



**CITY COMMISSION/PLANNING BOARD
JOINT WORKSHOP AGENDA
OCTOBER 20, 2014
7:30 PM**



Photo Credit: Carroll DeWeese

DPS FACILITY, 851 South Eton, Birmingham, MI 48009

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**BIRMINGHAM CITY COMMISSION /
PLANNING BOARD JOINT WORKSHOP SESSION
OCTOBER 20, 2014
DPS FACILITY, 851 SOUTH ETON
7:30 P.M.**

WORKSHOP SESSION

This will be considered a workshop session. No formal decisions will be made. The purpose of this workshop format is to focus on problem definition and desired outcomes. Each commissioner will have an opportunity to share their perspective and thoughts on problems and possible solutions. Citizens will have an opportunity to make public comment at the end of the workshop meeting.

I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Scott D. Moore, Mayor

II. ROLL CALL

Laura M. Pierce, City Clerk

III. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Downtown Birmingham 2016 Plan Review

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

VI. ADJOURN

NOTICE: Individuals requiring accommodations, such as mobility, visual, hearing, interpreter or other assistance, for effective participation in this meeting should contact the City Clerk's Office at (248) 530-1880 (voice), or (248) 644-5115 (TDD) at least one day in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.

Las personas que requieren alojamiento, tales como servicios de interpretación, la participación efectiva en esta reunión deben ponerse en contacto con la Oficina del Secretario Municipal al (248) 530-1880 por lo menos el día antes de la reunión pública. (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964).



MEMORANDUM

Planning Department

DATE: October 11, 2014

TO: Joseph A. Valentine, City Manager

FROM: Jana L. Ecker, Planning Director

SUBJECT: Downtown Birmingham 2016 Plan Review

The Downtown Birmingham 2016 Plan was completed by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Architects, Inc. ("DPZ") in 1996. This Master Plan was a strategic document intended for the next twenty years. Nearly eighteen of those twenty years have passed.

Over the past two years both the Planning Board and the City Commission have discussed the need to prepare an update to the Downtown plan and/or to the Citywide master plan. In order to determine how best to proceed, it was suggested that Andres Duany make a return visit to Birmingham to briefly review the implementation of the 2016 Plan and to make recommendations on setting major goals for the future.

At the October 28, 2013 City Commission/Planning Board joint workshop the topic was discussed in further detail. It was decided at that meeting that a subcommittee would be formed to develop a potential time frame and agenda for a return visit by Duany. A subcommittee was thus formed by the City Commission and charged with preparing a general outline of what the City would like Mr. Duany to study when he arrived by identifying key topics and areas for study, identifying stakeholders to include in the process, and determining what the City hopes to achieve from his visit. After meeting several times, the subcommittee selected some possible dates for Mr. Duany's visit, and outlined the planning goals to be accomplished by a review of the downtown by Mr. Duany. The subcommittee then developed a detailed content plan and draft agenda for a two day visit by Mr. Duany. After reviewing the City's draft agenda and planning needs with DPZ staff, a two and one half day agenda was agreed upon, with an option for a written summary report at the end of Mr. Duany's visit.

On February 10, 2014 the City Commission voted to approve hiring Mr. Duany and approved a contract for his visit on May 19th – 21st, 2014. On April 3, 2014, the City Commission voted to include a final written report in the contract with DPZ, for an additional \$4500.

In May 2014, over the course of two and a half days, Mr. Duany made observations and assessed what has been accomplished to date and which components of the 2016 Plan have not succeeded. The resulting written report is attached for your review and comment. (Please note that a draft Summary of Findings was reviewed at the Joint Meeting of the City Commission and Planning Board on June 16, 2014, but a final version of Mr. Duany's report was not available at that time.

Next Steps:

Discuss the report's findings and determine whether to update the 2016 Plan in a master planning effort focused solely on the downtown, or whether to use the findings and embark on an update of the City-wide master plan as a whole.

**City Commission Minutes
February 10, 2014**

02-32-14 DOWNTOWN BIRMINGHAM 2016 PLAN REVIEW

Ms. Ecker explained the visit from Duany will include a brief review of the implementation of the 2016 Plan and to make recommendations on setting major goals for the future. She noted the two and one half day visit will include a walking tour and meetings with various groups. She pointed out that there is an option for a written findings and observations report at the end of his visit.

Commissioner McDaniel expressed concern with 2016 throughout the agreement. He noted that the orientation of the exercise is to look forward to 2036 or 2046.

