

AN ADVISORY SERVICES PANEL REPORT

Downtown Allentown Pennsylvania



Urban Land
Institute

Downtown Allentown Pennsylvania

Energizing the Vision for Downtown

March 21–26, 2004
An Advisory Services Panel Report

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

ULI—the Urban Land Institute is a non-profit research and education organization that promotes responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment.

The Institute maintains a membership representing a broad spectrum of interests and sponsors a wide variety of educational programs and forums to encourage an open exchange of ideas and sharing of experience. ULI initiates research that anticipates emerging land use trends and issues and proposes creative solutions based on that research; provides advisory services; and publishes a wide variety of materials to disseminate information on land use and development.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 23,000 members and associates from 80 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Professionals rep-

resented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students, and librarians. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of America's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

This Advisory Services panel report is intended to further the objectives of the Institute and to make authoritative information generally available to those seeking knowledge in the field of urban land use.

Richard M. Rosan
President

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About ULI Advisory Services

The goal of ULI's Advisory Services Program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 400 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfields redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's Advisory Services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI panel teams are interdisciplinary and typically include several developers, a landscape architect, a planner, a market analyst, a finance expert, and others with the niche expertise needed to address a given project. ULI teams provide a holistic look at development problems. Each panel is chaired by a respected ULI member with previous panel experience.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives; a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 75 key community representatives; and two days of formulating recommendations. Many 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, partic-

ipants 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, academicians, 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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Planning Department, and Linda Kauffman of Allentown Parking Authority.

The panel is indebted to the dozens of community, business, and government leaders who provided unique and valuable insights during the interview process. The panel thanks all of these people for offering their time and expertise, and for helping the panel understand the issues facing downtown Allentown from all perspectives.

Panel members appreciate the hospitality expended to them by the people, businesses, and government of Allentown, which made their stay enjoyable.

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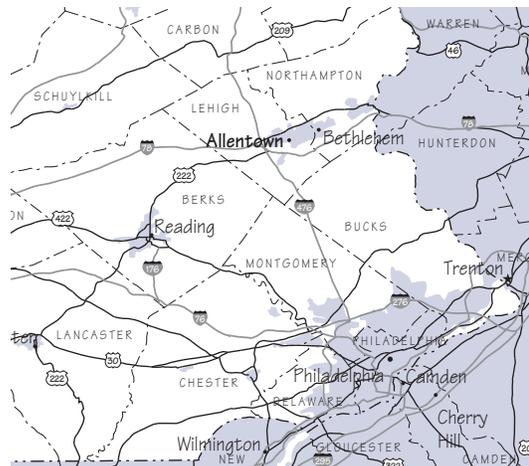
Foreword: The Panel's Assignment

The city of Allentown has been unusually active over the last seven years, undertaking numerous activities and programs focused on downtown. The list is long and comprehensive, and includes grant programs for façade improvements, loan programs for conversion of upper floors to housing, tax leniencies for development on particular sites, specific studies of downtown housing and retail markets, and a master plan for the cultural arts and entertainment district.

The overall guide to pursuing, developing, and/or implementing these programs has been the Hunter report, a 1997 consultant study. It is clear that this report has served the city well. Now, with a number of developments in place or well underway—the PPL Plaza, the streetscape improvements on Hamilton Street, the reuse of Hamilton Plaza Hotel, the new Lehigh County Historical Society museum, an addition to Symphony Hall, expansion of the Allentown Art Museum, the initial phase of the Arts Walk, and the America on Wheels Museum—the city believes it is time for an updated roadmap for the next round of action.

Certain key challenges remain. The city still struggles with attracting enough vibrant retail and commercial development to change the image of downtown from a place that “no one” comes to, to one that is a center of city life. Blessed with an array of organizations and departments enthusiastically interested in downtown, the city still must make a great effort to coordinate these interests for maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

In recognition of these challenges and the successes to date, the Allentown Economic Development Corporation (AEDC), in partnership with the city of Allentown, the county of Lehigh, and a group of private sector sponsors, asked the panel to assist in identifying key strategies that would result in bringing community and development in-



Above: Location map. At left: Regional map.

terest back to the downtown district. Specifically, the panel was asked to:

- Identify uses—commercial, residential, visitor, and higher education facilities—that can thrive in downtown Allentown;
- Recommend planning and design guidelines that support recommended market components, improve aesthetics, and improve circulation;
- Propose development strategies and specify priority projects; and



Above: The panel discusses observations during a walking tour of downtown Allentown. Right: Mayor Roy Afflerbach introduces the panel's final presentation.



- Provide implementation strategies that create structure and coordination among the large number of downtown supporters.

Context and Background Information

Downtown Allentown is centered along Hamilton Street from 4th Street to 13th Street. It is this street segment specifically that defines the health and image of downtown, both practically and perceptually. The briefing materials provided to the panel also defined downtown as including blocks north of Hamilton Street to Linden Street and south of Hamilton Street to Walnut Street.

Allentown is in southeastern Pennsylvania, about 80 miles west of New York City and Newark, and 60 miles north of Philadelphia. Over the past decade, Allentown has become attractive to a small but growing number of people who are employed in these major metropolitan areas and are

willing to trade a longer work commute for lower-priced housing. Still, Allentown and the surrounding Lehigh Valley are essentially a separate economy, providing employment for most of Allentown's resident population. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 78 percent of Allentown residents work in Lehigh County and an additional 11 percent work elsewhere in Lehigh Valley.

Allentown is the seat of Lehigh County and the largest of three cities in Lehigh Valley. Allentown's population, which was 206,632 in the 2000 U.S. Census, has remained fairly stable over the last ten years. Bethlehem, immediately east of the city, has a population of 71,329, and further east, Easton has a population of 26,263. About 35 percent of the population in the Valley resides in these three cities while 65 percent lives outside the cities' boundaries. It is interesting to note that Allentown is the third largest city in Pennsylvania, after Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, but it is closer in size to Erie, Reading, and Scranton than the two largest cities.

Downtown Allentown was once the commercial center of Lehigh Valley—the main shopping district and employment node. Hamilton Street hosted thriving retail with department stores and a variety of smaller stores, as well as the county courthouse, county government, city government, PPL headquarters, various bank regional office/service facilities, and Class A office space tenanted primarily by attorneys' offices who chose to be near the courthouse.

Downtown Allentown's role as a commercial center has dramatically been impacted by a series of developments, including major retail projects within two miles of the center, the demise of downtown department stores, the loss of a Class A office building to a sinkhole, and the development of suburban office parks. The courthouse remains, but attorneys do not appear to need immediate proximity as they once did. While specific changes in the city core would have, by themselves, impacted the downtown profile, development patterns elsewhere have seriously impaired the ability to easily replace those losses. Further, the demographics of the city have changed, with a predominantly lower-income ethnic population concentrated in downtown neighborhoods.

The new population could very well represent fresh opportunities, although the current perception is that these demographic changes have taken downtown Allentown one more step away from what it used to be. Further, a major concern voiced by the city and stakeholders is that the general public—seeing high vacancies and lack of foot traffic—perceives downtown to be unsafe. The city’s police data prove this to be unfounded. The panel believes that it will be critical to change this common perception as part of downtown’s revitalization, and it addresses the issue in its analysis and recommendations.

Overview and Summary of Recommendations

One of the strongest impressions the panel has of downtown Allentown is that of a place with extensive activity already underway, and of the positive momentum this has created. The panel supports the continuation of all programs and initiatives but offers recommendations regarding additional catalyst projects, priorities, and implementation structure.

From a broad perspective, the panel views the success of downtown Allentown as critical to the economic growth of Lehigh Valley. As the largest city in the Valley and one with the most extensive downtown infrastructure, a vibrant Allentown is both a symbol and a reflection of the general well-being of the area. Regardless of where Lehigh Valley residents live or work, a healthy urban core provides them with a unique blend of enriching amenities, facilities, and activities—culture, education, employment, recreation, homes, and a place to gather. With commitment from both the public and private sectors, the panel believes that downtown Allentown can, and will, become the most important urban center of Lehigh Valley.

Prior to developing specific recommendations, panel members identified the following development principles, intended for use by the city as it considers new downtown development proposals. They also served as guidelines for the panel's work:

- Downtown Allentown should be considered first for any development or relocation proposed in Lehigh County, i.e., Downtown First!
- Development should result in more people on Hamilton Street—a means to address the perceived lack of safety.
- Development should provide support for, and be connected to, existing and future facilities, thereby creating a place rather than individual projects.

- New projects should be designed to welcome pedestrians and create an environment that encourages downtown visits.

Prior to developing specific recommendations, the panel also drew up general supporting guidelines, as follows:

- Downtown should be safe, clean, and friendly. In other words, trash must be removed, sidewalks cleaned, and lighting improved on side streets.
- The Latino community should be recognized as a strong source of support for retail, housing, and new business. The “cultural divide” must be bridged.
- Signage for streets, places, and parking should be visible and say “we want you here” to both vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Specific development recommendations are made in the context of three districts—a concept drawn from previous planning documents and further refined during the course of the panel's study. Retail is addressed separately after the discussion of the districts as certain retail has a place throughout and near downtown.

The districts extend from about 4th Street to about 13th Street. An existing night club and entertainment district between Front and 4th streets is growing and developing based on its own energy and initiatives, and supports the three districts west of 4th Street. The panel believes that the segment of Hamilton Street from 4th to 13th streets represents the downtown core from a practical perspective and, therefore, this segment is the panel's primary focus. The panel notes, however, that activity to the east of this core area, notably the America on Wheels Museum and Lehigh Landing, is vital to the core in terms of linkages and influence. Unique regional attractions such as these, in close proximity to the downtown core, help in several ways: They improve the image of the general area; they expand the number of leisure and

recreational destinations, thereby creating a stronger overall destination; and they provide an additional visitor base for downtown attractions and facilities to draw on.

Commercial District

The panel recommends the development of two new anchor projects in the downtown commercial district (Hamilton Street from 7th through 10th streets). The first project should support the district's destination hotel, the Crowne Plaza. The second project should create a new destination. Both will bring new users to the PPL Plaza, the Crowne Plaza Hotel, the 800 block of Hamilton Street, and the Allentown Brew Pub now under construction—and will increase the number of people on the street. The first priority will be to develop a new conference and exhibit center, which will result in increased use of the hotel. A multipurpose venue should follow. The next step in realizing these projects will be research to determine the requirements of potential users.

The panel emphasizes the importance of completing pending office and retail projects—the 800 block and the Allentown Brew Pub—as well as leasing the 30,000 square feet at PPL Plaza. These are also catalyst projects for the district, and will play a key role in raising the level of daily activity.

When completed, the projects will provide a new environment, each giving people one more reason to come downtown.

The Arts District

The catalyst activity in the arts district (Hamilton Street from 4th Street to Center Square at 7th Street) primarily comprises the continuation, expansion, and coordination of a wide range of existing projects. The panel additionally recommends the introduction of several new projects into the district—a child-focused facility, an open-space amenity on the sinkhole site, relocation of existing festivals to the arts district, and an arts or Spanish-language theater. Panel members suggest the creation of a management position in support of the district's cultural activities. The new manager would coordinate and cross-promote arts and entertainment events to maximize their exposure and use. Numerous successful activities will be re-



Above: The 800 block of Hamilton Street is already undergoing revitalization, including: conversion of the old Harold's Furniture building into a brew pub, apartments, and offices; and remodeling of the corner property for a mix of office, residential, and retail uses. At left: The Baum School of Art has been a fixture in Allentown for almost 80 years, and at its current location—5th and Linden streets—for almost 20 years. It is one of the key anchors of the arts district.

quired to create a true destination. The panel views the arts district as one of downtown's signature areas, and makes its recommendations with the intent to support and encourage the momentum already under way.

Library Residential District

The catalyst for activity in the library residential district (Hamilton Street from 10th to 13th streets) around Allentown's main library is housing. Housing in its many forms—townhomes, condominiums, and apartments—will bring more people into the area and transform the image of downtown. The housing stock around the Main Library can be increased through infill development, rehabilitation, code enforcement, and the conversion of commercial upper floors to residential use. In-town resi-

The Main Library, located on Hamilton Street between 12th and 13th streets, serves as a community center for nearby neighborhoods and provides continuity between residential areas and downtown.



dential development has been shown to be one of the essential components in the revitalization of older downtowns.

Diverse urban housing attracts a mix of professionals, students, and artists—including those who are looking for move-up housing from nearby neighborhoods, those moving in from other metropolitan areas, and those who are looking for a change from suburban communities. This area will be more visually appealing and will become more vital as housing availability and choices increase, and more people consider downtown their home.

Retail

The panel considered the current downtown retail potential from two perspectives—that of the downtown neighborhood and of the larger region.

