

AN ADVISORY SERVICES PANEL REPORT

Hartford Connecticut



Urban Land
Institute

Hartford Connecticut

Redeveloping an Urban Gateway

September 23–28, 2007
An Advisory Services Panel Report

ULI—the Urban Land Institute
1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.
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About ULI—the Urban Land Institute

The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI is committed to

- Bringing together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs;
- Fostering collaboration within and beyond ULI's membership through mentoring, dialogue, and problem solving;
- Exploring issues of urbanization, conservation, regeneration, land use, capital formation, and sustainable development;
- Advancing land use policies and design practices that respect the uniqueness of both built and natural environments;
- Sharing knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, and electronic media; and

- Sustaining a diverse global network of local practice and advisory efforts that address current and future challenges.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 35,000 members from 90 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Professionals represented 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 the world's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

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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's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

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. 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, partici-

pants 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, academics, 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.

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MetroHartford Alliance, including Chairman Andy Bessette, President and CEO Oz Griebel, Vice President John Shemo, Vice President Jeff Vose, and Dianne McLane. Finally, the panel would like to thank the many community members who shared their expertise during the interview process.

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Foreword: The Panel's Assignment

Senator Edward Kennedy said of his late brother Robert, “Some people see things as they are and ask why. Others see things as they could be and ask why not.” The panel’s charge while in Hartford was to see things as they are, but also to visualize Hartford’s future and to provide the city with the tools to achieve its hopes, dreams, and aspirations. In other words, the panel is challenging the city to ask why not, and providing it with the know-how to achieve its goal.

The Study Area

As Connecticut’s capital city, Hartford also is referred to as the insurance capital of the world and is often considered to be one of New England’s rising stars. Even so, some think that Hartford suffers from an inferiority complex. The panel disagrees. Downtown Hartford is vibrant, lively, beautiful, livable, and humane. The city is filled with exceptionally clean and pedestrian-friendly streets, beautiful buildings both old and new, and diverse neighborhoods and cultures that many cities would like to call their own. It is a downtown of palpable character and energy.

However, Hartford’s real strength resides in its citizens. Again and again, the panel heard them express strong affection for the city they call home and great pride in its rich history and recent accomplishments. The people of Hartford believe in their city and its future, and they have every reason to do so.

Certainly, Hartford shares some of the problems of every great city, including moderately high unemployment, exceptionally high poverty, and a remarkably low homeownership rate. Workers at the lower end of the income scale, whose housing choices are more limited by financial concerns, find fewer choices for affordable housing in neighborhoods where their families can feel safe. The



Location map.

recent severe contraction of the housing financing and construction markets has not helped.

Also, the cost of construction in Hartford is heavily out of balance with the profit that development can produce for investors. Currently, it is nearly impossible for a developer to deliver a residential or commercial product that will generate the return on investment required to make development worthwhile without heavy public subsidy.



Regional map.



Hartford, a city of contrasts—vacant lots within earshot of a gleaming skyline.

Oddly, some of Hartford's greatest strengths pose some of the most difficult challenges to the city's future success. For example, the superb Frederick Law Olmsted parks, the strong network of community institutions such as churches and hospitals, and the state capitol and other state government buildings and property together constitute more than 50 percent of the city's total area that has been removed from its property tax rolls. As a result, Hartford must stretch to fund the very development that would propel it forward.

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by Hartford is a pervasive fear of crime. Whether or not borne out by statistics, fear of becoming a victim of crime inhibits many residents of Hartford from fully enjoying all the city has to offer. The school system's inability to keep pace with current educational standards adds to the desire of middle-class families to move out of the city to better school districts in the region. Rings of easily reachable surrounding suburbs make it easy for these middle-class families to leave the city, taking jobs, stores, and major employment centers with them. Remaining businesses often struggle to find enough customers in the evening, and failing to do so, many either close their doors or follow their customers outward to new centers of activity.

To a certain extent, this pattern underscores an oft-unstated but nevertheless insidious division between races and economic classes. The decision made by the more affluent, more educated, mostly white residents to leave Hartford has left behind a large population of mostly nonwhite, often immigrant, and economically disadvantaged residents who have little choice but to endure the difficult conditions caused by poverty and lack of education. As in nearly every American city, the fear of crime in Hartford is in part a result of the fear of those whose culture, language, and behavior are different from those of middle-class white America.

The panel wants to emphasize that no single development project can turn the corner to civic success. Although individual projects can have a positive effect on their immediate surroundings and lead to infill growth, they have not proven able to re-energize an entire downtown.

What has proven to work better is to build an economically, socially, racially, and functionally integrated community by investing in improvements to the quality of the public realm—streets, sidewalks, open spaces, and landmarks. Such investments define the character and quality of the urban experience, improve the overall civic image,

and contribute to the real quality of life for visitors and residents.

Downtown Hartford is fortunate to have retained many of the knowledge-based jobs in the companies that made it famous. However, due to the global nature of the economy, the previously home-grown leadership of those companies is now scattered throughout the world. This distancing from the original source has resulted in diminished interest in the civic purposes that the companies' founders once devoted themselves to. To be sure, smart business practices dictate that the needs of shareholders must precede the needs of the city. While the major industries continue to be supportive of the city's success, Hartford will need to explore new partnerships and tools in future development projects.

For example, Hartford will need to employ financial tools that can use public investment to leverage private equity so as to minimize costs to the city and state. The city will need to do whatever it can to make it easy for small business entrepreneurs to grow and prosper. And it will need to create the energetic, dynamic atmosphere sought by young professionals who want to live in the city's core.

One has only to look around to see the tangible results of the effort and energy that the city has put into the renaissance of Hartford's downtown and neighborhoods. The new convention center, science center, sports medicine magnet school, and downtown residential opportunities are all thriving examples. A bustling entertainment retail district close to transit and employment exists in the Union Station area with many upscale restaurants serving visitors and residents alike. Plans such as Hartford 2010 are being created to guide future decision making that will enhance the character of Hartford and better connect its neighborhoods to downtown. The public school system is under new guidance, and is adopting new strategies such as magnet schools. In time, with excellent leadership and support from the public and the business community, the Hartford school system could become a model for the nation. The panel commends the civic leadership, the business community, and the people of Hartford for these successes. But Hartford still



needs to do more to reach the critical mass of feet on the street that will assure its future as a destination city for tourists, and as a community of first choice for potential residents and employers. As Connecticut's capital city, Hartford should think of itself as a true, national demonstration city, a living laboratory for creating inventive solutions to the urban issues faced by communities across America.

The city is sprinkled with community institutions such as the Old State House and Christ Church Cathedral.

The Panel's Assignment

The ULI Advisory Services panel was asked to identify strategies consistent with market realities for the redevelopment of a large area to the west and north of the downtown core, known respectively as Asylum Hill, Downtown West, and what we refer to as North Park. These areas are home to major national corporations and historic Hartford institutions such as the Aetna, the Hartford, Travelers, and the St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center. Located within the site are the new public safety complex, Union Station, historic landmarks such as the Keeney Clock Tower and the Barnard Brown School, significant vacant land, and a number of underutilized buildings.

Developing these areas will require vision, a communitywide will to see it happen, the commitment and persistence to follow through, and the imaginative use of public and private partnerships to finance and facilitate development. This report analyzes the market conditions that will determine what can realistically and successfully be achieved; proposes strategies for actions to revitalize the areas; illustrates a vision of the results of these actions; and suggests specific tasks, tools, and executors that can accomplish the vision. In preparing the recommendations, the panel was asked to consider the following questions:

- What are the commercial, retail, office, and mixed-use marketing opportunities?
- What strategies can Hartford employ to reunite downtown to the south with neighborhoods to the north?
- What is the hotel room demand, given that the new convention center has been completed and the new Connecticut Science Center is under construction? Also, a new basketball/ice arena has been proposed.
- What infrastructure improvements might be necessary to accommodate large-scale development?
- What design characteristics should Hartford build into its land use codes for this area?
- What unique public or private financing tools are available in Connecticut to encourage or fund investments in the area?
- What densities should Hartford plan for to allow market viability?
- How can Hartford interest large-scale developers?
- What is the best first step?
- What are realistic time frames to accomplish the recommended development scenarios?

Market Potential

Understanding the socioeconomic trends affecting the study area helps establish the opportunities and challenges for future land uses. For the purposes of understanding these trends, the panel used data available for the three-county Hartford metropolitan statistical area (MSA).

