

AN ADVISORY SERVICES PANEL REPORT

St. Paul Gateway District San Antonio, Texas



Urban Land
Institute

St. Paul Gateway District San Antonio, Texas

A Redevelopment Plan

November 14–19, 2004
An Advisory Services Panel Report

ULI—the Urban Land Institute
1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.
Suite 500 West
Washington, D.C. 20007-5201

About ULI—the Urban Land Institute

ULI—the Urban Land Institute is a non-profit research and education organization that promotes responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment.

The Institute maintains a membership representing a broad spectrum of interests and sponsors a wide variety of educational programs and forums to encourage an open exchange of ideas and sharing of experience. ULI initiates research that anticipates emerging land use trends and issues and proposes creative solutions based on that research; provides advisory services; and publishes a wide variety of materials to disseminate information on land use and development.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 25,000 members and associates from 80 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Professionals rep-

resented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students, and librarians. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of America's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

This Advisory Services panel report is intended to further the objectives of the Institute and to make authoritative information generally available to those seeking knowledge in the field of urban land use.

Richard M. Rosan
President

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1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.
Suite 500 West
Washington, D.C. 20007-5201

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About ULI Advisory Services

The goal of ULI's Advisory Services Program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 400 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfields redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's Advisory Services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI panel teams are interdisciplinary and typically include several developers, a landscape architect, a planner, a market analyst, a finance expert, and others with the niche expertise needed to address a given project. ULI teams provide a holistic look at development problems. Each panel is chaired by a respected ULI member with previous panel experience.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives; a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 75 key community representatives; and two days of formulating recommendations. Many long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, partic-

ipants in ULI's five-day panel assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academicians, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

ULI Program Staff

Rachelle L. Levitt
Executive Vice President, Policy and Practice

Mary Beth Corrigan
Vice President, Advisory Services and Policy Programs

Nancy Zivitz Sussman
Senior Associate, Advisory Services

Nicholas Gabel
Associate, Advisory Services

Jason Bell
Panel Coordinator, Advisory Services

Yvonne Stanton
Administrative Assistant

Nancy H. Stewart
Director, Book Program

Julie D. Stern/JDS Communications
Manuscript Editor

Betsy VanBuskirk
Art Director

Martha Loomis
Desktop Publishing Specialist/Graphics

Kim Rusch
Graphics

Diann Stanley-Austin
Director, Publishing Operations

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Emil R. Moncivais, director of planning for the city of San Antonio, and Nina Nixon-Mendez, planning manager, provided useful consultation. ULI's primary planning department contacts—Christine Vina, special projects coordinator, and Andrew Holubeck, planner II—were responsible for preparing the panel application and briefing materials, organizing the study area tour, and scheduling interviews with key stakeholders. These components of the process are designed to assist the panel in addressing the issues presented by the sponsor. The panel gained significant in-

sights from the particularly thorough briefing materials and the trolley and walking tour of the East Commerce Street area and its surroundings. Special thanks go to the community stakeholders who assisted in providing information on the tour, including the Easttown at Commerce Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization representatives, William (Bill) Lewis III of the Carver Community Cultural Center, Friedrich Building developers John Miller and Eugene Simor, and Friedrich Building tenant Officesource, Ltd.

In addition, thanks go to the various city departments that provided information prior to the panel's visit and to the San Antonio Convention & Visitors Bureau and REOC Partners, Ltd., for generously providing timely information during the week. The panel also had the opportunity to interview more than 70 area stakeholders, all of whom provided useful information. These interviewees included consultants currently working on redevelopment projects in the study area, numerous public officials, local business owners, representatives of various neighborhood groups, and neighborhood residents. Their individual perspectives were crucial to the panel process. These stakeholders serve as a major asset in advancing the interests of this community.

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ULI Panel and Project Staff

Panel Chair

J. Kevin Lawler
Managing Partner
N-K Ventures LC
West Palm Beach, Florida

Panel Members

Robert H. Busler, Jr.
Principal
WDG Architecture, PLLC
Washington, D.C.

David R. DeSimone
Senior Vice President of Operations/
General Counsel
The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Lynn Everett-Lee
Land Use and Transportation Program Manager
South Florida Regional Planning Council
Hollywood, Florida

Philip S. Hart
President/CEO
Hart Realty Advisors
Los Angeles, California

W. Thomas Lavash
Senior Associate
Economics Research Associates
Washington, D.C.

David S. Plummer
President
David Plummer & Associates
Coral Gables, Florida

Harry G. Robinson III
Principal
TRG Consulting
Washington, D.C.

Mtamanika Youngblood
Chair of the Board
Historic District Development Corporation
Atlanta, Georgia

ULI Project Director

Nancy Zivitz Sussman
Senior Associate, Advisory Services

ULI On-Site Coordinators

Jason Bell
Panel Coordinator, Advisory Services

Kristen Cochran
Coordinator, Meetings and Events

Foreword: The Panel's Assignment

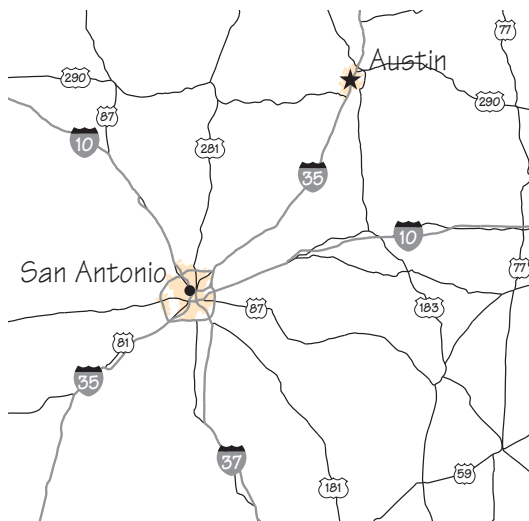
The city of San Antonio commissioned the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Advisory Services Program to organize a panel of experts to address a series of specific planning and development issues in an area on the city's eastern edge, adjacent to the downtown. During the past several decades, the city has invested considerable resources in the ongoing development of its downtown area to support and expand its strong visitor industry, which is anchored by the historic San Antonio Riverwalk. These investments include the recently completed expansion of the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, ongoing additions and improvements to HemisFair Park, prior investments in the Rivercenter Mall, and the pending development of a new convention center headquarters hotel.

The study area experienced a renaissance with the revitalization of the historic Sunset Station and St. Paul Square area structures in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In the early 1990s, the city decided to extend the geographic scope of its visitor facilities by locating the Alamodome on the eastern side of Interstate Highway 37 (IH-37). The 1993 opening of the Alamodome, then home to the National Basketball Association (NBA) San Antonio Spurs, added immediate economic stimulus to the Sunset Station/St. Paul Square area and served as an initial impetus for fledgling redevelopment in the area that is the focus of this report.

In 2003, the Spurs relocated to a new home, the SBC Center, located approximately three miles east of the Alamodome. The relocation of the Spurs precipitated a steady decline in economic activity in the Sunset Station/St. Paul Square area. At the same time, in conjunction with Bexar County and the Spurs, the city initiated a planning and development analysis of an area encompassing approximately 14 square miles on the eastern side of the downtown to set the stage for future growth and redevelopment. This effort resulted



Location map.



Regional map.

in the Arena District/Eastside Community Plan, completed in 2004.

The Study Area

The area addressed in this report encompasses 227 acres. Initially defined by the city as the East Commerce Street corridor, the study area is bounded by IH-37 at its western edge, by Montana Street

The Sunset Station depot building just off East Commerce Street is located north of the Alamodome, which can be seen in the distance.



to the south, and by Monumental Street at its eastern edge. The area's northern boundary zigs along Nolan Street, Brown Alley, Dawson Alley, and Florence Street. The study area therefore extends a considerable distance beyond the corridor.

The panel initially questioned the delineation of the study area's boundaries because of the presence of significant development patterns immediately outside and adjacent to it. However, the panel has elected to maintain the study area's existing boundaries and to address important adjacent development patterns as "edge conditions."

Early in its investigation and analysis process, the panel concluded that because of its development patterns, geographic contours, and historic significance, the study area required special attention beyond that envisioned by the city as a more detailed part of the Arena District/Eastside Community Plan. The far western section of the study area was de facto annexed into the downtown with the opening of the Alamodome; land lying between IH-37 and the Union Pacific (UP) railroad tracks presently is zoned as category "D," identical to all the properties lying immediately west of IH-37 in the traditional downtown area. ("D" zoning in the downtown provides for concentrated retail, service, office, and mixed uses in the central business district.) Additionally, land situated two blocks east of the UP tracks in the midsection of the study area

—while currently a mixture of transit surface lots and quasi-industrial buildings—also is currently zoned "D."

The remnants of a residential neighborhood that was the historic domicile and cultural center of the city's African American community lie primarily to the north of the East Commerce Street corridor. The recently renovated Carver Community Cultural Center and the newly developed, privately sponsored Carver Academy reflect the study area's strong African American heritage. At the far eastern edge of the study area are 31 historic cemeteries on 103 acres of land. Within the cemetery land, a Texas Historical Marker indicates the site of La Garita, the eastern garrison of the Alamo, also known as Powderhouse Hill. Bisecting the lower third of the study area is East Commerce Street, a main arterial leading to and from downtown San Antonio.

The panel elected to address the study area as both an important physical and developmental bridge between the city's past and its future, and as the main gateway to and from downtown and the eastern side of San Antonio. The panel believes that the study area is a unique part of the city with a special identity. It is important as more than just a starting point for the larger Arena District/Eastside Community Plan and more than just an eastern appendage to downtown San Anto-



The Alamodome, completed in 1993, was the previous home of the NBA's San Antonio Spurs and still serves as a major event venue. The area to its south offers a potential development opportunity.

nio. For the purpose of this report, therefore, the panel suggests a new name for the study area that reflects its historic and strategic significance: the St. Paul Gateway District.

Study Area Development Issues

The study area should soon begin to feel the benefits of downtown expansion spurred by the continuing growth of the overall San Antonio economy. While signs of recent private and public reinvestment clearly exist—most notably the recent construction of the Holiday Inn Express and renovation of the Best Western Sunset Suites hotels on East Commence Street, the renovation of the Carver Community Cultural Center, and the impressive campus of the Carver Academy—for the most part, the St. Paul Gateway District reflects years of disinvestment and neglect.

The panel identified the following as issues that currently inhibit redevelopment of the study area:

- Dominating north/south transportation barriers, including IH-37 and the UP railroad tracks;
- Hostile physical conditions, including limited roadway connections to the downtown, extensive physical deterioration of existing structures, abandoned or shuttered buildings, and vacant property;

- A deteriorated housing stock;
- Inconsistent development patterns and incompatible land uses;
- A low level of city services;
- A transitioning and transient population; and
- A diminished cultural memory.

The panel addressed these development challenges in an overall framework of findings and recommendations.

The Panel's Framework

City staff posed some 30 questions for the panel to address within a functional framework consisting of four categories: market potential, planning and urban design, development strategies, and implementation. The panel has maintained these functional categories in the organization of this report, which addresses the questions posed by the sponsor. After considerable deliberation, however, the panel elected to organize its substantive responses to the city's questions in terms of four "framing statements." The panel views these framing statements as most indicative of the short-, intermediate-, and long-term policies needed to guide and support reinvestment in and revitalization of the St. Paul Gateway District.

The four framing statements advanced and incorporated throughout each section of the report are as follows:

- Reconnecting with the city;
- Humanizing the corridor;
- Investing in the district; and
- Establishing a new focus and a new identity.

These four framing statements convey the essential elements of a successful program for the revitalization of the St. Paul Gateway District. For the most part, the panel's findings and recommenda-

tions are directed to the near and intermediate term. Although the panel strongly believes that a number of long-term planning and development issues need to be addressed, all of these issues involve a long-term plan for the entire area east of the downtown, a geographic area much larger in scope than the St. Paul Gateway District. In framing its findings and recommendations in this report, the panel has been attentive to how, over time, its more immediate recommendations will fit into and support a long-range plan for the entire eastern edge of downtown San Antonio.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The panel is keenly cognizant that the city of San Antonio has multiple development and investment activities underway in response to an expanding and ever transforming metropolitan economy. The panel is equally aware that the city has ever escalating demands on its finite resources. The panel also acknowledges that term limits on elected leaders result in regular shifts or redirection of resources in the city's public policy emphasis.

In considering various approaches associated with development strategies and a workable implementation plan, the panel consciously rerouted its recommendations away from traditional redevelopment models. While this report clearly contains elements of classic redevelopment approaches, the panel has recommended a series of different approaches for the St. Paul Gateway District, which it believes, over time, likely will give rise to a lower level of direct, long-term public investment by the city and provide a platform for ongoing private redevelopment and revitalization. The panel's primary recommendations are summarized below.

Market Potential

The visitor industry and associated hotel development, together with new residential development, offer the primary source of development demand opportunity. However, capturing market demand in this area is not automatic or assured, given a changing competitive position. To realize the area's market potential, the city will need to take a number of directed and dedicated actions. Public support for the proposed convention center hotel, to be located immediately north of the Alamodome, and the first-phase, mixed-use development of the Friedrich Building are immediate opportunities that will establish a market presence and momentum in the study area. The success of these two projects could set the stage for additional development opportunities.

Planning and Urban Design

The appropriate and enduring guidelines for the study area's planning and urban design are contained within the four framing statements. Each of these statements sets forth a proscriptive set of policies and actions to guide and enhance the character of further development in the area. Embedded within these framing principles is the need for an early and complete rezoning of the study area in a manner consistent with its important position in the overall buildout and revitalization of the city's eastern edge. This includes the introduction of two types of new mixed-use incentive zoning categories that can serve as a model for other parts of the city. Similarly, the drafting and adoption of strong design guidelines will raise the overall quality of newly built or renovated development to reinforce selected public investment. In the longer term, there is a clear need for a plan that will address the entire eastern edge of the downtown.

