



DESIGNPLACE HELENA

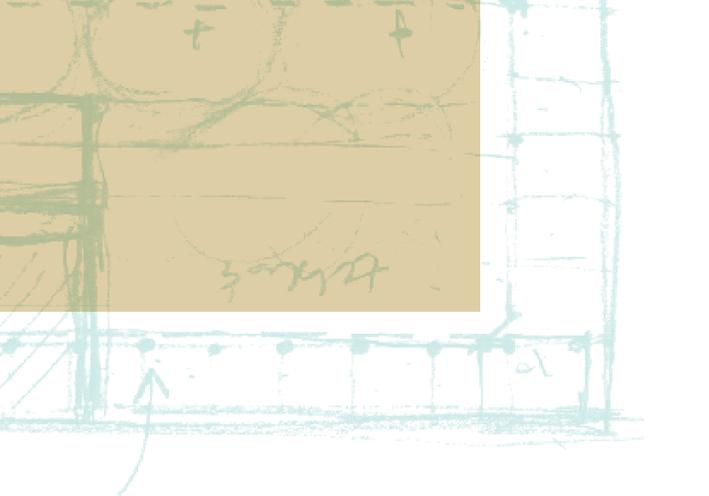


Design
Alabama

JUST A WORD

The ideas represented in the following report are those of a design team brought together to work for three days in a charrette process for the City of Helena. The ideas found in this report are based on observations of the community, significant public participation, and insights the community shared with the team about Helena. The process has informed our thoughts about Helena, and this report represents our best professional recommendations on how to create and enhance spaces throughout the community. We look forward to seeing all the exciting things that come from our time in Helena.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 2016 DesignAlabama decided to create a program that would allow communities represented at the DesignAlabama Mayors Design Summit with a “next step.” The idea was that mayors who had gained so much knowledge about planning and design during their time at the Summit needed a chance to share that knowledge with their community. The idea of the program is not to create a new place, but to enhance a community based on the assets of their community. Community assets include the built environment, the natural environment and most importantly, a community’s people.

Through a three-day charrette process, DesignAlabama brings in a team of design experts with experience in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, graphic design, interior design and planning.

Perhaps the greatest benefit is the stimulation and mobilization of the public. Citizen participation is absolutely critical to the success of DesignPlace or any local design and planning initiative. A DesignPlace visit is not an end; rather, a new

beginning. A second and equally important benefit is the objectivity which a team of “outsiders” brings to a community. Professional consultants are free to carefully examine strengths and weaknesses with “fresh eyes” untainted by political ambition or economic self-interest. Further, for both design and non-design professionals on the team, professional skills are sharpened. And for all participants, appreciation is deepened through citizen participation in the design and planning process. Finally, DesignPlace is invaluable for illustrating the value of community design and planning in Alabama. It stimulates awareness of design issues and dramatizes the impact design can have upon a community’s vitality and the quality of life within its boundaries.

II. WHO IS HELENA?

Helena, located in North Shelby County, is a city on the move, but a city that has also maintained its small-town charm.

Helena began as the Town of Cove, though in the beginning, it was not much more than a crossroads stage stop. The name changed to Hillsboro in 1856 and during this time, a highly productive rolling mill was built to manufacture material for the Confederate war effort.

During the Reconstruction period following the war, the railroads began contributing to the growth in the area. One of the more well-known railroads, L&N, sent an engineer named Pete Boyle to survey the land. Upon completing a new train station, he named it “Helena Station” after his sweetheart, Helen Lee, the daughter of a prominent local judge. The area around the station began to develop and grow, eventually absorbing Hillsboro and officially incorporating as the City of Helena.

Helena played a vital role in the Birmingham steel industry and growth which continued for many years, but hard times hit the City around 1920. The coal mines were almost depleted and closed their operations. About the same time, what was then and is today Connors Steel, moved its operations to Birmingham. The town declined rapidly, and not long afterward; the bottom dropped out. Without local employment, many townspeople had little choice but to move elsewhere for work.

Then came the depression, and in 1933, one of the most devastating tornadoes in modern history destroyed the town. Thirteen people lost their lives, scores were injured, and 110 houses were completely demolished. Despite the incredible adversities the citizens of Helena faced, the community pulled together to begin anew.

Today, Helena continues to grow and reinvent itself. With some of the most desirable schools, neighborhoods and retail development, Helena has a bright future.



III. HOW DID WE GET HERE?

In 2022, Mayor Brian Puckett attended the Philip A. Morris Mayors Design Summit. Mayor Puckett attended the summit looking for design ideas that would help him maintain the character of Old Town Helena, but would also work in coordination with future construction projects in undeveloped and unincorporated areas in this growing community. The suggestions offered to Mayor Puckett at the Mayors Summit are included in the box to the right, which are also some of the items examined and discussed later in this report. The consistency of these issues demonstrates a commitment by this community in creating goals and continuing to work towards them, no matter the long-term time commitment.



- Focus on Ecotourism-what do you need to support that?
- Retail Recruitment
- Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham - revolving loan fund, ask them to set aside funds that would locate along the trail system
- Unique/Boutique Hotel
- How do we complement old town and your tax base?
- Blue Way Trail Branding
- A good peer to help with talks with the single downtown building owner
- Creek Freaks-Autauga County, 501 C-3, talk with Jim Byard
- Identify your champions
- Brews and Canoes, beer garden at your microbrewery
- Common Vision- DesignPlace
- Build off the community already existing on Buck Creek- use this to become the style of homes in your community
- Land swap with the Shelby County Housing Authority - they must have a plan for building on the property
- What about your aging population- what housing do they need?
- Answering why you are moving city hall -if you can not give a definitive answer, maybe its negotiable, it could be a great anchor for new development or Old Town
- Balance new and old developments
- If city hall moves, what is the best and high use for that spot, maybe a leasable property that contributes to the character of downtown
- Housing needs: function, connectivity, broadband
- Values: small town, single family, front porches (these need to be close to the street to make it work)
- IDENTIFY VALUES
- Stop incentivizing bad behavior
- Belinda Stewart- Belinda Stewart Architects, Mississippi
- Overlay-transition district
- Redevelopment Authority
- TIFF
- Money is cheap right now
- What is worth going into debt for?

