

*Springfield - Greene County  
Comprehensive Plan*

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*Center City  
Plan Element*

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*Prepared for:  
City of Springfield  
in conjunction with  
Urban District Alliance*



*May 1998*

*Prepared by:*



*with*

**IN** Motion

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# 1. Summary

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## Purpose and Scope

The *Center City Plan Element* is a long-term guide for private investments and public improvements for a major part of central Springfield stretching from Commercial Street on the north to the Southwest Missouri State University campus on the south, and from Grant Avenue on the west to National Avenue on the east.

Overall, the *Center City Plan Element* aims to elevate the quality of urban design throughout Center City and build a strong working relationship between the City of Springfield and the Urban Districts Alliance, a non-profit community development, marketing, and management corporation recently created to serve Center City.

The *Center City Plan Element* presents the Center City area at two scale levels. The first scale level is Center City, as a whole. The second scale level consists of the three primary districts of Center City -- the Greater Downtown District, the Commercial Street District, and the Government Plaza District.

## Relationship to Other Elements of Vision 20/20

The *Center City Plan Element* is a component of *Vision 20/20*, the comprehensive plan for the City of Springfield and surrounding Greene County. As part of *Vision 20/20*, the recommendations of this plan are coordinated with those for the Land Use, Transportation, Parks, and Community Physical Image Elements.

The *Center City Market Analysis* was prepared and published as a background report to this plan and many of its findings and preliminary recommendations have been included in this document.

## Center City Vision Statement

This plan has been guided by the following vision statement written by the Center City Focus Group, one of 12 citizens' committees organized by the City to advise it on the *Vision 20/20 Comprehensive Plan*.

*Center City is everybody's neighborhood; a place to live, work and play. A place where people of all ages, backgrounds and interests are welcome to enjoy a vibrant, dynamic, and growing environment. Center City is an exciting, inviting, livable place. Center City is clean, safe, friendly, and accessible to all.*

## Summary of the Vision for Center City

The vision statement defines the special nature of Center City and especially the Greater Downtown. Center City is the heart of a major community. It will evolve to include the widest range of activities of any district of the city and will combine those land uses in a compact and interrelated manner.

## Center City Districts

Center City will be made up of several distinct districts each adding its unique qualities and amenities making Center City an event-filled, fun, nonstop, lively, and exciting place to be.

**Greater Downtown.** The Greater Downtown District, which includes the historic Park Central Square area, University Plaza, and parts of Walnut Street and the SMSU campus will be alive with business, shopping, and visitors. It will be the place to be for people of all ages - a well-maintained, attractive, and inviting environment.

Parking will be developed in close proximity to support the new downtown business developments. Patrons to the Greater Downtown will enjoy an urban experience that is clean, safe, and friendly.

The Historic Walnut Street area will reflect the beauty, architecture, and style of the Victorian Era. Walnut Street will be internationally known for its Bed-and-Breakfast establishments, Victorian walking tours, arts festivals, and as the host of an annual Best of Springfield Celebration.

**Commercial Street.** The Commercial Street District will be revitalized with new streetscape treatments, building facades, and lighting and it will offer creative attractions such as Frisco Days, Train Expo, and the Rail Museum, for train enthusiasts around the world.

**Government Plaza.** The Government Plaza District will be enhanced with new streetscaping along Central Street and a focal plaza to serve as a central feature for the district, a place for relaxation, and a stage for special activities. The Government Plaza District will be linked to Drury College, the Ozarks Technical Community College, and the regional trail system.

### **Marketing and Recruitment**

Center City will have a strong, well-managed, and effective marketing and business recruitment program. Center City will be actively marketed to stimulate business, residential, retail, arts, and entertainment development,

### **Business Center**

Center City will be Springfield's center for business and governmental activities. Center City will enhance its environment to retain and attract quality businesses to the area. Center City will be 'bustling' with activity and be 'the place' to locate and conduct business.

### **Shopping and Entertainment**

Center City will provide the community with a unique and timeless shopping and entertainment experience. New entertainment and retail developments will attract people of all ages and provide visual excitement for people strolling in Center City. Each district will offer its own unique shopping and entertainment experience.

### **Education and Technologies**

Building upon the strengths of Southwest Missouri State University (SMSU), Drury College, and the Ozarks Technical Community College, Center City will continue to be the focal point for higher education and technology development. Springfield and Center City shall be known as "an education and communications city" fulfilling the needs of businesses and students of tomorrow,

### **Accessibility**

Center City will be integrated into Springfield's multi-modal transportation system and will provide linkages into and through the Center City districts. Circulation for buses, autos, trucks, bikes, and pedestrians will be safe and efficient. Parking will be developed within close proximity to office, shopping, and entertainment uses. A shuttle will provide Center City patrons access to the various amenities throughout the Center City districts.

### **Connections within Center City**

The Greater Downtown, Government Plaza, and Commercial Street will be more strongly interconnected via landscaped street corridors. The major investments being implemented in the University Plaza area and SMSU will be better connected to the historic central business district around Park Central Square by improved pedestrian and auto links, adding to the sense of diversity and creating an economically stronger whole. Center City will have better bicyclist connections to the rest of the community via the

proposed Jordan Creek Greenway and a network of bicycling lanes and signed bikeway routes.

### **A Balanced Network for Movement**

Pedestrian activities and circulation will be fostered throughout Center City, particularly in Greater Downtown, and especially in areas that are presently being taken over by cars. The approach to street design will shift from one that primarily focuses on traffic capacity to a more balanced approach — one that gives equal consideration to the intensity of pedestrian activity and the quality of public space. It is essential to create an environment in Greater Downtown and, especially in the historic Park Central Square area, that is active, intense, compact, and pedestrian-friendly.

### **Festivals and Special Events**

Center City will play host to thousands of people enjoying a variety of quality and well-managed festivals and special events. Center City will be the gathering place for residents, office workers, and visitors to celebrate dynamic activities, the diversity of people, arts, and culture.

### **Arts and Culture**

Center City will develop into the Ozarks provider of arts and culture offering a diverse range of opportunities for artistic involvement, expression, and interests.

### **Historic Preservation**

Center City will preserve and enhance the public and private historic landmarks and "celebrate the heritage" and history of Springfield.

### **Visual Identity**

The use of public art, colorful banners, flags, lighting, and specialty elements will create a unique identity and signature for Center City

reflecting that one is in a vibrant, dynamic, and healthy environment.

### **Parks and Open Space**

Center City will include urban parks where people can meet, converse, have a snack, or relax and experience the sights and sounds of the urban park environment. These 'pockets of delight' will be linked to the linear parks system that extends outward from Center City.

### **Public Spaces**

The streets, parks, and civic plazas will support the public life of the city and contribute to its sense of community. Designed as a network, they will support and attract private investment, improve appearances, provide recreation and respite, and promote a sense of security. Springfield will work with Center City residents and business people to gradually enhance and enlarge the network of public spaces that has been eroded and weakened over time.

### **Jordan Creek Valley and Civic Park**

Civic Park, a major new open space in the Jordan Creek Valley, will serve a variety of civic functions for the entire community, complement the planned exposition center, and spur nearby reinvestment and redevelopment.

As the long era of central city manufacturing and warehousing gives way to new uses, some of the industrial buildings along Jordan Creek may gradually be re-used and re-oriented to other activities and some may be removed altogether. Recreational open space should become an even more feasible re-use of the valley and an amenity attracting new investment.

A major initiative in the Jordan Creek Valley will be to create a major new civic park which will include facilities for community gatherings and festivals, large picnics, strolling and passive recreation, and a trail link to the greenway network. Civic Park will

become the major open space that Center City lacks and an important element of the community's park and greenway system. It should also be the site of major new civic buildings or facilities, such as a history museum, botanical garden, or farmer's market.

An Exposition Center is a major project that could be a significant catalyst for redevelopment around Civic Park. The indoor and outdoor gathering and entertainment spaces could complement each other, and the two projects could combine to dramatically change and improve the quality and image of Greater Downtown.

Civic Park will complement the character of Greater Downtown by introducing green spaces and water features, thus relieving the intensity of the central urban core. Creating a major civic park will require a significant commitment from the community, but the rewards should outweigh the sacrifices. A key component will be revitalizing and beautifying portions of Jordan Creek which will become a segment of the Greenway system and, as such, a source of beauty, interest, and a link to the City's neighborhoods.

### **Historic Resources**

Renovation and adaptive re-use of Center City's fine, older buildings will be made a priority. These structures help make Center City special and different, cement the community's emotional attachment to the area, and offer economically attractive spaces for start-up businesses and cultural organizations that cannot be duplicated elsewhere. They are a special resource in the revitalization of Springfield, as in many other American cities.

### **Public Safety**

Security and the perception of security will be enhanced by making Greater Downtown more active and vibrant at all hours of the day. People on the sidewalks and in shops, offices, and residences with windows on the street, active parks, and intensively used properties will provide surveillance and a sense of ownership. Implementing the recommendations of this plan will help reverse negative perceptions about public safety in Center City.

## **Community and Government Involvement**

The community and the government will share in the vision for Center City, a strategic plan with development policies and procedures that will help create a desirable place for living, doing business, and recreational activities. They will cooperate in sharing resources to create an organization to provide oversight, guidance, and management of Center City and make Center City truly everybody's neighborhood.

### **Role of the Public Sector**

The role of the City and County will be to support private sector, market-driven investment by maintaining and improving public facilities, such as streets, parks, and utilities, and to encourage, coordinate, and build consensus for private initiatives. Only when necessary, will the City or County become directly involved in real estate redevelopment.

Much of the responsibility for community development, small business support, marketing, and advocacy and leadership will be assumed by the Urban Districts Alliance and its subsidiaries, Springfield Finance and Development Corporation and Springfield Events and Management Division. Partner organizations include the Walnut Street Merchants Association, the Downtown Springfield Association, and the Commercial Club of Springfield.

### **Realizing the Vision**

All of these changes will require some degree of vision and confidence, but they are within the community's ability to achieve. Realizing the vision will necessitate a long-term, sustained, and comprehensive approach supported both by individual advocates and the community as a whole.

*If Springfield is to prosper and grow in stature, it will require that Center City remain vital, valued, and special. This assertion is based on the fact that nearly every great city has a strong and vibrant central area.*

## 2. Center City

Center City, as defined by the Springfield-Greene County *Vision 20/20 Comprehensive Plan*, is a diverse group of business, residential, and civic districts including and surrounding the historic central business district. This area encompasses what was, at the turn-of-the-century, the entire City Limits of Springfield. It is bounded roughly by Commercial Street on the north, National Avenue on the east, Grand Street on the south and Grant Avenue on the west. Thus, Center City is approximately 1.3 miles wide and 2.3 miles long. Figure 1, Center City Context, on Page 2-3, illustrates these boundaries and the relationship between Center City and the rest of Springfield.

### CENTER CITY INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Within Center City are several districts, as illustrated by Figure 2, on Page 2-4:

- The Greater Downtown District, which is composed of the historic central commercial core around Park Central Square, the University Plaza area, portions of the Walnut Street Historic District, the northern half of the Southwest Missouri State University campus, and portions of the Jordan Creek Valley

#### The Commercial Street District

- The Government Plaza District and the adjoining Drury College and Ozarks Technical Community College

- The Midtown Neighborhood, including the Boonville Avenue corridor and the Midtown Historic District
- The West Central Neighborhood
- The central industrial area in the Jordan Creek Valley

Other large institutional uses in Center City are Cox Medical Center North and the home offices of the Assemblies of God church .

### Land Use and Development

Center City embraces nearly every type of land use found in Springfield including: the densely developed, mixed-use office/retail core of the historic central business district; industry and warehousing; government offices; retail and service businesses; low-, medium-, and high-density housing; institutions such as churches, schools, and colleges; parks and floodplain open space; railroad yards; and hospitals and clinics. Figure 3, on Page 2-5, provides an Aerial Photo Key Map and Figures 4 through 6, on Pages 2-6 through 2-8, include aerial photos illustrating typical conditions and developments in Center City. These photos should serve as a reference for all discussion in this report.

This variety of land development is a result of the fact that Center City developed incrementally and it includes some of the oldest parts of the community. The older streets, such as Boonville Avenue, served as businesses corridors for the entire community at one time and were sources of many jobs. Residential neighborhoods

grew up on a grid street systems behind the business corridors and included a wide range of housing types and styles. Many fine, older homes are situated in the Midtown Historic District.

The City and County offices were developed along Central Street in the late 19th Century when Springfield and North Springfield were united. Included in this vicinity are the original City Hall, the Donald G. Busch Municipal Building (the main City offices), the police headquarters, the Main Library, the City Utilities office building, Central High School and the Greene County offices. This location, a political compromise, unfortunately locates these offices outside the central business district where they might contribute to the economic strength of that area.

## Traffic Circulation

Center City has excellent access from other parts of the community because it is served by Chestnut and Kansas Expressways, National, Campbell and Grant Avenues, and Grand and Division Streets,

Figure 7, Traffic Volumes, on Page 2-9, illustrates the alignments of the major streets and recent average daily traffic counts.

Boonville/South and Benton/Kimbrough Avenues are collector streets that link the Greater Downtown, Government Plaza and Commercial Street Districts and serve as internal connectors within Center City. Each has certain advantages and disadvantages in terms of circulation and image. Boonville Avenue is lined within non-residential land uses from Commercial Street to Park Central Square. Non-residential land uses continue along South Avenue from Park Central Square to Elm Street. These features give it the sense of being a main artery, although the connection to Park Central Square interferes with its ability to move traffic all the way across Center City. Benton-Kimbrough, on the other hand, is continuous all the way across Center City but directly serves residential neighborhoods near its north and south ends. These two

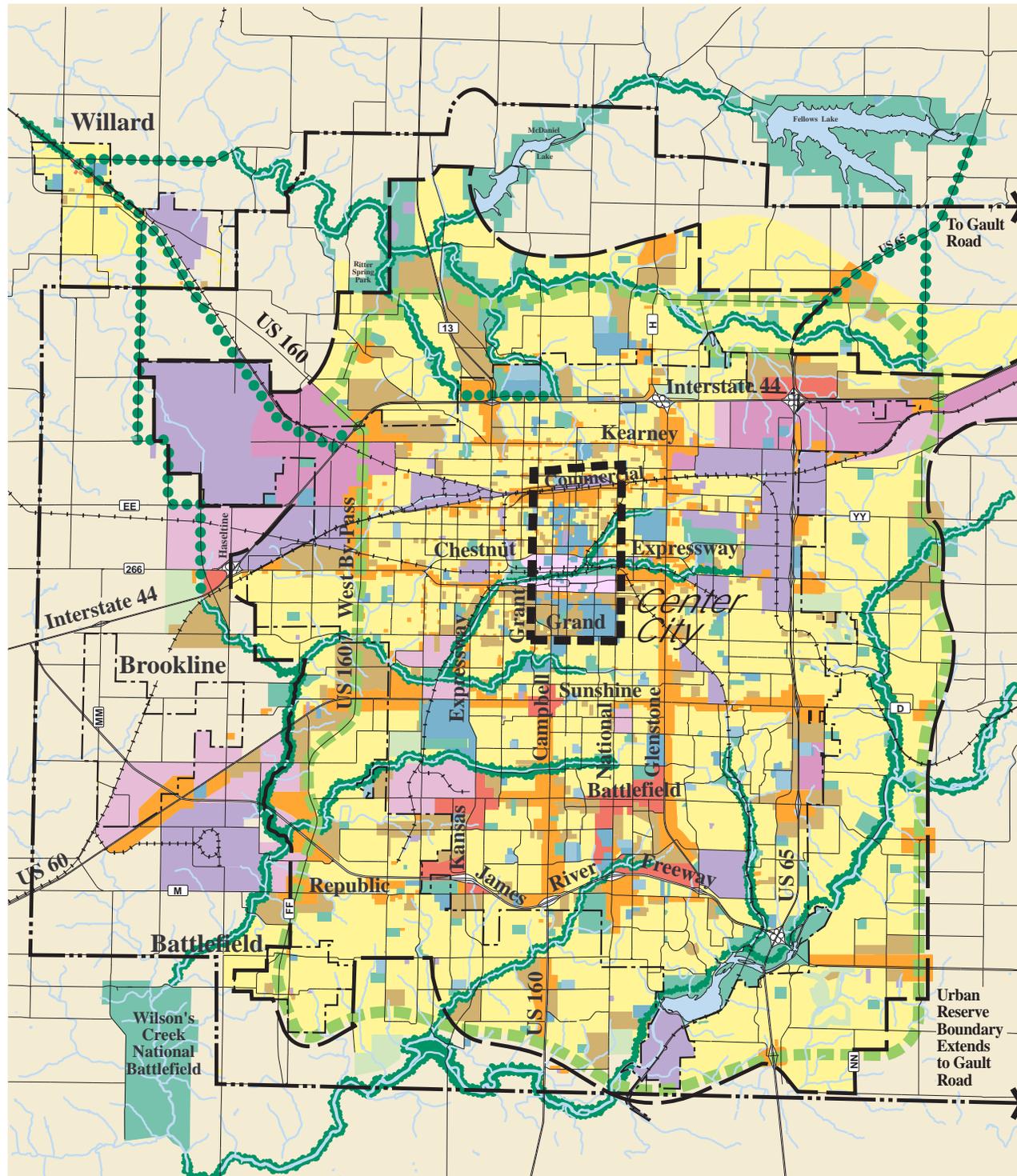
roadways should be considered for improved landscaping and lighting to help define and accentuate their role in connecting and integrating Center City.

Auto circulation within Center City is somewhat hampered by the fact that several streets are discontinuous. Barriers are posed by the railroad yard north of Commercial Street, the railroad tracks in the Jordan Creek Valley, by Park Central Square, and by Maple Park Cemetery located south of Grand Street. The Boonville/South Avenues corridor also terminates on the north end of Center City at Commercial Street and on the south at Grand Street. Water Street, East Trafficway, and Olive Street do not combine to form a smooth and unified east-west route. Finally, College and St. Louis Streets must bend around the central business core.

The central bus transfer station is located one block southwest of Park Central Square in the central business district. Greater Downtown has the single largest concentration of jobs and transit riders in the community, and many routes converge at this point, making transfers possible.

The relatively dense pattern of development and the mixture of housing, schools, and businesses offers opportunities for making many short trips on foot or by bicycle. However, there is no comprehensive system of on-street bicycle lanes, signed routes, or off-street paths serving Center City nor the rest of the community at this time, although *Vision 20/20* proposes to begin to correct that deficiency. For instance, public open space with bicycle and pedestrians paths is proposed along Jordan Creek and other streams, which would serve the Greater Downtown and the Government Plaza District

Figure 1  
*City Context*  
*Center City Study Area*



- Low-Density Housing
- Medium or High Density Housing
- Medium Intensity Retail, Office or Housing
- High Intensity Retail, Office or Housing
- Greater Downtown
- Business Park
- Light Industrial, Office and Office-Warehouse
- General Industry, Transportation and Utilities
- Rural
- Park
- School
- Greenway
- Greenway Connector
- Open Space; Golf
- Community-Public
- Urban Service Area Boundary, Year 2020
- Parkway
- Urban Reserve Boundary, Year 2040



0 1 2 3 Miles

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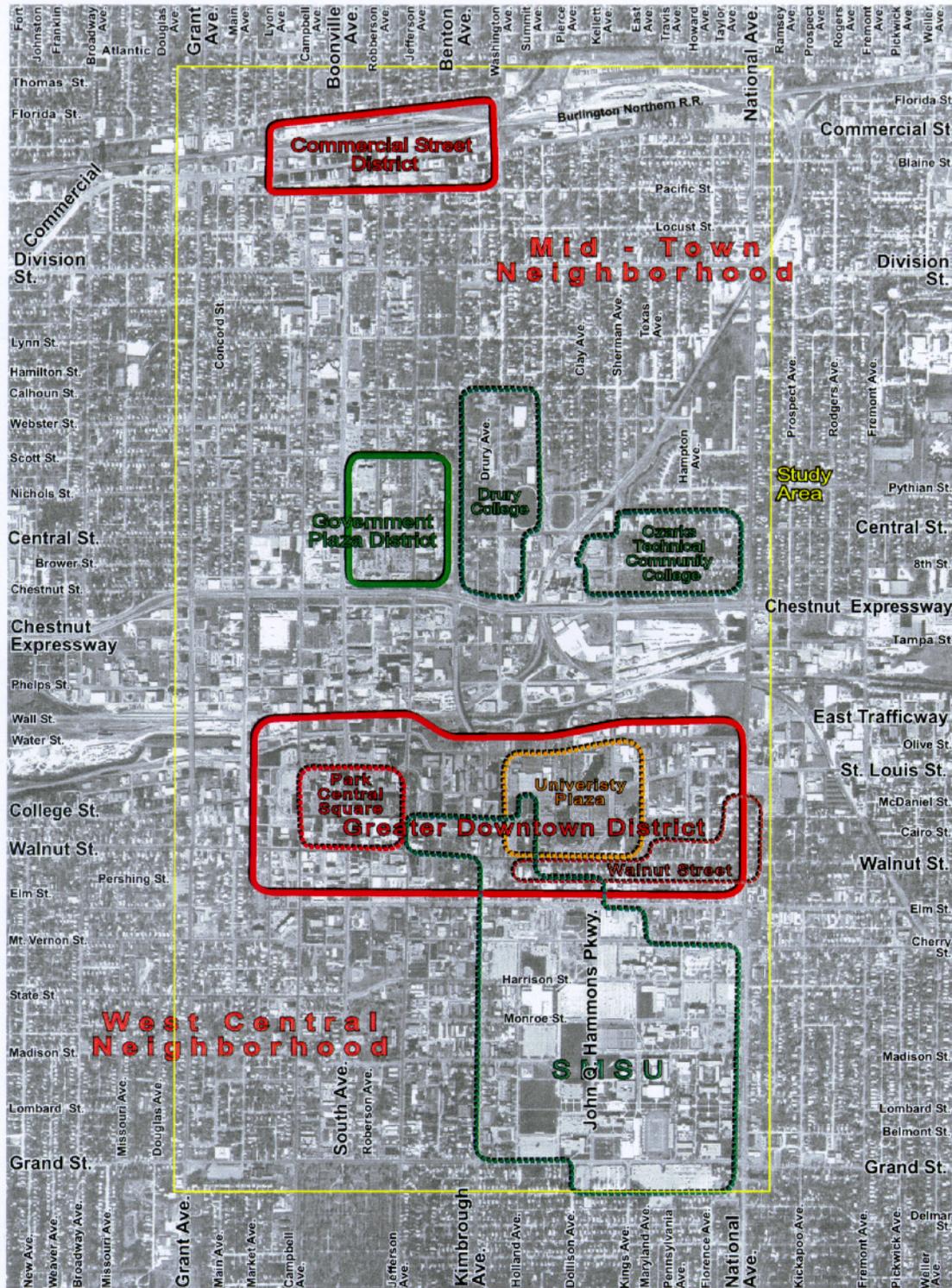


Figure 2  
**Districts**  
 Center City Study Area

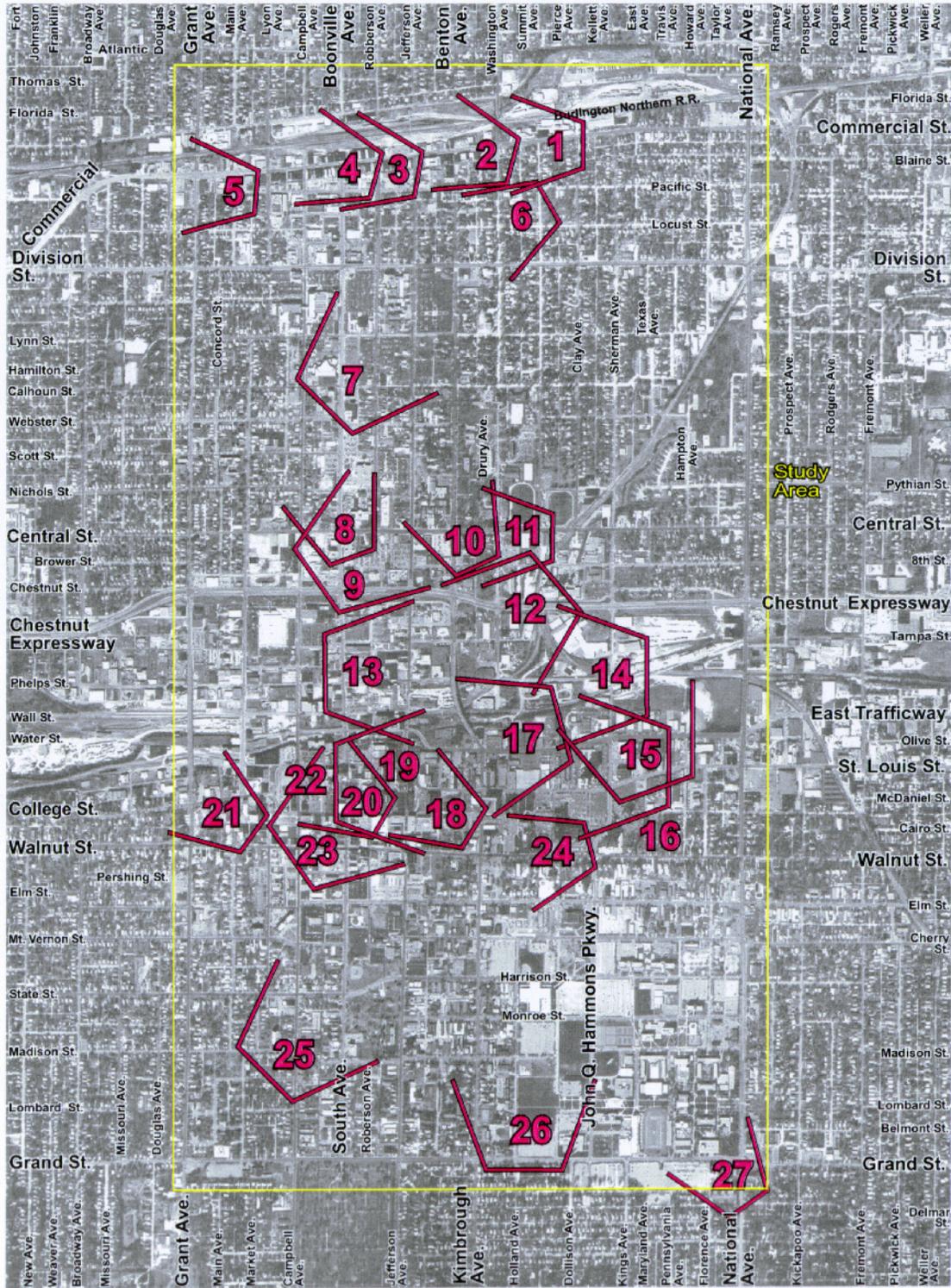


Figure 3

### Aerial Photo Key Map Center City Study Area



Photo View Point

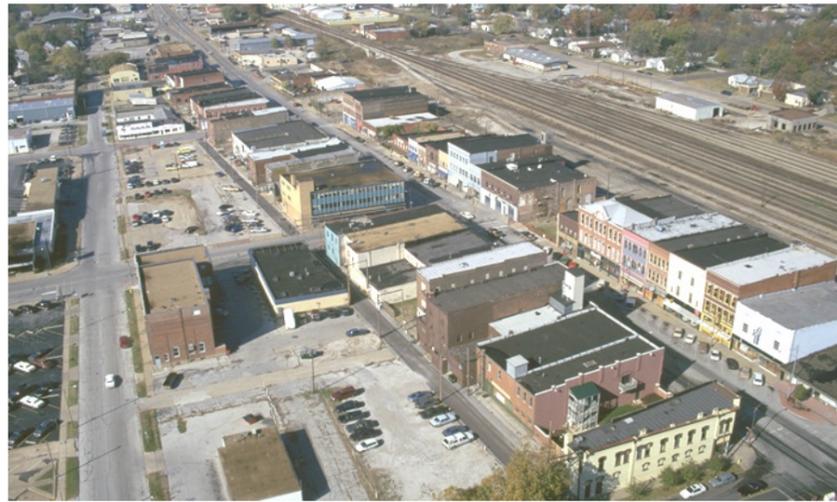


0 500 1000 Feet

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1. Commercial Street - East End



4. Commercial Street at Booneville



7. Booneville Corridor - North End



2. Commercial Street at Washington Avenue



5. Commercial Street at Main



8. Booneville at Government Plaza



3. Commercial Street at Jefferson



6. Midtown Historic District



9. Government Plaza - West Side



Figure 4  
Aerial Views 1-9  
Center City Study Area

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10. Drury College



13. Industrial District - West End



16. University Plaza



11. Government Plaza - East End



14. Industrial District - East End



17. East Trafficway at Benton



12. Industrial District - Northeast Corner



15. St. Louis Street - East End



18. Park Central - East Side



Figure 5  
Aerial Views 10-18  
Center City Study Area

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19. Park Central - East End



22. Park Central and University Plaza



25. West Central Neighborhood



20. Park Central



23. Park Central - Southwest Corner



26. SMSU - West Side



21. Park Central - West Side



24. Walnut Street District - West End



27. SMSU - East Side



Figure 6  
Aerial Views 19-27  
Center City Study Area

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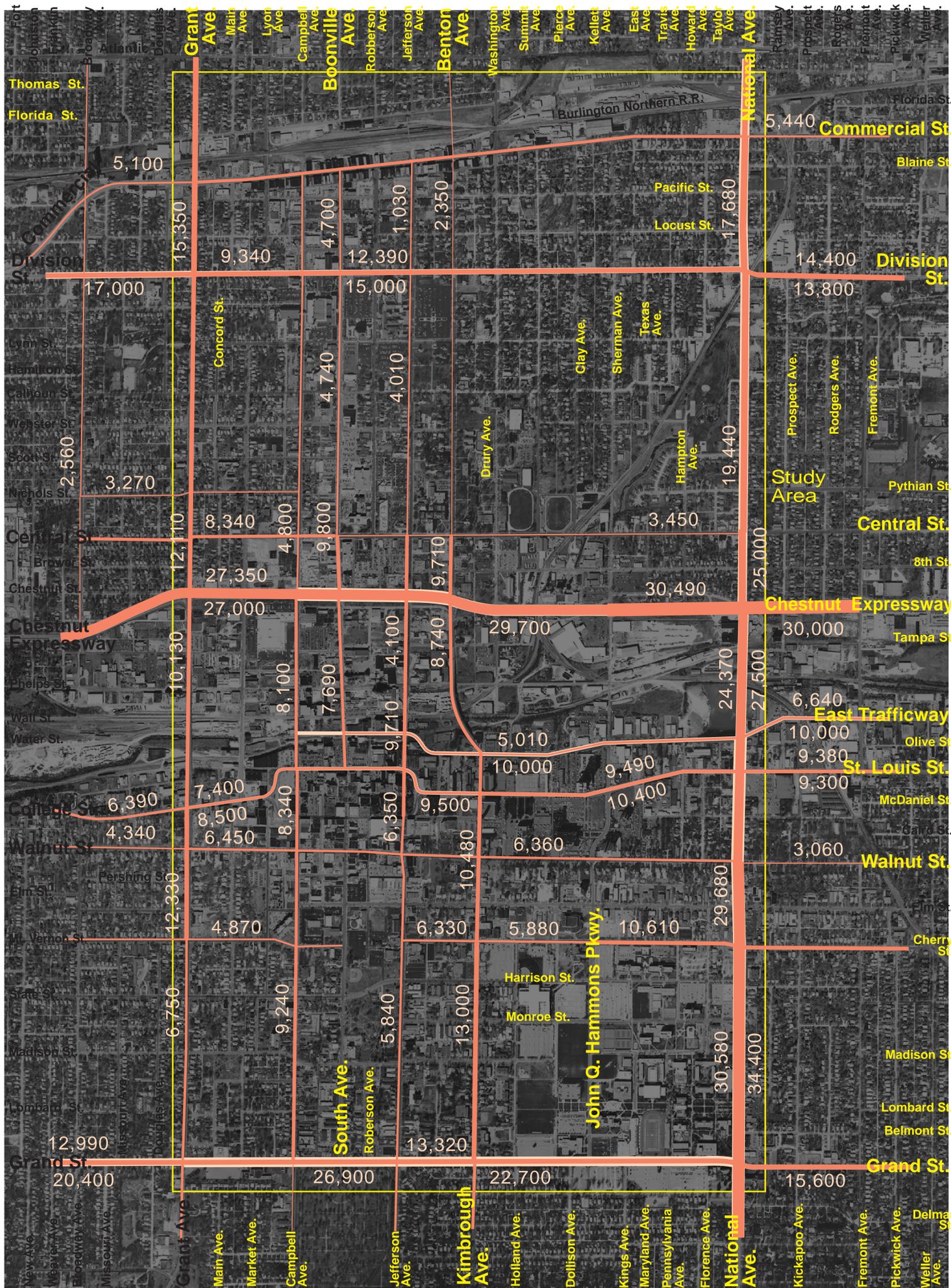


Figure 7  
*Traffic Volumes*  
*Center City Study Area*

*Average Daily*  
*Traffic Volumes (ADT)*



0 500 1000 Feet

May 1998

## Summary of Center City Issues and Forces

The following are the key issues or forces, illustrated in Figure 8, on Page 2-11, that affect Center City, as a whole:

### Land Use and Urban Design

1. Commercial, Industrial and Residential Conditions, Since Center City includes some of the oldest parts of the Springfield community, it suffers from problems commonly resulting from physical deterioration and economic obsolescence. However, there are many residential, commercial and office buildings that are well-maintained, or have been recently constructed. In fact, some of Springfield's finest office space or hotel facilities are located in Greater Downtown. Also, certain residential neighborhoods in and around Center City offer traditional charm and character. Nevertheless, the overall tone is one of an area that could use revitalization and new investment.
2. Insufficient Definition of Area and Districts. Center City is not commonly recognized as a single, unified location, but as several disparate areas with little or no relationship to one another. This impression results from the fact that it is a very large area, almost three square miles in size, has a variety of types of land development, has no central public space, and is divided by major roads and railroad tracks.

