

City of Fairmont Renaissance Plan



Submitted to
Fairmont Renaissance Authority
Fairmont, West Virginia

Prepared by
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I. INTRODUCTION	1
A. Purpose of Plan	
B. Renaissance Plan Objectives	
C. Renaissance Area Boundaries	
D. Methodology	
E. Consistency With Adopted Plans	
II. EXISTING CONDITIONS & FINDINGS	7
A. Physical Organization	
B. Measures of Disinvestment	
III. RENAISSANCE STRATEGY	15
A. Renaissance Area Geographies	
B. Development Directions	
C. Development Standards	
D. Character Areas	
1. Downtown	
2. Riverfront/Merchant Street	
3. Maple Avenue	
4. High Street	
5. Third Street and Fairmont Avenue	
6. Pennsylvania Avenue	
IV. APPROACH	35
A. Partnership	
B. Land Acquisition Strategy	
C. Timing, Scope, and Impact	
D. Potential Funding Mechanisms	
E. Procedures for Modifications	
V. APPENDIX	45



I. Introduction

INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of Plan

The Fairmont Renaissance Plan (FRP) is a result of the community's response to declining physical, social and economic conditions in the heart of the City. A declining demographic and economic landscape has resulted in decades of diminishing private investment in downtown and surrounding neighborhoods to a degree which warranted the formation of the Renaissance Area (RA). Evidence of this decline identified within the RA included:

- Continued deterioration of commercial and residential buildings including increasing numbers of vacant structures and land;
- Significant population, household and employment declines since 1950s;
- Deteriorating housing conditions in surrounding downtown neighborhoods;
- Declining household incomes;
- Loss of historic fabric and buildings; and
- Stagnant private investment

The ongoing disinvestment that has occurred throughout downtown and surrounding areas serves as an impediment for future private investment. In order to halt this process, the Fairmont Renaissance Authority (FRA) has decided to aggressively pursue facilitating the redevelopment and revitalization of the RA, a geography that generally includes Downtown Fairmont and its environs and that is critical to the success of the broader community.

The FRP has been reviewed by the FRA as specified under state code 16-18-5 (b) of the West Virginia Code as amended. The purpose of the plan is for revitalization of a portion of the City of Fairmont designated as the RA through a number of actions, including:

- Installation of site improvements;
- Designation of permitted uses in redevelopment;
- Redevelopment of land for new public and private uses;
- Acquisition of buildings and sites for development/redevelopment;
- Clearance of buildings which are structurally substandard, blighted, or incompatible with the objectives of the FRP;
- Construction of new street improvements, sidewalks, public facilities, landscaping, and urban design features to serve the needs of the area;
- Underground placement of utility distribution lines to the fullest extent possible;

- Retention of buildings which are structurally sound or capable of being improved, preserved or rehabilitated;
- Provision of general design and development guidance in conjunction with suitable principles or controls to achieve the objectives set forth by the FRP; and
- Provision of adequate parking, on-site, structured, surface and street parking, to accommodate new land uses.

These actions relate to development opportunities and specific objectives for redevelopment of the RA concerning appropriate land uses/building requirements proposed in the area.

The impetus of the FRP is based on the decision to bolster the economy of the RA and the City of Fairmont by capitalizing on current physical and market opportunities prevalent around the RA (e.g. Marion County and regionally) that are not fostering private economic growth within the RA due to disinvestment. These include:

- The Downtown/I-79 connector,
- An expanding housing market,
- A growing high-tech sector, and
- An expanding Fairmont State University.

B. Renaissance Plan Objectives

Part of the planning process involved defining the role of the FRA through a series of objectives. These objectives are consistent with community desires, city policies and state codes. The primary goal of the Plan is to encourage and facilitate the redevelopment and revitalization of the RA as a regional hub for government, civic, cultural, business, educational, recreational and residential uses. This will be achieved through the FRA objectives:

1. Re-establish Downtown Fairmont as a vital and active center of the city and regional economy offering quality housing, employment, and recreation;
2. Celebrate the unique heritage and cultural fabric of the RA, the City of Fairmont, and the region;
3. Leverage public projects (such as parking garages and the Downtown/I-79 Connector) to attract private investment and maximize the return of public investment in the RA;
4. Enhance the marketability of the RA by improving the character and functionality

INTRODUCTION

- of gateways into Downtown Fairmont; such as the riverfront, Fairmont Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, and Locust Avenue;
5. Establish unique retail and entertainment destinations and districts within the RA that attract local, regional, and national visitors and encourage repeat visits;
 6. Develop a quality hospitality service industry within the Central Business District, as defined by the 2005 Comprehensive Plan boundaries, that provides visitor accommodations, meeting facilities and community gathering venues to residents and visitors;
 7. Improve housing quality and increase available price range throughout the RA;
 8. Establish mutually beneficial partnerships with other organizations and agencies with the goal of achieving the objectives of the FRP and commonly held goals;
 9. Maximize the reuse of existing structures, especially historic and vacant or underutilized property, making them attractive to the commercial and residential development community, and governmental and non-governmental institutions.
 10. Develop the RA as a multimodal transportation environment that supports transit, pedestrians, bicycles, and other appropriate transportation systems that are inviting to visitors, that serve residents and support commerce.

C. Renaissance Area Boundaries

The RA boundaries encompass an area approximately 516 acres in size (approximately .8 square miles). This area includes Downtown Fairmont proper (the Central Business District as defined by the *City of Fairmont 2005 Comprehensive Plan*) and its adjacent neighborhoods and the east side of the Monongahela River along Merchant Street. A boundary description for the RA is included in the Appendix of this plan.

D. Methodology

The FRP planning process began in January 2004 with a work session with the Fairmont City Council. The initial steps in the process focused on the formation of the FRA. During the first half of 2004 the Fairmont City Council worked to establish the FRA, and define its role and purpose in accordance with West Virginia Urban Renewal Authority Law.

In June 2004 the newly formed FRA initiated a data gathering process within the City of Fairmont to inform and guide the process of defining the RA boundaries. The analysis consisted of documenting the existing physical conditions through a series of site visits and utilizing demographic and market data from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. Based on the findings of this analysis, the FRA found evidence of deterioration, slum, blight and continued disinvestment in Downtown Fairmont and its environs. These findings directly guided the formation of the RA boundaries as well as the final outcomes of the planning process. The findings and proposed FRA boundaries were presented to the public on November 11, 2004 and formally adopted on February 8, 2005. Figure 1-1 shows the RA Boundaries. The findings are represented in the series of maps and diagrams in the "Existing Conditions & Findings" section of this report.

1. Character Areas

The RA encompasses a large geography with a diverse character and a range of land uses. As such, the RA was divided into six "Character Areas" based on streets, neighborhoods, geographic features, land uses and existing boundaries. Character Areas provide the means of defining the role of different areas of the community and the various planning principles that should be applied within each one and suggesting a general pattern of future land use. The six Character Areas include Downtown, Riverfront/Merchant Street, High Street, Maple Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue and Third Street and Fairmont Avenue. These Character Areas are discussed in further detail in the "Renaissance Strategy" section of this plan.

2. Development Districts

As later defined in the "Renaissance Strategy" section of this plan, the six Character Areas include various types of "Development Districts". Development Districts have distinct qualities and proposed development directions that support the objectives of the FRA and the roles of their respective Character Areas. The same type of Development District may be found in two different Character Areas suggesting a similar direction for development with consideration given to the unique features of each area. For example, "Single-Family Residential Infill/Redefinition" Development Districts are appropriate for a variety of single-family residential housing options including various styles, sizes and affordability. The same Development Districts in different Character Areas should reflect the uniqueness of each geography and maintain distinct identities.

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1-1: Renaissance Area Boundaries



3. Renaissance Area Projects

A project list was derived principally from a series of existing studies that already possessed much momentum and support from the community. The process for selecting projects is defined in figure 1-2. These projects are discussed in further detail in the "Renaissance Strategy" section of this report. The FRA chose projects that: support the role of the respective character areas, corresponded to real opportunities (market or physical), and met the RA objectives (as discussed earlier). The FRA then prioritized the list of projects based on those that had the highest probability of success for short- mid- and long-term timeframes. Each project enhances or supports the identified role of its corresponding Development District and Character area.

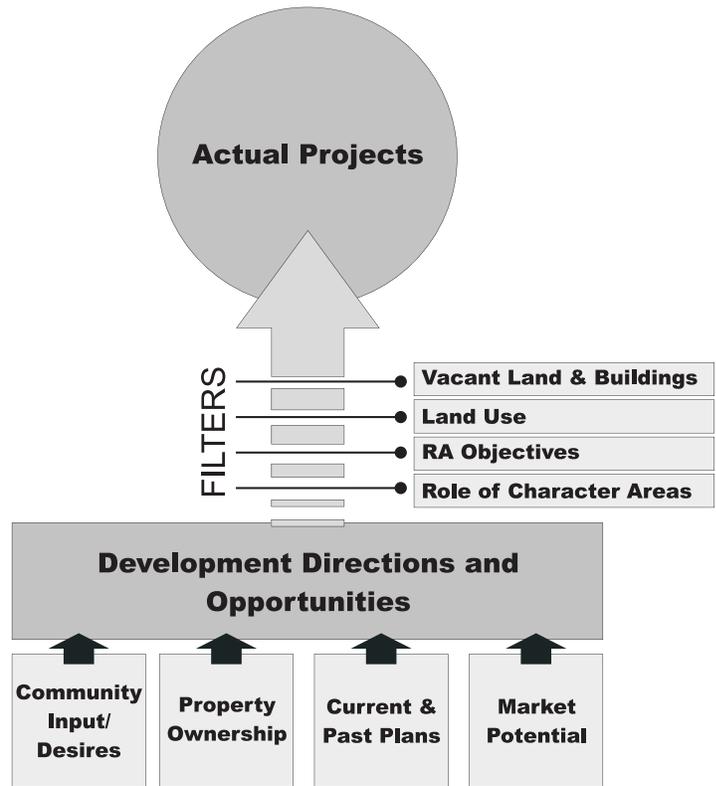
E. Consistency With Adopted Plans

The FRP is consistent with the *City of Fairmont 2005 Comprehensive Plan* adopted by the Fairmont City Council in 2005. The FRP supports and reinforces the *City of Fairmont 2005 Comprehensive Plan* to reestablish the RA as a vital and active center for government, commerce, recreation and habitation. Although minor differences in land use exist between the comprehensive plan's "Future Land Use Map" (see Appendix) and the FRP's "Development Directions" diagram (on page 19 of this report), the majority of proposed uses and projects coincide with the intent of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The most notable land use difference is that the Comprehensive Plan calls for commercial and industrial uses along a portion of the west side of the riverfront below Washington Street north of Downtown where the FRP proposes green space. Green space in this area is preferred over commercial and industrial use in order to preserve views to the river from adjacent neighborhoods.

In addition, the comprehensive plan's "Future Land Use Map" shows a significant amount of land dedicated to commercial use along major corridors into downtown; specifically Pennsylvania Avenue. In contrast, the FRP proposes that these corridors develop in a more mixed-use manner with particular emphasis on residential. Encouraging commercial uses to locate in nodes at critical intersections, particularly in downtown, will reduce unwanted sprawling commercial strips. This strategy will also help maintain existing neighborhood character and reduce the intrusion of commercial uses into residential areas.

