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THE ROAD TO REDEVELOPMENT: NEW URBANISM, NOSTALGIA, AND THE PROCESS OF DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
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Doctor of Philosophy

in
The Department of Geography and Anthropology

by
Jennifer Speights-Binet
B.S., Samford University, 1994
M.S., University of Edinburgh, 1998
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study focuses on a planning process in Baton Rouge, Louisiana called Plan Baton Rouge, which began in the summer of 1998 and continues through the present. The overriding goal of the Plan Baton Rouge process is to revitalize downtown Baton Rouge and promote economic and cultural vitality while implementing the design practices of New Urbanism. New Urbanism is a design methodology that condemns suburban sprawl while promoting denser, early-twentieth-century-style townscapes and urban centers, focusing on mixed land use, pedestrianism, and aesthetic and architectural continuity.

Through participant observation, this ethnographic account of New Urbanism in practice provides an in-depth case-study of how New Urbanism, a far-reaching international planning paradigm, works in a specially local context. Throughout the Plan Baton Rouge process, public participation was solicited through a charrette town-planning format. I argue that Baton Rouge is promoted in a particular way, creating a seemingly interactive dialogue between charismatic leader, local planners, politicians, and participants. Specifically, a powerful learning discourse is strategically implemented in the planning document as well as the public meetings to create an experience perceived as innovative and inherently progressive. But New Urbanism isn’t always about looking forward. As New Urbanists draw directly from design elements of the past, they also depend upon solicited public local memories during the planning process to strengthen their use of neotraditional design. Through the use of memories and photographs, “the way things use to be” becomes a powerful and evocative selling tool in engaging both local planners and community participants. However, while it is
certainly a powerful promotion tool, this nostalgic sentiment may not be a positive and productive force in the revitalization process as it depends upon highly selective, romanticized notions that may obfuscate the more complicated issues of creating a diverse and vibrant urban community.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGIES

1.1 Introduction

In 1925, Robert Park, one of the founders of what came to be known as the Chicago School of urban sociology, attempted to define the city beyond its physical structure.

The city is, rather, a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions, and of the organized attitudes and sentiments that inhere in these customs and are transmitted with this tradition. The city is not, in other words, merely a physical mechanism and an artificial construction. It is involved in the vital processes of the people who compose it; it is a product of nature, and particularly of human nature (Park 1925, 1).

Perhaps it would be no surprise to Park and his colleagues that over 75 years later, students and scholars of urban history and geography are still struggling with this elusive quality of the city. Writing a few years later, Lewis Mumford called the city a “geographical plexus” that is “an economic organization, an institutional process, a theater of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity” (Mumford 1937, 185). These “processes” of city life can be defined within political, economic, and cultural frameworks. They can be mapped, modeled, and digitally enhanced. They can be theorized and abstracted off the ground. But nothing ever seems adequate enough to capture the city completely, and perhaps, we need not try.

More recently, scholars and students of urban history and geography have focused more on the processes, or production, of cities. How does a city come to look like itself? Who are the players – the politicians, the investors, the planners, the architects, etc. – involved in this production? How is the city used, consumed, and experienced by people who work, live, visit, or play there? These are ambitious
questions to be certain, but in trying to answer them, we can shed some light on how the city works.

This dissertation focuses on a planning process in Baton Rouge, Louisiana called Plan Baton Rouge, which officially began in the summer of 1998 and continues through the present. The overriding goal of the Plan Baton Rouge process is to revitalize downtown Baton Rouge and promote economic and cultural activity, implementing the design practices of New Urbanism. New Urbanism is a design methodology that condemns suburban sprawl while promoting denser, early-twentieth-century-style townscapes, focusing on limited mixed land use, pedestrianism, and aesthetic and architectural continuity. New Urbanists argue for regional plans that include the city, neighborhood design with mixed usage that links easily to the city center, and a generalist approach to town planning that is the combination of architectural, engineering, and planning expertise to form a more holistic design.

My own introduction to New Urbanism occurred simultaneously on a personal and professional level. In a Cultural Geography seminar, I was introduced to the geographic critique of Seaside – the Florida resort community considered to be the first application of New Urbanist design principles (Falconer Al-Hindi and Staddon 1997). Shortly thereafter, I was introduced to a growing literature on New Urbanism. For example, as I discuss in Chapter 3, Karen Till argues that neotraditional landscapes, like those developed by New Urbanists, produce a geography of exclusion where residents of New Urban villages buy into a lifestyle identity (Till 1993). In a similar vein, Eugene McCann critiques the powerful rhetoric of
community in the promotional materials of Kentlands, another urban village outside Washington D.C. Using the concept of symbolic capital, he enhances Till’s argument that investors in New Urban communities are trying to buy much more than a real estate investment (McCann 1995). Rather they are allured by the presentation of the New Urban landscape and the promises of community. Initially, the most striking aspect about New Urbanism to me was how powerful the language of New Urban planning was, how proponents of New Urbanism unapologetically linked design to quality of life. They spoke with an almost religious-like fervor that was both disturbing and appealing.

Shortly after I took the seminar, my parents vacationed with friends at Seaside for the first time. Returning from their trip as what I now call Seaside “converts,” they had never relaxed so comfortably, “escaped” from reality so completely, and recreated their minds and bodies so healthfully. They rode bikes all week, shopped at the local market, and sat on the porch and watched people stroll by. After that first summer, my parents resolved to return every summer. And they have.

When I heard that the architects of Seaside, Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) were hired to compile a masterplan for downtown Baton Rouge, I felt compelled to participate in the community-based charrette planning process that summer. After seeing the dynamism of Andres Duany, the zealous commitment of local planners, and the community interest, I knew that this would be an excellent research topic for a geographer. It was several months later that I decided to focus on the Plan Baton Rouge experience for my dissertation research.
The process of Plan Baton Rouge is the primary focus of this dissertation. Only five years old, the long-term impacts are unknown and only for conjecture. Even though the story is incomplete, the Plan Baton Rouge story offers insight into the politics of urban revitalization, the use of participatory planning, particularly with the New Urbanist charrette format, and the construction of locally-based and nostalgic discourses of community and history to galvanize support and momentum for the projects associated with the plan.

1.2 Geography and the City

Like most subdisciplines of geography, urban geography wove its way through the academic traditions of the twentieth century. During the infancy of urban geography, scholars were concerned with both the “site and situation” and the apparent morphologies of cities (Wheeler 2000, Hall 1998). The scientific methodologies of positivism and the quest for universal laws dominated social sciences, including urban geography during the post-war period (Cloke, Philo, and Sadler 1991). Inspired by this methodology and strengthened by the advance of computer mapping technologies, quantitative urban geographies continue to be a vital branch of the discipline.

However, regarding this dissertation, it is more appropriate to focus on the humanistic critique of the modern approaches associated with both positivism and quantitative methodologies. Humanistic geographers have sought to understand the deeply subjective relationship between human beings and the environment. While most humanistic geography has focused on settings outside the city, some urban geographers have used humanism to critique the modern city as cold and “soulless”
Additionally, urban geography was influenced by many theoretical critiques that can be generally included as part of the increased interest, particularly by scholars struggling with cultural issues, in social theory (Cloke, Philo, and Sadler 1991).

In 1993, Jane M. Jacobs wrote, “The City as an object of analysis has been unbound” (Jacobs 1993, 827). Writing just over a decade ago, she argued that postmodern shifts in social theory and a transdisciplinary interest in the city set the stage for new perspectives to which scholars from a broader range of disciplines than planning and urban geography could apply their methods. The result, she maintained, is the application of more qualitative and interpretive methods. The interpretive, or textual approach, championed early on by geographers like Jim Duncan, Nancy Duncan (1988), Judith Kenny (1992), and Paul Knox (1987) paved the way for numerous urban and cultural geographers to conduct their research on the social production of the city and the city as a discursive site.

Within the subdiscipline of urban geography, perhaps the most significant contribution of late to urban studies more generally involves the theorization of spatial processes associated with creating the urban landscape. Many urban geographers have successfully used the spatial theorizations of Henri Lefebvre to discuss the multi-dimensional quality of urban space and the production of that space (Lefebvre 1991, McCann 1999, Soja 2000, 1999, Merrifield 1993, Stewart 1995). For Lefebvre, space is not merely a fixed entity (although it is often perceived as such); rather, space is best understood as an inherently social process. At the time of his writing, he argued that such a notion might seem counterintuitive, and therefore,
he suggested a powerful triad of spatial conception to clarify and strengthen his argument. This triad is composed of the following:

- **Representations of Space** – For Lefebvre, this is the space of planners and bureaucrats, constructed and maintained through planning discourse and methodology. This is an abstract space, as opposed to space that is lived and experienced.

- **Representational Space** is “directly lived space” experienced through “complex symbols and images of its inhabitants and users” (Merrifield 1993, 523). These often run counter to the abstract space of planners, and are produced outside of sanctioned institutions.

- **Spatial practices** are the everyday routines and experiences within the material world. These involve the experiential process of negotiating the perceived Representations of Space and imagined Representational Spaces (McCann 1998).

For Lefebvre, these three moments are what truly shape the urban landscape.

Ed Soja, working directly from Lefebvre’s triad, makes a useful application of Spatial Practices in what he calls “Thirdspace.”

In this alternative or “third” perspective, the spatial specificity of urbanism is investigated as fully *lived* space, a simultaneously real-and imagined, actual-and-virtual, locus of structured individual and collective experience and agency. Understanding lived space can be compared to writing a biography, an interpretation of the lived time of an individual; or more generally to historiography, the attempt to describe and understand the lived time of human collectivities or societies [emphasis is original] (Soja 2000, 11).
For Soja and Lefebvre, it is this “thirdspace” or space of the everyday experience that is most revealing for students of the city. For example, an architect’s blueprints and rendering of a particular building would be considered a “representation of space.” It is two-dimensional and inherently ideological. On the other hand, “representational space,” for Lefebvre, is how the eventual users of that building “perceive” that space. These can take the form of actual representations such as photographs or drawings, but it also includes mental representations of the building as well. Finally, the “spatial practices” of that building are how it is actually used and “experienced” on a routine basis. This relationship between intention, perception, and experience can illuminate the inherently political and social processes of creating urban space. For this dissertation, this schematic is particularly useful because I am writing at the moment where the intended and perceived spaces associated with Plan Baton Rouge are becoming experiential spaces. Within geography, most critical applications of Lefebvre’s triad evaluate the spatial practices of lived space (McCann 1999, Stewart 1995). Representations of space and the process of how those come to be are often overlooked. While I am focusing mostly on the planning process and the phase of ideological conception for Plan Baton Rouge, Lefebvre’s theoretical breakdown of spatial production (and Soja’s explicitly geographical application of it) help me conceptualize my own work.

1.3 The Political Economy Critique

Simultaneously, there has been a strong application of political economic theory to the city. Proponents of the political economy approach to urban geography focus on economic processes associated with urban governance, that is the origin,
flow, and accumulation of capital. As the modern city has shifted to a
deindustrialized, service-oriented economy, it has had to shift from a “managerial” to
an “entrepreneurial” role (Harvey 1989b, Hall and Hubbard 1998). To be clear, as
cities have lost their historically industrial bases, cities have had to proactively
strategize and seek out new economic bases. As Lovering writes:

If key local economic and political actors can get their acts together…
and if urban management focuses on economic regeneration rather
than on the ‘welfare’ issues that have unfortunately preoccupied policy
makers in recent decades, a new era of urban economic development
may be anticipated (Lovering 1995, 110).

These new economic strategies most often involve some form of public-
private partnerships, wherein cities negotiate relationships with private businesses
who are willing to invest in the city (Burayidi 2001, Frieden and Sagalyn 1989). These relationships are inherently laden with political and social networks that
represent an often unseen and unheard aspect to city business. For geographers, this
shift has had spatial consequences both from an interurban perspective (the
relationship between cities) and an intraurban perspective (within one particular city)
(Massey 1984).

The political economic approach is not uncompromisingly economic. Rather,
this economic approach should never be separated from social and political processes
others, helps geographers spatialize this process by introducing the concepts spaces of
dependence and spaces of engagement:

Spaces of dependence are defined by those more-or-less localized
social relations upon which we depend for the realization of essential
interests and for which there are no substitutes elsewhere; they define
place-specific conditions for our material well being and our sense of significance (Cox 1997, 2).

In trying to protect and promote these local “spaces of dependence,” however, urban players often have to “engage” with non-dependent players. Thus, we have “spaces of engagement,” where “the politics of securing a space of dependence unfolds” (Cox 1997, 2-3).

In furthering his argument, Cox summarized David Harvey’s distinction between fluid (mobile) and fixed (immobile) capital. Spatially fixed capital refers to the physical infrastructure of the city, for example, factories and a skilled workforce. In order to realize profits, however, there must be “fluid” capital to “flow through” the fixed capital (Cox 1997, 4). Because this capital is fluid and highly mobile, it searches for locations with greater opportunities for profit. This mandates competition for fluid capital investments within and between cities, and this competition is fundamentally political.

This political economy critique penetrated into planning theory as well. Unlike other theories, Harvey’s critique challenged the role of planner as expert and demystified the notion that planners always work in the public’s interest (Sandercock 1998). Rather, according to Harvey, there must be some form of continual coordination among private investments in the built environment of the city to ensure that there is a balance between capital and citizenry.

Undoubtedly, Cox’s approach to politics of space applies directly to this dissertation’s case study. A semi-abandoned struggling downtown is a clear example of fixed, locally dependent capital. Plan Baton Rouge, and the story of how it came to be, is definitely an example of local coalitions trying to attract economic
investment (fluid capital). And the local “networks” of the process are complex and often unclear. A participatory approach can help uncover these networks, but not always.

That Baton Rouge is the capitol city adds another layer to this project. Even before the community-based charrettes of 1998, the State, under the leadership of Governor Mike Foster, agreed to move dozens of its administration offices downtown. This Capitol Complex project – where the state employees are located – was from the very beginning a focal point for the Plan Baton Rouge process. Consequently, the continued involvement of state players in the “local” planning process is a constant reminder of the role the State of Louisiana has played.

1.4 The Influence of Cultural Geography

Within this dissertation, it is impossible to draw a clear line between urban and cultural geography. There are several reasons that this is so. First and foremost, I am a product of my education. My dissertation studies have been conducted within an anthropo-geographical tradition intertwined with both cultural anthropology and what is often referred to as the Berkeley school of cultural geography. While this may represent a time gone by for participants in cultural studies at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the legacy of this tradition continues to impress itself upon scholars who grapple with issues of cultural landscape, identity, and agency in their work. Even those who have gone on to challenge such work acknowledge that this tradition paved the way for what was to come (Duncan 1980, Jackson 1989, Rose 1993, Mitchell 1996). Perhaps the most useful concept within this field of study is the notion of the cultural landscape.
The study of landscape has a long and rich history in geography (Sauer 1925, Meinig 1979). Inspired by the cultural anthropological tradition of Franz Boas and Alfred Kroeber, Carl Sauer developed the notion of landscape as the “unit concept of geography” (Sauer, 1925, 25). His belief in the value of extensive fieldwork and the power of material artifacts to illustrate the relationship between culture and the physical landscape, catapulted cultural geography into its own disciplinary framework for the twentieth century. Not until the last two decades of the twentieth century did geographers begin to challenge Sauer’s “superorganic” treatment of culture (Jackson 1989, Cosgrove 1984, Richardson 1981, Duncan 1980). Unfortunately for urban geographers, Sauer’s focus, however, was almost always on rural and vernacular landscapes.

More recently, landscape research has been reinvigorated by the use of textual analysis, inspired by literary theory, to interpret the symbols and meaning of the landscape (Barnes and Duncan 1992, Duncan 1990, Jackson 1989, Duncan and Duncan 1988). Posited as a contrary view are those that subscribe to a more materialist view of landscape production and consumption (Harvey 1989, 1976). For example, Mitchell concentrates on how landscapes are created out of social struggle, and are therefore reflective of the social relations of a particular time in history (Mitchell 1996). Writing from a feminist perspective, Rose challenges the act of seeing a landscape as a masculinist endeavor overlooking elements of difference and objectifying the feminine within material culture (Rose 1993).

From this cultural tradition, a new dialogue began to question the notion of culture and the culpability of landscape interpretation. What came to be referred to as
the new cultural geography in the late 1980s and early 1990s, offered new insight for scholars of culture. As theories evolved, these “new” cultural geographers applied their innovative critiques and methodologies to the urban landscape as well. Over a decade later, some urban geographers are lamenting their sub-discipline’s reluctance to engage with these ideas (Lees 2003, 2002; McCann 1998). Implicit in these writings is the fundamental question: how valuable is the divide between cultural and urban geography?

One of the fundamental questions of human geography is how do human beings interact with their environment, be it urban, suburban, rural. However, this question is not isolated to the discipline of geography. Cultural and behavioral anthropologists have been studying and theorizing the relationship between people and place, culture and environment for arguably longer than geographers. Amos Rappaport, for example, focuses on the interpretation of the built environment and the “associational” meanings that people inscribe into the places they are (Rapoport 1982, 19). Miles Richardson uses George Herbert Mead’s process of “becoming” through a perceptual phase, a manipulatory phase, and a consummatory (or integrative) phase (Richardson and Dunton 1989, Richardson 1982). For Richardson, this consummatory phase is where the deepest degree of contact takes place, where “space has now been transformed into place, and culture has come to be” (Richardson and Dunton 1989, 79). Both these authors are concerned with the interaction between body and environment. Conceptually, this is not unlike Lebevre’s notion of “spatial practices.” All of these authors are looking for a deeper, more meaningful understanding of the way we engage with our spatial environment.
While not specifically citing these concepts, Loretta Lees illustrates one way to research these meaningful engagements. Her scope is narrower as she is focusing on one particular building – a public library in Vancouver, British Columbia. Her work there is even more useful for my own because she is also interested in the design and planning stage of a particular building. Lees is frustrated with geographers’ inability to effectively critique the intent and use of architecture. The problem, she suggests, is the persistent way of seeing a building only in a “freeze-frame” moment instead of as a process of becoming, or more importantly, a space of performance. She is frustrated with the overuse of representational approaches to the built environment and argues for analysis “beyond” the symbolic. She wonders, how is space used across time and space? (Lees 2001, 53) As an observer, she mentions three different uses of the completed library: a couple having coffee outside nearby, children playing up and down the escalators, and a seemingly homeless woman washing her laundry in the bathroom sink. These three uses of the space, argues Lees, tell us more about the meaning of the building than any picture or representation could.

1.5 Urban Geography and Planning

The connections between urban geography and the planning profession are difficult to find, and if found, they appear strained. The dividing line seems to be drawn from the assertion that the former is scholarly and academic, whereas the latter is practical and applied. Some geographers have struggled with this in their own work. Jamie Peck writes:

Not only does our academic practice tend to privilege abstract and ‘scientific’ knowledge over practical and policy-orientated
knowledge, but the two modes of inquiry are increasingly regarded as mutually incompatible (Peck 1999, 131).

Peck goes on to argue for more collaborative work between academics, planners, and policy makers, arguing that in such relationships, there is power to affect change.

Within urban studies and planning literature, some scholars have engaged with the theoretical critiques that inspired cultural geographers as well. For example, Annette Hastings describes the “cultural turn” within these fields – establishing the role of discourse as a component of urban processes and change and the power of the “processes and practices by which we signify or represent the world” (Hastings 1999, 7). She specifically credits cultural geographers for not only encouraging this disciplinary transition, but cites their work as an innovative approach to the interpretation of the city. This is a remarkable comment, considering that some practitioners view the abstract approach of cultural geography antithetical to the policy and practical concerns of planning theory (Peck 1999). Within her own discipline, Hastings recognizes that much remains to be tackled, specifically regarding issues of urban politics and public policy, both laden with much political and social rhetoric (Hastings 1999).

Prior to Hastings’ article, however, there are examples of discursive and textual critiques of planning. Jean Hillier challenges the ethics and professionalism of many planners who consciously adjust their language to accommodate their specific needs and goals (Hillier 1993). Specifically, she argues that as their responsibilities have changed in accordance with shifts in urban governance, many planners negotiate between discourses of planners as scientist, politician, and advocate to garner support needed to do their jobs.
Certainly, this is a systematic issue associated with the shifting nature of the planning profession – what Michael Dear calls the gradual “privatization” of the planning profession (Dear 1989). Working from a geographical background, Dear also analyzes the concept of rhetoric to make his argument. His use of the term rhetoric implies three interpretations: 1) rhetoric as persuasive, “how people convince one another to adopt a particular line of thought and/or action;” 2) rhetoric as power to establish control over another group; and 3) rhetoric as communal to establish links between similar people based on culture and sense of community (Dear 1989, 453). In Chapter 5, we will further discuss this shift and how rhetoric has been used throughout the Plan Baton Rouge process to garner support from local participants.

1.6 Methodology

This dissertation is a qualitative study of Plan Baton Rouge. Qualitative methods allow for a flexible and open-ended research agenda (Herbert, 2000). For the interpretive questions associated with this dissertation, such methods are invaluable, and in this researcher’s opinion, the only adequate way to approach such issues. The breadth and depth of data derived from qualitative methodologies provide opportunities for insight and interpretation that traditional forms of research might overlook (Herbert 2000, Till and Falconer al-Hindi 2001, McCann, 1998). On this same topic, Denzin and Lincoln write:

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical and interaction, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, 3).
The data for this project, then, takes many forms, from my own field notes to official planning documents; from meeting minutes to newspaper articles; from informal interviews with community members to observances collected through my own experience of downtown Baton Rouge.

In a recent article in *Progress in Human Geography*, Steve Herbert argues “for ethnography,” and maintains that ethnographic methods are underused in geography. As we have become more interested in the processes of space that lead to the creation of places and landscapes, Herbert strongly suggests that ethnographic methods illuminate these processes more clearly than other more commonly used methods. From the role as participant observer, “ethnographers unearth what the group [being researched] takes for granted, and thereby reveal the knowledge and meaning structures that provide the blueprint for social action” (Herbert 2000, 551). Ethnography, while often an intense and long phenomenological study of a group or person, does not always have to be so. We can use an ethnographic approach to shorter-term methods like both formal and informal interviews. We do this by focusing not just on what people say, but what they do (Eyles 1988). Incorporating our own level of participation also becomes a part of the ethnographic process (DeLyser 2001a, Denzin and Lincoln 2000, 1994).

Knowledge gleaned from qualitative methods should always be a situated knowledge. As a participant observer throughout the research process, I have tried to be honest and reflexive, always aware of negotiating my role as researcher, graduate student, and community member (not to mention white, middle-class woman and
mother.) My richest data have been based on my attendance and participation at community meetings, monthly planning meetings, regular status reports from the Plan Baton Rouge office, and informal “check-ins” with my contacts at several planning offices. I should also mention that my “participant” role is enhanced by the social time I spend downtown through annual events like Restoration Renaissance and the Arts Festival, as well as weekly events such as Rhythm and Blues programs and the Main Street Market.

Regardless, there is no escaping the fact that my work is my own, full of biases and subjective interpretation. This does not have to be problematic. Geographers, particularly those writing from feminist and post-structuralist positions, have already debunked the notion of an objective, mimetic representation of place (Rose 1993, Cosgrove and Domosh 1993, Barnes and Duncan 1992). Barnes and Duncan describe this “crisis of representation:

Pieces of the world, it is suggested, do not come with their own labels and thus representing “out there” to an audience must involve more than just lining up pieces of language in the right order. Instead, it is humans that decide how to represent things, and not the things themselves (Barnes and Duncan 1992, 2).

Cosgrove and Domosh articulate this sentiment as well:

We somehow must let our readers know that what we are creating are themselves cultural, gendered and political products, that our writing is as much about ourselves and our conditions as it is about some purported geographic reality, and that our methodologies and techniques are not ways of establishing ground truth but rather are conventions devised to make our meanings intelligible. We are obliged to share authority with both subject and reader (Cosgrove and Domosh 1993, 36).

My greatest surprise throughout this research has been the presence and participation of people who genuinely love their city and want it to be a better place.
Not just planners and politicians, these participants are sometimes renters, property owners, or outside suburbanites who came to one meeting and latched on to the causes associated with downtown revitalization. Again, their reasons range from investment opportunities to recapturing something they had in another city or town where they once lived, from participating in what they consider a community-driven activity to giving back to their hometown. The privileged position of a participant observer allows for these types of experiences to shine through.

1.7 Qualitative Methods in Urban Geography

Until recently, qualitative methods in urban studies more generally, and urban geography specifically, have had a marginal status at best. Like so many disciplines within the social sciences, urban studies were subsumed by the mandates of the positivist tradition. As I suggested previously, the influence of the new cultural geography on the studies of urban places has opened the floodgates for innovative and interpretive work on the city. In the rare event that ethnographic work on Western cities was published, it was dismissed as anecdotal and descriptive, rather than theoretically constitutive (Jackson 1985). Ironically, ethnographic data was valued outside the scope of Western cities, particularly within the context of Third World urban places, because within the anthropological tradition, ethnography illuminated the “exotic” (Jacobs 1993).

In a recent subdisciplinary review, Loretta Lees argues for a new awareness of qualitative methodologies within urban geography. While cultural geographers have been debating and writing about the efficacy and strategies associated with qualitative methods, urban geographers have avoided these types of endeavors to a fault (Lees
2003). According to Lees, if the “new” urban geography is to “stand the test of time” and contribute to larger debates within geography, explanation and justification of methods and methodology have to be incorporated into this work (Lees, 2003, 107). To be clear, Lees is arguing for the continued use of qualitative methods; however, she insists that new urban geographers incorporate awareness, discussion, and methodological debates within their work. Additionally, Lees suggests that more attention be paid to action-oriented research, in which the researcher or participants often seek to make social change in the tradition of William Bunge.¹

Lees criticizes some urban geographers who claim their work to be ethnographic simply because they mix methods of data collection and problematically blend them together. Her primary concern is that this type of work dilutes, or even dissolves, voices of the public, who can potentially benefit from such ethnographic endeavors. One of her proposed solutions is the perpetuation of more in-depth, participatory research. This dissertation, I believe, is a contribution to this type of academic research.

From the summer of 1998, when I attended the Plan Baton Rouge charrettes, until spring 2003, I actively followed the process and implementation of the projects associated with Plan Baton Rouge. My primary method of tracing this progress has been the monthly meetings of the Downtown Development District, during which the Plan Baton Rouge Coordinator presents reports and updates. I have attended these meetings regularly since spring of 1999. Certainly, I have participated in any public

¹ In the late 1960s, geographer William Bunge founded the Society for Human Exploration. Using the city of Detroit as his primary research area, Bunge argued for a more democratic geography, where people within the research area should be incorporated as students and teachers, not objects of study to be exploited for further research (Cloke, Philo, and Sadler 1991, Bunge 1973).
meetings regarding Plan Baton Rouge, including the follow-up visits and presentations by the key architect of the plan, Andres Duany. I also established relationships with key personnel at the Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District offices through regular meetings, but also dozens of informal interviews, emails, and phone calls as I have tried to actively follow the progress of downtown revitalization efforts.

My initial relationships with these key personalities in Downtown Baton Rouge were formal, as were my first interviews with them. As time passed, however, they became more accustomed to seeing me at meetings, all the while knowing that I was researching Downtown Baton Rouge, and Plan Baton Rouge specifically. The nature of my relationship with the staff at the Downtown Development District and Plan Baton Rouge did shift from formal to informal, or at least more personal, as my contact with them became more conversational, and even social at certain Downtown events. While I conducted semi-structured interviews throughout my data collection process, I often depended on the information and exchange of these informal, unstructured conversations to enhance my local knowledge. Throughout this process, I tried to keep detailed field notes regarding both these formal and informal encounters.

As the nature of the relationships with my informants changed, so to did my sense of obligation change. Increasingly, I became vested not only in the relationships I was establishing but also in the work that they were doing. When they celebrated a victory regarding a new aspect of work downtown, I wanted to celebrate with them. As my “insider” status was created and established, not only was I able to
conduct my research in a somewhat less formal way through discussion and more casual conversations, I also became more directly involved and interested in seeing the changes in downtown. Yet, my role as researcher and geographer mandates that I continue to critically evaluate the process of Plan Baton Rouge. This dual role has at times created some confusion and difficulty for me, particularly as I write this dissertation. I most definitely will share, and hopefully discuss, this dissertation with several of my primary informants. This is something that I have had to consider throughout the research and writing phases of this work.

Within the context of this dissertation, these two positions can be successfully and productively negotiated. Work on qualitative methodologies and in particular feminist research, as well as feminist critiques of qualitative methodologies, offers much help for the researcher trying to situate herself within the context of her work (Kirsch 1999, England 1994, Gilbert 1994, Nast 1994). Rather than being an impediment to strong research, these personal connections can, in fact, enhance the quality of the research (DeLyser 2001). Feminist research encourages collaboration with participants that can be “mutually beneficial, interactive, and cooperative” while also encouraging an in-depth analysis of the researcher’s identity, experience, and training (Kirsch 1999, 5). As researchers then, we can collaborate and critique simultaneously, as long as we understand our positionality within the process. As Dydia DeLyser so aptly states, “Insider researchers explicitly study not just others but also ourselves, attempting to gain insight through everyday life truly lived along with the rest of the community” (DeLyser 2001a, 446). This dissertation, then, is a
product of my work as a geographer and an “insider” within the Downtown Baton Rouge community.

Because of these contacts, I have also received a significant amount of other data, including the monthly reports prepared for the Downtown Development Commission, as well as the press kits supplied to local media covering downtown projects. Additionally, I have been on email list services for both a general Downtown Development District list (for anyone interested in downtown events) and a Downtown Stakeholders list (for a smaller group focusing on economic incentives and opportunities).

Another dimension of my data involves local media. Initially, I was simply following the events of Plan Baton Rouge in the newspaper, never intending these articles to be a part of my data. However, as I began to focus on the process of Plan Baton Rouge, using the local newspaper and the way the process was represented, became essential to my task. As I argue in the pages that follow, New Urban practitioners and proponents of Plan Baton Rouge use certain discursive devises that help garner support for the planning process. The local media contributes to this process. To access this data, I used several topical categories to structure my interpretation of the information (Berg 2004, Cresswell 1998). For example, regarding the articles covering the Plan Baton Rouge process, there were several recurrent themes: 1) history and background of New Urbanism; 2) design components of New Urbanism, including anti-sprawl rhetoric; 3) localization of the process, that is, how Plan Baton Rouge came to be; and 4) public opinion and/or sentiment regarding the issues in the previous categories. In more general ways,
these same themes were useful throughout my research, but applied to Downtown revitalization more generally. Not only did such a thematic approach help me manage my data, it also provided the fundamental structure of this dissertation.

I have also been diligent in participating in the social, cultural, and entertainment activities associated with Downtown Baton Rouge more generally and revitalization efforts specifically. These activities range from shopping at the downtown Farmers’ Market to attending the Rhythm and Views concert series, from volunteering to pick-up trash on a Saturday morning to touring homes in various stages of renovation during Restoration Renaissance.

From summer 2002 through spring 2003, I also participated as a member of the Mayor’s Smart Growth Task Force. This is a rather large committee convened by the Mayor, but overseen in part by the Plan Baton Rouge director, and is arguably a direct outgrowth of the perceived success of Plan Baton Rouge. While not directly related to Plan Baton Rouge or downtown revitalization specifically, this committee’s purpose was to find a guiding framework for planning and development throughout the city based on Smart Growth principles, many of which coincide with those of New Urbanism.

In the pages that follow, I use all of this experiential data as a participant observer to present a critical summary of the Plan Baton Rouge experience. I did however make some choices (some intentional and perhaps others not) along the way as to what my focus would be. Certainly, there are other themes and strategies I could have considered. However, in this dissertation I focus on the process of Plan Baton Rouge, and how the broader design elements of New Urban design
methodologies have been customized within the context of Baton Rouge. This localization occurs not only through the design proposals following the planning charrettes, but also through the strategic use of a powerful rhetoric of place appealing to local identity and memory, as well as the promise of something new. These were the critical and prevalent themes that surfaced as I began to conceptualize a structure for this dissertation. Using these themes, I organized my data accordingly. Even as I edit these pages, however, new themes and interests emerge.

1.8 Format of the Dissertation

The structure of this dissertation is reflective of my own timeline of discovery and consequential approach to this study. Chapters 2 and 3, what I consider to be the background chapters that set the stage for the rest of the dissertation document, provide historical and literature backgrounds for the processes of urban revitalization in the late twentieth century. This history is in no way comprehensive. My aim is simply to provide an historical context for the status quo of Baton Rouge at the beginning of the Plan Baton Rouge process. More specifically, Chapter 3 focuses on the literature relating to the New Urbanism planning methodology. Using a broad range of sources – historical narrative, journalistic, and academic – I present the suburban critique that New Urbanists fervently use to justify their approach to design (both in in-fill and green-field sites). Drawing from the literature within the New Urban community, I tell the “story” of New Urbanism, how the vision and design principles came to be realized by some of its founding practitioners, resulting in the Congress for New Urbanism – a membership committed to promoting New Urban
beliefs and design techniques throughout the world. Also, I provide a brief summary of the small literature on New Urbanism from within the discipline of geography.

Chapter 4 introduces the primary case study of this dissertation – Plan Baton Rouge. Within this chapter, I provide an overview of the Plan Baton Rouge design process and a summary of the Plan Baton Rouge document published shortly thereafter. While I am not presenting a critique of the design elements within the plan, I do offer a critical summary of some of the textual and rhetorical themes that contribute to my overall review of the creative process of Plan Baton Rouge.

Throughout this dissertation, I argue that Plan Baton Rouge has changed how the Downtown Development District, Baton Rouge planners, politicians, and citizens participate in large-scale planning processes. In Chapter 5, I illustrate the ways in which these changes have been encouraged and implemented. More particularly, how have participants “learned” to be New Urbanists, to understand their role in the planning process, and to incorporate their sense of history and community into the ideological and physical product associated with the plan.

Drawing from the literature on textual representation and interpretation mentioned above, Chapter 6 addresses the discourses of nostalgia and community that have been used throughout the Plan Baton Rouge process to garner support for the project. Drawing from tourism literature and critical work on “community” discourses, I argue that New Urbanists depend on local memory, both specific and abstract, to validate their approach to planning. By evoking feelings of local uniqueness and pride, they are able to strengthen the support for their work and build momentum to implement that work.
And finally, Chapter 7 argues that Plan Baton Rouge has indeed changed the way that planning occurs in Baton Rouge. The charrette model described in Chapter 4 has, in fact, become a standard for planning processes downtown. Additionally, Plan Baton Rouge is referred to as a success story and a template for future work, including the redevelopment of a neighborhood district close to downtown, as well as planning decisions in outlying suburban areas. Within a broader context, I argue that New Urbanism is becoming a part of a larger political and environmental discourse referred to as Smart Growth. And finally, I comment on how my dissertation contributes to geographic literature that I summarized earlier in this chapter, and perhaps more importantly, how this work can advantageously benefit the Baton Rouge planning community.
CHAPTER 2. HISTORICAL CONSIDERATION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter briefly and broadly introduces the history of U.S. cities from the beginning of the twentieth century. In doing so, there are two simultaneous histories: 1) the history of downtown decentralization in American cities, and 2) the history of the suburban landscape. These histories intertwine with the story of Baton Rouge, the city that provides the case study for this dissertation. Understanding two key concepts is important for the purposes of this historical consideration: 1) that Baton Rouge has experienced what some would consider to be a textbook case of suburban sprawl, or decentralization; and 2) as a reaction to this horizontal growth, the downtown area of Baton Rouge has tried for over 50 years to attract economic investment, as well as social and cultural activity. To write about what is happening in downtown Baton Rouge today mandates an historical introduction to the city. I argue, however, that certain kinds of historical knowledge also play an essential role in the Plan Baton Rouge process, and New Urbanism more generally. Because local history and personal memories are constantly being recalled and sometimes incorporated into the planning process, it becomes relevant to discuss aspects of that history.

Ironically, however, I also argue that the details or accuracy of that history are often not important or essential to the process. With New Urbanism, the design methodology that frames the entire project of Plan Baton Rouge, the accuracy of the past or the solicited memories seems less important than the process of remembering.
Indeed, some New Urban projects have blatantly manufactured and sold false histories to establish a sense of heritage at new green-fill sites (Till 1993). But remembering and sharing historical notions of the past remains essential to the participatory planning process used by New Urban practitioners. Additionally, participants are aware of the new history they are creating as they plan and implement the changes for their city. As we will see in the next chapter, the experiment of building Seaside has become its own heritage.

This chapter, however, focuses on the history of U.S. cities and the process of decentralization that occurred primarily as a result of intense suburbanization throughout the twentieth century. First, this chapter introduces that history. Then, we will incorporate Baton Rouge into the historical discussion, briefly introducing the city’s beginning, but focusing more intently on the twentieth century. Finally, we will consider the role that local planning has played in the revitalization of downtown Baton Rouge.

2.2 Moving Out of the City

Like so many cities throughout the United States, Baton Rouge has struggled to maintain its downtown area economically and culturally. Throughout the twentieth century, downtowns lost both their physical and symbolic centrality because of the way America grew out from the city (Knox 1994, 1993). But, the story of the decline of America’s downtowns is simultaneously the story of the evolution of the suburban landscape.

As a reaction to the industrialization, chaos, and poverty of the nineteenth-century city, suburban living became appealing to those who could afford it. Inspired
by the “garden-city concept” of Ebenezer Howard – who wanted to blend the best of
town and country, the new village concept of British planners Raymond Unwin and
Barry Parker, as well as the work of Frederick Law Olmsted of Forest Hills and
Central Park fame, suburban living would change the landscape of America forever
(P. Hall, 1998; Barnett 1995; Jackson 1985; Howard 1965 [1902]). In 1929, Frank
Lloyd Wright announced to an audience at Princeton University, “I believe the city,
as we know it today, is to die” (Moe and Wilkie 1997, 44). While some may argue
what Wright’s true intent was, he seemed to argue that the city stifled the individual,
and the solution was in “decentralizing urban America and scattering its
population…” (Moe and Wilkie 1997, 45). His “horizontal” pattern of settlement was
idealized in his design for Broadacre City, where the distinction between town and
country would be eliminated and population concentration would be no greater than
one person per acre (P. Hall 1998). This tension between town and country would
occupy planners throughout the twentieth century. Briefly considering the design
work of one of these visionaries, Ebenezer Howard, helps illustrate this point.

2.3 The Legacy of Ebenezer Howard

Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City is particularly relevant for this dissertation
because it illustrates the tension between ideology and design. Throughout this
project, we are trying to understand the ideological intentions of New Urbanism and
its correlating design strategies. Indeed, New Urbanists often refer back to the
concepts of the Garden City to explain their own work (Till 2001, McCann 1995).
Inspired by the social movements as well as the urban troubles of the late nineteenth
century, Howard proposed his town-country hybrid in the publication of Tomorrow!
A Peaceful Path to Real Reform (later called Garden Cities of Tomorrow) (1898). He wanted to combine the social and economic opportunity of the city with the space and fresh air of the country.

In his famous Three Magnets diagram, Howard illustrates his major ideological vision (Figure 2.1). He summarizes the offerings of both town and country life, and then suggests his town-country combination.

