

North Charleston, South Carolina

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

March 31–April 5, 2019



ULI Urban Land
Institute
Advisory Services

North Charleston, South Carolina

Building a Foundation for Equitable Development
along the Rivers Avenue Corridor

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March 31–April 5, 2019

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About the Urban Land Institute

THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of providing leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision-making is based on its members' sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. In 2018 alone, more than 2,200 events were held in about 330 cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at uli.org. Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

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About ULI Advisory Services

THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES PROGRAM

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 more than 700 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 are 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 100 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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The panel wishes to thank the city of North Charleston, Charleston County, and the Coastal Conservation League for sponsoring this important panel. A special thank you to Adam MacConnell for leading this effort. Additional thanks to Charles Drayton and Ryan Johnson from the city, Jason Crowley from the Coastal Conservation League, Walt Smalls and Joel Evans from the county, Duncan Cheney from Metanoia, and Amy Barrett from ULI South Carolina for all of their coordination and guidance throughout the panel week. A huge thank you to the people of Metanoia for hosting us in their space, to Lowcountry Alliance for Model Communities (LAMC) for helping involve the community, and to Mayor Keith Summey for lending us the city council chambers for the final presentation.

Finally, the panel would like to thank the entire steering committee, which guided this process to ensure that the right questions were asked and the engagement process was inclusive.



The ULI panel team.

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Background, Assignment, and Key Recommendations

THE CITY OF NORTH CHARLESTON WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1972, thereby becoming the ninth-largest city in South Carolina. Even before incorporation, North Charleston boasted several military bases and operations that formed the backbone of the community’s economic prosperity and population growth. So, when the Charleston Naval Base and Shipyard closed in 1996 after almost 100 years of operation, the city was faced with losing not only its largest employer, but also its identity.

Today, North Charleston has rebuilt its economy on the strong industrial roots established by its military heritage. New industry and manufacturing have more than replaced the job loss caused by base closure, and North Charleston is now the third largest city in the state of South Carolina. However, this growth has not been enjoyed by all of its residents and neighborhoods. The dynamic is highlighted by the city’s tallest building, the former Charleston Naval Hospital, which has remained shuttered since the base closure. With its 12 stories and about 400,000 square feet, the hospital is a towering reminder of the community’s loss.

Since the hospital’s closure, various reuses were proposed and redevelopment opportunities pursued, but none were fully realized. The challenge and stigma of past failed development efforts—paired with the disinvestment of surrounding neighborhoods—have made the hospital a symbol of contentious disappointment in a community looking to begin a new, more prosperous chapter.

The Advisory Services panel was invited to North Charleston in March 2019 to offer a fresh perspective about the future of the 22-acre site that was once Charleston Naval Hospital, the adjacent parcels along Rivers Avenue, and the affected

economic growth of several surrounding neighborhoods such as Chicora-Cherokee, Whipper Barony, and Pinecrest. Central to the panel's charge is to offer the sponsors a recommendation about whether to repurpose or demolish the hospital structure ahead of its planned demolition in May.

Study Area and Surrounding Context

The panel's primary study area is a 2.51-square-mile area bounded by Noisette Creek to the north, Interstate 26 to the west, Spruill Avenue to the east, and the city of Charleston to the south. Located centrally in North Charleston's historic southern reach, the study area runs along the Rivers Avenue corridor and is an active hub of transit activity that provides key connection points between downtown Charleston to the south and major industry to the north, including the Charleston International Airport and several outlying suburbs.

The panel's primary focal point within the study area is the Rivers Avenue and McMillan Avenue intersection and the 61-parcel area that runs along the Rivers Avenue corridor. The focal area is anchored by the Naval Hospital building and includes the Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority (ARTA) SuperStop and the county's social services center.

In many ways, the study area is distinctly different from the city as a whole. North Charleston has a population of about 110,000 and is growing at a rate of 1.7 percent per year. By contrast, the study area is home to about 9,785 people, has lost 14 percent of its population in the past 20 years, and has added only 400 residents since 2010. The study area's 12 distinct neighborhoods and other residential enclaves are a point of pride for longtime residents. However, despite regional growth, many neighborhoods report high vacancy rates, with an overall vacancy rate for the study area reported as being 20 percent.

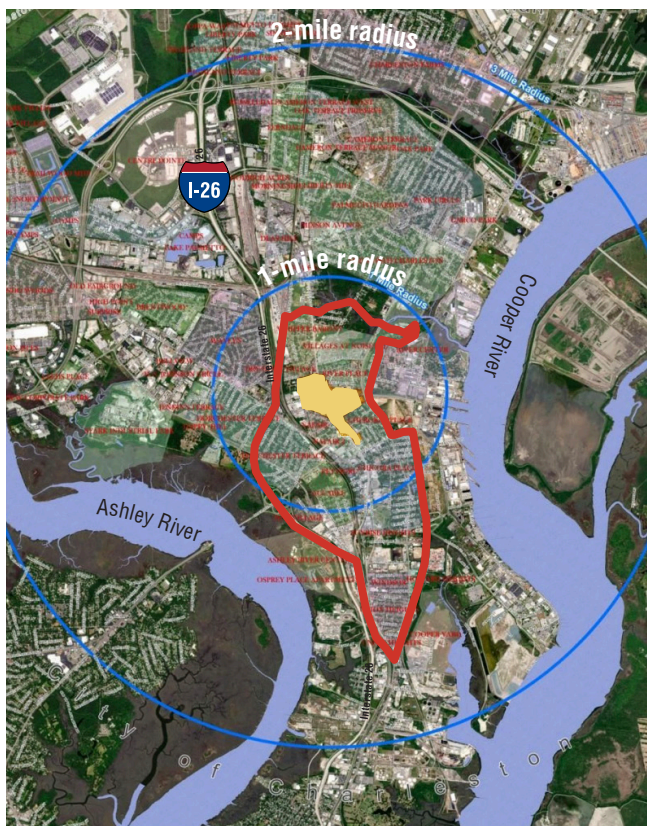
The study area also represents a distinct socioeconomic demographic. The area's residents are 85 percent African American compared to 47 percent in North Charleston. This finding positions the study area and its neighborhoods as rich cultural centers but highlights disparities. A quarter of the residents do not own a vehicle or have a high school degree. Despite the booming economy, the unemployment rate among study area residents older than 16 is 11 percent, which is nearly four times the rate (2.9 percent) of unemployment in the Charleston metro region. For those residents who gained employment, the median income of \$21,275 is half that of the city. Moreover, one-third of the study area residents earn less than \$15,000 per year.

This existing context informed the panel's work and underlined the value of the Naval Hospital site and the associated Rivers Avenue and McMillan Avenue study area as a potential catalyst for creating opportunities for existing residents.

The Panel's Assignment

The panel's three sponsors, the city of North Charleston, Charleston County, and the Coastal Conservation League, worked together and with a steering committee comprising stakeholders and elected officials to come up with the following eight questions for the panel. The panel was asked to address the redevelopment of the Charleston Naval Hospital and to identify strategies for economic development and planning for the surrounding neighborhoods.

- What uses or improvements in the study area would enhance and support the following: the bus rapid transit (BRT) goals, the efforts of Charleston County to establish a community services hub, North Charleston's goal to eliminate the food desert designation, and the goal of preserving the existing neighborhood's quality of life and affordability?
- What uses or improvements in the study area may be detrimental to the surrounding neighborhoods and could contribute to displacing those communities?



The panel's study area. The core study area is highlighted in yellow and the broader stakeholder outreach area is outlined in red.

Demographic Comparison: North Charleston and the Study Area

	North Charleston	Study area
Total population	110,000	9,849
Racial composition	45.3% white 47.2% African American	9.5% white 85% African American
Percentage of people under age 18	24%	30%
Adults 65 and older	10%	11%
Median household income	\$39,944	\$21,275
Percentage of population earning less than \$35,000	44.1%	69.6%
Percentage of population earning less than \$15,000	17.5%	36.0%
Owner-occupied housing unit rate	44.5%	25.5%

- With the pending BRT line established along this corridor and its including an essential hub and transfer station, is there a target of appropriate density or scale of development that addresses questions 1 and 2?
- What tools or strategies are available to help encourage investment within the study area while minimizing or mitigating the disruption to existing neighborhoods?
- What is the cost benefit of adaptive re-use versus demolition and new construction as modes of redevelopment for properties in the study area?
- If one understands that properties in the study area are both government owned and privately owned, what role could a private/public partnership play to achieve success of the development?
- Are public investments needed for the area's built-environment such as streetscapes, bike lanes, etc.?
- How can we best involve members of the existing community in the study so that they have a vested interest in the outcome?

Summary of the Panel's Major Recommendations

Although this report provides many recommendations, the key ones have been grouped into four categories: neighborhood and quality of life, development and redevelopment, housing stabilization, and planning

and public process. The panel believes that none of the recommendations in these categories can be implemented without progress on those in other categories and that the recommendations should be applied in conjunction with one another for best use and success.

The categories and recommendations in each follow.

Neighborhoods and Quality of Life

- Enhance linkages and activate North Charleston's open spaces to support healthy lifestyles and social interactions.
- Create job training opportunities, and support minority and small business programs.
- Research and implement creative short-term solutions for providing fresh groceries to the study area. As the area densifies and demand grows, a grocery store might be attracted to the study area down the line. In the interim, immediate action should be taken to set up a farmer's market or other type of temporary grocery space.
- The intersection at the study area has the most reported crashes in Charleston County. Safe mobility should be a main priority for the city, council, and Department of Transportation for streets within the study area. Steps to achieving this goal include these:
 - Support the BRT route along Rivers Avenue.
 - Widen sidewalks, and ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

- Improve streetscaping and incorporate green infrastructure.
- Make roadways safer by
 - Reducing the number of lanes on major roads
 - Adding landscaped medians
 - Creating protected bicycle lanes
 - Adding defined crosswalks

Development and Redevelopment

- Demolish the Naval Hospital, and ready the site for equitable mixed-use redevelopment.
- Develop a refined land use and master plan for the county-owned properties in PA-3 and PA-4:
 - PA-3: Develop into a retail depot that brings needed resources into the area.
 - PA-4: Develop a new neighborhood center that includes the planned Transit Center, structured parking, mixed-income housing, open space, and a temporary grocery use.
- Group community resources and services on three sites: the Civic Center, the Community Resource Hub, and a Community Park.
- Focus on supporting historic and emerging commercial corridors to function as neighborhood-scale commercial centers. Approaches similar to those on Montague Avenue, Reynolds Avenue, McMillan Avenue, and Stromboli Avenue could be further developed to better serve North Charleston’s southern neighborhoods.

Housing Stabilization

- Support affordable housing development and preservation through the following actions:
 - Modify the single-family zoning restrictions.
 - Implement density bonuses.
 - Support accessory dwelling units.
 - Create a Housing Trust Fund.
- Establish a Department of Housing and Community Development to administer and manage housing programs and strategic partnerships.
- Reduce displacement and evictions of homeowners and renters by educating residents about existing resources and by creating new programs that further address such issues.

Planning and Public Process

- Make robust community engagement a top priority for current and future redevelopment projects with the goal of creating an equitable outcome that addresses the needs of existing residents and has a community buy-in.
- Develop an equitable, accessible, and consistent community engagement strategy in partnership with community leaders. Aspects of this plan should include these:
 - Encourage meaningful engagement throughout the development process from the planning, design, execution, and construction phases.
 - Host engagement opportunities in the neighborhoods at times and in spaces that are welcoming and accessible for local residents.
 - Advertise opportunities in community spaces, and use alternative methods of distribution such as during church announcements, culturally relevant radio channels, and education providers (schools, after-school programs).
 - Make engagement fun and interactive so community members actively participate and remain interested throughout the development process.
- Create a new Districtwide Zoning Overlay that maximizes the benefit of BRT and fosters focused economic growth.
- Seek out public/private partnerships for redevelopment of the Naval Hospital site.
 - Clarity and transparency are key to attracting sophisticated development partners and can maximize certainty and value.
 - Municipalities should pursue ground leases when possible.
 - The city and county must grow their capacity to execute complex transactions with sophisticated developers to maximize benefits and project success.
- North Charleston, Charleston County, and the Coastal Conservation League should formalize their collaboration with regularly scheduled meetings that accomplish these tasks:
 - Coordinate and project manage ongoing initiatives.
 - Address stakeholder needs.
 - Identify resources to enhance projects.
 - Advocate for the community and region.
 - Support transparency and interagency communication.



LARS PLOUGHMAN

Vision

RESEARCH, SITE VISITS, AND COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS conducted throughout the panel process highlighted the needs, challenges, and opportunities of the study area. The panel heard about desired uses, plans for specific sites, and plans for broader regional connectivity. What seemed to be missing was a shared vision for the “Neck” area.

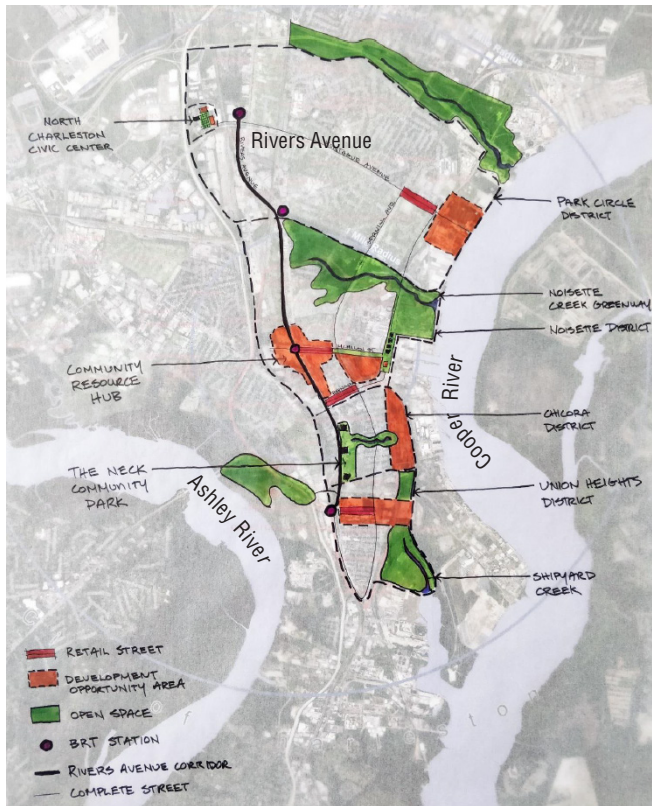
As referenced in this report, the Neck area is defined geographically by Cooper River to the east, Filbin Creek to the north, Interstate 26 to the west, and the viaduct corridors to the south. Rivers Avenue was identified as a major north–south corridor connecting North Charleston and the rest of the county to the city of Charleston.

The Neck

The Neck landscape has evolved over time and is a historic marker of the area’s cultural identity. After the Cooper River wetlands were converted to rice plantations using slave labor, Olmsted’s Chicora Park Plan re-envisioned the plantations within the larger Noisette Creek ecology and sought to create a landscape framework with homes situated around its edges. Following this plan, the Navy Yard development brought industrial uses to the Cooper River waterfront. Later, the Park Circle neighborhood embraced Ebenezer Howard’s garden city movement. Each of those land use and design decisions were informed by the existing environment and created a strong connection to the lowcountry landscape.

Not all neighborhoods, however, enjoy such strong connections to natural and civic resources. The existing neighborhoods at the southern end of North Charleston lack access to high-quality open space, shops, basic amenities, and community centers, and they offer poor mobility choices for people walking, biking, or using mobility devices.

The aim of the vision for the Neck is to continue to create connections that are distinctive to the character of North Charleston and are equitably invested throughout the corridor. Although Rivers Avenue and other major transit links form a strong north–south connection through the Neck, the corridor’s community character and community



The term “the Neck” was used in reference to land bounded by the Ashley and Cooper rivers as early as the 1670s, and since then has developed many evolving definitions. This report aligns with the definition of the Neck presented in the “Charleston Neck Area Partnership for Prosperity Master Plan.”

gathering hubs appear to be defined by natural and developed corridors running east and west.

As developers built on the existing assets of the landscape, the Neck began to reveal distinct districts that make up the area south of Park Circle, including the Noisette Creek District, Chicora Cherokee District, and Union Heights District. Each district has the potential for enhanced access to existing open space, connects to pathways and streets for cyclists and pedestrians, and forms a distinct community gathering opportunity. Those districts are described further in detail in the Districts section of this report.

Community Character

A community’s character can be thoughtfully curated, can have the character assigned to it by others, or both. For example, Charleston is well known for its antebellum architecture, its palmetto trees, and its location at the convergence of the Ashley and Cooper Rivers. This ambiance is promoted by visitors who flock to the area to enjoy the bustling tourism industry, but the character

is also strengthened through the city’s long-standing commitment to local land use and preservation policies, as well as through the unified use of imagery such as the palmetto tree on all branded items. North Charleston should play an active role in defining its own identity, brand, and unique community character.

