

1 Purpose and Study Area

Downtown Bentonville Timeline

1836
Bentonville chosen as County Seat.

1862
Downtown is largely destroyed by fire related to Civil War action.

1883
Bentonville Branch Railroad opens linking to Frisco's main line in Rogers.

1888
First Benton County Fair held in Bentonville.

1893
Henry Star gang robs the People's Bank of Bentonville.

1901
Bentonville celebrates orchard business with first Fruit Fair.

1906
U.S. Weather Bureau office opens in Bentonville.

1931
U.S. Highway 71 built between Bentonville and Rogers.

1950
Sam Walton opens Walton's Five and Dime on Bentonville Square.

The City of Bentonville is undergoing a significant transition. Bentonville is no longer a small Arkansas town. A growth spurt began in the late 1990's when the population increased by 31% between 1995 and 2000. The trend continued between 2000 and 2003, with a population increase of 27% in just three years. The projection for the city by the year 2025 is 62,000.

The combination of rapid growth and the home of one of the largest employers in the world, Wal-Mart, puts Bentonville in a position to make a name and place for itself.

Downtown Bentonville was the location of the original town in 1836 and the heart of the community. It was a place where people shopped, worked, lived and congregated. It was the "place to be" on Saturday afternoons.

Over the years the role of downtown changed. The movie theater closed, restaurants located where they had more land for parking, and new subdivisions were built on the outskirts of town. The city was losing its center of community.

Purpose

The city and other civic organizations have attempted several efforts to guide downtown development. In 1996, the University of Arkansas Community Design Center prepared a Downtown Study that presented a plan for renovation of the downtown square. In 2000, the City adopted its General Plan which included several recommendations regarding downtown Bentonville. In summer 2004, a National Main Street Team visited Bentonville Main Street to analyze the organization and develop recommendations for the square. These documents offer excellent recommendations and concepts, however, they are fragmented.

The purpose of the Downtown Master Plan is to gather all of the concepts, ideas and recommendations, add additional data, analysis, research, and public involvement to create a formalized plan with strategies for implementation that is adopted by City Council and Main Street Bentonville. The Downtown Master Plan is the primary tool that identifies a common vision and the methods and techniques to bring that vision to reality.

Process

To develop a plan that has buy-in and ownership of the community, the City and Main Street Bentonville sponsored a Downtown Master Plan Kick-Off meeting at the First Baptist Church in October 2003. Approximately 50 residents, business owners and city officials participated in the event. At that time, attendees signed up to serve on the following committees:

- Economic Development
- Image & Identity
- Architecture & Streetscape
- Infrastructure
- Future Development
- Transportation & Circulation

Kick-off Meeting
October 2003

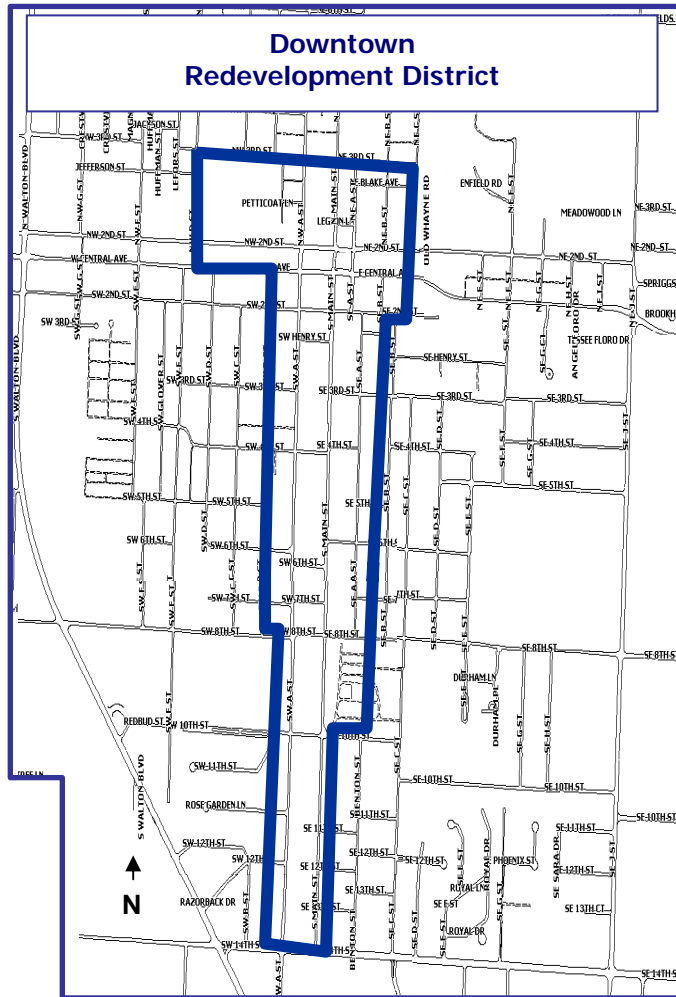


By the end of the year, more than 100 people were signed up for a committee. Between October 2003 and January 2004, each committee met two or three times. In February 2004, the committees came together to participate in a day-long workshop to gain consensus on the vision for the future of downtown Bentonville. Once the vision was identified and put to words (see Appendix A and Chapter 4 for more information), the committees met several more times to develop the plan and identify implementation strategies to achieve the vision.

