

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 14, 2010

TO: The Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

FROM: Parwez Alam, County Administrator

SUBJECT: Gadsden Street Parking Lot Sector Plan

As directed by the Board at the March 23, 2010 meeting, staff has prepared a sector plan regarding the Gadsden Street parking lot. This information will also be included on the May 25, 2010 agenda.

Encl: Gadsden Street parking lot sector plan

Tallahassee-Leon County
Planning Department**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Parwez Alam, County Administrator
THROUGH: Vince Long, Deputy County Administrator
FROM: Wayne Tedder, AICP, Director, Tallahassee-Leon Co. Planning Department
DATE: May 14, 2010
SUBJECT: Riley House Small Area Plan – Related Planning Department projects

INTRODUCTION

The approximately 1-acre county-owned parking lot parcel, totally slightly more than 1 acre, is located near the center of downtown. It is bounded by Meridian Street on the east, Pensacola Street to the south, Gadsden Street on the west, and other parcels – including the historic Riley House – to the north. The downtown area has been the subject of past and on-going planning initiatives, and the county-owned parcel falls within the bounds of several agencies and regulatory overlays. The following report summarizes each agency's proposals in the immediate area and the possible effects of the overlays and applicable regulations. This summary did not include a market analysis for the County site, but as is the case with the Fairgrounds parcel, near term redevelopment of any significant amount is not anticipated for this property in the near future. It seems practical that increased interest of this site will not occur until the completion of the Cascades Park and when a sizeable upturn of the economy occurs. Such an upturn will be evident when a recognized need for additional commercial, office and retail occurs within the immediate area.

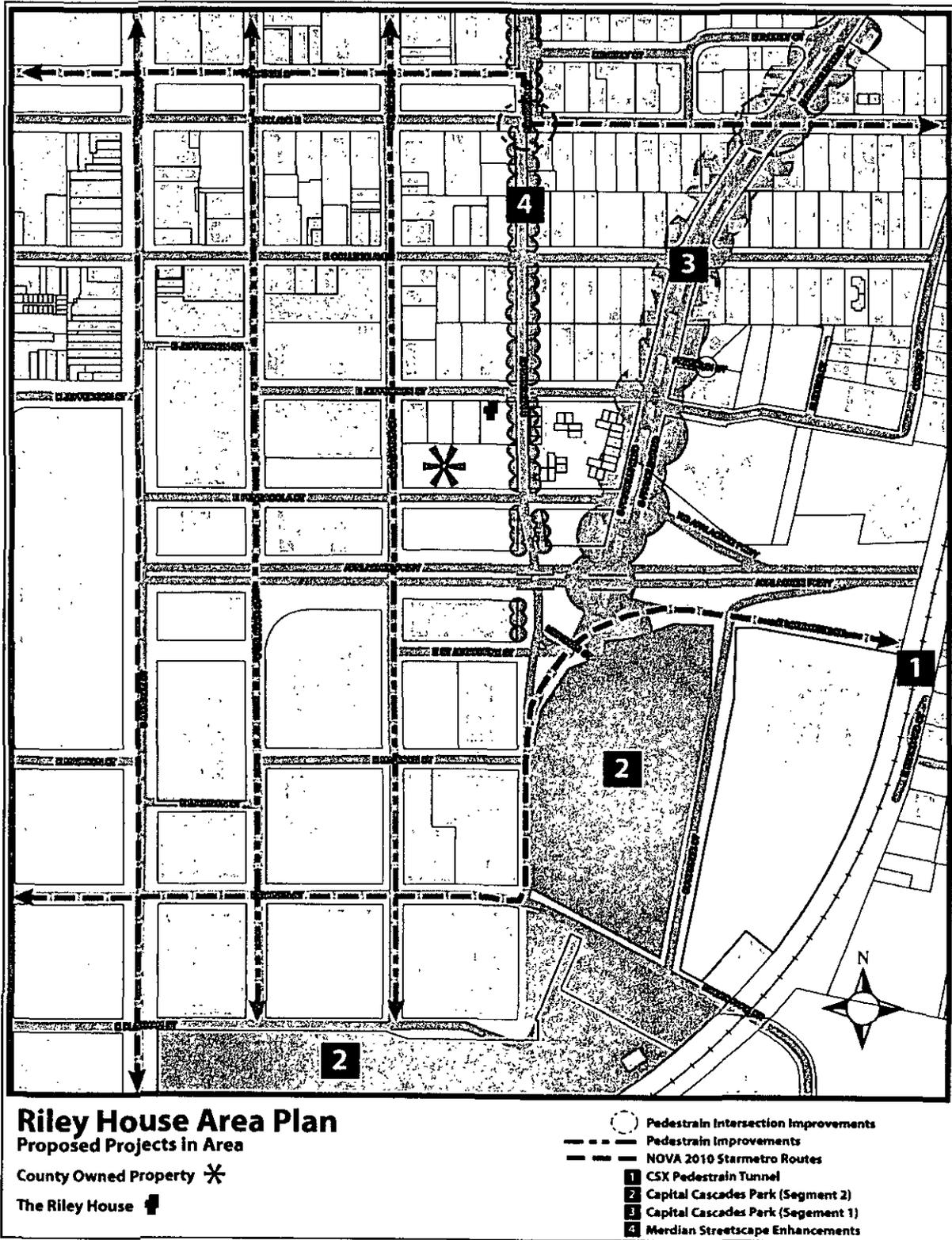
SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

