



# [IMAGINE DOWNTOWN]

LAFAYETTE, LA

## OPEN IDEAS COMPETITION

\$1500 CASH PRIZE TO THE BEST DESIGN ON EACH SITE • PUBLIC EXHIBITION  
REGISTRATION DEADLINE : OCTOBER 15, 2012

For further information, please visit:

[www.creativeactionacadiana.org](http://www.creativeactionacadiana.org)



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## WELCOME

***[Imagine Downtown] Lafayette: An open ideas competition to shape dialogue surrounding future creative and economic growth within six downtown sites in Lafayette, Louisiana.***

*Creative Action Acadiana in partnership with Urban Land Institute Louisiana (ULI), AOC Community Media (AOC), The Acadiana Center for the Arts (ACA) and The University of Louisiana, Lafayette School of Architecture and Design (ULL SoAD), has launched an open ideas competition called **[Imagine Downtown] Lafayette**. The objective of this competition is to generate a sustainable vision for Lafayette's downtown district. A redesign is sought that will invigorate Lafayette's urban core, unite surrounding neighborhoods and institutions, and develop a 24-hour livable and sustainable community.*

## INTRODUCTION

Because of its central location in the Acadiana Region, downtown Lafayette serves as a cultural and economic hub for the surrounding parishes. Historically categorized as the “Hub City,” Lafayette plays host to large-scale cultural and entertainment activities for locals and visitors, and serves as a point of departure for those seeking to explore the region’s surrounding towns and villages, cultural venues and lush natural attractions. Lafayette’s downtown district is a huge asset to the city’s economy, but its full value cannot be realized because of the many vacant properties, underutilized parking lots, lack of affordable housing, and poor pedestrian connectivity to surrounding residential neighborhoods and the University of Louisiana, Lafayette campus. With a new design, downtown Lafayette can be transformed into a top-notch urban environment that more effectively and aesthetically serves ALL of its users.

The Lafayette Consolidated Government has begun development of a Comprehensive Plan to guide the city's growth over the next 20 years, and has contracted the national consulting firm of Wallace, Roberts and Todd (WRT) to help codify land-use and zoning guidelines for the city's future. Lafayette residents have enthusiastically engaged in a participatory process to define their vision, which WRT is in the process of translating into an actual design. WRT will also complete a proposal for a central piece of the downtown area. *[Imagine Downtown]* gives an opportunity for everyone to inform the future growth of the city by submitting ideas for uniting all the pieces of downtown.

### ***Below are excerpts from Lafayette 2035 Vision...***

*In 2035, Lafayette is one of the nation’s most exceptional communities, renowned for its rich Cajun and Creole heritage, its creative scene and culture of innovation, and its authentic joie de vivre. Fueled by its desirable quality of life, its highly educated workforce and the community’s entrepreneurial spirit, Lafayette has attracted substantial investment and growth. This growth has been managed and absorbed in a manner that allowed Lafayette to retain its small-town neighborliness and unique way of life.*

### ***Our People: A Vibrant Culture of Creativity, Innovation and Compassion***

*We have a **vibrant cultural scene** that celebrates and treasures its local artists and performers, its many venues (museums, Cajundome, Parc Internationale, Acadiana Center for the Arts), and our many festivals and celebrations.*

### ***Our Community: Its Character, Form and Function***

***Downtown** Lafayette is **activated** with new development of housing, retail and entertainment, supporting day and night-time **activity** and a true **urban lifestyle**—one with a **distinct flavor of Acadiana**.*

