



Urban Land
Institute

North Florida

Renew Arlington / Jacksonville University

Technical Assistance Panel

August 8 - 9 | Jacksonville, Florida



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Preface

About ULI

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) is a nonprofit education and research institute supported by its members. Its mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Established in 1936, ULI has more than 40,000 members worldwide representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines. The North Florida District Council was formed in 2005 and has more than 500 members in 34 counties, including the cities of Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Gainesville, Tallahassee, Panama City and Pensacola.

What are Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)?

Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) are one- to two-day panels convened by the local ULI District Council at the behest of a community, public entity or private enterprise (Sponsor) facing real estate or land-use issues. The District Council assembles a panel composed of highly qualified professionals chosen for their knowledge of the issues facing the Sponsor. The interdisciplinary team of seasoned real estate professionals may include land planners, architects, financiers, developers, appraisers, attorneys and brokers who are well qualified to provide unbiased, pragmatic advice on complex real estate issues. Panel members are not compensated for their time, but they are reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses, such as overnight lodging and transportation to attend the TAP. To ensure objectivity, panel members cannot be involved in matters pending before the Sponsor, currently work for the Sponsor or solicit work from the Sponsor during the six months following the TAP program.

How do TAPs work?

Charged with moving specific projects forward, TAPs provide expert, multidisciplinary advice to local governments, private companies, public agencies and nonprofits facing complex land-use and real estate issues. Drawing from our professional membership base, we leverage the collective expertise of our members to provide a unique, market-based perspective on a broad range of issues including:

- The re-use potential of existing properties
- Revitalization of corridors or specific properties
- Key economic and other issues relating to public/private land-use situations
- Specific development and land proposals or issues
- Market feasibility, financial structuring, and more

The Program

During the two-day program, ULI North Florida assembles a panel comprised of six to 10 senior-level members representing the specific land-use disciplines needed for each assignment. Panel members may include developers and owners, investors, designers, engineers, attorneys and executives from the greater North Florida region. Panelists tour the study area, interview stakeholders, and work collaboratively to produce preliminary findings and recommendations which are presented after the TAP workshop in either a private or public forum. A complete report follows within about 6-8 weeks with detailed recommendations.

Sponsor and ULI Participants

Sponsor

Jacksonville University

ULI North Florida

Carolyn Clark

District Council Senior Director

Patrick W. Krechowski, Gray-Robinson

TAP Committee Co-Chair

Joseph Loretta, Genesis Group

TAP Committee Co-Chair

Lindsay Haga, England-Thims & Miller

TAP Committee Member

Acknowledgments

On behalf of the Urban Land Institute, the TAP Committee Chairs and TAP panelists wish to thank the following members and sponsors for their contributions:

Community Foundation of Northeast Florida

England-Thims & Miller

Genesis Group

Technical Assistance Panel

Farley J. Grainger, CRE, MAI, TAP Chair

President and Founder

Iconic Real Estate Investments, Jacksonville, FL

William Butler, CRE

President

Real Estate InSync (REI), Tallahassee, FL

Jeanette LaRussa Fenton

President

Solution Services Tampa, Inc., Tampa, FL

Patrick Hodges, ASLA

Founding Principal

Patrick Hodges Land Studio, Panama City Bch, FL

Reginald Johnson

Director, Community Development Department

City of Durham, NC

Mashonda Taylor

Chief Community Relations Officer

Woodlawn Foundation, Birmingham, AL

Aundra Wallace

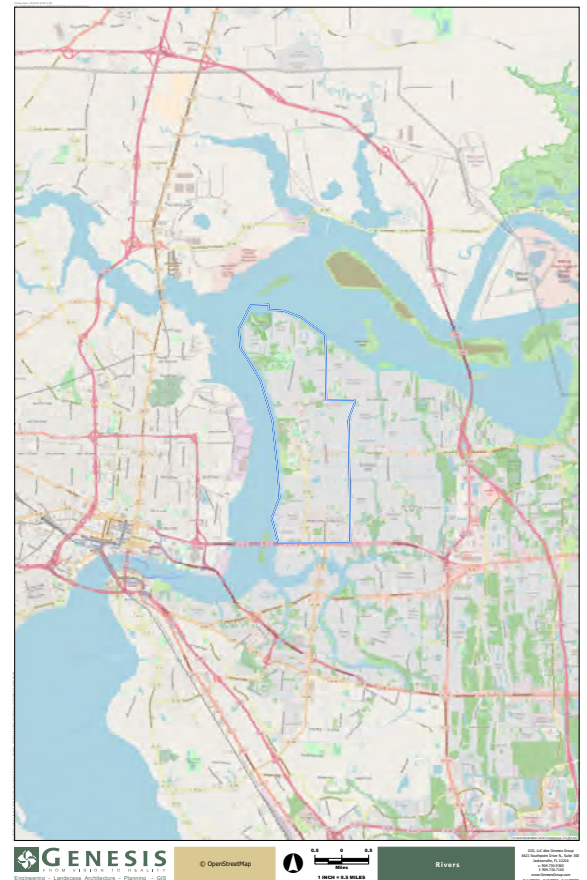
Chief Executive Officer

Downtown Investment Authority, Jacksonville, FL

TAP Scope

The Renew Arlington TAP will focus on four main concepts and issues that are unique to Arlington, the neighborhood and surrounding area in which Jacksonville University established its campus in 1950. The focus areas include:

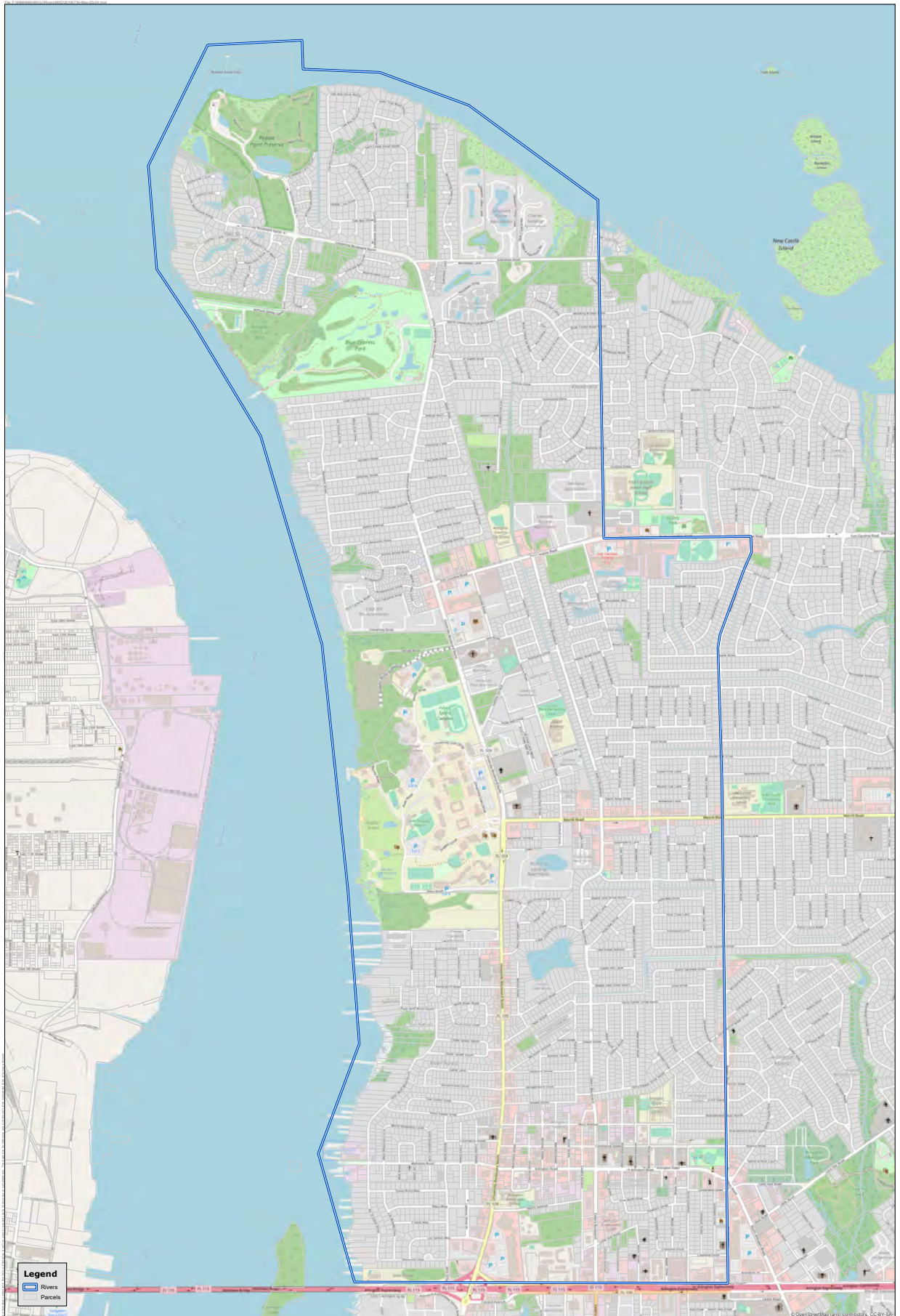
- Developing a program for identifying willing and responsible neighborhood and community organizations that have the capacity and expertise to take leadership and ownership roles in the Renew Arlington Community Redevelopment Area plan.
- Identifying the commercial sectors of Arlington that are most in need of redevelopment resources and formulating a plan to encourage property owners and similar stakeholders to take the first steps.
- Examining the depressed residential real estate sectors in Arlington and recommending a path forward that will benefit and improve those particular Arlington neighborhoods with a focus on blight, foreclosures and vacant homes.
- Coordinating the above factors with the Arlington Community Redevelopment Advisory Board and other Arlington stakeholders with an eye towards real, actual and cohesive neighborhood improvement.



To ensure the panel has the ability to fully comprehend the above concepts and to formulate tangible recommendations, ULI North Florida empaneled experts from the appropriate fields and communities that have struggled with similar obstacles and have achieved progress through implementation of community-based programming.

For the Renew Arlington TAP, the panel was introduced to the geography, demographics and atmosphere of the area while also having the opportunity to interview community and neighborhood leaders about the history, problems, and hopes of Arlington and its residents and businesses. The resulting TAP report will be a guide for the community of Arlington to use as a tool in addressing the most critical hurdles toward smart, positive, healthy and sustainable growth.





Panel Process

The ULI North Florida District Council assembled a group of accomplished ULI members who have expertise in land planning, landscape architecture, real estate development and environmental design, making for an intensive two-day workshop to address the challenges facing Arlington.

Prior to convening, TAP members received information on Arlington's demographics and economic data; Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) plan; Finding of Necessity Study; Greater Arlington Vision Plan; and Old Arlington Neighborhood Action Plan; and were provided with aerial maps.

Orientation on day one included an introductory presentation by Jacksonville University's President, **Tim Cost**. Interviews were conducted with **Joyce Morgan**, Jacksonville City Council member, District 1; **John R. Crescimbeni**, Jacksonville City Council member at large; **Captain Matthew W. Tuohy**, director of the School of Aviation, Jacksonville University, and Renew Arlington CRA Advisory Board chairman; and **Brian Bush**, e-commerce manager, The Tom Bush Family of Dealerships, and Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce Arlington Council president. In addition, an open forum was held to enable community stakeholders to discuss their concerns. Speakers included **Tom Larsen**, director of business development, Self-Help Credit Union; **Ann Burt**, Old Arlington, Inc., and Renew Arlington CRA Advisory Board member; and **Kathleen Bowles**, Old Arlington, Inc board member. Panelists were given a tour of the study area and discussed the issues that were presented.

On day two the panelists interviewed **Kirk Wendlend** and **Karen Nasrallah** of the City of Jacksonville's Office of Economic Development and **Shawn Ashley** of Impact Church. The panelists discussed solutions to the issues to be addressed, formalized their observations and made recommendations based on input from the stakeholders and the information provided to them by the Sponsor. At the day's end, their recommendations were presented to Jacksonville University staff.



Executive Summary

Arlington is a large, diverse area that became part of the City of Jacksonville in 1969. Prior to incorporation, Arlington was a rapidly growing, desirable suburb. Its growth was spurred on by the construction of the Mathews Bridge in 1953 and its prime location nestled along the St. Johns River between downtown and the beach.

The TAP study area focuses on West Arlington. It has been the home of Jacksonville University (JU) since 1950 and includes several parks, nature trails, a marina, public boat ramps, a fishing pier and numerous other recreational venues.

However, as many affluent and middle-class residents moved east to newer, larger homes, much of Old Arlington was left behind. Demographics changed, and with it, a loss of retailers. Currently, the population within three miles of University Boulevard North is about 52% white, 42% black, 3% Asian and 3% other. About 10% of the population is of Hispanic origin regardless of race. The 2018 median household income is estimated at \$41,179 versus \$62,175 nationally (Sentier Research, 2018), and 28% of the population earns less than \$25,000 annually. The median home value is \$137,660. Some 14.5% of residents do not have a high school diploma.

The area struggles with crime, aging infrastructure and deteriorating commercial corridors. Blight greets visitors on major roadways and housing in many areas is in run-down condition. West Arlington was designated an Urban Priority Area in Jacksonville's 2030 Comprehensive Plan, which identifies areas in need of redevelopment.

JU has heavily invested in its campus in the last five years and is spearheading the effort to revitalize the area around its campus. In November 2015, the Jacksonville City Council approved a 20-year Renew Arlington Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) focused on three major commercial corridors—University Boulevard, Merrill Road and Arlington Road. The western portion of Fort Caroline Road was also included in the CRA. A Tax Increment Financing District (TIF) was established to provide a funding source for renewal projects. The CRA's first focus has been on stormwater management. Additionally, the City Council is expected to vote this fall on a proposed overlay district within the Renew Arlington CRA.

TAP members conducted a SWOT analysis. The area has several strengths including a good location, access to transportation, Jacksonville University and affordable housing, along with strong stakeholder interest and history. However, Arlington lacks an identity or brand, pride of ownership and jobs. Crime is high and pedestrian/bike connectivity is poor.

Nevertheless, there are numerous opportunities on which the area can build. The CRA provides a good foundation, and there is a low bar of entry for developers. The area is a prime location for public-private partnerships and it qualifies for the New Market Tax Credit Program and façade grants, among others. The affordability of the housing and connectivity to Downtown Jacksonville could be a draw for millennials, particularly 22- to 35-year-olds, creatives, entrepreneurs and trend setters who can serve as mavens for a broader audience. There is a potential market for neighborhood-based economic development and target areas that are in strategic locations. Arlington also has the advantage of strong community-based groups, including Arlington 2020 led by Impact Church and its nonprofit Revitalize Arlington, Inc.