Development Strategies

It is unrealistic to expect that any meaningful redirection of areawide revitalization will occur without the hands-on support of the city at the outset. Accordingly, initial development strategies will be dependent on the city's leadership. These strategies should include a complete rezoning of the study area; stepped up code enforcement and neighborhood security, plus targeted investment in new infrastructure; and collateral public support of the two pending development proposals, the new hotel immediately north of the Alamodome and the first phase of the Friedrich Building. The city's investments can be leveraged through ongoing private investment, particularly if coupled with a new mixed-use zoning incentive program. The panel strongly urges the city to abandon the current tax increment financing (TIF) district covering the study area or, at a minimum,

remove the study area from this and any future TIF district.

Implementation

The panel recommends a new organizational structure to implement the development program and strategies for the study area. Specifically, the panel recommends a community action committee (CAC) authorized by an ordinance of the city council and reporting directly to the council. The CAC would be composed of representatives from existing neighborhood-based organizations. It would act as the champion for guiding the initial stage—the first five years—of the effort, creating the business plan for reinvestment, bridging the ongoing and future plans of the study area’s nonprofit

stakeholders, and providing leadership on the deployment and application of specific implementation tools recommended by the panel.

The balance of this report presents the panel’s complete findings and recommendations. The panel strongly believes that the St. Paul Gateway District deserves special attention by the city and that it can serve as the pacesetter for other redevelopment efforts that the city may wish to pursue in the future. The panel emphasizes the need for heightened attention to this area as a significant part of the city’s public investment program that includes the downtown and the Arena District/Eastside community.

Market Potential

This section examines potential market supports for a range of land uses as a means of identifying realizable revitalization strategies for the St. Paul Gateway District. In order to accurately measure the depth of these opportunities—as well as identify appropriate development and implementation strategies—the panel frames the market potential analysis by addressing the city’s main concerns.

The market analysis is designed to evaluate market forces affecting the competitive position of the St. Paul Gateway District and to determine how these advantages and disadvantages may drive revitalization strategies. In addition, the market analysis tests the economic potential of and market support for the uses identified to provide a “road map” that will help guide future investment and redevelopment efforts in the district by both the public and private sectors. It also identifies the depth of market support for specific near-term opportunities that will build momentum for subsequent revitalization efforts.

As the basis for its analysis and recommendations, the panel profiled demographic and economic characteristics to identify fundamental drivers of demand for various land uses. The panel examined regional demographic and economic trends in San Antonio, focusing on the greater downtown area and the Eastside, and reviewed growth trends and forecasts for specific factors such as population, number of households, age composition, employment, household incomes, consumer spending patterns for a range of retail categories, visitor/tourism trends and spending patterns, and other appropriate economic indices.

The second element of the market analysis examined real estate market conditions for a range of uses, focusing on downtown San Antonio because of its critical role as an existing—or potential—economic engine for adjacent and nearby neighborhoods. This included supply-side characteris-

tics such as commercial office and retail inventory, net absorption/leasing activity, rental rates, and other characteristics that illustrate the overall health of the downtown office and retail markets. To evaluate lodging uses, the panel examined trends in annual occupancy, room rates, and changes in the city’s convention and visitor markets. For residential uses, it reviewed available information on existing and proposed downtown housing projects, building permit trends, and other market characteristics such as for-sale pricing and rental rates, occupancy patterns, and the like.

The Drivers of Demand: Demographic Characteristics

As a whole, the San Antonio metropolitan area has experienced strong growth in population, households, and employment since 1990. The region’s economy is diverse; key sectors include biomedical/health care, information technology and security, hospitality, and the military, which ensures a cushion during periodic dips in the national and regional economies. Notable demographic characteristics are highlighted below.

The San Antonio metropolitan statistical area (MSA) is comprised of eight counties: Bexar, Comal, Guadalupe, Wilson, Atascosa, Medina, Bandera, and Kendall. Bexar County is the region’s largest, comprising roughly 81 percent of the metropolitan area’s 2003 population of 1,813,445. The county’s population has increased by more than 286,000 residents since 1990. In July 2003, based on census estimates, the city of San Antonio, with 1,471,644 residents, surpassed the city of Dallas in total population.

Conversely, the study area has lost population since 1990. According to information provided by the city, the population residing within a one-mile radius of Sunset Station declined by more than 2,200 persons between 1990 and 2000—a drop of

13 percent—to roughly 15,200 residents. Population declined in all age groups except those from 45 to 64 years old. Thus, the study area constitutes only 1 percent of the county's total population. This is known as its competitive share. Notably, this loss translated into a decrease of more than 500 households, mainly from renter-occupied units.

Retail potential typically is measured by changes in household incomes and consumer spending patterns. Household incomes in the study area exhibited compound annual (that is, real) growth during the 1990s, increasing about 7 percent, to \$21,740. By comparison, while the median household income across the city was \$36,200, significantly higher than in the Eastside, the rate of real growth there, 4 percent per year, was lower.

Another critical barometer of demand for real estate—particularly workforce-related uses such as office, flex-tech, retail, and the like—is measured by growth in employment. The region's largest employers include the military (Fort Sam Houston, Lackland Air Force Base), insurance (USAA), telecommunications (SBC Communications), health care (Methodist Healthcare, Baptist Health System), and the government.

San Antonio added more than 111,000 new jobs between 1995 and 2004. Illustrative of the region's diversified economy, job growth occurred in every sector except manufacturing. This includes information and telecommunications, with 7,000 new jobs, finance/insurance/real estate (15,000), professional/business services (24,000), and leisure/hospitality (15,000).

The panel notes that biomedical technology accounts for a sizable portion of the metropolitan area's economy. The majority of economic generators in this sector—such as hospitals—are located on the northwest side of the city as well as at Fort Sam Houston. Several medical professionals serving nearby households represent the medical sector in the study area. In addition, a large dialysis clinic in the study area serves clients from beyond the immediate neighborhood.

Woods & Poole, Inc., a national demographic forecasting service, has prepared employment forecasts for Bexar County that suggest continued

strong employment growth over the next ten years. Applying the Woods & Poole growth rates, by sector, to the 2004 base year employment statistics published by the Texas Workforce Commission suggests that an additional 136,000 new jobs could be created in San Antonio between 2005 and 2015. The strongest sectors are expected to be finance/insurance/real estate and services. This growth is expected to translate into significant demand for commercial real estate. The challenge, of course, is to identify a realistic capture rate of this potential new growth for the St. Paul Gateway District.

Household consumer spending patterns are another indicator of a community's overall economic health. In Bexar County, the average household spends approximately 39 percent of its annual median income, or \$16,700 per year, across a range of retail categories, including groceries, clothing, furniture, restaurants, and general merchandise. This is significantly below the national average of \$24,200 per household.

Retail spending patterns of Eastside area households were not available for this report. If one assumes that the proportion of spending, as a percentage of household income, is similar to that of Bexar County as a whole, however, this suggests that households on the Eastside spend approximately \$8,500 per year on goods and services. Increasingly, many national retailers are responding to this untapped buying power by locating stores in inner-city areas, such as the Walgreens pharmacy on the Eastside.

One of the largest segments of the region's economy is the hospitality industry. According to a study prepared for the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, the economic impact of hospitality on San Antonio's economy was nearly \$7.2 billion in 2002. The industry reportedly contributes nearly \$100 million in taxes and fees to the city—roughly 16 percent of its annual revenue—and employs more than 86,000 people.

Hospitality-related employment has grown by more than 30 percent since 1992. Moreover, the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce estimates that the city hosts 20 million visitors every year. This includes about 15.6 million leisure trav-

elers as well as 4.3 million business visitors who travel to San Antonio for conventions and other purposes.

Real Estate: The Other Side of the Market Equation

The panel examined market conditions across a range of uses, including commercial office and retail, hotel/lodging, housing, and flex/industrial, in order to understand regional influences on the St. Paul Gateway District, test market potentials, and identify positioning strategies for revitalization. These findings are highlighted below.

Office

The San Antonio office market is comprised of roughly 22.7 million square feet of multitenant space spread across the metropolitan area. Since 2000, the total inventory has expanded by more than 1 million square feet. Notably, the amount of vacant office space across the metropolitan area also has jumped, from 2.6 million square feet in 2000 (12 percent vacancy) to almost 4.3 million square feet today, reflecting a current office vacancy rate of 19 percent.

Weakened market conditions also are apparent in flat rents and negative absorption. Despite net gains in the area's labor market, much of this job growth has not translated into demand for net new office space. For example, despite positive absorption (that is, net leasing) in 2000 and again in 2004, average annual absorption across the region remained flat between 2000 and 2004 because of *negative* absorption in the intervening years. Moreover, rental rates have remained flat across all classes of office buildings, staying around \$17 to \$18 per square foot during this period.

Office market conditions are equally flat in the central business district (CBD). Today, the CBD contains about 5.1 million square feet of multi-tenant space, excluding headquarters properties for SBC Communications and USAA. Inventory has remained static since 2000. Notably, the amount of vacant space has increased, in part because of the migration of office tenants to outlying suburban submarkets. In fact, the amount of vacant office space in downtown San Antonio climbed from 680,000 square feet in 2000 to almost 1.2 million

square feet in 2004. Vacancy rates range from 17 percent in the premier, Class A stock to more than 40 percent in the CBD's Class C inventory.

Similar to citywide trends, downtown office rental rates have remained flat since 2000, in the range of \$17 to \$18 per square foot on a full-service basis. Weakened market conditions in the CBD also are evident in absorption trends. Since 2000, the CBD has experienced negative absorption averaging more than 100,000 square feet per year.

The panel notes the apparent disconnect between these negative market characteristics in San Antonio's office market and job growth figures over the past five years, as overall job growth between 1995 and 2004—111,000 net new jobs—should have resulted in significant demand for office space. This suggests that employment growth was accommodated within existing leased premises, was concentrated in owner-occupied properties that typically are not tracked in office market surveys, and/or largely generated overall net positive absorption between 1995 and 2000.

Hotel/Lodging

The downtown lodging market benefits substantially from one of San Antonio's core industries, the hospitality industry. As noted above, the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce estimates that the city hosts 20 million visitors every year, including about 15.6 million leisure travelers as well as 4.3 million business visitors, generating \$7.2 billion in economic impact.

The region's hospitality industry generates significant demand for hotel properties. Downtown San Antonio contains more than 10,700 rooms in 63 properties, accounting for fully one-third of the region's 32,000 rooms. According to Smith Travel Research, which tracks hotel markets nationwide, the current annual downtown hotel occupancy rate is 70.2 percent, a slight decline from the 2003 level of 71.1 percent. Occupancy levels in the downtown hotel inventory have varied between 66 and 74 percent since 1994. As a rule, the capital markets would look favorably upon these rates, as financial feasibility measures for new hotel development typically require minimum annual occupancies of 70 percent.

While occupancies have fluctuated, room supply has increased, from 7,300 rooms in the downtown marketplace in 1994 to more than 10,700 today—a 46 percent jump—with the addition of more than 3,000 new rooms to the downtown lodging inventory over this period. Average daily rates increased from \$97 in 1994 to roughly \$112 per room per night in 2004. Revenue per available room has remained flat, around \$71 per room per night between 1994 and 2004.

Supporting and Destination Retail

Retail and entertainment uses require a concentration of disposable income— from nearby residents, employees, and/or visitors—strong visibility and extensive frontage, adequate parking, and a clear competitive role and market identity. Moreover, supporting tenants often require an anchor tenant to generate traffic. The panel examined— on a preliminary basis—market characteristics in the downtown retail market.

As of 2004, the CBD retail market comprises 1.3 million square feet of gross leasable area. This accounts for less than 4 percent of the region's total retail inventory of 34.1 million square feet. Reflecting significant population growth and the sizable disposable income of households residing in the north and west flanks of San Antonio, the vast majority of the region's retail inventory (29.6 million square feet) is located in those areas. By comparison, the 1.3 million square feet comprising the downtown retail market is located principally in the Rivercenter Mall, a 1.2 million-square-foot super regional, enclosed mall that was financed, in part, with federal urban development action grants and anchors one end of the San Antonio Riverwalk.

Retail occupancies in downtown San Antonio are reportedly quite strong, with current vacancies of only 3.6 percent (38,610 square feet), according to REOC Partners, Ltd. This reflects strong consumer spending patterns from visitors and, to a lesser extent, downtown employees. According to REOC Partners, retail rents in downtown San Antonio average \$21.69 per square feet.

Miscellaneous retail stores augment the Rivercenter Mall, as do a significant number of restaurants located along the Riverwalk. According to

area retail brokers, however, these facilities, in aggregate, do not account for a significant impact on the competitive market for retail space in the CBD.

Downtown office workers and the emerging resident market also generate demand for some supporting convenience and service retail space throughout the CBD. These facilities, generally known as neighborhood retail centers, are located along the Houston Street corridor and elsewhere. Market conditions among the close-in neighborhood centers are effectively weak, however, with vacancy rates around 22 percent, or 44,150 square feet of vacant space in an inventory of 199,500 square feet.

Market-Rate Housing

Increasing the supply of market-rate rental and for-sale housing in both the core of downtown San Antonio and in adjacent neighborhoods is of paramount importance. Without equivocation, the panel strongly urges the city to focus on achieving this goal. To this end, the panel examined available market information on the emerging downtown housing stock. According to the Downtown Alliance, the downtown currently contains 950 market-rate rental units. Roughly 775 units have been created over the past ten years, equating to average annual deliveries of only 78 rental units per year. On the positive side, the housing market appears to be gaining momentum, with 450 units currently under construction. In addition, another 600 market-rate rental units have been proposed in various downtown locations.

For-sale product, not surprisingly, is limited, as developers in “untested” housing markets typically introduce rental products first. According to the Downtown Alliance, the downtown contains only 82 condominium units in scattered locations. The panel notes that information on sales price points is incomplete, but the estimated average price of a sample of 31 units is around \$165 per square foot. Notably, the for-sale market appears to be gaining momentum. The Downtown Alliance reports that 104 for-sale units currently are under construction, with sales prices averaging \$175 per square foot. One property, containing 45 units with a riverfront location, is projecting considerably higher sales levels, ranging from \$225 to \$300

per square foot. A critical mass of downtown and near-downtown housing will be necessary to enhance the marketability of the CBD, attract new employers and employees, and elevate the overall quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods such as the St. Paul Gateway District.

