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May 2008

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URBAN DESIGN **VISION** PLAN  
for the  
SOUTHSIDE MAIN STREET NEIGHBORHOOD



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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“Fifth Street Pedestrian Plaza Bridge” article - Courtesy of Aspire Magazine



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# INTRODUCTION

In late 2006, Judi Casavechia, Executive Director of Southside Main Street Organization (SoMa), with approval of her Board of Directors, approached UALR's Urban Studies & Design program and its director, George Wittenberg, AIA, about a plan for the SoMa area neighborhoods. What encouraged the group to explore the possibility of a plan was:

- Agreement of the board and focus group residents that a plan for change was needed.
- Willingness of the group to implement change.
- The decision of the Building Improvement District (BID's) to spend \$100,000 plus for new, antique-style, lights on Main Street from I-630 to 17th Street.
- The probability that the SoMa organization would be accepted by Main Street Arkansas as an official Main Street Program (formal acceptance occurred January 2008).

UALR 's Urban Studies & Design Program agreed to develop a plan as part of their public service mission, and contracted with independent study students to assist in the process.

The Board and its Executive Director, with detailed review by its Design Committee, were to act as the oversight review body for the plan. The following groups and individuals were selected to review the planning concepts under development:

- The SoMa Board members
- The Group of Groups
- Tony Bozynski, Director of the Little Rock Planning Department
- Sharon Priest, Executive Director of the Downtown Partnership
- Pulaski County Judge Buddy Villines
- The Business Improvement District Board (BID)
- Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola

As planning concepts were developed by George Wittenberg and the SoMa Design Committee, he set up a series of review meetings to gain input from the stakeholders. These meetings followed the public meetings in the various areas of the neighborhood and attempted to narrow the focus of the plan. Key specifics among the comments included:

- Provide gateways for the northern and southern entries into the planning area – at Broadway and Main Street along I-630, and at Broadway and Main Street along Roosevelt Road.
- Make the New Horizon Village housing project, being developed south of Roosevelt Road, part of the plan because it represents an important new housing community of potentially 150 residents, which will relate to business on Main Street and become a part of the neighborhood
- Circulation and parking studies need to begin in the neighborhood; specifically to bring the street car down Main to 17th, to slow traffic and to increase street parking availability.
- Buffer any recommended higher density housing by low density units such as town houses and row houses where they border existing neighborhood residential edges.
- Make a study of Capitol Zoning District Mansion Area and MacArthur Park Historic District requirements where they impact the SoMa Plan recommendations for Main Street development.



## URBAN DESIGN VISION PLAN for the SOUTHSIDE MAIN STREET NEIGHBORHOOD

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SoMa is a neighborhood dating from the mid 19th century located just south of Little Rock's downtown. Construction of the I-630 freeway broke the neighborhood's connection to downtown, by creating a new southern boundary for downtown, and cutting off from downtown its historic residential neighborhood and second tier commercial businesses. Although no longer the vital part of the city it once was, the SoMa (South Main) neighborhood has managed to maintain its historical identity and is now experiencing renewed interest and reinvestment.

The SoMa Plan is an effort to evaluate the neighborhood as a whole to define its physical area (See various maps throughout report.) and to envision a future that is consistent with its residents' desires and its historic significance. It presents ideas for desirable patterns of development throughout the area. It includes specific strategic projects that have the potential to stimulate neighborhood revitalization and significant new development.

*Anatomy of SoMa* reveals SoMa as it is now, dissecting it block by block. SoMa Today (blue) identifies eight areas and organizes and identifies the characteristics and potentials of each of them. In *Creating an Identity* the Plan discusses concepts and approaches to renewal by listing new parks, streetcar, transit, new streetscape, identification gateways, residential types to attract new markets, commercial revitalization for Main Street and a new organization to implement the plan.

It identifies five strategic projects, the implementation of any one of which would greatly contribute to SoMa's continuing growth and vitality.

**A. Freeway Park B. Gateways C. Streetscape D. Streetcar E. Roosevelt Park**

From anatomical analysis of the area, discussion of a renewed *SoMa Identity*, and *Strategic Projects* to embody that renewal, to an *Urban Design Plan* for the neighborhood, which includes its eight existing areas, plus an additional proposed area, Freeway Park, the *Urban Design Plan* includes different development approaches for each sub-area, A - I, and presents planning and design criteria for each.

The plan recommends the following actions and projects:

1. A transit extension of the streetcar route to SoMa.
2. Additional streetscape projects throughout the area.
3. A parking and circulation plan to incentivize development and slow traffic.
4. Designated bike lanes that follow a bike route coordinated with downtown.
5. Gateway identifying elements created by artists marking entrances into the neighborhood
6. Mending the freeway chasm with a new park overlaying it – thereby reconnecting SoMa with downtown.
7. An organizational strategy for implementing the plan.

Finally, the Plan identifies the need for a single entity charged with promoting/guiding the development of SoMa, and coordinating with the private and governmental entities that protect the Area.

This document is available for viewing at [www.ualr.edu/urbanstudies](http://www.ualr.edu/urbanstudies).

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# ANATOMY OF SoMa

When the Southside Main Street Organization board decided to develop a SoMa Plan, they did so because the necessary foundation, political will and social commitment was there to produce an effective plan.

Several previous planning efforts had protected the SoMa Plan area, which is bounded, roughly, by I-630 and Roosevelt Road on the north and south, and Broadway and I-30 on the west and east. Of these, the two that have substantive regulative powers are the Capitol Zoning District and the MacArthur Park Historic District. The DNA also has written a plan for the area. Each encompasses the majority of the SoMa planning area. Even before these efforts, the informal power and influence of the citizen-supported Quapaw Quarter Association provided protection for the area's important historic buildings. Later, in 1986, came formation of the South Main Business Improvement District. Its focus was narrower, using its taxing authority to invest in the infrastructure of Main Street from I-630 to 17th Street.

In 2001 the Downtown Partnership employed the UALR Urban Studies & Design program to develop a plan for the historic entirety of Main Street, from Markham to Roosevelt. This plan, recognizing the reality of the division created by I-630, developed the plan in two parts – North and South Main Street. (A copy of the overall plan with summary is available for review on the UALR Urban Studies & Design web site: [www.ualr.edu/urbanstudies](http://www.ualr.edu/urbanstudies).)

Most recently, people and businesses of the South Main area have organized and created the new Southside Main Street Organization. Now a part of Main Street Arkansas, it has a Board of Directors, an Executive Director and a \$125,000 budget. This organization, with the necessary social and political will to make for a successful effort, decided in 2007 to expand on the 2001 Main Street Plan by enlarging the focus area to encompass the larger and emerging SoMa urban neighborhood. This planning effort recognizes the importance of Main Street as a generator of economic development, while also addressing the value of its adjacent historic neighborhoods.

Its sponsors hope to establish an urban design framework for the area, which will balance new development, redevelopment and historic preservation in a way that will once again see this area as a vital contributing part of downtown Little Rock.



Broadway Commercial - at I-630



Broadway Commercial - Mt. Holly historic site



Broadway Commercial - adaptive reuse



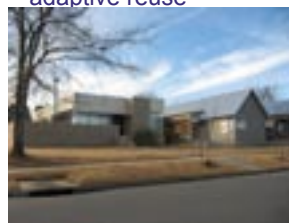
Broadway Commercial - residential restoration



I-630 at Main St. - recessed below the street



Main & I-630 - a proposed gateway site



Freeway Park - new residential



Freeway Park - r.o.w. land



## URBAN DESIGN VISION PLAN for the SOUTHSIDE MAIN STREET NEIGHBORHOOD

# ANATOMY of SoMa

The SoMa neighborhood is emerging as a diverse inner city urban neighborhood. Its character can be identified today as eclectic – including residents of diverse races, gender, and ethnic backgrounds. Its present eclectic urban identity inhabits the neighborhood’s rich cultural and historic heritage, the fabric of which is interwoven throughout the area. This neighborhood is known by its historic residences, including the Governor’s Mansion; churches both large and small; commercial structures, both offices and shops; and streets. As to streets, it is identified mainly by Main and Broadway (Ark. Hwy. 70) , which in recent history have been impacted by interstate highway systems. The area’s northern and eastern edges are defined by I-630 and I-30 respectively, its southern edge by Roosevelt Road; its western boundary is an imprecise edge between Broadway and Chester. Interstate 630 cut off this part of (south) Main, once historically tied to downtown’s (north) Main Street. Even though protesting residents forced the depression of the interstate in this area, it remains a huge physical barrier within the downtown.

This area of approximately 315 acres and 4,200 residents totals about 140 blocks. Large areas of land (not included in the block count) are: the Governor’s Mansion, the old VA Hospital site; Pettaway Park, Parris Tower assisted living, and the Rockefeller School. To walk the neighborhood north to south would take about 15 minutes and from east to west about 10 minutes.

A photographic survey of the area is shown on the map, SoMa Today. The next map, SoMa Today Sub-Areas, is the plan of the area organized into Sub-Areas, which refers to the following text, SoMa Today.



Upper Main Blocks @15th - adaptive reuse



Upper Main Blocks - historic residence @ 16th



Lower Main Blocks - residence recent restoration



Lower Main Blocks - CDC's affordable apts.



