

SPECIAL REPORT

# Advisory Services Panel Impact Assessment



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# About the Urban Land Institute

**THE MISSION OF THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE** is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI is committed to

- Bringing together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs;
- Fostering collaboration within and beyond ULI's membership through mentoring, dialogue, and problem solving;
- Exploring issues of urbanization, conservation, regeneration, land use, capital formation, and sustainable development;
- Advancing land use policies and design practices that respect the uniqueness of both built and natural environments;
- Sharing knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, and electronic media; and
- Sustaining a diverse global network of local practice and advisory efforts that address current and future challenges.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has 30,000 members worldwide, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Professionals represented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students, and librarians.

ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of the world's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

## Authors

Theodore C. Thoeig  
Julie D. Stern

## ULI Project Staff

Lela Agnew  
Senior Vice President, Strategic Communications

Gayle Berens  
Senior Vice President, Education and Advisory Group

Thomas W. Eitler  
Vice President, Advisory Services

Trisha Riggs  
Vice President, Strategic Communications

James Mulligan  
Senior Editor

Laura Glassman, Publications Professionals LLC  
Manuscript Editor

Betsy VanBuskirk  
Creative Director

Craig Chapman  
Senior Director, Publishing Operations

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1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW  
Suite 500 West  
Washington, DC 20007-5201

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# ULI Advisory Services: Transforming the World, One Panel at a Time

**FOR MORE THAN 65 YEARS**, ULI's Advisory Services program has been helping communities large and small throughout the United States—and, increasingly, around the world—find creative, practical solutions to some of their most challenging land use and development issues. More than 600 Advisory Services panels have offered these communities timely, candid, and unbiased input from expert land use professionals; provided fresh insights and innovative solutions to complex land use challenges; and kick-started critical conversations that have helped local officials and other stakeholders move beyond gridlock and toward action.

Prospective sponsors—including local governments, private developers, community development corporations, and other types of organizations—come to ULI when they need help, often with vexing land use issues that have eluded all local efforts at a solution. ULI responds by putting together a panel of its “best and brightest” from the Institute’s diverse membership, including developers, planners, financiers, market analysts, economists, architects, and public officials, and brings that panel to the study area for one week where members—who serve on a volunteer basis—attend briefings, tour the site and the surrounding area, interview as many as 100 stakeholders, and engage in intensive deliberations. After drilling deeply into the issue, the panel members prepare a draft report and present a summary of their findings and recommendations—which typically consist of candid, practical, specific advice—on their final day on site.

But this service produces much more than recommendations and a written report. It provides real, tangible, transformative results. In city after city, region after region, institution after institution, the Advisory Services panel process has changed the way local stakeholders think about land use planning and development. Many panels’ recommendations have powerfully affected the cities that hosted them and transformed them forever.

This report tells the stories of 11 of these panels, which took place around the world between 1948 and 2011 and cover topics ranging from the rebuilding of downtown Oklahoma City following the 1995 bombing to the redevelopment of Kai Tak Airport in Hong Kong. In some cases, the panel’s recommendations were implemented within a few years; in others, implementation took decades; and in still others, progress has yet to be made.

Many of the panels profiled in this report agreed with the sponsors’ initial assumptions and provided concrete suggestions and advice as to how they should be implemented. However, there are examples in which the panels rejected sponsors’ assumptions and suggested entirely different courses of action. In New York City, for example, the sponsor “learned that the Urban Land Institute is totally independent and will not be influenced,” says panel chair Clyde Jackson Jr., chairman of the board and CEO of Dallas-based Wynne/Jackson Inc.

This independence has helped ULI Advisory Services panels navigate complex and often contentious environments and arrive ultimately at bold recommendations capable of standing the test of time. “To take a thorny, complex problem that a municipality or a developer might be experiencing, and get an independent professional look at it, by folks who are not being paid to do so, have no ax to grind, and get that opinion within a week—I’m not sure how you could get a better process,” says Dan Van Epp, who has chaired several panels and is president and owner of the Van Epp Companies and executive vice president of Newland Communities.

Although the panel program has evolved over the years, in terms of the nature of assignments and the preparation and delivery process, its candor and objectivity remain constant: prospective panel sponsors seeking a “rubber stamp” for their plans should look elsewhere.

# Indianapolis: Government Consolidation and More—1948 and 2011

One of ULI's very first Advisory Services panels was prescient in its recommendations for government reform and consolidation. Although Indianapolis took more than 20 years to enact those recommendations, they made a lasting impact when the city and county eventually centralized community leadership, enhanced economic development and the city's tax base, and eliminated multiple inefficiencies and overlapping authorities.

When the third-ever ULI Advisory Services panel was held in Indianapolis in April 1948, the city faced a budget shortfall, and its reliance on property taxes seemed excessive. It had been labeled "the dirtiest city" in the United States and was facing challenges created by the proliferation of separate municipalities and unincorporated communities. Today, Indianapolis is widely recognized as a world-class, innovative city.

Convened under the direction of the Institute's Central Business District Council, the panel was chaired by A.J. Stewart of Indianapolis and had 14 additional members, including ULI's executive director and assistant director. The panel's assignment was to make practical suggestions about how to improve the downtown business district, where "serious problems" existed and where 40 to 60 percent of the working population was employed—something that is no longer true because of the ever-widening gyre of suburban development. The panel dealt with problems relating to parking, traffic control, mass transportation, urban redevelopment, air pollution, and "additional sources of revenue," all of which remain pressing issues for today's urban leaders.

Asked to address how the city could enhance revenues, panelists noted that Indiana is not a home-rule state; therefore, "the state is responsible for the cities' well being." At the time, Indianapolis faced a budget shortfall

of \$800,000, and its reliance on the property tax for 75 percent of its revenue seemed excessive. Consequently, panelists noted, "other sources of income should be secured" and local government operation streamlined to find savings. The panel believed that more of the money paid in taxes to the state and federal government should come back to the city, suggested floating bonds for capital improvements and initiating a payroll and salary tax, and opined that "a greater portion of gasoline, liquor, and certain other 'share taxes' should be allocated to the subdivision of origin." Today, an income tax is in place for all who work in Marion County. In 2010, however, Indiana passed a constitutional amendment that implemented property tax caps. Whereas the panel recommended diversifying the revenue stream for local government, the state has now capped what remains one of the biggest components of local government revenue.

Regarding transportation, the panel recommended increasing reliance on buses and streetcars. (At that time, more than 400 interurban light-rail cars came into Indianapolis daily, and 55 to 70 percent of downtown workers used mass transit.) Expenses should be borne entirely by the rider, the panel suggested. In other words, there should be no governmental subsidies; individual fares should cover operation and maintenance costs. Indianapolis today has an independent public transportation corporation



called IndyGo (with buses and shuttles, but no streetcars), started in the early 1970s, and continues to support “efficient, well-operated, well-equipped mass transportation,” as the panel recommended. In 2011, however, the system’s 9 million riders annually paid only 25 percent of the total cost; the rest came from government.

Not all of the panel’s recommendations on transportation were followed, even ones that made considerable sense. For example, the panel inveighed strongly against running “super highways” through the city. Such thoroughfares, “like a Chinese wall,” would cut the city into pieces. But after the Eisenhower Interstate Highway System came into being, Indianapolis experienced—perhaps to its benefit but also at the expense of some neighborhoods—a plethora of highways running through its middle: I-70,

I-65, I-74, and I-69, all rimmed by I-465. Today, notes Jeff Kingsbury, managing principal of Indianapolis-based Greenstreet Ltd., more interstate highways converge in Indianapolis than in any other city in the United States. That’s great, adds Kingsbury, for a region with “strong manufacturing and the associated logistics and distribution sectors. But that highway network is presenting a longer-term challenge for efficient development as well as place making, which are becoming increasingly important to build a more resilient, diverse, new economy job base.”

The panel praised the city for doing “a splendid job” of urban redevelopment—describing it as “a shining light for the guidance of other cities all over this country”—and its comments about several projects were a harbinger of things

to come. The city began to hollow out as suburbanization took hold in the 1950s and 1960s, but public policies after around 1970 were aimed at revitalizing the downtown core, exactly as the 1948 panel suggested. As mayor of Indianapolis from 1976 to 1992, William H. Hudnut III instituted a policy of encouraging urban reinvestment without discouraging suburban investment. Notes Hudnut, “I used to say, ‘You can’t be a suburb of nothing,’ and likened our efforts to reinvigorate our downtown with housing, commercial development, hotels, an expanded convention center, and entertainment and sports venues to transforming a doughnut into a cookie—solid all the way through.”

The 1948 panel also addressed the issue of air pollution in connection with revitalizing downtown, noting that “smoke control” was not “a problem the city should ignore.” At that time, Indianapolis was a solidly manufacturing-based smokestack city, labeled by John Gunther in his 1947 book *Inside USA* as “the dirtiest city” in the United States. The panel warned that if the city did not clean up its act, “you are going to find yourself at a disadvantage in the future.” This advice was well taken. By the late 1970s, Indianapolis had been designated by Keep America Beautiful as the cleanest city of its size in the United States; it is currently in attainment of the Clean Air Act standards for ozone, air particulate matter, and other pollutants.

But the heart of the 1948 panel report, so far-sighted in its observations, was a discussion aimed at governmental reform. The panel considered the proliferation of separate municipalities and unincorporated communities (the word suburb was not yet in its vocabulary) “absolutely ridiculous” and “an absurd situation.” Regarding annexation, it said, “We feel that it is essential to the orderly development of the city,” adding that, “The financial handicap which annexation would first appear to create has usually disappeared within a short period through consolidated governmental controls and avoiding duplicating taxing authority.”