Capturing a Competitive Share of the Market

San Antonio is blessed with many attractive submarkets that compete to capture both existing and emerging markets. For the St. Paul Gateway District, the biggest challenge to strengthening its competitive market position is overcoming pervasive unfavorable stereotypes and perceptions about the area. The panel believes that a more positive image can be created, based on the district's rich history and identity. It also will be important to build on several existing anchors.

Existing Commercial Assets and Connections with the CBD

The following uses draw patrons and reinforce economic connections between the St. Paul Gateway District and the CBD, notwithstanding the barrier of IH-37. These uses, particularly arts and entertainment, will play a critical role in helping to dispel the perception that the Eastside is an unattractive, dangerous place to visit.

Restaurants and Entertainment. Sunset Station contains two popular restaurants—Aldaco's, offering authentic Mexican cuisine, and Ruth's Chris Steak House, a white tablecloth steakhouse—that serve the convention and visitor markets. Both restaurants advertise aggressively, maintain close contact with hotel concierges and convention planners, and provide free shuttle service for visitors. In addition, Sunset Station management has expanded its entertainment venues to attract local residents with popular rock and roll and blues concerts. Further north, the Spaghetti Warehouse is another popular restaurant.

Lodging and Convention-Related Visitor Services. The Eastside has benefited from recent private investment in two hotel properties on East Commerce Street. The Best Western Sunset Suites and the Holiday Inn Express are capturing some of the demand for downtown hotel rooms gener-



ated by San Antonio's visitor industry. Other Eastside-based firms, including a major caterer and a tour company, provide additional services for conventioners and visitors.

Health and Human Services. Several Eastside health-related facilities draw patients and visitors from across the city. These include a dialysis treatment center on East Commerce Street and the Salvation Army facility north of St. Paul Square. Several public agencies also provide health and human services and other community-based support.

Humanizing the St. Paul Gateway District

If the St. Paul Gateway District is to capture a strong share of emerging market and real estate opportunities, it must support and sustain certain existing community assets. These assets are the neighborhood's jewels; they give the area its special character and identity. Such distinctive elements give the district a unique competitive advantage while also humanizing the environment and enhancing overall perceptions of the district. These assets are crucial to sustaining and improving the quality of life in both the St. Paul Gateway District and San Antonio as a whole.

The Carver Community Cultural Center

The Carver Community Cultural Center, which should not be confused with the Carver Academy,

Aldaco's at Sunset Station, a lively Mexican restaurant with stage space for performances, is popular with tourists and residents.



Above: The Carver Community Cultural Center provides a performing arts venue for all residents of San Antonio. Right: The Carver Academy, founded by David Robinson, provides private educational opportunities for low- and moderate-income children.



is first and foremost amongst these assets. During its long history in the neighborhood, the cultural center has hosted most of the giants of American jazz and popular music, including Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington. While the center has had its ups and downs over the decades, it is obvious that the San Antonio community—both public and private—still honors this facility, as evidenced by recent capital support for numerous performances and other programs at both the academy and the cultural center.

Today, the Carver Community Cultural Center offers world-class dance and musical performances. The physical plant has been renovated to provide inspiring performance space, and the administrative staff is highly professional. Community groups are able to provide a variety of programs by renting space at very low rents. The Carver De-

velopment Board—the institution’s private funding arm—has stepped up, along with a solid list of corporate and foundation sponsors, to match government financial backing with sizable private investment, guaranteeing the necessary ongoing support.

Private and public financial support for the Carver Community Cultural Center must be sustained in order to maintain the physical plant and expand its programs. The center has succeeded in its mission to provide a venue to showcase the arts and help educate children in the community, thus serving the entire community as well as attracting visitors from far beyond the immediate neighborhood. Ticket revenues and third-party rentals will never be able to cover the center’s total operating costs unless ticket prices and rents are raised to levels that would preclude the facility’s use by the community at large. Thus, continued private donations and public support must continue.

As aptly noted in the recent *Office of Cultural Affairs Biannual Report for the City of San Antonio*, “as human beings, it is our nature to want a record of our personal experiences in life, a snapshot of time to remember and reflect. Throughout history, cultural arts have captured these memories . . . to provide a scrapbook for us to enjoy today and a historical legacy from which future generations can learn. Through the arts, generations connect, neighbors communicate, and the world celebrates both our commonality and our uniqueness.” This eloquently describes why it is vital to maintain the Carver Community Cultural Center, not only for San Antonio’s African American community but also for all residents of San Antonio.

The Carver Academy

Located adjacent to the Carver Community Cultural Center, the Carver Academy is another community gem. Its attractive physical plant is a tangible financial and positive visual investment. It also is a symbol of hope and resiliency for the neighborhood. St. Paul Gateway District stakeholders must explore ways to collaborate with the academy and move forward together to provide continuing benefits to the community as a whole. It also is important to avoid confusion between the Carver Academy and the Carver Community

Cultural Center. The public must be better educated about the institutions' separate nature and missions, so that adequate funding and support can be sustained for both organizations.

Faith-Based Organizations

Active faith-based organizations provide another valuable competitive advantage and asset for the St. Paul Gateway District. The panel's limited time did not allow it to interview all of the active groups, but one in particular illustrates the strength of these organizations. The 138-year-old St. Paul Methodist Church and the affiliated but nondenominational, nonprofit St. Paul Area Development Corporation have a fruitful relationship with the Alamo Community College District to identify and recruit promising students from the community.

Other Organizations

Other organizations also are focusing on improving the lives of community residents. The St. Paul Area Development Corporation is rehabilitating a building near the Carver Community Cultural Center and plans to create an after-school program involving other community groups and the San Antonio Renaissance Theater to promote communication skills for children. Additional St. Paul Area Development Corporation plans include building a 40-unit independent living facility that will allow aging residents to remain in the neighborhood.

Nearby Community Assets

Beyond the immediate study area, other important community assets such as the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association, and St. Philips College also should be engaged, nurtured, and supported to ensure the revitalization and success of the St. Paul Gateway District. Each of these institutions contributes to the identity and rich heritage of the neighborhood in its own way, and each has current initiatives related to housing, education, and community development that are worthy of sustained support as important contributors to stabilizing and revitalizing the area.

Cultural Tourism

The panel also recommends that cultural tourism be promoted, safeguarded, and expanded to in-



Houses in the Dignowity Hill Historic District are typical of the area's grander historic homes.

crease the area's vitality and enhance its appeal as a destination. Increased marketing efforts will ensure that San Antonio residents understand the cultural assets located in the St. Paul Gateway District. Expanded programs and additional development will further heighten the district's overall visibility and help to dispel negative images and misperceptions.

Defining Market Potential

The panel's preliminary analysis of market conditions and characteristics suggests strengths in some product sectors and weakened market conditions in others. Short- and long-term growth in population, households, and employment—the drivers of demand—can be expected to strengthen weakened sectors and generate incremental additional demand for others, such as housing. This



Some renovation—much of it related to transit service—has occurred in the Ellis Alley area.

analysis also indicates the critical importance of strengthening the downtown core, across all property types, to enhance revitalization opportunities in the St. Paul Gateway District.

Market-Rate Housing

The Ellis Alley “Park ‘N Ride” lots to the north of St. Paul Square offer strong redevelopment potential. The panel recommends that these parcels be redeveloped with market-rate, high-density housing that takes advantage of the lots’ superb views and immediate access to downtown. The panel notes that such development is likely to require public participation in the form of infrastructure support, site preparation, and/or amenities that will enhance the overall marketability for private sector investment.

Equally important, the historic Friedrich Building complex could anchor the eastern end of redevelopment on the East Commerce Street corridor. Because of its proximity to the Carver Community Cultural Center and the Carver Academy, its redevelopment could create a hub of activity and development. The Friedrich Building’s lower floors could provide office space oriented to professional services, while upper levels could be converted into attractive, loft-style residences. These units could be targeted to San Antonio residents seeking a more urban working and living environment, thus providing an attractive alternative to suburban housing.

The panel’s analysis suggests near-term potential for up to 500 market-rate housing units in the St.

Paul Gateway District, assuming several conditions are met. These include a focused city economic development strategy that increases downtown employment and housing, as well as public investment in infrastructure and amenities in selected locations or projects that enhance the overall feasibility of residential development.

Affordable Housing

The panel did not estimate demand potential for additional affordable housing units in the St. Paul Gateway District. The panel’s interviews, however, made it apparent that many residents favor additional mixed-income housing as long as it is high quality. Mixed-priced housing would allow elderly and workforce residents with fixed or moderate household incomes to remain in the area, thus helping to stabilize the neighborhood. The district is well located to provide workforce housing, particularly for those employed in the downtown.

Office/Flex Space

Current market conditions indicate that the downtown office market would benefit substantially from a proactive economic development strategy that includes business retention and recruitment efforts to reduce the amount of vacant office space and enhance market opportunities for downtown service-related retail. The panel understands that projects are in the works that may convert several Class B and C office buildings to residential uses. This is a very positive step toward reducing overall office vacancies and strengthening the downtown’s competitive position in the region.

The panel notes that the demand potential for new office development in the downtown will largely be determined by the success of these efforts. In the St. Paul Gateway District, opportunities for office space will require carefully crafted niche marketing. This includes marketing such space at *lower* rents than those in the downtown core. In addition, demand for office space likely will be generated by new housing development, which could be expected to support professional office space for doctors, dentists, accounting and design professionals, business services, and the like. There is no doubt that San Antonio has a small but demonstrable market of design and other professionals desiring funky/innovative professional office space



The potential for infill housing development along Hays Street should be explored.

that could be accommodated through the adaptive use of structures such as the Friedrich Building and the Merchant's Ice Building.

Other potential uses for office/flex space in the St. Paul Gateway District include allied uses that support core downtown activity generators such as the visitor/tourist market. This includes flex space that encompasses a range of products and tenants, from semi-industrial uses such as warehousing and distribution, catering services, document storage, and exhibitor services for convention events. The Merchant's Ice Building, for example, could provide excellent flex/office/warehouse space to accommodate and consolidate these uses. Flex space in warehouse buildings also could be suitable for the expansion of San Antonio's emerging bioscience industries.

The panel notes that employment growth forecast for the next ten years could be expected to generate demand for additional office space. The key challenge will be to enhance the overall marketability of downtown San Antonio to ensure that it benefits from future demand that translates into new office development. A strategy focused on niche opportunities in the St. Paul Gateway District

—for example, price-sensitive design and professional services firms—suggests demand on the order of 100,000 to 130,000 square feet of professional office space over the next ten years.

Hotels/Lodging

The analysis of market conditions in the area's hotel/lodging market suggests that this is a bright spot. The region's hospitality industry is a significant economic driver, not only for the downtown but for the entire region as well. While the panel was not able to examine historic changes in the visitor market, such as the growth of leisure visitors, convention delegates, and so forth, the significant increase in the CBD hotel inventory suggests that San Antonio's visitor/convention markets are a logical fuel for hotel room expansion.

To some extent, the St. Paul Gateway District has begun to benefit from the overall health of the downtown lodging/visitor market with the construction of the Best Western Sunset Suites and the Holiday Inn Express. This investment by operators with national franchises sends a strong signal about the overall viability of hotel development in the district. Near-term opportunities for additional hotel/lodging uses in the study area will

Summary of Market Potential

Use	Square Footage ¹	Total Square Footage ¹
Commercial		556,000
Professional office	130,000	
Flex-Industrial	313,000	
Hotel/Lodging ²	113,000	
Retail		50,000
General Retail	25,500	
Food/Beverage	16,300	
Leisure/Entertainment	8,200	
Housing ³		600,000
Total Program		1,206,000

¹ Figures are rounded.

² 188 rooms at 600 square feet per room.

³ 500 housing units at 1,200 square feet per unit.

be determined largely by additional expansion of the downtown hospitality market. Preliminary analysis has identified near-term potential for an additional 150 to 200 rooms, presuming continued growth in the downtown hospitality sector. An extended-stay property oriented to visiting military personnel, convention delegates, and transferees to San Antonio—as well as the region’s tourists—appears to be an appropriate product for this area.

Supporting and Destination Retail

Retail opportunities in the St. Paul Gateway District—particularly for convenience and service/supporting retail—will be driven largely by growth

in households. Moreover, niche or specialty retailers increasingly are recognizing the consumer spending potential of inner-city areas. Market support for destination retail such as restaurants in the district will require more visitors coming to the district from downtown. Significant attention to physical issues such as linkages, streetscape improvements, visibility, and frontage will help attract new visitors.

Locating new retail uses therefore will require careful consideration. Although the historic buildings in St. Paul Square are a logical location for retail development, previous attempts have been unsuccessful. Mitigating or eliminating the physical and psychological barrier created by IH-37 is critical to enhancing overall retail opportunities. As public improvements and private investment along East Commerce Street are completed, opportunities for neighborhood-serving retail, such as a dry cleaner or bank, as well as other supporting and convenience businesses serving the needs of existing and new residents, will be strengthened. The panel has identified roughly 25,000 to 50,000 square feet of retail market potential in the study area and the nearby Eastside over the next ten years. As illustrated in the adjacent figure, the panel’s initial market analysis suggests that the market will support all of the uses described above.

Urban Design and Planning

San Antonio's close-in, east downtown area has a history as a working class, educated, vibrant neighborhood with high-quality housing and community-centered businesses, schools, churches, and cultural facilities. Any new plan for the area should incorporate this history into a defined identity for the community, which should permeate all visual cues throughout the neighborhood. Doing so also will help improve misconceptions regarding the neighborhood.

As it began its study of the St. Paul Gateway District, the panel reviewed the available San Antonio planning studies relevant to its responsibilities. It then established a set of four framing statements that reflects the primary strategies necessary to integrate all future redevelopment actions. The panel went on to develop a series of principles that it believes are essential to implementing these strategies. The framing statements are as follows:

- Reconnecting with the city;
- Humanizing the corridor;
- Investing in the district; and
- Establishing a new focus and a new identity.

