

# Knoxville Tennessee

October 5–10, 2014



# Knoxville Tennessee

Building on Momentum: Setting the Stage for  
Downtown Knoxville's Future

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# About 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 the 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 34,000 members worldwide, 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.

Cover: City of Knoxville.

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# About ULI Advisory Services

**THE GOAL OF THE ULI 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, brownfield 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, participants 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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# Acknowledgments

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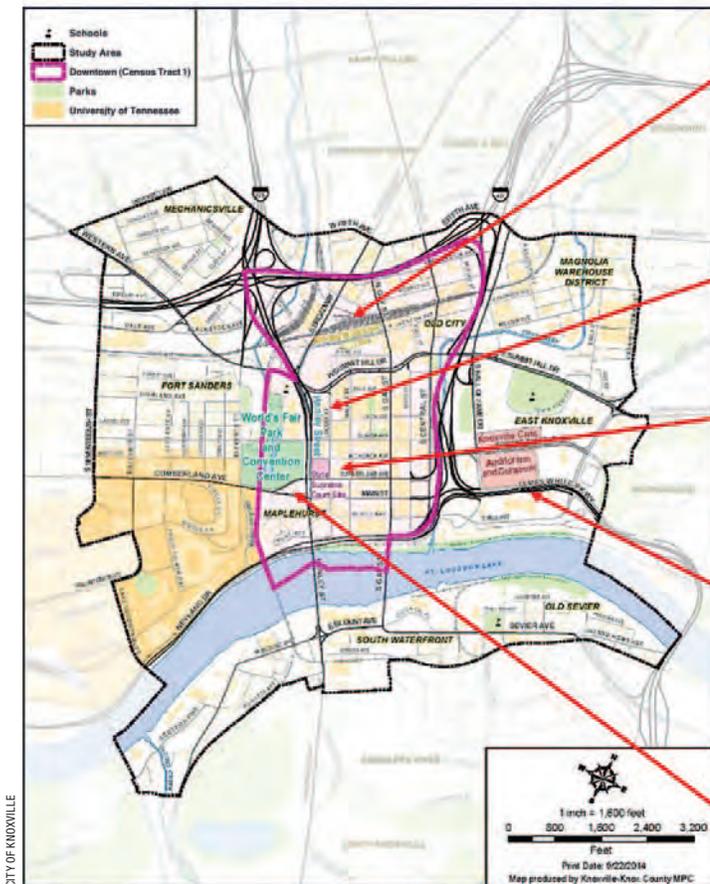
# Background and the Panel's Assignment

**KNOXVILLE IS THE THIRD-LARGEST** city in Tennessee and comprises 104 square miles, or 20 percent of Knox County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2013 estimates, the population of the Knoxville metropolitan statistical area (MSA) is 852,715, making it the 64th-largest MSA, with Knoxville accounting for about 183,270, or 21 percent of the total metro population.

From 2000 to 2013, the population of the Knoxville metropolitan area grew 14 percent, owing to a number of factors, including a diverse economy, a temperate climate

that attracts both working-age and retired residents, overall quality of life and cost of living, and access to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the country's most visited national park. Both Knoxville and Knox County are major hubs for employment and commerce in the region, with major employers in the health care, social assistance, and retail trade sectors. Notable local employers include the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Oak Ridge National Laboratory; the Tennessee Valley Authority; Denso; Alcoa; and the adjacent Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

*Knoxville study area map.*



*The panel's study area is outlined in black. The photos highlight individual study area sites. From top: 400 and 500 West Jackson Avenue, Henley Street, the State Supreme Court site, the Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum, and World's Fair Park.*

## The Panel’s Assignment

More than a decade ago, the Urban Land Institute came to Knoxville to make recommendations for the future development of the World’s Fair Park, the proposed new Knoxville Convention Center, and the revitalization of downtown Knoxville. Since then, downtown Knoxville has enjoyed a full-scale renaissance as a vibrant, mixed-use urban district. Many downtown buildings have been redeveloped, and discussion today centers on understanding the optimal next steps to ensure continuation of the incredible progress and momentum already achieved.

A great deal of this current discussion centers on two potential development sites on the edge of the Central Business Improvement District (CBID), currently owned by public entities, and two publicly owned and operated facilities on either side of the CBID, as well as the connections between these sites and with downtown Knoxville in general. Specifically these sites, referred to throughout this report as the “study area,” include the following:

- Henley Street/U.S. Highway 441;
- State Supreme Court site;
- World’s Fair Park;
- 400 and 500 West Jackson Avenue; and
- Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum.

The city of Knoxville (also referred to throughout this report as the sponsor) reached out to ULI for guidance on the following questions:

- How can Knoxville set the stage for future growth and development on the periphery of the downtown core?
- What are strategies to connect these resources to downtown and to each other?
- What are key, implementable steps to address development and connectivity issues in the short term?

*Examples of previous studies and planning work that contribute to the city’s ongoing efforts to revitalize downtown.*



## Summary of Panel Recommendations

The panel has been extremely impressed with the progress made in downtown Knoxville in recent years and encourages the city to continue with these efforts. The panel also recognizes the vast amount of effort that has been made over the years in revitalizing downtown, both the physical investment that is so readily apparent walking through the area and the intellectual investment that has been made in a number of prior studies and planning work.

Throughout this report, the panel presents a series of recommendations to inform the sponsor’s future actions and help meet the following goals:

- Further define Knoxville’s “brand”;
- Identify specific development objectives and methods; and
- Consolidate and mobilize resources to continue to redevelop downtown consistent with the city of Knoxville’s goals and vision.



*Knoxville and its surrounding region.*

This report begins with an overview of local market conditions and economic indicators that have helped inform the panel’s work and subsequent recommendations. Observations about Knoxville’s current physical framework, unique character, and identity set the stage for the panel’s overall strategic framework and recommendations that are described throughout this report. Specific recommendations are then shared for each of the five study area sites as well as the connections and synergistic opportunities between them.

The panel suggests many bold ideas, including the following overarching recommendations:

- Transform the Henley Street corridor by introducing on-street parking and activating the street with retail and a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Redevelop the State Supreme Court site with active uses, such as a mixed-use development with a performing arts component, and ensure that any future requests for proposals (RFPs) clearly guide design and program mix.
- Preserve the World’s Fair Park’s green space as an amenity for current and future Knoxville residents, and

activate adjacent underused sites and additional infill sites with synergistic uses, such as homes for existing cultural organizations seeking new space.

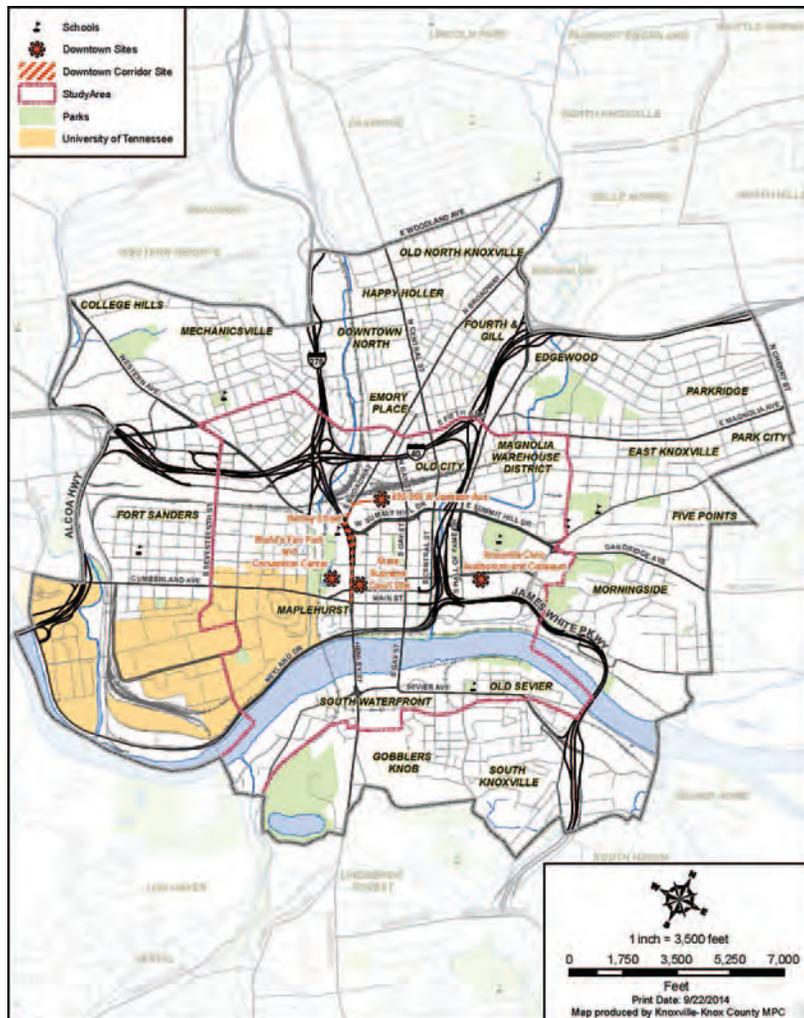
- Relocate those existing uses currently at the Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum to downtown, and engage in a public master-planning process to envision and create a vibrant, desirable, mixed-income community that includes diverse housing types and households.
- Consider a master-developer approach to ensure successful and contextual redevelopment (i.e., redevelopment that relates to existing development) for 400 and 500 West Jackson Avenue.
- Extend Knoxville’s greenway connection north from World’s Fair Park.

