DOWNTOWN CHATTANOOGA:

PLANNING AND PRESERVATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

BY

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MUNCIE, INDIANA

MAY 2015
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INTRODUCTION

Like many cities, Chattanooga faced decline in its urban core in the latter half of the twentieth century. Early efforts at revitalization focused on clearing large tracts of land to create space for new, modern development. These projects both alienated the citizens of the community they were supposed to help and failed to create the promised economic activity. As planning strategies shifted beginning in the 1980s, the city began to focus on preservation and rehabilitation of the city's historic resources as a way of revitalizing the downtown area. These preservation efforts were vital to creating the vibrant, active downtown that exists today.

The city of Chattanooga has a long history—it was occupied for thousands of years by Native Americans, played a central role in the Civil War, and was a major railroad hub in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As a result, the city has a rich history that includes many historic buildings and structures. The ways in which the city has approached planning and engaged with the historic fabric of the city has evolved since the earliest urban planning efforts in the 1920s and often reflect the broader attitudes in the country towards planning and preservation.

In the 1920s, the City Commission hired a proponent of City Beautiful who sought to give the city greater formality and grandeur. In the 1950s–70s, the city saw the historic buildings of the city as an obstacle to creating a new, modern city that could adapt to the rapidly changing modern American life. These changes included increasing use of automobiles, a rise in homeownership, and changing consumer shopping habits. To create space for new development, large numbers of historic buildings were razed, often over the protests of the citizens of Chattanooga.
In the 1970s, as preservation efforts began to increase across the country, the citizens of Chattanooga also became more active in advocating for the protection of historic resources. These efforts focused on large landmark buildings that were important in the community, such as the Terminal Railroad Station. As Chattanooga experimented with consensus-based community planning in the 1980s, with projects like Chattanooga Venture, the citizens of Chattanooga continued to push for preservation of buildings downtown was a top priority. New planning efforts, such as the riverfront development, successfully incorporated historic resources into their plans.

As these projects made downtown more livable, people began to move downtown, new businesses opened, and new schools were built. The new demand for space created a resurgence in downtown activity as people renovated traditional storefronts and adapted old warehouses into modern condos. By working with the historic resources, Chattanooga has created a thriving, vibrant downtown.
CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW

Downtown Chattanooga has a long history of urban planning, beginning in the 1920s with the creation of the City Planning Commission and the hiring of Harland Bartholomew, one of the nation’s first urban planning consultants, and continuing through today. Planning in downtown Chattanooga, in many ways, serves as a reflection of national trends, from its early efforts to adopt the vision of the City Beautiful movement, to slum clearance in the 1950s, consensus-building workshops in the 1980s, to modern downtown revitalization efforts which have turned historic brick buildings into craft breweries and yoga studios. My thesis will address the major efforts at downtown planning in Chattanooga, how they fit within broader national planning efforts, and their effect on the community.

The Chattanooga Street Plan and Preliminary Report on System of Recreation Facilities for Chattanooga, Tennessee, both by Harland Bartholomew & Associates in 1924, were the first plans for downtown Chattanooga created after a state law allowed Chattanooga to take over urban planning duties that had been held exclusively by the state.¹ Both reflected City Beautiful thought of the time and emphasized wide, formal streets; parks and green areas; and creating a sense of civic pride.

In 1946, a massive two-volume comprehensive plan, Comprehensive Plan of Development Chattanooga and Hamilton County Tennessee, was published. It contains within a long justification for urban planning, discussing both the need for urban planning and the right of the city to enact the laws necessary to carry out the provisions it recommends. It then goes on to offer sweeping plans for the city, on everything from

¹ Chapter 165 of the Private Acts of the General Assembly of Tennessee for 1921.
designing parks, to planning for housing, to creating better sewage and waste disposal systems in the city.

*The Main Street Redevelopment Project* in 1952 was an early plan for slum clearance in an area of south downtown along Main Street. While never implemented, the plan was part of controversial efforts at urban renewal in which the city would buy property, raze the structures, and then sell it to developers. The plan justifies the need for clearance by claiming the area is full of slums that are beyond rehabilitation. It also discusses the racial disparity in the impact of the proposed project.

*The Downtown Chattanooga: An Urban Design Plan and Improvements Program for the City of Chattanooga, Tennessee* was published in 1976. The plan came up with a new vision for the downtown that involved competing with the new shopping malls in the suburbs by creating an activity called “going downtown.” The downtown would offer a group of activities, like going to the theatre and parks that the malls were unable to offer. It recommended establishing the area bound by 6th and 9th, and Cherry St. and Broad St. as the dominant retail zone, with planned improvements to increase the traffic to those areas.

In 1977, the first historic survey of Hamilton County was released. The *Chattanooga-Hamilton County Landmarks Survey & Preservation Plan* surveyed all buildings eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places in the county and listed them. The survey was meant to serve as the basis for creating a historic preservation plan for the city and county, as well as the creation of a historic preservation commission to oversee alterations to historic buildings.
In 1984, Chattanooga launched a project called Chattanooga Venture, out of which came Vision 2000 and Revision 2000, which aimed to create changes in Chattanooga through consensus building in the community, rather than from the top down. The records from Chattanooga Venture are archived at the Chattanooga Bicentennial Library special collections. The records contain almost all materials relating to Venture, including minutes of meetings, reports, urban design plans, a copy of a short video documentary on the project, and brochures and other promotional materials.

The special collections also contain the archives of the Moccasin Bend Association. The Moccasin Bend Association was an effort to have the Moccasin Bend area on the north shore of the Tennessee River declared a park and was a driving force behind the redevelopment of the riverfront. The papers contain extensive correspondence, including letters and Western Union telegrams, between members of the committee, state and federal officials, and private citizens. The letters outline the efforts of the committee to have the area incorporated into the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park.

To improve the riverfront area, the city commissioned the Chattanooga Riverfront Draft Master Plan and the Chattanooga Riverfront Concept Plan Alternatives. Many other cities had begun capitalizing on their waterfront, but Chattanooga’s downtown was largely cut off from the river. The aim was to increase access to the water from the downtown. The Riverfront Draft Master Plan focused on building pedestrian, bike, and bridle trails and park facilities along the south shore of the Tennessee River with high-density residential buildings on the other side and redoing the streets to ease pedestrian traffic flow.
The *Concept Plan Alternatives* provided two different alternative uses for the Moccasin Bend area. They both recommended removing the existing mental health facility and golf course. One proposal was to increase tourism by turning the whole area into a model Cherokee village, since the area had originally been a Cherokee settlement. The plan suggested that the village would be comparable to attractions like Colonial Williamsburg. The other alternative had a smaller model Cherokee village, a zoo, and suggested turning the mental health facility into a museum that would interpret the site’s Native American and Civil War history.

While there are many reports and plans for improving the downtown, they are all plans that do not show implementation or the impact on the city. Each one is individual and has little information on the plans that came before it and does not tie the plan into the larger picture of how the downtown area in Chattanooga developed over time.

As Chattanooga continues to grow, important decisions will continue to be made about how to approach the city’s historic resources. An understanding of past approaches to urban planning and historic preservation, as well as their outcomes, will be valuable in informing the decision-making process.
CHAPTER II: EARLY HISTORY

Before European settlement, Chattanooga was occupied by Native Americans for thousands of years. At the time of the arrival of European settlers, the Chattanooga area was mainly used as hunting grounds by a group of Native Americans called Aniyunwiya, who, through a series of linguistical quirks, came to be known as the Cherokee in English. The Cherokee had five towns in the Chattanooga area: Running Water, Nickajack, Long Island, Crow Town, and Lookout. Together, these towns formed a political and cultural subgroup of the Cherokee known as the Chickamauga\(^2\). The Chickamauga Indians always supported the losing side in the conflicts between the European powers. First, they supported both the French and the Spanish settlers over the British and then the British over the Americans in the Revolutionary War. Their support for the losing side made them unpopular with the European locals who continually encroached on their territory.

As settlers expanded into Middle Tennessee, the Tennessee River became an important means of transporting people and goods into the region, and raids by the Chickamauga on the passing boats were common. In 1785, they captured a man named Daniel Ross as he was moving through the area. Another settler in the area, John McDonald, who had married a half-Cherokee woman, managed to negotiate his release. Afterward, Ross married McDonald's daughter Mollie and built a homestead at the base of Lookout Mountain. Ross and his wife had three children; the youngest was a boy that

they named John Ross. Although John Ross was only one-eighth Cherokee, he identified strongly with the Cherokee people.

In 1812, John Ross fought against the British in the War of 1812 with a group of Cherokee warriors. After the war, he returned home and built the first ferry crossing in the area—a ferry, a boat landing, and a small warehouse just west of modern-day Market Street in Chattanooga, an area that is still known today as “Ross’s Landing.” Because it was the only river-crossing and landing for boats in the area, Ross's Landing quickly became an important commercial center in the area and one of the primary meeting places between the Americans and the Cherokee. Perhaps because Ross was mixed-heritage and his landing served as a bridge between the Cherokee and the Americans, he quickly began to move up in the Cherokee political world. He was elected to the Cherokee National Committee in 1817, and two years later, he was elected as the committee's president. He served as committee president until the Cherokee Nation adopted a constitution in 1827. He was then elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation.\(^3\)

During this time, the Cherokee faced a continual increase of settlers illegally squatting on their territory, and they were forced to sign over more and more of their territory to the United States government. In 1830, the State of Georgia unilaterally claimed ownership of all Cherokee lands. The Cherokee were divided on how to handle the situation. Two major parties emerged: the National Party, supported by John Ross,

\(^3\) Council, *Ross’s Landing at Chattanooga*, 7
which advocated resistance; and the Treaty Party, which advocated for negotiating the best possible terms for their forced emigration to the west, which they saw as inevitable.

