

Community Design Charrette in
PORTERDALE
GEORGIA Nov. 9-11, 2012

The City of Porterdale is rich in architectural and natural resources. However, community participation, apart from a core group of motivated citizens, is imbalanced due to demographics. A high proportion of renters coupled with the problem of absentee landlords, as well as a lack of employment opportunities, all contribute to a decreased sense of community responsibility. This is often manifested in unkempt yards, littered sidewalks, and community dysfunction. These suggestions build on Porterdale's ideas for instilling pride, broadening citizen participation, and increasing population.



Innovative Ideas

Ideas generated through several visioning exercises included a community-wide focus on art, increased access to locally-grown healthy food, efforts to engage locals in outdoor activities like kayaking and swimming, and better promotion of the city's unique cultural events.

1. Instill pride amongst mill village residents by promoting a Yard of the Month contest to encourage home maintenance.

2. Create incentives by offering monetary prizes (such as gift certificates to local businesses) and photograph recognition in the local paper and city website.

3. The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) should evaluate which homes are in jeopardy due to demolition by neglect, and work with local churches and Habitat for Humanity to develop a volunteer-build effort for needy families.



Atlanta's Cabbagetown is one of several successful mill village redevelopments in Georgia that have attracted artists and homeowners looking for an eclectic neighborhood. Porterdale's extensive historic housing stock and proximity to Covington, Atlanta, and the Yellow River makes it a potential draw. Other revitalized mill villages include Whittier Mill in Chattahoochee, Canton Mill in Cherokee County, and Chicopee Mill in Gainesville.



Large, underutilized industrial space can find new life as art venues. The Goat Farm Arts Center in West Midtown, Atlanta, is a visual and performing arts center housed in the 19th century E. Van Winkle Gin and Machine Works complex. Goat Farm hosts music concerts, traditional and experimental theatrical performances, film screenings, contemporary dance performances, art exhibitions, artist residency programs, professional ballet and contemporary dance classes, and contains the studio space of over 300 artists.



Artist relocation programs have been used in small towns and cities across the United States. Paducah, KY and Oil City, PA, are both successful examples of programs which use a homeownership model to draw artists to their "revitalization districts". Making it easier for artists to qualify for mortgages for affordable housing facilitates the improvement of derelict properties. Tactics include zoning that accommodates live/work space, matching fund programs, residential and commercial financial incentives, and monetary assistance for moving, start-up business costs, rehabilitation costs, and building acquisition.

