



The Mayors' Institute on City Design

The National Endowment for the Arts

The United States Conference of Mayors

The American Architectural Foundation

Meeting Summary

West Session

Phoenix, Arizona

March 10–12, 2010

Mayors' Institute on City Design

The Mayors' Institute on City Design is a program that conducts a series of intimate, closed-door two-day symposia intended to offer a small group of invited mayors a better understanding of the design of American cities. Participation is limited to eighteen to twenty people: half are mayors and half are urban design experts and other resource people.

The mayors represent a wide variety of cities and bring a wide variety of design issues to the table. The resource team members range from architects and planners to public policy specialists, developers, preservationists, sociologists, lawyers, and historians, and include practicing professionals and distinguished academics.

The institute format encourages a high degree of participation and exchange. Each mayor presents a design issue from his or her city, which is analyzed by the other mayors and the design professionals who, working together, discuss how an appropriate design process can help solve the problem. The exchange between mayors and the resource team sparks lively debate, opens new perspectives, and leads to creative proposals for solutions.

The resource team members also make presentations on general principles of urban design. These provide important background for the mayors on planning, urban design, landscape design, and the role of developers. The mayors and designers discuss both generic and specific problems facing cities today, and explore how the public and private sectors can work together to improve the conditions of our cities. Particular emphasis is placed on how the design process works, and on the importance of the mayor as city designer.

The Mayors' Institute on City Design is a leadership initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts, in partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors and the American Architectural Foundation.

This document is the meeting summary of the West Session of the Mayors' Institute on City Design, hosted by the Phoenix Urban Research Laboratory, School of Architecture + Landscape Architecture, Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, Arizona State University, in Phoenix, Arizona on March 10-12, 2010. This summary draws on the background materials prepared for the session's briefing book as well as on the actual presentations made during the session.

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**Mayors' Institute on City Design
West
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Final Agenda

Wednesday, March 10, 2010

Throughout the day	Arriving participants will be collected by car service from their inbound flights
4:00 pm	Meet in Sheraton Phoenix Downtown Hotel, 340 North 3rd Street, Phoenix, lobby for light rail tour: John Farry , Metro Light Rail
5:00 pm	Tour of Tempe Transportation Center, 200 East Fifth Street, Tempe: Bonnie Richardson , City of Tempe, and John Kane , Architekton
6:00–7:00 pm	Reception at <i>House of Tricks</i> , 114 East 7th Street, Tempe
7:00 pm	Opening Dinner at House of Tricks Opening Remarks: Michael Underhill , Story Bellows
7:20 pm	Introductions Keynote Address: Grady Gammage Jr.
9:00 pm	Depart House of Tricks and return to downtown Phoenix via light rail
9:45 pm	OPTIONAL: Conversation continues at The District Lounge in the Sheraton Downtown Phoenix Hotel

Thursday, March 11, 2010

7:00 am	Breakfast available at the hotel
8:20 am	Meet in hotel lobby to walk to ASU Phoenix Urban Research Laboratory (PURL), 234 North Central Avenue, 8th floor, Phoenix
8:30 am	Introduction and Overview Story Bellows
8:45–9:05 am	Resource Team Presentation: Darren Petrucci
9:05–10:25 am	Mayor Case Study Presentation and Discussion: Meridian, Idaho The Honorable Tammy de Weerd
10:25–10:35 am	Break
10:35–10:55 am	Resource Team Presentation: James Charlier
10:55–12:15 pm	Mayor Case Study Presentation and Discussion: Bellevue, Washington The Honorable Don Davidson
12:15–12:50 pm	Depart PURL on foot for Downtown Phoenix Public Art Tour: Bob Allen, Ed Lebow, Raphael Ngotie , City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture
12:50–1:50 pm	Lunch at <i>Hanny's, 40 North 1st Street, Phoenix</i> (on foot)
2:00–2:20 pm	Resource Team Presentation: Kevin Kellogg
2:20–3:40 pm	Mayor Case Study Presentation and Discussion: Newport Beach, California The Honorable Keith D. Curry
3:40–3:50 pm	Break
3:50–4:10 pm	Resource Team Presentation: Nancy Rottle
4:10–5:30 pm	Mayor Case Study Presentation and Discussion: Federal Way, Washington The Honorable Linda Kochmar
6:45 pm	Meet in hotel lobby to walk to dinner
7:00 pm	Dinner at <i>Kincaid's Fish Chop & Steakhouse, 2 South 3rd Street, Phoenix</i>
9:45 pm	OPTIONAL: Conversation continues at The District Lounge in the Sheraton Downtown Phoenix Hotel

Friday, March 12, 2010

7:00 am	Breakfast available at the hotel
8:30 am	Meet in hotel lobby to walk to ASU Phoenix Urban Research Laboratory (PURL)
8:45–9:05 am	Resource Team Presentation: Joseph Ewan
9:05–10:25 am	Mayor Case Study Presentation and Discussion: Olympia, Washington The Honorable Doug Mah
10:25–10:40 am	Break and group photo
10:40–11:00 am	Resource Team Presentation: John Kaliski
11:00–12:20 pm	Mayor Case Study Presentation and Discussion: Carson City, Nevada The Honorable Bob Crowell
12:20–1:20 pm	Lunch at PURL
1:20–1:40 pm	Resource Team Presentation: Kurt Creager
1:40–3:00 pm	Mayor Case Study Presentation and Discussion: Lakewood, Colorado The Honorable Bob Murphy
3:00–3:10 pm	Break
3:10–3:30 pm	Resource Team Presentation: Samuel Assefa
3:30–4:50 pm	Mayor Case Study Presentation and Discussion: Avondale, Arizona The Honorable Marie Lopez Rogers
4:50–5:10 pm	Closing remarks: Michael Underhill, Story Bellows
5:30 pm	Return to hotel on foot
6:15 pm	Depart from hotel lobby for closing dinner
7:00 pm	Closing Dinner at <i>Portland's Restaurant & Wine Bar, 105 West Portland Street, Phoenix</i>



(front row, left to right) Nancy Rottle, University of Washington, Seattle, WA; Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers, Avondale, AZ; Joseph Ewan, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ; Darren Petrucci, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ; Story Bellows, Mayors' Institute on City Design, Washington, DC; Kevin Kellogg, Kellogg and Associates and Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ; Kurt Creager, Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ; (back row, left to right) John Kaliski, Urban Studio, Los Angeles, CA; Samuel Assefa, Phoenix Sustainable Asset Management, Chicago, IL; Mayor Bob Murphy, Lakewood, CO; Mayor Tammy de Weerd, Meridian, ID; Mayor Doug Mah, Olympia, WA; Mayor Keith Curry, Newport Beach, CA; Mayor Bob Crowell, Carson City, NV; Mayor Linda Kochmar, Federal Way, WA; James Charlier, Charlier Associates, Boulder, CO; Mayor Don Davidson, Bellevue, WA



Conference Events:

(left column) Tour of the Tempe Transit Center, including the green roof and bicycle storage facility, with Bonnie Richardson, City of Tempe, and John Kane, Architekton.

(right column) Tour of downtown Phoenix public art and Phoenix Convention Center art with Bob Allen, Ed Lebow, and Raphael Ngotie of the City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture.



Mayor Bob Murphy presents to the group.



Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers presents to the group



James Charlier advises Mayor Tammy de Weerd



Mayor Tammy de Weerd and Mayor Doug Mah



James Charlier, Michael Underhill, Darren Petrucci and Mayor Linda Kochmar



John Kaliski with Mayor Don Davidson and Kevin Kellogg

MICD West 2010

The Mayors' Institute on City Design 2010 West Regional session brought together mayors from a diverse range of communities, each facing unique challenges and opportunities. The process of making cities is by its nature messy, complicated, unpredictable, unrepeatable and reliant on the distinct circumstances of place and time. Despite this, and despite the many differences between the cities and their projects, a number of common themes emerged in the discussions that took place over the two and a half days of the institute.