# Study Area and Surrounding Context

**ENCOMPASSING FIVE SPECIFIC SITES**—Henley Street/U.S. Highway 441, the State Supreme Court site, World’s Fair Park, 400 and 500 West Jackson Avenue, and the Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum—the core study area covers a great deal of Knoxville’s downtown and includes a diverse set of land uses, including residential, recreational, civic and cultural, and former warehouses, among others. The larger, contextual study

area includes several surrounding neighborhoods; government, office, and industrial uses; and public amenities. The city has already made a number of public investments in the area, including several streetscape, greenway, and park projects, with still more to come. The contextual study area has also experienced significant private investment with various commercial and residential projects coming online in recent years.

The panel’s study area and the surrounding context.



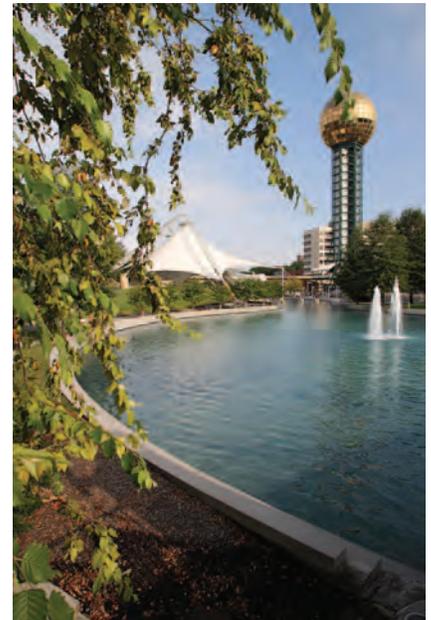
The following is a summarized description of each site in the core study area:

- **Henley Street:** Henley Street/U.S. 441 is a major thoroughfare connecting Interstate 40 to downtown and south Knoxville. Knoxville’s CBID, home to both the State Supreme Court site and the West Jackson Avenue sites, is located just east of Henley Street and World’s Fair Park, with the historic Fort Sanders neighborhood and the University of Tennessee immediately to the west.
- **State Supreme Court site:** Owned by the state of Tennessee, this vacant site still contains the State Supreme Court structures. Through an arrangement with the city of Knoxville’s Industrial Development Board, the sponsor has the opportunity to locally guide the redevelopment process. An RFP for redevelopment was released by the sponsor during the previous year; however, reported financing challenges caused the selected developer’s project to stall.
- **World’s Fair Park:** Built as the centerpiece for the 1982 World’s Fair in downtown Knoxville, World’s Fair Park is home to a number of recreational, civic, and cultural uses, including the Sunsphere, the Exhibition Center and Convention Center, an amphitheater, and the L&N STEM Academy, as well as the largest concentration of open space in downtown.

■ **Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum:** Built more than 50 years ago, the Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum was part of early urban renewal and redevelopment for the east side of Knoxville. The city of Knoxville is currently working with consultants to understand feasibility and future use of these spaces.

■ **400 and 500 West Jackson Avenue:** Comprising several now-vacant lots, 400 and 500 West Jackson Av-

enue formerly housed the historic McClung Warehouses, dating to Knoxville's early industrial days. In February 2007 and again in February 2014, these buildings were severely damaged by fires and subsequently demolished. The city of Knoxville owns the land plus a large parking lot adjacent to the building site.



*Clockwise from top left:*

*The Henley Street corridor (outlined in red), which connects Interstate 40 to south Knoxville and downtown.*

*The state-owned State Supreme Court site, currently vacant.*

*World's Fair Park, home to a number of civic and cultural uses, including the Sunsphere and the Exhibition Center and Convention Center.*

*The now vacant lots at 400 and 500 West Jackson Avenue.*

*The Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum.*

# Market Scan

**ORIGINALLY BUILT TO ACCOMMODATE** large railway hubs, Knoxville today brings together three of the nation's busiest interstate highways: north-south I-75 and I-81 and east-west I-40. These highways converge at or near downtown Knoxville, providing easy access to the city center but also forming physical barriers around the city.

The city center of Knoxville lies just over 20 miles from the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory, one of two major multiprogram science and technology centers operated by the U.S. federal government. It is also home to the flagship campus of the University of Tennessee system, drawing more than 27,000 Knoxville-based students. Finally, the city functions as one of the primary gateways to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the nation's busiest national park. Hosting 9,354,695 visitors in 2013, the park ranks well above Grand Canyon National Park, the second most visited national park, with 4,564,840 visitors in 2013.

## Population and Growth Trends

The Knoxville region grew 11.9 percent between 2000 and 2010 and has continued at this pace since 2010. Growth is expected to remain stable for the foreseeable future, and population within the MSA is projected to exceed 1 million by 2040, according to the University of Tennessee's *Knoxville 2040* report.

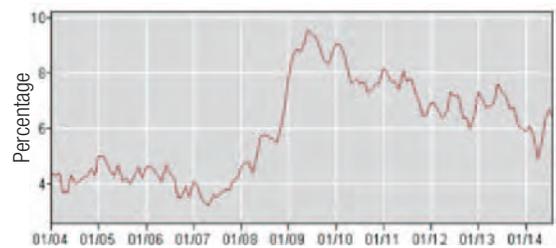
Although downtown Knoxville represents the smallest residential submarket in the region, it is also the fastest-growing area in the region. As detailed below, rapid growth downtown has resulted in full absorption of the downtown rental housing stock with additional development struggling to meet demand.

## Employment and Economic Stability

As depicted in the figure below, employment in the Knoxville region has been remarkably stable for the last ten years, with only a relatively small downward blip during the Great Recession. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' household survey, 336,504 people were employed in Knoxville as of April 2014, compared with the 342,793 employed in April 2007, while other surveys indicate modest economic growth of 0.5 percent during this period.

Employment continuity and economic stability in Knoxville are aided in large part by stability within the region's four largest employment sectors: education, state and local government, health services, and the federal government, as represented by the Oak Ridge National Laboratory facilities.

## Knoxville Unemployment Rate



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The region recovered quickly from the Great Recession—and reportedly was one of only three major cities in the United States to have fully recovered from the recession by 2012 (the other two cities were Pittsburgh and Dallas)—with gross domestic product and employment rates equal to or higher than peaks in 2007, according to the Brookings Institution. Knoxville's unemployment rate rose slightly from 4.9 percent in April 2014 to 6.4 percent as of August

## Demographics, Knoxville MSA Trade Area and Downtown Knoxville

	Knoxville trade area	Downtown Knoxville	
		0.5-mile radius	1-mile radius
<b>Population</b>			
2010 (actual)	837,571	2,470	12,705
2014 (estimated)	855,922	2,538	12,983
2019 (estimated)	882,177	2,615	13,299
Historic annual growth (2010–2014)	0.5%	0.7%	0.5%
Projected annual growth (2014–2019)	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%
<b>Households</b>			
2010	340,435	1,351	4,669
2014	352,764	1,409	4,870
2019	368,107	1,482	5,121
<b>Household income, 2014</b>			
Average household income	\$62,940	\$31,411	\$23,652
Median household income	\$46,312	\$26,079	\$18,732
Households earning \$75,000–\$99,999 Percentage	39,593 11.2%	111 7.9%	241 4.9%
Households earning \$100,000–\$149,000 Percentage	35,160 10.0%	92 6.6%	146 3.0%
Households earning \$150,000 and above Percentage	23,757 6.7%	15 1.0%	48 1.0%
<b>Age profile, 2014</b>			
Median age (years)	39.5	28.4	25.4
<b>Education 2014: Age 25+</b>			
High school or less	46.8%	39.1%	44.8%
College, no diploma	20.2%	14.1%	15.5%
Associate degree only	7.1%	3.5%	6.8%
Bachelor's degree only	15.9%	17.4%	15.8%
Graduate degree	10.0%	26.0%	17.1%

Source: ULI Advisory Services panel.

2014, remaining, however, in line with the national rate, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### Performance of Key Downtown Real Estate Sectors

Office, hotel, housing, and retail are the four major real estate sectors in downtown Knoxville. Understanding how each of these sectors contributes to Knoxville's overall economic health is critical to realizing future prospects.

Each of these four sectors is described in the following sections.

#### Office

The last major downtown office structure was constructed in Knoxville more than 20 years ago. With the loss of Kimberly-Clark to West Knoxville in 2012 and recent losses in First Tennessee Plaza and Riverview Tower, the central business district (CBD) office vacancy rate in Knoxville now hovers around 15 percent, with rents averaging in the \$15

to \$16 per square foot range. Given these market fundamentals, Knoxville lacks the underpinning and momentum necessary to support development of new Class A office building at this time.

### Office Activity in Knoxville, 2010–Second Quarter 2014



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

#### Hotel

Downtown Knoxville's current hotel inventory has about 1,283 hotel rooms, including the following:

Hotel	Rooms
Marriott	378
Hilton	320
Holiday Inn	286
Crowne Plaza	191
Hampton Inn	80
Oliver	28

According to Smith Travel Research, the occupancy rate for hotels in Knoxville stood at 56.4 percent with an average room rate of \$76.13 as of 2013. Occupancy declined from 60.8 percent in 2011 to 58.1 percent in 2012.

