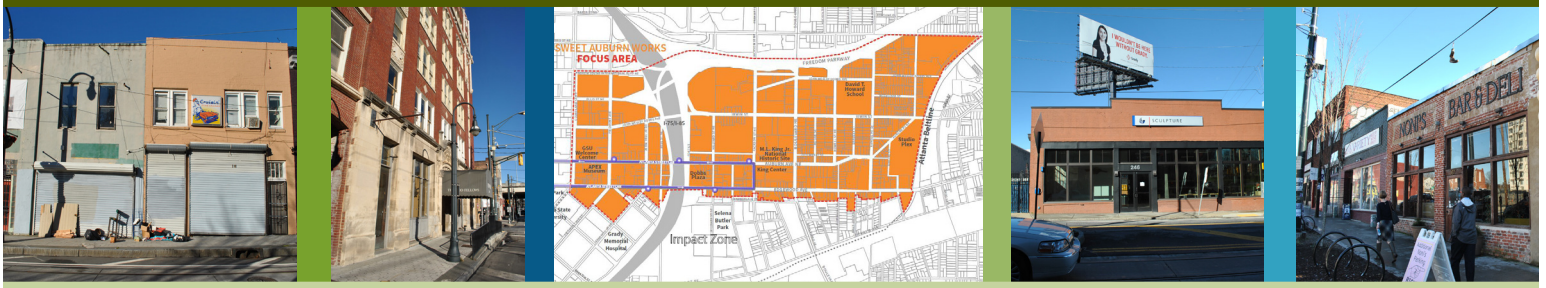


Sweet Auburn Retail Strategies



**Urban Land
Institute**
Atlanta

An Urban Land Institute
Technical Assistance Panel
February 2016

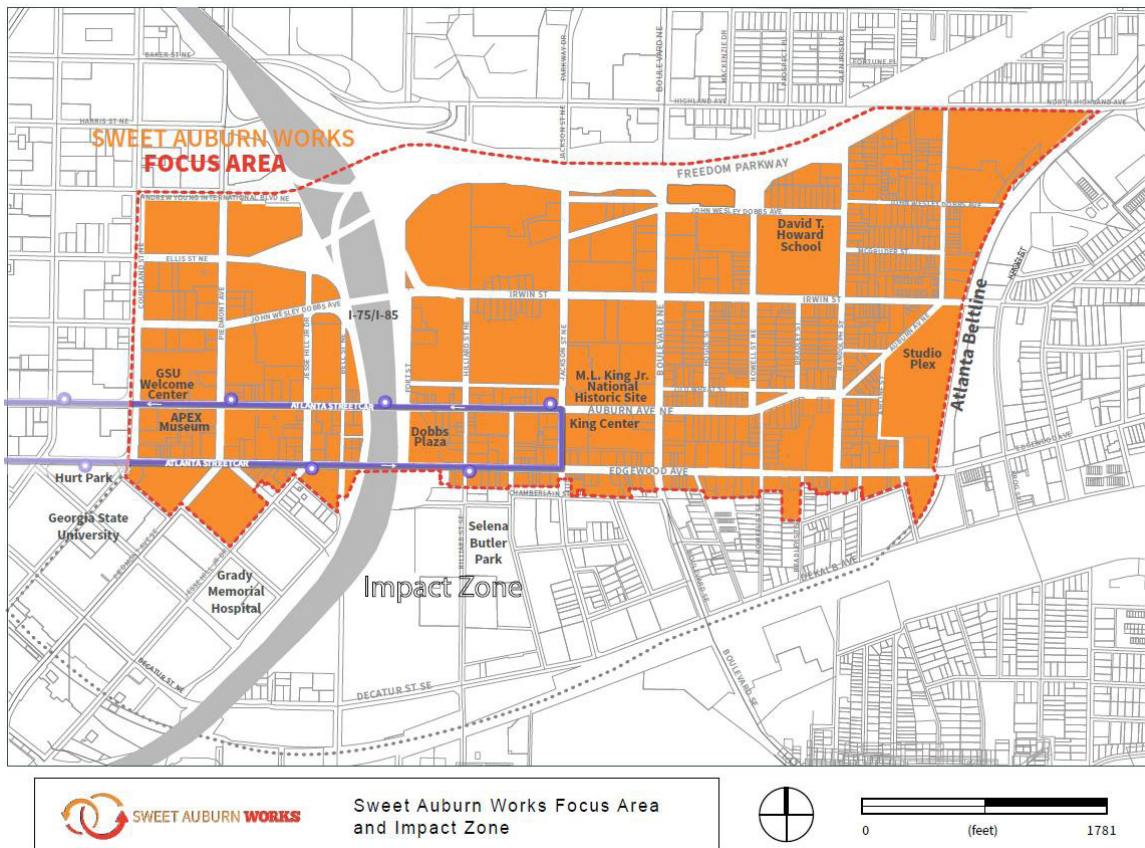
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Forward

Sweet Auburn Works, Inc. (SAW) is a nonprofit organization composed of residents, business owners, community leaders and volunteers with a mission to create a dynamic, revitalized "Sweet Auburn" community, firmly rooted in the historical Auburn District experience while going forward into the 21st century with a vibrant business and entertainment district and rich and diverse community.

SAW asked the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Atlanta District Council to convene a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to examine the desirable retail mix in the Sweet Auburn Historic District in Downtown Atlanta, Georgia (the "Study Area") as part of a broader strategy to revitalize the Study Area.



The Study Area

On December 14th and 15th, 2015, ULI convened a Technical Assistance Panel (Panel) of local and national real estate, finance, and design experts to provide recommendations to support the enhancement of the Sweet Auburn neighborhood. The Panel's charge was to interpret the current retail context and provide guidance on how to pursue an effective strategy to attract the appropriate retail mix to the neighborhood and help drive its ongoing redevelopment. Prior to the program, the Panel reviewed background materials compiled by SAW to provide a context and a historical understanding of the Study Area.

Day one of the two-day session included a guided walking tour of the Study Area, followed by a series of key stakeholder discussion groups designed to provide the Panel with various perspectives on the history, current conditions, and desired outcomes for the Sweet Auburn neighborhood.



Walking Tour

Stakeholder groups included local representatives from the attraction and tourism sector, business owners, local

government, neighborhood leaders, commercial property owners, institutional partners, and developers.

In the evening, three prominent national retail experts led a panel discussion touching on key drivers of successful retail development. The experts included:

- Michael Townsend, Founder of Townsend & Associates, a Los Angeles-based retail real estate advisory firm;
- Scott Auster, Managing Director of Grid Properties; and
- Matt Winn, Chief Operating Officer of Olshan Properties

Although the discussion was wide-ranging, it zeroed in on the unique aspects of the Study Area that make it particularly attractive and also challenging from a national retail perspective.