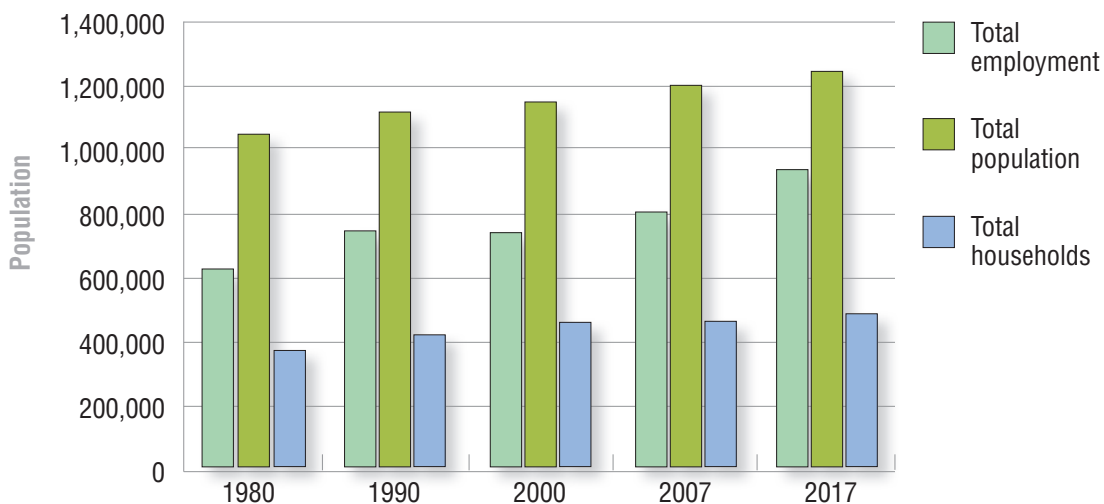
Population and Employment Profile

The city of Hartford is located within the three-county MSA that includes Hartford, Middlesex, and Tolland Counties. The population of this area has experienced moderate growth primarily fueled by modest job growth. Today, approximately 1.2 million people reside in some 460,000 households with almost 815,000 employed. Slightly more than 10 percent of this population (125,500) lives in the city of Hartford, but of even more significance is the fact that almost 15 percent of the MSA em-

ployment is in the city of Hartford. Job growth of 12,540 new jobs per year can be projected for the Hartford MSA, and as a result of those new jobs the population could be expected to grow annually by 7,500 people in 3,900 households. It is conceivable that the city of Hartford could capture almost 14 percent of this growth, resulting in an annual expansion of 1,030 people in 440 households.

The following market potential by land use estimates are based on the assumption that Hartford will successfully address the perception of unsafe neighborhoods and the quality of public education. The specific level and depth of future development demand and the ability of the study area to capture it will depend on both the visible and perceived level of success achieved in addressing these quality of life issues. Further, the ability of the study area to fully realize and absorb the projected level of development will be constrained by the land and construction cost dynamics. The panel has

Hartford Population and Employment Profile



Source: THK Associates.

The office market in the Hartford CBD represents 10.4 million square feet.



come to realize that the development costs associated with delivering the identified land uses currently outweigh the demonstrated revenues. Without market intervention it is unlikely the market can or will deliver the entire potential demand.

Market Potential by Land Use

From the market review, the panelists examined the potential demand for office, retail, hotel, and residential land uses.

Office

The metropolitan Hartford office market is defined as Hartford County. The current market inventory includes 25.7 million square feet with almost 10.4 million square feet or 40 percent located in 83 buildings within the Hartford central business district (CBD) and its surrounding periphery. The

current vacancy rate is approximately 19 percent and approximately 500,000 square feet needs to be absorbed to normalize the vacancy to 8 percent. In the first nine months of 2007 the Hartford CBD absorbed approximately 170,000 square feet of office space and the metro area added 110,000 square feet. Class B and Class C office buildings are being converted to residential structures, reducing the total amount of vacant office space throughout the metropolitan area.

Based on the job growth projected for the Hartford MSA, the metropolitan demand for office space will be almost 600,000 square feet. One-third or 200,000 square feet of this total could be projected to be absorbed within the city of Hartford CBD and its periphery. The study area could be positioned to capture 30 percent of the projected office space market, or approximately 60,000 square feet per year. A total of 25 acres of land could potentially be absorbed within the study area for office uses over the next decade.

Retail

The study area enjoys accessibility and visibility due to its proximity to the regional population base circulating on interstates 84 and 91. Almost 9,200 households with over 23,000 people live within one mile of the study area and that area is likely to grow by 900 people per year. The current households in this one-mile area have a median annual income of \$33,000, of which almost \$10,000 is spent on retail goods. New households are projected to spend \$18,200 on retail items. The one mile market area could then conceivably support

Successful retail in the Hartford CBD is located on a major thoroughfare and its tributary.



500,000 square feet of retail space today and could be expected to grow to 700,000 square feet over the next decade. The study area, therefore, could support 60,000 square feet of retail space today, approximately 145,000 square feet in 2013, and 355,000 square feet by 2018. The bulk of this demand would be filled by a 58,000 square foot grocery store. Adding 2,800 new residential units within the study area over the next decade will combine with nearby neighbors to create more than adequate support for a grocery-anchored neighborhood shopping district of 150,000 to 200,000 square feet. This retail space could be included as ground floor uses within residential, office, and hotel buildings throughout the study area, focusing on the major thoroughfares—like Main, Albany, Asylum, and Farmingham streets—to connect to the already thriving retail corridors.

Hotel

The city of Hartford CBD has approximately 2,000 hotel rooms. The highest concentration of rooms is found in the new Marriott Hartford Downtown at the Connecticut Convention Center with 409 rooms, in the recently renovated Hilton Hartford with 392 rooms, and in the Crown Plaza Hartford Downtown with 350 rooms. The hotels in the CBD operate at approximately 62 percent occupancy, with over 800,000 annual visitors. The Marriott plans to add another 270 rooms and a new Best Western will add 80 rooms. The insurance companies of Hartford, along with the substantial medical complexes and the convention center, generate a great deal of demand for overnight accommodations during the week, but occupancy slumps on weekends.

Considering the strong assets of the Connecticut Convention Center and the impending opening of the Connecticut Science Center, it is estimated that the visitor count could grow to over 960,000 people by the end of the decade and that an additional 2,000 rooms could be needed. The study area could capture approximately 30 percent of this total. Over the next ten years demand is likely to be created for approximately 600 rooms including one new full-service hotel and two limited-service hotels. A total of ten acres of land should be planned for additional hotel development within the study area.



The highest concentration of rooms in the Hartford CBD is located at the Hilton, the Crowne Plaza, and the newly opened Marriott Hartford Downtown.



New housing units constructed in Hartford in the last decade.



Residential

During the last decade metropolitan Hartford has built an average of 3,800 housing units per year, of which 16 percent or 600 units per year have been multifamily. Of this total, 150 units or 4 percent have been in the city of Hartford and half of those have been multifamily. As a result of job growth over the next decade, the metropolitan area is projected to have an annual market for 4,100 housing units. These units include 3,200 detached single family homes, 400 for-sale townhomes and condominiums, and 500 rental apartments. The city of Hartford could capture an estimated 11.5 percent of the projected metropolitan market demand for housing, or 450 units a year, including 250 for-sale townhomes and condominiums and 200 rental apartments.

The study area could capture approximately 55 percent of the housing market projected for the city of Hartford, building 150 for-sale townhomes and condominiums and 130 rental apartments per year. With an average density of 40 units per acre for residential construction, 70 acres of land with 2,800 residential units could be built within the study area over the next decade.

The median annual income for these households new to the housing market is expected to be approximately \$61,000, which converts to a recommended median sales price of \$185,000 or a monthly rent of \$950. Delivering residential products that meet these target price points will be critical to the success of their sales and rental. These types of new homes are often referred to as workforce

housing. Workforce housing is a term for homes that appeal to and are affordable for key members of the workforce such as office support professionals, teachers, and medical technicians who are thought to be the backbone of any successful community. New home development within the study area must strive to serve this currently underserved market. Further, new residential development within the study area also provides an ideal opportunity to create mixed-income neighborhoods that are comprised of not only workforce housing, but also more affordable or subsidized units.

Beyond Silver Bullets

A number of large-scale projects or developments have been proposed for significant portions of the study area. These ideas include a baseball stadium, a soccer field, a new civic arena, and a college campus. Within a specific local economy the success of these one-of-a-kind proposals is hard to predict. It is challenging to definitively analyze the feasibility and economic impact of the delivery of these blockbuster projects. This market impact uncertainty, coupled with the complicated nature of the big projects, has prevented large areas of vacant land within the study area to be redeveloped. While the following sections discuss two of the proposed scenarios, the panel believes that the time has come to set aside this notion of a one-of-a-kind, silver bullet project for this area. The city should work toward satisfying the current market demand for a more traditional development mix, consequently adding this long-stagnant acreage to the city's taxable property base.

The Arena Proposal

There has been much debate regarding the financial feasibility and the economic impact of a new arena. Because of the numerous complexities and nuances of the proposal, the panel was not asked to make a definitive build/no build decision. The panel did identify some core tenets that should be applied to the community's decision-making process. Prior to any further study or analysis a decision should be made about the community's desire and capacity to pursue a National Hockey League franchise to reside in a new arena. Many project variables—space needs, project costs, financing options, and the like—hinge on this one decision.

In particular, options for the retention and renovation of the existing arena, or the construction of a new one, become clearer. Regardless of financial feasibility, the community should decide if having a modern, multi-purpose arena to serve the city and surrounding region is an important component of the area's economic development goals.

Medical Campus Potential

Hartford and St. Francis hospitals are in close proximity to the Hartford CBD and the study area. These renowned medical facilities have close to 1,500 beds, treat more than 70,000 patients each year, have full-time equivalent staffs of 10,300 employees, and generate more than \$1.1 billion each

year in net patient revenue. The general aging of the population coupled with the infrastructure and support facilities available for in-town living suggest that this industry will continue to grow. With strong linkages to these two medical campuses the study area could accommodate land uses that further complement these substantial employment centers. Such uses could include medical office buildings, support and service retail, hotels, congregate care housing, assisted living housing, and nursing care units. Given these inherent strengths, deeper market analysis of this sector seems warranted.

Development Strategies

The panel found that the study area is positioned for change with its ideal location for capturing regional growth and its land that is ready for redevelopment. The city should capitalize on the opportunities here, by embracing higher goals, being bold, and building on the community's assets to create a truly great place.

Goals for the Study Area

The overall development goal is to create a more up-to-date, urban character for the study area. The panel suggests that the following concepts should be considered during the design and planning process.