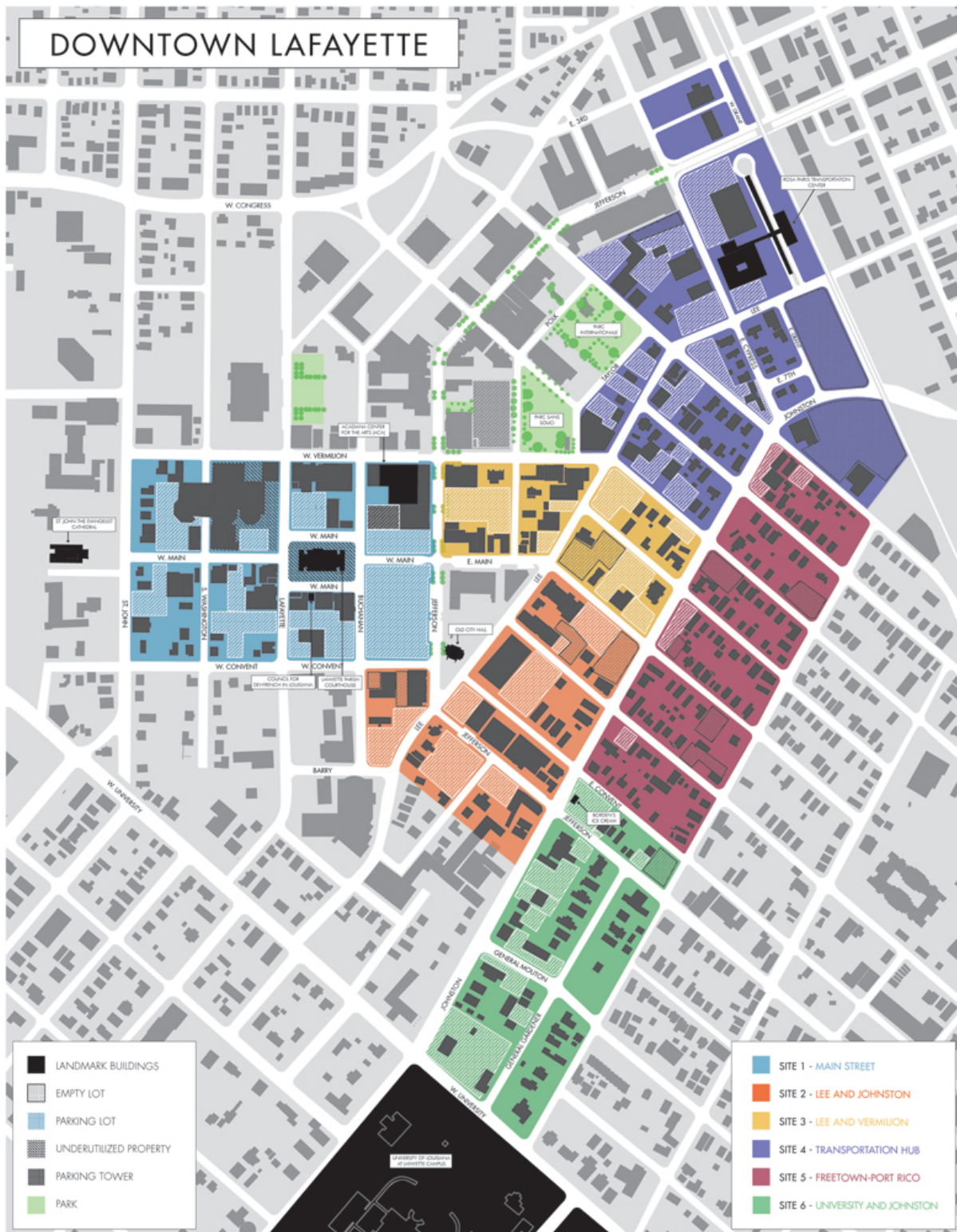
### ***Our Economy: The Prosperity of Our People***

*We are home to locally grown **entrepreneurs** and **small businesses** that proudly retain a progressive adaptation of the “**wildcatter**” **attitude** of independence and drive to succeed through **determination, creativity and innovation**.*

## ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

Creative Action is focused on leveraging Acadiana's creative assets for economic gain. ULI provides a forum for the exchange of information at the local and regional level; convening stakeholders to provide solutions to land use issues, promoting education and delivering community outreach services. The mission of the ULL SoAD is to integrate community-based research and scholarship that engages the community and ultimately improves the public good. AOC’s mission is to build an informed and engaged community through media, technology and education. The ACA’s mission is to create, facilitate, nurture, and fund arts and cultural activities to enrich quality of life and place. Through this open ideas competition we hope to facilitate a fully participatory forum for anyone to submit ideas of how they envision the future of downtown Lafayette. We encourage interdisciplinary teams that include architects, urban planners, designers, landscape architects, real estate developers, artists, and creative professionals and entrepreneurs to contribute to a more robust vision that appreciates the concerns of Acadiana’s creative class and their very real contributions to the region’s economy and urban growth.

