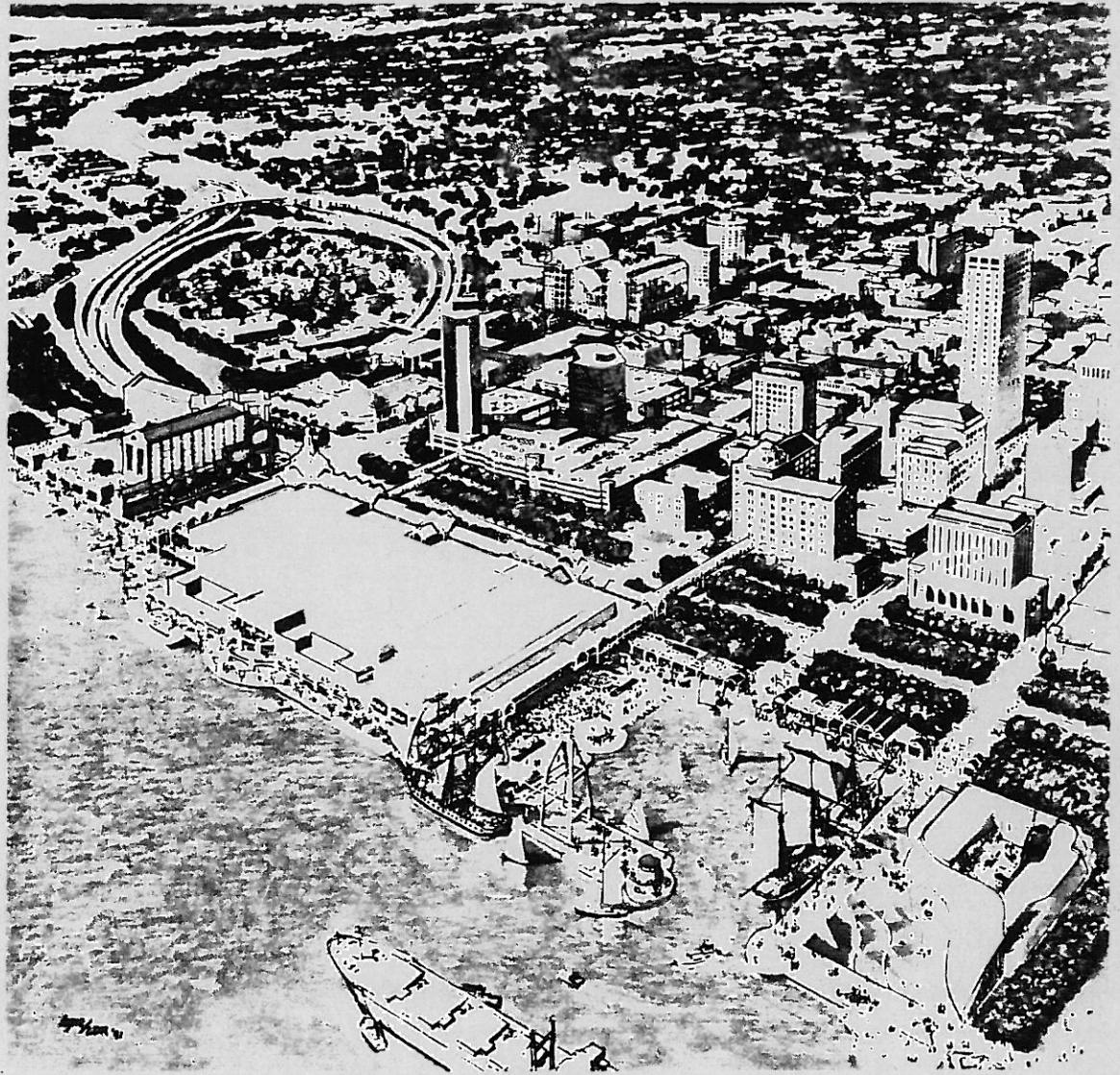

Downtown Development Plan and Program

Mobile, Alabama



November, 1991

Downtown Development Plan and Program

Mobile, Alabama

Prepared for
The City of Mobile, Alabama
Mobile Downtown Redevelopment Commission
Mobile Housing Board

November, 1991

Prepared by
LDR International, Inc.
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Appendix: *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Community Concept Plan*, published separately. Copies available from Mobile Downtown Redevelopment Commission.

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1. *Introduction*

In September 1990 LDR was commissioned to assist the Mobile Downtown Redevelopment Commission in the preparation of a comprehensive plan and program for Mobile's downtown and riverfront area. The first phase of the comprehensive planning process involved the following work elements:

- Strategic Assessment
- Concept Plan
- Linkage Assessment
- Action Plan
- Priority Site Plan and Development Strategy
- Downtown Master Plan Work Outline.

During the initial planning process several important development projects amounting to well over \$100 million were initiated. These important projects include: the Mobile Convention Center, the City/County Government Center and parking garage, and national solicitation for a hotel developer. These early-action projects have stimulated a great deal of interest in downtown and have provided tangible evidence that downtown Mobile has begun a process designed to create a healthy, vibrant city center.

This initial work effort concluded with two public meetings at the Mobile Civic Center that attracted several hundred participants. The public response to the concept plan was very positive and enthusiastic. One suggestion that came from the public meetings was that the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Community be included in the downtown planning process, to which the Mobile Downtown Redevelopment Commission and Mobile Housing Board agreed. The Mobile Housing Board provided additional funding and this project was added to the work program for the next phase of the downtown planning process, along with the following additional work elements:

- Priority Site Plans
- Sub-Area Strategy Plans
- Traffic/Parking Strategy
- Complete Downtown Master Plan
- Implementation Strategy/Action Plan.

This report summarizes the key findings, conclusions and recommendations resulting from the work programs outlined above.

1.1 Report Organization

The Mobile Downtown Development Plan and Program is organized in five sections and a separately published appendix document that include:

- Introduction
- Site Assessment
- Conceptual Framework
- Downtown Development Plan
- Action Program for Implementation
- Appendix: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Community Concept Plan.

1.2 Acknowledgements

From the very beginning, the downtown and riverfront planning process for Mobile has involved an extraordinary level of participation from community leaders, both public and private, and from a wide range of citizens interested in the future of the downtown area as an important part of a growing and vibrant city. The process involved more than 100 individual leadership interviews and small group meetings in addition to regular working sessions with the Mobile Downtown Redevelopment Commission. About midway in the process, the Downtown Redevelopment Commission members, the DRC staff, City staff department heads and Mayor Michael Dow spent an entire day in a workshop session dealing with the wide array of problems and prospects facing the downtown/riverfront revitalization process.

Throughout the process, Mayor Michael Dow, members of the City Council and members of the County Commission provided valuable input into the plan. The active involvement of Mobile's City and County leaders has resulted in consensus on most of the major issues facing the downtown area, so that the plan reflects an agreed-upon agenda for the future development of the downtown/riverfront area.

2. *Site Assessment*

Mobile has many assets that provide a strong base for a downtown redevelopment. The downtown is graced with interesting architecture and open spaces, and an increasingly active riverfront with a rich maritime history. Such attributes suggest a quality and human scale in the downtown environment that should be promoted to enliven the downtown.

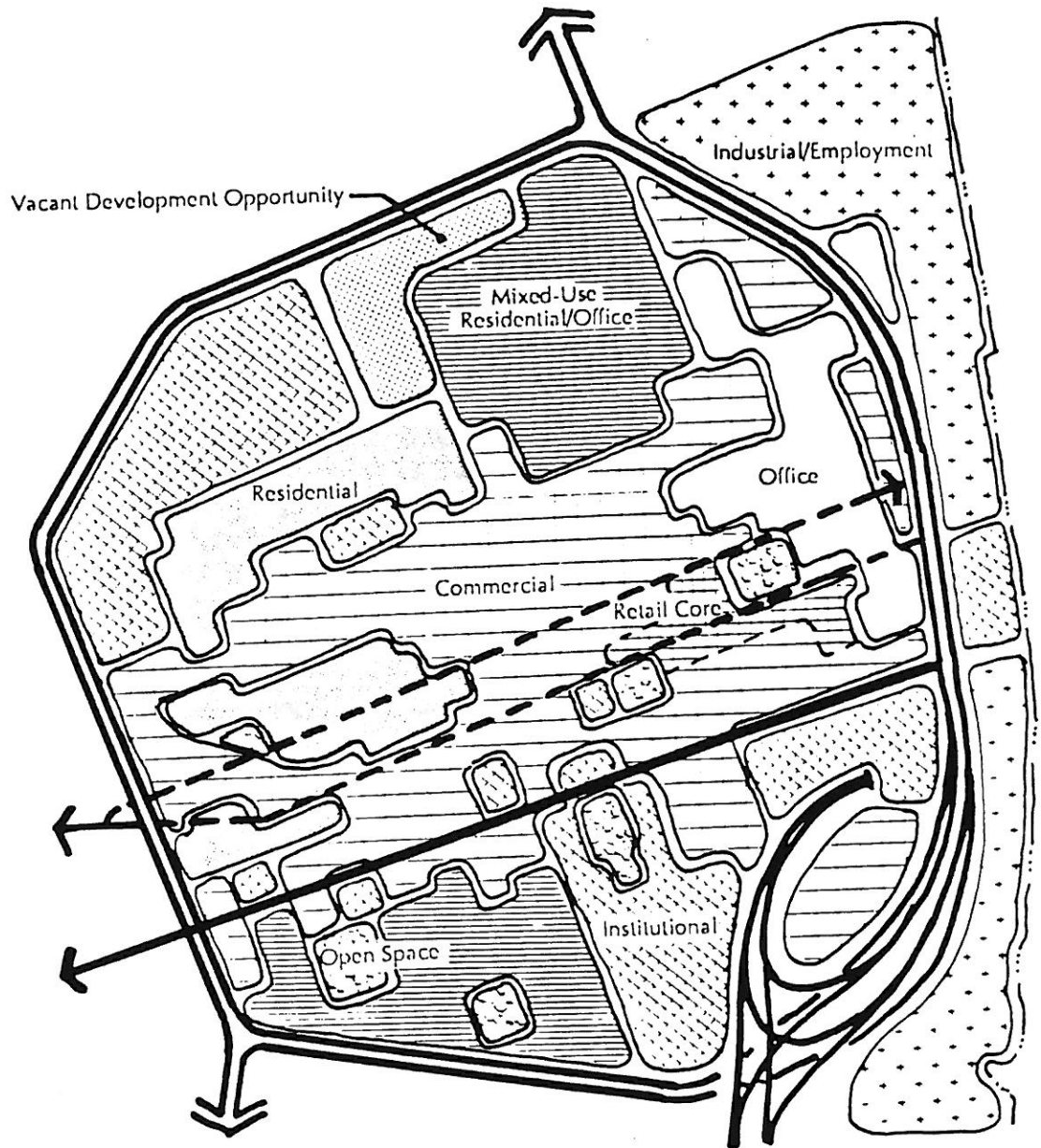
A primary goal of this plan is to unify and strengthen these and other existing positive elements in downtown, and to enhance the value of new development opportunities, by providing a framework and guidelines for development. This framework seeks to integrate old and new into a cohesive urban fabric which can stimulate and foster downtown revitalization.