There are in reality not only, as is so constantly assumed, two alternatives – town life and country life – but a third alternative, in which all the advantages of the most active and energetic town life, with all the beauty and delight of the country, may be secured in perfect combination; and the certainty of being able to live this life will be the magnet which will produce the effect for which we are all striving – the spontaneous movement of the people from our crowded cities to the bosom of our kindly mother earth, at once the source of life, of happiness, of wealth, and of power (Howard, 1898, 7).

Howard envisioned a circular Garden City, with a radius of three-quarters of a mile, which would have a fixed upper limit of 32,000 people living on 1,000 acres, surrounded by a green belt owned collectively by the garden city management (Figure 2.2). The light industrial factories would rest outside of the city center, which instead would be a public garden surrounded by public buildings. If a city grew to 32,000, then another garden city would start at an appropriate distance. Each garden city would be individually sustainable, but as other garden cities grew, they would all be connected by a railway. Howard called this larger, polycentric model the Social City.

Howard’s prescriptions were not simply about design. Inspired by many social activists of the time, particularly Prince Peter Kropotkin, Howard envisioned his cities as a sort of utopian anarchy, guided by a Board of Management and Central
Figure 2.1 Howard’s Three Magnets (originally published in 1898). Howard wanted to create a place that offered the best of town and country living. (Taken from Hall and Ward 1998, 18.)

Figure 2.2 Howard’s Garden City (originally published in 1898). Unlike the cities of the time, Howard’s Garden City would have a public green space in the center, with light industries located on the periphery. (Taken from Hall and Ward 1998, 20.)
Council, without central state intervention. Individualism and co-operation would be successfully combined in Howard’s world (Hall and Ward 1998, 28). While never realized, the legacy of Ebenezer Howard is certainly evident in the American suburban landscape. However, the suburban sprawl of the late twentieth century would not have pleased Howard’s aesthetic and environmental sensibilities. Perhaps then, like Peter Hall and Colin Ward, we can consider Howard to be the first proponent of sustainable development (Hall and Ward 1998). For New Urbanists, Howard’s vision of the densely-settled, heavily greened, and strategically-sized garden city runs counter to the majority of American suburban design; it inspired the Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) zoning framework made famous by the Seaside project, discussed further in Chapter 3 (McCann 1995). Additionally, the work of Howard, like that of his contemporaries, the social planners Edward Bellamy and William Morris, marks the beginning of “modern, future-oriented thinking about cities and landscapes” (Relph 1987, 11).

2.4 The Automobile Era

Even before World War II, city centers were feeling the effects of decentralization. In the 1920s, suburbs were growing faster than central cities for the first time, at a rate of 39 to 19 percent respectively (Knox 1994, 109). The 1940 census revealed the ten largest cities in the nation had decreased in population (Moe and Wilkie 1997). After World War II, however, a number of factors intensely sped up this suburban machine. A desperate demand for housing celebrated the Fordist mass production of Levittown on Long Island, which served as a model for the streamlined production of suburbs across the nation. By 1955, residential
subdivisions accounted for more than three-quarters of all new residential construction in metropolitan areas (Moe and Wilkie 1997, 55).

Additionally, automobile ownership drastically increased during the post-war boom. While in 1905 there were approximately 8,000 automobiles registered in the United States, by 1945 the number had escalated to 26 million, or approximately one automobile for every four people (Jackson 1985, 162-163). Even before World War II, what boosters called “automobility” was drastically changing the American landscape, both within and outside of the city. By the roaring 1920s, about 30 percent of the people entering the Central Business Districts of older cities were using their own cars; that same statistic rose to over 60 percent with newer cities, particularly those west of the Mississippi River (Knox 1994, 108).

Consequently, the federal government, under pressure from a large and powerful contingency of automobile special interest groups, began investing large sums of money for new road infrastructure to the detriment of pedestrian- and public-oriented transportation endeavors (Jackson 1985). This road-building revolution would drastically and irrevocably change not only the shape of America, but also the ideological notions of space, distance, and mobility (P. Hall 1998). In the name of progress and under the influence of the public works giant of New York City, Robert Moses, the most common approach to designing interregional highways was to sever, destroy, and displace existing urban neighborhoods. While such action was considered by many as the next stage of American progress, urban historian Lewis Mumford said of this approach: “…the most charitable thing to assume about this action is that they hadn’t the faintest notion of what they were doing. Within the next
fifteen years they will doubtless find out; but by that time it will be too late to correct all the damage to our cities and countryside” (Mumford quoted in Moe and Wilkie 1997, 63).

Coincidentally, the year that Congress passed the Federal Aid Highway Act was the same year that the first fully-enclosed shopping mall was built. In 1956, Southdale Mall, in suburban Minneapolis, was designed with huge parking lots. While obvious to us now, the risk of this endeavor was the fundamental question: would people be willing to drive and park at a place just to walk around and shop? The answer was a resounding yes, and in fact, the mall became a destination in itself – as a place of social interaction and entertainment. With the rising popularity of the suburban shopping mall, the fate of downtowns across the United States was sealed (Moe and Wilkie 1997; Frieden and Sagalyn 1989).

2.5 Geographic City Models

Several geographic models can help us understand what this decentralization process looks like on the landscape. John Adams’ intraurban model of U.S. Midwestern cities (Figure 2.3) shows how modes of transportation shaped the growth of the city (Adams 1970; Borchert 1967). Starting with the pedestrian-oriented cities of the mid-nineteenth century, Adams’s model illustrates how evolving transportation modes like the streetcar, and later the automobile, allowed those who could afford it to live outside the city center. His model illustrates four historical phases, or “eras”: 1) the walking/horsecar era (up through 1880s); 2) the electric streetcar era (1880 – World War I); 3) the recreational auto era (1920s through 1941); and 4) the freeway era (post-World War II). He argues that both phases two and four had the most
significant effect on the concentric morphology of the city. In other words, these new
types of transportation, particularly the automobile, allowed the city to stretch out
from its center, to “decentralize” from the city’s core. Throughout the twentieth
century, this pattern has sprawled out even further with the massive road
infrastructure associated with the proliferation of automobile use.

Another model suggested by James Vance, the suburban realms model (Figure 2.4),
demonstrates the later stages of this process of decentralization, resulting in new
centers of economic and social activity, called suburban downtowns (Vance 1990).
Each suburban downtown can support a mix of land uses so that residents can
function on a daily basis without having to visit the old core. However, for Vance,
these realms are never entirely autonomous. Boundaries will be crossed for many
reasons, and unlike Howard’s Garden City, they will not be identical. They will each
have their own areas of specialization along with mixed use.

Figure 2.3. Adams’ model of Intraurban Growth. His four transportation phases
trace the shift from what he calls the walking/horsecar era (pre-1880s) through the
post World War II freeway era. (Taken from Adams 1970, 56)
Others too have commented on the notion of decentralized new towns. For example, Joel Garreau calls the late twentieth century the era of “edge cities” (Garreau 1991). In an even more evocative analogy, Pierce Lewis describes the resulting landscape as the “galactic metropolis” where “…the residential subdivisions, the shopping centers, the industrial parks seem to float in space; seen together they resemble a galaxy of stars and planets, held together by mutual gravitational attraction, but with large empty spaces between the clusters…” (Lewis 1983, 35-36). For the old downtown areas, or central business districts, the result is the loss of jobs, businesses, and consequently, the economic and cultural investment of society. Therefore, the story of suburbia’s popularity is also the story of the central city’s decline.

Figure 2.4. Urban Realms Model. This model illustrates the creation of suburban downtowns that over time are completely independent from the central city. (Taken from deBlij and Muller 2003, 338.)
2.6 Suburban Imaginary

In his excellent history of suburbia, *Bourgeois Utopias*, Robert Fishman encourages students of history to consider suburbs as the monuments of the twentieth century, more telling than our engineering feats of skyscrapers and bridges. Considering suburbia a product of industrial capitalism and the ever-widening gap between public and private life, he traces the origins of suburbia back to eighteenth-century London, as an inherently middle-class invention and what Fishman calls a “radical rethinking of the relation between residence and the city in the history of domestic architecture” (Fishman 1987, 3-4). More than a significant change to the built landscape, suburbia “speaks” the values and ideas of middle-class life:

The classic suburb has thus left a dual legacy. It is first a monument to bourgeois civilization at its most prosperous and self-confident, an aesthetic achievement in both landscape and domestic architecture that commands respect; but it is also a testimony to bourgeois anxieties, to deeply buried fears that translate into a contempt or hatred for the “others” who inhabit the city. Both elements have left their mark on American culture in the twentieth century (Fishman 1987, 154).


Perhaps a common mistake when thinking about suburbia is that the suburban experience is somehow monolithic for those living within. To be from the suburbs seems somehow to imply a universal understanding of what that person believes and holds to be true. An edited compilation by Roger Silverstone attempts to complicate
this oversimplified approach to the suburb. For Silverstone, suburbia is no longer about tract houses or Victorian villas. Rather, he asserts we should focus on what he calls the “suburban imaginary, a virtual space no longer visible either on the planner’s drawing board or on the margins of cities. Suburbia is a state of mind” (Silverstone 1997, 13). Such a view allows for a more complex and nuanced discussion of what suburban experiences or identities may be. Stuart Aitken further illustrates the complexity of what constitutes a “suburban life” in both a personal and qualitative way, as he examines the experiences of traditional and non-traditional families during the birth, or adoption, of a child (Aitken 1998). Such a drastic life change, Aitken argues, is much more likely to affect the way life is lived than the choices we make in where to live.

As David Chaney argues, the suburban experience still represents a utopian setting for those wishing to live a familial, child-centered lifestyle and is shared and experienced by a majority of Americans (Chaney 1997, Thomas 1998).1 And whereas some suburban communities are often considered politically conservative, one cannot assume that these conservative beliefs are not based on some personal conviction. Simply stated, critics of suburbia often present those who buy into the suburban myth as being “duped” by the social and political processes at work. This arrogance is inherently problematic, as it perpetuates an academic and practitioner elitism that de-personalizes (and potentially debunks) the value of more meaningful foundational critiques of any built landscape (Harvey 1997). Additionally, they

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1 Although there is some ambiguity about what constitutes “suburban” statistically, Thomas uses U.S. Census data to illustrate that since 1960, the majority of Americans have lived in suburbs. Using the years 1940, 1990, and projected figures for 2020, Thomas presents total suburbanization percentages as 44.9%, 69.7%, and 74.0% respectively (Thomas 1998, Appendix A).
present the suburban experience as monolithic, when in actuality, there are many different dimensions to suburban culture (Silverstone 1997, Harvey 1997, Dowling 1998).

This brief discussion of suburbia further illustrates what has already been discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. For geographers and others concerned with place, it is never just about what appears on the landscape, but rather about the ideas and processes that create that landscape. Understanding such a notion becomes specifically relevant to this dissertation in the next chapter as the tennets of New Urbanism are introduced. The beliefs and practices of New Urbanism are lauded as a solution to suburban sprawl, and are therefore seen as inherently different from suburbia. This is a claim that should be challenged.

New Urbanists confront the quality of the suburban lifestyle. While their initial critiques question the form of suburban design, they also challenge the lifestyle structure that suburbia perpetuates, for example, homogenous neighborhoods, auto-centric living, and designs that discourage pedestrian activity. Anti-suburban rhetoric is popular in other venues as well. Suburbs are often described as anonymous and ordinary, where social convention and political conservatism are reinforced (Dowling 1998, Chaney 1997, Kuntsler 1996, 1993). While these critiques can be insightful, they risk oversimplifying the suburban experience and ultimately abstracting the people who make conscious decisions to live in such a setting.
2.7 What to Do with Downtown?

The decentralization of economic and social activities away from downtown areas has created numerous problems for cities. As illustrated in the urban realms model, residential decentralization was followed quickly by business decentralization. Since 1948, suburban areas have received over 80 percent of new employment in secondary and tertiary economic activities (Burayidi 2001). Newer jobs are thus located outside the city center. Lower income residents, who may be geographically proximal to downtown, are unable to obtain housing in these suburbs even though they work there. Therefore they have to spend the majority of their time outside of the downtown area to make a living. Consequently, cities lose tax revenues from businesses and residences that might have otherwise located within the central city (Garvin 1996, Garreau 1991).

There is a wealth of literature dealing with downtown revitalization efforts across the United States. John Barnett and Peter Hall discuss changes in the nature of planning practices throughout the second half of the twentieth century (Barnett 1995; P. Hall 1998). Some focus on the increasing privatization of downtowns as planning agencies looked for funding beyond the tax base (McGovern 1998; Fratz and Mintz 1998; Friedan and Sagalyn 1989) while others argue a more systematic critique – that such efforts represent an economic and structural shift in urban governance (Evans and Foord 2003, Landry 2000, Crump 1999, Hall and Hubbard 1998, Ashworth and Voogd 1990, Cox and Mair 1988, Harvey 1989b). More recently, geographer Larry Ford has argued for comprehensive comparative studies of American downtowns,
focusing on the specifics of downtown architectural trends and spatial linkages that may create a “multi-layered” model of downtown structure (Ford 2003).

While some authors focus on the innovative approaches of America’s largest and trend-setting cities like Los Angeles, Boston, and New York, others focus specifically on small town phenomena (Burayidi 2001, Paradis 2000a). Although writing from a historical perspective, Deryck Holdsworth, Richard Francaviglia, and Thomas Paradis all focus just on North American Main Streets (Paradis 2000b, Francaviglia 1996; Holdsworth 1985). Francaviglia, in particular, considers the image of Main Street and how its meaning has changed over time. Whereas Main Street once signified progress and the hopes of the future, it “has come to symbolize a place close to the people, people who have few pretenses and honest aspirations; and because it fuses images of place and time, it also symbolizes their past” (Francaviglia 1996, xviii). As I will discuss later, his book, *Main Street Revisited*, is a useful reference for me throughout this project as he is concerned with how the past affects the present, not only in terms of the built landscape but also current ideologies of nostalgia and community as well (see also Boym 2001, Lowenthal 1996). He discusses the power of nostalgia in shaping new places, and as I will argue in Chapter 6, New Urbanism draws on the past in similar ways both for its designs and its promotion.

The literature surrounding a controversial aspect of urban revitalization – gentrification – is also useful for my project. Where some might see the gentrification process as inherently good for the urban landscape, social critics like Neil Smith (1996, 1986) and Peter Williams (1986) tell a different story.
Revitalization and reinvestment are never just about “improving” the landscape; rather, as processes, they involve making socially sanctioned decisions about who are the most desirable tenants for a downtown with a newer image and an altered landscape. As the gentrification process continues, property values increase and thereby regulate who can and can not participate in the process (Palen and London 1984; Smith 1996, Smith and Williams 1986). Work of this nature serves as guide for critically interpreting the planning process. In other words, throughout this project, we should constantly be asking ourselves, “For whom is this work being accomplished?”

2.8 Baton Rouge

Specifically dealing with Baton Rouge, surprisingly, there are just a few books that take on the task of tracing its history. Mark Carleton’s book, *River Capital: An Illustrated History of Baton Rouge* (1981), Rose Meyers’ *A History of Baton Rouge, 1699-1812* (1976), and Robert Heck’s *Historic Baton Rouge* (1970) offer detailed historical background material on the city. Additionally, several local theses also contributed to the historical background of this project: “Applying New Urbanism to a Living Community: A Case Study in Baton Rouge” (Bing, 2000); “Historical Memory as a Resource for the Revitalization of the Baton Rouge Riverfront” (Wiederkehr, 1997); “Repeat Photography as a Tool for a Landscape Historian” (Frey, 1995); “Urban Revitalization Methods in Downtown Baton Rouge” (Wheeler, 1994); “The Aging Commercial Strip Model: Scenic Highway, Baton Rouge, Louisiana as a Case Study” (Aldrich, 1991); “Beauregard Town, Preservation of an Urban Landscape” (Bappert, 1978); and “The Cognitive Elements of Baton
Rouge: How the citizens Perceive Their City” (Biedenstein, 1978). While the complete historical study of the city of Baton Rouge is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I will offer some highlights that contribute to an understanding of the Plan Baton Rouge process starting in 1998.

Valued for its elevated position along the Mississippi River, the area that would become Baton Rouge was claimed by the French in 1682 (Carleton 1996, Meyers 1976). As Pierre le Moyne, Sieur d’Iberville approached the high bluffs, his expedition team saw a small Indian village and large pole painted red with blood from animals hanging over it. This pole, this baton rouge (red stick), served as a boundary between the hunting grounds of the Oumas and Bayagoulas tribes. For over a century, this land was passed between the French, Spanish, and British empires as the colonial conquest of North America continued. During this time, Baton Rouge (called by different names such as New Richmond by the British and Fort San Carlos by the Spanish) developed a river economy benefiting from plantation infrastructure and its strategic position on the Mississippi River near New Orleans (Figure 2.5) (Meyers 1976).

As the new experiment of the United States was nearly a generation in progress, most of Louisiana was now back in the hands of the French. In one of the most remarkable real estate ventures of all times, President Thomas Jefferson more than doubled the size of his fledgling country. Baton Rouge, at the time of the Louisiana Purchase, was officially still part of Spanish West Florida. Not until 1810 were the Stars and Strips of the American flag raised over the city (Meyers 1976). According to Carleton, by 1811, there were nearly 1,500 inhabitants in the city that
extended east from the Mississippi to 22\textsuperscript{nd} Street and from what is now known as Capital Lake to South Boulevard (Carleton 1996).

At this time, the two historic neighborhoods associated with Plan Baton Rouge were also developed. In 1805, Spanish Town, named in honor of the citizens from Spain and the Canary Islands, was laid out east of the Fort of Baton Rouge (Carleton 1996, Wiederkehr 1997). Just a year later, Captain Elias Beauregard subdivided his plantation into a formal grid, with diagonal streets pointing inward to a cathedral square (what is referred to a Royal Square in Figure 2.6). Eventually, the State Capitol building was built in the northwest corner of Beauregard Town. Gras
Town, laid out in 1809, extended from the river to Fifth Street between what is now Laurel and North Streets. Also, Devall Town subdivided the area between Beauregard and Gras Towns. The most significant legacy of these subdivisions is that they established the street system that before this time had not been officially laid out. There were smaller subdivisions as well that further strengthened the urban design of nineteenth-century Baton Rouge (Carleton 1996, Bappert 1978, Meyers 1976).

By mid-nineteenth century, steamboat transportation and Baton Rouge’s designation as Louisiana’s capital instigated rapid growth. At the beginning of the Civil War, during which the city would suffer terribly, the population was 5,000 (Carleton 1996, 85). Baton Rouge fell to the Federal army early in the war and sustained significant damage, not only to the physical infrastructure of the city, but it lost a significant percentage of its population. A topographical map drawn by a Federal engineer at the time of this battle in 1862 shows a recognizable grid developing outward from the river (Figure 2.6). The legacy of the Civil War would linger in Baton Rouge.

A crucial moment came for the city in 1909 when Standard Oil decided to locate its offices and refineries in the Baton Rouge area heralding an important economic shift toward petrochemical industries. By 1915, new subdivisions were being developed to accommodate refinery workers and their families, in particular, Istrouma and Fairfields subdivisions north of downtown. The new campus of Louisiana State University, located south of downtown, paved the way for university suburbs like Tiger Town, College Town, and University Hills along Highland and
Figure 2.6. A Topographic Plan of Baton Rouge and the Battle-field of Baton Rouge, circa 1862. (Taken from Reps 1965, 279).
Nicholson Roads (Bing 2000, Carleton 1996, Wiederkehr, 1997). Even prior to World War II, then, the suburbanization process that was occurring throughout the country was also shaping the city of Baton Rouge. At this point, it is necessary to shift our general discussion of Baton Rouge history to a more specific narrative of the history of planning in the city, particularly as it relates to downtown Baton Rouge.

Often called the “Bartholomew Plan” after the firm that authored it, the “25 Year City-Parish Plan for Metropolitan Baton Rouge” was commissioned after World War II by a new City-Parish Planning Committee and focused on population estimates for the city’s future as well as a proposal for the existing park and school systems. This new city-parish committee would become even more significant, when in 1949 (after a 1947 public vote), the governments of the city and parish were combined, making Baton Rouge a city of over 100,000 residents. Under a flexible framework, services and utilities were divided between the two, and taxing districts could be created throughout the parish to accommodate rural or urban needs (Wheeler 1993).

Regarding the Bartholomew Plan, most interesting are the first two chapters of this report as they define planning as a new and innovative approach to the American city, and therefore situate what is happening in Baton Rouge within a national historical context. Citing the then recent and impressive military accomplishments associated with World War II, the authors of this report argue that the quality of planning has a direct result on the quality of results achieved (Bartholomew and Associates, 1945, 1). In the excerpt below, the planners define the key objective of
their program as “the construction of a good community.” Attributes of this good community are defined as:

- A community in which all techniques, advantages, and improvements of our advanced civilization are effectively utilized to enable a full and wholesome life for every citizen,
- A community that is a convenient and inviting place in which to live and work,
- A community in which the essential activities of commerce and industry can be carried on efficiently and profitably,
- A community that is economically sound and well arranged upon the land,
- A community containing spacious and stable residential neighborhoods of fine character, designed to permit children to grow readily into fine citizens, and built and protected so well that these same children, as adults, will find a good environment for their children in the same neighborhoods. (Bartholomew and Associates, 1945, 5).

Certainly, understanding these prescriptions mandates a historically contextual framework. This plan was written during the heyday of modern planning, defined by Harvey as a time when “the idea [was] that planning and development should focus on large-scale, metropolitan-wide, technologically rational and efficient urban plans, backed by absolutely no-frills architecture” (Harvey 1989, 66). Although there is a three-page history of the city dating back to the seventeenth century, this history is not referred to again or incorporated into the plan. Not only is the language of the ideal community progressive in the sense of focusing on the future, the document goes on to recommend the installation of a planning body (what would eventually become the City-Parish Planning Commission) with the power to comprehensively zone the city according to appropriate land use.

While zoning in the United States had officially been in use since 1916 with the passing of the New York Zoning Ordinance, the city of Baton Rouge had not successfully established a zoning plan of its own. Often considered an inherently
American notion, land-use zoning allowed government agencies to regulate the private use of property to ensure “the health, safety, morals, comfort, convenience, and welfare of the community” (P. Hall, 1998, 59; Knox, 1994, 88). Essentially, zoning was good for business. A planning text from the 1920s declared “IT PAYS TO PLAN” as a chapter title (P. Hall, 1998, 61). Although zoning provided many health and aesthetic benefits, from a social and critical perspective, it also enabled middle- and upper-class merchants to keep their business districts free from outsiders, that is, immigrant merchants offering reduced rates and attracting a lower-class clientele. While rooted in discrimination, zoning was soon considered a standard to be followed for progressive cities throughout the nation. But nearly three decades after the 1916 ordinance, Baton Rouge was still attempting to establish a zoning plan, along with appropriate state agencies, that would strengthen their downtown area.

The Bartholomew Plan was the city’s attempt to accomplish such a task.

Zoning controls the use of land, the height of buildings, and the open spaces around buildings, including the size of the lot. In our homes we have a room for living, a room for cooking, rooms for sleeping, etc. In the city and parish, there should be areas set aside for homes on small lots, for homes on large lots, for stores, and for industries. They should not be all mixed up as they have been in the past (Bartholomew Plan 1945, 14).

This progressive zoning, then, mandated separate use, and consequently, created exclusionary geographies that would forever change the urban and suburban landscapes of America.

The Bartholomew Plan goes on to discuss the economic, social, and urban character of Baton Rouge in the 1940s. Regarding downtown specifically, the authors write:
The central business district of Baton Rouge has more of the appearance and character of a business district for a community one-half or one-third its size. The very narrow streets present a serious traffic and parking problem. The appearance of many of the buildings is poor. Almost no advantage has been taken of the river frontage. On the whole the present business district is inconvenient and presents a poor appearance. Its development is behind that of the other component parts of the urban area (Bartholomew Plan 1945, 19).

Like most Master Plans, however, the Bartholomew Plan was a prescriptive document based on the research collected and analyzed at the time of its compilation. Methods of implementation were not provided for. Within an historical context, the Bartholomew plan is fascinating as racial and social tensions are ever-present as the planners provided for white and black neighborhoods, schools, and parks. The drastic changes that would occur throughout the next two decades would render much of the Bartholomew Plan moot. It should be seen, however, as the beginning of modern, twentieth-century planning in Baton Rouge, specifically targeted at providing a downtown appropriate for a city of its size and character. Again, the City-Parish Planning Commission (CPPC), was a direct result of the Bartholomew Plan and continues to be the primary planning body and zoning agency for Baton Rouge.

The CPPC published another Comprehensive Plan for Baton Rouge in 1972. The primary focus of this plan, however, was the accommodation of the expanding suburban population of East Baton Rouge Parish (CPPC 1972). Maps from this report illustrate the suburbanization of Baton Rouge as residential land use expanded primarily south and east of Baton Rouge’s
Figure 2.7. Baton Rouge Land Use, 1946 (City Parish Planning Commission 1972).
Figure 2.8 Baton Rouge Land Use, 1956. (City-Parish Planning Commission 1972).
Figure 2.9 Baton Rouge Land Use, 1965. (City-Parish Planning Commission 1972).
historical center (Figures 2.7, 2.8, 2.9). Certainly, the revitalization efforts discussed later in this chapter were seen as contributing to the broader goals of this plan; however, downtown development, at this time, was not a concerted focus area for the CPPC.

Not until forty years after the Bartholomew Plan was there a specific planning document dealing with downtown revitalization. Most of the planning and programs directed at strengthening downtown were driven by individual projects and incentives. Any collaboration was conducted on an unofficial level, through personal and political relationships, as well as the Merchants Association of Downtown Baton Rouge. Again, the latter part of this chapter will address some of the individual planning projects associated with downtown.

In 1984, the CPPC formally addressed downtown decline in “Baton Rouge 2000: A Development Program for the Downtown Development District.” The report blamed the decline of the CBD on both the movement of people away from the downtown area and the reduction of state employees lunch hour from one to one-half of an hour (CPPC 1984). The report also proposed that the Riverside Mall area, or what is now known as Third Street, continue to be the best location for economic investment and promoting retail businesses.

Most notably, the report proposed the creation of a Downtown Development District (hereafter DDD), a tax district “charged with the management and promotion of the downtown area for the encouragement of
development” (CPPC 1987, iii). Based on the arguments made in “Baton Rouge 2000,” legislation was passed in 1984 and a property tax was dedicated in 1987 to officially establish the DDD. A later document, an update to the Baton Rouge 2000 Plan, attempted to clarify the role and responsibilities of the new district, as well as to assess market conditions and recommend certain projects funded through public and private cooperative relationships. The document also clearly defined the designated downtown areas which are still used today: the Central Business District, the Centroplex, Catfish Town, Spanish Town Historic District, Beauregard Town Historic District, the Federal and State Complexes, as well as the Riverside Frontage Area (Figure 2.10).

According to the Baton Rouge 2000 Update document, published three years later, the newly formed DDD should be the “catalyst of change” – establishing and strengthening the relationship between public and private interests downtown. Secondly, the DDD must negotiate and find investment capital for most downtown projects. Additionally, the district must understand market conditions for downtown, as well promote and manage the district as an administrative body. Specific projects were also suggested such as finding a hotel chain to locate in the area, developing the Riverfront as a public space for the community, renovating the old Courthouse, and establishing stronger, long-term relationships with the State of Louisiana at all levels. As we will see, these projects – some realized, some not – all contributed in some way to the design concepts associated with Plan Baton Rouge.
Figure 2.10. Area Designation Map of Downtown Baton Rouge. (CPPC 1987).
In 1992, the CPPC adopted the Horizon Plan, a 20-year comprehensive land use and development plan (CPPC 2002, 19992a). The Horizon Plan addressed a wide variety of issues including brownfield redevelopment and wetlands preservation, and was intended to act as a “blueprint for the future by serving as a guide for officials making decisions about land use and development” (CPPC 2002, 2). Also, the plan proposed an update and consolidation of the Unified Development Code, the primary zoning document for the city. Growth Centers, areas of concentrated higher intensity use, were identified and were to be continually supported by the CPPC. The plan divided the city into over 20 planning districts, and downtown Baton Rouge is contained with Planning District 8. The Riverfront Development Plan was also a part of the Horizon Plan (CPPC 1992b). However, the Downtown Development District, and later the Plan Baton Rouge office, focuses solely on developing successful investment projects for downtown. Therefore, there is an overlap of responsibility between these organizations, and this tension presents itself often and most recently during a local smart growth conference. I will discuss this in the last chapter of this dissertation.

For students of urban history, particularly in the United States, the history of Baton Rouge since World War II presents itself as reactionary, rather than innovative. From 1960 onward, four large-scale projects were undertaken to generate economic activity downtown: 1) a pedestrian mall; 2) a convention/civic center; 3) a festival marketplace; and 4) riverboat gaming (Wheeler 1992). In her Master’s Thesis entitled, “Urban Revitalization Methods in Downtown Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1950-1994,” Monique Wheeler describes these four revitalization schemes. Not only
had Baton Rouge been experiencing suburban decentralization, the city had also been annexing more remote parts of East and West Baton Rouge Parishes to increase the city’s population and therefore, its tax base. The first revitalization project – Riverside Mall – was envisioned as a pedestrian-mall to compete with other retail venues outside of the city’s center. According to Wheeler, the first talk of a downtown pedestrian mall was in the 1950s under the leadership of the Third Street Business Association (Wheeler 1992). But the plan never really gained the momentum it needed. In 1971, however, the Riverside Association proposed a name change from Third Street to the Riverside Mall. Five years later there were 20 vacant stores (Wheeler 1992). Two indoor malls – Bon Marche and Cortana Malls, both developed on the suburban extension of Florida Boulevard – were developed by 1972. They provided suburban Baton Rougeans with all of the shopping amenities they required, ensuring failure for downtown merchants and the Riverside Mall. Despite this trend of waning consumer interest, however, Third Street continues to be a key locale for the development of downtown Baton Rouge. As we will see in Chapter 4, for New Urbanists, the design and aesthetics of Third Street are now lauded as the best of the city and used to illustrate what downtown can be.

The second revitalization scheme discussed in Wheeler’s thesis is also addressed in Plan Baton Rouge. The Federal Urban Renewal Program had been paving the way for rebuilding downtowns since the 1960s (Frieden and Sagalyn 1989). The program allowed the destruction and removal of slums, regardless of what was built in its place. In 1971, Baton Rouge was awarded 7.1 million dollars in federal funds to purchase was would become the next revitalization project.
Wiederkehr 1997). In 1977, the Riverside Centroplex – a 12,000-seat arena – became the master project associated with downtown development. Referred to as the “Capitolplex project,” this large-scale construction included the arena, a performing arts center, a library, and a governmental office building. Like so many other struggling cities, Baton Rouge was trying to market itself as a convention city, and therefore a tourist destination – between the years 1977 and 1987, over 200 cities developed and marketed convention centers (Tabak cited in Wheeler 1992, 64). For the Centroplex, construction began in 1975, and by August 1979 the building projects were completed. During this time, each project cost significantly more than originally proposed. Scandal shrouded most of the projects as construction companies were investigated and fined late charges. Ultimately, the impact of such scandals is not quantifiable; however, the Centroplex was a financial failure (Wheeler 1994). Many argued that the real problem for the Centroplex was the absence of a convention-sized hotel. With the new construction of the Downtown Sheraton and several other hotel projects proposed, a new study is warranted in the near future (Baton Rouge 2000 Update 1987).

Inspired by the success of Boston’s Faneuil Hall, many cities attempted to develop festival marketplaces to generate economic and social activity downtown. Characterized by a reuse of old space such as warehouses or industrial buildings, festival marketplaces were designed to appeal to specialty retailers and restauranteurs, while also providing open, public space for people to enjoy. Catfish Town opened in

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2 Boston’s Faneuil Hall Market Place opened in 1976 under the leadership of James Rouse and designed by Benjamin Thompson and Associates. This project created a dominant model of themed specialty retail centers, usually on the waterfront, that combine both indoor and outdoor spaces. For nearly two decades, this development strategy was so popular it was often referred to the “Rousification” of the “Faneuilization” of America (Goss 1996, Frieden and Sagalyn 1986).
1984 but was bankrupt by 1987. The significance of this project, however, argues Wheeler, is that it was the first example of a public-private partnership in Baton Rouge’s history. The city worked with Catfish Town Properties to establish the project, providing the private investors with low interest rates, tax incentives, and aid in obtaining a federally-funded Urban Development Action Grant (Wiederkehr 1997).

This type of relationship was indicative of what David Harvey calls the “entrepreneurial shift” – whereas city governments were once seen as managers of the city, urban politics are now driven by promoting economic development, and coincidentally, often guided by private instead of public interests (Harvey 1989). As indicated earlier, the “Baton Rouge 2000” report recognized this shift, and ultimately established the DDD to nurture these types of relationships between public and private interests. Plan Baton Rouge is certainly an example of public and private cooperation.

Finally, the fourth project discussed in Wheeler’s thesis is the introduction of riverboat gaming to the Baton Rouge riverfront. The defunct Catfish Town site was bought in 1993 by Jazz Enterprises for the Belle of Baton Rouge Casino and Atrium. Another riverboat casino was established on the north end of the riverfront. Both opened in the fall of 1994. Although names have changed, there are still two riverboats a decade later. While these projects have been somewhat economically successful, they have not delivered what was originally promised. However, they continue to operate, employ Baton Rougeans, and generate income.

Certainly, the legacy of all four of these projects is still evident on the landscape of downtown Baton Rouge. Prior to the Plan Baton Rouge charrettes of
1998, other small-scale revitalization efforts had taken place, including the renovation of the Old State Capitol, a new Federal Courthouse, a new postal center, and the renovation of a series of privately owned properties. Even though some of these projects fall under the intentions and guidelines of Baton Rouge 2000, what seemed missing was an overriding, cohesive plan that was both ideologically sound and specific to the city of Baton Rouge. Christine Boyer describes such projects this way:

Designers of urban projects, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, seemed intent on arranging and detailing ornamental places of the city until a matrix of well-designed fragments appeared. In these compositional nodes, they called on history or local and regional traditions to specify through design codes and regulations the ambience and styles of particular places until an aestheticized aggregate prevailed (Boyer 1994, 2).

This lack of cohesion and specific goals is an issue frequently discussed during the Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development Commission meetings. Certainly, proponents of New Urbanism and Plan Baton Rouge would argue that their work provides both the ideological and physical cohesion that a Master Plan should have.

This chapter has established an historical framework for the rest of this dissertation. Briefly discussing the history of American suburbia, we understand that Baton Rouge experienced urban decentralization just as many other U.S. cities did. The proliferation of the suburban landscape was both a cause and effect of this process. Also, we have introduced the primary planning body in Baton Rouge, the CPPC, as well as the special planning agency for downtown, the Downtown Development District. Both of these organizations play a significant role in Plan Baton Rouge. As we will see in chapter 4, many of the goals and intentions of the Baton Rouge 2000 Plan are similar to the intentions of Plan Baton Rouge. There are,
however, some significant differences. For the purpose of this study, the most
important differences lie in the process and packaging of Plan Baton Rouge. Before
we can discuss these, we must first introduce New Urbanism and its design
principles, as well as summarize the Plan Baton Rouge document.
3.1 Introduction

Director Peter Weir is known for his provocative and visually stimulating films such as *The Year of Living Dangerously*, *Galipoli*, and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. In the 1998 film, *The Truman Show*, Weir certainly does not disappoint. He uses the film’s protagonist to challenge the viewer’s notion of individual agency and what constitutes “authentic” living, as well as the power of place to influence the way we live our lives.

Meet our hero, Truman Burbank, who leads an average, rich but simple life in ideal Sea Haven, surrounded by a loving wife, mother, and best friend. But as viewers, we know from the very beginning of the film that Truman’s life is not quite his own. Rather, the entire fabric of his life is a concocted world, with actors portraying his family, friends, and neighbors, all of whom work from a script of sorts, masterminded by the creator of *The Truman Show*, Christof.

From the lunar room on the 21st floor of the OmniCam Ecosphere, Christof – the world’s greatest “televisionary, the designer and architect of a world within a world that is Sea Haven Island” – orchestrates Truman’s life. With the strategic use of 5,000 cameras, viewers of the Truman Show are able to have 24 hours of daily coverage of Truman’s world. And they are all conspirators in the play, knowing that everything is designed and put in its proper place, except Truman himself. His feelings, reactions, and words – they are real.

But our hero begins to question his world as strange events start to occur – a stage light falls dramatically from the sky, the rain machine malfunctions on the
beach. Truman’s father, who supposedly drowned when Truman was a boy causing a life-long fear of water, reappears in Sea Haven and is dramatically ousted off the set by strange looking men in dark suits. All of this is compounded by his relationship with an alluring woman, Sylvia, who Truman now believes lives in Fiji and comes to represent what the world outside Sea Haven offers. So, Truman begins to challenge the authenticity of his own world, and consequently his life. And while Truman’s orchestrators are unsettled by all of the finagling they must do to try to assuage Truman’s doubt, this tension between Truman’s believing or questioning his reality is where the action lies.

Viewers of The Truman Show within the film are torn between continuing their non-stop connection with Truman and wanting him to realize what is happening and perhaps even leave the comfortable world of Sea Haven. For the viewers of the film, we also have to choose what we prefer – not only as to Truman’s fate, but the fate of these die-hard viewers themselves, who have knowingly or not, chosen to escape their own lives by constantly watching someone else’s.

Weir is presenting a social critique of American suburban life in the late-twentieth century. Ironically, the location where the film was shot is a real place in the real world – the resort town of Seaside, Florida. Seaside is considered the first New Urban design experiment and still serves as a prototype for the New Urban coding system of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND). The questions of the film, however, do not become irrelevant simply because Seaside is not considered a typical suburban place. The fact that Weir chose Seaside as an idealized and artificial version of a suburb speaks to the growing literature about New Urbanism,
both within and outside academia. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the concept of New Urbanism and to summarize the literature produced by its proponents. Finally, we will briefly survey the small amount of academic literature within geography which deals with New Urbanism.

3.2 What is New Urbanism?

Often called neotraditional planning, New Urbanism is a design methodology appealing to perceived turn-of-the-century precepts favoring the pedestrian over the automobile, mixed-land use as opposed to segregated use, and continuous aesthetic building typology in lieu of mixed or random typology. The terms New Urbanism (NU) and neotraditional planning are often used interchangeably. While they may present themselves in a similar way on the landscape, the distinction is important for the purpose of this project. Neotraditional approaches to planning developed from the historic preservation movement so popular in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s. Battery Park City in New York City is often cited as an example of this type of planning, focusing on redeveloping under-utilized urban spaces and incorporating contextualism, historicism, and public space (Ellin 1996, Boyer 1994) All of these are fundamental components of New Urbanism as well.

Whereas neotraditionalism recalls elements of past designs, New Urbanism, at least originally, referred specifically to the work and efforts of a group of planners and architects—the most well-known being Peter Calthorpe, Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Elizabeth Moule, and Stefanos Polyzoides – who in the 1980s realized that they were all trying to achieve similar goals, albeit on their own regional scales. “New Urbanism” was clearly defined in 1991 by a select group of
architects and planners, some of whom had been utilizing neotraditional elements of design and planning since the 1970s. With the 1991 publication of the “Awahnee Principles” and the 1993 establishment of the Congress for New Urbanism (hereafter CNU), the term “New Urbanism” became a designated framework for neotraditional planning (Congress for New Urbanism, 2000, 1993). Both these documents discuss the primary foci of these planners and designers, specifically their commitment to ecological soundness, pedestrian-friendly places, diversity, and the “integration of human social and economic activities and the places these occupy” (Falconer Al-Hindi, 2001, 206). An excerpt from the charter of the CNU provides sample of the organization’s overriding goals.

