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# The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Infill Plan

*Plan for the Reinvention of the Pearl District*



A Plan Amending  
A Part of the Detail Plan for Planning District 4 of the  
Comprehensive Plan for the Tulsa Metropolitan Area

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#### The Vision of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force:

*To reinvent the art of city life in Tulsa. To develop from the grass-roots an urban neighborhood that is diverse, intriguing and charming; that adapts to the new realities of the 21st Century and has the character, humanity and convenience of the best, traditional cities; that offers a radical and attractive alternative to suburban living; where it is possible to work, play and shop without recourse to a car; where neighbors work to foster good schools and safe, attractive streets and civic spaces; and where a vibrant, civic environment is matched by enlightened public policies. To do all this before it is too late.'*

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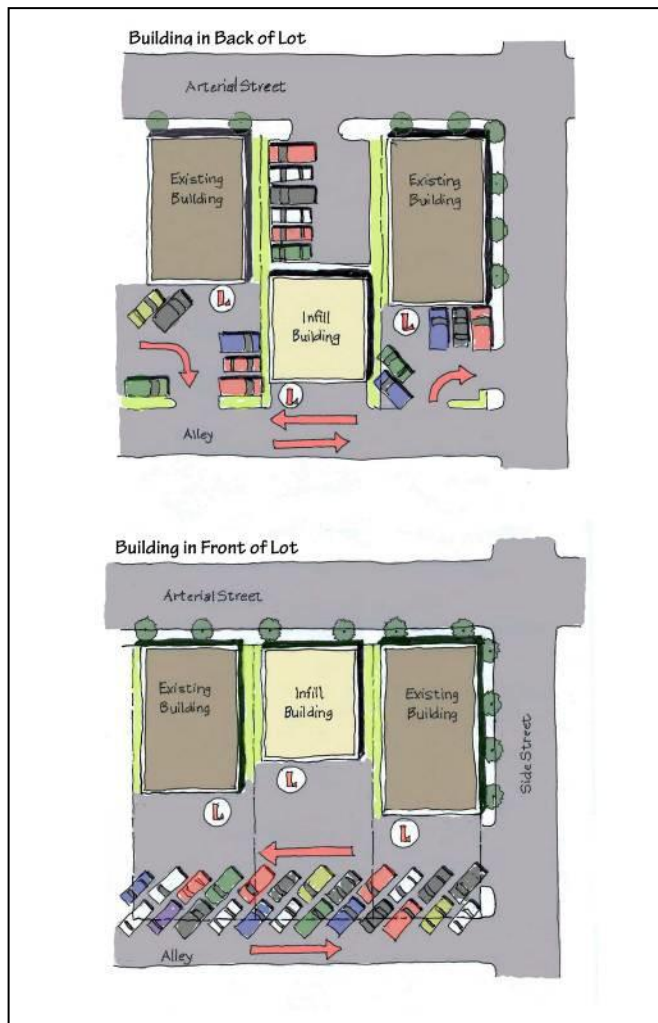
## Executive Summary

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Infill Plan is a detailed neighborhood plan prepared by the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force, a group of area residents, business-owners, and property owners with technical assistance provided by planners from the City of Tulsa Urban Development Division of Public Works and Development.

The plan describes in detail a future Vision for an area to the east of downtown Tulsa, located between I-244 and 11<sup>th</sup> Street, and between the downtown Inner Dispersal Loop (IDL) and Utica Avenue. It includes a careful and unvarnished self-assessment of existing issues and opportunities that provide a perspective of the neighborhood by the people who use it every day. It also provides recommended remedies for a number of urban problems ranging from

flood control, to security, to land use, to urban blight. These solutions will work together in a comprehensive manner to transform this struggling near-downtown neighborhood into a thriving, diverse, walkable, and desirable place to live, work, and play. Key recommendations in this plan include:

1. A brief series of recommendations for design guidelines for infill development. Specifically, these guidelines begin to address common infill issues such as building setbacks, parking requirements, and pedestrian orientation. The plan details portions of the neighborhood where these design guidelines are critical *as well as* areas where design guidelines are not needed.
2. A comprehensive strategy for the complete transformation of this neighborhood. The plan recommends flood control in the form of new parks and a canal. Plans have been developed through cooperation between area residents and property owners, the City of Tulsa Parks and Public Works Departments, and stormwater planners and hydrologists. These facilities will serve as a catalyst for new,



• Figure 1 - Current zoning rules, in this case setback requirements, often inadvertently yield results that are harmful to the orderly development of the neighborhood.



large-scale, urban infill development, which in turn will be produced through public-private partnerships.



## Introduction

### 1. Why a Neighborhood Plan?

This is the third of three “Infill Plans” called for by former Mayor M. Susan Savage and now supported by Mayor Bill LaFortune. The purpose of these plans is to solve problems, eliminate barriers, and provide direction for new growth in Tulsa’s older urban neighborhoods. In coming decades, conventional, “greenfield” development will have run its course in Tulsa. Infill development, i.e., new development in older, previously-developed neighborhoods, will become a norm and a necessity.

Infill is happening in Tulsa today, but the process is often fraught with problems. Prohibitive building codes, inappropriate zoning codes, aging infrastructure, and disinterested financiers, often make infill development fiendishly difficult. In addition, many organized and well-established neighborhood associations have high expectations for the quality and compatibility of infill development; failure to respond to neighborhood considerations can result in opposition. Successful developers have found ways to address these unique code requirements and human factors.

For its part, the City of Tulsa is methodically removing barriers, and infill development is becoming an increasingly attractive option. Tulsa has a new building code<sup>1</sup> for reuse of existing buildings, a one-stop permitting center, new public infrastructure investments, fire suppression grants, and other redevelopment incentives. These initiatives are making reuse and redevelopment easier and more practical. These efforts will go far to resolve development problems of a general nature.

Along a second front, the City is developing excellent communications with neighborhood groups. Through planning efforts like the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Infill Plan, Brookside Plan, Brady Village Plan, Crutchfield Plan, and others, the City is helping neighborhoods formulate a Vision for the future of their respective neighborhoods. In this process, these groups are identifying unique development opportunities and providing a detailed picture of the type and design of the development they would like to see. Efforts like these will help provide a backdrop for developers, allowing them to understand the context of the neighborhood and find ways to succeed within that context.

This plan is a detailed expression of the desired outcomes for the revitalization and redevelopment of their neighborhood. The Plan will: 1) describe the character of this traditional urban neighborhood, both as it is and how they would like it to be, 2) call for the preservation of the best elements of this neighborhood, and 3) define a template

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<sup>1</sup> The *IEBC International Existing Building Code August 2001* was adopted by the City of Tulsa in January 2002 (Title 51, Chapter 4, Tulsa Revised Ordinances).





for future growth that will ensure that new development enhances the character of the neighborhood and compliment other private and public development.

This Plan is a working document designed for a specific neighborhood. It will identify certain characteristics that are specific to this traditional urban neighborhood from the perspective of those who live, work, play, and own property here. From their assessment, a common Vision for the future has emerged. The purpose of this plan is to call attention to the changes that need to happen, to provide strategies for making those changes, and to assign responsibilities for making changes to the appropriate people.



• Figure 2 - Members of the 6th Street Task Force's Urban Design Subcommittee at work.

This plan is also a marketing tool. Those enlightened developers who share this Vision can join in this endeavor with the understanding that they are working with a neighborhood and City that embraces change. New partnerships and successes will come to those developers who are able to capitalize on 6<sup>th</sup> Street's unique values, such as its outstanding location and traditional, pedestrian orientation.

Finally, this plan is a guide. It clearly spells out the desired outcomes for future infill development. Radical change is required in this neighborhood: flood control, new

parks, and high-density, mixed-use development. By Tulsa standards, this plan is extremely flexible in terms of recommendations for future land use, but relatively uncompromising in its recommendations for high-quality, lasting construction. As the song goes, "It's not what you do, but the way that you do it". The guidelines herein are based on traditional, not conventional, principles of building neighborhoods. These guidelines are neither complex, nor stifling. They will however, help to protect investments in certain areas by people who choose to build for the ages. For those with tightly prepackaged and standardized real estate "products", there are certain corridors where this is welcome and others where it is inappropriate. This document will help you find a place for your Vision.

In summary, the Plan will:

- 1.1. Serve as the City's official guide for land use and development in the area. Public and private development in the future will take many forms: flood control; new parks and trails; large-scale redevelopment; small-scale infill development; rehabilitation of existing housing and commercial buildings; and expansion of commercial



and industrial facilities. A detailed plan can help ensure that future investments are compatible and cumulative, so that the whole of the neighborhood is greater than the sum of its parts.

- 1.2. Offer recommendations for modifying City development policies in older, urbanized areas. Over the last several years, the City has made some changes to zoning and building codes in order to make development in older areas more competitive with development at the edge of the City .
- 1.3. Create excitement. The plan for the area can help others take a look into the future and decide for themselves. This plan will allow developers, investors, and bankers to share the neighborhood Vision and find ways to participate in it.

## 2. The Desired Effect



• Figure 3 - Flood control, existing development, and new infill development can work together, "reinventing" the neighborhood.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Infill Plan offers a new approach to land-use planning for the City of Tulsa. This plan will concentrate on preserving and enhancing the best characteristics of the neighborhood: physical, economic, and social. Unlike previous plans however, this plan offers approaches that focus exclusively on the development and redevelopment of

previously developed land. This kind of development is commonly called “infill” development. This plan closely studies the unique opportunities and issues of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area, an area located between I-244 to the north and 11<sup>th</sup> Street on the south, and between the Inner Dispersal Loop on the west and Utica Avenue on the east. While some of the recommendations of this plan may be broadly applicable in other parts of the City, this plan is as individual as the neighborhood itself.

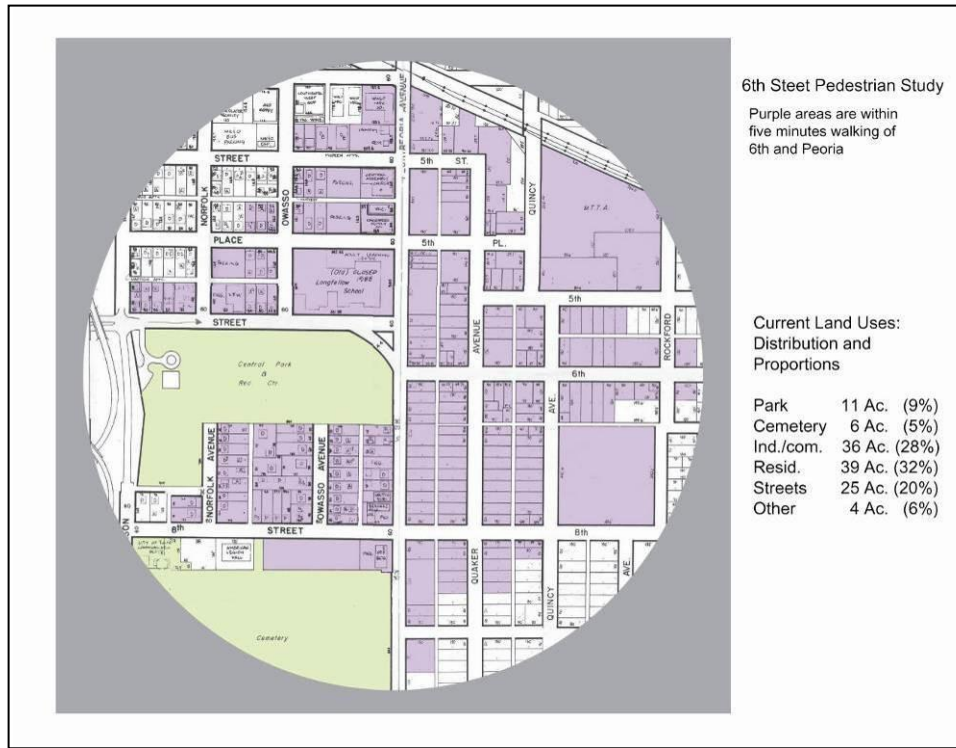


• Figure 4 - The 6th Street Planning Area, an area located between I-244 to the north and 11th Street on the south, and between the Inner Dispersal Loop on the west and Utica Avenue on the east.

Infill development in Tulsa has great promise. Areas like Brookside and Cherry Street, where revitalization and redevelopment are a regular occurrence, are some of our city's most interesting and popular destinations. The creators of this plan: property owners, business owners, and residents of the 6th Street Planning Area, believe that 6th Street is overdue for a similar transformation. Through detailed planning, innovative problem-solving, continued support from the City, and an indelible spirit of cooperation between business owners and residential property owners, the 6th Street



Taks Force feels that the successful “reinvention” of the 6th Street neighborhood is assured. In fact, changes are already happening.



• Figure 5 - The 6th Street Task Force has carefully studied land use within a five-minute walk of the 6th and Peoria intersection. New development in this area should be consistent with their objectives related to creating a compact, walkable, mixed-use, mixed-income node within the heart of the neighborhood.

A simple premise of this plan is that new development should build upon the existing physical fabric of the neighborhood. In other words, the streets and buildings of this traditional neighborhood provide a time-proven template for its future growth. Using the existing neighborhood as a starting point, a “form-based” approach to development that is principled on good urban design will allow for increased development density, walkable

neighborhoods, and successful mass transit systems. An inherent, deliberate, byproduct of this kind of urban neighborhood is that it will adapt to and support a wide variety of land uses in a compact area.

Form-based development is essentially the antithesis of our current approach to development, which produces a patchwork of low-density, single-use districts, and buildings that are often prevented, by law and “conventional wisdom”, from having lasting character and a good relationship to their surroundings. Development of separate, often private enclaves has over the decades become standard practice for Tulsa. The results of this kind of development are districts having minimal vehicular, pedestrian or visual connections. The unhealthy consequences of this form of development are guaranteed automobile dependency and, within neighborhoods, reinforced socioeconomic division and isolation. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force promotes a different form of development, one that respects traditional development patterns and offers a way to grow, without undoing the characteristics that will ultimately make this neighborhood unique, interesting, and livable.



The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force wants this document to help other Tulsans understand the strategic value of their neighborhood. With effort, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood can become the link between north and south, downtown and midtown, and the urban core and the University of Tulsa. This neighborhood has the potential to become a great residential choice for some of the 50,000 area workers. Because it already has numerous bus routes and a potential rail alignment, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood can demonstrate how higher density development can lead to a sustainable mass transit system. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood can also demonstrate how thoughtful urban design can resolve land use



• Figure 6 - The 6th Street Neighborhood is strategically located between downtown and the University of Tulsa.

conflicts between businesses and residents, allowing a wide variety of land uses in a compact urban area.

This plan is a consolidation of several different ideas, all of which are important to the future of the neighborhood: creating flood control; creating high quality, higher density development; reconnecting downtown to the University of Tulsa; preserving the walkability

of this traditional neighborhood; creating housing of various sizes, styles, and levels of affordability; preserving the established businesses, industries, and trades in the area; and creating opportunities for new businesses in this area. This is a long laundry list for such a small area—approximately one-half of one square mile. Integrating these ideas cannot be accomplished by simply drawing boxes on a map.

Successful infill development is not easy; if it were, it would happen more often. The actions needed to make infill development happen are generally more time-consuming, controversial, and expensive than development of “raw” land at the suburban fringe. Tasks like acquiring property, adapting or clearing structures, and removing land use restrictions can be very challenging, requiring support from the neighbors and help from the City. If a developer chooses to embrace the few simple ideas contained in this plan, i.e., increased density, mixed-use development, and design standards that encourage quality, permanence, and walkability, he or she can count on excellent support and perhaps incentives from the City and the neighborhood.



The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force understands the complexities of infill development because they are already immersed in it: Indian Health Care Resource Center, Family and Children’s Services, and the Village at Central Park, to name a few of the larger projects. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force welcomes new developers who will invest the time and resources into projects that further the Vision.

### 3. Recommended Changes in Development Policy

The purpose of this Plan, above all else, is to give a voice to the people of this neighborhood and allow them to share with others that this is a neighborhood with many assets, great vision, and significant potential. But to implement this plan, fundamental changes to the way we develop in Tulsa are needed. The objective of this plan is not to alter the development “status quo” for the entire City but merely to fine tune development policy in ways that support, rather than impede, the growth and redevelopment of this area. This Plan is not regulatory in nature, rather a guide for future regulations. The Plan should also act as a policy guide for development proposals; however, each development proposal must be evaluated on its own merit based on unique site conditions. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force seeks guidelines for development that:

- 3.1. Encourage a broad mix of land uses within the neighborhood while minimizing the negative environmental impacts of these uses,
- 3.2. Support pedestrian activity in the public and private realm,
- 3.3. Increase density without forfeiting quality and sacrificing the character of the neighborhood,
- 3.4. Resolve parking and setback issues that produce incompatible infill development.

This plan postulates that uniformity based planning and zoning, i.e., strict separation of land uses, may not be the best approach for infill development in this area that is already thoroughly mixed. It is certainly not the only approach available. Development code could be based on how buildings are formed and located to ensure that they create useful and distinctive public spaces and could account for local architectural traditions and building techniques. The private planning firm, Duany Plater-Zyberk promotes “transect zoning” which begins with an idealized slice of urban space from the rural fringe to the suburban core<sup>2</sup>. Once various regions have been identified, existing zoning standards (density, setback, etc.) could be assigned to the transect section that is most appropriate. With the 6<sup>th</sup> Street area, a combination of zoning for the appropriate density, along with an effort to create an architectural standard that promotes a compact, walkable, mixed-use, mixed-income, neighborhood could provide the desired results.

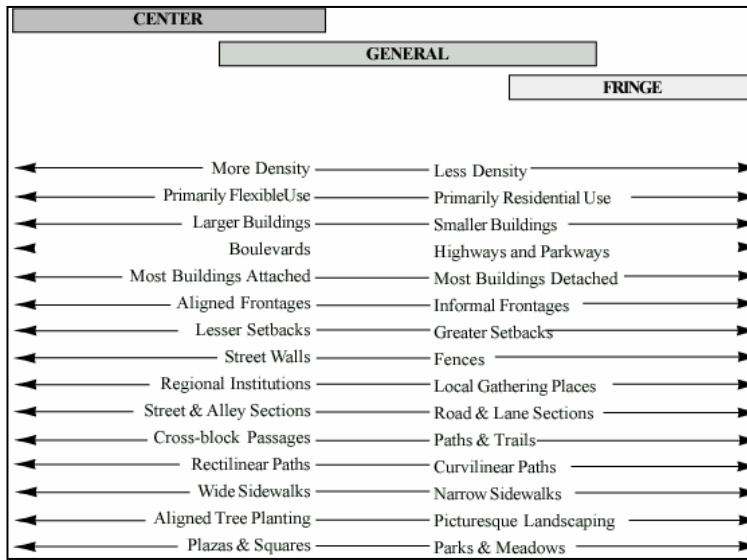
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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dpz.com/company.htm>, last linked Dec 10, 2004.



#### 4. Implementation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Infill Plan will:

- 4.1. Reverse a harmful trend by repopulating an urban neighborhood.
- 4.2. Resolve differences between neighborhoods, developers, and businesses owners by placing them on the same team. This plan demonstrates that differing interests and perspectives can be reconciled honestly and openly as they work side-by-side to produce the plan.



• Figure 7 - Urban Planners' Duany/Plater-Zybeck have written a model development code based on density rather than land use. From this they have developed a series of density zones, as opposed to land-use zones.

4.3. Create an exciting urban environment that is attractive to the “Creative Class”<sup>3</sup>, allowing us to retain our youth and attract many new people who will choose urban living, wherever it exists. 6th Street will help stop the “brain drain”.

4.4. Offer a new way for our City to grow, without creating more pollution. Denser, mixed-use development will decrease our dependence on personal vehicles. This plan introduces a promising alternative to punitive EPA mandates.

- 4.5. Reinvigorate our City’s economy by housing new shoppers and raising property values. Growth is occurring rapidly in fringe communities located beyond our City Limits. Though the region is growing, the City of

<sup>3</sup> Author Richard Florida uses this term to describe a new ethos wherein creativity is becoming increasingly dominant. Florida estimates that over 1/3 of our nation’s workforce is comprised of the Creative Class. On his website, creativeclass.org, he notes that Tulsa is ranked 55<sup>th</sup> out of 332 regions in high-tech business, which is attractive. However, Tulsa’s rankings for creativity and diversity were much lower, in the low-to-mid nineties.



Tulsa's share of this growth is diminishing. The consequence of this deceleration appears to be declining revenues and increased difficulty in maintaining the City's quality of life.

4.6. Promote small business development. Good infrastructure, great location, new amenities, and an abundance of adaptable, small industrial and commercial spaces provide the potential for a small business incubator of enormous scale. 6th Street is "start-up central".

4.7. Reconnect downtown and the University of Tulsa. Reconnect downtown and Cherry Street. Fill a presently growing void that threatens to harm all of these areas.



• Figure 8 - The 6th Street Task Force seeks a new paradigm for development in their neighborhood.

4.8. Create opportunities for high-rise residential development without upsetting the neighbors. High density development could be located between the Hillcrest Hospital Complex and a new urban park.