Managing Complexity:

Over the past decade, there has been a shift in thinking in urban planning and design away from a compartmentalized approach to one that is transdisciplinary, dynamic and integrated. Even the smallest urban project brings together an incredibly complex array of issues. Each of the mayors was well aware that, especially under current economic conditions, every project needs to serve multiple purposes. Transportation, housing, business, ecology, energy, communication, community, and recreation are all interwoven in the urban fabric. In order to create vibrant and sustainable communities, cities must bring all of these forces together. Different levels of government, the private sector, and community groups need to work together to forge a vision that benefits the city as a whole.

Going Slowly:

Cities need to develop a vision of the future and devise strategies to phase that vision in through time. Large, developer-driven projects that try to do everything at once often lead to uniformity, detract from local character, and fail to bring the community together. "Build it and they will come" is not a philosophy that will work for most cities. Sustainable growth needs to be based in local conditions and the needs and potential of the local community. Incremental development helps build projects that are the right scale, promotes local ownership, creates unique places, and can help ensure responsible and affordable financing. The small things are often what give a city its character; cities should look to these "Plan B" tactics to build their larger strategies.

Building Connections:

Cities are above all places of connection: to jobs, to friends, to recreation. Cities need to pay attention to the social lives of their urban spaces. Human-scaled and walkable neighborhoods promote social connectivity, and provide for the chance encounter that can start friendships or business relationships. The right amount of density supports this kind of propinquity. Multiple transportation models—bike paths, greenways, bus, rail—promote a diversity of opportunities for connection that auto-centric planning lacks. Successful cities bring together people, places, opportunities and ideas in ways that are convenient, flexible and accessible.

Supporting Quality of Life:

Urban design has enormous impact on how we live our daily lives. Good urban design promotes wellness—physical, social, psychological and economic. Cities need to reevaluate their growth models to help ensure that they grow in ways that contribute to quality of life. Public projects should be designed to be "amenity infrastructure" that actively enhances the experience of place, and "green infrastructure" that works with, not against, the processes of nature. There is growing interest in communities that are more sustainable, have greater social connectivity, promote active lifestyles and require less driving. The generation now entering the workforce and the baby-boomers soon entering retirement are both becoming more and more interested in living in walkable, dense, mixed-use neighborhoods. Successful cities will need to plan for the changing lifestyle choices of coming generations.



Meridian, Idaho

Case Statement

Meridian is located just west of Boise, Idaho. The current population is approximately 65,000, representing a 673 percent growth since 1990. This explosive growth is testament to the quality of life possible in Meridian with its access to recreation, great climate, and small-town feel.

Downtown Meridian is at the geographic center of the city. Downtown is anchored by a new civic center recently built at the southern end of Main Street, between Main Street and the Union Pacific Railroad's right-of-way. The traditional-style Main Street extends north for approximately five blocks. The street continues another four blocks until it ends at Fairview/Cherry Lane, the major east-west arterial, and a shopping center. Small, one- and two-story buildings with local business line Main Street. On either side to the east and west of Main Street, traditional single-family houses with front porches and yards line a grid of residential streets. Many houses have been converted for small business or live/work. Downtown Meridian already has an urban fabric that New Urbanists dream to create in new towns. The question now is how to accommodate growth and add density so that the downtown can continue to serve as the center of the community but do so in a manner that does not destroy what currently makes it so attractive.

Rail service—inter- and/or intra-community—at the Union Pacific right-of-way is expected in the future but is probably many years away. In the meantime, planners want to use the bus system to help establish habits of public transit. The bus, together with more extensive use of bicycles and an enhanced network for pedestrians, should serve as the basis for transit-oriented development in the downtown and help create the density needed for future transit improvements. More immediately, there is an effort to create a rails-to-trails improvement of the right-of-way.

Just north of the rail right-of-way and just east of the new civic center are approximately four blocks of underutilized land that may become available to the city for urban renewal. New development here could help to serve as an enhanced southern anchor to Main Street and the downtown. This may be the right location for additional civic or arts facilities, dense housing, or other appropriate downtown uses. The problem may be how to develop this land without lessening the use of Main Street.

Meridian, Idaho (continued)

Overall, the leaders of Meridian feel they have a great city with a unique downtown that identifies with the past and is in tune with the future. Important elements include attractive historic buildings, a traditional grid of walkable streets, and an assortment of small shops and restaurants. What is needed now is increased vibrancy in order to assure that downtown remains the important cultural and economic center of the city.

Questions

- 1) How can new development at the urban renewal site add density to downtown in a way that enhances Main Street?
- 2) What kind of increase in density in downtown is appropriate for both future public transit plans and the current historical small town feel?
- 3) How should the railroad right-of-way be developed so that it contributes to downtown and allows connections to the south?
- 4) Where should the city invest its resources to attract private investment in downtown?

Discussion

Everyone was very impressed by the charm of Meridian's historic downtown and thought that the project area Mayor de Weerd discussed in her presentation is a key part of town with great potential. It was generally agreed that to best take advantage of this potential, Meridian should create a comprehensive vision for its downtown and its role in the city and the region, then study how to best implement that vision. Several topics dominated the conversation: working with the railroad, what kind of infrastructure investments might be appropriate, and implementation strategies.

The resource team members and mayors who had experience working with railroads agreed that they tend to work at a very slow pace and are not good developers. It was suggested that Meridian could become the master lessee or potentially create or designate a third-party agency or master developer to be the lessee for the area and to administer a master development and lease plan. Alternatively, the railroad could be seen as a co-developer, with the intent for the City to control lease terms and contracting. In any case, it is important that the railroad retain ownership of the land in order to keep the special use constraint active and prevent a reversion to the underlying ownership.

Because of Meridian's location within the region, it has the potential to be both a destination and a catalyst for regional development. Meridian needs to develop a comprehensive vision that takes into account its place within the region, and decide on appropriate infrastructure investments and zoning changes. Keeping the three existing rail crossings active is very important, though investing in overpasses or tunnels to facilitate rail crossing may not be worthwhile considering the relatively light rail traffic passing through town. On the other hand, a large civic infrastructure investment like this could signal that Meridian is serious about downtown revitalization, and could incentivize private development. The Rails with Trails program can act as a good foot in the door for railroad partnership and development plans, and be a first step towards establishing a transit corridor.

Meridian, Idaho (continued)

Other less capital-intensive infrastructure changes and improvements could have a dramatic impact. Landscape should be considered as infrastructure. Tree groves and tree-lined pedestrian corridors can create area identity and greatly improve street level pedestrian experience. Underutilized hardscape such as parking lots could be converted to pocket parks, farmers' markets, or other "green" uses. Existing buildings and infrastructure can be repurposed, for example converting a light industrial building into a recreation center, an arts center or a business incubator.

These different types of infrastructure investment point to two complementary implementation strategies: a long-term strategy to achieve the full comprehensive vision, and an incremental strategy to energize the area in the interim. Interim uses for existing buildings could be determined by Meridian as leases become available. By populating the site with interim uses of existing structures through a master plan, instant value would be added to the site. Interim uses could initially be set up as temporary, but could allow for a transition to a permanent use. If a partnership is worked out with the railroad company, Meridian could approach the coordination as "a way to help the railroad make more money" by increasing land value adjacent to the rail. Bergamot Station in Santa Monica, California was mentioned as a precedent of an industrial warehouse area being converted into a thriving arts district. In Bergamot Station, the interim solution for an underutilized area has become a permanent and vital part of the city. An interim strategy master plan should take advantage of the existing buildings, infrastructure and qualities of the site. Potentially, a longer-term strategy could emerge from successful interim tactics.



Bellevue, Washington

Case Statement

Bellevue is a rapidly growing city in King County, Washington, across Lake Washington from Seattle. Long known as a suburb of Seattle, it is now an urban center in its own right with over 44,000 employees and 5,500 residents in its downtown alone. The city population was 109,569 at the 2000 census but by 2009 had grown to an estimated 120,600. With its immediate proximity to Redmond, home of the Microsoft main campus, and direct highway access to Seattle, Bellevue is home to many small and large businesses, including headquarters for Puget Sound Energy, Eddie Bauer, Expedia, T-Mobile USA, Drugstore.com, PACCAR, Coinstar, and Symetra Financial. Bellevue was also recently ranked number one on CNNMoney's list of the best places to live and launch businesses.

