

ULI

DOWNTOWN OKLAHOMA CITY



DOWNTOWN OKLAHOMA CITY

An Evaluation of Development Potential
and Real Estate Strategies for Rebuilding

December 3-7, 1995

An Advisory Services Panel Report
ULI-the Urban Land Institute
1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.
Suite 500 West
Washington, D.C. 20007



The City of
OKLAHOMA CITY

RONALD J. NORICK, Mayor

February 26, 1996

Mr. Joseph C. Canizaro
President
Urban Land Institute
625 Indiana Avenue, Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mr. Canizaro:

On behalf of the citizens of Oklahoma City, I would like to thank the Urban Land Institute for your commitment to assist Oklahoma City in our recovery efforts following the terrible tragedy of April 19, 1995. As a result of our past experience with ULI in evaluating the City's 23rd Street Corridor in 1992, we knew the value of ULI and were very appreciative of the offer to assist with the revitalization of our downtown area.

We thank the Urban Land Foundation, those who fund the Foundation, and the ULI members who donated their time and expertise to our community. The unsolicited and generous advice will be a great asset as we look to the future of Oklahoma City.

We were very encouraged by the panel's findings and recommendations. The panel acknowledged the solid foundation we have created with our extraordinary public commitment to the MAPS program and identified both short and long-term actions to achieve our goals. The ULI process helped focus the attention of our public and private sectors, giving momentum to our development efforts. This fresh look at Oklahoma City will motivate us to move forward and continue our growth activities.

Again, thank you and the Urban Land Institute for assisting our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ronald J. Norick".

Ronald J. Norick
Mayor

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ABOUT ULI-
THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

ULI-The Urban Land Institute is a nonprofit research and education organization that is supported and directed by its members. Its mission is to provide responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment. ULI sponsors educational programs and forums to encourage an open, international exchange of ideas and experience; initiates research that anticipates emerging land use trends and issues; proposes creative solutions based on this research; provides advisory services; and publishes a wide variety of materials to disseminate information on land use and development.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has about 13,000 members and associates from 60 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. They include developers, builders, property owners, investors, appraisers, planners, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academicians, students, and librarians. ULI members contribute to higher standards of land use by sharing their knowledge and experience. The Institute has long been recognized as North America's most respected and widely quoted source of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

Much of the Institute's work is accomplished through its councils, which include:

- Commercial and Retail Development Councils
- Community Development Councils
- Development Infrastructure and Services Council
- Development Regulations Council
- Industrial and Office Park Development Councils
- International Council
- National Policy Council
- Recreational Development Council
- Residential Development Councils
- Small-Scale Development Councils
- Urban Development/Mixed-Use Councils

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

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Both personally and on behalf of the Urban Land Institute, the panel members and staff would like to thank the Honorable Ronald Norick, mayor of Oklahoma City, for inviting ULI to undertake this important Advisory Services panel assignment. The panel was pleased and honored to participate in the development of strategies for reinvigorating and rebuilding the downtown core of Oklahoma City in the wake of the tragic bombing of the Murrah Federal Office Building in April 1995.

The panel would especially like to acknowledge and thank the members of the Downtown Steering Committee that was set up for the ULI panel under the chairmanship of Ronald Bradshaw to advise the city in structuring the panel's assignment and preparing for its visit to Oklahoma City. The panel would also like to thank Garner Stoll, director of planning, Oklahoma City, for coordinating the panel's visit and the planning department staff members involved in the ULI study: Bob Mier, Mike Deming, Karen Price, Jerry Hunter, Steve Rhodes, Greg Pugh, and Wes Armstrong. The panel greatly appreciates their work in preparing the extensive background materials

provided to panel members and for assisting the panel during its week on site. The panel members also appreciated the planning staff's constant availability to answer questions and to provide further material, interviewee contacts, and information as needed. The panel also wishes to thank City Manager Donald Bown and Tiana Douglas, director, Urban Renewal Authority, for their support and assistance.

The panel would like to acknowledge the support shown to the ULI panel and its work by the Honorable Frank Keating, governor of the state of Oklahoma, and the many community, business, and institutional leaders in Oklahoma City who provided their unique insights and perspectives during the on-site interviews. The participation of individuals representing a wide range of organizations, viewpoints, and interests enabled the panel to base its recommendations on accurate, timely, and balanced information.

Finally, the panel's work would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the following organizations, to which the panel extends its deep thanks: the Hertz Corporation; Hughes Aircraft Company; J.C. Penney Company, Inc.; the Macerich Company, owner of Crossroads Mall; Northwest Bank; and annual fund donors to the Urban Land Foundation.

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FOREWORD: THE PANEL'S ASSIGNMENT

On April 19, 1995, a terrorist bomb destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Office Building in downtown Oklahoma City, killing 168 people, gravely injuring hundreds more, and damaging scores of buildings in the vicinity of the blast. After interviewing more than 80 citizens of Oklahoma City, from the governor and mayor to representatives of local community and business groups, the

panel recognizes the depth of the sense of loss in the community, not only in terms of the injury and loss of life, which is enormous, but also in terms of the uncertainty regarding the future. As this report will show, however, the panel believes that the future of Oklahoma City and its people looks bright indeed and that the long-term opportunities for growth and development are impressive.

The panel recognizes that the blast at the Murrah Building has affected everyone, no matter where he or she lives in the Oklahoma City area. But because the tragedy occurred downtown, its impact is more visible. The legacy of death and destruction that is represented by the vacant lot at the Murrah site has added a sense of immediacy and urgency to the problems of economic development that Oklahoma City has faced for many years. As everyone in the city knows, these problems were apparent long before the bombing. When the bottom dropped out of the oil market in the early 1980s, the economy of the region went into a tailspin from which it was just beginning to recover when the bombing occurred. As a result, Oklahoma City has suffered from two back-to-back disasters: first an economic downturn and now a human and psychological tragedy.

The effects of the decade-long economic depression in Oklahoma City are readily apparent: low incomes, a dearth of new housing and apartment construction, empty lots and commercial buildings, and a general lack of economic vitality, particularly downtown—the very heart of the community. To a certain extent, many of these problems plague virtually every U.S. city, but the people of Oklahoma City have a tremendous opportunity to attack these problems and solve them by creating a vision for the future and a strategic roadmap for achieving that vision. It is the purpose of this Urban Land Institute Advisory Services panel report to help realize a new vision for downtown Oklahoma City.



OKLAHOMA CITY IN ITS REGION



Murrah memorial site.

The bombing has focused the world's attention on Oklahoma City, and the federal government undoubtedly stands ready to assist in repairing the damage to the community. The city and state also recognize the city's problems and appear determined to address them. Oklahoma City voters in December 1993 approved a five-year, one-cent sales tax to fund the Metropolitan Area Project (MAPS) plan to build new and upgraded sports, recreation, cultural, and convention facilities. The MAPS initiative is a tremendous start at changing the development momentum in this city and creating the kind of positive image and direction that Oklahoma City needs to move forward. It is a signal to the development community, to corporate and business leaders, to all

levels of government, and to the community at large that Oklahoma City means business—that it is a city moving forward vigorously and looking toward the future.

The panel believes that Oklahoma City benefits from many advantages that it can exploit to speed its recovery. It is a young city with room to grow; land is inexpensive and plentiful; taxes and rents are low; government regulations are few; and the city is not seriously burdened by the problems faced by the big coastal cities: high crime, rampant drug use, extremes of poverty and decay, traffic congestion, pollution, or acute fiscal problems. There is much to be proud of in Oklahoma City and what the city has achieved in its short 100-year history.

ULI was among several organizations that offered their services to Oklahoma City. The ULI Advisory Services panel was selected because of the success of such panels in other cities, including San Antonio, Chicago, and Sacramento. The ULI Advisory Services program was established in 1947 and has provided strategic advice to over 200 cities. The process brings together experts in various real estate disciplines, including developers, market analysts, public/private partnership specialists, planners, and architects, to address complex issues regarding land use planning, real estate development, and economic revitalization.



THE DOWNTOWN OKLAHOMA CITY STUDY AREA



The ULI panel is briefed by Garner Stohl, Oklahoma City director of planning, and Tiana Douglas, director of the Oklahoma City Urban Renewal Authority.

Based on the experience gained in many cities around the country, the panel believes that Oklahoma City will benefit from the advice and recommendations of an objective, interdisciplinary team of experts as well as from the expected consensus and momentum that this process can generate in the community.

It is within this context that the Urban Land Institute offered its help to the city and people of Oklahoma City to assist in the rebuilding effort. The 13 panel members donated a week of their time to be on site in Oklahoma City. As the sponsor of the ULI panel, the city of Oklahoma City, at the direction of the mayor, prepared issues and questions in advance, which it asked the panel to address and provide advice on. These questions and a voluminous briefing book containing detailed information about conditions in Oklahoma City were sent in advance to all the panel members, who studied the material before their arrival in the city. All of the questions relate to the need for an economic development strategy to reinvigorate and rebuild downtown Oklahoma City over the next 20 years.

The questions are divided into four major topic areas that the panel members addressed in teams: the market potential for different types of activities downtown; planning and urban design issues, including transportation and parking; development strategies for achieving new growth; and recommended actions for the city to take to carry out these strategies successfully.

Upon their arrival in Oklahoma City, the panel members received a briefing by the city staff and then toured the Oklahoma City area, including the entire downtown from Bricktown to the Capitol and from the Canadian River to St. Anthony Hospital. The panel also interviewed more than 80 people, including the governor, mayor, and city manager plus representatives of local banks and community groups, merchants, developers, city councilmembers, planning commissioners, city staff, and members of the citizens group set up for the panel's visit. The panel members met continuously throughout the week both formally and informally and usually late into the night to discuss their findings and to reach consensus on their conclusions and recommendations.

In summary, the revitalization of a downtown anywhere in the United States is a difficult and lengthy process that requires leadership and a proactive and committed partnership among the varied interest groups that hold a stake in downtown's future. Make no mistake about it, these groups include, first and foremost, the citizens of Oklahoma City at large. No community can allow its downtown to deteriorate and become a repository for its problems if it hopes to become a great city. Dallas, Kansas City, and Denver are just a few of the cities in the larger region that have recognized this fact and are actively reinvigorating their central cores. Other groups that must become partners in the revitalization effort are the community's corporate and civic leaders, landowners, merchants, and community groups; city government; financial institutions; local employers; and minority and other advocacy groups. Other cities are succeeding in their revitalization efforts, and the panel believes that Oklahoma City is well positioned to do the same.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oklahoma City has the potential to be the entertainment and cultural center of its region. Center Stage Theatre (top left), Bricktown (bottom left), Myriad Botanical Gardens (top right), baseball stadium under construction (bottom right).

Downtown Oklahoma City is on the verge of what may well be the most exciting period in its 100-year history. The city's economy is moving upward, a new spirit of public/private cooperation is evolving, and one of the nation's largest public development efforts—the MAPS program—is underway downtown. The panel firmly believes that these factors can form the foundation of downtown revitalization if a strategic vision and plan for the downtown is created to build on these strengths. The panel further believes that a coordinated, public/private, downtown revitalization effort is absolutely essential to the long-term economic well-being of Oklahoma City as a whole.

The panel has identified several targets of opportunity in the downtown area that it believes can be realized over the coming years. These opportunities will not, however, be easy to transform into reality. All will require proactive government support of and cooperation with the private sector; some will require subsidies. The important thing to remember is that the potential is there, and it can be captured.



The panel sees a new set of uses emerging, together with a changing set of functions for the downtown core of Oklahoma City as it moves into the 21st century. In the future, offices will play a smaller but still important role, dominated by federal, state, and local government uses and by legal, accounting, and some financial services. The large overhang of vacant space rules out new office construction in the near future. However, the need for replacement space for federal offices provides an excellent opportunity to fill some of the vacant space downtown, to energize the area with additional workers, and perhaps to preserve a historic building at the same time.

Traditional shoppers goods/department store-type merchandise will remain firmly entrenched outside the core, but eating and drinking establishments, urban entertainment, hotels, and, over time, specialized retail uses will play an even more important role in an expanded central business district (CBD). Entertainment uses will continue to expand in Bricktown, where the panel sees a potential for 100,000 square feet of additional space. Retail uses will include an estimated 50,000 square feet of office and tourist-related retail; 20,000 to 40,000 square feet of residential-serving retail; and in ten years or so, 250,000 square feet of specialty high-end retail at the Galleria site.



The panel believes that there is a dramatically strong market for rental housing in downtown and, to a much lesser extent, for ownership housing of several types at a variety of prices and densities. Initially, residential demand will be limited primarily to garden apartment and loft rental units along with a smaller component of other housing types, including for-sale townhouses. These units will appeal largely to non-child-oriented households. Nonetheless, over time and with continued improvements in the schools, child-oriented households will also be attracted to the area.

In total, the panel believes that downtown Oklahoma City could absorb 170 to 270 units of rental and for-sale housing annually over the next five years, rising to more than 300 units annually over the longer run. For residential development to occur, however, the city must create a comprehensive residential development program that provides tax-free bond financing and low-priced access to urban renewal sites and encourages primarily garden apartment development. Compared to suburban developments, these units will need to be higher-density housing designed to provide a secure environment and to accommodate a different mix of residents. Initially, rent and mortgage subsidies will be required to make such development financially feasible.

The panel believes that the creation of a vibrant rental housing market in downtown Oklahoma City is critical to the city's long-term economic success. The addition of rental housing will have a dramatic effect in terms of getting people on the streets after 5:30 p.m. and supporting new downtown restaurants, clubs, the YMCA, and entertainment activities.

To achieve the identified potential for development, downtown must overcome several shortcomings. These include lack of a single organization responsible solely for downtown development and improvement; lack of a comprehensive development strategy and plan for downtown revitalization; and lack of specific implementation roadmaps for achieving successful growth in each of the land uses that must be part of a successful downtown: housing, retail, offices, hotels, entertainment, culture, transportation, and parks and open space.

The existing land use pattern is fragmented into districts that lack identity. Combined with numerous gaps, primarily in the form of parking lots, this pattern prevents the downtown from achieving a critical mass of continuous activity that can draw and sustain pedestrian and economic activity.

Districts that need definition and strengthening include the urban core, the Bricktown urban entertainment district, the cultural district, the downtown retail (Galleria) district, four residential districts, two mixed-use/residential districts, a flex district, and a medical center district. As part of this effort, the planned locations of two MAPS projects—the arena and the metropolitan learning center—should be reconsidered. The site of the planned arena blocks future expansion of the convention center, and the site for the proposed learning center takes part of the Galleria site, which, due to its size, public ownership, and central location, is the only downtown site available for future, large-scale retail development.

Recommended transportation actions include designating and improving some streets to accommodate pedestrians as well as automobiles; returning some streets to two-way traffic; adding on-street parking wherever possible; eliminating pedestrian-activated crossing signals; rebuilding I-40 along its current alignment or slightly to the south; expanding the planned MAPS trolley route to include the Murrah site; enhancing the trolley with a strong entertainment-oriented design; and generally improving transit links into downtown.

A greenway loop that includes parks and streetscape improvements should be created to link together downtown districts and activities. The greenway loop and other improvements to the physical character of downtown should provide a high-quality environment that is attractive to investors, businesspersons, workers, shoppers, visitors, and residents. This is not a frill; the economic success of downtown depends on it. The current high availability and low cost of land provides Oklahoma City with a unique opportunity to undertake the type of open space planning carried out by older cities as they were evolving. The greenway would link the downtown core with the Canadian River, south along the planned MAPS canal and west along the river to Wheeler Park, and then loop back to the downtown core. As part of this linkage, the panel recommends that the city create a large park north of the Murrah site along Robinson Avenue to acknowledge the importance of the memorial itself and to provide a major central park for downtown. The panel recommends that the park include, at a minimum, the 22+-acre site shown on the map on page 33. The panel believes, however, that an even larger park would be desirable and stresses that some of the important buildings within the proposed park boundaries should be retained and integrated into the park's design.

The panel also recommends the gradual elimination of the city's pedestrian concourse and tunnel system because of its adverse impact on street life. Closing the concourse should start with tunnels that function exclusively as thoroughfares. Those with access to restaurants or other retail establishments should remain open until the CBD has achieved the level of street life and amenities desired by the community.

Signage needs to be improved throughout downtown, particularly on the freeways leading to downtown, so that people can locate the area's attractions and activities and move about easily within various districts. Oklahoma City can realize millions of dollars a year in business and associated sales tax revenues simply by providing improved freeway signs that direct weary long-distance travelers to Bricktown for a meal, short walk, and entertainment.

To build and strengthen the city's capacity to meet its downtown development goals, the city's implementation efforts need to focus on the following major tasks: 1) define a concrete image for downtown, extending the MAPS master plan; 2) establish a commitment to downtown as a regional asset; 3) strengthen the coordination of public and private interests in developing a strategic plan for downtown and implementing individual projects;



The Honorable Ronald Norick thanks the ULI panel at the public presentation of its findings and recommendations.