The county parcel abuts the Riley House site. As defined by the Downtown Community Redevelopment Agency's Plan, the surface parking lot is a "prime development" site that is currently underutilized. The existing and proposed land development regulations applicable to this block of downtown allow for maximization of on-site development. Specific agencies can assist financially.

1. There are benefits as a fully impervious (paved) site. Future development will not be required to retain stormwater on-site, a considerable cost savings.
2. Recent Comprehensive Plan amendments exempt downtown from slope preservation or mitigation, thereby removing a past development impediment.
3. By Summer 2010, the site will be rezoned to Central Core, which allows a full range of urban uses, such as office, residential, retail, restaurant, museum, studio/galleries, etc.
4. The height limit for the subject site is 7-stories, and front setbacks are minimal (15'), which gives ample room for street tree plantings.
5. Residential density is permitted up to 150 dwelling units per acre, and there is no limitation on non-residential square footage, except those created by height and setback limitations.
6. The subject site is exempt from parking standards. This means a proposed development can set a unique parking ratio. Therefore, the parking decision is market based [i.e., what is needed for the tenant], and a site can rely fully upon on-street parking or surrounding parking garages.
7. Proposed development on the site could be eligible for financial assistance from the CRA.
8. Proposed development on the site could utilize incentives of the State Enterprise Zone.

Additionally, the subject site should benefit due to its close proximity to the proposed projects included in the following map, *Figure 1*.

Figure 1.

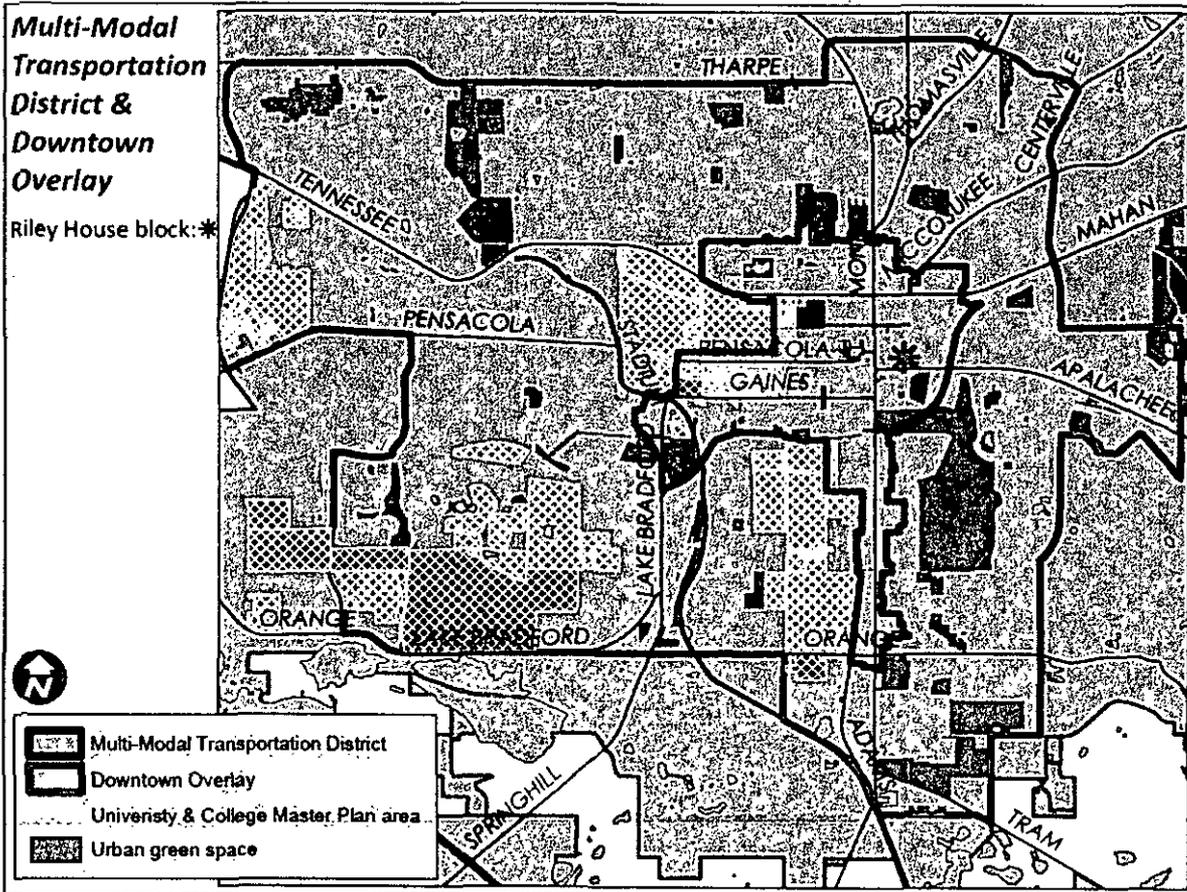


CURRENT PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT (2009)

