The Mansion Area
FRAMEWORK MASTER PLAN
Update 1998

Capitol Zoning District Commission
Little Rock, Arkansas

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Capitol Zoning District Commission
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The Capitol Zoning District Commission operates with a series of documents that establish its powers and responsibilities, define its operating procedures and provide land use policies and development standards.

ORDINANCE/REGULATORY

These documents provide the basic regulations for CZDC operations.

CZDC Ordinance

- Enabling powers
- Commission organization

CZDC Administrative Procedures

Provides administrative procedures, including:

- Hearing requirements
- Conducting meetings
- Application requirements
- Height review

OVERALL STANDARDS

These documents provide design standards and zoning regulations that apply to both the Mansion and Capitol Areas.

City of Little Rock Site Development Guide

Provides prescriptive standards for:

- Access & parking layout
- Landscaping
- Excavation & drainage

General Standards

Provides prescriptive standards for:

- Zoning chart
- Use groups
- Parking
- Signs

Rehabilitation Standards

Addresses treatment of historic properties

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

These documents provide development policies for individual areas in the Capitol Zoning District Commission's jurisdiction.

Capitol Area Framework Plan

Includes:

- Land use policies
- Urban design goals

Mansion Area Framework Plan

Includes:

- Land use policies
- Urban design goals

NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN STANDARDS

These documents provide performance based design standards for individual areas in the Capitol Zoning District Commission's jurisdiction.

Capitol Area Design Standards

Includes standards for:

- New construction
- Site plans

Mansion Area Design Standards

Includes standards for:

- New construction
- Site plans

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INTRODUCTION

In 1975, concerned about protecting the character of the environs of the Governor's Mansion, the state legislature defined a four to five block radius around the executive residence as a place where land use zoning regulations would be administered by the state. It defined land use categories and mandated a design review process to monitor the character of development in the area and also established the Capitol Zoning District Commission to administer the regulations.

In 1975, the Arkansas State Legislature formed the Capitol Zoning District Commission to protect the environs of the Governor's Mansion.

The goal of these actions was in part to enhance the character of the Mansion Area neighborhood. They also were motivated by a desire to preserve the historic resources of the neighborhood, which represent some of the finest in the state.

The majority of the area is residential in character and in use. Single family structures dominate the scene, although several of these have been converted into multifamily dwellings. Main and Broadway were defined as commercial corridors, with some portions established to develop in a traditional "main street" context, while other parts were to respect the traditional residential character as they adapted to new uses. The system served to create a climate for investment in the area. Property owners could be assured that, when they invested in their properties in a manner that was compatible with the historic character, others around them would be compelled to do so as well.

Over the past twenty years, the program has been very successful. Property owners have rehabilitated numerous houses throughout the area, and demolition of historic buildings has been substantially diminished. Many homes that had been subdivided into apartments have been returned to single family use.

The success of the program is noticeable on virtually every residential block in the neighborhood. A comparison with photographs taken when the commission was first established dramatically demonstrates improvement in the neighborhood. Original details have been restored and inappropriate alterations have been removed on many houses. Improvements also have occurred in the commercial areas, although perhaps not quite as successfully as in the residential blocks. In these areas, the automobile dominates the scene, with exposed parking and buildings set back from the street.

By 1997, the Commission recognized that the master plan and design guidelines for the area required updating, in part to respond to changing development trends and loss of less significant but historic structures. While basic rehabilitation principles had been the focus of the earlier design guidelines, they did not specifically address many of the restoration issues that property owners raised. Additional clarity was needed in these areas. Increasing interest in new construction made it clear that more specific guidelines for new construction also were needed. With regard to land use, some specific issues had also arisen, such as how to treat historic commercial structures that are located where commercial uses currently would not be permitted.

The Commission also recognized that the original plan had essentially focused on protection strategies that would maintain the traditional character of the neighborhood. Today, it is recognized that a more proactive stance is now needed to help the neighborhood realize its potential as a distinguished foreground for the Governor's Mansion.

The Scope of the Plan

The Framework Master Plan sets out the basic land use policies for the Mansion Area, including the types of uses to be permitted in each zoning category, and establishes a foundation of design goals that underlie the accompanying design guidelines. In addition, recommendations for improvements in the public sector are made. These focus on streetscape construction that would enhance the identity and function of the neighborhood and would require cooperation between the state and the City of Little Rock.

The Planning Process

In order to develop the Framework Master Plan a series of workshops were conducted in the spring and summer of 1998 with local residents, property owners, business owners, elected officials, CZDC staff and advisory committee members to discuss the potential future character for the Mansion Area. The insights provided by the participants assisted the team of consultants and CZDC staff in getting to the root of many development problems facing the area. This helped to develop appropriate policy and design recommendations and provide a framework for future developments. Some of the highlights of the workshops included discussion of the following:

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

- The Governor’s Mansion
- Large collection of restored and preserved historic buildings

NEIGHBORHOOD TRENDS

- Diversity (economic, racial, age)
- Increasing number of renovation and restoration projects
- Increasing amounts of landscaping
- Owner-occupied homes
- Families with children
- Single family use (vs. multi-family)
- Sense of neighborhood

KEY NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES

- Lack of commercial maintenance
- Lack of neighborhood convenience services
- Recent infill development out of character with neighborhood
- Unprotected front door between Mansion Area boundary and freeway
- Commercial impacts (noise, traffic)
- Inappropriate zoning/uses
- Inappropriate building alterations
- Parking in front yards
- Lack of sidewalk maintenance (who’s responsible?)
- Adjacent residential uses to east and west similar in character

The Governor's Mansion was identified as one of the most important character-defining features of the neighborhood.