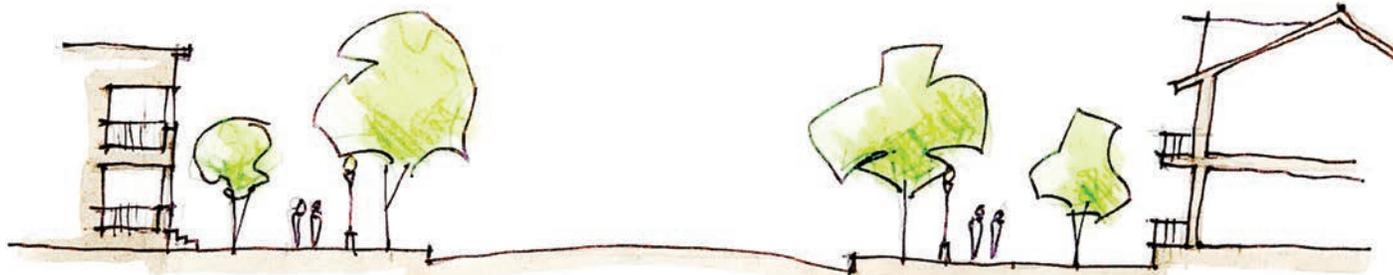
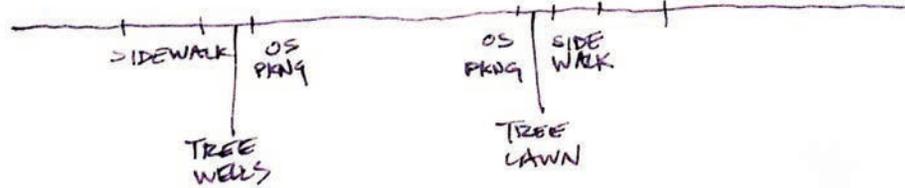
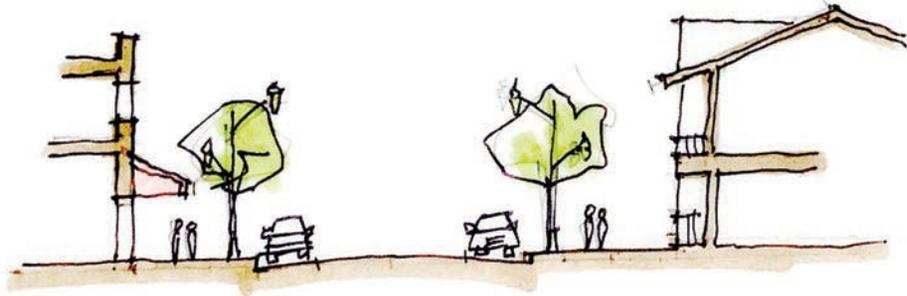
A. OLD TOWN HELENÁ INFILL OPPORTUNITIES

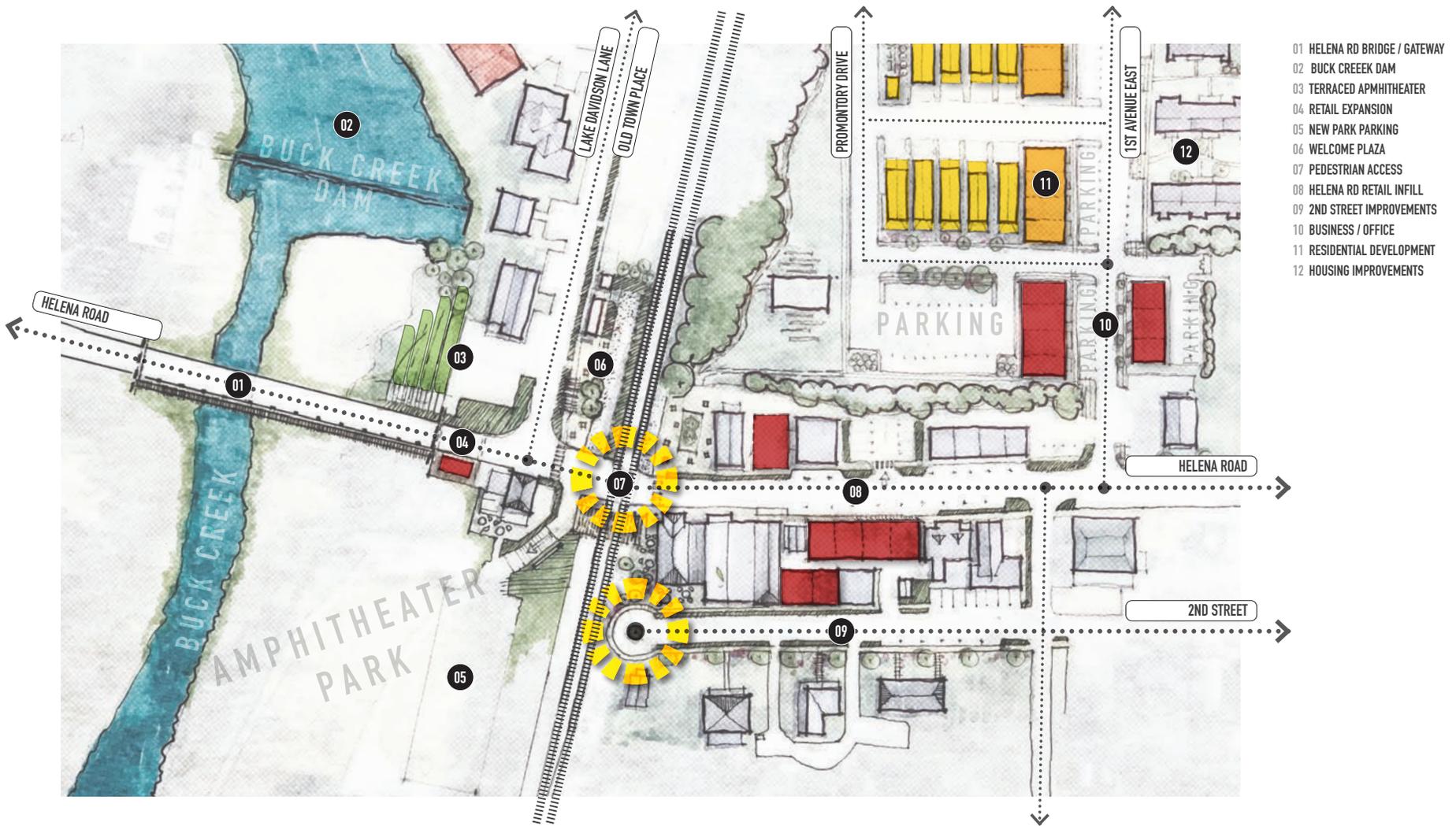
The community identified several assets and opportunities that included Old Town Helena, the existing city hall, the historic elementary school and opportunities such as the undeveloped and underutilized intersection at Helena Road and County Rd 52. This area of town contains multiple opportunities for future development which includes access to the elementary school, new developments focused around the intersection of Helena Road and County Rd 52, along with the access management, trail and sidewalk connections and additional development options to look at opportunities for the southern portion of Old Town Helena.

The concept diagram explores the opportunities to relocate the existing post office to the new town center development and provide for new commercial development opportunity at the southeast corner of Helena Road and County Road 52. The concept suggests reusing the existing city hall building to provide for expanded court, police and fire uses in the existing building to continue to provide for a mix of uses and allow for expansion needs of City departments.



This concept shows how the intersection and access management along Helena Road and County Road 52 can provide for new development opportunities adjacent to the intersection and can be designed with a new street cross section that promotes new sidewalks and connectivity to Old Town Helena and adjacent assets like the elementary school. In addition to new roadways and connectivity patterns, the concept explores the options to provide for new commercial and residential housing immediately adjacent the elementary school and continuing the commercial options of Old Town Helena. This infill redevelopment provides for a greater density of users and commercial options for Helena, while preserving the use, access and view corridor of the elementary school.





One existing development that residents of Helena spoke about is the existing town homes that are located adjacent to Buck Creek in Old Town Helena. This townhome housing typology provides a single family detached home, that has a unique look, feel and density that is desired

by the community. There are currently no other developments in Helena that resemble this pattern, density and typology. One opportunity the design team took was to demonstrate how a similar townhome pattern of housing could be developed.