4.9. Resolve a flooding problem which, for over 70 years, has threatened portions of Tulsa stretching from

Whittier Square to Veteran's Park. The Elm Creek Basin, an area of 3.4 square miles, is a watershed that stretches from east of downtown at Admiral and Trenton, to the south of downtown at 21<sup>st</sup> and the Arkansas River.<sup>4</sup>

4.10. Introduce a development paradigm based on design, not zoning. This will ensure that Tulsa just keeps looking better and better, and prevent the "could be anywhere" look and feel of many new buildings, shopping areas, and neighborhoods.

4.11. This plan will increase understanding so that the neighborhood, TMAPC, and potential developers have a clear picture of the desired outcome, thereby reducing conflict and resolving problems early-on.

4.12. Build in ways that complement our historical resources. New development will enhance and accommodate the best of our existing architecture, yielding a product that is new and old, yet seamless and attractive.

<sup>4</sup> Elm Creek Master Drainage Plan Update, February 2003, p. vii





4.13. Return to a traditional way of city dwelling: where every store is convenient; where walking is both a necessity and a healthy pleasure; where slow-moving traffic is a good thing; and where crowds of people are a perpetual source of stimulation, employment, friendship, and security.



## Background

### 5. The Grassroots Vision

Successful plans begin with a straightforward vision. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force is a grassroots neighborhood planning organization comprised of property owners, renters, business owners and other representatives of area businesses and institutions. This group of concerned citizens is the driving force behind planning and implementation decisions in the neighborhood. They are very diverse in every sense, but they share a special interest in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood. This common interest is expressed in the form of a Vision statement for the future of their neighborhood. This Vision has served as a guide for every planning decision and a filter through which all projects pass.

*To reinvent the art of city life in Tulsa. To develop from the grass-roots an urban neighborhood that is diverse, intriguing and charming; that adapts to the new realities of the 21st Century and has the character, humanity and convenience of the best, traditional cities; that offers a radical and attractive alternative to suburban living; where it is possible to work, play and shop without recourse to a car; where neighbors work to foster good schools and safe, attractive streets and civic spaces; and where a vibrant, civic environment is matched by enlightened public policies. To do all this before it is too late.'*

This Vision for the future of the neighborhood offers a framework for the development of a detailed plan. This Vision is the essence of what the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force is trying to achieve. It has proved to be an excellent communication tool by offering a quick overview of the entirety of the plan.

### 6. History of Citizen Participation in Tulsa Planning

It should come as no surprise that early on, Tulsa made no distinction between the City's physical growth and its success. Tulsa was an oil-fueled boom-town; in less than forty years it had evolved from little more than a trading post to a sizable American city. City-wide planning for future growth is a process that began after World War II and continues to this day. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Infill Plan is a grassroots neighborhood plan and it is important to understand that, while direct citizen participation in planning may seem somewhat limited at this point in Tulsa's history, it has not always been the case. At various points in time, average citizens have been very active in shaping the future of the City.

The Tenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States reserves to the states the power to regulate land use and planning. The State of Oklahoma, in turn, delegates this responsibility to its cities and towns<sup>5</sup>. Land use planning is a police power and it is the broadest and least limitable authority granted to cities; the only specific guidance to cities is that these police powers cannot be arbitrary and must have a substantial relationship to "the public health, safety,

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<sup>5</sup> 1 O.S.1991 § 43-101, General Powers of Municipalities.



morals or general welfare”<sup>6</sup>. Cities have many ways in which they can support these principles, but model legislation developed in the U.S. in the 1920s chose uniformity as the underlying goal<sup>7</sup>. Ultimately this concept of uniformity filtered down, and cities across the United States began to adopt zoning codes that promoted a fairly simple concept of separating buildings based on their use, i.e. residential with residential, commercial with commercial, etc.

Recognizing that uniformity-based land use laws tend to ignore other important community issues such as traffic congestion, historic preservation, neighborhood and community character, as well as important public resources like sewers, schools, and parks, the State of Oklahoma in 1953 required large cities to develop a comprehensive, planned approach to land use regulation<sup>8</sup>. The Tulsa City Commissioners and County Commissioners formed the Tulsa Metropolitan Area Planning Commission to begin the process of planning Tulsa’s growth. Despite this early effort to capture a public Vision for the future of Tulsa, the City was already succumbing to private patterns of investment and disinvestment that would define Tulsa for the next forty years.

In 1948, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that deed restrictions based on race were unconstitutional and black families began to break out from racially delineated confines of Greenwood into North Tulsa. Tulsa Public Schools voluntarily desegregated in 1956, however, segregation was in effect kept in place through rearrangement of school districts to correspond with neighborhoods targeted for white and black families<sup>9</sup>. By the mid 1950’s Tulsa, like so many other American cities, was experiencing “white flight” as white Tulsans abandoned North Tulsa, often literally, for white neighborhoods to the southeast<sup>10</sup>.

Also in the mid 1950’s, downtown was beginning to lose standing as the City’s commercial center with the opening of Utica Square at 21<sup>st</sup> Street and Utica Avenue (1952) and the relocation of Sears from downtown to 21st Street and Yale Avenue (1955). From this point onward, large commercial developments began to follow new housing construction and a clear pattern was emerging as residential and commercial development began a steady march away from downtown to the southeast.

By the late fifties Tulsa was in need of a master plan to ensure that public infrastructure would keep pace with suburban growth in a City projected to reach 529,000 by 1975<sup>11</sup>. Tulsa’s first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1960. But real estate speculation and short-term investments in fringe areas continued to undermine public planning processes and the City quickly found itself reacting to, not planning for, change.

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<sup>6</sup> Supreme Court, *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co.*, see U.S. 365, 395 (1926).

<sup>7</sup> Standard State Zoning Enabling Act, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1926.

<sup>8</sup> 1 O.S. 1991 § 43-103, Purpose of Regulations—Comprehensive Plan.

<sup>9</sup> Scott, Amy Louise, Master’s Thesis, *A Tale of Two Cities: Tulsa, Boulder, and the Planning of the Urban West*, 1999, p.23.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p.23. – “Many whites who could not sell their homes simply abandoned them to repossession and foreclosure by the federal government and moved to southeast Tulsa, Broken Arrow, Jenks, or Bixby.”

<sup>11</sup> TMAPC, Comprehensive Plan, p. B2-1.



Efforts to reinvigorate downtown were led by Mayor Jim Maxwell and the Tulsa Urban Renewal Authority<sup>12</sup>. These efforts focused on the clearance of land for redevelopment in the downtown area, but even a new convention and civic center did little to draw developers away from the suburbs. In 1966, the opening of the Broken Arrow Expressway provided assurance that the pattern of sprawling development to the southeast would continue.

By the mid 1960's the social inequities and physical inefficiencies were impossible to ignore. South Tulsa was sprawling at an enormous rate and North Tulsa continued to lose steam. White flight created a serious excess housing supply in North Tulsa as there were only 12,000 families and 40,000 homes<sup>13</sup>. Enrollment was falling rapidly in North Tulsa schools while the demand for new South Tulsa schools was enormous. For years, Tulsa had been renowned for its livability. But the growing disparities and inefficiencies in different parts of the city were beginning to threaten this quality of life. Serious discussions ensued, headed by private citizens, planners, and organizations like the Metropolitan Tulsa Chamber of Commerce. For the first time, Tulsans began to discuss the problems caused by imbalanced growth and the possibility that Tulsa, like so many eastern cities, could succumb to a pattern of disinvestment, i.e., inner-city decay, crime, and paralysis caused by inadequate revenue. New development, too, was not without its problems: there was continuous pressure to “keep up” with new development by expanding infrastructure both inside and outside the City; increasing traffic problems; and poor planning and design.

Citizen-based planning efforts were formally renewed in the 1960's with the federal Model Cities initiative. The Model Cities Program was an outgrowth of President Johnson's war on poverty, discrimination, and inadequate housing. The program sought to bring physical and social aspects of planning together, addressing complex and wide-ranging problems: transportation, employment, urban design, day care, residential rehabilitation, crime, and more. This effort concentrated on portions of North Tulsa, which faced a crisis caused by white flight. While Model Cities did have a positive impact on the quality of life, it ultimately did not reverse the damaging trends affecting Tulsa. One lasting legacy of Tulsa's Model Cities program was that it taught us that the local knowledge of average people is extremely valuable resource in planning efforts. Further, the involvement of citizen-groups in solving complex neighborhood problems in their own neighborhoods ensures focus and longevity that cannot be matched by the efforts of outside planners and consultants. Tulsans could and should have a role in shaping their neighborhoods and the portions of the city in which they live, work, shop, worship, and play.

In 1973 Mayor Bob LaFortune chose a similar planning model when he renewed the discussion of “balanced growth” and began work on the update of the Tulsa Metropolitan Area Comprehensive Plan. The metropolitan area was subdivided into smaller districts, allowing average citizens to focus on their own neighborhoods. New District Plans were adopted into the Comprehensive Plan from 1975 through 1980. This initiative was watered down somewhat by

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<sup>12</sup> This organization has operated continuously since 1959. It was renamed the Tulsa Development Authority in 1985.

<sup>13</sup> Scott, Amy Louise, Master's Thesis, *A Tale of Two Cities: Tulsa, Boulder, and the Planning of the Urban West*, 1999, p.27.

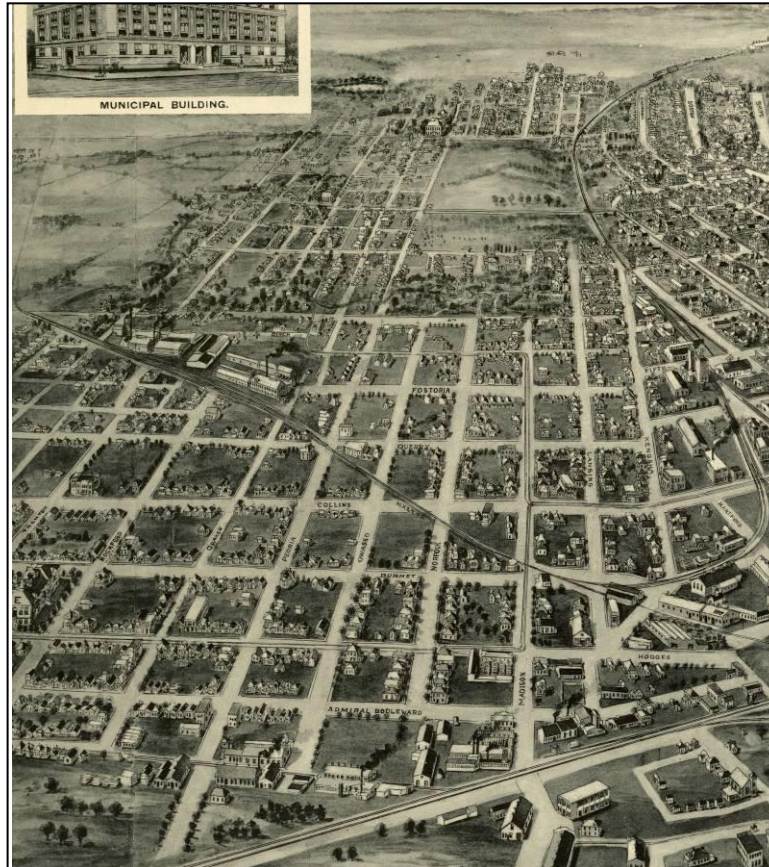


the opening of the Haikey Creek sewage treatment plant in 1974, which provided massive sewage capacity in southeast Tulsa and fostered the growth of vast undeveloped areas in Broken Arrow.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Infill Plan resumes this process of neighborhood-driven comprehensive planning wherein the Vision for the future of a neighborhood begins at the grassroots and moves upward to eventually become a part of the comprehensive plan for the City. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force recognizes that this form of citizen participation in planning and implementation over an extended period of time is needed in order to fulfill their objectives.



## 7. Neighborhood History



• Figure 9 - The 6th Street Neighborhood was east Tulsa in 1912.

With the discovery of oil at Red Fork in 1901, investors, wildcatters, and their families, began to pour into Tulsa. Additional oil finds in the area allowed this boom to continue the next 30 years. By then, Tulsa was well-established as the “Oil Capital of the Nation”. Development in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood reflects this initial explosion of growth, followed by an extended period of stability, and ultimately a period of decline. This pattern is repeated in many of the older parts of Tulsa. Review of early business directories indicates rapid growth in the 1910s and 1920s, an extended period of sustained success through the 1960s, and a period of decline beginning in the 1970s.

The “platting”, or subdividing, of land in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood began in 1909. At this time there were already a few buildings in the area. Located along the Missouri Kansas Texas (M.K.T.) rail line, there was a glass factory, cannery, and an oil depot. Continuous construction of new houses and industry in the area over the next decade helped bring about the development of a number of commercial businesses supporting industry and residents.

A quick examination of businesses in the area<sup>14</sup> reveals that by 1930, this area was firmly established as a diverse, mixed-use, urban neighborhood. The neighborhood thrived as it continued to cater to the downtown central business district, a large industrial district, and several working-class residential areas. There were a variety of offerings nearby, and the mix of shops and businesses along 6<sup>th</sup> Street were eclectic by today’s standards. Nevertheless, these successfully coexisted for over 50 years.

<sup>14</sup> Polk Directories: 1914, 1916, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1936, 1940, 1957, 1964, 1973, 1993, and 2001.



• Figure 10 - Zarrow Grocery, 6th Street, 1920.

Examining business records along a sample area, a two block long stretch of 6<sup>th</sup> Street from Peoria to Rockford Avenue, one can begin to understand this odd mix of businesses. From 1920 to 1964, the local residential population seemed to adequately sustain two small groceries, as well as a barber shop, drugstore, dry cleaner, shoe repair shop, beauty shop, tavern, and restaurant. Along with these neighborhood services, there were other businesses that provided goods and services to adjacent industrial areas as well as the nearby downtown business district. Along 6<sup>th</sup> Street in this tiny sample area, one would find several auto body and auto repair shops, the original location of Ehrle's Party and Carnival Supply, and a

machinery supply shop, lunch counter, electrical supply, saw sharpening service, and several print shops. Another unique characteristic of this area is that it housed quite a few upholstery and furniture refinishing shops.

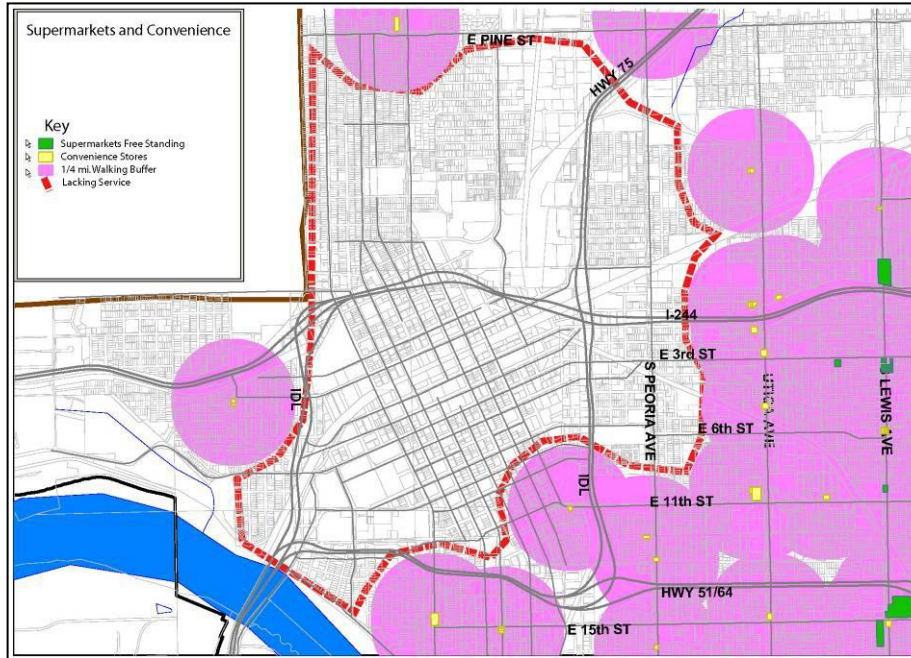
Today, the dry cleaners, groceries, and similar stores catering to the local residential population have moved out of this location in favor of larger sites with higher traffic volumes. Unfortunately, there are almost no services of this kind left within easy walking distance. This is perhaps not so much a reflection of drastic changes in the needs of the neighborhood. More likely, it is just another example of a tactical shift in the way we distribute (and consume) goods and services in this country. The "bigger, cheaper, faster" ethos of prosperous, post-war America has consolidated services in remote locations.

In spite of the nearly complete loss of neighborhood-oriented service business, the rest of the business district looks remarkably like it did 60 years ago. There is still a concentration of auto repair establishments, print shops, upholsterers, trades suppliers, manufacturers, and cabinetmakers. Many of these businesses continue to thrive.

Perhaps the most damaging trend in the long history of this neighborhood is the shift from owner-occupied housing to rental housing. The exodus of homeowners began in the mid-1950s and continued through the 1980's. Today, owner-occupied housing accounts for only 12% of the housing stock in the neighborhood. Many of the 75-year old rent houses in this neighborhood are now sub-standard due to decades of inadequate maintenance. More than any other factor, this shift from homes to "income properties" has created a malaise that discourages investment, and promotes a host of undesirable activities that are primarily the result of poor stewardship.



Cars and trucks were certainly an important part of the landscape in the 1930s, as evidenced by the number of auto repair facilities that served the large downtown business population. Overall, cars were not as important as they are today. Housing, employment, and goods and services were distributed over a fairly compact area. As a result, many of the people in this neighborhood could take care of their needs on foot, by mail, or via public transit. They often had no need for a car. Further evidence of this is found in the development style of the period. Building owners generally



• Figure 11 - The purple circles represent a five minute walking radius from grocery and convenience stores. Note the large area without service.

did not provide off-street customer parking. Buildings were also placed near the street, offering a strong pedestrian orientation in a building vernacular that included awnings, large display windows, and relatively ornate building entrances located on wide (by today's standards) sidewalks.

Through the mid 1930s, trolleys augmented well-established pedestrian movement by offering quick connections to downtown, the University of Tulsa, and Cherry

Street. In the 1950s, frequent bus service replaced the trolleys. Today, 6<sup>th</sup> Street 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Street, and Peoria Avenues, are still major public transportation corridors.

Multiple bus routes travel through the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning area on their way to and from the Downtown-Denver station and parts of midtown, North Tulsa, the airport, and South Tulsa. An important thesis promoted in this plan is that the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood can once again prosper as a pedestrian and mass transit-oriented neighborhood, building on the infrastructure that remains. New residents are moving into this area in compact, high-quality housing units. In coming years, it will be possible to once again sustain neighborhood-oriented service businesses here, and without displacing the well-established industry and trades. The Vision for the neighborhood, as seen by those who live and work here, is a return to the old eclectic mix of housing, merchants, offices, and industry.



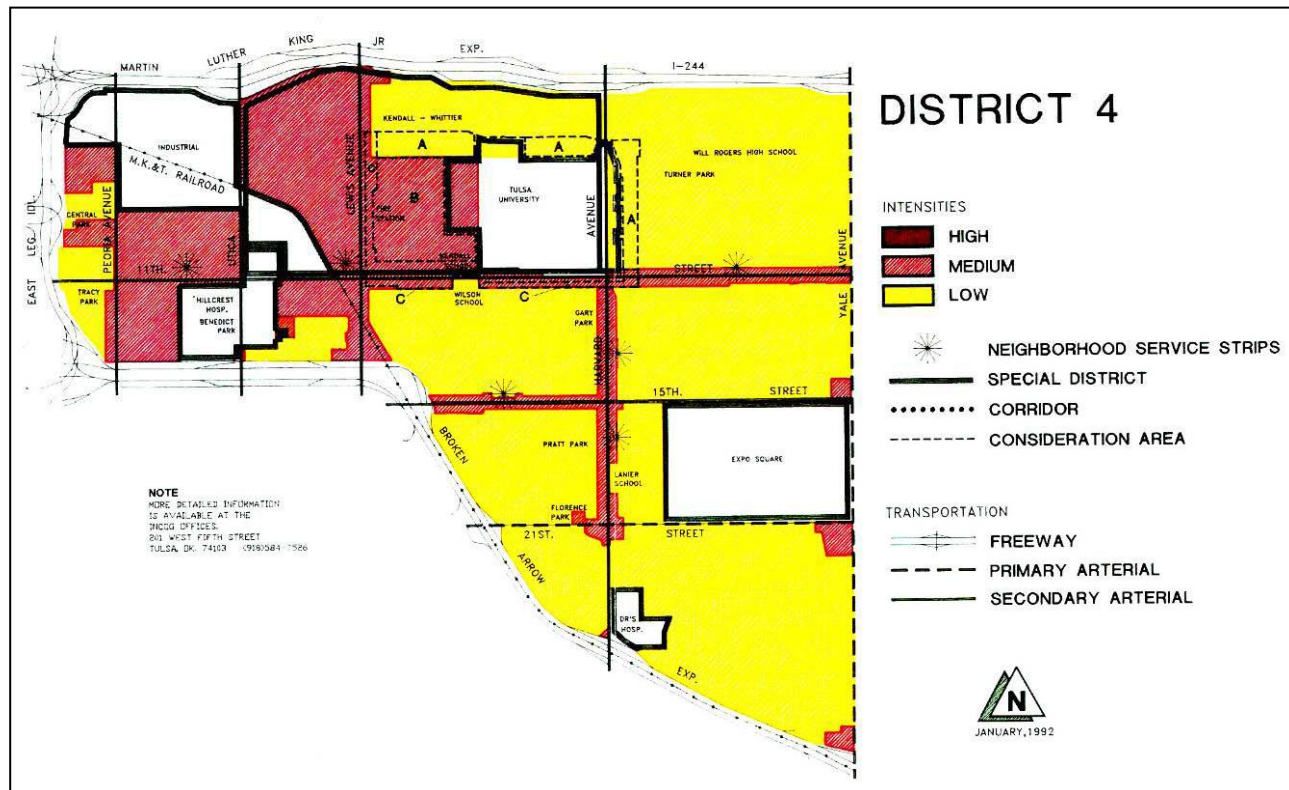


## 8. Previous Plans

### 8.1. The Comprehensive Plan/District 4 Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is the expression of the desired future for the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood, as well as the rest of the City of Tulsa. Specifically, the Comprehensive Plan provides policies for "...guidance and direction of physical development."<sup>15</sup> The Comprehensive Plan is divided into smaller, District Plans, wherein "...specific policies could be developed in a process that provided residents of the smaller areas an opportunity to be directly involved"<sup>16</sup>. The policies of the District Plans are adopted by the Tulsa Metropolitan Area Planning Commission and the City of Tulsa, but even after adoption, "...the District detailing/neighborhood planning process must be actively pursued on a continuous basis..."<sup>17</sup>.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood is located entirely within District 4, which covers a larger area located between the Broken Arrow Expressway on the south, I-244 on the north, the downtown east leg of the Inner Dispersal Loop on the west,



- Figure 12 - The District 4 Comprehensive Plan provides little detail on the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Plan will update the District 4 Plan, providing a more current assessment and a new level of detail in order to guide future development.

and Yale Avenue on the east. Also, in District 4 are the University of Tulsa and the Tulsa Fairgrounds. The District 4 Plan was initially adopted in 1980, with subsequent amendments that were in large part related to the establishment of

<sup>15</sup> Comprehensive Plan for the Metropolitan Tulsa Area, District 4 Plan, pg. iv, 1980.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



Special Districts and Special Consideration Areas around Hillcrest Hospital, Expo Square, and the University of Tulsa. Also included are modifications to the Coal Creek Master Drainage Plan. The last amendment to the District 4 Plan was made in 1991.