The Congress for the New Urbanism views disinvestments in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of agricultural lands and wilderness, and erosion of society’s built heritage as one interrelated community-building challenge.

We stand for the restoration of existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy.

We dedicate ourselves to reclaiming our homes, blocks, streets, parks, neighborhoods, districts, towns, cities, regions, and environment (CNU 2000, 1-2).

The charter goes on to define different working scales for town-planners within the region, neighborhood, and block. The message of this document is powerfully worded, normative, and indicative of the rhetoric used in much New Urban literature.
3.3 The Suburban Critique

Without question, New Urbanism is a reaction to suburbia. New Urbanists believe that on most measures, suburbia is a miserable failure. This critique is evident in both popular culture and planning literature (Hamilton 1999, Frantz and Collins 1999, Kuntsler 1993, 1996, Garvin 1996, Rymer 1996, Langdon 1994, Calthorpe 1993, Mohney and Easterling 1991). Journalist James Howard Kuntsler's book *Geography of Nowhere* (1993) is perhaps the most well-known lamentation of suburbia. Writing from a narrative perspective, Kunstler longs for the neighborhood of his younger years, and blames the cookie-cutter suburbia movement for destroying this community. Suburbia, he claims, made the place of community, which should be unique in place and to the people who live there, into “nowhere” in particular. After the success of his first book, Kunstler went on to write *Home from Nowhere* (1996), in which he continues his critique of suburbia in a much less nostalgic and more academic tone. Claiming that suburbia has created a “crisis of place,” in that it is not “real” enough for authentic human experience, he writes:

> Watching a movie ... only approximates the real thing, as watching a soap opera day in and day out only approximates having real relationships with real people. So it is with the places where we spend our days on earth. An approximation of a neighborhood or town is not enough – and tragically, that is what every American housing subdivision is. We long for the real thing, but we have lost the means to provide it for ourselves (Kunstler, 1996, 24).

Unlike his first book, here Kunstler is looking for a solution to our “crisis of place,” and after spending time with planners like Calthorpe and Duany, he believes that NU may be the answer.
Other authors suggest a significant and correlating relationship between the physical health of the built environment and the social health of American communities (Norquist 1998, Garvin 1996, Langdon 1994). For proponents of this view, this reciprocal relationship can be improved by elements of good design, and for many, NU strategies offer the best of good designs (Garvin 1996, Langdon 1994, Katz 1994). Writing as Mayor of Milwaukee, John Norquist presents his view of the decline of American cities. He maintains that cities aren’t dead or dying, as many like to argue; instead, they can continue to foster “civilization.” His book, *The Wealth of Cities*, is speaking not of financial wealth, although that can certainly result; rather he is promising a social wealth.

People living and working together bring about the mix of communication, supply, demand, invention, creativity, and productivity needed to fuel enterprise and generate profit. And only if profit exists – whether it is the working person’s small savings or the giant corporation’s large surplus – are resources available to advance art, education, and culture (Norquist 1998, 17).

This critique of suburbia is evident in urban and design literature as well (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck 2000, Norquist 1998, Katz 1994, Duany & Plater-Zyberk 1991). In his book *New Urbanism*, Peter Katz argues that the “suburban paradigm cannot sustain another generation of growth” because of its high costs, exhaustive land use policy, and environmental inefficiencies (Katz 1994, 24).

Suburbia is often described by such critics as “sprawling,” “creeping deterioration,” and “infectious.” This demonization of suburbia is a vital component of the NU philosophy, the ideological and physical goal of which is to “cure” the infection and
“arrest” the sprawl by replacing it with more sustainable, friendlier places that inspire community.

The most comprehensive discussion of NU principles is the book entitled *Suburban Nation*, written by Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck (2000). Here, the authors powerfully challenge the notion that suburban sprawl is an organic and ultimately inevitable part of post-industrial life. Rather, the status quo – a landscape of sprawl – is a result of years of restrictive federal policies, poor local zoning laws, and the demands of the automobile. With a new understanding, they argue, our destiny can be something radically different:

The choice is ours: either a society of homogenous pieces, isolated from one another often in fortified enclaves, or a society of diverse and memorable neighborhoods, organized into mutually supportive towns, cities, and regions (Duany, Pater-Zyberk, and Speck 2000, xiv).

One of the ways we can further understand how this revolutionary change is to come about is to consider what is often considered the first New Urban experiment and also the filming location of *The Truman Show* – the resort community of Seaside, Florida.

### 3.4 The Seaside Experiment

A place to reconnect with those you love. A place to rejuvenate. A place where the simple notion of relaxation at the beach recreates pleasures of a time gone by. This is Seaside, a small beach town in Northwest Florida where brick streets lined with picket fences beckon you to join in the town's favorite pastime – strolling. Stroll past wooden cottages with well-worn porch swings to beautiful beachfront gateways, past the shops, stores and restaurants of downtown to the village green amphitheater where you can settle in for an evening of musical enchantment. Or let nature serenade you with the gentle cadence of the sun on a barefoot beach excursion.

Seaside Promotional Brochure (1997)
Seaside, Florida is a small, private resort community located between Fort Walton Beach and Panama City, comprised of eighty acres inherited by Robert Davis from his grandfather in the early 1980s (Mohney and Easterling 1991) (Figure 3.1). Already a successful real estate developer, Davis wanted to create something different with his inheritance, and this was a perfect opportunity to go out on a limb. Davis eventually approached two architects from Miami, a husband and wife team who had both recently left a cutting-edge firm to strike out on their own. And so a friendship (and ultimately a hugely successful and profitable working relationship) formed between Davis and Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (Falconer al-Hindi and Staddon 1997). Together, they struggled for a sense of what their unique approach was going to be, and after unanimous dissatisfaction with the first several plans, the three set out on a road trip (in a convertible), visiting small southern towns along the Gulf and east Atlantic coasts. After experiencing the charm of such towns and small cities as Natchez, Savannah, and Charleston, the team decided to write the urban design and architectural codes for Seaside according to the morphology of these places (Falconer Al-Hindi and Staddon 1997, Duany and Plater-Zyberk 1991). The resulting landscape is one of Charleston single houses, dogtrots, and antebellum mansion types all brought together with tight street frontages, porches, and rear walkways linking house to house, promoting community interaction (Figure 3.2).

As a financial experiment, Seaside was, and continues to be, extremely successful. Lot prices have increased beyond ten times their original value. More importantly, after its first phase of development, Seaside was considered the first of many to come, perhaps even a prototype of what all planners should be working towards. Indeed, it
was Seaside that served as the basis for the Traditional Neighborhood Development code written and standardized for planners throughout the United States – even though it was always intended to be specifically a resort development (Katz 1994). Additionally, planners from around the country are invited to the annual Seaside Institute where they can learn these new planning principles. In developing Seaside, Duany and Plater-Zyberk:

pursued an overriding goal in the conception of the town – that of fostering a strong sense of community ... to reverse a trend toward alienation ... observed in suburban life. In their view, such alienation and related social ills result from the increasing privatization of the public realm that used to exist in towns and cities. They proposed that Seaside take an opposite course by consciously asserting the primacy of public over private space (Katz 1994: 3-4).

This sense and promise of community continues to be important in the NU agenda. Whereas suburbia inhibits community, new urban villages and towns are designed to promote a sense of community (Till 2001, 1993, Zimmerman 2001, McCann 1995).

The managers and promoters of Seaside, nearing its twentieth birthday, are acutely aware of Seaside’s legacy in neotraditional planning and for the Emerald Coast of Florida’s panhandle. Indeed, driving along Country Road 30-A, you can see duplicates of the Seaside model. Seaside, however, remains the point of origin, and the ingenuity of the “Seaside Story” is presented at information kiosks, the visitor’s center, and the rental agency. The story of Seaside’s inception has become its heritage and is promoted as such.
Figure 3.1 Aerial view of Seaside. Situated on the Emerald Coast in the panhandle of Florida, Seaside is considered the New Urban design experiment. (Photo taken from Katz 1994, 7)

Figure 3.2 Streetscapes of Seaside. The design landscape of Seaside includes tight street frontages, porches, and rear walkways linking house to house. (Photo taken from Katz 1994, 7)
3.5 Traditional Neighborhood Design

From a design perspective, DPZ’s Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) morphology and Peter Calthorpe’s Pedestrian Pockets, or Transit-Oriented Developments (TOD) are the most well-known design templates for NU villages and neighborhoods. One of the fundamental differences between the two is Calthorpe’s commitment to public transportation (Calthorpe 1993). Whereas suburban sprawl is characterized by isolated “pods” dedicated to single uses only accessible to each other by car, a TND is a comprehensive unit, limited in size so that most of the population can reach its center within five walking minutes. A suburb is comprised of cul-de-sacs and looping streets which all funnel into “collector streets,” often resulting in congestion; while a TND should have networked streets, offering alternate routes to most destinations. In suburbia, buildings are often “highly articulated” – meaning rotated on lots and set back from the street. If there are any open or green spaces, they are usually “buffers” for roads or “pedestrian ways” (Duany and Plater-Zyberk, 1991). In marked contrast, buildings in a TND are diverse in function, but compatible in size and orientation to the street. Open spaces are intended for playgrounds, parks, or specialized squares. For Duany and Plater-Zyberk, TNDs give pedestrians of all ages greater independence while reducing automobile usage, traffic congestion, and pollution. This pedestrian emphasis also “gets people out” to know each other, and thereby promotes a sense of “collective security.” They also maintain that TNDs are more egalitarian in that they allow for mixed-residential use, and
consequently can potentially integrate socioeconomic classes, promoting “authentic bonds of community.” All of this runs counter to the suburban model, where privileging the automobile creates an “asphaltic structure” that is both destructive to the natural landscape and costly to maintain, therefore, keeping public funds from more worthwhile endeavors such as schools, cultural buildings, and fire stations. Suburbia also reinforces class structures and isolates children and the elderly who are not as “auto-mobile” as young and middle-aged adults; therefore, for New Urbanists, community is restricted (Tables 3.1 and 3.2) (Duany and Plater-Zyberk 1991).

By using plans inspired by the past, TNDs are intended to encourage people to remember the past. TND’s, however, were always specifically intended for “village” developments. For my own case study in Baton Rouge (and others like it), the challenge for the planners is to effectively apply the principles and design components of New Urbanism to an already existing urban fabric – in this case, downtown Baton Rouge.

3.6 Geography and New Urbanism

Within geography, there are only a handful of articles dealing explicitly with neotraditional planning or New Urbanism, and until recently, there were no articles dealing with in-fill projects like the one being proposed in this dissertation. One way to begin a discussion of some of this literature is to engage with the work dealing explicitly with community because of NU’s explicit promise or provide it. The idea of what constitutes community as a place and people is a popular topic not only within cultural and urban geography, but other academic disciplines as well (Freie
### Table 3.1  Design Elements: Tradition Neighborhood Versus Suburban Sprawl

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND)</th>
<th>Suburban Sprawl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Planning increment (village or town)</td>
<td>Isolated Pods (residential clusters, office parks, shopping centers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited size to allow 5-minute walking buffer to the center of TND</td>
<td>Limited by range of automobile transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networked streets – offering alternate routes to most destinations</td>
<td>Cul-de-sacs and looping streets funnel into “collector” streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streets lined with buildings in a “disciplined” manner</td>
<td>Automobile traffic determines size and scale of streets; parking lots dominate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings have diverse functions but are compatible is size and orientation</td>
<td>Buildings are “highly articulated,” often rotated or set back on lots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic building placed on squares or at street terminations. Open spaces are specialized spaces, playgrounds, and parks.</td>
<td>Open spaces are “buffers” or “pedestrian ways”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Compiled from Duany and Plater-Zyber 1994, 1992, 1991)

### Table 3.2  New Urban Quality Comparisons Between TND’s and Suburban Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positives of TND</th>
<th>Negatives of Suburbia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian bias grants independence and movement to all. Reduction of auto use helps congestion, cost, and pollution</td>
<td>Privileging automobile creates “asphaltic” infrastructure which destroys natural landscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian orientation encourages people to “get out” and know each other and promotes a sense of community.</td>
<td>Dependency on automobile keeps people from “getting out” and experiencing their community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of housing in small area integrates classes, creating “bonds of authentic community.”</td>
<td>Class structure and economic levels are reinforced by clustering houses within price brackets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By providing suitable civic spaces, democratic initiatives are encouraged.</td>
<td>Cost of maintaining infrastructure takes money away from other civic endeavors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Compiled from Duany and Plater-Zyber 1994, 1992, 1991)
1998). While not addressing New Urbanism specifically, Stuart Aitken critiques pervasive monolithic notions of family and community in his book, *Family Fantasies and Community Space*. Drawing from a wide range of social and especially feminist theory, he uses extensive ethnographic data to argue that we are constantly bombarded with historically-based, normative myths of family and community that ignore or often harmfully inhibit the diversity of day-to-day experiences. Consequently, these myths of the monolithic family structure and a small-town community, often based on false nostalgia, have spatial implications that frequently isolate individuals within a family and families within communities (Aitken, 1998). In chapter 6, we will delve more deeply into the power of nostalgia, notions of community, and how they can affect the built landscape.

While grappling with some of the same issues, Evan McKenzie, in his cleverly titled book, *Privatopia*, argues that the economic privatization that occurred throughout the 1980s directly affected housing policies in the form of common-interest developments (CIDs), planned unit developments (PUDs), condominium associations, and cooperative apartments. All of these organizations build upon some notion of what a community should be, and ultimately manifest themselves into small-scale governing organizations. McKenzie maintains that this internal privatization only serves to fragment American cities even further, hindering what he believes to be a better form of community (McKenzie, 1994). Setha Low, writing from an anthropological background, uses oral histories to make a similar argument about “closed” communities (Low 2003). Both Aitken and McKenzie’s work, and to
a lesser extent Low’s, tries to disentangle the normative definitions of “community” and even “family” that we adhere to as we create the places we live. My study, a cultural critique of New Urbanism, also necessitates that the promise of community that suburbia failed to provide be evaluated. In later chapters, I will consider how meanings of “community” have been used throughout the planning process, both by the outside planners, the local offices, and the participating members of the larger Baton Rouge “community.”

Eugene McCann attempts to do something similar in another setting. Dealing specifically with a NU village (meaning it was built as an entirely new development), McCann considers the community sentiment at Kentlands in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Citing the promotional literature, McCann includes the following remarks from Kentlands residents.

The sense of community spirit and easy lifestyle are evident as soon as you enter the community. Life at Kentlands is reminiscent of a simpler time ... as neighbors talk to each other over the picket fences, spread picnics by Inspiration Lake and gather for activities on the village green.

Kentlands gives us the sense of belonging to a community, and the feeling that we are coming home to a “home.”

The safe feeling I have at Kentlands is what I value most. Also, the feeling of “community” is very strong here and participation is greatly encouraged (Kentlands Information Center) (McCann 1995, 217).

The promotional literature is using two key concepts to “strike a chord” with potential home buyers: a sense of community and a simpler time in the past. These ideological concepts are commodified to meet the needs implicit in what is being sold as an antidote for the absence of community and a sense of frantic chaos in everyday life.
Karen Till (1993) looks at another new urban village outside San Diego – Rancho Santa Margarita. She argues that in an effort to promote the residential community, the developers invented a historical tradition for the places they are constructing. In this particular case, the landowners are linked back to the historical O-Neill family who owned the same land in the nineteenth century, and whose philosophy of “caring for the land” should be preserved by those who “dare” to live at Rancho Santa Margarita. In this case then, the Santa Margarita company is appealing to a sense of the past, a sense of community, and the moral action of taking proper care of the environment (Till, 1993).

McCann and Till provide two examples of research on NU villages. Using promotional literature and informal interviewing, they are both able to contribute to an understanding of the appeal of NU places. Promotional literature and boosterism can often provide tremendous insight into how a particular place wants to present itself, or redefine itself to appeal to a different or wider section of consumer society (see for example: Gottdiener, Collins, and Dickens 1999; Hannigan 1998; Gold and Ward 1994; Kearns and Philo 1993; Also Sorkin 1992; Zukin 1995; and Ellin 1996).

Undoubtedly, the most significant contribution to geographical literature on New Urbanism is the spring 2001, special issue of Urban Geography, the idea for which grew out of a paper session at the 1998 Association of American Geographer’s Conference in Boston. At this special session, it became evident that geography’s contribution to the intellectual debate about New Urbanism needed to be articulated in a coherent manner. The special issue was an attempt to do just that. Falconer al-Hindi (2001) answers the seemingly simple question, “Where is NU happening?”
She uses the primary publication of the CNU, *The New Urban News*, to map Traditional Neighborhood Developments – the most common design and code plan for NU sites developed by DPZ architects in Miami – by region and state (Figure 3.3 and 3.4). She also differentiates between infill (working with an existing built environment) and greenfield (brand new sites for development) projects (Figure 3.5). Aside from illustrating that the southeastern and west coast United States have a larger share of these developments than other parts of the country, Falconer Al-Hindi doesn’t make much of the distribution; however, she argues that it visually proves the point that NU is making a significant impact on the American landscape. Since the development of Seaside in Florida over fifteen years ago, over 400 NU developments have been undertaken in the U.S. Her work does not consider the influence of NU in other countries; however, a few geographers, like Karen Till and Eugene McCann, are now in the early stages of grappling with this issue. It should also be mentioned that Al-Hindi’s data is already five years old. With a compilation of new data, the spatial distribution of New Urbanism might have changed in recent years.

Additionally, as New Urban design concepts have been incorporated into mainstream design projects, it becomes increasingly difficult to determine what is New Urban and what is not. To be officially considered an NU project, must the planner or designer have to be a member of the CNU? Or can the design simply be inspired by New Urban principles? This type of ambiguity makes a new spatial distribution more difficult.
Figure 3.3  A spatial distribution of Traditional Neighborhood Developments by region. (Taken from Falconer al-Hindi 2001, 210).

Figure 3.4  Traditional Neighborhood Developments by state. (Taken from Falconer al-Hindi 2001, 211).
After attempting to answer the essentially geographic question of “Where is NU?”, the next two articles consider the implicit environmental rhetoric attached to many New Urban projects. Till (2001), for example, examines the material and discursive use of nature in these places. Planners use nature as a design element in the planning process, but often, this design is promoted as a utopian component, or even Edenic. This “natural” component becomes a key part of the sell – advertising new places for investors and residents who have all been influenced to some degree by the green politics of late capitalism. For this reason, promotional literature, again, proves to be an invaluable resource in researching New Urban places, especially since little empirical research has been done to date. To some degree, Till’s work foreshadows the final chapter of this dissertation as I argue that New Urban interests
have been subsumed, at least to a degree, by broader political discourses associated with “Smart Growth” politics and sustainable development initiatives.

Following Till’s work, Zimmerman takes this ecological critique a step further by considering the NU conservationist community of Prairie Crossing, Illinois. He argues that in selling itself as a nature-conserving and sustainable development, in truth, such places preserve what he calls the “suburban ethos… the inward-looking, secluded, and tranquil community on the edge of the city, where the possibilities of the unknown…are very limited.” (Zimmerman 2001, 264). Both Till and Zimmerman are discussing NU in terms of consumerist intention – how choosing to live in a NU community becomes “symbolic capital,” – a socioeconomic definition of oneself.

McCann’s previously discussed article on Kentlands also looks at this notion of commodifying community. McCann uses Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus” to explain why the American upper-middle class is so receptive to new urban communities. Habitus is comprised of the “principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively ‘regulated’...” in an attempt to “account for practice in its humblest forms – rituals, matrimonial choices, the mundane economic conduct of everyday life, etc.” (Bourdieu 1977, 72; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 121). Habitus, then, is a system of practices and dispositions that create and reinforce particular groups within society. For Bourdieu, these groupings are fundamentally class-based.
For McCann, living in a neo-traditional village is constitutive of an upper-middle class habitus. Reinforcing a habitus involves designating certain goods, or property, as the “symbolic capital” of a particular group. So, by purchasing a house in Kentlands, one can help establish who he is, and who he is not, or as McCann characterizes it – “a sense of one’s place” as well as “a sense of the other’s place” (McCann 1995, 227). Till also discusses this concept as a neotraditionalist production of “geographies of ‘otherness’” (Till 1993). While new urban villages are intended to have low-to-moderate purchasing opportunities, their popularity and uniqueness serve to drastically increase land values. Consequently, the apartment and townhouse opportunities are affordable for middle- and upper-income families only. Therefore, while the plan may allow for integrating socioeconomic groups, the reality of new urban villages is both elitist and exclusive of lower income families and individuals.

In the final article of the special issue, Larry Ford (2001) criticizes much of the previously discussed work by geographers for overemphasizing rhetoric and choosing to focus on the more popular village developments like Disney’s Celebration and Seaside in Florida. To critique the promotional literature of these places is too “easy” according to Ford. Also, using somewhat elusive concepts like community, authenticity, and postmodernism to critique (always in a negative way, says Ford) evades the most basic question we need to ask about New Urbanism – what is the relationship between behavior and design? Ford, though, is not arguing for an anti-theoretical approach; in fact, he thinks the inadequacy of the current literature is due to the way it has randomly selected pieces and parts of other theories.
and applied them quickly and often uncomfortably to where they may not belong. Ford argues for much more empirical work, and he provides a small example of what that work may involve. He surveys members of residences where alleys – a component of many NU designs – exist and are being used, and he tries to find out if alleys are enjoyed, if they promote neighborhood connections, etc. By looking at microscale uses of NU design components, both within and outside of explicitly New Urban spaces, we can try to understand (and then theorize) how NU may help build better communities or more “real” places.

Emily Talen further articulates Ford’s frustration with geographic critiques of New Urbanism. Her key research question is: “Can the social doctrine of new urbanism be successfully supported or at least integrated with the social-science literature that deals with the question of community formation?” (Talen 1999, 1362). If New Urbanists believe that community can be created and encouraged by physical design, and most social scientists argue that the arrogance of this belief is inherently problematic and exclusive, can there be any useful dialogue between practitioners and academics? And while she is critical of what she calls the “culture of criticism” coming out of academia, she also calls for more empirical evidence from New Urbanists that they can deliver all they that promise (Talen 2000). Writing from a planning background, however, Talen’s articles conclude in an unsettling way. She seems to be indirectly arguing that while New Urbanism has its ideological problems, it is still the best thing to date, so why should academics (and geographers specifically) continue to tear it down.
Both Talen and Ford’s critiques, while somewhat narrow in view, do illuminate some potential for further study in geography. Very little research has involved in-fill sights, where NU principles are retrofitted to existing places within cities and suburban towns. However, recently Judith Kenny and Jeff Zimmerman introduce the beginning phases of Milwaukee’s efforts to recreate its image as the “Genuine American City” (Kenny and Zimmerman 2003). New Urbanism is one particular aspect of this effort along with a strong rhetoric of economic neo-liberalism put forth by the city’s mayor, John Norquist, in his leadership and in his book, *The Wealth of Cities* (1998). The local political context for projects like Milwaukee’s new downtown and Plan Baton Rouge is paramount to our understanding of New Urban projects imposed on existing urban landscapes. At these sites, planning becomes messy and complicated not only because of the previously built (and rebuilt, and renewed, and revitalized) environment, but because of the numerous players involved: the planning agencies (both public and private), the political players, the investors, the property-owners, the community activists, the historical preservationists, and so on. I would also agree with both Talen and Ford that empirical research is lacking within this literature. By focusing solely on Baton Rouge as my case site, I see my work as a way of filling in a small part of that void.

### 3.7 Don’t Forget about Disney

A survey of New Urban projects and literature would be far from complete without some discussion of the Disney Corporation’s neotraditional community called Celebration, just outside of Orlando, Florida. Just as Disneyworld grew from the imagination of Walt Disney who was simultaneously unsettled by postwar
suburbia and nostalgic for the small town of his childhood, the town of Celebration was also inspired by discontent with the status quo (Frantz and Collins 1999, Ross 1999, Rymer 1996, Zukin 1995). This master-planned community on 10,000 acres of Disney land promised to provide a new type of living experience for all who lived within (Ross 1999). A promotional brochure summarized all that was promised.

There is place that takes you back to that time of innocence. A place where the biggest decision is whether to play Kick the Can or King of the Hill. A place of caramel apples and cotton candy, secret forts, and hopscotch on the streets. A new American town of block parties and Fourth of July parades. Of spaghetti dinners and school bake sales, lollipops and fireflies in a jar. And while we can’t return to these times we can arrive at a place that embraces all of these things. Someday, 20,000 people will live in Celebration, and for each and every one of them, it will be home (Ross 1999, 18).

Certainly, this rich and nostalgic rhetoric is both enticing and unsettling. Similar to the discontent of Kuntsler, the Disney corporation is promising something that satisfies nostalgic longings of a time (or perceived time) gone by. While Celebration was designed by Disney planners, New Urbanist practitioners were consulted, and the developers held to the design principles of NU as they built the community. They focused on mixed-levels of housing ranging from loft-style apartments to 7,500 square foot homes. They planned a downtown Main Street area with a large grocery store, specialty shops, a movie theatre, and restaurants. Eventually, there would be public schools, a branch of Stetson University, and a medium-sized luxury hotel.

Two books are dedicated to the “Celebration experience,” coincidentally both written by Manhattanites. Celebration, U.S.A. (1999) written by Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins, both New York Times journalists, follows their family as they move from New York to Celebration for one year of their lives. Similarly, The
Celebration Chronicles (1999) traces the experience of one academic, Andrew Ross, a self-proclaimed “twice-divorced single cynic” who commits to spending his sabbatical year living in Disney’s community. Both declare their original intentions to prove that the promise of community is not met; however each has a different resulting experience. Not surprisingly, Celebration is more enjoyable for the family. These two books are the only long-term, somewhat ethnographic projects relating to New Urban communities. Unlike my own project, however, they are experiencing life in a greenfield setting, developed by a private developer from the ground up with a specific project in mind. Indeed, Till and Falconer Al-Hindi lament this absence of ethnographic work challenging others to take on such a task (Falconer Al-Hindi and Till 2001).

3.8 Conclusion

We can conclude this chapter by returning to the subject of it’s beginning – Truman Burbank. The defining moment for Truman, the moment when his life became inauthentic is when he becomes aware of its inauthenticity. The moment where he pushes, punches, and weeps for the reality and certain knowledge of those boundaries because there is no going back to not knowing. Truman is obligated to find a way out, an exit from the only world he has every known. But before he goes, he has what most us can only dream about – a conversation with his creator. He asks the question, “Was nothing real?” His creator, Christof tells him:

You were real. That’s what made you so good to watch. Listen to me, Truman, there’s no more truth out there than in the world I created for you. Same lies, same deceit, but in my world, you have nothing to fear.

So, Truman must decide to stay or go.
Truman’s struggle is perhaps a dramatic representation of what authors like Kuntsler and practitioners like Calthorpe and Duany have tried to articulate in their critiques of suburbia. Focusing specifically on downtown Baton Rouge, this dissertation attempts to integrate some of these ideological critiques with an assessment of the planning process associated with Plan Baton Rouge. To do this, we must first consider the master plan document – \textit{Plan Baton Rouge}. 
Chapter 4. *PLAN BATON ROUGE: THE DOCUMENT*

4.1 Introduction

For one week, starting June 26, 1998, hundreds of residents of Baton Rouge, came out – not to stop a highway, not to stop a high-rise. They came to participate in a planning charrette devoted to the future of Downtown. *Plan Baton Rouge* is the product of that effort and of the months of hard work examining the ideas generated during that exciting week.

*Plan Baton Rouge*

Executive Summary, p. I

Published seven months after the participatory charrette process in July 1998, “*Plan Baton Rouge,*” write its authors, “is not just a document. It is a new way of approaching urban planning and development, one that conceives of public action as an evolving process” (*PBR* 1999, i). This chapter introduces the planning process associated with Plan Baton Rouge and briefly summarizes the planning document. While this dissertation is not a critical analysis of the design projects included in the document, Appendices A and B provide an itemized list of the projects associated with Plan Baton Rouge, as well as a recent project update report. Additionally, this chapter will critically evaluate several textual themes that emerge from the document, particularly that the document is presented as a product of innovative, participatory planning and therefore, represents uncontested support for Plan Baton Rouge.

Secondly, the text of Plan Baton Rouge is lauded by its authors as an open-ended document, to be changed over time. And finally, within the planning document, there are unsettling issues regarding the normative spatialization of different socioeconomic groups. These geographies of exclusion within the Plan directly challenge and contradict the broader ideological promises of New Urban design.
4.2 Plan Baton Rouge

The genesis of Plan Baton Rouge begins a year before the charrette process. In April 1997, one of the founding members of the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU), Stefanos Polyzoides, was the inaugural speaker of a local lecture series. Polyzoides spoke about the revolution of New Urbanism (NU) and ultimately inspired two local non-profit organizations, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and Forum 35, to investigate New Urbanism and its potential in Baton Rouge. The New Urbanism Subcommittee (created by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation) presented its findings to the Baton Rouge Metro Council in February 1998. At the next monthly meeting, the council voted to fund one-third of the proposed cost of hiring a consultant team to apply NU to Baton Rouge’s ever-struggling downtown area. The additional funding had already been promised by a state agency and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

After soliciting proposals from around the country, the town planning firm of Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ), of Seaside fame, was selected to develop a plan for Baton Rouge. Additionally, Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin Lopez Rinehard, Inc., Gibbs Planning Group, Alexander Garvin, and Ferrill Ann Coates (all recommended by DPZ) were also hired for consultation on transportation and retail studies, economic implementation, and streetscape design. Two committees were created to organize the preliminary framework for the consultants’ work in Baton Rouge: the Plan Baton Rouge Steering Committee headed by the Mayor and including 21 community leaders, and the Leadership Committee, a broad-based group of over 300
Baton Rouge residents who had expressed interest in downtown efforts or were recommended by the Plan Baton Rouge leadership (Thomas interview, 1999). The first phase of the public planning process took place June 26-July 2, 1998, kicking off with a public lecture by Andres Duany, at which hundreds of Baton Rougeans listened to a two-hour presentation on the history of urban planning in America. As the community was introduced to the planning team, the lecture highlighted local architectural traditions and urbanism, and through old photographs and planning documents, provided a visual reminder of pre-war urbanism, with the intention of opening the participants’ imaginations to what is possible. Understanding this is key to the entire process, because, as will be discussed in chapter 6, NU draws from planning methodologies of the past. “The way things used to be” becomes a powerful tool in engaging both the local planners and community participants.

The week was conducted as a charrette, an intense planning period over a few days, instead of many weeks and months. From an architectural tradition, a charrette is a combination of design studio and town meeting recently made popular by private consulting firms, especially DPZ and other New Urban practitioners (Dutton 2000, Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck 2000, Falconer Al-Hindi and Till 2001). Since 1967, however, the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team Program (R/UDAT), under the leadership of the American Institute of Architects, has been using a similar process to facilitate community-oriented planning and policy debates, although they do not utilize the term “charrette” in their literature (R/UDAT: Planning Your Community’s Future, www.aia.org/rudat). Their planning strategy involves a four-phase process that, like the charrettes in Plan Baton Rouge, depends extensively on
local planner participation, public input, and media promotion. What is particularly unique about the R/UDAT program is that architects and planners from around the country volunteer much of their time and services to communities who want to participate. More recently, the charrette structure has been appropriated and formalized by planners and community groups to facilitate an “authentic” public and truly democratic experience (Lennertz 1999). The National Charrette Institute, for example, is committed to promoting collaborative planning and community building services for any group interested. They offer services as “charrette consultants” as well as offer seminars and lectures in a series called “Charrette 101” (National Charrette Institute, www.charrettinstitute.org). The charrette is promoted as a “hands-on” experience with maps, photographs, and lots of pencils for frantic notetaking and spontaneous designs. In Baton Rouge, Duany and his team spent their days getting to know the city, talking with local planners, architects and citizens about their frustrations with and hopes for their community. The local newspaper published a daily schedule so participants would know which area of downtown was the focus at a particular meeting. Each afternoon, the planning team presented its work for that day at a Public Design Review session, at which point anyone could ask questions, make suggestions, and share their opinions.

For proponents of the charrette process, the time constraints and intensity of the experience, while often stressful, can provide a necessary momentum for the overall project. The design team works frantically to synthesize ideas from participants, while continuing to walk the city and prepare designs and sketches. This momentum and the uniqueness of the experience can help galvanize local support.
This local support is critical as it will ultimately fall to local planners, politicians, and activists to ensure that whatever design projects are proposed work through the local approval and implementation process, which may take months or even years.

Secondly, proponents of this style of public planning argue, the isolation and intensity of the charrette experience can encourage a concentrated, higher quality of work (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, Speck 2000, Lennertz 1999). Away from the additional constraints of a standard office environment, the pressure of a deadline and the close connection between practitioners and the community encourage fresh and innovative design and problem solving. For a few days, everyone is focused on the task at hand, and that will never be the case again. At its best, a charrette offers the public an opportunity to truly engage with its community leaders and make meaningful suggestions for their city. Nevertheless, a charrette is seen as something inherently different from and more exciting than traditional planning meetings where Roberts Rules of Order are standard operating procedure.

In Baton Rouge, the charrette experience was promoted as a new type of public-oriented planning. Participatory planning of this nature was not something that had been actively incorporated into planning prior to Plan Baton Rouge (Fluhr interview, 2004). Certainly, public meetings had been part of the local planning process before 1998, however, actually getting people to participate was something that planners in downtown and the city-parish office had struggled with for years (Fluhr interview, 2004). The previously mentioned R/UDAT program of the American Institute of Architects did conduct a series of meetings in Baton Rouge in 1986. While the purpose of their urban design was to assess the entire city of Baton
Rouge, one of the recommendations made by the AIA team was to promote “urban density” in the direction of the historic downtown (Baton Rouge Advocate 1986a, 1986b, 1986c). The overall recommendation of the team, however, was that Baton Rouge needed a large-scale comprehensive land-use plan.

This recommendation played a significant role in what would come to be known as the Horizon Plan. In the late 1980s, a series of public meetings were held regarding the development of a city-wide land use plan. These meetings, however, were not city-wide and did not follow the planning structure that had been used during the R/UDAT process. The parish was divided into over 16 planning districts, and the public meetings addressed each district individually and spanned over months and years (Thomas interview, 2004). The feedback, then, between the public and the planning team was inefficiently slow and delayed for months at a time. While initial public participation was present at the initial phase of these meetings, by the time the follow-up occurred, interest had waned (Thomas interview, 2004). In contrast, the fast pace, the constant public “feedback loop,” and the level of publicity before the charrette week created a collective curiosity about what was actually going to happen. The tremendous publicity, in particular, created a public excitement and an expectation for something different (Angelette 1998a, 1998b, Guarisco 1998d, 1998e, 1998f). The charismatic personality of Andres Duany and other members of the

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1 While beyond the scope of this dissertation, the R/UDAT program offered a unique, participatory style planning experience comparable to that of Plan Baton Rouge, despite the fact that only a small number of Baton Rouge residents participated. That the process was not used in later planning projects like the Horizon Plan suggests that the public reaction (or lack of participation) was not as positive as that associated with Plan Baton Rouge. Additionally, throughout my research, not one of my informants discussed this planning process that occurred only twenty years ago. The implication for this study is the question: what will be remembered of the Plan Baton Rouge experience?
consulting team strengthened this public interest. Indeed, dynamic leadership is considered an essential component of successful charrette planning (Lennertz 1999).

At the time of the charrette process in Baton Rouge, there were 22,000 state, city, and private workers in the downtown area everyday. Due to the efforts of Governor Mike Foster and a strong commitment of support from many State offices, 3,000 more government workers would be relocated downtown within two years. At the same time, the Downtown Development District estimated that as many as 100,000 people traveled downtown everyday for various reasons. However, only about 2,000 people lived in the downtown area, including the two historic neighborhoods. Despite this, that the State, the city, and public and private interests were all collaborating in this process was a remarkable moment for Baton Rouge. At the first public meeting, participants were asked to brainstorm their concerns and aspirations for the downtown renewal process. These suggestions were summarized and included in the introduction to the Plan Baton Rouge document. They are listed below:

- Improve the image of Downtown as the common center of the city.
- Encourage municipal and state regulators to become proactive rather than procedural.
- Capitalize on work already in progress.
- Emphasize the identity of individual neighborhoods within Downtown.
- Establish the Downtown as a cultural center.
- Retain and maintain historical landmarks.
- Streamline the permitting process for building and renovation.
- Create an ongoing forum for citizens to discuss and control their destiny.
- Emphasize the Downtown’s status as the State Capital.
- Promote Downtown as the place to showcase Baton Rouge to visitors.
- Expand the areas of historic preservation.
- Present the Downtown as a focus for civic pride.
- Create a “sense of place” Downtown.
- Confirm the city and state alliance in support of Downtown.
- Celebrate diversity.
• Promote Downtown as the city’s spiritual, cultural, and economic center.
• Make use of existing infrastructure.
• Create a 24-hour city: a place for living, working, shopping, and recreating.
• Take advantage of the Mississippi River.
• Create a pedestrian experience in contrast to the suburban surroundings.
• Set an example for planning beyond the Downtown.
• Promote the economic impact of urban revitalization.
• Maintain a focus on the needs of Downtown residents.
• Focus on history and heritage as a marketing theme.
• Showcase the regional architectural style (*PBR* 1999, I-1.2).

While lengthy and broad in scope, this list summarizes the major themes of discussion prior to the final presentation of the plan. The last part of the charrette process was a four-hour presentation with over 500 people attending, hundreds of whom had to watch in another room on television monitors (Figure 4.1). The presentation was a summary of the proposed projects that were eventually included in the Plan Baton Rouge document.

DPZ’s first draft of the document was given to the director of Plan Baton Rouge in September, at which time Duany also publicly presented an updated summary of the Plan. In the weeks following, the Steering Committee, under the guidance of Elizabeth “Boo” Thomas, the Plan Baton Rouge Coordinator, and Mayor Tom McHugh, formed various task forces to assess and edit the Plan Baton Rouge document (Thomas 1999). Several additional public meetings were held during this time. According to the local media, there was little outright opposition to the plan (Guarisco 1998o). Nearly six months later, the final document was completed and made available to the public. The Plan was presented to the Metro Council in a “workshop” format. Because of the broad scope of the Master Plan, the Council was not asked to vote or approve the Plan. Rather the Steering Committee determined that individual job items would be submitted for approval on a case-by-case basis and
Figure 4.1. Duany Presents the Final Proposal. After a week-long charrette, Andres Duany and his design team make a four-hour presentation to hundreds of Baton Rouge citizens. The emotional connection to and enthusiasm for Duany’s proposal was palpable. (Photo taken from Baton Rouge Advocate, Guarisco 1998l).

only when approval was warranted. That the Metro Council represents the entire city and parish and Plan Baton Rouge addresses only a small place and population of that city caused concern for the Plan Baton Rouge leadership. Heightened by the fact that this process was occurring in an election year, Council approval was never aggressively sought out by Plan Baton Rouge (Thomas interview, 2004).

