

Building Arkansas' Best Street: A New Town Center for Mayflower, Arkansas

Mayflower's recovery plan from the April 2014 tornado is focused on the development of a new walkable town center with mixed residential, recreational, and commercial functions. Anchored by the existing city park and scattered municipal facilities, the area selected for redevelopment poses two primary challenges. First, the area is hemmed in by limited access transportation corridors—the Union Pacific railroad, Arkansas Highway 365, and Interstate 40—all unamenable to a pedestrian-oriented urbanism. The second challenge involves the area's thin long triangular form, a geometry unresponsive of the gridiron street plan shaping most downtowns. Since the 4,500-foot long area measures only 800 feet at its widest part and comes to a point, the design is structured around a super-street that we have designated "Slow Street". The town square as a signature civic space might be a useful analogy for understanding the concept of the Slow Street. Slow Street essentially stretches the civic landscapes and pedestrian spaces common to a town square along its 4,500-foot length as the town center's primary armature. No building is more than a block away from Slow Street or without visual connection to the street. Slow Street combines the qualities of the iconic American Main Street with those of a town square.

Slow Street vs Fast Street

Slow Street is designed as a shared space privileging walkability and pedestrian life, though mixed with vehicular traffic similar to the town square. Shared spaces, known in other contexts as "living streets", "home zones", "shared streets" or the Dutch woonerfs, are ideal small-town street types for mixing residential and commercial uses. In Mayflower's case, Slow Street is sited parallel to Highway 365, a "fast street"

planned singularly for the automobile, quick access, and shopping convenience. Rather than attempt a futile retrofit of fast street—pretending as if it could possibly function as a pedestrian-oriented environment—the lamination of a slow street and a fast street combines radically different levels of urban and ecological services in the same space. Slow Street provides high standards of livability connected to the pace of neighborhood life. Each downtown neighborhood is organized around a city park, a new trail system, and the micro-park spaces in Arkansas' best new street proposed here. On the other hand, the fast street continues to facilitate regional mobility with land uses oriented to the automobile, and will also provide greater automobile parking capacity for the densest neighborhoods of the proposed town center.

The walkable town center reflects a resilient and self-sufficient urbanism in its mix of land uses, contrary to the single-use zoning governing most town development. Downtown neighborhoods will accommodate all income groups through diverse housing types, providing lifestyle options previously unavailable. The housing mix, coupled with distributed park spaces, supports aging in place and the return of families to town centers. While downtown neighborhoods will have easy access to the conveniences on a fast street, they are safe spaces where children can walk to school and play among watchful neighbors. Slow Street provides a vital townscape where all can walk from their homes to churches, shops, offices, and a greenway trail system. Mayflower's rebuilding effort offers a model resilient townscape that turns the street—an infrastructure space in which we already make outsized investments—into a social, economic, and ecological asset.

Building Arkansas' Best Street:

A New Town Center for Mayflower, Arkansas pop. 2314



The triangular site, at its widest point, measures only 800 feet.

Design Approach with Existing Conditions

Since the 4,500-foot long area measures only 800 feet at its widest part, the design is structured around a superstreet that we designated as **Slow Street**. **Slow Street** essentially stretches the civic landscapes and pedestrian spaces common to a town square along its length.