See www.paducahalliance.org, www.artsoilcity.com

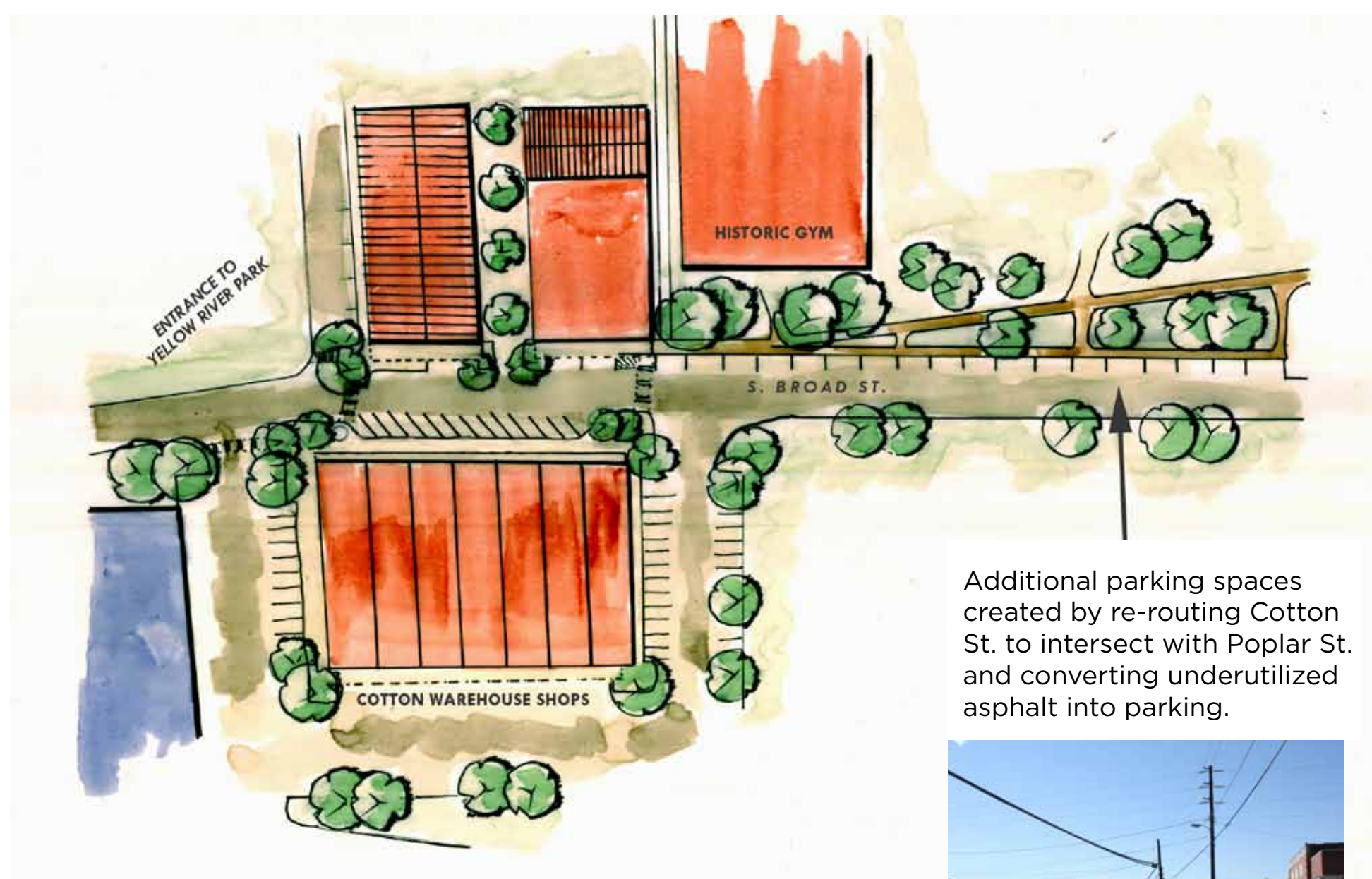


Porterdale residents clearly desire a local farmers market, but the proximity of larger cities makes it difficult to attract enough vendors to support one. In the interest of community building and bringing fresh, local produce to the area, Porterdale should consider a market sharing program in which Porterdale, Covington and Oxford host a local market on rotating weeks.

A shared market offers vendors a broader customer base, enticing them to venture from the larger cities. It also opens the door for Porterdale residents to take advantage of the "Double Your Dollars" program sponsored by Wholesome Wave Georgia. See www.wholesomewavegeorgia.org

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Streetscape improvements along Broad Street from the river through the commercial downtown and along the linear park should provide for street trees, greenspace and additional parking. The linear park between Broad Street and Cotton Street is a beautiful, unique, existing and affordable way to signal downtown is approaching.



Additional parking spaces created by re-routing Cotton St. to intersect with Poplar St. and converting underutilized asphalt into parking.

