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PATRICK M. FOX

"But the city makes up for its hazards and deficiencies by supplying its citizens with massive doses of a supplementary vitamin — the sense of belonging to something unique, cosmopolitan, mighty and unparalleled." - E.B. White from "Here is New York"

The University of Oklahoma
Graduate College

2006 Gunboat Park Master Plan

A Professional Project
submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science in Architectural Urban Studies

by
Patrick McDonald Fox
Tulsa, Oklahoma
2006

Approved for the Urban Design Studio
of
The College of Architecture

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Acknowledgements



This project is dedicated to my wife, Katie, for her support and patience.

I love you.

And to my son for whom I wait with bated breath.

I love you too.

Thanks to Mom, Dad, and Lori for being there when I needed moral and other (food, lodging, and cha-ching!) support. Seriously, I could not have done this without you all.

Thanks to everyone else who helped and supported me along the way: Roger Randle, Hans Butzer, Pat Treadway, Tom Baker, Bruce Bozle, Dr. Jack Crowley, Ann Crowley, Sarah Fox, Lindsey Fox, Chuck and Irene McConville, Steve Carr, Theron Warlick, Monty McElroy, David Simmons, Amanda DeCort, Jim Coles, Professor Goins, Duane Cuthbertson, Ron Flanagan, Greg Pollard, Paul Coury, Ryon Stirling, Ed Sharrer and anyone else I've bored to death with all of my planning "junk".

Thanks to my classmates: Marcus Fairless, Dr. Tom Costner, & Ryan Nowlin.

Special thanks to Shawn Schaefer for his wisdom and guidance. (And for not letting me quit.)

Preface and Planning Framework



The conclusion of the 2005 Tracy Park + Gunboat Park Master plan stated:

“...in the end, Tracy and Gunboat Parks will adapt to change and grow positively with that change, that they will provide safety and comfort to it’s residents; and that they become and remain vital for decades to come.”

The purpose for following up this study less than one year later with another academic planning project is to ensure that the goals listed above move forward toward implementation and reality. While the 2005 study focused largely on data and research gathered from various sources, none more important than from the people who live and work in Gunboat and Tracy Parks, it also contained some recommendations for future development. While Tracy Park residents were more concerned about safety commercial encroachment, Gunboat Park and other areas within the inner dispersal loop were particularly targeted for revitalization and new investment. Some the boldest recommendations came within the boundaries of the original Elm Park plat.

With the 2005 study, the University of Oklahoma Urban Design Studio studied the two neighborhoods in conjunction with each other because they felt strongly that the problems they were facing were linked. The assumptions proved to be true, and the subsequent recommendations resulted from that vein of thought. As the recommendations emerged, it became clear however, that what was recommended for Gunboat Park was very different than what was recommended for Tracy Park. So, in 2006 as the planning process started up again, it was only natural to take a new approach to planning for the area.

The Gunboat Park recommendations were formulated from unique circumstances. First, the typical resident of the neighborhood rents an apartment or a room in a multi-family structure, as opposed to owning a single family home. Second, Gunboat being located within the IDL, is subject to Central Business District (CBD) zoning, which in essence, offered few restrictions on use, height, setback, or parking. Third, Gunboat Park was particularly susceptible to flooding, which was an issue for physical reinvestment in the area. Lastly, there were a variety of social issues which also discouraged reinvestment, and caused a number of safety concerns in the neighborhoods, which also discourage investment in the district.

Several other planning efforts have also provided the framework for this project, including the Infill Development Task Force, The Sixth Street Infill Plan, The Elm Creek Master Drainage Plan and the Brady Village Infill Development Plan.

The desire is that through this process, the recommendations presented in this plan will continue to evolve and, eventually, come to fruition.



Project Schedule ³



OUUDS
Tracy Park + Gunboat Park

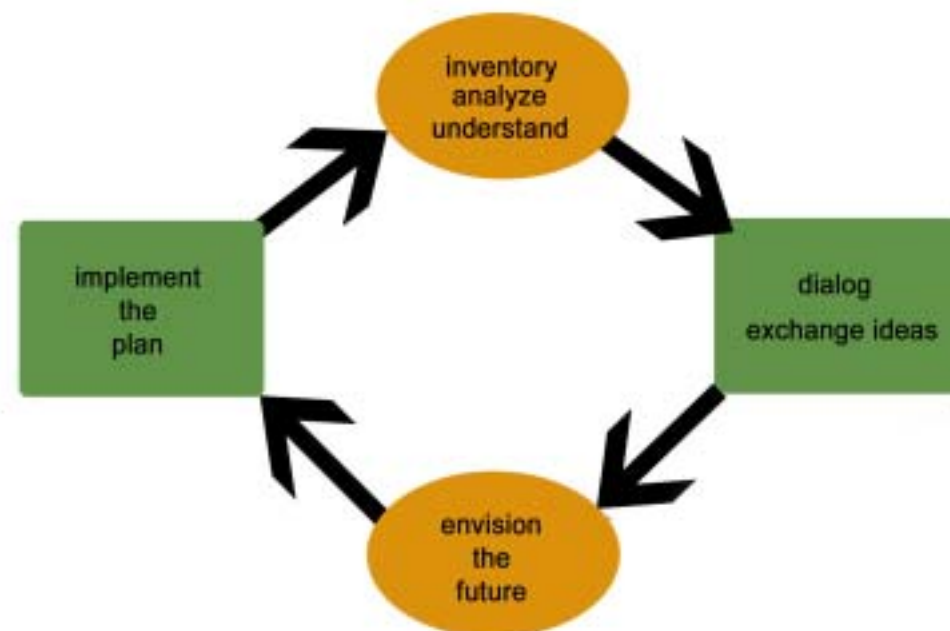
Planning Process

The planning process for this project began in the Fall of 2004 with a series of community meetings, a visual and written survey, several observational exercises, and 6 months worth of data collection and mapping. The synthesis of this data began in the Spring of 2005 and has continued today.

Continued partnerships with key interests in the neighborhood have been pivotal in this process. I have been fortunate enough to have several partners in this effort. KMO Development, a real estate development firm with several assets in the area has been willing to share ideas and plans to see this project through to fruition. The City of Tulsa Urban Development Department has provided this project with real and moral support, from providing maps and data, to facilitating meetings with the neighborhoods. Former District 4 Councilor Tom Baker was also instrumental in setting up meetings I would not have otherwise been able to arrange on my own. Lastly, the residents and business owners of Gunboat Park deserve much credit for their participation throughout the process

The design phase would not have been possible without all of these people. This plan will offer clearer design and more specific recommendations for Gunboat Park and its surroundings based largely on the information gathered in the first year and a half of the planning process.

The last phase, which this plan addresses in general, is the prioritization, strategy and implementation phase. This phase, more than any other, requires the will and participation of the people if any of the recommendations in this plan are to move forward.



Gunboat Park Location Maps

Downtown Tulsa, Oklahoma



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Gunboat Park is located in the south-eastern corner of Tulsa's Central Business District.



Maps courtesy of Downtown Tulsa Unlimited

Aerial Photo of Downtown Tulsa and Gunboat Park



Aerial courtesy of the City of Tulsa. Photograph in upper right corner courtesy of the Beryl Ford Collection.

During the last five decades Tulsa, like many cities in the United States, has experienced a gradual decline in sheer numbers of buildings in its downtown core

There are many factors that can be attributed to this trend, but no one more significant than the proliferation of the automobile.



A number of geographic and anthropological issues can be related to the West's dependence on the automobile. Included in that category is the increased physical need for parking and the expanding geographic and human boundaries of our nation's cities. The exodus of residents from the city core is partially driven by the use of cars and trucks as the primary source of transportation for the majority of Tulsans and Americans as a whole.

The pressure to provide parking for downtown employees and shoppers in Tulsa's downtown retail district began the teardown trend in the 1940s and 50's. The linear growth pattern of the city and continued suburbanization of Tulsa's residential areas eventually subsidized the success of the suburban shopping center. This eventually drove most retail establishments out of downtown Tulsa. As these business emptied the buildings they once occupied, it became common for property owners to tear down a building for a parking lot rather than maintain the older buildings. This cycle continues today as there have been five major teardowns in downtown Tulsa within the past one and a half years.

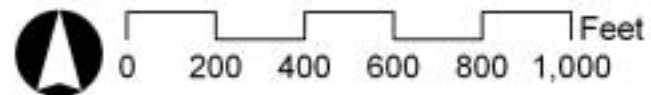
The aerial to the left displays this trend. It is particularly noticeable in the south end of downtown near Gunboat Park. Gunboat Park itself has been largely spared from this trend until recently.

Base Map

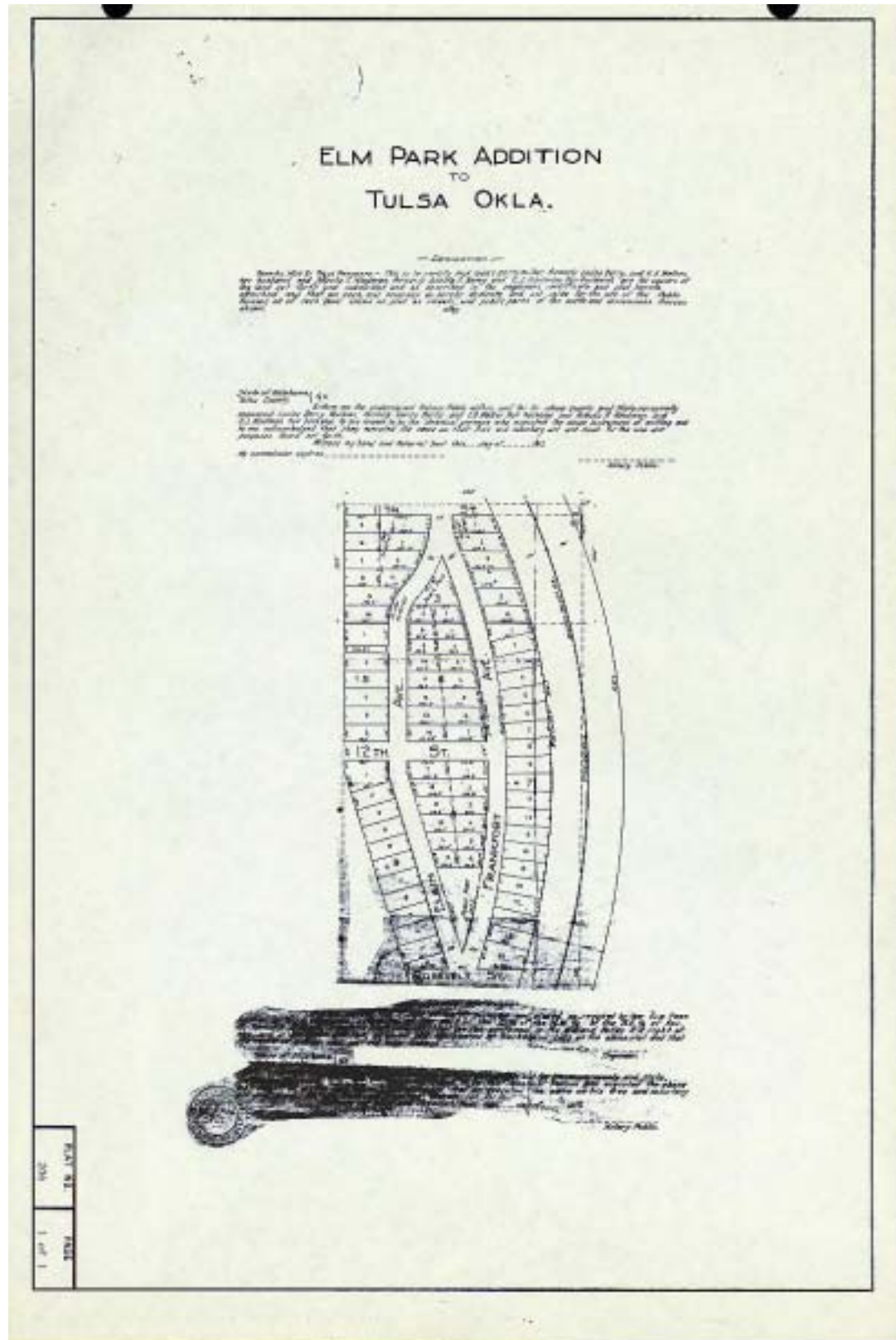


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This map displays the boundaries of the original Tracy Park + Gunboat Park study, as well as providing building and vegetation locations. Gunboat Park is located the the west of the highway.

