



# COMMUNITY PLANNING ASSISTANCE TEAMS

## TOWARD A VIBRANT DOWNTOWN SHREVEPORT

Shreveport, Louisiana CPAT  
Final Report  
November, 2014



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## PREFACE: HOW DID SHREVEPORT CPAT COME ABOUT?

In 2013, Shreveport Mayor Cedric Glover decided to take advantage of the American Planning Association's CPAT program to help Shreveport implement its master plan, "Great Expectations: Shreveport-Caddo 2030 Master Plan" which was adopted in 2010. Roy Jambor, Shreveport's Strategic Planning Manager, identified Downtown Shreveport as the area where the CPAT could have the most immediate impact. At the Mayor's request, he prepared and submitted an application for a CPAT in Shreveport. Shreveport was selected as a site for a CPAT project. The team assembly process began with the initial site visit with team leader Bob Lurcott, FAICP and APA staff lead, Jennifer Graeff in December 2013.

From June 22-27 2014, a team of planners visited Shreveport. The group was assembled by APA staff from its membership base, and was composed of professional planners, all volunteers, with expertise in the various technical areas related to Downtown planning and development. The CPAT project goal was to provide short-term recommendations focused on assisting implementation of the Downtown element of the master plan. For five days the team met with stakeholders in Downtown Shreveport, assessed issues, evaluated market conditions and analyzed challenges, with the purpose of developing these recommendations. The following report provides the CPAT's observations, analysis and recommendations.

For an explanation of APA's CPAT program, please see the end of this report.

## INTRODUCTION

The City of Shreveport, seat of Caddo Parish, with its population of 200,000, is the third largest city in Louisiana. Bordering Texas and Arkansas, it has historically been, and continues to be, the economic and cultural hub of the ArkLaTex area. Its location was important to its founding in 1826 and its subsequent economic role. Located at the convergence of the newly navigable Red River and the Texas Trail made it the gateway to the development of Texas and the Southwest. Shreveport boasted a thriving Downtown district and was a cultural, as well as commercial destination. Specifically, Shreveport played a central role in developing the American music scene, providing opportunities for some of the country's most famous musicians, including Hank Williams, Elvis Presley and Leadbelly.



*Public art in Downtown Shreveport. Photo Credit: Jeremy Nelson*

Shreveport has experienced good times and bad, typical of regional economies based on extraction.

Although its economy has diversified, it has been growing very slowly for the past decade. The 64 blocks of the original town site constitute the core of the present Downtown and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Although Downtown Shreveport has lost some of its employment base (about 14,000 employees work Downtown), it remains a cultural hub today. While Shreveport fared better than many other areas since the 2009 recession, the past few decades Downtown Shreveport has seen an overall decline. The once lively streets are now lined with vacant buildings and sparse commercial activity. Historic buildings have been demolished to be replaced by surface level parking lots, considered to be more profitable than maintaining an empty building.

Despite the decades of slow economic growth, Shreveport finds itself poised to regain its economic and cultural prominence. The town is home to growing natural gas and film industries and is experiencing a modest revived interest in development throughout the downtown area. These new opportunities make the planning and design process even more critical if Downtown Shreveport wants to achieve its goal of becoming an urban destination once again.

The updated Master Plan for Shreveport and Caddo focuses on downtown as the unique place in the region that could offer live-work-play opportunities (Ch. 10). The Plan contains many proposals that would increase vibrancy downtown. The Master Plan and this report recognize that considerable time will be required for Downtown Shreveport to regain the strength and prominence it had 50 or 100 years ago. In recognition of limited resources and slow economic growth, we favor modest proposals that can be accomplished in the near-term without substantial resource commitments.

## **ASSETS, DESTINATIONS AND CHALLENGES**

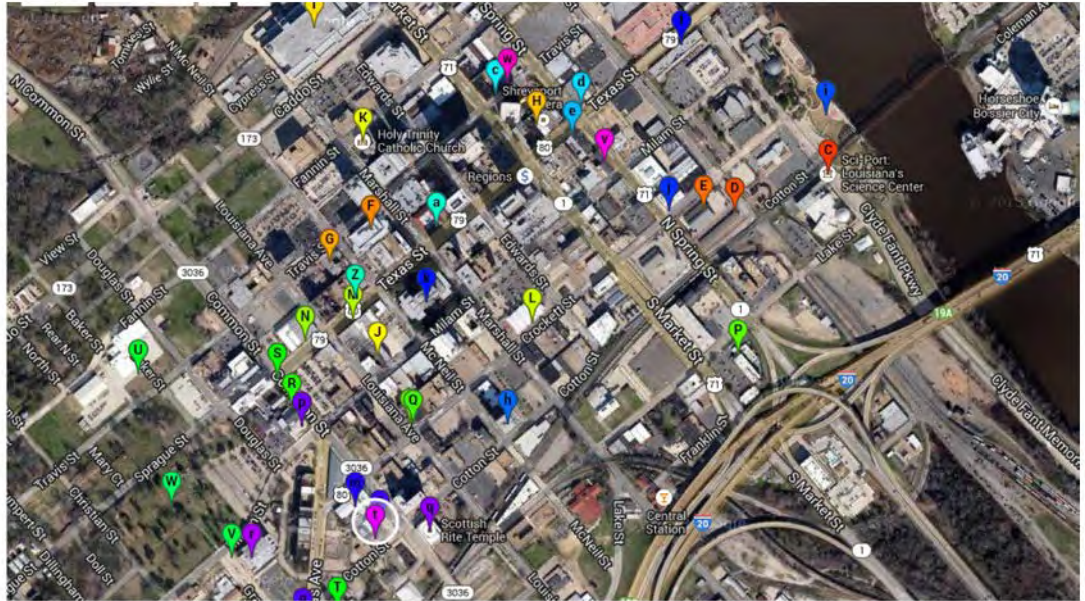
Downtown Shreveport enjoys substantial assets and important destinations, many resulting from its historical role as the ArkLaTex region's downtown and government center.

- The downtown and surrounding area provide high quality health services.
- Downtown is the location of an authentic arts, music and theater scene.
- Southern University is expanding its downtown campus.
- Large stocks of historic buildings exist.
- Downtown enjoys some of the region's best multimodal transportation infrastructure, with a gridded street network that has more than adequate vehicle capacity and above average walking and biking conditions.
- It has a sufficient number of parking spaces overall.
- It is immediately adjacent to water amenities – the Red River and the Cross Bayou
- Examples of successful residential development exist.
- Edge neighborhoods (in particular West Edge and Cross Bayou) have the potential for residential and specialty mixed use development that could support downtown.

However, there are challenges in utilizing these assets to bring increased vitality to Downtown Shreveport. Not enough people use the streets in Downtown to provide vibrancy. The 14,000 downtown jobs have not stimulated much restaurant or business growth which, in turn, would attract other job-producing activities. The residential community is not large enough to attract neighborhood service commercial and provide customers for businesses in the evenings and on weekends. Both the commercial and residential markets are too weak to encourage development. The more-than adequate one-way street pattern and minimal traffic result in speeds that are not pedestrian-friendly. The parking system - while more than adequate to meet current and future needs of downtown overall – does have localized imbalances between supply and demand that may reduce access to desired destinations. And, while there are examples of good streetscaping, the lack of adequate canopy makes walking long distances uncomfortable.

### EXHIBIT 3

#### Asset & Destinations Map



*Assets and Destinations in Shreveport. Created by Sara Egan and Megan Wooley*

Potential is what comes to mind when exploring Downtown Shreveport. Buildings have hidden character; street frontages have great appeal. However, actual street activity is minimal. There are not enough businesses that would make the area a prominent destination place. Where are the convenience stores? Where are the coffee shops, etc.?

The design and character of many building facades are uninviting, dissuading people from spending much time or money in Downtown. Awning replacement for historic buildings would promote street appeal as well as provide an escape from the elements. Adjacent neighborhoods have little connectivity to the Downtown. The many trees around the courthouse make this area prime for activity and redevelopment. The grounds alone would be a destination. The addition of specially designed benches and possibly public art would be an invitation to welcome visitors.

The number of buildings that are in disarray is heartbreaking. Guidelines to promote a property owner's responsibility to maintain historic property should be created. As outlined in Section 9 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, maintenance and repair is imperative to protect buildings that could give life to Downtown Shreveport.

Although the Downtown has tremendous potential, considerable effort is needed to realize this potential.

In addition to physical assets, capable real estate developers exist in the Shreveport area but most have no experience developing urban product. This is not surprising since almost all new development has been low-density, auto-oriented, single-use suburban projects for many years. Although mixed-use and multi-use projects are increasingly popular, most are still in suburban locations and served by adjacent



surface parking.

Suburban-oriented developers interested in Downtown sites often request dedicated surface parking adjacent to their project. Nothing destroys potential Downtown vibrancy faster than complying with this misguided request. The precious assets Downtowns offer are uniqueness and propinquity – proximity to and continual connections among different urban activities. Surface parking destroys these assets by demolishing unique buildings and pushing activities further apart.

## **OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS**

### **ECONOMIC CONTEXT**

Energy, utilities and health care are prominent industries in the regional economy. Shreveport's CBD has the typical range of professional services, banking, real estate and government agencies occupying office space. East of the CBD located in the Riverfront District along the Red River are large casinos and associated hotels that comprise the gaming sector. The arts, music and film media are opportunity sectors. Existing facilities supporting these sectors are located in West Edge adjacent to the CBD. Health care is another important sector and opportunity area for a presence Downtown.

The leadership in the City of Shreveport and Caddo Parish recognize that the growth industries in the emerging U.S. economy are research and technology based and knowledge oriented. Although the technology, health care and energy sectors continue to have prominent suburban footprints, the preference for urban locations is growing. Surveys including the recent one by Pew Foundation and others report that many Gen Y/Millennials want to live and work in urban environments instead of suburbia where most of them were raised.

Companies seeking young talent as well as many tech-savvy entrepreneurs also want to be in urban live-work-play environments that we will call vibrant centers. Productivity and innovation are expected to be higher and turnover lower in these places. With minimal journey to work, employees tend to work longer hours as well. The characteristics of Downtown vibrant centers are contrasted to suburban employment centers in Appendix A, Exhibit A1. In addition to live-work, the commercial activities that tend to enliven vibrant centers are listed in Exhibit A2.

Exhibit 1 presents basic real estate statistics on the CBD and the Shreveport-Bossier market area. The CBD accounts for 44% of the office space, 7% of retail space and 1% of multi-family space in this market. The office and retail inventory in the market area grew by 6% over the past 7 years but only by 0.3% in the CBD which reflects the decline of the CBD's importance relative to the suburbs. Average office rents for the past 5 years are slightly higher Downtown than in the market area, but if the more peripheral subareas are excluded, rents are lower in the CBD than in the four remaining subareas, namely Bossier Parish, Caddo Parish, East and Southeast. CBD absorption of office space, which is the change in occupancy for the past seven years, is more negative than in the market area; CBD office vacancies are higher. Many CBDs across the country are performing relatively better than their overall market area, another indicator of the challenges Shreveport faces.

**Exhibit 1: Real Estate Market in Shreveport Region**

Inventory in sf RBA:	Shreveport-Bossier Market	Shreveport CBD	CBD as % of Market
Office	9,339,190	4,146,228	44.4%
Retail	23,384,760	1,649,901	7.1%
Multi-Family	21,187,812	181,027	0.9%
Total sf RBA	53,911,762	5,977,156	11.1%
Change in Inventory	520,226	\$12.95	\$6,734,849.71
1Q07-1Q14*	6.13%	0.27%	
Office Sector:			
Gross Rents per sf	\$12.06	\$12.20	
Vacancy Rate	14.7%	18.5%	
Absorption			
1Q07-1Q14	-0.84%	-3.82%	

\*office and retail only, Source: CoStar database, 1Q2014

Of the 77 office properties in the CBD, 64 properties are rated Class C which account for 45% of the CBD inventory. Some are vacant, and the market for additional office space is extremely soft.

Exhibit 2 shows statistics drawn from research on the demographic and employment characteristics of Downtowns and other employment centers in the 150 largest cities (Levy and Gilchrist 2013). Five indicators are presented for Downtown Shreveport, Downtown Baton Rouge and Downtown New Orleans.