Day two began with another expert-led discussion hosted by local retail real estate brokers Amy Fingerhut of CBRE and Chris Carter of Vantage Properties. The discussion helped shape the Panel's understanding of the Study Area within the wider context of Atlanta's local retail market dynamics.



Chris Carter and Amy Fingerhut discuss local retail market

Armed with background materials from SAW, and fresh ideas and commentary from key stakeholders and local and national retail experts, the Panel deliberated for the remainder of day two on the questions they were tasked with addressing. The members of the Panel presented their thoughts and recommendations at the end of the second day to SAW and several interested stakeholders, who had the opportunity to ask questions and to give feedback.



TAP Panelists

Questions

SAW is seeking to preserve and enhance the commercial corridor of the Study Area and to revitalize its business community. The TAP was asked to examine the Study Area and offer its advice and recommendations on the appropriate retail mix for the Study Area, including answering the following questions:

1. What are the current retail market dynamics and opportunities in the Study Area?
2. What impact do adjacent land uses, including the Atlanta Streetcar, the Sweet Auburn Curb Market and historical sites, have on the desired retail mix in the Study Area?
3. Should SAW promote the Study Area to potential retail tenants as a place that will be a destination which attracts tourists and customers who do not live or work in the surrounding area or as place that is part of a community which serves its residents and nearby students and office workers?
4. What policies and economic resources should SAW implement to support the initial development of the appropriate retail mix in the Study Area and the subsequent long term maintenance of a viable retail sector in the Study Area?

Key Takeaways from National and Local Retail Discussions

Takeaways from discussions with national and local retail experts provide important context to the TAP. They help to ground its work in the questions at hand, which not only relate to general revitalization of the neighborhood as an ultimate goal, but more specifically to the development of retail opportunities in the area, and the needs of potential retailers. Prevailing sentiments from the discussion, which set the stage for the sessions that followed, included:

Storytelling and Authentic, Experiential, Retail

Place-making and storytelling will be key to the success of retail in the Study Area, as one of its main value propositions is its authentic identity. The internet changed the retail landscape, so now more than ever successful retail is about creating an experience and an emotional connection. An easy-to-understand story is needed that incorporates the history of the Study Area, the legacy of Dr. King and the national and global Civil Rights movement, and that story needs to be appropriately stretched throughout the Study Area from one end to another. The area's history

is its main asset, but the story can be about the continuation of the legacy as well, and the connection to the “soul” of the neighborhood.

Safety

Safety, both real and perceived, is always an issue for retail development, particularly in urban core environments. There are certain factors, like having a neighborhood policing strategy in place with a presence at the street level, that can make a real difference—in both actual and individual sense of safety. Providing safe public parking and eliminating aggressive panhandling have been central to the success of other downtown revitalization efforts.

Density, Scale, and Critical Mass

Retail is difficult to successfully execute in the context of fragmented development and fragmented ownership. The area needs coherence, and for that, the major property owners need to come together to work as one entity. This means sharing a vision and developing clearly aligned partnerships.

The Panel's Findings

Current Retail Market Dynamics and Opportunities

Based on observations from the walking tour and insights gleaned from the stakeholder and retail expert discussions, the Panel identified opportunities as well as challenges impacting the neighborhood that any redevelopment plan will need to address. Most notably, the retail setting, to the outside observer, appears to be a collection of small-scale, scattered independent businesses operating in a context of poor safety and incongruent branding.



Shops along Auburn Avenue

This lack of coherence and connectivity throughout the Study Area poses a particular type of challenge that can be addressed by capitalizing on the area's strengths. These include its unique history as the birthplace of the Civil Rights movement, its central location and proximity to key activity nodes, and its burgeoning success as a night-life destination, among others.

Strengths

Authenticity

One of the most common themes throughout the two-day session was the unique authenticity of the Sweet Auburn neighborhood. In terms of place-making and branding, this authenticity is a key asset. Key stakeholders, local and national retail experts, and the panelists all agree that this is the one ingredient that makes Sweet Auburn exceptional. The rich history of the area permeates the neighborhood and is palpable in its historic street network and in the buildings that house the legacy of America's Civil Rights movement.



Rich history in the area reflected in the buildings



Historic row of double shotgun homes

International Recognition

Along similar lines, the Study Area, which includes the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site ("the Site"), lays claim being the birthplace of the Civil Rights movement. It encompasses not only the National Park Service-run Visitor Center, but also Dr. King's birth home, the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church and the "I Have a Dream" World Peace Rose Garden". The garden is one in five located worldwide by International World Peace Rose Gardens. The one in the Atlanta is the only one located on the East Coast. The Site is known both nationally and internationally,



MLK National Site

However, there are a diverse set of local demand drivers operating in and around the Study Area.

- The Sweet Auburn Curb Market is a significant cultural and historic landmark. A municipal market first opened in 1918 after the Great Atlanta Fire of 1917, and in 1924 the existing building was constructed. Because of segregation, blacks could not enter the Municipal Market and had to buy from stands along the curb, so the place became known as the Curb Market. During the Depression of the 1930s and World War II in the 1940s, the market

was the largest operation of its kind in the state, handling fish, meats, and processed foods as well as fruits and vegetables. In 1974 seven local banks financed needed alterations and saved the building from demolition.



Ebenezer Baptist Church

and draws nearly one million visitors every year—numbers which should grab the attention of potential retailers interested in serving these potential customers.

Clear Demand Drivers

The MLK, Jr. National Historic Site draws the largest amount of regional, national, and international visitors to the neighborhood.



Municipal Market Building which includes the Sweet Auburn Curb Market

The Curb Market is home to 24 independently-owned businesses, including eateries, retail shops and shops offering sweets, fresh meat and seafood, as well as produce. It is currently a popular lunchtime spot for nearby Grady Hospital employees, GSU students and employees, and Downtown workers. The building recently underwent renovations and is becoming a popular spot for new restaurants – including several that are expanding from food truck concepts into permanent locations.

- **Grady Memorial Hospital**, one of the South's most well-known public hospitals, employs around 5,000 people who utilize the Study Area most commonly for lunchtime dining. The Sweet Auburn Curb Market is a primary recipient of this lunchtime business.
- **Georgia State University**, whose campus continues to expand to accommodate a rapidly growing student body, is a natural institutional partner for development in and around Sweet Auburn. Georgia State is currently home to 33,000 students. The recent merger with Georgia Perimeter College will boost enrollment to 50,000 students this Fall. There are 4,000 beds on campus to accommodate student housing. An additional 1,000 more beds are under construction. Overall, Georgia State's campus comprises 5.4 million square feet of real estate, with an additional \$1.5 billion in capital investment underway.