4) manage the public land inventory strategically for interim and long-term uses, including streamlining the disposition process and managing surface parking lots and vacant land parcels; 5) launch a creative marketing program to promote the new vision of downtown; 6) designate a single entity as the point of stewardship for promoting downtown's agenda; 7) create a leadership network among business, civic, and community groups with downtown interests; 8) tap the resources of state and federal agencies and programs to subsidize and assist in providing housing and generating economic development downtown; 9) rank all public and private initiatives and identify specific funding sources and strategies for each; 10) offer creative financing for major development projects; 11) coordinate public infrastructure improvements with private development; 12) promote downtown through continuous public events, festivals, and other activities; and 13) implement a pilot program for creating market-rate residential development on urban renewal land in several downtown residential districts.

Every city action should be judged in part by its effect on downtown; and, to the extent possible, the city should direct development into downtown through its planning and zoning authority. The strategic planning effort should also include conceptual and physical renderings of development opportunities that would enable developers, investors, and ordinary citizens to understand readily the city's vision for its regional core.

The panel has set forth an ambitious agenda for an economically healthy Oklahoma City; however, transforming the goal of a thriving city into reality requires adoption of a comprehensive and coordinated development approach. The panel cautions that this effort will not be quick or easy, but the rewards for the metropolitan area will be great. The MAPS initiative represents a promising start; it is now up to the city's public and private sectors working together to carry the momentum forward to create a downtown worthy of a great city.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

A CITY POISED FOR SUCCESS

Downtown Oklahoma City is on the verge of what may well be the most exciting period in its history. Given the difficulties of the past 20 years, however, Oklahoma City's promise may be difficult to appreciate. The collapse of the oil industry, the real estate bust, the out-migration of retail and office functions from the core, and, most recently, the tragic bombing of the federal office building have left the community reeling.

Table 1
IMPORTANCE OF DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT TO OKLAHOMA CITY: A GREAT CITY DEMANDS A GREAT DOWNTOWN

- Reinforces and strengthens economic development
- Facilitates new business recruitment
- Creates more favorable investment climate
- Represents region's greatest concentration of economic activity and jobs
- Provides largest generator of property taxes
- Draws conferences, conventions, meetings
- Symbolizes "heart" of the city
- Ties together the diverse ethnic, cultural, economic, and social elements that make up the community
- Offers an increasingly strong center for recreation, entertainment, sports, and culture

Yet, even during tough times, the community has demonstrated a determination, fortitude, resilience, and compassion that have generated nationwide and worldwide respect and admiration. The panel sincerely believes that Oklahoma City is poised for greatness.

Citywide population and employment levels are registering gains, economic development efforts are starting to pay off, and slowly but surely the city is healing. A new spirit of public and private cooperation is beginning to take hold. Under the MAPS program, the city has begun the nation's largest and most ambitious development effort, the results of which will soon become evident.

Yet, a number of people sincerely question whether their financial commitment and effort are worth it. Is the city throwing good money after bad? Should it simply allow the centrifugal forces that have been at work to continue? Is a viable central business district attainable and worth the effort?

The panel firmly believes that downtown revitalization efforts are not only worthwhile, but also crucial to Oklahoma City's continued long-run success. Table 1 demonstrates downtown's importance to Oklahoma City.

Table 2
BENEFITS OF DIVERSIFIED DOWNTOWN ACTIVITIES IN OKLAHOMA CITY

Benefits	Middle- and Higher-Income Housing	Hotel Space	Urban Entertainment	Specialized Retail
Create full-time permanent jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Strengthen the tax base	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Stimulate other uses and development activities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create favorable investment climate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Facilitate new business climate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Bring additional visitors and shoppers downtown	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Contribute to region's image	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

☒ To a significant degree ☐ To a moderate degree

Table 3
CONSTRAINTS ON DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN OKLAHOMA CITY

Constraints	Middle- and Higher-Income Housing	Hotel Space	Urban Entertainment	Specialized Retail
Requires financial assistance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Requires critical mass	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Market not fully tested	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

☒ To a significant degree ☐ To a moderate degree

Despite a decade or more of decline, downtown Oklahoma City remains the largest generator of taxes and the region's greatest single employment area. In addition, it plays a central role in the region's economic development efforts. Simply put, a healthy and dynamic downtown makes good business sense. Table 2 demonstrates the benefits of diversified activities downtown.

The broad support for the MAPS program is an obvious indicator of the widespread importance accorded an exciting and healthy downtown core. The panel prefers the community to think of the MAPS program not as the end but rather as the beginning of a bold new era in the energizing and revitalization of the core by stimulating demand for additional downtown activities. The catalytic impact of MAPS is already starting to pay off. Plans have been

recently announced for new Westin and Embassy Suites Hotels and the renovation of the Medallion Hotel; a rehabilitated Skirvin Hotel is also under consideration. Together, these facilities will create nearly 1,000 full-time jobs, add millions of dollars to the tax base, and allow an expanded convention center to compete more effectively at both the regional and national levels for the lucrative meeting, convention, and exhibition business.

The Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS) represent the first phase of downtown's revitalization.



The ULI panel takes a walking tour of downtown Oklahoma City. Left to right: Lynne Sagalyn, Martin Millsbaugh, Albert Ratner, Kathryn Wylde, Charles Shaw, and Garner Stofil.



The panel expects that other MAPS projects will have an equally significant impact on the life and economy of both the central business district and the community as a whole. These impacts, however, will not occur automatically. They will take time, patience, money, and commitment. Table 3 shows the various constraints facing downtown development. Nonetheless, the potential is there, and the benefits will flow to the community as a whole in the form of additional job opportunities, a strengthened tax base, and an array of facilities that will serve all Oklahoma City residents.

The panel has identified several targets of opportunity that it believes can be realized over a period of years. Some fly in the face of conventional wisdom; others may require subsidies or “pump priming.” In either case, the support and commitment of the citizenry are critical to success.

PROJECTED MARKET TARGETS

Oklahoma City has, to some extent, been a victim of its own successes. Its plentiful land, practice of aggressive annexation, excellent highway network, utility availability, and prevailing land values have exerted a centrifugal force that have, over time, sucked uses and vitality out of the core. Historically, retail and office land uses dominated the CBD. Today, however, one-third of all metropolitan office space is located in the core, but no more than 1 to 2 percent of retail space is concentrated in the CBD.

The nation’s changing economy and values prohibit a return to the “good old days.” Instead, the panel sees a new set of emerging uses, together with a changing set of functions for the downtown core of Oklahoma City as it moves into the 21st century. In the future, office uses will play a more limited but still important role, dominated by federal, state, and local government uses and by legal, accounting, and some financial services.

Traditional shoppers goods/department store-type merchandise will remain firmly entrenched outside the core, but eating and drinking establishments, urban entertainment, and, over time, specialized retail uses will assume an even more important role in an expanded central business district.

The panel also believes that the potential for market-rate rental and ownership housing types is significant at a variety of prices and densities. Initially, downtown housing will appeal primarily to non-child oriented households, particularly to young and middle-aged singles and childless couples. Over time and with continued improvements in the schools, there is reason to believe that child-oriented households can be lured into new and rehabilitated housing downtown, but a reversal of current patterns will take time and effort. Likewise, the centrality and amenities of the downtown core could appeal to a variety of empty-nest and/or retired households that demand upscale, assisted-living, or corporate housing.

In summary, whereas retail and office uses previously dominated Oklahoma City’s downtown landscape, the panel sees a future core with considerably more market-rate housing and a much-increased emphasis on entertainment and leisure activities. Table 4 summarizes the market potential for each land use category in downtown Oklahoma City.

Table 4
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

	Short-Term (Up to 10 years)	Medium-Term (10–20 Years)	Long-Term (Over 20 Years)
Office			
Speculative	Little to no potential	At least 500,000–750,000 square feet	Up to 1,000,000 square feet
Build-to-Suit	Some public sector potential (federal, state, and local)	Increasing private sector potential	Increasing private sector potential
R&D/Flex Space	Medical-related demand promising	Good potential of up to 750,000 square feet	Continued strong demand
Retail			
High-End	Very limited potential	Up to 250,000 square feet, including 2 smaller high-fashion stores	Continued growth and expansion
Office and Tourist-Oriented (nonentertainment)	Some potential, up to 50,000 square feet	Growing demand, up to 100,000 square feet	To be determined
Residential-Oriented	Neighborhood grocery and convenience shopping; 20,000–40,000 square feet	Small additions	Continued additions catering to growing residential population
Residential			
Loft—Rental Apartments	20 or more units per year	20–40 units per year (if build-ings are available)	Continuing demand, if appro-priate buildings are available
Rental Apartments and Townhouses	100–200 units per year	200+ units per year	200+ units per year
New and Rehabilitated For-Sale Homes	50 or more units per year	75 or more units per year	100 or more units per year
Urban Entertainment			
Restaurants	1,000 or more seats (5+ restaurants)	Continuing strong demand	Continuing strong demand
Specialized Attractions (IMAX theater, movie theaters, live theaters, nightclubs, and other commercial entertain-ment/sports facilities, jazz clubs)	2–5 attractions	2–5 attractions	To be determined
Entertainment Retail	100,000+ square feet	Continuing strong demand projected	To be determined
	Short-Term (Up to 5 years)	Medium-Term (5–15 Years)	Long-Term (Over 15 Years)
Hotel	3–5 new and renovated hotels, up to 1,000 rooms (already committed)	1–3 additional hotels, 500–700 rooms	To be determined; depends on long-term success of con-vention and office markets

The elegant and historic Skirvin Hotel, now shuttered, should be rehabilitated.

OFFICE USES

Today, the central business district accounts for just under 5.5 million square feet of private office space, of which about 1.5 million square feet (almost 30 percent) is vacant. Leasing activity has been slow in recent years. Despite some activity on the part of major tenants, the leasing market today is dominated by smaller, often noncredit tenants.

Particularly troubling to the private real estate sector are the low rents that typically range from \$7 to \$12 per square foot in the core. After subtracting property taxes, operating expenses, rental concessions needed to attract tenants, and the buildout of tenant space, the remaining net rental income to a landlord is often as low as \$2 to \$3 per square foot, an amount hardly sufficient to cover debt service or to generate profit. The combination of high vacancy rates, an anemic pattern of demand since the early 1980s, and low rental rates effectively precludes any new office development for the near term.

During the first half of 1995, however, about 100,000 square feet of office space was leased in downtown, suggesting that the outlook for office space may be a bit more promising than it was earlier. Selective opportunities for so-called build-to-suit users, that is, for preidentified occupants of single-user buildings, may be emerging. Likewise, the emergence of a biomedical industry related to the Health Sciences Center may well create additional short-term demand for R&D/ flex space and laboratory space near existing medical facilities.



In the longer run, as the inventory of existing office space is whittled down, vacancy rates drop, and rental rates begin to climb, it is not unreasonable to expect that a market will emerge for new conventional office construction in the core. The panel suggests reserving a minimum of three to six office sites suitable for high-quality, high-rise office construction as part of the continuing planning effort, even though the sites are unlikely to be needed for a decade or more.

HOTEL POTENTIAL

The impact of the MAPS program is making itself felt despite the fact that completion of a renovated convention center is several years away. The recently acquired 400-room Medallion Hotel adjacent to the convention center is embarking on a multimillion-dollar renovation and upgrading. The long-closed landmark Skirvin Hotel has been acquired, and a \$30 million total rehabilitation is reportedly planned for the 214-room facility. In late October, plans were announced for the development of a 140,000-square-foot, 350-room Westin Hotel opposite Myriad Convention Center.

Scheduled for completion in November 1997, the Westin is to be followed by a 240-room Embassy Suites Hotel to coincide with development of a new arena. These four hotel projects will add more than 1,200 first-class rooms downtown and create close to 1,000 permanent full-time jobs. In addition, the presence of the hotels will allow the convention center to compete effectively for regional and national trade shows, exhibitions, conferences, and meetings that would not previously have considered Oklahoma City because of its lack of first-class hotel facilities adjacent to the convention center.

The panel believes that the four new or rehabilitated properties will satisfy demand in the short term. Within a ten-year period, the panel projects a market for up to 700 additional hotels at varying price points. Typically, demand for additional facilities materializes when occupancy levels for existing facilities reach 70 to 75 percent occupancy on a regular basis.

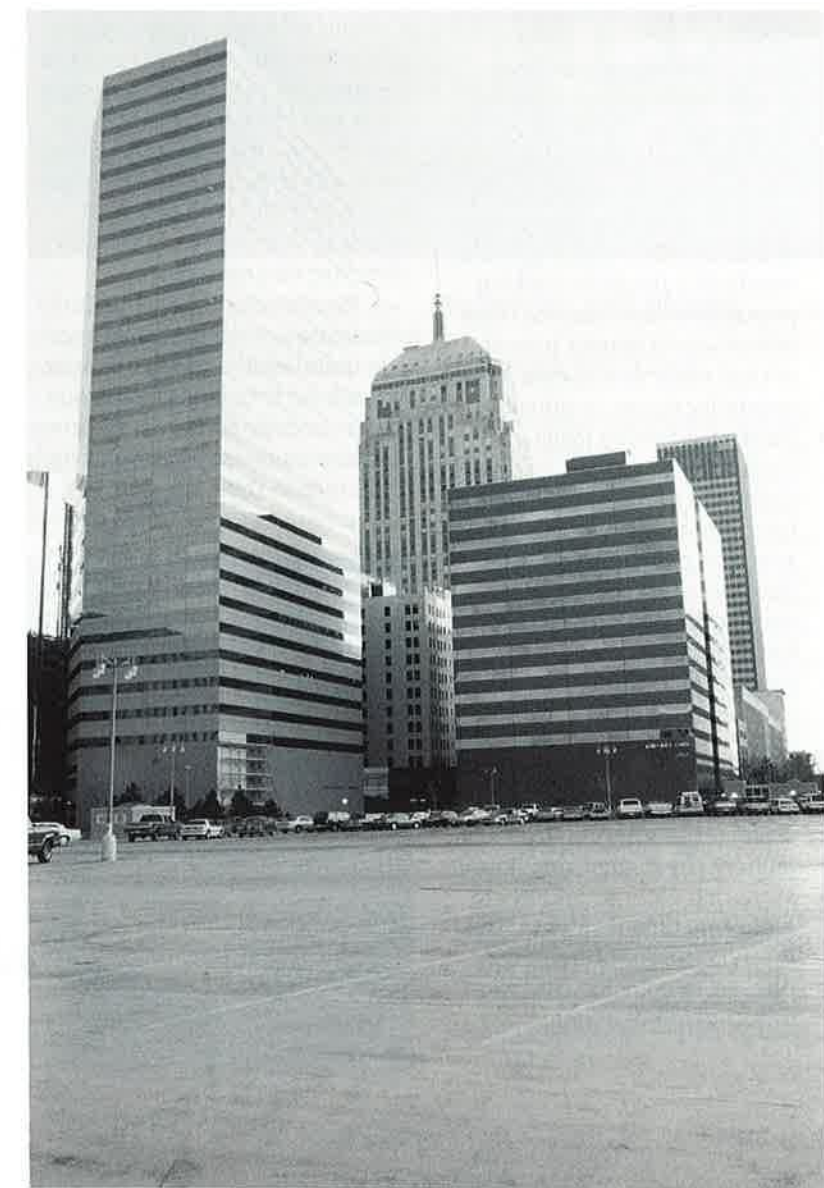
RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES

During the past 20 years, major retail activity has all but disappeared from downtown Oklahoma City, leaving only modest amounts of primarily service retail that caters to the daytime needs of the office population. Today, the metropolitan area contains more than 20 million square feet of gross leasable retail space in shopping centers (excluding free-standing fast-food restaurants and other retail), for a 25 percent increase over 1985. Nonetheless, the downtown retail market is so limited that real estate brokers do not keep statistics on it as a separate area.

Despite the panel's prevailing optimism about the future of downtown Oklahoma City, the panel members concluded that significant amounts of conventional shopper's goods/department store-type establishments are simply not warranted during the next twenty years. Yet, the panel has identified three types of non-entertainment retailing that offer potential now or in the future.

• High-End Retailing

As the major MAPS projects come on stream, new hotels open their doors, and business, tourist, and convention travel to Oklahoma City increases, the panel envisions the potential for up to 250,000 square feet of high-end, specialty retailing that is now largely captured by the Dallas area.



The vacant Galleria site, in the heart of downtown, should be land banked for future high-end retailing.

Such retailing could take the form of two high-end anchor stores (such as Lord & Taylor, Nordstrom, Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman Marcus, or other specialty stores) plus 30 to 50 small shops in an appropriately upscale section that is convenient to the convention center, hotels, and major entertainment/cultural areas.

- **Office- and Tourist-Oriented Retailing**

Today, the downtown core would benefit from up to 50,000 square feet of additional business-oriented retailing such as office supply, photography, travel, copy centers, and related establishments catering to the needs of a daytime working population. Such uses by themselves would benefit from the critical mass that comes from proximity to one another.