Just over 120 pages long and printed in an 11” x 17” format, the document is organized around the districts and neighborhoods that make up downtown Baton Rouge: Catfish Town, Old State Capitol, State Capitol, Central Business District, Beauregard Town and Spanish Town Neighborhoods. Also, the plan focused on the corridors linking these districts, specifically the Downtown Parks Corridor to connect Catfish Town with the State Capitol district, Riverfront Parkway Corridor in Catfish
Town along the River, and the Seventh Street Corridor linking the two historic neighborhoods of Spanish and Beauregard Town. The plan also addressed more general issues regarding Commercial Development, Transportation, Codes, Streetscape and Implementation. In total, there were over 100 projects, or action items, listed in the Plan Baton Rouge document. These projects are itemized in Appendix A. Additionally, Appendix B has the most recent update on the status of these projects. Below is a general summary of the projects proposed, divided according the district and neighborhood distinctions listed above.

4.3 Catfish Town District (CTD)

The Catfish Town District (Figure 4.2) is considered a visitor’s destination comprised of the Naval Museum, the Centroplex, the Louisiana Arts and Science Museum, the Pennington Planetarium (which opened May 2003) and the two parking garages associated with the Centroplex Convention Center and Arena. The primary recommendation was that the road infrastructure be redesigned to better incorporate these facilities with the rest of downtown. Also, the design team recommended the creation of a public square to strengthen the relationship between all of these buildings and their various functions. A downtown hotel, atrium renovation, and redesign of the Riverfront Plaza, an open area near the Centroplex, were also encouraged. A 100,000 square foot convention center was a major project for CTD, focusing not only on the expansion but the aesthetics of the design. Centroplex Liner Buildings were proposed to help assuage the “exceedingly hostile façade” of the current design (PBR 1999, II-1.2).
Figure 4.2 The Catfish Town District. (Plan Baton Rouge 1999, II-1.1)
Figure 4.3  Old State Capitol District (Plan Baton Rouge 1999, II-2.1)
4.4 The Old State Capitol District (OSCD)

Starting at the Old State Capitol and expanding eastward, the Old State Capitol District is promoted as the potential cultural and arts center of downtown (Figure 4.3). The largest project associated with this district is the renovation of the old AutoHotel to become an Arts Center to house galleries, studios, art classes, and retail space. The document also proposed an eventual city hall, specifically for the Mayor and his administration, which would be designed and incorporated within the fabric of the Arts Center. Also recommended were the renovations of Lafayette Park and new construction of a building for the State Capitol Center for Political and Governmental History and Baton Rouge Recreation and Park Commission.

4.5 The State Capitol District (SCD)

Part of the reason that the process associated with Plan Baton Rouge was so well-supported was that Governor Mike Foster and the state government had already committed to implement a State Capitol Complex Master Plan (Figure 4.4). The new construction and renovation associated with this plan is considered an essential element, if not the driving force of downtown development. With this Master Plan, for example, 3,000 additional state workers would soon be driving and parking downtown for work on a daily basis. Also part of this plan was the construction of an East and West Parking Garage (now referred to as Galvez and LaSalle garages respectively) to accommodate parking demand. Both garages would have bottom floor facilities like a fitness club or a downtown market and be designed to blend with the aesthetics associated with New Urbanism and Plan Baton Rouge.
4.6 Central Business District (CBD)

The Central Business District (CBD) is considered the heart of downtown entertainment and retail (Figure 4.5). Third Street was the historical retail center of downtown and is, according to the plan, positioned to be so again. The retail study associated with Plan Baton Rouge estimated that there is a market for 150,000 to 300,000 square feet of commercial space downtown. The plan recommended the creation and support of a Downtown Merchants Association, a consortium of business owners who have common goals and hopes for downtown.

In addition, the West Parking Garage was already being constructed and designed to house a fitness center on the bottom floor with aesthetically pleasing street frontages. As an anchor for Third Street Retail, the plan encouraged a movie theater on the corner of Third Street and Laurel to promote entertainment traffic downtown. Other recommendations were a community performing arts center, sidewalk galleries and street frontages for businesses, a community police outlet, and the continuation of the phantom gallery project – which displayed art spontaneously throughout downtown in the window fronts of vacant commercial spaces. They also made two policy-oriented recommendations: that state workers have the option of a one-hour or half-hour lunch break to take advantage of new businesses, and that the prohibition against outdoor dining be removed from restaurant guidelines.
Figure 4.4 The State Capitol District (Plan Baton Rouge 1999, II-3.1)
Figure 4.5  The Central Business District (Plan Baton Rouge 1999, II-4.1)
4.7 Beauregard Town Neighborhood (BTN)

East of Catfish Town and the Old State Capitol area rests Beauregard Town Neighborhood (BTN) (Figure 4.6). Considered an area of urban disinvestment, many parts of BTN are considered through-ways or short-cuts to other places nearby. Therefore, most of the recommendations for this area involved new traffic patterns that would slow down traffic flow and discourage this type of activity. They also recommended a Beauregard Playground and other public areas. New investment would be encouraged here, in the form of small businesses and residents who are willing and able to purchase and renovate properties in the area. According to the plan and the broader principles of New Urbanism, a neighborhood such as this should be walkable and safe.

4.8 Spanish Town Neighborhood (STN)

Because of its proximity to the Capitol Complex, Spanish Town is also subject to fast-flowing traffic (Figure 4.7). Traffic patterns that support this type of traffic were to be restructured to discourage it. According to the document, speed limits should be restricted to 25 miles per hour. Also, the open land near Spanish Town should be acquired by the city to prevent the construction of “destructive buildings” \((PBR\ 1999,\ IV-2.1)\). In other words, with this acquisition, the city and local civic association would have control over the type of development, if any, which should occur. The plan strongly encouraged the city to restrict commercial development and preserve the residential fabric of Spanish Town. They also proposed additions to Arsenal Park including a Dog Run and a Pavillion. While
Figure 4.6 The Beauregard Town Neighborhood (Plan Baton Rouge 1999, IV-1.2)
Figure 4.7 The Spanish Town Neighborhood (Plan Baton Rouge 1999, IV-2.1)
many of these responsibilities were assigned to Plan Baton Rouge and the Downtown Development District, some of these improvements would ultimately have to be initiated and supported by the Spanish Town Civic Association.

Some of the neighborhood projects involve both Spanish Town and Beauregard Town. In keeping with NU design principles, the Plan strongly recommends that both neighborhoods strengthen and maintain clear edges, delimited by landscaped streetscapes, but also clear signage that tells passers-by that they are in Beauregard Town or Spanish Town. This contributes to a stronger “sense of place,” that can strengthen the neighborhood identity of these areas. Also, many of the streets in these neighborhoods have brick pavement beneath the asphalt. With strong civic and home owner’s associations, such aesthetic projects, like excavating brick pavements, become very feasible. The plan also expressed concern about the sidewalk conditions. Many surfaces were damaged by tree roots. In order to encourage and facilitate a pedestrian-oriented downtown, one of the fundamental principles of New Urbanism, these sidewalks should be fixed. Other suggestions included the removal of all unused utility structures, reinstating old street names based on the residents’ opinions, and installing parking meters where appropriate.

4.9 General Elements of the Plan

After addressing each of the above districts, the Plan Baton Rouge document assessed the commercial development potential for the downtown area. Filling retail voids was considered essential to generating the economic base needed for the overall success of the plan. The consultant team recommended that based on population potential, Downtown could support the following:
• 1 major department store
• 15,000 square foot Public Market and Farmer’s Market
• 20,000 square feet of drug/convenience store
• 17,000 square feet of restaurant/bar establishments
• 3,800 square feet of personal service retailers
• 3,900 square feet of coffee and bagel shops
• 2,000 square feet for tapes/CD/record retailers
• 15,000 square feet for office supply store
• 18,000 square feet for bookstore
• 1,000 square feet for ice cream parlor
• 18,000 square feet for apparel services
• 5,000 square feet for fashion footwear
• 3,000 square feet for fast-food operation
• 10,000 square feet for health club operation (PBR 1999, V-1.4)

Transportation improvements were also considered essential to the overall success of the masterplan. The general goal was to implement “livable traffic” throughout downtown (PBR 1999, V-2.1) The consultants recommended restoring two-way traffic on larger streets such as Main and North Streets, reclaiming River Road for pedestrians by slowing down traffic and reducing the number of traffic lanes, and installing pedestrian crosswalks throughout downtown where appropriate. One of the greatest challenges for the transportation team was the concern over Government Street, a four-lane east-west artery through Beauregard Town to the River Road. The consultants recommended a large-scale “reclamation” of Government Street with the overriding goal of making some blocks on the street pedestrian-friendly. Specific suggestions included reasserting historic town squares, reducing the speed limit, eliminating a high-speed curve at the connection between Government and River Road, and encouraging alternate routes through downtown. Similar reclamation projects were proposed for other arteries such as River Road and Capitol Access Road.
The transportation consultant team also recommended long-term planning to accommodate alternative modes of travel. They proposed major bicycle paths throughout downtown and encouraged future consideration of some sort of downtown shuttle running constantly throughout the workday. Finally, the team proposed taking advantage of the rail infrastructure along the river to have a light rail route between Louisiana State University to the south and Southern University to the north, stopping at strategic points along the way. Additionally, although beyond the purview of Plan Baton Rouge, it was suggested that the city of Baton Rouge encourage the restoration of regional rail service, using downtown as a terminus.

The consultants also addressed what they considered to be the inadequacy of the zoning codes for Downtown Baton Rouge. They argued that many of the codes derived from suburban practices, not for downtown urban areas. Ultimately, the consultants recommended a new Zoning Ordinance that would ensure the appropriate kind of development in compliance with the overall principles of Plan Baton Rouge. Again, such a project was considered beyond the scope of the plan.

The last sub-heading of projects involved the Streetscape in General (SIG). The overall goals of this section are listed below:

- Define a pedestrian way,
- Create a pedestrian scale, and
- Enhance district identity.

Using these fundamental design elements of New Urbanism, each of the five downtown districts were considered and recommendations made with these larger goals in mind. The proposed projects included extensive landscaping, well-
constructed sidewalks, clear district signage in appropriate style, and enhancing a
“sense of place” where there is remarkable architecture or setting – for example, the
Old State Capitol, the Capitol Building, and the Riverfront.

4.10 Critically Considering Plan Baton Rouge

As mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, textual interpretations of
landscape have revolutionized methodologies associated with cultural geography
(Barnes and Duncan 1992, Duncan 1990, Duncan and Duncan 1988, Cosgrove
1984). However, the representational and symbolic quests that such work encourages
can be applied to what we might call literal texts as well, that is written documents.
Just as a landscape can be filled with undercurrents of social and political meaning, so
can the written words of authors, poets, planners, and politicians be laden with
messages beyond the written word. A planning document, like Plan Baton Rouge,
provides a rare opportunity for textual consideration because it is explicitly and
consciously a future-oriented, ideologically based endeavor.

With a similar task in mind, Judith Kenny employs the concept of textual
communities to assess a comprehensive planning document in Portland, Oregon.
Using Brian Stock’s term, she defines textual community as “what brings people
together and makes them act” and “the articulation of a text within the group and the
binding of a group’s behavior to the rules set forth in the text (Kenny 1992, 179;
Stock 1986). Using this definition, we could argue that the entire Plan Baton Rouge
experience, particularly the charrettes of 1998, served to create such a textual
community, in which the “rules” of New Urbanism were “articulated,” thereby
establishing an a priori system of meaning throughout the planning process. Indeed,
the next two chapters illustrate how this did occur through the use of powerful themes of learning New Urbanism, situating New Urbanism within the history of American planning, and ultimately, seeing Baton Rouge as a part of that larger story. This chapter, however, focuses on the written document.

*Plan Baton Rouge*, the document, is presented as a consensus between all of the participants of the 1998 charrette process. As previously mentioned, the drafting of the document, however, actually occurred weeks and months after the charrette by the consultant team and the Plan Baton Rouge leadership. A local printing shop sells copies of the document for $22.50. Additionally, most local libraries have at least one copy for reference use. *Plan Baton Rouge* is the primary written document for Plan Baton Rouge and is regarded as a direct result of the charrette planning process.

About the charrette process in general, Todd Bressi writes:

The New Urbanists place an enormous importance on communicating their proposals in terms that decision makers and everyday citizens can easily grasp, and their presentations are as strong on style as on substance. Calthorpe and Duany [the two most famous pioneers of NU] can be charismatic and compelling public speakers. DPZ’s proposals are often accompanied by captivating if overly romantic perspectives that emphasize the picturesque quality of the firm’s town plans and architectural visions (Bressi 1994, xxxvii).

The visual presentation of the plan, then, is explicitly intended to be both accessible to most people and representative of the ideals of New Urbanism. *Plan Baton Rouge* supports Bressi’s argument. It’s 11” by 17” watercolor renderings of streetscapes with liner buildings and public spaces promise much for the future of Baton Rouge (Figures 4.8 and 4.9). Within the larger context of the Plan Baton Rouge process, the document is a New Urbanism tutorial, that is, a practical guide to implementing New Urban design principles in downtown Baton Rouge. As
part of their design tenets, New Urban practitioners use discrete planning entities like Neighborhood, District, and Corridor to organize urban areas (CNU 2000). In Plan Baton Rouge, this same structure is used to outline the proposed projects as well as the planning document itself. The commitment to the streetscape and landscape design is also evident as the document contains dozens of pages of streetscape drafts and proposed liner buildings that “should be safe, comfortable, and interesting to the pedestrian. Properly configured, they encourage walking and enable neighbors to know each other and protect their communities” (CNU Charter, 2000).

The document then not only provides specific projects to be implemented in Baton Rouge; it also serves as a reference guide for those who read it, instilling the design precepts of New Urbanism. Several times within the document, this is clearly stated, as in “The recommendations are based upon the principles of New Urbanism…” (PBR 1999, V-5.2). However, for those familiar with the general design principles of NU, this is evident throughout the document. For example, under the heading of a specific project called Government Street Correction (BTN-1), the design team recommends the widening of sidewalks. In the broader discussion of this action, we read: “Four lanes for speeding traffic, no on-street parking, no trees, small sidewalks, long distance signage, and buildings behind parking lots all combine to make this street a visual blight” (PBR 1999, IV-1.1). Relating to a specific site in Downtown, important NU design elements (reduced traffic, landscaping, and pedestrian-oriented elements) are introduced and prescribed on the built landscape. While this may not seem remarkable when we
Figure 4.8  Artist rendering of proposed Liner Buildings that will mask Centroplex Façade. (*Plan Baton Rouge* 1999, cover page).

Figure 4.9. Artist rendering of proposed Public Square adjacent to Centroplex. (*Plan Baton Rouge* 1999, cover page).
consider that DPZ has played an integral part in establishing the CNU and writing TND codes, I argue that learning (and teaching) New Urbanism has been an essential dynamic of exchange throughout the Plan Baton Rouge process. As I discuss in the following chapter, this dynamic has empowered local planners and participants to continue the “essence” – that is, the lessons learned about pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use planning – of Plan Baton Rouge, even as projects have changed from their original design. This acquired knowledge and planning method, as I further argue in Chapter 7, extends beyond the scope of Plan Baton Rouge into other planning projects in the city.

It follows then that New Urbanism must be considered something beyond its design principles. Phrases used throughout the document like “sense of place,” “pedestrian way,” or “experience,” and “streetscape” would have different meanings if separated from the ideals of New Urbanism. Pedestrian Way, for example, is described in the following manner:

Visitors will be interested in recreation, entertainment, education, and inspiration. They will want to know about Baton Rouge’s unique features and how to find them easily. A pedestrian way must be provided and enhanced with safe and inviting places for both quiet and social activity. The Pedestrian Way should connect both existing and proposed features, and guide visitors through the district corridors in a pleasant sequence (PBR 1999, V-5.2).

A pedestrian way, then, must provide more than just a walkable path. Pedestrians must be guided through Downtown in a clearly defined and obvious way. What is considered “unique” is highlighted by design and literal signs that tell the pedestrian to stop here, or there, all the while providing a “safe” and “pleasant” experience. The Plan does not simply define these terms in general ways. It
customizes these concepts to the place of Baton Rouge itself. For example, the authors define a “sense of place.”

A crucial quality of a sense of place for people is a landscape that is visually coherent with its life and activities. There should be some sense of what makes each place different from other places. Native trees contribute to the sense of place. This Mississippi River is a strong and important natural feature, which could contribute strongly to a sense of place Downtown. Regional architecture and landscape design are recommended to enhance a district’s sense of place. Civic Art should be incorporated in the districts, corridors, and neighborhoods, in collaboration with the Arts Council and Create Baton Rouge (*PBR 1999, V-5.2*).

Using NU concepts like “pedestrian way” and “sense of place” have general meanings (within the context of NU design and methodology) but are also directly applied to Downtown Baton Rouge. The shift from general to place-specific demonstrates how NU can be customized directly for Baton Rouge.

Further, there are inherent social, political, and environmental agendas scattered throughout the language of the document. For example, American zoning is directly challenged. In proposing a Special Zoning District for the downtown neighborhoods, the authors are reiterating their larger message that this country’s planning system has failed to create livable towns and neighborhoods. Even though revising local zoning regulations is not an explicit part of Plan Baton Rouge, strong recommendations are made in a section entitled, “Codes in General.” The plan reads:

The existing Zoning Map makes use of eleven zoning categories for the Downtown. These zoning techniques, derived from postwar suburban practice, do not serve well the traditional urban fabric of the Downtown. Over the years, the existing code has become increasingly complicated. It now requires simplification if development is to be easy and predictable; two very real incentives for developers (*PBR 1999, V-4.4*).
In serving to “simplify” things, the authors proceed to designate new codes based on the New Urban morphology of District, Neighborhood, and Corridor, with clear distinctions between Center and Edge. These are fundamental morphological concepts and beliefs of New Urban design, included within the very text of the CNU’s charter (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, 2000, CNU 2000). Extending beyond implications of the Plan Baton Rouge process, the development and use of this Code System is an inherently political task promoted by Duany and the CNU to further their urban and community design that creates, in their view, better cities, neighborhoods, and towns.

The document also reiterates the strong anti-suburb or anti-sprawl rhetoric that is a vital part of New Urban discourse. The first exhibit in the document is a visual representation of three scales: 1) the Mall of Louisiana – a newly constructed, indoor-shopping mall off of Interstate-10 in Baton Rouge; 2) the downtown core of Savannah, Georgia (one of the American towns celebrated by New Urbanists for its compact, architecturally-coherent design; and 3) the downtown area of Baton Rouge (Figure 4.10). Visually, we are immediately told what is unacceptable and what is ideal, and then encouraged to consider what may be.

The suburban experience of Baton Rouge is also mentioned as a potential barrier to progress for New Urbanism. In the Introduction, the authors argue that while Plan Baton Rouge will be implemented gradually, there is strong evidence of a fast rate of progress due to projects already underway, the number of relatively inexpensive projects that can occur almost immediately regarding
Figure 4.10  Downtown Baton Rouge in its Regional Context. Visually, this schematic compares the density of Savannah to that of Baton Rouge downtown, as well as “sprawling” Baton Rouge (a newly constructed shopping mall off of Interstate 10) (Plan Baton Rouge 1999, I-1.3).
traffic flow and congestion, and the “outpouring of support evidenced during the participatory planning phase” (PBR 1999, I-1.2). The next statement reads:

“Against the prospect of success, however, must be set the competing needs of the struggling neighborhoods within sight of the Downtown as well as the general lack of urban consciousness of the suburban majority of Baton Rouge” (PBR 1999, I-1.2).

The phrase “needs of struggling neighborhoods” alludes to both financial resources needed to address some of the residential problems that may not directly benefit from the public-private partnerships nurtured to help finance Plan Baton Rouge as well as to the socioeconomic disparity between residential areas both included and excluded from the Plan. While no specific neighborhood is mentioned, the authors of Plan Baton Rouge are referring not to Spanish Town or Beauregard Town, the two neighborhoods included in the plan. Rather, they are referring to the residential neighborhoods north, south, and east of downtown.²

During the charrette meetings, some community leaders expressed concern about the exclusion of these neighborhoods from the broader projects of the Plan. An article in the newspaper declared that the “downtown plan won’t help the poor” of Baton Rouge and criticized the highly selective geography of the Plan in that it “intentionally stops at the boundaries of downtown” (Guarisco 1998n, 1B).

Just a few days following, however, an editorial in the Baton Rouge Advocate declared that in the “long march” towards a better downtown, we need the “discipline to take one step at a time” (Baton Rouge Advocate, Editorial

² One of these neighborhoods, recently referred to as Old South Baton Rouge, was included in an 18.6 million dollar Hope VI federal grant awarded in spring 2003. However, at the time of Plan Baton Rouge’s publication, such neighborhoods were not being incorporated into the plan.
In a letter to the Editor, Duany responded to Guarisco’s critique, asserting that public debate and concern for these neighborhoods proximal to downtown revolved around their displacement if property values increased too quickly as downtown revitalization spread outward.

We concluded that these neighborhoods needed a strategy to address this displacement issue before it became critical. We regretted that we did not have a technique at hand for this; that the principal difficulty was that the residents themselves generally welcomed the rise in value of their property and that it would be unfair to deprive them of it against their wishes. We concluded that we would research the implications of this phenomenon, particularly in West Palm Beach, where a similar downtown plan has been in place for several years. This level of concern and foresight by the Steering Committee of the Master Plan strikes me as the height of responsible leadership. I have encountered none better (Duany 1998).

The unresolved issue of how to reconcile the exclusion of neighborhoods beyond downtown, as well the socioeconomic state of these “struggling” residents, is presented as a potential hindrance to the positive and productive momentum of the planning process. More importantly, in trying to counter Guarisco’s critique, Duany’s letter to the editor uncovers a neglected, or at least highly problematic aspect of the Master Plan and perhaps New Urbanism more generally: while the rhetoric of New Urban design promises socioeconomic diversity, the site-specific and practical application of those design elements is often diluted with uncertainty and “we will see” resignation. We will return to this issue below.

Also presented as a potential stumbling block for the Plan’s success is a “lack of urban consciousness,” suggesting that suburban Baton Rougeans may not be as interested in downtown revitalization as proponents of PBR would like. A local editorial to the paper perhaps exemplifies this condition. Regarding living
downtown, one Baton Rouge suburbanite writes: “A few adventuresome souls
may not mind living in antiquated housing that is cramped and jammed and
lacking in the amenities of new homes” (Kent 1998). Another concerned citizen
asks the State employees being relocated to Downtown to consider what is being
asked of them:

Are they [state employees] aware that this will bring approximately
10,000 new state employees and their cars downtown? Are they aware
that five lanes of existing usage on River Road, Government and North
Streets are going to be cut out? Are they aware that this development
plan is seeking to build the new parking garages so employees will
have to walk farther to and from work, so they will have time to visit
shops in the downtown area?
State employees need to wake up! Quit being used. Let your voices
be heard (Webb 1998).

For this “lack of urban consciousness,” the implied antidote is a new and
improved consciousness based on the principles set forth in the document and in
New Urbanism more generally. Indeed, a major argument of this dissertation is
that one of the primary purposes of the entire Plan Baton Rouge process is to
educate people about NU notions of good urban places. But, there is a more
disturbing question that arises following this excerpt from the document: for
whom is Plan Baton Rouge? That is, who will benefit from the projects proposed
in downtown Baton Rouge?

The document also presents the Plan Baton Rouge process as just that – “an
evolving process…that began months prior to the charrette and will continue for years
to come” (PBR 1999, i). All of the proposed projects within the plan are presented in
various stages of planning or implementation. The document continues,

One thing is certain: they will all change and change many times over
the life of Plan Baton Rouge. For that reason this document is
contained in a three-ring binder that makes it easy to remove, replace, or add pages as conditions change and projects are executed (PBR 1999, i).

Therefore, this organic, open-ended document represents the “best advice” of the planning team at the time of its publication. They acknowledge that it will need to be “corrected” and “updated” as necessary. However, local planners are warned that:

Modifications to the Plan must be carefully considered, particularly the removal of recommendations…. Some of the recommendations may seem impossible under current circumstances, usually due to an absence of consensus or of resources, they are nevertheless an ideal that should not be eliminated (PBR 1999, I-1.2).

The document is to be viewed as malleable, but also as an “ideal” to be preserved and promoted in the landscape. Planning documents are, by definition, prescriptive. They are describing what should be. Plan Baton Rouge is certainly no exception; however, this document allows for local players to ultimately make changes when deemed appropriate.

Participants in the Plan Baton Rouge process have been encouraged to see New Urbanism more generally, and the projects associated with Plan Baton Rouge, as fundamentally different from anything tried before. For example, the initial statement of the plan, included at the beginning of this chapter, states that people came “not to stop a highway, not to stop a high-rise.” Rather, they came to be a part of something different, and something positive. Through the language of the document and New Urbanism, the authors separate Plan Baton Rouge from other failed efforts made to revitalize downtown Baton Rouge.

The weakest section of the plan deals with residential concerns for the downtown neighborhoods – Spanish Town and Beauregard Town. When we
reconsider the original list of goals included at the beginning of the document only three of the 25 relate explicitly to residential concerns. There are perhaps at least two reasons why this is so. First, most action taken in these neighborhoods will have to be initiated and approved by residential organizations. Secondly, although strongly supported by the Downtown Development District, Plan Baton Rouge, and their private partners, the financial support for residential projects does not often fall under the purview of the public-private relationships created for large-scale projects like the Centroplex renovation and the Arts Block (PBR 1999, I-1.2; See also Hall and Hubbard 1998, Hall 1997). As previously mentioned, the plan for these two neighborhoods focuses on limiting “short-cut” traffic through residential areas and promoting (and restricting) the aesthetics of the traditional architecture and streetscapes. Although the planning document has some strong recommendations for these neighborhoods, these standards and “aesthetics” will have to be promoted and further negotiated by local planners, but also by local, mostly resident-oriented groups, which may or may not produce results. For example, the city government can remove extruding tree stumps and repair the sidewalk infrastructure; however, changing street names (so that a street will have the same name from one end to another) or designating a dog-run inside a local park will have to be accomplished through residential associations and the proper parish protocol (PBR 1999, IV 3.1).

Beyond the two residential neighborhoods, the plan does make some strong and unsettling suggestions for “in-fill” housing. In a section entitled, “Affordable Housing,” the project argues that there is considerable demand for affordable housing in downtown Baton Rouge. This statement is based on the commercial market report
included in the plan. The authors recommend taking advantage of state and federal
tax programs that offer incentives for property owners who provide housing to people
who earn less than one-half of the area’s median income. Financial resources and
incentives appear to be the greatest obstacle in promoting economic diversity.

Financial incentives aside, the primary design proposal for this “affordable
housing” involves liner buildings, defined as “exceedingly thin residential buildings,
no wider than a row of parking stalls, that retain the parking below while creating
apartments above” (PBR 1999, V-3.1). Practitioners maintain that this mixed use, a
fundamental design principle of NU, helps to solve the ever-present problem of
downtown parking, while providing small-scale rental opportunities for property
owners and potential residents. However, the functional benefits of the design are not
the only justification as such buildings are seen to be able to perform a social task as
well.

They hide the parking lots while providing inhabited windows that are
the “eyes of the street.” The most effective way to keep public spaces
safe is by overlooking them with windows 24 hours a day. Liner
buildings eliminate very few of the existing parking places while
shading them, theoretically increasing the income from their lease.

Within the document, the “eyes of the street” reference is a direct homage to the work
of Jane Jacobs, who, writing in the 1960s, vociferously criticized modern city
planning and urban renewal while celebrating the “intimacy” of diverse urban
neighborhoods. She believed that windows, as well as active street life, provided not
only an organic sense of community, but a “benevolent” surveillance that provided
necessary security (Jacobs 1961; Also Harvey 2000, McCann 1995).
Liner buildings are presented as a partial solution to the housing situation, a social disincentive for crime, and as a potentially economic incentive for property owners. Clearly a more palatable euphemism for low-income housing, “in-fill” developments relegate low-income families to small rental units above parking garages, whose residents are perceived to be in need of social surveillance, as opposed to the property owners and gentrifiers of Beauregard and Spanish Towns. Another proposed project in the planning document illustrates yet another dimension of this socioeconomic placement.

Residential space is designated within the design for the Old State Capitol District. It is this section of the plan that is now referred to as the “Arts Block” of downtown Baton Rouge. Regarding the old Auto Hotel, the authors declare the building to be of “remarkable character.” While the building would have mixed usage, its general use would be as a Cultural Arts center, including studios and residential lofts for local and regional artists.

It is a loft building with tall ceilings, big elegant windows, a usable rooftop, and a large unusual ramp at its center. It has a desirable Bohemian character rare in Baton Rouge. It must not be unduly gentrified, as this is attractive to artists (PBR 1999, II-2.1).

They also offer very specific guidelines for the renovation of the internal space:

The AutoHotel should retain its rough finish, including perhaps its paint and signage, with most of the walls receiving only pressure cleaning. The windows should be restored, not replaced…. The ramp should be retained to provide a continuous spiral art gallery like that of the Guggenheim Museum. The roof garden should be available for sculpture and/or gatherings (PBR 1999, II-2.1-2.2).

In designating the residential space in the renovated AutoHotel as art lofts and using words like “Bohemian” to describe the architecture and style, the authors of the plan
are mandating that a certain type of resident live there. At the public meetings, the planners specifically mentioned art students or graduate students as fitting the prescribed profile. By situating these living spaces within the larger context of an Arts Complex and Arts Block, they are, in fact, promoting an indirect and insidious type of normative social zoning, paving the way for one particular type of resident, and shutting out others. Therefore, this is inherently exclusionary to those who do not fit that particular description, and consequently, directly contradicts many of the promises made by New Urban practitioners regarding socioeconomic diversity.

Coupled with the former reference to “liner” buildings, this social and spatial segregation creates multiple geographies of exclusion, differentiating between temporarily poor but well-educated “artistic” types and long-term poor relegated to cheaper buildings that provide a multitude of tasks (parking, social surveillance, creating streetscape, etc), thereby making them more functional. The Auto Hotel is preserved and renovated for its asthetic qualities, whereas the liner buildings must be promoted for their practicality and “killing two birds with one stone” appeal.

This critique is emblematic of many that have haunted New Urban practitioners like Duany and Calthorpe (Kenny and Zimmerman 2003, Falconer al-Hindi and Till 2001, Till 1993). While diversity and mixed-income residential use continue to be ideals celebrated and set forth by New Urbanists, the built product and eventual use often runs counter to these intentions. New Urban villages are often seen as exclusive spaces where only those who can afford to may partake of the small town atmosphere (Till 1993, McCann 1995, Zimmerman 2001). Even with the Hope VI project in which New Urban codes are incorporated into public housing design,
the mixed-income ideal is not attained. Rather, the result is often fewer publicly subsidized units and more of the same spatial and socioeconomic segregation (Kenny and Zimmerman 2003, Hanlon 2003).

To be sure, this is a neglected aspect of research on New Urbanism. Realistically, the problem may be that there simply has not been enough time to assess the implementation of New Urbanism in places like urban downtowns (Falconer Al-Hindi and Till 2001). We may critique the language and ideology of New Urban planning, but the ultimate use of space, that is the social appropriation and reappropriation of space, takes much more time to assess (Lees 2001). In Baton Rouge, this process has just begun. While early in the planning process, there was some concern regarding the exclusion of the neighborhoods beyond the Downtown area, it has been assuaged by the consultants’ admission that this is an unresolved issue and requires further consideration (Duany 1998), and by local planners and politicians acknowledging that although they hoped that the process would eventually spread farther, Plan Baton Rouge was always about Downtown redevelopment in the form of public investment to encourage private development (Rhorer 2001). Extending the boundaries of downtown would “dilute” the process (Guarisco 1998n). This unapologetic exclusion is, therefore, justified through an economic rhetoric of investment and reward, and the theoretical benefits for these excluded groups and spaces are relegated to some future time.

4.11 Conclusion

Planning documents, in this case Plan Baton Rouge, offer a unique opportunity to understand the power of textual interpretations. As a written and
explicitly normative text, *Plan Baton Rouge* clearly presents what the design team, headed by DPZ, envisioned for downtown Baton Rouge in the summer of 1998. More importantly, at least for the purpose of this project, the document is situated within the larger context of the Plan Baton Rouge process and the inherent social and political discourse associated with New Urban design. The suburban critique is an example of this. More than just a roster of proposed projects, the Plan is presented as an organic, malleable document that will change as new knowledge is incorporated into the process. As the authors conclude:

This document includes a wide array of proposals that cannot be brought into existence quickly. Daniel Burnham, the author of America’s first truly comprehensive plan, the 1909 Plan of Chicago, wrote that when “particular portions of the plan shall be taken up for execution, wider knowledge, longer experience, or changes in local conditions may suggest better solutions.” We can expect the same for Plan Baton Rouge. In some cases those refinements will be made by individual property owners. In other instances those refinements will be made by the public agency responsible for the project. But in all cases, the project that emerges will not be precisely as shown in the plan (*PBR 1999, V-6.1*)

Writing over four years after the document was printed, indeed, many of the projects have changed. That these proposals were expected to change over time does not weaken the larger message of the document. In this chapter, I have argued that this document, as a product of the 1998 charrette experience, is considered the written result of a public-oriented, participatory planning process that, at the time, was perceived as something new for the planning community of Baton Rouge. Throughout the text, New Urban design principles are explained and applied to specific projects in downtown Baton Rouge, just as Duany introduced them on the
first night of the charrette week. Learning urbanism becomes an essential part of the
Plan Baton Rouge process.

This chapter also addressed a larger question associated with this dissertation:
who does (or does not) benefit from the progress of Plan Baton Rouge? Within the
planning document, there are explicit and implicit exclusionary geographies being
proposed and therefore directly challenging the promises of New Urban design. In
the pages that follow, Chapter 5 will attempt to tackle another dimension of this
question. Place promotion is a broad and perhaps over-used term to describe the
goals associated with urban revitalization, like that which is occurring in Baton
Rouge. However, promoting a place is an essential part of the process. But, how
does that actually occur? Like New Urban discourse, place promotion is an
inherently social and political exercise. The following chapter addresses this aspect
of the case study.
CHAPTER 5. LEARNING URBANISM: SELLING THE CITY
AND SO MUCH MORE

5.1 Introduction

If we could collectively take a trip to Xpeditions@National Geographic.com, we could participate in a virtual tour of a New Urban neighborhood. With the click of a mouse, we would find out information about the unique features of this cyberspatial village. We would see the Apollo Cinema on the same block as an apartment building – some of the units are government subsidized while others privately owned. When we clicked on a school building, a pop-up window would inform us that all public buildings are within a short walking distance of most residences. We would see diverse house types close together, many with front porches and trees, near public transportation stops and situated on an easy-to-navigate and “pedestrian friendly” street network.

At the bottom of the screen, we would be directed to a “Lesson Plans” page. There, first graders are challenged to draw mental maps of their neighborhood, thinking about what they like and don’t. Twelfth graders are encouraged to become town planners and imagine viable alternatives to sprawl. The popularity of this interactive urban learning is clearly growing as the Sierra Club, the Urban Land Institute, and the Congress for New Urbanism all have similar applications on their web sites.

The implication is this: at some point, we are or can be taught about the places we build and how we build them. Depending on the biases of the teachers, the students are taught to see them in a time-specific, and inherently political way,
affecting not only our critique of the places we build today, but what will be built in the future as our children grow up. However, there is a different type of indirect knowledge that we acquire throughout our lives about what is a good place to live, and what is not. New ideas and approaches to suburban development and urban redevelopment have to be taught to planners, politicians, and residents alike – grown-ups, if you will, who remember the time when sprawling suburbs were ideal and symbolic of American progress, and when traditional, densely-designed cities were seen as almost anachronistic to the second half of the twentieth century.

This chapter looks at one such learning process associated with Plan Baton Rouge, which has been in progress since 1999. In Chapter 4, I summarized the planning document, Plan Baton Rouge, and demonstrated how the document represented and promoted New Urban design principles and ideologies. In this chapter, however, I am focusing not on the design proposal but the promotion of Plan Baton Rouge and the projects associated with it. The initial planning process, as well as local implementation, are all seen as an integral part of the promotion of the Plan, contributing to the ideological momentum of New Urban methodologies and downtown revitalization. I argue that cities implementing New Urbanism have to learn to be New Urbanist, and it is in this teaching and learning exchange where support, both financial and cultural, is truly garnered. With the help of outside consultants, this learning process is strategically nuanced for many audiences including financial investors, planners, community activists, and residents. Before addressing the specifics of the Baton Rouge case study, it is useful to review some of the literature associated with place promotion, and in particular, promoting urban
downtowns which suffered from systematic neglect and disinvestment throughout the twentieth century.

5.2 Selling the City

If we reconsider the goals and expectations solicited from Plan Baton Rouge participants and included in the introduction to the planning document, several common themes emerge (Table 5.1). The majority of these items are all forms of place promotion. Some are what may be referred to as “image-oriented,” that is referring to the general associations made with the city. They are often historically based, but not always (Short et al, 1993). Another series of these are associated with economic promotion, specially focusing on generating financial gain for investors, local merchants, and the city more generally. Still others fall under the theme of heritage-based or history-based promotion, in which tradition and local history are deliberately incorporated into the projects associated with downtown development. In Chapter 6, we will see that the past becomes a powerful and evocative reference that galvanizes local support for projects like those associated with Plan Baton Rouge. That cities must be promoted is a consequence of the shifting nature of urban politics throughout the twentieth century.

Fifteen years have passed since David Harvey introduced the concept of the entrepreneurial city – the notion that urban governance had by necessity shifted from a managerial role to that of the profit-seeking entrepreneur (Harvey 1989a, 1989b). Promoting economic development and establishing stronger, almost seamless, relationships with private business interests became the primary focus of urban
| IMAGE PROMOTION | - Improve the image of Downtown as the common center of the city.  
|                | - Establish the Downtown as a cultural center.  
|                | - Emphasize the Downtown’s status as the State Capital.  
|                | - Promote Downtown as the place to show case Baton Rouge to visitors.  
|                | - Present the Downtown as a focus for civic pride.  
|                | - Create a “sense of place” Downtown.  
|                | - Promote Downtown as the city’s spiritual, cultural, and economic center.  
|                | - Create a 24-hour city: a place for living, working, shopping, and recreating.  
| ECONOMIC PROMOTION | - Capitalize on work already in progress.  
|                  | - Encourage municipal and state regulators to become proactive rather than procedural.  
|                  | - Streamline the permitting process for building and renovation.  
|                  | - Confirm the city and state alliance in support of Downtown.  
|                  | - Promote the economic impact of urban revitalization.  
| HERITAGE/HISTORY PROMOTION | - Retain and maintain historical landmarks.  
|                      | - Expand the areas of historic preservation.  
|                      | - Celebrate diversity.  
|                      | - Take advantage of the Mississippi River.  
|                      | - Focus on history and heritage as a marketing theme.  
|                      | - Showcase the regional architectural style.  
| INNOVATION/ “SOMETHING DIFFERENT” FACTOR | - Create a pedestrian experience in contrast to the suburban surroundings.  
|                     | - Set an example for planning beyond the Downtown.  
|                     | - Make use of existing infrastructure.  
| RESIDENTIAL CONCERNS | - Emphasize the identity of individual neighborhoods within Downtown.  
|                      | - Create an ongoing forum for citizens to discuss and control their destiny.  
|                      | - Maintain a focus on the needs of Downtown residents.  |
politics. These public-private partnerships secure private funds to help maintain the public infrastructure of the city. Within this literature, however, discussion extends well beyond the economic discourse, asserting that such a transition is not simply economic; rather it is highly political and social affecting all practitioners and proponents of the city (Hall and Hubbard, 1998, Cox 1998, Leitner, 1990).