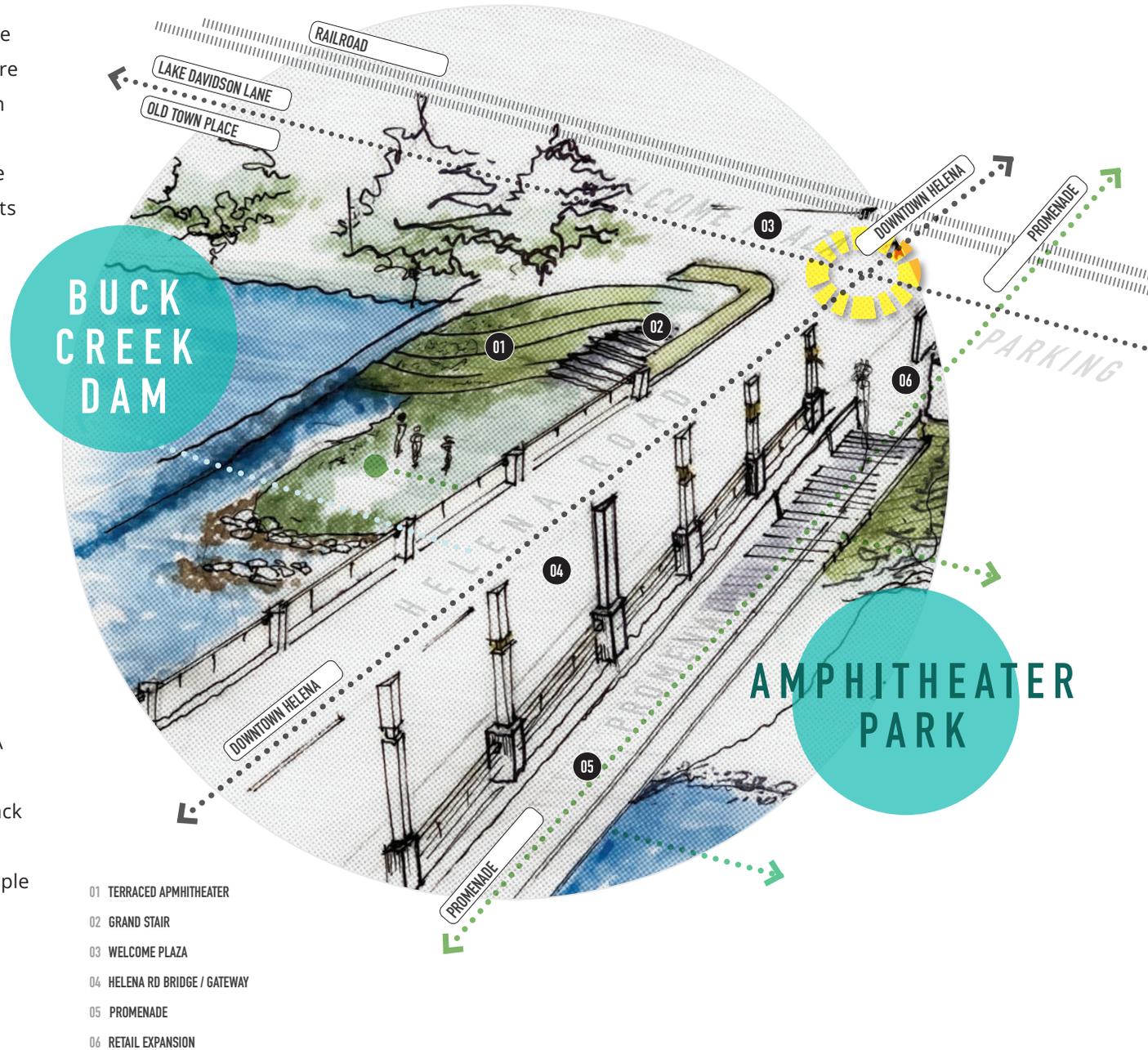


The concept plan shown here demonstrates new residential development in keeping with the pattern of the existing townhomes on Buck Creek. The concept plan uses the existing church site to demonstrate how a landowner can assemble properties to redevelop them for higher densities and transition the new development patterns into the existing residential neighborhood that is adjacent. This concept demonstrates how new

townhomes can be designed to front Helena Road, provide internal green spaces and amenities along with a pattern of alleys for service and parking needs for each home. The development pattern demonstrates how new development can provide green spaces, sidewalk and trail connections to adjacent assets and future amenities of the city and Old Town Helena.

Great public spaces have a distinct identity that says something about the people, place, and time in which they exist. They can act as gateways, share stories rooted in the past, or create a front porch to a community. Helena Road, the main two-lane road, runs right through the downtown core comprised of single and two-story business fronts that retain that small town charm. There is an existing bridge that takes you over Buck Creek past the Helena Welcome Center, a small train car filled to the brim with puzzles and books.

Connectivity is the key to sustaining these memorable and vibrant spaces. A new pedestrian promenade will run along side the bridge stitching together the north and south side of Buck Creek. New art commissioned from a local artist will create a rhythm along the promenade, tell the history of the community, and act as a lit gateway into the city. There will be a new plaza created at the existing Welcome Center that extends across Helena Road to a new outdoor café area that collects 2nd Street. A natural amphitheater will take people from the Welcome Center down to the dam connecting back to Amphitheater Park. New accessible sidewalks and a pedestrian-safe train crossing will pull people through the downtown core and connect to the mixed-use and residential development.

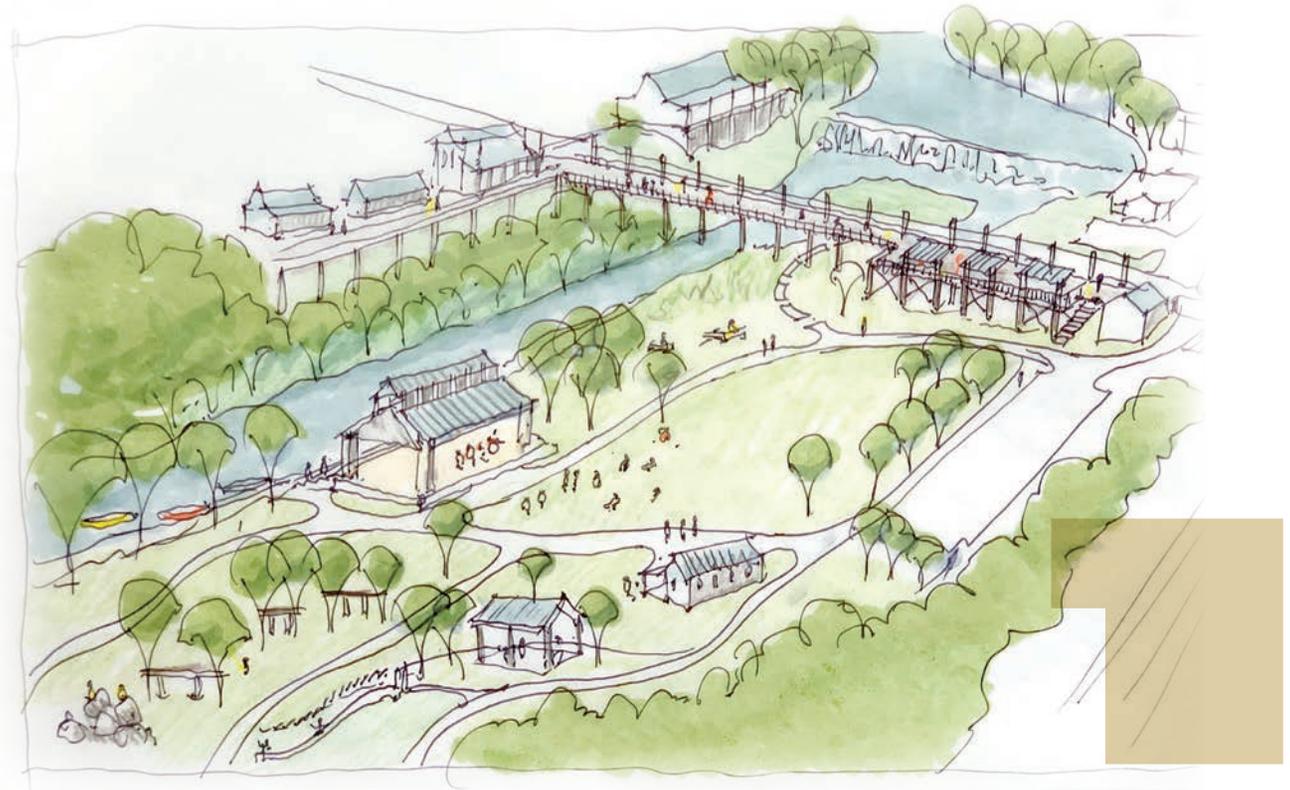


B. AMPHITHEATER

During the DesignPlace workshop, the team looked at opportunities to enhance Amphitheater Park in Old Town. Amphitheater Park is recognized as the central community open space, with a small open-air pavilion that has hosted small musical performances. It is also the only public access point to Buck Creek and serves as a viewing area for the waterfall at the old dam. Recent floods and tornadoes have damaged some of the elements of the park and many large shade trees were lost. The City has expressed an interest in hosting larger musical events, and would like to restore some of the tree canopy.

