

# Chapter 4: Opportunity Sites

Within the context of the Framework Plans elements described in the preceding chapters, several sites exist where redevelopment could occur that would support the “Collective Vision” for downtown. Many of these are underutilized or vacant parcels that present unique opportunities to diversify the mix of land uses, provide public amenities and strengthen pedestrian connections within the downtown. Some of these key sites are discussed in this chapter. Each one is diagrammed to indicate appropriate development patterns and densities and to illustrate the application of the urban design principles set forth in the plan.

These diagrams are for illustrative purposes only and are intended to demonstrate how buildings may be configured and how each site can be programmed to fulfill the vision for improvements within specific downtown neighborhoods. Prior to implementing any of these concepts, more detailed analysis and design would occur. As the needs of the community continue to evolve, different parameters and issues may arise that could impact specific attributes of individual projects. Therefore, alternatives to each opportunity site diagram which also meet the design principles outlined in the plan, can be considered. In addition, it should be noted that in some cases the suggested projects are mutually exclusive or at least interdependent: If one specific project is realized, it may in turn preclude the execution of another of the ideas for a different site, or cause a change in the overall intensity of development at another location.

## Opportunity Site 1: Mixed Use Development along the Northern Edge of Town Park

Town Park is an important community asset which serves as an active outdoor recreational facility for the nearby schools, in addition to functioning as a general-purpose public park. Its downtown location makes it accessible to many users and its green space is an amenity that is visible from several locations. Even so, it is constrained by physical features such as the San Juan River and Hermosa Street which divide the property. These cause the park to be segmented into different zones of activity. The northern edge of Town Park slopes steeply down from Highway 160; this forms a barrier between uses in the Downtown Core and traffic along the Highway. The result is a block-long, inactive street edge that discourages pedestrians from walking between the core and the East Village. This underutilized area provides a unique opportunity for new development along the highway that would expand the commercial business district, link East Village to the Downtown Core and provide additional pedestrian access from the highway directly to Town Park and the San Juan River. In addition, the grade change presents the opportunity to create structured parking that may be accessed from Hermosa Street and the opportunity to develop commercial spaces and a public plaza at the highway level. A parking facility at this site would serve the Downtown Core, Chamber of Commerce/Visitor’s Center, a part of Hot Springs Boulevard and portions of the East Village.

Two alternative diagrams for this site illustrate short-term and longer-term improvement scenarios. In the short-term scenario, Hermosa Street continues through the park and remains connected to Hot Springs Boulevard. In the second scenario, Hermosa Street is closed at the eastern edge of the park. The street closure minimizes pedestrian-vehicle conflicts in a busy, heavy-utilized public space and creates a larger expanse of lawn area for recreation and events. Both scenarios demonstrate the potential for a parking facility that is combined with an overlook plaza and commercial uses at the street level. Though the diagram illustrates a structure at the southwest edge of the park, a similar concept could be employed at the eastern side of the park in the area labeled as “potential re-development area.”

**The Town Park Opportunity Site Diagrams illustrate the following design concepts:**

- Frame views to the San Juan River from Highway 160.
- Encourage mixed-use development to reinforce existing Downtown commercial businesses including retail, restaurants, office and residential.
- Create a sound buffer between Town Park and the highway.
- Maintain the playing fields and lawn areas as flexible community assets.

**Short-Term**

- Incorporate a public plaza at the street level with an overlook, stairs and views to the river, Reservoir Hill and Town Park.
- Minimize the impact of Hermosa Street traffic on park activities.
- Animate the underutilized street edge on the south side of the highway by introducing appropriate building massing and streetscape improvements.
- Extend the commercial core of Downtown to the east using streetscape improvements and/or adaptive re-use that links the 400 Block of Pagosa Street with the adaptive reuse projects in the East Village.
- Construct a new pedestrian bridge to promote connectivity between Town-owned parcels on both sides of the river.
- Increase on-street parking along San Juan Street.
- Construct trail paralleling south side of river and extend trail under existing Hot Springs Boulevard bridge to create an underpass that links Town Park to the Chamber of Commerce.
- Use the existing topography to develop an amphitheater for outdoor performances.
- Integrate a trail extension along the river, through the Hermosa Street neighborhood, if feasible.
- Designate a location and construct a children’s playground or “tot lot”.