Commissioner Rinschler expressed support of the visit, but stated that a more informal walkaround would be sufficient. He expressed concern that the visit would be held on the May 6th election date.

Commissioner Nickita expressed that the visit was to include the idea of brainstorming, getting feedback in a less formal environment, not the regimented charrette style. He suggested staff document the findings and turn it into a report that could be used.

Russ Dixon expressed support of the written report.

Dorothy Conrad noted that this is more than what was originally discussed. She expressed concern with the visit being held on May 6th.

Commissioners Nickita and Dilgard requested clarification on what the report will entail. Commissioner Rinschler suggested the report summarize Duany's ideas and recommendations, not what was said at the planning session.

MOTION: Motion by Rinschler, seconded by Nickita:

To approve the agreement with Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company, LLC for master planning consultation services, contingent upon the approvals required by Sec. 2-289 of the Birmingham City Code, in the amount of \$13,500.00, plus reimbursable expenses not to exceed \$3,000.00, from account #101-721.000-811.0000 (Planning - Other Contractual Services) and to direct staff to redefine the report and return to the Commission at an appropriate time to add the report in and to revise the dates of the visit. Further, to direct the Mayor and City Clerk to sign the agreement on behalf of the City and to approve the appropriation and amendment to the 2013-2014 General Fund budget as follows:

General Fund Revenues:

Appropriation for Fund Balance

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| #101-000.000-400.0000 | \$16,500.00 |
|-----------------------|-------------|

Total Revenue Adjustment

| |
|-------------|
| \$16,500.00 |
|-------------|

Expenditures:

Community Development-Planning

| | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Other Contractual Services | #101-721.000-811.0000 | \$16,500.00 |
| Total Expenditure Adjustment | | \$16,500.00 |

VOTE: Yeas, 6
Nays, None
Absent, 1 (Hoff)

Ms. Ecker confirmed that she will report the new dates to the Commission.

City Commission Minutes
April 3, 2014

04-85-14 MASTER PLANNING CONSULTATION SERVICES
FINAL WRITTEN REPORT

Commissioner Nickita recused himself as he is collaborating with Mr. Duany on a lean-urbanism project for the Knight Foundation. Commissioner Nickita left the room.

Ms. Ecker presented the final schedule for the Andres Duany visit. She explained that Mr. Duany has confirmed that the report will be a ten to twelve page report on his findings and recommendations for the future and not a summary of what went on at the charrette. She noted that Mr. Duany recommends the report as it gives the City a document for future reference. She noted the sub-committee also recommended a written report.

Commissioner Hoff expressed concern with the cost for the report. Ms. Ecker confirmed for Commissioner Hoff that Mr. Duany would be assisted by one of his staff members in writing the report. She noted that the maximum cap for expenses is \$3,000 even with the extra person.

MOTION: Motion by Dilgard, seconded by McDaniel:

To approve the preparation of a final written report (at a cost of \$4,500.00) to be included in the previously approved agreement with Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company, LLC for master planning consultation services, contingent upon the approvals required by Sec. 2-289 of the Birmingham City Code, from account #101-721.000-811.0000 (Planning - Other Contractual Services). Further, to approve the appropriation and amendment to the 2013-2014 General Fund budget as follows:

General Fund

Revenues:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Appropriation for Fund Balance | 101-000.000-400.0000 | \$4,500 |
| Total Revenue Adjustment | | \$4,500 |

Expenditures:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Community Development-Planning | | |
| Other Contractual Services | 101-721.000-811.0000 | \$4,500 |
| Total Expenditure Adjustment | | \$4,500 |

VOTE: Yeas, 5

Nays, 1 (Hoff)

Absent, 1 (Nickita)

Joint City Commission / Planning Board Meeting
June 16, 2014

A. REVIEW OF SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS FROM DUANY VISIT AND DISCUSSION OF PRIORITIES.

City Planner Ecker explained that the draft summary of observations and recommendations has been categorized to focus the discussion.

The Planning Board and City Commission discussed the priorities of the visit by Andres Duany.

Mr. Boyle noted that Mr. Duany's comments were supportive of the City and that there was commentary on the fact that Birmingham is a strong City with opportunities for other areas, such as the Triangle District, and opportunity for development for parking. He noted that Mr. Duany's comments regarding Shain Park included the need to activate the park such as allowing food trucks.

Commissioner Nickita noted that Mr. Duany placed a lot of emphasis on multi-generational thinking and the need to keep incorporating it into future thinking. He commented that the ability to purchase land was discussed and noted that the City's hands are tied by the Charter regarding the purchase of land. He stated that Mr. Duany commented on Bates and Pierce Street and suggested the City could do better with the size of trees and vegetation.