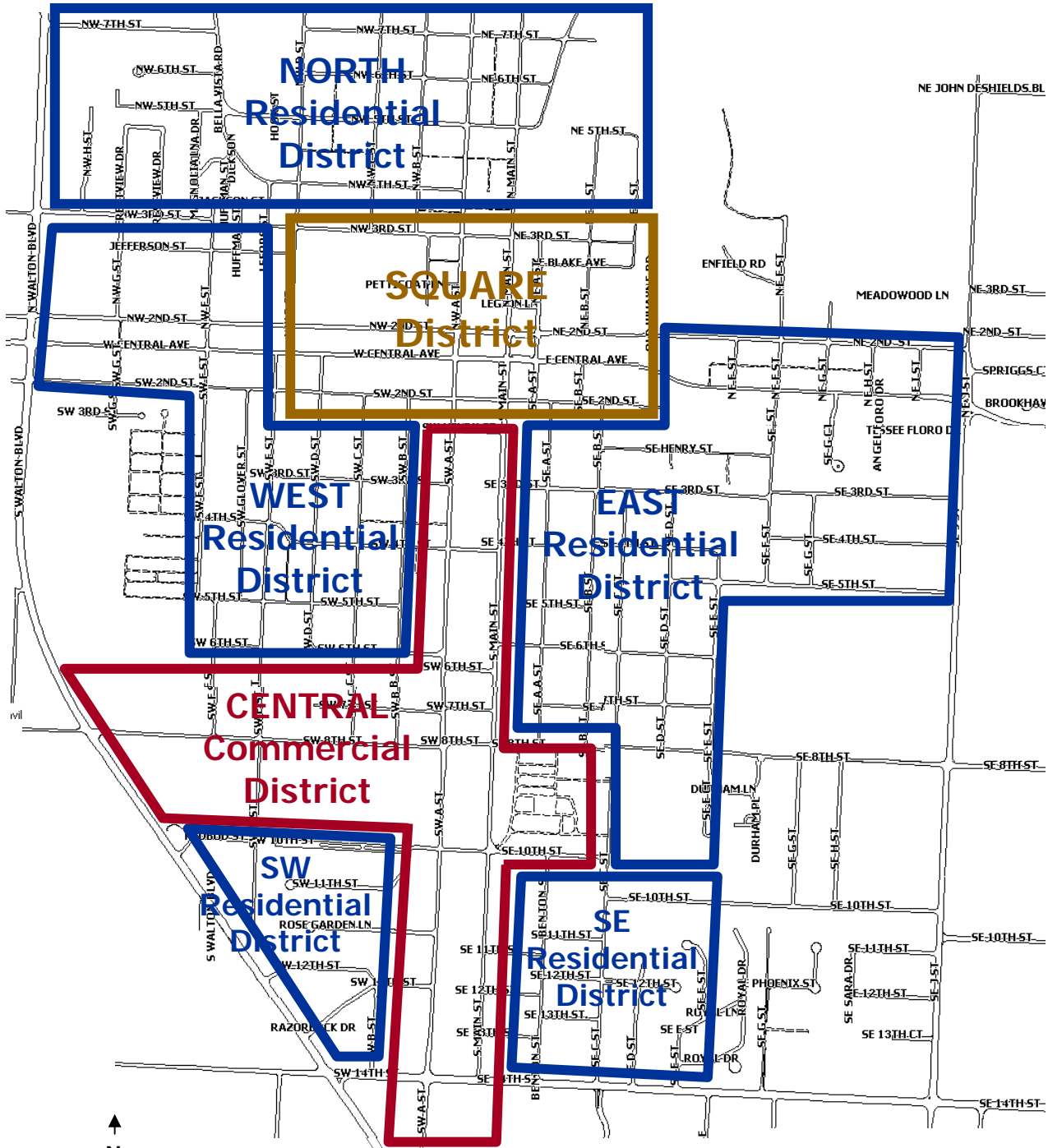
Study Area Description

The City initially identified the Downtown Redevelopment District in 2000. Impact fees were being implemented and city leaders wanted to exempt certain areas that were ripe for redevelopment and where infrastructure is adequate. During this process, the boundaries of the Redevelopment District were established. This boundary is described generally as NE 3rd St to the north, SW 14th St to the south, SW B St to the west and SE A St to the east.

