

Unique Identity: Focus on Downtown

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personal vision statements:

*“Downtown is alive with many
who live, work and play there
joined by others...for a day’s
or evening’s enjoyment.”*

Chapter Summary

Downtown Shreveport is the only real, urban downtown in a large region and provides a key resource for distinguishing Shreveport from other parts of the ArkLaTex. This chapter focuses on downtown and its waterfront, and includes an overview of existing conditions, a summary of public input related to downtown, and a series of goals, strategies and actions to create a better connected, mixed-use, live, work and play environment that further cements downtown as the economic and cultural center for the City of Shreveport and the surrounding region. The Master Plan framework for downtown has several components: securing the urban and historic character of downtown; bringing new activity through educational and civic institutions and strengthening the arts and culture hub already developing in the West Edge; establishing a strong residential component by reusing historic buildings and creating new neighborhoods in Cross Bayou and Ledbetter Heights; better connecting downtown's different districts; developing public green space; and revitalizing Texas Avenue as an events and "main street" corridor.

Strategies and actions include:

- Enact new downtown zoning and a demolition delay ordinance for historic buildings.
- Revise regulations and incentives for redevelopment and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, including a demolition delay ordinance, and creation of new residential space on underutilized lots.
- Develop a detailed plan for Cross Bayou as a residential district with publicly accessible natural green space along the water. Take steps to prepare the area for development— correct zoning, design guidelines, park planning, brownfields cleanup—and then develop a request for proposals to seek an experienced developer for a public-private development.
- Further develop the West Edge Arts District with adaptive reuse of historic buildings for cultural and residential purposes.
- Establish more educational programs downtown to bring student life to downtown streets.
- Improve circulation and parking downtown by creating a parking-management district for public and private spaces, providing for resident parking, establishing a circulator van or trolley, and exploring the elimination of one-way streets.
- Expand the tax-increment finance district downtown for key public projects to attract private investment.

GOALS	POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS
<i>A mixed-use, live, work and play center that serves as the economic, historic and cultural downtown of the ArkLaTex region.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support initiatives to attract economic and cultural activities and organizations to locate downtown. • Promote initiatives to provide a diversity of downtown housing options including rental and ownership units and mixed-use. • Encouraging policies and incentives to facilitate adaptive reuse of downtown's historic, vacant and/or blighted structures. • Support infrastructure investments that further revitalization. • Support investments and programs that improve the safety, appearance and cleanliness of downtown.
<i>An active, publicly accessible waterfront with recreational amenities and residential/mixed-use development.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus public efforts on creating a publicly accessible waterfront along Cross Bayou. • Support zoning and land use policies that encourage quality development of vacant parcels along the waterfront.
<i>Enhanced connections within downtown and improved downtown connections to other parts of the city and region.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support initiatives and investments that improve pedestrian, transit, parking and automobile circulation and conditions throughout downtown.

Findings

- 10 percent of all jobs within Shreveport are located within the downtown/waterfront planning area.
- Only 1 percent of Shreveport's population resides within the downtown/waterfront planning area.
- Downtown has few residential options for renters or owners, and existing densities are not sufficient to attract and support neighborhood retail and services.
- Large vacant and underutilized parcels with development potential, many publicly owned, have potential for residential and/or mixed-use development along the Cross Bayou waterfront and in the Ledbetter Heights subdistrict.
- Three interlocking organizations are responsible for downtown promotion and development—Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Downtown Shreveport Unlimited (DSU) and Downtown Shreveport Development Corporation (DSDC).
- Community organizations, such as the Texas Avenue Community Association, are taking action to encourage redevelopment.
- Downtown is the arts and cultural center of the ArkLaTex region.
- Downtown is home to three National Register Historic Districts and two dozen listed historic structures.
- Major strategic initiatives/projects completed over the last 20 years, all with public investment, include the Convention Center and Hotel, Sci-Port, Robinson Film Center, Festival Plaza, and consolidation of city and parish government offices in Government Plaza.
- Downtown is the center of northwest Louisiana's court system, with parish, state and federal court facilities.
- Riverboat casino facilities along the Red River bring thousands of visitors to the downtown area annually; however, their design discourages visitors from venturing outside their facilities to experience other downtown options.
- Casino facilities prevent public access along a portion of the downtown Red River waterfront.
- Downtown has few park and recreational facilities.
- There is citywide support for development and redevelopment within downtown.

Challenges

- Attracting residential development of various types to create the critical mass needed to support additional retail and services.
- Creating an improved, more attractive public realm necessary to entice private development in the planning area subdistricts.
- Creating a publicly accessible Cross Bayou waterfront with balanced zoning and land use policies for residential and mixed-use development.
- Preserving and reusing historic and older structures.
- Identifying appropriate development scenarios for the downtown area's numerous vacant and adjudicated properties.
- Revitalizing and rebranding the Red River District to become a vital, pedestrian oriented retail and dining destination within downtown.
- Changing perceptions that downtown is unsafe (despite its low crime rate).
- Improving connections and circulation among downtown's subdistricts.
- Attracting large companies to establish headquarters in downtown.
- Better marketing downtown's numerous cultural amenities and organizations.
- Enforcing property standards.

A. Current Conditions

DOWNTOWN PLANNING AREA

The downtown and waterfront planning area comprises roughly 750 acres bounded by the Red River to the east, Pete Harris Drive to the west, Cross Bayou to the north and I-20 to the south. The area generally adheres to the boundaries over which the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has oversight, with the exception of an area southeast of I-20 that can be studied in a later phase for future waterfront redevelopment. Over time, the area north of Cross Bayou up to Common Street should also be incorporated into downtown.

Previous planning efforts identified several sub-districts within downtown. These include the Central Business District, West Edge Cultural District and Riverfront District (which together make up the Central Core); Cross Bayou; the South Side; Ledbetter Heights; and the Texas Avenue Corridor. An analysis of land uses and site visits confirmed that these sub-districts accurately reflect areas of different built character and use within the downtown planning area.

DOWNTOWN HISTORY

What today is known as downtown Shreveport was founded in 1836 when a consortium of real estate speculators, including Captain Shreve, established Shreve Town on 649 acres along the banks of the then newly navigable Red River. The original eight-by-eight street grid laid out south of Cross Bayou and West of the Red River remains virtually intact and is today recognized as the Central Business District.

Early economic activity centered on prosperous cotton and timber industries, which used the Red River to ship goods south to New Orleans and on to the rest of the world. At its peak in the post-Civil War 1870s and 1880s, downtown Shreveport was the third-largest inland cotton port in the nation, with the majority of operations and warehouses lining Commerce Street in downtown. In the late nineteenth century, railroads transformed the means for transporting goods, and industry no longer relied solely on water routes for shipments.

The discovery of extensive oil and natural gas reserves in the early 20th century transformed downtown, initiating a building spree marked by the construction of downtown's first high rise, the Commercial National Bank building at Texas and Market streets, which still stands today. The oil boom brought great wealth to downtown. Milam and Texas streets teemed with retail and cultural activity, and streetcars circulated residents around, in and out of downtown. Numerous structures still standing were built during the boom years of the 1920s and 1930s to cater to a growing affluent population, including the former Washington and Jefferson hotels, the County Courthouse, the Selber Brothers Building, the Y.M.C.A, and the famous Strand Theater.

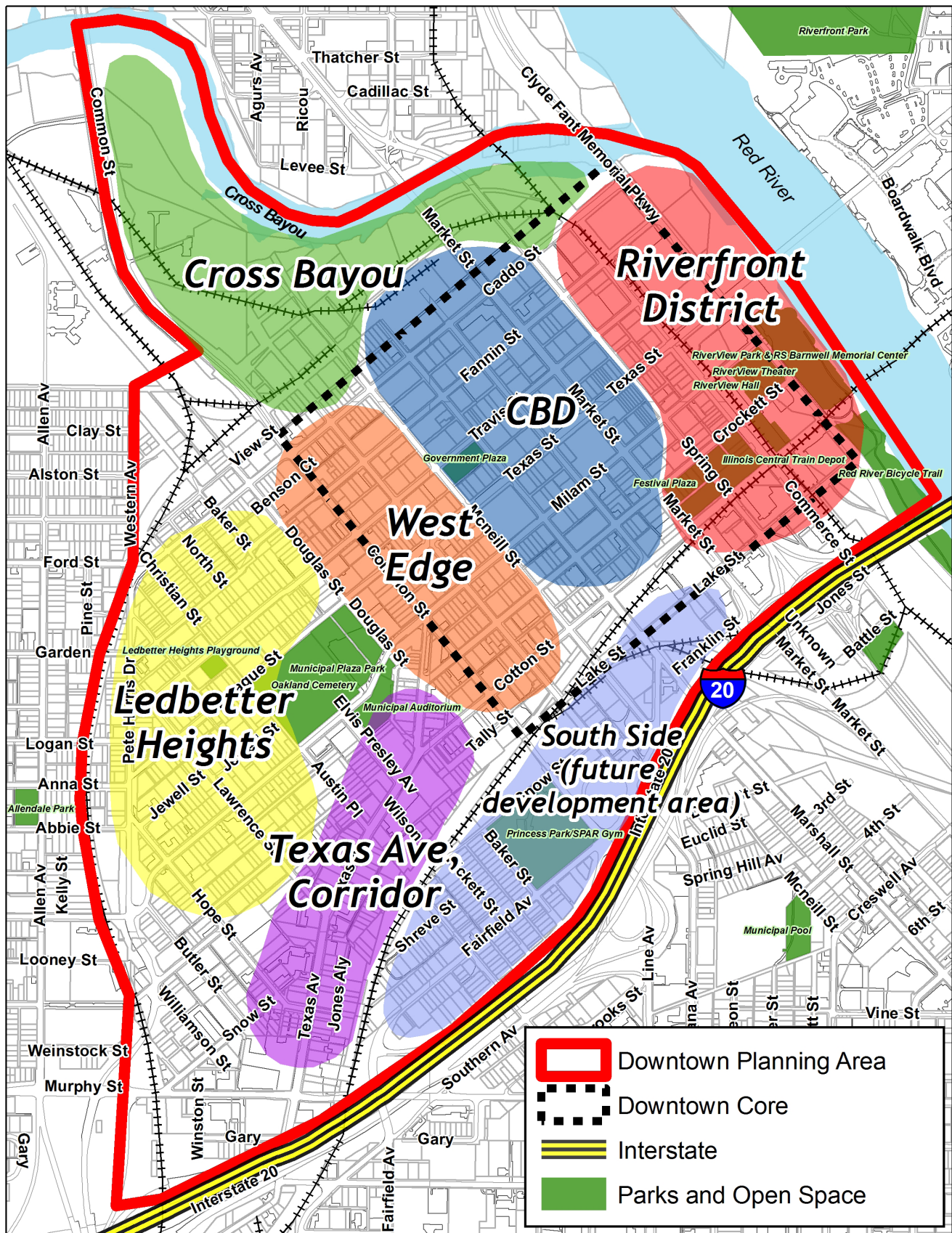
By the end of the 1930s, oil production was moving away from the Shreveport area to Texas, California, and developing foreign centers like the Middle East. Although downtown remained a vibrant city center in the years immediately following World War II, numerous downtown landmarks began to close in the 1950s and 1960s, including the once-bustling Union Station passenger terminal and the First Baptist Church on Travis Street. What followed was a slow but steady decline, as development and investment moved to more suburban areas. After the oil bust of the 1980s, office vacancies were high, surrounding neighborhoods like Ledbetter Heights lost most of their population, and retail activity fled for suburban locations south of the downtown.

DOWNTOWN TODAY

After years of economic decline, the city has made significant progress over the last several decades in reinvigorating parts of downtown. It remains the economic and cultural center for its region, as well as the center of government for the city and for Caddo Parish.

The Shreveport Convention Center brings thousands of visitors, many of whom stay in the convention center hotel. Gaming and entertainment establishments, Sam's Town and El Dorado, employ thousands and draw both locals and out of state visitors to the banks of the Red River. Sci-Port, the nationally regarded science center, other museums, and Festival Plaza draw people from all walks of life to the more

MAP 10.1 DOWNTOWN PLANNING AREA



Source: NLCOG, Goody Clancy 2009



Public investments within the downtown planning area provide key anchors on which to build over the next 20 years.

family-centered southeastern entertainment district, and newer attractions such as Robinson Film Center. Renovated theaters like the Strand, Capri and Municipal Auditorium provide more cultural programming to the West Edge District. Office vacancy rates have decreased, and new investments are underway, such as Millennium Studios, adjacent to downtown in Ledbetter Heights, to further cement downtown Shreveport as a national center of film and television production.

Although public initiatives have brought activity to various areas of downtown, many obstacles must be overcome to knit the entire downtown planning area together. The sub-districts are not well connected. And while Sci-Port and the Convention Center have succeeded in bringing visitors downtown, there are limited retail and restaurant options to capture their spending.

The Red River District has not met expectations; residential population has not increased, and street life is non-existent. Neighborhood-serving retail, restaurants, and other services are limited, and what does exist caters primarily to office workers or casino visitors, often from internal spaces not visible from the street.

DOWNTOWN PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Downtown has three interlocking agencies charged with promotion and development within the downtown core—the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Downtown Shreveport Unlimited (DSU), and the Downtown Shreveport Development Corporation (DSDC).

The Downtown Development Authority

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) seeks to increase awareness of and promote development within downtown Shreveport, with a mission “to actively pursue, support, facilitate and welcome initiatives that aid and encourage private development, and promote and coordinate public development within the Downtown Development District of Shreveport, LA.” Its *Downtown 2010 Plan*, released in 2004 and updated in 2006, provided a framework for public investment downtown, and identified opportunities.

The DDA receives a millage levied on property within the Downtown Development District and is responsible for downtown street sweeping and decoration, enhanced security, and management of downtown’s on-street parking operation including parking enforcement, meter repair and collection. DDA also makes downtown parking improvement and policy recommendations to the Mayor and City Council.

Downtown Shreveport Unlimited

Downtown Shreveport Unlimited (DSU) is a private, nonprofit membership-driven advocacy organization that promotes festivals, projects and events to attract more people to downtown. Events include Mudbug Madness, Rockets Over the Red, and the recent “BREW” event. DSU also monitors legislative affairs and advocates for downtown economic development.

