

AN ADVISORY SERVICES PANEL REPORT

Springfield Massachusetts



**Urban Land
Institute**

Springfield Massachusetts

Strategies for a Sustainable City

September 24-29, 2006
An Advisory Services Panel Report

ULI—the Urban Land Institute
1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.
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About ULI—the Urban Land Institute

The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI is committed to:

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

Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 35,000 members from 90 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Professionals represented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students, and librarians. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of the world's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

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About ULI Advisory Services

The goal of ULI's Advisory Services Program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 400 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfields redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's Advisory Services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives; a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 75 key community representatives; and two days of formulating recommendations. Many long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, partici-

pants in ULI's five-day panel assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academicians, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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The panel would particularly like to thank Mayor Charles Ryan and his staff; Phil Puccia, David Panagore, and the members and staff of the Springfield Finance Control Board; Russ Denver and Carol Baribeau of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce and its sponsoring members; Allan Blair, Al Griggs, and the membership of the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts; and Robert Culver, president and chief executive officer of MassDevelopment and his staff for their contributions as members of the city’s ULI Steering Committee, the preparation of panel briefing materials, and the panel’s comprehensive tour of the city.

The ULI Advisory Services panel process requires hard work on the part of the sponsor as well as panelists. The panel is grateful to the members of the city’s ULI Steering Committee: Timothy Brennan and Paul Foster, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission; Michelle Webber, Office of the Mayor; Katie Stebbins, Springfield Office of Planning and Economic Development; Scott Hanson and Phil Dromey, Springfield Office of Planning and Economic Development; Richard Henderson, Sean Calnan, Elizabeth Murphy, and David Webster of MassDevelopment; Eric Nakajima, Donahue Institute, University of Massachusetts; Nancy Urbschat, TSM Design; Ivette Cruz, Office of Housing and Neighborhood Services; Jason Mann and Cathy Mossi, city of Springfield; and Alta Stark, Lynn Johnson, and Jeff Ciuffreda, Affili-

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Conducting a panel requires the use of several venues and services. The panel would like to thank the following institutions for providing meeting space, food, or services: the Carriage House at the Barney Estate, CityStage, the Colony Club, the Fort, Frigo’s, the MassMutual Center, Peter’s Grille Prime Steakhouse, the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority, the Sheraton Springfield Hotel, and Sonoma Bar & Grill.

Finally, the panel members are grateful to the more than 140 community residents, business leaders, public officials, employers, and educational and cultural leaders who willingly gave of their time to be interviewed by the panel. Their insights and candor were particularly helpful in the panel’s understanding of the current situation in the city of Springfield.

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Foreword: The Panel's Assignment

The city of Springfield is at a pivotal point in determining its future. It has an opportunity to overcome past troubles and realize its potential as the region's urban and cultural center. Local leaders and citizens must make the following decisions:

- How should the city capitalize on its assets and make the most of its community and economic development efforts?
- How should the city prioritize its planning and development efforts?

Introduction

Leadership is at a critical transition point. The first item of business that citizens must address is how to rebuild the civic foundation of the city of Springfield into something vibrant and sustainable. Residents and workers must commit to building a new city, recognizing the strengths and assets of what is here, celebrating the energy and investment of new residents. In today's competitive environment, Springfield will not thrive and succeed if its people do not come together, share a common vision, and get about the business of implementing that vision with a steady and committed hand.

Next, the city must consider how to strengthen and diversify its downtown. The panel has identified Springfield's rich potential as the urban and cultural center of the Pioneer Valley. The Brookings Institution recently completed research on more than 200 metropolitan areas of the United States. Virtually no metropolitan area is strong if its central city is not strong. Safety and the perception of safety—especially as actual crime levels are dropping—are threshold issues for employers, residents, and visitors alike. Many development and redevelopment projects have lingered on drawing boards for too long. Key projects, able to serve a catalytic role in rebuilding the city, must be initiated at once and followed through to completion.

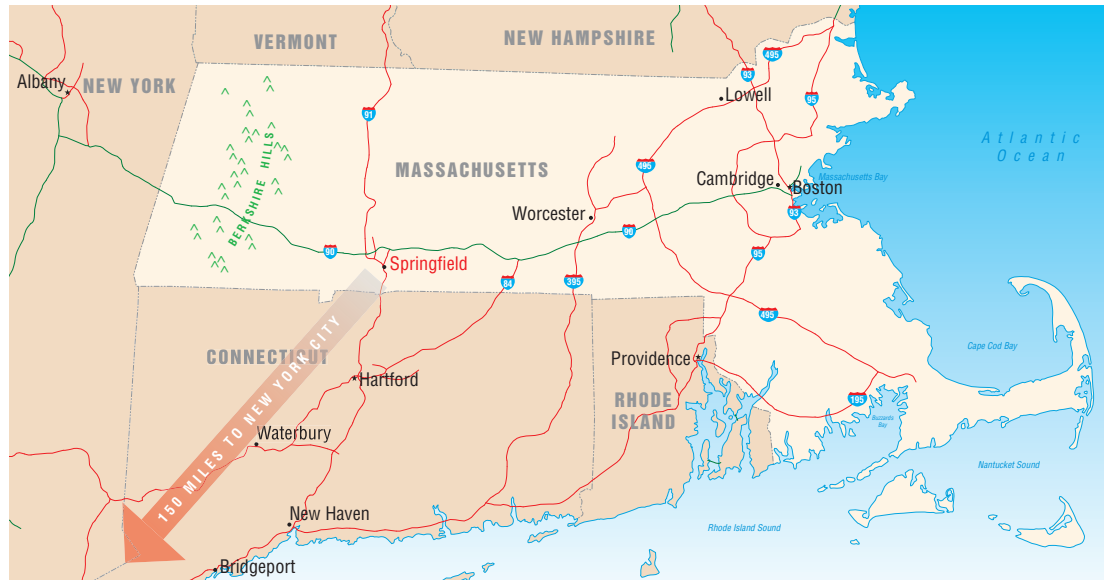
Lasting improvement will take more than the good work of a few. The panel heard that the city has been known as both the "City of Homes" and the "City of Grudges." The City of Homes needs to be rekindled, and the City of Grudges needs to be permanently buried. Springfield must pursue strategies to realize the rich potential of its downtown and secure its place as a vibrant urban center and cultural hub for the region. A strong downtown will, in turn, be a vital support for the livelihood of the city's neighborhoods and provide an inducement for redirecting new retail, entertainment, office, and housing growth that has been moving to the suburbs.