Figure 1-2: Project Selection Methodology

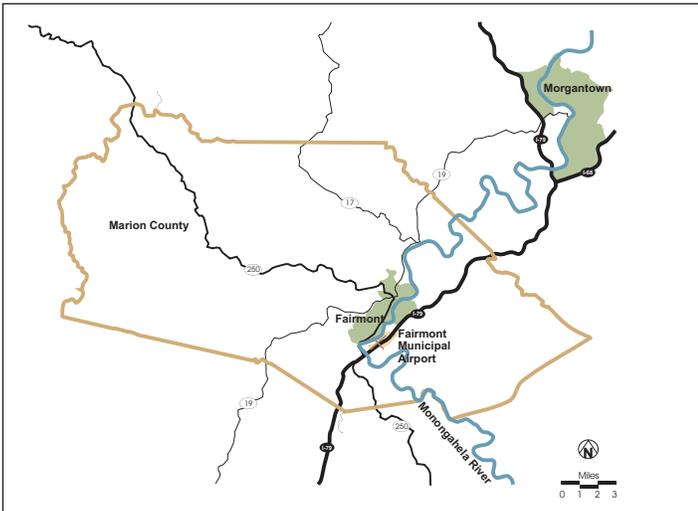




II. Existing Conditions & Findings

EXISTING CONDITIONS & FINDINGS

Figure 2-1: Marion County, West Virginia



Most of the RA contains outdated and substandard housing and vacant and unkempt properties. Some properties have been inventoried as potential or designated historic properties. The diagram titled "Renaissance Authority Vacant Lots and Surface Parking" (see Appendix) illustrates the vacancy pattern found in the RA. In the Maple Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue District, more than 50% of the parcels are vacant or contain vacant structures. The High Street area has about 30% vacant land and structures. And in the Riverfront/Merchant Street and Third Street and Fairmont Avenue district, more than 20% of the parcels are vacant or contain surface parking. In the Downtown district, the vacant parcels, vacant structures, and surface parking lots represent more than 27% of the district.

A. Physical Organization

1. Location

Fairmont, West Virginia is located in North Central West Virginia approximately 130 miles Northeast of the City of Charleston, West Virginia and approximately 90 miles south of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. With a population of more than 20,000, Fairmont is the largest municipality in Marion County. The Monongahela River runs through Fairmont dividing the RA from the southwest to the northeast.

2. Land Use

A site analysis of Fairmont and its environs was conducted to gather information about the overall physical characteristics including circulation, building conditions, and land use. This information was used to create the various maps and diagrams (see Appendix) that depict the RA's existing conditions.

Findings indicate that the RA suffers from fragmented parcel ownership and a lack of competitive identity within the regional market. There is an overall presence of deteriorated and vacated buildings as well as vacant lots and numerous surface parking lots. These factors also contribute to a variety of public safety and health issues.

The "Land Use" Diagram (see Appendix) indicates that the RA is largely mixed-use. This diagram indicates a prevalence of parking lots along with incompatible land uses. Other concerns in the RA include sites with environmental issues, and numerous vacant property, especially in key neighborhoods, commercial areas and the riverfront.

Renaissance Authority Property Ownership

The RA contains a significant amount of publicly owned property. The diagram titled "Renaissance Authority Property Ownership Diagram" (see Appendix) outlines the public and not-for-profit ownership of the parcels in the RA. The City of Fairmont, Marion County, and the State of West Virginia own many parcels. In addition, the Fairmont Community Development Partnership, the Vandalia Heritage Foundation, and the Housing Authority of the City of Fairmont own property within the RA.

Substandard Buildings

Further evidence of blight in the RA is found through the number of buildings that require substantial improvements or comprehensive



Example of a building with minimal improvements required

EXISTING CONDITIONS & FINDINGS



As demonstrated above, many buildings in the RA require comprehensive repairs.

repairs. The "Building Condition" Diagram (see Appendix) shows the condition of the buildings in the RA. The buildings in green are listed as 'Minimal Improvement Required'. This means that either no major rehabilitation is needed or that only minor cosmetic improvements such as paint or minor repairs are necessary. The buildings labeled yellow indicate buildings with 'Substantial Improvements Required'. These buildings require extensive masonry repairs, window/door replacement, or new engineering systems. The blue shaded buildings indicate 'Comprehensive Repairs Required'. This includes major interior and exterior renovation with the possible addition of new structural elements such as stairs or elevators.

Further evidence of the poor condition of many of the buildings is found in Figure 2-2 which indicates that 79% of the buildings in census tract 201 are in need of substantial improvements or comprehensive repair. In census tract 205, Figure 2-3 indicates that 81% of the buildings are in need of substantial improvements or comprehensive repair.

3. Traffic and Circulation

Difficult and disruptive transportation and pedestrian linkages and access plague the RA. Interstate 79 currently runs south of the City of Fairmont. Two U.S. highways provide access to and through Fairmont - U.S. 19 and U.S 250 as well as State Route 310. However, access across the river along this state road, locally called 3rd Street and also via Jefferson Street, are the only available routes that cross the Monongahela River. These routes offer access to various areas of the county and region. But, having only two routes across the river causes an influx of heavy truck traffic through the downtown area which has a negative effect on commerce and limits pedestrian movement across the river.

In addition, the infrastructure in the RA is not well configured. Circulation in and around downtown

Figure 2-2: Census Tract 201 Building Condition

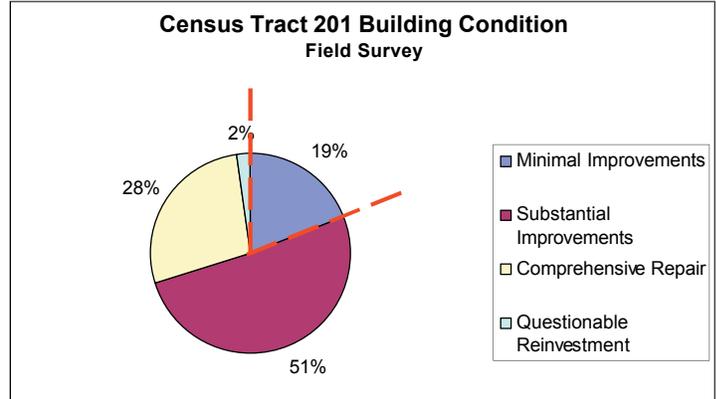
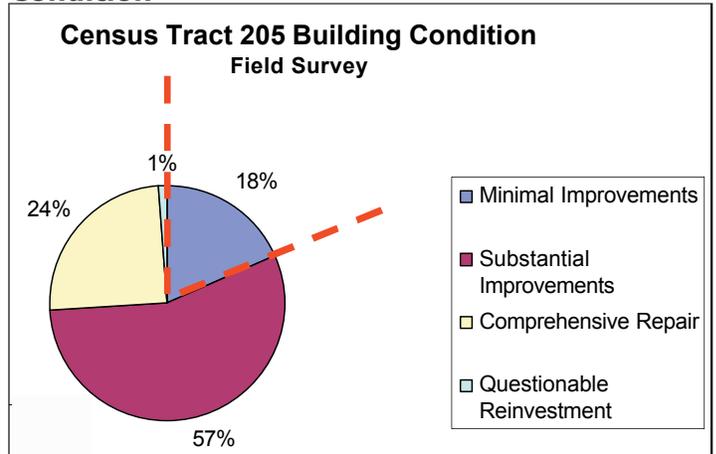


Figure 2-3: Census Tract 205 Building Condition



was noted to be confusing with a lack of appropriate signage to orient downtown users to major thoroughfares, parking, and important landmarks.

B. Measures of Disinvestment

The Urban Renewal Law contains key language that defines a methodology for documenting findings of disinvestment. The following factors have been identified as contributing to the slum and blighted conditions that are found in Fairmont. These include economic and social liability, impairment and impediment of sound growth, an ineffective private sector, unsafe buildings, significant job loss, a reduction in property values, and inadequate housing accommodations.

1. Impairment of sound growth

Marion County has witnessed significant population, household, and employment declines relative to the State of West Virginia and the United States. Every census tract within the city of Fairmont has had a decline in population. For example, as demonstrated in Figure 2-4, the population of Fairmont has

EXISTING CONDITIONS & FINDINGS

decreased by about 10% over the past 20 years. In addition, the number of households has been reduced by 6%. Between 1980 and 2001, census tract 205 lost more than 30% of its population. Other areas near downtown lost between 20 and 30% of their population as shown in Figure 2-5. The reduction of people living in the RA has resulted in a significant number of vacant and deteriorating residential properties.

Between 1980 and 1997, the county experienced substantial declines in earnings and earnings per worker. As demonstrated in Figure 2-6, more than 70% of residents in census tract 201 and more than 50% in census tract 202 have incomes of less than \$20,000. Figure 2-7 shows that the median household income in Census Tracts 201 and 202 are at or below the poverty level for a family of four. Figure 2-8 shows that the City of Fairmont and particularly census tracts 201 and 202 have a higher percentage of individuals living below the poverty level than the state of West Virginia. The decline in income has contributed to ongoing and expanding slum and blight. Residents have less money available for reinvestment and home improvement. This results in an increase in vacant and substandard housing.

2. Significant Job Loss

Marion County has experienced significant job loss. Employment rates between 1980 and 1990 for Marion County decreased by 8% and between 1990 and 2000 increased by 9% while the state increased 16% and the nation increased by 22%. The rate of unemployment in 2000 was 5.8% versus the state's rate of 5.4% and the nation's at 4.0%. The Marion County economy has performed poorly since 1980. The major cause has been the loss of some manufacturing and mining jobs. The higher paying manufacturing jobs were replaced by jobs that were concentrated in relatively low paying industry and service sectors. Per capita income gains, while comparable to the statewide economy average were very modest compared to the nation. In addition, Fairmont's job growth for the near future is expected to be modest.

The loss of jobs has caused a drop in the demand for office space causing even more vacant parcels. The CBD contains about 300,000 square feet of office space of which 56% is vacant. This office space is leasing for only about \$7 to \$10 per square foot which is significantly below class A office space rates.

Figure 2-4: U.S. Census Population Trends for the City of Fairmont

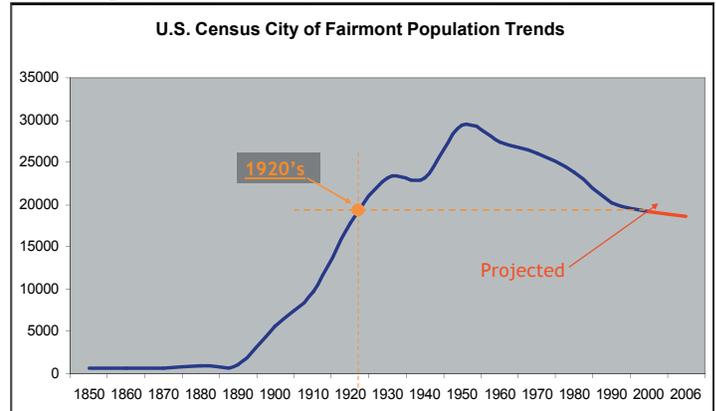
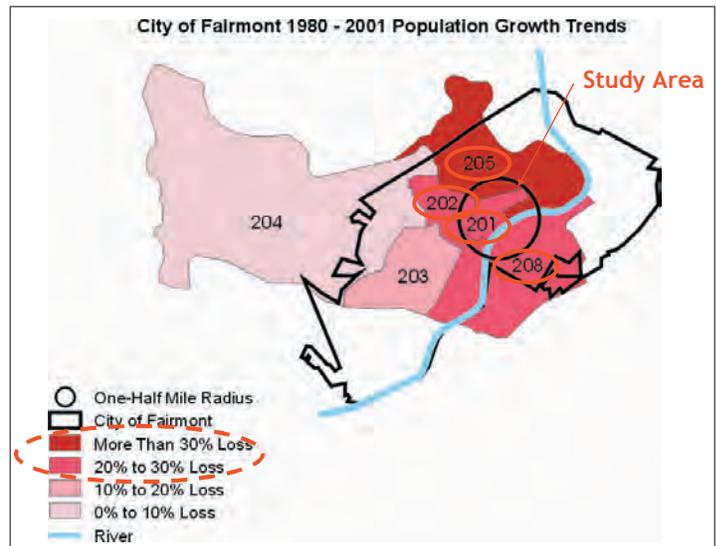


Figure 2-5: 1980 - 2001 Population Growth Trends for the City of Fairmont



3. Loss of Property Values

Property values in Fairmont have not kept pace with the national average. The median owner occupied housing value in 2000 for the City of Fairmont was \$62,000 compared to the United States of \$110,000. In Downtown Fairmont, the median value is even lower at about \$45,000. 47% of the housing units are valued below \$60,000 with only 14.1% valued greater than \$100,000 and 1.2% valued greater than \$200,000. Figure 2-9 illustrates that the median value of owner-occupied housing units in Census Tracts 201, 202, and 205 is \$40,000 which is only 1/3 that of the median value of an owner-occupied house in the United States.