Identity

Each of the neighborhoods within the study area has their unique context and feel. They contain unique sets of activities that identify them as a place. One of the outcomes of this activity is to reinforce their identities or, if missing, create one.

Walkability

The concentration of employees and relatively high-density housing that surround the study area make it a natural candidate for a strong pedestrian orientation. Yet many of its streets are inhospitable to movement through the area by foot.

Diversity

Hartford is a diverse city. The evolution of its in-town and downtown neighborhoods should reflect this diversity in socioeconomic, age, and ethnic groups and maintain that diversity as a strength of community.

Vitality

Downtown Hartford maintains a vital workday environment. The challenge is to extend that vitality to a 24-hour day and extend it to neighborhoods around the CBD. The vitality in those

neighborhoods will reinforce the health and safety of the downtown.

Safety

Safety is a necessary prerequisite for all the other quality of life issues discussed here. Principles of defensible space and sound urban design can reinforce the performance and the feeling of safety, whereas exclusionary techniques, such as fences, gates, and barriers tend to have the opposite effect.

Landscaping

Downtowns can be hard and cold environments without the softening effect of trees, colorful flowers, and planters strategically placed along the sidewalk. The importance of these added amenities in making an inviting place to rest, congregate, or just take respite from the day cannot be minimized. The resources devoted to both create and maintain these assets cannot be considered the first budgetary item to be dropped. They are integral to the downtown's or neighborhood's success.

Developing Three Strategic Areas

The panel divided the study area into three distinct strategic areas: Asylum Hill, Downtown West, and North Park. The following sections outline the strengths, challenges, attainable objectives, development strategies, and action items that should be followed for each area.

Asylum Hill

Hartford's Asylum Hill is located between Downtown and the West End. The Park River, I-84, and the railroad tracks act as natural boundaries for the thirty-block neighborhood, which is outlined by Woodland and Forest Streets on the west, Hawthorn Street and Capitol Avenue on the south, Garden and Spring Streets on the east, and Homestead and Albany Avenues on the north.

Strengths. The panel defined numerous strengths that will support development in Asylum Hill. These strengths include the area's:

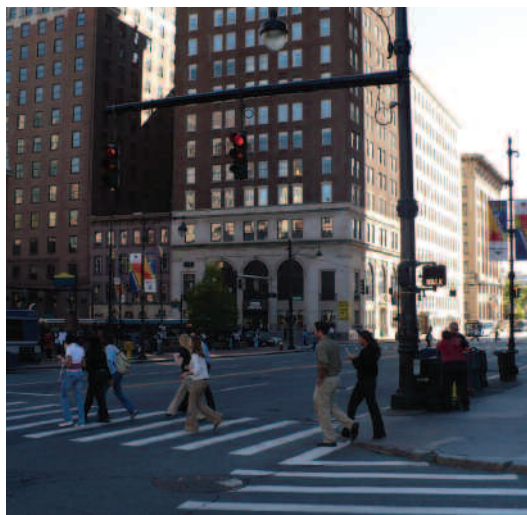
- International reputation.
- Historic legacy.
- Redevelopment opportunities.
- Concentration of employment.
- Long-established leadership role in community.
- Proximity to amenities of downtown (Bushnell Park, entertainment area).
- Major transportation corridors, including availability of transit.
- Existing infrastructure.

Challenges. The area also has many challenges that will make development difficult, including:

- The perception of crime.
- Traffic issues at trident intersection.
- Lack of neighborhood retail.
- Isolation of major institutions from neighborhood.
- Mixed housing stock.
- Barriers to the city center.
- Vacant and deteriorating buildings.
- Lack of convenient, sufficient parking in some portions of the study area.
- Lack of shared vision among stakeholders.

Objectives. To capitalize on the area's strengths and overcome its challenges, the city must work toward the following objectives:

- Integrating the corporate insurance campuses into the surrounding community.
- Creating a more pedestrian-friendly community with better access to the downtown area.
- Improving both perceived and real safety for employees and residents.



Hartford processes pockets of high-quality urban areas. The goal is to make these qualities more widespread and to connect them.

Various conditions showing barriers to the center city and vacant and deteriorating buildings.



- Providing convenient and adequate parking for the employment generators in the area.
- Creating an iconic entry to the downtown area worthy of the status of this neighborhood.
- Addressing overcrowding and deterioration of the housing stock surrounding the corporate campuses.
- Creating housing affordable and attractive to employees of the major institutions in the neighborhood.
- Creating retail opportunities on Asylum Avenue.

Development Strategy. In order to begin addressing the above objectives, the city should create a neighborhood-based steering committee of all major stakeholders (including, but not limited to, major employers in the area, city officials, the Asylum Hill Coalition, the Farmington Avenue Business District, and key property owners). The purpose of this steering committee will be to determine desirable uses to be included in future planning and design standards for private and public improvements. This steering committee should expand the boundaries of the study area for Asylum Hill to include I-84 on south, east to Walnut, north to Homestead, and west to Sigourney/Russ. The committee will consider new uses and activities such as new developments of hotel, housing, parking facilities, neighborhood-oriented retail, and attendant streetscape and public improvements. The committee will need to convene a meeting under the initial sponsorship of the Study Area Commission, which will be described

in more detail in the Implementation section of this report.

Action Items. Some of the intended outcomes of this effort include:

- Integrating corporate campus into the neighborhood.
- Improving link to downtown through the Asylum/Farmington trident.
- Reducing the complexity of the Trident gateway.
- Reinforcing and expanding ride-share and van-pool programs by major employers.
- Lobbying for transit and transportation improvements, including improving or redesigning I-84, commuter rail, and a pedestrian-friendly busway rapid transit stop at Union Station and Sigourney.
- Establishing adequate zoning and code enforcement of existing housing stock.
- Exploring opportunities to create age diversity through housing for seniors.
- Defining objectives for sustainable development within the study area.
- Creating a neighborhood plan to be presented to the Study Area Commission.

Union Station and Downtown West

The panel defines the Downtown West study area as I-84 on the north and west, Asylum on the south, and Ann Street on east.

Strengths. The strengths of the Union Station and Downtown West area include:

- Hartford's most impressive park.
- Inviting historic character.
- Vibrant mix of uses, building types, and streetscapes.
- Entertainment venues, including the Civic Center, nightspots, and many of the city's best dining establishments.
- Adjacent to many of the city's cultural attractions, including the museums and performing arts venues.
- Near Hartford's impressive state Capitol.
- Two main arteries from the west—Asylum and Farmington Avenue.
- Union Station transportation hub.
- Immediate access to the freeway.
- Availability of vacant land.

Challenges. Although Downtown West has some vibrancy, it must address the following challenges in order to feel like an integral part of the city.

- Far too many parking lots that create gaping holes in its fabric.
- Some vacant store fronts.
- Traffic congestion and poor pedestrian environment on Asylum approaching the highway.
- Adjacent noise pollution from the highway and visual blight and barrier created by I-84.
- Perceived safety problems.
- Concentration of buses on Asylum next to the park.

Objectives. To capitalize on the area's strengths and overcome its challenges, the city must work toward the following objectives:

- Creating a study area plan with specific design standards.

- Supporting planning for the Union Station improvements.
- Supporting commuter rail and busway initiatives.
- Improving perceived safety by focusing on facts and highlighting achievements.
- Creating a design standard to improve the appearance of existing parking lots.
- Supporting existing small businesses.
- Reinforcing role as an entertainment/nightspot.
- Fostering new residential development for market rate and workforce housing.
- Facilitating repositioning of office buildings that are no longer viable.

Development Strategy. In order to begin addressing the above objectives, the city should create a steering committee made up of property owners and other stakeholders in the area to create a master plan under the aegis of the Study Area Commission. This plan will address future planning for Union Station, with detailed design standards for new development and standards for rehabilitation.

Action Items. The city center, and particularly the Downtown West study area, can count many important successes. The panel sees the need to reinforce these successes through the following action items:

- Facilitating infill development on vacant parcels.
- Expanding business improvement district (BID) efforts to target marketing to the downtown area.
- Expanding BID event planning.
- Facilitating appropriate use changes.
- Relocating bus staging to off-street locations with less impact on the downtown.
- Supporting and lobbying for transit options, including commuter rail, busway, and connections to the airport.

- Facilitating ride-share and vanpool programs among downtown employers to reduce downtown parking demand.
- Improving the connection to the north end across I-84 through improvements to the park.
- Identifying new sources of subsidy and incentive funding to continue development of the downtown area.
- Augmenting public safety through additional police or BID-sponsored security ambassadors.
- Facilitating ground floor retail through a coordinated approach to obtaining subsidies and financing, including New Market Tax Credit financing from qualified banking institutions.

North Park

North Park is a provisional area name until a more durable identity can be created by a local steering committee. The area is delineated by the river on the east, I-84 on the south, the Amtrak right-of-way to the north and west, as well as the area bounded by Main Street and Canton Street north of the right-of-way. This area offers an opportunity to extend and complement the successful and effective community-based programs in the adjacent neighborhoods. This will include those activities undertaken by organizations such as the YMCA, the YWCA, the Urban League, Health Center Services, the HARTT School at the University of Hartford, and others. It also offers a rare opportunity to create viable, mixed-income housing and local retail to spawn new small business in the city. Existing educational facilities such as the Barnard Brown School and Rensselaer at Hartford offer opportunities to improve the educational infrastructure in Hartford. The Barnard Brown School is an attractive location for a magnet school and the Rensselaer facility has the potential to be a regionally significant training facility.

Strengths. The panel identified the following strengths in the North Park area:

- New public safety complex.
- New investment in Best Western.