HISTORIC OVERVIEW

The neighborhood encompassed by the Mansion Area developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and is today the second-oldest residential neighborhood in Little Rock that survives largely intact. In recognition of its historical and architectural significance, a large portion of the neighborhood is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Governor's Mansion Historic District.

The history of the Mansion Area begins shortly after the Civil War, when Little Rock's population was growing rapidly and new technology was bringing dramatic changes to the daily lives of the city's residents. It was during this era of growth and change that the neighborhood began developing.

Technological advances—paved streets, water and sewer systems, electricity, telephones, streetcars—made life easier and more pleasant for Little Rock residents. Streetcars, in particular, enabled the city to expand by providing residents a cheap and convenient means of transportation from home to work or shopping.

There was no streetcar when Peter Hotze built the oldest house that still stands in the Mansion Area. The "Old" Hotze House at 1620 Main Street was constructed in 1869 at what was then the southernmost edge of Little Rock.

Rosewood and the Blind School

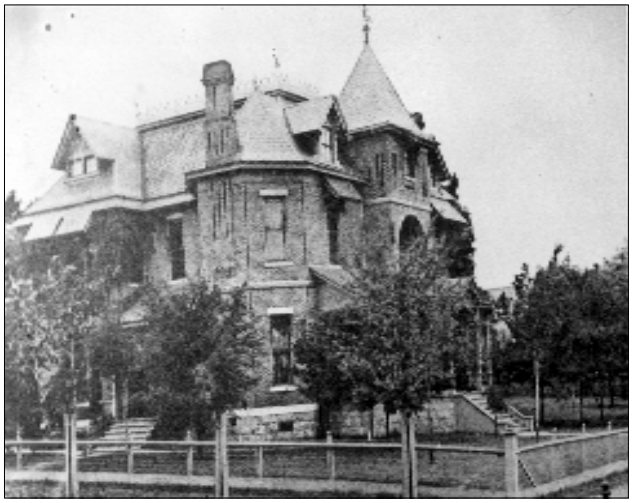
A short distance from the Hotze House was the former country estate of William Savin Fulton, Arkansas's last Territorial Governor and one of the first two U.S. Senators elected when Arkansas became a state in 1836. The Fulton estate, known as "Rosewood," stood approximately where the Arkansas Governor's Mansion does today, at 18th and Center Streets. In the same year that Peter Hotze built his house, Rosewood was acquired by the state as the site for the new "Arkansas Institute for the Education of the Blind."

This is a 1890s view looking north from the tower of the Blind School. Churches and grand homes dominated the scene in the early years of what is now the Mansion Area and surrounding environs.

Neighborhood Expansion

In the 1880s, significant numbers of new houses began joining the Hotze House to create a residential neighborhood around the Blind School. Most of the first neighboring buildings were modest workers' cottages, but a few were more substantial two-story frame dwellings. Frequently, these early houses were builders' versions of the Italianate style.

At the corner of 17th and Spring Streets, one block north and one block west of the Blind School, construction of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral began in 1884. The presence of this attractive and important religious institution may have served to persuade some of Little Rock's more affluent residents that the neighborhood around the Blind School would be a good place to live. In 1884, real estate broker W.J. Turner hired an architect, Thomas Harding to design a large brick residence in the fashionable Queen Anne style. The house was constructed directly opposite the Blind School, at the northwest corner of 18th and Center Streets.



W. J. Turner's residence

Construction of W. J. Turner's residence was followed by the building of other large, architect-designed homes. By the 1890s, the area around the Blind School was well on its way to becoming Little Rock's "best" neighborhood, the one most frequently selected by prominent and well-to-do families when looking for places to build new homes.

Aiding in the neighborhood's development was expansion of Little Rock's streetcar system, which had started in 1877 with mule- and horse-drawn cars but began using electric cars in 1891. By 1893, the Blind School neighborhood was served by streetcars that carried passengers south on Main Street to 23rd Street. Routes also crossed the neighborhood east to west on 15th and 23rd Streets. Another route ran south on Arch Street from 15th to 23rd. New homes were often built on or near the streetcar lines, and small commercial districts developed at two streetcar stops, one at 15th and Gaines Streets and another at 23rd and Arch Streets.

The neighborhood around the Blind School remained one of Little Rock's best through the 1920s, but by this decade, most of the neighborhood's building lots were occupied, and construction of new middle- and upper-middle-class houses had moved west and north into neighborhoods such as Central High, Hillcrest and the Heights.

Early Decline

In the 1930s and 1940s, many large homes in the Blind School neighborhood were converted to use as apartments or rooming houses, prompted first by the economic hardships of the Depression and then by demand for housing during and immediately after World War II. The Blind School itself left the neighborhood in 1939, eventually to be replaced by the Arkansas Governor's Mansion, first occupied in 1950 by the family of Governor Sid McMath.