The strong neighborhood associations must look beyond the borders of their own communities and engage in new ways with local and regional businesses, with local and state government, and with the media. The government and Finance Control Board cannot do this work alone. With a shared vision of the future, people can focus on the tasks at hand and move on. Focusing on the past—what could have, should have, or might have been done—will not help the city move forward. Everyone



Springfield's musical and artistic attractions, such as the Dr. Seuss sculpture garden, make it a cultural hub for the region.

Location map.



loses. Springfield has a comeback story to tell. It needs help from a variety of partners if the story is to have a happy ending. Those potential partners must be engaged, educated, and enthusiastic about making Springfield what it can be in the future, a thriving urban hub in the heart of the Pioneer Valley.

Springfield has important decisions to make. The city has great resources: beautiful buildings, 35 parks, and lovely rivers and ponds. Several major employers call the city home. Small businesses find the city a great place for a startup. Most of all, Springfield has its people. Although the city has had its challenges and troubles in recent years, the people of Springfield continue to have great pride in their city and are struggling to improve it.

The city must work for all, new resident or old, well connected or not. Transparency and ethical behavior must be the norm, not the exception. The hard, tough work being done now by the Financial Control Board must continue until community values and practice meet the highest expectations of the people who love this city so deeply.

The Assignment

Springfield is strategically located approximately 35 miles north of Hartford, Connecticut, 90 miles west of Boston, and 150 miles northeast of New York City. The city serves as a gateway to the

popular vacation area of the Berkshires. It is part of the financial, medical, and educational center of western Massachusetts.

Over the past 15 years, both good things and bad have happened in Springfield. In 1992, state funding was changed and Springfield lost approximately 80 percent of its nonschool state aid, crippling local services. Over the years, crime has increased as gangs and drug trafficking gained a foothold in the city. Some middle-class residents chose to move to the suburbs, as in other communities nationally. Some neighborhoods have started to slide. Development projects floundered, and corruption crept into segments of the public sector. Neighborhoods seemed to turn inward rather than embracing the entire city and region.

On the positive side, primary businesses have continued to expand: MassMutual Financial Group and Baystate Health have continued expansion within the city. Downtown has seen significant new regional cultural and civic spaces with the building of the convention center and the addition and expansion of new museums. City leadership has been rekindled. Business leaders are again taking hold and discussing new projects and investments. The state of Massachusetts has stepped in and assisted the city with support in the form of the Springfield Finance Control Board. It is a new beginning.

At this important juncture, the city asked the Urban Land Institute to convene a five-day Advisory Services panel to address specific issues confronting Springfield. The panel's assignment was both broad and targeted to certain development projects. The city asked the panel to undertake the following:

- Consider the current position of Springfield, its assets and opportunities, and its existing liabilities. Suggest a strategy for the city to leverage its available resources and encourage economic development, prioritizing its short-term, mid-term, and long-term planning and development efforts.
- Identify changes in current economic development programs and the process and approach to improve the quality and quantity of private investment, increase home ownership, and reduce crime.
- Analyze and assess public projects that might have the greatest potential in the near term for Springfield.
- Consider improved physical links within the downtown, between downtown and the riverfront, and between the downtown and the neighborhoods.
- Identify effective structures to carry out the strategies identified by ULI.
- Suggest the panel's view of Springfield's market and role within the region.
- Comment on economic development options regarding the expansion of the existing industry clusters, health, financial services, education and tourism/arts. Identify measures to support those strategies. Discuss how to balance economic development efforts between attracting new companies and retaining existing companies.

Summary of Recommendations

In light of these issues, the panel makes the following major recommendations:

- *Encourage strong community leadership from the highest level to step forward.* Leaders at the highest levels, across all sectors—public, pri-



vate, and community—must commit and engage positively for Springfield's success.