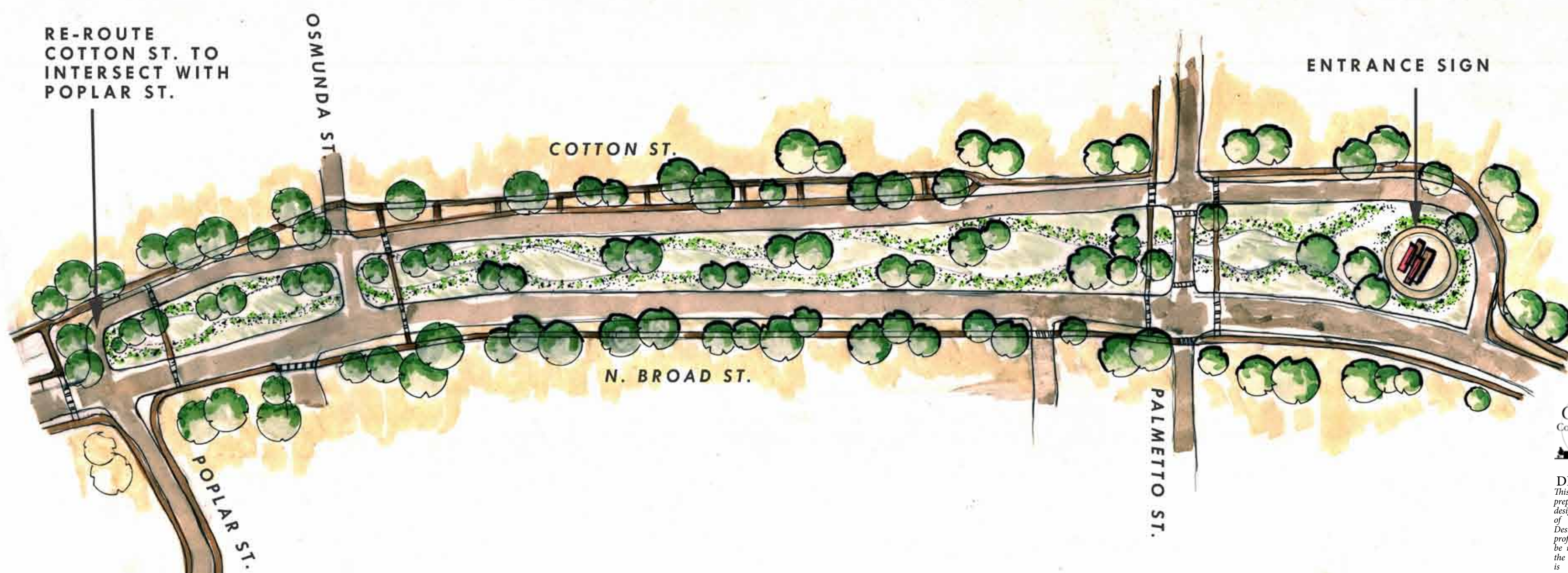


The merging of Cotton St. and Broad St. downtown results in excessive paved hardscape. Shortening Cotton St. so that it intersects with Broad across from Poplar St. will improve the safety of the intersection, allows excess paving to be converted into greenspace by extending the linear park plan, and allows for additional parallel parking spaces to be added to Broad Street in front of the renovated gym building and the Methodist church.



Great care has been taken to maintain the park, including the planting of several varieties of trees and the addition of "Little Library" book bins. Maintain the greenspace as is, but conduct a sidewalk inventory along Cotton St. and other adjacent residential streets to identify unsafe, unpassable or unattractive sidewalks needing improvements.

