



RE-ENVISIONING THE “HEART OF OUR CITY”

A MASTER PLAN FOR

THIRD STREET

DOWNTOWN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

DECEMBER 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not be possible without all of the help, advice, and guidance from the Downtown Development District Staff and Commission. In addition to their guidance, we are grateful for all of the 180+ survey respondents who shared their thoughts for creating a better Baton Rouge. Lastly, we are also thankful for an anonymous gentleman who shared his passion for downtown Baton Rouge through his donation of articles and pamphlets spanning from the 1960s to present-day.

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A faded, historical black and white photograph of a street in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The image shows a row of utility poles with cross-arms and wires running along the left side of the street. In the background, there are several palm trees and a large, multi-story building with a prominent gable roof and a chimney. The overall scene is somewhat desaturated and has a grainy texture, characteristic of an old archival photograph.

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Third Street, Baton Rouge La. (January 4, 1907). EBRPL Digital Archive.





SUMMARY

Located on the edge of the Baton Rouge Terrace, just blocks from the Mississippi River, Third Street is the heart of downtown Baton Rouge. The area contains a rich tapestry of geological, ecological, and cultural history. Sitting atop a natural levee, the street once marked the edge of the river's historic meanders. This elevated and protected location made it a natural corridor for Native American tribes, as evidenced by nearby mounds at the State Capitol to the north and Louisiana State University to the south.

European contact began in 1699 when Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville claimed Baton Rouge for France. A fort at the north end of Third Street anchored the area, and the street remained strategically important through shifts in European colonial control until Louisiana joined the United States in 1812. By the 19th century, Third Street had emerged as a key commercial, civic, and educational corridor, linking residential neighborhoods to the State Capitol, early LSU campus buildings, and local commerce.

During the 20th century, Third Street became Baton Rouge's social and retail hub, hosting streetcars, theaters, restaurants, and department stores. Post-WWII suburbanization and mall development contributed to decline, and the 1970s Riverside Mall pedestrian experiment achieved only limited success.

Building on prior efforts, including Plan Baton Rouge I and II, the Third Street Master Plan envisions a pedestrian-centered, interconnected corridor extending the Central Green network. Conceptually grounded in the "braid" idea inspired by natural river patterns, the plan introduces parklets, curb extensions, enlivened intersections, and green infrastructure. A sustainable urban forest of native trees and understory plantings strengthens the streetscape while providing shade, habitat, and stormwater management. Parklets act as "front porches," offering flexible programming such as outdoor dining, art installations, performances, and recreational activities.

Creative interventions—Art Slices, light installations, augmented reality, and seasonal displays—celebrate Third Street's layered history. Interpretive features highlight the land, the people, and the street's social and architectural evolution. Together, these strategies aim to transform Third Street into a vibrant, culturally rich, and pedestrian-focused corridor, balancing historic preservation with contemporary urban life, while reinforcing its symbolic role as the heart of downtown Baton Rouge.

METHODOLOGY

At the outset of the planning process, the design team developed a methodological framework centered on two primary areas of inquiry. The first examined the street's physical landscape, analyzing its geology, hydrology, ecology, existing infrastructure, and overall conditions. The second explored the human experience, considering the cultural and historical significance of Third Street and its role in the city's evolution—from its Native American origins through European settlement to today's capitol city. Together, these perspectives offered a comprehensive understanding of Third Street's past and present.

To study both the physical and cultural landscapes, the team drew on a range of primary and secondary sources at local and regional levels. Archival research included materials from the Downtown Development District, the Baton Rouge Room at the East Baton Rouge Parish Main Library, and the library's digital archives, which provided historical newspaper articles, maps, and photographs. These resources illuminated the street's transformation over time. In addition, planning documents—including Plan Baton Rouge I and II—offered context and continuity, providing a foundation on which the current master plan builds.

Equally important was direct community engagement. Through a comprehensive survey of residents, business owners, and stakeholders, the team gathered valuable feedback about current challenges, including neglect and underutilization, as well as hopes for Third Street's future. Integrating these perspectives ensured that the master plan reflected the experiences and aspirations of the Baton Rouge community.

Finally, the design team applied a traditional urban design toolkit—detailed site analysis, program development, and iterative conceptual designs refined into a final master plan. This approach ensured the plan was grounded in a deep understanding of Third Street's history while aligning with the community's vision for its future.

VISION

The project vision was developed in partnership with the Downtown Development District. Working collaboratively, the design team created a framework that shaped recommendations, guidelines, and goals throughout the master plan process. These goals were aspirational in nature, applying broadly to the Third Street corridor, and were further refined with insight from public surveys.

The collective vision for the Third Street Master Plan is to create a safe, welcoming, and vibrant destination that honors the corridor's complex and layered history. This vision lays the foundation for 24/7 activity, outdoor art installations, and pocket greenspaces. Above all, it reaffirms Third Street's role as both a local gathering place and a regional destination that celebrates its rich cultural heritage.

By synthesizing early research with input from the public, the master plan establishes the following guiding principles for Third Street:

1. Celebrate Third Street as the cultural heart of the capitol city.
2. Create a clean and safe streetscape that allows people to interact, gather, and live.
3. Provide pocket parks and café seating that support neighboring bars and restaurants.
4. Introduce opportunities for art interventions, bringing surprise and vibrancy to the streetscape. Encourage partnerships with local art organizations, galleries, and university art programs.
5. Celebrate the physical, cultural, and architectural histories of Third Street through interpretation and storytelling.
6. Establish native microhabitats to support urban wildlife such as birds and insects.
7. Expand the network of greenspaces and circulation, ensuring connections with the broader downtown system, including links to the river and neighboring communities.
8. Create a vibrant, family-friendly, pedestrian-oriented environment that attracts local businesses and supports a thriving residential community.



Figure 0.0 Third Street, Downtown Baton Rouge



PROJECT CONTEXT



NATURAL HISTORY
CULTURAL HISTORY

Louisiana State University, Downtown Baton Rouge (undated). Hill Memorial Library.

NATURAL HISTORY

Examining the nature of the broader physical landscape is an essential component to any site-specific planning project. The information gleaned from analyzing the ecological, geological, and hydrological systems at a regional scale uncovers how they have shaped the site prior to human habitation. This often reveals natural and environmental advantages that led to Native American and European settlements.

Within the urban context of downtown Baton Rouge, natural systems have been manipulated and are somewhat hidden. However, in order to best understand the natural history and related human settlement of the Third Street area, it is necessary to briefly introduce these systems and define how they have influenced the region's physical landscape.

Ecoregion

An ecological region, or “ecoregion,” is defined as a general area in which the prevailing assemblages of natural communities and species are geographically distinct from adjacent ecoregions. These ecoregions consider several abiotic, biotic, terrestrial, and aquatic ecosystem variables. In partnership with federal, state, and local resource management agencies, the EPA utilizes these ecoregions “as a spatial framework for the research, assessment, and monitoring of ecosystems and ecosystem component.” The EPA employs a four-tiered system to categorize ecoregions across the continental United States, ranging from Level I with 12 ecoregions to Level IV with 967 ecoregions.

The adjacent map displays several of the Level III and Level IV ecoregions located within southeast Louisiana. Third Street is situated within the Baton Rouge Terrace (74d) ecoregion, which features high sodium soils of brown to grayish-brown. The natural vegetation covering the Baton Rouge Terrace was historically comprised of a matrix of upland hardwoods, hardwood flatwoods, spruce pine-hardwood mixed forests, and bottomland hardwoods. According to the EPA, approximately 50% of the historic vegetative cover across the Baton Rouge Terrace has been cleared for agricultural and urban uses.

Analyzing the Baton Rouge Terrace ecoregion is particularly important when planning for the long-term planting strategy for Third Street. Because the system offers a detailed analysis of the plant communities that once covered the site, the design team will incorporate that information when contemplating plant and tree recommendations.

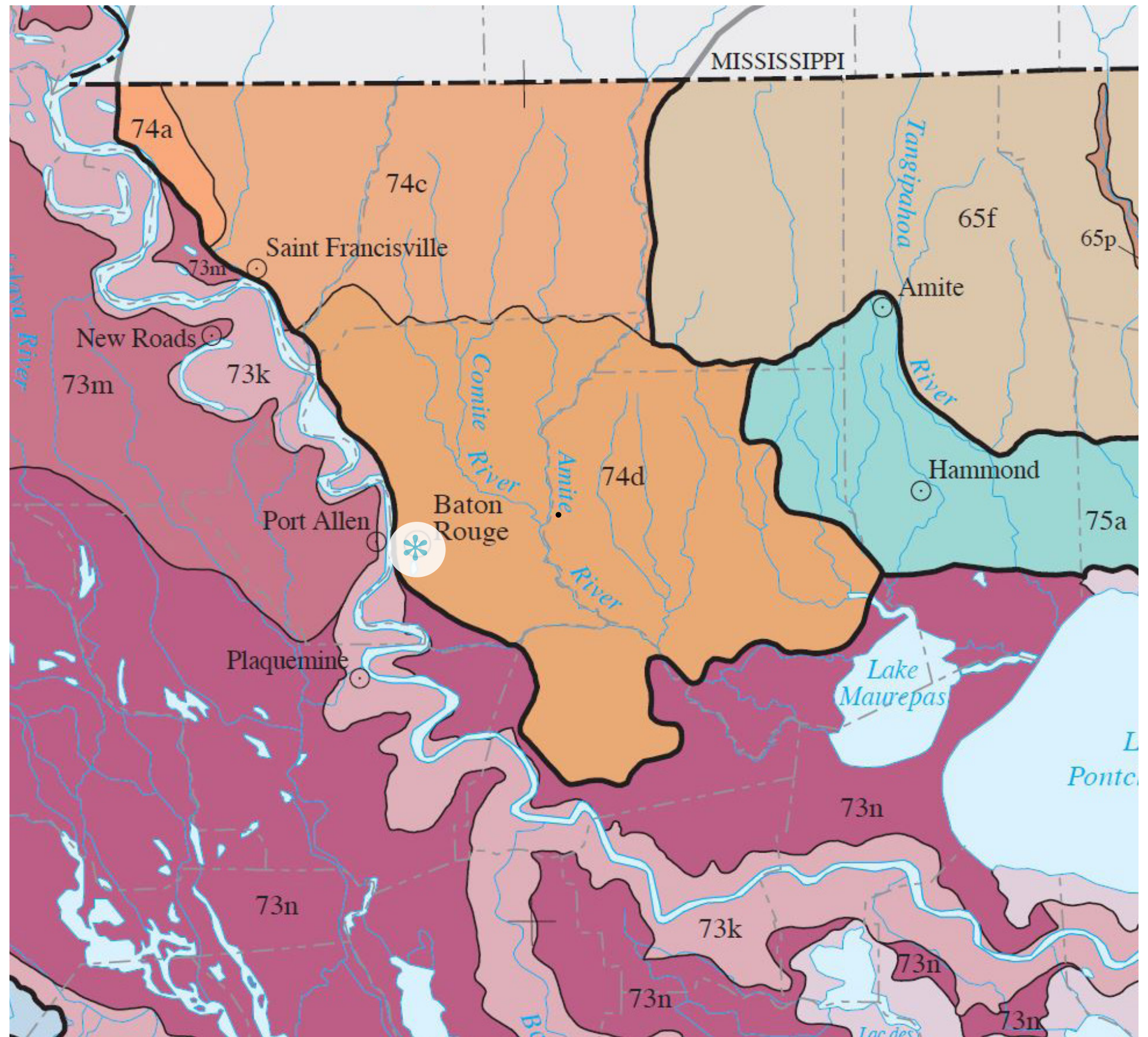


Figure 1.1: Level III and IV Ecoregions of Louisiana, United States Environmental Protection Agency

Hydrology and Topography

Although only several hundred feet from the Mississippi River, Third Street is located within the Amite River watershed, which serves as a primary tributary leading to Lake Pontchartrain and ultimately, the Gulf of Mexico. The Amite River channel travels approximately 75 miles and drains roughly 2,000 square miles from southern Mississippi to Lake Maurepas in southeast Louisiana. Nearly three-quarters of the watershed is situated within Louisiana.

The Amite River watershed contains a complex of Pleistocene-era terraces that descend approximately 500 feet in vertical change as one travels southward towards Lake Pontchartrain. These terraces can be categorized into three distinct classifications that relate to areas of sediment detachment, sediment transport, and sediment deposition. Soil composition varies between terrace groups, as the soils in the northern reaches contain more sand and gravel than those in the south, which consist of more sand, silt, and clay.

In the broader context beyond Third Street, the existing geologic and hydrologic systems are inextricably connected. Much of East Baton Rouge Parish, including Third Street, sits atop a terrace which was deposited during the Pleistocene and Holocene Epoch. Much of southern Louisiana was formed by sediment deposition from the Mississippi River and glacial sea level rise and fall cycles over thousands of years. Over time, the Mississippi River meandered and adjusted to assume the most efficient means of distributing water from its 1.2 million square mile watershed into the Gulf of Mexico. Several historic delta lobe remnants are still visible today.

Third Street sits atop the natural levee that, prior to modern-day levees, confined the river to its current location. The elevation of Third Street is roughly the same as the man-made levee along River Road.

In the vicinity of downtown Baton Rouge, the river is at the eastern most edge of the entire longitudinal range of the river's historic meanders. To the west, the former meanders spanned all the way to the city of Lafayette. The Baton Rouge Terrace begins at Lafayette Street and Third Street, making it an ideal place for settlement: high above the Mississippi River, and close enough to take full advantage for use as transportation.

In addition to the terrace and the river as primary geologic features, downtown Baton Rouge sits between the Denham Springs fault to the north, and the Baton Rouge fault to the south. Both faults are oriented east-west.

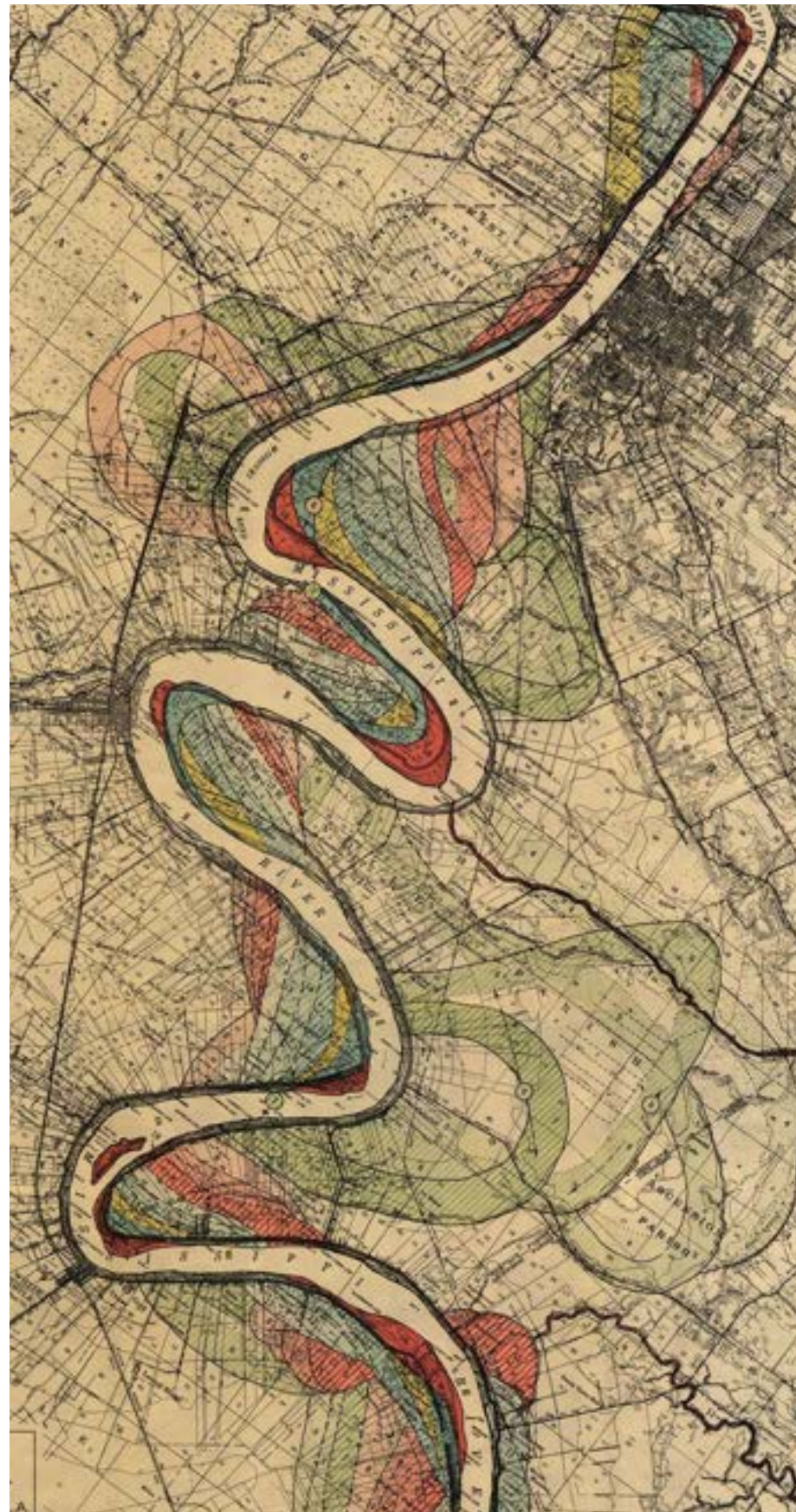


Figure 1.2: Fisk Map (1944) showing the ancient Mississippi River meanders in the Baton Rouge area.

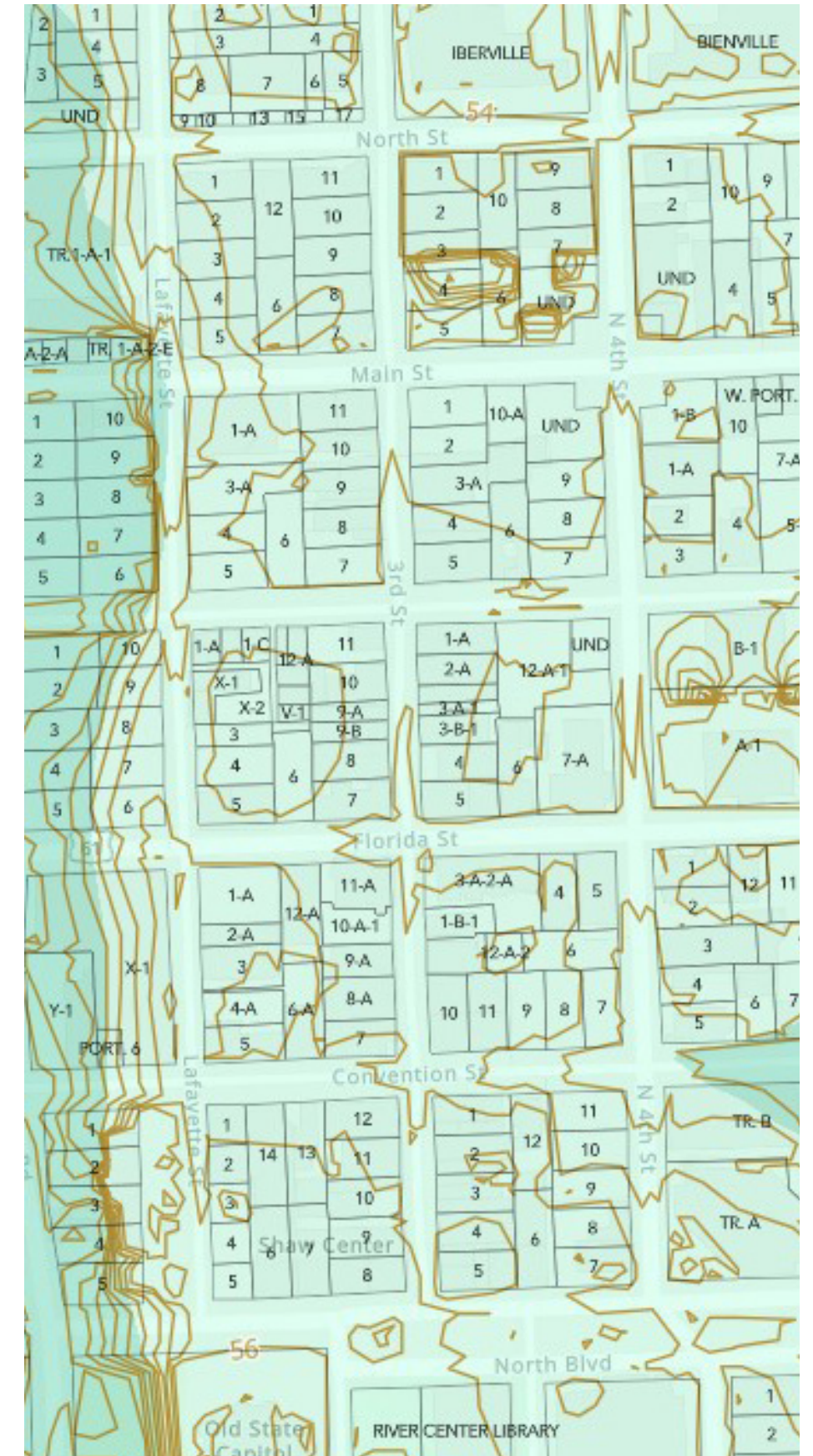


Figure 1.3: Topographic variation and Floodways along Third Street. City of Baton Rouge GIS.

CULTURAL HISTORY

Examining both the broader and local cultural landscape is an essential component to understand the development and evolution of Third Street. During the historical review, planners unlock clues that reveal stories of successes and challenges. In part, this understanding leads to design recommendations that are informed by the rich history of Third Street.

Within the urban context of downtown Baton Rouge, humans have been present for thousands of years. In order to best understand the human history of the Third Street area, it is necessary to briefly introduce eras of occupation and transition and how they have influenced downtown's development.