Other areas of Jacksonville are also competing for developer dollars, are farther along in efforts to attract investment and provide less investment risk. The 19-member Jacksonville City Council serves as the CRA board, but only two members are advocates for Arlington. As a result, there may be a lack of political will to support the area's revitalization. And while there are many stakeholders in Arlington interested in seeing the area prosper, they have disparate interests that could create barriers to advancement. Perhaps the biggest threat, however, is Inaction.

The panel recommended (1) hiring a champion to manage day-to-day operations and be responsible for moving the revitalization plan forward; (2) focusing on three strategic commercial nodes along University Boulevard; (3) focusing on residential improvements close to the commercial nodes; and (4) coordinating efforts with stakeholders in order to involve the overall community in the effort.

An executive director should be hired for a three-year period to head a nonprofit entity, such as a community development corporation, and serve as a champion for the TAP study area. Funding sources should be identified from among the stakeholders seeking Arlington's revitalization. The appropriate candidate must have knowledge not only about the community but real estate development, design, financing, economic development and marketing. Among other responsibilities, he or she will develop the brand, assemble a stakeholder advisory board and serve as the point-person for developers. Ideally, the candidate will be objective and not tied to any one group. If JU must host the executive director, this leader must detach himself or herself from the university and take on a third-party leadership role.

There are three main nodes along University Boulevard that offer the greatest opportunity for redevelopment: Town & Country Shopping Center/Thunderbird-Bethelite, University Boulevard/Merrill Road and University Boulevard/Fort Caroline Road. For impact, resources including CRA funds, façade and other funding should be clustered at these sites initially. In addition, develop node-specific design guidelines, an architectural theme, signage and streetscapes for each.

The Town & Country Shopping Center/Thunderbird-Bethelite properties offer the greatest opportunity to kick-start redevelopment. This must be a catalytic project. The property is suitable for mixed-use commercial development with high-rise residential buildings, retail, restaurants, offices and other commercial businesses. A focus should be on placemaking and incorporating new streetscapes, parking in the rear, and a pedestrian-friendly public realm. Utilities should be buried.

The planned roundabout at this intersection, including the road diet and other Complete Streets improvements are expected to improve the look and feel of the area around Jacksonville University's entrance. Traffic must be slowed down along University Boulevard and Merrill Road. Redevelopment should support student life, such as a mixed-use development offering student housing with retail below; e.g., coffee shop, deli, ice cream shop, cyber cafe and other restaurants.

University Boulevard offers a prime location for neighborhood-based support businesses. The Gazebo Shopping Center at Ft. Caroline Road is well located to provide retail shops to support Jackson Commons and other area housing. It is a prime location for an anchor grocer such as an Aldi or Lucky's.

It is important to create mass around the strategic nodes by focusing residential improvements around these sites. Cluster resources, such as façade and housing rehab grants for impact, and develop design guidelines, streetscapes and signage. The panel recommends surveying the housing stock to identify foreclosures, houses that are abandoned and those that are condemned. Economic incentives could attract private investors to purchase, rehabilitate and resell vacant properties. However, acquisition of these properties by the community development corporation (CDC) may be required to return them to productive use. The CDC can apply for funding through community development financial institutions (CDFIs) like Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Self-Help Credit Union and intermediary organizations like NeighborWorks America. Homeowners need to be encouraged to repair properties by educating them about available grants and low-cost loans, and by partnering with home improvement businesses to provide DIY project workshops for homeowners.

Ideally, stakeholders will come together and contribute funding for a champion and nonprofit entity to advance the redevelopment efforts. However, if JU must solely fund the champion, the champion must be seen as an Arlington advocate not just a JU advocate.

Background



JACKSONVILLE
UNIVERSITY
ENTRANCE

“ We have everything you need to make a home for hundreds of families. A place that can be livable, walkable.”

— Joyce Morgan, Jacksonville City Council, Renew Arlington CRA Vice Chair

Arlington is a historic Jacksonville community that encompasses 64.3 square miles, stretching from the banks of the St. Johns River east to the Intracoastal Waterway. As the river turns eastward, it serves as Arlington’s northern border, while Beach Boulevard (US 90) forms the southern boundary.

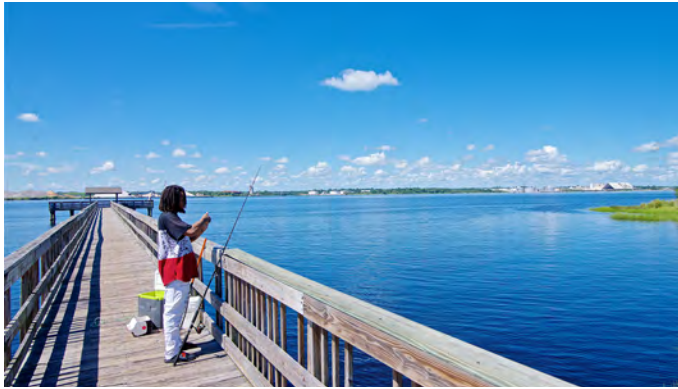
A large, diverse area, Arlington became part of the City of Jacksonville with the consolidation of Duval County in 1969. The area includes mid-century modern suburbs in the west to contemporary suburban developments in the east. Crowley Maritime Corporation, which Florida Trend ranked as the fifth largest private company in Jacksonville and thirtieth largest in Florida, is headquartered in the Regency area of Arlington. Jacksonville University (JU) has called Arlington home since 1950. The school covers 260 acres along the St. Johns River and has opened a Downtown Jacksonville campus. JU employs 705 people. An Economic Impact Study found JU was responsible for the regional creation of more than 2,518 jobs, \$91 million in labor income and more than \$271 million in total output.

Arlington’s growth can be traced to the opening of the Mathews Bridge in 1953, which connects Downtown Jacksonville to Arlington. Because of its prime location between downtown and the beach, Arlington became the fastest growing suburb in the region incorporating the various small rural communities that comprised the area. It was the place to live for several decades.

In 1967, Regency Square Mall opened in the heart of Greater Arlington. According to an Urban Land Institute study published by the Florida Times-Union in 1979, it was one of the most profitable retail centers in the nation, with yearly average sales of \$156/ft versus a national average of \$88/ft.

The TAP study area focuses on the portion of Arlington west of Rogero Road, much of which is considered Old Arlington. Besides Jacksonville University, the area boasts several parks with picnic areas and nature trails, as well as a marina, public boat ramps and kayak launches. The city-owned Blue Cypress Park includes a community center and swimming pool, nine-hole golf course, tennis courts, a fishing dock and

BLUE CYPRESS
PARK FISHING
PIER &
SWIMMING
POOL SITE



NORMAN
STUDIOS



boardwalk along the St. Johns River, soccer fields, trails and a concession/restroom building.

Old Arlington also is home to Norman Studios. Founded in 1916 as Eagle Film City and purchased by Richard E. Norman in 1921, Norman Studios was among the nation's first to produce films starring African-American characters in positive, non-stereotypical roles. Today, the Norman Studios Silent Film Museum, Inc., a 501(c)3 organization, focuses its efforts on the preservation of the five-building studio complex and Northeast Florida's film history.

However, the area has undergone a dramatic change and decline since the late 1980s and early 1990s. As many affluent and middle-class residents moved to other areas offering newer housing stock which Arlington did not possess, the change in the demographics began to affect businesses, and a series of retail and restaurant closures occurred over time in the TAP study area. In addition to the change in demographics, development of retail town centers and regional shopping centers in other areas of Jacksonville took their toll on Regency Square Mall and further accelerated the loss of retailers.