North Charleston’s identity is rooted in its role as an industrial hub that served Charleston and the U.S. Navy. Military installations can serve as economic engines for state and local economies and can generate thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic activity and tax revenue. However, as with other communities with military bases identified for closure during the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, North Charleston and the neighborhoods nearest to the base were faced with challenges resulting from the loss of a major economic driver. Those setbacks were compounded by the fact that North Charleston was a young community at the time of the closure. Having been incorporated for fewer than 20 years at the beginning of the BRAC discussion, North Charleston did not have time to establish a robust community identity outside of the base.

Although the community has successfully attracted more jobs than it lost when the base closed, the workforce demand is not aligned with the skill sets of the workforce supply in the historic neighborhoods surrounding the base. Long-standing commercial hubs are similarly struggling to attract the level of reinvestment that has made Montague Avenue a thriving destination. Specifically, Reynolds Avenue, one of the city’s historic commercial corridors, began to decline when residents moved out of the area, and it remains underused as surrounding neighborhoods continue to struggle with significant disinvestment.

New development in historic commercial centers presents an opportunity to cultivate North Charleston’s character on a large scale. Montague Avenue, McMillan Avenue, Reynolds Avenue, and Stromboli Avenue can help to reinforce the economic and social capital of the centers while creating a unified sense of place throughout the Neck. In addition, current development plans and capital improvement projects have identified the potential for the Rivers Avenue and McMillan Avenue intersection—currently anchored by the Naval Hospital—to serve as a new Community Resource Hub.

To ensure that future development occurs in a manner that establishes and celebrates North Charleston’s unique community character, the Neck area requires a cohesive

vision. This vision should properly synthesize community features and create a public realm that responds to the growing need for the study area to serve as the new hub.

To this end during the panel week, the Neck area was studied so the panel could understand the larger contextual framework and determine how to create a cohesive vision, to coalesce the community's ideas, and to identify capital improvement projects, as well as additional development opportunity zones.

Community Identity

A community's identity is defined by the sum of its many characteristics. For the Neck, this identity is characterized by its tight-knit neighborhoods, diverse cultural heritage, and physical landscape. The established neighborhoods have distinct histories, and many have cultivated and maintained their unique identities. For example, Park Circle has a strong identity reinforced by its physical design and civic functions. It is framed by well-defined boundaries and is home to a number of community resources including recreational fields, several schools, and programmed open space.

As the panel's analysis moved south through the city, the identity of the neighborhoods became less clearly defined.

Though long-term residents may identify with the history and past character of the neighborhoods in the study area, the high residential turnover and dramatic drop in home ownership is resulting in many neighborhoods quickly losing their defined boundaries and in a subsequent loss in civic engagement. This loss further highlights the importance of reinforcing neighborhood character and affordability while it ensures that the area needs to be served with resources, greenspaces, and community hubs that are equivalent to neighborhoods in the more affluent areas of the community. It is recommended that a cultural plan be developed to identify opportunities that will preserve the culture and history of the existing neighborhoods and residents.

The panel's recommendations are in no way an attempt to rebrand, gentrify, or reimagine the existing neighborhoods in the study area. Rather, they encourage the community to envision equitable access and opportunities in the neighborhoods through a modified lens that highlights and celebrates each neighborhood's unique identity. That lens will place primacy on improving the quality of life for existing residents and will ensure that North Charleston remains a place that is affordable and attractive to all.

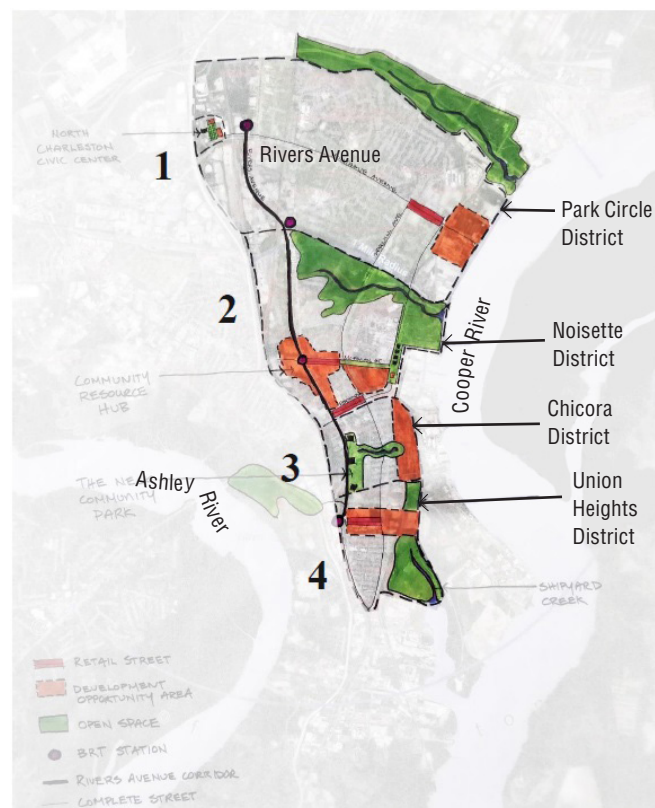
Districts

For the purposes of the panel's work, the Neck area encompasses the neighborhoods south of Park Circle (Area 1), which is anchored by the study area as the North Charleston Community Resource Hub and surrounded by opportunity sites. Looked at this way, three subareas or districts are then defined by east–west physical boundaries of commercial corridors and waterways.

The Noisette Creek District—includes the study area at its core. It offers access to Noisette Creek, which boasts pedestrian and recreational amenities, as well as access to the main development areas located at the corner of Rivers Avenue and McMillan Avenue and east of Spruill on the south.

The Chicora-Cherokee District—features a creek reimagined as a walkable park space that is connected to a new community center, and the district could have a neighborhood expansion to the state-owned land east of the railway.

The Union Heights District—can be connected to the larger lowcountry landscape by improving connections both east and west to wetland areas, plus a future mixed-use rezoning and redevelopment project along Stromboli Avenue.



Underperforming commercial corridors can be transformed into vibrant, mixed-use centers that transmit positive health and social benefits onto residents and visitors. Land use and transportation policies and decisions that encourage walkability, communal gathering, and connectivity are characteristic of thriving districts.

Neighborhood Retail Streets

Montague Avenue in Park Circle provides an excellent example of a successful neighborhood-scale retail street that offers basic neighborhood amenities and a social gathering place.

Three other primary retail streets similar to Montague Avenue are identified in the Neck: McMillan Avenue, Reynolds Avenue, and Stromboli Avenue. All are east-west streets that connect to main arterials and provide slower traffic and neighborhood-scale development for walkable retail environments.

- McMillan Avenue stretches east from Meeting Street Road to Hobson Avenue on the former Navy Yard, and it is envisioned to feature larger-scale retail that offers amenities at the city level. As it continues east beyond Spruill Avenue, it should connect to the Power House Building with a significant public boulevard walk. The retail along McMillan will provide an active streetscape in the middle of the North Charleston Community Resource Hub.
- Reynolds Avenue is envisioned as a small-scale neighborhood retail street that provides community amenities to the adjacent neighborhoods. Reynolds

Avenue should be connected on the east side to Hobson Avenue to improve connections to the development along Hobson Avenue to the north and to reestablish the historic function of the area. (Note: The panel heard that there may be a plan to close this street, thereby limiting access to pedestrian traffic only. The panel strongly recommends the city consider alternative methods of enhancing public amenity while allowing continuation of limited vehicular access. Georgia Avenue in downtown Indianapolis is a good example of a street redevelopment that allows slow through-traffic while the street maintains the ability to be shut down easily for events.)

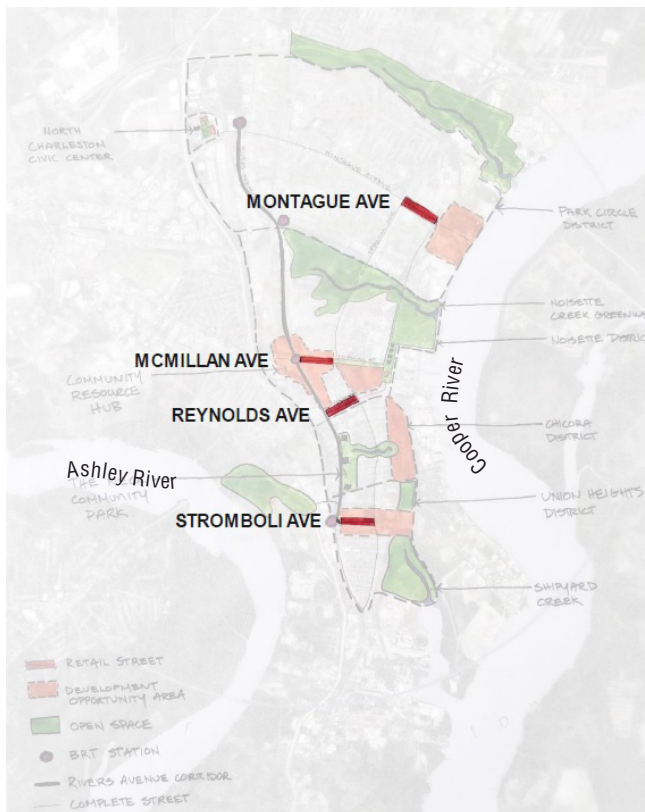
- Stromboli Avenue is envisioned as a small-scale light industrial, maker, and retail street that provides community amenities to the proposed development area stretching east–west.

Development Opportunity Areas

In addition to parcels discussed and highlighted in the panel’s scope, the panel identified the following as development opportunities:

- The proposed location of the Civic Center at the campus, which is currently defined by the Verizon Building and City Hall, positions it centrally in the county and within easy access to and from multiple regional highways. As a result of this accessibility, the panel believes this site has potential to serve as a major civic center. With City Hall anchoring this prospective center, the Verizon Building could be repurposed for a variety of city and county functions. It is the panel’s understanding that the building’s layout and security features may be well aligned to meet the needs of the South Carolina Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services center, which is looking for a new location. More on this recommendation can be found in the Equitable Development section of this report under Neighborhood Services.
- The panel understands that the existing Regal Cinemas’ Building is envisioned for future multifamily residential use. The existing theater parking lot can be designed as a flexible civic space, which will allow for closing off parking for major civic events and allow it to serve as a public plaza.
- Higher density redevelopment located at the mouth of Noisette Creek can provide housing along the Cooper River, with access to open space and will provide further economic stimulus for Montague Avenue in Park Circle.

PAUL PETERS/ULI



Neighborhood-serving retail enhances livability by creating jobs and entertainment within walking distance of existing residential enclaves.

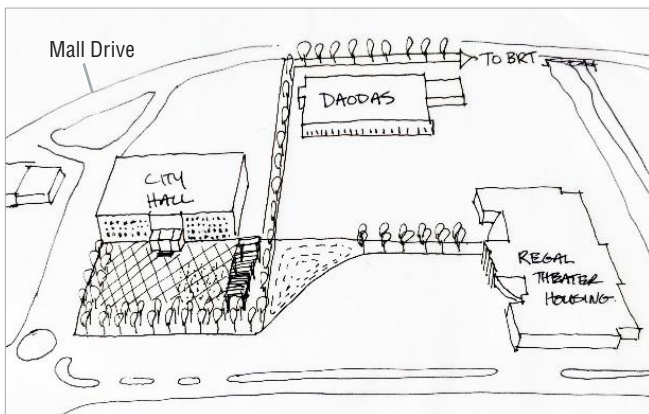
- The development site at McMillan Avenue and Rivers Avenue can be extended to the east to include the southern portion of McMillan Avenue. This extension will create a continuous neighborhood connection from Rivers Avenue to the waterfront.
- A multimodal container facility is currently planned for the vacant parcel of land west of Hobson Avenue in the Chicora neighborhood. This land use is incompatible with the long-term development goals of the neighborhood. It will create a barrier between the study area and the waterfront redevelopment area, will limit future economic real estate development in the region, and will have adverse effects on the quality of life in the neighborhood. Instead, it is recommended that this parcel be used for a mixed-use redevelopment connected to the Neck Community Park via the Chicora greenway.
- Along Stromboli Avenue, a mix of industrial and vacant city-owned land is recommended for rezoning and redevelopment to provide mixed-use development extending from Carner Avenue east to the rail tracks and to include the container-holding yard at the head of Shipyard Creek. This development will create a connection to the waterfront and will provide community amenities for the immediate neighborhood.



Riverfront Park accommodates multiple recreational activities and access to the Cooper River. The park serves as a communal gathering place for residents of North Charleston.

- The Noiset Creek Greenway provides high-quality habitat, stormwater infrastructure, and quality access to open space. The addition of a boardwalk is recommended to provide access from Noiset District neighborhoods to the greenway.
- East of Spruill Street on McMillan Avenue, a green pedestrian corridor creates a connection from the proposed Community Resource Hub at Rivers Avenue to the historical Power House Building. A proposed reuse of the warehouses connecting the Power House to the Riverfront Park is proposed as Noiset Mall, which includes a beautified pedestrian connection between Riverfront Park at the Power House.
- The Neck Community Park, which is located at the heart of the North Charleston’s southern reach, builds on two schools and a firehouse to provide multi-use park and recreational amenities for all ages. The park can be connected to neighborhoods by improving an existing waterway currently controlled by the city.
- Two connections are created to link the Union Heights District to Ashley River and Cooper River landscapes. Shipyard Creek Road currently connects the neighborhood to the Shipyard Creek wetlands. This area is envisioned to be a naturalized open space providing nearby residents with access to boardwalks and trails within the wetland ecology. On the west side, an existing road provides access to the Ashley River wetland landscape. Both roads should provide pedestrian and cyclist access via greenways into the wetland landscapes from the neighborhood.

PAUL PETERS/ULI



The Civic Center would create a destination by co-locating a dynamic mix of uses including City Hall, a public plaza, county services, and residential housing.

Park and Open Space

Before the military presence, a large portion of the area was originally envisioned as a park to serve the residents of Charleston. The panel encourages the community to restore this vision and embrace North Charleston’s lowcountry landscape and to highlight its unique features by connecting neighborhoods to greenspaces and waterways when possible.

- It is important that the city remain committed to ensuring that all residents have access to quality greenspace and recreational opportunities. According to the National Recreation and Park Association, the typical park and recreation agency offers one park for every 2,181 residents served, with 10.1 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, but this level of services can change in different states and jurisdictions. Benchmark data should be collected during the Comprehensive Plan update to best identify the balance of recreational land use throughout North Charleston’s southern neighborhoods.

A significant portion of the land and acreage described earlier either is controlled by public entities or is easily obtainable, and the panel encourages the city to invest in opportunities to replicate the success of Park Circle and the planned Noisette Creek improvements to other neighborhoods and waterways throughout the Neck, from “River to River.”

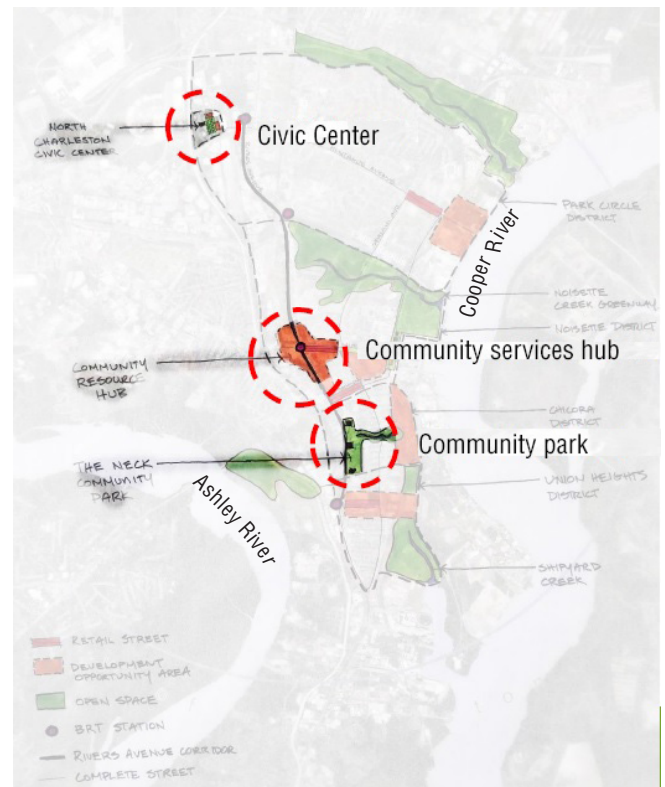
Downtown North Charleston

North Charleston’s geography offers an abundance of opportunities for natural or planned community gathering places. Similarly, downtowns can occur organically or can be intentionally planned and designed to serve the community. Downtown describes the commercial, cultural, and geographic heart of a city. Those districts are where the community comes together—to shop, to celebrate, and to access services.

When community members were asked what they consider “Downtown North Charleston,” the panel received multiple answers, including the shopping strip along Ashley Phosphate Road, the City Hall office center, and the Riverfront Park area. The revitalized commercial area along Montague Avenue at Park Circle was frequently identified. This identification was reinforced by that area’s dense cluster of commercial uses, outdoor cafe seating, streetscape improvements, farmers market, and events.