These framing statements express the qualities and actions required to create a sense of place. "Place" refers to more than just location. It is characterized by social and cultural memory; it connotes responsiveness to human needs and scale and presents a distinct image. This new special place must be actively nourished over time. It is the quality of place that gives a community its character and personality—indeed, its identity—the qualities by which it is known and which residents associate with it.

Historical continuity is an important element in creating a sense of place. Great places have transparent layers of history. History is encoded in per-

sonal memories, the housing stock, community institutions, and archaeological remnants. It is further defined by street patterns, which in turn define building relationships and linkages. History gives a place texture and meaning, and thus must be preserved as a value-added commodity.

The four framing statements establish the direction for the panel's plan for the St. Paul Gateway District. These statements are intended to be timeless and expandable, rather than contemporary and static. For each statement, the panel provides introductory principles and proposes policies and actions. The panel expects that additional principles will be developed to support the process as it matures and expands. The urban design and development plan that follows the framing statements reflects these statements and expresses how the panel believes the district should be organized and developed.

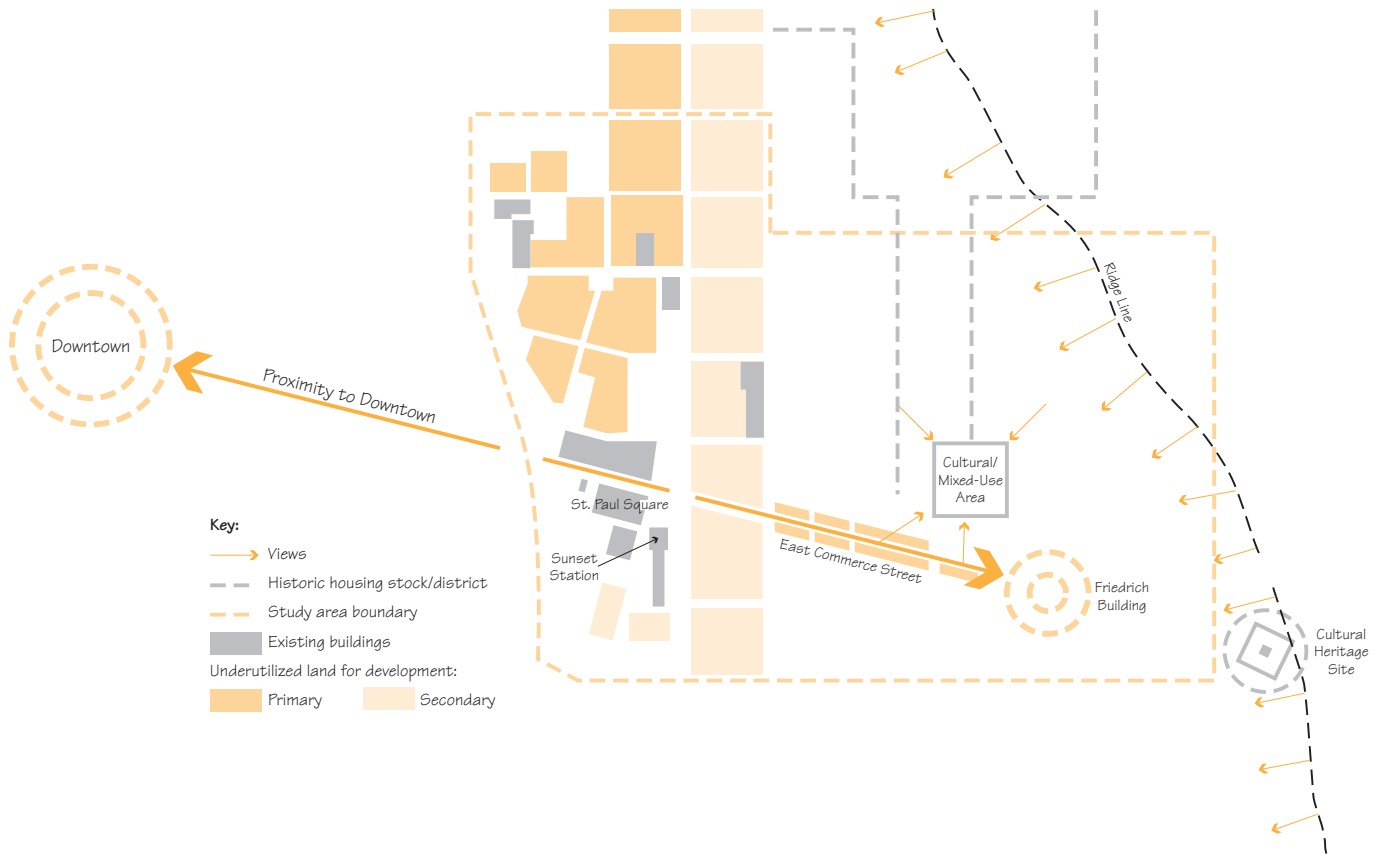
Context Analysis

The panel's process of determining an approach to the St. Paul Gateway District's urban design and planning issues is based on an understanding of the district's challenges and assets, which grew out of an on-site survey and the panel's interviews. Based on these understandings, the panel sees the area's dominant assets and challenges as follows.

Assets

The district contains a wide range of existing assets, including the following.

The Carver Community Cultural Center and the Carver Academy. As discussed in the preceding section, these facilities are symbolically and operationally important. Woven into the residential fabric of the community, they provide the area with a strong cultural identity. These institutions are a positive physical node. The work and philanthropy of David Robinson in developing the academy is a



Assets and opportunities.

significant element in the high visibility and value of this school.

Historic Housing Stock. The district’s historic housing stock is a link to the past and provides texture in the residential neighborhoods. Although some have been better maintained than others, these dwellings attract people to the area and could become the backbone of a restoration movement.

Proximity to Downtown. This proximity is one of the area’s most valuable assets. The district is essentially an extension of the downtown that is visually separated from the core of the city by IH-37.

St. Paul Square. This development is an early anchor in the area and is historically referential. It sets a design standard for subsequent development.

Sunset Station. The restoration of this historic property completes the western edge of the corridor and serves as an anchor, in partnership with St. Paul Square.

Vacant and Underutilized Land. Abundant, reasonably priced vacant and underutilized land is a resource that will make it easier to undertake infill development and assemble parcels for redevelopment.

Views. The high ground along the eastern edge of the study area provides relatively uninterrupted views of the downtown skyline.

The Hays Street Bridge. This magnificent historic artifact could, when restored, become a work of public art.

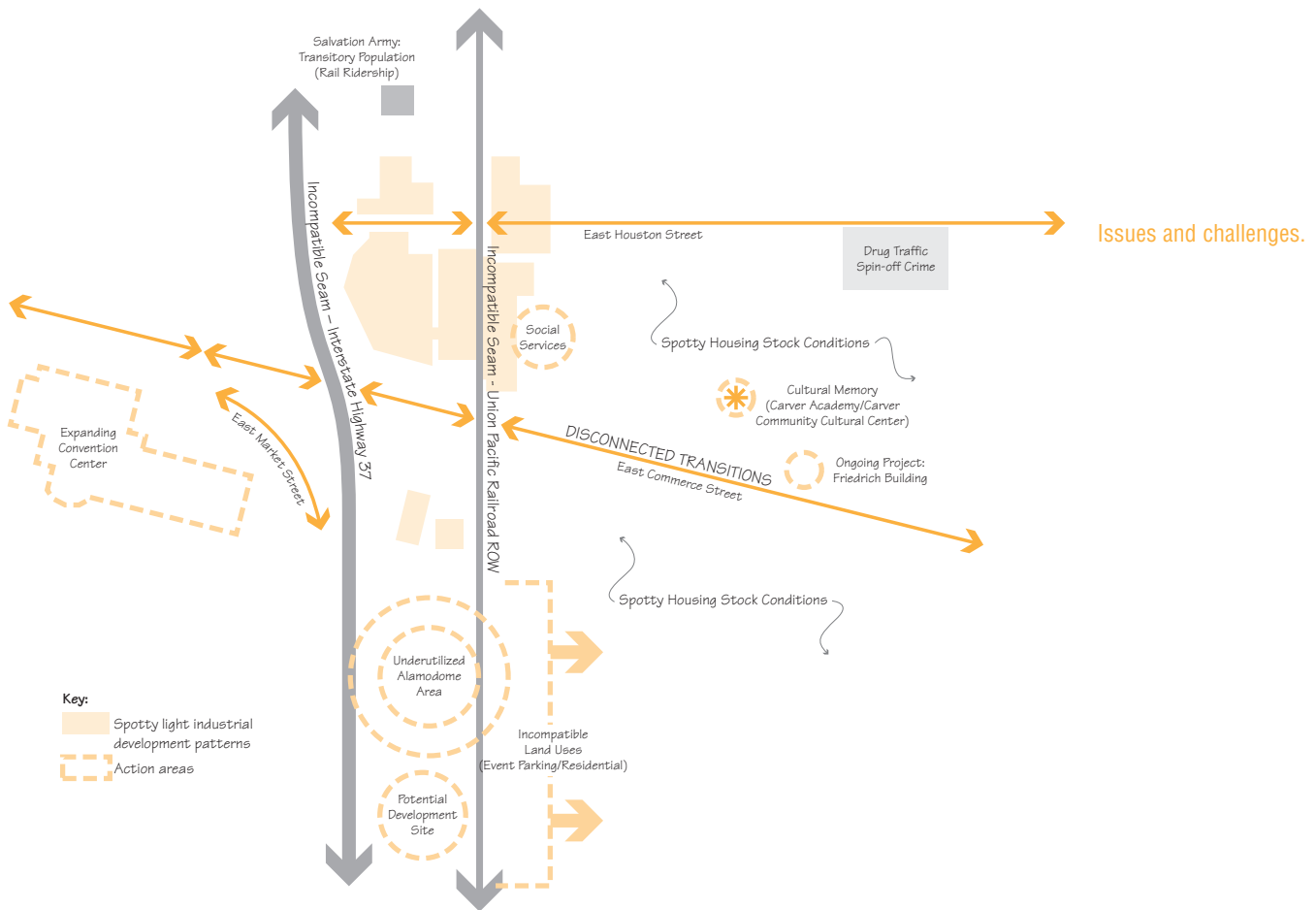
Cultural Memory Sites. These sites, which include the cemeteries and La Garita—a powder storehouse associated with the Alamo—have the potential to extend tourism activity to the east of IH-37 and into this area.

City Interest. The city’s interest in moving forward with plans to develop this area, as evidenced by the panel’s presence, is viewed as a positive step toward a full commitment of resources and political will.

Challenges

In addition to these assets, however, the district faces a number of challenges, which include the following.

Isolation. The isolating presence of both IH-37 and the Union Pacific right-of-way (ROW) create a segmented environment. IH-37 is a physical, visual, and psychological barrier that separates the district from the downtown core. While the presence of railroad activity may instill nostalgic memories



of the role of trains in the development of the nation, the railroad tracks are now an intrusion that detracts from the desired ambience and character.

Need for Additional City Services. While there has been significant public investment in this area, additional infrastructure investment certainly is needed. This is evidenced by the condition of some of the housing stock, the social issues associated with crime, and the barriers resulting from the transitways that bisect the community. These factors are a continuing detriment to both the livability of the area and the perception of it as an enclave in the city suitable for new residents and businesses.

The Physical Environment. The following physical elements create challenges for new development:

- *Lack of Connectivity.* The study area is physically disconnected from the culture, energy, and excitement of the downtown. Little seems to tie the areas together, other than infrequent bus service and light traffic, and the study area currently gains few benefits from its proximity to the CBD.
- *Visual Quality.* The visual appearance of the area signifies neglect and hopelessness. This is

surprising when one explores the history of the area and its significance to the city, and analyzes the physical proximity of this area to the CBD.

- *Perceptions of Crime.* Crime in the area is generated by two forces. The first is the transitory population housed nightly to capacity at the Salvation Army facility, a majority of whom reportedly find their way to the area as a result of passing freight train traffic. The second is the decades-old drug problem, which appears to be concentrated near the intersection of Monumental and Houston streets.

Housing Stock. The area's housing stock is of a moderately high quality, based on its age and cultural importance to the city. After decades of neglect, however, very few historically significant structures remain. At this stage, the greatest benefits will be derived by safeguarding the remaining historic structures by restoring them on a house-by-house basis, with a special focus on Dignowity Hill.

Existing Development Patterns, Incompatible Land Uses, and Tough Edge Conditions. Development in this area has proceeded in an ad hoc manner over

More than 100 acres of cemetery land define the eastern border of the study area.



the last 25 years. There has been little impact on or change to existing land uses, however, other than neglect. The exceptions to this are the Alamodome and its parking structures adjacent to residences on the eastern boundary, and the small hotel developments along the north side of East Commerce Street.

Diminishing Cultural Memory. The cultural history of the Eastside, specifically as it relates to the African American culture of San Antonio, seems to be diminishing and, it is feared, could be on the brink of disappearing altogether.

An Underutilized Light Industrial Area. The land due north of St. Paul Square, bordered by the Union Pacific ROW on the east and the IH-37 ROW to the west, represents a significant opportunity for higher-density, mixed-use development in the future. In the meantime, however, the area has a blighting influence on its surroundings.

Framing Statements and Principles

The four framing statements and supporting principles are discussed below. Each principle is designed to realize the objectives of the framing

statement in an effort to recommend a redevelopment plan for the area.

Reconnecting with the City

The St. Paul Gateway District's proximity to downtown/center city San Antonio is central to its revitalization. It is the relationship between the district and the near Eastside that establishes the market position of the study area. As a close-in community, the district is a major—though only partially defined—link between downtown San Antonio and its eastern edge.

Economic and city/community building benefits can accrue from the Eastside's redefinition as a vibrant, valued, and important place. Continuing the pattern of development from downtown will contribute to the sense of strength and economic and spatial vitality in the study area.