Georgia State Building



Georgia State Building

- **Local Churches** attract hundreds of congregants on Sunday mornings. The vast majority of church members do not live in the neighborhood. However, they could be enticed to spend more time in the area when attending church services and activities.
- **Edgewood Avenue** restaurants and bars, which attract a vibrant nightlife to the neighborhood, have made the area a destination for many millennials.



Restaurants and bars have made Edgewood Avenue a destination

Challenges

Fractured Ownership

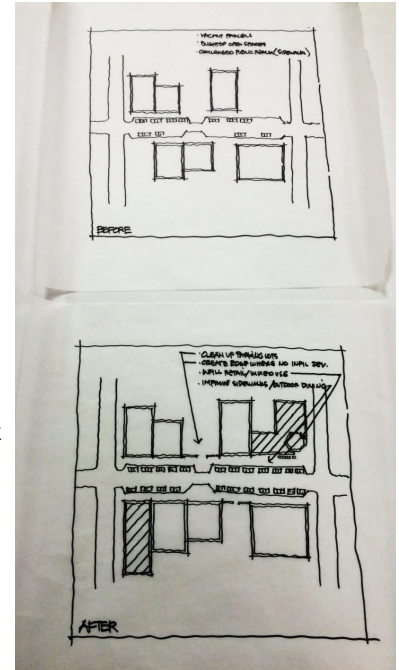
One clear challenge that any redevelopment effort will need to address head-on is the lack of coordination and shared vision among large, institutional property owners. Local religious institutions and non-profits hold a significant amount of land in the Study Area, especially along Auburn Avenue. This corridor in particular has not seen the same level of business activity as the portion of Edgewood Avenue located east of the Connector. Perhaps the single most important benefit that could come out of the TAP is the development of a partnership between property owners to promote a shared vision for the Study Area's development. Ideas for the Study Area's redevelopment will remain hypothetical (the quintessential "study on a shelf") without the buy-in and participation of the largest property owners in the Study Area.

Regulatory Hurdles

Small commercial property owners are also at a disadvantage without a coordinated visioning process and resources to implement improvements. A lack of knowledge and/or sophistication about real estate, financing, and historic rehabilitation hindered past efforts to take advantage of tax credits. Local business owners have expressed frustration at their perceived burdensome view of the permitting process for improvements. Most of the Study Area is located in the Martin Luther King Jr. Historic Landmark District, which is an overlay zoning district adopted by the Atlanta City Council in 2014. Zoning regulations are an essential part of preserving the authentic character of the Study Area. However, property owners need support with ongoing technical assistance and/or grants in order to overcome both real and perceived administrative barriers to redevelopment.

Missing Teeth/ Connectivity

From a physical standpoint, the missing and broken "teeth"—areas along the street where there are vacant and dilapidated structures, or no structures at all—break up the continuity and connectivity of the neighborhood. The lack of continuity created through spotted blight and vacant land throughout the area creates an atmosphere that is unwelcoming to potential visitors and prevents exploration of the area.



Missing Teeth

Parking

The Study Area appears to presently have a sufficient number of parking spaces. However, the accessibility and safety of the parking spaces is not optimal. The Study Area does not have a central parking deck that provides a safe and secure place for visitors to park.

Currently, surface parking can be implemented properly on vacant lots to help fill in the "missing teeth," and address some of the immediate parking needs. However, this is not desirable long-term land use. Other cities, such as Charleston, South Carolina, have implemented successful downtown business district revitalization through public investment in centralized parking decks. This should be explored as part of any long-term development plan for the Study Area.



Accessibility and safety of parking spaces are not optimal



An unsecured parking lot

Safety

Safety, or the perception that the Study Area is unsafe, could be one of the biggest impediments to the success of the Study Area. The notion that “you have to be safe before you can be cool” captures one of the difficult dilemma the neighborhood faces. There are multiple facets of safety that impact the Study Area, including:

- A combination of panhandling and drug-related activities affect the Study Area and will have a negative impact on tourism. The Study Area needs more “eyes on the street” throughout the day. This is an issue that is best addressed by increasing the number of occupied and activated commercial and residential spaces.
- Community policing, with more officers walking a beat, rather than just driving through the neighborhood without getting out of their vehicles, could help create both the reality and perception of a safer environment for neighborhood residents and visitors.
- The built environment and current dilapidated state of many parts of the Study Area also create a perception of questionable safety. Partnering with the City to clean up vacant lots and trash and finding interim uses for vacant lots could contribute to a safer environment. A recent example of this can be



Homelessness in the area

found along Memorial Drive slightly southeast of the Study Area’s boundary, where vacant lots were landscaped with low maintenance plants while they are being land banked for later use.



Aging and vacant building stock

- The Interstate 78/85 underpass represents a significant challenge both to safety and continuity from east to west throughout the neighborhood. It stands as a real and perceived barrier, acting as a wall between one side of the interstate and the other. Efforts are currently underway to create an interpretive mural under the overpass, but the Panel agreed the treatment needs to be much more bold and untimid. Lighting during the daytime in addition to the evenings is important, but the underpass needs to be made more inviting in order not to interrupt the flow of foot traffic from east to west.



Vacant buildings and trash



Underpass

Opportunities

- **Burgeoning national and international interest in authentic in-town/downtown retail shopping:** The apparent success of nearby retail and restaurant development bodes well for the Study Area, as projects such as Ponce City Market and Krog Street Market provide evidence of existing demand for such experiential retail. In this sense, Sweet Auburn is well-positioned to take advantage of this demand, given the area's unique history and authenticity. There is immediate need for food and beverage adjacent to the National Historic Site to accommodate the Site's visitors who currently have few options or reasons to venture beyond the Site itself. This is a natural opportunity to start filling in the neighborhood's "missing teeth" and pulling visitors further into the retail corridor.
- **Training and technical assistance opportunities:** Effective training and technical assistance will serve to support current property owners and would-be entrepreneurs in taking advantage of available development incentives and a strengthening

economy. Property owners need to be prepared to attract available capital investment and to better navigate the development process. Training and/or technical assistance in the areas of historic preservation and design, historic tax credits, marketing, and development pro forma analysis is needed to prepare for such interest and actively market the Study Area.