**Exhibit 2: Comparison of Three Louisiana Downtowns**

Downtowns:	Shreveport	Baton Rouge	New Orleans
Jobs Downtown & w/in one mile of Downtown	36,183	34,916	84,566
Population Downtown & w/in one mile of Downtown	28,097	31,803	70,525
Jobs per acre Downtown	11	17	59
Jobs per acre w/in one mile	4	6	13
% Workers living and working w/in this one mile area	19.8%	14.7%	37.2%
Total City Population, 2010	200,908	229,584	347,965
% Total Pop in Downtown Area	14.0%	13.9%	20.3%

**Exhibit 3: Source: Paul Levy and Lauren Gilchrist, Downtown Rebirth, Center City District, Philadelphia, 2013 and census data**



The results give an indication of Shreveport's relative position in Louisiana at this time. Downtown Shreveport and Downtown Baton Rouge have about the same number of jobs and population in their core area and about the same proportion of Downtown population at 14%. Baton Rouge is slightly denser. Shreveport has more workers also living in or near Downtown than Baton Rouge. With over 20% of its population living in its core area, Downtown New Orleans has much higher job densities and over twice as many core-area workers also living in the urban core. Clearly, New Orleans is the most vibrant center in the state. Downtown Shreveport has about the same level of vibrancy as Baton Rouge.

*Downtown Residential Development:* The number of residential units in and near Downtown Shreveport has increased in recent years. Several developers have been able to provide affordable housing through adaptive reuse projects. The general structure is to redevelop an historic property using federal and state historic tax credits, adding Low Income Housing Tax Credits when feasible and applying non-recourse, fixed rate 40-year permanent financing from HUD to close the gap between redevelopment costs and rents. Please see Appendix B for affordable housing options.

These projects should be encouraged since affordable/workforce housing Downtown is part of the infrastructure needed in vibrant centers. On the other hand, the absence of market-rate rental housing reflects the weakness of the Downtown Shreveport housing market.

We tested the consensus of opinion that new, market-rate multi-family rental projects were not feasible Downtown given current development costs and rent levels. The financial analysis shown in Appendix C, Exhibits C.1-3 confirms this opinion. Downtown rents would have to increase from \$15 per SF to almost \$22 per SF (47%) to make new development feasible. Conversely, construction costs would have to decrease by about 20% even if the land were contributed.

On the other hand, new, market-rate multi-family residential for-sale projects ("condos") look promising. As shown in Exhibit C. 4, condos can be built Downtown for about \$135 per SF and sold for less than \$300,000. Younger households without kids and single professionals with annual household income over \$68,000 per year can afford this urban housing option if they make a 10% down payment plus mortgage insurance. About 30% of households in Caddo Parish and 40% of households in Bossier Parish exceed this income threshold. A capture rate of only one half of one percent would account for almost 200 households.

Elderly couples and singles including retired military personnel could live in these units for about \$430 per month if they had the resources to pay cash to buy the unit.

An emerging opportunity is provided by the 800 tech workers coming to Bossier in connection with the CIC facility. Although Bossier will capture workers with children, there is no reason why Shreveport should not recruit singles and couples without children. Only Downtown Shreveport can offer an authentic urban living option.

This analysis was completed assuming a large four-story wood-frame structure containing 100 units on a infill site. The average size of the rental units was 800 SF whereas the for-sale units were 1200 SF and included one parking space. Complete information is given in Appendix C.

Although for sale Downtown housing is feasible, one glaring factor significantly reduces the for-sale unit market. Downtown Shreveport is too depressed at this time to attract market rate home buyers.

## CODE IMPLICATIONS

The current codes and ordinances are not user friendly or easily definable in regards to allowable uses. Most retail uses are too specific and should be generalized or collapsed into broader categories. Such uses as glass store, gift shop, hardware store, etc. could be categorized as “General Merchandise” and then defined. This would not only provide a clearer understanding for the potential store owner, but staff personnel reviewing applications would also benefit greatly. In addition, there is a disconnect between what the desired use is and what the zoning ordinance allows. More specifically, allowable uses do not necessarily emulate the desire for a more “millennial” base, nor does it reflect a desire for an aesthetically pleasing streetscape. High intense uses should be discouraged, while outdoor activities such as dining should be highly encouraged and not subject to board of appeals, but possible planning commission approval if unique circumstances are present.

Another potential code conflict observed relates to signage. Sec. 106-1122 & 1123 of the Code of Ordinances prohibits off-premise signage within the CBD.

It is unclear whether or not murals are included in the prohibition. It may be useful to consider murals as artwork that promotes culture and historic value to the CBD. They could possibly be permitted through an Arts Board, if one exists.

## TRANSPORTATION & STREETSCAPES

Traffic volumes are low in Downtown, which allows consideration of potential configuration changes to the existing road rights-of-way for bike lanes or wider sidewalks. Overall, street right-of-ways are already “right-sized,” (narrow through lanes, wide sidewalks). However further priority could be given to bicycles. The one-way street configuration in Downtown is functioning, but could be retrofitted to a two-way system to benefit retail visibility, slow speeds and improve safety and navigation. As redevelopment or infill occurs in the Downtown, access management should be a priority including shared parking strategies and shared access points to improve pedestrian safety.

The existing Downtown Transit Center is a critical downtown anchor and the proposal to relocate it out of Downtown creates several challenges for Downtown revitalization, including:

- Reduced transit service with direct access to/from Downtown destinations (i.e. without requiring transfers).
- Reduced legibility and cohesiveness of the Downtown transit network and exacerbating the low number and visibility of bus stops Downtown.
- Creation of another vacant structure Downtown.

Overall streetscape treatment is working but needs to be completed at key segments to create comfortable, safe and accessible walking routes to Downtown’s main assets. The idea of streets as places for “recreation” that is sitting, dining, strolling, shopping and gathering could be promoted. Texas Street in particular could be

further improved to provide additional seating, shade and gathering spaces – particularly to serve as additional event space/venue Downtown. In addition, the many vacant lots can provide necessary green space, pocket parks or mobile vending space. Blank walls are opportunities for further art installations.

Street furniture, trash cans and bike racks are minimal throughout Downtown. Accommodation for bicycles in particular is lacking in Downtown as safe, designated routes as well as bike parking is inadequate. Tree spacing and species selection are good, but tree growth will be limited as tree pits are small and the use of tree grates will limit trees from reaching their full maturity and maximum shade. Downtown lacks any green infrastructure. Opportunities exist for rain gardens, bio swales, pervious pavement and the like to treat stormwater prior to reaching the river and bayou.

The current wayfinding system is poor. The wayfinding system can be improved to better facilitate all modes of travel and strengthen the various 'districts' within Downtown. Destination maps would be very helpful at mid-block locations within Downtown. The sense of arrival into Downtown is inadequate but gateway treatments at key threshold points can improve this.

## PARKING

Two kinds of Downtowns exist in the United States: those that have a parking problem, and those that wish they did (because high parking demand is an indication of a vibrant Downtown economy). Previous studies, CPAT discussions with community and business leaders, and our own observations confirmed that the Downtown parking problem is a nuance, but solvable. Specific observations follow:



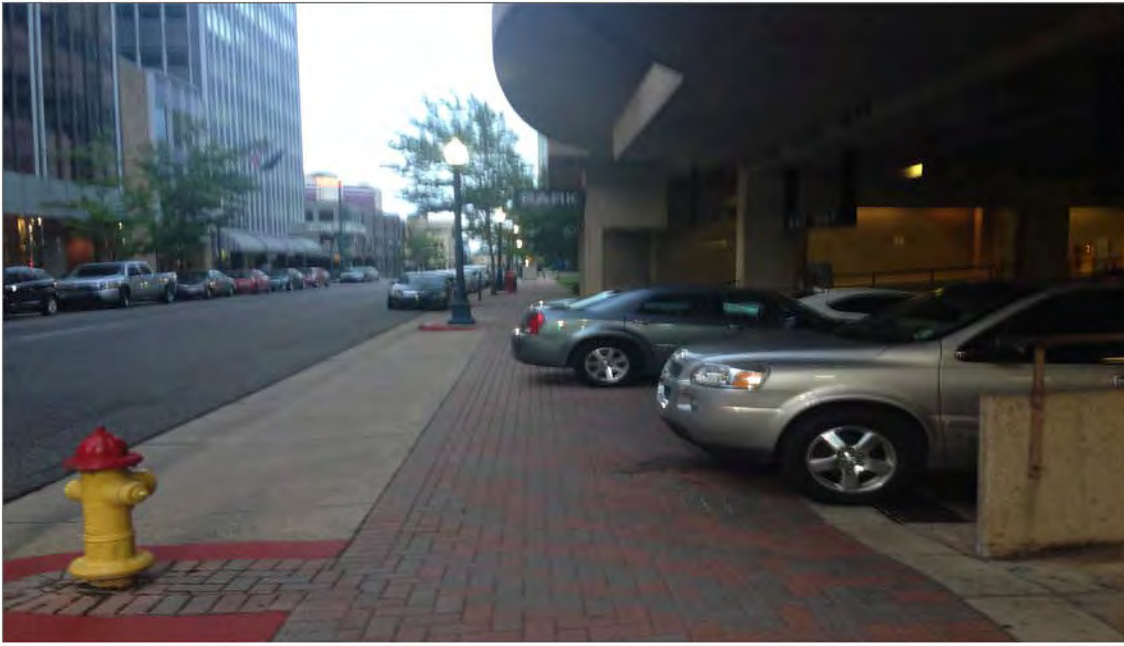
*Downtown Shreveport has an abundance of surface parking, which is likely hindering rather than helping revitalization. Map: Parking Guide. Downtown Development Authority July 2013*



- Overall, there is ample parking to meet current and realistic future projections of demand. Several hundred and often times thousands of empty spaces are always available at any given time.
- Previous studies and CPAT observations have identified locations where highly-localized parking imbalances exist between curb parking supply and demand at the current price. These occur on relatively few blocks and during fairly limited times of day.
- The overwhelming majority of the off-street parking supply is privately-controlled parking spaces, many of them reserved for specific user groups and utilized inefficiently. Only 11% of off-street parking supply is publicly controlled.
- There is a widespread perception that Downtown suffers a parking deficit. Climate and inconsistent pedestrian amenities Downtown can make a short walk feel like a longer one.
- On-street parking is priced in some areas of Downtown but well below the market rates for off-street parking. For example, short-term on street parking is typically \$0.50/hour but off-street parking was seen priced as high as \$2/hour.
- The private market at this time cannot support the construction of a privately-funded structured parking garage Downtown.
- Developers ask for adjacent parking in order to facilitate the redevelopment of historic buildings without their own dedicated off-street parking supply.
- There appears to be a lack of enforcement of parking violations in Downtown, including – and perhaps most importantly – parking on sidewalks.
- In a large number of zones Downtown, curb parking is prohibited. Many of these parking prohibition zones are no longer necessary and can be turned back to Downtown parking.



*Hundreds of parking spaces sit empty every day, "reserved" at all times but unused throughout most of the day.  
Photo Credit: Jeremy Nelson*



*Private off-street garage parking cars on the sidewalk in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act which require a minimum of 4' of level sidewalk surface be kept clear.  
Photo Credit: Jeremy Nelson*



*Large zones where curb parking is prohibited.  
Photo Credit: Jeremy Nelson*



# GENERAL STRATEGY

## STRATEGIC APPROACH

With both the Master Plan's vision for Downtown Shreveport and the economic realities facing the City in mind, we identify five imperatives for consideration to maintain and gradually enhance Downtown vibrancy.

