

Reno Nevada

April 3–8, 2016



Reno Nevada

The Virginia Street Corridor: Main Street Revitalization
for a City on the Cusp of Change

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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 38,000 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 photos, from top: Thomas Eitler, Ramona Anderton.

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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 600 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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Finally, the panel wishes to thank the more than 100 stakeholders from the community, which included residents, local businesses, service organizations, government officials, and others who agreed to be interviewed and gave meaningful insight, time, and energy to the panel process.

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Background and the Panel’s Assignment

THE CITY OF RENO IS NESTLED in the Truckee Meadows with the Sierra Nevada mountain range to the west. The third-most-populous city in Nevada, Reno covers only an area of 106 square miles and has been dubbed the “The Biggest Little City in the World.” Along with Sparks, Reno is located in Washoe County where it is the county seat. The city is well known for its casinos and gaming industry as well as its proximity to ski resorts, Lake Tahoe, and other outdoor recreational destinations.

Hit hard by the 2008 recession, the city suffered major setbacks. Many markets, including the gaming industry—the key economic driver—are still in recovery. However, the city has benefited from a recent injection of major technology companies poised to break ground in the region. In 2014, Tesla announced it would build the largest lithium battery factory in the world near Reno, estimating the creation of about 13,614 jobs. Switch, based in Las Vegas, is currently wrapping up a 3 million-square-foot data center near Reno, also one of the largest facilities of its kind in the world.

With these major wins in industries beyond the gaming world, Reno finds itself at an identity crossroads and hopes



Regional map.

to capitalize on the opportunity to diversify and build a framework for the future. Recognizing that now is the time for the city to establish precisely how it will continue to drive economic development, the city of Reno and the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Washoe County invited the Urban Land Institute to consider redevelopment opportunities along the metropolitan region’s major north–south spine, the Virginia Street corridor.

The Virginia Street Corridor Study Area

The Virginia Street study area, located between the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), to the north and McCarran Boulevard to the south, serves as the main street for the city of Reno. The study area encompasses a 5.7-mile-long strip and is only two blocks wide, but the hub includes the city’s key business districts as well as residential areas.

The Reno Arch, an iconic landmark in Reno, Nevada.





THOMAS EITLER

An aerial view of Reno's Virginia Street corridor.

The Virginia Street Bridge.



Virginia Street is home to the city's major commercial retailers, from hotels and casinos to locally owned restaurants and shops. The road provides primary access to UNR, Downtown Reno, the Midtown District, and the Reno-Sparks Convention Center.

At the north end of the corridor, UNR is home to more than 20,000 students, faculty, and staff and is one of the largest economic generators in the metropolitan area. Known as a center of innovation and entrepreneurship, the Midtown District contains small locally owned businesses that emerged during and after the economic recession and continue to thrive. The gaming industry has a major presence in key segments of the Virginia Street corridor. Specifically, Downtown is home to many gaming properties, including the Silver Legacy Resort Casino and the Eldorado Resort Casino, while the Atlantis Casino Resort Spa and the Peppermill Casino are located toward the southern end of the corridor. This segment of the study area also includes Meadowood Mall, a one-level, 890,000-square-foot super-regional mall.

Finally, Virginia Street is the region's premier transit corridor. The bus rapid-transit service, RTC RAPID, provides high-amenity stations with off-board fare collection, level boarding, and real-time bus arrival information. The RTC has developed the Virginia Street RAPID Extension Project, which outlines plans to extend transit service to UNR by constructing six new RAPID stations, a bus-only lane, and bike lanes near campus and building three new RAPID stations in Midtown. The overall purpose of the current

Virginia Street RAPID Extension Project is to strengthen regional connectivity and the connections between UNR, Downtown, and Midtown; grow transit ridership; and improve pedestrian accessibility and safety.

The Panel's Assignment

By expanding upon the current plans to further activate and revitalize Virginia Street, the city of Reno hopes to achieve greater economic vitality for the uses along the corridor, more effective conveyance for all modes of transportation and movement, and more visually compelling and dynamic streetscape treatments.

The panel sponsors also requested technical assistance relating to specific policies, actions, and strategies the city can implement in the short and long terms. In addition to interviewing local stakeholders, assessing the city's existing plans and policies, and reviewing best practices from other municipalities regarding corridor redevelopment, the scope of the panel's work included focusing on the following areas:

- A review and analysis of land use, design, and transportation elements along the Virginia Street corridor, including consideration of catalytic uses, transportation, gaming, and employment;
- An evaluation of nodes, such as UNR and its immediate environs, Downtown, the emerging Midtown, and the anchoring gaming node to the south, to include highlighting steps to enhance each node's performance and offering ways to strengthen through diversification or accentuating unique attributes; and
- An integration of recommendations for each node into a comprehensive plan to strengthen and optimize the historic commercial corridor as a whole.

Summary of Recommendations

The panel offers recommendations for the redevelopment of the Virginia Street corridor based on three distinct but connected approaches. The first set of recommendations

concentrates on linking market realities to create a vision for the future. The second series of recommendations draws attention to planning and design to activate the corridor. The final recommendations outline administrative and governance actions that are required to move the plan forward. A summary of those recommendations includes the following:

1. Link market realities to a long-term strategic vision.
 - Understand and react appropriately to the market forces driving the Reno economy.
 - Hone in on a branding strategy that focuses on the outdoors, arts and culture, and increasing opportunities in the technology industry and with the university.
2. Use planning and design to activate the corridor.

Develop a master plan for Virginia Street that identifies Downtown as the central region and applies the following design recommendations to enable the corridor to become a celebrated street:

 - Make the corridor a distinct "boulevard" with wide sidewalks, street trees, landscaped areas, good lighting, wayfinding signs, and public art;
 - Emphasize the transit opportunities;
 - Propose land uses to reflect the current market reality and provide meaningful solutions for the homeless, transient, and workforce housing;
 - Evolve land uses to address the future, encouraging the existing predominant pattern of low-rise, separated land uses along the corridor to transform to vertically mixed-use development as much as possible;
 - Create a complete and connected pedestrian pathway and bicycle trail network that ties into the corridor to highlight a community where outdoor recreation is a priority;
 - Increase the tree canopy in all areas so as to reduce "heat islands"; and

- Empower a focused team of individuals within the city administration responsible for implementing a robust and proactive strategic vision around economic development and quality investments for Reno to grow.
3. Enforce administrative and governance changes to facilitate implementation.
- Reorganize administrative priorities so that the mayor and City Council operate at a high level, as a board of directors, and are tasked to oversee this new strategic vision, provide the necessary resources, services, and leadership, and hire competent and ethical staff.
 - Promulgate, draft, and adopt these recommendations in the appropriate codes and guidance documents of the city such as the city's strategic plan, the city's Comprehensive Plan, the city manager's administrative documents, the budget, Capital Improvement Program, zoning ordinances, and Reno Municipal Code.

Market Potential

AS PART OF THE ASSIGNMENT, the panel listened to the commentary of interviewees through the voices of key Reno stakeholders. Beyond that, the panel listened to what the market said. The market forces told a story about where Reno has come from and where it can go. Furthermore, it revealed that Reno is in the midst of a significant structural evolution of its economy.

Historically, Reno has been driven by the gaming, distribution, and logistics industries. In 1990, the hospitality industry, which includes gaming and casinos, accounted for 26.3 percent of the region's workforce. Gaming, however,

has declined as an economic driver because local options have appeared in cities across the United States. Thus, the hospitality sector in Reno has decreased massively, now accounting for less than 17 percent of jobs. Although this segment is still large by any city's standards, it is almost 10 percentage points lower than in 1990.

To put it into perspective, Las Vegas, Nevada, has also seen a decline; however, its percentage dropped by only four points, from 34.3 percent in 1990 to 29.9 percent today. This contrast reflects the trend that in Reno, gaming has been less of a draw in the market.

Job Base in Reno by Industry Sector

Job base	1990	2016	Change
Industrial	15.8%	18.1%	15%
Office	12.4%	18.4%	48%
Hospitality	26.3%	16.7%	-37%
Education and health services	8.1%	11.8%	46%

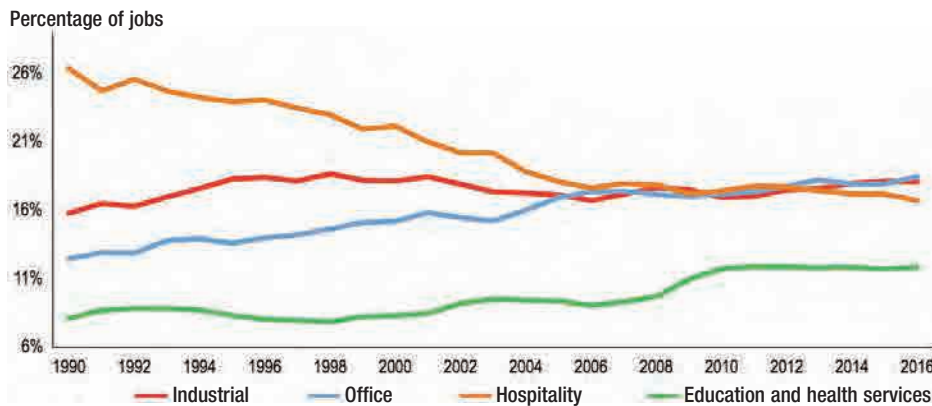
Sources: Urban Land Institute; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Job Base in Las Vegas by Industry Sector

Job base	1990	2016
Industrial	9.5%	9.4%
Office	14.8%	18.2%
Hospitality	34.3%	29.9%

Sources: Urban Land Institute; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Job Base in Reno by Major Industry Sector, 1990–2016



Sources: Urban Land Institute; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

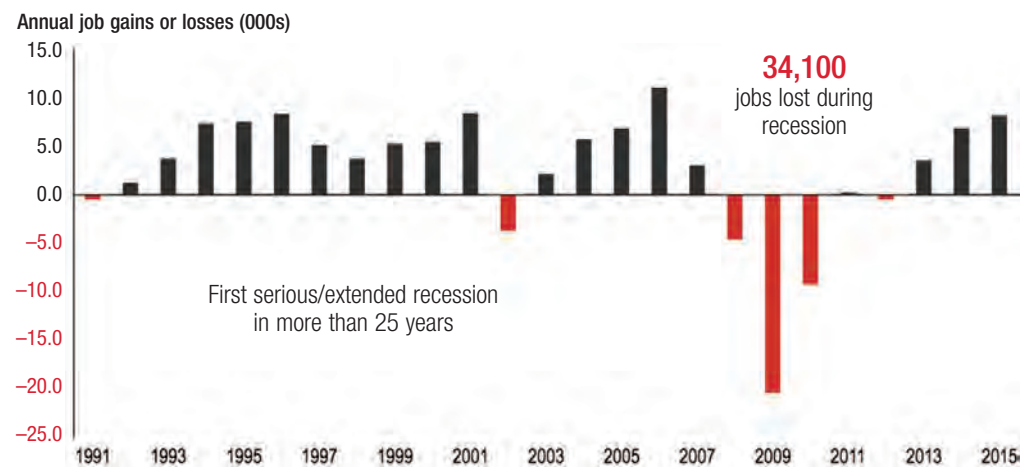
Industrial-related jobs, which include manufacturing, distribution, and logistics, traditionally have been a strength for Reno because of the city's location in Nevada and corresponding highway network. For that reason, the industry has been stable and slightly increased its share of regional jobs from 15.8 percent in 1990 to 18.1 percent in 2016. This industry will continue to be a growth engine moving forward.