- *Leave the Springfield Finance Control Board in place for another term.* Much needs to be done in a relatively short time frame for the city to regain its credibility and become a good place to live and invest. The control board has had substantial success, retaining a respected police commissioner who is already showing results, resolving lingering labor contracts, and balancing the budget. The efficiency and effectiveness of the control board can assist the city over the next few years in focusing on tasks, not politics. New leadership needs to emerge to carry on when the control board steps aside.
- *Make downtown the urban center of the Pioneer Valley, a great place to live, work, and play.* Reducing crime is a threshold issue. Encouraging market-rate housing, additional amenities, and ultimately more retail and entertainment will make Springfield what it can be, not a stepsister to other towns in the valley.
- *Embrace diversity throughout city.* Springfield has a rich ethnic and racial diversity that, with broad engagement of the representative public, is a critical foundation for future progress. It is time to celebrate what Springfield *is*, not bemoan what Springfield *is not*.

Assisting the growth and development of existing small businesses in Springfield stands to be a much stronger economic development tool than national or regional recruiting efforts.

Leaders at the highest levels, across all sectors—public, private, and community—must commit and engage positively for Springfield's success.



- *Conserve Springfield's neighborhoods.* As the “City of Homes,” the city should engage its many civic and neighborhood associations to support efforts to protect the architectural character of the city’s residential neighborhoods while also building a shared sense of community.

Although many projects may be viable over time, the panel believes that Springfield’s highest attention should be given to the following efforts:

- Solidify downtown as the preeminent employment, urban, cultural, and visitor center for the Pioneer Valley. Such efforts include:
 - Adding more market-rate housing in a variety of housing types to meet the market, such as lofts, townhomes, condominiums, and single-family homes.
 - Focusing attention on Court Square, including the redevelopment of the historic former Court Square hotel building. The ground-level uses and appearance of these buildings are important to encourage pedestrians and more-walkable connections in downtown.
 - Planning for the adaptive reuse of the Federal Building on Main Street. The city should gain control of the site and ensure that the site is used in a manner that will support downtown revitalization efforts. Optimal reuse of the building would be for classrooms or a student center for one of the locally based colleges, which would bring energy and activity to downtown.
- Demolish the York Street jail. The jail is a key downtown property that has languished for too long and stands as an extremely visible symbol of downtown stagnation. After the site is cleaned up and vacant, it will be available for the right development opportunity.
- Develop a plan and implementation strategy for the Gemini-Hollywood area in the South End neighborhood. Redevelopment of this area can be a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization. This area can and should become a thriving community with a mix of incomes and housing choices. Necessary steps for the revitalization of the South End neighborhood include thinking of the area in its totality, not just as isolated projects; reducing crime; reducing density in the Hollywood project and providing off-street parking and play space; and encouraging a good mix of neighborhood-oriented retail on Main Street.

Leadership: Public, Private, and Community

The city of Springfield is at a turning point with respect to its future, and everyone—public officials, business leaders, community organizations, and residents—must be involved in the choices at stake. These choices must start with the commitment of community leaders to renew Springfield, promote good government, engage the diversity of its population, and achieve financial stability. Some preconditions necessary for successful community development to occur in Springfield include the following:

- Effective local government support;
- A culture fostering local civic pride and corporate philanthropy;
- Sustained efforts to fight cynicism;
- Visionary developers;
- Regional cooperation; and
- A strong focus on economic development and with dedicated staff to initiate and sustain these efforts.

Encourage Strong Community Leadership

As the panel interviewed residents, business and institutional leaders, and community activists, panel members were struck that no common vision exists of either what is “wrong” with the city or how to put it “right.” Without a common vision, the necessary changes and identification of priorities are difficult to achieve. The leaders of the city, from its communities, businesses and institutions, and civic leadership (elected and appointed) must come together to work out a common sense of the role of the city and its desired future. Strong community leadership must step forward from the highest levels (see Figure 1).

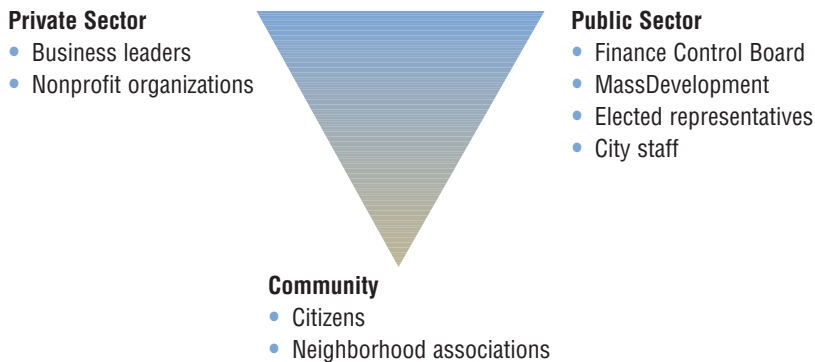
To thrive as a community and ensure that Springfield’s turnaround is enduring, Springfield’s citizenry must insist that at the city’s highest levels all business leaders step forward to identify, embrace, and opt into a plan to revitalize this great city. Strong leadership is imperative to create long-term, sustainable financial stability in Springfield. Leadership must also support Springfield’s plans to create jobs, to encourage investment, and to promote growth equitably across the whole city.

Government cannot be responsible for all things, however. Many more of its citizens must commit to stand up and help Springfield move forward. Such improvement requires public/private partnerships that reflect the city’s diversity. Going forward, business and neighborhood leaders must commit to engage positively toward the achievement of a well-defined plan for economic health. Inclusivity is key to Springfield’s success. This city’s wonderful ethnic and racial diversity must inform the agenda for progress and serve as a critical principle in engaging the public.