The District 4 Plan establishes an “Industrial” Special District that includes approximately 80% of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood. The policies for the Industrial Special District are designed to encourage and attract industrial activities into the area. Over time, the plan postulates, the neighborhood will evolve into an area filled with compatible industrial uses.

The District 4 Plan seeks to create uniform land use (industrial) in an area that has always been highly mixed (industrial, commercial, single-family, multi-family, parks, and community services). This contrasts rather sharply with the goals of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force. The group’s goals focus on preserving the mixed-use character and fostering the growth of a wide range of land uses in the area. They encourage adaptation of existing structures or, alternately, creating new infill structures that are physically compatible with the older neighborhood. The District 4 Plan, as it exists today, cannot adequately guide this kind of development.

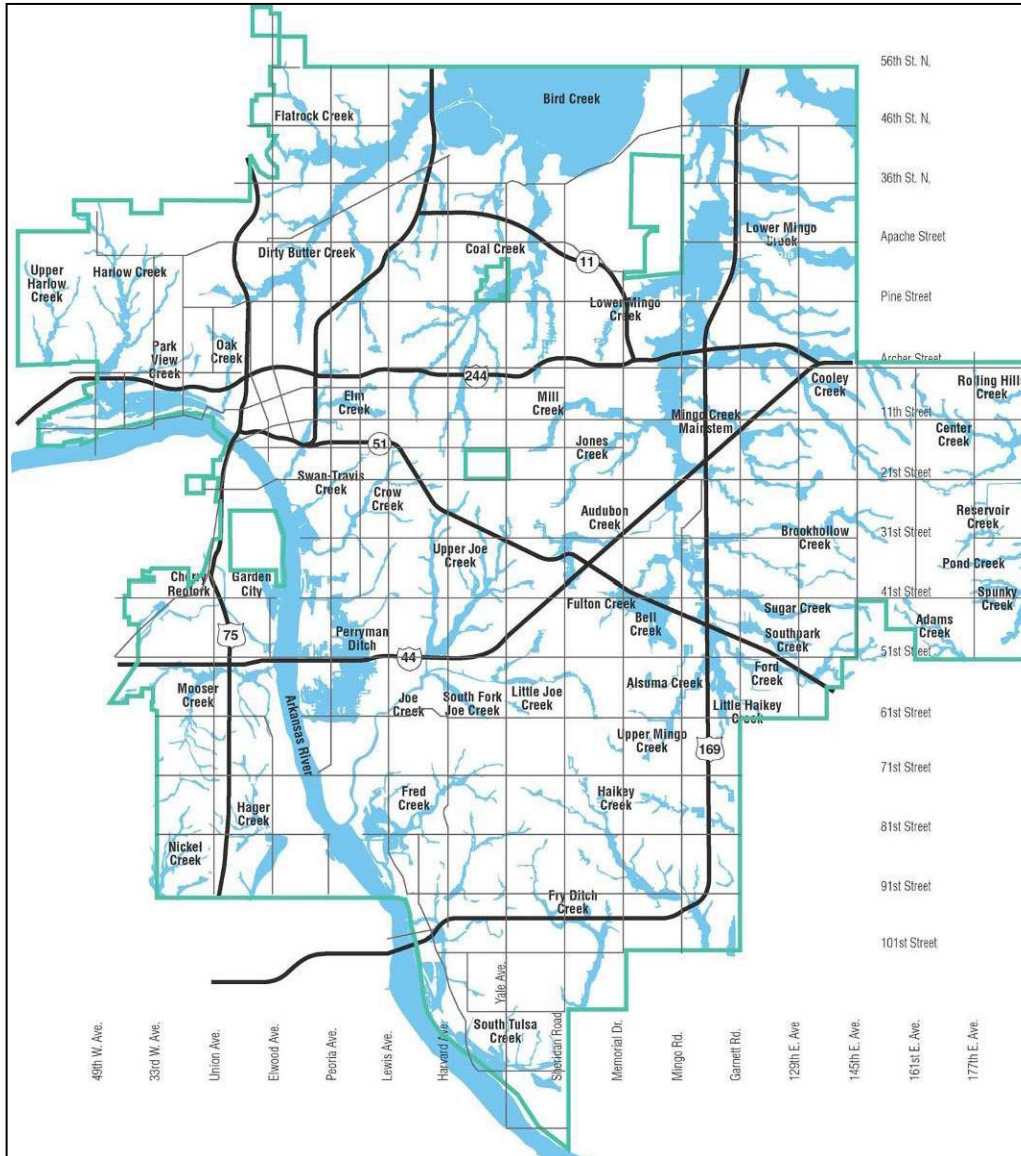
The citizen planners involved are familiar with the existing District 4 Plan and believe that the existing plan lacks the specificity needed to accomplish the Vision of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force. Additionally, though the Task Force does not disagree in principle with any of the District-wide Goals, Policies, and Objectives of the District 4 Plan, the Task Force believes that some of these objectives and policies can be interpreted too broadly or perhaps in ways which confuse or even contradict the objectives and recommended policies of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Plan. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the TMAPC seek better methods of managing growth in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area, perhaps in the form of a new Special District. The rules for this new District should not be contradicted by other portions of the District 4 Plan. Finally, to avoid confusion, the Task Force recommends that the existing land-use intensities and the existing “Industrial Special District” be abandoned in favor of this new Plan for the 6<sup>th</sup> Street (Pearl) Special District, which provides opportunities for industrial expansion in a way that is compatible with other objectives.

The comprehensive plan is the most important strategic document for this neighborhood or any Tulsa neighborhood. This 6<sup>th</sup> Street Infill Plan will amend the comprehensive plan and serve as a guide for future development, zoning changes, and funding and policy decisions. It is clear that portions of the District 4 Plan will need to be modified to accommodate the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force’s Vision. This plan will offer a new direction for redevelopment (mixed-use corridors, transit-oriented development, etc.), but it will also protect the operation and expansion opportunities for the valued industrial sector.



## 8.2. The Elm Creek Master Drainage Plan

The Elm Creek Master Drainage Plan is a specialized component of the Comprehensive Plan that is designed to reduce damages caused during the 100-year flood event. During the 1970s and 80s, Tulsa experienced several 100-year flood events: Mother's Day 1970; June 8, 1974; Memorial Day, 1976; and then Memorial Day 1984. This rapid succession of flood events caused severe damage and loss of life and prompted Tulsa to initiate a comprehensive stormwater planning and prevention program.



• Figure 13 - Approximately 10 percent of the City of Tulsa's land area is located in a 100-year floodplain<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Stormwater planner Ron Flanagan, Flanagan & Associates, Tulsa, OK

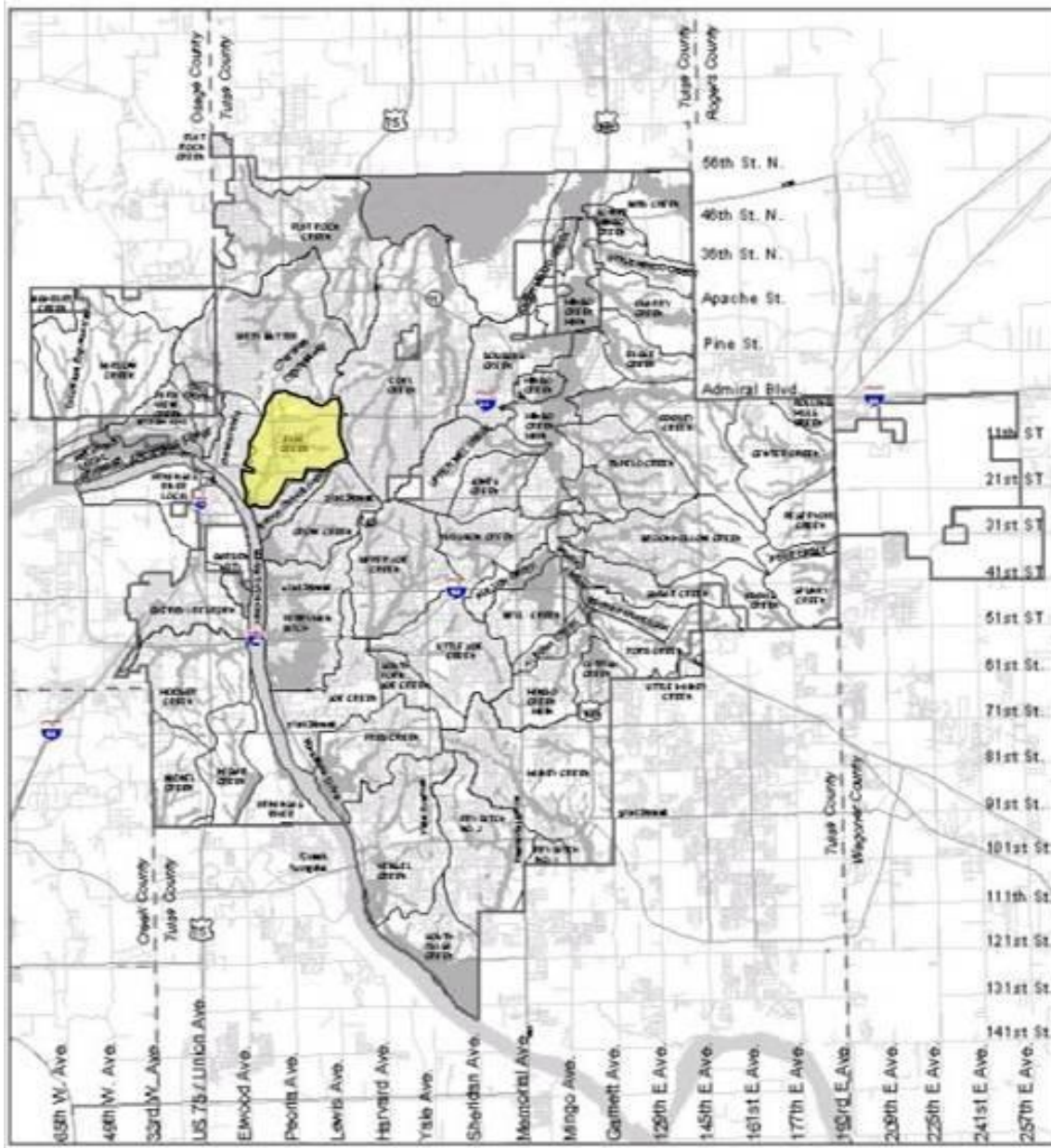


**Q: What does the "100-year flood" mean?**

**A: The term "100-year flood" is misleading. It is not the flood that will occur once every 100 years. Rather, it is the flood elevation that has a 1- percent chance of being equaled or exceeded each year. Thus, the 100-year flood could occur more than once in a relatively short period of time. The 100-year flood, which is the standard used by most Federal and state agencies, is used by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as the standard for floodplain management and to determine the need for flood insurance. A structure located within a special flood hazard area shown on an NFIP map has a 26 percent chance of suffering flood damage during the term of a 30-year mortgage.**

*Source: fema.gov<sup>19</sup>*

<sup>19</sup> [www.fema.gov/fhm/fq\\_fld03.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/fhm/fq_fld03.shtm), June 30,2004.



• Figure 14 - Since the mid 1980s, Tulsa has invested over \$200 Million in capital projects implementing 31 master drainage plans; Tulsa leads the nation in stormwater planning.

To date, 31 master drainage plans have been created, encompassing every stormwater runoff basin in the City. In stormwater planning, the costs of implementation, benefits to private property, and efforts to eliminate specific public safety threats, are all weighed in a methodical process. Typically, these plans recommend the removal of threatened houses from the floodplain. When feasible, the plans also call for detention basins that eliminate the floodplain itself.



With over \$200 Million in capital improvements since 1988, the City of Tulsa leads the nation in stormwater management activity.

The Elm Creek Master Drainage Plan, however, has been notoriously difficult to implement. The Elm Creek basin, of which all of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street planning area is a part, is fully urbanized, making acquisition and structural (detention basins) solutions more difficult and costly to implement than in suburban locations. Another factor that negatively affects cost-benefit analysis is extensive blight, which lowers appraisals of the area. Third, most of the older houses in this area have crawl space foundations that elevate them approximately three feet above grade. Unlike their slab foundation counterparts in newer parts of Tulsa, in many cases the 100-year flood can inundate a property but not reach the finished floor of the house.

Though property damage in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood could be extensive, particularly to the large number of at-grade constructed businesses in the neighborhood, the cost of improvements has up until now failed to outweigh the benefit in reduction of property losses. In fact, there has only been one low-cost solution and that plan has never won public acceptance.

A 1988 plan recommended the replacement of Central Park with a massive detention basin. Since the City already owned the land, normal acquisition costs would be eliminated. The proposed basin would need to be as large and as deep as possible. Once completed, the steep-sloped basin would leave virtually no land for public recreation. Property owners and residents were never content with this plan, which would do away with the City's second oldest park and the neighborhood's most important public amenity. As a result, after nearly 20 years of stormwater management projects, the Elm Creek basin is the last remaining basin to have received no funding at the local or federal level for stormwater improvements.



• Figure 15 - This concept drawing shows a functional drainage canal running down 7<sup>th</sup> Street between Peoria and Rockford Avenues. The drawing illustrates how this drainage feature could serve as a catalyst for high-quality infill development

Addressing flooding in this area has required a shift in strategy. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force has identified a new initiative that will begin to address this old problem. Working side-by-side with the City's stormwater planners, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force has recently helped to create a new plan that is much broader in scope and addresses multiple objectives. In a collaborative effort, a large group of determined individuals have produced a plan that will facilitate redevelopment while



resolving flooding problems. Various City representatives have collaborated with neighborhood residents and property owners to design new urban parks, which not coincidentally, happen to retain floodwater in a heavy storm. The new plan will be reflected in an amendment to the Elm Creek Master Drainage Plan.

The new Elm Creek Master Drainage Plan was recommended for approval by the Tulsa Metropolitan Area Planning Commission on October 6, 2004. It is currently under review by the City Council. If approved, the plan will serve as an integral part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street planning effort.

The first phase of construction, a sensitive introduction of flood control into Centennial Park, is funded and designed and should begin construction in January 2005. The redesign of Centennial Park has been a collaborative effort involving premier stormwater consultants, landscape architects, and the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force.

### 8.3. Central Park Tax Increment Plan

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a relatively new concept to the State of Oklahoma. Essentially, a boundary is drawn around a redevelopment area forming a district. An initial, or “base”, tax assessment is made of all sales, ad valorem,



• Figure 16 - The Central Park TIF District includes approximately 120 acres on either side of the downtown inner dispersal loop.

and personal property taxes generated within the district. For a period of time, in this case 15 years, any new tax revenues that exceed the base are captured and reinvested in the district. New public investments in streetscaping, parks improvements, and other necessities attract new businesses and residents, which in turn add more revenue to the tax increment district.

Until recently, Oklahoma prevented the issuance of bonds based on anticipated tax revenues in TIF districts. As a result, changes in the district have been slower. In November 2004, a ballot initiative was approved that will allow the use of “tax anticipation bonds” to advance-fund public improvements in tax increment districts. This change will allow a faster implementation of the Central Park TIF plan and could result in a bigger impact in a shorter timeframe.

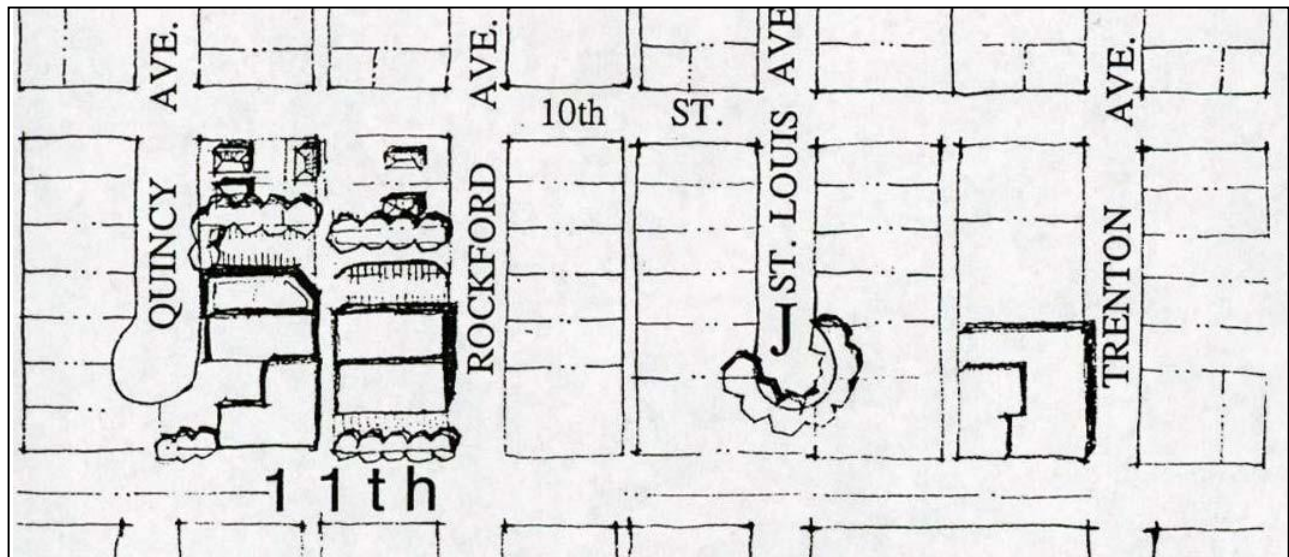
The main tax generator for the Central Park Tax Increment District is the downtown Home Depot, located at 11<sup>th</sup> & Elgin. So far, the TIF plan has resulted in streetscaping and infrastructure improvements around the Home Depot site, and the “rescue” of the building façade of the historic Warehouse Market building. Also in the first phase of the Central Park TIF, land was assembled for redevelopment



and this subsequently became the Village at Central Park. In the next phase of the plan, TIF funds will be used for park improvements in Centennial Park at 6<sup>th</sup> & Peoria. A 10,000 square foot community and senior center has been designed and constructions should begin in 2005. Other TIF projects in the plan will be implemented as tax funds are received. Planned projects include: streetscaping on portions of 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Peoria Avenue, additional improvements around the Home Depot site, and intersection improvements at 11<sup>th</sup> Street and Peoria Avenue and 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Peoria Avenue.

### 8.4. 11<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Plan

The 11<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Plan (1993) also affects portions of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area. Several recommendations of this plan have been implemented including new housing at what is now the Village at Central Park, and shortly, the reuse of the Tulsa Fire Alarm Building. Another recommendation of this plan called for streetscaping improvements along 11<sup>th</sup> Street and closing off a few residential streets. While streetscaping is highly valued by the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force as a method of attracting commercial reinvestment and improving the neighborhood's appearance, the cul-de-sac plans are no longer viewed as favorably. In the early 1990's, closing public streets was promoted by police departments across the country as a way to deter crime. In theory, closed streets reduced pass-through traffic and discouraged car-related criminal activity such as prostitution and drug dealing. In practice, however, closed streets have tended to dramatically increase traffic flow on the streets that remain open and have had, by most accounts, a negligible



• Figure 17 - Cul-de-sacs that separated the neighborhood from commercial areas were recommended in the 11th Street Plan. The 6th Street Task Force *does not* endorse closing streets. Preserving the "grid" street system will preserve a smooth flow of traffic movement in this urban neighborhood.

effect on criminal activity. Additionally, closed streets tend to present an access problem for fire departments.