The General Land Use diagram (Exhibit 1) illustrates the existing built environment of downtown, which is defined as the area bordered by Beauregard Street on the north, Broad Street on the west, I-10 and Canal Street on the south, and edged by the Mobile River on the east.

As shown, downtown's current development context is characterized by fragmented uses that lack strong definition and connection. Industrial uses, many of them deteriorated, dominate the riverfront, while a variety of commercial uses are distributed thinly through the center of downtown. Fringed around it are pockets of office and mixed-uses, low-rise residential neighborhoods, and institutional uses. Within this piecemeal setting are a number of inhibiting constraints and weaknesses that need to be remedied:

- underutilization of the riverfront potential;
- limited activities and attractions outside working hours;
- dilapidated and derelict areas and buildings; and,
- limited choice of housing within or near downtown.

Exhibit 1



	Industrial/Employment		Office
	Open Space		Vacant Development Opportunity
	Commercial		Mixed-Use Residential/Office
	Retail Core		Residential
	Institutional		

GENERAL LAND USE

Downtown Development Plan
LDR International, Inc.

Mobile, Alabama
October, 1991

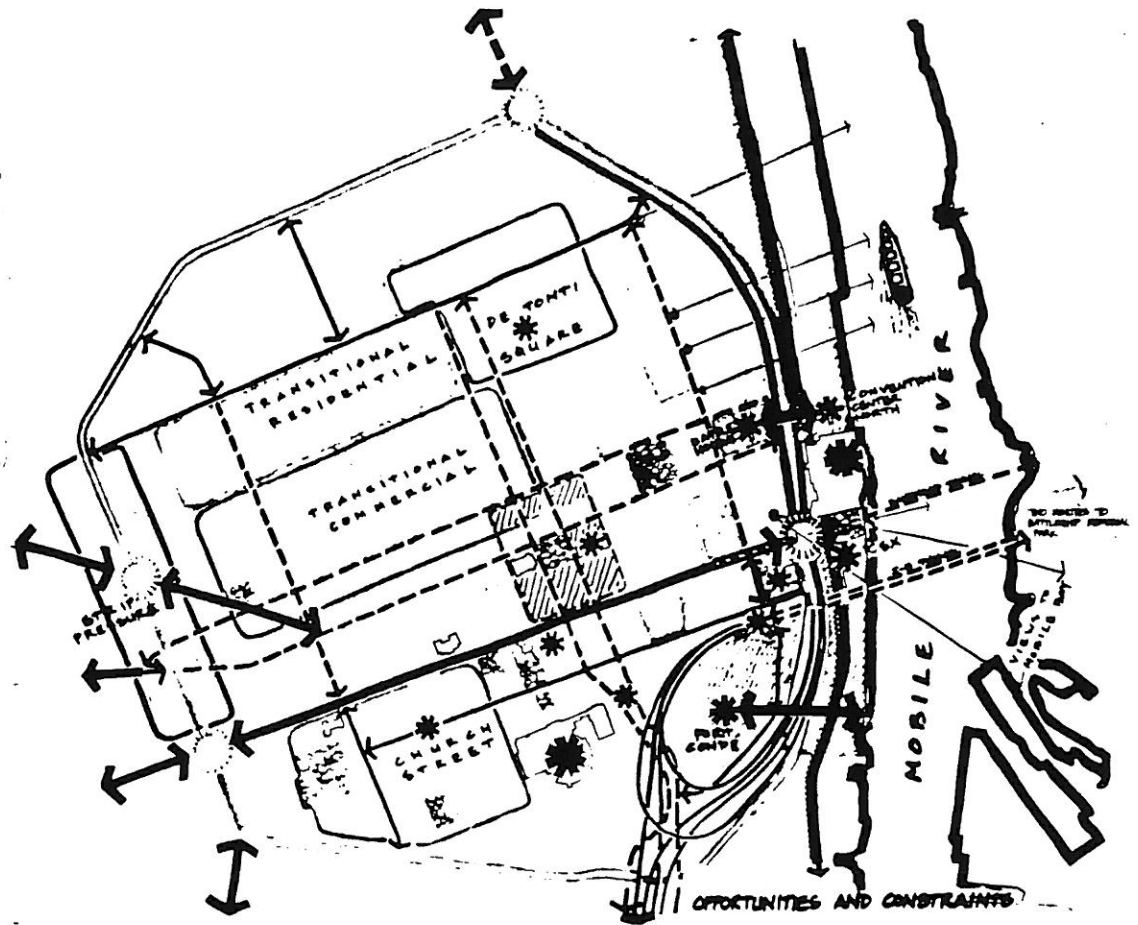
Despite such constraints, there are encouraging trends in the downtown, and the site evaluation of the study area reveals opportunities for new development. If these are supported and pursued, they can become catalysts for future development to occur, guided by the plan's vision of a revitalized downtown and riverfront area. The Opportunities and Constraints diagram (Exhibit 2) illustrates the broad strategy to take advantage of downtown's strengths and opportunities.

A keystone in the creation of an attractive and inviting downtown will be the Convention Center, which is currently under construction along the Mobile River. The center's potential for development and image-building should be maximized. It can open up the riverfront and create a focal point for an active downtown with its possibilities for riverside parks, a special attractions visitor center, and sites for restaurants, hotels and housing.

Mobile's commercial and residential districts include transitional uses or areas of substandard quality which can be targeted for renovation and redevelopment to create strong and continuous edges. Reinforcing tentative residential uses and linking them to the existing DeTonti Square and East Church Street neighborhoods will establish a supportive ring of housing around the downtown. Likewise, the northeastern sector, with its commercial/industrial orientation, has potential for development of a strong office core which is enhanced by river views and nearby back office space.

A number of opportunities relate to the downtown retail functions. An upgraded Bienville Square, one of the city's most endearing spaces, can serve as a starting point for improving the retail and arts districts surrounding it. Fort Condé Village can relate similarly to the riverfront.

Exhibit 2



	Ring Road Henry Aaron Loop		Primary Attractions
	Primary Streets		Secondary Attractions
	Secondary Streets		Downtown Gateways
	One-way Streets		Development Opportunities

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Downtown Development Plan
LDR International, Inc.

Mobile, Alabama
October, 1991

3. *Conceptual Framework*

A conceptual framework, based on experience in the successful revitalization of other downtowns, has guided the formulation of the plan specifics. It emphasizes the concentration of development and uses, to create a critical mass in downtown that has the energy and depth to bring people in to use, explore, and enjoy the downtown. All new and redevelopment opportunities should receive the highest quality design and materials possible. It is important to note that, while the development plan is created for Mobilians, experience shows that the local excitement of a good idea is readily transferred to visitors also.

The development plan integrates existing positive elements and opportunities for new development in support of the primary goal of enhancing the downtown and creating a desirable living environment. The plan seeks to promote this goal by:

- creating attractive and active riverfront and downtown environments;
- creating new opportunity sites for a major hotel and mixed-use development;
- establishing a viable business district;
- reclaiming the strong civic image of Government Street;
- strengthening the existing downtown retail core;
- stimulating the adjacent emerging arts district; and
- introducing strong, permanent residential components into the downtown.

The broad objectives evolved into specific features and configurations of development proposed for downtown, which are described in the following section. Critical to the success of this effort is public sector commitment to complete the infrastructure, and detailed guidelines for all developments within the downtown. The initiation of carefully selected public improvements can demonstrate that commitment early on, and act as an impetus for further development.

Many elements of this conceptual framework require a rethinking of the land use and zoning patterns currently seen downtown. The success of the development plan lies, in part, how effectively the City is able to replace lower or unsuitable uses with those which will best suit the downtown area, as well as ensure that new development is of high quality and meets the guidelines set forth.

As stated in the General Land Use assessment, downtown's land use pattern is dominated by a weak commercial zone, with pockets of unconnected uses along the fringe of this area. The development plan suggests that the existing downtown pattern change radically in order to achieve a better mix and balance of uses. Considerable importance is given to the reintroduction of a variety of housing types in the downtown area. If this mix can be achieved, Mobile will have the twenty-four hour environment that is critical to the success and image of any downtown.

While our purpose is not to rewrite the zoning ordinance or to redraw the zoning map, we have tried to set forth principles which need to be pursued by the Planning Department in order to effectively implement the development plan. A few areas in the development plan need to be addressed in this way.

The reintroduction of residential uses downtown is crucial to the success of this plan. As stated before, downtown needs a resident population which will be able to animate and enliven the downtown area well past business hours. In order to attract residents to the downtown area, new residential development must be of high quality and competitive price, amenities (parks, playgrounds, streetscape, etc.) and services must be available, and a positive image of the downtown area as a safe, lively place must be projected.

Redevelopment along the Mobile River is another essential component of the development plan. The creation of a high-quality public environment and the establishment of waterfront attractions and activity (such as the Maritime Museum) will attract Mobilians and visitors alike to the riverfront and downtown area.