Block-to-block visual connectivity along major streets provides a pleasant pedestrian experience and establishes a cadence to vehicular movement. Consistent urban design vocabularies and strategies contribute to this quality of connectivity. Use of the following principles will help reconnect the district with the city:



- Tourism attractions in the district should be incorporated into a citywide system of attractions. These attractions include the Carver Community Cultural Center and the Carver Academy; La Garita, the eastern garrison of the Alamo; and the area's cemeteries and churches, all of which should be supported and made visible as historic resources. The Old San Antonio City Cemeteries Historic District, Eastside Cemetery Complex, Master Plan of September 1990 offers appropriate documentation of these attractions.
- A “gateway” entry into the district along East Commerce Street should be developed. This gateway should reinforce the importance of the St. Paul Square/Sunset Station area and the blocks to its east.
- Public transportation should be enhanced to encourage east/west movement between the Eastside and the downtown core.
- The intrusion of IH-37 and freight train traffic along the Union Pacific ROW should be mitigated.
- The edge gateway blocks of East Commerce Street east of IH-37 should reflect the character

and uses of downtown, including retail, entertainment and dining, personal services, housing, and programmed open space.

- The rehabilitation of the Hays Street Bridge—as a work of public art, an historic resource, and an important east/west pedestrian link—should proceed.
- Planning and development efforts for the St. Paul Gateway District and other downtown areas should be considered of equal importance.
- Redevelopment plans for the HemisFair Park/Alamodome area must consider and include expansion plans for the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center and their combined effect on the Sunset Station/St. Paul Square precinct.

Humanizing the Corridor

Great urban places are designed in ways that support a sense of community or belonging, at a scale that uses pleasing pedestrian environments to encourage safe, human interactions.

The character of the host environment influences the streetscape and adjacent frontages. Great streets reflect the physical, cultural, and social

Streetscape improvements along East Commerce Street at St. Paul Square illustrate the benefit of incorporating street trees, lighting, and distinctive walkway materials.

This streetscape is typical of those in the Sunset Station/St. Paul Square area.



contexts within which they exist. They are a celebration of the pattern and purpose of the city, and must be thought of and designed as such. In the vocabulary of great streets, the intersections of 18th and Vine in Kansas City and Seventh and T in Washington, D.C.; Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House in Washington, D.C.; Copenhagen's Strogät; and Paris's Champs Elysees suggest immediately recognizable images that are associated with known places and activities. Use of the following principles will help humanize the East Commerce Street corridor:

- All of East Commerce Street should be converted to accommodate two-way traffic.
- The East Commerce Street ROW should be redesigned to enhance and support a pedestrian environment conducive to free and easy walking on appropriately scaled and designed sidewalks.
- The new streetscape must include a significant "greening" component to soften and humanize the pedestrian environment.
- Streetscape design should include components scaled to increase intimacy, including lighting, plantings, and the like. It also should pay attention to view corridors, both to the west and to the east.
- Urban design details that tell a unique "San Antonio story" should be incorporated. This can be done by using certain materials, textures, colors, and messages at ground level, eye level, and on upper stories.
- The now typical live/work model of ground-floor commercial space below upper-level residential units should be incorporated to activate the street 24 hours a day.
- Integrated signage and lighting systems must be given serious attention, as elements of a cohesive wayfinding system and a unique streetscape image.
- Clear, nonreflective glass should be used in all development—especially grade-level retail space—to the maximum extent possible, to make interior activity visible from the street environment.

Signage regulations would improve the visual landscape.



Investing in the District

A serious commitment of high-priority resources and political will and capital, at all levels, must be invested in the redevelopment of the St. Paul Gateway District. City officials and community stakeholders must organize to ensure continuing momentum and directed coordination in this effort. Use of the following principles will help increase investment in the district:

- A comprehensive urban design analysis/plan divided into appropriate subareas should be prepared as a preface to any public improvement program. The analysis should set forth timeless principles and qualitative indices, rather than specific applications. Particular attention should be given to the massing implications of zoning allowances.
- A comprehensive public site improvement investment strategy should be developed that is aligned with the urban design analysis/plan.
- Areas currently zoned for light industry should be reclassified as mixed use to incorporate future residential, office, retail, and entertainment uses. Zoning should allow these uses to

follow a transitional development period that may include warehouses, flex space, and/or incubator business spaces.

Establishing a New Focus and a New Identity

The qualities through which the community is known, both internally and externally, should be derived from a carefully crafted, managed, and promoted image, supported by a changed reality and perception. The sum of planning and development actions will frame and advance this new image. Through a directed effort, all these actions will converge to establish a new focus and a new identity for the district.

- The whole of the urban design and planning effort should be intended to create a new place within an existing community/district. The power of urban design to create community or a sense of place is fully realized when it establishes a unique image.
- The city should establish a design review process to assure high-quality, contextually sensitive development. The process should operate within design standards evolving from the urban design analysis.

Action areas.



Urban Design and Development Plan

The panel’s urban design and development plan for the St. Paul Gateway District is a combination of development strategies and the application of the urban design principles discussed above. The elements of the plan include grouping parcels/blocks, activities, and adjacent elements for action/consideration, and then applying the urban design principles to every action. The action elements of the plan for various areas follow.

- *The segment of East Commerce Street from IH-37 to the cemetery edge.* These blocks should be designed to have a unified yet variegated image. Appropriately scaled facades and landscape elements can define the street space. Unified information and lighting systems should be installed. Housing units over retail space will encourage a 24-hour, active street environment. Adoption of a neighborhood conservation overlay district could encourage the use of these design elements.
- *The blocks and parcels east of IH-37 to the railroad ROW, from Nolan Street to East Commerce Street, including St. Paul Square and Sunset Station.* These groups of blocks should reflect the land uses of the adjacent downtown area as well as urban residences. Strategies that provide height and density bonuses should be developed to encourage block-to-block investment.

- *The area between Nolan and East Commerce streets, and from the railroad ROW to North Mesquite Street.* This is a transitional area in which height and bulk are reduced, from the downtown edge to residential land uses.
- *The Dignowity Hill Historic District.* A concentrated historic restoration effort should be initiated in this district, rather than dispersed across the larger study area.
- *The node created by the Carver Community Cultural Center, the Carver Academy, and the Friedrich Building.* The concentrated success of the Carvers sets a tone that parallels the ambitions of the Friedrich. The city should invest in the development of this joint effort.
- *Historic cemeteries and other historic resources, including the La Garita site.* An opportunity exists to extend tourism activities from downtown to the St. Paul Gateway District, which would work to the advantage of economic development in the district.
- *The expansion of the convention center to the east, taking into consideration the HemisFair Park grounds, the Alamodome, and potential additional sports venues.* Toward this end, the HemisFair Park Area Master Plan completed in 2004 should be consulted, particularly when ad-

addressing the edges of the area and connectivity issues.

- *The housing environment and housing stock.* The existing historic district, Dignowity Hill, should be the focus of improvements. An effort to enforce code violations and encourage rehabilitation activities should be undertaken in the historic district as well as in the larger study area.
- *The on-grade railroad ROW.* The short-term goal should be to eliminate freight traffic and allow only Amtrak traffic. In the longer term, rerouting all rail traffic to the western spur will relieve the district of the current intrusion of rail traffic.
- *The IH-37 expressway.* Creating a surface-level boulevard and greenway is an immediate strategy that could be used to overcome the barrier of an interstate highway elevated on bermed land. A longer-range solution is to bury the interstate and use the newly created surface for development.
- *East Commerce Street from center city to IH-37.* Continuous lighting and signage systems could create a transition to the St. Paul Gateway District. This image should be continued into the district along East Commerce Street.
- *The Hays Street Bridge.* As a historic icon, the Hays Street Bridge can become a significant work of public art and should be preserved. The landing areas of the span should be redeveloped to create a distinct precinct.



The Sunset Station depot building, where Amtrak is located, is recognized for its Spanish architecture.



Left and below: The Hays Street Bridge, which provides access over the railroad tracks, demonstrates the width of the barrier created by the tracks. The bridge must be renovated and transformed into a safe pedestrian connection.



Development Strategies

It is clear to the panel that the Eastside neighborhood's St. Paul Gateway District has been neglected in the city's economic development agenda. Despite this perceived neglect, considerable potential exists for the redevelopment of this vital district.

Development strategies are tools that can be used to accelerate revitalization. These tools are both tactical and strategic in nature. The goal is to use public sector resources, both capital and regulatory, in concert with private sector resources to revitalize and transform the district through redevelopment.

A necessary component of development strategies in neighborhoods such as the St. Paul Gateway District is the need to reach consensus among members of the development community so that risky ventures can be planned and executed and a successful course of redevelopment can occur. To this end, city stakeholders need to agree upon certain principles, including the following:

- Reconnect the St. Paul Gateway District with the CBD;
- Humanize the East Commerce Street corridor, including certain street and sidewalk improvements;
- Continue public investment in front-end improvements in this area to induce long-term private investment;
- Rezone the area to encourage more compatible land uses and set the framework for future development and redevelopment;
- Establish a mixed-use, high-density development corridor between IH-37 and the railroad tracks;
- Utilize incentive zoning measures targeted to the two key redevelopment areas along the

East Commerce corridor and in the mixed-use corridor described above;

- Establish an emerging industries center to better capture growing biomedical and information technology clusters from across the city;
- Create a parcel-to-parcel linkage plan to guide resources generated via the real estate development process to this area; and
- Build upon the district's historic strength as a single-family residential neighborhood to help create a mixed-income community.

Humanizing the East Commerce Street Corridor

The Best Western Sunset Suites represents an important investment easily seen by anyone entering the study area from the downtown along East Commerce Street. The panel recognizes that the business plan for this hotel includes its value as an overflow location for CBD hotels and that it is competitively priced relative to the CBD hotels. The panel offers the following suggestions:

- No future hotel development should take place east of the Holiday Inn Express on East Commerce Street.
- Development of a mix of retail, residential, cultural, and institutional uses should be encouraged east of the Holiday Inn Express.
- The three structures adjacent to East Commerce Street to the north—the Carver Academy, the Carver Community Cultural Center, and the Friedrich Building—should be linked in a campus-like setting. The design and construction standards exemplified by both the Carver Academy and the Carver Community Cultural Center should be followed in the continuing renovation of the Friedrich Building. The East Commerce Street site on which a two-level



The Friedrich Building will be developed in phases as a mixed-use project that has the potential to become the eastern anchor for the corridor's redevelopment.

parking structure has been proposed should be reserved for open space and the garage should be relocated to an adjacent site.

- The city should fund an origin/destination study to gain a better understanding of how community residents make certain trips—work, recreation, education, medical, and so forth—and by which modes of transportation they travel, so that their travel needs can be integrated into development strategies.
- The historic and current pattern of single-family homes should be retained and strengthened as an important characteristic of the neighborhood. In addition, residential revitalization strategies should focus on achieving a mixed-income community.

Investing in the District

The panel's review process strongly indicates that the study area is underfunded by both public and private sector investment. On the public sector side, certain capital investment strategies and

regulatory tools can help accelerate revitalization in this neighborhood.

Public Capital and Regulatory Support

The area has an immediate need for an estimated \$15 million to \$20 million of investment. Currently, approximately \$5.0 to \$6.5 million is being invested in capital projects along both East Commerce and East Houston streets. This funding comes from a city capital improvement budget of \$500 million to be spread out over the ten council districts. In the past five years, Council District 2 has received a significant portion of this budget.

The Council District 2 allocation of community development block grant (CDBG) and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME) funds in the FY 2004/2005 budget of just under \$30 million is \$1.2 million, not all of which is to be invested in the study area.

The panel concluded that there is an immediate need to rezone this area to achieve better land use compatibility and performance standards. The current zoning appears to be a collection of zoning classifications that are not appropriate for the cur-

rent uses and are entirely inconsistent with the recent Arena District/Eastside Community Plan. Rezoning also offers the city an opportunity to employ more contemporary zoning approaches, which could include incentives to encourage certain types of development along the East Commerce Street corridor as well as in the proposed mixed-use, high-density district between IH-37 and the railroad tracks.

Like all redevelopment/revitalization efforts, the challenge also involves proactively mobilizing existing public financing tools such as enterprise zone incentives, empowerment zone incentives, historically underutilized business zone opportunities, incentive funds for targeted industries, industrial revenue bonds, various small business services, and workforce development assistance. Particularly appropriate is Chapter 380 of the Local Government Code, which provides legislative authority for municipalities to establish a program to make loans and grants that promote state and local economic development and stimulate business and commercial activity. Such authority should be vigorously utilized as part of the study area's development strategies.

In contrast, the panel concluded that the current tax increment financing (TIF) district, which encompasses the study area, probably is not an effective tool to directly support and focus revitalization strategies. The current TIF district encompasses a far larger area than the St. Paul Gateway District. According to materials reviewed by the panel, there are no programmed improvements for reinvestment of TIF funds in the St. Paul Gateway District, even though the district currently is—and is expected to continue to be—one of the prime generators of TIF monies. In the panel's opinion, this is a fundamental imbalance that leads to the conclusion that either the St. Paul Gateway District should be removed from the larger, existing TIF district or the TIF district as a whole should be abandoned.

A far more productive approach in the short term is to use tax abatement incentives. This strategy could be aggressively pursued in the early years to support and direct private investment. The use of tax abatement incentives for new development could be heavily front-loaded for early private de-

velopment projects and then tapered down as additional private development occurs.

Private Sector Initiatives

Among the existing private sector initiatives in the study area, the panel is encouraged by the revitalization plans for the Friedrich Building. The panel is cautiously optimistic that this mixed-use, office and residential project can succeed if timely and appropriate public support is forthcoming. A phased approach seems reasonable for this project, although the developer should seriously consider reducing the square footage to be included in the final building footprint. The city also should negotiate an amenities package with the developer in return for city support of this critical project.

The city also should support and encourage the development of the Oscar Eason Senior Mixed-Use Center on East Commerce Street, across from the Friedrich Building. This apartment, retail, community center, and office development for seniors is seeking HUD funding and seems to have a capable design, developer, and lending team. The project's existing retail tenants have indicated a desire to occupy the newly built-out space once it is completed. The developer, in concert with the city, needs to work out a relocation scheme for these retail tenants so that they can continue to operate during construction, with the goal of relocating them to the new space when it is completed.

The St. Paul Area Development Corporation has developed both a strategic plan for area development and conceptual plans for a 40-unit independent living facility in the area. It does not yet have site control, and the city has raised some questions about the capacity of this new non-profit developer.