As urban governance has shifted to entrepreneurialism, urban planners have had to redefine their priorities. Once driven by the modernist notions of progress and systematic improvement, planners have had to rethink their professional identity and credibility as discontent with the modern experiment prevailed (Knox 1993, 1991; Harvey 1989a). Planning practice, in the midst of its identity crisis, focused on the needs of individual producers and consumer demands, promoting a fragmented, piecemeal approach to the city (Boyer 1994). Often, the result has been disjointed pockets of successful redevelopment surrounded by contrasting signs of urban disinvestment.

Drawing on Harvey, James Painter argues that just as one has to learn to be a manager, so one has to learn to be an entrepreneur. Therefore, planners, politicians, and stakeholders have had to learn many new entrepreneurial approaches to running a city. He mentions, in particular: specific skills like place promotion, negotiating with private players, and fund-raising; a new understanding of urban governance no longer as a welfare provider, rather a “business supporter”; and the ideological acceptance of change as desirable rather than a symptom of instability (Painter 1998).

This process of learning, of understanding the way cities work and what they should be is not a benign process. What is taught, what is considered worthy to be
taught is a fundamentally social and political process, embedded in the city’s past, as well as the current political government, and private leadership. It is, in fact, a way of selling the city – to get investors to invest, not just financially, but socially and critically – to think about the city differently, and consequently, use the city differently (Philo and Kearns 1993). More generally, this is a process of place promotion, and it is not simply a by-product of post-War decentralization from the city. In fact, place promotion was used throughout the colonial era to entice settlers from abroad. And it is not unique to the city. Consider, for example, the tourist industry that has been enticing visitors to seaside towns and mountain chalets for at least two centuries (Gold and Ward 1994).

What does it mean to “sell the city?” When Harvey introduces the idea of the entrepreneurial shift, he is arguing that cities have to be like entrepreneurs, creating new resources and no longer simply managing the city and what is already there. Rather, they have to be agents for the city, generating interest and income. To put an even more economic phrase in use, they are marketing a place, and often a place image. Upon contemplation, however, the logical question follows: what exactly is the product that is being marketed? Is it the downtown restaurants? The stores? The businesses? Or, is it an experience defined and shaped over time? What makes this process different from the place promotion of the past, argue Ashworth and Voogd, is that this conscious application of marketing principles by planning agencies is now considered fundamental to the planner’s role (Ashworth and Voogd 1995, 1990).

With this distinction in mind, this type of conscious promotion has been a part of city planning since the 1970s and early 1980s, particularly associated with the loss

Again, this extends well beyond economic intentions. Philo and Kearns write:

We arrive at the essentially economic logic of selling places, of course, but there is also a more social logic at work in that the self-promotion of places may be operating as a subtle form of socialization designed to convince local people, many of whom will be disadvantaged and potentially disaffected, that they are important cogs in a successful community and that all sorts of ‘good things’ are really being done on their behalf (Philo and Kearns 1993, 3-4).

The deindustrialization of many cities throughout the Western world has led to a search for new economic interests and endeavors. As we will see later, more often than not, the local past becomes a cultural commodity to be reintegrated into the landscape and packaged for the tourist industry (Crump 1999, Zukin 1995). Plan Baton Rouge is first and foremost a master plan addressing the physical landscape of downtown Baton Rouge. But the creation and implementation of that plan has come to be seen as a unique experience, and in that way, the Plan Baton Rouge process has become a selling point for the physical changes it proposes. In marketing terms, the plan is the product, and the process is part of the pitch. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I will further develop this argument, using promotional materials, local media, and other aspects of the planning process to illustrate this complex connection between the physical process of rebuilding the city and the social, and often
ideological process, of promoting the new city that Plan Baton Rouge attempts to
design and create.

5.3 The Image of the City

All cities have an image. To comprehend our environment, including cities,
we understand them in terms of generalizations or a few selective impressions that
somehow represent the total. This concept of place image can be both detrimental
and invaluable to the task of place promotion (Hall 1998, 1997; Gold and Ward
1994). For the promoter, an image can be transformed and marketed in a new way
before substantial changes have actually occurred on the ground. On the other hand,
however, overcoming a persistent, negative image may take much time to overcome,
despite what changes have been made (Short et al, 1993).

Place images are usually place specific, but they can assert themselves in
more general ways. Consider, for example, the concept of the “inner city.” Not quite
the proper city center and certainly not the suburbs, the inner city can elicit powerful
images of city life. More often than not, the inner city (of what city is often
irrelevant) is described as a place of urban disinvestment, poverty, with the
consequential climate of crime and fear. While this image perhaps originated with
some particular place in mind, it has taken on a broader metaphorical meaning
referring to larger social and economic conditions associated with inner-city
neighborhoods, whether accurate or not (Hall 1998, 1997).

To deconstruct this pervasive and derogatory image of the inner city, a new
image has to be promoted, sold, and consumed by society. Gentrification is one
example of this type of re-imaging. Starting in the late 1970s and early 1980s,
usually young, middle-class residents have been moving into run-down inner city areas, investing money to beautify the area, and consequently, changing the social and economic landscapes of these places. These young, urban professionals were challenged to view these areas as urban frontiers to be reclaimed and settled. This metaphor of adventure and excitement appealed to large groups in cities throughout North America and Europe (Smith 1996). As time passed, however, some criticized the gentrification movement for uprooting and dispersing the local culture and communities of those who lived there before them. The high cost of investment and the resultant high rents prohibited locals from participating in the process.

Perhaps, in part, as a reaction to the social and cultural critique of gentrification, New Urbanism claims to provide a design structure allowing for economic and social diversity. Within the context of existing urban environments, New Urban practitioners are also trying to overcome the negative image of inner-city living. They promote pedestrianism, community, aesthetic streetscapes, and diversity. Perhaps it is not insignificant that in a recent attempt to extend the ideas of Plan Baton Rouge beyond downtown, local planners are focusing on a downtown neighborhood, specifically referred to as the “historic” neighborhood of “Old South Baton Rouge.” After all, doesn’t “historic neighborhood” conjure a more pleasant image than “inner-city neighborhood”?

Changing a city’s image can be a powerful way of encouraging economic investment (Bondi 1998, Short et al. 1993). Additionally, it can permeate a range of investment brackets from an individual buying a downtown loft to an international company building a new office complex. Indeed, the way an image is promoted may
be subtly adjusted to appeal to these various groups on different levels. For example, the Downtown Development District has two internet listserves: one for “Downtown Stakeholders,” and another for a more general audience. The prior focuses on economic incentives and developments. The latter promotes individual investment and participation on various levels.

Fundamentally, Plan Baton Rouge is a master plan for downtown Baton Rouge. But it is also more. The planning, promotion, and process associated with the composition and design of the plan is inextricably linked with the re-imaging of Baton Rouge. The new image is constructed from the task of learning a new design method and doing whatever is necessary to implement that design. It tells the local and outside investor that Baton Rouge is changing, is on the cutting-edge of something new and different. For those participating in the process, they are encouraged to see themselves as essential to the process, playing the role of a New Urban apprentice, learning innovative design principles while remaining locally connected to Baton Rouge downtown.

5.4 Apprentices of New Urbanism

In Chapter 3, the history and design elements of New Urbanism were introduced. Inspired by these new ideas, Baton Rouge hired one of the founding practitioners of New Urbanism to apply those design principles to downtown Baton Rouge. Duany and his team held introductory meetings, often in the form of public lectures, to introduce his work to those willing to listen. In a university town, certainly public lectures are common enough. But participants were soon introduced to the “charrette” concept that Duany and his firm use to refer to a period of intense
brainstorming while the plan was being designed. Indeed, a new language had to be taught. At the first public lecture, the audience was given a New Urban primer – where terms like New Urbanism, charrette, human scale, and historic preservation were introduced (Figure 5.1) and the principles of town-planning were clearly outlined (Figure 5.2). Participants were encouraged to see themselves as students – amateur town planners – who were apprentices to this new urban approach. The charismatic Duany lectured for over two hours about the history of American cities. He celebrated the designs of Annapolis, Natchez, Charleston, and Savannah while condemning the plague of sprawl in cities like Dallas, Houston, and Los Angeles. For the outside consultant, establishing an urban discourse became essential to the Plan Baton Rouge process because he was setting the stage to hand the project over to local planners and participants, who were also learning this new planning methodology.

The local newspaper supplemented this process by running pre-charrette articles where they introduced Duany and his team, New Urbanism, and the charrette concept (Baton Rouge Business Report 1998a, 1998b; Guarisco 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d, 1998e). For example, prior to the public meetings, Suzanne Turner, an LSU landscape architecture professor and member of the Plan Baton Rouge steering committee was asked to explain the historical reference associated with the term “charrette”:

Turner described the “charrette” as an intense planning session with tight deadlines. She said the word means “cart” in French. Long ago in France, professors would send a cart around town to pick up
Figure 5.1 Definitions of NU Charrette Terms. At the first public meeting for Plan Baton Rouge, participants were given a New Urban primer with definitions of new terms and principles of town planning.
architecture projects from students, but many of the students would not be finished, she said. Those students would jump on the back of the cart and try to complete the work before it got back to school (Angelette 1998a, 2B).

Local participants, then, were introduced to key concepts and prepared for the role they would play during the charrette process. Also, a few days before the planning process began, the Plan Baton Rouge project coordinator held a mock charrette with high school students from around the parish (Angelette 1998b). Shortly after the
planning week was over, Plan Baton Rouge posted a detailed website, explaining the project, New Urbanism and its principles, as well as a list of all projects recommended in the plan (Figure 5.3). Today, you can still use this website to gather new information and updates on Plan Baton Rouge, with many links to other New Urban websites including the offices of Duany, Plater-Zyberk and the Congress for New Urbanism.

As part of this learning process, participants in downtown development are continually encouraged by local planners to see themselves as innovative and on the cutting edge of city building. For many places like Baton Rouge, New Urbanism must be seen as inherently different from the many revitalization schemes tried before. Indeed, glancing back at Baton Rouge’s past efforts, one could be easily discouraged by what has been tried: a pedestrian mall on a downtown block, a moderately successful convention center riddled with political and financial scandal, a festival marketplace called “Catfish Town” that went financially bankrupt within a year of its opening, and even riverboat gaming to take advantage of its river city status. None of these projects has delivered what it promised.

Letters to the local Baton Rouge Advocate help illustrate this point. Writing to the newspaper, one suburban Baton Rouge resident bemoaned the efforts of the consultant team as more of the same (Forman 1998). She specifically mentions Catfish Town, the Centroplex, and Riverboat Gaming as representative of the exhaustive and unsatisfying efforts to revitalize a downtown that serves only a fraction of the parish’s residents. However, unlike Forman, many others considered
the efforts and the public sentiment for Plan Baton Rouge as unprecedented (Weinstein 1998, Riker 1998, Plater 1998). One local member of the clergy wrote:

   During my fifteen years as a resident of Baton Rouge, I have never witnessed the groundswell of enthusiastic excitement for any project such as that in evidence this evening at the final public presentation of Plan Baton Rouge. How wonderful it was to see our city and state officials, bankers, business leaders, School Board members and hundred of citizens join together for such an educational and enlightening event (Weinstein 1998).

Another contributor challenged Ms. Forman, and others who share her view, to consider the broader role of downtown Baton Rouge as a tourist site, the center of state government, and its unique orientation along the river. Criticizing the suburban development throughout the city, she poses the question:

   Wouldn’t it be terrific to have a place that is architecturally stunning, with an incredible history behind it that you could enjoy? Or do you want yet another concrete multiplex? I say that we need this renovation (Riker 1998).

As these excerpts illustrate, the Plan Baton Rouge projects were situated against past efforts to revitalize Downtown. Setting this new public and collaborative project apart from others before created a hopeful enthusiasm for something different than past efforts in downtown but also the suburban development throughout the rest of the city.

   In response to these past efforts, Plan Baton Rouge, therefore, has to be seen as something fundamentally different than what has preceded it. We saw this within the planning document itself. Situated within the “new” discourse of New Urbanism, locals see the potential for success perhaps because of the open access and participatory role they have throughout the process. Or, perhaps it is because they consider themselves empowered as amateur town-planners who need not have
political or financial clout to truly participate. Regardless, the continual theme of participation was ever-present during the charrette process and carried along throughout the implementation phases of projects I have followed during my research. Duany highlighted this broader participation in his introductory lecture at the beginning of the charrette process:

“Why should we be taking care of the downtown?” Duany asked. “Because you’re the custodians of the Capitol of your state.” The plans will be different from any previous plans because local residents, merchants, architects, builders and elected officials will contribute to the designs.

Figure 5.3 Plan Baton Rouge Web Site. Web users can find out about the history of Plan Baton Rouge, on-going projects related to the master plan, as well as be linked to other New Urban web sites including the Congress for New Urbanism.
“Until recently, planning didn’t involve the people,” Duany said. “You can’t trust planners any more. That’s why we’re here” (Guarisco 1998e, B1).

Duany is empowering locals as experts, in direct contrast to planners. Duany is not speaking to specific planners within the context of Baton Rouge. Rather, he argues that the profession has systematically failed America. This is a resounding theme within the New Urban critique of post-war planning (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, Speck 2000).

Local media also participated in the process. The local newspaper interviewed various participants in the charrette process to see how they evaluated the work that was being done. Duany was praised for soliciting and listening to all comments and suggestions. Chris Campany, then director of the Red Stick Farmers’ Market, replied:

“This is not just a master plan someone is writing; the whole community is seeing this happen. It’s a real, living document not done in some office and given to the mayor” (Guarisco 1998j, 4A).

After the charrette process, the excitement and momentum was palpable. The local paper quoted the president of the Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce:

“When we look at buildings in the future we’ll look at where customers come from, what’s the energy of the building, does it contribute to its surroundings. That’s a revolution” (Guarisco 1998m, 1A).

A Councilman for the City expressed his enthusiasm for the new downtown master plan:

“This ain’t the urban renewal of the 1960s, this is the revitalization of the millennium. This is something that can actually happen” (Guarisco 1998m, 1A).
A local arts critic also offered her interpretation of the events associated with downtown Baton Rouge:

Baton Rouge, open your minds and consider where we’re going in the 21st century. We’ve now got an innovative plan for the heart of the city, and ideas for change that could be our ticket to success. The key to realistic improvement is working together, being willing to try something new and establishing cooperative efforts with all elements of the community.

And then, later:

But the point of this entire planning process is to bring out ideas and put them into a concrete structure. And opposing change simply because we’ve always done it this way is probably the most devastating attitude for any kind of economic and/or cultural progress. Think about it, and study and consider the probable benefits from any change. Don’t reject this plan out of hand until we’ve tried new ideas (Price 1998a).

Another editorialist praised the efforts of Plan Baton Rouge and the concepts of New Urbanism:

It’s one thing to generate a plan, and another order of magnitude of difficulty to make it work – not only building new urbanism into public projects, but designing pedestrian-friendly blocks in private developments; making traffic patterns work in the downtown area; and using the city’s limited mass transit options to deal with crowds; promoting residential development within walking distance of office towers and yet still preserving the physical heritage of downtown architecture. The good news about downtown construction is not just in the numbers of projects and their variety, but in the collaborative effort which brings city, state and private interests to the table to work together (Baton Rouge Advocate 1998b, 10A).

All of these quotes from various community leaders further illustrate that the Plan Baton Rouge experience was promoted and considered something fundamentally different and innovative. In a variety of ways, they celebrate the participatory and collaborative nature of the process, and in doing so, help strengthen the local momentum for downtown revitalization.
This innovation can be discussed within a rhetoric of cultural creativity. For example, Landry introduces his notion of the *creative city*, a response to the argument that creativity is essential to a city’s economic success. He views creativity not as an individual moment of unique accomplishment; rather, it is a social process. With this understanding, the piecemeal approach to past projects of redevelopment are not simply failures, but opportunities for creative reconsideration (Landry 2000, Evans and Foord 2003).

Place and culture are persistently intertwined with one another, for any given place...is always a locus of dense human inter-relationships (out of which culture in part grows), and culture is a phenomenon that tends to have intensely local characteristics thereby helping to differentiate places from one another (Scott quoted in Evans and Foord, 2003,168).

This inescapable relationship between place and culture becomes even more complex as culture is commodified within the built landscape. As Evans and Foord argue, culture is seen as a resource that can actively contribute to the regeneration of areas like downtowns and older neighborhoods. To be used as a resource, however, culture has to be defined and understood by those who use it. Culture can be seen as a “quality of life” – meaning the everyday activities associated with living, but it can also be interpreted within an economic framework (Evans and Foord 2003, 167). The establishment of local culture industries is seen as a necessary element to regenerating local economies that have lost their economic base, as is the case with so may post-industrial cities. However, the process of defining local culture and representing it in the built landscape is not always an egalitarian enterprise. Local culture can be oversimplified, erasing elements of the past often pertaining to struggle and contestation (Crump 1999, Zukin 1995, Sorkin 1992).
In a recent publication, Richard Florida attempts to quantify this type of cultural draw. In *The Rise of the Creative Class*, he argues that there is a new social class dramatically changing the way we live our lives, including where we choose to live those lives (2002a). He shapes his theory around the concept of “creativity” and argues that it is now the “decisive source of competitive advantage” (Florida 2002a, 5). Some 38 million strong, this new class works in a range of occupations, from science and engineering to architecture, from education to music and entertainment. What defines them is their “common creative ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference and merit” (Florida 2002a, 8-9).

To substantiate his argument, Florida uses data from a broad range of sources to create what he calls a “diversity” and a “coolness” index of different cities and regions throughout the country. In this way, his work is profoundly geographical because he argues that one of the defining characteristics of this new class is its commitment to “quality of place” (Florida 2002b). Living in a city that provides this new class with all their wants and needs is essential. What they are looking for, argues Florida, are not the traditional, disconnected amenities like sports arena and outdoor shopping; rather, they value “high-quality amenities and experiences, an openness to diversity of all kinds, and above all else the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people (Florida 2002a, 219).

If this argument is plausible, it suggests a different goal for planners and developers who are trying to attract this new creative class. Creating an atmosphere of creative electricity, where new and progressive methods are applied to the landscape, as is the case with Baton Rouge, promotes the city in a different way,
perhaps attracting a broader range of local participants. The way a city is promoted, then, must appeal to a certain way of life that includes creative participation. Unsurprisingly, Baton Rouge did not appear in Florida’s ranking. However, within the context of Plan Baton Rouge, New Urbanism, by setting itself apart from other planning methodologies and encouraging local collaboration makes participants feel creative. That is evident within the quotes included above. Recently, at a Smart Growth Conference (discussed in Chapter 7), several proponents of Smart Growth advocated Florida’s work and agreed that cities have to provide a deeper and wider range of life experiences to appeal to a young urban generation. The increasing popularity of Florida’s academic work as well as his consultant role of “high-tech hot spot” locator suggests that this type of place competition to attract members of the new creative class has just begun (Kenny and Zimmerman 2003, Florida 2002a, 2002b).

5.5 Engaging the Local

There is yet another powerful dimension to the place promotion contained within the process and implementation of Plan Baton Rouge. Referring back to Table 5.1, we see that promotion can be historically based, or heritage-based. Elements of this type of promotion can include promoting regional architecture, historic preservation, and other locally specific strategies. However, the local past can be incorporated into the landscape in others ways. As locals participate in the planning process, their contributions are often in the form of anecdotal memories associated with downtown Baton Rouge. Participants at all levels of the process are encouraged to celebrate what is understood to be inherently unique, and local, about Baton
Rouge. Remembering the past becomes an essential part of this process. The hired consultants continually refer to this in their public meetings, press interviews, and planning circles. Evoking local pride is considered essential to the momentum of the overall project. They frequently remind their audience that the consultant quickly leaves and it falls to local planners and politicians to maintain the participatory fervor of the project. Celebrating the local past becomes essential – not just because New Urban design draws upon the physical structure of times gone by, but because these “urban memories” are ultimately vital to the implementation of the downtown project.

In fact, the next chapter focuses solely on nostalgic discourses of the past and community and how they are incorporated into the process and ultimately, the built environment.

Even long after the initial phase of Plan Baton Rouge was over, this type of planning process was still being used in reference to downtown Baton Rouge. A public meeting was held in spring 2002 to explore the opportunities for a Riverfront Park area along the Mississippi. “It’s a Riverfront Charrette” the mail outs declared. The well-attended meeting extended beyond public discussion and “visioning”; rather, participants told stories of ferry rides, first dates and kisses along the waterfront. Memories were shared and celebrated, and it became a sentimental experience for many who participated. And while the future of the park was the project at hand, the atmosphere was thick with nostalgic memories of Baton Rouge’s past.

The local media also participated in this process (Baton Rouge Advocate, Editorial 1998a, 1998b; Baton Rouge Business Report 1998c, 1998d). Shortly after
the original planning meetings in 1998, the *Baton Rouge Advocate* ran special features in which Baton Rouge citizens were encouraged to submit photographs and vignette memories from their past. This was yet another way that locals could participate in something much larger than a journalistic retrospective. Chapter 6 will include some of these memories.

This chapter, however, is focusing on the promotion of Plan Baton Rouge as an innovative, collaborative, and participatory process. While not specifically discussing New Urbanism, McCann argues that this is emblematic of a planning trend throughout the United States towards more public-oriented methods (McCann 2001). While seldom used during the Plan Baton Rouge process, the term “visioning” is a popular expression of this type of work. However, as Shipley and Newkirk argue, there are many different interpretations of the term within the planning profession, but in general, it implies “prophetic visions” for the future, “master plans,” vision “principles,” and vision as “agreement and support” (Shipley and Newkirk 1999, 581-583). Celebrating and remembering local history creates a sense of common purpose vital to the momentum needed to support a master plan like Plan Baton Rouge.

All aspects of the initial phase of Plan Baton Rouge – the pre-event lectures, the charrettes, the creation of the planning document, local media coverage – have served to create a momentum to keep the process going. The process has become an essential part of the same local pride and heritage that is being solicited and celebrated. Participants, by simply being involved, are becoming essential to the next phase of the story. The Plan Baton Rouge process itself, then, has become a contemporary component to the heritage that is being remembered and celebrated. It
becomes a referential narrative that is used in multiple ways throughout the on-going implementation of the master plan. A recent Plan Baton Rouge Progress Report even told this story in a letter format entitled “Defining a Movement” (Figure 5.4).

For one extraordinary week in June of 1998, the problems and possibilities of Baton Rouge’s urban landscape became household news. During this weeklong charrette, architects, town planners, traffic and retail consultants, bankers, developers, property owners, elected officials, civic organizations, community groups, downtown workers and residents came together for one purpose: To share their thoughts and ideas in hopes of planning a better future for our city…

What emerged was Plan Baton Rouge, in its simplest form a master plan or a document. But for many, it became a movement, by definition a cause with motion, direction and participation… One walk through downtown and it’s easy to see. Plan Baton Rouge is moving (Plan Baton Rouge 2000).

The original charrette process of 1998 has already been written into the new history of Baton Rouge and is then used like the stories of decades past are used to strengthen this sense of local history.

5.6 Promoting Baton Rouge

As the momentum of Plan Baton Rouge has strengthened, it is increasingly difficult to separate the efforts of the Plan Baton Rouge office with those of the Downtown Development District. Plan Baton Rouge, while it has a separate office, is seen as a smaller department of the DDD. For example, Plan Baton Rouge does not hold public monthly meetings; however, the DDD does. And at every meeting, there is a Plan Baton Rouge report. Likewise, the promotional efforts and materials associated with the DDD often include Plan Baton Rouge projects, even if they are not always designated as such.

Economic promotion is an essential part of the revitalization process. This is,
in fact, the primary function of the Downtown Development District. To constantly renegotiate the public-private partnerships that fund the largest projects associated with downtown redevelopment, new incentives must be created and financial barriers destroyed. In July of 2002, the State Legislature passed Act 60, which provided a 25 percent state tax credit for those investing and redeveloping historic structures, including private residences. The DDD also promotes other incentive programs such
as Economic Development Zone, Property Tax Abatement Programs, Low Interest Loans, and Storefront Façade Grants.

To help facilitate this process, in July of 2001, the DDD proposed a plan to create a Downtown Resource Center, modeled after a comparable center in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Simply, the center would contain information about financial incentives for downtown investors, permitting information, master plans (both past and present), reference guides, and planning periodicals, available to anyone interested in downtown Baton Rouge. Eventually, this office would hold a substantial archive of downtown Baton Rouge design history (DDD 2001b).

However, economic promotion and rhetoric is often combined with other aspects of place promotion. In Baton Rouge, the promise of economic investment is linked with the larger themes and promises of New Urbanism and Plan Baton Rouge. Promotional materials help illustrate this point. *Downtown*, a free and regular publication of the Downtown Development District, is available to anyone who requests a subscription. Locals who attend monthly planning meetings will also be offered the latest edition of the publication. *Downtown* summarizes all of the new and on-going downtown projects, as well as providing a calendar of downtown events. Such a publication contributes to the larger processes discussed in this chapter, that is, encouraging local participation, promoting and teaching the design principles used to guide the redevelopment process, and strengthening local identity and place character.

In 2001, a state Congressman helped secure funds for a feasibility study of new parking garages in downtown. The study itself was an indirect result of Plan
Baton Rouge as surface parking lots were strongly discouraged. Congressman Richard Baker wanted to research the marketability of a multi-purpose garage that would have retail shops and restaurants as well.

“Given the city has the blueprint for revitalizing downtown and how to draw more people to rediscover its potential, I guess you could say I was inspired by the Plan Baton Rouge cause,” said Representative Baker. “Like the voice in the movie says, ‘If you build it, they will come.’ This is primarily about economic development. You can’t have that many hubcaps lined up side-by-side in a parking facility without there being a positive impact on local small business” (DDD 2001a).

This excerpt, taken from the DDD publication Downtown, links themes of economic promise with the design principles of New Urbanism, specifically the reduction of surface parking lots. And just a few months later, when the State acquired a new site intended for a parking garage to serve the CBD and the Arts Block development surrounding the Old State Capital, the DDD solicited public input, photos, or anecdotal suggestions for “innovative garage” design (DDD 2002a). The search for a non-traditional design for a parking garage was not explicitly recommended in Plan Baton Rouge. However, surface parking lots were declared unacceptable, and mixed-use parking garages with pedestrian-friendly designs were proposed as necessary to the continuity of the new downtown. That locals were asked to contribute to this process through their own experiences is, I argue, a direct result of the new approach to participatory planning that Plan Baton Rouge instigated.

Without exception, every issue of Downtown since 1999 addresses some aspect of Plan Baton Rouge, even when it is not specifically designated as such. In Fall 2002, the Main Street Market opened downtown. Located on the ground floor of a parking garage, the Market has a variety of shops and restaurant counters, with
indoor and outdoor café-style seating. There was much publicity for the grand opening, and there were hundreds, if not thousands, of people in downtown Baton Rouge that Saturday morning. Certainly, Downtown, the DDD publication, promoted the event, giving an historical context for the project (that it had been in development since Plan Baton Rouge) and linked it with the “public market tradition.” Asked to define a public market, the director said it was a:

…mix of smaller businesses that draws diverse crowds of shoppers… who are equally interested in atmosphere as they are the end product. It’s a place where the person you’re buying from is usually the owner of the establishment, be it a local farmer selling fresh cheeses, milk and butter or a local chef with her made-from-scratch delicacies. Public markets also serve as a great equalizer, a place that people from different stations in life meet in an unhurried, relaxed setting and interact with one another. It brings the shopping experience back to a “village merchant” type of relationship (DDD 2002c).

The Main Street Market, then, is presented as something beyond an economic opportunity for small Baton Rouge businesses. It is promoted as a place that offers a particular type of “atmosphere,” an experience from the past, as well as a place of diversity. For the purpose of this chapter, this is yet another example of how place promotion is linked with design principles, in this case the tenets of New Urbanism.

5.7 Conclusion

Selling the city is nothing new. Prospectors and developers were doing it long before Harvey declared the entrepreneurial shift. Undoubtedly, Plan Baton Rouge is about repackaging and selling the city for financial investors, but the economic discourse is often hidden beneath layers of a different discourse about community, progress, and nostalgia.
Two years after his first visit, Duany came back for a progress report, part of his original contract with the city. At a public presentation his first statement was, “I am no longer the expert here. You are” (Duany 2001). The audience applauded his admission. The baton had been successfully passed. The lessons had been learned.

Looking at projects like Plan Baton Rouge can be frustrating because time prohibits us from making the types of conclusions we would like. We do not know what Baton Rouge will look like even in the near future. At this moment in time, in fact, the most significant change may not be what is in the built landscape. Rather, the most remarkable change is occurring in the production of ideologies and their role in creating that landscape. Duany and many of his New Urban colleagues are self-proclaimed “town-planners.” Even as the landscape of downtown Baton Rouge changes, his work, I argue, is less about the physical designs of the town and more about the ideological towns he creates – a place where community works and history is remembered.

We teach and we learn about the places we live. What was learned in the early stages of Plan Baton Rouge continues to impact the way planning gets done now. At least three anecdotal examples illustrate my point. In spring 2003, the Baton Rouge Downtown Development District held a charrette to discuss the new signage for downtown Baton Rouge. Community members were encouraged to come and participate in the process of “blending our new signs with the historical framework of downtown” and “helping tourists know what is great about our city.” The charrette concept continues to be used to structure public-oriented planning meetings (Thomas interview 2004, Fluhr interview 2004).
Recently, the city’s Mayor presented a financial plan that would support the construction of another large-scale parking garage. Referring several times to New Urbanism, he declared, “…in the spirit of Plan Baton Rouge, we have to make our streets better, and that means getting the cars out of the way” (DDD meeting, 8 April 2003). This phrase, or something similar, is used often in planning meetings. It recalls not only the ideas and principles of New Urbanism, but solicits memories of the process and experiences associated with the plan.

And finally, a downtown charter school is beginning to participate in this movement. Juniors and seniors are encouraged and challenged to spend their lunch breaks walking around downtown and eating at local restaurants. They are given fieldwork assignments and urged to talk with local business owners and others using downtown space. “We want our kids to know their city and how to use it,” the director recently told me. “We want them to be cosmopolitan” (DDD meeting, 11 March 2003).

In this chapter, I linked Plan Baton Rouge with broader issues of downtown redevelopment, in particular the process of place promotion. I argued that the entire Plan Baton Rouge experience has been and continues to be an essential component of promoting downtown Baton Rouge, even when the specific projects were not in the original plan. While promoting economic investment and return remains paramount to downtown stakeholders, they are also promoting downtown Baton Rouge, and specifically the planning process, as progressive, publicly collaborative, and inherently local. In the next chapter, I argue that perhaps the most powerful aspect of this place promotion is how local memory and nostalgia are used to envision a
particular type of built landscape, and consequently strengthen support for the building of that landscape.
CHAPTER 6. “THESE ARE THE THINGS YOUR MOMMA AND DADDY DID WELL” USING NOSTALGIA TO SELL THE CITY

6.1 Introduction

It is as if we have internalized a collective perception of the perfect city, and deviations from it become extremely threatening. Perfection, moreover, seems to be located either in the past or in the future. We rarely, if ever accept, let alone embrace the present (Wilson 1997, 132).

On the corner of Third and Florida Streets in Baton Rouge, I notice the Coca-Cola sign above the building that houses Richoux’s bar now (Figure 6.1). The old-fashioned style writing, the clunky metal and electric structure of the once-lighted sign evokes to me some non-specific time in the past. It tells passers-by that life has happened here before. It suggests that Baton Rouge, now a textbook case of suburban and asphaltic sprawl, once had a thriving downtown on the mighty Mississippi River. After all, this was the Baton Rouge of Huey P. Long, the stop on the Mississippi line before (or after) the ultimate destination – New Orleans. Photographs of Third Street from the 1950s tell the story of nighttime fun, endless views of neon, and two lanes of heavy traffic. Even Hollywood made use of Baton Rouge’s charm. The Faulknerian film, *The Long Hot Summer*, starring Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward, was filmed and eventually premiered in the city in 1959. The past lies in the present landscape, waiting to be discovered and read by those willing.

The Coca-Cola sign, erected in the 1940s, has at least one other story. It was refurbished to a functional state in 2002. Under the cooperative effort of the Baton
Rouge Arts Council, the Downtown Development District (DDD), and the Downtown Merchants Association, over 40,000 dollars were raised and earmarked for this refurbishment, which started in January 2002 and was completed by the first Rhythm and Blues festival later that fall (Fluhr interview 2003). This effort warrants the question: with all of the outstanding projects associated with the Downtown Development District, why is it important to refurbish a 60-year old advertisement for a soft drink? Why was it happening now?

Within the context of this dissertation, refurbishing an old Coca Cola sign resonates with the broader themes of Plan Baton Rouge, in particular preserving and
promoting the aesthetics of an early twentieth-century urban landscape. In the previous chapters, I have presented Plan Baton Rouge as a complex political and social process. Using the planning document and evaluating the participatory planning process, I have argued that New Urban ideologies have been introduced, taught, and learned, and in that instructive dialogue, Baton Rouge downtown revitalization efforts have continued with much support, at least in part because of the way the process associated with Plan Baton Rouge has been and continues to be used to further promote the city. In this chapter, I continue with the larger theme of place promotion, but I focus on how the past, or more specifically nostalgic notions of the past, have been used to garner public support for Plan Baton Rouge. First, however, I will briefly discuss the concept of nostalgia, in particular the way nostalgia can be both temporal (longing for a moment in the past) and spatial (longing for a particular place of the past).

6.2 Nostalgia

An eighteenth-century French doctor describes the symptoms of his patient’s illness:

Little by little his features become drawn, his face is creased with wrinkles, his hair falls out, his body is emaciated, his legs wobble under him; a slow fever undermines him; his stomach refuses nourishment; a dry cough fatigues him; the decline of energy soon does not permit him to get out of bed. Then he wraps himself in his sheets, refusing to respond to the questions he is asked; his lips contract with force if one tries to make him swallow some liquid. He speaks to himself, his discourse is incoherent; the fever becomes even greater, and soon he succumbs (Roth 1993, 29).

What is the diagnosis? Nostalgia.

Like most elements of our language, our understanding of nostalgia has evolved over time. To be sure, it has certainly changed since the French doctor
recorded his case notes. In her book, *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym starts her discussion of nostalgia with the Greek etymology of the word: from *nostos* – return home and *algia* – longing. Nostalgia, then, is a longing for a “home that no longer exists or has never existed” (Boym 2001, xiii). She traces the origin of the word to an earlier seventeenth-century doctor who was trying to describe the “sad mood originating from the desire for return to one’s native land” (Boym 2001, 3). The first “victims” of the disease were remarkably similar: displaced peoples, soldiers fighting abroad, and servants working outside their home country. Leeches, opium, and Alpine excursions were the most common treatments for nostalgia. Boym then uses literature, letters, and medical diaries to explain shifts in modern interpretations of nostalgia. Between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, understandings of nostalgia shifted from medical to psychological, from treasonous to patriotic, and from the sentimental to erotic and back to sentimental again (Lowenthal, 1985). Indeed by the nineteenth century, some optimistic doctors believed the most effective antidote for nostalgia was the promise and progress of the future (Boym 2001).

Related to broader themes of collective memory, recent work on nostalgia highlights the inherently spatial aspect of the sentiment. Within this work, nostalgia is almost always used in reference to a lost place, as well as a lost moment in time (Legg 2004, Hodgkin and Radstone 2003a, 2003b). Boym, for example, focuses on the nostalgia associated with Cold War spaces in Eastern Europe based on her own experience (and others) as a former Soviet citizen. She differentiates between what
she refers to as “restorative” and “reflective” nostalgia, where the first attempts to reconstruct the lost home and the latter focuses on the longing itself.

Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition. Reflective nostalgia dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from contradictions of modernity. Restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt (Boym 2001, xviii).

This inherently spatial “restorative” nostalgia is particularly useful when we consider the creation of a new urban landscape, or the “restoration” of an already existing place such a Downtown Baton Rouge. If the past, and in particular, nostalgic notions of the past, are to be incorporated into the landscape, there must be some social consensus about what constitutes that past. Later in this chapter, I argue that throughout the planning process of Plan Baton Rouge, a particular narrative of the past is solicited, created, and promoted to garner and solidify support for the work being proposed.

However, the most fundamental point that all of these authors make may seem somewhat elementary: nostalgia is not easy or dismissible just as an inevitable part of the modern human condition. Rather, it can be encouraged, promoted, and even manufactured. Most importantly, it can be a powerful force in the production of place. The nostalgic continually asks, “is the past irrevocably lost? Can we recapture it? Can we relive it?” Or maybe “can we rebuild it?”

Nostalgic landscapes are not unique to this particular moment in history. Christine Boyer argues that the early-nineteenth-century glass-covered arcades of Paris (precursors to modern day department stores) presented not only the new commodities of the burgeoning industrial age, but also a controlled, nostalgic
representation of the city, that did not include the radical changes brought on by rapid modernization (Boyer 1992). However, she does admit that in the late-twentieth century, there has been a proliferation of “nostalgic arts” that present a highly selective “reframing” of urban reality (Boyer 1992, 187). The result is a historic “tableaux” on which historical referents are incorporated into urban design.

Certainly, legally mandated historical preservation is one example of this. However, writing over a decade ago, she is most interested in the festival marketplaces, shopping malls and urban theme parks that “stage” a particular historical moment.

What characterize these new urban zones are the reiteration and recycling of already-known symbolic codes and historic forms to the point of cliché. Codes control signs, materials, colors, ornamentation, street furniture, and street walls; and codes also dictate the design of public spaces, the types of buildings, and the range of activities. Most important, codes contain a schema or program that generates a narrative patter, a kind of memory device that draws associations and establishes relations between images and places, resemblances and meaning (Boyer 1992, 188).

Nostalgic narrative of the past can be deliberately inscribed into the urban landscape. Festival marketplaces – themed retail centers that were incredibly popular with developers in the late 1970s and 1980s – incorporate a sense of history and public life into an indoor and outdoor retailing experience. Buying more than just the products sold, visitors consume a nostalgic narrative of history that is localized to the site (Goss 1996). Boston’s Fanueil Hall, considered the first festival marketplace, incorporates colonial U.S. history into its theme. New York’s South Street Seaport and Baltimore’s Inner Harbor capitalize on maritime history as their overriding theme (Boyer 1992, Frieden and Sagalyn 1989).
Another nostalgic landscape – Main Street – evokes rich images of small town, American life. Richard Francaviglia, after visiting thousands of Main Streets throughout the United States, maintains that while Main Streets must be considered as “real places,” the broader concept of Main Street is an expression of “collectively shared or experienced assumptions, designs, and myths” that refer to small town ideology – “the honest merchant, the hardworking townsfolk, and an accessible community government” all within a short walking block (Francaviglia 1996). While he draws examples form all over the country, his most powerful corroboration of his argument refers to the construction of Disneyland’s Main Street, U.S.A.