### 1) Protect the existing building stock.

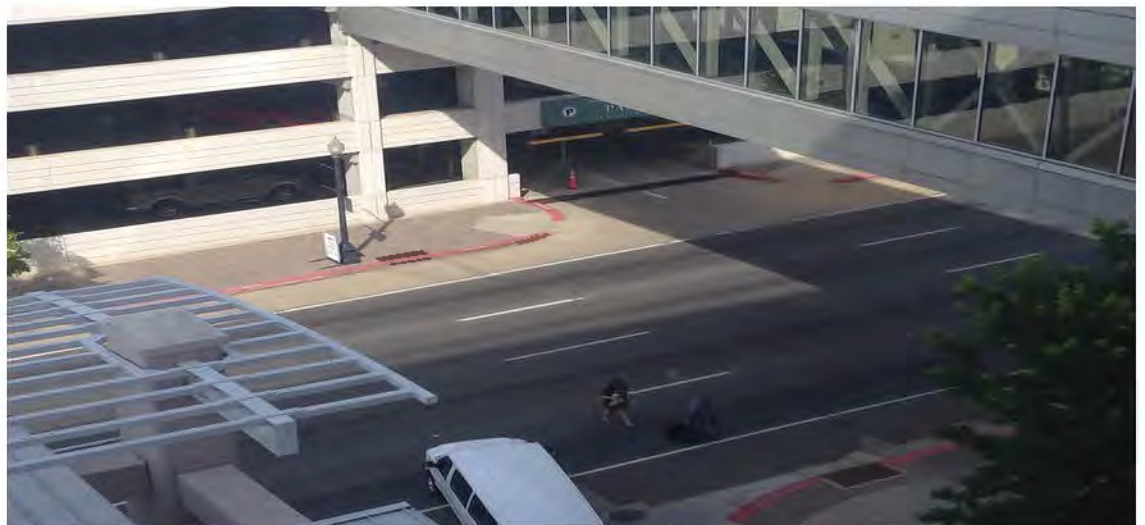
CBDs become less vibrant as building demolitions lower density. The first imperative is then to protect the existing stock of buildings, especially historic properties. Demolitions only make sense when the urban fabric is improved or density is increased.



*Entryway to the former Palais Royal building, now a surface parking lot. Once a historic building is demolished, the spillover benefits of that building to the rest of Downtown are lost forever. Photo Credit: Jeremy Nelson*

### 2) Improve the public realm.

Downtown Shreveport's urban form is a key asset: well-defined grid street pattern, relatively small blocks, attractive streetscapes, rich tree canopy, etc. The second imperative is to maintain and improve these features that define downtown's unique character and create value necessary to incentivize private-sector reinvestment.



*Pedestrian bridges deaden the pedestrian realm. In this example, the damage done by the pedestrian bridge is compounded by the lack of a mid-block crossing at grade. This creates dangerous conditions for pedestrians that rightly want to cross at this location. Photo Credit: Jeremy Nelson*



### 3) Improve connectivity.

The third imperative is to promote connectivity that should promote walking, biking and public transit use. More pedestrians, cyclists and bus riders in the CBD increase vibrancy. Anything that promotes walking is usually a move in the right direction. For many years Downtowns have been designed to serve the automobile. Cars must be accommodated, but their movement and storage (parking) should not be allowed to reduce Downtown vibrancy further. Parking is especially challenging in Shreveport since the many surface parking lots loosen connectivity, damage urban fabric and lower density.

### 4) Prioritize smart parking management strategies.

Downtown Shreveport needs a functioning parking system. But a publicly-funded parking garage is not needed at this time, and pursuit of such a project would be a diversion of public resources from more creative parking strategies. Downtown stakeholders should prioritize strategies to manage the existing parking supply as a coordinated system. The goals of Downtown parking management should be four-fold: a) increase efficiency (or productivity) of the overall parking supply, b) reduce localized imbalances between supply and demand, c) facilitate increased vibrancy and economic reinvestment in Downtown, and d) pursue all cost-effective alternatives (such as a Downtown circulator trolley bus as discussed elsewhere in this report)) before committing public funds to structure parking.

### 5) Diversify commercial uses and expand housing development.

Downtown Shreveport has numerous destinations and assets, as noted in Exhibit 3. More activities and events would enhance the urban experience by bringing people to streets and public spaces for specified periods of time. The type of commercial activities that enliven Downtown thrive most readily when they have 10-hour day, seven days per week customers. These customers should be Downtown residents. Although current conditions make new housing development marginally feasible, a key imperative is to encourage housing development to create a Downtown residential population.

## **FOCUS ON A “HOT SPOT”**

The CPAT requires analysis and recommendations are focused, both in time and space. Accordingly, the team determined that specific recommendations should be short to medium range in execution and impact, and that they should focus on a sub area of the Downtown. The area selected is ten blocks on either side of Texas Street, centered on the Caddo Parish courthouse, Courthouse Square. We propose this area as a “Hot Spot” for a series of specific short and medium range physical improvements and programmatic initiatives. These improvements and initiatives are designed to attract investment in job-producing businesses and lead to residential development that will, in turn, attract people – workers, visitors, residents – who will enliven Downtown.

Focused recommendations will permit greater, more visible impacts with minimal investment of scarce resources.

This area is a good candidate for focused, early action. It is centered on what is the most distinguishable building in Downtown. Texas Street is the main street of Downtown. It already has good streetscape elements, which can be enhanced, and it has new uses which will contribute to Downtown's vibrancy. Nearby buildings are good candidates for residential reuse.



*Courthouse Square Streetscape. Photo Credit: Jeremy Nelson*

# SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

## CODE IMPROVEMENTS

Downtown Shreveport should adopt an ordinance that supports revitalization and minimizes code enforcement barriers allowing for adaptive reuse of historic building. An example of this is shown in Appendix D.

The following definitions would replace the numerous use definitions listed in the current code:

1. A more “Generic Use Approach” should be used to combine similar specific uses listed in Division 6. B-4 Central Business District, Sec 106-698.

Personal service use is a facility for the sale of personal services. Personal services include, but are not limited to a barber/beauty salon, shoe repair, a tailor, an instructional art studio, a photographic studio, a handcrafted art work studio, a travel bureau, and duplicating shop.

General merchandise is a retail store for the sale or trade of general merchandise. Typical general merchandise includes clothing and other apparel, equipment for hobbies and sports, including bicycles, gifts, flowers and household plants, dry goods, toys, furniture, antiques, books and stationary , pets, drugs, auto parts and accessories, and similar consumer goods.

Food store is a retail store for the sale of food. This definition includes grocery, delicatessen, convenience stores, supercenters, and pharmacies that have 20% or more of the floor space, including aisle space, dedicated to food items. This use does not include other uses in this article that are specifically listed.

2. High intensity uses such as manufacturing and fabrication should be limited within Downtown Shreveport. Automobile and truck laundry and major automotive repair services should be prohibited within Downtown Shreveport

3. Off Premise Signs should be allowed to promote historic cultural art and/or special events open to the public.



Sec. 106-1122 (c) (1) of the current ordinance prohibits off premise outdoor advertising. A modification to the ordinance should include the permitting of murals. Artwork depicting local and state -wide historical figures and events could be viewed as both informational as well as aesthetically pleasing.

Clearer definitions and allowance of off-premise signage would promote a historical district by displaying of cultural art while serving a public announcement/ advertisement need.

Provisions should be addressed to revamp the code to bring non-conforming signs into conformity. Conducting a survey of existing signage would help determine what is desired and compatible within an historic district.

4. The creation of a Rehabilitation Code would assist in the implementation of the Historic Preservation Ordinance and protect the CBD's valuable resources.

Establish Sec. 106-704 of the Code of Ordinances (Appendix D) to give the necessary enforcement to support the Historic Preservation Ordinance, specifically Sec 36-31, Maintenance and repair.

Resolutions should be created for specific properties that will be adopted by the Council for the purpose of supporting and implementing the mission of the Historic Preservation Ordinance and the Historic Review Commission.

A historic building undergoing repair, alteration, or change of occupancy shall be investigated and evaluated.

Sec. 106-1232 of the Code of Ordinances needs to be revamped and reflective of current conditions and clearly allow for adaptive reuse of historic buildings for residential purposes.

5. Consider revisions to the development standards to bring vitality and substance to the Central Business District.

Design standards should be period specific, and recognize the architectural features that identify the valuable resource worthy of preservation. This district provides development and design standards that preserve the historic and architectural character of existing development, provides for adaptive reuse of existing buildings and the compatibility of new structures and uses with the historic nature of Downtown.

There should also be a revision of the code to allow awnings or awning repair. Awnings provide not only an escape from the elements, but also add a unique character to historic buildings.

## 6. Create a special exception use for the code Sec. 106-700

For Sec 106-700, temporary uses, including commercial, cultural, industrial, recreational, religious, seasonal or community service events for a period not exceeding six months, and no more than two three month renewals for the same business owner.

## TRANSPORTATION & STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

As noted in the published article “Really Complete Streets” in Planning Magazine’s October 2014 issue (See Appendix for full article) urban streets have historically served many purposes in addition to transportation. They were places for recreation, commerce and social gathering until the 1950s when streets began to prioritize the automobile and its ease of movement. With reduced demand and traffic volumes, there is opportunity to return Downtown streets to their broader role to strengthen the Downtown as a place for people.

## TRANSPORTATION

Low Downtown traffic volumes open consideration for configuration changes for accommodating bike lanes or wider sidewalks. Overall, street rights of way are already “right-sized,” (narrow through lanes, wide sidewalks) however further priority could be given to bicycles through the implementation of marked ‘sharrows’ which are travel lanes that are wider to accommodate cyclists and the pavement is marked accordingly. Bicycles are not accommodated well currently Downtown, both safe designated routes as well as bike parking.

7. Consider adding bike lanes to the existing rights of way of key Downtown streets to create a ‘bikeloop’ that connects Downtown and the river trail to Shreveport Common and Cross Bayou.



Proposed Bike Loop. Map: Sara Egan

8. Consider retrofitting the one-way street configuration in Downtown to two-way and lower speed limits (20-25 mph).

The one-way street configuration in Downtown is functioning for motor vehicles, but it could be retrofitted to a two-way system to benefit retail visibility, slow speeds and improve safety and navigation. Priority should be placed on Louisiana, Travis and Milam Streets.

9. Expedite plans to create a Downtown trolley bus circulator.

The graphic below shows one potential route for a Downtown trolley bus circulator. This route was designed with the following criteria in mind: 1) a route that supports the pedestrian, bicycle, and streetscape improvements recommended in this report; 2) a route that supports the revitalization of the “hot core” of the Courthouse Square subdistrict; 3) a route that provides direct service (no more than 1 block walk) for most major Downtown destinations and parking facilities, with an emphasis on natural markets for the shuttle (including Southern University, offices buildings, convention center, casino/riverfront, etc.); and 4) a route that allows the circulator to start small and keep initial operating costs as low as possible (expansions to the route and/or headways can be made as cost-share funding partners and demand increase). Please note: SportTran may be changing the routes of existing Downtown transit service as a result of the relocation of the Downtown Transit Center out of the Tent facility. This route should be re-evaluated in light of any of those proposed changes to maximize coverage and transfer possibilities and share co-branded bus stops wherever possible.



Proposed Downtown circulator route. Map: Jeremy Nelson



The decision to relocate the Downtown transit center out of Downtown will reduce direct service (not requiring a transfer) to and from Downtown destinations. While the merits of this relocation can be debated, it will be imperative for the City and SporTrans to develop a plan for a Downtown trolley bus circulator. Such a service would function as a “walking accelerator” because one could park further from their ultimate destination.

With the trolley bus, one might be willing to combine walking and bus trips. Key components of the service should include:

- Connect Downtown parking facilities with major Downtown destinations.
- Fare-free
- 10 -15 minute headways
- Small vehicles
- Uniquely-branded vehicles and stops
- Designated stops for getting on, but you can get off at any location

Such a service could allow redevelopment of historic buildings without needing an adjacent parking facility. It could also allow for the expansion of Southern University MetroCenter without the need for a new dedicated parking garage. As a result Downtown property owners, parking facility operators and large Downtown institutions and employers could be potential implementation partners. The CPAT estimates that the order-of-magnitude annual operating cost for (one)1 year of trolley bus operations would be equivalent to the capital cost of about (five) 5 structured parking spaces. In other words, a shuttle could be run for 40 years for about the same construction costs as a 200-space parking garage.