## Lafayette Downtown Area Maps



## **Lafayette Downtown Sites Description**

### **SITE CONSIDERATIONS**

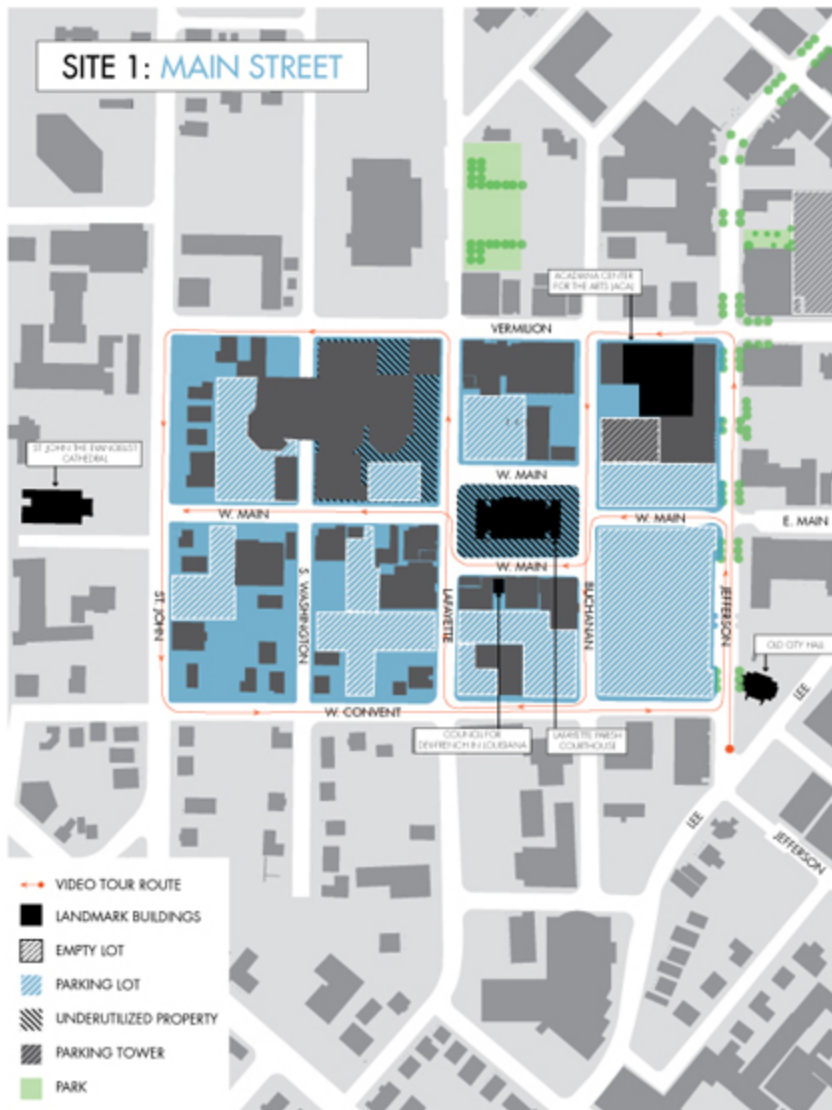
- Increase affordable residential and mixed-use density.
- Accommodate parking needs while increasing density.
- Reinforce existing public plazas, parks and streetscapes in the downtown area.
- Strengthen pedestrian connection to surrounding neighborhoods and UL Lafayette campus.
- Facilitate use of public transportation & bike trails.
- Develop a 24/7 urban condition, with mixed-use programming.

### **SITE PROFILES**

Lafayette's downtown district is divided into six distinct sites, each with its own set of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. At registration, competition participants will be asked to identify which of the six sites they would like to explore in greater detail, and to propose specific solutions to that site's particular challenges.