Despite the prestige of the Governor's Mansion, most of the neighborhood's remaining middle-class residents moved away, and houses began to deteriorate seriously, often after being divided for multi-family use. Institutional uses also took over some of the neighborhood's largest and most significant historic homes. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, commercial uses led to the demolition of several houses on Broadway. During the same period of time, the Little Rock Housing Authority demolished a block of houses between Broadway and Arch to erect the Fred W. Parris Towers, a high-rise apartment building for the elderly, completed in 1973.

Revitalization

The assault on Broadway proved to be a turning point for the neighborhood. Residents formed the Broadway Neighborhood Association (BNA) in the early 1970s to save the once-lovely thoroughfare from further demolition and commercialization. The Quapaw Quarter Association, a preservation advocacy organization, turned to the Governor and General Assembly for help. In 1975, the state created the Capitol Zoning District Commission with jurisdiction over the Mansion Area, offering encouragement to families who wanted to invest in the rehabilitation of the neighborhood's late 19th and early 20th century houses.

The first Hotze house at 1620 Main Street.

The Quapaw Quarter Association continued to assist in stabilizing and promoting the neighborhood by conducting an architectural survey of the area in 1976 and 1977. As a result, about twenty blocks immediately surrounding the Governor's Mansion were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 as the Governor's Mansion Historic District. A new survey of the neighborhood in 1987, co-sponsored by the Quapaw Quarter Association, the City of Little Rock and the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, led to expansion of the historic district, which now comprises about sixty-five square blocks. While the Governor's Mansion Historic District and the Mansion Area are not contiguous, they overlap one another to a considerable extent.

An 1890s view of Center Street, looking south from 16th Street to the Blind School.

Between historic preservation efforts and stable zoning, the Mansion Area has witnessed enormous improvement since the 1970s. Some 300 of its buildings, mainly houses, have been rehabilitated, representing millions of dollars of private investment in a neighborhood that was once in severe decline. Well-maintained single-family homes are now the rule rather than the exception in the Mansion Area. The Capitol Zoning District Commission and the zoning it administers have been critical factors in this dramatic transformation.

SUMMARY OF POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to understand the scope of this Framework Master Plan. It provides a broad view of how a variety of both public and private design and planning improvements may be coordinated such that the benefits of those investments may be maximized. The Framework Master Plan establishes a road map for planning and design work, indicating its general scope and character. It establishes a direction for public and private improvements, but it does not provide specific design solutions. Details of designs for individual plan elements should be refined as each component moves into an implementation phase.

The Mansion Area Framework Master Plan defines urban design policies for the Mansion Area and establishes a framework for implementing specific design improvements that will establish a distinct identity for this vital Little Rock neighborhood. The recommendations foster good design choices and sound development strategies for reinvestment and enhancement of the public nature of the Mansion Area. These recommendations provide for the continued accommodation of current uses and changing land use patterns within the neighborhood.

Planning & Design Goals

The Commission holds these planning and design goals for the Mansion Area:

1. To revitalize existing housing, to promote new infill housing development and promote diversity among residents
Enhancing the social and economic diversity of the neighborhood is very important to many area residents.

2. To rehabilitate dilapidated historic structures in and around the neighborhood
Protecting the environs of the Governor's Mansion is the primary charge of the CZDC; therefore, the rehabilitation of dilapidated and neglected historic structures is an important goal.

3. To create an improved image and stronger sense of identity
Neighborhood residents already feel a strong sense of identity but wish this image to extend through out the community of Little Rock.

4. To continue to develop a more family-friendly environment for residents and visitors alike
Providing such elements as landscaping, period lights, trails, parks and medians might help to accomplish this goal.

5. To establish new and to better define existing gateways into the neighborhood
Letting pedestrians know when they enter and leave the character areas of the Governor's Mansion neighborhood is very important to residents.

6. To create a mixture of uses throughout the neighborhood
Providing convenient neighborhood services is vital to the long-term success of any community.

Urban Design Goals

The Commission holds these urban design goals for the Mansion Area:

1. To preserve the character of the Mansion Area neighborhood and individual historic buildings
The preservation and restoration of significant buildings in the Mansion Area, as well as the preservation of the overall character of the Mansion Area, is the primary goal of this plan.

2. To enhance the pedestrian experience throughout the commercial areas
Streets should be places that are active with pedestrians, where walking is a pleasant experience. The automobile should appear subordinate to other uses. Therefore, parking and circulation requirements should be accommodated in a manner that supports the desired uses for the neighborhood.

3. To establish a sense of visual continuity within the Mansion Area neighborhood
A theme to visually unify the neighborhood is needed. Landscaping should help establish a sense of visual continuity in the area. It should include places for outdoor activities, including plazas and courtyards, as well as visual accents that give identity to individual blocks.

4. To promote commercial land uses along Broadway and Main Street that complement the residential neighborhood
An important goal for the Mansion Area is to promote a mix of uses that will support a lively neighborhood. While the predominant use will continue to be residential, retail and commercial uses such as family restaurants should be encouraged.

5. To accommodate the need for commercial uses along both Broadway and Main Streets, heavily traveled transportation corridors, while preserving the residential character of the remaining portions of the neighborhood
Uses along these streets should focus on serving the neighborhood.