- Existing activities at Plaza Hotel, Travelers, and BankAmerica process centers.
- Existence of Rensselaer at Hartford graduate school.
- Availability of vacant land.
- Amount of city-owned land.
- Proximity to downtown.
- Existing street and transportation infrastructure.
- Immediate access to interstates.
- Potential function as a link between existing neighborhoods and downtown.
- Proximity to river and riverside park.
- Proximity to New England Dodge Music Center.

Challenges. The area also has many challenges that will make development difficult, including:

- Perception of area as a no-man's land.
- Proximity to neighborhoods with high concentration of poverty and crime.
- Lack of any activity anchor.
- Psychological and physical barrier from downtown.
- Unattractiveness of vacant property.
- Historic reputation as a failed development opportunity.
- Noise from adjacent freeways.
- Barrier to river park.

Objectives. To capitalize on the area's strengths and overcome its challenges, the city must work toward the following objectives:

- Creating a new identity for the area.
- Using intended \$70 million investment in the public safety complex as a catalyst for the area through intentional public area design.
- Creating a striking gateway to the area with a highly landscaped transportation circle at the



Photo on left: Stacked freeways adjacent to the area create double barriers to the river and downtown Hartford, and also cause noise pollution.



Photo on right: Perception of area as no-man's land.

6 points intersection at Albany and Main, possibly with a fountain in the center.

- Preserving existing historic buildings.
- Removing existing non-historic eyesores.
- Creating a more inviting connection to the river through a redesigned bridge, tower, and approach.
- In the short term, maintaining current land use and activities between Windsor and I-91.
- Relocating existing lumberyard at Albany Avenue to a site adjacent to the concrete plant next to the interstate.
- Reinforcing gateway entrance from the downtown through an improved design treatment of the deck area park and Main Street.

Development Strategy. In order to begin addressing the above objectives, the city should create a neighborhood-based steering committee made up of stakeholders and interested parties in the adjacent neighborhoods, including Albany Avenue, Clay Arsenal, the downtown, and the study area itself. This committee should submit a plan to the Study Area Commission for review and acceptance. The commission will then take responsibility for implementing the plan.

Action Items. The following action items will reinforce the above objectives:

- The Study Area Commission will convene a meeting of the interested stakeholders in the

area, to include representatives from various neighborhood groups in the Albany Avenue and Clay Arsenal neighborhoods, landowners and building owners, the MetroHartford Alliance, the school district, and appropriate departmental city officials, especially in public safety.

- The steering committee will then arrive at a set of design standards and a provisional land use plan.
- The Study Area Commission will identify and quantify available potential subsidies for development.
- Using these design standards and objectives, the commission will solicit interest among developers for commitments to develop this area within a prescribed set of criteria in terms of uses, affordability, project schedule, available subsidies, and design.

The Next Steps

The action items for all three strategic areas should be accomplished within the same schedule. The neighborhood-based steering committees should be formed within the next sixty days. Within the next six months the committees should establish their own goals and objectives. Then in the following six to nine months the committees should be creating their plans to submit to the Study Area Commission.

Planning and Design

There is enormous capacity within the city of Hartford to accommodate a majority of the metropolitan region's projected job and population growth. However, present land prices and site preparation costs in the city's north end are higher than in the surrounding municipalities. This lower revenue potential within the city is a serious impediment to urban redevelopment. Subsidies have been necessary to spur residential and office development in the downtown. However, as a critical mass of amenities and the foundations of quality of life take shape in the city's core the equation will surely change. With centuries of infrastructure investment, it is fiscally prudent and socially just to encourage redevelopment of downtown Hartford over the conversion of forest and farmland to urbanized uses. All residents and policy makers in the region and the state should consider themselves stakeholders in the sustainable redevelopment of the city of Hartford. This approach is the key to preserving the region's economic competitiveness and natural framework.

Connecting Hartford

An important component of downtown Hartford's competitiveness as a thriving job center and livable community is its ability to provide reliable and efficient access to its downtown from the other job and housing centers of the northeast. With congestion on the region's highway infrastructure, alternatives to the automobile must be made available. The Hartford busway and regional rail connections provide sustainable access to the city's jobs for the population base living along the New Haven – Springfield corridor and to the southwest towards New Britain. These connections also provide access for the city's residents to the job centers in New Haven, Stamford, and beyond; connecting the Hartford and New York metropolitan areas. A more robust, high-speed rail system that would connect Hartford to Boston and New York should be pursued. Such a system

would integrate the northeast corridor into an economic megaregion that will compete with similarly integrated regions in Asia and Europe while bolstering the economic strength of Hartford and other underperforming northeast cities. Similarly, Hartford should continue to improve its global connections. A direct rail link to Bradley Airport will help the downtown harness the greatest economic impact from the airport's new international service. This system could subsequently be expanded to link the University of Hartford and the western neighborhoods to downtown. It is crucial for the city and the region to orient its future development toward this transit infrastructure, thus increasing the number of transit trips and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the city and the region.

Building on Hartford's Strengths

The city of Hartford represents a wonderful blend of the past and the future. The City Fathers had the foresight to establish a network of parks and avenues that represented the beginning of the modern park movement in American cities. Horace Bushnell, Frederick Law Olmsted, and later Olmsted's sons conceived a network of parks and gardens interconnected by parkway avenues that became known as the Rain of Parks. This open space network is enhanced by a rich collection of historic buildings and thoughtfully designed modern construction that combine to create an attractive downtown core. The recent Feet on the Street initiative—improved pedestrian pavements, street tree planting, lighting, banners, and the like—provides an attractive and inviting pedestrian environment that helps to convey a sense of civic pride worthy of a state capital.

However, there are parts of the downtown and its edges that need attention. The transition areas between downtown and adjacent neighborhoods have not been accorded the same care and consid-

Important city thoroughfares and major regional connectors.



eration as is seen in the downtown. The interstate system has severed the city, creating significant barriers between the downtown, the neighborhoods, the river, and the associated park and recreation network. The romantic notion of the Rain of Parks has been compromised by the car—a development that Olmsted did not anticipate.

Much of the historic building stock within these transitional areas has been either removed or allowed to lapse into disrepair. Large surface parking lots or semi-industrial land uses have filled this void, creating visually deserted areas that feel unsafe.

Some success has been achieved in reestablishing connections between the downtown and the river. Riverside Plaza offers access to the beautiful riverside trail and park system, as well as the boating opportunities on the river itself. The panel believes that additional developments that access the river can and should be pursued at the northern end of downtown. In addition, further efforts need to be made to reconnect downtown with its northern and western neighborhoods.

Planning and Design Vision

Taking these strengths and challenges into consideration, the panel sees great potential to reinforce

the character and charm of the Hartford downtown area. The time is right to develop a long-term, collective vision for the city; to create a dynamic, attractive, and livable downtown community that reflects the beauty and values of the broader Hartford metropolitan area. The panel sees an opportunity to create a blended mix of land uses, combining employment, recreation, and living opportunities to accommodate and celebrate the city's rich cultural heritage. The following plan is one example of how this vision might be realized, but it may not be the ultimate plan.

Asylum Hill

The concentration of employment population on the western side of the city has resulted in a largely single-use transition area between the downtown and the adjoining residential neighborhoods. The establishment of large surface parking areas has led to an uninviting and threatening environment. Farmington Avenue and Asylum Avenue converge to create a unique trident gateway into the downtown, however the unusual geometry of the roads at this convergent point has resulted in significant pedestrian and vehicular conflict and safety issues. The area is also segregated from downtown as a result of the poor-quality pedestrian connection along Asylum Street linking the district with downtown. This

Examples of visually deserted areas within the study site that are perceived as unsafe.



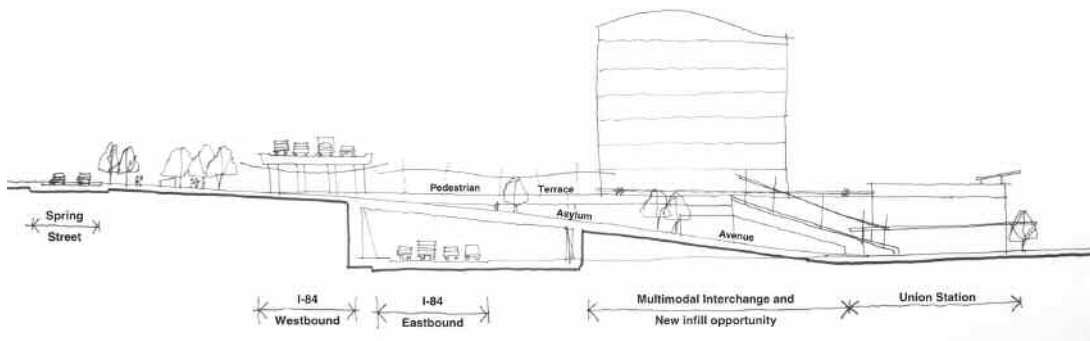
connection has long been a safety concern within the city and is a significant barrier. The concentration of supported housing in the area has also been expressed as a concern in further creating the perception of an unsafe public environment by local employers in Asylum Hill.

Despite the challenges outlined above, the area does have significant strengths to build upon, including attractive building stock, a mature landscape character, and a significant employment population. The panel heard that the residential neighborhood centered on Ashley Street is currently in transition. In addition, the Connecticut Culinary Institute located at the western end of the Aetna Campus offers a new opportunity to connect the campus with the local community. The Hartford has engaged consultants to consider ways in which their site might become a more integrated, mixed urban campus.