**Longer Term**

- Close the western end of Hermosa Street when additional access connects to San Juan Street or a signalized intersection at Highway 160 is constructed.
- Construct a new public facility that may house an interpretive museum, children’s museum, cultural heritage center, visitor center or other amenity.

The public parking structure may be directly accessible from Hot Springs Boulevard. The mid-term alternative maintains a connection between Hermosa Street and Hot Springs Boulevard which is consistent with the concept of providing alternative connections wherever feasible. This requires loss of parkland to accommodate access and turning movements. The long-term alternative is to terminate Hermosa Street at 3rd Street and direct local neighborhood traffic to the highway using 2nd Street. In addition, a long-term option is to provide a bridge to connect either 2nd or 3rd Street right-of-way to San Juan Street. These combined alternatives would result in a much larger non-fragmented open space area as well as an open circulation pattern through the neighborhood.



*Town Park is a beautiful community asset.*



*There are currently two structures within Town Park.*



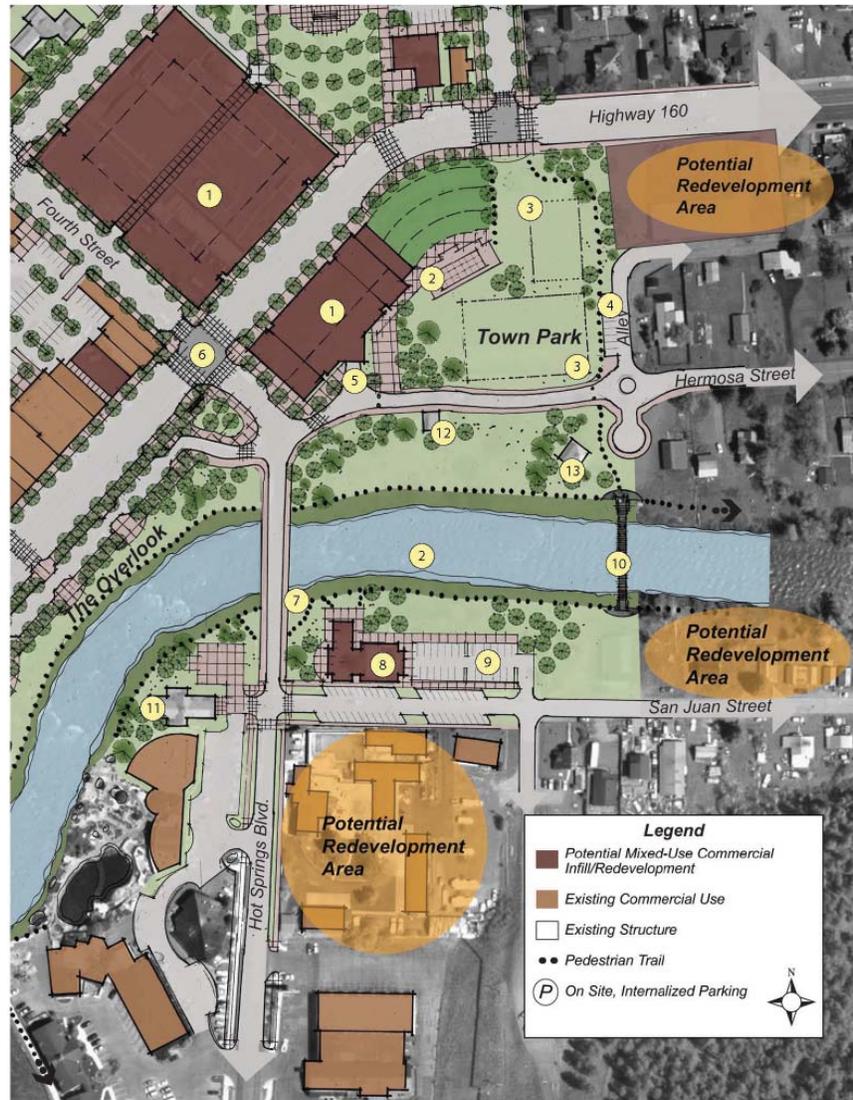
*Hermosa Street bisects Town Park.*



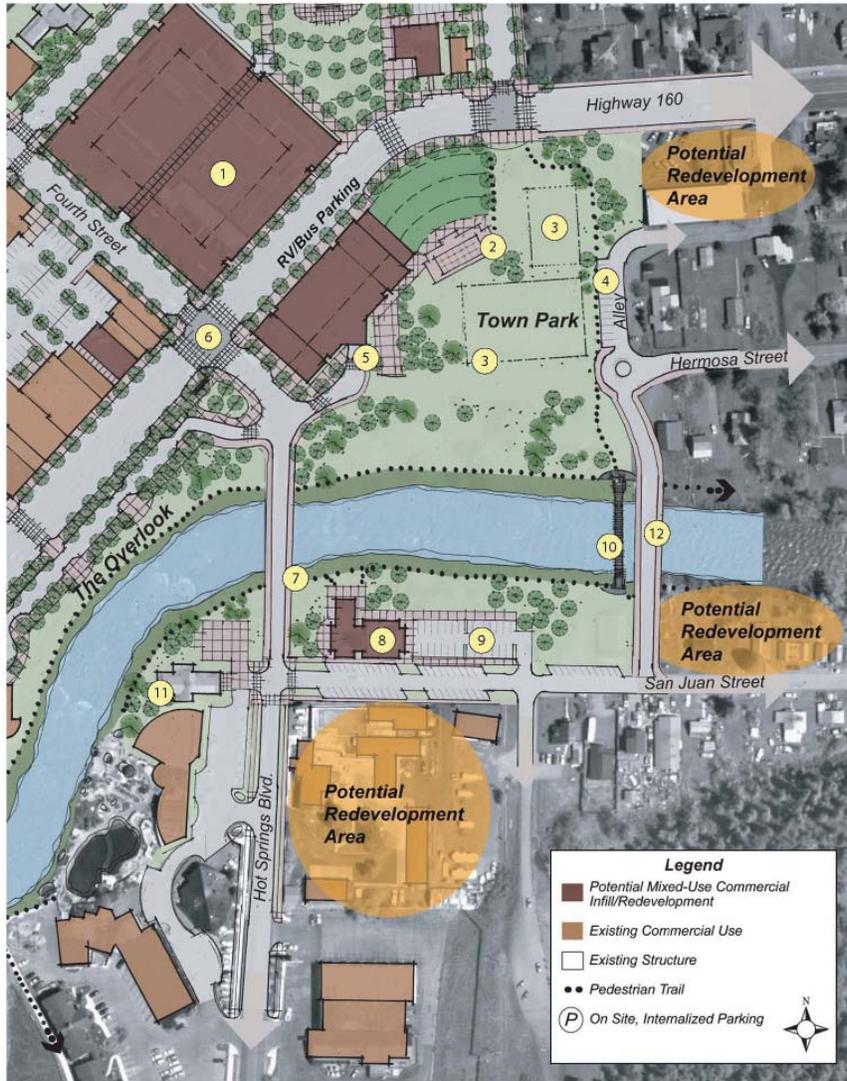
*The Chamber of Commerce is located across Hot Springs Boulevard from Town Park.*

## Opportunity Site 1: Short Term

1. Mixed Use: Commercial storefronts at street level; office and/or residential above. Integrated structured parking.
2. Amphitheater
3. Playfields
4. Public parking for Town Park and trail access
5. Structured parking access
6. Ornamental paving at key intersections
7. New trail with underpass connecting Chamber of Commerce to Town Park