Downtown Shreveport Development Corporation

The Downtown Shreveport Development corporation (DSDC) is a 501(c)(4) organization that generates revenue from parking garage fees to capitalize low-interest loans for downtown projects, including façade improvements,

roof replacement, residential construction and landscaping. The organization owns several downtown properties, including the spaces housing the Robinson Film Center and ArtSpace. Other work involves promoting initiatives to save historic buildings.

Collaboration

A retreat held in late 2009 with the three organizations (DDA, DSU, DSDC) identified priorities for downtown. The five highest priorities identified were:

- **West Edge.** The subdistrict, which holds the Robinson Film Center, ArtSpace, Strand Theater and more, is off to good start with potential opportunities to further cement it as the cultural center of downtown, including relocating the Shreveport Arts Council headquarters to the former Central Fire Station to act as an anchor to the district, and the Methodist Church performance center, which is scheduled to complete construction in 2010.
- **Cross Bayou.** Considered one of the city's most important public assets, the area should be developed into a mixed-use residential community with a publicly accessible waterfront. Public support for such an initiative is on the rise.
- **Riverfront District.** The district has not met expectations and needs to be revamped. The DDA developed a strategic action plan for the district a year ago, and the City is expected to take title to the property.
- **Downtown Residential Development.** Downtown's workforce needs places to live, and the DDA study

Central City Living has identified potential reuse opportunities for new residential units.

- **Historic Preservation and Adaptive Reuse.** Preventing demolition of downtown's historic structures is a key priority. As of spring 2010, discussions with the City Council, the Mayor's office, and a council committee about a demolition delay ordinance are underway.

DDA also collaborates with city and parish officials, cultural and nonprofit organizations, and groups such as A Better Shreveport, the Texas Avenue Community Association and others on various downtown initiatives to promote the development and cultural renaissance of downtown Shreveport.

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Today, the downtown Shreveport planning area is primarily a business and entertainment center, with just under 1 percent, or 1,225 people, of city residents living within the downtown planning area. Over three-quarters of these residents are African-American, with white residents making up just over 20 percent. There are few Asians and Hispanics. Median household income is low, less than half of that for the city as a whole (\$15,664 vs. \$36,027).

Two-thirds of residents within the downtown planning area reside along its periphery, primarily along the western edge of Ledbetter Heights near Hearne and Texas avenues. Approximately a third of area residents live in the downtown core, the area bounded by Spring, Lake, Caddo and Common streets. Residents in this area tend to have higher household incomes (though still low compared to the city as a whole), are slightly older, have smaller household sizes (more singles), and tend to better reflect the overall racial makeup of the city, with about half black/African-American, and the other half white.

FIGURE 10.1 DOWNTOWN AND THE WATERFRONT DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

	DOWNTOWN PLANNING AREA		DOWNTOWN CORE	
	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
Total persons	1,225	100%	420	100%
Households	471	100%	156	100%
RACE				
White	257	21%	192	46%
Black or African-American	935	76%	209	50%
Other	32	3%	19	4%
Hispanic (of any race)	14	1%	7	2%
INCOME				
Median household income	\$15,664	n/a	\$20,253	n/a
Median age	34.1	n/a	36.4	n/a

Source: ESRI 2009

INDUSTRY AND EMPLOYMENT

According to ESRI Business Analyst, nearly 14,000 citywide employees, or just over 10 percent, work within the downtown and waterfront planning area. The majority of these workers are employed in government, gaming, financial, legal and natural gas industries.

Nearly a third of workers in downtown are in the public administration sector (4,332 employees). The professional, scientific and technical services sector, which includes lawyers, has 1,991 employees, or nearly 15 percent of all downtown workers. The gaming industry, which is included in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector (total of 1,557 employees) and hotel and restaurant workers (589 employees) make up more than 15 percent (combined) of the employment base. The finance and insurance (875 employees) and mining (719 employees in the oil and gas industries) sectors also have a significant presence.

Once the city's retail marketplace, downtown now shows fewer than 2 percent of all downtown planning area employees working in the retail sector, compared to over 18 percent citywide. Moreover, although a significant area of land is zoned for heavy industrial uses within the downtown/waterfront planning area, fewer than 5 percent of area workers are employed in the manufacturing, wholesale, transportation and warehousing sectors combined.



There are many vacant storefronts throughout downtown.

DOWNTOWN RETAIL AND SERVICES

Retail and service offerings within the downtown planning area are limited. The estimated 110 establishments cater primarily to weekday office workers and visitors to the gaming establishments. Nearly half of them (50) are categorized as eating or drinking establishments, 24 of which are categorized as full-service dining. (See Figure, 10.3). However, the majority of these eating and dining establishments are located in the Riverfront District, with a third of all restaurants located within casinos and not accessible from the street. Instead, they are internal facilities designed to keep patrons within the casinos, thus eliminating what could potentially be a more active pedestrian area, particularly in the adjacent Red River District.

The planning area has a significant surplus in retail sales. Based on estimates, downtown residents hold less than \$5 million in retail spending potential. The area's retail sales of just under \$103 million, however, indicate the majority of sales are to those not living in the area—downtown's sizeable office workforce and visitors. Retail establishments, typically open only during business hours, do not target local residents, who must travel outside of downtown for basic needs. For example, although there are numerous eating and drinking establishments and many limited-service restaurants (not sit-down) for workers' lunch needs, no full-service grocery or drug store exists within the downtown/waterfront planning area.

FIGURE 10.2 TOP TEN INDUSTRY SECTORS BY EMPLOYMENT IN DOWNTOWN/WATERFRONT PLANNING AREA

SECTOR	EMPLOYEES	PERCENT OF DOWNTOWN WORKERS
Public Administration	4,332	31.1%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	1,991	14.3%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (includes gaming)	1,557	11.2%
Finance and Insurance	875	6.3%
Mining (Oil and Gas)	719	5.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	589	4.2%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	583	4.2%
Other Services	572	4.1%
Health Care and Social Assistance	404	2.9%
Information	397	2.8%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst 2009

FIGURE 10.3 DOWNTOWN RETAIL CONDITIONS

INDUSTRY GROUP	DEMAND (RETAIL POTENTIAL)	SUPPLY (RETAIL SALES)	RETAIL GAP	SURPLUS/ LEAKAGE	NUMBER OF BUSINESSES
TOTAL Retail and Food Expenditures	\$4,611,991	\$102,990,878	-\$98,378,887	-91.4	110
Motor Vehicle & Parts	\$890,083	\$14,750,934	-\$13,860,851	-88.6	8
Furniture & Home Furnishings	\$131,883	\$5,773,723	-\$5,641,840	-95.5	9
Electronics & Appliance	\$98,677	\$3,158,047	-\$3,059,370	-93.9	6
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply	\$129,851	\$973,594	-\$843,743	-76.5	6
Food & Beverage	\$793,842	\$13,725,778	-\$12,931,936	-89.1	8
Health & Personal Care	\$189,493	\$2,591,207	-\$2,401,714	-86.4	3
Gasoline Stations	\$730,334	\$0	\$730,334	100.0	0
Clothing & Clothing Accessories	\$144,586	\$1,457,367	-\$1,312,781	-81.9	6
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music	455,704	\$618,871	-\$563,167	-83.5	5
General Merchandise	\$562,597	\$137,987	\$424,610	60.6	1
Misc Store Retailers	\$89,018	\$1,295,369	-\$1,206,351	-87.1	8
Nonstore Retailers	\$112,867	\$683,151	-\$570,284	-71.6	1
Food Service & Drinking	\$683,056	\$57,824,850	-\$57,141,794	-97.7	50

Source: ESRI 2009



Residential adaptive reuse projects, although limited in number, have attracted residents to downtown.

FIGURE 10.4 EXISTING MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

	LOCATION	TYPE
Lee Hardware Apartments	719 Edwards St.	Rental (income restrictions)
United Jewelers Apartments	301 Crockett St.	Rental
Fairmont Apartments	726 Cotton St.	Rental (income restrictions)
710 Crockett Street	710 Crockett St.	Rental
Milam Street Condos	229 Milam St.	Ownership

Source: DDA, www.downtownshreveport.com/residential-opportunities.html

DOWNTOWN HOUSING

Currently, the downtown planning area is home to fewer than 1,300 residents, mostly concentrated in two areas, multifamily in the downtown core, approximately 420 residents, and single-family in the western section of Ledbetter Heights, near the Texas Avenue Corridor, with just under 900 residents.

Adaptive reuse of old downtown structures for residential or mixed-use has been a priority of the DDA, and successful projects in the downtown core such as HRI Properties' 109-unit Lee Hardware and Jeweler's Building project have demonstrated market interest for living in a downtown environment. DDA has studied several additional buildings for potential residential reuse as part of its Central City Living study, including the Allen Building, Johnson Building, Rubenstein and Landford Buildings, and Selber Department Store building. However, according to interviews and public comments, building code requirements and permitting processes often make residential adaptive reuse financially infeasible. States like New Jersey and cities like Los Angeles have adopted reuse building codes specifically crafted for the rehabilitation of historic or old structures to make conversion financially viable, while maintaining both safety and the historical integrity of the building.

MAJOR STRATEGIC INITIATIVES: 1990–2010

Numerous public initiatives have been undertaken over the last 20 years that laid the foundation for continued revitalization downtown and in Shreveport's waterfront areas.

Shreveport Convention Center and Hotel

The largest and most visible development in recent years is the Shreveport Convention Center and Convention Center

Hotel at the intersection of Market and Caddo streets. The 350,000 square-foot convention center was completed in 2006, followed by the hotel in 2007.

Riverfront District Development

Sam's Town and the Eldorado Resort and Casino, built on city-owned land, have brought thousands of visitors to downtown Shreveport, much-needed jobs for residents, and revenue for city government activities.

Economic Incentives

Incentives currently available for residential and/or commercial development or redevelopment.

PRESERVATION INCENTIVES

- > **Federal Historic 20% Tax Credit:** Available for properties certified as a historic building in the Downtown Shreveport Historic District or individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. 20% credit is applicable to renovations and includes labor, materials and architects/engineers fees.
- > **State Historic 25% Tax Credit:** Available for properties in the Downtown Development District. The credit is calculated at up to 25% of the eligible renovation cost. The tax is capped at \$2.5 million per structure.
- > **Restoration Tax Abatement (RTA):** Freezes property taxes at the base level before improvements, renovations, or additions are made for a period of five years with a renewal opportunity for an additional five years.
- > **Operation Facelift:** This program matches façade-improvement investments dollar for dollar up to a maximum of \$5,000 and is also a DSDC program.

OTHER PROGRAMS

- > **Riverfront and Cross Bayou Tax-Increment Financing District:** Encompassing areas of downtown east of Market Street to the Red River, the existing tax-increment financing (TIF) district allows the City to use funds collected from new sales tax activity created within the TIF district for physical and public safety improvements within the district's boundaries. Downtown areas outside of these boundaries, including the CBD, West Edge, Texas Avenue and Ledbetter Heights, are not eligible to receive improvement funds.
- > **New Market Tax Credits:** The NMTC Program provides tax credit incentives to investors for equity investments in certified Community Development Entities, which invest in low-income communities. The credit equals 39% of the investment paid out over seven years.
- > **Low-Interest Loan Program:** Funded and administered by the Downtown Shreveport Development Corporation (DSDC), this financial incentive is designed to provide rehabilitation funds to property owners and small businesses interested in renovating downtown's older buildings. The 3.5% loans are capped at a maximum of \$100,000 with terms up to ten years.
- > **Waiver of Construction Permit Fees for Downtown Properties:** Construction permit fees can be waived for properties in the Downtown Development District for buildings built before 1960.

Source: Downtown Development Authority, www.downtownshreveport.com/centercity/eco.html

The Red River District's restaurants, bars and shopping establishments are located below the Travis Street bridge. A revamp of the area to help reach its potential has been discussed, with the DDA providing a *Strategic Action Plan to Revitalize the Red River District*. The action plan recommends actions to be taken, including:

- Transferring the Red River District from the Eldorado Resort Casino to the City of Shreveport.
- Developing a desirable tenant mix plan for the Red River District and surrounding area.
- Changing regulations to improve commercial activity downtown, including revising the current B-4 zoning classification to better regulate sale of alcoholic beverages in the area.
- Increasing police resources to improve perceptions of public safety and security.
- Establishing a program of events to draw customers throughout the year.
- Developing a plan for capital improvements and lighting.
- Identifying and securing parking nearby.
- Acquiring the gateway parcel along Market Street.
- Relocating DDA offices to the Red River District as a symbol of City's commitment to the area.
- Rebranding and marketing the area to counter negative perceptions.

Sci-Port, founded in 1998, is a nationally recognized educational environment for mathematics, science and technology. It includes a 185-seat IMAX theater, numerous galleries, a restaurant and a gift shop, and it serves as the key southeastern anchor to the developing entertainment district, with Festival Plaza, and Riverfront Park.

West Edge and Texas Avenue Corridor

Initiatives within the West Edge district have made it the cultural center of downtown. Since 1990, numerous projects have been completed, including the renovations of the Strand and Capri theaters, the opening of ArtSpace and its café, and the opening of the Robinson Film Center and restaurant, Abby Singer's Bistro. Renovations have been

completed on the Municipal Auditorium just off Texas Avenue, including an improved parking lot.

Central Business District

Consolidating many City and Parish government departments at Government Plaza on Travis Street has brought hundreds of additional workers to the city center. Plans are also under way to renovate the Petroleum Building at Edwards and Texas streets to house Community Renewal International and make the building a LEED-certified "green" structure. CRI has begun fund-raising to pay for the renovation.

ZONING

The downtown and waterfront planning area is divided into several zoning districts (See Map 10.2). The vast majority of land is zoned as either **B-4 Central Business District**, **I-3 Heavy Industrial** or **R-3 Urban Multifamily Residence**. The remainder comprises smaller business districts (B-1, B-2 and B-3), and industrial districts (B-1). Zoning standards as written are vague and/or confusing.

B-4 Central Business District. The district was created to maintain the Central Business District as the "symbolic, managerial, and cultural focal point" of the city and region, and allows for a range of uses, including office, residential (one-family to multifamily dwellings); neighborhood retail and services; and varied industrial uses (i.e., recycling centers, wholesale and warehousing, manufacturing). This catch-all category provides no confidence to developers interested in downtown development. There is no assurance that an incompatible use will not be constructed next door to their investment (e.g., an industrial use next to a residential use).