4. Low Owner Occupancy

Another factor contributing to the low property values found in Fairmont is the high number of renter-occupied housing units. Only 50.7% of single-family units are owner-occupied. And,

EXISTING CONDITIONS & FINDINGS

Figure 2-6: 2000 U.S. Census Income Distribution

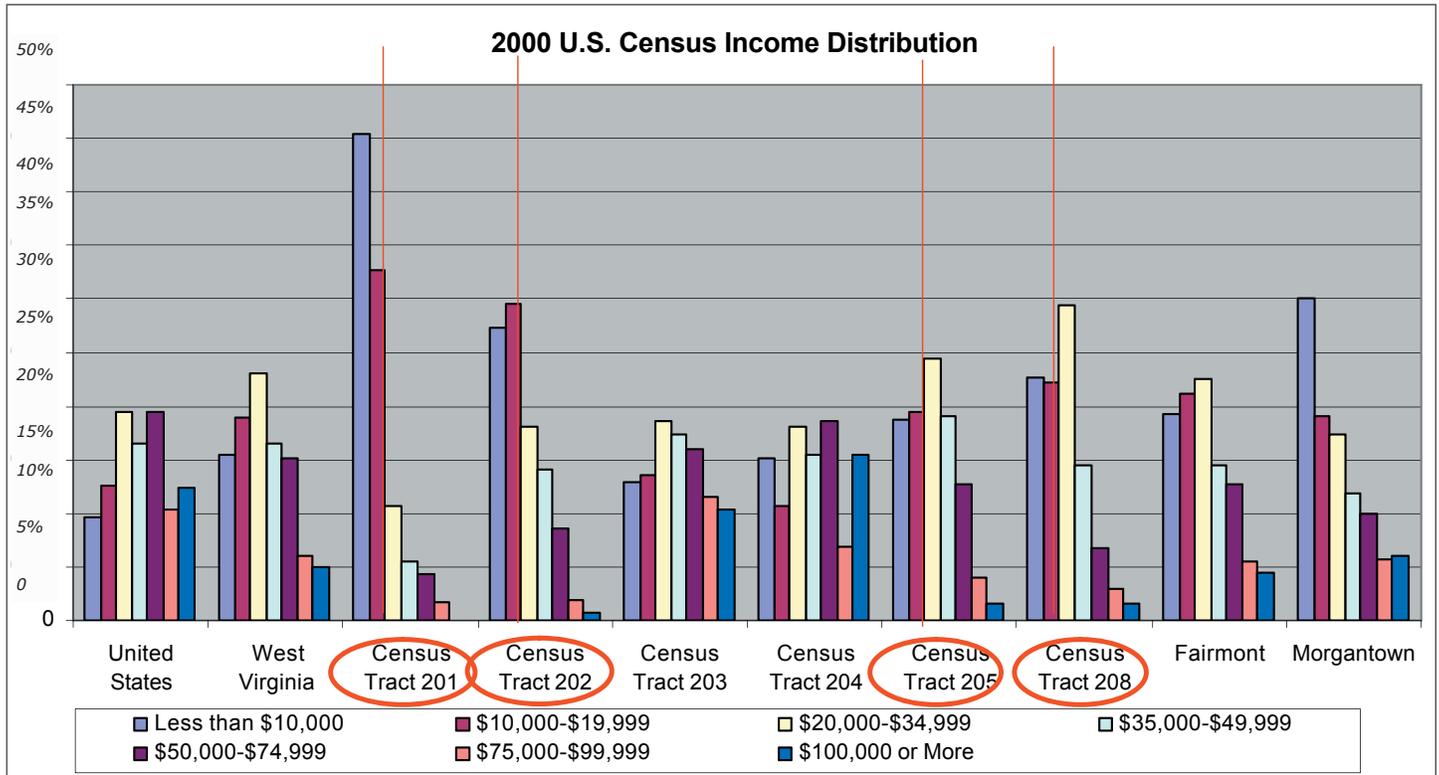
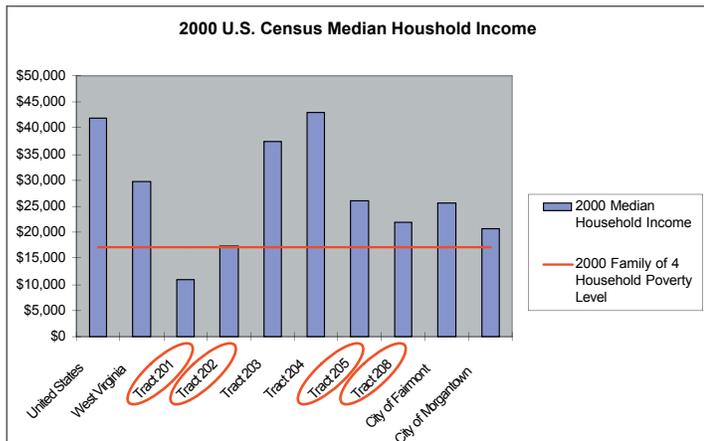
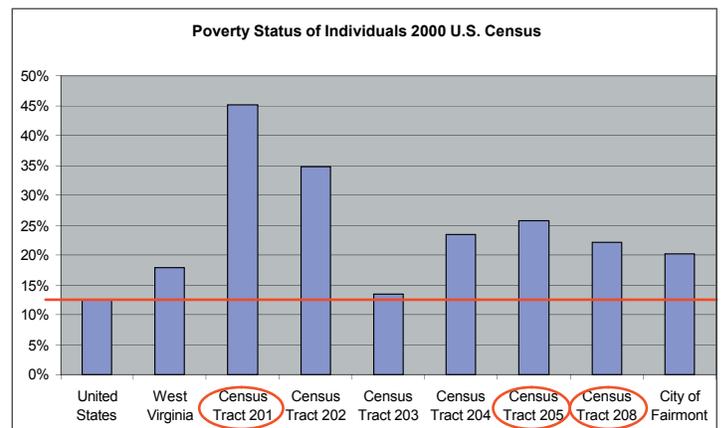


Figure 2-7: 2000 U.S. Census Median Household Income



8.2% of the owner-occupied units are vacant. The downtown area has disproportionately high concentrations of multi-family rental units compared to other areas in the community, state, and national averages. In Figure 2-11, the highest number of renter-occupied housing is found in census tracts 201 and 202. Another illustration is found in Figure 2-10 which shows that between 1990 and 2000, the percent change in the median value of owner-occupied housing units in the downtown census tracts 201 and 202 did not keep pace with the City of Fairmont or the national average.

Figure 2-8: 2000 U.S. Census Poverty Status of Individuals



5. Inadequate Housing Accommodations

Fairmont does not have an active, vibrant housing market. Essentially, there is no new construction in or around downtown. Between 1995 and 2001 there were only 180 new units constructed in the City of Fairmont. The residential structures downtown are ageing with 65% of them built before 1960.

6. Ineffective Private Sector

The average home sale price per square foot varies dramatically between new construction and existing home prices. As shown in Figure 2-12, the new construction sale price per square foot for

EXISTING CONDITIONS & FINDINGS

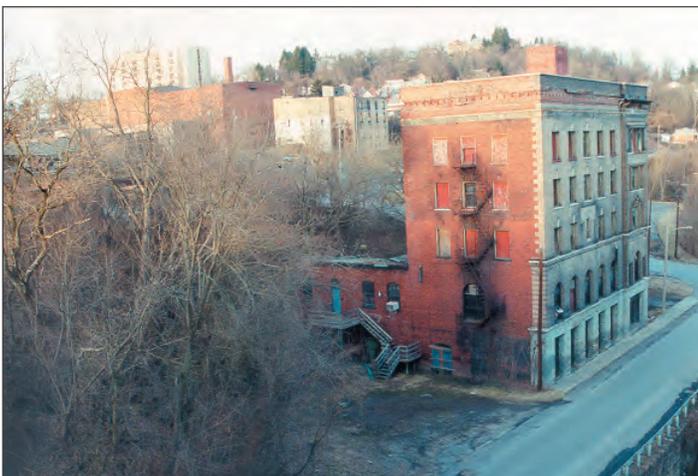
homes is about \$120.00 in Fairmont. In Downtown Fairmont, the value of the existing home price per square foot is about \$40.00 and slightly higher in Fairmont at about \$50.00 per square foot. Figure 2-13 demonstrates that without considering a key redevelopment project, the private dollars spent on new construction, additions, and remodels between 2000 and 2004 are low in downtown Fairmont.

7. Low Educational Attainment

The educational attainment of persons over 25 years of age in the RA is low. Figure 2-14 shows that in Census tract 201, over 40% of the population has not graduated from high school. In addition, in Census tract 201, less than 10% of the population has obtained an associate, bachelor's, or graduate degree. These low educational levels contribute to stagnant economic growth and the low earning potential of the population within downtown. Low incomes then contribute to low numbers of owner-occupied housing as residents are not able to afford to own a home.

8. Inability to Capitalize on Historic Districts

Currently, there are two historic districts that are partially located within the downtown area. They are the Downtown Historic District and the Fleming Watson Historic District and are shown in the Appendix. However, many of these historic neighborhoods and prominent historic downtown structures are continuing to deteriorate and are not being redeveloped by the private or public sectors. Consequently, many historic buildings that have unique and desirable features have fallen into disrepair or are underutilized.



Many historic buildings in the RA have fallen into disrepair and are vacant or underutilized like the former Elks Lodge at the intersection of Madison Street and Cleveland Avenue.

Figure 2-9: 2000 U.S. Census Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units

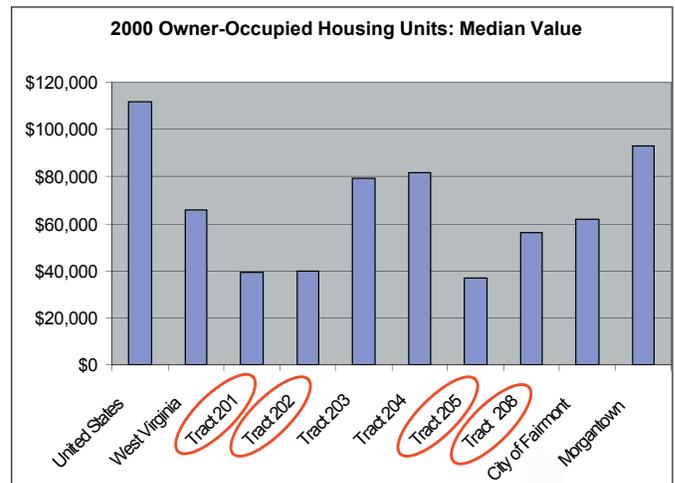


Figure 2-10: 1990 - 2000 Percent Change in Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units

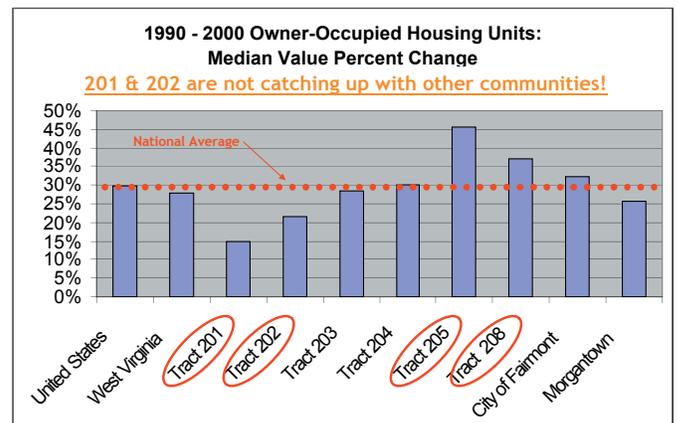
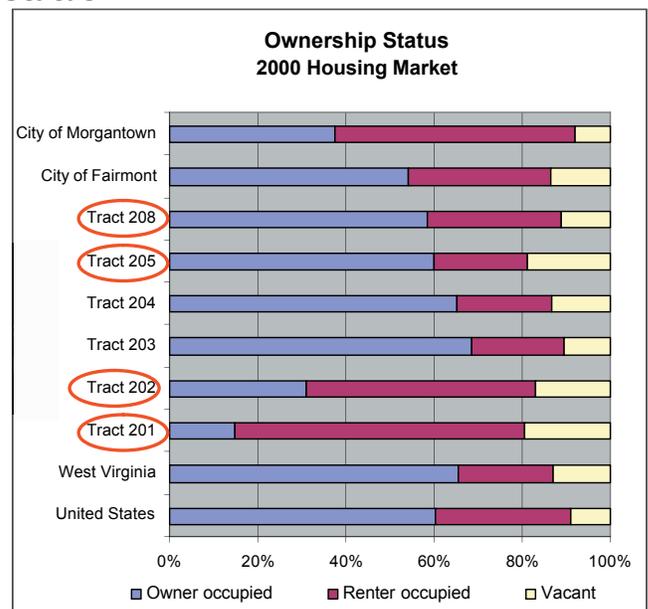


