

# **Downtown Visions Of Dothan, Alabama 2012 Update**

**April 24, 2012**



**Prepared by the Long Range Planning Division of the  
Planning & Development Department**



**“Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood.”**

**Daniel H. Burnham (1846-1912)**

President of AIA; wrote the “Plan for Chicago – 1909”; and inspired the “City Beautiful Movement”.

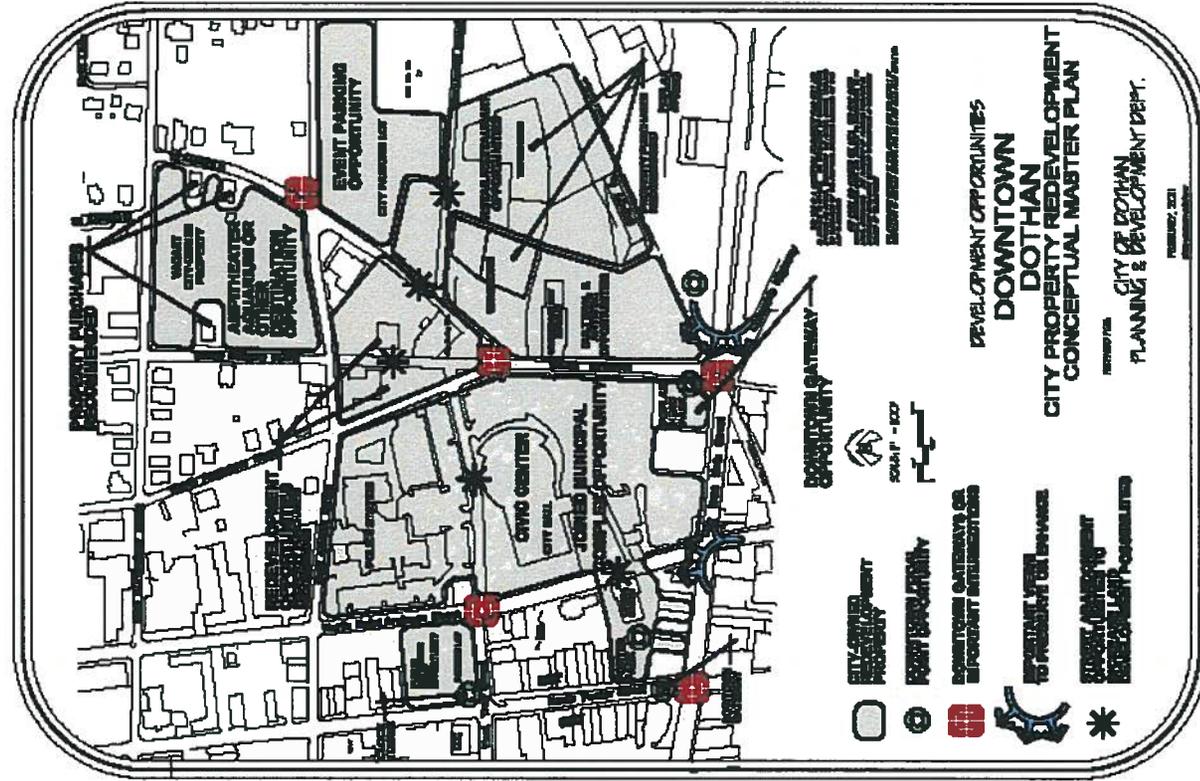
Make no little plans. Following is a collection of conceptual plans, development computation plans, illustrative drawings, perspective view sketches, and perspective view renderings of potential development and re-development opportunities for Dothan’s downtown. They represent a vision statement prepared to do exactly what Mr. Burnham suggested back at the turn of the twentieth century...”stir men’s blood.”

The Long Range Planning Division hopes that the visions found within the following pages will do just that, inspire, stir and prompt discussion which will lead our city down a path of rejuvenation of buildings, streetscapes, environment, spirit and public pride.



## City Property Master Planning

The Long Range Planning Division prepared a conceptual master plan for all the property owned by the city within the local of the civic center. Following is a reduction of the analysis of development opportunities inherent in the properties. The actual master plan can be viewed on the following page.

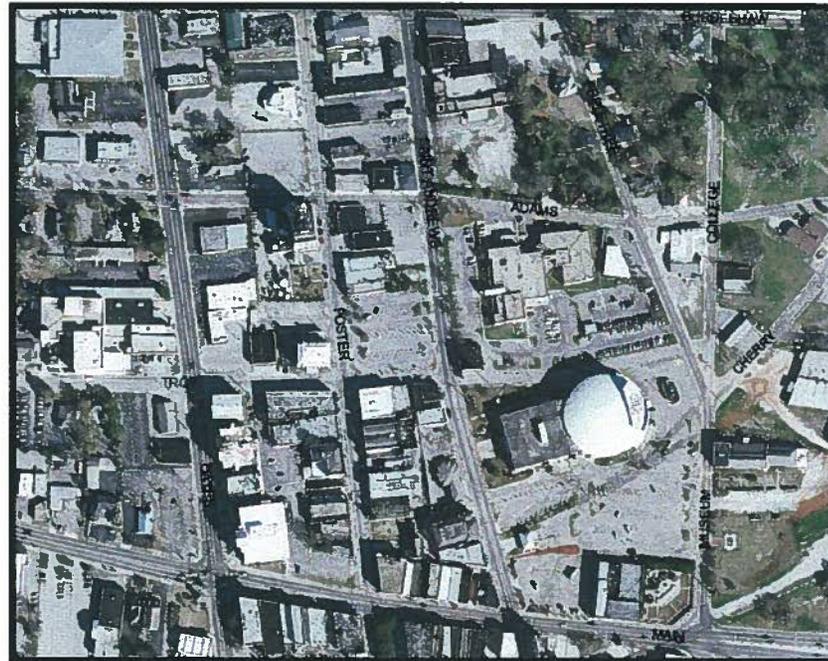






## Civic Center Re-Development Master Plan

The civic center is the focal point and one of the most recognizable buildings in the downtown. It serves as the central location for the municipal administration offices as well as an arena in the round for all sorts of entertainment and public venues. Next door to the civic center is the central police station and municipal jail. The following drawings envision possibilities for improvement, consolidation and re-development of the civic center and its surrounding area. Among the constraints of the existing civic center include the difficulty in expanding municipal offices; the small size of the arena for modern-day large venues; the aging HVAC system; the unfriendly environment for pedestrian activity; the lack of landscaped areas offering a “softer” streetscape view; and the aging parking lot surface.