While the Task Force values the objective of crime reduction proposed in the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Plan, they have chosen to address this problem more directly through improved coordination with the Tulsa Police Department. The results of this approach have been effective and most now agree that it may be better to preserve the existing grid street pattern. At this time, a police officer from Uniform Division North serves as a point of contact and coordinator for neighborhood policing. Using information gathered from residents, Tulsa police have conducted criminal sweeps and raided a suspected drug house. Visible criminal activity such as drug dealing and prostitution has diminished and continued vigilance on behalf of the neighborhood and police seems to be the preferred method for crime reduction.

### **8.5. Report of the Mayor's Infill Development Task Force**

In 1998, citizens and experienced development professionals were gathered to craft a series of recommendations for future infill development in the City of Tulsa. Their report recognizes that the location of development in the City is changing from pastures and fields at the edge of the City, to undeveloped pockets and previously developed land within the urbanized area. This 22-member team studied and recommended policies and programs related to utility regulations, development standards, and zoning ordinances "...to encourage and assist the appropriate use or reuse of property in the developed parts of the City which promote 1) quality of life in the City; 2) redevelopment of vacant or blighted areas; 3) a variety of land uses; 4) full utilization of existing infrastructure; and 5) an increase of the economic vitality of the City."<sup>20</sup>

This valuable document is a key resource for the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Infill Plan because, like the plan itself, it offers good recommendations and advice people with a depth of understanding of the development process that can only exist at the local level. Whenever possible, the Report of the Infill Task Force has served as a starting point for the recommendations of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Plan. The major recommendations include:

- 8.5.1. Infrastructure upgrades (water, sanitary sewer, stormwater drainage, streets, sidewalks and utilities. Particularly important in encouraging initial infill are the visible types of infrastructure, especially street resurfacing and sidewalk repair, which add to the area's curb appeal.
  
- 8.5.2. Parking needs should be addressed both publicly and privately. Pedestrian-oriented businesses should be allowed to seek expansion to a depth of one parcel into the adjacent neighborhood. In pedestrian-oriented areas, the City should also take an active role in the creation of municipal surface and structured parking facilities.

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<sup>20</sup> Report of the Infill Development Task Force, Prepared for Mayor M. Susan Savage and the Tulsa Metropolitan Area Planning Commission, Jan, 1999, page 8.



- 8.5.3. Code enforcement should be pursued more aggressively and consistently and policies and philosophies should be reexamined to determine their utility in encouraging infill development. The City should also consider adopting a specific schedule of fines for zoning code and PUD violations.
- 8.5.4. Crime prevention and security are key considerations in infill development areas. The City is encouraged to maintain and enhance the presence of law enforcement officers in and near infill development neighborhoods.
- 8.5.5. Policies and standards for utility placement should be examined, and revised if needed, to more effectively encourage infill development. Some of these standards include: right-of-way widths, easement needs for utilities, and provision and maintenance of sidewalks, landscaping, and buffering.
- 8.5.6. In many places where higher intensity nonresidential uses are located near residential uses, detailed neighborhood plans, and in some cases specialized zoning regulations, could provide benefit to both residential and nonresidential property owners.
- 8.5.7. In some areas with the potential for infill development, some mixing of residential and housing types may be appropriate and should be encouraged if the scale and intensity of proposed development is compatible with existing development. This may require new zoning categories.
- 8.5.8. Regulations and design guidelines should be adopted to protect adjacent residential properties from certain commercial activities. Specific items include outdoor speakers, drive-through windows, and dumpsters. Guidelines should require adequate buffering, screening, landscape, and setbacks.
- 8.5.9. The City should consider alternatives for the reviewing and permitting process for infill development in order to make it less time-consuming and more efficient.
- 8.5.10. The City should consider a fund with which to finance at least a part of the cost of upgrading old, substandard city utilities when upgrades are needed to serve infill development.
- 8.5.11. Recognizing that a strong school system can do as much or more than anything to encourage infill development, the City of Tulsa should continue to strongly support efforts to improve and strengthen the school system.

The 6th Street Task Force agrees with the major recommendations of the Report of the Infill Development Task Force and has incorporated these recommendations in their own conceptual designs and policy recommendations. Particularly relevant to the 6th Street Plan are specific recommendations for pedestrian-oriented improvements, trail



connections, methods for mixing residential and nonresidential development, and development guidelines regarding the scale and building materials used in redevelopment.

The report of the Infill Development Task Force continues to be a comprehensive and influential document. Consistent with the recommendations of this report, the City has created a one-stop permitting center; adopted the International Existing Building Code to facilitate rehabilitation; offered new lines of communication and improved strategies in policing and code enforcement; and in individual cases, provided the financial assistance in support of infill development. The Tulsa Metropolitan Area Planning Commission also continues to modify land use codes and street classifications to reflect the changing nature of development in the City of Tulsa.

### **8.6. Ongoing Planning and Implementation**

Many of the participants on the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force have served in these previous planning and implementation efforts. In fact, Task Force members are already guiding the implementation of several recommendations of this plan. They will continue to provide guidance on construction projects and assistance to police and many other City officials with numerous routine and special matters. This seasoned group of citizen planners understands that they themselves are ultimately accountable for the implementation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Infill Plan. Using this plan as a guide, they will be the driving force behind the reinvention of their neighborhood. Seeking the appropriate public and private partnerships, they will continue to plan, build, market, boost, and politick for their neighborhood until it is once again able to stand on its own feet.



## The Planning Process

Planning is an analytical process that examines the physical, economic, and social aspects of our community and, most importantly, the connections between them. Planning identifies existing conditions and future trends, and in this case, enables regular citizens to define for themselves a new path altogether.

### 9. Initial Observations and Neighborhood Organization

Prior to the formation of the Task Force, new and encouraging development patterns were emerging in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street area: the Indian Health Care Resource Center opened at 6<sup>th</sup> and Peoria, the Village at Central Park began construction south of Centennial Park, and Family and Children's Services had started planning for new facility on a site they had occupied for many years at 8<sup>th</sup> and Peoria. The people associated with these developments all agreed that this neighborhood, despite a few problems, offered good location, visibility, and access and was a sensible choice for reinvestment. Infill was already occurring in this area and the City postulated that, because of its strategic location, the entire 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area could be fully revitalized through infill development, noting that flood control would likely need to be an integral component of this effort. Infill and flood control would likely involve land acquisition and could very quickly have an impact on those who live and own property in the area, therefore, the logical course of action was to develop a plan that was owned and embraced by these same people.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force was formed by contacting local property owners, residents, and business owners. Many respondents already had years of community development experience through neighborhood associations and previous planning efforts. A large group of over 50 was assembled and thus began a multi-year process involving much hard work and commitment, and an occasional fiery debate. Over the next few months, this group developed a collective foresight that has served to guide their actions, present and future, large and small.

Why a grassroots plan? Quite simply, it would be impossible to implement a plan that involves large amounts of property acquisition in an urbanized area without strong neighborhood support. A plan that is developed by property owners, business owners, and residents of the neighborhood allows people to apply their intimate understanding of the area in an enlightened fashion that supports their own interests as well as the interests of their neighbors. The result is a better plan and a plan that people will want to implement. The success of an infill plan and program in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area will ultimately depend on the participation and ownership of the plan by the area's existing residents and property owners.

At first, many in the neighborhood questioned the seemingly new-found interest in their neighborhood. Early on, it was necessary to define some ground rules, so that all parties could agree upon the desired outcome of the planning effort:



- 9.1. The plan will be a product of the 6th Street Task Force. The purpose for meeting is to allow the community to define the issues and develop solutions. A previous plan, the report of the Infill Development Task Force, offered general recommendations intended to improve the economic and social vitality of Tulsa neighborhoods. The Task Force should review and embrace or reject these recommendations, as applicable.
- 9.2. The City of Tulsa Public Works and Development Department would like to modify their drainage master plan in the area. They are seeking a solution that is acceptable to area residents and property owners. They have requested that existing drainage recommendations be included as part of the neighborhood planning effort for the area. The Task Force can embrace or reject these proposals.
- 9.3. The plan will be action-oriented, and should produce tasks or campaigns that lead directly to the revitalization and/or redevelopment of some or all of the planning area. Recognizing the fact that new development in the area is ongoing, the group will work to produce a plan that incorporates new development and guides future phases of development in the area.

## 10. Planning Model

Thus was laid the groundwork for a new neighborhood plan. The 6th Street Task Force continues to follow a seven step model for planning and implementation:

- 10.1. Vision - Identify the preferred future for your neighborhood.
- 10.2. Reality - Describe the reality of your neighborhood.
- 10.3. Goals & Criteria - Decide where you want to be and the ground rules for getting there.
- 10.4. Strategies - Determine the best way to accomplish goals without compromising criteria.
- 10.5. Projects & Campaigns - Work together on real projects; make things happen.



• Figure 18 - Planning is a continuous process: planning precedes change, and change requires a reevaluation of the situation.



10.6. Evaluation - Review your accomplishments and refer to the Vision. Are things working according to plan?  
Do you need to refine your Vision, Goals, Strategies, etc.?

Every step of the planning and implementation model is important. Every action is a response to a shared Reality regarding the neighborhood. Every project is backed up by mutually preferred Strategies, Goals and Criteria, and Vision. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force uses this model, again and again. Over time, Goals, Strategies, etc. evolve, but the Vision for the neighborhood has not changed.

It was of utmost importance to communicate to the Task Force from the outset that this Plan will represent an ongoing commitment on the part of the City. The planning process will continue throughout the rebirth of the neighborhood. This overarching model has served the group well. Other planning activities are detailed throughout this report.

## 11. Neighborhood Opportunities and Concerns

A survey of neighborhood conditions and a self-assessment were very effective tools for gaining insight about the neighborhood and cultivating relationships within the group. Many issues were widely known, but others emerged through discussion and debate. In the end, these individuals produced a shared Reality for their neighborhood and in the process began to think, communicate and work as partners.

Explanation of Findings - The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force identified assets and issues related to the Built Environment, Social Context, Economic Conditions, and Public Policies. In full, this analysis will be used to understand multi-causal issues that affect the neighborhood. The Task Force believes that in order to get to the bottom of the problem, one must take a comprehensive look at the neighborhood. Likewise, strategies for improvement of the neighborhood (for example, enhancing public safety) may be multi-faceted, involving physical changes (improved lighting on streets and in alleys), along with social or sociopolitical changes (increased policing, formation of neighborhood watch groups, etc.).

### 11.1. Built Environment

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area is fully developed. It consists of a diverse mix of housing, commercial, and industrial properties. These properties are distributed within a compact, walkable, area. The Task Force identified the assets and issues in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood.

#### 11.1.1. Built Environment Assets

11.1.1.1. Close to downtown. The entire planning area is close and accessible to



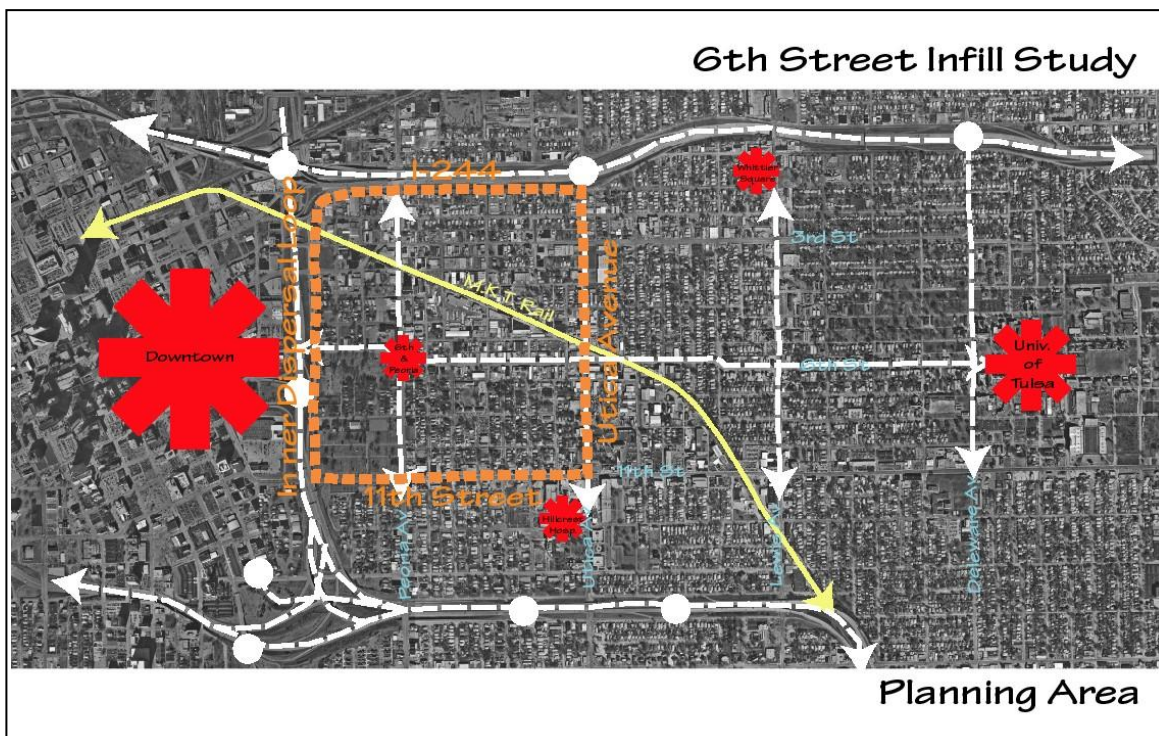
• Figure 19 - The Village at Central Park is a new row-house development at 8th and Peoria.



10.6. Evaluation - Review your accomplishments and refer to the Vision. Are things working according to plan? “edge” between downtown and the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood, several potential gateways exist: 11<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets. There are approximately 50,000 people working in downtown every day. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force perceives an untapped well of potential for housing, goods, and services catering to this population.

11.1.1.2. Important Link. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street corridor is a link between the University of Tulsa and downtown. Though I-244 and 11<sup>th</sup> Street are the popular routes for traveling east and west, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street corridor offers the potential for an attractive urban connection.

11.1.1.3. Close to hospitals. Hillcrest Hospital lies at the southeastern corner of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area. The neighborhood offers unsurpassed access to confluence of medical facilities created by Hillcrest and St. John’s Hospitals along the Utica corridor. This condition presents the potential for development serving an aging population, as well as for development catering to the thousands of medical personnel in the area.



• Figure 20 - 6th Street is an important link between downtown and the University of Tulsa. The Planning Area has convenient access to several highways and abuts major employment centers downtown and at Hillcrest Hospital.



11.1.1.4. Building Activity. In the past few years, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood has enjoyed several million dollars of new construction: The Village at Central Park, the Indian Healthcare Resource Center (a highly-rated medical clinic), Family and Children’s Services offices, Youth Services of Tulsa residential facility, and other high-quality developments. Additionally, several new projects including the restoration of the Tulsa Fire Alarm Building at 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Madison Avenue to serve as a headquarters for the Oklahoma Lung Association are proposed and/or under design. The tide is turning and many have already realized the advantageous of location and affordability that the neighborhood offers. This wave of new development will serve to spur on other opportunities.

11.1.1.5. Excellent Public Transportation Service: there are currently 22 bus routes originating from the downtown hub at 4<sup>th</sup> Street & Denver Avenue (5 minutes from the Planning Area). No fewer than nine of those bus routes (41%) pass through the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning area. Direct access to and from the airport is available. Commuting to and from downtown is extremely convenient. For example: between 7 and 8 a.m., there are five downtown-bound buses passing 6<sup>th</sup> and Peoria with an average wait time of only 11½ minutes between buses.

11.1.1.6. Close to expressways. Utica Avenue, at the northeast corner of the Planning Area, allows two-way access to I-244 (the Crosstown Expressway). In the southwest corner of the Planning Area, access to the Broken Arrow Expressway and U.S. 75 is also close via a slightly circuitous route that leads to 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Elgin Avenue.



• Figure 21 - The Oklahoma Lung Association plans to restore the historic Tulsa Fire Alarm Building. This is one of many examples that show that factors such as history are becoming increasingly important to employers.

11.1.1.7. Close to new areas of revitalization. There are numerous revitalization efforts under way in and near downtown Tulsa. These private and public efforts include nearby areas such as the



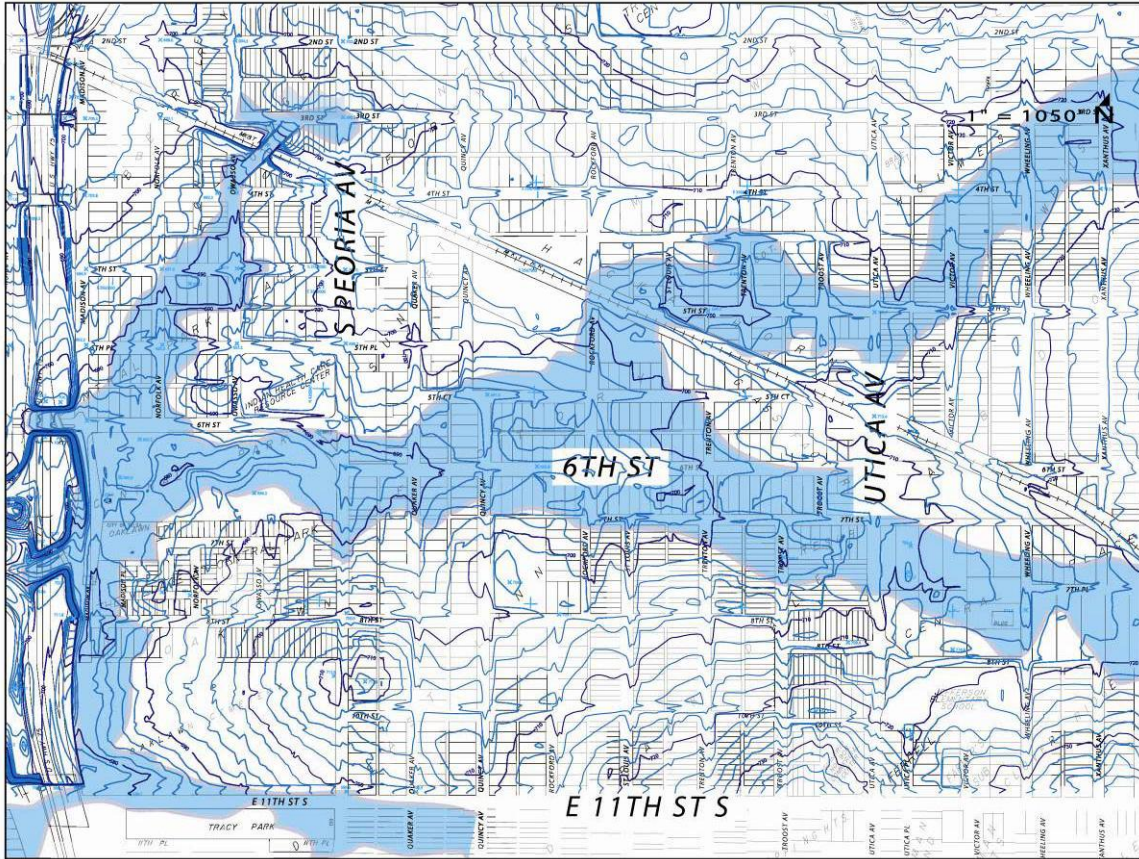


Village at Central Park, Greenwood, Brady Village, the East Village (eastern downtown), and OSU Tulsa. In addition, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood lies in between downtown and developing midtown success stories like Cherry Street and the University of Tulsa. Again, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood finds itself centrally positioned with respect to redevelopment efforts in downtown and midtown.

- 11.1.1.8. Near parks/open space. Centennial Park, Tulsa's second oldest public park (est. 1911) is the centerpiece of 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood. This attractive Park will receive over \$5 Million in improvements over the next two years. Centennial Park offers a stunning view of downtown, an important resource for neighborhood residents, and a relaxing counterpoint to the hustle-bustle of the downtown core. Tracy Park has similar potential.



### 11.1.2. Built Environment Issues



• Figure 22 - Flooding is an overarching impediment to the revitalization of the 6th Street Neighborhood.

11.1.2.1. Flooding. Vast portions of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area are subject to floods. Much of the land along either side of 6<sup>th</sup> Street is located within the 100-year floodplain and certain locations flood frequently. The threat of property damage makes ownership of a home or business in the area more costly, risky, and complicated.

Flooding is an impediment for anybody who owns property in this area, or may be interested in investing in the reinvention of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood.

11.1.2.2. Dilapidated infrastructure - The Task Force believes that the poor condition of the streets, alleys, sidewalks, and public lighting transmits a message to the rest of Tulsa that this neighborhood does not care.



• Figure 23 Aging infrastructure is a key concern.



11.1.2.3. Poor property condition - Throughout the residential and business areas, numerous examples of poorly maintained houses and commercial property contribute to the overall feeling of apathy that one feels in this neighborhood. The age of many of these structures, and certain economic realities perhaps make property maintenance more difficult. However, the Task Force considers this a largely correctable problem and lays much of the responsibility on the shoulders of a population of neglectful absentee landlords and unaccountable tenants.