10. Create an adaptive re-use plan for the historic “tent” facility that formerly housed the Downtown Transit Center.



*The Downtown Transit Center housed in the iconic modernist “tent” facility. Photo Credit Jeremy Nelson*

The decision to relocate the Downtown Transit Center out of Downtown will require a public-private partnership to develop an adaptive re-use plan for the iconic “tent” facility. Such a plan would logically be spearheaded by the Downtown Development Authority. It should focus on three primary goals:

- Respond sensitively to the iconic urban design and strategically-central location of this facility by retaining as much the existing facility as possible;
- Reactivate the parcel with a use that helps to prime additional residential development Downtown (such as small-scale grocery store, café, restaurant, or public space)



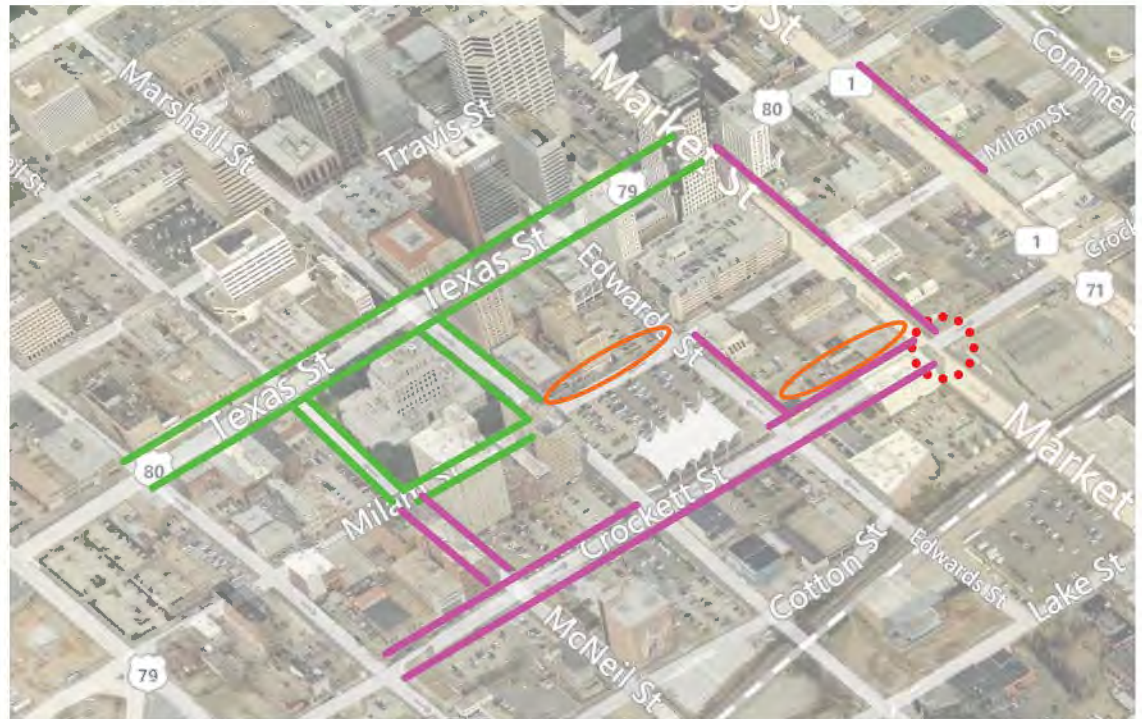
*Cush's Grocery and Market ([www.cushsgrocery.com](http://www.cushsgrocery.com)) is a local example of the concept of combining convenience and premium grocery items, take-out prepared meals, casual dining. They could be a potential partner on developing a Downtown version of their existing flagship location, perhaps in collaboration with the existing Downtown Farmer's Market ([www.shreveportfarmersmarket.com](http://www.shreveportfarmersmarket.com)) Photo Credit: Jeremy Nelson*




Maintaining a transit-focused program, as is likely required as a result of the original Downtown Transit Center receiving some capital funding from the Federal Transit Administration Another idea is to use the SporTran terminal in additional community-serving ways. The Downtown circulator could take over this facility to retain transportation as its required primary use. Available outdoor space could be used for co-working which would be open to anyone from the area. Co-working under the wing-like canopy would project the image of new ideas “soaring” from the synergies among co-workers.

The CPAT members wish to be explicit in not recommending that this site be repurposed as a structured parking garage. When a structured parking garage is needed, it is our strong opinion based on our cumulative professional experience that the former Downtown Transit Center site is not the appropriate location to build a new parking garage.

## STREETSCAPE

11. Complete the streetscape enhancement to connect remaining Downtown assets. Prioritize provision of shade through enhanced tree plantings and shade structures on buildings.



-  Reduction of access points (curb cuts) as redevelopment occurs
-  Priority New Streetscape (Trees, Paving, Crosswalks, ADA Ramps, Trash Cans)
-  Priority Streetscape Enhancements (Removal of Tree Grates, Additional Trash Cans, Recycle Cans, Additional Benches, Additional Bike Racks, Outdoor Dining Areas, Rain Gardens, Focus Public Art)
-  Enhanced Crosswalk

Possible streetscape enhancements. Map: Sara Egan



Streetscape treatments to date are working and need to be completed at key segments to create comfortable, safe and accessible walking routes to Downtown's main assets. Texas Street in particular could be further improved to provide additional seating, shade and gathering spaces – particularly to serve as additional event space/venues Downtown. As this streetscape is completed, the City should also consider larger planting areas for trees, ADA ramps, rain gardens, higher provision of trash cans, benches and bike racks. In addition, curb cuts should be reduced throughout the Downtown where possible.

12. Pilot test green infrastructure within the streetscape of Downtown – focus on Texas Street at Courthouse Square.



*Green infrastructure and rain gardens along Bagby Street in downtown Houston. Photo Credit: Design Workshop*

Downtown is lacking any green infrastructure – opportunity exists for rain gardens, bio swales, pervious pavement and the like to treat stormwater prior to reaching the river and bayou as well as recycle trash cans and LED lighting.

13. Develop Texas Street as a 'Festival Street' to further enhance retail locations and create a supply of event space to meet the demand.

The street should be re-striped to include sharrows in the travel lanes with back-in angled parking on both sides. The conversion of parallel parking to angled parking along this section gains a total of 6 parking spaces per block or 35-40 parking spots total. These improvements should bring various activities to Texas Street and the area around the courthouse on weekends and holidays throughout the year. These activities could include existing ones like the farmers' market and new ones that featured music connecting to Shreveport's past. This area could also host celebrations (for example, July 4th or Veterans Day). Event sponsors should be identified. Kiosks and food trucks should be encouraged to add interest to the main activity or event.

14. Retrofit tree planting areas with larger growing areas to eventually remove metal grates.



*Metal grates can prohibit trees from reaching full maturity. Photo Credit: Sara Egan*

Street trees can provide economic, environmental, physical, and financial benefits to a community. In a climate like Shreveport, shade is one of the key decision factors when deciding whether to walk. Tree height and size is proportional to the amount of growth area. Therefore the existing trees could be retrofitted to create a larger and healthier growing area to allow trees to reach their full mature size and shade canopy.

15. Allow and encourage the use of vacant lots and surface parking lots for gathering space.



*Vacant lots within Downtown can be temporarily activated or provide permanent necessary plaza/gathering space. Photo Credit: Sara Egan*



The Downtown has a number of vacant parcels and surface parking lots. These areas could provide temporary active spaces with seating, shade and/or food trucks or other mobile vending until a higher use becomes an option. As the Downtown population increases, demand will grow for a higher level of service for open space/parks to residents. This type of space is currently minimal.



16th Street Mall in Denver provides an example of temporarily activated space and mobile vending. Photo Credit: Design Workshop

## WAYFINDING AND IDENTITY

16. Develop a comprehensive signage and wayfinding program (to include gateway treatments) through a Request for Proposals.



Example of a comprehensive wayfinding signage program in Midtown, Houston. Image: Design Workshop

The current wayfinding system is inadequate. Opportunity exists to strengthen the wayfinding system to better facilitate all modes of travel and strengthen the various 'districts' within Downtown. Programs generally consist of symbols, colors, messages and images in the form of various sign types: street identification signs, district identity signs, map kiosks and gateway treatments. Gateways could include Spring Street and Crockett Street from the south-east, Common Street and Cotton Street from the south-east, Caddo Street and Clyde Fant Memorial Parkway from the north as you cross over Cross Bayou, and S. Market Street and Caddo Street from the north-west.



*Example of gateway signage in Midtown, Houston. Photo: Design Workshop*

17. Encourage further use of art and creative media to serve as district identifiers and strengthen the city's history as a capital for neon lighting.



*Opportunity exists to build on Shreveport's history with neon lighting. Photo Credit: Sara Egan*



Shreveport should build on existing successes with public art by adding public art and creative media such as portable projected lighting, photos, banners, art murals and installations. These treatments can serve as district identifiers that enliven blank building planes such as sheer walls and parking ramps, as well as unfriendly pedestrian zones.

A comprehensive architectural lighting plan for Downtown could also enhance wayfinding navigation, create a layer of interest after dark and enhance and celebrate the historic architecture in Downtown.

## **PARKING MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IMPROVEMENTS**

### **18. Create a Downtown “Park Once” Transportation Management District.**

Only 11% of the total Downtown parking is publically managed, and the rest is privately operated. This results in a wide variety of management practices that can lead to negative customer experiences. It also results in a large number of small inefficient lots reserving spaces even when those spaces are not being used. To increase the number of spaces managed as a coordinated system, the City should partner with DDA and private parking operators to create a “Park Once” Transportation Management District. The district could undertake the following priority initiatives:

- Require all new parking facilities to meet comprehensive signage, urban design, and maintenance requirements.
- Develop integrated marketing, signage, and frontage improvements for use by all parking facilities willing to participate in the district (even if the parking facility isn’t publicly owned).
- Get as much Downtown parking under district control as possible, via shared parking agreements (e.g. Regions Bank structure), lease (negotiate bulk discount rate), land swap, purchase at fair market value, or when necessary, condemnation.
- Consider passage of a parking tax on all commercial parking to generate revenue to pay for management and maintenance of the parking system as well as other Downtown improvements discussed in this report (such as trolley bus circulator and public realm improvements).
- When enough spaces are under management:
- Sell monthly permits to commuters at average market rates for Downtown (to undermine price gouging by some operators).
- Offer dedicated parking at nearby parking facilities to incentivize adaptive reuse of historic buildings (e.g. Lane Building), underutilized parcels, and other opportunity sites.

### 19. Develop parking wayfinding signage.

Half the battle of finding a parking space – especially for occasional Downtown visitors – is knowing where parking facilities are actually located relative to your ultimate destination. As part of the overall wayfinding signage scheme, a parking wayfinding signage system should be developed and installed. For an example of how to create signage visit [www.walkyourcity.org/](http://www.walkyourcity.org/).

### 20. Integrate real-time parking occupancy system.

Knowing where parking facilities are located is a good start. But knowing where an empty parking space is available when you want to park is even better! Technology now exists to link all Downtown parking spaces into a single network that includes – on-street, off-street, publicly-operated, and privately-operated parking. The network constantly monitors which spaces are empty at any given time and informs motorists via signage, online, and mobile phone where to find an available parking space at a distance they're willing to walk (or a price they're willing to pay). By making information about nearby parking alternatives readily available, such systems also reduce circling for parking that contributes to Downtown traffic congestion and price gouging by private parking operators that contributes to negative experiences for Downtown visitors.

### 21. Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for operation of a unified valet program.

In addition to the Downtown trolley bus circulator discussed above, another method to address localized imbalances between parking supply and demand is to implement a unified valet program. In such a program, a private valet operator (or multiple operators) would be given a franchise to operate designated curbside valet parking stands throughout Downtown. Each valet stand would have consistent signage, uniforms, and pricing (even across multiple operators) in order to simplify the customer experience and increase visibility and utilization of the system. The system might work as follows in Downtown Shreveport:

- Drive to the valet stand nearest your destination
- Car is valet parked at the nearest parking facility
- Text a few minutes before you are ready to leave your current location
- Receive a text when your car is ready at the nearest valet stand to your current location (even if in different location from where you dropped it off).

To incentivize use where there isn't a history of valet, it's important to emphasize that no tipping is allowed and to offer incentives like detailing while your car is parked. The first step would be for the City to develop and issue an RFP. If City and private sector cost share, this service could be offered for free. Otherwise there could be a nominal fee.

## 22. Improve on-street parking

Curb parking is the most valuable kind of parking in a Downtown environment. Yet Downtown Shreveport's management of this precious asset could be improved. Key short-term recommendations include:

- Price on-street parking to match or exceed the average price of off-street parking in Downtown responding to demand patterns in that area.
- Eliminate time limits
- To replace time limits and still encourage turnover of curb spaces, implement graduated meter rates (e.g. each additional hour parked costs more than the previous hour)
- Wherever possible, convert any unneeded fire lanes and other "parking prohibited" curb zones back to curb parking (some of these could perhaps be used as valet stands in the unified valet program proposed above)
- Re-examine enforcement protocols and resources to ensure consistent and fair parking enforcement.

## DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL REDEVELOPMENT

### 23. Diversify Land Use and Activities Downtown

### 24. Enhance commercial activities Downtown

The first step is to add some businesses and rental units in the core area near the courthouse (the hot spot). Taking this step will also protect large-scale historic structures that are desirable for future redevelopment but whose scale would overwhelm the market in the near term.

One alternative is for the City, DDA, DSDC or possibly other actors to create a stabilization program for prominent Downtown buildings. By working with property owners of vacant buildings, the program could achieve minimal levels of occupancy that would provide cash flow for maintenance and reduce the owner's liability and outlays for property insurance. The typical approach would be to locate a commercial use on the ground floor and to rehab several upper-story floors to create residential rental units. Building owners may not want to make substantial improvements, but they may be willing to provide sanitary kitchens and bathrooms to create live-work units.

One option is a variation of urban homesteading that has been used successfully to

increase home ownership in older core areas. Prospective commercial or residential tenants finance improvements to space that they subsequently occupy rent free until their investment burns off.

Our top candidates for this program are the Slattery, Lane and Johnson buildings which are strategically located, well designed, historically significant and large.



*The Lane Building*  
Photo credits: Roy Jambor



*The Johnson Building*



*The Slattery Building*

25. A non-profit housing organization with help from the City should create a land banking program that involved purchasing historic and noteworthy buildings and maintaining them properly. These properties form the inventory that could be drawn upon in the future to induce redevelopment when the market improves

Similar initiatives have undertaken in other cities and counties across the country. APA has identified two successful examples; one is Cleveland and another in Cuyahoga, both in Ohio. More information about the Cleveland examples can be in APA's Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Report Old Cities, Green Cities (PAS 506/507) while information on the Cuyahoga example can be found in the PAS report Cities in Transition (PAS 568)

26. The City should provide free space to local "pop up" businesses for 6 months or more

We propose extending no-rent leases to pop-up businesses for six months with two three- month renewal options (please see recommendation in Code Improvements Section). At the termination of the lease, the DDA would help business owners find appropriate rental space Downtown if they wanted to continue operations. These local businesses would diversify the commercial activity available Downtown and could become occupants of ground-floor space in large, prominent buildings noted above, this making residential development more attractive Downtown.



## 27. Promote an extended-stay hotel facility

Twenty years ago, the riverboat casinos were expected to add vibrancy to Downtown Shreveport. Instead, they have functioned as economic islands often criticized for capturing customers that otherwise would have patronized Downtown businesses. A redevelopment opportunity may exist: families with children visiting the casinos could be offered a different type of hospitality option Downtown. This facility would feature extended-stay accommodations that included kitchens. The facility could gradually be converted to fractional ownership (time-share) with central management provided for the owners.

The first step is to conduct a market study on both the extended stay and traditional hotel options. The study should indicate whether and when the market would support the better alternative. This alternative could be implemented at the Arlington Hotel, a property now owned by the City. This three-story 20,000 sf building is historic and unique and, according to the Shreveport Common Vision Plan, deserves to be rehabilitated.

## 28. Initiate an internet –based shopping and delivery service.

Before the residential market is deep enough to attract new vendors Downtown, treat the 14,000 people working Downtown as an existing target market. Supermarkets, drug stores, dry cleaners, hardware stores, specialty retailers and other personal service businesses could participate. Downtown workers would go on-line to place their orders. Vendors would fulfill orders and deliver adding reasonable delivery charges. As the residential population increased Downtown, this delivery program would continue. Such delivery programs are in place for downtown residents living in larger cities around the country. Wal-Mart, Kroger and Safeway offer delivery programs in many urban locations.

## 29. Add a grocery store Downtown by redeveloping Rubenstein's.

Rubenstein's at 513-19 Milam Street should be given serious consideration as the grocery store site. Rubenstein's department store was once a major destination and contributor to Downtown vibrancy. The suburbanization of retailing resulted in the closing of Downtown department stores in CBDs all across the country. Rubenstein's symbolic importance and central location on Milan Street across from the Courthouse make it the prime candidate. The current owners may be proud to have this property not become another surface parking lot. Despite its modest scale, we believe that the redevelopment of Rubenstein's could signal a "new day" for Downtown.

Rubenstein's is actually two buildings: 513-15 Milam Street and 517-19 Milam Street. The buildings account for over 40,000 SF GBA, and the leasable space is about 25,000 SF RBA. The buildings would qualify for historic preservation tax incentives and credits. After the wall separating the two buildings was demolished on the ground floor, the 8,000 SF of space could house the grocery store. The upper

floors could be restored for commercial activities reminiscent of the wide range of goods sold in Downtown department stores years ago. Candidate uses for the upper floors are among those listed in Exhibit A2. Ample parking could be secured in surface lots behind these buildings as well as the large surface lot on Milam across Marshall Street which has 120 spaces.

A full-service grocery would not be feasible until many more households lived in the CBD. According to Sarah Woodworth, a principal at W-ZHA who has conducted market research in Shreveport for many years, no grocery chain would be interested. At least 2,000 households would be needed to support a small food store (20,000 SF or less) that faced minimal competition in the surrounding area (March 8, 2009 Memorandum). A grocer in the 8-12,000 SF range that offered fresh foods, drugs, pet supplies, beer and wine, paper products, prepared food and other price-convenience retail goods could become a reality if it were financed creatively.

The best option to overcome insufficient Downtown demand may be to establish a cooperative business to capitalize the grocery store. The most challenging task is to identify honest and capable management. Food co-ops are relatively prominent in many states, but not in Louisiana. The New Orleans Food Co-op, founded in 2002, is the only prominent one in the state. Lori Burge, the general manager, recently reported about \$2.0 million in annual sales and 24 part time employees at the 4,100 SF facility.

If capable management can be identified, the next task would be to raise \$500K - \$800K to finance the co-op grocery. Although most co-ops take on loans from members and from the National Co-op Bank, the proposed grocer in Shreveport should raise all equity. The casinos should be approached to contribute \$300K - \$500K over the next several years for the start-up funding. The remaining funds could be raised by selling co-op memberships to all "Downtown advocates" and other interested parties. Crowdsourcing is another possibility. A detailed business plan could be developed during the fund-raising period that figured out how to ramp up the co-op as sales increased. The National Cooperative Grocers Association could provide valuable technical assistance during this phase.

## **EDGE COMMUNITIES: REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN CROSS BAYOU AND WEST EDGE**

As mentioned earlier, West Edge and Cross Bayou have great potential for contributing to the revitalization of Downtown. The federal EPA grant to undertake environmental assessment and develop a plan for the redevelopment of Cross Bayou provides a great opportunity to integrate plans for its redevelopment with implementation strategies for Downtown.

30. Use Cross Bayou for development of water-oriented for-sale housing and neighborhood retail development built around the water plant museum.

Specialty housing possibilities that would provide housing choices for Downtown include water-associated residences, for-sale townhouses or condominiums, with access to docking facilities along the bayou for private boats. Assuming that environmental clean-up occurs, the area may eventually be able to provide relatively attractive sites for new construction rental housing compared to the difficult market situation for similar housing in Downtown.

A loop on the proposed bikeway system through Cross Bayou would be a natural addition, providing a ride through trees and along the water, as well as connections to the rest of Downtown.

The water plant museum could provide a theme for the area and an activity center for other entertainment as well as neighborhood service retail development. The building would be a wonderful site for weddings and other community events.

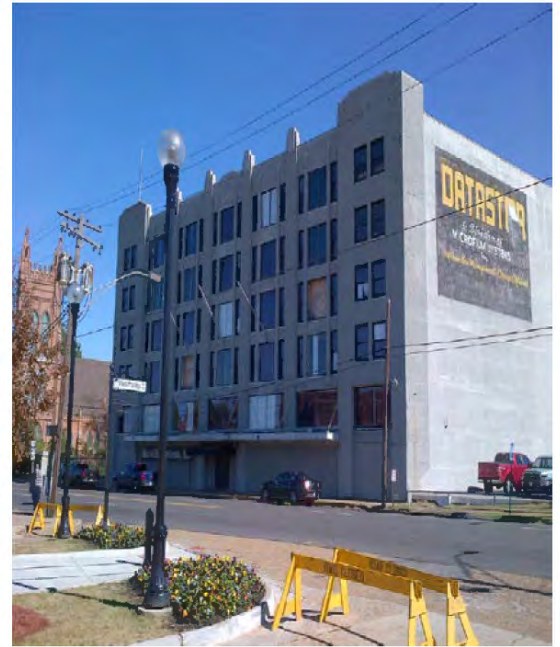
The West Edge neighborhood is the obvious location for the arts and entertainment district as envisioned in the Shreveport Common plan. The number of historically important performance venues in the area and its proximity to the center of Downtown give it great potential as a unique supporting neighborhood for Downtown. Ample successful examples in other cities indicate that the arts can become an economic development stimulus.

However, some issues are challenging. The venues in West Edge are scattered, making it difficult to create a critical mass without substantial infill development. A residential neighborhood could provide that infill and cohesiveness, creating active street life and a sense of security between venues and historic sites. Stimulating housing development in the present weak Downtown housing market will require subsidies not likely to be affordable in the near term.

31. Reconsider the Shreveport Commons Plan to provide new rental housing for artists' studio/living units.

The proposal to build new construction housing for artists should be reconsidered. Market analysis shows that new construction rental housing is not financially feasible at this point in Downtown Shreveport. Artist housing typically requires deeper subsidies because of the artists' modest ability to pay market prices. Doubling up subsidies to provide housing for artists in this form is not a prudent use of scarce resources. Providing such housing in existing structures would require fewer subsidies because rehab development appears to be supportable in the market as long as structures in the area qualify for historic tax credits. One possibility is the old furniture store on Texas Avenue which has several floors of spaces with large, north-facing windows that could be attractive as studio/apartments. The historically designated row house block farther in toward Downtown could also provide some artists' studio spaces, as well as a few market-rate units.





*Texas Avenue Storefronts. Photo Credit: Roy Jambor*

The site not used for artists' rental housing, plus other vacant sites could be used for new construction housing in the near-term, and rental as the market strengthens. To add to the residential population, efforts should be made to get control of some of the large historic residential structures on the west end of the district. These structures would be good for apartments. Their rehabilitation for this purpose could stimulate the private development of the others.

When a critical mass of residential development occurs, service commercial will complete the infill effort. But given overall slow growth in Shreveport, redevelopment in this area will take many years to come to fruition.

The DDA and other groups should seek ideas about ways to improve Downtown Shreveport

Downtown advocacy organizations have benefitted from information provided by focus groups of 12-15 people who share an interest in and preference for Downtown living. These potential urbanites are likely to mention their preferences for daycare centers, health clubs, grocery stores and movie theatres Downtown as well as access to bike lanes, parks and greenways. They understand that big-box retail, gas stations, chain stores, etc. should remain in the suburbs where they are currently situated.

Therefore when pursuing the early projects, it may be useful to consider recruiting real estate developers from outside the region who have experience building urban products in addition to approaching local developers. Many cities across the country are directly marketing opportunity sites on the internet. A potential tool to facilitate national marketing of redevelopment opportunities is [www.Oppsites.com](http://www.Oppsites.com) which hopes to become the clearinghouse connecting localities with sites to investors and developers with capital and expertise.

Second, the DDA should use Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) to prequalify real estate developers interested in Downtown opportunities. Through this process, developers with the knowledge and capacity to deliver successful urban projects would be identified. RFQs would be sent subsequently to the qualified bidders.

## NEXT STEPS/FOLLOW-UP STRATEGY

Most of the CPAT recommendations could be implemented in the short or medium term. A few things could be initiated right away setting the stage for other recommended actions.