Maintain parallel parking on Cotton Street by striping parking spaces, improving sidewalks, and enforcing violations for parking on the grass.



Charrette Team: Sanhita Bhargva, Adam Martin, Marilyn Wagman, Daniel Weldon
 Layout: Eleonora Machado, Center for Community Design & Preservation

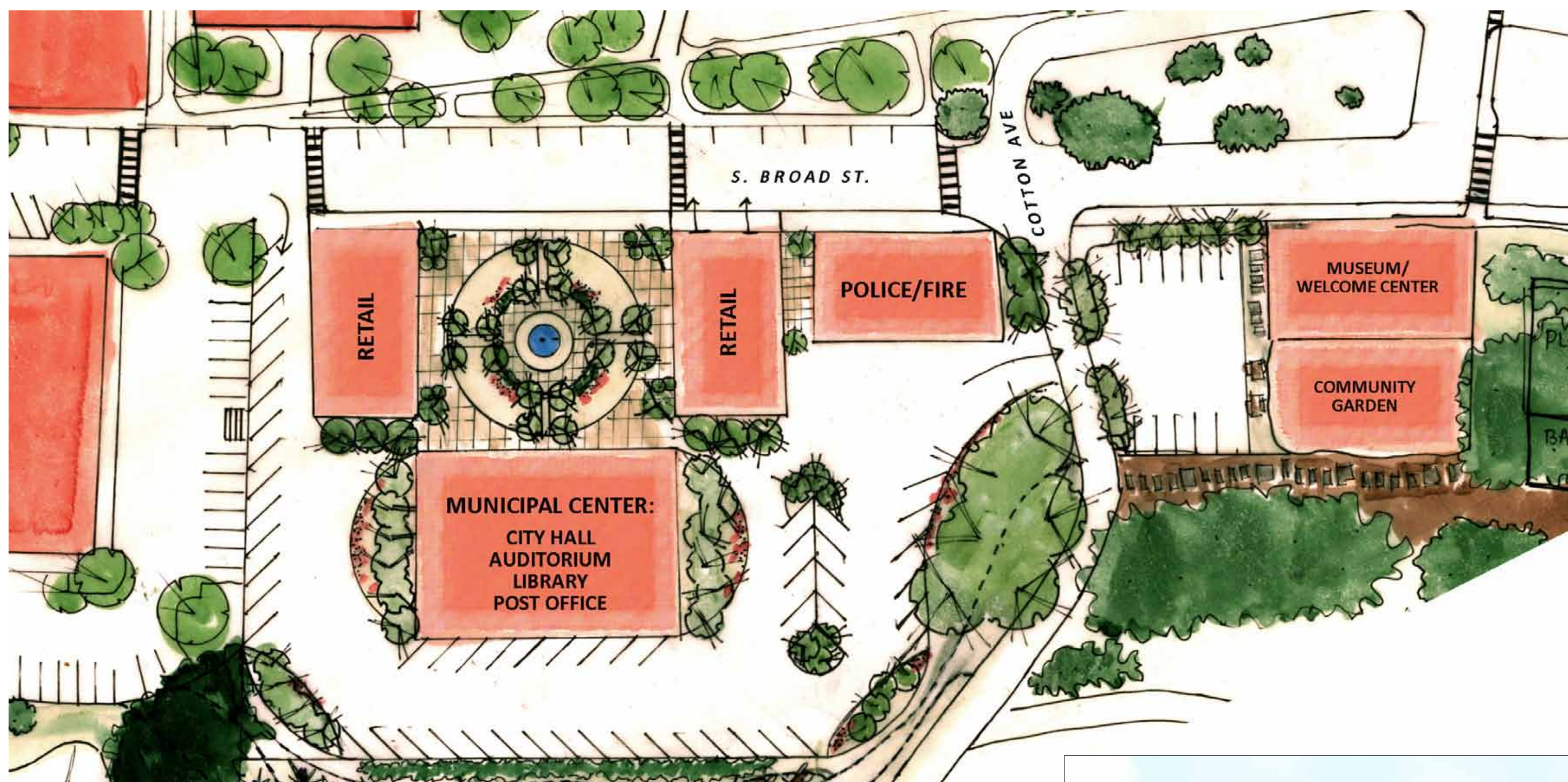
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The city-owned property along Broad Street - from the baseball field to the existing city hall building and extending east to include the grassy hill at the back of the post office and city parking lot - was reimagined for an increase in density and commercial retail space.

