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# *Clayton Business Districts Master Plan*

*Clayton, Missouri*

*Presented to*  
City of Clayton

*Prepared by*  
LDR International, Inc.  
Development Strategies, Inc.  
Mr. James A. Cloar  
Jerome Pratter, Esq.

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# Clayton, Missouri - Technical Report

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The City of Clayton is one of the St. Louis region's premier communities to live and work in. The quality of its neighborhoods, its housing stock and its schools would be the envy of any community. However, the high quality-of-life enjoyed by its residents springs in large part from the strong historic economic base provided by its business districts, especially its Central Business District (CBD). The CBD provides well over half of the City's total revenues (estimated at 56 percent in 1993) while consuming less than a third (estimated at 31 percent) of its expenditures on public services and capital investments.

The Clayton CBD's strength is, in part, due to the fact that it is the government center for St. Louis County's almost 1 million residents. It provides over 20,000 white collar jobs in some of the region's most prestigious office buildings and corporate parks. However, this key position in the region and its many quality attributes cannot be cause for community self satisfaction or complacency. Rather, the City must assess its strategic position in the context of an ever-changing and increasingly competitive regional environment. It then must act aggressively to not just defend its envious position, but to reposition itself advantageously in relation to changing conditions in the coming years and decades.

Across the country communities have been caught in the crunch of declining revenues, especially as a result of plummeting commercial real estate values and rising demands for services. After many years of growth and stability, Clayton has begun to feel the effects of this trend. The disproportionate contribution of the CBD to the City's revenues has begun to decline and its retail dominance is no longer true. To continue to provide the quality services which have been Clayton's hallmark, particularly in public education, Clayton's residents must choose to either raise tax rates, encourage the creation of additional revenue sources or shift their tax burdens. This Master Plan sets forth a series of recommendations aimed at stabilizing and improving Clayton's CBD in order to increase city revenues over time. These recommendations cannot be effectual unless Clayton's leadership and city administration have vision and the willingness to act, as well as the courage in some cases, to defer short term gains for long term economic health.

If the Clayton Business Districts are to remain competitive in the future, the City must adopt a much more proactive, intervention-oriented approach and a firm commitment to their development and management. The City must have a vision for the role, function and appearance of each of its four business districts - The Central Business District, Clayton Road, Hanley/Wydown and Demun. The Business Districts Master Plan provides that vision along with recommended implementation strategies for putting the plan into action. The following paragraphs are a distillation of the most significant conclusions and recommendations detailed in this Report.

FIVE KEY VISION COMPONENTS have been identified as critical to the Central Business District's future.

- *RETAIL/MIXED-USE CORE* -- This well-defined core should be a place where Clayton's businesses, employees, residents and visitors can converge to browse and explore, visit a cafe, enjoy entertainment. This area should be the hub of pedestrian activity in Clayton's CBD. Target retail businesses for the CBD should first build upon its captive market of office employees and the demonstrated successes of the district as a destination for evening as well as luncheon dining. In addition to restaurants, specialty food, galleries, specialty clothing, gifts, and other uses appealing to residents, employees and visitors should be encouraged. Uses not currently well represented that are potential targets are specialty home furnishings, sporting goods, record stores, and others offering specialized service or products. Another target retail category is "hybrid" retail stores such as the Gap, Crate & Barrel, Pier One, and Limited.
- *FORSYTH CORRIDOR* -- Forsyth is envisioned as the spine of the downtown area extending the length of the Central Business District. With an improved pedestrian environment and a clear visual theme, Forsyth will become the city's ceremonial civic street and a prestigious corporate address, anchored with major open space areas and strengthened by key opportunities for new private investment.
- *COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER* -- The development of the new Justice Center and the re-evaluation of the old county building and the accompanying plaza area to the south should be seen as an opportunity to reinforce the role of the county government as a critical catalyst for the broader business community of the Central Business District. A new public green should be developed as a focus for the CBD and the government center.
- *METROLINK* -- The importance of MetroLink to Clayton's long-term development cannot be overemphasized. The connection to downtown St. Louis and the airport are essential for Clayton to remain a premier regional business center. The City must be proactive in promoting MetroLink. It must begin planning now to accommodate MetroLink as an integral component of regional access to the CBD.
- *RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT* -- Another important component to the future stability of the Clayton Central Business District is the opportunity for increased residential development. Additional higher-density housing in and adjacent to the CBD will complement all of the key vision elements (particularly the retail/mixed-use core) and makes good economic and planning sense.