Although the Treaty Party represented only a minority of Cherokees, Andrew Jackson negotiated the Treaty of New Echota with them, which ceded all Cherokee territory in the southeast to the United States and required all Cherokee’s to relocate to designated Indian Territory in the western United States. Although John Ross pleaded with the Senate not to ratify the treaty, the Senate ratified it by one vote. Following the Treaty, approximately 13,000 Cherokee were rounded up into internment camps and then sent west either by foot or boat. One camp, Camp Cherokee, was built near Ross's Landing, though the exact location remains unknown, and housed approximately 2,500 Cherokee. They were the last Cherokee to remain in the area and, in 1838, were forcibly marched west suffering about 50 percent loss of life during the ordeal, typically called the “trail of tears.”

With the Cherokee removed, the area was open to wider settlement. The State of Tennessee ordered that the area south of the river, dubbed the Ocoee District, be surveyed into townships and sold. Two-hundred and forty acres of the land, centered on Ross’s Landing, was laid out as a city. It stretched south from the river to modern-day 9th Street/Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and from Cameron Hill to modern-day Georgia Street. Joseph Patty of Kingston, Tennessee was hired to lay out a nine-by-twelve grid of streets (Figure 1). The streets were plotted relative to magnetic north, unlike the original Ocoee District survey, which was oriented relative to the river. This created the irregular
Figure 1. Reproduction of the original plat map of Chattanooga, 1839.4

street intersections still present today along Georgia Street, as streets laid out in the Ocoee District were extended to join with the streets in Chattanooga. The streets in Chattanooga were also unusually wide. The north-south streets were 100 feet wide, except for modern-day Market Street, which was wider, and the east-west streets were 66 feet wide, though street widths were quickly reduced to save costs associated with maintaining them. Lots in the new town were sold for $7.50 an acre. In 1838, the name “Chattanooga” was chosen. It is unclear exactly what the word means but was undoubtedly taken from a Native American language. On December 20, 1839, Tennessee officially incorporated the City of Chattanooga.

The same year that Chattanooga incorporated, the Western & Atlantic Railroad announced that they planned to build a line running from Marthasville, Georgia to the Tennessee River near Chattanooga. The proposal to build a railway created a boom in land speculation and growth in the small city. The railroad came to town in 1850, and the Western & Atlantic Railroad was followed by the Nashville & Chattanooga in 1854. The Memphis & Charleston connected with the Nashville & Chattanooga four years later. As both a railroad hub and a port along the Tennessee River, Chattanooga's role expanded as a commercial trading point. It became a major trading route for iron; agricultural goods like corn, wheat, and whiskey; and salt to areas downriver.

Because Chattanooga was an important transportation center, it became one of the critical junctions of the Civil War. In August 1863, facing the advancing divisions of Gen. William S. Rosecrans, Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg, along with his troops, retreated from the city. Gen. Rosecrans pressed on south into Georgia. The resulting Battle of Chickamauga was the most costly defeat for the Union Army in the Western
Theater of the Civil War and second in causalities only to the Battle of Gettysburg. After losing, Gen. Rosecrans retreated into Chattanooga where he fortified his position. Although Gen. Bragg laid siege to Chattanooga, he ultimately lost at the Battles of Lookout Mountain and Chattanooga on November 23–25.

The war was devastating for the city. Although the Union Army built the first bridge over the Tennessee River, the Meigs Bridge, and the city's first waterworks to supply potable water to the troops, they also cut down virtually every tree in the city to provide clear firing lines for the artillery, and they destroyed the flour mill, whiskey distillery, and the Bluff Furnace. After the Civil War, the economic landscape of the South was dramatically altered, and lumber became more important to Chattanooga. Logs were joined together into rafts and floated down the Tennessee River to Chattanooga, where they were planned, sawed, and shipped further downstream. By 1885, Chattanooga was processing up to 20 million feet of lumber a year.

Chattanooga was also leading site of steel production in the South. The city had the South's first permanent steel work, and it was the first city in the region to adopt the Bessemer process, which was patented in 1855 as a way of cheaply producing steel from pig iron. Steel production in the city declined through the 1880s as the city faced competition from new companies in the North, such as the Edgar Thomson Steel Works in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In the 1890s, they switched to foundries that cast iron pipe. They also began to diversify their manufacturing base by expanding into textiles.

The Meigs Bridge that was built during the Civil War was short-lived. Because it was built by military to fulfill a pressing need—providing a supply route to the Union troops in Chattanooga—it was hastily built and constructed mostly of unseasoned lumber. It had
already been condemned as unsafe by the city when a flood destroyed it in 1867. It was not until 1883 that the city began work on a replacement. That year, the county court appointed a committee to supervise the sounding of the floor of the river as the first step in building a new bridge. The committee failed, and the following year a new committee was appointed which oversaw the sounding of the river.

Because the Tennessee River was used heavily by steamboats, all bridges across the river required a federal permit. Hamilton County was able to acquire a permit and rights-of-way from the Chattanooga Bridge Company, which had already tried to build a bridge across the river but failed due to lack of funding. The rights to build secured, Hamilton County issued $200,000 in bonds and began construction. The Walnut Street Bridge was dedicated on February 18, 1891 (Figure 2).

The Walnut Street Bridge quickly proved to be inadequate for Chattanooga's needs. It required constant repairs, and the bridge’s weight limit was too low to support the streetcar routes that had been planned. The city soon began planning the Market Street Bridge. The county wanted the bridge to be made out of concrete and with a low rise to save the expense of steel, tall piers, and a long approach. However, the federal requirements for at least one span to meet height and width requirements to allow ships to pass meant that a bascule bridge, i.e., drawbridge, would be necessary if the planners wanted to keep the bridge low to the river. To meet these requirements, the planners settled on a concrete bridge with a steel truss double-leaf Schrezer rolling lift bascule
mechanism, weighted by two large pieces of concrete. The Market Street Bridge was completed in 1917 at a cost of one million dollars (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Walnut Street Bridge, c. 1900.

In what is now a popular folktale among Chattanooga residents, in 1899, two Chattanoogans, Benjamin Thomas and Joseph Whitehead, purchased the bottling rights to Coca-Cola for a mere dollar after the president of the company assured them that bottled Coca-Cola would never take off. The men had trouble convincing investors to back

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5 The Schrezer rolling lift is a type of rolling lift trunnion patented by William Donald Schrezer in which a section of the bridge rolls on a semicircular fulcrum, counter-balanced by a large piece of concrete. A double-leaf bascule has two movable sections that separate in the center.

their enterprise, but local businessman Jack Lupton agreed to help finance the new Coca-Cola Bottling Company. Bottled Coca-Cola was a hit, and all three men became exceedingly wealthy. With his fortune, Jack Lupton was exceedingly generous and a renowned philanthropist. His philanthropy played an important role in later urban renewal projects, especially Chattanooga Venture, discussed below.

Figure 3. Market Street Bridge constructed c. 1917 (photo date uncertain).

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CHAPTER III: EARLY PLANNING

In 1920, Tennessee passed its first law allowing cities to form their own municipal planning commissions.\(^8\) However, the bill was only for cities of more than 160,000 residents, a mark which Chattanooga missed by over 100,000 people. Despite this, two years later, the Board of Commissioners of the City of Chattanooga hired the nation's first urban planning consulting firm, Harland Bartholomew Associates of St. Louis, to create a city plan for them. A year later, they formed the City Planning Commission, though it had little power beyond making recommendations to the Board of Commissioners.

At the time, Chattanooga, like many cities, was undergoing rapid changes as the population increased and automobiles become commonplace. The city commission was faced with issues like how to manage parking and whether streets, many of which were still being paved for the first time, should be made one way, and there were no professionals in the city to advise them.

Harland Bartholomew, dubbed the “Dean of Comprehensive City Planning” by the New York Times,\(^9\) was the nation’s first full-time city planner, originally working in Newark, New Jersey. In 1916, he moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where he worked as a city engineer and founded the consulting firm Harland Bartholomew Associates. He had a background in transportation planning, which made him a natural choice for cities that were adapting to cars.

