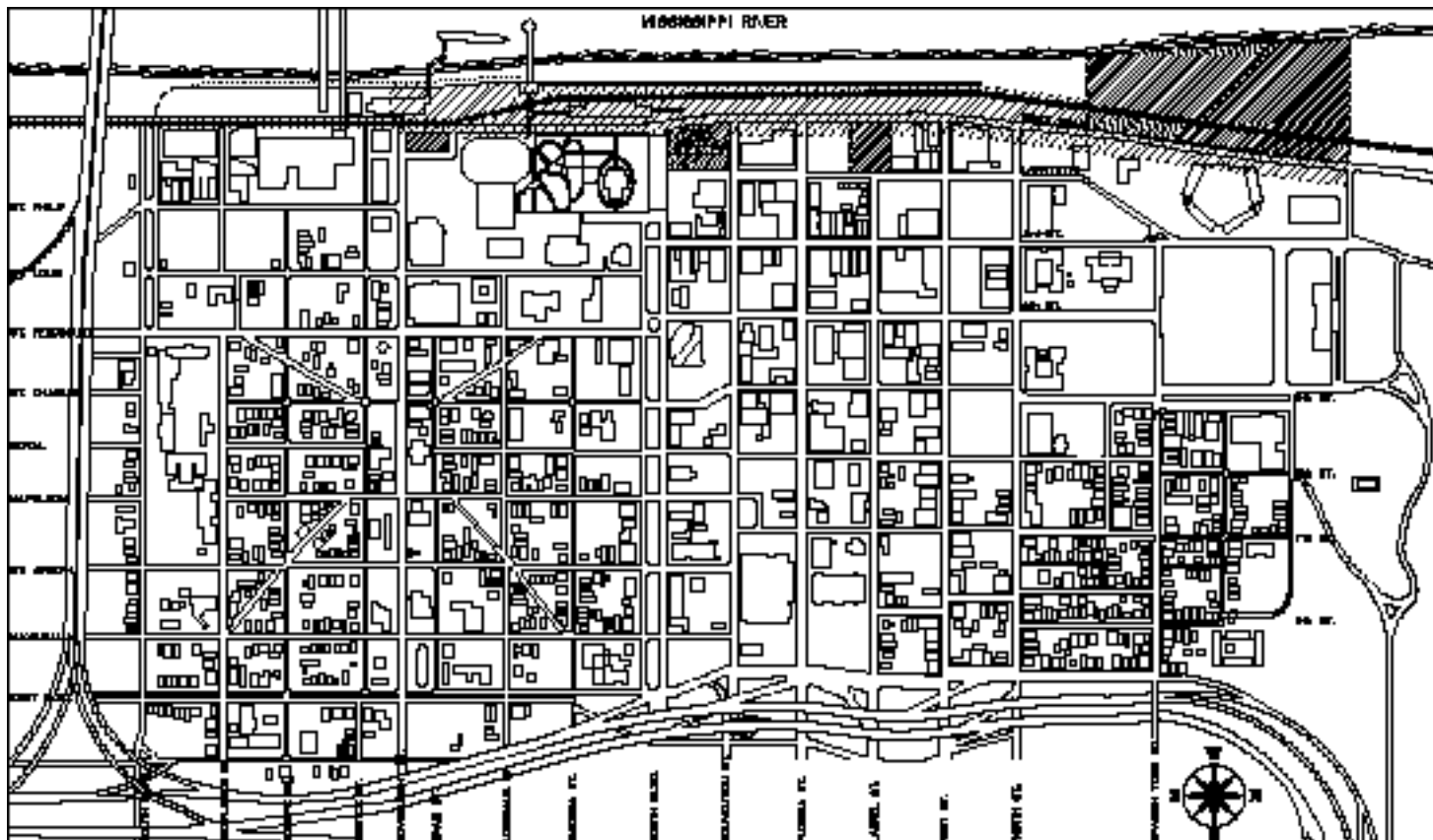


THE DOWNTOWN PARKS CORRIDOR



DOWNTOWN PARKS CORRIDOR

SUMMARY:

This trajectory stretches from Catfish Town to the State Capitol. It is an open space plan that incorporates the new square at Catfish Town, the refurbished Lafayette Park, a new plaza at the termination of Laurel Street, and the park to be built across

from the Pentagon Barracks. These squares, plazas and parks provide accessibility to the river from the Downtown. This trajectory includes the transformation of River Road itself from a highway to a drive, making it easier to cross and more pleasant to walk along.

PLAN BATON ROUGE

DPC-1

Project Name: River Road Redesign

Observation: The River Road acts as a barrier separating the Downtown from its river.

Discussion: The physical design of River Road, while less obstructive than the elevated highways found along the banks of many urban rivers, nevertheless is an impediment to pedestrian crossing. There are several reasons: First is the road's high-speed highway-style geometrics; the second is the presence of the dual railroad tracks; and the third is the steep slope of the embankment.

The problem of geometrics is discussed in Traffic in General. The basic remedy is to transform the highway into a parkway by converting the two outer driving lanes into parking lanes. This change would slow down the traffic, yielding a more pedestrian friendly environment, as well as providing much-needed parking. The streetscape, now raw and treeless, must be lined with trees. The downtown must access the river from new parks at the higher level of Lafayette Street. These are discussed under the sections on the Lafayette Park and Laurel Plaza. The resulting four points of river access constitute a system of places, perfectly spaced to be within walking distance of every sector of the Downtown.

Recommendation: Redesign River Road to be more hospitable to pedestrians. See Transportation in General.

Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

[The city and state agreed to redesign and provide funding to remove the high-speed curve. The new 20-mph curve is completed, but the additional on-street parking will be added after building construction is completed - SEE EXHIBIT B.]

DPC-2

Project Name: Square at the Centroplex

This new square is discussed in Catfish Town District section CTD-1.

DPC-3

Project Name: Lafayette Park

This new square is discussed in Old State Capitol District section OSCD-4.

DPC-4

Project Name: Laurel Plaza

Observation: The Downtown does not have effective visual access to the river. Laurel Street provides an opportunity to create a place where the river can be viewed.

Discussion: The Mississippi River has a mystical attraction to residents of Baton Rouge. It is capable of providing an anchor for the retail, somewhat less effective than the cinemas, but nevertheless of consequence. Even if River Road could be easily crossed, a view of the river must be secured from the east side of River Road. At the termination of Laurel Street there are building sites available on both sides of the street. The city should vacate the street at this last block and donate it to adjacent owners on the condition of a joint development of a publicly accessible plaza. This space would be at the elevation of the Lafayette Street overlooking the embankment to the river. The sides of this plaza would be made available to restaurants and bars.

Recommendation: Engage the landowners on either side of Laurel Street in a discussion for the joint development of a plaza over a vacated Laurel St. with the assigning of ownership as an incentive.

Responsibility: Downtown Development District

[The developer for Riverside Condominiums has agreed to incorporate this concept if feasible.]

DPC-5

Project Name: Batture Park [DeSoto Park]

Observation: Batture Park [DeSoto Park] is currently under design as part of the State Capitol District.

THE DOWNTOWN PARKS CORRIDOR

Discussion: The land mass slated for Batture Park [DeSoto Park] is the largest one remaining along the shores of the Mississippi in proximity to the Downtown. At first sight, it seems evident that its design should be conceived to make use of its potential capacity as a venue for gatherings.

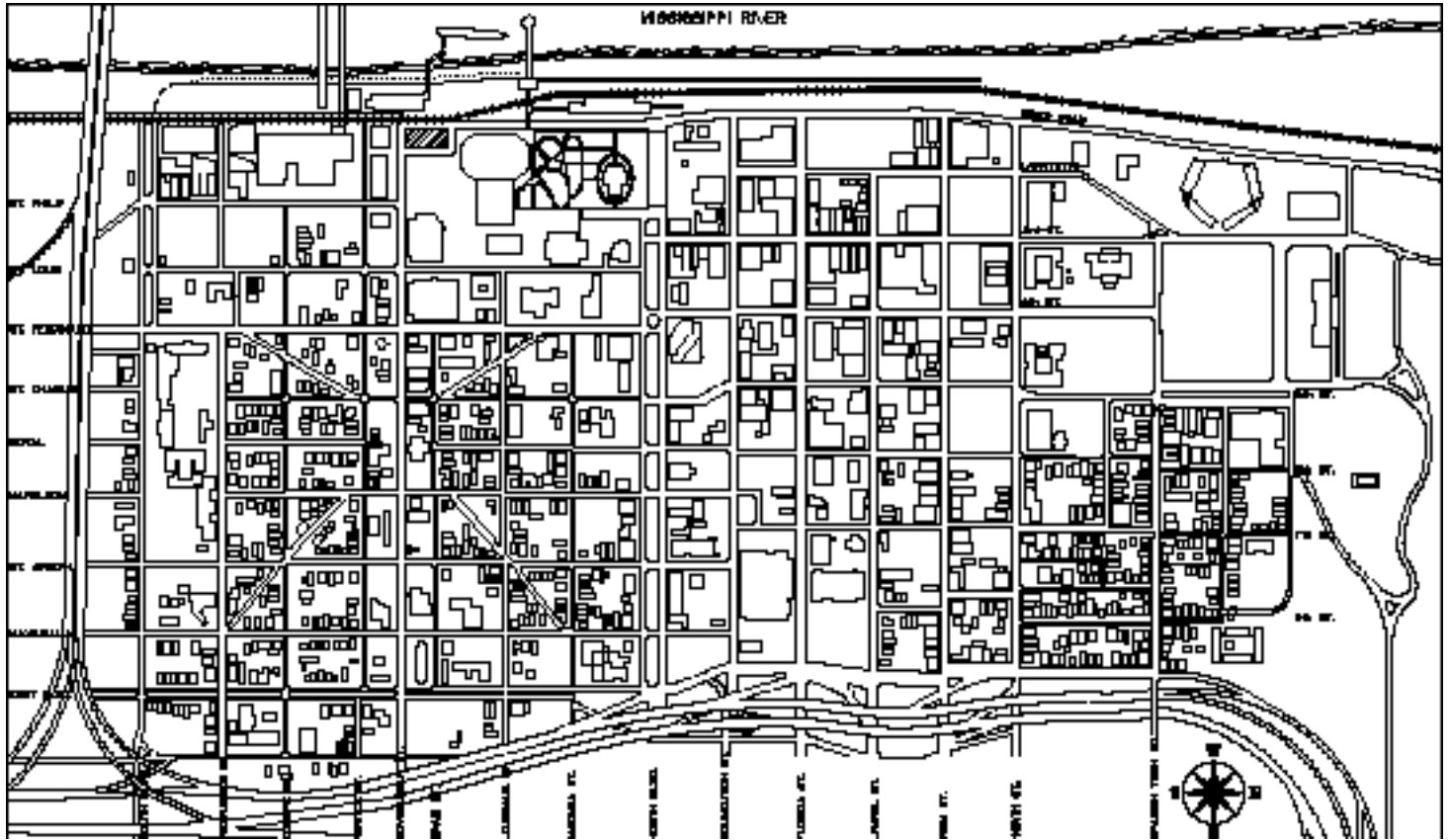
However, for festivals, it is not particularly well located relative to the commercial elements of the Downtown that would stand to benefit. The alternative design as a large naturalistic park may fare no better than the other similar parks on the Capitol grounds that are currently under-utilized. Public space in America, to be effective must have its activity supported by building at its edges.