The city's long-term plans include the Bel-Red Corridor Project, a large-scale planning effort to encourage the redevelopment of a large section of the city located between downtown Bellevue and the adjacent city of Redmond. The Bel-Red Corridor capitalizes on the 2008 approval of East Link, the 18-mile extension of Seattle area's Link Light Rail system. The light rail extension through Bellevue is planned to open in 2020–2021.

As one of Bellevue's major employment areas, the Bel-Red Subarea historically included a large share of the city's land zoned for light industrial and commercial uses. Particularly on the west end, land uses include sprawling, large lot warehouses and distribution buildings, with acres of surface parking. The transportation network is currently sparse and discontinuous with little in the way of a street grid. Six streams run through the area, all heavily impacted by past development, but remarkably still providing some functioning fish habitat. The area has one major city recreational facility (Highland Park and Community Center) but no substantial neighborhood parks or trails.

In recent years, light industry in the Bel-Red Corridor has seen significant declines, and the area has been in transition. Several large employers moved out or greatly reduced their operations. Between 1995 and 2004, employment dropped by more than five percent in the Bel-Red area, while increasing by 20 percent in Bellevue as a whole.

Bellevue, Washington (continued)

The Bel-Red Subarea Plan is based on a “nodal” development pattern, which concentrates future development in the vicinity of potential future light rail stations. Two nodes—one on the east and one on the west—are included in the plan, with a major developer already in place for the western node. The nodes are envisioned to be areas of sufficient development intensity, amenities, recreation opportunities, and mix of uses that support a high level of pedestrian activity. Because of the current economic climate, development is projected to be slower than originally expected, particularly in the eastern node. It is expected that the area will evolve over a number of decades, with the underpinning of continued strong market demand given this area’s proximity to downtown Bellevue, Microsoft headquarters, and other major employers.

A key part of the city’s vision for this area is the restoration of its natural streams and wetlands. The streams will be the basis for greenbelts throughout the Bel-Red development, forming a significant portion of the area’s public open space. It is also critical that the restoration of the streams returns function to the natural systems and creates high-quality salmon habitat. The restoration of the streams and their integration into a dynamic, mid-density urban area will require a great deal of attention to high-quality urban design, sensitive to the interface between the natural and built environments. It will also be important to manage the restoration project as a whole, even as development occurs gradually.

The plan for Bel-Red recognizes the economic value and the benefits to the community of the many existing light industrial and service uses, particularly to the north of the proposed development area. The planned land-use designations retain areas for many of these commercial uses to continue, but there are concerns about creating a good transition between these areas and the new, mid-density mixed-use development.

The city has also identified opportunities for an arts and cultural district that builds off the success of the existing Pacific Northwest Ballet School in the area. Plans envision public art, cultural uses, and complementary activities to be broadly integrated throughout the redevelopment of the subarea. Potential partnerships could occur between the city and nonprofit arts groups to further this concept.

The Bel-Red Subarea Plan is an ambitious vision that calls for a substantial departure from the area’s past. In addition to sweeping land-use changes in portions of the area, the plan calls for significant investments in transportation, parks, and environmental improvements. Successful implementation will require a coordinated strategy, with ongoing commitment, a full array of tools, and dedication over time.

Questions

- 1) What are good design strategies for integrating natural and built environments at this site? How can mid-density development and natural open space work together in a unified and cohesive manner? What are some ideas to fund and implement open space amenities needed to help transform the subarea?

Bellevue, Washington (continued)

- 2 What can the city do to help prevent the remaining service business and heavy retail—auto repair shops, appliance stores, etc.—from being priced out of the surrounding area once redevelopment takes hold? When uses will be displaced by new development, how can the city help transition retail and service uses out of the nodes into retail areas elsewhere in the corridor?
- 3) What are some options for a Bel-Red Cultural District? How could interim use opportunities be capitalized upon? What types of partnerships are most effective in redeveloping areas?

Discussion

The resource team was struck by the sophistication and thoroughness of Bellevue's Bel-Red plan and Mayor Davidson's grasp of the issues. However, as the discussion progressed questions were raised about the design, the implementation strategy and the cost of the plan.

One of the first questions raised was about buy-in for the plan by nearby residents and businesses. The plan calls for major changes to the proposed site, and it will be necessary to convince current residents that these are meaningful and worthwhile investments and that they will be a part of the new vision being created for this part of the city. It is especially important to address the transition between the new nodes of development and surrounding areas. Some of the resource team members felt that the current design of the two nodes would create islands that would feel detached from the rest of the city, and that the western node in particular seemed too much like an office campus. It was observed that the nodes might be too spread out and might compete against one another. It might make sense either to focus more on one node or to take better advantage of the space between the nodes. It is important that the two development nodes and the surrounding areas all work together and reinforce each other.

How development is phased in will be critical to the success of the Bel-Red vision. Some resource team members were concerned that the plan seems too developer driven, particularly the single-owner western node, and too top-down planned to allow for organic incremental development. Flexibility needs to be built into any twenty-five year plan. Some of the suggestions for making the plan more integrated, incremental and diversified included: delaying one node of development to help maintain demand; considering short-term strategies in addition to the long-term plan; creating more of a linear development scheme, as opposed to the nodal plan, that would facilitate phased in development over time; and designing from the perspective of the street view, not the bird's eye view. It was also observed that the only design idea driving the plan is that of New Urbanism and that it may be worthwhile exploring other urban design models and running financial analyses. Also, reducing the percentage of office space in the western node would help the project qualify for federal funds.

Most of the resource team agreed that it will be important to reduce the cost of the current plan in conjunction with an incremental phase in of development. Much of the cost savings could come from proper planning of the transportation infrastructure and open space. Coordinating the stream network and roadway network could create an identity for the community while providing destination and linkage. By coordinating the two networks, cost would be saved by eliminating excessive roadway and stream crossings. Extensive roadway infrastructure may not be necessary, especially looking twenty-five years into the future, if other modes of transportation are considered. The transportation

Bellevue, Washington (continued)

plan should not address only cars; it should include creating a network of bikable and walkable green, and water corridors.

Coordinating transit infrastructure with the area's open spaces would also help with the goal of stream and habitat restoration. The streams cannot have ecological integrity when surrounded by too much impervious surface. Groundwater penetration and runoff needs to be fully integrated into the city's infrastructure and addressed in the strategic plan. Additionally, it might be smart for the city to acquire strategic pieces of land key to restoration and the creation of greenways in the early stages of development when land prices are still relatively cheap. The City might want to consider a critical areas ordinance for opportunities and assets to preserve. The resource team felt that the stream corridors and other open spaces could give this area its identity and value, and that getting this part of the plan right should be a priority.



Newport Beach, California

Case Statement

Newport Beach, located in Orange County, California, is known as a “Community of Villages.” Because of historical development patterns and diverse geography, the city is comprised of eight distinct residential and commercial areas, each with its own unique character and sense of community. Newport Beach consistently ranks as one of the country’s wealthiest cities, with property values and median incomes among the highest in the nation. Newport Beach’s official population is approximately 86,000, but population swells to over 100,000 in the summer. Warm summer weekends draw as many as 100,000 tourists to area beaches. Population growth has occurred primarily as a result of land annexation, including the 2002 annexation of Newport Coast, a large area of recently developed luxury gated communities, the Pelican Hill Resort, and historic vacation cottages on the southwest side of the city.

Newport Beach is currently planning the construction of a new civic center, which will include a new city hall, the expansion of the existing city library, a parking structure, and a 16-acre park. The library is already extremely popular, attracting half a million visitors a year. The new civic center will be located near the geographic center of the city in Newport Beach’s primary business and retail hub. Within walking distance of Fashion Island, a large and successful high-end shopping center and numerous high- and mid-rise office and residential buildings, the new civic center promises to be a popular destination for a broad range of residents and visitors and could help define a sense of civic identity for the city as a whole.