Despite those areas serving as gathering and civic centers of the community in and around the study area, “Downtown” is still frequently used by locals to refer to Charleston’s downtown core. North Charleston would benefit from identification and clear branding of its community’s gathering spaces and civic hubs with alternative labels that differentiate it from its southern neighbor. The panel sees an opportunity to focus on the following three levels of service based on their potential reach and target population to be served:

- Civic Center—Located at the political center of the county and adjacent to the current City Hall, the Civic Center would combine community health services, City Hall, and a new multifamily residential housing development, which would encompass the entire Regal theater site. A civic plaza should also be created for countywide events. See the Neighborhood Services section of this report for more details about the Civic Center.
- Community Resource Hub—The new mixed-use hub will be created through redevelopment of the study area at Rivers Avenue and McMillan Avenue. It will be supported by a commercial and residential development, a transit center, and public amenities.
- Community Park—Building on the existing open space located in the Chicora neighborhood, the community park coalesces the two schools and the fire station.



PAUL PETERS/ULI

Community gathering places serve residents, the city of North Charleston, and the broader Charleston community with centrally located recreational assets, health and wellness providers, and civic services.

Principles for Perseverance, Progress, and Prosperity

The study area is underserved, has suffered from the loss of a major economic driver, and lacks public investment at both a financial and policy level. Moving forward, dedicated

attention and resources are necessary for enhancing the area while maintaining affordability. This approach should be a priority for every resident, businessowner, and governing body in Charleston County, because the study area serves as a primary gateway into Charleston and other communities and is centrally located in North Charleston.

With a semicentennial anniversary quickly approaching in 2022, the panel recommends that North Charleston strive to unite the neighborhoods in and around the study area in a shared vision and community identity by adhering to the following principles:

- **Shape a Shared Identity:** Many distinct cultures and communities can be celebrated within Charleston County. North Charleston is unique and should embrace its own identity; it does not have to look like downtown Charleston.
- **Create Equitable Communities:** Make a significant and recognizable investment that can be enjoyed by the current residents, visitors, growing business community, and future residents.
- **Celebrate Small Wins:** Make a commitment to engage the community during the planning processes and to celebrate successes.

Accessibility, Connectivity, and Opportunity

The distinctive neighborhood structure that defines North Charleston provides a framework for creating a strong identity and cohesive vision for the community. Successful cohesion, however, relies on the creation of welcoming community destinations—places where all neighborhoods can come together to celebrate the unique shared qualities of this community. Those qualities should be reinforced with strong linkages that interconnect both neighborhoods and community destinations.

Although the planned BRT will enable new regional and community facilities, the panel believes that local streets and greenways are fundamental to support local connectivity. The public realm within streets and the provision of safe, attractive, and comfortable sidewalks, crossings, and trails are fundamental to individual and social health. The public realm is the outward-facing aspect of neighborhoods and, in addition to their functional roles, reflect the values and pride of neighborhoods. The following sections describe the panel's initial responses to the existing public realm within the study area; they also recommend improvements that reflect the panel's view of current best practice.

Access and Connectivity: Creating a Community Destination

One of the questions asked of the panel related to what improvements in the study area would enhance and support both the BRT goals and Charleston County's effort to establish a community service hub at the site. The panel believes that community service hubs, together with community-based retail and services, will offer significant value and identity and, when clustered within proximity to transit, are invaluable places for connecting people. The hubs would align well with the goals of both entities.

Although the proposed Civic Center adjacent to City Hall offers facilities for county residents both within and outside North Charleston, the Community Resource Hub envisioned within the study area is intended to serve as a destination and service area for residents of the city. The panel sees an opportunity within this clustering of uses to create places for residents to meet, learn, share, and collectively celebrate the strengths and creativity of their shared community. The elements and land use components of the hub are described in more detail in the Land Use section of this report.

Co-op Plaza, Brattleboro, Vermont

The infill redevelopment Co-op Plaza in Brattleboro, Vermont, transformed a former dry cleaning facility into a mixed-use building that now serves as a community connector. The four-story building houses a community co-op grocery store (with a café and bakery), administrative offices, 24 affordable apartments, and commercial spaces for local vendors. The site, which went through a thorough community design process, has a green roof, additional parking, pedestrian walkways, a pocket park, and outdoor seating. The redevelopment addressed the environment mitigation from the dry cleaner and used green-building and energy efficiency techniques.

Winner of an American Institute of Architects/U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2015 Secretary Award and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Award for Smart Growth Achievement, the \$12 million project was funded through a private/public partnership with the Brattleboro Food Co-op and Windham & Windsor Housing Trust. To learn more, visit www.architectmagazine.com/project-gallery/co-op-plaza-redevelopment_c.



Mobility

ACCESSIBLE AND HUMAN-SCALED MOBILITY INFRASTRUCTURE is paramount to creating the vibrant and equitable community spaces and neighborhoods that North Charleston residents need and demand. The panel recommends both integrating best practices for enhanced mobility through street improvements and re-visioning of the city grid in the area near the study site.

Streets

Throughout history, streets have evolved from being places for a diverse range of movement into being car dominated. As streets have become wider and less about people, they have also lost their important social function. This change has made walking, using a wheelchair or other mobility device, and biking more difficult and unsafe. Recent years, however, have seen more balance coming back to streets with better sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure; with integration of more planting for shade, shelter, and environmental comfort; and with integration of stormwater

quality and management strategies. The completed street improvements being proposed for Spruill Avenue are an example of such improvements.

Currently, the streets in North Charleston are poorly maintained. The sidewalks are discontinuous and not designed according to ADA, which make them unusable to people who have no or low vision and to people using wheelchairs. The following section will describe in more detail the existing street and transit connectivity, as well as proposed enhancements that will help enable a more successful public realm environment.

Building on City and Regional Transportation Planning Efforts

Three major transportation planning efforts have a strong potential to work in tandem with the identified planning areas by using thorough and committed planning. The Berkeley–Charleston–Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG) is currently evaluating the BRT on Rivers Avenue. North Charleston has plans to transform Spruill Avenue into a complete street that creates a safe and inviting environment for pedestrians and vehicles, as well as converting Reynolds Avenue into a more walkable, activated public sphere. All three projects are undergoing planning and design processes that include community outreach. They address critical needs for safe and reliable transportation for residents in North Charleston as well as for the region.

BRT on Rivers Avenue. BRT is an important tool for providing safe, reliable, handicap-accessible, and affordable public transportation. The BCDCOG is currently planning a 23-mile route that would connect Summerville to downtown Charleston via North Charleston. The portion through North Charleston runs along Rivers Avenue with a proposed stop at the intersection of McMillan and Rivers. Currently, according to existing bus ridership, BCDCOG projects that most of the users of the BRT will be residents of North Charleston. Thoughtful development of the planning area parcels not only helps with the success of the BRT line but also can elevate North Charleston as a place to be versus a place that people merely pass through.

The panel recommends the following five principles for considerations to ensure that development of the parcels is equitable and accessible:

- **Safe Access:** The transit stop at Rivers and McMillan should have safe access for people to walk, bike, or use a wheelchair and other mobility devices as they come from existing neighborhoods; the stop should also include any new developments on the planning area parcels.
- **Accessible Location and Iconic Design:** The city should continue to work with BCDCOG to determine the ideal location for the stops, as well as continue to watch for opportunities to incorporate a unique and iconic design that visually connects with the future land uses.
- **Complete Streets:** As the design moves forward, BCDCOG should consider other streetscape elements such as protected bicycle facilities, sidewalks, green infrastructure, and lighting to ensure that Rivers Avenue is a grand

boulevard and not just a street with a nice bus. The existing bicycle facility and sidewalks on Rivers Avenue are insufficient for all users.

- **Economic Development:** Design and station location should consider access to economic opportunity (job centers in North Charleston and Charleston), education (Trident Tech), health facilities (Trident Hospital and potential future county facilities), and resources for North Charleston residents.
- **Density:** The density of population on the planning area sites should promote ridership to enhance the success of the transit investments.

Street Redesign for Spruill Avenue and Reynolds.

The concept of complete streets is designed to allow safe travel for people walking, biking, using a wheelchair or other mobility device, driving, and making deliveries. It does not mean all users are able to go as fast as they would like. Rather, complete streets are places where people want to live, work, shop, and recharge.

Through the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) program, the city expressed a desire to redesign Spruill Avenue, which is a focal point for attracting businesses. The city has plans to reduce the number of lanes and add infrastructure to make it safer for biking, walking, and using a wheelchair or other mobility device. In addition, the city is considering converting Reynolds Avenue into a pedestrian-only street to spur new businesses in the corridor.

A transformed Spruill Avenue and Reynolds Avenue would bookend existing neighborhoods and the planning areas. To that end, the panel supports the city's efforts to redesign the streets with the following considerations:

- **Green infrastructure:** Incorporate green infrastructure elements such as street trees, rain gardens, and bioswales to assist with managing stormwater during rain events.
- **Bike and pedestrian connections:** Consider how an infrastructure for people walking and biking along Spruill Avenue connects with streets that serve neighborhoods and other regional connections.
- **Prioritization of pedestrians:** Consider a pedestrian-priority street for Reynolds Avenue versus a pedestrian-only street. It would allow Reynolds to still be used by cars, but they would have to drive only 5 mph and yield to people walking or biking.

Creating Complete and Green Streets

The study area—specifically Rivers between McMillan and Reynolds—has the highest number of crashes and traffic-related fatalities in the county. The number of lanes, lane widths, distance between traffic signals, speed limits, and lack of crosswalks all contribute to unsafe conditions for people. Complete streets will more than accommodate all users of the roadway. Such streets also are about prioritizing people over vehicles. From the community and stakeholder interviews, the panel heard that people want safe places to walk and bike in North Charleston, especially because some residents do not have access to a car.

The Case for Complete Streets: Charlotte, North Carolina

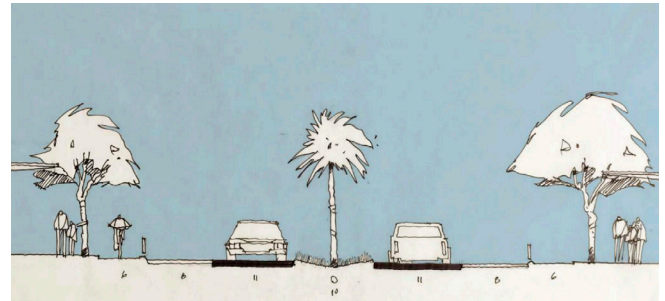
Since winning the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Award for Smart Growth Policies and Regulation in 2009, Charlotte has been a leader in adapting automobile-oriented streets to serve as places where bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, and motorists feel safe. Aesthetic landscaped medians not only serve as hardscape design elements, but also double as stormwater management tools, helping remove pollutants and reduce runoff.

Implementing complete streets and green streets considerations increases safety, enhances mobility, and, as a result, has a positive economic impact on the community. For other examples of road-diet strategies, see Smart Growth America's inventory of complete streets policies at <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/complete-and-green-streets>.



JAMES WILLAMOR

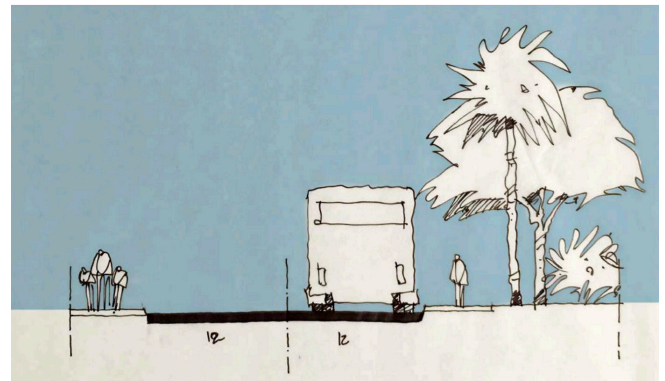
The panel recommends that North Charleston and the county continue to work with BCDCOG and other partners on the design of Rivers Avenue. The panel evaluated McMillan Avenue, Dorchester Road, and Cosgrove Avenue for potential redesign. For each street, the panel noted existing conditions such as lane widths, number of lanes, traffic volumes, and physical infrastructure.



VERONICA DAVIS AND ANDREW IRVINE/ULI

The proposed redesign for McMillan Avenue shrinks the road width and changes it to two lanes with an additional bike lane. New sidewalks and stormwater infrastructures are also proposed.

McMillan Avenue. McMillan Avenue will function as a local neighborhood connector extending between Meeting Street Road and Noisette Boulevard. The street section will include boulevard planting and will function as a commercial main street in the section between Rivers Avenue and Spruill Avenue. The proposed redesign assumes that the transit center is located off Rivers Avenue.



VERONICA DAVIS AND ANDREW IRVINE/ULI

The proposed redesign for Dorchester Road slightly shrinks the road width and changes it to two lanes. New sidewalks and stormwater infrastructures are also proposed.

Dorchester Road. Dorchester Road is an important east–west connector linking the neighborhoods to the west; the aquatic center, which is in development; and the study area. The street is an important local bus connector and will extend into the site (PA-4) and connect into the transit center proposed to be located between Rivers Avenue and Spruill Avenue.

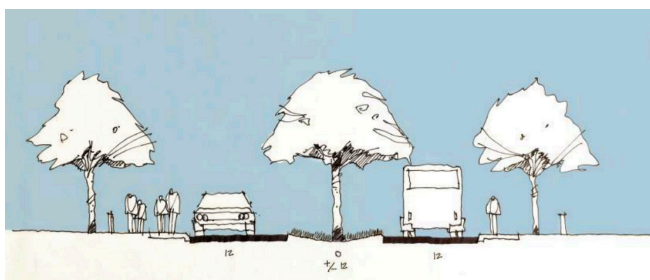
McMillan Avenue

	Existing conditions	Proposed redesign
Lane width (estimate)	12–13 feet	11 feet
Number of lanes	Generally 4, but 5 in some locations	2
Traffic volume (SCDOT 2017)	6,300 vehicles per day	—
Bicycle infrastructure	None	Curbside protected bike lanes on each side of the road
Sidewalk infrastructure	Discontinuous and not ADA-compliant	Minimum 12-foot amenity zone with tree lawn and sidewalk, including widened sidewalk to accommodate outdoor dining and vending between Rivers Avenue and Spruill Avenue
Stormwater infrastructure	No trees and no apparent drains for stormwater	A 10-foot-wide median with tree planting plus integrated stormwater management and water quality enhancements

Dorchester Road

	Existing conditions	Proposed redesign
Lane width (estimate)	12–13 feet	12 feet
Number of lanes	4. There seem to be two travel lanes and parking on both sides.	2 with a parallel parking lane on northern side of street to the west of the transit center
Traffic volume (SCDOT 2017)	6,800 vehicles per day	—
Bicycle infrastructure	None	None
Sidewalk infrastructure	Continuous, but not ADA-compliant in some locations	Attached sidewalk to match existing walkway
Stormwater infrastructure	No trees and no apparent drains for stormwater	Incorporation of stormwater management and water quality enhancements within planted buffer to the east of Rivers Avenue

VERONICA DAVIS AND ANDREW IRVINE/JULI



The proposed redesign for Cosgrove Avenue slightly shrinks the road width and changes it to two lanes. New sidewalks and stormwater infrastructures are also proposed, including a landscaped center median.

Cosgrove Avenue. Cosgrove Avenue is an important regional connection linking the western part of the city with the port area. The panel heard that the city was proposing to make Cosgrove a truck route. Current traffic volumes are high to the west of Rivers Avenue but drop off significantly to the east and should function more as a local connector. The panel proposes that the recommended enhancements include adding a wide, tree-lined center median that can accommodate stormwater management and water-quality enhancements.

Cosgrove Avenue

	Existing conditions	Proposed redesign
Lane width (estimate)	12–13 feet	12 feet
Number of lanes	Generally 4, but 5 in some locations	2
Traffic volume (SCDOT 2017)	7,300 vehicles per day between Rivers and Spruill avenues	—
Bicycle infrastructure	None	Infrastructure that is proposed in CCPRC's People 2 Parks plan
Sidewalk infrastructure	Continuous but not ADA-compliant in some locations	Existing attached sidewalks on both sides of the street
Stormwater infrastructure	Presence of trees and drains for stormwater	Wide median to the east of Rivers Avenue

Public Transit Connections Today

Although BRT is a major discussion point for the region, bus routes already exist to serve the residents of North Charleston. During stakeholder interviews, the panel heard that the existing routes have headways between 30 minutes and one hour, which are inadequate to properly serve the needs of the local community. The panel also heard that the superstop at Rivers and Cosgrove Avenues is insufficient to accommodate the number of bus routes that serve that intersection. The stop currently has two bus bays and places for people to sit. However, many bus drivers have to drive an empty bus around the block because the bays are filled and the stop is at or exceeding its capacity. In addition, riders expressed concerns regarding nonriders loitering at the stop.

Today, CARTA has a need for eight bus bays to accommodate safe transfers between bus lines. Those bays would serve the future BRT but not depend on the BRT for its success. A bus transfer station can be co-located with other uses on PA-4 and can serve as a catalyst for development.