- **Residential-Serving Retail**

Today, few people reside downtown, and even fewer shopping opportunities serve them. However, the panel proposes the development of a significant residential component downtown, as discussed later in this report, in conjunction with the development of at least 20,000 to 40,000 square feet of residential-serving retail. Stores in this category include an upscale neighborhood grocery, laundry, dry cleaner, and liquor store that cater to middle- to higher-income residents. The retail component must be phased to coincide with the introduction of housing.

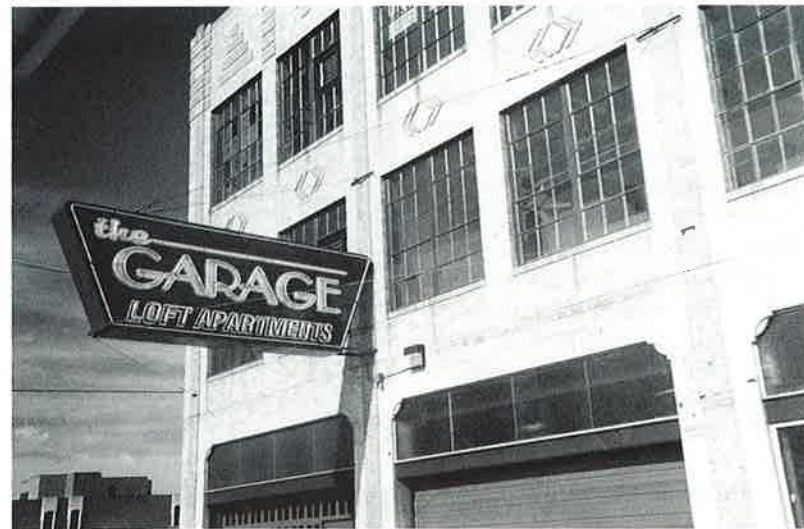
THE RESIDENTIAL MARKET

Recent years have seen virtually no new housing—either rental or owner-occupied—developed within either the broader central area of the city or the central business district. The panel proposes that considerable emphasis be placed on the development of market-rate, middle- and higher-income housing in the belief that a strong, if unrecognized, market exists for high-quality housing in a secure and attractive setting that offers appropriate neighborhood and community amenities. Housing needs to be developed in sufficient quantity to create the critical mass that ensures a safe and attractive environment.

Realistically, the vast majority of housing—whether rental or for-sale units—will appeal primarily to adult-oriented, one- and two-person, middle- and upper-income households consisting primarily of people in their 20s and 30s.

Over the years, as residential development catches hold and loses its “pioneering” edge, the panel expects that downtown housing will appeal to a broader segment of the community, including empty nesters and retirees. In the longer term, the panel is cautiously optimistic as to downtown’s ability to attract families with school-age children. The panel recognizes that enhancing downtown’s appeal to families will require a concerted effort on the part of the city and the school district.

Finally, the panel would like to note a small but potentially growing trend—the development of loft apartments that make use of former industrial, automotive, and warehouse buildings scattered throughout much of the inner city. Such an adaptive reuse has met with considerable success in other cities, and the panel sees no reason why it could not also succeed in Oklahoma City. The appeal is to those seeking nontraditional apartments with high ceilings and thick walls and to artists and craftspeople drawn to amply sized home-based work spaces.



Loft living in downtown Oklahoma City.

In total, the panel believes that the market for rental and for-sale housing in a variety of types, sizes, and price ranges could easily absorb 125 to 150 units annually over the next several years, rising to as many as 200 or more units annually in the longer run. Given that studio apartments rent for \$.50 to \$.75 per square foot per month and that good-quality for-sale housing is available for \$50 per square foot or less in Oklahoma City, major public assistance or incentives may well be required to make downtown units financially feasible.

Despite the success of Sycamore Regency Square and Towers, not to mention some close-in residential neighborhoods, some initial resistance to inner-city housing is likely, necessitating higher-than-normal marketing costs and lower sales or rental prices than could be realized in a more typical suburban setting. If inner-city housing is to become a reality, however, some mechanism will need to be developed to compensate developers for higher-than-average risk and costs.

URBAN ENTERTAINMENT

Clearly, one of today’s development bright spots both in Oklahoma City and across the nation is commercial entertainment. A combination of demographic, socioeconomic, and lifestyle changes have made the demand for restaurants, specialized attractions, and themed shopping one of the few growth opportunities in real estate. The panel believes that this trend will accelerate considerably in years to come. In the case of Oklahoma City, the MAPS program and certain of its major elements, including the expanded convention center, new arena, new baseball stadium, riverfront recreational facilities, and canal development program, will help support the expansion of commercial entertainment and add to the considerable and growing success of Bricktown.



The emerging Bricktown entertainment district.

PLANNING AND DESIGN

LAND USE PATTERNS

The existing pattern of land use in downtown Oklahoma City is fragmented into districts that lack identity. Combined with numerous gaps, primarily in the form of parking lots, the dominant pattern prevents the downtown core from achieving a critical mass of continuous activity that can draw and sustain pedestrian or economic activity. As a result, the existing land use pattern in downtown Oklahoma City illustrates several specific shortcomings that impede overall downtown development.

- Land uses appear random, reflecting a weak zoning pattern.
- The pronounced lack of parks and other green spaces fails to support desired higher-density development.

The panel believes that, in the short run, Bricktown and adjacent areas can absorb a minimum of 1,000 seats in five or more restaurants. The panel also expects that demand will continue to grow as the planned MAPS canal is developed and evolves into an entertainment destination. Over a period of five years or less, the panel recognizes the potential to add at least two to five specialized attractions such as an IMAX theater, live theaters, nightclubs, a small amphitheater, jazz clubs, and upscale movie theaters.

Finally, the panel has identified the potential for upwards of 100,000 square feet of entertainment retail such as a Warner Brothers and/or Disney stores, Nike store, virtual reality facility, or specialized themed restaurants such as Hard Rock Café, Planet Hollywood, or Dave and Busters, primarily in Bricktown.

- The significant amount of unused vacant land and land dedicated to surface parking lots compromises downtown vitality.
- The few downtown retail establishments have mostly been pulled away from streetfront locations and hidden in interior, or overhead pedestrian passages.
- Streetscapes are largely unimproved, with scant attention devoted to attractive paving, lighting, trees, and street furniture.
- Historic buildings are not adequately protected from demolition or ill-conceived modernization.

While these characteristics singly and in combination exert a negative influence on downtown development, they also provide the city with opportunities to create a physical environment that will attract the uses and activities that can strengthen the city's tax base and bring people downtown.

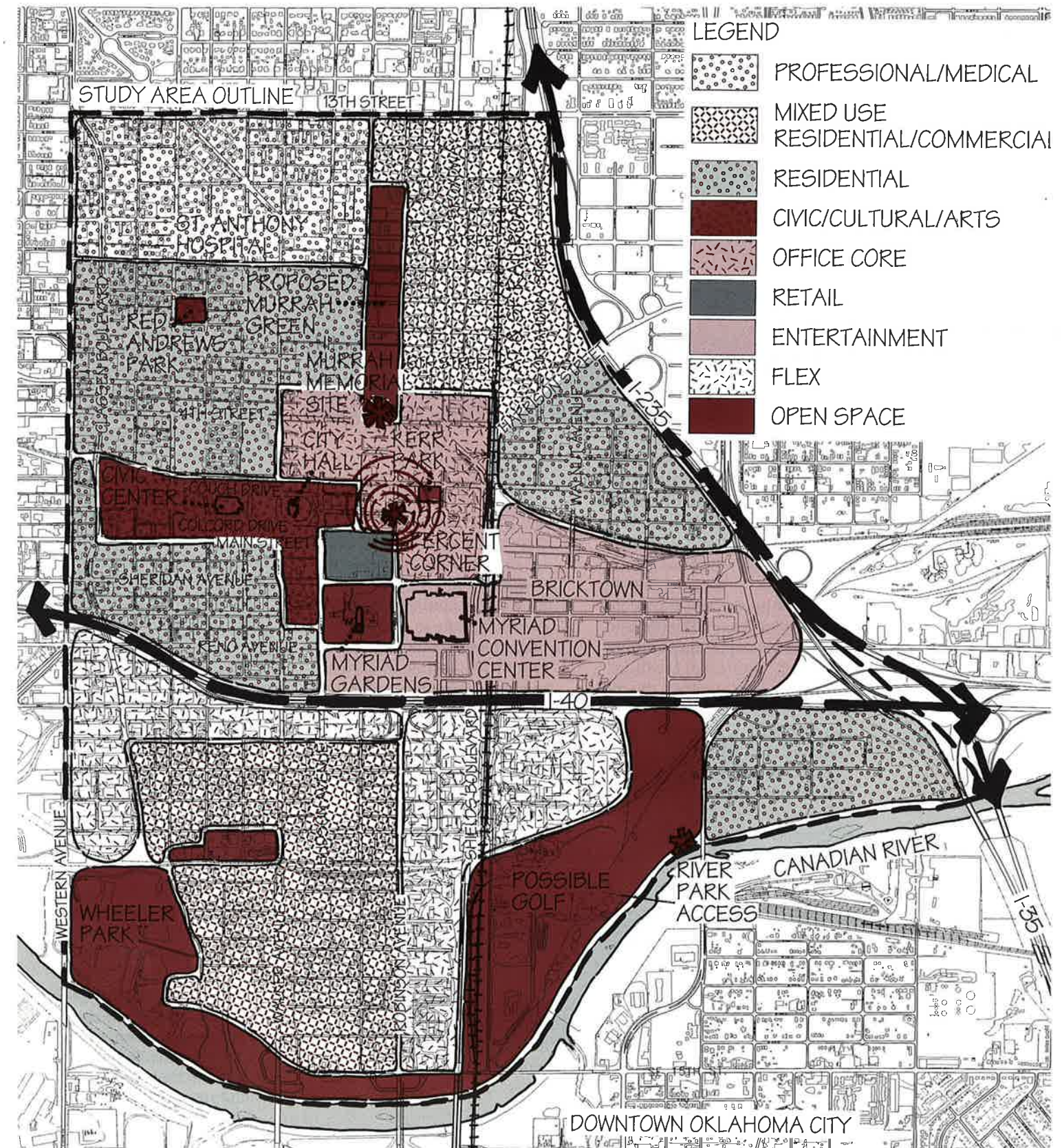
CREATING DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS

The panel recommends a stronger pattern of land use districting in the downtown area to reinforce downtown development and the overall urban fabric. The districts should be designed to encourage the types of infill development and building reuse that will strengthen the image of each district and create the synergy that individual activities need to thrive. In addition, the city should not discourage complementary uses that contribute to each district's diversity and vitality. The panel recommends the creation of seven types of downtown districts as described below.

- *The Urban Core.* As demand for office space strengthens in the Oklahoma City region, it should be directed to and concentrated in the existing high-rise, urban, commercial office core in the heart of downtown. It should reinforce existing development by filling vacant building space, redeveloping infill sites, and eventually extending to the north along the Robinson Avenue spine. To accommodate this future development, open land and derelict buildings should be land banked. All private and governmental means should be enlisted to encourage and direct office users to expand within the core or to locate there when moving to the Oklahoma City market. Incentives and disincentives should be put in place, respectively, to encourage development in the core and to discourage suburban high-rise office development until the core is fully developed.

- *Urban Entertainment District.* Throughout the nation, urban entertainment is an emerging land use that is best situated in the downtown core. A rapidly expanding menu of entertainment venues attracts not only tourists but also workers at lunch and after work and metropolitan residents in their leisure time. Theme restaurants, clubs, specialty retailers, film-based attractions, family entertainment centers, and sports facilities such as stadiums and arenas head the list.

In Oklahoma City, MAPS is already reinforcing downtown as the region's entertainment center, particularly in and around Bricktown. The planned arena, baseball stadium, canal, and improved Myriad Convention Center will anchor the emerging entertainment district. As a result, the area designated for entertainment uses should be centered around Bricktown but expanded to accommodate a fuller range of entertainment venues that likely will be attracted to the area over time as their first-choice location in Oklahoma City. Activities will be introduced incrementally and build on the market created by earlier arrivals and the strength of name recognition, image, and technology.



PROPOSED LAND USE DISTRICTS

Carpenter Square Theatre, a creative storefront theater in the proposed cultural district.



- **Cultural District.** Anchoring the west side of the downtown core should be a civic, cultural, and arts district that will center around such existing uses as the Civic Center Music Hall, municipal building, performing arts center, botanical garden, Carpenter Square Theatre, and future Metropolitan Learning Center. Additional facilities that would strengthen the district include a fine arts museum, a reopened, renovated historic movie theater, arts-oriented educational facilities, and supporting amenities such as café bookstores and art galleries.
- **Downtown Retail District.** The Galleria site has been planned for retail use for more than 20 years. Intervening land use decisions have reinforced the site designation, which is ideal for a concentration of retail uses when sufficient demand materializes. The site may also accommodate other uses such as offices or residential units on upper stories. As noted earlier, demand for a shopping center may not evolve for at least ten years until the other downtown districts have matured.

The panel strongly recommends land banking the Galleria site until a retail center can be built as the crowning centerpiece of downtown's reemergence as Oklahoma City's regional heart. It is unusual for a city to control a single-ownership site in the prime downtown retail location that is sufficiently large to accommodate a shopping center. The financial leverage offered by such a site to attract and snare a shopping center developer should not be underestimated. Accordingly, the site's potential should not be squandered by dividing the parcel and using it piecemeal for other activities, such as the proposed Metropolitan Learning Center. The panel believes that the center can be better accommodated on the site immediately to the north as an integral part of the proposed cultural district without foreclosing the option of a shopping center on the Galleria site.

- **Residential Districts.** Based on the apparent demand for various types of housing in downtown Oklahoma City, the panel believes that the city should designate several districts for apartment, townhouse, and single-family home development. In addition, the city should encourage the development of supporting services and amenities to make the districts attractive to new residents. The locations and configuration of the districts should be designed to reinforce and energize the more commercial and cultural districts of downtown while extending and strengthening existing neighborhoods at the downtown fringe. The panel recommends designation of the following residential districts:
 - **The Westside Warehouse Area.** The warehouse district claims several structures that are suitable for renovation as loft apartments. Structures should be identified, catalogued, and marketed for loft conversion. Artists and other design-oriented professionals find lofts particularly attractive due to their voluminous interior spaces, unique architectural qualities, and, in the case of Oklahoma City, proximity to the proposed cultural district.
 - **St. Anthony Medical Center South.** The vacant sites between downtown and the St. Anthony Medical Center should be land banked for future, downtown-related residential development. Sycamore Square and Regency Tower are anchors for this residential district.

The planning effort for this area should designate sites for neighborhood parks around which housing can be clustered. Residential development in this district would be particularly attractive for hospital employees and staff.

- **Deep Deuce (Second Street Area).** Deep Deuce is a dramatic district on the eastern edge of downtown that commands excellent views of the downtown skyline. It is near the major nodes of downtown activity, including the office core to the west, Bricktown to the south, and the Capitol-medical center to the north. It is an extensive area that has been largely cleared by urban renewal; however, no new development has replaced what was removed. The panel believes that it is a prime location for future residential growth.

The panel understands the history of Deep Deuce as Oklahoma City's original African American neighborhood and the birthplace of numerous jazz musicians and jazz clubs. Although only a church and a few shells of the original jazz clubs remain, the panel recognizes that the neighborhood is still a powerful historical symbol for many African Americans in Oklahoma City. New residential development must be sensitive to the area's illustrious history and planned in consultation with leaders of the African American community.

The old jazz club buildings are irreplaceable cultural and historical treasures, and the city should work with the community to bring them back to life. Moving and reopening the clubs in Bricktown is one option for consideration.

- **Canadian River East Waterfront.** Another downtown residential district is centered around the Walnut Grove School at the intersection of I-40 and I-35 along the Canadian River. This neighborhood is small and somewhat isolated, but its site provides the only opportunity for downtown riverfront housing in Oklahoma City. It also will border the planned MAPS canal and proposed golf course, thus giving it immediate access to recreational and entertainment amenities. Infill housing can be accommodated in this neighborhood.

The city, real estate brokers, and residents should link each of the above neighborhoods with a specific neighborhood name to promote each district's residential identity and to assist in marketing it for future residential development.

In addition to the four districts designed primarily for residential development, the panel believes that the city should, if developer interest materializes, permit housing development on a scattered, infill basis throughout downtown. In all cases, housing should be designed with security in mind.

- **Mixed-Use/Residential Districts.** Several downtown areas currently include both residential and associated commercial uses such as professional offices and retail establishments.
 - Parts of the Walker South, Little Flower, and Riverside areas south of I-40 should retain and enhance residential uses as well as associated commercial uses.



The few remaining historic structures in the Deep Deuce neighborhood.

The ULI panel on its orientation tour of the metropolitan area.