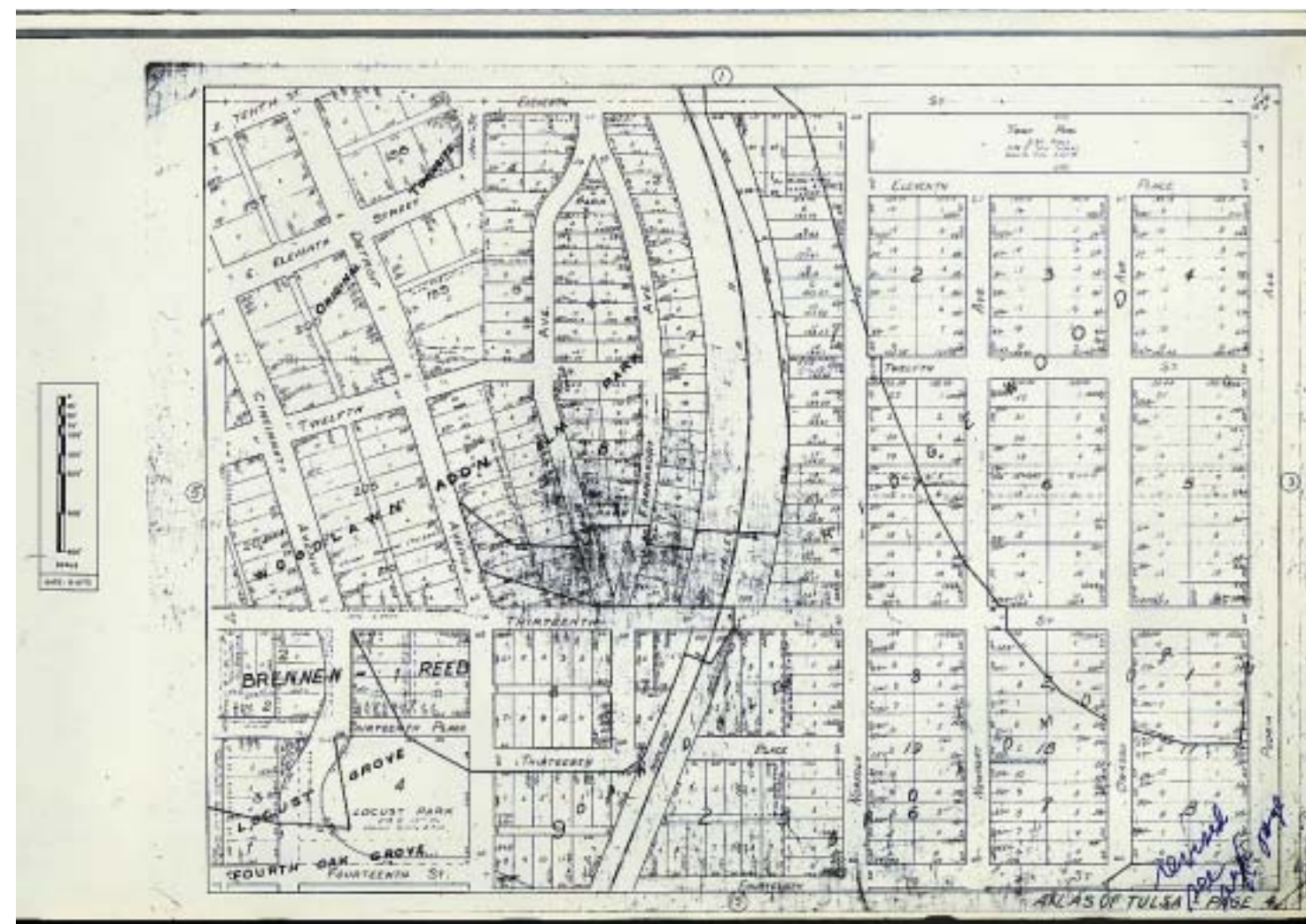


Gunboat Park Plats and Atlas Maps



Gunboat Park was originally platted as and is still referred to legally Elm Park in 1917. The map to the left is a copy of the original plat.

Below is from the City of Tulsa atlas. Both maps show that Gunboat's unique shape has maintained its original form for nearly 80 years.



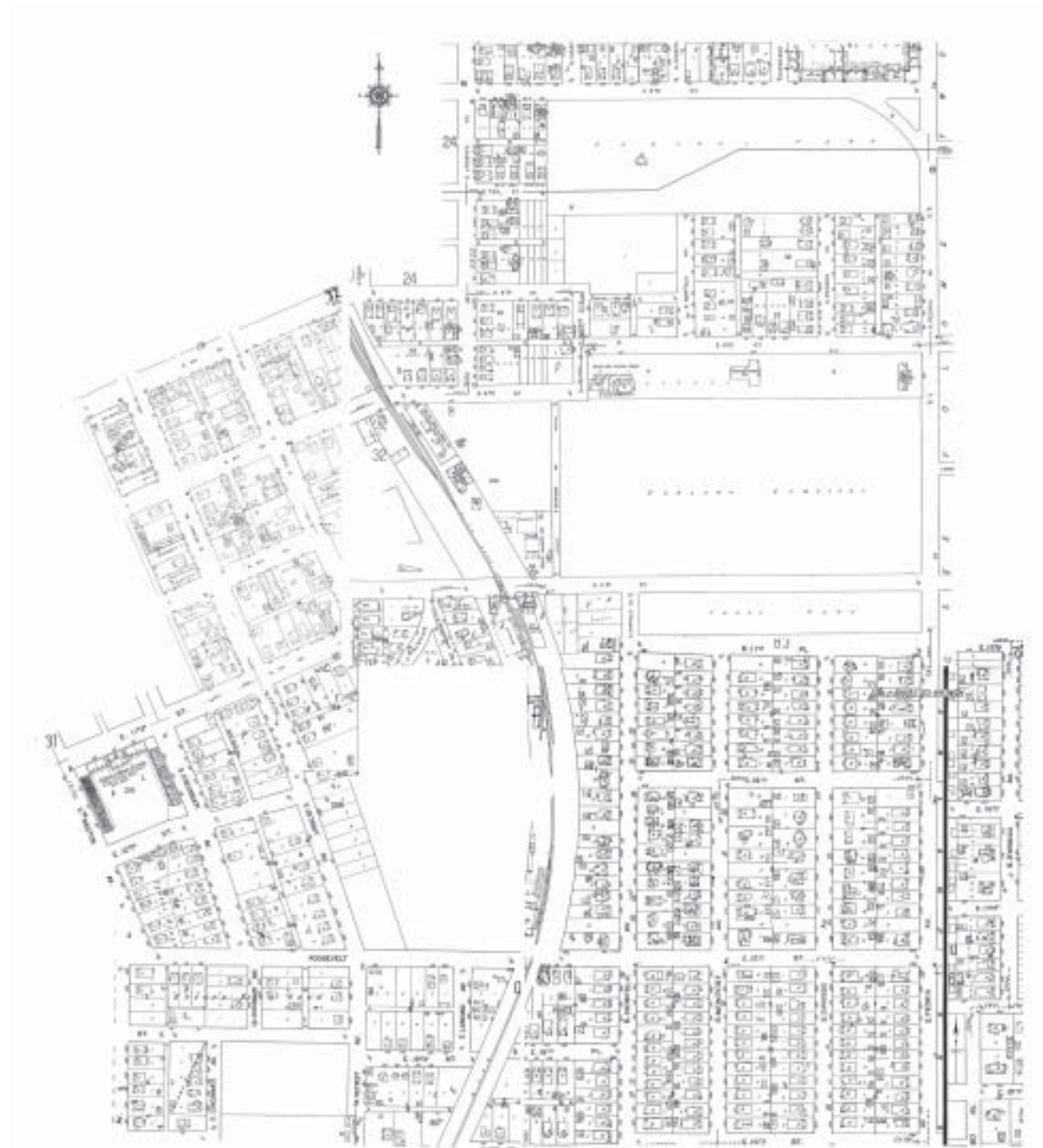
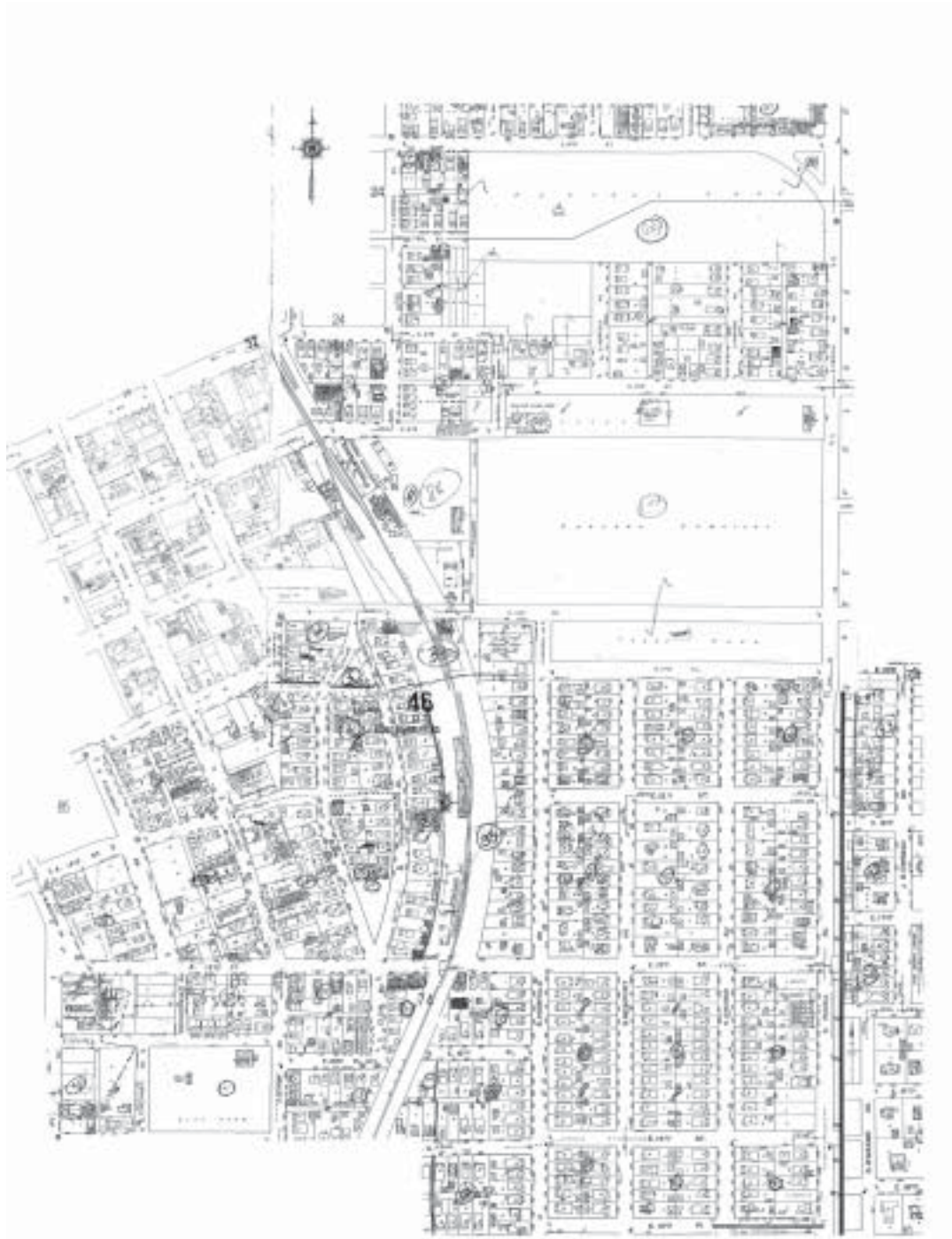
Documents provided by City of Tulsa Urban Development Department.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