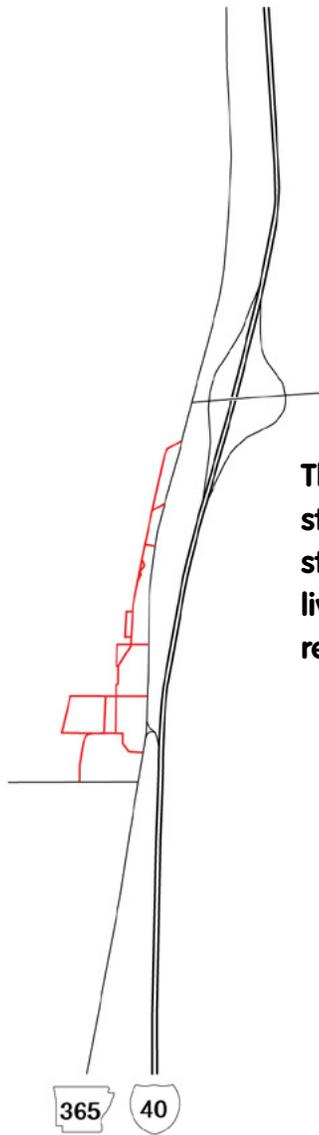


Slow Street

Fast Street

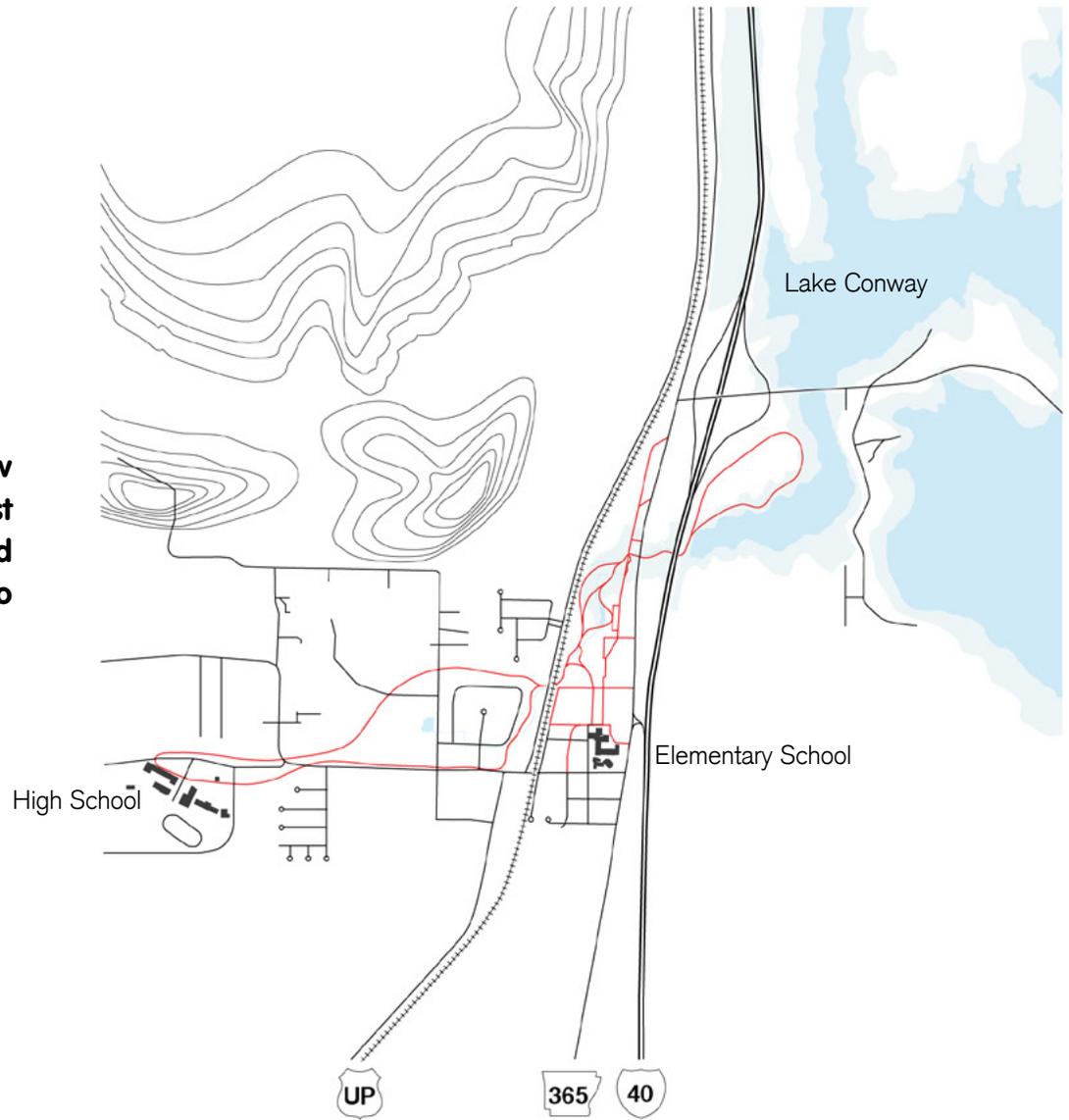


City Master Plan



The lamination of a slow street to the existing fast street offers neighborhood livability with access to regional mobility.