6. To define and enhance views between the Governor's Mansion and the Old State House
Another goal of this plan is to establish a distinct visual connection between the Governor's Mansion and the Old State House. This means that the key view corridor between the Mansion and the Old State House should be defined and enhanced.

The preservation and restoration of significant buildings in the Mansion Area, as well as the preservation of the overall character of the Mansion area, is the primary goal of this plan.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Mansion Area has experienced substantial rehabilitation in the past twenty years.

Building Conditions Surveys

In December 1977, the CZDC promulgated its Zoning Regulations and initiated the activity of issuing zoning and design review permits to property owners wishing to rehabilitate or renovate their properties. Between December 1977 and late summer 1978, the Commission awarded permits for the renovation of approximately 23 residential properties. This level of activity represented only 5% of the residential structures in the Mansion Area, but the important factor was that the procedures had been established, the regulations put into place and the promise for high quality residential rehabilitation had been introduced.

In a survey of Structural Conditions conducted by the Little Rock Comprehensive Planning Department in the late summer of 1978, approximately 350 out of a total of 686 residential structures in the Mansion Area (51%) were in need of rehabilitation and renovation to return them to a structurally standard condition. Out of the 350, 115 of these structures were categorized as dilapidated, substandard or requiring major repair.

Today, those numbers are quite different. A recent mapping effort by the City of building code violations indicates that fewer than a dozen buildings in the area have been reported to be in substandard condition. This success is in part a result of the protections of the design review system.

The above building is one of many adaptively reused institutional structures.

Historic Significance Surveys

After the preparation of the initial Master Development Plan in 1977, the Quapaw Quarter Association conducted a survey of buildings for historic significance. This survey was designed to identify those structures that were significant either from a historic standpoint or for architectural design. However, in order to be listed as significant, the key character-defining features had to be visible; if they were obscured with a non-historic siding material, for example, the property was not rated as significant, even though the structure itself may date from the neighborhood's historic period of significance. Because of this approach, many older buildings in the Mansion Area were rated as having no significance because they had lost their integrity as historic resources.

For those properties listed as significant (only 40%), design alterations were subject to review and proposed demolition could be delayed for 90 days. Many older buildings that did not appear historic were not subject to these provisions, and several were lost to demolition. This approach to survey ratings reflected national standards at the time. Today, however, preservationists recognize that, in many cases, buildings that are altered may be some of the best candidates for restoration. For this reason, current survey methodologies encourage considering the potential of such properties to be restored to their historic appearance.

In spite of the loss of some historic structures, the design review system administered by the CZDC has provided a sheltered climate for investment in the Mansion Area and many structures have been restored. Because rehabilitation is so prevalent, many buildings that were once rated as having no significance should now be considered historically significant.

In 1998, the CZDC commissioned a resurvey of the neighborhood to identify historic resources. All buildings in the neighborhood were to be researched, and individual property forms were to be produced, which included a description of the property, documentation of its construction history and an evaluation of significance. This survey shows a substantial increase in historically significant structures over the earlier percentage.

Clearly, the Commission's oversight of their regulations has gone a long way toward preserving the historic qualities of the neighborhood. The combined tools of demolition protection and design review have served to achieve the overall objective of preserving and enhancing the neighborhood's residential character and therefore in protecting the environs of the Governor's Mansion, as the original legislation intended.

Historic Survey Rating Categories

The levels of ratings used in surveying historic properties is an important consideration. While an initial purpose of a rating system is simply to determine if a property is historically significant or not, the survey can also indicate the degree of integrity that a property retains. This information is very important to property owners when they begin to plan rehabilitation strategies and to the Commission when it considers proposals for alterations.

Recommendations:

Provide design review of alterations to all properties in the area.

The Commission should consider the effects that changes will have on the integrity of individual historic structures as well as the neighborhood at large.

Continue preservation initiatives.

The Commission should continue its program to identify historic properties and to provide protection to them through the review of proposals for demolition and alteration.

Continue to monitor building conditions.

The Commission should, in cooperation with the City of Little Rock, periodically review surveys of building conditions to evaluate the effects of its protection programs as tools for stimulating investment in older buildings in the area.

Clarify preservation policies through revised design standards.

In a pair of companion documents, the Commission should provide updated design standards that provide additional information to property owners about appropriate treatment of historic buildings and compatible new construction.

DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

Boundary Changes

In 1975, a series of blocks lying along the northern edge of the neighborhood were not included in the boundary of the jurisdiction of the Capitol Zoning District Commission. This area is bounded by 13th Street on the south and Interstate 630 on the north; the half block west of Gaines Street is the western boundary and Cumberland is the eastern limit. This area contains a wide variety of building types and uses from single family residential to warehouse to the Mount Holly Cemetery, with a scattering of vacant sites and parking lots. Investment has not been as intense here as in the Mansion Area itself and some developments have occurred that would be considered incompatible with the revitalization trends to its southern edge.

In the blocks between the Mansion Area and I-630 a collection of eclectic buildings and uses, including new and historic, occupied and abandoned single family homes, multifamily apartment buildings, churches, a car wash, a copy center, warehouses and a recently revitalized neighborhood shopping center.

