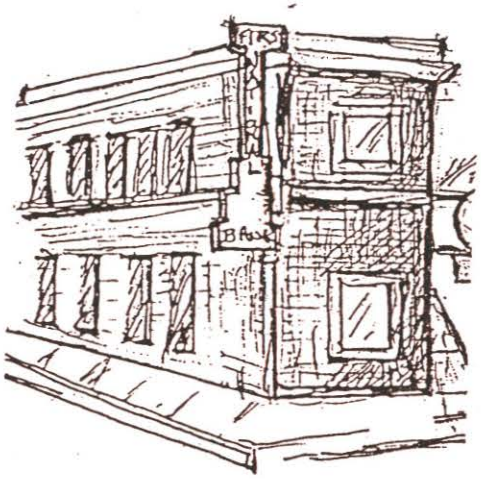

Wetumpka

DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT GUIDE

June/July 1995

Wetumpka

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June/July 1995

Funded in Part by:

The Alabama Historical Commission
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Montgomery, Alabama 36130

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Sources of Information:
Alabama Historical Commission
National Register Survey, by Marilyn Sullivan
Wetumpka Area Chamber of Commerce
Wetumpka Water Works and Sewer Board

WETUMPKA DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT GUIDE

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* maps accompany text

"As a district rich in natural as well as historic resources, the purpose of Downtown Wetumpka is to remain the heart of the community through business, recreation, service, and entertainment, while preserving our unique image and historic character. With pride in our heritage and progressive thinking for the future, Downtown will thrive and contribute to Wetumpka residents and visitors alike."

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide a guide for the improvement and future growth of Downtown Wetumpka. Changes are taking place rapidly, so it is important to know how to handle those changes and capitalize on the positive aspects. The process involved in the production of this guide included the evaluation of current conditions, goal setting, and planning for implementation. Initial planning is only the beginning of downtown enhancement. The Wetumpka Downtown Enhancement Committee has been able to set some standards and goals to be achieved in the near and distant future. These goals are set out in this document in such a way that anyone can read it and learn what the role of Downtown Wetumpka is and will be in the future. It should be read by everyone concerned with Downtown in order to bring people together in thinking about the future of the district and the community. The committee of 25 various citizens and local officials was the driving force behind the contents of this guide. Through active public participation and community involvement, this report will have achieved a status that makes it truly appropriate to Downtown Wetumpka.

Downtown Enhancement Committee:
Tom Edwards, Chairman
Mayor Alma Leak
Velma Gober, City Clerk
Jan Wood, Exec. Director, Wetumpka Area Chamber of Commerce
Kendall Smith, City Council
Dennis Fain, President, Wetumpka Area Chamber of Commerce
M.D. "Mike" Ray

Mary Jane Sanford	Gwen Turner
Robert Muncaster	J.H. "Jeff" Johnson
Gerry Schmidt	Rick Beauchamp
Randy Brown	Art Bolin
Fred Sumners	Barney Thames
Mark Wellander	Gary Mullins
J.D. Farrow	Earl Singleton
Jacqueline Austin	Betsy Sheldon
Julius Geeter	John Paul Leofsky
LaMarlowe Weldon	Mark Harris

II. DOWNTOWN HISTORY

The evolution of Downtown Wetumpka can be seen in its patterns of development that provide a visual record of its history. Wetumpka's rich agricultural lands and appealing trading location first attracted the Creek Indians, followed by Andrew Jackson in 1814 as he succeeded in gaining a treaty from the Indians to release their claims to the lands west of the Coosa River. By 1832, there had developed a trading post along the Coosa River known as Wetumpka.

Wetumpka's formative years were from 1830 to 1880, out of which emerged the unique character and configuration of Downtown Wetumpka. Wetumpka grew immediately to its prime location at the head of navigation on the Coosa River. Due mainly to its location as a transportation center, it managed to survive through trying periods of political unrest, natural disasters, and other hardships as in the 1830s when Daniel Pratt chose another nearby location (Prattville) to be the home of Pratt's cotton gin factory. Also, the opportunity to become the state capital in 1845 was missed.

The post-Reconstruction era brought renewed prosperity through banking, cotton brokerage, and utility companies. This type of commercial activity brought Wetumpka into the twentieth century with a strong presence. There are many landmarks Downtown that serve as evidence of this period in history and contribute to Downtown Wetumpka's status as a National Register of Historic Places District.

Economic prosperity and the advent of the automobile influenced the quality of roads and bridges serving the area by the end of the 19th century. The 1920s and 1930s were times of vitality for Wetumpka as these improvements in transportation made Downtown more accessible to outlying areas and changed the nature of commerce in Downtown. The first movie house opened in 1920, followed by a Ben Franklin store, and the 1931 construction of the Elmore County Courthouse. County offices had been located on this site in the upper floors of Hagerty Hall until 1884 when the first Elmore County Courthouse was built. This structure was later demolished by fire and the present courthouse was built. The Bibb Graves Memorial Bridge, a community landmark, was also completed in 1931 and is the only bridge south of the Mason-Dixon Line that boasts the technology of reinforced suspended concrete construction. From 1940 to 1959, Downtown continued to prosper with the addition of several new buildings on Hill and Orline Streets. Since the 1960s however, growth has been limited and businesses on the outskirts of town have begun to compete with the core commercial district, Downtown.

History *does* live in Downtown Wetumpka. This densely developed district built on the Coosa River follows the topography

and old territorial road patterns, containing quite a collection of clustered buildings that help to tell the story of how life has developed and thrived in Wetumpka.

III. CURRENT CONDITIONS

A. Commerce

Downtown Wetumpka today is still a thriving center for government and commerce, but the focus has moved further from retail establishments and entertainment to offices and service businesses. The continued increase in transportation opportunities and growth in Wetumpka helped lead the city to develop patterns of *sprawl* on the outer edges of the community. Commercial activity on these suburban roadways has impacted Downtown in the sense that the buying capacity of larger chain stores versus the small family business, made it hard for Downtown businesses to compete. The area has experienced some economic and physical decline, but there has been an upturn of events. There is a trend nationwide to return to the quality of life that a small town can offer. Realizing mistakes of rapid and uncontrolled growth, people have turned "back to their roots." This change is evident in the growth experienced in newer suburbs as well as established small towns near larger metropolitan areas. Within the past two and one-half years, thirty new, expanded, or relocated businesses have been added to Dowtnown Wetumpka. This is an exciting turn of events in such a small district and city. Only a very few of the new offices and service oriented businesses have ceased to exist in the past two years. In December of 1994, a movie, *Grass Harp*, was filmed in Downtown Wetumpka and the surrounding neighborhoods. The film was based on a semi-autobiographical novel by Alabamian Truman Capote. Wetumpka was chosen as the film site based on the typical charm and character of older small towns typical of Capote's book. Downtown is coming back into the spotlight of the community where it belongs. Public enthusiasm and pride have begun to be restored in this unique and historic district. The charge now is to capitalize on the positive characteristics of the area that can not be duplicated elsewhere. These characteristics are outlined in the following chapters, with detailed data that relays information such as land use, circulation, utilities, historic resources, and demographics in Appendix A.

B. Legibility

The legibility of a place is how it "reads." The accompanying map identifies points that add to the way Downtown functions. These are nodes of activity, landmarks, edges, district boundaries, gateways, major paths of transportation, and the historical significance of the Downtown core. The Coosa River as an edge of Downtown is obvious, but some of the other factors may not be, such as the three gateways at South Boundary Street and Main, Bridge Street and Main, and Company and Green Streets. These are the points at which one enters the Downtown district as it is different from the rest of the City. Major paths include Main Street, East Bridge Street, and Company Street as well as the one-way streets Hill and Orline.

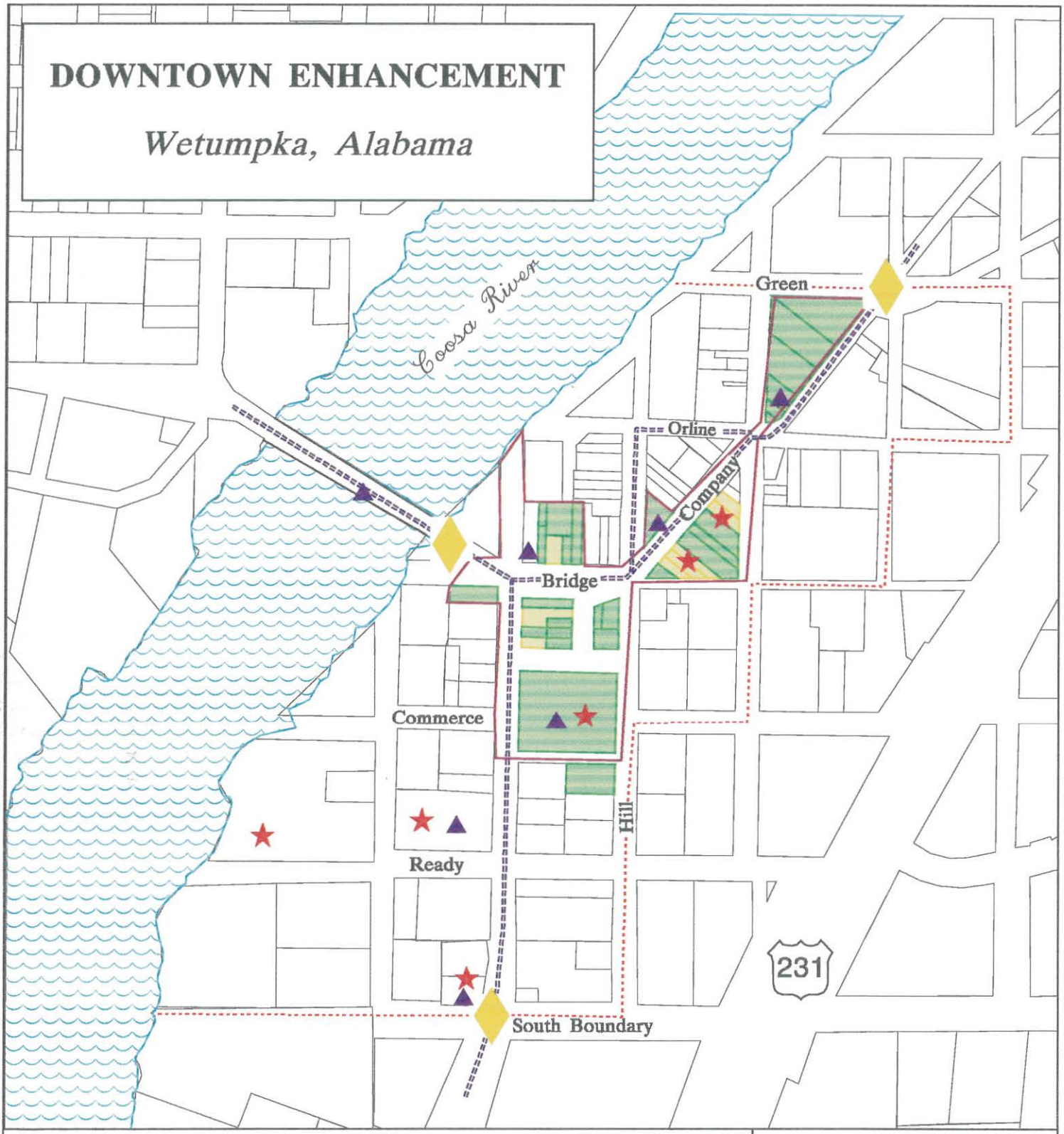
Landmarks that help to give the Downtown its identity are Bibb Graves Memorial Bridge; the Dairy Queen as a gateway marker upon entrance; Wetumpka City Hall; Elmore County Courthouse; the Fain Theater building; First National Bank; and Rose Geeter Funeral Home upon exiting Downtown to the north. Some of these landmarks are of historical or other special significance like the Bridge or the Courthouse. Other landmarks can simply serve as points that people may use to give directions to visitors, such as the Dairy Queen. The current major nodes of activity include the Dairy Queen, Gold Star Memorial Park, Wetumpka City Hall, Elmore County Courthouse, Little Sam's Cafe, and Wetumpka Fitness Center. These are the most populated places Downtown at any given time of day.