The design team proposed several new elements, including a large pavilion, parking areas, new restroom facilities, play areas, trails, grassy lawns, and a new pedestrian boardwalk that parallels the vehicular bridge on Hwy 52.

The new 50x100 pavilion will serve as a stage area for events, a farmer's market and event space for community gatherings, and a large, shaded terrace for everyday use. The new pavilion is fashioned after the former mill structure that once stood nearby. A concession building offers a concession space for serving food and drinks at special events, as well as restrooms for daily use. The concession building is styled to complement the pavilion and the other historic buildings in Downtown Helena.



A new entrance drive and parking area provides a much more gentle entrance into the park, with paved surfaces that can withstand the occasional flooding of Buck Creek. New walkways provide connections within the park and also serve as a looped walking trail. The walkways within the park connect to the future Buck Creek Trail system, which will offer several miles of trails, connecting several schools and other parks.



A new boardwalk structure, or promenade, is proposed adjacent to the existing highway 52 bridge to allow pedestrian linkage from one side of Buck Creek to the other. The boardwalk is envisioned as a separate and independent structure from the existing bridge, since the existing bridge is very difficult to modify or replace. Market sheds and other pavilion-like structures on top of the boardwalk offer expanded seating areas for enjoyment within the Downtown Entertainment District.

The plan introduces new trees within the park and recommends a tree preservation plan for the existing tree canopy. The preservation plan should include recommendations for protecting the root systems from further erosion. The Tree Preservation plan should also address selective thinning of the canopies to allow for additional sunlight on the lawn surfaces, aiding in the growth of grasses that can help protect the lawn areas from further erosion.

C. NASH BRIDGE

Nash Bridge on Highway 52 is proposed to be a new park and canoe launch area that will serve as a park and open space on the west side of Helena. Constructed in 1941, by the W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration), Nash Bridge was named in honor of Thomas R. Nash (1892-1964) a pharmacist who came to Helena around 1916 and built a new drugstore by the Masonic Lodge in Old Town. Nash bridge was one of the very few crossings of the Cahaba River, and served a much- need transportation route from Bessemer to Helena. The bridge was constructed of stone from the old coke ovens at Lee Springs Park.

During recent highway improvements, a new bridge was constructed to replace Nash Bridge. Fortunately, a new, modern bridge was constructed parallel to the historic bridge, and Nash Bridge was preserved. The City would like to convert the old vehicular bridge and roadway into a trail and canoe launch area.

The team looked at two options for the long-term development of the abandoned bridge, right of way and adjacent parcels.