In 1924, Harland Bartholomew Associates presented their first plan to the city, a street plan. The plan was meant to help the city deal with the rapid changes taking place,

\(^{8}\) Chapter 165 of the Private Acts of the General Assembly of Tennessee for 1921.
including population growth, the rise in the automobile, and the expansion of the streetcar network. Bartholomew also uses it to advance his views of what a city should be: a beautiful environment shaped by a strong government. As the report states:

[Chattanooga] has lacked, moreover, a compelling vision of civic greatness, shared by all its citizens. Not the least of its handicaps has been the lack of a definite guide by which the unusual possibilities of the city might be more effectively realized. The various interests which make up the city have all looked ahead and made plans for their own advancement, but no agency has been charged with the duty of planning a larger, better Chattanooga.10

The street plan was primarily aimed at widening streets to facilitate better traffic. Market Street was the only major thoroughfare through the downtown. The report called for the widening of 2nd, 4th, and 7th streets, which crossed Market Street, from 46 feet to 66 feet. It also redesigned their intersections where they terminated on Georgia Avenue to reduce traffic congestion into downtown from the suburbs to the north. It also proposed widening Walnut Street, Cherry Street, and Chestnut Street to provide alternatives for traffic to Market Street.

The report also described the way in which the railroads were limiting the growth of the city. Already confined by natural and geographic boundaries—the Tennessee River, the Georgia border, and Lookout Mountain—the railroads and depots further divided the city (Figure 4). It called from moving the Nashville, Chattanooga, & St. Louis Railroad Station, which started east of 9th Street between Market and Chestnut and created a barrier that limited connections with the eastern portion of the city. By removing the station, Broad Street could be extended and connect with Whiteside Street which ran to Lookout Mountain.

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10 Harland Bartholomew & Associates, Chattanooga Street Plan, 1924, I.
That same year, Harland Bartholomew Associates also submitted the *Preliminary Report on System of Recreation Facilities for Chattanooga, Tennessee*, which detailed their ideas for creating more parks and recreational areas that were called for in the street plan. Bartholomew thought that the city suffered from having too many people in the suburban areas surrounding the city. At the time, Chattanooga was much smaller since it

had not incorporated several surrounding areas, including North Chattanooga across the Tennessee River, Alton Park, Lookout Mountain, St. Elmo, East Lake, and Missionary Ridge, though it would do so by 1929. He thought that his plans: enforced zoning, better roads, improved streetcar routes, and more parks and recreational facilities, would bring people back to the city.

Most of ideas in the report were not implemented. There is no record of discussions during city commissioner’s meetings between 1924 and 1926 of implementing any of the park or recreational facilities, nor did they discuss any new zoning regulations. The commissioners did fund the widening of Cherry Street and extending 11th Street from Chestnut Street to Market Street. They also undertook one of more ambitious proposals in the report—extending Broad Street through the existing railroad tracks at the southern terminus of the street to connect it with Whiteside Street in order to create a more direct route between Chattanooga and the base of Lookout Mountain (Figure 5).

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12 Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of Commissioners, November 13, 1924, Chattanooga Bicentennial Library microfilm, Chattanooga, Tennessee.
Figure 5. Proposed Broad Street and 11th Street extensions (highlighting added).\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{13} Harland Bartholomew Associates, \textit{Chattanooga Street Plan}, Plate 14, 1924.
CHAPTER IV: POST–WORLD WAR II PLANNING

While Chattanooga made early strides in urban planning, the city, like most in America, was hit hard by the Great Depression. By 1933, the city's planning efforts had largely ended and did not begin again until after World War II. In the years following WWII, Chattanooga embarked on a multi-decade, ambitious program of urban renewal. In 1946, the first comprehensive development plan for Chattanooga was released by the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission, a massive two-volume set that covered everything from housing to parks to sewage removal to long treatises on the need for urban planning. One of the main focuses of the report was the substandard housing throughout much of Chattanooga. It recommended the clearance of large amounts of slums, which would inform Chattanooga urban planning until the 70s.

Main Street Redevelopment Project

The first slum clearance plan in the city was the Main Street Redevelopment Project in 1952. The Main Street Project was an attempt to clear “blight” from the area on the southeast side of downtown, bounded by Central Avenue on the east, Main Street on the south, Market Street on the West, and the Chattanooga Station Company on the north (Figure 6). The project involved clearance of 234 structures that were considered dilapidated. They were mostly old houses and commercial blocks with apartments above them. The structures were considered too dilapidated to rehabilitate, and most of them lacked basic facilities such as indoor plumbing.
The newly cleared area was to be used for business, commercial and industrial, rather than housing (Figure 7). The planners recommended that easements be placed on all property the city cleared that forbid it from being used for residences for the next 40 years. This would open the area to more commercial and industrial use, as residents of Chattanooga migrated to the surrounding suburbs. They wanted to replace the shops in traditional street-level storefronts and their on-street parking with new, enclosed shopping centers surrounded by parking lots. All new commercial buildings would be required to have parking lots at least three times the footprint of the building. The traditional hotels

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14 Chattanooga Housing Authority, *Air View of Existing Conditions* from *The Main Street Redevelopment Project*, page 6, c. 1954.
would be replaced by motels that provided better accommodations for a new generation of travelers that were coming by car, not train. By clearing the area of residential use, the planners hoped it would encourage industry to move closer to downtown, freeing up the suburbs for residential expansion, a reverse of Bartholomew’s earlier vision.

Figure 7. Example shopping center for the Main Street project area.\textsuperscript{15}

The plan was very racially divisive. The urban renewal of the 1950s took place in an environment in which demographics in the city were changing radically: white people were moving to the suburbs while blacks were abandoning the region all together. In 1957, the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Planning Commission released a report which outlined population trends in the county.\textsuperscript{16} They found that in the years 1940–1950, virtually all of

\textsuperscript{15} Chattanooga Housing Authority, \textit{Possible Retail Shopping Center} from \textit{The Main Street Redevelopment Project}, page 36, c. 1954.

the population growth in the region had been outside of Chattanooga and in the surrounding suburbs. They also found a sharp racial divide between the city and suburbs. The number of white people in the city decreased while blacks either remained in the city or migrated out of the county altogether. The area surrounding the city, mostly suburbs, saw an increase from approximately 52,000 people to approximately 77,000 people. Virtually the entire population increase was white. While there was no firm way to track migrants, the report authors suggested that blacks were leaving the area for the North.

The Main Street Redevelopment Project area was largely black, with 798 black residents and only 237 white residents. Moreover, the homes of black families in the area were dilapidated or sub-standard at a much higher rate than the homes of white families—66.8 percent versus 22.8 percent respectively. The black families also had more limited housing options. Not only did segregation mean they were restricted from many communities, they were much poorer than their white counterparts living in the same area. Black families in the neighborhood made on average just 58.6 percent of what the white families in the neighborhood made, although this gap was consistent with broader income disparity in the state.17

The project also faced significant opposition from private interests in Chattanooga. James R. Chamberlain, representing the Chattanooga Board of Realtors, along with 19 other citizens representing realtors and the building industry, opposed the plan since it would entail moving hundreds of residents into public housing after their homes were destroyed. They felt that public housing competed unfairly with private housing, and they

17 The 1950 Tennessee Census reported that blacks in non-farming occupations had a median income of 52.5% comparable white families in the state. (Census of Population 1950, Volume II, Characteristics of the Population, Table 87)
proposed an alternative plan that would use the funding for demolishing the structures and building new public housing to instead pay private developers to rehabilitate the homes. They pointed to efforts in cities like Baltimore, where they had rehabilitated over 11,000 homes and were continuing to rehabilitate at a rate of about 1,500 homes a year.\textsuperscript{18}

The group demanded a public referendum, which was denied by the City Commission, when they approved an ordinance to accept Title I federal funds,\textsuperscript{19} which paid two-thirds of the losses to the city from acquiring the land, clearing it, and selling it to developers. The opponents filed a petition in court, hoping to force the referendum, but before it could work its way through the court, the project was canceled for budgetary reasons. The city commission had planned on spending $210,000 for acquiring the land, but it was appraised at a much higher value than the commission thought it was worth. Despite the cancellation of the project, the Chattanooga Housing Authority continued developing public housing in the East Lake Courts, College Hill Courts, and Boone Hynsiger homes.

Even though it was canceled before it started, the Main Street Redevelopment Project is significant because it illustrates the often hostile relationship between the city commission and the citizens of Chattanooga on planning issues. Acting with little public input, the commissioners sought to demolish an area that many citizens wanted to see rehabilitated. When the city’s plan failed, they walked away from nearly half a million dollars in federal matching funds rather than considering other proposals.


\textsuperscript{19} Title I of the American Housing Act of 1949 provided matching federal funds to communities for slum clearance at low interest rates.
Westside/Golden Gateway

In 1955, the city decided to try a project similar to the Main Street plan in the western part of downtown. There were two major, separate projects planned for the area. The first plan was to put in a highway, US-27, running north-south through the area to accommodate increased automobile traffic into downtown. Under the new interstate highway systems bill, the federal government would pay 90 percent of the cost of putting in the highway. The second was an urban renewal program, the Westside Renewal Area, for the over 400 acres between Main in the South and Carter Street/Chestnut Street to the east to the Tennessee River on the West and North (Figure 8). The area was to be almost completely demolished and rebuilt with garden-type apartments and high-rise apartment complexes replacing single-family homes and traditional streetfront commercial replaced with large shopping complexes.

Interestingly, the city neglected to incorporate the riverfront into the plan. Under the plan, manufacturing plants along the riverfront were not addressed. The Westside Renewal area added 102 acres of new industrial zoning, with heavy manufacturing along the river, except for a small area set aside as a park, and light manufacturing was used as a buffer between the heavy manufacturing zones and the commercial and residential zones. Manufacturing was a critical part of the economy, and the manufacturing plants relied on the Tennessee River for shipping, water for cooling processes, and waste disposal.