Currently, the population within three miles of University Boulevard North is about 52% white, 42% black, 3% Asian and 3% other. About 10% of the population is of Hispanic origin regardless of race. The 2018 median household income is estimated at \$41,179 versus \$62,175 nationally (Sentier Research, 2018), and 28% of the population earns less than \$25,000 annually. The median home value is \$137,660. Some 14.5% of residents do not have a high school diploma.

Old Arlington has been left behind, even as there has been explosive growth in other areas of metro Jacksonville. The area has struggled with rising crime, aging infrastructure and deteriorating commercial corridors. Even the once reigning Regency Square Mall has been displaced by the more upscale Avenues Mall and St. Johns Town Center in Southside.

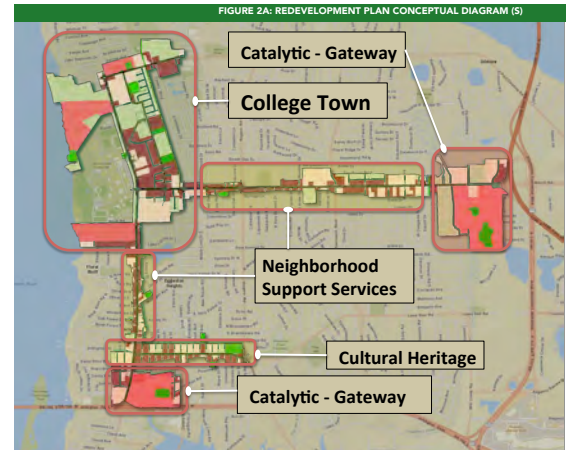
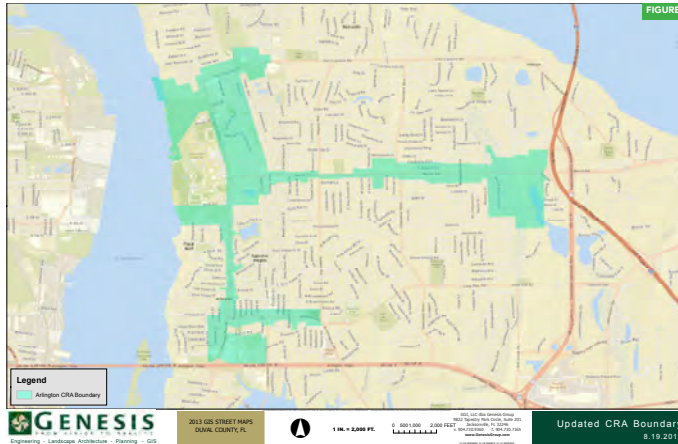
Residents complain that the area lacks nice restaurants for lunch or dinner, and they must go elsewhere for shopping. While not a food desert, Arlington has lost supermarkets like Publix at the Gazebo Shopping Center and Winn-Dixie at the Town & Country Shopping Center, a large, mostly vacant outdoor mall that once included a movie theater. The neighboring site of the Thunderbird Motor Hotel and Convention Center off Arlington Expressway sits barren. Major roads in Old Arlington are rife with tire stores, auto repair shops and unkempt commercial properties, while many homes are also in disrepair.

Numerous studies have been undertaken to address the issues facing Arlington. They include the 2005 Arlington Town Center Vision Plan, the 2007 Old Arlington Neighborhood Action Plan, the 2010 Greater Arlington/Beaches Vision Plan, as well as others by Jacksonville Electric Authority, Jacksonville Transportation Authority and Florida Department of Transportation. The area was designated an Urban



OLD THUNDERBIRD
SITE AND TOWN &
COUNTRY SHOPPING
CENTER





“ We can be the catalyst to bring the community together.”

— Tim Cost, President, Jacksonville University

Priority Area in Jacksonville’s 2030 Comprehensive Plan, which identifies areas in need of redevelopment. There also are a number of nonprofit organizations and community groups working to transform Arlington, such as Arlington 20/20 led by Impact Church and its nonprofit Revitalize Arlington, Inc.

A June 2015 Finding of Necessity study was conducted to determine whether a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) could be established for three major commercial corridors – University Boulevard, Merrill Road and Arlington Road. The western end of Fort Caroline Road is also included in the CRA. The report found evidence of slum conditions or blight as defined by Florida statute and higher occurrences of crime than in the county as a whole.

As a result, the Jacksonville City Council approved a 20-year Renew Arlington CRA in November 2015. The Council serves as the CRA’s board of directors. A Tax Increment Financing District (TIF) was also approved to provide a funding source for the many projects listed in the master redevelopment plan. The latter is predicated on having three catalytic developments, including the Town and Country Super Block, the Merrill Road/I-295 Gateway and College Town. Portions of the University Boulevard and Merrill Road corridors are slated to include predominantly neighborhood support services, while plans for Arlington Road redevelopment are to include a cultural heritage theme.

Jacksonville University is spearheading the effort to revitalize the area around its campus. The school has heavily invested in its campus in the last five years, spending more than \$40 million. They are currently investing another \$40 million to construct a HealthCare Science Institute building and Welcome Center in addition to other campus renovations.

In contrast, the school resides in U.S. Census Tract 148, which has the highest poverty level, at 25%, in Old Arlington.

According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey five-year estimate, median household income in Tract 148 is \$27,202. Rentals make up about 72% of housing, and 24% of houses are vacant. JU's President, Tim Cost, wants to open up the university to the community. He believes JU can play a positive role in the redevelopment and resurgence of Arlington. Cost noted, "We can be the catalyst to bring the community together."

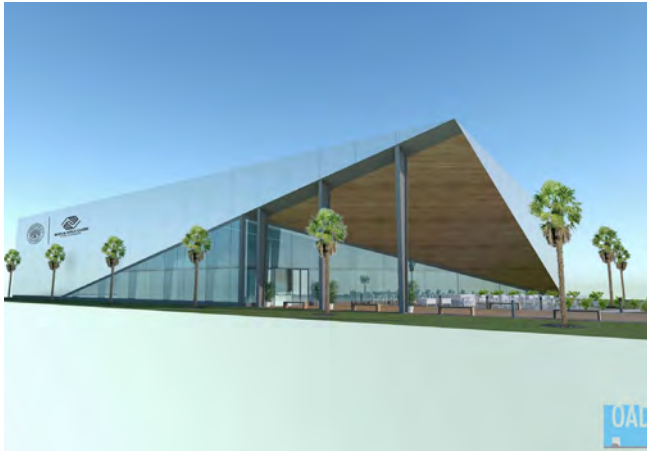
To that end, JU has partnered with Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida on a new 20,000 square-foot, \$2.5 million teen center north of the school's campus. JU will lease most of its vacant four-acre property on University Boulevard at Justina Terrace to the Boys & Girls Clubs for \$1 a year for 50 years. The university plans to provide the center with a variety of community outreach programs. More than 100 teens ages 12 to 18 are expected to be served each day at the facility, which will include a learning center, tech lab, fitness area, art studio, robotics lab, lounge and gymnasium with a full basketball court, among other amenities. Programs offered will focus on careers and education, character and leadership, health and life skills, sports and the arts. The Boys & Girls Club is raising funds for construction, which is expected to begin next year.

JU has also been working with business and civic leaders to promote economic development, such as the Dolphin Pointe Landing senior community on the north end of campus, the Jackson Commons off-campus student housing development, as well as S2 Capital's investment in apartment communities in the area, among others.