The panel heard that the county is recommending that the bus bays be located on McMillan. An ideal location would be on the southern portion of the site close to Rivers Avenue. In addition, the panel recommends that bus bays

be incorporated into a larger development to create a transit center destination with a variety of other uses. There are several options for how the transit center is oriented and for other uses that are co-located. Here are some examples:

- **Boulder Junction Transit Center (Colorado):** This center is a great example of an integrated transit hub that integrates an underground eight-bus bay with structured parking and affordable housing above. The parking structure serves a park-and-ride function, as well as the associated housing. The facility integrates an urban plaza and ground-level retail with access to the transit center.
- **Intermodal Transfer Station at Collier County Government Center (Florida):** This center has six bus bays, a passenger lobby and sitting areas, restrooms, and a six-level parking garage.
- **Transbay Transit Center (San Francisco, California):** This center serves as a hub for local and regional bus service and the future rail line. The unique feature is a 5.4-acre public park located on the roof.
- **Markthal (Amsterdam):** This center is an iconic hybrid building that combines apartments, a food and hardware market, and a transit center, thereby creating a dynamic public amenity in the city.

Salesforce Transit Center

In 2001, the Transbay Joint Powers Authority was formed to develop downtown San Francisco's Transbay Transit Center, which was approved by voters in 1999 and received \$55 million in federal funding. Construction began in 2013, and after a quick opening and then closing for repairs, the transit center reopened to the public on July 1, 2019. In 2017, Salesforce bought the naming rights for \$110 million and renamed it the Salesforce Transit Center.

Designed by Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects, the building cost \$2.2 billion. The transit center currently serves bus lines, with a planned expansion to include light rail service in the future. It includes retail, office, dining, and recreation uses as well as an elevated 5.4-acre park that spans four city blocks.



TIMOTHY VOLLMER/FLICKR

As officials in North Charleston work with the county to develop next generation transit options, they should also consider changes in parking demand. With cultural and generational shifts in driving habits and patterns that reduce the demand for permanent parking, some developments

include parking structures that can eventually be converted into offices or housing. Retrofit-ready parking structures and other innovative solutions should be considered as North Charleston aims to develop in a manner that considers the long-term viability of major projects.

Creating a Transportation Management District or Association

A transportation management district or transportation management association (TMD or TMA) is an entity that coordinates with landowners and businesses within a specific area about how to efficiently connect people to retail, housing, and employment on their properties. It can be funded by a special tax, business dues, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality grants from the Federal Highway Administration, or a combination of those sources. The TMA is responsible for developing a holistic plan for how people move in and out of the area, as well as working with businesses to implement programs that reduce the number of people driving alone, also known as transportation demand management.

The panel recommends that the TMA includes the five planning areas, as well as the employers and landowners east of Spruill Avenue, such as the Navy Yard.

Short-Term Role of the TMA. The panel's interviews revealed that the lack of parking and transportation options near the Navy Yard has limited employee recruitment and has challenged business growth. Large employers in the area have a demand for additional parking or alternative transit options to serve their employees and to better connect them with the broader community. In the short term, a TMA could be created to work with existing employers to provide such enhancements.

If the transit center with parking moves forward, the employers can create an instant market because they are able to provide parking for employees. To prevent an influx of people driving alone, the TMA would work with employers to implement vanpool and carpool programs with incentives such as gas cards and prime parking spaces.

Depending on the location of the transit center, a need may exist for increased CARTA bus service to shuttle people from the transit center to their place of employment.

Long-Term Role of the TMA. The planning area parcels will have a significant increase in development and density after the area is built out. Without a plan to manage the transportation demand, there is a risk of increased traffic.

As developments come online, the TMA would continue to work with landowners and businesses to create incentives for their employees and residents to use alternative transit options such as these:

- Vanpool or carpool: A vanpool or carpool program would be a continuation of the short-term role of the TMA.
- Transit benefits: The TMA would work with employers to provide transit benefits that cover all or some of their employee's transit costs.
- Bicycle incentives and facilities: Bicycle incentives can range from giving employees an annual or biennial stipend to purchase a bike or to support bicycle maintenance. Additional incentives may include adding the cost of a vehicle parking to the salary of bike commuters and providing bike-friendly facilities like secure bike storage and showers.
- Walking incentives: Incentivize walking by adding the cost of a parking subsidy to the salary of those who choose to walk to work regularly.
- Parking for local workforce in the transit center: This program would continue from the short-term role of the TMA with the goal of incentivizing carpooling and reducing the number of people driving alone.

Threats to Connectivity

According to the panel's review of planning and environmental documents, as well as interviews with residents, the state's proposed intermodal facility and rail line are a threat to the community, connectivity, quality of life, public health, emergency response, and success of the BRT. A stopped train would block streets that need to cross the rail line, thus limiting emergency response and operations of existing bus routes and future BRT.

The panel strongly recommends that the state abandon its plans and use the property in a way that benefits the economic development of North Charleston and the broader region.

Connection of the Grid and People

The goal of all transit decisions should be to create greater connectivity between people and their community. Key to this effort is connecting destinations with safe, pedestrian-friendly streets. Several neighborhoods within the study area already enjoy quiet, narrow, and shaded streets, particularly the Chicora-Cherokee neighborhood to the south of the study area. The panel believes that there is a great advantage to connecting the streets and sidewalks

Train Quiet Zone

The panel heard loud and clear the concerns about a new train line running through the study area and whether the North Charleston government would try to block its construction. However, if it does get built, several negotiating points can mitigate the negative effects of the train line for the neighborhood.

One point is implementing quiet zones. Both Muncie, Indiana, and Broward County, Florida, have put programs in place that minimize train noise by restricting the use of horns. For each jurisdiction, the cost of modifications to crossings and other infrastructure to implement quiet zones was roughly \$5 million. Such small programs could be points to address during negotiations with the railroad.

within the adjacent communities with the study area, but that connection should be sensitive to the scale and function of the local streets. Extending those small-scaled streets wherever practical will enhance connectivity while discouraging through traffic.



Current neighborhood streets do not promote walkability, but they do create a sense of intimacy and privacy for the communities they serve. When retrofitting the roads and sidewalks and reconnecting the neighborhood street grids, it is vital to make sure that the redesign continues to create a sense of privacy and safety.

Existing Neighborhoods That Are Disconnected

The existing neighborhoods are physically disconnected from the five planning areas. Looking at an aerial map, one can see little opportunity to create connections between the community and PA-1, PA-2, and PA-3. For all three, the

houses are laid out in a way that prevents the extension of existing roads into the planning areas or the creation of new access so people can walk. The panel does not recommend removing a house in an effort to create a grid.

PA-4 presents an opportunity to extend the existing street grid through the site in a way that respects the existing neighborhood and creates walkable, developable block sizes. Most of the existing roads between PA-4 and Cosgrove Avenue are narrow neighborhood streets with no sidewalks or on-street parking. South of Cosgrove Avenue, however, the neighborhood streets are a little wider. They have a sidewalk on the west side and space for on-street parking.

The panel heard concerns from local residents that—by extending the grid—the area may experience an increase in the amount of traffic on those streets because people will cut through to avoid other streets. To minimize cut-through traffic, the panel recommends that the blocks between PA-4 and Cosgrove be narrowed. They would remain two-way, but the narrower space would require people to slow down to navigate around each other. This change should free up existing road space to install a walking path. In addition, the streets should be repaved. South of Cosgrove, the panel recommends enhancing the existing condition by repaving the roadway and repairing the sidewalks. Repaving and construction of new sidewalks and walking path improvements in the neighborhoods should happen in the near term.

When new development comes online, the panel recommends maintaining the dense tree border between the new development and the existing neighborhood. With the narrow streets, this border will make the roadway feel private, while still extending the grid and enhancing pedestrian connectivity. The streets within the development would mimic the typical cross section of neighborhood streets south of Cosgrove.

Community Hub and Community Services Node

Enhanced connectivity and mobility will create strong links between people and the dynamic destinations in their communities. North Charleston has an opportunity to host two such community centers: a Community Services Node, which is clustered around the new library building, and a proposed Community Hub, which can be an arts, cultural, and recreation facility to serve as the heart of the North Charleston community. Together, the sites can serve as an active gathering place and a mixed-use hub that will bring life to what is conceived as the center of North Charleston.

Such a center can serve the 12 discrete neighborhoods within the city.

The panel believes that existing uses can be brought to the site early and in a way that creates more critical mass and energy, plus being a community-oriented companion for the catalytic transit center.

The redevelopment of the Cooper River Memorial Library on Rivers Avenue creates an opportunity to explore the strategic co-location of county facilities. By acquiring adjacent parcels, this expanded development could host the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and the Department of Social Services (DSS) facility, in addition to the new library. Moreover, co-locating the facilities around a common open space or plaza, which is further anchored by a mix of uses (i.e., retail, residential), presents an opportunity to create a common purpose destination and community node.

The panel members believe there is strength in such clusters because they can collectively function as vibrant social destinations where users can enjoy greater interaction and functional cohesion. Clustering such facilities around a common open space with shade, shelter, gathering spots, and play areas will also provide an attractive and functional amenity for residents and will support a collective, early, positive sense of community.



Land Use

THE CHARLESTON NAVAL HOSPITAL was built in 1973 to serve the nearby naval complex; the hospital closed in 2010 after the actual base closed in 1996. At 12 stories and with 400,000 square feet, the hospital is the tallest building in North Charleston and sits on a 22-acre lot that also has a three-story barracks building. The site was auctioned by the government in 2012 and was acquired by North Charleston. The panel recommends that the building be demolished to create greater opportunity for a new, catalytic development at the prominent corner of Rivers and McMillan avenues.

Since the sale, various reuses have been proposed and redevelopment opportunities pursued, but none was fully realized. The building has switched owners multiple times; Charleston County is the current owner after purchasing the building (following a lawsuit) for \$33 million in 2018. The challenge and stigma of past failed development efforts, paired with the disinvestment of surrounding neighborhoods, have made the hospital a symbol of contentious disappointment in a community looking to begin a new, more prosperous chapter.

The panel addressed two key problems: what to do with the hospital building and its surrounding 22 acres to create a redevelopment that functions as an asset for the current surrounding communities and how to absorb regional growth.

Hospital Building

After a series of owners, Charleston County now owns the Naval Hospital property in the wake of a \$33 million settlement. The panel was asked whether the county should

renovate and reuse the 400,000-square-foot, 12-story building or should raze it to create a development site. The panel analyzed the feasibility for both keeping and razing the building, with the end goal of what would be the most economical way to have the site ready to become an asset for the community.

Scenarios: Keeping the Building

The panel focused on two reuse scenarios: office, and office and residential. Those uses would best complement the adaptive use of the existing hospital building structure.

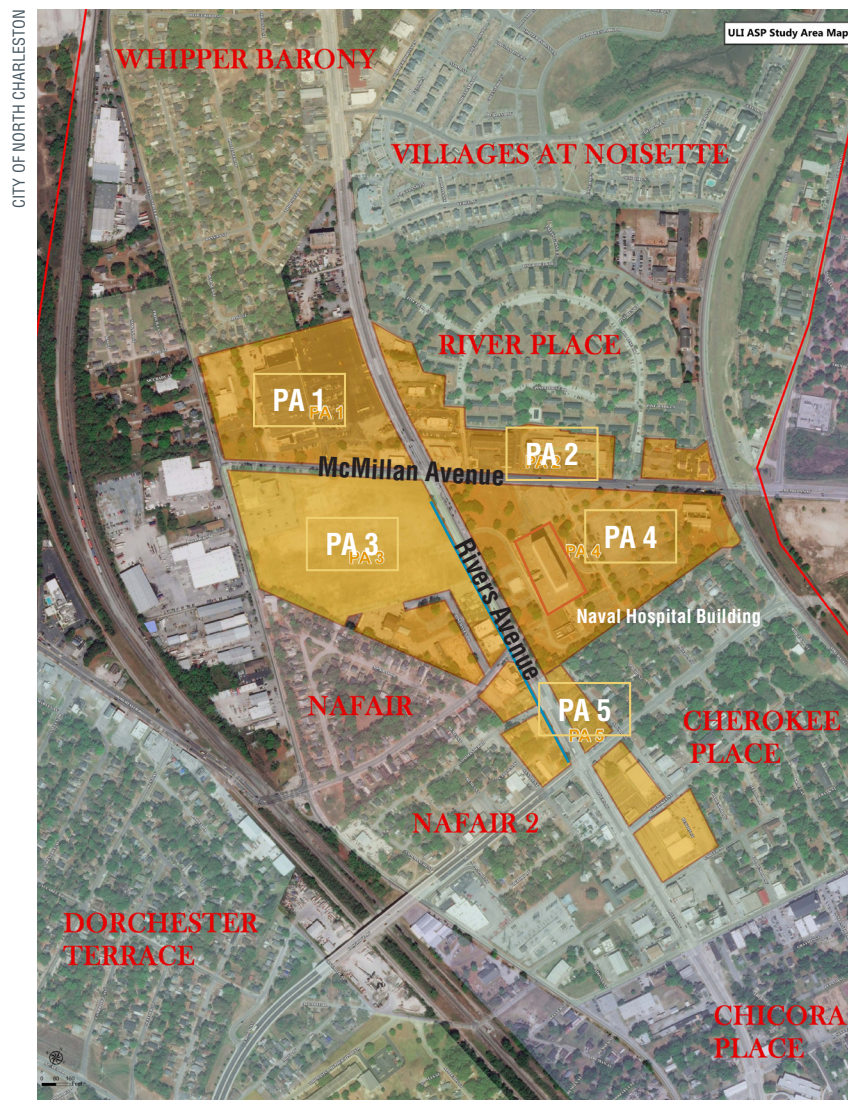
Office. The building could become a marketable class B office building at an estimated cost of \$92 million, including hard construction costs of \$66 million and associated land and the site development and soft costs of more than \$25 million. Given the expected return on office investments in the Charleston area, a typical developer would expect to earn at least 7.5 percent on total development cost. The rent required to generate such a return from 360,000 square feet of net leasable area is about \$31 per square foot for a full-service or gross lease. Comparable properties in this submarket garner no more the \$23 per square foot on a gross lease. Therefore, the necessary rent would not be attainable to justify renovating the building.

Office and Residential. The panel also conducted a more detailed comparison of cost to value while assuming both office and market-rate residential reuse. The value of the property in those uses, while applying a 6 percent capitalization rate to estimated net operating income, was about \$56 million. The total development cost that included tenant improvements was more than \$110 million. Thus, development cost would be almost two times the property value. In other words, a subsidy of more than \$54 million would be necessary to change this property into an office with market-rate residential reuse.

In addition to economic infeasibility, the building generates negative perceptions for many members of the community and has dated design features. The building lacks market appeal because current users prefer three- to five-story buildings with sizes in the range of 60,000 to 120,000 square feet. Furthermore, this area currently lacks the amenities needed to attract office users.

Recommendation: Razing the Building

As a result of the high cost of both the commercial and commercial-and-residential redevelopment scenarios and the



The panel study area is defined by five distinct planning areas. Each planning area represents a mix of city, county, and privately owned parcels that have been identified as opportunities for catalytic development. Planning areas 1–4 encompass the parcels along the River Avenue and McMillan Avenue intersection. Planning area 5 captures the River Avenue and Cosgrove Avenue intersection and key county services buildings.

lack of market appeal, the panel recommends that the county move forward with demolishing the building. The demolition cost estimate is \$6 million, including asbestos removal. After remediation, the site would be available for redevelopment.

Starting with a clean slate for redevelopment gives the county an opportunity to partner with the city and other organizations to figure out what the ideal uses for the site and the surrounding publicly owned parcels could be. The panel recommends that Charleston County consider a private/public partnership for the redevelopment, a strategy discussed in more detail later in this report.

Hospital Site (PA-4)

The panel believes that the 22-acre hospital site has the potential to become an impactful, long-term redevelopment where a vision of an equitable, mixed-income, mixed-use, transit-oriented development could be realized. The hospital site redevelopment, located across Rivers Avenue in PA-4, has the potential to make this site a new center of North Charleston and can focus on serving the city's southern neighborhoods.

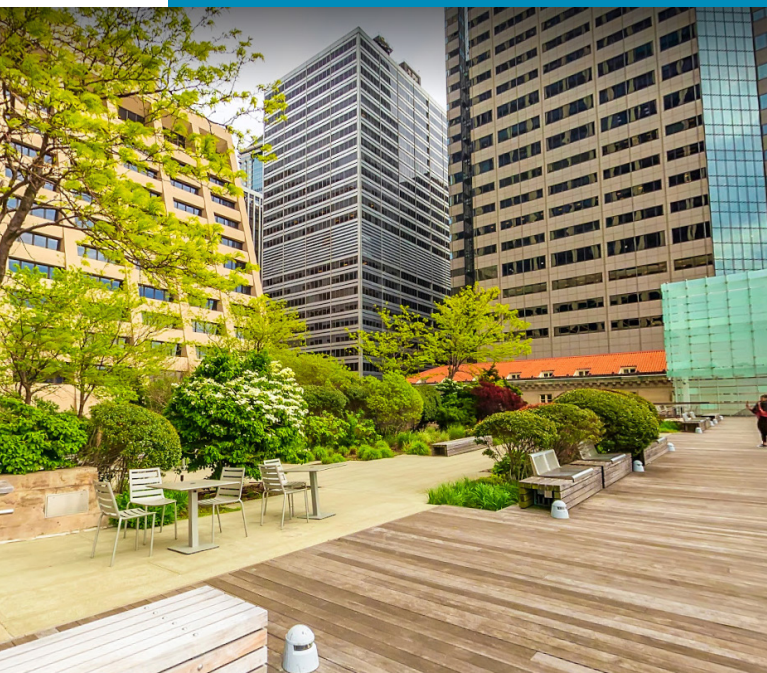
Uses

The current vision for this site is a community resources hub of sorts and a new transit center that incorporates BRT. The panel agrees with locating the transit center on this site, as well as adding citywide community services. Such uses—paired with complementary development—could spur critical mass and synergies to help this development succeed. The panel recommends adding anchors and land uses to increase vibrancy in the area and to begin planning for those developments immediately. Moreover, the panel recommends residential development with a density in the range of 45 to 50 units per acre, which would ensure effective use of the site. This density would provide the market for profitable food-oriented uses, services, and other urban amenities.