I-2 Heavy Industrial. The district allows for industrial uses such as manufacturing (light to heavy), warehousing, and well drilling; numerous retail uses; and minimal residential use—one-family or mobile homes only, with Planning Commission approval. Zoning does not allow multifamily residential or mixed-use development on all land directly abutting Cross Bayou.

R-3 Urban Multifamily Residence. The district occupies the majority of Ledbetter Heights and western portions

of the South Side subdistrict. All residential types (one-family, two-family, townhouse and multifamily or apartment dwellings) are allowed, as well as community facilities such as schools and churches, but retail and service establishments are prohibited. Multifamily projects require a minimum lot area of 10,000 sf.

LAND USE

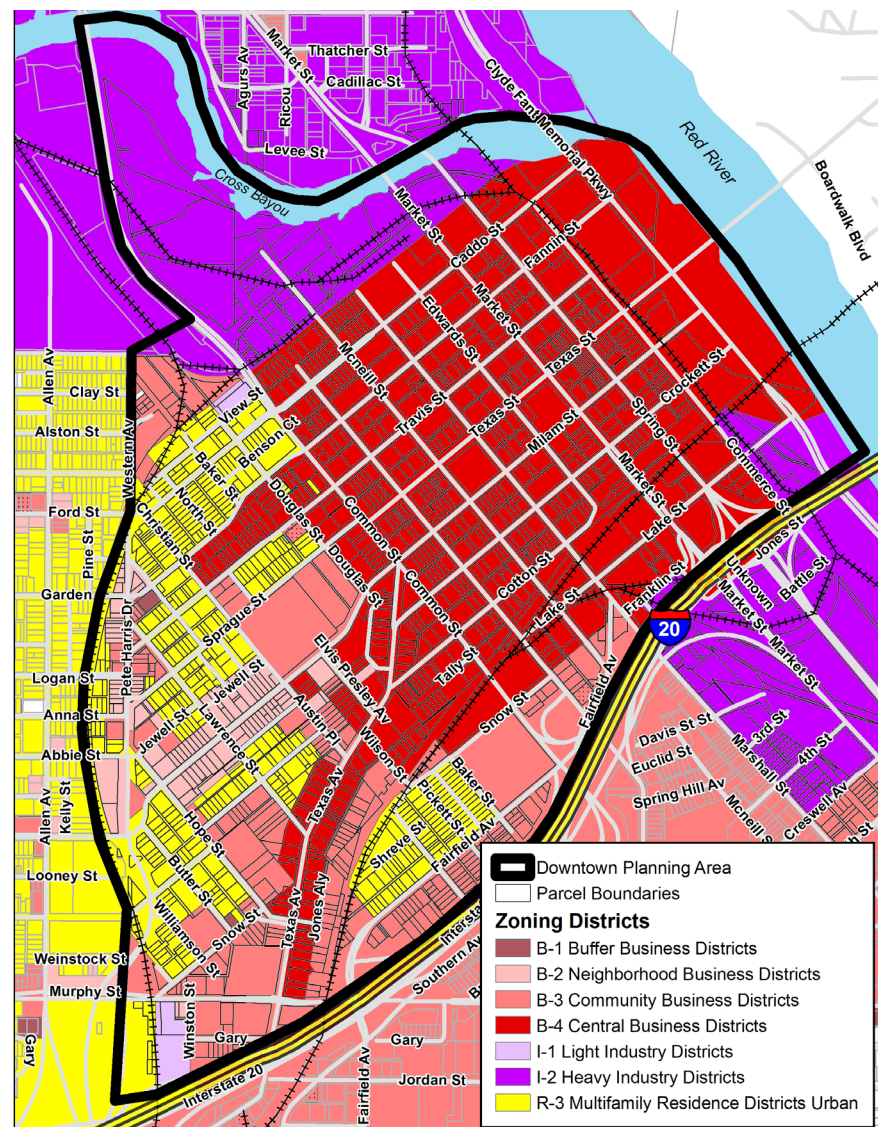
As shown on Map 10.3, land use varies within the downtown planning area and, in most cases, corresponds to the zoning. However, this is a result of the catch-all zoning category, B-4 **Central Business District**, described above. A more targeted land use policy would benefit overall goals to create a vibrant, live, work and play mixed-use downtown.

Commercial/industrial uses.

Commercial office and retail uses make up the majority of land within the Central Business District. Numerous surface parking lots and structures are located throughout the core area. Although Texas and Milam streets were once the center of retail activity within the city, few establishments line these corridors. A few industrial uses are found along Cross Bayou, including a large junkyard. Auto repair and service facilities are found along Texas Avenue.

Government and public uses. Government and public uses are concentrated within the Central Business District and include Government Plaza, the Courthouse, police station, and other government uses, as well as government-owned properties used by entities such as the convention center, hotel, and Sci-Port.

MAP 10.2 DOWNTOWN ZONING



Source: NLCOG, MPC

Residential Uses. Reflecting the low number of residents within the planning area, few residential uses were identified, with some single-family structures found in the Ledbetter Heights and South Side subareas, and larger multifamily structures located along the periphery of the CBD and West Edge districts. Downtown also includes social services housing for homeless and recently homeless people.

Parks and open space. Several parks and publicly accessible open spaces are located within the downtown/ waterfront planning area, but most are relatively small and not well connected to one another. (See Chapter 4, for additional detail.)

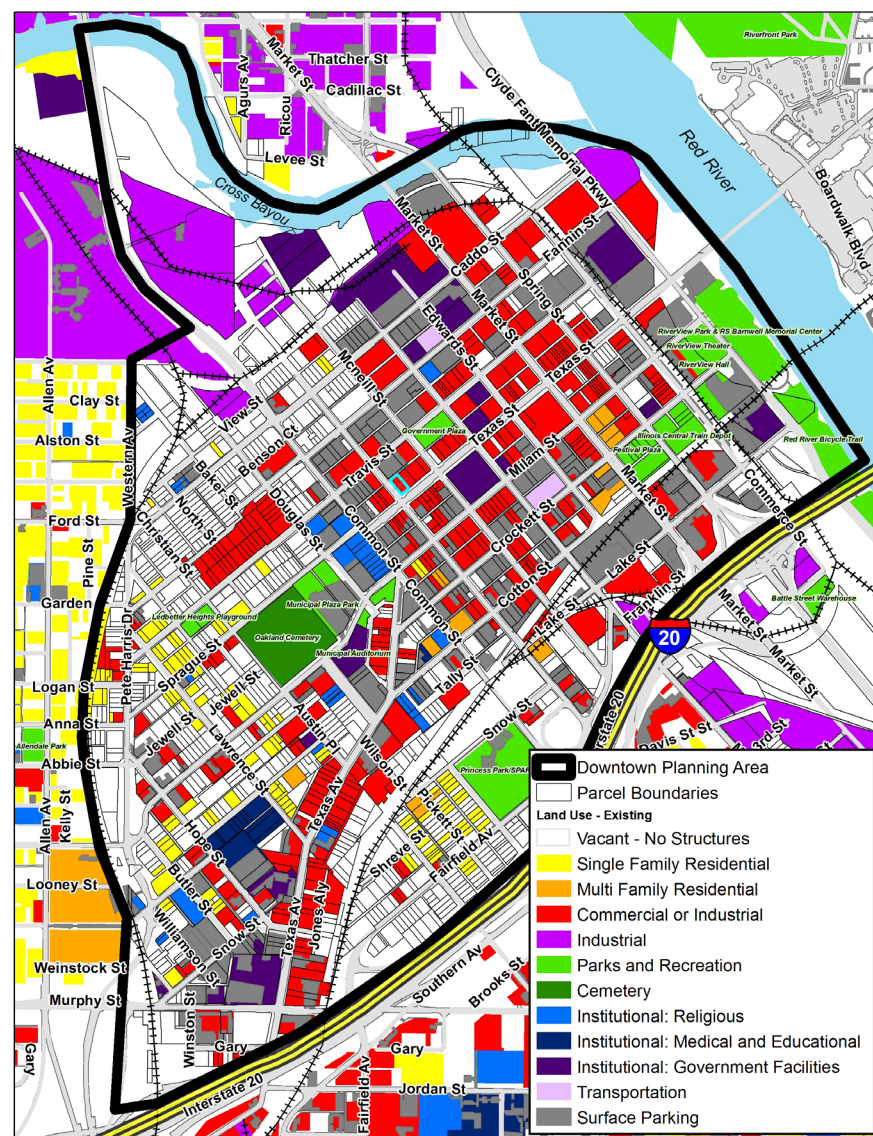
- RiverView Park
- R.S. Barnwell Memorial Center
- Princess Park/SPAR Gym
- Municipal Plaza Park
- Festival Plaza
- Oakland Cemetery

Institutional. Institutional uses within downtown include several museums and churches, and an educational facility run by Southern University. A new law school is planned for the United Mercantile Building at Market and Texas Streets.

Vacant and Underutilized Land. More than 205 acres of land within the downtown and waterfront planning area are vacant (have no structures), and when underutilized lots (those with minimal, or unoccupied buildings) are included, the figure is significantly higher.

The largest vacant sites surround the Central Business District, particularly along Cross Bayou, around the intersection of Caddo and Common streets, and in the South Side subdistrict. Many of these sites, but not all, are publicly owned. Numerous small residential lots, many of which are adjudicated or publicly owned, are located throughout the Ledbetter Heights neighborhood. In addition, many underutilized surface parking lots dot the downtown landscape.

MAP 10.3 DOWNTOWN LAND USE



Source: NLCOG, Goody Clancy

FIGURE 10.5 VACANT, ADJUDICATED AND PUBLICLY OWNED PARCELS

	BY CATEGORY	TOTAL ACRES
Vacant parcels	886	205.40
Adjudicated parcels*	238	36.34
Publicly owned parcels**	299	145.02

Source: NLCOG GIS

* Most, but not all, adjudicated parcels within the downtown planning area are also vacant.

** Not all publicly owned parcels are vacant.

Rebuilding with Brownfields!

SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA

Shreveport Convention Center
\$1.2M Remediation Funds (Soil)
Shreveport's \$85M, 300,000 sq. ft. convention center will be joined by a \$40M hotel within the Cross Bayou Redevelopment area. Most of this former industrial site has been vacant for decades. The convention center is expected to re-open the redevelopment possibilities of downtown's northern waterfront edge. Remediation underway. Open in late 2004.

Red River District
\$1M Remediation Funds (Soil)
\$5M Section 108 (Infrastructure)
Shreveport's historic working waterfront street finds new life with the 120,000 sq. ft., \$27M entertainment district developed by Beale Street's Performa Entertainment Real Estate. New buildings designed to look historic and refurbishment of late 19th century buildings will house dozens of restaurants and live entertainment venues. Remediation complete. Open August 2002.

Lee Hardware & United Jeweler's Apartments
105 Units - Adaptive Re-Use
\$180,000 Remediation Funds (Asbestos/Lead)
\$2.2M HUD 108 (Construction Loan)
Downtown Shreveport's first large scale residential adaptive use development. HRI's 105 Unit, \$14M apartment community features warehouse-loft style units. Half market rate and half below market, the apartments stay virtually full. The market rate units are the price leaders in Shreveport/Bossier. Over 120 residents now call these new downtown apartment homes "home". Success of this project has prompted more residential development nearby.

Festival Plaza
Six Acre Dedicated Festiva; Site
\$200,000 Remediation Funds (Soil)
Environmental remediation of this problematic site was needed for the development of Festival Plaza, a \$9M state-of-the-art festival site designed in concert with festival producers. Formerly an eyesore known simply as "The Hole," this prominent gateway to downtown has been transformed into the home of regional special events and community gatherings.

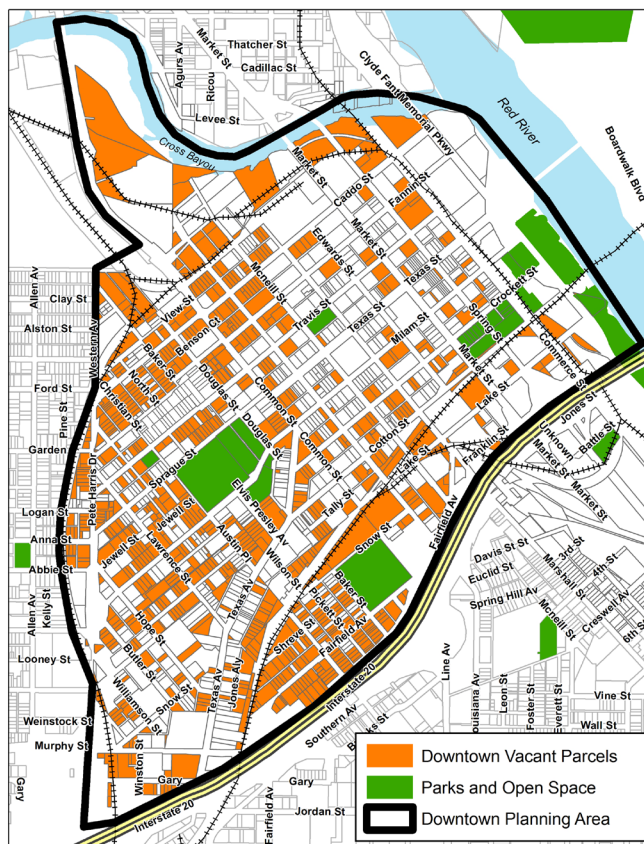
Before **June 2002** **Open 2004** **Open August 2002** **After**

Harrah's Casino **Hollywood Casino**

Shreveport has successfully put environmentally contaminated sites back into commerce through its Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative.