In 1955, when Walt Disney was developing his new theme park, he designed the primary entranceway as Main Street, U.S.A., a five-eights reduction of a prototypical Main Street. Disney lore has it that Walt Disney incorporated his own nostalgic longings for his small town boyhood in Marceline, Missouri, complete with a library, post office, courthouse, and thirty-foot tall statue of Goofy (Francaviglia 1996, Kuntsler 1993). However, there are obvious inconsistencies. Most of the building material is fiberglass (revolutionary in the 1950s). The interior retail spaces extend well beyond the street frontages to allow for massive crowds. And, of course, people travel from all around the world and pay an entrance fee to stroll down Disney’s Main Street. Ironically, Disneyland, and later Disney World, represent not small town America but an intensified, large-scale corporate entertainment industry (Zukin 1991).
While nothing new, nostalgic landscapes, in various forms and fashion, are inspired and motivated by different reactions to history, and more specifically to selective, subjective, and often romanticized notions of that history. Nineteenth-century shopping arcades, festival marketplaces, and reproduced and renovated Main Streets are built landscapes layered with nostalgic notions of the past.

6.3 Conjuring the Past

As discussed in previous chapters, New Urbanism celebrates and utilizes the design strategies of the past. This is not at all disguised or hidden in a more contemporary rhetoric. They explicitly refer to past designs, planners, and methods and credit them as the inspiration for the work they are proposing a century later (Duany Plater-Zyberk 1994, 1992, 1991; McCann 1995). In his personal introduction to his edited volume entitled, The New Urbanism, Peter Katz writes:

The proposal of New Urbanism…includes several forms of housing that haven’t been built since my grandfather’s time. Since then, they’ve been systematically eliminated. I’m referring to truly high-quality apartments and townhouses, boarding houses that were respectable places to live; also accessory units, duplexes and quadruplexes of every kind. All of these proven options from the past seem again suited to the needs of a diverse society (Katz 1994, x).

The link between the design elements of the past and the perceived lifestyles of the past is strong and often seamless. In this sense, traditional design symbols help to recapture a collective memory of a past that is more civic, more communitarian than the present (Till 1993). As a corollary to this, the design elements of the present that they critique, in particular mass-produced suburbia, are effectively linked with what is unsatisfying about lifestyles today.
Suburbanites sense what is wrong with the places they inhabit. Traffic, commuting time, and the great distances from shopping, work, and entertainment all rank high among their complaints. But all such inconveniences might be more bearable were suburbs not so largely devoid of most signs of “community.” The classic suburb is less a community than an agglomeration of houses, shops, and offices connected to one another by cars, not by the fabric of human life… The structure of the suburb tends to confine people to their houses and cars; it discourages strolling, walking, mingling with neighbors. The suburb is the last word in privatization, perhaps even its lethal consummation, and it spells the end of authentic civil life (Duany and Plater-Zyberk 1992, 21).

The loss of the past and what has come to replace it are effectively linked together as cause and effect. Intuitively, then, argue New Urbanists, the relationship can be reversed and presented as problem and solution.

However, New Urbanists are reluctant to use the term “nostalgia.” Judith Kenny and Jeff Zimmerman trace the evolution of Milwaukee’s New Urban downtown revitalization. In searching for a new city slogan, planners and politicians ultimately rejected the phrase, “Milwaukee, the America You Remember,” although it originally received the most support. Such “explicit nostalgia” regarding America’s past of inequality and civil rights was potentially offensive to particular groups within the city (Kenny and Zimmerman 2003). The slogan they settled on, “Milwaukee: the Genuine American City” combined elements of the industrial past (the words appear visually as a “stamp” of approval) with a nostalgic reference to “real” America. This reality, while deliberately vague, is produced in part through the nostalgic cues of the New Urban landscape of the city’s renovation efforts.

In an address to the Congress for New Urbanism, Alex Krieger accuses NU practitioners of perpetuating a middle-class notion of the good life, offering a product (green space urban villages) that is just a small increment better than the very
suburban landscape that NU rejects (Krieger 1998). He also expresses frustration with their unwillingness to admit that nostalgia is a vital “weapon” in their arsenal to promote New Urbanism:

You have found a means of distilling the image of the American Dream from the consequences of the dream. Some of you practically blame the loss of community on flat roofs and horizontally-proportioned windows. The places you have designed may express repressed longings for town life, but in fact are sanitized versions that avoid the messier attributes of town life with which Americans seem disenchanted. You must rise beyond making new developments look like towns – separate the search for the image of the community from the desire for community itself (Krieger 1998).

In a direct response and writing on behalf of the CNU, Andres Duany responded to Krieger’s critique in *Architecture* magazine. He reasserts New Urbanism’s commitment to inclusive housing, a clearly defined public realm, and pedestrian-oriented design, while agreeing that more New Urban design should be applied to infill sites as well. Regarding the nostalgic critique, Duany argues that the nation-wide “industrial-distribution complex” of New Urbanism is definitively modern. Regarding the nostalgic design, he counters that New Urbanism combines the best of what has been. “Why should the human environment settle for less?” (Duany 1998b).

He concludes:

We are allergic to nostalgia. The CNU is prepared to engage the mass culture of the American middle class and damn the kitsch. It is learning the brutally modern techniques of marketing, communication, and financing. The only thing nostalgic about the CNU is holding the principles and nurturing of the possibility of attaining them (Duany 1998b).

Despite the ambiguous use of the term “nostalgia,” Duany strengthens Krieger’s critique by declaring NU design to be the cumulative best of what has been built and then by linking that very design to the diligence and dedication of working to get
them built. This reinforces another dimension of this nostalgia: the neotraditional and valued-based notion of “getting good work” done.

New Urban designs are often described as neotraditional because of their use of pre-war design methods (Falconer Al-Hindi and Staddon 1997). For the social critic, the resurgence of these landscapes of a bygone era indicates a change in the social climate as well. For example, McCann argues that such landscapes appeal to a new middle class. For the resident, living in such places as Kentlands becomes symbolic capital used to identify their cultural and economic standing in society (McCann 1995). Promoting elite, upper-middle class experiences like those in Georgetown, Annapolis, Princeton, and Savannah, New Urban planners and developers promise potential homebuyers a comparable residential experience. The “rhetoric of community” they are directing towards this new niche market, argues McCann, resonates with a certain section of the middle class who are willing to pay for it (McCann 1995, 226). In this willingness, residents become culpable agents as well, using their investment in neotraditional design to help define who they are, or to “establish a habitus” that defines them. (McCann 1995, 227; Till 1993).

Likewise, Robyn Dowling argues that the proliferation and popularity of neotraditional landscapes suggests something much deeper than a retrospective appreciation for neighborhood designs of the past. Neotraditionalism, then, refers to a set of ideas and beliefs, what Dowling calls a “conservative reaction to current economic, social, and cultural change” that celebrates and advocates a return to the ideals of the past (Dowling 1998, 106).

Neotraditionalism is one such web of meaning used to make sense of contemporary circumstances. It is a conservative reaction to change,
pronouncing the benefits and ideals of the past, not the present. Neotraditionalism thus is a reworking of old ideals in the contemporary context, asserting that if only we could return to the 1950s then social problems would disappear (Dowling 1998, 107).

She also argues that the beliefs often associated with neotraditionalism are found in other landscapes beside those that are explicitly neotraditional. From her interviews in newer suburbs in Vancouver, she found similarities between those living in a neotraditional neighborhood and those who did not. As a form of nostalgic sentiment, neotraditionalism suggests more than a mere appreciation for the physically designed landscapes of the past, but a return to the perceived values of that time, which may include a reassertion of gender roles, the traditional nuclear family, and conservative political agendas. In other words, to be like the past, we must live and believe like those who lived in that past.

New Urbanists also maintain that their design promotes a stronger sense of community, particularly in direct comparison to the typical American suburb (Duany and Plater-Zyberk 1994, 1991; Langdon 1994). The promise of community, a somewhat elusive concept, is also presented in a nostalgic manner. For Freie, such promises, if kept, can only provide what he calls “counterfeit” community, in that it is composed of “images, symbols, structures, and suggestions of association and connectedness that are false and ultimately exploitative” (Freie 1998, 5). He further argues that counterfeit communities often exist prior to the physical presence of people. They are strategically planned to appeal to people’s need or longing for a sense of community (Till 1993). Following Freie’s argument then, most New Urban projects, particularly greenfield projects like Kentlands, are definitively counterfeit
because they use the concept of community as a marketing device for potential investors (McCann 1995).

David Harvey, too, has critiqued what he calls the “communitarian trap” of New Urbanism. While he applauds certain aspects of New Urbanism – for example, their willingness to conceptualize the city and region as an “organic” whole and the street as an architecturally coherent and “civic space,” he (like Krieger above) argues they are committing the very mistakes made by the dreamers of the same suburban landscape that New Urbanists reject.

Does it [New Urbanism] not perpetuate the idea that the shaping of spatial order is or can be the foundation for a new moral and aesthetic order? Does it not presuppose that proper design and architectural qualities will be the saving grace not only of American cities but of social, economic, and political life in general (Harvey 1997, 68)?

And what of the community that New Urbanism promises? He continues:

But can “community” really rescue us from the deadening world of social dissolution, grab-it-yourself materialism and individualized, selfish, market-oriented greed? Community has always meant different things to different people, so what kind of “community” is understood within the philosophy of the New urbanism? It is here that harking back to a mythological past carries its own dangerous freight (Harvey 1987, 69).

At a theoretical scale, then, New Urbanism’s negotiation between design and community remains tenuous at best, and somewhat unsettling when we evaluate what constitutes community. Even Vincent Scully, one of Duany and Plater-Zyberk’s instructors at Yale, while celebrating the innovativeness of Seaside, argues that they, unlike any other architects of our time, have successfully created an “image of community” (Scully 1994, 226). He does not address the implied question that follows: do they, can they, or can anyone create community?
New Urban planners use community as a rhetorical device to validate and promote their particular designs for good places to build and live. Also, this vague and somewhat intangible notion of community is repeatedly linked with a past that is just as fuzzy and ambiguous as the community they promote. As I argue below, within the case study of Plan Baton Rouge, soliciting memories of local participants strengthens New Urban planners’ use of the past and consequently the power that this rhetoric has in garnering support for that work and promoting economic investment in that work.

6.4 Plan Baton Rouge

Throughout the charrette week in June 1998, local Baton Rouge residents were asked to participate in public meetings to discuss downtown Baton Rouge. Invariably, these discussions included stories of Baton Rouge from the past – memories that people had experienced or heard about what downtown had been like before. Participants were encouraged to bring photos of downtown landscapes that might contribute to the design process (Angelette 1998a, 1998b).

Discussions of the past, however, were not always specifically about Baton Rouge. In the initial lecture of the week, Duany introduced listeners to the planning methods of the early-twentieth century. He also lauded cities like Savannah, Charleston, Annapolis, and Princeton for containing many of the design elements so essential to New Urban methodologies. Referring to such places solicited romantic notions of the past that listeners might attach to these cities (Ayers 1996). In addition, the audience was likely to have experienced at least one of these cities as a tourist. Experiencing places as a tourist, particularly experiences concentrating on
history and heritage, suggests a different type of interaction with an urban landscape (DeLyser 2003a, 1999, Franklin 2003). As brief visitors, tourists can appreciate the historic landscapes and presentation of a particular place, without having to consider the regular everyday functions of a contemporary city including the process involved in creating those heritage-based landscapes.

References to the past occurred beyond the planning meetings as well. The local paper covered the planning week with great interest. In the weeks that followed, they ran a special feature called “Remember when…” and reprinted excerpts from a past feature called, “Our Town.” Journalists wrote about the history of local landmark buildings. Likewise, Baton Rouge citizens were encouraged to submit photographs and vignette memories from their past (Figures 6.2 and 6.3). One lifelong resident of Baton Rouge talked about a family shopping excursion.

After parking we ventured up Third Street. I knew the route well – past Stroube’s, Sears, stopping in the window shop at Ryder’s…past the Paramount with its fascinating billboards of what was playing…Only the promise of a treat at Kress’s [candy shop] encouraged me to push on (Baton Rouge Advocate 1999b).

Another Baton Rougean recalled wandering the downtown streets with friends:

Chilly Saturday mornings in the fall, our gang would burst out of the screen doors… and head down Convention Street to Mister Teddy’s City Newsstand two doors away from Third…Then around the corner to Third: Coney Island, with the best chili hotdogs in the universe…Then Walgreen’s for “all the iced tea you can drink for a dime!” (Cullen 1995, 9E)

Sharing such quaint, down home memories strengthened the local sentiment attached to the Plan Baton Rouge process. Printing pictures from the past also served the cause, providing a visual reminder of what Baton Rouge had been.
Figure 6.2 Remember when? Locals were asked to send in old photographs of downtown Baton Rouge (*Baton Rouge Advocate* 1999b).
Figure 6.3 Remember When Downtown was the Heart of Baton Rouge. The local paper told stories of local landmark buildings (*Baton Rouge Advocate* 1999b).

On the last evening of the charrette week, Duany and his team made a final four-hour presentation to hundreds of Baton Rougeans, showing the results of their weeklong efforts. Throughout his presentation, he folded in personal anecdotes that community members had shared with him during the week. The audience listened to somewhat technical plans for traffic controls, retail marketing strategies, as well as initial designs for the new streetscapes associated with the districts and
neighborhoods outlined in the plan. However, the last fifteen minutes of the presentation were unlike any other planning meeting I have ever attended. After explaining all of the things that were inherently wrong with downtown Baton Rouge and offering strategies for correcting them, Duany acknowledged what was unique and remarkable about Baton Rouge. “You are ‘beginning to remember’ how to build good places,” he assured the crowd. “Beginning to remember what?” we may ask. Was it our childhood, our parent’s childhood, our hometown before the interstate, before the first suburban shopping mall? He proceeded to show slides of the “best of Baton Rouge”:

- pictures of the Old Capitol building, (Figure 6.4)
- the new Capitol, (Figure 6.5)
- the frontages of Third Street, (Figure 6.6)
- and “quaintscapes” of Beareguard and Spanish Towns, the two residential neighborhoods surrounding downtown. (Figure 6.7)

“These are the things your ‘Momma’ and ‘Daddy’ did well. It’s in your blood,” Duany told the crowd. Immediately, the crowd burst into cheering and applause. After a lengthy standing ovation, people were hugging each other and wiping the tears from their eyes. In this dramatic presentation, Duany effectively linked what the past had been – using the memories and anecdotes that had been shared throughout the week – with the aspects of the built environment that he, and New Urbanism practitioners more generally, view as good places.
Even within the planning document itself, this nostalgic sentiment is present.

Consider the following excerpt:

As these proposals are implemented Downtown Baton Rouge will resume its traditional role as the vital center of the Parish and the active Capitol of Louisiana. Third Street, once again, will be a thriving retail destination. Residents will be coming Downtown to go to the movies and to purchase local produce at the public market. Tourists will be lodged in downtown hotels. The expanded State Capitol District will bring thousands of additional people Downtown. Together with the residents of Spanish Town, Beauregard Town, and affordable new rehabilitated downtown housing, they will restore a lively pedestrian environment morning, noon, and night (PBR 1999, ii).

Full of promises for the future, this excerpt clearly illustrates the link between past, present, and future. Phrases like “once again,” and verbs like “resume” and “restore” establish a powerful connection between what has been and what can be. Reading the entire document, these past references are never explained. Therefore, it is only
within the context of the larger Plan Baton Rouge process, during which New Urbanism has been fully explained and past memories, experience, and photos have been shared, that we understand fully how the past is being used, solicited, and incorporated into both the built environment and the public support for those projects.

Establishing this visual and emotional connection between certain aspects of the past in memory and the past in the built landscape, and then ultimately projecting it into what the future can be, is vital to the overall project. After the charismatic architect leaves, local planners and community groups will be responsible for
Figure 6.6 Third Street Streetscape. Considered the historic retail center, Duany celebrated the integrity of this design (Photo by author).

Figure 6.7 Beareguard Town Streetscapes. Duany commended the urban fabric of the historic neighborhoods of Spanish and Beareguard Towns. (Photo by author.)
maintaining the sentimental, as well as financial momentum of the entire process.

This event, this final presentation after the charrette week, remains an extraordinary experience not only in my mind as I have pursued this topic for my dissertation, but among local planners, politicians, and citizens. They refer back to that experience as something to be remembered and called upon when they need to galvanize local support for on-going work in downtown. “In the spirit of Plan Baton Rouge” is an expression I have heard often at planning meetings and charrettes that have followed (DDD 2003b, 2002; Smart Growth Task Force Meeting Minutes, 20 July 2002, 25 February 2003).

6.5 Nostalgic Landscapes

Once an experience of urban life is safely in the past, we are able to invest it with a charm it lacked at the time. It is this shifting of perception that is sometimes dismissed as “mere” nostalgia, but I am not convinced it is anything as simple as sentimentality (Wilson 1997, 133).

Trying to understand and situate the intense emotion from that night into my work has caused much frustration for me. As an urban geographer, I am aware that contemporary cities have to be sold to their developers, investors, and even their residents. I believe that while New Urbanism offers some innovative design methodologies, it is also a mechanism for place promotion. But what about these nostalgic emotions, these unquestionably sincere experiences for many in the audience that night? We can’t just dismiss them as “gullible” or “overly-sentimental.” They truly were remembering their parents and their childhoods. By remembering, they inscribed meaning into the places of the past, present and future (Boym 2001, Sturken 1997). Why is this nostalgic? Because the rhetoric and
promises of New Urbanism are perfectly nostalgic. They not only celebrate and remember the past (albeit a highly selective construction of the past); they long for an active return to the design elements of the past, and in doing so, implicit is a larger promise for the lifestyle of the past, the community of the past, and a “simpler time.”

However, the past that is evoked is a highly selective one. Romanticized notions of times gone by are more appealing because they can be remembered without trouble and contestation. For New Urbanism, referencing the town planning of the early-twentieth century does not address the social and spatial segregation of ostracized groups like African Americans, women, or socioeconomic groups who could not afford to live in these innovative new towns. In Baton Rouge, soliciting particular kinds of memories like running through the shops downtown or wondering along the river, excludes many other types of memories, along with the people who experienced them.

Perhaps one way to interpret such a strategy is that Duany is making the process specifically local. In his design work, he is using principles of the past to create denser, more pedestrian-friendly urban landscapes. By soliciting local memories and experiences that are specific to Baton Rouge, he is customizing his work to fit local needs and sentiment. As a method of place promotion, the past becomes commodified as something that can be repackaged into the built landscape and into the process of building that landscape. Localizing this process galvanizes support for downtown revitalization, and perhaps makes it more difficult for contested notions of the past to be incorporated into the process. Crump, in his work on a remade industrial center in the Midwest, writes:
…when a new landscape that incorporates a commodified version of local history is constructed, each element of the populace may find something to like about it. Former workers may approve of it, since it symbolized their role in shaping local history. And because such landscapes often effectively cloak conflict and hide the social relations of production, those residents outside of the orbit of factory and union life may also find little to object to. Younger generations desire something new, yet also hunger for the sense of local history and identity that redeveloped landscapes can provide, however packaged or synthetic. Thus, business interests are often able to generate widespread support for their projects. Local support of and response to the landscapes of redevelopment is therefore shaped by a complex amalgam of economic crises, the influence of local growth coalitions, social memory, local class structure and personal identity (Crump 1999, 301).

The use of the past, and in particular a public constitution of the past, limits the likelihood of any contested views of history. At least for those who participate in the process, this publicly created, nostalgic-based past appeals to everyone on some level because they are contributing to the construction of that past, and presents a “charming” narrative to tie into the New Urban landscapes of Plan Baton Rouge.

Over five years after the charrette process, the past is still present both in the landscape and in the planning process associated with downtown revitalization. Let us reconsider the refurbished Coca Cola sign mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. Refurbishing an electric sign for a soft drink is certainly not about advertising a product as ubiquitous in our society as water. Such a project became emblematic of all of the work being accomplished in downtown Baton Rouge. A local editorialist applauded the renovation project. Such efforts “are going to help bring back that quality Third Street had back in the 1930s and 1940s” (The Advocate, Editorial, 2002a). The sign becomes a material part of the landscape, a tangible piece of the past, brought into the present, for the future. The process associated with
refurbishing the sign is further used to encourage comparable projects associated with downtown revitalization and “bring back” that lost “quality.” Additionally, it is used on promotional materials created by the Downtown Development District to introduce potential investors to Baton Rouge (Figure 6.8).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the charrette process is still being used by local planners and politicians to structure public meetings in Baton Rouge (Thomas interview 2004). One example is a Riverfront Charrette held February 20-22, 2002. The initial public meeting was a presentation by the consultants hired to design the plan for the Riverfront redevelopment. After the presentation, the organizers opened discussion to the public. Participants expressed concern and interest about what they thought the Riverfront could mean to Baton Rouge. They expressed much pride in their strategic position along the Mississippi River. They also shared experiences from other cities that had a thriving waterfront park. Locals told stories of a ferry that used to run up and down the river. People would use it for transportation, but also for entertainment. One woman shared that her parents became engaged while riding that ferry. Another person told of being kissed for the first time while riding the ferry (Riverfront Charrette 2002). What a particular place meant in the past is linked with what can be in the future. Again, however, these are selective memories. Nobody mentioned the unbearable summer heat, or the smell of the river, or being late when the ferry broke down. Their memories were hopeful and full of promise, just as they want the future of the Riverfront to be.
In Fall 2003, using federal funds for clean air management, the Capitol Transportation Corporation, in conjunction with Plan Baton Rouge and the Downtown Development District, started a workday trolley service with fifteen strategic downtown stops. The Speaker of the Louisiana House of Representatives, Charlie Dewitt, told local press that a trolley was ideal for downtown.

A trolley system for the downtown area is a win-win situation. The system will provide efficient transportation for those working in the area and will be an incentive to patronize downtown businesses, thus
Figure 6.9 Downtown Trolleys Begin Service. In Fall 2003, a workday trolley service began. Local planners and politicians hoped to discourage automobile use and promote the environmental benefits of using public transportation. The trolleys, however, also contribute to the nostalgic landscapes associated with New Urbanism and Plan Baton Rouge. (Photo courtesy of the Downtown Development District.)

Promoted as an economically sound and environmentally progressive strategy, local planners hope that the trolley service will discourage automobile use while encouraging downtown workers to explore the area during their workday. The trolleys, however, can also be interpreted as a nostalgic addition to the downtown landscape (Figure 6.9) Like the Coca Cola sign, they refer to a time in the past, when streetcar trolleys were the primary mode of transportation.
6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated how nostalgic notions of the past are incorporated into New Urban design, the charrette planning process, and eventually, the built landscape that is being produced. Intentionally referencing design elements of the past, New Urbanists employ a nostalgic rhetoric that, when combined with the solicited memories of locals’ past, creates a powerful vehicle for place promotion, and the promotion of the planning process, in this case Plan Baton Rouge. That this past is highly selective and romanticized seems irrelevant to the process (DeLyser 2003b). In fact, it is ultimately this lack of specificity, this inaccuracy of the past, that makes this nostalgic sentiment so powerful. It is compellingly tidy and charming.

In this context, nostalgic components of the landscape – a 1940s Coca Cola sign, a trolley, or other neotraditional elements like tight street frontages, awnings, and public markets – become visual signs of New Urban ideology in practice. As Gottdeiner argues, textual signs in the landscape have exchange values as well use values. They “…signify ideas with the aim of encouraging the social actor to behave in particular ways” (quoted in Bell and Lyall 2002, 284). Refurbishing a Coca-Cola sign, then, is not just about fixing something that is broken; rather, it is about investing in downtown, preserving something of the past, remembering the work that is presently taking place, and therefore, ultimately, supporting New Urbanism for the future of Baton Rouge.
CHAPTER 7. THE PLAN BATON ROUGE MODEL?

7.1. Introduction

From the beginning of the research for this dissertation, my study was intentionally focused on the process associated with Plan Baton Rouge, and not necessarily on the physical changes associated with the plan. Indeed, such an investigation of the physical redevelopment would take at least another five years, after which the implementation schedule established in the planning document for Plan Baton Rouge is finished. And as planning history has suggested over and over, by a project’s end, a new plan may very well be in place. Certainly some type of long-term, qualitative study associated with New Urbanism, and specifically the people who live in NU spaces, would be useful, both in Traditional Neighborhood Development and In-Fill projects, because the research to date has yet to successfully answer the question – does New Urbanism honor the ambitious promises it makes concerning community, diversity, and sense of place (Falconer Al-Hindi 2001, Ford 2001).

The final chapter of this dissertation speculates as to how planning processes in Baton Rouge have been altered by the Plan Baton Rouge experience. Throughout this dissertation, I argue that all participants, whether state or city government officials, planners, developers, and local property owners, view the Plan Baton Rouge experience as an essentially positive and successful one. This is clearly evident in the local media (as we will see below) and at the numerous planning meetings I have attended. The work accomplished downtown, and the planning process associated
with this work, is considered remarkable and worthy of emulation in other parts of Baton Rouge. We can see this in at least two specific and recent instances within Baton Rouge local politics and planning: 1) the circumstances surrounding a nearly unanimous decision to approve a Wal-Mart Supercenter on College Drive and 2) the creation and development of the Mayor-President’s Smart Growth Task Force, a deliberate attempt to expand the successes of Plan Baton Rouge beyond the city’s downtown.

7.2 Wal-Mart on College Drive

On Monday, March 24, 2003, the East Baton Rouge Planning Commission voted by a 6-1 vote to approve a site-plan for a Wal-Mart Supercenter to be built in the Village Square Shopping Center, a partially abandoned strip mall on College Drive (Baton Rouge Advocate 2003b, 2003d, 2003e). Hundreds of local residents attended the meeting, many of whom wanted to see the proposal defeated, or at least slowed down so that local residents and perhaps planners could think about the long-term effects of such a project.

The most problematic concern for these residents was the issue of traffic. Baton Rouge traffic is notoriously troublesome, and its most challenging hot spot is this interstate bisect of College Drive. Thus far, the Parish’s solution has been to repeatedly widen and add lanes to the street. Opponents suggested imagining a different street network, perhaps some sort of grid to dilute the ceaseless traffic on College. Local newspapers lamented the Commission’s hasty decision and their unwillingness to listen to alternative suggestions by residents. In several instances,
the planning process and the success of Plan Baton Rouge were mentioned as an example to be followed and learned from, not forgotten.

Plan Baton Rouge, the city’s master plan for downtown and areas that surround it, is widely embraced by the community and often held up as a model in local planning. It was created through extensive public participation and facilitation by nationally renowned architects.

The key to the success of Plan Baton Rouge has been grass-roots support that grew out of a groundswell created during a series of public planning workshops. A new groundswell of local interest has been created by the proposed Village Square Wal-Mart. Why not apply the Plan Baton Rouge model to College Drive? (*Baton Rouge Advocate* 2003b)

Despite public concern and interest, a participatory planning process was not used to address the controversial issues associated with the new construction. By the time the planning commission realized that there was a demand (and even an expectation) of a public process and was willing to have such a meeting, the residential groups were frustrated and they refused to meet with the planners and Wal-mart (Thomas interview, 2004). The decision, however, was final. Wal-Mart has already started construction on its new site and committed over one million dollars for road improvements on College Drive (*Figures 7.1 and 7.2*). Many residents will not soon forget this experience (Nunnally 2004). I contend that the Wal-Mart Village Square process, or lack of process, has motivated large numbers of Baton Rouge residents to pay closer attention to planning and building projects sponsored by the city. The significance of this case study is not the project’s success, but the failure of the planning commission to listen to, engage with, and incorporate citizen’s opinions and alternative proposals. While a few local residents were able to
Figure 7.1  Wal-Mart on College Drive. Despite public concern, the Planning Commission voted 6-1 to approve the new construction. (Photo by author).

Figure 7.2  Construction in progress for new Wal-Mart Supercenter. (Photo by author).
speak at the meeting, they were not incorporated into the design process and consequently, nothing they said, at least in their view, affected change (Thomas interview, 2004). The impotence of this process, particularly when compared with the more participatory charrettes of Plan Baton Rouge, became clearly evident. Recently, this was a recurring theme during a local Smart Growth Conference. Many of the questions and concerns referred back to the Wal-Mart situation. However, I must first explain how a Smart Growth Conference came to occur in Baton Rouge.

7.3 Smart Growth

In the mid- to late-1990s, a new buzzword entered the American discourse primarily through the environmental efforts and political notoriety of then Vice-President, Al Gore and the governor of New Jersey and eventual director of the Environment Protection Agency, Christine Todd Whitman (Urban Land Institute 1998). “Smart Growth” became a powerful and evocative anti-sprawl term associated with the policy-oriented debates about urban and suburban growth (Grogan and Proscio 2000, Barnett 1995). While focusing more on policy and implementation, the philosophy of smart growth is inextricably linked with more theoretical debates about urban sustainability, whose proponents seek to mitigate the sometimes difficult relationship between the needs and wants of humanity and functioning ecosystems. Defined as such, urban sustainability echoes many of the arguments made regarding “sustainable development,” an environmental policy that has tremendously impacted agricultural and governmental reform across the globe and is committed to “close[ing] the gap between the poor and the privileged, both within and between societies”

Proponents of smart growth contend that they are not against growth, or even rapid growth. They are, however, concerned about “urban disinvestment, sprawl, loss of farmland and open space, congestion and time lost in traffic, air pollution, and barriers to infill development” (Urban Land Institute 1998, 4). While this horizontal expansion was once necessary as cities grew quickly, Smart Growth proponents contend, this type of growth is no longer logical or efficient as city centers and older neighborhoods are abandoned for newer infrastructure on the city’s edge. What about the abandoned infrastructure? The term in-fill, as we have seen elsewhere, relates specifically to projects that are investing in an already existing built landscape. Smart growth advocates want to create incentives for investors and developers to “rebuild” these old sites. Hence, the Wal-Mart case study becomes more relevant because they are reusing an abandoned strip mall; however, they are also abandoning another Wal-Mart less than one-quarter mile away.

Strengthening city centers is one of the most critical strategies of smart growth. Strong central cities experience less abandonment and more regular investment from property owners and businesses (Williams 2000). However, as we read in Chapter 2, downtowns have been trying to strengthen their economic and culture base for nearly half of the twentieth century. History tells us that success is the exception, not the rule. To counter this critique, smart growth policy makers argue that this type of planning has to be comprehensive in scope. Funding must be long-term and
This commitment to urban density, diversity, and proximity are essential for smart growth policy makers. Set against this description of smart growth, we can consider Baton Rouge’s engagement with this new growth policy.

7.4 Smart Growth Comes to Baton Rouge

In the spring of 2002, Mayor-President Bobby Simpson founded what he called the Smart Growth Task Force, a committee of over forty community members representing various state, city, private, and citizen groups. Aware of the work I was doing on downtown Baton Rouge, Boo Thomas, the chairperson of the committee, asked me to participate as a member. The first job assigned to the committee was to research Smart Growth and construct a definition of the term specific to Baton Rouge. After much consideration, input, and debate, the definition was adopted on 30 July 2002. Though lengthy, I am including the complete definition below.

Smart Growth is the planning, design, development and revitalization of East Baton Rouge Parish to promote community and equity, to create a sense of place to preserve our natural as well as cultural resources. The Goal of Smart Growth is to reap the benefits of growth and development, such as jobs, tax revenues, and other amenities, while limiting the negative impact of growth, such as degradation of the environment, overburdening of public financial resources and worsening traffic congestion.

In Baton Rouge, Smart Growth incorporates the following principles:
1. Promoting a greater mix of land uses and housing choices in neighborhoods and communities that are focused around pedestrian friendly, mixed-use centers utilizing multiple transportation modes by
   • Promoting a mix of diverse housing (i.e. quality rental housing that provides basic services for the residents within walking distance);
   • Addressing quality of life issues;
   • Fulfilling needs of residents and businesses;
   • Encouraging attractive and sustainable developments;
   • Recognizing distinct/diverse neighborhoods;
   • Promoting mixed use land developments;
   • Promoting brownfield developments;
   • Enhancing the tax base; and
   • Protecting investment in existing neighborhoods.

2. Integrates land use and transportation by
   • Promoting efficient use of infrastructure;
   • Providing efficient city operations;
   • Addressing quality of life issues; and
   • Decreasing congestion by providing alternative modes of transportation.

3. Encourages efficient use of land and infrastructure by
   • Promoting mixed-use land developments;
   • Enhancing the tax base;
   • Addressing quality of life issues;
   • Promoting brownfield developments; and
   • Providing inducements for good growth, when appropriate.

4. Protects environmental and cultural resources by
   • Encouraging innovative stormwater management practices (i.e. Mississippi River, Amite River, Comite River, and the relationship of other tributaries to the Manchac Swamp);
   • Encouraging construction techniques that protect open space and water quality/quantity;
   • Promoting attractive and sustainable developments;
   • Optimizing use of existing intellectual resource centers;
   • Addressing quality of life issues; and
   • Preserving historical sites.

5. Encourages working relationships between public/private/community-based organizations that promote diversity, equity and good growth principles by
   • Promoting collaboration between universities, research institutions, technology parks, and community colleges;
• Promoting collaboration between organizations (i.e. BREC, library board, East Baton Rouge School Board, and public commissions, etc.);
• Providing efficient city operations;
• Optimizing the use of existing intellectual resource centers;
• Addressing quality of life issues; and
• Enhancing the sense of community.

6. Integrates state and federal policy structure that supports compact development and land conservation by
• Informing state leaders of successful smart growth strategies used in other states;
• Promoting planning within the context of the greater Baton Rouge region; and
• Addressing quality of life issues.

(Smart Growth Task Force 2002)

The process associated with drafting this definition was both tedious and long. Personal and political agendas were perhaps inhibiting more meaningful discussion and debate about Baton Rouge and Smart Growth. In fact, the Mayor expressed frustration with the definition’s lack of specificity. Although officially adopted, the committee agreed that the definition was not satisfactory and that we needed to step back and learn more about Smart Growth. Even after studying the definition, the Mayor asked the question: “What makes a development Smart Growth or not Smart Growth? Will we always have NIMBY’s?” (Not-In-My-Back-Yard) (Smart Growth Task Force, 25 February 2003). The Mayor was referring not only to his frustration with the vague definition, but the Village Square Wal-Mart plan as well. The fact that Wal-Mart is using a “brownfield” to build its new SuperCenter seems a victory for smart growth; however, the public outcry regarded such a project as detrimental to smaller businesses and to the aesthetics and traffic troubles in the area (Nunnally 2003a).
The *Baton Rouge Advocate*, reporting on the progress of the task force, sensed the frustration and potential inefficiency of the work being done. The confusion surrounding the Wal-Mart site plan is also referenced.

So far, the mayor and his task force are flailing around. And the city’s bureaucracy continues to grind out the same sort of disputes – the Wal-Mart discussion is typical – that we’ve always seen in East Baton Rouge Parish. The residents of an area don’t feel they are consulted about dramatic changes in their neighborhood; they become angry and suspicious. Public officials who don’t have a strong agenda for planning only roll with the punches and try to work out compromises. That’s not even smart politics, much less smart growth (*Baton Rouge Advocate* 2003a, 6B)

Another point of contention during these meetings was the sporadically funded Horizon Plan – a 20-year Comprehensive Land Use and Development Plan approved in April 1992 (Horizon Plan Summary 1992). With over 200 Action Items, the Horizon Plan addresses issues of land use, transportation, wastewater and drainage, conservation, recreation, housing and public services. The Plan directs the City-Parish Planning Commission to focus on the neighborhood scale of implementation for which it has just initiated a five-year Growth Center Community Planning Process. During this time, city planners will conduct intensive public planning sessions to prepare and facilitate future growth, and while not explicitly calling these meetings “charrettes,” they are using members of the leadership committee from the 1998 charrettes to help facilitate this process (Thomas interview, 2004). However, the Smart Growth committee did not understand the purpose of the Horizon Plan and repeatedly called its relevance and efficacy into question. Several members expressed opinions of doubt and concern about the public perception surrounding the Horizon Plan. “I don’t feel in my bones that the Horizon Plan is
happening," one member declared. Another person suggested that perhaps we should rename the Horizon Plan and include something about Smart Growth in the title.

“The perception is that the plan [the Horizon Plan] is outdated.” Much like the inherent strategies of Plan Baton Rouge, perception and innovation can play a vital role in the success of a project.

These comments are not exceptional. The local newspaper has often reported on the status and stagnancy of the Horizon Plan (Baton Rouge Advocate 2003d; Angelette 2002c, 1999e; Nunnally 2002d, 2000). However, it could be argued that the earliest inspiration for Plan Baton Rouge was not at a lecture series in 1997, but rather within the Horizon Plan itself. One of the document’s high profile action items was to, “revitalize downtown Baton Rouge and encourage government to locate buildings there” (Angelette 1999a, 12A). Despite this, in his article, “Ignoring the Horizon,” Adrian Angelette reports that many of the guidelines of the Horizon Plan are being overlooked to allow for more businesses in areas once designated as residential. In 2000, the commission adhered to the plan in nearly 80 percent of zoning issues. In 2001, the percentage fell to 67 percent, and within the first seven months of 2002, the guidelines were honored in only 55 percent of zoning applications (Angelette 2002c). Simply put, there was no mechanism for enforcement or accountability. The Horizon Plan was viewed as a set of guidelines, not rules to be followed. Not surprisingly, the public started questioning the value of such a plan (Nunnally 2002d, Hair 2002). Such palpable frustration and the committee’s floundering lack of progress mandated a new perspective on the Baton Rouge planning system.
7.5 Smart Growth for All

In an attempt to strengthen the committee’s understanding of smart growth principles, several members attended a Smart Growth Conference in New Orleans, and in May 2003, Baton Rouge held its own conference called, “Smart Growth for All: A Blueprint for Baton Rouge.” Open to the public, this symposium had nationally renowned speakers from around the country and aimed to “bring together citizens, elected officials, policy makers, community development practitioners, private sector developers and philanthropic leaders to stimulate a discussion on the value of proactive planning and smart growth in Baton Rouge” (Smart Growth for All Program).

The two-day conference featured a handful of Smart Growth experts. While some were planners associated with specific cities like Seattle, others talked more generally about Smart Growth concepts and vision. There was a roundtable discussion just for the Task Force focusing on the economic aspects of getting smart growth done in a local community, including government grant opportunities. The final part of the conference was a celebratory reception recognizing the fifth anniversary of Plan Baton Rouge, followed by a public lecture by the mastermind of Plan Baton Rouge, Andres Duany.

One of the speakers, Tony Proscio, is also co-author of the book, Comeback Cities: A Blueprint for Urban Neighborhood Revival (2000). In their book, Paul Grogan and Proscio argue that the American city is rebounding, not just anecdotally on a case-by-case basis, but broadly and fundamentally. They also maintain that this definitive change is not yet quantifiable or even visible, but based on their extensive
qualitative work with inner city neighborhoods, they sense a revolutionary change in the assumptions associated with city life. They cite four trends to substantiate their claims. First, they refer to the maturing of grassroots organizations committed to reviving American cities. Thousands of community groups and non-profit organizations have been working, in some cases, nearly three decades to halt urban disinvestments. Though individually modest, the sum total of their accomplishments is evident. The second point of proof is what Grogan and Proscio call the “rebirth of functioning private markets in former wastelands” of American downtowns (2000, 4-5). In some cities, inner-city neighborhoods represent a neglected and un-tapped market for retailers and businesses. While this may not yet be true of Baton Rouge because of its smaller population, there has been a proliferation of small businesses in the downtown area, many of which have been aided by government programs committed to smaller business enterprises. The third propellant of this urban resurgence is the consistent reduction in inner-city crime throughout the country. And fourth, is the gradual dissolution of public bureaucracies that the authors feel restrict city life like public housing and welfare programs. The authors propose these four trends as potential goals for cities that are looking to participate in this urban shift. Smart Growth, then, becomes linked with political, economic, and policy issues that extend well beyond the planning community.