MULTIFAMILY
HOUSING ON
JUSTINA RD (LEFT)
& NEW JACKSON
COMMONS
STUDENT
HOUSING (RIGHT)

CONCEPTUAL
DRAWING OF NEW
BOYS & GIRLS
CLUB (LEFT)
PLANNED
ROUNDBABOUT
AT JU ENTRANCE
(RIGHT)



Captain Matthew W. Tuohy, JU's director of the School of Aviation, chairs the seven-member Renew Arlington CRA Advisory Board, which recommends to the City Council projects to pursue and how to effectively spend allocated funds within the CRA boundary. To date, the Advisory Board has recommended projects totaling \$773,570 that cover stormwater and traffic studies, Complete Streets Phase II funding and a matching façade grant program for businesses. Projected fiscal year 2018-19 funding is \$732,000.

The CRA's first focus has been on stormwater management. As part of the plan, the existing Justina Road drainage ditch will be converted into a bioswale, with new in-line storage facilities, walkways, landscaping, lighting and greenway trailhead at Merrill and Ft. Caroline roads. In addition, the Advisory Board has embarked on a five-year strategy to better focus the available funds onto projects that will result in the earliest results.

Phase I of Complete Streets is a Jacksonville Transportation Authority initiative that the authority has fully funded. It includes a roundabout at the entrance of Jacksonville University at the intersection of Merrill Road and University Boulevard, as well as sections of a multi-use path and reduced lane widths. The anticipated completion date is March 2020.

Phases II through IV extend the Complete Streets initiative. They will be funded by the CRA, City of Jacksonville and other sources. Phases II and IV will include reduced lanes on Merrill Road east to Townsend Boulevard, with raised medians, bike lanes, on-street parking and three new mid-block crossings from Rogero Road to Townsend. Phase III focuses on University Boulevard from Merrill Road north to Ft. Caroline Road, including reduced lane widths, raised medians, a multi-use path, two roundabouts and two mid-block crossings.

The City Council is expected to vote this fall on a proposed overlay district within the Renew Arlington CRA. The overlay, if approved, will require businesses to come into compliance with the new requirements within five years. Businesses that are nonconforming and unable to change (e.g., the building is 8 feet from the road and the code is 10 feet) would not need to comply unless the owner is making more than 50% improvements to the property. A property that has been vacant for one year will automatically default and must come into compliance. Some business owners in the CRA district are apprehensive about the plan. They believe it is designed to drive out their existing businesses because they are viewed as adding to blight. For residents, however, redevelopment can't come soon enough. They have seen study after study come and go but, they say, nothing gets done.

Analysis

Strengths

- Location
- Good access to transportation
- Affordable housing
- Jacksonville University
- Strong stakeholder interest
- History

Weaknesses

- Brand/Lack of identity
- Lack of pride of ownership
- Crime (real or perceived)
- Financial weakness/jobs
- Inadequate per capita disposable income
- Pedestrian/bike connectivity

Opportunities

- Community Redevelopment Area
- Façade grants
- Low bar of entry
- Public-private partnerships
- New Market Tax Credit program
- Target areas
- Neighborhood-based economic development
- Affordable housing
- Connectivity to Downtown Jacksonville
- Riverfront – public access
- Norman Studios
- Entrepreneur Center

Threats

- Competition with other areas of Jacksonville
- Lack of political will
- Disparate special interests
- Inaction

Strengths

Like many older suburbs, Arlington has been left behind as newer areas have been developed. Nevertheless, it has some of the elements needed to spark a resurgence.

Location

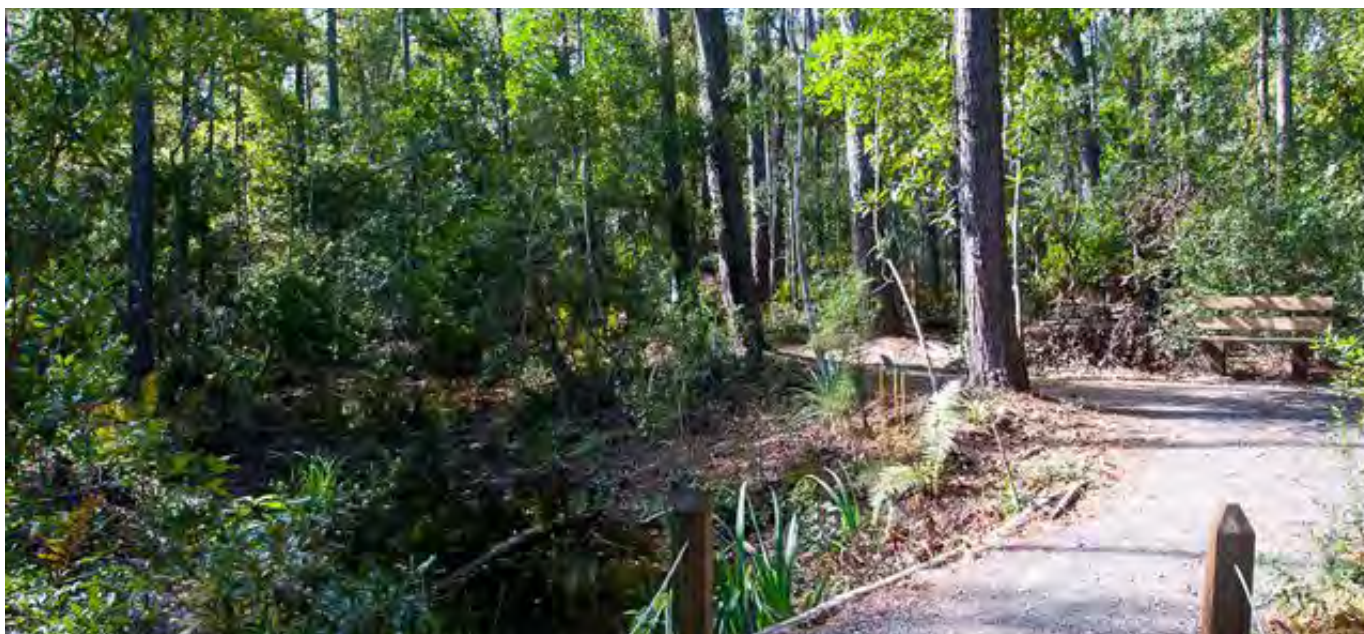
The TAP study area is in a prime location nestled between Downtown Jacksonville and the beach. Location is the reason the area was such a popular place to live for decades. It is situated along the St. Johns River and has great connectivity to and from popular attractions.

University Boulevard and Merrill Road is between five and eight miles to major venues, such as TIAA Bank Field, Metropolitan Park, the Jacksonville Landing, Museum of Science and History, Baptist Medical Center, San Marco, the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens, Five Points and Avondale, for example. The Beaches Town Center is only 13 miles away and Jacksonville International Airport is little more than 17 miles away.

There are several area parks along the waterfront in the study area that offer recreational opportunities, including kayaking, picnicking, swimming, soccer, tennis, golf, fishing, etc. Minutes away in the heart of Arlington are two attractions. Tree Hill Nature Center is home to more than 50 acres of preservation land. It includes three walking trails, a hands-on kids museum featuring Florida's natural history, butterfly and hummingbird gardens, a seasonal live butterfly exhibit, and a variety of other animals. Jacksonville Arboretum and Gardens is a 120-acre urban woodland replete with a lake and miles of hiking trails that wind through a series of distinct ecological habitats.