8. New public facility: Children's Museum, National Forest Service Information Center, Arts Center, Information Center
9. Public parking for Town Park and trail access
10. New proposed pedestrian bridge
11. Existing Visitor's Center/Chamber of Commerce
12. Existing Arts Council building
13. Existing gazebo



## Opportunity Site 1: Longer Term



1. Mixed Use: Commercial storefronts at street level; office and/or residential above. Integrated structured parking.

2. Amphitheater

3. Playfields

4. Public parking for Town Park and trail access

5. Structured parking access

6. Ornamental paving at key intersections

7. New trail with underpass connecting Chamber of Commerce to Town Park

8. New public facility: Children's Museum, National Forest Service Information Center, Arts Center, Information Center

9. Public parking for Town Park and trail access

10. New proposed pedestrian bridge

11. Existing Visitor's Center/Chamber of Commerce

12. New vehicular access and bridge (Optional alignment at 2nd Street)



*The current location of the Junior High and Intermediate Schools does not function adequately as a school site serving a growing community.*

## Opportunity Site 2: Mixed Use Development at 4th Street and West Lewis Street

The current location of the Junior High School and Intermediate School does not adequately serve a growing community. The site does not provide adequate space for the diverse needs of a school including bus loading, playgrounds, playfields, student drop off and pick up. Students currently walk across Highway 160 to use the playing fields in Town Park. By relocating the schools, the site provides a prime redevelopment opportunity that would expand the existing commercial core, link Pagosa Street to Lewis Street with additional retail and restaurants and accommodate enhanced public plazas and pedestrian connections to Town Park.