More notable increases in other sectors have occurred as Reno has begun to evolve from its past roots. For instance, office-related jobs have increased from 12.4 percent in 1990 to 18.1 percent in 2016, and health and education service jobs have increased from 8.1 percent to almost 12 percent in 2016, which represents a 48 percent increase in the city's job base. These numbers reflect a major sector change in Reno, one that not many U.S. cities have encountered.

Deep Recession Accelerates Structural Changes

Although this gradual evolution is good news, it is not the whole story. Reno was one of a number of markets exceptionally hard hit in the 2008 Great Recession. Jobs declined from their peak of 221,000 in 2007 to 186,000 in 2012, a loss of 16 percent of the city's workforce jobs.

Job Gains/Losses in Reno, 1991–2015



Sources: Urban Land Institute; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Key observations noted are that Reno started into the recession earlier than most cities and stayed down longer. Still, jobs have not completely recovered. At 212,000 jobs today, the base remains 4 percent off its peak. Although the trend toward returning jobs is positive, most U.S. markets have completely recovered, advancing in net new jobs for a few years now. This economic impact has deeply affected Reno across its real estate sector.

So what happened? Home speculation drove median single-family home prices from \$165,000 in 2001 to \$205,000 by 2003. Home prices took off and hit \$350,000 in 2005. The crash resulted in prices dropping to \$259,000 in 2008 and continuing to slide to \$158,000 in 2011. That is an overcorrection, and prices have since been normalizing, rising from \$218,000 in 2013 to \$284,000 in 2015. This rapid rise is putting pressure on local housing affordability today. Given the swings in price, where the right price may be is hard to see. This increase may be a reaction of trying to regain lost value and not caused by the region's growth.

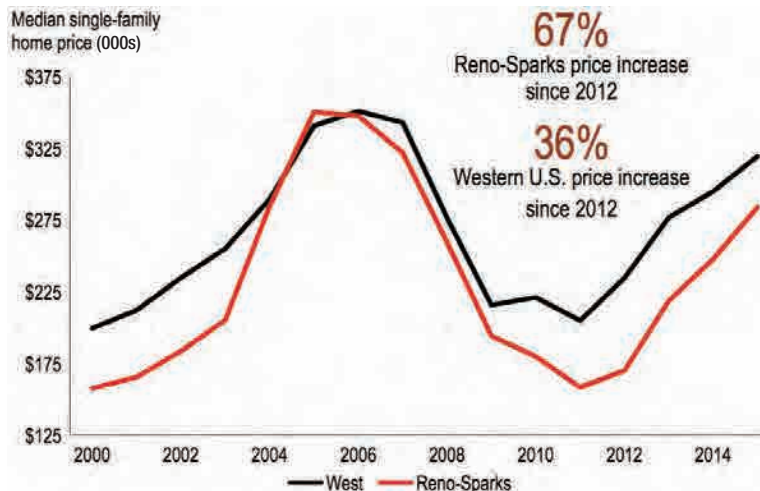
Up to now, Reno has been on the back burner economically with minimal activity since this housing downturn. Job growth has been slow with only 16,000 jobs added since 2010 (8.1 percent total growth). A comparison city, Boise, Idaho, has seen 45,000 new jobs, or 18 percent total growth.

Job Growth in Reno and Comparison U.S. Cities

	Total jobs (2016)	Job growth, 2010–2016	Percentage increase
Reno	212,000	16,000	8.1%
Spokane	235,000	17,000	7.8%
Boise	295,000	45,000	18.0%
Salt Lake City	682,000	105,000	18.2%

Sources: Urban Land Institute; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Single-Family Home Prices: Reno-Sparks versus Western United States



Sources: Urban Land Institute; National Association of Realtors.

In terms of real estate use, warehouse and manufacturing development, a major economic driver in Reno, ground to a halt in the past several years as vacancy crept up into the low teens. This sector typically accounted for 3 million to 4 million square feet of development annually in the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s. This sector totals 76.4 million square feet of multitenant and user space.

Office development has also been absent since 2007–2008. The office market had typically delivered 500,000 square feet annually in the mid-1990s and mid-2000s. Reno’s office market is minor with an inventory of Class A and B space of 6.3 million square feet.

Market Realities: Where We Stand Today

Reno is a small market, and that adds interesting risks to its current situation. The metropolitan household base totals only 172,000, which makes supply and demand for all property types easy to overshoot. Despite the recession, average incomes remain solid at \$70,500, which is good by national standards. The job base (and labor market) totals only 212,000 jobs. The market looks very traditional from a lifestyle perspective. Although Reno has a large college and university student population, the “working

millennial” lifestyle does not show up in any meaningful numbers.

Local corporate recruiting has been strong as companies look to flee high-cost states like California, with big names such as Tesla and Switch recently making their choice to establish prime hubs near Reno. Corporate recruiting today is a new wave and a direct result of improvement in home values nationally, allowing companies to move for the first time. Reno’s high quality of life is attractive to companies. Competition for these companies is keen, with many areas across the country vying for the wins. Tesla is a potential game changer, but it chose the Reno area for very specific locational attributes (lithium mines). Companies such as Clear Capital and Blackridge Technology have recently selected Reno for their headquarters, which are also excellent success stories.

Office

The office sector has limited location options for new companies. Office build to suit is the likely route for larger companies, but limited high-quality multitenant space exists for temporary or permanent space. With average annual absorption of under 50,000 square feet, demand fundamentals do not support any kind of prudent, larger-

Reno Real Estate Market: Office

Office (15,000+ square feet)	
Inventory Class A & B (sq ft)	6,300,000
Number of buildings	150
Current vacancy	13.1%
Current asking rent (full-service gross)	\$19.35
Total deliveries 2012–2016 (sq ft)	0
Net absorption 2015 (sq ft)	92,000
Total net absorption 2010–2016 (sq ft)	267,000
Average annual net absorption (sq ft)	43,000

Sources: Urban Land Institute; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; CoStar.

scale speculative construction. Office rents are also low to support new, high-quality development outside build to suit.

Industrial

Reno is an established and strong logistics location. Despite a development shutdown after the recession, Reno will continue to be a preferred location for logistics going forward.

Reno Real Estate Market: Industrial

Industrial/Flex (30,000+ square feet)	
Inventory (sq ft)	76,400,000
Number of buildings	599
Current vacancy	9.6%
Current asking rent (NNN)	\$4.31
Total deliveries 2012–2016 (sq ft)	5,696,000
Net absorption 2015 (sq ft)	2,447,000
Total net absorption 2010–2016 (sq ft)	8,404,000
Average annual net absorption (sq ft)	1,345,000

Sources: Urban Land Institute; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; CoStar.

Housing

For-sale housing prices have recently increased rapidly, making Reno look less affordable. New home development is still lagging from the recession, although permitting has increased in 2014 and 2015. Local apartment stock is below standard, expensive, and a mismatch for the corporate relocation efforts underway. Of the 41,000 dwelling units in the region, 48 percent is reportedly Class C, which is well below institutional grade. Yet rents for these units are \$868 per month for a typical two-bedroom unit. Less than 10 percent is Class A, at 3,900 dwelling units, which is insufficient to house the potential relocations associated with the corporate headquarters efforts. Two-bedroom rents for Class A units are \$1,137 per month. The remaining units are a variety of Class B product and serve the local workforce housing needs, but units are old and rents

Reno Real Estate Market: Housing

Multifamily (50+ units)	Class A	Class B	Class C
Units	3,900	17,400	19,600
Number of buildings	17	89	134
Current vacancy	4.3%	2.7%	2.6%
Current asking rent (monthly)	\$989.00	\$989.00	\$777.00
Current asking rent per sq ft (monthly)	\$1.08	\$1.09	\$1.02
Studio	\$1,040.00	\$539.00	\$559.00
One bedroom	\$961.00	\$852.00	\$717.00
Two bedroom	\$1,137.00	\$1,038.00	\$868.00
Three bedroom	\$1,268.00	\$1,110.00	\$1,038.00

Sources: Urban Land Institute; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; CoStar.

are high (only slightly below Class A) at \$1,038 per month for a two-bedroom unit.

Outlook

Reno is on the cusp of significant change. After being hit hard during the recession, it is poised for major industry shifts. Gaming will continue to be a driver, but its importance has declined and will not return. Serious leadership decisions about managing Reno's future will be required. If Reno does not adjust quickly, this window of opportunity will close.

The market has very compelling locational and business cost advantages, but those are not the only drivers for

winning relocations. The ability to afford incentives to win over other competing markets is key. Reno's labor force is inadequate to compete over the longer term and win: the market's small scale is a blessing and a curse. The local entities and organizations must work on retaining students and training them, especially in technology fields.

Reno must adapt to potentially rapidly increasing demand (and shifting demand) in industrial, office, and housing sectors. Guiding new development in appropriate locations, at an appropriate scale, and at appropriate pricing (not cheap, but affordable and diverse) is paramount to not overbuild the market's small scale.

Vision and Branding

THE MARKET REALITIES INDICATE the Reno economy is diversifying. As the city becomes multifaceted, it can no longer be an economy driven by gaming on its own. After the Great Recession of the mid-2000s and with gaming below its peak, the market's key economic driver is undergoing massive changes and Reno finds itself at a crossroads. This conclusion is not dissimilar from what is in the city's developing master plan, *Reimagine Reno*, and the panel agrees that Reno desperately needs a cohesive framework for inspiration and a clear vision for the future.

During the interview process, the panelists heard about the unbelievable quality of life. The panel believes this particular feature needs to be expressed in a new way to the outside world. The following branding strategy highlights a vision for the city to navigate the global economy and find its place in the hearts and minds of current and future residents, businesses, and tourists.

Outdoor Lifestyle

Reno's mild, four-season climate and incredible natural assets set the stage for an outdoor lifestyle that few other cities can offer. With the Truckee River flowing through the center of town—intersecting with Virginia Street—opportunities to recreate and commune with nature must be magnified. The great outdoors should become a brand pillar of the city and communicated overtly. Although current residents understand the benefits of living in Reno, future growth demands telling the rest of the world.

The panel's vision for Reno is for it to become known as a place where an outdoor lifestyle is celebrated in every corner of the city. Therefore, the panel recommends the following:



Flickr, Rick Cooper

Spectators watch water sports at the Reno River Festival along the Truckee River.



Wikimedia Commons, Darron Birgeheier

Other recreation opportunities in Reno include biking and hiking. This image depicts a biking and walking trail along the Truckee River near downtown.

- Make the river more accessible, so people can enjoy it and use it. This includes developing programs and events incorporating the river in an unprecedented way.
- Create a complete and connected pedestrian pathway and bicycle trail network that will make using the city a pleasure.
- Build new parks and greenways.
- Reach out to outdoor retailers for Downtown locations.



FLICKR, SHINY THINGS

Housed on the side of the Whitney Peak Hotel in downtown Reno is the world's tallest artificial climbing wall. Known as BaseCamp park, the urban rock wall provides an example of the outdoor recreation activities available in the area.

- Create food and beverage opportunities along the river.
- Advertise Reno's recreation opportunities.

Work/life balance continues to be a concern for the millennial workforce, and as young and educated people come



KLADÉ HARE

into this market, these recommendations can improve people's lives.

Arts and Culture

The impact of arts and culture on the city is well documented with the success of Artown every July. The panel thinks the city can be galvanized in this sector and develop a specific reputation for outdoor art and performing arts that will continue to drive tourism, increase resident satisfaction, and allow people to see Reno in a new and sophisticated light. The panel recommends the following:

- Consider the creation of a new multipurpose, riverfront-adjacent, multifunctional cultural performance space.
- Create a series of SXSW style events, the week before Burning Man, that give Reno the big buzz and make it the big attraction for world-class artists and visitors.
- Invest in an outdoor public art program along the Virginia Street corridor.
- Add even more downtown events to Reno's currently packed event schedule.
- Keep Reno authentic. Art is provocative and smart cities celebrate it.