Mapped from 1926 through 1939



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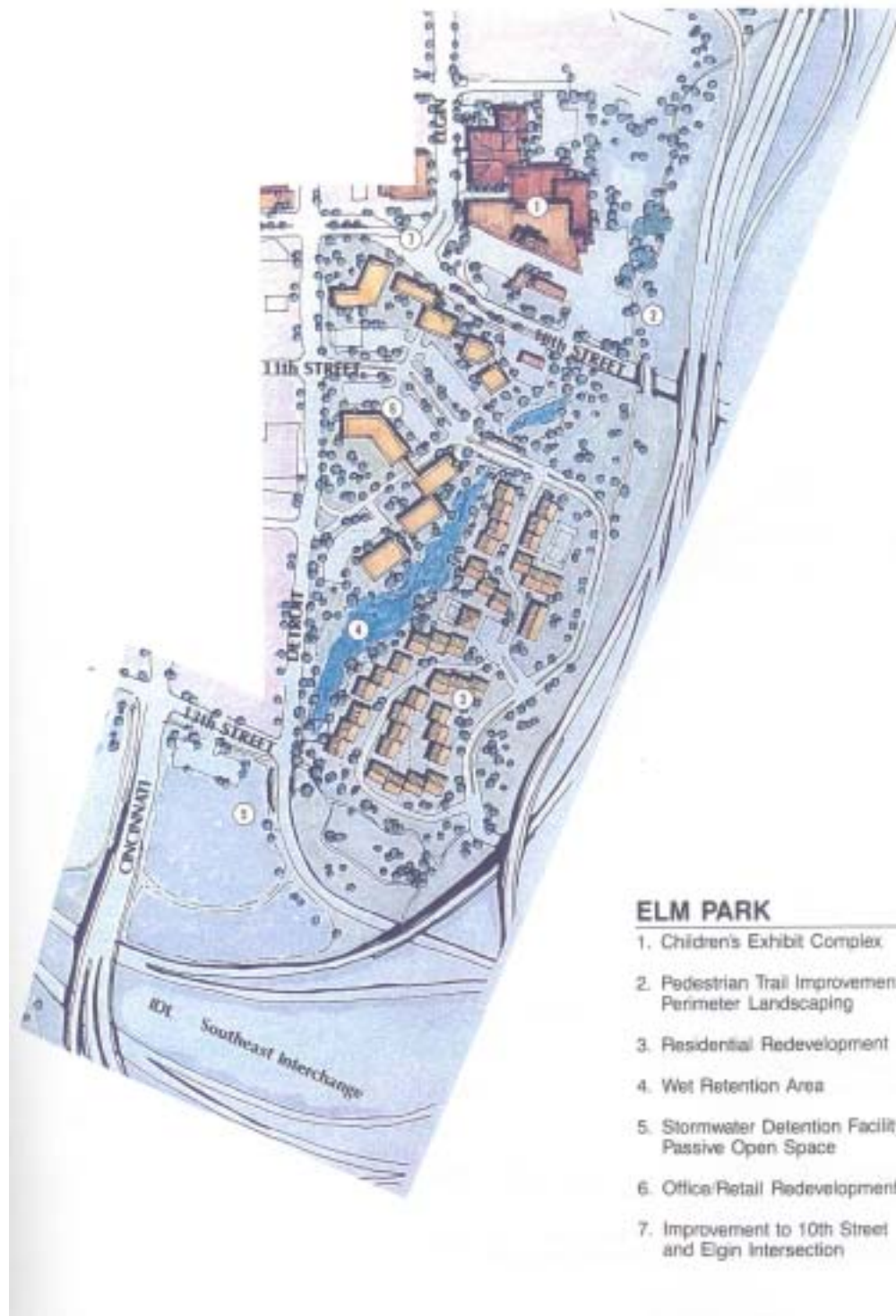


Maps: Sanborn Library LLC
<http://sanborn.umi.com>

History of Planning in Gunboat Park



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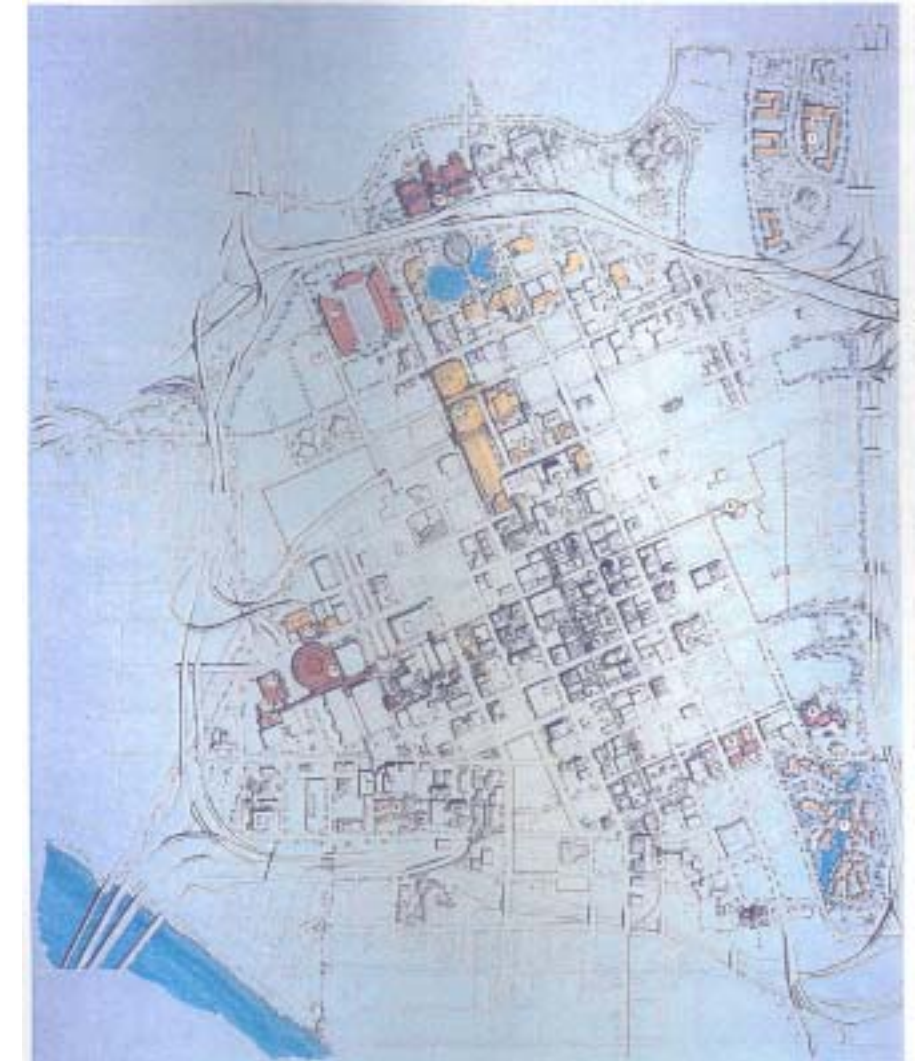
ELM PARK

1. Children's Exhibit Complex
2. Pedestrian Trail Improvements and Perimeter Landscaping
3. Residential Redevelopment
4. Wet Retention Area
5. Stormwater Detention Facility/ Passive Open Space
6. Office/Retail Redevelopment
7. Improvement to 10th Street and Elgin Intersection

31

Throughout the history of planning in downtown Tulsa, Gunboat Park has been identified as a unique area within the Inner Dispersal Loop. While design solutions for Gunboat and Downtown have varied in style and design, there are several concepts that are constant in most every plan:

- 1) The need to mitigate flooding in Gunboat through detention facilities along the Elm Creek drainage basin.
- 2) Recommending higher density residential as the primary appropriate use within Gunboat Park area.
- 3) Retention and rehabilitation of key structures in the area.
- 4) Office and retail, mixed use development.
- 5) Intersection and streetscape improvements, primarily at the 10th and Elgin intersection.

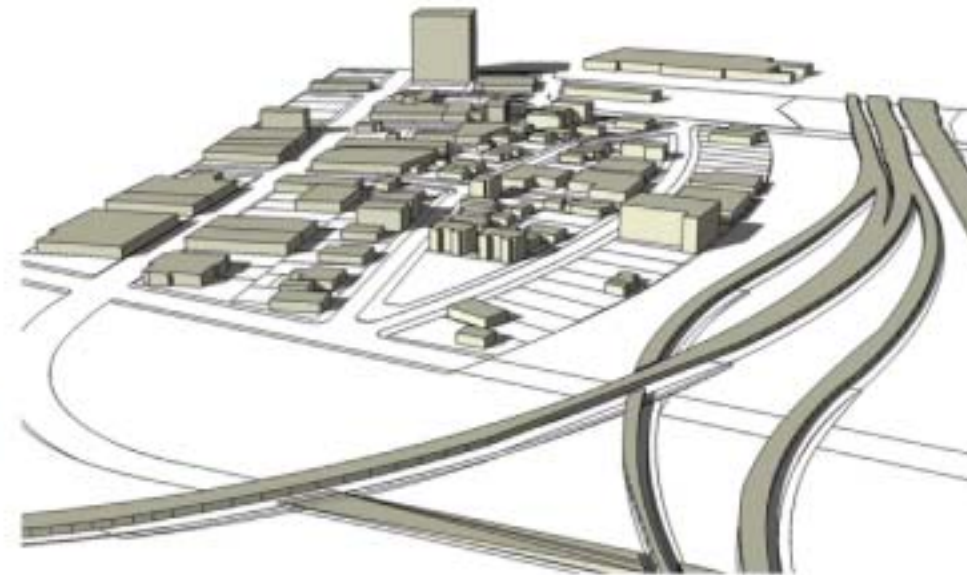


Images courtesy of Downtown Tulsa Unlimited

Existing Conditions: Modeling Gunboat



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A physical, scaled model built both for displaying existing conditions and also for experimenting with potential urban design solutions. Many of the recommendations emerged from this process.

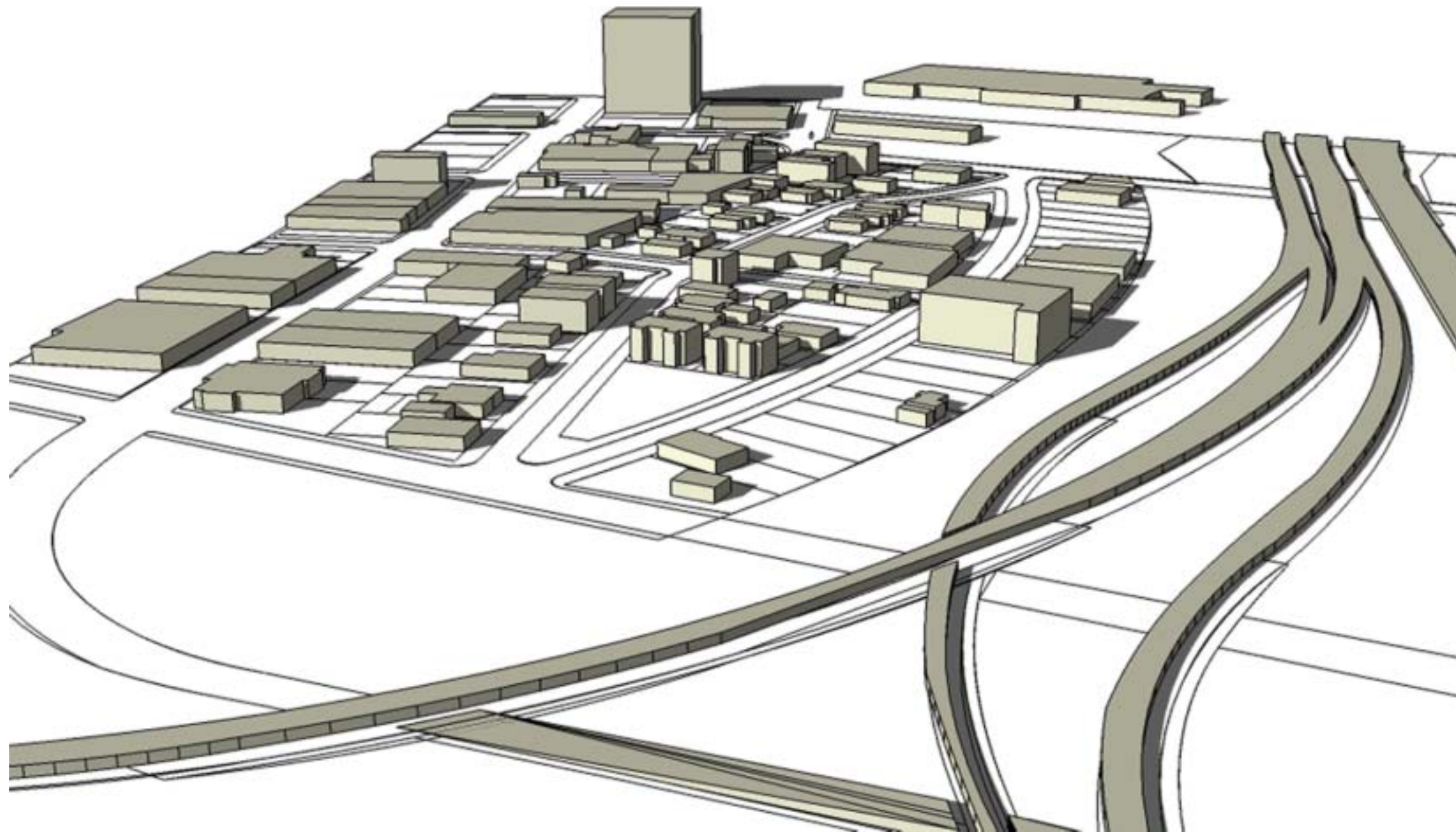


Existing Conditions

Sketch Up Model



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The initial Sketch-Up model of Gunboat Park was designed to depict the existing building massing in the study area. It was used as the base design tool for the final Gunboat Park Master Plan.