The legibility map also identifies the historic district as noted on the National Register of Historic Places. It is made up of contributing historic structures and non-contributing structures. The non-contributing status is given to historic structures that have been altered in such a way to disturb their architectural integrity. It may be possible to rehabilitate and add them to the contributing list of the National Register Nomination. The non-contributing buildings should be rehabilitated with materials and design appropriate to the district's historic character.

It is interesting to compare legibility every several years to see how certain aspects may change. Nodes of activity, major paths, and the historically contributing status of structures are the three most likely to change within the next ten or more years. Downtown Wetumpka has experienced a rebirth of sorts within the past few years and will continue to build on that with increasing commerce and pedestrian activity.

DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT

Wetumpka, Alabama



Legibility

- *Altered Structure*
- *Contributing Structure*
- *Downtown District*
- *Historic Downtown*
- *Major Paths*
- *Gateway*
- *Node of Activity*
- *Landmarks*

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IV. ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Downtown Wetumpka has many assets including the natural resources upon which the community was founded. Others assets relate to with the historic and physical environment. These assets far outweigh the liabilities, many of which may quickly be remedied or turned into positive aspects of the area.

Major assets of Downtown Wetumpka:

Natural Resources - Downtown's location on the bank of the Coosa River lends it a beautiful view of the river and surrounding vegetation. This, coupled with the trees of surrounding residential properties, provide a sense of enclosure and comfort for Downtown as well as helping to define it as a particular and special place within the City. Other than view, the Coosa River provides recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Existing Recreational Activities - Many groups already use Wetumpka's Gold Star Memorial Park as a base for their recreational outings, including the Capitol City Wanderers and Volksmarchers, and a group of walkers that enjoy a 6.2 mile trail that begins and ends at the park. Other groups are the Coosa River Paddling Club, the Montgomery Rowing Club (name soon to change) which is headquartered Downtown, and several cyclists and jogging clubs from Montgomery that have a couple of events per year in Wetumpka. These clubs bring people and activity to Downtown and are a major asset upon which to be capitalized.

Historic Resources - Downtown Wetumpka is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The district is significant for its architectural and historical associations. it is representative of commercial centers of the 19th and early 20th century in Alabama. National Register designation can help to promote community pride in Wetumpka's heritage; attract visitors; and provide federal tax credits for the certified rehabilitation of contributing buildings. A detailed outline of historic properties, the district boundary, and tax credit information is found in Appendix A.

Pedestrian Scale & Design - Just about everything in Downtown Wetumpka is within walking distance of everything else. The district is small and dense, potentially providing many goods and services in one place. The closeness of the buildings and narrowness of some streets make it more comfortable for pedestrians to walk and feel protected without vast parking lots to cross and traffic to fight. The building heights are consistently two and three stories. This scale also helps create continuity and definition for Downtown as a place.

Variety in Land Use - Many uses can be found among the close knit buildings. From retail to service business, government and civic institutions, recreation, and food establishments, there's a little of everything Downtown. Although, many of the buildings contain a use other than retail, offices and service oriented businesses are excellent reuses for vacated Downtown storefronts trying to compete with new commercial developments in other parts of town.

Elmore County Courthouse - As the county seat, Downtown Wetumpka is fortunate to have a landmark such as the Elmore County Courthouse. This neoclassical building with Egyptian Art Deco overtones sits at the end of Court Street as an anchor for downtown. The building provides convenient access to its services for residents, and also attracts visitors on business or pleasure trips to the area. The appearance of the Courthouse evokes civic pride that can spill over into the rest of Downtown.

Bibb Graves Memorial Bridge - This landmark deserves special attention as it is one of the few bridges of its type in the South. Its reinforced suspended concrete technology and design is typical in Missouri and Kansas, but unusual in Alabama. It is considered eligible for the National Register by the Alabama Historical Commission and the Alabama Department of Transportation. This bridge is unique and adds a certain character to the Downtown district. It has become somewhat of a logo for promotion of any business or event in Wetumpka. Of its type in the

Property Ownership - All but twelve of the ninety-three buildings and businesses are operated and/or owned by Wetumpka residents. Ten of these twelve belong to people within a fifty mile radius of the community and only two belong to out-of-state residents. Citizens, residents, and natives of Wetumpka will take pride in their property and naturally have a greater sense of responsibility to it than absentee landlords.

Citizen/City Involvement - As mentioned earlier, Downtown is home to the City government and the Chamber of Commerce. Both groups are actively involved in concerted efforts to develop Downtown into a thriving district that deserves special attention, promotion, and protection. Merchants, local officials, and property owners have all made efforts to make time for educating themselves, each other, and other residents on Downtown concerns and happenings. This interest and involvement on a group and organized level is *essential* in developing ideas for the present and future of Downtown.

Location - Wetumpka's location to surrounding cities is advantageous for a few reasons. With Montgomery only 15 miles away, the offerings of a larger city and State Capital can be conveniently accessed without having to live with some of the problems of a larger city such as traffic, crime, pollution, and congestion. Other surrounding cities such as Millbrook (15 miles) and Tallassee (15 miles) can also take advantage of Downtown Wetumpka's offerings as a County seat as well as some of the events that take place on the river and in Gold Star Memorial Park.

The following **liabilities** currently exist in Downtown Wetumpka. Each has the capacity to be removed or turned into a positive factor for the area.

Lack of Gateway Celebration - There are three main entrances into downtown. Main Street brings U.S. Highway 231 traffic from the south, the Bibb Graves Memorial Bridge leads people to the center of Downtown from the west, and Company Street brings traffic from the north off U.S. Highway 231 and State Highway 14. These accesses make Downtown Wetumpka very easy to get to from any direction with little trouble. The points of entrance into the district should announce one's arrival. Currently there is no special recognition such as signage, landscaping, or lighting to let visitors realize that they've arrived in a place that is unique as well as a source of pride for the community.

General Building Maintenance - Although dilapidation is not widespread in Downtown, the general maintenance of some buildings is not up to par with the standards that shoppers and Downtown visitors should expect from any business, especially those as unique or historic as Wetumpka structures. Cleaning and minor repairs are needed on many exteriors as well as in and around storefronts. The potential beauty or attractiveness of these buildings is not being reached.

Inappropriate Building Rehabilitation - The Wetumpka Downtown District has qualified for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. A few buildings however were noted as non-contributing structures, due to inappropriate facade rehabilitations that destroyed or concealed important identifying historic features. Quick-fix storefronts and facade screens that simply cover up the original structure are inappropriate and take away from the character of the whole area. Downtown is a very densely developed place and needs to maintain its original continuity by having adjoining buildings express their original historic integrity.

Crumbling Sidewalks - The time has come when, by natural deterioration, many of the sidewalks are in need of repair. Corners are crumbling, paths are cracked, and some areas are inaccessible to those who may have mobility hindrances such as the elderly or handicapped. Grass has begun to grow through some of the sidewalks, giving an appearance of neglect.

Trash cans on sidewalks - This is a quickly identifiable liability. Garrbage containers that are not for pedestrian use only should not be housed on the sidewalks in front of stores. They get in the way of pedestrians, are unsightly, and may produce a health hazard. This problem is easy to remedy and would show a little more care on the part of merchants and business owners.

Vacancies - There are only five vacant buildings Downtown, but any vacancy is a liability as it insinuates the failure of a business. There is a lot of space available Downtown, not only in vacant buildings, but in the vacant upper stories of most inhabited structures. Some repair may be required to make all available space usable, but that is one aspect of marketing a property for sale or rent that should be pursued in order to fill Downtown with the goods and services needed by residents.

Inconsistent Store Hours - Retail shopping Downtown may be difficult for some as shops open and close at varying times on various days. Wednesday afternoons are lost to potential customers and most of the Saturday shopping hours are not available to those who would like to shop Downtown but cannot be there during the week. Store hour inconsistencies may amount to less business overall for Downtown merchants.

Power lines - Power lines Downtown are a liability in the respect that they obscure the attractiveness of the streetscape. The poles and lines are placed in such a way that they are in certain cases the first and almost only thing pedestrians and vehicular travellers notice. Downtown is small and densely developed so that the placement, abundance, and size of the power lines somewhat overwhelms the area.

Traffic Flow - Despite the plentiful traffic direction signage, cars and trucks continue to either speed through the small streets or become confused at the direction. The few one way streets that warrant the "Do Not Enter" signs seem to cause problems for some. Speeders off the bridge and down Main and Company Streets also make it difficult for pedestrians to feel safe.

Signage Overabundance - Related to the traffic flow, is the overabundance of signage and barrels in the street to help people see where the roads change direction. Indication of the necessary one way streets and inherent odd angles is a must, obviously, but there are better ways to direct vehicles than to string several signs across the road. Signage also hinders the potential beauty of the streetscape.

Sewer and Stormwater Drainage - The least visible liability is also the largest and most costly to repair. The water and sewer lines in Downtown Wetumpka, like the sidewalks, have reached the age of repair. Potential problems exist in the future with these old lines and their connections that must be studied and planned for in order to avoid major damage and further costs to the City and property owners.

Lack of Protection - As Downtown is a special place, with many features that once destroyed could never be replaced, there is the need for some way to protect these historic resources. Whether it be by revisions to the City Zoning Ordinance, design guidelines to be followed, or just commitment on the part of property owners to treat their property in a manner appropriate and consistent with the rest of the district, some protection device needs to be in place. The current zoning attached to Downtown allows some inappropriate uses such as M-1, manufacturing. Gold Star Memorial Park for instance is in this M-1 zone, necessitates the need for a double check or revision of the City Zoning Ordinance.

V. OPPORTUNITIES

Based on the assets and liabilities identified, several opportunities for enhancement and promotion can be realized for Downtown. The following are **opportunities** for Downtown Wetumpka to capitalize on its assets and remedy its liabilities in order to work for the betterment of the district and the City.

Build on Natural Resources - The Coosa River is a major asset for Downtown Wetumpka. It is popular for recreation as well as providing a scenic view for Downtown workers and shoppers. There is also much vegetation that surrounds Downtown, not only on the river bank, but in the hills and vacant lots on the perimeter of the district. Wetumpka can build upon Gold Star Memorial Park and the beauty of the Downtown surroundings to actively promote the district as a fun and pleasant place to be.

Business Recruitment - Vacant buildings provide the chance to fill in these spaces with the goods and services needed or requested by the community. Variety is one key to inviting people to Downtown. When one can run several errands or shop several places at once, the willingness to travel to the area as a whole is enhanced. Also, a full Downtown looks like a prosperous Downtown, therefore a prosperous community.

Community Character - One aspect of Downtown Wetumpka's identity as a small and historic Downtown is the community feel and friendly, small town atmosphere that people enjoy. More and more people are seeking this atmosphere not only in a commercial district, but in the communities in which they live. This special attention to customers and visitors is something that a Downtown can provide better than a generic shopping center on the side of a highway. Wetumpka can make its Downtown known and shoppers feel welcome while also attracting potential residents.