The development team for the Friedrich Building also controls the Merchant's Ice Building. The team has abandoned its plans to transform this building into a telecom center. The site should be considered as a possible location for flex space, perhaps for catering, entertainment, exhibit support services, mill work, carpentry, electrical work, and so forth, as well as for biotech or information technology uses.



The Merchant's Ice Building could be redeveloped as flex space for a variety of business ventures.

Financing tools being utilized for these private sector projects include various HUD programs, city business and economic development incentive (BEDI) grants, new market tax credits (NMTCs), historic tax credits, and loan guarantees.

An Emerging Industries Center

The city needs to proactively guide the expanding biomedical and information technology industry clusters to the study area. The panel recommends that Phase I of this strategy utilize a site such as the Merchant's Ice Building as the location for an emerging industries center, primarily for biomedical firms and secondarily for information technology ones. The center would function as a business incubator and would provide flexible space and shared business amenities for new companies. As these companies expand, they can be expected to develop additional biomedical/information technology facilities within the district. It is important to note that similar emerging industry centers in other locales have been funded by federal appropriations. The panel estimates that up to 200,000 square feet of space could be available at this location for such an initiative.

The panel also recommends that the city consider encouraging the development of flex space for catering and entertainment uses serving the CBD hospitality sector. A possible Phase II of an emerging industries development strategy could consist of such uses, built on or around the vacant six-acre Budweiser site.

Education and Training

The city of San Antonio has taken great strides in advancing a biomedical education and training agenda. Curriculum development is either underway or in place at a wide range of educational levels, from the fifth grade through higher education. Innovative magnet schools have been established that can support curriculum in the health care and life sciences areas. These types of activities should be encouraged to locate within the St. Paul Gateway District.

Mixed-Use, Density Incentive Districts

In concert with the complete rezoning of the St. Paul Gateway District, the panel recommends that the city create two separate mixed-use zoning incentive districts. The first would be a high-density district in the area between IH-37 and the

railroad tracks. The second would be along East Commerce Street. In both districts, the city would establish an as-of-right base zoning. This would cover use, height, and density or floor/area ratio (FAR). The incentive could be stepped so that, for an initial increment of density and height, design standards would increase, together with a requirement for a mix of at least three types of land uses. For an additional increment in height and density, other public objectives—such as workforce housing, parks and open space, or adopting and co-investing with a community development corporation (CDC)—would be required.

The panel recommends that the city consider allowing the highest densities in the area between IH-37 and the railroad tracks. A base height of six floors would be appropriate in this area, with a density and height incentive to step up in increments of five floors, to a maximum height of 16 stories. At each incentive step, design standards and collateral investment in public objectives would be required as the incentive *quid pro quo*.

For the East Commerce Street corridor, the base height could vary, starting with the highest base closest to the railroad tracks and tapering down to the east. A base height of three to four stories would be appropriate here, with incentives stepped in one- or two-floor increments. The city of Fort Worth has successfully employed part of this strategy in its Central City Commercial Corridors Revitalization Strategy.

The panel recommends that the city carefully review the approaches other municipalities—either in Texas or elsewhere—have employed to craft incentive zoning districts that incorporate the most contemporary practices. It then could customize these approaches to meet the needs of the St. Paul Gateway District.

Parcel-to-Parcel Linkage: Guiding Prosperity to the Needy Neighborhood

Another important component of the panel's recommended development strategies is a parcel-to-parcel linkage plan. The goal of such a plan is to guide real estate development to the East Commerce Street corridor by linking it with development opportunities in the CBD or in the proposed mixed-use, high-density district. Attendant to

this plan is a community benefits package that captures some portion of building net operating income (NOI), resale, and refinancing proceeds for community development uses. This type of innovative linkage plan was pioneered in Boston, where a downtown parcel was linked to a parcel in the needy Roxbury community. To date, Boston's plan has yielded a fully leased, 36-story office tower in the financial district and a nine-story, fully leased office building in Roxbury with a multilevel parking structure, plus more than \$20 million in community benefits.

San Antonio is a growing city with a good mix of industries. The challenge for the city is to redirect some of its growth to the long-neglected Eastside neighborhood. Such an economic development strategy stands to benefit not only this neighborhood and the central business district, but the entire metropolitan area as well. In order to effectively carry out such an effort, it is important that a viable implementation plan be adopted by those affected by these changes. The Implementation section of this report details a plan that takes into account the market potential, urban planning, and design and development strategies suggested above.

Transportation Issues

Physical barriers in the St. Paul Gateway District limit how the study area is linked to the CBD. Although it is not impossible to get from one area of the city to the other, the connection is difficult to maneuver and leads to the perception of the study area as isolated. This situation can be overcome by improving vehicular, pedestrian, and transit linkages. It will be difficult to create a successful neighborhood without first addressing these challenges.

Specific connectivity issues therefore must be addressed. Connectivity relates to the ability of study area residents to travel conveniently to their desired destinations. They should be able to reach destinations such as shopping, dry cleaning, and service stations without leaving the neighborhood, and they should be able to reach the downtown without undue confusion. Linking

the study area to the CBD will require adjusting street patterns.

The limited linkage to the CBD does not just affect the ability of study area residents to have reasonable access to the CBD. Equally important is the number of trips generated within the CBD that require easily understood vehicular and pedestrian paths to the retail and entertainment uses along the East Commerce Street corridor and to the light industrial area north of St. Paul Square. Residential and industrial users rely mainly on vehicular travel, whereas shoppers—particularly those visiting St. Paul Square—require an attractive pedestrian environment. A good example of a successful connection is the direct vehicular and pedestrian access among the Alamodome, the convention center, and downtown.

Interstate Highway 37 is a visual barrier that, surprisingly, has a reasonable number of openings. Five underpasses—at Durango Boulevard, Market/Montana, East Commerce, Houston, and Nolan streets—connect downtown to the city's near Eastside. The problem is not the number of linkages, but rather the imbalance in terms of volume and the design of these openings.

The volume imbalance is created by the IH-37 interchange ramps. All ramps seem, for the most part, to direct travel west—toward the downtown—on East Commerce Street. The projected volumes of traffic moving west on East Commerce Street are almost six times higher than the volumes of the other east/west streets. The system needs to spread this traffic among all of the streets mentioned above.

Market and Commerce streets support this traffic volume imbalance, together with the preferential direction of IH-37 traffic to the west. Commerce Street is one-way westbound with five lanes beginning at Elm Street. Market Street is one-way eastbound and narrows from five lanes to three under IH-37. The route is confusing and difficult for unfamiliar drivers to navigate. In addition, eastbound movement on Market Street has very limited capacity with regard to direct access to St. Paul Square. One must travel eastbound on Market Street and then connect with a northbound

frontage lane under IH-37 to reach an eastbound lane at Commerce Street.

The other transportation element that contributes to this volume imbalance is the awkward flow of traffic from IH-37 to westbound East Commerce Street. There is a single westbound lane on East Commerce Street under IH-37, separated by a raised median that accepts traffic from Market Street via a northbound lane of IH-37. The distribution of traffic along these westbound lanes of East Commerce Street, under the IH-37 structure, is unbalanced.

All this has the unintended effect of creating an unfriendly pedestrian and vehicular corridor along East Commerce Street. The unfriendliness is not due only to the moving lanes of traffic; there also is no pedestrian path on the south side of the street. The walking distance from Bowie Street to St. Paul Square is more than 1,000 linear feet. This walk is further burdened by long intersection crossings that create an extremely sterile environment, devoid of artwork or any refuge from the extreme San Antonio heat. The pedestrian pathway, together with vehicular circulation, must be redesigned.

Although the other streets that pass under IH-37 do not experience the traffic volume nor have the unfriendly pedestrian paths found along East Commerce Street, the principles and solutions proposed for East Commerce Street are applicable to all these other corridors as well.

Linkage Recommendations

The panel suggests six short-term/midterm solutions and one long-term solution to improve linkages between the CBD and the St. Paul Square Gateway District.

The short- and midterm improvements are interrelated, although they could be most logically implemented in two phases. The long-term alternative would not simply improve linkage, but rather would be a roadway plan to fully integrate the Eastside with the CBD.

East Commerce Street from Cherry Street to the east end of the study area at Palmetto Street is in

poor condition. The needs along this section of the corridor do not relate to capacity improvement, since the traffic volumes along this segment of East Commerce Street are moderate. Nevertheless, improvements to East Commerce Street can serve many functions. The street carries traffic, serves adjacent properties, defines the visual form, and accommodates pedestrians. The improvements to the corridor recommended by the panel attempt to balance these functions.

East Commerce Street should become a two-lane, divided roadway. Left-turn lanes should be provided only at major intersections with limited median openings. Beginning east of Cherry Street, East Commerce should feature wide sidewalks and, depending on the street face, either parallel parking or landscaping. Parallel parking is more appropriate along major streets; less parking should be located along the side streets.

Phase One: Short-Term Solutions

The panel recommends the following short-term solutions:

- Streetscape improvements along East Commerce Street, from Cherry Street to the east;
- Conversion of East Commerce and Market streets from one-way to two-way travel; and
- Conversion of the IH-37 ramp connections at East Commerce Street to a two-way condition, so that traffic can travel either east or west.

Phase Two: Midterm Solutions

The following midterm improvements would occur once the convention center is expanded. The realignment of Market Street to merge with Montana Street is a typical improvement for an urban interchange. This configuration is applicable to all east/west roads leading to IH-37, and would provide for a better balance of traffic.

- Build a collector/distributor interchange configuration parallel to IH-37 from north of Nolan Street to Durango Boulevard;

- Extend the depressed section of Market Street as needed to maintain the separate pedestrian connection to the Alamodome; and
- Construct covered pedestrian pathways—or walkways that use landscaping to protect pedestrians from the elements—that connect to the Alamodome and other walkways.

Phase Three: The Long-Term Solution

The long-term solution is to remove a portion of IH-37 from the interstate system, between Interstate Highway 35 (IH-35) on the north and U.S. Highway 90 (U.S. 90)/Interstate Highway 10 (IH-10) to the south, and convert it to a boulevard or gateway design. IH-37 now ends at IH-35, where it becomes Federal Highway 281. The panel proposes that IH-37 be terminated at U.S. 90/IH-10. Traffic heading north or south would be diverted to either IH-35 or Interstate Highway 440 via U.S. 90/IH-10. This would allow a smoother transition of downtown expansion to the east. In addition, eliminating this section of IH-37 would remove the route that bisects the loop around the downtown and the Eastside area—defined by IH-35 to the west and north, with Interstate Highway 410 to the east and U.S. 90/IH-10 to the south.

The abandoned section of IH-37 section would be converted to a ground-level boulevard at grade to just north of Nolan Street, and then return to an elevated roadway as it approaches IH-35. Although the number of lanes on the boulevard should be determined by transportation modeling, it appears likely that a six-lane divided roadway with a wide, landscaped median and generous landscaping along the sides of the roadway would be appropriate.

Aggressive public efforts will be required to make these changes happen. Rezoning will be necessary to encourage land use compatibility. The creation of incentive zones with targeted public investment will, in turn, lead to increased private investment. These efforts need to merge so that the panel's recommended changes can be instituted.

Implementation

The panel's assessment of the market potential, its planning and urban design recommendations, and its development strategies for the study area culminate in a set of recommendations for implementation. This section of the report deals with structural organization and implementation tools designed to address the panel's four major framing statements and accompanying principles.

To reiterate, these framing statements are reconnecting with the city, humanizing the corridor, investing in the district, and establishing a new focus and a new identity. In addition, the panel defines a redevelopment timeline for the study area. Further, the panel has identified several specific principles, consistent with the framing statements, that provide additional guidelines for the implementation of the panel's recommendations. These include the following:

- Link public investment to benefits for residents and stakeholders in the St. Paul Gateway District. This concept is central to the notion of "value added."
- Build on the community's existing assets.
- Establish meaningful and productive relationships with residents and stakeholders.
- Invest in social capital. Support coalitions among stakeholders, neighborhood associations, churches, businesses, and cultural interests.
- Develop a broad-based and ongoing system to include community residents and stakeholders in all aspects of planning and implementation.
- Recognize that development objectives are more important than the development process.

Organizational Structure

The panel considered the organization and purpose of existing entities before recommending the creation of a community action committee (CAC) to foster the essential ingredients of community will, resources, and leadership. The panel specifically rejected another layer of purely public sector organization and oversight for the implementation of its recommendations. It is the panel's opinion that a classic, solely publicly sponsored redevelopment program for the St. Paul Gateway District would add an unnecessary layer of institutional bureaucracy and that such a purely public entity would compete for resources within an already constrained public sector.

Existing Entities

Several well-established neighborhood-based organizations already exist within the St. Paul Gateway District. These neighborhood associations and community development corporations have common goals. None, however, are comprehensively focused on the overall area. These groups need to form a cohesive and coordinated force with independent funding resources.

Under current policy, the city of San Antonio neighborhood planning process expects a neighborhood association to advocate for public improvements through a neighborhood plan. The neighborhood associations in the area include the Dignowity Hill, Nevada Street/Denver Heights, Jefferson Heights and Historic Gardens, and Harvard Place/Eastlawn associations. The commercial area along East Commerce Street is not represented by any kind of association. These factions need to be brought together so that they can speak with one voice that represents the interests of the entire community. A stronger means of communication throughout the community as well as with the city needs to be developed. Atlanta's neighborhood planning unit structure is an example of an approach that gives residents an effec-



The ticket booth at Sunset Station provides tickets for events held at the pavilion.

tive voice regarding land use, zoning, public funding, and the like.

The Proposed Community Action Committee

No mechanism currently exists for implementation of the panel's overall strategy and specific recommendations for the revitalization of the St. Paul Gateway District. As a result, previous planning efforts and recommendations have not been implemented and, with a few notable exceptions, widespread positive change has yet to occur in the area. The number of plans that have been developed and the number of programs that the city of San Antonio has designated to assist urban areas contrast greatly with the activity that has occurred in the study area. In order to change this dynamic, a better match is needed between the planning effort and actual development in the community.