This lack of definition affects both Center City, as a whole, and its districts. The outer edges of Center City are amorphous and undefined, there are no visual clues that announce entry, and there are no visual or functional arrival points. At the level of the districts — Greater Downtown, Commercial Street and Government Plaza — entry and arrival are only slightly more clear.

The strongest 'sense of place' is at Park Central Square, a dramatic, centrally-located public space accessed through narrow streets and lined with multi-story, brick office and retail buildings of compatible size and scale. However, Greater Downtown is divided into the historic central business district around Park Central Square, University Plaza, and the Walnut Street historic district and, thus, lacks an overall focus. The Commercial Street and Government Plaza Districts have no such features to define a 'sense of place'. Government Plaza lacks any sense of unity, coordination, or focal place whatsoever — beneficial attributes often found in complexes where several major public or institutional buildings are located in close proximity.

Consequently, the plan recommends strengthening the 'sense of place' of each of the several independent districts while improving a select number of linkages among them. Each district should have a central public space or feature and elements that are recognizable as edges and entry ways, whether they be building placement and massing, fences or screen walls, signage, lighting, or landscaping.

Dispersed Core Area Facilities. The private and public facilities typically found in strong central business districts — retail shops, office buildings, hotels, and institutional and government buildings — are dispersed among several locations in Center City, adding to its lack of focus. In Greater Downtown, offices are located in both the central business district around Park Central Square and in University Plaza. First-class hotel rooms are found only in University Plaza - an urban renewal project with only tenuous physical relationship to the historic core business area. City and County offices are located along Central Street and Boonville Avenue, a considerable distance from the business core around Park Central Square.

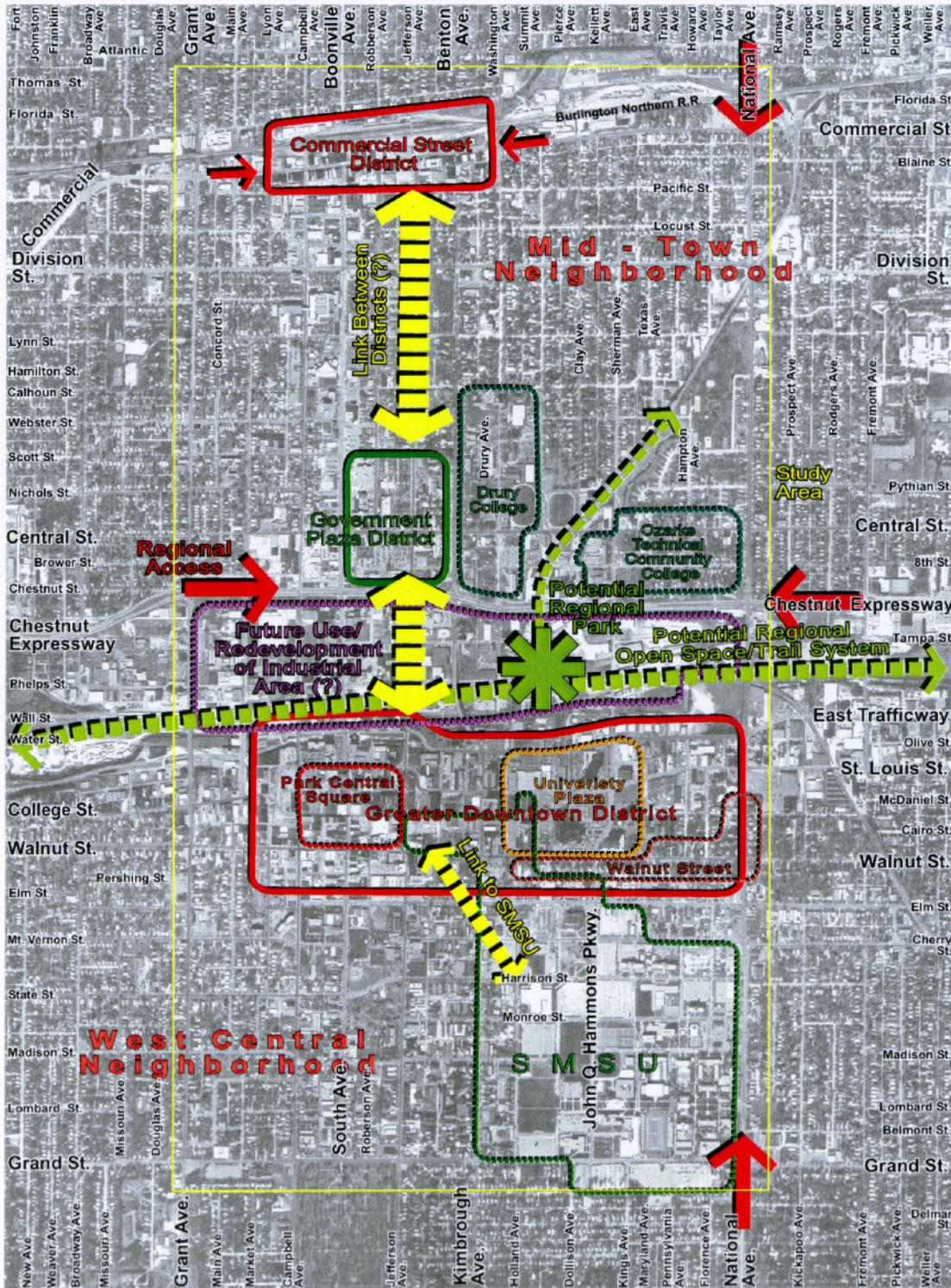


Figure 8  
**Issues/Forces**  
 Center City Study Area

4. **Urban Character in an Auto-Oriented Community.** Two of the major positive attributes of Center City are the fact that it is relatively densely developed and, because of its density, mixture of land uses, and sidewalk system, it is more pedestrian-oriented and less auto-oriented than the rest of the community. While these characteristics sometimes may work against attracting some commercial or residential investments, they may allow Center City to compete effectively for a segment of those markets that desire an attractive alternative to contemporary auto-oriented suburban design.
5. **Underutilized Historic Resources.** Center City has a sizable collection of older residential and commercial buildings that can be used to establish a strong position in those markets which desire or prefer a historical setting. The Midtown Historic District, the Commercial Street District, the Walnut Street Historic District, the vicinity of Park Central Square, City Hall, the County Library, Drury College and other locations represent historical resources that evoke strong emotional responses from the community. They are Center City's greatest asset and tool for revitalization.

### Traffic Circulation

6. **Insufficient Linkage between the Districts.** While it is possible to drive between the three Center City districts, the movement capacity of the major connecting streets is uneven and the sense of those streets as prominent visual paths is weak. Even the visual and functional linkages among Greater Downtown sub-districts ~ the central business district around Park Central Square, University Plaza, and historic Walnut Street -- are tenuous. Least well defined are the paths that psychologically and visually link the residential areas to the commercial or public areas. It may be possible to strengthen these connections with landscaping, lighting, signage, and building placement. Better integration of peripheral housing could support the businesses, enhance the feeling of living in Center City, and support property values.
7. **Inconsistent Appearances.** Center City, as a whole, each of its districts, and each of the sub-districts present a mixture of building styles and sizes and uneven application (if any) of public street-edge improvements. This diminishes the effect of these sub-areas to be recognized as distinct places, and, in turn, hampers the efforts to communicate a strong and clear message to potential customers or clients.
8. **Lack of Landscaping Enhancements and Screens.** In addition to the inconsistent and poorly defined conditions, Center City has very little greenery. More trees, shrubs, and flowers would soften the harsh appearance of the buildings, mitigate the effects of density, provide shade and color, help define major pathways, and buffer incompatible land uses.

### Public Open Space

9. **Lack of Open Space.** There is precious little public open space in Center City. While it does contain several neighborhood parks, they are not prominent, not linked to an overall system of open space or trails, and not designed as the focus of any neighborhood of Center City.
10. **Underutilized Jordan Creek.** The community turns its back on Jordan Creek to such an extent that it was years ago relegated to underground pipes through much of the central industrial area. While it is not a major stream, it was part of the reason Springfield is located where it is and it does offer great possibilities for outdoor relaxation, recreation, and enjoyment.

## CENTER CITY FRAMEWORK PLAN

*Continue to build several distinctive, urban districts oriented around high-quality public spaces that are linked to one another and collectively recognized and organized as Center City.*

This section provides recommendations for Center City, as a whole.

### Actions for Center City

A summary of the primary recommended actions for Center City, as a whole, are presented below and by Figure 9, Center City Framework Plan, on Page 2-15.

1. Develop Center City as three distinct districts — Greater Downtown, Commercial Street, and Government Plaza.
2. Orient each district around attractive public streets and spaces.
3. Define the boundaries and link the Center City districts.
4. Strengthen and utilize the Urban Districts Alliance to guide Center City development.

### 1, Develop Center City as three distinct districts -- Greater Downtown, Commercial Street, and Government Plaza.

Center City is, at best, an imaginary concept in the minds of most Springfield residents. People are more inclined to think of Park Central Square, University Plaza, Walnut Street, Commercial Street,

Drury College, SMSU, and Government Plaza as independent areas rather than as one entity.

The whole Center City area does not function as one, unified district. It is too expansive, too fragmented, and there are too many barriers and unrelated uses separating the individual districts within Center City. 'Center City' is a term that defines the core area — not a contiguous district. Center City neither functions, nor is it perceived as one distinct, continuous whole.

Instead of stretching the communities resources in trying to accomplish something which may be impossible to achieve — unifying the whole Center City area, the recommendation is to concentrate the efforts on giving each Center City district its own clear and distinct identity and image, yet coordinating activities between the districts and providing strong linkages between them so that the districts can reinforce and mutually benefit each other.

### 2. Orient each district around attractive public streets and spaces.

Develop the various Center City districts as distinct but related places, each with its own identity, focused around an attractive public space, and linked by landscaped streets and sidewalks. Improve each district according to the plans of this document or guidance provided elsewhere in *Vision 20/20* or in specific neighborhood plans (e.g., *Midtown Neighborhood Plan*, 1989; *Commercial Street Historic District Development Plan*, 1982).

Use parks, public spaces, and/or heavily landscaped streets to focus and identify each district, as well as the adjoining neighborhoods. These public amenities can create individual character for each district, attract private development, provide places for recreation and relaxation, and communicate City support for upgrading each district.

The parks and public spaces should be designed to reflect the varying needs and opportunities of each district. Densely developed commercial districts, such as the central commercial core around Park Central Square, should have a space designed for large numbers of workers to enjoy the midday sunshine or have lunch, while a residential neighborhood park might be configured for active recreation by small children.

A major new public park should be created in the Jordan Creek Valley as a specialized community-wide gathering and recreation space and it should incorporate the planned Jordan Creek Greenway. A large civic park could be an incentive for Greater Downtown redevelopment and long-term investments, it could serve as an amenity for a new Exposition and Trade Center, and it would be further evidence of the community's commitment to Center City.

### 3. Define the boundaries and link the Center City districts.

The Center City districts should be well defined. Clear boundaries need to be established to prevent gerrymandering and negative impacts on adjoining land uses -- especially residential neighborhoods. Clearly defined district/ neighborhood boundaries reduce uncertainty for homeowners thus stimulating reinvestment and preventing deterioration and slow erosion at the edges. In addition, landscaping or screen walls should be used to screen undesirable views and to create stronger boundary definitions.

The two areas that will need to be carefully watched and evaluated are the portion of the Mid-Town Neighborhood, west of Washington Avenue, and the boundary area between the Greater Downtown and the West Central Neighborhood. The western half of the Mid-Town neighborhood has been converted slowly from residential to predominantly institutional uses. Of concern are the small remaining pockets of residential uses and the exact definition of the institutional/residential boundary.

Similar concerns exist for the West Central Neighborhood southwest of Park Central Square. The West Central Neighborhood Alliance has prepared a revitalization plan for the West Central Neighborhood. The boundaries of the study area include the west side of the Greater Downtown area, but do not impact the strategies set forth in the *Center City Plan Element*. A healthy West Central Neighborhood will be vital to making the vision for Greater Downtown a reality.

The City should make improvements within the public right-of-way of identified streets and roadways to link the Center City districts and announce major entries. The north-south connecting streets that should receive special landscaping, lighting, and sidewalk improvements are:

- Boonville/South Avenues
- Benton/Kimbrough Avenues

Boonville and Benton/Kimbrough Avenues should be beautified with special landscaping, lighting, and signs to better link the Greater Downtown, Government Center, and Commercial Street Districts. Boonville Avenue is a collector street that extends from the Commercial Street district, past Cox North Medical Center, and Government Plaza, to Park Central Square. Benton/Kimbrough, also a collector street, extends from the east side of the Commercial Street district, through Government Plaza/Drury College, to the heart of the Greater Downtown District.

### Likewise, the appearance of the Chestnut and Kansas Expressways

should be improved to "parkway" standards as also recommended by the Community Physical Image Element of Vision 20/20. Arrival and turning points along the Chestnut and Kansas Expressways and along National and Campbell Avenues should be defined with special landscaping, lighting and signage. Chestnut Expressway is a critically important entrance because it serves Center City districts to its north and south.

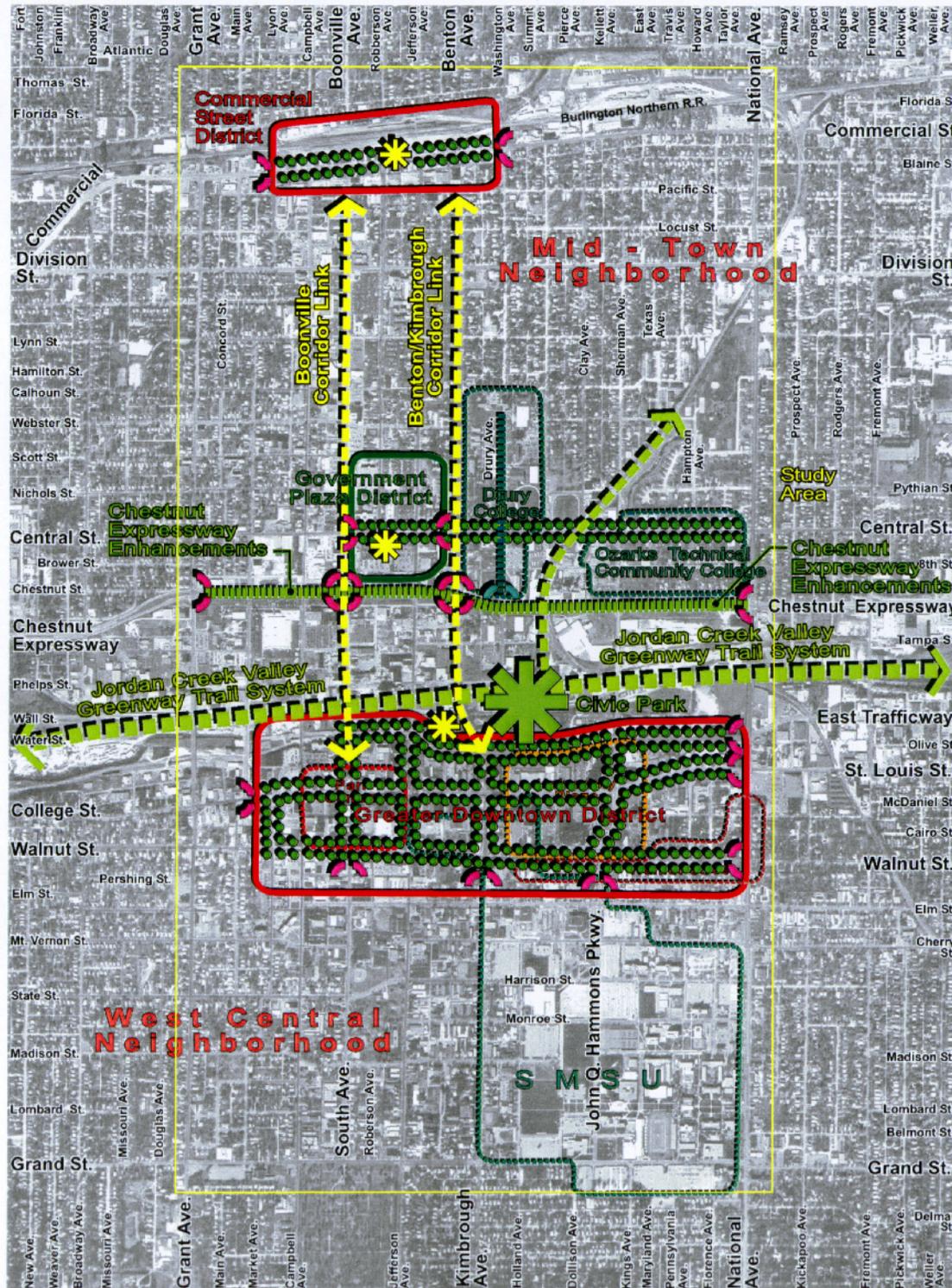


Figure 9  
**Framework Plan**  
 Center City Study Area

-  District Gateways
-  Major 'Signature' Roadways
-  District Focal Feature/Plaza



May 1998

Center City "gateways" should be accentuated at the following locations through special landscaping, lighting, and signage, building orientation, location, and massing:

- Chestnut Expressway at Grant Avenue
- Chestnut Expressway at Boonville Avenue
- Chestnut Expressway at Benton Avenue
- Chestnut Expressway at National Avenue

Individual district gateways should be created at secondary locations at the peripheries of each district.

#### **4. Strengthen and utilize the Urban Districts Alliance to guide Center City development.**

The Urban Districts Alliance (UDA) is a rising force in Center City improvement activities. It should be recognized as the organization to lead private investments and leverage real estate improvements, business promotions, and municipal investments in Center City. The City of Springfield should continue to participate as a member of the UDA Board of Directors and support the UDA financially and programmatically.

The Urban Districts Alliance was restructured and incorporated in 1997 as a 501(c)(6) non-profit community development corporation. This tax status allows the UDA to receive government funding and tax exempt donations from foundations and corporations.

The primary purposes of the UDA are to:

Provide leadership, programs, and redevelopment projects to preserve and strengthen the economic vitality of Center City and each of its districts.

- Provide technical business development assistance in cooperation with the Springfield Finance and Development Corporation.

The UDA has a 25-member board of directors comprised of property and business owners from the three commercial districts, public agencies, civic institutions, and at-large representatives.

The UDA has two subsidiary entities to address its development and marketing functions — the Springfield Finance and Development Corporation and the Springfield Events and Management Division.

A more detailed description of the mission, organization and capabilities of the UDA is presented in the Implementation Program chapter at the end of this report.

### 3. Greater Downtown District

The Greater Downtown District is defined to include the following:

- The central commercial core around **Park Central Square**
- **The University Plaza** area including the northern fringe of the SMSU campus
- The historic **Walnut Street** corridor west of National Avenue
- The southern portions of the Jordan Creek Valley and the **central industrial area**

#### GREATER DOWNTOWN DISTRICT INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The boundaries of the Greater Downtown District extend approximately from Main Avenue on the west to National Avenue on the east and from Phelps Street on the north to Elm Street on the South.

##### Greater Downtown Existing Land Use and Development

Existing land uses in the Greater Downtown area, as illustrated by Figure 10, on Page 3-2, consist primarily of retail businesses, office buildings, industry, housing, and parking. Parking and streets account for well over half of the land area, particularly in the area bounded by

Jefferson Avenue, East Trafficway, John Q. Hammons Parkway, and Walnut Street.

The existing pattern of buildings and open space, as illustrated in Figure 11, Built Form, on Page 3-3, indicates that the focus of the core area is shifting to the east and is centered east of Park Central Square, between University Plaza, Walnut Street, and the northern half of SMSU.

The pattern of land values is illustrated in Figure 12, Generalized Property Values, on Page 3-4. This map indirectly portrays the combination of development intensity and reinvestment but not necessarily building quality, and it also confirms the shift of the core area focus to the east, especially because of the large reinvestment in the University Plaza area.

There were 99 retail establishments in the Greater Downtown area, as of October 1996. Excluding ten auto-related businesses, there is approximately 400,000 square feet of occupied space.

There were 283 service-related businesses including private businesses, not-for-profit organizations, government offices, and public/semi-public uses. These businesses occupy approximately 1.1 million square feet of total space, of which approximately 800,000 square feet is in multi-tenant and single user office building space.

The Greater Downtown commercial area also had 27 businesses classified as industrial, and a total of 325 apartment and loft units in 21 buildings.

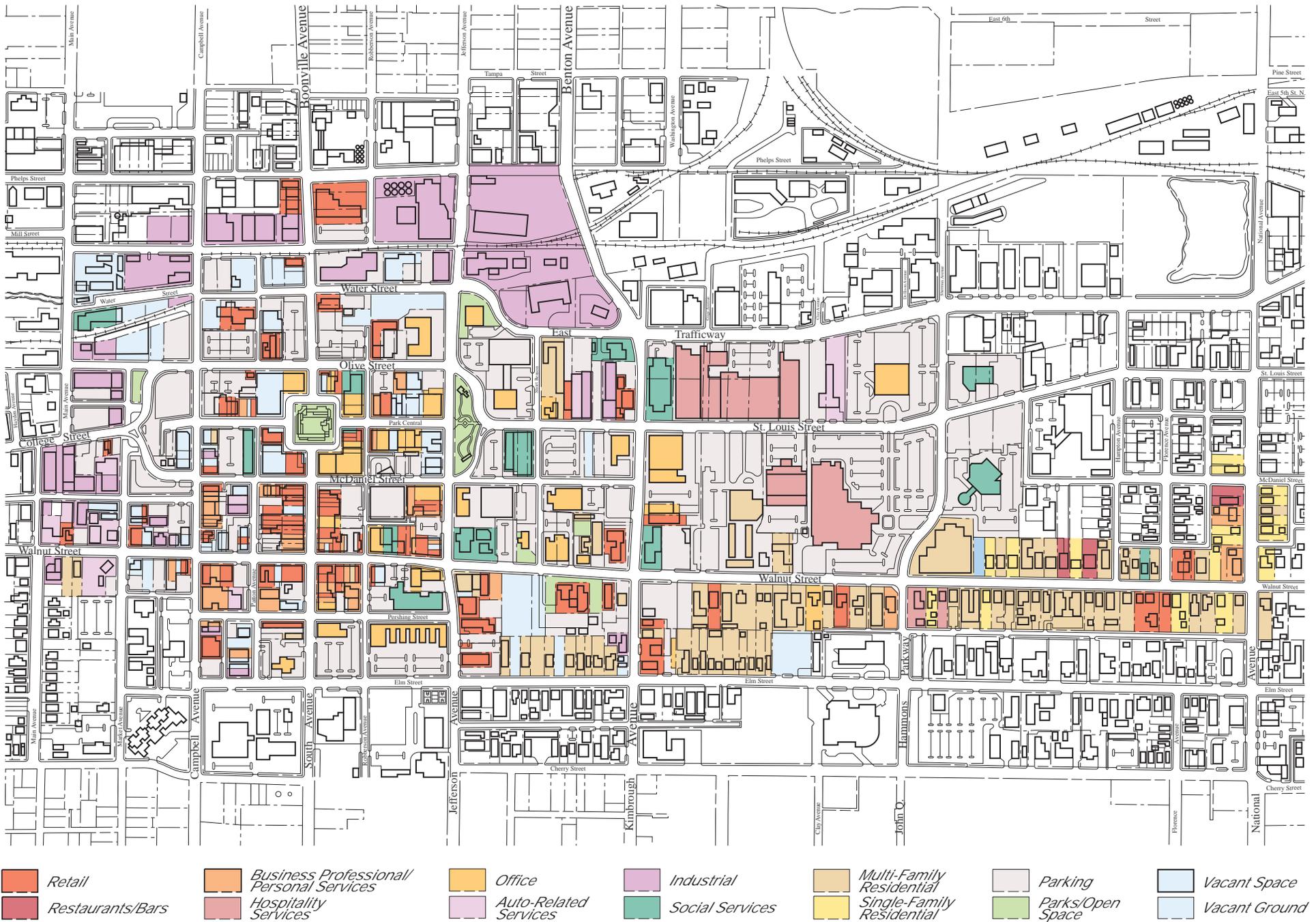


Figure 10  
 Existing Land Use  
 Greater Downtown District

May 1998



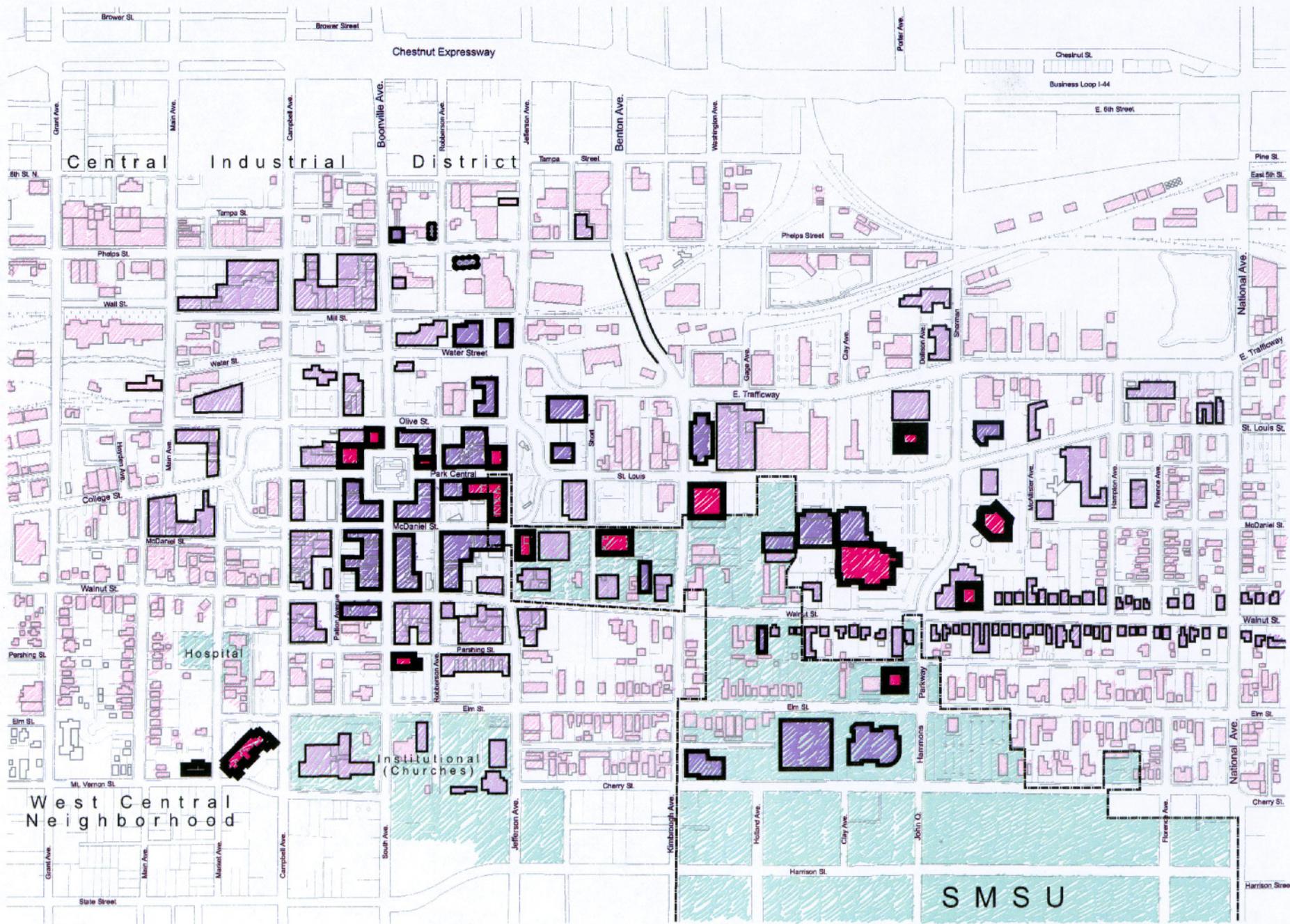


Figure 11  
**Built Form**  
 Greater Downtown District

-  High-Rise Structures
-  Mid-Rise Structures
-  Low-Rise Structures



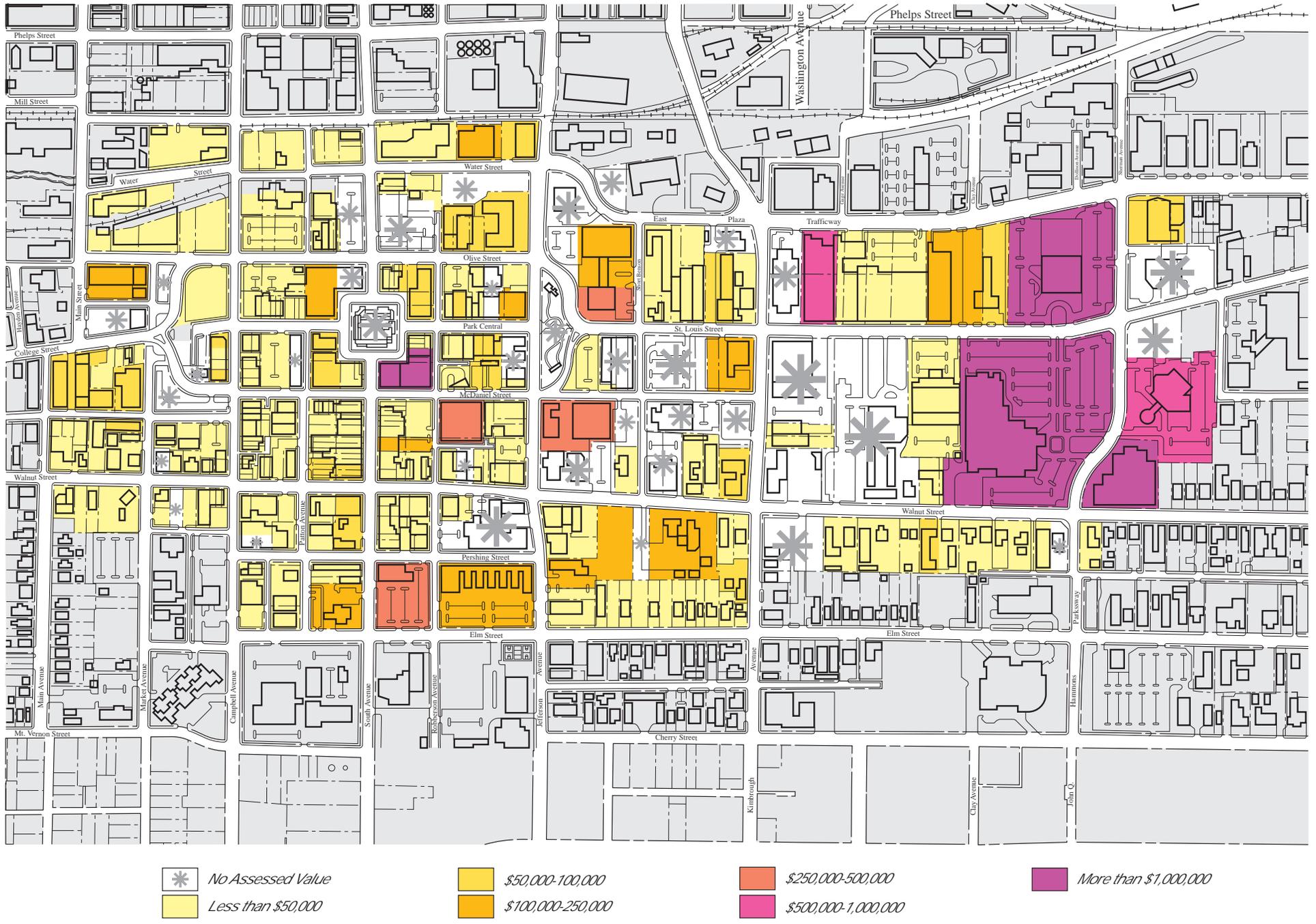


Figure 12  
*Generalized Property Values  
 Greater Downtown District*

May 1998



Refer to Chapter 3.0 of the *Center City Market Analysis* for a detailed description of the Greater Downtown retail business community.