Transportation

Access is readily available to transportation, with major highways close by, including I-95, I-295 and Arlington Expressway. Jacksonville Transit Authority (JTA) runs several regular bus routes through Arlington. The First Coast Flyer™ Red Line, the East Corridor of JTA's bus rapid transit system, is expected to be launched in November 2018. The \$33.9 million East Corridor project covers 18.5 miles from Downtown Jacksonville through Arlington to the beaches. It includes 21 branded stations, transit signal priority at 32 intersections (holds green lights, allowing buses to move through intersections without stopping) and off-board fare collection. The Flyer makes fewer stops and offers 10-minute frequency during weekday peak hours and 15-minute frequency in weekday off peak hours. In the TAP study area, the Red Line will stop along Arlington Expressway at Cesery Boulevard and Arlington Road.



TREE HILL AND
JACKSONVILLE
ARBORETUM

Affordable Housing

The Jacksonville housing market is very strong. The median home sales price in July 2018, including single-family, condo and townhomes in 33 submarkets of Jacksonville and surrounding areas, was \$230,000, up 7 percent over July 2017 per statistics from the Northeast Florida Association of Realtors. Because of low inventory and high demand, 14.3 percent of all sales were for more than the original listing price. In Duval County, the median price was \$204,500.

By comparison, housing in the TAP study area is very affordable. Within the area between Merrill Road, Rogero Road and the Arlington Expressway, median home value is estimated at \$106,651, according to research by Front Street Commercial Real Estate Group.

Jacksonville University and Other Stakeholders

The major employer and influencer in the study area is Jacksonville University. Under the leadership of its President, Tim Cost, JU has shifted its focus from co-existing with the local community to engaging with it, becoming a driving force in efforts to revitalize the area. Taking a collective impact approach to community problems, the university has reached out to various community, faith-based and business leaders to rally support for efforts to change the area's social and economic dynamics. As JU continues to grow, so will its economic impact, currently nearly \$300 million.

Jacksonville University is one of several stakeholders with a strong interest in changing the trajectory of the study area and Arlington in general. Sustaining a revitalization effort requires leveraging not only a community's assets but its people, both public and private partners. Renew Arlington appears to have the community support needed to get behind the initiative, as well as the support of District 1 Councilwoman Joyce Morgan, who is vice-chair of the Renew Arlington CRA. Actions not just words, however, are needed from all participants.

In any case, the revitalization effort will need a champion like a community development corporation (CDC) whose job it is to organize the day-to-day operation.



PRAIRIE-STYLE MID-CENTURY MODERN RESIDENCE DESIGNED AND BUILT BY ARCHITECT ROBERT BROWARD

History

Among the numerous community and nonprofit organizations active in Arlington are several that are working to enhance and preserve the architecture, culture and history of the community.

Old Arlington, Inc. and the American Institute of Architects-Jacksonville Chapter host an annual Arlington Mod & More Home Tour featuring many of the mid-century modern homes built during Arlington's heyday. The tour includes Norman Studios, which produced silent films in the 1920s starring African-American characters. Ann Burt, who chairs the tour committee, seeks to designate the older area of Arlington as an historic district to enable residents to work year-round to maintain the area's mid-century modern and traditional architecture.

Beyond architecture, Arlington's history is rich, offering opportunities to create cultural heritage themes that bring Native American, French, Spanish and African-American history to life.

Weaknesses

Arlington is ripe for revitalization and redevelopment. However, it lacks a strong brand or identity—a sense of place that draws people to it. To most metro Jacksonville residents, Old Arlington is an area you drive through to get to where you are going.

If there is a current identity, it is one of blight that is enforced by a lack of pride in ownership. Homes in some areas are run-down and properties are unkempt. The look is exacerbated by ugly overhead power lines. The city-owned utility, Jacksonville Electric Authority, cites cost and right-of-way constraints as barriers to burying the lines underground. In addition, businesses like auto transmission and repair shops do little to create a clean look.

The panel's consensus was that the TAP study area needs to create a "hip identity" to attract millennials and entrepreneurs who can serve as ambassadors. These trendsetters can drive residential change; others will follow. Millennials represent the largest rental population. According to a Gallup report, when marketing to millennials, a brand needs to create a compelling story and find the right people to tell that story for them, both offline and online.

Another issue is Arlington's reputation as a high crime area—real or perceived. Certainly, both property and violent crime in JU's zip code is higher than in metro Jacksonville as a whole. But Sperling's research data show that it is not as high as many other areas in the city, including Brooklyn, which is undergoing a resurgence in developer interest.

For residents who want to live, work and play in a community, finding work can be a problem. Except for Jacksonville University, there is a lack of good job opportunities in the immediate area. The high poverty level in the TAP study area and limited disposable income also has had a deleterious effect on area businesses. There is a dearth of restaurants, retail, entertainment venues and other services. As a result, disposable income is spent elsewhere. The area also lacks qualities residents look for, such as pedestrian and bike connectivity. It is not currently a walkable or bikeable community.

Opportunities

The CRA offers great hope for change. For the first time there will be money behind area revitalization plans. The plan for a mixed-use commercial corridor not only addresses blighted conditions but also transportation and connectivity, inferior infrastructure, land regulations and zoning—all designed to incentivize private investment in the area. With infrastructure going in, the panel believed the CRA can draw some developers within two to three years who can pay a prorated share of the stormwater, roundabout and other improvements.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) generated for the CRA may not be enough to support all planned projects. Funding may need to be supplemented through establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) that self-assesses a non ad-valorem tax on commercial property values.

Businesses in census tract 148, which comprises part of the CRA and is designated as an economically distressed area, are currently eligible for façade grants through the City of Jacksonville's Façade Renovation Matching Grant Program. The CRA plan also includes the establishment of matching façade grants, which will extend the area of eligibility for such grants. These grants can help to reduce area blight. However, there is a need to cluster the façade grants so that they make an impact.

Low Bar of Entry

Real estate prices in the TAP study area are comparatively low in a metro area that is seen as a hot market with some of the highest increases in home prices and rental rates in the nation. A January 2018 Ten-X Commercial research report identified Jacksonville as one of the five "top markets where investors should consider buying multifamily assets." The report estimated rental growth "will remain steady in the three percent range through 2021."

Developers and businesses can also take advantage of incentives to build and invest in the CRA. The CRA should develop a package of potential incentives (e.g., tax abatement, waiving impact fees) based on types of products sought for the corridor.

Public-private partnerships (P3s) offer a prime opportunity for redevelopment that can spark other private investment and economic growth. Jacksonville has embraced the P3 model for several projects in the Downtown area. The panel suggested University Boulevard is a public-private partnership opportunity. Merrill Road east of CVS also offers a P3 location to create cool restaurants that appeal to the student population as well as the residential base.

Revitalization efforts in the TAP study area qualify for the New Market Tax Credit Program, which should be pursued. While not the lead source in financing, the program can provide the extra support needed to make a commercial project market-worthy and help to attract necessary private investment.

Most importantly, development in the study area should target locations with the most impact. The Town & Country Shopping Center and former Thunderbird/Bethelite property provide a gateway to the study

area. A catalytic mixed-use development at that location is key to kick-starting other area investment. The university student population is the prime market for mixed-use developments for student housing with retail underneath in the University Boulevard/Merrill Road area and the University Boulevard/Ft. Caroline Road area. University Boulevard offers a prime location for neighborhood-based support businesses.