- Parts of the North Broadway and North Walker Hudson areas should include commercial uses on Broadway and Robinson Avenue and residential uses on interior blocks.
- Flex Districts.** Several areas are currently characterized by a concentration of low-scale industrial and commercial uses. These uses should be maintained in flexible areas that can accommodate future market demand for a variety of land uses that may expand into the area from surrounding districts or require special districts unto themselves. These areas include parts of the South Side, South Broadway, and Shields Robinson areas.
- St. Anthony Medical Center District.** The medical center area has lost most of its character with the demolition of many older buildings. The availability of several developable parcels in the vicinity of the hospital, however, provides an opportunity for the development of additional medical and professional offices and could accommodate expansion of the hospital.



TRANSPORTATION

PEDESTRIAN STREETS

Urban streets perform two functions: to accommodate traffic movement and to accommodate pedestrian activity. Many cities handle their traffic needs at the expense of their pedestrians, usually because of excessive traffic volume. The panel found that, like other cities, downtown Oklahoma City favors automobiles over pedestrians, but, unlike some other cities, it need not give pedestrians short shrift. It can and should comfortably accommodate both automobiles and pedestrians.

The city is blessed with an excellent highway and roadway system. I-40 forms the southern edge of the downtown core, carrying 88,000 vehicles per day, and I-235 lies just to the east, carrying 65,000 vehicles per day. The access road system to the core provides more-than-adequate capacity to accommodate peak-hour traffic. In many ways, the downtown street system is overscaled for the present and future downtown. The north-south streets, which are part of a one-way pair system, are largely given over to vehicular traffic, with little acknowledgment of the pedestrian.

With the available public rights-of-way in downtown, the panel believes that the city has the ability to distinguish between streets needed for long-term traffic capacity and streets that can be improved to accommodate pedestrians. To provide a more active and pedestrian-friendly environment, the panel recommends that the city

- provide a traffic-calming effect by returning one-way streets to two-way traffic;
- add on-street parking wherever possible; and
- eliminate pedestrian-actuated crossing signals and cycle pedestrian walk indicators as part of signals' regular green time.

After a review of downtown traffic patterns, the panel recommends that the city designate the following as major traffic-carrying streets:

- Reno Avenue, Main Street (from Bricktown extended through the Galleria site), 6th Street, 10th Street, and 13th Street (all east-west thoroughfares); and
- Classen Boulevard, Broadway, E.K. Gaylord Boulevard, and a new connection from Harrison Street to Bricktown along Oklahoma Street or Walnut Street (all north-south thoroughfares).

The panel recommends that the following streets receive greater pedestrian emphasis:

- Sheridan Avenue, especially from Walker Avenue through Bricktown, and Park Avenue (east-west thoroughfares); and
- Robinson Avenue from Myriad Convention Center north through Heritage Hills, and Walker Avenue from Park Avenue south to Wheeler Park (north-south thoroughfares).



I-40 RECONSTRUCTION

The elevated section of I-40 south of downtown is deteriorated and scheduled for replacement. As a substantial asset to downtown, I-40 has the potential to convey visitors to Oklahoma City's cultural and entertainment attractions. The panel recommends that the city

- reconstruct I-40 in its existing location, or slightly to the south, to provide residents and visitors with immediate access to the core and to create a southern boundary for downtown, thus containing a downtown that is more spread out than it needs to be;
- depress the freeway alignment, if feasible, to eliminate an unsightly barrier for neighborhoods to the south;
- construct adequate north-south overpasses, if the freeway is depressed, thereby providing strong connections between the core and neighborhoods to the south;
- maintain quick interchange access to the core; and
- provide clear signage directing motorists to downtown's attractions, particularly Bricktown.

TRANSIT SERVICES

While Oklahoma City today has a modest bus system, downtown's long-term health depends on a more comprehensive and functional public transit system. The panel believes that the system should be continually enhanced to provide convenient connections from the region to downtown, from outlying employment centers to downtown, and within downtown itself. As downtown activity increases, transit can play an important role in enhancing pedestrian activity, minimizing the need for new parking, and building synergy among downtown destinations. Within downtown, the panel supports the city's plans to create a stronger transit circulator system. The panel recommends that the city

- expand the planned route of the MAPS trolley to include the Murrah site in addition to city hall, Myriad Convention Center, and Bricktown and incorporate all major downtown attractions and employment nodes into the trolley route; and

I-40, which forms the southern boundary of the downtown area, should be reconstructed in its current location.

- enhance the trolley system with a strong entertainment-oriented design so that the system itself becomes an attraction and increases resident and visitor ridership.
- The purpose of the downtown bus and trolley system is to strengthen downtown and make it a more desirable place to be. To accomplish these goals, the panel recommends that the city
 - create a new transit center in downtown where bus and trolley transfers are convenient; restoration of the old Santa Fe Railroad station for this purpose is one possibility that should be explored since it would enhance the environment and create an identity for downtown transit;
 - continue to improve transit routes to link downtown to outlying employment centers such as the Oklahoma Medical Center and NW 23rd corridor; buses should be routed through these outlying centers to the downtown core; and
 - establish outlying transit centers in locations such as Penn/23rd, Oklahoma Medical Center, and South Capitol Hill; these centers, however, should not be used to reduce bus service to the downtown core by increasing transfers for downtown employees.

PARKING

Downtown Oklahoma City currently enjoys an ample supply of parking in city garages, private garages, private lots, and on-street spaces. As new activity nodes continue to develop, however, the parking supply may prove to be poorly located. To maximize use of existing supply and to reduce the need for new parking, the panel recommends that the city

- use transit and pedestrian connections to link activity areas to existing parking;
- acquire, as a secondary technique, strategic vacant properties to improve parking supply in areas of emerging activity; and
- develop a parking lot design code that requires landscape treatment of surface lots and implement the code on city-owned surface lots to lead the way.

SIGNAGE

As downtown increasingly becomes a visitor destination, wayfinder signage will be an important tool to link activity areas and to encourage pedestrian movement. The panel recommends that the city

- improve signage from the I-40/I-235 freeway to identify downtown and Bricktown access;
- use wayfinder signage to direct motorists to downtown districts, attractions, and parking;
- place locational "You are here" signage at major activity nodes to inform pedestrians of nearby attractions and walking opportunities; and
- incorporate more historical events and markers into the downtown pedestrian environment.

URBAN DESIGN, PARKS, AND LINKAGES

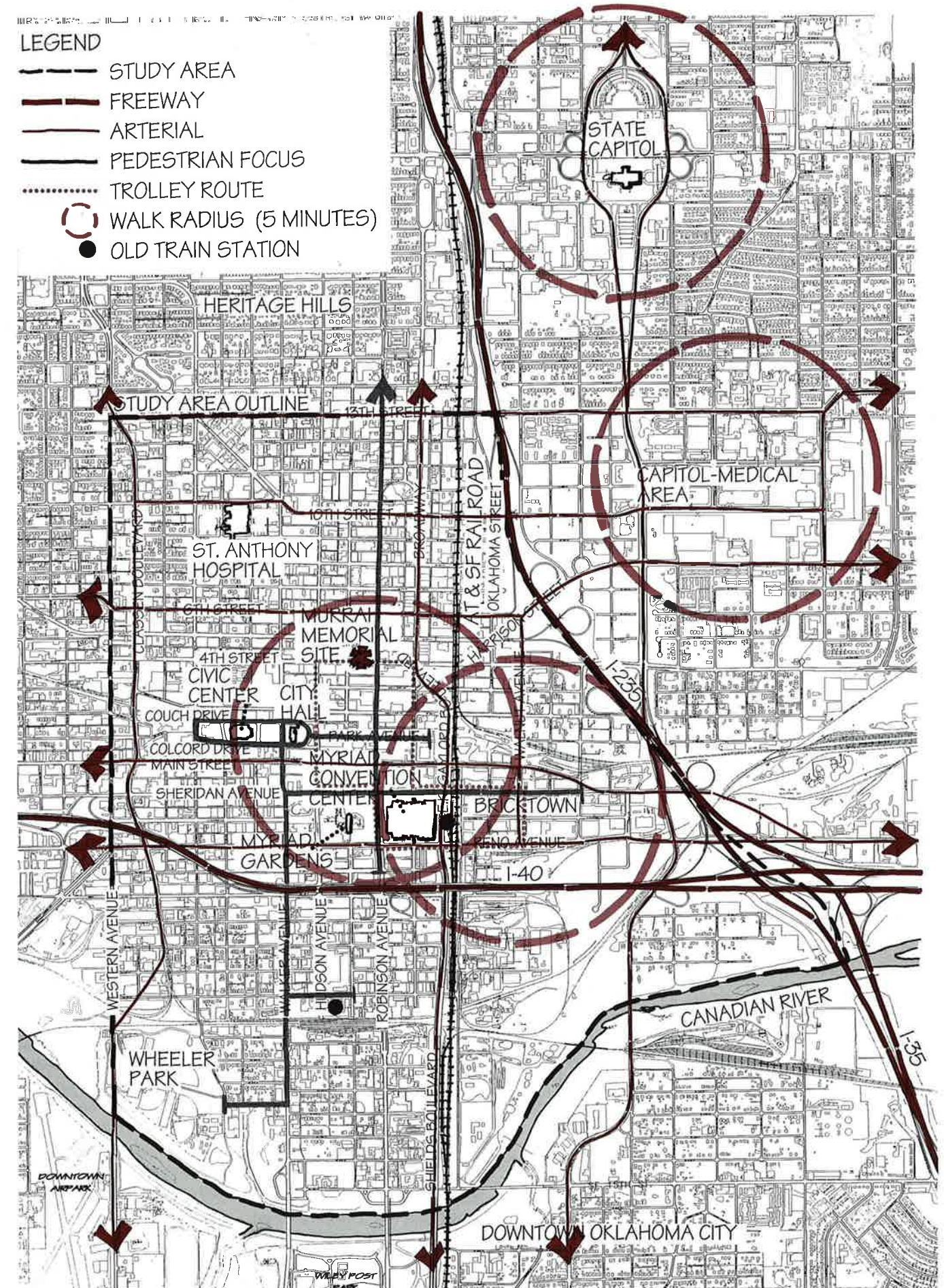
GREENWAY SYSTEM

Prevailing local opinion seems to hold that downtown lacks open space. The current high availability and low cost of land translates into a unique opportunity to follow the early examples of Boston, Chicago, and other cities. Oklahoma City has the potential to develop a looped greenway system that would link downtown to the Canadian River, south along the planned MAPS canal, west along the river to Wheeler Park, and then north back to the downtown core.

Open space acquisition in the Cottonseed Oil Mill area would create a greenway that would reach the scale of a regional park. Uses along the Canadian River could include a small, nine-hole community golf course, perhaps with double tees. A golf course would offer downtown a substantial amenity that would be unique to Oklahoma City. Chicago recently developed and began operating an enormously successful downtown public golf course.

MURRAH MEMORIAL SITE

Another strong anchor within the greenway system should be the Murrah memorial site. The panel strongly agrees with the National Endowment for the Arts study that the memorial should be further enhanced by surrounding open space. The Murrah site has become a grim but important part of American history. It is hard to imagine that any family visiting Oklahoma City would not visit the site. Similarly, if the State Museum of History is looking for a location that will attract visitors, the Journal Record Building would be an ideal and reinforcing land use for the memorial.



PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The underground concourse system should be gradually closed.



The panel recommends creation of an expanded park north of the Murrah site not only to acknowledge the significance of the memorial itself, but also to provide a needed open space for the downtown community. The panel stresses that some of the important buildings in the proposed park should remain and become integral parts of the park's design. The park would complement and enhance the proposed long-term expansion of the downtown core to the north as well as the projected intensification of ancillary uses along the Robinson Avenue spine. In addition, the park would reinforce the pedestrian scale of a Robinson Avenue linkage to Heritage Hills and the 23rd Street corridor to the north.

The parks surrounding the memorial should not be planned exclusively as passive open spaces. They should be designed as simple but vital places for people and could include active recreation facilities as well as open areas for unstructured activities and lunch-time breaks. They could also be strengthened by the demolition of the Water Resources Building.

The acquisition of land for the proposed greenway system, including the parkland north of the Murrah site, might be funded by an open space acquisition program similar to the one required to build the MAPS projects. The program could be initiated with a trust fund endowed with substantial monies. Boulder, Colorado, levies a dedicated tax to fund such a program.

PEDESTRIAN LINKAGES

In line with its recommendation to reserve some important streets for people, the panel believes that several important pedestrian linkages deserve special treatment as follows:

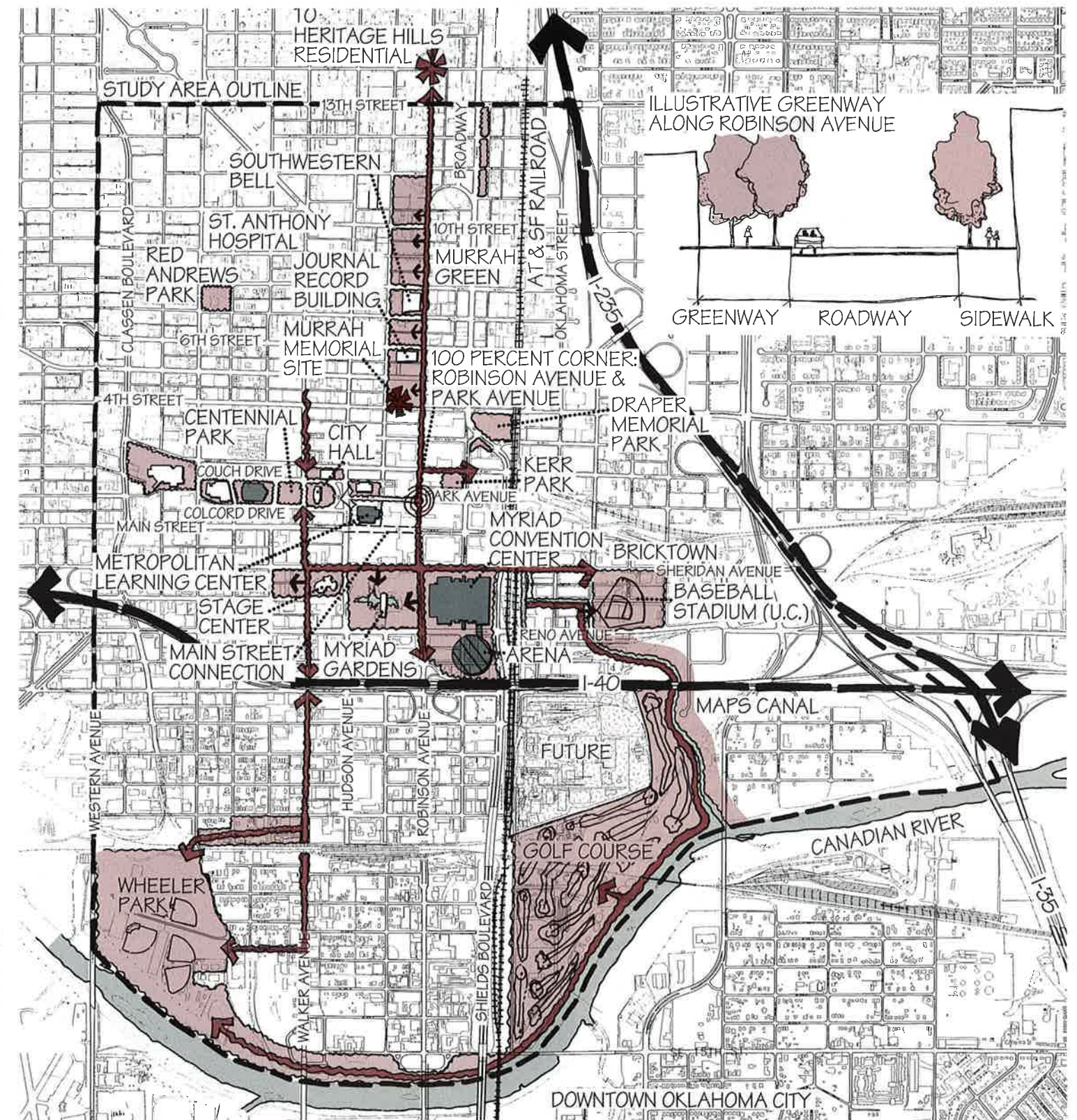
- Robinson Avenue from the northern to southern edges of the downtown study area is a prime candidate, with special attention directed to the area between 10th Street and Reno Avenue. The panel believes that the 100 percent corner for pedestrians in downtown is the intersection of Robinson Avenue and Park Street. Creating a pedestrian-friendly environment to the north past the Murrah memorial and to the south past the convention center will encourage the use of Robinson Avenue and enhance the urban environment in its vicinity.



- Park Street and its connection from the civic center to Santa Fe Plaza should become the east-west spine of the downtown pedestrian system.
- Walker Street has already been improved with some enhancement projects, but it should be integrated into the proposed greenway system.
- The Sheridan Avenue linkage from Walker Avenue to Bricktown should be reinforced to highlight the avenue's value to the emerging entertainment district. Street plantings, street furniture, special paving, sculpture, icons, and gateways, particularly beneath the Santa Fe Railroad overpass, will underscore the area's entertainment focus. The linkage would complete the greenway loop through downtown to the MAPS canal and the river beyond.