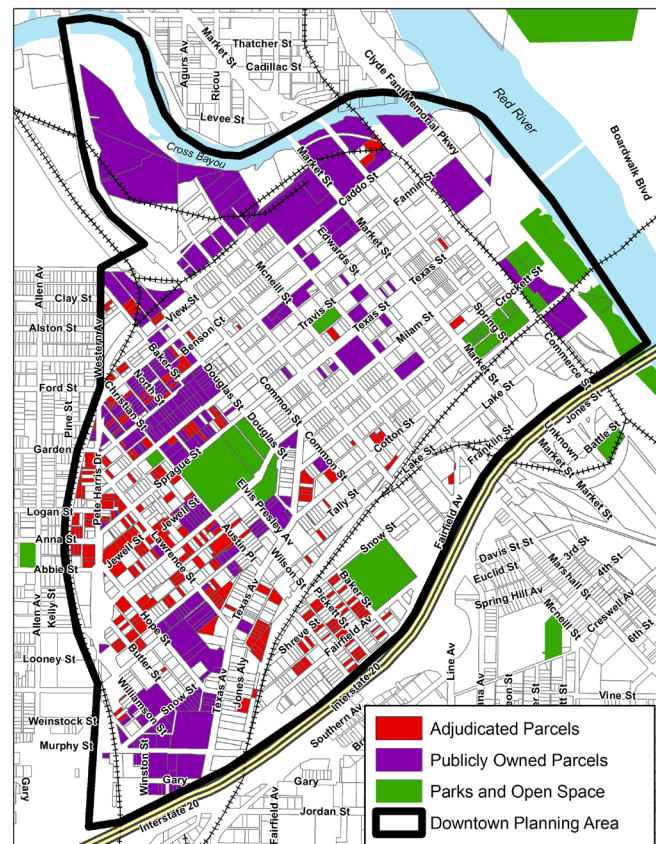
Source: City of Shreveport, www.shreveportla.gov/dept/cd/gfx/rebuild.jpg

MAP 10.4 VACANT PARCELS



Source: NLCOG

MAP 10.5 PUBLICLY OWNED & ADJUDICATED PARCELS



Source: NLCOG

THE WATERFRONT

The development of large gaming destinations along the Red River blocked public access to about half of downtown's waterfront, with RiverView Park taking up the other half. The Cross Bayou area, however, remains essentially undeveloped. This untapped resource, lined largely by vacant and underutilized parcels, holds the promise of a publicly accessible waterfront supported by residentially anchored mixed-use development. Because of a history of industrial uses on the Cross Bayou sites, the area will require some environmental cleanup to allow for residential development. The City of Shreveport, however, has had much success with its Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative. A number of successful brownfield-remediation and -redevelopment projects have been completed on downtown properties, including the Convention Center property, the Red River District, United Jewelers, and Festival Plaza. Additional federal funding for brownfields projects is expected to be available for future projects.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL AMENITIES

Shreveport's historic character and urban fabric reflect the city's role as the economic and cultural hub of the ArkLaTex and this unique character is central to downtown's identity and sense of place. Preserving and enhancing this character is critical to ensuring Shreveport's continued ability to attract jobs, residents and visitors.

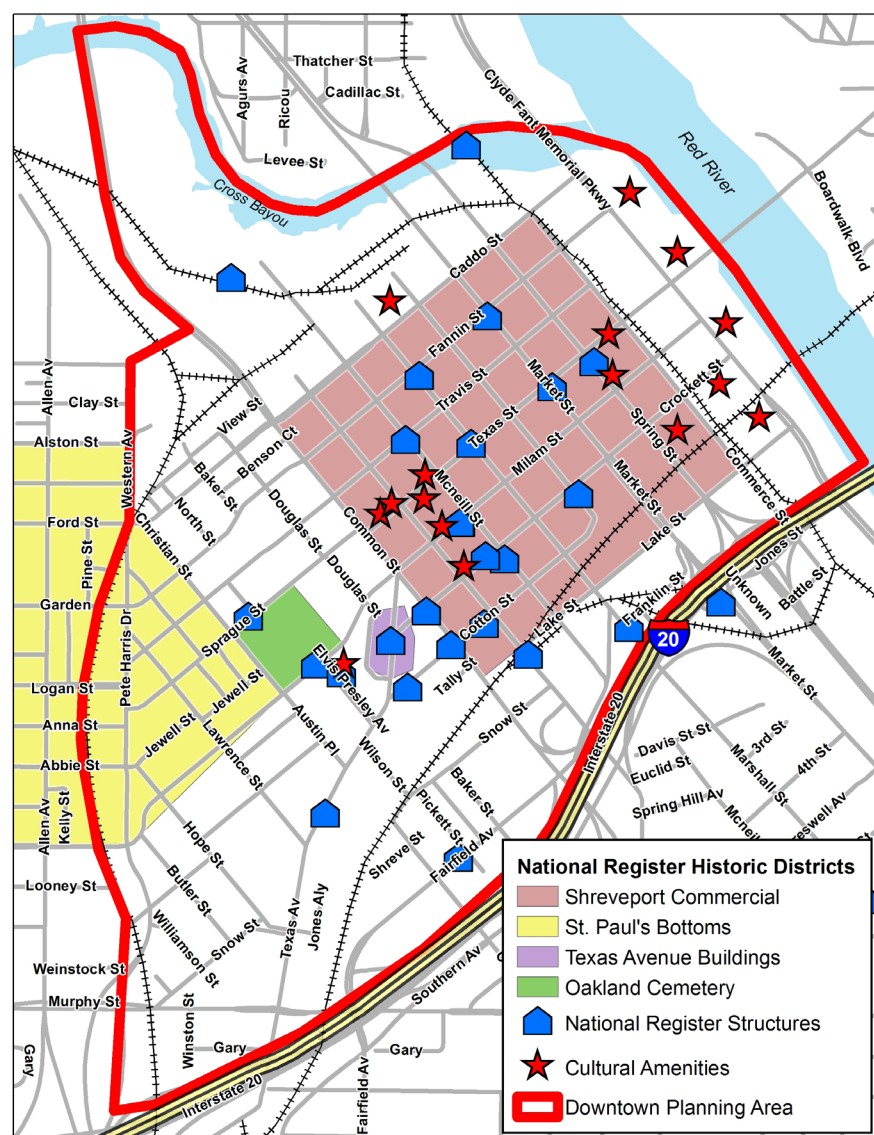
National Register Historic Districts and structures.

Downtown has three National Register districts, but this designation does not provide protection against historically incompatible alterations or demolition:

- Shreveport Commercial Historic District
- St. Paul's Bottoms (Ledbetter Heights)
- Oakwood Cemetery

The downtown planning area contains more individual National Register Historic Structures (23 total) than all of those in other parts of the Shreveport/Caddo study area (not including the National Register historic residential neighborhoods). These structures link today's downtown to its past and provide many of its unique public spaces, renovated residential structures, and religious institutions.

MAP 10.6 DOWNTOWN HISTORIC AND CULTURAL AMENITIES



Source: Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism



Downtown offers numerous cultural amenities, including ArtSpace on Texas Street, which features art exhibitions, readings and music performances.



Twenty-three structures within the downtown study area are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Wray-Dickinson Building and the Commercial National Bank building.

While several of these historic buildings continue to serve their original purposes as offices and commercial buildings, some have been converted to new uses (e.g., Lee Hardware), and others are vacant and threatened by long-term lack of maintenance—mostly due to the high cost of repairs relative to downtown real estate market demand and values.

Cultural amenities and organizations

Downtown Shreveport is the center of culture within the ArkLaTex region and home to numerous facilities, from a world-class science center, to historic theaters, to outdoor event spaces, and a new film center. (See Chapter 5 for details on downtown's arts and cultural organizations and

amenities.) Attractive to urban-inclined households, these amenities should be better marketed to those seeking residential options within downtown.

TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

Road Network

A network of interstates, highways and local streets provides expedient automobile access into and out of the downtown planning area. In public meetings, many participants even noted the ability to reach downtown from any part of the city in less than 20 minutes. I-20, along the planning area's southern boundary, provides direct access to and from downtown to points east and west. Major arterials—US Route 71 and two one-way, four-lane roadways (Spring and Market streets)—provide access from north and south, and are supplemented by the less-traveled Clyde E. Fant Memorial Parkway. US Route 79 (Texas Street and Avenue), a two-way, four-lane roadway, connects to western sections of Shreveport and provides a direct connection to Bossier City via the Texas Street Bridge.

I-49 provides direct access from the south, with on and off ramps at Texas Avenue. The I-49 Inner City Connector is in early stages of evaluation (See www.i49shreveport.com). If built, downtown would be surrounded by highways on the land side, with an interchange at Caddo Street. Should this project proceed to implementation, the City and downtown stakeholders must be involved in the planning to ensure critical design enhancements, public open space, pedestrian crossing provisions, and land use planning efforts at a community scale. Funding for the planning of these amenities must be included in the budget for design and construction and not be eliminated through “value engineering” budget cuts. This is essential to making sure that this project would not isolate downtown. (See Chapter 8, for details.)

A street grid established in the 1800s remains largely in place throughout the Central Business District. Traffic on these streets is minimal, with little to no congestion, even at rush hour. Organized as one-way pairs except for Texas Street, downtown streets tend to promote higher speeds through downtown.



SporTran offers bus service from its downtown station to most areas of Shreveport and Bossier City, but circulation throughout downtown is limited. City-owned trolleys that could have served as downtown circulators were sold. The purchase of new trolleys, however, is under consideration should funding be identified.

Public transportation

SporTran provides public transportation to and from downtown along 17 bus lines that link up at the main downtown terminal on the 400 block of Milam. The system requires riders to travel to the terminal, as no other stops exist within the downtown core. Service for all routes is infrequent, running no more than once every half hour.

To better connect downtown's districts, three trolleys were purchased and refurbished to serve as a downtown circulator, but operational funds were lacking. After years of sitting idle, the trolleys were sold in 2010. As downtown activity increases, a funding plan for equipment as well as operations should be identified and service initiated.

Sidewalk and pedestrian environment

The pedestrian environment varies widely throughout downtown. Sidewalk conditions in most of the Central Business District, West Edge and Red River District are excellent, having benefitted from a multimillion-dollar streetscape improvement program that featured new brick sidewalks and street trees. Sidewalk conditions outside of these districts vary widely, from slightly damaged, deteriorated, and uneven, to completely absent. In some areas, such as Ledbetter Heights, pedestrians must walk along street edges in moving traffic. Outside of business hours, few pedestrians are present, with downtown often described as a "ghost town."

Parking

Parking is often cited as a critical issue within the downtown planning area. While there are many parking options, none of them is free. Office workers use spaces in numerous surface or structured lots. Spaces are either provided by employers, or impose daily charges (typically under \$10). Residential complexes are not required to offer parking, though most provide spaces on a per-unit basis.

The difficulty and cost of securing parking is one of the barriers to more residential development.

At the same time, demolition of historic buildings for surface parking threatens the unique physical character of downtown.

On-street parking revenues support downtown redevelopment initiatives. The Downtown Development Authority manages all on-street parking within the downtown planning area, with all funds collected going to



Downtown is dotted with numerous surface parking lots that offer opportunity for infill development.



Bicycle traffic should be better accommodated throughout downtown to offer residents and workers a viable transportation alternative to the automobile.

the Downtown Parking Enterprise Fund. DDA parking staff is responsible for all parking enforcement, meter collection and repair, and fine collection. Because many residents are accustomed to free parking at other retail and entertainment centers in the area, they sometimes complain about the need to pay for parking in downtown.

Bike facilities

The only bike facility or lane in downtown is the Red River Bike Trail, an 8-mile trail along the river connecting RiverView Park with the Charles & Marie Hamel Memorial Park near 70th Street. No streets incorporate dedicated, striped bicycle lanes.

URBAN DESIGN IN DOWNTOWN

The urban design character of the downtown planning area varies from district to district, with definitive economic and use transitions. On the whole, much of the downtown core has a well-defined street grid, many historic structures, and good sidewalks. However, newer structures are not always compatible with neighboring structures, many historic buildings need extensive renovations, and surface parking lots break up the street wall along most blocks. More than half of the waterfront areas are either blocked by large casino complexes, vacant, or underutilized near Cross Bayou. In areas outside of the downtown core, decades of disinvestment have resulted in significant vacancy and blight. Street and sidewalk conditions are poor, and some streets have been closed. The pictures in the following section highlight various design elements of downtown's distinct subdistricts.

Central Business District

The CBD is the Class A office center for the ArkLaTex region, and is home to local government offices and the regional courts. Arranged along a traditional grid of mostly one-way streets, the subdistrict holds office towers up to 30 stories high, with limited or no ground-floor retail space that faces the street. Older and/or historic structures, typically 4 to 6 stories with ground-floor retail spaces (many are vacant), and large concrete parking structures make up the remaining building stock. Numerous surface parking lots with no landscaping buffers or greenery, and



Office and government buildings in the Central Business District.

hard-surfaced vacant parcels, are also common, particularly around the edges of the CBD. Although the pedestrian environment is generally in good physical condition, the result of streetscape improvements (brick pavers, historic lighting fixtures, landscaping), few pedestrians are present, even during peak commuting and lunch hours. There are few stores or amenities to walk to. Street trees have been planted, but they do not yet provide a good tree canopy, with the notable exception of the mature oaks around the courthouse. Public open space is minimal, with a few paved plaza areas offering seating but little landscaping (e.g., Government Plaza), and informal green spaces with shade trees (e.g., open spaces around the courthouse).

Riverfront District

The Riverfront District provides numerous cultural and entertainment amenities. However, they are generally disconnected, often oriented to patrons arriving by car, and provide no aesthetic continuity. Large, high-rise casinos and their parking structures dominate the subdistrict, designed to keep patrons within individual establishments and off surrounding streets—all dining and retail establishments are internal. Built directly along the river, they prohibit public access to half of the riverfront, exacerbating an already poor pedestrian environment. In the adjacent “Red River District”—a pedestrian-only, New Orleans-themed retail area—two- to three-story older structures provide a continuous street wall on many streets, but



Views of the Riverfront District

many storefronts are vacant or hold bars and clubs not open during the day. RiverView Park provides public access to the waterfront just downriver of the casinos with landscaped walkways, an amphitheater, and splash park. Pedestrian connections within this district are fair to poor, with varying sidewalk conditions, limited wayfinding signage, and numerous barriers to easy access, including vacant lots, large surface-parking areas, and casino parking structures. Automobile and railroad bridges further isolate various areas. Lighting is spotty, including the neon lights of the Texas Avenue Bridge, many of which are out.

The West Edge

The West Edge provides downtown's most cohesive architectural character, and greatest opportunity for

a strong pedestrian environment. Old and historic structures, including several theaters, are typically 3 to 4 stories with ground-floor retail spaces, providing a nearly continuous streetwall throughout the central areas of the subdistrict, particularly along Texas and Milam streets. Wide sidewalks line the streets, many with newer brick pavers, providing a comfortable pedestrian environment through much of the subdistrict, with shade provided by street trees and awnings along some storefronts. However, the limited number of retail destinations and remaining vacant are insufficient to support much pedestrian interest. Vacant lots and surface parking dominate portions of the subdistrict closest to Cross Bayou and key corners (McNeil/Milam streets, Common/Texas Streets), breaking up the pedestrian environment. Institutional structures like the Methodist church at the head of Texas Street, and the Courthouse at McNeil, act as symbolic boundaries to surrounding subdistricts—Ledbetter Heights and the CBD. Revitalization of the West Edge gateway is under way with SRAC's project to move to the old fire station and create public spaces.