Commissioner Hoff commented that some ideas were not practical such as lighting up the 555 building as it is privately owned. She pointed out that Mr. Duany commented that the City demands high quality, which is why it is getting high quality. She suggested the need to prioritize some of his suggestions.

Ms. Lazar commented on the need to look further ahead for additional parking. She stated that the idea to expand the Triangle District into Adams Square is a good idea.

Commissioner Rinschler commented on the importance of the land control issue. He noted that the issue is central in order to make progress and suggested it is the number one priority.

Commissioner McDaniel agreed that land control is the central issue to taking the next step. He noted that Bates Street and the Library should remain high on the priority list. He suggested that food trucks would liven up Shain Park.

Mayor Pro Tem Sherman commented that development will not occur if there is nowhere to park. He noted that the focus should be parking in the downtown and where to add capacity in order to allow the rest of the City to happen.

Commissioner Hoff noted that Mr. Duany commented that the alleys should be kept clean, but to leave them as is and noted that he focused on development for the next generation. She agreed that land control, regarding the ability to purchase and sell, is a high priority.

Mayor Moore left at 8:50 PM.



BIRMINGHAM
2016 PLAN
ASSESSMENT
OF 2014

Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company

C O N T E N T S

- 1 Background
- 2 General Commentary
- 3 Report on the Visit
- 4 Recommendations

1. BACKGROUND

In 1996, Andrés Duany of DPZ, with local consultants, prominent among which was Robert Gibbs, held a week-long design charrette to plan Downtown Birmingham to 2016. This served as a strategic guide through the next two decades of its development.

At the request of the City Commission and Planning Board, Andrés Duany returned to Birmingham May 19-22, 2014, to review the plan's implementation and make recommendations. A subcommittee formed by the City Commission prepared an outline of goals for Duany's review. Over the course of two and a half days, Duany held meetings with city authorities, stakeholders, developers, architects, and residents. He listened, responded to concerns, shared observations, made recommendations, emphasizing the importance of the millennial generation.

This following report contains an overview of these meetings and proposes certain very preliminary recommendations toward what must inevitably become a plan for 2026.

2. GENERAL COMMENTARY

The Birmingham 2016 Plan has been as successful as any plan of its vintage. This is partially a result of the work of DPZ, but much more to do with the achievements preceding the 1996 charrette and the reports of those subsequently responsible for the plan's implementation. Among the preceding accomplishments, the greatest inherited asset is the set of parking garages which made possible the infill of the 1996 Plan. Without this prescient investment, very little renovation and construction would have been possible, and downtown Birmingham would consist—as do most American downtowns—of primarily surface parking lots. Since the charrette, the most important development for which DPZ cannot take credit is the establishment of a declension of liquor licenses. This facilitated the opening of the host of new restaurants and that now invigorate downtown.

Among the achievements of the DPZ plan, the most visible has been the transformation of the “central square” from parking lot to an actual square. It was work boldly executed, requiring difficult political decisions. This square needs further tuning. Another achievement of the DPZ plan was the gradual replacement of many open sites downtown with good, strong, urban buildings. This infill process should continue until every underutilized site downtown is built upon.

Birmingham has been on an excellent trajectory before the Plan, subsequent to the Plan until today, and there is nothing to prevent its continuing into the future, as several untapped opportunities remain with elected officials and regulators ready and eager. Some are time-sensitive, and should be engaged soon, before an update of the Plan. The following pages summarize some of what remains to be done.

Andrés Duany
Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company
July 2014

3. REPORT ON THE VISIT

This overview contains a very brief summary of each public meeting, followed by a list of the topics addressed. Recommendations that emerged from these sessions are synthesized in Section 4.

ON STREETScape, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND CIVIC SPACES

Attended by approximately fifteen people expressing their concerns and aspirations. Andres Duany does not necessarily agree that all of these are equally important nor, indeed, feasible:

- Perform transit analysis. Modify the street section to incorporate appropriate transit in each context. Privilege community transit over commuter transit.
- Pay greater attention to pedestrian crossings.
- Review the street network plan. Classify streets according to the quality of the pedestrian experience, including the frontage of buildings. One-third of the streets are likely to be good (A streets) and the rest less so (B streets). Focus on and invest in the quality of the A streets. (N.B. Woodward Avenue is a B street.)
- Calm traffic. Reduce the number of lanes on some streets. Use traffic circles and pair lights to reduce traffic speed.
- Plan a system of bike lanes. Where traffic is violent, provide bike trails. Where traffic is calmed, provide bike lanes or bike paths shared with cars. For example, reduce Maple Road from four to two lanes with bike lanes.
- Experiment on the streets. If you don't like the striping, just add a little tack coat of asphalt to erase, and stripe them a different way. Experimentation is more efficient than discussion.
- Control traffic speed on certain sections on Woodward for pedestrian safety and accident prevention, focusing on the redesign of intersections at Oak Street and at Maple Road.
- Repair sidewalks and streets. Restore concrete specifications to ca.1980 to provide a more attractive finish. Allow installation of cobblestones around trees to provide the percolation that supports tree growth.
- Provide larger tree wells and invest in bigger and better trees. Plant trees in small clusters to incentivize their faster growth as they compete for sunlight. Do not plant the

same trees everywhere. Trees on Martin Street are suffering.

- In zones with houses, require the provision of porches that link people with their streets and strengthen neighborhoods. They are a great attribute of urban architecture.
- Require that garages be recessed behind houses.
- Establish the inappropriate height of some awnings. Too many are too high to be effective.
- Take advantage of corner sites for outdoor dining areas. Several are underutilized, such as Park Street/Hamilton Row and Willits/North Bates Street.

ON MIXED-USE

Attended by retailers, developers, property owners, architects and residents:

- Building Codes. The current ordinance is considered too rigid and it is perceived as a constraint for development.
- More playground equipment is needed in Shain Park.
- More parking is needed.

THE ROUNDTABLE OF THE GENERALS

Attended by fifteen but only one or two youngsters (this is typical of public processes participation and an important problem). Robin Boyle, Chairman of the Planning Commission, expressed his concern about how Birmingham is perceived by young people and how to involve this demographic.

- Affordability. Downtown Birmingham is too expensive for the younger generation. Both housing and restaurants are out of reach.
- Young people are more engaged in social media than they are in the life of the city.
- The East Side may be the site for the next generation to establish their housing and businesses.

RESIDENTS ROUNDTABLE

Duany attempted to create a space for discussion of controversial issues. The following requests and concerns emerged from the audience:

- How to better connect the Triangle District to the downtown and also to its adjacent residential areas.
- The strip mall east of the Triangle District is not included in the plan; this confuses the planning and limits future development.
- Maple Road ought to be brought into the Multi-Modal Transportation Plan.
- Crossings on North Woodward Avenue are difficult and dangerous.
- Bike trails: The need is clear, but it's unclear where to place them.
- Transitional zoning is required to the residential areas from the commercial areas.
- The farmer's market is a successful initiative that should be continued.
- Homes being remodeled and rebuilt larger are adversely affecting neighbors' light, green and privacy.

THE TRIANGLE DISTRICT

This session touched on the following topics:

- The desperate need for public parking.
- There is a need for pedestrian crossing of Maple and Woodward Avenues.
- The status of strip mall area is unknown. Refusal of owners of the strip mall to be considered in the Plan.
- The regulations from traffic engineers are counter productive.
- Haynes and Worth Streets to be connected.
- There must be land acquisition to ease development.
- Reconsider the exclusion of Adams Street from the Triangle District.

BALDWIN PUBLIC LIBRARY EXPANSION

Attended principally by staff and committees of the library. Voters had recently refused a \$21.5 million proposal for the expansion of Baldwin Public Library. The director of the library explained that there is no current alternative plan. Duany recommended a series of successional plans. This session produced an abundance of very specific improvements for the library, many of which dealt with its interior. The following topics emerged during this session:

- The current entrance of Baldwin Public Library is dark and dated; the library deserves a brighter and more decorous civic presence. The ramp and steps are uncomfortable.
- There is a need for substantial additional space to accommodate the shelves.
- Interior design is sadly out of date and should be freshened up. Desired features include study rooms, a new location for the circulation desk, and updated study rooms and computer stations.
- Neither the 1960 nor the 1981 addition was constructed to current ADA standards.
- The 1981 addition lacks pleasant views outward, especially to the new square.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Attended by Duany met with a group of twelve stakeholders.