Figure 2-11: 2000 U.S. Census Ownership Status



EXISTING CONDITIONS & FINDINGS

Figure 2-12: Average Home Sale Price Per Square Foot



Figure 2-13: 2000 - 2004 Construction Dollars on New Construction, Additions, and Remodels

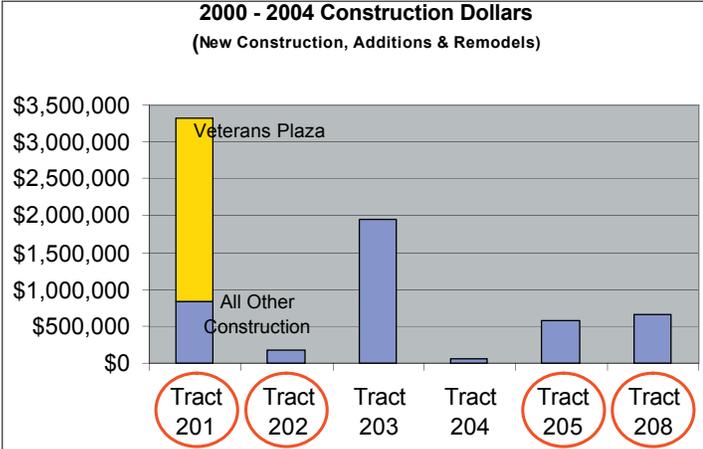
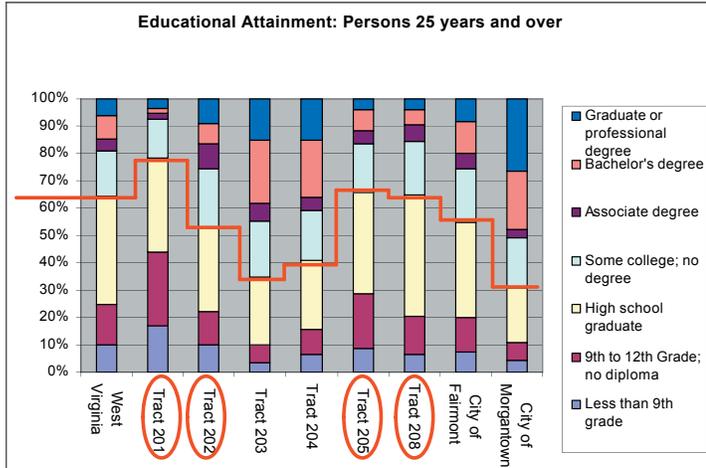


Figure 2-14: Educational Attainment of Persons 25 Years and Over





III. Renaissance Strategy

RENAISSANCE STRATEGY

A. Renaissance Area Geographies

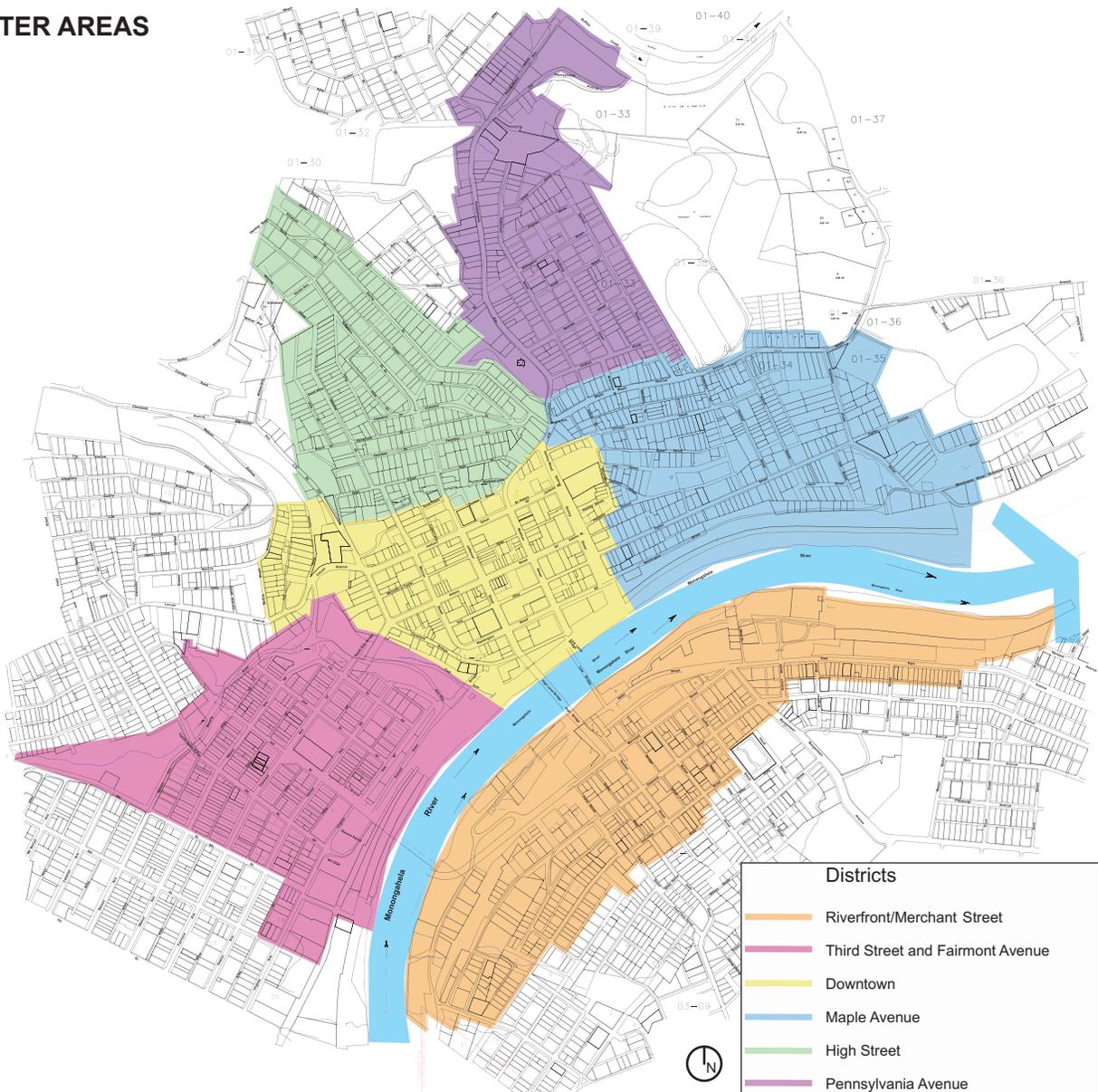
1. Character Areas & Projects

As mentioned in the "Methodology" section of this plan, the RA is divided into six "Character Areas" (described below). Character Areas are used as a means of defining smaller and more manageable geographies that have related uses, functions and physical qualities. Each character area has the potential to play a distinct and vital role within the City of Fairmont and the region. Unfortunately, the Character Areas in their current state are struggling to fulfill their respective roles. As such, the *Fairmont Renaissance Plan* organizes a series of proposed catalyst projects for the Character Areas that support each of their defined roles. The projects (discussed in further detail below)

support the overall development direction of the RA and provide a character and function for the corresponding Development District within each character area. These projects in turn support the broader objectives of the FRA.

Although the FRA may operate anywhere in the RA, the renaissance plan calls for implementation of projects in four of the six Character Areas; Downtown, Riverfront/Merchant Street, Maple Avenue, and High Street. The projects within these four Character Areas were determined by the FRA to hold the most potential for redevelopment and to have a significant impact on addressing slum and blight and improving the economic climate of the character area and the whole RA over the long-term.

CHARACTER AREAS



B. Development Directions

1. Overview

The center of activity for the City of Fairmont was once downtown and along the riverfront, anchored by a strong business base, vital neighborhoods and a visible government center. The *Fairmont Renaissance Plan* utilizes three principal strategies for revitalizing Fairmont including; housing, riverfront development, and downtown activation. These broad planning strategies are defined on the "Development Directions" diagram (located on page 19). The "Development Directions" diagram presents a district-oriented approach to reactivating and redefining land use within the RA with the goal of coordinated improvements to slum and blighted conditions through distinct "Development Districts" supported by public and private investments. Most thriving communities have well established districts that are recognized as a place to go for their unique mix of uses and their offerings. The development strategy identifies eleven types of districts within the RA. Each of the districts described in the subsequent pages play a role in restoring the City of Fairmont as the locus of activity for Marion and adjacent counties.

2. Residential Reinforcement

The pale yellow areas on the diagram indicate residential reinforcement. Reinforcement of living conditions and the introduction of new housing options surrounding the Downtown Character Area will enhance the redevelopment potential of the entire RA. Reinvestment in these neighborhoods is critical since housing is necessary for a healthy and operational community. The following elements are necessary for successful redevelopment of the residential reinforcement area:

- Reinvestment – Target near downtown housing for reinvestment incentive programs
- Ownership – Implement programs that encourage and facilitate home ownership over renting
- Infill – Identify available land near downtown for infill development, possibly townhouses
- Enhanced Streetscape Environment – Utilize thematic enhancements of neighborhoods such as unique signage, street furnishings, and appropriate gateways
- Linkages – Appropriate pedestrian linkages to the CBD and civic/institutional areas allowing residents to travel to destinations via foot or bike

3. Single-Family Residential Infill/Redefinition

The areas shaded bright yellow on the diagram indicate geographies that should be redefined as single-family neighborhoods. Opportunities to infill vacant single-family lots, rehabilitate historic properties, and enhance the area through private investment should be initiated. Streetscape elements such as sidewalks, fences, trees, and lighting are all important to reestablish a unique neighborhood with an urban character. Many of the single-family homes are subdivided into rental units. Incentives should be created to promote home ownership over renting.

4. Multi-family Residential Redefinition

The light orange shaded areas on the diagram are the Multi-family Residential Redefinition Development Districts. These districts offer new downtown residential development with a range of multi-family housing options. These districts would primarily consist of housing but would also include some retail development below the residential. Housing would target singles, young couples, empty nesters, and seniors. Housing would include an assortment of multi-family units that directly connect to adjacent areas.

5. Mixed-use Central Business District (CBD)

The area shaded red is the Mixed-use Central Business District. This Development District is the center for business activities including a mix of commercial uses supporting a wide range of retail, restaurant, and service uses. The goal of this district is to create a business friendly atmosphere that attracts and fosters entrepreneurship. The FRA should seek to locate new businesses to this area. Emphasis should be placed on locating retail at street-level with loft housing or offices on upper floors.

6. Downtown Entertainment and Heritage

The magenta shaded area is the Downtown Entertainment and Heritage Development District. This district will be the hub of activity for residents and visitors in Fairmont. It includes development of a vibrant mixed-use entertainment destination and an enhancement of the Jefferson Street gateway. The emphasis on development in this district would include bars, restaurants, entertainment venues (live performances, etc.), and heritage oriented businesses. These would include businesses serving the local tourism market. Its unique, historic buildings create a dynamic and active place for interaction and discovery that make the area immediately distinguishable from other areas.