The Multi-Modal Transportation District (MMTD) is an 18 square mile area in the center of Tallahassee, *Figure 2.*, and the supporting policy direction represents a complete change in past local development philosophy. Within this District, the City of Tallahassee, Leon County, and State of Florida have committed to planning primarily for the pedestrian, bicyclist, and transit. That means the design of infrastructure and new development will make the pedestrian and bicyclist experience a safe and pleasant one. Within this district, different standards for roads will apply – even on state arterials – and any mitigation fees paid to offset transportation impacts will be directed toward pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements instead of road widening. The Riley House site is located squarely in the middle of the MMTD. The changes in concurrency fees within the district will support the backlog of projects that support alternative transportation modes. As part of the MMTD project, that backlog was incorporated into the Capital Improvements Plan, and includes several intersection pedestrian improvements in close proximity to the Riley House, as depicted previously in *Figure 1.*

Figure 2.

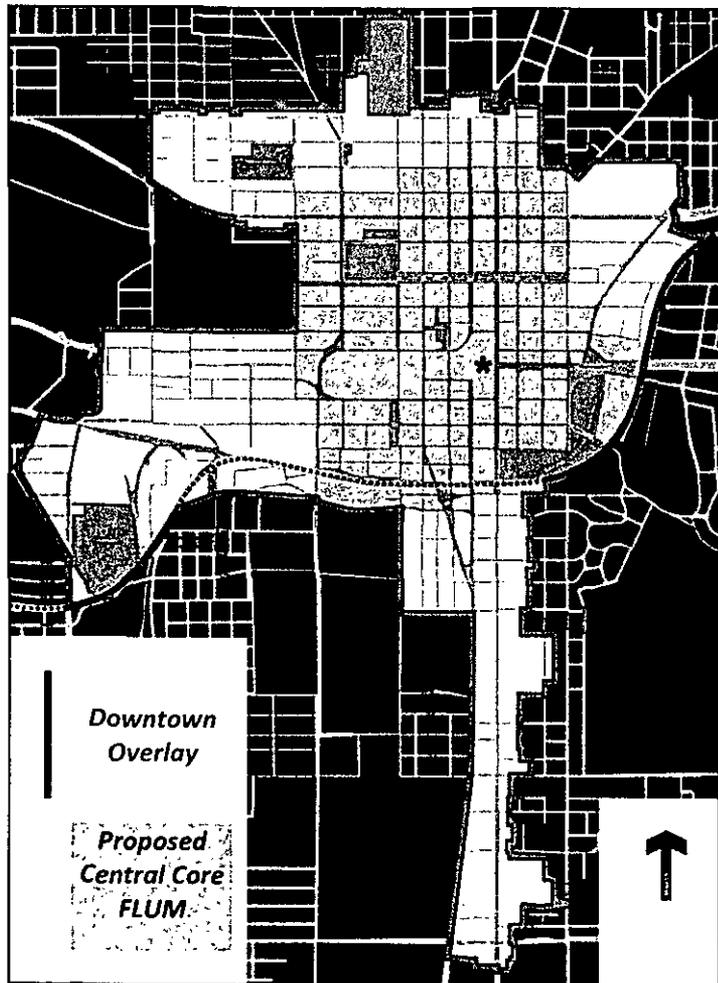


DOWNTOWN OVERLAY AND REGULATING PLAN MAP SERIES (2010)

Over the past 20 years, Planning initiatives have been undertaken in the downtown by several different entities. Each resulted in recommendations and some level of codification in the Comprehensive Plan or City Land Development Code. Planning staff recognized that the numerous recommendations created numerous layers that can be redundant and needlessly complicated. Additionally, the State has decided to consolidate certain departmental operations at the Capital Circle Office Complex, thus presenting an increased opportunity for redevelopment or re-use of properties within the downtown State office campus. Therefore, Planning staff initiated Comprehensive Plan amendments to simplify the redundancies, while also increasing the ease with which a redevelopment proposal can maneuver through the review process. Both of the following Comprehensive Plan amendments became effective in January 2010. A summary of the changes follows.