## 11.2. Social Makeup

The social environment of the 6th Street Neighborhood is as diverse as the physical environment. There are significant populations of white, black, Hispanic, and Native American populations living in this neighborhood. Though low-to-moderate income families have traditionally lived in this neighborhood for decades, this neighborhood is currently in an upswing and new residents are changing the social and economic character of the neighborhood. The Task Force identified the assets and issues related to the social environment of the neighborhood:

### 11.2.1. Social Assets

11.2.1.1. Diversity of population: 2000 Census data confirms what this neighborhood already knows: There is a diverse population in this neighborhood including substantial numbers of white, black, Hispanic, and Native American persons. A broad set of cultures and values enriches the quality of life in the neighborhood.



• Figure 24 - A new community/senior center in Centennial Park will begin construction in early 2005. The facility will, among other things, provide a wonderful gathering place for this diverse community.

11.2.1.2. Community services nearby.

There is a concentration of community services located in this area: Indian Health Resource Center, Family & Children's Services, churches, and other institutions. These services contribute to the health and wellness of the neighborhood. These institutions are an asset in themselves, but the traffic they generate is equally important. These facilities provide a reason for people from all



over Tulsa to visit this neighborhood. This base of employees and volunteers and the steady stream of people and families that visit them are an important resource for a neighborhood trying to grow economically.

### 11.2.2. Social Issues

11.2.2.1. Demoralized property owners - Business and residential property owners have seen a steady decline in the neighborhood for nearly three decades. The new row house development at the Village at Central Park is welcomed but viewed largely as an abnormal departure from the more regular pattern of neglect and decay in the neighborhood.

11.2.2.2. Transient Population - Members of the Task Force point out that Centennial Park is a popular stopover for transients traveling to and from downtown to the closest liquor store at 11<sup>th</sup> and Elgin. The occasional presence of intoxicated persons is a deterrent to Park patrons.

11.2.2.3. Prostitution - Many note that prostitution around 11<sup>th</sup> Street is occurring less frequently, but when it crops up it is perhaps the most noticeable and disruptive problem in the neighborhood. Anecdotal information, seemingly supported by comments of local police officers, indicate that prostitution tends to migrate between various points east and west along 11<sup>th</sup> Street, leading to an unpredictable ebb and flow of unlawful activity.

11.2.2.4. Unsupervised youth problems - Perhaps due to neighborhood vigilance and intervention over the past 15 years, violent, organized gangs do not appear to have a foothold in this area. However, some residents note that there are incidents of burglary, vandalism, and graffiti.

## 11.3. Public Infrastructure

Public infrastructure, though technically a part of the built environment, is discussed as a separate issue in order to highlight the City's responsibility for maintenance and improvements. Due to the age of the neighborhood, extensive repairs are needed to restore streets, alleys, sidewalks, water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure to peak efficiency and encourage economic growth. Nevertheless, the fact that these public facilities are already in place and serviceable gives this neighborhood a distinct advantage over undeveloped land.

### 11.3.1. Public Infrastructure Assets

11.3.1.1. A "grid" street pattern. Though often rejected because of cost in modern development, the elongated block with double-loaded service alleys is highly efficient, predictable, and easy to develop. The web of streets creates redundant paths allowing for smooth, slow movement of traffic. This is highly desirable in a neighborhood that encourages pedestrian activity. Alleys



provide an alternative location for sanitation, utilities, and homeowner parking, keeping the streets uncluttered for the benefit of pedestrians and visitors. This discussion is continued in the Urban Design Plan.

11.3.1.2. Public Schools. Home district schools for this area include some of Tulsa's finest public schools. The new Kendall-Whittier super-elementary is a model for efficient building design and offers year-round education. Wilson Middle School offers foreign language sequences and an International Baccalaureate Middle School program (and with them the potential for preferential admission status to Edison and Booker T. Washington High schools). Central High School, home district school for the area, houses the district's magnet arts program.

11.3.1.3. Transit. Tulsa has not yet began to develop land in a way that capitalizes on the reciprocal benefits of high density development and established mass transit routes. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area is a likely a candidate for high density, transit-oriented development for several reasons: 1) the neighborhood is well served by the existing bus system, 2) the M.K.T. (Katy) railroad corridor, which bisects the Planning Area, is the most likely alignment for a future railway commuter system, and 3) the Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority (MTTA) owns 5¼ acres currently used for bus yards, and there with possible room for a transit-oriented development near 5<sup>th</sup> & Rockford. This property is adjacent to the M.K.T. line and in close proximity to numerous buses that traverse routes on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets. With the MTTA site as a central focus for transit-oriented development, it is possible to redevelop portions of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area in ways that exploit, and thereby sustain, this excellent transit environment.



• Figure 25 - Light-rail is admittedly decades away, but it is not too early to begin planning, increasing density, and preparing.

### 11.3.2. Public Infrastructure Issues

11.3.2.1. Flooding. The Elm Creek Flood Basin has the dubious distinction of being the only large flood basin in Tulsa that has received no remedial attention. Flooding remains a problem along 6<sup>th</sup> Street in the Planning Area and related problems intensify in downstream areas such as the "Gunboat" neighborhood at 11<sup>th</sup> & Elgin. The Planning Area is in need of a flood control plan



that eradicates flooding by means of an imaginative solution that: (a) Recognizes that the neighborhood’s revitalization strategy is focused on repopulation and upgrading of the built environment, and (b) Addresses root causes, not symptoms of flooding.

11.3.2.2. Public Schools. Though the schools that serve the Planning Area are of high quality, the perception that suburban schools are better is a key issue and deterrent for many parents.

11.3.2.3. Civic amenities.

Centennial Park is clearly an asset to the neighborhood. However, in its present state it is due for renovation and improvement. Based on its location alone, Centennial can and should be a source of pride for all Tulsans. It is the park that downtown visitors are most likely to see and should be cultivated into one of Tulsa’s



• Figure 26 Bus shelters are needed in the 6th Street Neighborhood.

premier parks. Increased housing density will intensify the need for high quality public open space and improvements and additions will be needed.

11.3.2.4. Aging Infrastructure. The water, sewer, stormsewer, and street networks date back to the time that this area was initially developed in the 1920s. Streets and sidewalks are in visibly poor condition.

11.3.2.5. Easements. Existing utility easement requirements are generally located in front of buildings. They tend to promote clutter (utility poles, meters, etc.) and are ill suited to urban street design where pedestrian needs are pre-eminent..

11.3.2.6. Bus Shelters - 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets are major transit thoroughfares for buses moving south and east of downtown. In addition, these streets are important links between downtown and the University of Tulsa, and are located within walking distance of relatively high concentrations of multi-family housing near the university. However, there has been no effort to introduce bus shelters along these seemingly important corridors. Well-placed bus shelters can become the foci of pedestrian activity along the 6<sup>th</sup> Street corridor. Good location and proper urban design can



facilitate surveillance by the police and public and these bus shelters can become a refuge from the elements.

## 11.4. Economic Environment

It may surprise some to learn that there are thousands of people working in and around the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood in areas as diverse as aerospace, health care, printing, and woodworking. Many of the Task Force members own businesses and work in the neighborhood:

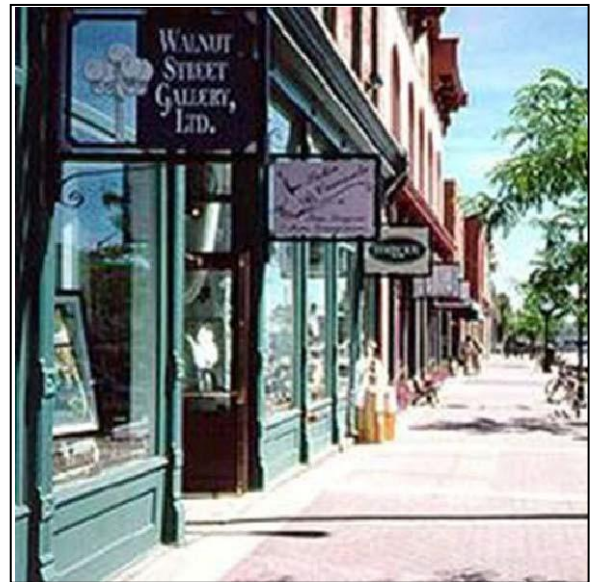
### 11.4.1. Economic Assets

11.4.1.1. Commitment. Several businesses and institutions have been in this area for many years. Surveys indicate that the majority like the location and intend to stay in the area. These include a wildly diverse group: Southwest Aerospace, Indian Health Care Resource Center, Claude Neon Sign, Nanna's House Learning Center, Angel Ornamental Iron, Greg's Auto Detail, ALRAC Electric, and the Eclipse Lounge to name just a few.

11.4.1.2. Jobs. According to a Daytime Employment Report prepared with the assistance of the Metropolitan Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, within one mile of 6<sup>th</sup> and Peoria, there are over 38,000 employees working in nearly 2,000 businesses.

11.4.1.3. Housing. Many types of housing are available in the Planning Area, from very affordable bungalows, to large luxurious row homes.

11.4.1.4. Proximity. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area sits between several nodes of activity and employment: downtown on the western border, the University of Tulsa two miles east, Hillcrest Hospital at the southeast corner, Cherry Street ½ mile south, a new Albertson's grocery and shopping center one mile north.



• Figure 27 This photo captures the essence of the neighborhood the Task Force is creating...walkable...likeable.

11.4.1.5. Cost of land. Real estate is very reasonably priced extremely so considering the amenities and advantages of the area.



11.4.1.6. Opportunities for development. Several large sites may present opportunities for redevelopment.

11.4.1.7. Amenities. Attractive amenities and open space (Centennial Park, Oaklawn Cemetery, and Tracy Park)

## 11.4.2. Economic Issues

11.4.2.1. Below Average Property Values.

11.4.2.2. Insufficient Commercial Development. The Task Force cites a lack of restaurants, convenience services, and retail shopping opportunities.

11.4.2.3. Underutilization. There are several abandoned commercial buildings, many other former retail spaces now serve as warehousing and storage.



• Figure 28 - Unused commercial space.

11.4.2.4. Blight. A large number of structures are in very poor condition.

11.4.2.5. Parking. Many retail buildings are not viable because they lack sufficient parking.

## 11.5. Public Policy Review

Another major discussion area was the Task Force's views about public policy in the area. The overwhelming sentiment was that this neighborhood, despite its successes and great potential, has been largely ignored by the City for decades. Recent investments through the Central Park TIF have redeemed the City, but there are significant opportunities for State and Federal levels in this neighborhood, according to many in the Task Force. The only new investments in this area have been private, or through public private partnerships:

### 11.5.1. Public Policy Assets

11.5.1.1. Rehabilitation Building Code - In November 2001, the City of Tulsa adopted a new building code for existing structures. This code provides a new set of principles for construction. These principles protect health and safety, but allow a great deal of flexibility in the use of cost-efficient materials and methods of adapting older buildings to new uses. The new code is generally more





liberal with allowable building areas, building occupancies, long corridors and vertical openings, exterior firewall ratings, and techniques for providing handicapped accessibility.

11.5.1.2. Fire suppression grant - The City now offers relief for owners installing fire suppression systems.

### 11.5.2. Public Policy Issues

11.5.2.1. Insufficient attention - Portions of the neighborhood are in advanced states of decline. The deterioration of the neighborhood includes public infrastructure as well as private property. The kinds of public infrastructure investments that other parts of Tulsa have seen over the years have not materialized in this neighborhood. This includes major improvements such as flood control projects and minor ones, such as routine maintenance of streets and alleys.

11.5.2.2. Disappointment with conventional development practices - The short-term bias in conventional financing of real estate projects makes building “for the ages” virtually impossible.

Though the neighborhood has a strong desire to see infill development, there is a certain amount of fear and dread that new investment will be the same modular, car-oriented, construction that is typical of suburban development in Tulsa and throughout the country. If this kind of development is allowed in certain key areas, it will quickly blunt efforts to reinvent this neighborhood. The City should assist directly and indirectly to influence private real estate



• Figure 29 - There is a strong desire to see new development in the neighborhood, but this is mixed with apprehension. For certain areas, the Task Force would like to see development that features pedestrian orientation and quality construction. Typical suburban development, in certain areas, could do more harm than good.

investments to produce lasting, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use buildings. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force believes that the success of this strategically located neighborhood is inevitable, but it will require confident investors who are willing and able to invest in the long-term.



## 12. Neighborhood Preference Survey

The report of the Mayor’s Infill Development Task Force recommended the adoption of guidelines regarding the appropriate scale and materials for infill development<sup>21</sup>. Further, the report suggested that mixed-use development is appropriate for portions of the City, but that design guidelines should be developed to ensure that abutting uses remain compatible. And finally, the Infill Task Force also recommended the development of pedestrian oriented commercial areas.

The recommendations of the Mayor’s Infill Development Task Force represent a departure from conventional development practices. Mixed-use development, higher-density development, walkable neighborhoods, and similar types of development are sometimes difficult to communicate when there are so few examples locally. However, using an ‘I know it when I see it’ approach, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force was able to present a clear picture of the desired look and feel that they wanted for their neighborhood.

A slide show based on the Visual Preference Survey<sup>TM</sup> developed by architect Anton Nelessen, was assembled as a method of involving the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force in design and land use planning in the area. The neighborhood preference survey was comprised of various examples of development including single and multi-family housing types, commercial areas, parking, signs, pathways, and other elements of the urban environment. The members of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force were asked to rate the appropriateness of these images for the 6<sup>th</sup> Street area on a scale from (-10) to +10. For development considered inappropriate for the neighborhood, a negative number was assigned. Desirable development was given a positive number. The degree of desirability was also assessed, a +10 being considered the most desirable, with a -10 considered the least appropriate. Indifference towards a certain type of development was given a zero. Survey data was gathered and averaged for each slide. Finally, results were reviewed by the group.



### 12.1. Key Findings of the Neighborhood Preference Survey

Interestingly, very few zeroes were collected, indicating that most people had some opinion, positive or negative, on most kinds of development. Also striking, respondents were very consistent with one another,

- Figure 30 - This building had the lowest overall score in the neighborhood preference survey. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force has plenty of experience with “cheap” apartments. They believe that affordability and good design should not be conflicting virtues.



positive or negative. Few slides showed divided opinion.

Certain identifiable trends emerged. Traditional housing forms tend to score higher than suburban counterparts. The same is true of commercial types, where pedestrian oriented commercial areas rated higher than their suburban car-oriented counterparts. Reaction to townhouses and multi-family housing varied widely. Though the results were somewhat mixed, it appears that smaller scale, high quality, traditional apartment forms, forms that resembled row houses, or buildings resembling traditional 4-unit apartment blocks scored well. Large-scale, 50+, apartment complex developments of any quality construction scored poorly. Large signs and clusters of signs typical of car-oriented development scored poorly. Neon, and indirectly lit shop signs scored higher.

Key findings of the Neighborhood Preference Survey include:

12.1.1. A desire for pedestrian oriented development. The survey showed a strong positive reaction to walkable neighborhoods in general, with streets that featured amenities like brick or patterned concrete sidewalks, shade trees, decorative lighting on streets and building facades, benches, enhanced pedestrian street crossings, and handicapped accessibility. Positive reaction was noted to commercial businesses that were placed near the street, with sidewalk entries, display windows, awnings, signs that project perpendicularly from buildings, and had parking areas in the rear.

12.1.2. A lack of enthusiasm for suburban, car-oriented development. Negative reactions were noted on homes that featured garage doors protruding from the front façade; neighborhoods without sidewalks; sidewalks abutting featureless walls and fences; and sidewalks located between busy streets and large parking lots. Commercial buildings such as strip malls which featured large street setbacks and massive, treeless parking lots were viewed negatively.

12.1.3. A preference for quality of design over density and building type. Average to poor quality new single-family homes scored negatively, while high-quality apartments and row houses of any age scored positively if they featured street orientation, parking areas hidden from the street, and attractive façade articulation.

12.1.4. An acceptance of mixed-use development. Buildings which featured apartments on the upper levels and pedestrian oriented commercial businesses on the ground floor



• Figure 31 - Higher density matched by high quality; these row houses scored extremely well in the neighborhood preference survey.



scored positively.

The Task Force's reaction to apartments was particularly surprising. In 1994, neighborhood residents led an effort to "down-zone" their neighborhood to prevent further encroachment by apartment buildings. Subsequent discussions indicated that infill apartment construction in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood was of poor quality and did not "fit" the surrounding neighborhood. Neighbors pointed to examples of "shoebox"-like apartment buildings, most of which were in need of maintenance. These were six to eight-unit apartment buildings, placed tightly on standard 50 foot by 140 foot lots. These infill apartment buildings were built in the 1970s and 1980s and did not line up with established setbacks; had featureless front facades; and parking lots running along the sides of the buildings. They contrasted sharply with the existing neighborhood buildings, which featured consistent setbacks for apartment buildings and houses, parking and access behind the structures via alleyways, and large porches. Though most of the existing houses and apartment buildings in this neighborhood had no driveway, infill apartment buildings generally made use of installed driveways.

The results of the neighborhood preference survey indicated very little desire to transform their neighborhood into a suburban enclave. Rather, the group preferred traditional urban design patterns which were already featured in their existing neighborhood. There was a degree of acceptance of higher density, so long as the buildings were of high quality, and designed with pedestrian oriented features.

The neighborhood preference survey serves two purposes. First, it provides an assessment of the degree of acceptance of different kinds of development by a broad cross-section of citizens, most of whom can be considered, with respect to design, laypersons. Second, it introduces a visual language that can be broadly understood and useful in gaining an understanding about traditional, pedestrian and transit-oriented development. While maps and model codes may be interesting to planners, they are specialized tools and many people have trouble visualizing the end product. Photographic examples, however, provide a fairly universal means of communication.

Photographs of various, successful developments also helped the Task Force to briefly see past blighted conditions and imagine a bountiful future. For many, it had been difficult to visualize a successful neighborhood when evidence of disinvestment was so apparent. The neighborhood preference



• Figure 32 - The "sideways" orientation and lack of architectural detail on the front (side?) of this apartment building caused it to score very poorly in the neighborhood preference survey.



survey can help residents and owners gain a better understanding of what is possible given the proper amount of time and effort. The neighborhood preference survey can provide a source of inspiration and a window to the future for many involved in the planning process.

### 13. Vision Statement

As mentioned previously, the Vision Statement is the filter through which all plans and projects must pass. The Vision of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force was developed after initial discussions at Task Force meetings and is an answer to the question, “What do you want this neighborhood to be?” The answer is as follows:

*To reinvent the art of city life in Tulsa. To develop from the grass-roots an urban neighborhood that is diverse, intriguing and charming; that adapts to the new realities of the 21st Century and has the character, humanity and convenience of the best, traditional cities; that offers a radical and attractive alternative to suburban living; where it is possible to work, play and shop without recourse to a car; where neighbors work to foster good schools and safe, attractive streets and civic spaces; and where a vibrant, civic environment is matched by enlightened public policies. To do all this before it is too late.’*

### 14. Identified Principles

#### 14.1. Diversity

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood is diverse socially, economically, and in physical function and form. It retains an organic character that predates present-day development, which tends to be formulaic and segregated. This traditional character should be retained. New development should be accessible and responsive to a wide range of needs, needs that tend to evolve over time. This is less a social justice issue and more a marketing strategy. Without cynicism, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force recognizes a growing population that seeks a more diverse, interesting, and by default



• Figure 33 - The traditional character of the neighborhood should be retained.



more egalitarian lifestyle. In a bustling city neighborhood, one-dimensional, “one-size-fits-all” solutions just don’t seem to work.

## **14.2. Urban Design**

The foundation for the revitalization of 6<sup>th</sup> Street should be good urban design. New development should be carefully designed to fit and flow with the surrounding neighborhood. Design forms should respect existing setbacks, pedestrian and vehicular linkages, and materials. So long as the design mitigates undesirable environmental impacts (noise, dust, vibration, etc.), the use of the property is of minor importance.

### **14.2.1. Pedestrian Orientation**

The pedestrian orientation of this neighborhood is one of its chief assets and has been identified as a key contributor to the long term success of this neighborhood. Pedestrian orientation should be protected and incorporated into new developments.

### **14.2.2. Increased Density**

Flood control in the neighborhood will consume large amounts of land. To offset this, some of the remaining land should be redeveloped at higher densities. In certain areas, the density and scale of the neighborhood will increase dramatically. New development should remain connected to the rest of the neighborhood and transitional areas may be needed in order to create continuity.

### **14.2.3. Mixed-use**

Good design practices will reduce or eliminate the need for strict separation of commercial, residential, and industrial land uses. A thorough integration of land uses establishes a new growth dynamic that will ultimately lead to a neighborhood that is able to evolve to suit the needs of those who live in it.

### **14.2.4. Reducing Automobile Dependency**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force is pragmatic in its approach to this principle. In the short run, the Task Force is recommending strategies which efficiently increase the amount of available parking in order to make existing properties commercially viable. But in the long run, the Task Force is recommending changes in density; preservation of pedestrian movement; and retention of a wide array of businesses and industries within the neighborhood. These measures will ensure that the neighborhood continues to offer residents plenty of opportunities to live, work, and play without having to use a car. Ultimately, the same variables that reduce dependence on automobiles will increase the demand for and the viability of mass transit in the neighborhood and throughout the City.