RENAISSANCE STRATEGY

7. Riverfront Recreation

The area shaded in bright green is the Riverfront Recreation Development District. This district will provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of Fairmont. This district supports the development of a network of trails and public spaces that connect the community to its surrounding natural features. A pedestrian bridge across the Monongahela River would provide a necessary pedestrian link from the Downtown Character Area to the Riverfront/Merchant Street Character Area. This district could also support facilities for people to learn about the history and heritage of Fairmont.

8. Marina/Commercial

The areas shaded in dark green on the diagram represent the Marina/Commercial Development Districts. These districts include private and public access to the Monongahela River in the form of boat slips and peripheral retail uses. The proposed marinas anchor the broader riverfront development with a more active and engaging use than is found in the riverfront recreation district.

9. Mixed-Use Corridor

The areas shaded orange on the diagram are the Mixed-Use Corridor Development Districts. These districts include a mix of retail, residential, and business uses. Higher density residential opportunities would be available with an emphasis on locating retail at street-level with housing on upper floors. This area would provide a clear and defined identity while serving the daily needs of nearby residents. Riverfront/Merchant Street would also act as a gateway that introduces people to Fairmont who are coming into town from the interstate.

10. Hotel and Cultural Center

The area shaded in purple is the Hotel and Cultural Center Development District. This district includes space for cultural events and performances. The district also provides accommodations for visitors with a hotel and cultural space.

11. Riverfront Landscape Improvement

The area along the river shaded in pastel green is the Riverfront Landscape Improvement district. The district would enhance the existing natural features found along the riverfront and enhance views from surrounding areas. These enhancements would be used as a catalyst for investment in the surrounding districts.

12. Mixed-use Civic and Institutional

The area shaded in light red is the Mixed-Use Civic and Institutional Development District. This district reinforces the expansion of governmental and institutional uses in the Downtown Character Area. The district is principally home to government buildings, churches and other non-profits but also includes residences and businesses. This area is appropriate for future government expansion. Proper expansion of civic uses in this district is paramount to making the RA the center of activity in the region.

C. Development Standards

1. Overview

For purposes of this document, development standards refer to recommended intensity and scale of commercial and residential land use for each parcel or conglomeration of parcels that form a project with a Development District. As mentioned earlier, each Character Area is comprised of a series of Development Districts that, together, form the overall preferred land use for the RA. The standards are meant to provide a measure for achieving certain housing densities or commercial development intensities based on desired levels of development investment that will create an active and vital RA. Residential land use standards are measured in dwelling units per acre (DUA) and commercial standards use Floor Area Ratio (FAR). A more detailed definition of these standards is provided below. The application of the development standards to each Development District are discussed later in this section.

2. Dwelling Units Per Acre (DUA)

Neighborhood density (defined in figure 3.1) refers to the number of DUA of land devoted to residential building sites, local streets, and facilities serving the population including common areas of undeveloped land. More rural areas typically have DUAs of less than .05 DUA. That is, less than 5 dwelling units in 100 acres of land. Smaller urban areas like the City of Fairmont may have DUAs closer to five to seven that is 500 to 700 dwelling units in 100 acres of land.

3. Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

The most typical standard used for development is Floor Area Ratio. FAR is the ratio of the total building floor area to the total lot or parcel size. Consequently, the FAR reflects the bulk of the structure in relation to lot size. For example, a plot with an FAR of one that is 10,000 square feet,

RENAISSANCE STRATEGY

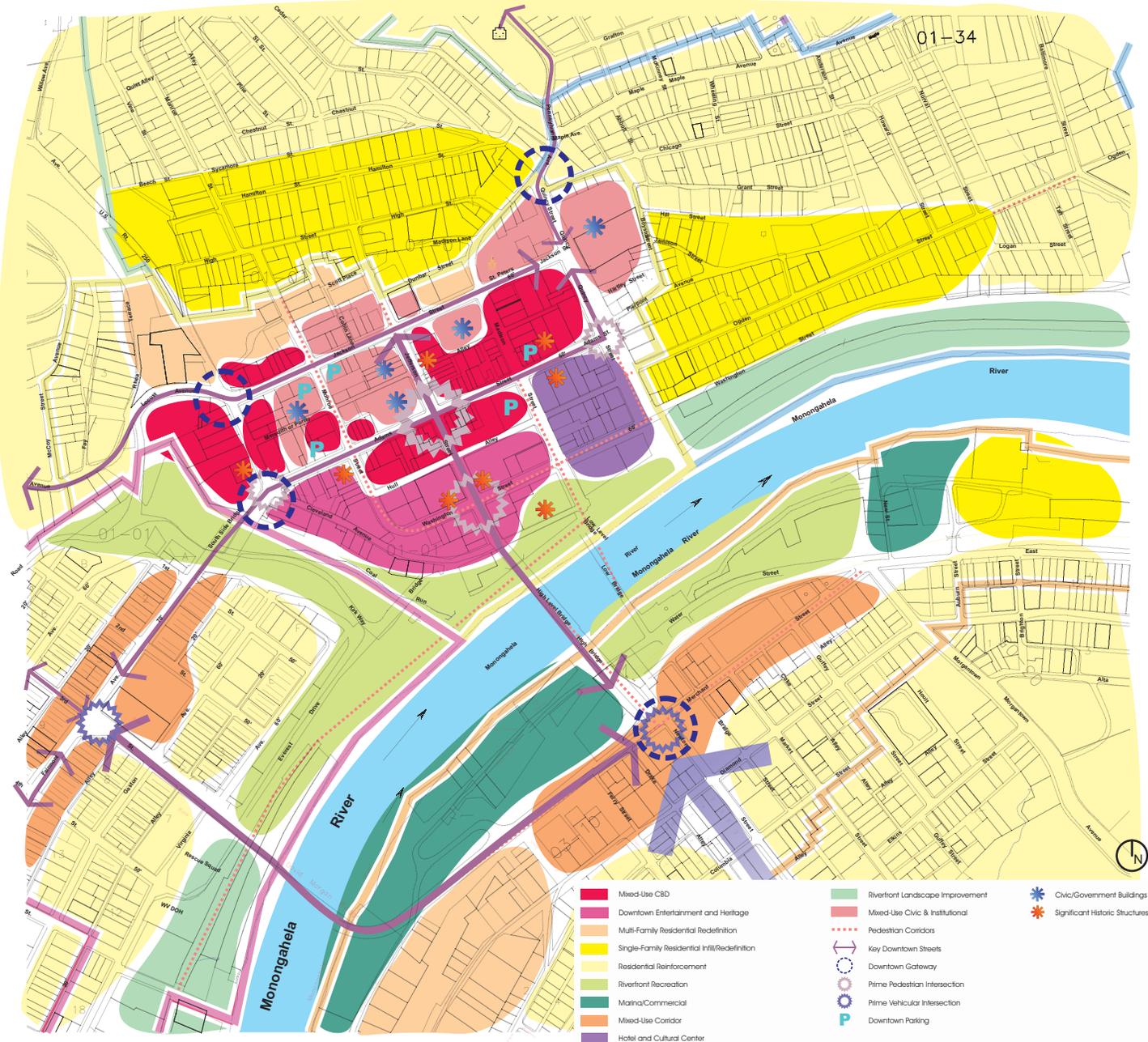
Figure 3-1: Neighborhood Density Description

Residential Use	Neighborhood Density DUA
Rural Estates	0.05
Rural Residential	0.15
Low Density SF	1.5
Medium Density SF	3.5
High Density SF	5.2
Duplexes	6
Low Density TH	5
High Density TH	7
1 Story Apartments	10
3 Story Apartments	20
6 Story Apartments	35
12 Story Apartments	60

requires that 10,000 square feet of gross floor area must be built on the plot. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. For example, covering 1/4 of the site with four stories gives a FAR of 1.0. Four floors of 2,500 square feet each are built on a site of 10,000 square feet.

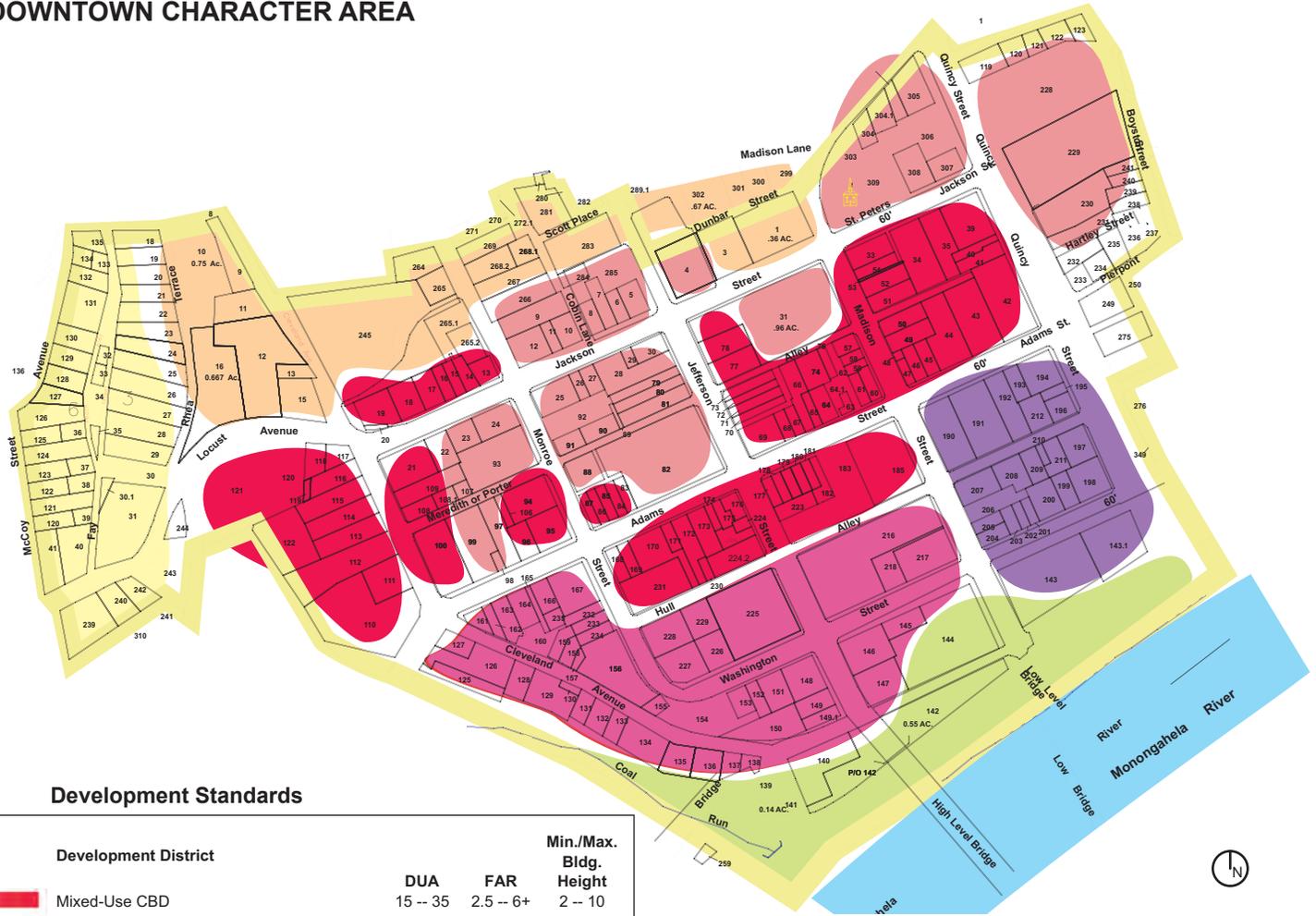
In much of the Downtown Character area, a FAR of four is often exceeded. A four FAR is considered normal for central business districts of a community such as Fairmont. This FAR requires four or more story buildings that are typically built to the property line with no set back.