More generally, the panel recommends maximizing the long-term development potential of the land by including design elements that achieve proximity, visibility, and connectivity. This approach should feature a high-quality public realm that includes small parks and open space to add value to adjacent private uses. Arts, cultural, and recreation facilities could serve as the heart of the North Charleston community. Co-locating the facilities around a common open space or plaza presents an opportunity to create a community node and destination. There is strength in such clusters because they can function as vibrant social destinations where users can enjoy greater interaction and functional cohesion.

Clustering facilities around a common open space—with shade, shelter, gathering, and play opportunities—will provide an attractive and functional amenity for residents and will foster early use of the site. As further discussed in the equitable development section, the envisioned result would offer high-quality, higher-density, mixed-use development with special attention to mixed-income housing.

The panel stresses the importance of having uses on this site that are people oriented and having economic drivers that will attract other desired uses to the area. The panel believes that such uses, especially those that front the street, should be reserved for activities such as retail or open space that will draw people in. The panel strongly discourages auto-prioritized uses such as a gas stations or drive-throughs.



GOOGLE MAPS

Privately Owned Public Space: The Elevated Acre

From parks and plazas to arcades and atriums, public spaces provide a social, environmental, and economic benefit that often makes them iconic staples of downtown development. To counteract the high cost of such facilities, cities are teaming up with private developers to create privately owned public space (POPS). New York City has more than 550 POPS. In exchange for building spaces that are accessible to the public, developers are allowed to add extra floor area to their development.

One example of a POP is the Elevated Acre (55 Water Street) in New York's Financial District. This urban oasis is a one-acre park on the roof of a parking structure and is complete with trees, seating, and views of the Brooklyn Bridge. It is owned and maintained by the New Water Street Corporation.

Parking

Parking and current parking regulations in North Charleston are a major challenge to the proposed vision. Currently, given the parking minimums, more land area is required for vehicles than for the office employees who own the vehicles. Therefore, structured parking is necessary to move forward with commercial use. Given the substantial cost (usually more than \$20,000 per space), the number of constructed parking spaces should be minimized.

Three tactics have been successfully used elsewhere to tackle parking issues:

- Each residential unit should claim no more than one space. A parking maximum rather than a parking minimum is often used to accomplish this goal.
- Renters of market-rate units should pay parking fees in addition to monthly rent so that renters without cars are not subsidizing people with cars.
- Some percentage of parking required for residential and commercial uses could be shared. For example, in Charlotte, North Carolina, 50 percent of the spaces needed by adjacent residential and office uses is shared.

These parking tactics could be a part of a parking overlay district that, when paired with incentives, would encourage developers to adopt modern parking strategies. In addition, an appropriately sized parking structure could be financed through tax increment financing (TIF). A partnership could be considered with nearby landholders to put overflow parking on their land and to generate additional cash flow. Employees could get to their work site by using an employer-provided shuttle or city bus or by walking after sidewalks are retrofitted.

Parking Management Solutions

The search for a parking spot can contribute as much as 25 percent to congestion. The expense of constructing off-street parking further limits parking options. To better manage curb space, cities such as Los Angeles, Seattle, and Washington, D.C., use demand-based pricing on meters and city-owned lots in high-demand corridors. The cost to use metered spaces fluctuates according to location, time of day, and other factors that signal how busy an area is at any given time.

Denver's population boom has highlighted the need for parking solutions. Denver Public Works created a Strategic Parking Plan, which assessed parking demand, location, pricing, and supply on a citywide scale. This information fed area management plans that recommended strategies for hyperlocal, neighborhood-scale parking challenges. In the reinvigorated commercial corridor of Baker and Broadway, the management plan proposed consistency in parking time limits, short-term parking for high-turnover businesses, and strategic placement of loading zones.

In the University Circle district of Cleveland, Ohio, drivers struggled to locate available parking. The city responded by improving wayfinding, encouraging visitors to use the district's website to find parking, and making key investments in bike lanes, transit, and streetscaping, thus making a multimodal commute more attractive for employees.



ASHLEY ROBERTSON/JULI



Equitable Development

NORTH CHARLESTON, like many urban centers across the world, is experiencing increased growth and prosperity as more people move out of suburban and rural areas and into denser cities. Although the prospect of adding new employers, businesses, residents, and amenities is both exciting and highly appealing, an influx of new residents presents challenges and may have negative impacts on existing communities. The influx of new residents runs the risk of causing housing prices to rise rapidly, increasing problems with traffic congestion, and exacerbating existing education and skill gaps between the local workforce and the needs of new employers.

As acknowledged in this report, North Charleston has been successful in its efforts to recover from the housing recession and the base closure. However, the indirect effect of this success has heightened concerns around equity, affordability, and inclusion—with redevelopment plans along Rivers Avenue calling further attention to residents’ concerns. This issue is particularly acute in the study area, which, when compared to North Charleston as a whole, has more naturally occurring affordable housing, more communities with higher densities of intergenerational “heir” owners, a higher percentage of renters, and a larger concentration of people of color.

Although North Charleston has \$39,944 as the area’s median household income, median household incomes in the study area are almost half of this figure: \$21,275. Even if incomes are lower, residents benefit from more affordable housing options, with median rents in 2016 falling closer to \$560 when compared to \$909 for North Charleston and \$1,000 for the metro area. In addition to changes in income, demographics in the study area are also distinctly different from North Charleston; the study area is about 85 percent African American while the city is almost a 50/50 split between white and African American populations. These

differences in demographics create a need to ensure that there is sensitivity to both income and other demographic differences as redevelopment plans are addressed.

To recognize the value of maintaining the study area's uniqueness while simultaneously realizing the positive benefits of potential redevelopment, the community, government leaders, and interested nongovernmental organizations must take proactive and aggressive steps to mitigate the negative impacts of growth that ensures that issues of equity, affordability, and inclusion are directly addressed. This section seeks to provide an overview of potential barriers that will ensure an equitable development and to outline best practices that need to be examined by the community, government leaders, and interested nongovernmental organizations alike.

Finally, while the city and county hold the primary responsibility for addressing the equitable development needs, there is also a need to bring in both local nonprofit partners that are currently operating in the community development space and new nonprofits that may not already have a presence in the area. Interviewees recommended that groups such as Habitat for Humanity, the NAACP, the National Action Network, and the Charleston Trident Urban League (which has the Center for Housing) also be involved in the redevelopment as key partners.

Public Investments

The interviews highlighted the need for North Charleston and Charleston County to respond to the overwhelming community desire for public funds to be equitably disbursed when planning and implementing community development, economic development, public works, recreation, and other municipal responsibilities.

Provided next is an overview of ways in which the city and county can increase public investments in affordable housing and community development efforts.

Community Engagement

The first step to equitable development and planning is to create a comprehensive plan that engages the community throughout the entire process. The panel heard that most current opportunities for community members to participate are difficult to access, leaving the community feeling not included and shut out of the process. It is important to change this relationship immediately, not only to encourage community buy-in but also for the community's ideas to be incorporated into the plan to strengthen its goals and

recommendations. Steps to creating an equitable community engagement process include these:

- Encourage meaningful engagement throughout the development process with continuity between the planning, design, execution, and construction phases.
- Host engagement opportunities in the neighborhoods at times and in spaces that are welcoming and accessible for local residents.
- Advertise opportunities in community spaces, and use alternative methods of distribution such as during church announcements, culturally relevant radio channels, and education providers (schools, after-school programs).
- Make engagement fun and interactive so community members actively participate and remain interested throughout the development process.

Not only will a successful community engagement processes improve the relationship between the city and county and the community for this project, but also it will establish a path to deeper engagement for all city and county projects. This community engagement process should leverage partners such as Metanoia and LAMC, which already have deep community bonds, and should ask for their assistance.

Use of Public Land

Land owned by either the city, county, or local housing authorities presents a prime opportunity to address issues of public concern. Governments across the country recognize that it is important to use public land not only for schools, parks, public transportation, and other services but also to ensure that issues of pressing public concern—such as affordable housing—are addressed.

Unfortunately, opportunities to fully use publicly owned land in North Charleston have been only partially effective. In 2003, Charleston purchased Century Oaks, a World War II-era housing community that was identified in 2001 by the Noisette Community Master Plan as an “area of concern.” Housing on the site was demolished, residents were relocated, and the new community of Oak Terrace Preserve was developed. The community is an attractive, high-quality housing redevelopment, with prices currently exceeding \$400,000, far out of reach of the average household in the study area. None of the housing on the site was set aside for low- or moderate-income residents. As noted next, setbacks for affordable housing, use of community land trusts, and development of housing with nonprofit partners or the housing authority may help the city to ensure a level of affordability in future redevelopments of publicly owned land.



CHRY'S RYNEARSON

The original Century Oaks development provided temporary housing to naval base employees and their families. When the base was shuttered, the homes were used as rental properties serving North Charleston residents. The city purchased the Century Oaks property in 2003 and began planning efforts to envision a future for the World War II-era neighborhood. The result was Oak Terrace Preserve, a sustainable neighborhood of 370 single-family homes and townhouses.

Disposition or monetization of public assets should be used exclusively for economic and community development purposes and not to fund ongoing operational needs, which encourages irresponsible short-term budgeting practices. This process should recognize that North Charleston Council and Charleston County are not in the business of maximizing profit but rather of creating shared prosperity and fiscal sustainability. This approach should include facilitating intergovernmental transfers of land to municipalities or public entities (including housing authorities) that have the capacity, resources, and ability to access external funding sources. In particular, when a government is disposing of land, the following objectives (in whole or in part) should be considered during disposition:

- Support for privately developed, mixed-income housing.
- Creation of 100 percent affordable housing (such as senior housing).
- Economic development, including the growth of diverse jobs.
- Creation of affordable ownership housing.
- Creation of community amenities.
- Creation of public open space.
- Increased access to city and county services.

Given the limited availability of land that can be developed for housing, it is particularly important that any housing that is developed in the study area include significant amounts of

affordable housing for existing residents and families. The panel recognizes the need to balance this approach with the desire for revitalization and new investments.

Public Funding

North Charleston has invested heavily in successful place-based economic development and community development initiatives that have grown fiscal revenues over time. As land and real estate values increase and as community pressures related to gentrification intensify, North Charleston should ensure that staffing and use of resources are aligned to community needs and should maximize economic development opportunities.

Outside the North Charleston Housing Authority's budget of \$17 million and Community Development Block Grant allocated through the county, there is no dedicated source of public funds for affordable housing. Charleston County currently allocates \$1,645,644 toward community development efforts, with \$1,406,082 being allocated to health and welfare initiatives and \$239,562 being allocated to general government.

Within the constraints of responsible budgeting, resources should be used to support communities that have not benefited from recent economic growth.

This investment should include the following:

- Distribution of public works investments geographically and allocation of similar levels of funding on a multiyear basis to communities identified through municipal budgeting processes as communities with the greatest need.
- Creation of dedicated funding sources to support meaningful affordable housing and economic development. This source will strengthen community resilience against displacement and will support the growth of small businesses, including minority-owned businesses, that can grow wealth through entrepreneurship. This source should also include these:
 - Structuring funding programs as revolving funds, where loans are made at low interest rates or with relaxed requirements that expand access to debt for a broader range of qualifying businesses, including affordable housing developers.
 - Identifying a tangible amount of immediate funding (at least \$2 million) for the acquisition of land in rapidly changing communities (e.g., Chicora-Cherokee and Union Heights) to support land banking and future affordable housing initiatives.

- Advocating for the creation of a regional affordable housing trust fund, which unlocks incremental value from external funding sources (i.e., federal, nonprofit, and other sources) that are currently being underused.
- Developing business assistance and façade improvement programs, including loan programs to support acquisition of property for existing local small businesses and property owners so they can enhance commercial viability and leverage programs to limit displacement. All programs should be paired with technical assistance programs and should be in partnership with a qualified nonprofit organization.

Public Staffing: Department of Housing and Community Development

Finally, North Charleston should seriously consider creating a Department of Housing and Community Development to ensure that the recommendations outlined in this report are addressed. The department can be patterned after Charleston's Department of Housing and Community Development that "coordinates the provision of various housing, community and economic development programs in partnership with a number of organizations that include non-profit and for-profit developers."

Charleston's Department of Housing and Community Development is responsible for the following:

- Creating, facilitating, and implementing activities and programs that stimulate community and economic development.
- Expanding the supply of available housing.
- Stimulating the construction and rehabilitation of housing for persons of very low, low, and moderate incomes in Charleston's neighborhoods.

Displacement of Longtime Residents

As with any community that is facing economic development and change, the concerns of the existing North Charleston residents should be heard and prioritized. The residents have long contributed to the city's neighborhoods and are justified in feeling worried about encountering gentrification or displacement and about being priced out of new amenities and services that are brought into their community. In addition, almost 15 percent of residents are 60 years of age or older; thus, programs that allow them to age in place are crucial. The city should prioritize their ability to remain in the city so

they can have a fully inclusive and diverse citizenship. By targeting whether such residents can afford to live in North Charleston and whether they are able to participate in the economic activity—new and old—the city can keep its longtime residents while welcoming new ones.

Education

For housing, many tools have been implemented in other municipalities that can prevent displacement. The first and foremost is to educate and inform owners and renters about programs and policies that are at their disposal. A municipality can have all the tools in the world, but if they are not communicated and marketed to residents, the tools will go unused.

It is difficult for residents to balance work, family, and life while also educating themselves about programs that exist to assist them as renters and owners, about policies that are in place to protect their property rights, and about financing tools that can assist them in upgrades and other property improvements. Even more so, some programs can involve tax abatements or other forms of financing support that will require financial and legal literacy, which many Americans do not have.

Therefore, it is up to the public sector not only to expand the programs and policies that can protect and assist homeowners and renters, but also to inform them about such programs and to guide people through their use. The panel learned that South Carolina has a tax cap; however, many residents are not aware of this cap, and there is limited public information about how to access it.

According to the South Carolina Department of Revenue, a person's primary residence, when occupied by the owner, is "taxed on an assessment equal to 4% of the fair market value." Countywide, property is reassessed every five years. An increase to fair market value of any parcel is capped at 15 percent within this five-year cycle. In addition, if a homeowner is 65 or over, permanently disabled, or legally blind, that person may qualify for the Homestead Exemption for Elderly, Blind, or Disabled. This code provides exemption from property taxes for the first \$50,000 in the home's value. To receive this exemption, homeowners or their representative should contact the county auditor's office to confirm their eligibility and to apply.

The panel consistently heard that several owner-occupied homes have been owned by families for several generations. Known as "heirs property," those homes are typically passed on to the descendants by someone who passed

Education on Housing Rights

North Charleston has an eviction crisis and is struggling with foreclosures. Other cities use a number of programs to help people navigate their legal rights.

According to its website, Local Housing Solutions helps cities, towns, and counties develop comprehensive and balanced local housing strategies that enhance affordability, protect low-income residents from displacement, and foster inclusive neighborhoods.

Philadelphia has enacted a robust foreclosure prevention program that protects homeowners with legal assistance, counseling, mediation with lenders, and other resources. The online and hotline platform SaveYourHomePhilly is government run and provides immediate support for people facing eviction and foreclosure.

Educating residents about what their options are and whom to call for help is an important step so North Charleston can lower its eviction rate.

away without a will or a deed to the property. However, the tenancy of this property can be informal; without a clear title, financing maintenance can become an added challenge. There is a need to ensure that owners of heirs properties are educated about their rights and about how to pursue clear title to the properties, as well as about increasing property values in order to ensure that they do not presumptively sell a property that could increase a family's wealth.

In general, there is a need for better legal assistance for homeowners and renters in North Charleston to help homeowners in foreclosure prevention and renters in eviction prevention. For foreclosure prevention, state and city funds can be dedicated toward a network of counseling and case workers who can assist homeowners in renegotiating their mortgage terms and payment plans, in learning about financial literacy and savings programs, and in accessing funds when needed.