**Retail Space.** The 99 retail establishments in the downtown area have been categorized into four major retail store groups: convenience retail, shoppers goods, eating and drinking establishments, and auto-related businesses. These businesses (excluding auto-related businesses) occupy an estimated 398,100 square feet of space. Greater Downtown is dominated by a diverse mix of specialty stores and an increasing number of eating and drinking establishments.

**Non-Retail Space.** The Greater Downtown commercial area has a strong presence of non-retail activities, including services, light industrial, and residential uses. Office space using services are the predominant use in the Greater Downtown commercial district. There are 156 businesses in seven multi-tenant office buildings occupying 302,000 square feet of space. There are also 14 larger office users in single user buildings, who occupy approximately 520,000 square feet of space. The largest of these are the State government, Southwest Bell, and Boatmen's Bank, who account for almost 70 percent of this total.

The predominant use for multi-tenant office space in Greater Downtown is associated with legal services. There are 47 law firms located in Greater Downtown and 17 architecture/engineering firms. There is not a single medical office in Greater Downtown.

### **The Central Commercial Core Around Park Central Square**

The Park Central Square area has a diverse mix of local, independent retail, and services businesses surrounding the commercial core, primarily to the south and east. These businesses are mostly located in ground floor storefront space of one to three story buildings constructed in the early 1900's. State offices, professional services, business services, and banks occupy a number of low- to medium-rise Class 'B' and 'C' buildings also constructed during the same time period. These buildings are located on Park Central Square and just east of the Square.

A number of newer single-use office buildings are located on the peripheries of the Square area, mainly to the east and south. A number of recent redevelopment efforts, including a micro-brewery, are starting to revitalize the area southwest of Park Central Square. The west and north edges of the Park Central Square area include wholesale and light industrial uses. The southeast edge, along Walnut Street and Elm Street, is primarily residential, connecting to the Walnut Street Historic District.

Park Central Square has a number of prominent vacant, boarded-up buildings in the core area, including the eight-story Heer's department store building. Other vacant space within the core area is primarily on upper floors.

### **University Plaza**

The east side of the central commercial core area is one of Springfield's links with the past (historic Walnut Street), the future (University Plaza convention and tourism businesses), and education (SMSU). However, its focus should be expanded to create an economic and visual connection to the central commercial core around Park Central Square. The St. Louis Street corridor, as well as East Trafficway and Walnut Street, could play key roles in that evolution.

University Plaza is a 1980's urban renewal project that constitutes the largest reinvestment in Center City in recent history. To date, the project has included a 300-room Holiday Inn hotel with meeting and banquet facilities, two Class 'A' office buildings, the Federal Court House, the Chamber of Commerce building, a parking structure, and a major apartment building. A new exposition center has been discussed to be located between St. Louis Street and East Trafficway on the site of the current trade center. (A more complete description is presented under Action Ic of the Greater Downtown Framework Plan.)

The SMSU main campus, which is located at the southeast corner of the Greater Downtown area and which includes some buildings close to

Park Central Square, represents, because of its large student and faculty population, a considerable patron resource for Greater Downtown.

### **Walnut Street**

The eastern part of the Walnut Street corridor, between John Q. Hammons Parkway and Glenstone Avenue, has been designated a National Register Historic District, because of its collection of architecturally-significant homes that were an important part of the early days of Springfield. Although some of these historic resources have been lost, the street still retains considerable charm and continuity.

In order to help owners maintain these buildings, the City has created a zoning district that allows limited commercial use of these houses, as long as their outer appearances are maintained consistent with historic guidelines. There are now a few bed-and-breakfast inns, restaurants, art galleries and small professional offices, in addition to housing.

### **Central Industrial Area**

One of Springfield's first railroad lines ran through the Jordan Creek valley and along it were located the community's earliest industrial buildings. Many of those industrial uses remain today, although contemporary industrial investment is now drawn to the fringes of the community, where large tracts of undeveloped land with good truck access are available.

The industries in this area include a variety of light and heavy manufacturing, meat packing, printing and publishing, auto or truck repair, and warehousing. The buildings tend to be in fair to poor condition and many sites and structures appear to be underutilized. The streets and utility infrastructure is old and deteriorating. Jordan Creek runs through this area and, as noted previously, is channeled through an underground pipe part of the way.

## **Existing Traffic Circulation**

The general pattern of traffic circulation for Center City was described in the previous section with references to Greater Downtown. Figure 13, Area Roadway System, on Page 3-7, illustrates the functional classification of streets in and near Greater Downtown. Figure 14, Existing Traffic Volumes, on Page 3-8, shows the existing average daily traffic volumes. Chestnut Expressway and National Avenue are the major roadways serving Greater Downtown while secondary streets include Campbell, Boonville, Jefferson, and Benton/Kimbrough Avenues and College/Olive/St. Louis Streets. Also, of some importance are East Trafficway/Water Street and Walnut Street. McDariel Street is one-way eastbound and Campbell and Jefferson Avenues are north-south, one-way streets.

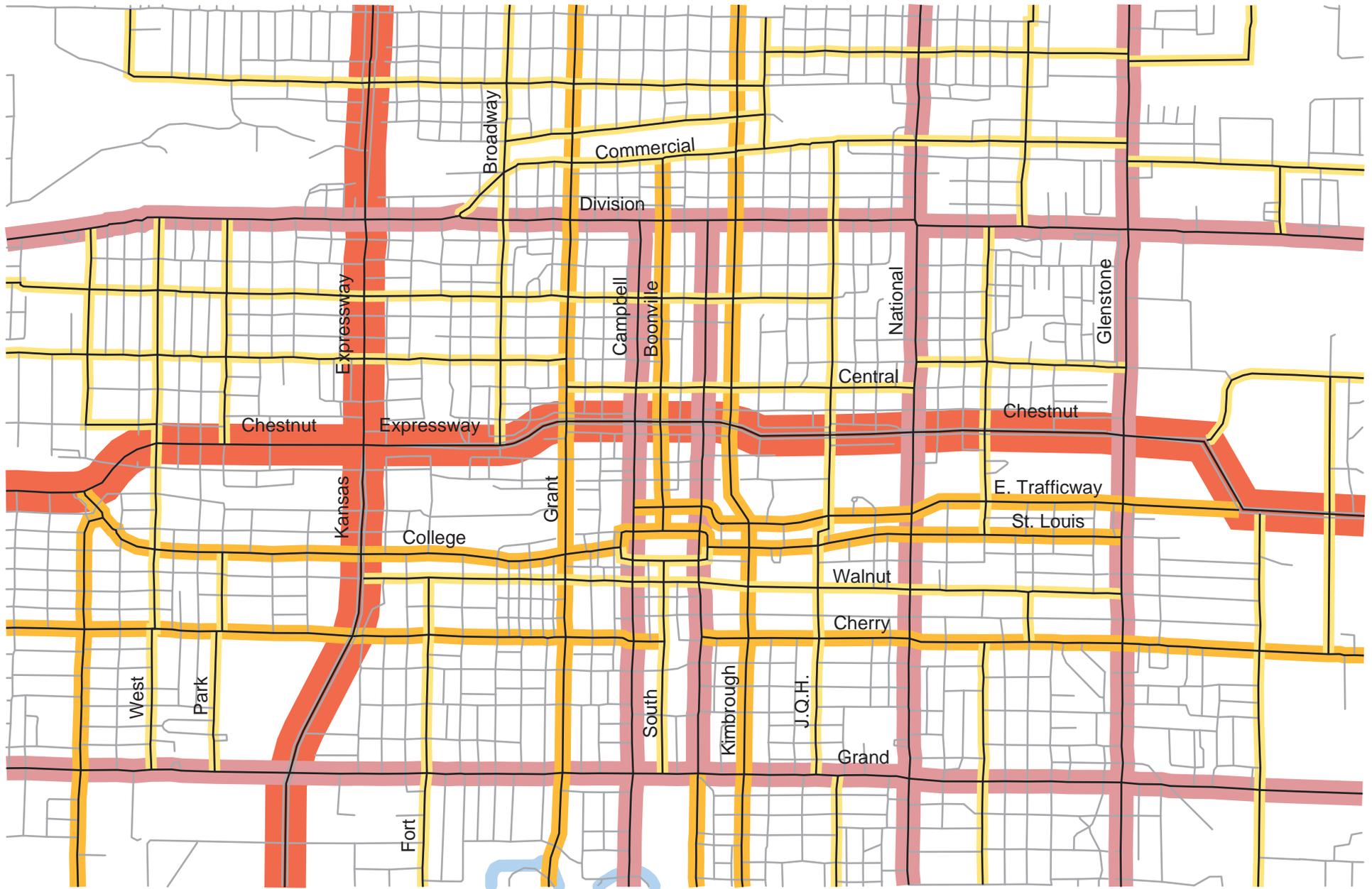
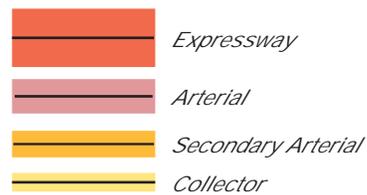


Figure 13  
*Area Roadway System*  
*Greater Downtown District*





## Greater Downtown Market Potential

This section summarizes the findings of the *Center City Market Analysis*, regarding the development potential of three mixed-use commercial districts contained within the Center City — the Greater Downtown commercial core, Commercial Street and Walnut Street. (For a more detailed report on this subject, refer to *Center City Market Analysis, 1997*, City of Springfield and BRW, Inc.) The research for the study included a household survey documenting current utilization patterns and resident desires for improvements. Also, focus groups were held with interested survey respondents to test and validate the market study recommendations.

### Greater Downtown Retail Potential

Greater Downtown has the potential to capture in the range of 150,000 to 200,000 square feet of space over the next 20 years if it is actively developed and marketed as a specialty retail and arts and entertainment district. This estimate is based on a capture rate of 20 percent of the specialty store space and 10 percent of the eating and drinking space forecast for the larger Springfield market area. Table 1 ranks the major store types by their development potential for Greater Downtown.

The greatest potential is for smaller format, specialty stores and restaurants, and nightclubs. The goal is to develop a critical mass of the types of stores already locating in the area. If successfully developed, the diversity and character of the store mix will appeal to the multiple market segments needed to succeed - Greater Downtown workers, SMSU students, visitors, and the larger Springfield community. Following are the types of facilities that could be considered:

- Supportable store types include antique stores, art galleries, gift shops, used merchandise and novelty stores, book stores, music stores, a smaller consumer electronics store such as Radio Shack,

a newspaper/newsstand, an optical store, and specialized clothing and shoe stores.

- Greater Downtown has an already established niche in antiques and collectibles stores and to some extent in art galleries. This Greater Downtown retail niche has the potential to be much stronger if additional like businesses are attracted and they organize and market themselves as a group rather than as individual stores.
- Greater Downtown is also establishing a niche as a restaurant and entertainment center. There are a number of new restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. Given the size of the Springfield market, the opportunity for expansion of this segment of Greater Downtown business is enormous.
- Specific restaurant and entertainment opportunities include a number of higher quality "white tablecloth" restaurants and a range of ethnic restaurants not currently represented in the Greater Downtown area.
- Other individual businesses include, a sports bar, a country western dance hall, a spaghetti house, and brew-pubs.

Although most convenience goods stores tend to locate closer to the newer residential neighborhoods, there is moderate potential for specialty convenience businesses that are oriented to the Greater Downtown business market, or are complementary to the arts/entertainment/ specialty mix.

There is an opportunity for a larger format drug store, such as a Walgreen's, which also carries a variety of low-cost general merchandise and novelty items. Such a store would need to locate on a major arterial to take advantage of traffic flows as well as the nearby trade area population. The best food store possibilities are specialty stores, such as a bakery, candy store, wine shop, or ice cream parlor, catering to Greater Downtown workers and visitors.

**Table 1:  
Retail Store Potentials by Type in Greater Downtown, 1997**

Retail Store Type	Greater Downtown Potential			Comments
	Good	Limited	Weak	
Convenience Goods				
Food stores				
Grocery stores			X	Locate in residential areas
Meat and seafood markets			X	Locate in residential areas
Retail bakeries		X		Bakery/Cafe"
Other food stores		X		Lunches/Candy/Ice Cream
Drug stores		X		Supermarket locations
Liquor stores		X		Wine
Primary Shoppers Goods				
General Merchandise Stores				
Department stores			X	Locate in suburban centers
Variety stores				Retail dinosaurs
Apparel Stores				
Men's & boy's clothing stores		X		Office workers/students/visitors
Women's clothing, specialty stores		X		Specialty /visitors /students
Children's clothing stores		X		Specialty /gifts
Shoe stores				Office workers/visitors/students
Furniture & Home Furnishings				
Furniture stores			X	Locate in suburbs
Home furnishings stores			X	Locate in suburbs
Household appliance stores			X	Locate in suburbs
Radio, television, computer, music		X		Students /DT business /workers
Building Materials & Hardware				
Building materials and supply stores			X	Arterial locations/growth areas
Hardware stores		X		Specialty/DT business /students
Specialty Retail Stores				
Used merchandise stores		X		Specialty/students/visitors
Sporting goods stores, bicycle shops			X	Existing stores
Book stores	X			Unique/specialized
Jewelry stores			X	Existing stores
Stationary stores		X		Office supplies
Hobby, toy, and game shops		X		Visitors/Discretionary
Camera and photographic supply stores			X	Existing stores
Gift, novelty and souvenir shops	X			Visitors
Luggage and leather goods stores			X	Malls/department stores

Retail Store Type	Greater Downtown Potential			Comments
	Good	Limited	Weak	
Sewing, needlework, piece goods stores		X		Suburban centers
Florists		X		Existing stores
Tobacco stores and stands	X			Opportunity
News dealers and newsstands	X			Opportunity
Optical goods stores	X			Opportunity
Pet shops			X	Suburban locations
Art dealers	X			Opportunity /visitors
Other miscellaneous stores	X			Unique/specialized
Eating & Drinking Places				
Eating places	X			Independent/ethnic
Drinking places	X			Entertainment/students
Automotive Related				
Auto parts, tires, and accessories stores			X	Existing businesses
Gasoline service stations		X		Arterial location

The highest potential retail businesses for Greater Downtown are summarized in Table 2. Springfield residents indicated high levels of support for these types of businesses in both the survey and the focus groups.

The recommended location for concentrating the high potential arts/entertainment/specialty retail businesses is in the most intact

pedestrian-oriented portion of Greater Downtown. This area can be generally described as the 12-block area from Olive Street on the north to Walnut Street on the south and from Campbell Avenue on the west to Jefferson Avenue on the east. Over a period of time, this area should be reinforced with streetscape improvements to make it more pedestrian-friendly and attractive for the intended market. Currently, the two strongest blocks are the 300 South block of South Avenue and the 300 East block of Walnut Street. Over the next 10 years, the remaining portions of this district can be developed with the same type of mix of businesses.

**Table 2:  
Greater Downtown High Potential Businesses**

Convenience Stores	Specialty Stores	Restaurants, Bars, and Nightclubs
Super Drug	Antiques	Coffee House
Bakery	Art Galleries	White tablecloth restaurant
Candy	Books	Ethnic restaurants
Ice Cream Parlor	Computers	County western nightclub
Wine	News stand	Non-alcoholic dance hall
	Optical	Brew pub
	Specialized clothing	Independent/foreign movie
	Vintage clothing	Sports bar
	Music	Spaghetti Factory theme

For Greater Downtown to reach its potential as an arts/entertainment and specialty retail district, there will need to be a significant increase in building renovation to provide quality spaces for rent.

Although many existing downtown businesses are in their own buildings and are located downtown for that opportunity, most businesses are not interested or financially able to own their own building. There are relatively few available storefronts in the downtown area. If there were more rentable space available, there would be a greater number of new businesses.

Greater Downtown is expected to remain a location of owner/entrepreneurs for the foreseeable future. The relatively low building values present opportunities for independent businesses to purchase and renovate their own building. However, as greater concentration of specialty store space is located in Greater Downtown, in the clusters mentioned above (arts, restaurants and nightclubs), there will be more confidence that speculative space can be renovated and leased to prospective tenants.

### **Greater Downtown Office Potential**

New office space in Greater Downtown will likely be developed largely through the renovation of existing two and three story commercial buildings. In some cases, the first levels will remain retail-oriented, with upper floors converted to office space. In other cases owner-occupants will purchase buildings as investments largely for their own use similar to the Springfield Business Journal's renovation on Park Central Square West. There are a significant number of buildings within the downtown core with vacant or underutilized upper stories, particularly on Park Central Square and on Park Central Square East.

- The Heer's Building represents the largest potential rehabilitation opportunity in Greater Downtown. Given the size of the building and the lack of major tenants in Greater Downtown, this project will likely require a major lead tenant with a large space commitment in order to secure financing for renovation.
- The retention and expansion of office uses is key to the revitalization of the Greater Downtown area. Office uses are a

key element of Greater Downtown's multi-functional business mix. The loss of major Greater Downtown office tenants would likely lead to related erosions in business services.

- The commitment of single-user office tenants to the Greater Downtown area is a key component to retaining Greater Downtown as a multi-functional business district. The major banks, utilities and State government are major employers occupying more space in aggregate than all retail users, employing an estimated 1,500 workers. These workers in turn provide significant support for many of the retail service and restaurant uses in Greater Downtown.

### **Greater Downtown Cultural Potential**

Although many of Greater Downtown Springfield's historical functions have eroded, it remains the primary location for civic and cultural facilities, and therefore also civic and cultural activities within the Springfield metropolitan area. The challenges are to ensure that these facilities remain in Greater Downtown, and to attract new and complementary facilities to also locate in Greater Downtown.

- The renovation of the Gillioz Theater is the largest immediate challenge. The 1,100 seat theater will complement the smaller Landers Theater and the larger Hammons Performing Arts Center, and provide a venue for popular music concerts and other live performances within Greater Downtown. Renovation of this facility should also have the added benefit of being a stimulus to the revitalization of the surrounding vacant properties on Park Central Square East.
- Greater Downtown can become the location for a wider range of entertainment. The college-oriented bars are viewed by some as a nuisance, but the idea of nightclubs being located in the Greater Downtown makes sense. The challenge is to ensure better enforcement of liquor and loitering laws so that these operations do not negatively impact surrounding businesses. A

second challenge is to attract better quality clubs appealing to a broader segment of the public.

- Another opportunity is to develop the related visual arts focus within Greater Downtown. There are already a number of galleries located within the core. There is obviously a benefit to existing and potential future galleries to establish a larger concentration of these businesses within the core in close proximity to one another.

### **Greater Downtown Housing Potential**

Greater Downtown housing can utilize vacant building space and help create a 24-hour environment. It should therefore be a top priority. Although there are a number of small residential loft projects, the depth of the Greater Downtown housing market remains untapped.

- The greatest opportunity would be for a major residential loft renovation project in a major vacant building. Available incentives should be utilized to support such a project including Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds; tax exempt bonds and tax credits; and/or Community Development Corporation (CDC) financing, property acquisition and write-downs. The project should be a mix of low- and moderate-income housing and market-rent housing.
- There is also an opportunity for a boutique hotel serving tourists, out-of-town business people, and Springfield residents. Such a hotel would further support and complement Greater Downtown specialty retail businesses and restaurants and would establish Greater Downtown as the predominant entertainment center.

### **Walnut Street Sub-District Development Potential**

Walnut Street has an established identity and a positive image in the community. There is a tremendous opportunity to build on this

success. The district needs to develop a business mix that is complementary to that image. The Walnut Street corridor should prove attractive to unique individual businesses that serve the larger Springfield trade area and desire a central location and/or historic character.

- The highest potential businesses would principally be more of what is already in place; bed and breakfast establishments, professional offices, independent restaurants, and higher quality gift stores and galleries. The most significant opportunity for the district is to develop a critical mass of these specialty businesses.
- The district should prove an attractive location for other complementary specialty stores, in particular high quality antique shops, art galleries, photographic studios, bridal shops, and unique and unusual apparel stores, that can complement and add to the overall market draw of the existing establishments. Also, additional low-volume professional offices, or personal services, such as hair salons, are compatible with the existing area businesses.

## Summary of Greater Downtown District Issues and Forces

Following is a summary of the key issues and forces which need to be considered in planning for Greater Downtown. The Issues/Forces are illustrated in Figure 15, on Page 3-15.

1. **Two Greater Downtown Centers.** There are two contrasting and separate centers in Greater Downtown — the original office and retail center around Park Central Square and the much newer University Plaza area. The older central commercial core has a few low-rent hotel rooms while University Plaza has the largest and finest hotel in the region. There is a small amount of housing around Park Central Square, while there are several hundred very attractive apartments in University Plaza. The current and proposed future exhibition center sites are closer to University Plaza, while most of the nightlife is in the historic core. The older area has architectural charm, street life and a more human scale while University Plaza is designed primarily for the automobile.

There currently is little functional, economic or visual relationship between the two Greater Downtown centers. This separation has resulted primarily from the lack of consistent and supportive land development along St. Louis Street or the other roadways, the increased amount of surface parking in University Plaza, and the lack of strong streetscape theme treatments to unify the areas.

2. **Economic Viability.** The original portion of Greater Downtown around Park Central Square suffers from building deterioration and obsolescence and no longer competes effectively in either the office or retail markets. The entire layout is not conducive to attracting the types of stores found at the contemporary suburban malls, as is the case in most American city downtowns. Inconvenient parking and concerns about personal safety add to the problem. The Park Central Square vicinity once held all the better shops in Springfield but those days are long gone. It does not provide the convenient access and parking of the fringe malls

and there are not sufficient workers and residents to provide a large enough walk-in market.

Other portions of Greater Downtown show similar degrees of deterioration and economic obsolescence, especially the industrial areas in the Jordan Creek valley.

3. **Clustered Cultural and Entertainment Facilities.** One of the strengths of Greater Downtown is its collection of art and craft galleries, nightclubs, live theaters, and museums.
4. **Weaker North and West Sides; Stronger East and South Sides.** The northern and western sides of the central commercial core around Park Central Square show more building deterioration and contain more marginal businesses than the eastern and southern sides. Land coverage is less intensive on the west side, building conditions are poorer and there is more surface parking. The negative influence of the central industrial area is evident along the north and west sides as are the positive influences of University Plaza and SMSU along the south and east sides. The area west of the central commercial core is especially in need of redevelopment and revitalization, and entrepreneurs in 1997 had already begun that process with investments in brewpubs and nightclubs.
5. **Complex Traffic Circulation.** The pattern of traffic circulation is complex and confusing because of the discontinuity of streets at the east and west ends of Park Central Square and the one-way streets, which limit access to some of the businesses. The Park Central Square area traffic patterns allow only slow movement around its perimeter and in or out along its four spoke streets. The one-way street designation for McDaniel Street/ Campbell Avenue, and Jefferson Avenue, are not warranted, due to the overall low traffic volumes in the core area, and they confuse drivers, because they are not closely paired and do not form a comprehensive one-way street system. Consequently, it is



difficult to access the businesses around Park Central Square and to circulate in the core area.

6. **Special Urban Park Central Square Space.** Park Central, while creating some minor inconveniences for motorists, is one of the most recognizable spaces in all of Springfield, by virtue of its unique setting and the enclosed character created by the surrounding building massing.
7. **Building Character and Image.** The buildings around Park Central Square and along South Street have retained their traditional urban look, which is a very positive feature. These buildings, which were constructed about the same time, are two or more stories in height, face the sidewalk, incorporate various textures and design details, and provide a continuous facade. The core area also lacks any significant streetscape enhancements, such as a continuous pattern of street trees, theme landscaping, and pedestrian amenities. In addition, the sign system appears uncoordinated, due to the profusion of signs, and ineffective.
8. **Core Area Isolation.** The commercial core appears to be an island, isolated from the surrounding uses and neighborhoods, because much of its perimeter is devoted to parking lots, heavy industry, and a steep grade change.
9. **Open Space Opportunities.** The Jordan Creek valley represents a vast resource for developing a unique and special open space or public park for the core area, as well as the community-at-large. The valley, which adjoins the Greater Downtown area, currently contains a mix of aging, low-density, industrial developments. It also includes the buried Jordan Creek, Founders Park, and the former quarry at National Avenue and East Trafficway, which has filled up with water and forms a small lake. A Civic Park in the valley could provide amenity space for the Greater Downtown area, could help link it to the adjoining residential neighborhoods, and could serve as a link in the regional open space and trail system.

10. **Focus for Greater Downtown.** Park Central Square serves as a focal space for the older commercial district around the Square. However, with the redevelopment of University Plaza, the changing character of Walnut Street to more commercial uses, and the expansion of SMSU toward the core, the focus has shifted to the east. The Greater Downtown requires a new focal place or space, which could serve as a symbolic as well as a functional center of the district and accommodate larger civic festivals, events, or gatherings.
11. **Internal Links.** In order to create synergism and strengthen the Greater Downtown area, strong links need to be developed between the four sub-districts — Park Central Square, University Plaza, Walnut Street, and SMSU.

## GREATER DOWNTOWN DISTRICT PLAN ALTERNATIVES

Five conceptual alternative plans for Greater Downtown were developed for review and discussion with representatives of the Urban Districts Alliance, members of the public, and City staff. The purpose of the conceptual plans was to help the community evaluate options and to establish the direction in which the Greater Downtown should grow and expand and to identify areas where major public investments should be made. Much more detail about private and public investments is presented in the next section, Greater Downtown District Framework Plan.

The alternative plans are illustrated in Figures 16 through 20, on Pages 3-18 through 3-20, and a brief summary is included below. The favored Concept alternative, described in the next chapter, most closely resembles Concept E.

### Concept A: Park Central Square Emphasis

Concept A calls for infill development around Park Central Square, and linking the Square with University Plaza by locating a new exposition center and other new facilities along St. Louis Street, and creating a major new Civic Park in the Jordan Creek valley. Jordan Creek would be brought back to the surface and returned to a more natural state within Civic Park, east and west of Park Central Square, but not along Water Street.

Pedestrian-oriented sidewalk, landscaping, and lighting improvements would be made to streets in the Park Central Square area and northeast to Civic Park. Entrance streets such as Boonville Avenue, Benton/Kimbrough Avenues, and Walnut Street would also receive image improvements.

### Concept B: Water Street and East Trafficway Corridor Emphasis

Concept B emphasizes development, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse of buildings along Water Street and East Trafficway, both of which would be improved as traffic routes, landscaped and connected to College Street west of Park Central Square. Civic Park would be a major, long-term community improvement that would dramatically change the nature of the Jordan Creek Valley from the current industry and railroads uses. Jordan Creek would be reopened, possibly all the way across Greater Downtown. Streetscape investments would link Park Central Square to Water Street and improve the appearance of the Greater Downtown entrance routes.

### Concept C: St. Louis Street Corridor Emphasis

In Concept C, the linkage between Park Central Square and University Plaza would be made most strongly along St. Louis Street. There would be infill and redevelopment in the St. Louis Street corridor between Jefferson and Kimbrough Avenues, and the corridor segment between John Q. Mammons Parkway and National Avenue would change from industrial to commercial and/or high-density residential. Streetscape investments would be concentrated on St. Louis Street and Civic Park would be created northeast of Park Square Central.

### Concept D: Walnut Street Corridor Emphasis

Although the proposed exposition center is shown along St. Louis Street in Concept D, the development linkage and emphasis would be along Walnut Street/South Avenue. There would be no park in the Jordan Creek valley, but a large new park would be created between Park Central Square and SMSU to improve that linkage and to provide a beautiful public space around which to orient new mixed-use buildings. Links to University Plaza and the proposed exposition center would be along Benton Avenue and John Q. Hammons Parkway.