## Urban Design Plan

Enforceable urban design standards should be developed and implemented according to the recommendations of this plan.

### 15. Rationale

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood is unique in Tulsa. The neighborhood has always contained industry and close-by worker housing. Serving both groups, there have always been a large number of commercial, retail, and wholesale operations. The intertwined relationship of business and residential is chaotic when compared to conventional development, but it is still appropriate for this neighborhood.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force would like to retain and enhance this eclectic environment. Walkable neighborhoods have certain physical and contextual traits: they are mixed-use, mixed-income, and pedestrian-oriented. You can find examples of walkable neighborhoods in our nation's small towns and big cities. When functioning properly, these



• Figure 34 - Conventional suburban development is not appropriate for the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood.

neighborhoods are the most desirable in their region, and have very high property values. They are also considered the most interesting, and therefore the neighborhoods that visitors want to see and experience.

Infill development in these kinds of neighborhoods needs to exhibit these characteristics, namely: development at higher densities; a variety of retail, residential, and employment opportunities within a compact area; human-scale building articulation; quality, lasting construction; the ability to easily adapt buildings to new trends and changes; a robust mix of land uses; and a coordinated pattern of vehicular and pedestrian movement that clearly places the pedestrian on equal footing, so to speak, with cars. Unfortunately, today's standard commercial, industrial, and residential archetypes have moved far away from the traditional, walkable neighborhood. Further, current building and land use codes generally discourage, and often outlaw, this kind of development. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force contends that for most parts of the neighborhood, modern, suburban, car-oriented development is too specialized to adapt to change; too disposable to avoid falling into decline; and too car-oriented to function as infill in pedestrian neighborhoods.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force calls for a return to proven traditional methods of building cities. In so doing, the neighborhood will retain and promote a mixed-use character. Infill development opportunities are virtually endless. Developers will enjoy long lost freedoms and efficiencies that will allow them maximum benefit with outstanding local



support and minimal governmental interference. In exchange, the Task Force asks that developers pay attention to detail and consider the distinctly different context and character of urban neighborhoods.

Our City's land use policies are a mismatch for this urban neighborhood. In some instances they have caused harm to the urban fabric, but mostly they simply discourage reinvestment and deprive property owners of some seemingly logical land-use opportunities. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force proposes to dispose of the rules that are not working in their neighborhood. In its place they offer a simple premise...that quality counts. They propose very liberal land use laws and in return they demand high-quality development that integrates seamlessly with historic buildings and values pedestrians over cars.

Already, cooperative public and private investments have produced new landmark buildings. In less than five years, large areas of the neighborhood have been permanently transformed and the scale of new development in the area dwarfs anything that has occurred in the previous 30 years. Many of these new buildings have attempted to design their buildings with a great respect for the established architectural vernacular. But in so doing they have run squarely into conflicting City ordinances. Some issues, like setbacks, were resolved through costly, lengthy, and otherwise counterproductive processes. Other issues such as excessive parking requirements were often not resolved favorably, perhaps to retain some kind of parity with lower-density portions of Tulsa.

At the very least, developers who wish to build at higher intensities with lower parking requirements and with pedestrian orientation, in ways that otherwise "fit" the established vernacular of this urban neighborhood should be allowed to do so unencumbered. Further, a wide variety of commercial, light industrial and residential uses should be permitted in these spaces. First, the Task Force asks that these restrictions be removed from their neighborhood.

Second, the Task Force recognizes that there will be opportunities for development of a conventional, suburban, nature in areas that are targeted for pedestrian oriented development. After all, land and building prices in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood are among the lowest in midtown Tulsa. For reasons of economy and practicality, conventional construction makes sense, and there are a great many places in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area where car-oriented development is encouraged. But along a few critical corridors and in certain small areas, minimum design standards should be applied. These standards will address certain common traits with respect to building setback, building orientation, and use of materials. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and there are a few critical areas in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood where a few inappropriate new buildings would disrupt the entire infill effort. It is absolutely essential that this does not happen.





## 16. Recommended Design Standards

### 16.1. "...To preserve the traditional character ..."



- Figure 35 - The Oklahoma Lung Association will improve the historic Tulsa Fire Alarm Building at 8th Street and Madison Avenue to serve as their new headquarters. In microcosm, this building and the new companion building beside it illustrate the Task Force's desire to appropriately build upon the existing assets in the neighborhood.

Though at first glance the arrangement of this neighborhood seems haphazard, a better understanding of the historical development of the area reveals that this is really not the case. Upon closer examination, one begins to see the reasons why buildings are where they are. Far from a jumble, this area was once a tightly-woven, very logical arrangement of businesses and homes.

You can find trace evidence that there was a time when one could live in this neighborhood without a car: an empty corner grocery; a half covered rail from an old trolley line, an empty streamline art deco office building; a former factory is now an empty warehouse...

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force would like to build upon the historical assets of the neighborhood. This includes many significant but underutilized structures, as well as a general arrangement of the neighborhood. There will be a great number of opportunities to enhance this character with infill buildings and public improvements.



### 16.2. General Urban Design Recommendations

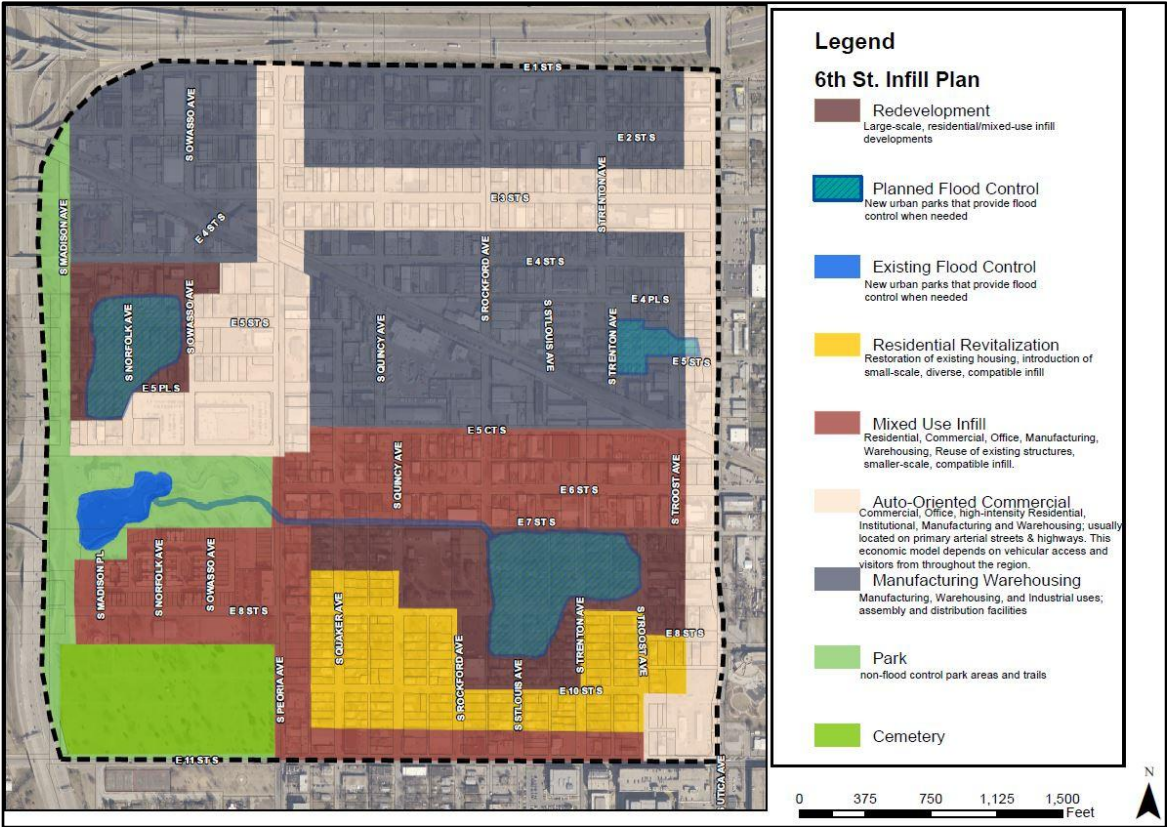


Figure 36 – Larger version of plan included at the end of this document

Detailed recommendations for subareas within the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area are included within this section. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force has also created a broader set of general recommendations for the neighborhood as a whole.

- 16.2.1. Urban Setting - The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area is an urban neighborhood. Suburban development patterns are not appropriate in many areas and corridors.
- 16.2.2. Urban Character - Portions of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area are interesting, attractive, and exhibit a well-defined traditional urban character. These pieces are considered the neighborhood’s greatest assets. Adaptation and reuse of significant structures in these areas is always the first choice for development. New infill development should strive to complement and enhance this existing urban fabric.



16.2.3. Pedestrian orientation - With 6<sup>th</sup> and Peoria as an epicenter, arterial streets should be redesigned to encourage pedestrian activity through the use of traffic calming techniques, street crossing points, and streetscape amenities such as wide sidewalks, trees, and benches. Private development can enhance pedestrian orientation through building placement and street level retail building design (display windows, pedestrian oriented signage, canopies, awnings, etc.).

16.2.4. Parking philosophy - An area-wide parking strategy should at its core reflect the following understanding: 1) Additional off-street parking will facilitate reuse of existing structures, and 2) On-

street parking is beneficial for businesses, people in cars, and pedestrians (through indirect traffic calming effects). Generally, off-street parking areas should be located behind principal structures. Good design (access, landscaping, screening, setbacks, etc.) can provide an adequate buffer between commercial and abutting residential properties. Shared parking in a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use area is an inherent design benefit. Commercial areas, residential developments, churches, and institutions, should work together to provide maximum efficiency and minimum amounts of land. Formal association among property owners is encouraged so that revenue and incentives can be focused on creating

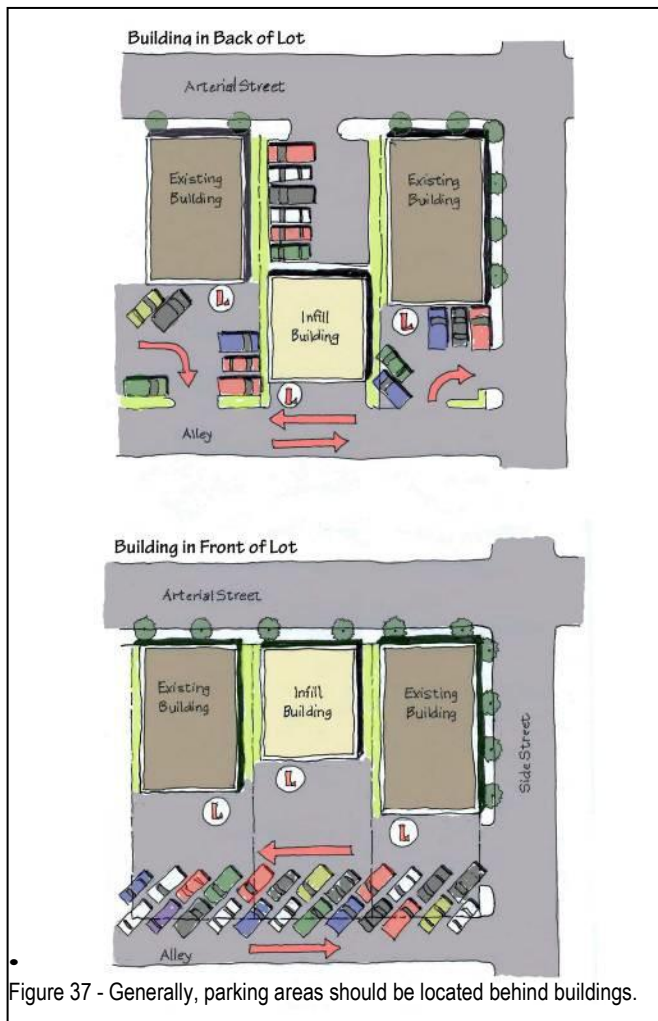


Figure 37 - Generally, parking areas should be located behind buildings.



structured parking. There should be no reduction in required parking as specified in the Tulsa Zoning Code, unless a variance is granted by the Board of Adjustment, until such time as parking facilities or enhanced public transportation are available, or new incentives are included in the Tulsa Zoning Code.

16.2.5. Mixed-use Development - The development pattern in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood is diverse (some might say jumbled) by today's development standards. Residential, commercial, and industrial land uses are close to one another or sometimes interspersed. This is an old, working-class neighborhood where historically many people walked to work and took care of all of their daily needs on foot or by using the trolley. The people in this area were dependent upon one another and they knew each other well. This traditional lifestyle, a village within a city, is still a viable alternative and should be an option for the citizens of Tulsa.

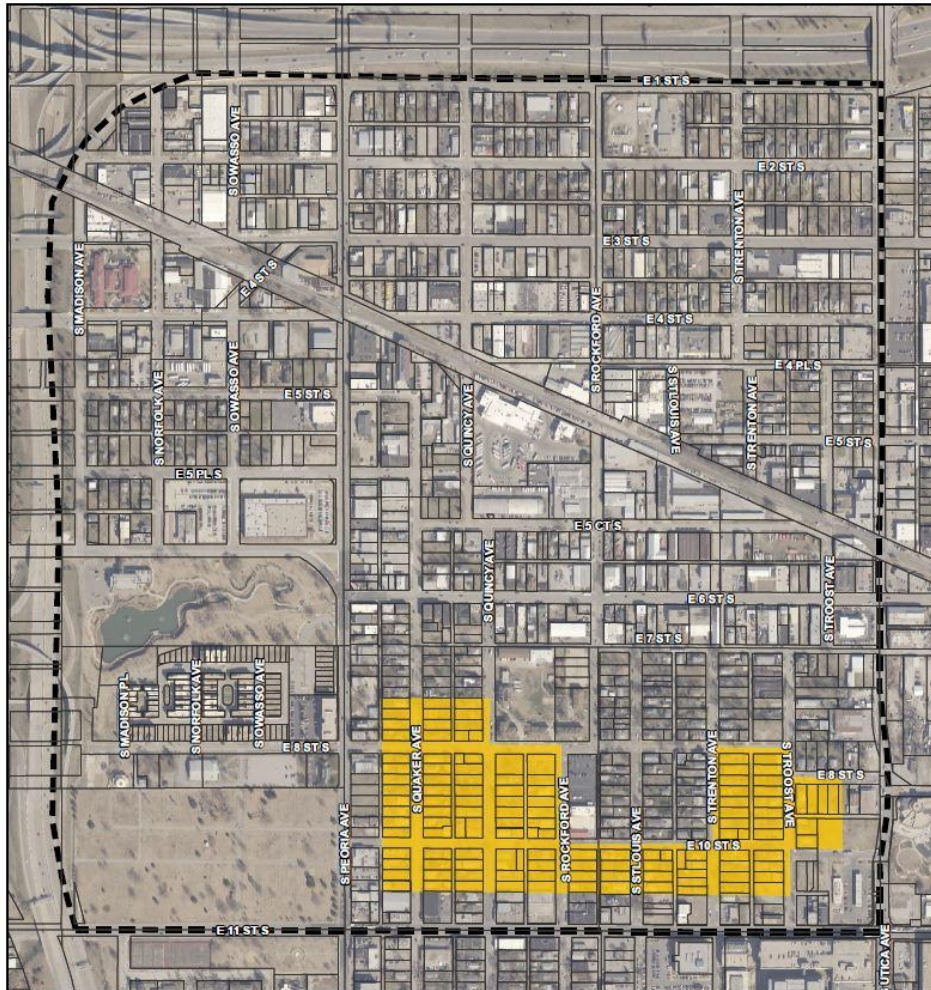
### **16.3. Recommendations for Subareas**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood has distinct areas with unique considerations. Each of the following "Subareas" contains area-specific recommendations for the design of this neighborhood. It is hereby recommended that the existing "Industrial" Special District be replaced by a new "6<sup>th</sup> Street (Pearl) Plan" Special District with boundaries of I-244 on the north, 11<sup>th</sup> Street on the south, the inner dispersal loop on the west, and Utica Avenue on the east. The following subarea goals and objectives shall serve as design guidelines for this new Special District.

These design guidelines shall guide public and private development, including but not limited to Planned Unit Developments, in their respective subareas. In the event that further zoning changes, ordinances, and policy changes are needed to ensure that these recommendations are followed; these guidelines should serve as the principal design resource for their development.



## 16.4. Residential Revitalization Subarea



This is a small portion of the neighborhood located between 7<sup>th</sup> Street and 11<sup>th</sup>, also between Peoria and Rockford. It is comprised of bungalow houses built in the early 1900's and is currently one of the oldest neighborhoods in Tulsa. Restorations of existing bungalow housing and small scale, single-lot, multifamily units are appropriate. Compatibility between existing and infill housing can be achieved by a small number of design requirements that are intended to preserve the existing form, scale, rhythm, and proportion of this residential enclave.

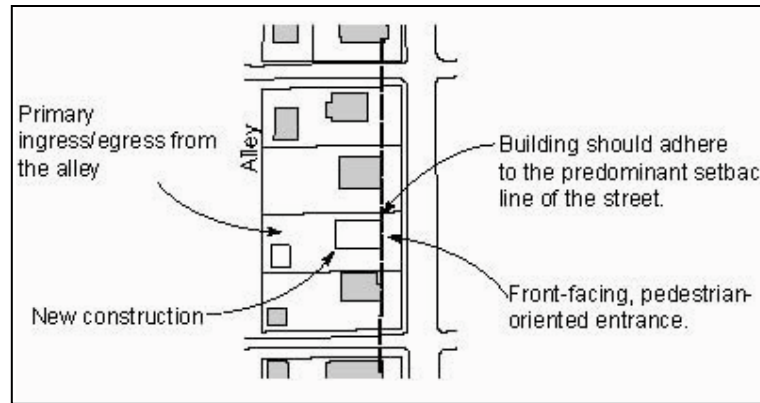
### 16.4.1.1. Goals for Residential Revitalization Subarea:

- 16.4.1.1.1. Retain a small enclave of traditional bungalow housing and small, compatible residential buildings.
- 16.4.1.1.2. Preserve the historical character of the neighborhood.
- 16.4.1.1.3. Encourage new infill development that allows for increased density while respecting the continuity and context of the existing neighborhood.
- 16.4.1.1.4. Retain a diversity of the housing stock in the neighborhood.
- 16.4.1.1.5. Create, in the short term, “fixer-upper” opportunities for those who want to purchase housing at reasonable prices and move into this neighborhood.



### 16.4.1.2. Objectives for Residential Revitalization Subarea:

- 16.4.1.2.1. Create simple guidelines for infill development that require preservation of established setback lines, street-facing and pedestrian-oriented entrances and building facades, and use of alleyways for vehicular services and ingress/egress.



• Figure 39 - A few straightforward rules regarding setbacks, building orientation, and vehicular access are recommended. The goal is not to *duplicate* the existing architecture; rather, these rules will provide a simple building vernacular that will allow new infill development of various styles and densities to harmonize with the existing neighborhood.



• Figure 38 - The apartment building on the left projects approximately fifteen feet into the front yard, lacks any articulation on the front façade, features a “sideways” orientation and a driveway onto the street. The apartment building on the right aligns with the houses on either side, features an entrance on the front façade and parking behind the structure. This building demonstrates that higher density development can harmonize with the surrounding neighborhood if it is designed to do so.



## 16.5. Mixed Use Infill Subarea



The Task Force has identified several goals for the restoration and enhancement of private property along key arterial corridors. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Peoria Avenue corridors provide opportunities for small-scale infill development. It is recommended that new development should utilize existing lots, streets, and alleyways and should also complement the existing architecture.

### 16.5.1.1. Goals for Mixed Use Infill Subarea:

- 16.5.1.1.1. To create a stable neighborhood with rising property values.
- 16.5.1.1.2. Allow for a thriving neighborhood commercial area.
- 16.5.1.1.3. Removal of blight through restoration or replacement.
- 16.5.1.1.4. Provide adequate parking for commercial businesses.
- 16.5.1.1.5. Land use policies that support traditional forms of development.
- 16.5.1.1.6. Make the process of restoring older buildings sensible and economically competitive.



16.5.1.2. Objectives for Mixed Use Infill Subarea:



- 16.5.1.2.1. Encourage two to four story infill development.
- 16.5.1.2.2. Require infill development that will complement the existing, urban vernacular in the area.
- 16.5.1.2.3. Retain the established street wall.
- 16.5.1.2.4. Require substantial buffers between higher density and lower density development.
- 16.5.1.2.5. Work with City of Tulsa to allow on-street parking on both sides of arterial corridors.
- 16.5.1.2.6. Work with City of Tulsa and other partners to repair sidewalks.
- 16.5.1.2.7. Work with City of Tulsa and other partners to create attractive landscaping: use trees that are appropriate in urban environments,
- 16.5.1.2.8. Work with City of Tulsa and other partners to install pedestrian-scale street-lighting, furniture, signage, awnings, etc.
- 16.5.1.2.9. Work with AEP/PSO and the City of Tulsa to remove electricity/phone poles along arterial corridors: bury or relocate to rear of properties.

