

Civic Center

Planning Commission

August 18, 2022

History

Arena and Theater Built: **1963-64**

Dedicated Sept 18-20, 1964 (58 yrs ago)

Expo Hall Built : **1973**

Surface Parking: **1,250 spaces**

Auditorium Seating: 6,120 + 4,500 portable
= **10,620 Capacity**

Theater Seating: **1,950**

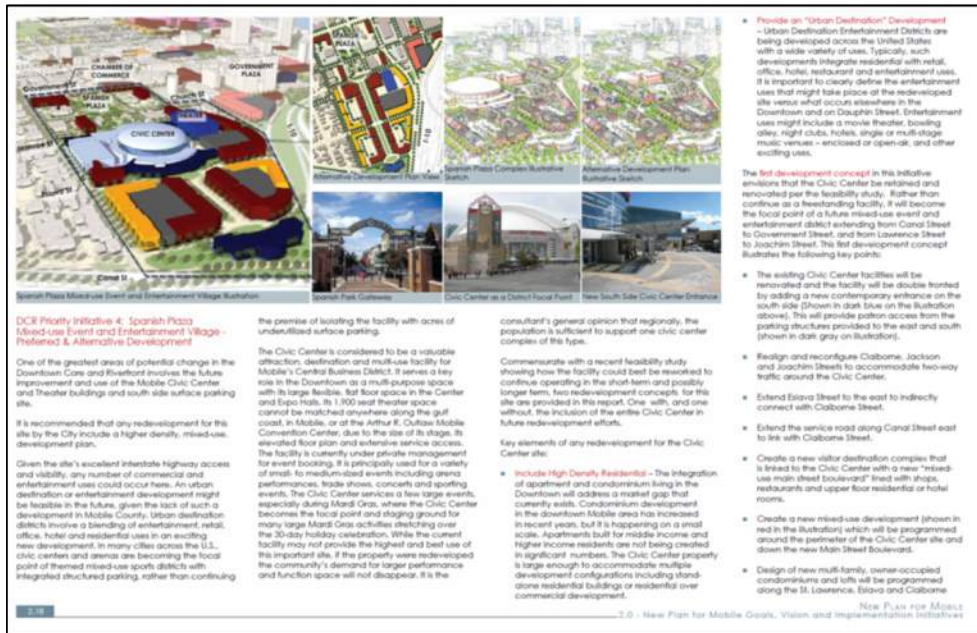
- State of the art facility when built
- Very few upgrades done over time
- No longer meets requirements including ADA
- No longer meets needs to entertainers or public expectations



A New Plan for Mobile 2008



A New Plan for Mobile 2008



“A recently conducted feasibility study for improvement of the Civic Center facility, prior to this plan, and it was concluded that \$40,000,000 in improvements would have to be funded for the Civic Center to be fully functional and marketable in the region as a “state-of-the-art” event and conferencing facility.”

Source: A New Map for Mobile pg 2.19, 2007

Street frontages to appropriately respond to existing Church Street East residences.

- Expand the Admiral Semmes Hotel with a second tower at the corner of Joachim and Church Streets (This is shown in orange on the Illustration).
- The Holiday Inn Express Hotel may be renovated or replaced with a high-quality hotel (in orange) with integrated structured parking (in dark gray), overlooking the Spanish Plaza area and the expanded Ft. Conde Village.

Although the exterior architectural design of the Civic Center makes it an arguably positive contribution to the City's heritage and urban fabric, the facility is outdated in its overall appearance, functional layout and lack of technological facilities. A recently conducted feasibility study for improvement of the Civic Center facility, prior to this plan, and it was concluded that \$40,000,000 in improvements would have to be funded for the Civic Center to be fully functional and marketable in the region as a "state-of-the-art" event and conferencing facility. Given the facility's age and condition, this investment may be better spent building an entirely new arena or civic center complex in an alternate downtown location and offering the existing site up for new public/private mixed-use development that would incorporate the existing Civic Center Theater.

A second, alternative development concept for the existing Civic Center site assumes that a new facility would be built at another equally accessible location Downtown (Note: specific sites for a new Civic Center were not identified within this planning effort.) Specific elements of alternative concept are:

- Demolish the Civic Center Arena and Expo Hall buildings.
- Retain the Theater building.
- Extend the mixed-use "main street" boulevard described in the first development concept further to the north. This new "Spanish Plaza Boulevard" and its associated mixed-use development will encompass the land area of Civic Center Arena and Expo Hall buildings.
- Construct two large buildings as "anchor tenants" to frame the corners of the new Spanish Plaza Boulevard and Civic Center Drive.
- Shared surface parking will be provided for residential use.
- A centralized parking structure will be located behind the Theater building for retail-mixed use patron parking.

Ultimately, the decision of whether the Civic Center site is redeveloped in whole or in part lies with the City Administration and their view of what is best for the City's future. Allowing things to remain as they are with the Civic Center is not a sustainable option; the City should certainly want to secure a public/private partnership with a developer to deliver an economically viable development which retains the lot Civic Center complex in its program. If this does not prove feasible, the site development will follow some derivation of the second, alternative development concept.

As of the writing of this report, the current economic conditions are not conducive to large-

scale commercial developments. The effects of current economic limitations will likely forestall any commercial redevelopment of the Civic Center property in the near term. This does not stop the City from pursuing development inquiries.

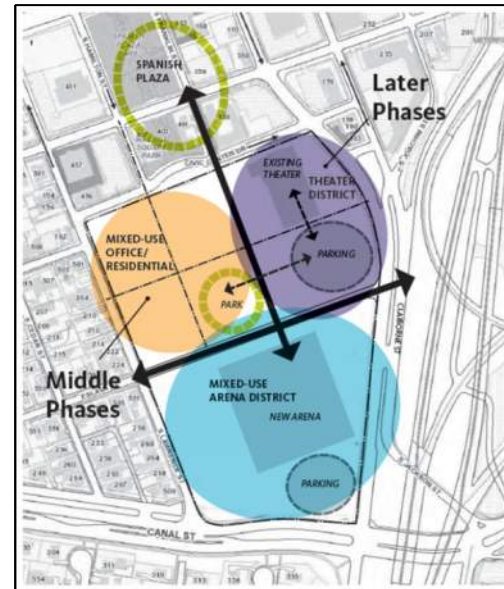
Attracting a private development partner may require the City to become a partner in the project. This may require the City, through its newly formed Mobile Downtown Redevelopment Partnership, to provide financial and other incentives to make the project feasible. Moving ahead with the demolition of the Civic Center Arena and Expo Hall, and preparing the site for redevelopment may be one way to improve the chances of finding a suitable development partner.

The search for a developer, or development partner, should focus on firms with extensive urban, mixed-use experience. This search may involve preliminary identification of firms with both the desired level of interest and qualification by soliciting a formal Request For Interest (RFI). Further refinement of interested responders can be accomplished through the release of a formal Request For Proposals (RFP). A preferred development program may be established prior to releasing these Requests, providing potential developers with focused information on which to provide realistic responses. Preparation of such a preferred program may be managed through the Mobile Downtown Redevelopment Partnership, in conference with community stakeholders and City administration.