Slow Street + Fast Street



Street and Trail Network

Existing Conditions



Harps Grocery

Lake Conway

City Hall

Satterfield Road

City Park

Post Office

School Auditorium

Elementary School



Looking east to City Park, municipal buildings, and Satterfield Road



Looking east to square with City Hall and public buildings

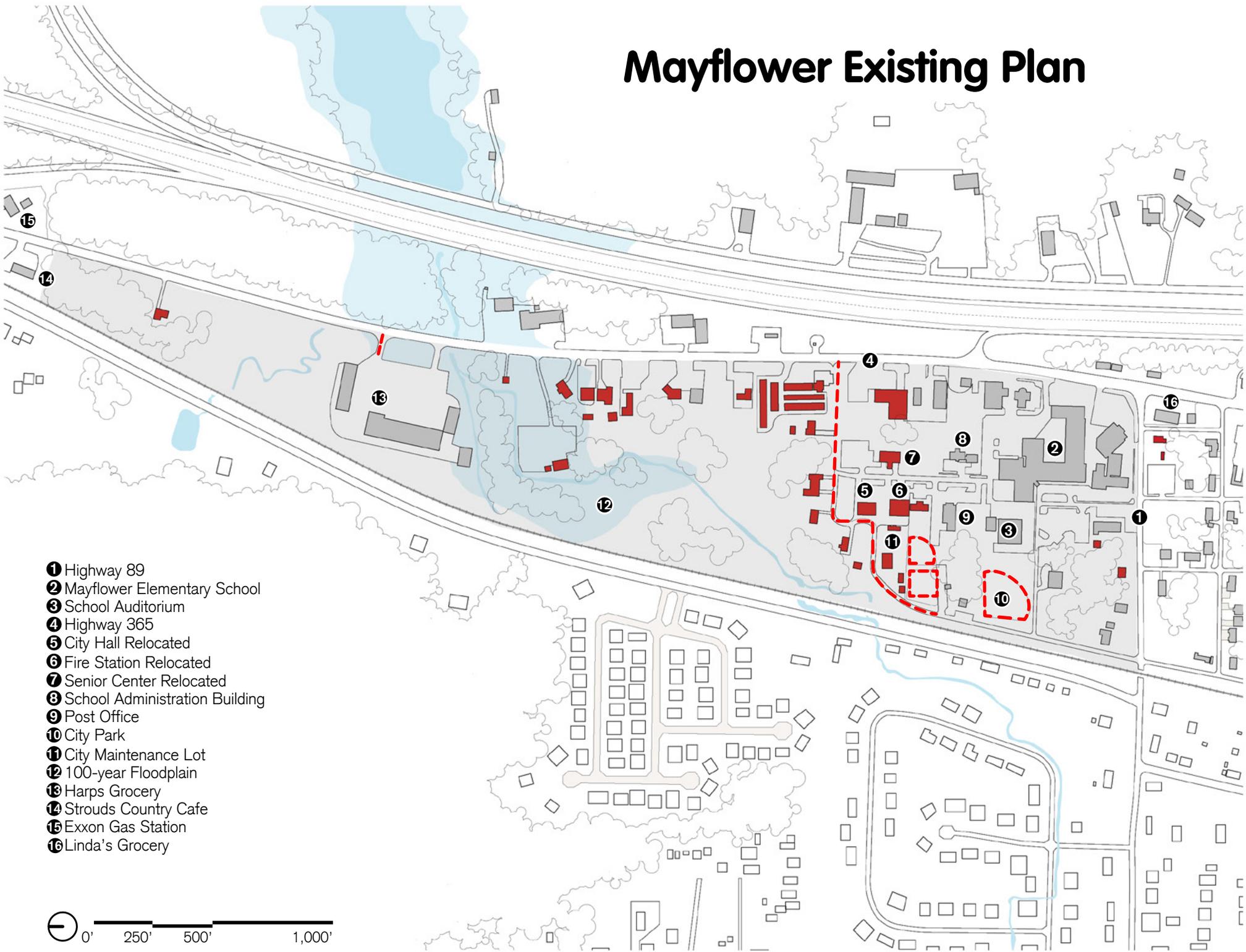


Looking South from the North End and Farmers' Market



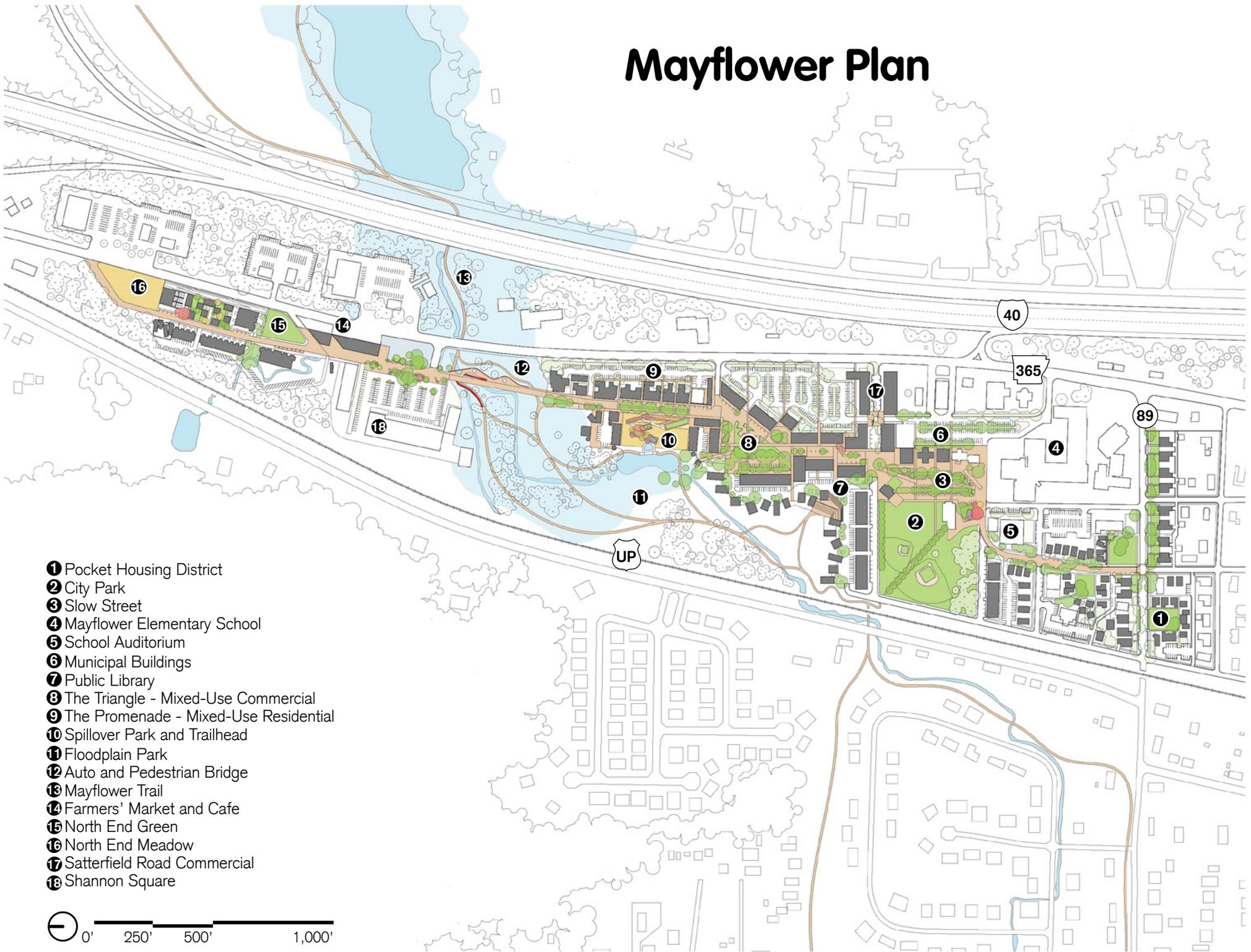
Looking east to The Promenade, The Triangle, and City Park