20 Staff Writer, “City will pay $1 for each $10 in aid,” Chattanooga Times, September 23, 1956.
Figure 8. Map of the Westside Renewal Area/Golden Gateway project area.\textsuperscript{21}

World War II was a boon for the manufacturing industry, as new manufacturing plants started up to fill war orders and existing ones began to convert their process, to provide the military with products like boilers for steamships, medical supplies, and K-rations. Following the war, Chattanooga's industry began to turn away from traditional goods, such as textiles, to industrial goods. Between 1950 and 1957, jobs in manufacturing increased 15.6 percent, and almost all of the growth in manufacturing was in industrial goods, like chemicals and machinery, while employment in manufacture of traditional goods, like textiles and furniture, dropped by nine percent. By 1957, manufacturing jobs represented 46 percent of all non-farm employment in the Chattanooga-Hamilton County area, and they brought with them other jobs in areas like construction.22

Like the Main Street area, the urban planners frequently used the words “blighted" and “slums” to refer to the Westside project area Of the over 3,300 houses in the area, more than half were listed as substandard on the 1950 US census.23 Most of the housing stock in the area was old. Sixty-four percent of the homes in the area were built before 1920, and by the 1950s, most had been divided up into cheap apartments. Only 11 percent of homes in the area were owner-occupied.24 Also like the Main Street Redevelopment area, it was occupied by predominately poor, black families that the urban planners wanted to move out of the area. The plan would come to be known colloquially as “negro removal.”25

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22 Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission, Description and Evaluation of the Present Economy in the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Planning Region, Chattanooga, TN, January 19, 1957, pg. 36.
The plan included some new housing—high-rise apartment buildings and garden apartments, but the Chattanooga Housing Authority fully expected that most of the people living in the area would not return after the development since the proposed housing would be too expensive for most of the existing residents. As part of their agreement with the federal Urban Renewal Agency to receive federal funding, the City Commission agreed to provide housing assistance to 500 families displaced by project. Originally, they intended to use only private housing, not public, due to the previous push-back they had received during the planning of the Main Street plan.

Working with the Chattanooga Board of Realtors, the city came up with a plan to build 490 low-cost homes. Two-hundred and fifty single family homes would be privately built with city funding and then rented for forty dollars a week. The remaining houses would be sold to displaced families under a Section 221 FHA loan, which would provide loan guarantees for homes that cost less than nine thousand dollars. The loans required no down payment, $200 in closing costs, and were amortized over 40 years. However, there were families that could not afford to rent or purchase a home, so the Chattanooga Housing Authority was “forced” to build an additional 192 public housing units, which because the Maurice Poss homes on the south side.26

In order to build the new highway, planners decided to level off Cameron Hill on the west side of the downtown for fill dirt. Cameron Hill was an important site in Chattanooga. Cameron Hill had been used as a site for Union artillery fortification during the Civil War, after the Union army had taken the city. During the turn of the century, many

26 Fred Schneider, “Poorer Negros Are Seen in Need of Public Housing,” Chattanooga Times, April 10, 1959.
of the most prominent Chattanoogans moved there, building large Victorian homes. The natural scenery made it an attractive area for them to build on, and at the top of the hill was Boynton Park, which had remnants of the Union artillery and fortification. Although the area had fallen into decline, the area was still important to the community. The decision to tear it down was controversial, and many citizens objected to it, even going so far as writing to the National Park Service (NPS) encouraging them to designate the area as a National Park, which the NPS declined to do.

The Westside Renewal Area plan also involved demolishing a significant portion of Ninth Street. Ninth Street was an incredibly important center of African-American music. In 1937, when segregation was still strongly enforced, the Work Progress Administration (WPA) added a public swimming pool for African-Americans to Lincoln Park, a large park on the east side of the city. Because it was the only public swimming pool for African-Americans in the region, Chattanooga became a vacation destination for the African-American community in the South, and a vibrant nightlife grew to cater to travelers. Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Auditorium attracted national acts, but afterward, the black clubs on 9th street, played by local musicians, would fill up. The clubs on the street launched the careers of many nationally known groups, such as “The Impressions.” Destroying the clubs was a significant setback for the African-American music community, which never fully recovered.27

In November 1959, the project was renamed The Golden Gateway after the name was chosen in contest held by the Junior Chamber of Commerce. The plan was expanded to include a new shopping center with a department store, off-street parking for 3,000

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cars, three office buildings, two motels, and a bus station. The department stores in downtown, like J.C. Penny, were large anchor stores that provided much of the economic activity in downtown, and the city wanted to create the space for new, bigger, better department stores to compete with the new developments in the suburbs.

During the 1960s, the city implemented much of the Golden Gateway plan. The area was cleared and the lots sold to businesses (Figure 9). Tennessee Blue Cross/Blue Shield built a large 10-story office complex on the site of the former Cameron Hill. In 1964, the Gateway Shopping Center opened, a 125,000 sq. ft. shopping center, featuring a supermarket on the first floor and a Zayre department store on the second. Other new buildings included an IBM office building, a 204 unit apartment tower, and a 500 car garage. US Highway 27 was built through the site.

In 1968, the city released a new economic report that showed that the plan to revitalize the downtown was not going well. Despite plans to make the downtown a commercial center, downtown was turning into an office park. By 1968, 60 percent of downtown workers were working in the 1.6 million square feet of office space, with customer service accounting for most of the remaining workers. Retail sales slowly diminished from about $56 million adjusted dollars in 1958 to about $50 million in 1968. The decline was due to competition with suburban stores since fewer people were making the trip to the city center, with workers accounting for a large portion of the sales figures.

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In 1972, the Northgate Mall was opened in Hixon, a small suburb to the north of Chattanooga. The mall was such a success that it captured most of the new sales in the area. While downtown sales grew by about $10 million (adjusted) dollars between 1967 and 1972, their share of the retail market dropped from 43.9 percent to 28.5 percent. By 1975, the downtown had lost 23 stores, and sales decreased 40 percent. Seventy percent of that was in loss of department stores sales.\textsuperscript{31} The Golden Gateway project ended on April 20\textsuperscript{th}, 1977, when the last tract of land was sold.


Although the project failed in many respects—the shopping center is now more office space, the luxury apartment complexes are now public housing—it did have some successes. US-27 continues to be a major route, connecting Chattanooga with I-24 to the south. The Blue Cross Blue Shield still currently uses the site of Cameron Hill for its Chattanooga headquarters, and a new office complex was constructed in 2010 on the site. The public housing projects in the area provide affordable housing near downtown, which has seen prices rise dramatically in the recent past, the YMCA originally built in the area is also still very active, and the St. Barnabas Nursing Home is now a studio space for artists (discussed in Chapter VII). However, the destruction of so many historic resources has created lost opportunity. Bluff View Arts District, discussed below, has been able to capitalize on the combination of stately historic homes. Without those existing resources to draw on, the Golden Gateway area continues to lag behind the rest of the downtown in growth.

Model Cities Program

In 1968, the City Commission became interested in the model cities program, an anti-poverty program under the Johnson Administration which aimed to alleviate poverty through comprehensive planning, combined with improved social services. In February, Dean Tucker, a field representative of the program for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) came to Chattanooga to meet with the council to sell the program. Under the model cities program, the federal government would pay 80 percent of the costs to come up with a five-year development plan for a poor area of the city. If the plan was approved, the federal government would pay 80 percent of the total costs of implementing the plan. In April, the council voted to apply for $268,232 in funds to create
a plan. In July, HUD approved about half that amount. Mayor Kelley hailed the decision as “the ability to plan for the greatest progress the central city has ever witnessed” but, because Congress had not yet funded the program, cautioned against too much optimism, saying “this program should not be oversold and people should not be misled into expecting too much.”

The city chose the area adjacent to downtown on the east, beginning roughly at Georgia Ave and bound by the Tennessee River in the north, Main Street in the south, and ending at the railroad tracks (Figure 10). The area was home to almost 50,000 people. Thirty percent of families in the area made less than $3,000 a year—the federal poverty line for a non-farm household of two parents with two children was $3,526.

Thirty-nine percent of adults in the neighborhood lacked even an 8th grade education.

The model cities program capped the number of people in the development area at 15,000 so the city commission reduced the area to Orchard Knob, Avondale, and Bushtown (Figure 11). The city planned to spend, including federal funds, between $50 and $90 million dollars over five years in the area. To create the plan, the City Commission formed a City Demonstration Agency (CDA) board of 50 people. Twenty-five members of the board were appointed: six by the City Commission, five by the Chamber of Commerce, five by organizations representing labor, and the rest from smaller community organizations and city departments.

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Figure 10. Model Cities proposed boundaries.

Figure 11. Revised Model Cities boundaries.
The remaining 25 members were elected by the residents of the area to be developed. The model cities program emphasized community involvement, and the city hoped that electing representatives would give the residents a voice that would help prevent many of the mistakes of past programs, such as the Westside Redevelopment Area, that were opposed by the residents they were supposed to help. The model cities area was divided into seven different districts, which would each elect three people, with another four at-large representatives. Despite their attempts at community involvement, the conflict between the appointed board members and city officials on one side and community residents on the other derailed the project.