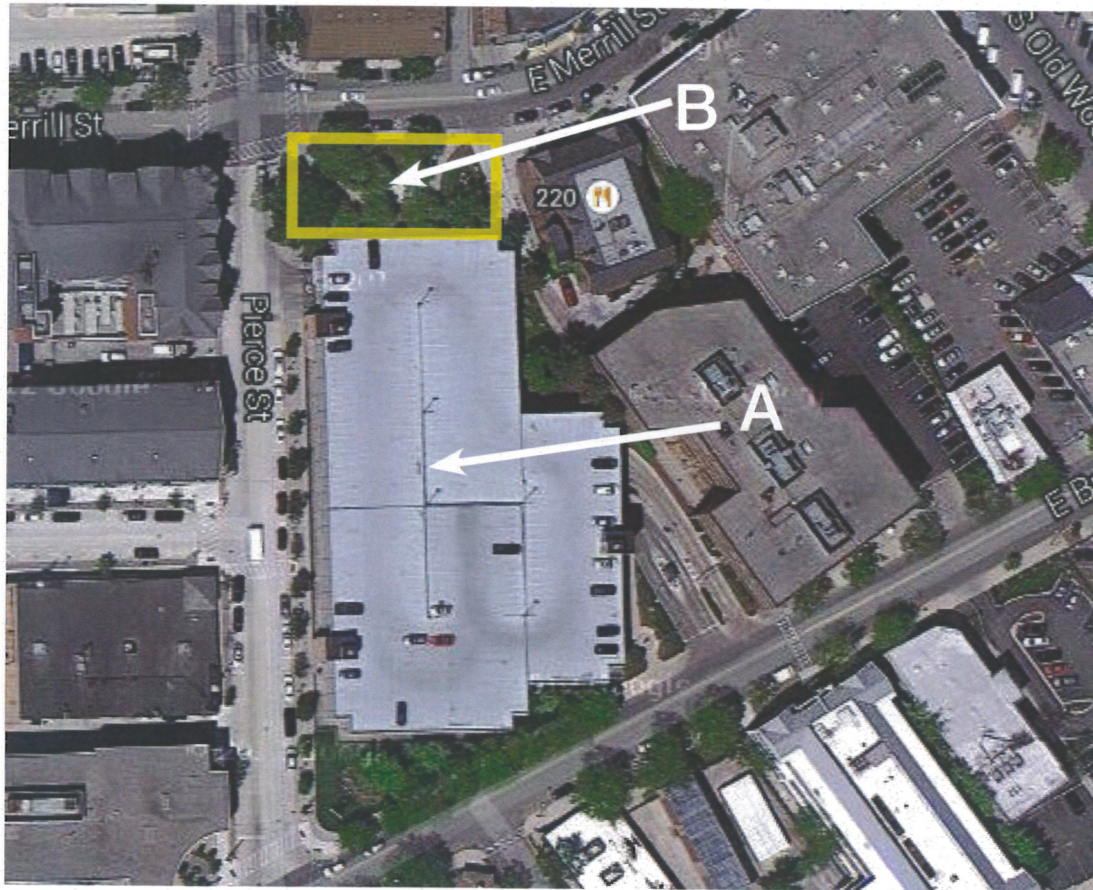
- Parking is scarce.
- High-value residential is needed.
- Taxes are too high to make development work.
- The Triangle District development is constrained by absence of parking.
- Public land restrictions inhibit development.
- The lower rental prices in the Triangle District are promising for startups.
- Adams Square is reluctant to participate in a master plan.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