As an ecological park demonstrating the ecology of the Mississippi, it has some promise if associated with the public education curriculum. This should be explored as it is compatible with the historical sub-text of the State Capitol Master Plan.

Recommendation: Follow the design of the State Capitol Master Plan.

[Michael Van Valkenburgh provided a concept design for the riverfront park in cooperation with State Capitol architects. At the request of State Division of Administration, Plan Baton Rouge facilitated a Charrette in late February 2002 to determine programming for the riverfront park. The charrette design team included Eskew+, Suzanne Turner, Audubon Institute and the Waterfront Center. The process yielded exciting plans which are being developed. - SEE EXHIBIT C]

PLAN BATON ROUGE



PROPOSED SQUARE AT THE CENTROPLEX



THE FIRST CIVIC PLACE: SQUARE AT THE CENTROPLEX

NOT IMPLEMENTED

THE DOWNTOWN PARKS CORRIDOR

EXHIBIT B



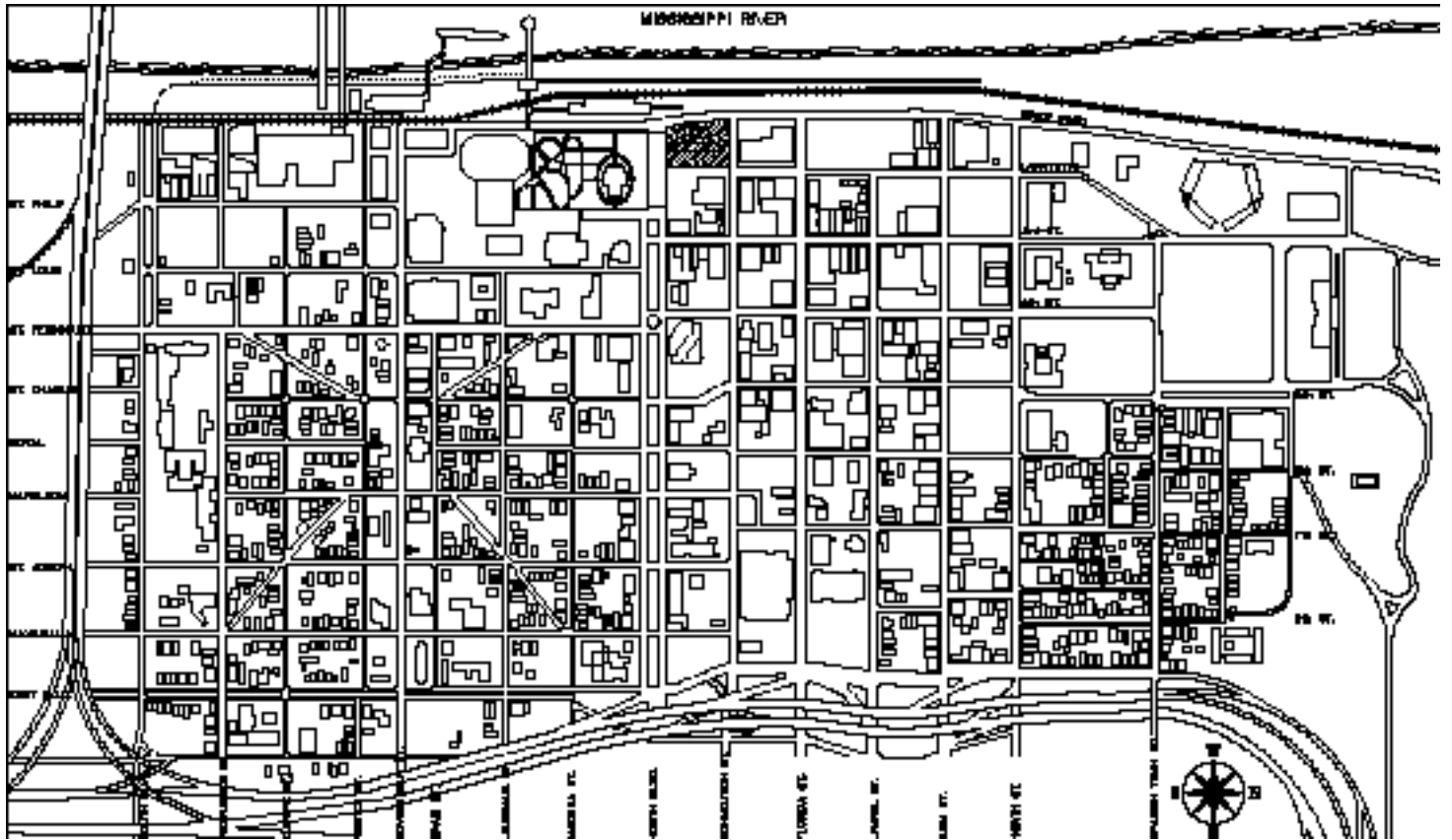
River Road Realignment - Completed May 2002