The Oliver Hotel, a 28-room boutique hotel located near Market Square (originally opened as the Blakely House Hotel in 1982), represents a particular bright spot in the market, reporting nearly full occupancy and average room rates exceeding \$100.

Plans currently exist for the addition of at least three new downtown hotels. The proposed hotels, listed below, would collectively add about 375 rooms to the market:

Hotel	Rooms
State Street Residence Inn	120
Supreme Court site hotel	135
The Tennessean	120

To date, work has not commenced on any of these proposed additions, and market conditions are not considered favorable for the addition of rooms in the near term.

#### Housing

According to the *Memphis Daily News*, housing sales in the Knoxville region have nearly fully recovered from a low point of 4,811 in 2011. As of September 30, 2014, year-to-date sales stand at 7,145. Knoxville residential rental vacancy peaked at 9.23 percent in 2005 and has since fallen to 5.52 percent in 2013, well below the national average of 6.49 percent.

The downtown segment of the market, while small in size, has been the strongest performer in the market since 2008. With downtown Knoxville's residential population growing by nearly 40 percent from 2008 to 2012, demand for new units has outpaced supply in recent years, leaving the market effectively fully absorbed. Downtown rental rates remain stable in the \$1.50 per square foot per month range. Significant additional rental housing units will be added to the market in the near future, led by the 283-unit Marble Alley Lofts mixed-use development planned for State Street on the eastern edge of downtown.

#### Retail

The greater Knoxville area includes millions of square feet of day-to-day retail offerings, including Knoxville Center Mall in East Knoxville and two significant upscale offerings at West Town Mall and Turkey Creek to the west. In addition, significant outlet shopping options exist in the Sevierville/Pigeon Forge tourist area to the east of Knoxville.



*Market Square, located in the heart of downtown, is home to restaurants, shops, a seasonal farmers market, and public open space.*

Despite these offerings, downtown Knoxville has seen resurgence in food, beverage, entertainment, and other retail offerings in recent years. The addition of national retailer Urban Outfitters adjacent to Market Square represents a major milestone in the resurgence of retail in downtown Knoxville and should usher in additional interest from regional and national upscale retailers. Additional redevelopment plans for the Old City and Jackson Avenue should increase the quality of the overall shopping, dining, and entertainment experience in downtown Knoxville.

In addition to all of the retail currently in place and planned for the CBD, increased population will create a need for additional core retail offerings, ranging from convenience and drugstores to grocery and specialty food stores, in the foreseeable future.

## Conclusion

To the casual observer, Knoxville may appear to be little more than the home of the University of Tennessee's flagship campus, the confluence of some big interstates, or the gateway to the Great Smoky Mountains, but in fact the city is in the early stages of transitioning into a fully functioning urban center with a heart, a soul, a pulse, and a beat. Led by an insightful and visionary private sector, aided by a proactive city government, Knoxville is literally transforming itself from the shell of another generation to a sophisticated urban center with authentic texture and rich heritage.

Now home to nearly 2,000 full-time residents, the city center is poised to grow and prosper—and to become the living and dining room, as well as the sports and educational center, for an entire region. The extraordinary transformation of Gay Street and Market Square that has already occurred is set to extend to Jackson Avenue and the Old City. Investment activity is ready to penetrate the concrete perimeter of the CBD and extend this renaissance to the north and northeast from downtown.

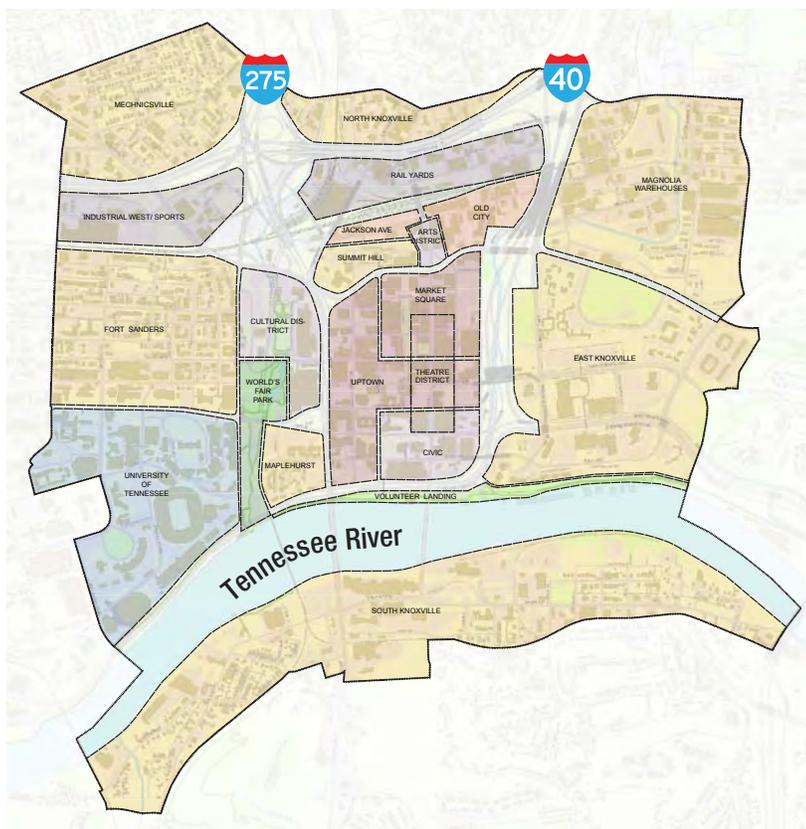
The panel applauds the entire Knoxville community for the bold steps it has already taken—and encourages Knoxville to seize the moment. The panel has carefully crafted recommendations, which are described throughout the body of this report, to help finish the puzzle already started—to literally connect the dots and fill in the missing pieces to create and ensure Knoxville's ongoing and future success.

# Urban Design Framework

**KNOXVILLE HAS A SERIES OF DISTINCTIVE** areas that contribute to its unique character and identity. Some, such as Fort Sanders, Mechanicsville, and Morningside, are established first-ring neighborhoods surrounding the downtown; others, such as the Old City and World's Fair Park, are recognized areas within the downtown; and some, such as the Arts District at the northern end of Gay Street and the less clearly defined Theater District that are emerging in the southern end of downtown, are newer.

*Knoxville has a number of definable districts that contribute to its unique character and that can help shape development in a relevant and meaningful manner.*

As is the case in many cities across the United States, districts and edges help define the personality of our downtowns and provide a way to help us better understand how our cities are organized and function.



## Districts

Narrow streets, wide sidewalks with mature shade trees, and cared-for, repurposed historic building stock help distinguish downtown Knoxville. The following section describes those districts the panel has identified in and around downtown that can help inform future development in a meaningful and relevant manner.

### Downtown Districts

The panel has identified six primary downtown districts that help define and distinguish Knoxville's rich city fabric and provide the foundation to understanding and further defining its identity and branding.

**World's Fair Park and Cultural District:** World's Fair Park is the most significant open-space allocation within downtown and forms the western edge of downtown. It is home to a concentration of civic functions including the Exhibition Center and Convention Center, the amphitheater, the Sunsphere, Knoxville Museum of Art, and the L&N STEM Academy in the north of the district. East-west connections are challenging, primarily because of the traffic flow from Henley Street to the east, the railroad corridor and level changes to the east, and connections to the Tennessee River to the south. Additionally, topography and grade issues to the west and lack of direct access to the Knoxville Museum of Art present challenges. As described later in this report, the panel strongly recommends that the main lawns be retained as public, green, open space to serve current and future downtown residents and visitors.

**Theater District:** The Theater District is an emerging area around southern South Gay Street, including the Bijou Theatre, the Tennessee Theatre, and the Regal Riviera Stadium 8 movie theaters, and helps form part of the Gay Street corridor, which is home to lively restaurant and entertainment functions. In recent years, this district has



*Located along Gay Street, Knoxville's historic theaters connect yesterday's downtown to present-day Knoxville.*

seen a rise in residential development and activity and remains a vital bridge between Knoxville's past and present.

**Arts District:** An emerging area located in the recently redeveloped 100 and 200 blocks of South Gay Street, the Arts District centers on the Emporium Center, which houses the Arts and Culture Alliance of Greater Knoxville, Knoxville Symphony Orchestra, and gallery and studio spaces. The city has recently completed major streetscape and bridge improvements here, and the district also supports a recent influx of residential population. The Arts District is an important connector between the Old City's Uptown Commercial District (described below) and part of the panel's study area—the 400 and 500 Jackson Avenue redevelopment sites, growing the city to the north.

**Uptown Commercial District:** Gay Street and Market Square are the heart of downtown life and activity and define the Uptown Commercial District with a strong concentration of food, beverage, and entertainment uses. Much of the district's preserved historic fabric has been repurposed for new uses. Narrow, tree-lined streets with wide, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks define the pedestrian district, though public open space, squares, and plazas are limited. The Uptown Commercial District has numerous potential infill sites currently used for surface parking. The panel sees a strong opportunity for Knoxville to transform these infill sites as it continues to plan and shape its downtown and define its downtown brand.

**Civic District:** The Civic District is defined by wide, tree-lined streets and significant historic building stock

and forms the administrative heart of Knoxville. It is home to a concentration of civic uses, including the City-County Building, which occupies several blocks at the southern end of downtown; additional institutional uses include the post office, church, and court facilities. Buildings within this district are located prominently on a bluff overlooking the Tennessee River, and an elevated pedestrian bridge facilitates pedestrian access to the riverfront, Volunteer Landing, and James White Greenway. The combination of steep topography and Neyland Drive separates the downtown from the river.