Governor's Mansion Residential - restoration



Governor's Mansion Residential - remodel



South Residential - residence restoration



South Residential - Parris Tower



South Residential - CDC affordable housing



Roosevelt Edge - Broadway commercial



Roosevelt Edge - commercial



Roosevelt Edge - old VA hospital site

## URBAN DESIGN VISION PLAN for the SOUTHSIDE MAIN STREET NEIGHBORHOOD

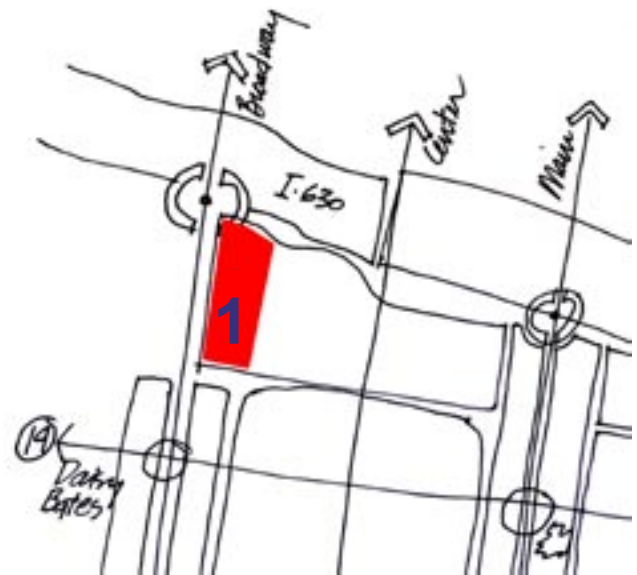
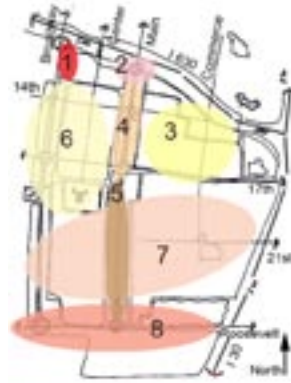


# SoMa TODAY

## Sub-Area 1 Broadway Commercial & Freeway Frontage

The Area A commercial “zone” was a zoning response by the City of Little Rock to the presence of the interstate and also to traditional uses along what was state Highway 5, now Broadway. Even though they faced Mount Holly Cemetery – a premier historic site - properties along the east side of the road were allowed to develop as a commercial strip. Today, the Sonic Drive-in, car wash and storage buildings present a “ragged” edge to the street and an inappropriate face to historic Mt. Holly Cemetery.

In spite of these inappropriate commercial uses, there are several historic buildings along Broadway south to the Daisy Bates (14th Street) intersection. Most of these are undergoing quality renovation. The exit off of I-630 and the route south down Broadway makes a natural point of entry into the SoMa neighborhood.

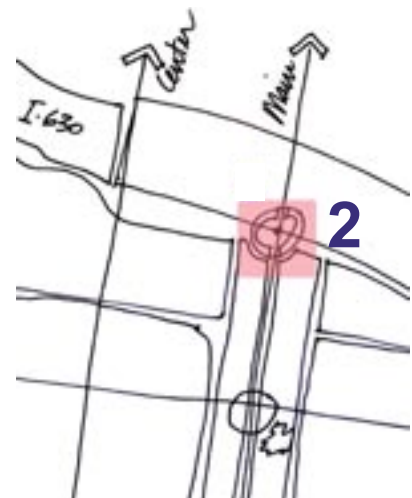
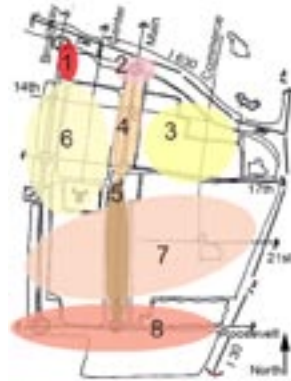


Views of sites in and adjacent to Broadway Commercial area



## Sub-Area 2 Main Street Gateway

The intersection of Main Street with the I-630 exit lane, its frontage road leading both to Scott Street north and an on-ramp to (the depressed) I-630, and the Main Street overpass bridge mark the center of this sub-area. (This intersection design is dangerous and ill-conceived; accidents happen there frequently.) The premier neighborhood property, and a well-known landmark, at this intersection is Community Bakery. The concentration of automobile activity and building uses combine to define this intersection as the other south entry into the neighborhood. The blocks to the immediate west and east contain historic properties like E.M.O.B.A., residential properties, and renovated and new commercial sites. Quality commercial uses like Kinko's; marginal commercial storage and retail; quality new and renovated business developments; open property waiting for redevelopment and the I-630 frontage roads right of way green space all comprise the larger area centered around this point. There is ample redevelopment opportunity within this mix of building and property types.



Views of site for proposed Main Street gateway



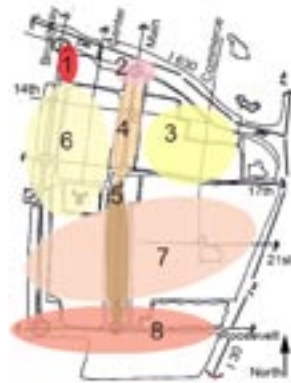
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# SoMa TODAY

## Sub-Area 3 Freeway Park Residential

Although the freeway through this sub-area is depressed (as was also noted in sub-areas 1 and 2), the noise and traffic generated on and off of it is still a detriment to the neighborhood – certainly to any pedestrian environment. Residential types of mixed quality dominate this sub-area, from Main Street to I-30 down to 17th Street. Sadly, the path of the January, 1999 tornado opened up several properties for redevelopment here, recently begun. In fact, some of the newer and higher priced properties for sale in the sub- area (on a per square foot basis) are here. The sub-area includes the Rockefeller School, East Side Lofts (a recent conversion) and the premier Villa Marre residence, among several quality projects. Its close proximity to Main Street is a factor in the sub-area’s identity.



Villa Marre - restored residential



East Side Lofts - loft conversion



Existing Right of Way (R.O.W) land - development potential



Existing residence

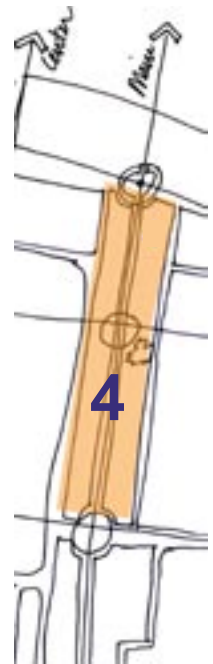
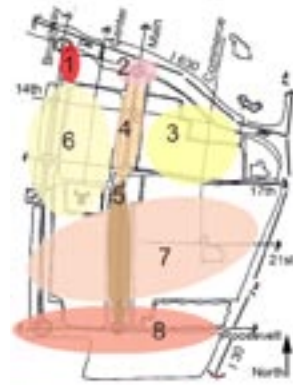


Views of new residences built in the area



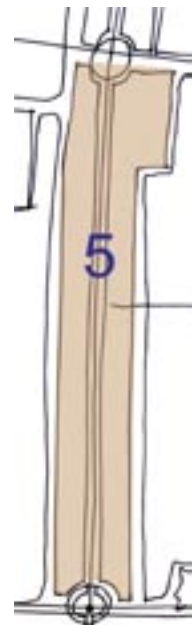
## Sub-Area 4 Upper Main Blocks

The heart of the SoMa neighborhood, Main Street from I-630 to 17th Street, is currently a mixture of uses - retail, commercial and residential. Currently some properties are being used in ways in compatible with this core of South Main – like the retail drive-in E-Z Mart, the Miracle Wash Coin Laundry or C & W Tool. Some historic properties are now occupied but require renovation; some have been recently renovated. A few small single-floor buildings are not historic and could be replaced. Several vacant lots exist. Parking in the sub-area is satisfactory, and a bus route runs both ways on the street. This section of Main Street is anchored on the south at 17th Street by the Harvest Foods grocery and a Post Office.



## Sub-Area 5 Lower Main Blocks

This sub-area from 17th Street to Roosevelt is partially developed by single and multi-family dwellings. Several residences are single family and some are being reused as commercial. Several small apartment buildings have been renovated and are occupied. The downtown Little Rock CDC manages and develops affordable housing in the area. They have plans to develop more single family units in the area east of Main Street, referred to in this report as Sub-Area 7. The density is similar to the way it was originally – large and small residences and apartment buildings. There are several vacant properties.



Upper Main Blocks



Lower Main Blocks



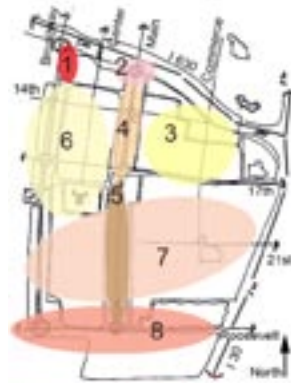
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# SoMa TODAY

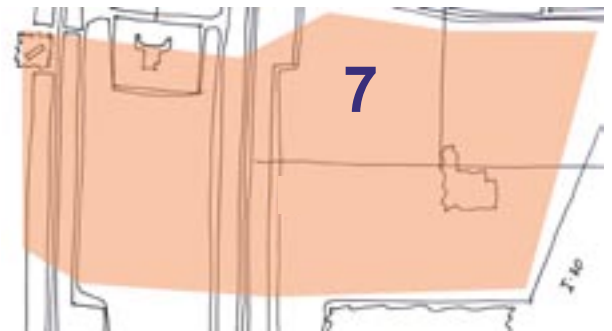
## Sub-Area 6 Governor's Mansion Residential

This sub-area includes the historic residential core. From the Governor's Mansion to the edges of the commercial and even deteriorated areas along the freeway's Right of Way (R.O.W.), the residential properties of this part of the neighborhood are among the finest in the historic quarter. Clearly, the idea of building, protecting and maintaining the Mansion in the neighborhood has had a positive effect on renovation and new building. Along Broadway, the western edge of the sub-area, there are similar historic residences, smaller commercial properties built before design controls were in place, and properties needing redevelopment. The 14 story Parris Tower affordable senior housing building, the largest building in the sub-area, is currently being considered for redevelopment. Its site will be re-landscaped as a neighborhood park.



## Sub-Area 7 South Residential

The south central portion of the SoMa neighborhood is a mixture of high quality historic residences, rundown former commercial buildings, buildings adapted to new uses, small single family residences, small to medium sized apartment buildings and many vacant properties. This sub-area overlaps Broadway and Main, where several large historic residences signal the quality the sub-area once had. Several of these residences have had excellent restoration and preservation work and remain single family. Many small and large churches exist throughout the sub-area. A small public park, Pettaway Park, and a new city Alert Center are located adjacent to each other on 21st Street. The Job Corps Center at I-30 and the frontage road, formerly a mid-rise Red Roof Inn Hotel, is vacating the building. This site will be available for redevelopment, probably by the city.



Gov. Mansion Residential



South Residential



# SoMa TODAY

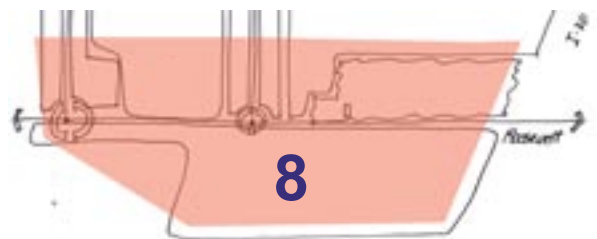
## Sub-Area 8 Roosevelt Road Edge

This sub-area has for the most part remained blighted for the last few decades. Exceptions do exist. A prime exception is the St. John Baptist Church, which is the major property owner of this sub-area, responsible for maintaining a stable image at the southern terminus of Main Street. It is in the process or has recently completed purchasing the entire intersection at Main Street and Roosevelt. The old VA hospital property, with struggling new owners and a stagnating attempt at adaptive reuse, remains the largest boarded up building in the SoMa neighborhood, a symbol of neglect and abandonment. The Little Rock Police Department and the social service non-profit Our House have facilities on the VA property. Our House is located on the original VA Hospital grounds. Its facility includes an emergency center for about 80 men and women with children, and they have plans to

renovate part of the original hospital for a Family Shelter. The site includes the historic Lightfoot Cabin built in 1857, one of the city's most historic properties.