Two main concepts emerged, yet both plans call for the removal of the existing buildings housing City Hall, the Post Office, and the fire-police station; and relocates those services into new buildings. The addition of a welcome center, civic auditorium, library space and mixed-use retail/residential space completes the mix of functions.

Concept A - Create a civic plaza that responds to the formal axis and architecture of the historic gymnasium and the Methodist church.

Concept B - New buildings should be built up to the property line facing Broad Street with maximum parking opportunities behind and between buildings.



Concept A locates a new civic space oriented around a central courtyard. City Hall is in the back as a new "Municipal Center", and also houses the Post Office, Library, plus a large meeting space. The Municipal Center is flanked by new mixed-use retail buildings, with the fire/police station closest to Poplar Street. This plan

allows for parking along the rear edges of the lot and will require cutting into and terracing the hillside. A new building that could accommodate a welcome center and textile museum sits in the former fire station location next to the existing playground and ballfield. The community garden has been relocated here as well.



A historic photograph of the 1900 Kindergarten built by the Bibb Company serves as inspiration for a small-scale Textile Museum and Welcome Center.



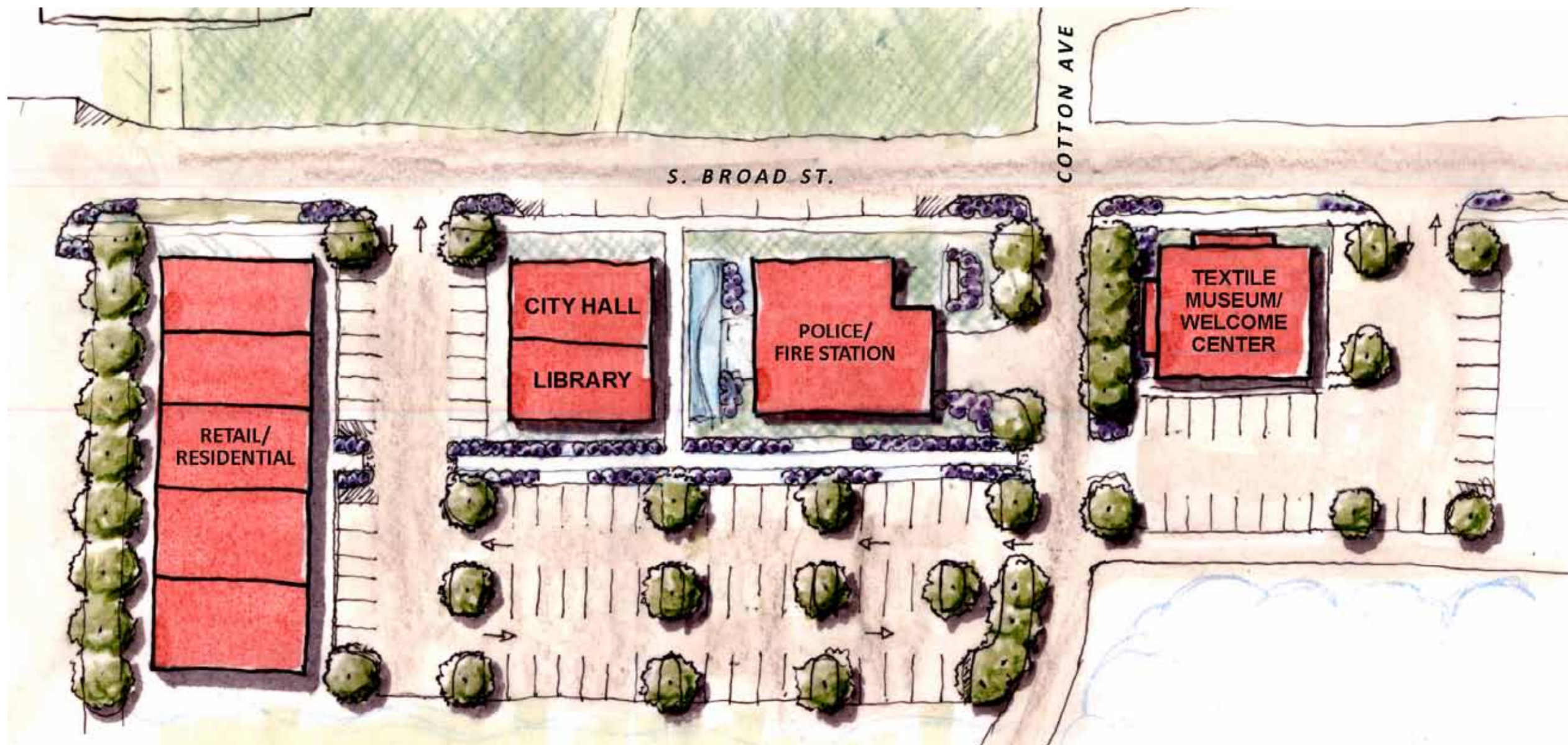
CONCEPT A

Charrette Team: Sanhita Bhargva, Cameron Fox, Adam Martin, Coco Nogawa, Ann Nguyen, Marilyn Wagman, Daniel Weldon, and Jennifer Lewis
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The appearance of any infill buildings should echo historic building characteristics without directly copying a particular style.

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Concept B focuses on maintaining adequate parking for future development for city hall. It provides a mixed-use expansion opportunity. Keeping in mind that the large existing slope is used for various activities throughout the year, the design calls for only a small amount of ground disturbance to fit

parking at its base. Realignment strategies for Cotton Street at the intersection of Poplar and Broad Street will help better define the intersection, and will be safer for pedestrians to cross the street. The building layout remains consistent with the fabric of the city.



Infill buildings are aligned with the sidewalk and public parking is located in the rear. Mixed-use retail is nearest the existing retail in the Cotton Warehouse shops, and the new municipal building (city hall, library, auditorium) and fire/police station are in the center. A textile museum/welcome center is within a new building designed after the now extant Kindergarten building.

CONCEPT B

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Mixed-use Infill should take its inspiration from the Cotton Warehouse shops located adjacent to the Mill Lofts. This industrial aesthetic is entirely appropriate in Porterdale.

See National Park Service *Preservation Brief #14* for guidance in designing appropriate infill.

PARKING:

While Porterdale's year-round population is only around 1400, large-scale celebrations are held in the downtown a few times each year and overflow parking is needed for out-of-town visitors. Rather than construct an expensive parking deck that will take up valuable retail or greenspace, first explore way to identify, mark and direct people to where parking spaces already exist. Special arrangements should be made for off-site parking during events in designated open spaces and fields. Parking should be prohibited on those areas where investments have been made (parks, grassy medians, ball-fields, walking trails). Explore innovative partnerships with churches, the mill, the mill lofts, and other underutilized spaces.

Parking Deck Construction Costs:
 Hard cost (\$15000-\$30000 per space)
 Soft cost (30-40% more): planning, design, permits, and financing