The area was zoned GB (General Business) and HR (High-density Residential) by the City of Little Rock. These designations reflect redevelopment policies of the 1970s associated with the interstate highway construction that envisioned a high density corridor developing along I-630. However, this is an important "front door" to the neighborhood as one approaches from the north, and in particular establishes the first image of entering the sphere of influence of the Governor's Mansion.

It is important that regulations in this area be applied in a manner that will assure development to be compatible with the character of the Mansion Area and that will help attract appropriate investment into the area. Therefore, it is recommended the Mansion boundary be extended to include these lands, which are to be zoned "N" (see Appendix A, Map M-1 for the Zoning Categories and Area Boundaries).

Conservation Districts

In public workshops held in 1998, residents also indicated interest in expanding the boundaries of the CZDC's Mansion Area to the south, west and east to include additional residential areas. Houses here are relatively similar in character to the Mansion Area, but generally reflect a smaller scale and more modest style of building.

These areas have not enjoyed the intensive level of investment that has occurred within the Mansion Area itself. In part, this may be a result of a lack of design review and demolition protection programs. However, it is important to recognize that the Capitol Zoning District Commission has a very specific focus: To protect and enhance the environs around the Governor's Mansion. With this in mind, it is difficult to rationalize extension of the boundaries of state-administered zoning, even though the goal of promoting preservation in these outlying areas is meritorious. A more appropriate tool would be to apply comparable neighborhood protection programs through the jurisdiction of the City of Little Rock.

A variety of tools may be considered for a city program. These include the use of a zoning overlay that would employ architectural design standards and review of demolition. Similar protections also could be accomplished through a conservation district system, which is similar to a historic district designation but generally provides more flexibility in design review. State enabling legislation would be necessary to implement a conservation district program, but it would be a worthwhile effort because it could have applications elsewhere in the state as well.

At present, a planning effort for the core area neighborhoods is in the works and preliminary recommendations call for some form of design review in those outlying areas. This may provide a more comprehensive approach to addressing preservation objectives in a broader segment of these older neighborhoods within the city. The Commission should seek methods of cooperating with the City of Little Rock to encourage such approaches.

LAND USE

This section addresses policies for the underlying land uses permitted in the Mansion Area. Three zoning categories are applied. These include zoning for single family residential and commercial uses in a variety of design conditions.

A Folk Victorian style residence in the Mansion District.

Residential: Zone "M"

The land use policies underlying this zoning category are compatible with its traditional development residential patterns and with current revitalization trends. Therefore, the allowed uses of this classification should be continued.

The intersection of 23rd and Arch Streets
The intersection of 23rd and Arch Streets developed historically as a neighborhood commercial center. Buildings here reflect traditional commercial storefront designs and are of historic significance. However, the zoning is designated "M," for single family residential.

Commercial uses that are compatible with the neighborhood should be considered for this area in order to stimulate revitalization of historic commercial storefront type buildings. For this reason, quiet commercial uses that are compatible with the neighborhood are to be permitted as a conditional use and where preservation of a historic resource is involved. At the same time, special use limitations are to be added to restrict uses to quiet activities that would help to serve neighborhood needs.

Individual historic commercial buildings
This same condition may exist in a more limited extent to a scattering of individual structures within the "M" zone that historically were commercial storefront buildings that provided neighborhood services. While these buildings can be adapted to residential use, and doing so should be encouraged, it may be difficult to do for some properties. For this reason, alternative commercial uses should be available as a conditional use to historic commercial buildings throughout the neighborhood in order to encourage their rehabilitation.

Neighborhood Residential and Commercial Uses: Zone "N"

The Mansion Area includes a special zoning category for commercial and office uses set in a context that was traditionally residential in character. For example, both the portion of Main Street south of 19th Street and the length of Broadway are designated "N," which permits commercial uses in a development pattern similar to that of traditional single family buildings. Historically, these blocks were residential in use but have been adapting to commercial functions over time. While commercial use is the trend in these blocks, it is still important that references to the historic functions be maintained in building and landscape designs.

The land uses permitted in this area should be continued. However, the design guidelines of maintaining a residential heritage should be strengthened. In this setting, commercial uses are to be located in structures that are similar in character to historic residential lots. Front setbacks are to appear as yards, building forms should reflect residential style and commercial displays should be "low key."

The Mansion Area includes a special zoning category for commercial uses set in a context that traditionally was residential in character—Zone "N."

New construction and redevelopment should reflect the historic features of the area and help to support the residential character of the neighborhood. New construction in this area should be designed to be compatible with this established context. Mixed use developments that include residential uses are encouraged in this zone and building forms that relate to traditional residential types should be used. Variety in building setbacks is appropriate in this area but should reflect the traditional front yard dimensions and be landscaped. Parking should be located to the side or in the rear of a lot and be screened from view.

Redevelopment of residential building types as commercial uses is encouraged in the "N" Zone.

Historically, these blocks were residential in use but have been adapting to commercial functions over time.

Traditional Main Street Commercial: Zone "O"

The portion of Main Street north of 19th Street that is zoned "O" was originally developed in a traditional commercial storefront context, where buildings are rectangular and aligned at the sidewalk edge. Many of these buildings survive and form the context for new development here.