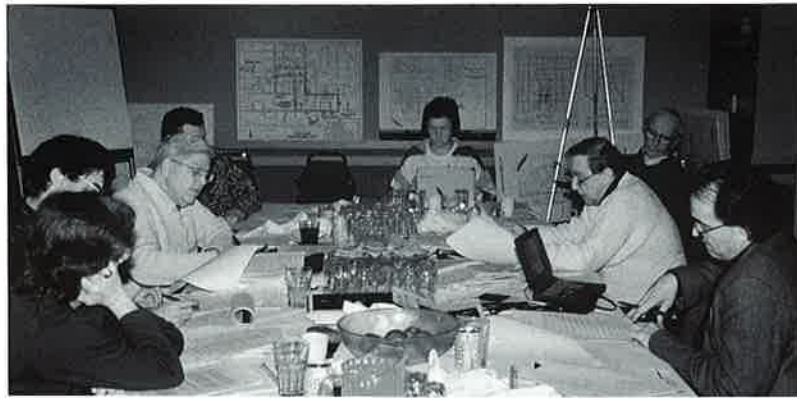
CONCOURSE SYSTEM

The downtown's underground concourse system needs to be eliminated over the long term because of its adverse impact on street life. While the perception of activity on downtown streets is an indication of an area's health, the seeming absence of pedestrians in downtown Oklahoma City deters prospective tenants and defeats retail initiatives. Accordingly, the concourse program should be curtailed in favor of an enhanced streetscape and street-level retail development.



PROPOSED LINKAGES AND OPEN-SPACE PLAN

The ULI panel deliberates its findings and recommendations.



DOWNTOWN PLAZAS AND PARKS

When it occurs, new office construction should include development of street-level plazas and public spaces similar to Kerr Plaza. These open spaces should reflect pedestrian-friendly design, draw workers during lunch and after work, and provide locations for special events. While developers may be responsible for construction and even maintenance, their participation should earn them development credits or eligibility for incentives.

MAPS PROJECT LOCATIONS

The panel applauds the MAPS initiative in general and believes that it will prove to be the most important catalyst for building a great downtown for the coming decades. In the panel's view, however, two currently planned locations for MAPS projects are problematic and deserve reconsideration. They are the arena and the Metropolitan Learning Center.

- **Proposed Arena.** As proposed, the arena would block the future expansion of the convention center once current expansion plans are completed. Exhibit space needs to be contiguous for a convention center to graduate to a higher-level market sector.

At some point, Oklahoma City will need more than 200,000 square feet of contiguous exhibit space. The best direction for expansion is to the south, which requires relocation of the arena site to the east and the possible depression of Reno Avenue. Such a configuration could create the opportunity to build a connecting plaza between the existing convention center and the arena.

- **Proposed Metropolitan Learning Center.** The panel believes that the new center should be sited south of the courthouse to function as a more integral part of the proposed cultural district. In this location, the library would reinforce the urban assemblage created by the courthouse, civic center, city hall, and old movie theater.

The panel advocates retaining the undeveloped Galleria site for the eventual emergence of large-scale retail or mixed-use development. Indeed, the panel applauds many of Oklahoma City's land use decisions over the past 20 years that considered the Galleria as a prime retail site. At some point, the demand for a large-scale specialty retail center in downtown Oklahoma City will materialize. Its size, location, and public ownership continue to make the Galleria site the best downtown retail location. The retail center may be accompanied by other uses such as residences or offices in a high-rise, mixed-use development.

SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS TO BE SAVED

Numerous historical or architecturally worthy buildings scattered throughout downtown contribute to Oklahoma City's urbanity. Efforts should be made to preserve and find alternative uses for worthy vacant structures, which are irreplaceable assets. While some structures may not seem individually important, together they create a sense of history, scale, and texture that new construction cannot duplicate. Further, they represent one of downtown's significant competitive advantages over outlying locations.

Two buildings in downtown Oklahoma City deserve special attention.

- **First National Bank Building.** The irreplaceable building's historic design and symbolism are essential to downtown's urban quality. The interior is the finest public space in the city. With distinctive retail spaces at street level, the building must be protected and preserved.
- **Santa Fe Railroad Station.** The station is an important downtown landmark worthy of preservation. Possible future uses include a downtown bus or train station.

Based on the findings and conclusions presented in the first two parts of this report, the panel has prepared strategic development and implementation recommendations for downtown Oklahoma City as a whole and for the various land uses, activities, and initiatives that it views as essential parts of downtown's future. These recommendations are presented in the next section.

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The development and implementation strategies for Oklahoma City call for a long-term perspective. The strategies are rooted in a vision of downtown as an entertainment and cultural destination for Oklahoma City and the surrounding region. Development timing is predicated on continued regional economic growth, expansion of in-town housing options, and investment opportunities generated by the city's impressive commitment to improving the quality of life and furthering economic development through the MAPS initiative.

It is imperative that the city take steps now to ensure that the necessary organizational and financial resources are in place as the market expands and matures and as development opportunities ripen over the next five to 20 years. Several of the necessary economic development tools are already at hand; others need to be added to the city's repertoire. Existing public and private entities already support efforts to develop the city at large; the efforts of these various entities can be substantially enhanced and directed to downtown. To build and strengthen the city's capacity to meet its development goals, however, the panel's recommended implementation program must initially focus on the following five tasks:

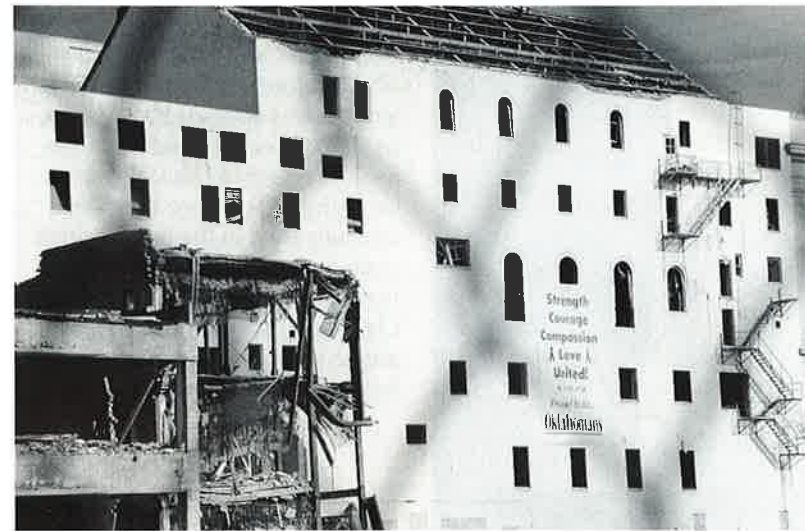
- Define a concrete image for downtown, extending the MAPS master plan;
- Establish a commitment to downtown as a regional asset for Oklahoma's future;
- Strengthen the coordination between public and private interests in implementing downtown projects;
- Strategically manage the public land inventory for interim uses and long-term downtown development goals; and
- Launch a creative marketing program to promote the new vision of downtown as a regional asset.

GETTING STARTED

Stimulating development in areas where market conditions are weak or uncertain requires public and private interests to combine forces in a coordinated effort. In adopting this approach throughout the 1970s and 1980s, cities across the nation switched from the command-and-control strategy demanded of federal urban renewal programs to a more flexible management style that was attuned to specific local conditions and private market project feasibility. The result is that public/private partnerships have proven themselves a successful and adaptable model for achieving ambitious development objectives—whether for specific projects such as Boston's Faneuil Hall Marketplace or broad-based agendas as in the case of the Dallas Arts Complex. They have been successfully used in the largest cities such as New York and Chicago; in medium-sized cities, including Cleveland, Baltimore, and Denver; and in smaller cities such as Norfolk, Charlotte, and Kansas City.

The First National Bank Building is one of the finest private structures in Oklahoma City and must be preserved.





Federal support for rebuilding the downtown area can be expected as a result of the devastation at and near the Murrah memorial site.

Their application to housing and commercial projects as well as to retail centers has generated many lessons and a clear understanding of what makes public/private initiatives succeed.

In applying this understanding to the task of implementing downtown development in Oklahoma City, the panel believes that most of the necessary tools are already in place. Under its Urban Renewal Authority, the city is empowered to assemble land, ready it for development, and sell it to private interests at "fair value." In Second Century, the public/private entity formed in 1989, the city has established a supervisory, coordinating, and policy-making body that can act on behalf of the Urban Renewal Authority to undertake the planning, funding, and execution of redevelopment activities throughout the city. By using that structure, the mayor can combine the unique powers of urban renewal with input from city councilmembers and with strong private sector participation to advance downtown initiatives flexibly as opportunities present themselves.

The recently signed preliminary development agreement for the proposed 350-room Westin Hotel on the northeast corner of Broadway and Sheridan Avenue across from Myriad Convention Center illustrates how the city can get things done. After evaluating several proposals received in response to an "Invitation for Statements of Interest, Concepts, and Qualifications for Redevelopment," the mayor negotiated general conditions and terms for a \$40 million private sector investment that leverages one of the city's MAPS projects. The agreement specifies a development schedule and defines the respective roles of public and private parties for the financing and construction of the 140,000-square-foot, full-service hotel.

Strong commitments are essential to the success of any public/private development initiative. In this regard, the panel emphasizes that the city already possesses a set of special resources in its community cohesiveness, business and entrepreneurial attitudes, and willingness to invest tax dollars in its future. MAPS is an obvious symbol of these strengths. It is also a key investment signal to future investors—local and otherwise. Along with several other conditions listed in Table 5, MAPS provides the conceptual blueprint and financial cornerstone for rebuilding downtown.

By themselves, however, these favorable conditions are unlikely to generate the private investment activity necessary to turn into bricks-and-mortar reality the development strategies aimed at creating nodes of activity for entertainment, culture, business and government offices, in-town housing, and open space.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The panel concludes that several overall planning initiatives need to be undertaken to translate the city's strengths into a comprehensive strategy for developing downtown. First, the city should establish a specific downtown strategic planning process that works hand in hand with MAPS and other initiatives. This process should produce a strategic plan that provides a roadmap for short-, medium-, and long-term private, public/private, and public development initiatives.

The MAPS projects should be considered the first phase of the strategic development of downtown. As a result, it is imperative that projects are delivered as promised on time and on budget.



William Renner and Anthony Guzzardo develop plans for downtown Oklahoma City.

Table 5
CONDITIONS SUPPORTIVE OF PUBLIC/PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN DOWNTOWN OKLAHOMA CITY

- Public mandate and funding for MAPS, one of the 1990s' largest public sector commitments to downtown development in the United States
- Mayoral leadership
- Urban renewal legislation that empowers a public authority to undertake actions necessary to foster downtown development
- An in-place organization such as Second Century to foster public/private partnerships
- \$10 million in private funds raised by the city's chamber of commerce and targeted to economic development
- Can-do civic attitude
- Unique position to gain federal support
- High national profile and respect for community cohesion

However, the next phases, which will include private investments, will need special attention and guidance. Most important, the city should direct development into downtown to the extent possible by using its land use planning and zoning authority. It is especially important to concentrate medium- and high-rise office space in the downtown core until available land is depleted so as not to continue draining economic vitality and jobs to the metropolitan fringe.

The strategic plan for downtown should include a conceptual and physical rendering of development opportunities to enable developers and investors to understand readily the city's vision for its core. The MAPS master plan and schematic drawings could function as the beginning of such a plan, yet the city needs a more comprehensive representation of its long-term strategy for downtown and an explicit statement of the process and priorities for implementing downtown development.

IMPLEMENTATION OBSTACLES

The panel believes that several obstacles stand in the way of creating a strategic plan and carrying out effective public/private development initiatives in downtown Oklahoma City (see Table 6).

Public and private interests are actively engaged in several significant initiatives throughout the city, including the BioMedical Research Park, Forward Oklahoma, Central Oklahoma 2020, Downtown Now, and the Oklahoma City Arts Festival. Taken together, these commitments make a compelling statement about local community support of efforts to stimulate economic development. Still, investors have no easy way to comprehend how the different initiatives relate to one another and, most important, how they are likely to further development opportunities for downtown.

The panel believes that the central implementation issue facing the vitalization of downtown Oklahoma City is the lack of a strong, vocal advocate for downtown. The core needs its own organizational entity, preferably with no competing agenda, to act as the single point of stewardship. This organization, with its broad representation, could effectively coordinate efforts with the city's other public and private entities. Second Century, for example, is a flexible, representative entity that could fulfill the role of steward, but to date it has been reluctant to define its mission in such terms.

Table 6
OBSTACLES TO CREATING A STRATEGIC PLAN AND
CARRYING OUT EFFECTIVE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT
INITIATIVES IN DOWNTOWN OKLAHOMA CITY

- Lack of a strong, vocal advocate for downtown
- Lack of a clear statement of priorities and implementation strategies to guide downtown development into the next century
- Perception of uncertain times and terms for the disposition of publicly owned land
- Fragmented private sector support and collaboration despite the existence of individual commitments
- Lack of public/private programs to leverage resources for economic development and housing

Though it seems counterintuitive, the city's large supply of relatively low-cost vacant land is one of its most valuable resources for implementing future development initiatives. The city has actively used its vacant land downtown to further many individual economic development activities, yet it can do more by managing its land assets strategically and packaging clear and simple information about these holdings to signal investors about short- and long-term development opportunities.

IMPLEMENTATION GOALS

To move forward immediately, the panel recommends four broad implementation goals.

- Establish a higher profile for downtown development by designating one entity as a single point of stewardship empowered to assume a strong role in promoting an agenda for downtown.
- Create a leadership network that overcomes the fragmentation among existing groups, bridges gaps, and forges links with business organizations that have similar interests in the economic development of Oklahoma City.

- Review the disposition process for publicly owned land with an eye toward streamlining the process, and, most important, commit resources to the development of a strategic plan for managing surface parking lots and vacant downtown parcels.
- Use state agencies and programs to assist in advancing the downtown mission in housing and economic development.

In support of these strategies, the panel believes that it may be advantageous for Oklahoma City to consider using tax increment financing to help finance some downtown improvement projects. Several types of public entities, including downtown development authorities and redevelopment agencies, are typically authorized to collect taxes generated by increases in property values due to major public investments on nearby properties. In the case of Oklahoma City, the increased property taxes generated by the increase in property values due to MAPS could be applied to finance bond issues that might pay for important public and even private downtown projects such as street enhancements, open space acquisition, or other infrastructure improvements.

The panel believes that Oklahoma City's real estate cycle might be uniquely poised to take advantage of currently low property values that will soon benefit from the huge MAPS investment. The following discussion outlines development and implementation strategies for each essential component of downtown.

ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPMENT

The only real estate market that shows dynamic growth in downtown Oklahoma City is the thriving cluster of dining and entertainment establishments that has grown up in the Bricktown district without any direct government financial support. This new attraction is bringing both residents and visitors into downtown and helping to increase the use of Myriad Convention Center and Arena, which together are already drawing an annual attendance of 1 million to more than 600 different events. Downtown will become an even stronger entertainment district as the MAPS projects are completed and transit links are created between the Myriad/Bricktown complex and other strong visitor destinations and employment centers in the city.

This combination of old and new magnets will, for the first time, permit Oklahoma City to achieve a critical mass of attractions strong enough to revitalize the entire downtown. This would come about through the synergy created by converging streams of people entering downtown for different reasons, with the effect that two plus two equals ten or more. The vitality of the city will escalate with the addition of thousands of people.

Perhaps the most important result of this phenomenon is the transformation that takes place in the way residents view their own city. When outside visitors and media accounts begin to notice and praise a city, its citizens find their own pride rising and become fans and boosters who add to the perception of the city as a great place to live, work, and visit. However, a rational strategy needs to underpin these psychic results. This is where the city government, chamber of commerce, and citizens' advisory and support groups should concentrate their efforts.

The panel has concluded that Oklahoma City is already on its way to producing the critical mass of attractions that will enable the entire downtown to emerge as the heart and focal point of the region. The city must support the continued growth of this critical mass by simultaneously following five courses of action.

- Intensively market the image of downtown. The city has the opportunity to use creative marketing to leverage the entertainment market created by the Bricktown phenomenon and the remarkable commitment to MAPS. City agencies, however, need the tools to show the world what is and will be available to future investors and developers, including a conceptual master plan and model detailing the specific development projects envisioned for the area as well as the existing features that will remain; aerial renderings and close-up sketches that clarify the image for the layperson; print and film materials that explain goals and images to national and international audiences; site tours and written and oral slide presentations; and concrete symbols, marquees, or structures erected at the approaches to the entertainment district.

- Rank public and private initiatives for downtown. It makes strategic sense for both the public and private sectors to assign priority to the production, processing, and promotional elements that are converting downtown initiatives into bricks and mortar. Ideally, the downtown development program should be placed in the hands of a separate organization whose only responsibility is to deliver the development specified by the downtown master plan. Such an organization could be Second Century. The legal framework already exists, but the mandate does not yet appear to be in place.
- Offer creative financing for major development projects. The perception among investors that downtown commands top priority was a major factor in reaching the development agreement for the proposed Westin Hotel. Indeed, the results promise to put a critically important component of the downtown plan in place. The same type of resourcefulness should be applied to other public/private transactions that can build toward a critical mass of attractions. The entertainment and dining establishments operating in Bricktown have succeeded on the strength of the private market. In fact, local operators have wisely accepted a design review requirement that will reinforce and protect the district's historic character and thus its ambience.