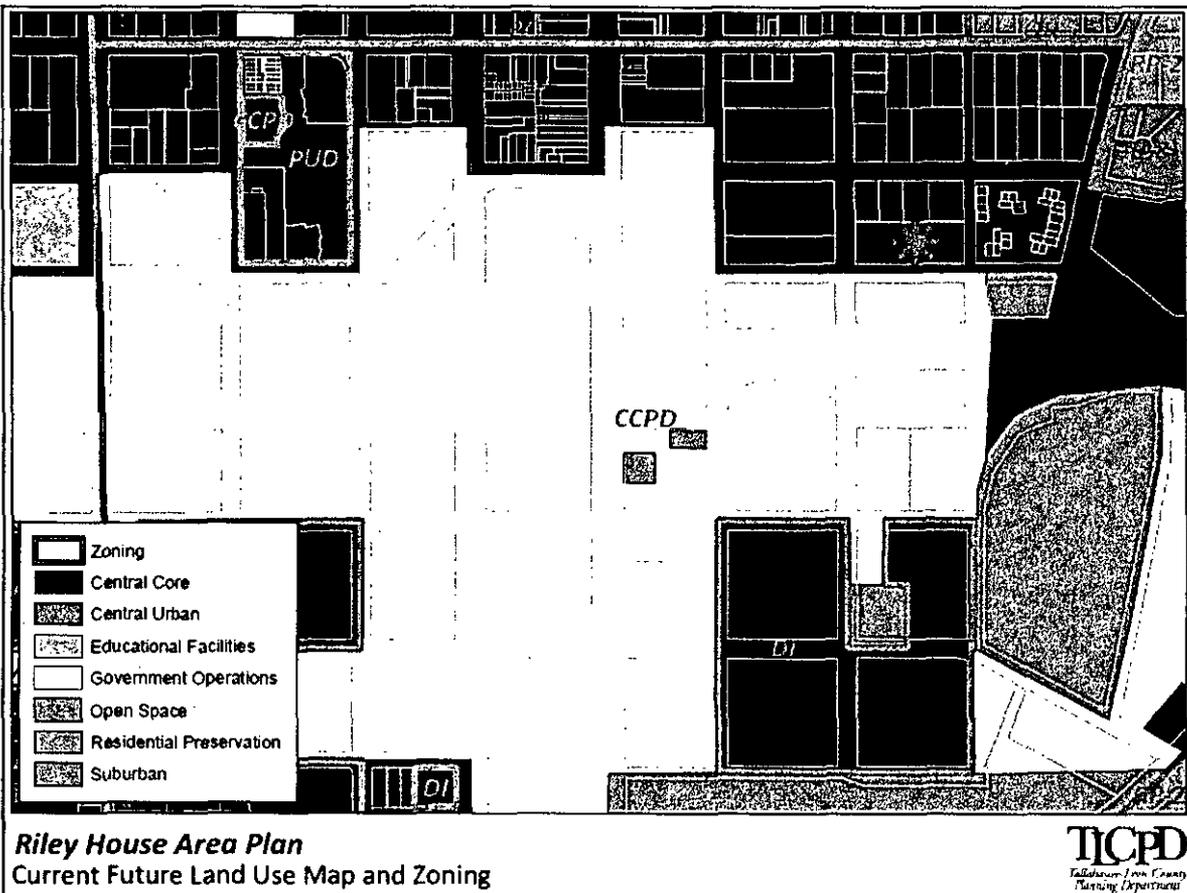
- Comprehensive Plan Amendments.
 - Several existing overlays, such as the Urban Central Business District, Urban Core, Gaines Street Redevelopment Area, and Downtown Retail/ Entertainment Core, have been combined into a single Downtown Overlay – at right in *Figure 3*. – that preserves the existing development incentives, including exemptions from or reduced parking standards, reduced on-site green space requirements, and exemptions to severe slope preservation regulations.
 - Much of downtown has limited permitted land uses because properties are designated Governmental Operations on the future land use map (FLUM). This reflects the historic use of downtown as the State office campus, but is an obstruction to redevelopment, as it does not permit residential or retail uses. Proposed amendments will change these properties to Central Core FLUM category, which will allow a truly urban mixture of uses.

Figure 3.