PROJECT 1: PIERCE STREET GARAGE

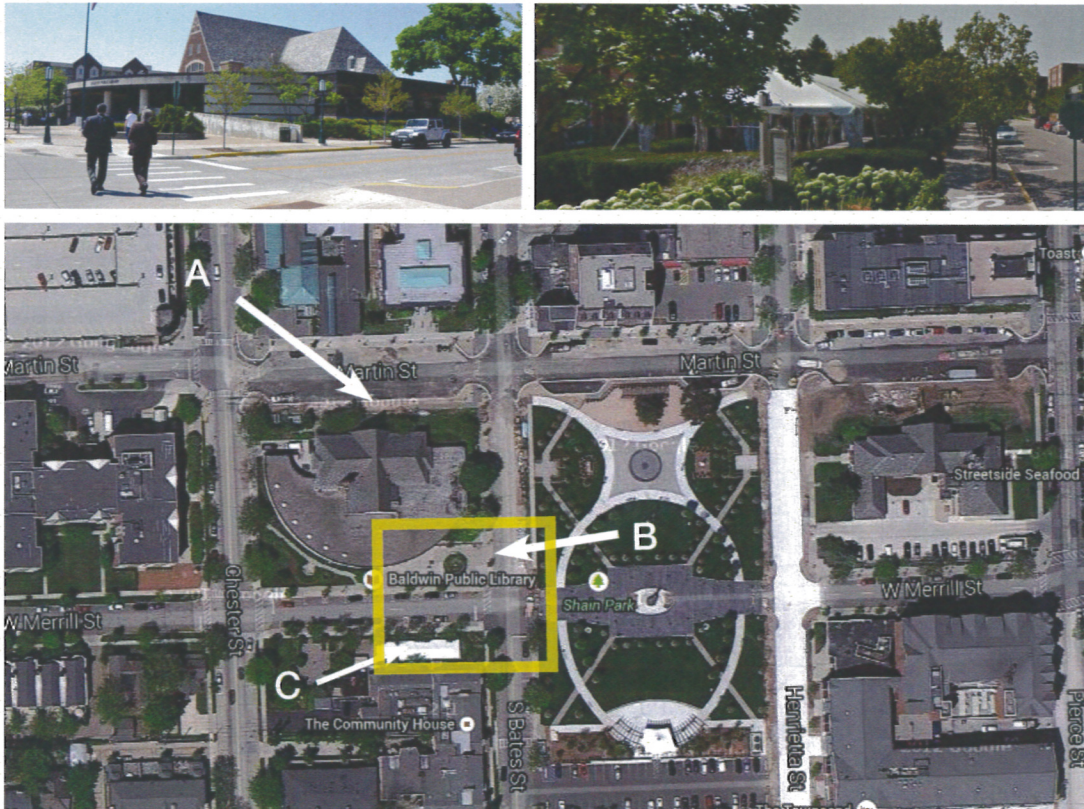
More parking is required. Study the possibility of an additional parking garage or policies that would increase the efficiency of the existing ones.

Add two more stories to the Pierce Street parking garage [A], the construction of which was envisioned. This is an obvious opportunity to help meet parking needs; it is less expensive than creating a new parking structure (with its real estate cost). The cost of this addition may be amortized by allowing a liner building or apartments [B].



PROJECT 2: LIBRARY IMPROVEMENTS

The proposal in the 2016 Plan that the Baldwin Public Library entrance be restored to Martin Street [A] is (in retrospect) not a good idea—because the grand space which is the current reading room would then become a mere vestibule full of security tech. [B] Transform the southeast corner into a civic plaza engaged designed in connection with Shain Park and the enfronting Community House. Develop a raised terrace at the intersection of Merrill and Bates, supporting the existing library entrance. Consider a corner café, on the terrace, which would encourage library use and lend energy to Shain Park. Redesign the library, landscape and ramp accordingly, improve signage, and provide a readily accessible exterior book return. [C] Across Merrill Street, convert the tent now being used by the Community House into a permanent structure that relates to the library. This intersection of park, library, and community center should be conceived as a single urban design project.



Clockwise from top left: The corner of Merrill and Bates, the site of the proposed terrace and civic plaza; the tents of the Community House, which ought to become permanent structures incorporated into the plaza design; aerial image of the site.

PROJECT 3: SHAIN PARK ACTIVATION

A complex project of major importance is the activation of Shain Park. This place, rebuilt is beautiful but not active enough. As public space is activated not just by its internal elements but by the buildings along its perimeter, with buildings whose energy spills over into the park, such as bistros and cafés. The library plaza proposal (Project 2) would provide this activity on the western perimeter. On the north and east perimeters, the open sites, as built should have the ground floors orienting commercial activity towards Shain Park. The sliver of land to the north in particular offers an opportunity for a café abutted to the telephone exchange. To the south, food trucks may be hosted on the paved area near the stage; these would provide affordable and attractive alternatives to the otherwise high-end restaurant scene, particularly for young people and workers. Within Shain Park itself, more and bigger trees might be beneficial planted in clusters.



Clockwise from top: Children enjoy the play structure at Shain Park; a musician practices on the steps; Andrés Duany crosses Bates Street into Shain Park on a walking tour during his visit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