To achieve Springfield’s potential and establish a renewed civic foundation, the panel recommends the following:

- Renew the Springfield Finance Control Board for another term.
- Resolve inequities in nonschool state appropriations to Springfield.
- Reshape community attitudes for a positive outlook on Springfield’s future.
- Create and promote guiding principles for good government.
- Seek inclusiveness and celebrate diversity.

Figure 1
Leadership for a Sustainable Springfield



Extend the Term of the Springfield Finance Control Board

Outstanding work has been done—and continues to be done—by the Springfield Finance Control Board (SFCB) and the city under the leadership of Mayor Ryan. With many of the worst of its problems behind it, the city is well on the way to recovery. Thanks to massive belt tightening, fiscal restraint, new labor contracts, new and improved management tools, and just plain hard work on the part of many dedicated and talented people, the city is at or near fiscal solvency. It is dealing effectively and realistically with its key problems and key issues. Crime rates are beginning to decline. Municipal services are being improved, and faith is being restored in local government.

The SFCB, with the city, has made significant progress in a relatively short time. First and foremost, the business of government is now being conducted within the highest legal, moral, and professional standards. The strong partnership between the SFCB and Mayor Ryan has resulted in the achievement of significant wins:

- A positive year-end 2006 cash balance;
- The signing of fixed, long-term labor agreements going out six to seven years;
- Significant health care savings through the re-assignment of Medicare-eligible employees to

Medicare and the adoption of the state's health care plan;

- Significant improvements to delinquent tax collection, resulting in collection of \$21.5 million, or 47 percent, of the city's tax title portfolio;
- Implementation of crime prevention strategies by the new police commissioner to address fear and disorder and to build strong police and community relations;
- Citywide departmental audits and assessments with strategic action plans that seek to automate services and encourage efficiencies;
- Strong commitment to economic development with appointment of a chief development officer;
- Deployment of significant resources to improve school facilities and academic performance; and
- Highly qualified professional senior managers selected both from within and from beyond the limits of the city's boundaries.

Significant work remains for the SFCB, however, if Springfield is to right the ship for its long-term sustainable recovery. The SFCB must remain in place for another term to continue to make progress on these efforts. Despite fixed long-term labor contracts and significant constraints won on health care growth, Springfield's fiscal stability is fragile. Expenses continue to rise at a rate greater than revenues. Economic development and community growth must occur to create jobs, encourage investment, and promote growth equitably across the city. New initiatives for policing must take hold.

The panel also heard from several interviewees that improvement in city schools, both in academics and operational performance, is needed if Springfield is to attract families into its borders. Additionally, strategic action plans for coordinated delivery of health and human services among agencies is imperative as Springfield continues to struggle with social issues related to drug addiction, homelessness, poverty, and the like.

The SFCB and the city must continue together to strengthen Springfield's financial position. Cash balances are not nearly sufficient. More time is needed to streamline operations to deliver the most efficient and effective services to the residents of

Springfield. More time is needed to develop civic leadership among Springfield's residents, businesses, nonprofits, funders, and community organizations. Allowing the dissolution of the SFCB in June 2007 would be shortsighted when so much remains to do. The appointing authority, stakeholders, or both should set criteria by which to measure the completion of SFCB's agenda. Such measurable criteria will give residents the confidence that the return to self-governance is advancing.

Resolve Inequities in State Appropriations to Springfield

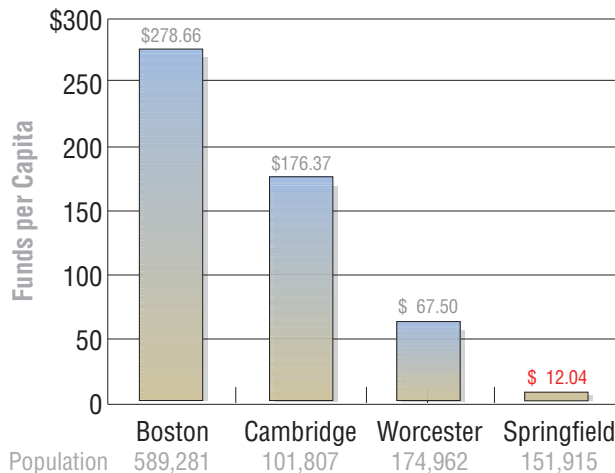
One immediate agenda item that must be a priority for the leadership in the Springfield community is righting the method used to allocate dollars in the state's Additional Assistance program. State allocation of Additional Assistance dollars is woefully out of balance.

Last year, Springfield—the third-largest city in Massachusetts—ranked 36th among municipalities receiving funds from the Additional Assistance program, which is one of two major sources of non-school aid. Distributions statewide from this program were reduced in the early 1990s and have remained relatively flat since then, but initial reductions were inexplicably applied. Where Boston and Cambridge experienced reductions in Additional Assistance in 1992 of 18 percent and 21 percent, respectively, Springfield's reduction in 1992 was 84 percent. In 1991, Springfield received \$14.3 million in additional assistance; in 1992, only \$2.3 million was allocated. For 2007, Springfield anticipates a distribution of \$1.8 million, the same as in 2006.