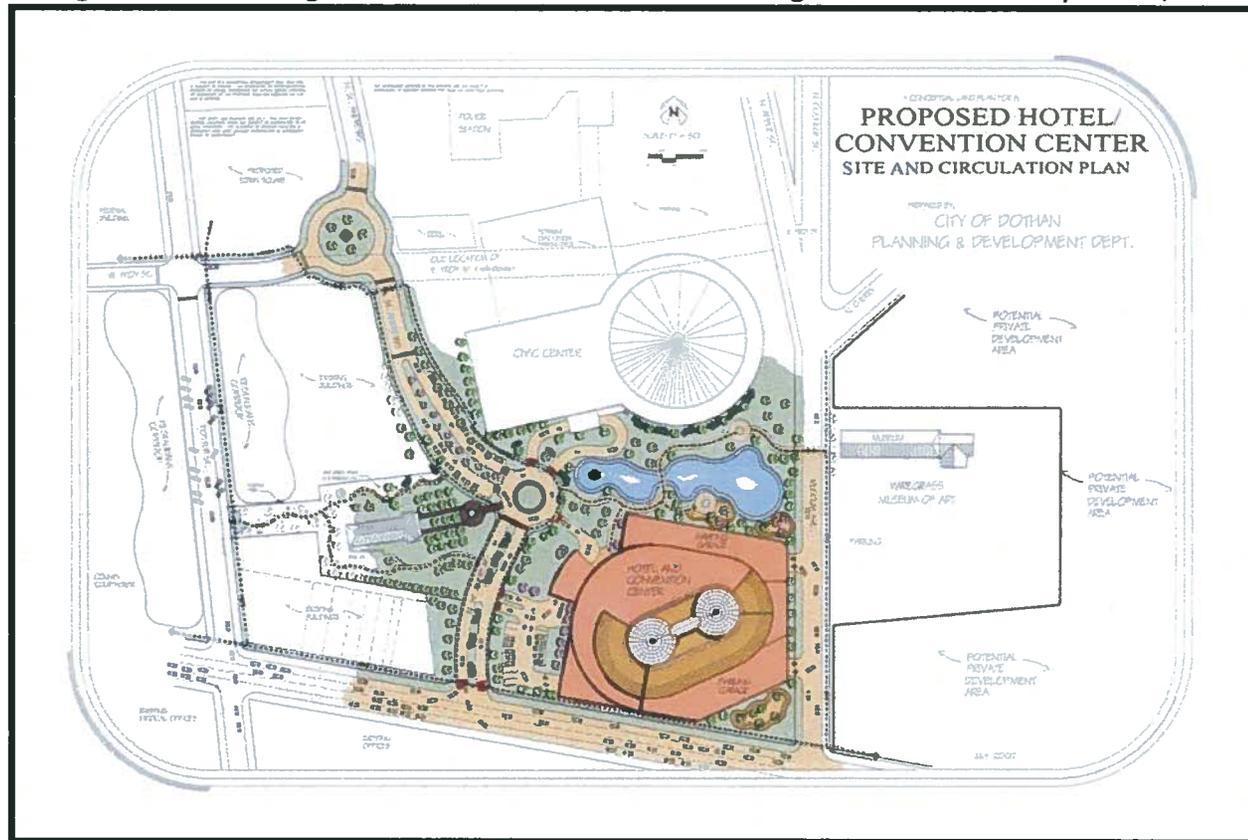




Part of a consideration to spark interest and outside investment into our downtown area included a proposal to offer a portion of the civic center property to a hotel developer. The idea was to attract a 4 or 5-star hotel and convention center to the civic center property where the current parking lot sits. The existing parking lot would be replaced by the construction of a new parking garage on the north side of the civic center's municipal administration office building. Four alternative redevelopment concepts were prepared. Two of those alternatives of how that redevelopment idea might be accomplished are presented below and on the following page.

### Concept "A"

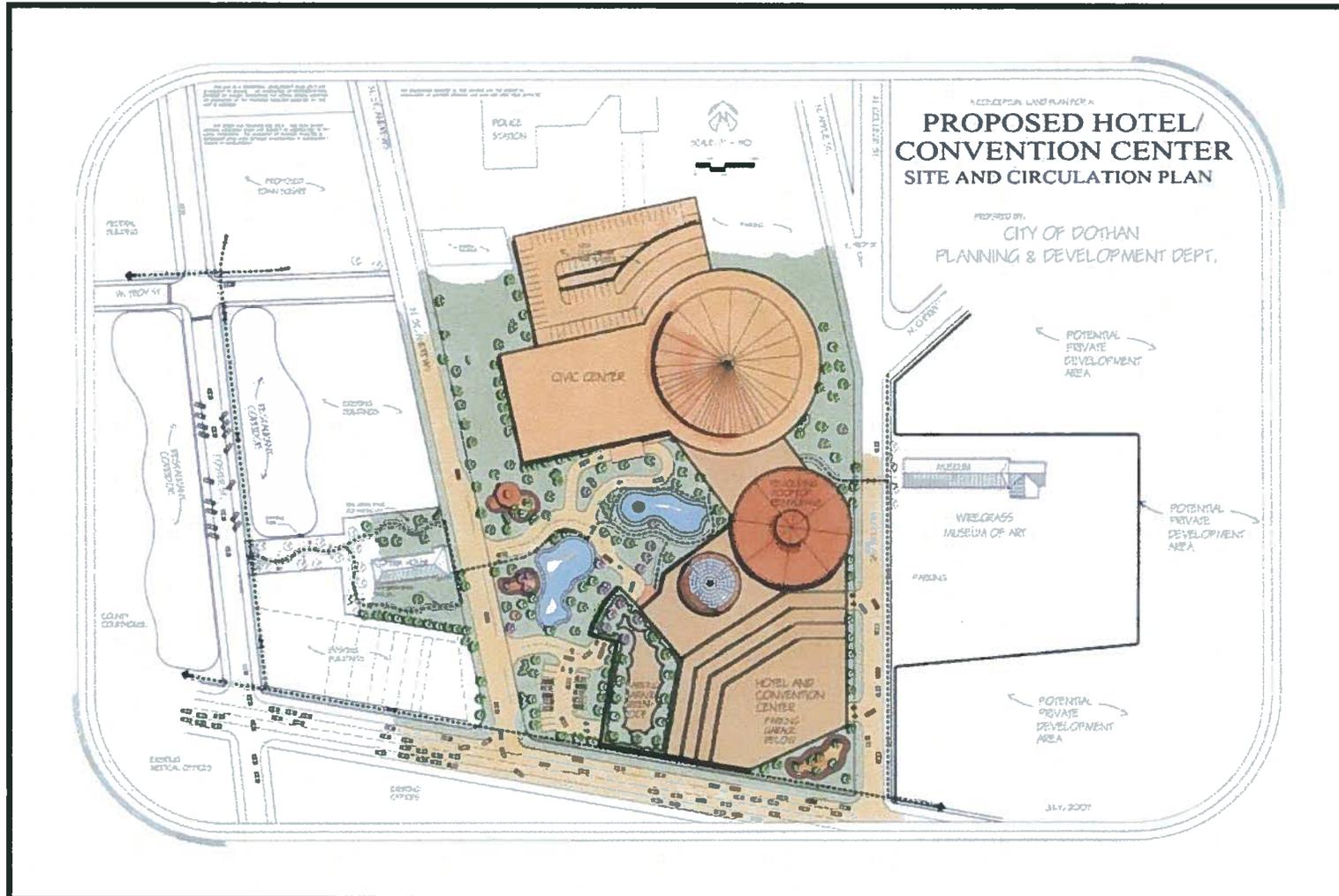
The civic center building remains unchanged, and N. St. Andrews Street is realigned to create a campus-like, lake endowed environs.





## Concept "B"

The civic center is joined to the new hotel and a parking garage is constructed along the north civic center wall atop the abandoned section of the Troy Street right-of-way. The result is a Municipal Complex Campus joining the city administrative offices to the police station.





## The Pedestrian Link

Walkable downtowns with open spaces such as parks and “people spaces” (small landscaped areas along the sidewalks with benches for sitting and ornamental street lights for illumination) are important components to the vitality of cities. The sense of security while in the downtown area is important to attracting visitors. It is imperative that visitors to the downtown feel safe and are able to find their way around on foot. Satellite parking areas on the periphery of new commercial developments in “downtowns” promote the concept of parking in perimeter lots and encouraging foot traffic through the retail, restaurant, and entertainment areas along the project’s “Main Street”. This strategy eliminates the amount of conflicts between foot traffic and vehicular traffic.

Concepts of walk-ability in new retail, restaurant and office environments borrows from a simpler time such as the one Dothan knew during the 1940s and 1950s where the downtown was the hub of weekday and weekend activity. The advent of the satellite malls in suburbia did not materialize until the 1960s and 1970s throughout this nation. Now the trend is to return to the feel of the downtown. New developments are attempting, with great success, in recreating the downtown “feel” and sense of community that emulates a typical small town downtown area in the new open-air mall concepts being developed throughout the country. Smart cities are capitalizing upon this success and rejuvenating their own central business districts to draw people to the downtown after normal working hours.