Mayflower Existing Plan

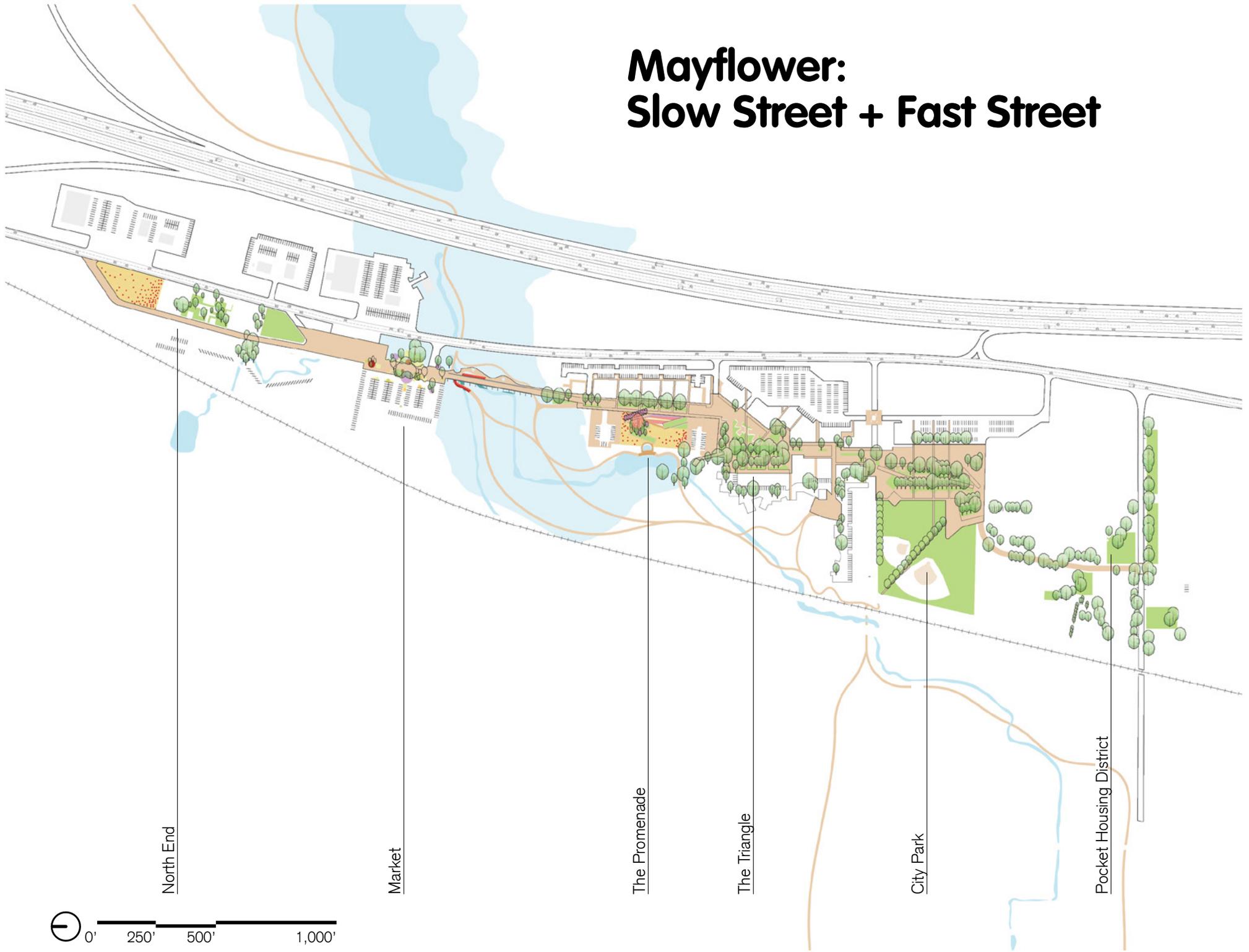


- 1 Highway 89
- 2 Mayflower Elementary School
- 3 School Auditorium
- 4 Highway 365
- 5 City Hall Relocated
- 6 Fire Station Relocated
- 7 Senior Center Relocated
- 8 School Administration Building
- 9 Post Office
- 10 City Park
- 11 City Maintenance Lot
- 12 100-year Floodplain
- 13 Harps Grocery
- 14 Strouds Country Cafe
- 15 Exxon Gas Station
- 16 Linda's Grocery