Precolonial Era

Prior to European contact in the 1500s, South Louisiana was occupied by Native American tribes who were mound-builders. Tribes present in the area include Caddo, Bayou Goula, and Houma among others. Much of the evidence of pre-colonial Native American settlements has been erased by modern development. However, remnants have been unearthed by archaeologists working in the area as a part of roadway or development projects. Some evidence remains visible on the ground-plane surface in the form of mounds.

Several nearby mounds and their relative ages suggest a robust Native American culture that once existed in the area. The closest mound exists about 300 yards from the northern portion of Third Street, on the east side of the state capitol. It has been dated to about 1,000 A.D. Two miles to the north, two mounds existed near Bayou Monte Sano in the vicinity of the Exxon Industrial Facility, where the bayou discharges into the Mississippi River. In conversations with Dr. Chip McGimsey, state archaeologist and director, the mounds were noted as the oldest in North America and were created by the first mound-builders. They were demolished in the 1960s for industrial development after being excavated by archaeologists.

The most visible and recognizable remnant may be the LSU Mounds, two miles south of downtown and Third Street. Although contested, recent radio carbon dating of the mounds places them at about 11,000 years old. Incredibly, they are claimed to be the oldest known man-made structures in the Americas.

Based on the age of the LSU and Bayou Monte Sano mounds, their proximity to downtown Baton Rouge, and the elevation advantages of the Baton Rouge Terrace, one could infer that the downtown area has been transversed by humans for thousands of years. One could also infer that

Third Street's location on the dry and well-protected natural bluff above and adjacent to the vast Mississippi River floodplain would have made it a natural circulation route for tribes in the area. The bluff edge is a datum which separates dynamic and unstable wetland ecologies to the west from upland hardwood forests and portions of prairie to the east.

Colonial Era

Much has been written about the colonial history of Baton Rouge and of Louisiana in general. For the purposes of this study, the broad historic review is brief, and research is focused on the area surrounding Third Street.

Baton Rouge was claimed for the French on March 17th, 1699 by Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville. In 1718, Bernard Diron Dartaguette won a land concession from the French government that includes the area of Baton Rouge. By 1727, the small colony in Baton Rouge is abandoned. The colony is ignored by France until the British receive the area in the Treaty of Paris which ends the Seven Years War.

Baton Rouge is a strategic point for Britain, as it is located across the Mississippi River from rival world power Spain. The British constructed

Fort New Richmond adjacent to what would become Third Street, less than 100 yards away.

In 1779, Spain enters the American Revolutionary War. In an effort to overtake the British, Spanish troops approach the Fort New Richmond from the south along the riverfront, immediately adjacent to Third Street. The Spanish defeat the British in September of 1779 and the fort is renamed Fort San Carlos. According to Chip McGimsey, state archaeologist, evidence of the British and Spanish forts most likely remains buried underground.

One remnant from this era and perhaps the oldest object visible along Third Street is a Spanish cannon and cannon ball embedded in the sidewalk at the corner of Third and Laurel, marking the location of the 19th century-era Fort Sumter saloon. The cannon is reportedly from Fort San Carlos, and was originally used to keep horse-drawn vehicles off of the sidewalk. According to a 1918 State-Times article, General John McGrath notes that although there is a possibility that the cannon is from the original British Fort, it has always been considered a Spanish cannon in his lifetime. Further archeological exploration is needed to determine the exact age and origin of the cannon. The article further states that most of the remaining artillery and cannons from the fort were melted to produce sugar cane equipment.



Figure 2.1: The history of the Fort Sumter Saloon and the origin of the Third Street cannon was told by General John McGrath. (1918) State Times.



Figure 2.2: The history of the Fort Sumter Saloon and the origin of the Third Street cannon was told by General John McGrath. (1918) State Times.

19th Century

In 1803, the United States buys a half-million acres from France as part of the Louisiana Purchase. Baton Rouge is not a part of the purchase, and remains under Spanish rule until 1810 when the militia is defeated by local residents demanding independence. Baton Rouge is a part of the West Florida Republic until 1812, when Louisiana is admitted into the Union. The fort, now referred to as Fort St. Charles, and surrounding grounds including portions of Third Street become property of the United States Government.

Baton Rouge first developed from the banks of the Mississippi River and gradually spread from west to east, and north-south along the river bank. In the 1821 sketch of Baton Rouge, the riverfront appears fully developed near Main Street. Large trees are visible in the vicinity of Third Street and Lafayette Street, upon the natural bluff. Third Street and the blocks surrounding start to take shape as evidenced in the 1825 Map of Baton Rouge. The layout of Third Street and much of downtown as we know it today is established in the Map of the Town of Baton Rouge, 1837. In 1849, the state capitol operations were moved from New Orleans and the Old State Capitol was built in Beaugard Town, near the terminus of Third Street at North Boulevard. Due to its proximity to the fort to the north, and to the “Old” State Capitol to the south, Third Street is a busy and active corridor in the mid-1800s.



Figure 2.3: Baton Rouge, 1821. Note that development is concentrated along the river, and trees are visible beyond, in the vicinity of Lafayette and Third Streets. Baton Rouge Room, EBRPL.



Figure 2.4: 1825 Map of Baton Rouge. The red dash indicates Third Street. EBRP Library, Baton Rouge Room.

Once again, Third Street is witness to war during the 1862 Civil War Battle of Baton Rouge, where federal troops occupied the fort under Colonel H.E. Paine. The epicenter of the battle occurred in the vicinity of Magnolia Cemetery, only ten blocks east of Third Street, or about one mile. In addition to the garrison and troop operations north and northeast of Third Street, federal gunboats moored in the Mississippi River would have been visible from Third Street near the Laurel, Florida, and Convention Street intersections.

Entrenchments for the Union Army crossed Third Street approximately 300' north of North Street. According to McGimsey, entrenchments have been unearthed during road work near the State Capitol, and similar evidence could be expected below Third Street in that area.

After the war and during the time of reconstruction, race relations were tense, growth was stagnant, and corruption was common. By 1885, development spread to modern-day Mid City, and property lines are established along Third Street and the rest of downtown. According to an 1885 map by Waller and Swart, three fire cisterns are located where Third Street intersects North Boulevard, Florida, and Main Streets. During reconstruction, opportunity arose as the United States Government no longer needed the garrison for military purposes.

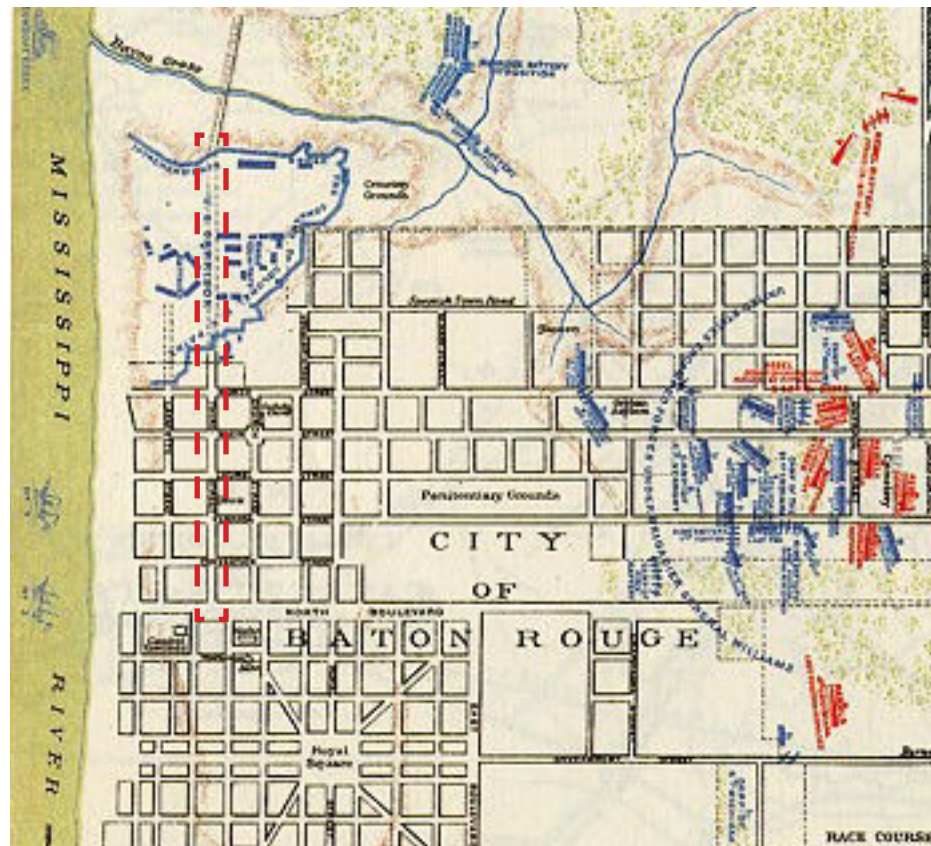


Figure 3.1: Topographical plan of the city and battlefield of Baton Rouge, LA, August 5, 1862. Third Street, highlighted in red, spans across the Union Garrison and related earthworks and bunkers.

In 1886, Louisiana State University moved from their location in south Beauregard Town onto the former military post land which once contained Fort New Richmond, Fort San Carlos, and the recent United States Garrison. Many university buildings were oriented along Third Street, including Garig, Heard, and Robinson Halls, Hill Memorial Library, and Alumni Memorial Hall.

In addition to the storied and vast military and academic history, perhaps the most intriguing layer of hallowed ground sits at the foot of Third Street. The land near the Pentagon Barracks nicknamed “the gridiron” witnessed the first LSU home football and baseball games. The university and the gridiron remained in that location for about forty years, until the mid-1920’s when it moved to the present-day campus on the former Gartness Plantation.

In analyzing historic photographs of the Third Street and North Street intersection from that time, Third Street abruptly changes in character from a bustling and developed 19th century urbanized downtown to the south, into a tree-lined serene campus landscape to the north. In the latter half of the century, Third Street continues to thrive as the city’s commercial center and as a focal point in Baton Rouge’s urban life.



Figure 3.2: LSU Football Team (1895); Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University.



Figure 3.3: The Civil War Battle of Baton Rouge (1862) EBRP Library, Baton Rouge Room.

20th Century

As evidenced in photographs, Third Street was the epicenter of Baton Rouge life in the early 20th century as well. It was the place to see and be seen. By 1900, the economy was improving. According to a Weekly Advocate article on April 5th, 1902, Third Street was the first street to be paved with asphalt. Later that year, in August, the same publication declared “Baton Rouge has long passed the bicycle stage and has now reached the automobile period.” One can imagine Third Street as the main thoroughfare for early automobiles. One writer appeals for rules and regulations before “careless handlers of ‘autos’ would make a mighty smash up on Third Street some fine evening.”

The spirit of improvement that took hold of Baton Rouge is already bringing good fruits. Third street was the first to be paved with asphalt.

Figure 3.4: April 5, 1902, Weekly Advocate.

The early 1900s was a time of transition in the story of Third Street, as “old frame buildings from North (Street) to the Boulevard (North Boulevard) are gradually giving way to large commodious and handsome stores... Ground is being prepared for a fine modern hotel... the old Sumter House will probably be remodeled and enlarged for a first-class hotel.” Again in 1902, one writer eloquently sums up the growing pains that were common as adolescent towns matured into urban centers: “owners of cows, horses, geese, hogs, and the like, should keep them in their yards or stables...” The writer later states in frustration, “Let’s make Baton Rouge either a barn yard or a city.”



Figure 3.5: Third Street looking south, (1905). Electricity arrives in Baton Rouge in 1889. Note abundant awnings providing shade. EBRPL Digital Archive.



Figure 3.6: Third Street (1907). Note shade trees and residential homes. EBRPL Digital Archive.

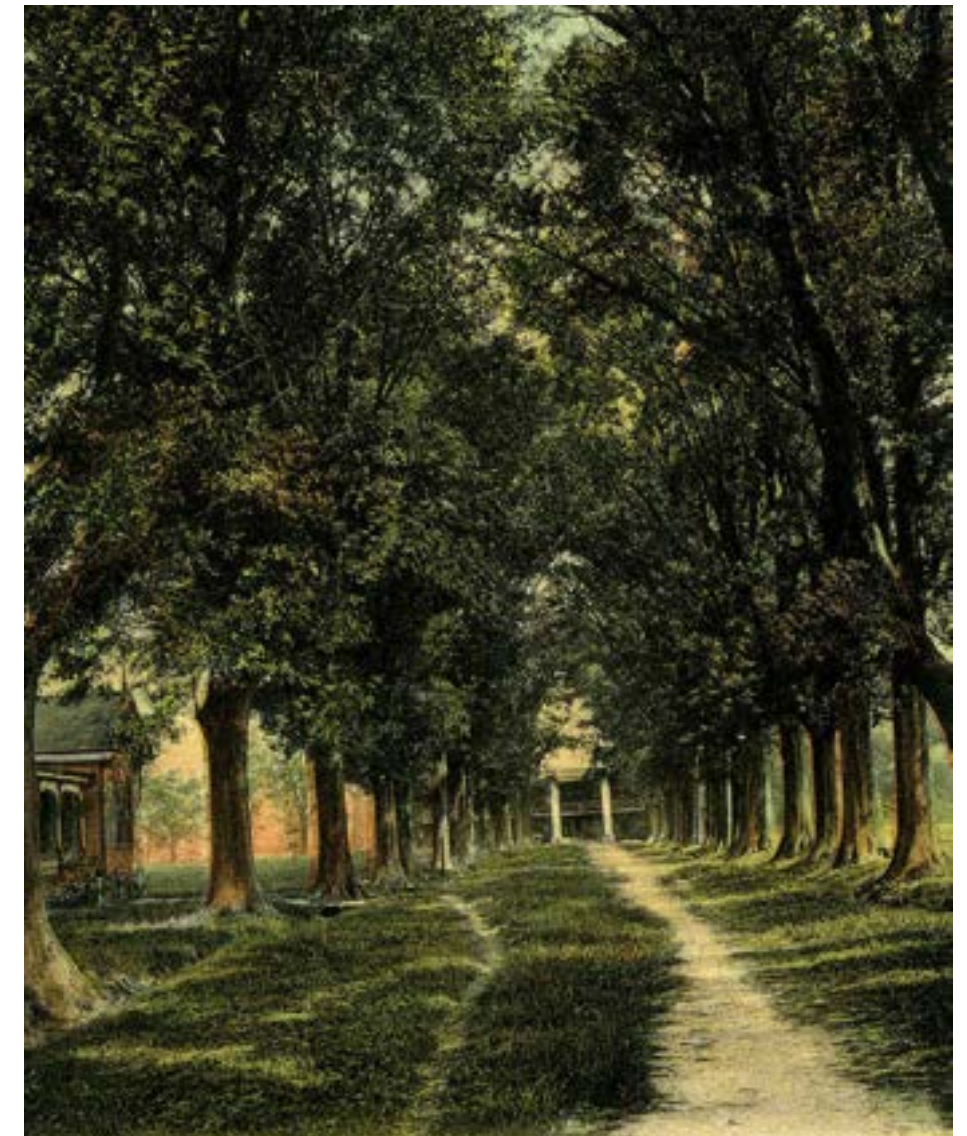


Figure 3.8: “Avenue of Oaks,” Third Street at LSU, (1906). Note shaded character. EBRPL Digital Archive.



Figure 3.7: LSU Campus, north portion of Third Street, (1909); Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University.

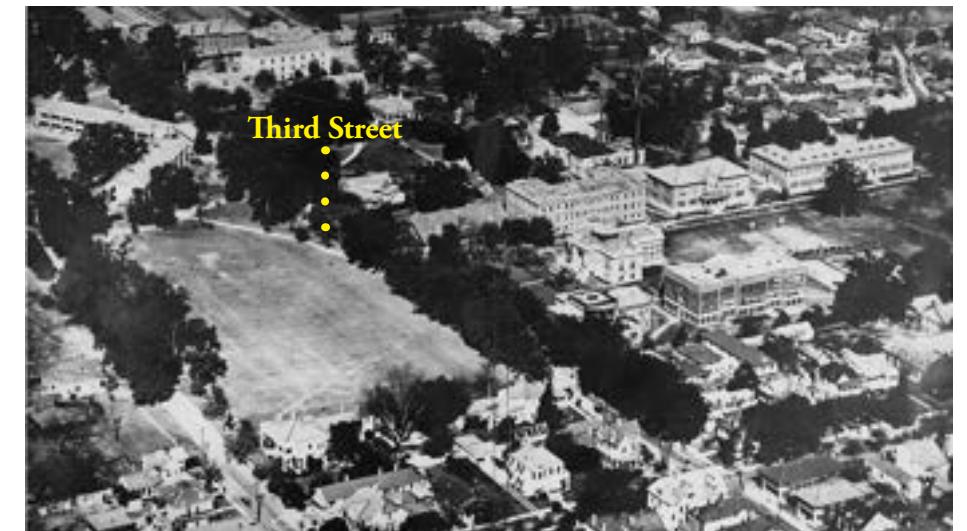


Figure 3.9: Tree-lined Third Street and LSU Campus (undated); Hill Memorial Library, LSU.

Baton Rouge's economy and population grew after the Standard Oil Company built a refinery north of downtown Baton Rouge in 1909. Because of the refinery and subsequent growth of the city, Third Street remained the center of social activity and retail for much of the early 20th century. At this time, street cars crossed Third Street to the north and south but were never located along the street itself.

The prosperity remained through WWI until the Great Depression in 1929. The vitality of downtown and Third Street was greatly affected after WWII, as many of the returning soldiers and the popularity of automobile culture fueled a population shift toward the suburbs beginning in the 1950s.

In addition to the population shift, a key historical event marked a turning point in race relations in the mid-20th century. In 1960, African American students from Southern University staged a sit-in at the Kress Department Store on Third Street. They demanded equal service at the lunch counter, which had previously been restricted to white patrons. This non-violent protest was part of the larger Civil Rights Movement and played a significant role in the desegregation of Baton Rouge. As the only surviving site of the Baton Rouge sit-ins, The Kress Building on Third Street is of exceptional importance depicting Baton Rouge's Civil Rights history.

During this contentious time, Third Street retail was at its peak, as shoppers were able to walk below covered arcades to visit restaurants such as the famed Piccadilly, and department stores including Sears, J.C. Penny's, Dalton's, Kress, and Rosenfeld's. Unfortunately, in response to the population shift to the east and southeast of downtown, many retailers followed. Some remained on Third Street and experienced a slow downturn until they eventually moved to follow the residential population.



Figure 4.1: Women's Parade on Third Street, (1925). EBRPL Digital Archive.



Figure 4.2: Third Street Postcard (1908). Note abundant awnings, shade, and pedestrian scale. EBRPL Digital Archive.



Figure 4.3: Third Street Postcard (1920s). Note vitality, bustling activity, and pedestrian scale. EBRPL Digital Archive.



Figure 4.4: Snow on Third Street (1940s). EBRPL Digital Archive.



Figure 4.5: Third Street Postcard (1940s). Note abundant awnings, life, and vibrant signage. EBRPL Digital Archive.



Figure 4.5: Third Street looking north (1947). Note people, electric signage, life, and activity. This scene depicts the mid-century hey-day of Third Street. EBRPL Digital Archive.

In the 1950s and 1960s, downtown Main Streets across America witnessed a steady and inevitable decline that was exacerbated with the advent of modern-day shopping malls. Baton Rouge and Third Street was no exception to this unfortunate trend, as Bon Marche Mall opened in 1960 east of downtown, and Cortana Mall later opened in 1976 at the intersection of Airline Highway and Florida Boulevard.

During the 1960s in an effort to attract people back downtown, a nationwide trend emerged to redevelop Main Streets into outdoor open-air malls by closing streets to vehicular traffic. The goal of the effort was to prioritize pedestrians by creating seating areas, fountains, and public spaces to attract activity and people. In many cases around the country, Main Streets enjoyed a wide right-of-way dimension which allowed inventive design and an expanded public space. Unfortunately, the effort was widely unsuccessful.

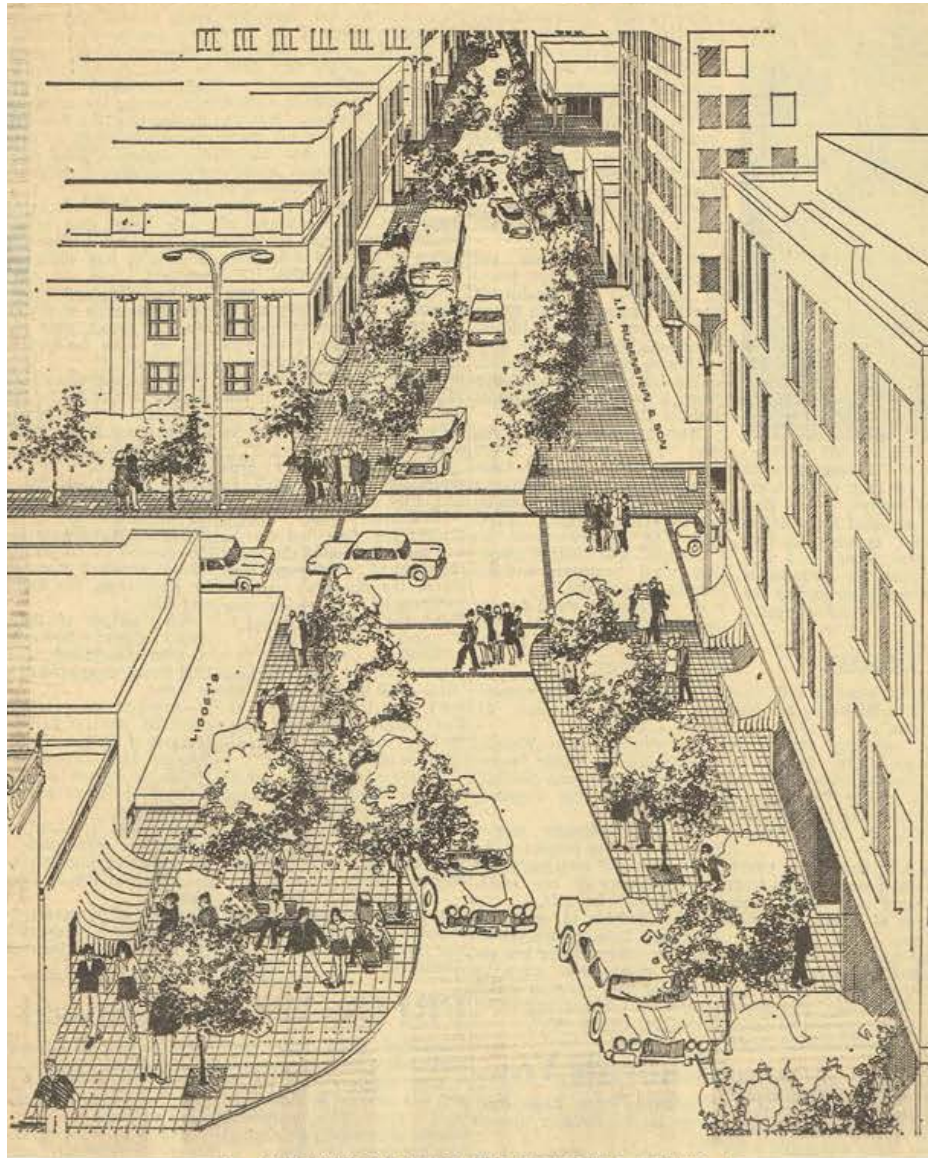


Figure 4.6: A New Look For Third (April 8, 1971). Morning Advocate, DDD Archive.