The reinforcement and expansion of the existing business district is another key element of the plan. As seen on the General Land Use map, the office core today is a small and fairly compact area. The plan calls for the expansion of this district to the north, using Royal Street as the main spine and Water Street as a major address, and mixing retail uses within the area. A higher density should be encouraged for the area, with specific building setbacks and height limitations established to provide a quality setting for

pedestrians and maintain a scale and visual appearance appropriate for downtown. A 15-20 foot building setback and a 12 story height limit is suggested, with a 45 foot minimum setback along Water Street. Continuous building frontage is crucial along streets in this area, and the City should have a firm policy addressing this issue, as well as requiring animation of ground floor space on office and parking structures by introducing retail and service uses. On-site or immediately adjacent parking should be provided for all new development.

Two other areas worth addressing here are Dauphin Street and Government Street. Both are remnants of what is traditionally seen in American cities: the Main Street (Dauphin) and Civic Street (Government). The establishment of the Cathedral Square Arts District, which takes up five of the central blocks along Dauphin Street, is an important step towards realizing the revitalization of this important street. Many opportunities for infill development currently exist along Dauphin Street. This new development must maintain a continuous street facade along Dauphin Street and also respect the existing historic architecture of the street. Streetscape improvements are another key component of this revitalization. These must be handled with a great amount of specificity to Dauphin Street's environment, an environment which is created mainly by excellent architecture rather than trees and landscaping.

Government Street still has remnants of its past glory, but for the most part its important role for providing the City's civic image has deteriorated. Many incompatible uses, such as fast food restaurants and auto service centers, have contributed to the erosion of this street's image. When opportunities arise, the City must move quickly to acquire key properties and to work with property owners in eliminating signs, excessive pavement and inappropriate landscaping. Building setbacks of 45-60 feet should be enforced along Government Street, and where possible, civic and institutional uses (i.e., Mobile Public Library) should be encouraged to locate along the street. Additionally, all development, both old and new, should be encouraged to plant live oaks along Government Street in order to provide the beautiful canopy that is still seen on some portions of the street.

4. *Downtown Development Plan and Program*

The Downtown Mobile Development Plan and Program provides a framework for development decisions to be made over the next several decades. The plan, as illustrated in the Development Plan map and diagram (Exhibits 3 and 6), presents both proposed public improvements and private development opportunities, to build upon and reinforce existing uses.

The plan is divided into general areas or districts according to geography and purpose:

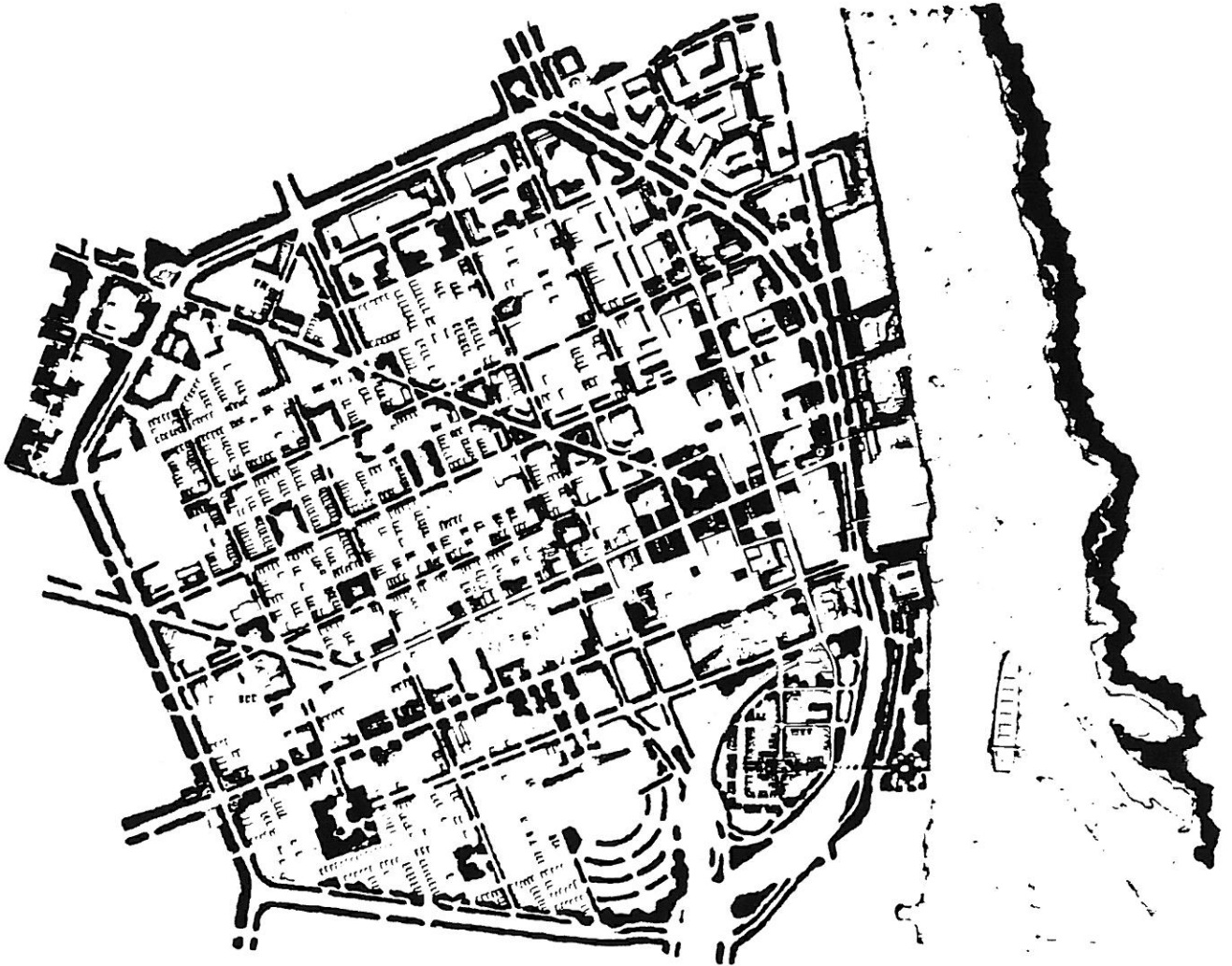
- Riverfront District
- Retail/Arts Districts
- Commercial District
- MLK Avenue Corridor
- Residential Districts
- Government Street Civic Corridor.

Each of these general areas has enormous potential, both individually to define its own distinct character, and collectively to achieve a vitality and diversity that is essential to the urban experience.

4.1 Riverfront District

The riverfront district (Exhibit 4), consisting of the area between Water Street and the river and bounded on the south by Eslava Street and on the north by Beauregard Street, constitutes downtown Mobile's most exciting development opportunity. Nothing less than the highest quality of development should be accepted along its frontage. The placement of the convention center already highlights the commitment and importance of this investment. The city should continue to apply such conviction to take control of the riverfront as land becomes available, by buying or leasing land from the Alabama State Docks or major property owner CSX Railroad. In this manner, Mobile can advance the momentum stimulated by the convention center, and realize the great potential of its riverfront.

Exhibit 3



DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Downtown Development Plan
LDR International, Inc.

Mobile, Alabama
October, 1991

The Development Plan, as shown in Exhibits 4 and 6, illustrates a bold riverfront concept combining public attractions and private development opportunities in an elegant, accessible setting. A continuous riverfront promenade will visually and functionally unite the diverse uses.

The keystone to the riverfront will be the \$52 million, 317,000 square foot **Convention Center** which is currently under construction. The center, geared to a national marketplace, is already booked for a number of conventions for its scheduled opening in April 1993. It will be integrated into the downtown through skywalks connecting to Riverview Plaza and to a new hotel that will front Water Street.

A successful convention center will double its size every 10 years. Therefore, the **Convention Center Expansion** of 50,000 square feet is already planned, for a total 150,000 square feet of exhibit space. It will be important, architecturally, that the expansion design is compatible with the existing center, and that an inviting edge is created for the north side of the center, and eventually its expansion, which overlooks the riverfront plaza. Prior to the construction of this expansion, however, this site should be utilized as an interim park, as illustrated in Exhibit 5. Creating simple but useful "people places" along the riverfront is very important in acclimating Mobilians and visitors to a quality riverfront environment.

The **Iberville Harbour** should be an active, open place of pubs, shops, entertainment, concerts, and activity which will be enhanced by the riverfront setting and the attractive glass facade of the convention center. Additional activity in the area will be generated by a public harbour, which will accommodate paddleboats and historic ship exhibits, as well as large and small visiting boats that dock along the river.

Integrated into the riverfront plaza and slipway will be the **Mobile Maritime Museum**. The museum will house a permanent display of Mobile's rich maritime history, with related hands-on exhibits located on the water. Architecturally, the maritime museum has the potential to create an exciting and memorable image along the riverfront which will bear testimony to its status as a world-class facility.

A prime development opportunity exists on the south side of the Convention Center. By virtue of its high visibility and relation to the convention center and the downtown, the site is envisioned for a **Riverfront Hotel**, possibly with a mix of other uses as well. The presence of CSX railroad tracks on the site poses difficulties in design and access. This challenge is addressed by elevating the hotel above the tracks, providing underground parking, and fronting shops and restaurants along the riverfront promenade.