Pedestrian Linkages - When making pedestrians feel comfortable on the streets and sidewalks, they stay in the area for longer periods of time. The small scale of the area lends itself to a lot of foot traffic or bicycle traffic with ease. One could easily park in one place and walk to several. This pedestrian aspect also ties in with the idea of recreation opportunity enhancement such as Gold Star Memorial Park.

Gateway Enhancement - The opportunity to "announce" one's arrival to Downtown exists at the three aforementioned gateways, west, north , and south. Recognition of the district at

these points will help define the area, bring attention to its significance, and invite people to stop and shop or do other business, not just drive through.

Circulation Enhancement - As mentioned earlier, there are some difficulties with the circulation of traffic in certain instances such as at the foot of the bridge and on the one way streets. Traffic may be controlled somewhat by enhancing other features that will cause cars to move more slowly or in a more determined direction. Renewed crosswalks, the timing of traffic signals, and medians and curbing may all work to accomplish the goals of current and overly abundant signage.

Beautification - To build upon the natural resources of a district lends itself to other types of beautification efforts within the business core. While there is not room for tree-lined streets, other plants and flowers may be used to accent buildings and soften the streetscape. They are also a psychological invitation for pedestrians as they have a comforting and even cooling effect on hot or cloudy days.

Continuity by Design - The idea that Downtown is a specific place leads to the notion that there are ties within that define the area. The historical aspects in Downtown are one defining factor for Wetumpka. When a streetscape of historic structures is broken up by one false facade, the appearance of the whole street is off set. Restoring buildings and adding appropriate treatment to them when needed is the chance to pull the Downtown image together.

Community Involvement - The very active Chamber of Commerce and City officials, along with others who have been so involved in the formulation of this guide can be the community link that gets others involved in and excited about Downtown. Wetumpka is blessed with many talented individuals, designers, architects, and others with a genuine interest in the preservation of communities as well as historic structures and districts. These people can be the instigators and educators for others who have a stake or interest in Downtown.

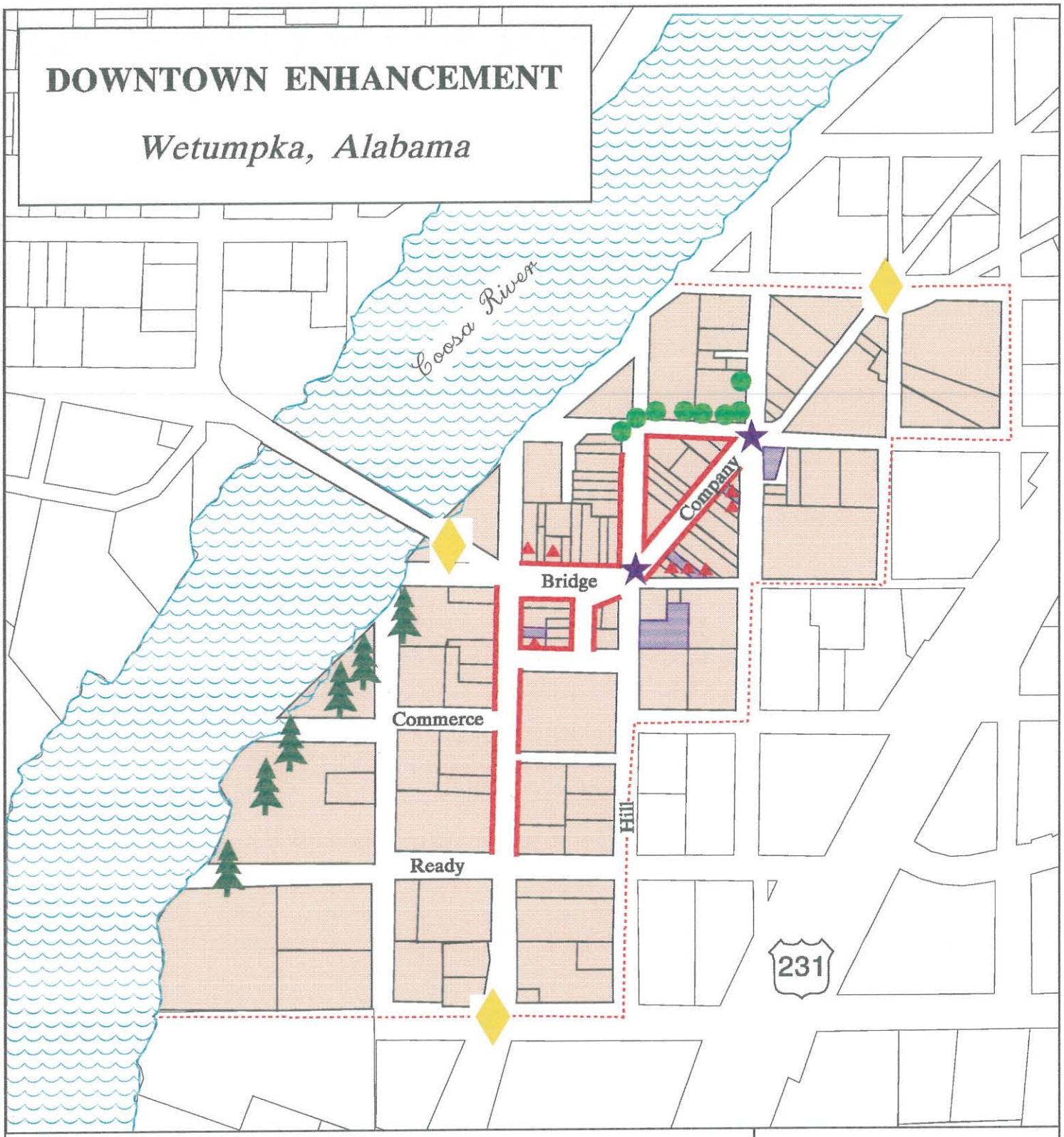
VI. VISION STATEMENT

Upon taking an indepth look at the Wetumpka Downtown district, the Downtown Enhancement Committee has derived a sense of purpose for the area. Based on input from the community, the mission of Downtown as stated in the "vision statement" describes the role the area will play in the community as a whole and what its priorities will be when making decisions for the future.

"As a district rich in natural as well as historic resources, the purpose of Downtown Wetumpka is to remain the heart of the community through business, recreation, service, and entertainment, while preserving our unique image and historic character. With pride in our heritage and progressive thinking for the future, Downtown will thrive and contribute to Wetumpka residents and visitors alike."

DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT

Wetumpka, Alabama



Recommendations

- *Downtown Enhancement*
- *Infill (Vacant Floor Space)*
- *Downtown District*
- *Sidewalk Repair & Replacement*
- *Future Landscaping*
- *Natural Resources*
- *Gateway*
- *Median Opportunities*
- *Restore Historic Character*

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VII. ENHANCEMENT PLAN

Enhancement is not restricted to beautification, although many enhancement projects involve beautifying the physical aspects of a place such as Downtown. Downtown revitalization or enhancement inevitably involves more than planting trees and placing flowers. In Wetumpka's case, the economic development and renewed interest in unique and identifying characteristics has begun the rebirth of Downtown as the heart of the community. In order to encourage more growth and activity Downtown, the assets must be capitalized upon and the liabilities reversed. Physical improvements as well as economic development strategies can result in a Downtown Wetumpka that is an even bigger source of pride for citizens, revenue for the merchants and the City, and attraction for visitors and new residents.

A. Streetscapes

Streetscape improvement includes everything one sees when looking down a street, from the skyline, building tops, buildings facades, sidewalks, and streets. Many areas in need of minor or major improvement were noted as liabilities earlier in this text. The projects range from small and simple improvements, to larger in scale and capital commitment types of improvement. To begin with the easiest projects will be advantageous to Downtown players for two reasons. First, and most obvious, they can be taken care of sooner than larger projects and with less immediate outlay of money. Second and most important to making Downtown plans actually happen is the fact that when people see tangible results early on, excitement is built, not only for Downtown stakeholders, but the general public as well. Interest in Downtown is maintained and people are encouraged to continue working and take on some of the more lofty goals.

The following is a list of streetscape improvement projects that should be pursued in Downtown Wetumpka.

- **Building Maintenance** - Cleaning of the building exteriors should be a part of the general maintenance that does not get forgotten. Older structures *should not* be sandblasted or power washed in order to remove paint or clean them. These treatments severely damage the masonry leaving it eroded and unprotected from weather and pollutants. Low pressure water washes are better for historic structures. Clean windows, inside and out, are a must at the sidewalk level. Any disrepair of signage or awnings should be corrected as soon as possible. A poorly maintained building suggests that the occupant does not care and that customers may

chose to shop elsewhere. Guidelines for maintenance and cleaning are available in Appendix B.

• **Storefronts** - Not only should signs in poor condition be repaired, but signs that are not appropriate to the building design should be replaced. Signs can draw attention to a business in anyform, but a well designed sign that adds to the character of the building can create a positive image for the business and add to the integrity of the whole street. General guidelines relating to size, number, and placement of signs are available as part of the Alabama Main Street Program. National Main Street specifications are part of the design guideline examples in Appendix B. Another aspect of storefront improvement is the window display. They must be kept clean and neat, but design is also important. Displays should be changed often enough to maintain the attention of passersby. Part of the success of shopping malls is in their visual merchandising techniques. Sensitively designed awnings may also be an appropriate addition to storefronts as a quick way to improve the looks but also give shade and protection to the pedestrian.

• **Vegetation** - The narrow streets of Downtown Wetumpka have never accommodated trees, but there is room for planters or hanging baskets of flowers and plants. The presence of plants on a sidewalk helps to soften the area and create a comfortable feeling that will entice shoppers to spend more time on the sidewalk or not mind walking more than a few feet from their car to destination. *Concrete* planters will last the longest, are more difficult to move, and would better fit the character of the area than wood. Painted wood boxes may work well on windows, but really should be protected from weather. This beautification effort is one of the easiest to begin, but planters must be maintained. An empty planter or one with dead plants is worse than none at all.

• **Gateway Enhancement** - As mentioned earlier, there is no announcement of one's arrival to Downtown from any of the three gateways. Even a simple sign that contains a Downtown logo, Chamber of Commerce logo, or Wetumpka coat of arms along with "Welcome to Historic Downtown Wetumpka" would be an attention getter for passers through. Keep in mind that the placement of this sign will be important in that the roadside or lot around it must be well maintained. That means not overgrown with weeds, or surrounded by an ill-kept parking area. The gateway should literally signal the entrance into Downtown, but the gateway areas themselves should show the same pride that the central core of Downtown does by looking their best. Gateway entrance designs should be consistent with each other, having the same treatment at each entrance.

• **Sign Location** - Related to the storefront and gateway signs, are the street signs that direct traffic and advertise services. Again signs are meant to be seen and draw attention to something, but they can also be overdone and take away from the general appearance of the district. The abundant "Do Not Enter" and "Wrong Way" signs that hang across the streets on cables should be removed. The message can be told with a "One Way" sign and a median instead. The collection of signs located at the end of Main Street and the foot of Bibb Graves Bridge need to be better organized and placed. Ideally, the many signs could be combined into a sort of Downtown Directory that would serve as a multipurpose sign and take care of the present jumbled appearance.

• **Landscaping** - Although the streets of Downtown can not accommodate trees, the public parking lot on Orline Street can. Landscaping around the outer edges of the parking lot and at its entrance will improve the Orline Street appearance and make the parking area more inviting.

• **Recreation** - Gold Star Memorial Park is already a busy place on the weekends. Many people use this park for a variety of recreational purposes. Downtown businesses can reap the benefits of the abundance of pedestrians and the district can use this natural resource as an attraction for visitors. With the addition of the Montgomery Rowing Club and other types of water transportation, the need for a second boat ramp exists. Two places for boats to be put in the water will be advantageous for the present and future users.