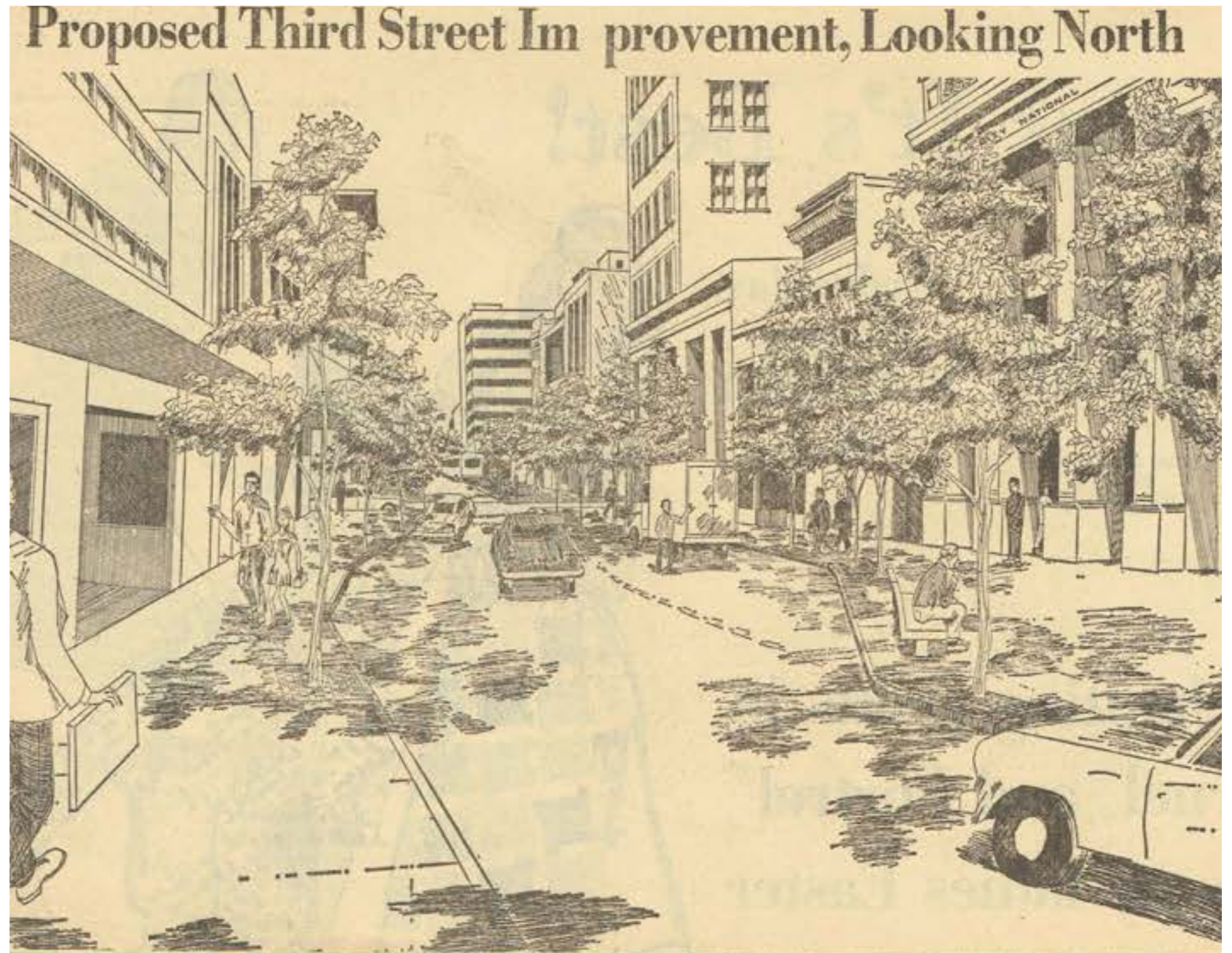


Figure 4.7: Proposed Third Street Improvement, Looking North (April 8, 1971). Note the design vision including expanded pedestrian zones, seating, street trees, intersection pavement, and pull-off zones. The character suggests a pedestrian-focused urban space. Morning Advocate, DDD Archive.

This trend manifested in Baton Rouge as a redesign effort for Third Street, the center of downtown retail. In the early 1970s, a proposal to redesign Third Street into an outdoor pedestrian mall without vehicular traffic was approved. Under considerable debate and frustration, the proposal was changed with support from the Merchant's Association during the last stages of design to allow for two lanes of vehicular traffic and pull-outs for parking. Third Street would be rebranded and renamed "Riverside Mall." The result was a half-hearted effort that fell far short of the original grand aspirations of a true outdoor pedestrian mall.

At first, vehicles were prevented from entering at certain times of the day. Soon after opening, the rules were changed and vehicles were permitted to drive at any time of the day. In reality, streetscape capital improvements were not enough to lure people back from the suburbs and their indoor air-conditioned shopping malls.

One additional challenge for the Third Street experiment was the dimensional constraints of the street right-of-way. The space available for the street and sidewalks was far narrower than many Main Streets across the country. As a result, the streetscape improvements were not as grand as other Main Street developments.

However, remnants of the Riverside Mall era are visible today as the curved streets, benches, and wide sidewalk "bump-outs" are common from North Boulevard to North Street. In addition to the pedestrian improvements, crape myrtles and native river birches were planted as the official Third Street trees.

The decline of Third Street in the latter part of the 20th century was calamitous, as many historic and architecturally significant buildings were torn down to make way for parking lots and modern office buildings. A significant casualty was the demolition of the famed Paramount Theater in 1979. The result of this practice left Third Street with alternating positive and negative space—buildings and parking lots—creating a "gap toothed" urban fabric.

By 1985, Third Street was still referred to as Riverside Mall, but most retailers had relocated to more popular suburban malls further east. With the shift in demand, many buildings were renovated into office space to keep them occupied. An excerpt from the Sunday Advocate stated, "the street is so congested with renovations... that traffic must weave from side to side to avoid construction vehicles."

Around this time, the Downtown Development District was established with Davis Rhorer at the helm. Under his leadership, several studies were commissioned which provided frameworks for downtown revitalization.

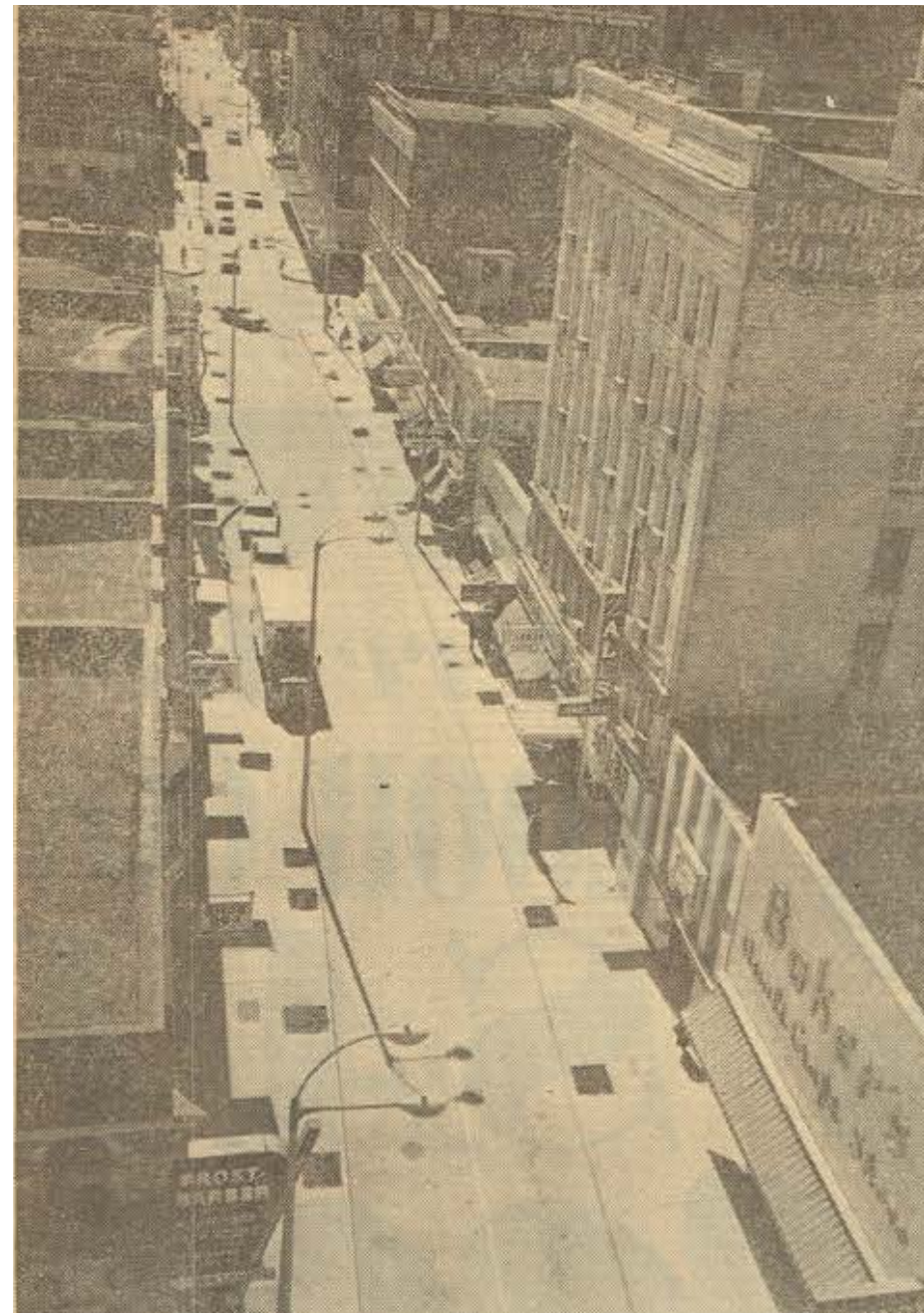


Figure 5.1: The photo depicts a brand new Third Street alignment in November of 1971. Tree wells and the street curves are visible. This project is the origin of the current form of Third Street. The caption states that the final clean-up will be complete in the next 30 days. (November 11, 1971). State Times, DDD Archive.

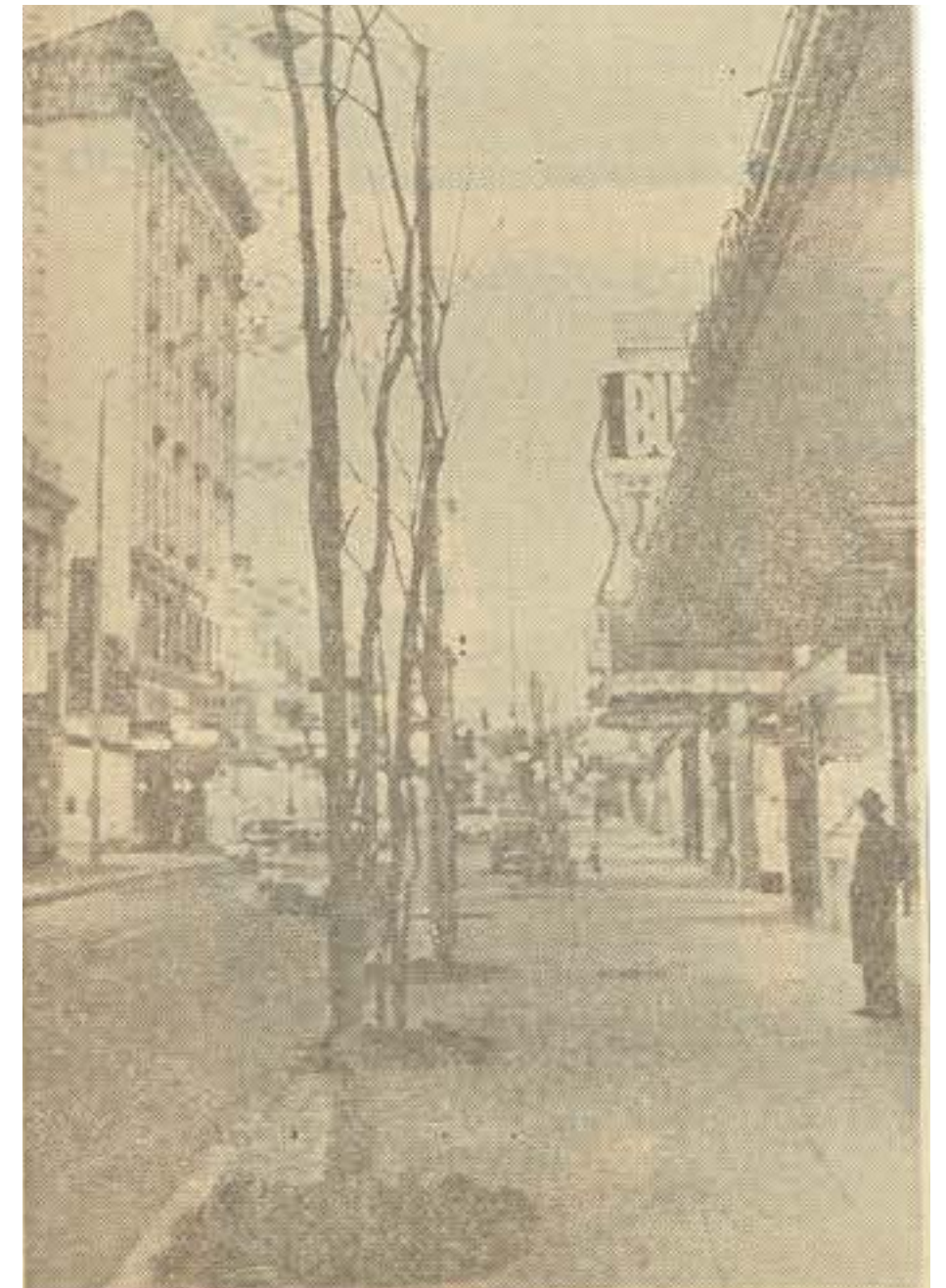


Figure 5.2: This sidewalk view shows newly planted river birch trees along Third Street. In addition to river birch, the caption states that crape myrtles were also planted along the street. The inclusion of river birch suggests a desire to include species native to the region along side the non-native ornamental crape myrtle. (November 25, 1971). Morning Advocate, DDD Archive.

The first effort, Baton Rouge 2000, called for Third Street to be re-established as the retail core of downtown. Within that document, a quote from Charles Caplinger conveys a bleak story:

“The bulldozers and demolition crews have done their work so well during the past thirty years that virtually any building left in the old central business district that has stood fifty years or longer is ‘ipso facto’ a treasured rarity, its preservation value almost directly proportional to its mere age alone.”

The description of Third Street architecture as a ‘treasured rarity’ certainly applies today. At the time of this writing, the buildings have survived an additional thirty-eight years beyond the 1987 report, with many being over the century mark. Further, as more recent mid-century buildings age, they should be evaluated by an architectural historian for their integrity, significance, and possible inclusion in the Third Street National Register Historic District.

21st Century

In the first quarter of the 21st century, Third Street has returned to a version of prominence, albeit somewhat less-so than its hey-day during the 19th through the mid-20th centuries. Efforts such as Plan Baton Rouge I and II, and subsequent successful construction follow-through has contributed to the transformation.

The Shaw Center for the Arts was one of the first developments in 2005 which connected Lafayette Street through to the 100 block of Third Street. Other additions since that time include the office building at the corner of Third and Convention, a parking garage at the northwest of the same intersection, a hotel at the corner of Third and Florida, and another parking garage at Third and Main.

During this time, additional significant developments were built adjacent to Third Street. To the south, the street is anchored by North Boulevard Town Square, Davis Rhorer Plaza, the Old State Capitol, the Downtown Library, and the River Center. Third Street is anchored to the north by a cluster of state office buildings that house 20,000+ workers daily. The street has become a focal point for cultural and social events, including festivals, art exhibitions, and live music, which help to animate the area and attract a diverse crowd.

In the first months of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shut down America and most of the world. One result of this challenge was the advent and normalization of remote-working. Although by 2025 many workers have returned to physical offices, the practice is still popular today, as the pandemic has shed light on the comforts and conveniences of remote

work. Since the pandemic, demand for downtown office space and retail has slowed. However, residential interest in the downtown area around Third Street has been robust.

The residential market, including Beauregard Town, Spanish Town and residential areas east of downtown, are essential in Third Street’s vitality and success. The Downtown Development District continues to passionately promote and support downtown Baton Rouge through community and planning efforts. Plan Baton Rouge III is underway, and downtown will embark on a new chapter of development and continued revitalization. Presumably, Third Street will be identified as an important centerpiece of historic and cultural significance.



Figure 5.4: Third Street, 1980s. EBRPL Digital Archive.



Figure 5.3: During planned events, Third Street is regarded as a community hub with bustling activity (2014). Urban Renaissance, InRegister Magazine, October 30, 2014.





SITE ANALYSIS

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS PLANNING DOCUMENTS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

A REVIEW OF PREVIOUS PLANS

As Third Street is reconsidered for improvements, a cursory review of prior downtown master plans and their approaches to streetscape development provides a roadmap and framework for how this plan fits within the context and recommendations of previous redevelopment and planning efforts.

Baton Rouge 2000 (1987)

- Designated 3rd Street as the primary commercial/retail district for a downtown office and residential community.
- Increased retail activity will generally follow office and residential development. Therefore, area retailers will benefit most from increase employments and residential activities in the area.
- Promote ground floor retail. Underutilized upper floors should be developed for office or residential uses.
- Surface parking lots are prime location for infill development.
- Third Street is characterized as a festive atmosphere that reinforces the unique history and heritage of the downtown area.
- Encourage preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings.
- Develop a design language of light fixtures, benches, and furnishings.

Plan Baton Rouge I (1999)

- Recommends a multiplex cinema in the block of Third, Lafayette, Main, and Laurel Streets.
- Encourages liner buildings, shade and rain protection by arcades.
- The use of phantom galleries is a technique of masking inactivity. It is commonly employed in malls and shopping centers.
- Commercial growth should occur on Third Street between Main Street and North Boulevard.

- Short-term metered parking.
- Third Street should be a retail hub. Sit-down restaurants, cinema, and a department store.
- Two-way traffic and parking. Widen Third Street by 3 feet to allow for 2 lanes and one parking (southbound).
- Eliminate the s-curve. Restore straight alignment.
- Trees should provide shade between galleries. Willow oak is identified as the preferred street tree.

Plan Baton Rouge II (2009)

- The pedestrian circulation through the central green into Third Street is conceptually thought of as a network of braids. The braid concept is derived from the patterns produced by natural river channels.
- Strengthen ties to Louisiana State University and Southern University.
- Develop a tree planting program to create a sustainable urban forest.
- Pursue the critical theme – a greener downtown.
- Priority actions: promote a central green and plant an urban forest. Pull people from the central green into Third Street. The area should be considered a series of outdoor living rooms surrounded by cultural destinations. “Replanting the street trees that once graced Baton Rouge will augment these parks, spreading beauty and cool shade throughout the downtown, and creating a strong visual and experiential connection between them.”
- Make Third Street an entertainment corridor. Downtown Baton Rouge has an exciting, but small, cluster of museums and restaurants. Downtown needs several additional arts and entertainment anchors, such as a jazz club or a movie theater or culinary museum, to attract and entertain visitors from the rest of the city and the region.
- Anchor the intersection of Third and Main streets with an entertainment or cultural venue.
- Make downtown clean and safe.
- Make Third Street an entertainment and shopping corridor.