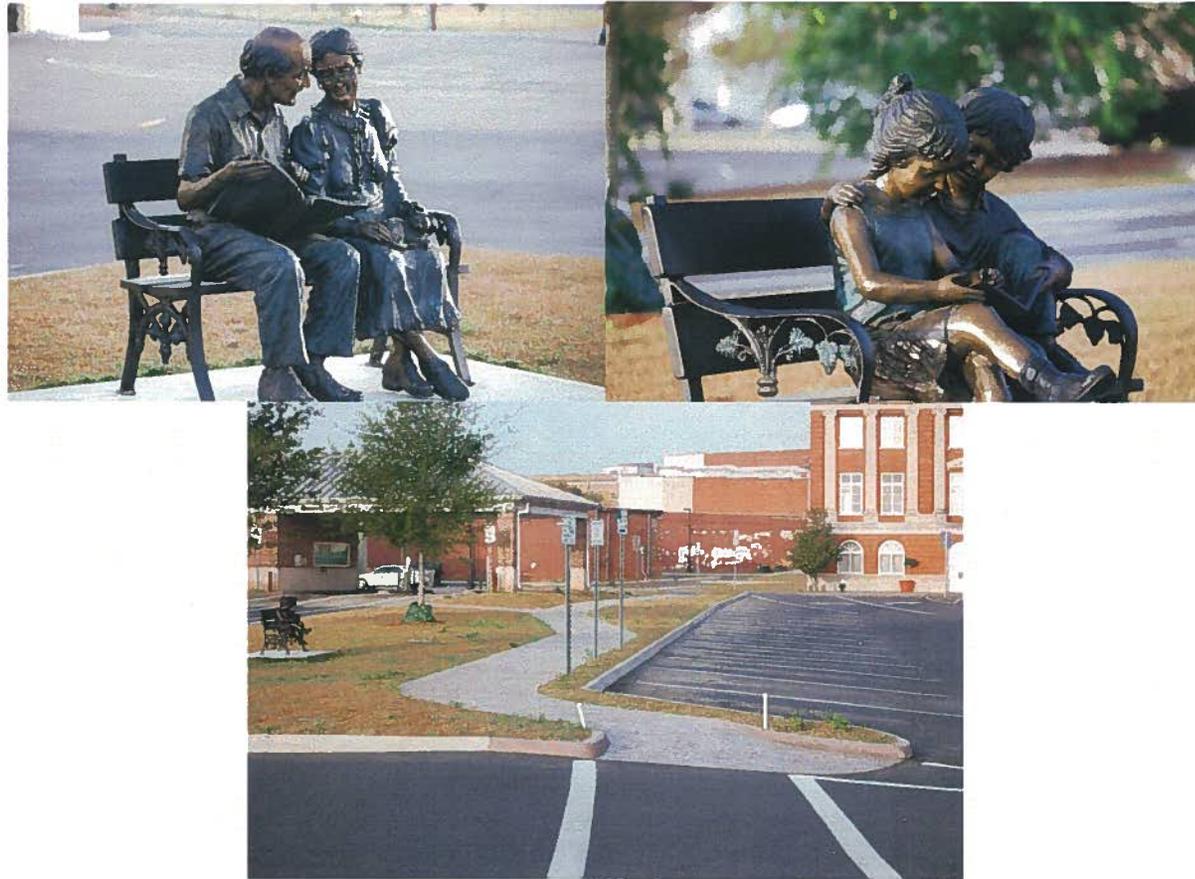
The plan on the following page presents an opportunity to reconstruct the parking lot and redirect traffic flow in the downtown area to the benefit of creating a large, municipal “complex”. The new complex consists of the civic center, the Opera House, the Wiregrass Museum of Art, and the police station linked to the civic center by a new building containing municipal offices. The 100 block of N. St. Andrews is eliminated in this concept and in its place are a parking area and a system of pedestrian ways designed to decrease the amount of pedestrian/vehicular conflict to those who visit the new complex. The pedestrian ways will enable a visitor to walk through the new, park-like parking lot between the museum of art and the restaurant district along the 100 block of N. Foster Street with little threat from automobile traffic. Views of the Opera House have been enhanced with the removal of the old Jail House and paving which was at the front door of this entertainment facility.

A pedestrian connection through the civic center parking lot has been constructed as the result of this plan and the photos follow the concept plan.



**Photos**

Following are photographs of the constructed pedestrian link through the civic center parking lot, adorned with landscaping, ornamental lighting, and street art.





## **Streetscape Re-inventing and Wayfinding**

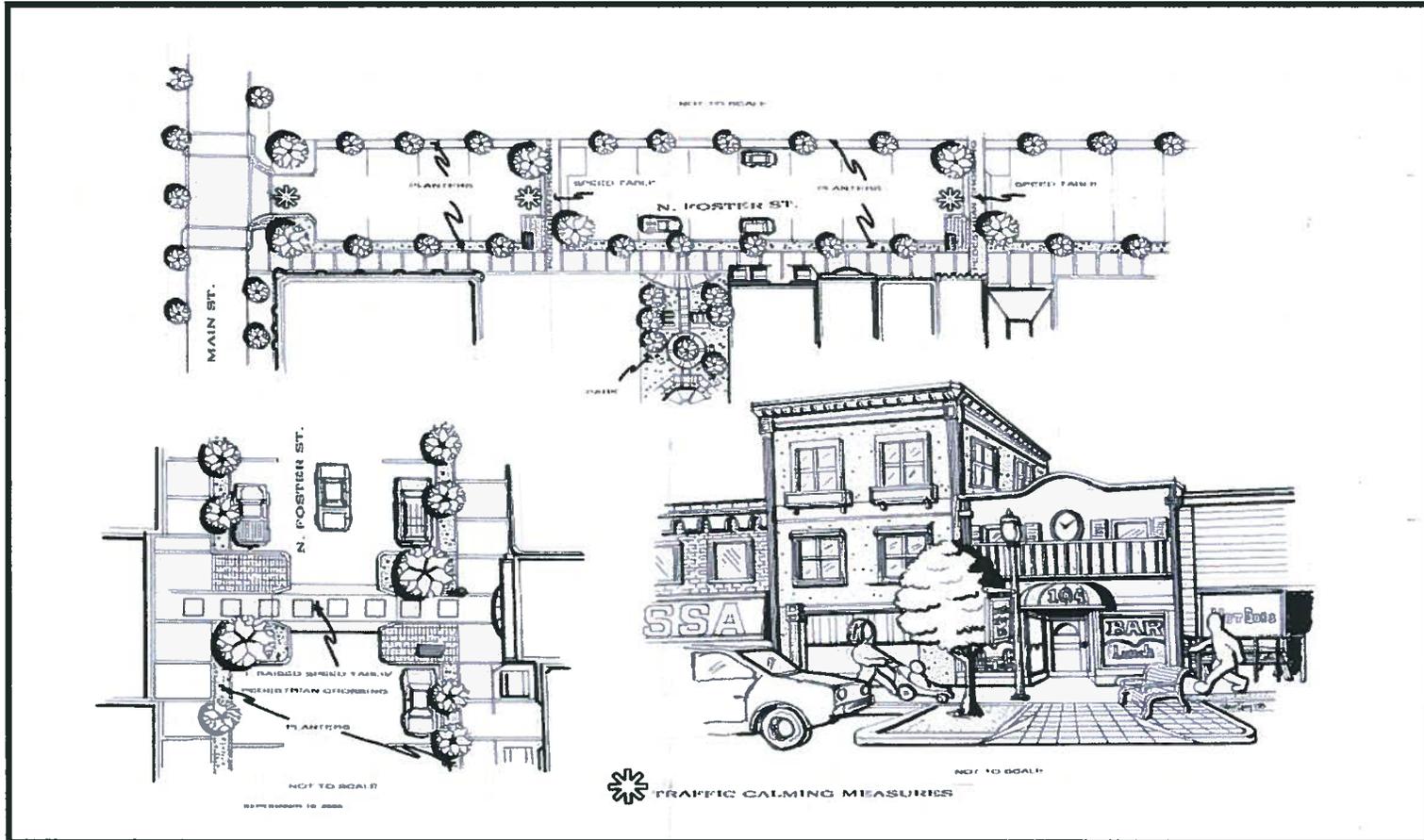
Some techniques employed by cities to attract new businesses and people downtown are to improve the feel of the downtown streetscapes with ornamental lighting, landscaped areas, brick pavers, parks and benches. To add to the sense of security, cities are increasing the amount of police officers on foot patrols, installing various methods of traffic calming measures, and providing better street lighting.

The Long Range Planning Division looked at some conceptual ideas that Dothan might use in its downtown revitalization efforts which would capitalize on some of these techniques and facilitate retail and restaurant activities on its streets. The following pages present two conceptual, perspective artist's renderings of generic improvements that might be applied to any street downtown. Also included are conceptual plans to install a wayfinding system, improve the 100 Block of North Foster Street, construct a new town center, provide a library expansion, improve existing parks, and a sketch of a possible gateway in the downtown area as well as introduce new concepts for opportunities in residential development in our downtown environs.





