tax credit for historic rehabilitation of buildings.* In August of 2013 the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) approved

regulations for the Alabama Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit. The new law gives tax credits to owners who rehabilitate residential and commercial property. There are \$20 million in tax credits available each year for this program. The AHC will review applications and reserve credits in the order in which they are received. Once the annual tax credit allocation has been reserved, the commission will place later applications on a waiting list.



- *Federal tax credit for low and moderate-income housing.* It is likely that higher-income housing would be more beneficial to the downtown, but modest amounts of more affordable housing in and near Downtown Wetumpka may still be beneficial.

Develop new incentives and tools for downtown revitalization.

Potential new incentives and tools applicable to Downtown Wetumpka might include:

- *Property tax abatement program for building rehabilitation and infill development.* This approach would effectively “freeze” the assessed value of a property for a set number of years (5 is a common figure) so the owner is not penalized by increased property taxes for simply investing in their property. The City would need to require that the project met the City and/or federal preservation standards. The City would also need to research any limitations on this approach created by state enabling legislation before adopting such a program.
- *Façade grants and/or low-interest loans for approved rehabilitations.* This joint program between the City and one or more local banks should require that rehabilitations are consistent with City and/or federal preservation standards.
- *Waiver of fees for permitting for certain development types.* Such waivers would need to be based upon a clear adopted policy laying out qualifications.

V. IMPLEMENTATION

THE RIVERFRONT

The Coosa River riverfront is extremely important to the future revitalization and enhancement of the entire study area. It is clearly one of Wetumpka's treasures. While this plan has included numerous recommendations related to the riverfront, they are often somewhat hidden within the plan's text. Consequently, to better highlight the riverfront recommendations, they are being summarized on this page, as follows:

Physical Plan

Because of the floodplain that dominates the riverfront south of bridge and the steep slopes north of the bridge, development along the riverfront will necessarily be limited. However, the following key recommendations have been made:

- *Strengthen the link between downtown and the riverfront* via enhancements to West Commerce Street, its intersection with Main, and the proposed new plaza just west of the courthouse (see pages 31-32, 44).
- *Construct four trailheads for the existing Riverwalk* to feature paved areas, an informational kiosk, and seating (see pages 42-43).
- *Extend the existing Riverwalk south* to Fort Toulouse / Fort Jackson (see page 43).
- *Enhance the Goldstar park restrooms*. Another idea is to relocate it slightly to open views to the river from West Commerce

Street (see page 43).

- *Develop more riverfront parking* accessed via the east-west streets extending west from Main Street. Some would be new, while other parking areas would be physically improved for greater aesthetics and utilization (see page 46).
- *Transform the bridge into a gateway* into downtown by painting the rail, adding banners and lighting it (see pages 49-50).

Economic & Market-Based Strategies

Most recommendations for the riverfront that are tied to economic and market-based strategies relate to branding and river-oriented businesses, as follow:

- *Prioritize the Fain Theatre's rehabilitation as restaurant*. This recommendation acknowledges the owner's proposed outdoor dining deck with views to the river (see page 60).
- *Incorporate the river into the downtown's proposed branding* as an "Authentic Historic Southern River Town" (see page 61).

- *Leverage the river for river-oriented uses*, such as kayaking businesses. Also, promote the downtown among regional fishing tournament visitors (see page 66).

Implementation

The recommendations tied directly to the Implementation section relate to public policies, as follows:

- *Consider revising the zoning north of Green Street*, including the associated lands along the riverfront. It is recommended that the existing commercial zoning be changed to a relatively high-density housing zone (see page 71).
- *Extend the R-3 zoning west of Main between Ready and Boundary Streets in place of the R-H zoning* to accommodate existing development so it is not considered non-conforming (see page 71).



OTHER IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Below are some additional “final thoughts” on implementation.

PowerPoint Presentations

The final presentation of this plan by the consultant team will be made available to the City. It, or an edited-down version, can be used by City officials and downtown organization representatives to give “dog and pony” shows. The presentation can also be posted on the City and downtown organization’s website, along with the full plan document.