- Develop a mature tree canopy to transform the streetscape into an oasis of cool shade.
- Plantings should have proper infrastructure, irrigation, and maintenance.
- With the downtown’s share of regional employment declining, shopping revenues may decline further, making investment in arts and entertainment venues essential to bring people downtown.
- The city needs to build on the success of the Shaw Center and manage the downtown’s transformation from a narrow entertainment focus into a broader regional destination for the arts, culture, shopping, with continued entertainment, and more local residents.
- Develop a main entertainment anchor at main between 3rd and 4th. It should include mixed use infill, retail below, residential or office above.
- Programming activities in existing public spaces will also draw people downtown. Programmed activities should address the interests of people of all ages and backgrounds, from weekday government workers to Sunday churchgoers. Programming should focus on the authentic history, lore, traditions, or cultural resources.
- Great streetscapes that support entertainment and retail venues focus on sidewalks and abutting buildings. They typically include:
 - Wide sidewalks
 - Shade from regularly planted street trees
 - A consistent street wall of attractive buildings and storefronts
 - Street furniture and seating areas
 - Public art by local artists
 - Screened parking lots, loading and dumpster areas
 - Pedestrian scale and mood lighting

EXISTING CONDITIONS

To better understand the complex relationships of people and places along multiple blocks of Third Street, a baseline of existing conditions was documented both by the design team and the Downtown Development District staff through the use of photography, notation, and digital cataloging. The team noted streetscape furnishings, utilities, paving materials and patterns, sidewalk widths, street trees, sun/shade aspect, public seating areas, architectural features, first floor businesses and vacancies, and gaps in the urban fabric.

As shown on the diagram, the primary land use along Third Street is categorized as office and commercial. There are small pockets of institutional which include the YMCA, Shaw Center, and Helix Legal Academy.

This information was compiled in part using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and is available in its entirety through the DDD and the East Baton Rouge Parish GIS office.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

After collecting a baseline inventory of Third Street, the design team synthesized and analyzed information to create a framework for the master plan. The following graphics depict the ground-floor uses, opportunities, and constraints that will inform the design approach.

Each block has a subtly different environment depending on its immediate urban context, business operating hours, vacancies, public space, shade, and architectural character. Through identifying site-specific hyper-local challenges and opportunities, the DDD may focus on real improvements and tangible outcomes when improving the streetscape experience.



Figure 6.1: Zoning and land use along Third Street. City of Baton Rouge GIS.



Figure 6.1: Third Street, Downtown Baton Rouge, Louisiana - Opportunity and Constraints Reference Map



THIRD STREET - 100 BLOCK



INVENTORY

- A** Stroube's Seafood and Steaks
- B** Access to the Shaw Center
- C** Courtyard for Mother's Lounge
- D** Mother's Lounge - Bar
- E** Residence (above)
- F** Happy's - Bar
- G** Dark 30 - Bar
- H** Onyx Residences
- I** First Horizon Bank
- J** Regal Nails
- K** Subway Restaurant
- L** Resource Environmental Solutions / Source Capital L.L.C.
- M** Lyceum Dean - Event Space
- N** Downtown Seafood and Grill
- O** Lee Overton Law Office
- P** O'Hara's Irish Pub
- Q** Milford's on Third - Restaurant
- R** Watermark Hotel
- S** Streetlight

OPPORTUNITIES

- 1** This block is adjacent to North Boulevard Town Square, the Old State Capitol, Downtown Library, Galvez Plaza, Rhorer Plaza, Repentance Park, North Boulevard Greenway, the River Center, and the Louisiana Art and Science Museum.
- 2** Enhance identity with a gateway feature, lighting, or graphic.
- 3** Great views to the Downtown Library and Town Square.
- 4** Mature pistachio trees provide streetscape shade.
- 5** Art Slice - Opportunity for art or graphic design intervention.
- 6** Opportunity for elevated design focus.
- 7** Drop-off space could be used as an urban parklet to provide additional seating for nearby restaurants.
- 8** Great existing environment with outdoor seating.
- 9** Drake elms provide shade.
- 10** Consider this block as an extension of the Shaw Center, North Boulevard Town Square, and Rhorer Plaza. Reflect this connection through materials.
- 11** Outdoor living - opportunity for curb extension with seating and furnishings.

CONSTRAINTS

- 1** Multiple litter receptacles present, and they are not organized within an overall design.
- 2** Consider relocating the dumpster.
- 3** The east side of the street is hotter in the afternoon due to western exposure.

EXISTING VEGETATION

- CP Chinese pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*)
- DE Drake Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*)



THIRD STREET - 200 BLOCK



INVENTORY

- A Garage pedestrian access
- B Police Station
- C Jimmy John's Sandwich Shop
- D Garage Exit
- E Parking
- F State National Building (partially vacant)
- G Downtown Grocery
- H Vacant
- I Somewhere Neighborhood Bar
- J Violet Night Club
- K Bonton Associates
- L Stonehenge Capital
- M Courtyard Marriott
- N Starbucks
- O Courtyard
- P Streetlight

OPPORTUNITIES

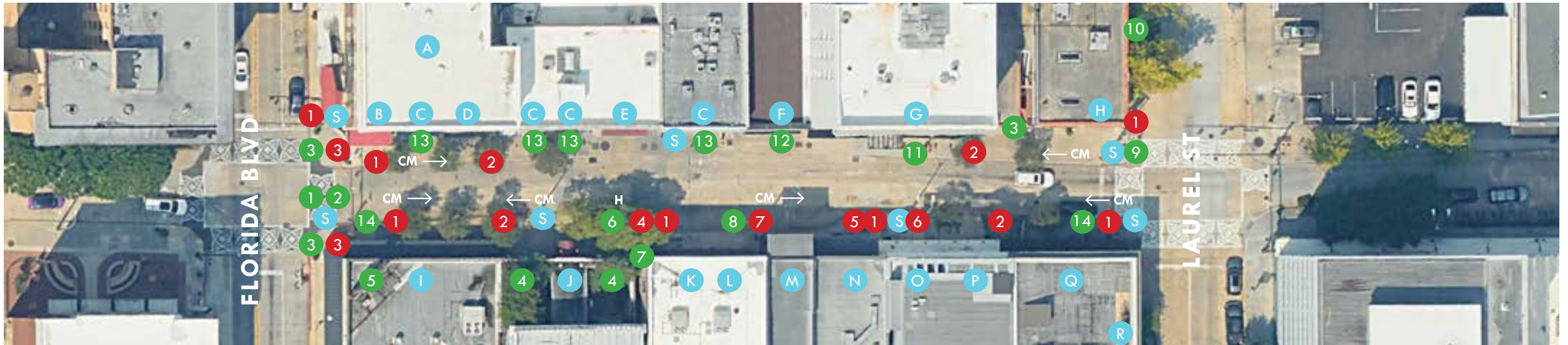
- 1 This block contains a large parking garage which is an advantage for venues nearby. This is the first opportunity to make an impression on visitors.
- 2 Mature pistachio trees provide streetscape shade.
- 3 Art Slice - Opportunity for art or graphic design intervention.
- 4 Great outdoor space, opportunity for elevated design focus.
- 5 Drop-off space could be used as an urban parklet to provide additional seating for nearby restaurants.
- 6 Great existing environment with outdoor seating.
- 7 Opportunity for new street-level business or venue.
- 8 Courtyard space, opportunity for night lighting.
- 9 View to nearby mural on 4th Street.
- 10 Planters, opportunity for better organization.
- 11 Benches under shade, contributes to street activity.
- 12 Bike racks encourage alternative modes of transportation. Consider arranging in concert with other street furnishings.
- 13 Outdoor living - opportunity for curb extension with seating and furnishings.

CONSTRAINTS

- 1 Dumpsters are visible from the street sidewalk.
- 2 Vacancy contributes to inactivity.
- 3 Multiple litter receptacles present and they are not organized.
- 4 Awkward sidewalk / driveway connection.
- 5 Surface parking lot visible from streetscape.
- 6 Remove outdated parking meter.
- 7 The east side of the street is hotter in the afternoon due to western exposure.
- 8 Trees are unhealthy and surface gravel is inconsistent with streetscape.
- 9 Bike racks are black - inconsistent in color and style as the others.
- 10 Perceptions of unsafety, garage columns are dark at night.
- 11 Signage directions are incorrect.
- 12 Outdated trolley stop. Remove post.

EXISTING VEGETATION

- CP Chinese pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*)
- MG Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora* spp.)
- MV Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)



THIRD STREET - 300 BLOCK



INVENTORY

- A Taylor Building - Office / Retail
- B Schlitz and Giggles Pizza
- C Vacancy
- D Faye's Subs
- E Parole Project
- F Bates and Thigpin - Clothing Retail
- G Roumain Building
- H Visit Baton Rouge
- I Helix Community School (Weightroom)
- J DeLaronde Hall - Ruffino's Catering Events Venue
- K Squeaky Petes - Bar
- L The Trademark - Events Venue
- M The Emporium Signature Spa
- N The Basin Music Hall - Live music, bar
- O Mapp Construction (Lobby)
- P 13 Social - Bar
- Q Fuqua Building - Cornerstone Government Affairs
- R Blend - Wine Bar
- S Streetlight

OPPORTUNITIES

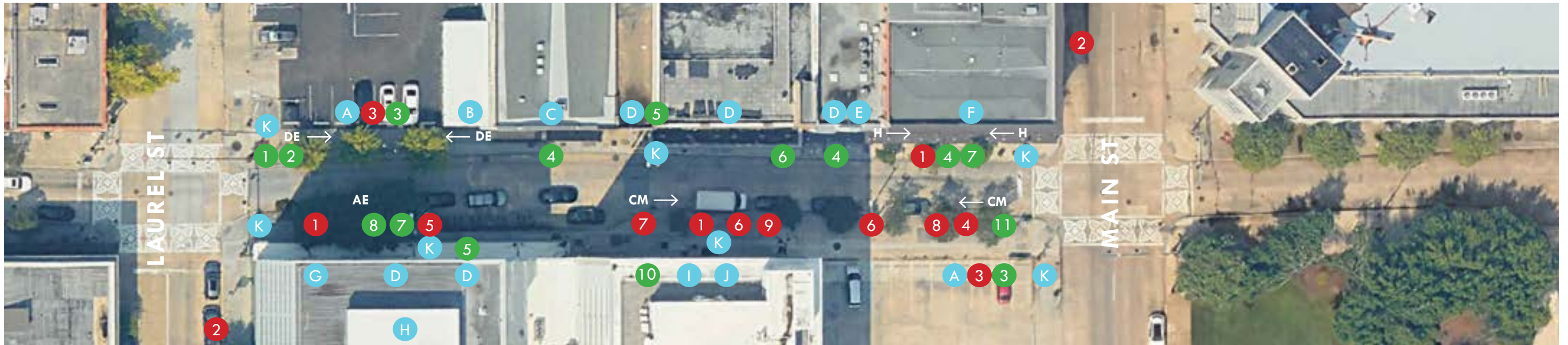
- 1 This intersection leads to the "Sing The River" sculpture by Po Shu Wang, an important node along the Mississippi Riverfront. Great views to the Mississippi River and sculpture.
- 2 Interesting graphic crosswalk at intersection. Consider a more permanent bricked option, or a consistent painted theme at all intersections.
- 3 Planted pots add life. They could be organized and ordered within a designed streetscape.
- 4 There is opportunity for an art installation within a well-designed, landscaped courtyard. Daytime and nighttime character.
- 5 Historic Coca-Cola sign adds life and authenticity to the streetscape.
- 6 Mature evergreen holly trees provide streetscape shade.
- 7 Art Slice - Opportunity for art or graphic design intervention.
- 8 Drop-off space could be used as an urban parklet to provide additional seating for nearby bars and restaurants. Consider a flexible option - business loading during the day, seating at night.
- 9 Utility pole and large silver box - opportunity for art intervention.
- 10 Visit Baton Rouge mural and photo opportunity.
- 11 Opportunity for historic signage interpretation featuring the Roumain Building and clock.
- 12 Opportunity for enhanced artistic product display featuring the history of Third Street's oldest retail shop, Bates and Thigpen, and the high-quality men's clothing that they offer. Daytime and nighttime character.
- 13 Vacant storefronts are an opportunity for artistic intervention and daytime and nighttime temporary tenants.
- 14 Outdoor living - opportunity for curb extension with seating and furnishings.

CONSTRAINTS

- 1 Multiple litter receptacles are not organized within an overall design. Some are damaged.
- 2 Crape myrtle trees do not provide adequate shade and are a messy tree for streetscapes.
- 3 Brightly painted curbs - consider alternate options while maintaining safety standards.
- 4 Green bike racks do not conform to the new design and style.
- 5 Remove outdated trolley stop. Pet waste bags on post - could be organized within a streetscape design.
- 6 Seating and bike racks could be better organized. They are different colors (green and silver).
- 7 The east side of the street is hotter in the afternoon due to western exposure.

EXISTING VEGETATION

- CM Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*)
- H Holly (*Ilex opaca* spp.)



THIRD STREET - 400 BLOCK



INVENTORY

- A Public Parking
- B Bengal Taproom
- C Cecelia Creole Bistro
- D Vacant
- E Kress Building
- F Little Village Restaurant
- G The Vintage
- H The Commerce Building
- I 440 on Third
- J Matherne's Market
- K Streetlight

OPPORTUNITIES

- 1 Site of Fort Sumter Saloon, historic cannon, cannon ball. Opportunity for interpretation, lighting.
- 2 Great views to the Mississippi River.
- 3 Opportunity for future infill development.
- 4 Great streetscape character with plantings and hanging baskets.
- 5 Art Slice - Opportunity for art or graphic design intervention.
- 6 Civil Rights interpretive sign, great information and character.
- 7 Mature trees provide shade and character.
- 8 Opportunity for an updated seating area. Wood is rotten and area needs attention.
- 9 Enlarge the seating area to include the drop-off area. Ride-share bike racks are present but are not used, resulting in underutilized space.
- 10 Planting beds are empty along building edge. Plant hardy natives for character.
- 11 Outdoor living - opportunity for curb extension with seating and furnishings.

CONSTRAINTS

- 1 Multiple litter receptacles are not organized within an overall design. Some are damaged.
- 2 Dumpster visible, need to screen.
- 3 Bad character/views into parking lot. Consider artful screen or hedge.
- 4 Disorganized seating area cluttered with utilities. Consider relocating.
- 5 River birches need consistent edging. Incorporate into seating area design.
- 6 Crape myrtle trees do not provide adequate shade and are a messy tree for streetscapes.
- 7 Remove outdated trolley stop. Pet waste bags on post - could be organized
- 8 Parking app doesn't work.
- 9 The east side of the street is hotter in the afternoon due to western exposure.

EXISTING VEGETATION

- AE American Elm (*Ulmus americana* 'Princeton')
- CM Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*)
- DE Drake Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*)
- H Holly (*Ilex opaca* spp.)



THIRD STREET - 500 BLOCK



INVENTORY

- A** Charles W. Lamar Jr. YMCA / Parking Garage
- B** One American Place - Office Tower
- C** Streetlight

OPPORTUNITIES

- 1** This block has the opportunity to make a first impression as visitor's exit the parking garage.
- 2** Great views to the Mississippi River.
- 3** Great views to the Downtown Library and Town Square.
- 4** Opportunity for green roof or seating if structure allows.
- 5** Windows into gym add to streetscape character. Opportunity to light at night as well.
- 6** Consider creating a linear planted zone and a circulation zone. There is lots of unused space between trees.
- 7** Outdoor living - opportunity for curb extension with seating and furnishings.
- 8** Potential seating area. This is the only location on 3rd Street where you can see the State Capitol.
- 9** Great views into Capitol Park. All areas north are for governmental use and are closed at night.
- 10** Opportunity for enhanced design, sunken garden, or public space.
- 11** Loading zone could transition into parklet. However, input from tenants should determine need.
- 12** Upper plaza level could be redesigned with the landscape as one cohesive design intervention.

CONSTRAINTS

- 1** Multiple litter receptacles present, and they are not organized within an overall design.
- 2** Green bike rack conflicts with newer type.
- 3** Crape myrtle trees do not provide adequate shade and are a messy tree for streetscapes.
- 4** Remove unneeded and duplicate signage.
- 5** Redesign landscape - bradford pears are at the end of their lifespan.
- 6** The east side of the street is hotter in the afternoon due to western exposure. Consider street trees here.

EXISTING VEGETATION

- CM Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*)
- BP Bradford Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)
- RB River Birch (*Betula nigra*)

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

As part of the outreach effort, planners conducted a community survey to further understand the nuances of Third Street, and to tap into the pulse of the community that experiences the street on a regular basis. Surveys were distributed electronically through the DDD email list and also physically at Park(ing) Day, an event where several parking spaces along Third Street were transformed into micro parks and public spaces for a day. The community was prompted by three questions, with each question allowing a top three answer. There was also an option to write in comments for each.

We asked downtown stakeholders: “What do you love about Third Street?” and “What would make your Third Street experience better?” And lastly, we asked them to think big: “What are your thoughts and ideas for making Third Street vibrant and memorable?” With over 180 responses, people were really excited to offer opinions on how to improve the streetscape experience. Our personal favorite described Third Street as **“The Heart of Our City.”** A few other responses illustrate their incredible ideas:

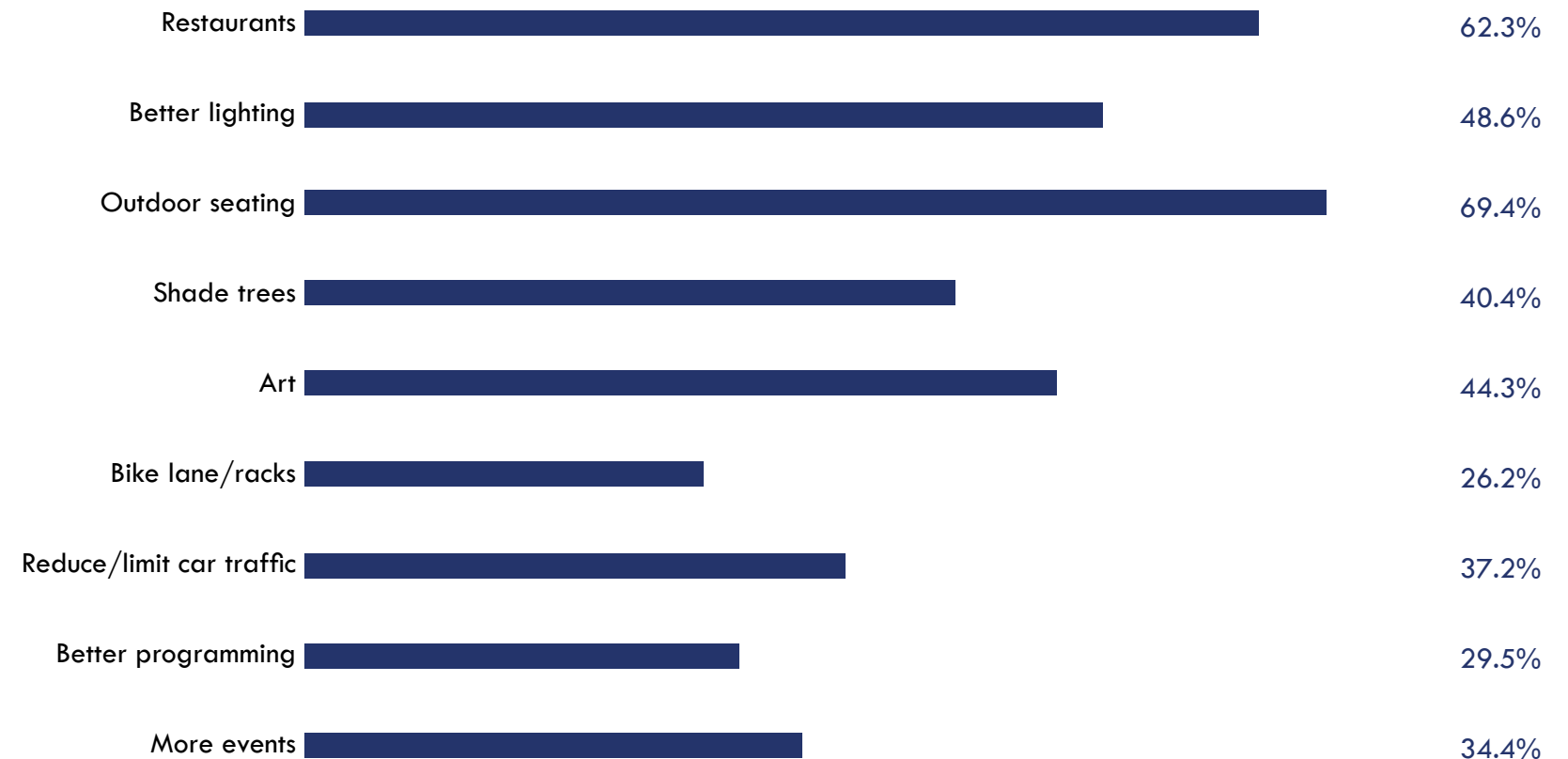
- *Shade, trees, parks.*
- *Rooftop bars, pocket parks with large TV screens, food vendors.*
- *Local brewery, brand identity, activation of alleys.*
- *Music! Dancing! Theater!*
- *Third Street Taste Tour!*
- *Hub for artists. Live music.*
- *Outdoor seating, trees.*
- *No empty storefronts!*
- *Storytelling of local history and culture.*
- *Retail and art galleries.*
- *Visible police presence.*

For the first question, “What do you love about Third Street?,” the top three responses are walkability (86.3%), restaurants (75.7%), and social/community aspect (45.1%). Hotels and nightlife (37.9% and 33%) are next in popularity. The bottom three are retail (16.5%), residential (13.7%), and parking access (8.2%). The top five categories portray Third Street as being a community-oriented, walkable space with many popular restaurant, nightlife, and hotel destinations.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT THIRD STREET?



WHAT WOULD MAKE YOUR THIRD STREET EXPERIENCE BETTER?



Retail may have been a lesser choice simply because there aren't many retailers along the street. The choice of residential may depend on the residency location of the respondents. Therefore, if a majority of respondents reside outside of downtown, that item may be of lesser value to them personally. It is notable that parking access was of least concern by far. According to the survey, accessible parking does not contribute to the perceived success and vibrancy of Third Street as much as the other seven categories.

There were several write-in responses, several of which provided interesting insight. Street trees and people watching were added. Others enjoyed the history, as one recalled that it was "the place to shop years ago," they enjoyed the Paramount, Gordon, and Hart theaters. One lamented, "there aren't as many attractions as there used to be."