Twenty years later, in the late 1960s, that suggestion became reality. A movement sprouted, spearheaded by former mayor Richard G. Lugar, to consolidate Indianapolis

and Marion County. It culminated in approval from the state legislature in 1969 and the establishment of UNIGOV (City/County Unified Government) in 1970. Sixty governmental units were reduced in number and size, and six city departments were created—public safety, transportation, parks, metropolitan development, public works, and administration. In addition, six municipal corporations were created—covering health and hospital, library services, city hall operations, convention center operations, airport, and public transportation—to produce improved and more efficient service delivery. Some functions, such as schools and fire services, as well as a few smaller towns, were not consolidated, but a strong mayoral system was set up, and a City-County Council of 29 members was created.

UNIGOV subsequently provided the foundation for the growth of Indianapolis as a major American city by centralizing community leadership, enhancing economic development and the city’s tax base, and eliminating inefficiencies and overlapping authorities. It “was a preface to regionalism that, in the 1970s, was ahead of its time,” notes Kingsbury, “but that regional thinking didn’t continue to evolve. We’re getting better, but the city versus suburbs and suburbs versus suburbs mind-set has meant we’ve lost opportunities to other regions competing with central Indiana nationally and globally.”

As Indianapolis grew and prospered, it sponsored additional Advisory Services panels, including one that examined the city’s downtown business district in 1957 and another in 2011—cosponsored by Develop Indy, the city’s affiliated development arm—that was asked to focus on the economic, urban planning, and redevelopment opportunities associated with the June 2011 closure of the General Motors Metal Fabrication Plant, which occupies a large (102-acre, 41-ha) site immediately west of the White River from downtown. That panel, cochaired by Hudnut and Wayne Ratkovich, president of the Los Angeles–based Ratkovich Company, recommended that if no new industrial user could be found for the site, the city or an appropriate development entity purchase the entire property and establish a vision for its redevelopment as a mixed neighborhood of primarily retail and residential



uses that would extend the downtown and connect it with nearby residential neighborhoods. The panel also recommended connecting the site to downtown by extending South Street (which the 1948 panel considered an impediment to smooth traffic flow) across the river to the GM site, with an iconic cable-stayed bridge that would serve as a “doorway” to the city that could be seen by travelers on the nearby interstate highway.

After marketing the site for nearly two years and receiving no serious offers, the Revitalizing Auto Communities Environmental Response (RACER) Trust—which was created to clean up and market GM properties—announced in June 2013 that it will demolish the buildings on the site to make it more attractive for redevelopment. Bruce Rasher, RACER’s redevelopment manager, told the *Indianapolis Star* that “RACER has embraced the Urban Land Institute’s mixed-use proposal in marketing efforts.” Although the city has not formed a development entity to purchase the property, it has been working with the trust to prepare the site for redevelopment. Much of the city’s focus “has been on ‘setting the table’ for that redevelopment,” notes Kingsbury. Next year, Indianapolis will be undertaking revisions and updates to its regional center plan as well as its

comprehensive plan; it also is in the midst of overhauling its zoning ordinance.

Kingsbury also points out that the city has made progress on three other recommendations made by the 2011 panel: (1) capitalizing on improved water quality, recognizing that the riverfront is an asset as well as a potential focal point for redevelopment; (2) strengthening the city’s relationships with anchor institutions; and (3) advocating for larger public works and transportation improvements. A community-led initiative called Reconnecting to Our Waterways is working to strengthen Marion County’s waterways and the neighborhoods that surround them; the city’s director of metropolitan development, Adam Thies, has taken a strong position on strengthening relationships; and Mayor Greg Ballard has made transit one of his top priorities.

Indianapolis clearly recognizes—and has benefited from—the long-term value of the panel process.

Adapted from “Revitalizing Cities: Advice for Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow,” by William H. Hudnut III (now ULI senior fellow emeritus), which appeared in the *Urban Land 75th Anniversary Issue*, Fall 2011, and *Urban Land* online.

# Washington, D.C.: Saving Union Station—1981

In a city with many grand public spaces, Union Station—an iconic and historic urban mixed-use center—is one of the grandest. Set only five blocks from the U.S. Capitol, this Daniel Burnham–designed Beaux Arts masterpiece is the most visited place in the District today (with about 32 million people passing through its vaulted arches each year), not only because it is a key transit hub for local and regional trains, but also because it offers great shops, restaurants, and public spaces in a format that many cities may wish to emulate. But if it had not been for a little-known but influential 1981 ULI Advisory Services panel, this architectural masterpiece might well have been demolished.

Nearly abandoned, structurally unsound, and considered an eyesore, Union Station suffered an ignominious and nearly fatal middle-age crisis in the 1960s but was resurrected with great effort by many stakeholders, spurred by the comprehensive 1981 panel. Among the station's many overlapping constituents, Amtrak had perhaps the most at stake and therefore sponsored and underwrote the panel—chaired by Donald R. Riehl, president of the Pacific Grove, California–based D.R. Riehl Inc. development company—to take a hard look at what could be done to redesign and reuse the space.

Union Station has long been a cornerstone of Washington history, though it was not named to the National Register of Historic Places until 1969. The station opened its doors in 1907; at the height of activity during World War II, some 200,000 people passed through it on peak days. The building contains 349,000 square feet (32,400 sq m) of space, including an 85,500-square-foot (7,800 sq m) grand concourse. For most of its early existence, Union Station served as a nexus of service for an array of rail lines, including the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, the Pennsylvania Railroad, and the Southern Railway. As American

railroad travel declined in the years after World War II, Union Station fell into financial and physical disrepair, losing much of its former glory.

In 1967, the chairman of the U.S. Civil Service Commission expressed interest in using Union Station as a visitor center during the 1976 Bicentennial celebrations. A six-year funding effort led to reconstruction that was to encompass renovations, including a much-needed parking garage, and a slide show presenting the historic sites and attractions of Washington. The reconstruction project was completed, except for a half-finished parking garage, and opening ceremonies were held on the Bicentennial Independence Day in 1976.

Because of a lack of publicity and convenient parking, however, the National Visitor Center was never very popular and could not attract enough people to sustain its operating costs. By the late 1970s, Union Station had fallen into such a state of seediness that some in Congress were advocating tearing it down. The visitor center closed in 1978 following a 1977 General Accounting Office report citing danger of imminent structural collapse.



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The ULI panel that convened four years later did not mince words: “The general opinion [is] that Union Station’s current situation is an embarrassment to the nation, to the federal government, and to Washington, D.C.” But Union Station did not succumb to the wrecker’s ball as many feared it would. The dire situation awakened citizens groups, public and private constituents, and even Congress, which, with its budgeting and oversight responsibilities, had been part of the problem. Riehl very quickly realized that this would be an extremely political process and that all the parties involved wanted two things: first, to avoid any further criticism of what had become a major boondoggle—with exposed rebar sticking out of the unfinished garage just blocks from the U.S. Capitol—and second, a way to avoid ceding control lest another agency get credit for coming up with a solution. He describes his role as negotiating with each of the many groups involved and convincing them to agree “to keep their hands off”—as long as everyone else also agreed to do the same—“and it worked.”

The panel was given the task of taking a hard look at Union Station to “determine whether or not viable commercial space could even be developed within the complex” and “the types of commercial development and the steps required to realize such development.”

To crystallize the challenge ahead, the panel got everyone’s attention with its top conclusion—that “due to limitations and constraints,” Union Station was not viable for commercial or retail activity and only could be if Congress and the key jurisdictions considered extreme measures. The first of these measures was to cede control of the structure to a single independent agency that would take responsibility for and oversee the facility—as well as open the door to public/private partnerships and commercial activity.

According to Riehl, it was clear to the panel from the beginning that Amtrak representatives felt that Amtrak should be that “single agency.” Yet most panel members believed Amtrak was not qualified to manage such a complex redevelopment project. The entire process was quite contentious, Riehl recalls, and one high-profile panel member (who supported Amtrak) even walked out of the panel’s final work session in protest and refused to attend the public presentation.

The panel’s key recommendations included the following:

- Recognize that the building is a valuable, national architectural landmark worthy of preservation and enhancement;

- Provide adequate funding by the federal government—namely Congress—for basic improvements in the parking, roof, and other infrastructure;
- Establish proper leases and occupancy agreements for current and future retail businesses, and cooperation among all interested parties;
- Extend existing train tracks to the concourse to shorten walking distances to the trains and accommodate future service; and
- Restructure the National Visitor Center to free up space for commercial use. (The center eventually moved out of the station entirely.)

If these recommendations were to be implemented, the panel said, 100,000 square feet (9,300 sq m) of space could be created for the ground-floor retail space crucial to making Union Station a viable commercial project. The panel also recommended a series of long-range planning goals, which included offering developers air rights over the tracks to accommodate development such as offices, hotels, and retail space, and bringing in more Metro subway lines and car rental companies to allow people to use the station not only as a destination, but also as a link to other parts of Washington and the surrounding suburbs. “In conclusion, the panel feels that Union Station can serve as a vital transportation terminal and bring in thriving revenue-producing commercial space,” the panel wrote.

The next stop on the station’s path to redevelopment came when Congress passed the Union Station Redevelopment Act of 1981. In 1983, Union Station Redevelopment Corporation (USRC), a private, nonprofit corporation, was formed to manage the public sector commitment, secure necessary approvals, select the private sector developers, and balance the competing demands of preservationists, Amtrak, and developers. Through a request for proposals competition in 1984, it selected Union Station Venture Ltd. (USV)—a joint venture team of proven experts—as the project’s commercial developer. That same year, the property was transferred from the National Park Service to the U.S. Department of Transportation. It then was subleased to USRC, which in turn subleased it to USV in 1985, for a

term extendable up to 99 years. After extensive excavation, demolition, asbestos removal, and construction, the station reopened in September 1988, and construction was completed six months later.