## Concept "B"

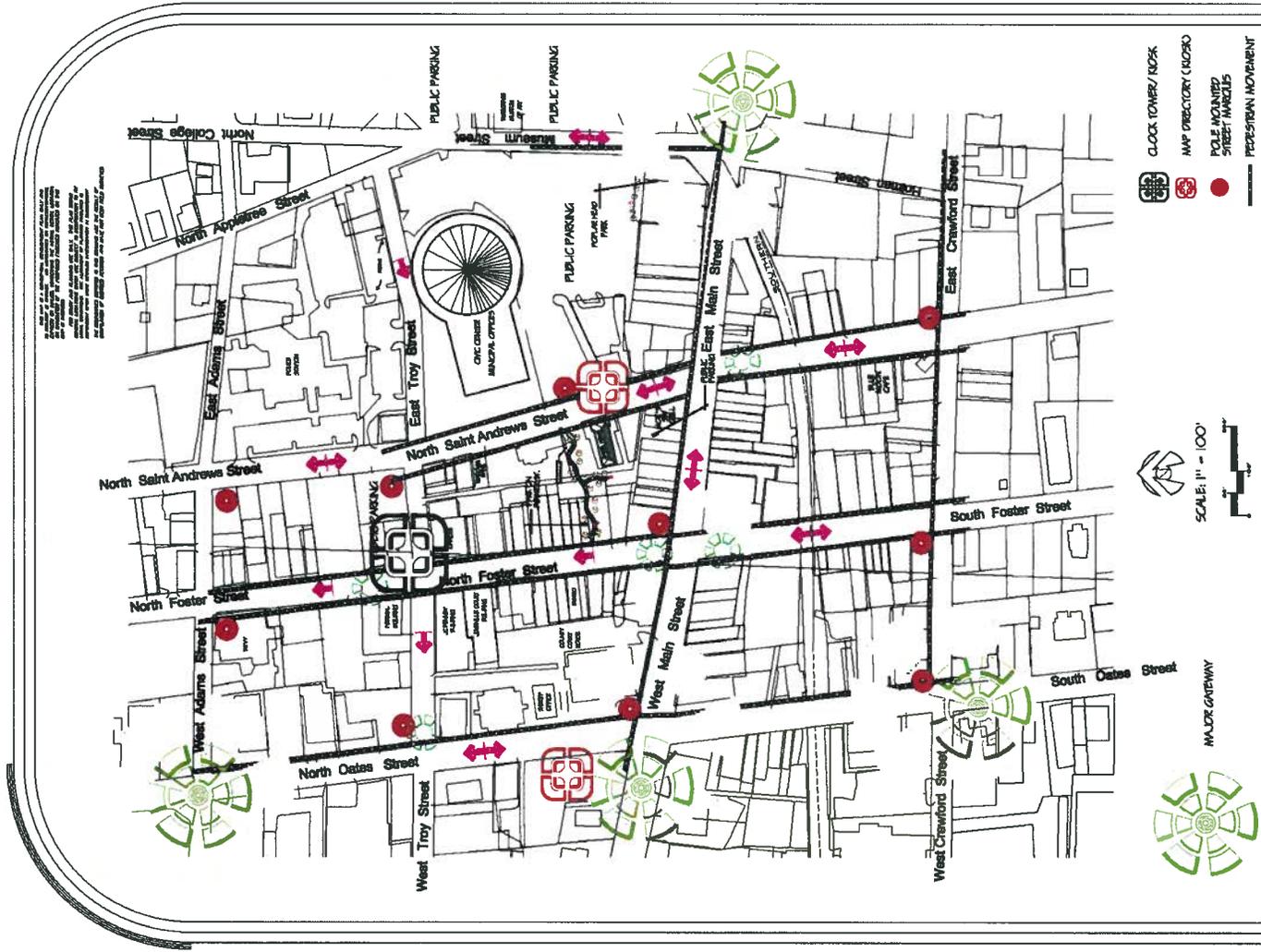


This sketch offers an example of streetscape improvements along the 100 block of N. Foster St. There are façade improvements, people spaces, parallel on-street parking, wide sidewalks, street trees, ornamental street lamps, and raised speed tables as traffic calming and pedestrian crossings.



## **Wayfinding**

Directing people to the downtown can be challenging unless a system of signs, banners, gateways, and other measure light the way for the public to navigate. Wayfinding plans can be holistic and city-wide or site specific restricted to a small area. The wayfinding plan the Long Range Planning Division prepared was limited to downtown environs; and envisioned a system of banners, tree pallets, street lights, minor and major gateways, and directional kiosks to assist the public in navigating their way around. It is found on the following page.



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-  CLOCK TOWER/ TOWER
-  MAP DIRECTORY (KIOSK)
-  POLE MOUNTED STREET MARKERS
-  PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT



## DOWNTOWN DOTHAN WAYFINDING SIGNAGE PLAN

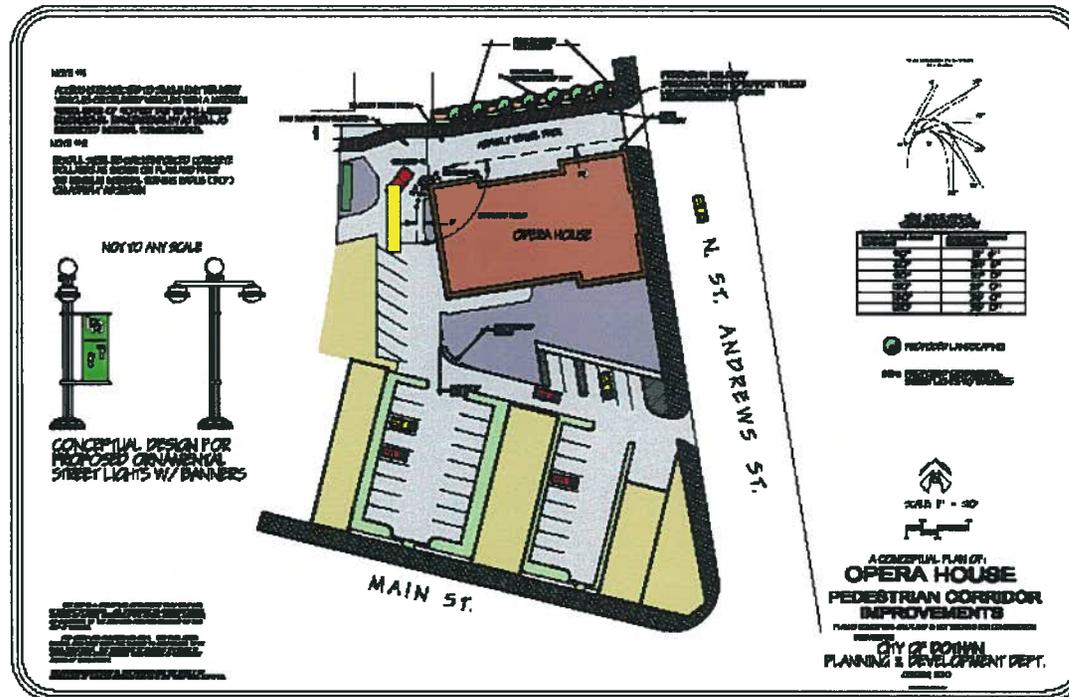
PREPARED BY:  
CITY OF DOTHAN  
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPT.