Each of Clayton's other three business districts should have its own identity and purpose. The Demun business district should continue to serve a combination of neighborhood and specialty retail functions. The Hanley/ Wydown district should also provide neighborhood service and convenience shopping with some limited dining and service uses. Clayton Road should serve a much broader specialty retail market with destination businesses dependent on automobile access.

**MAJOR STRATEGIES FOR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION** -- The following highlights the key strategies that should be pursued in order to implement the Clayton Business Districts Master Plan. These and other strategies are described in greater detail in the body of the plan.

1. In order to remain competitive with Downtown St. Louis and the western suburbs, Clayton must offer an office environment that provides something to distinguish it from these locations. Clayton's strategy should be to create such a special, active pedestrian downtown environment that it adds value to the office worker, employer and property owner as well as to its citizens.

When considering an urban design concept and themes for the business districts, it is always important to strive for quality. Clayton's stature requires buildings and environments of distinction. The City should not pattern itself after shopping malls which utilize flamboyance and novelty to gain recognition and are, thus, condemned to continual re-invention.

2. A special Redevelopment Committee should be established to advise the Clayton Board of Aldermen and Planning Commission with regard to <sup>1)</sup> the development of a policy concerning the use of those redevelopment incentives which are available to the City and <sup>2)</sup> the evaluation of redevelopment proposals to insure compatibility with the Business Districts Master Plan.

For certain key sites in Clayton, redevelopment can serve a strategically important function for the community. A number of different tools or incentives are available to encourage redevelopment. Depending on the circumstances and the desired and necessary level of city intervention in the development process, Clayton could assist private development through property consolidation, property acquisition, public infrastructure, zoning incentives, or financial incentives.

3. If the City decides to use redevelopment incentives, it should limit its use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Chapter 353 inducements to proposals that clearly contribute to one or more of the five Key Vision Components -- the Retail/Mixed Use Core, the Forsyth Corridor, the County Government Center, the construction of MetroLink stations in Clayton's CBD, and the introduction of more Residential Development.
4. To realize the vision for the Retail/Mixed-Use Core as a special place in the CBD, another level of public controls, guidelines and incentives is needed to supplement those contained in the present zoning code. For this purpose a Retail/Mixed-Use Core Overlay Zoning District is proposed. It is also clear from

this planning process that in order to secure future business district development and redevelopment and to adequately guide and manage it, the Clayton Zoning Code must be substantially updated.

5. Finally, the City will need to use a wide variety of means to communicate the scope and potential impacts of the Business Districts Plan. The City must focus attention on the importance of the CBD to the community and the array of special opportunities for the implementation of this plan. Hearings, information seminars and the appointment of task forces focused on certain key elements of the plan (such as the attraction, location and economic impacts of MetroLink) should be used to secure community support.



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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The preceding Executive Summary provided highlights of the Master Plan for the Clayton Business Districts. The following sections of the Technical Report provide details of the **Vision for the Business Districts, Development Concepts and Strategies** for seventeen separate Action Areas, **Design Criteria and Public Improvements** recommendations, and **Implementation Strategies** for setting the Master Plan into action. But before proceeding with these plan elements, a few basic questions about the Plan's purpose, methodology, and authors/participants should be addressed.