Exhibit 4



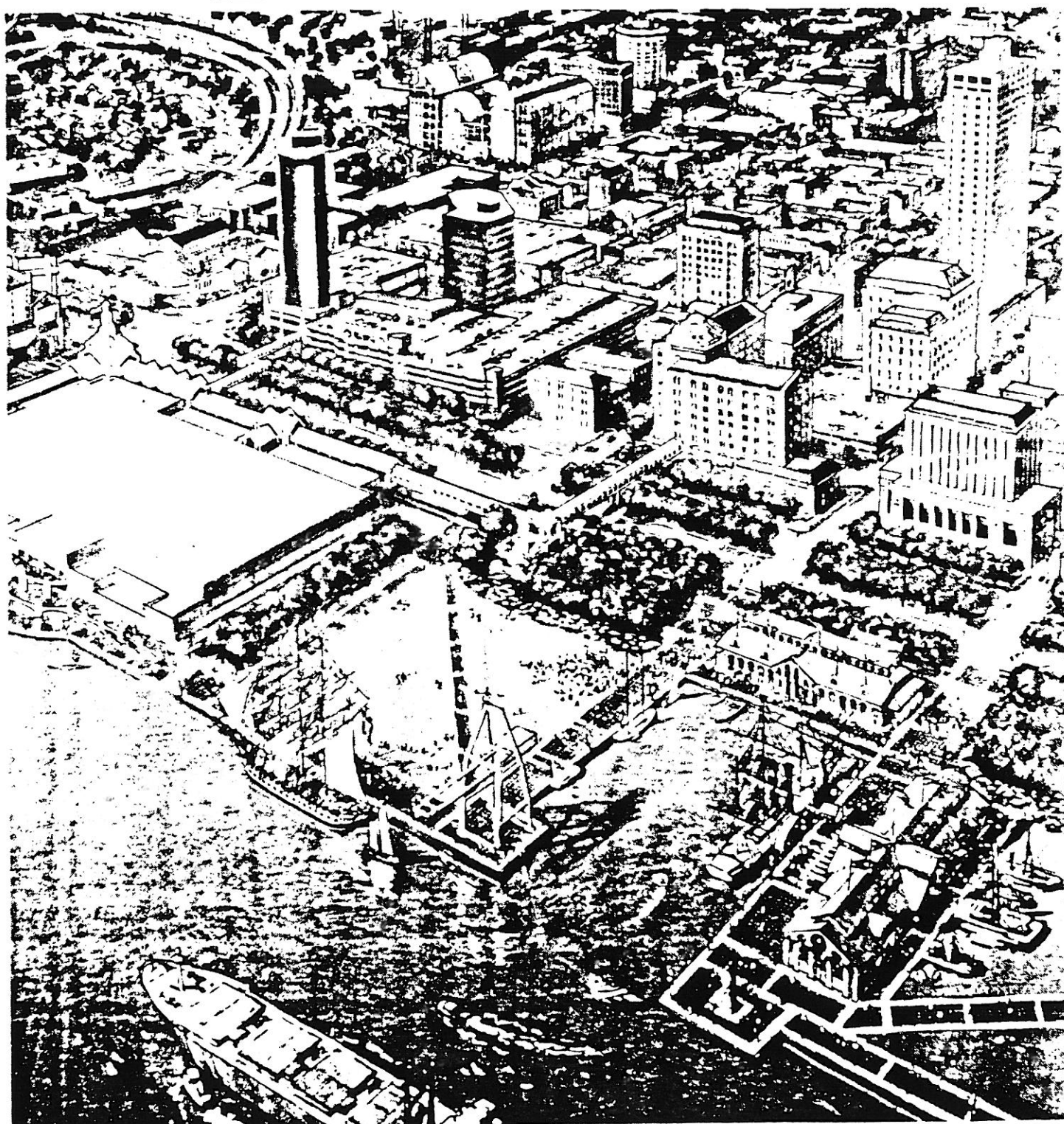
RIVERFRONT DISTRICT

Downtown Development Plan
LDR International, Inc.

Mobile, Alabama
October, 1991



Exhibit 5

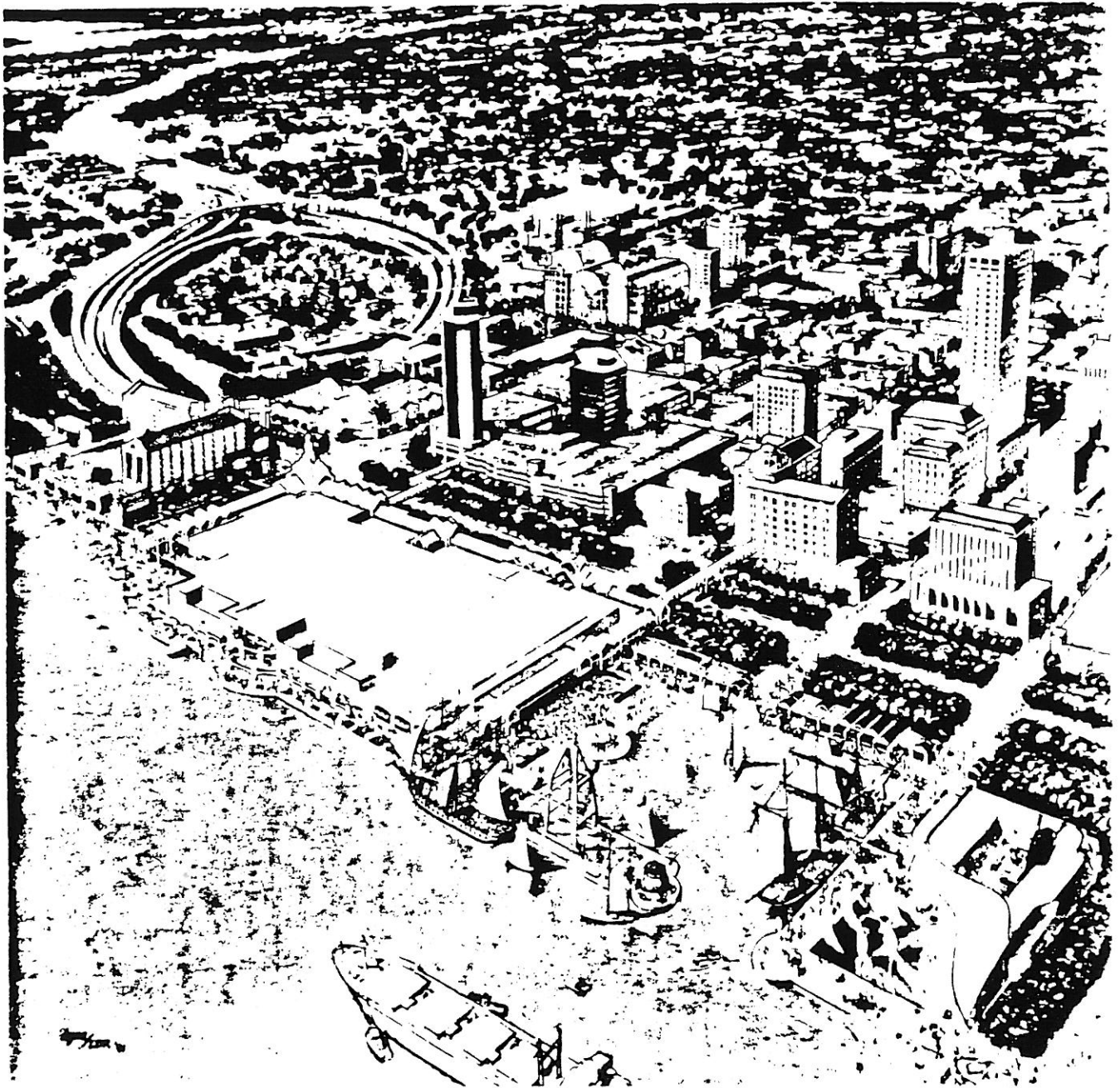


RIVERFRONT DISTRICT - PHASE I

Downtown Development Plan
LDR International, Inc.

Mobile, Alabama
October, 1991

Exhibit 6



RIVERFRONT DISTRICT

Downtown Development Plan
LDR International, Inc.

Mobile, Alabama
October, 1991

The riverfront parks, in addition to providing open space, are important to balance the large mass of the convention center. **Riverfront Park South** eases the transition from Fort Condè Village towards the river, inviting pedestrians into the riverfront promenade. The large **Riverfront Park North** will accommodate large-scale festivals and outdoor concerts, with the potential to establish city traditions such as evening concert series or holiday fireworks over the river. The park's landscaping and lighting will create an attractive edge for prestigious Water Street, so that businesses located on this major image street will enjoy expansive river views over green open space.

The site above the north park is illustrated in the development plan as a **Riverfront Residential Development**. This would take the form of mid-rise, stacked condominium flats, facing onto the landscaped promenade along the river and overlooking Mobile Bay. The housing would be attractive to professionals who work across Water Street in the business district or elsewhere downtown.

One of the most important projects for the riverfront and the downtown will be a **Hotel/Mixed Use Development**, targeted for the site on Water Street between St. Francis and Dauphin Streets. The complex will contain a 300 to 400-room quality hotel, with direct access to the convention center, 120,000-160,000 square feet of Class A office space, and an 850 space parking garage. An option being considered for the site would be to develop a total of 365,000 sf of office space in order to house the Army Corps of Engineers local and regional offices. Its development should be undertaken soon in order to coordinate with the opening of the convention center. The new building design can distinguish itself architecturally by incorporating some of the preserved features of the historic Battle House hotel, if such a preservation effort proves economically viable.

The relocation of city and county offices to a new city/county complex opens the **Old City Hall Block** for potential reuse. The building could be easily converted to house an arts museum and restaurant. Upon relocation of the City Police Department, it is recommended that a new development, described below, be sited on the same block just north of City Hall. It should have a maximum height of five stories to preserve the scale of the City Hall building.

An existing development opportunity is taking shape on the old City Hall Block, with its potential reuse as the **Exploreum/Omnimax/Planetarium**. Mobile's existing Exploreum wants to establish a new downtown presence at this prime location, including a science museum, an Omnimax theater, and planetarium shows. In addition, the complex can be utilized for non-

museum evening functions or film festivals. This science center has great potential to enliven the downtown as it becomes a major draw.

Tucked into the I-10 interchange in a rather isolated location is **Fort Condè Village**. Reconfiguration of the interchange will create additional acreage and allow for better internal circulation and increased access to downtown and the riverfront. This improvement will open up the area as a destination for visitors and pedestrians of the riverfront promenade. Building upon the area's charming architecture and lively village atmosphere, it is envisioned as a mix of entertainment, restaurants, specialty retail shops, and bed and breakfast-style hotels, all centered around a new park, Fort Condè Square, which is shown in Exhibit 7.