- **Visibility/proximity to the interstate:** The Study Area's location vis-a-vis the interstate may be a burden in one sense, but could be a blessing in another. Over 500,000 vehicles per day pass over the neighborhood, and there is existing access via the Edgewood exit. The Study Area could be effectively promoted with branding that is visible from the interstate and invites interest and curiosity. The highly visible mural of Congressman John Lewis, an icon of the Civil Rights Movement, is one good example that could be built upon. The Sweet Auburn Curb Market's adjacency to the Interstate provides ample opportunity for additional signage that draws attention to the neighborhood.



Municipal Market building. Interstate is visible in the background

Impact of Adjacent Land Uses on the Desired Retail Mix

An assessment of current land uses in and around the Study Area supports a phased approach to developing an appropriate retail mix. Several land use factors in the neighborhood play into how retail development will take shape, including:

Vacant land and “dead” zones: The most conspicuous land use factor in the Study Area is the “missing and broken teeth” referred to repeatedly throughout this report. This contributes most to the scattered effect in the Study Area that inhibits the natural development of the area.

The Atlanta Streetcar: The impact of the Atlanta Streetcar, whose route encircles a significant portion of the Study Area along Auburn and Edgewood Avenues, is yet unknown. It has the potential to support a mix of food and beverage services if traffic and demand from downtown (including residential, office, and tourist traffic) continues to increase. The Streetcar has already had an impact on the Sweet Auburn Curb Market, which is now open on Sundays. The Streetcar has also created new connections, including between the MLK Jr. National Historic Site and Centennial Olympic Park and other Downtown attractions and hotels.

The Sweet Auburn Curb Market: The Curb Market is currently serving lunchtime demand generated by local employers— most notably Grady Hospital—and draws 2,500 visitors each day. A significant aspect of the Market is its location just west of the Connector, as it serves as an important anchor that has the potential to truly activate the area.



Aerial view of Municipal Market showing the close proximity of the Interstate

The MLK Jr. National Historic Site: As one of the main sources of foot traffic to the Study Area, the Historic Site creates strong, unmet daytime demand for food, beverage, and other related services.

Retail phasing in Sweet Auburn should lead with food and beverage to address the immediate needs generated by the area’s current uses, especially related to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr National Historic Site. As more missing pieces are filled in and daytime foot traffic from the Site ventures further into the neighborhood, soft goods, community and service retail should be added to the retail mix.



Downtown Map

Study Area Promotion: Should SAW promote the area to potential retail tenants as a destination for outside visitors or an area serving the community?

Panelists agree that the neighborhood can and should serve both the local community as well as attract and cater to outside visitors, and that these purposes should not be considered mutually exclusive. Rather, the Study Area can be viewed as being made of up different activity nodes in different stages of development. As a whole, the area is currently not cohesive/coherent. To address the lack of cohesiveness, a strategy to fill in and repair the “missing/broken teeth”—or the vacant lots and storefronts that permeate the area—is needed. This could tie the neighborhood together and pull visitors through it. But the lack of coherence needs to be addressed as well, and this is where telling the story of the site—expressing its authenticity—is most important. There is no other neighborhood in the country (or world, for that matter) that can call itself the birthplace of the civil rights movement.

In order to better understand how to promote Sweet Auburn to potential retail tenants, it is helpful to view the Study Area’s different activity nodes independently—not as disconnected sections, but as a continuum of potential experiences and uses that serve different purposes.

Auburn Avenue at Jackson St. to the Connector (the “Tourist Corridor”): The focus here should be on telling the story and rich history of the King Historic District. There is a built-in captive audience in the 800,000+ visitors who travel to the Site each year, and this traffic should be capitalized on and drawn further into the community. Existing assets such as Prince Mason Hall and Madam C. J. Walker Museum should be leveraged and incorporated into guided walking tours, and storefronts should be activated with full service food and beverage to meet the very clearly stated demand for such offering. It is important to program every part of the day—not just lunch, but breakfast and dinner as well.



Prince Hall Masonic Building and Madam C.J. Walker Museum

Auburn Avenue from the Connector to Courtland: This section of the corridor on Auburn represents a continuation of the story of Dr. King’s legacy and the Civil Rights movement, but the focus of the story shifts somewhat toward the success of the area as a thriving African American business sector.

Edgewood West of the Connector: This segment should accommodate student and employee dependent retail, as well as student housing, and build on the current amenities offered by the Sweet Auburn Curb Market. The Market currently caters mostly to area residents, but could be marketed as a regional destination as well. The Market’s potential to offer authentic local cuisine, for example, could cater to the increasing demand for food tourism and serve as an anchor for visiting national and international tourists.

Edgewood East of the Connector: New private capital and investment in evening restaurants and nightlife has already transformed this segment organically into a destination for younger Millennial customers. However, demand for daytime businesses and retail has been limited, and there has been some turnover among the daytime retail businesses that have opened. This is a good example of the difficulty in making the transition to retail and the importance of demand generators that span both the evening and daytime hours. While bolstering additional nightlife should still be the focus on Edgewood Avenue, second level office space development should be encouraged to bring more daytime traffic and further support retail opportunities on Edgewood.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

SAW should serve as Brand Champion

Sweet Auburn Works should promote the Study Area as a priority project for the City and any other potential funding partners. The area currently represents an important but missed opportunity to redevelop one of the most historically significant neighborhoods in Atlanta—perhaps in the Southeast. SAW can serve as the brand champion needed to tell that story, and can work with other partners to help drive the implementation of proposed strategies and policies.

In order to do this, however, significant obstacles need to be addressed and overcome. Chief among those is a perception that the area is somewhat dysfunctional, and the sense that development efforts are hampered by multiple and varied missions and actors who have not coalesced around a shared vision. However, if SAW can serve as a unifying entity and rally divergent stakeholders around a more focused and coherent mission, it could serve to transform those perceptions of the area. While this may not be an easy task to assume, the timing is right and there is a legitimate argument for it.

Until recently, the churches and non-profits—owners of the largest vacant parcels in the Study Area—have served an important role as stewards of property that might otherwise have been developed haphazardly, degrading the quality of the neighborhood with undesirable uses. This defensive posture served an important purpose when the area was being overlooked due to prevailing economic forces. But the current renaissance and desire for intown living and authentic experience now presents an opportunity to realize the latent potential of the neighborhood. These same stewards may inadvertently be exacerbating the very conditions that cause retailers to continue to pass on the area—namely vacant lots and a lack of density/activity.

Rather than continue to operate independently, however, developing a shared vision among property owners is essential for the long term viability of the neighborhood, and therefore, of those same owners' investments. A shared vision is the first step to ensuring that the neighborhood's historic character is protected. With a plan, a brand, and a champion leading the charge, the churches can shift from a defensive or reactive posture to a proactive and much stronger position.