The city hall and park will be built on a long, narrow piece of land stretching to the northeast of the library. The site is bounded by MacArthur Boulevard, a major thoroughfare, on the east and Avocado Avenue to the west and is bisected approximately two-thirds of the way to the north by San Miguel Drive. A pedestrian bridge is planned to span San Miguel Drive. A transit station serving several local bus routes is located at the far north end of the site. The park design calls for large areas of native landscaping and will retain the wetlands currently in place. Several areas of the park will have panoramic views of the ocean.

Newport Beach, California

Planning for the civic center is at a late stage with construction expected to begin in 2010 and to be complete by 2012. However, the city has very recently decided to rethink and reinforce a significant public art component to the project, likely taking the form of a sculpture garden dispersed throughout and integrated into the project site. It is hoped that some permanent, signature works can be commissioned for the park and possibly the grounds adjacent the buildings and perhaps integrated into the park's infrastructure—e.g., the pedestrian bridges, a bird viewing station, retaining walls, slopes, etc. It has not been decided how to best integrate potential art projects with current designs for the site. There are also plans to develop an ongoing program of temporary exhibitions, commissions, and performances, possibly in partnership with the Orange County Art Museum located nearby. The Newport Beach Arts Commission has a robust performing arts program and has completed a couple of moderately scaled public art works in recent years. The funding mechanisms for the civic center art program have not yet been worked out.

The city sees this as an opportunity to lay the foundations of a unique and dynamic public art program that will not only make the new civic center an exciting destination but will also engender a sense of civic identity and pride for the residents of Newport Beach.

Questions

- 1) What are the best opportunities for integrating artwork into the infrastructure and design of the civic center and park?
- 2) How can the art program work with the site as a whole to create a living sense of place rooted in the natural beauty of the area and the character of the community?
- 3) Are there ways that the public art program can be designed and structured to create a greater sense of civic identity and to encourage interest and philanthropy from residents, especially in the recently annexed areas of the city?
- 4) How can the art program create a sense of connection and civic unity among the various villages that make up Newport Beach?
- 5) Are there successful examples of partnerships between museums and municipalities in public art programs?

Discussion

The resource team and the mayors were excited about Newport Beach's plan for a civic park and public art program and felt that this project does have the potential to be a connecting point for the city. Connectivity was a major theme of the conversation, both the physical connectivity of the new park to the surrounding city, and the psychological connectivity that a successful public art program could foster.

The panel was concerned that the new park could end up being too much of an island unto itself, and that the lack of connection from the site to the rest of the city would need to be addressed. Though many amenities are within walking distance, design of the site and the surrounding streetscapes will determine whether people see it as a walking destination. Pedestrian friendly street treatments and

Newport Beach, California (continued)

crossings could go a long way towards ensuring walkability, as could proper treatment of the existing public transit station. Pedestrian points of access to the park will also be critical. It was also suggested that the City consider grade changes at San Miguel Drive to better connect the two sections of the park.

Suggestions were made about how the new buildings and infrastructure in the park could better engage the city and add vibrancy to the urban fabric, such as artist studios or small shops integrated into the parking structure facing pedestrian areas or the street. The resource team was divided on the importance of bringing artists into the design of the parks infrastructure. Some felt that this could lead to infrastructure that would quickly look dated, while others felt it would be critical to prevent the art from merely being a decorative “skin” on the structures. It was also pointed out that by incorporating the art into the infrastructure, much of the fabrication costs for the art could be folded into the construction budget.

The panel thought that James Turrell and Robert Irwin would be great for this project and would create an interactive experience and connect the art to the landscape and the city. It was suggested that an established but younger artist such as Olafur Eliasson be added to the mix of initial artists. Several people noted the importance of asking the right questions of any well-established artist brought in to the project.

It was viewed as extremely important that the art be the beginnings of a continuing program and not a finished product to be put in place and let stand. This is a great opportunity for increased public engagement and community pride. Interactive art, rotating exhibitions, event-based art, performances and education events can bring people to the site and keep them coming back and help them to feel like an active participant. A strong partnership with the Orange County Museum of Art will help achieve this goal. A kind of zoning overlay could apply to the art in the park, with works relating to the city and community nearer to City Hall, and works engaging the natural environment through the wetland areas. The artwork could be the basis of educational programs.

Once the art program is established in the park, it should extend out into the community. This branching out, along with interactive installations, temporary exhibitions, performances and action oriented activities such as art walks, will be key in creating a sense of a connected community that will engage residents who haven't previously been vested in the city or interested in public art.



Federal Way, Washington

Case Statement

Located in southwest King County on Puget Sound and the I-5 corridor, midway between Seattle and Tacoma, Federal Way is Washington state's eighth largest city. Originally established as a logging settlement in the late 1800s, Federal Way experienced substantial growth as an unincorporated commuter suburb starting in the 1960s following the construction of the I-5 freeway. Federal Way was incorporated as a city in 1990. It is the home of the Weyerhaeuser Corporation, one of the country's largest forest product companies, and a world-class aquatics training center. Because of its location between the urban centers of Seattle and Tacoma, Federal Way, along with much of southern King County, is poised for significant economic and population growth in the coming years. The city is eager to take advantage of this potential and is working towards establishing a dense and walkable urban core as the focus of this growth.

Federal Way's city center and retail hub is a 414-acre site currently occupied by the Commons at Federal Way, a large shopping mall (formerly the Sea-Tac Mall, opened in 1975), and assorted big-box and strip retail. Directly off of the I-5, the city center is bisected by 320th Street, a major east-west arterial, and Pacific Highway, a major north-south arterial. The city center has been zoned into two areas: the City Center Core and the City Center Frame. The Core is zoned for high-density mixed use with a nominal height limit of 200 feet, though there is a good deal of flexibility in the ultimate height limit. The core zone development regulations call for pedestrian-oriented design solutions and restrict auto-oriented uses or developments. The Frame, to the north and west of the core, is zoned for mid-density mixed use with a nominal 85-foot height limit and has fewer restrictions on auto-related development.

This area is ripe for redevelopment and transformation from a low-density, retail-only location dominated by surface parking, into a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood interspersed with parks and open space. There has already been movement in this direction. The Federal Way Transit Center opened in 2006, offering access to three separate bus systems including local routes and express commuter buses, a 1,200-space parking structure, and bicycle storage. Adjacent to the Transit Center, a mid-rise

Federal Way, Washington (continued)

senior housing development is currently under construction. There are also two major high-rise projects being actively pursued by private developers.

As the city center develops in the coming years, the city wants to ensure that its vision of a dense, walkable neighborhood is realized. Key components of this vision are a potential performing arts and conference center (PACC) and a series of loosely linked parks, plazas, and open space to enhance pedestrian movement, potentially between the two large city parks located directly to the northeast and southwest of the city center. The city has commissioned a study of several possible locations and concepts for the PACC. It has also put into place zoning codes to encourage mixed-use development and the creation of parks and plazas on privately developed land.

The city currently owns an undeveloped four-acre plot in the center of the city center area, though not on either of the main thoroughfares. This plot is currently optioned for high-rise development by a group of private investors; however, the option expires at the end of March. If the investors of the proposed high-rise are not able to secure funding by the deadline, which is questionable, this would be a good potential site for the city's PACC and associated codevelopment.

Another option is for the city to acquire a 20-acre parcel north of the four-acre site and located in the City Center Frame, currently occupied by a strip retail center and two unoccupied big-box type retail buildings. There is potential for the city to acquire this land but would require building enough political will and likely the ability to form appropriate public/private partnerships to ensure that the whole parcel could be fully developed.

Questions

- 1) How can the city best leverage its public development resources in the city center in order to prompt private development that will meet the city's vision for the area?
- 2) Is the performing arts and conference center a good use of public resources to catalyze mixed-use development in the city center? If so, how is this best achieved, both in terms of design and policy/financing?
- 3) How can the city center take form as a unified whole given the variety of land ownership, the unpredictable pattern of development, and the combination of superblocks and major arterial roadways? Are there strategies for making the Commons at Federal Way feel like an integral part of a vitalized city center? How can the city plan for a loosely linked but orderly system of parks and plazas distributed throughout various public and private developments?