Existing Conditions

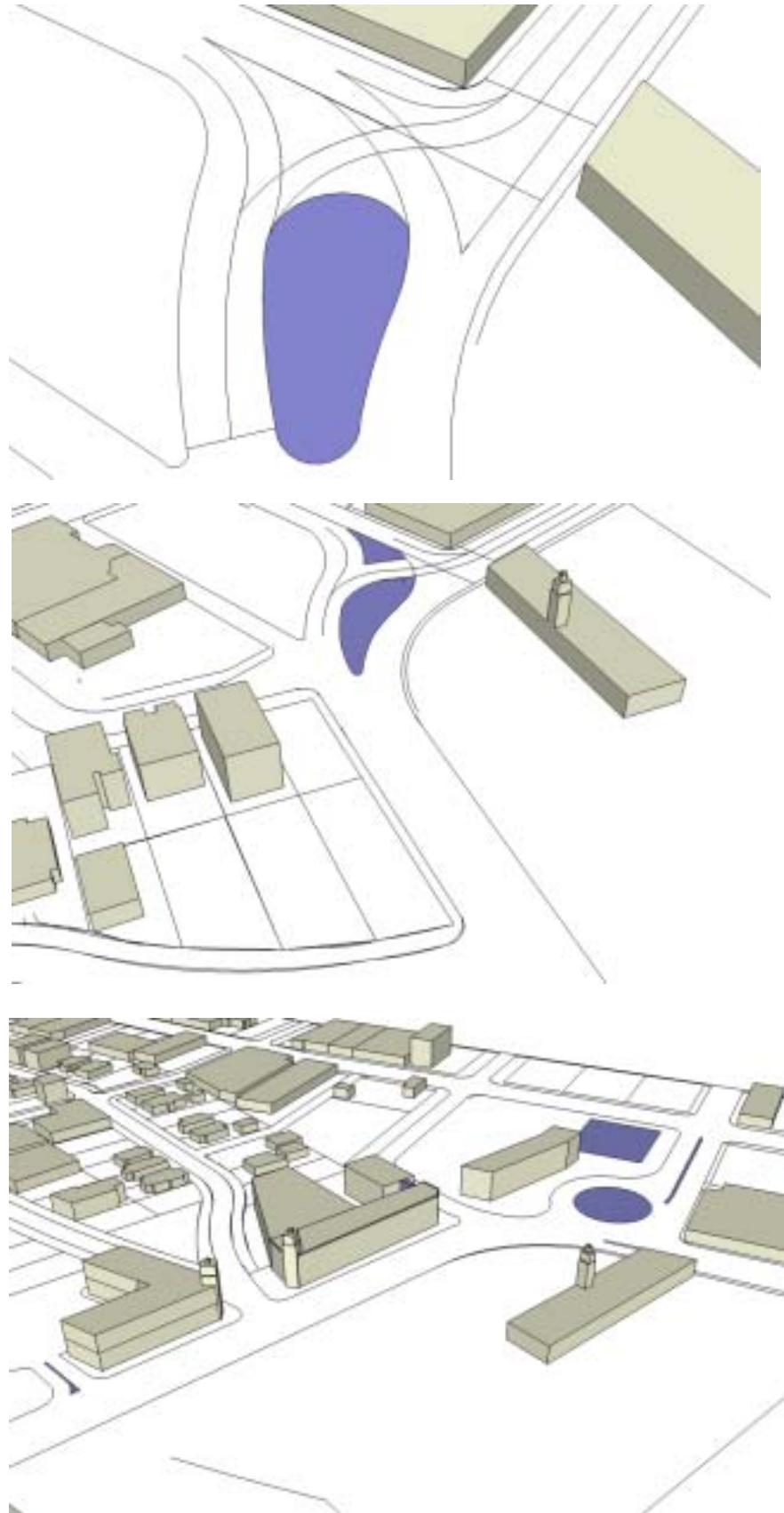
Photographs



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Design Process



The physical design process began in earnest in early 2006 by identifying broad, distinct districts, and determining their current function and potential function in a revitalized downtown core. Upon identifying those district, we examined more specific conditions such as traffic dispersion, and the emersion of potential destination sites within downtown, and how the existing street pattern might influence the success of a specific area.

The images to the left and the right of the page display different stages in the design process. One of the most difficult problems encountered was the intersection at 10th and Detroit. The three images to the left show different concepts for routing traffic through the intersection, while trying to make pedestrian crossings a safe as possible. Ultimately, we wanted to make the intersection a focal point and use it as an amenity. Thus, we determined that a traffic circle was the most effective way to safely route traffic through the intersection, while providing an attractive feature for pedestrians and cyclists to utilize.



Gunboat Park District Overlay Map



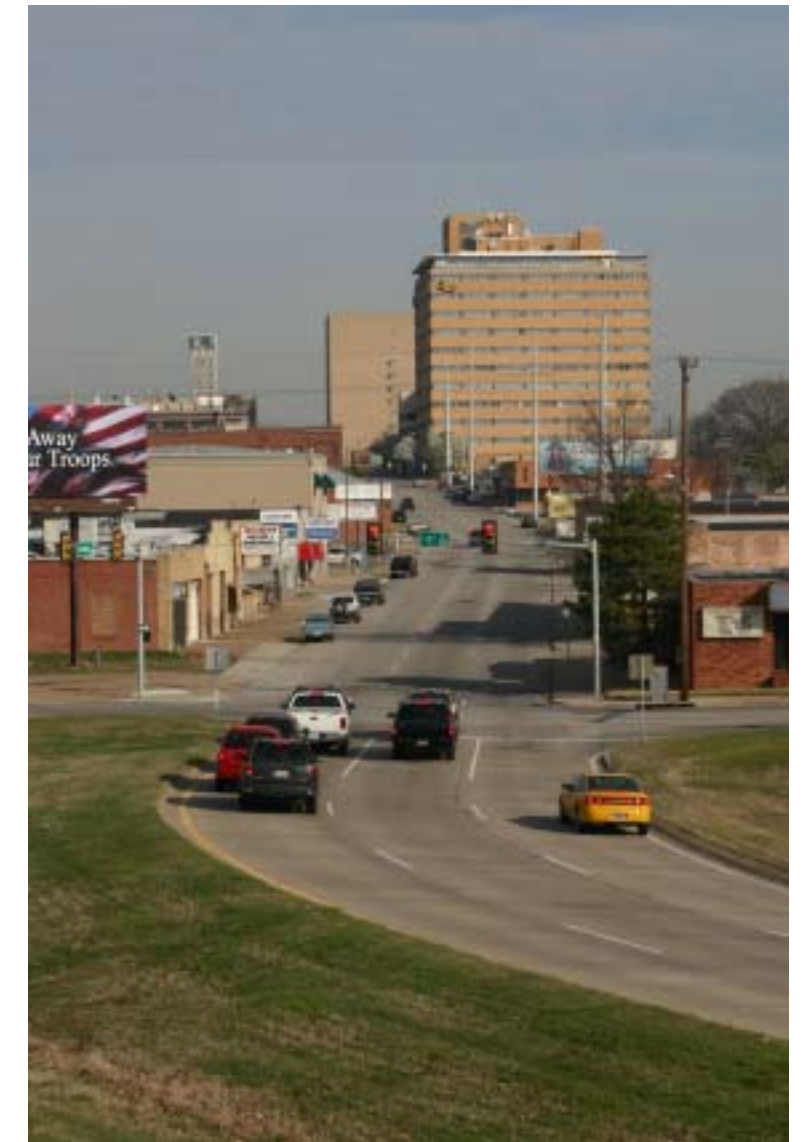
The Gunboat Park District, which has sometimes been referred to as Elm Park, has long been identified as an independent and unique place in Downtown Tulsa. This overlay identifies several potential development areas and districts in and around Gunboat.

North of the Gunboat District is the East Village, an area east of the Downtown Core which has been identified for potential mixed use development. Of note, this area is a possible site for a minor league baseball stadium.

To the west and northwest of Gunboat are Cathedral Square and the Downtown Core respectively.

Between Cathedral Square and Gunboat, Tulsa Community College owns several square blocks. No plans were immediately available identifying future campus development.

Within the Gunboat District there are several distinct areas: 1) The Gunboat Park Loft/Residential District, 2) the South Detroit Retail Corridor, 3) The KMO Blocks (planned development by KMO Development Corp. 4) Home Depot/Warehouse Market Site, 5) Parking areas, and 6) the 11 & 11th Node.



The location for the proposed South Detroit retail corridor.

Gunboat Park Master Plan



The Gunboat Park Master Plan as shown to the left is the visual culmination of months of research, collecting community input, analysis of opportunities, and finally, formulation of design. The process was designed to ensure both that community concerns were properly considered and the resulting urban design would create a vibrant and safe environment.

As depicted in the district overlay map on page 18, the Gunboat area has several distinct sub districts. Because these districts are geographically adjacent to each other, there is great potential for creating a true 24/7 environment within a small area. Combined these districts can provide a variety of amenities and services; places to work, places to live, places to shop, places to play, and places to eat; all within an easily walkable urban environment.

Because this district is located within the Inner Dispersal Loop, and the properties in question are zoned CBD, it offers some opportunities to combine these uses without many of the restrictions that exist with properties outside the IDL.

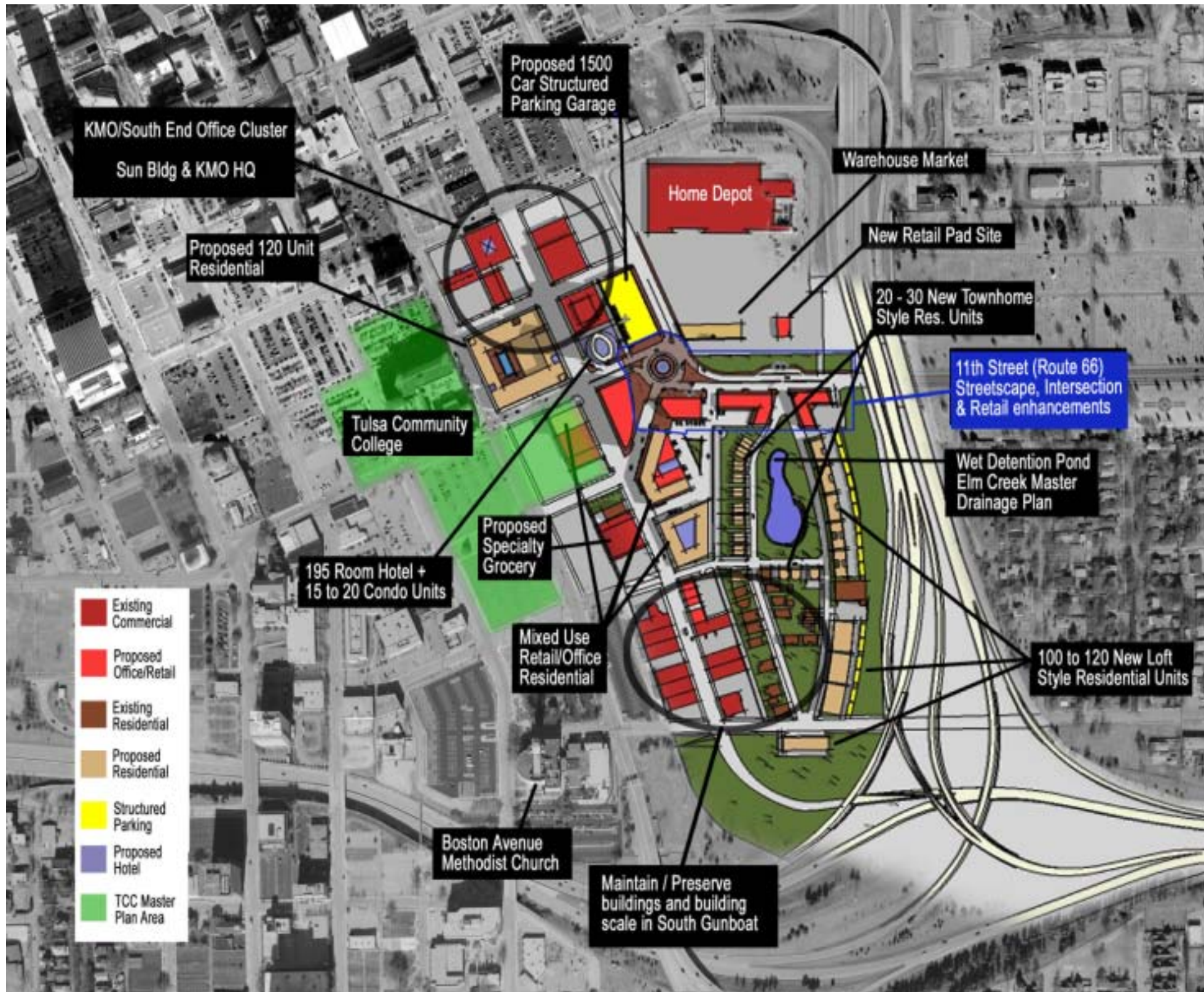
There was also an identified need for some capital investment in the district. Streetscape and intersection improvements along Detroit and particularly along 11th Street, would provide needed infrastructure for emerging private development. There is also an identified need for downstream flood relief as part of the Elm Creek Master Drainage Plan. The proposed stormwater retention pond at the north end of Gunboat Park would help to provide flood relief and present an attractive focal point for the Gunboat Park Neighborhood.