EXHIBIT C



Rendering of Proposed DeSoto Park

PLAN BATON ROUGE



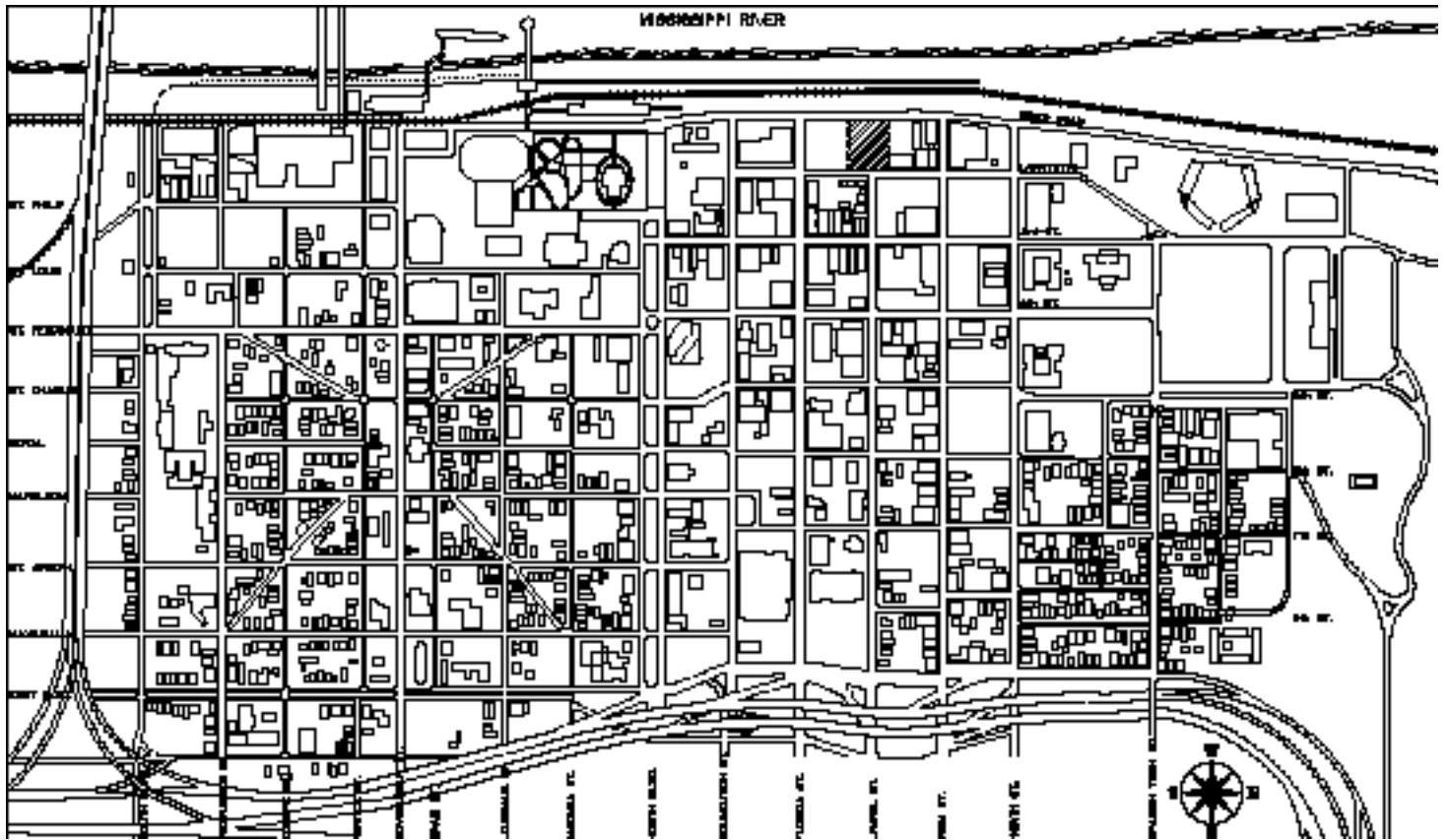
LAFAYETTE PARK AT THE RIVER

THE DOWNTOWN PARKS CORRIDOR



THE SECOND CIVIC PLACE: LAFAYETTE PARK

PLAN BATON ROUGE



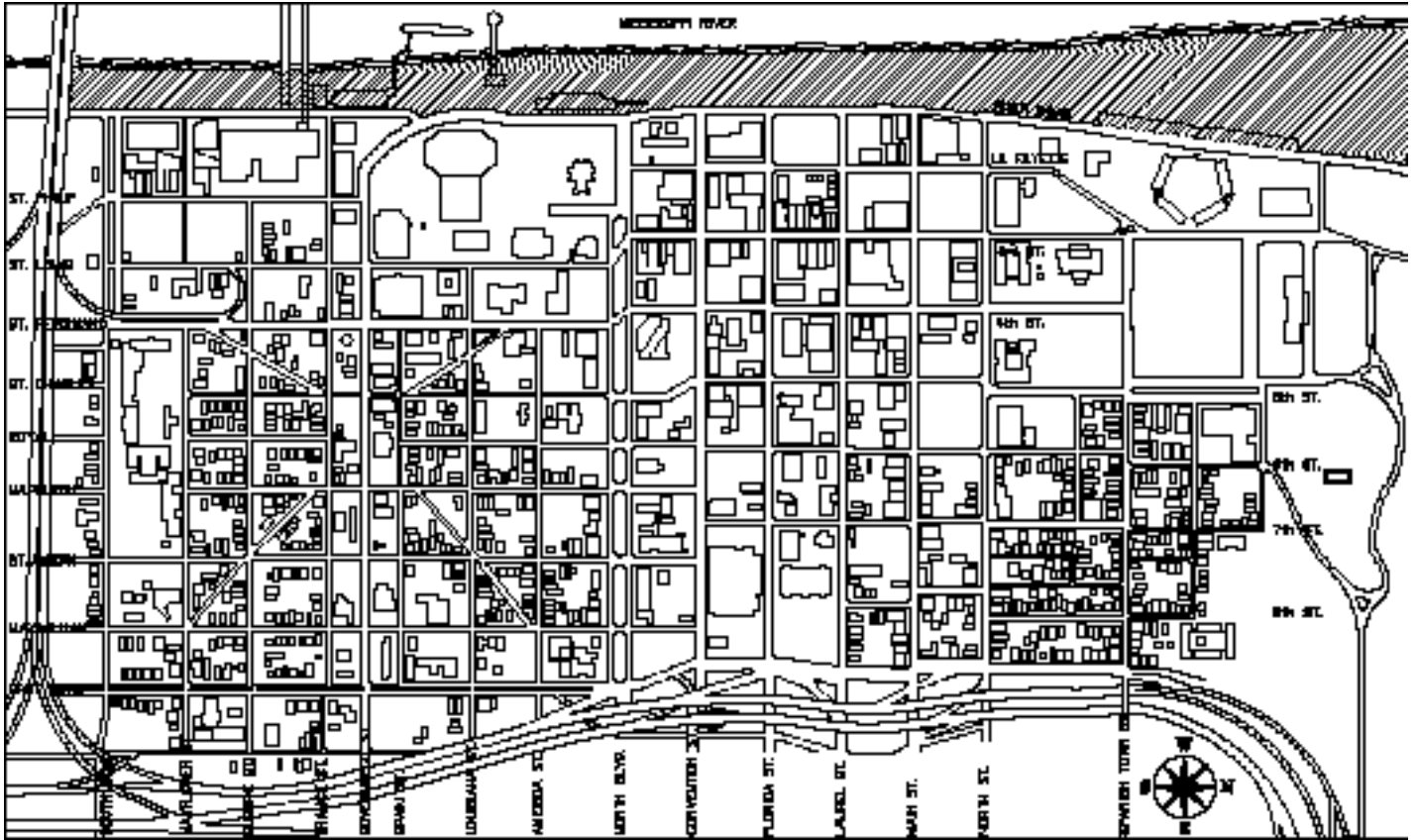
LAUREL ST. PLAZA AT THE RIVER

THE DOWNTOWN PARKS CORRIDOR



THE THIRD CIVIC PLACE: LAUREL ST. PLAZA

THE RIVERFRONT PARKWAY CORRIDOR



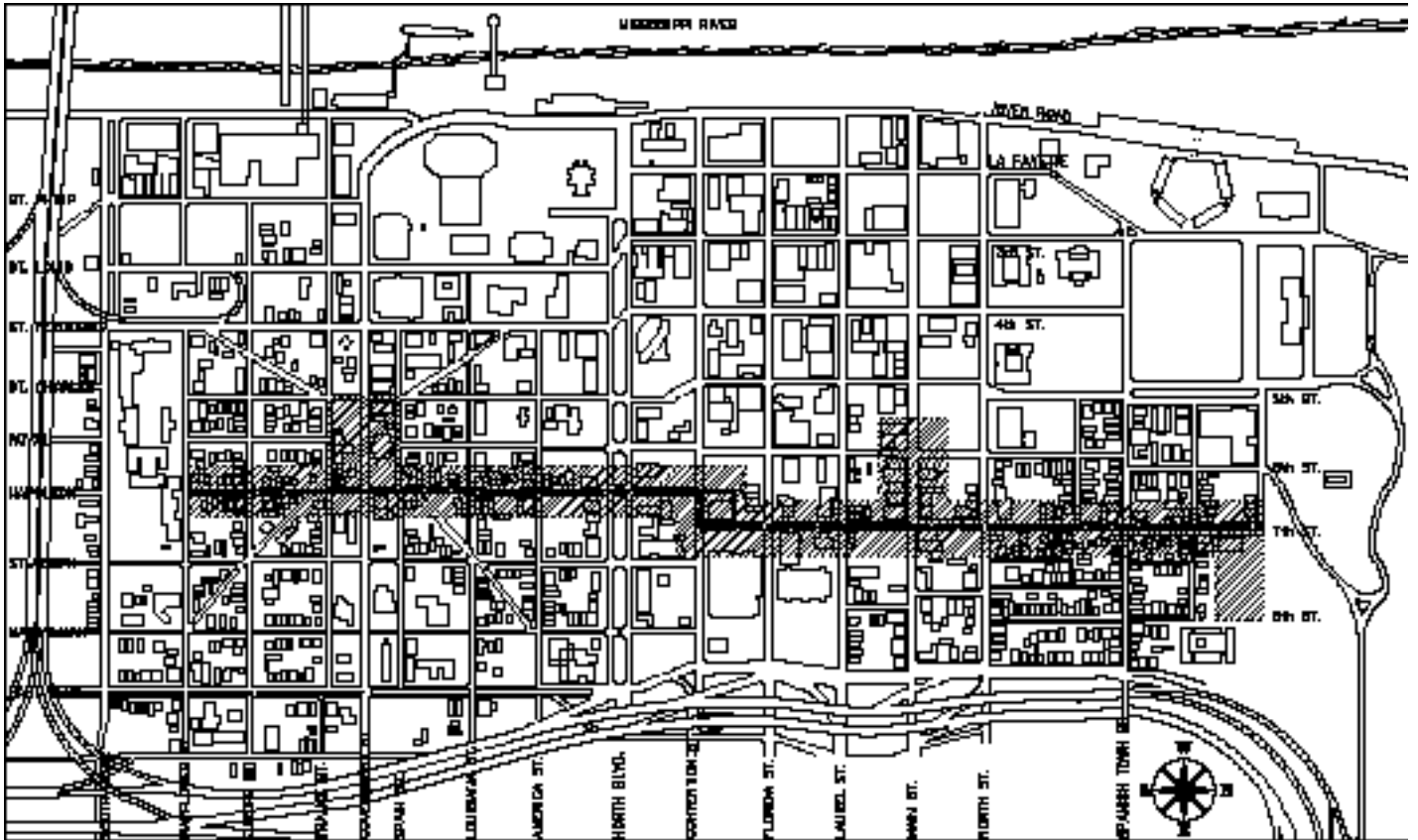
RIVERFRONT PARKWAY CORRIDOR

SUMMARY

This is an ambitious and well-conceived master plan that has been partially executed. It should be completed as designed with one exception: the elimination of Riverfront Plaza, a place that does not work. This change is discussed in the Catfish Town District section CTD-4.

This section is held open to incorporate the existing Baton Rouge Riverfront Development Plan into this comprehensive Plan Baton Rouge Master Plan.

THE SEVENTH STREET CORRIDOR



SEVENTH STREET CORRIDOR

SUMMARY

This trajectory emerged out of a request by the residents of Spanish Town and Beauregard Town to create a connection between their two neighborhoods, one that would enhance and secure their presence in the Downtown as well as provide useful goods and services for residents. Napoleon and Seventh Street were selected as the only ones that connect the hearts of both communities. The trajectory would start within Beauregard Town with the restoration of Royal Square (on Government Street), and move along Napoleon Street, which in this sector is in excellent condition. Crossing from North Boulevard to Seventh Street, a series of interventions are necessary to mask the existing parking lots. It is necessary to create a square on Convention Street to rectify the slight misalignment of the two streets. Then a retail core must be developed that is essential to both neighborhoods at the corner of Main, anchored by the adjacent East [Galvez] state parking garage. This trajectory would cross Spanish Town and terminate with a new park to be managed by BREC.

The two residential neighborhoods within the Downtown have

no common center.