- Site 1: Main Street
- Site 2: Lee and Johnston
- Site 3: Lee and Vermillion
- Site 4: Transportation Hub
- Site 5: Freetown-Port Rico
- Site 6: University and Johnston

## Zone 1: Main Street (primary area of intervention in blue)



Lafayette's founding street, Main Street, runs east-west through the center of the Main Street Zone, which contains many older streets in the original grid pattern that began the city. The site is bounded on the west by St. John Street and the historic landmark St. John's Cathedral (circa 1916), on axis with Main Street. Over the years, The Lafayette Parish Courthouse (completed 1965), the five-story parking garage on Buchanan Street, and Lafayette Parish Jail have compromised the cathedral's prominence on Main Street and the zone's overall appeal. While architecturally mundane, these buildings and other local businesses draw day workers to the area, which would otherwise be primarily concerned with nightlife. Distributed throughout the Main Street zone are numerous parking lots that are largely under-utilized, except during Festive International. Jefferson Street borders the eastern edge of the Main Street zone and serves as a major pedestrian connection

into the rest of the downtown area. Jefferson Street's generous, shaded sidewalks are the result of a downtown revitalization project undertaken in the '90s, and are an exception to an otherwise inadequate pedestrian situation in the area. Vermillion Street borders the northern edge and contains primarily small offices, as well as one of the largest cultural and performance venues in the city--The Acadiana Center for the Arts. Convent Street borders the southern edge of the site and has along it a primary school and small offices. In general, the lack of residential property and pedestrian-friendliness are detrimental to this zone and most others.

**Strengths:** Historical significance; St John the Evangelist Cathedral (Historic Landmark); strong urban grid, Acadiana Center for the Arts; presence of day workers help sustain local businesses; some interesting older structures.

**Weaknesses:** Mundane architecture; small sidewalks; very little residential.

**Opportunities:** Infill development could potentially aid in reinvigorating many under-utilized sites; St. John's Cathedral provides a strong visual element on the Main Street axis; Bordered by pedestrian-friendly Jefferson Street.



## Site 2: Lee and Johnston (primary area of intervention in orange)



Main and Lee streets border the northern edges of the Lee and Johnston site, and remain largely under-utilized streets with some mundane architecture and some crime. This site is at the southern end of the Jefferson Street landscaped, pedestrian-friendly corridor, on the periphery of the traditional activated core of downtown. It enjoys the residual traffic of vibrant daytime and nighttime mixed usage, with amenities that include restaurants, cafes, art galleries, theatres, nightlife venues, offices and other small businesses. The adjacent neighborhood of Freetown- Port Rico (see Zone 5) borders it on the west just across Johnston Street, one of Lafayette's busiest streets and longest thoroughfares. A few mid-sized parking lots are dispersed throughout the site.

Strengths: Borders Johnston Street; some thriving small businesses, restaurants, and cultural venues.

Weaknesses: Lee Street remains largely an underutilized street; some mundane architecture; some crime.

Opportunities: Lots of land adjacent to a core intersection is available for development.

### Site 3: Lee and Vermilion (primary area of intervention in gold)



The Lee and Vermilion site is characterized by proximity to many of downtown Lafayette's main assets. Sidewalks throughout the site are comfortably wide, but some crime deters foot traffic in the southernmost portion, especially at night. Jefferson Street forms the western border; to the north it is bordered by Vermilion Street and Parc Sans Souci, a large outdoor event space used regularly for weekend music and cultural events throughout the year, perhaps most notably the increasingly popular Festivals Internationales de Louisiane. The western portion of this zone, between Jefferson and Lee Streets, enjoys a great deal of foot traffic because of several restaurants and small businesses, as well as the popular fountain feature at Parc Sans Souci. The southernmost portion of this zone abuts Johnston Street, one of Lafayette's busiest streets and longest

thoroughfares, right across from the residential Freetown-Port Rico neighborhood (see Site 5).