Gunboat Park Master Plan

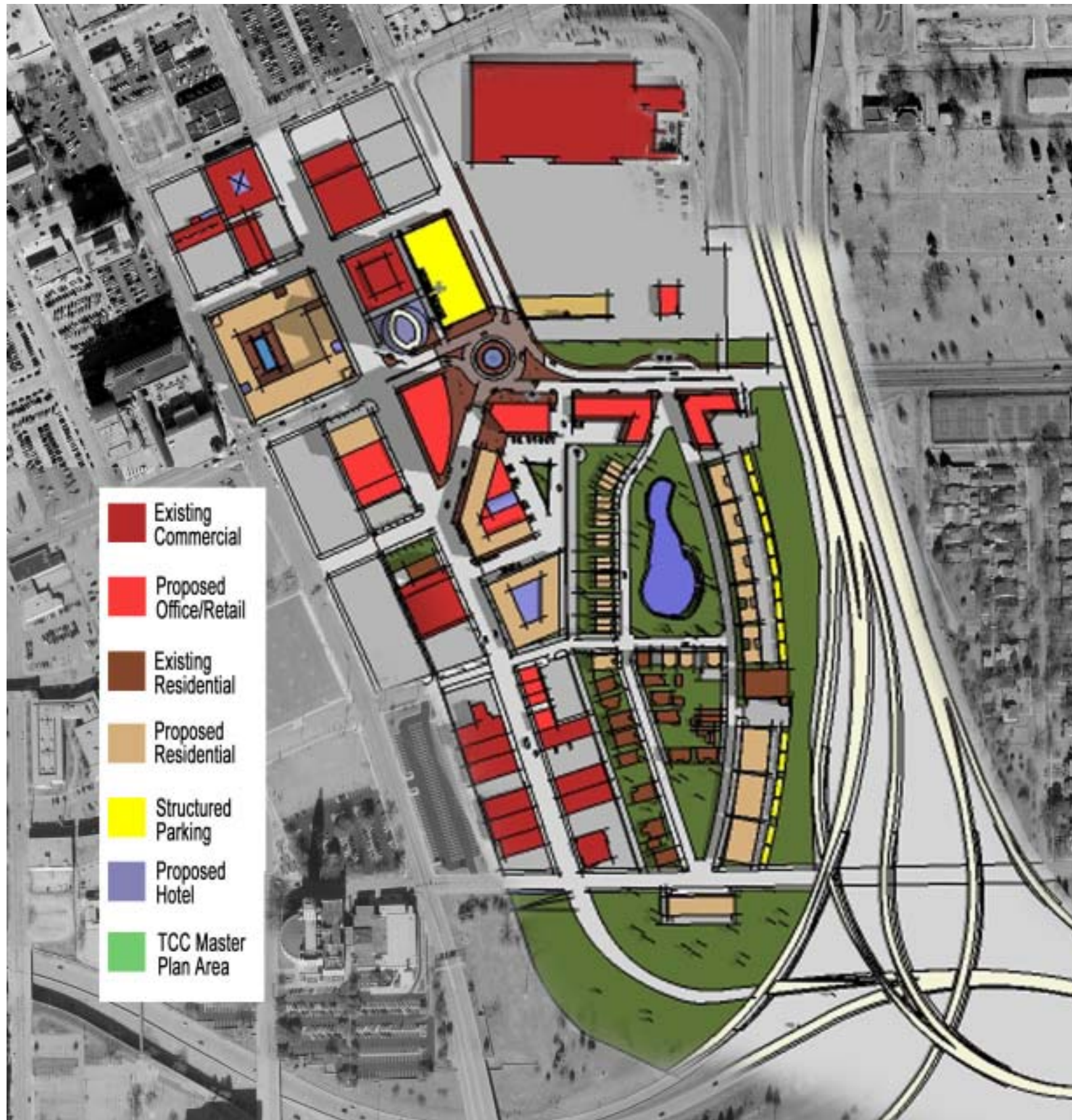
Zoom Version



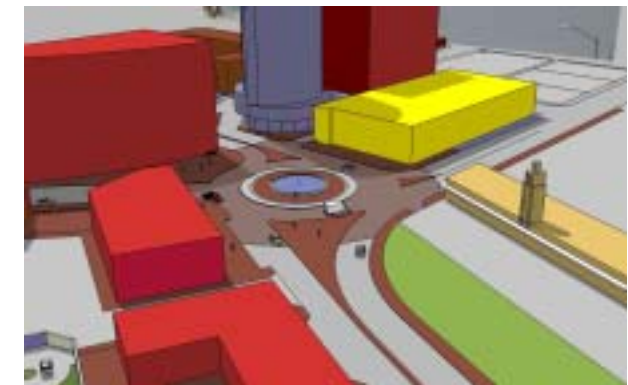
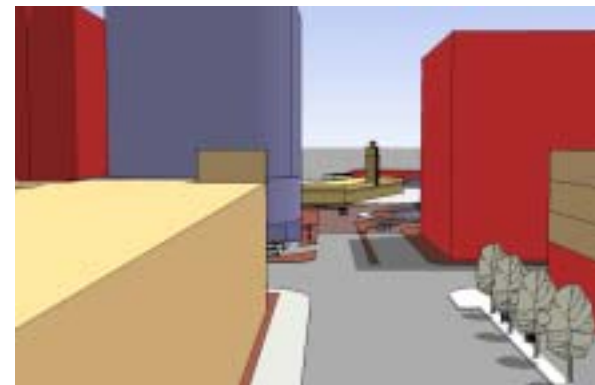
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Master Plan (without notes)



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Gunboat Park Massing Model



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Eleventh Street Corridor

Streetscape & New Office/Retail Development



Eleventh Street Proposals:

- Street, Sidewalk, Curblines, and Landscape Improvements
 - o Traffic Circle with Monument/Art for Route 66, 1921 Race Riot, or McNulty Park
 - o Curb to Curb street repair.
 - o Parallel parking and bump outs on South side of street.
 - o Boulevard Treatment.
 - o Trees/Vegetation in boulevard.
 - o Terraced Landscaping on Greenbelt north of 11th Street.
 - o Covered Bus Stop at 11th and Frankfort, North and South sides of street.
 - o Cut in for busses on North side of street.

Private Development

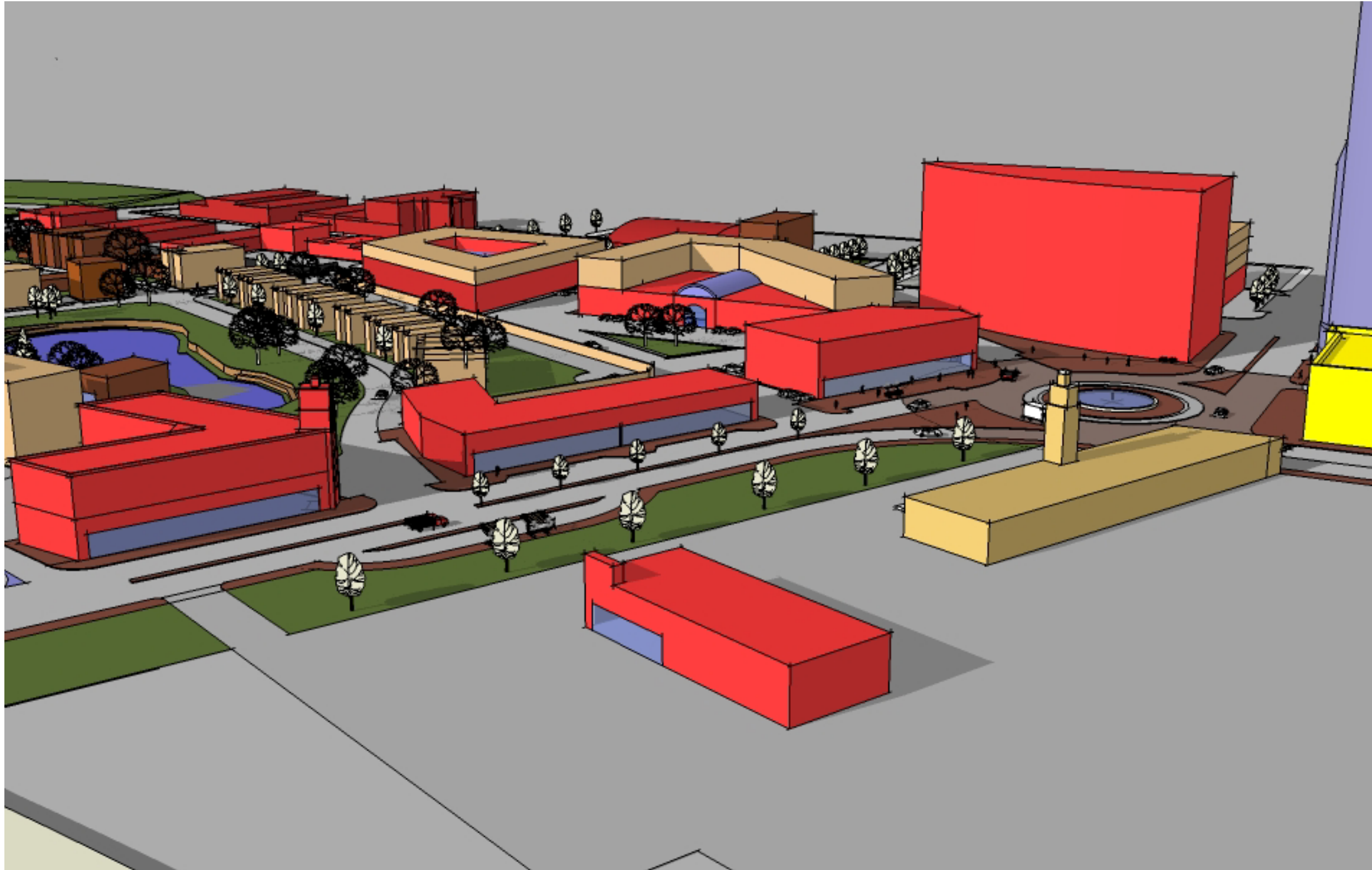
- o Mixed use office retail on South side of street. 90000 Sq. ft of proposed mixed use on 11th between traffic circle and overpass. 2-4 stories.
- o Proposed 200,000 Sq. ft./11 story office Building at 11th & Detroit.
- o Proposed 6000 Sq. ft pad site in front of Home Depot.
- o 10-12 ft Sidewalk setbacks.

Eleventh Street Corridor

Streetscape & New Office/Retail Development



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Left : 11th Street Improvements as seen from the air looking south.

Below: Photographs of 11th Street as it exists today.



Bus Stop



Proposed new covered bus stops and transfer station on the north side of 11th at Frankfort.