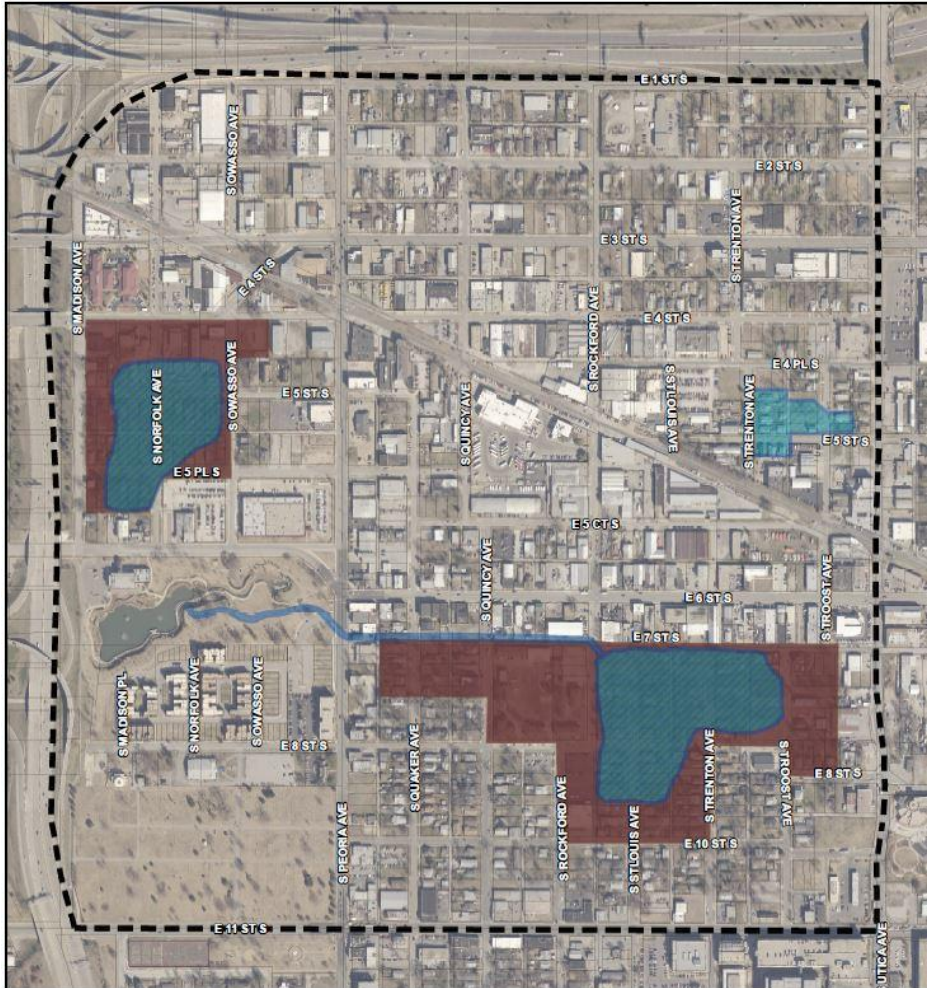




•Figure 40 – Commercial areas should promote pedestrian activity.



## 16.6. Redevelopment Subareas



Around the new flood control parks and in the vicinity of the Metropolitan Tulsa Transit “bus barn” area at 5<sup>th</sup> Place and Quincy Avenue, there are extraordinary opportunities for higher density redevelopment. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force would like to see high-quality new development successfully integrated into this neighborhood.

### 16.6.1.1. Goals for Redevelopment Subareas

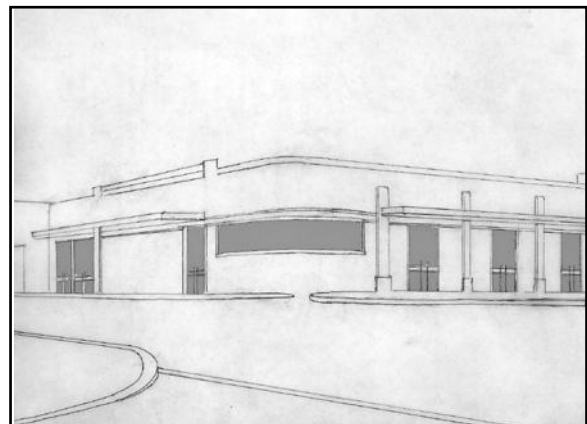
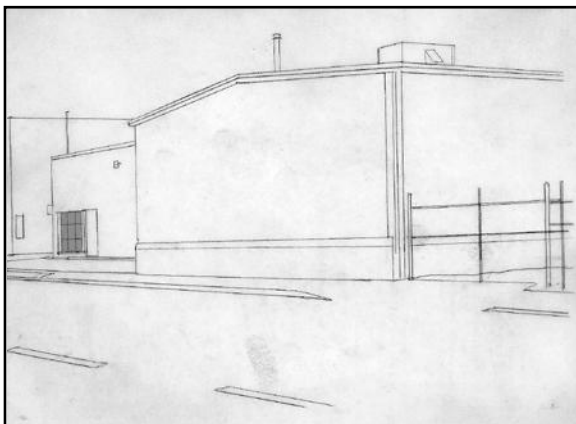
To create high-density housing and mixed use development that complements and enhances the existing neighborhood. Walkable neighborhoods have certain physical and contextual traits. Infill development in these kinds of neighborhoods needs to reflect these traits.

### 16.6.1.2. Objectives for Redevelopment Subareas

16.6.1.2.1. Massing: up to four stories/50 feet. Human scale proportions shall be maintained



- 16.6.1.2.2. Building articulation: quality, lasting construction; a robust mix of land uses; and a coordinated pattern of vehicular and pedestrian movement that clearly places the pedestrian on equal footing, so to speak, with cars.
- 16.6.1.2.3. Use of elements that reinforce human scale: When used thoughtfully, elements such as storefront windows, sign bands, cornice lines, lighting, and awnings, can work together to produce human-scale amenities.
- 16.6.1.2.4. Access: Pedestrian access at the front of the building, facing the street. Vehicular access and parking in the rear. Arcades, landscaped walks, courtyards, etc. to bring people from parking areas to front.
- 16.6.1.2.5. Fenestration: Portrait windows (except for storefronts); contextual with height, rhythm, patterns, materials of adjacent buildings.
- 16.6.1.2.6. Materials: Brick (masonry) fronted to match existing fabric. Other materials above street level (above sign band/cornice line) are permitted: stucco, EIFS. Metal buildings are not permitted.
- 16.6.1.2.7. Building setbacks: Zero setback in most areas. Up to 10 foot setback may be appropriate to allow for consistency with flanking buildings, wider sidewalks, cafes, street vending, etc. Off-street parking behind the sidewalk is not permitted.
- 16.6.1.2.8. Screening: Landscaping and fencing shall be used to screen dumpsters, loading docks, and off-street parking areas from abutting residential areas.



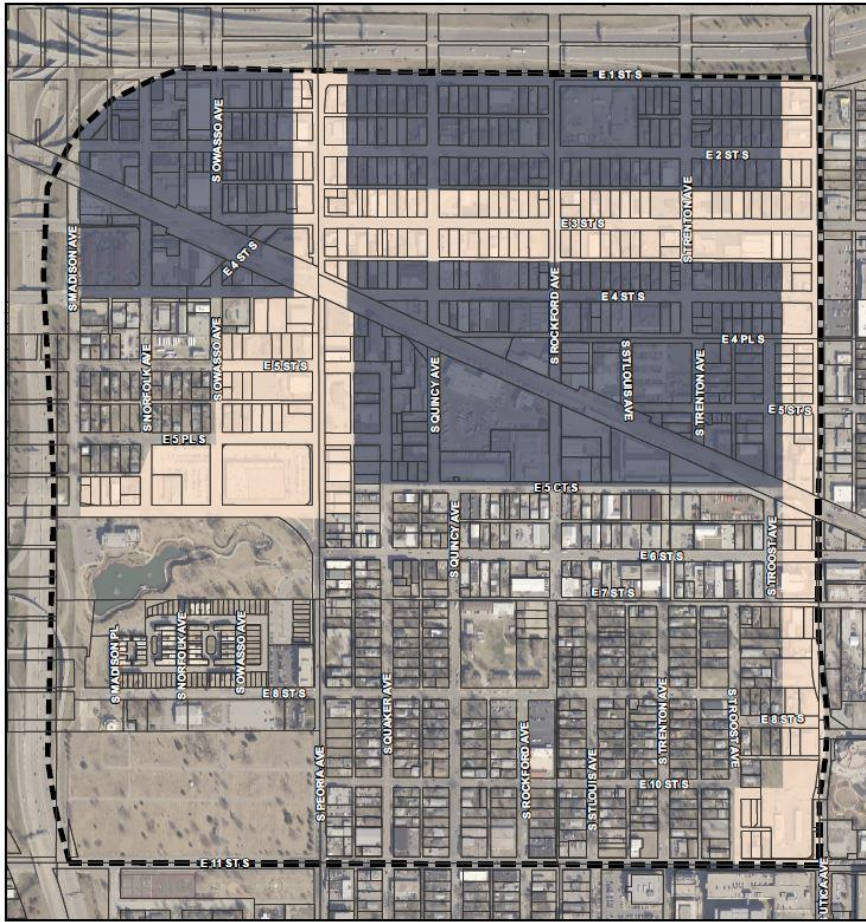
• Figure 41 - The building on the left is placed close to the street, which is desirable. However, it lacks a front entrance, windows, or other features that could lend it a sense of scale and pedestrian orientation. The building on the right also sits near the street, and it features awnings, picture windows, and a pedestrian entrance (several, in fact) onto the adjacent sidewalk.



16.6.1.2.9. Parking: Off-street parking to be located behind structures. The City should become an active partner in the development of well-designed parking areas. Shared off-street parking and adjacent on-street parking can be counted to meet parking requirements of the zoning code.



## 16.7. Manufacturing Warehousing and Auto-Oriented Commercial Subareas



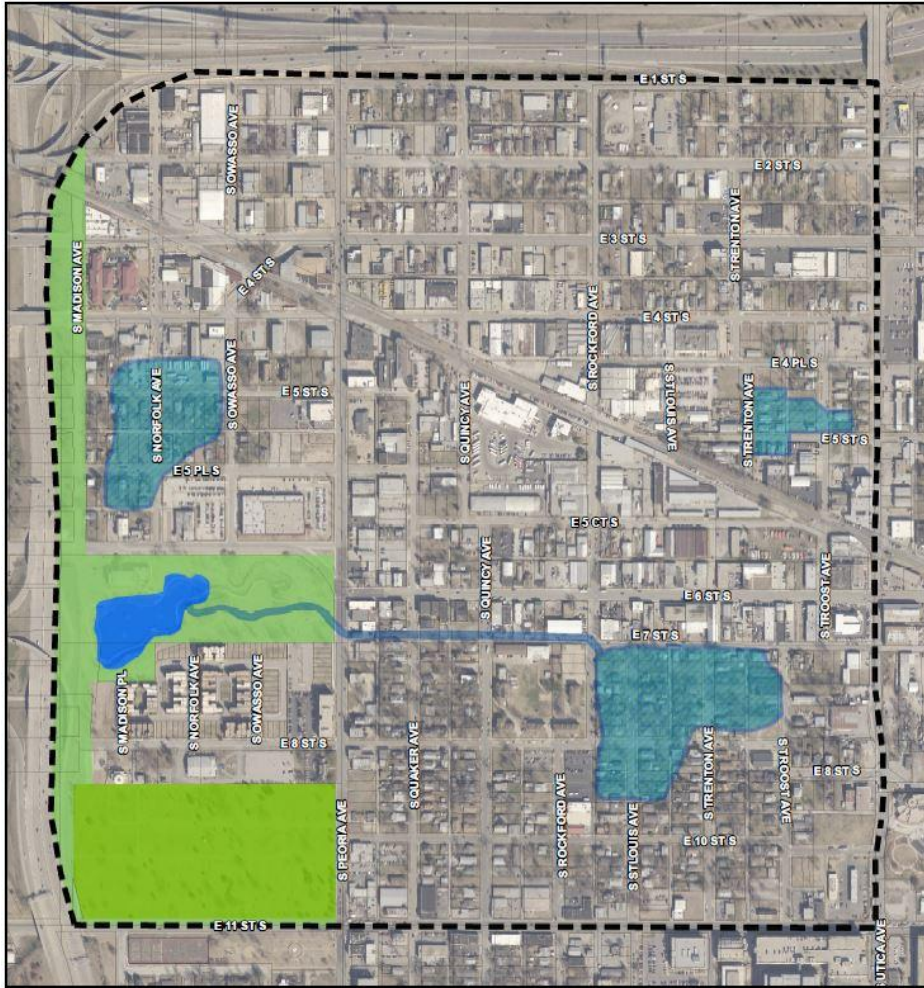
From small workshops to medium-sized manufacturing operations, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood has dozens of business providing employment to thousands of Tulsans. Outside of the proposed infill corridors along 6<sup>th</sup> Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Street, and Peoria Avenue, the Task Force would like standards for design and development to remain unchanged. Business owners would be encouraged to upgrade facilities in step with other neighborhood improvements, but special design guidelines are only recommended for those key corridors where the need for high quality, appropriately designed, infill development is most critical.

The existing industrial businesses operating in this area are environmentally unobtrusive: they are fairly quiet; they do not create smoke and odors, and conduct business during the day and sit quietly at night.

These businesses offer more positive than negative effects on the human and social environment in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood. In fact, the only criticism against industry, warehousing, etc., is that they often develop their property in ways that are less inviting, less attractive, and often out-of-step with most of the buildings in the neighborhood. Fortunately, most of this can be remedied with modest efforts over time: Razor wire can be replaced with iron fencing; attractive facades can be added to utilitarian metal buildings.



## 16.8. Design of Public Space



Efficiently use public space to address multiple concerns:

- 1) create attractive open space as a counterbalance to new high density development in the area,
- 2) address flood control issues

## 16.9. Street Alignment and Streetscaping

The 6<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood is laid out on a grid pattern, with several local streets feeding into the arterial streets of 11<sup>th</sup> Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Utica Avenue, and Peoria Avenue. The existing grid pattern efficiently promotes accessibility for both vehicles and pedestrians via many routes. As important, the rectangular blocks circumscribed by this grid provide an efficient starting point for the restoration and rebuilding of this neighborhood.

Some changes to the grid may be required to accommodate parks, ponds, and paths along with institutional, multifamily and commercial uses. This will involve the closing of some streets and the introduction of a few new curvilinear streets, but it is hoped that these changes will be minimal. The streets should retain the characteristics of a traditional urban neighborhood in certain subareas. However, street closures may be considered for larger-scale developments or projects that require controlled access, efficient utilization of tracts created by the creation of detention ponds, and where the impact of street closure will be minimal.



The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force also recommends that future street improvements should favor the enhancement of pedestrian activity over increased vehicular speed and capacity. Dramatic increases in vehicular traffic speed and capacity along the 6<sup>th</sup> Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Street, and Peoria Avenue corridors could easily damage efforts to retain this neighborhood's pedestrian-friendly characteristics.

## 16.9.1. Streets and Streetscaping

### 16.9.1.1. Goals for Streets and Streetscaping

16.9.1.1.1. Whenever and wherever possible, the existing grid network of streets and sidewalks should be retained. However, street closures may be considered for larger-scale developments or projects that require controlled access, creation of detention ponds, or where the impact of a street closure is minimal.

16.9.1.1.2. Streetscaping in the 6th Street Neighborhood should encourage and enhance pedestrian activity and allow slow, constant, vehicular access throughout the neighborhood.

### 16.9.1.2. Objectives for Streetscaping

Work with the City of Tulsa and other development partners to define a standard for streetscaping that:

16.9.1.2.1. Provides pedestrian amenities: wide sidewalks, shade, bus shelters, benches, and trash receptacles.

16.9.1.2.2. Allows on-street parking wherever possible as the principle means of traffic-calming, and a means of increasing access to businesses along the corridor.



• Figure 42 - Three recently restored businesses on Peoria Avenue. Streetscaping would greatly enhance their function and appearance.



16.9.1.2.3. Works with businesses to enhance visibility and access. Placement of trees, curb cuts, and streetscape features should be tailored to maximize visibility and access to existing businesses.





## 16.9.2. Alleys

Alleys provide an efficient way to manage access to private property. This becomes very important when the Vision for the neighborhood involves increased density. In dense areas with few alleys like New York City, the competition for access to properties is fierce. Parked cars, street sweepers, pedestrians, street trees, delivery trucks, mail carriers, children playing, utility poles and repair trucks, trash and trash trucks, must all share the street and sidewalk in front of buildings.

Alleys introduce secondary pathways through neighborhoods. Parking, and many services and utilities can be oriented towards the rear of properties, leaving the streets more hospitable for pedestrians as well as residents and visitors alike. Neighborhoods with alleys don't need to have cars and trucks backing over sidewalks, or street trees "topped" to clear utility wires. Alleys are critical in the creation of secondary dwellings at the rear of properties. This increases housing options and provides for true mixed-income neighborhoods, and provides housing options for extended family.

### 16.9.2.1. Goals for Alleys

- 16.9.2.1.1. Whenever and wherever possible, existing alleys should be retained and alleys are strongly encouraged in new development.
- 16.9.2.1.2. Alleys should be clean, well-lit, and properly maintained so as to discourage dumping, or other unlawful use.



• Figure 43 - When properly lit and maintained, alleys provide an efficient secondary path for traffic, maintenance, and infrastructure. Retaining this path is essential where higher density development is envisioned.

### 16.9.2.2. Objectives for Alleys

Work with the City of Tulsa and other partners to define a new standard for the development and use of alleys;

- 16.9.2.2.1. Alleys should be retained and used as secondary pathways through the neighborhood;
- 16.9.2.2.2. Overhead power lines should be located in alleys;
- 16.9.2.2.3. Use of alleys (as opposed to front yards) for gas, water, and other utilities is encouraged;
- 16.9.2.2.4. Trash removal should be located in alleys.



## **16.10. Flood Control and Redevelopment**

### **16.10.1. The Flooding Problem**

Large, fully developed areas located within the Elm Creek Basin are subject to flooding. The Elm Creek Stormwater Master Plan indicates that in a 100-year flood event, hundreds of properties would be threatened by damaging floods. The flood area is vast, including housing, commercial, and industrial property ranging from near Whittier Square at Admiral Place and Lewis Avenue, to 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Peoria Avenue, to the Gunboat Neighborhood at 11<sup>th</sup> Street and Elgin Avenue, and to Veterans Park Area at 18<sup>th</sup> Street and Boulder Avenue. The possibility of flooding in this area presents continuous threat to the health, safety, and property of a large number of Tulsans.

#### **16.10.1.1. Problems with the Existing Elm Creek Master Drainage Plan**

At the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Effort, the Task Force studied the existing Elm Creek Master Drainage Plan. Their conclusion was that the proposal for flood control would resolve the problem, but largely at the expense of the people that live and play in the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood.

The original plan did not have the support of the Parks Board or Parks Department, or neighborhood because it proposed a radical excavation of the entire Centennial Park; it essentially replaced the Park with a detention pond. The neighborhood was left with several bad options: a) lose the Park and lose the neighborhood's biggest amenity, b) do nothing and let flooding continue to serve as a barrier to development, b) do nothing and, after some unfortunate event like a catastrophic flood, let the City build it in spite of objections. They sought another solution, and after much hard work and compromise, they found a good one.

#### **16.10.1.2. Developing Alternatives**

A Second Attempt was made in 1998. The City of Tulsa's Public Works Department authorized the development of alternative Plan. A private hydrology consultant team, with assistance from the Urban Development Department drafted an alternative scenario that avoided any use of Centennial Park. In this proposal three sites were proposed: 1) a residential area between Madison Avenue and Owasso Avenue, between 5<sup>th</sup> Street and 6<sup>th</sup> street, 2) a residential area between Rockford Avenue and Troost Avenue, between 7<sup>th</sup> Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Street, and 3) a residential area between Trenton Avenue and Troost Avenue, between 4<sup>th</sup> Street and the MKT railroad. However, this alternative plan did not adequately resolve flooding and presented even more challenges:



- 16.10.1.2.1. Residual Flooding on 6th Street would leave a huge development barrier in the neighborhood business district. Some in the Task Force have suggested elevating structures or first floor elevations in this area, however, this unusual proposal was eventually ruled out because it restricted the reuse of existing buildings. Eventually, the Task Force decided that more flood control was needed and that the use of Centennial Park, to a degree, was unavoidable.
- 16.10.1.2.2. Removing large residential areas, for obvious reasons, made the repopulation of the 6th Street Neighborhood more difficult. An ideal flood control solution should accommodate the Task Force's goal of neighborhood repopulation.

In 2000, the 6th Street Task Force began to work directly with the Public Works Department to revise the 1998 proposal. They discovered a solution that would bring flooding under control and meet their objective of repopulation of the neighborhood *without* losing the Park.