Overwhelmingly, people loved the walkability and restaurant options along Third Street. Collectively, people want activity, engagement, and social connections. This sentiment is important in planning for its future development: **the streetscape should be a comfortable space where people interact, gather, and live.**

What would make your Third Street experience better?

The answers to this question are more balanced in popularity, with a clear top five, and a bottom four that are very close to each other. The top five are outdoor café seating (69.4%), more restaurant options (62.3%), better lighting (48.6%), art (44.3%), and shade trees (40.4%). The bottom four are very close to each other—reduce or limit car traffic (37.2%), more events (34.4%), better programming (29.5%), and bike lane and racks (26.2%).

It is interesting that people enjoy being outside, even in the sub-tropical climate of Baton Rouge. Restaurants as a clear second indicates that people are looking for more options and more things to do. Lighting, art, and shade trees provide ambiance, safety, and comfort, three 'musts' that reflect a desire to create and contribute to an overall spirit of place. A reduction or limitation in vehicular traffic indicates a desire for the pedestrian to be prioritized over cars. More events and better programming are almost synonymous, and could hint at a need for more things to do year-round, 24-7. Lastly, bike lanes and racks are of somewhat importance, as the street is not designated as a bike route. However, racks could be helpful as a convenience to visitors from local neighborhoods such as Beauregard Town and Spanish Town.

There are many write-in answers for this question. A few excerpts:

- *A playground and green space*
- *Family-friendly features to draw from families who are visiting downtown*
- *A fun walking trail based on a theme (nature, art, history, etc.)*
- *Traffic signals timed for pedestrians, better sequencing, possibly four way stops*
- *Clean sidewalks and better maintenance of micro gardens*
- *Safety, close parking that is well-lit*
- *More events for kids*
- *More local coffee shops, pharmacy, dress shops, art galleries, barber shops, medical clinic, more retail*
- *Pedestrian-focused street*
- *Less cumbersome process and protocols for downtown event planners (permits, schedules)*

People are passionate about Third Street, and there is no shortage of suggestions about how to make it better. All answers center around the idea of people, enjoyment, activity, safety, and cleanliness.

Think big! What are your thoughts and ideas for making Third Street vibrant and memorable?

- *Connection to river and to neighboring communities*
- *Central theme – heart of the city*
- *Showcase historic architecture*
- *Murals and art, art galleries*
- *Live music and food trucks during work week*
- *Storytelling of local history and culture*
- *Focus on creating inviting public spaces with green areas, street art, and live performances to bring the community together. Encouraging local businesses, hosting cultural events, and offering unique dining or shopping experiences could draw both residents and visitors.*

- *Food Truck Roundups to coincide with themed events where patrons are encouraged to costume up. Street plays.*
- *Third street should be pedestrian only between North and Laurel, only allowing East/West vehicular traffic to cross at intersections.*
- *Build small outdoor stages for live music or a pocket park, which could encourage more restaurants to offer outdoor dining, increasing how many diners they can accommodate, and offer a new experience for the established restaurants. Encouraging musicians and visual artists to setup up on the streets/new green space to busk or sell their work (like Jackson Square) could add a great cultural aspect to Third Street.*
- *Implement a "beautification and animation" plan along with a "clean and safe ambassador" program. Create an incentive program for drawing retail back into our empty spaces. Produce a festival much like Art Prize in Grand Rapides. Signify Third Street as the entrance from North Blvd. as the "place to be."*
- *Paint the utilities boxes with themed murals. Work the BTR icons into public art.*
- *More selfie spots*
- *Develop a "Third Street Taste Tour" with rotating culinary events, like food crawls featuring local restaurants and chefs. Food festivals could highlight Louisiana's world-famous cuisine with cooking demonstrations and tastings.*
- *Local brewery/distillery/tap room*
- *More retail options to increase foot traffic over weekends.*
- *Areas for local artists to make or show their work*
- *Change parking spots into parklets with things that engage passerby - stepping stones, play equipment, benches, art installations, sky's the limit!*

In addition to the great ideas from the responses to the first three questions, there are also issues and challenges that people experience on Third Street. An honest self-assessment is critical in formulating a plan.

Common concerns surfaced:

- Homeless population
- Safety
- Cleanliness
- No activity during the day, closed storefronts
- No activity after hours or on weekends
- Substandard lighting
- Lack of directions
- When many businesses instituted cover charges to move between locations, it zapped the nightlife energy that used to exist on 3rd Street.
- Nothing to do to entertain children
- Abandoned buildings
- The DDD mature tree canopy is threatened by a large mass of ball moss. There must be control measures.
- Lack of sidewalk space for outdoor dining
- Vehicles speeding
- The Third Street Parking garage and several parking lots are close to all of the establishments, and affordable and easy to access, and I think that should be better communicated to the general public via signage and marketing.
- Confusing signage that is dated (shuttle stops)
- Parking tickets/booting, graffiti
- The high fees for parking, especially during events or peak times, can deter people from visiting frequently or staying for extended periods.
- Crowded sidewalks with disjointed connectivity and lack of pedestrian amenities.

- It takes a long time to cross the road as a pedestrian (long traffic signal cycles)
- Massive surface parking lots that sit empty most of the time. This is prime real estate that needs to be developed. Perhaps something similar to a vacant building ordinance but for surface parking lots?
- Only options seem to be dining or drinking
- If downtown is the living room of the city, then Third Street is the front door. It needs to be more inviting, enticing folks in to explore the entire downtown area. Evoke a feeling that one has entered something special.



Opportunity for public square or gathering space.



Interesting architectural detail; a building of significance; 400 block.



Opportunity for art intervention/art nook; 200 block.



Selfie spot near Visit Baton Rouge offices.



Opportunity for art intervention/art nook; 100 block.



Interesting paving detail; 400 block.



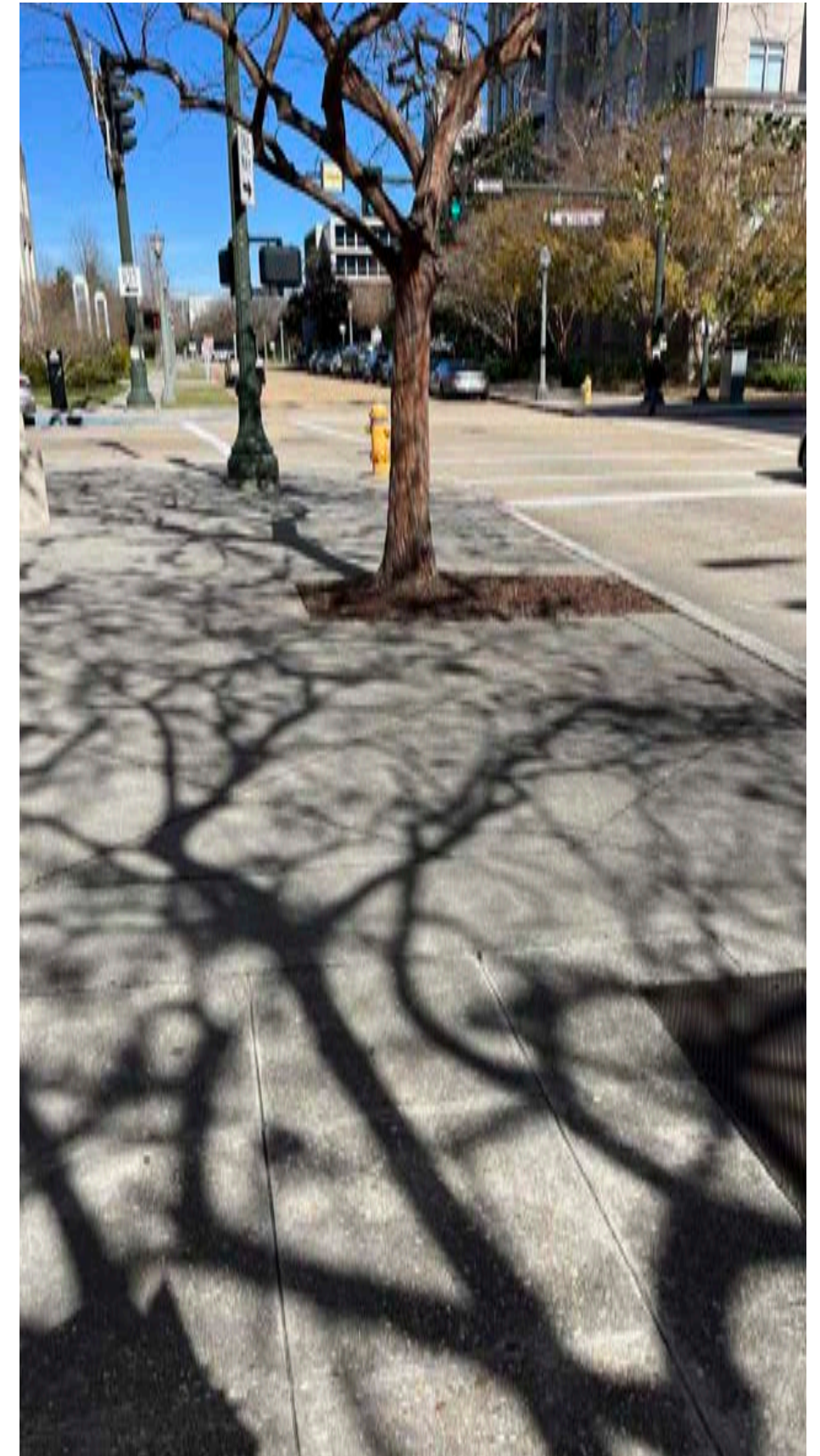
Opportunity for art intervention/art nook; 200 block.



Interesting architectural detail; 500 block.



Daytime view of a primarily nighttime venue.



Interesting shadow pattern on pavement; 500 block.



Opportunity for art intervention/art nook; 400 block.



Arts market, brick paving, tents, active spaces. Chicago, Illinois. Photo: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.; <https://downtowngr.org/announcements/2019/01/streetspace-guidelines-jan-2019>



Opportunity for native planting; 400 block.



Underutilized loading zone. Note that cars are parallel parked and zone cannot be used.



Signage depicting the Civil Rights significance of the Kress building.



Crosswalk depicting images from the Old State Capitol fence. Canopy provides shade.



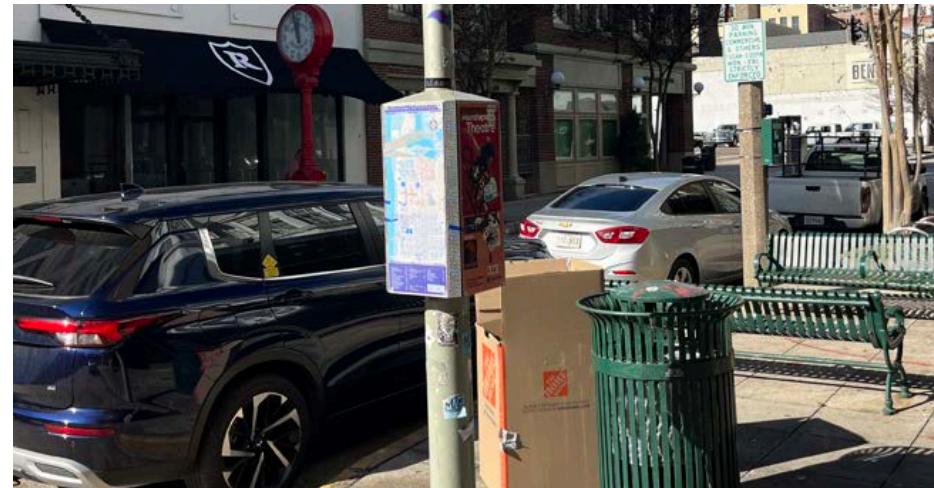
Parking lot is a placeholder for future development. Opportunity to screen using art or vegetation.



Interesting 18th century cannon and cannon ball marking the location of the Fort Sumter Saloon.



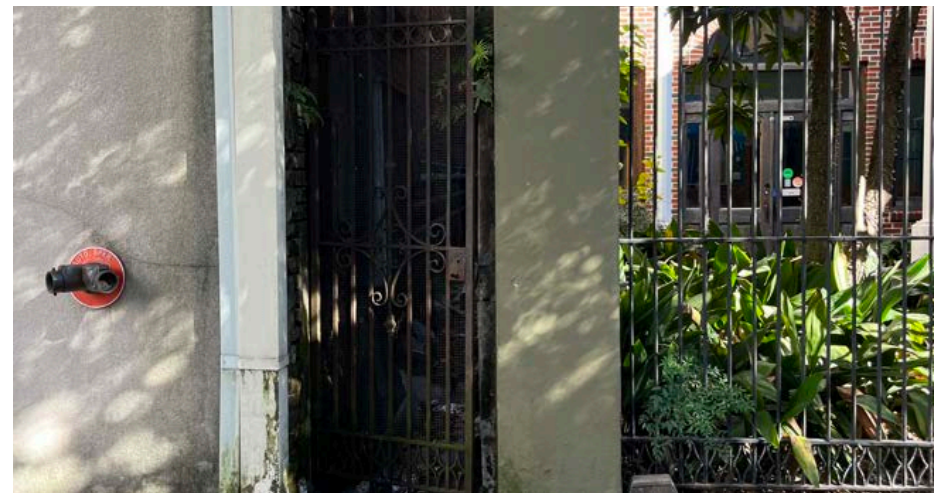
Collage of historic downtown photos at Bates and Thigpen, downtown's oldest retailer.



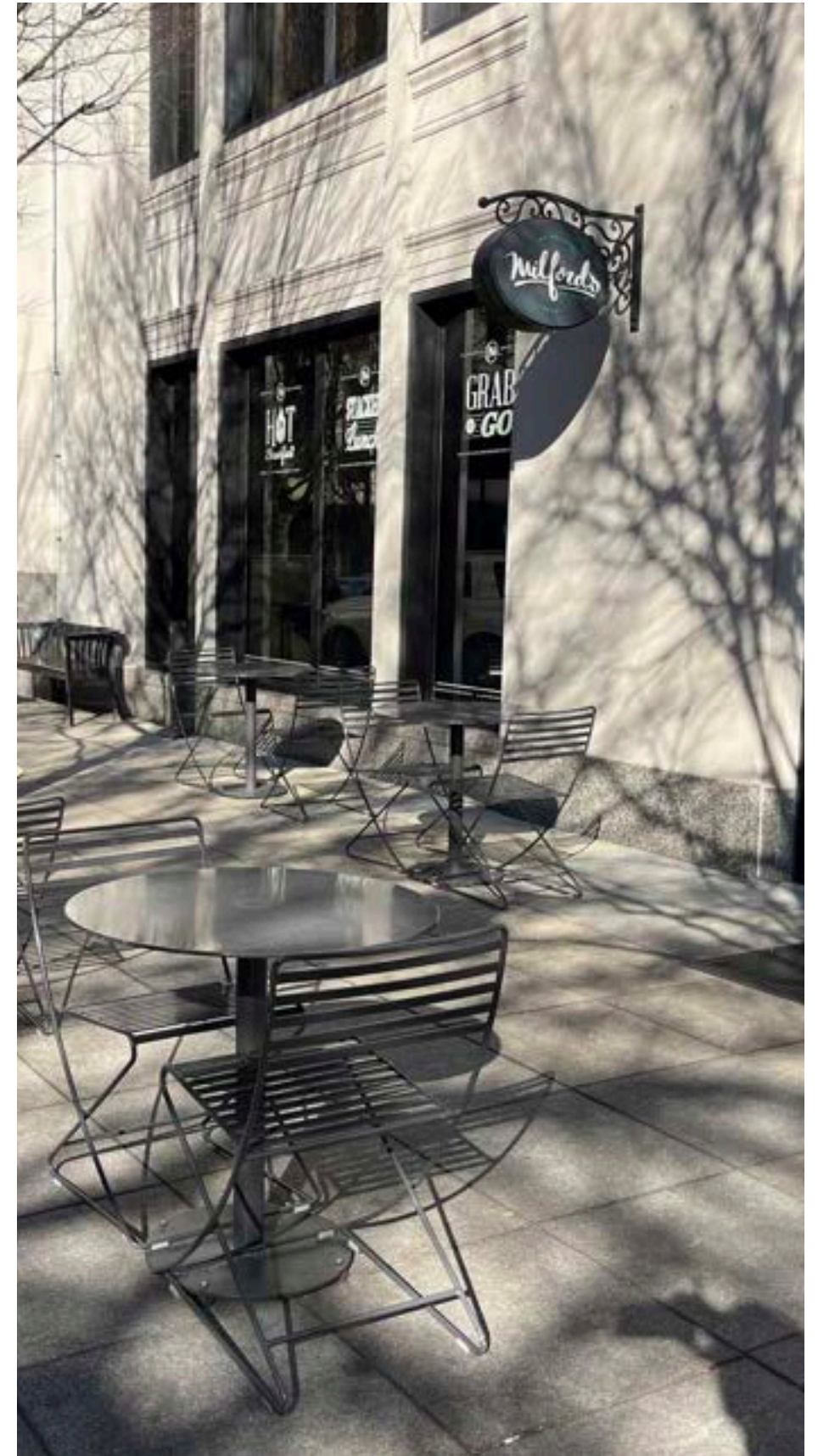
Outdated signage should be removed or repurposed.



Dumpster is unsightly, a negative experience along Third Street.



Opportunity for art intervention.



Outdoor seating at Milford's; 100 block.



An aerial photograph of a city grid, showing a dense network of streets and buildings. A multi-lane highway runs vertically along the left edge of the image. The overall tone is muted and grayscale-like.

MASTER PLAN

MASTER PLAN
ENLARGEMENTS
INTERSECTION
PARKLET & GATEWAY
MATERIALS & CHARACTER
CREATIVE INTERVENTIONS & CURIOSITIES
PRECEDENTS

EXTENDING THE BRAID: CIRCULATION, VEGETATION, URBAN LIFE

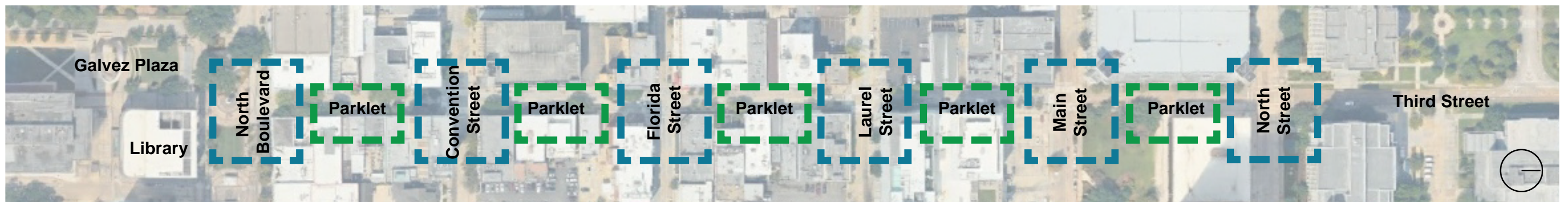
The plan for Third Street is conceptually grounded in the vision that urban spaces are interconnected through a network of braids—an idea formulated during Plan Baton Rouge II that refers to an urban pattern of circulation and green space. The idea is derived from the winding and complex patterns produced by natural river channels common in the Mississippi River delta.



Aerial bird's-eye view of Third Street and the existing tree canopy.



Excerpt from Plan Baton Rouge II - A network of public spaces connected through green braids.

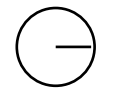


Aerial view showing the layout of alternating intersections and parklets. The design of intersections—places for rest, orientation, and interpretation; and parklets—the front porches of Third Street; will extend the urban green space braid into the urban fabric of the Central Business District.

THIRD STREET MASTER PLAN



Third Street Master Plan Composite



Conceptual Vision

Third Street is the heart of downtown Baton Rouge. It tells a story of authenticity and honesty through its age, its layers of history and cultural identity, and its importance as the most architecturally significant street in the capitol city of Louisiana. The Master Plan is inspired and informed by the historic layers of natural and cultural history, contemporary streetscape design, and the creativity of the people of Baton Rouge.

Third Street is envisioned as an important extension of downtown's Central Green—a collection of park spaces which includes North Boulevard Town Square, North Boulevard Greenway, Galvez Plaza, Rhorer Plaza, Repentance Park, the Old State Capital, the Shaw Center Plaza, and Yazoo Plaza. It is an urban oasis, a pedestrian-centered space where people and experience are prioritized and vehicles are secondary.

The plan for Third Street is conceptually grounded in the vision that urban spaces are interconnected through a network of braids—an idea formulated during Plan Baton Rouge II that refers to an urban pattern of circulation and green space. The idea is derived from the winding and complex patterns produced by natural river channels common in the Mississippi River delta.

Expanding upon the braid concept, **the Third Street Master Plan provides new threads that collectively create new fabric, patterns, stitches, and patches which create an authentic tapestry of urban landscape.**

Overview

The master plan features an interconnected threaded assemblage of urban green infrastructure: parklets, crosswalks, curb extensions, expanded tree wells with engineered root-zone structures, a mature tree canopy and shade, a native plant palette, comfortable seating, and light recreation space. The street maintains its current configuration with one lane of travel on the west side and one lane for parking on the east side. From North Boulevard to North Street, the pedestrian zones on the east and west side of the street expand and contract as spaces are carved by the winding roadway. As the only street in downtown that is curved, the unique design provides a subtle variety in scale and space, and is an understated gesture toward the braid concept.

Gateways, Destinations, and Interstitial Space

The Third Street Master Plan divides space into three categories: gateways, destinations, and interstitial space. Gateways are thresholds, a special mark or announcement that defines a transition from one space to the next. The primary gateway to Third Street is at its intersection with North Boulevard Town Square. This location is where Third Street and downtown commerce meet the Central Green, the network of parks and plazas that host a variety of events. In addition to the primary gateway at North Boulevard, all street intersections are considered gateways to Third Street, as pedestrians and vehicles are introduced to the streetscape from these locations.