Still owned and operated under a public/private partnership and revenue-sharing agreement, Union Station continues to serve millions of passengers, shoppers, and visitors each year. Although no plaque or monument commemorates it, the ULI Advisory Services panel played a key role in saving Union Station and transforming it into the vibrant place it is today. And many of those people do pass by a ULI commemorative silver cube at Union Station: the ULI Award for Excellence, which was given to USRC in 1991 for its redevelopment of this splendid facility. The project also spurred extensive economic development in the city which, between 1988 and 1996, added almost 18,000 tourism jobs, nearly 2,000 of which were within or directly attributable to Union Station. And the revitalized station has anchored additional, private sector development in the eastern part of downtown, including significant new office space.

The Union Station story does not end here; even more of the panel’s recommendations are well on the way to becoming reality. A 2012, award-winning Union Station/ Burnham Place master plan—to be implemented by a public/private partnership of Amtrak, local developer Akridge, and USRC—aims to integrate additional transit facilities with up to 9 million square feet (836,000 sq m) of new construction within the footprint of the existing rail yard and on air rights above it. The plan’s components include an ultra-high-capacity intermodal transportation center, a new train hall for high-speed rail, public plazas, a reintegrated street grid, and a linear greenway, all of which will be woven together to enhance the vitality of the neighborhood—as well as up to 1.5 million square feet (139,000 sq m) of office space, more than 1,300 residential units, more than 500 hotel rooms, and an additional 100,000 square feet (9,300 sq m) of retail space.

Adapted from “Saving Union Station,” by Valerie Fahey, which appeared in the November/December 2011 issue of *Urban Land* and *Urban Land* online.

# Denver: Colorado Convention Center Revitalizes Downtown—1987

By the late 1970s, local and state leaders knew that Denver needed a new convention center but could not agree where it should be built. In 1987, they passed a state law authorizing a ULI Advisory Services panel to recommend a convention center proposal from those submitted by a set deadline. Although the panel shocked everyone by selecting a site proposed by a smaller, relatively unproven developer, the results have been remarkable. The Colorado Convention Center, which opened in 1990 and was expanded 14 years later, has become an economic powerhouse for Denver and has spurred significant revitalization in the surrounding area.

The Colorado Convention Center on 14th Street in downtown Denver is one of the country's busiest meeting venues, hosting more than 400 events annually—more than one a day. The facility's 2.2 million square feet (204,000 sq m) of meeting and exhibition space includes 584,000 square feet (54,000 sq m) of exhibit space on one level, six individual halls, outdoor terraces, and a 5,000-seat theater. The work of a ULI Advisory Services panel chaired by Michael Kelly, president of the Minneapolis-based Center Companies, played a significant role in Denver's decision to build the convention center on this site and laid the groundwork that guided its growth and success as a major economic engine for the city. But it had a humble and fractious start.

In the late 1970s, leaders of the Mile High City noticed that the convention, exhibition, and meeting industry was experiencing phenomenal growth. But Denver was missing out on convention business because of the physical limitations of its existing facilities. When former Denver mayor Federico Peña ran for the office in 1983, his campaign slogan was "Imagine a Great City." One of the cornerstones of his platform, in addition to building a new airport, was to build a new convention center. After the election,

Peña appointed a committee to study whether Currigan Exhibition Hall could be expanded. For the next four years, committees and task forces weighed in, and finally the city decided it needed a new convention center.

The state government supported this business development move and, on June 25, 1987, passed House Bill 1382, which promised financial assistance and authorized a ULI Advisory Services panel to recommend a convention center site from among five proposals received in Governor Roy Romer's chambers by July 8. Romer threw his support behind the concept of the ULI panel to provide an objective, outside perspective on the optimal site for the convention center's location.

The panel visited Denver in August 1987, reviewed the proposals, and made recommendations concerning site, location, design, access, financing, operation, and management. Its final recommendation: a new convention center should be built at the Silver Triangle site, the most centrally located, pedestrian-oriented location near the heart of downtown among those being considered, as proposed by Baltimore-based real estate developer French and Company, Colorado-based Hensel Phelps Construction Company, and Denver-based architects C.W. Fentress



and Associates. The selection was quite controversial, with the *Rocky Mountain News* running a story under the headline “Dark-horse pick stuns city officials.”

“We decided that because there was so much controversy and so much interest in our decision, we would tell them which site we’d chosen right off the bat, at the beginning of our presentation,” recalls Kelly. “For the first time ever, most of the city council walked out before we could complete our presentation. And, of course, the news people left, too, to file their stories.”

“The decision drew gasps of surprise from an audience, including Gov. Roy Romer and Mayor Federico Peña, gathered to hear the verdict,” reported the *Denver Post*, which also quoted council member Cathy Donohue: “I’m in such shock, I don’t know what to do.” City officials had favored another site outside the central business district and had negotiated with the developer of that property for more than a year. Although the panel recognized and understood the politics involved, “they didn’t color our choices,” notes

Kelly, “and I think that may have been a surprise to some of the folks who were listening to our recommendation.”

The panel’s reasons for supporting the Silver Triangle site now constitute a list of “missions accomplished” for the city. In reporting its findings to a packed audience, the panel presented a strong case that the proposal would both enhance urban quality of life and favorably affect the surrounding neighborhood, which at the time was in need of redevelopment.

The panel members said that building the Colorado Convention Center at the Silver Triangle would provide multiple benefits, including reinforcing and rejuvenating the central business district, and take full advantage of existing and planned urban amenities such as light rail and the 16th Street pedestrian mall. The site was close to downtown hotels and within walking distance or a quick shuttle ride of numerous attractions, such as the Denver Art Museum, the Colorado State Museum, and the Tivoli mixed-use project.

A free shuttle serving the 16th Street Mall corridor and the convention center would be located just off the center point of that retail/entertainment spine. The panel believed that placing the convention center near the midpoint would provide an important boost of vitality to bridge the distance between city hall and the civic center at one end and the popular Larimer Square complex at the other. Having spent several days in the field reviewing sites, the panel concluded that these and other amenities attractive to convention goers would all be accessible within a five- or ten-minute walk of the proposed site.

“When we had finished our report, Governor Romer stood up and said, ‘This was a wonderful presentation. It’s going to be a great project for Denver. I support it, and that’s what’s going to happen.’ And that was the end of the political controversy,” concludes Kelly.

Since the new facility opened in June 1990, it has been an economic powerhouse for the city, leading to a \$340 million expansion that was completed in December 2004. It also spurred significant redevelopment in the surrounding area, including the expansion of the Auraria Campus—which houses facilities for the University of Colorado—Denver, the Community College of Denver, and Metropolitan State College of Denver—as well as the development of three major new sports stadiums: Coors Field (which opened in 1995), Pepsi Center (1999), and Sports Authority Field at Mile High (originally known as Invesco Field at Mile High), which replaced the obsolete Mile High Stadium in 2001 and was itself the subject of another Advisory Services panel chaired by Kelly.

To accommodate the 2004 convention center expansion, the old Currihan Exhibition Hall and a nearby office tower were demolished and Stout Street and the light-rail tracks were rerouted to curve through the facility. The expansion doubled the size of the facility to the current 584,000 square feet (54,300 sq m) of exhibit space, 100,000 square feet (9,300 sq m) of meeting rooms, and 85,000 square feet (7,900 sq m) of ballroom space. The expansion also added the 5,000-seat Bellco Theatre (originally known as the Wells Fargo Theatre) and led Hy-

att Hotel Corporation to build the 38-story Hyatt Regency Denver (one of the city’s ten tallest buildings) next to the convention center. The number of hotel rooms in the area more than doubled, from 4,100 to 8,400. In addition, at least two dozen outdoor cafés and numerous shops are within a mile of the convention center.

The expanded Colorado Convention Center allows the city to host all but the largest 5 percent of gatherings, keeping Denver competitive in the convention business. The convention center also has spurred substantial private sector investment in the area and, along with investments made next door at the Denver Performing Arts Complex, has greatly contributed to the overall revitalization of downtown Denver. With its integration of public art and architecture, the expanded convention center strikes a balance between functionality and aesthetics, meeting the needs of conventioners and the community while adding a striking new image to the Denver skyline, says Rich Grant, communications director for visitdenver.com, the city’s convention and visitors bureau.

The Colorado Convention Center hosted 98 national groups in 2012, made up of 266,111 delegates who spent \$530.1 million in the city. In addition to those large events, the center has welcomed hundreds of thousands of people at local events, such as auto and garden shows. (ULI has held several meetings there, including its 2012 Fall Meeting.) Tourism is now the second-largest industry in Denver, supporting 50,000 jobs and generating \$3.3 billion in spending each year, Grant reports.

Adapted from “A 1987 ULI Panel Helped Lay the Foundation for the Colorado Convention Center,” by Valerie Fahey, which appeared in the September/October 2012 issue of *Urban Land* and *Urban Land* online.

# New York LaGuardia and JFK Airport Access Panel—1991

As Denver’s experience with the Colorado Convention Center panel made clear, not every Advisory Services panel elicits the response the sponsor expects or wants to receive. In 1991, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority—on the heels of a successful ULI plan review session for an early concept for the Westside railyard conducted in the late 1980s—asked a ULI panel to assess the development potential of sites along a proposed rail link between John F. Kennedy International Airport and LaGuardia Airport. That linkage was proposed in response to a direct charge by the governor of New York to explore airport ground-access alternatives, and as such had become a major Port Authority initiative.

Although the panel initially assumed the proposed transit link was viable and achievable, as the week wore on, it determined this was not the case. The panel concluded that the link, as proposed, would not satisfy the desired goal of improved access between Manhattan and each airport because of the inconvenient transfers that would be involved for subway and Long Island Railroad (LIRR) passengers in accessing the proposed new link. Furthermore, the panel concluded that low ridership projections—at the time, the two airports connected more than 40,000 riders with Manhattan daily, whereas only 1,200 riders traveled between the two airports—raised questions of economic viability. The panel did not mince words in its final report, stating that it “sees virtually no need for direct access between the two airports.”