• **Power Line Adjustments** - One of the more difficult projects to take place Downtown will be the moving of some key power lines. As mentioned earlier, the current placement of such large poles and lines often dominate the view of the streetscape. The small scaled buildings and streets can not handle the heavy lines. Ideally, the Bridge, Court, and Commerce Street power lines may be buried. Other lines may be moved to the backs of buildings or some other position not so deterrent to the appearance of the streetscape.

B. Pedestrian Linkages and Transportation

Pedestrian linkages involve making people feel comfortable walking Downtown. Transportation encompasses not only automobile pathways such as streets, but pedestrian ways like sidewalks or bike paths. The goal Downtown is to make it easy for cars to maneuver and park, but also to provide a pleasant atmosphere for people to walk up and down sidewalks or across streets.

The following projects will be useful in enhancing the pedestrian experience as well as the traffic flow of automobiles Downtown. They range from the smallest to largest undertakings.

- **Repainting Designated Crosswalks & Parking Spaces -** Some clearer definition of crosswalks will be more visible for pedestrians and automobiles. Visibility may help to slow vehicles down somewhat, especially at the Bridge Street and Main Street intersection. Parking spaces need to be repainted, keeping in mind the need for handicapped parking Downtown. The City parking lot on Orline Street should be freshly painted and landscaped in order to make it more inviting to shoppers or visitors.

- **Median Additions** - The addition of two green space medians is recommended for the two five point intersections on Company Street that now utilize a sign-in-barrel technique to direct traffic. If there were an actual median with grass or shrubbery in the center of the street, traffic would find the direction obvious without the need for strings of "Wrong Way" signs.

- **Sidewalk Repair & Improvement** - As noted earlier, many Downtown sidewalks are in serious disrepair, others need only slight repairs and general maintenance to keep grass out. Beginning with the Downtown core and working outward would be the best approach to making improvements. The sidewalks along Bridge, Court, and portions of Main Street seem to be the most needy. Commerce, Hill, Company, and Orline Street sidewalks will also need attention, but more of the maintenance type than total replacement. When repairs are being made, it will be a appropriate to also meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards. This act sets forth guidlines for handicapped parking, access to sidewalks, and withing buildings.

- **Street Furniture** - Another pedestrian link that is not directly related to transportation is the provision of street furniture such as benches, especially near restaurants or other areas receiving a high amount of pedestrian traffic. People like to go where they can watch and be seen by others they know. Combined efforts to

attract and keep people Downtown will be important in the overall enhancement of the district.

C. Business Recruitment

There are few vacant storefronts Downtown, but the upper stories of almost all buildings remain empty. There is a lot of space to be utilized and as Downtown continues to thrive and grow, some suggestions should be kept in mind.

- A vacant storefront suggests failure, and also breaks up the continuity of the streetscape, especially if the vacancy is not well maintained. A full street looks prosperous and sends out a message to potential renters and shoppers. A commercial space on the ground floor that is for lease should be clean with the "ready for business" look that will invite investors to move right in.

- In a full and ideal situation, the retail establishments and restaurants will be on the street level with offices and some residential opportunities on upper stories. This doesn't mean that all offices must be upstairs, but retail businesses allow window shopping and give pedestrians something to look at as they walk down the sidewalk.

- In the search or recruitment for new businesses and services to locate Downtown, pay close attention to market demands. A market analysis will be helpful in determining what types of businesses are desired or needed Downtown. The citizen survey was enlightening in pointing out that not only do residents shop other area of Wetumpka, but there are a large number of things that people feel they have to travel to Montgomery to find. Appendix C gives specific information resulting from the citizen surveys conducted as part of this process. The responses will portray what people think of Downtown and what they would like to see. Downtown businesses can help each other by being complimentary rather than competitive. For example, dress shops near shoe stores and beauty parlors may allow one stop shopping for a special occasion. Also consider that one could shop Downtown and find something for the whole family; clothes, toys, books, sporting goods, cosmetics, food, etc. *Variety* is one key.

- The other key is *customer service*. What Walmart offers in scale, variety, and prices can be combatted by individual storeowners' service capabilities. Small shops get to know their customers and can better provide individual attention that larger chain stores can not. Merchants should remember this when considering what they are doing for their shoppers and what more they could do.

D. Historic District Continuity

A large part of the identity of Downtown Wetumpka stems from its historic character. As noted on the Legibility Map, there are only four structures that do not "contribute " to the historic integrity of the Downtown core which is on the National Register of Historic Places. It is important not to alter historic structures in such ways that would change their appearance to take it out of its original context. It is equally important to restore the character of altered buildings by removing the false fronts that may have covered up doors, windows, or other unique details that give a picture of the time in which it was built.

Not everything old is necessarily good, but in the case of Downtown buildings that exhibit craftsmanship or an architectural style no longer found in newer cities, the need to conserve these resources must be recognized. Once something is destroyed, it may never be replaced. Appendix A contains an inventory of Historic Resources keyed to a map that will be helpful in conveying what makes Downtown Wetumpka an identifiable place and not a generic space that can be found anywhere.

Advantages to historic preservation go beyond the visual appearance of an area. *Economic benefits* exist when a neighborhood is designated a local historic district, property values rise and investment is attracted. Designation as a National Register historic district provides tax credits for certified rehabilitations. Also, the labor intensive work of rehabilitation creates jobs for local residents. Preservation *promotes fiscal responsibility* in that it makes use of what already exists. It helps protect investments already made and reduces the demands for infrastructure that urban sprawl creates. Lastly, reuse and preservation *promotes community and individual responsibility*. It is a grassroots activity, giving the power to local residents and officials to protect what they have and organize to promote themselves.

VIII. IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES

A. Who, What, When, Where, & How

In considering the recommendations for Downtown enhancement, it is important to be able to organize roles, responsibilities, and have a clear idea of the options that exist. *Who* will be responsible for *what* and *how* they can accomplish the goal is as important as the recommendations themselves. There are many players involved in Downtown enhancement. The City of course will have decisions to make, but property owners, merchants, and citizens will also play a key role in making the ideas represented in this guide a reality. If the work that follows is not cooperative between the public and the private sectors, many of the goals will never be met.

To take each of the enhancement projects and answer these questions will be the easiest way to organize for results. It is important to remember is that small projects such as accomplished first will draw attention to the area and let people know that Downtown is continuing to improve. The following may be some of the smaller or least costly projects that get accomplished first.

- window cleaning
- extra care in creating good looking window displays
- planters put at storefronts
- oversized trash cans taken off sidewalks
- the organization of cluttered, overabundant street signage
- repainting of parking spaces and crosswalks

Some of the above projects will be the responsibility of the merchant, others will need to be taken care of by the City. Most of these are almost no cost types of improvements that can be done right away. One special note regarding the planters is that if plants are desired, they must also be maintained. Planters are an opportunity for a public - private cooperation. For instance, if the City offered to provide the planter itself and the first plantings, then the merchant or property owner could agree to maintain and replace plants as necessary. In the event that planters were neglected, they could be given to another merchant. That is just one example of how different stakeholders can work together for the good of the district.

Major projects will take longer to plan and more money to finance. The folowing are some of these projects.

- the cleaning or repainting of buildings - following established guidelines
- the addition of special signage or plantings at gateway entrances
- landscaping on Orline and Hill streets
- sidewalk repair
- power line adjustment
- median additions
- addition of special Downtown lighting or street signs
- the improvement of improperly treated storefronts

Although these projects require more investment and time, they are all most definitely achievable goals. The City should research available funding to help repair sidewalks, and add landscaping and medians. Tax incentives for the rehabilitation of historic structures are available to private property owners through the Alabama Historical Commission and the National Parks Service. Regarding the improvements to be made to buildings, Wetumpka is lucky to have talented designers willing to give their time and technical support to property owners wanting help in decision making. Quality design can all be accomplished by Downtown stakeholders and Wetumpka residents themselves without the need for regulations that could cause unnecessary hardships for all concerned.

B. Promotion

The *how* to make things happen involves not only the dollar amounts required, but also letting people know where you are and what you're doing. Promoting Downtown for what it has and what is coming will be important in letting citizens and visitors realize that Downtown Wetumpka has changed for the better and will continue to improve in many ways. The Wetumpka Magazine newspaper insert is a wonderful way to inform large numbers of people. Local newspapers and radio stations can be used to advertise Downtown as a district. Property owners and merchants can organize themselves to promote the whole area. Fundraising and promotional events such as a streetfest will also help draw attention and dollars to Downtown. Evening events would not deter traffic and could draw more people. Magazines such as Southern Living are regional and often feature cities or Downtowns not unlike Wetumpka. The *promotion* possibilities are endless.

C. Community Connections

A concentration of development such as Downtown, offers is a wealth of opportunity. History has proven that urban sprawl does not ultimately produce the desired results and creates more problems for the future. The Planning Board and City Council should make the commitment to see that the growth Wetumpka experiences and recruits is of the kind and quality that will allow them to maintain the quality of life that residents enjoy. The flight from urban centers such as Birmingham and even Montgomery has proven that unplanned and uncontrolled growth ultimately hurts the community. As mentioned before, downtowns can be real money makers. When rehabilitated and maintained, preservation is not always just for the satisfaction of historical societies and the sake of a good deed. Downtown should be given special attention in the city's comprehensive planning process in order to produce policy that will help Downtown to achieve the goals of a unified and unique place, offering something for everyone and protected from future harm by negligence or unsatisfactory development.

The designation of someone or some group with the responsibility of keeping the Downtown enhancement planning process in motion would also be advantageous to the district and to the organization plans being made and goals accomplished. This could be in the form of a volunteer, a Chamber of Commerce affiliated group, or a group of concerned citizens who want to help. The City Council should give this group authority to investigate and report on issues of concern to Downtown. Whatever the situation, these plans can actually happen with constant guidance and effort towards them.

PROJECT	TIME	$ COST LEVEL $	RESPONSIBILITY
organize a Downtown support committee or group	0 - 3 mths	low	Downtown Committee/*/City & Chamber support
remove large trash cans from sidewalks	immediately	$0	merchant
clean store windows & displays	immediately	low	merchant
weed sidewalks	immediately	low	City
general maintenance clean/repair buildings	within 1 yr.	medium	property owners
market analysis to determine needs/demands	within 1 yr.	low - medium	merchant/downtown organization supporters
cement planters/maintenance	0 - 2 mths.	low - medium	merchant/property owner/City or combination
gateway enhancement	1 - 2 yrs.	medium	City
sign repositioning public/private	6 - 12 mths.	low - medium	merchants & City
landscaping	12 -18 mths.	medium	City
sidewalk replacement	12 - 24 mths.	high	City/*/ISTEA funding
power line adjustment	12 - 24 mths.	high	City/*/Alabama Power cooperation consider special lighting at this time
repaint parking & crosswalks	within 1 yr.	medium	City
median additions	12 - 24 mths.	medium - high	City/*/sidewalk replacement ISTEA
promote area as a whole	now	low medium high	merchant City property citizens by support

D. Design Review

It is easy to confuse a simple review process with a mandated control, but they are not the same. In historically significant or otherwise special areas, a review can help to ensure that the beauty and design of an area is maintained. Downtown Wetumpka gives identity to the community, therefore special treatment of the land and structures is appropriate.

An established design review committee could function as an educator for property owners who wish to make improvements to their buildings. Design review is also a protection device. A design review board that is given authority to approve proposed physical changes can help to ensure that plans made in Downtown work together to ensure the unified character of the district. Maintenance of district character is one of the aforementioned goals that will help to promote Downtown as a desirable place to shop, work, and even live.