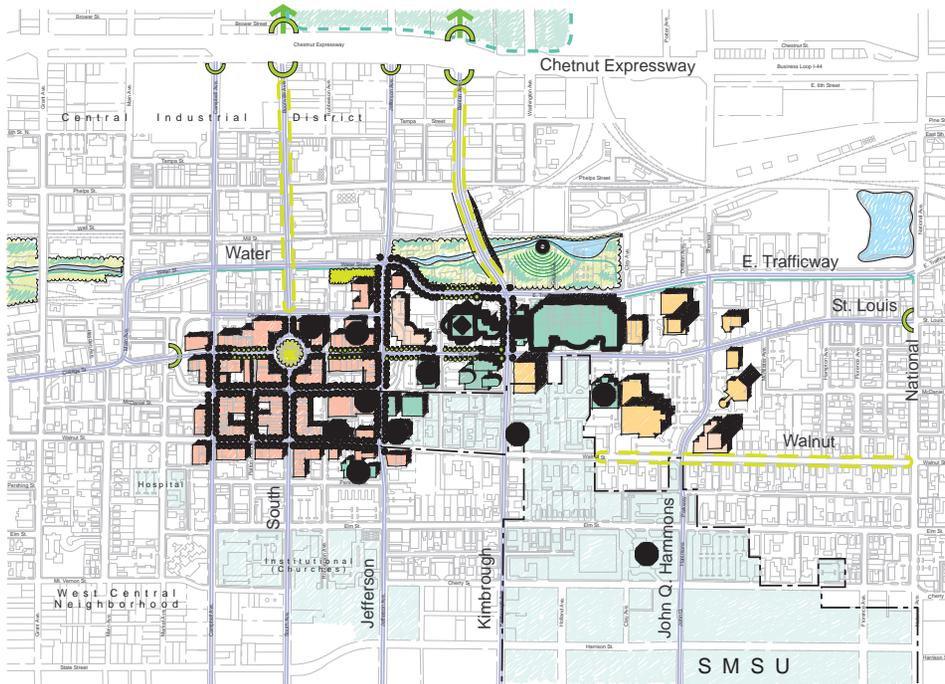


Figure 16

*Concept A:  
Park Central Square  
Emphasis  
Greater Downtown District*

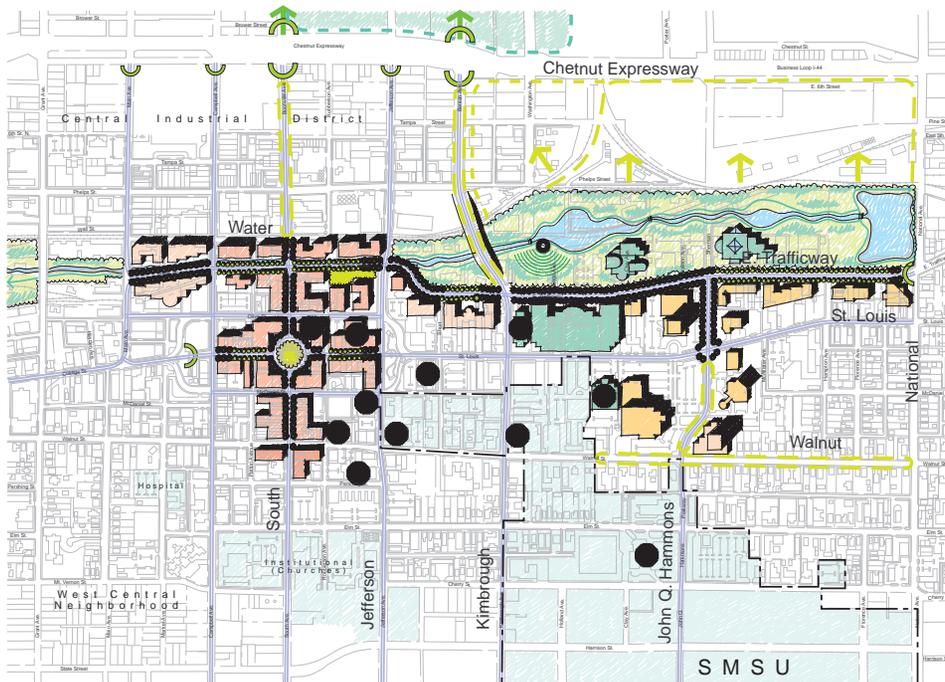


Figure 17

*Concept B:  
Water Street and East  
Trafficway Corridor  
Emphasis  
Greater Downtown District*



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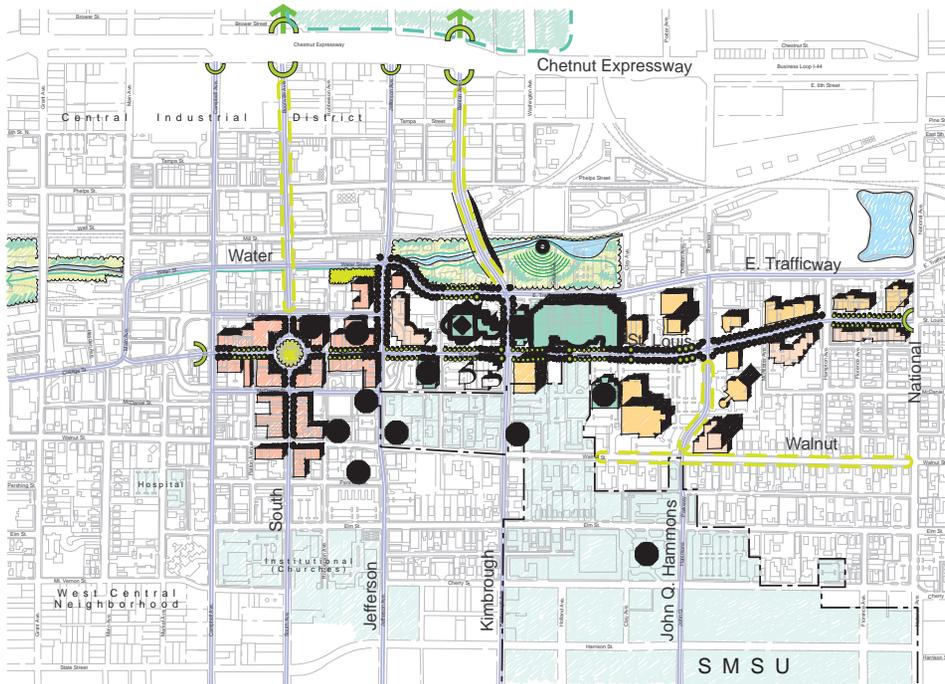


Figure 18

*Concept C:  
St. Louis St. Corridor  
Emphasis  
Greater Downtown District*

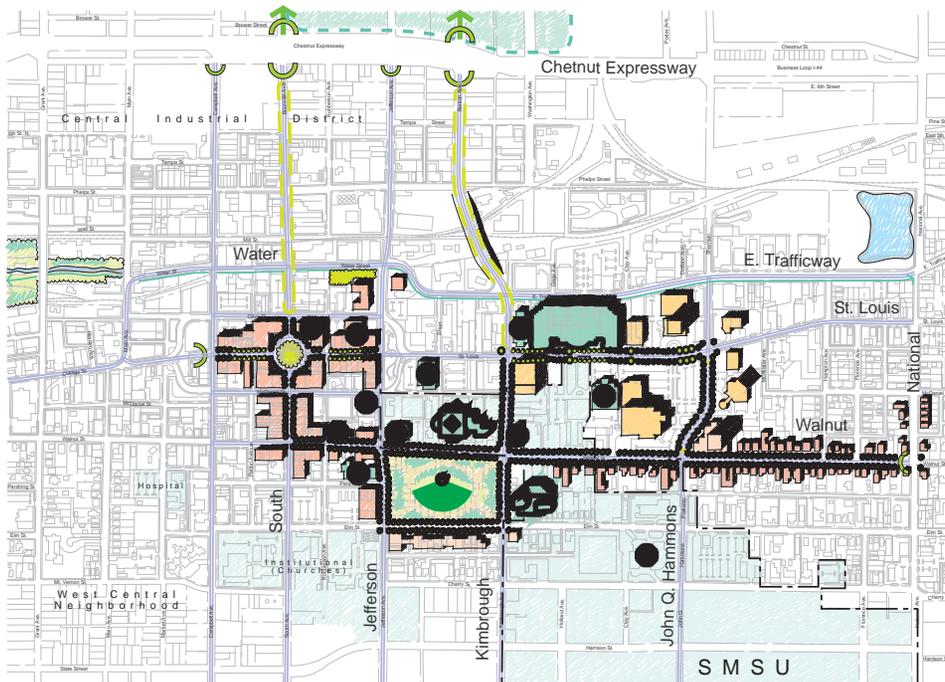


Figure 19

*Concept D:  
Walnut St. Corridor  
Emphasis  
Greater Downtown District*



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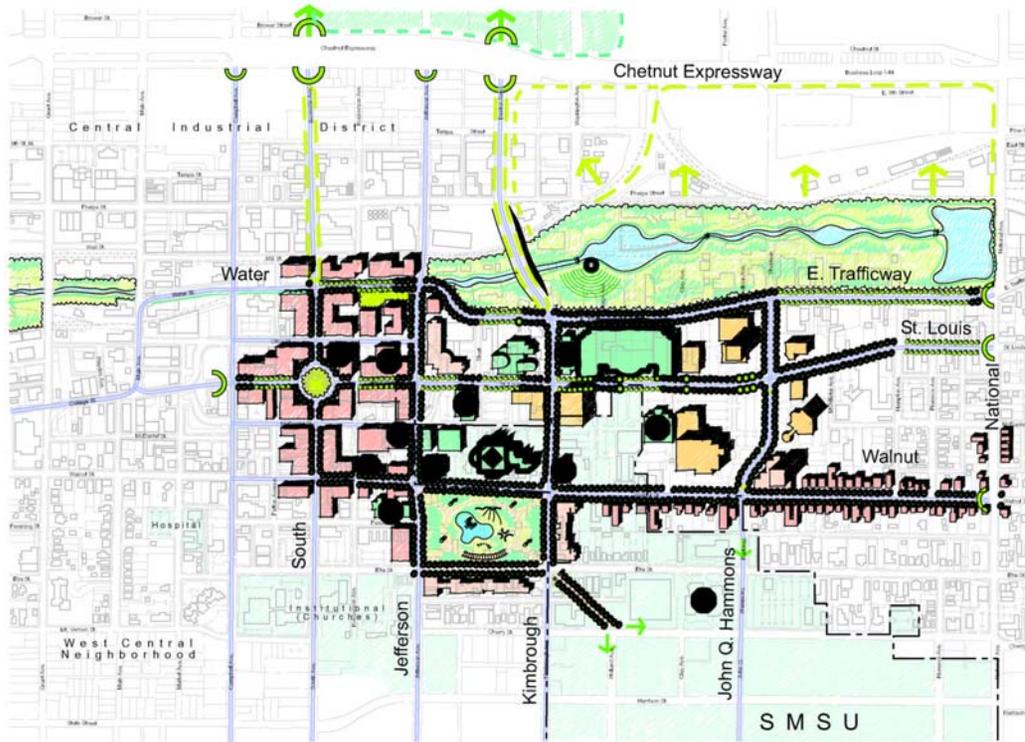


Figure 20

**Concept E:  
Multiple Corridor  
Emphasis  
Greater Downtown District**



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**Concept E: Multiple Corridor Emphasis**

Concept E calls for improvements, redevelopment, and infill growth in each of the corridors mentioned in Concepts A through D. This would provide maximum linkages between all the sub-districts and it would create the most opportunities for new infill developments.

A large Civic Park would be developed in the Jordan Creek Valley. The pedestrian linkage between Park Central Square and SMSU would be strengthened. This could be accomplished either through improvements along existing streets and/or by creating a diagonal pedestrian walkway, possibly in the form of an "arts park" around which new mixed-use buildings could orient

## GREATER DOWNTOWN DISTRICT FRAMEWORK PLAN

The Framework Plan for the Greater Downtown District includes the following elements and objectives:

- **Land Use and Urban Design:** Create a vibrant, mixed-use urban center that occupies a unique position in the Springfield market.
- **Circulation:** Support the Center City development concept with a circulation system that accommodates pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as motorists.
- **Public Open Space:** Create interesting and attractive public open spaces scaled to the pedestrian to serve as a focal place for Greater Downtown as the well the larger community.

### Land Use and Urban Design

***Create a vibrant, mixed-use urban center that occupies a unique position in the Springfield market.***

Greater Downtown and each of its sub-districts should become more diversified and less specialized in their activities. While Greater Downtown, as a whole, has a wide range of housing, employment, and entertainment, there still tends to be too much specialization and segregation of these uses, sometimes resulting in empty streets after 5 p.m., a reduced sense of security and excessive dependence on the automobile.

The thrust of this strategy is to encourage a wider range and closer mixture of land uses in Greater Downtown, occasionally also mixing uses vertically in multi-story buildings. These features of compactness, fine-grained diversity, and mixture are the characteristics that make the great cities of the world desirable and

sustainable places to live. In

Springfield, these are also the key to Greater Downtown's revival, because they will make it unique in the region and appeal to a segment of the population that desires this alternative. Other benefits include economic efficiency through clustering of mutually supportive businesses, encouragement of business start-ups, a reduction in auto trips, promotion of a culturally rich environment, and more efficient use of public infrastructure.

The proposed increase in urban density, intensity, and activity should be complemented and softened by an improved environment. Sidewalks and street frontages should become more interesting and comfortable for pedestrians; nicely designed parks, squares, and water features should provide places for relaxation and escape; and public and private spaces should be well maintained, safe, and clean.

Figure 21, Circulation Diagram, on Page 3-23, defines the recommended roadway network for Greater Downtown; Figure 22, Greater Downtown Framework Diagram, on Page 3-24, illustrates conceptually the basic relationships inherent in the Framework Plan; and Figure 23, Greater Downtown Framework Plan, shows many of the Framework Plan's principles for land use, urban design, public open space, and special features.

In addition, Figures 24 through 32, on Pages 3-26 through 3-34, provide illustrative examples of comparable, desirable urban design features and developments for the Greater Downtown District, as well as the other Districts and the rest of Center City. The examples include images for urban area streetscapes, urban area specialty treatments, new developments and redevelopment, roadway corridor enhancements, gateways and specialty items, public gathering places, park and open space activities and features, and public art

The examples are not intended to represent any specific recommendations for Springfield's Center City or Greater Downtown. Rather, they are meant to provide a general idea of the type of features and elements that should be considered and that could be incorporated in the design for City Center and Greater Downtown..

**Actions for Greater Downtown Land Use and Urban Design:**

Primary actions needed to create a vibrant, mixed-use urban center are:

1. Reestablish a unique position for Greater Downtown within the larger marketplace; one that is of value to the community and its residents.
  - a. Expand Greater Downtown's position as an arts and entertainment district.
  - b. Enhance Greater Downtown's unique role as a multifunctional business district.
  - c. Expand the capacity of Greater Downtown to accommodate conventions, conferences, and trade shows.
  - d. Promote the emergence of a residential base in Greater Downtown.
  - e. Build upon the positive image of the Walnut Street Historic District while protecting its historic qualities
2. Increase the diversity and compactness of land uses in Greater Downtown,
3. Link the subdistricts into a whole that is recognized as Greater Downtown.
4. Create pedestrian-friendly blocks and streets.
5. Encourage developments that define and support public spaces.
6. Use landscaping, parks, squares, and water to focus and beautify Greater Downtown and to create gateways.
7. Encourage buildings of appropriate scale, mass, and form.

8. Preserve buildings of historic, architectural, or cultural merit.

9. Improve maintenance and cleanliness.

**1. Reestablish a unique position for Greater Downtown within the larger marketplace; one that is of value to the community and its residents**

There are five ways to define a unique and different position for Greater Downtown in the Springfield regional marketplace:

**1a. Expand Greater Downtown's position as an arts and entertainment district**

Greater Downtown has all the fundamentals in place to become a more significant arts and entertainment area. The city's main performing arts facilities are located in Greater Downtown, and there is a collection of complementary galleries, restaurants and nightclubs. (Refer to the Table 1 for a complete list.)

These facilities provide a solid nucleus for Greater Downtown to build upon and develop into a more vibrant entertainment center, that in turn will support additional complementary specialty retail businesses. The challenges are to ensure that these facilities remain in Greater Downtown and to attract new and complementary facilities. A greater concentration of like businesses will give the area the critical mass to function as a distinct district rather than solely as individual businesses.

Opportunities include: completing the renovation of the Gillioz Theater; attracting new music clubs, specialty, 'white tablecloth' and ethnic restaurants and bars that appeal to a wider market; new art galleries; coordinating more programs and activities with SMSU; developing Civic Park in the Jordan Creek Valley; and improving the pedestrian links between Greater Downtown and SMSU.

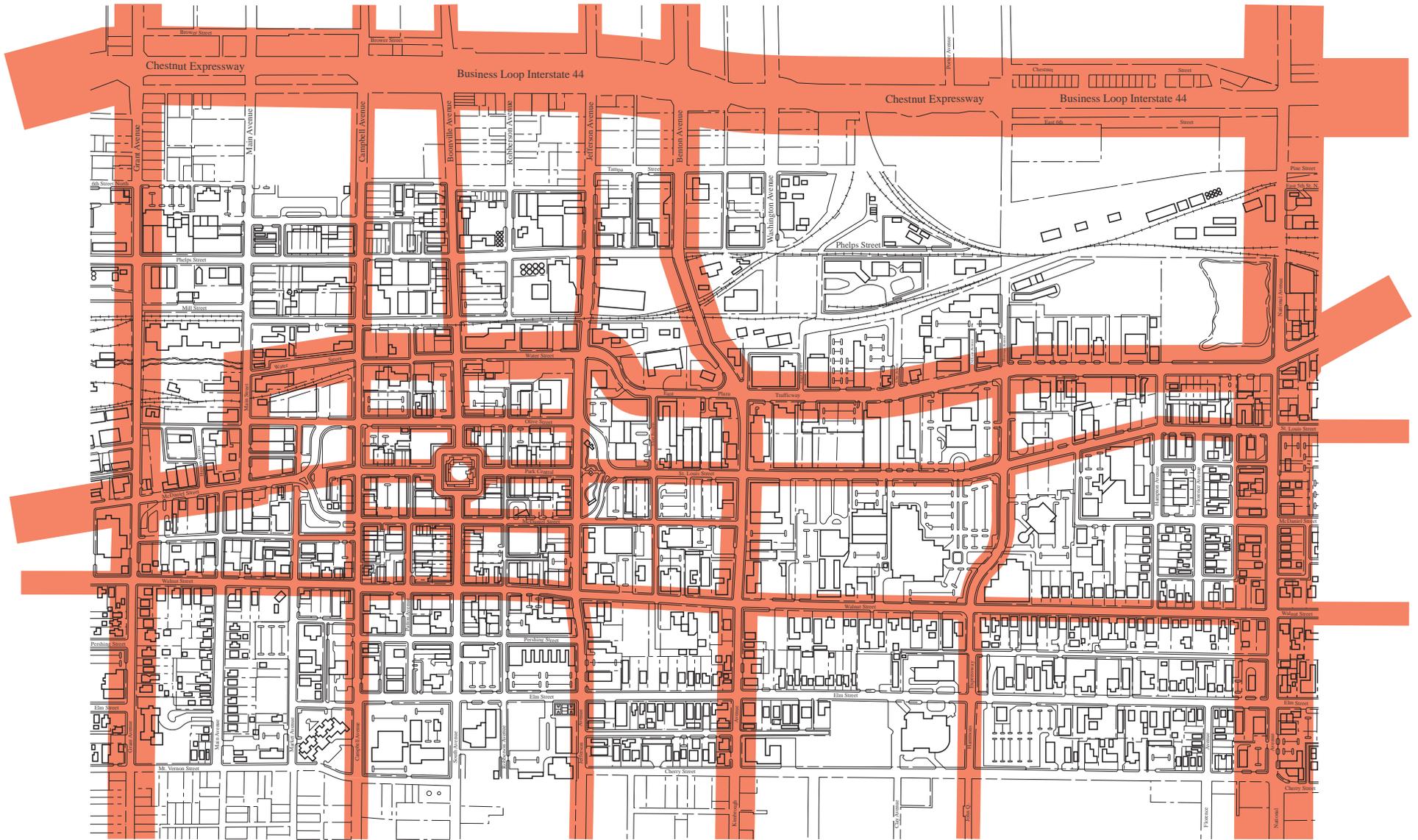


Figure 21  
*Circulation Diagram*  
*Greater Downtown District*



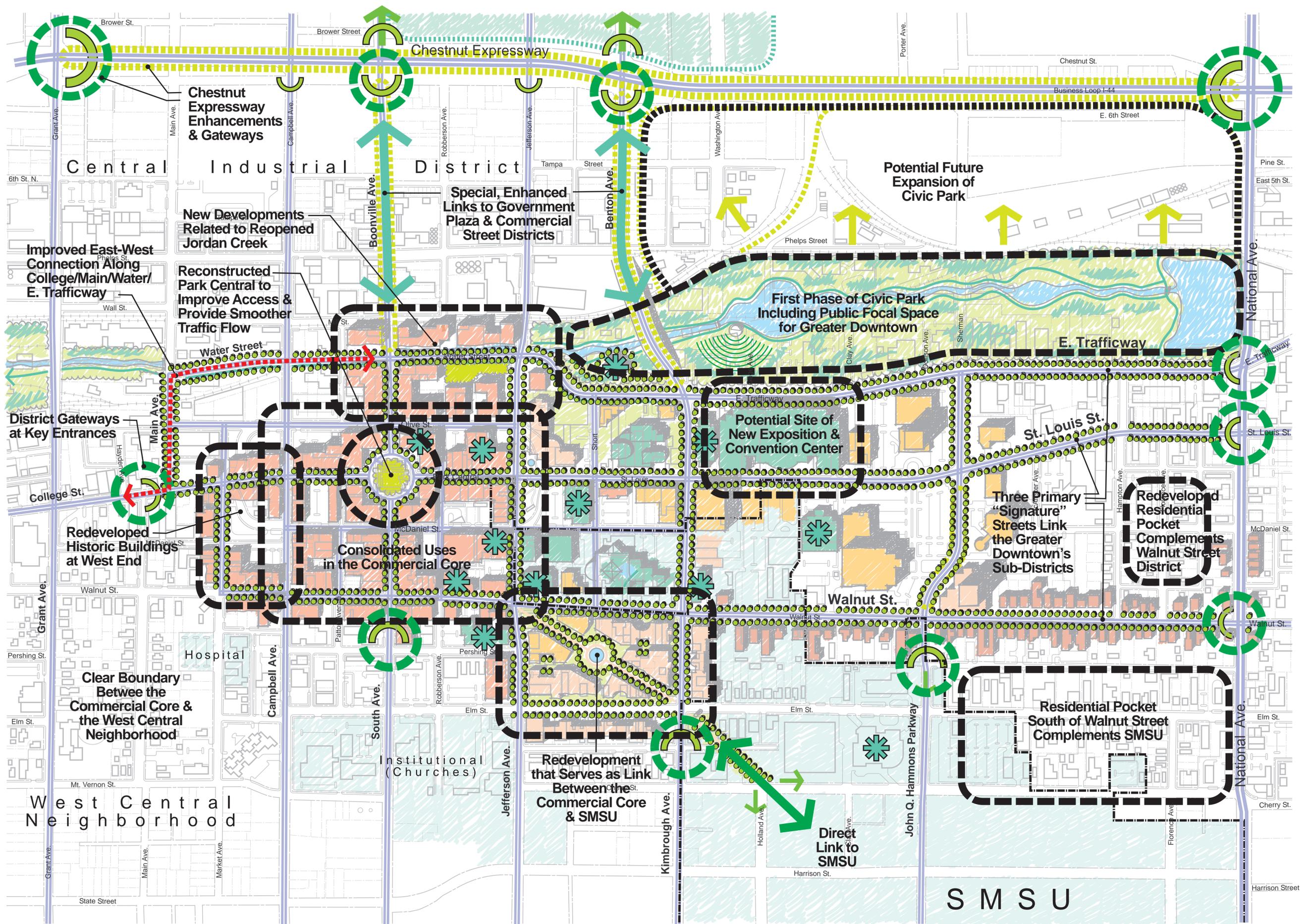


Figure 22  
 Framework Diagram  
 Greater Downtown District

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0 200 400 600 Feet



Springfield Center City  
 Plan Element

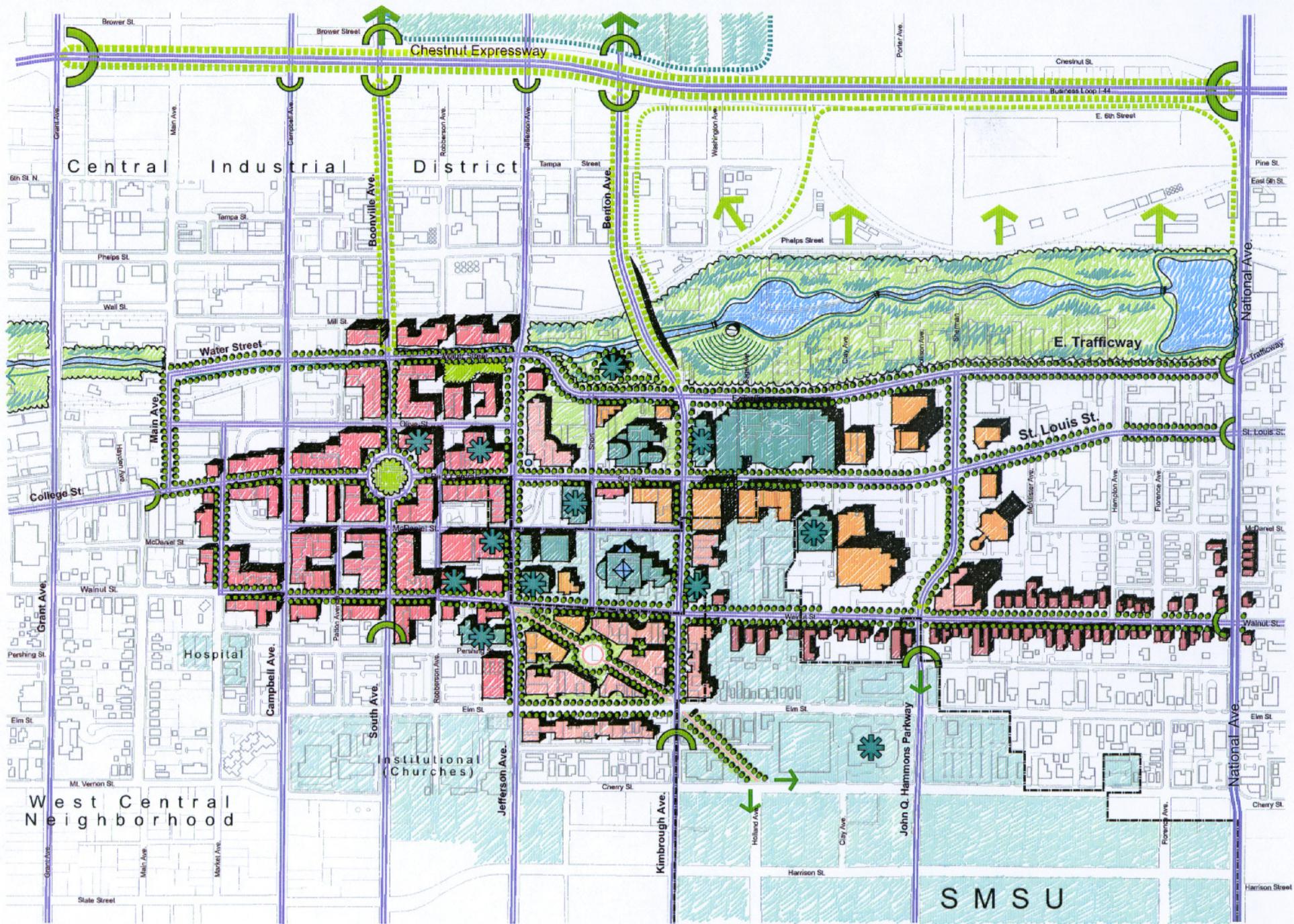


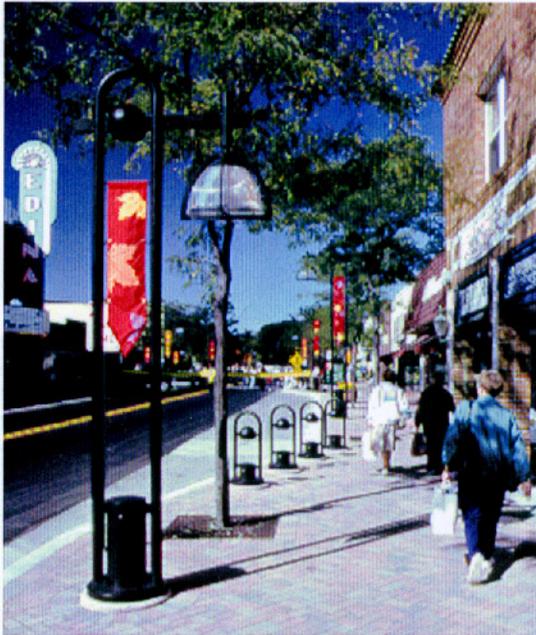
Figure 23  
**Framework Plan**  
 Greater Downtown District