JANUARY 6, 2009





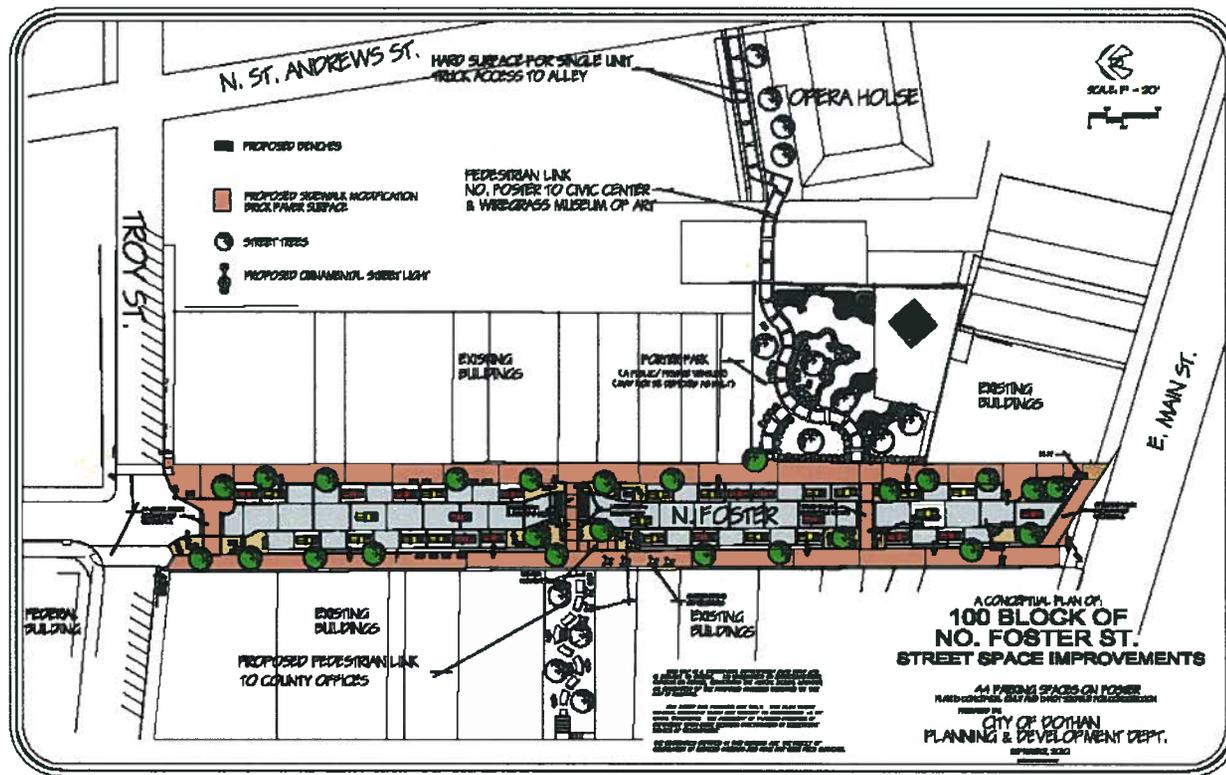
The following conceptual plan delineates the possibility of developing the space that once was occupied by the old jail house into a parking lot. A continuation of the pedestrian link from the Wiregrass Museum of Art and civic center to N. Foster St. is suggested on the north side of the Opera House. Ornamental street lamps adorned with wayfinding banners would illuminate and mark the pedestrian trail.





## 100 Block of N. Foster Street Space Improvements

A development plan was prepared for the 100 block of N. Foster to widen sidewalks, install speed table pedestrian crosswalks, install street trees and lighting, benches, street art, and to also incorporate the flow of the trail system in Porter Park as well as a narrow bit of land running between buildings.





## **Public Open Spaces and Facilities**

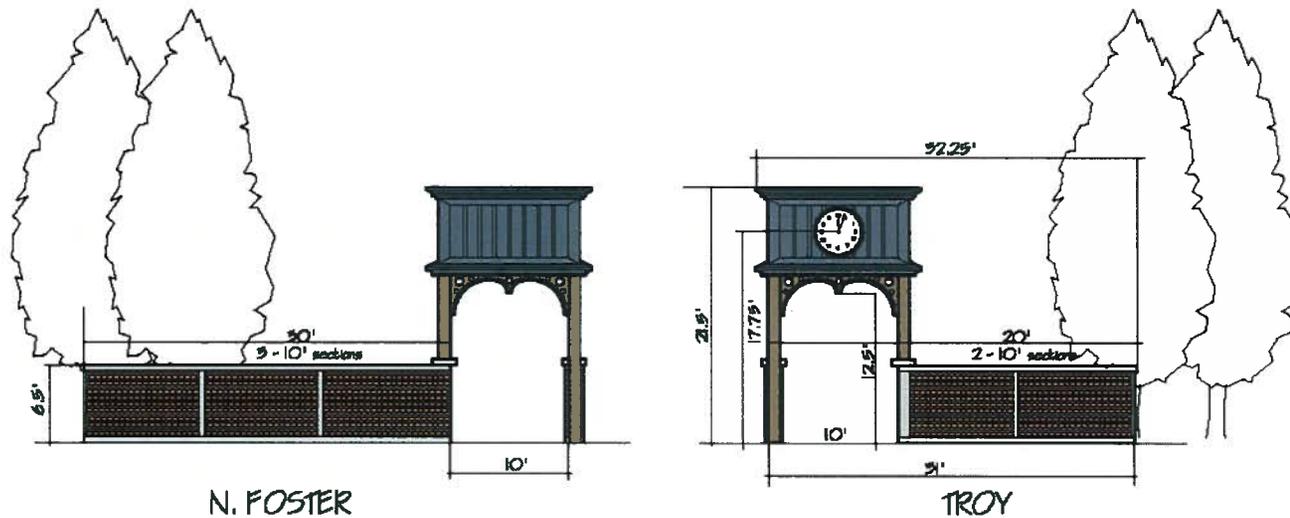
Parks and Public places play an important role in the resident's sense of community and sense of belonging. Some elderly citizens and most retirees consider quality community public spaces and places as an integral part of their overall sense of arrival and quality of life. A city must continually develop or re-invent open spaces and facilities to be as diverse as the makeup of its population and as complex as their needs. The Long Range Planning Division prepared plans that do just that. Following are some of those plans that propose the construction of a new town center, enable a library expansion, improve two existing downtown parks, and provide an idea for a possible gateway in the downtown area as well as to introduce new imagination for opportunities in non-traditional residential developments in our downtown environs.





## Clock Tower

The town center has always been envisioned to harbor a clock tower as its focal point. The Long Range Planning Division artist's rendering below depicts how that clock tower might look.



ALL EXTERIOR WALLS ARE BRICKED AND SUPPORTED BY AN TREATED  
LEADER AND FRAISED WITH 1/2" WALL BOARD

THIS PLAN IS A CONCEPTUAL, PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION ONLY AND  
IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. NO WARRANTIES OR REPRESENTATIONS  
EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, CONCERNING THE ACTUAL DESIGN, LOCATION,  
OR CHARACTER OF THE PROPOSED FACILITIES INDICATED ON THIS  
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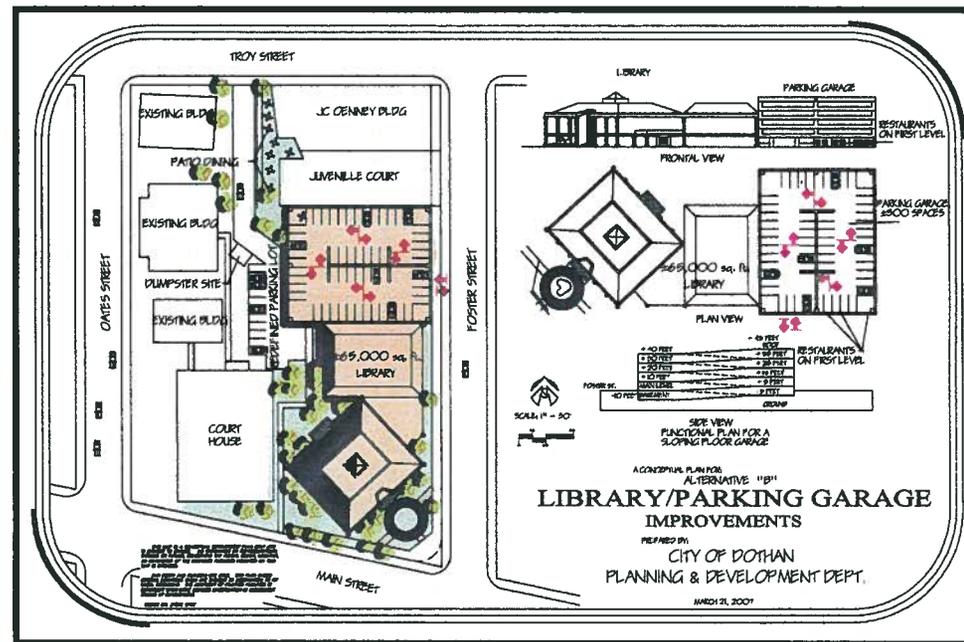
DESIGN AND DRAWING BY: [unreadable]



## Public Library

The city considered the construction of a new public library on N. Foster Street and the Long Range Planning Division prepared two alternative conceptual layouts for a proposed new library and parking structure. One of those two layouts follows.