The elections were held on August 3rd, 1969. Although community organizers went door-to-door registering people to vote in the elections and encouraging participation, only 17 percent of eligible people (adult residents and property owners) voted: 1,300 people out of 5,000 who had been registered. Perhaps the lack of competition between candidates failed to inspire a higher turnout. Only 34 people ran in the election for 25 spots. District 4 had only two people running for three slots (a representative would later be appointed by the District 4 community council).

The area was 85 percent black, and 18 of the 24 elected members of the board were black. The week following the elections, the board learned that the mayor had appointed Quentin Lanes as director. Lanes was director of staff personnel services for city schools but had taken a leave of absence to work on a Ph.D. in education at the University of Tennessee Knoxville. Members were outraged. The mayor had not consulted the board before making the appointment, and Lanes was white and from nearby Lookout Mountain, a much wealthier community. He was also spending most of
his time in Knoxville while working on his doctorate. Board members wanted a director who was more representative of the community. As one member, Tommie F. Brown, put it: “‘I feel very firmly that the person who heads the project should have been Negro. [...] I’m sorry—you can call it a racial issue if you want—but this is a chance of a lifetime for one of our people to draw this $16,500 a year [salary].” 34 Two days later, 23 of the 25 appointments were made to the board—only one of them was black; the rest were white.

From the start, Lanes lacked community support, in what was supposed to be a community-based effort, and the city refused to compromise. Two of the seven districts voted to oppose the Lanes’s nomination, and many residents began protesting. On the Sunday following the announcement, 250 residents gathered in Avondale to protest his nomination, with a few marching to downtown and distributing black power literature. The downtown model cities planning office was picketed in early September, in a protest led by Rev. H. H. Wright, head of the Action Coordinating Council; Rev. Charles Ashley a member of the CDA Board; and Johnny Holloway, vice chairman of the Model Cities’ District 4 community council. All eight staff workers refused to cross the picket lines, but the picketing was canceled the next day, after the mayor threatened to fire any worker that did not report to work.

Rev. Wright said that the protests and picketing were designed to send a message to Lanes that he did not have the support of the black community. Lanes, for his part, thought that he had the support of both the black and white community. He thought that doing an effective job as director would allow him to overcome any objections and that the protestors objected to him solely on racial grounds and had no personal animosity.

towards him. Neither Lanes nor the mayor planned on meeting the protestors’ demands for a new director. Forced to call off the picketing, Rev. Wright threatened to block the model cities program. A no-confidence resolution by the CDA in late September was voted down, with the board split along racial lines. In October, a Molotov cocktail was thrown through the storefront window of the model cities office.\textsuperscript{35}

With so much community opposition, very little headway was made on the planning. In January of the following year, three of the staff workers resigned, saying they were already seven months into the project and nothing had been accomplished. They hoped their resignations would spark change, but little else happened. By the time February rolled around, there was only two and a half weeks left to come up with a plan for the area to address the poverty, infrastructure, education, health care, and any other issues. Congress had also failed to renew funding for the program, since the Nixon Administration had shifted their priorities towards public housing, and they no longer had the funds to meet payroll.

In the end, very little came of the model cities program, and none of the planned demolition or new construction happened. In 1973, some funding was used to open a free health care clinic that provided health tests and some basic screenings for diseases, as well as prenatal care. A group of residents sued the city. Though it was dismissed, it claimed the city had improperly consolidated services like trash removal so that they could use money from the model cities program for more affluent white areas and that the city was discriminating against blacks in providing these services.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{35} Harry Austin, “Firebomb hurled through window of model cities,” \textit{Chattanooga Times}, October 9, 1969. 
Like the Main Street Redevelopment Program before it, the model cities program represented a major loss for the city that was caused by a disconnect between the city officials and the people of the city. Although the program ostensibly included public participation, the unwillingness of the city officials to work with the residents meant a lost opportunity to gain millions of dollars in federal funding to improve the community. The lessons of the model cities program were important for the city as programs like Chattanooga Venture worked to remove the disconnect between city officials and the public in the planning process.
CHAPTER V: THE 1970S AND EARLY PRESERVATION EFFORTS

Chattanooga Choo-Choo

As discussed earlier, trains played a large role in Chattanooga’s history as a transportation and manufacturing center. With the rise of the automobile following World War II, the creation of the interstate system, and more widespread air travel, passenger trains were becoming obsolete for much of the country, including the South. By the end of World War II, Chattanooga had two passenger rail stations: Union Station and Terminal Station. Terminal Station was the first to close in 1970, with Union Station following the next year.

Union Station was built c. 1859 as a simple train-shed with some office space and waiting rooms. Over the years, it received several important upgrades, the most notable was a new front: a large, brick Romanesque facade c. 1881 (Figure 12). The station served the Western & Atlantic, Nashville & Chattanooga, Memphis & Charleston, and the East Tennessee & Georgia railroads.

When the station closed in 1971, there was an effort in the community to save it. Students at University of Tennessee, Chattanooga (UTC), led by Dr. Tom Preston, wrote A Proposal for the Restoration and Utilization of the Historic Union Depot in Downtown Chattanooga, which recommended turning the depot into a railroad museum with space for community events. The Chattanooga Historical Society got behind the project, the mayor supported it, and the Chattanooga Times made it a front page story. The property the station was built on was owned by the State of Georgia though, and they had little interest in the plan. They sold the land to developers who wanted to build downtown high-rises, and the station was demolished in 1973. Today, the Krystal and Tallan office
buildings stand on the site of the former rail station with a historical marker noting the location of the former station.\(^{37}\)

Figure 12. Union Station, c. 1924.\(^{38}\)

The Terminal Station was spared the fate of its counterpart. Designed by architect Donn Barber and built in 1909, the Beaux Arts station was built to accommodate the rapid increase in passenger rail traffic through the city, which was too much for Union Station to handle (Figure 13). When passenger rail stopped in 1970, the railroad planned to


demolish the station. In one of the earliest preservation efforts in the city, the station was bought by several businessmen and turned into a hotel and convention center. The group was led by B. Allen Casey, Jr. who owned three restaurants and a hotel in Chattanooga. He met with the President of Southern Railway Robert B. Claytor through a mutual friend. Southern Railway had recently demolished Birmingham's Terminal Station, a move which was very unpopular in Birmingham. Wanting to avoid more criticism, Claytor was eager to see the building sold to a company that wanted to preserve the structure rather than tear it down.³⁹

Casey convinced 24 other investors to match his $100,000 investment and then got a matching $2.5 million loan from American National Bank. The half-million dollars was the seed money for The Quiet Company, which was the corporate owner for the hotel. The company spent another $4 million restoring the building and turning it into a hotel with space for conventions. They renamed the station the “Chattanooga Choo-Choo” after a number one hit by the Glenn Miller Orchestra in 1941–42. The hotel preserved many of the building’s historic components, including preserving the platforms and sections of railroad track in the rear, which held railroad cars that had been converted into hotel rooms and conference space.

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³⁹ Justin W. Strickland, Chattanooga's Terminal Station (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2009), 99.
In 1985, a new convention and trade center, with 19,000 sq. ft. of exhibition space and an attached Marriott Hotel, was built just blocks from the historic train station. As a result, the Chattanooga Choo-Choo never drew the anticipated business. While the Chattanooga Choo-Choo is owned by a private company and sales figures are not available, during the author’s visits to the hotel in 2014, it was mostly deserted—there were few travelers, and the bar was empty on weekend nights. While the Choo-Choo is not very active itself, the hotel has encouraged development surrounding it, including a brewpub and restaurant in the Stong building, formerly a hotel built in 1909 that served

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the station; an apartment complex in another nearby hotel originally known as “The Grand Hotel”, and a gourmet chocolate shop in a commercial block across from the former station. In 2014, the hotel began another $8 million dollar renovation to add two restaurants, retail space, and improve the hotel rooms.

**Miller Plaza**

In the mid-1970s, the center of downtown began to receive attention. Two major events happened in 1976: the Chattanooga Bicentennial Library opened and Miller Park was created as the first downtown park in Chattanooga. Named after Burkett Miller, a prominent attorney in the city, the park was located prominently along the intersection of two major streets: Market and Ninth Street/Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

Stroud Watson recognized the potential of the area as the fulcrum between the two sections of downtown: the riverfront to the north and the south side, anchored by the Chattanooga Choo-Choo. Under his leadership, RiverCity constructed Miller Plaza across the street. Miller Plaza opened in 1988 and included a two-story building with first-floor retail and offices, including those of RiverCity, above; a pavilion; and a stage. The stage was instrumental in RiverCity’s strategy to bring people back into downtown. The summer that the new Miller Plaza opened, they had three nights of free concerts called “Nightfall.” They continued having three or four free concerts a year in 1989 and 1990. In 1991, they expanded to a full concert series on Friday nights from May through August. While RiverCity dropped their participation in 2010, the series continues at Miller Plaza with hundreds of people attending every Friday night.
CHAPTER VI: CHATTANOOGA VENTURE

By the 1980s, it was apparent that Chattanooga's downtown needed a new direction. While other cities in the region, such as Nashville and Memphis, were developing their city center to attract young, middle-class residents, Chattanooga's downtown was lagging behind. It was full of vacant lots and lacked adequate housing, restaurants, and entertainment. In one 1981 study, almost a quarter of downtown workers interviewed were interested in moving downtown but could not find suitable housing.\footnote{Hammer, Siler, George Associates, \textit{Downtown Chattanooga Market and Economic Development Study}, prepared for the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission, July, 1981.}

After Jack Lupton died, his son created what is today the Lyndhurst Foundation to continue his father's legacy of giving. The Lyndhurst Foundation went on to play an important role in Chattanooga's future. In the 1980s, the Lyndhurst Foundation turned its focus toward renewing Chattanooga's downtown under the leadership of Jack Lupton's grandson Jack Lupton II, and in September 1983, 47 Chattanoogans went on a bus trip organized by the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce to Indianapolis, Indiana, paid for by grants from the Lyndhurst Foundation. Indianapolis was selected because it had many of the same negative forces acting on it as Chattanooga, but it was having success with a 350 member taskforce called the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee (GIPC).