Adopting the Plan

To give the plan greater weight than it might have otherwise, it is recommended that the City formally adopt the plan as part of its public policy. While the plan would not have the same legal “teeth” as codes (legislation), it would help to direct future decisions by the City.

Future Plan Updates

It is recommended that this plan be updated at least every five years, and it may be worthwhile to create a separate new plan, depending upon this plan’s continued relevance as time evolves.

Relationship Between a Revitalization Program and a Preservation Program

One question raised toward the end of this planning project related to the relationship between a Main Street type revitalization program versus a historic preservation program entailing mandatory design review. There was a misconception that the City would need to choose between the two options when, in fact, they should pursue both. They are two very different types of programs and not mutually exclusive. A closer look at pages 69-72 will shed light on this topic.

Alabama Communities of Excellence

The ACE program provides technical assistance to select communities to strengthen their long-term economic success. Their comprehensive three-phase approach targets communities with populations ranging from 2,000 to 18,000. Communities are selected based on the level of local commitment to the ACE program and the community’s capacity to support the ACE program. It is recommended that Wetumpka explore participating as a means to help further the implementation of this plan.

Infrastructure Project

The City has submitted a federal grant application to rehab and replace utilities in

the downtown, including water lines, sewer lines, and the drainage system. The total cost is estimated to be \$850,000. The City and Wetumpka Water Works & Sewer Board have each pledged \$200,000 in matching funds, and the City is requesting \$450,000 in grant funds. The work will be targeted to these streets: East Bridge, Company, Orlin, Court, Hill, and Main.

Implementation Flexibility

Fortunately, there are no “linchpin” components of this plan that, if not implemented, would cause the rest of this plan to unravel. Also, any useful plan should never be viewed as being “etched in stone.” Not only are there often multiple approaches to achieving a plan’s particular objective, but changing circumstances over time can prompt the need to adjust the recommendations of a plan. A frequently used “rule of thumb” is to update a plan at least every five years, and many states that mandate citywide comprehensive plans use a five-year timeframe as their requirement for updates. At the very least, a plan is needed every ten years as an absolute minimum. The physical characteristics of a downtown may not change dramatically over the course of a decade, but political, social and economic conditions will certainly change.

V. IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION MAP & MATRIX

Page 77 features a plan Implementation Matrix that summarizes the key recommendations of this plan, as follows:

Subject Category

The matrix has organized the key plan ideas into the following three subject categories:
A. Physical Plan (see map at right)
B. Economic & Market-Based Strategies
C. Implementation

Alphanumeric Designation

Each subject category has been assigned a sequential letter and each plan recommendation has been given a sequential number. The category letter and recommendation number are combined for an alphanumeric designation for easy reference.

Page Number

This column indicates the plan page numbers that explain the recommendation in detail.

Responsible Party

This column indicates the recommended party (or parties) to spearhead implementation in order of their level of responsibility.

Time-Frame

This section sequences implementation into Near Term (Year 1), Mid Term (Years 2-3) and Long Term (Years 4-5) categories. Potential infrastructure improvements (sewer, water, etc.) are not factored into the schedule.



V. IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

No. Recommendation		Page #	Responsible Party	Time-Frame
A. Physical Plan				
A-1	Street Intersection Improvements - four locations along Main, E. Commerce, Bridge & Company	31-33	City	Near Term (Yr. 1)
A-2	Key Street & Streetscape Improvements - Main, Bridge, Court & Company	34-41	City	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
A-3	Public Space Improvements - Goldstar Park & trail, Court House, Court St. & new plaza	42-45	City & County	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
A-4	Development of New Off-Street Parking - parking lots and County garage	46-48	City, County & Private Sector	Long Term (Yrs. 4-5)
A-5	Gateways Development - Bridge, South Main Street & Company Street	49-50	City	Near Term (Yr. 1)
A-6	Rehabilitate Key Historic Buildings - Court Street buildings, former hotel & former theatre	51-52, 60	Chamber, City & Private Sector	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
A-7	Develop New Infill Buildings - including County building at Main & Courthouse Lane	53-55	Private Sector & County	Long Term (Yrs. 4-5)
B. Economic & Market-Based Strategies				
B-1	Business Development - retention, expansion & recruitment (based on optimal tenant mix)	59	Downtown Organization	Near Term (Yr. 1)
B-2	Branding, Marketing & Promotion	61-65	Downtown Organization	Near Term (Yr. 1)
B-3	Leverage Area Attractions - Coosa River, casino, Forts Toulouse/Jackson, impact crater	66-67	Downtown Organization & Others	Near Term (Yr. 1)
B-4	Maintain Downtown as an Institutional Center - local governments and other institutions	68	Downtown Organization & local gov'ts	Near Term (Yr. 1)
C. Implementation				
C-1	Establish a Downtown Organization - leverage existing entities and individuals	69	Downtown Organization, Chamber & City	Near Term (Yr. 1)
C-2	Revise the B-3 Zoning - amend the specific provisions and decrease the area designated	70-71	City	Near Term (Yr. 1)
C-3	Establish a Historic Preservation Program - ordinance, district, commission, guidelines	71-72	City & Alabama Historical Commission	Near Term (Yr. 1)
C-4	Establish a Parking Management Program - on-street time limitations and enforcement	72	City & Downtown Organization	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
C-5	Promote Existing Financial Incentives - federal and state historic rehab. investment tax credit	73	Downtown Organization	Near Term (Yr. 1)
C-6	Develop New Financial Incentives - property tax abatement, façade grants/loans, fee waivers	73	City & Downtown Organization	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
C-7	Formally Adopt this Plan - City Council should pass a resolution as official public policy	74	City	Near Term (Yr. 1)
C-8	Update this Plan in the Future - revisit at least every five years	74	City & Downtown Organization	Long Term (Yrs. 4-5)

Note: The proposed time-frame for physical improvements such as street and streetscape redevelopment does not factor in related infrastructure improvements (sewer, water, etc.).

APPENDICIES



APPENDIX A

MARKET OPPORTUNITIES: 2012 PLAN

SUMMARY: Market Opportunities

In 2012, the City of Wetumpka commissioned the "City of Wetumpka Downtown & Riverfront Development Plan." Prepared by a consultant team consisting of Brown Chambless Architects, WTL+a, and Sasaki, this plan included a market analysis to identify market opportunities for Wetumpka's downtown and riverfront. Since this planning effort is a continuation of the 2012 project and builds upon that previous work, this plan avoids repeating work already accomplished by simply revisiting the 2012 study area analysis. The following pages address the following issues:

- Housing
- Workplace / Office
- General Retail / Restaurants
- Hotel / Lodging

The content of this market analysis and projected market opportunities is summarized within the Background section at the beginning of this plan. It should be noted that a set of "Precedents" from other communities that were used to help illustrate this plan's ideas have been eliminated from this repeat of the 2012 plan's market opportunities since they are not critical to an understanding of the opportunities.

A large concrete arch bridge spans a wide river. The bridge features multiple arches supported by tall, tapered concrete piers. The water is calm, reflecting the bridge and the sky. The background shows a line of trees on the far bank. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The text 'MARKET OPPORTUNITIES' is centered in the lower half of the image, underlined.

MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

HOUSING

- Demand for **1,100+ new units citywide** if Wetumpka *maintains* its fair share of Elmore County
- New housing requires amenities (river views, high-quality finishes, supporting retail) & supportive markets (people willing to live downtown)
- Spin-off demand generated by casino expansion
- Incremental approach over next 3-5 years: identify catalyst building(s) for rehab, provide incentives for 10-20 units

<i>Development Targets (2030)</i>	Years 1-5	Years 5-10	Years 10-20 (Cumulative)
Baseline:	10-20	30-50	75 Units
Induced:	25-50	50-100	150 units

MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

WORKPLACE / OFFICE

- Office employees account for only 4% of County's 23,300 jobs; national average: 30%
- Market drivers: additional population growth, maturing County economy, targeted recruitment will increase office-related jobs
- Translates into **130,000 SF** of new office space citywide