The following comparison may help to clear any confusion related to the purpose of design review vs. aesthetic control.

DESIGN REVIEW VS. AESTHETIC CONTROL

Aesthetic Control	Design Review
* dwells upon the superficial aspects of the visual setting & is narrowly focused; prescriptive.	* broadly oriented to encourage the creative use of design principles to a specific site.
* seek to severely limit choices	* expands choice & flexibility
* concerned with product; looks only	* concern with performance; how it functions *and* looks.
* exclusionary	
	* different solutions to a general criteria (guideline).
* rigid rules	
	* involves collaboration & accommodation throughout the design process; *voluntary* with incentives.
* involves mandates	
* values conformity	
	* values creativity

(Adapted from Planning Advisory Service Report #454: "Design Review", Mark L. Hinshwaw)

In conclusion of the implementation opportunities, a few key words to remember will be....

PROMOTE the area

EDUCATE people and each other

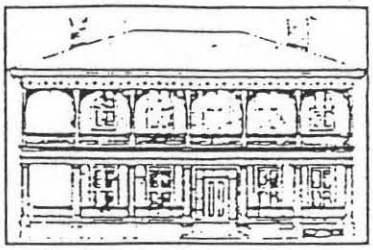
ORGANIZE to work together

PLAN for growth

LOOK for needs to serve

ENHANCE the positive

These are what will be necessary to bring PEOPLE. The existence or lack of people determines the success or failure of any development and can not be forgotten. Market demands and customer service will be the consumer oriented aspects of enhancement that cost nothing.



Alabama Historical Commission

468 South Perry Street (P.O. Box 300900)
Montgomery, AL 36130-0900 205/242-3184

WHAT ARE PRESERVATION TAX INCENTIVES?

Preservation Tax Incentives are a credit that can be taken on your federal income tax for work done to renovate historic buildings. This is a dollar for dollar reduction of your tax, not just a deduction to reduce your earnings. These incentives are one of the few tax credits available to encourage real estate development.

WHAT KIND OF BUILDINGS QUALIFY?

To use these tax incentives, the building must be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, either as a contributing part of a historic district, or an individual listing. In general, buildings must be 50 years old or older to be eligible. You have to do some research on the building in order to get it listed on the Register. To find out if your property is listed, or for help getting it listed, contact the Alabama Historical Commission.

WHAT ARE ELIGIBLE REPAIRS?

You must do what's called a "Certified Rehabilitation." In general, this means you try to save as many of the important things about the building as possible, like repairing original windows rather than replacing them. All the costs involved in renovation of the building are eligible, except costs involved in buying the building, furnishings, landscaping, or parking.

HOW MUCH DO I HAVE TO SPEND?

Either $5000.00 or more than the adjusted basis of the building, which ever is greater. The adjusted basis is the amount you paid for the building, minus the cost of the land, minus any depreciation you have already taken. To be eligible, the building must be used for income-producing purposes: offices, farms, or residential rental.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR THE CREDITS?

You must fill out a two-part application describing the building and the work to be done and take pictures of the building inside and outside before you begin work. Send the application and two sets of photographs (black and white or color) to the Alabama Historical Commission. The project is reviewed at the Commission before being sent to the National Park Service for final approval. The review by the Historical Commission is a public service, but the Park Service will request a $250.00 fee. If there are any problems with what you plan to do, they can almost always be spotted at the state level. We notify you of any problems and work with you to find a solution before any fees are charged.

HOW DO I TAKE THE CREDITS?

When you have completed your work, take photographs of your restoration. Send two sets of photos along with a one-page "Certification for Completed Work" to the Historical Commission for review and referral to the National Park Service. Depending on how much you spend on the restoration, you may have to pay an additional fee. The Park Service will send your "Certification for Completed Work" back to you, and you should file this approved form with your federal income tax forms when you claim your credits.

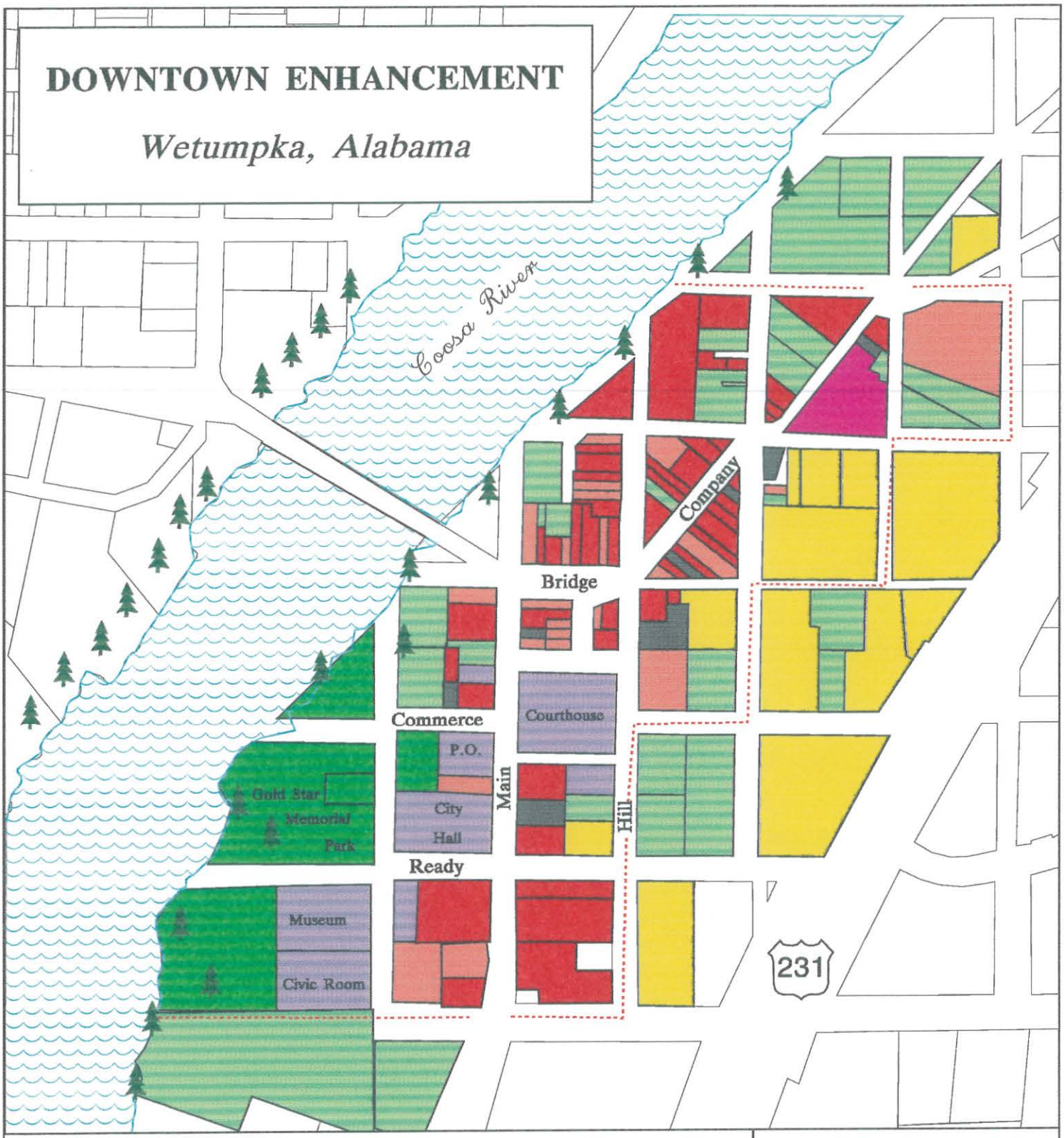
For applications or further information, please contact the
ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

APPENDICES

DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT
Wetumpka, Alabama
Bridge
Commerce
Bell
Rice
231
Land Use
Commercial
Residential
Institutional
Vacant Lot
Light Manufacturing
Vacant Structure
Office / Professional
Downtown District
Park
Vegetation
N

DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT

Wetumpka, Alabama



Land Use

- *Commercial*
- *Institutional*
- *Light Manufacturing*
- *Office / Professional*
- *Parks*
- *Residential*
- *Vacant Lot*
- *Vacant Structure*
- *Downtown District*
- *Vegetation*

N

Feet

0 200 400

APPENDIX A

1. Land Use

The land use pattern in Downtown Wetumpka is typical of small and historic Downtowns. It is a mixed use, multi-purpose district that has over the years replaced many retail functions with service type businesses and offices. The competition spurred from newer shopping centers elsewhere in Wetumpka and out of town has proven difficult for small businesses to compete. Wetumpka is fortunate however to have a very low vacancy rate, 4.7 percent, and has maintained several shops and services such as pharmacies, gift shops, a book store, food service establishments, banking, the Post Office, City Hall, and recreational opportunities, among others. This mixture of uses provides the variety needed in order to keep an area active. The accompanying map illustrates what types of uses are located Downtown and where they are found. Although many buildings are two or three stories in height, the bottom floors are the only utilized areas for pedestrian traffic with the exception of five offices, one service business, and one retail establishment which have each expanded to their second story. The following is a list of uses and the number of structures or lots in which each use is contained.

- Commercial 45
- Office/Professional 22
- Residential 6
- Vacant Structures 5
- Vacant Lots 17
- Institutional/Public 8
- Light Manufacturing 1
- Parks and Open Space 2

TOTAL 106

2. Circulation

As the Downtown streets follow original old territorial road patterns, they are somewhat narrow and difficult to navigate compared to newer street patterns in other areas of the city. Downtown is configured at angles along the Coosa River bank, resulting in some odd five point intersections. These intersections link the very core of the district and tend to carry alot of through traffic. Crosswalks for pedestrians do exist but are not very noticeable as the paint has worn and faded. Every building is fronted by sidewalks, though some are in need of repair and accessibility improvements. Parking is available at most storefronts, whether it be parallel or angular. Public parking lots adjacent to the core of Downtown are not well marked and are underutilized. The following itemizes parking locations and space numbers.

• Orline Street City lot	58
• Water Works lot	47
• Bridge, Court, Company Commerce, & Hill Streets	242
TOTAL	347

A map on the following page will point out several circulation features as they currently exist. These include traffic signals, stop signs, yield signs, pedestrian crosswalks, and problem intersections.