To serve the population on the fringe of downtown, the panel recommends development of a modern community shopping center, optimally located north of Hamilton Street and in close proximity to the proposed Multi-Modal Transportation Center. It is likely that local-serving stores now on Hamilton Street would relocate to such a center, allowing for a general upgrade of retail establishments on Allentown’s main street.

While the panel does not believe that traditional retail is coming back to Hamilton Street, the panel sees the potential for niche specialty stores supported by a wider market. Growth in the current number of specialty stores will most likely follow a larger “driver” and therefore the panel’s recommendations are conditional on particular changes downtown.

Implementation Strategies

In drawing up recommendations, the panel also focused on implementation strategies that will help Allentown realize its revitalization goals. The panel’s recommended strategies for moving downtown Allentown into the future are summarized below:

- The private sector organizes, leads, and supports a vision for downtown.
- Allentown Economic Development Corporation’s sole purpose is to plan and implement critical downtown development projects.
- Public agencies with particular relevance to downtown revitalization coordinate and focus their efforts.
- A “Downtown Summit” educates the citizens of Allentown and Lehigh Valley on the many positive developments occurring downtown—and simultaneously invites them to become involved in shaping downtown’s future.
- A clear and concise agenda specifies exact goals.
- An independent financial expert evaluates financing tools now in place as well as effective tools not yet in use for downtown Allentown.
- Better marketing efforts are used to promote downtown and address both consumers and businesses.
- Universities engage in downtown revitalization, whether through location or field projects, thereby providing fresh ideas and insights.
- The city recognizes that any efforts made in downtown must be supported by long-term economic development strategies for the city as a whole.

Downtown revitalization often is the result of one project/one step at a time, and Allentown has clearly taken many steps forward. The city’s agencies and leaders have the experience, the interest, and the resources to continue progress—and to make downtown a vital center of the city and the Valley.

Market Potential

Downtowns across the country are experiencing renewed interest from businesses and the general public. Many are successfully being transformed from abandoned cores into vibrant centers of activity. Given downtown Allentown's fitting role as the center of the city and Lehigh Valley, the panel evaluated a range of markets and activities to determine how they can contribute to energizing downtown. Members considered the office market, retail market, hospitality market, residential market, and arts and entertainment.

Office Market

One essential component of vibrant downtowns is an active employment base, which provides daytime use of buildings and infrastructure, and supports other ongoing activities such as restaurants, retail, and service businesses.

Lehigh Valley had 324,247 jobs in 2000, according to the Lehigh Valley Commission. The area's unemployment rate was 5.4 percent in 2002, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. Lehigh County accounted for 65 percent or 210,244 of the Valley's jobs and had an unemployment rate similar to that of the Valley. Allentown accounted for 26 percent or 55,498 of Lehigh County's jobs.

Demand for Office Space

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission projects a growth of over 12,000 jobs in Lehigh Valley by 2010. These figures belie the fact that certain sectors such as finance, insurance, real estate, and services are projected to grow, while others, such as manufacturing, transportation, utilities, and wholesale and retail sectors are projected to decrease. The growth sectors all rely heavily on office workers.

Downtown Allentown should and can be a reasonable alternative to suburban development for re-

gional growth sectors. It is centrally located in the Valley, allowing employers to draw residents from throughout the region. Downtown can offer a unique environment, one that provides accessibility to lunchtime eating places, opportunities to shop and stroll, and proximity to other businesses. At this point, however, downtown faces stiff competition from suburban office parks, as evidenced by the larger number of workers outside downtown. Suburban settings often offer parking directly in front of the building and newer space, and also most critical at this time—a sense of safety. In 2000, only some 6,000 persons, representing about 11 percent of the city's total workforce, were employed downtown. Much of this is government- or utility-based employment, neither of which is projected to grow. Further, as suburban office nodes strengthen, employee bases downtown become further weakened. Major office buildings of 40,000 square feet or more are concentrated outside of downtown, mainly along Route 22.

Downtown office employment declined sharply in the 1990's due to the collapse of a Class A high-rise office building into a sinkhole, bank mergers, and simultaneous growth of suburban office parks. Since then at least some of the empty bank buildings have been reused for nonoffice space, and downtown's employment base appears little changed, if at all. The most significant event was the recent relocation of PPL employees into a new Class A building, developed by Liberty Property Trust, just east of the PPL tower. This move consolidated existing PPL employees from scattered downtown sites and did not represent a net increase in employment.

Currently, many of the largest employers in Allentown are on Hamilton Street or within a few blocks. However, they are, for the most part, entities in owned, single-purpose buildings with little need for outside space. Still, their location downtown provides prestige and stability, and it brings peo-

Near right: This renovation and remodeling project at 818-822 Hamilton is in a Keystone Opportunity Zone, a site-specific state designation that reduces or minimizes state and local taxes. Far right: The PPL office tower at Hamilton and 9th streets stands out as the visual anchor for downtown when approached from outside Allentown.



ple in on a daily basis. These employers include Lehigh County, PPL, Sacred Heart Hospital/Health Care System, Good Shepard Home/Rehabilitation Hospital, the city of Allentown, and Morning Call. Other large employers in Allentown, such as Mack Trucks, would not require space downtown given the nature of their activities.

The panel notes the importance of new office space that is available, or coming on line soon, on Hamilton Street. This includes the new building developed for PPL by Liberty, with 30,000 square feet of Class A office space available for lease. As Liberty is seeking a single tenant for the entire floor, this space has been on the market for some time. A pending rehabilitation project is located across the street from PPL at 818-822 Hamilton. Both projects are on designated Keystone Opportunity Zones (KOZs), which indicates to the panel the value of this program to downtown revitalization.

The panel also is aware of efforts to lease vacant older and rehabbed office space within several blocks to the east of this node. This kind of availability will begin the process of providing more competitive space downtown.

Recommendations

Based on the observations and analysis discussed, the panel makes the following recommendations:

- Create a dense node of employment and a visually appealing new image in order to reestablish downtown as a place to do business. This can be accomplished by filling available new and rehabbed space and complimenting the PPL office cluster by completing the 800 block. The quality of the new PPL building and the public plaza creates an anchor for this node. It can further be anchored by the PPL tower and Crowne Plaza Hotel.
- Direct any subsequent office development to locations in close proximity to the new PPL building and plaza.
- Seek the support of the largest non-government downtown employers such as PPL and the nearby health care institutions to promote their location as a viable place for business.
- Make downtown Allentown the priority of all Lehigh Valley economic development agencies when they assist prospective employers looking to locate in the Valley.

- Develop awareness among businesses outside the city center that they have extensive parking opportunities downtown. Outreach to realtors, the Chamber or Commerce, etc. Place signage throughout downtown to insure awareness and invite use.
- Continue to address the perceived lack of safety through media coverage of new development of any kind in the downtown area.

Consider a program like Philadelphia’s Ambassador Program as a means to address safety concerns. The program’s Web site provides the following description:

In their instantly recognizable and distinctive teal uniforms, the Center City District’s community service representatives (CSRs) provide public safety, hospitality, and outreach services within the boundaries of the Center City District seven days a week. Patrolling on foot, they are equally prepared to direct a lost tourist, provide outreach to homeless individuals, or radio police as necessary. Uniformed, but unarmed, the CSRs are an effective deterrent to crime by serving as the ‘eyes and ears’ of the Philadelphia Police Department. CSRs also serve as goodwill ambassadors to the public.

Such a program is most effective after efforts have been implemented to keep downtown clean.

Retail Market

The potential for retail development in downtown was one of AEDC’s and the city’s main interests due to the area’s long and distinctive history as the primary retail center for the city and the entire Lehigh Valley.

Three factors affect the current and near-term market for retail: existing and projected supply in the surrounding area as well as in downtown; demand generated by the resident population base both in nearby neighborhoods and regionwide; and demand generated by office workers and the hotel. Each of these factors is addressed below.

Competitive Supply

Downtown’s distinctive role as a retail center appeared to end by 1996, when Hess’s—the last of the major downtown anchors—closed. This also

Lehigh Valley Shopping Centers

Major Shopping Centers	Size ¹
Lehigh Valley Mall, Whitehall	1,100,000
Whitehall Mall, Whitehall	665,985
MacArthur Shopping Center, Allentown	604,100
Northhampton Crossings, Easton	522,170
Palmer Mall, Easton	458,542
South Mall, Allentown	378,000
Westgate Mall, Bethlehem	270,000
MacArthur Town Centre, Allentown	260,000
Tilghman Square, Whitehall	250,000

Neighborhood and Community Shopping Centers

Allen Street Shopping Center	46,500
Airport Shopping Center	75,000
American Parkway Shopping Center	80,000 ²
Crest Plaza Shopping Center	156,000
K-Mart Plaza	161,218
Mountainville Shopping Center	115,000
Parkway Shopping Center	135,000

¹ Square feet of gross leasable area.

² Estimated.

Source: National Research Board, Shopping Center Directory, 2001.

led to the closing of many smaller shops. At the same time, regional and community-serving shopping centers were developed outside the city core, following residential development and locating where vacant land was readily available. Emerging suburban shopping centers not only offered an alternative to downtown shopping, they eventually supplanted it, providing the type of “modern” shopping environment that consumers had come to expect and be comfortable with. It is worth noting that this shift in consumer support from downtown to the suburbs was repeated across the country over the last several decades.

The area’s existing retail stock is extensive and close to the city, as indicated by the examples of

The Bay Leaf is an established, successful destination restaurant in downtown Allentown.



major and neighborhood shopping centers in the figure on page 15.

Even today, the number of suburban shopping centers continues to grow in Lehigh Valley. As discussed in the February 24, 2004 issue of *Shopping Centers Today*, three separate open-air, lifestyle-type centers have been proposed in the Valley. While it is likely that only one will actually be built in the near future, this simultaneous interest is indicative of the growing strength of the retail market. The development teams for each of the three proposed centers have a track record of success with such generally upscale formats. Bayer Properties and Forest City Enterprises propose an 800,000-square foot open-air center called The Summit in Bethlehem Township on Route 33, and are aiming for a 2006 opening. Poag & McEwen, the firm that originated the term “lifestyle center” proposes a 700,000 square foot lifestyle center in Center Valley off of I-78, with a targeted opening in 2005. Stanberry Development proposes a 410,000 square foot hybrid lifestyle-power center at the intersection of Routes 22 and 512 in Hanover Township, also with a planned opening in 2005.

Freestanding “big-box” stores continue to proliferate, with two proposals for the Leigh Parkway/Lehigh Street area—one for a Wal-Mart, the other for a Lowe’s.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that demand for downtown retail in Allentown has not disappeared completely. On the one hand, a new concentration of retail outlets appealing to the lower income groups in nearby neighborhoods has emerged. Bargain stores in particular are abundant, although they do not necessarily sell at bargain prices. On the other hand, a group of retailers have successfully appealed to a citywide market for “funky” clothing and unique merchandise, such as Garden Gate Natural Food, Planet Earth, Mish Mash, and a new children’s clothing store that sells baptismal outfits. Also, long established retailers who have concentrated on goods and services with a stable demand, such as a jewelry store offering clock repair services, have found a niche that is commercially successful. More of these establishments could operate successfully and will likely be identified in the upcoming downtown retail study.

Destination restaurants also have found a niche in downtown Allentown. Through the interview process, the panel learned that at least two long-time destination restaurants, the Federal Grill and Bayleaf, are located downtown, and a new restaurant, the Loop, has recently opened in the area. The panel also learned that the Allentown Brew Pub, with 300 restaurant seats, is under construction as part of the conversion of the Harold’s Furniture building, and the leasing of space for a large-scale destination restaurant is under discussion for the new PPL building. The brew pub is particularly noteworthy because it is locally owned by the family who started and runs the successful Bethlehem Brew Works. The placement of their second facility on Hamilton Street is a strong positive statement that a location in downtown Allentown is viable when serving the wider region.

In addition to recognizing successful individual stores as a starting point, it is important to recognize that the older built environment along Hamilton Street provides a potential environment similar to that created by “new” concepts in shopping centers. Such concepts include the lifestyle cen-

ters noted earlier, town centers, main street developments, and mixed-use developments. They emphasize, among other things, public gathering spaces, entertainment in the form of a leisurely physical environment and restaurants, pedestrian-scale and pedestrian-friendly layouts, and unique design and architecture. Many are based on what older downtowns such as Allentown's once offered. Because Hamilton Street's older built environment remains largely intact, it will provide an ideal setting for these "new" concepts.

Demand from Residents

To become a true center for the city and region, downtown Allentown must serve all segments of the population—both close-in neighborhoods and communities across the region. It is important, however, to understand the size and nature of these constituencies.

Population. Allentown had a population of 106,632 in 2000, according to the U.S. Census—a modest increase of 1.5 percent over the 1990 Census population. Little growth is currently projected for Allentown over the next decade, most likely due a diminished supply of large tracts of vacant land.

According to the city's statistical information, the greatest population growth occurred in neighborhoods abutting or close to downtown (referred to as "Center City"), where the population increased by 1,273 people—a 3.8 percent increase since 1990. With 33,671 people, Center City was also the area with the largest population in 2000, home to 32 percent of the city's population.