Discussion

The resource team was very supportive of the overall idea of converting central Federal Way from a parking-intensive conglomeration of strip malls into a vibrant and walkable city center, but had some serious concerns about how this vision would be implemented. One of the main themes of the conversation was the need for Federal Way to create a comprehensive plan for its city center based

Federal Way, Washington (continued)

in the character of the community and to take more control of the design and development. A “trail city” with a network of pedestrian trails or open spaces could be successful, but it is crucial that such a strategy integrates into the overall development plan and urban fabric of Federal Way. Similarly, the city is populated enough to support a performing arts and convention center, but it should be a component of the established community vision in order to achieve success.

The panel suggested that the City should consider holding a series of design charrettes with a technical design advisory board to work with the community to articulate a sophisticated vision with established parameters. This would provide a set of metrics to gauge future projects based on an evaluation from a common established base line. Developing a basic framework plan to dictate the vision for what downtown should look like would let the city establish the rules for developers to work within. The City could also consider taking control of easements around buildings in order to enforce a set standard. This would allow the City to essentially control the building envelope and therefore the design itself.

New development should address the street properly by creating an inviting place for social interaction and connections between various indoor and outdoor spaces. Plazas and parks, whether City-owned or on private developments, should engage the street and be easily accessible by pedestrians. Parking garages should not face the street directly, and mid- and high-rise buildings should not be built on parking structure podiums that eliminate connection to the street. Adding three new streets each way would divide the site into manageable blocks. A good urban scale block would be approximately 330' square. The City should think of shifting its concept of development progress from just parcel development to street development and enhancement. Enhancing the streets would be an effective incentive for development and would add instant change and character.

Many of the resource team members were quite wary of plans for high-rise development in Federal Way, pointing to the many risks of this strategy. High-rise developments are much less likely to actually get built, and can tie up parcels of land for many years. Once built, high rises can soak up all demand, significantly delaying further development and densification, or be too expensive for the local market. Some panelist felt that there might be a place for high-rise developments, but advised that the city proceed with caution. General agreement was that mid-rise projects would be much better suited for this site, both because the financing would be more feasible, and because the scale would be more appropriate.

However the City proceeds, it needs to take charge of the urban design process and recognize that the value system of developers does not necessarily coincide with the established vision of Federal Way. Design details can mean the difference between success and failure. Development on the site should incorporate a good architect, landscape architect, transportation planner, and urban designer. This is a truly multi-disciplinary issue that done properly could be a catalyst and poster child for further development in Federal Way and the state.



Olympia, Washington

Case Statement

Located on the southernmost point of Puget Sound approximately 60 miles southwest of Seattle, Olympia is Washington's capital city. The Olympia peninsula was "Cheetwoot" (the black bear place) to the Coastal Salish, who occupied the site for many generations before the American settlement was established. The end of what we now know as Budd Inlet was a favorite shellfish gathering site for many Coastal Salish tribes, including the Nisqually, Duwamish, and Squaxin. Peter Puget and a crew from the British Vancouver Expedition visited the site in 1792. The first American settlers claimed the town site in 1846. The name of Olympia was selected by Isaac N. Ebey, a local resident, and reflected the view of the majestic Olympic Mountains on a clear day. Olympia developed around the waterfront and quickly became a hub of maritime commerce, at one time boasting the largest population of any town on Puget Sound.

Changes were made to the topography of the city in 1911–12, when almost 22 blocks were added to the downtown area in a gigantic dredging and filling effort to create a deep water harbor and fill the sloughs to the north and east of the city. Downtown buildings were constructed and residential areas south and west of the city developed. By the time of the completion of the grand domed legislative building in 1927, the city had become a fitting setting for such an imposing structure.

There is a thin strip of land, commonly referred to as the Isthmus, between Budd Inlet and the manmade Capitol Lake. The Isthmus is a critical transportation corridor for the city and includes two bridges for vehicular and pedestrian traffic and supports major east-west arterials connecting downtown Olympia to the west side of the city. The site acts as a gateway to downtown. Existing development includes a vacant nine-story commercial office building (105-feet tall), several vacant and blighted single-story office buildings, an occupied two-story office building, and a popular city park. The vast majority of the land and parcels are in private ownership. Parcels to the north of the site support a local grocery store, the area's yacht club, and a historic waterfront restaurant. Heritage Park, part of the State Capitol campus, is located to the south across 5th Avenue. Heritage Park surrounds Capitol Lake, a lake that was formed by the damming of the Deschutes River. The lake and park are owned and managed by Washington state. The State Capitol Campus Master Plan empha-

Olympia, Washington (continued)

sizes the connection between the State Capitol campus and the Puget Sound. The state has taken steps to ensure this connection through the creation of Heritage Park. The city has taken steps to retain this view corridor by acquiring most of the easternmost block and creating an interactive fountain park. The city has plans to acquire the remaining parcel on this block and expand the park.

In the fall 2007, the City of Olympia received an application to rezone a five-acre, four-block parcel on the Isthmus from “Urban Waterfront” to “Urban Waterfront Housing.” The change in zoning would allow the height of buildings on the isthmus to increase from 35 feet to 90 feet and would limit all new development within the zone to residential except for one story that could be used for office or commercial purposes and would require provisions for setbacks, view preservation, and creation of public viewing platforms. The zoning change was viewed by some as a means to encourage new market-rate housing and revitalize the downtown commercial and retail core. However, the 2008 rezoning process was extremely contentious. A majority spoke in opposition to the rezoning, principally concerned with the impact of the taller buildings on the views from the State Capitol campus and the large scale of the proposed development. The city council considered the citizen input and voted 4 to 3 to support the rezone to urban waterfront housing.

In 2009, several bills were introduced in the state legislature to restrict new building heights on the Isthmus to 35 feet and designate the area shoreline as a shoreline of statewide significance. The 2009 city council elections changed the council majority on this issue, and the rezoning was overturned in January 2010. Through citizen initiative, the city was required to retain a design firm to assess the feasibility of turning a majority of the Isthmus into a passive public park. The firm concluded that such an effort was feasible but expensive. In the spring 2009, the city council considered placing a voted measure on the ballot to fund the acquisition of the isthmus for a public park. Ultimately, the issue was not placed on the ballot.

The Isthmus is an area that is likely to be impacted by sea-level rise. Most of the area is less than one foot above extreme high tides. The city anticipates sea-level rise between 13 and 50 inches between now and 2100. Future design solutions need to take into consideration the potential impacts of sea-level rise. The city is also in the process of rebuilding its public boardwalk that lines much of the shoreline of Budd Inlet. The new boardwalk will be designed to accommodate a one-foot rise in sea level.

In its current condition, the Isthmus creates a large commercial “dead zone” in town. Several of the existing structures are vacant, in various stages of disrepair, and considered urban blight by many. This area detracts from an otherwise dramatic and dynamic pedestrian experience. The current buildings do not create a positive sense of synergy for new development. Finally, the area does not maximize the draw and retention of patrons and users of the parks and open space. As of this date, no new development has occurred on the Isthmus. No new funds have been allocated to move private property into public ownership. The community continues to be divided on the best use and design for the Isthmus. The Isthmus is a unique focal point and confluence of interests, issues, developments, and uses. Land use on and around the Isthmus continues to be challenging and an underutilized public and private asset in the capital city.

Olympia, Washington (continued)

Questions

- 1) Given all the interests and issues, what is the highest and best use for the Isthmus.
- 2) What tools can the city use to best build consensus among the various interest groups and create a path forward?
- 3) How can the city best use its power and authority to help to create a viable redevelopment solution for this property?
- 4) What public- and private-sector tools and resources exist that could help create and maximize a public-private partnership.
- 5) How can the qualities of connection and transition be best expressed in creating future design solutions for the property?
- 6) What would the impacts be of acquiring the Isthmus property and turning it into a public park be and how might those best be shared with the community to develop support for such a proposal?
- 7) What are the unrealized opportunities that this site creates and how can the city take advantage of them?
- 8) How does sea-level rise affect decisions on how to use the site in the future?