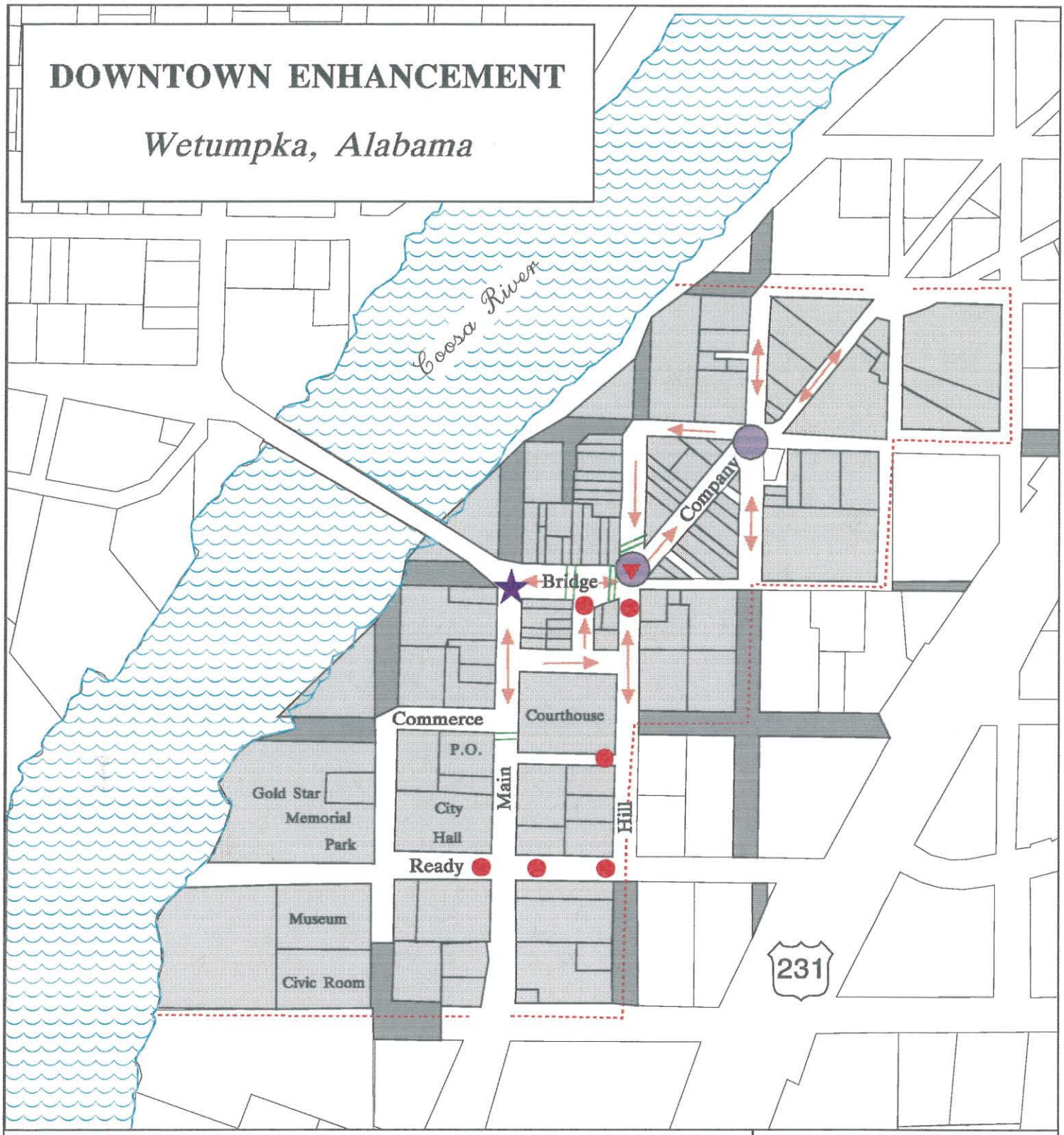
3. Utilities

A variety of utility systems provide the necessary services to Downtown. The water, sanitary sewer, storm drainage, and solid waste systems are city-owned utilities. Electricity is provided by Alabama Power and natural gas by Alabama Gas Corporation (Alagasco).

The capabilities of the existing powerlines exceed the demand being made on them at the present. This capability allows for future development and increases in usage without problem. The water supply is also not yet at full usage capacity. The amount of water available through the current sewer system is adequate to accommodate future growth, but the sewer and water lines themselves may be in danger due to their age and natural deterioration of the clay from which they were made at the time of placement.

DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT

Wetumpka, Alabama



Circulation

- *Former Right-of Way*
- *Downtown Enhancement*
- *Downtown District*
- *Traffic Signal*
- *Crosswalk*
- *One-Way Traffic*
- *Two-Way Traffic*
- *Problem Intersections*
- *Stop Sign*
- *Yield Sign*

N

Feet

0 200 400

4. Demographics

When setting goals for a community or a district's future development, it is important to look at whom the area will serve. The population of Wetumpka and its characteristics will be important in determining what is needed for Downtown and may be the best choices for new businesses or services that want to locate or will be recruited to the area.

Population Trends - Since 1960 Wetumpka's population has gradually increased, until the last official census count of 4,134 in 1990. The largest increase in population occurred in the eighties and shows no signs of slowing down.

Community Composition - The population of Wetumpka is composed of 52.2 percent females and 47.8 percent males. The city's black population makes up 27.5 percent of the total and other minorities, 0.6 percent. These percentages have not changed much according to past census counts. The rate of growth is proportionate throughout gender and race.

Age Breakdown - As most small, old towns have the reputation of being retirement age communities, Wetumpka has proven to be quite different. The largest group of the population is between the ages of 20 and 40 years old, 41.8 percent. The second largest group at 18.6 percent is the 5 to 19 year old age group. Ages 45 to 64 make up 18.1 percent while the 65 and older group are 15.8 percent. Those under 5 total 5.7 percent of the population.

Income - Between the years of 1980 and 1990, the median family income of Wetumpka residents more than doubled, from $15,028 to $31,451. This is higher than the state average, but lower than Montgomery and the United States averages. The number of persons below the poverty level decreased by 192 at this time, but the number below poverty level is still 15 percent.

Employment - The number of persons employed in manufacturing, industries, and public administration decreased between 1980 and 1990. At the same time, the number employed in retail trade, personal services, and professional services increased. This may indicate a trend toward "white collar" employment, however, since 1990, formerly lost industries have been replaced by new manufacturers such as Russell Corporation who will open a new textile plant near Wetumpka in 1995.

Place of Employment - Based on travel time of residents to their workplaces, 42.7 percent of the population works in Wetumpka, while 41.4 percent travel to Montgomery.

5. Historic Resources

Some of the structures remaining in the historic commercial district can be attributed to the early days of Wetumpka. The district contains 25 contributing historic structures of significant location, design, integrity, material, and workmanship which have been individually evaluated and described in a National Register of Historic Places survey. There are 8 potentially-contributing historic structures obscured by removable coverings and inappropriate alterations that damage their historic character.

(1) Rose Geeter Funeral Home

Location: 221 Company Street
Construction Date: 1910 or 1925
Description: Three story brick commercial building featuring an arched center entrance to the upper floors and a handsome stone frieze above the entrance.
History: This structure served as the social and economic hub of the black community and was traditionally known as the Rose Geeter Funeral Home.

(2) Renaissance Technology

Location: 211 Company Street
Construction Date: 1920
Description: One story storefront with a gable front, cinderblock and frame structure with brick veneer facade.

(3) E. Anthony Taxi Stand & Barber Shop

Location: 201 Company Street
Construction Date: 1884
Description: One story brick veneer storefront attached to a one story brick restaurant.

(3) Chicken Shack

Location: 201 Company Street
Construction Date: 1920
Description: One story brick restaurant attached to the adjacent one story brick storefront.

(4) Austin's Flowers

Location: 124 Company Street
Construction Date: 1905
Description: One story brick storefront with new brick veneer facade.

(5) The Outlet

Location: 120 Company Street

Construction Date: Pre-1855

Description: Two story brick commercial building facade coated in textured stucco. The windows and storefront have been altered.

(6) Wetumpka Fitness Center

Location: 114 & 116 Company Street

Construction Date: Pre-1885 or 1890

Description: Two story, five bay, brick, commercial building with decorative cast iron pilasters at street level, two paneled wooden storefronts both intact and two over two windows with arched heads. It has simple brick corbeling and star shaped tie rod anchors embellishing the facade.

(7) & (8) City Barber Shop & Camelot Travel

Location: 112 Company Street

Construction Date: Pre-1885 or 1900

Description: Two story commercial building with three bays and a pyramidal parapet. The second floor windows are bricked in.

(9) Prudential, Ballard Realty and G&M Development

Location: 110 Company Street

Construction Date: Pre-1885 or 1900

Description: Two story commercial building with pressed metal cornice and pilasters. This six bay building has two intact wooden storefront entrances.

History: Thornhill Hardware opened here in 1907.

(10) ECH Home Health

Location: 108 Company Street

Construction Date: 1900

Description: Two story commercial building, part of neighboring 110 Company street building.

(11) Litle Sam's Cafe

Location: 106 Company Street

Construction Date: Pre-1885

Description: Two story stuccoed brick and permastone facade.

History: The 1885 Sanborn insurance map indicates a drug and book store at this location. Little Sam's Cafe opened here in 1909.

(12) Vacant Structure

Location: 104 Company Street

Construction Date: Pre-1885

Description: Two story brick comercial building with a new brick facade and jalousie windows at the second level.

History: The 1885 Sanborn map indicates a restaurant was located here followed by a dry goods store for many years.

(13) C&C Hair Studio

Location: 102 Company Street

Construction Date: Pre-1885

Description: Two story brick commercial building with second story fenestration bricked in. The storefront was altered to aluminum sash and the bake house was added to the rear between 1897 and 1903.

(14) Custom Art By Columbus

Location: 100 Company Street

Construction Date: 1925 or 1945

Description: One story brick commercial building with an unembellished storefront configuration.

(15) First National Bank and Jackson Thornton & Co. Accountants

Location: 101 Company Street

Construction Date: 1905

Description: Two story triangular tan brick bank and office building with a First National Bank clock mounted an the corner, decorative masonry banding at the cornice and lime and urn finials at the top of the corners. It also has metal sash windows.

History: Hohenburg and Company purchased this corner in 1891 and opened the First National Bank here in 1905. Extensive fire damage occurred in 1908 in which the structure was either remodeled or rebuilt in 1910. It is the site of the mid-19th century Carnochan Block which was occupied variously by G.D. Robison Drug Store, the telephone exchange, and a ladies millinery parlor.

(16) Shear Talent

Location: 109 East Bridge Street

Construction Date: 1855

Description: Two story stuccoed brick commercial building with full daylight basement and a tall parapet. It has a three bay facade with a nine over nine double hung wooden sash and louvered blinds. The storefront has been altered.

History: The second floor was the site of the City Council Chambers c. 1885-1903 and the L.R. Robison and Brothers Store c. 1938.

(17) Paul H. Hebel, Attorney at Law

Location: 107 East Bridge Street

Construction Date: 1925 or 1935

Description: One story brick storefront that rests on tall brick piers with altered neoclassical entrance.

History: King's Barbershop in 1938.

(18) American Eagle

Location: 105 East Bridge Street

Construction Date: 1920

Description: One story brick storefront resting on tall piers. The facade is obscured by a metal covering and the storefront is altered to aluminum sash.

History: This structure was the location of the Ben Franklin Store in 1938.

(19) Wetumpka TV and VCR Repair

Location: 103 East Bridge Street

Construction Date: 1920

Description: Simple one story brick front resting on tall brick piers that originally had a multipaned full width transom over the central entrance storefront with multipaned windows.

History: Walter Gaines Grocery in 1938.

(20) Riverview Office Building; Colonial Jewelers and M.D. Ray Contractors

Location: 101 East Bridge Street

Construction Date: 1925

Description: Two story brick commercial building with a full basement. The storefront was altered and the second story windows are screened.

History: The Fain Theater opened here in 1920.

(21) Ross Wright Agency

Location: 100 East Main Street

Construction Date: 1930

Description: One story mixed-bond brick service station and auto repair shop with Tudoresque features.

(22) Central Alabama Appraisal, Southland Concepts, and Elmore County Pregnancy Center

Location: 102 East Bridge Street

Construction Date: 1903

Description: Monumental three story brick building with a two story western extension. Exposure of three streets. Four bay Court Street facade has simple vertical brick courses which suggest pilasters. The windows have square heads. The East Bridge Street facade has arched window heads as does the two story Main Street facade. All upper floor windows are boarded and street level storefronts "modernized".

History: Built as the Lancaster Hotel after this block burned in 1902.