### Why Prepare a Business Districts Master Plan?

For decades the Clayton Central Business District has enjoyed an enviable position in the St. Louis region. It contains the seat of county government. It is a regional office center employing over 20,000 people. It is near the geographic and demographic center of the metropolitan area with excellent highway access. It is surrounded by quality residential neighborhoods within walking distance of the Central Business District (CBD) which is both urban in character and pedestrian in scale. But Clayton's CBD has also been impacted by dramatic changes in regional and national retailing, real estate markets and development trends that will continue to affect, and possibly erode, its competitive position and role in the region.

The Business Districts Master Plan has been prepared to better understand these factors and to create plans and implementation strategies that will allow Clayton's CBD and Clayton's other business districts to be proactive rather than reactive in responding to these changing conditions. The community and its elected officials recognize that the development of a long range plan is the best way to ensure that Clayton's CBD retains its unique position as a positive economic force in the community and a safe, interesting, and attractive urban environment in which to live, work and shop. This proactive approach to planning for the Clayton Business Districts was stated formally in the City's Strategic Plan which was adopted by the City and its strategic task force, the Strategic Issues Committee. The need for a business districts plan as a foundation for this proactive stance was previously recommended by the Clayton City Manager in his report on Building a New Economic Development Strategy for Clayton (July 1992) in which he recommended to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen that "We need to define our vision, which can best be accomplished by the development of a master plan for our business areas ...". The Business Districts Master Plan not only defines a new vision for the Clayton business districts but also recommends and prioritizes specific development concepts and implementation strategies for realizing that vision.