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS DIAGRAM



RENAISSANCE STRATEGY

DOWNTOWN CHARACTER AREA



Development Standards

Development District	DUA	FAR	Min./Max. Bldg. Height
Mixed-Use CBD	15 -- 35	2.5 -- 6+	2 -- 10
Downtown Entertainment and Heritage	10 -- 25	2.5 -- 4	3 -- 6
Multi-Family Residential Redefinition	7 -- 20	.6 -- 2.5	2 -- 5
Residential Reinforcement	3 -- 5	.6 -- 1	1 -- 3
Riverfront Recreation	--	--	--
Hotel & Cultural Center	10 -- 20	2.5 -- 4	3 -- 6
Mixed-Use Civic & Institutional	10 -- 30	2.5 - 6+	2 -- 8

D. Character Areas

1. Downtown Overview

The Downtown Character Area includes the historic Central Business District of Fairmont. This Character Area was once the center of business, entertainment, retail and cultural activity for the City of Fairmont. For years, the Downtown Character Area has not been able to compete for private investment much of which has gone to other areas of the City or to other counties. The lack of investment has perpetuated a misunderstanding by the community and the private sector of the Downtown Character Area's role within the City of Fairmont. Many no longer view the Downtown Character Area as the heart and center of the community.

Although the current role of the Downtown Character Area is not well recognized or defined, the outcome of this planning effort presents a clear intent to restore the area as a center of government, civic, social and commerce activities for Marion and adjacent counties. The following projects will improve the Downtown Character Area's identity and support it's role.

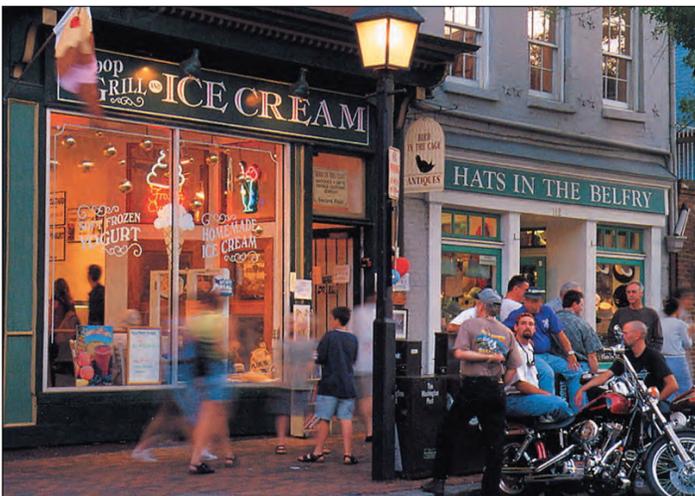
D1 - Deveny Building

The Deveny building is one of several prominent historic structures in the Downtown Character Area. This underutilized structure, owned by Vandalia Heritage Foundation (VHF), is planned as a mixed-use building to include the ground floor as commercial and educational with residential uses on the upper floors. Located in the "Entertainment and Heritage District", the reuse of the Deveny should include commercial uses at ground level as a crucial component to creating a vibrant downtown and thriving entertainment district. Repopulating the Downtown Character Area through the introduction

RENAISSANCE STRATEGY



The Downtown Entertainment and Heritage Development District should include a mix of entertainment and retail uses that encourages people to linger and animate the streets as depicted above and below.



As demonstrated above, empty lots in the Downtown Character Area should be redeveloped as close to the sidewalk as possible. Mixed-use buildings that include residential above commercial are preferred over single-use buildings.

of additional housing units in the Deveny Building is also an important objective of the FRA as part of creating a base that supports downtown commerce.

The current downtown housing market is geared towards affordable and senior housing. However, the market for singles, particularly Fairmont State University (FSU) students, is strong and the Deveny is appropriately configured and located for capturing such market as a redevelopment project. Although VHF is facilitating the redevelopment, the FRA should offer VHF or other partners support and assistance to expedite the project. Support could include securing additional financing and helping to locate the necessary developers to appropriately complete the project.

D2 - City Fire Station

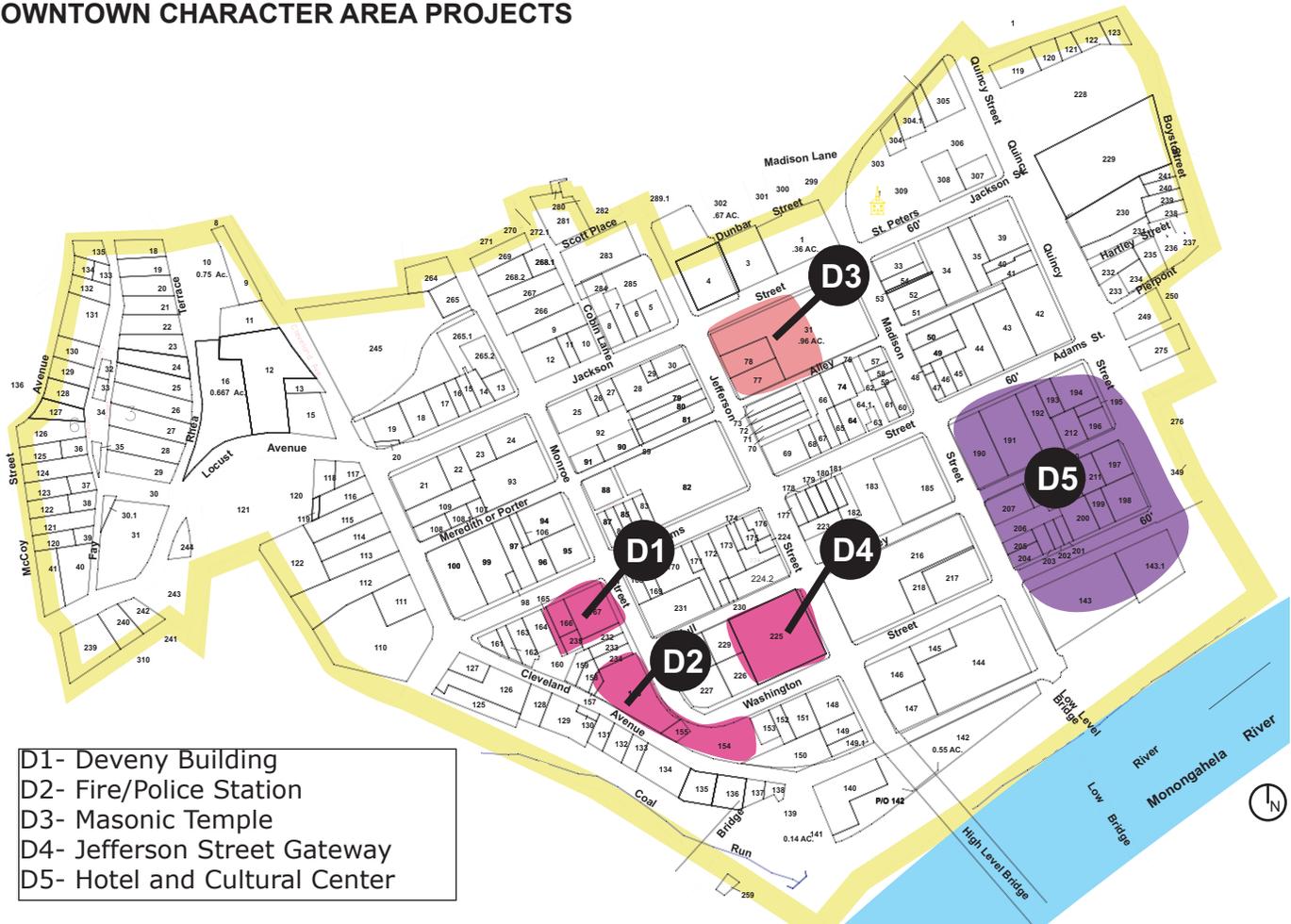
Located in the "Entertainment and Heritage District", the City Fire Station is no longer adequate for today's equipment and staffing needs. The City will relocate the police and fire departments to the new public safety building on the opposite side of downtown in 2006. Once the transition is complete, the historic City Fire Station will be available for redevelopment. The FRA's objectives support the creation of new attractors in the Downtown Character Area and the City Fire Station is appropriately configured and located for such a venture. Its new use(s) should support the concept of an active and vibrant destination and the establishment of an entertainment district. New uses could include, housing, restaurants, bars and night clubs, or health and fitness clubs. Local residents have shown interest in reusing the building for retail, arts, culture, and entertainment venues. These ventures should be encouraged and supported by the FRA.

D3 - Masonic Temple

The Masonic Temple is another defining historic structure located in the Downtown Character Area. The building is located on Jefferson Street mid-block between Jackson and Adams Streets. Completed in 1907 the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1993. The structure has remained in disrepair for many years. The underutilized building is now used as a storage facility and is in dire need of repairs in order to maintain the structure's integrity. The building is at risk of suffering from serious cosmetic and structural problems if its exterior does not receive immediate maintenance to prohibit interior exposure to the harsh elements of the West Virginia climate.

RENAISSANCE STRATEGY

DOWNTOWN CHARACTER AREA PROJECTS



The Masonic Temple can be used for a variety of uses thanks to its large spacious floor plan and sturdy steel reinforced concrete structure. Its height, location, character, and presence also make it one of the most important buildings in downtown. With the right mix of uses, the building should be able to be returned to service and aid in the redevelopment of the RA.

The biggest issue in reuse of the Masonic Temple is locating a viable use to occupy the upper stories. A soft office market in Downtown Fairmont makes conversion of upper floors to office space a less desirable option. Yet, the potential for market rate housing in Fairmont is growing. As technology and its peripheral industries continue to expand in Marion and adjacent counties, Fairmont can capture regional growth in the housing market. Furthermore, like many communities across the United States, Fairmont is seeing a growing interest in housing in downtown by young singles, couples and empty nesters. As such, one potential reuse opportunity for the building includes conversion into lofts or condos.

The potential for reuse as a mixed-use residential building is contingent upon capturing additional land adjacent to the Masonic Temple to provide adequate parking for residents, workers and patrons. Additional planning would be needed to determine the amount of parking that would be adequate for the proposed uses. In addition, a planning and feasibility study for the reuse of the Masonic Temple will be required to adequately determine the best use for the building.

D4 - Jefferson Street Gateway

The Downtown Character Area's lack of private investment is apparent when viewed from the High Level Bridge, a gateway to downtown. Moreover, the addition of the I-79/Downtown connector will increase the Downtown Character Area's visibility by drawing people from the interstate into Downtown Fairmont. As a result, the viewshed from the High Level Bridge will be the "first impression" for an increasing number of visitors. The intersection of Washington and Jefferson Streets is a prominent opportunity to address the diminished appearance of the Downtown Character Area from this

RENAISSANCE STRATEGY

A Hotel and Cultural center in Downtown Fairmont would improve the visibility and attractiveness of the City of Fairmont. Cultural space could also be used for the arts and other cultural performances.



Buildings with consistent character and quality are important to defining districts and establishing a unique aesthetic quality.

gateway. The intersection is currently occupied by a vacant Legion building, the former Fairmont Hotel and other institutional uses. This “gateway” is downtown’s front door and should offer a more appealing experience for both visitors and residents.

A prominent site from the High Level Bridge viewshed is the property once occupied as the Legion. The former Legion site should be upgraded with hospitality, entertainment or civic uses, enhancing the view and arrival experience from the High Level Bridge and intersection of Washington and Jefferson Streets. The stone wall that creates a physical and visual barrier to downtown should be reconfigured to open up the site, and thus downtown, to visitors arriving from the High

Level Bridge. This site should be developed with a structure of striking and open character that makes a statement about the City of Fairmont and its residents. Building and site design and location are of utmost importance and should maximize the urban design statement.

D5 - Hotel and Cultural Center

Downtown Fairmont has little venue space available for arts and culture events. Furthermore, no hotels are available to accommodate guests in downtown – visitors must stay in outlying areas or along Interstate 79. A new multiuse hotel and cultural complex would give Downtown Fairmont the edge it needs to compete for additional businesses, residents and visitors.