DCR Priority Initiative 4 - Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing			Estimated Cost
Downtown Core & Riverfront		Public	Private/PP	1-3 Years	3-10 Years	10+ Years	Cost
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION							
Goal: To redevelop the current Civic Center site to create a new, exciting mixed-use attraction downtown that incorporates residential, commercial, office, and urban entertainment uses.							
Initiative - Downtown Mixed-use Riverfront Village around the Spanish Plaza and the Mobile Civic Center Complex							
Action 1:	Create self-served and professionally marketed development on the open sites around the Spanish Plaza and the surface parking areas surrounding the Mobile Civic Center.	DCR/PP	D		X		D
Action 2:	Seek if development interest from experienced mixed-use developers to create an urban entertainment district.	DCR/PP	D		X		D
Action 3:	Construct a 16-story to partially fund public infrastructure in support of a larger mixed-use project.	DCR/DCR/PP	PP	X			D
Action 4:	Examine the probability to incorporate the current Theater into a new redevelopment plan.	DCR/PP	D		X		D
Action 5:	Examine the extent and feasibility to developing a new civic center in the downtown.	DCR/DCR/PP	PP	X			D

New Plan for Mobile
2.0 - New Plan for Mobile Goals, Vision and Implementation Initiatives

Concepts and Studies



Many studies and concepts over the years

Common themes:

- Higher and better use of surface parking
- Mixed use development office, residential, commercial, entertainment (Generate Revenue)
- Concepts have include keeping and removing Arena, Theater, Expo Hall



- COVID demonstrated demand and use for Civic Center Arena
- Funding a single development posed a challenge

New Development

- 2017 Facilities Assessments
- Jan 2018 Completed Strategic Plan
- Sep 2018 RFP for site development
- July 2019 Presentation to Council



Phased Approach

Update Civic Center Complex

- ☐ Retain Civic Center Arena
- ☐ Retain Theater
- ☐ Mitigate Parking
- ☐ Create Residential Buffer
- ☐ Establish Street Grid



- Cost effective phased development
- Set conditions private development
- Obtain current cost for Civic Center complex renovation

Develop New Space

- ☐ Introduction of Office, Commercial and Hotel space
- ☐ Create additional Residential and Retail opportunities
- ☐ Future Commercial Space



Populous

Civic Center Concepts **Revitalization Options**



SHIFT TO THE EAST

- Preserve Arena + Theater
- Demo Expo Hall
- Focus on Performing Arts
- Frees up Lawrence Street for other development (possibly residential or multi-family)
- New support spaces for Arena + Theater
- New south entry with connection thru to north Entry
- Shared Lobby spaces

**Arena, Theater, Expo
Renovation 200,000 SF**

New 200,000 SF

New Hotel 172,000 SF



EMBRACE THE DOME

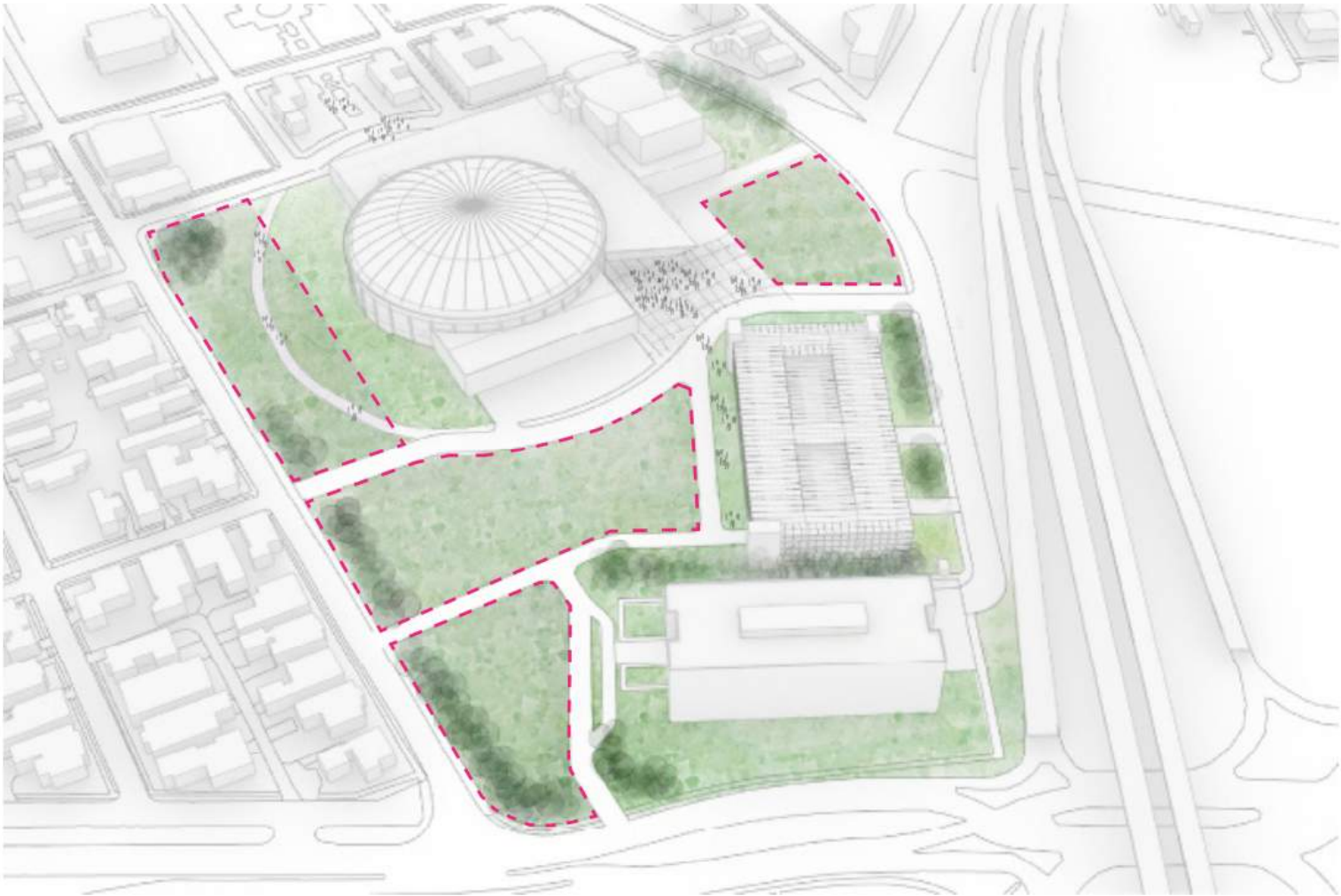
- Reinforce landmark status of the dome
- Remove all other elements
- New lobby and support spaces that complement the architecture of the dome
- Unique opportunity for new, large scale, public green space surrounding the arena
- Add pavilion, amphitheater, plaza and other community spaces to enhance site on daily bases and for Mardi Gras parades and balls
- Frees up space along Claiborne Street for compatible development (hotel, office, etc)