Science and Technology

The panel believes that the UNR engineering program should continue to be amplified. All science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs will help deliver a more educated workforce that will be a unique complement to Reno's economic development plans. Students should realize that staying in Reno after they receive their degree will offer them many opportunities in emerging technologies. This strategy will create synergy with

Panelists tour the University of Nevada, Reno. The university recently launched the Innevation Center, powered by Switch. Also located in the Virginia Street corridor, this center is a collaborative hub for the northern Nevada community, where university students, faculty members, and researchers engage with entrepreneurs, investors, commercialization experts, and community leaders.

national stories of companies relocating here and begin to paint Reno as a viable, technology-fueled city.

Summary

The panel considers the preceding categories the three pillars of the new Reno brand. Each is critically important to changing perception, creating new opportunities, and managing a single, powerful vision. The panel understands gaming will continue to be a part of the Reno story, but diversification demands that it be a part of a bigger story.

For these items to be accomplished properly, Reno must change in a meaningful way right now. Incremental change is simply not adequate. The city must change the way it reveals itself to the world, how it processes information, and how it measures results. Clarity and focus on the bigger picture goals are required now. Either this bold and clear

vision will carry Reno forward into a vibrant future, or Reno will continue to be diminished by fractured interests and messages. The panel asks that Reno focus on the specific long-range vision contained in this report and build it out completely so the rest of the world can understand what the plan is and where Reno is putting its stake in the ground.

The panel has some suggestions and believes there are many opportunities for new residential, retail, institutional, and industrial uses, particularly within the Virginia Street corridor, that iterate how these three branding pillars can be highlighted physically through careful planning and design.

The next section of the report suggests some strategies and locations for these new ideas.

Planning and Urban Design

FROM A PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN perspective, the panel has approached the Virginia Street corridor as a series of districts, each with its own idiosyncrasies and unique opportunities. The suggestions for each district are preceded by a group of general recommendations that can be applied to the entire study area.

Great Streets

Great boulevards and “Main Streets” consist of green spaces, large street trees, and generous pedestrian spaces that are lined by multistory buildings. Almost every large and small city has a distinct “main street” and whether or not it is named Main Street, these avenues share certain characteristics.

Virginia Street is Reno’s main street. Over time it has evolved from a quaint street with the original Biggest Little City in the World arch. Today, Virginia Street is flanked by large buildings in Downtown, vibrant new and reused older buildings in Midtown, and large parcels with open parking and casinos at the south end of the corridor.

The 5.7-mile Virginia Corridor study area stretches from UNR in the north to South McCarran Boulevard in the south. As Virginia Street is improved in the future, new land uses that fill in or replace what is there today should be undertaken in a way that allows Virginia Street to become special and distinctive. Uniform features such as consistent public signage, street trees, street lighting, and open spaces incorporated from north to south should all be contributors to this end result. In addition, as Virginia Street develops in intensity, the street’s density and scale should obviously increase as one approaches the high-rise Downtown.

After consideration of demographic and market data, the vision provided and the reality that Virginia Street

intersects with various distinct segments of the city, the panel divided the corridor into the following seven districts to enhance the effectiveness of the planning and design recommendations:

1. University District;
2. North Downtown District;
3. Central Downtown District;
4. South Downtown District;



The panel has identified these seven districts for Virginia Street.

In Paris, France, the Avenue des Champs-Élysées exemplifies a tree-lined street.



WIKIPEDIA, JSOUSH

Las Ramblas in Barcelona, Spain, provides an example of a pedestrian-oriented avenue.



Flickr, OH-BARCELONA.COM

5. Midtown District;
6. Virginia Lake District; and
7. Convention Center District.

Following are general recommendations that can be applied to all districts because they are designed to enable Virginia Street to become a celebrated street:

- Make the corridor a distinct “boulevard” (different from other streets) with wide sidewalks, street trees, landscaped areas, good lighting, wayfinding signs, and public art.
- Emphasize the transit opportunities. Though transit is important, transit is not a central organizing element because it is already well underway, and most people with the means choose to drive or ride bicycles.
- Ensure that proposed land uses reflect the current market reality, and provide meaningful solutions for the homeless, transients, and workforce housing.

- Address the future through evolving land uses. The existing predominant pattern of low-rise, separated land uses along the corridor should be encouraged to transform to vertically mixed-use development (ground-floor office/retail; residential/office above) as much as possible.
- Create a complete and connected pedestrian pathway and bicycle trail network that ties into the corridor, which is critical in a community where outdoor recreation is a priority.
- Increase the tree canopy in all areas to reduce “heat island” (large expanses of paving that absorb and radiate solar heat).
- Establish a public art and sculpture program along the corridor that might be linked to Burning Man, and curate it to change pieces over time and to keep it fresh.

Adding to these plans, the panel has identified goals for Virginia Street as follows.

Civic Open-Space Framework

Current open spaces in the form of parks, plaza, and the river greenway are fragmented and should be linked with strong streetscapes or other green connections. This can be done through the following:

- Provide high-quality public open spaces for programmed events throughout the corridor including festivals, farmer’s markets, music, art, and food trucks.
- Link UNR to Downtown and the river.
- Add high-quality open space Downtown.
- Redesign the central riverfront as a center of social interaction.
- Add a performing arts plaza south of the Washoe County Courthouse.
- Create stronger links to Greater Nevada Field.



Civic open-space framework. This image illustrates how green and open spaces can be incorporated along the corridor. Integrating high-quality open space from UNR and throughout downtown will link these areas to one another and the river.

University District

The University District is bounded on the north by North McCarran Boulevard and by Interstate 80 on the south. The UNR campus is on the east, and a residential neighborhood containing a significant amount of student housing is on the west.

The panel has reviewed the recent UNR Master Plan and endorses the concept that the university should grow toward Downtown and integrate with it as much as possible. This growth should include classroom space as well as student-focused commercial development. Further, all parties should prioritize taking advantage of the opportunity to provide more academic and commercial development and student housing along the western edge of the university on both sides of Virginia Street to create a “two-sided” street in this area.

Specific targeted observations and recommendations:

- Add a city of Reno/university gateway/monument at North McCarran Boulevard and Virginia Street. This should be a large structure that is lit at night.
- Add commercial uses (i.e., restaurants, bars, shops) near university sports facilities and the Lawlor Events Center for patrons to use before and after games and events. The sites north and east of the football stadium and parking structure and the “Wedge” site between Virginia and Sierra Streets should also be considered for commercial development.
- Streetscape improvements should extend south from McCarran Boulevard to the proposed roundabout at the Lawlor Events Center. These should include street trees and pedestrian lighting.
- Much of the university campus along Virginia Street feels like the “back door.” As feasible, improve this area to be a more inviting edge to visitors.
- The panel endorses the UNR plan that identifies the blocks west of Virginia Street between Interstate 80 and 12th Street for future academic buildings to expand the campus.
- The university should grow south toward Downtown and develop the blocks that are between Ninth Street and I-80 for academic buildings.
- The historic houses on Center Street (and other houses or streets as appropriate) should be given to an organization that will relocate them to another location to preserve and use them for other purposes, conditioned on the activity being the first step in implementing the UNR vision or Master Plan that makes a commitment to expanding south into the North Downtown District.
- Center Street should remain in place and be enhanced as the ceremonial front door to the university and provide a strong pedestrian and bike connection to Downtown.

- The freeway “lid” over I-80 should be redeveloped as part of the pedestrian open-space connection and as a welcome center for the university.



The panel recommends the following uses for these University District sites: (1) gateway monument; (2) streetscape improvements; and (3) commercial development (restaurants, bars, shops, etc.).



The panel recommends the following uses for these University District sites: (4) implementation of UNR’s master plan and expansion across Ninth Street and Interstate 80; (5) relocation of historic homes (only as part of a larger plan for UNR to move south to downtown); (6) redevelopment of site as UNR visitors center and a pedestrian/bicycle connection into downtown.

North Downtown District

The North Downtown District is bounded on the north by I-80 and on the south by Fourth Street. It is now an area of open lots and buildings long in need of upgrades or replacement. Among other uses, it includes the Reno Events Center, the National Bowling Stadium & Hall of Fame, and the Circus Circus Hotel and Casino. The UNR Master Plan includes much of the university’s student housing opportunities here. In that regard, an 800-bed student luxury housing building named “The Standard” has been proposed for the block bounded by Center, Lake, Sixth, and Seventh streets.

The panel believes this district is a distinct land of opportunity. Not only can additional UNR development locate here, but the blocks are also available and appropriate for a mixed-use development containing housing, office, commercial, and retail uses. As a grand undertaking, the panel proposes an open-space corridor starting from UNR at Center Street and continuing south through the district. This proposal enables Virginia Street to be developed as a grand corridor and become Reno’s great main street. The scale of development in this area will grow as it moves south to Fourth Street from I-80. North Downtown represents near-term opportunities for redevelopment that should be expedited as much as possible, removing impeding Downtown uses such as weekly motels. Though this form of housing does disrupt the desired downtown character, it does serve as an affordable housing option. Therefore, appropriate actions should be taken to replace this housing option with affordable housing in another area of the city.

Specific targeted observations and recommendations:

- Prioritize redevelopment of the blocks between Virginia and Center streets to be urban, high-density commercial and residential buildings.
- Enhance the streetscape along Virginia Street, including consistent special paving, street trees, pedestrian lighting, and “downtown” community identifiers.

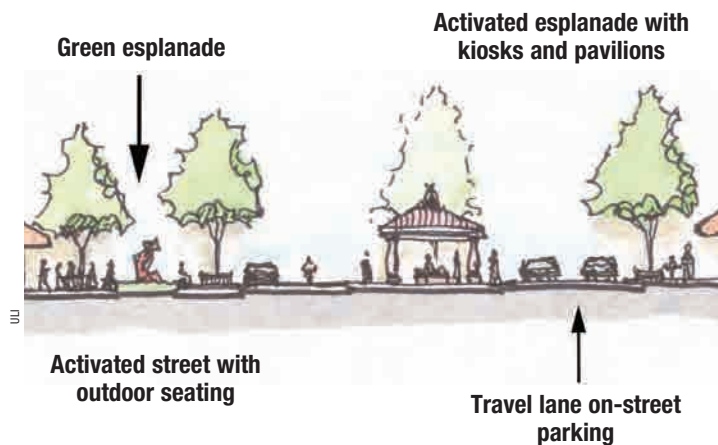
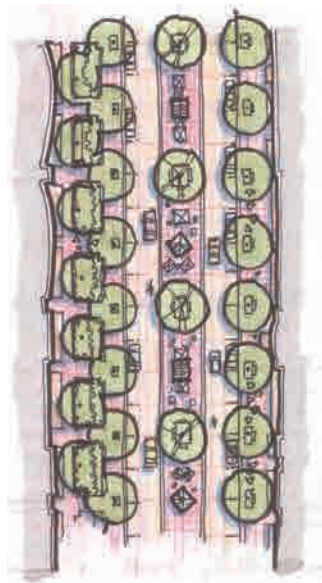
- Convert Center Street from one-way (north) to a two-way street, and add an esplanade or parkway along Center Street (e.g., Las Ramblas). This should become a social gathering destination with shops, restaurants, and bars along it, a pedestrian link between the UNR campus and the river should be provided, and it should extend the ceremonial front door of the campus into Downtown.
- Encourage student housing and student-oriented commercial development in the blocks south of I-80, as prescribed in the UNR Master Plan.