To address the overall organizational structure for the revitalization of the St. Paul Gateway District, the panel recommends that the city create a community action committee (CAC) to oversee private development and public improvements in this area. The new entity would be proactive, responsive, and accountable to the city, residents, and stakeholders. The CAC would serve as the oversight and monitoring entity for the city's commitments and public investments in the community. The CAC would be of a finite duration, perhaps directing redevelopment activity for five years or so, and would be disbanded once significant progress is underway.

In summary, the panel suggests the following operational parameters. The CAC would:

- Be established by an ordinance of the San Antonio City Council. The ordinance would specify the membership of the CAC and the framework for its responsibilities and tenure.
- Become the city's agent for organizing and executing an overall development strategy for the area. At the same time, it is not expected to have a formal staff. It would rely on dedicated staff resources from within the city's existing departments, particularly the planning, economic development, and neighborhood action departments.
- Likely require additional public support, in the form of resources from the health department, VIA Metropolitan Transit, the public works and code compliance departments, the housing and community development department, the Texas Workforce Commission, and/or the San Antonio Independent School District.
- Act as a liaison between those representing the needs of the neighborhood and elected officials. The CAC also would provide the vehicle—both operationally and financially—to leverage neighborhood organizations and their projects and priorities.

Operationally, the CAC initially would be charged with the following mandate:

- Create a strategic action or business plan for the first two years of operation. This would focus exclusively on an action/task-oriented agenda for private development. The action plan would identify the priorities, public funding commitments, and other resources needed to sustain private development. It also would address the priorities and needs of existing neighborhood development organizations and serve as the catalyst to get projects now in the pipeline to completion, supported by public investment. The strategic action or business plan also would address the following:
 - Implementation of residential, commercial, and retail development, as well as infrastruc-

ture improvements and selected public investments;

- Design review standards and guidance;
 - An inclusive and ongoing public involvement process; and
 - Milestones to measure progress of public investments in the community, with priorities set by the CAC through the plan process.
- Bring its action/business plan back to the city council for approval. Once the plan is approved, the CAC would be required to report periodically to the city council on its progress, with full reporting required each year.
 - Provide direct funding for the support of CAC operations and startup planning and project-related activities via its city council authorization. The panel specifically does not recommend that the CAC be freestanding financially from the city at the outset; rather, its expenses and other support—including office space, conference rooms, out-of-pocket expenses, operational overhead, and the like—would be funded by existing city departments.
 - Be given the authority to review designs and provide recommendations on prospective publicly funded/incentivized neighborhood projects and determine whether they are appropriate within the context of the community.

The panel suggests that the CAC comprise no more than five to seven members. Illustratively, these would include:

- A city council representative for the area;
- A representative from a neighborhood-based religious, educational, or cultural institution;
- A resident;
- A design professional;
- A neighborhood business owner;
- A representative of a neighborhood association; and
- A representative of a neighborhood-based CDC.



The individuals appointed to the CAC should either serve on a volunteer basis or receive a modest annual stipend. They would be the equivalent of a board of directors. The CAC would be assigned dedicated city staff support and resources, and this staff would be responsible for the CAC's day-to-day operations and accountable to the CAC as a whole.

Implementing the Panel's Recommendations

The panel delineated its recommendations for each framing principle, emphasizing the need to capitalize on the St. Paul Gateway District's physical proximity to the downtown, the need for streetscape improvements of a more pedestrian scale, and the creation of a mixed-income neighborhood with its own special identity.

Reconnecting with the City

To capitalize on the district's physical proximity and historical connection to the CBD, the panel recommends that the city undertake the following actions:

- Form a public/private partnership with the business community—specifically the hospital industry—that would benefit from the cultural reconnection of the district to the downtown. The creation of a larger, more extensive and inclusive area of historic significance related to the Alamo and La Garita and the rich heritage of this African American community

The ceremonial entrance to the Department of Veterans Affairs cemetery is located just east of the study area.

offers opportunities for investment to research, interpret, and reveal the city's rich historic fabric. This can be translated into an effective heritage tourism effort and, ultimately, additional overnight stays by visitors to San Antonio.

- Utilize the Carver Community Cultural Center in a seamless extension of downtown cultural offerings and activities.

Humanizing the Corridor

In order to incorporate human- and pedestrian-scale improvements into the East Commerce Street corridor, the panel recommends the following actions:

- The city should adopt a set of design standards for the area, in conjunction with the comprehensive rezoning of the city.
- A CAC should provide design consultation and recommendations.
- Design elements that reflect the history and context of the neighborhood should be used.
- Visual cues should be developed that hint at what lies beyond in the larger community.
- Improvements to rights-of-way should include upgrading or adding sidewalks, providing high-quality lighting, and installing appropriate street furniture such as bus stop shelters.
- Cultural activities in the district should be enhanced and encouraged.

Investing in the District

The city should use whatever resources it has at its disposal to ensure that the study area is redeveloped as a mixed-income neighborhood of choice. In order for this to become reality, however, current human, public safety, and physical conditions within the neighborhood must be addressed. The panel recommends the following actions:

- The TIF district needs to be abandoned or the study area needs to be excluded from the district.
- The city should improve its promotion, marketing, and deployment of existing programs and resources that it has at its disposal for all as-

pects of housing rehabilitation and construction, community revitalization, and support for community building.

- The city should use financial incentives to encourage residential, retail, and commercial development in the district, since, at least initially, it will be difficult to attract residents to the area while redevelopment is taking place.
- The city should take the lead in substantially increasing investment in infrastructure and should integrate the improvements in roadway, sewer, water, power, fiber optics, and other systems to fully upgrade the area's utilities.
- The city should improve services such as trash collection, police presence, code enforcement, and infrastructure repair. It should make tangible projects a priority, beginning with the cleanup of bulk items and trash from streets, and continuing with improvements to rights-of-way and the utility infrastructure.
- Public investment in public spaces will improve the attractiveness of the study area and the quality of life for existing and prospective residents.
- A block-by-block development strategy should be implemented, in which entire blocks are improved by rehabilitating existing housing, building new compatible infill housing on vacant lots, and providing assistance to homeowners that will enable them to improve their properties.
- Partnering with community development corporations offers the opportunity for resident-led, sustainable housing development in the study area. Investment in neighborhood building, leadership development, technical assistance, and training will be necessary for the effective utilization of neighborhood resources. Community development corporations (CDCs) can become flexible, nimble, production-oriented entities that are the right-sized developers for the generally small, scattered, vacant parcels and structures needing rehabilitation.
- Public investment in the Carver Community Cultural Center needs to continue as a line item in the city's budget.

- The successful redevelopment of the Friedrich Building is critical to the revitalization of the district and needs public support. City underwriting of this project will help to buy down the development risk and should result in other leveraged investment in the neighborhood by the developer.
- Local foundations should be viewed as critical partners seeking to invest in cultural, human, or physical development that can be leveraged because of a concerted and coordinated focus on the district.
- Nonprofit organizations like the Salvation Army can become partners with the city in the development of mutually beneficial programs to address the social service needs that plague the district. Physical development cannot be sustained without a commensurate investment in and improvement of human development.

Establishing a New Focus and a New Identity

The district must create a clear, unique identity for itself. In this regard, the panel recommends the following:

- Comprehensive rezoning to create two incentive zoning districts, one for commercial development and one for mixed-use development.
- Creation of a neighborhood identity that relates to the working history of the community, resulting in a trail of evidence of successes along the way.
- Establishment of common design themes and elements that are consistently applied throughout the neighborhood. This should include the creation of a neighborhood iconography to apply to neighborhood markers and icons. This iconography, or lexicon, needs to reflect the working, vibrant community and its historical context and complexities.

Once an identity is determined, all project and program implementation actions can flow from it.

Timeline and Phasing

The panel's recommended general timeline for redevelopment is described below. In the short/im-

mediate term, the first phase should begin with the provision of a clean and safe environment. That is the necessary first step, which should be followed by creating a committee structure, organizing the stakeholders, and planning and building momentum. The next phase should be characterized by an emerging community identity, the completion of smaller projects, and the assurance that large projects are in the pipeline. In the longer term—five years and beyond—the district's identity should be emerging and the community should be well on its way to becoming a “place” and a community of choice.

One to Two Years

Actions for this period include the following:

- Create an action committee and assign city staff support.
- Develop a business plan for the district as a whole:
 - Articulate a collective vision, with a focus on framing statements;
 - Define an area of influence and visual cues that create identity;
 - Establish goals for the community and identify contributing components;
 - Prepare a budget, plan timing for public improvements, and follow the city funding cycle; and
 - Involve schools, the workforce, faith-based organizations, social services, public services, and community representatives in the creation of the plan.
- Organize the work of member agencies and community organizations.
- Develop task-specific implementation priorities and create a plan for timing, funding partners, and responsibility.
- Establish reporting criteria and timelines. Set meeting schedules and locations.
- Ensure line-item funding for the CAC that will enable it to secure programs such as the home rehabilitation program.

- Build membership throughout the community. Organize events to enhance visibility.
- Program funds for public projects such as roadways in the city budget and in the Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Improvement Program.
- Create local assistance programs to repair and rehabilitate structures in the community. The criteria for these programs should be clear and consistent with the action plan objectives. A revolving loan fund and a matching grant fund of approximately \$50,000 for small repairs should be established in year one, and the first set of eight to ten projects should be completed between years one and two.
- Develop newsletters and marketing tools to communicate and support successes.

Initial efforts should be focused, visible, and directly benefit the community, both economically and socially. As an example, the CAC should champion the development of a facility that provides jobs in the community. This high-priority project should be subject to the same design standards and review established for other development in the community.

Three to Five Years

After the first two years, the reporting structure and process for the CAC should be well established, two to three rounds of small projects should have been completed, larger projects should be underway, and private investor movement should have begun on larger parcels within the community. Actions for years three to five include the following:

- Designation of eligible fiscal agents within the community should be complete, so that larger grant requests can be pursued.
- Grant applications for high-priority projects should be well developed.
- Smaller, local assistance programs for emergency repairs, rehabilitation of structures, and improvement of exterior spaces should be well established, with increasing funding through

CDBGs, local community resources, and other sources.

- Action plan progress should be evaluated and the plan updated as needed. The CAC structure and viability should be reviewed as part of the planning and project review process, then modified to meet the district's current needs.

At this point, project successes should be more significant and more varied. Newsletters and other communication tools should continue to highlight this progress and feature upcoming projects, including private investments that enhance the community. Communication tools can be used to emphasize what can be accomplished with collaborative partnerships.

Year Five and Beyond

By year five, direction for the ongoing redevelopment of the district should be established and the development efforts should be reaching a balance between public and private investment to increase efforts toward establishing a livable, viable community. At this point, the city must consider taking the following actions:

- The role and operational structure of the CAC should be reevaluated; if truly successful in its initial mission, the CAC may be a candidate for transferring its operations to other organizations and winding down.
- Larger commercial projects that require more complex funding should be pursued through partnering.
- Public investment in the district should be well underway, resulting in clear, identifying accomplishments, and a new sense of place should be apparent.
- The larger public works projects should be programmed and disruption to commercial areas mitigated.

By this time, the CAC and its member entities should be well established in their roles within the community and the city. Community collaboration should be resulting in events and activities, investments and developments that are raising awareness and supporting the value of the district

and the assets it contributes to San Antonio. Plans and activities should continue to be reviewed and evaluated, and emerging priorities addressed. As the organization matures, its ability to respond to community needs and to secure the appropriate resources from the city and other sources should become routine.

It is critical that the community succeed in this effort to ensure the revitalization of the St. Paul Gateway District as part of a balanced and equitable economic development strategy for the region as a whole. The St. Paul Gateway District represents an important piece of San Antonio's long and rich cultural heritage and identity.

Conclusion

The panel has organized its analysis and recommendations according to four framing statements that best articulate the need for redevelopment in the study area. These framing statements also serve to organize the findings in each section of this report:

- Reconnecting with the city;
- Humanizing the corridor;
- Investing in the district; and
- Establishing a new focus and a new identity.

The panel has renamed the East Commerce Street corridor study area, calling it the St. Paul Gateway District. Because the area is plagued by negative perceptions caused primarily by conditions of neglect, panel members agree that a new name will help establish a new image for the area. The St. Paul Gateway District also better describes the redevelopment area, since the panel considered various action areas, designated by strategic land uses, that lie beyond the East Commerce Street corridor.

The panel strongly endorses the need for significant public sector investment to begin to create an environment for change in the district. Its primary focus was on two areas: the land between IH-37 and the railroad tracks, from south of the Alamodome north to Nolan Street, and the East Commerce Street corridor between the interstate and Hackberry Street, including the connection to downtown San Antonio. Areas of secondary concern include the Dignowity Hill Historic District, the Friedrich Building and the surrounding cultural area, and the residential area south of East Commerce Street between South Cherry and Monumental streets.

The panel recommends improved gateways along East Commerce Street just past IH-37 at St. Paul Square and at the La Garita historic marker at

Monumental Street. While St. Paul Square serves as an anchor at the western entrance to the community, the Friedrich Building, together with the cemetery lands, helps establish an anchor further east, thereby defining a concentrated area for redevelopment along the corridor.

With a new name and a new focus for redevelopment of the study area, the panel believes that the area can move beyond past images and present itself as a district ripe for change. Sparking redevelopment will require considerable front-end expenditures. Existing zoning does not reflect current conditions or desirable changes. The panel suggests design standards to raise the quality of design and begin to sustain change.

The panel considers the need to shape patterns of growth for this area east of the downtown essential, since land uses from the downtown gradually will expand into the study area. By transforming itself into a new destination east of the downtown, the St. Paul Gateway District can help encourage extended visitor stays. This would help address the concern that while the visitor population is large, the length of its stays is short.

An organization is needed that will enable neighborhood and community groups to come together and speak with one voice. To best represent the area, the panel recommends a community action committee (CAC), a volunteer organization of people appointed by the city council to bring the community together. The CAC will not be a redevelopment agency; redevelopment should remain under the purview of the public sector.