**Old City District:** The Old City District in the northeast quadrant of downtown has evolved into a vibrant, pioneering entertainment district. Characterized by strong historic building stock, much of which has been restored and repurposed, the district still has many opportunities for infill development. The Old City District forms the northern edge to downtown and is highly visible from I-40 and James White Parkway.

### Design Tools

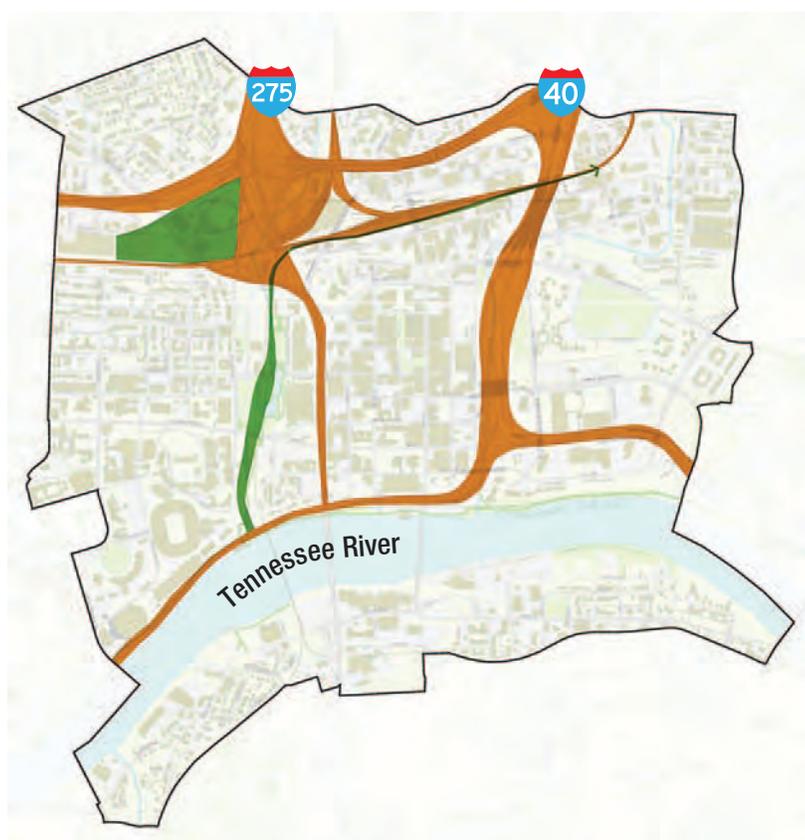
Districts can be reinforced in many ways. Outside the downtown area, special land use districts have been established to help shape and manage these areas. These designations relate predominantly to land use designations intended to support and promote mixed-use development of the area. The scale of the districts within Knoxville's downtown may be too small to warrant application of these tools, but other design tools such as integrated signage, street furniture, building character, and design of the public

realm can all help define and reinforce a district's brand and identity.

The city of Knoxville adopted design guidelines in 2007, amended in 2014, which are intended to help ensure protection of downtown's qualities and character. The guidelines endeavor to define design expectations while allowing flexibility to cultivate high-quality design. These guidelines are overseen by the Downtown Design Review Board that provides recommendations for city-initiated improvements to the public realm, such as streetscapes, walkways, street furniture, parking, pavers, park spaces, and landscaping. The board also reviews requests for certificates of appropriateness for those private projects that successfully achieve relevant design requirements, which is necessary to ultimately receive a building permit.

Though specifying and mandating every design nuance is difficult, the panel strongly recommends that the city go beyond these existing design guidelines and develop educational programs and tools (in person and online) so that

*Knoxville has a number of definable edges that present opportunities to create attractive gateways to its downtown.*



the private development community clearly understands the city's design vision for downtown and well as specific design requirements.

## Edges

Although much consideration has been given to centers and connections in previous studies and initiatives, the perimeter of the downtown area is strongly defined with a combination of natural physical features (Tennessee River and the existing natural topographical features) and constructed features (highways, roads, and rail). While these elements have been described as barriers, they also create a clearly defined edge that if treated effectively can help reinforce the Downtown District, avoiding the notion of sprawl while at the same time helping enhance the value of downtown property, which is a finite resource.

The challenge and opportunity is to ensure that these areas each perform the function as an attractive edge and, where appropriate, defining gateway to downtown. Characteristics of each of the edge areas the panel observed are described in the following sections.

### World's Fair Park and Second Creek Corridor

The World's Fair Park and Second Creek Corridor is an attractive transition space between downtown and the University of Tennessee, and Fort Sanders to the west. It serves as a neighborhood park to local residents and is a regional destination for major events and festivals. Henley Street, the existing rail line, and topography all create barriers to downtown Knoxville, Fort Sanders, and Knoxville's western suburbs. This edge is an iconic postcard for the city and a critical connector to the river and northern neighborhoods.

### Henley Street Corridor

Henley Street is a large transportation corridor feeding both the city and the greater Knoxville region. This large-scale piece of infrastructure currently operates for both speed and capacity and provides significant turn movements into downtown. Currently, its grade-separated bridges take activity and energy from the street, and existing, institutional uses lack active edges. Despite

these challenges, the panel sees a great opportunity to transform the Henley Street Corridor into an activated and pedestrian-friendly boulevard. Success will require effective collaboration between business owners, property owners, and the city; combined land use and design solutions to achieve a complete street; and a partnership with the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

### **Interstate 40 and Northern Rail Lines**

Interstate 40 and the northern rail lines create major transportation barriers between downtown and the northern suburbs. Transformation of the former industrial warehouse buildings for residential and commercial use on both the northern and southern sides of the corridor is bringing new life to the area. Additionally, major redevelopment and streetscape improvements within the Arts District are enhancing value in the area.

Current rail operations do not use the full capacity of the rail yards (the rail lines carry about three freight trains each day), and although barriers to reducing the width of this corridor are significant, the city should continue to keep this opportunity on its radar.

Soccer fields have been developed on former industrial land on the northern side of Fort Sanders. Opportunity exists to see this as the first move to establish a consolidated sports hub in this area, thereby creating a healthy resource to serve not only the adjacent neighborhoods of Fort Sanders and Mechanicsville but also the broader region. The sports hub could create a new home for the Tennessee Smokies, who relocated to Sevierville in 1997. Knoxville's connection with baseball dates to 1897, and the lease on the Smokies' facility on I-40 is up for renegotiation in seven years. The potential also exists to create a future new home for the Knoxville Ice Bears, since their current facility does not meet regulations and the future of the existing Civic Auditorium and Coliseum is under consideration.

### **First Creek and James White Parkway**

The intersection of First Creek and the James White Parkway creates a major transportation barrier between downtown and its eastern communities. First Creek is channelized through the parkway, which in general is



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*The northern rail lines establish a significant barrier between downtown and Knoxville's northern suburbs; however, reducing the width of this rail corridor creates a potential opportunity for greater connectivity.*

underused because it was designed to meet peak capacity on Tennessee Volunteers game days. A notable lack of active uses exists along the western side of the corridor, which is dominated by parking structures and the rear of buildings. However, several active uses and destinations exist along the eastern side of the corridor, including Cal Johnson Park and Recreation Center, the Civic Auditorium and Coliseum, and the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, which the panel sees as an opportunity. The panel noted that several studies and local blogs have raised the prospect of transforming this area from a parkway to a park. This could be done in a number of ways, from a minimal solution that might daylight First Creek and integrate significant native tree planting and pedestrian trails to a reconfiguration of the roadway elements. In addition, the Church Avenue Bridge, which includes the Knoxville Area Transit Station, is an excellent connective device, which creates an important linkage node between downtown and activity areas to the east. The panel encourages the city to build upon this existing link in its future planning and development efforts for this area.

### **Tennessee River Corridor**

The Tennessee River Corridor is currently an underused recreational asset with poor connections to downtown. Active boating is visible on University of Tennessee Volun-



Although the intersection of First Creek and James White Parkway creates a significant transportation barrier between downtown and the city's eastern communities, the nearby Church Avenue Bridge is an outstanding example linking downtown to other centers of activity.

tant environmental asset. The panel sees continued great opportunity to realize the corridor as the beautiful scenic foreground to the city that it is.