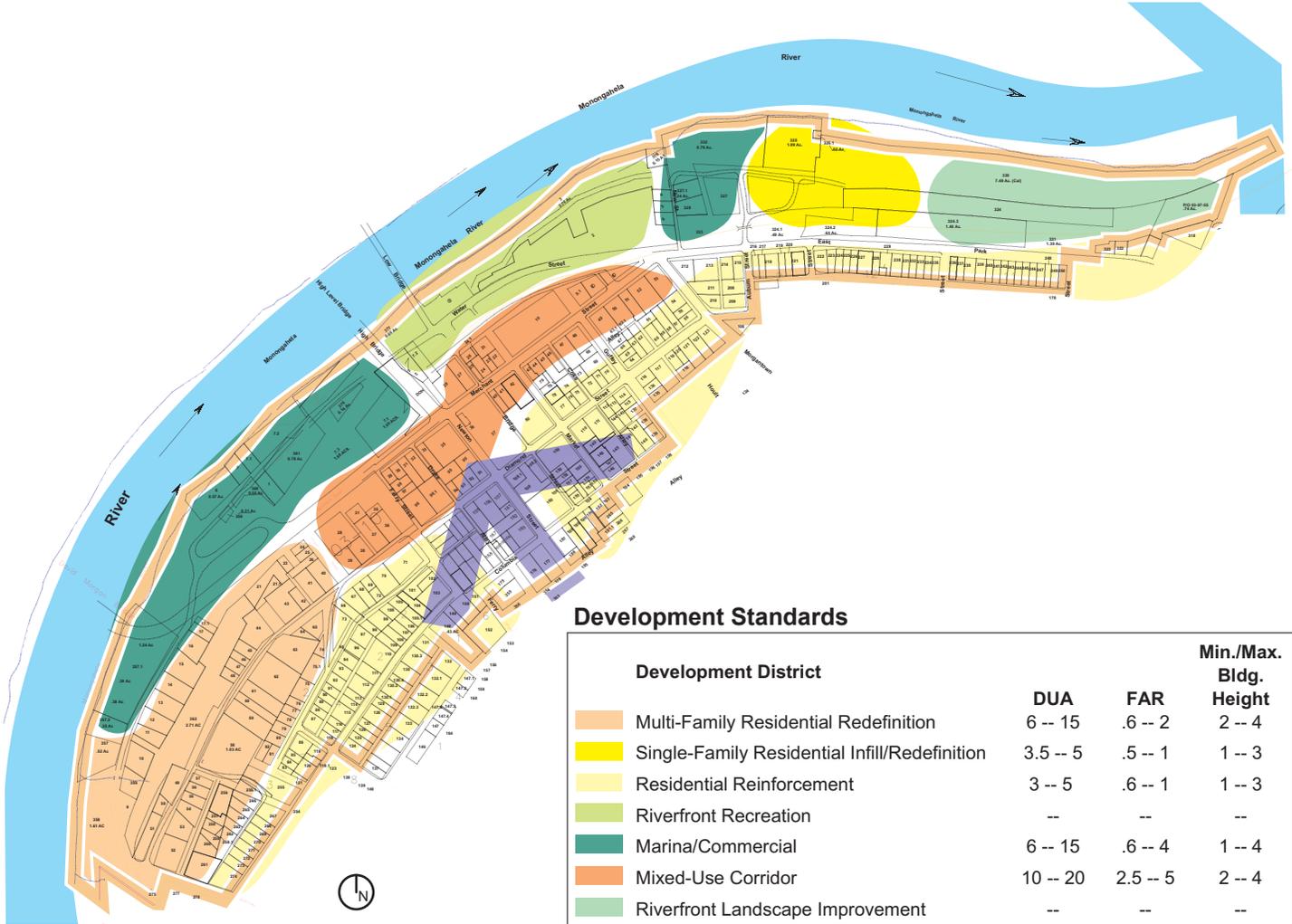
The proposed center is located on the block bounded by Adams, Madison and Quincy Streets and the Monongahela River. The area is currently comprised of a significant number of vacant lots, buildings and surface parking lots. The Fairmont Theater is also located in the proposed Hotel and Cultural center area. The site provides views and access to the Monongahela River and Adams Street – Downtown Fairmont’s “Main Street”. The site is also adjacent to the future Low Level Pedestrian Bridge.

The proposed Hotel and Cultural Center would include a multiple use structure for accommodating culturals, cultural performances, and art related activities. Redevelopment would include reuse and incorporation of the Fairmont Theater. Additional structures would be located south of the Fairmont Theater down to the Riverfront. The hotel, Fairmont Theater and multiple use complex would be interconnected. According to the *Fairmont Downtown Revitalization Plan*, the City of Fairmont can support approximately 200 additional hotel rooms and approximately 45,000 square feet of museum and arts/performance space.

Additional uses on the site could include a mix of housing and retail fronting Adams Street to the east of the Fairmont Theater. The topography of the site presents some challenges for development activity. Parking could be accommodated in the newly constructed garage on the northeast corner of Madison and Adams Streets as well as on site. Feasibility and planning studies should be conducted to accurately determine the appropriate square feet and mix of uses for the site.

RENAISSANCE STRATEGY

RIVERFRONT/MERCHANT STREET CHARACTER AREA



2. Riverfront/Merchant Street Overview

The Riverfront/Merchant Street Character Area includes the east bank of the Monongahela River. This area is currently comprised of vacant and underutilized land that is littered with remnants of former commercial uses that remain as an eyesore for users and as viewed from the Downtown Character Area. The area is haphazardly organized and includes a mix of property owners and various parcel shapes and sizes. The area to the southeast of the riverfront includes the struggling Merchant Street commercial corridor and a residential area with an amalgamation of housing styles and ages. This area includes a significant number of vacant lots and structures.

Fairmont has not effectively utilized the Riverfront/Merchant Street Character Area to reconnect itself to its river city past and provide uses that attract people to the City of Fairmont. The Character

Area's current role is not well defined. Existing uses suggest that it is primarily a struggling commercial corridor that offers daily goods and services to surrounding neighborhoods. However, the Character Area should be a much more well defined and vibrant area given its proximity to downtown, coming connection to I-79 and direct access to the Monongahela Riverfront. As such, the *Fairmont Renaissance Plan* outlines strategies for redefining the Riverfront/Merchant Street Character Area into a more dynamic and active place. The proposed I-79/Downtown Connector and its underutilized riverfront present this area with reconfiguration opportunities that should be guided and used to create a community gathering and regional attractor that includes a range of housing, shopping and recreational uses. A comprehensive and planned approach to redevelopment is critical in order to give this Character Area a cohesive and unified development theme that fulfills its larger role.

RENAISSANCE STRATEGY



Development of a marina in the Riverfront/Merchant Street Character Area is a vital component to successful redevelopment of the RA. A new marina would create a unique regional attractor to distinguish Fairmont from surrounding communities.

Careful consideration should be given to the design and commercial mix of the Riverfront/Merchant Street Character Area. The entire riverfront project should be connected with pedestrian paths and a riverfront boardwalk to encourage people to stay in the area once out of their automobile. Furthermore, the addition of shops and restaurants to the riverfront should be limited in number and to establishments that are related to surrounding activities. The proper development mix for this area is important. The riverfront should complement and enhance downtown and should not compete for redevelopment activities. Striking a balance in investment patterns and uses is important for the successful redevelopment of both geographies.

The projects outlined below support the Character Area's role as a mixed-use community gathering space that provides public access to the Monongahela Riverfront.



New multi-family housing in the Riverfront/Merchant Street Character Area is important to revitalization of the riverfront. As pictured above and below, new housing can take many forms including condos and townhouses.

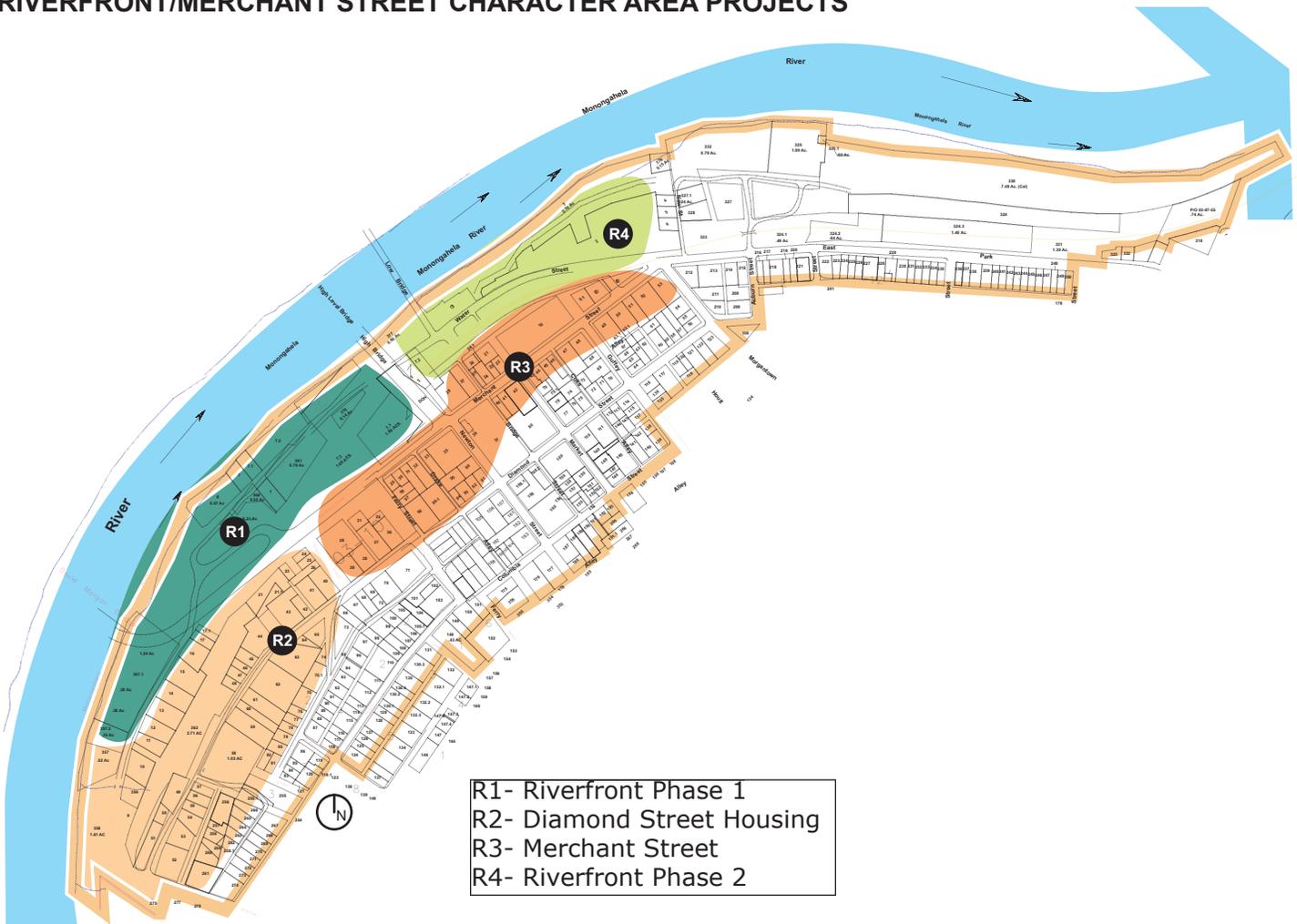


The riverfront should provide spaces for community gatherings and events as well as personal recreation and reflection. The new park should be functional but also whimsical and interactive.



RENAISSANCE STRATEGY

RIVERFRONT/MERCHANT STREET CHARACTER AREA PROJECTS



R1- Riverfront Phase 1

The guiding principle for redevelopment of the Phase 1 Riverfront is creating a mixed-use riverfront development that reconnects Fairmont to the Monongahela River by establishing access to the river with public open space, and a mix of uses including residential dwellings and private shops and restaurants. Although open space would be predominantly public, private operations related to boating and water sports and dining is encouraged. Proposed north of the Third Street Bridge, the marina would include boat slips, a launching dock, and a restaurant with related shops. A new housing component is proposed immediately south of the Third Street Bridge along Diamond Street.