The area bordered by Water, Congress, and Beauregard Streets and the CSX railroad tracks on the east is designated the **State Docks Commercial District**. Currently the area is rundown, with vacant or deteriorated warehouses. The district is a likely location for the development of in-town high tech and flex space uses which would be compatible with and support the high class office space located in the Royal Street office core. This site also provides an opportunity for office and flex space which will support ongoing State Docks operations. Sites that front on Water Street should be reserved for office-oriented uses so that the boulevard carries a continuous architectural presence. Parking and loading docks will be located in the rear.

The **GM and O Railroad Terminal** is a substantial, attractively detailed old railroad terminal whose current vacant status is considered temporary. In the interim, the City should encourage the private owner of this building to undertake basic maintenance and upkeep of the structure to preserve it for future use.

4.2 Retail/Arts Districts

The heart of Mobile is historic **Bienville Square**. It also forms the center of the city's retail district which is oriented along Dauphin Street and around the square. Currently, gaps in the area detract from the retailing activity. These vacant spaces need to be infilled with new retail uses, with an emphasis on establishing ground floor activity so as to maintain a continuous retail presence around the square. Dauphin Street can be strengthened further by preserving historically significant architecture and restoring facades.

Exhibit 7



FORT CONDE VILLAGE

Downtown Development Plan
LDR International, Inc.

Mobile, Alabama
October, 1991

Improving the Infrastructure of Bienville Square will preserve this important amenity and ensure its place as a focal area for the heart of downtown. Bienville Square becomes the leading element in creating a new "City of Parks" image and program for Mobile. This will help to attract pedestrians and support and encourage the revitalization of the retail and arts districts. Special attention should be given to the square's aged oak trees.

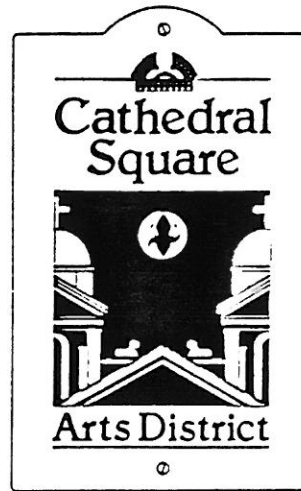
The former Kress Department Store and Van Antwerp buildings, located between Dauphin, Royal, Conti and St. Emanuel Streets, are currently proposed to be renovated in order to create **Royal Street Alley**. This is envisioned as an urban retail center incorporated into the two buildings at ground level with indoor "streets", restaurants and shops. It can draw visitors touring around Bienville Square and office workers from Royal Street.

The **German Relief Hall Block** is a prime location and presents an excellent mixed use development opportunity. Hopefully, this distinctive hall can be saved and renovated for use as part of a corporate headquarters office building with street level restaurants and retail.

The area surrounding the Saenger Theater and Cathedral Square holds a budding arts community, which extends along both sides of Dauphin Street. Its continued emergence is encouraged through the designation of the **Cathedral Square Arts District**, where these uses could be concentrated more to strengthen their identity. New development should infill the district's blank spots, taking on the scale and character of existing buildings on Dauphin Street. Arts-oriented activity should be encouraged to locate here, into ground level galleries and arts supply shops, and upper story loft studios. In addition, a new logo has been designed for the district to help give identity to the area. This logo is shown in Exhibit 8.

The **Renovation of Cathedral Square**, as depicted in Exhibit 8, consists of redesigning the square with a graceful palette of lawn panels, trees, and quality paving to become a more prominent public space and to create a grand setting for the Cathedral and adjacent arts, antique and specialized home renovation retail uses. In addition, there should be new lighting to ensure safety in the square; dramatic spotlighting of the Cathedral would enliven the square in the evening.

Exhibit 8



CATHEDRAL SQUARE ARTS DISTRICT

Downtown Development Plan
LDR International, Inc.

Mobile, Alabama
October, 1991

4.3 Commercial Districts

Downtown's commercial development and urban design opportunities hold great potential for creating a dynamic variety of commercial uses, ranging from premier business addresses to supportive back office and flex space uses. Together, these uses will form a strong and distinct commercial edge to downtown's north and east sides.

A major upgrading of **Water Street** is proposed, between Beauregard and Church Streets, to prevent its becoming a major constraint between the riverfront and downtown. Instead, the city can take control of Water Street and create a wide, green boulevard that is comfortable to cross, thus linking the riverfront and downtown. Water Street has the potential to become downtown's most important image street, enhancing the riverfront with a grand boulevard and affording sweeping river views to Royal Street office buildings. This positive result can be achieved even while maintaining the existing road width, by regulating 45 foot setbacks from the curb line, increasing signalization, setting pedestrian crosswalks, and creating wide islands planted with trees.

The **Royal Street Commercial District** forms the urban spine of the downtown office core, with the majority of the city's office development and Class A office buildings lining the street. These uses are proposed to be continued and enhanced for further establishment of Royal Street as the place of business and commerce. Every vacant site is viewed as a development opportunity site, and Mobile-based companies should be encouraged to locate here.

A continuation of the commercial edge along the Henry Aaron Loop is proposed in the **North DeTonti Square Commercial District**, located between Conception, Lawrence, Adams and Beauregard Streets. This area is considered an optimal development opportunity site for up to 500,000 square feet of office space, with good relationship and access to the other commercial districts. Development facing Adams Street should be no more than three stories, respecting the scale and character of the adjacent DeTonti Square Historic District. This area's development has been hindered by an option on the property dating from the early 1980's which was never exercised. The City should aggressively market the area to potential developers as soon as it has legally terminated the cloud of the option.

One use currently being considered for the **North DeTonti Square** site is 365,000 sf of Army Corps of Engineers office space, as well as warehouse and staging to support this. The Army Corps project could be developed entirely on this site or, as mentioned earlier in the report, the office space could be developed on the Battle House block with the warehouse and staging areas remaining in North DeTonti Square.

4.4 The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Corridor

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue (MLK) forms an important link between downtown and the MLK community and should be transformed into an image street. The **MLK Avenue Extension** is proposed to extend the street from its current terminus at St. Anthony Street into the heart of downtown to Bienville Square. The city can accomplish this by taking control of the required properties over time. Care must be taken in extending the Avenue through to Bienville Square in order for traffic to be "calmed" and rerouted before getting to the square. As proposed, the plan calls for traffic to be routed along St. Michael and Joachim Streets one block short of Bienville Square, while preserving an open view corridor down MLK Avenue into Bienville Square.

The diagonal cut of MLK Avenue across the street grid creates interesting parcels with elongated fronts. These present opportunities for **MLK Residential** sites and for parks, contributing to an image of a quality residential neighborhood. In addition, the introduction of housing here will strengthen the existing residential base in downtown and create a strong southern edge for the DeTonti Square area.

The intersection of Broad Street and MLK Avenue can be graced by a **Gateway Park** to create a transition statement entrance between the MLK community and downtown. The park will feature consistent, quality landscaping, park furniture, and signage.

The **MLK Community Plan** presents a framework for the revitalization of the business and residential community located around MLK Avenue beyond the Gateway Park. The goal of the plan is to create a setting, and increase the potential, for economic redevelopment of the community, so that it may become an integral part of the downtown. The plan is summarized in a separate Appendix document.

An important element of the MLK Community plan is the **Bishop State Community College Campus**. As shown on the master plan, the siting of new buildings and parking as well as the introduction of new green space to the campus helps to achieve a cohesive design for the college. The excitement of the new campus setting would be further stimulated by an entertainment center destined for the adjacent Lincoln Theater. Upgrading the campus will provide an important edge to the downtown area, and a thorough master plan for Bishop State is recommended.

4.5 Residential Districts

A focus of revitalization efforts in the downtown should be on strengthening residential neighborhoods. The overall concept of the development plan is to create a ring of residential around the downtown, from DeTonti Square to the East Church Street District.

As stated earlier, the importance of establishing a strong residential presence downtown cannot be underestimated. A full-time downtown population, combined with the services and amenities to support it, will help energize the core area and convert it into a lively, round-the-clock environment.

Obviously, the introduction of residential uses into downtown is of vital importance to the future viability of the downtown. Residential development, particularly for middle-income families and professionals, in the downtown core should be a publicly stated "city" policy backed by public willingness to invest in such projects and the tenacity to see that these projects are accomplished.

A first step will be to encourage the removal of auto-oriented uses, blighted buildings and vacant lots from transitional areas in the middle of downtown. These marginal commercial/residential areas should be transformed with **Infill Residential** to create continuous and occupied streets. New development will comprise single family, detached dwellings of a scale and character similar to the DeTonti Square and East Church Street districts. A range of housing options should be offered, from high end to affordable units, to accommodate different income levels.

Neighborhood Parks are encouraged to complement the burgeoning residential districts. These can be located on sites of vacant or blighted buildings that have been removed. Priority should be given to creating parks that are located near development opportunity sites, so that the park investment can be a catalyst to jumpstart other improvements.

Similarly, in the creation of a hierarchy of **Neighborhood Streets**, the streets that link the parks should be enhanced first. They function as primary image creators for a neighborhood, and other improvements will follow this highly visible commitment.

A key element in expanding the downtown's residential base entails re-establishing residential uses in **DeTonti Square**. This area has seen the transformation of many of its beautiful, historic houses into non-residential uses. A greater residential presence should be encouraged in DeTonti Square, and new professional offices and commercial uses seeking to locate in the area should be directed to the new DeTonti Square Commercial District.

The strong **Church Street East** neighborhood has missing spaces and vacant lots among its housing stock which need to be filled in with new residential development. Many of the historic district's houses are renovated shotgun units; new development should be consistent in scale and character in order to preserve the flavor and architectural continuity of the district.

4.6 Government Street Civic Corridor

Downtown Mobile is the established location for a variety of city and county government functions, as well as institutional uses. The Civic Corridor concept is proposed as a means of strengthening the image of downtown as the seat of government and civic-oriented uses, and identifying new opportunities to enrich the district.

Government Street is recommended for upgrading as an image street, to restore its dignity and status as the center of civic life in the city. A critical part of this effort will be to encourage the removal of inappropriate uses such as fast food restaurants and service stations. As these uses relocate from Government Street, they should be replaced with institutional and civic-oriented uses. In addition, the beautiful oak trees that line the street should be protected, and dying trees replaced, in order to preserve the corridor's grand image.