In recent years, portions of Main Street in Zone "O" have lost their historic character. Original buildings were demolished and newer ones constructed that emulate building types popular in strip commercial areas. These buildings were set back from the sidewalk edge, with parking lots in front. This development eroded the traditional character of the sidewalk and diminished the sense of visual continuity. These properties do not represent a part of the context that should be repeated in new development.

A few infill buildings have been built in the past 5 years that are out of scale with the residential character of the neighborhood. Some, for example, are set back from the street with parking in front.

This area should continue to develop as a concentration of commercial uses. Development along Main Street in Zone "O" should reinforce the traditional storefront commercial character of the area. Traditionally, this portion of Main Street was animated with commercial activity. Storefronts provided views to goods and services inside ground floor shops, and the sidewalk was active with pedestrians. While variety existed in building designs, there was a general sense of continuity and interesting details established a human scale that invited pedestrian activity. This commercial activity center attracted pedestrians from nearby neighborhoods, a goal that exists for today. This distinctly different setting should be maintained as a typical Main Street character.

New buildings should respect this established character but should not literally imitate historic building styles. Historically, buildings created a strong edge to the street because they aligned at the front lot line and were usually built the full width of the parcel, to the side lot lines. Patterns were created along the street by the repetition of similarly-sized building elements. For example, uniform facade widths evenly spaced along Main Street create a rhythm that contributes to the visual continuity of the area. At a smaller scale, the repetition of upper story windows across most building fronts also creates a unifying effect. These patterns should be respected in all new construction and redevelopment projects.

Presently, restaurants are permitted as conditional uses. In part, they have been so categorized to provide

That portion of Main Street north of 19th Street, zoned "O," originally developed in a traditional commercial storefront context, where buildings are rectangular and aligned at the sidewalk edge.

New buildings should respect the established character.

opportunities for review of the potential impacts. While such oversight is desirable, it can cause delays each time a restaurant simply changes its name. A means of simplifying use review in such cases should be considered. At the same time it is important that regulations remain in place that prevent establishments that are incompatible with the neighborhood.

Commercial activity center attracted pedestrians from nearby neighborhoods, a goal that exists today for Zone "O."

Storefronts should provide views to goods and services inside ground floor shops, this encourages pedestrian activity.

Uniform facade widths evenly spaced along Main Street create a rhythm that contributes to the visual continuity of the area.

STREETSCAPE DESIGN

Pedestrian Systems

The Mansion Area developed in a period in which walking was a major mode of circulation and street cars provided public transportation. In the early twentieth century, automobiles came on the scene but, even so, remained "in balance" with other modes. Today, the car dominates the scene. Nonetheless, an important goal is to renew the balance of circulation systems. In order to do so, enhancements to pedestrian circulation systems should be considered, and automobile circulation should be planned such that any potentially negative effects upon the neighborhood will be minimized.

Sidewalk Repairs
In general, pedestrian systems in the neighborhood consist of a network of sidewalks that flanks all of the streets. These provide a comfortable means of circulation, except that several segments are badly deteriorated. In these cases, broken pavement discourages walking. New sidewalks should be installed in such conditions.

Crosswalk Improvements
In addition, crossing some major arterials may be intimidating. Providing enhanced crosswalk designs, which may include delineating the crosswalk with special paving and installing special signs and lighting, should be considered. Prime locations are along Broadway and Main Street.

Recommendation:

Continue to encourage the City of Little Rock's support and infrastructure investment in the Mansion Area.
The Commission should work with the City to develop a long-range plan for upgrading the infrastructure in the Mansion Area.

Public Transit Service

Three Central Arkansas Transit Authority routes provide service to the Mansion Area along Main Street. Another route runs down Broadway and a cross-town route provides service along 17th. These services should be continued and enhanced. Installing bus shelters along Main Street that would be convenient for use by neighborhood residents should be considered, for example.

Recommendation:

Encourage neighborhood residents to continue and increase their use of public transportation.
Increased ridership in the Mansion Area can also bring increased investment from the City and CATA. The Commission should continue to foster this relationship and strongly encourage the neighborhood residents to do the same.

Crossing some major arterials may be intimidating. Providing enhanced crosswalk designs, which may include delineating the crosswalk with special paving and installing special signs and lighting, should be considered.

Automobile Circulation

The Mansion Area is linked with downtown Little Rock by Broadway, which is classified as a "Principal Arterial," and by Main Street, which is a "Minor Arterial," 14th and 17th Streets provide the primary east-west routes through the neighborhood and are designated "collectors."

The intersections of these major east-west and north south streets are therefore important ones, where motorists make decisions about turning movements. These are also the key points at which visitors turn to approach the front gates of the Governor's Mansion.

Center Street runs one-way northbound above 14th Street, thereby significantly reducing the level of southbound traffic on it in the Mansion Area. Scott Street is one way northbound past 17th Street.

Recommendation:

Traffic impacts on the neighborhood should be minimized to the greatest extent possible.
In general, automobile circulation systems work efficiently in the neighborhood. However, while Main and Broadway do serve as arterials for the city, their traffic impacts on the neighborhood should be minimized. Because of the potential for higher traffic volumens and rates of speed, one-way streets should be discouraged due to their impacts upon pedestrian friendly environments. Other techniques which contribute to traffic calming, such as on-street parking, should also be considered.