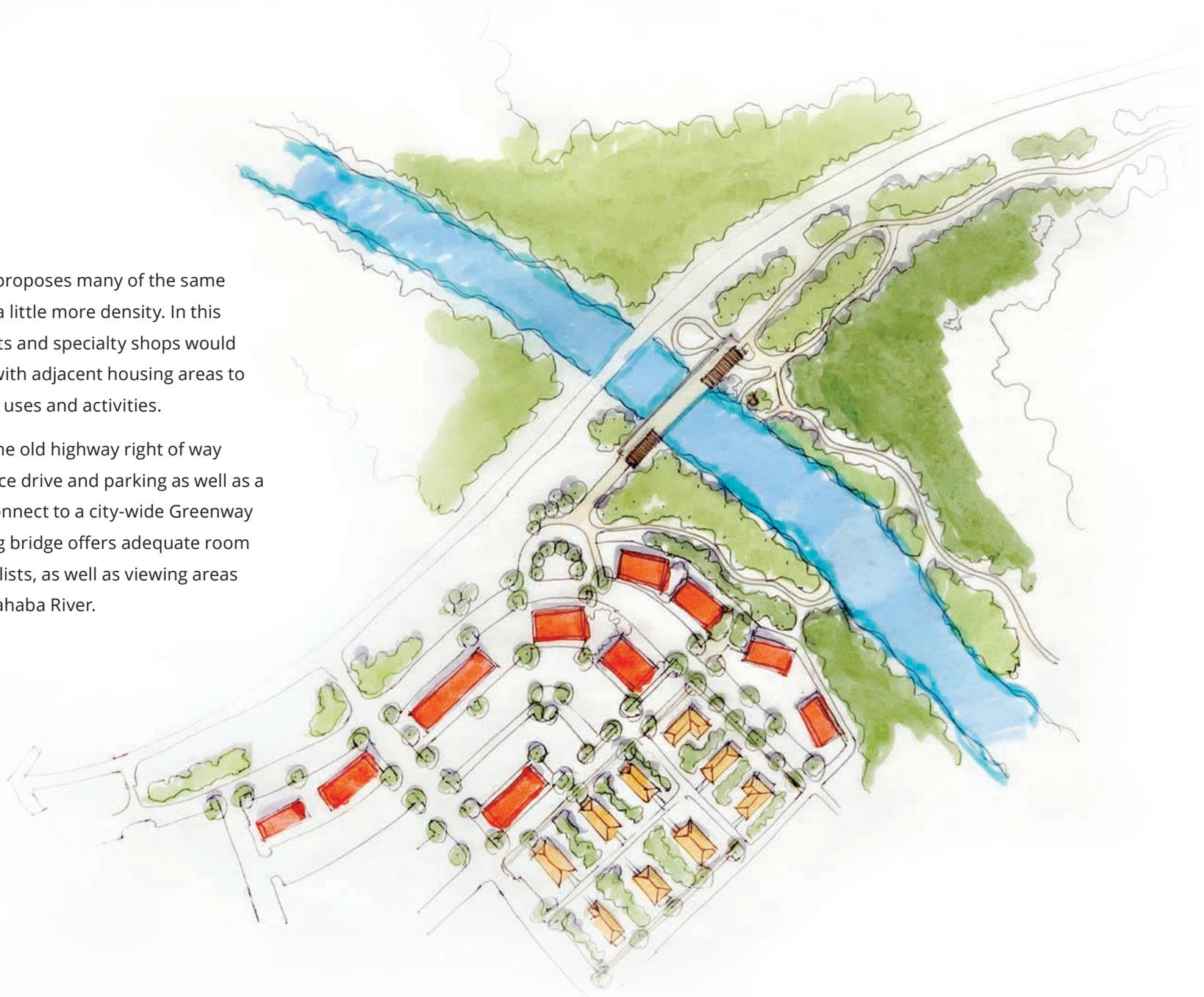




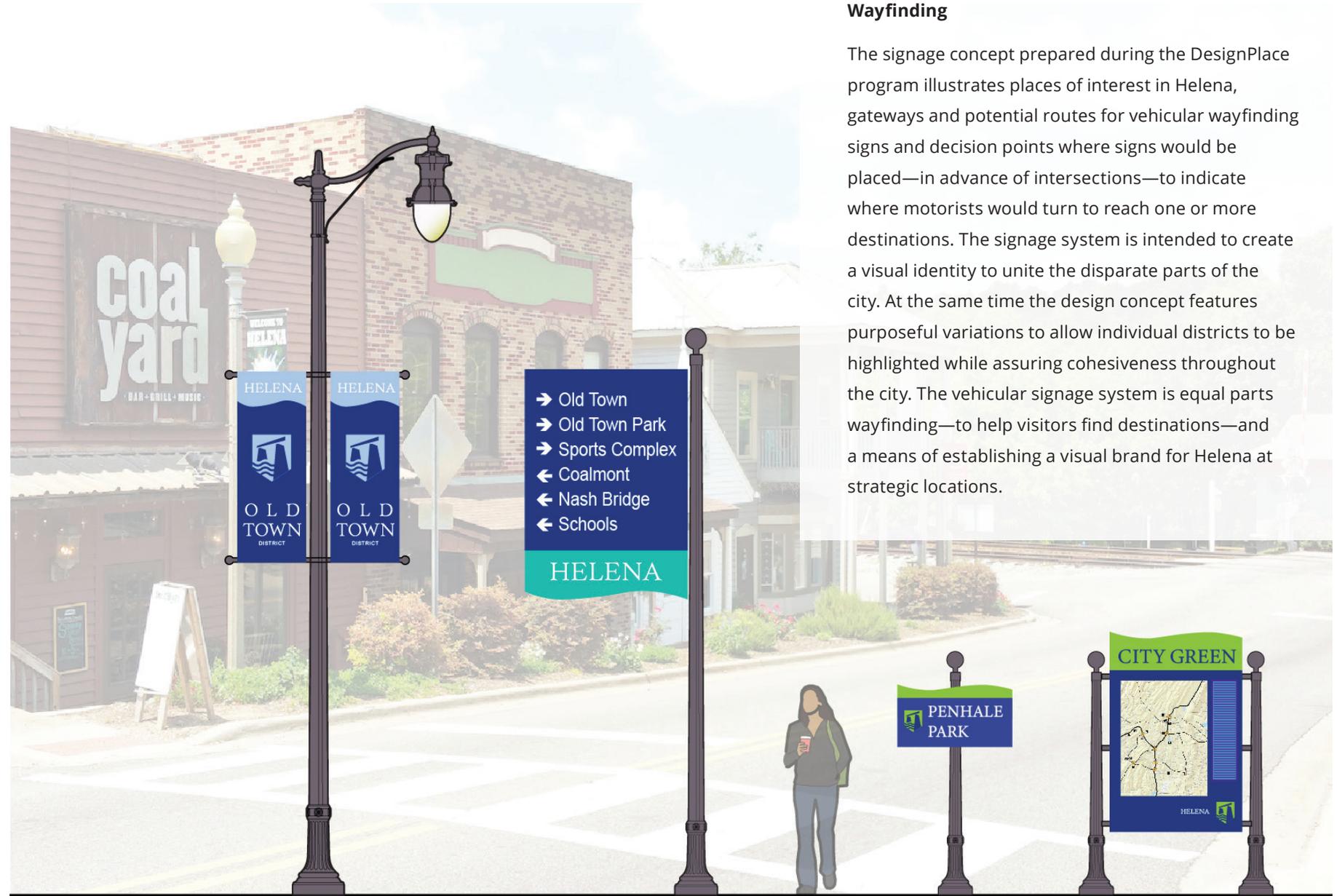
The first option proposes an expanded park and trail system with supporting amenities such as restaurants and Outfitter shops, nestled into the wooded landscape. The combined park and amenity area would offer a new “Village” of sorts for residents on the west side of Helena, with connections to the river and the land. The bridge structure and right of way would offer trails, scenic overlooks, and access to the Cahaba River. The old Canoe Outfitters structure and Canoe-launch located on adjacent parcels would be preserved and re-used as a new outfitter shop, nestled into the tree canopies with play areas, and cabin rentals that overlook the river. A small restaurant/bar area would provide additional opportunities to enliven the park area, with an architectural style reminiscent of Old Town, and a landscape character that is natural and wooded.

The second option proposes many of the same amenities but with a little more density. In this scenario, restaurants and specialty shops would overlook the river, with adjacent housing areas to create a diversity of uses and activities.

In both scenarios, the old highway right of way serves as an entrance drive and parking as well as a new trail that will connect to a city-wide Greenway system. The existing bridge offers adequate room for pedestrians, cyclists, as well as viewing areas that overlook the Cahaba River.



D. WAYFINDING AND GATEWAYS



District & Event
Banner

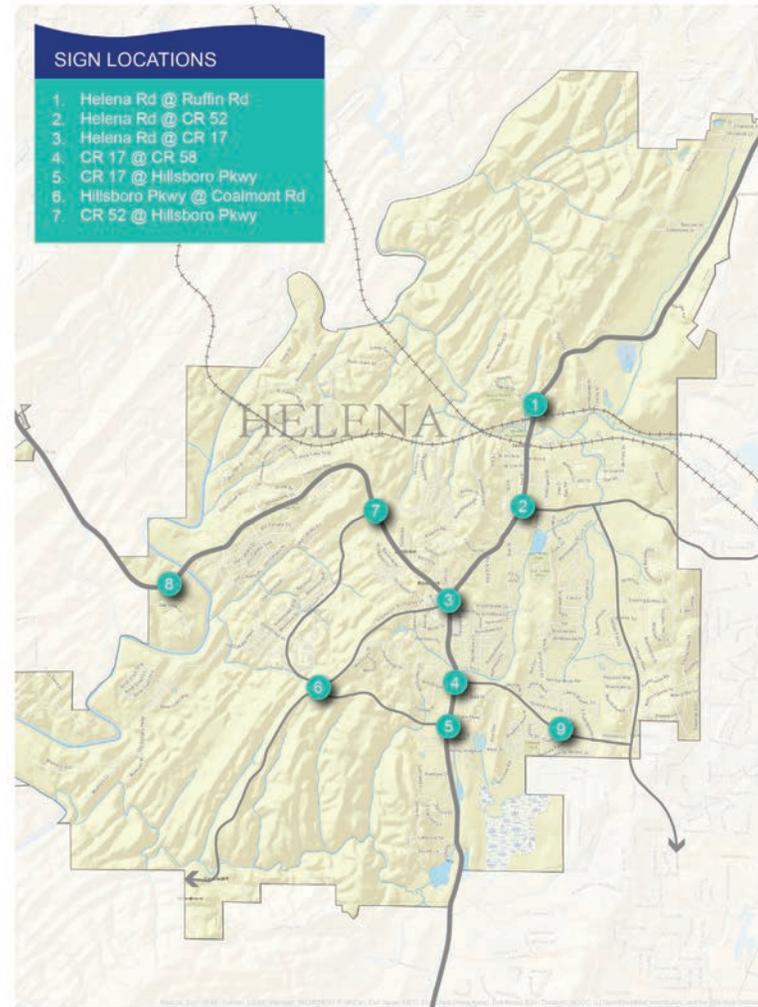
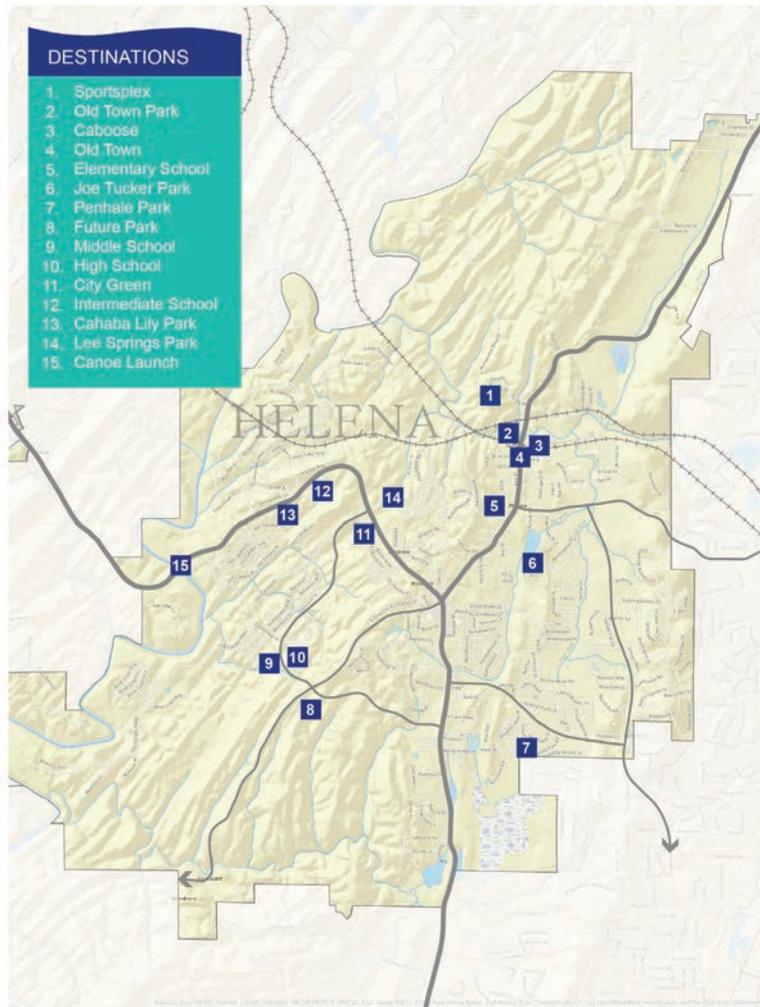
Vehicular
Direction Sign