Several options were explored to connect Spanish Town and Beauregard Town. Those along the highway were too unpleasant to walk along. Sixth Street was blocked by the new fire station at Beauregard Town, and is too far to the west from the heart of Spanish Town. The best connection is the combination of Napoleon and Seventh Streets. These are virtually the same street, but not exactly aligned. The disjunction provides the opportunity to create a square at the approximate center of this trajectory.

This trajectory described from south to north begins with Napoleon at its inception at the police station. It passes Royal Square of Beauregard Town along its edge, the middle being cut off by the aforementioned fire station. Napoleon, although off-center with the square, is nevertheless the effective centroid of this neighborhood. (The reclamation of

PLAN BATON ROUGE

Royal Square is discussed in The Beauregard Town Neighborhood.) Napoleon Street has good spatial definition on both sides, except for the potentially destructive condition of the large unbuilt plot on the corner of America and Napoleon. This site, subject to current zoning laws, could be badly overdeveloped. After crossing North Boulevard, the trajectory becomes ill-defined spatially, because of parking lots on both sides. These require liner buildings. Napoleon then terminates at the unused Postal Credit Union building. This property should be purchased by condemnation, the building demolished and its site converted to a square that neatly shifts the northward trajectory onto Seventh Street. Liner buildings must be erected on all sides of the square. Fortunately, the layout of the surrounding parking lots are perfectly aligned for liner buildings with minimal disruption. Beyond the square, Seventh Street is again effectively defined spatially except that the two small parking lots near Laurel should be provided with streetwalls for they are too small for liner buildings.