Formed in 1965 by Indianapolis Mayor John J. Barton, the GIPC was a privately financed committee of private citizens working to revitalize Indianapolis. While initially it was comprised mostly of business leaders, by the 1980s, it had become more inclusive. In 1980, the GIPC created a plan for downtown in partnership with the private Commission for Downtown and the city's Department of Development. The plan helped to realize many
improvements in the downtown, such as the canal improvements and Circle Centre mall. Inspired by what they saw in Indianapolis, the 47 people who went on the trip, along with 33 others, became part of an 80 member steering committee tasked by the Mayor and County Executive with creating Chattanooga Venture. Chattanooga Venture was an incredibly radical departure from past redevelopment in a number of ways.

In the past, planning had been a primarily top-down approach. There was little, if any, input from the people that lived and worked in the neighborhood. Decisions affecting the African-American community were mostly made by white city officials. Chattanooga Venture aimed to be a much more inclusive organization, drawing members from a large cross-section of the community. The board included architects, businessmen, and lawyers, but it also included several women, the pastor of a largely African-American church, several black community leaders, and a union representative. The first project of Chattanooga Venture, Vision 2000, had the goal of having 2000 people from the community participate in planning for the future, to ensure that the voices represented the community as a whole.

Chattanooga Venture was also more holistic effort. They wanted to address not only city planning, but the underlying issues that created poverty in the community. Chattanooga Venture was divided into several committees: People, Places, Work, Play, Government, and Future Alternatives, with some further divided into subcommittees, such as the Places committee, which had Downtown, River, Community Standards, Community Appearance, Neighborhoods, Housing, and Transportation subcommittees.

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Chattanooga Venture officially kicked off Vision 2000 on August 16, 1984. They taped large pieces of paper to the walls of their meeting space, titled with the names of the committees, and they invited the public to write comments, suggestions, and the city's strengths and weaknesses for each of the areas on the wall. Many comments focused on the environment, especially the natural areas surrounding Chattanooga and the lack of clean industry.

**Riverfront**

One of the primary goals of Chattanooga Venture was developing the riverfront. Three major ideas for transforming Chattanooga came out of the process. One was creating a plan to increase access to the river. While many cities had incorporated their riverfronts into downtown, Chattanooga had isolated itself from the water. As part of the Golden Gateway Urban Renewal Project, Chattanooga had improved a road into an expressway, Riverfront Parkway, along the south shore to provide access for trucks and other traffic to the manufacturing areas. Walnut Street Bridge had been closed and was not being maintained. And there was a severe lack of recreational facilities, such as parks, along the shore.

For sixty years, citizens had been working both in public and behind the scenes to have an area known as Moccasin Bend area on the north shore of the Tennessee River, near downtown, turned into a park. The first attempt at turning Moccasin Bend into a park came in 1920, when Adolf Ochs, the publisher of the Chattanooga Times, offered to pay for half of the costs. There was significant push-back from the Chamber of Commerce, which wanted to develop the site for industry, and the rest of the money was never raised. In 1943, the Forestry and Recreation Committee of Chattanooga created the Moccasin
Bend Park Project to reopen the possibility of designating the area as a park as a memorial for the citizens of Chattanooga that died in World War II. The park committee decided that the area should be incorporated into the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park.

The Secretary of the Interior agreed in 1949 to accept the area for inclusion in the park, but giving the land to the federal government required both the state of Tennessee and the federal government to pass laws allowing the transfer. In 1950, President Truman signed a bill, allowing the Secretary of Interior to acquire the property, but the land was still in private hands. The following year, the Tennessee General Assembly passed a law authorizing the transfer and designating $100,000 for purchasing the area, with the county and city each contributing $50,000. The land was appraised at $255,000 though, and the city was unable to get the rest of the money through private donations. While they were trying to raise the money, both a sewage disposal plant and a mental hospital were built in the Moccasin Bend area. The National Park Service determined that both structures altered the character of the district enough that they were no longer interested in the project. The plan was effectively dead, but the city of Chattanooga was still hoping to have the area designated as a park when they began redeveloping the area in the 1980s.

To improve the riverfront area, the city commissioned the Chattanooga Riverfront Draft Master Plan and the Chattanooga Riverfront Concept Plan Alternatives. Many other cities had begun capitalizing on their waterfront, but Chattanooga’s downtown was largely cutoff from the river. The aim was to increase access to the water from the downtown.

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43 Public Law 650 of the 81st congress of the United States.
The *Riverfront Draft Master Plan* focused on building pedestrian, bike, and bridle trails and park facilities along the south shore of the Tennessee River with high-density residential buildings on the other side, as well as restructuring Riverfront Parkway to allow better pedestrian access to the waterfront.

The *Concept Plan Alternatives* provided two different alternative uses for the Moccasin Bend area. They both wanted to remove the existing mental health facility and golf course. One proposal was to increase tourism by turning the whole area into a model Cherokee village, since the area had originally been a Cherokee settlement. They thought that the village would be comparable to attractions like Colonial Williamsburg. The other alternative had a smaller model Cherokee village, a zoo, and would turn the mental health facility into a museum that would interpret the site’s Native American and Civil War history.

To implement the plan, the RiverCity Company was created in 1986, which used private dollars to implement much of the plan. The company’s primary funding came from the Lyndhurst Foundation. Raising a total of $12 million dollars, the RiverCity Company was able to buy tracts of land for development along the riverfront. It bought and developed the land that would eventually become home to the aquarium, riverfront property adjacent to the Walnut Street Bridge on which apartment complexes would be built, and a history trolley barn along Broad Street near the riverfront that was later rehabilitated for adaptive reuse as commercial space. It also was able to build the first sections of the Tennessee Riverpark in 1989.

**North Shore**

Another riverfront project to come out of Venture was the reopening of the Walnut Street Bridge. With the construction of the bridge for U.S. Highway 27, discussed above,
and the anticipated construction of the Veterans Memorial Bridge which today crosses the river on the other side, the Walnut Street Bridge was allowed to deteriorate and, in 1978, closed.

The Walnut Street Bridge was beloved by the citizens of the city, and saving it was one of the most unifying ideas in Venture. Suggestions included everything from restoring it for vehicular traffic to using it as the home for a restaurant with open-air seating. In the end, after the funds were raised to restore the deteriorating structure, it was designated as a park and opened to only pedestrian traffic in April, 1993. The pedestrian bridge helped to create a vital link between the south and north shore of the city and helped bring about the renaissance of the North Shore community.

The North Shore area had long been neglected by the city. At a 1985 community meeting sponsored by the city for North Shore residents as part of the city's redevelopment, citizens complained that lack of enforcement of building codes had created swaths of substandard housing and services to the area lagged far behind those south of the river. Trash was removed infrequently, and in one case, junk that had been piled up, blocking a street, was left for weeks. Programs such as the Community Development Home Improvement Loan which provided residents with low-rate loans to improve their property were not available in the area, which residents complained was unfair.

With the reopening of the Walnut Street Bridge came the chance for renewal of an area that was first developed with the first Walnut Street Bridge. With new easy access to the North Shore in the 1890s, a small commercial district of mainly two- and three-story brick buildings was developed along modern-day Frazier Street which runs parallel to the
river. As the downtown declined, so too did the area, dubbed “Hill City.” In the 80s, the buildings were mostly vacant. Art Creations, an art supply store, was one of the few businesses to move in when the owner, Tony Mines, bought the c. 1890 structure at a bankruptcy sale in 1988. When the prospect of the bridge reopening became a reality, more businesses began popping up in the early 90s. First it was a bike shop, appropriately named “The Bike Shop,” which sold bikes and rented in-line skates to tourists. Then it was coffee shops and a dance studio, clothing boutiques and organic food grocery stores and art galleries. The North Shore was rapidly gentrifying. To aid in the transformation, the city used $110,000 in Community Development Block Grants to create a loan program match by $100,000 in promised loans from each of seven banks. Under the program, qualifying property owners got a $24,000 grant from the city for rehabilitation of their property, along with a $70,000 15-year loan at prime plus 2.7 percent.44

The opportunities presented by the North Shore quickly attracted developers who were interested in capitalizing on the riverfront property. In 1994, the Northshore Riverfront Plaza Development Company was launched with the goal of creating a $25 million dollar urban park along the river. With $3 million from the city and the rest from private investors, they hoped to create a park, a 50-unit apartment complex, a 120-unit hotel, 20,000 sq. ft. of retail space, and move the existing Little Theatre into a new $6 million home. The plan fell through. The developers said that the city was not willing to commit the $3 million in public funding to the park, and the city, for its part, claimed that the developers had not been communicating to them. Two years later, Showboats Suites, Inc. planned a large marina across from the aquarium complete with 40 condos, a 50-unit

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hotel, restaurant space to seat 454 people, and a minigolf course. That too quickly fell through. In the end, Chattanooga built two parks on the land, Coolidge and Renaissance parks. Coolidge Park was the first to open in 1999. It was built on land given by the Navy which had been used as a Naval Reserve Center. The parks are now one of the primary activity centers on the north shore.