Instead, the panel unanimously concluded that the city should refocus its efforts on the issue of ground connections from each of the two airports to the business centers of Manhattan. “A paramount and vital need exists to improve the access of each of the airports to and from

Manhattan. In contrast, there appears to be no need for a direct transfer between the two airports,” the panel reiterated. Its report concluded with a series of strongly worded recommendations for action to improve access to both airports, with the final one reading simply “ACT NOW.”

The recommendations were not well received by the sponsor, which lobbied ULI to revise or leave the report unpublished, according to panel chair Clyde Jackson Jr., chairman of the board and CEO of Dallas-based Wynne/Jackson Inc. “They were very disappointed that ULI would not totally verify their program,” he recalled.

The following two decades, however, would prove the panel right. Support for the direct rail connection between both airports fizzled out, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) have taken up efforts to try to improve airport access to and from Manhattan. As part of a \$1.2 billion package with funding coming from the MTA, the Port Authority, and the city, then mayor Rudy Giuliani put forth a plan in 1998 to build a rail link from John F. Ken-





nedly (JFK) International Airport to Manhattan and extend the subway to LaGuardia (LGA) Airport. Although neither plan was fully realized—and in the case of a subway extension to LGA, not at all—the transit authorities’ shift in priority to increasing airport access to the city’s business center was apparent.

JFK’s AirTrain, a three-line, 8.1-mile (13 km) elevated railway opened in December 2003, connecting airport terminals with LIRR and subway lines in Jamaica, Queens. While the initial plan called for the AirTrain to continue from the Jamaica transit hub into Manhattan, political opposition and a \$9 billion price tag scaled the plan down to the version in operation today. “For a direct rail connection, you would have to build a new tunnel under the East River and a new [subway] station,” explained Chris

Bastion, associate director of the MTA. The transit agency has revisited the direct rail link to Manhattan a number of times over the years, but plans have failed to gain traction because of the high cost and questionable benefits: the MTA estimates that a “one-seat” trip would save riders, on average, only five minutes.

Although not the “one-seat” solution the panel recommended, ridership on the \$1.9 billion JFK AirTrain has been robust. The system carried 5.7 million riders in 2012, up 30 percent since 2007 and more than double its initial ridership in 2003. The light-rail line also provides another connection to the growing Jamaica transit hub, where the LIRR, four major subway lines, and 40 bus routes converge.

Giuliani’s proposal to extend the elevated N Line in Queens to LGA, however, was scuttled by public opposition. The

*New York Daily News* at the time termed the opposition NAMBYism—Not Above My Backyard—and virtually every local politician and community organization opposed the proposed route. In mid-2003, the MTA announced that it was shelving the proposed extension. “We have no expectation of revisiting a subway connection to LGA,” said Bastion.

In May 2011, a study focusing on low-cost, shorter-term solutions to improve access to LGA identified bus rapid transit (BRT) as the preferred alternative. As part of MTA’s general expansion of BRT routes, the agency identified three prospective routes to LGA. The proposed BRT route along 125th Street from Harlem was recently dealt a setback by local residents opposed to giving up on-street parking for a bus lane. The Queens Q70 express bus to LGA, however, is now operational, with an extension of another express bus route in the Bronx along Third Avenue under consideration.

The MTA also asked the panel to evaluate the extent to which the private sector could be attracted to participate in development around proposed airport transit link stations in exchange for development rights, tax benefits, or other project development benefits—in 1991, an early foray into transit-oriented development. One of the major points

of feedback from the panel “was that transit is only one component of making a market,” recalled Robert Paley, director of transit-oriented development at the MTA. “And there was no market at that time.”

Today, conditions around the Jamaica transit hub are more favorable for transit-oriented development. In September, the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation (GJDC) and the MTA announced a joint venture to build a 210-room hotel with ground-floor retail and a restaurant across from the JFK AirTrain station. The \$35 million hospitality project was facilitated by the Jamaica Plan, a rezoning effort initiated by the GJDC in the late 1990s to encourage high-density and mixed-use development around the airport-serving transit hub. “Downtown Jamaica has just reached a positive tipping point for sustainable, mixed-use development, leveraging its extensive, in-place transportation infrastructure,” said Andrew Manshel, executive vice president of the GJDC.

Although unpopular, the recommendations of the 1991 ULI panel were validated over time. When asked what was the most important thing the sponsors learned from the panel process, Jackson was frank: “They learned that ULI is totally independent and will not be influenced.”

# Oklahoma City: Rebirth of Downtown—1995

At 9:02 a.m. on April 19, 1995, a two-ton (1.8 metric ton) fertilizer bomb exploded in a moving truck parked outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City. The blast—the worst domestic terrorism attack in the country’s history—killed 168 people, destroyed or damaged more than 300 buildings in a 48-block radius, and caused an estimated \$652 million in property damage. Within weeks of the bombing, ULI reached out to Oklahoma City, as it has done subsequently in post-Katrina New Orleans and most recently in New York after Hurricane Sandy, offering to do its part to help rebuild the city.

Less than two decades after the bombing, Oklahoma City has become one of the nation’s fastest-growing cities. In 2012, it ranked 12th of the nation’s 52 largest metropolitan areas in net growth rate and led all large cities in job creation. According to its chamber of commerce, the city has attracted more than \$2 billion in public investment and over \$5 billion in private investment since 1995. The area devastated by the bomb blast has now become one of the most vibrant neighborhoods in Oklahoma City, with hundreds of new apartment units and a \$350 million investment in a medical campus around St. Anthony’s Hospital.

Perhaps most important, downtown Oklahoma City has been able to attract a young, highly skilled workforce. The 1995 ULI Advisory Services panel felt that, although it would take time, “the creation of a vibrant rental housing market in downtown is critical to the city’s long-term economic success.” Even before the bombing, the city had seen little to no residential activity downtown: in the 25 years from 1980 to 2005, only 492 residential units were built downtown. More than 2,500 units have been built since, with another 1,000 units in the pipeline—representing a ninefold increase in downtown living over

the past decade. Oklahoma City, according to former mayor Kirk Humphreys, “has become a place where people want to be.”

The centerpiece of the downtown renaissance—the 50-story, \$750 million Devon Tower—was made possible in part by a recommendation from the panel. The group of experts implored the city to land-bank a vacant four-block downtown parcel for future development—a recommendation the *Oklahoman* newspaper called “dead on” after Devon Energy selected the site as the location of its new headquarters.

When the ULI panel arrived in December 1995, however, such a future was difficult to see. The bombing had left much of downtown Oklahoma City in ruins. The blast radiated north from the federal building, leaving more than 40 blocks in the area known as Midtown virtually uninhabitable. “It just became a wasteland,” said Humphreys. “Nobody would invest there.”

The economic decline actually began long before the terrorist attack. Two major events in the 1980s left Oklahoma City in steep decline: the closure of the Penn Square Bank, based in Oklahoma City, set off a series of bank closures,



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siphoning off liquidity; and the mid-decade bust in the oil market following the boom of the 1970s and early 1980s. By 1987, the local market had bottomed out and downtown had become a ghost town. Unemployment hovered around 10 percent, the only hotel downtown was on the verge of closing, and the convention center's roof leaked.

In an effort to boost the local economy, Oklahoma City voters passed a one-cent sales tax to fund the Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS) capital improvement program in 1993. The program, which funded new sports, recreation, entertainment, and cultural projects, created the foundation for renewed investment in downtown. "With the MAPS program, the city was poised to do something," said Lynne Sagalyn, Columbia University real estate professor and member of the 1995 ULI panel. "It made the implementation of the panel's recommendations much more likely."

The panel called the MAPS initiative a tremendous start at changing the development momentum, signaling to the

private sector that Oklahoma City "means business." Now in its third installment, the MAPS program has become a national model for public investment. The city created a regional entertainment district in Bricktown with a new ballpark and sports arena, rediscovered natural amenities with a mile-long canal and the restored riverfront, and transformed downtown into a viable place to raise families through \$700 million in school and public space improvements.

The panel did recommend one change to the MAPS program that 18 years later would have a nearly billion-dollar impact. In 1995, the city had designated the future location of a library on a failed urban renewal site known as the Galleria. Designed by I.M. Pei and envisioned as a grand retail and office complex, the project failed to attract investment and sat unfinished for more than three decades. "This was one of the main areas in town," said Humphreys, "and for 30 years it was a parking garage."

The panel suggested that the property was far too valuable for a public structure, recommending that the city move the proposed library to the north and earmark the Galleria site for future development. “It is unusual for a city to control a single-ownership site in downtown,” the report stated. “The site’s potential should not be squandered by dividing the parcel and using it piecemeal for other activities.”

The city’s decision to heed the panel’s advice paid off when Devon Energy announced its decision to build a new \$750 million corporate headquarters on the Galleria site. In October 2012, the hometown energy company completed construction on the “tallest building on the Plains,” consolidating its formerly scattered operations into the 1.9 million-square-foot (177,000 sq m), office tower 844 feet (257 m) tall. The Pickard Chilton–designed skyscraper became the anchor of the downtown office district with an estimated economic impact of \$1 billion in 2013, according to a study commissioned by the city’s Urban Renewal Authority.

The Devon Tower is helping fulfill another of the 1995 panel’s recommendations by funding a citywide public space and streetscape makeover. The city, in partnership with Devon Energy, established a tax increment finance

(TIF) district for the immediate vicinity of the tower that is expected to generate \$106 million over 25 years. The TIF district is being used to fund Project 180, a public improvement plan to rebuild sidewalks, reconfigure streets, refurbish public spaces, and enhance landscaping to make a 180-acre (72 ha) area of downtown more attractive for private investment. In 2011, Project 180 funded a \$10.5 million upgrade to downtown’s central open space, the 17-acre (7 ha) Myriad Botanical Gardens.