⁷ The intersection on Main Street is virtually intact on three corners. The buildings on the south side should be merchandized to provide the necessary neighborhood retail for both neighborhoods. At North Street, another liner building is required on the southeast corner. Further north, Seventh Street again acquires good spatial definition provided by the existing houses. Seventh Street should terminate at the Capitol Park pavilion to signal the existence of this wonderful park, currently under utilized.

⁷Note that the axis of Seventh Street looking back to the south, aligns perfectly with the rear entrance of the First Presbyterian Church.

[Three hundred trees were planted in October 2000 on the Seventh Street Corridor in honor of the late Charles P. Manship whose boyhood home was on the corner of Florida Street and Seventh Street. Baton Rouge Green installed the plantings that will provide shade and color during the four seasons. The City of Baton Rouge and the Department of Public Works removed concrete and prepared the beds for the tree plantings which were designed by the Louisiana Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. The project won an award in 2001 from The Louisiana Urban Forestry Council for promoting urban forestry in Baton Rouge with "The Capital City Enhancement Masterplan."]

SSC- 1

Project Name: Seventh Street and the Post Office Square

Observation: There are many gaps along the edges of this

corridor that tend to destroy its pedestrian quality.

Discussion: These liner buildings are necessary on the Napoleon & Seventh Corridor and they may also be useful on gaps elsewhere, particularly on the open parking lots on the Third & Lafayette corridors.

Project A: Seventh Street

Recommendation A: Acquire the vacant Postal Credit Union building through condemnation. Design and develop it into a square defined by liner buildings.

Responsibility: Downtown Development District

Project B: Post Office Square

Recommendation B: Encourage the construction of liner buildings along Seventh Street through a variety of means, including persuasion. Following the construction of the first set of liner buildings by Hibernia Bank (on its parking lot on Third Street) this will become easier to do.