1. Modify the DDA façade renovation grant program to require awnings on buildings that originally included them or that are now compatible with them. This would be an immediate fix and encourage owners to begin upgrades to buildings.
2. If the new Unified Development Code does not address the need for a rehabilitation code and the recommended permitted use amendments, consider retaining a local zoning expert to draft these items.
3. Take steps to follow up on the Sportran letter requesting permission from the FTA for new uses of the Downtown Transit Center “tent” to ensure City control of its reuse.
4. Consider undertaking a feasibility analysis for the proposed internet-based shopping and delivery service. This could be extension of the existing delivery service from local restaurants and markets to the elderly.
5. Inventory vacant lots and surface parking lots that could be candidates for special activity gathering spaces.
6. Undertake a review of on street parking rates and restrictions to bring pricing in line with lot and garage rates and maximize space availability.
7. Conduct a comprehensive review of all existing Downtown street segments where curb parking is prohibited, identify any that can be eliminated or shortened, and convert back to paid curb parking via simple re-striping, re-signing, and meter installation
8. Include in the Cross Bayou development plan a portion of the proposed Downtown bike loop from the north end of Commerce Street, through the site, along the bayou, past the commercial area near the museum and connecting with the Caddo Street entrance of the site.
9. Undertake a financial feasibility analysis of rehabbing costs of the two buildings suggested for artists’ apartments/studios.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the City of Shreveport for showing our CPAT such wonderful hospitality during our visit in June. Throughout the entire week our team met with passionate community leaders, elected officials and citizens all of whom shared their insights and stories as well as information and data, which not only helped the team better understand the complexities of Downtown Shreveport but also allowed us to create specific recommendations to help support Shreveport's Master Plan. The CPAT would like to extend a special thank you to His Honor the Mayor, Cedric Glover; Steven Jackson, Executive Assistant to the Mayor; Roy Jambor, AICP; Liz Swain, Executive Director of the DDA; Paul Farmer, FACIP; members of Shreveport City Council, Caddo Parish Commission and agency representatives, and community members who attended our meetings and presentations throughout the week of June 23.

## MEET THE TEAM

### ROBERT H. LURCOTT, FAICP

Team Leader

Bob Lurcott has been an independent planning and development consultant for 20 years, working mainly in southwestern Pennsylvania. His prior planning experience includes management positions with the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. He served as city planning Director for the City of Pittsburgh for 12 years and as vice president for district development at the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust for five years, using the arts as a vehicle for economic development. As Pittsburgh planning director, Lurcott oversaw the city's Renaissance II downtown development effort, and managed the development of Strategy 21, the city, county, and university economic development program that garnered \$450 million in state aid.



### SARA EGAN, PLA, AICP, LEED AP

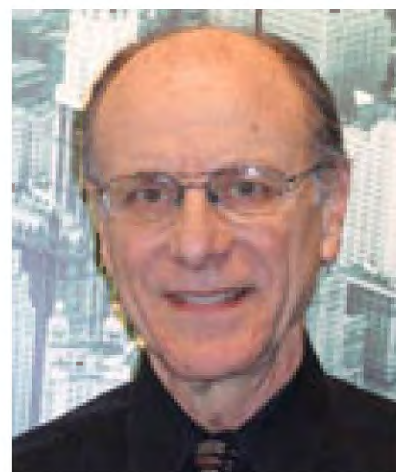
Sara Egan has been an associate at Design Workshop for seven years. Her experience ranges from regional open space and natural resource planning to planning at the corridor and downtown scale. In addition, her background in both landscape architecture and planning has supported her role in detailed streetscape and park design. Her work on the Strategic Master Plan for the Petra Region was honored by APA with the Pierre L'Enfant International Planning Award. The Larimer County, Colorado "Finding Connections to the Outdoors for Youth and Families" effort was recognized at the national level by ASLA. Egan's role in multiple corridor planning projects was recently honored at the state and national levels by the American Society of Landscape Architects.





## **EMIL MALIZIA, FAICP**

Emil Malizia is professor, Department of City and Regional Planning, and director of the Institute for Economic Development at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His expertise spans the related areas of regional economic development, real estate development, and urban redevelopment. For over four decades, he has conducted research, taught graduate-level and in-service courses, and engaged in consulting for private, nonprofit, and public clients. He is the author or co-author of five books and over 150 scholarly articles, monographs, and other publications. During leaves, he has been a senior real estate adviser to a major life company, a visiting professor, a special assistant in federal service, and a Fulbright Senior Scholar. He has served on CPAT teams in Greensboro and Matthews, North Carolina.



## **JEREMY NELSON**

Jeremy Nelson is the president of REgeneration Strategies, where he advises public- and private-sector clients on land use and transportation planning, urban design and placemaking, and real estate development projects. Throughout his 15-year career he has executed on a wide variety of projects that have catalyzed consensus, revitalized communities, and delivered lasting economic benefits. Nelson has worked at organizations that include the City of Portland Planning Bureau, Group 4 Architecture + Design, Livable City, and the Land Use and Transportation Coalition. Most recently, he was a vice president at Vialta Group and a principal and practice leader at Nelson\Nygaard Consulting where he managed multimodal transportation projects as well as a variety of public-private infill redevelopment projects.



## **RENAE' OLLIE**

Renae' Ollie is currently director of development services for the City of Wylie, Texas, where she oversees the process of planning, entitling, permitting, and inspecting development and redevelopment projects including review of construction and development plans for compliance with building and development codes to ensure community functionality and aesthetics. Ollie is immediate past president of APA's Texas Chapter and a member of APA's Urban Design and Preservation Division. Previously, she was state secretary and listserv manager for the chapter. She holds a Bachelor of Architecture from Prairie View A&M University and a Master of City Planning from Massachusetts Institute of Technology.





## JENNIFER GRAEFF

Jennifer Graeff is Associate Director of International Partnerships at the American Planning Association (APA), where she manages APA's international projects, including the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas program, which focus on building planning capacity throughout Latin American and the Caribbean. Jennifer is also a part of the Community Planning Assistance Team Program and APA's Water Task Force. She has participated in planning projects all over the world and has completed research on informal transportation systems, the nexus between transportation and public health, and hazard planning. Jennifer holds a Master of International Affairs from the School of International and Public Affairs and a Master of Science in Urban Planning from the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation both at Columbia University.

Special thanks to Megan Wooley and the Wooley Family. Megan is a planner for the Town of Chapel Hill and a native of Shreveport. Megan provided the CPAT with valuable insights and efforts and an important asset to the team throughout the week.

## The Purpose of the CPAT Initiative

The purpose of the CPAT initiative is to serve communities with limited resources to address planning challenges by offering pro-bono expert assistance. Planning issues and challenges include social equity, affordable housing, economic development, transit and walkability, and urban design. By pairing expert planning professionals from around the country with citizen planners and stakeholders from local communities, the initiative seeks to foster community education, engagement, and empowerment.

APA staff works with the community, key stakeholders, and the host organization(s) to assemble a team of planners with the specific expertise needed for the project. The team meets on-site for three to five days, during which a series of site visits, focused discussions, and analysis are performed. On the final day, the team reports their results back to the community with local press in attendance. A final, more detailed report is issued to the community at a later date.

## Guiding Values

APA's professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), is responsible for the CPAT Initiative. It is a part of APA's broader Community Assistance Program. Addressing issues of social equity in planning and development is a priority of APA and AICP. The Community Assistance Program, including the CPAT initiative, was created to express this value through service to communities in need across the United States.

Community assistance is built into the professional role of a planner. One principle of the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct states that certified planners shall aspire to "seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration. Yet another principle is that certified planners should aspire to "contribute time and effort to groups lacking in adequate planning resources and to voluntary professional activities."

## Program Background

In recognition of the key role urban and regional planners play in shaping vibrant, sustainable, and equitable communities, the APA Board of Directors established the "Community Planning Team" initiative in 1995. This initiative resulted in a very successful pro bono effort to assist an economically struggling African American community in North Carolina. APA has continued to develop a pro bono planning program that provides assistance to communities in need.

Another Community Planning Assistance Program is the Community Planning Workshop initiative, which is held in the host city of APA's National Planning Conference every year. The workshop is a one-day event that engages community leaders, citizens, and guest planners in discussing and proposing specific solutions to urban planning challenges. Workshops typically begin with an introduction of individuals involved and a tour of the community, neighborhood, or site. Participants form breakout groups that begin by discussing existing issues and formulate new ideas based on community needs and sound planning techniques. Each breakout group "reports out" on its results to the entire group. Facilitators then lead a discussion to form consensus around future goals and ways to achieve these goals. Upon the conclusion of the workshop, it is the responsibility of the local community to compose a final report that incorporates workshop results and specific actions that local officials should take to turn the project vision into reality.



In 2005, program efforts were notably increased after the tragic and devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast region. APA immediately embarked on a number of initiatives and projects including Planning Assistance Teams in the affected cities of Henderson Point, Mississippi, and Mandeville and Slidell in Louisiana. Another ongoing Gulf Coast recovery project is the Dutch Dialogues, which has brought American planners together with Dutch experts to transform the way that Louisiana relates to and manages its water resources

AICP broadened the scope of the CPAT program with its 2009 project in Buzzard Point, a neighborhood in Southwest Washington, D.C. Over the course of the site visit, the team met with more than 40 neighborhood groups, government agencies, residents, and other stakeholders. The team advised community leadership on long-range strategies to strengthen both existing and proposed transit links and increase accessibility, improve existing affordable housing developments, position the area as a major gateway to the city, and to deal with dominant industrial areas within the neighborhood.

Recently completed CPATs in Story County, Iowa, Maricopa, Arizona, Wakulla County, FL, Dubuque County, Iowa, Augusta, GA and La Feria, TX denote the increasing interest in the CPAT program. With more applications submitted each cycle, APA is confident the initiative will continue to gain momentum in coming years as it become an integrated component of APA's service, outreach, and professional development activities.

More information about APA's Community Assistance Program and the Community Planning Assistance Team initiative, including full downloadable reports, is available at: [www.planning.org/communityassistance/teams](http://www.planning.org/communityassistance/teams)



The American Planning Association's  
Professional Institute  
**American Institute  
of Certified Planners**

*Making Great Communities Happen*

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Successful Downtown Traits

**Exhibit A:** *Characteristics of Downtown Vibrant Centers Compared to Suburban Commercial Development*

Vibrant Centers	Suburban Commercial Development
Compact with FARs > 1.0	Spread out with FARs < 0.3
Mixed-use buildings	Single-use buildings
Multiple land uses in close proximity	One land use per area
Grid-type street pattern	Curvilinear streets, dead ends & service roads
Smaller block size with multiple connections	Superblocks & landscape buffers
Connected to internal & external destinations	Separated from destinations
Parking maximums & structured parking	Parking minimums & expansive surface parking lots
Relatively high density	Relatively low density
Public places & outdoor open space	Private enclosed interior spaces
Transit-accessible destinations with defined public realm	Highway-oriented entrances and signage
Discrete boundaries and edges	Continuous development pattern consuming greenfield sites
Critical Mass: More development increases the center's vibrancy	More development increases traffic congestion

**Exhibit B:** *Commercial Activities Found in Vibrant Centers*

Athletic gear	Galleries/visual arts	Restaurants – full service, caterers, carry-out
Bakery	Gift/card shops	Shoe stores
Bars, sports bars, brew pubs	Grocer/supermarket	Thrift shop
Baristas, coffee houses & roasters	Hair stylists	Travel agency
Beer, wine, alcoholic beverage stores	Ice cream/pastry shop	UPS/FEDEX store
Bicycle shop, sales & repair	Insurance agencies	Video arcade
Billiards Parlors	Jewelry & accessories	Wireless/internet service providers
Branch banks	Legal services	
Cafes	Manicure/pedicure	
Clothing stores, women's, men's and/or children's	Massage spas	
Computer stores	Movie theatre	
Dentist & optometrist offices	Music/audio	
Drug stores/pharmacies	Pet store	
Dry cleaners	Pizza	
Emergency medical care	Real estate offices	
Financial advisors, brokers, accountants		
Fitness Centers		

## **APPENDIX B: Applicable Financial Incentives**

The Shreveport Common Market Assessment (TMG Consulting, 2014) provides information on financing affordable housing. Please refer to the Shreveport Common Market Assessment, Appendix I at:

<http://downtownshreveport.com/media/2014/04/Shreveport-Common-Market-Assessment-Intro-and-Exec-Summary.pdf>