Barcelona's Las Ramblas exemplifies how an esplanade can establish a cultural destination and promote pedestrian activity.



The panel recommends the following uses for these North Downtown District sites: (1) prioritize for redevelopment; (2) enhance Virginia Street streetscape; (3) establish an esplanade along Center Street; (4) focus on student housing and student-oriented commercial development.

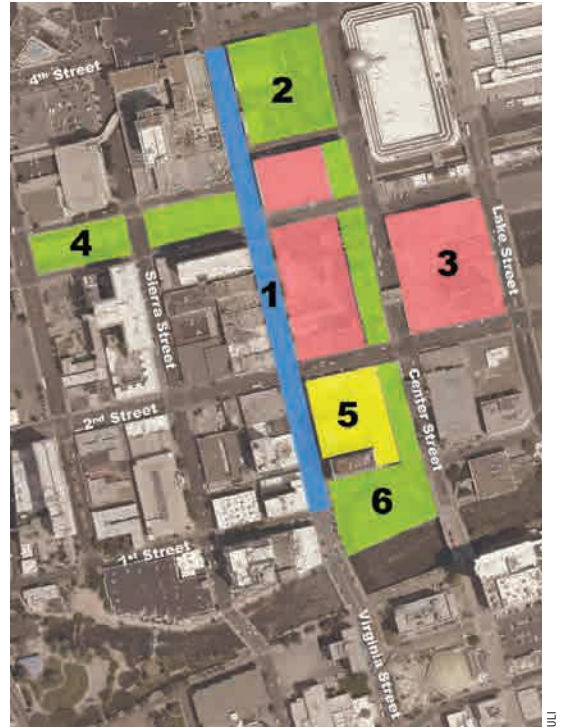


These conceptual images of Center Street's cross section depict one travel lane in each direction, one lane of street parking, bike lanes, green space, and an activated street scene. Allowing ground-floor retail along this section of Center Street can enhance pedestrian activity and foster a sense of place. The esplanade shows the expansion of the pedestrian area with outdoor seating, retail, shade trees, and a large pedestrian median. This concept would enhance aesthetics and extend the entrance of UNR to downtown.

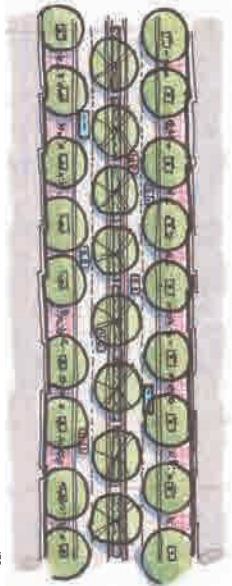
Central Downtown District

The Central Downtown District extends from Fourth Street south to the north bank of the Truckee River at the south. The area is mostly dominated by the existing casinos and their parking structures along with many restaurants and other commercial establishments that vary in quality. City Hall is also located here along with the at-grade Amtrak terminal and sunken rail tracks.

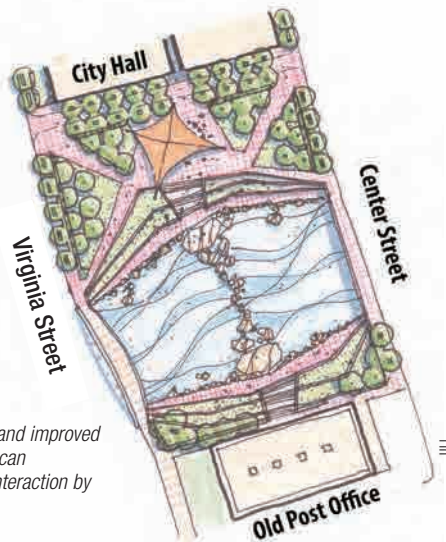
Clearly, the center (Downtown) here should be the priority for redevelopment and high-density, vertically mixed-use development. The panel envisions the district evolving and reemerging as a central business district with as much high-quality office space, ground-level restaurants, and shops as possible, supported by public realm and streetscape upgrades. The river frontage should be



The panel recommends the following uses for these Central Downtown District sites: (1) continue Virginia Street streetscape improvements; (2) redevelop the former RTC station and police substation site into a new city park; (3) redevelop Harrah's into a high-density, urban mixed-use development; (4) design the ReTrac rail lids as a high-quality urban plaza; (5) redevelop the Cal-Neva parking structure as a high-density, mixed-use property; (6) redesign this area to become a high-quality urban plaza that permits programming.



Enhancements depicted in these illustrations depict two lanes of traffic in both directions, in addition to pedestrian developments. Expanding the sidewalks permits addition of medians and trees to increase shading and pedestrian comfort.



Increased shading and improved access to the river can encourage public interaction by the water.

leveraged in terms of recreation—walking, dining, events, etc.—and make a “moment” in the water by improving the area between City Hall and in front of the renovated post office building on the south bank.

Specific targeted observations and recommendations:

- Enhance the streetscape along Virginia Street, including consistent special paving, street trees, pedestrian lighting, and “downtown” community identifiers.
- Redesign the full block that is currently occupied by the former RTC CitiCenter Transfer Station and police substation as a world-class urban park or plaza.
- Redevelop Harrah's Reno Hotel & Casino as a high-density, urban mixed-use development. Either repurpose the existing buildings or demolish and build new.



FLICKR, PAYTON CHUNG

Chicago's Riverwalk encourages pedestrian activity and engagement with the river.

- Pursue reuse of historic buildings.
- Design the “ReTRAC Covers” of the rail tracks as a high-quality urban plaza, and continue to program it with a diverse series of events for all ages.
- Through a public/private partnership, redevelop the Cal-Neva parking structure adjacent to City Hall as a high-density, mixed-use project.
- Through a public/private partnership, acquire and demolish the Cal-Neva casino and redevelop the site as high-density, mixed-use property.
- Engage the river as much as possible by providing shading and increasing access down to the water. To do so, design and construct a high-quality urban plaza in front of City Hall that provides a flexible open space for a variety of festivals and events.
- Strengthen pedestrian connections east to Greater Nevada Field.

South Downtown District

South Downtown District extends south of the Truckee River to California Avenue. It is largely a civic and cultural district containing courthouses, Washoe County offices, the Pioneer Center for the Performing Arts, and the Nevada Museum of Art. West along the south bank of the Truckee River is the amphitheater, the kayaking park, and additional park spaces further on.

This area presents a great opportunity to leverage parcels along the waterfront for redesign and development. The abundance of parking in the area can provide opportunities for added public space.

Specific targeted observations and recommendations:

- Enhance the streetscape along Virginia Street, including consistent special paving, street trees, pedestrian lighting, and Downtown community identifiers.
- Replace the parking lot in front of the old post office, The Basement, and future West Elm furniture retail location with a series of green terraces that step down to the river and can be used as informal gathering space.
- Infill the vacant lot between Sierra and Virginia streets to allow high-quality, mixed-use development that engages the river and promenade.
- Redevelop the large surface parking lot south of the Washoe County Courthouse into two uses:
 - An urban plaza oriented at outdoor performing arts and recreation activities the north third of the block; and
 - A mixed-use development with an internal parking structure and ground-floor restaurants and retail on the remainder.
- Convert surface parking lots that face Virginia Street to mixed-use development.



WIKIPEDIA, ROBERT NEFF

Atlanta's Centennial Park demonstrates how incorporating water elements into the urban plaza provides an opportunity to escape the heat.



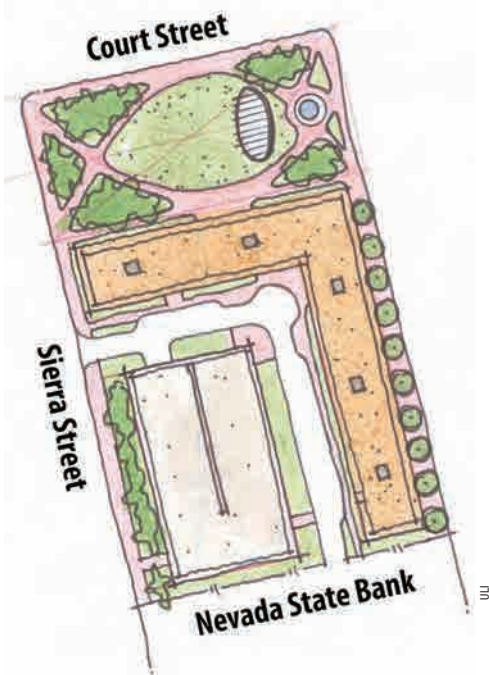
WIKIPEDIA, DORI

Milwaukee's Cathedral Square Park exemplifies an urban green space and outdoor performing arts center.

The panel recommends the following uses for these South Downtown District sites: (1) continue streetscape enhancements along Virginia Street; (2) redevelop current parking lot into an access point to the river; (3) promote infill development to allow mixed-use development; (4) establish an urban performing arts and recreation plaza; (5) redevelop current parking lots into mixed-use development.



iii



The current parking lot south of the Washoe County Courthouse presents an opportunity to create public space and additional housing for the city. This conceptual design for the area proposes an urban plaza and park adjacent to a mixed-use development with an internal parking structure.

iii

Midtown District

The panel's definition for Midtown extends south from California Avenue to Plumb Lane. This vibrant area is experiencing redevelopment in existing buildings, construction of new retail, and some housing development. The evenings are lively in this district because of the activity surrounding brewpubs and restaurants, among other uses. Bordering Midtown to the west and east are residential areas. The neighborhoods to the west are stable with increasing home values whereas the east side is a less stable area with some crime and a generally lower income level.

The panel endorses what has transpired in Midtown and encourages the continuations of the organic redevelopment trend in the area. However, in more open parcels, the area might evolve to a somewhat higher-density, vertically mixed-use (ground-floor office/retail; residential/office above) development facing the street with rear parking. The east side residential neighborhoods should be strengthened to complement the west side, providing a more robust commercial "main street" on Virginia.

Specific targeted observations and recommendations:

- If possible, relocate the Wild Orchid to another site off Virginia Street. Then, redevelop the site as a mixed-use property. In the short term, enforce sign ordinance requirements on the property.
- Encourage infill development on empty corners and surface parking lots, or "missing teeth," along Virginia Street.
- Preserve selected motor lodges that are not used as "weekly" rentals for the transient population.
- Consider vistas and long views down the street when siting buildings; enhance the facades of existing buildings where needed.
- Endorse the current RTC street reconstruction plan in this area.
- Abandon Holcomb Avenue from Burns Street to Vesta Street, and sell the vacated right-of-way to the owners of the parcels along Virginia Street for parking space. Encourage those parcels to redevelop as higher-density uses. Add a roundabout at the intersection of Burns Street, South Center Street, and Holcomb Avenue.



The panel recommends the following uses for these Midtown District sites: (1) endorse the Virginia Street RTC streetscape improvements; (2) relocate the Wild Orchid to a site off Virginia Street, and redevelop the property.



The panel recommends the following uses for these Midtown District sites: (3) abandon Holcomb Avenue from Burns to Vesta streets, and sell the right-of-way to Virginia Street property owners for parking; (4) promote development within these vacant parcels and surface parking lots.