Mayflower Plan



Mayflower: Slow Street + Fast Street



North End

Market

The Promenade

The Triangle

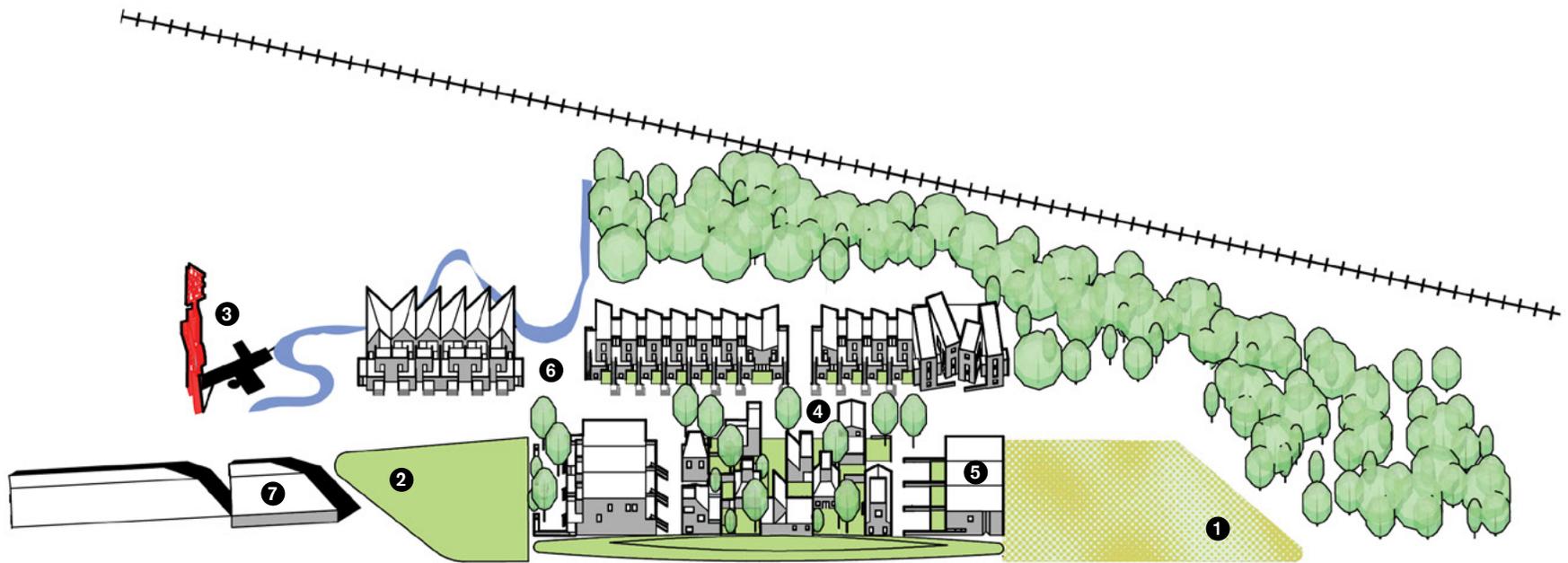
City Park

Pocket Housing District



North End ⊖

- ① North End Meadow ② North End Green ③ New Gateway Tower ④ Patio Housing
⑤ Meadow Housing ⑥ Townhouses ⑦ New Farmers' Market / Cafe



Townhouses fronting a wildflower meadow to the north and a manicured town green to the south signal the northern entrance to Mayflower's town center. Slow Street creates a shared space blending the territories of patio houses with townhouse units. Slow Street intensifies the optics of an otherwise straight right-of-way to create a social space, which is also an effective traffic-calming strategy.