The presence of the **Mobile Public Library** downtown should be maintained, even as it seeks to expand its facilities. There are expansion possibilities across Washington Avenue to the East, where the new facility will be in close proximity to the distinctive library building.

The intersection of Government and Broad Streets is important as one of the main entry points into the city. As such, it is appropriate to create a **Government Street Gateway** at this juncture, as the opportunity arises. The gateway consists of quality landscaping and paving.

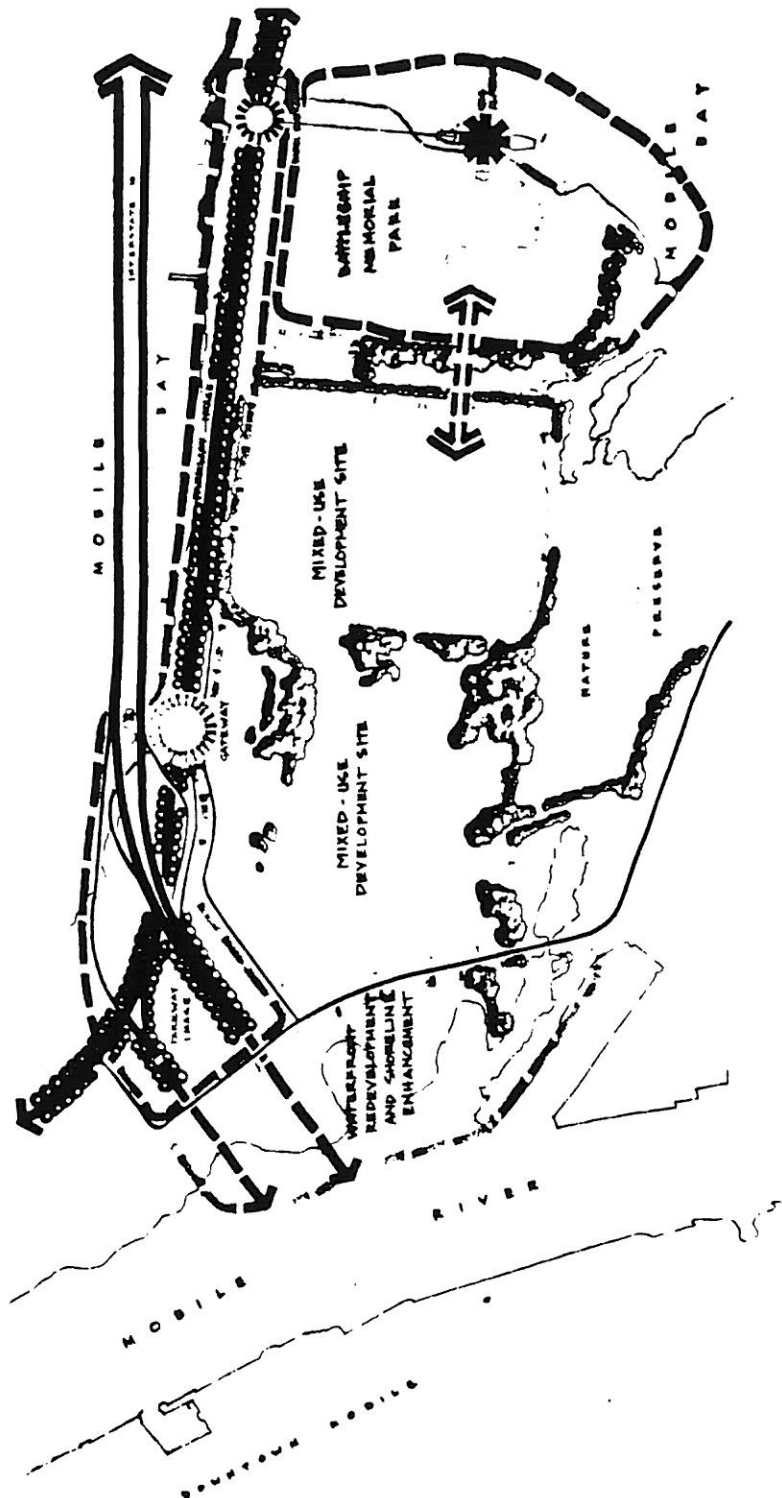
A new **City/County Government Center**, scheduled to begin construction in January of 1992, will represent an exciting and architecturally innovative addition to the Civic Corridor. The 550,000 square foot complex includes two buildings connected by a covered atrium to create an urban plaza, and is served by a new 550 space parking structure directly to the west. The design mixes traditional elements of civic architecture with new structural expression representative of Mobile's port, ships, and industry. This significant commitment is very encouraging for revitalization efforts along the Civic Corridor.

4.7 Battleship Park/Causeway

Within a five-minute drive of Downtown Mobile lies **Battleship Memorial Park**, the home of the U.S.S. Alabama. The park is located east of downtown (on the other side of the Mobile River) and has access from both Interstate 10 and Battleship Parkway (U.S. 90). Planning efforts took in not only the park and parkway, but also a large portion of land which lies between the eastern banks of the Mobile River and Battleship Park itself. This 16 acre opportunity site requires more detailed environmental and market analyses before more detailed plans are prepared.

As illustrated on Exhibit 9, this large opportunity site can be divided into three main development areas: Battleship Memorial Park on the east, the Mobile Riverfront on the west, and stretching between the two would be a potential mixed-use development site. Each of these three areas deserve special consideration for their own unique development issues and constraints.

Exhibit 9



BATTLESHIP PARK/CAUSEWAY

Downtown Development Plan
LDR International, Inc.

Mobile, Alabama
October, 1991

Battleship Memorial Park is the second largest visitor attraction in the State of Alabama, and as such it needs to recognize its own potential for growth and expansion of plans to add the U.S.S. Lexington or another large ship to the park are approved, this will add to an already impressive collection of U.S. planes and warships.

A study prepared for the park in September of 1990 by a group at Auburn University gave good direction to the park's expansion process, and many elements of this plan need to be picked up and implemented. There are, however, certain elements which need to be addressed now that it appears the aircraft carrier Lexington may become part of the park. The most important of these issues is the siting of the new ship, and with this the relocation of other activities displaced by the carrier (i.e., the location for the proposed marina).

Along the Mobile River, there is great potential in redeveloping and enhancing the waterfront. This area is especially important because of its relation to downtown Mobile. There is a need to enhance the eastern bank of the Mobile River in order to provide a pleasing backdrop to waterfront activities occurring downtown. This enhancement, which could initially consist merely of planting trees and removing unsightly structures, will add to the draw of the Battleship Park area and help to invite downtown's visitors to explore the opposite side of the river. Ultimately, this area may become a new mixed-use development replacing the lower-end and industrial uses as the land becomes more valuable.

Lying between the riverfront and Battleship Park is a large parcel of land which has potential as a mixed-use development site. The key to the success of any development which occurs here will be the creation of linkages between this site, the riverfront, and Battleship Park. By treating this whole eastern riverbank as one distinct area, there becomes great potential in creating a new Mobile destination.

Common among all three of these areas is the issue of access. The primary means of access to the area is along Battleship Parkway (U.S. 90), and this parkway becomes the first image maker for the Battleship Park area. As it exists, the parkway consists of a jumble of buildings scattered along the length of the parkway, and no attention is paid to landscape maintenance. The plan proposes to improve the image of the parkway by cleaning-up or removing unsightly buildings and installing landscape improvements along the causeway. These landscape improvements should be very simple in their scope -- the long views over the bay and towards the battleship need to be reinforced by simple, low plantings which preserve and enhance these views. Additionally, there are two areas which require a little more

consideration. One of these is the new entrance for Battleship Park as shown in the Auburn plan. The other is the creation of a gateway between downtown and the parkway, which will serve to terminate the parkway at its western end and provide an entrance for people arriving into downtown through the tunnel.

The final element of this plan would be the preservation and creation of a nature preserve to the south of the development areas. This preserve surrounds Pinto Pass, which used to be the main channel of the Mobile River, and provides a great opportunity for Mobilians and visitors to experience a natural bay habitat only minutes from the downtown. Additionally, this preserve provides the means for the creation of a great amenity for development to front onto as well as being a natural transition between the Battleship Park area and industrial and port related activities to the south.

4.8 Streetscape, Traffic and Parking Improvements

In order to stimulate downtown investment, certain public improvements must be made to create a positive setting for development. **Streetscape improvements** in the downtown area are part of this process, and a consistent, quality design is key to creating a good street environment. This plan suggests phasing the streetscape program in small, manageable sections, picking up on elements and recommendations made by WRT's streetscape plan. The first three phases would be as follows:

- Phase I - Dauphin Street between Royal and St. Emanuel Streets (demonstration project).
- Phase II - Dauphin Street between Water and Royal Streets.
- Phase III - Royal Street between Dauphin and Government Streets, Government Street between Royal and Water Streets.

In addition, as new development occurs within the downtown area, the City must require that streetscape improvements made in conjunction with the development be wholly consistent with the City's streetscape program.

The **Henry Aaron Loop** functions as a ring road for the downtown, tracing the general boundaries of the study area--Canal, Broad, Beauregard, and Water Streets. It should be seen as an urban boulevard embracing the downtown, and should receive special landscape and lighting treatment. The upgrading should be consistent in all sections of the loop, so that the entire thoroughfare is opened up as a broad, green boulevard that establishes a definitive edge to downtown.

One of the State's major transportation improvement projects is the construction of the **I-165 spur**. This elevated roadway will come down to grade at Manassas Street, and care must be taken to provide a quality boulevard landscape treatment to ease the transition into Water Street and downtown.

Another transportation improvement project involves the expansion of the **I-10 Tunnel Interchange**. This endeavor will increase the turning radius of the interchange ramps and improve vehicle safety. As a consequence, the reconfiguration also will expand the land area of Fort Condé Village by approximately 8 acres, creating additional opportunities in that special district.