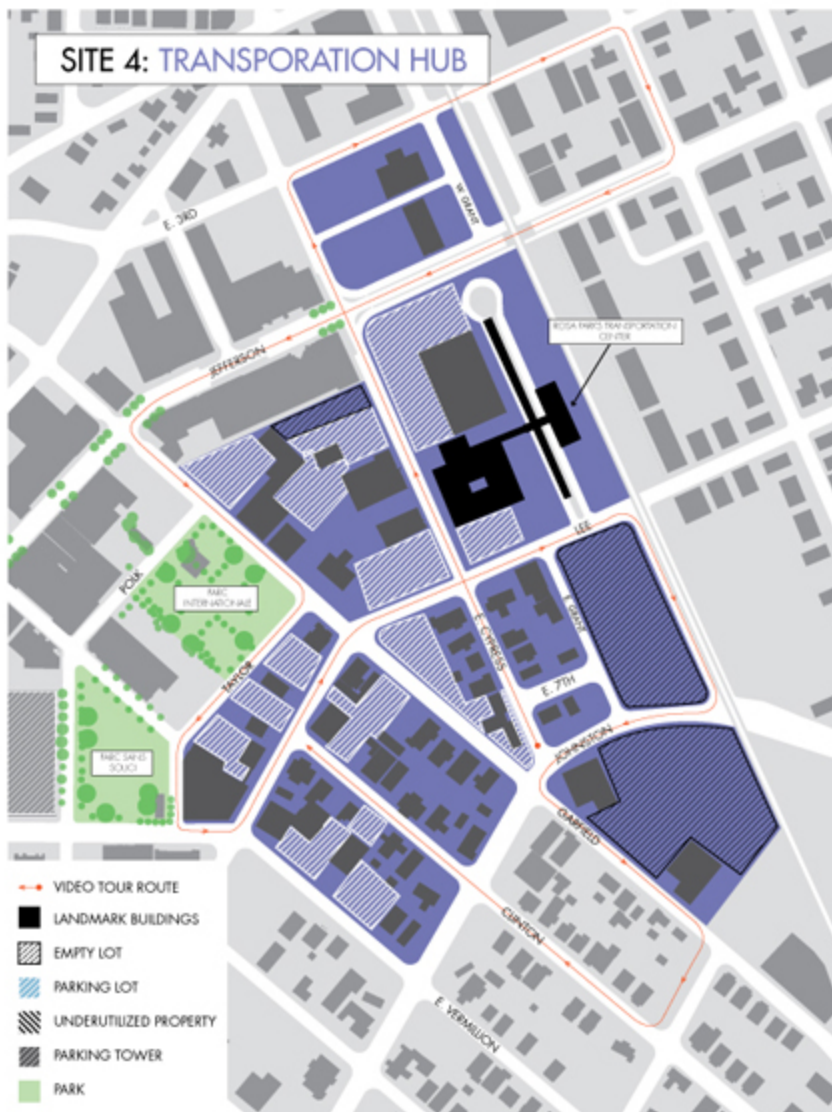
Strengths: Immediate access to Johnston Street and Parc Sans Souci; some interesting older structures; the Attakapas Bike Trail begins at Parc Sans Souci, which is also the starting point for Critical Mass Bike Rallies; some thriving small businesses, restaurants.

Weaknesses: Lee Street remains largely an underutilized street; very little residential.

Opportunities: Lots of land available for development; infill development could potentially aid in reinvigorating many under-utilized sites.



#### Site 4: Transportation Hub (primary area of intervention in purple)



The Transportation Hub site wraps around both Parc Sans Souci and Parc Internationale on its western edge, large outdoor event spaces utilized for weekend music and cultural attractions throughout most of the year, perhaps most notably the increasingly popular Festivals Internationales de Louisiane. Vermilion Street forms the southern border and the northern portion is bordered by Jefferson Street. The eastern border is held by the railroad tracks and the Rosa Parks Transportation Center, a large new facility that serves as Lafayette's central transportation hub. Here lies the Amtrak Station, intercity bus station and the city-parish Traffic and Transportation Department, as well as the home of community public media access. The southernmost portion of this zone crosses Johnston St., one of Lafayette's busiest streets and its longest thoroughfare, into the residential Freetown-Port Rico neighborhood.