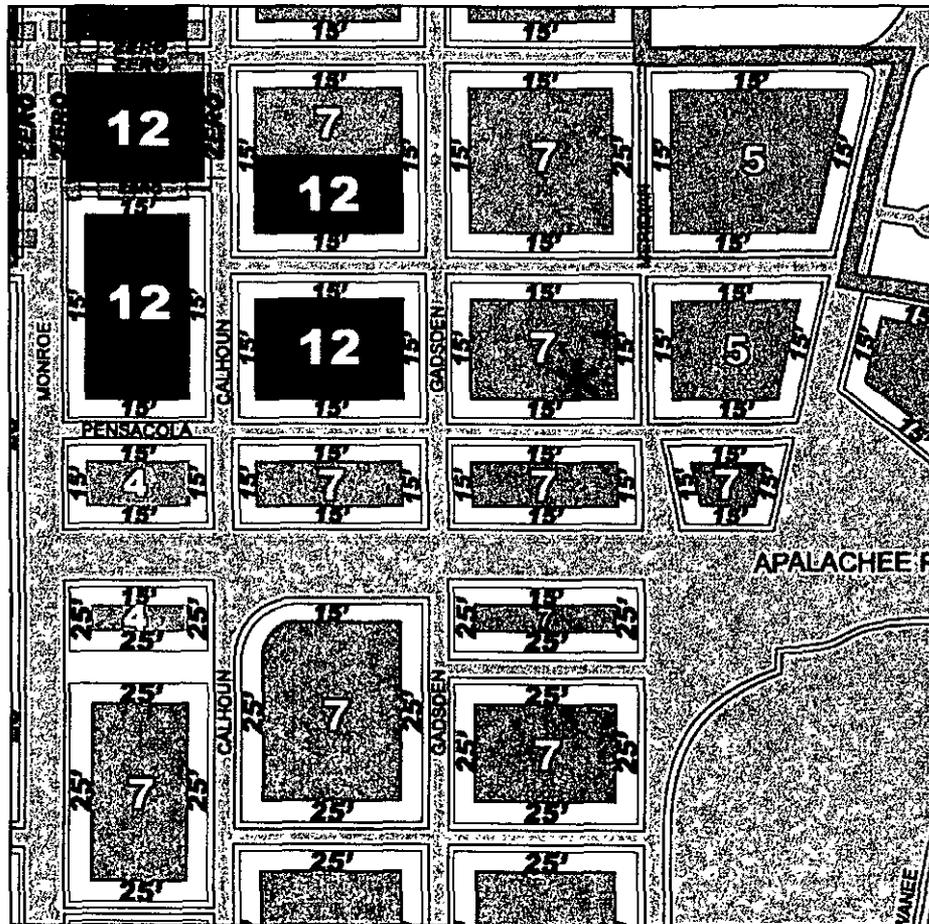
- Rezoning.
 - Similar to the Comprehensive Plan amendments, rezonings are currently taking place in an attempt to remove redundancies from the Code and streamlined the redevelopment process. In brief, three zoning districts, see DI, RO, and CCPD below in *Figure 4.*, with three different lists of permitted uses and development and design standards are being combined into a single Central Core zoning district. The Central Core district will allow a full mixture of uses while maintaining the development and design standards necessary to create a pedestrian oriented downtown. These rezonings will go before the Planning and City Commission for public hearings in May and June, respectively, with an estimated adoption date of June 23, 2010.

Figure 4.



- Regulating Plan map series.
 - The map series – a thumbnail of which is provided in *Figure 5*. – seeks to place as much regulatory information as possible on an easily legible map series and, in the process, discard pages of textual requirements that are in different City code sections. The end result will be much easier to use and consolidate several redundant Code sections.

Figure 5.



The Riley House block, including the County-owned property, is currently designated Government Operational, and will benefit from the change to the Central Core FLUM category and subsequent rezoning. The block will be rezoned from Capital Center Planning District (CCPD) to Central Core (CC), which will then allow a variety of uses. The Central Core zoning district is permitted up to 150 dwelling units per acre and can develop at any intensity (square feet per acre) as long as development adheres to the land development regulations that create a developable envelope for a given site.

While heights and setbacks will vary according to the Regulating Plan, depicted above in *Figure 5*., the subject block has a 7-story height limit and a 15-foot front setback, to allow for a wide sidewalk and street tree plantings. The block is located within a transitional area between an intense pocket along Monroe Street that permits taller structures and a low-density residential neighborhood with a proposed 3-story height limit east of the St. Augustine Branch.

Within the Downtown Overlay and the larger MMTD, staff proposes land development regulations that will preserve current landscaping requirements for surface parking lots and add urban design treatments to parking garages. Generally, landscape islands and perimeter landscaping will remain a requirement of

surface lots, and parking structures will be required to wrap 50 percent of the first floor façade with active uses (i.e., leasable space).

STARMETRO: NOVA 2010

The Tallahassee City Commission voted in March to approve the proposed decentralization of StarMetro's antiquated spoke-and-wheel transit system. The decentralized system will reduce headways and rely upon transfer points throughout the community. Several routes, as depicted in *Figure 1.*, will travel through downtown in close proximity to the Riley House.

- B (Big Bend): This route follows the north-south Monroe Street axis, and is proposed to have 20 minute peak headways.
- E (Evergreen): This route follows the Park Avenue east-west axis, and is proposed to have 30 minute peak headways.
- T (Tall Timbers): This is an east-west route that uses Gaines, Meridian, and Lafayette Streets to the south of the Riley House area. It is proposed to have continuous 30-minute headways.

Such frequent headways in close proximity to the subject site can be seen as a marketable benefit for future tenants, employees, or residents.

PRIOR PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

GREENWAYS MASTER PLAN (2004)

The county-approved master plan prioritized acquisition of 17 greenway and trail segments. The public deemed the Upper and Lower Capital Cascades Greenways as the top priority. This segment of the greenway system begins at the intersection of Franklin Avenue and E. Tennessee Street, and it then follows the St. Augustine Branch to a connection with the St. Marks Trail on the west side of the Bond neighborhood. Blueprint 2000 is administering this high priority project.