What is the Brand?

The question of branding and storytelling is one that will have to be addressed via fully participatory visioning sessions that include local institutions and leadership and engage the neighborhood. This should include a strong

focus on history, authenticity, the Civil Rights movement, and the identity woven into the Site through its significant landmarks and the legacy of Dr. King.

Public Safety

A sound approach to improving public safety (and the public's perception of safety) is central to paving the way for attractive retail uses. This has been touched on throughout the report and should include/address the following elements:

- Neighborhood/community policing strategy
- Elimination of aggressive panhandling
- Safe public parking options
- Lighting and activation of the underpass (potential location for a central parking deck)
- Sanitation, maintenance, and interim uses for vacant lots (including landscaping, attractive fencing, public art, and pop-up food and retail)

Public Incentives and Infrastructure Funding

- TAD bond proceeds from Atlanta's Eastside TAD, which encompasses all of the Study Area, could serve as a major source of funding for a potential parking deck or other parking improvements, and a process for making a formal application should be explored.
- New Markets Tax Credits and Historic Tax Credits could also serve as a viable public funding source for physical improvements to the area's businesses, and help support the adaptive reuse of historic structures.
- Private investment can be enticed when by eliminating or minimizing risk
- Public and philanthropic funding sources are needed to support the filling in of the missing and broken teeth through various tactical urbanism regimes such as:
 - o Branded advertising in vacant store windows
 - o Pocket Parks
 - o Improved fencing (more attractive)
 - o Signage and highway visibility
 - o Temporary uses on vacant lots to draw activity (see Safety section above)
 - o Public Art (tell the Civil Rights story through murals on buildings, walls that are visible from outside of the neighborhood)

Invest Atlanta serves as a redevelopment agent for all tax allocation districts (TADs) formed within the City of Atlanta. TADs are one of the City of Atlanta's key economic development tools. Also known as tax increment financing (TIF), tax allocation financing is a redevelopment and financing tool by which governments can provide financial assistance for eligible public and private capital projects within a TAD.

The Eastside Tax Allocation District was established in 2003 to join the Westside TAD in allowing the City to rebuild its Downtown streetscapes and improve its road and utility infrastructure, making Atlanta a more enjoyable place to live, work and play.

The **New Markets Tax Credits** (NMTC) program was created by the U.S Congress in 2000 to attract private investment to revitalize neighborhoods with high rates of poverty and unemployment. To date, over \$50 billion has been invested nationwide through the NMTC program to finance commercial, industrial, community facility, and mixed-use real estate projects in qualifying Census tracts.

Invest Atlanta utilizes the NMTC program as a tool to provide low-interest loans to builders and businesses with large redevelopment projects. To be eligible, a project must be located in an area with high poverty and unemployment. Projects with total planned capital costs/business investments of at least \$4 million work best for NMTC financing.

Eligible project types include:

- Business and industrial expansions, including capital expansions and working capital, that retain and/or create high-quality jobs
- Community facilities that deliver vital services, such as healthcare, recreation, and job-training
- Retail Centers that provide healthy food options

Panel Recommendations

Near Term

Visioning and Brand Championing

SAW should lead the charge to unite disparate property owners and other key stakeholders with the proposition of speaking with a singular voice to develop and tell the story of the area, and coordinate its ongoing development. An example of what that visioning process might consist of includes:

Connect the area with the community and retailers with customers:

- Create a compelling center brand platform
 - Strategic Brand Analysis
 - » Determine unique selling propositions (USP) for the area - as a result of a deep dive in trade area and community analysis, create 3-6 USPs. This is more than a demographic study. This drives merchandising, place making, operational, sustainability and promotional decisions.
 - » Create a brand story – a paragraph summary of the brand including mood/story boards.
 - This can include tenant coordination items like a uniform method of announcing spaces for lease (window banners) and information to direct prospective tenants to the website.
 - Outline tenant criteria to help inexperienced retailers with ideal ways to merchandise, exhibit product, creative signage techniques and govern how the retail integrates with the public realm.
 - » Create a brand promise – an “only” statement that summarizes the promise of the brand to the retailer/customer.
 - » Create brand keywords – define the brand's personality, to be used in all marketing and public relations materials.
 - The brand generates a connecting plan that includes but is not limited to:
 - » Promotional/programming activities
 - » Capital/asset preservation plan
 - » Merchandizing plan

Wayfinding and Signage

The Panel recommends wayfinding and signage as one tactic to address the lack of cohesiveness throughout the Study Area. The overall strategy should include celebrating the area's rich Civil Rights history.

- A key priority for wayfinding should be better signage from the parking at the MLK Jr. National Historic Site directing visitors to Auburn Avenue and activating the park in from of the Site. Both can draw people out to the street and create opportunities to keep visitors in the area longer supporting restaurants and other businesses.
- Branded signage throughout the corridor can serve to knit Auburn Avenue together from west to east, particularly under the viaduct.

The signage alone can help accomplish great cohesion and identity. Over time, the signage can be complemented through lighting, pedestrian infrastructure and land use to create a seamless experience along Auburn Avenue.

Court key retail tenants

Food is a main driver of retail these days and the one for which there is likely greatest near-term demand on the corridor. Make a list of potential tenants that would elevate the food experience and set up meetings to identify where there is a match. For example, King of Pops could replicate their dessert and lunch concept currently at Ponce City Market. Position one or two of these tenants are there and successful, the corridor should experience a positive ripple effect with additional food-oriented retailers as well as a greater diversity of retailers.

Inventory of commercial real estate

SAW should identify and track ownership, contact information, space availability, and other pertinent information about every commercial property available in a centralized location. This could be a two-page pdf with proposed terms, updated floor plans, photos, and area plans for each property in the Study Area and a contextual area map as a guiding document. See the following inventory map from Midtown Alliance as a good example:

<http://www.midtownatl.com/files/docs/midtown-retail-inventory-map.pdf>

Partner with the City on Neighborhood Policing and Blight Taskforce

If the above steps are taken to unify property owners under a shared vision/mission, SAW could speak more effectively to the City and its development arm about concrete steps the City and/or Invest Atlanta could take to assist with police/ambassador presence and sanitation. The neighboring ADID Ambassador program is a good existing model for how effective a neighborhood policing and sanitation program can be in turning around perceptions of a neighborhood and paving the way for reinvestment. Extending the program throughout Auburn Avenue will be critical in addressing some of the challenges.