Cross Bayou

Although the subdistrict holds great potential for a downtown mixed-use neighborhood with public waterfront access, in its current form the area is mostly vacant, with a working horse stable and grazing field, a junkyard off a dirt roadway, and an old food-



The West Edge has many historic buildings.



Cross Bayou is an unrealized opportunity,

distribution warehouse near Market Street. Access to the waterfront is blocked by heavy brush and mature trees, and recreational amenities are nonexistent, although fishermen often use the banks closest to the Red River outlet. Access to the area is limited, with much of the area blocked from the CBD by the convention center, whose rear wall creates a physical barrier. McNeil Street provides the best roadway access from the CBD and West Edge, which are up a substantial hill. Market Street provides potential pedestrian access with a lesser slope. Nearby, a small, little-used walking path has been built along the bayou banks as part of the hotel complex's parking area. An active freight rail line runs between the subdistrict and the remainder of downtown. A rail spur leads to the historic truss bridge over the bayou.

Ledbetter Heights

Virtually vacant, this subdistrict holds a few dilapidated, single-family structures, many of them shotgun-style. Historic markers point to structures that are in disrepair, boarded up, or no longer exist. The street grid has been broken up and streets are in poor condition, some permanently blocked to through traffic. Crumbling pavement and large potholes are common. Most streets do not include sidewalks, requiring the few pedestrians to walk in the street or along uneven grassy patches. Crumbling staircases often lead from the road to vacant properties where houses once stood. Few streetlights are present. Oakwood Cemetery, a National Register

Historic District, is in a state of disrepair, with poor groundskeeping and numerous toppled headstones. However, revitalization is under way, including new sidewalks along Milam Street closest to the West Edge and Texas Avenue Corridor, and the initial phase of Millenium Studios on a large parcel one block from Common Street.

Texas Avenue Corridor

Design character varies greatly throughout the Texas Avenue Corridor. Although portions of the subdistrict are in disrepair, those closest to the West Edge provide a continuous streetwall of older two-story structures and a historic church with potential to serve as a revitalized Main Street anchored by the small pocket park. The Municipal Auditorium, one block from the avenue, has been restored, and serves as an anchor —despite its being separated from Texas Avenue by a large surface parking lot. Other areas of the corridor are lined with one-story auto-repair shops and dilapidated structures with collapsed ceilings. A few buildings have been rehabilitated for private or public uses. Pedestrian conditions throughout are poor, with crumbling pavement and no street trees or building awnings to provide shade. Vacant lots and surface parking are common along the corridor.



The construction of Millennium Studios will help bring more activity to Ledbetter Heights.

The Texas Avenue corridor has potential.

B. Downtown Market Potential

This analysis of market potential focuses on the first five years of the master plan time frame. It reflects current demographic conditions within the Master Plan area and the region. It does *not* reflect the goals for growth presented within this plan, nor on strategies and actions designed to diversify the economy and bring more jobs to the area. These limits on assumptions qualify this as a conserva-

tive analysis. Yet, even under this conservative approach, a simple continuation of current conditions and trends means that a market exists for a more vibrant downtown, with hundreds of new housing units and increased retail amenities.

NATIONAL TRENDS SHAPING DOWNTOWNS

Two major demographic groups are shaping downtowns across the nation—the 82 million Baby Boomers and their 78 million children, often referred to as “Millennials.” Many Baby Boomers have become empty nesters and are beginning to reach retirement age. No longer needing or wanting a single-family home in the suburbs, many now seek a more urban quality of life in walkable environments with shopping, cultural amenities, and services. At the same time, Millennials, those 12 to 31 years of age, are moving (or soon will) in larger numbers to urban environments, which are often conducive to their place in life. Many are mobile, tech-savvy, single or in childless couples, and they have different values and interests than generations before. A healthy, active downtown is attractive to both groups.

KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESSFUL DOWNTOWNS



The 4 keys to downtown success are:

- > Vision and community support
- > Strong leadership and management
- > Creativity
- > Public/private development and financing

Successful downtowns...

- > are great places to live, work and play.
- > are generally mixed-use in character.
- > tend to have multiple activity generators within walking distance of one another.
- > are walkable and have streets that act as parks for pedestrians.
- > are places where entertainment is a driving market segment.
- > have strong downtown residential and adjacent neighborhoods.
- > are safe and secure.
- > typically have broad public/private investment in the future of downtown.
- > are beloved by the citizenry.

THE ECONOMY AND DOWNTOWN

A downtown that also acts as a civic and cultural hub is a critical component to a region's economic development potential, and downtown Shreveport is the urban center for a large geographic area. With 65 percent of all establishments in Shreveport having fewer than 20 employees, economic development initiatives must target both large and small businesses in order for the downtown to be successful.

At the same time, as the national economy continues to move toward service- and knowledge-based industries, cities increasingly compete for talent. In this more competitive environment, it is far easier to keep talent than to recruit it. Therefore, workforce-development programs—many of which could be located in downtown—are crucial to the future success of the Shreveport economy, as is providing a full range of residential environments, including an attractive, amenity-rich, and mixed-use downtown.

DOWNTOWN HOUSING POTENTIAL

Downtown Shreveport offers the only downtown environment for its entire media market of one million people, the second largest within Louisiana. Although population has remained relatively static over the last 40 years, the number of households has risen, a result in part of an aging population, fewer couples with children, and more single-person households. Growth in the Shreveport area over the next five years will be driven largely by one- and two-person households (96 percent of Caddo Parish growth, and 81 percent of metropolitan-area household growth.)

There are certain household types with tastes and preferences conducive to urban lifestyles—often lived in small single-family rowhouses or multifamily apartment/condo dwellings. These households, referred to by demographers as “urban inclined,” typically include young, single-person households; childless couples; single-parent households; and older singles and couples—in other words, Millennials and empty nesters. In the Shreveport metro area, 22 percent of households fall into this category, or approximately 34,000 households; over the next five years an estimated 9,700 of these households will move into a different housing unit.

Using these data, if downtown Shreveport can capture just 1 to 3 percent of these new and ready-to-move one- to two-person, urban-inclined households, downtown could support from 140 to 410 new units of housing within five years. Remember that these are conservative capture rates with the potential to increase. Out of these units, approximately one-third would be families seeking new, in-town rental and ownership housing like a rowhouse, small cottage, or bungalow. The remaining two-thirds would be for rental, multifamily units. In total, approximately 80 to 90 percent of all demand would be for rental housing.

Although the market exists, development potential is constrained by current apartment rental rates. Average Class A apartment units rent for \$1.06 per square foot per month, a figure with which private developers cannot make an adequate return on new investment. To attract new rental housing to downtown, an initial subsidy of some sort would be required. New housing is needed to spark a residential

renaissance; therefore, it is essential for the City to ensure that the first project is a quality development in order to provide confidence that new rental housing is viable and to act as a catalyst for additional projects. The success of the first residential project will trigger immediate recognition of pent-up demand for urban housing; downtown investment in both new housing and in adaptive re-use of existing buildings typically accelerates in response to demonstrated market potential.

Three areas of focus for residential development are the West Edge, Cross Bayou and Ledbetter Heights. The most likely area for an initial catalyst project would be the West Edge. With several large, vacant properties (or parking lots), the area offers cultural amenities attractive to downtown dwellers, such as the Robinson Film Center, ArtSpace and other theaters. Cross Bayou offers tremendous potential

FIGURE 10.6 DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL POTENTIAL, 2008-2013

	HOUSE- HOLDS	POTENTIAL DOWNTOWN UNITS	
		CONSERVATIVE (1% CAPTURE RATE)	MODERATE (3% CAPTURE RATE)
New 1- and 2-person households	4,100	40	120
Moving urban-inclined households	9,730	100	290
Total Units		140	410

Source: W-ZHA, 2010

FIGURE 10.7 RETAIL AND EATING AND DRINKING SALES PER CAPITA

	U.S	LOUISIANA	S'PORT CBSA	S'PORT CITY
Total Retail Sales/ Capita	\$15,100	\$15,360	\$17,650	\$18,430
Eating and Drinking Sales/ Capita	\$1,360	\$1,360	\$1,540	\$1,680

Source: Sales and Marketing Management; Claritas

FIGURE 10.8 DOWNTOWN CAPTURE OF METROPOLITAN AND CITY EATING AND DRINKING SALES

	METROPOLITAN AREA	CITY
Eating and Drinking	1%	2%
Drinking	12%	15%

Source: Sales and Marketing Management; Claritas

as a larger new urban waterfront neighborhood. The first projects will require detailed RFP processes to help ensure that the vision for the area is achieved. Ledbetter Heights will likely be perceived as more attractive to residents interested in living close to downtown in smaller, cottage or bungalow housing units on small lots.

RETAIL MARKET POTENTIAL

Retail sales within the Shreveport-Bossier metropolitan area and the City of Shreveport are higher than comparative national and state averages. One reason for these higher levels is that Shreveport serves a large trade area outside of its jurisdictional boundaries. In addition, the gaming establishments attract patrons from far away, resulting in the high eating and drinking sales per capita.

Successful downtowns typically capture 5 to 15 percent of their City's eating and drinking sales. As defined by Census Tract 201, Shreveport's downtown is capturing 2 percent of the City's eating and drinking sales, and 15 percent of the City's drinking sales. The offerings are even more limited considering a large share of current sales occur inside the riverfront casinos, and not in downtown storefronts that would enliven the environment.

With a large concentration of arts, entertainment and recreation offerings, downtown is well positioned to further cement its place as the cultural center of the ArkLaTex region. Further development of the arts, music, and movie production sectors within downtown will greatly enhance downtown's attractiveness as a restaurant and entertainment center, since its market will be not only the downtown population, but the region. Therefore, great potential exists for developing a strong cluster of niche restaurants and entertainment outlets, co-located to create a destination downtown that is a walkable and lively eating, drinking and entertainment environment.

OFFICE MARKET POTENTIAL

Downtown currently has approximately 2.2 million square feet of multitenant office space, including approximately 90 percent of the Shreveport metro area's Class A office space—a large percentage for any city.

From 2010 to 2020, employment is projected to grow among industries that typically utilize office spaces by an additional 1,437 jobs.¹ This would translate into approximately 360,000 square feet of potential new office space. If downtown maintains its share of the office market (56 percent), approximately 202,000 square feet of new office space would be possible by 2020.²

To attract developer interest, however, new office space would need to command rents of at least \$25 per square foot. And current rental rates of \$10–16 per square foot for Class A and \$7 to \$12 per square foot for Class B space would not support new development without some subsidy or incentive. New rental office space would need to be no more than five stories, because rental rates could only support stick-frame construction, which costs less than high-rise construction.

New office space should be strategically located to support evolving urban districts, such as the West Edge and Texas Avenue. Office uses would provide a valuable daytime population to enliven the street and patronize potential new restaurants.

C. Case Study: Greenville, SC

Greenville, South Carolina, offers an instructive example of what works in bringing back a downtown. The city of 59,000 in a metropolitan region of 400,000 experienced rapid post-World War II suburbanization, and by the 1970s its downtown had lost its luster and position as a regional retail center. Other than workers, few residents had any reason to visit.

In the 1970s, a new, visionary mayor who was a strong advocate of downtown set about returning the downtown to prominence. The first major action, completed in 1979, was a plan to redesign the downtown streetscape, including reducing the width of Main Street from four lanes to two, widening sidewalks, planting street trees and shrubs, changing parallel parking to diagonal parking, and

¹ Moody's economy.com; W-ZHA

² *Ibid.*



Mixed-use developments have brought more residents and neighborhood-supporting retail to Greenville's downtown.

adding street furniture and outdoor dining. To further catalyze and guide revitalization, the City developed a 25-year Downtown Master Plan in the 1980s, with a key recommendation focusing on creating new anchors through public-private partnerships, which ultimately resulted in completed projects, including:

- A convention center, parking garage, and public plaza with leased air rights for a new Hyatt Regency hotel as a northern anchor. (Public investment comprised about one-third of the project's total cost.)
- The Peace Center for the Performing Arts, built in a former industrial area along the Reedy River to serve as a southern anchor. (Approximately 70 percent of the project cost came from the private sector, including \$10 million from a local donor to initiate the project. The City established a tax increment financing [TIF] district to underwrite additional improvements.)

- The Poinsett Hotel: The City formed a partnership with a developer to rehabilitate the historic hotel, and to create additional uses, including a new 220,000-square-foot office building, residential penthouses, and condominiums.

The new anchors were successful in drawing residents and visitors to downtown, and initial retail followed, including new restaurants and entertainment establishments. But neighborhood retail was slow to grow. Continued collaboration through the 1990s between economic development organizations, real estate marketers, and developers aimed to attract additional residential development, which would draw more retail activity. An aggressive marketing campaign focused on bringing an anchor to a former department store building with the hope that specialty retail would follow. In 2003, the Mast General

Store, a major clothing/outfitter in western North Carolina and South Carolina, opened an 18,000-square-foot store, and smaller apparel and toy stores followed.

After success in the downtown core, the next target area was the neglected West End along the Reedy River. Public-private partnerships again played a critical role in revitalization. West End Market—a mixed-use development with office, retail, restaurants, artist space, and a farmers market—was completed first. A private donor provided the land, and the City took the lead

FIGURE 10.9 KEY GREENVILLE PROJECTS

PROJECT	YEAR COMPLETED	INVESTMENT LEVELS		
		PUBLIC	PRIVATE	TOTAL
Greenville Commons	1982	\$10 million	\$24 million	\$34 million
Peace Center for the Performing Arts	1991	\$13.9 million	\$28.5 million	\$42.4 million
West End Market	1995	\$4.2 million	property donation	\$4.16 million+
Poinsett Plaza/Hotel	1999/2000	\$15.1 million	\$39 million	\$54.1 million
Falls Park and Liberty Bridge	2004	\$13 million	\$3.4 million	\$16.4 million
RiverPlace	2005	\$16 million	\$50 million +	\$66 million
West End Baseball Stadium	2006	\$8.5 million	\$20.7 million	\$29.2 million

Source: City of Greenville

role as developer, creatively financing the project through a combination of TIF (tax increment financing) funds, a HUD Section 108 loan, general fund dollars, and grants. When the City sold the development in 2005, it invested its profit in other projects, including a new park along the Reedy River featuring a pedestrian river trail; and a public-private partnership for Riverplace, a residential, hotel, office, and retail mixed-use development.