Responsibility: Downtown Development District

SSC-2

Project Name: The Main Street Shops and Public Market

Observation: Shopping in the neighborhoods is inadequate.

Discussion: Neighborhood life is premised on most ordinary needs being available within walking distance of home. Retail plays an important role here and should include at least a neighborhood grocery, video store, neighborhood restaurant, automatic teller machine, local post office/police post, as well as a bakery and a walk-in clinic. The best location for these is the intersection of Main and Seventh Streets. There are several reasons supporting this location: 1. This location holds a series of under-utilized commercial buildings suitable for these purposes. 2. This location is on the exit trajectory for state employees where they may conveniently shop on the way home. 3. The second state parking garage will soon be built nearby, which will bring customers by on the way to their cars. 4. This location is

THE SEVENTH STREET CORRIDOR

along the trajectory that connects the Beauregard and Spanish Town neighborhoods.

Project A: The Main Steet Shops

Recommendation A: Professionally merchandise the empty retail at the intersection of Seventh and Main.

Responsibility: Downtown Development District

Project B: The Public Market

Recommendation B: Integrate a Public Market in the design of the State's East [Galvez] Parking Garage on Main and Sixth Street.

Responsibility: State Commissioner of Administration

[Immediately following the *Plan Baton Rouge* charrette, the Baton Rouge Economic and Agricultural Development Alliance, (BREADA) the organization which developed the Red Stick Farmers' Market, helped to form a committee to investigate the feasibility of a public market in the proposed Galvez Garage. This group evolved into the Public Market Working Group.

Nancy Duncan Porter, a consultant with Projects for Public Spaces, was hired by *Plan Baton Rouge* to provide guidance about the design and programming for the public market. The Public Market Working Group then developed the program for the public market which was the basis for the Public Market business plan. The business plan was presented to the BREADA Board in November 2000 and was approved by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation Planning and Development Board in March 2001. BRAF provided the start-up funds to hire a market director and initial funds for operations. Sandy Saye was hired in July 2001 as the first director of the public market: *Main Street Market*. The market will open October 2002.]

SSC-3

Project Name: BREC Day Camp

Observation: In Spanish Town there is a seven-acre site that

is the finest wooded property in the Downtown.

Discussion: These untended woods, currently used by rather pastoral street people, should be purchased by or for the Parks Department. In combination with the Lafayette Park Recreation Building, this purchase would complete the compensation due to BREC for the elimination of Victory Park in 1989. Its best use is for a BREC Day Camp.

Recommendation: Purchase this site through condemnation and grant it to BREC for development.

Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge

SSC-4

Project Name: Street Name Restoration

Observation: This trajectory, which is assembled from three streets-Napoleon, Seventh, and Lake Park Road-lacks the civic identity it deserves.

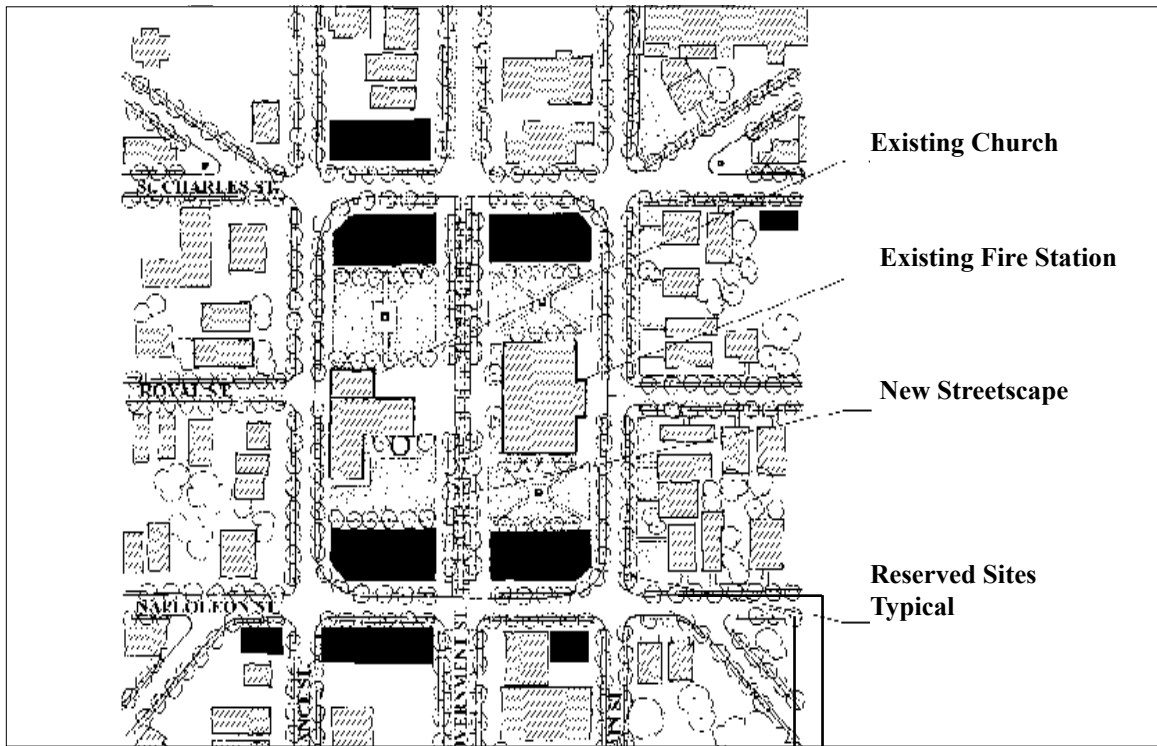
Discussion: To establish identity, these three street names may be replaced by their historical name of St. Francis Street, reestablishing their importance and coherence. Alternately, this street may be renamed its other historical name, Lake Park Road, as a symbol of its finest asset, the lake at its northern termination.