**Arena Renovation
168,000 SF**

New 126,000 SF



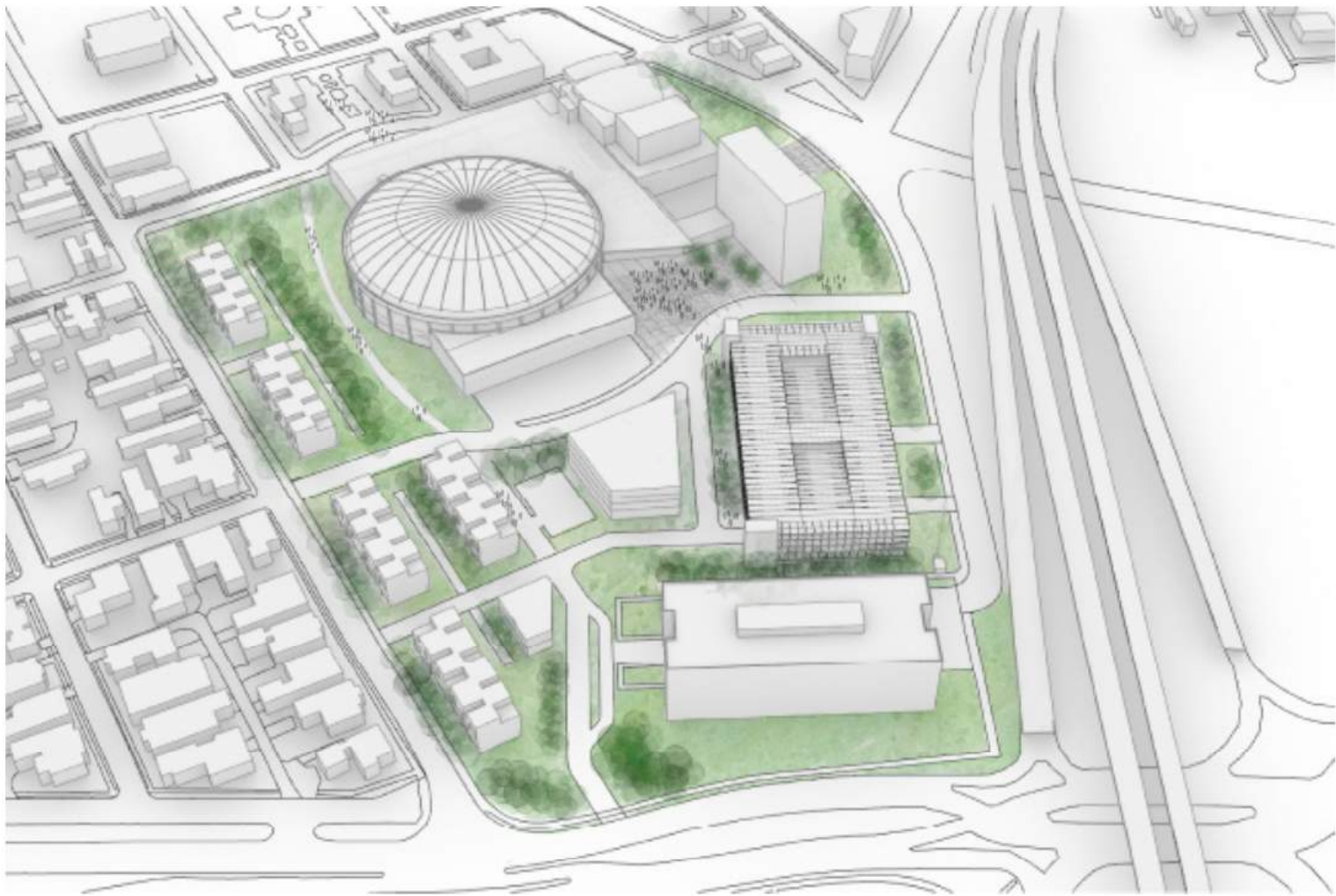
Site Concepts **Shift**



Shift to East

Potential Hotel with connector
Additional Residential along
Lawrence Street

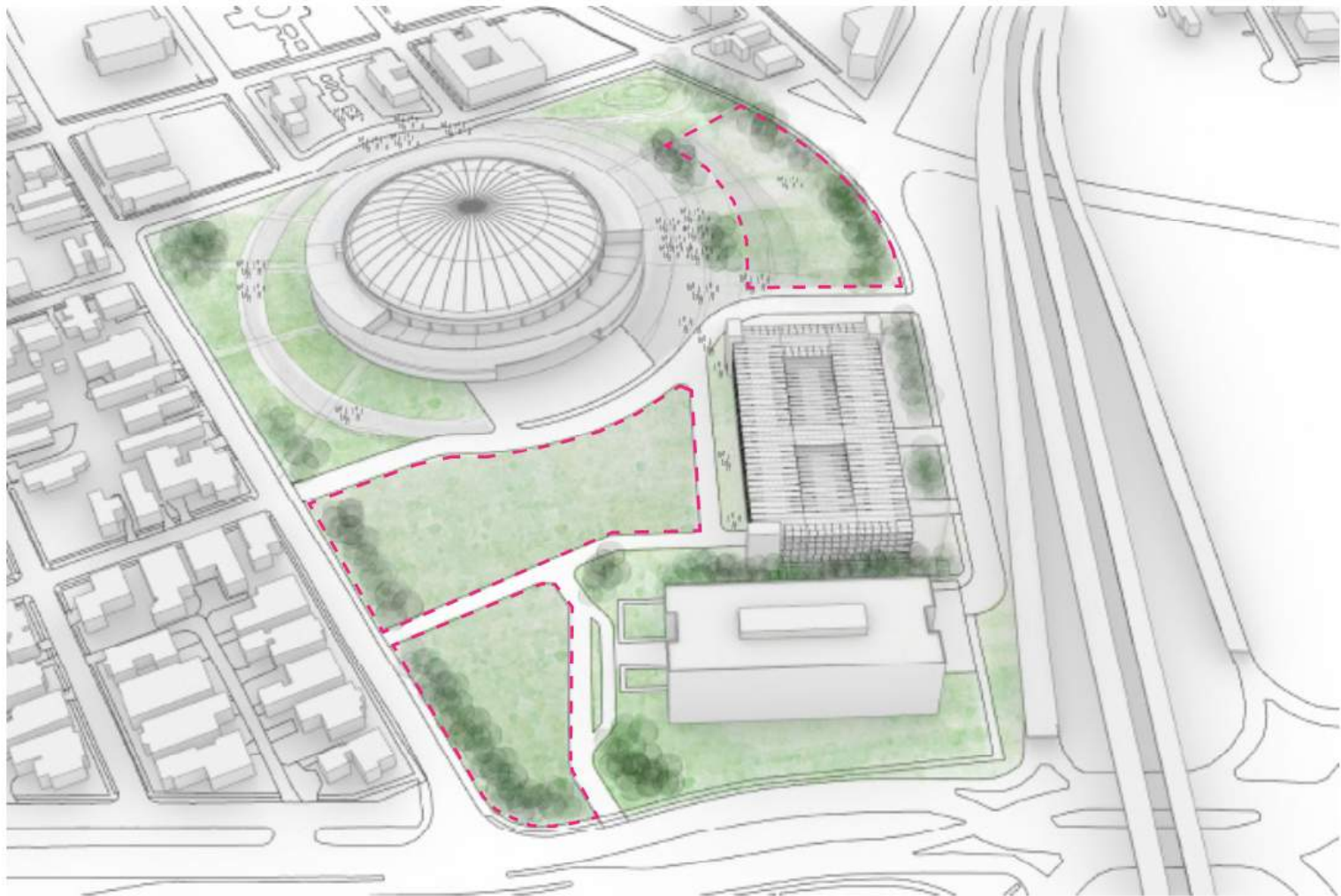
Site Concepts **Shift**



Shift to East

Potential Hotel with connector
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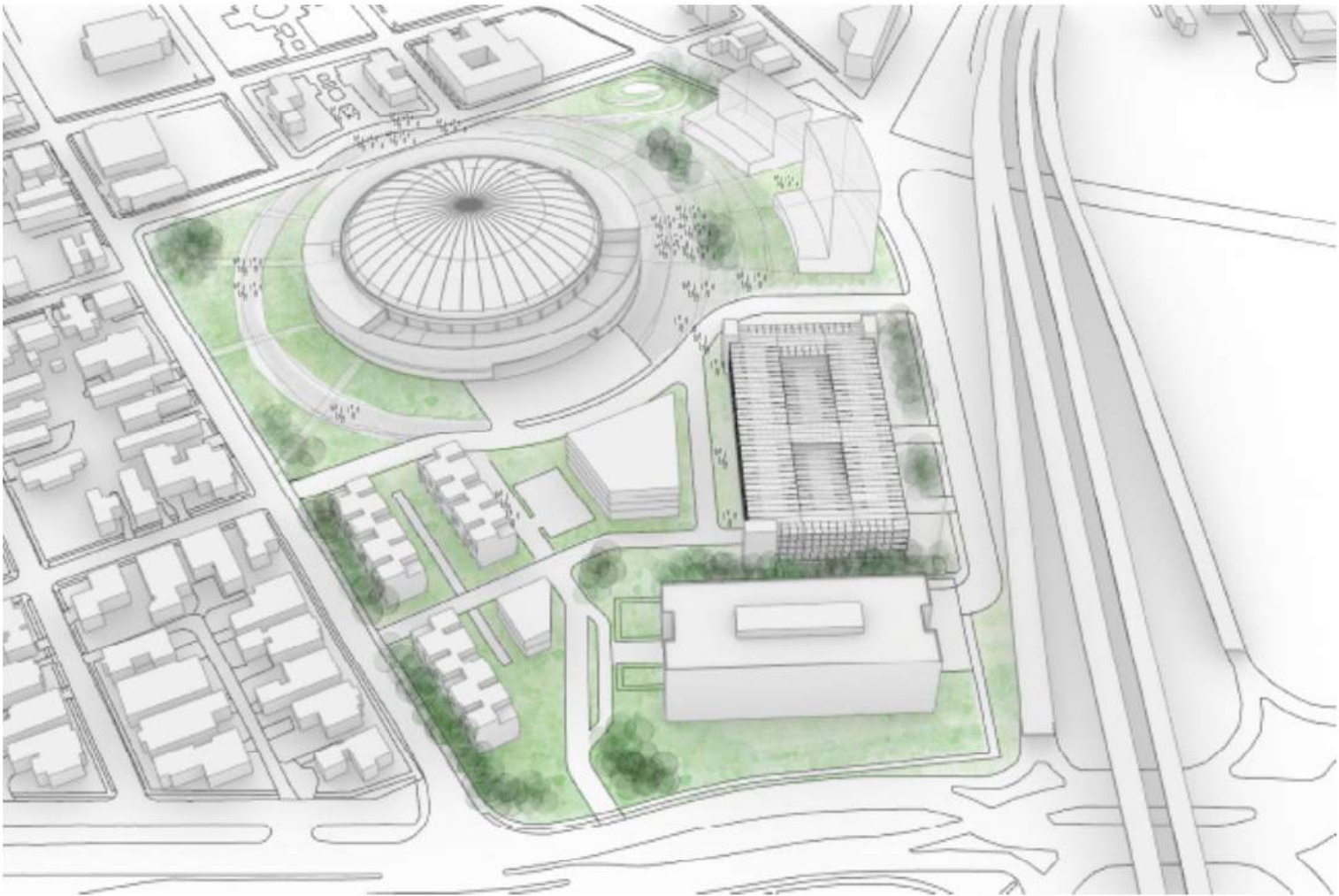
Site Concepts **Embrace**