Today downtown Greenville is nationally recognized as a model for successful downtown revitalization, even winning the Great American Main Street Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2003. Revitalization efforts have resulted in 1,700 residential units (half of them built in the last eight years), a daytime population of over 25,000 employees in more than 3 million square feet of office space (a third of total office space in the Greenville/Spartanburg area), and 850 hotel rooms. Downtown has become a retail and dining destination for the region with over 90 retail establishments (14 opening since 2009) and over 95 restaurants (20 opening since 2009). Downtown is also home to a full year of events, including a farmers market, a weekly music series running from March to October, as well as parades and community gatherings.

D. Community Issues and Concerns

In a series of public meetings and a public opinion survey, residents, employees and business owners within the Shreveport-Caddo study area agreed that an invigorated live, work and play downtown and its waterfront are crucial to the future prosperity and quality of life of Shreveport.

Public opinion survey

Key findings of the survey included:

- 79 percent felt development should be “promoted in downtown and central areas that have vacant housing or land.”
- 75 percent said “the government should promote development with incentives and public investments, where needed.”
- 82% of respondents said that diversified industries and job growth were “very important” to the future of the Shreveport area.
- 80% said that employment opportunities were a “very or extremely important” reason to stay in or come to live in the Shreveport area, and, when asked what would have the most impact on them staying, employment opportunities ranked highest.
- 71% said it was “very important” to retain young people and recent graduates.

Visioning forum for the 2030 master plan

Downtown improvement was a key reason why a quarter of all participants came to the Visioning Forum. Downtown was a prominent topic of conversation, and when talking about values, the hope for a revitalized and thriving downtown and waterfront where people live, work and play was among the most frequently mentioned.

The availability of downtown and waterfront areas for development and creating more working and living opportunities were identified as key opportunities of this master plan—as were proactive economic development and workforce development—in the service of attracting new business and jobs and of retaining talented young workers, many of whom could make downtown home.

Moreover, “quality of life” and sustainability were discussed as important to downtown and Shreveport’s future. Topics discussed included:

- Attracting the creative class by creating a “green,” “healthy” place to live and work. Healthier communities are more prosperous communities.
- Marketing Shreveport’s image to attract people from out of state and to increase local pride.
- Adding bike lanes and increasing walking areas on roads to create a happier, healthier community.

Although seen as a key opportunity, downtown revitalization was also perceived as one of the greatest challenges facing the city, after years of decline.

“Speak Out!” neighborhood vision meetings

Although most input focused on residential areas outside of downtown, topics included the importance of pursuing development opportunities in priority locations, including downtown, and the need for growth in key industry sectors (technology, natural gas, film/digital media and biomedical) to create more jobs and strengthen the regional economy. Small-business development, a critical element to creating a vibrant downtown live, work and play environment, was also viewed as important to economic development.

Downtown and the waterfront workshop

Discussion topics at the workshop held in November 2009 focused on downtown’s and the waterfront’s assets, opportunities, and challenges. These included:

Assets

1. Downtown’s historic buildings and architecture
2. The Cross Bayou and Red River riverfronts
3. Cultural attractions and “things to do”

Opportunities

1. Revitalization of downtown structures
2. A pedestrian bridge to connect Shreveport’s riverfront to Bossier
3. A larger university facility
4. Revival of Texas Avenue
5. Downtown housing

Challenges

1. Code enforcement and regulatory barriers to revitalization (e.g., zoning)
2. Safety/crime
3. Lack of collaboration among various groups seeking revitalization

Specifically, topics mentioned included the potential for residential mixed-use development on large, vacant, publicly owned parcels along Cross Bayou; adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized historical structures in the CBD; continued revitalization in the West Edge and Texas Avenue districts; and the economic importance of downtown as the



Participants at one table in the master plan workshop on downtown review their list of assets and opportunities

economic, cultural and entertainment center of the region. Working with the Consortium of Education, Research and Technology of North Louisiana (CERT) to bring a significant university facility downtown was identified as a key to downtown’s future. In addition to code enforcement, other challenges facing downtown’s economic prosperity included lack of services and retail, building codes that discourage adaptive reuse of historic structures as new office and/or residential uses, and a lack of incentives to bring new investment to the area.

Downtown and the waterfront in the vision and principles

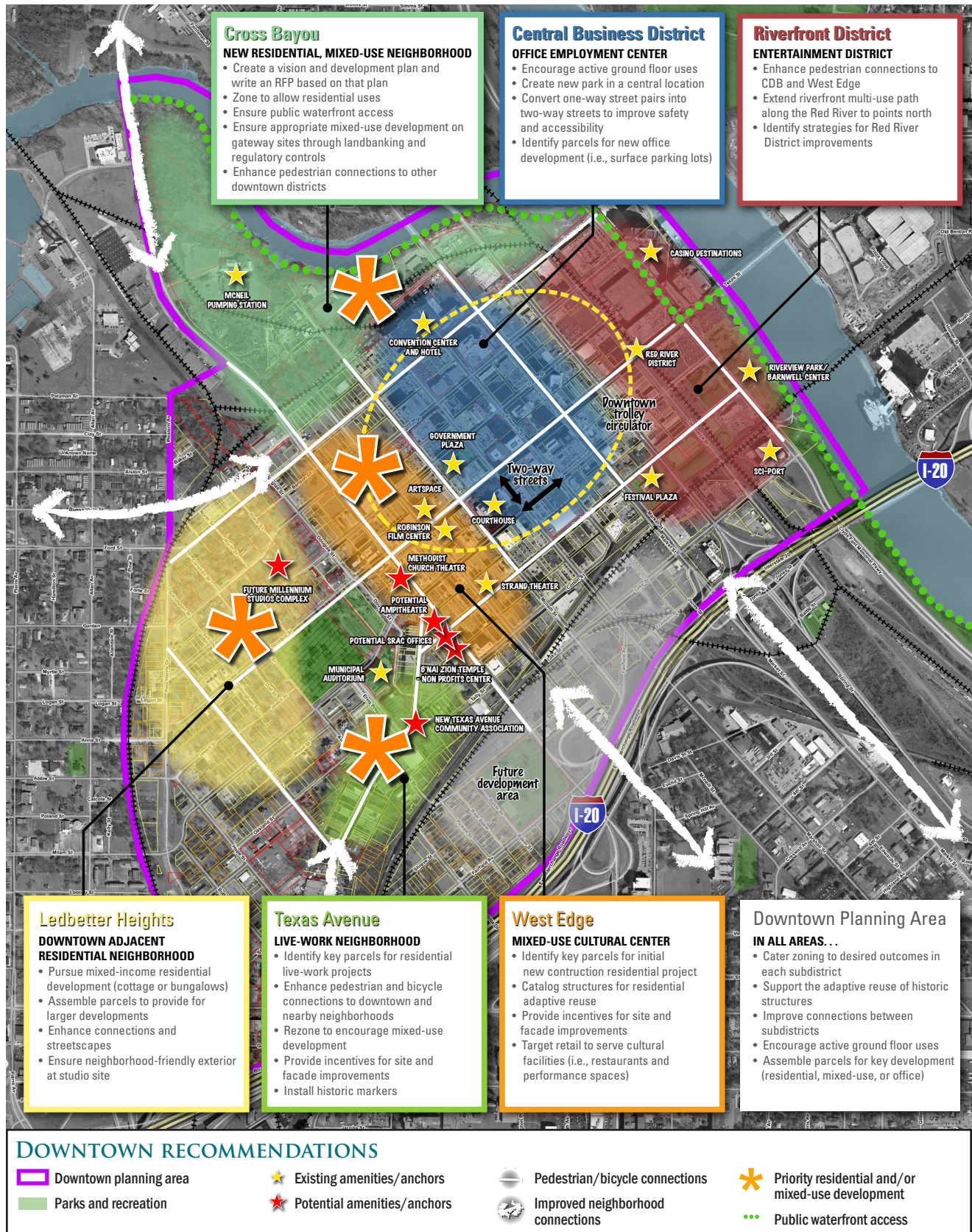
In the vision, downtown and the waterfront are considered key to the future success and vibrancy of the Shreveport-Caddo study area and the wider region:

- “Downtown and nearby neighborhoods in the city core are vibrantly alive with residents and businesses in historic and new buildings. A revitalized waterfront district links Cross Bayou and the city center to Shreveport’s origins on the banks of the Red River. Underutilized properties...have been restored to community use with housing, shops, offices, or parks and other public spaces. Downtown...offer(s) attractive and affordable choices for young singles and couples, families with children, empty-nesters, and retirees.”
- “Our landscape is enriched by a natural network of greenways and bayous offering recreation and nature.”
- “...Shreveport’s youth and college graduates, as well as newcomers, are proud of their beautiful city, cohesive community, and culture of opportunity. All citizens choose to be part of an innovative city on the move.”

The principles also relate to the theme of downtown revitalization:

- Fairness and opportunity for everyone
 - > Make every neighborhood a “neighborhood of choice” with excellent infrastructure, services and amenities.
- Strengthened assets and enhance possibilities
 - > Support, maintain and expand on the economic and community assets that sustain our area today. Create a community with easy access to all aspects of community life—work, travel, cultural events, festivals, shopping and faith based and nonprofit opportunities.
- Good stewardship of our natural and cultural heritage
 - > Build greater understanding of our historical roots through organized preservation and historic heritage activities and incentives programs.
 - > Support arts and culture as a source of community pride and a distinctive economic competitive advantage.
- High standards of quality in development and design
 - > Make public investments a model of quality, excellent design, and long-term vision.
- > Promote and enforce quality design standards in private development regulations.
- A business-friendly environment
 - > Establish policies that create the conditions and climate to support the growth of local businesses and attractive investment and entrepreneurs.
 - > Streamline regulations while preserving appropriate safeguards to our resources and quality of life.
- A community of learners
 - > Make Shreveport-Caddo a center of lifelong education and learning for all its citizens, young and old, from the first explorations all the way through advanced training and degree programs.
- Communication, transparency and community participation
 - > Promote civic engagement of all community members, with an emphasis on engaging young people.
 - > Keep residents, businesses and others informed about community conditions (quality of life indicators, both good and bad), decisions and options.
 - > Expand community participation in decision-making—every voice counts.

E. Downtown Recommendations



Source: NLCOG, Goody Clancy



Central Business District

The Central Business district will continue to serve as the regional center for Class A office space and the center of local government and the regional courts system. Natural gas service firms, financial and other firms will occupy renovated and new office structures, and support an increased diversity of retail and restaurant activities that face the street to help create a bustling pedestrian environment.

Key actions required to accomplish this goal include:

- Identify parcels for **new office development** in the CBD (i.e., surface parking lots).
- Require **active ground-floor** uses to bring new life to downtown streets, including cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating attractive to downtown workers, visitors and residents.
- Develop a **unique park** on the current bus station parcel once the station is relocated.
- **Convert one-way street pairs** into two-way streets to improve safety and accessibility.

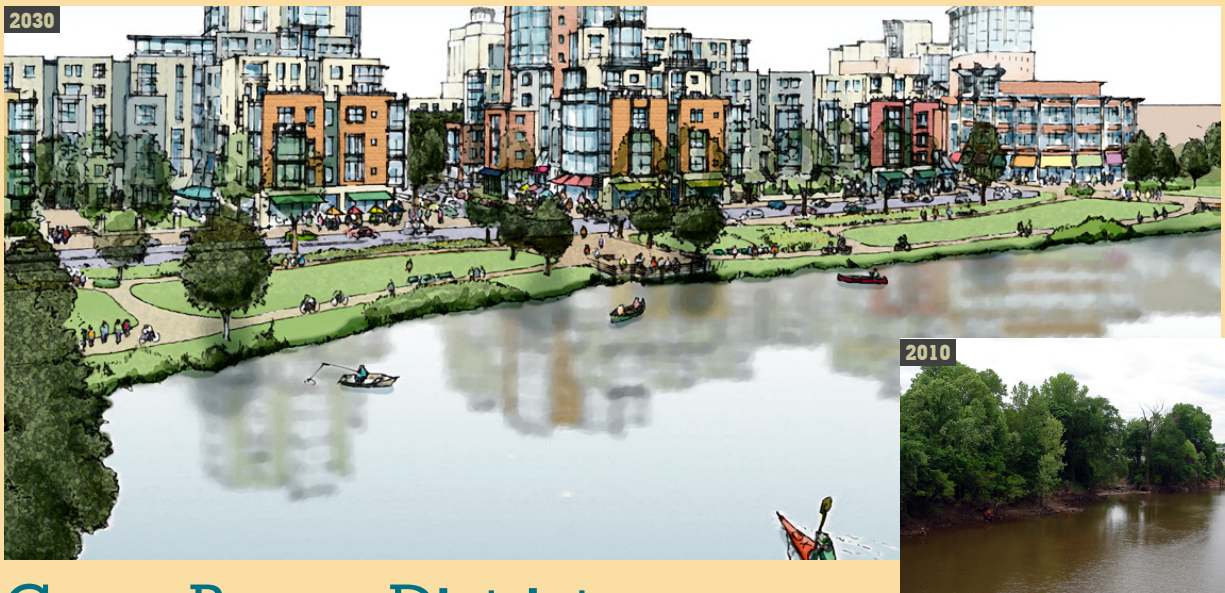


Riverfront District

A reactivated and revitalized Riverfront District will bring more visitors to downtown Shreveport and the Red River Waterfront. New residents will live in mixed-use buildings that include restaurants and retail amenities that support both their daily needs and those of visitors attracted to the area's numerous cultural events, museums and entertainment/gaming establishments.

Key actions required to accomplish this vision include:

- Identify sites for potential **mixed-use residential development** and market the area to prospective residents, such as empty nesters and 55+ communities seeking an environment with existing amenities such as restaurants, Riverview Park and Festival Plaza programming, casinos and a rebranded Red River District.
- **Revitalize and rebrand the Red River District** by implementing DDA-developed strategies.
- **Improve access** to the area through enhanced pedestrian connections to the Central Business District, West Edge, and future Cross Bayou neighborhood
- **Extend the riverfront multi-use path** along the Red River to points north utilizing Clyde Fant Memorial Parkway right-of-way where casinos block waterfront access.
- Repair and maintain downtown **riverfront arts venues** and resolve lighting issues on the bridge.