<i>Development Targets (2030)</i>	Years 1-5	Years 5-10	Years 10-20 (Cumulative)
Baseline:	2,000-5,000	5,000-10,000	10,000 to 20,000 SF
Induced:	5,000-10,000	10,000-25,000	25,000 to 50,000 SF

MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

GENERAL RETAIL / RESTAURANTS

- **\$144 million** in leakage among categories typically located in downtowns: restaurants, home furnishings, leisure/entertainment
- Capturing only 5% provides immediate opportunity for **25,000 to 30,000 SF of new retail**
- Retail strategies to include:
 - Targeted tenant recruitment
 - Identify catalyst buildings/locations in study area
 - Incentives tailored to needs of specific tenants (financial, rehab, public infrastructure)

MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

HOTEL/LODGING

- Market drivers: growth in tourism/visitor events & office market required to strengthen hotel room-night demand
- Attract national limited-service flag (Marriott Courtyard, Hilton Garden Inn, Comfort Inn)
- Deal may require significant incentives, but opportunity to located hotel adjacent to Civic Center is key advantage
- Identify additional site (historic building) as candidate to accommodate 20-30 room boutique inn

Development Targets (2030)

- Limited-service designation: **75 to 90 rooms**
- Expansion opportunities over time to 120 rooms based on growth in tourism/visitor events & office market

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

SUMMARY

- Limited-service Hotel: 70-120 rooms (support civic center)
- Boutique Inn: 20-30 rooms
- Professional Office: 30,000-50,000 SF
- General Retail & Restaurants: 25,000-35,000 SF
- Market-rate Residential: 75-150 units

APPENDIX B

COST OF BURYING REROUTING UTILITIES

COST OF REROUTING OVERHEAD UTILITIES

Treatment of Overhead Utilities in the Streetscape Plan

This plan's section on streetscape improvements has approached the recommended design with the idea that existing overhead power lines would need to remain in place because of the costs that would be incurred by burying them. While burying them could still occur with the proposed designs, another more cost-effective alternative would be to relocate lines from some of the more high-visibility streets to those less frequently traveled.