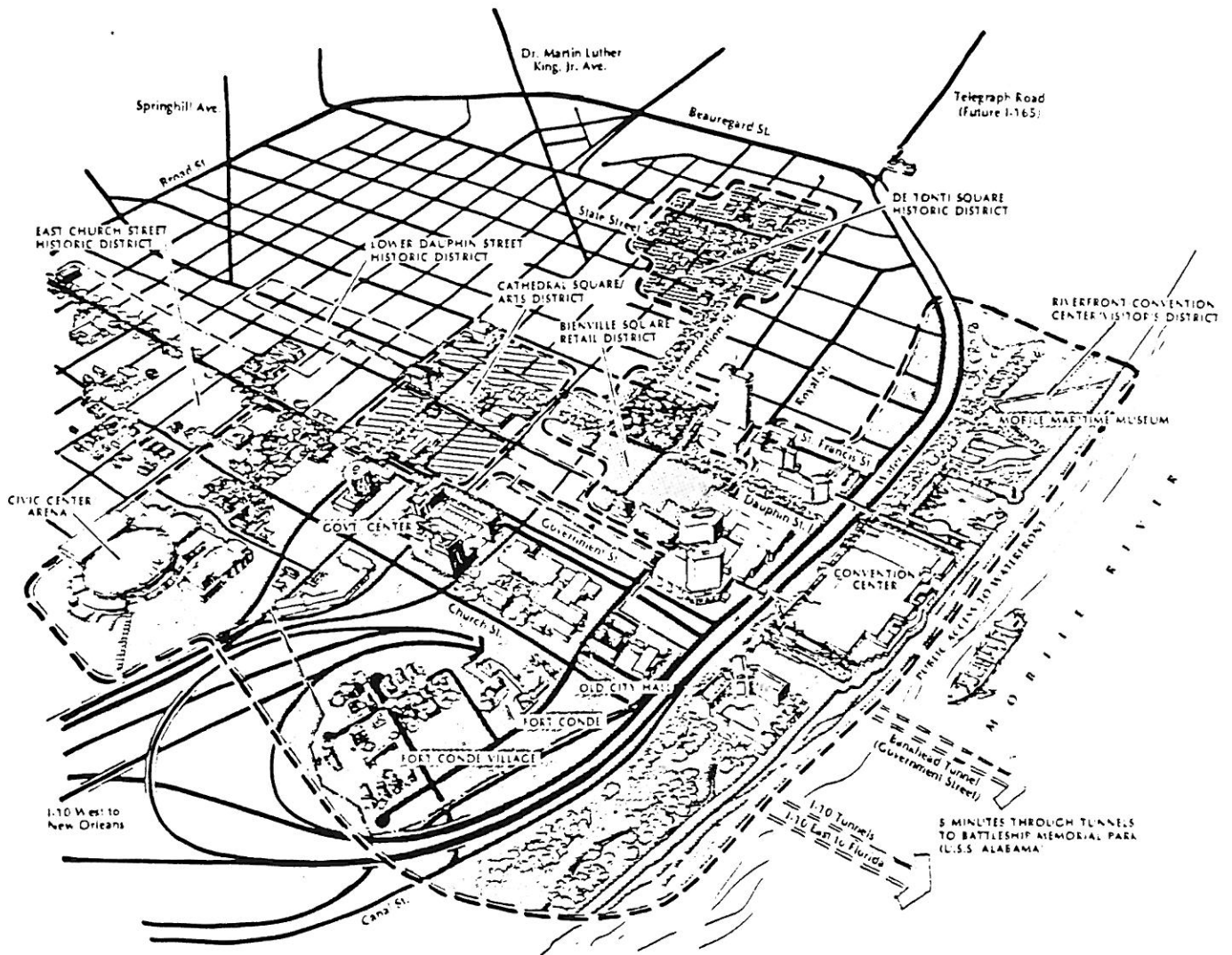
An important element of the downtown development plan is the phased development of new surface and structured **parking facilities** as development occurs. Major parking resources amounting to approximately 9,500 new parking spaces are designated on the plan (Exhibit 3) by "P".

4.9 The Visitor's Domain

The Downtown Development Plan presents a vision of a revitalized downtown Mobile, and a guiding framework of strategies and recommendations to achieve that goal. The individual elements of the plan are designed to work together to promote diversity and concentration of uses, to create an appealing pedestrian environment, to develop a distinctive image and identity for downtown, and to strengthen the residential function.

It is notable that this revitalization effort in itself produces an important concept for downtown, "The Visitor's Domain", as shown in Exhibit 10. A view over the city reveals a rich variety of attractions throughout the downtown, creating an environment that is inviting to visitors.

Exhibit 10



"THE VISITOR'S DOMAIN"

Downtown Development Plan
LDR International, Inc.

Mobile, Alabama
October, 1991

5. Action Program for Implementation

The Mobile Development Plan and Program provides both the vision and specific planning required to bring about major change in the downtown/riverfront area. The planning process over the past year has developed a great deal of enthusiasm, optimism and commitment to make things happen in this area. Already, as a result of construction beginning on the Mobile Convention Center and the new parking garage for the City/County government center, a number of private initiatives are being considered in the downtown area. New interest in hotel development, shops, restaurants and pubs are a part of the beginning of implementation of the plan. Maintenance of this momentum calls for coordinated and aggressive action by the public and private sectors, and a clear ordering of priorities to maximize the impact of scarce human and financial resources. To sustain this momentum, a specific implementation strategy and action plan is proposed.

5.1 Organizing for Action — Downtown Management

In June 1990 the Mobile Downtown Redevelopment Commission was created by the Mayor and City Council to provide guidance, direction and leadership for the downtown revitalization process. The DRC board brings an important private sector component to the revitalization process and forges the much needed public/private partnership required for successful implementation. Having a single organization responsible for downtown revitalization focuses City professional and financial resources so that they will have the greatest impact as specific actions are taken. The role of the Downtown Redevelopment Commission (DRC) is important for several compelling reasons. These include:

- *Focus of energy and resources* — a number of individual departments, agencies, and organizations have a stake in downtown Mobile. None has a specific mandate to deal with the future of downtown alone. Creation of the Mobile DRC has provided a single-purpose, highly focused organization with one mission — the revitalization of the downtown. No other single organization can possibly operate as effectively as the DRC — they all have other important interests and commitments.

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- *Flexibility* — a distinct advantage of the DRC with its active private sector board participation is its flexibility to take on economic and political risks that a prudent development or purely government agency cannot. Accepting greater risk can influence a project outcome, by facilitating intergovernmental communication, smoothing the permitting processes and seeing that the City is able to respond in an entrepreneurial fashion.

5.2 Cost Estimates

Mobile's development plan and program is both bold and pragmatic. It provides specific recommendations for a limited number of projects, both public and private, that have a high probability of implementation. The estimated cost, which excludes the \$243 million earmarked for the Interstate 165 and Interstate 10 projects, is approximately \$181.3 million. Based on the estimated project costs summarized in the Downtown Development Program matrix at the end of this section, these costs are allocated as follows:

	Millions 1991 Dollars
<i>Public Sector Projects</i> (excluding major highway projects)	\$ 125.1 - \$ 128.6
<i>Private Sector Projects</i>	\$ 55.8 - \$ 69.0
<i>Total</i>	\$ 180.9 - \$ 197.6

The above figures give an approximate ratio of 69 percent to 31 percent public to private dollars invested in the downtown program. However, when the two major committed public projects are excluded (the Convention Center and City/County Government Center total \$97 million), the ratio turns to 34 percent public and 66 percent private. This ratio is quite positive, especially when it is compared to other cities of similar size (a 50/50 ratio is considered good).

5.3 Funding Strategy

Downtown Mobile has been the focus of attention by public and private leaders for the past year during the planning process that has brought about Mobile's downtown development plan and program. In addition, there has been a substantial amount of new development activity and there appears to be more interest than ever before in bringing about new major development projects in downtown Mobile. An overriding theme in the downtown revitalization process has been to recognize that downtown revitalization is economic development that benefits the entire city and county area.

The funding strategy is predicated on the fact that public and private investments in the downtown will strengthen the tax base, create jobs and stimulate other economic development activities in the area. The downtown development program matrix listing of project costs and priorities provides the basis for a capital improvement program for the downtown area that clearly identifies funding requirements over time so that public officials can make prudent decisions about where to invest scarce public funds. The City has effectively used general obligation and revenue bonds, along with a wide variety of Federal funding sources. While Federal funds have been in short supply in recent years, some funding continues to be provided. Specific mechanisms that may be utilized in the future include:

- **Section 108 Loan Guarantee program** could provide assistance in financing land acquisition and installation of public infrastructure. This new program is seen as a successor to the UDAG program, currently being closed out.
- **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)** have provided funding for housing and public infrastructure in downtown in the past and could be used for public street and park improvements in the future. Because of the success of this program and the continued dramatic needs of America's cities, it is anticipated that the CDBG, or its successor, may be resurrected later in this administration or in a future administration.
- **Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRB)** can be used to provide low interest rate funding for projects ranging up to \$10 million. Interest covering up to 100 percent of the project loan is provided at 65-70 percent below the prime interest rate.

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- ***Tax Increment Financing (TIF)*** is a procedure whereby a municipality will issue bonds to provide infrastructure for private development projects. The incremental increase in tax revenues from the higher property base resulting from private development is pledged to the payment of municipal bonds. TIF is permitted under Alabama law and provides a highly realistic approach to the funding of necessary capital improvements in Downtown Mobile.
 - ***City Bonds (General Obligation or Revenue)*** can be issued for specific projects or to fund activities in a special district.
 - ***Tax Incentives and Abatement Programs*** often assist in the development of rehabilitation projects. In an abatement program, property taxes can be reduced or eliminated for a number of years, followed by gradual increases in taxes until a certain period, say 20 years. Such programs are locally mandated.
 - ***Development Linkage Fees*** can be linked from new downtown projects to impoverished areas, to fund residential development or economic redevelopment efforts there. This linkage approach was pioneered in Boston, and has been successfully used in other cities.
 - ***Downtown Community Mortgage Pool*** could be created by the City and participating Mobile banks interested in financial spin-offs associated with a revitalized community. A number of such pools have been formed in other communities, often in cooperation with the City government or Redevelopment Authority (Mobile Housing Board). Such a pool could provide construction or permanent loans for smaller commercial or residential projects, as well as for facade improvements and renovation of existing properties.
 - ***Special Grants and Appropriations*** from State and Federal agencies, the Board of County Commissioners, the business community, and private foundations, should be sought for special projects. In order to secure such funds, the City's leadership must creatively assert its political influence. This technique is used routinely by cities like Mobile that lack local resources for the planning and funding of major capital investments.
 - ***Other Mechanisms*** might include SBA 504 Loans, special assessment districts and private subscriptions for a local development fund.