A real and targeted effort must be made to advocate for restoration of Springfield's rightful allocation to plan agenda items in the short term and particularly to define priorities for new leadership. As Massachusetts's third-largest city, with a population of 151,915, no reason exists why it should receive so much less than a city the size of Cambridge (population 101,807), which received \$17.9 million in 2005, or Worcester (population 174,962), which received \$11.8 million (see Figure 2). Equity must be mandatory.

Springfield is not the only city in Massachusetts facing the financial squeeze of limited revenue growth

Figure 2
State Additional Assistance Allocations, 2005



Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services.

and the rising costs of delivering municipal and educational services. More and more cities and towns across Massachusetts have been forced to reduce municipal services as employee benefit costs rise and the demands to meet state and federal mandates increase. *Moody's Economy.com*, a Pennsylvania research firm, estimates that municipalities in Massachusetts reduced their workforces more steeply than any other state in the nation between 2001 and 2005. Although increases may have occurred in worker efficiency and productivity during that period, a careful look at staffing levels necessary to meet basic city services is required. Limited revenue-raising options will continue to strain municipal finances unless action is taken to raise the distribution level of state aid to localities.

Reshape Community Attitudes for a Positive Outlook on Springfield's Future

During the course of its more than 140 interviews, the ULI panel was struck by the amount and degree of negativism that came through from so many, particularly in the private sector, which can only be self-defeating and create a drag on revitalization efforts. At the risk of sounding naïve and possibly Pollyanna-ish, the members of the panel were consistently more positive and more optimistic about the future of Springfield than

were the interviewees. Interestingly, the panel notes that outside business interests—the so-called bottom feeders—are looking at development opportunities and real estate acquisition possibilities with far more enthusiasm than are local business interests. Perhaps outsiders see things with a clearer, more unbiased eye. They are beginning to acquire properties at only a fraction of their replacement costs.

The media here, as in most cities, tends to focus on the bad and the sensational, often leaving a misleading impression. Nowhere is this tendency truer than with respect to crime. Time and time again, the panel was told how unsafe the downtown is, how high the crime rate is, and how panel members should “watch our step.” However, the panel found those reports generally overstated and old news.

A review of crime statistics reveals that Springfield’s crime rates are at the low end when compared with cities of comparable size. More encouraging is the fact that for the first six months of 2006, crime in Springfield dropped by 7 percent. Putting the crime situation in its proper perspective—both the recent improvements and the degree of crime relative to comparable cities—is important for the public’s accurate perception. Perception is often reality relative to people’s action and investment. The perception of crime appears to be worse than the reality and is likely harming the city’s investment climate.

Finally, the panel got the impression during its interviews that some people in the community are stuck in the past, either remembering the glory days of yesteryear or the major problems of the past few years. The need is to celebrate the future and work toward its realization. A participatory planning or visioning process can assist in getting the leadership of the community on the same page.

Create and Promote Guiding Principles for Good Government

To continue with reforms and shape an ongoing government that provides excellent service to the public, the city leaders need to instill a set of guiding principles throughout the entire city government, including elected and appointed officials of

the city and the many related agencies. These principles must be put on wall posters, be included at the front of major documents such as budgets, be used for discussion with employees, and be part of personnel evaluations. These principles should include the following:

- Commitment to excellence;
- Adhering to the highest ethical standards;
- Ensuring high value for tax dollars;
- Insisting on customer satisfaction;
- Being open, accessible, and responsive;
- Appreciating diversity;
- Striving for continuous improvement; and
- Being accountable.

Celebrate Diversity and Seek Inclusiveness

The composition of the population of Springfield has become increasingly diverse. The 2000 U.S. census reports that the population includes substantial numbers of residents of Hispanic, Asian, and African origin as well as African Americans. These findings represent a big change from earlier decades when the majority of the population was of European ancestry, even though they came from many different countries and spoke different languages.

The culture of the community embodied by the city in a leadership role must change to appreciate diversity and be inclusive of these many cultures in the community. Services must be provided, staff members who understand not only the languages but also the cultures of these populations must be in place, and initiatives should be pursued that allow for more input from these communities in determining the operation of the city and the decisions that are made.

Minority groups must be included in the outreach process. The city should particularly focus on the assimilation of the Hispanic population. Nearly 25 percent of Springfield is under 25 years of age, and a large percentage of this demographic is Hispanic. From taking civic leadership roles to the process of developing small businesses, the Hispanic and African American communities should



The urban hub of the Pioneer Valley, Springfield is strategically located approximately 35 miles north of Hartford, Connecticut, and 90 miles west of Boston.

be more engaged because they are a big part of the city's future.

Local leadership, in both the public and private sectors, needs to better reflect the city's changing demographics. The city's minority population, now in excess of 60 percent, hardly has representation commensurate with its numbers.

Springfield elects a strong mayor; a nine-member city council, elected at large, serves as the city's representative legislature. Elections at large, however, have not resulted in true representation of Springfield's ethnically and racially diverse population. Some form of ward representation, whether mixed or not, should be considered to address the critical issue of inclusiveness. It is the panel's understanding that the mayor and city council have taken action on this matter and adopted a home rule petition, which requires state approval, for a 13-member city council that would include eight ward district and five at-large councilors.

A more representative local government and widespread community engagement in public affairs—with the civic involvement of citizens and leaders that truly reflect Springfield's population—are critical steps to move beyond the current transitional stage and achieve a healthy, vibrant city for the long-term future. Specific suggestions from the panel follow.