The Little Rock Housing Authority (LRHA) owns the land along the eastern side of the sub-area on the south side of Roosevelt Rd., from the St. John Baptist Church property towards I-30. The LRHA's land totals about 20 acres. Once the Ives Homes and Ives Walk public housing of the 1940's and 50's where about 150 families lived, it will become a new "neighborhood-style re-design" of 137 affordable housing units with plans to develop additional single-family home ownership and duplex rental housing within 5 years in conjunction with local community organizations on additional property that the LRHA has acquired. The new Metropolitan Village, Cumberland Manor and New Horizon Village developments will include single family homes, garden apartments, townhouses and traditional apartment configurations. The total population of this new neighborhood will be approximately 450 to 600 people, who will shop and visit the Main Street corridor.

The western side of the sub-area is scattered with commercial and residential properties of varying quality.



VA Hospital Bldg.



Historic Lightfoot Cabin



Existing residential



Existing residential



Existing commercial

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# MAP: SoMa TODAY



# MAP: SoMa TODAY SUB-AREAS

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# CREATING AN IDENTITY

The role of the Urban Designer is to define and discuss a range of strategic project interventions that can revitalize the greater SoMa area. The role includes describing types of land uses for the SoMa area, and discussing where they go best in the Plan. Altogether over time, with appropriate land uses in the right places, an identity for the area will emerge.

The SoMa area, like any urban district, has a history of settlement and the resulting physical infrastructure that held it all together. Early in the settlement of Little Rock this area was residential, with connections to the commercial areas on the riverfront. This held steady into the early 20th Century, with the addition of the commercial expansion of Main Street southward and also the state highway that is Broadway today. This combination of residential, plus limited commercial along automobile routes, has persisted. It still holds as a framework for building the area's proposed identity and its revitalization.

A 21st Century identity for the SoMa Area will be created by the following project interventions:

- New parks that support the residential areas and link districts of the city.
- A transportation network of buses and street cars that connects residents and businesses within the city.
- A new streetcar line on Main Street connecting this area to the River Market and stimulating new development that can connect to it along and on Main Street.
- Key street intersections redesigned to include streetscape identification through elements such as special lights, graphics, paving textures, landscaping and street furniture.



Quality Parks



Streetcar system



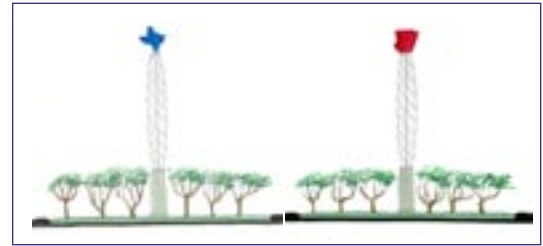
Quality streets



# CREATING AN IDENTITY

- Gateways at the area’s entries, designed as public art and as symbolic references to its diverse lifestyles.
- Various residential types to reflect the area’s diverse market and styles.
- Commercial uses that respond to the needs of the area, designed to respect its historic architectural forms without being historic reproductions.
- A general “retooling” of the methods, practices and rules of the three (plus the City of Little Rock) major planning jurisdictions as they apply to the SoMa Area; these organizations include the Capitol Zoning District – Mansion Area, the MacArthur Park Historic District and the Main Street Business Improvement District, and The Quapaw Quarter Association should also be consulted.
- There will need to be a new organizational entity to coordinate existing jurisdictions and adapt the best existing rules while adopting new ones; this might be an overlay district, an expansion of the BID or simply a commission to suggest adjustments of existing codes.

The strategic intervention in an area of an important project, will, by its type and placement, influence future adjacent development. An example of this in Little Rock/North Little Rock was the decision to place the Alltel Arena, the River Rail Route and the River Market building in locations that would spawn new adjacent development, which over time they have done. The project strategies as described in this Plan, when implemented within the existing SoMa neighborhood context and historic framework, will support and encourage the revitalization efforts now taking place in the area.



Gateway - proposed for Texarkana’s Stateline Avenue



Neighborhood commercial



Residence over commercial



Townhouses



Mid-rise residential

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# STRATEGIC PROJECTS

Projects defined as “Strategic” and positioned in a designated area of the city, will have an impact on their immediate surroundings by virtue of their placement and how they are developed. When the Alltel Arena was placed on its site by the river, the surrounding North Little Rock downtown area was under utilized and depressed in value. Today, partly because of Alltel Arena, downtown North Little Rock is experiencing a renaissance of redevelopment. The River Market on the opposite side of the river is another successful example of a “strategic project”.

These five strategic SoMa projects, with good urban design, will influence the redevelopment of their surrounding neighborhoods:

## Project A – Freeway Park

The depressed – and negative - I-630 freeway can be spanned with a park, knitting back together the severed historic neighborhoods of the downtown. The freeway ditch, a gaping wound in the historic grid of downtown, can be closed and designed as a new inner city park for the areas north and south along it. This project can extend from the Center Street overpass to the pedestrian bridge at MacArthur Park, linking the SoMa gateways at Main and Broadway to MacArthur Park.



# STRATEGIC PROJECTS

## Project A – Freeway Park - continued

On both sides the Park will create incentives for new development - properties will use the Park as a new green space amenity, with views north to the skyline and south to SoMa neighborhoods, and with the Park linking other projects north and south. All existing street patterns will remain, including on and off ramps. On the surface will be a new park designed to include spaces for passive recreation and public art. The technology for this construction is changing and becoming simpler (and more affordable) as other cities start to cover depressed expressways. An excellent example of new spanning systems is the Fifth Street Pedestrian Plaza Bridge in Atlanta - a new plaza spanning 16 lanes of traffic. (The article from “Aspire” Magazine is included in the Appendix to this report; its web site is: [www.aspirebridge.org](http://www.aspirebridge.org).)



Photo: Jim Aitken ARCADIS U.S. Inc Atlanta

Views of the 5th Street Plaza Bridge in Atlanta

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# STRATEGIC PROJECTS

## Project A – Freeway Park - continued

The Seattle Freeway Park is the ultimate example of a “park over a freeway”. Its cost is outside the range of feasibility for a similar park over a freeway in Little Rock. However, its concepts and unique uses of landscape design and public art are worth noting in this report.

These examples of Freeway Park projects will provide guidance for a design feasibility for Little Rock’s proposed Freeway Park. The proposed Park over the freeway from Center to Commerce Streets will create a new open and green space amenity for the surrounding properties and create high value for new development along its edges.



Views of the Seattle Freeway Park



# STRATEGIC PROJECTS

## Project B – The Gateways

Recognizing the entrances to this downtown neighborhood with physical Gateways will mark these as actual entrances to the neighborhood. They will symbolically express to all, “you are entering a special place”. A visitor to an older European city knows when they have entered the historic and original city when they walk through the city’s ancient wall and gateway. Since Little Rock was not a walled city, it does not have such gateways, but they can be created, based on neighborhood boundaries.

The way to create them is through public art projects, with specific criteria to stimulate new 21st Century Gateways. Their locations will be at the four major intersections of Main and Broadway at the freeway on the north and at the older highway (now Roosevelt) on the south. The physical scale of these gateways should catch the automobile traveler’s eye as well as impress the pedestrian. These markers - public art sculptures - will not only designate their places as “entries,” but also add value to the larger district, helping attract redevelopment.



## Project C – Streetscape

There will be several types and scales of streetscaping in a neighborhood. At the minimum, streets will have trees planted along new and/or repaired sidewalks with new light fixtures. As the development scale increases, based on budget and appropriateness, more elements will be included on designated streets. Details would include graphics banners, pavers at important intersections, more street furniture and special lighting. Strategically located streetscape will improve immediate properties and signify that the streets themselves are important to the neighborhood. The Sign Toppers program of the DNA (Downtown Neighborhood Assoc.) has contributed to streetscape improvement in the neighborhood with plans to add more signs.



Dark Blue = 1st Priority Streets  
Light Blue = 2nd Priority Streets

# URBAN DESIGN VISION PLAN for the SOUTHSIDE MAIN STREET NEIGHBORHOOD



# STRATEGIC PROJECTS

## Project D – Streetcar

The route of the streetcar down Main Street (once again!) will add value to the redevelopment of the street as well as provide needed transportation links for the neighborhood. It's a proven redevelopment reality that streetcar lines spawn development. This route for the next future phase of the streetcar will strategically reinforce the SoMa Plan by stimulating redevelopment along its historic Main Street core.

A most realizable next phase for the streetcar line extends south to 17th Street. It will most likely make a loop, south along Main and north along Scott Street to the existing River Rail Line. This route would include both the historic and south residential areas, once again connecting residents to the downtown. The 17th Street southern terminus would set the stage for the future redevelopment of the Harvest Foods/Post Office sites and provide a possible future link west. (Another possible western link option would be at Daisy Bates (14th Street) connecting to Central High School.



Little Rock & North Little Rock's River Rail Streetcar system - phases 1 & 2



# STRATEGIC PROJECTS

## Project E – VA Park

This strategic project is to convert the original VA property into a new park. The concept envisions the land area as a mixed-use park comprised of public uses, non-profits, etc... surrounded by an active public park. This park would be named for the historic house on its edge, the Lightfoot Cabin, be redesigned as a new multi-use city park, and link to Main Street and the new New Horizon Village housing neighborhood to the south. (The property's outdated and under utilized structures would be removed.) This redesign is a strategic project to reinforce the neighborhood south of Roosevelt and the New Horizon Village project by creating a new accessible open space for the residential neighborhood, with potential for influencing the design for the gateway at Roosevelt and Main Streets. As a new park for the immediate neighborhoods, it will signal that the city is serious about redeveloping this historic area of the SoMa Plan.