Cross Bayou District

A vibrant, mixed-use residential neighborhood will grow alongside the banks of Cross Bayou to bring hundreds and potentially thousands of new residents to downtown and the accompanying restaurants and retail to serve them. A publicly accessible multi-use path and park system lining the waterfront will act both as an anchor to attract visitors to the waterfront, and as an active and passive recreational area for downtown residents.

Key actions required to accomplish this goal include:

- **Create a Cross Bayou Vision Plan and Development Framework** for the new waterfront-adjacent neighborhood, write an RFP based on that plan, and identify a development partner.
- **Rezone parcels abutting the Cross Bayou waterfront** to allow for residential and mixed-use development that preserves a public right-of-way directly along the waterfront.
- **Address brownfield issues** by preparing a Phase I Environmental Assessment and securing funding for remediation.
- **Secure key gateway sites** to ensure compatible development character through landbanking and other regulatory controls.
- **Prepare a Cross Bayou public access waterfront plan** with SPAR to anchor the waterfront, and to serve as a catalyst for future development.
- **Enhance pedestrian connections** to other downtown districts.



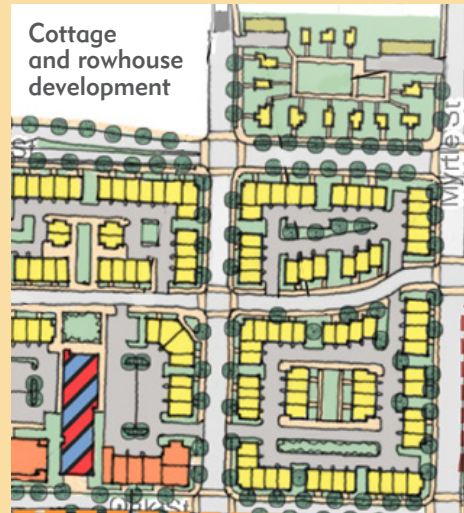
West Edge District

Spurred by new successful, mixed-use residential development, the West Edge transforms into a vibrant, seven-day-a-week, 18-hour downtown environment. Residents occupying apartments and condos in new and adaptively reused structures, along with thousands of annual visitors, populate sidewalk cafes, art galleries, restaurants, and performance spaces throughout the district. Established cultural institutions along with a new film festival highlighting Shreveport's and downtown's growing film industry, draw national attention to the district, further cementing the area's position as the cultural center of the ArkLaTex region.

Key actions required to achieve this future include:

- Adopt a **demolition-delay ordinance** for historic properties downtown as a first step to saving many threatened structures, then adopt an adaptive reuse ordinance to remove barriers and lower rehabilitation costs for residential and/or office conversions of old and historic buildings.
- Rewrite zoning to **encourage mixed-use residential and flex office space** structures, and eliminate industrial uses to provide greater confidence and returns on downtown investments.
- Identify key publicly-owned properties, privately owned surface parking lots, and/or properties under single-ownership that would be suitable for **residential development**.
- Create a **revolving fund for matching grants or low-interest loans** to help renovations that create low-cost live/work raw spaces.
- **Develop a storefront inventory** within the West Edge of spaces suitable for full-service restaurants and market spaces to market to experienced restaurateurs.
- **Develop design guidelines** that ensure new construction complements the West Edge's historic building fabric, and encourage active ground floor uses.

source: www.cottagecompany.com



Ledbetter Heights

Ledbetter Heights, the mostly vacant and underutilized area west of the downtown core, will become a downtown-adjacent mixed-income residential neighborhood. A strategic plan for the subdistrict should include opportunities for different housing types (row houses, duplexes, and bungalow/cottage-style units) that appeal to young singles, couples, families and retirees seeking proximity to a vibrant downtown. It should also identify key connective corridors to a revitalized Texas Avenue mixed-use commercial corridor, and to the culturally vibrant, amenity-rich West Edge District.

Key actions required to accomplish this goal include:

- Identify and package adjoining adjudicated parcels to **create larger parcels** attractive for developers.
- **Work with for-profit and nonprofits housing developers** to develop residences.
- **Work with downtown churches** and other nonprofits that own sites desirable for residential development.
- Develop expertise in **layered financing** opportunities to help support development.
- **Work with Millennium Studios** as operations expand to ensure that its design is attractive, open to the community, and perceived as a quality neighborhood anchor.
- Ensure that Community Development's Ledbetter Heights plan, which extends into areas of the West Edge and the Texas Avenue Corridor, is **integrated into the overall downtown strategy**.



Texas Avenue District

Texas Avenue is the vibrant, mixed-use “Main Street” and events corridor for downtown and the city, serving residents of nearby Ledbetter Heights, West Edge and South Side, but also welcoming artists and musicians in search of raw spaces, visitors seeking arts programming, and recreational opportunities, such as “bike-only Sundays.”

Key actions required to accomplish this goal include:

- **Restripe Texas Avenue to provide bike lanes, and improve sidewalk conditions to encourage pedestrian traffic.**
- Implement a **pilot Main Streets program** to revitalize Texas Avenue.
- **Develop design guidelines** to ensure new development complements historic building fabric.
- Incorporate Texas Avenue structures and cultural amenities into **guided audio tours**.
- **Coordinate planning and marketing efforts** to make the avenue an event corridor with street fairs, farmers markets, and a pilot “car-free Sunday” bikeway extending from downtown to Levy Street.
- Continue to market Texas Avenue as **a distinct cultural destination**, including targeted marketing of vacant storefronts for performance spaces, art galleries, etc.
- **Encourage adaptive reuse** of structures to provide live/work space for artists.

F. Strategies and Actions to Achieve the Goals

Goal 1

A mixed-use, live, work and play center that serves as the economic, historic and cultural downtown of the region.

Policies:

- *Support revitalization efforts and incentives to attract economic and cultural activities and organizations to locate downtown.*
- *Promote policies and initiatives to provide a diversity of downtown housing options, including rental and ownership units and mixed-use developments.*
- *Encourage policies and incentives to facilitate adaptive reuse of downtown's historic, vacant and/or blighted structures.*
- *Support infrastructure investments and programs that improve the safety, appearance and cleanliness of downtown.*

STRATEGIES

A. Convene major downtown, city and parish stakeholders to guide downtown development and revitalization.

Meeting downtown's true potential will require extensive coordination and dedication. Therefore it is essential that City and Parish officials, nonprofits, and other downtown organizations work with one another to ensure that initiatives and projects not only move forward, but are completed.

Actions

1. Build on ongoing DDA efforts to create a downtown/waterfront revitalization working group.
Key stakeholders in a working group focusing on advancing an integrated plan for downtown revitalization would include representatives of the

DDA; MPC; city, parish and nonprofit economic development organizations; historical, cultural and arts organizations; neighborhood groups like the Texas Avenue Community Association; downtown property owners, managers, and associations; commercial brokers, major lenders and developers; major downtown employers and businesses; and college and university representatives.

Beyond this framework for downtown revitalization, the City should prepare a more detailed plan for downtown, similar to that developed in Greenville, SC, to maximize revitalization potential. The plan should include targeted actions, grounded in extensive market analysis, as well as detailed implementation and financing strategies. A long-term commitment from the City and partners from the for-profit and nonprofit sectors would also be required. The DDA should lead this effort, turning their downtown vision plan into specific plans for each of the downtown districts.

2. Led by DDA, conduct a parcel-by-parcel analysis to identify priority development and redevelopment opportunities throughout the downtown planning area.

A database of key development and redevelopment sites would allow the City to target and market to developers specific sites that would serve as catalysts for further development at strategic locations within the various subdistricts. This marketing effort would also provide greater confidence that the City is an active participant and supporter of downtown's future.

B. Create a regulatory environment and information resources to encourage desired development types and uses throughout the downtown planning area.

Current zoning within the downtown planning area is outdated, vague, and needs to be rewritten. New

zoning districts would promote desired development types, such as business/office/institutional in the CBD; residential and mixed-use neighborhoods along Cross Bayou; mixed-use cultural districts for the West Edge, Texas Avenue and the Riverfront; and a redeveloped residential neighborhood within Ledbetter Heights.

Actions

1. **Establish new zoning districts—with clear, understandable design and development standards—that encourage desired development specific to the planning area’s various sub-districts and that create an inviting environment for workers, residents and visitors.**
New zoning must be enacted to promote the kind of development desired in downtown’s various segments. This will reassure developers that undesirable or incompatible uses, with the potential to devalue their investment, will not be permitted on adjacent properties. Design guidelines will ensure that new development is compatible with historic fabric and promotes active ground-floor uses.
2. **Incorporate building code standards that promote adaptive reuse of historic buildings, while protecting health and safety.**
A number of models are available, including the New Jersey historic building code, the Los Angeles downtown code, and the International Existing Buildings Code. If state action is needed, work with other Louisiana cities to pass legislation that gives cities the option of using these codes.
3. **Establish a demolition-delay ordinance to help preserve downtown’s historic building fabric.**
A demolition-delay ordinance would require a waiting period when an owner of a historic property applies for a demolition permit. During that period, an effort is made to find a use for the property that will not require demolition of the historic elements. The state-designated Cultural District, which includes the CBD and the Texas Avenue corridor, would be a suitable area for initial application of demolition delay. (See Chapter 5.)
4. **Identify all historic structures in downtown suitable for reuse.**
The inventory of historic properties recommended in Chapter 5 would be a good resource for identifying structures in downtown.
5. **Consider creating a local historic district in downtown after demolition-delay, new zoning, building code changes, and incentives are in place.**
(See Chapter 5.)
6. **Target businesses to locate downtown, particularly in growing sectors such as natural gas and film/media.**
Downtown is the office and culture capital of the region and has room for additional office space. Targeting select industries to locate downtown achieves two objectives—it diversifies downtown’s economic base, and it brings in more workers to support retail, services and restaurants.
7. **Create and implement a new signage and wayfinding plan that brands downtown subdistricts as well as the entire downtown.**
Downtown is not clearly identified for motorists arriving by interstate or other major roads. In addition, current signage within downtown is not designed for maximum legibility and impact. A signage and wayfinding system that clearly indicates downtown attractions and downtown amenities (such as parking) should also be designed to incorporate branding of the subdistricts within an overall downtown signage design identity. Despite the fact that the downtown core is compact, attractions are dispersed, so public maps that show visitors where they are in relation to other attractions are also needed.
8. **Work with Millennium Studios to ensure that the building and its operations function as a quality neighborhood anchor.**

Movie studios are enclosed buildings with the architectural character—or lack thereof—of warehouses. Enhancements that can help make the building serve as an anchor to a new neighborhood are essential. Simple actions like covering the walls with trellises and planted vines and agreements on managing truck operations can make a significant difference.

C. Attract new anchors to spur development within downtown's various subdistricts.

Downtown revitalization would greatly benefit from additional anchor destinations that draw new residents, businesses and visitors to downtown. Recent publicly-funded investments—including the Convention Center and Hotel, the Robinson Film Center, and Festival Plaza—have successfully attracted people and business to the downtown. While successful, these destinations would benefit from additional facilities that would bring increased vitality to downtown and the waterfront.

Actions

1. Work with CERT and higher education institutions to build on Southern University's existing downtown location to bring more programs and students downtown.

Colleges and universities in downtown locations have a proven record of bringing in new vitality, economic activity and culture.

Perhaps the best-known example of the impact of higher education on a downtown is the Savannah College of Art and Design, founded in the 1970s, which has completely transformed central Savannah through rehabilitation and reuse of historic buildings, as well as construction of new buildings, in some 60 locations throughout the city's downtown.

Louisiana College has chosen downtown Shreveport for its new law school, which will be located in the United Mercantile Building

(donated to the school) at the corner of Market and Texas streets. Additional student activity could be provided in a multi-institutional location. The Learning Center of Rapides Parish in Alexandria could serve as a model.

2. Identify new anchors, or seek improvements of existing anchors, within downtown subdistricts to increase downtown activities and serve as catalysts for additional development.

Anchors could include a revitalized and rebranded Red River District; new performance spaces in the West Edge and along Texas Avenue, a waterfront park along Cross Bayou; and renovations and enhanced programming at the Barnwell Center and Riverview Hall.

D. Break down barriers to residential and mixed-use development.

The city, through the DDA and through actions such as creation of a downtown residential plan, can hasten new and adaptive-reuse development downtown. It is extremely important that initial projects be pursued with great care and high standards. The first projects need to be successful; otherwise they may discourage further investment.

Actions

1. Develop a residential plan for downtown.

A plan should target different residential types (multifamily, mixed-use, rowhouse, single-family cottages) for different subdistricts and identify appropriate regulations (i.e., zoning changes), design guidelines, and financing strategies needed to achieve desired outcomes. Different subdistricts could also be targeted to different demographic groups interested in downtown living (i.e., singles, families, 55+ empty nesters). Residential options could include raw space renovated to meet code but otherwise left for owners or tenants to fit out for their own needs, as well as more conventional residential approaches.

2. Working with the DDA, the City should continue to assemble available parcels within the downtown planning area that hold the potential for residential development.

The city has already assembled several properties along the Cross Bayou and within Ledbetter Heights that hold potential for residential development. Continued assembly of contiguous parcels within these subdistricts and others should be encouraged, including the numerous adjudicated lots within the downtown planning area, many of which abut publicly owned land. After assembling contiguous parcels, and putting the right regulations in place (zoning, design guidelines, etc), the City should issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to interested developers, potentially with discounted land price as an incentive to promote residential development. To encourage more significant redevelopment, RFPs should target developers with experience in downtown settings. Assembly of infill sites, such as parking lots and vacant structures, in the downtown core and particularly in the West Edge, can promote the development of catalyst residential projects.

E. Explore housing-development opportunities on City-owned land.

Incentives such as tax abatements, permit streamlining, and other inducements offered to developers can spur creation of new housing downtown and make projects more financially viable.

Actions

1. Identify key publicly owned surface parking lots for residential development, initially targeting areas within the West Edge.