The Asylum Hill plan conceives an active, mixed-use campus centered on the major employment facilities. The plan envisages a campus node, a vibrant hub incorporating retail and restaurants, supporting commercial and open space parkland that together provide a central focus to this important district. The plan envisages the reestablishment of the avenue planting along Farmington and Asylum Avenues, two major gateway roads into the downtown. New landmark areas flanking the intersection of Asylum Avenue and Spring Street have the potential to create a gateway entrance into downtown, with active street edges helping to provide a more attractive and engaging pedestrian experience linking to the city.

In addition to the urban node and gateway connection centered on Farmington and Asylum Avenues, it is proposed that a residential, mixed-use node be established at the northern end of the site, centered on the intersection of Myrtle and Edwards Streets. This mixed-use node would incorporate local retail and service uses to serve the new residential population proposed along the eastern side of Asylum Hill. This area would also feature an enhanced pedestrian connection linking directly to Union Station and the West End entertainment district. Should an alternative arena location be deemed desirable, the potential exists to

Section showing potential connection between the western edge of Asylum Hill and Downtown West.



incorporate a new arena into this urban node site, further activating this area.

The currently vacant Mass Mutual campus is an attractive architectural facility that is considered appropriate for adaptive reuse. Potential uses may include a learning and residential campus or senior living facility to further increase the residential presence in Asylum Hill. Key aspects of the Asylum Hill plan are described below:

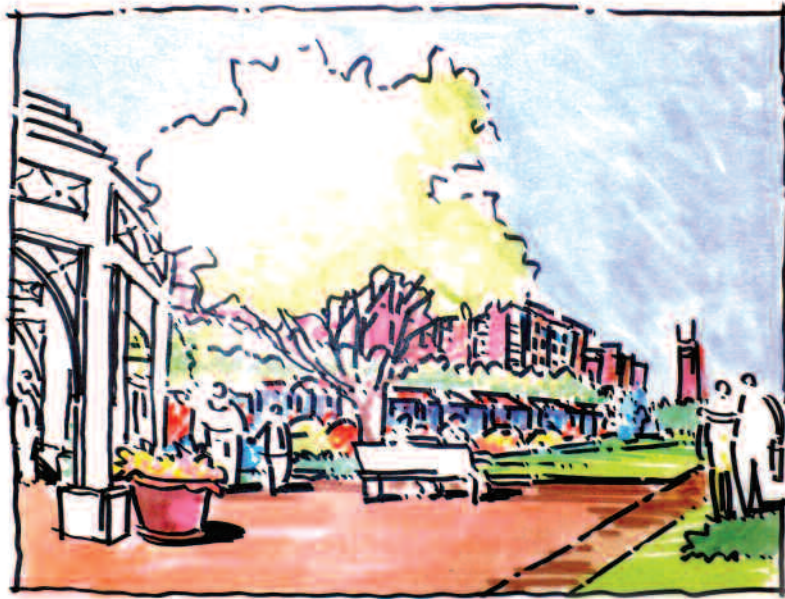
- Reinstate the boulevard qualities along Asylum Avenue and Farmington Avenue in recognition of their regional arterial function.
- Opportunity for mixed-use and open space campus district node linking the Hartford and Aetna with frontage to Asylum Avenue, Farmington Avenue, and extended Sumner Street.
- Establish landmark building (commercial or hotel) in the triangle flanked by Broad Street, Farmington Avenue, and I-84 with potential green linkage to Bushnell Park.
- A new arena facility will have the potential to be a nodal destination that geographically helps tie together the downtown, Asylum Hill, and North Park areas.
- Should an arena be proven nonviable, the Myrtle Street node would be developed as a mixed-use node, with education and local service retail as the anchor.
- The above schemes would not preclude the opportunities to retain the Griffin Line as a transit connector.

- A mixed-use entertainment node, potentially anchored by an arena, with supporting service retail, small office, and residential with elevated public deck providing pedestrian linkage back to Union Station and the West End would extend the dynamic energy of the West End area west of I-84, would provide a strong transit connection to the potential arena, and would also be supported by vocational educational facilities to support the institutional uses located at Asylum Hill.

Union Station and Downtown West

Organized around the core of the region's expanded transit network, Union Station and the broader study area should be targeted as one of the best opportunities in Connecticut for transit-oriented development. This will consist of both additional development, as well as public and private investments to ensure the highest possible transit usage at the existing job centers within walking distance of the station.

Two-thirds of the downtown, the insurance campuses on Asylum Hill, and the majority of the state complex lie within one-half mile of Union Station. The most challenging pedestrian connection exists to the west, from Union Station to Asylum Hill. There is an opportunity with the construction of an intermodal facility to accommodate regional rail, Amtrak, and the bus rapid transit at Union Station to facilitate this connection. An elevated pedestrian walkway should be incorporated that connects the train platform level to the Garden Street – Asylum Avenue intersection above westbound I-84 and below eastbound I-84. This corridor would provide a safe and level



Artist's sketch of proposed Nodal Gateway in North Park.

connection between the insurance campuses and Union Station and downtown.

New development within one mile of Union Station should be developed under the principles of transit-oriented development. Pedestrian connections between the development and the station should be emphasized while the physical impact of automobile infrastructure should be mitigated through its proper siting and design. Building services, garage access, and curb-cuts should be reserved for the streets on which pedestrian activity is not targeted or essential for vibrancy. On the primary streets that form the pedestrian backbone of the study area, on-street parking and other measures should be used to calm traffic flow. Ground floor retail and other active and transparent spaces should be mandated to ensure activity along the sidewalk, and street trees and robust streetscape improvements should be used to create a unified identity and comfortable ambience for pedestrians.

One of the essential characteristics of transit-oriented development is that parking be both managed and minimized within walking distance of Union Station. The parking ratios mandated in a more suburban or automobile-dependent setting are not appropriate for a location that will have such robust transit service. Excessive parking

takes up land that could otherwise be developed as a higher and better use and increases development costs, potentially rendering an otherwise appropriate development unfeasible. Beyond those parking reductions that may be appropriate based solely on development proximity to Union Station, a variety of demand management strategies can be utilized by employers and rental building management in the study area. The Aetna has developed an innovative program of parking pricing and incentives to encourage both carpooling and transit use. Subsidized transit passes can have a pronounced impact on the transit-share captured within a company in close proximity to the core of a network. Every effort should be made to eliminate surface parking in the study area and, at a minimum, ensure that parking does not have an adverse impact on the primary pedestrian corridors in the study area and the downtown. Key aspects of the Downtown West plan are described below:

- The upgrade of Union Station into an intermodal facility, with the introduction of the Hartford/New Britain Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service, combined with the potential light rail connection to Bradley Airport and regional commuter rail services.
- Redevelopment of the Downtown West area as a higher density, mixed-use, transit-oriented development, including multilevel commercial or hotel development above BRT facility on western side of Union Station, with elevated public deck that provides pedestrian connection between the station and Asylum Avenue to the south, and a proposed mixed-use entertainment node to the north.

North Park

The North Park district offers significant opportunities to create a vibrant, mixed use precinct that provides an effective transition between downtown and the adjacent Clay Arsenal neighborhood.

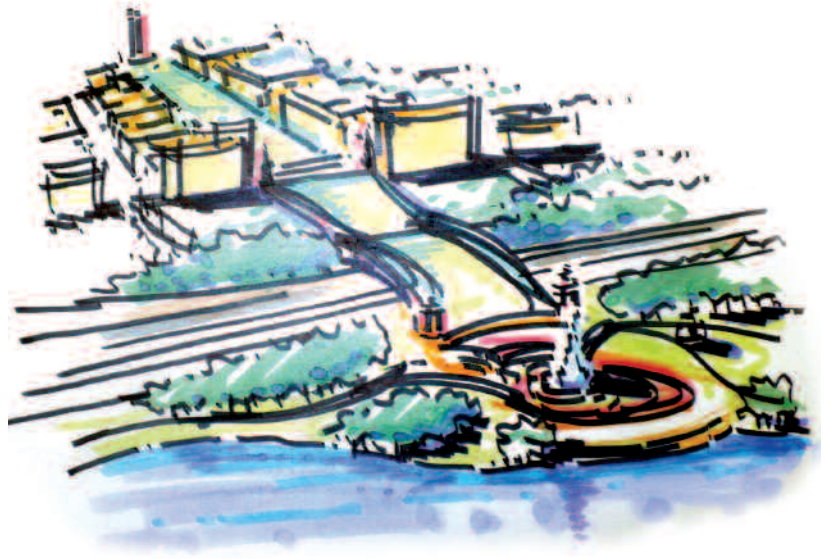
The area currently contains a mix of land uses, and some remnant historic buildings, although many of the original buildings have been removed and replaced with either replacement structures or surface parking. The most intact grouping of original historic buildings is found at the northern end of the site, adjacent to the intersection of

Main Street and Albany Avenue. These include the historic Keney Clock Tower and park, the former Northwest District School Building—which is planned to be adaptively reused as a Public Safety Complex—Isham Terry House, and a number of remnant Victorian houses. Several education institutions are active in the North Park district, including the Barnard Brown Magnet School and the Rensselaer at Hartford. Additional uses within the district include three data centers, light industrial uses, and the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

The vision for North Park is to create a vibrant, mixed-use community that celebrates the rich natural and cultural heritage of the city and provides an effective bridge between the downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods to the north and west. Further, the panel believes that within this area lies an enormous opportunity to further reconnect the community with the river, creating a large linear urban park straddling I-91 and creating a green corridor between the Keeney Clock Tower Park and Riverside. This gesture is aimed at restoring the Rain of Parks, Olmsted’s significant contribution to this city, as well as creating a heart to the district and enhancing the value of adjacent development parcels. The linear park will be lined with residential, mixed-use buildings, with a range of rental or for-purchase housing catering to a socially, culturally, and economically mixed residential community.