In urban districts, public transportation provides convenient and inexpensive alternatives to driving and parking. The current stop at this location does not have a bench or a safe transfer point. The cut in provides a bus only lane which removes the bus from main flow of traffic, making it safer for riders and drivers. Modern busses with disability access lifts and bicycle racks take longer to load and unload, and can impede traffic when stopped in the street.

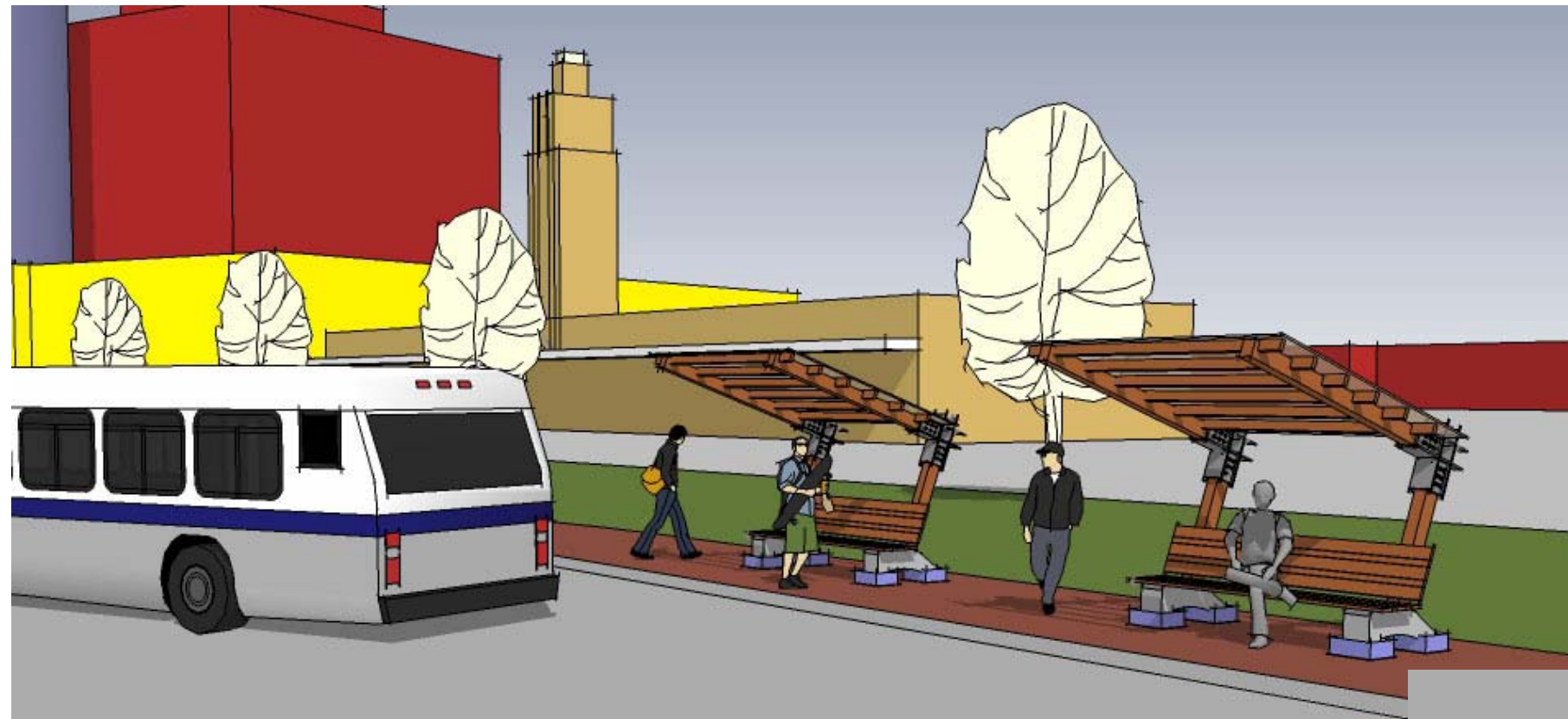
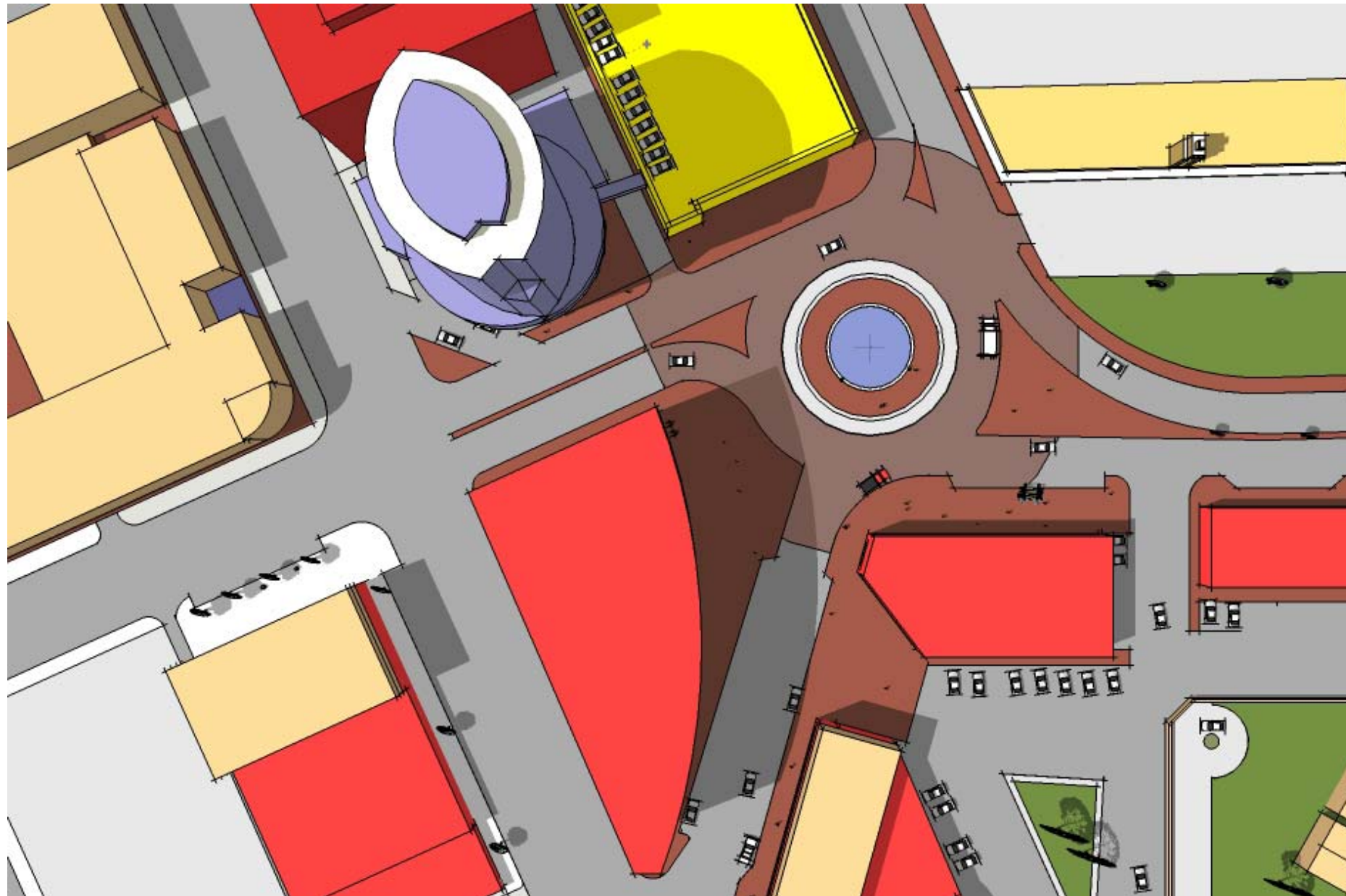


Photo courtesy of the Bus Stops Here project.
http://www.the-bus-stops-here.org/Union_City-NB_Dyer_Opp_Rankin-Shelter-s.jpg



10th and Elgin Intersection Enhancements



The 10th & Elgin intersection is one of the most interesting Downtown Tulsa. Elgin Avenue, 11th Street (historic Route 66), 10th Street and 11th Place intersect at an “S” curve which is also on a slight grade to the west. The current configuration is difficult to navigate, and has been identified for some time by the City of Tulsa traffic engineering department for improvement. The intersection has also been identified as a potential project to be paid for with Central Park TIF funds.

The traffic circle, in conjunction with the 11th Place realignment (page 30), is designed as both a solution to the engineering problem and also as an amenity. The circle and the surrounding plaza areas diagrammed to the left are designed to improve the visual appearance of the intersection and to create pedestrian space.

Tenth and Elgin is known to most as the location of the art deco Warehouse Market and the entrance point for Route 66 into Downtown Tulsa. Prior to its construction in the 1930's, it was also the location of McNulty Park, which has the distinction of being one of Tulsa's earliest baseball parks. It was also one of the internment locations for African-American detainees during the 1921 Race Riot. Any of these distinctions would be worthy of commemorating, and the new design offers several sites for locating such a memorial or piece of art.



South Detroit Retail Corridor

Detroit Avenue is a primary vehicular entrance point for downtown Tulsa from the Broken Arrow Expressway. Likewise, Cincinnati Avenue one block to the west, and which forms the western edge of the planning district, is the primary route for downtown workers leaving the Central Business District. The corridor's proximity to these two paths provides a high amount of visibility and convenience for these travelers.

Tulsa Community College and Boston Avenue Methodist Church to the west and the emerging residential district in Gunboat and Tracy Parks to the East also provide a more captive

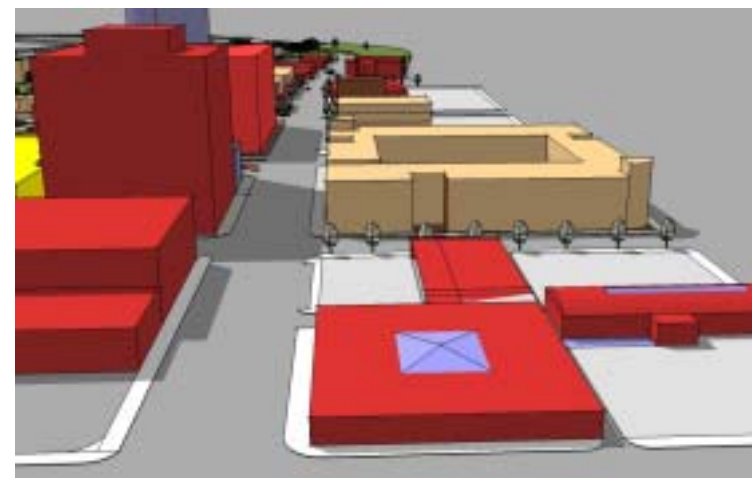
The existing building stock is varied. The southernmost Downtown blocks are primarily made up of plains commercial storefronts and garages, a typical building style of the 1920's and 1930's. The buildings are primarily being used for light industrial and auto repair, however they offer great opportunity for adaptive reuse in an retail or restaurant capacity.

The building stock becomes more varied and sparse as Detroit travels north into downtown, exposing a number of opportunity sites for new development. Preferred development involves mixed uses: first floor retail, second story professional office, and upper floor residential. This plan displays a variety of options for mixed use development

There was also an identified need for a number of residential units adjacent to Tulsa Community College. A proposed 120 unit complex is located at 10th and Detroit

The North end of the corridor features an office cluster. The 12 story Sun oil Building and a proposed 200,000 square foot 11 story office building are serviced by a 1500 space parking garage located at 10th and Elgin.