A number of major employers have followed Devon Energy downtown: SandRidge Energy has redeveloped an empty downtown tower and has plans to build a second; Chesapeake Energy has expanded its headquarters campus; and Continental Resources relocated from nearby Enid to one of Devon Energy’s former buildings. “Today, jobs are following where people want to be—not the other way around,” said Sagalyn. In Oklahoma City, she said, “that has made the difference.”

# Barcelona: New Convention Center Expands Meetings Market—1999

Picture a modern, expansive convention center set in Barcelona's Diagonal Mar seafront esplanade and near 22@, the city's new business and technological district, surrounded by nearly 5,000 hotel rooms and a complete public transport network. The Centre de Convencions Internacional de Barcelona, which opened in 2004, has helped transform Barcelona into the number-three city for association meetings worldwide (after Vienna and Paris). Its successful development—which has spurred significant additional development in the surrounding area—can be traced back to a 1999 ULI Advisory Services panel that was asked to evaluate the city's proposed plan for a new convention center on the Diagonal Mar site, as well as Barcelona's convention and congress market and the proposed World Forum of Cultures.

Hines and the city of Barcelona cosponsored the Advisory Services panel that visited Barcelona in November 1999. They asked the panel, chaired by James De Francia,

president of Lowe Enterprises Community Development Inc., to look at a parcel of land slated for public use that was part of Hines's Diagonal Mar, a 34-hectare (84 acre)





mixed-use, sustainable development project that aimed to complete the urban beachfront regeneration begun in 1987 for the 1992 Summer Olympic Games.

The sponsors charged the panel with evaluating proposed convention center plans for the site, as well as the city's convention and congress market. Barcelona already had one convention center, the Fira de Barcelona; was there enough market demand for another? And if the answer

to that question was “yes,” how should the Diagonal Mar site be master planned to develop a successful convention center there? At the same time, Barcelona was preparing to host the proposed World Forum of Cultures (Forum 2004) and wanted to know if the proposed new convention center should be built as a venue for that event.

“Local parties had combined the two issues, seeking to build a new convention center for Forum 2004 without considering the center’s longer-term use and focusing only on the needs of Forum 2004 in thinking about the convention center design,” recalls De Francia. “One of our most important conclusions was that these were separate questions; each needed to be assessed independently.”

The panel agreed with Hines and the city that the Diagonal Mar site, though constrained, was an appropriate one for the proposed convention center, and presented recommendations to assist the city in moving ahead with building a marketable convention center there. The panel offered guidelines regarding the sizes and locations of various elements (including how many hotel rooms would be needed and where they should be located), provided advice on how to incorporate technology, and suggested preemptive planning to mitigate adverse urban impacts such as noise and traffic. Overall, the panel’s report stressed that



“the city must prepare a viable development plan that addresses the real world issues of the convention centre and its potential expansion, revitalisation of the overall area, and proposed infrastructure elements.”

“This was a transformative step in guiding the city, both politically and commercially, to proceed with the convention center project,” says Jay Wyper, vice president with Hines, who at the time of the panel was managing director for Hines Spain and Hines’s Diagonal Mar project. According to De Francia, “the panel’s recommendations were very well received. Everyone involved—including representatives of the local government, local professionals who served as resources to the panel, and members of the general public—was visibly impressed with the panel process and welcomed its advice.

“It was the credibility and work product of the panel that helped the mayor and city administration believe in the location for the convention center,” continues Wyper. The 100,000-square-meter (1.1 million sq ft) Centre de Convencions Internacional de Barcelona (CCIB), built between 2002 and 2004, comprises two buildings connected by an underground corridor. The Convention Centre, with space for 15,000 people, consists of 38 meeting rooms—equipped with the latest technology and ranging in size from 30 to 2,600 square meters (325 to 28,000 sq ft)—spread across three floors and two mezzanines. Its 11,340-square-meter (122,063 sq ft) Exhibition Hall can be broken into eight separate spaces; its banquet hall offers spectacular views of the Mediterranean. The triangular blue Forum Building, its color inspired by the Mediterranean Sea, contains a 3,200-seat auditorium and appears to hover above the ground; only a few pillars support its weight. The Forum Building also houses Museu Blau, a natural history museum.

The development of the CCIB culminated in Barcelona’s hosting of Forum 2004, with the CCIB—particularly the Forum Building—as its centerpiece. Although the 141-day event, dedicated to the principles of cultural diversity, world peace, and sustainable economic development, did not live up to expectations, attracting far fewer than the 5 million expected visitors, today the surrounding

area—from the CCIB to the eastern border of the city—is, according to Wyper, “a modern, mixed-use center of culture, arts, retail, residential, and waterfront activities that has revitalized that sector of the city.” Because it was not designed or built solely for Forum 2004, the CCIB ultimately became much more of a success—and a driver of additional development—than the event for which it originally had been planned. Since its inauguration, it has hosted more than 600 events—ranging from small, local gatherings to international business meetings and world congresses—that have been attended by more than 3 million visitors. Its presence stimulated the development of a new hotel and office building on the site, as well as additional hotel development in surrounding areas.

Back in 1999, the panel also had been asked to advise the city on marketing efforts. It recommended that the convention center “have its own marketing function, rather than being absorbed into a larger municipal marketing effort,” says De Francia. Following Forum 2004, management of the CCIB was awarded to GL events CCIB SL, a company created specifically for this purpose. GL events, a Lyon, France-based global events management firm, owns 80 percent of this limited liability company; the Barcelona City Council owns 12 percent, and the Association of Barcelona Hoteliers owns the remaining 8 percent.

Today, the CCIB stands out as an innovative, expansive, and flexible conference center set in the heart of Barcelona’s business district. It also has become a pioneer within the events sector in calculating the carbon footprint of its own activity. CCIB SL fully compensates the convention center’s emissions through the purchase of carbon credits in a range of projects that meet the standards of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In addition, since 2009 the CCIB has made available to all its clients a voluntary system of emissions compensation for each event.



# Charlotte: Multiple Transit Corridors— 2000–2011

The ULI Advisory Services program has been active in Charlotte, where seven panels have been held in the past 15 years alone. Considered one of the country's forerunners in regional transit planning, Charlotte has long recognized the value of using transit to guide development. Its \$5 billion light-rail system, the largest infrastructure investment in city history, surpassed its 20-year projected ridership within its first year in service and has provided more than 12 million rides since opening. The multimodal system has spurred new development as well: of the more than 4,000 new apartment units announced in 2012, 60 percent were within a 15-minute walk of the light-rail line; apartments near mass transit in Charlotte rent for an average \$982 a month, compared with an overall city average of \$638 a month.

In 1998, after a decade-long planning process, regional leaders approved a one-cent sales tax to fund a public transit system that would broaden travel choices and relieve congestion on the metropolitan highways. A city that had undergone tremendous and rapid post-World War II growth, Charlotte in 2000 was ranked second to last in density among large metropolitan areas. The transit plan identified five major corridors, which at the time provided routes for 125,000 commuters traveling to the center city each day, where rapid transit would be focused.

Between 2000 and 2001, ULI held a series of five connected Advisory Services panels in Charlotte, each focusing on a separate corridor, that made clear the connection between transit and economic development. The panel emphasized and regional leaders understood that transit would succeed only if accompanied by supportive land uses. "It is always about mobility," said Charlotte-Mecklenburg planning director Debra Campbell. "But equally as important, how do we use transit to revitalize and reshape our city?"

However, along one of the five transit corridors identified by the city, east Charlotte's Independence Boulevard, revitalization has been slow to come. Frustrated by the lack of progress, then mayor Anthony Foxx—one of four mayors selected for a two-year ULI Rose Center Fellowship—in 2011 invited a ULI Rose Center panel to examine the city's plan for the area and recommend tools to realize the city's vision. The panel affirmed the city's new Independence Boulevard area plan, and its recommendations resulted in concrete action: today, funding for five catalyst projects along the corridor has been approved, and a critical change to the future transit alignment was won. "There were design changes made that resulted from the ULI fellowship process," said Brian Horton, a transportation planner with the Charlotte Area Transit System.

On his first day in office as mayor in 2009, Foxx called a meeting with state transportation officials to discuss the city's concerns with Independence Boulevard. The main artery, which upon completion in 1950 became Charlotte's (and North Carolina's) first urban expressway, was under-



going an expensive, painful, and slow conversion into a limited-access highway. Uncertainty about the transportation project's time frame—which locals derisively referred to as “a mile a decade”—as well as its final design had harmed the local real estate market, resulting in a trend of disinvestment on the east side.

At the time, the plan for the next phase of Independence Boulevard was to extend bus rapid transit (BRT) service along the central right-of-way while reserving space for future light rail should funding materialize. The BRT system was to operate along an exclusive, double-barrier transitway with nine in-line stations accessed across the 300-foot-wide (90 m) road by long pedestrian bridges. BRT's preferred option arose from a combination of factors, including cost, projected ridership, and an existing express busway that had operated along the highway median since 1988.

The east Charlotte community, having observed the transformative effect of light rail in the city's south corridor, preferred light rail to BRT. With the four other corridors planned or built with some variation of rail—the light-rail Blue Line to the south and northeast, the commuter-rail Red Line to the north, and an urban streetcar circulator system to the west—installing a limited-access BRT system in the median of Independence Boulevard became for residents a questions of geographic equity.

The panel recognized that stakeholders were asking too much of Independence Boulevard. The corridor, for example, could not accommodate long-distance transport, regional commuting, and local transit trips while simultaneously encouraging economic development with walkable urban centers. “Trying to solve everyone's needs in the same place can result in compromises that yield poor performance across the board,” the panel noted.

Somewhere along the way, the twin pillars of Charlotte's transit philosophy—mobility and economic development—had become competing goals. A different model, in which Independence Boulevard serves the long-distance commuter and the neighborhood streets serve the residents, would lead to different types of commercial development along each part of the corridor, panel cochair Carlton Brown, CEO of New York–based Full Spectrum LLC, explained at the panel presentation.