### What Business District Areas are Included in the Plan?

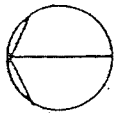
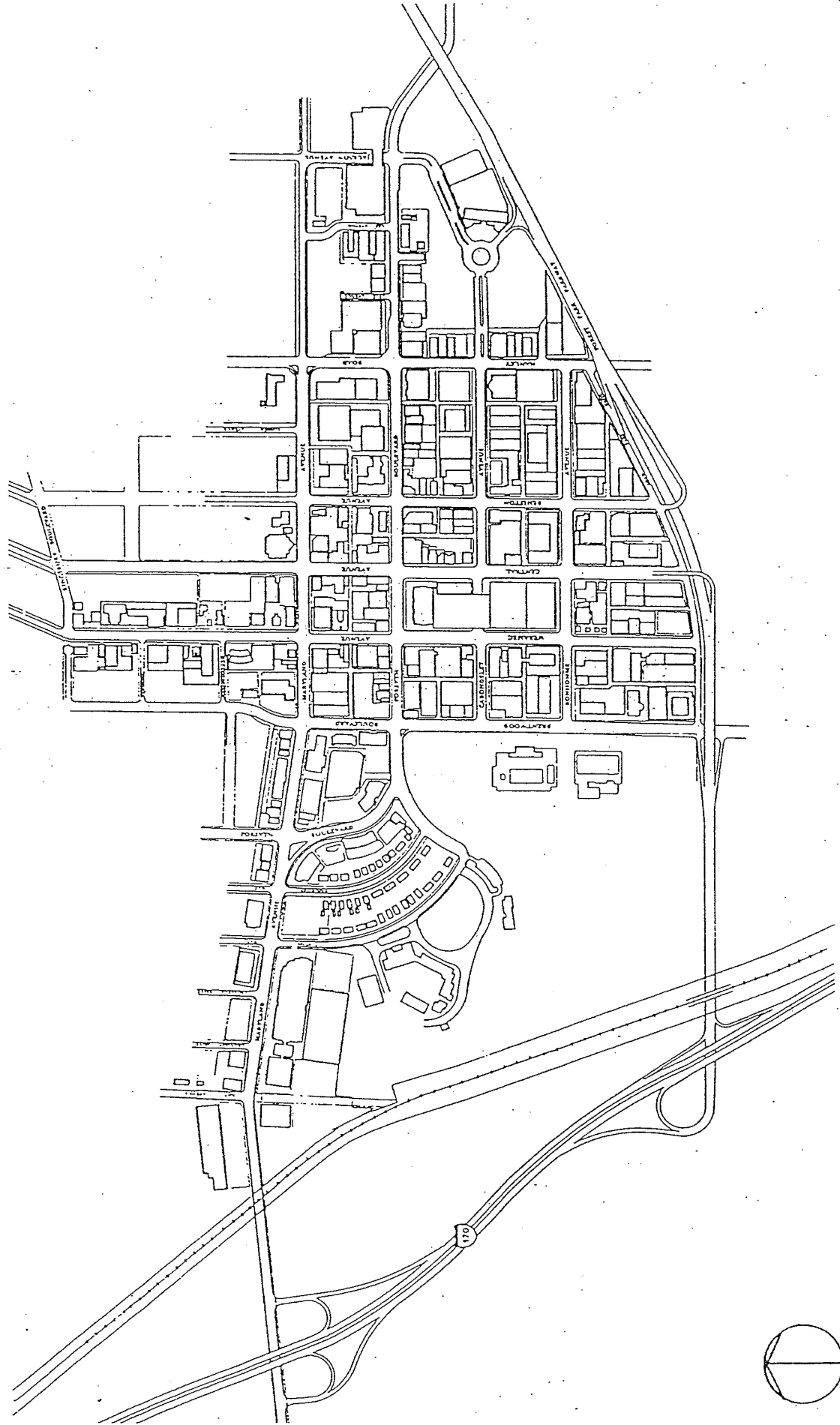
The Master Plan covers the four business areas in Clayton. First, of course, is the Clayton Central Business District which comprises the area from Maryland Avenue on the north to Shaw Park Drive on the south and Shaw Park itself on the west as well as Meramec Avenue north to Kingsbury and Maryland Avenue west to the city limits. In addition to the CBD, three other non-CBD business districts are included. These are the Hanley/Wydown district at the intersection of those streets; the Clayton Road district extending from Hanley Road west to the 8200 block and from Big Bend Boulevard east to the 6300 block; and the Demun district that includes the 700 and 800 blocks of that street and its immediate adjacent properties. Each of these business districts is characterized by its own set of use and development patterns, opportunities and constraints as described in the Technical Report. The maps on the following pages illustrate the location of the business districts.

### How was the Plan Prepared?

The consultant team undertook four primary work elements in preparing the Business Districts Master Plan. First, background research and analysis was conducted to understand the physical conditions, market context and existing regulations, plans, and policies affecting the business districts. The second phase of the study focused on "vision-building" to reach a consensus on what the business districts should look like and how they should function in the future. This included several facilitated workshops with business district stakeholders as well as interviews with selected individuals with varying interests in the business districts. The consulting team then prepared a set of preliminary development plan concepts and alternatives which were presented to the business district stakeholders and the City officials for review and critique. The concepts and plan elements were evaluated by these groups to determine if they reflected the vision for the business districts that were previously outlined in the workshops. Following these presentations and reviews, the consultant team prepared the plan and implementation strategies incorporating them into this Technical Report.