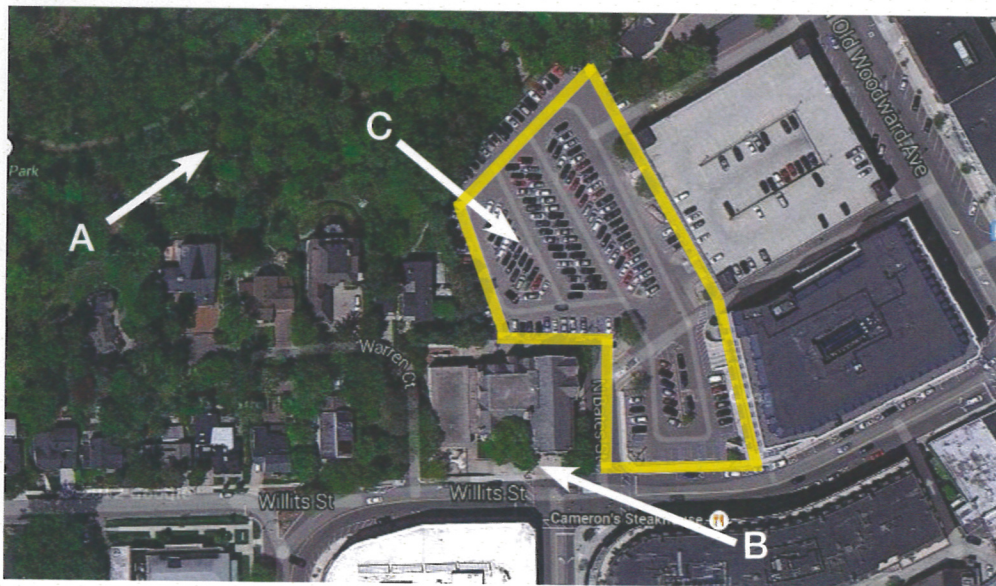
PROJECT 4: BOOTH PARK CONNECTOR

Complete the connection from N. Bates Street to Booth Park [A] with a comprehensive master plan along the east side of First Baptist Church [B]. Line this connection with retail and residential buildings above the surface parking [C], (on which the church depends). Extend the North Woodward parking deck above to accommodate additional cars. Consider extending the urban edge on Willits Street with condo units overlooking the Rouge River. Build a café at Booth Park to further enhance its vitality. If well handled, this connection will effectively incorporate this spectacular greenway to the downtown.



Left: First Baptist Church terminates Willits Street; to the right lies a potential connection to Booth Park behind, which should be lined with buildings.

Below: Note the proximity of Booth Park and the lack of access points to this valuable greenway.