Lehigh County, the county in which Allentown is located, and Northampton County, the adjacent county to the north, make up the Lehigh Valley, a region with 579,156 residents. The region itself grew 7.6 percent since 1990. Projections for the Valley indicate that its population will grow another 7.6 percent and reach 620,471 by 2010, with 42 percent of the growth taking place in Lehigh County.

Households. In contrast to the slight citywide population increase, the number of households in Allentown decreased slightly, by 1.7 percent, between 1990 and 2000. Similar to changes in population, the greatest change occurred in Center

City, where the number of households decreased by 8.9 percent. These seemingly divergent trends are reflected in the fact that the city's average household size increased from 2.36 to 2.42 persons per household, and average household size in Center City increased from 2.47 to 2.73 persons per household. These increases signal the arrival of more children, a trend likely to continue in the near future.

Income. Overall income of Allentown's residents is somewhat lower than that of Lehigh and Northampton counties. The per-capita income in Allentown was \$15,869 in 1999 and the median household income was \$32,078. The per-capita income of Lehigh County residents was \$21,897 and the median household income was \$43,449. Per-capita income of Northampton County was \$21,399 and the median household income was \$45,324.

Income is not evenly distributed throughout Allentown—the neighborhoods immediately north and east of downtown are the poorest in the city.

Ethnicity. Over one-half of Allentown's Latino population currently lives in Center City. Overall, 24.4 percent of Allentown's population is Latino, a change from 1990 when 11.7 percent of the population was Latino.

Demand from Other Activities

Downtown workers are important as a source of daytime patronage. Although downtown employment has changed little over the last eight years, several recent and pending projects will stimulate growth of this daytime population. Occupancy of the 30,000 square-foot space at the Liberty building will potentially add 100 to 130 office employees. The new KNBT bank, restaurant, and personal service outlet in the Liberty building will add another 20 to 50 new employees. The relocation of PennDOT into older buildings vacated by PPL will add some 300 additional employees to the downtown area. Finally, the redevelopment of the 800 block will add employees, although the exact configuration of the buildings is not known at this time.

Guests at the Crowne Plaza Hotel also are an important source of retail patronage, particularly for eating establishments. Future developments in

the arts district and events-oriented development also will provide additional support for retail.

Recommendations

In general, retail is a “follower” of rooftops and office space rather than a leader, unless there are unusual circumstances—those simply do not exist in Allentown. Consequently, the historic retail function of downtown Allentown can no longer be re-created. Moreover, it is obvious to the panel, based on our local inspections, a review of dominant market factors, and our experience, that traditional retailing is not coming back to downtown Allentown.

To draw up meaningful recommendations, the panel considered downtown retail potential from two perspectives—that of downtown neighborhood residents and of the larger regional population.

The panel recommends development of a modern community shopping center anchored by a major supermarket, drug store, and a range of convenience merchandise outlets, as well as personal and financial services to serve the new residents who have migrated to downtown’s fringe neighborhoods. The recommended shopping center should provide between 120,000 to 150,000 square feet of gross leasable area and preferably be developed north of Hamilton Street. A location in proximity to the Multi-Modal Transportation Center may be of particular interest because of its accessibility by car as well as public transit.

The most important feature of such a shopping center will be its appeal to the neighborhood customer base. The high concentration of Latino residents in proximity to the site, and to downtown Allentown in general, should provide direction for the tenant mix. The development of the shopping center will likely lead to relocations of neighborhood retail from Hamilton Street to the recommended site, which would be a desirable change facilitating the upgrading of retail on Hamilton Street.

To encourage niche market specialty stores that could be supported by a wider market, the panel recommends the following initiatives, each to succeed the establishment of a larger “driver:”

- After the pending two restaurants are firmly established, consider expansion and promotion of existing destination restaurants to create a “Restaurant Row.” The key point here is to wait until after the two new restaurants have proven successful.
- After a second college (satellite) campus locates in downtown Allentown, encourage the establishment of eating places nearby that appeal to college students.
- After an increase in residential development in the downtown area, either through upper floor conversions to lofts or through new townhouse clusters, pursue the addition of convenience-oriented retail space, personal services, and limited medical and dental services for the local population.
- After further development of the arts district and upper floor lofts for artist residences, encourage district retail that specializes in locally created art, commercial art, and antiques.

Finally, the panel understands that the city is in the process of contracting with a consulting firm for a detailed study of the downtown retail market. The panel recommends that final, specific direction be taken from this study.

Hospitality Market

Based on interviews with industry participants, the panel learned that Lehigh Valley’s 2003 hotel occupancy rate was 63 percent, reflecting over 850,000 room nights. The overwhelming bulk of visitors (88 percent) drive to the Valley, with the majority (60 percent) traveling from a starting point within the Middle Atlantic region. The importance of the visitor industry is suggested by the economic impact of these visits—in 2001, the most recent year for which data is available, visitors to Lehigh Valley provided well over \$500 million in direct or indirect sales, creating almost 9,000 jobs and generating almost \$100 million in tax revenues.

Hotel facilities in downtown Allentown function in several ways. They provide local businesses with rooms for incoming business trips and for off-site

meetings, and they provide facilities for visitors to Allentown, whether for leisure, business, or conference/convention trips. The hotel guests are, in turn, an additional source of demand for other downtown activity, particularly restaurants.

Downtown now has a first-class, newly renovated Crowne Plaza hotel with 229 rooms, well poised to capture a share of the current visitors and to increase visitor presence downtown. Prior to the re-opening of the Crowne Plaza, no other hotels were located within walking distance of Hamilton Street between Front and 13th streets. The Crowne Plaza offers meeting rooms that can accommodate 900 people, but cannot provide for exhibit space at the same time or for groups larger than 900.

Maintaining and expanding support for the hotel will be a critical to energizing downtown. The provision of additional space for exhibits and meeting space could be a means to provide that additional support.

Recommendations

The panel considers a conference and exhibit facility to be a viable option in downtown Allentown and recommends that the city undertake the next level of research. This would entail evaluating existing conference and exhibit facilities in Lehigh Valley as far as level of use, user profile, and type of space and services now offered, as well as identifying users not now serviced by the existing facilities.

Development of such a facility adjacent to, or in some way directly accessible to, the Crowne Plaza would be optimal. The panel recommends that Hamilton Mall and the two buildings between the hotel and the mall be investigated as possible sites, and that potential linkage be studied.

The owner and manager of the hotel should be a primary participant in discussions regarding a conference and exhibit facility.

The panel also recommends that free or reduced rate parking be explored for downtown guests. As the vast majority of guests from outside Lehigh Valley drive to the area, parking costs are likely to be an important factor in their lodging decisions.

Residential Market

Residential development has been shown to be one of the key components of vibrant downtown districts. In fact, in many cases residential development is the anchor. The panel understands that the city is in the process of contracting with a consulting firm for a detailed study of the downtown residential market, so that a quantitative approach to discussing this market would be redundant. Instead the panel focused on highlighting promising niche market types that may be overlooked because of a lack of supporting historical evidence locally.

Recent Market Activity

First, the panel noted numerous nascent residential activities in and surrounding downtown, all of which point to a beginning of the type of residential mix a vibrant downtown requires:

Lofts. The panel observed the following nascent loft activity: redevelopment of the Schoen's Furniture building into 30 loft apartments; renovation of a former mill at 128-132 North 8th Street into 20 loft apartments; and renovation of the Harold's Furniture building to include 12 loft-style apartments above the new Allentown Brew Pub and restaurant.

These projects are supported by the Upper Floor for Housing Program—which provides no-interest loans of \$5 per square foot of rehabilitated interior space, not to exceed \$75,000 per project—and/or by the Pennsylvania Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) program.

Seniors' Housing. The panel observed the following nascent housing activity for seniors: renovation of the Trojan Powder and First National Bank buildings into 62 apartments for the elderly. This project is supported by the KOZ program.

Rehab in Old Allentown. The panel observed the following nascent rehab activity in Old Allentown: homeowners are undertaking rehabilitation of older homes.

Weed and Seed. The panel observed the following nascent "weed and seed" activity: systematic code inspections in target area; and secured Lead Paint Remediation Grant from HUD for target area.

Near right: An example of a private home renovation taking place in downtown Allentown. Far right: Pennrose Properties, the largest developer and manager of residential properties in the state, has expressed interest in converting these two buildings into apartments for seniors.



Proposal for Infill Townhomes. The panel observed the following nascent infill townhome activity: a well-known suburban developer, Nic Zawarski & Sons, is interested in placing 34 townhomes on KOZ sites near Walnut and 8th streets. The sites are currently surface parking lots.

Proposal for Luxury Apartments. The panel observed the following nascent luxury apartment activity: City Line Construction's proposal for the 800 block of Hamilton Street includes four luxury apartments.

Emerging Demographic Trends

Second, the panel reviewed the population segments that demographers have identified as new sources of demand for downtown and urban housing:

“Young Literati.” A mix of young executives, professionals, and students who live in multifamily apartments, condos, and townhouses near private urban universities. They have few children. They are free to pursue their interests in art, fitness, and travel.

“Bohemian Mix.” An integrated mixture of writers, artists, students, executives, and actors. A group that is dominated by singles, and has the second lowest index for children.

“Urban Achievers.” A bimodal group with a young/old profile, single students mixed with older professionals in business, finance, and public service.

A thriving arts district, an inventory of commercial and residential properties with historical and/ or architectural significance, and relatively low acquisition costs will be prerequisites for attracting these segments of the market to downtown.

Further, the panel notes the small but growing number of transplants from New York and New Jersey, many of whom still work in those metropolitan areas. The diminished supply of available land in Allentown and the urban orientation of these newcomers also points to a market segment that can be serviced well by a range of downtown housing opportunities.



A view of Symphony Hall from a segment of the Arts Walk.

Recommendations

The panel considers it especially important that Allentown's Latino neighborhoods be supported through residential improvement programs. Ongoing upper story conversions and new development on Hamilton Street should support all segments of the market. Both the nearby and larger area markets will be well-served by development of infill townhome and multifamily housing. These types of housing provide an attractive alternative to single-family homes in the suburbs. They also provide a larger number of units per single development and create a significant visual and neighborhood impact. Therefore, the panel recommends that the city put a premium on completion of the 34 townhomes and identify other possible multifamily sites in the vicinity.

Arts and Entertainment

The panel was particularly interested in existing arts and entertainment facilities and programs, and the extensive plans already in place, as these can differentiate, define, and energize a downtown.

The panel views the arts district as one of downtown's signature areas—a destination that can draw people from throughout the region. There is a greater concentration and diversity of arts and entertainment facilities in downtown Allentown than in any other place in Lehigh Valley. As originally conceived, the district was to be built around an “Arts Walk.” The panel believes that the linkages will be reinforced and expanded by the expansion of the Arts Walk, programming of the Arts Park, and by targeted areas of additional arts development. Visitors to the district, in turn, stimulate the development of restaurants and new retail.

There is no movie theater in downtown Allentown. The existing demand is currently served by large-scale, multiplex theaters located in Lehigh Valley Mall. Due to the distribution territories for first-run movies existing at this time, which the panel has not investigated in detail, such a first-run theater may not be feasible downtown. Nevertheless a second-run arts movie house or Spanish-language theater with two or three screens

may well be warranted, but will need further investigation.

Recommendations

The panel considers it important to improve coordination and cross-promotion of existing arts and entertainment events, and to expand the programming of Symphony Hall and other adjacent facilities. The relocation of some festival activities now taking place outside downtown to the arts district would also strengthen this area. Board members and directors of all arts institutions should be primary participants in discussions of expanded programming and cross-promotion opportunities.

Subsequent to the enhancement of existing facilities, programs, and activities, the addition of an appropriate regional attraction to downtown Allentown could significantly add to the revitalization of the area. Of greatest interest would be a multipurpose venue offering a large range of popular events. These could include concert performance presentations with broad appeal—musicals, traveling Broadway productions, and fairs and exhibitions, as well as sporting events. A new facility incorporating the latest technology regarding lighting, sound, state-of-the-art electronics and alternative, flexible configurations would provide a distinct advantage over any existing facility in Lehigh Valley.

The greatest benefit to downtown Allentown would be achieved if such a facility could be located on a site bordering Hamilton Street. Due to the parking requirement of such a venue and the fact that most large parking structures in proximity to Hamilton Street are underused in the even-

ing, it would be unnecessary to build new parking if the multipurpose facility was located nearby. Potential sites may include the 0.86-acre vacant parcel immediately east of the new PPL building, and abutting properties directly adjacent to an 800-car public parking garage. Several other locations could potentially be assembled but may require more demolition.