Discussion

Discussion of possible development of Olympia's isthmus started with the particulars of what kind of urban design would be appropriate for the site and evolved into a deep exploration of much larger ecological and urban planning issues. This case study sits right at the intersection of urban development, landscape ecology and the need to prepare for a changing climate.

Regarding proposed development for the isthmus, the resource team was surprised that the site was not better used, given the amenities of the view and waterfront. The site seems suited for waterfront restaurants, public buildings and parks and recreational activities. The area is visually accessible, therefore developing public buildings and uses would provide a valuable community identity. The City could reconsider private development to allow for public celebration of the city, such as a combination of public buildings and parks. Private buildings (such as a hotel, housing etc.) can surround the more central and significant public realm. Public and publically accessible private uses should be prioritized over housing. Vibrant public use of the isthmus could make infill housing in the downtown area more attractive.

There were questions about the wisdom placing ninety-foot buildings on the isthmus. The excessive cost of higher buildings, in addition to concerns about maintaining the view corridor, make four-story development more appropriate. If taller buildings are to go in, well-established smaller buildings should be in place. In any case, the City shouldn't let developers control the outcome and vision of

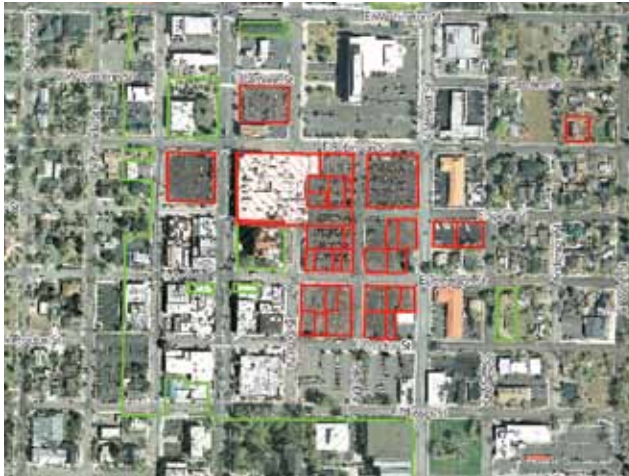
Olympia, Washington (continued)

the site. A city driven vision and strategy with community consensus would provide a design defense against bad development projects and help ensure that new building maximizes benefit to Olympia.

It became clear midway through the conversation that what is at stake on this site are very large ecological issues and the long-term future of Olympia. At some point, be it now or in twenty or fifty years, Olympia will have to grapple with sea level rise and the possible effects of a seismic event on the portions of the city built on unstable fill. It was suggested that the City take a big step back and take the time to thoroughly examine the larger context of the issues at play on the isthmus. The isthmus is a critical point of connection in the city, a visually and symbolically potent site, and the border between the city and Puget Sound. As such it is worthy of serious study and significant investment.

The City could develop a partnership with a university or other research entity to interpret and visualize the collected data related to sea level rise. It was also suggested that the City contact Dutch architects, planners and engineers, as they are at the forefront of designing in preparation for sea level rise. A line should be drawn around the portion of downtown that is most important and historically significant and steps taken to actively protect it. The isthmus should be seen not just as a location for buildings or parks, but as natural infrastructure that serves as a line of defense against sea level rise and potential natural disasters. Costs that would seem very high for standard development of the isthmus may seem very reasonable for disaster mitigation infrastructure.

An international competition could help create the vision and provide the innovative design ideas needed for this complex situation. Federal funding is available for the cost of such competitions. A competition would be an extremely cost-effective way of bringing world-class ideas to solve these complex issues. Additionally, a competition would bring public awareness and animate the community to accept change associated with sea level rise and the investments needed to deal with it. This is an opportunity to force engineers and designers to re-examine how infrastructure looks and works. Olympia could be at the cutting edge of future innovation and design as a disaster resilient city.



Carson City, Nevada

Case Statement

Carson City is located at the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains just 14 miles east of Lake Tahoe. Reno is 30 miles to the north. The first European settlers arrived in the area in 1843. Carson City began to boom with the discovery of gold in the late 1850s and was named Nevada's capital when statehood was established in 1864. Carson City's population and commerce declined with the construction of the Southern Pacific Railroad, which ran too far to the north for the city to take advantage of. Carson City defined itself as a small city and has grown slowly since. Carson City's economy is heavily reliant on government jobs, which make up 42 percent of the payroll earned in the community.

Downtown Carson City has been the subject of community-wide planning efforts for more than 20 years. With particular intensity over the past five years, a 35-block Downtown Revitalization Vision has been adopted with a mixed-use, form-based urban code. Established in 2008, the Carson City Downtown Consortium is a Carson City Redevelopment Authority-led initiative composed of hundreds of business and property owners in the downtown central businesses district. The boundaries of the redevelopment area are from West John Street to the intersection of Stewart Street and US 396 and from one block west of Mountain Street east to Valley Road.

The historic nature of the downtown core and the surrounding residential neighborhoods makes this area well-suited for redevelopment into a vibrant, walkable city center. The city would like the economic benefits of redeveloping the downtown core area to expand into surrounding areas. It is hoped that increased property values will make it economically feasible for individual property owners to invest in redevelopment of their properties. To the west of the downtown core is an historic residential neighborhood, which currently contains a mix of residential and small office uses. To the east is an older residential and office neighborhood that could be ripe for development spurred from downtown core redevelopment. Several residential motels bordering the downtown commercial zone to the east provide some affordable housing but are also the source of crime problems. The commercial corridors to the north and south of the downtown project area contain primarily strip commercial development from the 1960s–80s.

Carson City, Nevada (continued)

Carson City is considering a public-private partnership to construct a mixed-use development behind the Carson Nugget Casino on the Nugget's existing surface parking lots. The site, bounded by Carson Street to the west and Stewart Street to the east, is approximately eight acres and is adjacent to Nevada's state capitol campus. The project concept is centered on a new facility for the Carson City Library, which enjoys immense popularity. A high-tech Knowledge and Discovery Library will be the project's civic centerpiece, potentially combined with a business incubator, a digital media lab, office and retail space, an entertainment venue, a public plaza, and a transit hub. The mission of the Nugget economic development project is to foster a skilled and competitive local workforce; introduce high-tech, innovation-oriented business to the city; create high-wage jobs; and grow the local economy.

Recently, the Carson City Nugget's downtown land holdings have been put under the control of the Mae B. Adams Trust, which is working with the city to support downtown revitalization and this project in particular. This unique arrangement will make the land available for public/private development and could help the city finance its development goals. The Nugget Casino will continue to run as an independent business, but the rest of the Nugget property—the site of the proposed development—will be transferred to the Hop and Mae Adams Foundation, which will in turn put revenues from leases on the land back into community development and the public portion of this project. Other potential partners for this project include Western Nevada College, the state of Nevada, and other local municipal entities.

Development concepts have been formed and a preliminary financing and funding plan has been outlined. It is estimated that \$40 million in public funds, to be raised by a 1/8 cent sales tax and incremental property tax, and \$46 million in private investment will be needed. The property owner's team is in the process of working with the city to bring a master developer into the project to begin more detailed design and implementation strategies.

Questions

- 1) How can the city best leverage its partnership with the Hop and Mae Adams Foundation to secure the public financing and private investment needed to fund this project and to help ensure success of the project once it is built?
- 2) What are some design strategies to help create a dynamic flow throughout the various public and private uses of this project? What are strategies to establish flow and connections between this project and the adjoining areas in downtown, including the Carson Street shops, the Capitol Campus, and the surrounding historic residential/commercial neighborhoods?
- 3) What is a proper balance among all the proposed public and private uses in this project?
- 4) What can be done to help make this project a powerful catalyst that promotes further redevelopment and economic growth in downtown and Carson City as a whole?

Carson City, Nevada (continued)

Discussion

Everyone was impressed by the historic charm of Carson City's downtown, and felt that the proposed project does have the potential to catalyze development and economic growth. There were, however, many questions about the best way to implement the project, and challenges that could stand in the way of success were identified.

