

CHAPTER V. DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS

Having reviewed the Concept Plan for the overall vision for Downtown, the Structure Plan, which provides the broadest land use policies, and the Detailed Land Use Plan, which refines the land use policy, the Downtown Plan now turns to Downtown’s individual neighborhoods.

In many communities, the community planning process ends with the Structure Plan and its broad land use policies. In a community as diverse and quickly evolving as Downtown, the creation of a Detailed Neighborhood Design Plan (DNDP) for each Downtown neighborhood is necessary to guide growth and development.

The DNDP contains special policies, the Detailed Land Use Plans (DLUP) and Building Regulating Plans (BRP).

As a refinement of the Community Plan, the DNDP addresses land use, transportation, and community design at the neighborhood level. The DLUP refines the land use policies in the Structure Plan, while the BRP addresses matters of urban design such as building massing, height and placement. Within the BRPs, there are references to “A”, “B”, “C”, and “D” streets, and streets where active first floor uses are required. These Street Designation Maps can be found at the end of Chapter V.

Each of the seventeen Downtown neighborhoods has a unique character. Within each neighborhood, there are subdistricts with specific growth and development goals and objectives. In some cases, specific land uses are

recommended for the subdistrict. It is important to note, however, that the current zoning in much of Downtown is very permissive, so land uses would not be limited to those listed in the BRP.

The DLUP and BRPs are crafted to reinforce the Downtown Plan’s guiding principles. The BRPs include goals and objectives to create development that will enact the guiding principles.

The policies, goals and objectives in the Downtown Plan will be the basis for Metro Planning Commission staff recommendations relative to rezoning requests, subdivision requests, variances and special exceptions. The policies, goals and objectives are intended to implement the guiding principles of the Downtown Plan; they provide specific steps to create development that transforms the guiding principles into practices. All development is also encouraged, however, to offer additional or alternative innovative ways to achieve the guiding principles.

SPECIAL POLICIES

There are several special policies that apply to specific locations within Downtown. Special policies are used to clarify the type of development intended and provide additional guidance for new development in unique situations. The locations of the special policy areas are shown on the Detailed Land Use Plan maps in each neighborhood in Chapter V. Additionally, there are two overarching special policies impacting multiple locations in Downtown, which are described below.

SPECIAL POLICY: INTEGRATING A NEW

CONVENTION CENTER INTO DOWNTOWN

There has been clear, compelling analysis identifying the need for a new, expanded convention center in Nashville. Building the convention center in Downtown is crucial to capitalize upon the numerous restaurants, entertainment venues, and accommodations options available in Downtown. Downtown is also the best location for a convention center to build upon the very draw of Nashville as a convention location – its unique character as the commercial, civic and entertainment center of Tennessee.

Wherever it is located, the convention center can provide a strong development anchor and catalyst for additional redevelopment. To ensure that the convention center contributes to the guiding principles of the Downtown Plan, including transforming Downtown into a 24/7 community, and creating and nurturing Downtown neighborhoods, special policies are needed to consider how the convention center will interact with its neighborhood.

These special policies apply to the potential convention center locations, shown on the accompanying Potential Convention Center Sites map. These special policies are intended to supplement the Detailed Neighborhood Design Plans for each of the proposed locations and are guide land use decisions related to the siting, design and supporting uses of a new convention center.

The convention center special policies include general policy guidelines applicable to *all* of the proposed sites as well as policy guidelines specific to each of the sites.

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Potential Locations for a New Convention Center

The Downtown Plan does not recommend a specific site, but provides guidance on urban design for each site. Four potential locations have been identified. The sites are as follows:

SoBro

The proposed site is bounded by Fifth Avenue, Gateway Boulevard, Eighth Avenue, and Demonbreun Street. It was identified by the Nashville Civic Design Center (CDC) as a “very strong” option due to its proximity to existing entertainment districts, primary visitor attractions, and restaurants. Based on the potential for development in this area, the site was also commended as presenting the best opportunity for successful mixed-used liner buildings. An approximately fourteen story, 1,000-room hotel is anticipated on a three-acre site fronting on Gateway Avenue.

Of the proposed sites, the SoBro site has the highest anticipated land use costs. Additionally, selecting this site will likely require relocating or otherwise accommodating the existing NES substation.

The CDC’s designation of “very strong” for this site is contingent on preserving the existing street grid and lining at least three sides of the proposed structure with commercial and residential uses.