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN (2004)

The Tallahassee-Leon County MPO – predecessor of the CRTPA – finalized the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan six years ago, and an update process will be completed as part of the Regional Mobility Plan, which is scheduled to be complete in November 2010. This effort is being led by the CRTPA. The original plan recognized the need to improve numerous facilities in Tallahassee's downtown to improve pedestrian and bicycle transport modes. To that end, the following projects, as depicted previously in *Figure 1.*, were recommended in the eastern downtown area.

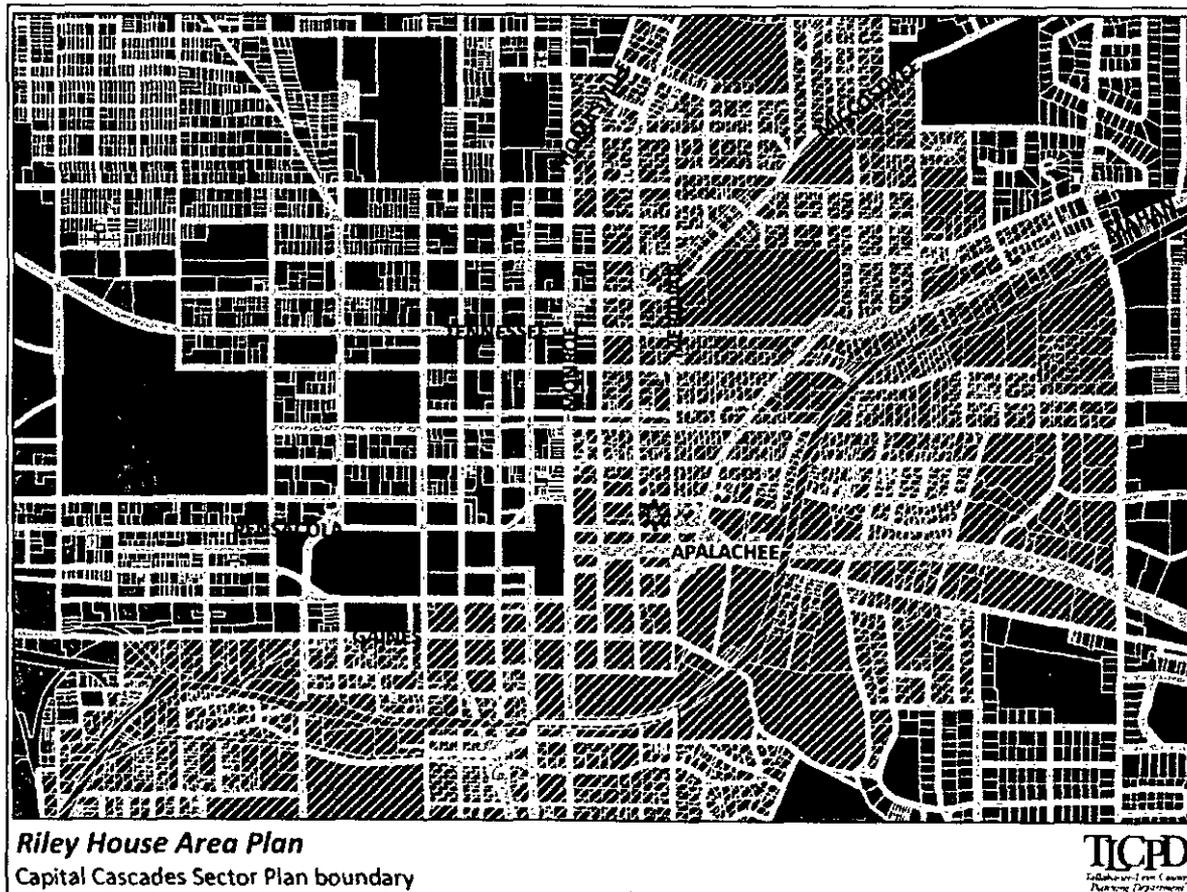
- Franklin Avenue, Cascades Park, and St. Augustine Branch reconstruction.
 - According to Blueprint 2000 documents, this section of the Cascades Trail will involve placing the existing stream in a large culvert, installing a landscaped median and vehicular turning lanes, and creating a wide multi-use trail on the westside of the roadway to link Tennessee Street to the Cascades Park.
- Downtown improvements, enhancements, and maintenance.
 - These are general upgrades and improvements, such as curb ramps, installation of missing sidewalk sections, or the removal of obstacles from the sidewalk.
- Lafayette Street pedestrian tunnel.
 - According to CRTPA staff, this project – long planned for and only recently funded – is slated to begin construction in 2010. It will continue the Lafayette Street sidewalk, where it currently forces walkers into vehicular traffic, as the bridge abutments are too narrow.
- Traffic control and pedestrian enhancements on the Gadsden/Calhoun one-way pairs.
 - The plan lacks specific construction details, but such improvements could include a major project like reduction in roadway width to 2-lanes, or a smaller item such as the addition of bulb-outs to reduce pedestrian crossing distances at intersections.