Destination
Marker

Pedestrian
Kiosk

Wayfinding

The signage concept prepared during the DesignPlace program illustrates places of interest in Helena, gateways and potential routes for vehicular wayfinding signs and decision points where signs would be placed—in advance of intersections—to indicate where motorists would turn to reach one or more destinations. The signage system is intended to create a visual identity to unite the disparate parts of the city. At the same time the design concept features purposeful variations to allow individual districts to be highlighted while assuring cohesiveness throughout the city. The vehicular signage system is equal parts wayfinding—to help visitors find destinations—and a means of establishing a visual brand for Helena at strategic locations.

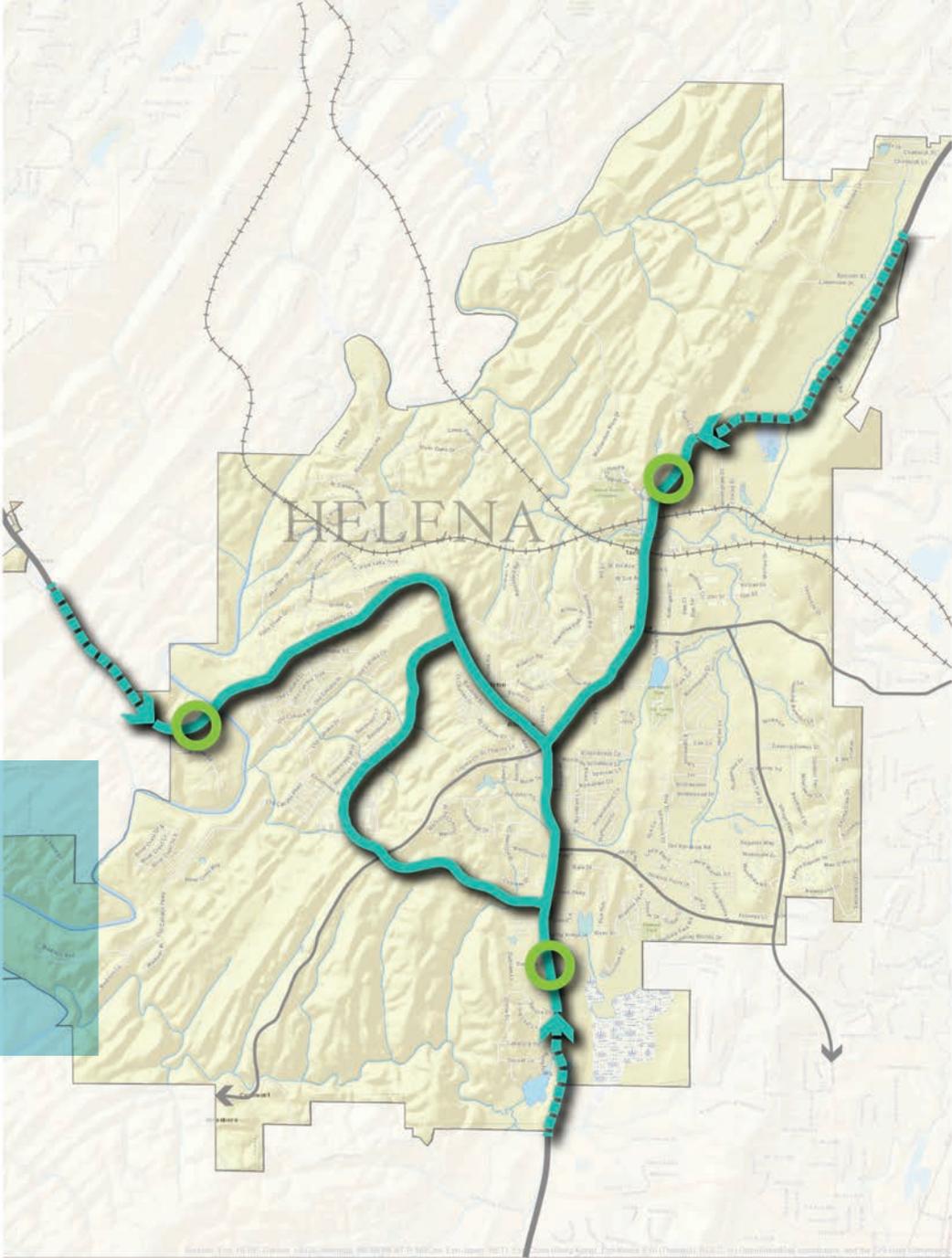


In addition to vehicular directional signs, the community signage system can be expanded to include banners along major corridors that have varying colors and/or graphic elements to distinguish the different districts of the city. Destination markers can be used at schools, parks and city facilities. And, in locations with a cluster of destinations all in walking distance, such as around Old Town, pedestrian kiosks can be installed. Pedestrian kiosks provide directional information but also alert visitors to places of interest

they may not have been aware were nearby. Pedestrian kiosks can include QR codes to connect visitors with a wealth of information online about landmarks, businesses and activities in the area. Kiosks can also incorporate digital elements such as interactive, searchable maps and information about upcoming events. The concept should be considered preliminary; and a finalized plan should be prepared before the community invests in vehicular wayfinding signs.