The historic Intermediate School building would be preserved and perhaps re-used as a cultural facility. Some new, on-site surface parking may be introduced in the northeast corner of the property. An existing residential-type structure (Hollowell House) which currently houses a commercial use in the southeast corner of the site would also be preserved. The Junior High School would be replaced by a three story, mixed-use project that includes structured parking for approximately 300 vehicles (two stories plus one parking deck). The structure would be wrapped with commercial uses along the street edge and the upper story could contain either office or residential uses. The third story of the parking structure could be considered a parking deck which would minimize costs and also provide a large venue for public functions that would offer expansive views to the south.

If a parking structure is erected in Town Park, the pressure for additional parking in the Downtown Core would be relieved and a structured parking facility that is shown at the school site would not be necessary. In that case, the space originally illustrated for parking would instead accommodate additional mixed-use development including, but not limited to, offices and/or residential uses. On-street parking along Pagosa Street, Lewis Street and 4th Street would remain.

The diagram also illustrates the potential for alley improvements between Lewis Street and Pagosa Street. While building front setbacks along Lewis Street and Pagosa Street are relatively uniform, the structure depths vary, which creates an undulating edge that is used primarily for parking and services. The amount of underutilized land along the alley is significant and provides an opportunity for alley improvements that would enhance this highly visible corridor, especially if redevelopment were to occur along 4th Street. Improvements could include landscaping such as trees and/or shrubs to delineate property lines, reuse or removal of secondary alley structures and integration of pedestrian amenities such as paving and furnishings to create outdoor seating in areas where rear access and redevelopment is likely to occur.

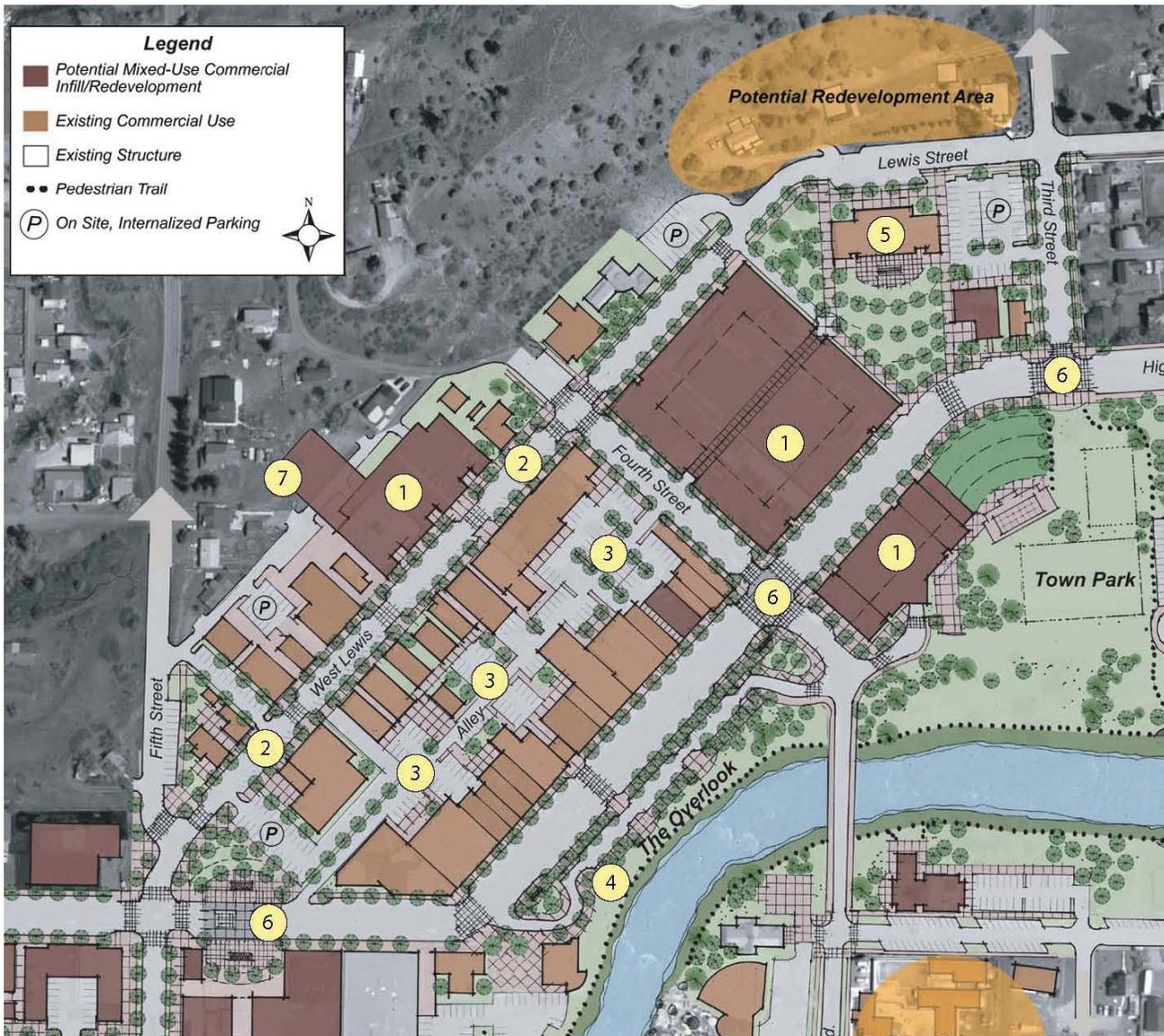
Lewis Street represents one of the most important opportunities to increase the intensity of commercial activity in Downtown. The existing structures offer a variety of configurations; there are residential structures with front porches exhibiting traditional residential setbacks juxtaposed with commercial buildings that abut the front property line. A mix of churches and office buildings complement this area. While there is substantial diversity in building types contributing to the interest of Lewis Street, the area lacks a strong image. This should be established through streetscape improvements within the public right-of-way which establish a uniform appearance that creates a cohesive framework for private-sector improvements.