Views of park details that are appropriate for proposed VA Park

URBAN DESIGN VISION PLAN  
for the  
SOUTHSIDE MAIN STREET NEIGHBORHOOD

# URBAN DESIGN PLAN

NOTE: See map, Urban Design Plan, on page 28.

## A – Freeway Park

Freeway Park, a bold, forward thinking project with enormous impact for the two downtown areas, will bridge the two downtowns and mend the gap created by the Interstate. The project is a park to be constructed over I-630, from Center Street to Commerce Street. Thanks to similar projects across the nation, modular systems for crossing freeway spans are now available. The project would be phased, keep existing access to the freeway and city streets, and make use of the excavated “trench” of I-630. What was an earlier attempt to “depress” the traffic and noise from the park can now be realized to its fullest by “tunnelizing” this section. The final project will:

- B**ecome a new city park.
- C**ontain public art throughout.
- L**ink North & South Main
- L**ink SoMa to MacArthur Park.
- P**rovide redevelopment stimulus to both sides.



There will be considerable developable land along the southern edge of the freeway, when it is compiled and grouped into development parcels. Once the freeway “ditch” is covered and a new park built on its surface, these parcels will become more valuable and more land available for development. The Plan views the area as a way to invigorate real estate development along this edge of SoMa - providing a new green area connecting to MacArthur Park for buildings to open onto and, on the southern edges of the parcels, lower density transition projects for the historic neighborhood.

## B – Freeway Park Mixed-Use

In this almost 10 block area ( 20 acres +/- ) virtually all of the blocks can be combined into re-development parcels. The west end would include mixed use of commercial/retail and residential. It would have the advantage of including the EMOBA block as a possible residential site. In this area new residential buildings would be scaled more moderately - 5 - 8 stories, and parking would be provided as required by developers' unit numbers.



Views of housing types and mixed use projects appropriate for this area



THE HISTORIC URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

# URBAN DESIGN PLAN

## C – Freeway Park Residential

On the east end of this area, where the old right of way land and the new park provide more open space, new developments could be built to a higher density, as much as 15 stories, like in the River Market. Of the almost 23 block area 7.5 acres, or almost 4 blocks, can be combined into re-development parcels. These buildings would be orientated to take advantage of the north views and access to MacArthur Park and have their own parking requirements based on developers' needs. An analysis of the land in these east end blocks will provide a guide for restoration of housing determined to be historic, combined with town houses and single family housing, as a transition into the historic neighborhood to the south.



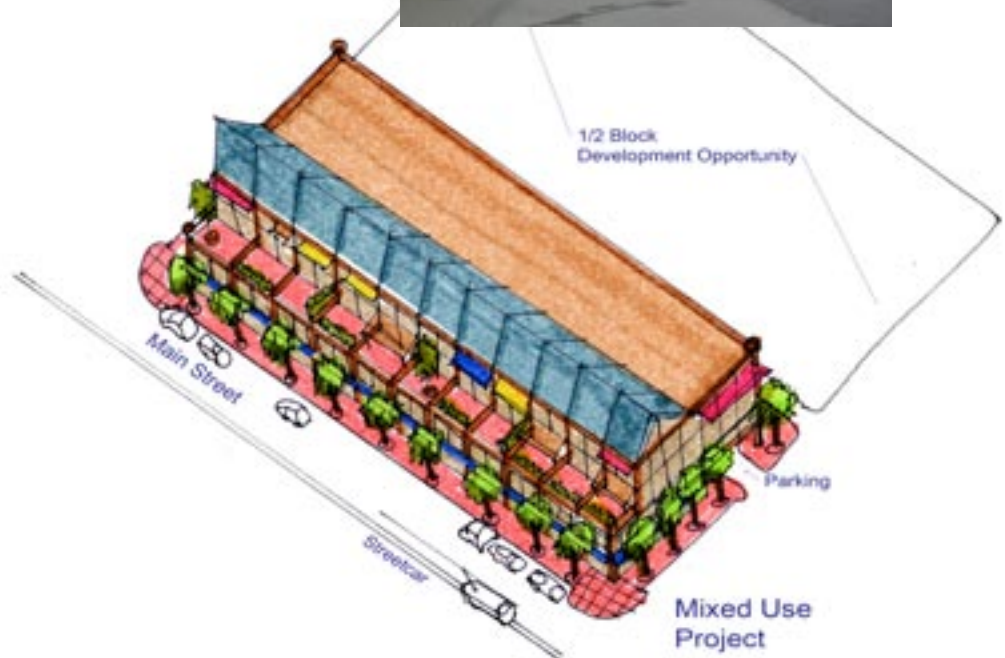
Views of various building's sizes and mixed use housing



## D – The Main Street Blocks

The Plan divides Main Street, north of and south of 19th Street. (This is also the way the Capitol Zoning District divides it.) North of 19th Street would be a mixture of infill and rehabilitation on blocks where property is available, as well as new commercial development. Limited demolition would happen, reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The design of any development, whether new or rehabilitative, should consider the historic context, honor the sidewalk frontage, and place parking along alleyways. The CZD heights of 3-5 floors fit the goals of a new SoMa identity for Main Street.

On Main Street south of 17th Street, commercial sites will be rebuilt as rehabs and infill. Projects can be commercial, as it is now in some cases, and residential in others. A proposed project should match in setbacks and form the original residential character along its part of the street.



## URBAN DESIGN VISION PLAN for the SOUTHSIDE MAIN STREET NEIGHBORHOOD



# URBAN DESIGN PLAN

## E – Broadway

Broadway has a mixture of building types, but its predominant form is medium to large single-family structures and small multi-family structures. Several have been adapted for new uses; an excellent example is the Peter Miller Law Firm at Broadway and 16th Street.

The redevelopment of Broadway should build on this pattern of mixed uses. A future of denser mixed residential uses, even new small-scale apartment/condominium projects, is recommended. Residential projects like The Rainwater Flats on Capitol Avenue is an example of one.

## F – North-east Residential

This area has seen new residential construction in recent years. Both new single-family and multi family housing have been built, and in a variety of styles. The plan envisions continuing this approach to infill housing for this area. Development of the northern edge of this area will provide an incentive for more residential development, from the parks on the north to Main Street on the west.

## G – Historic Residential

This area is similar to area E, but in a north-south orientation centering on the Governor’s Mansion. This area, with some variation in defined boundaries, is the heart of the CZD Mansion Area. The CZD’s guidelines here fit the goals of the SoMa Plan, with one minor exception: the SoMa Plan would encourage more dense housing, like town houses and multi-family, to be developed north of Daisy Bates (14th Street). This higher density residential development will respond to incentives created by the new projects as described for area 2 and similar to those created for area E.

The area south of the Governor’s mansion should continue as it does now, by rebuilding with infill, rehabilitation of existing structures, and small multi-family.

S. Broadway new residential



S. Broadway office use



Law offices on Broadway



Governor’s Mansion



# URBAN DESIGN PLAN

## H – South Residential

Infill and rehabilitation of existing structures should be the pattern here for the foreseeable future, complementing its more modest recent development. The use of city housing programs to provide work-force housing should be encouraged. The renovation and expansion of Pettaway Park, its connection to the Neighborhood Alert Center, and a concentrated effort to upgrade 21st Street will help provide incentives for continued rebuilding of this area. Attention should be given to the future use and redevelopment of the current Job Corps Center building. Future and planned development to its south will also provide incentives for redevelopment.

## I – Roosevelt

The Little Rock Housing Authority (LRHA) owns the land along the eastern side of the area on the south side of Roosevelt Rd., from the St. John Baptist Church property towards I-30. The LRHA's land totals about 20 acres. Once the Ives Homes and Ives Walk public housing of the 1940's and 50's, where about 150 families lived, it will become a new "neighborhood-style re-design" of 137 affordable housing units with plans to develop additional single-family home ownership and duplex rental housing within 5 years in conjunction with local community organizations on additional property that the LRHA has acquired. The new Metropolitan Village, Cumberland Manor and New Horizon Village developments will include single family homes, garden apartments, townhouses and traditional apartment configurations. The total population of this new neighborhood will be approximately 450 to 600 people, who will shop and visit the Main Street corridor.

Additionally, the SoMa Plan improves on these incentives by addressing what to do – over time - with the old Veterans Affairs Hospital (VA) property. This 20 acre property, and its large, mostly



Existing and remodeled housing

empty buildings, negatively impacts the SoMa area. As long as the current band-aid approach of reuse and rehabilitation continues, it will remain a blighted property. The main hospital building should be demolished and the property redeveloped, reusing key structures, where appropriate, and locating social services like Our House there, while converting most of the property into a new park featuring the Lightfoot Cabin historic property. This park, with its selected new and rehabilitated structures, would be an incentive for continued redevelopment of the areas north and south, while providing necessary open space for residential areas.

Capitol Zoning District's zone for "quiet business" redevelopment of Roosevelt Road properties is compatible with the SoMa Plan. Allowable quiet businesses are listed in the CZD General Stan-



Computer generated view of LRHA's new Metropolitan Village

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# MAP: URBAN DESIGN PLAN



THE HISTORIC URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

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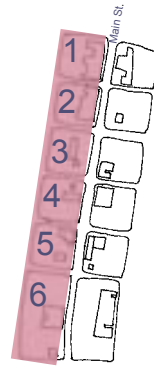
URBAN DESIGN **VISION** PLAN  
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# MAIN STREET BLOCK BY BLOCK URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

## Main Street: I-630 – 19th Street

A block-by-block urban design analysis of the historic commercial portion of the Street, using the “Strategic Projects Descriptions” approach, produces suggestions for redevelopment based on a view of the SoMa Plan’s new Identity. Its detailed discussion of each block describes a framework for redevelopment that assumes the forces of changing markets and individual development goals will play an important role. The SoMa Plan should guide an “overlay” entity, or a new consortium of existing oversight entities, in the review of individual proposals.



**#1**  
12th-13th



**#2**  
13th-14th



**#3**  
14th-15th



**#4**  
15th-16th



**#5**  
16th-17th



**#6**  
Post Office  
17th-19th



## West Side of Main Street From I-630 to 19th St.

**12 to 13** Rehabilitation of existing structures.

**#1**

**13 to 14** Rehabilitation of existing structures and infill; also review existing structures for possible replacement with three floors.

**#2**

**14 to 15** Demolition and reconstruction; new building facing Main Street built to property line, 3-5 stories with set-backs; parking along alley.

**#3**

**15 to 16** Infill new construction, 3-5 stories, parking on alley where feasible at each corner; rehabilitation of existing older structure with added floors.