Continue Outreach and Education

Increase staff in the mayor's office and in key departments who are bilingual and bicultural. These staff members must reach out to the ethnic communities to begin a dialogue to determine the most important service needs or difficulties they have in interacting with the city.

Fairs and outreach on city services and opportunities for participation in community meetings and decision making, local laws, and procedures could be held. Laws relating to building permits, housing codes, and occupancy and maintenance as well as rules about businesses in residential areas could be described at these meetings. Pamphlets and booklets in English should be developed as well as in major languages, such as Spanish.

Celebrate the City's Cultural Diversity

Fairs, festivals, and parades provide excellent opportunities to share the most interesting and exciting aspects of other cultures. Such events can feature music, food, and arts and crafts and draw visitors from throughout the region. Festivals and celebrations can help create a sense of community, generate significant economic activity, and build a city's reputation for diversity and livability. In light of these benefits, many cities dedicate financial resources to staff and promote such events. Festivals and fairs can be fun and interesting while fostering the role of Springfield as the urban hub of the Pioneer Valley.

Planning and Development Strategies

Although Springfield's population of about 150,000 has been relatively constant since 1990, the city has undergone significant demographic changes. Most-notable shifts have been in the growth of residents under 18 years of age—now nearly a quarter of the population—and a sharp increase in the Hispanic population, with 23.9 percent of the population speaking Spanish at home. These trends mean the city of Springfield must take stock of its assets and determine how to reposition itself for future growth.

Understanding the Role of Springfield in the Economy

Springfield has many assets that it can capitalize on, including the following:

- Exceptional regional access;
- A vibrant mix of uses in the urban core;
- Architecturally significant buildings ripe for redevelopment;
- Abundant, convenient parking; and
- A 350-year history to showcase.

The third-largest city in Massachusetts, Springfield is the cultural and economic hub of the Pioneer Valley, which is the fourth-largest metropolitan area in New England. Springfield is home to several of the region's largest employers, including MassMutual Financial Group, Baystate Health, Mercy Hospital, Inc., Smith & Wesson, and Big Y Foods, Inc. In the past generation, the region has experienced a radial pattern of development characterized by growth pushing away from urban core communities, such as Springfield, to the inner suburbs and rural areas.

The planning and development strategies for Springfield are intended to provide blueprints for undertaking a comprehensive effort to revitalize

the city's central business district and conserve its well-established neighborhoods. The strategies seek to capitalize on the city's multiple assets and to attract private investment that will reinvigorate these areas.

The strategies set forth are a series of interrelated ideas and initiatives that establish a framework to better position the city to achieve its full economic potential. The strategies are not static and must constantly be adapted to evolving circumstances and opportunities and address obstacles as they occur.

Meaningful downtown development and neighborhood conservation cannot be accomplished cheaply and quickly. Both the public and private sectors will be challenged to assemble critical resources to implement the strategies over time. These strategies will require upfront buy-in on their basic components and on the role each party needs to assume in their execution. Building this consensus is both the culmination of the planning process and the first step in implementing these strategies.

The value of the development strategies will be determined by the extent to which they stimulate redevelopment of downtown and conserve neighborhoods in the city of Springfield. Successful redevelopment will require a dynamic and iterative collaboration, one in which innovative ideas are exchanged and new opportunities explored. The draft Downtown Plan, prepared in 2001, should continue to serve as a guide for redevelopment of this area. Many of the ideas captured in that document are not new and are similar to those used to guide development in downtown areas of many cities. What is unique in Springfield are the city's attributes—its history, infrastructure, and demographics—and how they could be leveraged to facilitate a successful downtown resurgence. Downtown's success, as the major employer, the regional cultural and civic center, and the area's entertainment capital, is vital to the entire region.

One common denominator of virtually all successful revitalization programs nationally is a vigorous partnership between the private and public sectors. The city of Springfield must take the lead in formulating a revitalization plan for its downtown area and land use plans for its neighborhoods. To be successful, these plans must have the input of the private sector and the community.

Think Like a Master Developer

Springfield must begin to think like a master developer to analyze and leverage its assets, improve the development approval process and planning tools, and repackage vacant land. As an initial step in this process, the city should identify its strengths and leverage them. These strengths include location, transportation infrastructure, museum and cultural assets, and regional identity.

The program priorities that must guide the re-birth of Springfield's downtown, rejuvenation of its major commercial corridors, and conservation of its neighborhoods are as follows:

- *Public safety:* This is a minimal threshold issue. Concerns about public safety must be resolved to establish public confidence in the downtown and in neighborhoods.
- *Cleanliness:* Patrons and residents must be convinced that their downtown and neighborhoods will be consistently maintained as clean and attractive locations.
- *Business attraction and retention:* Simply put, the city must be dedicated to maintaining and growing existing, thriving businesses in its downtown and along its major commercial corridors.

Under its charter, the Springfield Business Improvement District (SBID), which has existed for about eight years, has responsibility for the day-to-day care and maintenance of the downtown, supplementing the efforts of the city's Department of Public Works. Commentary about the SBID indicates that the time has come to examine its role in achieving the full range of its mission within the context of a new downtown strategy. For instance, moving beyond its emphasis on beautification of downtown, the SBID could publicize recent im-



provements in public safety, promote access to ample parking downtown, and seek to connect the growth of downtown residents with area businesses. Focus should also be directed to ensure that the SBID's programs reflect the cultural diversity of the city.