May 1998



0 200 400 600 Feet

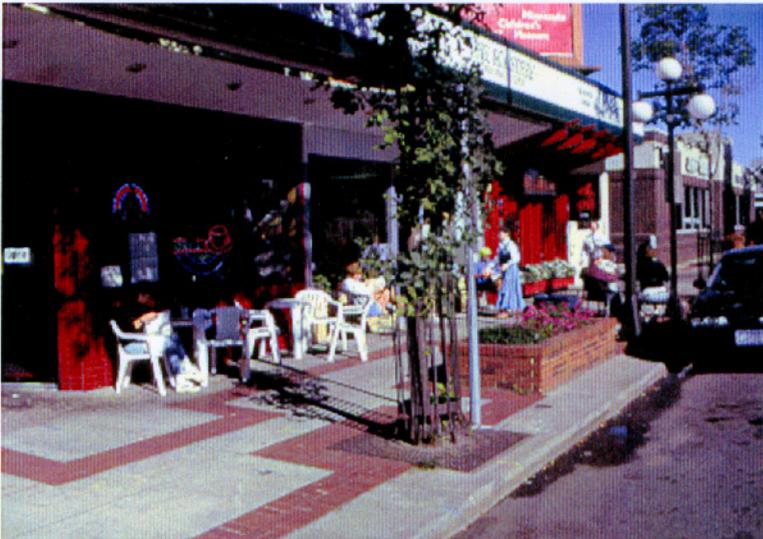
**VISION 20/20** **Springfield Center City**  
 Creating the Future **Plan Element**



a. Core Area Comprehensive Streetscape Treatments



b. Core Area Street Activities Enliven the Streetscape



c. Opportunities for Informal Street Activities

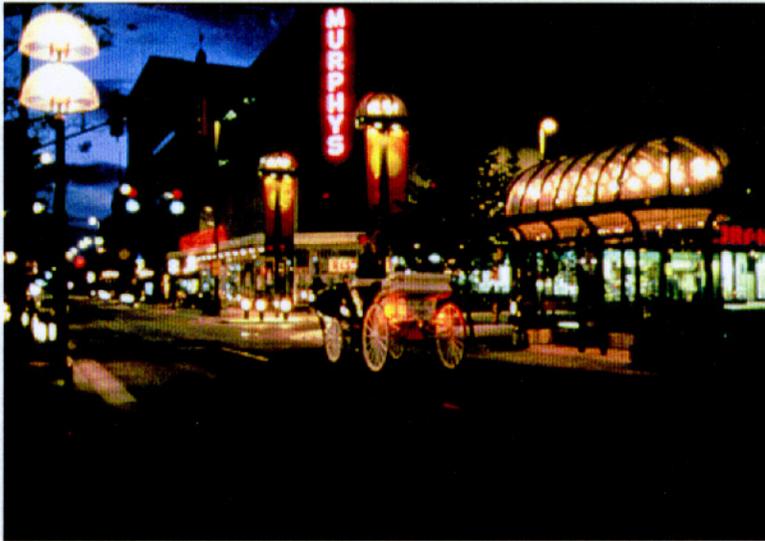


d. Parking Lot Screening/Landscaping

Figure 24

**Urban Area Streetscapes**  
Center City Study Area - Illustrative Examples

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a. Well-Lighted Nighttime Environment



b. Design Themes



c. Landscaping Enhancements – Flower Baskets



d. 'Landmark' Landscaping Design Treatments

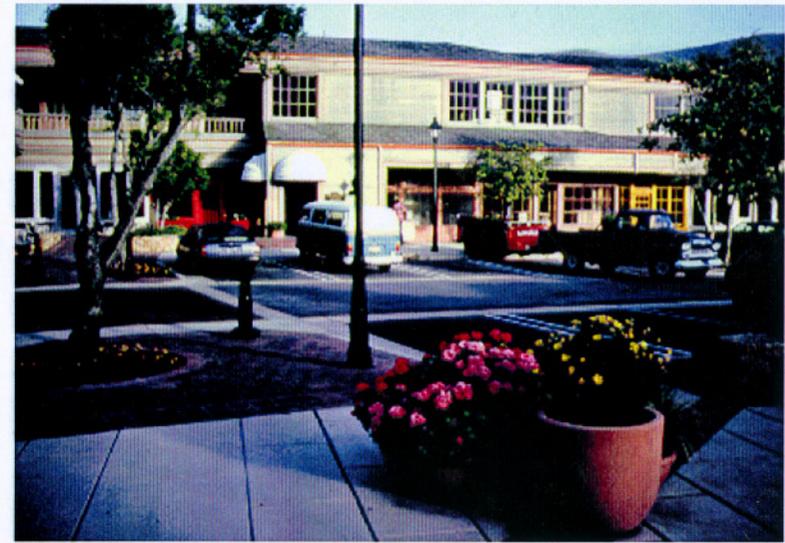
Figure 25

**Urban Area Specialty Treatments**  
Center City Study Area - Illustrative Examples

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a. Infill Redevelopment / Rehabilitation



b. Infill Developments with Pedestrian-Friendly Streetscape



c. Waterfront Developments Along Park Open Space



d. Core Area Residential Developments

Figure 26

**New Development / Redevelopment**  
**Center City Study Area - Illustrative Examples**

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a. Distinct 'Theme' Lighting, Landscaping, and Signs for Corridors Linking the Districts



b. Special 'Theme' Treatments and Pedestrian / Bicyclist Paths for Corridors Within Districts



c. Special 'Theme' Treatments for Historical Areas



d. Appropriate Streetscape Elements / Activities for Historical Areas

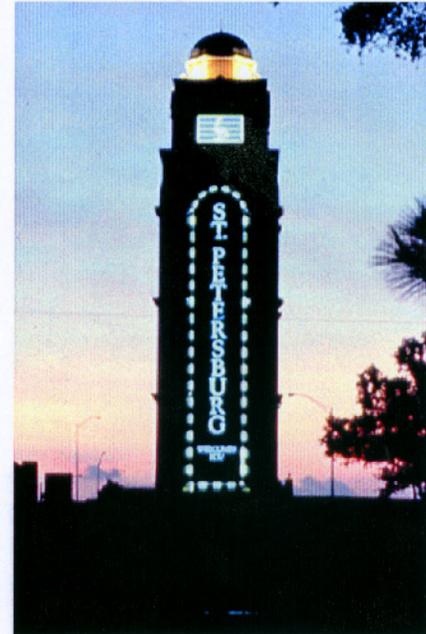
Figure 27

May 1998

**Corridor Enhancements**  
Center City Study Area - Illustrative Examples



a. District Gatesays / Entries



b. District Gateway Monuments



c. Banners for a Livelier Image



d. Comprehensive Sign / Directory System

Figure 28

**Gateways and Special Features**  
**Center City Study Area - Illustrative Examples**

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a. Focal Areas / Special Features



b. Special Event Plazas



c. Performance / Activity Spaces



d. Seating Alcoves

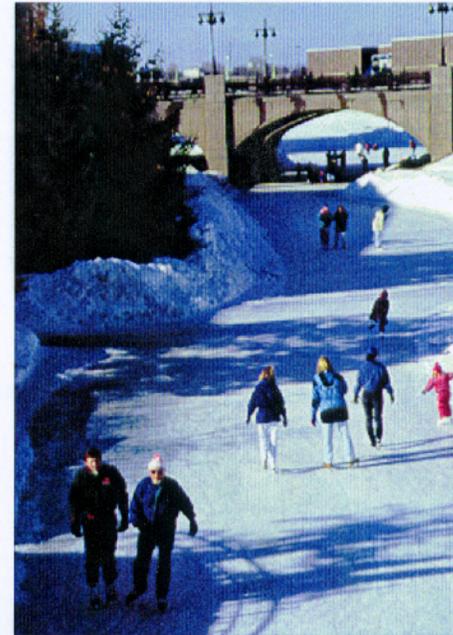
Figure 29

**Public Gathering Places**  
Center City Study Area - Illustrative Examples

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a. Park / Open Space Summer Activities



b. Park / Open Space Winter Recreation



c. Park / Open Space Special Features / Attractions



d. Well-Developed Trail System

Figure 30

**Park / Open Space Recreational Activities**  
Center City Study Area - Illustrative Examples

May 1998



a. Special Lighting 'Theme' Effects



b. Waterfront / Open Space-Oriented Spaces



c. Dramatic Water Features



d. Abundant, Varied Landscaping

Figure 31

**Park / Open Space Special Features**  
**Center City Study Area - Illustrative Examples**

May 1998



*a. Large-Scale, Monumental Art*



*b. Streetscape Art*



*c. Unique Art Expression*



*d. Subtle, 'Touchable' Art*

Given the size of the Springfield market, the opportunity for expansion of this segment of Greater Downtown business is enormous. A conclusion of the *Center City Market Analysis* was that Greater Downtown could capture ten percent of the new eating and drinking space built in Springfield over the 1998-2017 time period. Such activity has also started occurring in 1996 and 1997 as entrepreneurs were taking advantage of low-cost space to open a micro-brewery and restaurants.

**1b. Enhance Greater Downtown's unique role as a multi-functional business district**

Greater Downtown should continue to evolve as a multi-functional business district containing office, service, and retail businesses along with the above-mentioned civic and cultural facilities.

The Greater Downtown's retail focus should go beyond the arts and entertainment. Greater Downtown is also an excellent location for specialty retail businesses such as antiques and gift shops (which already have a presence in Greater Downtown), specialty foods, unique clothing or shoe shops, book stores, music stores, small consumer electronics stores, and other specialty shops. The best food store possibilities include baked goods, candy, wine, or ice cream shops catering to Greater Downtown workers and visitors.

Greater Downtown is an important business service center, which includes both financial institutions and professional and business services. The *Center City Market Analysis* identified the non-retail sector as critical to the business viability of Greater Downtown. It is an important generator of demand for building space and it is a generator of customers for retail businesses and restaurants.

Retaining and expanding office uses is key to Greater Downtown revitalization and to maintaining a multi-functional business mix. The loss of any of the large office tenants in Greater Downtown could further erode the employment base and lead to erosion of business services.

Maintaining the commitment of single-use office tenants for Greater Downtown is key to this strategy. The major banks, utilities, and State government are major employers, occupying more space in aggregate than all retail users. Their workers provide significant support for many of the retail service and restaurant uses in Greater Downtown.

Most new office development is expected to occur by renovating existing two- and three-story commercial businesses. In some cases, the first levels will remain retail, with upper floors converted to offices. In other cases, owner-occupants will purchase buildings as investments largely for their own use.

**1c. Expand the capacity of Greater Downtown to accommodate conventions, conferences, and trade shows**

Greater Downtown already has facilities for conducting conventions, conferences and trade shows with the University Plaza Convention Center and the University Plaza Trade Center, both of which are located just outside the commercial core, east of Kimbrough Avenue. The former is a modern facility and physically associated with the high-rise University Plaza Holiday Inn. However, it is limited in size and suited only for small to mid-sized conferences and conventions. It lacks the large, unobstructed floor area desired by larger shows and conventions. The Trade Center is obsolete in terms of size, layout, amenities, appearance, parking, and maintenance quality. Neither facility is designed to accommodate sporting events or stage shows.

As noted previously, Greater Downtown has a small, but growing, entertainment, dining and arts component that is very helpful in attracting conventions. If more visitors can be brought to Greater Downtown, either through conventions, SMSU activities, or for other reasons, the shops and businesses that cater to them can increase in number and quality, in turn supporting the reasons for scheduling conferences in Springfield.

During the preparation of this plan, a proposal was being studied to develop an Exposition Center, a new convention and conference facility, on the present site of the Trade Center between St. Louis Street and East Trafficway and between Benton Avenue and John Q.

Hammons Parkway. The preliminary concept includes an exhibit hall, meeting rooms, and an arena. It potentially could also include a major athletic complex in connection with Civic Park to attract regional and national youth, college, and adult sports tournaments.

The Exposition Center would enhance Greater Downtown's position as the community's center for hospitality, entertainment, dining, and the arts. It could lead to the creation of additional hotel rooms in Greater Downtown, add pedestrian activity to the streets, and begin to bridge the gap between the commercial core near Park Central Square and University Plaza. Finally, it could serve as a major element of Civic Park and the Jordan Creek Greenway.

**1d. Promote the emergence of a residential base in Greater Downtown**

Greater Downtown housing can utilize vacant building space and help create round-the-clock activity. It should therefore be a top priority. Although there are a number of small loft projects, the potential depth of the Greater Downtown housing market remains untapped.

The greatest opportunity would be for a loft renovation project in a major vacant building, creating a mix of low- and moderate-income units along with market-rate housing. Available incentives should be utilized to support such projects, including Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, tax exempt bonds, tax credits, community development corporation financing, property acquisition, and cost write-downs.

In 1996, there were 46 loft housing units existing in the upper floors of Greater Downtown commercial buildings, most of which have been recently created. There are a large number of unrenovated office and department store buildings, such as the former Heer's building, with similar potential for conversion to apartments, either for seniors, or for that segment of the community which desires a more urban living environment.

The City should promote private reinvestment and redevelopment of existing neighborhoods on the fringes of Greater Downtown.

Incompatible land uses should be either redeveloped or buffered. Zoning should be reviewed to either protect the single-family housing stock or promote redevelopment.

Finally, there is also an opportunity for a boutique hotel serving tourists, visiting business people, and Springfield residents. Such a hotel would further support Greater Downtown specialty retail businesses and restaurants and it would support Greater Downtown's emerging role as the region's predominant entertainment center.

**1e. Build upon the positive image of the Walnut Street Historic District area while protecting its historic qualities**

The *Center City Market Analysis* indicated a strong positive perception exists of the Walnut Street corridor in terms of its atmosphere, quality of stores, and services. As a result, this location should prove attractive to unique individual businesses that serve the larger Springfield trade area and desire a central location and/or historic character. These businesses would largely consist of more of what is already in place: bed and breakfasts, professional offices, independent restaurants, and higher quality gift stores and galleries.

- a. **Increase the number of complementary businesses.** Walnut Street has an established identity and a positive image in the community and the district needs to develop a business mix that is complementary to that image. The most significant opportunity for the Walnut Street area is to develop a critical mass of specialty businesses, so that Walnut Street becomes known as a destination place to shop rather than just the location of a particular retailer. The Walnut Street area should prove an attractive location for other complementary specialty stores, such as high quality antique shops, art galleries, photographic studios, bridal shops, and unique and unusual apparel stores, that can complement and add to the overall market draw of the existing establishments. Additional low-volume professional offices, or personal services, such as hair salons, are also compatible with the existing area businesses.

- b. Carefully increase the number and variety of restaurants.** There is also a significant opportunity to expand the number and variety of restaurants within the area. There are very few locations with a reputation as a place to go to find independently-owned restaurants within the metro area. These one-of-a-kind restaurants can appeal to the entire trade area for their business. A Walnut Street address gives them a central location and unique and unusual space. The added advantage of this location is its proximity to the Greater Downtown area workers. Specific restaurant types with potential are fine dining, ethnic food such as Italian, Thai, Vietnamese, and a more upscale lounge/drinking establishment. The perception of the district's attractiveness as a restaurant location and its proximity to SMSU also points to opportunities for more bars and restaurants serving the student and younger working-age population.

A concern with additional restaurants is the associated high level of parking demand and the lack of any significant available off-street parking in the district. The number of these businesses that can be supported in the area without impacting the area's appeal is therefore limited. The demolition of existing historic buildings to provide greater parking would be detrimental to the overall character of the area and is therefore not encouraged. An option might be to redevelop the deteriorating residential pocket north of Walnut Street, to create a centralized parking facility or additional complementary developments.

- c. Improve the appearance of the Corridor.** Although Walnut Street presents a fairly attractive overall appearance, there is room for improvement. The Urban Conservation District zoning has been quite successful in generating financially viable uses for the old houses along the street while retaining their architectural character. But if the corridor's business community wishes to trade upon the charm of the historic district, it would be helpful for the City to upgrade the quality of the street trees, sidewalks, and lighting and continue to promote building facade renovation. In general, the Walnut Street Historic District should be perceived as elegant, historic, low-rise and green - a pleasing addition and

complement to Greater Downtown, University Plaza, and the SMSU campus.

- d. Reposition the western end of Walnut Street Corridor.** Develop a complementary mixed-use urban corridor focused on a landscaped pedestrian route between Park Central Square and SMSU. The western half of the corridor, between South Street and John Q. Hammons Parkway, seems to hold opportunities for selective redevelopment and infill in a manner supportive of the rest of Walnut Street. New buildings should be in the two- to four-story range and have interesting facades that face the street. A residential appearance and character would be most desirable. To the extent feasible, buildings should accommodate both commercial and residential activities.

**2. Increase the diversity and compactness of land uses in Greater Downtown.**

It has become an accepted principle of urban planning that compact, dense, pedestrian-oriented places retain urban vitality and interest and are essential for the vitality of cities. In Center City, there are fragmented examples of this type of environment, such as parts of Greater Downtown, the college campuses, Walnut Street and portions of Commercial Street. However, other areas are single-purpose and oriented to the auto -- University Plaza, parts of St. Louis Street, the Cox North medical center and some parts of Greater Downtown. A closer relationship of living and working spaces may not guarantee that people will necessarily do both -- work and live in Greater Downtown, but that opportunity will be increased.

In parts of the Greater Downtown, the continuity of the city is broken by vacant and underutilized parcels, including a large number of surface parking lots. These voids make these areas uninviting and inhospitable. This pattern is most noticeable on the northern and western sides of the historic Park Central Square and in the area between the historic core and the University Plaza area (see Figure 10, Greater Downtown Land Use, on Page 3-2). The corridor between the historic core and University Plaza is also discontinuous and fragmented because of parking lots that abut streets.

Thus, the community should work to fill the empty spaces between buildings, bring housing into every district, aim for mid-rise density across districts, and create areas that combine housing, jobs, and entertainment uses. The City should encourage infill development on vacant and underutilized sites to reinforce and re-knit the pattern of buildings, to fill the voids, and to expand the volume of the Greater Downtown. The historic core area around Park Central Square should receive careful infill development with displaced parking moved to the perimeter or into structures. (A few small parking lots or ramps near the commercial core would still be acceptable.) Of particular importance is the corridor between Park Central Square and SMSU, which should be reinforced by new mixed-use development and a green pedestrian spine.

Opportunities should be sought to develop new, infill buildings and structured parking where there is now surface parking in University Plaza. New buildings should reinforce the street edges and improve the pedestrian environment, particularly along St. Louis Street. Housing would be especially desirable as a way to add more hours of activity to this area.

**3. Link the subdistricts into a whole that is recognized as Greater Downtown,**

The Greater Downtown subdistricts should be linked with attractive, specially landscaped and lighted streets and new development should fill the voids in the pattern of buildings. One of the major objectives should be to unify and link the commercial core around Park Central Square, University Plaza, Walnut Street, portions of the Jordan Creek Valley, and the northern half of the SMSU campus into a single identifiable entity that is recognized and that functioning as one entity - Greater Downtown.

Greater Downtown has many wonderful components but they are separated from one another and do not effectively function as a whole. For example, the Greater Downtown commercial core is separated from University Plaza by a mixture of isolated, auto-oriented buildings, the interesting, historic character of eastern Walnut Street does not extend to the Park Central Square area, and

SMSU turns its back on Walnut Street. Only a few buildings, such as the SMSU Alumni Center, currently link the University to the Park Central Square area.

In 1996, the City and SMSU executed an agreement that established direction for the future physical growth of the University, This agreement evolved from the desire to redirect the physical expansion of the campus away from the neighborhoods to the south and east and to direct it instead toward Greater Downtown's core area around Park Central Square. SMSU currently owns and leases space in several, large multi-tenant buildings in the core area with the goal of expanding their holdings and commitments to the Greater Downtown. In 1997, the University, under the leadership of President Keiser, passed a resolution outlining their policies for achieving an expanded Greater Downtown presence.

**4. Create Pedestrian-Friendly Blocks and Streets**

The community should strive to make all Center City districts attractive for walking, particularly the Greater Downtown district. A pedestrian-friendly environments would make Greater Downtown unique in Springfield and would help to sustain its urban vitality.

The pedestrian environment should be enhanced by a combination of public and private improvements. These improvements, whether in public rights-of-way or on private property, should include well-designed plazas, sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian-scale lighting, banners, general landscaping, and a well-coordinated sign system.

The City and the Urban Districts Alliance should work together to improve the pedestrian environment in the following key 'signature' street locations:

- Main Avenue, between Water and College Streets
- Market Avenue, between College and Walnut Streets
- Boonville/South Avenues between Water and Walnut Streets
- Jefferson Avenue, between Water and Elm Streets

- Kimbrough Avenue, between East Trafficway and Elm Streets
- John Q. Hammons, between East Trafficway and Walnut Street
- East Trafficway between Main and National Avenues
- College/St. Louis Streets between Main and National Avenues
- Walnut Street between Market and National Avenues
- The corridor between the Park Central Square area and SMSU. Options in that area include either improving the frontages of Walnut and Elm Streets and Jefferson and Kimbrough Avenues, or else, creating a diagonal cross-block landscaped pedestrian way and park in that vicinity.

The 'signature' streets, listed above, should be lined by a reasonably continuous wall of interesting and vibrant building facades interspersed with parks, monuments, and plazas. They should focus and channel pedestrian activities and serve as locations for specialty retail, offices, hotels, theaters, restaurants, bars, and meeting and conference centers.

Improvements to other street frontages should not be overlooked, but should receive lesser priority than the projects listed above. The City cannot afford to improve every Greater Downtown street to the same high level, so, as soon as possible, detailed guidelines should be established, priorities should be assigned, and a long-term improvement program begun.

#### **5. Encourage developments that define and support public spaces.**

Greater Downtown has some buildings, mostly older structures, that respond well to the street and the public spaces while some, mostly of newer vintage, do not. The better examples have windows that face the street, identifiable and direct entrances from the street, and interesting - articulated or enhanced - facades.

Buildings should generally provide a frame for streets and other public spaces rather than being conceived as isolated objects. Infill building facades should be animated with appropriate architectural detailing, and with articulations that create a consistent structural rhythm compatible with adjacent buildings. First floor facades should include large window openings in order to generate visual interest, provide informal surveillance, and enhance the sense of security.

Active building uses should be located on the ground floor. Parking should not generally be located on the ground floor, particularly along pedestrian-oriented streets. Vehicular access to parking, deliveries, and other services should be provided on the sides and rears of buildings.

New development should support an urban street grid and a vital public realm. Buildings should be constructed with minimum setbacks, close to the front streets or property lines. Blocks should be made relatively short and streets should be interconnected. Mid-block pedestrian passages should be provided to break up long blocks.

#### **6. Use landscaping, parks, public squares, and water features to focus and beautify Greater Downtown and to create gateways.**

Great city centers are frequently anchored by successful public spaces - a town square, a park, a broad boulevard or waterfront public open space. These public amenities promote private investment, help orient office buildings, offer a pleasant urban respite for workers and residents, and provide a destination for visitors.

Developments in Greater Downtown should be organized around several significant public open spaces:

- Park Central Square
- The proposed Civic Park and Jordan Creek Greenway (refer to the next section, Public Open Space Improvements)
- Landscaped East Trafficway, St. Louis, and Walnut Streets

- Possibly, a new park or landscaped pedestrian corridor between Park Central Square and SMSU.

These green spaces should be linked to one another by pedestrian-friendly streets, and Civic Park should be linked to the city-wide network of open spaces via the greenway system.

Gateways should be created to define the entrances to the Greater Downtown area and to give it identity. Primary Greater Downtown gateways have been identified for the following locations:

- College Street at Main Avenue
- Grant Avenue at Chestnut Expressway
- Boonville Avenue at Chestnut Expressway
- Benton Avenue at Chestnut Expressway
- National Avenue at Chestnut Expressway
- East Trafficway at National Avenue
- St. Louis Street at National Avenue
- John Q. Hammons Parkway at Walnut Street
- Kimbrough Avenue at Elm Street
- South Avenue at Walnut Street

#### **7. Encourage buildings of appropriate scale, mass, and form.**

A relatively uniform and mid-rise scale of buildings that cover a large amount of the land area are preferable to a few very tall buildings with 'dead' spaces between them. Given the limited market in Greater Downtown, the community should strive to disperse the benefits of new developments somewhat evenly in low- to mid-rise buildings, rather than have them absorbed into a few very tall and isolated structures. Low- and mid-rise structures can be used successfully to reinforce and frame public spaces.

In addition, the height and bulk of buildings should be a function of their location in Greater Downtown. Large buildings would be more appropriate in and around Park Central Square and University Plaza and between them, mid-rise and smaller footprint buildings in the rest of Greater Downtown, and two-to four-story buildings along Walnut Street and in the adjoining residential neighborhoods.

#### **8. Preserve buildings of historic, architectural, or cultural merit.**

Historic preservation is an important and worthy goal throughout the city and especially in Greater Downtown. Conservation and active use of buildings that link the community to its past is vital in distinguishing Greater Downtown from fringe-area developments and in fostering the emotional attachment of the public to Greater Downtown.

Of the 15 single sites and three districts in Greene County listed on the National Register of Historic Places, all but one are in Center City and many of them are in the Greater Downtown area. Therefore, the City should continue to support its ongoing preservation ordinance, education program, and design review. A detailed description of these initiatives is presented in the Historic Preservation element of the *Vision 20/20 Comprehensive Plan*.

Rehabilitation and adaptive re-use of standing structures of special merit is the best way to save them and is also an effective way to create an attractive central urban area. Such buildings and districts usually embody most of the design features promoted by this Plan. Whenever a threat arises to such resources, special effort should be taken by the City to find ways to preserve and maintain them.

#### **9. Improve maintenance and cleanliness.**

As investor confidence and property values return to Greater Downtown, owners and tenants will tend to improve their level of building maintenance. In the meantime, the City should pro-actively heighten its level of maintenance of public streets, alleys, sidewalks, signs, landscaping, and parking areas. The private sector is more likely to spend money on building improvements if there is some commensurate level of public commitment. The Urban Districts Alliance should lead the way in organizing private efforts to upgrade the image and appearance of properties. Programs which might be appropriate include 'Adopt-a-Street' and youth offender cleanup programs.

## Greater Downtown Circulation System Improvements

***Support the Center City development concept with a circulation system that accommodates pedestrians and bicyclists as well as motorists.***

The Center City circulation system needs to provide for a full range of functions - autos, transit, pedestrians and bicyclists - in an interconnected manner that will promote other objectives of diversity, interest, mixture and security.

Transportation should support the overall vision for Center City. The *Center City Plan Element* calls for retaining and improving the qualities of Center City that make it special and different from other parts of Springfield. Center City, and Greater Downtown in particular, will thrive if it is a place where people can interact on a face-to-face basis, where the physical environment is designed at a human scale and evokes the community's heritage, and where specialty shops, clubs, galleries, offices, and cultural activities are intermingled.

These objectives demand urban density, and that density is attainable only if land devoted to the auto is balanced with the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists. (Every driver is a pedestrian at both ends of each trip.)

***The Greater Downtown street system should serve the vital components of the Framework Plan:***

**Circulation Systems for Entertainment and Culture.** One of the major components of the current and future Greater Downtown will be entertainment, cultural events, and conventions or conferences. By extending the walking range of the individual islands of entertainment and linking other complementary uses to the primary entertainment destinations, the duration of stay in Greater Downtown can be extended. The critical mass of available

entertainment options can be enlarged if people perceive them to be easily accessible one from the another. Convention-goers will be more likely to visit the restaurants and shops west of Jefferson Avenue if the walk is well defined, pleasant, interesting, and safe. The linear park proposed along Jordan Creek should be linked to the regional Greenway system.

**Circulation Systems for Offices and Retail Business.** Greater Downtown desires to increase its office employment base and increase the number of specialty retail businesses. In order to keep Greater Downtown attractive to daytime employees, the public realm of streets, parks, and plazas must be safe, active, and well-kept. This will require improvements that mostly serve pedestrians, such as better sidewalks, street crossings, links to parking, and infill development that faces the sidewalk.

**Circulation Systems for Housing.** If housing is to be attracted to Greater Downtown, residents must be able to walk safely and easily to nearby shops, banks, commercial services, attractions, parks, and jobs. In the neighborhoods, sidewalks should be well-maintained along every tree-shaded block and auto traffic should be appropriately calmed for the sake of pedestrians and bicyclists.

**Circulation Systems for Education.** There are nearly 20,000 students on the three university and college campuses located in Center City. Many of the students do not own cars and most rely on hiking or walking to get around. By improving the non-auto connections between the campuses and other destinations, especially Greater Downtown, the number of customers can be increased. Good bicycle routes across Springfield to the campuses can help relieve traffic congestion, save parking costs, and improve the quality of life.

The actions in support of the Greater Downtown circulation system improvements are:

1. Refine the street system so that pedestrians and bicyclists are better accommodated
2. Improve the pedestrian environment throughout Greater Downtown.
3. Strengthen the pedestrian connection between Greater Downtown and the Southwest Missouri State University campus.
4. Link Center City to other parts of the community with bicycle paths and lanes.
5. Improve transit service to and throughout Center City.
6. Work to ensure that the parking system supports the goals of the Revitalization Plan.

**1. Refine the street system so that pedestrians and bicyclists are better accommodated.**

Streets in Greater Downtown should be designed with consideration for all modes of movement, and the design of each should consider how the full width of the right-of-way might be used for the benefit of pedestrians and bicyclists as well as motorists. A good level of auto traffic service should be maintained while greatly enhancing walking, bicycling and the "greening" of streets.

In the past, the emphasis has too often been on moving large numbers of autos through and around Center City and the Greater Downtown, sometimes to the detriment of pedestrians and bicyclists. This approach is best exemplified by University Plaza, which displays an almost totally auto-oriented, suburban pattern. Streets are wide and far apart, blocks are large, and parking dominates the landscape. In comparison, Walnut Street, the SMSU campus, and the Mid-Town Historic District accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists well. Skewing the street system too strongly in favor of the auto tends to reduce the number of pedestrians on the street.

***Thus, the emphasis should be on improving the total quality of circulation, not just the quantity of auto traffic.***

**Desirable Street Characteristics**

The Greater Downtown street system should be designed to optimize the following criteria:

- Convenient access to and across Greater Downtown and especially to the Park Central Square area
- Substantially calmed auto traffic

Greater friendliness to pedestrians and bicycle traffic

A greater orientation to pedestrian-oriented retail business

- Maximized on-street parking
- Attractive and convenient transit

The street system should incorporate, as much as possible, the following features:

- **Simple, Easy To Understand, Traffic System:** Two-way streets are easier to use and they support pedestrian-oriented

retail development better than one-way streets. They also allow for easier parallel parking and pedestrian movements from one side of the street to the other. All streets, generally, should be two-way.

- **Minimized Street Widths:** Wider traffic lanes and streets encourage speeding. Narrower streets are more pedestrian-friendly. Minimize the widths of traffic lanes and streets,
- **Maximized On-Street Parking:** On-street parking aids retailers and buffers sidewalk pedestrians from street traffic. Wherever feasible, on-street parking should be provided.
- **Maximized Sidewalk Width:** Wider sidewalks are more pedestrian-friendly and provide space for street trees, street furniture, and seating. Bump-outs at intersections help pedestrians safely cross busy streets and provide more space for street trees, landscaping, and street furniture..
- **Bicycle Routes:** Bicycle routes should be implemented on selected streets, according to a city-wide plan. Removing on-street parking to provide lanes is usually not an acceptable option. Alternatively, auto lanes can sometimes be restriped to provide for a combination parking and bicycling lane, 14 to 16 feet in width, which is acceptable.
- **Unified, Simple Sign System:** Too many signs can be confusing and clutter up the streetscape. Minimize and unify signs.

### Specific, Recommended Street System Improvements

Several specific street system improvements are proposed to help accomplish the objectives outlined above. Refer to Figure 21, on Page 3-25, for the proposed circulation system and Figure 23, page 3-25, for an illustration of the recommended Framework Plan. Before any of the recommended circulation improvements are

initiated, a traffic impact analysis should be conducted to assess, in detail, all traffic impacts and to refine the improvements presented here.

- **Two-Way Streets:** Make all streets in and around the Park Central Square two-way and eliminate the diverters near Market Avenue and Jefferson Avenue.
- **Park Central Square Loop:** Re-open St. Louis Street to auto traffic and on-street parking through the core commercial district around Park Central Square. Round off the corners of Park Central Square for better traffic movement through the square and introduce, if possible, some parking into the Square. These changes are intended to improve the access and visibility of shops and offices within this confined space.
- **Designate and Improve an East-West Connection Along College Street, Main Avenue, Water Street, and East Trafficway:** Improve the corridor of these four roadways in order to provide east-west continuity for pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

The streets in the heart of the business district should be designed to provide local access, internal circulation, and on-street parking, not channel external traffic through the district. The new alignment is more appropriate for east-west through traffic, since East Trafficway has a direct connection with Chestnut Expressway at its east end (see Figure 13, Area Roadway System, on Page 3-7), whereas St. Louis Street terminates at Glenstone.

Also, providing east-west circulation alternatives will permit the opening up of the "tuning forks," will optimize traffic circulation, and will help calm traffic in the core area. A traffic impact analysis should be conducted during preliminary design.

**2. Improve the pedestrian environment throughout Greater Downtown.**

Enhance the pedestrian linkages Park Central Square, University Plaza, Walnut Street, and SMSU through a series of incremental improvements along the streets and sidewalks including better landscaping, lighting, and signs and new, possibly wider, sidewalks. These pedestrian-oriented improvements create new public outdoor spaces and encourage buildings with a more pedestrian-friendly relationship to the street,

**3. Strengthen the pedestrian connection between Park Central Square and the Southwest Missouri State University campus.**

The Park Central Square area and the Southwest Missouri State University campus are growing together, producing mutually beneficial effects. Park Central Square provides office space for university-related functions and entertainment outlets for its student body. These activities add to the critical commercial mass necessary to sustain Greater Downtown.

Walnut Street has emerged as a link between Park Central Square and SMSU, but the connection is tenuous and would benefit from reinforcement. Bed-and-breakfast inns, restaurants, small taverns, and art galleries have sprung up in the fine old houses of this historic district under the umbrella of zoning that encourages adaptive re-use. Walnut Street now provides an interesting atmosphere and nightlife although a few gaps in the corridor exist west of John Q. Hammons Parkway, The University has been slowly expanding its campus toward the commercial core with Downtown Hall and Alumni Center located at McDaniel Street and Jefferson Avenue.

The City and the University should work to increase the pedestrian traffic between the campus and Park Central Square. To that end, one of these two alternatives should be pursued.

**A. Streetscape Improvements:** Improve the sidewalks and add street trees and pedestrian-scale lighting along the length of Walnut Street as well as portions of Elm Street and Jefferson and Kimbrough Avenues. At the same time, promote new mid-rise and mixed-use buildings along those streets where there are now parking lots or open land.