Main Street is intended to function as the retail and commercial core of the district, with the potential to adaptively reuse existing historic buildings as well as adding new buildings lining Main Street. The retained buildings offer the opportunity to attract a more diverse range of traders, specifically drawing upon the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Clay Arsenal neighborhood.

The intersection of Main Street and Albany Avenue is seen as an urban gateway to mark the junction of the North Park District, the Albany Avenue Corridor, and the Clay Arsenal Neighborhood. The cluster of civic uses and proposed retail uses, supported with a strong landscape gesture seeks to create a new urban node and center in the northern part of the city—not only to serve the North Park District, but also to provide a new center to serve the Clay Arsenal






Artist’s sketch of proposed Linear Park in North Park.

Neighborhood. Key aspects of the North Park plan are described below:

- Nodal gateway to be developed at the intersection of Main Street and Albany Avenue—creating a retail and service area for both North Park area as well as the Clay Arsenal neighborhood.
- The North Park concept draws its inspiration from the 19th century Rain of Parks gesture that aimed to create a unified system of parks. Olmsted stated that, “the larger city will need, not only an account of its larger population, but because of the growth of a special demand in modern urban society, much more available public grounds than it yet possesses.” Olmsted called for a belt of public grounds that literally required the city boundary of 1872 to be expanded 1-2 miles from the heart of the city.
- The central element of the North Park concept—establishing a green parkway link between the Keeney Clock Tower Park located at Gateway and Riverside Park—is considered as a mixed-use residential corridor with an elevated deck spanning I-91 and reuniting the river to the community.

Proposed mix of uses in
Asylum Hill, Downtown
West, and North Park.

Key:

-  Proposed Residential
-  Proposed Retail
-  Proposed Commercial





Zoning Recommendations and Design Guidelines

As the primary regulatory controls that will manage land use and built form within the study area, zoning and design guidelines will profoundly affect development. The panel recommends that form-based and performance-based zoning are developed as an overlay or as a new zone for the study area. With less of an emphasis on the precise location of different land uses, these two zoning models foster the incremental formation of the city fabric that creates the vibrant and mixed-use district that will integrate the downtown with the surrounding neighborhoods.

As a redevelopment plan is formulated for the study area, it should include specific building massing for each parcel, mandated locations for ground floor retail, appropriate locations for building services and garage entrances, and a robust

landscaping and street tree plan. Design guidelines and the new zoning would ensure first and foremost that building scale and the interaction between the public and private realms is appropriate in creating the context for this pedestrian-oriented and walkable district. While ensuring an urban built form, this framework will allow the mixture of residential, office, retail, and institutional uses in the study area to continually adjust and adapt to market conditions.

The city may consider establishing a village district to achieve some of these goals in the study area. Under Connecticut state statute, a village district would allow the city to preserve the unique historic character and context of the downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods through a robust control over the aesthetic and physical characteristics of the study area.

Implementation

The panel believes that the city of Hartford, with its diversity of people, its rich culture and unique history, has the opportunity to focus its vision for the future as the region's gem, the heart of employment, entertainment, and family activities, with distinct neighborhoods, architecture, and parks.

Vision

In recent years, a variety of new housing, retail and entertainment establishments, and civic venues have been built into the fabric of Hartford. It is important to continue to expand on these successes with the confidence to tell the story of a capital city that is safe, livable for all, and able to provide jobs in a strong economic environment.

At this point in the redevelopment history of Hartford, it will be necessary to overcome attitudes from the past and to put political agendas aside. All stakeholders should work to build the strongest of partnerships between governments, the business community, and the neighborhoods.

Orderly planning, robust and inclusive decision-making, creative financing mechanisms, as well as new leadership strategies for accomplishing the city's goals will lay the foundation for Hartford to build on its existing strengths. In order for this to occur, it will be imperative that the planning, regulatory and financing entities presently in place within the city are able to use their full authority in order to move projects forward in an efficient manner.

Constant and consistent communications and marketing are also key components for informing all stakeholders about the reality of Hartford's assets, as well as overcoming any perceptions which may have perpetuated over time. Hartford's convenient location within the region and compact downtown allow it to be thought of, as one resi-

dent remarked, "the neighborhood that belongs to everyone."

Leadership

To oversee the expediency of purpose and continued development of the targeted study area, specific entities must be tasked to provide the necessary leadership. The panel believes that a single-purpose commission for the study area with appropriate public and private stakeholders and staff must be put in place. This commission should have responsibility for

- Developing an area master plan.
- Marketing the vision.
- Assembling the land.
- Managing the development process.
- Identifying investment capital.
- Establishing design standards.
- Coordinating a public outreach process and communicating with all publics (public, private, nonprofit).
- Acting as the developer of last resort.
- Working with the city to establish a tax increment financing (TIF) district.
- Staffing the steering committees.

The panel recognizes that the decision to create this commission can be politically difficult. It requires elected officials and existing agencies to give some of their powers to a new board of appointed individuals. However, use of this commission minimizes many of the political roadblocks in the redevelopment process by putting more power into the hands of private sector leaders—the same leaders upon whom the community must rely to

Before and after: present view at a typical intersection and an artist's computer generated sketch showing a potential future of the site.



take the financial risks necessary to achieve redevelopment.

The new study area commission should include the following nine representatives:

- Governor or cabinet member.
- Mayor or city director.
- The Hartford senior level executive.
- The Aetna senior level executive.
- Business owner from the study area.
- MetroHartford Alliance chair.
- Capital Region Council of Governments/
Metropolitan Planning Organization chair.
- Urban League representative.
- Hartford Community Foundation
representative.

It is also recommended that each of the three distinct areas that make up the study area create steering committees made up of appropriate neighborhood and employer stakeholders. The steering committee will advise the commission by determining desirable uses to be included in future planning, recommending design standards for private and public improvement, and implementing the plan in collaboration with the commission.

The Public Realm

In its completed state, the study area should recapture the beauty of the old Hartford, but it will do so in a way that presents a city of the future. Consequently, the panel recommends that the activities and investment in the study area be held to a very high standard of design and expectation.

Business Improvement District

The recently created business improvement district (BID) plays a valuable role in the economic vitality of downtown Hartford with its mission to create a safer, cleaner, and more attractive environment for employees, residents, and visitors. The panel encourages the Hartford BID to place greatest emphasis on increased public safety and security and to be robust in the expansion of its efforts to both market the downtown area and plan special events. It is also important that the Hartford BID serve as the forum for downtown property owners to have a voice in the continued revitalization of downtown Hartford.

Capital Region Council of Governments/ Metropolitan Planning Organization

The Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG)/Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has responsibility for regional transportation planning and advocacy. These two organizations address important elements for the economic vitality of downtown Hartford and the redevelop-

ment study area including the Union Station intermodal center, the downtown Star Shuttle, and future commuter and light rail connections to the airport and other cities. The city must protect its partnership with the MPO by actively participating in the decision-making process and securing support for a fully integrated transportation system throughout the region with downtown Hartford as the hub.

Airport Rail Link

Because of the importance of air travel to the business community, the panel recommends continued work in exploring the creation of a rail link to the airport that would capitalize on Union Station's accessibility to the study area.

The Riverfront

The panel recommendations on riverfront access are covered in detail in another part of the report, but in addition to the physical connection, the panel recommends that the commission explore ways to animate the riverfront. There is a great deal of literature on how to accomplish this, but for now the panel recommends that the commission and the city explore ways to augment the daily activities at the boathouse. One possibility is the provision of a skateboard park.

Partnerships

The panel has met impressive champions for Hartford through its many outstanding business and nonprofit organizations, foundations, governmental bodies, and neighborhood groups. Each play an integral leadership role in the life of the city of Hartford and each must be fully engaged in the city's future. Where strong partnerships presently exist, they must be continually nurtured, and where a partnership needs strengthening, it must be thoughtfully built on trust and collaboration. A city's civic success and economic strength is directly related to its ability to build relationships with those who make personal and professional investments. There is some question as to whether partnerships are being used as valuable tools toward accomplishing Hartford's goals for the future. The panel recommends tapping into the spirit and wealth of the vast resources that are available within the community at every level and in every imaginable way.

Funding Sources

The panel proposes stimulating development in the study area through a strategic approach that will amount to more than a series of high-profile transactions. Accordingly, there are few specific transaction recommendations, and what follows in this section of the report is a series of recommendations of resources, both programmatic and institutional, on which the commission can draw as it implements the strategy.

Numerous stakeholders told the panel that it is unlikely that the state can be relied upon for large, single-purpose grants. However, the panel believes that many of the tools necessary to implement the vision are available to the city now, and that the city should explore every available option as it works toward implementation. These tools include various financing options that will be necessary to bridge the gap between cost and value; they also include a focused management of other city responsibilities in advancing the projects within the study area.

Local Programs

The following recommendations will help the city access funding options at the local level:

- The panel recommends creating a TIF district. As a general policy matter, the panel believes that the TIF boundaries should cover the entire study area.
- The city of Hartford has the capacity to issue general obligation bonds. Future bond issues should be committed to projects in the study area and to public improvements to remedy weaknesses in the infrastructure in the areas immediately adjacent to the site as identified in another section of the report.
- The charitable foundations should be approached early in the process to discuss the best form of participation in a comprehensive, transit-oriented development. These discussions should focus on funding programs to help the residents of the neighborhoods deal with the issues of jobs, job training, education, and housing in the adjacent communities.