Analyze Real Property Assets

At one time in Springfield's development history, the approach of "if you market it, developers will come," may have been reasonable. With a stagnant economy, limited city supports, and few new investors, however, this approach is no longer appropriate. Additionally, demographic shifts and marketing changes are making available buildings and land parcels that are strategically located and can be recycled for other uses. Therefore, the city needs a realistic and achievable marketing strategy to maximize its return from the development of its assets.

The goals of the analysis for each site should be to

- Determine how a property is positioned in the marketplace;
- Assess its advantages and disadvantages compared with those of its competition;
- Gauge the extent of developer interest; and
- Classify the site according to its readiness for development.

Downtown Springfield has ample parking, but it needs to be programmed more effectively to overcome the perception of limited spaces.

As initial steps, the city should prepare a complete inventory of its available land parcels and evaluate and rank each according to when and how it should be marketed for development. For example: “Priority 1” could be those sites that have sufficient private sector interest and are deemed ready to market. “Priority 2” would include those sites that have some private sector interest but where existing constraints that need to be overcome. “Priority 3” could include those sites that not only lack private sector interest but also need substantial and sustained city support to make the site marketable. Nearby residential parcels could be bundled to create sufficient opportunity for a residential developer to build ten to 20 single-family homes efficiently. By bundling assets, the city may draw in larger area developers.

This real estate analysis should be the basis used to market city-owned sites; it would be updated periodically. The analysis should also indicate whether linking the site to public support programs or economic development incentives would alter or improve a site’s ranking. The advantage would be that only those sites that are ready for development would be in the work programs of the relevant city agencies.

Streamline the Solicitation Process

The selection of a development team for a specific site is one of the most important aspects of the development planning process. The city now processes approvals for development projects in much the same way as it procures goods and services: through the selection of applicants that respond to a request for proposals (RFP). This approach is costly, time consuming, and most important, does not recognize the highly sophisticated nature of real estate development transactions. Several developers interviewed by the panel noted that the city’s solicitation process is not well articulated by the city and is too time consuming. A slow process can be a significant disincentive for new private development.

The panel believes that the development process would be markedly improved by removing development projects from the traditional procurement process. Instead, the city should strive for an efficient two-step request for qualifications (RFQ) and RFP process for major developments (more

than 20,000 square feet) to solicit and select developers. This two-step process allows an emphasis on marketing opportunities rather than on purchasing goods.

With an RFQ, the city asks interested parties to submit only their firm’s capability and experience and any other information required to assess the firm’s ability to develop a particular parcel. Selecting potential developers based on responses to the RFQ allows the city to prepare a short list of developers based on their experience, capacity, and other considerations—while significantly reducing the time and expense for firms to respond compared to a full proposal. Subsequently, developers selected in the RFQ process are asked to respond to an RFP with very specific design and proposal requirements. The panel believes that this approach would yield responses from developers with proven track records and speed up the city’s selection process.

Improve the Development Approval Process

Action steps that the panel believes will improve the city’s development approval process include the following:

- Ensure that the new zoning regulations provide flexibility in the application of parking requirements, establishing maximum, rather than minimum, space requirements for projects. Standards for shared parking, particularly in mixed-use developments, should be encouraged.
- Consider using experienced real estate brokers or consultants to expedite the marketing of city-owned sites to reach a broader regional audience.
- Use development solicitations as an opportunity both to market Springfield and to negotiate the best financial package (with the most reliable, credit-worthy developers). The distribution of the solicitation should be at least regional to maximize access to “best practices.”
- Establish a realistic annual revenue goal for economic development projects based on the real estate analysis.

Create a public service plan as a companion to the city’s annual budget. The public service plan should identify scheduled operations and mainte-

nance activities, establish annual expenditures, and link and leverage external public and private funds. Priority should be given to infrastructure improvements along the major corridors: State Street, Harrison Avenue, and Main Street.

Members of the city's economic development staff should not only assist with the regional economic development efforts but also focus on the city, to improve the process of development and the completion of key projects.

Establish Criteria for Evaluating City Projects

Springfield benefits from the relatively low cost of property and has many attractive development opportunities. The city has many significant development projects in the pipeline with varying degrees of financing, control, and approvals in place, but it cannot allocate resources everywhere. The city needs to focus on projects that will have the greatest effect on the city's economic development efforts. Job creation, bringing people back to the downtown, raising the quality of life in the city's neighborhoods, raising property values, and leveraging resources for maximum effect are key considerations.

The city should determine which projects should move forward using public subsidy according to the following criteria:

- Ability to generate consumer traffic in the key downtown city center;
- Creation of significant skilled labor or living-wage jobs in the city;
- Capacity to leverage public or private investment;
- Extent to which city funds are required (with a target leverage ratio of 1:3 for public/private financing);
- Considerable improvement of quality of life in a city neighborhood;
- Positive effects on real estate values; and
- Net increase in local tax revenues.

Projects should be prioritized based on these strategic criteria, and those projects not measuring up should be put on hold to see if market forces will improve their viability.