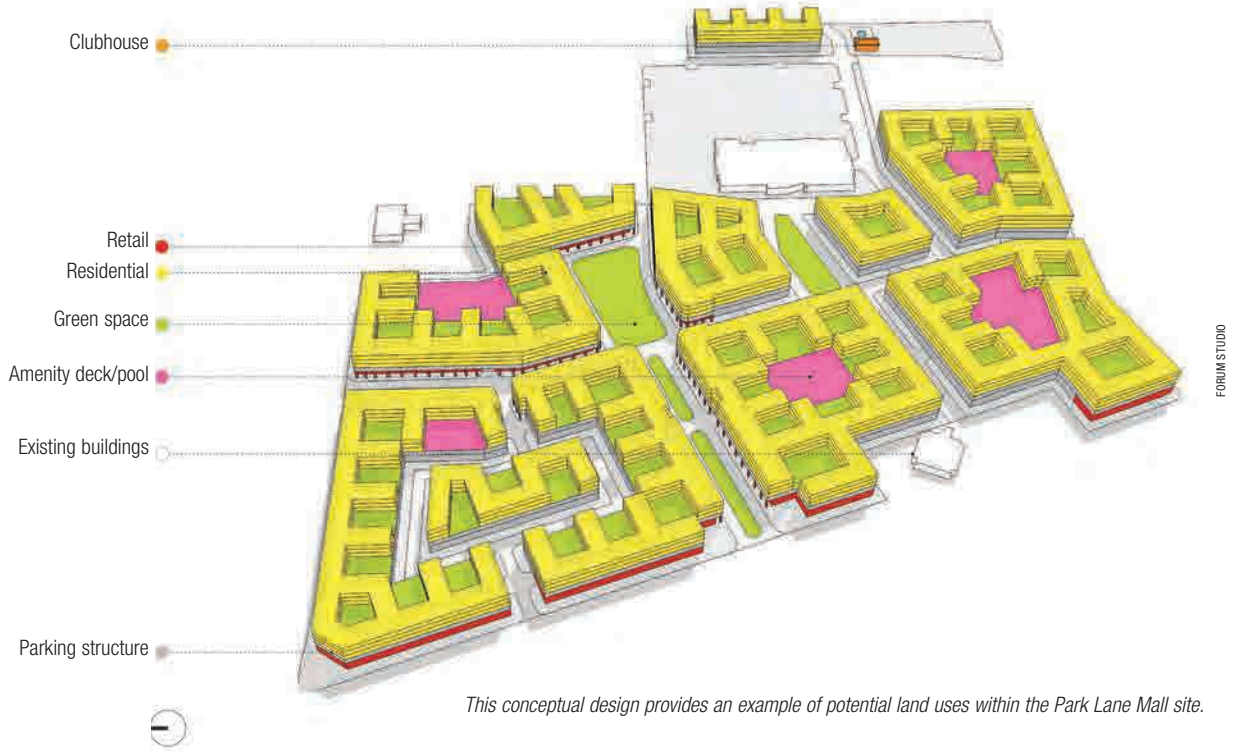
Virginia Lake District

Extending south from Plumb Lane to Moana Lane, all of the Virginia Street frontages are located in an adopted Transit-Oriented Development overlay district. The currently developing Plumb Crossing transit-oriented design project is located here along with the Peppermill Casino on the west side and, for most of its length, the vacated Park Lane Mall property on the east. This district was also reported to have one of the highest crime rates along the Virginia Street corridor.

Because it is the major gateway from the airport to Virginia Street, the panel believes the connection to the airport should be strengthened in conjunction with improving the street's arrival experience. The vacant Park Lane Mall property has the largest and most negative impact in this district, so its development should be emphasized, incorporating a mixture of retail, office, and residential buildings with significant open-space areas. Redeveloping much of the district will most likely assist in reducing some of the area's crime issues.

Specific targeted observations and recommendations:

- Design and construct an entry monument along with a wide, well-planted parkway and central median on Plumb Lane.
- Redevelop properties containing the motels at the southwest corner of Plumb Lane and Virginia Street.
- Reexamine the South Virginia TOD Corridor Plan to increase pedestrian sidewalk widths, increase landscape areas, add medians, and decrease vehicular travel lanes. Preserve and protect the existing bus transit facilities in place.
- Encourage a high-density, mixed-use development on the former Park Lane Mall site.
- Require a public park, urban edges, and open spaces for the Park Lane redevelopment.
- Encourage infill development on empty corners and "missing teeth" along Virginia Street.
- As properties redevelop along Virginia Street, require higher-density, vertically mixed-use development that features retail and restaurant space on the ground floor and residential or office uses above.

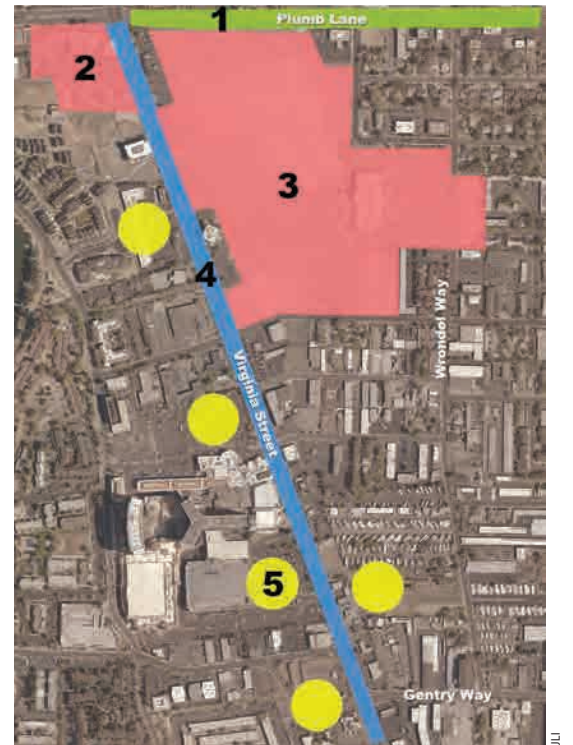


This conceptual design provides an example of potential land uses within the Park Lane Mall site.



The panel's conceptual plan for the Park Lane Mall site includes buildings fronting the street and holding the edges to establish an urban setting, mixed-use development (retail, residential, office), interior parking, block patterns, and as much retail as possible along Virginia Street.

The panel recommends the following uses for these Virginia Lake District sites: (1) enhance streetscape and add a city of Reno entry monument; (2) redevelop the motel properties at the southwest corner of Plumb Lane; (3) redevelop the Park Lane site to support high-quality, walkable, mixed-use, and open space; (4) continue streetscape improvements; (5) require properties along Virginia Street to redevelop at higher density with no setbacks from the street.



Convention Center District

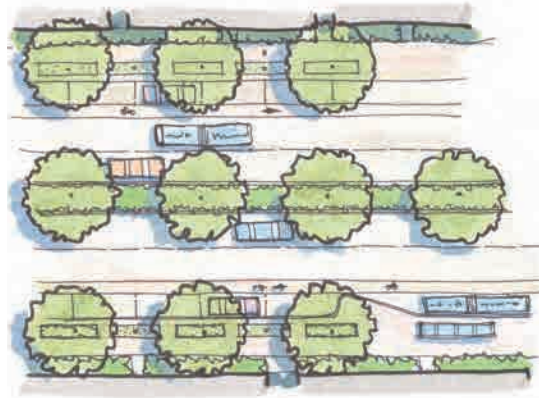
The Convention Center District extends from Moana Lane to the north to McCarran Boulevard to the south. The area is visibly dominated by parking lots. Both the Reno-Sparks Convention Center and the Atlantis Casino have an abundance of unstructured on-grade parking lots that border both sides of Virginia Street and remain vacant most of the time. Because of this isolation, entertainment options before and after events around the convention center are limited—other than gambling. Streetscape improvements along Virginia Street will be essential to beginning the transformation of the southern end of the corridor.

Specific targeted observations and recommendations:

- Reassess the South Virginia TOD Corridor Plan to increase pedestrian sidewalk widths, increase landscape areas, add medians, and decrease vehicular travel lanes. Preserve and protect the existing bus transit facilities in place.
- Encourage infill development on empty corners and “missing teeth” along Virginia Street.
- As properties redevelop along Virginia Street, require higher-density, vertically mixed-use development of two to four stories, with retail and restaurant space on the ground floor and either residential or office uses above.
- Add an entertainment and retail center across the street, west of the convention center for pre- and post-center events.
- Add a gateway monument at or near McCarran Boulevard to mark the entry into the revitalizing Virginia Street corridor.

Currently, Virginia Street is designed as a highway with larger than necessary capacity. Therefore, the panel proposes designating the third lane on each side for parking, as a bus pickup/dropoff lane at the existing RTC stations, and for parallel bike lanes. Doing so permits addition of larger medians, wider sidewalks, and street trees to provide shade along the streets and sidewalks. To further enhance the pedestrian experience, three- to four-story buildings should be permitted along the corridor to create a sense of enclosure and place.

The panel recommends the following uses for these Convention Center District sites: (1) develop an entertainment and retail destination near the convention center with easy access for patrons; (2) continue Virginia Street streetscape improvements; (3) add a gateway monument to mark the entry to the city and the Virginia Street corridor.



Immediate Action: Short-Term Wins

Because the panel understands these items will be taken on over time, the panel believes the following projects can be accomplished in the near term (i.e., two to five years).

Upcoming RTC Construction Plans

- Plant street trees in large tree wells in sidewalk areas. Ensure trees currently shown in illustrative materials as being in above-grade planters be altered to demonstrate they will be installed in tree wells.
- Shorten turn-lane pockets and extend the length of center median planters on Virginia Street. The panel does not see a need for the lengthy turn pockets currently illustrated and believes the extremely short planted median areas will do little to establish this as a distinct, memorable street.

Green Improvements at I-80 to UNR Gateway on Virginia Street

The panel understands RTC will be constructing a bus facility on the east side of Virginia Street, just north of Interstate 80, and has acquired more land in this area than is needed to accommodate the bus facility. The opportunity should be taken to establish a deep, that is, 50 feet or more, green, landscaped space here that links to UNR's most historic and green corner. Doing so will establish a green connection from the interstate to UNR, thereby providing a much-improved entry for students, parents, faculty members, and visitors.

Redevelopment, Open Space, and Streetscape Plans

Establish an urban design and streetscape framework that can be implemented incrementally. Taking this proactive and imperative approach will provide guidance on how to address the expected changes in the development environment.

Building on the work provided, the panel advises completing a redevelopment, open space, and streetscape plan (or plans) that addresses the details of plan elements in the University, Downtown North, and Central Districts. Boundaries for the plan would be UNR on the north, the Truckee River to the south, the east side of Center Street on the east, and the west side of Sierra Street on the west. The plan should include the following elements:

- Redevelopment of blocks currently occupied, underoccupied, and vacant land. The emphasis would be on the blocks running south in the corridor between Virginia and Center streets.
- Open-space planning for the corridors along Virginia and Center streets, the reclamation of CitiCenter plaza, and the plaza between City Hall and the river.
- The RTC Virginia Street corridor planning has not addressed Virginia Street through the Downtown North, Central, and South Districts. A streetscape plan should be prepared to ensure a consistent approach for the length of Reno's main street. Included, among other things, would be paving, street plantings, street furniture, and signage.

Light Rail/Trolley: An Option for the Future

As the city of Reno builds on the momentum of the recommendations provided by the ULI panel, it should consider long-term strategies to diversify transit opportunities and increase connectivity for the public. The panel recognizes that at the moment, the city does not have a ridership large enough to sustain a viable light-rail/trolley system; however, projected population growth, spurred by successful economic development efforts, justifies the city's need to expand public-transit opportunities over time.

One example of such an expansion is the construction of a light-rail/trolley system. Light rail/trolleys can help decrease congestion by reducing the number of cars on the road. Such transit is even correlated to positive health impacts because of the propensity for increased physical activity. Reno can use cities such as Seattle (Sound Transit), Portland (Portland Streetcar), and Tampa (TECO Line Streetcar) as models of exemplary light-rail/trolley systems.