Additionally, parklet destinations are identified within each block. The interstitial space serves as a transition zone between gateways and destinations. A sustainable urban forest of native trees and understory plantings strengthens the streetscape while providing shade, habitat, and stormwater management.

Intersections—Places of Rest, Orientation, and Interpretation

Intersections are both gateways and destinations as all are converted into pedestrian-centered spaces, as curb extensions allow for organized outdoor living spaces with seating, litter receptacles, tasteful paving design, native planting areas with potential for storm water retention, and relocated utility boxes. The extended curbs provide a safer crossing distance, as the walking distance is cut in half from twenty-four feet to twelve feet. These zones are also areas for map orientation and opportunities for interpretation.

Parklets—The Front Porches of Third Street

With origins dating to a 1970s-era “Main Street” redesign, each block currently contains an oversized and underutilized loading zone. The master plan re-envisioned these overlooked spaces as parklets—a small seating area or green space in a former parking space. Collectively, the five potential parklet spaces along Third Street have the potential to significantly redefine the aesthetic and identity of the streetscape. If Third Street is the quintessential urban streetscape, the parklets are envisioned to be the front porches.

Each parklet must relate to the needs and creativity of the immediate users, those who live and work in the buildings that abut the space. Programming and design should be flexible to accommodate users of all ages throughout the day and evening.



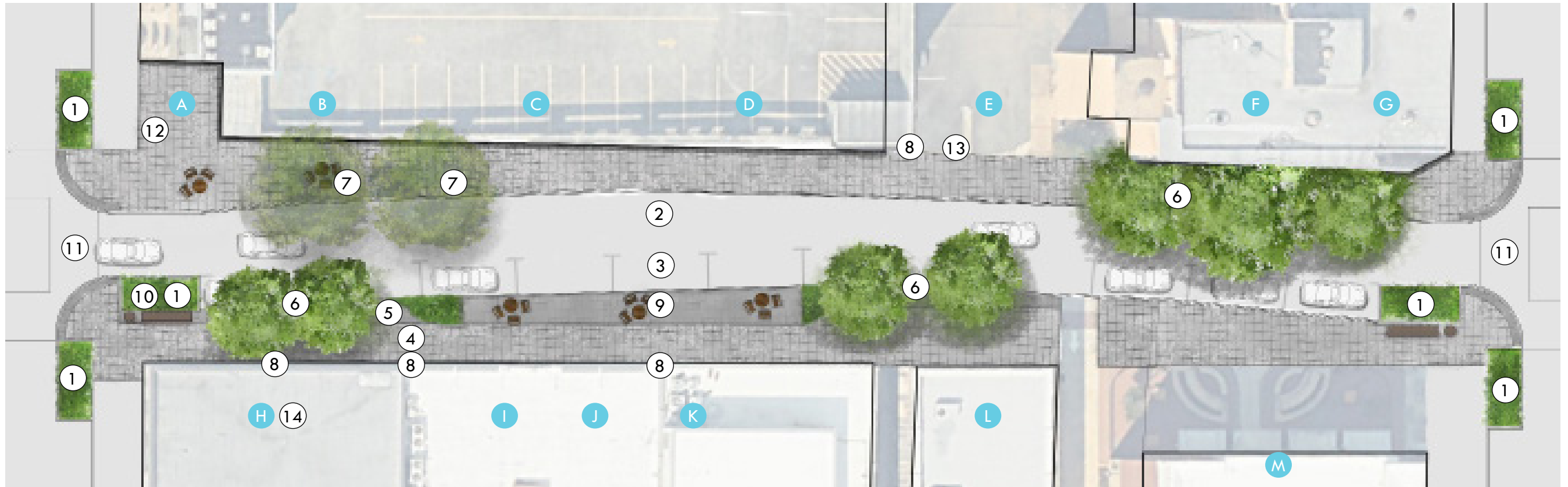
THIRD STREET - 100 BLOCK

EXISTING VENUES

- A Stroube's Seafood and Steaks
- B Access to the Shaw Center
- C Courtyard for Mother's Lounge
- D Mother's Lounge - Bar
- E Happy's - Bar
- F Dark 30 - Bar
- G Onyx Residences
- H First Horizon Bank
- I Subway Restaurant
- J Resource Environmental Solutions / Source Capital L.L.C.
- K Lyceum Dean - Event Space
- L Downtown Seafood and Grill
- M Lee Overton Law Office
- N O'Hara's Irish Pub
- O Watermark Hotel / Milford's on Third - Restaurant

DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

- 1 Curb extension with seating and furnishings.
- 2 Drive Lane, 12+ feet wide.
- 3 Parking Lane, 9 feet wide.
- 4 Pedestrian circulation zone - active.
- 5 Pedestrian rest and tree root protection zone - passive.
- 6 Retain trees to provide streetscape shade.
- 7 Art Slice - Art or graphic design intervention.
- 8 Parklet - Designed space for outdoor gathering.
- 9 Seating retained for Milford's on Third.
- 10 Gateway feature.
- 11 Crosswalks.
- 12 Interpretive signage.
- 13 Removable bollards for events.
- 14 Third Street Marquee



THIRD STREET - 200 BLOCK

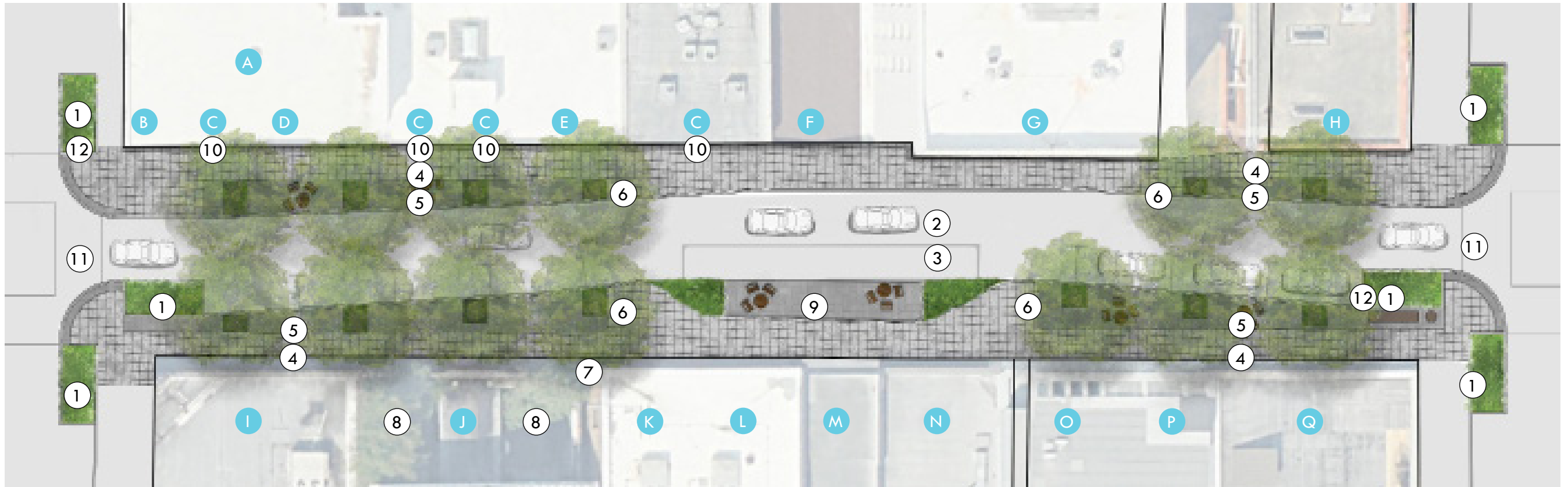


EXISTING VENUES

- A** Garage pedestrian access
- B** Police Station
- C** Jimmy John's Sandwich Shop
- D** Garage Exit
- E** Parking
- F** State National Building (partially vacant)
- G** Downtown Grocery
- H** Vacant
- I** Somewhere Neighborhood Bar
- J** Violet Night Club
- K** Bonton Associates
- L** Stonehenge Capital
- M** Courtyard Marriott

DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

- 1** Curb extension with seating and furnishings.
- 2** Drive Lane, 12+ feet wide.
- 3** Parking Lane, 9 feet wide.
- 4** Pedestrian circulation zone - active.
- 5** Pedestrian rest and root protection zone - passive.
- 6** Retain trees to provide streetscape shade.
- 7** Proposed tree - pistachio to match nearby.
- 8** Art Slice/Alcove - Art or graphic design intervention.
- 9** Parklet - Designed space for outdoor gathering.
- 10** Interpretive signage.
- 11** Crosswalks.
- 12** Map/Directional Signage.
- 13** Art or vegetation parking screen.
- 14** Activate vacant storefront with art, studio, or temporary tenant.



THIRD STREET - 300 BLOCK

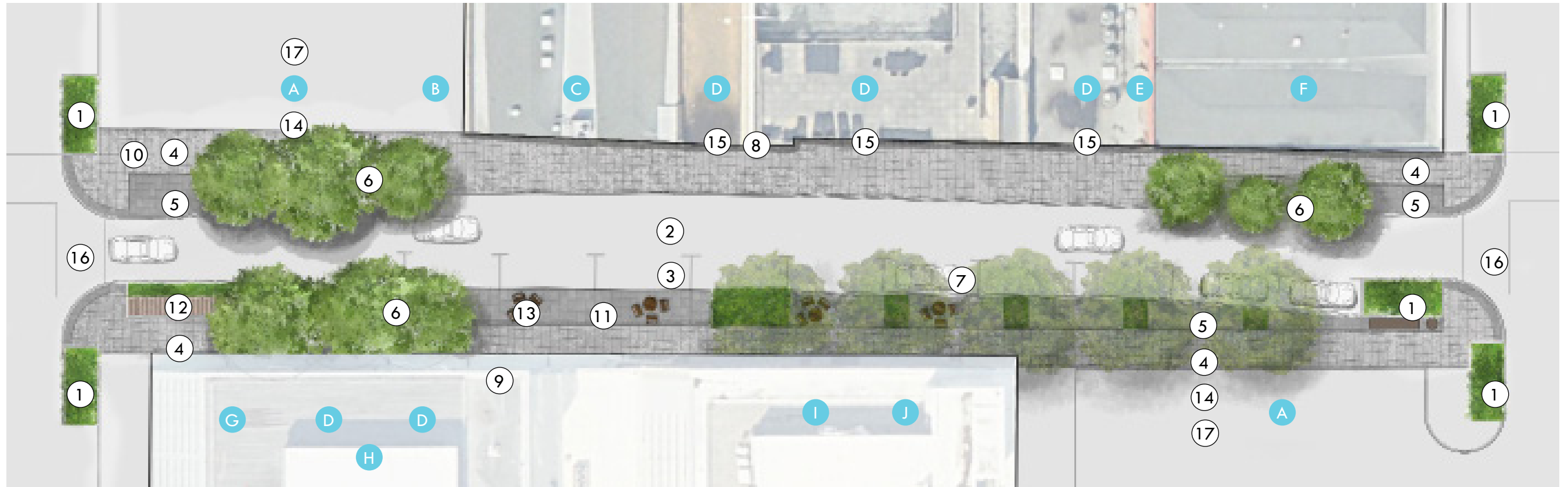


EXISTING VENUES

- A** Taylor Building - Office / Retail
- B** Schlitz and Giggles Pizza
- C** Vacancy
- D** Faye's Subs
- E** Parole Project
- F** Bates and Thigpin - Clothing Retail
- G** Roumain Building
- H** Visit Baton Rouge
- I** Helix Community School (Weightroom)
- J** DeLaronde Hall - Ruffino's Catering Events Venue
- K** Squeaky Petes - Bar
- L** The Trademark - Events Venue
- M** The Emporium Signature Spa
- N** The Basin Music Hall - Live music, bar
- O** Mapp Construction (Lobby)
- P** 13 Social - Bar
- Q** Fuqua Building - Cornerstone Government Affairs

DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

- 1** Curb extension with seating and furnishings.
- 2** Drive Lane, 12+ feet wide.
- 3** Parking Lane, 9 feet wide.
- 4** Pedestrian circulation zone - active.
- 5** Pedestrian rest and root protection zone - passive.
- 6** 13 new trees - Willow Oak, spaced 30 feet on center.
- 7** Art alleyway - Art or graphic design intervention.
- 8** Courtyard with art, sculpture, elevated design.
- 9** Parklet - Designed space for outdoor gathering.
- 10** Activate vacant storefront with art, studio, or temporary tenant.
- 11** Crosswalks.
- 12** Interpretive signage.



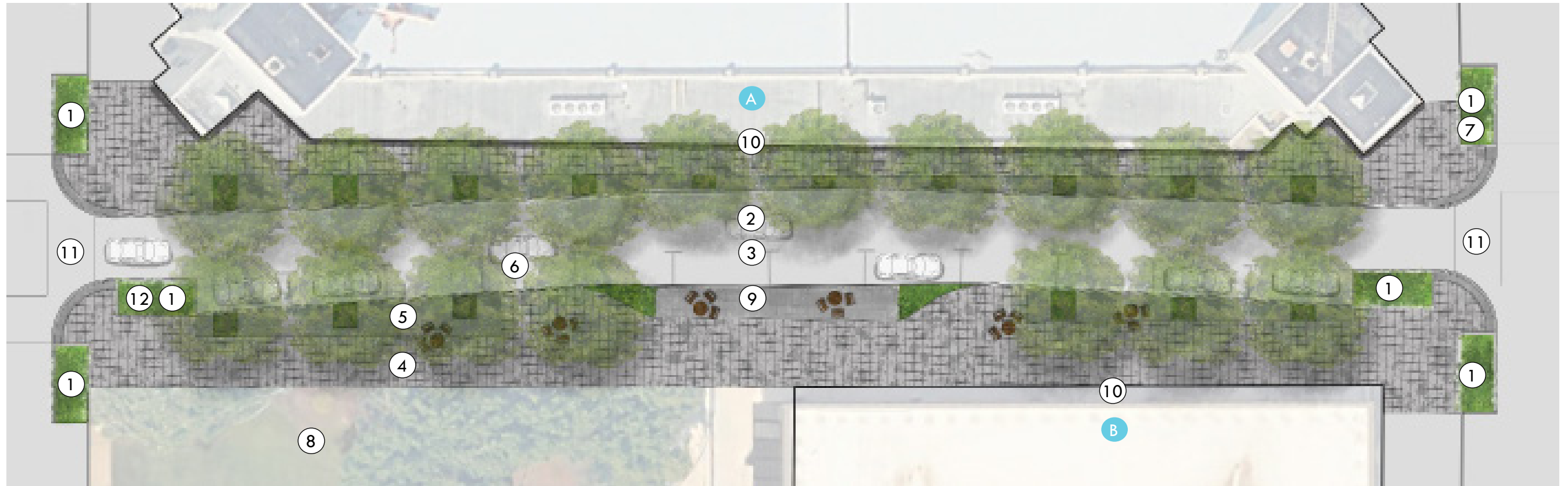
THIRD STREET - 400 BLOCK

EXISTING VENUES

- A** Public Parking
- B** Bengal Taproom
- C** Cecelia Creole Bistro
- D** Vacant
- E** Kress Building
- F** Little Village Restaurant
- G** The Vintage
- H** The Commerce Building
- I** 440 on Third
- J** Matherne's Market

DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

- 1** Curb extension with seating and furnishings.
- 2** Drive Lane, 12+ feet wide.
- 3** Parking Lane, 9 feet wide.
- 4** Pedestrian circulation zone - active.
- 5** Pedestrian rest and root protection zone - passive.
- 6** Retain trees to provide streetscape shade.
- 7** 5 new trees - Willow Oak, spaced 30 feet on center.
- 8** Art Slice - Art or graphic design intervention.
- 9** Art Cave - Art or graphic design intervention.
- 10** Art/Interpretation of 18th century cannon and cannon ball.
- 11** Parklet - Designed space for outdoor gathering.
- 12** Maintain and renovate existing parklet + seating.
- 13** Interpretive signage.
- 14** Art or vegetation parking screen.
- 15** Activate vacant storefront with art, studio, or temporary tenant.
- 16** Crosswalks.
- 17** Parking area to transition into mixed-use development as the market conditions allow. Future building facades must contribute to the streetscape with retail, restaurant, or other flexible spaces that engage patrons.



THIRD STREET - 500 BLOCK

EXISTING VENUES

- A** Charles W. Lamar Jr. YMCA / Parking Garage
- B** One American Place - Office Tower

DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

- ① Curb extension with seating and furnishings.
- ② Drive Lane, 12+ feet wide.
- ③ Parking Lane, 9 feet wide.
- ④ Pedestrian circulation zone - active.
- ⑤ Pedestrian rest and root protection zone - passive.
- ⑥ 17 new trees - Willow Oak, spaced 30 feet on center.
- ⑦ Interpretation - State Capitol is visible from 3rd.
- ⑧ Opportunity for medium-sized public green space.
- ⑨ Parklet - Designed space for outdoor gathering.
- ⑩ Activate street-level with night lighting, activity, and/or art.
- ⑪ Crosswalks.
- ⑫ Interpretive signage.

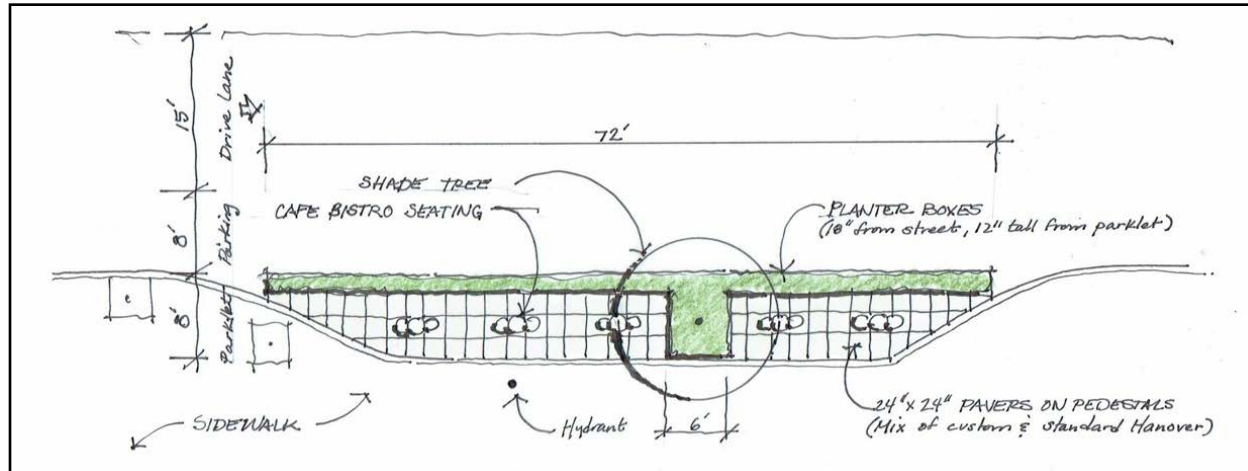


INTERSECTIONS

DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

- ① Curb extension with seating and furnishings.
- ② Drive Lane, 12+ feet wide.
- ③ Parking Lane, 9 feet wide.
- ④ Pedestrian circulation zone - active.
- ⑤ Pedestrian rest and root protection zone - passive.
- ⑥ Opportunity for interpretation

PARKLET CONCEPT - THIRD STREET'S "FRONT PORCH"



Schematic Design / Concept Sketch for the 100 Block Parklet.



Parklet rendering, view looking east.*



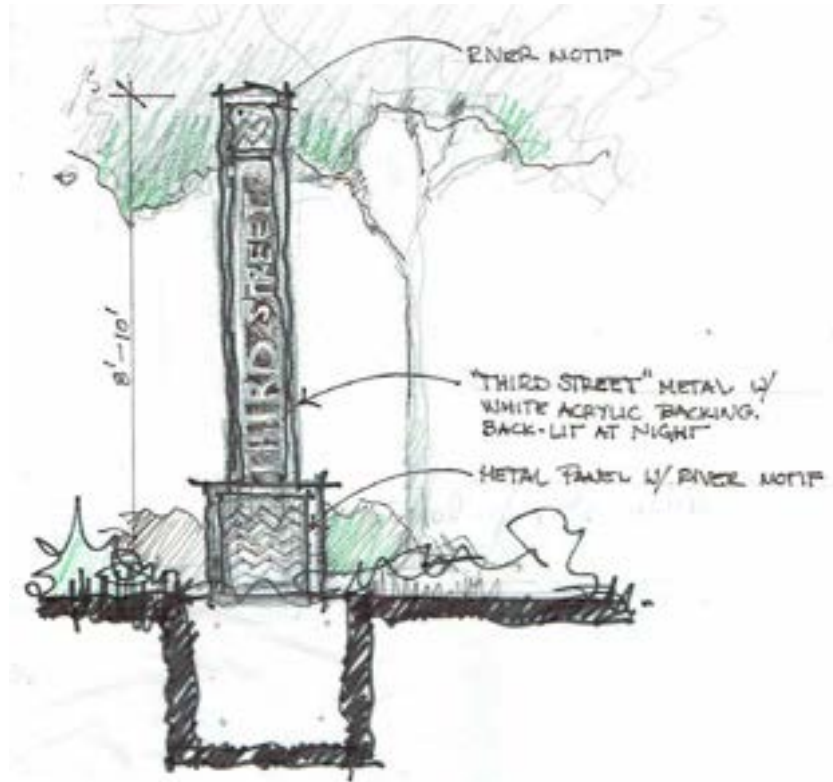
Parklet rendering, view looking south.*



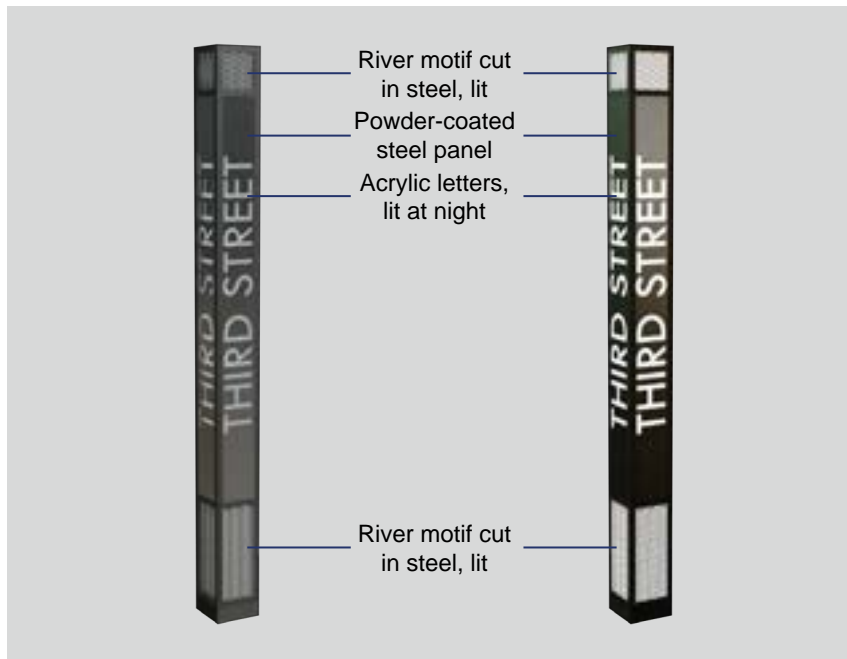
Parklet rendering, view looking west.*

* Parklet 3d renderings courtesy of Nabil Abdullah, DDD.