A well-operated venue of this type may offer 120 to 150 events annually in its introductory period, with an even higher number once maturity is reached. The addition of several hundred or even a thousand persons to Hamilton Street during evening hours, on a frequent basis, would represent a vast improvement over current conditions. Its multiplier effect would have a very beneficial impact on the hospitality industry. Such activity also would contribute to a perception of greater security, which usually results from increased pedestrian traffic on the street.

The panel also considers it important to offer children a broader range of entertainment options than are currently available downtown. The panel recommends that the city explore development of an attraction of interest to children such as a children's museum or a "Discovery Zone" facility, or a technical (how things work) museum. An attraction for families, including children, will add to the overall cultural offerings of the area.

The panel recommends that a traffic study be undertaken to determine the ability of downtown streets to accommodate such events.

Planning and Design

Three planning and design tools are specifically relevant to the city's initiatives in downtown Allentown: a vision plan; connections and linkages to the larger area; and design and development guidelines.

Vision Plan

The Allentown vision plan shows the location of, and relationships among, various opportunity areas suggested by the built environment.

Library/Residential Area

The panel took particular note of the Main Library and its vicinity between 10th and 13th streets. This neighborhood around the library is already well established and it bridges Hamilton Street. The street's scale and character are compatible with the qualities of a vibrant urban neighborhood. Building size and distribution allow in sun and light, with opportunities for small shops, on-street parking, and street trees. The library serves as a community center and magnet for nearby residential areas, extending the urban fabric to downtown. Neighborhood residents use the library and support small businesses and restaurants nearby.

Infill opportunities in the mid-block regions around Maple and Court streets, and architecturally significant buildings appropriate for renovation, will allow for further strengthening the residential character of the area. The plaza space in front of the library provides an opportunity for outdoor gatherings, with perhaps a café on the ground floor and vendors, food carts, and outdoor tables bringing activity out onto the street.

Business Core

The concentration of office space and commercial amenities provides a business core for downtown between 7th and 10th streets. The PPL tower, the new Liberty office building, and the Crowne Plaza

Hotel anchor this area. The height of the tower, the excellent design of the Liberty building, and the open space of the plaza create a strong central point. Infill and rehabilitation projects for additional office space and supporting amenities, such as a conference and exhibition space, would encourage and expand recognition of this area as the business core.

The multipurpose venue recommended in the previous chapter, while not directly a business amenity, would provide nighttime support for restaurants in this area. Use of the undeveloped site next to the PPL Plaza for such a facility is appropriate because it requires less demolition than other downtown sites while allowing for use of one of the largest existing parking structures.

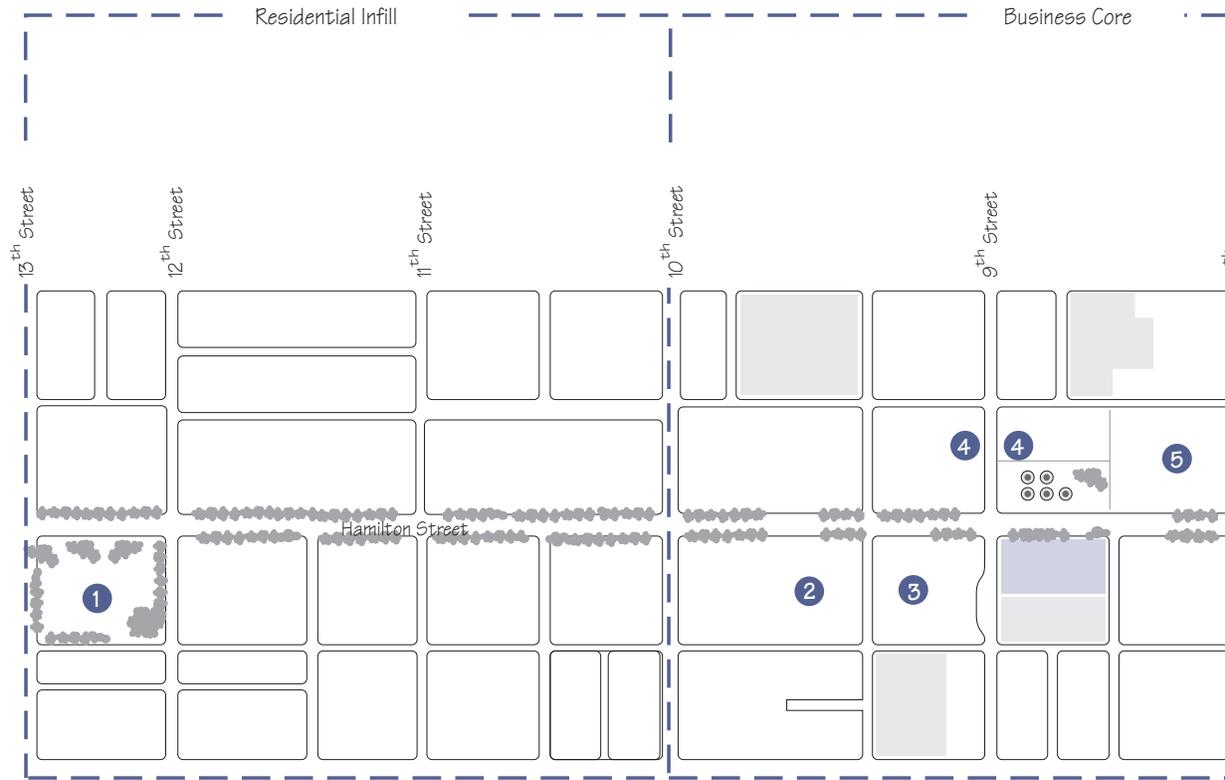
Center Square

Center Square—the intersection of Hamilton and Seventh streets—marks the main southbound entrance into downtown. This is the historic crossroads of the city, clearly designated by the historic monument. The panel believes that there are some unique opportunities in this area due to the sink hole on Seventh Street.

Seventh Street, beyond being the southbound artery into downtown, is the linkage between the ethnic neighborhood to the north and the Hamilton Street corridor. The panel proposes an active public open space on the sinkhole site to provide an open space amenity in the area, as well as to encourage citywide markets and festivals. Light-frame park structures should be built to accommodate a variety of events such as flower shows and farmers' markets, etc. The sinkhole site is considered appropriate for park space because it is unlikely to be practical as a development site.

It will be important that streetscape improvements in this area be continued.

Vision plan.



- Key:
- Parking
 - Apartments
 - Office
 - Mixed-Use Office/Retail
 - Multi-Modal Transportation Center
 - Arts Walk
- 1. Library
 - 2. Conference/Exhibition Facility
 - 3. Crowne Plaza Hotel
 - 4. PPL
 - 5. Multipurpose Venue
 - 6. Educational
 - 7. Symphony Hall
 - 8. Infill
 - 9. The Baum School of Art
 - 10. Allentown Art Museum
 - 11. City Hall
 - 12. City Square

Arts District

Symphony Hall, the Allentown Art Museum, the Baum School, and the Lehigh County Historical Society museum form the heart of the arts district centered on the Arts Park—the “living room” of the area. Conversion opportunities, from commercial use to residential and/or artist workspace, are extensive in this area and are key to expanding the district. Infill potential exists at 6th and Linden streets for additional artist space.

Civic Center

The proximity of federal, county, and city buildings creates a de facto civic center—a post office, the old and new county courthouses, and City Hall. The old county courthouse and post office in particular are attractive landmarks for this area. Given that government activity is not expected to

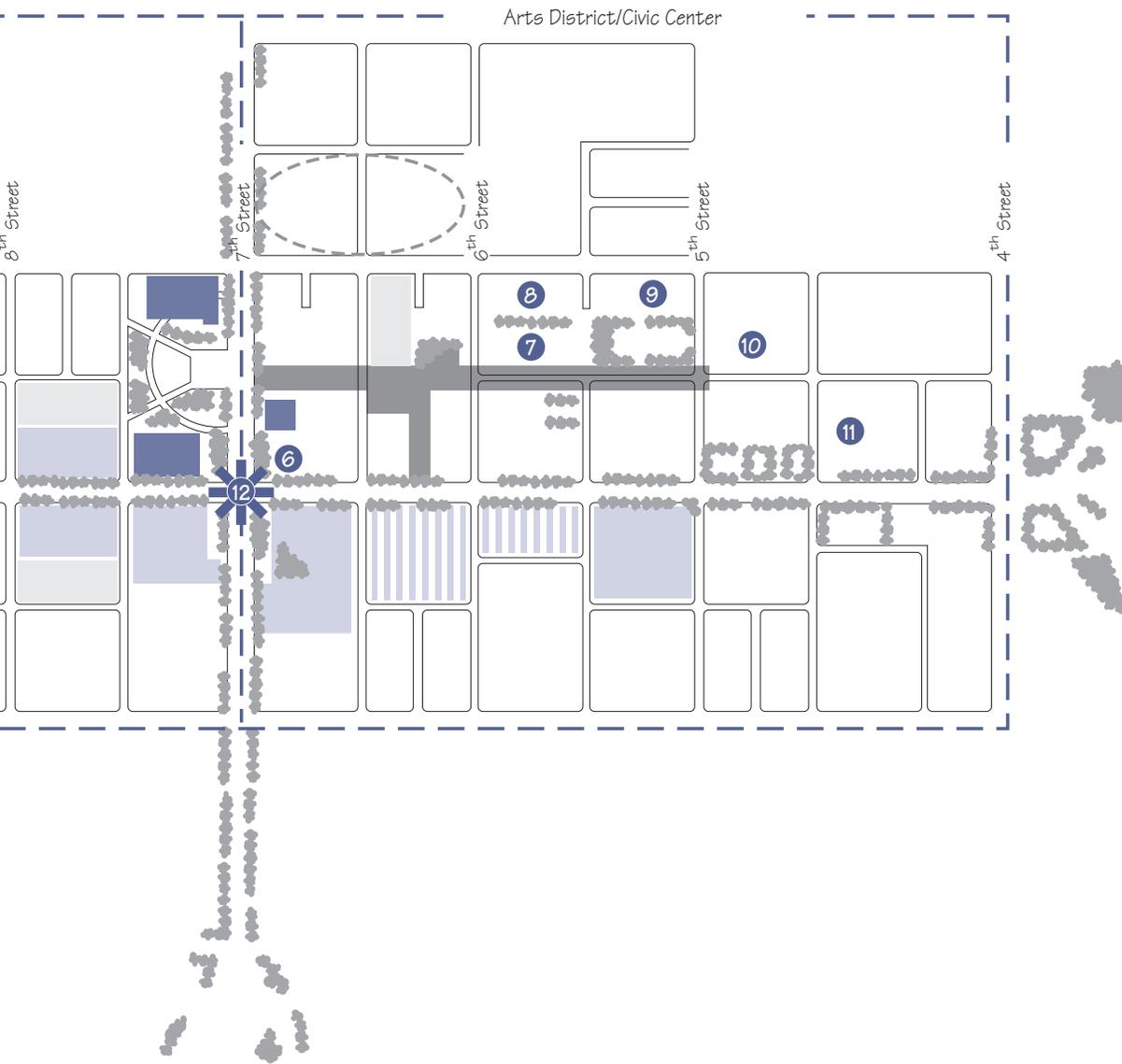
grow, little change is expected in the civic center, but all together the current activity provides a distinct downtown anchor.

Connections and Linkages

In order to keep the city’s revitalization focus on Hamilton Street, activities that may take place outside the downtown core should be carefully evaluated to ensure that they support downtown, or at a minimum, do not divert resources and energy from it. Potential activities to monitor fall into three categories: land use; transportation and access; and greenways and place-making destinations.