## North Foster Street Site

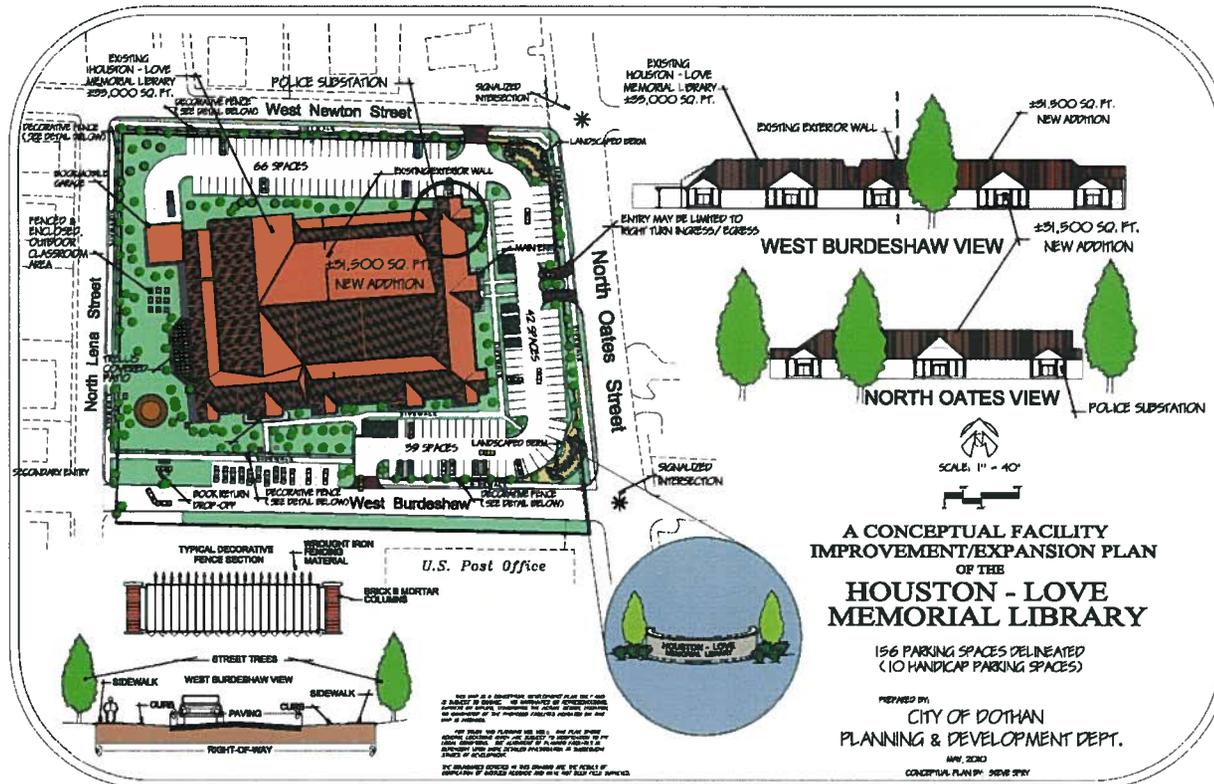


This alternative places the library at the intersection of Main and N. Foster Streets with the parking garage further up N. Foster. This enables traffic entering and exiting the garage stacking ability along N. Foster St. rather than the busy Main Street.



## Original Library Site

After careful study the North Foster Street site was eliminated from consideration and expansion to the existing Houston Memorial Library was examined as the viable alternative. Both the city and the county governments reached an agreement to share in the cost of acquisition of adjacent developed properties along North Oates Street so that the expansion could take place. The Long Range Planning Division prepared the plan below which delineates the conceptual expansion plan for the site.





## Parks

The downtown area has two park sites that the Long Range Planning Division studied for possible improvements. The first was Porter Park on Foster Street and the second was Poplar Head Park at Main and Museum Streets. Porter Park has been built.

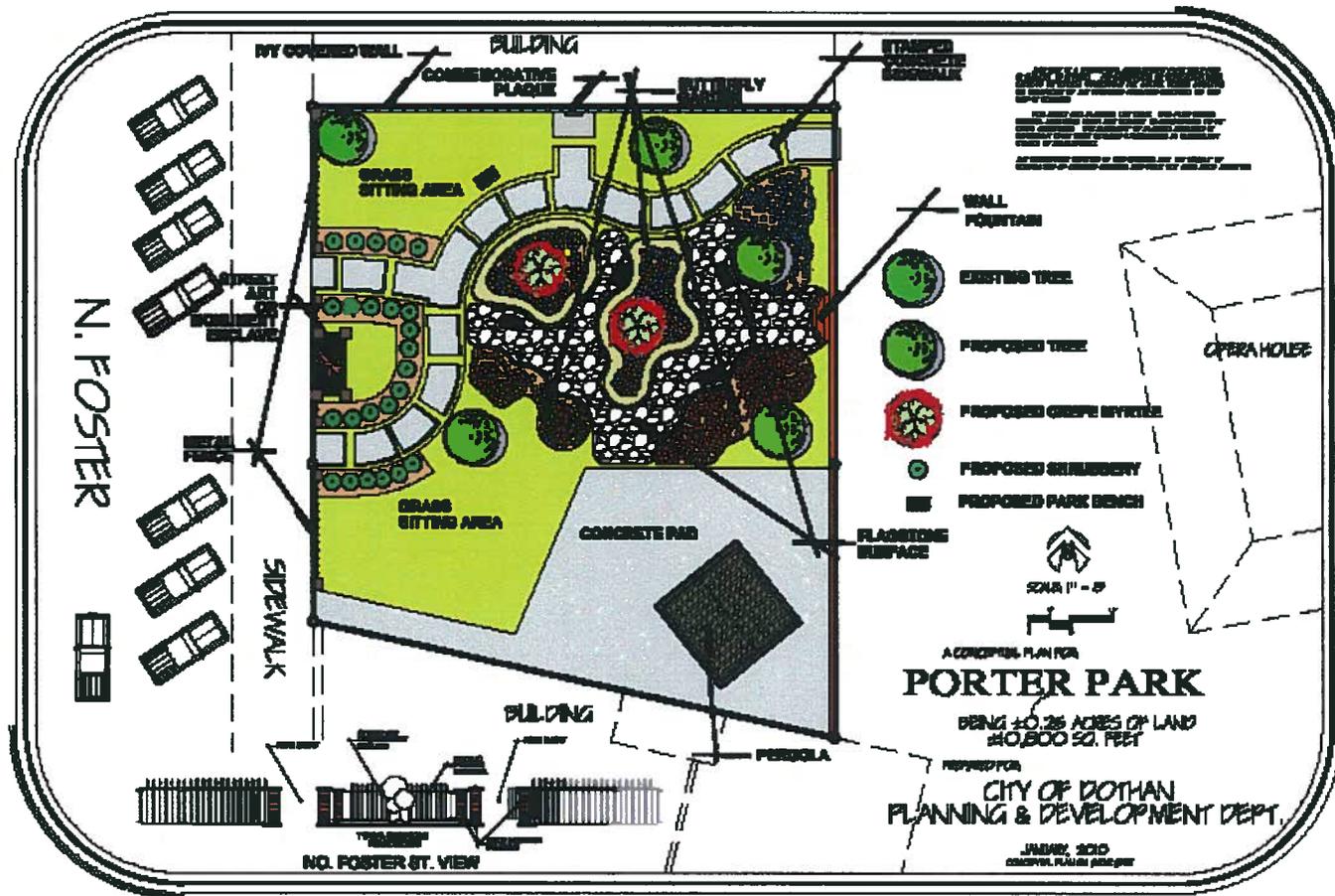
### Porter Park on Foster

This photo was taken in 2008 of the existing, underused park before the Long Range Planning Division redesigned it. Equipment and landscape material placement lacked real planning. The concrete sidewalk which ran adjacent to the park didn't meander through the park and missed an opportunity to tie the park features together. It was uninviting, lacked the sense of arrival, character, and place.



# Porter Park on Foster Renovation

It all began with a Plan.



The following photos were taken April 16, 2010 as the construction work on Porter Park began.