(23) Olde Town Antiques

Location: 103 East Main Street and 104 Court Street

Construction Date: 1903

Description: Large two story L-shaped building that fronts both East Main and Court Streets.

(24) Elmore County Finance

Location: 106 Court Street

Construction Date: 1903

Description: Two story brick commercial building which survived inpart after the 1902 fire. Window and storefront alterations do not completely deny the building of its character because of surviving brick corbeling at the cornice line.

(25) Vacant Structure

Location: 109 East Main Street

Construction Date: 1903

Description: Two story brick commercial building built after 1902 fire. Three bay facade with corbeled brick parapet and arched brick door and window heads. Entrance altered to aluminum framed door.

(26) Jacqueline E. Austin, Attorney at Law

Location: 108 Court Street

Construction Date: 1855

Description: Two story brick commercial building which survived in part of the 1902 fire. Existing facade in c.1903. Three bay facade has a corbeled brick cornice and an unusually well-preserved wooden storefront.

History: Occupied for many years by E.M. Cain Drugstore which located here in 1867.

(27) Cousins Family Dentistry

Location: 101 Commerce Street

Construction Date: 1903

Description: Two story brick commercial building with the original south and west facades obscured by stucco and synthetic shingle siding. The second floor windows were altered to multipaned fixed sash with fixed colonial shutters

History: This structure is known as the Wetumpka Insurance Company Building which was on this site as early as 1867 and presumably burned in 1902.

(28) Jones Accounting Service

Location: 110 Court Street

Construction Date: 1855

Description: Two story brick commercial building which survived in part the 1902 fire. Three bay facade with exposures on Court and Commerce Street. 1902 brick veneer covers.

History: Early 20th century location of City offices.

(29) Elmore County Courthouse

Location: Commerce Street

Construction Date: 1931

Description: Monumental two story neoclassical building with Egyptian Art Deco overtones. Central loggia supported by eight massive fluted columns. Architrave embellished with large medallions and flowerettes. Metal sash windows.

(30) Sisters-N-Effect

Location: 109 Court Street

Construction Date: 1905

Description: Two story three bay brick commercial building with exposures on Court, Commerce, and Hill Streets. Corbeled brick cornice. Wooden storefront intact. Court Street windows altered at second level. Arched two over two openings with iron ventilators on Commerce Street.

History: In 1909, location as an automobile showroom. Arched "garage" opening and ramp in rear still intact.

(31) Vacant Storefront

Location: 107 Court Street

Construction Date: 1876

Description: Two story brick commercial building with a new brick facade that respects original window and storefront configuration.

(32) Wetumpka Area Chamber of Commerce

Location: 110 East Bridge Street

Construction Date: 1900 or 1910

Description: Two story white masonry bank building with strong vertical emphasis created by tall narrow windows and neoclassical detailing. Pilasters support the wide architrave above the first floor windows. The pattern is repeated on a smaller scale at the second level.

History: Built as the Bank of Wetumpka

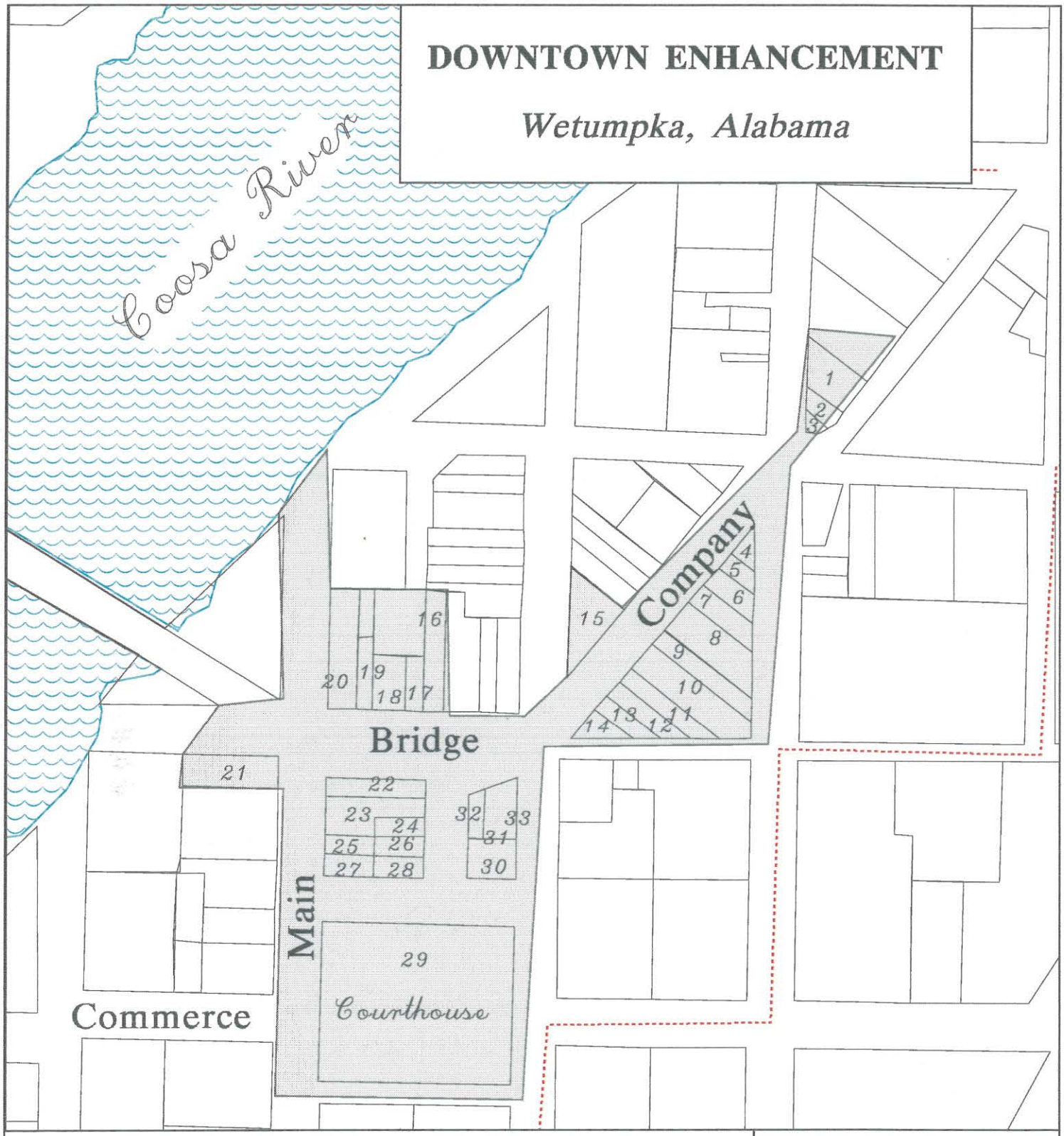
(33) Edwards and Edwards, Attorneys at Law, and Bridge Street Books

Location: 116 and 118 East Bridge Street

Construction Date: Pre-1885 or 1900

Description: Two story stuccoed brick commercial building with a six bay facade with two storefront entrances now altered to aluminum sash.

History: The wrought iron stair on the east side of the building was salvaged from the 1884 Court House.



Historic Resources

Historic Resouces

Downtown District

Note: Numbers correspond to list and descriptions in text.

N

Feet

0 100 200

APPENDIX B

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design guidelines can be very strict and enforceable standards set out in an ordinance that apply to new or existing structures. Guidelines can also serve as only suggestions for the most appropriate way to treat a building or development. For Downtown Wetumpka, some standard must be realized as the character of this historic district is so important to the community's identity. Design guidelines will be helpful to property owners who wish to improve their properties. The following examples give a broad base from which to work.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:

- A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a *new* use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site environment.

- The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterized a property shall be avoided.

- Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

- Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

- Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

- Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.

- Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that can cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

- New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

- New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

(An expanded version of the Secretary of the Interiors's Standards for Rehabilitation is available through the Alabama Histrical Commission or the National Parks Service.)

Excerpts from the *National Trust for Historic Preservation - Main Street Guidelines:*

The following are excerpts from the storefront guidelines used by the Main Street Programs throughout the nation. These highlights relate to masonry surfaces, signs, awnings, and color. More detailed information can be obtained through the Alabama Main Street Program and the Alabama Historical Commission.

- **Masonry Surfaces**

Cleaning should only be undertaken by experienced professionals. As mentioned earlier, aged brick or stone can be eroded by improper cleaning techniques such as sandblasting.

Unless it is necessary for the protection of the surface, painting is not recommended. Exposed masonry should be left unpainted, and a previously painted surface should be *repainted* rather than chemically cleaned.

- **Signs**

A storefront should not have more than two signs, a primary sign, and a smaller secondary sign.

A flush-mounted sign board may extend the width of the storefront but should be no more than two and one half feet high. The sign should be mounted above the storefront display windows and below the second story window sills. Lettering should be 8 - 18 inches high and occupy about 65% of the signboard.

A hanging sign should be at least eight and one-half feet above the sidewalk and extend no more than five feet.

Window signs should not get in the way of the display area.

Awnings can also serve as signs with contrasting lettering painted or sewn onto the valance. Usually 6 - 8 inch letters are sufficient.

Sign colors should complement the colors of the building. Light colored letters on a dark background are easier to read.

- **Awnings**

A street-level awning should be mounted so that the valance is about 7 feet above the sidewalk and extends out between 4 and 7 feet from the building.

An awning can be attached above the display windows and below the cornice or sign panel.

Inappropriate storefront alterations may be disguised by mounting an awning over the alterations while maintaining the proportions or a traditional storefront.

Aluminum awnings or canopies generally detract from the historic character and should not be erected. If a flat canopy exists, it can be dressed up with a 12 - 24 inch awning valance.

- **Color**

Three colors are sufficient to highlight any storefront. The base color appears on the upper wall and piers flanking the storefront. This color is usually the natural brick and won't require paint. If the building has been painted, a color should be selected that relates to the surrounding buildings.

Major trim color defines the decorative elements of the building, tying together the upper facade trim and the storefront. The trim color should compliment the base color. If there is natural stone or terra-cotta trim on the facade, it should serve as the color and paint is not necessary.

Minor trim color should enhance the color scheme established by the base and major trim colors. Often a darker shade of the major trim can be used to highlight the window sashes, doors and selective cornice details.

Care should be taken not to overdecorate the building facade.

APPENDIX C

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The need to involve the general public stems from the necessity that there be *community support* for Downtown efforts. Isaac Newton said "Every action has an equal yet opposite reaction." This couldn't be more true from a community planning standpoint. Anything that happens anywhere in Wetumpka will have an effect on Downtown and vice versa. This could mean business decisions, traffic patterns and flow, development decisions (what & where), and so on. The point is, everyone should know what the goals for Downtown are and should be convinced to respect and help work toward these goals when making decisions.

Multiple efforts were made to involve the community in this planning process. The citizen advisory committee was key in linking the process to the people it will benefit. Also, three surveys were conducted. One telephone survey was made to random residents one evening to ask questions regarding the offerings of Downtown Wetumpka and the shopping habits of those interviewed. The same survey was given to high school students at Wetumpka High School to complete and turn in. A third and different survey was handed out to all Downtown merchants and businesspeople. The merchant's survey was related to the merchants view of Downtown, its assets, problems, and priorities. Copies of each of these surveys accompanies this report along with a listing of the popular responses from which many of the ideas and proposals in this Enhancement Guide stem.