As an initial step, establishing long-term objectives and goals for creating the system are important. In February 2016, the District of Columbia opened its long-awaited streetcar. According to DC Streetcar's website, the goals of the system are to

- Link neighborhoods with a modern, convenient and attractive transportation alternative;
- Provide quality service to attract and reach new transit ridership;
- Offer a broader range of transit options for District residents;
- Reduce short inner-city auto trips, parking demand, traffic congestion, and air pollution; and
- Encourage economic development and affordable housing options along streetcar corridors.

Source: District Department of Transportation, www.dcstreetcar.com/about/information/history.



DC Streetcar.

Implementation, Governance, and Leadership

AS THE PANEL HAS IDENTIFIED, Reno is on the cusp of change as a renewed positive energy is replacing the pessimism of the past recession. Although this optimism is refreshing for the city, it must not lure the city into complacency but instead motivate Reno to push forward. Moving to a new era will require addressing the underpinnings of the city's governance, and after the assessment of community input and the amassing of data, the panel recommends focusing on five fundamentals to achieve the goals previously set forth in this report.

These five fundamentals are establishing a strategic direction; a structure and organization to facilitate this direction; targeted funding and financing of future growth and redevelopment opportunities; commitment to a vision; and mature leadership. The panel believes that if Reno does not address these five principles, the city will not realize its potential to become the go-to city for outdoor lifestyle; arts and culture; and science and technology.

Strategic Direction—Capturing Opportunities

Reno is at a critical juncture of securing its place on the map as the go-to community for outdoor lifestyle, arts and culture, and science and technology. An entrepreneurial spirit is turning Midtown into a destination for entertainment and dining. The arts district is creating a tourist destination and a living space for emerging artists. Downtown is showing signs of new investment: a new Marriott is under renovation; the renovation of the post office is proceeding with a commitment by West Elm, a prominent home retailer, to serve as an anchor; and investments along the waterfront, the Virginia Street Bridge, and the riverfront art facade all add to the city's excitement.

To move to the next step, Reno should build on its foundation of strengths. To do so, Reno must leverage these assets and commit to a disciplined and focused approach. Following are Reno's key areas of strength and opportunity that the panel identified and feels can be built upon.

Engaged and Enthusiastic Community

In the initial data-gathering and interview process, it became evident that all facets of the community—are excited about the future of Reno. Consequently, an optimistic private sector is beginning to view investment in Reno in a positive light.

Accompanying this optimism is skepticism about whether Reno will return to its old behaviors, such as allowing the community to yield to the temptation of believing that a new industry or prospect will be Reno's "silver bullet" or costly, uncoordinated incentives that will not further the community's ability to fulfill its potential. Adding to this hesitation is a concern over whether the City Council will miss the big ideas and opportunities by channeling their focus on operational details that would be better left to the city's competent staff.

Establishing a *cohesive community vision* is essential to harnessing this optimism. If Reno continues to move forward without a common vision for agencies such as the RTC, the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada (EDAWN), and private interests, private sector investments, major capital projects, or economic development recruiting efforts will miss opportunities, poor funding decisions will be made, and in the worst case, plans will work in opposition to one another.

Natural Assets Provide a Strong Foundation

Reno is built on a strong structure of natural assets. The Truckee River provides a focal amenity for Downtown as

well as water recreation opportunities within an urban setting. The surrounding mountains contain diverse recreational opportunities for snow skiing, biking, and hiking. Agricultural and food-related uses are even emerging outside Reno that have found a niche in the food industry. These assets make Reno special and allow it to separate itself from many other cities of similar size.

However, without a *unifying framework*, a plan that ties these amenities together, celebration of Reno's outdoor lifestyle and other assets becomes difficult. If this plan is missing, these natural strengths are merely individual, isolated puzzle pieces. To celebrate and enable Reno, these pieces must be assembled into a cohesive picture.

Downtown Core with Urban Amenities

Downtown Reno has a mix of what one would consider traditional uses and others that are unique to Reno. Conventional uses such as office and government buildings; legacy and new-cuisine restaurants; retail; and arts venues like the Nevada Museum of Art and the Pioneer Center for Performing Arts, under the iconic geodesic dome, are complemented with unique entertainment opportunities such as the casinos, a minor league baseball stadium, river amenities, and the National Bowling Stadium. Recent additions to Downtown such as the Whitney Peak Hotel, a casino recently converted into a fitness experience hotel with its own rock-climbing wall, and the announcement of the Standard have introduced hope for new opportunities Downtown.

Many of Downtown's locations, including its plazas, serve as venues for Reno's numerous outdoor summer events. Downtown's general proximity to UNR provides the university with growth opportunities to expand into an urban setting and provides the city with a chance to attract students to the area as it works to grow retail and entertainment options.

Over the years, the city of Reno and others have made significant capital investments in Downtown, notably ReTRAC with a total cost of \$265 million and a city of Reno \$120 million contribution to the Reno Events Center, the National Bowling Stadium, and other facilities in the area.

In addition, the city contributes \$1 million to the Reno Aces baseball team annually from the general fund, and most recently, the city completed the Virginia Street Bridge at a cost of \$18.2 million.

Addressing redevelopment in any downtown is challenging, but Downtown Reno has its own set of challenges. This area may represent the single most complex set of issues along the Virginia Street corridor, yet the future of the corridor and the city itself depends on tackling Downtown's issues through the use of strategic decision making.

To do this, Reno must provide the decision-making parameters to make *strategic, not transactional decisions* about partnerships and future financial investments. Many plans for Downtown are on the shelf and another one has recently been removed. The city should reconsider starting, and may want to rethink, the recently initiated Downtown Action Plan in light of the panel's recommendations. Any plan that is initiated now needs to drive future decisions about land uses and design, while providing contemporary solutions addressing the homelessness, safety, crime, and drug concerns (these issues also exist along the corridor, not limited to Downtown), and partnerships with the university and the casinos.

University of Nevada, Reno

UNR provides an anchor at the north end of the Virginia Street corridor. The university houses an engineering program as well as an innovation space. Its student and faculty body has been growing at a significant pace. This asset offers an opportunity to collaborate on redevelopment between Downtown and the campus in addition to representing a partnership opportunity for private companies and the public sector. With this in mind, UNR should become a partner in economic development opportunities, participate in business attraction initiatives, and be included in the city's labor force discussion.

Midtown

Midtown is a demonstration of organic growth. Its entrepreneurial and local spirit have been key contributors to the area's evolution. Reno residents emphasized

Housing First: Access to Affordable and Supportive Housing for the Homeless

Housing First is a proven strategy widely adopted by several major cities across the United States to address chronic homelessness. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the concept is defined as an approach that centers on first securing housing as quickly as possible for people experiencing homelessness, then addressing individual setbacks and needs, such as addiction or unemployment, to improve quality of life. The method distinguished itself from earlier models, considered singular and short term, that set preconditions, such as sobriety, treatment, or service participation requirements prior to securing housing.¹ The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) lists six premises behind Housing First.²

- Homelessness is a housing crisis and can be addressed by providing safe and affordable housing.
- With varying degrees of short- and long-term supports, all people experiencing homelessness can achieve housing stability in permanent housing.
- Everyone is “housing ready” regardless of sobriety, compliance in treatment, or even clean criminal history.
- As a result of housing, many people have improved quality of life, particularly in the areas of health, mental health, substance use, and employment.
- People experiencing homelessness have the right to choice and should be treated with dignity and respect.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness lists two common program models that follow the Housing First approach:³

- *Permanent supportive housing* (PSH) targets individuals and families with chronic illnesses, disabilities, mental health issues, or substance use disorders and have experienced long-term or repeated homelessness. This PSH model offers long-term rental assistance and supportive services.

- *Rapid rehousing* is used for a wider variety of individuals and families and provides short-term rental assistance and services. The core goals of rapid rehousing are housing identification, rent and move-in assistance, and case management and services.

Research has shown that, in general, Housing First yields higher housing retention rates, lower returns to homelessness, and significant reductions in the use of crisis services and institutions. Participants in permanent supportive services are more likely to attend school and job training programs, discontinue substance use, and have fewer instances of domestic than those not participating. Finally, permanent supportive housing has been found to be cost-efficient.⁴

For examples of comprehensive citywide efforts that incorporate the Housing First model, visit the following municipality pages:

- **Gateway Housing First** (St. Louis, Missouri)—www.gatewayhousingfirst.com;
- **Tampa Hillsborough Homeless Initiative** (Hillsborough County, Florida)—www.thhi.org; and
- **The Way Home** (Houston, Texas)—www.thewayhomehouston.org.

Notes:

1 U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Housing-First-Permanent-Supportive-Housing-Brief.pdf>.

2 Ibid.

3 National Alliance to End Homelessness, www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/2016-04-26%20Housing%20First%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf.

4 Ibid.

the area as a center for nightlife and cultural expression. Midtown contains several breweries, local restaurants, and a diverse set of businesses that contribute to the area's eclectic character. The neighborhood's success has attracted not only residents and students but also investment. Midtown's natural development signifies its independence and does not require much intervention, as a result. Reno should continue to let Midtown thrive and embrace its self-cultivation.

Dedicated City Staff Efforts

During the interview process, the panel was consistently reminded that the city of Reno has a staff dedicated and committed to making the city a great place.

The panel also learned executive-level staff routinely and directly participates in daily operations, which represents an organizational or cultural breakdown. Such a practice is unsustainable and inhibits executive decision makers from focusing on big ideas for the city. To make major decisions, the city manager and his executive-level staff need to function at a policy, not operational level.

To resolve this situation, the city of Reno's governmental *structure and organization* need to be reevaluated and strategically realigned to have the correct staff in the day-to-day processing of applications, thus allowing the city executive to address the policy and financial investments. The following section provides further, more detailed recommendations on this topic.

Structure and Organization

Government organizations can be structured in a variety of ways based on a range of needs. The successful ones can change over time but remain fundamentally aligned to implement a strategic vision. In listening to and reviewing the decision-making and conflict resolution patterns within the city, the panel realized that a realignment of positions and possibly the addition of key new positions will be important in carrying out the proposed strategic direction.

Currently, no clear distinction exists between policy-related functions and administrative ones such as plan review

and building permit activities. Assistant city managers are called upon to facilitate development projects and shepherd the long-range plan while running day-to-day administrative operations dealing with personnel, budgets, and council agendas.

The city of Reno depends on strong partnerships with its agencies and institutions such as the RTC, EDawn, and UNR. Therefore, the city manager should have a seat at the table and actively engage as future plans are being developed to ensure that the outcomes are mutually supportive to the city's vision.

The city need not wait until it commits to a vision and strategic direction to realign and reallocate staff resources. Although organizations often adjust and double up responsibilities when budgets are cut, now is not the time to cut corners on the quality of staff or the resources dedicated to meet the challenges of downtown redevelopment, redevelopment along the Virginia Street corridor, economic development, and transportation systems to facilitate Reno's future.

The staff should be strengthened so it can turn its focus to managing and achieving the articulated vision. The panel has made two distinct recommendations that can enable this to happen.

First, hire a liaison to the city manager. The city manager needs a high-level, trusted person to be the liaison with City Council members and their constituents to clear his plate of day-to-day operations and allow him to focus on major policy initiatives, investment opportunities, economic development recruitment, and partnering with community stakeholders. The personality and skill set of such a person is key to fostering facilitation of issues between council members and staff. The addition of this position will open up the city manager's calendar to keep his eyes on decisions that affect the outcomes of the city's strategic direction.