Gateways

Helena can expand on the branding and community signage concepts proposed in this report by installing signage to announce arrival into the community at three primary gateways. Gateway locations are proposed on the three major routes bringing visitors into the community. Gateway signs should be placed where the arrival experience is enhanced by the natural setting, built features or a combination of the two. Where the city limits cross a major road should not be the default location for gateway improvements, particularly since those locations can change over time through expansion. Gateway signs should be enhanced with landscaping and lighting.



E. BRANDING

Helena Brand Narrative

Rippling water, a soft trail of lights and laughter drifting from balcony overlooks might well be your first experience in a town full of warm and welcoming people. The City of Helena is vibrant place ideally positioned central to neighboring communities just south of Birmingham.

Helena enjoys beautiful green spaces bordering Buck Creek which provide the backdrop for our active outdoor community. It boasts one of the most scenic locations to view the area's famous Cahaba Lilies.

Families find our town ideal. Here we have great schools with modern amenities and Friday night lights are set against gorgeous mountain views and sunsets. Housing options are plentiful within our small town and secure culture. The shops and restaurants of Old Town and our local parks bustle with activity where the community comes together to relax and enjoy one another's company. A business-friendly customer base and leadership fuels opportunity for start-ups, small business and larger companies bringing jobs to our area.

Come see the sites of our lush landscape, browse unique boutiques, sample the tastes of local chefs, mingle, and relax Creekside while you sip refreshments. We think you'll be inclined to stay and make Helena home.





HELENA

A L A B A M A



OLD TOWN
DISTRICT



COALMONT
DISTRICT



CITY GREEN
DISTRICT



NASH BRIDGE
DISTRICT



F. LIGHTER QUICKER CHEAPER

Crosswalk Art

Artistic crosswalks are crosswalks that incorporate a mural inside of the traffic control white stripes. Artistic crosswalks take advantage of a city's most extensive public space, our streets, to improve pedestrian safety, activate the public realm, and instill neighborhood identity and pride. Possibilities for crosswalk art may exist near the library, and near the brewery in Old Town Helena.



Parklets

A parklet is an extension of the sidewalk over an on-street parking space that provides space and amenities for people. Parklets can include a range of features including seating, tables, greenery, and bike racks. Possibilities for parklets may exist along Helena Road in Old Town Helena



Artistic Traffic Signal Boxes

Artistic traffic signal boxes leverage a necessary piece of infrastructure as an art canvas. Above-ground traffic signal boxes are often considered eyesores at street corners. By using the boxes as canvases for art, this necessary infrastructure equipment contributes not only to traffic safety, but also to the vibrancy of the public realm.



Murals



V. NEXT STEPS

The City of Helena is currently experiencing strong forward momentum with leadership, community involvement and development. The City is experiencing a surge of opportunities that is directly related to the level of activity, participation and excitement from the community. As the City continues to plan and hold community events, its leadership should take advantage of these opportunities to continue to engage, refine ideas and begin to implement desired projects.

The first task is to continue to engage the community with the City's Comprehensive Plan. This overall city wide planning document can help the City to prioritize values, assets and needs. This work can help the City to explore the design opportunities that Design Alabama discovered.

// Branding and Wayfinding

Continue to work through options of potential branding solutions for the City. An adopted family of design symbols, colors and names can help create the foundation for a future wayfinding system. Wayfinding systems will require that the City has identified the places to connect and lead travelers to. These places will require names and potential design elements that help inform individuals where they need to go and make it clear when they arrive. To start their wayfinding system, the City should first determine the places to connect as described earlier and their names. Then using the work provided, the City can finalize sign locations and needs that can be implemented or become a project to seek grant funding for its design and construction.

// Amphitheater Park

The design team discovered multiple ways to upgrade and invest in the city's signature park space. These ideas can provide the community a road map for potential projects and new developments in the park. As the City explores these possibilities, it should continue to engage the public and surrounding property owners to test ideas and understand their needs. This will help refine ideas and the potential final design. The City can begin to explore local, regional and state tools and grants to help fund the park improvements. A final park design will allow the City to create consensus support, seek funding opportunities and leverage any capital improvements to help incentivize private investments.





// Old Town Developments

Park developments and public infrastructure improvements in Old Town can help private investments in the district succeed. Prioritizing these public investment needs is a means to help the City to identify funding needs and projects. The City should continue to engage property owners to discuss their ideas and help connect them to resources such as design and financing to help new developments in Old Town come to life. Develop relationships with owners, operators and new groups interested in development to connect ideas, people and build relationships.

// Old Town and Hwy 25

The design team identified potential projects in the district that included new street cross sections, infill development, and existing building's reuse. The City should review the ideas and look to update their policies and design standards to help incentivize development and set standards for the developments. The City can help identify developers and existing property owners to connect them for future development opportunities. For properties that the City currently controls, planning for future uses and needs, as it looks to move City Hall, is important. Existing City Hall can be a catalyst to help spur development in the area, with the expanded police, fire and court uses in the existing building. Engaging the Post Office, to help relocate them to the new City Hall will create new development opportunities in the district and place a municipal use within the new City Hall development.

// Nash Bridge

The City has recently celebrated Nash Bridge's history. With the new road development, the design team helped identify potential improvements at the bridge to celebrate the bridge's history, identify places for the community to access the creek and to help spur adjacent private development. The City should use these ideas to help determine potential partnership with the county for improvements and with surrounding property owners. Documenting the design improvements can help the City to identify partners and grants to implement the projects, which may provide additional infrastructure and improvements that can incentivize adjacent development. The City can continue to refine its policies and standards to ensure new projects and developments meet the community's needs.

VI. TEAM



BEN WIESEMAN (Facilitator)

Ben is the Director of Catalytic Development for REV Birmingham. He is responsible for managing REV's catalytic development

team. The Catalytic Development team undertakes development projects owned and managed by REV, projects realized in partnership with private developers, manages all of REV's real estate holdings and works closely with its business development team to place clients and new businesses in spaces throughout the City, as well as managing and participating in projects with public

and private entities that seek improvements in the public realm related to public art, infrastructure and real estate development.

REV Birmingham (REV) revitalizes places and energizes business to create vibrancy in the City of Birmingham. REV is an economic development organization that stimulates business growth and improves quality of life in Birmingham's City Center and its Neighborhood Commercial Centers. REV fuels commercial vitality through proactive business recruitment and retention activities, and by encouraging private and public investments that support economic growth citywide. REV's initiatives generate positive results for partners, enhance

tax revenue, generate and sustain jobs, increase tourism and positively influence perceptions about the City of Birmingham. REV is a private-public partnership that was formed in 2012 by the strategic merger of Operation New Birmingham and Main Street Birmingham

Ben holds a master's degree in Real Estate Development from Auburn University and is also trained and licensed as a landscape architect in the state of Alabama. In addition Ben is a certified planner with the American Planning Association and also hold a certificate with the United States Green Building Council as a LEED AP professional.



AMY SMITH

Amy Smith founded Studio A Design in 2015, and offers 27 years of professional experience in landscape architecture, planning and

urban design. Amy led the landscape architecture department of a large multi-disciplinary firm in Birmingham for over 22 years. Amy remains committed to her clients and her community.

Studio A Design's office is located in the Five Points South Neighborhood of Birmingham, within walking distance of many of our clients, colleagues, and community partners. We appreciate the partners who have led us to this point, and we are excited to move forward with them and others to a vibrant future!