### Who Prepared the Plan?

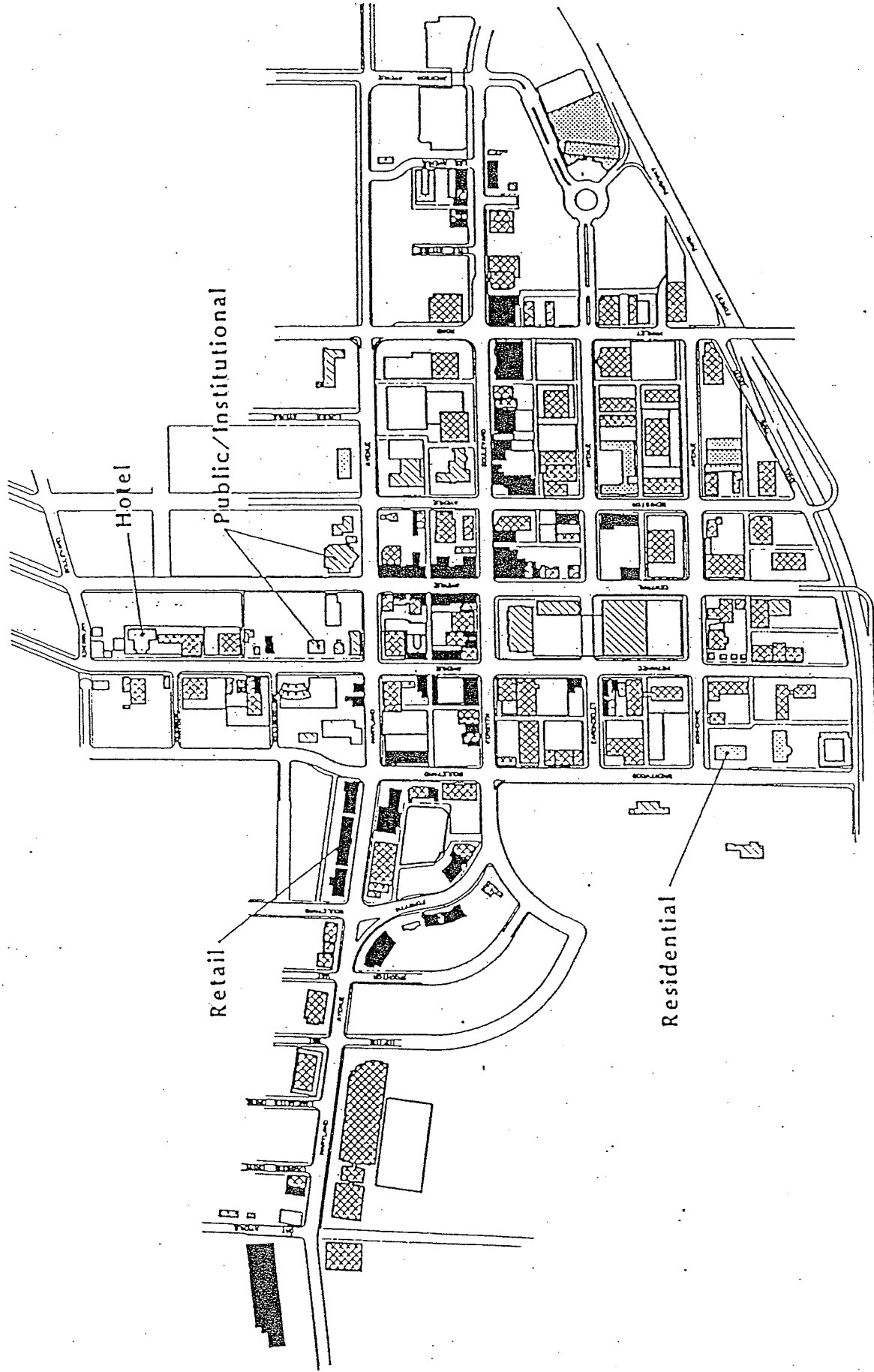
The consultant team responsible for producing the plan included LDR International, an urban design and planning firm headquartered in Columbia, Maryland; Development Strategies, real estate/community/economic development consultants in St. Louis; Mr. Jim Cloar, Executive Director of Tampa Downtown Partnership and downtown development consultant; and Mr. S. Jerome Pratter, a land use/real estate attorney and partner with Stolar Partnership located in St. Louis. Though this group of development and planning professionals actually produced the plan document, a great deal of support and input was provided by many City officials, City staff and Clayton residents and business persons who participated in the visioning-sessions, workshops, and interviews that were critical to the preparation of the Business Districts Master Plan.