**#4**

**16 to 17** Rehabilitation; infill and new construction on block up to historic Little Holtze house property.

**#5**

**17 to 19** Post Office remains as long as it is determined viable; future use would include mixed use housing and commercial; corner house could be replaced with 2 - 4 family housing and oriented to Main Street and 19th Streets.

**#6**



# MAIN STREET BLOCK BY BLOCK URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

## East Side of Main Street From I-630 to 19th St. Block by Block Recommendations

**12 to 13** Market demand will increase the value of this site including multiple stories; the replacement uses will be mixed uses and the project's design will reflect the character of historic Main St. as much as possible; with increased density to 5 floors; parking will be along the alley on site.

**#7**

**13 to 14** Block 7's design applies to this block; a full block design study should be undertaken; an interim phase could include the Scott Street one-half block as surface parking for Main Street; a future phase would see a 3 - 5 - story mixed-use project development.

**#8**

**14 to 15** This block frontage, currently under one ownership, is planned as mixed-use residential/commercial, with a park on the corner of Daisy Bates; this is a compatible use for the block and the SoMa Plan.

**#9**

**15 to 16** Market demand will increase the value of this site including multiple stories; the replacement uses would be mixed use designed to reflect the look of the block; with increased density to 5 floors; parking on site along the alley in the back.

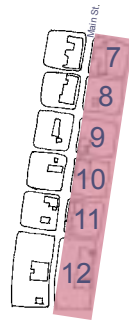
**#10**

**16 to 17** Block 7's design applies to this block; a full block design study should be undertaken; an interim phase could include the Scott Street one-half block as surface parking for Main Street; a future phase would see a 3-5-story residential mixed-use project development.

**#11**

**17 to 19** As long as the site remains economically viable as a grocery store it should remain; if market demands would warrant an increased density for the site, a mixed use of residential/commercial with a grocery store should be promoted.

**#12**



**#7**

**12th-13th**



**#8**

**13th-14th**



**#9**

**14th-15th**



**#10**

**15th-16th**



**#11**

**16th-17th**



**#12**

**Harvest Foods  
17th-19th**



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# TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

## Trolley

The SoMa Plan strongly recommends extending the next phase of the River Rail Streetcar from 2nd Street down Main Street to the 17th Street intersection. If a one-block loop route is considered, it recommends an extension to the east to Scott Street. An alternative loop route could extend east to Commerce, along 17th Street. Future neighborhood routes would include an extension west to Central High School along Daisy Bates (14th St.).

NOTE: See map, Transportation, on page 34.



Streetcar station in Portland

## Pedestrian

Repair and add where required sidewalks for all blocks to reinforce walking patterns.

## Biking Lanes

Begin a study with BACA to determine priority bike lanes for the area. Lobby city government for these lanes to be painted in the public works budget.

## One Way Streets

As a means to help slow traffic through the neighborhood, study the possibility of removing one way streets.



Streetcar in Portland



Bus with bicycle rack



Biker on Main Street shoulder at streetcar line



River Rail station at Clinton Presidential Library

# TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

## Significant Streets

A goal for all streets in the SoMa Plan area would be to have new light fixtures and underground utilities. This is a long-range goal. Working towards that goal in phases, street by street, even block by block, is a feasible short-term approach.

The SoMa Plan recognizes the following streets as significant, meaning they should be given near-term priority. A “significant” street will be visually recognizable and fit the identity goals of the Plan by having: consistent historical replica light fixtures on approximately 30 foot centers; a street tree plan; and underground utility lines. Significant Streets, in order of priority:

### Main Street

- a. I-630 to 17th Street (Current)
- b. 17th Street to Roosevelt Road (Future phase to be determined)

### Broadway

- a. I-630 to 17th Street
- b. 17th Street to Roosevelt Road (Future phase to be determined)

### Daisy Bates (14th Street)

- a. Broadway to Main Street
- b. Main Street to Commerce Street (Future phase to be determined)

### Center Street

- a. I-630 to Daisy Bates (14th Street)
- b. Daisy Bates to the Governor’s Mansion (Future phase to be determined)

### Roosevelt Road

- a. Main Street to I-30
- b. Main Street to Broadway (Future phase to be determined)

### 21st Street

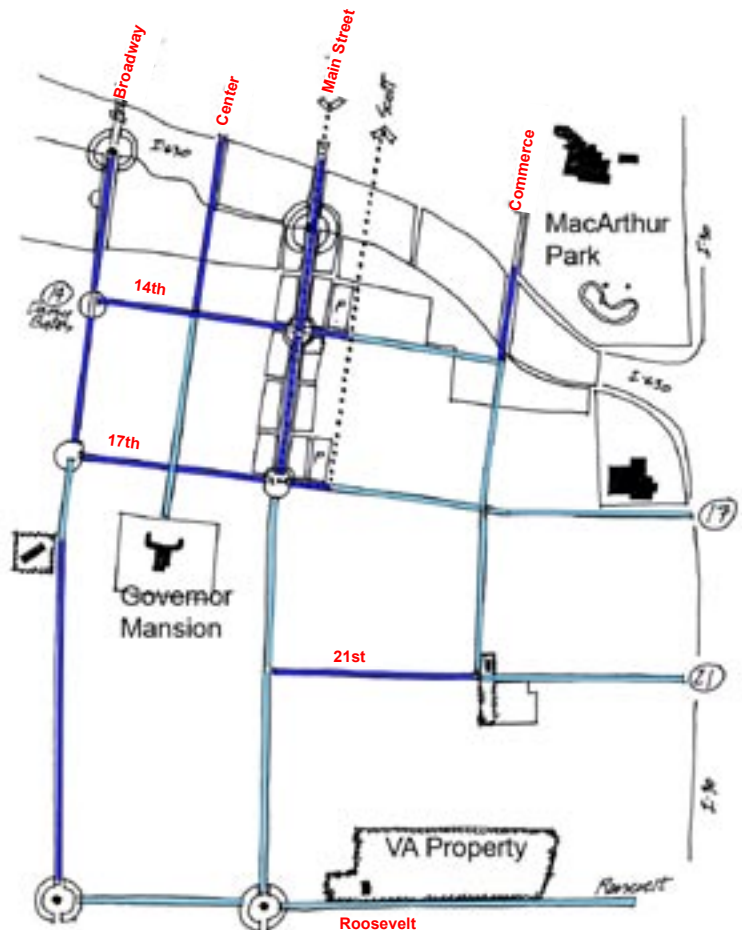
- a. Main Street to Pettaway Park
- b. Pettaway Park to I-30 (Future phase to be determined)

### 17th Street

- a. Main Street to Broadway
- b. Main Street to Commerce Street (Future phase to be determined)
- c. Commerce Street to I-30 (Future phase to be determined)

### Commerce Street

- a. Daisy Bates to MacArthur Park
- b. Daisy Bates to 21st Street (Future phase to be determined)



Dark Blue = 1st Priority Streets  
Light Blue = 2nd Priority Streets

# MAP: TRANSPORTATION



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# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **STREETCAR EXTENSION DOWN MAIN STREET**

Promote the next phase of the streetcar route as an extension down Main Street to 17<sup>th</sup>; this next streetcar route could be a phased project, initially planned to 14<sup>th</sup> and ultimately to 17<sup>th</sup> street; the route would be a single direction route loop (based on transit feasibility), returning north up Scott Street or Commerce; both routes go through the redeveloping residential area east of Main and north of 17<sup>th</sup>, connecting them to the northeastern areas of the downtown core.

## **STREETScape PROGRAM**

Begin a streetscape program with the city of Little Rock; follow SoMa Plan guidelines for priority locations within the neighborhood; include redevelopment of the four important intersections referred to in the plan as important nodes.

## **PARKING & CIRCULATION PLAN**

Begin a detailed study of streets in the neighborhood where parallel parking could be reintroduced; this added parking will aid redevelopment concepts and help slow traffic; the study should also include a full review of the effectiveness of all one way streets; begin a traffic analysis of the key streets. Also, discuss with the Capitol Zoning District Board and Executive Director waving parking requirements for Main Street Blocks 12<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup>; consider an experimental time limited waiver of these requirements; removing requirements would lessen the burden on developers in these challenging blocks.

## **BIKE LANE DESIGNATION**

Develop a plan with BACA, the local biking organization, for a bike lane through the neighborhood.

## **GATEWAY PROJECTS**

Begin a gateway project; the gateways, viewed as public art projects, would have their development specifications outlined as for an “arts” project; the northern gateways at Main and Broadway should be the first priorities, with the southern gateways at Roosevelt next.

## **FREEWAY PARK OVER I-630 FREEWAY**

Begin this large-scale Little Rock public works project with a detailed feasibility study and promotion effort by the SoMa Board; plan it in phases according to engineering feasibility; consider as an initial phase redevelopment of the Main Street overpass, similar to the Atlanta Fifth Street Bridge referred to in this plan.

## **DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT**

Write new design guidelines for the blocks bordering the southern edge of the proposed “Freeway Park”; these new guidelines should complement existing design guidelines of Capitol Zoning District and MacArthur Park Historic District; they should recognize new development incentives created by “Freeway Park” and the recommendations this plan proposes for two distinct districts – one from Main to Broadway with smaller scale and more commercial uses mixed with residential and the other to the east of Main, with larger scale (6-8 stories) residential blocks mixed with single family and townhouse development.



# GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

## SoMa Actions with Neighborhood Organizations

### C.Z.D. (Capitol Zoning District)

- Existing zones and guidelines meet SoMa goals
- Parking study should begin
- Recommend moratorium on Upper Main Street blocks
- Recommend re-introducing street parking on selected streets

### Q.Q.A. (Quapaw Quarter Association)

- Coordinate all new projects
- Maintain a seat on the SoMa Board

### M.P.H.D. (MacArthur Park Historic District)

- Develop specific guidelines for the re-development sites bordering the present freeway right of way

### B.I.D. (Business Improvement District)

- Maintain an organizational presence between the BID and SoMa boards

### D.N.A. (Downtown Neighborhood Association)

- Maintain membership & board representation
- Plan for area is compatible with SoMa Urban Design Plan's goals

## Implementation Strategy

To implement the SoMa Plan a new organizational entity should be created. The SoMa Board would have oversight of the organization. The organization would act as an “ad hoc” urban design group with the primary objective to review and encourage the proper development for the area as defined in the SoMa Plan. The following outline provides suggested tasks to begin:

### 1. Work with existing jurisdictional districts

Develop a policy for the review process for all proposed development in the planning area

Review SoMa Plan objectives with Board and committees

Set priorities for project implementation

Meet with Mayor Stodola, City Manager Moore and City Planning Director Bozynski to learn of current plans for the area, and to promote the SoMa strategies

### 2. Consider design guideline changes for SoMa planning areas

C.Z.D. – Mansion Area

Remove parking requirements for Upper Main Street Blocks

Review design goals for specific SoMa Plan project areas

M.P.H.D. - new design guidelines for targeted areas

### 3. Create a new organizational entity

Investigate the feasibility of an overlay district in targeted areas

Create an ad hoc review committee comprised of members of the CZD, DNA, MPHD, QQA, BID and SoMa and the City of Little Rock

Meet to review projects and set priorities

Devise agreement for notification and review of projects

Hire an urban design consultant to review projects and make recommendations.