Medium Term

SAW, serving as the brand champion, can drive a visioning process that brings all parties to the table, but for the technical support required to implement policy changes SAW should consider engaging a competent third-party consultant for supplemental efforts and master advisory services.

Public Infrastructure and Funding Plan: The Sweet Auburn Neighborhood needs to work with the City/Invest Atlanta to develop a longer-term infrastructure and funding plan that lays out the specific investments needed in public infrastructure (such as a central parking deck) and a plan for funding it. Similar to Charleston, parking should be well maintained (safety optic) and consolidated to every few blocks. Clear, well placed signage that ties the parking to the area will help bring a cohesion to the district.

Project Background

Overview of the Sweet Auburn Neighborhood

Designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976, the MLK, Jr. National Historic District is the only African American federally recognized landmark district in the United States. In 1957, Fortune Magazine called Auburn Avenue “the richest Negro Street in the World.” John Wesley Dobbs, Grandmaster of the Prince Hall Masons and maternal grandfather of Maynard H. Jackson, Jr., the first African American mayor of a major southern city, dubbed Auburn Avenue as Sweet Auburn in 1930. Auburn Avenue became a mecca for unparalleled social, political and economic growth. It is the place where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was born, raised, lived, worked and worshiped, and where he is buried. In 1980, an act of Congress designated the Martin Luther King Jr. District a Historic Site that attracts one million visitors a year.

Like many urban neighborhoods, Sweet Auburn

experienced prolonged decline, resulting from disinvestment, underutilized and vacant buildings, absentee landlords, and rising unemployment. The ability of potential entrepreneurs to attract capital to the district has been hampered by market misconceptions and the lack of a well-coordinated revitalization effort. The streetcar project is expected to boost economic activity in the neighborhood by drawing visitors from Centennial Olympic Park to the King National Historic Site. Also, Auburn Avenue dead ends into the most utilized section of the Atlanta BeltLine, the largest redevelopment project in the country at this time.

Thanks largely to the Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC), the residential portions of the Sweet Auburn neighborhood and the Old Fourth Ward have enjoyed a distinct turnaround in the last few decades. HDDC was founded in 1980 by Coretta Scott King. Under the leadership

of Mtamanika Youngblood the organization has restored and developed over 120 single-family homes, constructed nearly 500 units of multi-family housing and added over 40,000 square feet of commercial space in the Old Fourth Ward. HDDC currently operates 65 units of affordable housing and is currently in the process of renovating the Historic Atlanta

Life Insurance Company building site into a boutique hotel. In 1905 Alonzo Herndon, a former slave, started the Atlanta Life Insurance Company, the second largest black owned insurance company in the country. The main office building has a Beaux Arts Classical façade that is without question one of the outstanding visual points of the district.



Odd Fellows Building



Odd Fellows Building

Acknowledgements

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Program Chair: **Eric Weatherholtz**, Healy Weatherholtz

Program Managers: **Derrick Holland**, Trinity Group

Panel Members:

- Jonathan Bartlett**, Jacobs
- Angelo Carussi**, Cooper Carry
- Chris Faussemagne**, Westbridge Partners
- Alrich Lynch**, LDG Consulting
- Jodi Mansbach**, Jamestown
- Scott Prigge**, Regency Centers
- Cheryl Strickland**, Stifel

Technical Writer: **Jesse Zaro-Moore**, Beazer Homes

Project Staff

TAP Committee Chair: **Darryl Moss, Weissman**, Nowack, Curry & Wilco

ULI Atlanta Staff: **Sarah Kirsch**, Executive Director

ULI Atlanta Staff: **Barbra Bowers**, Director



ULI Atlanta TAP participants

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Panelist Biographies



**Scott Auster, Managing Director,
Grid Properties**

Mr. Auster joined Grid Properties in 2009 as a Managing Director responsible for sourcing acquisitions and new development projects as well as overseeing the leasing of Urban Strategic Partners' new projects and existing retail portfolio.

Prior to joining Grid Properties Mr. Auster was a partner in the New York City office of Ripco Real Estate Corp. – a boutique commercial brokerage company specializing in retail real estate leasing throughout the New York metropolitan area. During his 11 years with Ripco he specialized in representing landlords and developers in the leasing of the retail space in their properties throughout New York City. His clients included building owners and developers such as Archstone, Kimco Realty Corporation, RREFF Alternative Investments, The Apple Bank for Savings and The Argo Corporation. Mr. Auster completed transactions with many prominent tenants including Marshalls, T.J. Maxx, Best Buy, JP Morgan Chase Bank, Darden Restaurants, Bank of America and Staples. He continues to maintain close ties with major national and regional retailers. In addition to his many leasing assignments throughout New York City, Mr. Auster specialized in existing properties and retail developments along the 125th Street corridor and throughout other parts of Harlem where he oversaw the completion of more than 20 significant leasing transactions.

Prior to joining Ripco, Mr. Auster was a senior analyst with BRT Realty Trust where he focused primarily on analyzing equity and debt investments for the company. In addition, he was asset manager for a portfolio of internally held commercial properties and was responsible for the organization's relationship with the capital markets.

Mr. Auster began his career in real estate in Washington D.C. working as a lobbyist for the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) International. He is a graduate of the University of Maryland and New York University's Schack Institute of Real Estate, where he received a Master's of Science in Real Estate Development and Investment. He is a member of the International Council of Shopping Centers where he is a board member for the Next Generation Committee, The Real Estate Board of New York and both The NYU Schack Institute of Real Estate and University of Maryland Alumni Associations. Mr. Auster is a licensed real estate broker in the State of New York.



**Jonathan Bartlett, Senior
Consultant, Jacobs**

Jonathan Bartlett serves as senior consultant for private and public sector projects. Jonathan's core skills are in forward-looking market, financial, and strategic analysis of real estate development and investment opportunities. He also brings

private sector expertise to municipal engagements, unlocking economic development opportunities through demographic analysis and real time market intelligence. He believes that bold plans must be implementable, so he applies an understanding of a range of tools from private equity to P3 and tax credit sources. Jonathan also brings expertise in fiscal and economic impact analysis, tax increment finance, and portfolio strategy.



**Angelo Carusi, Principal,
Cooper Carry**

Angelo has been designing with Cooper Carry's Atlanta office for 32 years. For the last 25 years of his career, Angelo has focused on mixed-use master planning and retail design. Named a Principal in the firm's retail studio in 2000, he is currently directing the design of mixed-use projects in Nashville and Wilmington, NC. Over the

years, his projects have received several of the retail industry's highest design honors, including an International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) Award of Merit for The Mercato in Naples, FL. Angelo holds a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Tennessee. He is a LEED Accredited Professional with the United States Green Building Council, a member of the American Institute of Architects, the Urban Land Institute (ULI), the International Council of Shopping Centers and the Buckhead Business Association.