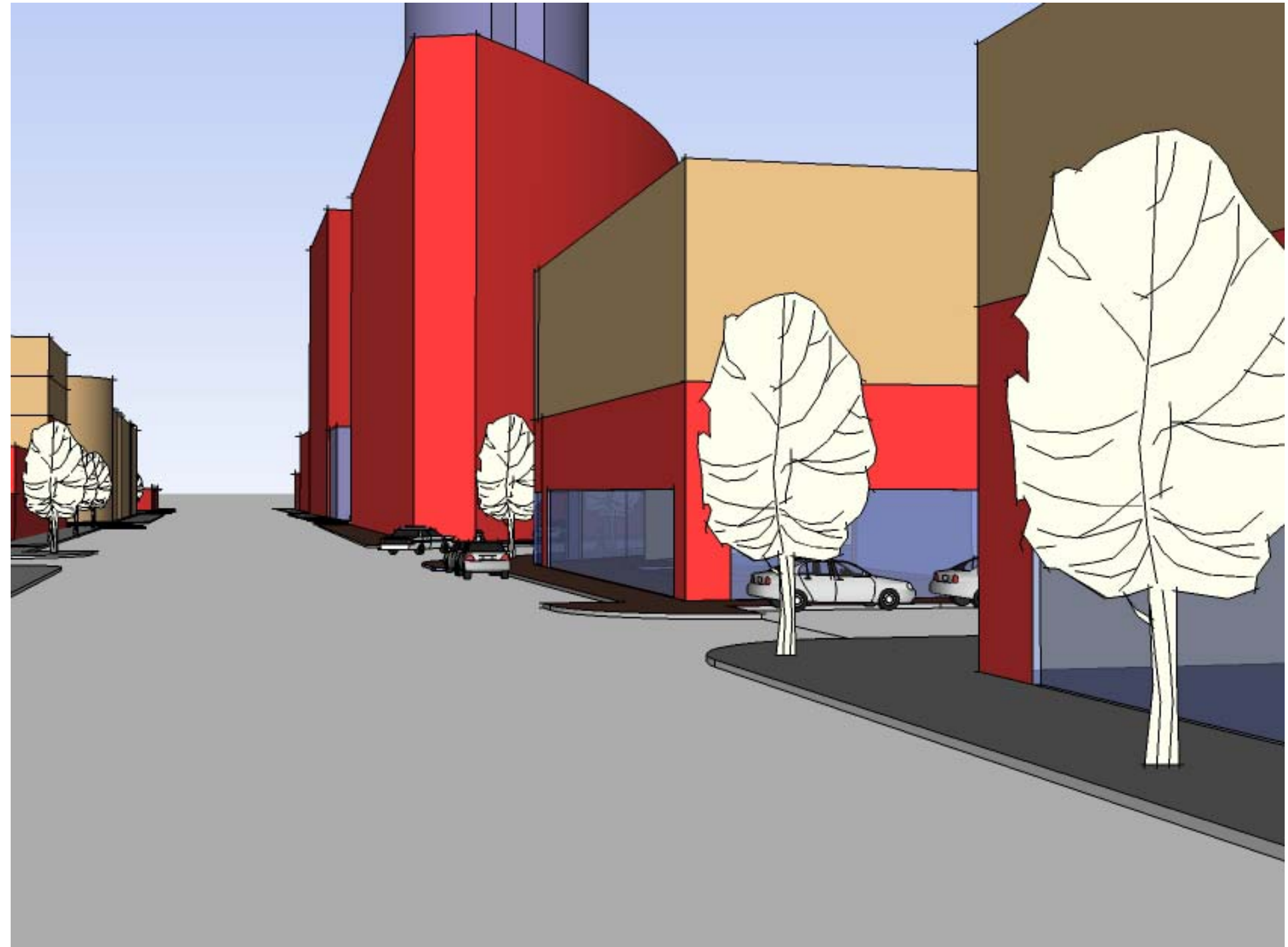
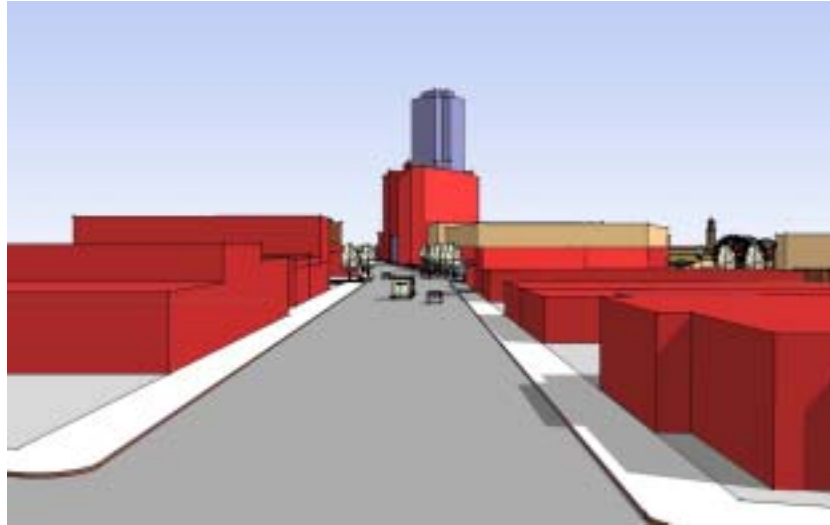
The most noticeable change to the skyline is a 21 story 195 room hotel. The height also allows for approximately 20 penthouse condominium units. The hotel would feature a number of amenities, including restaurant, meeting space, and spa, which would be available to guests and residents.



South Detroit Retail Corridor

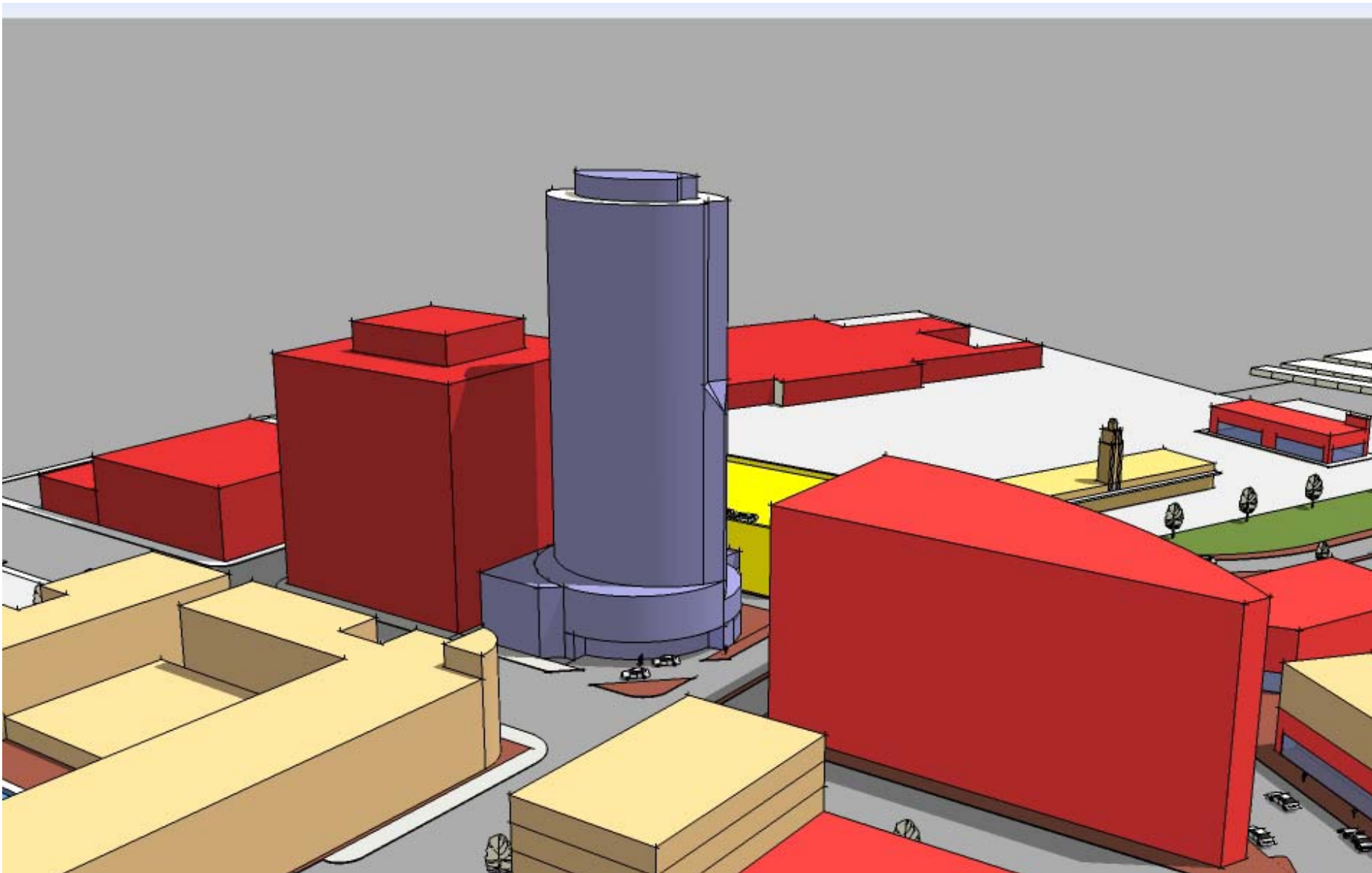
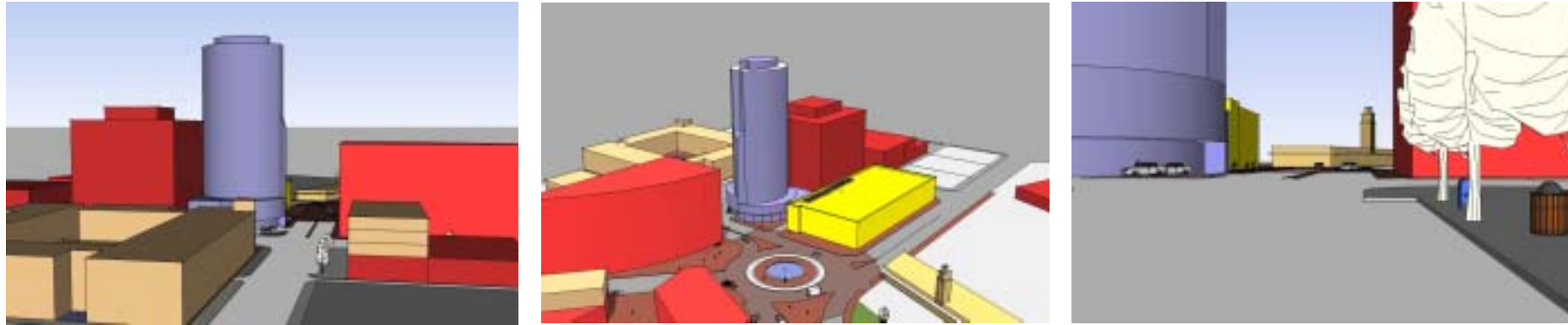


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South Detroit Retail Corridor

Hotel and Office Cluster



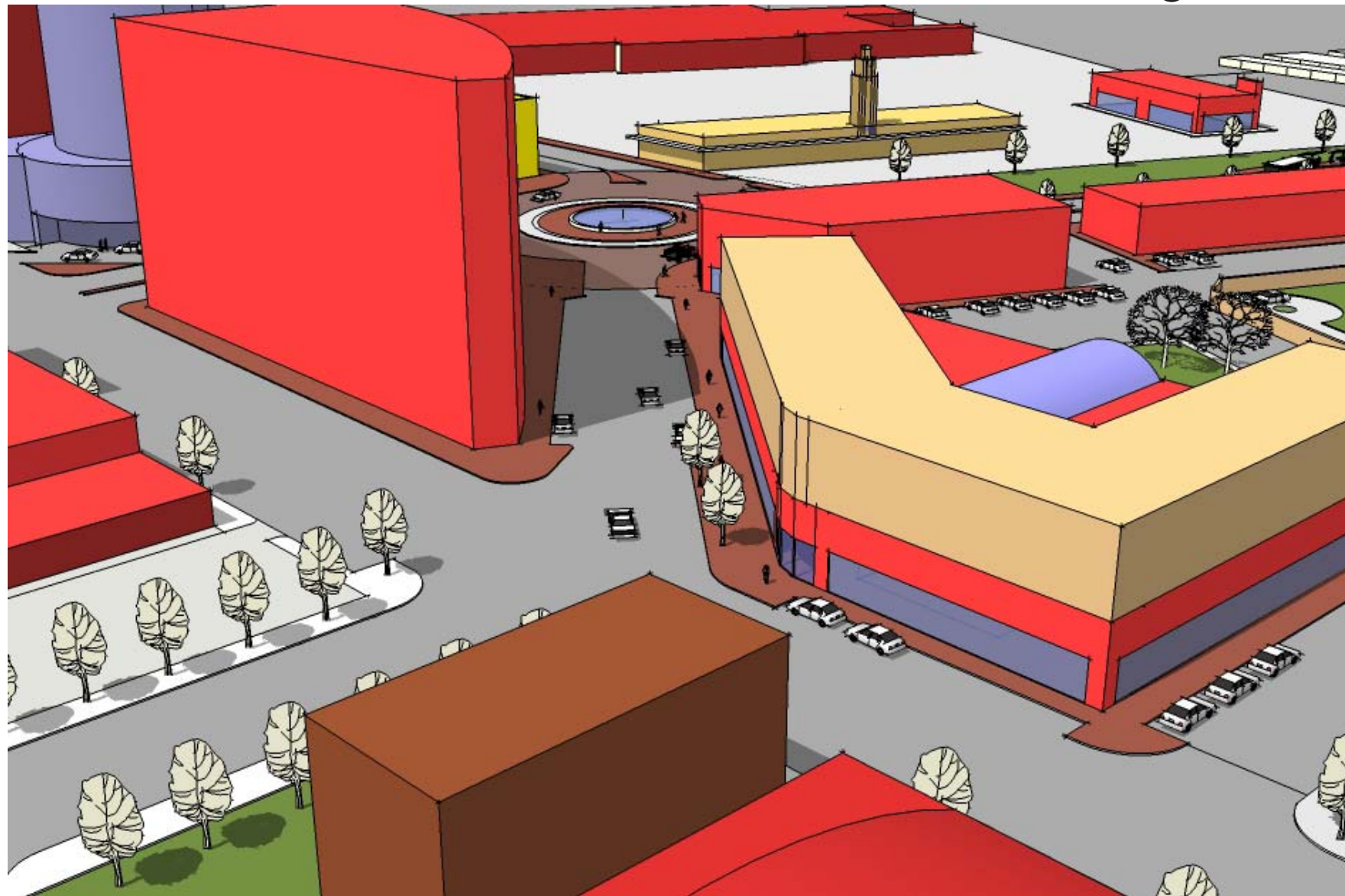
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Above: The current skyline at 10th and Elgin
Below: Retail and Office in Downtown Portland, Oregon