**B. Diagonal Pedestrian Way:** Create a diagonal pedestrian way, bracketed by new mixed-use buildings, extending from the intersections of Jefferson Avenue/Walnut Street to Elm Street/Kimbrough Avenue. This would complement SMSU's plans to create a diagonal connection from the Elm Street/Kimbrough Avenue to Cherry Street/Holland Avenue intersections. This alternative would involve redevelopment of property south of Walnut Street under a publicly-guided plan.

Alternative A has the benefit of keeping the pedestrian life along the streets and would be less costly than Alternative B. However, Alternative B would provide a more direct connection and could result in a unique public space.

**4. Link Greater Downtown to other parts of the community with bicycle routes and lanes**

Link Greater Downtown to the regional greenway system via linear public open spaces and trails through the Jordan Creek Greenway.

Gradually, implement the city-wide system of on-street bicycle lanes and signed bicycle routes, as envisioned in the Bicycle Element of the *Vision 20/20 Transportation Plan Element*. Major activity centers, such as Greater Downtown, should be a focus for these improvements because of their high number of origins and destinations and because bicycle traffic can reduce auto parking demand.

## 5. Improve transit service to and throughout Greater Downtown

Work to ensure that transit access to Greater Downtown and other parts of Center City remains strong. Maintain the good appearance and the perception of safety at the Greater Downtown transit hub and its immediate vicinity. Means of accomplishing these objectives include:

- Increased day and night pedestrian activity resulting from commercial, residential, and recreational developments
- Streetscape enhancements, such as trees and pedestrian-scale lighting
- Improvements to building facades along the streets

Provide attractive and substantial transit shelters at major origins and destinations throughout Greater Downtown, such as at the University Plaza Holiday Inn, the proposed exposition center, SMSU, and other destinations throughout Center City, such as Commercial Street, Government Plaza, Drury College, the campus of the Assemblies of God Church, and Cox Medical Center North.

Finally, the feasibility should be studied of improving bus service among the various Center City districts and neighborhoods.

## 6. Work to ensure that the parking system supports the goals of the *Center City Plan Element*

The planning and design of the parking system is a crucial element of the *Center City Plan Element*, because of the vast amount of land that parking consumes, the appearance it sometimes presents, and the capital cost involved. The parking system should not serve just the narrow objective of storing as many cars as possible at the lowest cost and greatest convenience to the motorist. Rather, parking should work to help make Center City, and Greater Downtown in particular, an

interesting and interrelated mixture of specialty activities within a pedestrian-friendly environment.

The quantity of parking is not the problem, rather it is location, pricing, awareness and personal security that are the concerns. There is inadequate directional signage pointing the users to available public parking and the number of one-way streets limits the access to the parking. There are a combination of public and private lots, some restricted for individual businesses, and others open to all customers. Individual lots are poorly signed, further confusing the customer.

### Parking Management Plan

A parking management plan, supported by the Urban Districts Alliance, should be prepared to address these problems. The parking management plan should:

- Promote **shared parking** for public and private uses.
- Find solutions involving **cooperation** between the City and private interests.
- Ensure that parking **serves multiple destinations** and is open to many users, or the general public. This will help ensure maximum use of available parking, minimize the investment of land and capital, and make it easier and more understandable for occasional Greater Downtown users.
- Encourage use of public parking through readable and commonly accepted **identification and entrance signs**, such as the large letter "P" in a circle, and attractive and safe pedestrian routes to and from those locations.
- **Minimize single-user parking** located adjacent to the destination building.

- **Design parking** in a manner consistent with the building and streetscape principles of the *Center City Plan Element*.
- **Design the street frontage of any parking lot or structure** so that it is interesting to the pedestrian.
- Incorporate into the front of any parking structure small **retail stores with doors and windows onto the street**.
- **Use high quality materials for the facades of parking structures**, similar to the facades of office or retail buildings.
- Plant dense **hedges and/or trees**, or install ornamental **screens or railings**, along the street edges of surface parking lots.
- Use lighting, glass, and security devices to promote **safety in parking structures**.
- Provide **well marked and safe pedestrian routes** between parking and destinations.
- Develop a program to **coordinate operational issues** such as time limits, fees, loading zones, and signs.
- **Maximize on-street parking**. Continue to assume that all streets in Greater Downtown are candidates for on-street parking except for the arterial streets. On-street parking has several benefits:
  - - It adds to the supply of parking and improves the perception that there is ample parking available
  - - It supports retail activity by providing convenient, short-term parking
  - - It helps improve the pedestrian environment by buffering pedestrians from auto traffic.

## Public Open Space Improvements for Greater Downtown

### **Create interesting and attractive public spaces scaled to the pedestrian.**

Attractive public open spaces are vital to a successful urban center because they attract and focus private investment, soften the effects of urban density, improve appearances and provide recreation and relaxation space. Communities across the United States have leveraged their natural, historic, and park resources as major components in successful downtown revitalization campaigns.

Springfield has the resources of Jordan Creek and Park Central Square upon which to build. This community was born at the springs that flowed to Jordan Creek on the edge of the present-day Greater Downtown, and Founders' Park commemorates that birthplace. Although Jordan Creek through Greater Downtown is now buried under industrial streets, vestiges of it remain to the east and west. This stream and its role in the community's history may support new life for Greater Downtown in Springfield's second century.

The Greater Downtown was built around a public space, Park Central Square, that has functioned as market place, parking lot, and park during its long lifetime. The strong orientation of major office and retail buildings toward Park Central Square is a testament to the magnetic power of such spaces and their value as economic catalysts and public investments.

The *Vision 20/20* Vision Statement for Parks, Open Space and Greenways guides the open space improvements described below:

*Center City open space will feature the Jordan Creek Greenway. The creek will be restored, providing water features, shops, restaurants, inns and entertainment along the dear, gentle Ozark stream. It will be a focal point for the area with wide open pools, riffle areas and waterfall that*

*plunges underground. A winter park that includes ice skating and other activities will be established, possibly in one of the existing parks. The quarries will be reclaimed for uses such as outdoor theaters or teen entertainment centers. Small, unexpected pocket parks with a special appeal, whether it be historical, such as Founder's Park, or beautiful, such as Jubilee Park, will augment Center City open space.*

### **Actions for Greater Downtown Public Open Space:**

The actions recommended for public open space improvements in Greater Downtown are:

1. Create a major new park in the Jordan Creek valley and link it to the greenway system.
2. Improve the water quality and edge treatments of Jordan Creek.
3. Maintain and improve Park Central Square in conjunction with traffic flow improvements through the square and its adjacent streets.

### **1. Create a major new park in the Jordan Creek valley and link it to the greenway system.**

The idea for a 'Civic Park' originated early in the *Vision 20/20* planning process with members of the Parks, Open Space, and Greenways Focus Group. A need was identified for a centrally-located space of at least 200 acres that could:

- Function as a gathering and ceremonial space for the entire community

- Provide passive recreation, such as picnicking
- Provide some active recreation, such as swimming or ice skating
- Contain unique, one-of-a-kind facilities for outdoor concerts or plays
- Include quiet wooded areas and/or flower gardens
- Allow space for features such as a farmers' market
- Contain trails for walking and bicycling, with a linkage to the greenway system.
- Provide space for civic facilities

At the same time, interest arose for creating a metropolitan-wide greenway system — linear open spaces with bicycling and walking trails along the creeks and rivers. Jordan Creek became a greenway candidate, and the intriguing possibility was discussed of bringing that creek back to the surface.

Jordan Creek is related to the genesis of Springfield but is greatly diminished as a physical feature through most of Center City. East of Main Avenue, through the manufacturing and warehousing district, it is channeled underground. Whether or not Jordan Creek could be 'daylighted' between Main and National Avenues may depend on the redevelopment potential of the adjacent properties.

In 1996, talks were initiated between private and public interests about building a new facility for conventions, trade shows, and conferences in the Greater Downtown near University Plaza. A site along the north side of St. Louis Street was proposed. The concept of creating a public park or open space north of East Trafficway as a related amenity and neighborhood improvement was also discussed. Thus, Civic Park became a catalyst for new private investments including the exposition center and potential other civic facilities in or near Civic Park.

### Civic Park Concept Plan

The Greater Downtown Framework Plan, Figure 23, on Page 3-25, proposes a Civic Park north of East Trafficway along with the re-opened Jordan Creek, a pond, and a water link to the flooded quarry near National Avenue. Figure 33, Civic Park Concept Sketch, on Page 3-49, illustrates the location and possible features of the park.

In the spirit of *Community As A Park*, Civic Park will integrate and link existing and future amenities in the Greater Downtown with a focal point or community gathering place in the heart of the community. It will be a park for everyone to share and enjoy and it should promote a sense of community and provide a unique place and clear identity for the Springfield area.

Obviously, creating the Civic Park would involve property redevelopment and great public expense. Therefore, it is a difficult long-term objective, but it may appear more feasible as the years go by. However, Civic Park is an idea whose time has come. The benefits of Civic Park would be to:

- Help focus community interest and attention on Greater Downtown and strengthen the Greater Downtown's role in the larger Springfield-Greene County community.
- Provide a desired central park and gathering space.
- Bring a much-needed natural element to the Greater Downtown and provide a place for relaxation and respite for Greater Downtown workers.
- Provide an interesting and attractive green urban space for visitors and residents alike.
- Act as a catalyst and focus for new Greater Downtown developments, particularly if the design for the park incorporates ideas for related residential, office, or commercial investments.



- Complement and support the proposed exposition and convention center.
- Reinforce East Trafficway as a "signature street."
- Provide additional needed park and open space for the central neighborhoods.
- Help improve water quality in Jordan Creek, regulate surface water flow and initiate remediation of potential soil contamination along the creek.
- Potentially, utilize the lake created by the quarry near National Avenue as a visual amenity.

## 2. Improve the water quality and edge treatment of Jordan Creek

The *Vision 20/20 Parks, Open Space, and Greenways Plan* calls for linear public open space and trails along several of the streams that serve Springfield, including Jordan Creek. The Civic Park open space would be a magnificent addition to the community and would take on even greater significance if it were linked to downstream enhancements that ran all the way into Fassnigh and Wilsons Creeks.

Jordan Creek's edges and watershed should be carefully designed and managed for improving the water quality through nitrification and settling, species growth, and beauty. Edge treatments could include a combination of either natural forms and plantings or urban treatments, depending on space availability and intended use. Ensuring that there is an adequate supply of relatively clean water for Jordan Creek, since it will be a recreational amenity, will involve better management of its entire watershed, including greater use of natural conveyance and pre-treatment techniques such as surface drainage swales and basins. (The *Fulbright Spring Protection Study*, 1994, described many of these methods.)

## 3 Maintain and Improve Park Central Square in conjunction with traffic flow improvements through the square and its adjacent streets

Park Central Square should continue to be an important civic space for Springfield and a focal point for Greater Downtown developments. This park is centrally located, several prominent buildings face onto it, and it has strong emotional appeal because of its historic function as a market and gathering place. A Greater Downtown public square is a feature that graces many Midwestern towns and is utilized as a ceremonial space, a symbol of the community, and an arrival point.

However, there is an economic need to improve the exposure of storefronts and office buildings that face Park Central Square, and the best way to do that is to channel more auto traffic through the Square. This may be accomplished by removing the 'tuning fork' traffic diverters at the east and west ends and by rounding the corners of the traffic circle around Park Central Square.

## 4. Commercial Street District

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The Commercial Street Historic District is located on the northern edge of Center City. It includes the face blocks of Commercial Street between Lyons Avenue on the west and Washington Avenue on the east. The Commercial Street Historic District was established in 1978 for the dual purpose of preserving the historic building stock of the area and stimulating the revitalization of the area.

### COMMERCIAL STREET DISTRICT INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Figure 34, on Page 4-3, illustrates the existing conditions and the key forces and issues for the Commercial Street District. Commercial Street has a long and colorful history. The area was settled in 1853 as a result of the railroad alignment that was located 1.3 miles north of Park Central Square in Springfield. The area was platted as North Springfield in 1869 by the Ozark Land Company, a subsidiary of the railroad company. By the late 1870's, a thriving business district had developed along Commerce Street, immediately adjacent to the depot and the railroad alignment. The area also became more interdependent with Springfield due in large part to a new streetcar line that connected the two cities. A railroad merger in 1878 led to the closure of the North Springfield depot in preference to the Springfield depot located near the Park Central Square. The growth and interdependence of the two communities led to their merger in 1887.

Commercial Street remained a thriving business district until after World War II. The suburbanization of the area, the resultant decline of the surrounding neighborhoods, and the advent of shopping center

competition are all factors that led to a decline in the importance of the Commercial Street business district.

The revitalization of Commercial Street has been studied since the 1960's. There were at least seven separate planning studies between 1964 and 1984 addressing various approaches to the area's renewal. It is perhaps fortuitous that a 1969 designation of Commercial Street as a federal urban renewal area, and its proposal to redevelop the area like a suburban shopping center, was never implemented. From today's perspective, the impetus behind the historic district designation in 1978, while not yet fully realized, was still the most foresighted of the planning efforts.

### Commercial Street Existing Land Use and Development

According to a 1979 market study, there was approximately 230,000 square feet of building space within the boundaries of the historic district when it was established. Due to demolitions and the lack of new construction, there is an estimated 200,000 square feet today. Although the area has been declining, in terms of its retail importance, since the late 1940's, there was still a fairly large mix of shoppers goods establishments in 1979. In total, there was approximately 120,000 square feet of general merchandise, apparel, furniture and accessories store space in 1979. The overall retail mix included primarily discount merchants oriented towards low and moderate income shoppers living in the inner city area, including larger stores such as Anthony's and Woolworth's. Due to the low rents and declining demand for first level retail space, there

were also an increasing proportion of service and light industrial users moving into the area.

Since that time, space for these primary shoppers goods categories has further declined to its current total of 10,000 square feet in 3 stores, Rathbone Hardware, Rebori's Shoes, and Davis Appliances. (Since this inventory was completed, Rebori's Shoes has also closed.) These businesses have been on Commercial Street for at least 20 years, and in the case of Rathbone Hardware, for 100 years. The predominant retail grouping is now miscellaneous shoppers goods, primarily antiques and collectibles, pawn shops and used clothing. These businesses are mostly lower-rent businesses that move in when the demand for space declines. A total of 19 of 23 retail businesses are in these categories.

There are also a handful of bars and cafes, many of which have been in business for more than 40 years. The existing businesses are grouped by category in Table 3.

**Table 3  
Commercial Street District  
Retail Space by Type**

	Number	Percent	Percent
<u>Shoppers Goods</u>	2	9%	7%
Apparel & Shoes	2	9%	7%
Hardware	1	4%	3%
Appliance	1	4%	3%
Misc. Shoppers Goods			
Antiques & Collectibles	9	39%	31%
Books	2	9%	7%
Music	1	4%	3%
Pawn & Used Clothing	4	17%	14%
Other Misc	3	13%	10%
Subtotal	23	100%	79%
Eating & Drinking			
Bars	4	67%	13%
Restaurants	2	33%	7%
Subtotal	6	100%	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>		<b>100%</b>

In total, retail businesses comprise only 39 percent of the total businesses. There is a mix of personal, business, professional, and social services totaling 19 businesses. Contractors, warehouse and storage, auto related repair, and other wholesale uses now comprise a significant portion of the overall space as shown on Table 4. In total, non-retail businesses now are the majority with 45 of the total 74 businesses. These uses are especially concentrated on the western end of the district.

**Table 4  
Commercial Street District Non-Retail Space By Type**

	Number	% Subtotal	% Total
<u>Cultural/Entertain/Recreation</u>	4	100%	9%
<u>Personal Services</u>			
Barber/Beauty	2	25%	4%
Photography (Personal)	1	13%	2%
Repair Service	3	38%	7%
Miscellaneous	2	25%	4%
Subtotal	8	100%	18%
<u>Business Services</u>			
Printers	1	33%	2%
Miscellaneous	2	67%	5%
Subtotal	3	100%	7%
<u>Professional Services</u>	3	100%	7%
<u>Membership Organizations</u>	4	100%	11%
<u>Social Services</u>	5	100%	12%
<u>Auto-Related</u>	4	100%	9%
<u>Industrial</u>			
Manufacturing	2	14%	4%
Contractor/Trades	4	29%	9%
Wholesale Warehouse	7	43%	13%
Storage	2	14%	4%
Subtotal	12	100%	31%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>		<b>100%</b>



The most visible and dominant uses in the area are the social service businesses, the Kitchen (Fresh Start Program) and the Victory Mission. The Victory Mission has been located on Commercial Street since 1976. The Kitchen and the associated Missouri Hotel opened in 1983.

The most notable development trend is the more recent addition of residential uses in the commercial building stock. There are several loft-type apartments on the second floors above retail businesses, including a residence over Dr. Tickle, at 216 West Commercial Street, and the residence over the Class Act Flea Market, at 224 West Commercial Street. A local private developer is currently renovating three buildings on the 200 East Commercial Street block, with first level retail and a total of 10 lofts on the second and third floors. The Rebori shoe store building recently sold and loft units are planned for the building at 214 West Commercial Street. There are 17 efficiency apartments located on the upper floors of 306 West Commercial Street as well. In total, there are an estimated 25-30 apartments or lofts in the District.

## **Business Conditions**

As the overall demand for retail space has declined, rents and building values have also declined.. With rents, and commensurate building values at an all time low, the influx of lower value uses is explainable. Reflective of the relatively low sales levels, most businesses are independent entrepreneurial enterprises with very few employees. Six of 21 businesses completing merchant surveys had zero employees, and another six have 1-2 employees.

Most businesses in the district serve a city-wide trade area. In particular, the collection of antiques and collectibles stores attract residents from the greater Springfield area interested in comparison shopping for these items. For the remaining retail businesses, there is a lack of a critical mass of similar businesses in any one category. There is therefore, little in the way of a cumulative market attraction

for these businesses. They are dependent on generating their own clientele through word of mouth and advertising. The wholesale and service businesses are generally taking advantage of the area's relatively central location to serve the larger Springfield commercial business market. The long-time businesses are primarily relying on established relationships with generations of family customers.

## **Organization**

Commercial Street has an active business organization with their own building and offices located at 299 East Commercial Street. Founded in the 1920's, the Commercial Club provides marketing and advocacy services on behalf of business and property owners located within the Commercial Street Historic District. The most visible event is Frisco Days, which celebrates Commercial Street's railroad heritage. The Commercial Club operates on an annual budget of about \$10,000 with 60 active members.

## **Market Potential**

The Commercial Street Historic District has been slowly evolving from a traditional business district to an area with an eclectic mix of wholesale, retail, and service and residential uses. The traditional shoppers goods retail businesses are declining in number as long-term businesses close when their owners retire. Space is then being taken over by lower-rent uses including the light industrial, warehouse, and storage uses and the lower-rent retail uses including the antique stores and flea markets. Recently, building space has been taken by owner-occupants and developers converting space to residential lofts and apartments. This investment in building renovation represents the greatest opportunity for the continued revitalization of the area.

There have been a number of attempts to define a market niche for Commercial Street in the past. The district's appeal as a business location today is defined more by the availability of inexpensive

buildings and a central location than it is by a distinct market niche. Certainly, the appeal of the historic building stock has risen over the last few years, particularly for specialty retail and residential development.

- The development niche for Commercial Street should continue to be as a historic district with an eclectic mix of antiques, stores, galleries, artist work-live studio spaces, and in-town loft residences.
- The goal should be to replace the industrial and warehouse uses that are inappropriately located in first level retail space with retail or office uses. This will likely only be accomplished through the acquisition and renovation of these properties. The renovation of properties will likely continue to be dominated by owner-users who can purchase buildings either for the renovation of first-level space to house their gallery or restaurant business, or alternately the renovation of second-level spaces as their residences. The visual and social effects of the storefront social service agencies should be minimized, and further congregation of these organizations along Commercial Street should be strongly discouraged.
- The success of independent entrepreneurs will attract investors who begin to see opportunity for the speculative conversion of space for retail, restaurant and residential uses.

## Summary of Commercial Street District Issues and Forces

Refer to Figure 34, on Page 4-3, for illustrations of the Commercial Street District issues and forces.

1. **Need to Redefine Primary Use and Purpose.** The Commercial Street District continues to work through its long evolution as a business district and has not yet fully defined a viable primary market.
2. **Lack of Distinct Theme.** Since the market for this district is not clearly defined, there is also no coordination among the buildings and public improvements designed to appeal to a given market and support the core businesses. The railroad-related history of the Commercial Street businesses offers a special design theme opportunity.
3. **Lack of Clearly Defined Edges or Center.** Businesses and industries line Commercial Street west of Lyon St. and east of Washington St., as well as Pacific St. to the south. Thus, the edges and entries to the district are not clearly defined. In addition, there is no point of arrival or focus. Thus, it is a challenge to define in the minds of the public this district as distinct and special compared to the rest of the corridor.
4. **Uncoordinated Parking System.** Off-street parking is located in a large number of small, individually-owned lots, and there is no coordination regarding whether they are available for use by the general public.
5. **Future Use of Railroad Yards.** The Burlington Northern Railroad tracks occupy a large tract of land just north of the Commercial Street District. If some of this land becomes excess and available for other uses, new opportunities could be created for Commercial Street.

## COMMERCIAL STREET DISTRICT FRAMEWORK PLAN

***Create a vibrant neighborhood within the Commercial Street Historic District with an eclectic mix of commercial and residential activities.***

The Commercial Street Historic District has been slowly evolving from a traditional business district to an area with an eclectic mix of wholesale, industrial, retail, service, and residential uses. The traditional shoppers goods retail businesses are declining in number, as long term businesses close when their owners retire. Space has been taken by alternative uses, including the light industrial, warehouse, and storage uses, and by other retail uses such as antique stores and flea markets. More recently, building space has been taken by owner-occupants and developers who are converting it to residential lofts and apartments. This investment in building renovation represents the greatest opportunity for the continued revitalization of the area.

Commercial Street will likely remain an area of independent businesses for the foreseeable future. However, there is a perception that the overall atmosphere, and the presence of the social service organizations in particular, is an impediment to attracting customers and new businesses from traditional markets. Fortunately, the district will continue to appeal to the segment of the community that includes in-town residents, younger artists, artisans, entrepreneurs, and craftsmen. Commercial Street leaders and business people should capitalize on the unique atmosphere of their district by focusing on markets that may flourish there such as arts, crafts, entertainment and music, ethnic dining, antiques, specialty used clothing, and similar 'bohemian' ventures. Figure 35, Commercial Street District Framework Plan, on Page 4-7, illustrates the key plan recommendations.

### **Actions for Commercial Street District:**

The actions recommended for the Commercial Street District are:

1. Replace the industrial and warehouse activities that are inappropriately located in first-level retail space.
2. Complete the streetscape and gateway program.
3. Address the unintended side-effects of the social service organizations.
4. Create a focal point near the pedestrian bridge.
5. Develop a coordinated program for the parking lots on the south side of the District.
6. Use new developments to fill in gaps in the core area instead of at the fringes.

### **1. Replace the industrial and warehouse activities that are inappropriately located in first-level retail space**

There is an extensive amount of industrial and warehouse uses that are inappropriately located in first level spaces that should be replaced with retail or office uses. This will likely only be accomplished through the acquisition and renovation of these properties. The renovation of properties will probably continue to be dominated by owner-users. This group can purchase buildings either for the renovation of first-level space to house their gallery or restaurant business, or the renovation of second-level space as their residence, or both. The success of independent entrepreneurs will

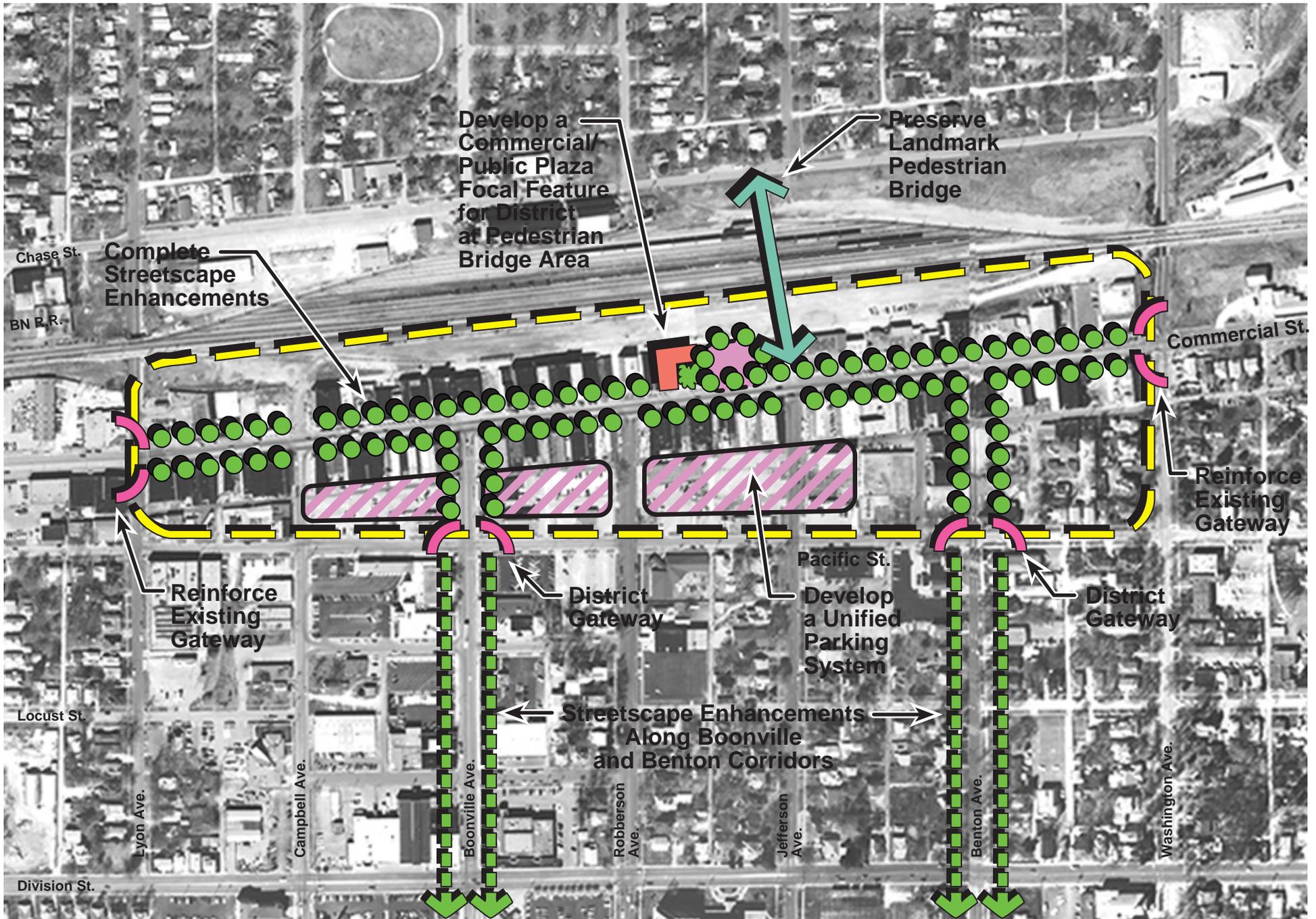


Figure 35  
 Framework Plan  
 Commercial Street District

May 1998



attract investors who see opportunities for the conversion of space for retail, restaurant, and residential uses,

## 2. Complete the streetscape and gateway program

The historic railroad streetscape theme improvements proposed in the *Commercial Street Historic District Development Plan* and partially built should be completed. The simple, but complementary, tree planting, bench and lighting schemes, and parking and gateway treatments can improve the environment for the active building renovation and loft developments underway. These improvements are currently being developed incrementally using annual federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the City. Gateways should be completed at the east and west ends of the District and along the Boonville and Benton Avenues access routes from the south,

## 3. Address the unintended side-effects of the social service organizations

The marketplace has the ability to address incompatible uses in the area, with the exception of the social service organizations. As the demand for buildings increases, space occupied by lower-rent wholesale and storage uses will decline and be replaced by higher-value uses. But it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the marketplace to displace the social service organizations, which own their own properties and have few options for relocation.

From the perspective of the Commercial Street property owners and businesses, addressing the impacts of these social service organizations on their properties is a legitimate priority. The fact that these facilities negatively impact the area needs to be acknowledged by the City in order that short- and long-term solutions can be found. At a minimum, no additional social service facilities should be located in the Commercial Street District.

## 4. Create a focal point near the pedestrian bridge

Centrally located in the District, along the north side of Commercial Street, adjacent to the pedestrian bridge, is an underutilized parking lot. This space could become several shops, possibly including a restaurant, facing onto a public plaza with an ornamental focal feature such as a gazebo or a fountain. That investment should be viewed as a long-term opportunity, since there is presently quite a bit of underutilized or vacant commercial space. A recommended short-term improvement is to landscape this parking area so it can also be used as a gathering place for festivals and a potential farmers' market. Building a focal point would help define the space.

## 5. Develop a coordinated program for the parking lots on the south side of the District

There are several individually controlled parking lots behind the buildings that line the south side of Commercial Street. The whole District would benefit if an arrangement could be worked out whereby that parking could be shared among patrons of any of the businesses, and if that were communicated through signage. Shared parking could be achieved through either private or public ownership of the lots.

## 6. Use new developments to fill in gaps in the core area instead of at the fringes

Priority in locating new developments should be given to the vacant lots or deteriorated building sites in the core area of the District, such as the underutilized site next to the pedestrian bridge. Incentives or other strategies should be used to discourage developments at the fringes of the District.

## 5. Government Plaza District

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The Government Plaza District contains many of the City and County government buildings and facilities. The location of the Government Plaza District - halfway between Commercial Street and Greater Downtown — was selected as a compromise location by the two original towns — Springfield, which originated around the Park Central Square, and North Springfield, which was located around Commercial Street.

### GOVERNMENT PLAZA DISTRICT INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

#### Government Plaza District Existing Land Use and Development

The Government Plaza District has evolved into a major complex of government and institutional facilities.

Figure 36, on Page 5-3, illustrates the pattern of roads and traffic circulation and summarizing the major issues and forces for the Government Plaza District.

The Government Plaza District is centered along Central Street and includes:

Old Springfield City Hall  
The Donald G. Busch Municipal Building • The Springfield Police headquarters  
The City Utilities office building

- The Greene County Courthouse and Office Building
- Greene County Jail
- Greene County Judicial Facility
- Greene County Juvenile Court Building
- The City-County Health Department
- The City-County Library
- Central High School
- Springfield School Board offices
- *Vision 20/20* building

Directly west of the Government Plaza District is the Drury College campus and further east the Ozarks Technical Community College. Although these two colleges are not directly a part of Government Plaza District, they do contribute to the civic/educational character and image of the area.

Old City Hall was located on this site as a political compromise when Springfield and North Springfield merged over 100 years ago. Since that time, the District has grown into a sizable complex of government buildings and support services.

#### Traffic Circulation

The primary access to the Government Plaza District is provided by Chestnut Expressway, which runs along the southern edge and provides at-grade intersections every block. The primary intersecting north-south roadways are Boonville and Benton Avenues. On the eastern edge of Center City, National Avenue provides access to Central Street.

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## Summary of Government Plaza District Issues and Forces

1. **Lack of Cohesion, Identity, and Ceremonial Focus, The** arrangement of buildings and open spaces does not focus views or activities toward the prominent public buildings such as the old City Hall. Major public buildings face in different directions, their main entrances are sometimes difficult to identify, and there are no broad lawns across which one can view inspiring civic architecture. Busy streets separate public buildings and divide the area, making pedestrian movement among the buildings difficult.