Affordable Housing Convenient to Downtown

The Jacksonville housing market is very strong. According to First American Financial Corp.'s May 2018 Real House Price Index, Jacksonville had the fourth highest year-over-year increase in the country, rising 17.4 percent compared to 11.4 percent nationally. In the meantime, real estate technology and analytics firm RealPage Inc. reported that rents during the second quarter of 2018 rose at an annual rate of 4.9 percent, the third highest increase nationally.

The study area's connectivity to Downtown is a major plus. As housing costs rise in popular places like Riverside, Avondale and Brooklyn, millennials and other trend setters will be looking for a lower cost place to live that is convenient to Downtown. There also may be opportunities to create additional connectivity to Downtown with pedestrian and bike paths across the Mathews and Hart bridges and a water taxi from Arlington to Downtown.

The area's access to the river can be a great draw. It offers the potential for developing and promoting waterfront activities. Event planning to curate activities at waterfront venues like Blue Cypress park can bring in people to help support local retail. Old Arlington also is home to Norman Studios, which can become a tourist destination if the historic studio complex can be restored and reopened.

Jacksonville University's plan for the JU Boys & Girls Club will provide a safe, constructive environment for area youth. The facility's focus on education, tech and robotics labs, as well as leadership will support academic achievement and entrepreneurship.



BLUE CYPRESS
PIER WITH VIEW
OF DOWNTOWN

Threats

Strong competition for new development dollars puts the TAP study area at a disadvantage. An Urban Land Institute study released in June 2018 found that Jacksonville has the largest percentage of its urban population in what the study describes as “emerging economic centers”—former single-family or low-density commercial areas that are evolving into new urban cores. Riverside and St. Johns Town Center were identified as prime examples.

The 19-member Jacksonville City Council serves as the board for the Renew Arlington CRA. Unfortunately, politics can play into what projects get funded. CRA money is diverted from the general fund and cannot be used for projects in any other portion of the city. Council members Morgan & Crescembeni are the only ones that have an interest in seeing Arlington’s redevelopment. They need eight other Council members to have a majority. If the CRA is not generating sufficient funds to cover needed projects, support for Arlington projects may be lacking on the Council.

Disparate special interests also can create roadblocks. While the various community groups enjoy a common cause, they have different perspectives on what is a good outcome for all. A successful redevelopment plan will focus on broad community interest as well as the needs of existing residents.

Perhaps the biggest threat is inaction. The CRA is in its third year. If it cannot attract needed capital on the commercial side within a few years, nothing may happen.

Recommendations

1. Hire a Champion

Currently, there is no designated champion for the TAP study area—someone needs to act as an executive director of a nonprofit entity such as a community development corporation, whose sole job is to organize and move redevelopment plans forward.

Funding

Funding sources should be identified from among the stakeholders seeking Arlington’s revitalization. It may include JU, the city, the CRA, a Business Improvement District (BID), community groups and/or other organizations. Each stakeholder needs to “have skin in the game.”

Requirements

The executive director should be hired for a three-year period. This person should not simply be a community organizer. The appropriate candidate must have knowledge not only about the community but real estate development, design, financing, economic development and marketing. The candidate also must be objective and not tied to Jacksonville University or any one group exclusively. If JU must host the executive director, this leader must detach himself or herself from the university and take on a third-party leadership role.

Responsibilities

The champion must see the big picture and take responsibility for executing the plan. He or she must develop a mission statement; galvanize the stakeholders; develop a brand identity to attract new investment, businesses and residents; create a marketing strategy and serve as the point-person for developers. The executive director also will need to assemble a stakeholder advisory board composed of business leaders and experts in financing, development and marketing.

2. Focus on Strategic Commercial Areas along University Boulevard

The University Boulevard corridor has the potential for redevelopment within 24 to 36 months. Branding and messaging must reverberate with developers and businesses. There are three main nodes along University that offer the greatest opportunity for redevelopment. For impact, resources, including CRA funds, façade and other funding, should be clustered at these sites. In addition, development of node-specific design guidelines, an architectural theme, signage and streetscapes for each must occur:

Town & Country Shopping Center/Thunderbird-Bethelite Property

These two properties currently offer the greatest opportunity to kick-start redevelopment at the southern entrance to the CRA. Together they comprise 36 acres and are strategically located at Arlington Expressway, the gateway to the study area and offers easy access to and from Downtown Jacksonville.

This must be a catalytic project, not a strip mall. The property is suitable for mixed-use commercial development with high-rise residential buildings, retail, restaurants, offices and other commercial businesses. A grocer like Trader Joe's could draw people who live Downtown. Zoning should be form-based, which focuses on placemaking and incorporates streetscapes, parking in the rear, and a pedestrian-friendly public realm. Utilities should be buried.

University Boulevard/Merrill Road

The planned roundabout at this intersection, including the road diet and other Complete Streets improvements are expected to help rejuvenate the area around Jacksonville University's entrance. Redevelopment should support student life, such as a mixed-use development offering student housing with retail below; e.g., coffee shop, deli, ice cream shop, cyber cafe and other restaurants.

University Boulevard/Ft. Caroline Road

University Boulevard offers a prime location for neighborhood-based support businesses. The Gazebo Shopping Center is well located to provide retail shops to support Jackson Commons and other area housing. It is a prime location for an anchor grocer such as an Aldi or Lucky's.

3. Focus Residential Improvement in areas closest to the three strategic commercial nodes

It is important to create mass around the strategic nodes. Cluster resources, such as façade and housing rehab grants for impact, and develop design guidelines, streetscapes and signage. Neighborhood branding and marketing to millennials, entrepreneurs and creative types can strengthen housing demand and attract private investment.

Housing stock survey

Survey the housing stock to identify foreclosures, houses that are abandoned and those that are condemned. They are a destabilizing force, create fire and safety hazards, and drive down property values.

Rehabilitation

Economic incentives could attract private investors to purchase, rehabilitate and resell vacant properties. However, acquisition of these properties by the community development corporation (CDC) may be required to return them to productive use. The CDC can apply for funding through community development financial institutions (CDFIs) like Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Self-Help Credit Union and intermediary organizations like NeighborWorks America.

Homeowners need to be encouraged to repair their properties by educating them about available programs, including rehabilitation grants and low-cost loans (e.g., Self-Help Credit Union). Partnering with businesses like Ace, Home Depot and Lowe's to provide DIY project workshops for homeowners may also encourage homeowners to take action.

4. Coordinate with Stakeholders

It is important that existing residents have a place at the table. Ideally, stakeholders will come together and contribute funding for a champion and nonprofit entity to advance the redevelopment efforts. Funding partners could include Jacksonville University, the CRA, the local Rotary Club, Revitalize Arlington, and others, including large area employers such as Crowley Maritime, CSX and Florida Blue. The Arlington business community can create a self-taxing Business Improvement District that may be able to fund the champion in total. However, if JU must solely fund the champion, the champion must be seen as an Arlington advocate not just a JU advocate.

About the Panelists



Farley J. Grainger, CRE, MAI, President & Founder, Iconic Real Estate Investments, Jacksonville

Farley Grainger, an original partner in Broom, Moody, Johnson & Grainger, has more than 35 years of real estate experience and a breadth of knowledge based in appraisal/valuation, brokerage, investment management and development. He holds the MAI designation from the Appraisal Institute and the CRE® designation from the Counselors of Real Estate. These designations signify the highest level of experience in the valuation and evaluation of commercial, industrial, residential and other types of properties.