The panel is confident that, by building on its assets, the St. Paul Gateway District can evolve into both another destination for visitors to San Antonio and a cohesive yet diverse urban residential neighborhood. Improvements in circulation and streetscape upgrades will help to physically connect the area to the downtown. Expansion of the

downtown can extend into this community, and the panel has designated a transitional development zone—located between the railroad tracks and the more residential area—between the expansion area and the historic residential neighborhoods north of East Commerce Street.

The goal of the panel's proposed redevelopment plan is to build upon the area's historic and cultural resources and create a mixed-income resi-

dential community characterized by its arts and entertainment venues as well as its historic characteristics. As more people choose to live closer to the downtown, this area will provide an ideal location for the development of mixed-price housing, new businesses, and accompanying employment opportunities within a district known for its unique identity, the St. Paul Gateway District.

About the Panel

J. Kevin Lawler

Panel Chair
West Palm Beach, Florida

Lawler, the managing partner of N-K Ventures LC, has more than 30 years of national experience as a real estate financial and deal adviser. N-K Ventures is principally engaged in the development of urban infill residential and mixed-use projects in southeast Florida. Founded in 2001, the company's development activities reflect the philosophy of its founding principals: the creation of high-value urban places. The firm started two projects in 2001, both of which are nearing completion. In 2003, the company started a multiphase urban mixed-use project that currently is in the planning and permitting phase.

Lawler is responsible for initial underwriting of all new development projects, investor and capital relationships, and all transactional aspects of N-K Ventures's projects and investments. He also manages subcontractor relationships and, together with his partner, Nancy C. Graham, is involved in the identification and qualification of new business opportunities.

Prior to starting his career in the development business, Lawler was a partner in the real estate advisory services practice of a major financial services firm's Washington, D.C., and Miami offices. He had a national practice advising developers, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and public entities on financing and large-scale development transactions. Lawler's practice included REIT formations, commercial property portfolio structuring and recapitalization, corporate real estate ventures and leasing, large-scale development projects, public/private development, and financing transactions.

Lawler is a member of the ULI—the Urban Land Institute's leadership group. He serves on the In-

stitute's Policy and Practice Committee and is a member of the Multi-Family Council. He has served on numerous Advisory Services panels and ULI project analysis teams, and was a vice chair of the Southeast Florida District Council. In October 2000, ULI recognized his service with the Robert O'Donnell Award. Lawler also has lectured extensively on real estate development and financing at the Harvard Business School, the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, the McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University, the George Washington University School of Business, the University of Maryland, and the University of Miami School of Law.

Prior to relocating to south Florida, Lawler served on the economic development committee of the Washington Board of Trade for several years. He is a graduate of Michigan State University and received an MCP from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, where he also was a Mellon and Ford Foundation fellow.

Lawler currently serves as the mayor of West Palm Beach's representative in securing and negotiating a major convention center hotel project. He also is a member of the Mayor's Economic Development Council and was the keynote speaker at the Greater Fort Worth Builders Association Annual Awards Dinner in 2004.

Robert H. Busler, Jr.

Washington, D.C.

Busler is the principal responsible for strategic planning and business development with WDG Architecture, PLLC. He has more than 25 years of design, project management, business development, and practice management experience. Busler is responsible for setting WDG's strategic direction as well as spearheading business development initiatives in support of the firm's strategic plan. He develops and directs the implementa-

tion of new market strategies while focusing on WDG's organizational structure and systems refinement to enhance process and design quality.

As a practicing architect, Busler is recognized for his expertise and leadership in the design and construction of large facilities for public and private clients. His accomplishments include the completion of major development/transportation projects, design management of the Washington/Baltimore bid for the 2012 Olympics, and the new Washington Convention Center, as well as the initial Major League Baseball ballpark location study for Washington, D.C., and the renovation of RFK Stadium for the new Washington Nationals baseball team. Other projects under his leadership include major airport terminals, federal agency headquarters, corporate headquarters, and urban and suburban investment office buildings, hotels, and sports facilities. Busler has won numerous architectural design awards for projects in the United States, Europe, and Southeast Asia.

Prior to joining WDG, Busler spent nine years as vice president and director of architecture in the national capital region office of HNTB Corporation, and 13 years with Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates (KPF) of New York City, where he served as an associate principal and principal-in-charge of the firm's Southeast Asian office in Sydney, Australia.

Busler received his master's degree in architecture from Columbia University and his bachelor of science in architecture from the University of Virginia. He was inspired to become an architect while growing up next door to Edward Tanner, the chief residential architect for J.C. Nichols and Kansas City's Country Club Plaza district.

David R. DeSimone

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

DeSimone is senior vice president of operations and general counsel for the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, where he manages real estate development, capital projects, theater operations, planned giving, and general legal matters. The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit group created in 1984 to restore the Benedum Center for

the Performing Arts, a 2,700-seat performing arts venue. The trust currently owns and operates five performing arts venues, three visual arts galleries, and several storefront arts projects to support diverse performing and visual arts offerings as part of the ongoing revitalization of the Pittsburgh Cultural District, a 14-square-block area in downtown Pittsburgh. The trust also presents a wide range of arts offerings.

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust has collaborated with commercial real estate developers, government leaders and planners, lenders, leaders of performing arts groups, and representatives of local philanthropic foundations to create and support a variety of public/private initiatives, including Theater Square, a mixed-use development with a cabaret theater, restaurant, marketing and ticketing center, and 790 parking spaces.

Other trust real estate projects include residential development, including a new 151-unit riverfront building developed as a joint venture with Lincoln Property Company; art galleries; office space for performing arts companies; a jazz club; acquisition of strategic properties; and the relocation of the Creative and Performing Arts High School into the Pittsburgh Cultural District.

Public projects include installations of public art and amenities such as new brick sidewalks and granite curbs, new streetlights, and new banners; administration of a 51-building national historic district, the Penn-Liberty Historic District; development of new riverfront parks; and the creation of a historic facade loan program and an elevator loan program.

DeSimone currently is coordinating a team to implement a long-term strategy recommended by a ULI Advisory Services panel for additional residential, commercial, and arts uses in the Pittsburgh Cultural District. He is a former chair of ULI's Pittsburgh District Council and a member of the ULI Inner-City Council. A lifelong resident of western Pennsylvania, DeSimone graduated from Harvard College and the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

Lynn Everett-Lee

Hollywood, Florida

Everett-Lee is the land use and transportation program manager for the South Florida Regional Planning Council, where she is responsible for guiding development projects with regard to transportation and transit improvements, and coordinating among area transportation planning and engineering agencies and local communities through the development review process. She has developed community-based transportation programs, primarily focused on services for seniors and people with disabilities, throughout the United States, and also has expertise in transportation issues surrounding workforce development, seniors who no longer drive, access to dialysis treatment, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its implications for public transit.

Everett-Lee has worked with a broad range of transportation providers, both public and private, to develop and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of transportation services. She has worked extensively with seniors and people with disabilities to develop responsive service that improves their quality of life.

Everett-Lee previously served as a senior planner in market development for the Regional Transportation Authority in Chicago. She acted as liaison to transportation agencies throughout the region to determine needs and match solution strategies to core issues. She also assisted in developing a travel training program framework that has become one of the premier programs in the United States. Everett-Lee served as the ADA compliance officer for the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), working with the community to develop a fully compliant transportation program and to improve communication between the CTA and stakeholders with disabilities.

Everett-Lee began her career in Memphis, where she assisted with planning for the Memphis Area Transit Authority bus and rail transit systems and complementary paratransit service. While in Memphis, she served on the board of the Memphis Center for Independent Living and the Mayor's Council for Citizens with Disabilities. Everett-Lee

received a degree in city and regional planning from the University of Memphis and an undergraduate degree in finance from the University of Florida.

Philip S. Hart

Los Angeles, California

Hart, president/CEO of Hart Realty Advisors, a division of Tanya Hart Communications, Inc., has more than 20 years of experience in developing and managing complex real estate development projects. He served as project manager for the 5,000-seat West Angeles Cathedral in South Los Angeles, and as master developer for the 75-acre CrossTown Industrial Park in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood. Hart also has directed major transportation studies, in addition to providing master planning services for urban industrial parks and planning studies in association with the Urban Land Institute for communities such as Hollywood, California, and Roxbury, Massachusetts.

Other facilities Hart has developed include a biotechnology center in Roxbury's CrossTown Industrial Park that opened in 1989. Boston University Medical Center is the anchor tenant, along with several commercial biotech firms. The center has provided education and training for local residents interested in biotech careers and has made advances in the treatment of sickle cell anemia and congestive heart failure among African Americans. Hart also developed the mixed-use Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries headquarters in CrossTown Industrial Park.

Hart served as project director for the Boston Transportation Planning Review Southwest Corridor Mobility Study, which reconfigured transit and highway options within Boston's Route 128 corridor. He was a faculty member at the University of Massachusetts in Boston for more than 20 years and served as a professor of sociology and director of the William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black Culture before taking early retirement in June 2002. February 5, 2002, was declared Philip S. Hart Day in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for his contributions to Massachusetts as a public intellectual. Hart earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Col-

orado in Boulder. In 1995, he was inducted into the university's Distinguished Alumni Gallery. He earned graduate degrees in sociology from Michigan State University.

Hart also is an award-winning author and filmmaker with two documentary films in the PBS video catalog. He is developing a feature film titled *The Hallelujah Flight*. He serves on the board of managers of the Hollywood Wilshire YMCA and as vice chair of Ability First's (formerly the Crippled Children's Society of Southern California) Housing Governance Board, which has developed more than 300 residential units for disabled persons.

W. Thomas Lavash

Washington, D.C.

Lavash is a senior associate with Economics Research Associates, a national real estate and economic development consultancy. He brings to public and private clients 20 years of experience in real estate and economic development projects. Lavash directs market, financial feasibility, and cost/benefit studies; revitalization strategies for downtown, waterfront, and commercial districts; repositioning studies for underperforming assets; and property valuations. He has worked in numerous primary and secondary markets, and his public clients include numerous government agencies such as the U.S. General Services Administration, the Florida Department of Transportation, and the Massachusetts Port Authority. Private clients include Hines Development, Icahn Enterprises, Michael Swerdlow Companies, Olympia & York, Prudential Realty, and Terrabrook.

From 1992 to 1994, Lavash completed more than 40 valuations of commercial and multifamily properties throughout the northeast corridor with the Washington, D.C., office of Ratcliffe, Cali, Duffy, Hughes & Company, where he advised on acquisition and disposition strategies and property operations. From 1986 to 1991, he completed 65 market assessments of residential, commercial, and industrial projects nationwide for Halcyon Ltd.

Lavash is a member of the Urban Land Institute and the Congress for the New Urbanism, and is

listed in *Who's Who in the East*. He also serves on the technical advisory panel committee of ULI's Washington, D.C., District Council. Several of his projects have received national planning or honor awards from the American Planning Association. Lavash holds a master of city planning degree from the University of Pennsylvania with a certificate in real estate development from its Wharton School of Business and a bachelor of arts in urban studies, cum laude, from the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth.

David S. Plummer

Coral Gables, Florida

Plummer founded David Plummer & Associates in 1978. The firm provides a wide variety of engineering services with an emphasis on traffic and roadway design. His engineering career spans more than 35 years and includes some of the most significant projects in Florida. Plummer's public engineering experience involves local, county, and state jurisdictions where he pioneered studies of street protection systems to reduce crime and traffic. He was affiliated with the Criminal Justice Institute in south Florida and promotes close cooperation between law enforcement and traffic engineering.

Plummer previously worked at Northwestern University, the California Department of Transportation, and the Illinois Department of Transportation. He was a graduate of the training programs of both public organizations. This training included planning, traffic engineering, design, material testing, and construction. He has served as a member of the Coral Gables Planning and Zoning Board, the Dade County Impact Fee Committee, and the Northwest Dade/Southwest Broward Planning Committee. He also has been involved in Florida Supreme Court transportation training, the Criminal Justice Institute, and committees of the Florida Department of Community Affairs.

Plummer received a BS in civil engineering from the University of Arizona and an MBA from Northwestern University. He is a registered engineer in the states of Florida and Illinois, and a member of

the Urban Land Institute and the Institute of Transportation Engineers.

Harry G. Robinson III

Washington, D.C.

Robinson is a design professional educated in architecture, city planning, and urban design. His career in these disciplines includes practice/consultation, teaching, management/leadership, and research/publication. Currently, he is professor of urban design and dean emeritus, adviser to the president and director, Center for Urban Design in Transportation, Howard University, and principal of TRG Consulting, an international design firm.

From 1979 to 1995, Robinson served as dean and professor of urban design at Howard University's School of Architecture and Planning, and subsequently served as the university's interim vice president of academic affairs and vice president for university administration.

The president of the United States twice appointed Robinson commissioner of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, which he was elected to chair. He also was elected president of two national architectural organizations: the National Architectural Accrediting Board in 1996, and the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards in 1992. Robinson is author of the award-winning third history of Howard University, *The Long Walk: The Placemaking Legacy of Howard University*. He holds professional degrees in architecture and city planning, a bachelor of architecture degree with design honors, an MCP from Howard University, and an MCP in urban design from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

Mtamanika Youngblood

Atlanta, Georgia

Youngblood is chair of the board of the Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC), Atlanta's leading nonprofit, community-based builder of affordable homes in the central city. HDDC is committed to neighborhood revitalization based on historic preservation and economic diversity. Its goal is to reestablish the mixed-income residential community that once thrived around Sweet Auburn Avenue and the childhood home of Martin Luther King, Jr.

As a community-based developer, HDDC has built strong links to neighborhood organizations and homeowner groups. Through discussion and collaboration with local residents, Youngblood has helped develop innovative new strategies for community revitalization by combining mixed-income housing and historic preservation. Among these strategies are a firm policy of nondisplacement of existing neighborhood residents and a block-by-block pattern of development that emphasizes scale and sustainable improvements.

Youngblood also served as a James A. Johnson 2000 Community Fellow of the Fannie Mae Foundation. She most recently served as the senior vice president for community impact at United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta. Youngblood earned an MBA in organizational management from Atlanta University and was sponsored by the Fannie Mae Foundation as a fellow to the John F. Kennedy School of Government Executive Program at Harvard University.