### 16.10.1.3. Revised Elm Creek Master Drainage Plan

A new Master Drainage Plan has been developed with the following key recommendations:

- 16.10.1.3.1. Two large sites should serve as flood-controls basins. Both are situated in areas recommended as detention sites in a hydrological analysis by consultants for the Elm Creek Drainage basin in 1998,
- 16.10.1.3.2. Detention areas are to be constructed as attractive urban parks,
- 16.10.1.3.3. Reclaimed land around the parks should be used for high-density, high-quality, redevelopment,
- 16.10.1.3.4. Detention in Centennial Park is permitted; but the size of the detention area should be scaled down in order to preserve a large portion of the park for other recreational uses,
- 16.10.1.3.5. The basin in Centennial Park should be heavily landscaped and natural. When the landscaping has matured, it should be unidentifiable as a detention pond to the untrained eye. Centennial Park should be one of Tulsa's most attractive parks,
- 16.10.1.3.6. A conveyance needed between the eastern detention pond and the Centennial Park detention pond should be developed as an urban amenity, as either a canal or linear park,
- 16.10.1.3.7. A third area is recommended for acquisition in order to clear a flood area and allow for expansion of industrial uses.



With patient support from the City's Public Works and Development Department and skilled assistance from stormwater design consultants Ron Flanagan and Mark Swift, the Task Force was able to move forward on a detailed design that is a first-of-its-kind effort. This redesign provides detention in a way that not only gives needed flood control, but actually serves as a catalyst for the reinvention of the neighborhood.

The 6th Street Task Force has worked closely with the City on a design that introduces some flood control into Centennial Park. This plan would introduce approximately 52 acre-feet of flood storage in the western edge of the park. The need to place a pond in the west end of the park will require the replacement of an aging community center built in 1962. Additionally, the park improvements will feature a permanent lake, a channel, fountains, and waterfalls.

#### 16.10.1.4. Implementation of the Elm Creek Stormwater Master Plan

The Task Force's recommendations for urban parks and high-density redevelopment around these parks will be



• Figure 44 - The first phase of the implementation of the Elm Creek Master Drainage Plan is under construction at Centennial Park at 6th St. and Peoria Ave. This facility is located between several infill development projects. When completed, it will retain its function as a park and provide much needed flood control. The 6th Street Infill Plan calls for the construction of two other similar facilities.



reflected in a forthcoming amendment to the Elm Creek Stormwater Master Plan, which is currently under review by City Council.

More exciting, however, is the fact that the Task Force has worked to secure \$5 Million for implementation of the first phase of the Plan. At this time, design for the new Centennial Park Senior and Community Center is complete and construction of a new, 12,800 square foot facility is set to begin in early 2005. This \$2.9 Million facility will feature classrooms and exercise facilities, a large dance hall, banquet facilities, and a large veranda overlooking the new lake.

Design of the Centennial Park Lake is also complete and should begin in early 2005. Special care has been taken in order to preserve large stands of mature trees. The lake will feature natural rock retaining walls, integrated paths and trails, appropriate landscaping.

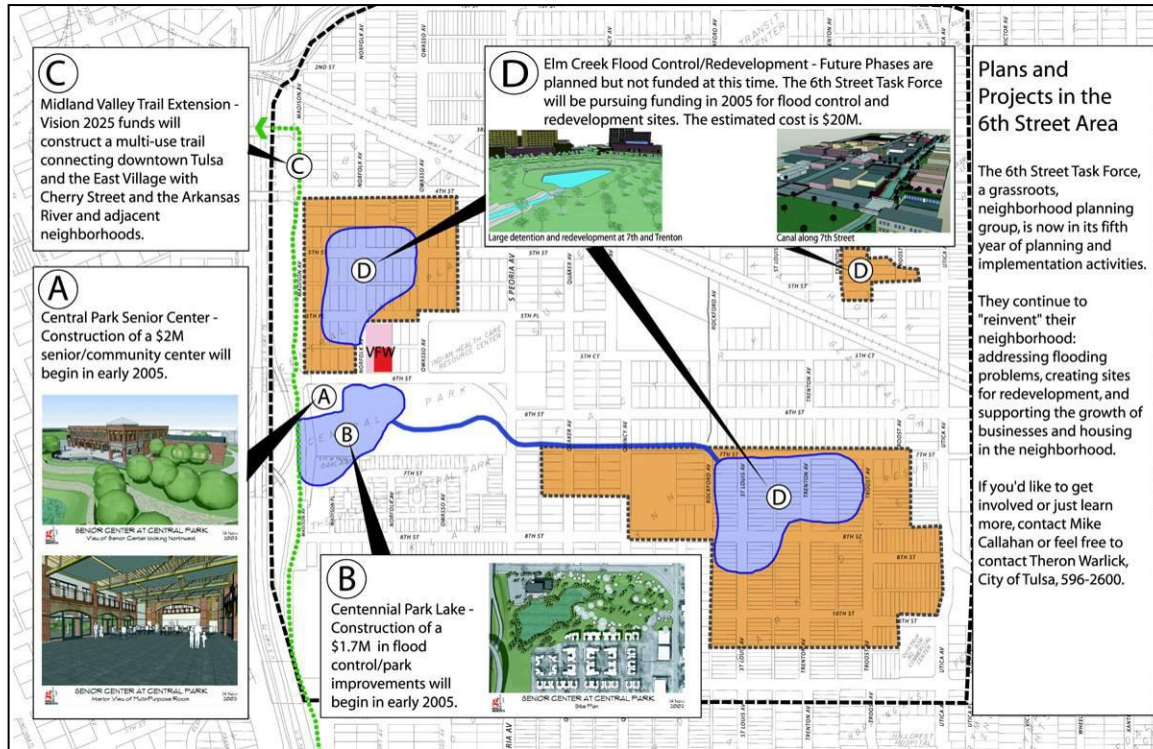
Benefits of this project:

- 16.10.1.4.1. High visibility from the Inner Dispersal Loop and Peoria,
- 16.10.1.4.2. Conversion of substandard rental housing to market rate, higher density, row housing,
- 16.10.1.4.3. Addresses serious flood control issues,
- 16.10.1.4.4. Bolsters the northward march of revitalization up Peoria: Maple Ridge, Cherry Street, Tracy Park, The Village at Central Park, and Pine and Peoria.
- 16.10.1.4.5. Repopulates a neighborhood with great potential,
- 16.10.1.4.6. Reduces flooding.
- 16.10.1.4.7. Complements other downtown development efforts: East Village area, Brady Village, OSU Tulsa, and Convention and Tourism proposal,
- 16.10.1.4.8. Provides another opportunity for asserting Tulsa's preeminence in flood control design,



## Implementation

The Sixth Street Task Force understands that the creation of this plan is only a first step. Success will depend on their ability to remain active and unified as they push to see that the goals and recommendations of this plan are completed. The sixth Street task force must remain willing to undertake various initiatives ranging from neighborhood cleanups to



• Figure 45 - The 6th Street Task Force will need to stick together and work very hard in order to ensure that flood-control and redevelopment projects are fully implemented.

capital projects to local festivals, and more in order to achieve the restoration of the neighborhood.

With regard to capital projects, the first step is to ensure that the proposed project has been formally recognized as a public need. This can be accomplished by placing the project on the City's capital improvements program list (CIP). The CIP includes a long list of prioritized projects that have been reviewed and endorsed by the city Council. The CIP list is constantly changing as high-priority projects are completed and new projects are added. While most of the recommended projects in this plan are already included on the CIP, this Sixth Street Task Force will need to continually monitor the list to ensure that all projects are recognized and appropriately prioritized. The task force should can consider new projects and work with city employees and the District 4 city councilor to see that these projects are added and prioritized.

### 16.11. Projects

Capital improvements that have already been included in the City of Tulsa's Capital Improvements Program are:



16.11.1. **Implementation of the Elm Creek Master drainage plan.** This is by far the largest project on the list for this neighborhood in terms of cost and potential impact. Estimated cost for this project, which includes two new flood control parks and a canal, exceeds \$15 million.



16.11.2. **6th Street redevelopment.** Though redevelopment around the flood control parks and canal should be considered an integral part of the improvements process, redevelopment is listed separately in the capital improvements program. Cost for acquisition of property for higher density redevelopment around the new flood control parks is estimated to cost \$8 million.

• Figure 46 - At 7<sup>th</sup> and Rockford looking southeast. New 10-acre park/flood control pond at 10th and Troost. High-density redevelopment is proposed for the area surrounding this facility.

16.11.3. **Streetscaping on 6<sup>th</sup> Street.** This project is included on the capital improvements program as a portion of a much larger streetscaping project that begins Inner Dispersal Loop and continues to Columbia Avenue at the University of Tulsa. Cost estimate for this project is \$2 million.



• Figure 47 - Streetscaping along 6th Street.

An additional project has been proposed in the Central Park Tax Increment District:

16.11.4. **Intersection improvements at 6th and Peoria and 11<sup>th</sup> and Peoria.** When the Central Park tax increment plan was developed in 1994, the improvements proposed at 6th and Peoria and 11th and Peoria were conceived as car-oriented solutions that would enhance an increase the volume and speed of car traffic through these intersections. Additional study during 6th Street planning process has produced a somewhat modified recommendation. In keeping with a series of recommendations that are designed to enhance pedestrian oriented activity, the intersection improvements at 6th and Peoria and 11th and Peoria should enhance the ability of pedestrians to cross the street. Pedestrian crosswalks and traffic calming techniques can be incorporated into a streetscaping design that will improve pedestrian movement that these locations. Initial cost estimates were approximately \$500,000 per



intersection, however, the recommended pedestrian improvements will not require the acquisition of private property and realignment of streets and therefore costs may be substantially less.

Two projects in the 6th Street planning area were funded by the Vision 2025 bond issue in 2003. The 6th Street Task Force should support and facilitate the following:

16.11.5. **Route 66 Improvements.** In the Vision 2025 funding package approximately \$11 million was approved by the voters of Tulsa County for the construction of improvements along Route 66. Route 66 runs along 11th Street within the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Planning Area. At this time, a study group is selecting areas where Streetscaping may be appropriate and this group has agreed to study a stretch of 11th Street east of Peoria Avenue. The portion of 11th Street contains many attractive, older commercial buildings and streetscaping improvements here could help to spark the introduction of new shops and restaurants, similar to the rebirth of Cherry Street.

16.11.6. **The Midland Valley Trail extension.** \$2 million was allocated for a bike trail that will connect downtown with the River Parks trails system along the path that begins at Maple Park at 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Quaker Avenue and moves northeasterly crossing the Broken Arrow Expressway at Peoria Avenue. The trail will then continue to the north on Peoria until it reaches 13<sup>th</sup> Street, at which point the Trail will turn west and continue to the eastern edge of the Inner Dispersal Loop. The trail will then turn northward for approximately 1 mile along Madison Avenue through the 6th Street planning area until it reaches 3rd Street, where it intersects with an existing on street bike route heading westward into downtown. A trail crossing of the Broken Arrow Expressway at Peoria provides a perfect opportunity to improve the pedestrian connection between Cherry Street and neighborhoods to the north, including 6th Street and Tracy Park.

Additional projects emerged during the planning process and during discussions for from the Vision 2025 bond proposal. These projects are not yet included in the capital improvements program. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force should continue to work with Public Works and Development Department's Urban Development staff, the Mayor, the District 4 City Councilor, and various private individuals and organizations as appropriate in order to fully developed these project proposals:

16.11.7. **Façade grants to private property owners.** Several cities have developed façade grants and façade loan programs for use by private property owners and targeted redevelopment and revitalization areas.





Typically, these programs are designed to eliminate blight by improving façades and portions of buildings that are visible to the public. Most programs do not allow these funds be used for any interior remodeling, plumbing, electrical, or HVAC. However, a small grant or loan through this program can act as equity towards a much larger private loan. A façade grants program should therefore indirectly result in building improvements that reach far beyond the portion of the building that is visible to the public.

16.11.8. **Employer assisted housing.** Discussions began with Hillcrest Hospital in 2003 but have since lapsed, in part due to the 2004 purchase of Hillcrest by Ardent Health Systems of Nashville, Tennessee. A renewal of these discussions is recommended as soon as possible. Employer assisted housing is a program developed by Fannie Mae wherein business owners offer down payment assistance to their employees provided that they choose a home near the workplace. Fannie Mae has demonstrated that employees that receive housing assistance from an employer are more likely to stay with that employer for longer periods. Though Fannie Mae provides no monetary contribution to these programs it does give useful technical assistance in setting up a program. Fannie Mae has helped establish employer assisted housing programs in other cities but has yet to do this in Tulsa. Large institutions in older urban areas, such as universities and hospitals, have utilized this program with particular success. The program is a win-win. It allows employees to enter into home ownership where they otherwise might not be able to afford it. For the institution, it reduces blight in surrounding neighborhoods, raises property values, improves customer perceptions of the institution and surrounding neighborhood, reduces employee travel time to work, reduces absenteeism especially in bad weather, and enhances employee loyalty to the company. Down payment assistance is usually offered in the form of a forgivable loan. If an employee leaves the company within the period of the loan, usually five years, then that employee is obligated to repay a prorated portion of the loan.

## 16.12. Funding opportunities

Funding for these and other projects may be found at the federal, state, and local levels as well as through private and public-private partnerships.

16.12.1. The Sixth Street Task Force should coordinate with Public Works and Development staff, the Mayor, and the District Four City Councilor to ensure that projects are



• Figure 48 - The 6th Street Task Force must take the lead role in fulfilling the objectives of this plan.



first included in the city of Tulsa Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

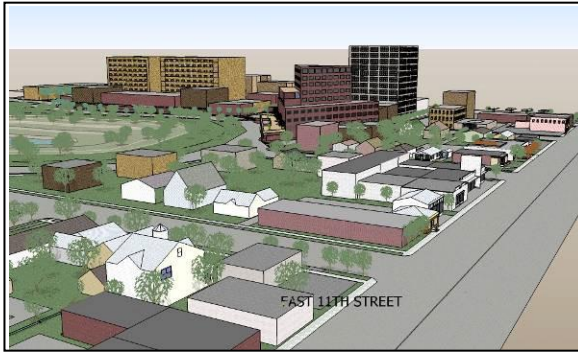
- 16.12.2. The 6<sup>th</sup> Street Task Force will need to hold together as a cohesive group in order to ensure that the plan objectives and projects are completed. It is recommended that the group continue to meet on a regular basis, and the Public Works and Development Department's Urban Development staff be ready to assist them with submittals for the CIP, bond issues, grant applications, and other funding opportunities. Urban Development staff should be available to assist with design proposals and technical issues, however, the driving force behind implementation efforts must come from the neighborhood itself.
- 16.12.3. The third-penny bond issue occurs every five years in the last bond issue was in 2001. The next bond issue will be in 2006. Typical capital projects funded by this bond issue include street and flood-control improvements. The 2001 third-penny bond issue included capital projects totaling over \$300 million.
- 16.12.4. Another source of funds is the sales tax bond issue. These also occurred on five-year intervals, with the next interval in 2005. Capital projects are also very common in this bond issue.
- 16.12.5. Another potential source of funding would occur if there was another bond issue like the Vision 2025. Vision 2025 was a large-scale downtown improvements package designed in part, to attract folks to the downtown area.



## **Conclusion**

Making this Vision a reality will require dramatic change: flood control and public improvements, higher-density infill development on opportunity sites, and increased home ownership throughout the neighborhood. Unlike more prosperous areas where dramatic change is sometimes unnecessary and unwelcome, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood is ready for a radical transformation. Many property owners in this neighborhood are seeking change. Change will require many partnerships at government and corporate levels, but the Task Force understands that success will depend largely on their ability to persuade savvy local investors that we, as a City, must begin to change the way we do business. Future investors, both public and private, must understand the long-term, self-sustaining value found in high-quality urban areas.

There is strong support for new ideas and great tolerance for anything and anyone who brings high quality, historically sensitive, pedestrian oriented, improvements to the area. This diverse group of neighbors and merchants, builders and tenants, churchgoers and manufacturers, understands that through hard work and careful investment, this area will inevitably grow, and prosper. Change will require faith in the future of our City, as well as the tools, skill, patience, and courage to see it through. Ultimately, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Neighborhood will offer Tulsa's most complete example of urban living.



• Figure 55 - 11th Street looking northeast. New park and proposed high-density development in background.



• Figure 54 - Birdseye view of new park at 10th and Troost. Proposed high-density development in background.



• Figure 53 - Birdseye view from Centennial Park looking east at 6th Street and 7th Street Canal.



• Figure 56 - At 7th and Rockford looking southeast. New 10-acre park/flood control pond at 10th and Troost.



• Figure 52 - Conceptual redevelopment at 6th and Rockford.



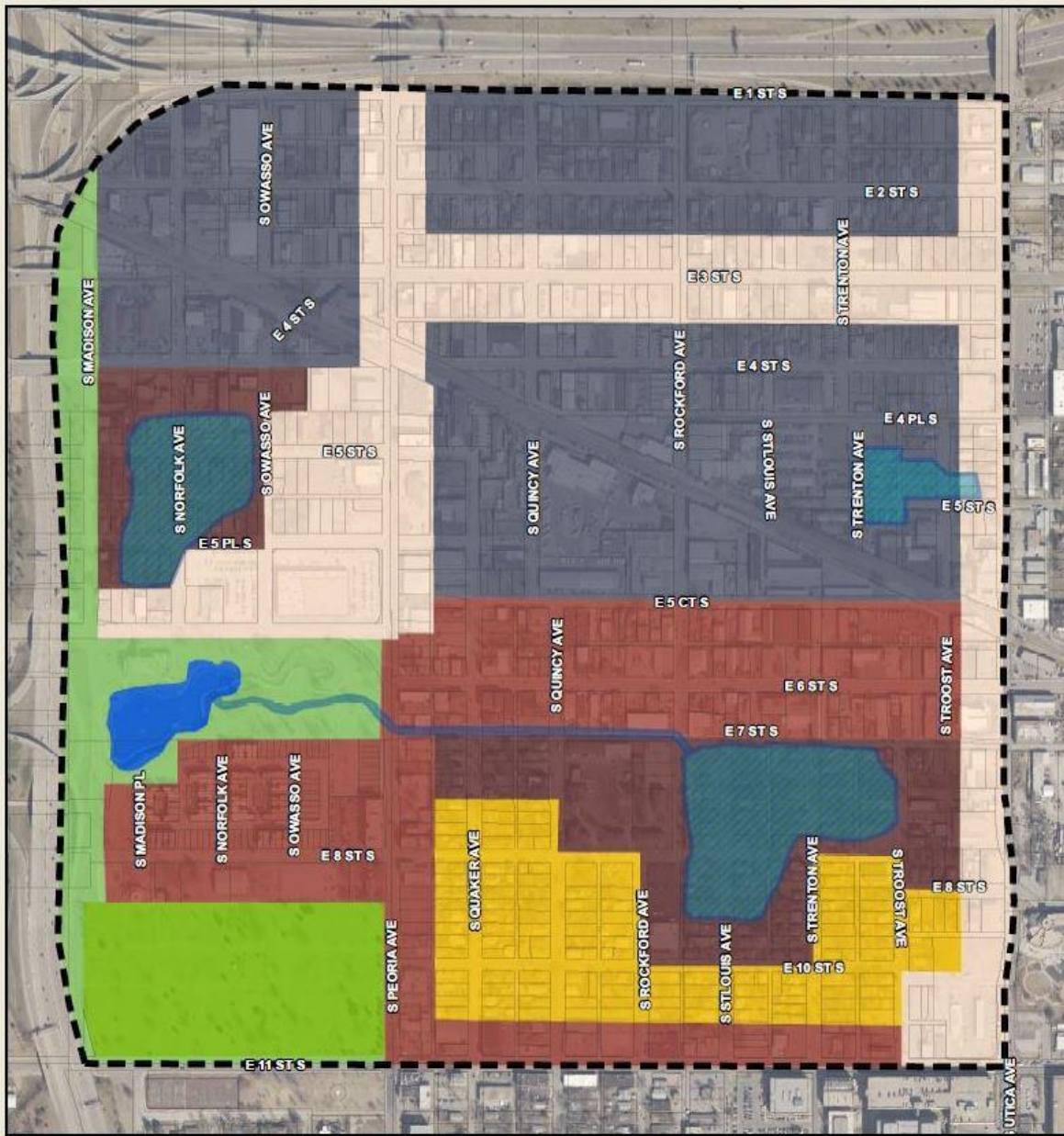
• Figure 51 - 7th Street Canal.



• Figure 50 - 7th Street Canal at 7th and Peoria looking east



• Figure 49 - Streetscaping along 6th Street



## Legend

### 6th St. Infill Plan

- 
**Redevelopment**  
 Large-scale, residential/mixed-use infill developments
  
- 
**Planned Flood Control**  
 New urban parks that provide flood control when needed
  
- 
**Existing Flood Control**  
 New urban parks that provide flood control when needed
  
- 
**Residential Revitalization**  
 Restoration of existing housing, introduction of small-scale, diverse, compatible infill
  
- 
**Mixed Use Infill**  
 Residential, Commercial, Office, Manufacturing, Warehousing, Reuse of existing structures, smaller-scale, compatible infill.
  
- 
**Auto-Oriented Commercial**  
 Commercial, Office, high-intensity Residential, Institutional, Manufacturing and Warehousing; usually located on primary arterial streets & highways. This economic model depends on vehicular access and visitors from throughout the region.
  
- 
**Manufacturing Warehousing**  
 Manufacturing, Warehousing, and Industrial uses; assembly and distribution facilities
  
- 
**Park**  
 non-flood control park areas and trails
  
- 
**Cemetery**