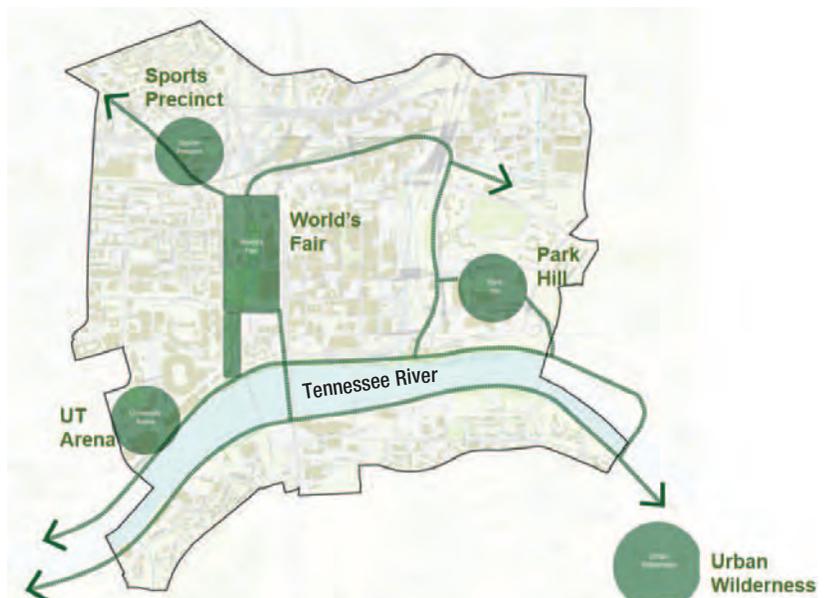
## Corridor and Greenway Connections

The city has made great strides to identify and address connectivity within the downtown and the greater urban area. Although topography and infrastructure create barriers in certain situations, they also offer opportunities. The greenway initiative is a healthy initiative that appears to have broad appeal and support. Similarly, new initiatives have led to public and private sector improvements in some of the major connective corridors to downtown, including Cumberland and Magnolia Avenues. In addition to these, the panel has identified several areas that should be addressed to further enhance connectivity between downtown and adjacent areas. They include connections to and with the western and eastern portions of the city, the Tennessee River/Lake Loudon waterfront, and a Jackson Avenue greenway connection.

teers game days when the Vol Navy docks along the river; however, the corridor has a combination of topographic and transportation barriers. Nevertheless, it is also an important part of the city greenway network and an impor-



By repositioning its edges, Knoxville has the opportunity to turn these barriers into opportunities and create attractive gateways to its downtown.



To further enhance connectivity, the panel suggests completing the greenway initiative and connecting Knoxville's unique cultural and recreational amenities to the city's eastern and western portions, the Tennessee River, and beyond.

# Overall Vision

**DOWNTOWN KNOXVILLE IS ALREADY** a unique place. It offers a level of urbanity—urban structure, culture, heritage, and quality of life—that reflects its distinct personality as a gateway city of East Tennessee. The panel’s recommendations seek to retain and reinforce downtown character and offer guidance for the next stage of downtown growth.

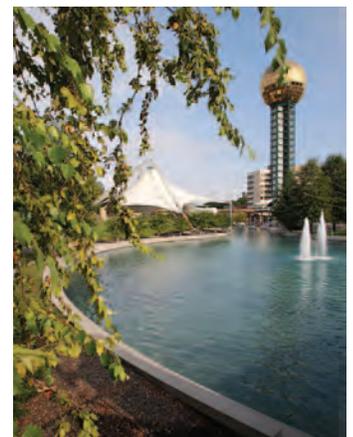
## Themes

Four interrelated themes shape the panel’s recommendations:

- **Sense of place**—Build upon the historic legacy of downtown. Change can occur, but modern adaptations should acknowledge and respect the downtown’s authenticity of character.
- **Community**—Build upon the contributions of the multiple stakeholders that create, use, and influence downtown Knoxville. The process of guiding future growth should nurture inclusiveness and equity, allow the expression of diverse points of view, and from that diversity build consensus. The list of stakeholders includes downtown residents; downtown users; residents of Knoxville beyond downtown; the University of Tennessee; and local, county, and state governments, among others.
- **Connectivity**—Increase connections across the following four subsets:
  - Physical environment: Greenways and parks (open space), land use and urban design, and transportation and transit corridors;
  - Neighborhoods;
  - Arts and cultural entities, artists, and designers; and
  - Organizations: Local, county, and state governments; the University of Tennessee; and neighborhood groups.
- **Prosperity**—Encourage diverse land uses and activities that work interdependently to create a robust and sustainable economic base.

Cutting across all of these themes and underlying the panel’s recommendations is the notion of civic leadership. Ongoing, focused, inclusive stewardship and organization is critical to implement strategies for change successfully.

*Downtown Knoxville’s urban structure, culture, heritage, and quality of life all contribute to its unique sense of place.*



## Strategies for Change

The panel's strategies are organized into two areas: the downtown experience and downtown management. Both are incredibly important to the ongoing success of downtown.

Here *experience* means the sum of all experiences customers have when they live, work, or play downtown. This term comes from Joe Pine, author of *The Experience Economy*. We want our downtown experiences to be positive, memorable, and current. There is a rising tide of expectations on these experiences.

Downtown management today is an increasingly sophisticated industry and a profession focused on the experience economy and place making. As destination management and marketing become more important, cities strive to create and maintain high-performance organizations for downtown marketing and management and to attract top talent to run them.

Over the course of a week in Knoxville, the panel heard from a number of stakeholders who helped inform many of the panel's strategies described in this section.

### Downtown Experience

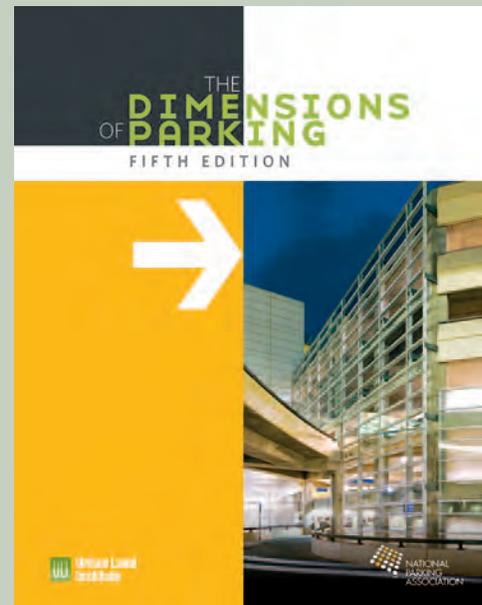
**Parking:** People who use downtown, including visitors, employees, and residents, perceive a lack of parking.

#### Strategies:

- Use parking as an economic development tool to promote visitation and investment.
- Address the specific needs of people who live, work, and play in downtown.
- Encourage shared parking to increase utilization.
- Adopt best practices in parking management from similar downtowns.
- Make parking easier, faster, and more cost-effective for more people.

## A Conceptual Approach to Understanding Shared Parking

For further resources on parking, refer to the Urban Land Institute's 2010 publication *The Dimensions of Parking*, fifth edition. The book's contents include how to assess parking demand, shared parking, programming and design, and operations and management, among other topics.



**Underused sites:** Concerns exist about surface parking lots and unattractive buildings making downtown a less desirable and vibrant destination.

#### Strategies:

- Inventory desirable sites for reinvestment or redevelopment or for converting to open-space uses.
- Develop a priority list of sites.
- Identify tools, financing, and partners to upgrade these sites.

**Livability:** Often the retooling of successful downtowns includes residential uses. Providing neighborhood services

and amenities is a critical factor of a revitalized downtown's sustainable livability.

**Strategies:**

- Provide retail, services, and amenities that support the needs of downtown residents.
- Support families in downtown with a full range of school choices.
- Consider livability issues and local business function in the planning and implementation of special events.

**Parks, open space, and event locations:** A perception exists that downtown will be challenged by greater building densities and infill. This challenge includes the need for passive and active multiuse spaces.

**Strategies:**

- Determine community desires for new investments in parks and open spaces.
- Identify strategic locations, projects, and partners.
- Develop plans, funding, and management approaches.
- Consider space needs for events and festivals.

**Art and cultural assets:** Demand for arts and cultural programming and venues is greater than can currently be met.

**Strategies:**

- Identify and communicate the collective contribution of arts and culture as economic drivers.
- Identify ways for the university and the downtown to better partner on programming and venues.
- Use local artists to enliven the public realm, especially forgotten or overlooked public spaces.

**Downtown Management**

**Public engagement:** Community stakeholders would like to play a greater role in the future of downtown.

Shared Parking Methodology



\* Step 7 is automatically performed in the ULI/ICSC shared parking model.  
 Source: Smith, Mary S., et al. Shared Parking, second ed. (Washington, D.C.: ULI, 2005).

**Strategies:**

- Engage community stakeholders and the public in meaningful and memorable ways in place-making decisions.
- Reach out to diverse audiences and groups for creative ideas and feedback.
- Develop an aspirational, bold, and compelling image for downtown.

**Downtown marketing and organization:** As more people are downtown and use it in different ways, service demands are outpacing resources and organizational capacity.

**Strategies:**

- Understand how downtown is being used today and how it will be used in the future.
- Benchmark downtown service performance with a peer set of cities.
- Recommend the best organizational models and practices for downtown Knoxville.

**Application of design guidelines:** The design quality of buildings is fundamental to the success of the downtown. Knoxville's newly amended guidelines are critical to maintaining the design quality of downtown.

**Strategies:**

- Fully apply the 2014 downtown design guidelines.
- Conduct educational outreach to the development community regarding the design guidelines.
- Establish an early, informal discussion between developers and the reviewing body about project design.

# Site-Specific Recommendations and Implementation Strategies

**IN ADDITION TO THE GENERAL THEMES** described in the previous section, the panel has developed site-specific recommendations and implementation strategies for the study area. These recommendations build upon the tremendous volume of background information provided by the city, the input of the 140-plus stakeholders the panel interviewed, market statistics, district-level observations, and those themes and strategies that emerged during the panel's week in Knoxville.

## Henley Street Corridor

U.S. Route 441 is known as Henley Street where it runs north–south along the west side of downtown Knoxville. This 72-foot-wide boulevard has as many as four lanes in each direction and carries in excess of 45,000 vehicles daily at its peak point, dropping off to the south. Henley Street presents a significant barrier to pedestrians seeking to cross the street at grade during rush hour can require two full light cycles. The volume of traffic on Henley Street has also influenced the design of much of the recent development along the route, resulting in these structures turning their backs on the street.