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# MAP: BOUNDARIES & JURISDICTIONS



THE HISTORIC URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

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# APPENDIX

The following text is the edited summary of the report: “Neighborhood Input for Streetscape Project” completed in March 2007 and provided to the SoMa organization.

## Public Meetings

It was decided to conduct public meetings at the beginning of 2007. The meetings were designed to attract diverse representatives from the SoMa area by scheduling three meetings in different locations throughout the neighborhood. Facilitators Dr. Mark Peterson and Maureen Rose, from the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, were hired to conduct the meetings. The turn out was good and the comments varied, but one theme was evident – the time is now to revitalize this neighborhood to provide the businesses and residents with a vibrant place once again.

The following excerpts are from the full report compiled after the public meetings. The complete report is included in the Appendix.

## Meeting Summary

Forty-five Southside Main Street Neighborhood residents and business owners gathered to talk about their dreams and visions for the area, in three meetings held February 20, 2007 at Juanita’s, February 27 at St. John’s Vision Center, and March 1 at the Arch Street Alert Center. The purpose of the neighborhood input meetings was to gather information to drive the next step for the Southside Main Street Little Rock – a streetscape project.

The people who attended are representative of the diversity of age, race and economics of the neighborhood. Most have a clear vision of Southside Main Street neighborhood as vibrant and bustling. They shared ideas of which elements will help to make that happen. Long-time residents remember the neighborhood as vital and active, and all would like to see the vitality restored with services and businesses appropriate to today’s busy families and lifestyles.

The idea of a streetscape project was well received by all participants. “Once investors and developers see a streetscape is going in, they will be more likely to invest,” said one participant. There are many examples of a single project jump starting development. This project will likely be a catalyst to future growth and development, generating momentum in the neighborhood.

Initial questions were designed to help participants recall places that draw people to them – and provide experiences that draw them to return. These memories triggered suggestions for specific qualities and experiences that could become part of Southside Main neighborhood, enhancing the neighborhood’s culture and flavor. Participants favor quality design, good public transit and parking, a safe neighborhood, diversity, and a sense of neighborhood.

## Conclusion

The next step is to proceed with the Southside Main Street Neighborhood streetscape project.

## Vision Statement

Southside Main Street neighborhood is:

An attractive and economically viable destination for citizens and visitors

A Place with prosperity for all residents

A well known entity in downtown Little Rock

Known for excellent cooperation among organization, businesses and the city.



# APPENDIX

## Questions and Discussion

1. Places that make us want to return.
2. What attracts you to these places?
3. How did these places make you feel?

Respondents recalled places with unique character, many places to visit and shop, beautiful streets and green areas, presence of arts and music, places to relax, walk-ability, and diversity of people.

4. What do you cherish and want to preserve in your neighborhood?
5. Comments on our history and culture.
6. Have any changes made you sad or angry?

Both recent and long-time residents cherish the history and architecture of the neighborhood, along with its greatest resource - its people. The group recognizes the potential of being next to downtown Little Rock. The sense of neighborhood emerged as important for all participants.

Changes that are difficult to accept include the devastation of the 1999 tornado, the empty lots and neglected old homes, fast moving traffic through the neighborhood, (city-wide) increased vulnerability to crime, and businesses leaving.

7. What types of businesses and services would you like to see here?
8. How would you like the neighborhood to look – to make this a better neighborhood?
9. How should side streets look in relation to main and Broadway?

Each group listed businesses that would be desirable, most of which are support services businesses. Generally, residents would prefer to not have to leave the neighborhood to get essential services.

The preferred look for the neighborhood is busy and vital, clean and beautiful, with landscaping and trees to provide bountiful shaded areas. All three groups like (for Main and Broadway) the concept of buildings with storefronts on ground level and residential housing above.

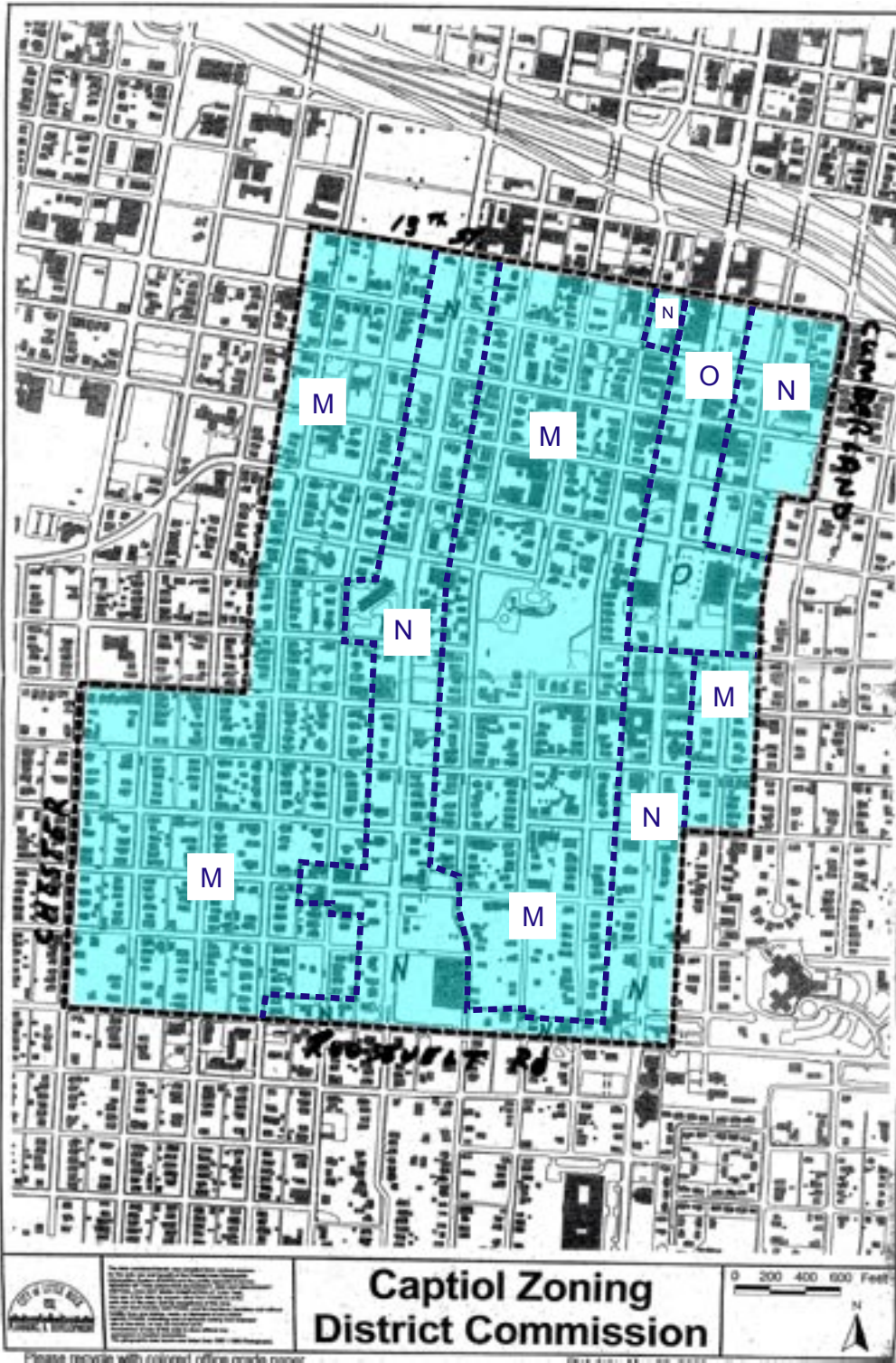
## Other Comments

We would like to attract the creative class; Promote more locally owned businesses; Once investors and developers see a streetscape is going in, they will be more likely to invest; We may volunteer together to turn a vacant lot on Main Street into a garden; The neighborhood has had a lot of plans; The key now is implementation.

## Community Focus Public Meeting Attendees

Brian Minyard, Normard Crump, Kathy Wells, Willie Jones, Lea Hart, Joe E. Matlock, Tony Curtis, John & Anne Jarrard, Paul Hastings, Muriel Lederman, Chris & Liz Ellis, Amos Lassen, Hillis Schild, Gerald Turner, Richard Butler, Chuck Heinbockel, Lynn Hamilton, Drew & Beverly Jones, Tony Bozynski, Russell & Teresa Murphy, Margaret Norton, Sharon Welch-Blair, Stewart Child, Christin Harper, Doug Melkovitz, Brian Keating, Lee Fleming, Larry Chastain, Zach Jeffery, Danielle de Preux, Richard & Chrystal Ball, Dana Minton, Charles Vann, Amber Jones, Peter Hartstein, Jennifer Haddock, Jim Wiersmo, Cheri Nichols and Anita Davis

# CAPITOL ZONING - MANSION DISTRICT MAP



- Key:
- N = Neighborhood, residential & commercial uses
  - M = Single family residence
  - O = Traditional Main Street commercial



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# CZD COMMISSION PLAN SUMMARY

The following text is a summary of the various CZD planning documents for the Mansion District that apply to the SoMa Plan. The complete set of documents are available at the CZD web site [www.arkansas.gov/czdc](http://www.arkansas.gov/czdc).

## What is the Capitol Zoning District?

The Capitol Zoning District (CZD) was created in 1975 by the State Legislature (Act 267 of 1975) during the term of Governor David Pryor to protect and improve the neighborhoods around the State Capitol and the Governor's Mansion. The CZD consists of two separate areas: The Capitol Area and the Mansion Area.

A nine member Commission regulates all land use and development in the CZD and is governed by the CZD Ordinance and Master Plan.