GATEWAY MARQUEE



Third Street Signage Marquee Concept.



Marquee - Daytime (left) and nighttime (right) model view.



Marquee - Powdercoated steel to match steel color in North Boulevard Town Square. Acrylic letters and river motif lit from the inside at night.

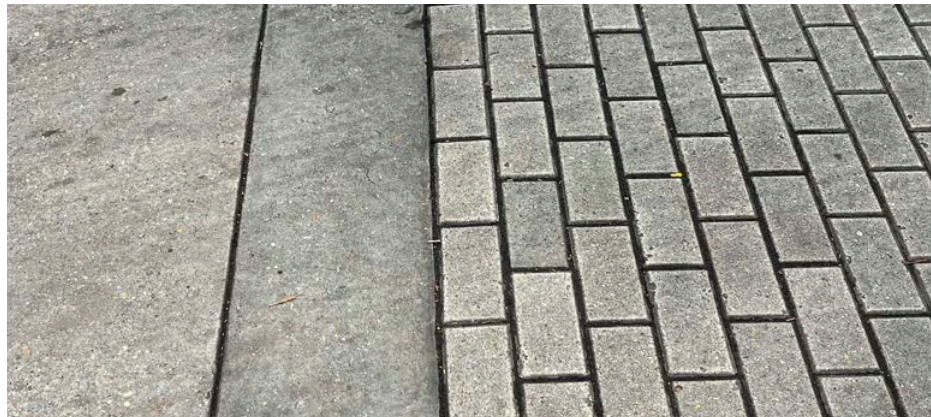
MATERIALS & CHARACTER

Creating the Language

The palette of materials along Third Street is refined and edited into a collection in which each component contributes to a similar aesthetic language. Hardscape, plants, furnishings, and existing materials are considered to be the equal parts of this system. Several options are given so that future available budgets may dictate the degree of intervention and related expense.

Hardscape

The hardscape for Third Street is envisioned to be a subtle indicator of use zone. Currently, certain materials and patterns indicate differences in vehicular and pedestrian zones. Traditional concrete and jointing patterns characterize the street and a disjointed mix of 24”x24” scored concrete squares indicate the pedestrian zone. The master plan divides the vehicular and pedestrian zones into smaller categories with a richer material experience.



Typical crosswalk at Town Square. Light gray 4”x8” concrete pavers with a 12” concrete band.



Concrete pavers, charcoal, truncated domes. Typical of areas where sidewalks meet streets.

Hardscape Option A

Vehicular: The street remains concrete. The parking lane is brick, 8”x4” to match the color and texture of those installed east of the Old State Capitol along the path leading to Repentance Park.

Pedestrian: Pedestrian areas are separated into different zones—one is active for circulation and one is passive which accommodates seating and an expanded root zone. The active circulation zone is paved with 12”x12” medium gray concrete pavers to match the North Boulevard Town Square. The passive zone may serve as a structural root zone for new and existing trees. This zone is paved with 8”x4” concrete pavers to match the color and texture of those installed east of the Old State Capitol (Hanover #B91744). Color and texture to be a subtle mix of darks and lights (or smooth and rough) which is inspired by the braid concept.

Intersections: The intersection pedestrian walks are comprised of 8”x4” light gray brick to match the color and texture of the crosswalks at North Boulevard Town Square. The pavers are bordered by a 12” concrete band. The interior intersection square is comprised of 12”x12” gray concrete pavers to match the North Boulevard Town Square pavers in color and texture.



Existing 12”x12” concrete pavers, North Boulevard Town Square.

Hardscape Option B

Vehicular: The street travel lane and the parking lane remain as concrete.

Pedestrian: Pedestrian areas are separated into different zones—one is active for circulation and one is passive which accommodates seating and an expanded root zone. The active zone remains as the existing 24”x24” scored concrete squares. The passive zone is paved with 8”x4” concrete pavers to match the color and texture of those installed east of the Old State Capitol along the path leading to Repentance Park (Hanover #B91744). Color and texture to be a subtle mix of darks and lights (or smooth and rough) which is inspired by the braid concept.

Intersections: Intersections are repainted to match the existing patterns and to accommodate the new dimensions of the curb extensions.



Concrete pavers, Galvez Plaza, east of the Old State Capitol.

Furnishings

Furnishings are selected for durability, comfort, and compatibility with existing materials in the immediate downtown area. The condition of existing litter receptacles and benches are varied, as some are in need of serious repair, and others need aesthetic mending. After conversations with the existing manufacturer, it was determined that existing furnishings are not under warranty, and are also cost-prohibitive to repair. Therefore, new furnishings are proposed which connect and contribute to the overall contemporary aesthetic of North Boulevard Town Square and Repentance Park.

Benches: Stay, silver, Landscape Forms (matching Town Square.)

Litter Receptacles: Chase Park, silver, Landscape Forms (matching Town Square.)

Parklet and Café Seating: Park Centre chair, 24” table (matching Town Square.) Color may vary depending on concept of individual parklets.

Bike racks: Ring bike rack, stainless steel, Landscape Forms (matching Third Street.)



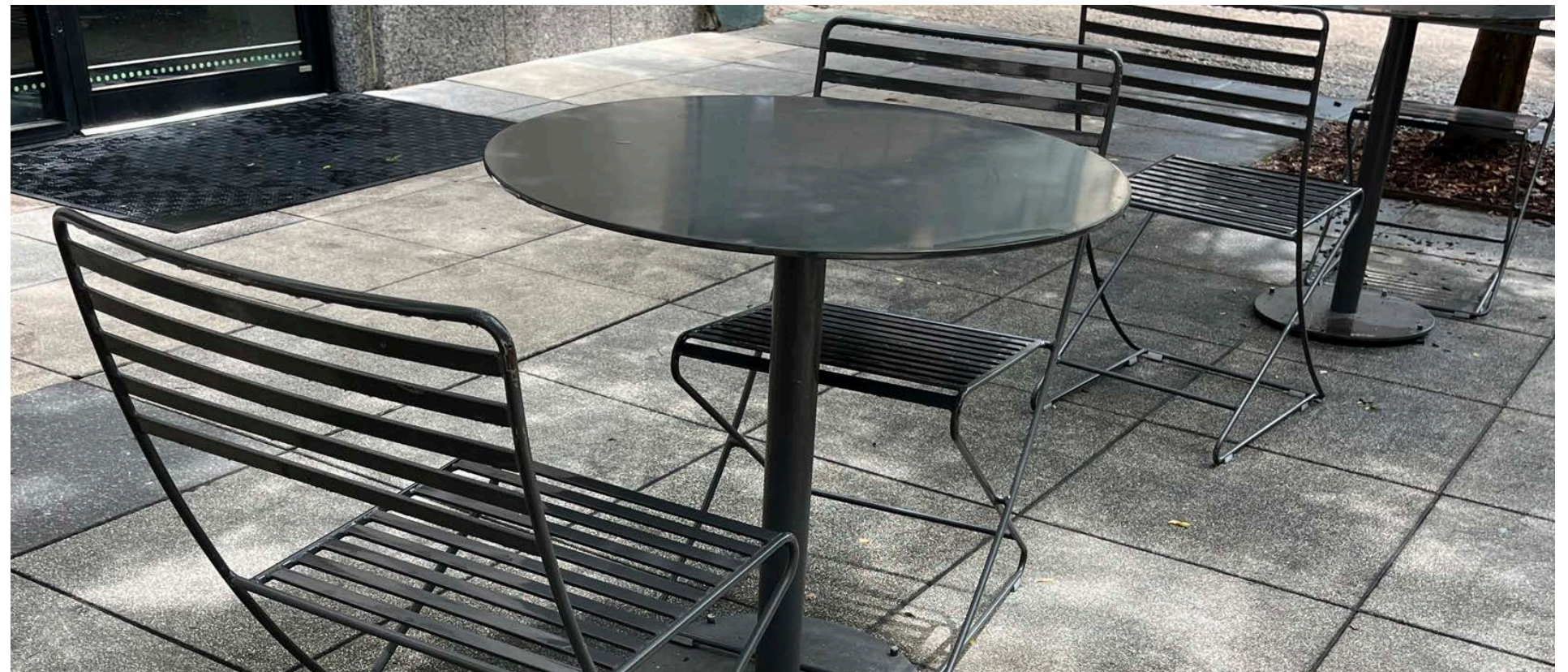
Stay bench, silver, Landscape Forms.



Chase Park litter receptacle, silver, Landscape Forms.



Ring bike rack, stainless steel, Landscape Forms.



Parc Centre chair, table. Color may vary depending on the parklet concept. Neutral colors are silver and titanium metallic. Landscape Forms.

A Sustainable Urban Forest

The landscape strategy for Third Street aligns with one of the critical themes of Plan Baton Rouge II—A Greener Downtown. The master plan addresses gaps in the existing mature tree canopy by proposing a sustainable urban forest. A completely native landscape is proposed. Contemporary planting trends incorporate native materials as a testament to both beauty and durability. Mature non-native trees such as Chinese pistachio will remain since their immediate value in producing shade outweighs the desire for natives. However, as this non-native tree canopy declines, their replacement should be native specimens.

In addition to Chinese pistachio, a large number of non-native crape myrtles are present along Third Street. Since they do not provide a large amount of shade, they are recommended to be replaced with native trees, and the tree well spacing is reconfigured to be thirty feet on center. As trees mature, the canopy should be raised and the limbs should be cleared to eight feet so that pedestrians can circulate below.

As budgets allow, new trees will be installed within a network of soil cell Arbor Systems for root management, aeration, and irrigation. The system is made from 100% recycled plastics, and as it promotes root health below ground, it structurally supports brick and paving at the surface level. If the system is cost prohibitive, designers should allow for a maximum exposed root zone in the design of hardscape, preferably 6'x6' minimum.

The street tree is selected for durability and species diversity: Princeton Elm (*Ulmus americana* 'Princeton')

A cultivar of the American Elm, Princeton Elm thrives in moist wet conditions, and is well-suited to the urban environment. The tree is selected to repeat the line of elms present in Galvez Plaza leading to Repentance Park, south of Third Street.



Soft rush.



River oats.



Pink muhly grass.



Purple cone flower.

A Sustainable Urban Forest Floor

The ground-plane planting contributes to the greening of downtown, creates an urban wildlife habitat, and can be configured to accept stormwater to lessen the loads on municipal systems. The height of plantings should be 24 inches or less, with no material reaching over 36 inches. Sight triangles at intersections are of notable concern. The parish Unified Development Code has further height requirements when designing within sight triangles.

The areas with opportunity for forest floor planting are within intersection curb extensions, within parklets, and below new and existing tree plantings.

Several plant species are noted for durability. Plants should be selected based on the location, solar and hydrologic conditions, and aesthetics.

Cherokee Sedge (*Carex cherokeensis*)

River Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

Dwarf Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria* 'Nana')

Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*)

Pink Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*)

Purple Cone Flower (*Echinacea purpurea*)



American Elm 'Princeton'.

CREATIVE INTERVENTIONS AND CURIOSITIES

Creating the Mystery and Excitement

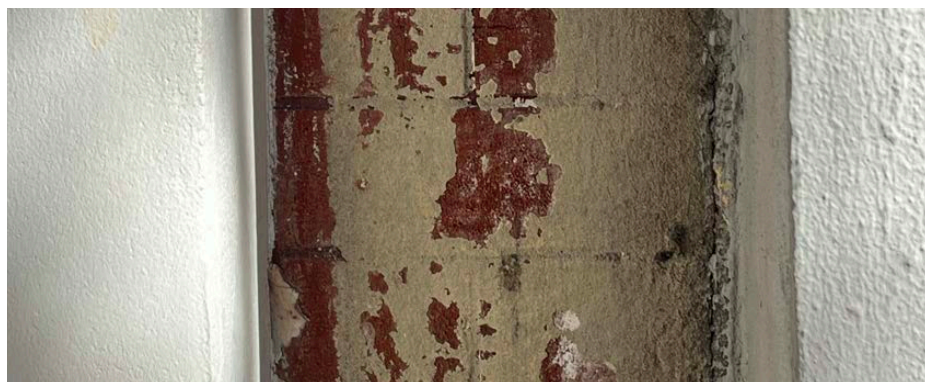
People connect with Third Street through events that bring individuals and communities together within an urban environment that exudes authenticity. These urban environments are rich with layers of history, culture, and the interactions of countless individuals. Every street corner and building tell a unique story, shaped by the diverse people who have lived and worked there over time. The history woven into each space adds depth and meaning, transforming these areas into living, breathing entities that offer a dynamic yet deeply rooted sense of place.

Inspired by the natural history, cultural history, and the contemporary appetite for creative interventions, new layers are proposed that complement the stories and authenticity of Third Street.

Art Slices

Within the urban fabric, there are small spaces that exist unnoticed and forgotten. Small gaps between buildings, gated alleys, a hole in a brick, a crack in the sidewalk—all are opportunities to embed a layer of art, a curiosity, a surprise. These installations are not intended to be flashy or easily seen, but rather something mysterious and hidden, something that people stumble upon and discover.

As part of the master plan recommendations, unconventional ‘canvases’ are identified along Third Street. The DDD may develop and promote a national competition to entice artists to develop designs and proposals for these interesting interventions. Some may relate to the culture and history of Baton Rouge or Third Street. Hopefully, others may be completely abstract and experimental. As the program matures, the Art Slices will become another story embedded within Third Street, contributing to the collective cultural value.



Infusing discovery and surprise into every square inch of Third Street. Small slices occur between buildings, a perfect canvas for adventurous abstract artists.

Creative Interventions

In addition to Art Slices, artistic expression can be overlaid upon common streetscape items such as utility boxes. Boxes may be covered with a meaningful pattern, artistic graphics, or historic information that highlights the people and places that existed along Third Street.

Coves, alleys, and courtyards that face Third Street are also great opportunities for design interventions, art, and sculpture. Each space should be viewed through a lens of creative potential. Historic items that are part of the streetscape—the Spanish cannon on the corner of Third and Laurel and the historic Roumain clock on the 300 block of Third—are potential subjects to be highlighted through non-material-altering methods.



Utility box graphic, interpretation of artist. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Photo: Renee Chatelain

Audio Tours

Audio tours can be created as an additional layer of activity and life. In 2010, a tour was completed for the north portion of Beauregard Town, beginning at the Old Governor’s Mansion. This existing tour should be connected to Third Street through signage and QR codes. Other tours should be developed to focus on the history of the CBD, Spanish Town, the Mississippi River, and other nearby attractions. Third Street should be the starting point for the tour offerings.

Light

In addition to the traditional artistic interventions proposed for Third Street, light artists should be engaged to create a video installation which highlights building facades. The artistic approach may highlight the research within the National Register Historic District, relate to the building ages or materials, or may be completely abstract. The light presentation may coordinate with a specific time each night, or it may change throughout the season.



Superbowl 59 light show in Jackson Square, New Orleans. Photo: Reddit.

Augmented Reality / AI

Augmented reality is a technology that overlays digital elements onto the real world. The DDD may engage this technology to highlight contemporary information such as restaurants and destinations, or feature interesting historic information about Third Street such as a virtual reconstruction of significant architecture that has long been demolished. Such technology could provide a more visual connection to the past and foster an appreciation for historic preservation.

Seasonality

Embrace seasonality and a holiday atmosphere. The Third Street aesthetic should evolve as the year progresses, providing the stage and backdrop for changing seasons. Examples include holiday displays, lights, planting, and decoration. The holiday extras are temporary and should be removed immediately after the holiday is over.

Scavenger Hunts—Uncovering the Details of Third Street

Scavenger hunts are a fun and engaging way to observe and explore an environment. They are exciting for people of all ages, especially children. A series of scavenger hunts should be developed for Third Street—architectural features, art slices, and others—which highlight significant character-defining elements. Examples of elements could be the decorative details of a building, interesting or unique architectural materials, a building name cast into a façade, or a year marker.



Architectural details can be the subject of a scavenger hunt.

Street Level Storefronts—Magnets of Life and Activity

Although streetscape design is an important component within the toolkit of urban redevelopment, many other factors contribute to the success of a street, and of a downtown. The most tangible element contributing to the life and vitality of Third Street is the street-level storefronts. Although the tenant occupancies are market-driven, the DDD should encourage owners to engage tenants that support the residential and commercial population as well as **contribute to the streetscape at all times of the day and night, during all seven days of the week.**

Each current occupant should develop a plan for their Third Street façade and storefront to contribute to the life of the streetscape both during business hours and afterhours. Businesses and offices that are primarily open during the day should brainstorm ways to contribute to the nighttime aesthetic. Options may include lighting, art, sculpture, or perhaps temporary occupants. Businesses that operate primarily at night should find ways to offer daytime services or products such as a breakfast or lunchtime menu. At minimum, the environment should be clean and

safe, and businesses should contribute a certain level of activity to the street at all times of the day and night.

Storefronts that are vacant are of particular concern because they contribute to a gap-toothed effect within the urban fabric, a term often attributed to buildings that have been demolished and no longer contribute to the life of a streetscape. The DDD should engage with the realtors and owners of such spaces to appeal for unconventional and temporary tenants such as working art studios, art galleries, food truck storefronts, coffee shops, bakeries, and brick and mortar locations for local businesses. **Owners must be willing to offer their otherwise vacant spaces for a discounted compensation as a contribution to build the downtown collective and as an investment in the future and on-going popularity of the street.**

The DDD should create a committee solely focused on the life and vitality of Third Street. The committee will address vacancies, maintenance, and other issues. An ambassador program will also help create a safe and clean environment, as well as help orient visitors to nearby attractions.



Window graphics, art. New York City. Photo: Renee Chatelain.

Interpretation—Discovering the History of Third Street

As presented in the inventory and analysis section of this master plan, there are multiple layers of history that contribute to the story of Baton Rouge and of Third Street. There is an opportunity to present the important chapters of the story within the physical urban context of the streetscape. The stories add another layer of intrigue to the street design.

An interpretive plan and strategy should be developed as part of a future effort to present these stories properly. Subjects of interest and further study:

- *The Story of the Land—Underlying Ecologies of Third Street and the Surrounding Area*
- *The Story of the People—Native Americans and the Pre-Colonial Character of Third Street*
- *The Story of Europeans—Colonial Origins and the Development of Third Street*
- *The Story of Independence—The People and Places that Transitioned Baton Rouge from Colonial Territory to State*
- *The Story of Race—Third Street, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement; Kress and Sitman's Drug Store Sit-Ins*
- *Early 20th Century Third Street—The Heyday: Louisiana State University, Old State Capitol, and the Hub of Commerce*
- *A Story of Mid-Century Transition—Shopping Malls, Suburban Sprawl, and a Slow Decline*
- *The Comeback—People, Programs, and the On-Going Success of Third Street*

Parklets—Activating the Front Porches

Parklets serve as mini-parks, alcoves of respite among the busy urban streetscape. Collectively, the five potential parklet spaces along Third Street have the potential to significantly redefine the aesthetic and identity of the streetscape. **Parklets are envisioned to be the front porches of Third Street.**

Each parklet must relate to the needs and creativity of the immediate users, those who live and work in the buildings that abut the space. Programming and design should be flexible to accommodate users of all ages throughout the day and evening.

Program and Component Ideas:

- Outdoor dining
- Planters
- Dog park
- Art and sculpture
- Yard games – cornhole, putt-putt, Connect Four, Jenga
- Conversation area
- Stage for small performances



Arts market, brick paving, tents, active spaces. Chicago, Illinois. Photo: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.; <https://downtowngr.org/announcements/2019/01/streetspace-guidelines-jan-2019>



Circulation zone, seating zone. Seattle, Washington. Photo by author.



Outdoor seating, shops, tree canopy, curb extensions. Greenville, South Carolina. Photo by TCLF.