Embrace

- Hotel / Commercial along S. Claiborne Street
- Continuity of Green Spaces
- Pavilions

Site Concepts **Embrace**



Embrace

Hotel / Commercial along
S. Claiborne Street

Continuity of Green Spaces

Pavilions

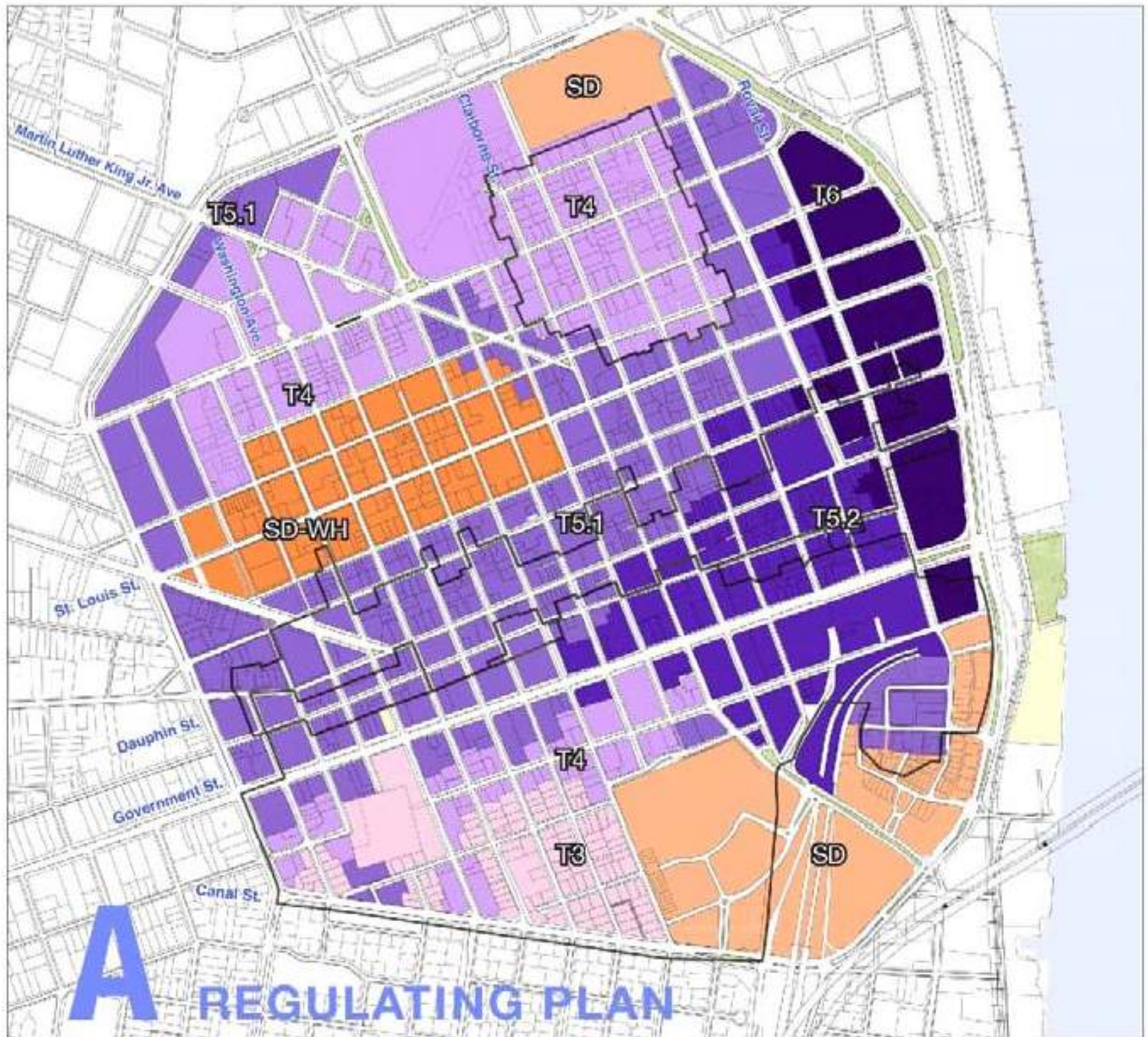
A FRAMEWORK FOR REUSE

Establishing zoning standards for the Civic Center site.



DDD REGULATING PLAN

The civic center is in a special sub-district that currently has no defined standards.