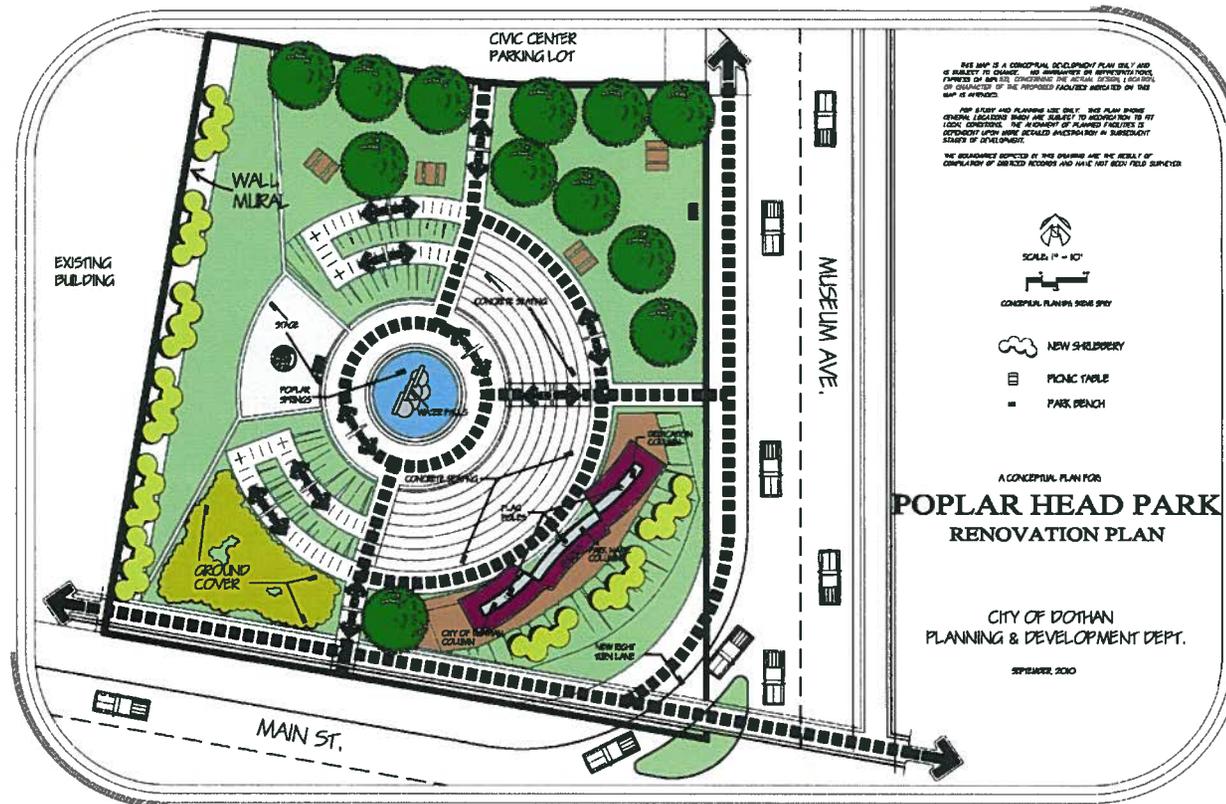
And the photos below were taken April 16, 2012 exactly two years after the construction work on Porter Park began.





## Poplar Head Park

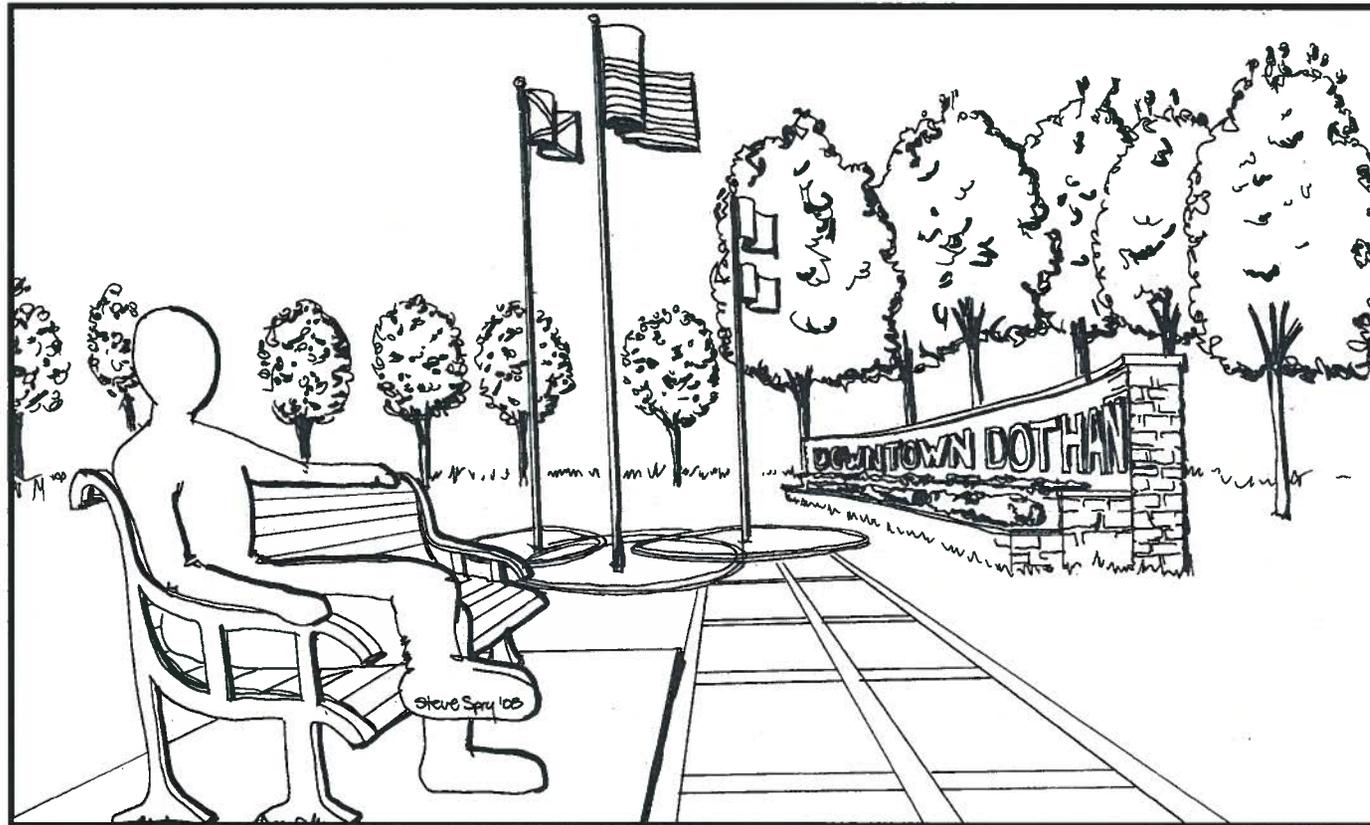
Since the creation of the Long Range Planning Division in 2006, several alternative conceptual site plans of possible improvements to Poplar Head Park have been developed for consideration. Below is just one example of those alternatives.





## Downtown Dothan Gateway

The Dothan Downtown has several gateways. In the city's Wayfinding Plan major and minor gateways were identified. The perspective sketch below presents the Long Range Planning Division artist's concept of how a major gateway to Dothan's Downtown might appear.