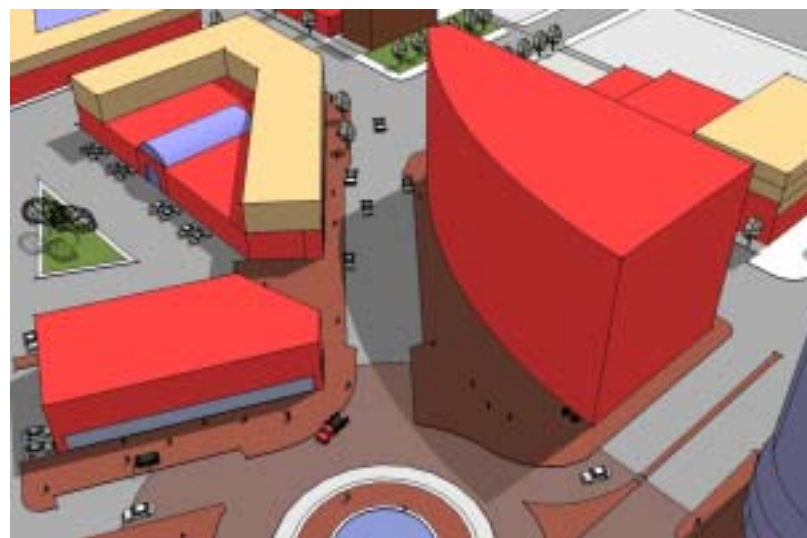


South Detroit/Eleventh Place Street Realignment



The 11th Place realignment is the result of a design process which evaluated the existing physical alignment of 11th Place, the difficult to navigate intersection at 10th and Elgin, the current traffic conditions, the potential for increased future traffic downtown, balanced with the desire to create an intimate, more appealing environment that would attract mixed-uses development.

The result creates several opportunity sites for future development and a pedestrian friendly “plaza” area surrounding the proposed traffic circle. The ‘Y’ shaped intersection increases the potential retail frontage space along the realigned 11th Place, and places a new entry point for the street at the intersection. The metered traffic circle is designed to help navigate this intersection. The ‘Y’ also creates an interesting triangle shaped space that could be filled by a new iconic “flatiron” building, which creates a dramatic approach traveling North on Denver.



Above: 11th Place as it is today.

Gunboat Park Loft District

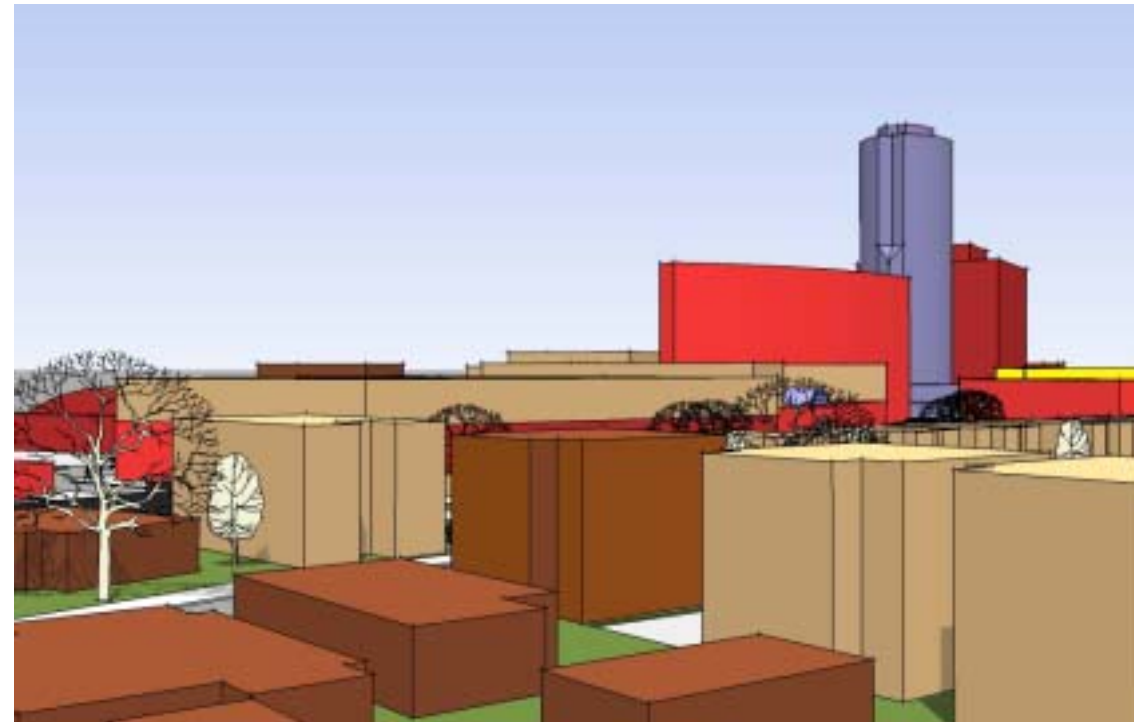
Overview

Gunboat Park in its current condition is a neighborhood of mixed uses, often incompatible with each other. There are liquor stores, apartments, light industrial businesses, distribution warehouses, and single family homes all abutting each other. Crime and safety are still major concerns in the neighborhood, so during the planning and design process these were the issues we were attempting to address.

Gunboat Park has been identified as a residential first neighborhood since it was established in 1917. CBD zoning has permitted the continued clash of land-use interests in the neighborhood. Additionally, our research and observations were that the persistence of criminal activity was due to the lack of attention the perpetrators were given at this location.

The logical conclusion we came to, is that in order to resolve the social, and land-use issues, Gunboat Park needed to repopulate itself. The biggest deterrent for crime is to have “eyes on the street” as often as possible. In order to create that environment, Gunboat Park needed to return to its residential roots. The added benefit would be that, if Gunboat was to become residential again, it might capitalize on the current trends being seen around the country in terms of housing type and lifestyle choices.

The creation of a distinct “Loft District” centered around a unique outdoor space, would create an attractive living environment for anyone who desires a more urban lifestyle, from Young Professionals to “empty nesters”. The influx of residents into the district would be the catalyst for growth and infill in the southeastern quadrant of Downtown Tulsa.



Left: Proposed Gunboat Loft District

Lower left: Lofts in the Pearl District, Portland, Oregon

Below: East Elgin Avenue, Gunboat Park



Gunboat Loft District:

Park Enhancements and Stormwater Detention Pond



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Gunboat Park has been identified by the Elm Creek Master Drainage Plan as one of the developed neighborhoods along Elm Creek that is susceptible to flooding. While the construction of the upstream detention ponds at Centennial Park mitigate much of the potential flooding in Gunboat, it does correct flooding downstream towards South Boston and Veteran's Park. The construction of a pond at Gunboat would assist in mitigating this flooding while providing an attractive public amenity. The removal of the industrial uses in the neighborhood and the expansion of the park would provide added incentive for residential redevelopment in the neighborhood.



Gunboat Park Loft District

East Gunboat Park/ Frankfort Avenue Lofts



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As mentioned on page 31, Gunboat Park should provide a variety of urban housing options. The west side of Gunboat along Frankfort is an appropriate site for urban-styled work/live lofts. This plan proposes the conversion of the art deco Better Price Warehouse plus new construction to provide an additional 100 to 120 loft units. These buildings would typically be 3 to 4 stories to provide a buffer from the highway noise for the interior of Gunboat Park. The lofts themselves would provide flexible space for urban professionals, artists, at home businesses, or empty nesters. This location provides spectacular views of the current Tulsa skyline and the proposed area improvements. The desired result is the creation of a dense, walkable environment with easy access to public transportation, outdoor recreation, and convenient amenities.

Gunboat Park Loft District

West Gunboat/East Elgin Townhomes



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The west side of the Gunboat Loft District, along Elgin Avenue provides an opportunity for an equally urban, yet smaller scaled type of housing. The west side of Gunboat, with its narrow street and large shade trees, provides a more typical neighborhood experience. A multistory urban house, two to three stories, attached or detached, that is built close to the street and has an individual entrance and private outdoor space more typical of a single family home is appropriate for this site.

Depicted in this plan are two story townhomes, approximately 1500 square feet a piece. These promote the visual appearance of density while providing another housing option within the Gunboat neighborhood. Combined with the existing walk-up apartments, single family homes, and the proposed loft style apartments, Gunboat Park should offer a broad range of housing options within a very small area.



Rowhouses in Minneapolis.
 Photo by Patrick Fox



Homes on Elgin. Most of these houses have been condemned or torn down.
 Photo by Patrick Fox



Gunboat Park Loft District

South Gunboat



South Gunboat Park has seen more private investment in its older structures than the rest of the neighborhood. As a result the existing housing, consisting primarily of classically styled walk up apartments and historic single family homes, is in relatively good condition. Furthermore this type of housing provides a more moderately priced alternative to new, higher end construction. In conclusion, the plan calls for the preservation of these structures.

There are a few opportunity sites where either the structure is in extremely poor condition or where there is no structure. The proposal is to add housing which complements the existing structures in style and scale. On Frankfort, housing should be loft style, scaled to the Better Price Warehouse. On East 12th, appropriate infill would be walk up style apartments designed complement the existing architecture, and to take advantage of the new views provided by the expanded park and pond. The south side of East 13th and Gunboat, the plan proposes row houses similar to those on Elgin.

One problematic site is the location of the cell tower on Frankfort. The optimum solution for the neighborhood would be for the removal of the tower. At street level, it requires a safety fence which is visually inconsistent with the rest of the neighborhood. On a larger scale, the tower obstructs the visual pattern of the neighborhood due to its tremendous height. A short term alternative is to adorn the tower and its site with landscaping and art.



Summary and Implementation Strategy

Seeing the Gunboat Park Master Plan move from the page to reality will require a strong public and private partnership and the effort and time of nearly every person affected by this plan. The importance of these relationships is that the needs of one affects the other and vice versa.

There are current identified capital needs in the area already: Elm Creek flood control and 10th and Elgin street improvements. The importance of this plan is that it may help dictate how those capital improvements are implemented.

There has already been significant investment from the private community. In downtown alone the last three months of 2005 and the first three months of 2006 witness around 200 million dollars worth of real estate transactions. These are all indicators of positive change in Downtown Tulsa and this, of course, is a positive sign for Gunboat Park.

Outside of Downtown, Tracy Park and the Sixth Street are seeing a revival of sorts, as an energized community continues to put forth effort into bettering their neighborhoods. This too bodes well for Gunboat Park.

First and foremost, Gunboat Park must form an organized and active neighborhood association. Second, this plan needs to be refined, revised, expanded, detailed, and adopted in to the City of Tulsa District 1 Comprehensive Plan.

Like the 2005 plan, this is not a final document. There will be more community meetings. There will be new ideas and changes to the plan. I look forward to being there when it happens,

Patrick M. Fox



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