The panel recommended that any future rail transit service should run elsewhere in the plan area. If Charlotte really wanted to use transit as an economic development tool, as it had successfully done elsewhere, it should be looking at parallel alignments away from Independence Boulevard where it could promote more mixed-use development, neighborhood-serving retail, and a greater diversity of housing types. If the light rail went in the middle of a busy, ten-lane highway, as the community desired, “you may get geographic equity in terms of the mode of transit, but not in terms in economic impact,” explained Campbell.

The panel saw BRT on Independence Boulevard as the best way to serve the needs for longer-distance commuters but recommended that the system should operate in shared high-occupancy vehicle/high-occupancy toll (HOV/HOT) lanes rather than a dedicated transit right-of-way. A limited-access express bus lane as planned might achieve the admirable goals of reducing travel times and environmental impact, but its use as an economic development tool would be lost. “Opportunities for transit-oriented development are very limited when facing a 300-foot or longer walk in a hos-

tile environment to access a station,” warned the panel. The panel's proposed alignment would shift future BRT stations offline and into the neighborhoods, minimizing the need for costly and sterile bridges while creating more flexibility with perpendicular access, branch services, and connection with major land use nodes.

The panel recommended that Charlotte establish a task force that could move expeditiously to alter the BRT alignment. In July 2011, the mayor assembled such a task force, which succeeded in convincing the transit authority to rescind a special provision that preserved space in the median for BRT or light rail and to adopt instead a strategy that could combine rapid-bus service with HOV/HOT lanes. The city also budgeted a half-million dollars to study a potential parallel streetcar alignment on Monroe Avenue.

Armed with a clear vision for Independence Boulevard, the Charlotte City Council adopted a capital budget in 2013 that included five of the catalyst projects the panel endorsed from the Independence Boulevard Area Plan. Funding for the projects—which include a private/public partnership to upgrade and encourage development around key cultural facilities as well as streetscape and public space improvements to connect neighborhoods across the boulevard—will be available in 2014.

The 2011 panel, much like the panels in the early 2000s, helped Charlotte refine and affirm how it uses transit as an economic development tool. “It was much easier for our community to accept when it came from a credible organization like ULI,” said Campbell.

# Los Angeles: Cleantech Corridor—2010

Cities are constantly evolving: new mayors are elected, priorities get shuffled, funding for programs that seemed imperative one day can disappear the next. Los Angeles's Cleantech Corridor, a mayoral initiative to attract and grow a clean-technology industry and the subject of a 2010 ULI Advisory Services panel, weathered such a disruption. Shortly after the panel departed, California dissolved the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles (CRA/LA), cosponsor of the panel and the primary funding vehicle for its recommendations. Despite this setback, the city's vision and the panel's recommendations have proved durable. "The panel gave us a new and positive way of looking at attracting investment to the community," said David Riccitiello, former CEO of the CRA/LA.

For more than a decade, Los Angeles has struggled with the future of its downtown industrial zone, which houses an aging stock of small warehouse and light-industrial buildings in a four-mile (6 km) stretch along the Los Angeles River. In April 2008, then mayor Antonio Villaraigosa launched an ambitious effort to convert the past-its-prime industrial area into the Cleantech Corridor—a cluster of locally based businesses engaged in the burgeoning clean-technology industry, in which companies use innovative technology to create products or services that can compete favorably on price and performance while reducing ecological impact.

At the time the panel was invited to Los Angeles, the city's industrial land policy—which sought to preserve the downtown industrial base and deter conversion to residential development—was viewed negatively by property owners along the corridor. "They saw it as a disincentive to investment," explained Riccitiello. "They didn't understand [the Cleantech Corridor] or how it would benefit them."

The CRA/LA and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), which cosponsored the panel, tasked ULI with changing the perception of the corridor by finding a new and comprehensive strategy for attracting investment. "We expect to receive valuable recommendations from ULI that will make the Cleantech Corridor a national model for transforming an old, downtown industrial core into an incubator for green jobs and technology," Villaraigosa said in 2010.

The panel first recognized that the corridor as designated was too large and disjointed. Instead, it recommended, the city focus its initial effort in a concentrated area where cleantech innovation could best thrive—the flourishing Arts District near the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc). "This area has a mix of users, buildings, and activity, and it has a potential link to mass transit—all ingredients ripe for a catalytic transformation," the report explained. With a strong foothold there, cleantech businesses could then grow and expand throughout the corridor. The panel, chaired by John Walsh, president of the Texas-based TIG Real Estate Services Inc., suggested



the area could someday look like the South of Market (SoMa) neighborhood of San Francisco or the Pearl District in Portland—former warehouse and industrial centers revitalized by an infusion of cutting-edge businesses.

Less than seven months after the panel departed, a court decision nearly halted progress in the Cleantech Corridor before it could begin. In December 2011, California's highest court upheld a state law that abolished the more than 400 statewide redevelopment agencies—including CRA/LA, Los Angeles's oldest and largest redevelopment agency. The agencies used a portion of property tax revenue—which at the time of dissolution was approximately \$5 billion statewide—to partner with developers to encourage development in blighted and disadvantaged areas. With one decision, the funding source for the Cleantech Corridor vanished, imperiling the mayoral initiative. "The CRA/LA was uniquely positioned to help drive the implementation of the corridor given its mandate," lamented Riccitiello.

Despite the untimely demise of the CRA/LA, the panel's recommendations have proved durable. In the smaller focus area the panel identified, a cleantech business incubator, with 18 portfolio companies in its temporary location, is under construction, as is a 472-unit apartment building with another 400 units in the pipeline. Activity has flowed to the southern edge of the corridor, where Trammell Crow has started development on the \$40 million CleanTech Manufacturing Center. The extension of the Metro Red Line to SCI-Arc, another panel recommendation that is currently under evaluation by the city, has the potential to increase access to and awareness of the corridor.

The LA Cleantech Incubator (LACI) stepped into the vacuum created by the CRA/LA's dissolution. The nonprofit, launched in 2011 and funded by CRA/LA and LADWP, is developing the \$43 million LA Kretz Innovation Campus, a 60,000-square-foot (5,600 sq m) business incubator located on a full city block. Currently under development, the 3.2-acre (1.3 ha) project will be complete with research

labs, prototype workshops, office space for 25 to 30 new companies, a training center, and a community park.

Developed by LACI, the campus will give start-up companies access to research labs, a newly trained workforce, and entrepreneurs and investors. In its temporary location, the incubator currently nurtures 18 companies working on diverse cleantech technologies to make energy storage more efficient, wind turbines quieter, and electric-car recharging easier. According to the cleantech incubator, in two years LACI companies have attracted nearly \$14 million in investment.

The concept behind the incubator is to grow innovative companies that would then “graduate” into the corridor, creating a critical mass of cleantech enterprises that would attract investment. “With our market size, talent pool, research institutions, and growing pool of hard and soft incentives, if you’re in cleantech, Los Angeles is the place you want to start, build, grow, and headquarter your company,” announced LACI CEO Fred Walti at the company’s launch.

The long-anticipated Cleantech Manufacturing Center is being developed as the southern anchor of the corridor. Historically referred to as the Crown Coach site, the 20-

acre (8.1 ha) brownfield property was slated for development in the 1980s as a medium-security prison until local opposition secured its sale to CRA/LA. After a number of false starts, the redevelopment agency sold the property to Trammell Crow for \$15.4 million in September 2012 to redevelop as a 375,000-square-foot (35,000 sq m) cleantech manufacturing site.

The Dallas-based developer has plans to build a state-of-the-art industrial complex with three buildings of approximately 233,000, 107,000, and 34,000 square feet (22,000, 10,000, and 3,000 sq m). CB Richard Ellis, the project broker, is targeting cleantech manufacturers—companies involved in renewable energy and electric car and battery manufacturing, according to the developer—to occupy the space. The \$40 million speculative project sits in a downtown industrial area with very few modern or large-format buildings, a market the developer hopes to attract.

Despite the subsequent political and financing disruptions, the 2010 ULI panel helped chart a future for the Cleantech Corridor. “The panel was a way of solidifying support by property owners, businesses, and city officials about a direction to take in that area of downtown,” said Riccitiello. “I think it did a lot in that regard.”

# Chicago: Reimagining Navy Pier, Twice— 1989 and 2010

Chicago's historic Navy Pier sits on 20,000 wood pilings that extend 3,300 feet (1,000 m) from the Chicago shoreline into Lake Michigan. Located on the Near North Side lakefront, the pier was built in 1916 at a cost of \$4.5 million, equivalent to \$90.5 million today. In 1917 and 1918, during World War I, the pier housed soldiers, the Red Cross, and even Home Defense units. Today, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is Chicago's top tourist attraction.

Built as one element of famed architect and city planner Daniel Burnham's influential 1909 Plan of Chicago, Chicago's Navy Pier—originally known as Municipal Pier #2—was a mixed-use facility dotted with parks for public gatherings and warehouses for commerce. Developed primarily to serve a commercial function, its warehouses were created to serve lake freighters that needed to load and unload goods and store cargo; secondarily, it was a place for passenger steamers to dock. In its infancy, the pier was served by its own streetcar. It was renamed Navy Pier in 1927, in honor of World War I Navy veterans.

Throughout its nearly 100 years of storied history, Navy Pier's fortunes have fluctuated widely as its uses have gradually changed. In the 1920s, considered the pier's Golden Age, an average of 3.2 million people visited it annually, mainly to use it as a cool, lakefront summer playground before the days of air conditioning. With its picnic areas and children's playground, it was perfect for families who needed a respite from the heat; others were drawn to its entertainment offerings, which included dance halls, dining pavilions, and an auditorium. In later years, its uses ranged from a temporary jail, a traffic court, and a Navy training facility to a campus of the University of Illinois. After 1965, however, Navy Pier's fortunes turned. For the next two decades, it was little used, except from 1978 to 1983, when it was the site of ChicagoFest, a popular summer music festival.