Lewis Street is targeted as a prime location for a “festival street,” which would be designed to accommodate special events. Any improvement within the public right-of-way should enhance this street in a manner that is conducive to an event site. Sidewalks should be widened and redesigned to include street trees in grates that are irrigated and equipped with electrical outlets for vendors or exterior light displays. Paving patterns should be simple and respond to the public’s desire to maintain the existing character of the community. On-street parking should be reconfigured to provide diagonal parking on one side and parallel parking on the other side, as illustrated in the West Lewis Street cross-section illustrative found on page 3-9 in Chapter 3. Structural changes to the street should be coordinated with reducing curb-cuts and development of off-street parking, such as that proposed to be constructed in tandem with the expansion of the Methodist Church.

The Site Diagram illustrates the following design concepts:

- Infill development that is built to the street edge, with a 0’-0” setback along segments of Pagosa Street, 4th Street and Lewis Street. A new three-story building would contain retail and restaurants located at the first floor and upper stories would include offices and/or residential units; these would have views to the river, hot springs and Reservoir Hill. These uses would wrap around a three-story parking structure that provides approximately 100 spaces per level.
- The Intermediate School building is rehabilitated and converted to a cultural facility with off-street surface parking. On-street public parking along Lewis Street is reconfigured to a diagonal parking arrangement.
- A historic structure on the southeast corner of the Opportunity Site is preserved and integrated into new mixed-use development.
- A pedestrian plaza is located in the center of the site that serves as a quiet courtyard and public plaza for the cultural arts facility.
- Alley improvements are targeted for the “400 Block” alley. The improvements should include shrubs, trees and public art to mitigate views into the alley from 4th Street and Highway 160. Maintaining the alley as a service corridor is also important.
- Lewis Street improvements should include streetscape enhancements, which increase the potential for Lewis Street to host festivals, farmer’s markets and other public celebrations, including parades. The critical component to the success of this conversion will be to upgrade sidewalks and utilities along this street so that vendors have easy access to adequate electrical power.
- The Overlook is redesigned with improved landscaping, pavers and a parallel parking configuration.