Parking

While the use of automobiles has certainly increased over the years, on-street parking supply generally remains adequate, and the existing parking requirements for on-site design also are sufficient. In residential areas, the historic treatment of parking was to locate vehicles to the side or rear of a property. In many cases, a garage or carriage house served to enclose cars and screen them from view.

However, parking design is a concern along the commercial corridors. In these cases, the visual appearance of parked cars is a major concern since the potential for larger parking lots, which can negatively affect the visual character of the area, exists here.

Recommendations:

Encourage area residents to develop off-street parking when undertaking rehabilitation or new construction projects.
This concept is reinforced in the Mansion Area Design Standards, and compliance should be strongly encouraged.

Zoning standards that require locating parking away from the street edge should be enforced, and design standards that promote the screening of cars from the public way should be rigorously applied.

While the use of automobiles has certainly increased over the years, on-street parking supply generally remains adequate.

PUBLIC SPACES

In the Mansion Area, streets and sidewalks form the bulk of the public spaces. Sidewalk designs generally consist of concrete paving, frequently separated from the curb with a planting strip. In addition, a variety of parks and open spaces exist. Mount Holly Cemetery defines the northwest corner of the neighborhood with a green space and provides passive open space opportunities for the neighborhood. Formal public parks lie just north of the interstate highway.

Because the bulk of the public spaces are in the right of way, they are under the jurisdiction of the City of Little Rock. Therefore, most streetscape improvements occur through special assessment programs established by business or property owners. In this case, the Commission's role is a supportive one, in which it should cooperate with city agencies to encourage improvement programs that would enhance the streetscape.

The Streetscape

The streetscape design should help to establish a unified image for the Mansion Area. In residential areas, the streetscape design consists of paved detached sidewalks and planting strips. Streetscape designs in commercial areas should include street trees, furniture such as benches and waste receptacles, and construction of planting areas, all coordinated to establish a distinct identity for the area.

Historic development patterns seen in street and alley plans often contribute to the distinct character of the Mansion Area and, therefore, should be preserved. These street plans influence the manner in which primary structures are sited, and they also shape the manner in which secondary structures and landscape features may occur on the site.

The traditional streetscape of the Mansion Area

The Mansion Area's streetscape design should serve to reflect the characteristics of the neighborhood, establishing a sense of visual continuity throughout. Elements to be considered include: A consistent public landscape palette, distinctive gateway designs, consistent architectural design and special public improvements.

The Framework Master Plan for the Mansion Area (Appendix A, Map M-2) identifies the streetscape design concept, which includes four categories of treatment:

Traditional Main Street Corridor Streetscape
(Main Street between I-630 and 19th Street)
Within this portion of Main Street, small scale commercial buildings are to be the dominant use. Building fronts generally should be located at the inside edge of the sidewalk. The streetscape should convey an urban character with street trees, decorative street lights, benches and planters. In 1989-1991, property owners established the South Main Street Improvement District and joined in a streetscape improvement program that included installation of many of these features. This design palette should be continued farther south.

Residential Commercial Corridor Streetscape
(Main Street south of 19th Street and Broadway between I-630 and West 24th Street)
This category applies to those streets that are residential in character but accommodate both commercial and residential uses at a lower density. A front yard serves as a transitional space between the public sidewalk and the private building entry. In many blocks, front yards are similar in depth, resulting in a relatively uniform alignment of building fronts which contributes to the sense of visual continuity. Maintaining the established range of setbacks is therefore preferred. Development along these streets should reflect the existing residential character and be set back from the street according to the historic pattern, with landscaped front yards and canopy street trees evenly spaced in the "tree lawn."

Center Street
Center Street should serve as the ceremonial entry to the Governor's Mansion and be more pedestrian in character. The streetscape treatment should include canopy street trees and low-intensity, decorative street lights. The Commission should seek opportunities to enhance the street in cooperation with the City of Little Rock.

17th Street
This east-west street, just north of the Governor's Mansion grounds, provides access from Broadway and Main Street to Center Street, which then feeds directly south into the Governor's Mansion. The streetscape treatment here should include evenly spaced canopy street trees, decorative street lights and specially designed signs.

Recommendation:

Develop streetscape designs that invite pedestrian activity.
Buildings that relate to their immediate context and streetscapes with street trees, lights, furniture and directional signs all encourage pedestrians to make use of the area and feel safe.

Neighborhood Gateways

Key entry points, or "gateways," exist along major streets into the neighborhood. These are points at which motorists may first become aware that they are entering this historic area. To the north, gateways occur at the intersections of the interstate frontage road with Broadway and Main Street.

The experiences at these key gateways are quite different: At Broadway, the tone of the neighborhood is clear. Restored homes and mature landscaping signal a special district. By contrast, the context for the Main Street gateway is a mixed collection of commercial structures. Some retain their historic character, while others are more recent and reflect an auto-oriented culture.

Similarly, gateways exist at the southern boundary of the neighborhood at 23rd and Broadway and 23rd and Main. In each case, it is desirable that the boundary of the neighborhood be identified. This would be particularly valuable along Main Street, where the residential character of the neighborhood is not evident.

Recommendation:

Develop visual "entry" elements at key intersections around the Mansion Area.
The Commission should seek opportunities to cooperate with the City of Little Rock to enhance the impact of these gateways with landscape improvements.