Let's take a walk down Arkansas' Best Street



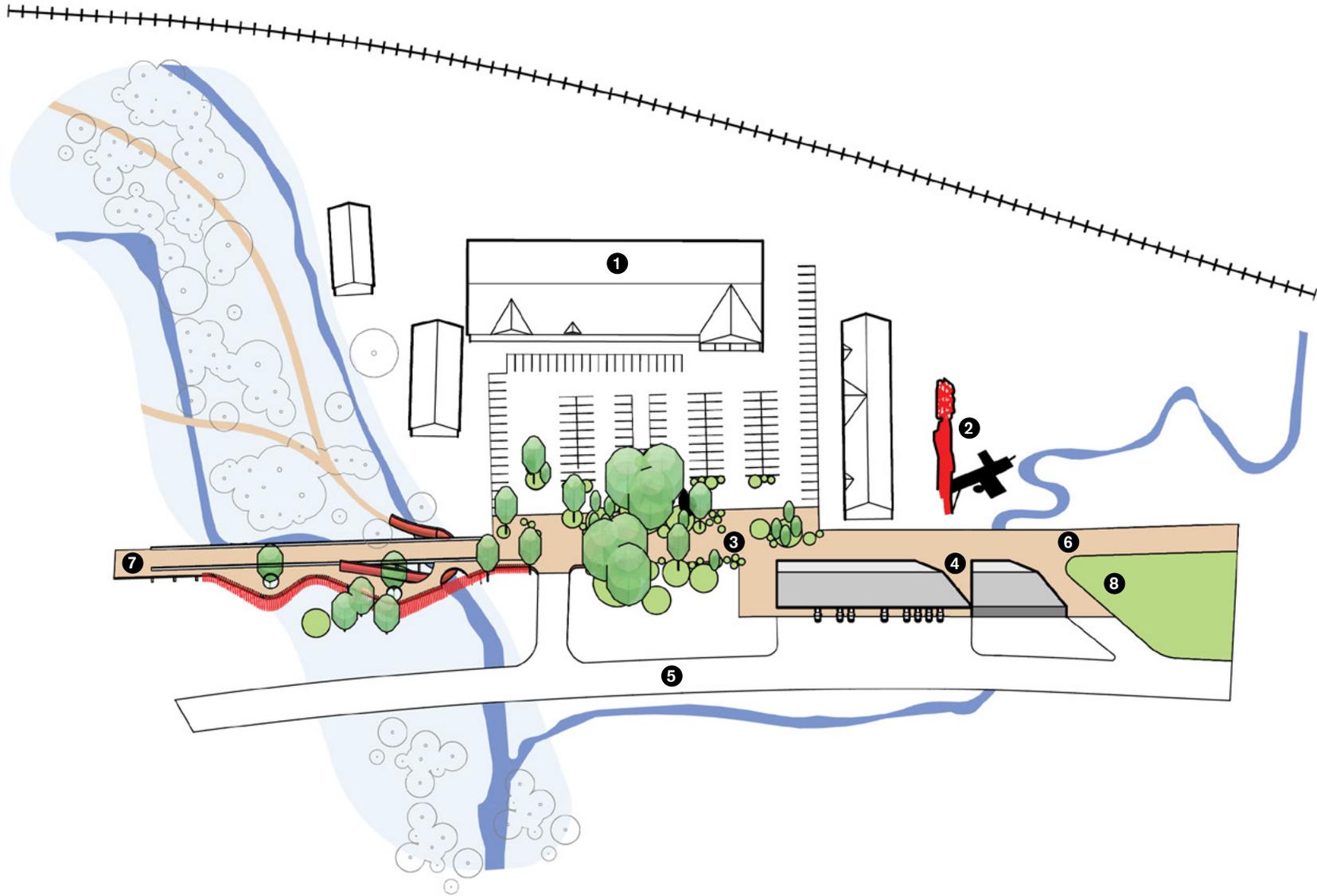
Looking south upon arrival at North End



Looking south moving through North End to Farmers' Market

Market

- 1 Existing Strip Shopping
- 2 New Gateway Tower
- 3 Green Street with Stormwater Bioswales
- 4 Farmers' Market and Cafe
- 5 Highway 365 / Fast Street
- 6 Slow Street
- 7 Auto and Pedestrian Bridges
- 8 North End Green



Slow Street converts the oversized parking lot serving the Shannon Square commercial strip center into a green street for the ecological management of urban stormwater runoff. Low impact development facilities like rainwater gardens, filter strips, and bioswales treat runoff before it is discharged into the floodplain. A new farmers' market connecting Slow Street and the fast street expands the shopping venues while elevating the gateway experience to the town center from the north.



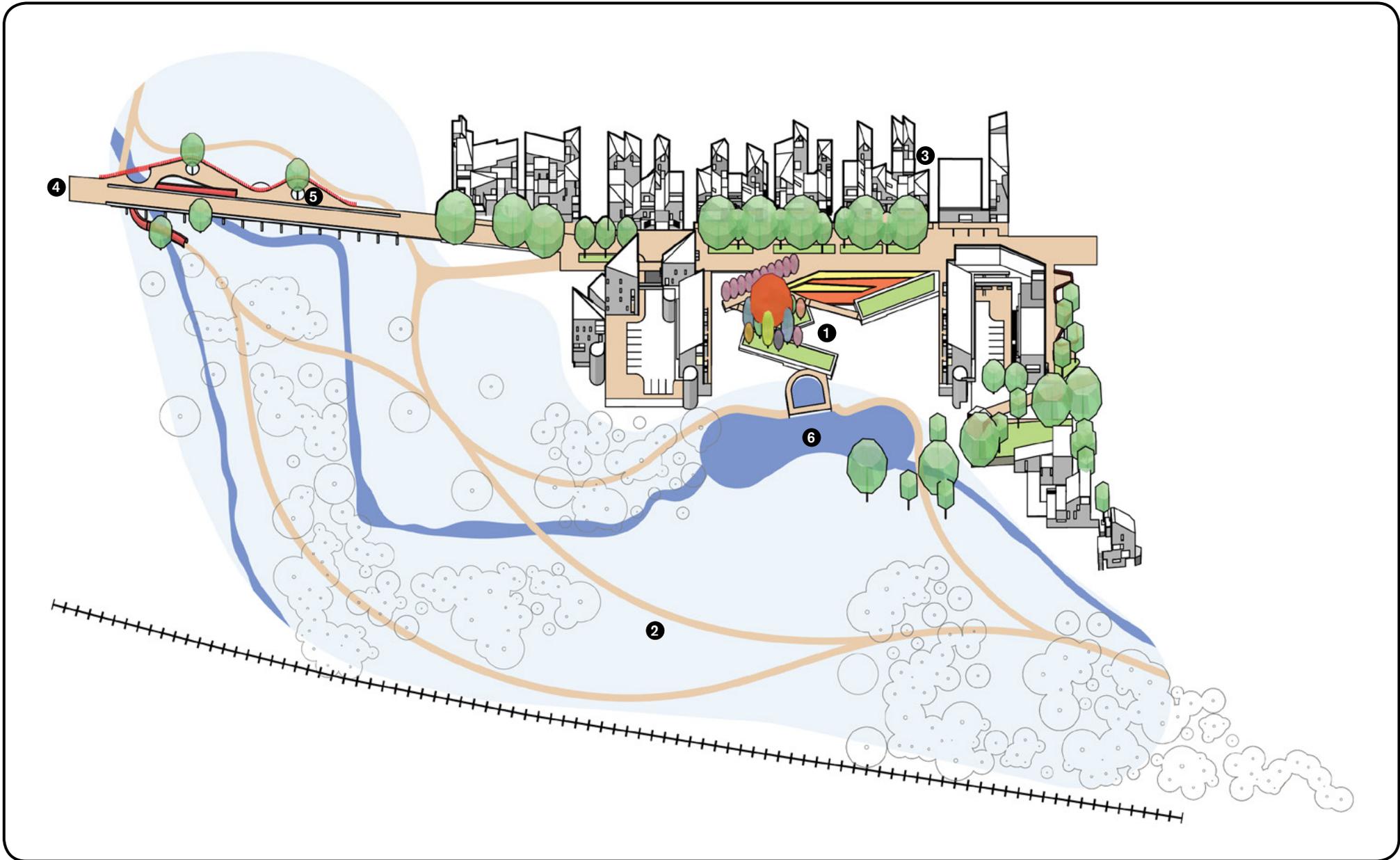
Looking north to North End from Farmers' Market



Looking south from Auto and Pedestrian Bridges and Straw

The Promenade ⊖

- ① Spillover Park to Floodplain ② New Mayflower Trail ③ Live-Work / Commercial
④ Auto Bridge ⑤ Pedestrian Bridge and Straw ⑥ New City Pond



Slow Street evolves into a tree-lined esplanade that spills into the floodplain while opening views to the hills northwest of the site. Here, the street serves as a primary trailhead to a new municipal greenway system laminated to Slow Street. The greenway supports walking and cycling while preserving sensitive landscapes and delivering important ecosystem services within the city.