Although the historic area is not protected by historic zoning ordinances, North Shore is unique in Chattanooga for being the only area not designated a historic district which has compulsory design guidelines for new construction and alterations, rather than traditional zoning guidelines (the downtown has voluntary design review). The guidelines were designed to illustrate general principles, such as height, compatibility of the style with surrounding structures, and the promotion of pedestrian traffic. Unlike historic zoning laws, the design guidelines provide only weak protection for historic structures. For example, guideline 6.1.1 states only that “demolition of a building over 50 years old should be avoided. (pg. 47)” as opposed to the stronger language seen throughout the guidelines, such as guideline 1.2.6 which states that adult-oriented establishments “shall not be permitted [emphasis in original].” The seven member design review committee also contains no slot for a professional preservationist.

The original guidelines were passed in 1998, designating the area as a mixed-use overlay district. In 2000, there was a push by some in the community, including the councilman for the North Shore Mai Bell Hurley, to expand the district to include more of

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the North Shore, expanding the existing district north to Dartmouth Street. By using design guidelines instead of traditional zoning, they hoped to help preserve the early 20th century suburban character of the neighborhoods.

The original proposal passed a first reading in May, 2000 but was postponed at the second reading the following month. The board voted to postpone the original bill because of strong objections from residents, including a small group called Homeowners Against Legislated Taste (HALT). Many residents stated that the language was too vague, giving too much authority to the review committee. Others felt that it was the first step towards the city telling them what color to paint their house. Many middle-class residents felt that it was a way of gentrifying the area so that only the wealthy could live there.47 A community meeting was later held to try to work out the issues, but no resolution was reached, and two months later, the proposal for design guidelines was dropped by the council.48 The current guidelines received some minor modifications, such as changes to the committee terms, in 2007, but are substantially the same today.

Aquarium

The Tennessee Aquarium is one of the most recognizable projects that came out of Chattanooga Venture. The idea for an aquarium arose early during the Venture process. In October 1985, when Chattanooga Venture's board of directors approved a $15 million dollar “wish list” which was presented to Tennessee Governor Lamar for state funding, the Tennessee Aquarium was half of the budget.49 It was expected that the $7.5 million would cover half the cost of construction. This was not without controversy,

however. Several Venture members felt that the aquarium was never identified through the consensus process but were instead the pet projects of the wealthy represented by the Lyndhurst foundation that funded Venture. By focusing on the aquarium, the community was shut out of the planning process and other projects that were widely supported by Venture members. Nevertheless, the Venture Board and the Executive Director Ron Littlefield vigorously defended the aquarium as a potential money-maker for the city.

Chattanooga Venture never got the $7.5 million dollars from the state. Instead, the money for the aquarium was raised entirely from private funds. Perhaps proving the critics of the aquarium right, Jack Lupton donated $10 million dollars from the Lyndhurst Foundation and another $11 million dollars of his personal money to construction of the aquarium. He fundraised for the rest from individuals, corporations, and philanthropic organizations.\textsuperscript{50} Though the city did help fund the landscaping of the site on which the aquarium was built through RiverCity Company. When it opened in 1992, it was the largest freshwater aquarium in the world. In 2005, a second building “Ocean Journey” was opened which featured saltwater aquariums.

**Tivoli Theatre**

The Chattanooga Venture also played a crucial role in redeveloping the Tivoli Theatre, which was one of the top priorities of Venture, along with the Aquarium and riverfront redevelopment. The Tivoli Theatre opened on March 19, 1921. It was built by the Chattanoogan architect R. H. Hunt and Rapp and Rapp, an architectural firm in

Chicago, Illinois. The theatre cost $750,000 to build and was known as the "finest theater in the entire south." The Tivoli Theatre was constructed in a Beaux Arts style with a terracotta and tile facade dominated by a large marquee and neon sign (Figure 14).

The Tivoli Theatre was closed on August 17, 1961. The theatre had been through several owners, and at the time of its closing, it was owned by the Eastern Theaters, Inc., the same company that owned the nearby Rogers Theater, which had been built in 1951. Faced with declining ticket sales due to competition with new suburban movie theaters, the company hoped that consolidating their operations would help them remain competitive, and the newer Rogers Theater was less expensive to maintain.

The Tivoli Theater also sat on prime downtown real estate. However, several members of the community quickly began looking at ways to save the theater. Just four days after the closing of theater, the Chattanooga Times appointed a group, headed by future mayor Ralph Kelley to look at proposals for saving the building. The idea of the city taking on the theater as a smaller venue space than Memorial Auditorium was popular, and on December 11, 1962, the City Commission officially leased the space. The city was able to partially renovate the theater the next year, thanks to a grant from the Benwood Foundation, founded by George Hunter, a philanthropist who inherited his fortune from Benjamin Thomas, founder of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company.

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With the building stabilized thanks to the grant from the Benwood Foundation, the city continued to lease the Tivoli Theater as a community center until 1976, when it was purchased by the city for $300,000. The city had been leasing the building for $22,000 a year so purchasing the building outright was an economical choice. In 1979, the Lyndhurst Foundation provided another $25,000 to the city for a feasible study of doing a complete restoration of the theater. Restoring the building would be a

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$4–6 million dollar project, and faced with such a large bill, the project was shelved until Chattanooga Venture.

Like the Tennessee Aquarium, the Tivoli Theatre restoration was supported by Jack Lupton, as evidenced by the Lyndhurst Foundation's earlier grant. Unlike the Aquarium, there was broad consensus during the Venture process that the Tivoli Theatre should be one of the top priorities for the project. When Venture submitted a funding request to the state of Tennessee in October 1985, $5.5 million of the requested $15 million was earmarked for the restoration of the theatre. While they only got $9 million in funding, they spent $3.5 million of it on the Tivoli, which they were able to match with $3.2 million in private fundraising and $300,000 from the city of Chattanooga. With the funding, the theatre was able to reopen on March 29, 1989 after being completely restored. Today, the building is a popular venue for music and other entertainers, including being the home of the Chattanooga Symphony Orchestra.
CHAPTER VII: THE SOUTHSIDE

While Chattanooga’s efforts to redevelop the riverfront were successful, the concentration on the waterfront area created a divide between the north and south sides of downtown. In the mid-90s, Chattanooga’s urban planners began to look at bridging the divide between the two areas. Urban planner Shroud Watson noted that much of the area was originally worker housing, and the landscape, including narrower streets, gave Chattanooga the opportunity to have affordable, single-family housing near downtown, something that residents had repeatedly said was a top priority throughout Venture’s consensus-building process.\textsuperscript{53} While some felt that the plan would stretch Chattanooga’s resources too thin by focusing on too large of an area, Mayor Roberts put his support behind south side redevelopment, believing that trying that a wider approach would bring more development potential: “some people want to concentrate everything on the riverfront, but it won’t all fit....Trying to push everything to the riverfront could cause us to lose some development potential.”\textsuperscript{54}

The South Central Business District Plan came out of the effort. It had several objectives: an eco-industrial park designed to make Chattanooga a stronger competitor in manufacturing, especially in the automotive industry; a new stadium; an ecology center; expansion of the trade center; expansion of the National Main and Market Street Historic District; an increase in retail; revitalization of the Fort Negley area; and turning abandoned railroad rights-of-way into greenspace and pedestrian trails.

\textsuperscript{53} Judy Frank, “Rustville studied as worthy candidate for urban makeover,” Chattanooga Times, May 19, 1994.

\textsuperscript{54} Brian Hicks, “A stretch too far,” Chattanooga Times, December 14, 1993.
To pay for the stadium and trade center expansion, city and county proposed an additional one percent tax sales tax on restaurants to raise the needed $3.5 million annually. The tax was, unsurprisingly, unpopular with the restaurant industry, and the tax failed to win the necessary support from the state legislature. While alternate proposals were floated, including a wheel tax that would cost $12.50 per automobile and an increase in the hotel tax, none passed. In the end, a new football stadium for the University of Tennessee Chattanooga in the south side was financed through a mix of funding from the state, private donations, the university, and $13.5 million in bonds from the city. The bond was paid off with subsidies given to Erlanger Medical Center that they agreed to return to the county.