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



**Chris Faussemagne, Principal,
Westbridge Partners**

A native Atlantan and graduate of the Westminster Schools, Mr. Faussemagne graduated in 1994 from Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia. He began his real estate career in 1998 with The Winter Group of Companies and then joined Weaver & Woodberry Company in 2000.

In 2005, he formed White Provision Development Co. to acquire and develop the historic buildings at 14th Street and Howell Mill Road in West Midtown Atlanta into a 335,000 square foot mixed-use development. The project delivered in 2008 and partnered with neighboring properties to create the Westside Provisions District, which continues to be one of the Southeast's top destinations for restaurants and retail.

Westbridge Realty Partners was formed in 2010 by the development partners of the White Provision project continuing the focus on developing adaptive re-use and urban infill projects as well as consulting on larger regional projects for institutional clients. Over the past five years the company has continued to actively develop projects in the West Midtown submarket and will break ground in early 2016 redeveloping one of the area's last early 1900's historic buildings providing much needed office space to the area.

Mr. Faussemagne has won Development of Excellence awards from The Urban Land Institute (ULI), Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta Urban Design Commission, and the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation for past projects he has developed. He is active in land use policy and currently co-chairs the MSAA (West Midtown) land use committee and a board member of ULI Atlanta.

Mr. Faussemagne lives in the Buckhead neighborhood with his wife Katie and their two boys.



Alrich Lynch, LDG Consulting

Alrich Lynch has nearly twenty years' experience in numerous aspects of the real estate, development, construction management and asset management arenas. His varied background has afforded him the ability to smoothly transition between various positions, complex assignments and uniquely different organizations.

Mr. Lynch's various roles have included: Sole Development Manager for the simultaneous development, construction and operations of over 1,270 market rate apartment units; Development lead and contact for Sales, Marketing, Construction, Condo Association Management, Equity's Asset Manager, and Finance groups for 442 units developed in three different product types; Development Manager for several redevelopment and repositioning projects; Program Manager for complex mixed-income developments financed with HOPE VI loans & grants, LIHTC, CDBG, and traditional equity; and as Program Manager; negotiated debt, equity, and grant instruments for new mixed-income developments.

During Mr. Lynch's career, he has held increasingly substantial positions at regional and national firms including, H.J. Russell and Company, The Integral Group, Julian LeCraw & Company, Trammell Crow Residential. In 2010, Mr. Lynch took the helm of LDG Consulting, an advisory services firm focused on the design, construction, and real estate industries.

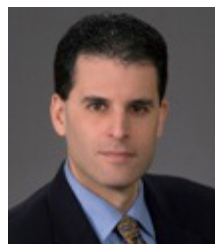
Mr. Lynch, a native of West Palm Beach, FL., graduated from the University of Florida, earning a Bachelor of Design in Architecture with a minor in Business as well as Master of Building Construction. Mr. Lynch graduated from Georgia State University with a Master of Business Administration, concentration in Real Estate.



Jodi Mansbach, Vice President of Development & Construction, Jamestown

Jodi Lox Mansbach is Vice President of Development & Construction at Jamestown, a real estate investment and management company that oversees \$8 billion in assets. As an urban planner, Jodi is involved in the firm's New Urbanist development and adaptive reuse projects.

She worked for several years on the Mixson project in North Charleston, leading the effort to activate and redesign the 44 acre site into a vibrant neighborhood with single family, multifamily, retail and a first-class amenity center. She also worked on an entertainment component for the rooftop at Ponce City Market, the largest adaptive reuse project in the southeast. At Jamestown, Jodi also co-leads the firm's sustainability initiatives for the US portfolio and directs philanthropic giving for the Jamestown Charitable Foundation. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Art History from Yale University, Master of Arts in Art History from Northwestern University and Master in City and Regional Planning from the Georgia Institute of Technology.



Darryl Moss, Partner, Weissman, Nowack, Curry & Wilco

Darryl Moss is a Partner in the firm's Commercial Real Estate group. He represents builders, developers, investors, brokers, and lenders in commercial real estate transactions, including acquisitions, dispositions, and leases.

Darryl represents developers throughout the country in the creation of new real estate developments, and is considered an industry leader and expert in condominiums (both commercial and residential), master planned communities, new urban communities, mixed-use developments and other types of real estate developments involving complex ownership structures. He also represents clients in the organization and structuring of new corporate entities.

Darryl was one of the primary authors of the 2006 and 2007 amendments to the Georgia Condominium Act, which addressed issues related to master condominiums, escrow of purchase deposits, certificates of occupancy, and developer exemptions from assessment obligations.

Darryl is a frequent speaker at commercial real estate and legal continuing education seminars. His recent presentations include: "Issues in Mixed-Use Development and Changes in the Condo Act" (Georgia Real Property Law Institute); "Structuring Mixed-Use Developments with Master Condominiums (National Business Institute); "Considerations for Lenders Dealing with Condominium Associations in a Difficult Economic Climate" (Law Seminars International); and, Considerations for Dealing with Homeowners' Associations in Troubled Communities" (State Bar of Georgia, Real Property Section – Commercial Real Estate Seminar). He is also a frequent contributor to *Developments in Real Estate*, the official Weissman, Nowack, Curry & Wilco newsletter for the real estate community.

Darryl was named a "Georgia Rising Star" by Law & Politics Magazine in both 2006 and 2007. He is an active member of Urban Land Institute. As one of the emerging leaders in the real estate industry, he was selected to participate in ULI Atlanta's inaugural Center for Regional Leadership Development program in 2009-2010. He is also an active member of ULI Atlanta's Technical Assistance Panels (TAP) committee. He was chairperson for the Fulton Industrial Boulevard TAP (2012) and is co-chairing the Clarkston TAP (2013).



Scott Prigge, Senior Vice President of National Property Operations, Regency Centers

Scott Prigge is Senior Vice President of National Property Operations at Regency Centers. He currently oversees property management, specialty leasing, and the company's sustainability program for a portfolio of 318 retail properties encompassing over 42.7 million square feet located in top markets throughout the United States.

Scott joined Regency in 1997 and has held a variety of roles employing his talents in team building, strategic planning, development, and redevelopment, while managing and leasing retail projects throughout the United States. He became Senior Vice President in 2008.