The last part of the conference was the final lecture given by Andres Duany, the charismatic architect of the entire Plan Baton Rouge process. During the final session of the Smart Growth Conference on May 16, 2003, Duany gave what was understood to be his final talk to a Baton Rouge audience. Duany is well-liked by the
audience and considered a type of celebrity, or perhaps a local hero. Mayor-President Bobby Simpson, while introducing Duany, declared him to be “…responsible for creating the energy that has created the new downtown Baton Rouge” (Smart Growth For All 2003). Just as he had several years ago during a follow-up presentation two years after the Plan Baton Rouge charrette, Duany declared that Baton Rouge was almost “unrecognizable” to him just five short years after he knew the city so well. He argued that Baton Rouge had reached what he refers to as the “tipping point” – where the momentum of change is in place and progress will continue. Like the other speakers at the symposium, Duany was in Baton Rouge to campaign for Smart Growth policies in the city. He argued that the process becomes much more difficult as a city attempts to extend its work beyond the downtown area. He proposed that Baton Rouge needs to have a common spatial language in reference to its city. With Plan Baton Rouge, Duany explained, the city has been working on the Core. Spanish Town, Beauregard Town, and Old South Baton Rouge are Inner-city Neighborhoods. For Duany and New Urbanists, these are the easiest areas to work with from a design perspective because they are inherently walkable in their pre-World War II design. Indeed, the conference used the area referred to as Old South Baton Rouge as a case study throughout the symposium.

The next spatial designation for Duany is the Outer Core of post-World War II suburbs that tend to be fully developed. He maintained that these places are “charmless,” full of “monoculture,” and losing value at a steady rate. “What do you restore them to?” he asked. “They were never any good.” The fourth layer of Duany’s model is what he call the Urban Fringe – new Greenfield development and
growth. For Duany, this is the battle of the future for New Urbanism and the opportunity to not repeat the same mistakes of the past. Like he did five years ago, Duany taught his audience new concepts and a new language for the work of the future. And in the instruction, participants – whether planners, politicians, or interested citizens – were being empowered for that work. The apprentice status discussed in chapter 5 is perpetuated for what is to come.

Near the end of his lecture, Duany addressed a question that I had been struggling with throughout the symposium: the difference between New Urbanism and Smart Growth. Referring back to the definition of Smart Growth included earlier in this chapter, there are many similarities. For example, mixed-land use, pedestrian-friendly spaces, preserving historical sites, addressing quality of life issues, and enhancing a sense of community all overlap perfectly with the ideological concepts of New Urbanism discussed in Chapter 3. When asked about the similarity between the two, Duany replied that New Urbanism is a design method born out of Seaside in the 1980s. Today, there are over 400 NU communities and almost none are funded by government subsidies. Contrarily, for Duany, Smart Growth is about government and urban policies, implementing healthy design within their cities through the use of local politics.

This link between New Urbanism and Smart Growth is not unique to Baton Rouge. The Congress for New Urbanism is a supporting member of Smart Growth America, the largest advocacy group for promoting smart growth policies. Linking the design principles of New Urbanism and the policy initiatives of an organization like Smart Growth for America and the Smart Growth Leadership Institute (a smaller
group within SGA that teaches politicians and planners how to implement smart
growth) creates a stronger message for both groups, but particularly for New
Urbanists as they can broaden their audience and influence in urban policy. In fact,
when asked about the relationship between the two, Duany acknowledged that NU
practitioners had adapted to the language of smart growth.

I think the term “smart growth” is going to win [over New Urbanism]. It’s got tremendous polemical power. We have actually repositioned our work as smart growth. For example, our old TND codes are not called smart codes. I don’t know if New urbanism and smart growth are synonymous, but they are certainly convergent (Duany, quoted in M. Zimmerman 2000, 10)

The broader political and policy appeal of smart growth provides an opportunity for New Urbanism to engage in larger debates beyond design.

Since the Smart Growth meeting in spring 2003, the projects of Plan Baton Rouge and the smart growth debate have progressed. The Mayor’s Smart Growth Task Force continues to meet regularly and address issues of learning smart growth principles and reaching out to neighborhoods to promote the idea. Most recently, Baton Rouge was awarded a grant from the Smart Growth Leadership Institute to bring in a smart growth team to evaluate Baton Rouge’s planning policy and its development code (Thomas interview, 2004, Dunne 2004). As director of Plan Baton Rouge, Elizabeth “Boo” Thomas is overseeing the Smart Growth Task Force, as well as the implementation of the grant. For Thomas, this is simply the next phase of Plan Baton Rouge. “Plan Baton Rouge was always intended to spread beyond downtown. That was the hope. That was the dream” (Thomas interview, 2004).

Both the inadequacy of the Wal-mart planning experience and the implementation of a Smart Growth Task Force help illustrate that the process of Plan
Baton Rouge has had a direct effect on the public perceptions of planning in Baton Rouge. The frustration and disappointment with the Wal-mart development was considered a failure when compared to the type of public-oriented, participatory planning associated with Plan Baton Rouge. On the contrary, the creation of a Smart Growth Task Force and the consequent smart growth conference, are considered a natural extension of the Plan Baton Rouge experience. In this way, the planning process of Plan Baton Rouge is considered a success, a model to be implemented elsewhere.

7.6 What the Future Holds…

The Baton Rouge story that this dissertation attempts to tell is not over. Indeed, the Smart Growth conference and the process of learning and implementing those broader principles in Baton Rouge’s downtown and older neighborhoods are simply the next steps in the process. Planners and downtown players view this as a transition phase from focusing specifically on downtown to extending the innovative approach associated with Plan Baton Rouge beyond the city center. The perceived and actual successes of Plan Baton Rouge serve as the precedent and impetus for what the future holds.

In a recent downtown publication, Red Stick Renaissance: Your Official Guide to Downtown Baton Rouge, David Rhorer, the Executive Director of the DDD described the essence of what is happening downtown:

It’s all about a sense of place. And when you’re here, you get a sense of drama, of energy that comes from being at the heart of Baton Rouge – sort of the living room of the community (Red Stick Renaissance 2003).
To kick off this new publication, nine community leaders, representing state, local, and private interests gathered for an informal panel discussion about the future of downtown (Figures 7.3). Panelists were asked to share their first memories of Baton Rouge and how they came to care so much about the city. While each member had their own political interests to represent, they expressed a unanimous enthusiasm for the completion of the 55-million dollar Shaw Center for the Arts and a commitment to encouraging more people to live in downtown Baton Rouge and its neighboring Spanish Town and Beauregard Town Districts. Currently, there are 2,000 people living there. With a population doubling, downtown would have the needed momentum to support larger scale endeavors like a multi-screen cinema and grocery stores.

They also projected their enthusiasm into the future. Early plans were in place for a downtown shuttle that would transport downtown residents and workers anywhere they needed to be during the day (which opened in the fall of 2003). Developers also discussed the need for a beautiful Riverfront Park and some type of excursion boat for visitors and locals to take advantage of the unique river setting. Both of these ideas were discussed often during the Plan Baton Rouge charrette process, and later at a Riverfront Charrette focusing specifically on the Riverfront Park project. However, specific plans were never put into place.

The final question for the panel members was the following. “It’s ten years later. What one word do you hope people – residents, visitors – use to describe downtown Baton Rouge?” Here are the answers in the order they were given.
But there’s a phrase, too: smart growth. We want to be an example of smart growth for not only Baton Rouge, but the whole country.

The mayor closed with, “Put all of (those words) together and you have ‘downtown’” (Red Stick Renaissance 2003, 14).


7.7 Conclusion

New Urbanism is changing the appearance of the American landscape (Falconer Al-Hindi 2001). Whether the New Urban green-fill projects are significantly different than, or merely an adapted version of suburban living remains to be seen. Residents who live in these places sense and articulate that they are living a different kind of life in a more vibrant and fulfilling community setting, even though they may recognize that the concept of community is also a rhetorical tool for place promotion (Frantz and Collins 1999, McCann 1995). Within the context of urban in-fill projects, like the study of this dissertation, the first consideration has to be how the concepts of New Urbanism are adopted and translated for and by the planning and development community. This dissertation has attempted to understand this process in Baton Rouge. New Urbanism’s potential and effectiveness to change a pre-existing urban landscape is not clear. Certainly, there are changes to the Baton Rouge landscape since 1998. According to the Downtown Development District, nearly 500 million dollars have been invested in the downtown landscape since the late 1990s (Fluhr interview, 2004). But the long-term effects remain to be seen. The most significant change to date, however, involves the processes and the public’s perception of redevelopment.

In Baton Rouge, the Plan Baton Rouge experience is often lauded as a success story in terms of planning practice. I have argued that the memory of that experience has set a new standard for the public’s understanding of its role in planning and shaping the physical construction of their city and community. As Grogan and Proscio argue, perhaps this level of participation is indicative of a broader trend in
community-oriented planning and politics (2000). In this chapter, I further argue that the debates and issues associated with New Urbanism are being absorbed into a broader political discourse about “smart growth” and “urban sustainability.” This is undoubtedly the case in Baton Rouge, and I believe we can see it in other work as well, particularly Grogan and Proscio’s discussion of “comeback cities” (2000). As they argue in their book, this is not something that can be successfully quantified yet; rather, they see and sense such a change on a daily basis as they visit cities all over the country. However, this is a research topic that should be considered further.

Specifically, what is the spatial impact of “smart growth” discourse on the American urban landscape? To date, there is a surprising absence of academic literature on this topic. As with New Urbanism, this may be an issue of needing time to implement and evaluate these new growth policies. However, the *Journal of Planning Literature* recently solicited papers for a special issue on the topic suggesting that a research agenda is underway.

From a geographical perspective, critically evaluating the Plan Baton Rouge process offers a rare opportunity to understand the process of creating, or recreating, a new urban space. As mentioned in the Introduction of this dissertation, these are Lefebvre’s “representations of space,” the space of planners, politicians, and community leaders. Geographers who use Lefebvre’s triad of representations of space, representational space, and spatial practices often focus on the latter two, and consequently neglect how “representations of space” are created over time (McCann 1998). Yet, these spaces also have stories and processes of becoming that we can try to understand more fully. And while we should consider all three to fully understand
Lefebvre’s theorization of the production of space, the focus of this dissertation is the creation of a planning discourse in a local context. The public planning process and specifically soliciting memories and suggestions from the public add another dimension to our understanding of Lefebvre’s spatial production as these create the representational spaces, the way members of the community interpret and understand Downtown Baton Rouge. This dissertation considers the conceptual moment where representations of space (and how they are created) are connecting with representational space, or perhaps how they are incorporated into those representations.

The planning document, *Plan Baton Rouge*, emerges as a composite result of these processes, and therefore, a useful focus of study for geographers as it reveals textual themes regarding the planners’ intentions and the planning process itself. As argued in Chapter 4, these “textual communities” facilitate the process. Within the context of the planning experience, the document serves as a tutorial, a set of guideposts to be followed as Baton Rouge implements New Urban design. But it also speaks to the planning process itself, that the creation of the document is a product of public consensus and contribution. However, despite the promise of diversity and the strong language of consensus, there are exclusionary practices at work within the document and New Urban design more generally. Indeed, the spatial boundaries of Downtown Baton Rouge, that is, what was included in the plan and what was not, are highly selective and create geographies of exclusion for those residential areas just outside the Downtown area. Within Downtown itself, there are also social and spatial
appropriations for what type of person should live where. These seemingly silent aspects of the Plan challenge the promises of New Urban design.

These themes within the planning document are reiterated in the public planning process as well. In Chapters 5 and 6, I argued that Baton Rouge is promoted in a particular way, creating an interactive dialogue between charismatic leader, local planners, politicians, and participants. Specifically, a powerful learning discourse is strategically implemented to create an experience perceived as innovative and inherently progressive.

Another dimension of the place promotion formula is the deliberate use of a nostalgic past to garner support for the projects associated with the plan. That New Urban design explicitly copies design techniques from a time in the past establishes this “backward looking” discourse. Soliciting public participation in the form of past memories, photos, and highly selective notions of times-gone-by perpetuates this nostalgic discourse. The quest for reclaiming design elements of the past conflates with more neotraditional social and political critiques of the present such as the loss of community or longing for a “simpler” time. These nostalgic referents are powerful devices that strengthen the momentum of the Plan Baton Rouge experience.

Nostalgia, then, becomes a powerful rhetorical tool throughout the planning process that helps strengthen support for New Urban designs, and the Plan Baton Rouge process. But what else does this nostalgic fervor accomplish? Does it really help make better cities according to the promises and principles of New Urbanism? Or does it, by being so selective, perpetuate an oversimplified, and therefore unrealistic, image of what downtown Baton Rouge was and can be. Projecting such a
nostalgic conceptualization of downtown Baton Rouge may strengthen public
sentiment for Plan Baton Rouge in the present, but depending on such a sketchy ideal
may also be simultaneously condemning the plan to fail in the future. Certainly,
even if every project proposed in Plan Baton Rouge is implemented, Downtown
Baton Rouge would not provide the same experiences as those shared and
remembered during the charrette process. Nostalgia is not nearly enough to create the
downtown that New Urbanists and Plan Baton Rouge propose. While it may promote
sentimental discussions about Baton Rouge’s yesteryear and consequently public
support for downtown revitalization, nostalgia may also obfuscate more critical issues
and responsibilities that are essential to providing diversity and the social and
communal health that New Urbanism celebrates and promises.

However, the time for nostalgia may be over. At his presentation in the spring
of 2003, Duany told Baton Rougeans to stop looking backward:

I want to de-romanticize your charrette memory and experience.

I want to remind you how unlikely so much of this was.

[Baton Rouge] “… is not back to circa 1940. Yours is better now than
it was then which is very rare in U.S. cities. Your present is better
than your past (Smart Growth For All Conference 2003).

After five years, how and why does he shift the focus from the past to the present,
particularly in light of the arguments I make above and in the two previous chapters?
The very past to which he had been alluding was now declared substandard, almost
irrelevant. The notion of the present being inherently better than the past questions
the very nostalgia on which he depended throughout the planning process. And
unsurprisingly, he is aware of it. Rather than contradicting previous arguments,
however, I argue such a rhetorical shift strengthens the argument made throughout this dissertation: nostalgia is indeed a powerful rallying cry, in this case a selling tool to strengthen public support for city growth and change. It can be rhetorically packaged, encouraged, and manipulated to achieve a certain goal, and afterwards, can be dismissed. In doing so, Duany challenges the audience for the work ahead. He seemed to be saying, “you know the past that you have been romanticizing and longing for all this time. Well, stop it. You are already better than that, and you can achieve much more.” The rhetoric shifts from the nostalgic to the progressive.

But will this temporal shift from the past to the present and future occur in the minds and experiences of those who have participated in the nostalgic visioning associated with Plan Baton Rouge? If so, perhaps the memories that are strategically excluded from this nostalgic discourse will resurface and be included in the on-going discussions about downtown revitalization, as well as into the new projects associated with the Smart Growth Task Force. What we do know is that the Plan Baton Rouge experience, initiated over six years ago, is still in process. Though still just a short time ago, Plan Baton Rouge is remembered as a successful and enjoyable public event. It is perhaps treated nostalgically as well, just as Downtown Baton Rouge has been. However, as the implementation deadline looms large in the near future, what will the criteria be for assessing Plan Baton Rouge’s success? The promises of New Urbanism are ambitious, to be sure. The result must be assessed not solely in the experience of the planning process itself, but in the lived experiences of people who “live, work, and play” Downtown.
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APPENDIX A
PLAN BATON ROUGE PROJECTS SUMMARY

Compiled from Plan Baton Rouge (1999)

The Catfish Town District (CTD)
CTD-1: Square at the Centroplex
Recommendation: Implement public square at River Road and Government to give a common front to all of the principal buildings, promoting cohesion in the district.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

CTD-2: Square at the Centroplex Hotel
Recommendation: Supervise design of proposed hotel to insure that lobby and principle entrance will be adjacent to the existing atrium. Develop an access road from the proposed Square to the atrium.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

CTD-3: The Atrium Renovation
Recommendation: Redesign interior of atrium to make it appealing to potential merchants. Construct an interior “liner” building that will provide extra leasing space and narrow the passage, and guide visitors through.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

CTD-4: Riverfront Plaza Renovation
Recommendation: Redesign Riverfront Plaza, leaving only monumental sculpture, the flat plaza and the pier. Remove the bridge over River Road, and reserve a site for a transit station. Detail remaining space as a park.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

CTD-5: Centroplex Liner Buildings
Recommendation: Take advantage of the large setbacks, and design and build liner buildings as part of the projected renovation and expansion.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

CTD-6: Robert Reich Park
Recommendation: Modify Repentance Park (and change name) by creating a connecting path and opening gate in the fence that surrounds the Old State Capitol.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

CTD-7: Government Street Garage Upgrade
Recommendation: Maintain a regular pressure-cleaning schedule of these “unpleasant” and seemingly “dangerous” places. Reserve places closest to entrance for periodic and voluntary visitors. Modify security screens for better transparency. Install an interior and exterior lighting scheme. The crosswalks should be greatly improved.
Responsibility: Department of Public Works

**CTD-8: Centroplex Expansion**
Recommendation: Already in progress: A 100,000 square foot convention center will be added to the existing Centroplex.
Responsibility: Department of Public Works, Offices of the Mayor, Downtown Development District

**The Old State Capitol District (OSCD)**

**OSCD-1: The New City Hall**
Recommendation: Build a new City Hall on North Boulevard and the end of Fourth Street. Purchase 101 St. Ferdinand (Pelican Homestead), renovate, and use it for temporary offices for Mayor until the City Hall is complete.
Responsibility: Office of Mayor and Plan Baton Rouge

**OSCD-2: Auto Hotel Arts and Cultural Centre**
Recommendation: Renovate Auto Hotel. Clean and waterproof building immediately. Use the proposed design as a guideline to allocate space and secure retail businesses for first floor. When that is in place, commission architectural drawing for the renovation.
Responsibility: State Commissioner of Administration

**OSCD-3: Site Assembly**
Recommendation: Secure the lots that lie between Auto Hotel and North Boulevard. Reserve sites for Civic buildings or related Arts and Cultural Center to prevent random development. A new building “worthy” of facing the State Capitol should be constructed.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge

**OSCD-4: Lafayette Park Renovation**
Recommendation: Prepare a design to refurbish Lafayette Park, extending it to the east at Lafayette Street, to the west toward the River with a lightweight wooden deck, and southward to the front of the Old State Capitol.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

**OSCD-5: The Center for Political and Government History**
Recommendation: As the CPGH needs additional space, secure an architect to sketch a new building on the Auto Hotel block. In keeping with the Old State Capitol District, this building should be civic in design.
Responsibility: State Commissioner of Administration

**OSCD-6: The Recreations and Park Commission (BREC) Building**
Recommendation: BREC is in search of a new facility downtown. A second building may be built south of the Auto Hotel, in the middle of the block. Retain an
architect to sketch a building that will accommodate a gymnasium, day camp and
daycare center.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge

**OSCD-7: Eastern end of North Boulevard**

Recommendation: As an “elegant and important civic thoroughfare,” North
Boulevard should be designed to fulfill its symbolic role. The Post Office parking lot
on the north end should be purchased, or traded for another one. Reserve this spot for
a suitable civic building.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge

**OSCD-8: Western End of North Boulevard**

Recommendation: Reconfigure the Boulevard’s median at is western end,
conforming to the idea of the parkway, rather than the “diagonal geometry” of traffic
flow.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

**The Central Business District (CBD)**

**CBD-1: Merchandising the Storefronts**

Recommendation: As the center of retail historically, Thirst Street should regain its
retail function. Implement merchandizing plan proposed in the Gibbs Report. A
Merchant’s Association should be formed, including both owners and tenants. A
specialized professional may be needed to recruit prospective merchants.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

**CBD-2: The West Parking Garage**

Recommendation: The State Capitol Master Plan (already in progress) has located a
parking garage of 2000 cars at the corner of Main and Third. The parking garage
incorporates shopfronts at the base level. While designed for State employees, it also
directs pedestrian traffic to Third Street retail. The state has agreed to make this
parking available in the evenings. Locate a YMCA that provides childcare and a
health club in the new garage.
Responsibility: State Commissioner of Administration and Downtown Development
District

**CBD-3: The Movie Palace**

Recommendation: A “modern anchor” for Downtown retail is a multiplex cinema.
Arrange a lease agreement with a cinema corporation. This will require financial
incentives and parking allowances. The cinema should be located ideally between
Third and Lafayette between Laurel land Main Streets, with the lobby and main
entrance at the corner of Laurel and Third, feeding into the surrounding shopfronts.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District
CBD-4: The Community Performing Arts Center
Recommendation: Secure the building on the west side of Third between Laurel and Florid. Design a “black box” large theatre behind this building, yet connected to the frontage building on Third. Retain an architect for a feasibility study and begin local fund raising efforts.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

CBD-5: The Sidewalk Galleries
Recommendation: Encourage the building of metal galleries over the sidewalks of Third and Lafayette Streets through financial incentives and code modifications. This protects shoppers from rain and bright sun, but also masks some of the more unsightly buildings.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

CBD-6: Community Police
Recommendation: There is no police precinct in Downtown Baton Rouge, and a new precinct is not warranted. However, a bicycle police staff should set up a post in a visible part of downtown.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

CBD-7: The Mid-Day Option
Recommendation: The State should offer its workers the option of a half-hour of full-hour lunch break as equal alternatives. This gives workers longer lunches to experience downtown, and will help stagger traffic at the end of the day.
Responsibility: State Commissioner of Administration

CBD-8: Outdoor Dining Policy
Recommendation: Eliminate the limits to outdoor dining through codes and deregulations. Outdoor dining, something not available in suburban shopping malls, should be encouraged.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

CBD-9: Phantom Gallery
Recommendation: The Phantom Gallery Project – displaying local art work in abandoned shopfront windows – should continue and be encouraged.
Responsibility: Arts Council

The Downtown Parks Corridor (DPC)

DPC-1: River Road Design
Recommendation: The current design of River Road is a barrier between Downtown and its river because of its high-speed “geometrics,” the dual railroad tracks, and the steep slope of the embankment. Using Transportation in General guidelines, redesign
River Road to be more hospitable by reducing the number of driving lanes and improving the streetscape.  
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

DPC-2: Square at Centroplex
Recommendation: Project CTD-1 is a part of this corridor.  
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

DPC-3: Lafayette Park
Recommendation: Project OSCD-4 is part of this corridor.  
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

DPC-4: Laurel Plaza
Recommendation: The termination of Laurel Street at the River provides an opportunity for a public plaza on the river. Engage the landowners on either side of Laurel Street to discuss a joint development of a plaza.  
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

DPC-5: Batture Park
Recommendation: This park is already under design as part of the State Capitol District.  
Responsibility: State Commission of Administration

The Riverfront Parkway Corridor
The master plan is already underway and partially executed. However, this plan recommends the elimination of Riverfront Plaza as discussed in CTD-4.

The Seventh Street Corridor (SSC)

SSC-1: Seventh Street and Post Office Square
Recommendation: In creating a street trajectory to try and connect the Spanish and Beauregard Town Neighborhoods, Napoleon–Seventh Street is the best choice.  
Project A: Seventh Street: Acquire the vacant Postal Credit Union building through condemnation. Design and develop into a square framed with liner buildings.  
Project B: Post Office Square: Encourage the construction of liner buildings along Seventh Street.  
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

SSC-2: Main Street Shops and Public Market
Recommendation: As shopping in the neighborhoods is inadequate, the best location for these services is the intersection of Main and Seventh because there are a series of underused buildings and this area will also receive some of the traffic leaving the state offices.
Project A: The Main Street Shops. Encourage retail at the intersection of Seventh and Main.

Project B: Public Market: Include a Public Market in the design of the East Parking Garage on Main and Sixth Street.
Responsibility: State Commissioner of Administration

SSC-3: BREC Daycamp
Recommendation: Purchase 7-acre site in Spanish Town through condemnation and grant it to BREC for development. Its best use is for a BREC daycamp.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge

SSC-4: Street Name Restoration
Recommendation: The corridor has three names: Napoleon, Seventh, and Lake Park Road. Replace with the historic “St. Francis Street” or some other name determined by residents of both neighborhoods. Change signage accordingly.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

The Beauregard Town Neighborhood (BTN)

BTN-1: Government Street Correction
Recommendation: Widen sidewalks on Government to narrow traffic lanes slightly. Add signage to guide traffic towards alternate routes to Centroplex and Convention Center. Curve corner where South Boulevard meets traffic from U-turn.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge, Downtown Development District and Metro Council

BTN-2: East Boulevard Correction I
Recommendation: To slow traffic, add additional landscaping on median. Clearly stripe parking areas to encourage use.
Responsibility: Baton Rouge Green

BTN-3: East Boulevard Correction II
Recommendation: Northbound traffic is eventually blocked by a highway on-ramp. Create a clear and “graceful” terminus by convincing First Methodist Church to erect a gateway at the entrance to its parking lot, centered at the northbound lane of East Boulevard.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge, Downtown Development District and Metro Council

BTN-4: East Boulevard Correction III
Recommendation: East Boulevard is “blighted” by many parking lots on its edges. Encourage liner buildings on these lots, or the edges of these lots.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District
BTN-3: Beauregard Playground
Recommendation A: Improve South Boulevard Elementary School playground and make it available to both students and neighborhood residents via a key to a locked entrance. Employ BREC to provide maintenance.
Recommendation B: Turn lot on Mayflower (between Napoleon and Joseph Streets) into a sitting and play area for residents.
Recommendation C: Pending a study, remove the U-turn on ramp between St. Louis and St. Ferdinand Streets. Make available area into a park.
Recommendation D: Remove existing fence on the front yard of the Police Department between Royal and Napoleon. Replace with small fence segments connecting the buildings.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

BTN-6: St. Ferdinand Street Correction
Recommendation: Reduce St. Ferdinand to one lane in each direction, with parking on the sides.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Metro Council

BTN-7: St. Louis Street Correction
Recommendation: Revert St. Philip and St. Louis to one travel lane in each direction, with parking on the sides.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Metro Council

BTN-8: Maximillian Street Correction
Recommendation: Make all Beauregard Town streets two-way to traffic. Remove all parking restrictions except on street corners.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Metro Council

The Spanish Town Neighborhood (STN)

STN-1: Predictability
Recommendation: Property owners will usually not preserve or renovate buildings near a state complex because they anticipate that it will be taken through eminent domain. Issue preservation easements to purchase development rights or create some other long term guarantee that no more land will be claimed.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

STN-2: Costello Lane Correction
Recommendation: Repair and replace curbs with a roll-over design that will not be crushed by garbage and other trucks.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Office of the Mayor

STN-3: North Street Correction
Recommendation: Reduce traffic to one-lane each way with parking on both sides. To help traffic, restrict parking during rush hours only.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Office of the Mayor

**STN-4: Spanish Town Road Correction**
Recommendation: To accommodate the single-most important complaint by Spanish Town residents, construct a chicane just east of Fifth, and limit speed to 25 mph. Also divert traffic with clear signage leading to Interstate 110 via Capitol Lake Drive.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Office of the Mayor

**STN-5: Ninth Street Correction**
Recommendation: Reduce traffic to two lanes and add parking on sides. Bulbing-out curbs, especially at corners, can further reduce speed.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Office of the Mayor

**STN-6: Bungalow Lane Correction**
Recommendation: Allow parking on one side of the street. Allow residents to construct garages leading out into street. It may also be possible to remove asphalt to reveal bricks beneath. This texture would also slow traffic and create a more “scenic environment.”
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Office of the Mayor

**STN-7: Senior Citizens’ Park**
Recommendation: Already in progress, BREC should prioritize the completion of this park. It should also have children’s play equipment, as parks should serve elderly and “neighborhood families” as well.
Responsibility: Spanish Town Civic Association

**STN-8: State Capitol Park Plan**
Recommendation: The new state buildings should be designed to have hidden or midblock parking, accessible only from the west. These new buildings should be “low” and against the street.
Responsibility: Spanish Town Civic Association

**STN-9: State Capitol Park Plan**
Recommendation: For the new east garage, the sides must be faced with a “habitable component,” perhaps a public market.
Responsibility: State Commissioner of Administration and Downtown Development District

**STN-10: State Capitol Park Plan**
Recommendation: Repair flooding problems associated with Insurance Building to reopen western entrances.
Responsibility: State Commissioner of Administration

**STN-11: Arsenal Park Dog Run**
Recommendation: Within Arsenal Park, the State should consider a designated area for a dog run. “The best place would be a location where loitering is currently a problem.”
Responsibility: Spanish Town Civic Association

**STN-12: Arsenal Park Pavilion**
Recommendation: Construct a pavilion at the north end of Seventh Street, strengthening the street’s role as a corridor to Beauregard Town.
Responsibility: Spanish Town Civic Association and Downtown Development District

**STN-13: Traffic Noise Attenuation**
Recommendation: Construct a sound-attenuation wall between the highway and trees along the length of Spanish Town. This wall should not be taller than the trees.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

**STN-14: Special Project Site 1**
Recommendation: Construct and permit new building according to design in Site 1.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

**STN-15: Special Project Site 2**
Recommendation: Construct and permit new building according to design in Site 2, compatible with the historic district.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

**STN-16: Special Project Site 3**
Recommendation: As an alternative to an apartment tower, purchase these woods by condemnation for “all the citizens of Baton Rouge.” BREC could take over its maintenance and use.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

**Traffic in General (See Traffic Report)**

**T-1: Spanish Town Livability**
Recommendation: Implement a livable traffic program.
Responsibility: Office of Mayor

**T-2: Beauregard Town Livability**
Recommendation: Implement a livable traffic program.
Responsibility: Office of Mayor

**T-3: Government Street Reclamation**
Recommendation: Reclaim Government Street as a neighborhood street, rather than an artery road.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Office of Mayor
T-4: **Main and North as Two-Way Streets**  
Recommendation: Restore two-way traffic on North and Main Streets.  
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Office of Mayor

T-5: **River Road Reclamation**  
Recommendation: Reclaim River Road as a community asset.  
Responsibility: Downtown Development District, Plan Baton Rouge, and Office of Mayor

T-6: **Capitol Access Road Improvements**  
Recommendation: Use more of Capitol Access Road and connect it with a fuller network of streets, especially north of the Capitol.  
Responsibility: Office of Mayor and State Commissioner of Administration

T-7: **Interstate 110 Ramp Improvements**  
Recommendation: Add full entry/exit to all ramps on Interstate 110.  
Responsibility: State Commissioner of Administration

T-8: **Third Street Improvements**  
Recommendation: Reconfigure Third Street for two-way traffic and parking.  
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Office of Mayor

T-9: **Additional Parking Lanes**  
Recommendation: Add parking lanes to streets with extra traffic capacity.  
Responsibility: Office of Mayor

T-10: **Alternative Transportation Modes**  
Recommendation: Offer alternative transportation through bicycle path and jitney loop through Downtown.  
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Office of Mayor

T-11: **Baton Rouge Light Rail**  
Recommendation: Develop conceptual plans for use of rail infrastructure.  
Responsibility: Downtown Development District, Plan Baton Rouge, Chamber of Commerce, and Office of Mayor

T-12: **Regional Rail Service**  
Recommendation: Investigate the possibility of a regional rail service.  
Responsibility: Office of Mayor and Chamber of Commerce

Infill Housing in General (IHG)
IHG-1: Affordable Housing
Recommendation: Encourage the Louisiana State Housing Finance Agency to set aside a percentage of its tax credit specifically for Plan Baton Rouge. This amount should be used as incentives for developers to build small infill projects along 7th Street.
Responsibility: Various

IHG-2: Liner Buildings
Recommendation: Plan Baton Rouge should facilitate investigation of liner building feasibility.
Responsibility: Private Sector

Both Neighborhoods (BN)

BN-1: Parking Policy
Recommendation: Create a Resident Only parking policy for Spanish and Beauregard Town residents.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

BN-2: Streetscape in General
Recommendation: Residents may choose to pay for restored brick surfaces to asphalt streets on a block-by-block basis.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Plan Baton Rouge

BN-3: Streetscape in General
Recommendation: The city should fix all broken sidewalks.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Plan Baton Rouge

BN-4: Streetscape in General
Recommendation: Encourage utility company to remove all unused poles.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Plan Baton Rouge

BN-5: Streetscape in General
Recommendation: If residents elect to, Spanish and Beauregard Town should be able to restore historic names to street.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Plan Baton Rouge

BN-6: New Code
Recommendation: Establish an effective notification system for all code variances.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

BN-7: New Code
Recommendation: Evaluate the Historic Preservation Ordinance for Beauregard Town.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Plan Baton Rouge
BN-8: New Code
Recommendation: Revise on-street parking requirements and have waivers in place for those who preserve historic buildings.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District and Plan Baton Rouge

BN-9: Parking Meters
Recommendation: Create a block-by-block program in which property owners can chose to have parking meters.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

Commercial Development (CD)

CD-1: Unfavorable Traffic Conditions
Recommendation: Current traffic conditions are a major impediment to downtown commercial development. There should be clear signs designating a “Downtown Shopping District” near the proposed Third Street area. Major improvements must be made to interstate access and exit roads. Reduce traffic on River Road with parallel parking, wide sidewalks, traffic signals, and pedestrian cross ways.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

CD-2: Insufficient Off-Street Parking
Recommendation: There should be short-term parking on Third Street. The proposed parking garage at Third and Main should have first floor commercial space. Existing surface lots should be converted to alternate purposes according to the Master Plan.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

CD-3: Expanding the Market
Recommendation: Third Street between North and Main should be a retail center for Downtown. The proposed commercial plan is based on a series of five-minute walks between destinations. Major anchor commercial developments should be located approximately 1000 feet from each other.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

CD-4: Filling Retail Voids
Recommendation: Various types of retail should be encouraged to locate downtown based on Commercial Report.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

CD-5: Retail Design and Management
Recommendation: The organization and management of Downtown retail should be based on the guidelines included in the Master Plan.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District
CD-6: The Public Market
Recommendation: The Commercial study shows that Baton Rouge could support a 15,000 square foot Public Market. Use the guidelines in the Commercial report to facilitate the creation of a Public Market.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

CD-7: Adjusting the Dry Areas
Recommendation: For the buildings on Third Street, create an exemption to the law preventing alcohol service within 300 feet of religious institutions.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge

Codes in General (CIG)

CIG-1: Simplified Approval Procedure
Recommendation: Recommend and adopt a simpler approval process for new construction in Downtown.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

CIG-2: New Code / Rehabilitation of Buildings
Recommendation: Adopt a Rehabilitation Subcode to reduce the inconveniences to renovate older buildings Downtown.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge

CIG-3: New Code / Historic Houses
Recommendation: Evaluate several strategies to prevent historic buildings from being destroyed: 1) incorporate a Historic Preservation code; 2) allow owners to build small rental space behind houses to provide rental income; 3) rewrite codes so that keeping the building offers highest land value; 4) restrict commercial-use parking in neighborhoods to reduce incentive to tear down adjacent buildings for parking; and 5) establish a system for relocating undesired houses to empty lots.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge

CIG-4: New Code / Setbacks
Recommendation: Establish flexible setbacks.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

CIG-5: New Code / Overpricing of Properties
Recommendation: Empty lots near commercial development are too expensive to encourage residential use. Create a code that would allow rowhouses, apartments, and offices in traditional building types.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge

CIG-6: New Code / Historic Reconstruction
Recommendation: The new code must maintain the historic patterns of neighborhoods, including lot size.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge

**CIG-7: New Code / Signage**
Recommendation: Create a separate sign ordinance for residential-scale use.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

**CIG-8: New Code / Surface Parking**
Recommendation: Require parking to be masked by buildings.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

**CIG-9: New Yard Maintenance Standard**
Recommendation: Create “Management and Maintenance Standards” with a ticket style violation system.
Responsibility: Downtown Development District

**Streetscape in General (SIG)**

**SIG-1: Catfish Town District Streetscape Improvements**
**SIG-2: Old State Capitol District Streetscape Improvements**
**SIG-3: Central Business District Streetscape Improvements**
**SIG-4: Downtown Parks Corridor Streetscape Improvements**
**SIG-5: Seventh Street Corridor Streetscape Improvements**
**SIG-6: Beauregard Town Streetscape Improvements**
**SIG-7: Spanish Town Streetscape Improvements**
Recommendation: Use guidelines in Master Plan to define a pedestrian way, create a pedestrian scale, and enhance district identity.
Responsibility: Plan Baton Rouge and Downtown Development District

**SIG-8: Public Art**
Recommendation: Encourage more public art.
Plan Baton Rouge has 104 projects that make up the vision for downtown as developed through the charrette process in the Summer of 1998. This report tracks the progress of each of the projects. Although there are 104 items in the Plan, this document describes 111 items because additional projects were added to the original plan. As Alexander Garvin predicted, a small amount of public investment has created widespread, sustained private reaction.

**CATFISH TOWN DISTRICT:**

**1. New Public Square (CTD-1)**
The Columbus statue will be relocated closer to the USS Kidd due to the River Road realignment. The River Road area will be enhanced with pedestrian signals and crosswalks and new lighting standards.

**2. Catfish Town Hotel (CTD-2)**
The Sheraton Baton Rouge Convention Center Hotel officially opened on February 5, 2001. The Sheraton is using the existing atrium, restaurant, and meetings rooms for the hotel, as suggested in the *Plan*. Occupancy has exceeded projections.

**3. The Atrium Renovation (CTD-3)**
The Sheraton uses the atrium entrance on France Street as entry to the hotel as suggested by the *Plan*. In January 2001, the City re-opened St. James Street to vehicular traffic while preserving pedestrian access.

**4. Riverfront Plaza renovation (CTD–4)**
On hold until Centroplex’s convention center expansion plans are completed. The Downtown Development District unveiled a Visitors Amenity Package in March 2003 developed by Washer Hill & Lipscomb with Eskew + Dumez + Ripple and Reich & Associates. A proposal for re-energizing the riverfront plaza is included in the Visitors Amenity Package.

**5. Centroplex Liner Buildings (CTD-5)**
On hold until Centroplex expansion plans are completed.

**6. Robert Reich Park (CTD-6)**
Pedestrian connection and renaming of Repentence Park will be reevaluated in the Visitor Amenity Package.

**7. Government Street Garage Upgrade (CTD-7)**
The Centroplex’s convention center expansion RFP included study of access to municipal garages. With planned developments such as the Centroplex’s convention center
expansion and the Planetarium Space Theater, there will be additional demand for parking in this location. The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan suggests rehabilitation of these garages along with an efficient shuttle system between the garages and the CBD. DPW has cleaned the garages and installed new lighting during the first quarter of 2002.

8. Centroplex Expansion (CTD-8)
Post Architects, Washer Hill & Lipscomb, and LMN Architects (Seattle) were selected to design the 150,000 square foot expansion (70,000 square feet of exhibition space). Groundbreaking was held on August 21st, 2002 with completion scheduled for August 2004.