## Opportunity Site 2



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| <p>1. Mixed Use: Commercial storefronts at street level; office and/or residential above. Integrated structured parking.</p> <p>2. Lewis Street: Festival Street with wider sidewalks, upgraded utilities, crosswalks</p> <p>3. Alley improvements: curb and gutter, paving, landscape</p> | <p>4. The Overlook</p> <p>5. Proposed Cultural Arts Center</p> <p>6. Ornamental paving at key intersections</p> <p>7. Potential expansion of parking structure</p> |
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## Opportunity Site 3: Intersection of 5th/Highway 160 and Centennial Park

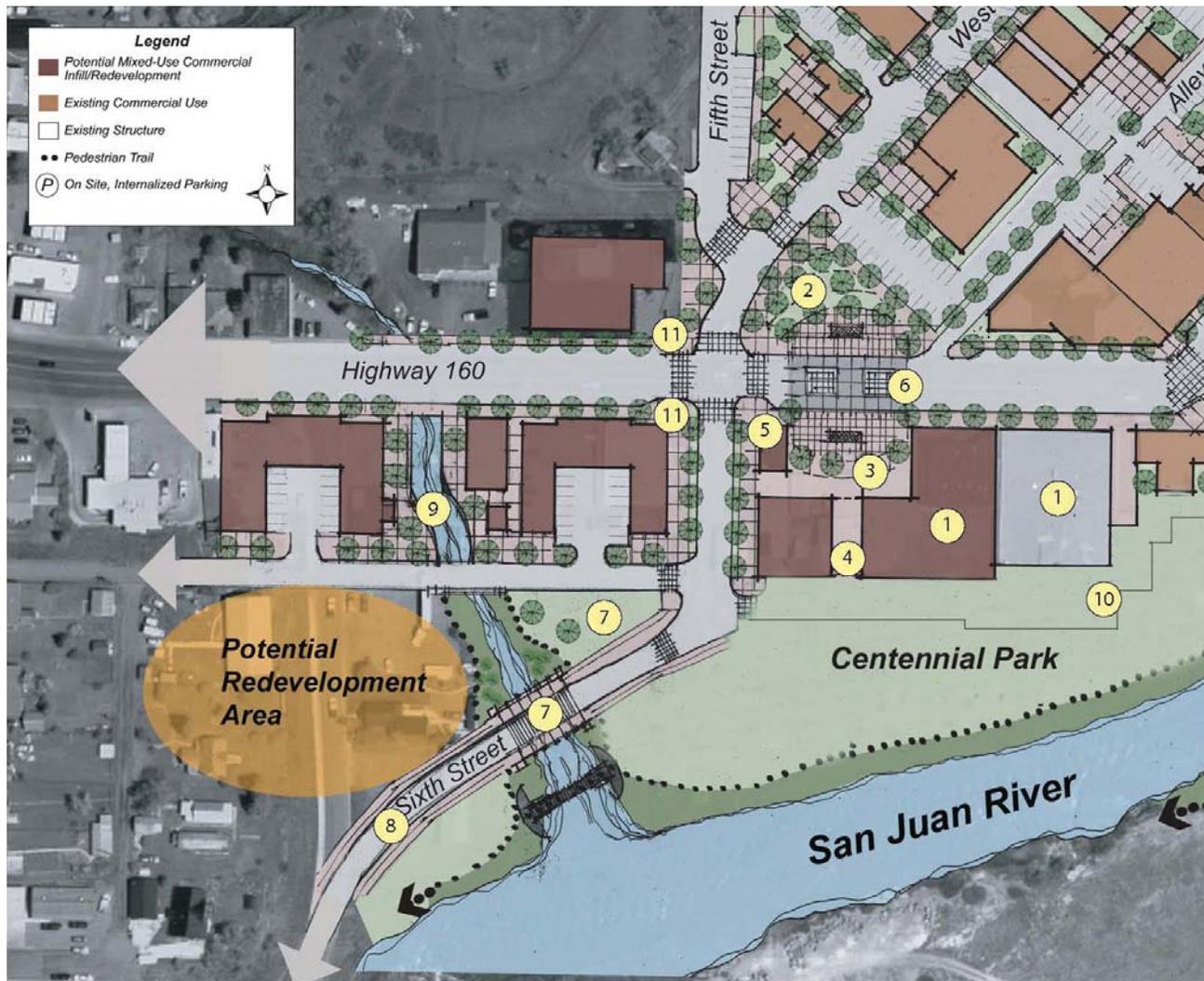
Redevelopment of the area between the northern edge of Centennial Park and Highway 160 will likely occur in the near future. There is an opportunity to create a development that takes advantage of the established density and intensity of commercial uses along the Pagosa Street edge. Development in this location should introduce uses that maximize the views to the San Juan River and Centennial Park. The site includes a number of significant amenities including the heat exchange building for the Town, the confluence of McCabe Creek with the San Juan River, views to the Hot Springs Resort and access to the existing Riverwalk trail system. These should be respected in any development concept. This highly visible site provides an opportunity for mixed-use development that defines the western edge of the Downtown Core and creates an active, pedestrian friendly backdrop to Centennial Park.