The city continued to push for development on the south side, believing it was the right direction for the city. A 1995 study by Robert Charles Lesser & Co., realtor advisers to the city showed that the area could support 600 apartments and 300 single-family homes, as well as 30 stores and 40 restaurants. And, spurred by the public interest, the area started to get a significant amount of private development. In 1996, a c. 1911 five-story hotel, the Grand Hotel, across from the Chattanooga Choo-Choo was renovated into a mixed-use development with street-front commercial and housing above.

In 2001, the city rezoned the area bound by 16th and 20th streets, Market Street, and Broad Street, an area known as Rustville, from industrial to commercial but specified that it could only be used for residential development. The decision to use commercial instead of residential zoning freed the city planners from the strict residential requirements like deep setbacks from the street and off-street parking that were put in place after World War II. Instead, the new neighborhoods used shallow setbacks and narrower lots,
modeled on the historic neighborhoods of Chattanooga (Figure 15). Several other large residential and commercial development projects followed, including a 40-unit apartment development with an upscale grocery store, Enzo's Market, in 2009, and a small community of 18 single-family occupancy architect-designed Neo-Craftsman homes in 2012.

![Figure 15. 18th and Long St, view to north.](image)

One of the largest preservation projects in the Southside was the Ross-Mehan Foundry. A c. 1922 manufacturing plant, the abandoned building was directly across the street from the site of the new Finely Stadium. The foundry was stabilized in 1997 during the construction of the stadium and turned into an open-air pavilion through the removal of broken windows. The new Tennessee First Pavilion serves as a community space,
and in 2001 began hosting a producer’s only farmer’s market on Sundays, which today attracts about 300,000 people annually.

The investment in housing in the south side created a drastic change in the area. In 2012, analyzing the 2000 and 2010 census data, Michael Petrilli labeled the zip code 37403, which covers south side of downtown Chattanooga, the “fastest-gentrifying” area in the United States.\textsuperscript{55} Another zip code, 37403, which covers the area east of downtown, was the thirteenth. Petrilli used the change in the percentage of black and white residences to measure gentrification. The zip code lost approximately a quarter of its residents from 2000 to 2010. Almost a thousand African-Americans left the area, and the percentage of white residents rose from just seven percent in 2000 to 46 percent the following decade.

While gentrification is hard to measure, the south side experienced many of the common changes associated with gentrification. While gentrification is often associated with an area becoming younger, the median age of the area increased between 2000 and 2010 by a little over eight years; however, the increased age of residents can be attributed mostly to a decline in children. The number of children under five dropped by half, and the number of children between five and nine in 2010 was less than 20 percent of what is was ten years earlier. Despite the decreasing population, there were 63 more residents between 20 and 34 years old in 2010. The area also saw a slight decrease in housing but a huge change in home ownership: the number of rental units decreased by 30 percent while owner-occupied housing increased over 228 percent.

One of the largest contributing factors to the changing demographics was the closing of the Maurice Poss Homes in 2005. The closing of the Maurice Poss Homes, a public housing project, accounted for 100 percent of the decrease in available rental units. Built during the 1960s, the Maurice Poss homes were poorly maintained and in deteriorating condition. In 2004, the city received a HUD grant for demolition, and in 2005, the 188 units were demolished.

While the idea of a green industrial park for auto manufacturing in the South Central Business District never materialized, the idea ended up being incorporated into Enterprise South Industrial Park which was built on the east side of the city away from downtown. The industrial park is the home to a Volkswagen assembly plant which opened in 2011, and the industrial park promotes itself as "green." There is a 2,800 acre attached nature park, and the VW plant is LEED platinum certified.
CHAPTER VIII: PRESERVATION AND REVITALIZATION

Preservation Successes

Chattanooga’s downtown has changed drastically since the first city plan was created in the 1920s. Tremendous progress has been made in not only revitalizing the downtown but preserving Chattanooga's historic buildings and structures that make the city unique. Gone are the days where progress and renewal meant the destruction of the city's heritage. There are several downtown and near-downtown areas in which the historic fabric provides the space for new, exciting developments in Chattanooga.

FRAZIER STREET

At the northern end of Walnut Street Bridge is Frazier Street (Figure 16 and Figure 17). The street is mainly traditional one- and two-story streetlevel commercial mainly from the turn of the twentieth century. The street provides a mix of local retail and restaurants, including local clothing boutiques, upscale restaurants, art galleries, and cafés. The street is adjacent to Renaissance and Coolidge Parks along the Tennessee River which has turned the street into a major pedestrian hub.

WAREHOUSE ROW

An adaptive re-use project created from two large c. 1900 warehouses, Warehouse Row is one of the anchors of downtown Chattanooga (Figure 16 and Figure 18). Warehouse Row is a mix of retail and restaurants on the first and second floors, with both local boutiques and national chains like J. Crew and Anthropologie, and office space on the third through fifth floors. List on the National Register in 1984, the space was an outlet mall in the 1980s and 1900s, but by mid-2000s, retail stores were closing and the
space was left with only 23 tenants. It was purchased by Jamestown in 2006 and renovated into
Figure 16. Preservation successes.
a high-end retail and office space.\textsuperscript{56} Although it got off to a slow start, by 2014, 90 percent of space in the buildings had been leased.\textsuperscript{57}

The large warehouses are also immediately surrounded by other adaptive re-use projects, including the Freight Depot, an 1871 building that was converted into a freight depot in 1894 (Figure 16 and Figure 19). It was renovated in 2005 and serves as high-end office space for companies like HHM Wealth Advisors. Another old manufacturing facility to the southeast now houses apartment buildings and a sushi restaurant.

\textsuperscript{56} Ellis Smith, “Retail, office complex Warehouse Row fills space in latest incarnation,” \textit{Chattanooga Times}, 3 June 2012.
\textsuperscript{57} Mike Pare, “Warehouse row ramps up,” \textit{Chattanooga Times}, 21 September 2014.
Figure 18. Warehouse Row rear faces.

Figure 19. The Freight Depot.
The Bluff View Arts District wasn’t planned but was created as a result of Chattanooga’s Venture efforts to bring more people to the riverfront. Originally the Bluff View neighborhood, named for its proximity to bluffs along the Tennessee River, the neighborhood was where many wealthy industrialists built large homes during the turn of the twentieth century (Figure 16 and Figure 20). In 1993, the River View Art Gallery opened in a large Spanish Revival house in the district, spurred by the rise in riverfront activity and the proximity to the Hunter Museum of American Art. It soon attracted more businesses into the eclectic blend of mansions surrounding it, including a cafe, restaurants, and a bed and breakfast.

**Figure 20. Bluff View Arts District, view from Veterans' Bridge.**

**CHATTANOOGA WORKSPACE**

Chattanooga Workspace is a great example of the way in which recent past buildings can be adaptively reused to contribute to the vitality of downtown (Figure 16 and
Figure 21). The building was originally constructed as part of Golden Gateway program for the St. Barnabas Senior Center, which provided assisted-living apartments to elderly residents. However, after over four decades, St. Barnabas moved into more modern facilities. The building was then purchased by a group of artists to create studio space for artists.

Figure 21. Chattanooga Workspace.

Recommendations

Despite the progress made, there are still many steps Chattanooga could take that would aid historic preservation in the city. There is currently no mandatory design review by the Chattanooga Historic Zoning Commission for the downtown area south of the river. Using the North Shore C-7 commercial/mixed-use as a model, Chattanooga could extend design review to downtown area, protecting historic structures and ensuring new
structures are compatible in design. New areas, especially the Bluff View Arts District should be considered for locally designated historic districts.

The city should pay particular attention to the way that park affects the design of the city. Especially on the North Shore where design review requires that new building match the setback of the historic buildings, new chain stores have been permitted to build setback from the street with parking in front, similar to a traditional suburban development. This detracts from the historic character of the area, as well as the walkability. Figure 22 illustrates the way the new development contrasts with the traditional pedestrian-friendly storefronts along Frazier Street.

Figure 22. Frazier Street with Walgreen's highlighted.
Conclusion

The city of Chattanooga overcame many obstacles to create the city as it is today. In the mid-twentieth century, the city faced a host of problems, including racial tension, suburbanization, and changing transportation habits that shifted away from railroads. Faced with these issues, city officials attempted to modernize their city by rebuilding it according to their ideas of what the city should be without much regard for what the city was. These efforts often had paternalistic tones as the government ignored citizens’ complaints in pursuit of what they thought was best for the city. The planners had little regard for many of the places that people cared about, and their efforts led to widespread destruction of historic properties.

When programs like the Golden Gateway Redevelopment Area failed to bring the promised economic development back to Chattanooga, Chattanooga adopted new strategies. With programs like Chattanooga Venture, city planners worked with the community to create a vision of Chattanooga that reflect the desires of its citizens and incorporated the existing historic fabric as an asset rather than an obstacle to be overcome. These efforts, which were a combination of public, private, and non-profit efforts, have turned the city’s center from an office park into an active, vibrant place. At the core of this are Chattanooga’s historic buildings and structures—the first bridges across the Tennessee River, warehouses and manufacturing facilities from Chattanooga’s industrial heritage, the houses of Chattanooga’s first industrialists.


Harland Bartholomew & Associates. *Chattanooga Street Plan.* St. Louis, MO, 1924

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Strickland, Justin W. *Chattanooga’s Terminal Station.* Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2009.