Strengths: Borders Johnston Street, Jefferson Street, Parc Sans Souci and Parc Internationale; contains the transportation Center; some residential areas with comfortable sidewalks.

Weaknesses: Lee Street remains largely an underutilized street; moderate crime rates.

Opportunities: Lots of land adjacent to this intersection is available for development; infill development could potentially aid in reinvigorating many under-utilized sites.

### Site 5: Freetown-Port Rico (primary blocks for intervention in maroon)



The Freetown-Port Rico zone is best known for the *Freetown* neighborhood, one of the oldest residential areas in Lafayette. Originally settled by freedmen prior to the Civil War, *Freetown* has a rich cultural history of black camaraderie and mutual aid organizations. Though it has been developed slightly over the past few years, it retains its residential character. Notable for its many old houses, some of which have been owned and occupied by local families for generation, *Freetown-Port Rico* fell into disrepair over the latter half of the 20th century. Many of the houses are now owned by out-of-neighborhood or absentee landlords, and are currently rented by UL Lafayette students. As well, several small apartment complexes and townhouses have been purpose-built as student housing, an activity that has not set well with many long-time residents. The mostly residential structures are interspersed with commercial properties that

attract some pedestrian and vehicular traffic, most notably on Jefferson Street, which runs directly into the heart of downtown, along the southern edge, and on Johnston Street, which borders the zone to the west. The McKinley Street “Strip,” a row of college bars, ranges a few blocks away and is known to be the source of some crime in the area. While the entire *Freetown-Port Rico* neighborhood is much larger, the blocks on its northwestern edge between Johnston Street and Gordon Street are the focus of this competition, mainly for their proximity to the downtown, the university, and to Main Street, and their potential as a connector between them.

**Strengths:** Close-knit residential community; provides housing for college students; a few popular restaurants and nightlife venues attract some pedestrian traffic.

**Weaknesses:** Many of the houses are old and unkempt because of out-of-neighborhood ownership and local economic decline; little parking for commercial venues; moderate crime rate; residents resistant to change; the McKinley Street “Strip” is a loud party area.

**Opportunities:** Close to the downtown and university, and could bridge the gap between the two; infill possibilities; infill development could potentially aid in reinvigorating many under-utilized sites

## Site 6: University and Johnston (primary areas of intervention in green)



The University and Johnston Zone is situated just blocks away from the historic downtown. Though part of the *Freetown-Port Rico* neighborhood, it has been identified as a separate zone for the purposes of this competition because of its location adjacent to a potentially important traffic and pedestrian intersection on Johnston Street and University Avenue, and to the UL Lafayette Campus. If the area between the campus and the downtown were more pedestrian-friendly, and perhaps more visually connected, the entire area could benefit. Its southwestern border is University Avenue, which denotes an edge of the university campus and also serves as a major entry from I-10 (2.7mi to the north) to the heart of Lafayette. Its northwestern boundary is Johnston Street, one of Lafayette's most heavily trafficked streets and longest thoroughfares. This zone features many older houses in

varying states of repair, and the southernmost portion has seen a fair amount of renovations as younger families move in. The McKinley Street "Strip," a row of college bars, ranges a few blocks away and is known to be the source of some crime in the area. On the corner of this intersection is a Dominos Pizza and several parking lots, all of which could be re-envisioned to make more efficient use of the property. Gordon Street is a quiet residential street that sits at the eastern edge of the site.

**Strengths:** Close-knit residential community; provides housing for college students.

**Weaknesses:** Many of the houses are old and unkempt because of college student tenants and out-of-neighborhood/absentee landlords; the McKinley Street "Strip" is a loud party area located a few blocks away; potentially important corner of Johnston and University occupied by Dominos Pizza; moderate crime rate.

**Opportunities:** Provides a clear connection to the downtown; infill development could potentially aid in reinvigorating several under-utilized sites.