Studio A Design is known for our careful attention to each client and for bringing inspiring and transformative thoughts and ideas to each

challenge that will surpass our client's goals and expectations. We are known for our sensitivities to the unique qualities of each context, crafting solutions that respect the unique character of place, while creating vibrancy and promoting social interaction. Our work is team-oriented and collaborative. We bring creative energy that is both relevant and relational. We are known for thinking outside of the box, and bringing transformative thoughts and ideas to projects large and small.



ANGELA STIFF

Angela Stiff is the Managing Partner and Creative Director of Copperwing Design, located in Montgomery, Alabama. Angela succeeded in growing Copperwing into one of Alabama's leading communications firms during the first decade of the company's existence. She founded the

firm with brand management as its cornerstone, recognizing its critical role in creating breakthrough communications with long-term relevance. She continues to lead with the same out-front thinking as she sets the vision for the firm. She has successfully led branding initiatives for clients with regional and national reach. Her creative work has been recognized with numerous industry awards. Angela is a proud graduate of Auburn University, where she earned a BFA in visual communications.

Angela is a member of the Auburn University College of Architecture, Design and Construction Executive Board. She serves as member and Communications Co-chair to the DesignAlabama Board of Directors. She has served as past member of the Summerdale University College of Communication and Fine Arts Advisory Council. She has also served as past board member to AGAPE for Children, for whom she still advocates.



JASON FONDREN

Planning Studio leader for Birmingham's KPS Group Jason has 20 years' experience as a planner and urban designer, performing citywide planning, downtown and neighborhood revitalization, campus planning and code development work throughout Alabama. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and a LEED accredited professional. Providing planning and design services for

cities large and small, his exceptional work with KPS Group has been recognized numerous times by the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association, including the organization's Distinguished Leadership Award in 2014.

Jason regularly shares his hard-won planning experience through training and speaking engagements to government and civic organizations, addressing topics such as downtown design, smart growth, zoning, land use law, asset-based planning and sustainability.

In addition to his professional work, Jason has lent his expertise to Alabama communities as a volunteer through DesignAlabama, Auburn University's Small Town Design Initiative and the Alabama Communities of Excellence program. He sits on the Your Town Alabama Board of Directors and is active in the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Jason lives with his wife and three children in Birmingham.



ANDREW BRYANT

Andrew Bryant has “a passion for connecting people with people and people with places.” As an architect, he helps individuals and organizations navigate design and construction to help them achieve their goals. His design influences stem from growing up in Southern California and Kansas, and time spent working

in New York and Alabama. Bryant believes good architecture can be found at the intersection of collaboration and community.

While in Birmingham he partnered with several community organizations such as the Woodlawn Foundation, REV Birmingham and Neighborhood Housing Services. Bryant also served on executive boards of the American Institute of Architects, Alabama Environmental Council, Young Pioneers and the ACE Mentor Program. In addition, his service through the Foundry Ministries, the

Lovelady Center and the Firehouse Shelter cultivate a sense of community that he brings to his Norwood neighborhood by connecting neighbors in need with resources.

Bryant earned a Bachelor of Science in Architecture from Kansas State University and has served as a critic for studio reviews at Mississippi State and Auburn University. He also led architecture and design camps for Auburn University and Space One Eleven, a non-profit community arts organization that provides arts education to disadvantaged neighborhoods in the Birmingham area.



SUCHITRA PRABHU

Suchithra is currently an Associate at Williams Blackstock Architects (WBA) located in Birmingham, Alabama. Since receiving her Master’s degree in Architecture from the University of Illinois, she has developed a variety of experiences from working in India, Chicago, and Birmingham, which has enabled her to provide a unique perspective to any project team. She brings a modern eye to her design process with

a passion for sustainable building strategies.

Recently, she has been instrumental in the design of the adaptive re-use of the Hardwick Building, a historical industrial facility to be repurposed into an imaginative modern mixed-use office building in Birmingham’s Design District.

In addition to her professional work, she has shared her skill and expertise through various volunteer efforts within the community. This past year, she was a key member in the design and build of sleeping shelters for the Compassion

Project, an initiative held during The World Games 2022, as part of a data-driven pilot program to explore compassionate, innovative ways to support people who are experiencing homelessness. She sits on the Junior Board for Workshops Empowerment, ACE Mentor of Alabama and is an officer with the Birmingham Chapter of National Organization of Minority Architects.

Suchithra would like to continue to design places and buildings that have a meaningful and lasting impact in the community.

VII. RESOURCES

The City has strong partnerships throughout the region and should continue to leverage these relationships as they identify potential projects to explore funding tools and grant needs. These tools can be used to create catalytic development projects, assist development opportunities, and create public/private partnerships to help projects succeed.

Relationships: One of the most important tools that Helena has are its existing relationships with partners and programs. The city can help developers identify project needs and their gaps and can connect them to resources that may identify potential business operators and entrepreneurs who are seeking physical locations. The City can introduce development partners to legal and financial service providers who are familiar with local market needs and help define legal and financial terms for projects.

Regulatory tools: The next set of tools that are available to the City is its ability to set visions, identify needs and enact standards for the performance and design of projects. The City can create forums for public engagement that allow the community to set visions, plans and priorities for their needs. The City can then develop

performance and design standards for projects to ensure they meet the community's and market's needs. The City can use comprehensive plans, master plans, neighborhood plans, downtown plans, overlay districts, design standards and zoning and land use ordinances to set minimum standards and aspirational goals.

Corporations: The State of Alabama Charter provides an additional set of tools that Cities may use. The different tools listed below can provide a City with a comprehensive set of economic development options for the acquisition, assemblage, disposition, redevelopment, loans and grants to spur public and private developments. Each tool mentioned has a description provided in the appendix. The tools listed below will each

require specific findings, a plan and an entity or group responsible. The plans created may be used by multiple groups to help guide decisions.

- a. Urban Renewal District
- b. Downtown Redevelopment Authority
- c. Commercial Development Authority
- d. Tax Increment Financing District
- e. Business Improvement District
- f. Amendment 772



Alabama Clean Water Partnership

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cleanwaterpartnership.org

Alabama Communities of Excellence

Mary Jackson // mjackson@almonline.org
alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org

ADECA

Kenneth Boswell, Director // 334-242-5370
adeca.alabama.gov

**Alabama Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources**

334-242-3486

Alabama Forestry Commission

Dale Dickens // 334-240-9300
forestry.alabama.gov

Alabama Historical Commission

334-242-3184 // preserveala.org

Alabama League of Municipalities

almonline.com

Alabama State Council on the Arts

Jacqueline Viskup // 334-242-4076
arts.state.al.us

Alabama Travel Council

334-271-0050

Alabama Tourism Department

334-242-4169 // tourism.alabama.gov

Economic Development Partnership of Alabama

205-943-4700 // edpa.org

**University of Alabama Center for Economic
Development, The University of Alabama**

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MainStreet Alabama

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mainstreetalabama.org

National Endowment for the Arts

arts.gov

Opportunity Alabama

opportunityalabama.com

USDA Rural Development

334-279-3400 // rurdev.usda.gov/al

Housing and Urban Development

Denise Cleveland-Leggett, Regional Administrator
205-731-2617

www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/
communitydevelopment/programs/stateadmin

Your Town Alabama

www.yourtownalabama.org

Additional Federal Resources:

www.reconnectingamerica.org

Downtown Revitalization - www.nal.usda.gov

www.nal.usda.gov/ric/guide-to-funding-resources

Rural Development Grants – www.rd.usda.gov

EPA Smart Growth Grants – www.epa.gov

(Smart Growth in Small Towns and
Rural Communities)

https://projectrowhouses.org/

https://monstrum.dk/en

Our mission is to
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collaboration of the
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importance in creating
and enhancing place
in Alabama.



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