Second, restructure the city's organization. Three options are provided, but Reno must choose one. Though the city's staff members are doing their jobs competently, creation of

the following three organizations is recommended to focus Reno's resources and staff alignment to allow the strategic vision to be attained.

- *Option 1: Create an Economic Development Office*—This group can allow Reno to focus on the economic development initiatives.
- *Option 2: Empower the Planning Department*—The planning and development function is disaggregated and buried deep within the organization, so it must be empowered to effect the proposed vision.
- *Option 3: Create a Redevelopment Agency*—Though such an agency existed in the early 1980s, it may be time to look at revitalizing this group and restructuring it to attain the vision's goals. Downtown is a significant challenge in itself, requiring the city to build relationships with key stakeholders such as the casinos, UNR, and neighborhood organizations.

Regardless of the structure, the purpose is to create a proactive team that can uphold the vision. This team can exist within the current structure under an assistant city manager or under the Planning Division while its leadership can report directly to the city manager. The final details depend on what works best within the city of Reno. The size of this unit could be small, but the composition and staff competencies are paramount to its success. To be effective, this team should consider a broad range of competencies in long-range land use planning, urban design, transportation planning, redevelopment, real estate and market analysis, and finance.

One key benefit of such a unit could be to work proactively to identify prospective opportunities for economic and redevelopment opportunities on behalf of the city. The group needs to possess deal-making skills and understand the needs of the private sector. The team should also possess financing knowledge not only to address the needs of the private sector, but also to take into account the public interests. It needs to develop a menu of financing options, ensure design standards are upheld during the pursuit of the Virginia Street corridor redevelopment, and develop

effective partnerships with UNR, RTC, EDawn, and neighborhood organizations. Downtown redevelopment could become a focused initiative of this group, with the potential to have a dedicated downtown redevelopment person.

Funding and Financing

Though the city of Reno has a significant debt from many investments already made, the city has been able to add 53 positions in the current budget, address code compliance, and add safety personnel, all of which have been investments in the city's future. Moving forward, the panel believes alignment of funding and financing with the goals of the strategic vision set forth in this report is important.

Creative Financing

Forming effective partnerships with UNR, EDawn, and the private sector can be the first step in Reno's funding and financing endeavors. The second step should be leveraging limited local funds by monetizing stable and regular revenue streams to expand the capacity of where the city's dollar can go and layering resources. Using Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) with general revenue dollars and other sources is not uncommon to make projects work. These strategies will require creativity and staff resources to look at financing in a way that has not been done before.

Following is a menu of financing options:

- Equity;
- Parking revenue/revenue bonds;
- Tax credits;
- CDBG;
- Direct municipal investment
- Tax increment financing;
- Synthetic tax increment financing;
- EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program;

Conceptual Cost of Virginia Street Improvements

The panel felt having a working figure for the improvements to the Virginia Street corridor would be useful. The panel estimates that improvements could be in the range of \$30 million.

The panel broke the cost estimate into three major components:

- Road, landscape, and hardscape improvements for each of the seven sections of Virginia Street (and Center and Sierra where appropriate) = \$20 million.
- The cost of the riverfront park improvements = \$7 million.

- The cost of the courthouse park improvements (not including the structured parking) = \$3 million.

The cost estimates for the road, landscape, and hardscape improvements are derived from generic cost per mile based on Nevada Department of Transportation/ University of Nevada Las Vegas Corridor Study 2008, increased by 20 percent.

Cost information presented here is provided for long-range planning and budgeting purposes and is not intended to substitute for a project-level detailed cost approach.

- Sales tax rebates;
- Federal programs;
- Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act credit assistance;
- Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing;
- New markets tax credits;
- Historic tax credits;
- HUD's Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant Program;
- Low income tax credit;
- Other HUD and transportation federal programs (e.g., federal funding for trails, Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery [TIGER] grants);
- Business Improvement Districts (BIDs);
- Special assessments; and
- Private business development funds.

Public Entrepreneurship

The city of Reno needs to become a public entrepreneur. The city should clearly understand the public purpose

when entering into agreements, so it can negotiate on the public's behalf by identifying the best opportunities and return on investment in development and economic development. Wisely investing in projects that have a clear public purpose will take all of the city staff and personnel to understand the potential of such ventures. If the correct resources are made available, these investments can be done wisely.

Intentionality

During the interview process, the panel was told, "We want to make Reno famous again." If Reno is going to answer this call, it must determine for what it wants to be famous and if the city is being intentional in its actions. If Reno does not clearly state what it wants to do or where it wants to go, it could drift without direction. Such intentionality will require evaluating the city's actions, or inactions, and how these can be interpreted by its stakeholders and prospects.

Reno is becoming a different city than it has been traditionally. The preceding numbers demonstrate how the Biggest Little City is diversifying. Though gaming will continue to be an integral part of the city's economic base, other opportunities exist to diversify the economy, but such diversification requires shaping the city differently. This

economic shift demonstrates that talent is becoming the driver for how Reno will attract jobs. Consequently, Reno's success will depend upon its ability to grow and attract talent. In the past, the workforce has moved to where the jobs are, but today's talented workers are moving to vibrant cities with a high quality of life. Currently, UNR is cultivating talent, so now the city of Reno must become a place that not only retains this talent but attracts it.

The plans set forth by the panel are designed to help Reno evolve with this new economy. The panel has provided branding strategies that focus on the outdoors, culture and arts, and the growing technological and university opportu-

nities. The Virginia Street urban design plan illustrates how to connect not only the various pieces of the corridor, but also portions of the new and traditional economy, attractive streets and trails, some of which are currently underway. The plan builds off natural assets like the river, creates new places to celebrate Reno, and recognizes the university has grown into a place not only to educate and perform research but also an essential economic engine of the new economy. The panel believes the changes to staffing and the development of partnerships will be essential to the city. The partnerships with UNR, RTC, EDAWN, and others need to be clear, aspirational, and focused.

Adoption of Steps

To prevent these recommendations and Virginia Street's long-term vision from becoming just another plan, the new vision should be formalized and adopted within the city of Reno's actionable documents. As they are ratified into the following documents, timelines and goals should be established to ensure progress can be measured and the plans are completed in a timely fashion.

The following documents should adopt Reno's vision for Virginia Street:

- **City of Reno Comprehensive Plan:** The panel is aware that *Reimagine Reno* has adopted a timeline for updating and adopting a new master plan for the city. Because a preliminary master plan draft is set to be developed starting in September 2017, the panel believes the new vision and recommendations for the Virginia Street corridor should be included within this draft and its ultimate adoption.
- **City of Reno Budget:** Because these plans and goals are set within the comprehensive plan, the city of Reno should take into account not only how much executing this vision will cost, but also which revenue source will allow this vision to be realized. Fixing these plans within the budget will inform the city how to direct and allocate present and future financial resources.
- **Capital Improvement Program (CIP):** In addition to putting these plans in the framework of the city budget, they should be included within Reno's CIP to allow the city to identify and plan capital improvement projects surrounding Virginia Street and the overall vision. Doing so will enable these plans to be accounted for in future long-term financial scheduling.
- **Strategic Plan:** Once the plans are established within the comprehensive plan, the city budget, and the CIP, a strategic plan must be completed to ensure an efficient development cycle is put in place to allow the vision to be attained. Similar to the timeline established in *Reimagine Reno*, monthly and annual goals should be set.
- **Reno Municipal Code:** While a comprehensive plan will set guidelines and goals for development, zoning ordinances will provide a guideline for achieving the vision. The updates to the zoning ordinance should take into account the design codes and vision for Virginia Street to prevent future development from deviating from the set standard.
- **City Manager Administrative Documents:** Including Virginia Street and Reno's future vision within the administrative documents will reinforce the city's commitment to the plans set forth. Taking this step will provide a framework and guide daily decision making.

Enforcement of Zoning Codes and Concepts

After the city of Reno has updated its zoning ordinances, codes, and concepts to align with the vision for Virginia Street and the city itself, they must be enforced.

Although adopting and updating a new zoning ordinance is important, its enforcement is vital as the city executes the vision. If Virginia Street is going to achieve its goal of becoming Reno's thoroughfare, developers and property owners must contribute to and abide by this vision.

Enforcing the zoning and building codes will allow the city to uphold the vision and establish accountability for present and future development.

The city of Reno's success will also require the adoption of a new thought mentality, reassessing how the city is viewed and governed and how resources, both staff and funding, are allocated.

Strategic Vision

To shape the city of Reno's decisions, partnerships, potential investments, and funding, it needs a strategic vision. The panel's research and interviews indicated the city does not have a vision that guides its decision making. Although the UNR Master Plan, the RTC plan, Midtown, and investments such as the Virginia Street Bridge are signs of progress, they need to be put into a larger context with a strategic plan; otherwise they cannot operate synergistically for the city. Investments such as the riverfront, parks, plazas, and even streets are not immune; they all encourage vitality and new investment, but their impact depends on this larger vision.

The city should continue to elaborate *Reimagine Reno*, which is a start in developing a vision for Reno. Because the plan is intended to be a blueprint for the city's future, the city should structure its team to implement the plan as well as the panel's recommendations while understanding and using creative financing opportunities to pursue public/private partnerships. To prevent the plan from becoming latent, the council should formally ratify the document.

Leadership

Establishing this vision will take leadership. Reno's leadership needs to be cohesive and fixed upon this vision, while ridding itself of its current indecision. For example, the debate over whether to allow UNR's planned expansion toward Downtown on Center Street would be unanimous with a vision, the disagreements would be in the details. Although one can understand why opposition would exist to demolishing the historic rowhomes, city leaders have the responsibility to provide an alternative plan to any opposition and must provide the support that is necessary to reaching the end goal. Because a strategic plan has not been put in place, the project cannot be part of a larger plan and consequently this plan is simply a transaction. Reno's leadership must establish a vision and move this project forward rather than opposing the moving or removal of these homes without offering alternatives.

The mayor and City Council are the elected officials who should act as the board of directors for the city of Reno. The essential tasks for this group are to set a vision and provide the necessary resources, services, and leadership while hiring a competent and ethical staff. As previously highlighted, Reno's leadership has hired and established a dedicated and competent staff, but now leadership must enable them to perform their duties of running the city without facing undue scrutiny as they currently do.

In addition, if the city commits to embracing the vision for Reno, it must reorganize its staff. Presently, the staff is largely focused on delivering high-quality day-to-day services (e.g., police, roads, etc.), but the panel understands only one person is assigned to perform economic development, in conjunction with other responsibilities. If Reno hopes to implement a strategic, robust, and proactive government working toward a vision, it must field a focused team of individuals within the city administration who make attracting and fostering investment in Reno a daily enterprise. Reno must look into the future and take into consideration projects such as what will follow the West Elm company Downtown and what future development will complement that project. Reno's leadership

must establish a vision, because this shapes a proactive approach to development, thereby forcing governance to benchmark the quality of overall development by comparing building designs with neighboring uses, the street, and the larger vision.

Although these plans are ambitious, Reno's leadership should not allow the conversation of financing to halt its progress. When the market does not respond because of conditions or the need for higher-quality infrastructure, public investment can inspire investment. To help make these investments, Reno's tax structure needs to change to reflect the city that it is becoming rather than what it

was in the past. Recognizing that those changes are out of the city's control, Reno should coalesce with other cities in Nevada to inform the legislature why these adjustments are needed since they will enable Reno not just to survive, but to thrive.

As Reno advances, its leaders must shape a vision and lead. Although inaction is easy, Reno is not in a position to fail to act. The panel believes if Reno's leaders empower their staff and have the community and political will to be bold, they can reach for the future.