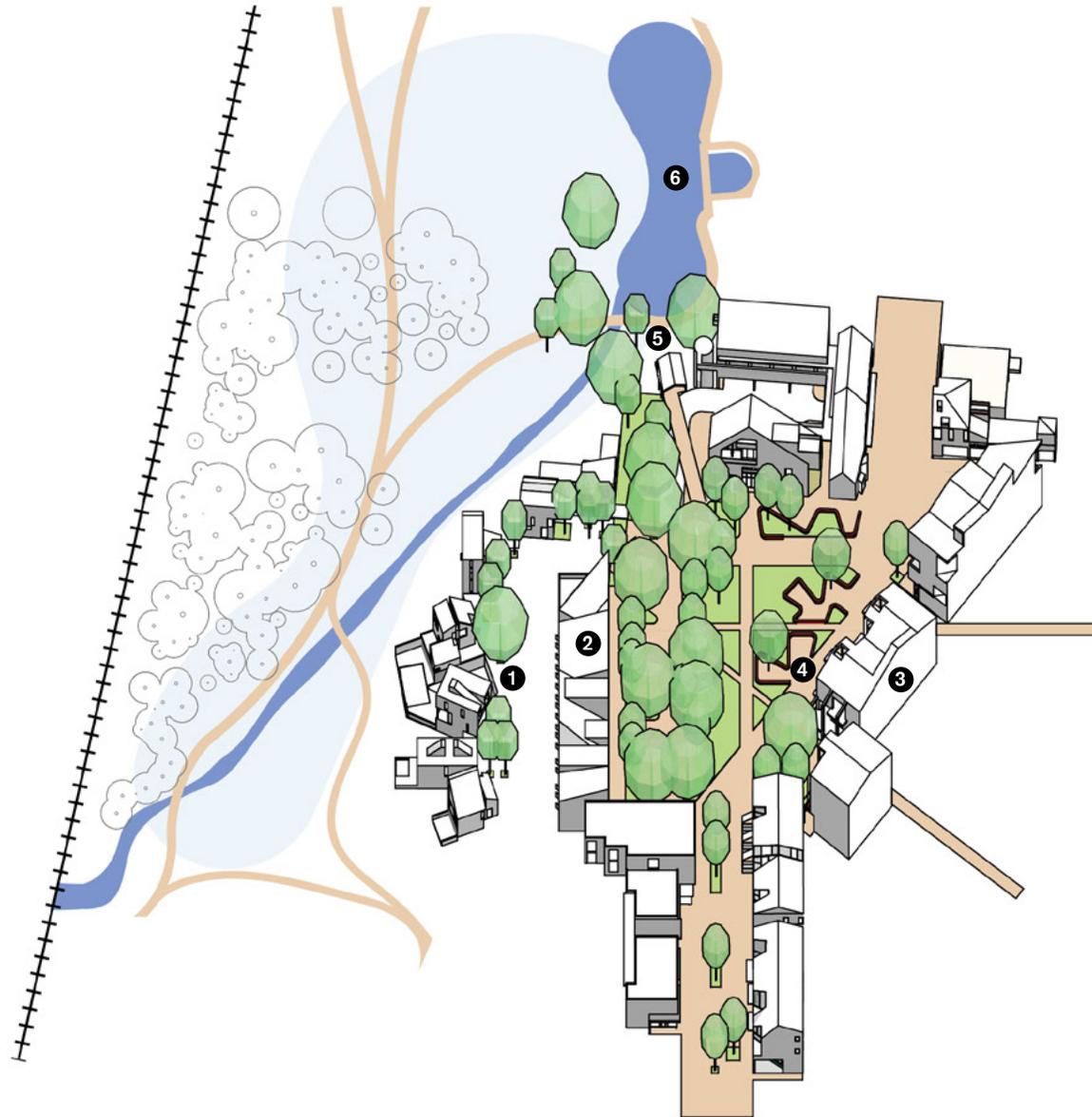
Looking east from Mayflower Trail to The Promenade above



Looking north through The Promenade and Spillover Park

The Triangle ⊖

- ① Detached Housing Overlook
- ② Live-Work Units
- ③ Mixed-Use Units
- ④ Pedestrian Sitting Rooms
- ⑤ Floodplain Park Entrance
- ⑥ New City Pond



The Triangle shifts Slow Street eastward to preserve the area's floodplain as new park space. Slow Street expands into a town center park accommodating changes in densities and mixed uses from predominantly commercial retail to office, residential, and dining. High to moderately dense urban rooms form a second layer around The Triangle as transition zones to the floodplain below and the fast street to the east.