Sculpture in downtown Oklahoma City adds to its image, ambience, and marketability.



However, other essential uses such as hotels require government subsidies or "gap" financing in order to achieve financial feasibility. Often, only one such deal is needed to establish a market, after which private financing can support additional development of the same type. In any case, such transactions can be structured such that the developer's profits are controlled and the benefits to the public far outweigh the cost of providing incentives. One creative use of such a technique might be directed to reconstructing the Deep Deuce Jazz Club in Bricktown.

- Coordinate public infrastructure improvements with private development. The principle of ranking projects applies to the public sector with more urgency than to private sector development deals. That is, it might be necessary to design and develop public infrastructure specifically to support the downtown plan, possibly by deviating from normal standards that would apply on a citywide scale.

For the MAPS/Bricktown initiative, the panel believes that the transit system, street and highway layout, and parking (as addressed elsewhere in the report) must accommodate and support planned and evolving development.

- Promote downtown through public events and activities. The panel recommends promoting the vision of the new downtown not just through the advertising media but also by making news. In other words, downtown needs to produce the type of publicity that money cannot buy. Downtown supporters sometimes do not realize that even the most modest activities such as a paint-in for a construction fence, an outdoor dance contest, or a hot-air balloon launch can, if sufficiently imaginative, create just as much media attention as the ground breaking for a major building.

To be successful, the entertainment district and ultimately the entire downtown must draw local citizens during leisure hours. Downtown must be attractive not just for restaurants and the sporting events whose admission costs can become intimidating for a family of five, but also for free outdoor events such as festivals, parades, flea markets, and kite-flying, frisbee, or frog-jumping contests—whatever will draw a crowd for a wholesome good time. The panel recommends that the limited number of free activities already scheduled for downtown, including the annual arts festival, should be expanded and slated for regular intervals throughout the year.



The ULI panel gained considerable insights and information through its interview process.

The staff of Downtown Now should continue its relationship with Second Century and retain responsibility for promoting downtown events. Downtown Now should be supported with a sufficient budget and receive high priority in the city administration to ensure that it attracts major private contributions.

CULTURAL DISTRICT

Although considered by many to be the country's cowboy capital, Oklahoma City is gaining a well-deserved reputation for its growing arts organizations and cultural activities. In an era increasingly characterized by computer chips and video screens, more than 3 million people attended over 2,500 arts events, performances, arts and crafts fairs, festivals, and exhibitions in 1993, twice the combined attendance of hockey, basketball, baseball, and horse racing events. Attendance in 1995 was expected to increase by as much as one-third as the arts industry and its patrons generated over \$166 million. This substantial sum not only helps underwrite the arts and allows them to expand and flourish but also supports hotels, stores, and restaurants and fills city and state coffers with increased tax revenues.

It is not just the money from these activities that is important, however. Cultural events give Oklahoma City a strong identity and an enlivened sense of place for residents and visitors alike. No other endeavor in the city can boast of more than 12,500 volunteers annually, ample testimony to the importance of these institutions and events and their collective impact on the community.

Accordingly, the city should capitalize on its successes in the arts and clearly identify, consolidate, and enhance a cultural district where much of its arts activity can be focused. Fortunately for the city, virtually all of the components for a successful district are already in place: the Civic Center Music Hall, city hall, Stage Center, and proposed Metropolitan Learning Center. Through a coordinated program of signage, landscaping, lighting, and marketing designed to give the area a distinctive image, the cultural district will not only thrive but will also stimulate complementary development in directly adjacent areas. Most important, a critical mass will be established at the Galleria site, which is situated at the confluence of the cultural district to the west, the central business district to the north, and the entertainment district to the east.

ULI Panel Chair Jim Klingbeil ponders the challenges faced by Oklahoma City in rebuilding its downtown.

As addressed earlier, a change in the MAPS plan for the cultural district will, the panel firmly believes, significantly improve the mixed-use character and consequent synergy of this section of downtown. The proposed Metropolitan Learning Center, scheduled to be constructed on the Galleria block, should be built instead on the site at the southeast corner of Main Street and Hudson Avenue immediately to the northwest. Extending in an east-west direction along Main Street, the site clearly defines an important pedestrian link between the cultural district and the central business district and reserves the Galleria site for major retail use in the future. A trolley stop in the heart of the cultural district would provide an additional link to other downtown districts, including Bricktown to the east.

Cultural activities appear to be one of the strongest sectors in Oklahoma City's economy. Nonetheless, support of the arts will require modest amounts of city and state funding in addition to the well-conceived MAPS project. In the panel's view, public funding for refurbishing the music hall and constructing the Metropolitan Learning Center, coupled with the Art-in-Public-Places program, will have a dramatic effect on the city's cultural life. The panel strongly supports a private sector contribution of \$15 million to endow cultural, music, and arts organizations housed in their own facilities.



The panel recognizes that a refurbished Civic Center Music Hall is of paramount importance. The facility serves not as only the jewel in the city's cultural crown but also as home to a number of significant performing arts organizations temporarily dislocated during the hall's renovation. The second cultural priority should be construction of the Metropolitan Learning Center at the new site recommended by the panel and the planning and implementation of a signage, lighting, and landscaping program for the cultural district.

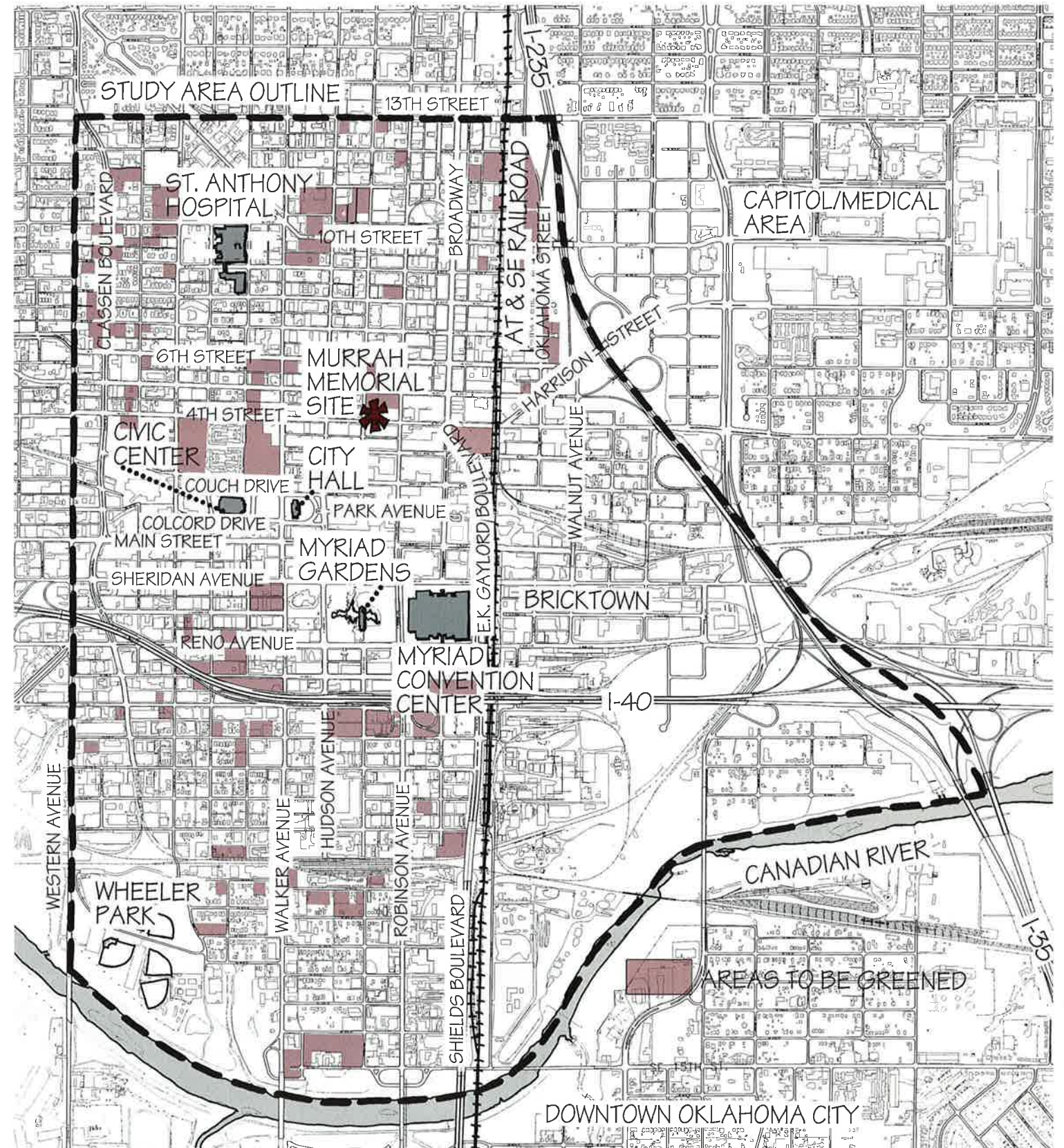
PARKS AND OTHER PUBLIC PLACES

While downtown Oklahoma City has much vacant land, it has few attractive and well-maintained public spaces. Casual visitors to the city, including first-time tourists and conventioners, see a downtown landscape with a limited number of large office towers amid a sea of parking lots. Myriad Gardens is the only large green space, along with the small jewel-like Kerr Park. The outsider is not aware of the presence of the river just to the south.

The April 19, 1995, blast has caused city government and residents to think seriously for the first time about how to design a space to memorialize past events.

The panel believes that the memorial that is ultimately situated on the Murrah site should be only a small part of a much larger plan to develop new spaces for public use, to beautify the few public spaces that already exist downtown, and to highlight for the first time the city's interesting history of Native American habitation, land-rush development, and oil-based growth. The panel suggests the following strategy for accomplishing these goals:

- First, the city should "green" the numerous vacant parcels and parking lots that create the main visual impression as visitors, residents, and workers enter and move through downtown Oklahoma City. The vacant land plan (page 43) shows the recommended high-priority locations for greening.
- Second, some of the major vehicular routes that emerge from the heart of downtown, such as Robinson and Walker Avenues, deserve priority treatment. The improvement of these streets, which should include such obvious items as historic light fixtures and additional street trees, should also extend to smaller features such as attractive benches, water fountains, and historic markers. These improvements would provide the symbolic spine that links downtown to nearby areas, which, in the panel's opinion, should be targets for new development.
- Third, the city should assign a high priority to developing a large central park in the area just north of the Murrah site to act as a magnet for nearby residential development and to provide additional recreational opportunities for downtown residents and employees. The proposed linkages and open-space plan (page 33) shows the recommended over-22-acre public park along Robinson Avenue from NW Fifth to NW Eleventh Streets.



VACANT LAND PLAN

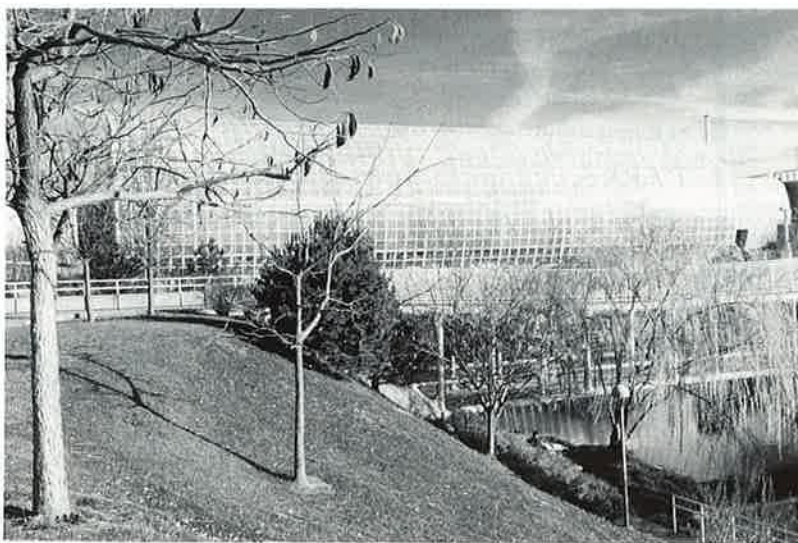
Parks, open space, and greenways should be expanded and linked.

The panel believes, however, that an even larger park would be preferable and stresses that, in any case, some of the important buildings within the park's boundaries should be retained and integrated into the park's design.

- Fourth, the panel believes that the planned Canadian River park should be connected to the proposed downtown greenway loop by publicizing a connection for jogging, skating, and bicycling. If adequate public use develops, the city can justify further expenditures for a formal greenway or trail.

The significant expenditures to acquire or, in some cases, develop and maintain new open spaces should be funded from three primary sources.

- While land transfers from the urban renewal land inventory to public space status may have imputed value, any transfer ought to be made for one dollar a year to permit completion of important beautification measures.
- Park development costs should be funded with a combination of federal relief funds and MAPS revenues (where projects qualify) as well as with whatever municipal capital funds can be dedicated to this important purpose.



- A public/private venture should be established to manage the parks proposed by the panel. The city already enjoys an excellent model in the attractive and successful Kerr Park, which is managed extremely efficiently by Kerr-McGee Corporation on a budget of about \$30,000 per year. Given the corporation's park management experience, the city may want Kerr-McGee to lead a public/private management partnership. Other downtown interests, including MetLife, which has also funded park improvements, should play an important role in any partnership devoted to park management. The panel recommends that the budget for ongoing management should be raised privately from grants, commercial sponsorships, and dedicated concession revenues. The annual management cost is estimated to be about \$3 million for the panel's recommended addition of about 200 acres of public open space.

Design development should proceed expeditiously from the schematic plans presented in this report by drawing on the combined talents of local landscape architects, the city planning department, and the leadership of Oklahoma City Beautiful. The design should concentrate on vegetation and minimize both expensive paving and symbolic structures. The latter are expensive and generally do not promote much park use.

The opportunities for programming are limitless. The success of three major arts and patriotic festivals downtown have made it clear that Oklahoma City residents are as likely to gather to celebrate publicly as the residents of any other great city. Unusual arts events could be added to the current mix.



For example, outdoor movies on large screens have been a great success in New York City and several European cities. Given the number of truck farms in the area, the area's long growing season, and the fact that the city's pioneers grew all their own food in the first months of the city's existence, green markets and community gardens ought to be encouraged in some of downtown's vacant spaces.

Maintenance standards need to be superb. Following the advice of the savvy Kerr-McGee park managers and taking advantage of the regional belief in volunteerism and individualism, community residents should be able to handle park maintenance with the guidance of the proposed public/private partnership.

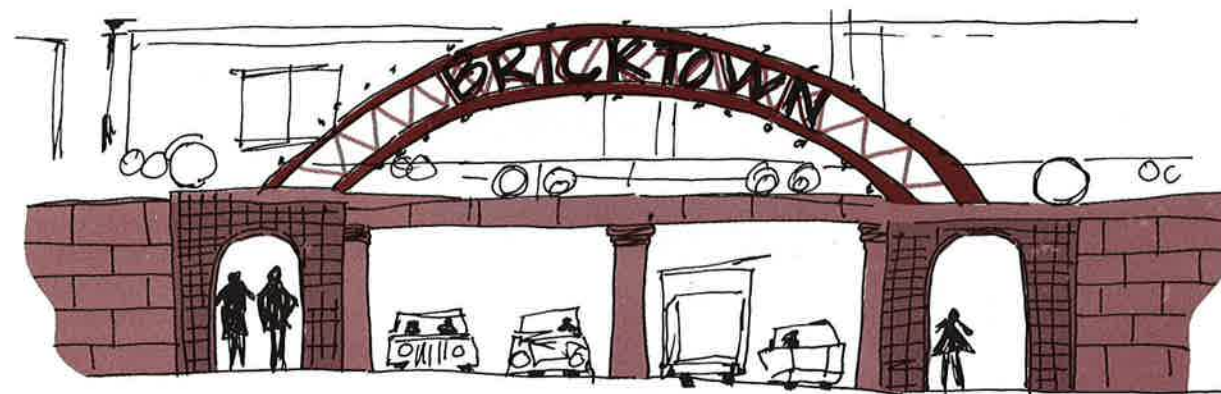
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Since the gun went off in 1889 to signal the land rush, just four generations have worked to improve Oklahoma City. Their diligence, craftsmanship, aesthetic values, and ingenuity are reflected in many of the city's buildings, both large and small, in downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. This legacy provides the residents of Oklahoma City with visible ties to their past, a special identity, and a valuable resource.

The preservation and reuse of many buildings has enhanced and will continue to strengthen Oklahoma City's character and economy. Preservation is not only a cultural and aesthetic concern but also a critical element of Oklahoma City's economy. Within the downtown study area, Oklahoma City boasts 40 historic buildings and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places and over 100 structures of potential historic value. Four strategies should be implemented to assist in their protection.