5.4 Action Plan

The Downtown Development Plan and Program Matrix which accompanies this section provides a detailed listing of the priorities for all projects in the plan. In addition, the matrix provides a concise overview of each of the major elements, with map location, project description, actions required, potential sponsors and funding sources, estimated costs and development schedule. Map keys for the matrix are given in Exhibit 11. Priority I Projects are those requiring immediate attention by all participants in the Downtown revitalization process. The Mobile downtown action plan that follows provides the immediate and long-term steps that can be taken to bring about implementation in a logical and productive fashion. These essential actions include:

- The Mayor and City Council and the Board of County Commissioners should accept the downtown development plan and program as the official policy guidance directive to be used in making decisions on all new downtown development and public investment.
- The Mayor and City Council should provide the Mobile Downtown Redevelopment Commission with sufficient staff and resources to effectively conduct the implementation program.
- A new private sector action arm of the Downtown Redevelopment Commission should be organized to actively participate in the plan implementation process. This arm will provide resources that cannot be made available through traditional City budgeting procedures, such as small business financing, loan pools for development, and certain real estate development transactions.
- A unified downtown development negotiation strategy should be organized through the Downtown Redevelopment Commission that openly involves both public and private sectors.
- Concentrate available professional and financial resources on selected high-visibility and high-impact Priority I Projects in downtown until they happen (Priority I projects are those projects which need to be initiated and completed before 1996).



DEVELOPMENT PLAN KEY MAP

Downtown Development Plan
LDR International, Inc.

Mobile, Alabama
October, 1991

Priority I Projects

Project No.	Project Description
1A Convention Center	Complete construction by early 1993.
1C <i>Interim Park</i>	Phase I — develop concept and construction plans immediately. Phase II — construction, to be completed same as convention center (Spring 1993).
1D <i>Iberville Harbour</i>	Develop joint plan for riverfront development with City and State docks.
1E <i>Mobile Maritime Museum</i>	Predevelopment feasibility study.
1G <i>Riverfront Park South</i>	Negotiate for and acquire riverfront property currently owned by CSX Railroad.
2 <i>Hotel/Mixed-Use Site</i>	Phase I — negotiate with and select developer for site. Phase II — development of project, completion to coincide with convention center opening.
3 <i>Old City Hall Block/ Exploreum/Omnimax</i>	Prepare strategy for reuse of City Hall and development of new location for Exploreum/Omnimax.
4 <i>Ft. Condé Village</i>	Complete developer negotiations, begin planning and development process.
5 <i>"City of Parks" Strategy</i>	Develop plans and strategies for development of park system linking downtown, historic and new parks.

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|----|---|---|
| 8 | <i>Water Street</i> | Phase I (underway) — develop construction documents for section of street at Convention Center.
Phase II — complete construction to coincide with opening of Convention Center. |
| 9 | <i>North DeTonti Square
Commercial District</i> | Develop guidelines to shape commercial development adjacent to historic district. |
| 11 | <i>MLK Gateway Parks</i> | Phase I — negotiate site acquisition with Gas Company immediately.
Phase II — develop concepts and construction plans for gateway park Winter 1992.
Phase III — construction of park - Fall 1992. |
| 12 | <i>Government Street
Corridor Strategy</i> | Provide guidelines for new development, program for streetscape revitalization, plans for key gateway parks. |
| 15 | <i>Downtown Streetscape
Improvements</i> | Phase I — develop construction documents for first three phases of streetscape construction.
Phase II — construction of first section of streetscape as demonstration - completion to coincide with that of Convention Center. |
| 16 | <i>Battleship Parkway,
Causeway and Gateway</i> | Develop plans and guidelines for entire causeway, include key gateway statements approaching downtown. |

Downtown Development Program, Mobile, Alabama

Map #	Project	Action	Sponsors/Funding	Priority I/II Estimated Costs	Schedule/Comments
1a	Convention Center	Phase I - Under Construction	City	Phase I - \$52 Million	N/A
1b	Expansion	Phase II	City	N/A	Priority 3
1c	Interim Park	I. Design and Construction Documents II. Construction	City	I. \$5,000 - 10,000 II. \$110,000 - \$125,000	Priority 1
1d	Iberville Harbour	I. Joint Planning Study II. Phased Acquisition III. Development	DRC/City and Alabama State Docks	I. \$25,000 + travel and expenses II. N/A III. N/A	Priority 1 Priority 2 Priority 3
1e	Mobile Maritime Museum	I. Feasibility Study II. Development	Private Interests City, County, DRC	I. \$90,000 II. N/A pending master plan study	Priority 1 Priority 2

Downtown Development Program, Mobile, Alabama

Map #	Project	Action	Sponsors/Funding	Priority I/II Estimated Costs	Schedule/Comments
1f	Riverfront Hotel	I. Land Acquisition II. Developer Solicitation III. Development	City, County Private Interests	I. N/A II. N/A III. N/A	Priority 2 Priority 2 Priority 3
1g	Riverfront Park - South (CSX)	I. Land Acquisition II. Development	CSX City	I. \$5-\$6 Million II. \$960,000 - \$1,200,000	Priority 1 Priority 2
1h.	Riverfront Residential	Land Acquisition Developer Solicitation Development	State Docks City Private	N/A	Priority 3
2	Hotel/Mixed Use Site	I. Land Acquisition/ Developer Solicitation II. Development (400 rooms)	City/County Private	I. II. 34.0 - 40.0 Million	In Progress Priority 1
3	Old City Hall Block, Exploreum, Omnimax	I. Fund Raising Strategy II. Development	Exploreum Board City County Private Interests	I. N/A II. \$9.0 - \$10.5 Million	Priority 1 Priority 2 & 3

Downtown Development Program, Mobile, Alabama

Map #	Project	Action	Sponsors/Funding	Priority I/II Estimated Costs	Schedule/Comments
4	Fort Condé Village	I. Phase I Development Plan Development II. Phase II Development	City Private	I. 4.5 - 5.0 Million (Shared) II. N/A	Priority 1 Priority 2
5	"City of Parks" Strategy	I. Study II. Implementation	I. City II. City Private Sources	I. \$42,500 - \$50,000 II. N/A	Priority 1 Will provide plans for key downtown parks.
6	Royal Street Alley	N/A	Private City Historic Development Commission	4.5 Million	Scheduled to begin construction January, 1992
7	German Relief Hall Block	I. Developer Solicitation II. Development	City Private	N/A	Priority 2 Priority 3
8	Water Street	Phase I - Chuch Street to Dauphin Street CD's Immediately	City	\$1,060,000 - \$1,200,000	Phase I - Complete with Convention Center

Downtown Development Program, Mobile, Alabama

Map #	Project	Action	Priority I/II Sponsors/Funding	Estimated Cost	Schedule/Comments
9	North DeTonti Square Commercial District	I. Guidelines II. Developer Solicitation Development	City Private	I. \$7,500 - \$10,000 II. \$22.8 - \$29.8 Million	Priority 1 Priority 2
10	MLK Avenue Extension	R.O.W. Acquisition Implementation	City	N/A	Priority 3
11	MLK Gateway Parks	Site Acquisition Plans Construction	Gas Company MHB Bedsole Foundation	\$85,000 - \$110,000	Priority 1
12	Government Street Corridor Strategy	Development Guidelines and Plans for public and private restoration.	City Private Sources	I. \$25,000 - \$30,000 II. \$120,000 - \$160,000	Priority 1 Priority 2
13	Government Street Gateway	I. Site Acquisition II. Development	City Private Sources	I. \$55,000 - \$70,000 II. \$43,500 - \$54,500	Plans are part of Government Street Corridor Strategy Priority 2

Downtown Development Program, Mobile, Alabama

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Downtown Development Program, Mobile, Alabama

Map #	Project	Action	Sponsors/Funding	Priority I/II Estimated Costs	Schedule/Comments
14	City/County Government Center/ Parking Garage	Development	County City	\$45 Million	Construction to begin January, 1992 Garage under construction
15	Downtown Streetscape Improvements	Phase I: CD's Phase II: Dauphin-Royal to St. Emanuel Phase III: Dauphin - Royal to Water Phase IV: Royal - Government to Dauphin	City	I. \$150,000 - \$175,000 II. \$210,000 - \$230,000 III. \$350,000 - \$390,000 IV. \$720,000 - \$790,000	Priority 1 - do for all phases (2-4) Priority 1 Priority 2 Priority 2
16	Henry Aaron Loop (exclusive of Water Street)	I. Development Guidelines II. Redevelopment	City	I. \$20,000 - \$25,000 II. N/A	Priority 1 Priority 2 & 3

Downtown Development Program, Mobile, Alabama

Map. #	Project	Action	Sponsors/Funding	Priority I/II Estimated Costs	Schedule/Comments
17	I-165 Spur	N/A	State Highway Development	\$180 Million	Under construction January, 1991 Complete by January, 1995
18	I-10 Interchange/ Ft. Condé	N/A	State Highway Department	\$63 Million	No definitive construction schedule.
N/A	Battleship Parkway Streetscape & Gateway	I. Design Plan II. Development	City/County and State	\$20,000 - \$25,000 N/A	Priority 1 Priority 2

Total Public Investment - \$368,123,500 - \$371,569,500

Total Private Investment - \$ 55,775,000 - \$ 69,000,000

Total Public Investment - \$125,123,500 - \$128,569,500
(Excluding Major Highway Projects)

Total Investment - \$423,898,500 - \$440,569,500