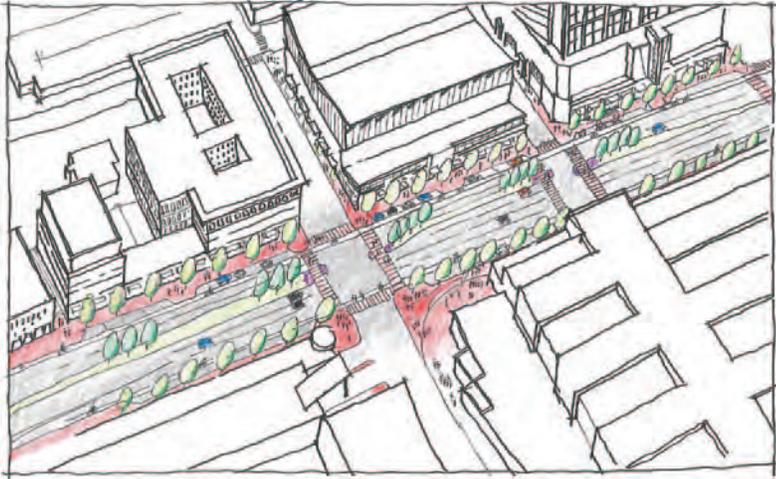
To reconnect the university and World's Fair Park with the downtown core and attempt to reverse this situation, the panel proposes to transform the corridor from a highway connector to a pedestrian-friendly city street. The panel understands that transforming Henley Street is no small feat. Pending validation by traffic engineers, the city can implement parallel parking along both sides of the street, thereby narrowing the existing road by one lane in each direction. The existing sidewalks will be infilled over time with new street-level retail and improved landscaping. As traffic speeds drop and conditions improve, the need



*Henley Street/U.S. Route 441 (outlined in red) is a significant physical barrier to east–west movement in downtown.*



*Buildings with their backs to the street characterize much of Henley Street today.*



*The panel believes that by introducing on-street parking and filling in the street with wide sidewalks, plazas, and ground-floor retail, as well as programming active uses for the city's redevelopment parcels, Henley Street will be dramatically improved.*

for elevated pedestrian walkways will be obviated, and pedestrians will have the option of reasserting their rightful place in the crosswalks. Under a best-case scenario, the elevated walkways may someday be removed because no one is using them.

The revitalization of Henley Street will be further supported by the redevelopment of key parcels along and adjacent to the corridor, including the former State Supreme Court building, the Knoxville Convention and Exhibition Center, and the proposed Tennessean Hotel project. Existing design guidelines must be strictly enforced to ensure that these projects take their relation with the corridor into account in the design process. Both the State Supreme Court site and the Knoxville Convention and Exhibition Center site are discussed in more detail later in this report.

## World's Fair Park

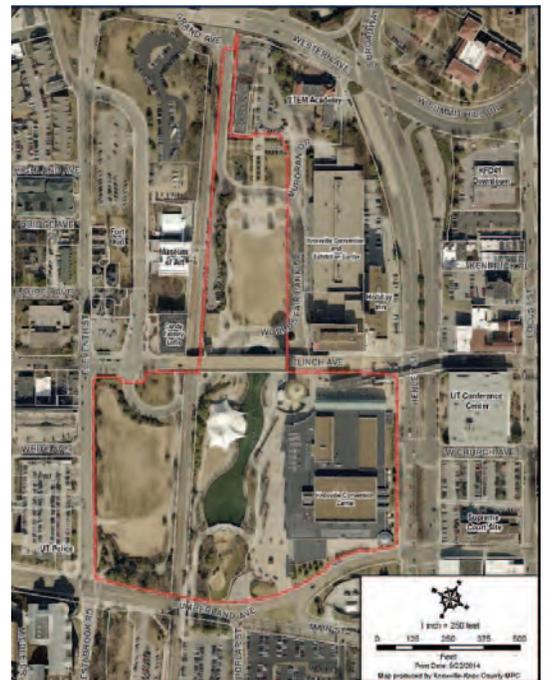
Built on the site of a former rail yard, the World's Fair Park is a well-maintained collection of lawn areas and water features centered on the iconic Sunsphere tower and a large amphitheater. Several major structures, the Knoxville Convention Center and the former Knoxville Convention and Exhibition Center, the Holiday Inn Hotel, and the former state office building (the proposed Tennessean Hotel location) separate the park from the busy Henley Street corridor to the east. The beginnings of a ring of supporting cultural and institutional uses, including the Knoxville

## Complete Streets

The National Complete Streets Coalition defines complete streets as “streets for everyone”: “They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street. Complete streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from train stations.” In short, complete streets are well-designed, well-thought-out strategic investments in a city's infrastructure.

Museum of Art and the L&N STEM Academy, are located north and west of the park. A single-track freight-rail line bisects the park on a north–south axis.

In terms of acreage, the World's Fair Park is the most significant green open space in the downtown study area. Although it is used regularly by neighbors, students from the adjacent STEM Academy and the university, and more than



*World's Fair Park (outlined in red) is Knoxville's most iconic green space and home to many of its cultural and recreational assets.*

50 special events annually, some perception exists that the park space is underused, thus leading to discussion of redeveloping parts of the lawn space for various uses.

While this perception may be understandable today, the panel anticipates that the park will become an increasingly important recreational resource for the public as the downtown population grows and other existing green spaces reach capacity. To this end, the panel recommends that the park's lawn areas remain off limits to development and that supporting redevelopment activity be directed to sites on the edge of the existing park.

The city is to be commended for already engaging the public in a series of master-planning discussions in 2013. Planning for the World's Fair Park site will only succeed with continued proactive public input as part of a comprehensive district plan including land uses, planned public improvements, and potential open space, adaptive use, and infill development opportunities.

*The State Supreme Court site (outlined in red) offers a tremendous redevelopment opportunity for the city of Knoxville to connect the vitality of Gay Street and Market Square to its east with World's Fair Park and the University of Tennessee to its west.*



Among potential actions to explore are redesigning or completely rebuilding the Knoxville Convention and Exhibition Center for use as a new home for the Clarence Brown Theatre, the Muse children's museum, or a comparable facility that will activate the edge of the World's Fair Park and benefit from the adjacency to the open space, bolstering the collection of cultural uses around the park.

During the week, the panel incorrectly identified an additional location for supportive cultural development. The panel identified a property adjacent to Clinch Avenue and Henley Street that it believed was large enough to accommodate a significant cultural facility and parking needs. The panel believed this site was owned by the city; however,

*The panel encourages the city to explore redesigning the Knoxville Convention and Exhibition Center as a new home for some of Knoxville's existing cultural facilities, and recommends that the park's lawn areas remain off-limits to development.*



following the panel meetings, the panel was made aware that this property is privately owned by the adjacent Holiday Inn. In light of this updated information, the city is encouraged to explore developing a public/private partnership with the Holiday Inn.

The master planning of the World's Fair Park should also include a safe pedestrian and bicyclist connection north to the West Jackson Avenue site and adjacent areas.

## State Supreme Court Site

The state of Tennessee granted the city of Knoxville's Industrial Development Board an option to purchase the former State Supreme Court site on Henley Street in 2005. The Industrial Development Board issued RFPs for the two-acre property in 2007 and 2013, but neither designated developer was able to advance the project. Because the option expires in August 2015, moving a new developer selection process forward efficiently and in a coordinated manner is critical.

## Walkable Retail Case Study

In 2012, New York City's *Measuring the Street* report quantified the economic impact of safe, walkable, and more attractive streetscapes. Using a cross section of recent street design projects for the New York City Department of Transportation, the project found that complete street strategies such as protected bicycle lanes, pedestrian safety islands, new pedestrian plazas, and simplified intersections could reduce the number of vehicle and pedestrian accidents, as well as raise commercial rents and retail sales.

Among the report's success stories is the redesign of Eighth and Ninth avenues in Manhattan. After the city implemented a variety of pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements, Ninth Avenue between 23rd and 31st streets saw a 49 percent increase in retail sales (compared

with 3 percent in the rest of Manhattan). Expanding and enhancing an iconic space at Union Square North led to 49 percent fewer commercial vacancies as compared to the rest of the borough, and transforming an underused parking area along Pearl Street led to a 172 percent increase in locally based retail sales, a rate nine times greater than experienced Brooklyn-wide.

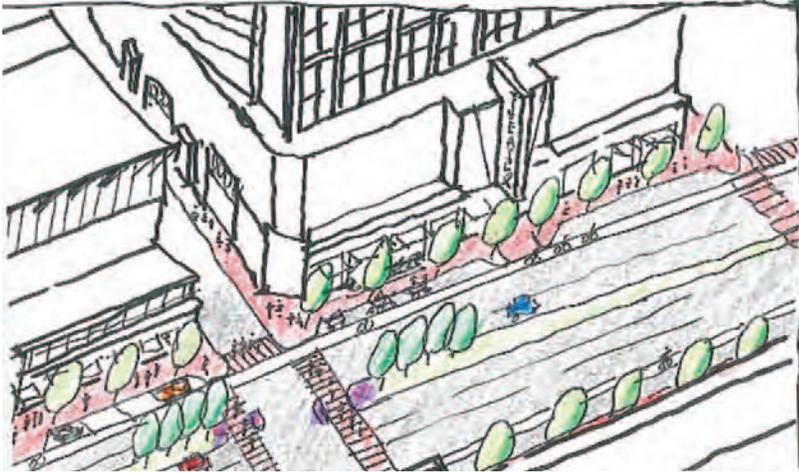
Walkable retail environments elsewhere have been shown to have significant economic return. Auto-dependent retail must depend on drive-by traffic alone, sacrificing leasable area for on-site parking. These businesses must have long frontages and large signage to be seen by drivers. The result for the investor is a product that must be quickly amortized; for the community; it is properties of low value and high traffic impact.