## APPENDIX C: Downtown Shreveport Market Feasibility Analysis

Exhibit A: Development Cost Budget

INPUTS				
	M-F rental		Condos	
Building	100,000		150,000	
Efficiency Ratio	0.80		0.80	
NLA	80,000		120,000	
Site in SF & Acres	30,000	300 x 100	43,560	
Land per SF	\$15.00		\$15.00	
Land cost	\$450,000		\$653,400	
Site development	\$150,000		\$200,000	
Hard costs per SF	\$100		\$105	
Soft costs @ 25%	\$25		\$26	
Hard costs	\$10,000,000		\$15,750,000	
Soft costs	\$2,500,000		\$3,937,500	
Cap Budget w/o Land	\$12,650,000	\$126.50	\$19,887,500	\$132.58
Total Cap Budget	\$13,100,000	\$131.00	\$20,540,900	\$136.94
Ann. Mortgage K	0.064419		0.064419	
Loan / Cost	0.75	0.75	0.75	
DSC ratio	1.2	1.2	1.2	
Cash-on-cash	0.12	0.12	0.12	
Op Ex per SF & Tot	0.35	0.3		
RET per \$1K & Tot				
Rent /SF/yr	15	14.4		
Other Income /SF/yr	0			
Total Revenue /SF/yr	15			
Vacancy rate	0.1			
Unit size in SF	800		1200	
Total units	100		100	
Parking stalls			100	
SF/stall all in			300	
Total SF			30000	
Total Cost			\$450,000	
m-f cap rate			0.065	
margin			0.15	

Exhibit B: Cost-driven analysis for rental project

Cost Driven Analysis using Loan to Cost Ratio					
Multi-Family Rental, New					
		Costs			
		Acquisition	\$450,000		
		Construction/Hard Costs	\$10,000,000		
		Soft Costs	\$2,500,000		
		Site Development	150,000		
		Total Development Cost	\$13,100,000		
Equity				Debt	
1-Loan to Cost Ratio	0.25			TDC	\$13,100,000
*Cost	\$13,100,000			*Loan to Cost Ratio	0.75
= Equity Needed	\$3,275,000			= Allowable Mortgage Amount	\$9,825,000
*Cash on Cash Return Rate	12%			*Annualized Mortgage Constant	0.064419
= Required "Cash Throw Off"	\$393,000			= Annual Debt Service	\$632,917
		Net Operating Income	\$1,025,917		
		+ Operating Expenses	\$552,417		
		+ Real Estate Taxes			
		= Effective Gross Income	\$1,578,333		
		+ Vacancy	\$175,370		
		= Gross Required Revenue	\$1,753,704		
		/Net Leasable Area	80,000		
		= Required Rental Income per Sq Ft	\$21.92		
		Market Rent	\$15.00		
		Required Rent/Market Rent	146%		

Exhibit C: Market-driven analysis for rental project

Market Driven Analysis using Debt Coverage Ratio					
Multi-Family Rental, New					
		Market Rent	\$15.00		
		*Net Leasable Area	80,000		
		= Gross Potential Revenue	\$1,200,000		
		- Vacancy	\$120,000		
		= Effective Gross Income	\$1,080,000		
		- Operating Expenses	\$378,000		
		- Real Estate Taxes			
		Net Operating Income	\$702,000		
Equity				Debt	
NOI	\$702,000			NOI	\$702,000
- Debt Service	\$585,000			/Debt Coverage Ratio	1.20
= Available "Cash Throw Off"	\$117,000			= Cash available for Debt Service	\$585,000
/Cash on Cash Return Rate	12%			/Annualized Mortgage Constant	0.0644190
= Justified Equity Investment	\$975,000			= Justified Mortgage Amount	\$9,081,172
		Justified Project Investment	\$10,056,172		
		- Anticipated Capital Budget w/o Land	\$12,650,000		
		= Justified Land Purchase Price	(\$2,593,828)		
		Anticipated Land Cost	\$450,000		
		Additional Funds Required	\$3,043,828		
		Justified Investment/Capital Budget	76.76%		
				Loan to Cost Ratio	0.69

Exhibit D: 4: Cost-driven analysis adapted for "Condo" project

Cost Driven Analysis using Loan to Cost Ratio						
Multi-Family For Sale, New "Condos"						
		Costs				
		Acquisition	\$653,400			
		Construction/Hard Costs	\$15,750,000			
		Soft Costs	\$3,937,500			
		Parking	\$450,000			
		Site Development	\$200,000			
		Total Development Cost	\$20,990,900			
	</					



## **APPENDIX D: Draft Building Rehabilitation Regulations**

### **CODE OF ORDINANCES, CHAPTER 106 ARTICLE I. IN GENERAL**

Sec. 106-704. Title of Chapter; Rehabilitation Code

Sec. 704.1. Purpose and scope of chapter; referenced codes.

(a) Purpose. This chapter shall be construed to secure its expressed intent, which is to provide minimum requirements to safeguard the public safety, health and general welfare, insofar as they are affected by building construction, through structural strength, adequate means of egress facilities, stability, sanitary equipment, light and ventilation, energy conservation, erosion and sediment control and fire safety; and in general to promote safety to life and property from fire and other hazards incident to the construction, design, erection, installation, alteration, addition, removal, demolition, replacement, location, relocation, moving, quality of materials or use and occupancy, operation and maintenance of buildings, structures or premises, and to provide safety to fire fighters and emergency responders during emergency operations.

The purpose of this chapter is not to create or otherwise establish or designate any particular class or group of persons who will or should be especially protected or benefited by the terms of this chapter, but to promote Local, State & Federal incentives for historic preservation & rehabilitation.

(b) Scope. This chapter provides the administrative and technical provisions to be followed by all persons engaged in the construction, design, erection, installation, alteration, addition, removal, demolition, replacement, location, relocation, land disturbance, moving, quality of materials, or use and occupancy, operation and maintenance of buildings, structures or premises, located within the Central Business District as defined and regulated by this chapter. This chapter does not apply to public infrastructure or work in a public right-of-way except as expressly indicated herein.

(c) Process. The building official shall have the responsibility to make timely recommendations to update this chapter, upon the publication of nationally recognized model codes. Technical committees shall be established to assist the building official in determining recommendations for the adoption of any model code.

(d) Referenced codes. The other codes listed in sections (1) through (7) and referenced elsewhere in this chapter shall be considered part of the requirements of this chapter to the prescribed extent of each such reference.

(1) Building. The provisions of the International Building Code, as amended, shall apply to the construction, design, erection, installation, alteration, addition, removal, demolition, replacement, location, maintenance, land disturbance, moving, quality of materials, or use and occupancy of every building or structure or any appurtenances connected or attached to such buildings or structures.

(2) Electrical. The provisions of the National Electrical Code, as amended, shall apply to the installation of electrical systems, including alterations, repairs, replacement, equipment, appliances, fixtures, fittings and appurtenances thereto.

(3) Gas. The provisions of the International Fuel Gas Code, as amended, shall apply to the installation of gas appliances and related accessories as covered in this code. These requirements apply to the installation and operation of residential and commercial gas appliances and related accessories.

(4) Mechanical. The provisions of the International Mechanical Code, as amended, shall apply to the installation, alterations, repairs, and replacement of mechanical systems, including equipment, appliances, fixtures, fittings and/or appurtenances, including ventilating, heating, cooling, air conditioning and refrigeration systems, incinerators, and other energy-related systems.

(5) Plumbing. The provisions of the Uniform Plumbing Code, as amended, shall apply to the installation, alteration, repair and replacement of plumbing and fuel gas piping systems, including equipment, appliances, fixtures, fittings and appurtenances, and where connected to a water or sewage system and all aspects of a medical gas system. See article VII of this chapter. The provisions of the International Private Sewage Disposal Code, as amended, shall apply to private sewage disposal systems for one- and two-family dwellings only.

(6) Energy. The provisions of the International Energy Conservation Code, as amended, shall apply to all matters governing the design and construction of buildings for energy efficiency.

(7) Existing buildings and structures undergoing repair, alterations, additions or change of occupancy shall be permitted to comply with the International Existing Building Code, as amended.

(e) Historic Buildings. A historic building undergoing repair, alteration, or change of occupancy shall be investigated and evaluated.

(1) If it is intended that the building meet the requirements of this chapter, a written report shall be prepared and filed with the code official by a registered design professional when such a report is necessary in the opinion of the code official. Such report shall identify each required safety feature that is in compliance with this chapter and where compliance with other chapters of these provisions would be damaging to the contributing historic features. Additionally, the report shall describe each feature that is not in compliance with these provisions and shall demonstrate how the intent of these provisions is complied with in providing an equivalent level of safety.

(2) Where feasible, the demolition of historically significant buildings should be avoided.

(3) The MPC shall establish a “classic sign” designation for historic properties in an effort to preserve specific historic and/or unique signs within the CBD.

(4) The MPC shall allow awning replacement for historic properties in an effort to preserve specific historic and/or unique character within the CBD. This allows buildings to maintain a legally conforming status and continue to be repaired, replaced, and maintained.

(5) Design Review Site plan and design review submitted to the MPC is required for new construction and substantial renovation of existing buildings within the Downtown Historic District. Substantial renovation means:

- a. Alterations to the exterior of existing buildings that change the placement or design of windows, doors or other exterior features of the building such as coping or pilasters;
- b. An increase in the floor area of the building greater than 10 percent.
- c. Adding new exterior building materials that do not match the existing materials.

(6) Interior renovation of existing buildings that do not alter the exterior appearance of the building do not require site plan and design review under the provisions of this article. (e.g., a drop ceiling that covers part of an existing window would alter the exterior appearance and require review.)

Physical properties of an existing building such as setbacks, foot prints, height, or other similar characteristics that cannot be altered without substantial hardship are not required to meet the development or design standards within this article. All other provisions shall apply.



## **APPENDIX E: Planning Magazine Article**

Planning Magazine is published by the American Planning Association for its members and the public who wish to learn how innovative programs and techniques are reshaping America's communities. The following article is from the October 2014 issue.

# Really COMPLETE Streets

Let's make room for parks and recreation in the right-of-way.

By Rebecca Leonard, AICP,  
and Sara Egan, AICP

## AS CITIES

build out, street easements and rights-of-way tend to expand—and parkland per person tends to shrink. But what if streets were the new frontier for parks and recreation?

Urban areas are desperate for more parkland. Research conducted by the National Parks and Recreation Association suggests that the acreage per person is going down nationwide and has fallen to just 9.1 acres per 1,000 people. Many urban areas come nowhere near that level of parkland, or the parkland quality is so poor that it isn't a community asset.

Even once properly “park-ed” locations are looking for ways to inject more parkland into built-up areas. According to a report issued earlier this year by the Trust for Public Land, American cities have a median of 12.9 acres of parkland per 1,000 people, but the cities with the highest densities have a median of 7.1 acres of park per 1,000 residents.

The trend is global. According to the United Nations, the percentage of people living in urban areas will grow worldwide from 52.1 percent in 2011 to 67.2 percent in 2050. (In the U.S., the figure is projected to increase from 82.4 percent urban to 88.9 percent urban.) How much additional parkland will be created to match population increases?

Instead of buying expensive land for parkland, thereby removing it from the tax rolls, cities could plan for more uses in rights-of-way. In his 1995 book, *Great Streets*, Allan Jacobs says that in the mid-1990s, 25 to 35 percent of a city's developed land was likely to be in public rights-of-way. More recent analysis suggests that perhaps upward of 40 percent of a city's land may be dedicated to streets and rights-of-ways.

It doesn't have to be this way. European cities tend to have less land dedicated to streets, yet their



densities are higher and their mobility demands may be greater. That means rights-of-way in American cities are underperforming.

Streets are typically defined as the areas within rights-of-way or easements used for the purpose of moving vehicles. Corridors are typically defined in a





The 16th Street Mall is a tree-covered, mile-long pedestrian promenade lined with 42 outdoor cafes that runs through the center of downtown Denver. Designed by I.M. Pei, the pink, rose, and gray granite stones are in the pattern of a diamondback rattlesnake when seen from above. Free hybrid-electric shuttle buses leave either end of the mall as often as every 90 seconds, stopping on every corner. More than 40,000 people hop on and off the free shuttles every day. After six p.m., horse-drawn carriages and pedicabs cruise the mall, offering alternative transportation.

PHOTO BY STEVE CRECELIUS FOR VISIT DENVER

broader way: linear areas with common influences. However, planners generally use the terms *street* and *corridor* interchangeably. Regardless, the time is right to make better use of them.