By 1988, Navy Pier had experienced a decline so apparent that there was even talk of closing it. Former mayor Eugene Sawyer created the Navy Pier Development Authority to prepare a redevelopment plan for the pier, and the authority, in concert with the city of Chicago, invited a ULI Advisory Services panel to develop recommendations for the pier's future role and uses.

The ULI panel that visited Chicago in May 1989 was chaired by Wayne Ratkovich, president of the Los Angeles-based Ratkovich Company. It recommended a framework for reimagining Navy Pier that was "tied to the water" and included creating a wharflike frontage street, as well as boat slips and other marina services. The panel rejected the idea of adding office space because that market was readily served at more convenient downtown locations. The panel maintained that, developed properly, Navy Pier would pay for itself.

"I believe the panel played a very significant role in the redevelopment of Navy Pier," says Ratkovich. "We developed recommendations on saving the pier from sinking into Lake Michigan, proposed a physical plan for the pier's redevelopment, and authored a financial plan to fund the entire process."

Less than seven weeks after the panel made its recommendations, the Illinois General Assembly created the



nonprofit Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA)—the state/city agency that now owns Navy Pier, which it leases to a not-for-profit management corporation. The MPEA was authorized to issue up to \$150 million for pier redevelopment, to be raised and secured by a state-wide cigarette tax. In 1995, after a four-year, \$150 million renovation, Navy Pier was reopened as the city's new lakefront playground, with an iconic 150-foot-tall (46 m) Ferris wheel, an outdoor stage, and the Chicago Shakespeare Theater, plus shops, restaurants, and exhibition halls.

“The physical plan [that the panel recommended] was not followed as closely as we hoped, but the redevelopment was successful,” recalls Ratkovich. Indeed, annual attendance peaked at 9 million in 2000. The redevelopment led to more than 15 years of successful operation. But by 2010, after nearly a century of use, Navy Pier was looking dated and “cheesy.” Although the MPEA had released a plan for a major renovation of Navy Pier in January 2006 that included a monorail, a roller coaster, a floating hotel, and an 80,000-square-foot (7,000 sq m) water park with a Great Lakes theme, the estimated \$2 billion price tag, combined with the Great Recession, derailed that plan.

The pier remained the state's most visited tourist site, but annual attendance had declined to 8 million. Since the success of the 1989 plan had proved the value of the Advisory Services program for Navy Pier, MPEA asked two additional ULI Advisory Services panels to help create a new long-term vision for Navy Pier as well as recommend near-term actions to achieve that vision through financially sustainable renovation, redevelopment, and reprogramming—the kind of makeover that would turn

it into a world-class cultural destination. Those panels—both of which were chaired by Las Vegas-based Daniel C. Van Epp, president of the Van Epp Companies and executive vice president of Newland Communities—visited the city in February and August 2010.

The second ULI report, released in November 2010, recommended a more modest and realistic set of enhancements aimed at retaining the pier's traditional role as a public space rather than turning it into a theme park. The new plan incorporated a stepped approach to redevelopment and recommended governance changes. In outlining a set of near- and long-term recommendations to refresh and revitalize this aging icon, members of the 2010 panels brought diverse experience to the challenge from many areas of expertise.

“What we saw, from the very first night, was that Navy Pier should have its own board, separate from that of the McCormick Place convention center,” says Van Epp. On December 31, 2010, MPEA trustees recommended a new governance structure to Governor Pat Quinn and the Illinois General Assembly, calling for Navy Pier to be leased to a newly formed not-for-profit corporation, Navy Pier Inc. (NPI), that would separately govern and manage the pier. In 2011, NPI was established to maintain Navy Pier as a historic public landmark and oversee its redevelopment.

The 2010 panels also addressed a number of other challenges, including how to energize Navy Pier during the low season and maximize its use during the high season. During warmer months, their report noted, the pier is an extremely active space, drawing vast numbers of people to stroll, eat,



entertain themselves, and take in the views. The report suggested that new restaurants and clubs be introduced to increase nighttime use of the pier and envisioned bringing in a developer to add shops as well as a boutique hotel with 200-plus rooms near the existing Festival Hall to entice guests who use the Grand Ballroom for weddings and parties to stay the night. (The hotel, notes Van Epp, was probably that panel's most controversial recommendation.)

The 2010 panel report also called for the expansion and renovation of the underused Crystal Garden space, as well as the addition of new, winter-friendly cabs to the existing Ferris wheel, which made its debut at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. The panel said a new wheel with enclosed and climate-controlled cabs, similar to those on the popular London Eye, could become a year-round attraction and high-profile landmark.

In addition, the panel recommended greatly expanding both the Chicago Shakespeare Theater and Chicago Children's Museum. Leaders of the popular Children's Museum had debated moving it to nearby Grant Park but ultimately decided to stay and expand at Navy Pier. The report also suggested landscaping public spaces to take advantage of the area's light and water and adding amenities that would enhance pedestrian enjoyment.

In July 2011, NPI approved a version of the panel's recommendations, backing a \$155 million general plan to revitalize and beautify Navy Pier in the hopes of attracting more year-round visitors, as well as building growth toward implementing other long-term improvements. The MPEA offered to provide \$50 million in seed money. In February 2012, a plan submitted by New York City-based James Corner Field Operations, which presented a bold, sustainability-minded vision for the pier that largely dovetails with the panel's recommendations, was chosen in a competitive process. The new Centennial Vision plan aims to "give the lakefront back to the city" and make Navy Pier a truly iconic and world-class destination as it approaches its 100th anniversary in 2016.

Today, this plan is on its way toward becoming reality. On May 16, 2013, Mayor Rahm Emmanuel and the MEPA

announced a new program, Elevate Chicago, to implement the \$115 million first phase of the Centennial Vision plan, beginning in fall 2013. The redevelopment will include major landscaping and interior changes, including an interactive fountain in Gateway Park that will transform into a skating rink in winter and an expanded Chicago Children's Museum, expected to open in 2016.

"We are taking what is good and making it great," says Marilyn Gardner, president and CEO of NPI. "We have a unique opportunity to create one of the world's signature attractions, one that bridges elevated, contemporary design with popular appeal."

Gardner notes that the redevelopment project scheduled to begin in fall 2013 is firmly rooted in the concepts developed as a result of the ULI panel reports, particularly the one completed in 2010. She says the ULI panels were instrumental in building local consensus on the path forward—which was especially important, she says, given what had been seen as a misfire in the elaborate plan floated in 2006.

"Our goals and approach are consistent with what we heard from the panels: restructure Navy Pier governance to give the landmark facility its own board, expand our customer base with more nighttime and year-round attractions, and strengthen Navy Pier's connection to the city and the lake," adds Gardner. "Our objectives are consistent with the enduring values of Burnham's original vision, which were so effectively captured by the panel reports. Navy Pier forever will be a place where people from all walks of life can come together to enjoy the natural beauty of the lakefront and the city's magnificent skyline. It is truly the People's Pier."

"Navy Pier is a great example of a complex problem that needed an outside look from an unbiased set of professionals," says Van Epp, and that is what it got, not once, but twice.

Adapted from "Evolution of Chicago's Navy Pier Shaped by ULI Advisory Service Panels," by Valerie Fahey, which appeared in the May/June 2012 issue of *Urban Land* and *Urban Land* online.

# Hong Kong: Creating a Strategy for Sustainable Redevelopment—2011

The redevelopment of the former Kai Tak Airport and the nearby Kowloon East area offers Hong Kong a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a sustainable new waterfront central business district. The report prepared by a 2011 ULI Advisory Services panel, subtitled “Formulating a Sustainable and High-Quality Urban Environment,” offered suggestions as to how the government could do just that. The panel reviewed the central government’s existing planning vision for the area and recommended ways to refine that vision. Although it is too soon to say whether Hong Kong will implement the panel’s recommendations, one early impact of this panel has been to increase ULI’s already high visibility and credibility within Asia as an independent source of knowledge and fresh, new ideas that can be a valuable resource for the region.

The Kai Tak Airport—officially known as the Hong Kong International Airport since 1954—was built on landfill in Victoria Harbour in 1925 and served as Hong Kong’s principal airport until it closed in July 1998, when it was replaced by the new Hong Kong International Airport at Chek Lap Kok, 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) to the west. Since then, the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region—which owns most of the land in Hong Kong—has considered many different schemes for redeveloping the site and various surrounding areas.

Hong Kong’s land use, planning, and development activities are guided by a collection of strategic plans and policies. Most recently, the government spent about five years developing a master plan for the huge (323 hectares, or 798 acres)—and hugely complex—site that now includes the airport and the nearby Kowloon East areas. The Kai Tak Development (KTD) site offers an unprecedented development opportunity in one of the world’s most spectacular and densely populated cities, as well as an

opportunity for Hong Kong to showcase its “world city” qualities.

In December 2011, the Hong Kong government’s Civil Engineering and Development Department sponsored a ULI Advisory Services panel on the Kai Tak and Kowloon East site. It asked the panel—which was chaired by United Kingdom-based Jeremy Newsum, an executive trustee of the Grosvenor Estate—to provide strategic advice on land use and real estate issues that would lead to the sustainable redevelopment of KTD. The panel was charged, in part, with considering how the government’s vision for KTD, the Kai Tak Outline Zoning Plan (OZP), could “be translated to make it a distinguished, attractive, and vibrant community.” The high-profile site is iconic; because Kai Tak was surrounded on three sides by water and on the other side by skyscrapers and hills, “landing at the airport was a very vivid experience, one that anyone who ever landed there will never forget,” recalls Newsum.