*Near right and center: An example of a parking lot transformed into a pedestrian plaza with street furniture, on-street parking, and bike lanes in a waterfront Brooklyn neighborhood.*

*Far right: In 2010, the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) launched a series of significant reconfigurations along the Broadway corridor in Manhattan. Union Square exemplifies the main principles used by NYCDOT in redesigning complex intersections: multiphase traffic signals were simplified, pedestrian plazas were developed at undefined or underused locations, and bikeways and turn lanes were incorporated to better accommodate traffic.*



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CITY TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS URBAN STREET DESIGN GUIDE



*The panel recommends releasing a revised RFP for the State Supreme Court site that targets a mix of uses, including ground-floor retail, cultural or performing arts venues, and upper-floor residential units.*

Primarily used as a surface parking lot for state employees, the site also accommodates an empty art deco courthouse dating to the 1950s. The historic courthouse facade and lobby may have some reuse potential. As one of the few undeveloped sites along Henley Street, the site has the potential to restore some level of vitality to this automobile-focused corridor. Centrally located between the vitality of Gay Street and Market Square to the east and the University of Tennessee campus to the west, the site has the potential to serve both constituencies.

The panel recommends that the Industrial Development Board issue a revised RFP for the site as soon as possible, targeting mixed uses including ground-floor retail, a significant cultural or performing arts component above that, and upper-floor residential.

The boilerplate of the 2013 RFP document is likely to be generally reusable but should be bolstered with additional information on design objectives and civic goals for the site, such as an active ground floor and street orientation. Engaging a fee developer, a design team, or both to help depict these intentions graphically and to be included as part of the RFP document may make sense. Additionally, rather than just referencing the City of Knoxville's Down-

*The now vacant former warehouses at 400 and 500 West Jackson Avenue (outlined in red) not only are excellent redevelopment sites but also offer significant opportunities to continue building downtown's northern gateway.*

town Design Guidelines, the Downtown Design Review Board should be invited to participate in the development of the design guidance for the RFP.

A revised RFP could be issued as soon as early January 2015, leading to a closing date by the August 2015 option expiration date.

## 400 and 500 West Jackson Avenue

The Knoxville Community Development Corporation, on behalf of the city, acquired the site of the C.M. McClung Company's brick warehouses in late 2013, after a massive fire had resulted in the demolition of seven of the nine historic buildings on site. The remaining two buildings would burn out only months later because of suspected arson. The city has yet to take title to the property, and one site is still owned by Ernie Gross, who is willing to participate in future development but retains the rights to the property. Even in its largely vacant state, the site remains significant as downtown's northern gateway and a highly desirable location for redevelopment.



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The panel recommends that the city consider a master-developer approach to create a conceptual use and design plan for the future redevelopment of the 400 and 500 West Jackson Avenue sites.

Relics of urban renewal projects from the 1950s to the 1970s, the Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum complex (outlined in red) presents a tremendous opportunity for the city of Knoxville today.



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The site's topography, while challenging, provides an opportunity to develop zero-lot-line structures fronting onto West Jackson Avenue atop one or more levels of parking, accessed from below at the level of the rail yard.

The panel has heard from many stakeholders eager to see the scale and architecturally diverse facades of the original warehouse row echoed in the new project. This goal is valid but will be difficult to implement in an organic fashion given the considerable upfront investment required to stabilize the hillside and erect a large parking garage on the lower levels.

The panel recommends that the city engage a master developer on a fee-for-services basis to develop a conceptual use and design plan for the redevelopment of the property. The advantages of this approach are that it couples the financial resources and experience of a master developer with the entrepreneurial focus and local knowledge of the smaller individual developers and businesses building out the row.

The plan should be a logical extension of the progress and redevelopment that has occurred along the adjacent parts of Jackson Avenue, the 100 block of Gay Street, Old City,

and environs. It should be structured to allow for the development of increments of the row by separate developers as the market can support each phase of the development over time.

The RFP should include design review standards and enforcement mechanisms to ensure that the quality of future development enhances the work that has already been done and respects the historic character of the area. Design requirements could be made additionally binding by including them as terms in the purchase and sale agreements and deed covenants with the designated developers.

## Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum

A series of urban renewal projects implemented from the 1950s to the 1970s largely displaced the Mountain View neighborhood east of downtown, replacing it with the Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum, its three parking garages, a public safety headquarters, public housing, and other low-density uses characteristic of that era. Further isolated from downtown by the James White Parkway, the

district does not effectively capitalize on its proximity to downtown.

Although the 2,500-seat civic auditorium and 6,500-seat coliseum host about 150 revenue-generating events annually, the complex runs an annual operating deficit of between \$700,000 and \$1 million and has a significant deferred capital maintenance backlog. Furthermore, the facility is approaching obsolescence because of its non-regulation ice surface for the hockey team, poor acoustics, and lack of modern stage rigging. The city is currently undertaking a study to understand whether the Civic Auditorium and Coliseum can be brought up to modern standards—and at what cost.

This is a logical point at which to consider starting to reverse the damage of urban renewal. The panel proposes that the city and its partner entities work together and in full collaboration with residents and other stakeholders to explore redeveloping or infilling the entire Civic Auditorium and Coliseum district, loosely bounded by Summit Hill Drive, Hall of Fame Drive, James White Parkway, and Hill Avenue. The panel recommends that the city cut its losses and relocate existing uses within the district to more appropriate locations. The Civic Auditorium function would

be better accommodated on the former State Supreme Court site downtown near restaurants and hotels (this move should also include relocating the auditorium's large collection of memorabilia). The Ice Bears would benefit from a regulation ice surface in a new sports and recreation district north of downtown, and the police department would be better served by a modern, more visible facility in the downtown core.

The current Civic Auditorium and Coliseum district would be master planned as a new, primarily residential, mixed-use neighborhood, including diverse mixed-income for-sale and rental housing opportunities in a walkable urban configuration similar to the scale and character of other urban neighborhoods in Knoxville. Phased in over a decade or more by a master developer, this neighborhood would provide a much-needed residential expansion area for the downtown. The neighborhood would also benefit from repurposing much of the right-of-way of James White Parkway into more parklike uses while preserving traffic flow capacity for handling University of Tennessee game days and other high-volume events.



*The panel encourages the city to work with residents and community stakeholders to explore redevelopment options and consider plans for a truly mixed-use and mixed-income neighborhood.*

# Conclusion

**THE PANEL HAS BEEN IMPRESSED** by the steps that Knoxville has already taken and encourages the city to take advantage of this momentum as it continues to think about downtown's future development. Though numerous recommendations are described throughout this report, the panel believes the following are priority recommendations for Knoxville to begin work on immediately to guarantee Knoxville's ongoing and future success:

- *Fix Henley Street and develop the Supreme Court site.* This includes modifying the design of the street and traffic flow and redeveloping the edges to include some retail or other active uses and immediately soliciting and effectively completing a transaction with a developer to redevelop the critically important Supreme Court site.
- *Save the park and add a greenway circuit.* Preserve the vital urban green space represented by World's Fair Park, and extend the pedestrian and bicycle connections it affords to ultimately connect from the university by the river's edge up the Second Creek valley, through the park to West Jackson Avenue, Old City, across James White Parkway to a redeveloped Mountain View community, and back to the river and on to the South Waterfront and Urban Wilderness south of the river.
- *Activate the edge of the park.* Locating Clarence Brown Theatre in the Exposition Center and the Muse Knoxville next to the Knoxville Museum of Art on the other side of the park, with plans for shared-use parking, will make these cultural facilities part of the heart of the city and enhance the downtown experience while providing them with a link to the park for additional exposure and programming.
- *Enhance operational capacity.* Consider minimal, additional, dedicated staffing (perhaps within Knoxville's Community Development Corporation) to provide focused, entrepreneurial management of the activities to implement these initiatives. The city and the community can take advantage of the private sector talent and resources already available to undertake the work with appropriate municipal oversight to protect the city's and the community's long-term interests.

# About the Panel

## Leigh Ferguson

*Panel Chair*

*New Orleans, Louisiana*

Ferguson is a developer with over 35 years' experience in the real estate profession. He is an expert on downtown revitalization, affordable housing, mixed-use development, and partnerships with public and nonprofit entities. As the director of economic development for the city of New Orleans, he is responsible for facilitating downtown real estate development and investment, assisting the downtown community with issues affecting the business environment, advancing downtown planning, and attracting new business and development projects that will result in the expansion of employment, the tax base, and wealth creation in downtown New Orleans. Before his time in New Orleans, Ferguson was a senior developer at Bayer Properties where he was involved with a variety of commercial, mixed-use, and residential products in several locations around the United States. His primary duties included operating the residential and mixed-use real estate development and management division that focused on urban mixed-use community development projects in Birmingham's revitalizing Center City.