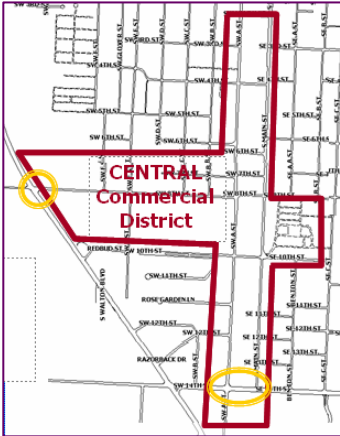
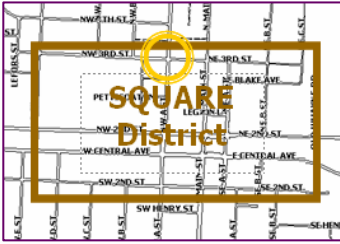
As the committees began preparing the Downtown by Design Master Plan, it became apparent that the boundary of the Downtown Redevelopment District did not encompass all that the committees wanted to accomplish. They created a larger study area to include the Wal-Mart home office and surrounding residential areas. The study area boundary is described generally as NW 7th St. to the north and SW 14th St. to the south, SE J St. to the east and S Walton Blvd. to the west.



Study Area Boundaries



Special Districts



Historic home in north residential district

The committees classified certain areas based on similar uses or characteristics and identified two commercial areas – the town square and the central commercial district, and surrounding residential areas.

Square District

The Square District includes the areas immediately surrounding Town Square Park, from NE 3rd St. to the north and SW 2nd St. to the south, SW E St. to the west and NE C St. to the east.

The district is characterized by governmental facilities, such as city hall and Benton County administrative offices. Other offices, such as law offices and vendor space are located among interspersed retail and service shops.

Central Commercial District

The Central Commercial District includes two main corridors: SW A St. and SW Main Street from SW 2nd St. to SW 14th St. and SW 8th St. from SE C St. to S. Walton Blvd. It also includes the Benton County Fairgrounds.

This district is characterized by a mixture of retail and offices to include the office anchors of Wal-Mart General Office, Sam’s General Office and Bentonville Plaza. Restaurant uses along with a couple industrial warehouse facilities are located in this district.

Residential Districts

Residential areas adjacent to downtown have been identified and included in the study area due to the importance of linking residential areas with the commercial areas. There are five residential districts surrounding the Square District and the Central Commercial District.

The *Southwest Residential District* consists of a mixture of multifamily residential and small single family homes. There are some multifamily developments on the west side of SW A St. and a townhouse development on Rose Garden Lane. Most single family homes represent the architecture of the 1960’s and 1970’s.

The *Southeast Residential Area* is single family in nature with areas of duplex and higher density development. There are four-plexes on the northwest corner of SE C St. and SE 14th St. The Meadowglade Subdivision includes a three-plex development with a total of 20 units. There is another 20 unit development on the southwest corner of SE 10th and SE C St. Single family architecture is consistent with mid-20th century residential development.

The *West Residential District* is predominantly single-family with spots of duplexes. There is one four-plex development on the northwest corner of SW C St. and SE 7th St. near the Sam’s home office. This district contains the historic homes along Central Avenue. Many homes in this area are older and characteristics of the early 20th Century.

The *East Residential District* also is predominantly single-family, with two areas of commercial/industrial development surrounded by higher density residential. One area is between S. Main St. and SE B St. between SE 4th St. and SE 6th St. The second is between SE 3rd St. and SE 8th St. between SE D St. to SE G St. The architecture in this area is a mixture of early to mid-20th century architecture.

The *North Residential District* is predominantly single family with early to mid-20th century architecture.

Gateways

Gateways

- 1) NW 3rd St. and NW A St.
- 2) W. Central Ave. and S. Walton Blvd.
- 3) SW 8th St. and S. Walton Blvd.
- 4) SW A St./SW Main St. and SW 14th St.
- 5) SE 8th St. and SE C St.
- 6) E. Central Ave. and NE J St.

Gateways are those intersections that serve as a primary entrance into the downtown area. The committee has identified six gateways (see inset at left).

The goal is for visitors to feel a sense of “arrival” in downtown when they enter these locations. That may be sensed by signage, landscaping, a change in street width, or the character of the area.



The Downtown Master Plan will prepare a roadmap to implement the common vision for central Bentonville:

“Downtown Bentonville is the community center of choice to experience a vibrant culture through living, working, shopping, dining and civic events.”

The plan includes three primary elements: (1) an analysis of existing conditions and areas for improvement or enhancement (Chapters 2 and 3); (2) describing the common vision (Chapter 4); and (3) detailing the plan and the implementation of the plan (Chapters 5 and 6). The first element includes a study of the conditions within the study area to include demographics, land use, transportation, and promotions. The second element pulls together the results of several surveys, studies and workshop to create a common vision for downtown Bentonville. The third describes the future for downtown Bentonville and the methods and techniques that will be used to achieve the vision.