- The dislocated federal agencies should be strongly encouraged to move into vacant office space in downtown high-rise buildings instead of constructing a low-rise federal campus north of the central business district as suggested by some.
- Both the public and private sectors should urge banks to provide loans to revitalize buildings of historic significance.
- The demolition of vacant historic buildings to construct more parking lots in areas within and immediately adjacent to the central business district should be strongly discouraged, except for facilities damaged beyond repair last April.
- The city must ensure that of the ten to 12 historic structures with currently varying levels of highlighting and enhancement, none must be lost! The First National Bank Building must be preserved as a city landmark, with government agency leasing of space as the recommended action. The city should work to ensure that these structures are illuminated by their owners, or, when in public hands, illuminated with the use of state tourism funds.

Homer Russell reviews recommendations for park development and management.



PEDESTRIAN GATE

SHERIDAN AVENUE

PEDESTRIAN GATE

ILLUSTRATIVE ENTRANCE GATE TO BRICKTOWN

A state that can provide a superb movie on the history and geography of Oklahoma can also afford to highlight its historic structures for both everyday residents and visitors.

The rich history of Oklahoma City should be made visible in other ways as well; currently, it is slighted. The development of the city on one day in 1889 is rarely mentioned. Similarly, no effort has been made to draw attention to the several historic and attractive buildings that reflect the city's early-20th-century development. The city should designate the boundaries of Oklahoma City at various times in its history by using signs, footprints, site markers, and even paint on the streets by following the successful examples of Boston (the Freedom Trail), Philadelphia, and Manhattan. When a vacant lot's historic significance is interpreted, the site is no longer just a vacant lot but rather becomes a part of the city's living history.

Directions to the city's historic districts also need to be made clear to those unfamiliar with the city. Oklahoma City could realize millions of dollars a year in business and associated sales tax revenues simply by installing an improved series of signs on the interstate highways that direct travel-weary drivers to Bricktown for a meal, short walk, and entertainment. Excellent information graphics are visible throughout the nation. Some consideration should be given to employing a team of local and outside designers whose work would be directed by local historians.

The funds for these relatively inexpensive improvements should come primarily from the private sector for site improvement to privately owned structures, from municipal capital funds or private contributions for signs and a site marker program, and from state tourism funds for other promotional activities.

Finally, the role of commemorations should not be ignored. Annual events commemorating the April 22, 1889, land rush as well as events celebrating statehood, oil blowouts, and birthdays of famous Oklahomans such as Will Rogers should become part of the cycle of public events.

The history of the city provides another reason to expand the current program of downtown festivals to cover several weeks in the year, helping to change the image of downtown and encouraging people to take another look at Oklahoma City as it is transformed.

MEMORIAL SITE

Although time is a necessary ingredient for placing the April 1995 bombing in perspective, the panel does not believe that the time elapsed for installation of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., is appropriate for Oklahoma City. Beyond whatever symbolic memorial is placed on or near the site, a living memorial to the dead and survivors is in order sooner rather than later.

While it would be presumptuous of the panel to recommend any aspect of memorial design, panel members believe that the often-discussed possibility of an international design competition might be successful in eliciting ideas for public discussion. The panel is intrigued by the idea that the makeshift memorial that has evolved on the temporary chicken-wire fences at Harvey and Robinson Avenues could be a precursor of the ultimate form of the permanent memorial. The panel supports the idea that the National Park

Service should fund the development, interpretation, and maintenance of the memorial at the Murrah site as a gift from the nation to Oklahoma City, much as areas that were the sites of major Civil War battles have been granted National Historic Site status and the federal resources that come with that status.

COMMERCIAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The panel's development and implementation strategy for the downtown core is driven by the market's absence of demand for additional office space for probably five to ten years. Rather, its proposal calls for improving and building on what is already there, and that is substantial. The gleaming downtown with its period and contemporary architecture spanning the 20th century provides both an accurate picture of modern-day Oklahoma City and a symbol of what Oklahoma City can make itself in its second century.

The visitor to the central business district sees a clean, uncongested downtown free of pollution and evidence of urban decay. The same visitor may also see the potential central business district that Oklahoma City could create: a vibrant core with the features that make downtowns appealing to pedestrians, including sidewalk-level restaurants and small shops, pockets of green and other open spaces, street festivals, and street life.

As the panel explored Oklahoma City's central business district and noted all its good features, the city began devising ways to build on its attributes. Given that both public and private sector leaders and ordinary citizens share an interest in and commitment to downtown, the strategy for developing the central business district will require channeling public and private sector interests into a collective focus on the central business district.

When a community is committed to strengthening its downtown, it should see every decision in terms of whether it will further the goal of enhancing downtown.

FEDERAL OFFICES

If the city chooses, its first and most obvious development strategy can draw inspiration from its recent tragedy. The federal government must permanently relocate about 170,000 square feet of office space from what once was the Murrah Federal Building. The General Services Administration (GSA) is authorized to set aside as much as \$40 million to rebuild office space for the federal agencies displaced by the disaster. The city has an almost 30 percent office vacancy rate downtown, with current effective rents in the range of \$2-\$5 per square foot. One of the highest vacancy rates is in the First National Bank Building, a landmark building whose art deco tower evokes Oklahoma's economic roots.

The panel learned of the Oklahoma City community's interest in the development of a low-rise campus for most of the dislocated federal agencies. This concept has gained favor because of the perceived ease in securing such development and the ready availability of vacant land. From a strategic point of view, however, the panel views development of the federal campus as a serious error if downtown revitalization is a true priority. Assuming that the April 19 bombing made Oklahoma City more strongly committed to a better downtown, as the panel was repeatedly told, then the community has a rare chance to act on its commitment and make a strategic decision to move the federal offices into the downtown core's existing vacant space. GSA continues to lease secure mid- and high-rise space elsewhere in the country and would no doubt be able to do so in Oklahoma City.



Ronald Bradshaw, chair of the Downtown Steering Committee, thanks the ULI panel.

Lewis Bolan presents the panel's view of downtown development potentials.

In addition to lowering the downtown office vacancy rate, the presence of federal offices would generate an obvious spin-off. Local and other companies that conduct business with the federal agencies would be motivated to locate nearby, thus further lowering the downtown vacancy rate. In addition, all downtown office users would require the usual complement of restaurants, convenience retail, and commercial suppliers. Applying a conservative multiplier of 1 to the amount of needed federal space indicates that up to 170,000 square feet of additional space could be filled downtown if all federal offices relocated there.

DISPLACED BUSINESSES

Oklahoma City's second opportunity arising from the bombing disaster lies in the number of buildings (over 325) that require either demolition (25 structures) or rehabilitation (more than 300 structures). These buildings were all located in north downtown, outside the downtown core. Some owners will recover their losses from private insurers; others will be reimbursed for uninsured losses from a one-time federal allocation of \$39 million in supplemental Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The city's strategy should focus on getting as many business owners and renters as possible to rebuild or relocate their businesses in the downtown core. This development initiative on the city's part would strengthen the impact of the available federal dollars for rebuilding damaged businesses and leverage additional private investment downtown.



Given that many of the north downtown businesses damaged by the blast were services such as printing establishments, plumbing suppliers, and other wholesalers, it would be appropriate for the city to establish for them a peripheral zone immediately adjacent to the high-rise zone centered on Park Street and Robinson Avenue (the 100 percent corner). The high-rise zone would continue to accommodate financial, government, insurance, and similar uses while the second zone, still part of the downtown core but farther from the center and characterized by lower building heights, would accommodate the service businesses displaced by the blast plus other related office uses.

PEDESTRIAN CONCOURSE

A third strategy that Oklahoma City could employ to enhance downtown vitality involves the gradual closing of the pedestrian concourse and tunnel system. Street life and pedestrian traffic are essential for the type of downtown desired by many in Oklahoma City. By the panel's count, peak lunchtime pedestrian traffic on all three levels at the 100 percent corner was about 2,500 persons per hour, suggesting that Oklahoma City accounts for about as much pedestrian traffic as other comparably sized cities.

Closing the concourse should start with tunnels that function exclusively as thoroughfares. Those with access to restaurants or other retail establishments should remain open until the CBD has achieved the level of street life and amenities desired by the community. At that point, the panel predicts that the retailers now located in tunnels will choose to move to street-level space. The panel realizes that the tunnel system provides convenient shelter from Oklahoma City's famous winds and the more universal elements of rain and summer heat. But it is also clear that the concourse system detracts from the social experience that attracts most people to downtown.

SPECIALTY/IMPULSE RETAIL

Finally, panel members as well as visitors perceive a need for specialty retail in downtown. As indicated earlier in the report, the market can support as many as 800 to 1,000 additional hotel rooms downtown. Added hotel rooms and an expanded convention center will bring more tourists with dollars to spend. Oklahoma City's downtown could truly benefit from specialty or "impulse" retail, i.e., the type that appeals to tourists but also to office workers.

In San Antonio, for example, visitors walking a block from their hotel room can buy cast-iron soldiers from all the wars, cardboard replicas of the Alamo, and Mexican pastries. In Santa Fe, tourists can enjoy an even wider array of irresistible. Oklahoma City, whose history is every bit as rich, should offer stores where visitors could shop for Western gear, locally made gifts, local art and antiques, and Native American handicrafts. The market is limited but will grow.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL

Housing and neighborhood retail development can make a major contribution to the economic growth, business environment, and quality of life in downtown Oklahoma City. The edges of the downtown study area are characterized by several acres of underused, low-cost land where construction of garden apartments, townhouses, and, to a lesser extent, single-family homes and related amenities are the only likely private development to take place in the foreseeable future. At the same time, the regional housing market is gaining momentum after a decade during which values plummeted. As jobs and the economy pick up and more people relocate to Oklahoma City, the demand for a range of housing types and locations, including downtown housing, will increase dramatically.

Across the nation, well-planned housing developments are drawing people back to center city neighborhoods and stimulating a ripple effect of private investment. Oklahoma City has already sparked private sector interest in residential loft conversion in response to the MAPS initiative. In addition, the seeds of a vibrant downtown housing market are being sown in historic districts and emerging ethnic neighborhoods at the edges of the central business district. Now is the time for

Oklahoma City to capitalize on the growing momentum of these initiatives and to move forward with an aggressive program to reclaim some of center city's most blighted areas. With the appropriate financial incentives from government, community support, and investment by bankers, developers and residential builders can turn fledgling housing activity into a movement that builds and preserves downtown neighborhoods.

In terms of construction and permanent jobs, a direct economic benefit flows from residential development activity. The U.S. Department of Commerce calculates that a dollar invested in housing construction generates an additional \$1.95 in private sector economic activity. Today, Oklahoma City's downtown population accounts for less than 5,000 residents, but an influx of renters and homeowners into downtown is essential to attract needed shops and services and to create the street life and sense of security that will transform downtown into a vital regional hub.

For two decades, Oklahoma City has seen virtually no new residential development of any type in downtown. To understand why, the panel looked at two of the last developments completed before 1980—Sycamore Square and Regency Tower. Both failed as development ventures, although the two projects were restructured and have become successful sources of quality housing for several hundred households.

Sycamore Square, originally planned as a condominium development, failed to meet sales expectations (\$125,000+ per unit) and now is a combination of condominiums (\$70,000 per unit) and investor-owned rental units (\$550–\$650 per month). It failed, according to some, because it was either ahead of its time or the wrong product for Oklahoma City, whose households prefer yards, private open space, and a more traditional, single-family home.



Lynne Sagalyn describes the panel's recommended development implementation strategy.

Finally, many people noted that the amenities of downtown living—convenience shopping and active street life and nightlife—were nowhere to be found around Sycamore Square. Obviously, the fact that this development did not become an instant success, remained substantially vacant for years, and continues to sit amid vacant urban renewal lots has had a chilling effect on any subsequent investment in downtown housing by banks or builders.

A similar lesson emerged from the development of Regency Tower, which did not succeed until the original developer sold the building at a significant loss. The security of a doorman building as well as sound management and commanding views of the city are some of the amenities that have attracted single professionals and empty nesters and helped the building achieve full occupancy (99 percent) before it sustained damage in the April 19 bombing. In the month since the building was renovated and reopened, it achieved 74 percent occupancy at rents in the \$500 range.

A review of these two developments, together with several interviews, has led the panel to the following recommendations for creating a residential development strategy for downtown Oklahoma City. Central to the strategy is the organization of the city's multiple public agencies, community groups, builders, developers, and banks into a coordinated housing delivery system under the aegis of a new public/private organization or a network of individual groups. In an effort to spur private investment in entertainment and tourism, the city worked with the private sector and community leaders to mobilize support for the MAPS initiative. A similar public/private effort is needed to stimulate residential development, including public investment in infrastructure, the contribution of land, and incentive financing.

- First, the city should build on the strength of the preservation movement by developing sites and encouraging rehabilitation in or near downtown's historic neighborhoods. The premier example is Heritage Hills, a close-in downtown neighborhood whose home prices have climbed from \$12 per square foot 20 years ago to over \$65 per square foot today. Oklahomans have been relatively slow to understand how they can capitalize on their rich and little-known history to build real estate values and fuel the economy.

In cities like San Antonio, New York, New Orleans, and San Francisco, the back-to-the-city preservation and sweat-equity movement took off in the 1970s and has substantially reclaimed dozens of former slums. In commenting on Oklahoma City's relative weakness in celebrating its rich history and culture in the preservation, planning, or architecture of its downtown, one community leader said, "Sod houses don't last." The fact that the original housing stock has worn out or fallen victim to urban renewal does not mean that the city cannot move to reclaim its original style and spirit. Indeed, the housing industry can build on the strength of Heritage Hills, Mesta Park, Lincoln Terrace, and Edgemere to design new neighborhoods that carry on the historic traditions of the city. Only recently, the governor's mansion was recognized as an important historic resource as First Lady Kathy Keating challenged thousands of residents to help refurbish and refurbish the premises. Even where buildings no longer stand, sentiment about the past runs deep. One example is the African American community's feelings about Deep Deuce, the neighborhood largely cleared by urban renewal just north of Bricktown that was a center of jazz and the birthplace of Oklahoma's civil rights movement.



The panel developed its recommendations during numerous late-night working sessions.

Top left: Anthony Guzzardo (left) and Patricia Burke.

Top center: Kathryn Wilde (left) and Charles Shaw.

Top right: Daniel Biederman (left) and Donald Hunt.

Bottom: (from right to left around the table) Homer Russell, Panel Chair James Klingbeil, Martin Millsaugh, Daniel Biederman, and Lynne Sagalyn.

- Second, the city should encourage the formation of a public/private partnership to organize a development and marketing program that can capture the growing demand for nontraditional housing types that are not necessarily available in the city's rural and suburban areas. Lofts are just one example of a housing type that appeals to many young people, empty nesters, and single professionals. Another potential market focuses on newcomers to the city. In general, a city's population tends to turn over at a rate of about 20 percent over the course of five years. Given the size of Oklahoma City's medical and educational institutions and federal workforce, it is possible that a quarter-million people could move into or out of the metropolitan region over a five-to ten-year period.

The panel concludes that the issue facing the city in terms of bringing residential development back to downtown is not the usual question of supply and demand. All indications suggest that, given the right circumstances and the industry's delivery of the appropriate product, plenty of people would rent and, to a much lesser extent, buy downtown housing.

A primary element of the marketing effort should be a campaign to counter the stigma attached to downtown living by most Oklahomans, including bankers and developers. Negative attitudes suppress market acceptance of downtown residential locations and depress values below the cost of development. Accordingly, a marketing effort to reverse current opinion cannot be a small undertaking but rather must make people feel they are part of a larger movement. Specifically, downtown residential redevelopment must focus on one or more new communities and be carried out with fanfare and at a sizable scale. People must be persuaded that renting an apartment is a worthwhile deal or that the purchase of a home will yield a profit at resale.

- Third, the city, state, and federal governments must cooperate in creating a package of public incentives, including contributed land and subsidized financing, to bridge the gap between development costs of new housing and the price that working people will pay for an apartment or home in an emerging downtown neighborhood. Just as the MAPS program was necessary to jumpstart economic development, public investment in the range of 15 to 20 percent of development costs will be required to spur downtown residential development.

The first phase of residential development on urban renewal land will require a commitment of public funding. Once the advantages of downtown locations are established, however, the panel believes that the combination of the region's low costs and improving economy will support market-rate, unsubsidized housing.

- Fourth, it is essential that the city set up an efficient and predictable process for the sale of urban renewal land and the expedited processing of financing and development approvals.
- Fifth, the panel suggests that the city establish a pilot program to develop residential units in the short term. As part of this effort, the city should pursue several initiatives. The first program should make sites available for and subsidize development of garden-style rental apartments that would primarily serve the needs of transient employees and students and encourage additional private investment by rental housing developers. The panel anticipates that demand for low-density rental apartments will be the largest component of overall housing demand in downtown Oklahoma City for the long term and thus should receive the highest priority.