Alternative Routing of Utility Lines

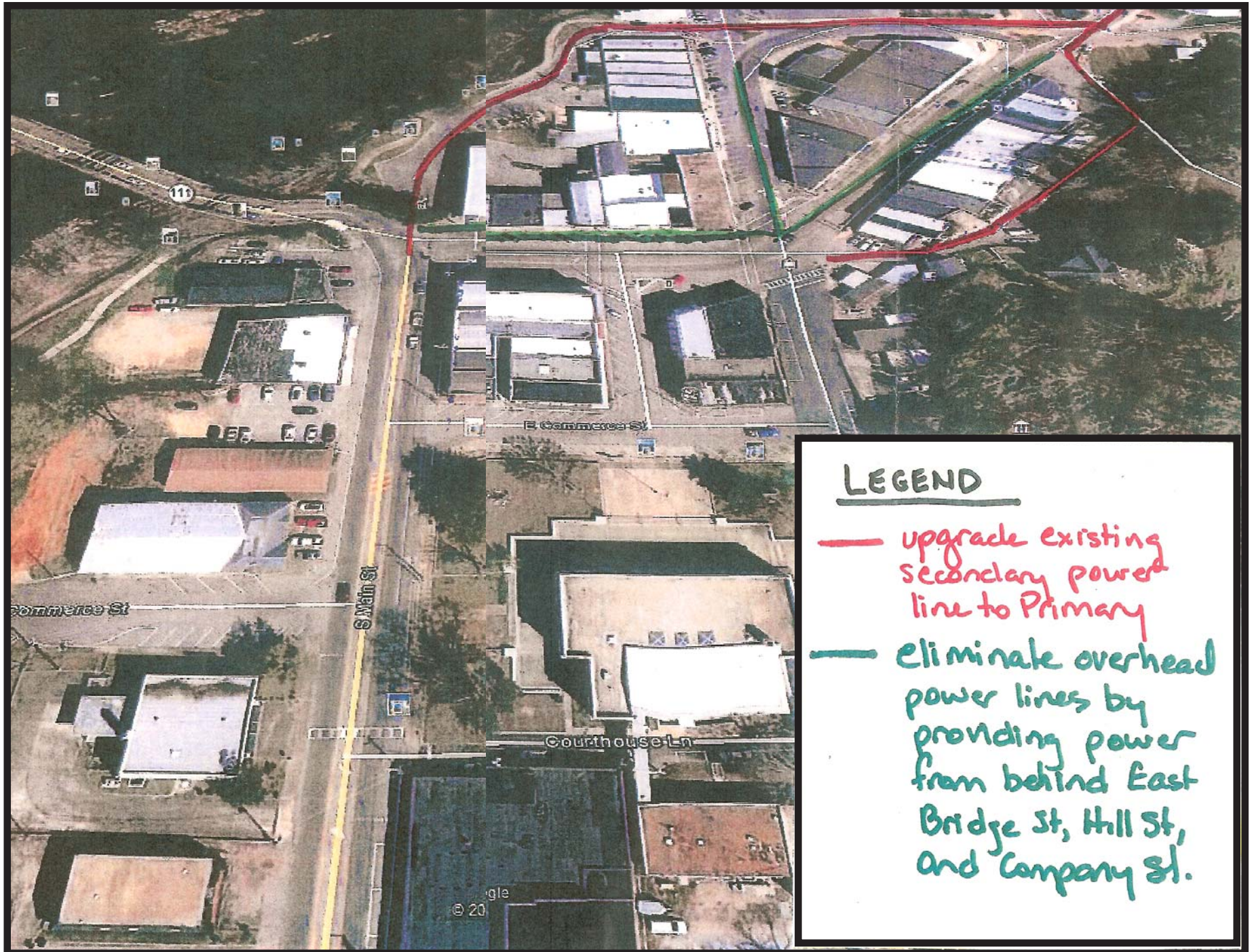
In the fall of 2013, the Southern Company - the study area's electrical provider - was approached about the idea of relocating overhead lines from some of Downtown Wetumpka's primary streets to some of the secondary streets. Per the rough map on the following page, overhead lines and their supporting utility poles would be removed on Bridge Street, Hill Street from Bridge to Orlin, and Company from Bridge to Orlin. To compensate for these changes, existing secondary lines on other streets would be upgraded. Those streets include Orlin from its westerly end just north of the bridge all the way east to Company, E. Bridge Street from Hill to Spring, and up Spring Street from E. Bridge to Company.

It is noteworthy that, while these upgraded lines would occur along other streets, much of those street segments are essentially alleys and have very little visibility. Examples of such conditions include Orlin from its western terminus to Hill Street, and E. Bridge from Hill to Spring. Both street segments are fronted by the rear of adjacent buildings on one side and have no development on their other side.

Approximate Costs with Caveats

While it must be emphasized that the cost estimates provided by the Southern Company are very preliminary and would require much greater refinement to arrive at an accurate number, it is believed at this point that the total cost would be in the neighborhood of \$350,000. However, that ballpark figure comes with the following caveats:

- City approval would be required.
- Additional easements might be needed to gain the needed access.
- Tree conditions would need to be studied and selected removal and/or trimming might be required.
- Some downtown utility poles are owned by BellSouth. BellSouth and Brighthouse would have to agree to transfer off all APCo poles.



LEGEND

- upgrade existing secondary power line to Primary
- eliminate overhead power lines by providing power from behind East Bridge St, Hill St, and Company St.

- Because street lights are mounted on utility poles for the streets where overhead utilities would be removed, alternative poles would be required. This plan's streetscape design proposes pedestrian-scaled historic looking street lights, but they alone may not meet traffic engineering standards for vehicular safety.
- Service to the former bank building at Bridge, Hill and Company will still have to be figured out.
- Businesses currently served with electrical service on the front of their buildings would have to be rewired for the rear access.

Of the various challenges summarized above, the most significant hurdle may be for the existing electrical service to the front of buildings to be relocated to the rear of buildings. Average costs per building would need to be estimated, and the willingness of effected owners to pay for that change would need to be gauged.