Upkeep and Improvements

For some homeowners, the larger obstacle can be property upkeep. A home requires cosmetic and structural upgrades to remain stable, safe, and a source of pride. Upgrades and improvements can prove too costly for homeowners,

leading to conditions that can be perceived as blight. Renters are at the mercy of landlords, who often will either make those improvements and then raise rents or not make the improvements to keep rent low. In North Charleston, 60 percent of the housing is single-family but only one-quarter of the housing units in the study area are owner-occupied. Public and nonprofit resources can be combined and deployed to assist in the rehabilitation of properties that can improve quality of life for those living in the homes and can reduce blight for the larger community.

Financial assistance programs, such as those offered by Fannie Mae, can help homeowners install energy-efficient fixtures, solar panels, and other green technology; all of which can be costly up front but can lower long-term utility bills. This assistance can help both renters and homeowners alike. If permitted by state law, tax abatements that allow homeowners' tax assessments to remain at pre-improvement levels can encourage capital improvements; however, this assistance should be used only for owner-occupied homes because landlords could take advantage of the tax abatement while raising rent.

Tax abatements or other financial assistance can particularly help seniors retrofit access to and within their homes so those seniors can better accommodate disabilities and other physical obstacles that they often face. Much like the Homestead Exemption detailed earlier, such provisions allow seniors to age in place, surrounded by their community and neighbors with whom they are familiar and comfortable. Similarly, for income-qualified seniors, "circuit-breaker" programs can provide a tax cap to prevent the taxes on the property from overbearing a resident's fixed income.

Eviction Prevention

For renters, protections must be put in place to prevent eviction; according to Princeton University's Eviction Lab, North Charleston has the highest eviction rate in the country. Not only does eviction encourage blight and disrupt the community's health and economic well-being, but also evictions can destroy families. Eviction protection programs are crucial. A person's ability to pay rent can be put in jeopardy with one medical bill or one car accident that depletes all savings.

The panel found that in North Charleston more than 58 percent of renters are paying more than 30 percent of their income on rent; while in the study area, two-thirds of renters are paying more than 30 percent of their income on rent. Those residents are particularly vulnerable to evictions.

Beyond adults, eviction has large implications on school attrition and education attainment for children, which causes not only children and their families but also the whole community to suffer.

First, the community should be made aware of the existing U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Fair Housing Hotline. It is the only locally HUD-certified Fair Housing counseling agency that works against housing infractions, unequal treatment by landlords, and lack of access to the financial mainstream by minorities and other unprotected classes of people. This agency can be a critical resource for renters, especially if there are local resources to help educate people about the program.

Further, a system of emergency funds and services should be deployed. Public agencies working in this field have realized that protecting renters against eviction can save municipalities elsewhere in their budgets, because homeless individuals and families often cost a municipality more in hospitalization, prison, and other public resources and services than they require. As such, municipalities and states have enacted emergency funds and services—with the help of local partners—to protect against missed rent. Others have legal resources that are available for all renters facing eviction and that can greatly reduce the eviction rate. Examples can be found at the Local Housing Solutions web page, www.localhousingolutions.org/act/housing-policy-library/eviction-prevention-programs-overview/eviction-prevention-programs/.

Vacancy

Beyond protecting families, keeping properties from vacancy and blight will also be highly important. North Charleston's vacancy rates remain around 20 percent, a high level that in turn hurts the wider community. However, this problem does offer an opportunity for the city to take the currently vacant homes and turn them into affordable housing. The panel found a great need for affordable housing; the Charleston area and many other municipalities do not have the current supply to meet the demand for housing. However, North Charleston has properties at its disposal that can be used to meet some of the gap in demand.

To keep properties from becoming vacant, the city should enact a vacancy tax for nonowner-occupied residents. This tax would discourage property owners from keeping housing stock off the market and landlords from evicting tenants in order to sit on the property until its value increases.

Further, assistance for renters who are ready and interested in becoming homeowners can have a great effect on reducing gentrification and displacement. Rent-to-Own programs including Right of First Refusal for Tenants should be used as ownership incentive tools. Others, done in partnership with well-regarded and trustworthy nonprofits, can help renters become homeowners. Some municipalities have gone so far as to use a dedicated source of funding for downpayment assistance for first-time homebuyers.

Expansion of Permanent Affordable Housing Options

To prepare for future demand and to preserve the existing community, North Charleston must understand that it is vitally important for naturally occurring affordable housing to be paired with permanent affordable housing. There are

many barriers to creating permanent affordable housing, and the city and county must start developing, redeveloping, and incentivizing such initiatives now to protect the study area from displacement. In particular, the influx of amenities that this report discusses will make the study area a more attractive place to live; the panel stresses the need to stabilize affordable housing and to add protections for current residents.

Concerns with Single-Family Zoning

City Council zoning decisions have discouraged affordable housing development. The City Council adjusted the zoning for the Chicora-Cherokee and Union Heights Community from a designation that would allow for developing duplexes and using ancillary developments for a more restrictive single-family classification. Residents shared the concern that this approach not only discouraged



Landed's mission is to help essential professionals (starting with educators) build financial security near the communities they serve through homebuying. Landed invests alongside teachers and school staff members when they are ready to buy a home in expensive areas, including Boulder, Denver, Los Angeles, San Diego, the San Francisco Bay area, Seattle, and Hawaii. Landed is backed by many different organizations, notably the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative; it partners with school districts, real estate agents, and community organizations. Working with an organization such as Landed would bring new and creative ways to combating North Charleston's growing housing unaffordability issues.

the use the ancillary dwelling units that could provide affordable housing options but also led to the deterioration of structures as a result of owners' inability to make necessary improvements because of their inability to obtain permits needed for improvements.

The restrictive zoning changes had further negative impacts on the North Charleston Housing Authority's ability to add additional affordable units to the Horizon Village redevelopment. Horizon Village (previously Tilman Homes) is a high-quality HOPE VI project, which provides 430 units affordable to families earning less than 50 percent of the area's median income (\$74,500). The Authority's 2003 plan called for 501 units including duplexes, triplexes, and single-family homes; 371 units were designated as rentals and 130 as for-sale units. Sales moved slowly, and by 2015, only 31 for-sale units had been sold. The housing authority approached the city about converting the remaining 99 units to rentals.

However, spurred by the adamant opposition of existing homeowners who voiced concerns about adding additional affordable units, the City Council rejected the effort to increase the number of multifamily units on the site. The housing authority opted instead to sell the remaining lots to a private developer, thereby removing the requirement that new units be made affordable. The 99 properties are now being constructed as market-rate for-sale units. The results will have a long-term effect on the availability of affordable housing solutions in the area and on the perception of development in the eyes of the community.

As it updates its comprehensive plan, the city should review its zoning policies to reduce regulatory barriers to increasing the supply of accessory dwelling units, duplexes, triplexes, and quadruplexes in single-family zoned communities. The public's need for more affordable housing also must be further prioritized as the City Council reviews requests for zoning revisions that will allow for more affordable housing.



Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are small, free-standing residential units on the same property as a single-family house. They can take many forms, most commonly an apartment over a garage, backyard cottage, in-law unit, and basement apartment. ADUs are a great tool for a homeowner to generate additional income and to create more inexpensive rental housing sources. ADUs cannot be bought or sold separately, so they are under the control of the homeowner. Many cities across the United States are changing their legislation to make ADUs easier to build, retrofit, and rent, which will help address the housing supply and affordability issues.

Minneapolis Zoning

Cities across the United States are examining ways to ensure that zoning designations encourage creative solutions that increase the availability of naturally occurring affordable housing.

Minneapolis, for example, recently became the first major U.S. city to end single-family home zoning. Residents and policymakers implemented the change out of concern that restrictive zoning policies increased segregation, added to high housing costs, and encouraged urban sprawl as residents were forced to move outside urban areas to find affordable housing options.

In 2019, the City Council passed Minneapolis 2040, a comprehensive plan to permit three-family homes in the city's residential neighborhoods, abolish parking minimums for all new construction, and allow high-density buildings along transit corridors. The plan further calls for density bonuses and other incentives for the construction of affordable housing. To learn more, visit <https://minneapolis2040.com>.

Community Land Trusts and Use of Public Land

North Charleston and Charleston County are in the fortunate position of having a lot of undeveloped land at their disposal to build much-needed housing. The city and county should inventory publicly owned land assets and develop a formal process to evaluate the optimal use of public land assets and to leverage their value for community and economic benefit.

The city should undertake an inventory of public assets and should circulate the list internally for review by individual departments to determine whether the land assets have a current or future use for municipal purposes. For properties that do not have municipal use, the city's economic development department, in partnership with the North Charleston Housing Authority, should determine whether parcels have the potential to support housing or economic development needs, as well as which use could have the greatest effect. For properties that are determined to be surplus, the public/private partnership process should be pursued as described in the governance and implementation section.

For what is deemed appropriate for housing, the city and county then will conduct a review of all available public land to accommodate affordable housing initiatives, including land trusts, affordable multifamily, and for-sale housing. Through this initiative, the city and county will then be able to donate any unused residential lots to a local Community Land Trust. Prioritization should be given to affordable and mixed-income housing or for other much-needed public uses. For housing that is built, the panel recommends a mix of incomes, tenures, and typologies to create a truly inclusive community that meets the needs of a diversity of households.

Affordable Rental

As mentioned earlier in the report, two-thirds of renters in the study area spend more than 30 percent of their household income on rent; that percentage is a nationally recognized benchmark for indicating cost-burdened households. When a household pays more than 30 percent on rent, little is left for utilities, food, transportation, health care, child care, and other needs.

Affordable housing was recognized by the sponsors as a priority issue for the panel to consider. The panel learned during stakeholder interviews that the existing affordable housing is running up against expiring covenants, which, if not addressed in a timely manner, will further deplete an already low supply. Without a new supply, the downward pressure on the market will drive costs up and will price many residents out of North Charleston.

Therefore, to meet this demand, the city and county should welcome a wide spectrum of residential development to offer housing options for seniors, veterans, families at the market-rate, and affordable levels. Market-rate units are important to include; although it may seem counterintuitive to build market rate or even luxury units, they can offset or cross-subsidize affordable units. This understanding is as important for developers who will build the housing as it is for residents. Communities also benefit when they are not economically segregated.

To spur development, the city and county should offer public land for free or at discounted rates to lower some costs of development. Concessions can be made to mandate a certain number or percentage of affordable units on land provided by the government. Tax incentives, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, New Market Tax Credits, and similar financing incentives can be deployed to spur production.

In addition, a housing trust fund should be created to collect and administer a dedicated pool of funds toward housing. Funds can come from tax sources or an inclusionary zoning policy that can be implemented. Inclusionary zoning can mandate developers to build a certain number of affordable units or can pay fees-in-lieu to the housing trust fund. Some municipalities offer a streamlined development review process and other fast-tracked approvals for developments with affordable housing. Given that North Charleston already has a fairly quick approval process, this approach might not be applicable.

Other options to encourage affordable housing production can include lowered parking requirements (especially for housing created near public transit) and upzoning. Here, it will be important to determine the right density based off the surrounding neighborhood. Higher density multifamily apartments can be located near main streets, particularly along Rivers Avenue. Upzoning can include duplexes, triplexes, or fourplexes that are more appropriate in lower density neighborhoods.

Affordable For-Sale Housing

Affordable for-sale housing development can benefit from more affordable construction options: expedited permitting and approvals, tax incentives, and partnerships with reputable organizations (e.g., Habitat for Humanity) that will increase the supply of for-sale housing.

A review of building codes and zoning to identify areas for modernization can also help. Many existing laws can increase costs in aspects of home construction that are no longer relevant or applicable to how people live. For example, Minneapolis conducted a challenge to drive ideas for lowering the cost of housing, and one idea was modernizing building codes. Minneapolis found that one code mandated a separate dining room; however, consumer preferences indicated a shared kitchen and dining room space is sufficient or even preferred. Similarly, larger zoning revisions can allow smaller housing typologies (e.g., tiny homes) that are new to the market.

Density Bonus

The panel recommends implementing a density bonus for new housing construction. To best understand how the density bonus funding might function in practice, the panel offers the following as an example of the bonus in action.

A lot owner either sells to a developer or decides to redevelop his property in the Union Heights area. To secure the right

to build a duplex or two attached or detached single-family homes, the owner of the property pays the city a density bonus fee of at least 50 percent of the average selling price per square foot of single-family lots in the affected neighborhood. The funds are deposited in a fund administered by the city, the housing authority, and at least one local nonprofit housing developer. The funds are used to provide needed equity to construct similar high-density homes, typically three-bedroom homes of 1,000 square feet, which are rented or sold to residents of the affected neighborhood.

The rent or mortgage amounts are to be determined on the basis of the income of prospective occupants (it being anticipated that family sizes may increase given this housing opportunity). Assuming a household income of \$32,000 per year, a mortgage payment of \$790 per month would finance a \$100,000 mortgage at 5 percent amortized over 15 years. At the end of the 15 years, assuming a 3 percent inflation in the area, the home could be sold for 145 percent of its purchase price, or, assuming 100 percent financing, \$145,000.

This investment may create a transformational source of family wealth. Given the tax deductions attendant to home mortgage payments, the net financial strain between paying a \$500 monthly rent and a \$790 mortgage is negligible. The use of a 15- versus 30-year mortgage is critical to this wealth building, and financial consoling and family team building may be a critical part of this process.

Assuming a \$20,000 average density bonus fee and construction costs of \$200,000 per duplex, for every five lots so entitled, the \$100,000 of available funds should be sufficient to provide the equity to build a duplex, and the sale for \$100,000 per unit should recycle the costs to fund the program again. This estimate ignores many soft costs and management fees but provides some sense of the scope of the opportunity. If the average lot is 30 by 60 feet, and if walkways, excluding a community park or garden, are 20 percent of lot size, 20 lots per acre is achievable on scale and should be considered for the demonstration development of available city or county land, including the site of the former overpass to the Navy Yard or one of the Parcel 5 lots.

Likely partners for this undertaking include the North Charleston Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity, South Carolina Community Loan Fund, and private profit and nonprofit developers.



ALETHA DUNSTON

Neighborhood Services

INTEGRAL TO SUPPORTING NEW DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS in the study area is to have its new uses address the existing needs of the community. Three big needs are continued access to social services, greater access to healthy food options, and increased programs for training the local workforce.

Community Services Sites

Charleston County has planned on relocating certain community services to the Naval Hospital site. Although the panel believes this site is a good location for some of the services, it believes that those services can be spread over a few different sites across the city to achieve greater access.

The panel recommends that before making any decisions on relocations, the city and county should meet with each department to identify where those departments would like to be located, if they would like to be co-located with other

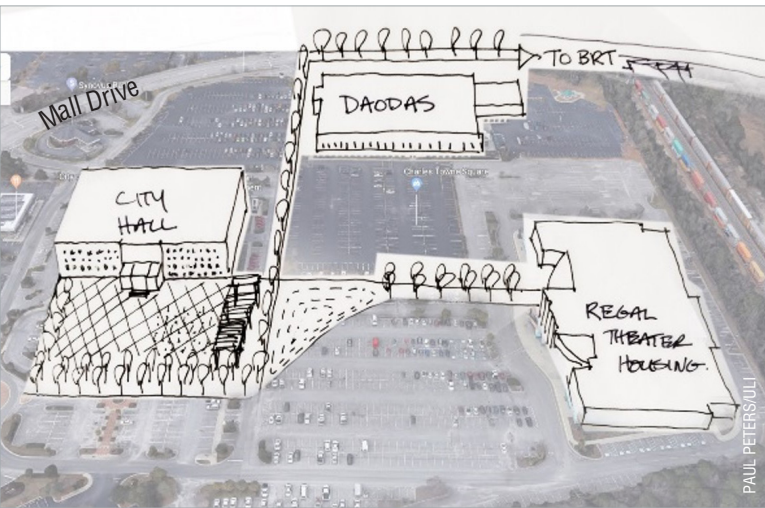
facilities, and what their facility needs are. Although the panel has recommendations on which agency should go where, the priority should be best accessing the people that each facility serves.

The panel recommends that South Carolina's Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services and the health, human, and administrative services not be located as it currently is in Charleston. The clinic and closely related treatment services could be housed in the building adjacent the North Charleston City Hall, where its current occupant, Verizon, is coming to the end of its lease.



STUDIO GANG

The Lavezzorio Community Center in Chicago not only houses community amenities, but also is home to a branch of SOS Children's Village, an organization that helps support children in foster care. Designed by Studio Gang Architects, the community center provides gathering spaces, a fitness area, an event space, and classroom space. Co-locating the SOS Children's Village has been a big success: people consistently use the community center and make it a revolving point for the community located around it.



The Civic Center would create a destination by co-locating a dynamic mix of uses including City Hall, a public plaza, county services, and residential housing.

The DSS promotes the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and vulnerable adults, thereby helping individuals achieve stability and strengthening families. DSS is located adjacent to the study area and provides a wide range of services that benefit the community, including these:

- Provides protective services for children and vulnerable adults, adoption, and foster care services.
- Administers the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, which provides employment and training for people receiving cash assistance.
- Administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to assist low-income people in the purchase of food.

The panel recognizes the need for DSS to remain either within its current location or close by, because its current location enables it to be part of the community it serves. If moving, DSS could be co-located with other county services agencies including the DHEC along Rivers Avenue. This pairing could create a community services node that offers convenient access to residents in surrounding neighborhoods. Those amenities would be bolstered over time only with the redevelopment of PA-3 and PA-4.