The existing change in topography could accommodate subsurface parking and allow continued access for service vehicles to adjacent buildings. Other on-site improvements could include the relocation of the heat exchange building to a more prominent site, the development of an urban plaza that complements the Bell Tower and pedestrian access from Highway 160 to Centennial Park.

**The Opportunity Site Diagram illustrates the following design concepts:**

- Mixed-use development with integrated structured parking along Highway 160 built to the sidewalk edge.
- Architectural detailing and facade treatment of structures abutting Centennial Park.
- A public plaza that mirrors Bell Tower Plaza and provides pedestrian access from street level down to Centennial Park. The plaza should be large enough to accommodate public amenities such as a relocated heat exchange exhibit, interpretive signage, wayfinding for the Town, temporary and permanent public art, public gatherings and events.
- Realigned 6th Street that crosses McCabe Creek and merges with 5th Street to route vehicles into an existing signalized intersection. The 6th Street easement would be vacated.

## Opportunity Site 3



- 1. Mixed Use: Commercial storefronts at street level; office and/or residential above. Integrated structured parking.
- 2. Reconfigured Bell Tower Park to create gateway into core
- 3. Public plaza
- 4. Pedestrian connection to Centennial Park
- 5. Relocated and improved Geothermal Heat Exchange Building with interpretive displays

- 6. Ornamental paving at key intersections.
- 7. New Bridge over McCabe Creek
- 8. 6th Street realigned to merge with 5th Street
- 9. McCabe Creek daylighted in Public Plaza
- 10. Parking may be accommodated underneath new development and park space.
- 11. Gateway elements

## Opportunity Site 4: East End Mixed Use

The East End is located in close proximity to the highway and river and contains predominately private property with some public park land. The park land includes fishing ponds and a pedestrian trail that serve primarily local residents and provides a peaceful reprieve from the highway noise. However, access is limited to informal service routes to the rear end of the development. There is parking along the edge which is defined by boulders, but pedestrian access linking the trail to the frontage road and commercial businesses is minimal. The current development pattern in the East End does not take advantage or contribute to the character of the river's edge and does not provide easy pedestrian access to existing public amenities.

Contributing elements to this opportunity site are the Museum, historic cisterns and residential homes on 1st Street that overlook the river. The cisterns provide a unique opportunity for public viewing that integrates historic structures with new landscape features to create an overlook to the fishing ponds and river. Just to the north of the cisterns is an old stone bridge that connects the cisterns to the adjacent residential property. Ideally, this stone bridge should be integrated into the redevelopment of the site and existing vegetation manicured to allow visual access from the fishing ponds to this historic stone bridge. Redevelopment along the bluffs should integrate existing historic structures and maintain the scale and massing of traditional residential development in this area.

**The East End Opportunity Site Diagram illustrates the following design concepts:**

- Frame views to the San Juan River and northern bluffs.
- Maintain the alignment of the north and south frontage roads, which parallel the highway.
- Bring development close to the to a sidewalk abutting the frontage road to minimize the amount of paved surfaces.
- Introduce a defined edge for parking along the fishing ponds.
- Enhance the existing commercial gateway to Downtown.
- Provide additional landscape improvements between the highway and frontage road.
- Provide non-motorized boat put-ins.
- Provide additional pedestrian bridges across the San Juan River at key locations.
- Preserve existing historic stone structures on 1st Street and integrate them into a publicly accessible project.



*North and south frontage roads flank the highway in the East End.*



*Fishing ponds and a trail exist to the north of existing development.*



*This traditional home sits atop the bluff along the San Juan River.*

## Opportunity Site 4

1. Potential link to Town Park
2. Potential pedestrian bridge
3. Museum
4. Cisterns
5. Retail and Trailhead parking
6. Plaza/Gathering space
7. Trailhead/river parking
8. Non-motorized boat put-in
9. Enhanced trailhead and park access to Reservoir Hill.