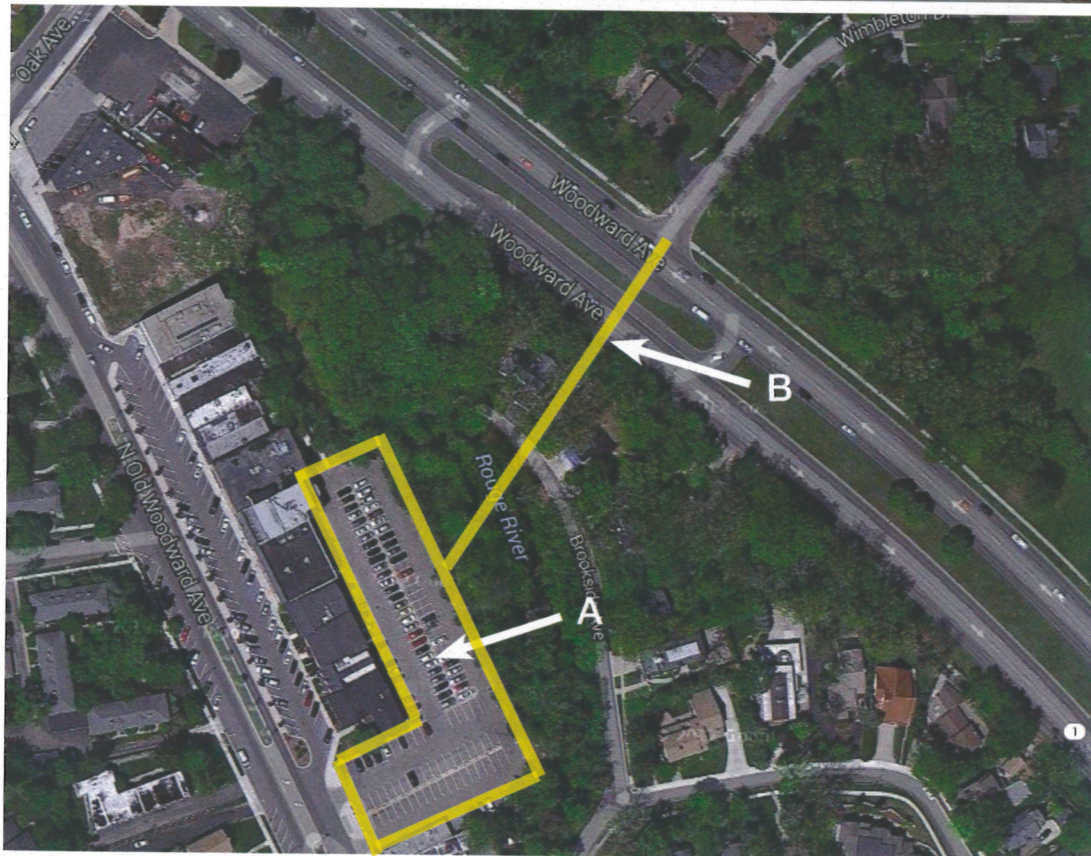
RECOMMENDATIONS

PROJECT 5: OLD WOODWARD-WIMBLETON CONNECTOR

Assure connectivity between northeast and northwest Birmingham by introducing a link across Woodward Avenue. Use the site of the open parking lot [A] to receive the pedestrian connection across the highway from Wimbleton Drive [B]. Build on this site to accommodate (1) the successful and growing market that regularly occurs in this lot; (2) a connection across the highway; and (3) a parking garage for the deficiency, which threatens to worsen in the future.

Right: *View of the proposed connector site on Old Woodward.*

Below: *the proposed connection diagrammatically illustrated in red.*



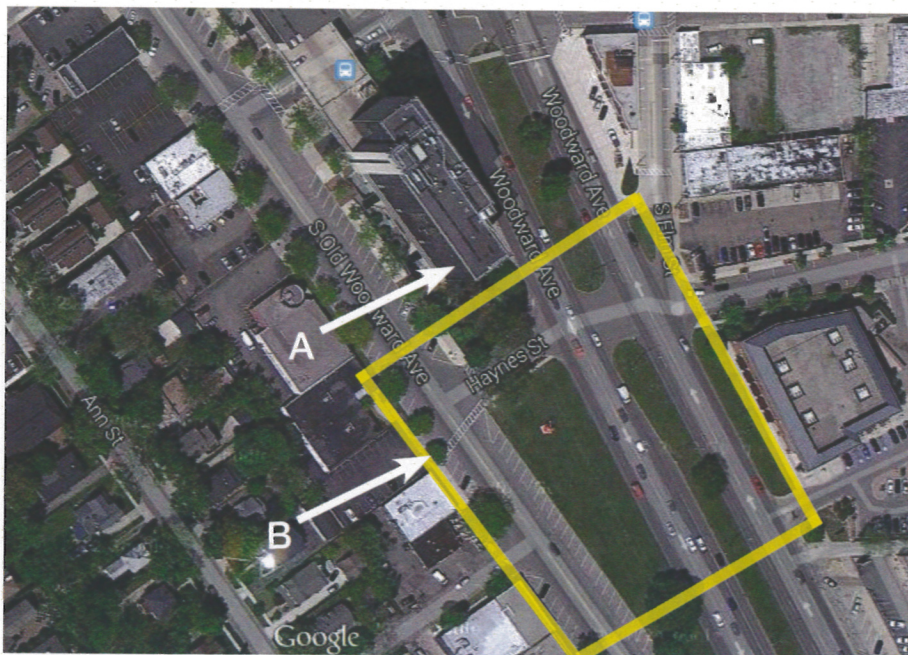
PROJECT 6: GATEWAY TO BIRMINGHAM

Downtown Birmingham has an opportunity to signal its presence on Woodward Avenue by transforming the 534 building on the southern end of Old Woodward as a landmark. As part of the proposed renovation, the 555 building [A] should receive an addition that emphasizes its “flatiron” quality. This addition should be heavily glazed, seen as a glowing beacon (winters being dark). The landscaping at its base should span across the complex pattern of leaves as a single coherent entity.



Above: The 555 Building, poised for transformation into a Birmingham landmark.

Below: Aerial view showing the site's complex junction of thoroughfares.



PROJECT 7: THE TRIANGLE DISTRICT

The Triangle District is the next frontier in Birmingham. Its character is and should remain different from the existing downtown. It is to be less expensive, grittier, hipper, and more attractive to the younger generation. Apart from the necessary, less-expensive housing, supporting such a vision should allow entertainment venues providing night-life. Use a contemporary aesthetic that incorporates diversity; welcome small developers by reducing code regulations to attract a new generation of investors and entrepreneurs. However, the Triangle District may remain unattainable until the shopping center on Adams Road is included in the plan [A]. If not the Triangle District's boundaries, redevelopment will not really occur until a parking garage policy commensurate with the old one of the downtown is implemented—and this site is virtually the only feasible one. Anchor the district with a general green at Haynes and Worth. Provide public parking policy immediately.