As with many other panel assignments, the ULI members who served on this panel were keenly aware of the politics involved. “It’s possible that [the sponsor] initially hoped we would reinforce existing policies—that we would put a ‘rubber stamp’ on its master plan,” says Newsum, but that was not the case. Although the panel endorsed many elements of the OZP, it also suggested some significant revisions, stating that it “believes that the good work already completed can be enhanced by embracing the CBD2 [Hong Kong’s second central business district, which is planned for Kowloon East] concept, making the logical adjustments to KTD and Kowloon East to unite the planning vision for these areas.” As a first step, it suggested that Hong Kong adopt a statement articulating this vision and adjust the master plan to conform to the renewed vision.

Perhaps most controversial among the panel’s recommendations was the suggestion to remove a proposed

sports stadium complex from the site. “The inward-looking and monolithic nature of a sports stadium would add little to the concept of place and community,” the panel report states, arguing that the complex “would be located on land that is extremely valuable and from the panel’s point of view key to the success of KTD acting as the driving force for CBD2.” Whether the stadium site will be moved out of KTD remains to be seen; as John Fitzgerald, executive director of ULI Asia Pacific points out, “this is a highly political process. While the sponsor agrees with this recommendation and would like to implement it, it is not the final decision maker.”

Among its other recommendations, the panel stated that “design, quality, and innovation should be strongly emphasized, as should the flexibility of the zoning plans to evolve and respond to change over the long haul. . . . The enhancement of the entire waterfront coupled with

actions that trigger near-term results can make Kowloon East a financial and social success like no other location in the city.” The panel offered the following additional recommendations for how the city should move forward on redeveloping KTD:

- Create a large new central park to act as the central organizing feature for the Kai Tak portion of the area;
- Open up the park, restore the Kai Tak River, and enhance the waterfront;
- Introduce residential uses;
- Improve connectivity;
- Provide a destination at the end of the former runway; and
- Create a development corporation to implement the vision.

What impact will the panel’s recommendations have on the eventual redevelopment of this iconic site? Any predictions would be mere speculation at this point. Newsum believes that “it is very unlikely that the panel will turn out to be in any way a turning point. While it will have assisted with the government’s thinking about this project, we are talking about a central government here, and a single panel on a single site, as large as this one is, is not going to be the pivot around which government decision-making turns.”

But Newsum and Fitzgerald also stress that the panel’s recommendations did make an impact with the sponsor, whose representatives were quite impressed with the panel process and pleased with the resulting recommendations and report. “The panel certainly helped solidify and strengthen ULI’s relationship with key decision makers in the Hong Kong government; we’re still seen as a resource to the government,” notes Fitzgerald.

In the end, that may be just as important a result as any impact the panel’s recommendations have on the redevelopment process. The individual responsible for bringing the panel to Hong Kong, then secretary for development Carrie Lam, is now the government’s chief secretary for administration, number two in the Hong Kong government only to new (as of July 2012) chief executive C.Y. Leung, who is also the founding chairman of ULI Asia Pacific and who, in his first official visit to Shanghai since becoming chief executive, was the headline speaker at the Institute’s Asia Pacific Summit in June 2013. “From a relationship-building, visibility-building, and credibility-building exercise for ULI, this panel was a big deal,” concludes Fitzgerald.

# Washington, D.C.: Planning to Remake Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library—2011

District of Columbia mayor Vincent C. Gray has proposed spending more than \$100 million to remake the four-decade-old, five-story, 440,000-square-foot (41,000 sq m) Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, moving forward with a project that was the subject of a 2011 Advisory Services panel study. Gray's proposal to renovate the library by 2019 would make good on his longstanding promise to revitalize the aging steel-and-glass structure, which was designed by pioneering architect Mies van der Rohe in 1968 and opened in 1972 as the District of Columbia's new central library. The international-style building—the last library designed by Mies and his only work in Washington, D.C.—was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.

Located at the intersection of Ninth and G streets, N.W., in the center of Washington, D.C.'s prospering downtown business district, the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library (MLK Library) is an important landmark and community center. Yet by 2011, years of neglect had left the building in dire need of rehabilitation and renewal.

A number of factors—including an aging and poorly maintained structure, insufficient lighting, poorly functioning elevators, limited access for people with disabilities, potential environmental issues, and an inadequate heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning system, as well as the changing functional requirements of libraries—led the DC Public Library (DCPL) to explore whether the building was adequate for the needs of the city's central library.

With limited financial resources available to rehabilitate the building—and with the high value of property in the surrounding neighborhood—the DCPL began to explore the possibility of selling or leasing all or a portion of the structure so that the proceeds could be used to fund a new or renovated central library. It asked the panel to



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consider “what is the best value for the District for reuse or redevelopment of the MLK central library building?”

At the invitation of the DCPL, a ULI Advisory Services panel convened in Washington, D.C., in November 2011 to evaluate alternatives for the building housing the city's central library. The panel, which was chaired by Wayne Ratkovich of the Los Angeles–based Ratkovich Company, considered three potential redevelopment scenarios:

rehabilitating the existing building for the library's sole use; establishing a cotenancy in the existing building (in which the library would share the structure with one or more additional tenants); and moving the library to a new location, using the sale or lease revenue from the existing building to fund a portion of the costs of site acquisition and construction of a new library building.

Although the panel expressed its belief that the first scenario was not economically feasible, it did not recommend one of the remaining two scenarios over the other. Rather, the panel presented an implementation approach that would help achieve either of them—and stressed that doing so “will require a significant investment in and commitment to a major rehabilitation initiative.” The ultimate goal, the panel report stated, “should be to make available a library that meets the needs of the ‘library of the future.’”

The panel reported that building one or two additional stories atop the MLK Library and making all or part of the larger building available for lease could generate as much as \$4 million to \$5.5 million annually to offset the cost of critically needed repairs to the historic landmark. Alternatively, the sale of the building could generate at least \$58 million for construction of a new central library.

Ratkovich told the community members who gathered in the library's Great Hall to hear the panel's presentation that the building was in urgent need of renovation, regardless of its eventual use. “Something has to happen here,” he said. “The building is not in good condition; it needs help.” The structure needs to be thoroughly renovated to address deferred-maintenance problems, building code issues, and other deficiencies, including limited access for people with disabilities and the presence of asbestos and other hazardous materials.

Noting that Mies's original design for the building could accommodate one or two additional stories, the panel estimated that such an expansion would create an additional 390,000 to 419,000 square feet (36,000 to 39,000 sq m) of space, depending on whether the addition were set back from the current facade or built to occupy the entire footprint of the existing building.

The third option, which would call for the library's relocation and the sale or ground lease of the existing building, would generate \$58 million to \$71 million, or possibly much more, given the strong market demand for space in the District's downtown.

The panel also proposed that, regardless of how the building is used in the future, some publicly accessible use be maintained on the ground level, where the Grand Hall and the Popular Library now reside. Changes to that space are inhibited by the building's historic landmark status. In particular, the panel noted that the high visibility from outside the building should be exploited by taking advantage of the space for art exhibitions or similar uses. Use as a restaurant or other retail space could bring vitality and a greater sense of security to the building, panel members noted. Rooftop terraces are another possible amenity.

The District has continued to consider the panel's recommendations for the library. DCPL chief librarian Ginnie Cooper asked the library's architect of record, the Freelon Group, to build on the ideas that emerged from the panel report—and to consider the question, “Is a knock-your-socks-off library possible?” Freelon responded with two architectural plans, both of which would cut a large light well in the center of the building and include substantial renovation of the library's long-failing systems. It presented those approaches at a library board meeting on September 19, 2012, at which the board continued to discuss options that included adding two new floors to the structure, renting space to other tenants, converting below-ground levels to commercial parking, and adding a café space.

Most recently, at a press briefing on March 28, 2013, at which he proposed spending more than \$100 million to redevelop the MLK Library, Mayor Vincent C. Gray focused on the facility's importance to the community. “This library has extraordinary significance. This would be an effort to not only modernize the library,” he said. “I think it's a real opportunity to preserve our library.” Other city officials told reporters that the funding would be used to pursue a public/private partnership that probably would involve sharing the building with a paying tenant—the second scenario considered by the panel. In 2012, the DCPL board com-



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missioned designs that involved adding two floors to the structure and making its stark interior more inviting; those plans were estimated to cost as much as \$200 million to implement. The funding that Gray has proposed would be supplemented with financing generated by the paying tenant. Although the bulk of the city's money is not scheduled to be spent until 2016, Gray has set aside \$3 million for fiscal year 2014 to hire an architect and business consultants to create a workable plan.

In fall 2013, the library is undergoing renovations that will convert its first-floor business, science, and technology reading room into a "digital commons," maintaining the space's architectural character while transforming it into a 21st-century research and communications space. The 11,000-square-foot (1,000 sq m) digital commons, scheduled to open this summer, will feature 80 computers, a 3D printer, a Skype station, and an eResources discovery station, as well as five conference rooms and a meeting room that will accommodate up to 50 people.

Looking back, Ratkovich says the most important lesson local stakeholders learned from the panel process was that "something had to be done to enable the building to function, to be a safe place for public assembly, and to be in conformance with code. They also learned that there was a development opportunity that would enable the library to continue to operate in a renovated portion of the building while new uses were introduced."

Cooper told the *Washington Post* in March 2013 that one option under consideration is to lease the entire building to a private developer that could add as many as six stories to the structure, then lease back the library space to the city. While other options also are being explored, Cooper stressed the important decisions that have been made since the panel made its recommendations: "We now know the library will stay in this location and we know this landmarked building will be preserved."

Adapted from "ULI Panel Analyzes Scenarios for the Only Washington, D.C., Building Designed by Mies van der Rohe," by Elizabeth Razzi, which appeared in the January/February 2012 issue of *Urban Land* and *Urban Land* online.



JEWEL SAMAD/STAFF/AFP

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