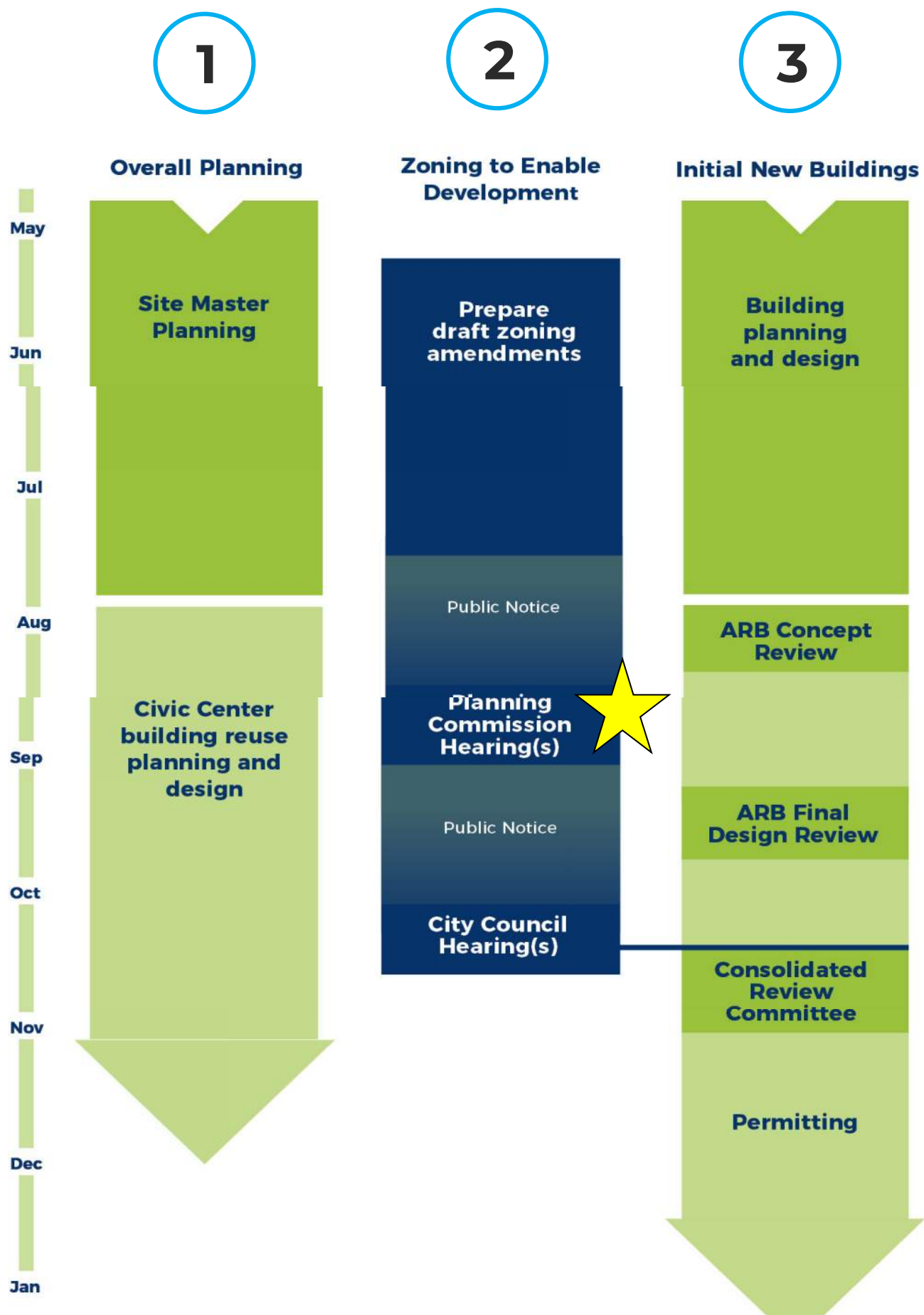


SPECIAL DISTRICTS

All special districts except SD-WH
require a plan be completed.

*The Proposed Special District SD-CC
will establish standards that address
land uses, building size, height, and
location, parking, materials,
landscaping and other details. The
intent is to establish standards that
accommodate a wide range of
redevelopment options while
respecting abutting neighborhoods.*

THREE PARALLEL TIMELINES



THE FUTURE OF THE CIVIC CENTER SITE WILL:

1. **Maintain the Arena as a focal point for the community...**

To continue the long tradition of hosting Mardi Gras events, concerts, sporting events and other uses needing a large assembly space.

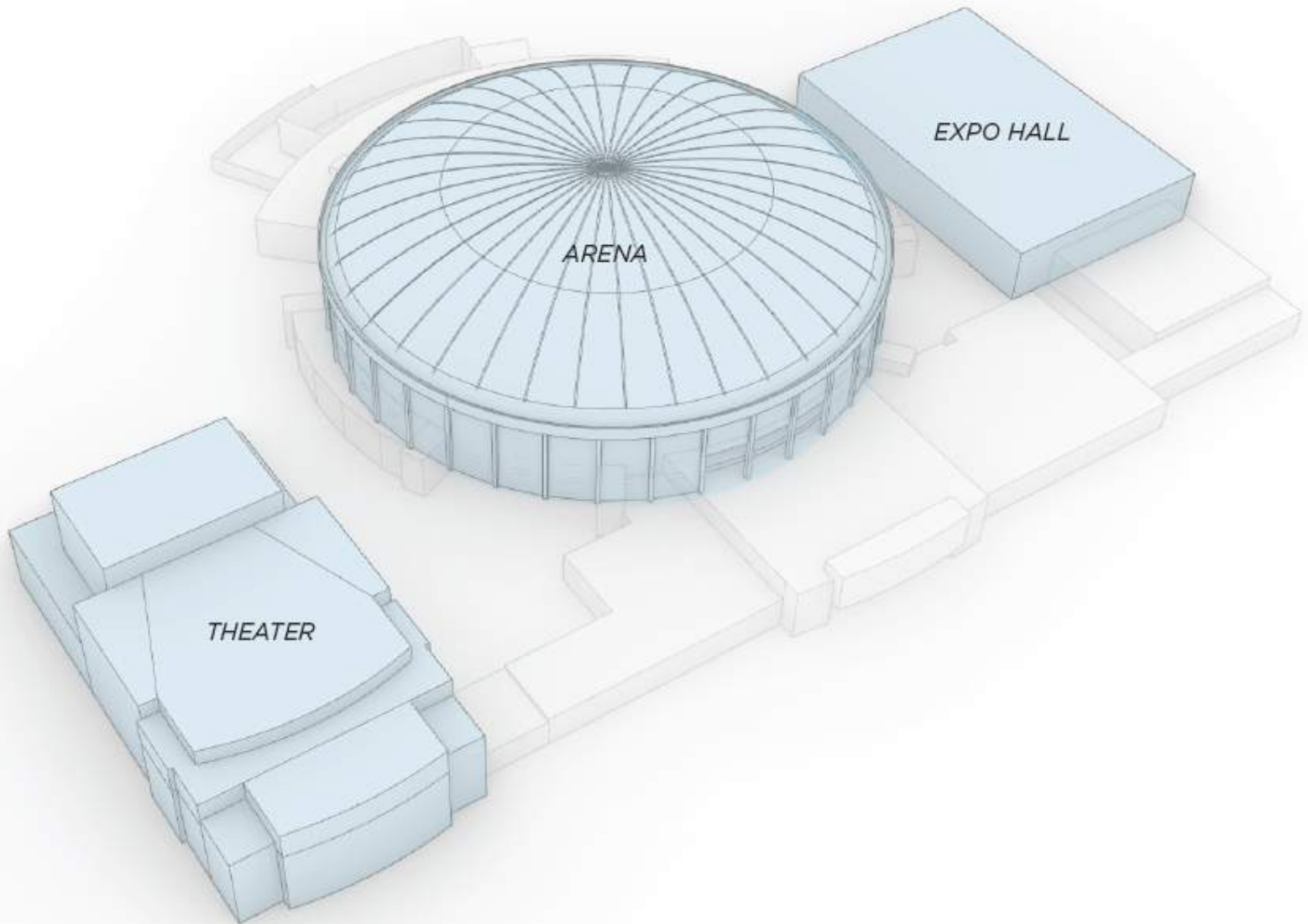
2. **Include new development on other portions of the site...**

To expand the existing entertainment venue, accommodate additional community spaces, and add office, retail, lodging and related supporting uses to the site.

3. **Relate well to surrounding neighborhoods...**

With uses, architecture, and site standards such as parking that limit negative impacts to the surrounding area and add to the vitality of Downtown.