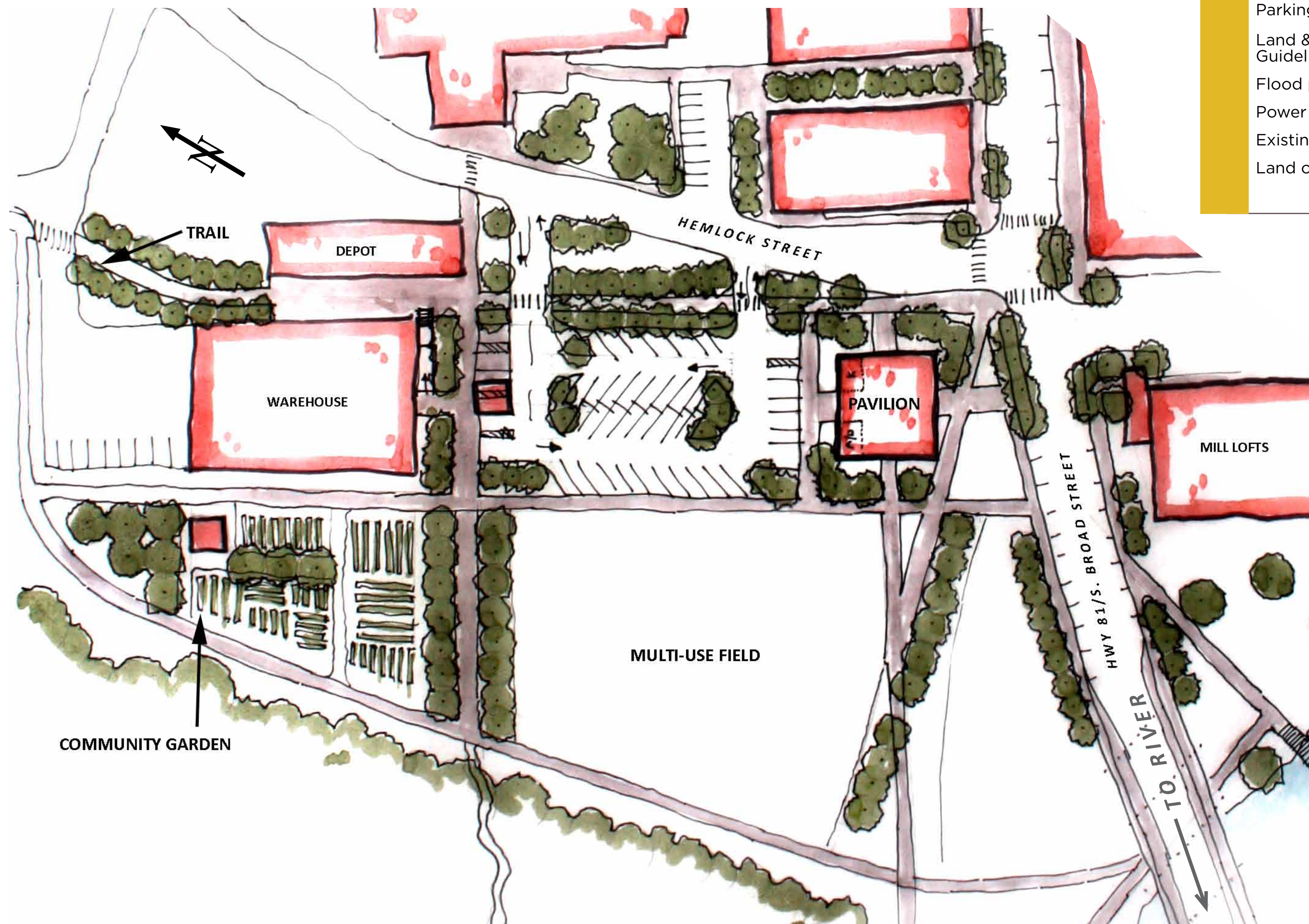
Operating and Maintenance Costs:
 Cleaning, lighting, repairs, security, access control
 Every 5-10 year resurfacing
 Every 20-40 year major reconstruction



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The Yellow River is one of Porterdale's most valuable natural resources. The most direct access to the park land along the Yellow River Park is the large parking lot on the corner of Broad Street and Hemlock Street.



CHIEF CONSIDERATIONS:

Desirables:

- Improved aesthetics
- Trail Connection
- Incorporating mill history
- Educational Elements
- Use for festivals & gatherings
- River access
- "Depot village"
- Community involvement
- Preserve old rail bed

Constraints:

- Parking
- Land & Water Conservation Fund Grant Guidelines
- Flood plain
- Power lines
- Existing infrastructure
- Land ownership

The lot is unattractive and is often underused. The redeveloped lot will reconnect the downtown to the banks of the river. In addition to enhancing the natural features of the site, it strengthens the public's access to the river. Broad Street would be enhanced with new street trees. A pavilion is proposed to anchor the corner, serving as a highly

visible gateway. From the pavilion, a green corridor along the former rail line would extend to the depot. This will reference and reinforce the historic railroad path. The existing metal warehouse could be repurposed. A community garden would be located adjacent to this building. This proposal also calls for extending the park space to the

downstream side of the bridge, with a pier overlooking the dam. The existing bridge over the Yellow River has an especially wide roadway, with the excess area devoted to shoulders that resemble on-street parking. The sidewalks, however are very narrow on the bridge. If the existing shoulders on the bridge

were raised, it would provide an expanded sidewalk. If the Department of Transportation is concerned about removing both shoulders, or the project is cost-prohibitive, then the downstream shoulder is preferred for an expanded sidewalk to provide views of the historic mill and shoals.