For decades, the U.S. has relied on engineering standards as the

basis for street design. Many states require thoroughfare plans and access control plans, typically written by engineers. While important for safety on high-speed and rural streets, “clear zones” or “recovery zones” are often inappropriately applied to urban settings.





The reconstruction of Bagby Street in Houston, Texas, increased the amount of pedestrian space and installed new lighting at varying heights in an effort to create a safe and pleasant environment for people to walk and gather, day or night.



SOURCE: DESIGN WORKSHOP

These plans have led to a system of functional classifications tied to a street's capacity for vehicles—too simplistic a structure for streets with a complex set of demands that include multimodal travel, multiple utilities, social gathering, and recreational uses.

Corridor plans, typically led by planners and urban designers, have been taking a holistic look at streets. Many of these plans are resulting in streets that function as recreational spaces. "Not only can streets connect to other natural open spaces of the city; streets can themselves be redesigned as green corridors that are conduits of nature," writes Vikas Mehta in his 2013 book, *The Street: A Quintessential Social Public Space*.

Throughout history, streets have been designed to serve many

roles: connection, communication, entertainment, and commerce. Often one use takes precedence—transportation. But streets are also a setting for active and passive social behavior. "The street is the most ubiquitous form of open space across the urbanized world," writes Mehta.

Only after WWII did the automobile and its ease of movement become the priority for corridor planning on all scales in the U.S. The decade-old complete streets movement has widened the focus beyond cars, but as the movement progresses, complete streets shouldn't stop at planning for movement; corridor plans should also consider the street as a recreational space—i.e., "parkland." Many communities are seeing flattening or even reductions in traffic growth, which means it may not be necessary to plan for the theoretical future growth of vehicular traffic in those settings.

#### Today's trends

Municipalities are specifying new types of streets these days: green streets, complete streets, and so on. These streets accommodate multiple modes and multiple infrastructure demands. For example, New York City is setting public plaza standards and metrics for seating along streets. But streets could also be designed as greenways with eddies—spaces for pedestrians to congregate—to offer an alternative to the torrent of vehicles on collectors and arterials.

**BAGBY STREET—MIDTOWN HOUSTON.** The planning and design of Bagby Street in Midtown Houston was first conceived during a capital improvement planning effort—a project to place a 60-inch storm drain to handle off-site drainage issues—conducted by the Midtown Redevelopment Authority and Management District.

The population of the district grew from less than 1,000 in 1995 to about 10,000 in 2013. Collective property values rose from \$157 million to \$1.4 billion in that time. In 2009, the district decided to overhaul the street—from storm drains to pedestrian improvements.

One of its first steps was to research a range of costs and improvement models. The district had to set priorities for expenditures because funds were lacking for uniformly high-level improvements along the entire 10-block length of the street. That was the impetus for a corridor plan.

Midtown is located between Houston's central business district and the Texas Medical Center, which together employ about 250,000 people. In connecting the CBD to Highway 59, Bagby Street is a key commuting route for many urban workers. Multifamily residential currently delivers the highest return on investment along the corridor. The only green space there is a small (20,000-square-foot) plaza called Midtown Park.

Midtown is one of few neighborhoods in the city that has no remaining natural features. Tributaries to the bayou system have long since been placed in underground pipes, and other landforms have been removed to make way for a consistent grid of streets. The corridor treats a portion of the area's stormwater in rain gardens—reconnecting people to the natural world and reintroducing urban wildlife, notably birds and butterflies. All significant trees were protected, reducing the heat island effect and providing comfort for pedestrians.

Now that street reconstruction has been completed, the street has become a recreational haven. Acreage devoted to pedestrian areas nearly tripled, and 88 percent of these areas were shaded, making them more appealing for outdoor leisure pursuits. Seating and gathering areas increased by 38 percent, and there has been a 16 percent decrease in noise levels in key pedestrian areas. Today, people can be seen strolling, dining outdoors, reading signage that interprets the green strategies applied to the street, and posing for wedding photos!

To acquire Greenroads certification, Bagby Street is also fitted out with directional signs for nearby parks and community gardens. The street can easily be expanded to connect with Buffalo Bayou and 300 miles of continuous all-weather hike and bike trails associated with that amenity. Public investment has climbed: There has been \$30 million of private reinvestment and a 20 percent increase in rental rates in the corridor since the street improvements were finished in 2013.

**P STREET—LINCOLN, NEBRASKA.** P Street is a one-way, three-lane road that transitions from the Haymarket into the downtown retail core, past the civic heart of Lincoln and on to the growing residential neighborhood adjacent to Antelope Valley. Each district has different land uses, parking demands, peak usage times, architectural characteristics, and user patterns.

The importance of placemaking along the corridor was a driving factor of the corridor plan. The P Street corridor had a lot of unused space: large corner radii, wide lanes, and space allotted to vehicular functions (about 34 percent was for pedestrians and 66 percent for cars). The corridor plan proposes to reclaim 210,000 square feet (4.82 acres) of space within the 26-block stretch though downtown for social gathering and recreation.

The team focused on creating spaces and enhancing an identity for each district of the corridor. Improvements to the retail core

district provide a lighting design to complement the new Civic Plaza, a former parking lot. The civic district and Antelope Valley are planned to become more of a parkway, catering to the corridor's growing and planned residential population by offering intimate outdoor gathering spaces to increase neighborhood interaction.

In the corridor plan, the median sidewalk width will increase from nine to 19 feet, crosswalk distances will drop by 23 percent, and seating opportunities will jump by 73 percent. Gathering space is slated to increase by 17 percent—in the form of new plazas, pocket parks, and alley retrofits—and the tree canopy will grow by 400 percent.

The team also proposed that the downtown circulator shuttle be rerouted to decrease wait time by 14 minutes and service a more equitable area. This would increase ridership and passenger efficiency, ultimately decreasing vehicular dependency. By decreasing the asphalt footprint while maintaining level of service, the street could better address the demand for parkland, especially pocket parks, seating areas, and planting. The plan also identifies key areas for adaptive reuse and new development. It is estimated that the changes will result in a \$50,000 annual increase in taxable sales and an average increase of seven percent in building lease rates.

#### **A seat at the table**

If Allan Jacobs is correct, urban street networks generally account for about 30 percent of the total land area within an urban metropolitan area, and 60 million acres of land in the U.S. are urban. So the nation has about 18 million acres of street network. If planners could make incremental improvements in the amount of right-of-way dedicated to pedestrians—say, a 25 percent increase—the total could amount to a three-million-acre increase in public pedestrian space, an area almost the size of Hawaii.

Although performance measures are now part of corridor planning, few such systems address the recreational and parkland qualities of the street environment. Planners could be promoting multiple uses for streets to organizations such as the U.S. Green Building Council, Sustainable Sites Initiative (known as SITES), the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, and WalkScore.

USGBC and SITES have led the way in making sustainability mainstream, but their efforts don't address the need for more recreation space. The ITDP promotes density as a way to encourage transit ridership; as its transit oriented development standards suggest, "The only limits to densification should result from requirements for access to daylight and circulation of fresh air, access to parkland, preservation of natural systems, and protection of historic and cultural resources." Using that logic, the standards could speak to methods of creating and accounting for more parkland in built-out urban environments.

WalkScore and San Francisco's Pedestrian Environmental Quality Index system both benchmark pedestrian accessibility in various locations. WalkScore measures walkability on a scale from zero to 100 based on walking routes to destinations such as grocery stores, schools, restaurants, and retail. Parks are one of the destinations WalkScore measures, implying that more and better distribution of parks would lead to a higher score. However, some streets can act as recreational space as well, and that factor is not being measured.

In contrast, San Francisco's PEQI system evaluates a series of



quality indicators in these five categories: intersection safety, traffic volume, street design, land use, and perceived safety. Because the amount of pedestrian space, availability of seating, and linkages to public spaces are considered in this index, places that perform best in PEQI may also be situated near a street that serves basic recreational purposes.

Corridor plans are essential to good outcomes like more multimodal use of the rights-of-way, increased recreational opportunities and connections, healthier neighborhoods, less expensive parkland, and better placemaking, but they continue to be short-changed. All too often, corridor plans focus solely on the right-of-way, making them essentially glorified access control plans that

disconnect transportation and land uses. That is a missed opportunity because a well-funded corridor plan, with proper assessments of land use, demographics, return on investment, and environmental benefit, can save millions of dollars in wrong choices and expensive rework.

These streets are the lifeblood of our cities; the complexity of systems at play in our urban environments should be reflected in our street environments. ■

Rebecca Leonard is the president of Design Workshop. She works on public-private partnerships and projects that provide the greatest benefits to communities, both new and existing. Sara Egan, an associate in the Chicago office of Design Workshop, focuses on transportation corridors and parks and open space planning and design.

## ON A RELATED TOPIC

### SHARING STREETS

By Rebecca Leonard, AICP, and Sara Egan, AICP

There are great examples of ways to create and support lively shared corridors all over the world—including in the U.S.

#### Boulevards and avenues

Boulevards are largely associated with 19th century Paris, where large-scale city planning gestures took the form of radial tree-lined streets connecting civic uses such as the Champ-Élysées and opened up land for development. Today, Paris has the largest concentration of multiway boulevards in the world. Barcelona is also famous for its boulevards; the Passeig de Gràcia and others are major structural elements connecting important places. While these historic corridors were structural design elements within these cities, they were intended to inject a recreational function, creating linear parks within newly developed areas of their cities.

"When bordering a park [a street] becomes part of the park," Allan Jacobs noted in his book *Great Streets*. Boulevards were imported to the U.S. in the 19th century during the parks and city beautiful movements, largely implemented by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn was designed as part of a larger system of linear parks to connect Prospect Park and Central Park. Between the center and side roadways are 30- to 35-foot-wide pedestrian medians. The *Boulevard Book*, also by Jacobs, calls Eastern Parkway a "lineal neighborhood meeting place" for everyday recreation as well as parades and events. The median spaces provide access to the subway, and the roadway serves as a major arterial carrying 60,000 to 75,000 cars daily.

Corridor planning standards have changed the makeup of the boulevard, but they deserve a fresh look. Gone are the public green spaces, as turn lanes have become standard and everything else has gotten bigger: lanes, distances between parallel roads, turning radii at intersections, and parking lanes.

#### Promenades

Some streets were always designed for strolling. They may have shaded walkways, benches, places for festivals, and fruit and flower stalls. Promenades, with their wide swaths of public space

and tree canopies, unquestionably function as parkland.

In their 2013 book, *Street Design: The Secret to Great Cities and Towns*, John Massengale and Victor Dover, FAICP, describe the promenade this way: "Like a square, the promenade street is a space where people are drawn to gather and socialize and eye one another—but unlike a square, which condenses this activity, the promenade street stretches it out and sets it in motion."

Boulevard de Rochechouart in Paris has a tree-shaded central promenade for sitting, walking, and cycling. Two of the four central lanes are dedicated to buses and taxis, while Metro entrances are accessed from the median. An intentional grade change shifts the psychology of the street to that of a pedestrian way.

Las Ramblas in Barcelona reverses the relationship of people and cars by placing pedestrians in a 40- to 60-foot promenade in the center of the street and automobiles to the outside. Some people call this promenade the "emotional hub of the city."

#### Market streets

Market streets are places for the exchange of goods, but these streets do much more. Kurfürstendamm in Berlin, designed in the late 1800s and reconstructed after WWII, became home to the city's most prestigious addresses. Restaurants, cafes, and seating areas line the street's 33-foot-wide sidewalks, while a large median provides gathering space under a double row of trees.

Some market streets have evolved into niche areas. Broadway, Manhattan's oldest north-south corridor, is known worldwide as the heart of the theater industry. Gran Vía in Madrid, built in the early 1900s, serves as an upscale shopping street and is known as the "Spanish Broadway."

Others have evolved into pedestrian walks—a strategy that has proven most successful where there is density to support it. There are many successful examples in Europe, but not in the U.S. Most pedestrian malls in the U.S. have returned to automobile thoroughfares. However, in Copenhagen's Strøget District, a narrow pedestrian walk with open squares allows strollers to stop, sit, and enjoy themselves. The street was designed with no curb and no separation of zones, and became a pedestrian walk in the 1960s.

Planning for streets as recreation space is not a new idea. As we retrofit our cities and adapt to a more urban world, let's reference these examples to make the case for measuring street recreation and park space within our street rights-of-way.



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November, 2014



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