Ferguson also managed the Sloss Real Estate Group's participation as a joint venture partner in a \$100 million dollar HOPE VI, mixed-income residential development. Before joining Sloss, Ferguson was the president of Corker Group Inc., where he managed about 2 million square feet of office, commercial, and industrial properties. From 1991 to 1999, Ferguson was president of Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise Inc. There he managed lending, development, financing, and property management functions of about \$30 million per year.

Before 1991, Ferguson was president and chairman of John Laing Homes Inc. and vice president of development for both the Van Metre Company and the Winkler Companies, all in the Washington, D.C., area.

Ferguson is a full member of ULI, having received ULI's Robert M. O'Donnell Award in 2007, and has served as vice chair of the Affordable Housing Council. He has served on 11 Advisory Services panels and chaired ten of those panels along with several other ULI forums and workshops. He has served on numerous civic and nonprofit advisory boards, including the Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati and the Tennessee Housing Development Agency.

## Angelo Carusi

*Atlanta, Georgia*

Carusi has been designing with Cooper Carry's Atlanta office for 30 years. For the last 22 years of his career, Carusi has focused on mixed-use master planning and retail design. Named a principal in the firm's retail studio in 2000, he most recently directed the design of the Shops at Wiregrass, a 1 million-square-foot lifestyle center in Tampa, Florida, and the Mercato, a half-million-square-foot mixed-use community located in Naples, Florida. Carusi has experience in retail, hospitality, office, and residential design. This knowledge of specific building types informs mixed-use design.

Over the years, Carusi's projects have received several of the retail industry's highest design honors, including an International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) Award of Merit for the renovation of Charlottesville Fashion Square in Virginia. He holds a bachelor's of architecture degree from the University of Tennessee. He is a LEED Accredited Professional with the United States Green Building Council,

a member of the American Institute of Architects, the Urban Land Institute, ICSC, and the Buckhead Business Association.

For over 11 years, Carusi has taught courses on making critical decisions for retail renovations and mixed-use design at ICSC University. He has also participated on many ICSC and ULI panels and has published articles in *Retail Traffic*, *Retail Construction*, and ULI's development magazine.

## Nick Egelanian

Annapolis, Maryland

Egelanian is the president and founder of SiteWorks Retail Real Estate, a retail, mixed-use, and shopping center consulting firm, whose clients have included FAO Schwartz, Stuart Weitzman, Zany Brainy, Limited Too/Justice, Lane Bryant, Vornado Realty Trust, Madison Marquette, and Cadillac Fairview, among many others.

Before founding SiteWorks, Egelanian served as vice president of real estate and new store development for Crown Books and FAO Inc./Zany Brainy. Since 1992, SiteWorks has provided highly targeted retail and shopping center consulting to retailers, developers, owners, and municipalities.

Egelanian authored the retail chapter of the Urban Land Institute's *Professional Real Estate Development* book (third edition), published in 2012, within which he pioneered the segmentation of retail into distinct "commodity" and "specialty" classes to better explain retail shopping patterns in what he terms the "post-department store era."

Having contributed numerous articles and editorials in publications including the Urban Land Institute's *Urban Land* magazine and Madison Marquette's *PLACES* magazine, Egelanian is also a frequent industry speaker. Most recently, he spoke at ULI's Fall 2013 Conference in Chicago, at the February 2014 Mid-Atlantic ICSC Program in Washington, D.C., and at the British Council of Shopping Centers' Annual Conference in London in September 2014. He will be leading the North American Retail Program at Europe's

MAPIC Conference in November 2014 in Cannes, France, where his panel will include the top real estate executives from U.S. retailers Staples and Williams-Sonoma, along with the president of Madison Marquette.

## Andrew Irvine

Denver, Colorado

Irvine is a principal with RNL Design in Denver. RNL is a full-service architecture and landscape architecture firm with offices in Denver, Phoenix, Los Angeles, and Abu Dhabi. RNL is dedicated to sustainability, design excellence, and innovation in everything—architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, planning, and urban design. RNL embraces the Design for One Earth philosophy.

Before his current position, Irvine was a senior landscape architect at EDAW Inc. with a broad range of project experience throughout the United States and Australia. 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.

Irvine has served on four of ULI's national Advisory Services panels. He has degrees in landscape architecture and environmental design.

## Mary Konsoulis

Alexandria, Virginia

Konsoulis is a consulting curator, writer, and editor whose practice focuses on the relationship of people to the built environment. Her work includes a number of exhibitions, including *Reston: The Art of Community* for the Initiative for Public Art in Reston, Virginia. She has been an editor, curator, and writer with the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts,

a federal design review agency in Washington, D.C. At the agency, she edited and was a contributing author for *Civic Art: A Centennial History of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts*, an illustrated history of the commission published in spring 2013 and distributed by the University of Massachusetts Press. Before her work for the commission, Konsoulis was a curator at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., developing exhibitions that explored the spatial, political, cultural, and technological influences on the design and development of American cities.

Konsoulis is an adjunct faculty member in the University of Maryland's School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation. She has taught in both the historic preservation and real estate development programs; her courses emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of the planning, zoning, and entitlement processes and the importance of public engagement and communication. From 2007 to 2009, she was a senior editor at *Real Estate Review*, a professional journal for the real estate industry produced by the Colvin Institute of Real Estate at the University of Maryland and published by Thomson/West.

In 2012, she served on a ULI Washington Technical Assistance Panel for the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton, Virginia, a historic property and adaptive reuse project that formerly housed the District of Columbia jail.

Konsoulis has a master's degree in city and regional planning from Harvard University and an undergraduate degree in American Studies from Wellesley College. For a number of years, she was an urban planner in the Washington, D.C., office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

## Ed Starzec

*Boston, Massachusetts*

Starzec is the director of land entitlements and master planning for MassDevelopment, the commonwealth of Massachusetts' real estate and investment banking agency. MassDevelopment works with businesses, non-profits, and local, state, and federal officials and agencies to strengthen the Massachusetts economy. Through

these collaborations, MassDevelopment helps create jobs, increase housing opportunity, eliminate blight, and address factors limiting economic growth, including transportation, energy, and infrastructure deficiencies.

In this role, Starzec provides overall real estate project management as well as planning and permitting-related technical expertise for major agency projects and state-wide consulting engagements, typically in the commonwealth's underserved gateway cities. Current and recent assignments include leading MassDevelopment's ongoing design and permitting efforts for a 124-unit new urbanist neighborhood at the former Fort Devens, managing financial due diligence and environmental permitting for a 220-acre industrial park in Taunton, preparing a community-based plan for two municipal parcels on the Newburyport waterfront (the basis for a subsequent developer RFP), overseeing the successful construction of a transitional housing facility for homeless mothers and children, and evaluating opportunities for mutually beneficial real property exchanges and public/private partnerships at the commonwealth's military installations.

Starzec is completing a master's degree in city and regional planning from Cornell University and has an undergraduate degree in English literature from Hamilton College. Before joining MassDevelopment, he was an urban planner in the Watertown, Massachusetts, office of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Inc. He has served on numerous ULI Boston Technical Advisory Panels.

## Julie Underdahl

*Denver, Colorado*

Underdahl is the president/CEO of the Cherry Creek North Business Improvement District, the premier mixed-use and retail destination in the Denver region. The mission of the district is to creatively plan, manage, and promote Cherry Creek North. As president/CEO, Underdahl led the financing, design, and construction of an \$18 million district streetscape project that won the mayor's design award; initiated and guided the district's participation in a new city area plan and district zoning; and created a new

organization in Cherry Creek to unify and mobilize business interests on governmental matters. She was instrumental in the rebranding of Cherry Creek North as an active, urban, lifestyle community.

Underdahl has more than 20 years of experience in urban district management and marketing; economic, real estate, and community development; and developing public/private partnerships and organizations. Before joining Cherry Creek North, she was the president/CEO of two economic development organizations in Colorado, the City of Aurora Economic Development Council and the Denver International Airport (DIA) Regional Partnership. During Mayor Peña's administration, she served in the Denver Office of Economic Development. In her economic development roles, Underdahl was responsible for the national and international recruitment of companies to Colorado and participated in the redevelopment of major sites in Denver, including the former airport and two former military installations.

She serves as the chair of the City of Denver Planning Board, on the Executive Committee of the Metro Denver Visitor and Convention Center Bureau ("Visit Denver"), and on the board of the International Downtown Association. She was appointed to the University of Colorado Real Estate Foundation board, the Citywide Banks Inc. board, and the Citizen's Advisory Committee for the new metro light-rail system. Underdahl is the past chair of the ULI Colorado District Council and national vice chair of the ULI Public/Private Partnership Council. She has served on ULI national Advisory Services panels in Pittsburgh and Atlanta. Her article on how international airports drive land use was published in *Urban Land* magazine. The model she pioneered for airport area development at the DIA Regional Partnership is being used today by Denver's "Airport City."

Underdahl was recognized by the *Denver Business Journal* as the outstanding woman business leader in Denver and by *Colorado Business Magazine* as one of the top three economic developers in Colorado, and she has received awards from business, civic, and professional organiza-

tions. She graduated magna cum laude from the University of Colorado, Boulder, and holds a master's degree in urban and regional planning from Eastern Washington University.

# A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report



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