Church Street

The proposed site is bounded by Charlotte Avenue, Tenth Ave, Church Street, and Eleventh Avenue. The Church Street site was supported by the Plan of Nashville because it is the least disruptive to the existing street grid and has

relatively low land costs. In an assessment of sites conducted in 2006, the Civic Design Center identified the site as a “strong” location for the new convention center.

A convention center in this location would provide a west anchor for Church Street, the most pedestrian friendly east/west street in Downtown. An approximately twenty story, 1,000-room hotel is anticipated on a two-acre site fronting on Tenth Avenue. Both the front entrance of the convention center on the Church Street viaduct and the new hotel on Tenth Avenues would be at their respective grades. The new hotel would provide a visual terminus for Union Street.

While this site is closer to existing Downtown hotel rooms, it is further away from entertainment districts and visitor attractions. In order for this site to retain its “strong” classification from the CDC, it needs to utilize extensively the negotiated air rights with CSX railroad and have an “at grade” entrance on the Church Street viaduct. Meanwhile, the treatment of the street at Eleventh Avenue should be pedestrian-friendly.

Demonbreun/Eighth Avenue

The proposed site is bounded by Demonbreun Street, Eighth Avenue, Gleaves Street, and Tenth Avenue. It is in close proximity to entertainment districts and provides an additional link from Midtown and Music Row to Downtown. In addition, it has relatively low land costs. It was identified as a “viable” location option for the new convention center by the CDC.

An approximately twenty story, 1,000-room hotel is anticipated on a two-acre site bounded by Eighth Avenue, Demonbreun Street, Seventh Avenue, and Clark Place. A separate parking

garage would be located in the block bounded by Eighth Avenue, Clark Place, Seventh Avenue, and Shirley Street. Locating the Convention Center at this site would require demolition of the Methodist Publishing House and the relocation of its operations and the proposed hotel would likely require relocation the Greyhound Bus Station. Phase Two expansion would require the demolition of the Cannery Row Complex.

Lafayette Street/Eighth Avenue

The proposed site is bounded by Eighth Avenue, Lea Avenue, Lafayette Avenue, Ewing Avenue, Fogg Street, and the train tracks. While this site was not included in Nashville Civic Design Center’s recommended sites, the Metro Planning Department received requests during the Downtown Community Plan update to include the site in analysis and in the proposed special policy.

This site offers relatively low land costs and the opportunity to revitalize the area with the presence of the convention center and supporting land uses. This site could take advantage of the high visibility at the future Gateway Boulevard roundabout and the Eighth Avenue vista looking south.

The site is less proximate to hotels and visitor attractions, but could act as a catalyst to draw development south through SoBro and capitalize on restaurants and entertainment in the Gulch. The site also has ample room for future expansion. Meanwhile, the biggest factor to overcome would be the displacement or a number of businesses and agencies providing services to the homeless population.

Goals and Objectives for a New Convention Center

Goal 1. To ensure that a new convention center is located Downtown, contributes to a vibrant, diverse Downtown urban neighborhood and meets the special polices as well as the guiding principles of the Downtown Plan. This goal and these objectives are to apply to *all* potential convention center sites. The goal and objectives are intended to implement the guiding principles of the Downtown Plan by providing specific steps to create development that transforms the guiding principles into practices. The convention center development is encouraged, however, to offer additional or alternative innovative ways to achieve the guiding principles.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Contribute to the evolution of Downtown as a mixed-use neighborhood by providing active land uses, such as retail and restaurants, which add activity for both the convention center and the surrounding neighborhood.
- 1.2 Conform to any relevant Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency redevelopment plan.
- 1.3 Build on the extensive public input process to date and continue to provide opportunity for local public input.
- 1.4 Allow variations in the architecture, but ensure that the proposed architecture is compatible with, and complementary to, the predominant architecture of the given neighborhood.
- 1.5 Be environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable over the duration of the building's lifespan.