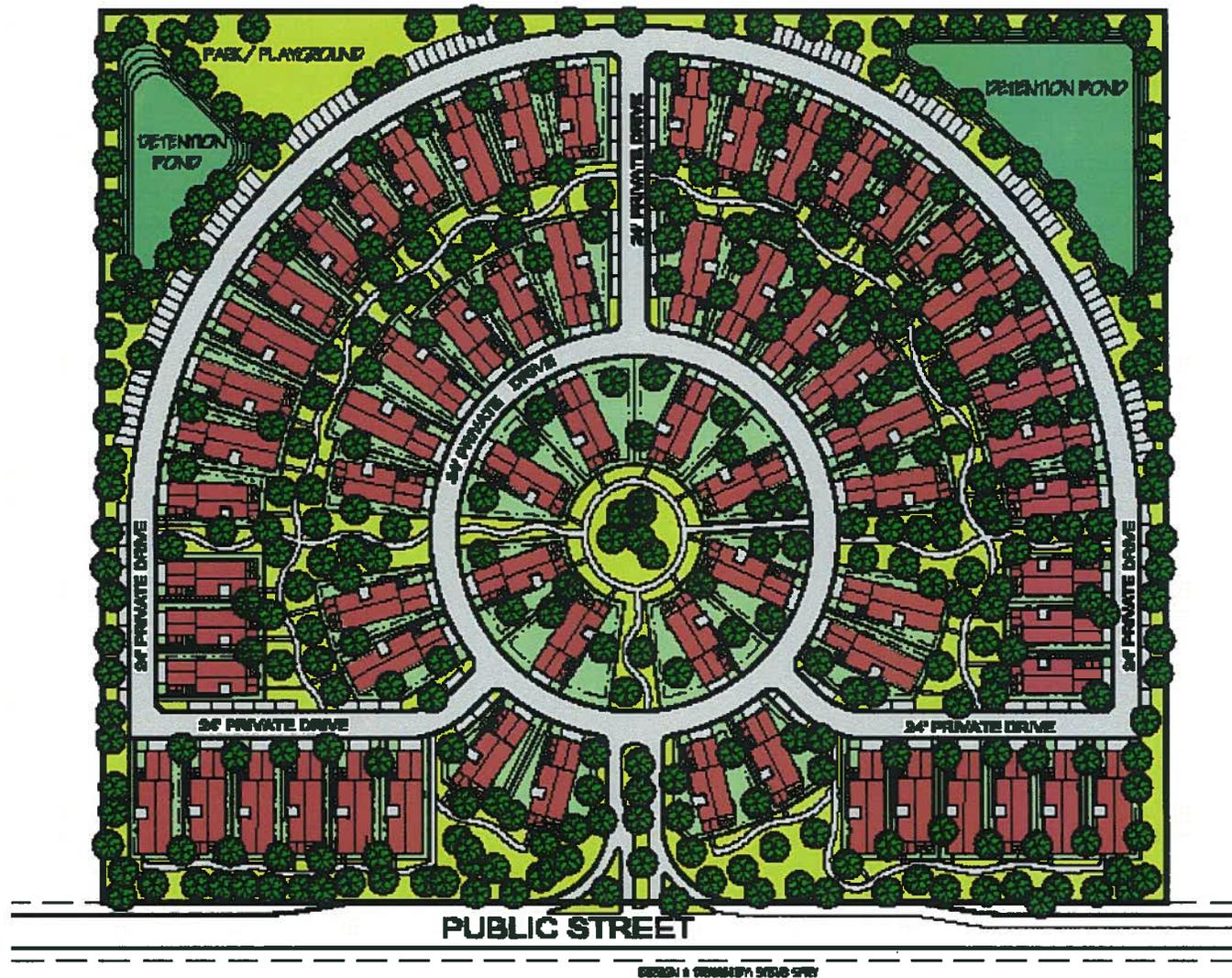


## **Downtown Residential Development**

Creative thinking and design innovations are keys to planning success whether in the public or the private sector. Imagination is fundamental in planning and the ability to formulate that imagination to plans on paper is a talent critical in today's planning world. Without that ability we are merely regulators.

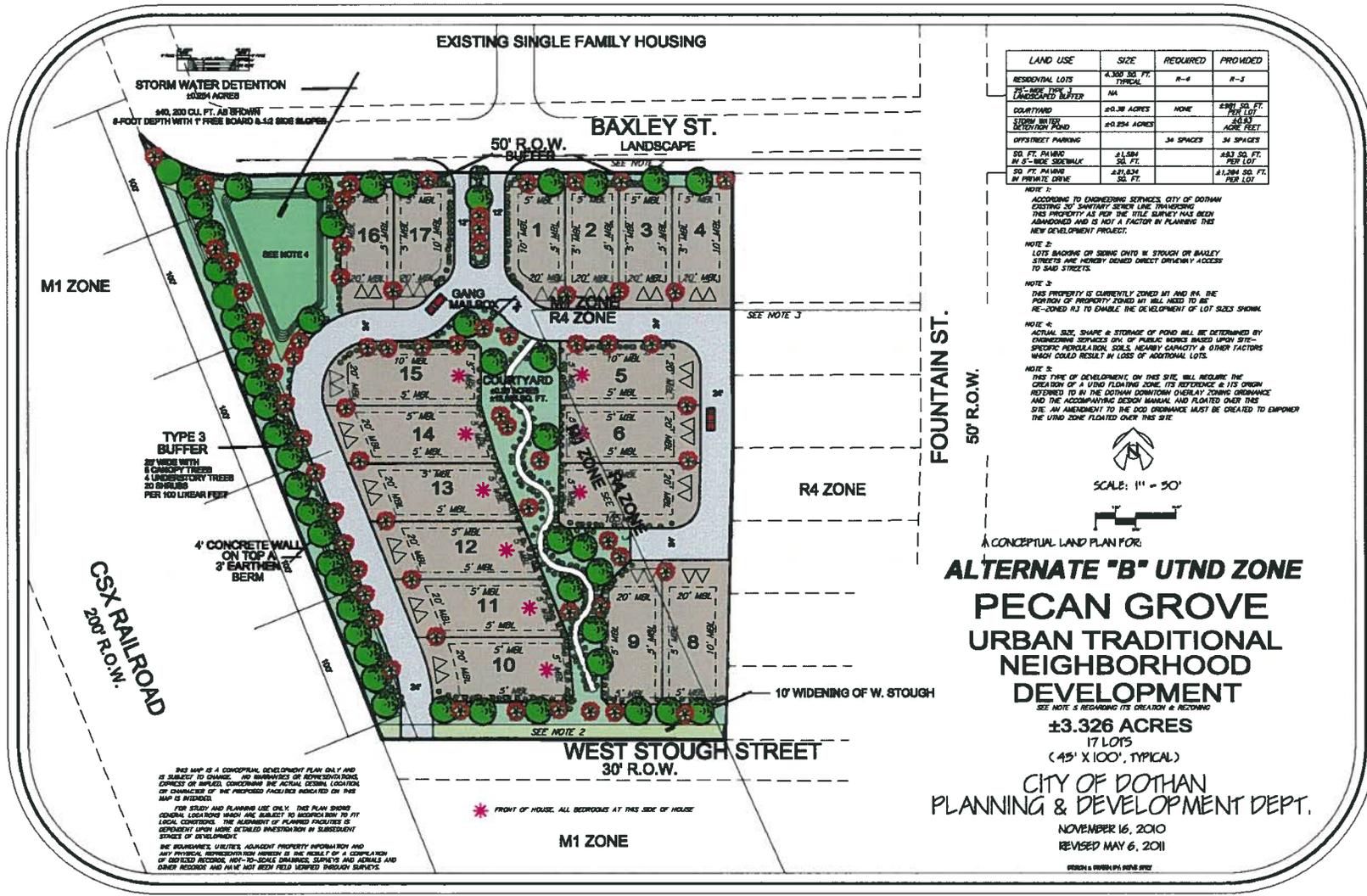
The Long Range Planning Division prepared the new Downtown Overlay District (DOD) Ordinance along with the DOD Design Manual which, in 2010, the Dothan Planning Commission approved and the Dothan City Commission adopted. The new ordinance allows Urban Traditional Neighborhood Development (UTND) zones to "float" onto undeveloped or underdeveloped infill tracts in and nearby the downtown core area. This new development opportunity might change the image of the Dothan downtown into one with close in residential opportunities. A UTND, as defined in the DOD Design Manual can occur on small tracts of land, have zero building setbacks and smaller than normal zoned lot sizes. The compact nature of the UTND will minimize utility lines and have narrow street right-of-ways. The "T" T-type and "L" -type dead end street turn around features as opposed to the traditional cul-de-sac circle will reduce construction costs to the developer and maintenance costs to the HOA or city while providing adequate vehicle and utility access and distribution.

The illustration by the Long Range Planning Division on the following page depicts a typical UTND scenario that could be allowed within the DOD or its environs.





The possible UTND approach:





**Dothan leaders have done a great deal of thinking and dreaming. We adopted a redevelopment plan for downtown in the summer of 2007 which we are determined to follow. In 2012 the first of four urban sector super neighborhood plans (the NE Urban Sector Neighborhoods Plan) prepared by the Long Range Planning Division was approved by the Planning Commission. That Plan included improvements to the downtown area including wayfinding and streetscaping as part of the implementation recommendations.**

**Our downtown, like many others, is a casualty of failed community commitment resulting in gradual land use changes and declining investment. Nevertheless, we are determined to change these conditions from an economic detriment to an economic advantage. We are convinced that our downtown can realize and economic rebirth and once again, be an important part of the local economy. The momentum for change had already begun as we have seen an increasing interest in the area but we need a strong infusion of capital to advance the plans and concepts on the preceding pages.**

**Please Use this Space for Notes:**

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