### Available Basemaps

Information will be available for download on our competition website [www.creativeactionacadiana.org](http://www.creativeactionacadiana.org):

- 3D drawing/model of downtown sites. DWG file made with Autocad

### Schedule and Important Dates

August 15, 2012	Public Announcement
August 30, 2012	Registration Opens
<b>October 15, 2012</b>	<b>Registration Deadline</b>
<b>January 15, 2013</b>	<b>Submission Deadline</b>
January 30, 2013	Announcement of Winners
April 13, 2013	Exhibition Opening

## TO ENTER

### Who Can Enter

*[Imagine Downtown] Lafayette* is open to all interested entrants. Individuals, teams, professionals, students, artists, and others are all encouraged to contribute their visions. Multiple submissions from any one individual or team are permitted, although each entry must be submitted under a unique User ID.

### Registration Process

Each individual or team that wishes to submit an entry must be registered digitally by 5:00 pm US Central Time, October 15th, 2012. To register, go to [www.creativeactionacadiana.org](http://www.creativeactionacadiana.org), select a site from the list of six, and pay the \$30 registration fee per entry. After we have confirmed your payment, we will email you a username and password that you will use for the submission process. If you wish to make multiple entries you must register and pay for them separately. You will use your username and password to log into this site and submit your designs when they are ready (No later than 5:00 pm US Central Time January 15, 2013).

### Fees

There is a required \$30 fee per entry. When registering all entrants will be guided through the payment process. All fees must be paid through PayPal™. Registration will not be finalized until payment is processed.

### Submission Requirements

All submissions must be digitally logged through the competition website. After being guided through the creation of a unique, anonymous login, competition entrants will be prompted to submit the following:

1. CONTACT INFORMATION
2. PROJECT INFORMATION
  - a. What is your project's title?
  - b. Please provide a brief description of your proposal (50 words or less)
  - c. Describe your design philosophy and identify key design elements (500 words or less)
3. PROJECT DRAWINGS (JPEGs ONLY. 72dpi. File size limit 2MB each)
  - a. urban site plan
  - b. urban site diagrams (examples: urban section, exploded axonometric, digital model)
  - d. at least **2** contextually grounded perspective renderings at eye level

### Anonymity

All entries will be reviewed by the jury anonymously. Thus, all submitted text and images must be free of any marks, logos, or writing that identifies authorship. The presence of any such insignia will result in disqualification.

**Deadlines**

All submissions must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. (US Central) on January 15, 2013, the stated deadline in “Schedule and Important Dates” section, above. Creative Action Acadiana reserves the right to extend the registration and/or submissions deadline.

**Ownership and Copyright**

All materials submitted to the competition become the property of Creative Action Acadiana, and may be retained for archival purposes and possible exhibition and publication. Each competition entrant will retain full copyright of all their materials, and will always be given appropriate credit if and when their material is used.

**Exhibition and Publication**

The [Imagine Downtown] Lafayette partnership will mount an outdoor exhibition of top entries in the spring of 2013 in downtown Lafayette. If your entry is selected for inclusion in the exhibition, you will be required to provide a high-resolution version of each submitted image to Creative Action Acadiana.

The [Imagine Downtown] Lafayette partnership will also publish the results of the competition online, and potentially in print format. In any exhibition, publication or website, we will make every effort to properly credit the appropriate competitors. As Creative Action Acadiana retains ownership of all competition materials (see “Ownership and Copyright,” above), it reserves the right to use them in any publication or promotional endeavor in perpetuity and without compensation to entrants.

**Awards**

Each of the six sites will have a “Best Design” award, which will be a cash prize of \$1500. The best design proposals will be exhibited in public venues (to be determined) across downtown Lafayette, with a potential print publication. There is a possibility that other design awards may be given and other entrants’ proposals exhibited.

**Jury**

We will announce our five final jurors soon. The jury will be made of local and nationally recognized professionals from various disciplines in the design field. Jurors will be announced on the website [www.creativeactionacadiana.org](http://www.creativeactionacadiana.org).

**Endnotes**

For a full version of the 2035 Vision follow this link.  
<http://www.lafayettela.gov/ComprehensivePlan/VisionStatement.asp>