A Design Review Committee evaluates proposals for new construction and rehabilitation to existing structures and makes recommendations to the CZD Commission.

For more information about the Capitol Zoning District Commission, you may visit the offices at 410 S. Battery Street or the web site at <http://www.arkansas.gov/czdc>. The Executive Director is Randy Jeffery who can be reached by telephone at 501-324-9644.

## The Basic Approach to Building in the Mansion Area

Designing a building to fit within the Mansion Area requires careful thought. First, it is important to realize that, while the Mansion Area conveys a certain sense of time and place associated with its history, it also remains dynamic, with improvements to existing structures and construction of new buildings occurring over time.

The Capitol Zoning District Commission strives to assure that, when new building occurs, it will be in a manner that reinforces the visual characteristics of the area. This does not mean, however, that new buildings must look old. In fact, imitating historic styles is generally discouraged; historians prefer to be able to "read" the evolution of the street, discerning the apparent age of each building by its style and method of construction.

Rather than imitating older buildings, a new design may relate to the historic design characteristics of the neighborhood while also conveying the stylistic trends of today. New construction can be done so by drawing upon certain building features – such as the way it is located on a site; the manner in which it relates to the street; and its mass, form and materials. It is possible to be compatible with the historic context while also producing a design that is distinguishable as being newer than the historic buildings of the area.

## Mansion Area Overview

The Mansion Area Design Standards address treatment of existing historic features, repair of deteriorated details and replacement of missing elements.

In addition, Rehabilitation Standards, General Standards and the City of Little Rock Development Guide are regulatory documents that may also apply to a specific project. Furthermore, underlying policies for these design standards are presented in the Master Plan for the Mansion Area.

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for the  
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# CZD COMMISSION PLAN SUMMARY

## **Mansion Area Overview**

The Mansion Area Design Standards address treatment of existing historic features, repair of deteriorated details and replacement of missing elements.

In addition, Rehabilitation Standards, General Standards and the City of Little Rock Development Guide are regulatory documents that may also apply to a specific project. Furthermore, underlying policies for these design standards are presented in the Master Plan for the mansion area.

## **Design Standards for Zones “M” and “N” in the Mansion Area**

These Design Standards are for new construction in Zones “M” and “N” in the Mansion Area. These districts developed with a traditional single-family residential character, which is to be continued in renovations and new construction. These standards therefore provide criteria for new buildings to be built in a manner that will be compatible with this established context.

Note that, in addition to these standards, design standards for site development may also apply. For properties that involve a historic property, the standards for rehabilitation also apply. See map on page 34.

## **Features That Should be Considered When Planning New Construction in the Neighborhood**

### **Neighborhood Commercial Uses**

The Mansion Area includes a special zoning category for commercial uses set in a context that traditionally was residential in character.

Commercial uses are to be located in structures that are similar in character to historic residential lots.

### **Traditional Main Street Commercial Zone**

Note that the northern portion of Main Street developed in a traditional commercial storefront context. Buildings are rectangular and align at the sidewalk edge. This distinctly different setting is to be maintained as a typical “Main Street” character, and it is zoned “O.” A special set of design standards is provided for this area.

### **Traditional Development Characteristics of the Mansion Area**

The following section highlights some of the key features of the Mansion Area that should be respected in new construction.

### **Mansion Area Street Patterns**

Historic development patterns seen in street and alley plans often contribute to the distinct character of the Mansion Area, and therefore they should be preserved. These street plans influence the manner in which primary structures are gated, and they also shape the manner in which secondary structures and landscape features may occur on the site.



THE HISTORIC URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

# CZD COMMISSION PLAN SUMMARY

## Site Design

When considering the design features of individual building sites, a rich palette appears in the neighborhood. The similar orientation of buildings to the street, the variety of landscape designs, and the intermittent use of fences and rock retaining walls are among those site features that contribute to the character of the neighborhood.

Mass and Scale  
Building Width  
Building Form  
Roofs  
Solid-to-Void Ratio  
Materials  
Architectural Character  
Windows  
Doors

## Mansion Area Framework Master Plan Summary of Policies and Regulations

It is important to understand the scope of this Framework Master Plan. It provides a broad view of how a variety of both public and private design and planning improvements may be coordinated such that the benefits of those investments may be maximized. The Framework Master Plan establishes a road map for planning and design work, indicating its general scope and character. It establishes a direction for public and private improvements, but it does not provide specific design solutions. Details of designs for individual plan elements should be refined as each component moves into an implementation phase.

The Mansion Area Framework Master Plan defines urban design policies for the Mansion Area and establishes a framework for implementing specific design improvements that will establish a distinct identity for this vital Little Rock neighborhood. The recommendations foster good design choices and sound development strategies for reinvestment and enhancement of the public nature of the Mansion Area. These recommendations provide for the continued accommodation of current uses and changing land use patterns within the neighborhood.

## Planning and Design Goals

The Commission holds these planning and design goals for the Mansion Area:

1. To revitalize existing housing, to promote new infill housing developments and promote diversity among residents.
2. To rehabilitate dilapidated historic structures in and around the neighborhood.
3. To create an improved image and stronger sense of identity.
4. To continue to develop a more family-friendly environment for residents and visitors alike.
5. To establish new and to better define existing gateways into the neighborhood.
6. To create a mixture of uses throughout the neighborhood.

URBAN DESIGN **VISION** PLAN  
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# CZD COMMISSION PLAN SUMMARY

## Urban Design Goals

The Commission holds these urban design goals for the Mansion Area:

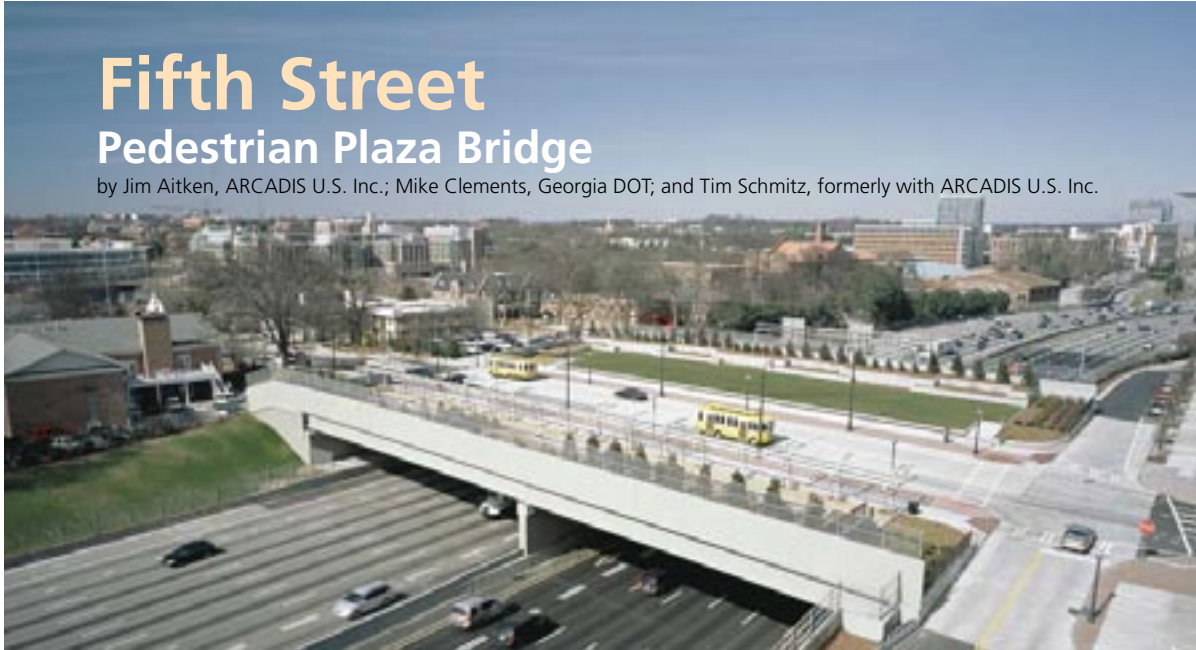
1. To preserve the character of the Mansion Area neighborhood and individual historic buildings.
2. To enhance the pedestrian experience throughout the commercial areas.
3. To establish a sense of vital continuity within the Mansion Area neighborhood.
4. To promote commercial land uses along Broadway and Main Street that compliment the residential neighborhood.
5. To accommodate the need for commercial uses along both Broadway and Main Streets, heavily traveled transportation corridors, while preserving the residential character of the remaining portions of the neighborhood.

## Design Standards for the Commercial Zone "O" in the Mansion Area

These design standards are for new construction in Zone "O" in the Mansion Area. This district developed with a traditional commercial storefront character, which is to be continued in renovations and new construction. These standards provide criteria for new buildings to be built in a manner that will be compatible with this established context.

Note that, in addition to these standards, design standards for site development may also apply. For properties that involve a historic property, the standards for rehabilitation also apply.

# Fifth Street Pedestrian Plaza Bridge - Atlanta, GA



## Fifth Street Pedestrian Plaza Bridge

by Jim Aitken, ARCADIS U.S. Inc.; Mike Clements, Georgia DOT; and Tim Schmitz, formerly with ARCADIS U.S. Inc.

The newly constructed Fifth Street Bridge over I-75/I-85 provides a user-friendly environment with a roadway, traffic lanes, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, lawns, and planters. Photo: ARCADIS U.S. Inc.

### Reconnecting Neighborhoods in Midtown, Atlanta



Original Fifth Street Bridge.  
Photo: Sunbelt Structures Inc.

Located in the heart of Midtown, the recently completed Fifth Street Bridge is quite unlike other bridges that cross the I-75/I-85 downtown connector in Atlanta, Georgia. At bridge level, it is difficult to tell that this is a bridge at all. It more closely resembles a small park with wide sidewalks, grassy lawns, shrubbery, and benches. Trees and a trellis provide shade from the intense summer sun that beats down on Atlanta.

The new Fifth Street Bridge reconnects neighborhoods that were once isolated from the downtown area by the 16 lanes of northbound and southbound traffic on I-75/I-85. It links the main Georgia Institute of Technology campus to the

university's east campus at Technology Square, which was completed in 2003. Technology Square is home to a hotel and conference center; the College of Management; Georgia Tech Global Learning Center; Economic Development Institute; Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development; Georgia Tech Bookstore; and a host of restaurants, shops, and other businesses. The entire Midtown community is now unified by this inviting green span that provides a pedestrian-, bicycle-, and transit-friendly connection over the vehicular traffic that uses Atlanta's streets daily.