OPTION 1

Charrette Team: Cameron Fox, Dan Kletzing, John Stovall, Eduardo Tapia, Kevan Williams and Siyu Xiao
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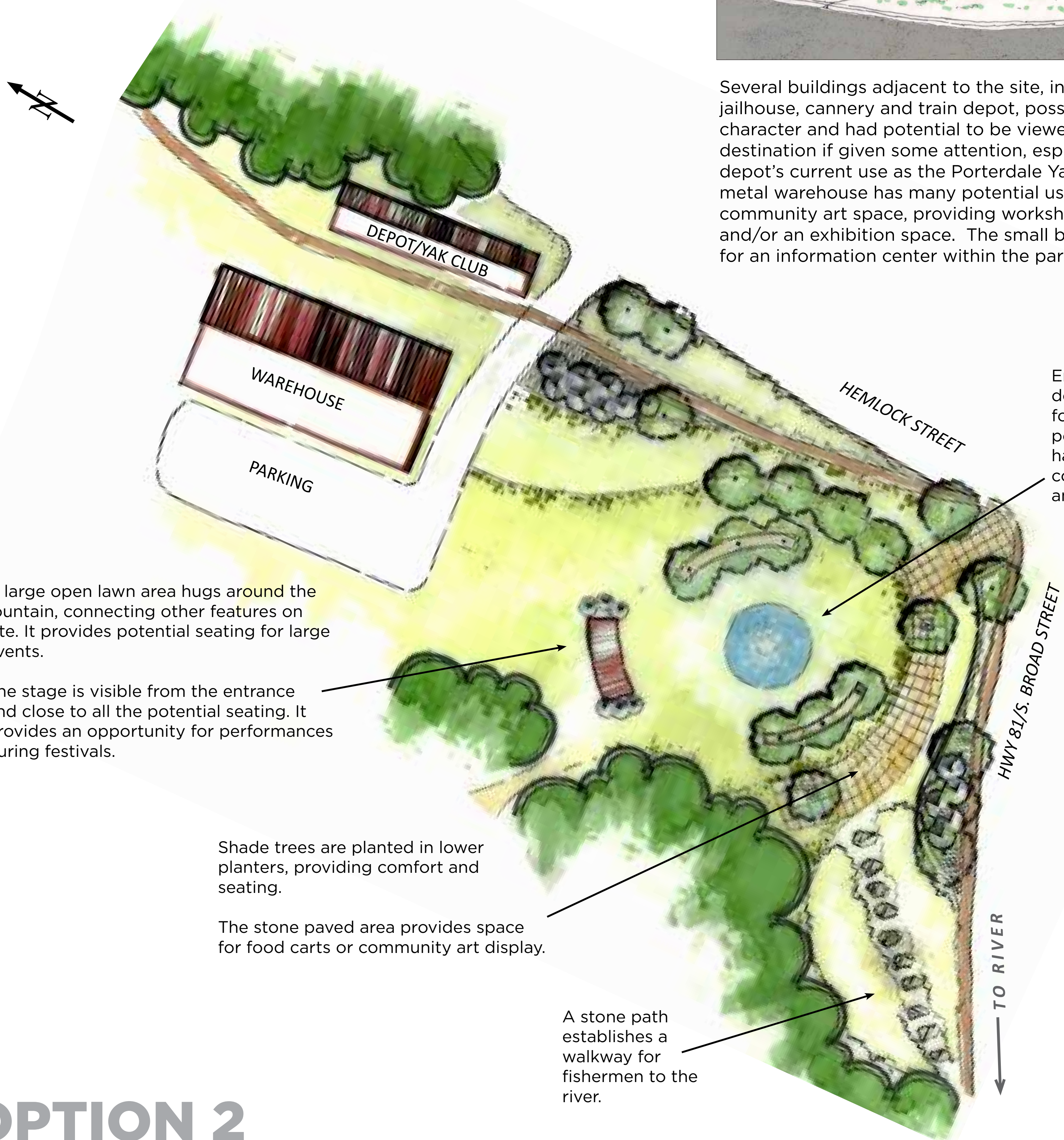
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YELLOW RIVER PARK ENTRANCE



Several buildings adjacent to the site, including a historic jailhouse, cannery and train depot, possessed strong character and had potential to be viewed as a community destination if given some attention, especially given the depot's current use as the Porterdale Yak Club. The large metal warehouse has many potential uses, including a community art space, providing workshops, studio space, and/or an exhibition space. The small brick jail is well-suited for an information center within the park.



A large open lawn area hugs around the fountain, connecting other features on site. It provides potential seating for large events.

The stage is visible from the entrance and close to all the potential seating. It provides an opportunity for performances during festivals.

Shade trees are planted in lower planters, providing comfort and seating.

The stone paved area provides space for food carts or community art display.

A stone path establishes a walkway for fishermen to the river.

Entering the park from downtown, the splash fountain is the focal point of the design. It has a low operational cost while maintaining an interactive function.