Recommendation: Replace the three street names with the historic "St. Francis Street" or some other name to be agreed by the residents of both neighborhoods. Change the signage.

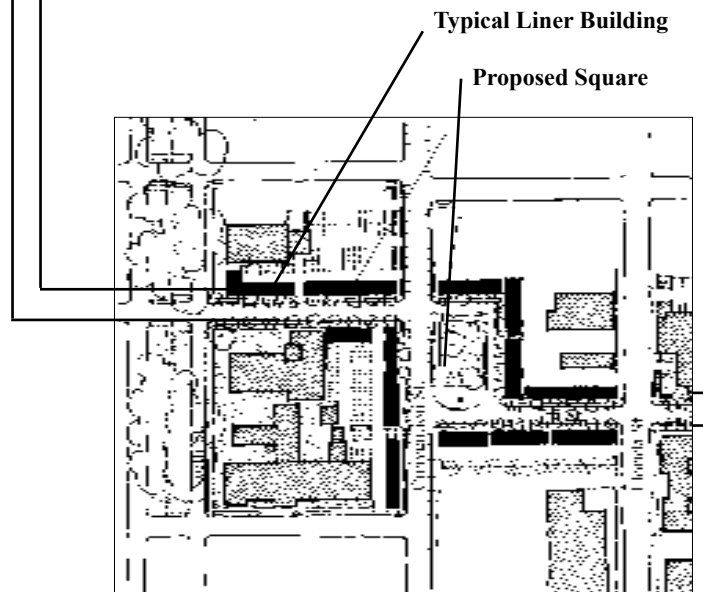
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

[Historic Spanish Town Civic Association has selected certain streets for name changes and submitted a request to the Department of Public Works to install new signs.]

PLAN BATON ROUGE



BEAUGARD SQUARE IMPROVEMENTS

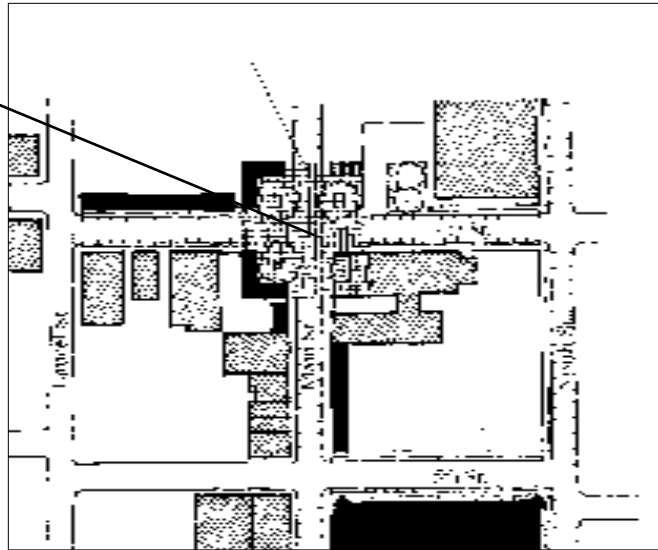


**PROPOSED SQUARE ON 7TH STREET
ON 7TH STREET**

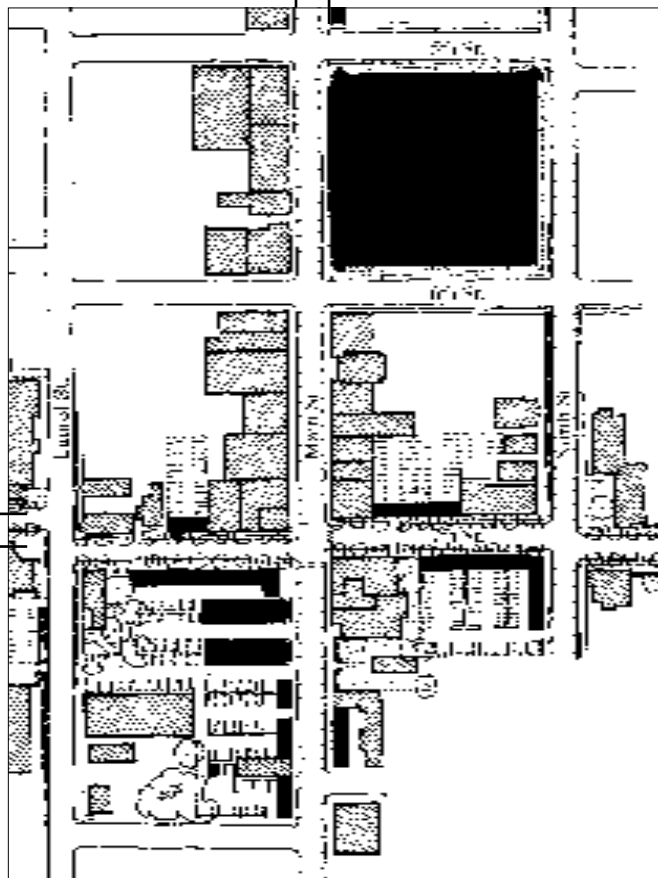
THE SEVENTH STREET CORRIDOR

EXHIBIT A

Redesign of Implied Square



GRAS TOWN PLAZA IMPROVEMENTS



PROPOSED SHOPPING STREET ON 7TH AND MAIN ST.