CAPITAL CASCADES SECTOR PLAN (2005)

Across the Southern Strategy Area, several community-based planning efforts were undertaken and resulted in sector plans, one of which covered the subject area. The Capital Cascades Sector Plan, a portion of which is shown in *Figure 6.*, concluded with a list of recommended action items. While several items were site specific and would have little effect on the subject area, the following items are applicable.

- Facilitate the redevelopment of former state office buildings into residential or mixed-use projects. Staff has addressed this recommendation with the Central Core FLUM comprehensive plan amendments and rezonings, as noted previously.
- Utilize non-intrusive CPTED (crime prevention through environmental design) principles in trail/greenway design and in adjacent neighborhoods. Essentially, this means that users should feel safe while using the trail. This can be achieved through adequate lighting that ensures facial identification and prevents dark trail sections, or installation of landscaping that maintains clear sight lines from adjacent homes to the trail, which fulfills the “eyes on the street” security principle. Such considerations should be a part of the trail design process.
- Continue more specific, detailed neighborhood planning efforts within the sector plan areas.

Figure 6.



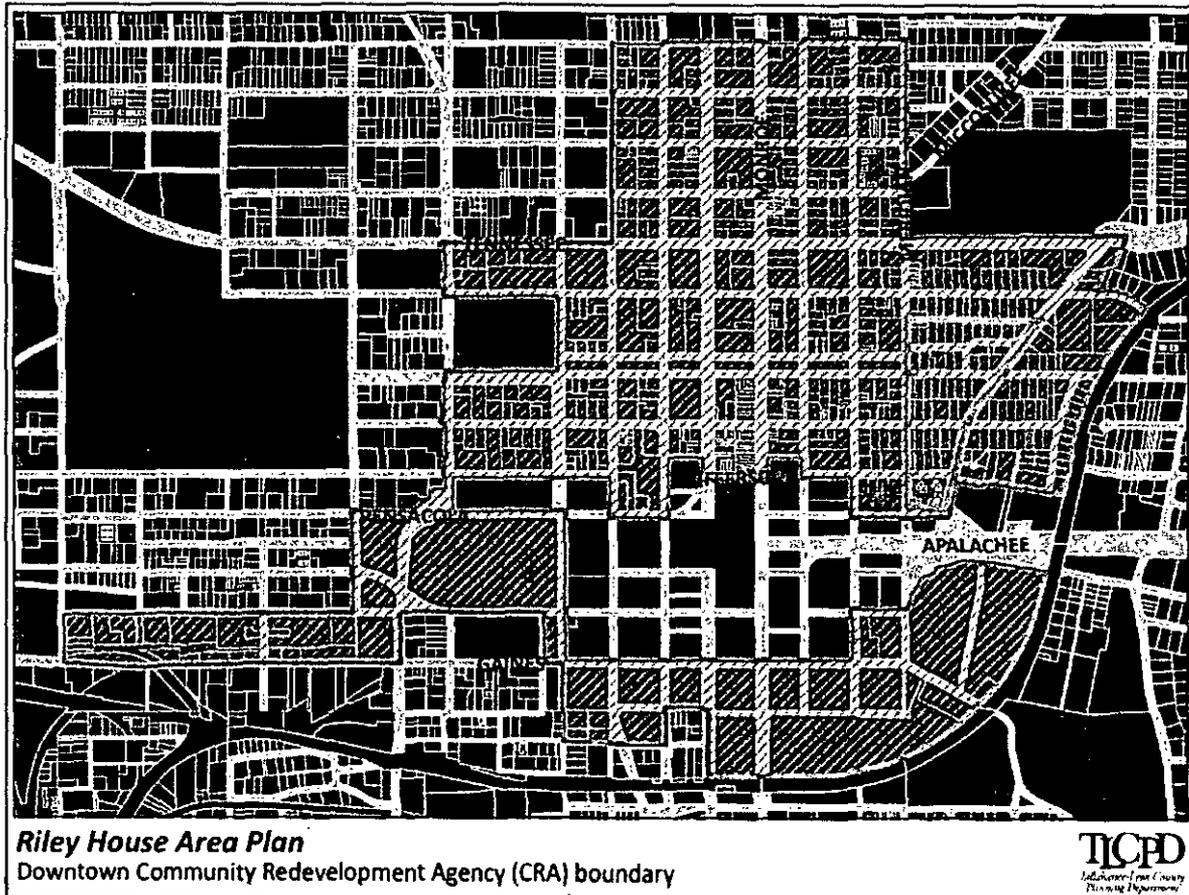
OTHER APPLICABLE AREA ACTIVITIES

DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA (2004)

In 2004, the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) finalized the Downtown Redevelopment Plan, which applies to the entire CRA area, as depicted in *Figure 7*. This plan offers a laundry list of areas suitable for investment; including streetscape improvements and pedestrian amenities, gateway enhancements, signage and wayfinding, parking accommodation, parkland expansion, and redevelopment opportunities. The recommendations stretch across the CRA Downtown boundary from Gaines Street in the southwest to E. Tennessee Street in the northwest. The following items would affect the area in proximity to the subject block.