- All of the study area is eligible for federal Community Development Block Grants. These funds would help with programs to help integrate the activities in the study area into the adjacent neighborhood. There should be a special focus on jobs, job training, and safety issues.
- The City Parking Authority currently owns and manages approximately 4,300 parking spaces. The Authority has the capacity to issue revenue bonds to provide a financing tool for partnerships with private development entities to provide parking in a variety of projects throughout the study area.
- The city should immediately update its downtown master plan. After the plan is updated, the city should create and adopt an overlay zone covering the entire revised study area. These two steps should be undertaken in collaboration with the three neighborhood-based steering committees.
- Both the Hartford region and the state of Connecticut lag in business formation, and other communities have found that the system of services for start up business found in incubators can enhance business formation. The panel recommends that the commission and the city provide an incubator in the study area.
- The Capital Region Council of Governments is the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Hartford Region. It should be approached to become a partner in implementing the development in the study area, and it should be called upon by the commission and the city to assist in taking advantage of the resources available for transit-oriented development.
- In the panel's opinion, the assembly of large tracts of land within the study area is absolutely necessary to realize the vision for the site, and will result in substantial public benefit by eliminating blight, creating and retaining a substantial number of jobs, creating new housing, and adding to the city's tax base. The community should be willing to make use of the tool of eminent domain, if necessary, in order to create the land mass necessary to carry out development.

The State of Connecticut

The following recommendations will help the city access funding options at the state level:

- Industrial revenue bonds are a potential tool available to market to manufacturing plants that provide good jobs and expand economic opportunities for residents and the community. The city must work to inform developers of this program and provide technical assistance in packaging proposals and applications.
- The state departments of Economic Development, Transportation, and Environmental Protection have a variety of programs that can be used to support transit-oriented development. The panel recommends that the city and the commission approach these state offices early in the process to explore how the city and the state can collaborate on a transit-oriented development.
- Within the office of the Governor, the study area stakeholders should approach the Office of Responsible Growth, and Hartford should make its case for the study area as a resource for leadership and innovation in smart growth within the state.
- The city and the commission should approach the Governor's office and members of the state legislature to explore the possibility of rebating a portion of the room occupancy tax and sales tax to the city for uses within the study area.

Federal Programs

The following recommendations will help the city access funding options at the federal level:

- The panel recommends using low income housing tax credits to provide greater choice in the housing products to be developed in the study area.
- The panel recommends that the commission and its partner developers aggressively pursue the use of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified tax credits.
- The commission should be prepared to submit an application for New Market Tax Credits the

next time the Treasury department announces an application process.

- Both the state and the city are fortunate to have effective leadership in the United States Congress. The panel recommends that early on in the development process local officials and community leaders explore with their federal legislators the use of federal earmarks for investment in the study area. These discussions could include opportunities like the river access, transportation improvements, and various other infrastructure improvements.

Conclusion

Downtown is the one neighborhood that all residents of Hartford can call their own. It is the people's living room, the point of arrival, the front door, the image-maker, the picture postcard. It is the image that people remember. It is Hartford's identity. The city has made some great strides. New anchor developments have been built and the face of the city has been changed.

Now, Hartford must decide what kind of city it wants to be. It is not enough to say, as so many cities do, "this will be a great place to live, work, and play." By trying to be everything to everyone, a city loses itself and its own identity. If Hartford wants to be, for example, a city that is a great place to raise a family, it must make development decisions that aim toward that goal, and only that goal. In such a case, the city would have to ask itself, "What is best for the kids" in everything that it does. That vision may conflict, for example, with a vision of a city that is a great place for visitors to party late into the night, or a city known for being a center of major league sports.

The answer to this question of identity lies in being the best city that Hartford can be, honoring its heritage, its traditions, its people, and its assets, and not trying to be what it is not, and should not, be. It is also a question of knowing and acting upon only those decisions that will lead to the greatest level of prosperity for all of Hartford.

Although much has been accomplished, a few more pieces must be put into place to knit together Hartford's urban fabric to create a seamless, enjoyable urban experience. Yes, Hartford faces some challenges. But, the city has the means to overcome them if the community has a unified desire to do so.

Overcoming these challenges will require great collaboration, some patience, and no small amount of imagination. However, the one thing Hartford must not do is to fall victim to pessimism. Instead, it must embrace its can-do heritage. It should aim high, in the spirit of its pioneering heroes, and proceed with confidence to finish the job it has so ably begun.

As a total community, Hartford will need the vision to see what others cannot, the conviction to inspire others to move in the same direction, and the persistence of will to do what is necessary to make the city's dreams come true.

The question is, does Hartford have what it takes?

This panel believes that it does.

About the Panel

Ray Brown

*Panel Chair
Memphis, Tennessee*

Brown has more than 35 years of experience in both architectural and urban design and consulting services to diverse clients including municipalities, community development corporations, downtown redevelopment agencies, private developers, and architects. With a passion for downtown and neighborhood design and planning, and for designing buildings that enhance the existing urban fabric, he prefers projects that have the best potential for improving the quality of life for disadvantaged urban residents in at-risk neighborhoods. As a practicing architect, Brown has designed both single-family homes and multi-family projects that combine today's construction techniques with historical design precedents to produce affordable buildings that comfortably fit their contexts.

During his tenure as vice president for development of the Memphis Center City Commission, Brown reviewed proposals for downtown development projects that conformed to the overall Memphis downtown development goals and financial incentive eligibility requirements, evaluated and selected sites for proposed projects, and prepared preliminary development pro forma. As project director for the Memphis Redbirds, Brown directed the design and construction of AutoZone Park, the nation's premiere minor league baseball park.

Brown is an active member of the Urban Land Institute and the Congress for New Urbanism, and has participated in nine previous ULI Advisory Services panels in cities across the country as both panelist and chair.

Jennifer Ball

Atlanta, Georgia

Ball is vice president of planning of Central Atlanta Progress, Inc. (CAP) where she manages land use and transportation planning policy initiatives and implementation projects within downtown Atlanta. Recent notable initiatives under her direction include the development of the Imagine Downtown vision plan, the Downtown Livability Code zoning regulation update and the on-going implementation of \$35 million worth of public space capital improvements including streetscape improvements, wayfinding signage, and roadway upgrades.

She received a Bachelor of Science degree from the Georgia Institute of Technology College of Architecture and a Master of City Planning degree also from Georgia Tech. She was the recipient of the Frederick K. Bell Memorial Fellowship and the Georgia Planning Association Student of the Year Award.

She began her career with John Wieland Homes as a marketing coordinator and then a custom home coordinator. Subsequently, she joined The Preston Phillips Partnership (a medium-sized architectural and engineering firm specializing in retail projects) as a project assistant. Following graduate school she took a position with Robert Charles Lesser & Co. as an associate and performed real estate market research and analysis for development projects and public sector redevelopment plans.

In 2004, Ball was named a member of the Atlanta Business Chronicle's "Up and Comers: 40 under 40" group of promising young leaders. She has been an active member of the Urban Land Institute as a founding member of the Atlanta District Council Young Leaders Group and a member of the membership committee. She is also a member

of the American Planning Association. She currently serves as the secretary and treasurer of the Georgia Tech College of Architecture Alumni Committee and previously served on the Georgia Tech Young Alumni Council. She also volunteers at the Centennial Olympic Park Visitor Center.

Ball has been a guest lecturer at Georgia Tech's City and Regional Planning Program and a presenter at national and local city planning conferences on topics ranging from downtown economic development and business improvements districts to transportation planning and plan implementation. She has also authored an American Planning Association Planner's Advisory Service Report on Street Vending.

Charles Berling

Morrison, Colorado

Berling is managing member of Berling Equities, LLC, a real estate development, consulting and services company. Prior to Berling Equities, he developed more than 17 million square feet and \$2 billion of commercial real estate in major markets throughout the United States while serving as a senior executive with Homart Development Co., Glacier Park Co., and BetaWest Properties. The project list includes more than 20 major ventures from New England to Hawaii.

Among a wide range of accomplishments are Alii Place, Honolulu; Hills Plaza, San Francisco; LaSalle Plaza, Minneapolis; Phoenix Plaza, Phoenix; the original Scanticon Hotel and Conference Center, Denver; Securities Center, Atlanta; Xerox Centre at Las Colinas, Dallas; Williamsburg Office Park, Louisville, Kentucky; and Corporate Centre North, Indianapolis. The real estate products he has developed and acquired include central business district office and mixed-use, suburban office and industrial, neighborhood retail, single and multi-family residential, hotels, a major conference center, and several land entitlement assignments.

Prior to his development career, Berling managed a family-owned general construction company in Indianapolis, Indiana. He is a graduate of Princeton University, a member of the Urban Land In-

stitute, and a board member of both United Western Bank in Denver and Chinese Children Adoption International.

Daniel Conway

Aurora, Colorado

Conway is a real estate marketing and research authority specializing in residential, commercial/industrial, and golf course developments. Conway has had over thirty years experience as an urban land economist. For the last 20 years as president and director of economics and market research for THK Associates, he has conducted numerous residential, commercial, industrial, and golf course economic feasibility and market studies, socioeconomic impact assessments, and financial planning studies.

Projects of particular interest include an international market center and industrial market analysis for the Dove Valley Business Air Park in Arapahoe County; a residential and related uses market analysis for several major developments in Douglas County including the 1,342 acre Parker City site; and numerous golf course feasibility studies throughout the country. Specific communities where Conway has completed a wide range of research and analysis include Las Vegas and Reno, Nevada; Oxnard, Palm Springs and Carmel, California; Kansas City, Missouri; Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Oklahoma; Austin, Texas; Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico; Seattle, Washington; and Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona.