There is no gathering space for civic ceremonies and celebrations. The building architecture and arrangement do not define the various roles and relationships of city, county, school, or college, nor their administrative, judicial, protective or educational missions. The closest thing to a unifying element is a collection of uncoordinated, minimally landscaped parking lots.

In addition, there is little physical definition of the edges of this district and no sense of gateways or entrances. None of the perimeter streets point the way to the major public building. On the south side, the district is bordered by the Chestnut Expressway, which is completely without landscaping or any special features or treatments.

In contrast to this, would be the classic Midwestern courthouse and office building set along Main Street in the middle of a block surrounded by a lawn and the storefronts of businesses. A City Beautiful style design done in the 1920's proposed a grand plan for a City and County campus complete with fountains, but it was never implemented. The sum of these shortcomings is reduced public appreciation and respect for the roles of local government and a lost opportunity to create an attractive civic center.

**Inconsistent Streetscape Design.** Central Street provides an opportunity to link all of the Government Plaza functions except for the County facilities, which are north along Boonville Avenue. Presently, however, there are no landscaping, special lighting or any other public improvements along Central Street supportive of that aim. Moreover, the design and placement of the buildings along the street is very inconsistent. Along Central Street are: a secondary entrance to the Donald G. Busch Municipal Building; the beautiful, classic County Courthouse; a blank side-wall of the City Utilities building; the lawn, steps, and columns of the Public Library; several one-story commercial buildings; a former church; a gas station; and the shady campus of Drury College.

Boonville Avenue also lacks public and private Streetscape enhancements. The County public works garage is a function that clearly should be located elsewhere.

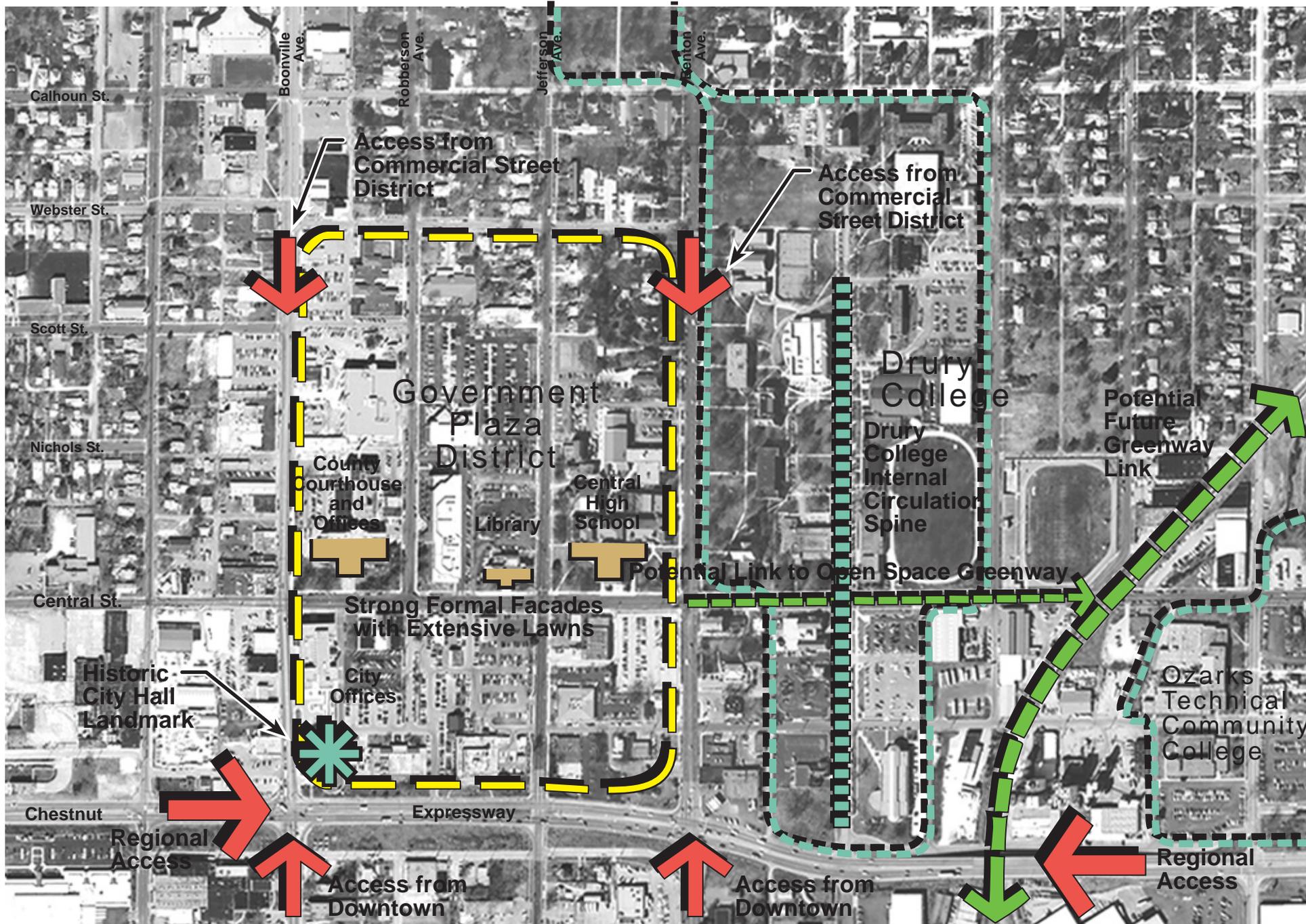


Figure 36  
*Analysis*  
 Government Plaza District

May 1998



0 200 400 600 Feet



Springfield Center City  
 Plan Element

## GOVERNMENT PLAZA DISTRICT FRAMEWORK PLAN

### Improve the perception of the Government Plaza District as the honored hub of civic life in Springfield.

The Government Plaza District is the focus of official civic functions and activities from paying utility bills to participating in City and County public meetings and gatherings. The District includes most of the community's large public buildings and facilities and it has great symbolic significance as the center and seat of the region's government. The image and appearance of the Government Plaza District needs to be improved to reflect its significance as the civic focus.

#### Actions for the Government Plaza District:

The actions recommended to achieve the Government Plaza District objective are:

1. Prepare and implement a District Master Plan that will help convey a civic theme through land use planning, site planning, and public improvements along the streets of the District.
2. Plan locations for and cluster government and institutional buildings along and near Central Street.
3. Prepare and follow guidelines for building architecture and site planning.

4. Install special landscaping and lighting along Central Street to complement the civic and institutional architecture and to emphasize the importance of the corridor
5. Create an outdoor space for ceremonies and community gatherings that may also serve as an attractive forecourt for a major building or buildings.

Figure 37, Government Plaza Framework Plan, on Page 5-5, illustrates the key plan recommendations.

#### 1. Prepare and follow a district master plan that will help convey a civic theme through land use planning, site planning, architecture and public improvements along the streets of the district

The best way to bring long-term coherence to the public and private investments that may be made within the Government Plaza District would be to prepare a plan upon which the City, the County, the City Utilities, the Library Board, and the School District agree. This plan should provide principles that may be applied to changing development needs over the decades. It should address land use, architecture, site planning, open space and plazas, and Central Street landscaping and lighting. One of the products should be an aerial perspective drawing to summarize the vision and remind leaders and citizens of the plan and its benefits.

#### 2. Plan locations for and cluster government and institutional buildings along and near Central Street

The Government Plaza District, particularly the Central Street corridor, should be developed predominately with buildings for the local government, education and other public services. Commercial

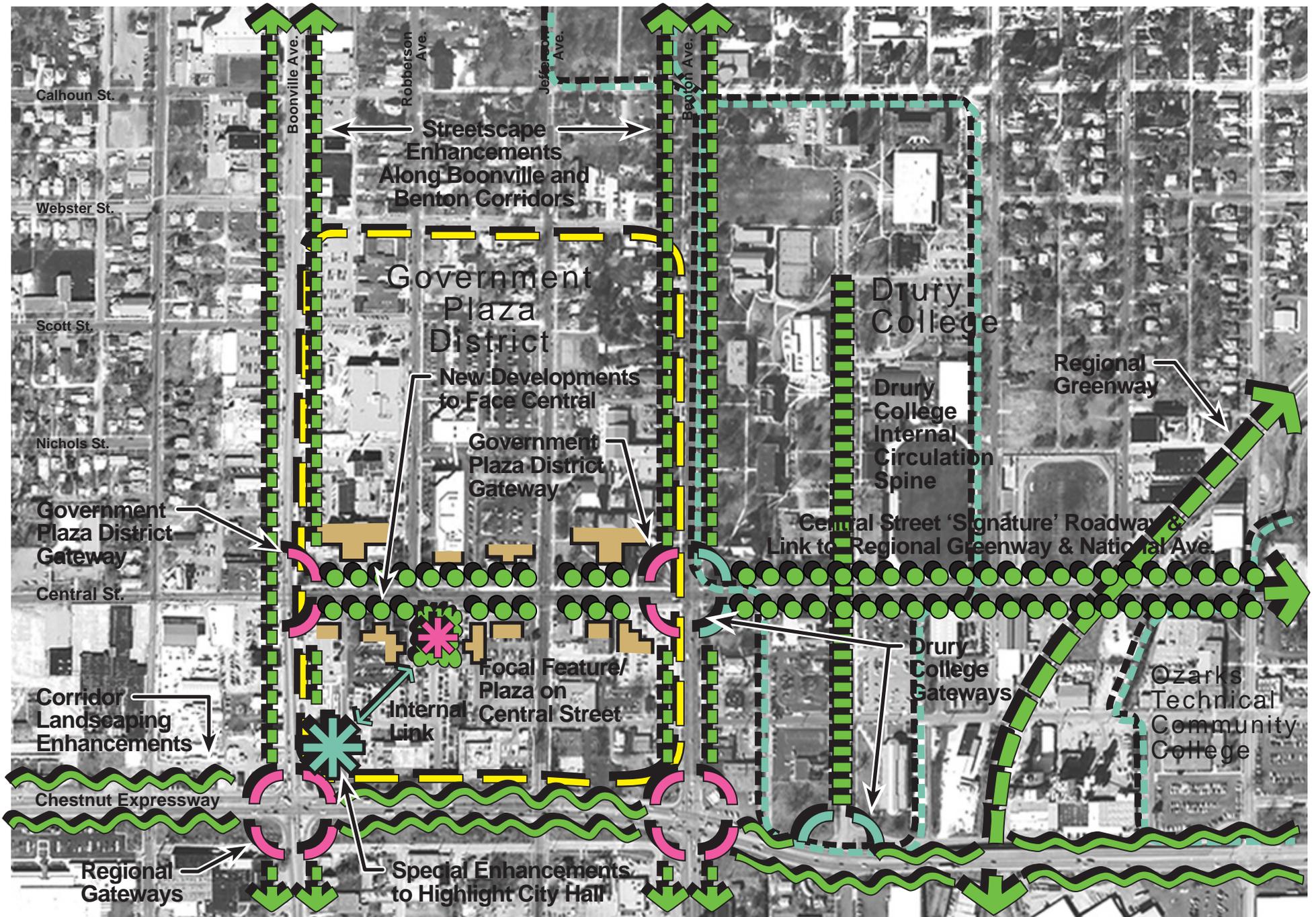


Figure 37  
 Framework Plan  
 Government Plaza District

May 1998



0 200 400 600 Feet

buildings should be secondary and supportive only. The master plan should provide direction regarding how buildings from the various units of government should be clustered for functional efficiency and identification. Underutilized spaces along Central Street should be redeveloped and vacant parcels filled in, so that there is a continuous frontage of prominent facades and ceremonial (if not functional) entrances along this street. Ideally, the City, the County, the City Utilities, the Library Board, and the School District should each prepare an estimate of long-term building needs and requirements to guide the master plan.

**3. Prepare and follow principles for building architecture and site planning**

A major element of the district master plan should be principles for building architecture and site planning. Their aim should be to guide but not overly limit creative expression.

Buildings should be oriented toward major streets (such as Central) rather than to parking lots; design should be recognizable as civic rather than commercial; buildings should have certain degree of awe and inspiration rather than just efficient and functional practicality; there should compatibility in massing and materials, at least within each unit of government or institution.

**4. Enhance major street corridors to complement the civic and institutional architecture and to emphasize the importance of the corridor**

Central Street should be improved to be easily recognizable as a civic space onto itself and the unifying element of the Government Plaza District. Therefore, the master plan should establish a theme for street trees, street lighting, sidewalk design, public art and intersection designs for Central Street. Means should be recommended to emphasize district entrances at Boonville and Benton Avenues.

Boonville and Benton Avenues should also receive special landscaping and lighting treatments. The design of these north-south streetscapes should emphasize the idea that Boonville is a long commercial connector street and Benton is primarily a residential street. By comparison, Central Street should appear to be of greater symbolic importance, should express a civic rather than a commercial or residential nature, and should receive a more generous level of improvements. Also, Central Street should have a special sidewalk treatment to emphasize its significance. Chestnut Expressway, the major access road to this district, should be heavily landscaped, and there should be gateways treatments designed for the intersections at Boonville and Benton Avenues.

Finally, there should be a future pedestrian connection to the planned greenway trails along the Jordan Creek near the point where it crosses Central Street. Also, the Government Plaza District plans should be coordinated with the plans of Drury College and the Ozarks Technical Community College.

**5. Create an outdoor space for ceremonies and community gatherings that may also serve as an attractive forecourt for a major building or buildings**

The Government Plaza District needs a central plaza or ceremonial gathering space. South of Central Street, between City Hall, the Donald G. Busch Municipal Building, the police station and other public buildings, yet to be constructed, there should be an attractive outdoor space intended for ceremonies, gatherings, sitting, and relaxing. Buildings can be oriented around this space, and it can provide vistas to important entrances such as the County Courthouse, the Donald G. Busch Municipal Building or the library. Ideally, this space should abut Central Street about halfway between Boonville and Benton Avenues. There are several older, small buildings with no distinguishing architectural or historic merit in this area that could be removed and the surface parking could be redesigned and reorganized. The Old City Hall should be linked to the plaza visually and functionally.

## 6. Implementation Program

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The Implementation Program specifies the recommended actions to realize the *Center City Plan Element*. While the *Center City Plan Element* has a 20-year time horizon, the Implementation Program is a shorter-term action program outlining the specific steps necessary to begin the implementation of the Plan over the next five years. It includes only those projects that can be accomplished under forecast funding levels. It also includes a large number of planning and design projects as necessary first steps to the implementation of larger capital improvement projects. The Implementation Program should be periodically updated in order to monitor progress, respond to changing conditions, and establish new priorities as components of the Plan are implemented.

Although the *City Center Plan Element* presents a bold new vision of the future role of Center City and its individual districts, the Implementation Program is based on the philosophy established by the 1985 *Downtown Strategy Plan*. The *Downtown Strategy Plan* determined that the City could no longer rely exclusively on publicly funded development projects to redevelop the Greater Downtown area. The implementation philosophy of the 1985 *Downtown Strategy Plan* and the *Vz'szon 20/20 Center City Plan Element* are both based on a more limited role for public investment.

*"The role of the public sector will be to support, not replace private investment decisions. City investments will be based on their ability to leverage and encourage private investment through redevelopment incentives and public improvements."*

This implementation philosophy is consistent with the City of Springfield's use of public incentives and investments for economic development projects and programs outside Center City as well. The City should use its limited financial resources to leverage private development projects that are determined to meet overall economic development objectives. *Vision 20/20* provides a vision for the City's development and growth and states its overall objectives to realize this vision. *Vision 20/20* provides a better framework for evaluating appropriate public improvements and financing investments that stimulate the type of development desired by the City and its citizens. The *Center City Plan Element* provides this same vision and objectives for Center City.

The Implementation Program therefore emphasizes private investment actions and strategies that will help property owners and businesses realize the growth and development objectives included in the Plan. It also includes limited public improvements and financing investments that will help encourage private development and investment consistent with the Plan in the Center City area. The City has already taken action by investing in the Urban Districts Alliance to help Center City property owners and businesses help themselves.

The implementation framework is presented in three separate sections:

1. Organization: The organizational requirements for developing, managing, marketing and promoting the Center City. The

recently incorporated Urban Districts Alliance is expected to fill much of these roles and responsibilities.

2. **Action Plan:** The recommended high priority economic development and public improvement projects and programs to implement real estate and business growth and development opportunities and to improve the quality of community facilities and public spaces. The economic development actions are those to be initiated by the private sector, primarily through the UDA. The public improvement projects are primarily capital investments to be made by the City.
3. **Financing:** A list of financing sources and strategies to provide public and private revenues to help implement the *Center City Plan Element*.

## ORGANIZATION

This section describes a new organization and organizational plan for managing the development, redevelopment, and marketing the Greater Downtown and Commercial Street Historic Districts.

***The development of a stronger, more active management organization is the single most important implementation action included in the Center City Plan Element.***

The impetus for the plan arose from an International Downtown Association's (IDA) Resource Team visit in 1994. The IDA panel offered several recommendations for improving Springfield's Center City, including the formation of a viable public/private partnership organization to provide unified leadership and leverage community resources. As part of BRW's team preparing the *Center City Market Study*, Progressive Urban Management Associates (PUMA) was hired to evaluate existing management and marketing efforts within the Center City and to recommend an organizational structure to implement the *Center City Plan Element*, PUMA's analysis and recommendations were contained in the *Center City Springfield Organizational Development Plan, June 1996*.

The proposed organizational structure outlined in the *Organizational Development Plan (ODP)* has already been implemented. The sections below describe the new organization and its mission. The recommended work program, budget and staffing from the ODP are also summarized.

### Mission and Objectives

The purpose of the ODP was to create a new private/public organization to mobilize property owners, business owners, and civic leaders to affect positive change in Center City. The plan established the following objectives:

Provide a unified voice for the Center City business community on issues that affect the viability and vitality of Center City.

- Cultivate private sector leadership to guide, in partnership with City government, the future growth and development of Center City.
- Create an inclusive leadership structure and accessible programs to respond to the diversity in Center City's districts.
- Maintain a flexible structure that can evolve to address a variety of Center City challenges and opportunities.
- Establish and manage cost effective services and programs that improve Center City.
- Provide direct accountability to those who pay to support the services and programs of the recommended organizational entity.

PUMA conducted a comprehensive investigation of opportunities and constraints regarding organization and management needs within Center City. Nearly 100 Center City property owners, business owners, office tenants and civic leaders were involved in a series of focus groups to identify existing strengths and weaknesses, and to recommend priorities for new services to improve the Center City area and its business districts. A clear message from the focus groups was that each of the business districts was distinct and unique and had its own marketing organization and orientation.

### Existing Organizations

The existing organizations active within the three districts are:

- **Urban Districts Alliance (UDA).** UDA was formed in 1991 as an umbrella organization with representatives from each of the

historic business districts, the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Springfield. The five-member organization has been actively involved in the *Vision 20/20* process and other Center City revitalization efforts. Although the organization has no budget or staff, it has been successful in developing a unified advocacy voice for business interests within Center City.

- **Downtown Springfield Association (DSA).** DSA is the traditional merchants association serving the Greater Downtown commercial district. DSA focuses on promotions and special events, including the production of annual Christmas and St. Patrick's Day parades that attract visitors from throughout the region. DSA has a membership of 125 businesses with an estimated annual budget of \$20,000.
- **The Commercial Club of Springfield.** Founded in the 1920's, the Commercial Club provides marketing and advocacy services on behalf of business and property owners located within the Commercial Street Historic District. The most visible event is Frisco Days, which celebrates Commercial Street's railroad heritage. The Commercial Club operates on an annual budget of about \$10,000 with 60 active members.
- **Walnut Street Merchants Association.** The newest of Center City's advocacy and marketing organizations, the Walnut Street Merchant's Association is composed of about two dozen property and business owners from the emerging Walnut Street Historic District.

Although each district is unique, there are common threads or needs that connect Center City districts including the following:

- **Entrepreneurial Spirit.** Each Center City district is being revitalized incrementally, project-by-project, largely by an influx of independent entrepreneurs and property owners.

These entrepreneurs have common business support needs that can be effectively serviced by the new Center City management organization.

- **Community Development.** Each Center City district is challenged to convert vacant and/or underutilized real estate from civic liabilities to assets that present opportunities for attracting new businesses and jobs. New innovative approaches are needed to acquire, renovate, and secure tenants for problem buildings.
- **Marketing and Promotions.** Reflective of the entrepreneurial nature of Center City's new business base, each district is producing a series of events and promotions to attract customers. Lacking central coordination, existing Center City marketing efforts miss opportunities to leverage scarce resources and deliver broader marketing messages.
- **Advocacy and Leadership.** By offering a unified voice and developing new private sector leadership, the management organization has the opportunity to harness a greater share of civic resources and market visibility.

After analyzing the existing organizational capabilities and needs, the ODP recommended that a non-profit community development corporation (CDC) be established to fulfill these common needs and to respect and support the individuality of the separate districts.

### Urban Districts Alliance

The Center City interests quickly acted on the recommendations of the ODP. The existing UDA was expanded and restructured to become the recommended CDC and management organization. Under the CDC organizational umbrella, subsidiary organizations could be created to facilitate specialized programming. The three existing business organizations will remain as organizations to carry out marketing and management activities specific to their districts.

Urban Districts Alliance, Inc., was restructured and incorporated as a 501(c)(6) non-profit community development corporation in 1997. This tax status allows UDA to receive government funding and tax exempt donations from foundations and corporations. It also gives the organization flexibility to engage in marketing activities.

The primary purposes for which UDA is organized are to:

- Provide leadership, programs, and services and redevelopment projects to preserve and strengthen the economic vitality of the Center City, and each of its distinct business districts
- Provide technical business development assistance in cooperation with the Springfield Finance and Development Corporation

The UDA has a 25-member board of directors comprised of property and business owners from the three commercial districts, public agencies/institutions, civic organizations and at-large representatives. There is no membership beyond the board of directors.

Urban Districts Alliance has two subsidiary entities to address its distinct development and marketing functions, the Springfield Finance and Development Corporation and the Springfield Events and Management Division, as described below. A chart illustrating the UDA structure and its relationship to Center City districts is provided in Figure 38, on Page 6-5.

- **Springfield Finance and Development Corporation (SFDC).** The SFDC is a legally separate, for-profit, bank community development corporation. Modeled after existing successful bank CDC's in other communities, SFDC will be governed by the financial institutions and other investors that capitalize the

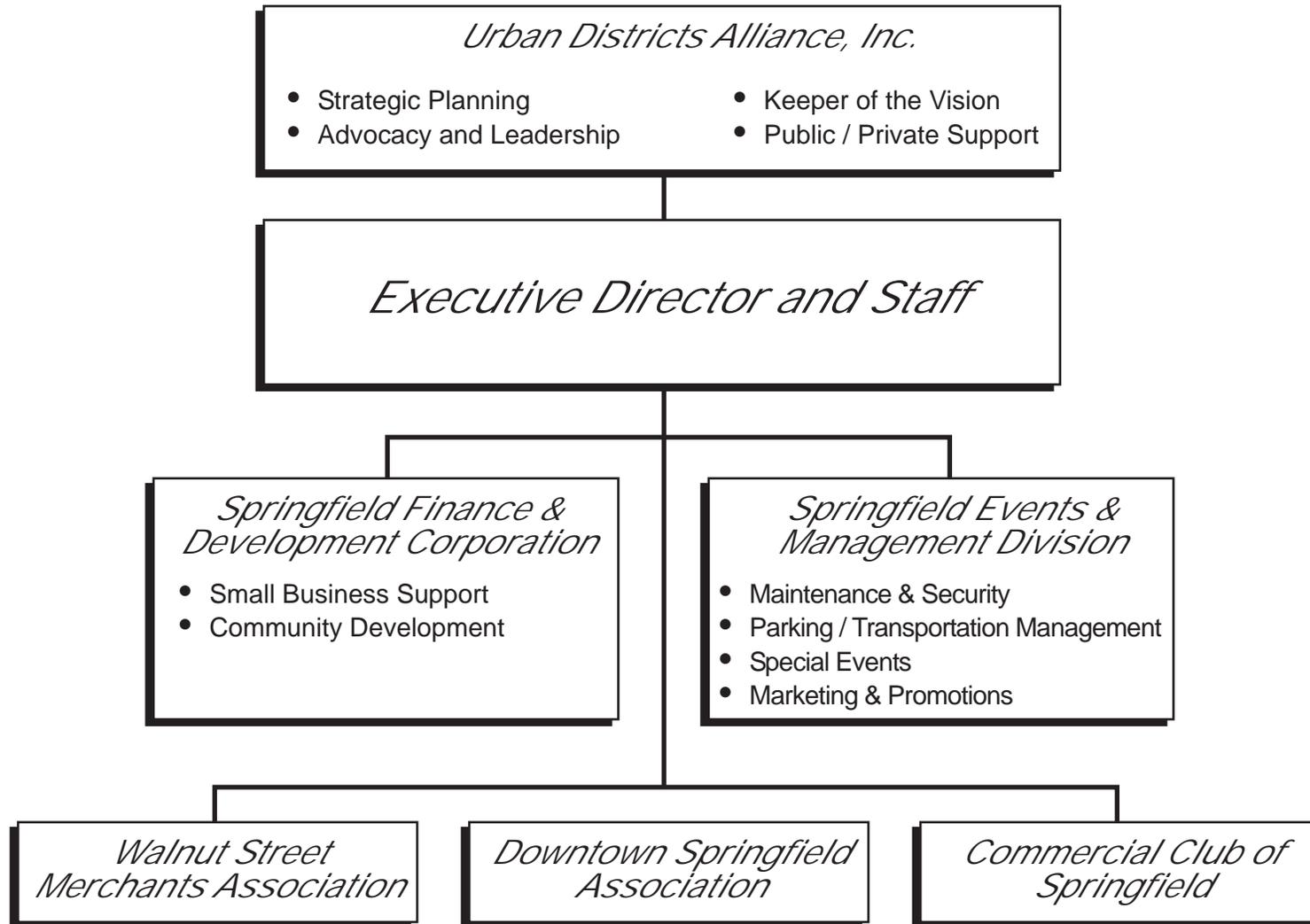


Figure 38

*Urban Districts Alliance  
Organization Chart*

small business financing pool. The SFDC reports to UDA and has a seat on the board of directors, SFDC investors qualify for a 50 percent State tax credit, if funds are kept in the corporation for five years. The SFDC has been initially capitalized by 10 Springfield area financial institutions with \$300,000. These funds will be used to provide small business loans and/or equity to entrepreneurs that cannot obtain conventional bank financing.

- **Springfield Events and Management Division (SEMO).** The SEMD is the marketing, management, and promotions arm of UDA. The SEMD will provide technical expertise and professional staffing to the three Center City districts for a variety of purposes. The SEMD has already contracted with the Springfield Area Arts Council to manage *Artsfest* and *First Night*. In addition to special events programming, the division will participate in parking and other downtown management activities, potentially utilizing a new community improvement district for additional funding. The division will also work in conjunction with the Arts Council and the three business district organizations to establish new events and programs.

### Management and Funding

Initially, UDA will have two full-time staff, an executive director, and a marketing/events coordinator. The City of Springfield will provide additional staff support to process SFDC loans and provide other financial assistance through its CDBG loan program. Additional staff may be hired based on future responsibilities and funding levels.

The organization will be located in 1080 square feet of newly renovated store-front space at 304 West McDaniel Street in the heart of the Greater Downtown business core. This space will be provided to the UDA free of charge in 1997, and on a sliding scale through 2001.

The UDA's first year operating budget is expected to be approximately \$200,000. Revenues to cover operating expenses will be generated by investments and contributions by the City, the DSA, the Walnut Street Merchants Association, and the Commercial Club. Contracts to provide specific services, such as events and parking management, will also contribute to operating revenues.

### Programs and Services

The staff will be responsible for assisting the UDA Board of Directors with developing a work program and project priorities. The staff will have the *Center City Plan Element* (specifically the recommendations of the Implementation Framework) as well as the previously completed ODP as blueprints from which to work. The programmatic recommendations of the ODP are summarized in four functional areas:

- Small Business Support
- Community Development
- Marketing and Promotions Advocacy and Leadership

**Small Business Support.** Center City is characterized by relatively low building values and rents. Yet, Center City's business districts are experiencing growth in specialty retail uses and, in particular, arts and entertainment oriented uses. These business conditions are conducive to new independent business formations. To capitalize on these favorable market dynamics, a UDA small business support program is recommended to provide tools and to create a business environment that will be inviting for additional entrepreneurs to enter the marketplace - an 'incubator without walls' that positions Springfield's Center City as a new center for entrepreneurship and innovation.

The Springfield Finance and Development Corporation is expected to take on the primary role of providing capital support for business

development by providing loans or equity investments to viable small businesses that cannot secure conventional financing.

The SFDC supplements funds already available through the Small Business Loan Program. Capitalized through annual CDBG grants, the existing loan program has \$3.8 million in outstanding loans and has approximately \$750,000 available annually. These loan funds are more restricted and can only be used for equipment, property acquisition, and rehabilitation. The SFDC can also be used to leverage other existing sources of financing, including Small Business Administration (SBA) guaranteed loans and conventional bank products.

Business counseling is also an area of emphasis recommended for UDA's small business support program. UDA can offer loan packaging assistance in conjunction with its various capital formation initiatives. Packaging and loan application fees should be explored to defray costs. UDA should take advantage of the existing counseling services available at the Small Business Development Center (SBDC). Located on the nearby campus of SMSU, the SBDC provides one-on-one counseling, loan packaging, retail audits, and other business support services.

**Community Development.** UDA will pursue traditional community development activities, including the development of underutilized and/or blighted real estate. In addition to the equity participation and project financing roles described for the SFDC above, other community development functions that UDA/SFDC could provide include:

- **Project Development.** The UDA could act as a developer and/or joint developer to convert underutilized or vacant real estate to an active use. A UDA CDC brings several advantages to a real estate project including: ability to secure private, public, and philanthropic financing; flexibility to joint venture with private developers, governmental agencies, churches, and educational institutions; and the ability to be the recipient of

property donations, providing lucrative tax benefits to donors. UDA could participate in any or all phases of the development process, including site acquisition, design, financing, construction, and property management. A CDC is entitled to a standard development fee to compensate for costs.

- **Process Facilitation.** Community Development Corporations often facilitate permitting and other community processes for public benefit projects pursued by private or non-profit developers. Similar to project development, the CDC is entitled to fee compensation for professional time associated with process facilitation.
- **Financial Packaging/Tax Credit Syndication.** The UDA could emerge as a local source of expertise to package financing for public benefit projects, including publicly assisted loan programs and tax credit syndication. Financial packaging services would be available to private and non-profit developers on a fee basis.
- **Land Clearance and Redevelopment Authority (LCRA).** Formed in 1968, pursuant to Missouri's Land Clearance and Redevelopment Authority Law, Springfield's LCRA was active in the 1970's and early 1980's. LCRA projects were concentrated in the Southwest Missouri State University and University Plaza areas. The traditional use of LCRA has been to acquire and clear land in anticipation of new development. In the 1990's, traditional redevelopment authorities like LCRA are becoming pivotal partners in a new generation of projects that are smaller in scale and based upon the historic preservation principles of adaptive reuse. UDA could utilize LCRA to implement aspects of the *Center City Plan Element*.

**Marketing and Promotion.** The responsibilities of the Springfield Events and Management Division will be to provide marketing, promotions and management expertise to support the Center City districts and their existing business organizations. Opportunities

for events, promotions and public relations to benefit the entire Center City area will also be pursued.