Land Use

In order to create a healthy city core—located within a five-minute walk from Center Square—future development activities in the area must be guided by two supporting principles:

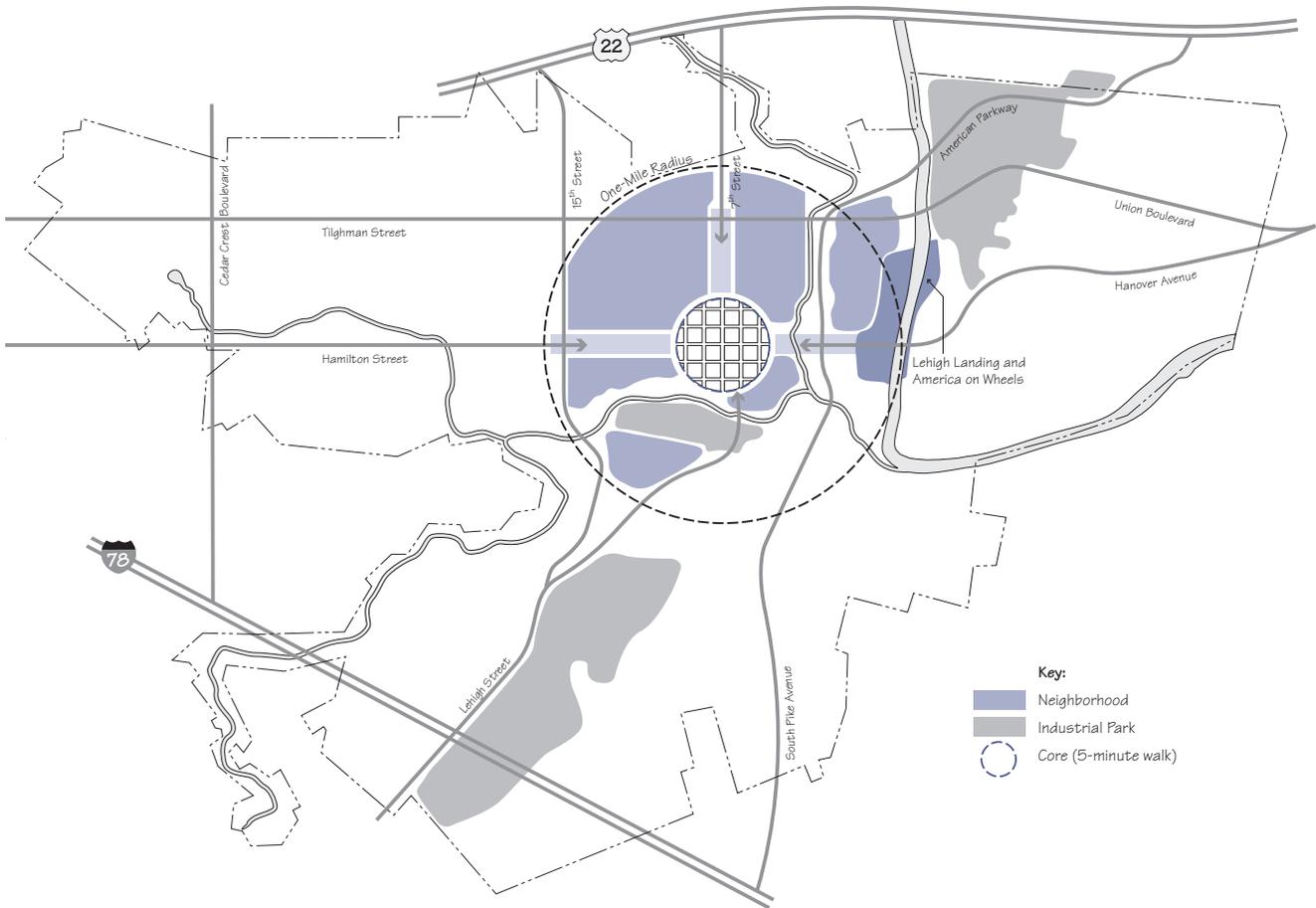


- *A longer-term influence zone.* This is generally a one-mile radius around Center Square. Revitalization of neighborhoods, infill housing, and preservation of Old Allentown historic buildings within the zone will enliven downtown. Similarly, development of ethnic retail districts to the north and east, and revitalization of community retail districts along 7th Street and the west segment of Hamilton Street will strengthen the downtown city core.
- *Increased employment opportunities adjacent to the core.* Bring more employment adjacent to the city center through brownfield development at three major industrial areas (along the corridor between Route 22 and I-78) to provide accessible employment to inner city and downtown neighborhoods.

Transportation and Access

In order to make downtown an easy place to find and get around in, transportation and access must be planned and developed according to the following guidelines:

- *Establish gateways to downtown* from the major arterials and interstates—I-78 and State Route 22. Use signage, landscape and lighting, as well as quality development at these points.
- *Distinguish the three main arrival points to downtown* through landscaping and signage to provide an attractive introduction. The three main arrival points are 15th Street/ Hamilton Street on the west, Center Square, and American Parkway/Hamilton Street on the east.
- *Differentiate the eight major routes to downtown* based on local versus first-time visitor



Land use strategy.

usage to make lighting, landscaping, and way-finding signage effective. The eight major routes are I-78/South Pike Avenue, I-78/Lehigh Street, Hamilton Street/Cedar Crest Boulevard, Tilghman Street/Cedar Crest Boulevard, 22/15th Street, 22/7th Street, 22/American Parkway, and Hanover Avenue to Hamilton from the east. Once completed, the new American Parkway Bridge will also become a well-used visitor route.

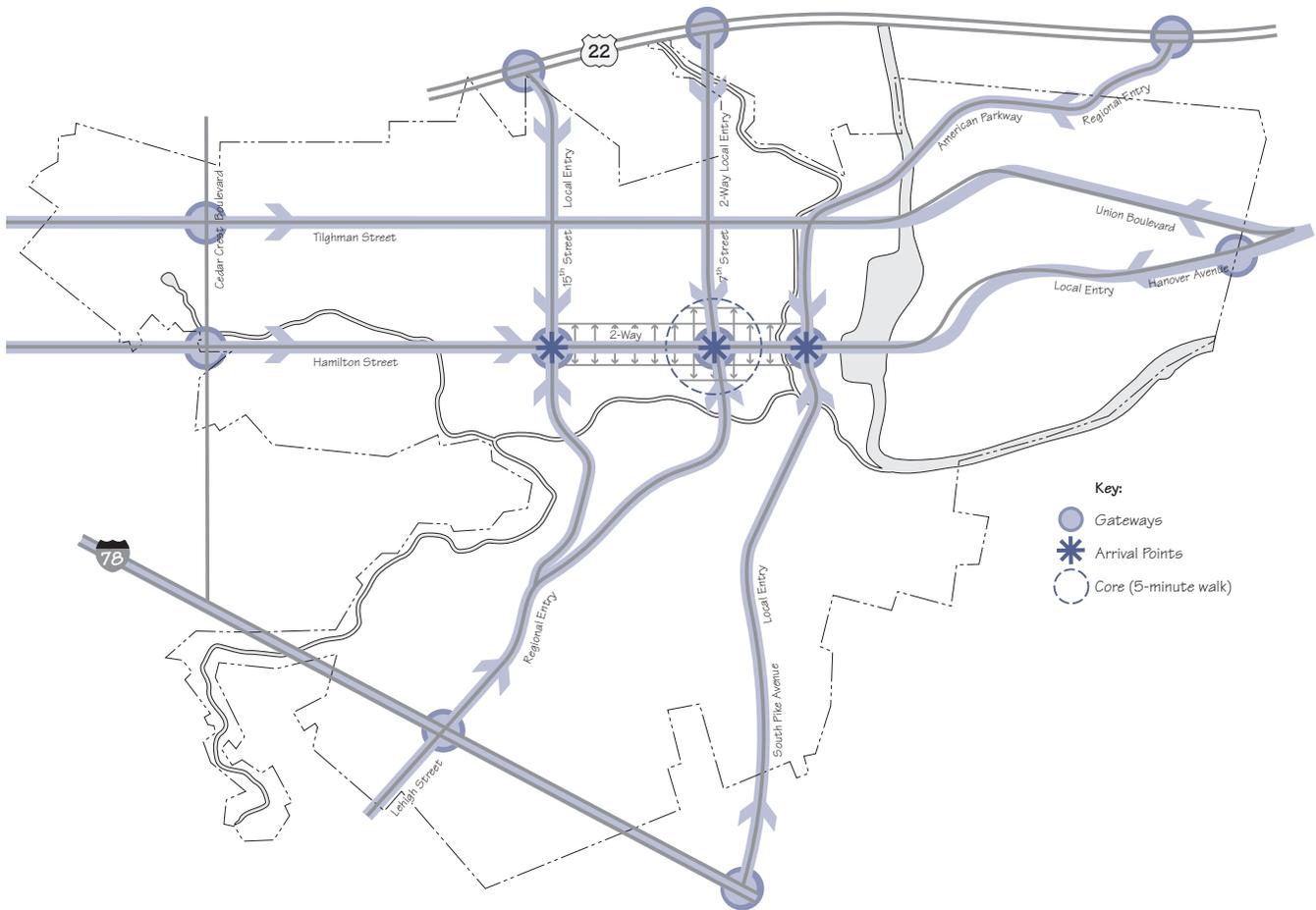
- *Evaluate the one-way pairs and two-way streets.* For example, the panel strongly recommends that Hamilton Street (from the river to Cedar Crest Boulevard) and 7th Avenue (from State Route 22 to Union Street) become two-way. As mentioned earlier, these streets may need to accommodate greater traffic volume during large downtown events.

- *Relocate the bus routes* from Hamilton to Linden and Walnut streets in order to make Hamilton Street more pedestrian friendly.

Greenways and Place Making

In order to create a more livable downtown, the downtown area should be linked to surrounding areas through greenways, bikeways, and pedestrian-friendly access streets. These should be planned and developed according to the following guidelines:

- *Pursue development and programming* of existing and proposed parks and public places. This includes the programming—special events, concerts, etc.—for the library plaza, PPL Plaza, Jordan Creek Park on 4th Street, and the park at the end of 7th Street; re-landscaping of Center Square; completion of and programming for the Arts Park; a new festival park at the



Key:
 ● Gateways
 * Arrival Points
 ○ Core (5-minute walk)

sink hole site on 7th Street; and completion of the Lehigh Landing Riverfront Park.

- *Link the existing and proposed parks through a system of greenways, following existing creeks, streambeds, and the Lehigh River.*
- *Link the existing and proposed parks through bikeways.*
- *Link neighborhoods adjacent to the core to Hamilton Street via pedestrian streets. For example, Church Street, Penn Street, and Jefferson Street have the potential to be more pedestrian friendly.*

Design and Development Guidelines

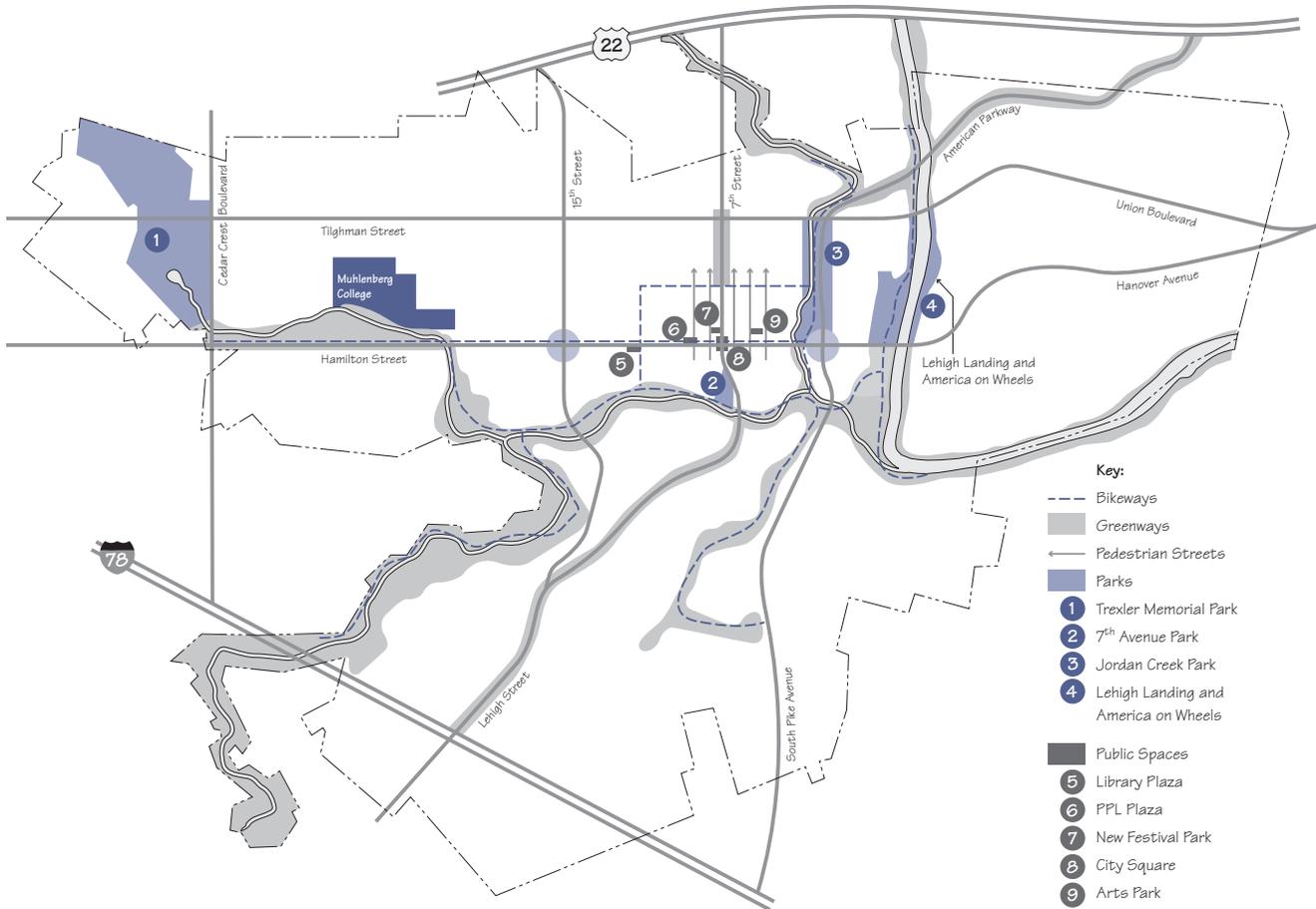
The panel recommends the following:

- Parking garages should be prohibited on Hamilton Street. Any new garages should be located

between Walnut and Maple streets and between Linden and Courts streets.