- The entire block on which the county-owned property is located – bounded by Meridian, Pensacola, Jefferson, and Calhoun Streets – is given high priority as a “Development Opportunity Site.” These sites were selected because each are “vacant lands...with prime development prospective.” In the CRA Redevelopment Plan, vacant lands included surface parking lots, which are considered an inefficient use of urban, downtown property.
- Promote medium density residential redevelopment in the triangular area (see *Figure 7*, green outline) between Beverly Street, Meridian Street, and both sides of Franklin Boulevard. It was envisioned that this area redevelops as an urban neighborhood of apartments or townhomes in the “appropriate architectural character, scale, and density.”
- Provide minor streetscape improvements along Meridian Street. There are no construction details in the plan, but the street lacks sidewalk segments north of Park Avenue and has none south of Park Avenue. Additional improvements, the location of which is depicted in *Figure 1.*, would include street tree plantings and formalization of on-street parking.

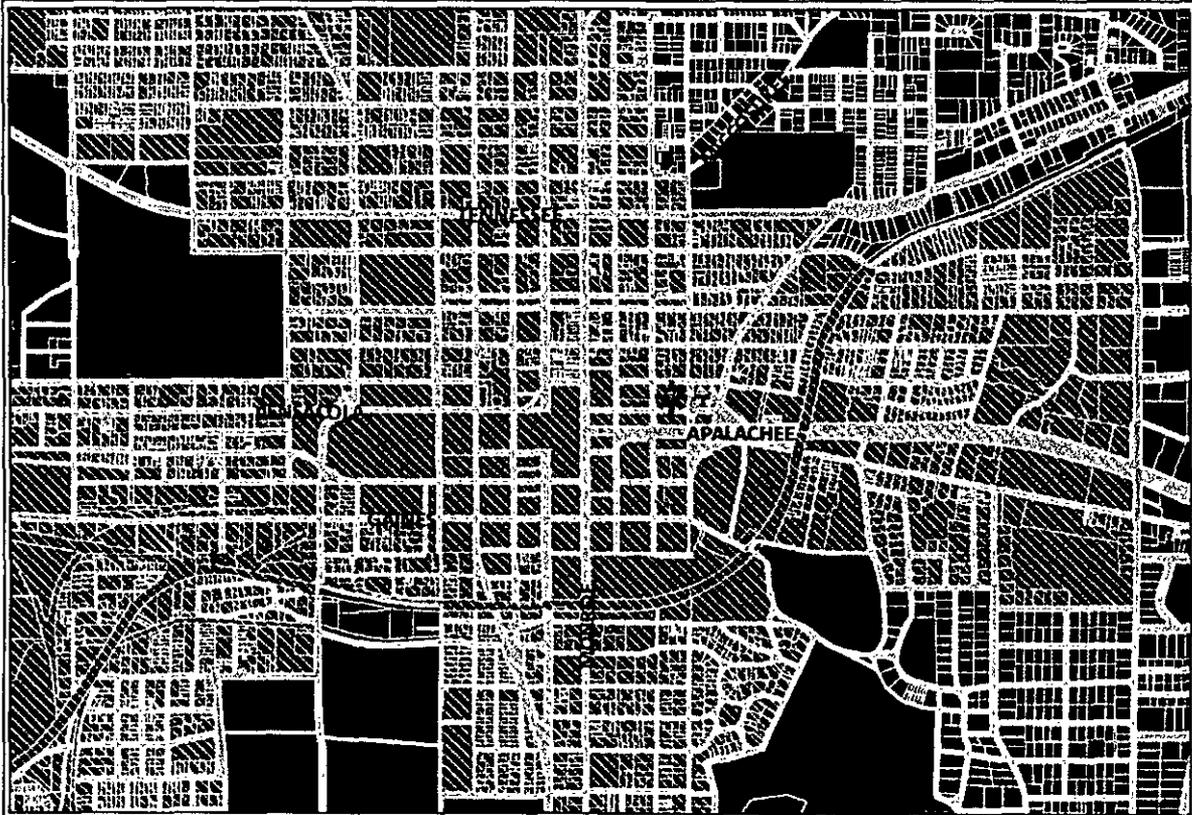
Figure 7.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF TALLAHASSEE- LEON COUNTY: ENTERPRISE ZONE

The subject site is located in the State Enterprise Zone. The Enterprise Zone is a joint City and County program that has designated a 20 square mile area of Leon County. Businesses that locate or expand their operations are eligible for various state tax credits. Potential benefits include a jobs tax credit for new employees who live within an enterprise zone boundary, rebates of state sales tax paid for equipment and construction materials, a state tax credit for increases in local property taxes due to property improvements, and a state tax credit for donated materials. A map of the downtown areas within the Enterprise Zone is included below in *Figure 8*.

Figure 8.



Riley House Area Plan
Economic Development Council: Enterprise Zone boundary