DRAFT CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN



PROPOSED SD-CC DISTRICT

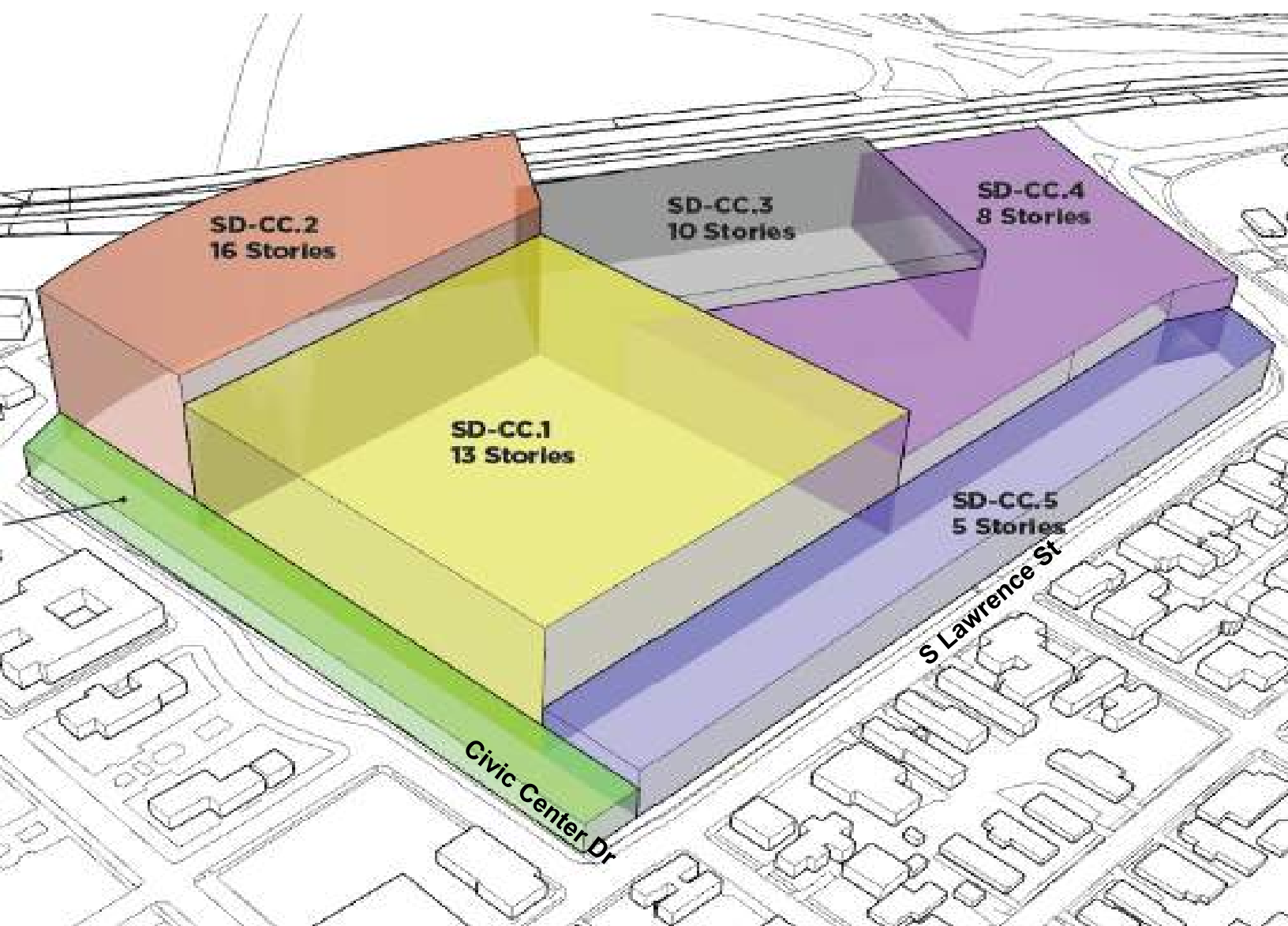
Includes six sub districts.



CC.1 AND CC.6 SUBDISTRICTS

Maintains the civic center arena.

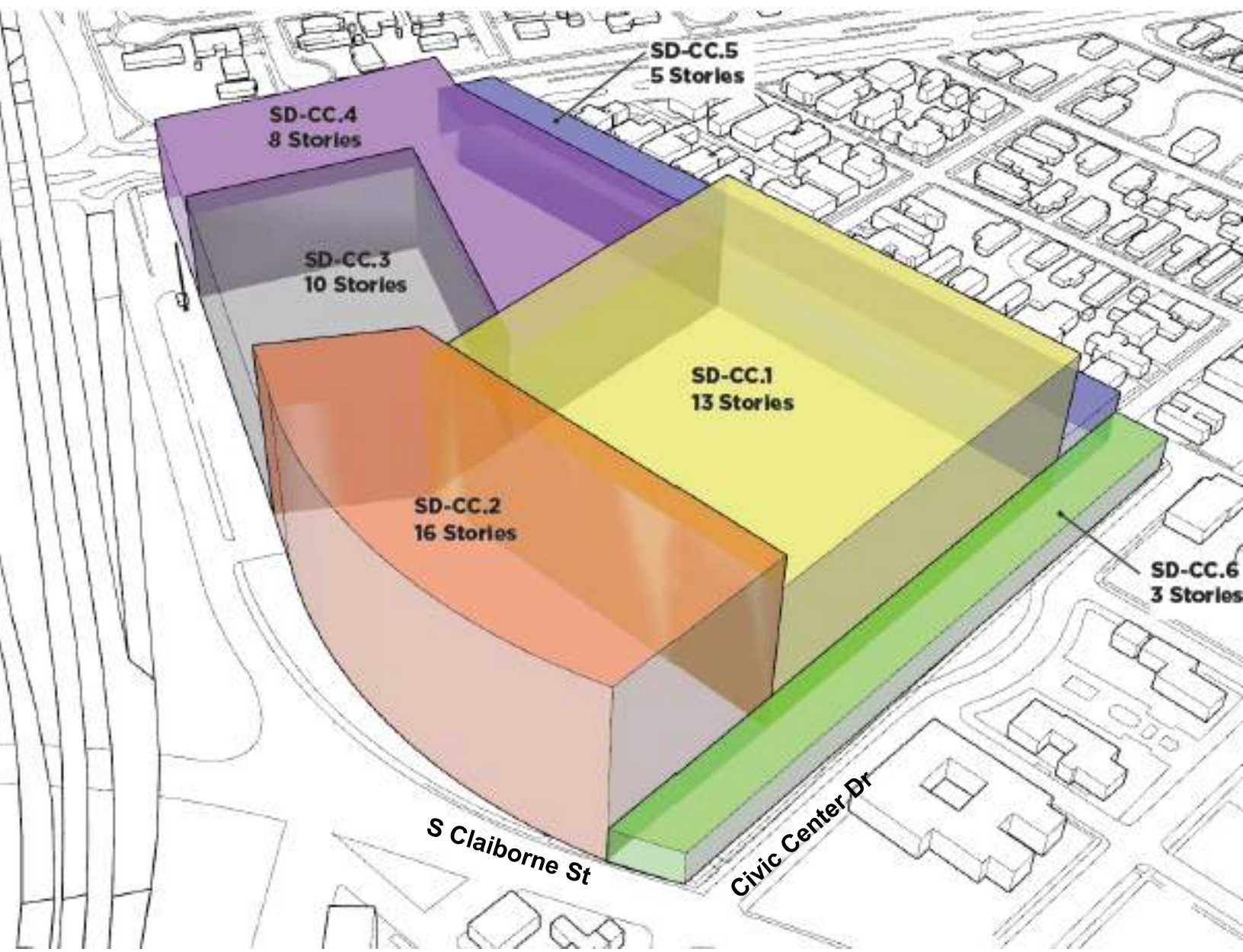
- Limits heights to 3 stories at street frontage (CC.6) and 13 stories for the arena (CC.1)
- Expands permitted uses to provide maximum flexibility for modern reuses of the arena and entry



CC.2 SUBDISTRICT

Provides for mixed-use development adjacent to the arena on a highly visible site.