Central Business District

Clayton Business District Master Plan

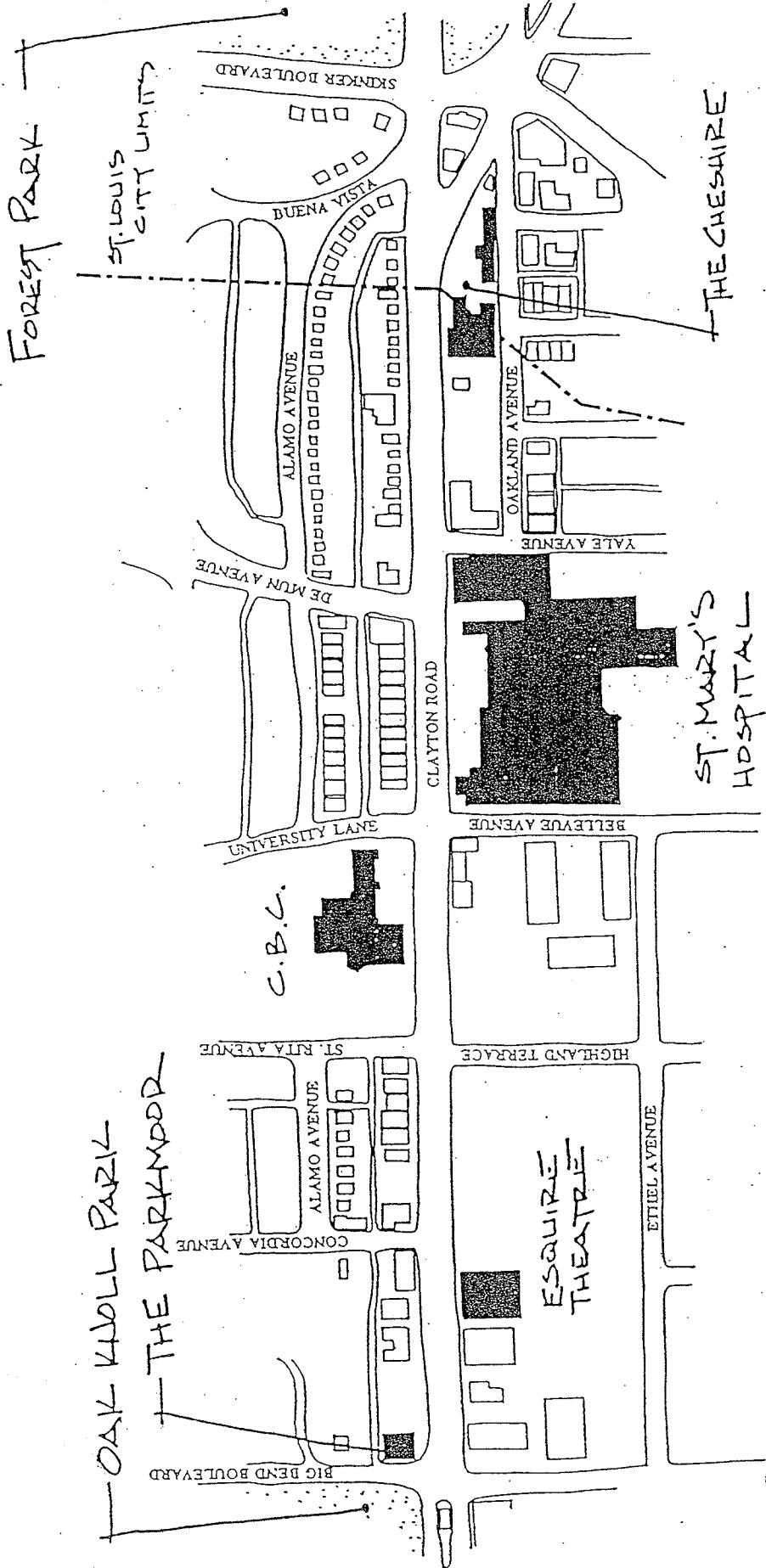
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Existing Land Use