Numerous lots within the downtown planning area offer strategic residential infill opportunities that could act as catalyst residential projects. To demonstrate market demand, an initial mixed-use development should include quality design

standards that complement surrounding historic structures, and be marketed to urban-inclined households seeking downtown apartment or loft-style living.

2. Work with churches and nonprofits that own sites desirable for residential development.

Parking lots for churches within downtown, particularly in the West Edge, could be suitable for residential use. Churches could benefit from developing this land, potentially providing a church-sponsored mixed-income housing development, while developing parking solutions with less visual impact from the street.

3. Pursue mixed-income residential development.

As the urban core of the city and region, downtown needs to reflect the socioeconomic makeup of its people. By pursuing mixed-income development, downtown can become a welcoming environment for all Shreveporters.

4. Identify appropriate strategies for streamlining permitting for residential development or redevelopment within the downtown/waterfront planning area.

The DDA could designate a staff person to assist potential downtown investors with permitting. After rezoning, permitting should become less time-consuming and burdensome.

5. Extend the Restoration Abatement Program for a longer period.

The current program of five-year tax abatements could be extended to ten years for all or for particularly desirable renovation projects.

6. Develop expertise in layered financing opportunities to assist development of residential properties downtown.

Early projects may require financing support that is more complex than usual.

F. Enhance downtown's retail environment.

Although downtown was once the bustling retail hub for Shreveport and the ArkLaTex region, today's downtown offers limited retail or service amenities and an overabundance of vacant storefronts. However, there is opportunity for new retail within the downtown planning area. As the cultural center and only downtown environment for the region, opportunities exist for niche retail offerings, such as full-service restaurants, cafes, performance venues and specialty retail, and they should be explored. Additionally, as new development over the next 20 years brings more residents downtown, the need for neighborhood-serving retail will also increase.

Action

1. **Encourage active ground-floor uses in all new or renovated structures within the downtown core, and require them on major streets such as Texas, Milam, and Travis.**

Active uses are those that can be entered directly from the sidewalk and provide transparency, so that pedestrians can see into the building. These establishments increase pedestrian traffic, bringing downtown streets increased vitality and safety, as more eyes are on the street.

2. **Complete an inventory of active and vacant storefronts, building on the retail inventory conducted by Community Development within downtown, to develop a database to assist in marketing sites to prospective retailers.**

Downtown has numerous cultural draws, including the Strand Theater, ArtSpace, the Barnwell Center, SciPort, Festival Plaza, and the Robinson Film Center, and it now attracts thousands of visitors to events, but there are few downtown restaurants in which they can dine (outside of the casinos). New restaurants marketed initially to visitors, in ground-floor, sidewalk-accessible spaces, would bring increased activity to downtown, provide additional choices for existing and future residents, and

enliven pedestrian traffic for a more active environment. Neighborhood-serving retail would follow as more residential development occurs throughout the planning area.

3. **Expand eligibility and market the DSDC Low-Interest Loan Program for interior and exterior improvements, to draw restaurants, cafes, and performance spaces to downtown.**

The current program is limited to renovations of older buildings, but loans could also be extended to desirable newer buildings. With so many vacant storefronts throughout the downtown planning area, providing incentives for interior and exterior improvements would help to attract new businesses interested in moving downtown, but unable to obtain financing to cover some of the costs associated with initial interior and exterior build out. As loans are paid back by businesses, these funds would then be available for additional loans to businesses interested in locating downtown.

4. **Coordinate work of the DDA, City economic development staff, and real estate community to target and market retail businesses to locate downtown with tailored services.**

Providing the right tenant mix to serve workers, visitors and residents is essential to creating a vibrant downtown environment. Targeting initial service-based businesses, niche retail and restaurants/cafes to locate downtown, as was done in Greenville, SC, will lead to a more complete retail environment over time, particularly as more residents choose to locate downtown.

5. **Establish a Small Improvements Fund and program to provide design assistance and funds for signage, store display and similar improvements.**

Providing design assistance for signage, store window displays and other activities can help downtown businesses be more successful in attracting patrons.

6. Establish a pilot Main Street program on Texas Avenue.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation created the Main Street Program 28 years ago as a combined economic-development and historic-preservation program for commercial districts. Over 1,600 communities have put it into practice, including 28 in Louisiana. (See Chapter 5.)

G. Continue to invest in programs and activities to promote heritage and cultural activities.

Amenity-rich environments, including strong historic and cultural assets, are key to attracting new residents and visitors to downtown. Shreveport is the region's cultural center, and downtown stakeholders must work to build upon existing assets and programs and draw more workers, residents and visitors to truly realize downtown's cultural potential. (For more information about the recommended actions below, see Chapter 5.)

Actions

1. Inventory, improve and expand existing interpretative signage on historic resources throughout downtown.
2. Create self-guided walking tour maps and digital tours to highlight downtown's historic and cultural amenities.
3. Amend downtown zoning to specifically allow artists' studios and live-work situations.
4. Attract artists' studios, galleries and residences by providing incentives for low-cost renovations for raw space.
5. Create marketing materials and initiatives to market downtown residences specifically to artists—both locally and nationally.
6. Invest in a cultural arts identity branding campaign for downtown, including promotional materials for different market segments:

families, locals, tourists, potential future residents, businesses, and so on.

7. Repair and maintain downtown riverfront arts venues and resolve lighting issues on the bridge.
8. Market the state-designated cultural district to increase awareness of its benefits.
9. Seek grant funding, corporate sponsorships, and donations from foundations for new cultural events, such as new film and music festivals.

H. Create new park and open spaces throughout the downtown planning area.

Actions

1. Identify publicly-owned land that could serve as park space within each downtown subdistrict. Parks are valuable amenities in dense, urban environments. Shreveport's downtown core lacks public park spaces. As new and enhanced residential neighborhoods develop within the downtown planning area, a connected series of park spaces, with playgrounds and programmed activities such as concerts or community fairs, will be crucial to attracting new residents seeking a walkable, active, urban lifestyle. As downtown revitalization takes shape over the next twenty years, it is essential that public access to remaining waterfront areas be provided in all redevelopment initiatives.
2. Use broad-based design competitions to create distinctive and unique downtown parks that would serve collectively as an attraction for residents and visitors. In order to make the investment in parks worthwhile, it is important that designs include unique elements that can make them special attractions in their own right, not simply a green space. Themes related to Shreveport's history and landscape, parks that help demonstrate

environmental processes, such as water cycles, or a park with interactive sculptural elements could be among the possibilities. The Van Alen Institute (www.vanalen.org) is a major sponsor of design competitions for the public realm throughout the country and can be contacted for information and possible assistance in organizing, funding and running a competition.

3. Make Texas Avenue into an events corridor for special activities.

Texas Avenue, from downtown to Levy Street, has special character, even in its mostly dilapidated state. With limited investment, it could become an events corridor, with weekly or monthly car-free Sundays for biking, walking, roller blading and events such as street fairs and markets, and heritage activities such as podcasts with music that tell the history of the buildings along the street.

I. Create a public-safety program and marketing campaign for downtown.

Many Shreveporters retain an outdated image of downtown as a high-crime area. A public-safety program is needed to publicize the low-crime reality and to create an environment that sends a message that downtown is safe and well-policed.

Goal 2

An active, publicly accessible waterfront with recreational amenities and residential/mixed-use development.

Policies:

- *Focus public efforts on creating a publicly accessible waterfront along Cross Bayou.*
- *Support zoning and land use policies that encourage quality development of vacant parcels along the waterfront.*

STRATEGIES

A. Create a Cross Bayou Vision Plan and Development Framework for a new residential and mixed-use neighborhood along Cross Bayou, put regulations and other pre-development requirements in place, and issue an RFP with specific criteria based on the established vision for the area.

There is broad consensus that Cross Bayou offers an opportunity to create a new residentially focused, mixed-use neighborhood that provides public access to the waterfront. To attract a quality developer to the project, and achieve desired outcomes, the City and DDA need to prepare the way.

Actions

1. **Create an organized program to advance development of the Cross Bayou district into an exciting downtown waterfront district.**
 - Establish a vision and development framework for the Cross Bayou area.
 - Reach consensus on a set of development principles and project objectives.
 - Identify and/or create an implementing organization for the public/private development of Cross Bayou.
 - Test development feasibility and identify the initiatives necessary to make private investment feasible. These may include city commitment and action to remediate brownfields issues. Prepare an implementation schedule that responds to the feasibility issues.
 - Put appropriate zoning in place.
 - Reach consensus on the development incentives committed to the project.
 - Secure key gateway parcels (those near McNeil or Market streets) to ensure compatible development.
 - Draft a Developer Request for Proposals that details the vision, development principles, project objectives, the anticipated role of the public and private sectors and the incentives/

resources available to the selected developer.

- Select a development partner and negotiate a development agreement.

It is imperative that initial mixed-use developments on key “gateway” parcels be well executed, with quality design standards, and appropriate marketing to urban-inclined households in order to demonstrate market demand within the area. Should the initial project be unsuccessful, additional development will be unlikely to follow.

B. Create a publicly accessible waterfront along Cross Bayou.

Development along the Red River cut off public access to half of the downtown waterfront. As Cross Bayou develops, it is essential that the public have access to this valuable natural amenity.

Actions

1. Ensure that a publicly accessible waterfront is included in the desired vision for the Cross Bayou area.

Funds from the “Riverfront Park Extension” general obligation bond may be available now to support planning and design for public waterfront access and recreation within the Cross Bayou Vision plan. Elements to be considered include:

- A multi-use path from the Red River to the historic MacNeil pump station and identification of additional areas for a larger active-use park along Cross Bayou, connected to the waterfront multi-use path.
- Incorporation of the historic truss bridge as a pedestrian amenity.
- Connections with existing green networks, such as the Red River Bike multi-use trail.

Goal 3

Enhanced connections within downtown and improved downtown connections to other parts of the city and region.

Policies:

- *Support initiatives and investments that improve pedestrian, transit, parking and automobile circulation and conditions throughout downtown.*

STRATEGIES

A. Prepare a Downtown Mobility Plan to improve access and better connect downtown anchors and subdistricts.

Actions

1. Improve the pedestrian and bicycle environment throughout downtown.

Walkability is the hallmark of successful downtowns. Downtown Shreveport must provide comfortable, attractive and interesting pedestrian conditions and connections within all districts and between all districts. Currently, the downtown core has good streetscapes, but ground-floor storefronts are often uninviting, vacant, or boarded up. In other areas, pedestrian connections are poor, including those connecting riverfront attractions, such as the casinos and Sci-Port, to cultural attractions in the West Edge. These poor connections create a greater psychological distance, despite a relatively short geographic distance. Enhanced bicycle access can also contribute to livelier streets, as well as providing more incentives for downtown workers to commute by bicycle.

2. Continue strategic investment in pedestrian-friendly streetscapes throughout the downtown/waterfront planning area.

Streetscape investments should be planned, scheduled and implemented as part of the strategic targeting of specific areas and connections.

3. Apply “complete streets” design to all roadway improvements to provide for safe and attractive travel by all modes, as appropriate to the type of street.

“Complete streets” provide for safe travel by all modes—pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and auto—and should be the standard for all road or street improvements unless the type of street cannot support them (e.g., freeways). (See Chapter 8.)

4. Determine the value of converting one-way street pairs into two-way streets, where feasible.

The one-way street pairs in downtown are confusing to visitors (especially given limited signage to destinations) and encourage motorists to speed through downtown. Two-way streets enhance connections, provide better access to businesses and residences, slow traffic, and provide more visibility to storefronts and activity centers. Although it is sometimes argued that one-way streets are safer for pedestrians, this is generally not the case for multi-lane streets. Downtown intersections in the CBC and the West Edge have pedestrian-crossing signals, which provide safe crossing conditions.

5. Seek funding to cover operating expenses to run a downtown circulator trolley to connect existing and future amenities as more residents move into downtown and more attractions bring additional visitors.

Initial operation of a trolley circulator could include weekend, night or special event service to and from key downtown destinations—for example, linking the casinos and Sci-Port to the West Edge’s ArtSpace, Robinson Film Center and Strand Theater. Service could increase as more residents move to the downtown core.

City-owned trolleys for downtown were recently sold after sitting in storage for several years due to lack of funding to operate them. Initial service could be provided through rental of a van that is branded as the Downtown Circulator. New trolleys

could be purchased when funding is available, including from such potential sources as parking revenues, modest fees, or grants.

6. Create a parking management district.

There are numerous privately owned parking lots throughout downtown Shreveport, many of which are inefficiently used during the day and empty in the evening. A parking management district, overseen by the DDÄ, would manage all parking within the district by facilitating shared-parking arrangements, providing parking for downtown’s numerous cultural offerings, particularly in the West Edge and Riverfront subdistricts. Designated evening parking areas with attendants would also improve perceptions of safety.

B. Improve connections from downtown to surrounding neighborhoods.

Currently, connections between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods are fragmented, unattractive, or unsafe for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Actions

1. Use various methods such as dedicated bike lanes, multi-use paths, crossing improvements and wayfinding signage to improve connectivity within downtown and between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

- Study the feasibility of creating a multi-use path and green space between the Spring and Market Street viaducts with bridges over train tracks.
- Study the potential for additional bicycle corridors (Texas Avenue, Marshall Street and Common/Line Avenue) to better connect downtown to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Extend the multi-use path along the Red River to points north, using the historic truss bridge as a pedestrian/bicycle connector.

C. Identify funding strategies for streetscape and infrastructure improvements in downtown.

Actions

1. Explore the creation of a second or enlarged Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district to support continued streetscape and key infrastructure projects throughout the downtown core and identify the boundaries of an expanded or new district.

Currently, a TIF district serves areas along the Red River east of Market Street. An enlarged or

new TIF district can provide revenue to reimburse public infrastructure investments needed to spur revitalization in much of the downtown study area. Public investment in streetscapes and infrastructure helps to attract private investment by giving private developers confidence that the city is providing an environment that supports investment. Taxes on the incremental value of the improved properties then go back to the city to pay for the cost of the initial improvements.

G. Getting Started

Early actions that are not costly will provide a foundation for more ambitious activities.

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Enact a demolition-delay ordinance for core downtown areas	DDA; MPC; City Council
Create a Downtown Revitalization Working Group	DDA, government and stakeholder representatives
Revise the regulatory environment (zoning and building code) to promote redevelopment and revitalization	DDA; MPC; City Council
Prepare a Vision Plan and Development Framework for Cross Bayou	DDA