An already defined role for the division will be to provide professional packaging and technical assistance for district events. SEMD will provide technical assistance to districts to maximize marketing opportunities and event revenues. SEMD has contracted with the Springfield Arts Council to manage the *Artsfest* and *First Night* events. There are also opportunities for SEMD to manage other Center City events and to work with the Arts Council and the districts to develop new events. It is anticipated that sponsorship revenues could eventually defray the administrative costs associated with SEMD. Other marketing and promotions functions that UDA/SEMD could provide include the following:

- **Center City Marketing Matching Fund.** The UDA should establish a marketing matching fund to better coordinate and leverage existing district marketing efforts. To qualify for matching funds, each district would be required to submit a brief marketing plan describing planned events and promotions. From the district marketing plans, UDA could prepare a master marketing plan to develop and promote Center City messages and tie-ins to be utilized by all districts.
- **Facility Management.** Springfield's Center City contains a wealth of underutilized cultural resources, including several vintage theaters and other performance venues. To reduce operating costs associated with these venues, the City, property owners, and local arts groups could investigate the transfer of many of these facilities to City ownership. City ownership would eliminate property tax and insurance costs. Utility and maintenance costs may also be reduced by inclusion in City contracts. SEMD could then manage these facilities on behalf of the City. An advantage of SEMD facility management would be its focus on property management, as opposed to arts production.

## Advocacy and Leadership

Developing a unified voice for the Center City business community was a key objective for creating a management organization to serve the three separate business districts within Center City. UDA will aim to be pro-active on issues that affect the Center City, establishing programs and services to advance Center City growth and development. Through its board of directors, committees, and subsidiary corporations, UDA will aim to cultivate diverse Center City leadership within its various business districts, institutions, and public agencies.

## ACTION PLAN

This section presents the recommended high priority strategies and actions to implement the goals and policies of the *Center City Plan Element* as outlined in the Framework Plans for each District. The *Action Plan* includes only those projects that can be feasibly accomplished within a first phase of development. A five-year framework was chosen in order to be consistent with the capital improvements planning time horizon of the City.

As the first phase of an overall plan that has a 20-year time horizon, it includes a large number of planning and design projects as necessary first steps to the implementation of larger capital improvement projects. It also includes a number of smaller, short-term projects that can be easily implemented and can provide immediate and visible evidence of revitalization. The implementation action program summarized below and in the table at the end of the section contains the following:

- **Action** - Summarizes the recommended strategies and actions to implement the *Center City Plan Element* within the limits of available funding and labor availability.
- **Purpose** - Identifies the intent of accomplishing the particular action.
- **Timeframe** - Establishes the target year priority within the five-year (1998-2002) planning horizon.
- **Responsibility** - Designates the agency, group, or individual responsible for initiating the implementation action.
- **Cost** - Estimates additional operational or capital costs for the proposed project or action.

- **Financial Resources** - Lists the funding resources necessary to carry out the intended action.

The recommended actions are listed in four separate groups:

- **Center City** - Center City area-wide plans, projects and programs.
- **Greater Downtown District** - Improvements to the historic CBD around Park Central Square, University Plaza, and Walnut Street Historic District. (Because of the extent of recommended improvements in this area, they are further separated into economic development improvements and public improvements.)
- **Commercial Street District** - Improvements within the Commercial Street Historic District.
- **Government Plaza District** - Improvements within the Government Plaza District.

The actions for all the districts are summarized in Table 5, at the end of this section.

## Center City Area-Wide Actions

This section lists the high-priority economic development and public improvement projects proposed for Center City, as a whole.

### 1. Civic Park Master Plan

A Civic Park and related greenway in the Jordan Creek Valley is the one 'grand vision' included in the *Center City Plan Element*. It is an ambitious project, one that will take a substantial investment of capital funds and a considerable period of time to plan and implement. As a first step, the City needs to prepare a Master Plan for the Civic Park and the larger Jordan Creek Valley Greenway. The Master Plan needs to take the overall concept and vision to the next level of detail addressing specific location, design, and function and use issues for both, the public sector projects - what should occur on the site and in the public rights-of-way, and the private sector projects — what should occur on the private parcels adjacent to Civic Park. The master plan needs to include a project budget for total project costs, revenue sources, and a development phasing plan tying project elements to available funds.

A project of this magnitude will need a dedicated funding source. Since Civic Park has the potential to serve as a tourist attraction, a potential funding source for a portion of the project could be an increased hotel/motel occupancy tax. The project also includes additional park and open space improvements. A community-wide bond issue may also be needed to fund all or part of the Civic Park project. In either case, the recommended Civic Park Master Plan will be necessary to help further define the concept to city decision-makers and the community-at-large.

Responsibility:	City
Timing:	1998-1999
Cost:	\$100,000 to \$200,000
Funding	Hotel/Motel Tax; General Fund

### 2. Civic Park Pilot Project

After the Civic Park Master Plan is completed, a first phase project should be initiated to establish the reality of the development plan in the public's mind. The type and location of the pilot project should be established as part of the overall Civic Park development program. If the Exposition Center moves forward, a potential pilot project could be to build a plaza or other public gathering place related to that project. Attaching the Exposition Center to the initial phase of Civic Park could also provide a logical funding source, as it could be included as part of its budget. In addition, the initial project could provide open space, trails, and a water feature.

Responsibility:	City
Timing:	1999-2000
Cost:	\$12 million
Potential Funding	Hotel/Motel Tax

### 3. Center City Streetscape Design Plan

A goal of the *Center City Plan Element* is to link the individual districts of Center City in a way that identifies the larger area as a unique and distinct part of the City. The *Plan Element* recommends developing gateway improvements at key locations and streetscape improvements along the Chestnut and Kansas Expressways as well as the major through routes and connectors, Boonville and Benton/Kimbrough Avenues. The first step must be a more detailed design plan to establish the specific landscaping, lighting, and signage themes and treatments and the specific locations for the improvements. The design plan has an estimated cost of \$50,000 to \$100,000 and should be completed within a one-year time horizon. The City of Springfield should provide the funding and the project should be coordinated with UDA.

Responsibility:	City
Timing:	1998
Cost:	\$50,000 to \$100,000
Potential Funding	Community Improvement District Hotel/Motel Tax; CDBG Funds

#### 4. Gateway Pilot Project - Chestnut Expressway / Boonville Avenue

As with the Civic Park project, it is important to build an initial phase or pilot project to illustrate to the community the benefits of the project and what it will look like. The initial gateway is proposed to be built at the intersection of Chestnut Expressway and Boonville Avenue — an important gateway to the Greater Downtown and Government Plaza Districts.

Responsibility:	City
Timing:	1999-2000
Cost:	\$50,000
Potential Funding	Hotel/Motel Tax; General Fund; ¼ cent Capital Improvement Funds

#### Greater Downtown District - Economic Development Projects and Programs

This section includes the economic development actions proposed for the Greater Downtown area including the historic CBD around Park Central Square, University Plaza, and the Walnut Street Historic District.

##### 1. Organize the Arts, Entertainment, and Restaurant Uses

Greater Downtown will not become a legitimate arts and entertainment area until the arts-related businesses understand that there is a benefit to working together. An important role for UDA will be to work with DSA to organize these business types to work together and do joint marketing and promotions. This is also potentially an opportunity to jointly market with the nearby Walnut Street Historic District. UDA has the marketing expertise to help these businesses organize to help themselves. The project can be accomplished in 1998 with no additional funding.

Responsibility:	UDA
Timing:	1998
Cost:	Unknown
Funding	Current UDA budget

##### 2. Strengthen Events and Promotional Activities in Greater Downtown

*FirstNight*, the annual New Years celebration, is an excellent event with broad participation, but the area needs 3 or 4 additional annual on-going events, such as an Arts Fest, 'Wagon Days', or a 'Blues Fest', to give a wider segment of the population exposure to the Greater Downtown area. The UDA has already established itself as the events management group for Center City. UDA should also use its expertise to help the districts develop additional events complementary to its

primary market opportunities. For the Greater Downtown area, additional events should be complementary to its arts and entertainment focus. This project is expected to be part of the work plan for UDA's Events and Management Division and the marketing and events coordinator. It will take two to three years to fully develop a recognized events program.

Responsibility: UDA  
 Timing: 1998-2000  
 Cost: UNknown  
 Funding Current UDA budget

**3. Gillioz Theatre Renovation**

The Gillioz Theater will be an important additional performing arts facility in Greater Downtown. The completion of this project will also have an important catalytic effect on the potentials for property renovation around Park Central East. The non-profit Friends of the Gillioz is renovating the theater incrementally as it raises funds, UDA should make this project a priority and provide fund raising and development assistance to help this project be completed on an expedited schedule. One funding source could be the Hotel/Motel Tax. The UDA can lend the expertise of its marketing and events coordinator to help broaden fund raising for this project. The capital investment is expected to be minimal.

Responsibility: UDA  
 Timing: 1998-2002  
 Cost: Unknown  
 Potential Funding Grants; Private Donations; SBDL Program; City's Façade Loan Program

**4. Boutique Hotel in the Historic CBD Area**

The University Plaza Holiday Inn is the only active hotel in the Greater Downtown area. There is a potential for a second Greater Downtown hotel in or near University Plaza to be built in conjunction with a proposed Exposition Center. Developers in other cities have successfully converted vacant office or department store buildings to smaller boutique hotels providing additional rooms and greater accommodation choices within their downtowns.

Greater Downtown has a number of vacant or underutilized buildings, such as the Sterling, State, and Seville Hotels, with the potential for conversion to a smaller bed and breakfast, or boutique hotel. The UDA and/or the City should take appropriate actions to help encourage a hotel in the Greater Downtown core including potentially soliciting developer proposals for a potential building or site and/or financial assistance to make the project more attractive to an outside developer/investor.

Responsibility: UDA  
 Timing: 2000  
 Cost: Unknown  
 Potential Funding Grants; Private Donations; SBDL Program; City's Façade Loan Program

**5. Office Business Retention and Expansion Program**

The UDA, in partnership with other economic development agencies, should establish a program to help property owners attract office and service tenants and fill up vacant space in the Greater Downtown area. UDA can also assist property owners who want to renovate and improve office space or convert vacant space for office uses. When the office market was overbuilt in Denver in the 1980's, the Downtown Denver Partnership established the Metro Denver Network, an office leasing and marketing program to work on filling up vacant space. This program is important for maintaining Springfield Greater Downtown's role as a multifunctional business center. It is also important to UDA in that it can help establish the organization's legitimacy as a business organization and not just a merchants or retail organization. The project can be accomplished with existing UDA staff and within its operational budget.

Responsibility: UDA  
 Timing: 1999  
 Cost: \$20,000  
 Funding Greater Downtown businesses

**6. Publicizing of Successful Office Development and Redevelopment Projects**

The acquisition and redevelopment of a vacant building by Scott Consulting for their engineering offices is a success story for Greater Downtown, as is the Springfield Business Journal's renovation of a building on Central Park West. Too often, the publicity related to downtown development is focused on the retail sector. The UDA needs to also support the development of the office/business sector and help publicize business development and recruitment successes. These and other projects should be publicized in the local press to help raise the awareness of the real estate opportunities available to area businesses. UDA should be the focal point for this Greater Downtown marketing effort.

Responsibility: UDA  
 Timing: 1998-2002  
 Cost: Minimal  
 Funding: Current UDA budget

**7. Large-Scale Residential Development Project**

Although there have been a number of successful loft residential renovations, Greater Downtown is still not thought of as a mixed-use district suitable for residential developments. Completing a large-scale residential project of 50 or more units should be a priority of the UDA. A larger project will have a greater impact on establishing the legitimacy of Greater Downtown as a viable urban residential location. The UDA can provide development expertise to interested developers and property owners and financing assistance to help address the financing gap. The UDA should begin promoting Greater Downtown as a residential neighborhood. Within a two year period, the UDA should identify a developer and assist in implementing this project

Responsibility: UDA  
 Timing: 1998-2002  
 Cost: Unknown  
 Funding: HOME funds; CDBG Housing Rehab. Loan Program

**8. Renovation of Rooming Houses to Housing for the Elderly**

Greater Downtown has a number of vacant and old hotels that are rented to elderly, single, and low- to moderate-income persons. Many communities have used HUD Home funds and/or tax exempt financing to renovate similar properties into single-room occupancy (SRO) residences for low- and moderate-income persons. Downtown locations work well for residents dependent on public transportation. UDA should make the redevelopment and renovation of these properties a development priority that contributes to the Greater Downtown residential base.

Responsibility: UDA  
 Timing: 1999  
 Cost: Unknown  
 Funding: HOME funds; CDBG Housing Rehab Loan Program

**9. Increased Membership and Activities of the Walnut Street Merchants Association**

As the number of businesses in the Walnut Street District increases, there will be a greater number of property owners and business owners with an interest and stake in the marketing and promotion of the area. A greater awareness of the potential of the District will come from the opportunity to discuss issues of common interest. Also, if the businesses and property owners are organized at the District level, they will have a larger voice within UDA and greater leverage with the City to get their share of services and resources.

Responsibility: UDA, Walnut Street Merchants  
 Timing: 1998  
 Cost: Minimal  
 Funding: Current UDA budget

## Greater Downtown District - Public Improvements

This section lists the high-priority capital improvement projects proposed for the Greater Downtown area.

### 1. Greater Downtown Detailed Streetscape Design Plan

A major emphasis of the *Center City Plan Element* is creating a pedestrian-oriented arts, entertainment, and specialty retailing district within the Greater Downtown's central core. To support this development concept, the Plan recommends promoting historic renovations of buildings and compatible infill development built at a similar scale and with a street and sidewalk orientation. It also recommends public improvements including more two-way streets and Streetscape improvements to make the sidewalk areas conducive to and compatible with greater pedestrian usage.

In most instances, these Streetscape improvements are funded through special improvement districts, whereby the property owners, with some financial assistance or incentives from the City, pay for the improvements in direct proportion to the benefits received. The *Center City Market Study* indicates that there are individual property owners motivated to make these changes, but it would be difficult to convince a majority of businesses/property owners that they should invest in Streetscape improvements at this time. To stimulate these desirable changes, the UDA and the City should take the lead for the development of a Detailed Streetscape Design Plan for the Greater Downtown area.

Responsibility:	City
Timing:	1998
Cost:	\$50,000 to \$100,000
Funding	Community Improvement District; Hotel/Motel Tax; CDBG Funds

### 2. Streetscape Improvements Demonstration Project

The City should also participate in the construction of the Streetscape improvements in demonstration projects to set the

design standard for the area. These improvements should be made where the property owners and businesses have committed to investing in project improvements. The strongest retail blocks are South Street between Park Central Square and Walnut Street, and Walnut Street between South and Jefferson Avenues. The Streetscape improvements could also be built in conjunction with a major new renovation such as along Market Avenue, between McDaniel and Walnut Streets. This demonstration project should be a joint City/UDA effort.

Responsibility:	City
Timing:	1999-2000
Cost:	\$250,000 to \$400,000 (City participation 50%)
Funding	Community Imp District; ¼ cent Capital Improvement Funds; Hotel/Motel Tax

### 3. Greater Downtown Traffic Circulation Review

An equally important priority, in order to make Greater Downtown more conducive to street-front retail, restaurant and entertainment uses, is to implement the recommended street system changes. This includes re-opening St. Louis Street to auto traffic between Market and Short Avenues; creating a round-a-bout in Park Central to smooth traffic movements; eliminating the tuning forks near Market and Jefferson; and converting McDaniel Street and Campbell and Jefferson Avenues to two way-way streets. It also includes improving the traffic flow along College Street/Main Avenue/Water Street/East Trafficway to provide the required through traffic capacities to and around the Park Central Square area. To accomplish these changes, the impacts on overall traffic flows need to be analyzed and evaluated in greater detail. The City Traffic Engineering Department should reevaluate the proposed changes and develop a phasing program for implementing the proposed the Greater Downtown street network.

Responsibility:	City Traffic Engineering Department
Timing:	1998
Cost:	Unknown
Funding	Current budget

**4. Conversion of McDaniel Street to Two-Way Traffic.**

Converting McDaniel Street to two-way traffic could be easily accomplished with minimal impacts on the remaining Greater Downtown street network. This change should be implemented as a pilot project to illustrate the benefits of two-way traffic movements on the Greater Downtown environment. The project can be implemented by the City Public Works Department.

Responsibility: City Public Works Department  
 Timing: 1998  
 Cost: \$50,000  
 Funding: CDBG

**5. Greater Downtown Parking Management Plan**

A plan to organize and manage available parking is in the best interest of all Greater Downtown businesses. Both, the merchants and the general public have indicated that parking is a significant problem. It is not, however, so much the number of parking spaces available, as it is the organization, circulation to, signage, and location of parking. Signage identifying available parking is inadequate and some streets have too many signs, which is confusing. A joint UDA/City parking study should be prepared to address these issues and develop a public/private management plan to increase access and utilization of available parking resources.

Responsibility: City / UDA  
 Timing: 1998  
 Cost: \$15,000 to \$25,000  
 Funding: Special Business District City Funds

**6. Exposition Center.**

The Exposition Center is proposed as a multi-functional convention and events center located close to the existing University Plaza Holiday Inn. The preliminary concept includes an exhibit hall, meeting rooms, and an arena. Although the Exposition Center will be privately

funded, it may be built on public land and the City should coordinate with the developers issues such as site location, access, circulation around the Center, streetscape improvements, special features and amenities, and relationship and linkages to Civic Park.

Responsibility: City and Private Developers  
 Timing: 1998  
 Cost: Unknown  
 Funding: Private Funds; Hotel/Motel Tax (Land)

**7. Pedestrian/Bicyclist Circulation Between the Greater Downtown Sub-Districts**

The historic core around Park Central Square, the University Plaza District, the Walnut Street Historic District, and the SMSU campus are all within walking distance of each other. The business and market interactions will be improved enormously by providing better pedestrian linkages, particularly along St. Louis Street, Walnut Street, and, possibly, a diagonal route to connect Park Central Square with the SMSU campus. The City should plan and budget for wider sidewalks and landscaped paths with distinctive pavement, street trees, lighting, and special features such as banners, to improve and distinguish these special connections

Responsibility: City and UDA  
 Timing: 2001-2002  
 Cost: \$250,000 to \$500,000  
 Funding: CID, ¼ cent Capital Improvement Funds; CDBG; Transportation Enhancement Funds

**8. Improvements in the Walnut Street Historic District.**

The City should participate in pedestrian-oriented improvements for the Walnut Street corridor between South Avenue and National Avenue to promote the continued investments in historic building renovations and area improvements. Wider sidewalks, additional street trees, and historic lighting and theme treatments can

contribute to the historic residential garden character of the Historic District. The district could also benefit from a focal point for special events or public gatherings.

Responsibility: City and UDA  
 Timing: 1998-2000  
 Cost: \$180,000 - \$250,000  
 Funding: CID, ¼ cent Capital Improvement Funds; CDBG; Transportation Enhancement Funds

## Commercial Street District

This section includes the recommended economic development and public improvement projects for the Commercial Street Historic District.

### 1. Zoning Strategies and Regulations to Address the Impacts of the Missions

The missions perform a valuable social service function within the community. However, the concentration of missions and mission-related businesses on Commercial Street has a negative impact on the area's ability to attract retail, arts, and residential uses to the area. Zoning regulations should be instituted to prevent any expansion of mission-related businesses. Also, a UDA-sponsored task force should be created to address enforcement and image issues related to the missions.

Responsibility: City  
 Timing: 1998  
 Cost: Existing staff and budget  
 Funding: Current budget

### 2. Expanded Participation and Membership in the Commercial Club

The Commercial Club has been a business and property owners association since the 1920's. However, since the number of retail-oriented businesses has declined, so has participation and interest in the organization. It is unlikely that the wholesale, distribution, and contracting uses will be interested in participating in the organization. However, many of these uses will be replaced in the coming years. Commercial Street is becoming a neighborhood with an eclectic mix of retail, gallery, studio, and residential uses. Commercial Club needs to change its focus to represent the broader interests and concerns of the neighborhood. The UDA, with its additional organization and management expertise, should assist the Commercial Club in defining its mission and objectives to more closely reflect the character and potentials of the District.

Responsibility: UDA, Commercial Club  
 Timing: 1998 - 2002  
 Cost: Existing staff and budget  
 Funding: Current budget

### 3. Commercial Street Streetscape Program

The 'old-time' railroad theme streetscape improvements proposed in the *Commercial Street Improvement Plan* and partially built should be completed. Simple, but complementary tree planting, benches, and lighting and special parking lot and District gateway treatments can improve the environment for the active building renovations and loft developments underway. Funding these improvements, at least for a few more demonstration blocks, at an accelerated rate is recommended so that the improvements can have the desired effect of stimulating reinvestment. The parking lot adjacent to the pedestrian bridge should also be landscaped as a space for special events.

Responsibility: City  
 Timing: 1999  
 Cost: \$200,000 to \$300,000  
 Funding: Community Improvement District;  
 Transportation Enhancement Funds

## Government Plaza District

### 1. Detailed Master Plan

Preparing a Master Plan for the Government Plaza District is the next major implementation step. The Master Plan should represent a consensus among the major public entities that already have facilities in the district (City, County, School District, and Library Board) so that construction funding decisions can be mutually supportive and reinforce the image of the district as a unified government center complex. The Master Plan should address land use and zoning, architecture and site planning, street corridor improvements, and public open space development.

Responsibility: City, County, School District, Library Board  
 Timing: 1999  
 Cost: \$75,000  
 Funding: General Funds

### 2. Central Street Streetscape Improvements

The City in conjunction with the other public agencies should complete the special streetscape improvements along Central Street between Boonville and Benton Avenues. These improvements should include special pavement, street trees, lighting, and special features such as banners or other design treatments. The Central Street improvement project should also include special gateways at Boonville Avenue and Benton Avenue.

Responsibility: City, County, School District, Library Board  
 Timing: 2000-2001  
 Cost: \$250,000  
 Funding: ¼ cent Capital Improvement Funds;  
 Transportation Enhancement Funds

**Table 5**  
**Implementation Action Plan**

Action	Purpose	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Responsible Entity	Cost	Financial Resources
<b>Center City Area-Wide Actions</b>									
1. Civic Park Master Plan	Initiate planning and development of project	●	●	○	○	○	City	\$100-200 K	Hotel/Motel Tax
2. Civic Park Pilot Project	Build a first phase of this long-term project		●	●			City	\$12 M	Hotel/Motel Tax
3. Center City Streetscape Design Plan	Detailed design for recommended improvements	●	○	○	○	○	City	\$50-100 K	CID; Hotel/Motel; CDBG
4. Gateway Pilot Project - Chestnut Expressway Boonville Avenue	Initial phase of Greater Downtown gateway project		●	○			City	\$50 K	Hotel/Motel; General Fund; 1/4 cent GIF
<b>Greater Downtown District - Economic Development Projects and Programs</b>									
1. Organize Arts, Entertainment, and Restaurant Uses	Organize the arts and entertainment district	●	○	○	○	○	UDA		Current UDA Budget
2. Strengthen Events and Promotional Activities	Promote the arts and entertainment district	●	○	○	○	○	UDA	—	Current UDA Budget
3. Gillioz Theatre Renovation	Expedite the renovation of this performing arts facility	●	○	○	○	○	UDA	—	Grants; Private Donations; etc..
4. Boutique Hotel in Historic CBD Area	Promote diversification of Greater Downtown development mix		●	○	○	○	UDA		Grants; Private Donations; SBDL; etc...
5. Office Business Retention and Expansion Program	Maintain Greater Downtown's multi-functional mix		●	○	○	○	UDA	—	Greater Downt. Businesses

● **Planning and project initiation**

○ **Active Implementation**

Action	Purpose	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Responsible Entity	Cost	Financial Resources
6. Publicizing of Successful Office Developm. and Redevelopm.	Maintain Greater Downtown as business center	●	○	○	○	○	UDA	Minimal	Current UDA Budget
7. Large-Scale Residential Development Project	Promote Greater Downtown for residential uses	●	○	○			UDA	—	HOME funds
8. Renovation of Rooming Houses to Housing for the Elderly	Promote Greater Downtown for a variety of residential uses		●	○	○	○	UDA	—	HOME Funds
9. Increase Membership and Activities of the Walnut Street Merchants Association	Promote Walnut Street as specialty retail area	●	○	○	○	○	UDA, Walnut St. Merchants	Minimal	Current UDA Budget
<b>Greater Downtown District - Public Improvements</b>									
1. Streetscape Design Plan	Make Greater Downtown more pedestrian-friendly.	●	○	○	○	○	City	\$50-100 K	Hotel/Motel; CID; CDBG
2. Streetscape Improvements Demonstration Project	Implement first phase of larger improvement program		●	○			City	\$250-\$400 K	CID; 1/4 cent.; Hotel/Motel
3. Greater Downtown Traffic Circulation Review	Detailed traffic analysis prior to implementing street changes	●	○	○	○	○	City Traffic Engineering	—	Current Budget
4. Conversion of McDaniel Street to Two- Way Traffic	Improve street for retail development	●					City Public Works	\$50 K	CDBG
5. Greater Downtown Parking Management Plan	Increase Greater Downtown's attractiveness for business	●	○	○	○	○	City/UDA	\$15-25 K	SBD; City Funds
6. Exposition Center	Coordinate project components with private developers	●	○				City	—	Private Funds; Hotel/Motel
7. Pedestrian/Bicyclist Circulation Between the Sub-Districts	Connect the sub-districts of Greater Downtown into a unified whole				●	○	City	\$250-500 K	CID; 1/4 cent CIF; CDBG; Transp. Impr.
8. Improvements in the Walnut Street Historic District	Reinforce the specialty retail District's environment	●	○	○			City	\$180 K	CID; 1/4 cent CIF; CDBG; etc

Action	Purpose	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Responsible Entity	Cost	Financial Resources
<b>Commercial Street District</b>									
1. Zoning Strategies & Regulations to Address Impacts of Missions	Promote urban arts and residential district	●					City	Existing Staff & Budget	Current Budget
2. Expand Participation & Membership in the Commercial Club	Promote Commercial Street	●	○	○	○	○	UDA, Commercial Club	—	None required
3. Commercial Street Streetscape Program	Improve retail business environment		●	○	○	○	City	\$200-300 K	CDBG; CID; Transp. Enh.
<b>Government Plaza District</b>									
1. Detailed Master Plan	Coordinate and improve design image of District		●				City and other Public Agencies	\$75 K	General Funds
2. Central Street Streetscape Improvements	Improve image and appearance of District			●	○		City and other Public Agencies	\$250 K	1/4 cent GIF; Transportation Enhanc. Funds

Footnotes:

- CDBG Community Development Block Grants
- CID Community Improvement District
- CIP Capital Improvement Program
- DSA Downtown Springfield Association
- SBD Special Business District
- SBDL Small Business Development Loan Program
- SFDC Springfield Finance and Development Corporation
- SID Special Improvement District
- PW Public Works
- UDA Urban Districts Alliance
- 1/4 cent GIF 1/4 cent Capital Improvement Funds

Transportation Enhancement Funds includes:  
 ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) Funds

## FINANCING SOURCES

This section of the Implementation Program lists the primary sources of financing available to the UDA and the City to carry out the Implementation Program. The financing sources are grouped into two general categories: Economic Development — funding sources for UDA and the businesses and property owners; and Public Improvements — financing sources available to the City to make the recommended public improvements. The ability to raise the required funding will determine the capabilities of UDA and the City to carry out the Implementation Program on schedule.

### Economic Development Sources

The majority of the financing sources and methods available for business and real estate development and redevelopment in the Center City area are associated with the UDA and the business districts. The primary financing sources are as follows:

- **Springfield Finance and Development Corporation (SFDC).** The SFDC is a for-profit corporation, established to provide small business loans and equity capital in the Center City. Ten Springfield area banks have already provided investor equity of \$300,000 to capitalize the SFDC. Additional capital equity may be received from other individual and corporate investors. A critical incentive for SFDC investors and contributors is the State of Missouri Community Bank Tax Credit Program, which allows for a 50 percent credit on state tax liabilities. The SFDC has available \$750,000 in State Tax Credits to attract \$1.5 million in investments.
- **Greater Downtown Community Improvement District (CID)** - The existing Greater Downtown Special Business District should be expanded to cover a larger geographic area, and also to provide a broader array of services, including parking management, maintenance and security. District approval is subject to a vote of the property owners in the proposed district. A tiering system is proposed to relate

the amount paid to the level of services provided. It is estimated that the CID will generate \$200,000 in annual revenue.

- **Events Management.** The UDA has already contracted with the Arts Council to manage its two major events, *Artsfest* and *First Night*. These two events will generate nearly \$20,000 in operating revenue for the UDA. There are other existing events held within the Center City that could also take advantage of the professional management expertise of UDA, as well as new events to be developed by UDA, for which the organization will generate management revenues.
- **Project Development Equity.** The UDA can also charge for its time in project development and financing and packaging. Involvement in real estate development could be on a fee or equity basis. Projects with a community development focus will be eligible for consideration by foundation, corporate, and government funding programs. Equity can also be formed through the syndication of tax credits on historic and/or low- and moderate-income housing properties.
- **Project Management Fees.** The UDA could also act as a property manager for community development projects that it develops. Project management fees are estimated at covering project debt service plus an 8% management fee.
- **Special Improvement Districts.** Many public/private development projects, including most streetscape programs, are financed through special improvement districts whereby the property owners agree to assess themselves for the cost of the improvements. Assessments are typically determined based on a linear foot, square foot, or other equitable distribution of total project costs. Often the City will participate in the project construction or financing to entice property owners to invest in improvements designed to increase business volumes and property values.

## Public Improvement Financing

This section outlines recommendations for generating additional revenues for the proposed Public Improvements included in the *Center City Plan Element*. In order to accomplish some of the projects identified in the *Plan*, the City will need to look beyond traditional methods of financing capital projects. To the extent possible/ the City will look for public/private cooperative efforts to use City dollars to leverage private investment. The funding sources under consideration for the proposed public improvements are as follows:

- **Capital Improvements Sales Tax.** Improvements to the existing parks program are funded through the existing capital improvements sales tax which generates approximately \$6.5 million per year. The proposed improvements to Park Central Square may be eligible for this funding source.
- **General Obligation Bond Issues.** The City's policy is to fund the acquisition and development of new parks through bond issues voted on in a separate referendum. The Civic Park project will involve the development of a unique new City park and open space and will likely require a dedicated bond issue for part or all of its development. Because the Civic Park project also involves some unique economic development features, such as the proposed Exposition Center, there may also be the possibility to utilize other funding sources for parts of the project development.
- **Hotel and Motel Room Tax.** The existing two percent transient lodging tax raises approximately \$1.0 million per year, which is primarily used to support the Convention and Visitors Bureau. If this tax were doubled, it would not be out of line with other cities in the region. These additional revenues could therefore be applied to projects, programs, and marketing associated with increasing visitations to Springfield.
- **Tax Increment Financing (Commercial).** The City's policy, to date, has been to reserve property tax increment financing for significant manufacturing, industrial, or retail projects. For major retail projects, the City has used Developer Agreements to invest a portion of future sales tax revenues back into infrastructure development. These informal TIP agreements have been important to insuring that major retail complexes are built within the City. The use of TIP financing is appropriate to support major Center City office, retail, or entertainment facility development.
- **Tax Increment Financing (Residential).** The general policy of the City is to discourage the use of TIP for residential projects. An exception may be warranted for a major Center City residential loft conversion project that could help establish the viability of urban-scale residential development in the area.
- **Foundation Grants -** The Civic Park project is a unique urban development and open space project. The City could pursue partial funding and support from non-profit advocacy organizations, corporate foundations, or government agencies with an open space, nature, wildlife, or environmental mission. There is also an opportunity for a new non-profit civic foundation, established to promote and finance the development of this project alone.