Key Intersections

In addition to the gateway conditions, other key intersections exist where motorists make important turning movement decisions. Two of these key intersections, or "nodes," exist at the intersections along 17th Street at Broadway and Main Streets, where motorists turn to access the Governor's Mansion. At present, however, these are not clearly identified. Conventional metal road signs are positioned at these points, indicating the location of the "Mansion." These nodes should be designed to help identify the location of the "Governor's Mansion."

Gateways into the Mansion Area should be designed with motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians in mind. Some elements, such as flowering ornamental trees or public art, should be large enough in scale to be perceived at a distance by drivers. Information signs should be provided that can be read and easily identified by a motorist or bicyclist who is slowed or stopped at an intersection. Fine-grain detail should be introduced for viewing by pedestrians and by motorists in stopped cars. Examples include; low shrubs, ground covers, and perennial and annual flower beds.

The gateway concepts discussed above also should be incorporated at the intersections along 17th Street at Broadway and Main Streets, providing a ceremonial gateway to the Governor's Mansion. The gateway should include a small corner plaza with well designed signs and colorful landscaping.

Interpretive plaza

Another key intersection is located at the north end of Center Street between West 12th Street and I-630, a point at which one can view both the Governor's Mansion and the Old State House. This is not a key intersection from the standpoint of traffic volumes, but it offers a special opportunity for interpreting the history of the area. Because the site provides views to the Governor's Mansion and the Old State House, as well as the rest of downtown Little Rock and the Capitol Area of the CZD, it is in a unique position to serve as an interpretive site where markers could provide information about these historic sites. It would also serve as a northern anchor to the Center Street corridor, with the Governor's Mansion serving as the southern terminus.

Recommendations:

Develop visual "way-finding" elements at intersections throughout the Mansion Area.

When in the Mansion Area, visitors should always have a sense of direction and know where important features, like the Mansion, are. These elements should be large enough to be seen at a distance but also should incorporate fine details that create interest to pedestrians and bicyclists. The use of colorful landscaping is encouraged.

Develop an interpretive site for the Governor's Mansion and the Old State House.

A site at the northern end of Center Street in the Mansion Area should be considered. The Commission should explore cooperative opportunities with the City and other state agencies to accomplish this objective.

I-630 Open Space

As part of the I-630 construction project in the 1980s, open space areas adjacent to the freeway were identified to be improved in a manner compatible with the character of the Mansion Area. Some areas currently owned by Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department may remain available, but administrative obstacles may make improvement difficult, although not impossible. These lands remain an opportunity to create a positive image for the neighborhood as seen from the freeway. The interpretive plaza recommended at the north end of Center Street in the Mansion Area is an example.

Recommendation:

The Commission should continue to work with the City of Little Rock and Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department to acquire and improve open spaces along the interstate.

Public Art

Opportunities to place public art exist in some of the more active areas of the neighborhood, especially at key intersections along the commercial corridors. Art installations can provide a distinct image, promote regional identity, and enhance the neighborhood for residents and visitors. Public art may include individual art objects that are installed at key intersections, along sidewalks and in association with other special public facilities. Other art installations may include decorative painting, murals and modifications to the street furniture along commercial corridors that provide surprise and delight in the urban setting.

Recommendation:

The Commission should consider an opportunity to install public art as a part of the proposed interpretive park at the north edge of the neighborhood.

The Commission also should work with the City of Little Rock to explore opportunities for installing public art at key intersections on Main and Broadway. Private developments in these areas also should be strongly encouraged to incorporate public art in their improvements.

APPENDIX A:

Mansion Area Maps

APPENDIX B:

Mansion Area Zones

Little Rock
Mansion Area Zones

Primary Structures

Zones	"M" Residential	"N" Neigh. Res. and Comm.	"O" Genl. Business
Front Yard SB	25' min. landscaped no parking [4.]	25' min. landscaped no parking [4.]	Mandatory build-to-sidewalk
Side Yard SB	8' min	8' min	5', if any
Rear Yard SB	25' min	25' min	5' if any
Min. Lot Area / DU	2500 S.F. / D.U.	2500 S.F. / D.U.	1200 S.F. / D.U.
Min. Lot Area / DU w / cond. use	1200 S.F. / D.U.	1200 S.F. / D.U.	1200 S.F. / D.U.
Max. F.A.R.[1.]	1.1 : 1.0	1.5 : 1.0	1.5 : 1.0
Maximum Height	2.5 Stories or 35' (whichever is less)	3 stories or 45' (whichever is less)	3 stories or 45' (whichever is less)
Permitted Uses [2.]	Single family Two family	Single family Two family Prof. offices	Single family Two family Prof. offices Quiet business
Conditional Uses	Multi-family res. Comm. facilities II Quiet Business [3.]	Multi-family res. Comm. fac. II & III Genl. office Quiet business Accessory Structures	Multi-family res. Comm. fac. II & III Genl. office Hotel, Motel, Amusement, consumer goods & services, Accessory Structures

1. See the *General Standards for the Capitol Zoning District*, for F.A.R. definition.
2. See CZDC General Standards, "Use Groups" Section, for specific uses allowed within each use group category.
3. When preservation of a historic commercial type building is involved.
4. The setback may be less than 25' up to a minimum of 15' where historic precedence exists on the block.