- 1.6 Include on-site stormwater management through innovative landscaping and other techniques.
- 1.7 Achieve at least a Gold Certification for environmental and energy building design from Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.
- 1.8 Include public art as an integral component of the design.
- 1.9 On key streets which are identified in the objectives for each convention center site's neighborhood, achieve a pedestrian-friendly, active streetscape by:
 - a. Lining all buildings, including parking structures, with active retail, restaurant or high-volume office uses, and
 - b. Providing direct street access doors and transparent windows on the first floor.
- 1.10 On all other streets, all buildings, including parking structures, should have active retail or high-volume office uses with direct street access doors and transparent windows on the first floor, and retail, residential or offices uses above.
- 1.11 Provide easy access between the convention center and the associated hotel and other Downtown attractions.
- 1.12 Provide transit connections between the convention center and other Downtown amenities including at least one stop for a Downtown bus, trolley, shuttle, or other transit line.
- 1.13 Locate parking in structures or underground. Above-ground parking structures shall be lined with active retail, restaurant, high-volume office or

residential and should be designed to look similar to surrounding buildings.

- 1.14 The loading and unloading areas of parking structures that are not lined shall be screened from the face of the building.

In addition to the general objectives, each site shall also meet the site-specific objectives listed below.

Goal 2. The SoBro Site: To develop a convention center that supports the goals and objectives of the SoBro Subdistricts 3 and 4 creating balanced, mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly environments.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Locate the exhibition and ballroom floors so as to allow the existing street pattern to remain intact to minimize the impact of the convention center on street connectivity for vehicular, transit, pedestrian and bicycle traffic and to maintain the street grid for active uses.
- 2.2 Ensure that the 'interior' streets (those that go through the convention center) remain accessible, comfortable, and attractive for pedestrians.
- 2.3 Prohibit entrances and exits to parking structures and loading and unloading facilities on Demonbreun Street, Eighth Avenue, and the extended Gateway Avenue.
- 2.4 Incorporate a new NES substation into the convention center development or provide an alternative location acceptable to NES.

Goal 3. The Church Street Site: To develop a convention center that supports the goals and

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Objectives:

- 3.1 Locate floors so that the convention center concourse and potential commercial uses gain primary entrance, at grade, to the Church Street viaduct.
- 3.2 Achieve a pedestrian-friendly active streetscape by providing active retail or high volume office space with primary entrance onto the Church Street viaduct.
- 3.3 Ensure that building entrances and facades on Charlotte Avenue support an active pedestrian environment.
- 3.4 Consider shared parking facilities with Tennessee State University and the YMCA.
- 3.5 Prohibit entrances and exits to parking structures and loading and unloading facilities on Church Street and Charlotte Avenue.
- 3.6 Locate and design the hotel to provide a visual terminus to Union Street.

Goal 4. The Demonbreun/Eighth Avenue Site: To develop a convention center that supports the goals and objectives of SoBro Subdistrict 3, the Gulch Subdistrict 1, and Lafayette Subdistricts 1 and 2 creating balanced mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly environments.

Objectives:

- 4.1 Achieve a pedestrian-friendly active streetscape by lining all buildings on Demonbreun Street and Eighth Avenue with at-grade active retail or high volume

office and four stories of housing to match the cornice line of Cummins Station as recommended by the CDC.

- 4.2 Prohibit entrances and exits to parking structures and loading and unloading facilities on Demonbreun Street and Eighth Avenue.
- 4.3 Provide for an urban roundabout traffic feature with a significant architectural feature at the western terminus of Gateway Boulevard.

Goal 5. The Lafayette Street/Eighth Avenue Site: To develop a convention center that supports the goals and objectives of Lafayette Subdistricts 1 and 2 creating balanced mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly environments.

Objectives:

- 5.1 Resolve issues related to the relocation of businesses and agencies currently providing services to the homeless population.
- 5.2 Provide a prominent architectural feature on the future Gateway Boulevard frontage and a visual terminus for Eighth Avenue/Lafayette Avenue junction.
- 5.3 Prohibit entrances and exits to parking structures and loading and unloading facilities on Lafayette Avenue and Eighth Avenue.

Once a final site has been selected or one of the above sites is removed from the list of site options, the underlying policies of the Downtown Plan shall apply to the sites not selected.

SPECIAL POLICY: ENTRANCES INTO DOWNTOWN

Downtown offers a unique setting and atmosphere to play, work and live and is alluring to countless residents and visitors each year. Given its special role in Davidson County and Middle Tennessee, it deserves grand entrances that alert visitors that they have arrived Downtown.

A number of routes into Downtown have been identified on the Concept Map as prominent entrances. These entrances require special treatment to provide a distinctive transition into Downtown.