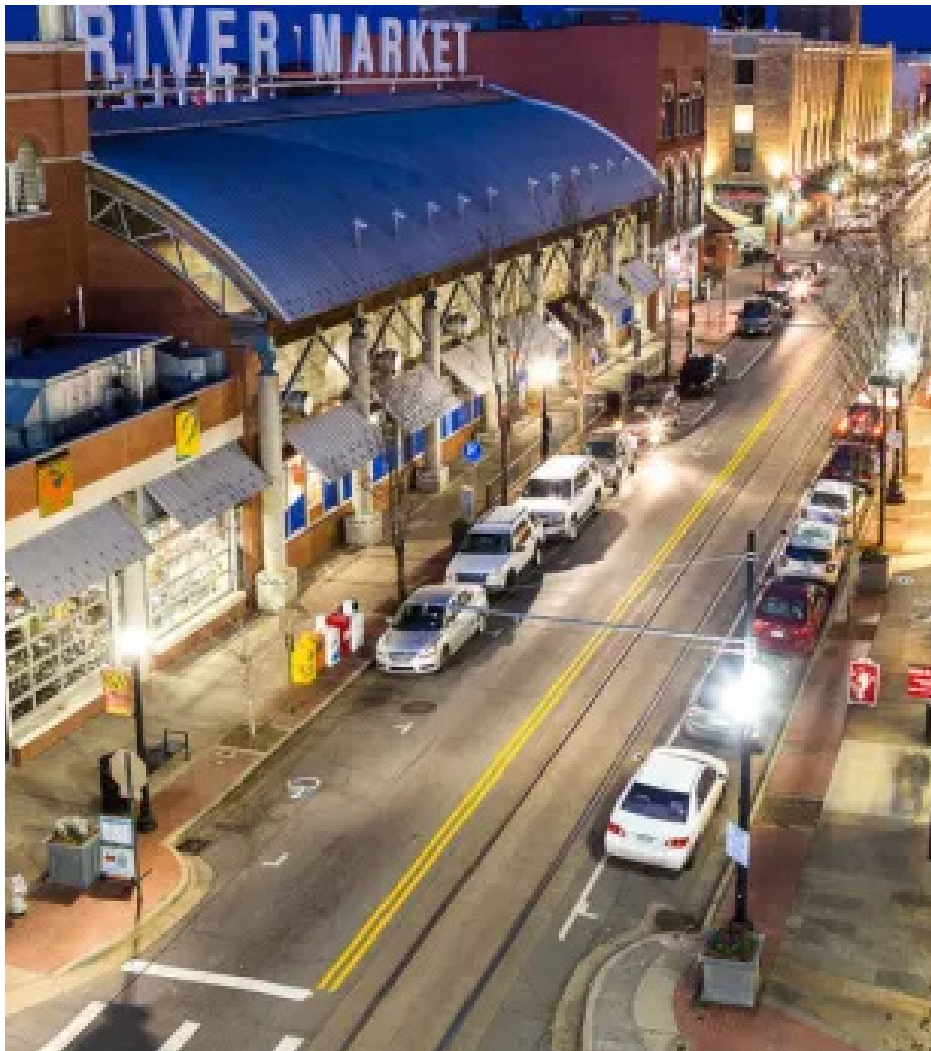


Signage describing the planting design concept. High Line, New York City. Photo: Renee Chatelain.



Instagram, greatglobaladventurer, Chelsea Kumar. Cartagena, Columbia.

PRECEDENTS



Market Square Streetscape, Little Rock, Arkansas. Photo: Brian Cormack, Arkansas Times.



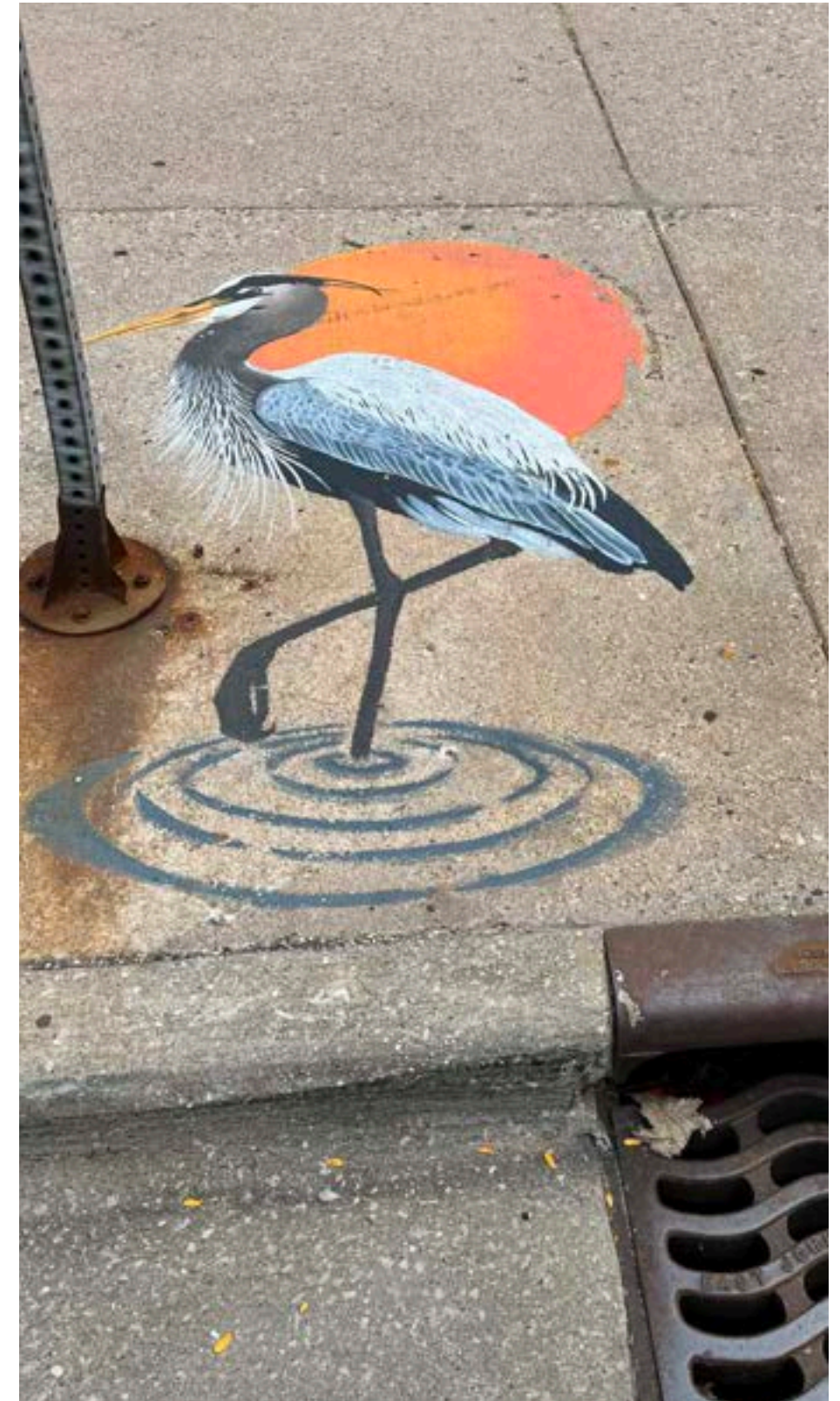
Covered outdoor seating, art. New York City. Photo by author.



Art in the landscape. Chihuly, Seattle, Washington. Photo by author.



Lights, globes, ambiance. Washington D.C.. Photo: Whitney Hoffman-Soyal.



Streetscape art intervention. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Photo: Renee Chatelain.

PRECEDENTS



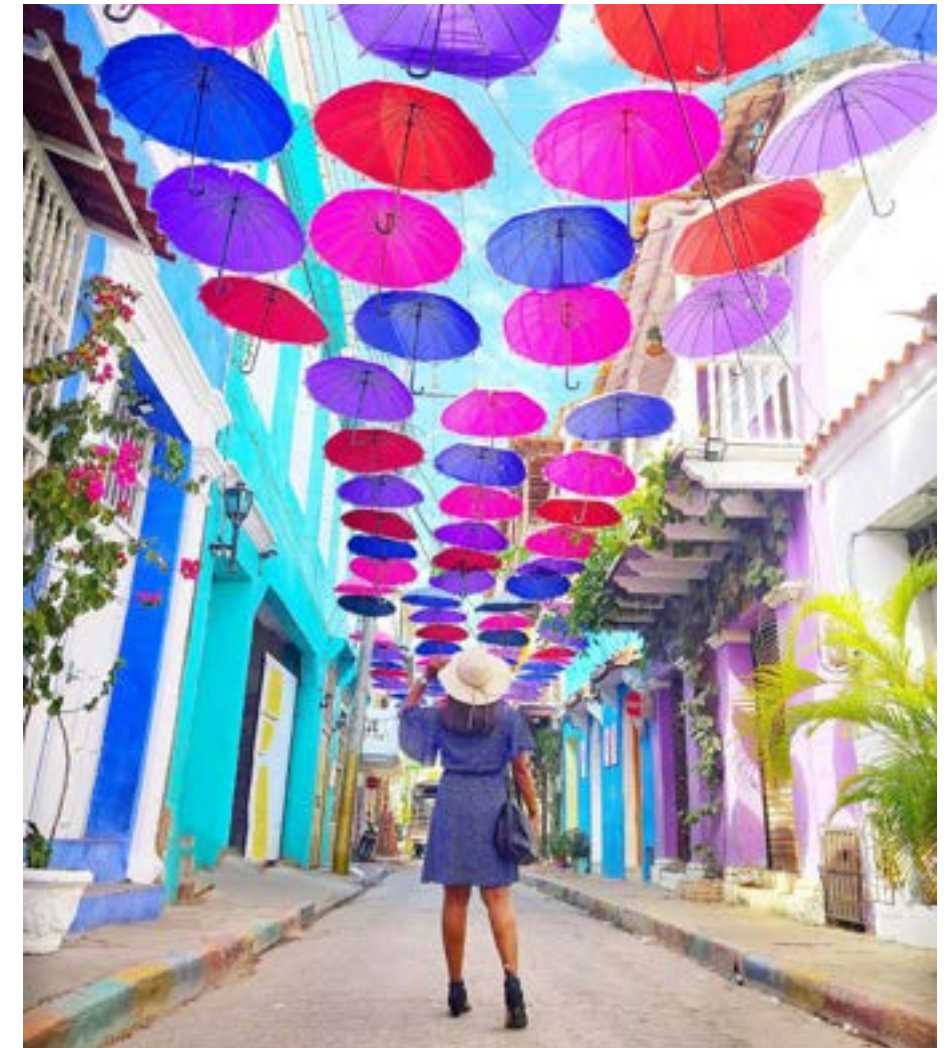
Art nook, selfie spot. Washington D.C. Photo by Whitney Hoffman-Sayal.



Signage describing the art program. High Line, New York City. Photo: Renee Chatelain.



Planting areas, streetscape. Chicago, Illinois. Photo by author.



shortgirlontour.com. Cartagena, Columbia.



Outdoor seating, ambient lighting. Denver, Colorado. Photo: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.; <https://downtowngr.org/announcements/2019/01/streetspace-guidelines-jan-2019>



Circulation zone, planting zone. Vancouver, Canada. Photo by author.

PRECEDENTS



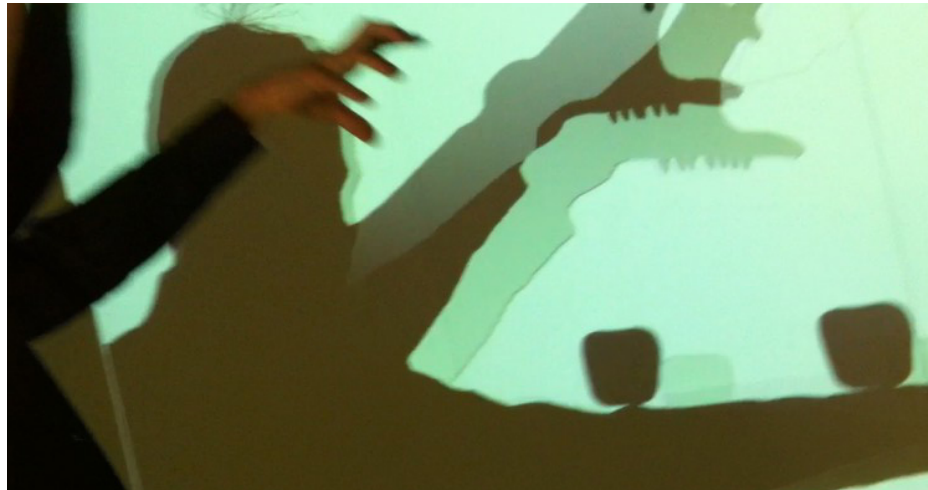
Circulation zone, planting zone. Chicago, Illinois. Photo by author.



Subtle paving change. Dallas, Texas.. Photo by author.



Lake to Bay Loop. Map on concrete. Seattle, Washington. Photo by author.



Art installation featuring people, shadows, abstraction. Vancouver, Canada. Photo by author.

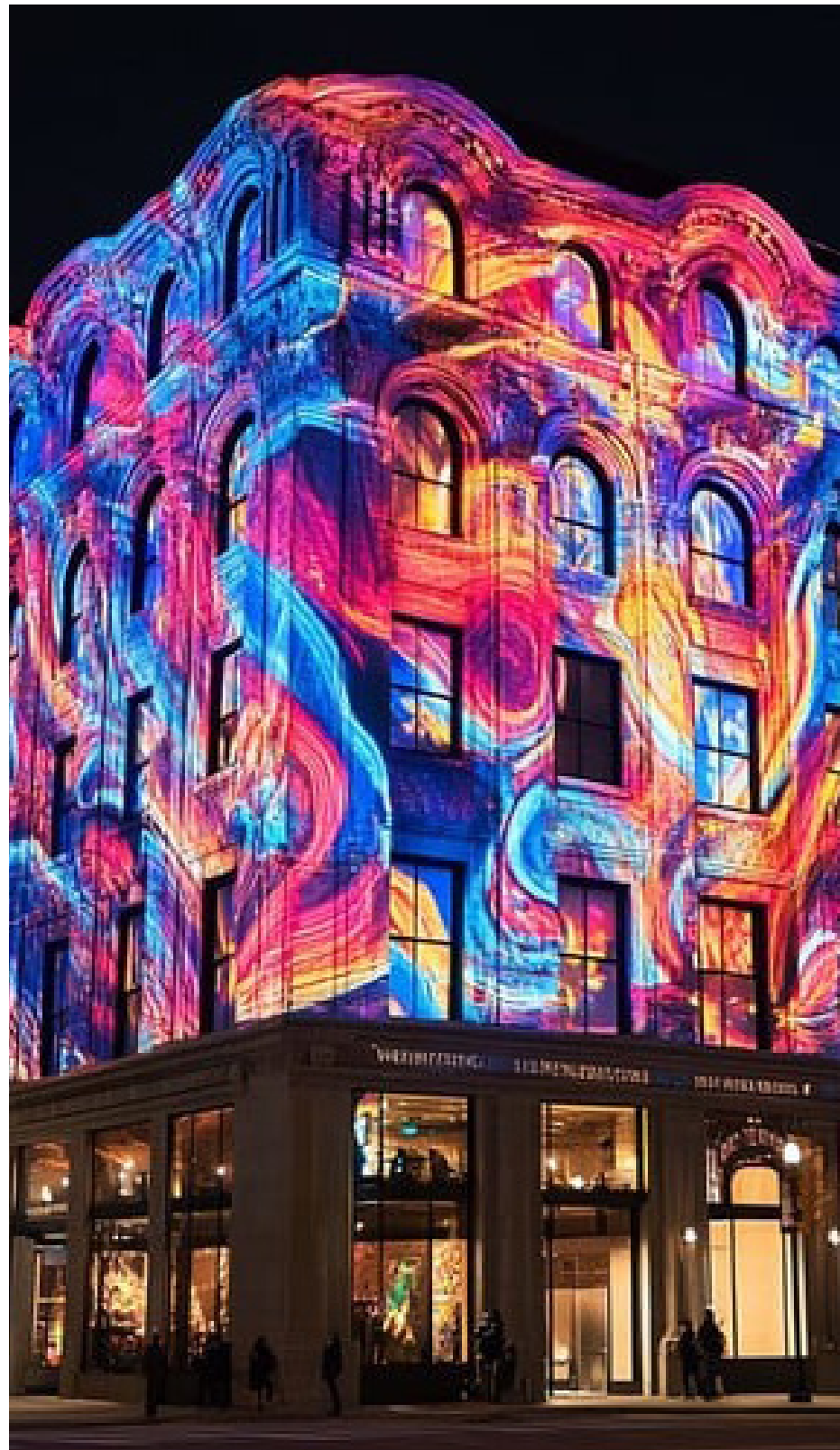


Parklet, seating, rest space. Vancouver, Canada. Photo by author.



Circulation zone, seating zone. Chicago, Illinois. Photo by author.

PRECEDENTS



Light installation. Photo: https://stockcake.com/i/colorful-illuminated-building_1329079_979645



Circulation zone, planting zone. Seattle, Washington. Photo by author.



Outdoor seating, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Photo: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. via X.



Curb extensions, storm water management. Seattle, Washington. Photo by author.



Festivals, market, activity. Vancouver, Canada. Photo by author.



Circulation zone, planting zone, food trucks. Vancouver, Canada. Photo by author.

PRECEDENTS



Utility box, historic imagery. Victoria, Canada. Photo by author.



Art installation, Philippe Katerine. Quebec City, Canada. Photo: Art Beyond Walls: Temporary Public Art in Downton Cities and Public Spaces. <https://exmuro.com/en/>



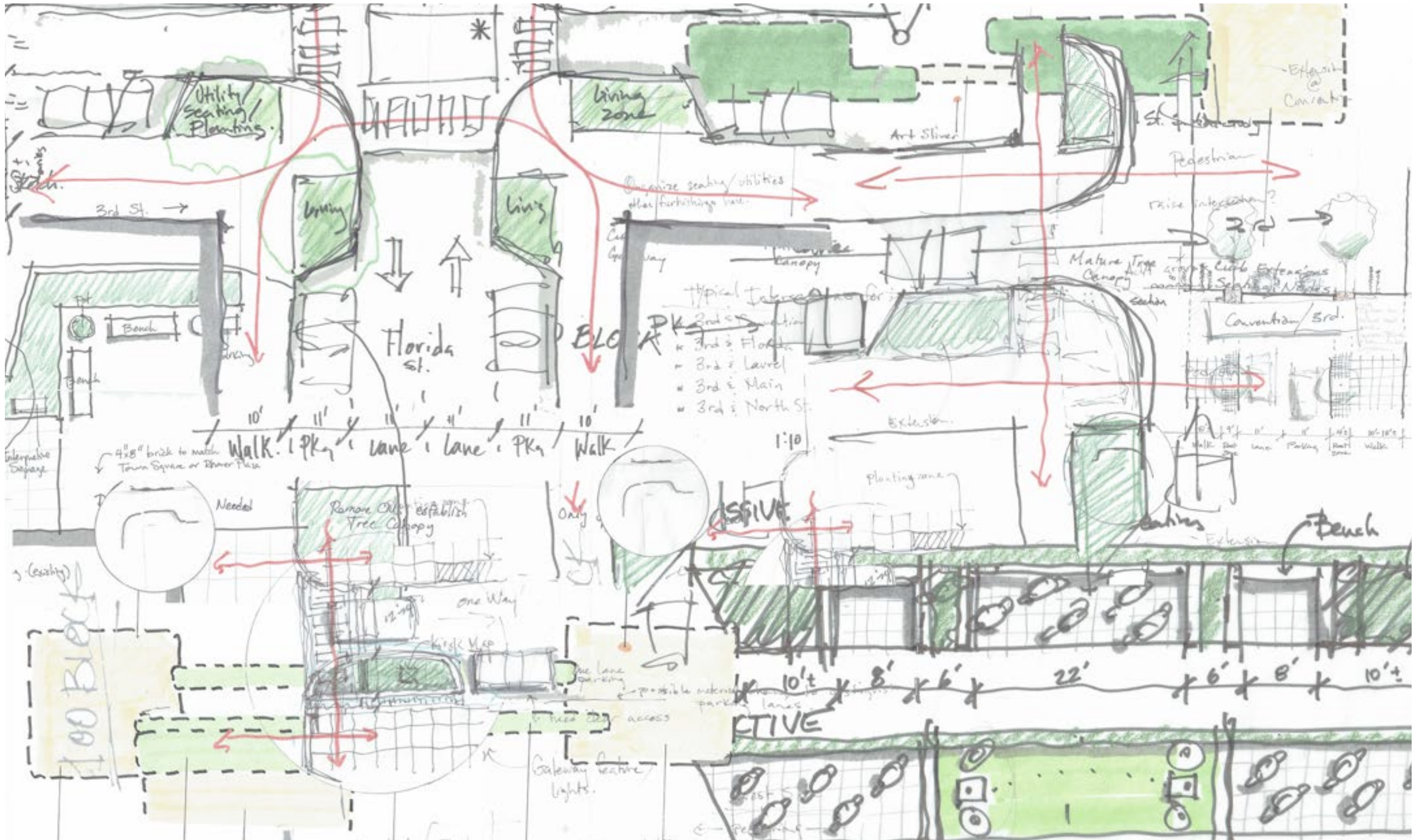
Art installation. Brandon Vicard. Hamilton, Canada. Photo: Art Beyond Walls: Temporary Public Art in Downton Cities and Public Spaces. <https://exmuro.com/en/>



Art installation, Max Streicher. Boston, Massachusetts. Photo: Art Beyond Walls: Temporary Public Art in Downton Cities and Public Spaces. <https://exmuro.com/en/>



Utility box graphic, interpretation of artist. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Photo: Renee Chatelain



Composite Collage of Schematic Design Drawings.

WITH GRATITUDE

The project authors extend their sincere gratitude to the Downtown Development District staff and commission—especially Whitney, Casey, and Iboro—for their invaluable guidance and support. This master plan would not be what it is today without your contributions.

We also wish to honor Davis Rhorer, former executive director of the DDD, a trusted friend and mentor whose tireless efforts over more than three decades helped transform Baton Rouge into a vibrant 24-hour city where people can live, work, and play. This plan builds upon the legacy of visionary planning documents that guided downtown's development, from the Baton Rouge 2000 Plan through Plan Baton Rouge I, II, and III.