Most recently, Conway has gained recognition as a sought-after speaker on the golf course development circuit. His numerous presentations at the Crittenden Golf Development Expos have been widely attended and universally applauded, and his book *The Cost and Revenues of a Unique Golf Club* has furthered his reputation as one of the industry's leading authorities. Under Conway's guidance, THK Associates completes over 75 golf course feasibility studies and golf driving range market studies and appraisals each year.

Tom Cox

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

From 1979 to 1989, Cox was the executive director of the North Side Civic Development Council, which became the community development corporation for fifteen neighborhoods (pop. 60,000) in the north side of Pittsburgh under his leadership. During his tenure, the organization developed sale housing, an incubator, industrial and commercial buildings, and managed a seed/venture capital fund. The organization was identified by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) as one of the ten best community development corporations in the United States during the decade of the 1980s.

In 1989, Cox became the first executive director of the Neighborhood Progress Corporation, an intermediary organization created by the major civic organizations and philanthropies in Cleveland, Ohio. He managed an annual \$3 million grants program to provide operating support to Cleveland's community development corporations. During this time, he created a \$15 million development loan fund, a housing development corporation, and the first wholly-owned subsidiary of the South Shore Bank of Chicago. The organization created a small business incubator and two Nehemiah housing developments, including a smart growth project with Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company as the project architect.

In 1994, Cox became Pittsburgh's deputy mayor and chief of staff to Mayor Tom Murphy, with major responsibilities for neighborhood and economic development, and budget management. Cox was, in effect, the chief operating officer of the city. During the twelve years of the Murphy administration, the city payroll was reduced from 5,000 to 4,200 employees and some city services were privatized, most significantly payroll.

As manager of the capital budget process, Cox created routines for various city investment programs like paving and vehicle purchase. New computer systems were purchased for budget management. These systems also helped the police bureau institute state-of-the-art personnel evaluation systems and crime mapping systems in order to implement better police resource deployment

practices. Every playground in the city (some 150) was repaired or replaced, which included the installation of child safety surfaces. Cox also secured pro-bono services by the McKinsey consulting firm to re-engineer Pittsburgh's police bureau and the public housing authority.

As a consequence of his responsibility for neighborhood and economic development, Cox served as chairman of the Urban Redevelopment Authority (the city's urban renewal operating agency) for twelve years. He oversaw the design and implementation of numerous projects including the creation of a \$60 million revolving development fund, two sports facilities, the convention center, a new headquarters for Alcoa, new office buildings for Mellon and PNC Banks, downtown housing, numerous neighborhood housing and commercial projects, and two new town/in town developments.

Cox is a graduate of Yale University (B.A. Philosophy, 1961) and the Union Theological Seminary (M. Div. 1964). He is an ordained Episcopal priest.

Glenda Hood

Orlando, Florida

The Honorable Glenda E. Hood is the former Florida secretary of state and mayor of Orlando. She has dedicated her adult life to making her community and state a better place to live, work and raise a family. As a businesswoman and public leader, she has served in a myriad of leadership roles at the local, state, national and international levels. The Orlando Sentinel referred to Hood in a 2005 editorial as a "tireless visionary" with "marketing savvy, tenacity and experience."

As Orlando's first woman mayor, she was the chief executive officer responsible for a workforce of approximately 3,200 employees and an annual budget of \$526 million. Hood used growth management strategies and smart growth principles to build safe, livable neighborhoods, a revitalized downtown, and a strong local economy.

She aggressively increased the number of police officers patrolling Orlando's streets and doubled the number of police officers in Orlando's high schools. She strengthened neighborhoods by cre-

ating the Neighborhood Services Office, her highly successful Neighborhood Matching Grants programs, and her Legacy Parks Initiative. She improved education by creating partnerships to build new facilities and developing the volunteer Neighbors Helping Schools program.

Hood worked to build a strong economy by attracting higher wage jobs and high technology companies, and by assisting small business through the Business Assistance Team (BAT). She helped Orlando focus its development as a world marketplace by organizing the Metro Orlando International Affairs Commission. Mayor Hood also spearheaded the reuse plan for the Orlando Naval Training Center, increased the city's land area through large annexations, and oversaw a renaissance of downtown development.

Prior to being elected Mayor in 1992, Hood served as an Orlando City Council member and was president of her own public relations firm. She served as a board member for both the city-owned Orlando Utilities Commission, which provides electricity and water in the metro area, and the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority, which operates Orlando International Airport and Orlando Executive Airport. She has served as chairman of Lynx, the regional transportation authority, and is past president of the National League of Cities, the Florida League of Cities, and the Florida Chamber of Commerce.

Currently, she is chairman of Partners for Livable Communities, a national organization enhancing community life through innovation, studies and programs, and serves on the national boards of the Alliance for Regional Stewardship and After School Alliance. Hood is also a Homeland Security Advisory Council member for the Department of Homeland Security.

An Orlando native and fourth generation Floridian, Mayor Hood graduated from Orlando's Oak Ridge High School and Rollins College with a degree in Spanish. She has completed the Executive Program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and the Mayor's Urban Design Institute at the University of Virginia.

Andrew Irvine

Denver, Colorado

Irvine is a senior landscape architect at EDAW, Inc. with a broad range of project experience throughout the United States and Australia. Recently, Irvine relocated from the Melbourne office to the Denver office and brought more than 15 years of experience in landscape architecture and urban design with him. He has specialized skills in site planning, master planning, and urban design guidelines. His range of projects includes major infrastructure, urban renewal, public domain, and traditional park design. He has worked on numerous planning projects that include significant experience with transportation and waterfront development. Irvine also has completed projects that have incorporated comprehensive open space networks and ecological restoration areas into planned communities. He has degrees in landscape architecture and environmental design.

David Kooris

Stamford, Connecticut

Kooris is the director of Regional Plan Association's Connecticut Office. As a senior planner, he has managed a variety of community design and growth management projects in Connecticut, the Hudson Valley, and Long Island. An emphasis in all of his work is community participation and the involvement of as wide a spectrum of stakeholders as possible.

Kooris currently manages two growth management projects in Orange County, New York. A total of 14 towns and villages are engaged in a coordinated inter-municipal land use plan to mitigate the effects of future growth. By working together in a collaborative and iterative planning process, these fourteen municipalities aim to limit traffic congestion, loss of open space, and declining quality of life while continuing to grow. Kooris also presently manages the urban design component of the Downtown Bridgeport Master Plan, the largest city in the state of Connecticut. After several decades of decline, cities across the region are showing signs of life aided by changing demographics and a renewed demand for urban living.

Bridgeport is in a unique position to get out in front of this pending development and ensure that future growth is oriented toward the city's phenomenal transit access and contributes to the city and the region's quality of life. Kooris' work in the city of his birth will ensure that development in the coming years ensures Bridgeport's long term success.

In his three years at Regional Plan Association, Kooris has worked on several neighborhood-scale planning initiatives throughout the tristate region. He has played an active role in the urban design, planning, and communicative aspects of station area plans for Netcong, Somerville, and Galloway, in New Jersey as well as the neighborhood center plans for the communities of Glenbrook and Springdale in Stamford, Connecticut. He has also led the Long Island Mayors' and Supervisors' Institute on Community Design, a workshop that pairs elected municipal officials with planning and design professionals to formulate cutting edge solutions to the challenges that face the region's neighborhoods.

He received an Honors Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Geography from McGill University and a Master in City and Regional Planning and a Master Certificate in Urban Design from PennDesign at the University of Pennsylvania.

Jerry Miller

Atlanta, Georgia

Miller recently formed Fabric Developers, LLC, a development firm committed to restoring the fabric of inner-city Atlanta through human-scale, neighborhood-oriented development.

For the last twelve years Miller has been a partner in Miller-Gallman Developers, LLC, a real estate development firm that focuses on historic rehabilitation loft apartments and new in-fill development in Atlanta and other cities. Since its inception in 1995, Miller Gallman has developed over \$100 million in loft apartments and condominiums and has been part of the rejuvenation of the Ponce corridor through its development of Glen Iris Lofts and Ponce Springs at Glen Iris across from City Hall East.

Miller-Gallman has also been an integral part of the transformation of the Castleberry Hill historic loft district, having completed numerous rehabilitation and new construction projects in that neighborhood. The company has received awards in adaptive reuse from the Urban Design Commission, and for historic preservation from the Georgia Trust, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources-Historic Preservation Division, Athens Clarke Heritage Foundation, and the Columbus Historic Foundation.

Miller earned an M.B.A. in finance from the Wharton School of Finance and a B.A. from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. He has been an Atlantan since 1980. He chairs the Capitol Hill Neighborhood Development Corporation, is on the board of the Decatur-DeKalb YMCA, and is an elder at Central Presbyterian Church.

Brett Wylie

Atlanta, Georgia

Brett Wylie joined Cooper Carry in 1995 as a planner and landscape architect, and was soon made director of landscape architecture in The Center for Connective Architecture, where he is engaged in diverse public and private projects throughout the United States. Within the Center for Connective Architecture, Wylie is responsible for planning, designing, and implementing elements within each project's designed exterior environment. He brings with him valuable experience in taking projects from initial concepts through to construction completion with coordination of project budgets, cost estimates, specifications, construction documents, and construction observation.

Brett holds a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree from the University of Georgia, and is a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA).



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