- Once approval is received from the state, the city should install signage that is clear and directional for wayfinding and that includes cultural and entertainment destinations, major civic buildings, and public parking.
- The streetscaping program should continue to 4th Street through the civic center to tie in with the existing plan.
- Building height should be controlled and restricted to six floors along Hamilton Street from 10th to 4th streets. The panel suggests a height limit of four stories in the more residential portion along Hamilton Street between 10th and 13th streets.

Transportation and access.



Places and linkages.

- The panel supports the Hamilton Street Facade Program and encourages the city to adopt the regulations contained in the plan.
- Design review is important to safeguard against incompatible design. Design guidelines provide direction in terms of scale, materials, color, set-backs, and the like.

Development Strategies

The downtown development plan prepared by Hunter Interest, Inc. in 1997 focused on methods and recommendations for marketing downtown Allentown, as well as recommendations for physical improvements. The panel's development strategies attempt to build on those early concepts and provide specific guidelines for physical and economic development of Hamilton Street between 4th and 13th streets, with limited spillover to some adjacent streets. At the same time, the panel recognizes that other development has been taken—or will take place—outside the downtown core. It therefore proposes that physical linkages be provided between these projects and downtown.

The panel recognizes that the dynamics of development in Allentown have changed (due to such factors as the growth of competing centers in Bethlehem and Easton, and the recent influx of immigrants to Allentown), and that some early planning concepts are therefore obsolete. The panel has attempted to offer a fresh and bold approach to development strategies that the public and private sector of Allentown can pursue to regain and enhance downtown's vibrancy.

Development Principles

First, it is important that Allentown adopts development principles or guidelines to assist in prioritizing development efforts, action items, and responses to development proposals. Otherwise, it is easy to lose focus and in the end accomplish little. The panel suggests that all proposed projects be screened according to the following guidelines:

- *Downtown First!* Downtown should be considered first for any proposed new development or relocation in Lehigh County. The city government and the Allentown community are well on their way to promoting development in the city core, and already have begun the planning and

implementation of several downtown development projects. However, a more focused and concentrated effort is needed. The panel recommends that priority be given to downtown development. This would mean that any new development proposed in the city limits be given top priority for consideration and approval, if the developer agrees to locate downtown and is in line with the following guidelines and strategies. Any relocation that requires city approval should also be given priority if that relocation is to downtown.

- *The development should result in more people on Hamilton Street.* More people on the street are the best advertisement for the fact that there are reasons to be downtown. It also is a practical means to address the negative perceptions of safety.
- *Development should strengthen and be connected* to the key downtown centers suggested in this report (such as the arts district, conference and exhibit facility, and the PPL Plaza).
- *New projects should be designed to welcome pedestrians* with main entrances on Hamilton Street (not on a side street) and facades should allow pedestrians to see into the buildings.

In addition to these guidelines for specific projects, the panel suggests the following overall development guidelines:

- To ensure that new developments are successful and attract their optimal market, downtown should be made clean, safe, and friendly. Development projects in downtown Allentown need to be supported by a public infrastructure that is user-friendly and makes people feel safe. Trash and graffiti communicate neglect and lack of safety. Removing the trash and cleaning the sidewalks is essential for development to succeed downtown. The money spent on keeping an



A view looking east along Hamilton Street toward City Square. Hamilton Mall is the low-rise building with the curved awning. The Crowne Plaza Hotel is the third building farther east.

area clean and safe has a high rate of return in the form of sales and property taxes. Lighting also is paramount for a sense of safety by workers who stay downtown after hours, as well as for nighttime visitors and residents in the area. The lighting along Hamilton Street is excellent; more lighting is needed on streets off of Hamilton, particularly around the arts district.

- The ethnic divide that is prevalent in Allentown must be addressed. The Latino community must be recognized as a strong source of support for retail, housing, and new businesses. Acceptance, communication, and recognition are key to breaking down barriers and to viewing that community as part of the solution, not the problem.
- Downtown directional signage and pedestrian signage should say “we want you here” to Allentown’s visitors. Without such signage, drivers and pedestrians are easily confused and will end up not arriving or coming back.
- Downtown parking is a challenge in almost every city. If it is not free and within ten feet of the customer’s destination, it becomes a disincentive. Recognizing that this problem will never be totally solved, mitigating the negative impacts of this perception needs to be given attention. Good directional signage is essential.

Strategies

For the purpose of drawing up development strategies, the panel divided downtown into three dis-

tinct development opportunity areas or districts. The district concept is an expansion of some districts already in place, and a further refinement of the district concept suggested by the Comprehensive Plan and the Hunter Downtown Development Plan. The panel recommends that the districts be precisely defined to emphasize the numerous potential activities downtown:

- *The Commercial District.* This area will be concentrated on Hamilton Street between 7th and 10th streets.
- *The Arts District.* This area will comprise the eastern portion of downtown, specifically between 4th and 7th streets, and between Linden and Walnut streets.
- *The Library Residential District.* This area will comprise the neighborhood surrounding the Main Library, specifically between 10th and 13th streets, and between Linden and Walnut streets.

The Commercial District

This development area should be limited to Hamilton Street between 7th and 10th streets to consolidate existing developments and provide a critical mass of office, commercial, and entertainment-based activities.

New Conference and Exhibition Space. As discussed previously, the panel recommends that the Hamilton Mall structure be converted into a state-of-the-art, flexible exhibition and conference facility to complement and draw from the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The panel believes that this will strengthen the hotel’s business, promote extended stays, and provide much needed meeting space that cannot otherwise be accommodated at the existing hotel.

The new exhibition and conference facility, which the panel views as an immediate priority, should have the following components:

- Flexible space;
- Free or reduced parking fees for guests and employees;

- First priority and assistance with available grants and/or tax relief, in the form of KOZs or other financing;
- Possible incorporation of the Visitor Center and a relocated Chamber of Commerce in the facility; and
- Signage directing traffic to downtown from major thoroughfares.

The panel recommends that the next level of research be undertaken to determine the precise nature and size of an exhibition and conference facility.

Office Projects. For the downtown area to succeed, a critical employment mass should be created to attract a stable consumer base. The panel recommends that two main actions be taken in this regard:

- Complete leasing of the Liberty building. The 30,000 square feet of office space will bring approximately 100 new employees to downtown. Therefore, the panel recommends that filling this space be given top priority before other office sites within the city limits are approved.
- Promote a quick start of new Class A office space, making use of the proposals that have been presented for the site at 9th and Hamilton streets.

Multipurpose Venue. The main developments envisioned for this district focus on the creation of a new multipurpose venue complex. Conceivably, this complex could be located on a vacant parcel adjacent to the new PPL building and abutting parcels fronting Hamilton and 9th streets. The facility could take the form of a multifunction theater incorporating the latest technology such as electronic sound and lighting, audiovisual technologies, and should be able to offer numerous configurations to appeal to different size audience requirements.

The multipurpose venue should complement other theaters in Allentown by featuring attractions that cannot readily be accommodated at those sites. Events like off-Broadway productions, musicals, jazz festivals, etc. will address popular culture,



in contrast to Symphony Hall, which caters to a more focused and narrow audience. The multipurpose venue could host as many as 150 yearly events, and should be designed for such use. The adjacent PPL Plaza can be an outdoor extension of this facility so that an indoor/outdoor atmosphere is created. This will also contribute to bringing people to Hamilton Street.

The panel believes that the location of this facility on the proposed site will benefit Hamilton Street and will make use of the existing Hess's parking garage, which is currently underutilized. The microbrewery project now under construction could be a strong component of the multipurpose venue project and would provide the synergy, critical mass, and 24-hour activity necessary to its success.

The Arts District

The arts district includes Center Square at 7th Street and extends eastward to 4th Street. The panel views the arts district as one of downtown's signature areas—a destination that can attract people from throughout the region. It is important to capitalize on the identity of this district through the following specific actions:

- Solicit the location of additional college or university activities. Expand the focus of the drive to include specific arts and drama programs as well as an entire branch;
- Continue to support conversion of upper stories to lofts to encourage artist studios, combination artist housing and gallery space, and living

This underutilized parking deck with 733 spaces was originally constructed for Hess's Department Store. It is located between 8th and 9th streets behind the new PPL building.



A view from Hamilton Street of a segment of the Arts Walk with unique streetscape features. This segment is adjacent to the Sovereign building.

space for residents who prefer to live near art-related activities;

- Expand opportunities for artist space with a new building at Linden and 6th streets;
- As the number of residents and visitors grows, encourage development of area galleries and cafés;
- Complete the Arts Park;
- Expand the Arts Walk and link new developments and activities;
- Investigate the potential for a second-run arts movie theater or Spanish-language theater, or a means to provide such films in one of the existing institutions;
- Expand programming at Symphony Hall;
- Relocate festivals and events now taking place outside of downtown to the arts district;
- Develop an active public open space on the sink-hole site to provide an open space amenity for abutting neighborhoods to the north, as well as to encourage citywide markets and festivals;
- Investigate the potential for a child-focused facility or wing of an existing facility, such as a children’s museum; and
- Coordinate and cross-promote arts and entertainment events. In order to effectively accomplish this, the panel recommends that a pro-

gram manager be hired to assure maximum utilization of arts district offerings.

The panel recognizes that the Americus Center and the Capri Theater represent eyesores and lost opportunities. The panel supports the city’s efforts to monitor the status of the property and recommends that the owner be made aware of the city’s vision and plan for the area.

The panel also recognizes that the post office is underused, but does not consider it a negative factor. The building is an attractive landmark, and supports an appropriate downtown activity.

The Library Residential District

This development area should be distinctly different from the other two districts. The focus should be on strengthening its residential character and providing for infill housing to include market-rate housing of different types, namely townhomes, condominiums, and apartments.

As the Allentown *Looking Ahead* comprehensive plan correctly states, “Housing plays a vital and prominent role in assuring the health and prosperity of the community.” This applies appropriately to bringing a stable supply of new residents to downtown, which will provide a local consumer-base for new businesses. At the same time, demands in infrastructure, services, and the recent migration of Latino and other minorities to neighborhoods adjacent to downtown make a compelling case for a determined focus on providing a range of adequate housing. Downtown development also should capitalize on changes in lifestyle as discussed in other portions of this study, to generate new housing development opportunities as follows:

- Develop new infill, market-rate housing on empty lots, underutilized parking areas, or on sites now occupied by decrepit housing. Typical individual new developments in this area should be small in order to maintain the historic character of the district.
- Restore historically significant buildings. The panel recommends that the city work aggressively to restore and maintain historically significant residential structures, and to make use of all available financing mechanisms that incen-

tivize investment in these properties. This should include the aggressive use of historic tax credits, etc.

- Continue to market the Upper Floor for Housing Program so that small merchants can establish businesses on the ground floor of their buildings while using the upper floors for living quarters.
- As properly addressed in the comprehensive plan, renter-occupied properties in this district should be aggressively inspected, and absentee landlords should be fined with stiff penalties if their properties are not maintained properly. Vacant properties should be inspected for code violations, unsightly maintenance, etc.

For the above programs to succeed, the city as a whole should start a dynamic and aggressive outreach program that involves the entire community in planning and implementation programs. Such outreach and involvement will require the following steps:

- Involve neighborhood groups and nonprofit organizations;
- Form neighborhood improvement associations;
- Support lifestyle community and ethnic groups;
- Involve colleges and significant employers. Invite the schools of architecture and arts programs of adjacent colleges and universities to participate and conduct local charettes with the residents;
- Promote mixed-use housing;
- Provide live/work space;
- Enforce maintenance of renter-occupied and vacant properties; and
- Enforce absentee landlord ordinances and provide stiff penalties if properties are not properly maintained.

Implementation Strategies

The staff of the city of Allentown and related agencies should be congratulated for the progress they have made in implementing positive change over the past few years. A number of worthy projects have been undertaken; and a number of others are in the pipeline.

Many interviewees noted that, for the first time in many years, the conditions are right to affect a renaissance in downtown Allentown. City staff should be cited for their professionalism, cooperation, and determination. Regional entities should be commended for recognizing how important downtown Allentown is to the future success of the region.

If Lehigh Valley is to truly prosper from growth that has been projected, downtown Allentown must serve as the urban core for the region; it must be treated with the care and purpose that the region's capital deserves. Just as downtown Allentown is blessed with the advantages of an urban center (the arts, historic structures, cultural diversity), so it is burdened with some of its liabilities.