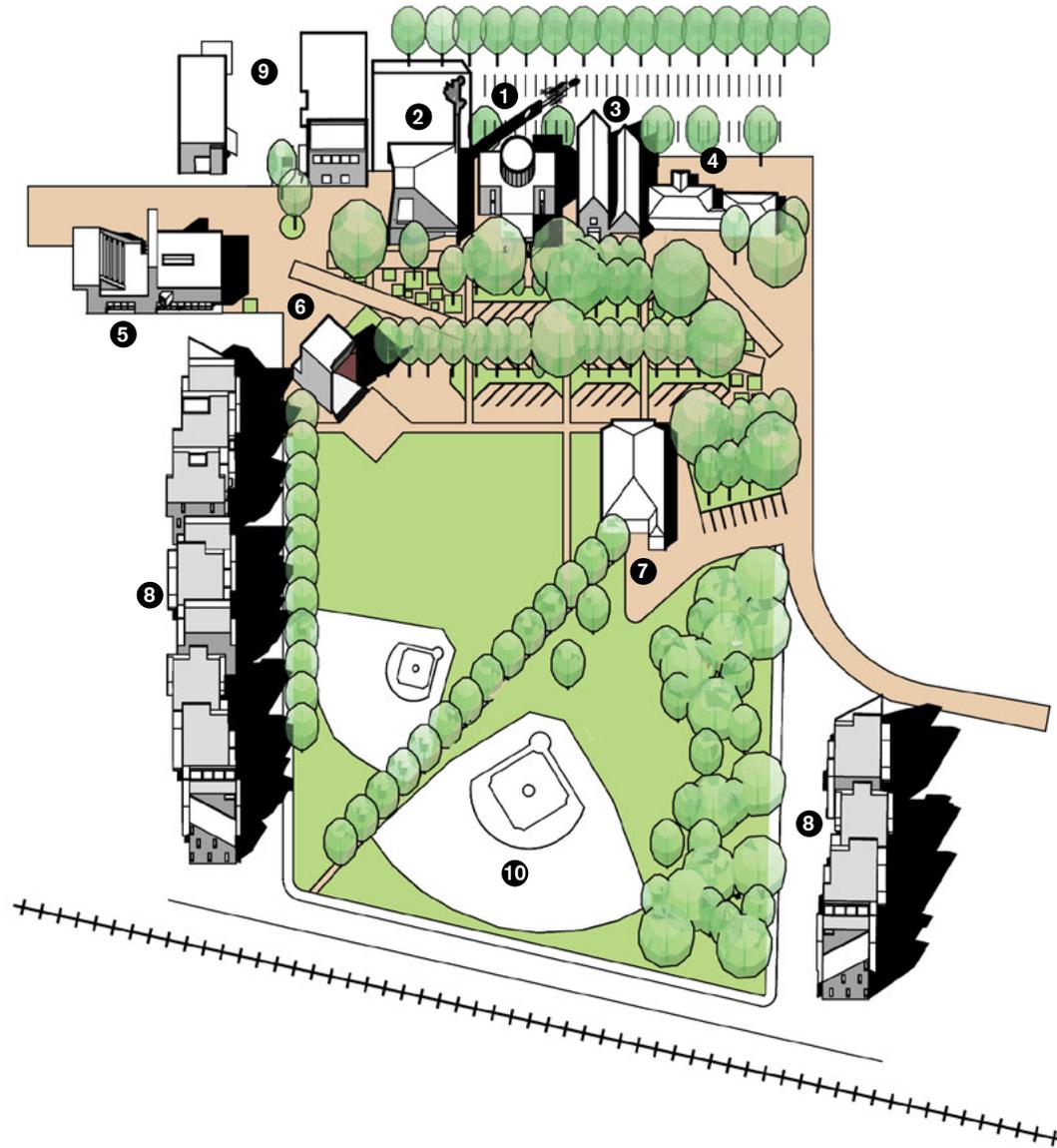
Looking northeast through The Triangle



Looking south through The Triangle

City Park ⊖

- ① City Hall ② Public Safety Facility and Yard ③ Senior Center ④ Existing School Administration ⑤ Library ⑥ Bandshell
⑦ Existing Post Office ⑧ Townhouses and Flats ⑨ Satterfield Road Commercial ⑩ New Baseball Fields



Slow Street defines new edges for the existing city park and extends its space eastward to create a new public square for civic buildings, including a new city hall, public safety facility, senior center, and bandshell. Automobile parking for the city park area bookends the eastern edge and provides new street linkages to Satterfield Road and Highway 89. Street right-of-ways are often barriers. Slow Street's shared space offers park-like amenities that stitch together disparate and unplanned development while still accommodating parking and traffic throughput.



Looking north from intersection of Satterfield Road and City Park



Looking north on Slow Street and City Park to City Hall

Pocket Housing District ①



Pocket housing is an identifiable cluster of 4-16 homes around shared outdoor commons and infrastructure. Its compact footprint and higher density makes pocket housing an especially sustainable and affordable land use for town centers. Pocket housing provides desirable housing options between the scales of the single-family house and mid-rise flats, what planners call the “missing middle”, because they have not been built since the 1930s. Missing middle housing types, from the duplex to the triplex and fourplex, bungalow court, mansion apartment, townhouse, live-work, and courtyard apartments, are all high-quality medium-density options which meet the density thresholds for viable public transit neighborhoods and can be easily financed. Missing middle housing readily meets the new demand for urban livability within walkable neighborhoods and is affordable for the average household income.



Looking west on Highway 89 to Slow Street entrance on right



Looking north from Highway 89 to Slow Street entrance



Looking west to pocket house development on Slow Street



Looking south across Highway 89 to one of three pocket housing developments

Arkansas' Best Street



Looking south to City Park over the Public Library's roof-top theater