Conclusion

THE CITY OF RENO IS EXPERIENCING a fundamental shift not only in its economy but in its perception. Now is a critical time for the city to translate and build off this momentum to move toward a vibrant future. As outlined in this report, the panel believes the recommendations provided will be critical to ensuring the success of the Virginia Street corridor and the city of Reno. Moving forward will require building off four pillars: understanding Reno's economics and market, creating a vision and brand for the city, establishing a Virginia Street master plan, and

adopting these recommendations within a refined government structure that is fixed upon a strategic vision.

Aligning the city's natural resources, economic assets, and social enthusiasm with a fixed vision will provide direction for Reno and enable its leaders to grow the city in the future. The panel hopes the recommendations in this report prove useful and are just the start of Reno's new beginning.

About the Panel

Tom Murphy

*Panel Chair
Washington, D.C.*

Murphy is a senior resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute and the ULI Canizaro/Klingbeil Families Chair for Urban Development. A former mayor of Pittsburgh, Murphy has extensive experience in urban revitalization—what drives investment, what ensures long-lasting commitment.

Before his appointment as senior resident fellow, Murphy had served as ULI's Gulf Coast liaison, helping coordinate with the leadership of New Orleans and the public to advance the implementation of rebuilding recommendations made by ULI's Advisory Services panel. In addition, he worked with the Louisiana state leadership, as well as with leadership in hurricane-impacted areas in Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, to identify areas appropriate for ULI involvement.

Earlier, Murphy served three terms as the mayor of Pittsburgh, from January 1994 through December 2005. During that time, he initiated a public/private partnership strategy that leveraged more than \$4.5 billion in economic development in Pittsburgh. Murphy led efforts to secure and oversee \$1 billion in funding for the development of two professional sports facilities and a new convention center that is the largest certified green building in the United States. He developed strategic partnerships to transform more than 1,000 acres of blighted, abandoned industrial properties into new commercial, residential, retail, and public uses; and he oversaw the development of more than 25 miles of new riverfront trails and urban green space.

From 1979 through 1993, Murphy served eight terms in the Pennsylvania State General Assembly House of Representatives. Murphy served in the Peace Corps in Paraguay from 1970 through 1972. He is a 1993 graduate of the New Mayors Program offered by Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. He holds an MS in urban studies from Hunter College and a BS in biology and chemistry from John Carroll University.

Daniel Anderton

Gaithersburg, Maryland

Anderton is currently employed by Dewberry, a national planning, engineering, and architectural firm, and is responsible for community planning and urban design within the company. He has worked for architects, engineers, landscape architects, and horticulturalists throughout his career, giving him a unique and holistic perspective of community planning and urban design.

Anderton has served in the Washington, D.C., region for more than 30 years and has been directly involved in the creation of communities with services in all aspects of land use planning and physical planning, including comprehensive and master planning, urban and mixed-use planning, site planning, redevelopment planning, affordable housing, rezoning, subdivision planning, small town revitalization, and landscape architecture. He also has extensive experience with local and state government development review processes and effective working relationships with local and state agencies, boards, commissions, and public officials in multiple jurisdictions.

Anderton's goal is to create communities that are comfortable, sustainable, and inclusive to a wide demographic of residents and business owners while also being market-

able for either public or private developers. He takes care to ensure that a conceptual design's integrity and density are maintained through the planning process. By carefully planning FAR and densities, providing for a mix of diverse building and product types and phasing, and by incorporating traditional and neo-traditional styles, community developments are poised to capture the needs of the market and a wide cross section of prospective renters, buyers, and shop owners. The juggling of everyone's interests throughout the completion of a plan or project is extremely important. The desire is to make it through the design and planning process with the majority of stakeholders feeling as though they have succeeded in having their personal vision incorporated into the community.

Anderton graduated with a bachelor's of landscape architecture and environmental planning from Utah State University in 1983 and with a master's of landscape architecture from the University of Illinois in 1985.

Walter Bialas

Dallas, Texas

Bialas is the vice president for market research for Jones Lang LaSalle's (JLL) Dallas office. JLL is one of the world's largest professional services and investment management companies specializing in real estate. Bialas is a seasoned real estate professional with more than 25 years of creative problem-solving experience in the consulting, banking, and development industries. By virtue of a longstanding career in evaluating real estate across the United States, he has comprehensive knowledge of all the major markets and property types, as well as a particular strength in quickly assessing market dynamics and their implications on project feasibility.

Before JLL, Bialas was senior market advisor at PPR/CoStar, where his role was to enhance the research capabilities of both companies and expand the potential services available to clients in the Washington, D.C. region. Earlier, he oversaw Madison Marquette's research function as part of the company's investment and acquisitions team for retail properties across the country. Before his work at

Madison, Bialas established an internal real estate consulting group at PNC Bank. During his 14-year tenure with PNC, he provided custom market due diligence in support of the bank's commercial underwriting process, evaluating unique location dynamics, market issues, and the reasonableness of pro forma assumptions. Before joining PNC, he spent ten years with the national consulting practice of GA/Partners-Arthur Andersen in Washington, D.C.

Bialas is an active Urban Land Institute member. As part of his ULI commitment, he has completed seven national advisory panels, addressing a variety of downtown master planning and redevelopment issues. He also served on the Pittsburgh District Council's executive committee. In addition, he is a longstanding member of the International Council of Shopping Centers and has served as the chair of its North American Research Task Force.

He received his bachelor's degree in urban studies from Albright College in Reading, Pennsylvania, and his master's degree in city and regional planning from Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

Kathleen Cecilian

Flemington, New Jersey

Cecilian has been involved in the strategic marketing of master-planned communities (MPCs) since 1985. After attending the University of Florida and majoring in English, she began her professional career as a copywriter with the prestigious Leo Burnett Company. There she honed her award-winning strategic thinking and creative execution on such accounts as McDonald's, Heinz, Memorex, and Kellogg's.

This consumer goods background has given Cecilian special insight into understanding how America's brand leaders persuade customers to purchase their product. She has brought this unique perspective and marketing expertise to the real estate industry. Her company, Cecilian Worldwide, was established to provide strategic marketing, creation of brand identity, and exceptional creative ideas to MPCs around the country. She is a coveted thought

partner, and her work has influenced many of the top communities in America.

Presently, Cecilian is a governor of the Urban Land Institute. She has held the position of council counselor to the ULI Community Development Council Flights and the council chair of the CDC Blue Flight; she has been a member of the Policy and Practice Committee, the Programming Committee, and the Executive Committee of the ULI Foundation. Previously, she was the chair of the 2005 ULI Master Planned Community Conference in Denver. She is the author of the marketing chapter of the ULI book *Developing Active Adult Communities*, a contributor to ULI's *Ten Principles for Smart Growth on the Suburban Fringe*, and a frequent lecturer and speaker at ULI and other organizations on all subjects related to innovation, brand, and real estate.

Cecilian has provided invaluable assistance by contributing her strategic marketing and branding ideas to local and national charities such as Special Olympics and America's Grow a Row. She chaired the \$30 million capital campaign for the Hunterdon Medical Center. She is on the board of the Hunterdon County YMCA and SAFE in Hunterdon.

Bill Clarke

Ross, California

Clarke is licensed as both a civil engineer and a landscape architect and has over 30 years of experience in planning, design, and construction projects. Now retired, he consulted to developers, other planning and design firms, and public agencies on issues ranging from new community plans to site planning and infrastructure.

In recent years, Clarke's work has centered on the planning and implementation of a variety of projects. Among these projects has been an 11,000-acre residential development near Livermore, California; an 800-acre commercial/industrial plan in Tracy, California; and a 300-acre business park also in Livermore. He also worked on the implementation of a town center for the new community of Mountain House, California, and he was part

of a team preparing a resource management plan for the country of Palau.

For over 20 years, Clarke was with two of the largest landscape architecture firms in the country. As a principal at the SWA Group in Sausalito, California, he worked on projects including the Weyerhaeuser Corporate campus outside Tacoma, Washington; the engineering planning for the Woodbridge new community in Irvine, California; and ARAMCO compounds in Saudi Arabia. As a principal at EDAW Inc., Clarke led a team that won a design competition for a government complex in Doha, Qatar; prepared two specific plans for over 6,000 homes and 800,000 square feet of office industrial land in Tracy, California; and prepared construction documents for Washington Harbour in Washington, D.C.

Lucia E. Garsys

Tampa, Florida

Garsys is the chief administrator for development and infrastructure for Hillsborough County, Florida. She manages more than 1,500 employees with a \$1 billion six-year capital program and an operating budget of \$358 million annually. Within her purview are the cradle-to-grave operations of design, construction, operations, and maintenance of Hillsborough County's capital portfolio, including 3,300 miles of roadways, 1,300 stormwater conveyance systems, four water plants, and seven wastewater plants. She is responsible for all land development activity, including mid-range planning, zoning, site and subdivision review, and building permitting operations.

Before joining Hillsborough County in 1990, Garsys led the comprehensive plan update effort in Fairfax County, Virginia. Her private sector consulting experience for public and private clients in the Chicago metropolitan area includes managing and directing projects in comprehensive and land use planning, downtown and commercial revitalization with tax increment financing including a sales tax component, developer recruitment, fiscal impact analysis, strategic economic development plans, and land use feasibility studies. She has worked with emerging de-

mocracies in Eastern Europe, namely, Lithuania, Belarus, and Kaliningrad, to develop strategic plans, public hearing processes, and local strategies to adopt codes.

Garsys has a BS in city planning from the Illinois Institute of Technology and a master's in urban planning from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana where she also served as a teaching assistant. She is a member of the Urban Land Institute, the American Planning Association, and the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). She served as a juror for AICP's Student Project Awards between 2007 and 2010. Between 2004 and 2009, she served on the Board on Infrastructure and the Built Environment as a part of the National Research Council and on three of the NRC's committees.

Todd Meyer

Chicago, Illinois

Meyer began his career designing and implementing commercial and residential projects in a self-employed capacity. After graduating from Kansas State University, he worked on the West Coast and in the Midwest for professional design firms including EDAW, HOK, and SWA, learning the corporate design and consulting business. After joining Forum Studio, he has continued to work with public and private sector clients on community planning projects of all types and scales, including new towns, residential communities, mixed-use and transit-oriented development, urban infill, redevelopment strategies, and smart growth initiatives. A common theme of his work is to promote a "triple-bottom-line" approach, including ecological, social, and economic goals, as well as to integrate sustainable planning principles in his projects, including the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED-ND™ criteria.

As a principal with Forum Studio, Meyer's responsibilities include management, design oversight, and business development in the Chicago office. Forum Studio is a subsidiary of Clayco, a real estate development and

design-build firm based in Chicago. With project work in the United States and globally, including Asia, India, Russia, Turkey, and the Middle East, Meyer has a broad range of professional experience on a variety of assignments.

One of his professional interests is to promote "cultural urbanism" in his projects, working to celebrate our regional differences and create unique places for social interaction. As a daily part of his work with clients and project teams, he is committed to creating beautiful, functional, and high-quality environments for people. This in part addresses physical infrastructure, but also considers the natural systems that shape our urban areas, using appropriate materials and making the right choices for the environment. He also seeks to stimulate cities, neighborhoods, and districts to be active and energetic in economic investment and unique cultural expression.

Meyer subscribes to the principles of the Charter for the New Urbanism, which seeks to curb suburban sprawl and promote authentic urban neighborhoods that are compact, walkable, provide an interesting mix of uses, and promote a strong sense of identity and community for both visitors and residents.

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