Recommendations

Following are the panel's recommendations for implementing successful downtown revitalization strategies as downtown Allentown moves into the future.

Private Sector Engagement

The private sector must organize, lead, and support a vision for downtown. The private sector needs a strong downtown partnership, with top-level representatives from major private and non-profit stakeholders at the table. It is a long shot that a downtown will become successful by relying solely on the public sector for leadership. Public sector leaders need help formulating and implementing strategies. Strong downtowns have strong downtown partnerships, led by major employers and property owners, and these partner-

ships help sustain downtown revitalization activities. For discussion purposes, the panel names such a partnership the "Downtown Partnership."

Downtown Allentown today has a unique opportunity to form a strong Downtown Partnership with the leadership of both longtime downtown stalwarts and players new to the scene:

- Major longtime employers such as PPL, Allentown Morning Call, Lehigh-Carbon Community College, Sacred Heart Hospital, and Wachovia and other banks;
- Developers and property owners new to town—e.g., Liberty Property Group, Pennrose Properties, Landmark Communities, and Allentown Brew Pub;
- Minority group leaders such as the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; and
- City officials and authority heads.

The Partnership should proceed with some of the priorities identified by the able Allentown Ahead task force set up by Mayor Afflerbach.

The Partnership should maintain a focus on:

- *Vision.* Making sure that the vision for downtown Allentown is formed, marketed, and implemented.
- *Maintenance.* Downtown's sidewalks should be free of litter and snow, and decorated with flowers and banners.
- *Security.* Downtown should not just be safe, but should be perceived as safe, through programs like Philadelphia's Downtown Ambassador Program.
- *Public space management.* Downtown should have well-regulated and well-activated public spaces.

- *Marketing.* A marketing program is outlined below.

The Partnership should collaborate with AEDC, the city of Allentown, and other entities. The able leadership of city officials needs the private sector's assistance if downtown Allentown is to be revitalized.

Private sector leadership will provide constancy across city administrations as political leadership changes. Depending on the nature of activities undertaken or desired by the Partnership and the interest of the general business community, the Partnership may eventually wish to reexamine the feasibility of a formal organization.

AEDC Role

The city should designate Allentown Economic Development Corporation as having the sole purpose of planning and implementing private sector developments for downtown Allentown. In the previous key recommendation, the panel advises that a private sector partnership be formed, devoted to the sole purpose of making sure that downtown Allentown is clean, safe, friendly, accessible, and that it has the appropriate vision. In this recommendation, the panel suggests that AEDC be given a similarly clear focus—to plan and implement critical downtown development projects. While the board of the first organization is to come primarily from the major private sector and nonprofit leaders (with some city representation) the private sector also must make sure that it participates actively and fully in the governance of AEDC.

In essence, the panel suggests that two organizations—the Downtown Partnership and AEDC—work in tandem to ensure the future success of downtown. The panel believes there is no reason why either of these initiatives needs to wait longer than a day. Time is critical. The continued success of the Crowne Plaza Hotel and remaining downtown retailers and restaurateurs, the future success of the Allentown Brew Pub, the America on Wheels Museum, and housing developments all depend upon people's confidence in downtown Allentown. That confidence depends on immediate action that improves downtown and its environs.

A small group of private sector stakeholders—with assistance from the mayor's Allentown Ahead task force—could begin work immediately on maintenance, security, marketing, and other initiatives to be supported by the Downtown Partnership. AEDC could begin tomorrow to develop and construct a work plan of priority downtown development projects.

The director of the Allentown Department of Community Development and his senior staff are critical to the future implementation of downtown projects and programs, and should be included on the board of the Partnership (and continue to be on the board of AEDC). He will play a critical role in coordination of activities between the two organizations, and in the coordination and focus of city agencies and authorities on downtown revitalization.

Role of Public Agencies

The city should coordinate and focus public agencies toward the goal of revitalization. Allentown has a full range of public and quasi-public agencies and authorities with responsibility for various services, which directly impact the downtown and its revitalization. These agencies and authorities must be brought into the process of establishing the development and implementation strategy for downtown Allentown's revitalization, and adopt the resulting downtown revitalization agenda as a priority. Each unit of government should have a specific role and responsibility in the revitalization process.

The panel suggests that this process be carried out as follows:

- *Identify agencies with particular relevance to downtown revitalization.* These include the city departments of Finance, Community and Economic Development, Public Works, Police, the Allentown Commercial and Industrial Development Authority, Allentown Arts Commission, Center City Hamilton Mall Review Board, Historical Architectural Review Board, Human Relations Commission, Allentown Housing Authority, Parking Authority, Redevelopment Authority, Shade Tree Commission, Vacant Property Review Board Blighted Property Review Committee, and the city Planning Commission.

- *Each agency and authority completes an inventory of financial and human resources.* The panel suggests that this be managed by an outside consultant or staff from the mayor's office to assure consistency of approach and focus on downtown revitalization needs.
- *Each agency and authority then prepares a one-year action agenda* with specific work items, milestones, budget commitments, and allocation of staff to support the downtown revitalization, with annual reviews and updates.
- *Regional and state cooperation is critical to the downtown agenda implementation strategy and the overall health of Allentown.* Key regional and state agencies include: the Lehigh County Department of Community and Economic Development, Governor's Action Team, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, and the like. These entities also should participate actively in the establishment of the downtown Allentown revitalization agenda, complete an assessment of resources they can bring to the table, and establish a short- and long-term action plan of support.

Key elements of cooperation include: school funding; transportation; tax revenue sharing; and economic development.

These elements all require long-term commitment and cannot be addressed within the scope of this report. However, the panel wants to stress the critical nature of each. Cities must have good schools to attract and retain families—the current school funding system results in severe disparities which can only be resolved through regional and/or state cooperation and action. The economic health of Lehigh Valley's urban center is key to the health of the entire region. Goal setting and regional cooperation are needed to insure that Allentown captures a significant proportion of the thousands of new jobs projected for the region by 2010.

Downtown Summit

The city should convene a "Downtown Summit" to educate the citizens of Allentown and Lehigh Valley on the many positive developments occurring downtown—and simultaneously invite them to participate in shaping its future. Many significant

improvements have occurred in downtown Allentown over the past few years, and many more are under way. The panel's interviews indicated that there is a large gap between the city's knowledge of these projects and public awareness. Further, many groups and individuals have expressed interest in being a part of Allentown's progress and, in part, their feeling of being left out of the revitalization process.

One way to raise public knowledge and enlist support is to convene the Downtown Summit. The city could enlist the support of local professional and civic groups, as well as universities, to conduct such a half-day or all-day event. The mayor and the chair of the Downtown Partnership should cohost the summit.

Clear and Concise Agenda

An effective implementation strategy requires a clear and concise vision, message, and priorities, which will be established in part by the Downtown Summit. Although it is premature to identify the areas of focus, based on interviews with numerous stakeholders, the panel suggests the following:

- Add so many units of housing, so many per year, by such and such a date;
- Improve so many arts/entertainment facilities by such and such a date; and
- Make downtown clean, safe, and friendly by implementing the following activities: twice-a-day litter pickup; so many police on foot patrol; and so many downtown festivals and events per year.

Whatever three or four key foci emerge from the summit must also be the key elements of revitalization. The mayor, the Downtown Partnership, AEDC, and city agencies and authorities, as well as county, regional, and state stakeholders will rally around the vision and priorities.

The mayor will espouse them as a priority of his administration, assess their progress in his state of the city addresses, and accordingly prioritize his requests for funding and other support to the governor and federal government. City agencies and authorities will use the revitalization vision

and priorities as the basis for their action agendas and budget priorities. The Downtown Partnership will focus its efforts in support of the vision and priorities.

With such clarity and focus, the city can effectively call upon the good will of the state and the federal government to support downtown Allentown's revitalization, and will more effectively be able to approach the federal government with specific requests for assistance.

Evaluate Financing Strategies

The panel commends the city of Allentown for its creative use of financing mechanisms to spur downtown development. Its Design Assistance Program, Hamilton Street Facade Grant Program, Upper Floors for Housing Rehabilitation Program, and others clearly are having a positive impact on the downtown, as is the effective use of the KOZ program and other state and federal programs.

The panel recommends that the effectiveness of the programs be evaluated—now that there is a track record—to determine whether funding levels are appropriate, how programs are utilized, whether they are achieving objectives, whether some could be merged for more effective administration, the effectiveness of oversight, etc. If greater incentives are needed to spur investment, the city might consider providing limited-term tax abatement, phase-in of full property value assessment, etc. If owners are reluctant to improve building upper floors for housing because this is not their core business, the city might explore the option of master leasing. Residential development professionals and property managers who are attracted to projects of greater scale than two or three units could be encouraged to lease the upper floors of multiple properties.

The panel suggests that the city explore the benefits of establishing a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district as a source for financing various demands of the downtown revitalization agenda. Although the program varies by jurisdiction, in general through a TIF program, incremental taxes over the base (property and/or sales taxes) are committed to repaying bonds issued to cover infrastructure and other public improvements with

a specified purpose. Such bond funds might be used for developing a conference center, public infrastructure such as parks and street improvements, etc.

The city agency/authority resource assessment discussed above will show where city resources might effectively be committed to downtown revitalization. Public resources and agency budgets must be coordinated and focused. For example, perhaps a portion of the parking revenues could be devoted to the effort, as has happened with sewer funds.

The panel recommends that an independent financial expert be engaged to advise the city on the best use of its public resources for downtown revitalization and to establish an overall financing strategy. This expert could also advise on state and federal financing mechanisms. Possible funding resources for consideration include:

- Federal brownfields funds;
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funds;
- Downtown Business Improvement District tax;
- HOPE VI;
- Bond financing;
- National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) arts financing;
- Foundations; and
- Historic and Low Income Housing Tax credits.

Marketing Strategies

Downtown Allentown needs to be better marketed, both to consumers and to businesses. The panel's suggestions for business-to-consumer marketing include:

- PPL Plaza and the Arts Park lot can and should be used—immediately—for public events and festivals. Programs could include, during good weather months, a weekly afternoon “party,” a la “Parties in the Plaza” in Syracuse or “Thursdays in the Square” in Buffalo, or a weekly farmers' market. PPL Plaza also can be animated with outdoor cafes/vendors and white Bryant Park-style chairs.

- The city should consider relocating some festivals and events—currently held in city parks—into the downtown area.
- The Downtown Partnership should develop cross-promotions with restaurants on evenings that the symphony is playing, on festival weekends, etc.
- The Downtown Partnership should develop a once-a-month Arts Walk among facilities in downtown Allentown.
- The Downtown Partnership should lead retailers to promote themselves to downtown employees and residents.

The panel’s recommendations for business-to-business marketing include:

- The Downtown Partnership and AEDC should ensure that downtown office, retail, and entertainment space—as well as land—are being adequately marketed by state and regional marketing entities and should educate them as to the many positive changes occurring downtown. Such entities would include the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Council, the Lehigh Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the State Department of Economic Development.
- The Downtown Partnership and AEDC should ensure that downtown office, retail, and entertainment space—as well as land—are being adequately marketed by private sector entities such as realtors and hotels.
- Work with universities. Downtown Allentown needs the best and brightest minds of Lehigh Valley, of the region, and the state working on its opportunities and on its problems.

At the same time, downtown Allentown represents a living laboratory that today’s generation of students increasingly insists on experiencing as part of their undergraduate and graduate education—and represents a city scale that is manageable yet significant.

The Downtown Partnership and AEDC should reach out to partnerships with local colleges and universities, including Muhlenburg, Cedarcrest, Lehigh-Carbon Community College, Lehigh, Lafayette and others, as well as to larger institutions, such as the University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University, and others, to work on projects and programs for downtown Allentown. For example, the University of Pennsylvania’s Department of Urban and Regional Planning and Pennsylvania State University’s Department of Landscape Architecture should be invited to Allentown to work on further implementation of some of the recommendations from this report.

Perhaps a local benefactor would consider funding an Allentown urban design center that would regularly partner with area and statewide colleges and universities to work continually on downtown projects.

Long-Term Strategy

Strategies for downtown Allentown must be implemented with support from the city’s overall long-range economic development strategy. It will be important to envision and maintain a long-term implementation approach. Potential links between downtown revitalization and city economic development include brownfields redevelopment, regional cooperation and resource allocation, and business retention and attraction strategies.

Conclusion

The extent to which government and non-profit organizations have focused their concern on downtown Allentown is impressive and vital. They have an established history of productive planning efforts and, more recently, a track record of effective development projects.

The panel considers the following three directions to be key to the continuing and expanded success of downtown revitalization:

- Continue pursuit of development projects similar to those already underway, such as residential of all types and the Arts Park/Walk;
- Introduce new types of development projects such as a conference and exhibit center; and
- Strengthen implementation mechanisms.