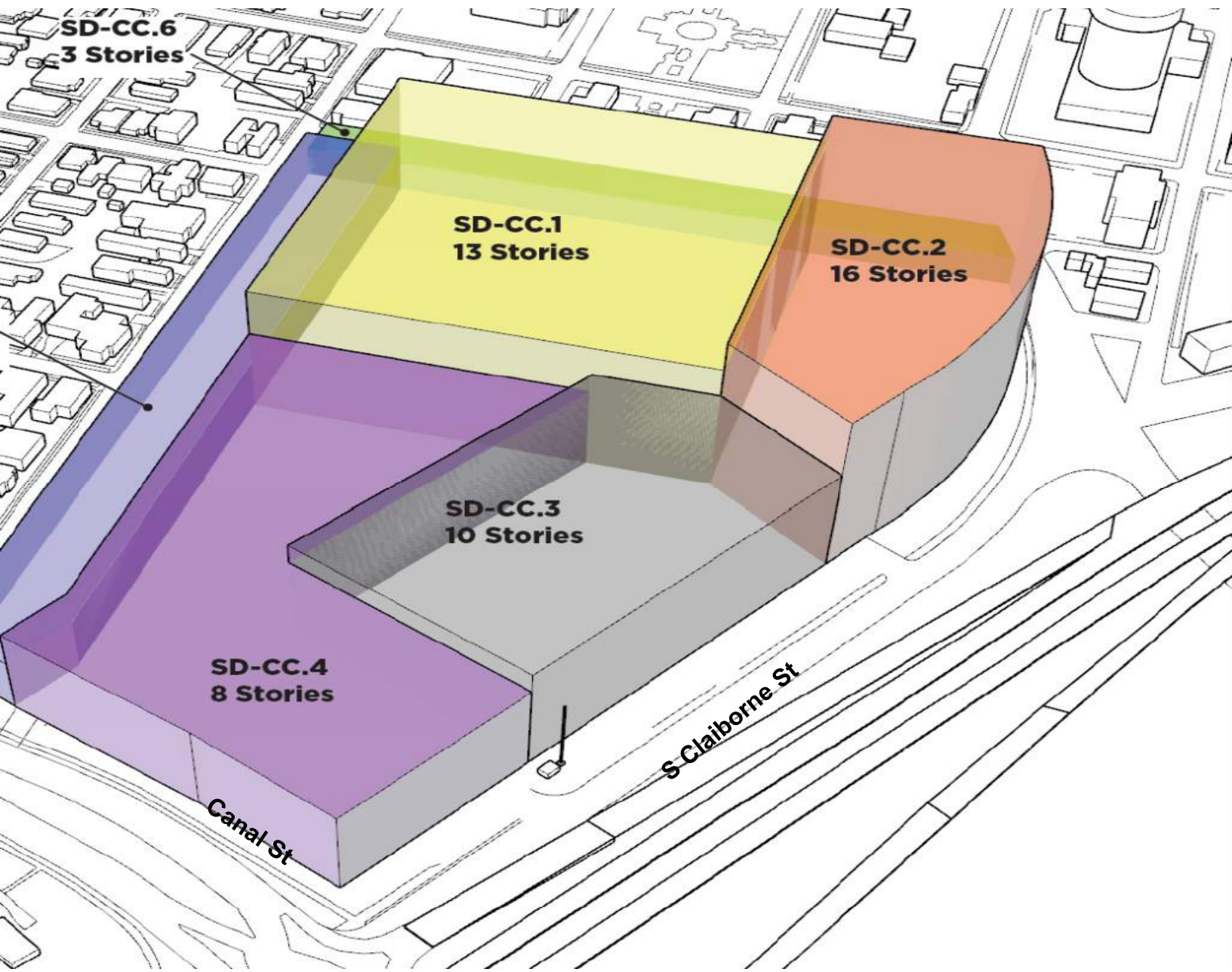
- Allows heights up to 16 stories
- Expands permitted uses to allow hotel, retail, office, and restaurants



CC.3 SUBDISTRICT

Provides for a multi-story parking structure to serve the entire Civic Center site.

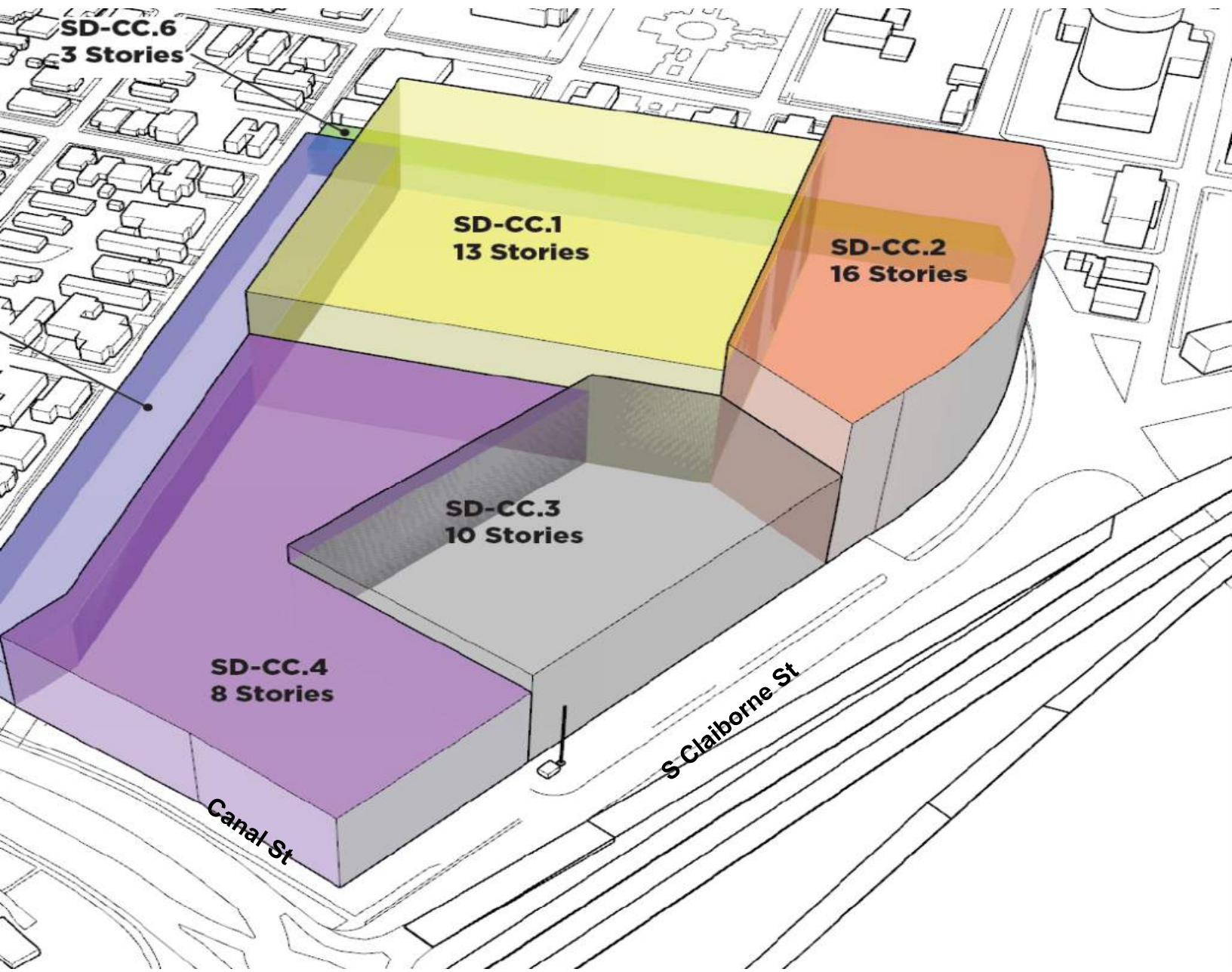
- Allows heights up to 10 stories for general uses and 80 ft for a parking structure.
- Accommodates additional mixed-use development.



CC.4 SUBDISTRICT

A high-profile site that will be part of the reimagined I-10 interchange.