While these entrances offer some exceptional views into Downtown, there is much room for improvement to make each entrance welcoming. Recommendations in this section should be considered by the various Metro Departments and other public agencies with interests in the public right-of-way when undertaking projects in and around the entrances to Downtown.

The Entrances

From the South

- Hermitage Avenue
- Lafayette/Second/Fourth Avenues

Into the Gulch

- Eighth Avenue South
- Twelfth Avenue and Division Street

From the West

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- Demonbreun Street
- Broadway
- Church Street
- Charlotte Avenue

From the North

- Eighth Avenue North at Jefferson Street
- Fifth Avenue North at Jefferson Street

From the East

- Jefferson Street at Cowan Street
- Main Street
- Woodland Street
- Shelby Street

The Issues

Most of the entrances provide excellent views of Downtown, although the view is often cluttered by advertising signs and overhead wires. These views should be enhanced.

There are no “welcome” signs at the entrances. These are particularly important at the locations where there is not a view of the Central Business District. Once inside the entrance, there are few wayfinding signs to provide direction to the numerous attractions and destinations in Downtown. The Public Works Department is currently undertaking a study of wayfinding options designed to provide directions for people driving, walking, or riding a bike in an urban environment. Included in this study is an examination of appropriate signs for areas in and approaching Downtown.

All entrances from except those from the north pass either under or over the interstate system.

The ample green space associated with the interstate ramps provides an opportunity for a consistently-themed landscaping plan and ideal locations for entrance signs. However, at a number of the key entrances, the green space is enclosed by unsightly chain link fences that should be removed.

In addition to open space in the right-of-way, a number of entrances include publicly-owned open spaces in front of government buildings. These are ideal locations to enhance the landscaping and place public art and signs.

Many of the properties flanking the entrances are in privately owned. A large number are small-scale, service businesses that have not invested in the visual aesthetics of the property. A program that assists with landscaping, painting, and other beautification projects can encourage private investment to enhance the visual impact these properties have as the entrance to Downtown. Where the businesses present a blank wall to the entrance street, assistance with efforts to animate the building to contribute to a lively pedestrian environment would be appropriate. At a few locations, the existing businesses are not compatible with a first impression of Downtown. Particular effort needs to be made either to enhance their visual appeal or to screen these businesses from the street.

A program of unified streetscape elements would provide consistency to the entrances and assist in creating a sense of transition into the unique Downtown community. The *Downtown Streetscape Elements Design Guidelines* notes that well-conceived urban streetscape corridors are among the most commonly experienced civic spaces and that the streetscape environment must enhance, complement and strengthen the identity of an urban district. The *Guidelines* distinguish various

contextual sub-districts within Downtown through use of different types of streetscape elements. These guidelines can be used to determine the appropriate streetscape elements for the entrances.

There is significant visual clutter at the entrances from the above ground utilities and numerous advertising signs. As development occurs, an emphasis on undergrounding electric facilities should be pursued. In addition, any publicly-led opportunity to underground utilities beyond private investment should be seized. Where underground services are not feasible, efforts should be made to place power and communication lines in the alley network.

Poorly located signs impede views and seriously distract from the entrances. While signs are an important element of a business, they should be designed and placed in a way that complement and enhance the entrances while advertising services.

Street trees are missing at many of the entrances, particularly on the portions of the streets abutting private property. Street trees are recommended for their many benefits including providing a frame for the street, softening the “hard edges” of the urban environment with green and providing a unifying element to the entrance and streetscape.

Recommendations

As noted above, these recommendations are primarily for Metro Departments and other public agencies with interests in the public right-of-way. However, as development occurs near the entrances, these recommendations can also be used as a guide for private investment.

1. Preserve and enhance the views of Downtown at the entrances.

2. Install signs welcoming visitors to Downtown.
3. Implement the entrance-related elements of the Public Works wayfinding sign research.
4. Use public open space, including open space within the right-of-way, for attractive landscaping, signs and public art. Whenever possible, remove unsightly fences.
5. Assist private property owners with landscaping, painting and other beautification projects.
6. Add banners and other streetscape elements using the *Downtown Streetscape Elements Design Guidelines*.
7. Underground the utilities as public or private development occurs. Where this is not feasible, locate the utilities within the alley network.
8. Work with business owners and appropriate Metro Departments to design signage to enhance rather than detract from the entrances.
9. Add and maintain street trees where possible.