9. Irene S. Pennington Planetarium Space Theatre at Louisiana Arts & Science Museum (CTD-8)
This world-class education and entertainment complex, which opened May 24, 2003, is equipped with a Minolta Infinium Beta star projector, capable of projecting over 15,000 stars and planets from anywhere in the universe. The theater seats 150 viewers for planetarium shows and large-format film screenings. The Pennington Foundation has contributed $3 million for the $14.5 million project, with the balance funded by the City of Baton Rouge, the State of Louisiana and private donations. ExxonMobil Foundation granted $1 million to the planetarium space theater and will continue to sponsor educational science programs in a unique partnership with LASM.

OLD STATE CAPITOL DISTRICT:
10. The New City Hall (OSCD-1)
At the September 16, 1999 One Year Celebration, Andres Duany enthusiastically promoted the construction of a new city hall on the parking lot in front of the Municipal Building. A group of community leaders would like to see a blue-ribbon committee appointed to promote the idea.

11. Auto Hotel Arts and Cultural Center (OSCD-2)
Jerry Campbell and Associates are the architects for the Phase I renovation of the Auto Hotel which began in August 2000. New developments include plans for a LSU Museum of Art, which will use the third floor of the Auto Hotel and build new gallery space as part of the complex. Schwartz/Silver Architects (Boston), Eskew +, and Jerry Campbell and Associates will collaborate on a master plan for the entire block incorporating the Auto Hotel, Performing Arts Theater and the LSU Museum of Art.

12. Site Assembly at Auto Hotel (OSCD-3)
Jerry Campbell and Associates completed Phase I renovations of the Auto Hotel for the State of Louisiana in 2001. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation entered into a partnership with state government to develop and manage - through an LLC - the state-owned Auto Hotel property. The state agreed to renovate the building, and the Foundation, along with LSU School of Art and the Arts Council, will convert the building to house an arts
As the arts center was taking shape, the Arts Council hired a consulting firm to determine the feasibility of a new performing arts theater that could support local and visiting productions. Theater Projects Consultants, Inc. concluded that the city could support a 300-350 seat venue, particularly if there were nearby arts organizations to build foot traffic in the area. The obvious location for the new theater was on the city block with the Auto Hotel.

LSU was planning to relocate the Museum of Art - in LSU’s Memorial Tower - to property near LSU’s Rural Life Museum on Essen Lane. Jennifer Eplett Reilly saw another opportunity to grow the Arts Block and suggested to LSU Chancellor Mark Emmert that the university consider moving downtown instead. Soon thereafter, LSU joined the ranks of the center’s collaborators.

Currently under construction, Baton Rouge’s Shaw Center for the Arts has all the components of successful cultural districts found in other cities and is being designed by the nationally renowned architectural firm, Schwartz/Silver Architects in collaboration with Eskew + Dumez + Ripple and Jerry Campbell and Associates. The Groundbreaking Gala for the Shaw Center was December 10, 2002. For updated information and architectural renderings, see www.schwartzsilver.com, user name: pub; password: tigers.

13. Lafayette Park renovation (OSCD-4)
The BREC fountain is now functional. A large plaza with unified paving material, defining the pathway through the facility and incorporating water features, including the Robert F. Nichols interactive fountain, will animate this block, linking the Arts Block to surrounding attractions.

14. The CPGH Building (OSCD-5)
Because the LSU Museum of Art and the Douglas Manship Sr. Performing Arts Theater will be constructed on this block as part of the Arts Block, the CPGH Building will not be located here.

15. New Recreational Facility (OSCD-6)
Eugene Young, former BREC Director, visited Senator Mary Landrieu to obtain funding to replace Victory Park that was used for the 2 federal court buildings. Both the Mayor and Plan Baton Rouge have indicated willingness to support BREC’s request with BREC leading the effort.

16. Site purchase/Eastern end of North Boulevard (OSCD-7) Plan Baton Rouge is working on a strategy to pursue a new use for this unoccupied Post Office property.

17. Streetscape improvement/Western end of North Boulevard (OSCD-8)
Fred Raiford, DPW Director, is coordinating North Boulevard improvements with the
River Road upgrade and the Arts Block streetscape redesign. DPW has recently installed curb-cuts along North Boulevard. Other planned North Boulevard enhancements include seating areas, decorative paving and continuous sidewalks for the length of the corridor.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT:
18. Merchandising Program for the CBD (CBD-1)
Because Plan Baton Rouge and BRAF will be responsible for leasing the Auto Hotel, LaSalle and Galvez Garage retail spaces, a merchandising plan and a marketing strategy has been developed. H. Blount Hunter of H. Blount Hunter Retail and Real Estate Research prepared a market assessment and merchandising/leasing study for downtown. The study reveals that there are 84,000 square feet of vacant first floor space in the CBD, which would add an additional $20 million in revenues to the current $33.3 million in annual sales for downtown. The next step in the process is the hiring of a tenant broker to lease the spaces.

Plan Baton Rouge has funded a Storefront Grant Program for $10,000 commencing in 2001 that matches private funding up to $2500 per project for façade improvements along Third Street. Two grants were awarded through the Downtown Development District to McGlynn, Glisson & Koch Law Firm and Roy Phelps Gallery. McGlynn, Glisson & Koch Law Firm graciously returned their grant award to the DDD to spur additional investment. Phase II recipients were Casselberry’s Cafe, Butler Brothers Rental, Atelier Salon and funds for the restoration of the Coca-Cola sign. Phase III of the program was launched in January 2003 with an additional $10,000 grant from Plan Baton Rouge.

The DDD has formed an Entertainment District Committee which has defined an entertainment district within a targeted area downtown.

19. Ground level tenants for LaSalle (West) Parking Garage (CBD-2)
YMCA has signed an agreement with the state to lease 10,000 sq. ft. on the ground floor, with Third Street frontage. The YMCA officially opened in February 2001 and has already extended its hours to 8 pm to accommodate its 1949 members. A generous donation from Charles W. Lamar, III in memory of his late father, Charles W. Lamar Jr., assured that the YMCA opened fully funded and fully equipped.

The other two retail pods in the LaSalle Garage were included in the merchandising plan developed for Plan Baton Rouge. Obee’s Deli opened in the LaSalle Garage on January 15, 2003 and Bastion’s for Hair opened March 5, 2003. Serop’s Express, Jambalaya Shop and Capitol Corner Market & Newsstand, located in the Galvez Garage pods opened in February 2003.

20. Movie Theater (CBD-3)
Anchor for Third Street - An incentive package is required to attract a movie developer to downtown.

21. Community Performing Arts Theatre (CBD-4) (See #11, OSCD-2) - The state has allocated $3 million in the capital outlay budget for community performing arts theaters in downtown Baton Rouge. Three parcels of land were purchased in 2000 by the State in the Auto Hotel block which not comprise the Art Block. Updated information can be
obtained on the Schwartz Silver website. Baton Rouge Area Foundation has agreed to support the fundraising efforts of the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge for the new theater. The Arts Council has conducted a feasibility study for fundraising. On February 13, 2001, the Arts Council announced that the children of the late Douglas Manship donated $2 million towards the building of a downtown performing arts center. Theater Project Consultants from Connecticut, who are internationally known for programming arts centers and theaters are working with the Arts Council on programming for the Auto Hotel. Webb Management is also working closely with Theater Project Consultants to determine details such as ticket prices and the number of seats necessary to fulfill community needs. They presented the results of their findings at the third town meeting on March 19, 2001 (a detailed report is available). The Doug Manship Sr. Performing Arts Theater will be built as part of the Art Block complex.

22. Sidewalk Galleries (CBD-5)
Russell Davies' design proposal for Third Street canopy project was well received by the Steering Committee in June 1999 and has been approved by Duany Plater-Zyberk. Preliminary cost estimates were prepared, and a survey was completed by Sigma Corporation to determine the location of underground utilities. The project is on hold awaiting funding. The recent Storefront Grant Program, funded by Plan Baton Rouge and administered through the DDD, encourages the installation of awnings and overhangs to enhance the pedestrian experience.

23. Community Police/Improved Public Safety (CBD-6)
Crime statistics prove that there is very little crime in downtown. The addition of the State's bicycle patrol has provided increased coverage.

24. Mid Day Option for State Employees (CBD-7)
Currently state employees are allowed to choose a 30-minute, 45-minute, or 1-hour lunch break.

25. Eliminating Restrictions on Outdoor Dining (CBD-8)
Food can be served to outdoor patrons but liquor cannot be served outdoors. The DDD wrote an Outdoor Dining Ordinance which the Metro Council approved in April that allows food to be served outdoors throughout the DDD.

26. Phantom Galleries (CBD-9)
The successful Phantom Gallery program continues.

DOWNTOWN PARKS DISTRICT:

27. River Road Redesign (DPC-1)
The city and state agreed to redesign and provide funding to remove the high-speed curve. The new 20-mph curve is completed, but the additional on-street parking will be added after building construction is completed. The road has remained passable to provide access to the Sheraton Hotel and the USS Kidd.
The Visitors’ Amenity Package is proposing further enhancement of the riverfront in this area. Also, future plans include four pedestrian activated signals to allow safe crossings in this area.

28. Square at the Centroplex (DPC-2)

See CTD-1. The area designated in the Plan for the square is part of the site for the convention center expansion.


30. New Public Square/Laurel Street Terminus (DPC-4)

If Hartley-Vey builds Riverfront Towers, they would be very willing to work with Plan Baton Rouge to develop the public square next to Riverfront Towers. In December 1999, David Vey said that the 26-story mixed-use project is on hold.

31. Riverfront Park at State Capitol Park (DPC-5)

As part of the Louisiana State Capitol Park Landscape Guidelines and Master Plan, Michael Van Valkenburgh provided a concept design for DeSoto Park (Riverfront Park) in cooperation with State Capitol architects/landscape architects. ABMB Engineers were selected by the State Selection Board November 14, 1999 to do the engineering design for the park. At the request of the State Division of Administration, Plan Baton Rouge facilitated a Charrette in late February 2002 to determine programming for the riverfront park. The charrette design team included Eskew+, Suzanne Turner, Audubon Institute and The Waterfront Center.

32. Capitol Park

The Groundbreaking Ceremony for the LaSalle Building and Parking Garage took place on August 5, 1999. The LaSalle Garage opened in February 2001 along with the Charles W. Lamar Jr. YMCA. The 12-story, 376,000 square foot LaSalle Building opened October 19, 2001 and houses 1050 employees of the Department of Revenue and Natural Resources. The 540,000 square foot garage has 10,000 square feet of retail space, most of which houses the YMCA. . The Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Claiborne Office Building and Parking Garage took place on December 13, 1999. Ribbon cutting on this 475,000 square foot building took place in August 2002. Allen Eskew was selected as architect for the proposed 100,000 square foot Louisiana State Museum, which will be located on Fourth Street at Spanish Town Road. Groundbreaking was held on March 21, 2002. The Galvez Parking Garage houses the public market, Main Street Market. Members of the Public Market Working Group worked closely with the architects Kessels Diboll Kessels with Sam Short, Jr., Architects to determine the specific needs in this space for the public market. Main Street Market Director, Sandy Saye, was hired in July 2001 and the Main Street Market opened on November 2, 2002. The market contains three kitchens, one commercial community kitchen and ten micro-enterprises. The Galvez Building designed by Post and KPS Group, Architects and containing 350,000 square feet is scheduled for completion in Summer 2003. The Galvez Garage will house the Public Market. Members of the Public Market Task Force have worked closely with
the architects Kessels Diboll Kessels with Sam Short, Jr., Architects to determine the specific needs in this space for the Public Market. Construction should be completed by the summer of 2002. The new 100,000 square feet Insurance Building designed by Bani Carville will be erected north of the existing First Circuit Court of Appeals building was completed in October 2002.

The 71,000 square foot Department of Justice/Edward Livingston Building designed by Washer, Hill & Libscomb will be located near the new Insurance Building. The program for the Capitol Park Visitor Center is currently being developed for the site of the Zachary Taylor house near the Pentagon Barracks by Filson Architects. Seven Task Forces were appointed to develop the Interpretive Plan for Capitol Park under the leadership of Allen Eskew, Eskew +. The Interpretive Plan provides guiding principles for the development of the informational and educational venues in Capitol Park, capitalizing on the historic and cultural treasures.

SEVENTH ST. CORRIDOR:

33. Seventh Street Corridor and Post Office Square on Convention Street (SSC-1A)
Numerous meetings with church leaders and other parties have been held to discuss affordable housing development. (See Residential section). Three hundred trees were planted in October 2000 on the Seventh Street Corridor in honor of the late Charles P. Manship whose boyhood home was on the corner of Florida Street and Seventh Street. Baton Rouge Green installed the plantings that will provide shade and color during the four seasons. The City of Baton Rouge and the Department of Public Works removed concrete and prepared the beds for the tree plantings which were designed by the Louisiana Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. The project recently won an award from The Louisiana Urban Forestry Council for promoting urban forestry in Baton Rouge with "The Capital City Enhancement Masterplan." Community Development Block Grant funds of $117,000 are committed for additional curb cuts along the Seventh Street corridor.

34. Main Street Shops & Public Market (SSC-2A)
Ten buildings on Main Street have been purchased since Plan Baton Rouge was completed. Better Business Bureau, Baton Rouge Bar Foundation and the former DSI-LA are completely renovated. Also, the Golden Dome has recently undergone renovation by the deGravelles, Palmintier Holthaus & Frue Law Firm. Petroleum Service Corporation completed its renovation of the old Bell South building on Eighth Street and Main and it serves as a training center. The DSI building was purchased by The Relocation Center in December 2002.

35. Public Market within Galvez (East) Parking Garage (SSC-2B) Immediately following the Plan Baton Rouge charrette, the Baton Rouge Economic and Agricultural Development Alliance, (BREADA) the organization which developed the Red Stick Farmers’ Market, helped to form a committee to investigate the feasibility of a public market in the proposed Galvez Garage. This group evolved into the Public Market Working Group.
Nancy Duncan Porter, a consultant with Projects for Public Spaces, was hired by Plan Baton Rouge to provide guidance about the design and programming for the public market. The Public Market Working Group then developed the program for the public market which was the basis for the Public Market business plan. The business plan was presented to the BREADA Board in November 2000 and was approved by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation Planning and Development Board in March 2001. BRAF provided the start-up funds to hire a market director and initial funds for operations. Sandy Saye was hired in July 2001 as the first director of the public market: Main Street Market. The market opened on November 2, 2002.

36. BREC Day Camp (SSC-3)
BREC is focusing its efforts on recovering a site for a park in the CBD.

37. Street Name Restoration (SSC-4)
Historic Spanish Town Civic Association has selected certain streets for name changes and submitted a request to the Department of Public Works to install new signs.

BEAUREGARD TOWN DISTRICT: (BTN 1-8)
38. St. Joseph Street Improvements
Frank McMains III has completed 3 renovations on St. Joseph Street and Maximillian Street with 4 additional properties undergoing renovation. McMains received the residential preservation award for 643 St. Joseph Street from the Louisiana Preservation Alliance. Also, Rick Carraway has renovated 4 houses in Beauregard Town. The renovated home of Michael & Ursula McClure was featured in Dwell Magazine, October 2000.

39. Government Street Correction (BTN-1)
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan makes specific recommendations to improve pedestrian safety on this corridor such as pedestrian activated signals and striped crossings.

40. East Boulevard Correction I (BTN-2) traffic too fast, add landscaping
No action

41. East Boulevard Correction II (BTN-3) Dead end at First Methodist Church
No action

42. East Boulevard Correction III (BTN-4) Too many parking lots
No action

43. Beauregard Playground (BTN-5) Neighborhood park
No action.

44. St. Ferdinand Street Correction (BTN-6)
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends that two-way operation be implemented on St. Ferdinand between North Boulevard and Penalvert Street. The
diverted island at Penalvert Street will have to be removed. DPW is planning to complete this in two phases in 2003.

45. St. Louis Street Correction (BTN-7) (See Transportation, # 80) Two-way with parking on one side
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan concluded that the morning peak hour traffic volumes prevent St. Louis from being converted to two-way.

46. Maximillian Street Correction (BTN-8)
(See Transportation, # 80) Eliminate one-way streets in Beauregard Town
When the Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan was presented to the public, the residents of Beauregard Town expressed opposition to changing the streets to two-way.

47. Traffic Model (BTN-6, 7, 8) (STN-2, 3, 4, 5, 6)
(See Transportation, # 80)
DPW and State DOTD commissioned the development of a traffic model by ABMB Engineers at the recommendation of Walter Kulash, Plan Baton Rouge’s transportation consultant. On May 10, 2000, the Metro Council approved the contract for a Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan with Urban Systems and Krebs, LaSalle, LeMieux Consultants. This study incorporated the ABMB traffic model and also studied vehicular traffic, mass transit, pedestrian and bicycle access, parking and rail service. The report is available on the DDD website and was received by the Plan Baton Rouge Transportation Steering Committee in July 2001. Mayor-President Simpson appointed an Ad-Hoc Transportation Committee to review specific items in the Transportation Plan related to Plan Baton Rouge recommendations. Plan Baton Rouge worked with the DDD to prepare a list of prioritized projects that DPW began implementing in January 2002.

SPANISH TOWN: (STN 1-11)

48. Home Sales Property values in Spanish Town have escalated 20-60%. George Jenne has renovated 3 homes on Spanish Town Road and plans to build his personal residence on an empty lot on Spanish Town Road.

49. Predictability (STN-1) state encroachment on neighborhood
No action.

50. Costello Lane Correction (STN-2) repair curbs
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends the damaged curbs on Costello Lane be repaired when other road repairs are done in Spanish Town.

51. North Street Correction (STN-3) Revert to one-way
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan did not recommend changing North Street to two-way because of the cost of reconfiguring the ramp from I-110 northbound.

52. Spanish Town Road Correction (STN-4) Traffic calming.
chicane
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends installing a deflector at the entrance to Spanish Town Road. Signage could also be used to divert traffic to Fifth Street to Capitol Access Road for access to I-110. The Spanish Town Civic Association does not want to implement this traffic-calming technique.

53. Ninth Street Correction (STN-5) Add on street parking
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends curbside parking on the west side of Ninth Street between Spanish Town Road and Main Street. DOTD authorized the City of Baton Rouge to modify the striping on Ninth Street so that the existing, outside lane can accommodate parking and the project was completed in December 2002.

54. Bungalow Lane Correction (STN-6) (See Transportation, # 80)
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends parking on one side of Bungalow Lane. This recommendation has been implemented.

55. Senior Citizens' Park/Seventh Street (STN-7)
BREC has completed the park and the ribbon cutting was held in June 1999. The park won an Honor Award from the Louisiana Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architecture in 1999.

56. State Capitol Park Plan-Reduce Impact of Galvez (East) Building (STN-8)
Skipper Post, architect for Galvez Building, and Roger Magendie held two planning meetings with Spanish Town Civic Association. The groundbreaking was held on February 15, 2001; completion is scheduled for June 2003.

57. State Capitol Park Plan-Retail in Galvez (East) Garage (STN-9)
Louisiana House Bill #1198 has provided the method for leasing state properties to a private or non-profit entity within the boundaries of the Downtown Development District. Main Street Market is open and the four retail pods are successfully leased.

58. State Capitol Park Plan-Impact of Insurance Building (STN-10)
Construction of the new Insurance Building has begun and should be completed in the first quarter of 2003. Demolition of the existing insurance building on Fifth Street is scheduled for September 2003.

59. Arsenal Park Dog Run (STN-11) –
No action.

60. Arsenal Park Pavilion (STN-12) Create Terminus at north end of Seventh Street - No action.

61. Traffic Noise Attenuation (STN-13) (See Transportation, # 80) Sound attenuation wall
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends installation of a sound attenuation wall but did not identify sources of funding to implement this recommendation.

62. Petroleum Service Corporation: New Facility at 7th and North (STN-14)
The Planning Commission changed Land Use for this property in the Sub Area meetings. Petroleum Service Inc. will move ahead with construction plans, but has also purchased an additional office building on the corner of 8th and Main Street. Renovations were completed in August 2002.

63. Special Project Site 2 (STN-15)
Site bordered by Sixth, Seventh, Lakeland and State Capitol streets - the owner of the property is not interested in Plan Baton Rouge’s suggestions.

64. Special Project Site 3 (STN-16)
Apartment tower on lake - no action.

65. Preis Property and Development of Property Adjacent to Capitol Lake (STN-15 & 16)
A number of developers have attempted to develop residential units on this site but could not get control of the property.

BOTH NEIGHBORHOODS:

66. Parking Policy (BN-1)
The Historic Spanish Town Civic Association has requested meetings with state officials, lobbyists, and legislators to address this on-going problem. The neighborhood has requested that the DDD implement a Residential Parking Sticker program.

67. Streetscape in General (BN-2) Removal of asphalt to restore brick streets –
DPW has agreed to add brick crosswalks as part of the North Boulevard widening.

68. Streetscape in General (BN-3) broken sidewalks –
No action.

69. Streetscape in General (BN-4) unused utility poles
Unused poles have been identified and a request for removal has been submitted to DPW.

70. Streetscape in General (BN-5)
The Historic Spanish Town Civic Association has voted to put dual names (new and historic) on some street signs on a trial basis.

71. New Code (BN-7,8)
Spanish Town Civic Association has reviewed the Code Section and has made suggestions for parking requirements. Beauregard Town held a review session on
September 8, 1999 and approved Plan Baton Rouge's code revisions. Former Mayor Tom Ed McHugh requested that Planning Commission conduct Sub Area meetings for the downtown in October and November 1999 (two years ahead of original schedule). The meetings were well attended and all changes requested by participants were made by the Planning Commission staff. The Sub Area Land Uses for downtown were approved by the Planning Commission and adopted by Metro Council on December 7, 1999.

72. Parking Meters (BN-9) (See Transportation, # 80)
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan has recommended relocation, removal, and addition of parking meters throughout downtown.

RESIDENTIAL:
As noted in the Plan, Historic Spanish Town and Beauregard Town are valuable assets that cannot be underestimated. Many initiatives in the Plan are designed to protect the integrity of the two historic neighborhoods. But it is crucial to increase the number of residential units in downtown, both upscale and mixed income. The issue of affordable housing in or adjacent to downtown has been the subject of meetings with Congressman Richard Baker, Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Housing Authority of East Baton Rouge, Office of Community Development, and Mid City Redevelopment Alliance, CALEB Community Development Corporation and LSU School of Architecture. A Residential Task Force has met numerous times to hear presentations from New Orleans developers, non-profit banking entities, and local community development corporations.

In the Parish Assessor’s reevaluation of property values in 2000, there was a 2%-4% increase across the parish in property values, but an 11% increase in downtown property valuations.

A project is underway that will have great impact on the residential density of downtown. Developer Richard Preis bought the riverfront property now occupied by General Lafayette Inn and plans to build a 130-unit highrise condominium development with office and retail space included. Preis retained architect Russell Washer of Washer, Hill & Lipscomb to design the building.

COMMERCIAL:
73. Unfavorable Traffic Conditions: Signage, Entries, River Road (CD-1)
State DOTD has approved the new signage suggested by Plan Baton Rouge's transportation engineers for Interstates 10 & 110. As phase I of a three-year program, new signage reading "Downtown – next 4 exits" was installed in January 2001. The Downtown Development District received funds from the State of Louisiana for a Visitors Amenity Package which will initiate a new signage and graphics program to direct visitors to downtown destinations.

River Road improvements include parallel parking on one or both sides of River Road from Government Street to Florida Street. Four pedestrian crosswalks will provide safer pedestrian access to DeSoto Park (Riverfront Park), the new Visitors Center, Capitol Park, LASM and to the riverfront area in front of the new Convention Center.
74. Insufficient Off-street Parking (CD-2)
Plan Baton Rouge hired a parking garage consultant, Mark Bunnell, in November 2000 to determine feasibility of constructing parking garages downtown, to recommend financing options, development tools and partners, and to assess the political realities of the issue. His report, Parking Initiatives for Downtown Baton Rouge, was completed in January 2001 and presented to the Mayor and the Transportation Committee for review. The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan identified parking constraints and solutions. The Transportation Plan confirmed the need for additional parking structures as well as the need for a jitney loop, rail connections, and streetscape enhancements. Mayor-President Bobby Simpson formed a Parking Garage Team chaired by Cordell Haymon to coordinate parking initiatives in the downtown area. The team will determine the next steps in planning for two parking garages which are the key intervention needed to unleash private investment in the next phase of revitalization of downtown. Plan Baton Rouge was able to secure $172,000 for the planning of downtown garages from Congressman Richard Baker in a VA/HUD appropriation line-item. A portion of these funds was used to plan the first parking garage on the corner lot at Convention and Third Streets which will serve the parking needs of the state, the Shaw Center and other adjacent retail destinations. Rich and Associates Inc., from Southfield, Michigan, were hired to complete a feasibility study for the parking garage. Their study also recommends the formation of a Parking Authority to pro-actively assess the needs for parking downtown. The state and city will form a cooperative agreement to build a 468 space garage on this site.

75. Expanding the Market/Centralized Retail Management (CD-3) (See #18, CBD-1)
76. Filling Retail Voids (CD-4) (See #18, CBD-1)
Third Street will receive new tenants in the old Gordon’s Jewelry building recently purchased by Ben Hu and in the Piccadilly Building purchased by Danny McGlynn. Both owners plan a restaurant on the first floor with office space above.

At a Plan Baton Rouge Press Conference in November 2001, Baton Rouge Area Foundation unveiled plans for its new 22,000 square foot headquarters at the corner of Laurel and Fourth Streets. Architect Buddy Ragland of Robert Coleman and Partners designed the building within the Plan Baton Rouge context by incorporating sustainable design elements such as solar shading and high-efficiency heating and cooling systems. Duany Plater-Zyberk gave a highly favorable architectural review of the design for the building. Construction will begin in March 2002 with occupancy planned for late 2002.

Two locations of Joey’s Java currently operate: One American Place, North Street side (January 2000) and Cortana Mall (November 1999).

• Avoyelles Café doubled its size and opened expanded area in January 2000. A cigar bar opened in the summer of 2000 and has proved to be a popular after-hours gathering place.

• Red Star, a new downtown cocktail lounge managed by Frank McMains, opened in late December 2000.
Swamp Mama’s opened in July 2002 in the former M’s Fine and Mellow space.

Atelier Salon opened on North Boulevard in mid December 2000, providing a range of salon services to downtown customers.

Downtown Seafood opened in early December 2000 on 130 Third Street. Henry Zare’s restaurant seats 50 people, catering to the downtown lunch crowd.

Mortorano's Deli opened in April 2002 at the corner of Third and Florida.

Acadian Insurance acquired the already renovated offices formerly occupied by McGlynn Glisson on 236 Third Street.

Matthew Jobe has purchased Jane's Café at 315 North Boulevard and plans an interior renovation and longer evening hours. It will be renamed Jobe's Café and open in January 2001.

The McGlynn Glisson & Koch Law Firm (the old Varsity Shop) opened in January 2001. Ami’s Catering, Mickey’s Varsity Café and Donna Louise’s Fudge Kitchen are located on the first floor of the building.

Tabby's Blues Box opened in March 2000 in the old Rathskellar location on Lafayette Street.

Harrington’s Café opened in March 2000 attracting a busy lunch-hour crowd.

Office Emporium, selling office furniture and accessories, opened in June 2001 and occupies the first floor of the renovated Fuqua Building.

Construction of the St. James Episcopal Church Great Hall on the corner of Fourth and Florida began in March 2002. Buquet & LeBlanc was awarded the contract for the $2,690,000 building.

Wampold Companies announced plans in February for a 280,000 square foot building with a 14-story tower and parking garage. Retail is included in the new tower and also in the first floor of the parking garage. Construction could begin in 2002.

ABMB purchased the Joy’s Building from Hunt Hearin in July 2002 as a result of Act 60 which allows a 25% state historic tax credit for the restoration of properties located within the DDD boundaries.

Baton Rouge Business Report has relocated its business offices to City Plaza in March 2002 to contribute to downtown revitalization efforts.

Outside the CBD:
Remson Haley Architects relocated its offices in April 2002 to a beautifully restored building on St. Ferdinand Street.

E. Eric Guirard Law Firm moved into its new 10,000 square foot office in April 2001.

77. Retail Design and Management (CD-5) (See #18, CBD-1)
The Downtown Baton Rouge Market Assessment and Merchandising/Leasing Strategy, completed in February 2001 by H. Blount Hunter of H. Blount Hunter Retail and Real Estate Research, provides strategies that address implementation, design and management.

78. The Public Market (CD-6) (See #35, SSC - 2B)

79. Adjusting the Dry Areas (CD-7) Serving alcohol in proximity to churches – No action.

TRANSPORTATION:
The State of Louisiana and the City of Baton Rouge funded a comprehensive study of the transportation needs in downtown. The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan, completed in September 2001, reviewed the strategies in Plan Baton Rouge and made recommendations based on their research.

The traffic signalization system downtown is an outdated system requiring manual adjustments. Replacing the signalization system is recommended in the Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan. DPW is currently installing new traffic controllers for the signals on Main and Laurel Streets. DPW is also working with the State in updating the signals on Florida Boulevard and Government Street from River Road to I-110. Work began towards the end of 2002.

80. Traffic Calming (T-1, Recommendations A, B, C) Spanish Town Livability

The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends the installation of a vehicle deflector to slow eastbound traffic entering the residential section of Spanish Town Road. The Historic Spanish Town Civic Association has not approved this recommendation.

T-1, Recommendation D - The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan did not recommend restricted access into the Spanish Town neighborhood to reduce traffic.

T-1, Recommendation E - The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan does recommend parking in the west side of Ninth Street. Information was submitted by DPW to State DOTD in April 2002 for approval to implement this recommendation.

T-1, Recommendation F - The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan does not recommend two-way on Main or North Streets because of anticipated traffic volumes from the new state parking garages.

T-1, Recommendation G - The parking deck improvements as suggested in the Plan have been implemented by the State of Louisiana.
T-1, Recommendation H - The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends the addition of curbside parking on Bungalow Lane. The Historic Spanish Town Civic Association has not approved this recommendation.

T-1, Recommendation I - The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends curb repairs throughout Spanish Town.

81. T-2, Recommendation A : Beauregard Town Livability
Beauregard Town Civic Association did not want to change the majority of their streets to two-way. The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommended additional parking along St. Joseph and Maximillian Streets and this was completed in April 2002. The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommended that Royal Street should be converted to two-way.

T-2, Recommendation B - The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends the restoration of two-way traffic on St. Ferdinand Street (Priority Project approval). DPW is currently studying Phase I from Highland Road to Government Street.

T-2, Recommendation C - The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends the removal of the diverter island at St. Ferdinand and Penalvert Streets when St. Ferdinand is converted to two-way. This is projected to be completed by the end of 2002.

T-2, Recommendation D - The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends the removal of the bulb-outs on Somerulos Street when St. Ferdinand is converted to two-way.

T-2, Recommendation E - The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan does not recommend parking on the east side of St. Louis Street nor does it recommend parking on St. Phillip Street.

T-2, Recommendation F - The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan does not recommend the removal of the U-turn ramp from northbound St. Louis street to southbound to I-10. The ramp minimizes the impact of trucks accessing the interstate from south of downtown.

T-2, Recommendation G - The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends the re-striping of on-street parking on East Boulevard.

82. T-3 Recommendation A : Government Street Reclamation
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan does not recommend the rebuilding of the historic town square on Government Street due to the significant volume of traffic on Government. The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan does recommend pedestrian traffic improvements: pedestrian crossing striping and a mid-block pedestrian crossing at or near Napoleon Street.

T-3 Recommendation B - The construction of the re-design of River Road has been completed.

T-3 Recommendation C - The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan does not recommend that South Boulevard be converted to a major access route at this time.

83. Main & North as Two-way Streets (T-4)
The Comprehensive Downtown Transportation Study did not recommend changing Main Street to two-way because it would cause congestion headed eastbound at peak hours.
The Study did not recommend changing North Street to two-way because of the cost of reconfiguring the ramp from I-110 northbound.

84. River Road Reclamation: Parking Lanes, Continuous left turn lane (T-5A) (See #27, DPC-1)

85. River Road Reclamation: Remove high-speed curve (T-5B) (See #27, DPC-1)

86. Capitol Access Road Improvements (T-6)
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan does not recommend conversion to two-way because the geometrics of the road were not designed for two-way operation.

87. Interstate 110 Ramp Improvements (T-7) The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan said these changes would be costly but actual costs have not been determined.

88. Third Street Improvements (T-8)
Russell Davies’ Third Street Gallery proposal and the Streetscape Enhancement Plan provide design guidelines. Sigma Consulting Group has completed a survey to determine the location of all utility lines on Third Street. The comprehensive study suggests new reconfiguration of Third Street to provide additional on-street parking. This recommendation would require approval by Third Street merchants.

89. Additional Parking Lanes: Fourth, Lafayette and Convention Streets (T-9)
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommended converting Fourth Street to two travel lanes with a middle turning lane and a parking lane on the east side. This Priority Project was completed in March 2002. Lafayette Street will remain one-way but the east travel lane was converted to parking in February 2002, leaving one travel lane with parking lanes on the east and west sides (first Priority Project to be completed). Convention Street is to remain one-way.

90. Alternative transportation modes (T-10)
Recommendation A: The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends that North Boulevard be designated as a major bicycle path. DPW contracted with Reich Associates and Perez Associates to design the bicycle path on the levee connecting downtown with LSU. DPW received TEA-21 funding for this project. Construction is scheduled to begin in Spring 2003.

Recommendation B: Capitol Transportation Corporation (CTC) has provided additional bus service downtown along Florida Street (Gold Line) and Highland Road (Purple Line). Capital Region Planning Commission (CRPC) and Capitol Transportation Corporation are very interested in providing a shuttle system within the downtown. Downtown employers are also interested in possibly subsidizing this service. The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends phasing in the operation of a Downtown Shuttle service based on the demand level (see Chapter Six of the Study for a more detailed explanation).
91. Baton Rouge Light Rail (T-11)
The GBR Chamber of Commerce and Plan Baton Rouge hosted meetings with industrial plants (including Exxon) to enlist their cooperation and participation. The Chamber has had a series of meetings to study light rail connectors, high-speed rail service, and rail connections with New Orleans.

The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan concludes that there is potential for a light rail system to connect Downtown to other activity areas but this potential can only be realized if the transit system is part of the long-range vision for Baton Rouge which includes transit as an alternative to highway access. Providing this kind of transit connectivity within the area will depend on developing the support for it in the impacted communities. A study to identify the potential market issues, costs and possible operators of such service is warranted.

92. Regional Rail Service (T-12)
The Louisiana DOTD completed an extensive study of the feasibility of restoring passenger rail service to Baton Rouge. DOTD’s Louisiana Passenger/Commuter Rail Service Master Plan (Draft Final Report, May 1998) examined the possibilities for intercity rail connections between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. The study identified a demand for potential commuter travel that could be captured by a passenger rail service.

CODES: (CIG 1-9)

95. Code Revisions (CIG 1-9)
The Plan Baton Rouge Steering Committee has approved the Central Business District (CBD) section of the Code and transmitted those changes to the Mayor-President in April 1999. After the Planning Commission staff and DPW submitted the suggestions, the Codes Committee proposed revisions to the Planning Commission. The Metro Council approved the following revision in October 2000: 1) designation of the Central Business District boundaries; 2) elimination of set-back requirements in the Central Business District; 3) parking may not be located between the street and building facade unless screened with a six foot (minimum) masonry wall.

96. Simplified Approval Procedure (CIG-1)
After studying this issue, it was determined that this could be best handled by additional staff at the DDD.

97. New Code / Rehabilitation of Buildings (CIG-2)
A task force was formed to compare East Baton Rouge’s codes with those of the State of New Jersey. Few changes are necessary but a one-stop shop to streamline the process would be extremely helpful. The Mayor’s Planning and Development Task Force study of this issue resulted in changes which will streamline the application process for the entire parish.

98. New Code / Historic Houses (CIG-3) –
No action.
99. New Code / Setbacks (CIG-4) –
This was adopted in October 2000.

100. New Code / Overpricing of Properties (CIG-5) –
No action.

101. New Code / Historic Reconstruction (CIG-6) –
This was adopted in October 2000.

102. New Code / Signage (CIG-7) –
No action.

103. New Code / Surface Parking (CIG-8)
The Metro Council approved the following amendment to the UDC in October 2000:
"In the Central Business District parking may not be located between the street and the
building facade, unless such parking is screened with a masonry wall with a minimum
height of six feet."

104. New Code / New Yard Maintenance Standards (CIG-9)
No action.

STREETScape:

105. Safe crosswalks throughout downtown (SIG A-1)
The Baton Rouge Downtown Transportation Plan recommends paving crosswalks with
textured materials at the Fifth Street/Spanish Town Road intersection and striping
crossings on the Government Street Corridor to improve pedestrian safety. The
Transportation Plan also recommends amid-block pedestrian crossing of Government
Street at or near Napoleon Street with a push-button activation pedestrian signal. DPW
has approved 3 pedestrian crosswalks across River Road at the Centroplex. DPW will
also study other pedestrian crossings as new signals are installed.

106. Bikeways (SIG A-2) (See #90, T-10)
Capitol Region Planning Commission (CRPC) contracted with Urban Systems to study
the feasibility of extending bike paths along the River Road or along the levee. Using this
information, Fred Raiford, DPW Director, was successful in getting a grant from the
Corps of Engineers and TEA-21 to construct the bike trail connecting downtown with
LSU. In the Fall of 2001, DPW hired Reich Associates and August Perez & Associates to
design the bike path. A preliminary design proposal was submitted for public comment
on February 27, 2002. Construction is scheduled to begin Spring 2003.

107. Walking Map (SIG A-3)
The Downtown Development District has maps of downtown points of interests, CTC
bus routes, and bike rack locations available on their website.
108. Streetscape, Street Furnishings, Lighting, Signage (SIG B-1) –
Design and installation of street furnishings, lighting, and signage was submitted as part of the DPW grant proposal. TEA-21 funding is also a possibility. The Downtown Merchants Association installed new benches, trash receptacles and bike racks on Third Street and in other strategic locations throughout downtown.

109. Street Trees (SIG-B2)
300 trees were planted along Seventh, Convention and Main Streets through a donation by Paula G. Manship in memory of her late husband, Charles Manship. Baton Rouge Green planted the trees in collaboration with the Department of Public Works of the City of Baton Rouge in fall of 2000. During a design charrette conducted by the Louisiana Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, the species and planting plan were determined as part of the award-winning Capitol City Enhancement Masterplan.

110. Signs and Banners (SIG-C1)
Visitors’ Amenity Package will address this issue.

111. Public Art (SIG-8)
Arts Council, DDD, and Plan Baton Rouge were unsuccessful in their application to the Division of the Arts for a grant to incorporate public art in the Streetscape improvement plan in 2000. The Arts Council has formed an Arts District Needs Assessment Committee to discuss the formation of an Arts District downtown as recommended in Create Baton Rouge.
Jennifer Speights-Binet was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1972. She was raised in LaPlace, Louisiana, and graduated from the Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts in 1990. While attending Samford University, she was introduced to the discipline of geography and graduated in 1994 with a joint Bachelor of Arts degree in history and geography. She was lucky enough to pursue a master’s degree at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, during which time she developed a keen interest in and affection for cities. After receiving her master’s diploma in 1998, she began her doctoral work at Louisiana State University. She will eagerly receive her Doctor of Philosophy degree in May 2004. She is currently a new faculty member in the Geography Program at the University of Houston, Clear Lake.

Ms. Speights-Binet is married to another Louisiana native, John Binet. They have a beautiful, four-year old daughter, Sara Eleanor.