The original Fifth Street Bridge was constructed in the mid-1980s as a two-span, continuous steel-plate-girder

### profile

#### FIFTH STREET PEDESTRIAN PLAZA BRIDGE / ATLANTA, GEORGIA

**ENGINEER:** ARCADIS U.S. Inc., Atlanta, Ga.

**TIEBACK WALL ENGINEER:** Hayward Baker Inc., Alpharetta, Ga.

**ARCHITECT:** Smallwood, Reynolds, Stewart, Stewart & Associates, Atlanta, Ga.

**PRIME CONTRACTOR:** Sunbelt Structures Inc., Tucker, Ga.

**PRECASTER (BEAMS):** Standard Concrete Products, Atlanta, Ga., a PCI-Certified Producer

**PRECASTER (MSE AND MISCELLANEOUS PRECAST PANELS):** MC Precast Inc., Atlanta, Ga.

**AWARDS:** 2007 PCI Bridge Design Award for the Best Non-Highway Bridge and Co-Winner of the Best Sustainable Design

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# Fifth Street Pedestrian Plaza Bridge - Atlanta, GA

**Precast, prestressed concrete beams were selected as the most economical solution.**

bridge, 228 ft 4 in. long and 70 ft 5 in. wide. The roadway carried four 12-ft-wide lanes and two 8-ft-wide sidewalks. Concrete parapets with a chain link fence formed the railings on each side of the bridge. The end bents were constructed on retaining walls at each end, with a cast-in-place (CIP) wall at the west end and a tieback wall at the east end. During the construction of Technology Square, Fifth Street underwent a major renovation that featured wide sidewalks and special lighting, both on and off campus. To complete the renovation, Georgia Tech initiated a meeting with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) officials to discuss replacement of the Fifth Street Bridge.

The university wanted a signature bridge that would create approximately three-quarters of an acre of green space with 25-ft-wide sidewalks to match the sidewalks at the ends of the bridge, as well as planters, benches, decorative lighting, and a trellis to serve as a shaded area for the campus trolley stop. The walls and planters would be wide enough and high enough to obstruct the view of the interstate below the bridge. In addition, the original plan called for removal of the existing bridge and completion of the traffic lanes and sidewalks of the new bridge, without interruption to vehicular or pedestrian traffic, by the beginning of the 2006 football season. The total bridge width, including roadway, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, lawns, and planters, would be 250 ft 3 in. However, the Federal Highway Administration required that the proposed structure provide for future high-occupancy vehicle expansion of the downtown connector. Therefore,



A wide sidewalk and trellis were used on the south side of the plaza.  
Photo: ARCADIS U.S. Inc.

it was necessary to increase the bridge length to 256 ft 6 in. and reduce the bridge width to 223 ft 3 in.

GDOT decided that the best way to meet the requirements of all parties involved was to award the project as a design-build project with an accelerated schedule. Ten design-build teams submitted Statements of Qualifications in November 2003, and a shortlist of five teams was released in February 2004. The project was advertised in April 2004 and awarded to the winning team of Sunbelt Structures Inc. (Sunbelt) and ARCADIS in June 2004. The entire process was greatly accelerated, especially in the planning stages. On average, a GDOT project of this size and nature takes approximately 10 years from the initial concept to the letting phase, whereas Fifth Street took just 10 months. Notice to Proceed was issued July 22, 2004.

ARCADIS served as the project designer and performed all roadway, drainage, electrical, and structural design, with the exception of the abutment at the east end of the bridge. Hayward Baker Inc. designed this abutment as a tieback



Planters were used on the north side of the bridge to hide the interstate.  
Photo: ARCADIS U.S. Inc.

wall abutment due to the presence of an existing tieback wall that complicated the design and construction. The contractor, Sunbelt, was responsible for construction of the entire project.

The new Fifth Street Bridge is a two-span bridge with span lengths of 137 ft and 119 ft 6 in. Precast, prestressed concrete beams were selected by the design-build team during the prebid phase as the most economical solution for the new structure. The final design used twenty-eight 74-in.-deep modified AASHTO bulb-tee beams in span 1. The modifications consisted of increasing the depth of the bottom flange and width of the beam by 2 in. over the entire height of the beam to fit an additional strand per row in the bottom flange and web. Span 2 used twenty-six 74-in.-deep bulb-tee beams without the additional 2 in. width. The large dead loads associated with the landscaping, planters, and sidewalks necessitated the use of the deep beam and modified section. In addition, the beams were designed and constructed using high performance concrete with a 28-day specified compressive strength of 10,000 psi and 0.6-in.-diameter strands. Structural steel diaphragms made up of 6 x 6-in. angles were used instead of GDOT's typical CIP concrete diaphragms. These were installed more quickly and provided lateral support to the beams almost as soon as they were erected.

**PRECAST, PRESTRESSED CONCRETE / GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, ATLANTA, GA., OWNER**

**PRECAST SPECIALTY ENGINEER (MSE WALLS):** Reinforced Earth Co., Norcross, Ga.

**PRECAST SPECIALTY ENGINEER (PLANTER WALLS):** Wolverton & Associates, Duluth, Ga.

**BRIDGE DESCRIPTION:** Two-span bridge with precast, prestressed concrete beams and cast-in-place concrete deck supporting unusual loads including planting areas up to 9-ft high

**STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS:** 74-in.-deep bulb tees, modified 74-in.-deep bulb tees, planter walls on bridge, mechanically stabilized earth wall panels, and cast-in-place concrete deck

**BRIDGE COST:** \$10.12 million

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# ORGANIZATIONS

## Group of Groups Organization

The organization was formed to foster coordination among the many groups having jurisdiction and influence in and around the SoMa neighborhood.

Anita Davis, SoMa Board President  
Scott Grummer, Downtown Little Rock Community Development Corp., Executive Director  
Chuck Heinbockel, B.I.D. representative  
Amber Jones, the MORE GROUP  
Ron Maxwell, the Governor's Mansion  
Sharon Priest, Downtown Partnership, Executive Director  
Jo Summar, Downtown Neighborhood Association  
Margaret Wyatt, Downtown Dames  
Roger Williams, Quapaw Quarter Association, Executive Director

### Acronyms and groups in the report refer to the following:

B.I.D. -	Business Improvement District
Q.Q.A. -	Quapaw Quarter Association
C.Z.D. -	Capitol Zoning District
D.L.R.C.D.C. -	Downtown Little Rock Community Development Corporation
D.N.A. -	Downtown Neighborhood Association
D.P. -	The Downtown Partnership
The M.O.R.E. Group -	Marshaling Our Resources Effectively
The Downtown Dames -	An early Southside Main Street group

# SUMMARY OF MAIN STREET 2001 PLAN

## Main Street Corridor Plan Overview

The Downtown Little Rock Corridors Study identified a network of six streets as a framework for the future growth through downtown. Factors affecting development and opportunities for enhancing each corridor were studied. This study was adopted by the City of Little Rock in 2000.

The objectives for a revitalized Main Street include:

- Restoring its economic value
- Preserving and enhancing its historic/cultural values
- Recreating its active street life
- Promoting its image as a special place within the City
- Incorporating public transit as a major amenity of the street
- Developing an approach to the implementation of the plan
- Adopt a procedure/entity for the review of all proposed Main Street projects to determine adherence to the principles of this as well as other plans adopted for downtown
- Select strategic adaptive reuse projects in the Historic Core and actively pursue development prospects for them
- Commit to implementing trolley/rail service on Main Street
- Initiate a streetscape/public art program for Main Street
- Develop gateway enhancements



## UALR URBAN STUDIES & DESIGN

UALR Urban Studies & Design is a program of the department of Political Science, which is housed in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Our mission is to provide academic instruction and public service activities throughout the state focusing on community development, housing, small town assistance, and neighborhood planning. The program uses senior architecture students and personnel from other related disciplines at the university to provide technical assistance to communities for such projects as schematic design, preliminary site plans, neighborhood analyses, feasibility studies, and technical research. Services are facilitated by the Urban Studies & Design professional staff and the use of local architects and planners as adjunct faculty. This involvement in “real world” projects, through interaction with the community, offers a unique and significant complement to the student’s higher education experience while providing a much-needed service to the state.

In the years the program has been in operation, the UALR Urban Studies & Design program has been asked to assist in several community projects in the central Arkansas area. Current projects include the urban design analysis of the downtown block, Block 97, for conversion to a mixed use urban park, the conversion of the Junction Bridge to a pedestrian bridge and the plan for North Bluffs Community, a new residential community in North Little Rock. Other projects and research being conducted concern issues of housing, scenic highway corridors, locating new public facilities, and government policy relative to community development programs.

UALR Urban Studies & Design has established working relationships with numerous community groups and institutions and communities statewide, and is recognized as a significant technical resource for public efforts. The services provided have expanded the capacity of several CDC and community based organizations and has enabled these groups to develop more effective building programs and become more involved in shaping their physical environment.

Contact information:            UALR Urban Studies & Design  
George Wittenberg  
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Stabler Hall, Room 603  
Little Rock, AR 72204  
501.324.9255  
[www.ualr.edu/urbanstudies](http://www.ualr.edu/urbanstudies)

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## PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

The technical assistance provided by the UALR Urban Studies & Design program is based on a combination of the following:

- Information gathered from public meetings
- Knowledge of planning and urban design
- Information from related professionals in the community-planners, architects, engineers, landscape architects, etc., as required by the research
- Such as city officials

This information is compiled as research, and reproduced in Case Study Reports.

The Case Study Reports are intended to provide a factual basis for advocacy groups to move their projects into the next step of project implementation. In addition to research, the Case Study Reports provide conceptual data, including plans when required to describe the feasibility of a particular or community area. These diagrams produced as a part of the conceptual data are meant to describe data concepts only, and to become the basis for further technical investigation.

As advocacy groups and communities move their projects into the implementation phase, the following groups of professionals are typically the ones to assist them in that phase:

- Civil engineers- site detail
- Landscape architects- site design
- Architects- building planning and design
- Structural engineers
- Mechanical engineers
- Electrical engineers

Typically, a “building project” begins with the selection of an architect who, as a generalist, will help the group determine their building needs and create a program of spaces and budgets. The architect will also help determine the proper group of specialist consultants to work with them to provide special expertise for engineering, planning, landscape architecture or interior design. A list of architects for selection for a project can be obtained by calling the American Institute of Architects at (501) 661-1111.



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