It was generally agreed that a new library could be a good anchor for this project so long as it is a true 21st century facility that integrates information distribution with digital technology, networking and connectivity, and educational programming. Rather than being a separate facility, the proposed digital media center can be an integral part of the library. The library should create a sense of place and be an obvious destination. It should also be designed to be very flexible in how the space is divided and programmed so that uses can change and evolve over time. It will be worth bringing in a good architect to achieve these goals. Sustainability achievement and LEED certification could create an opportunity for downtown to be a showcase and attract a greater audience.

How the various elements of this project relate to each other and to the city will be critical to its success. Multiple programs built into a facility, combined with transit and pedestrian connections to downtown retail and the Capitol Campus, should foster quality public space and social interaction on the ground. The site should link economic development, sustainability, and education—K-12 and higher education. Mixed use should be thought of not just vertically—different uses within single buildings—but also horizontally, with uses mixed along the length of the street. This approach can save cost and better anticipate demand by allowing for more incremental development. An incremental development plan could also prove to be a more efficient use of the Hop and Mae Adams Foundation funding.

A form-based code is very appropriate for downtown Carson City. It can promote incremental development in response to market demand while controlling the scale of buildings and their relationship to the street. Because of the current economic situation, it is unlikely that this plan can be built all at once as one big project. The resource team also thought that the established urban form of downtown Carson City is very good, and should be the starting point for design of this project.

The urban fabric of downtown Carson City is warm and welcoming in large part because of the small block size. The City should avoid removing the streets in the proposed project site. The current block size will allow for ample development. Removing streets would cause the project to be uncomfortably out of scale in relation to the rest of Carson City and would inhibit walkability. A suggestion was made that the city explore options to move or renovate the Nugget Casino in order to create a more healthy and lively streetscape. When developing a parking plan, the city could use architectural treatments to wrap the block with active uses. A distinctive parking structure can mark a destination and foster walkability within the historic downtown by signaling “park once and walk from here.”

Carson Street is a huge asset; development on the proposed site should engage it as much as possible. The City should be wary of adding too much new retail space, particularly along Stewart Street, as this could negatively impact the existing retail on Carson Street. Any park or open space built on the project site should be placed to draw pedestrian traffic from Carson Street. Many resource team

Carson City, Nevada (continued)

members were concerned with the proposed scale of the park space, and suggested having a smaller park that complements and links to the existing open space on the Capitol Campus. A connection could be made between the parks using green streetscaping along Carson Street. A modern design vocabulary for the new park could create a dynamic contrast to the Capitol Campus

The City should explore relationships with the State beyond it just being a tenant. A more extensive fiscal relationship, with the State providing loan guarantees to back the city-issued municipal bonds, could significantly boost chances of success for this project and provide benefit to both the City and the State. The office vacancies that will be created in older and out-dated buildings can make good incubator spaces, which by nature are lower-cost, short-term leases. The proposed business incubator should be thought of as a program, not necessarily a physical space within the new development.

It was observed that businesses will not locate in the new development just because there is a nice lifestyle and public space. The City needs to establish the value of locating downtown. This project is an opportunity for Carson City to show that downtown is a great place to live and to work.



Lakewood, Colorado

Case Statement

The city of Lakewood is located just west of Denver and is the fourth largest municipality in the state of Colorado. Growing from a population of some 90,000 when incorporated in 1969, the current population is approximately 150,000 and is projected to grow moderately to about 163,000 by 2025. Lakewood's economy is diverse with the largest employer being the Denver Federal Center (over 6,000 workers). Most housing is single-family detached, and the 2009 median house price was about \$237,000, slightly below the median house price in Denver. Nestled between the scenic foothills of the Rockies with an array of recreation opportunities and the energy of downtown Denver, Lakewood is an attractive place for active families. Situated at an altitude of 5,375 feet, the city enjoys sunshine more than 300 days per year on average and moderate temperatures through the year.

Three major east-west highways provide vehicular access to Denver now, but a commitment to public transit has led to a plan for light rail to connect Lakewood to the Denver metropolitan region by 2012. The Regional Transportation District (RTD) is currently constructing a new light rail line through Lakewood, with seven stops in the city. The city leadership, planners, and citizens have already done significant planning to accommodate and utilize light rail, and zoning adjustments and station area plans are underway. The project to consider here is the further development of these plans. Each location, each light rail stop, has great opportunities and challenges. It may make sense to develop different typologies for different stations that serve different kinds of neighborhoods. All of the stops represent important opportunities for transit-oriented development. Three of the Lakewood light rail stations are of particular interest: Oak Station, Wadsworth Station, and the Lamar Street Station.

The Wadsworth Station is the largest, to be located on a bridge over Wadsworth Boulevard, which is the major north-south surface street, two blocks south of Cofax Avenue, which is the major east-west surface street in the center of the city. A 1,000-space parking structure for park and ride is to be built next to the station. Lakewood is investing considerable resources in creating a signature bridge and plaza area at the station. Further study could identify ways to connect to Cofax Avenue, to enhance local streets and facilities for pedestrians, to encourage appropriately dense mixed-use development

Lakewood, Colorado (continued)

in the immediate area, and to make appropriate transitions between new development and the existing urban fabric. Currently approximately 4,700 people live and 2,600 people work within one-half mile of the station.

The planned station at Lamar Street will serve the Two Creeks and Edgewood neighborhoods. Currently, approximately 3,400 people live and 2,500 people work within one-half mile of the planned station. No parking facility will be provided at this station. The Lamar Street Station Area Plan promotes infill development that interacts with the character of adjoining neighborhoods and strives to meet the diverse housing needs of all segments of the community. Land use might include residential, live/work, limited office, neighborhood-serving retail, and facilities for the arts. Recreation could also be an important theme with connections to parks, bikeways, and trails.

Oak Station is located two blocks south from major, aging, auto-oriented shopping centers and underutilized auto dealership lots. A major research and development employer is located south of the station. There are currently approximately 1,200 residents and 4,100 people who work within one-half mile of the station location. Plans call for 200 parking spaces with an additional 200 spaces possible. The Station Area Plan envisions a mixed-use center with an emphasis on research and development employers and renewed retail. There appears to be major opportunity for transit-oriented development in the area, perhaps changing the immediate neighborhood into a unique place in Lakewood.

Questions

- 1) How can the planning and development around the different light rail stations appropriately reflect the different character of the adjacent neighborhoods?
- 2) How can the opportunity for pedestrian-oriented, higher density, new development be integrated into existing urban fabric?
- 3) How do current economic conditions impact strategies for new planning and development?
- 4) How does the city spend precious resources on elements at the different stations in a way that is catalytic—encouraging the private sector to invest in transit-oriented development?

Discussion

The resource team was very impressed with the sophistication of design and preparation that Lakewood has done for its coming light rail station areas. It was pointed out, however that the station area plans are all very similar. There were many questions about how to best create a unique identity for each station and maximize the potential of the new light rail system.

There was agreement that not every station should have the same uses and program. If each station is defined generally as “mixed-use,” there will be no real distinction between the stations. Each station must have the right mix of uses for its particular location, and the concept of mixed-use should be applied in a linear fashion along the rail line, with different uses, housing types, and amenities spread out across the stations. The University of London campus, which is dispersed throughout the city but

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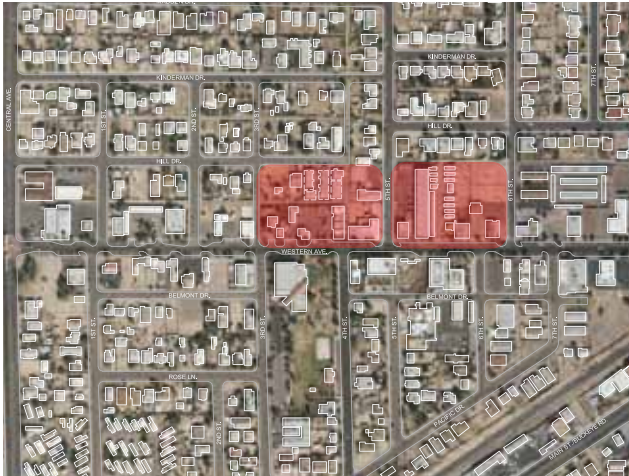
connected by the subway, was mentioned as a relevant case study. The short time between trains will encourage people to hop off at one station to meet someone, get a cup of coffee or do some shopping, then get back on the train to travel to another station. This will help form unique station identities and will encourage ridership.