Continue Similar Projects

The objectives of the continued pursuit of development projects similar to those already underway are as follows:

- Transform the image of downtown both visually and practically by providing a range of housing products;
- Strengthen downtown's competitive status relative to suburban office space by supporting new/rehabbed office development;
- Respond to the retail market realistically by serving close-in neighborhoods with a shopping center north of Hamilton Street and encouraging the niche restaurants and retail establishments that serve the larger market to locate on Hamilton;
- Expand on the interest generated—and the promotion opportunities presented—by the Arts Walk and Arts Park, and the arts district as a whole.

Introduce New Types of Projects

The objectives of new types of development projects are as follows:

- Ensure the longevity of the major downtown hotel through expansion of amenities like a conference and exhibit center. Guests at a thriving hotel, in turn, provide support for other downtown activities;
- Expand the notion of a multipurpose downtown through a venue that accommodates attractions not readily serviced by other downtown facilities. An emphasis on popular culture will serve to open downtown to a wider audience;
- Solidify the number of destination attractions and create another anchor through the development of America on Wheels; and
- Open downtown to population segments not currently well served. Projects such as a children's museum or section of a museum, and an active public space on the sinkhole site could serve the broader population well.

Strengthen Implementation Mechanisms

The objectives of the implementation mechanisms are as follows:

- Place the private sector in its rightful place as the leader of downtown's success through formation of a strong downtown organization;
- Position the city's development arm for greater effectiveness by directing it to focus solely on downtown;
- Coordinate responsibilities, finances, and agenda of all stakeholders—public, private, and community—relative to downtown through in-depth evaluations and summits; and

- Let people and businesses get involved in downtown immediately through outdoor events, coordination of existing programs, and overall marketing of downtown successes.

The panel believes that these objectives sum up the needs and direction of downtown Allentown, and that Allentown is well on its way to achieving success. Downtown revitalization is often the result of one project/one step at a time—Allentown has clearly taken many steps. It has the experience, interest, and resources to continue its progress and make downtown the center of the city and of Lehigh Valley.

About the Panel

Anne Warhover

*Panel Chair
Denver, Colorado*

Anne Warhover is president and CEO of the Downtown Denver Partnership, a private, non-profit corporation. The Partnership, a group of three separate corporate entities and one quasi-governmental entity, markets downtown as a vibrant and diverse place to work, live, play, and invest. A \$6 million dollar annual budget provides funds for services designed to give downtown Denver a competitive edge as the business center and entertainment destination for the Rocky Mountain Region. Services include keeping downtown clean and safe, retaining and recruiting jobs, facilitating housing development, marketing entertainment and retail destinations to the metro area residents, and producing three major annual events. In her role as president, Warhover is responsible for implementing the policies set by four separate boards of directors who represent 475 member businesses and over 600 downtown property owners.

Prior to joining the Partnership in 1992, Warhover was a vice president of First Interstate Bank of Denver. As a banker for over 15 years, she provided corporate banking services to regional and national customers and managed the Community Relations Department. She graduated from the University of Colorado.

Guillermo M. Aguilar

Santa Ana, California

Guillermo Aguilar, AIA, has more than 25 years of experience managing and developing large complex projects. As a project executive, he has provided professional services including architectural design, program management, environmental planning and design, master planning, and real estate

development for construction projects totaling over \$3 billion.

With his strong management approach, extensive development planning, design, and construction experience, Aguilar has successfully completed projects to meet design and aesthetic goals while simultaneously meeting timetables and budgetary requirements. The types of projects he has worked on include but are not limited to schools, medical facilities and hospitals, hotels and resorts, residential multifamily buildings, and office and multiuse buildings. Aguilar has proven his knowledge, professionalism, and ability to work in various areas of the development and program management field in multiple projects with many types of private and public institutions.

Aguilar received a bachelor of architecture from the National University of Mexico, a master of architecture from Tulane University, and a master of landscape architecture from Harvard University.

Aguilar is a registered architect in California, a full member of the Urban Land Institute, and a member of ULI's Residential Neighborhood Development Council. In addition, he serves as a member in the Blue Ribbon Citizens Oversight Committee for school construction in Los Angeles, overseeing over \$10 billion of school bond construction.

Elinor R. Bacon

Washington, D.C.

Elinor Bacon has more than 25 years of experience in housing, real estate development, and community development in the public and private sectors. Bacon formed E.R. Bacon Development, LLC, a real estate development and consulting firm, in 2002. The firm's primary clients have been Forest City Washington and the Housing Authority of the City of Spartanburg. The firm is cur-

rently codeveloping two market-rate infill townhouse developments with six and ten units respectively, in Baltimore, MD, and a 500-unit mixed-income, mixed-use for sale and rental HOPE VI development in Spartanburg, South Carolina. The firm's development focus is on urban infill; mixed-use mixed-income projects involving rental and/or for-sale housing and retail; and adaptive use of historic buildings.

From January 2001 to April, 2002, as president and CEO, Bacon launched the National Capital Revitalization Corporation (NCRC), a public real estate development corporation established by the ULI Washington D.C. District Council. NCRC's mission is to spur economic development in the District, primarily in neighborhoods of need.

From June 1997 through December 2000, Bacon served, under Secretary Andrew Cuomo, as deputy assistant secretary for the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Public Housing Investments. In this capacity, she administered the \$4.2 billion HOPE VI Program and other public housing capital programs with annual appropriations of approximately \$2.5 billion.

Before joining HUD, Bacon was a private real estate developer and consultant in Baltimore where she established her firm, Bacon & Company, in 1985. The company focused on affordable housing, adaptive reuse, historic preservation, and development management of public purpose urban projects. Prior to forming her company, Bacon worked for more than ten years in the field of public sector housing and community development at the city and federal levels, and for the Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Bacon has a master of arts degree in Chinese studies from the University of California, Berkeley, and a bachelor of arts degree from the New School for Social Research.

Thomas Curley

New York, New York

Thomas Curley is director of urban planning at HOK. His projects can be found on six continents

for clients as diverse as the Walt Disney Company, the Guggenheim Museum, the city of New York, the United States Air Force Academy, the National Capital Planning Commission, the District of Columbia, the New Jersey Nets, and the Smithsonian Institution, among many others.

Curley has designed new towns in the Philippines, China, and Australia, and recently completed a submission for the 2008 Olympic Village in Beijing. He was the lead designer for Phase II EuroDisney in Marne la-Valle, and provided strategic planning for 9,000 acres of Disney property south of the Disney World resort in Florida. His most recent works include the reconstruction of downtown Beirut, for which he won an international design award for excellence from the Congress for New Urbanism. In addition, he was one of the authors of the Legacy Plan for the National Capital Planning Commission. Curley believes that to be called to service on public projects is the highest honor an architect can achieve.

Thomas Curley graduated from the Southern California Institute for Architecture with graduate degrees in architecture and urban design.

H. Cales Givens

Denver, Colorado

Throughout his career, H. Cales Givens has elected to use his consensus building skills on a variety of project types for diverse clients. Due to the nature of his focus—urban revitalization, community planning and design, parks and greenways—many projects have been sizable and very much in the public domain. The Potomac Yard, Lakelands, Celebration, and now Stapleton in Denver, Colorado, are among the high-profile new communities he has worked on, and St. Louis was the site of an award-winning downtown planning project.

At 4,000 acres, Stapleton is the largest urban redevelopment site in the nation. As principal in charge, Givens has overseen EDAW's work for the past four years, which encompasses master planning, design guidelines, a major urban park and greenways design, urban drainage, sustainability, civic meetings, and design review. The

project is destined to become a national model for urban revitalization within the next decade.

In pure acreage, Givens's largest project to date involved the 1,000,000 acres owned by the St. Joe Company in western Florida. The preparation of a market-based business plan and investment strategy for land development required Givens to work with a cross-disciplinary staff that included land planners, economic specialists, facilitators, and information technology specialists. He also was instrumental in organizing and facilitating three major workshops in six weeks during the planning process.

Many of Givens's projects have received local and national awards from the ASLA and the APA, including the St. Louis downtown development action plan; Stapleton; the Lansdowne (Loudoun County, Virginia) corporate center master plan; the Potomac Yard (Alexandria, Virginia) master plan; and a memorial to the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Givens holds a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and has served as a member of the College of Architecture Advisory Board. He also is a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Givens has been an active ULI member since 1988, serving on the Mixed-Use Council and participating in numerous Advisory Service panels in North Carolina, Illinois, Ohio, and California, tackling local issues ranging from football stadiums and downtown plans to transit corridors and base realignment and closure. He is currently vice president and principal in the Denver office of EDAW, Inc.

Hermann J. Kircher

*Toronto, Ontario
Canada*

Hermann Kircher was for 25 years president of the international real estate market research firm, Larry Smith and Associates Ltd. After merging that firm with Coopers and Lybrand, he served for 12 years as partner responsible for real estate and retail consulting services at Coopers and Ly-

brand (now Pricewaterhouse Coopers). He opened his own consulting practice in 1992.

Kircher has completed strategic, market, and financial feasibility studies for major retailers, town centers, vacation resorts, housing agencies, the hospitality industry and office developments. He also has been responsible for more than a thousand shopping center market studies for developers, retailers, financial institutions and public agencies. Furthermore, he conducted extensive research on developments combining retail and entertainment including West Edmonton Mall, the Mall of America and Mills Centers. In addition, he has been an expert witness before courts and quasi-judicial agencies regarding lease valuations, rent arbitrations, expropriation hearings and zoning, as well as impact issues.

Kircher's professional affiliations include the Urban Land Institute where he has been a member of the Entertainment Development Council, and the Urban Mixed-Use Development Council. He also is a member of the National Retail Federation, International Council of Shopping Centers, and the Retail Council of Canada. He holds master of business administration and bachelor of commerce degrees from the University of Toronto. Besides his extensive consulting background in Canada, his international assignments include major research studies in the United States, most European countries, Africa, South America, and the Middle East.

F. Anthony (Tony) Orbe

New York, New York

Tony Orbe joined Insignia/ESG in February 2000 as senior managing director in the firm's Capital Advisors Group. With more than 25 years of real estate experience, Orbe's focus at Insignia\ESG is large, complex investment transactions such as joint ventures.

Orbe began his career in 1972 at a major financial services firm. In 1979, that company asked him to open the New England investment office. There, he led his staff in the development of three office/R&D parks, and the acquisition and redevelopment of three regional malls. All projects were

brought in under budget and exceeded the pro-forma expectations.

In 1986, Orbe was named officer-in-charge of real estate operations in the Northeast. In that capacity, he oversaw five regional offices. He restructured and energized an existing organization, managing a \$7 billion portfolio of mortgages and equity. He established an aggressive asset redevelopment plan that reinvigorated the equity portfolio. Notable projects for which Orbe was responsible include 660 Madison Avenue (Barney's store) in Manhattan, the Centre Square Complex in downtown Philadelphia, and Woodmont Plaza in suburban Washington, D.C.

In 1991, Orbe assumed additional responsibilities, overseeing the firm's interest in two firms, an investment management organization and a large-scale projects development firm. Along with the Northeast real estate portfolio, Orbe assumed leadership of the Midwest real estate operation, bringing total assets under his management to over \$15 billion. He also supervised the New Business Development Unit. In 1992, Orbe was selected to lead the Real Estate Investment Management Group, servicing and managing all of the firm's international and pension fund clients. In 1995, Orbe, along with several other senior investment executives, formed Equinox Investments, Inc., a consulting and investment firm servicing the institutional market.

Orbe is a 1968 distinguished military graduate of the Baruch School of Business Administration, City College of New York. He is an active member of the real estate industry and several of its associations including the Real Estate Board of New York and the Urban Land Institute. He also is an active member of the community, serving as a founding director of the Grand Central Partnership, and as a trustee for the Children's Aid Society, the Bellevue Association, and the Citizen's Budget Commission.

Richard T. Reinhard

Atlanta, Georgia

Richard Reinhard has spent two decades leading nonprofit, urban revitalization corporations in the United States—making center cities clean, safe, friendly, and accessible; attracting and retaining businesses; developing housing and commercial properties; and creating good urban design. In the summer of 2004 he will begin working abroad as executive director of a large, new, urban regeneration company in Northern Ireland.

Reinhard has led downtown improvement organizations in Richmond, Buffalo, and most recently, in Atlanta, where he led Central Atlanta Progress and its four affiliates, with combined budgets of \$11 million a year. Reinhard has served as chief of staff to the mayor of Buffalo and as chief operating officer of a real estate development corporation headquartered in Toronto. His consulting organization, Niagara Consulting Group, has undertaken forming a medical campus in Buffalo, developing a citizens' plan for Niagara Falls, and currently is working on forming a streamlined downtown organization for Detroit.

Reinhard has a bachelor of science degree from the College of William and Mary and a master of business and public management degree from Rice University. He was a Loeb Fellow at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

Reinhard has served as an adjunct faculty member in urban planning and public policy at Virginia Commonwealth University, the University at Buffalo, and Georgia State University.