Previously, Scott was Vice President for Sizeler Property Investors Inc., where he supervised leasing, management, and redevelopment for a large retail portfolio in Florida. He also served in various management positions with commercial real estate developer Hill Partners, Inc., focusing on innovative retail

development and management solutions for institutional clients. Throughout his career he has specialized in leading and building dynamic teams, strategic planning, redevelopment and the management and leasing of retail projects on a national basis.

Scott is board chair for L.E.A.D. (Launch, Expose, Advise, Direct), a non-profit whose mission is to empower at-risk young men in Atlanta's inner city with a path towards productive citizenship. In addition, he is currently a board member for the Council for Quality Growth, a trade organization dedicated to balanced and responsible growth in metro Atlanta. He is also actively involved with several civic organizations, including the child-advocacy group Families First and the Cathedral of St. Philip. He is an active member of the International Council of Shopping Centers and Urban Land Institute.

Scott is a native of Sparta, New Jersey and received a bachelor's degree from Washington and Lee University. He currently resides in Atlanta with his wife and their two sons.



Cheryl Strickland, Stifel, Nicolaus & Company, Incorporated

Ms. Strickland joined Stifel, Nicolaus & Company, Incorporated to open the Public Finance Department's Atlanta office in June 2012. She has participated in numerous government and development municipal bond financings across the southeast. She joined Stifel after 8 ½ years with Atlanta Development Authority

("Invest Atlanta"), where she was instrumental in establishing a Tax Increment Bond Financing program providing funds for redevelopment of several economically blighted areas within the City of Atlanta. She led a \$78 million municipal bond financing that was voted 2009's "Best Bond Deal of the Year" nationally by Council of Development Finance Agencies. Ms. Strickland's skillful application of tax increment financing resulted in issuance of over \$550 million in Tax Allocation District bonds in six separate transactions, leveraging more than \$4 billion in private investment. Ms. Strickland also chaired ADA's New Markets Tax Credits entity.

In addition, Ms. Strickland brings 17 years of experience in commercial loan production, underwriting, and portfolio management from Prudential Investment Management, part of Prudential Financial. Her transactional experience spans all major property types, including office, retail, hotels, industrial, and multi-family. Ms. Strickland received her B.S. in Mathematics from Northwestern University and an M.B.A. at the University of Chicago. She is on the board of the Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA), active in Urban Land Institute's (ULI) national Urban Development-Mixed Use product council and a Past-President of CREW (Commercial Real Estate Women) Atlanta. She also holds the Chartered Financial Analyst designation.



Michael Townsend, Founder, Townsend & Associates

Michael Townsend is the Founder of Townsend & Associates, a Los Angeles-based retail real estate advisory. The company has represented a roster of leading retailers including Forever 21, Urban Outfitters, Hard Rock Café, lululemon, Kate Spade, Ed Hardy, Mango, and H&M in their expansion plans

nationwide. Mr. Townsend began his career with CB Richard Ellis before becoming Director of Real Estate for Virgin Entertainment and managing their US expansion. The company also has incubator services to advise boutique brands in the creation of a retail

template; services include capital raising, management staffing, logistics systems, and marketing strategies. In addition to his long-standing relationships with senior management at leading retailers, Mr. Townsend is highly experienced in urban retail site selection.



Eric Weatherholtz, Healy Weatherholtz

Quill Healey and Eric Weatherholtz formed HWP in 2006, combining their shared experience pinpointing desirable locations in a new vehicle intent on making exceptional places.

In partnership with institutional and individual investors sharing its point of view, the company transforms properties in collaboration with innovative merchants, architects, and artists.

The company is a recipient of the Urban Land Institute's Development of Excellence award.

Prior to HWP, Eric had direct property-level roles in over 100 retail properties for a public REIT. Subsequently, he held various management positions for a private developer of large-scale entertainment and retail projects. He formed a predecessor company in 2002 that, through single asset and discretionary private equity funds, acquired and repositioned retail properties.



Matt Winn, Chief Operating Officer, Olshan Properties

Matt Winn serves as the Chief Operating Officer of Olshan Properties and is responsible for the operations of the company's entire portfolio.

Mr. Winn guides and directs the day-to-day functions of the Olshan Properties operating units including Leasing,

Marketing, Property Management and Asset Management and establishes forward-looking strategic plans for the portfolio of properties.

With a career spanning two decades in commercial real estate, Mr. Winn has been involved in billions of dollars of transactions and has been a trusted partner in the growth, operations and development of many companies. Most recently as Global Retail COO and Head of the Retail Services platform of Cushman & Wakefield (C&W) in North and South America, Mr. Winn was responsible for all areas of the business including overall strategy, operations, business development and platform growth.

Earlier in his career Mr. Winn led the evaluation and strategic planning exercise that brought Prudential Financial into the conduit market. He also worked on the sale of Prudential Health Care, performed complex loan workouts, developed a new real estate valuation tool with software group, Charter, and crafted custom reports allowing institutional clients and the American Council of Life Insurers to perform comparative analyses across their investment portfolios. During his time with Starwood Capital Group, Mr. Winn oversaw corporate and project-specific operations for some of the firm's retail, residential and mixed-use portfolio investments.

Mr. Winn holds a bachelor's degree with honors from Wesleyan University in Middletown CT in Art and Architectural History. He currently chairs the Binswanger Committee that provides annual awards for teaching excellence at the University. An active volunteer with the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Mr. Winn has received awards and accolades for his work as a candidate for the Man of The Year campaign, as a member of the Team in Training Executive Committee in Georgia, and a team captain, mentor and marathoner. He is a member of the International Council of Shopping Centers and the Urban Land Institute.

ABOUT ULI – URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) was established in 1936 and has over 30,000 members from more than 90 countries. It is one of America's most respected resources of information and knowledge on urban planning, growth and development. ULI is a non-profit research and education organization. Its mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. To encourage an open exchange of ideas and sharing experiences, ULI membership represents the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service. Among its members there are developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, planners, public officials, brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students and marketing and brand identity experts.

ULI ATLANTA

With over 1,000 members throughout Georgia, Alabama and Eastern Tennessee, ULI Atlanta is one of the largest District Councils of the Urban Land Institute. We bring together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs. We share knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, and electronic media.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

Since 1947, the Urban Land Institute has harnessed the technical expertise of its members to help communities solve difficult land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. ULI Atlanta brought this same model of technical assistance to the Metropolitan Atlanta area. Local ULI members volunteer their time to serve on panels. In return, they are provided with a unique opportunity to share their skills and experience to improve their community. Through Technical Assistance Program Panels, ULI Atlanta is able to enhance community leadership, clarify community needs and assets, and advance land use policies that expand economic opportunity and maximize market potential.



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