The identity of the station areas should be based on the character of the surrounding neighborhoods, should be determined with community participation, and should be allowed to grow organically over time. A contrived identity that has more to do with real estate marketing than true urban experience will be rejected by the community. Because of the area's demographic homogeneity, station differentiation could come out of amenity specialization. The City could incentivize small business clusters in the different station areas. Often times the parcels immediately surrounding new station are slow to develop due to speculative investment, and the independent businesses that first start to form the organic station area identity often locate at least $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from stations. It can take 20 years for neighborhoods to establish themselves around new light rail lines.

The station areas should work together and work within the region as a whole to maximize opportunities for the city. The City should think about what it wants to attract, work to create a 20 to 30 year strategic vision, then determine the best public investments over time to achieve that vision, perhaps choosing just a few critical infrastructure investments for each station area. Access to schools, housing, food, services, open space and employment should all be considered. The City should work with regional entities to coordinate transit, housing and environmental policy to help qualify for braided federal funding and to ensure that development is incentivized along the rail corridor.

One strategy to consider is to create a hierarchy between the three stations. One could focus on “big idea.” Of the three station areas, one could combine parcels to go after a “big idea”. The others, with proper incentives in place, could focus on small parcel development. The City should also realize that it has huge landholdings in the form of streets, sidewalks and other public space that can be used as a palette to establish neighborhood identity. The Lamar Street station got the most attention and enthusiasm, largely because of its location near the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design. The college, especially if it adds on-campus housing, will bring activity and vibrancy to the area, making building proper connectivity between the school and the station a “no brainer”.

Because these stations will likely be opening in economically slow times, the city will have to work to get development to happen. A slower pace of development, however, will give the city time to have the community conversations, do the proper planning and make the proper investments to get things right.



Avondale, Arizona

Case Statement

The city of Avondale is located on the western periphery of the Phoenix metropolitan area. The current population is more than 70,000, with a high percentage of the population living in recently developed single-family housing in the north sector of the community, which forms a “new” city characterized by modern design standards. This rapid growth has made Avondale one of the fastest growing communities in the Valley and correspondingly one of the hardest hit by the 2009 financial and foreclosure crisis.

As with many cities in the Phoenix area, Avondale has an original city-center. “Old Town” Avondale is comprised of small-scale businesses and older residential neighborhoods formed by farm workers in the early 1930s. Many of these residential properties are in need of basic improvements and cleanup. Property upkeep has been a problem in these neighborhoods in recent years due to the age of housing and the high percentage of low-income ownership.

Old Town Avondale has been identified by the Avondale City Council as one of their priorities of focus in the community. As a result, in 2007 the Old Town Avondale Revitalization Plan was launched to provide a plan for commercial revitalization in Old Town Avondale. The boundaries of the designated revitalization area are Van Buren Street on the north, Lower Buckeye Road on the south, the incorporated boundary on the west, and the Agua Fria River on the east. The area is divided east and west by Central Avenue as well as north and south by Western Avenue, Main Street, and Buckeye Road.

Western Avenue currently has a series of active commercial businesses. The scale of these existing buildings is for the most part similar to the scale and density of the surrounding residential blocks. The Western Avenue region contains a variety of architectural styles and conditions. A majority of the businesses of Western Avenue are brick construction dating from the 1950s. Other commercial buildings such as Sterling Plaza are newer stucco-finished frame construction. Larger buildings such as the old movie theater and the Sam Garcia Library are unique in their appearance and contribute to the neighborhood’s eclectic old and new character. The surrounding residential districts are filled

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with one-story single-family homes, most of which were built between the 1950s–1970s.

The Old Town Avondale Revitalization Plan has identified pockets of reinvestment within both the commercial and residential areas of Old Town. Revitalization efforts undertaken to date include the new Sam Garcia Library and the neighboring Sterling Plaza West commercial center. Until now, revitalization efforts have focused primarily on Western Avenue as an effort to create a pedestrian retail heart for Avondale.

The City of Avondale would like to continue and extend revitalization efforts to the single-family residential neighborhood just north of Western Avenue along Hill Drive. The area of focus consists of two blocks bound by Hill Drive to the north, Sixth Street to the west, Western Avenue to the south, and Third Street to the east. These two blocks are placed between the commercial zone of Western Avenue to the south and a residential zone to the north. Within these two blocks, a series of multi-family homes have already been demolished and are awaiting new development. These empty parcels are the focus for mid-density housing or mixed-use development. Currently, these parcels are cut off from Western Avenue to the south by a high masonry wall not owned or controlled by the city. New construction such as the nearby Sterling Plaza will remain while existing buildings in need of reinvestment will be either incorporated into proposed development schemes or relocated to appropriate sites.

Questions

- 1) What higher density residential uses would be appropriate as an infill project for an area detached from Western Avenue and adjacent to single-family residences?
- 2) How can city-owned land be developed while interacting with surrounding parcels owned by various families, most of whom have been long-term residents?
- 3) What kinds of public and private partnerships are viable in a low-income area, especially considering current economic constraints?
- 4) How could infill projects connect to the surrounding amenities off of Western Avenue such as the Sam Garcia Library, the Avondale Boys & Girls Club, and public parks?

Discussion

It was clear from Mayor Lopez Roger's presentation that historic downtown Avondale has a great sense of place and a community character that is unique in the Phoenix area. While many challenges face downtown Avondale, the resource team focused on how to maintain and build on this unique character and look towards the future.

One of the main problems with the project site that was pointed out by the resource team is the lack of connectivity to the street and to the amenities on Western Avenue. While tearing down the structures on the site has significantly reduced crime, it is still an out-of-sight dead end that will encourage criminal activity. The best first step to take would be to connect through to Hill Drive to elimi-

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nate this dead end. Residents may be against this, worrying about more traffic, but the open connection and the small amount of added traffic will actually add to the visibility, transparency, safety, and overall health of the neighborhood. Residents may also worry about increased foot traffic from the high school. While this may be a minor nuisance, it will also deter more serious crime.

Visibility is a major component of creating defensible space. It is crucial to create connections to the park, library and high school. Any development on the site should build on all of the recent nearby infrastructure investment. It may be worthwhile putting in basic street improvements as well. Combating demoralizing infrastructure will foster community pride and aid police access. The alleys could be improved and made into a functional pedestrian amenity. If the alley were improved and a good use put in place on the project site, the owners of the block wall abutting the project site might be convinced to tear it down, creating a great connection to Western Avenue. Ideally the site should be something that neighbors want to open up to, not feel like they have to protect themselves from.

Once connectivity is established to the site, it can be put to any number of uses. New development that follows the existing pattern of small-scale buildings will help maintain an authentic sense of place. Housing is one possibility, but it must fit with the character of the neighborhood and fill a real demand. Well-designed small-scale courtyard housing was suggested. Temporary, modular housing could also work and be accepted by the neighborhood if it is well designed and does not feel like cheap “trailer park” housing. Housing projects could qualify for HUD money or FHA loans. The contrast of new housing development with the surrounding neighborhood could encourage adjacent residents to invest in upgrading their properties. The energy of new residents could bring value to the collective neighborhood.

Many members of the resource team felt that the best strategy would be to forego any significant development projects, focus on interim uses for this site and work with the community to put together a long-range vision for downtown Avondale. The possibility of a future rail corridor, combined with the unique charm of downtown Avondale could make it a very high demand location in the future. A long-range vision should take this possibility very seriously. Under current economic conditions, it will be difficult to build a successful permanent project on this site. Interim uses such as a farmers’ market or a community garden could give the site life and vibrancy, and could help energize street life and retail along Western Avenue. Small, temporary uses and activities can help bring the community together and lay the foundation for a larger city vision.