OPTION 2

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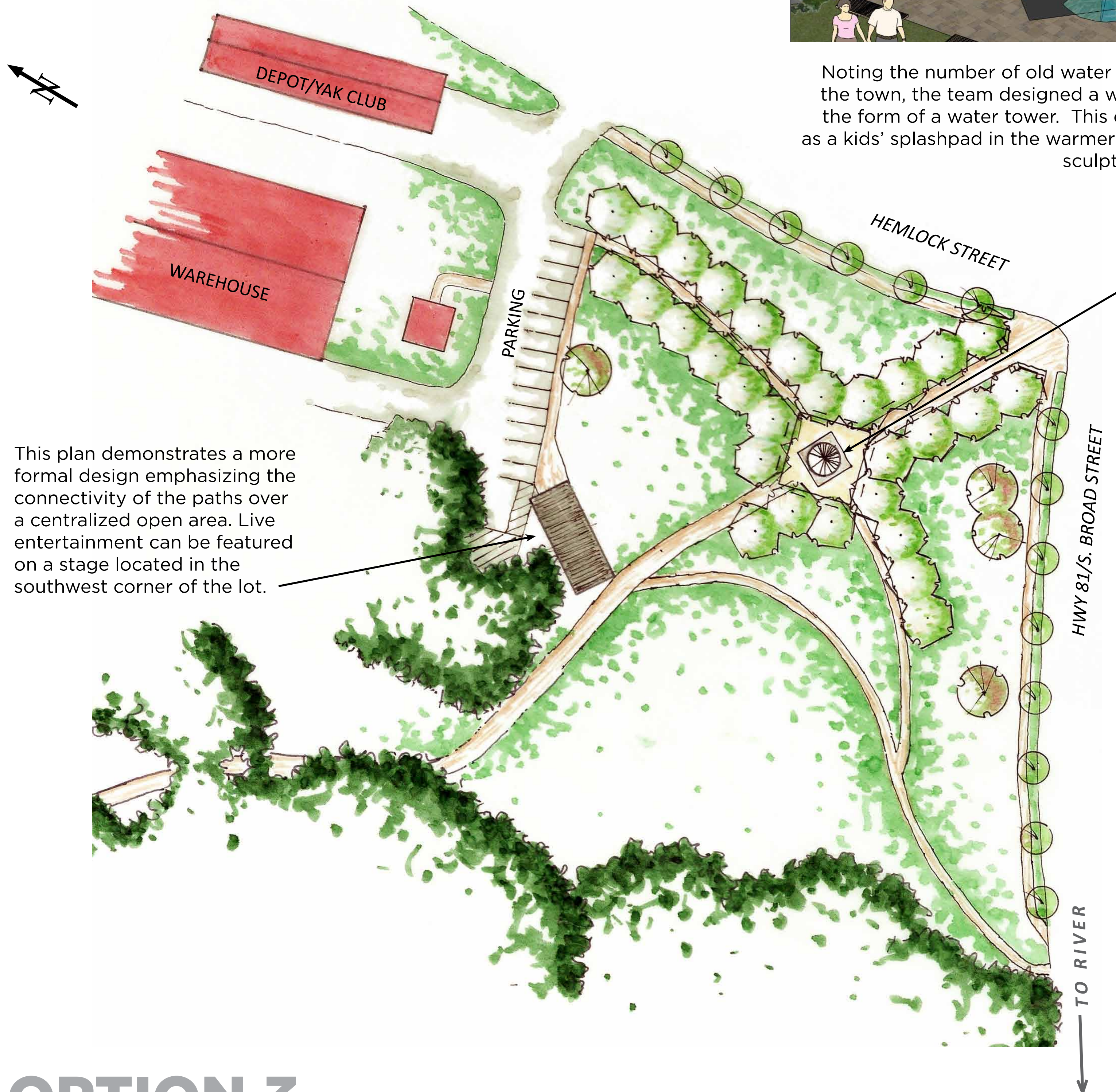
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YELLOW RIVER PARK ENTRANCE



Noting the number of old water towers located throughout the town, the team designed a water feature for the park in the form of a water tower. This element could be designed as a kids' splashpad in the warmer months and still serve as a sculptural element in all seasons.



This plan demonstrates a more formal design emphasizing the connectivity of the paths over a centralized open area. Live entertainment can be featured on a stage located in the southwest corner of the lot.

One element of this design that has received positive public feedback is the proposal for an artistic structure depicting a water tower, which could embody a water feature or sculpture, to be located in the park at the intersection of the pathways.

OPTION 3

Charrette Team: Cameron Fox, Dan Kletzing, John Stovall, Eduardo Tapia, Kevan Williams and Siyu Xiao
 Layout: Eleonora Machado, Center for Community Design & Preservation