RANDOM TELEPHONE SURVEYS
total responses = 44

1. a = 13%
   b = 25%
   c = 62%

2. a = 12%
   b = 52%
   c = 36%

3. a = 20%
   b = 29%
   c = 29%
   d = 22%

4. a = 18%
   b = 52%
   c = 18%
   d = 12%

5. (written responses were taken directly from the survey)
   Montgomery
   malls
   retail shopping
   Winn Dixie
   Walmart
   more variety

6. a = 18%
   b = 8%
   c = 37%
   d = 37%

7. Would like to see.....

Entertainment *	No Change
Restaurants *	Movie Theater *
Retail	Hotel
Shoney's	Hardware Store
Craft Stores	Dress Shop
Specialty gift shops *	Multi- purpose Department Store
Doctors offices	Improved property
Children's activities	Variety & Quality merchandise *
Tea Room	
Mini Mall	* top five responses

8. **a = 74%**
   b = 20%
   c = 6%

9. **a = 37%**
   b = 35%
   c = 28%

DOWNTOWN WETUMPKA
CITIZEN OPINION SURVEY:

("Hello, my name is _____ OPTIONAL _____.) I'm calling for the Wetumpka Downtown Enhancement Committee. We're not selling anything, but want to know your opinion if you have a couple of minutes to answer a few questions."

As plans are being made to enhance Downtown, this survey is being conducted in order to gather Wetumpka residents' thoughts about the area.

1. Where do you tend to make your major purchases such as clothing?

   a. Downtown b. Elsewhere in Wetumpka c. Out of town

2. Where do you go most often for entertainment or eating out?

   a. Downtown b. Elsewhere in Wetumpka c. Out of town

3. What is the place *Downtown* that you most often spend money or time?

   a. Restaurant b. Service business c. Specialty Store d. Recreating

4. What is the *second* place Downtown that you most often spend money or time?

   a. Restaurant b. Service business c. Specialty Store d. Recreating

5. What is the place/reason you most often spend money/time *not in Downtown Wetumpka?*

   _____

6. What time of day do you prefer to do most of your shopping?

   a. morning b. mid-day c.afternoon d. night

7. Please list what kinds of businesses, services, or other opportunities you would like to see in Downtown Wetumpka?

   _____

   _____

   _____

	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
8. Most Downtown buildings are attractive outside	a	b	c
9. Most Downtown buildings are attractive inside	a	b	c
10. Most Downtown stores have good merchandise selection	a	b	c
11. Downtown businesses seem concerned with quality and customer satisfaction	a	b	c
12. Downtown advertising is informative/effective	a	b	c
13. Downtown traffic flow is usually pretty good	a	b	c
14. Downtown parking is available & convenient	a	b	c
15. Walking Downtown is safe & pleasant	a	b	c
16. Downtown should be the center of commerce in Wetumpka	a	b	c
17. Downtown should an attraction for visitors	a	b	c
18. Our historical & natural resources (as the Coosa) give Downtown its character and should be preserved	a	b	c

19. If you had the power, what would you really want to *keep* in Downtown?

_____

_____

20. If you had the power, what would you really want to *get rid of* in Downtown?

_____

_____

Finally, please share a little about yourself--this is *strictly confidential.*

21. How many years have you lived in Wetumpka? ____

22. Do you work in Wetumpka? If not, where? a. yes b. no c. other_____

23. Are you....? a. male b. female

24. What is your age? a. under 21 b. 21-40 c. 40-65 d. over 65

*** Thanks so much for your time!**

10. **a = 41%**
b = 22%
c = 37%

11. **a = 73%**
b = 20%
c = 7%

12. **a = 55%**
b = 17%
c = 28%

13. **a = 84%**
b = 12%
c = 4%

14. **a = 61%**
b = 29%
c = 10%

15. **a = 71%**
b = 13%
c = 16%

16. **a = 78%**
b = 11%
c = 11%

17. **a = 82%**
b = 8%
c = 10%

18. **a = 100%**
b = 0%
c = 0%

19. keep.....
everything
movie sets
river activities *
historical aspects *
Courthouse *
Gold Star Park
quality retail
church by the bridge

20. get rid of.....
junk
run down look *
salvage lots
trash
flea markets *

* most common responses

21. Average years lived in Wetumpka = 21

22. workplace = 23% Wetumpka
55% Montgomery & others
22% don't work or retired

23. Male = 41% Female = 59%

24. Age = under 21 = 6%
21 - 40 = 39%
40 - 65 = 32%
over 65 = 23%

(Please note that the male/female ratio and the age group represented is consistent with Wetumpka demographics, making the survey more valid.)

WETUMPKA HIGH SCHOOL SURVEYS
total responses = 98

1. a = 15%
   b = 2%
   c = 83%

2. a = 2%
   b = 25%
   c = 73%

3. **a = 37%**
   b = 33%
   c = 19%
   d = 11%

4. a = 36%
   b = 24%
   c = 24%
   d = 16%

5. (written responses were taken directly from the survey)
   Montgomery
   Bowling
   Movies
   Malls
   Fast Food

6. a = 7%
   b = 24%
   c = 45%
   d = 25%

7. Would like to see.....

Restaurants *	Mall
Movies *	More Clothing Stores *
Bowling *	Music Store *
Recreation	Krystal
Beauty Supply Shop	Wendy's
Bars	Card Shop
Copy Shop	Youth Gathering Places
Bakery	
Gift Shops	* top five responses

8. **a = 43%**
   b = 43%
   c = 14%

9. a = 30%
   b = 33%
   c = 37%

10. a = 16%
    b = 56%
    c = 28%

11. **a = 46%**
    b = 30%
    c = 24%

DOWNTOWN WETUMPKA
CITIZEN OPINION SURVEY

This survey is being conducted by the Wetumpka Downtown Enhancement Committee in order to gather Wetumpka residents' feelings and opinions about Downtown. The area considered "Downtown" covers the Wetumpka Herald to the North, the Dairy Queen and Touch of Class to the South, and the Coosa River to the West. The Eastern boundary is not a straight line as it encompasses only the open streets in and around this business district.

As plans are made to enhance and promote Downtown, it is important to learn about the needs and concerns of citizens as they relate to the area. The committee is particularly interested in the opinion, interests, comments, etc. of the youth of Wetumpka. Please take time to complete this survey along with any additional comments you may have.

Please circle one answer per question:

1. Where do you most often make your major purchases such as clothing?

a. Downtown **b. Elsewhere in Wetumpka** **c. Out of Town**

2. Where do you most often go for entertainment and eating out?

a. Downtown **b. Elsewhere in Wetumpka** **c. Out of Town**

3. Where Downtown do you most often spend money and/or time?

a. Restaurant **b. Service Business** **c. Specialty Store** **d. Recreating**

4. What is the second place Downtown that you most often spend time and/or money?

a. Restaurant **b. Service Business** **c. Specialty Store** **d. Recreating**

5. Other than Downtown Wetumpka, where do you most often spend time and/or money?

_____

6. What time of day do you prefer to do most of your shopping?

a. Morning **b. Mid-day** **c. Afternoon** **d. Night**

7. Please list what kinds of businesses, services and other opportunities you would like to see in Downtown Wetumpka?

_____

_____

Please share your thoughts and attitudes about Downtown Wetumpka?

	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
8. Most Downtown buildings are attractive outside	a	b	c
9. Most Downtown buildings are attractive inside	a	b	c
10. Most Downtown stores have good merchandise selection	a	b	c
11. Downtown businesses seem concerned with quality and customer satisfaction	a	b	c
12. Downtown advertising is informative/effective	a	b	c
13. Downtown traffic flow is usually pretty good	a	b	c
14. Downtown parking is available and convenient	a	b	c
15. Walking Downtown is safe and pleasant	a	b	c
16. Downtown should be the center of commerce in Wetumpka	a	b	c
17. Downtown should be an attraction for visitors	a	b	c
18. Our historical and natural resources (Coosa River) give Downtown its character and should be preserved	a	b	c

19. If you had the power, what would you really want to keep in Downtown?

_____

_____

20. If you had the power, what would you really get rid of in Downtown?

_____

_____

Finally, please share a little about yourself – strictly confidential.

21. How many years have you lived in Wetumpka and/or surrounding communities? _____

22. Do you work in Wetumpka? Yes_____ No_____ If not, where _____

23. What is your sex Male _____ Female _____

24. What is your age? Under 16 _____ Over 16 _____

Thanks so much for your time? Please feel free to make additional comments on the bottom of this page.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension Service
AUBURN UNIVERSITY

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12. a = 34%
b = 37%
c = 29%

13. **a = 66%**
b = 30%
c = 4%

14. a = 28%
b = 60%
c = 12%

15. **a = 59%**
b = 22%
c = 19%

16. **a = 58%**
b = 11%
c = 31%

17. **a = 75%**
b = 8%
c = 17%

18. **a = 89%**
b = 5%
c = 6%

19. keep.....
Courthouse
Bridge lamps
Barber Shop
Restaurants *
Post Office
Chicken Shack
First National Bank
Old look *
Small town atmosphere
Park *
Dairy Queen
stores fixed for *Grass Harp* *
Trails
Fitness Center *
Little Sam's
Recycling
Thames Pharmacy

20. get rid of.....
Trashy looking buildings *
Drugs
Crime
Nothing
Parking Problems

* most common responses

21. Average years lived in Wetumpka = 15

22. Workplace = 35% Wetumpka
42% Montgomery
23% do not work

23. Male = 44% Female = 56%

24. all respondents were between 16 & 19 years of age.

WETUMPKA DOWNTOWN BUSINESS SURVEY

This survey will give every business in Downtown Wetumpka the op unity to have input in the upcoming Downtown Enhancement Guide. Efforts are being ma to discover ways to enhance and promote the Downtown district and your ideas and concerns be key in helping the project become something useful for Wetumpka, citizens, local als, merchants, and property owners. Please take a minute to complete this survey and it w picked up or you may return it to City Hall. This is **strictly confidential** and your hones nions will be appreciated.

1. What type of business do you operate?
   a. retail b. service c. office/professional other

2. What are your hours of business?

Monday	_____	Saturday	_____
Tuesday	_____	Sunday	_____
Wednesday	_____		
Thursday	_____		
Friday	_____		

3. Where do you feel your greatest competitors are located?
   a. Downtown b. Elsewhere in Wetumpka c. Out of town

4. Please rate the following on what should be their level of importance in Downtown:
   0 = not important at all ---------- 10 = very important

   a. business hours _____
   b. customer parking _____
   c. employee parking _____
   d. landscaping--plants, trees, or flowers _____
   e. marketing/advertising _____
   f. physical condition/sidewalks & buildings _____
   g. historic preservation _____
   h. special signs or lighting _____
   i. what is planned for other areas in Wetumpka _____

5. List any other items you feel are of importance in Downtown.

   _____
   _____
   _____

6. Would you be interested in involvement in a Merchant's Association tha ld work together on projects for Downtown Enhancement?
   a. yes b. no

WETUMPKA DOWNTOWN BUSINESS SURVEY
total responses = 11

1. a = 30%
   b = 25%
   c = 45%
   d = 0%

2. Hours of business were basically consistent:

   Monday - Friday opening anywhere from 7:00 - 9:00 a.m.
   closing anywhere from 5:00 - 5:30 p.m.
   Saturday varied; open either morning or afternoon, but not all day.
   Sunday - closed

3. a = 10 %
   b = 42%
   c = 48%

4. (average ratings of importance)
   a = 6.4
   b = 8.0
   c = 5.3
   d = 6.5
   e = 7.2
   f = 5.5
   g = 7.5
   h = 7.7
   i = 7.2

5. other items of importance....

underground utilities	small town feel
landscaping	river walkway
utilize waterfront	park areas for employees' breaks
clean up junk	enforceable rules re: trash

6. **a = 85%**
   b = 15%