The first initiative, called the Downtown Pioneer Program by the panel, should be designed to encourage the development of garden-style rental apartments on infill urban renewal sites and the rehabilitation of loft buildings for rental housing. The panel, however, does not believe that demand exists for market-rate, high-rise rental or condominium housing. To carry out an apartment construction initiative, which should jumpstart the downtown housing movement, the city will need to offer an incentive financing package that bridges the gap between development costs and affordable rents for downtown employees.



Regency Tower and Sycamore Square.



The second initiative, called the Second City Homesteader Program by the panel, should be designed to develop new homes on vacant urban renewal land. It is estimated that 1,600- to 1,800-square-foot homes can be produced for about \$75,000, with low downpayments of less than \$1,000 and incentives that effectively write down the purchase price of the home to about \$60,000.

Just as some other cities do, Oklahoma City should consider providing special incentives to police and fire department employees to invest in homes in core neighborhoods. The panel expects that the Second City Homesteader Program will be considerably narrower in scope than the Downtown Pioneer Program, at least in the short term, as demand for for-sale housing appears far below that for rental units.

- Sixth, to help downtown housing succeed, the city must create a sense of neighborhood security and ensure the presence of neighborhood amenities such as convenience retail stores and parks. Part of this strategy calls for a comprehensive approach to the rehabilitation of property surrounding pilot development sites. In addition, a good public education system is essential if the city hopes to attract families to the downtown core in the long run. While education policy is beyond the purview of the panel, it is worth noting that magnet schools have been successful in some urban areas in retaining and attracting families with school-age children.

Regarding neighborhood retail development, the panel believes that existing commuter traffic and growing tourism and convention activity will supplement and make feasible the proposed residential market for downtown shops and services. Oklahoma City clearly has no shortage of innovative entrepreneurs and energetic young people who would be prepared to open a coffee bar, delicatessen, or dry cleaner. Access to working capital and long-term financing for small business, on the other hand, is a particularly serious barrier for small retailers in a city that has lost many of its local banking institutions.

The city's task in rebuilding its downtown requires a partnership with the private sector to get the job done.

Technical and financial assistance available through the federal enterprise community designation as well as through the new small business initiative of the chamber of commerce should be incorporated into a more comprehensive development initiative called shopsteading. This program should be designed to encourage new development and renovation of neighborhood commercial space, to identify appropriate sites, and to package financing for individual projects. The panel recommends financing the shopsteading effort with private funds insured by federal Section 108 loan guarantees, small business loans, and CDBG writedowns of development costs to affordable rents.

FUNDING SOURCES

Oklahoma City can package a variety of funding sources to make investment in downtown residential development attractive to builders and banks.

- First, development sites for a ten-year buildout of rental and for-sale housing and neighborhood retail and amenities must be identified, preapproved, and prepackaged for turnkey disposition to builders. The city has the single most important resource to stimulate the implementation of a residential building program in downtown: the vacant land held in the inventory of the Urban Renewal Agency, along with the powers to assemble additional parcels into development sites.



- Second, all levels of government must assume some of the cost and risk of downtown residential development by committing land; infrastructure improvements such as streets, sidewalks, utilities, infill parks, and lighting; and financial incentives such as Community Development Block Grant funds, HOME funds, tax-exempt mortgages, and downpayment assistance. The Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency should become an active partner as well, although the agency has not issued a bond to finance new rental housing since 1986 and has no plans for future issues.
- Third, civic leaders, churches, and preservation organizations must also commit to helping plan for new developments and to take the lead in a marketing campaign that includes education and outreach to identify needed community services.

PILOT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Banks and homebuilders must commit to share the risk and help create value for downtown residential development. The first step in implementing a pilot downtown housing program is to design and test locations, rental unit and house types, amenities, and rental/sales prices by using focus groups of downtown employees and community meetings. The next step is to cost out the most economic package requiring the least public funding and to finance the upfront investment in model units. In most cities, this phase is the responsibility of a consortium of banks working with a nonprofit organization, such as the Second Century Corporation, established under the auspices of the city; the private sector working through an organization, such as the chamber of commerce; or a nonprofit intermediary, such as the Enterprise Foundation or a local housing partnership.

The next steps are to select specific development sites, put a major program into place, and announce a first development phase that provides a bonus for renters or buyers who are first in line.

The effort calls for generating the same type of excitement experienced by the settlers and pioneers who gathered in 1889 for the land rush to establish their homesteads. The first model apartments and for-sale housing units should be built on relatively strong sites, anchored by an existing residential neighborhood and with a special market pitch to a few major employers. Promising sites include the location of the soon-to-be-demolished Mercy Hospital and the vacant land around Sycamore Square. In either case, planning for neighborhood stores and amenities, the buildout of nearby vacant land, and upgrading of nearby blighted properties must be included in the project. The driving concept is not the development of a "housing project" but rather the building of a new or extended neighborhood. Seed funding for pilot neighborhood planning should come from philanthropic sources such as foundations or corporate grants.

The first priority of the pilot housing program should be the construction of garden apartments, but it should also extend to the development and sale of 100 townhomes to families that work in downtown Oklahoma City. Initial renters and buyers should be rewarded with special bonuses such as preferential rents and soft second mortgages that are forgiven after ten years of owner-occupancy. It is important to test the pilot program simultaneously in two or three locations, perhaps with a corporate sponsor adopting each location. A mechanism for neighborhood input into planning and marketing should be established to include local residents, church leaders, and merchants. The chamber of commerce and state homebuilders association, with input from the state housing finance agency and the city, should be asked to identify the strongest builder/developer candidates to participate on a limited-fee basis in the first round of the program.

Table 7
ILLUSTRATIVE HOMEOWNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROTOTYPE

Land Cost	\$0 (city-owned land)
Development Cost	\$75,000 per unit
Infrastructure, Street Improvements	\$5,000 per unit
Total Development Costs	\$80,000 per unit
Downpayment, Closing Cost Assistance	\$4,000 (FHLB* Affordable Housing Program writes down the cost)
Purchaser Downpayment	\$1,000 per unit
Soft Second Mortgage	\$15,000 (CDBG/HOME funds)
FHA Mortgage	\$60,000
Family Income of Purchaser	\$20,000

*Federal Home Loan Bank.

As described earlier, a financing package and a marketing strategy should be established for all sites developed under the program.

Table 7 presents a homeownership development prototype that assumes a development of 20 individual townhomes of 1,600 to 1,800 square feet each with private front- and backyards and a garage.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations in this report represent an ambitious agenda for Oklahoma City. However, the panel strongly emphasizes that the goal of an economically and socially thriving downtown is absolutely essential for the future well-being of the Oklahoma City metropolitan area. The panel firmly recommends that Oklahoma City build a downtown worthy of a great and growing city and believes that the broad range of actions outlined in this report are necessary to achieve such a downtown. The city has already made an unusually strong commitment to its downtown through its MAPS initiative, and its importance should not be underestimated. MAPS is the foundation on which a successful downtown can be built. To carry forward this momentum, the city must set clear goals for downtown, lay out a roadmap for achieving them, and form public/private partnerships to take the incremental steps necessary to build on what has gone before. The panel cautions that this effort will be neither quick nor easy, but the rewards for the city will be great, and the effort must be started today.

ABOUT THE PANEL

JAMES D. KLINGBEIL
PANEL CHAIR
San Francisco, California

Klingbeil is chair and chief executive officer of American Apartment Communities, Inc., which is a national apartment partnership that has evolved out of the many years of development activities of the Klingbeil Company, which he founded in 1961. The company's primary focus is multifamily residential, including all aspects of development, as well as investment and property management.

While attending Ohio State University, where he received a bachelor of science degree, Klingbeil developed his first real estate project, a 19-unit garden apartment for graduate students. From that start, he and his affiliates have since developed or renovated over 30,000 apartments and condominiums throughout the United States. Klingbeil cofounded the Anden Group in 1975, which built approximately \$1 billion of sales housing in the United States, Paris, and London before conclusion in 1986. Klingbeil has been active over his career in real estate and business organizations and in national and community activities. He is a long-time member and past president of the Urban Land Institute.

DANIEL A. BIEDERMAN
New York, New York

Biederman, who serves as president of the Grand Central Partnership, president of the 34th Street Partnership, and executive director of the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, cofounded those downtown management organizations in 1980, 1985, and 1989, respectively. The Grand Central Partnership is the public space management arm of some of New York City's largest real estate owners and corporate tenants and has already made major improvements in the security, cleanliness, social services, tourist information, public events, and retail environment in a 70-block area surrounding Grand Central Terminal. The Bryant Park Restoration Corporation is one of the largest efforts in the nation to apply private management backed by private funding to a public park. The park's reopening in 1991 was a huge success and was followed by a 100 percent reduction in crime in the critical nine-acre area managed by the corporation. The 34th Street Partnership, which covers a critical area with more than 36 million square feet of commercial space, has already achieved similar success.

As head of these three redevelopment efforts, Biederman has written, lectured, and taught extensively in the field of urban management. Over the last several years, he has advised public and private parties on the art of downtown management in New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Boston, Newark, Louisville, and several other cities. He is a magna cum laude graduate of Princeton University, earning a bachelor of arts degree from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs in 1975. He also earned an MBA with distinction from Harvard University's Graduate School of Business Administration.

LEWIS BOLAN
Washington, D.C.

Bolan is cofounder of Bolan Smart Associates, Inc., a firm specializing in real estate consulting, economic analysis, and development planning. He works with many of the nation's leading developers, major U.S. *Fortune* 500 companies, and financial institutions as well as with local, state, and federal government agencies, including the General Services Administration.

Bolan has more than 20 years of professional experience in the fields of strategic planning, market and financial real estate economics, and development consulting. Previously, he was managing director of Leggat McCall Advisor, Inc., a national real estate consulting firm, as well as vice president of the Real Estate Research Corporation (RERC), where he directed its Washington, D.C., office and headed its investment advisory services division. Before joining RERC, Bolan was director of planning for Victor Gruen International.

Bolan is a member of the advisory board of the Johns Hopkins University Real Estate Institute; a member of the American Planning Association; and a member of the Urban Land Institute, where he currently serves as a member of the Commercial and Retail Development Council and as vice chair of the Publications Committee. He holds a bachelor of arts degree from Columbia University and a master of city planning degree from the University of Illinois.

PATRICIA M. BURKE
Washington, D.C.

Most recently, Burke has been portfolio director for JCF Partners in Lanham, Maryland, and consultant to CLMI, Inc., in Rockville, Maryland. For JFC Partners, she managed the acquisition and liquidation of portfolios acquired by the company through competitive bids run by the Resolution Trust Corporation. For CLMI, Inc., she advised Montgomery County, Maryland, on implementation of a large-scale urban redevelopment project in downtown Silver Spring.

From 1984 to 1992, Burke was managing director and senior vice president of Home Federal Bank of San Diego, California, directing real estate loan origination in three East Coast offices and managing a \$1 billion loan portfolio. Prior to that, Burke worked for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for more than a decade as senior development director for the Urban Development Action Grant program and as program manager for Newark, New Jersey, and New York City.

Burke holds a bachelor of arts degree in political science from Marymount Manhattan College in New York City and won an N.D.E.A. Doctoral Fellowship and completed course work for a PhD in political science.

ANTHONY M. GUZZARDO
San Francisco, California

Guzzardo is president and founder, in 1963, of Guzzardo & Associates, Inc., a San Francisco-based firm specializing in land planning and landscape architecture. Guzzardo & Associates has been responsible for land planning numerous new communities in California and throughout the United States and Europe. The firm has earned a reputation as an innovative designer and pragmatic problem solver as evidenced by the consistency and quality of completed projects and repeat developer clients.

Guzzardo is a fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects, served as executive director of the Landscape Architecture Foundation, has been a teacher and guest lecturer at many universities, and has been a member of the Urban Land Institute since 1972. He is a graduate of the University of Illinois and holds a master's degree in landscape architecture from Harvard University.

DONALD E. HUNT, AICP
Denver, Colorado

Hunt is principal and president of BRW, Inc., and, in addition to his involvement in transportation and community planning projects, provides the firm's overall strategic and administrative direction. His experience encompasses redevelopment and transportation planning, urban planning and design, and comprehensive planning and zoning. He has managed a variety of projects, including site design services for the new Denver International Airport, the Washington, D.C., President's Park/Memorial Core Study (a project to identify visitor access and circulation improvements for the National Mall and White House); the Auraria Parkway and Lower Downtown Streetscape in Denver; and the Denver Downtown Transit Project, a rail/bus transit mall. He has been involved with many large-scale redevelopment projects, including Stapleton Airport in Denver and Lowry Air Force Base; Cherry Creek retail district in Denver; and the Mississippi riverfront in downtown Minneapolis.

Hunt holds a master's degree in city and regional planning from Harvard University and a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture and bachelor's degree in environmental design from the University of Minnesota. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners, American Society of Landscape Architects, and Urban Land Institute. He serves on the board of directors of the Downtown Denver Partnership and the Denver Children's Museum.

MARTIN L. MILLSPAUGH
Columbia, Maryland

Since 1985, Millspaugh has been executive vice president, then president, and now vice chair of the board of directors of the Enterprise Development Company and the Enterprise International Development Company. Both companies are for-profit commercial development firms participating in mixed-use, leisure, and entertainment-driven development projects in the United States and on five continents. Millspaugh was responsible for the creation of Enterprise's consulting developer practice and its international business.

For 20 years before joining Enterprise, Millspaugh was chief executive of the public/private development corporation that he created to function as the delivery system for the city of Baltimore in realizing the ambitious goals of its Charles Center and Inner Harbor master plans. Both Charles Center and the Inner Harbor received the Award of Excellence, the highest honor bestowed by the Urban Land Institute.

Millspaugh serves as vice chair of the Urban Institute's International Council. He is a member of the board and secretary of the Maryland International Center and serves on the advisory boards of the National Aquarium in Baltimore, International Business Program at Morgan State University, Real Estate Institute of Johns Hopkins University, and Maryland Department of Transportation. He has been an author, newspaper columnist, and urban affairs writer and served as assistant commissioner in charge of research and development for the federal Urban Renewal Administration.

ALBERT B. RATNER
Cleveland, Ohio

Ratner is co-chair of the board of Forest City Enterprises, Inc., and played a key role in the revitalization of Cleveland. When Cleveland was suffering from the fallout of its default, Ratner made his company's largest single investment in his hometown in the redevelopment of the Terminal Tower and old Union Terminal into Tower City Center, along with the addition of new office buildings and a hotel and retail stores, thus creating a city within a city.

Ratner is also involved in many civic activities. He is currently cochair of Shoes for Kids, a member of the board of trustees of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, a director of Cleveland Tomorrow, a member of the board of trustees of University Circle, Inc., founder and chair emeritus of the Holiday Lighting Program, a director of the Cleveland Foundation Commission on Poverty, and a member of the advisory board of the Task Force on Violent Crime. Nationally, he is a member of the board of governors of the Henry M. Jackson Foundation.

Ratner holds a bachelor of science degree from the School of Forestry at Michigan State University, an honorary doctor of laws from Long Island University in Brooklyn, New York, and an honorary doctor of engineering from Polytechnic University in Brooklyn. He is an active member of the Urban Land Institute.

WILLIAM B. RENNER, JR.
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Renner is an expert in tourism and urban and community planning. He has been responsible for the consultant coordination, planning, and environmental permitting of master-planned communities ranging in size from 300 acres to 12,000 acres. Renner has been on planning teams for new communities and urban development in Florida, Arizona, California, New York, and abroad. At Edward D. Stone and Associates, he has assisted clients in the early stages of project development, providing support in all areas of planning, permitting, and management. Renner is currently involved in planning Blockbuster Park, a mixed-use sports and entertainment complex in Dade and Broward Counties, Florida; an urban redevelopment in Oklahoma City; and tourism plans in Volusia County, Florida; Puerto Rico; and Brazil.

Renner was project manager of the planning team for Dakota Dunes, a new 2,200-acre community in South Dakota. The public/private partnership planning process included a new interchange, the relocation of 300 acres from Nebraska to South Dakota, and the enabling of a unified community development district by state legislation. He is an active member of the Urban Land Institute.

HOMER RUSSELL
Boston, Massachusetts

As assistant director of urban design for the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Russell is responsible for the preparation of urban design guidelines for entire districts and specific projects and for the review of development proposals for the downtown and waterfront. He oversees the planning for the surface air rights over the depressed Central Artery currently under construction (the most extensive public works project in the country), the Charlestown Navy Yard (a 100-acre defense conversion and preservation effort), and South Port, the 100-acre largely vacant site on the harbor in the industrial sector of South Boston where the city's growth will be directed into the next century.

Russell was a juror for the 1996 National American Institute of Architects Institute Honors Awards and a recipient of three National AIA Urban Design Honor Awards from 1992 to 1994. He has been a planning and urban design consultant in Tokyo, Kobe, and Sendai, Japan, and served for a decade as chair of the Block Island (R.I.) Historic District Commission.

Russell received his undergraduate degree from Princeton University in 1964 and his master's degree in architecture from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design in 1967.