R2 Diamond Street Housing

The southwest portion of the Riverfront/Merchant Street Character Area is largely undeveloped and vacant. Much of the housing that exists in this area is lower density and marginal in quality and appearance. A number of the structures in the area require substantial investment in order to



New multi-family housing in the Diamond Street area could include townhouses that front the street and relate to the riverfront and the proposed marina.

RENAISSANCE STRATEGY



New restaurants and retail in the Riverfront/Merchant Street Character Area should be limited to enterprises that relate to the marina or serve surrounding neighborhoods.



The new Downtown/I-79 Connector will bring new visibility to the City of Fairmont. The Riverfront/Merchant Street Character Area should provide interesting and unique gateway statements to visitors.

meet building and zoning codes. The investment in the adjacent Riverfront Phase 1 and the I-79/ Downtown Connector, offer the opportunity to redefine this area. The FRA should present a clear and comprehensive approach for redevelopment of this area that improves the quality and increases the housing choices available in the RA.

If left unchecked, the area could redevelop in a piecemeal manor that offers no clear identity to the neighborhood. A suburban housing solution in this area is not the recommended development pattern. Housing should be more urban in character and incorporate a pedestrian scale with walkable connections to surrounding areas. In addition, the area should relate well to its surroundings including strong visual and physical connections to proposed developments along the riverfront and neighborhoods. Development should not become an enclave that is fragmented and disconnected from the riverfront, downtown and surrounding areas. Failure to make adequate connections to other areas will inhibit leveraging of additional development along the Riverfront and Merchant Street and in the Downtown Character Area.

R3- Merchant Street

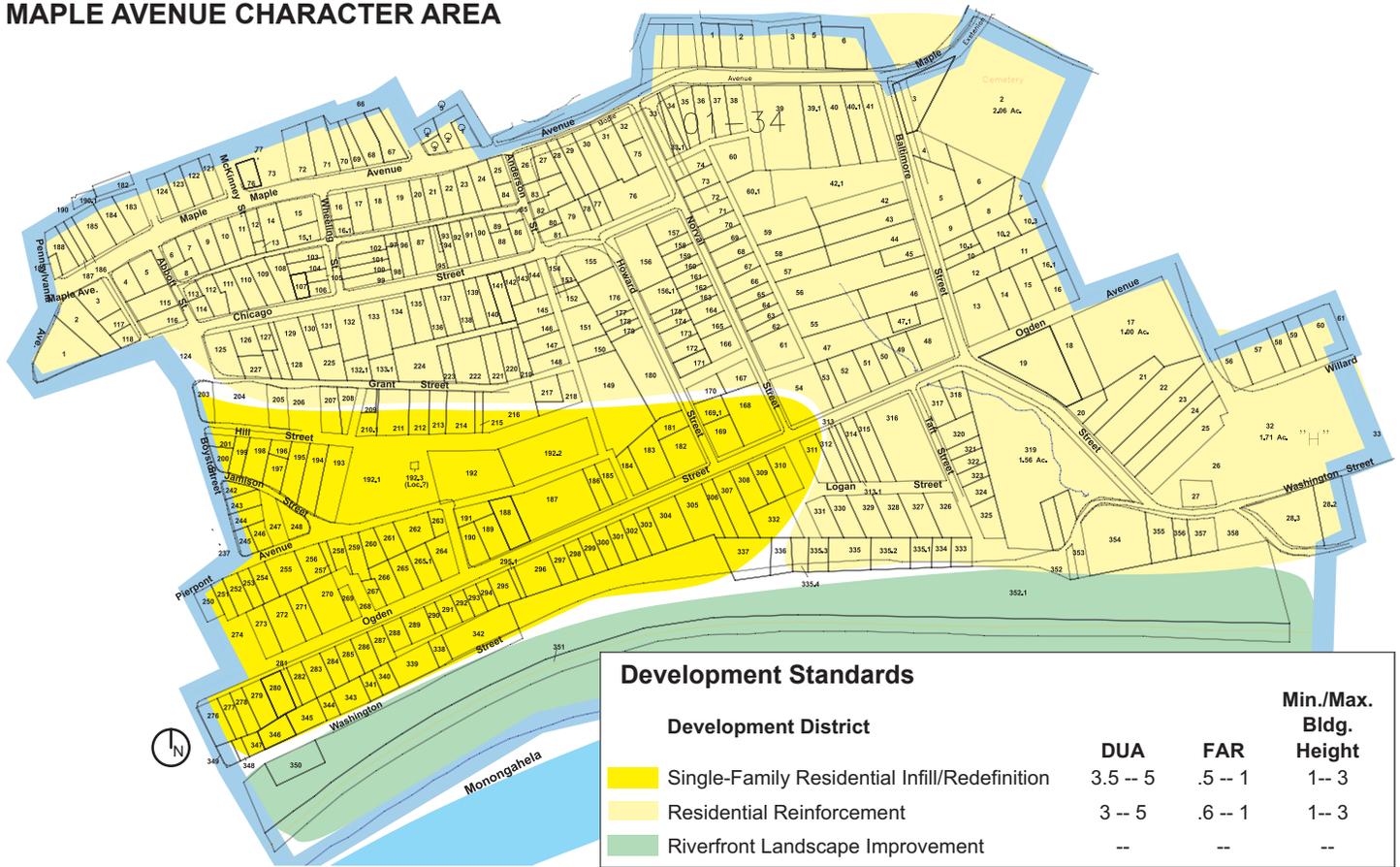
Merchant Street is an important but struggling mixed-use neighborhood commercial corridor providing goods and services to the surrounding area. Although the property fronting Merchant Street is mostly occupied and businesses are operational, the corridor’s role as a mixed-use neighborhood corridor is not well defined. Redefinition of the corridor is inevitable with construction of the new Downtown/I-79 connector and future riverfront investments. The corridor’s proximity to the riverfront makes it an excellent location for a truly mixed-use corridor including restaurants, neighborhood shops and unique housing with a view to downtown. The area could also play a secondary hospitality role within the RA with the development of a hotel with direct access to I-79. Care should be given to implementing a planned and unified development approach.

R4- Riverfront Phase 2

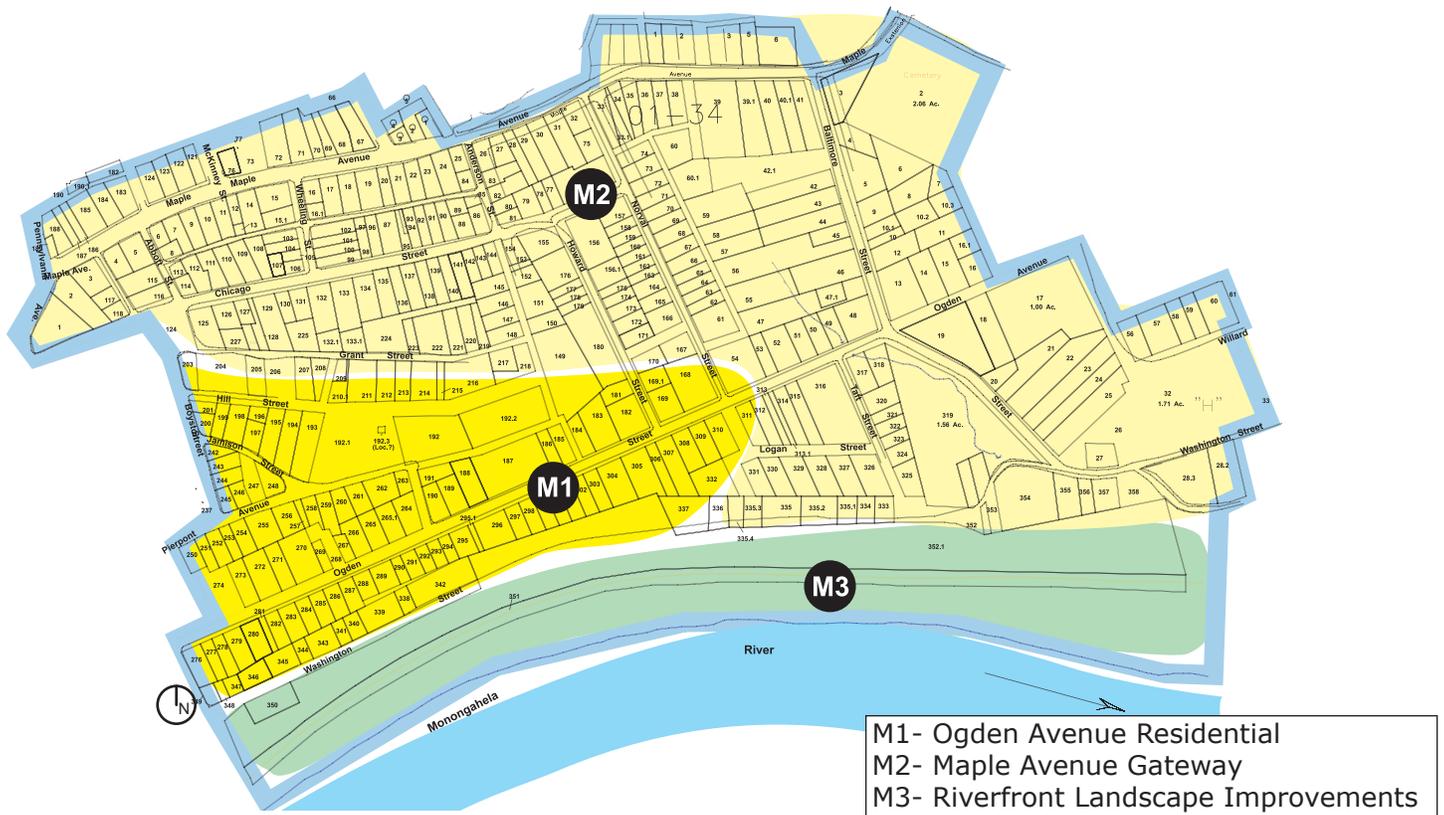
The downtown/I-79 Connector will provide the opportunity for additional private investment along the riverfront. The area immediately northeast of the High Level Bridge could include open space for large programmed events and community gatherings. Well defined connections to surrounding residential and commercial uses are important to the success of the riverfront.

RENAISSANCE STRATEGY

MAPLE AVENUE CHARACTER AREA



MAPLE AVENUE CHARACTER AREA PROJECTS



RENAISSANCE STRATEGY



Rejuvenating existing historic homes is important to preserving the existing character of the Maple Avenue Character Area. New housing should be sensitive to the design of historic structures.



The Maple Avenue Character Area has a significant amount of vacant and undeveloped land. Vacant lots should be returned to residential use. The area should be cordoned into neighborhoods with distinct markers and a unifying design. This area should provide housing for a mix of incomes including upper market rate.



3. Maple Avenue

Overview

Near downtown housing is an important aspect in making any downtown operational. Nearby residents support downtown businesses and events and make downtown an active and vital place particularly after normal business hours. One strategic neighborhood in proximity to downtown includes the Maple Avenue Character Area. The Maple Avenue Character Area was once a thriving residential area adjacent to Downtown Fairmont. Revitalization of this neighborhood is key to successful redevelopment of the broader RA. The City of Fairmont, Vandalia Heritage Foundation and the Fairmont Community Development Partnership (FCDP) have already initiated efforts to improve the housing quality in this area.

M1- Ogden Avenue Residential

The Ogden Avenue Residential project should include infill housing with predominantly single-family residential homes to fit a mix of incomes. The area has a number of historic homes that should be rehabilitated to help reestablish the character of the neighborhood. New infill homes should resemble the historic character and quality of former and existing architectural styles. Additional study will be needed to determine the best approach for redevelopment of the area.

M2- Maple Avenue Gateway

The Fairmont Community Development Partnership has already accomplished a significant amount of work in the Maple Avenue Character Area. The FRA should seek a partnership with the FCDP or other partners to support the completion of this initiative.

M3- Riverfront Landscape Improvements

The riverfront along the Maple Avenue Character Area is overgrown with thick brush and dense tree foliage. As a result, the properties along Ogden Avenue have an obstructed, or in most cases, no view to the riverfront. A strategic landscape plan is recommended for this area that improves view access to bolster investment in the adjacent properties.