Clayton Business District Master Plan

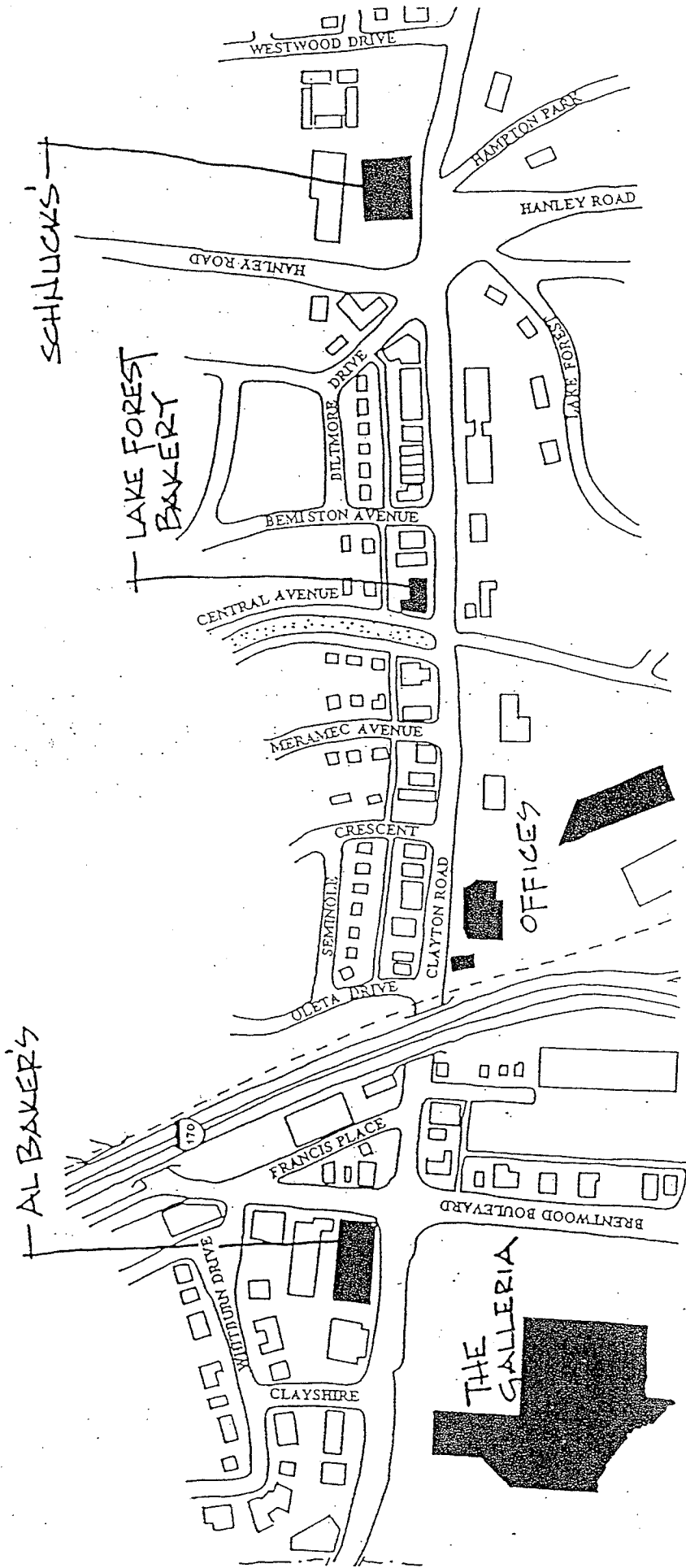
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Clayton Road Business District - East

Clayton Business District Master Plan

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Clayton Road Business District - West

Clayton Business District Master Plan

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