Food Equity

Residents in the study area have been demanding a grocery market to address a serious food desert issue. Although the city has tried to attract a grocer through different incentives and packages, it has not yet found success. The panel heard that a grocery store would be attracted to the study area if another 500 rooftops were added; however, the panel cautions against relying on a benchmark number. Current grocers in the area are at interchanges with major highways, suggesting that grocers are attracted to catching people on their routes home rather than necessarily in their neighborhoods. Thus, to attract a grocer, the benchmark may need to shift from 500 roofs to showing the density, mobility, and active other uses that will become part of the hospital site's redevelopment.

The challenge with the current grocery options is that such stores do not offer many fresh food options, are far from the communities in the study area, and require a car to get to them. Current grocery store options within several miles of the study site are these:

- Save-A-Lot
- Family Dollar
- Walmart
- Vereen's Grocery
- Jerusalem Market and Deli

To further exacerbate the issues, Save-A-Lot, which is the closest outlet, does not accept SNAP benefits. This nonacceptance is despite the fact that 46 percent of the study area's households rely on SNAP.

Long-Term Goal

The city should continue to pursue potential grocer tenants in partnership with the landowner of PA-3, which is where the city controls a two-acre site dedicated to a grocery use. The grocery store must be able to support

Gateway DC

Gateway DC is a distinctive, state-of-the-art response to a lack of access to healthy food and community gathering space in the Congress Heights neighborhood of Washington, D.C. The pavilion sits on two acres of the 180-acre east campus of St. Elizabeths Hospital, a former mental hospital being redeveloped as a mixed-use destination. The pavilion features an iconic design and is surrounded by a multifunctional plaza. The pavilion accommodates food trucks, casual dining, a farmers market, and cultural and community events on the weekends and after hours.



GOOGLE MAPS

a sustained volume of top-line sales after inventory, wages, expenses, and the burden of debt service to justify capital investment. Therefore, the city should explore the dedication of capital and an operating subsidy to minimize risk associated with introducing a grocery store into what is currently considered an untested market. The city will need to ensure that SNAP benefits are accepted at the market, particularly because the DSS provides \$350,000 in monthly SNAP benefits.

Short-Term Solution

The city should consider the potential of creating a farmers market as a quick first step to bringing fresh groceries to the study area. Municipalities increasingly locate such markets adjacent to public transportation centers in order to ensure that residents can access healthy foods. The market can easily be constructed in a public area adjacent to the transit center, which will make it convenient for residents to get their groceries while commuting through the area. Creating an open-air farmers market is also a way to immediately

create healthy food options while grocer recruitment efforts are underway. It can be a first step to reactivating the area, thus making it a relevant location for residents even before any major development begins.

A number of fresh farmers markets in the area can be used as models or as potential partners:

- North Charleston Farmers Market
- Lowcountry Street Grocery: a Mobile Farmers' Market

Development of a farmers market creates an opportunity to have a local operator. Existing local groups, such as Lowcountry Local First, which are already ingrained in the network, may be helpful in identifying an appropriate operator or may be interested in serving as the operator themselves.

The city should examine whether TIF funds can be used to pay for the farmers market or whether a farmers market area can be built into the capital budget for the transit center.

In addition to providing fresh food options, the market space could provide opportunities for hosting community events around the market.

Public Markets

Public markets are valuable community assets and can be scaled and programmed to accommodate local demand.

Detroit's Eastern Market, a city-run market dating to 1891 and occupying 381 acres, hosts a variety of vendors, restaurants, and food retailers year-round, including a food wholesaler, slaughterhouses, and food entrepreneurs. In 2006, operational ownership of the market was transferred from the city of Detroit to the nonprofit Eastern Market Corp.

Bloomington Community Farmers' Market is in its 45th year of providing high-quality produce and crafts to shoppers. The market hosts roughly 130 vendors that provide seasonal goods. All vendors are from Indiana and all produce the food they sell, making the market a point of pride not only for the community, but also for the farmers themselves.

Bloomington's market has accepted Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits since 2007. In 2013, Bloomington implemented the Double Market Bucks program, which provides \$2 for every SNAP dollar a vendor receives. The shift created a 15 percent increase in SNAP dollars used at the market.



Eastern Market in Detroit.

Workforce and Small and Local Business Inclusion

One of the key observations made by the panel is that although there are twice as many jobs in the region as there are people, a mismatch exists between the available labor source and the employer demand. Many interviewees noted that 11 percent of the adult civilian population (16 years of age or older) is unemployed.

For residents who are employed, wages are often below the area's median income of \$74,000. In fact, more than 80 percent of the households in the study area earn less than \$50,000 per year, with one-third (1,387) of the total households making less than \$15,000 per year. Anecdotal information suggests that new employers in the region, such as Boeing, bring talent from outside of the North Charleston area to fill positions because the local talent pool does not have the technical skills and training needed to fill open positions.

Those statistics highlight the serious need for investments to be made in developing local businesses, in job training, and in local hiring programs.

Attracting Small and Local Businesses

Although the panel noted the success that the region has had in attracting large, new employers, it also noted the importance of investing in local small businesses. Unlike national companies, small businesses are unlikely to relocate out of the area and can serve as a key stimulator for the employment market. They also tend to hire local talent. Having a robust small business program will help North Charleston stabilize its business base as businesses grow and expand over time.

The city and county can offer several programs for small businesses to incentivize them to locate in North Charleston and to help them grow. Support can be given through reduced rent programs or designated spots in developing spaces (like a farmers market) that have lower barriers and costs to entry. The city noted that it has a minority business hiring program, which should be further highlighted as the redevelopment continues to help new businesses find employees.

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As cities look to reinvest in disinvested neighborhoods, local businesses and entrepreneurs present a valuable opportunity to create high-impact community partnerships and to redevelop with authenticity. The restaurant Deltz on the Macon has expanded from its Deltz Uptown Charleston venue to open its second location in North Charleston. Led by a mother/daughter team, the restaurant provides vegan food and education regarding a healthy lifestyle. Small, civic-minded businesses such as Deltz should be fostered and encouraged to grow in place.

Redevelopment efforts like the Naval Hospital site redevelopment can create opportunities to use local small businesses in both construction and operation of the site. The city and county should develop creative ways in which local residents can participate in such development. For example, to the extent there is art installed on the site, the art should be the handiwork of local artists. Several interviewees expressed a desire for the redevelopment to reserve a portion of its retail space for local businesses.

Job Training Needs

A key and consistent theme expressed by interviewees was the need to develop a robust job program for local residents who are seeking to move themselves out of poverty and into living wage careers. This transition is possible through hard and soft skills training, adult basic education, and career development. The city and county can work together to develop a workforce program that not only prepares the local

workforce for employment but also provides a first priority in hiring local residents who have completed the program.

Charleston County's Workforce Development division can be a key player in ensuring that any training programs eliminate key barriers to success, including these:

- **Criminal backgrounds:** Ensure that one's criminal history is not a barrier to employment.
- **Drug history:** Develop programs to ensure that residents struggling with drugs are connected with the proper resources.
- **Educational background:** Develop a program where a high school diploma or a GED equivalency is not required to participate.
- **Transportation:** Provide transportation assistance to training sessions because 25 percent of the residents in the study area do not own cars.



ALETHA DUNSTON

Governance and Implementation

THE PANEL FOUND THAT North Charleston has the will and the ability to transform itself into a vibrant, equitable, and unique community. So many different projects and initiatives are in progress across the city that North Charleston has set itself up to be making great strides or juggling multiple failures. The panel found that the many members of the city and county staff whom they worked with during the panel process had incredible passion for the work they are doing but are not currently given the resources to succeed in their ambitious goals. The panel recommends that both agencies increase the number of staff members to ensure that the many projects will succeed and that there is a capacity to look forward and foster innovation.

Next are a number of steps to be followed and tools to be used by the public to help best position the future for North Charleston.

High-Quality Design and Mixed-Income Communities

Creating and executing a vision for redevelopment of the Naval Hospital site and study area are key to ensuring that the communities around the site have greater access to the benefits of living in a growing region. To encourage and ensure that the right projects happen, the city and county should work to update the zoning code in the study area, create a District Wide Zoning Overlay plan, and create a master plan for county-owned parcels.

Zoning for Single-Family Neighborhoods

As described previously, to support equitable investment in the communities surrounding the study area, North Charleston should implement zoning procedures that allow for increased density on R-1 lots while capturing revenue that can be used for the acquisition of parcels and the construction of ownership and rental housing. This implementation should entail the following:

- The city should create a density-bonus system, whereby residents or investors are able to access R-2 zoning on R-1 lots by paying a meaningful “in-lieu” fee for additional residential density. This density bonus would allow two units to be built on lots currently zoned for one unit in exchange for a payment that should be equal to or greater

than one-half of the average sale price for vacant lots in the Chicora-Cherokee and Union Heights neighborhoods.

- Subsequently, the city should develop a new, dedicated fund for each community within which the density bonus system is available. Payments generated through this bonus program should be deposited in the relevant fund for each neighborhood. Subsequently, the city should issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to prequalify eligible market-rate housing developers (and should reissue the RFQ at least once every two years to prequalify additional affordable housing developers) and should make funds available on a quarterly basis for the construction of ownership (preferable) or rental housing at reduced prices for households earning under 60 percent of the area's median income. City land assets that meet the criteria (described next) within each neighborhood should also be immediately made available to developers through this program. Where possible, property taxes should be stabilized for units developed through this program and should be subject to legal limitations. Deed restrictions should be required to permit homes to be resold for no more than the home's original price, plus an increase in value no more than the change in consumer price index for all goods and services in the relevant census tract over the period of ownership.

Districtwide Zoning Overlay

North Charleston should facilitate the development of a comprehensive and equitable overlay plan titled the Rivers Avenue Overlay District Plan (Rivers Overlay). It should incorporate higher-density, high-quality development that includes uses such as mixed-income housing, public open spaces, retail amenities, commercial office, civic uses, governmental services, and potentially future hospitality, while it restricts uses that are inconsistent with the vision.

This plan should define design and locational parameters for a grocery store, and it should explore opportunities that address specific concerns related to the potential location of a gas station, which may be detrimental to land values and transit-oriented objectives. The Rivers Overlay should include these at a minimum:

- Community benefits plan, which should ensure that any proposed development of more than 50,000 square feet or 50 residential units or of any new construction that is not office, residential, or educational/institutional or a combination of these demonstrates as a prerequisite that the proponent has facilitated a minimum of two community outreach meetings. These constructions

should be within a half-mile radius of the project site, should have meeting notification consistent with the guidelines included previously, and should be attended by a planning staff member and an elected official in conjunction with the developer's representative.

- Frontages and design guiding that includes parking visibility and frontages.
- Bicycle and transit-oriented infrastructure.

Master Planning for County-Owned Parcels

Charleston County, in collaboration with North Charleston, should develop land use and site plans for PA-4 and county-owned properties within PA-3 (anticipated to include only library and other county facilities). The plans should be aligned with the Rivers Overlay, should incorporate specific-use categories within higher-density development envelopes for PA-4, should require the provision of an integrated CARTA bus transfer station, should have structured parking that serves the site and regional employers, and should have a public market facility that can serve as an interim food provision solution until a grocery store is built. The plan should also include affordable housing and other higher density, transit-oriented commercial and real estate land uses that are consistent with the Rivers Overlay.

This plan would serve as the basis for any future RFQs or RFPs (requests for proposals) for Development Agreements for all or portions of the site. A clear vision that can be codified and incorporated into procurement documents will increase visibility and developer interest, will support the provision of infrastructure consistent with the vision, and will allow for the realization and capture of maximum financial and community value from the county-owned properties.

Both the revised Rivers Overlay and county's plan must solicit community input from neighboring areas through gatherings located in close proximity to those neighborhoods and will facilitate attendance by those who cannot easily travel—pursuant to the guidelines included in the Community Engagement section of this report.

Public/Private Partnerships

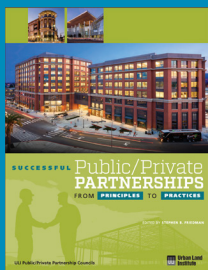
Public/private partnerships are the development of concepts by the public and private sectors that benefit both but that neither could achieve independently. The panel believes that the former hospital building is the perfect opportunity for the city and the county to engage in a

public/private partnership. The process created for the hospital can also lay the foundation for similar endeavors with other city and county projects.

Principles

When preparing to dispose of publicly owned assets, Charleston County and North Charleston should follow a clear and transparent process that incorporates community input, incentivizes high-quality development,

Principles for Successful Public/Private Partnerships



The term *public/private partnership* generally describes a cooperative arrangement and collaborative relationship between the public and private sectors to combine each of their strengths and resources most effectively and to achieve a common

purpose. The partnerships are often used in economic development, in infrastructure development, for building schools, and for delivery of social services, among other uses. In 2005, the Urban Land Institute published *Ten Principles for Successful Public/Private Partnerships*, which enumerated the following principles:

1. Prepare properly for public/private partnerships.
2. Create a shared vision.
3. Understand your partners and key players.
4. Be clear on the risks and rewards for all parties.
5. Establish a clear and rational decision-making process.
6. Make sure that all parties do their homework.
7. Secure consistent and coordinated leadership.
8. Communicate early and often.
9. Negotiate a fair deal structure.
10. Build trust as a core value.

ULI's *Successful Public/Private Partnerships: From Principles to Practices* is a helpful resource about the fundamentals of public/private partnerships.

Source: *Successful Public/Private Partnerships: From Principles to Practices*.

and maximizes benefit to the community. North Charleston has experienced substantial economic growth from the city's management of its assets and other transactions. Going forward, the city should adopt new policies and procedures to fully leverage its enhanced regional standing and to maximize the benefit to its residents and businesses, while it creates transparency and certainty that will attract high-quality development partners.

First, municipalities must recognize their role in the creation of value (through zoning, infrastructure investment, or general policy and economic development initiatives that grow market interest) that can be subsequently captured through the value of their land assets. This recognition should entail a process whereby land is strategically released to maximize value, with the intent of using that value to directly fund municipalities' community initiatives or to discount land value to support onsite provision of high-quality development and community benefits, including affordable housing.

Organizational Capacity and Coordination

North Charleston, Charleston County, and the Coastal Conservation League should formalize the collaboration developed during this advisory services panel to collectively maximize effectiveness at addressing shared concerns and issues. These and potentially other entities should develop a regular schedule of public meetings to coordinate pending and ongoing initiatives, identify internal or external resources to enhance capital projects, and ensure that community needs and concerns are being addressed. Those entities, in partnership with other stakeholders, should also coordinate advocacy to the state of South Carolina and the U.S. government so they ensure that affordable housing, transportation, environmental, and other funds are being maximized for the benefit of city and county residents.

To ensure that the city is capable of executing transactions with qualified, sophisticated development partners and of generating the community benefit desired by city residents, the city must increase and enhance planning, economic development, and community development staff capacity. City departments must be well-resourced, and the staff must be able to convey transparency and credibility in order to engage proactively with the private sector to implement key economic development initiatives, including the disposal of city assets. The staff should have the technical capacity, knowledge, and authority

to advise on and support transactions including but not limited to private/public partnerships, intragovernmental partnerships and structures, and financial transactions that include bond and opportunity zone financing.

Public/Private Transactions

In all cases, the municipalities should explore and encourage the use of ground leases for income-producing projects (i.e., market/mixed-income residential or commercial development). Ground leases enhance municipalities' control of development projects in terms of ensuring performance, and they can be structured in a way that reduces developers' up-front risk associated with land purchase. Ground leases have the potential to benefit municipalities from regional economic growth when the leases are well-structured and have incremental lease step-ups that are based on growth in gross income, assessed value, or regional economic indicator. This approach may include the option for participation upon sale or refinancing. This option will allow municipalities to share the benefits of their investments and growth with their constituents.

In some cases, developers' willingness to engage in ground leases may be limited, or there may be practical restrictions (i.e., for-sale residential or commercial uses) in doing so. In such cases, municipalities should explore using financial structures that generate return over time as value is created, and they should limit one-time disposition early in market cycles or when investment is expected in communities. Those structures could include equity contribution to development partnerships in order to generate ongoing returns, phased disposition of parcels, or taking a deeply subordinated debt position equivalent to land value in a capital stack that is paid back with interest after other lenders.

This disposition process should include the following steps:

- Community outreach to identify land use, design, and other priorities. This process was outlined in the Equitable Development section under Community Engagement.
- High-level financial testing to determine the financial feasibility of the requirement of various community benefits.