Grainger was also a founding partner in the Stornoway Real Estate Investment Management firm, which managed investments for high net worth individuals and institutional investors in Singapore, China and the United States. The firm was purchased by Taurus in 2006.

He is currently the president and co-founder of Iconic. The firm specializes in the underwriting, structuring, development and management of real estate investment deals in the Northeast Florida area. With a focus on cultivating long-term relationships and a concentration in unique urban infill and adaptive re-use projects, Iconic services an extensive network of high net worth investors through strategic planning, innovative thinking and a passion for the business of real estate. Their investment and development opportunities are internally generated as well as sourced through partnerships with other local, high-quality brokers and developers.

A graduate of the University of Florida in 1977, Grainger holds a degree in real estate and urban land studies.



William Butler, CRE, President, Real Estate InSync, Tallahassee

The founder and principal of Real Estate InSync (REI), William Butler is an accomplished real estate project and portfolio manager with more than 30 years of experience partnering with high net worth private, corporate and institutional clients throughout the United States on projects ranging from commercial portfolios to mixed-use facilities and residential developments. Butler's distinguished career prior to founding REI includes service as senior vice president with The St. Joe Company, principal of Boutin Brown Butler Real Estate Services, vice president with New York-based international real estate firm, Landauer Associates, Inc., and real estate analyst and project administrator with Raymond-Kaiser Engineers, Inc. in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Among Butler's credentials is the prestigious designation of Counselor of Real Estate, which signifies professional achievement as a trusted real estate advisor, as acknowledged by his peers in the American Society of Real Estate Counselors. Butler is past chairman of the Economic Development Council of Tallahassee/Leon County, Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce, Tallahassee Downtown Redevelopment Commission, National Biletnikoff Award in college football, Florida State University Center for Real Estate Education & Research and the Urban Land Institute, Capital Region. He has also served as vice chairman of the Leon County Planning Commission.

Butler holds a Bachelor of Science in real estate from Florida State University and is a graduate of Leadership Florida and Leadership Tallahassee.



Jeanette LaRussa Fenton, President, Solution Services Tampa, Inc., Tampa

Jeanette Fenton is a consultant specializing in community and economic development, strategic planning, communications, governmental affairs and community relations. She has 41 years of public service experience in Hillsborough County, most recently with the city of Tampa, where Fenton led economic development efforts in Drew Park and West Tampa. Prior to that, she served as director of Intergovernmental Relations and as manager of Tampa's Private Industry Council.

For almost 20 years, Fenton served in various capacities with the Hillsborough County government, including social services, civil rights outreach and compliance, growth management and community development. She was appointed as the first director of the Hillsborough County Commerce Department in 1991 with responsibility for the County's economic development, consumer protection and volunteer programs. Fenton is the recipient of the 1995 Excellence in Government award, the highest honor bestowed upon a County employee. She also served for three years on the Florida Commission on Human Relations.

In addition to being a past president of the Network of Executive Women and the Florida Association of Intergovernmental Relations, Fenton founded and served as president and as a board member of the Hillsborough Community Housing Resource Board. She also has served on the Florida Redevelopment Association. Fenton is a recipient of the City of Tampa Josephine Howard Stafford Memorial Award; Florida Redevelopment Association Lifetime Achievement Award; and the Human Rights Award from the Tampa/Hillsborough Human Rights Council.

She is a graduate of the University of South Florida with a Bachelors of Arts degrees in mass communications and sociology. Fenton obtained her Master of Science degree in management from National-Louis University.



Patrick Hodges, ASLA, Founding Principal, Patrick Hodges Land Studio, Panama City Beach

Patrick Hodges is a senior landscape architect and master planner. He has extensive experience in land development and professional design practice, including but not limited to master planning, site and amenity design, marketing, scheduling and budgeting for residential communities, mixed-use, resort, commercial, civic, educational and resource-based recreational developments.

As founding principal of the Patrick Hodges Land Studio, he serves as the principal designer on all studio projects, which range from master planning of large scale, mixed-use communities, public parks and coastal resorts to detailed landscape planting, site development and amenity design. Hodges master planned more than 60 projects for the four business units of the St. Joe Company.

Hodges is the recipient of numerous professional awards, including eight Leon County Environmental Awards, the Department of Landscape Architecture Distinguished Alumnus Award from University of Florida's College of Architecture, Florida Design Arts Award, Florida Downtown Redevelopment Association Award of Excellence, Tallahassee/Leon County Historic Preservation Board Award, two Southern Living Idea Houses Awards, and Florida Communities of Excellence Award for Florida-Friendly Landscapes.

He earned a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from the University of Florida and an Associate of Science degree in real estate development from Gulf Coast State College. A member of ULI, Hodges serves on the University of Florida's Landscape Architecture & Urban Planning Professional Advisory Committee. He also is a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects and served on the Florida Chapter's Executive Committee from 2005 to 2012.



Reginald Johnson, Director, Community Development Department, City of Durham

Reginald James Johnson has served as director of the Durham, North Carolina Department of Community Development since 2011. Community Development is responsible for coordinating Durham's federal and local housing resources and promoting affordable housing and wealth and asset building. From 2004 to 2011, Johnson was senior assistant to the city manager. Johnson also serves as the liaison to Durham's two city-owned theatres – the 1,000-seat historic Carolina Theatre built in 1926 and the 2,800-seat Durham Performing Arts Center (DPAC).

A magna cum laude graduate of Southern University and A. & M. College in Baton Rouge, La., Reginald also holds a Master of Public Policy degree from Duke University and a Juris Doctor from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is a member of the Louisiana and North Carolina bars.

Johnson serves on the board of directors of the St. Joseph's Historic Foundation and Maureen Joy Charter School. He is a member of St. Joseph's A.M.E. Church and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.



Mashonda Taylor, Chief Community Relations Officer, Woodlawn Foundation, Birmingham

As Chief Community Relations Officer for the Woodlawn Foundation, Mashonda Taylor leads all the Community Wellness efforts for the foundation, a holistic neighborhood revitalization organization committed to the elimination of generational poverty in the Woodlawn community of Birmingham, Ala. Since the foundation's inception in 2010, it has developed a high quality mixed-income housing strategy, a cradle-to-college education pipeline, and community wellness programs to support and provide residents a better quality of life. Taylor establishes and builds relationships in the community, evaluating not only the needs of the community but also its assets.

Taylor is a graduate of Loyola University New Orleans with a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and Gonzaga University with a Master of Arts in organizational leadership. She is a Commissioner for the Birmingham Planning Commission, the 2018-2019 Volunteer Vice President for the Junior League of Birmingham, and Executive Board Member for Jones Valley Teaching Farm. Taylor also is a member of Class I of the Alabama Leadership Initiative, a Catalyst Fellow for the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, and a Trustee for Mount Hillard Baptist Church.



Aundra Wallace, Chief Executive Officer, Downtown Investment Authority, Jacksonville

Aundra Wallace has served as the chief executive officer of the city of Jacksonville's Downtown Investment Authority since August 2013. Prior to coming to Jacksonville, Wallace spent three years as executive director of the Detroit Land Bank Authority. His previous experience includes serving as senior vice president for Commercial Real Estate at the North Carolina Community Development Initiative, as well as holding several senior executive and department head positions, managing community, economic and housing development initiatives over twelve years with Miami-Dade County Government.

Wallace holds a Masters of Public Administration from Clark Atlanta University and a Bachelor of Science in political science from Georgia Southern University. He is a Certified Housing Development Finance Professional and a Certified Economic Development Finance Professional.



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