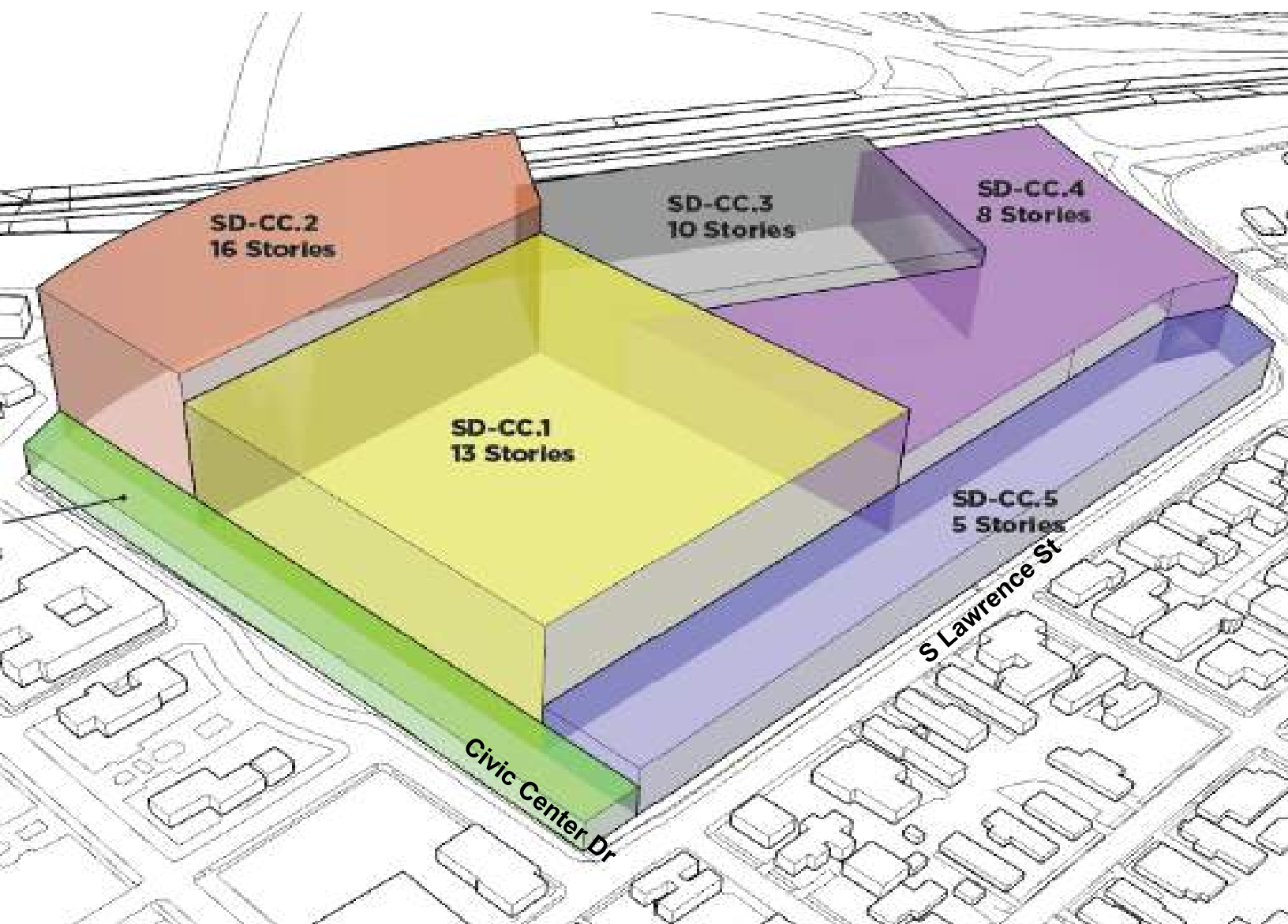
- Allows heights up to 8 stories.
- Accommodates mixed-use development as in CC.2 and CC.3.

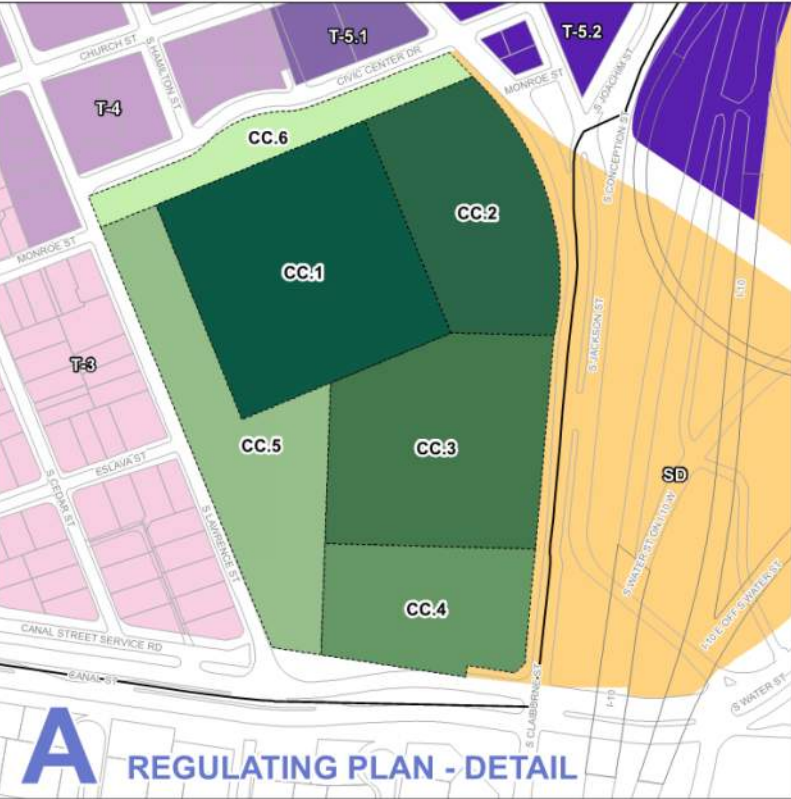


CC.5 SUBDISTRICT

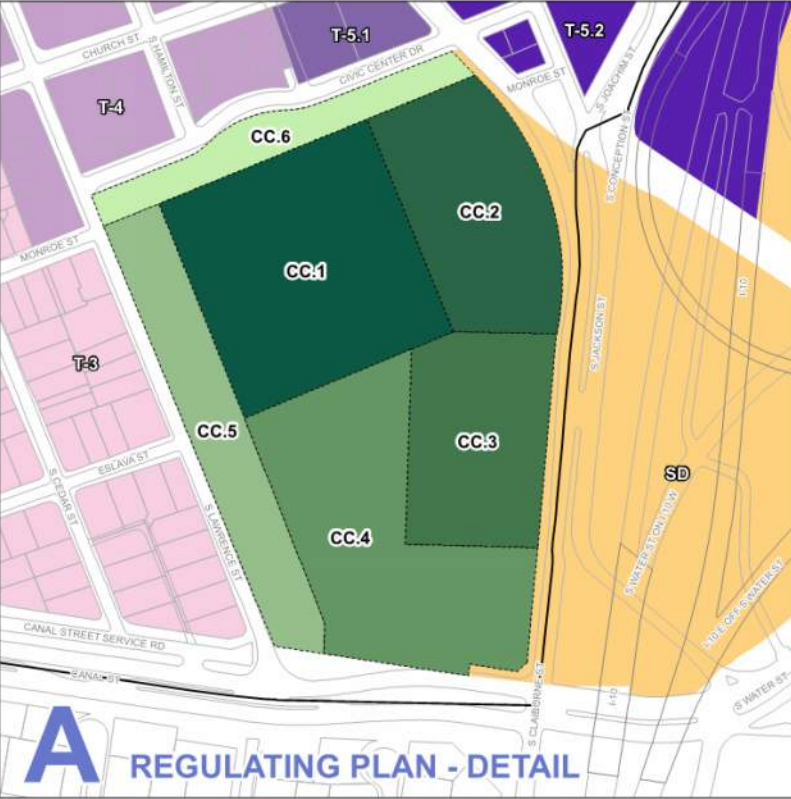
Provides for appropriate transitions to the adjacent Church Street East Historic District.

- Limits heights to 5 stories
- Permitted uses are similar to the existing T-3 district which composes most of the adjacent neighborhood.





AS ADVERTISED



PROPOSED - AMENDED BOUNDARIES

THREE PARALLEL TIMELINES