- Development of a clear, concise, and widely distributed RFQ that includes a description of the desired project and potential incentives or benefits to prequalify potential development partners based on these:
 - Experience in completing the desired type of development.
 - Financial capacity.
 - Due diligence on proposers' track record of performance and history of litigation.
 - Demonstrated history of productive community engagement.
- Simultaneously identification, exploration, and—where possible—development and enhancement of a package of incentives or direct funding that is relevant to the vision and desired type of development. Those sources should be intended to do the following:
 - Accelerate development.
 - Increase the scale of community benefits provided as part of the projects.
 - Increase the scale and quality of development.
 - Increase revenue that goes to the municipality and that is used for the delivery of services and investments near the project site. Sources may include these:
 - Planning incentives (reduced parking or similar reduction of noncommunity benefit-related requirements).
 - Affordable housing resources.
 - Tax increment financing for public infrastructure.
 - Federal, state, and local tax credits or incentives or a combination for development or future tenants, including Opportunity Zone incentives.
- Development of an RFP with specific land use or program objectives (in terms of square feet, amenities, publicly accessible features, affordability, and community benefits), as well as a detailed list of incentives available to the selected and qualified development partner; also required performance metrics related to timeline, tenancing, and other desired development characteristics.

The elements should be accompanied by a transparent set of evaluation criteria for development partners that may include these:

- Adherence to land use or program objectives.
- Financial capacity and track record of development partner.
- Community benefits and affordability.
- Financial offer.
- Creativity and unique aspects of development project.

Next Steps

It is important that the city and county demonstrate their commitment to the greater community by initiating steps that can be started immediately to support high-quality investment and development. It is important that the local government demonstrates a commitment to address issues associated with potential displacement and to continue a track record of attracting economic anchors to the region. The steps should include the following:

- Begin the outreach process now.
 - Pursue deeper engagement, increased communication, transparent processes, and trust building with the community to ensure buy-in and the success of the panel.
- Collaborate and grow capacity.
 - Create and staff a Housing and Community Development Department within the city.
 - Continue the collaboration created from this panel, and form a joint city, county, and Coastal Conservation League committee to ensure a successful redevelopment.
- Create a districtwide zoning overlay plan.
 - Create a districtwide zoning overlay plan to ensure a disciplined and coordinated approach to long-term development that achieves the community vision.
 - Adhere to the plan to maximize the positive effect of the BRT.
- Start pre-development steps and develop a site-specific concept plan.
 - This plan should conceptualize locations for the community resources hub, transit center, street grid extensions, and future development sites.
 - Zoning ordinances, TIF and other public funding mechanisms, and affordable housing incentivized by land price are all tools for the successful redevelopment of the study area.
 - Predevelopment steps and concept planning that are initiated will demonstrate commitment to reinvesting in the study area.
- Commence construction of Community Resources Hub and Transit Center.
 - Establish the framework for the future of the Rivers Avenue Corridor, and move forward with the predevelopment steps of the Community Resources Hub and Transit Center.
- Start a pilot program for affordable housing that uses the density bonus.
 - Create opportunities for homeownership and attainable rental housing through piloting the density bonus programming.



ADAM MACCONNELL

Conclusion

THE PANEL SEES THE NAVAL HOSPITAL SITE REDEVELOPMENT as an exciting, unique, and rare opportunity to bring much needed amenities to southern North Charleston, to stabilize the city’s affordable housing, to capitalize on the BRT, and to create a vibrant corridor for current and future residents to enjoy. However, with great opportunity comes great risk. If this redevelopment and other projects around the city are not handled in a balanced and purposeful manner, growth can result in displacement and disenfranchisement of the existing community.

The following are key aspects of the panel’s recommendations that should be followed to work toward an equitable, feasible, and future-driven redevelopment.

Planning for Accessibility, Connectivity, and Opportunity

The distinctive neighborhood structure that defines North Charleston establishes a strong identity framework for the community and a cohesive framework. The structure lays out the neighborhood structure, together with placemaking elements aimed at providing a heart and soul for each neighborhood. Although this structure

is important, the panel also considered it vital to establish a central North Charleston Center—an area that clusters public services and facilities—a place where all neighborhoods can come together to celebrate their unique shared qualities. To achieve this centrality, the plan must establish strong linkages that interconnect both the individual neighborhoods and the centrally located community destinations. Public realm is the outward-facing aspect of neighborhoods; in addition to their functional roles, neighborhoods reflect collective values and pride of the local community and should be incorporated into the fabric of any redevelopment.

Creating a Community Destination

The panel believes that community service hubs, together with community-based retail and services offer significant value and identity when clustered within proximity to transit. Connecting people to resources and leveraging the incoming BRT will prove invaluable for connecting people and supporting a healthier community. The Civic Center that is proposed adjacent to City Hall offers facilities for county residents both within and outside North Charleston, while the mixed-use hub envisioned within the study area is intended to serve as a destination and service area for residents of the city. The panel sees the opportunity within this clustering of uses as a place to meet, a place to learn, a place to share, and a place to collectively celebrate the strengths and creativity of the North Charleston community.

Connecting the Community

Throughout history, streets have evolved from places for a diverse range of movement into being car dominated. As streets have become wider and less about people, they have lost their important social function and made walking and biking more difficult and unsafe. In recent years, a more balanced approach has been taken in street design and redevelopment. Complete streets design also allows greater provision for walking and biking, together with integrating more planting for shade, shelter, and environmental comfort and with integrating storm-water quality and management strategies. The complete street improvements being proposed for Spruill Avenue are an example of such improvements, and they should be expanded throughout the study area. The public realm within the local streets can offer safe, attractive, and comfortable sidewalks and trails, as well as safe street crossings that connect home with schools, shops, and recreation destinations and that support individual and social health. Those investments promote safety, health, and human interaction—all of which lead to a stronger community.

Promoting Equity through Development

The panel has recommended that the Charleston Naval Hospital Building be torn down in order to prepare the entire 22-acre site for redevelopment. A purposeful and careful approach to this redevelopment with attention to uses, design, zoning, transit orientation, public space, and affordability can be the catalyst for a new wave of investment for the southern North Charleston neighborhoods. Although this development would bring

much-needed resources to the area, it will also run the risk of causing displacement, both physical and social. It is vital that the city and county start protecting its current affordable housing and channel resources through funding, programming, and partnerships to create new affordable housing. This approach will work toward allowing the current residents to keep their community strong while benefiting from a new investment in their area.

Getting It Done

At current capacity, no one department can handle this redevelopment—nor should it. Because it is a priority to ensure that this development is done equitably, efficiently, and sustainability, more capacity must be added and stronger partnerships must be forged. As has been learned from missteps up to this point, this process is hard and will only become more complicated as the city and county hold themselves to higher standards. Not all change is positive, and the city and county need to stand firm and preserve their vision. Along with their vision, they need to collaborate with clear steps to ensure success:

- Include the neighborhoods in developing a common vision.
- Urgently establish the tools and means to guide partnerships with the private sector.
- Strengthen communication with nonprofits to coordinate programs and opportunities.
- Treat this project as the start of the process.
- Keep the momentum going.
- Institutionalize ownership so that it transitions over time.

The panel is excited to follow the progress of this project as well as that of North Charleston. The city has prepared itself well to start planning before growth, before development takes on a life of its own, and before the city has an opportunity to channel that growth into a force of equity and inclusion.

About the Panel

Andrew Irvine

Panel Chair
Denver, Colorado

Irvine is an energetic, creative, hands-on professional with a passion for design and is known by his clients as someone who delivers exceptional quality. As senior principal and leader of the urban design discipline within Stantec's buildings group, he brings to the panel more than 30 years in the industry and a knack for bringing people together to work toward a common goal. Irvine is the one you want in charge of building, motivating, and managing large interdisciplinary teams.

An enormous responsibility comes with designing new cities, places, and buildings. Designers play an important role in shaping the places where future life will play out. As a result, Irvine believes in doing work that promotes happiness and health and that has a positive cultural and social effect. In support of this mission, he has served on a Building Healthy Places Advisory Services panel in Lamar, Colorado, and cowrote ULI's *Ten Principles for Building Healthy Places*.

Before his current position, Irvine was a senior landscape architect at EDAW Inc., where he developed a strong portfolio of master planning projects across the United States, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Australia. He has specialized skills in site planning, master planning, and urban design guidelines. His range of projects includes major infrastructure, urban renewal, public domain, and traditional park design. He has worked on numerous planning projects that include significant experience with transportation and waterfront development. Irvine also has completed projects that have incorporated comprehensive open-space networks and ecological restoration areas into planned communities.

Irvine has served on 10 national Advisory Services panels and on one international Advisory Services panel. He has degrees in landscape architecture and environmental design.

Catherine Buell

Washington, D.C.

Buell is the new vice president for policy and programs at the Greater Washington Partnership, which is a first-of-its-kind civic alliance of chief executive officers in the Washington, D.C., region. The partnership draws from the leading employers and entrepreneurs who are committed to making the capital region—from Baltimore to Richmond—one of the world's best places to live, work, and build a business.

Before her role with the partnership, Buell served as president and chief executive officer of the Atlanta Housing Authority (doing business as Atlanta Housing, or AH). There she led strategic, financial, and operational efforts by providing housing to more than 23,000 of Atlanta's low- and extremely low-income households. Buell's visionary approach focused on Atlanta Housing's new strategic plan titled "Vision 2022" (Live, Work, Thrive), which outlines a targeted three-point thrust (live, work, thrive) aimed at housing human development and fiscal responsibility.

Buell previously served as the executive director of St. Elizabeth's East, D.C.'s largest mixed-use redevelopment project. St. Elizabeth's East is home to D.C.'s Entertainment and Sports Arena, which hosts the Washington Mystics' and Wizards' practice facility, the R.I.S.E. Demonstration Center, and Gateway DC, and it is the future home of the Residences at St. Elizabeth's. Buell also served as chair of D.C.'s Historic Preservation Review Board and earned a number of awards for her revitalization efforts—the Built by Women D.C. Award and Historic Preservation Review Board Chair's Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation among them.

Buell started her career as an attorney with Patton Boggs LLP, where she counseled institutional investors about real estate assets and private equity funds in the United States, South America, and Europe. She is a cum laude graduate of Spelman College and the Georgetown University Law Center.

Veronica O. Davis

Washington, D.C.

Davis is a self-described transportation nerd. She believes all people should have access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation. She has more than 16 years of experience in civil engineering and planning and is currently a co-owner and principal planning manager at Nspiregreen LLC.

At Nspiregreen, she is responsible for managing the multimodal transportation and community planning projects, which include surface transportation planning, policy development, and long-range planning. She was the principal-in-charge for D.C.'s Vision Zero Action Plans and for the city of Alexandria, Virginia. This position includes guiding the team to develop strategies that prioritize safety for people who are biking and walking.

Davis is a cofounder of Black Women Bike (BWB), an organization and movement that encourages African American women to use biking for health and wellness, as well as an alternative form of transportation for commuting. In less than two years, BWB has grown to more than 1,500 African American women ranging in age from late 20s to early 70s. She is also on the board for America Walks.

Davis earned her dual master's degrees (in engineering management and in regional planning) from Cornell University. She has a bachelor of science in civil engineering from the University of Maryland. She is a registered professional engineer in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia.

In July 2012, the White House recognized her as a Champion of Change and Transportation Innovator for her professional accomplishments and community advocacy in D.C. She currently lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband and dog.

Aletha Dunston

Indianapolis, Indiana

Dunston is the executive director of the Fort Harrison Reuse Authority in Lawrence, Indiana, which works to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Lawrence by facilitating the economic redevelopment of the former Fort Benjamin Harrison Army Base.

A certified planner with experience in planning, zoning, and community development, Dunston has served as the program manager for Indiana's \$28 million Community Development Block Grant program; as a community liaison for Indiana; and as the planning and community development director for the city of Marion, Indiana. For the latter, she wrote the first comprehensive plan for the city since 1961 while using in-house resources. She also contributed to several large-scale site redevelopment and residential clearance programs.

Dunston has served as a part of Indiana Main Street, the American Planning Association, and the Broad Ripple Village Association. She specializes in helping communities build capacity, identify strengths, and build on the characteristics that make them unique.

As a proud graduate of the College of Architecture and Planning at Ball State University, Dunston is currently enrolled in Butler University's MBA program. She continues to serve on the APA-IN State Planning Association board and strives to support programs that move Indiana and the Midwest forward.

Rosemarie Hepner

Washington, D.C.

Hepner is director of ULI's Terwilliger Center for Housing. She contributes to the Terwilliger Center's research, events, and annual housing awards programs. Her most recent work is the Yes in My Backyard report, which exemplifies strategies for states to support the creation and preservation of affordable housing options in their local communities.

Before joining ULI in February 2017, Hepner worked for two international development nonprofits, most recently as the international capital markets program specialist at Habitat for Humanity International. In that role, she supported the operations for the MicroBuild Fund (Habitat's \$100 million housing microfinance fund), and she managed the State of Housing Microfinance survey reports while conducting extensive research and data analysis.

Hepner holds a master's degree in city and regional planning from the Catholic University of America's School of Architecture and Planning, where her research focused on low-income housing practices and design. Her thesis examined housing reconstruction in informal settlements after the 2010 earthquakes in Haiti and Chile. She also holds a bachelor of arts from the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs.

Thomas Jansen

Los Angeles, California

Jansen is a director in HR&A Advisors' Los Angeles office. He leads market, financial feasibility, economic analysis, and implementation advisory to help public and private clients identify and implement real estate and economic development strategies. In addition to leading market and financial feasibility analyses for large-scale redevelopment projects across the western United States, Jansen frequently develops inclusionary affordable housing strategies on behalf of developers and municipalities.

Jansen has advised about a number of transit-oriented development projects in Southern California while supporting project teams as they create market-responsive development guidelines and corridor-wide economic development strategies that leverage increased connectivity to jobs, housing, and amenities. Past clients have included OmniTrans, a regional BRT operator, Los Angeles Metro, and Metrolink (Southern California's regional rail operator). Recently, he managed the development of Los Angeles's first economic development strategy, which includes focused actions to support the equitable growth of the city's diverse communities and to support local businesses and residents.

He received his master of architecture from the University of Pennsylvania and pursued coursework in real estate design and development at the Wharton School and at Penn's School of Design. He also holds a bachelor of arts in architecture, cum laude, from the University of Pennsylvania.

Emil Malazia

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

In addition to his position as research professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Department of City and Regional Planning, Malazia is president of Malazia & Associates LLC. His expertise spans the areas of regional economic development, real estate development, and downtown redevelopment. Over his career, he has conducted research; taught graduate-level and in-service courses; and engaged in consulting for private, nonprofit, public, and foundation clients. His current research and consulting practice focuses on adding vibrancy to downtowns and other major employment centers in the United States.

Malazia has written five books, including *Sustainable Development Projects* and *Understanding Local Economic Development*, as well as more than 170 scholarly articles and other publications. During university leaves, he has held positions as senior real estate adviser in a major life company, visiting professor, special assistant in federal service, and Fulbright Senior Scholar. He is a Fellow Member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and the American Real Estate Society. He is also a member of the American Planning Association, the International Economic Development Council, and the Urban Land Institute.

Malazia received his baccalaureate from Rutgers University and his master's degree and PhD from Cornell University. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves.

Paul Peters

Oakland, California

Peters is a landscape architect and design principal at Hood Design Studio in Oakland. He currently oversees the conceptual design and implementation of several innovative, complex, and thought-provoking projects. These projects include the highly anticipated International African American Museum in Charleston, renovation of the historic Oakland Museum of California, and Nvidia's new tech campus in Silicon Valley.

A geographer at heart, Peters explores ways of weaving together natural infrastructure and social systems with urban form. He has an adept ability to work across scales and typologies by using a layered design approach that seeks a hybridized outcome for the landscape. Whether he is working on community master plans, parks and plazas, or museums, this approach allows for existing neighborhoods and communities to be the main driver in the design of their landscapes while allowing new and latent ecologies and infrastructures to emerge.

Lance Robbins

Los Angeles, California

Robbins, who is Urban Smart Growth's principal and manager, founded that company more than a decade ago after rehabilitating greater than 6,000 distressed inner-city apartment units in Los Angeles across a 20-year span. A native of West Los Angeles, Robbins is a graduate of the University of California at Los Angeles, with a degree in economics and history and of the University of California at Berkeley's Boalt School of Law. He has practiced real estate creditors rights and learned how not to structure a real estate development business. The lesson was to buy ahead of, not in, the curve; to buy cheap; to keep leverage as low as possible; to stay in cyclically defensive properties such as multifamily residential and small industrial; and to cater to the creative class.

His opportunistic buying and cost-conscious rehabilitation of foreclosed and distressed inner-city Los Angeles apartments earned more than a 14,000 percent return on equity from 1995 to 2005, and it generated more than \$100 million in value. In 2003, Robbins used the proceeds of \$60 million in nonrecourse financing to go on a development spree that crystalized into the formation of Urban Smart Growth.

Gayle Starr

San Francisco, California

Starr is a managing director at Prologis. She has been responsible for initiating and negotiating the corporate lines of credit as well as overseeing all nonpublic debt internationally and domestically for Prologis and its co-investment funds. Starr has successfully designed and originated complex finance structures across eight funds globally and has orchestrated the corporate- and property-level financing for currencies in 14 countries, as well as being responsible for more than 40 lender relationships. Her previous experience in development, asset management, and acquisitions has facilitated an understanding of real estate operations.

Before joining Prologis, Starr was a vice president for a national development company with experience in major lease negotiations, development, partnership structuring, finance, and dispositions. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of California at San Diego and a JD degree from the University of California at Davis.



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