Enhance and Develop Critical Planning and Development Tools

The panel believes that Springfield needs to improve its planning, zoning, and development processes. The city of Springfield has in place most of the regulatory tools found in municipalities and urban areas: master planning, zoning, subdivision, and a recently developed Capital Improvements Program. Yet existing procedures appear confusing, cumbersome, and time consuming, in part because city responsibilities for land use regulation and approvals are spread among so many agencies and commissions. For example, currently the following bodies are each involved with land use regulation in the city:

- The nine-person, appointed planning commission is responsible for recommending the Master Land Use Plan and neighborhood plans, liquor licenses, and changes to the city's zoning and subdivision regulations and for submitting these recommendations to the City Council for approval.
- The Board of Appeals hears and decides petitions for variances.
- The city's Redevelopment Authority approves urban renewal plans and amendments to the 37 existing urban renewal plans, with final approval required from Commonwealth of Massachusetts's Department of Housing and Community Development.

In real estate development, time is money—so a lengthy, burdensome process will discourage developers. The panel urges the city to explore ways of consolidating these land use regulation functions. This consolidation could possibly be achieved by eliminating or combining some of the various reviews and approvals or, alternatively, creating a “one-stop shop” in the city for obtaining project permits.



Among Springfield's most appealing resources are its 35 parks.

The city's planning and development processes would also benefit from updating and streamlining. Some of these efforts can be achieved locally; others require changes at the state level.

State Land Use Laws

The local impact of state land use laws needs to be considered. For example, Springfield's planning commission operates under the authority of section 81-0 of chapter 41 of the Massachusetts General Laws. Unfortunately, the American Planning Association describes Massachusetts as having some of the most outdated state land use laws in the nation and notes that the effectiveness of the local land use authority is often hampered by confusing and unduly limited state law. Proposed changes to the Massachusetts Land Use Reform Act are the first major updating of the commonwealth's zoning in 30 years and of planning and subdivision controls in 50 years, according to the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

Planning

Neighborhood and small-area master plans focused on economic development play a role in public and private land use decision making. They express and define a vision for the area for the future, give direction and certainty to private investors, and allow the city to allocate resources in a timely fashion to support economic development. With the city's wide-ranging budget and administrative

problems, however, the city has not given priority attention to its land use planning activities.

The city developed a series of neighborhood plans in the 1990s and the existing master plan for the downtown area was developed by a consultant in 2001. The city's existing comprehensive plan and neighborhood plans should continue to serve as guides to the city's redevelopment. However, none of these plans has been adopted by the planning board or the city. Updating and adopting all of these documents should proceed posthaste. The panel understands that a principal planner who can facilitate this process will be hired by the city in the near future.

Many of the ideas captured in the city's comprehensive and neighborhood plans are being successfully tested and implemented in downtowns and neighborhoods across the nation. Springfield may wish to examine the experiences of Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, Maryland; Cleveland, Ohio; and other cities that have approved similar changes to their downtown plans.

Zoning

Traditionally, zoning reflects policies in neighborhood and master plans. Without an adopted master plan, development and zoning decisions become more difficult to propose and approve. Developers and others feel a sense of unpredictability because the existing zoning cannot be relied on; such uncertainty can cause property values to decline or stagnate.

In March 2006, the city initiated an effort to revise and modernize its zoning regulations, enhance economic development opportunities, focus on the process and a better expression of community goals, simplify and clarify zoning districts, and address frequently raised questions about conflicting land use issues. The process is expected to be completed in February 2007.

In Springfield, in contrast to other cities, zoning decisions are often made through special permits approved by the City Council—without involvement of the planning commission. Yet the advantage of planning commission involvement is that citizens have an opportunity to debate a proposal and provide input in an informal fashion. Using

the City Council–driven special permit approach essentially eliminates an opportunity for citizens to provide comments and input before the proposal gets into the political process. The new proposals under consideration by the city are intended to change this process so that the site-planning decisions are made by professionals in the planning department, not members of the City Council. The panel supports this administrative change.

Capital Improvements Program

The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is currently prepared by the city's Budget Office with little or no involvement of the Planning Commission. As such, the CIP is more a budgeting than a planning document. It provides a list of the city's proposed capital expenditures without the neighborhood land use context. Therefore, its utility as a significant planning tool and, thus, an economic development tool, is limited. The panel recommends that the CIP be redrafted to model those in other cities to improve its use by the city as a planning and development tool.

Repackage Vacant Land

Springfield has many small lots of vacant land and structures dotted throughout the city; however, like so many older communities, Springfield has very little vacant land in parcels of five acres or more, primarily in the northeast quadrant of the city. To support positive uses of city-owned vacant land, lots should be cleaned, grass cut, and vacant buildings secured. These simple actions leave a very different impression on passersby than overgrown land and partially boarded buildings.

Given this lack of readily developable lots of significant acreage, the city's need for specific development criteria is vital. (See section "Establish Criteria for Evaluating City Projects," page 19.) This land, which is primarily industrial in charac-

ter, needs to be redeveloped intensively. However, low-density warehouse or distribution-type facilities that generate relatively few jobs and modest tax revenues do not represent the highest and best use for most of these parcels. Some of the lots could become pocket parks, creating focal points for new development and revitalized projects.

The city should create a Land Bank Authority that takes tax-delinquent land and holds it for future development, and the city should include these abandoned or vacant lots as part of the real estate analysis previously described to determine their highest and best use. Land bank programs are an economic and community development tool to revitalize urban areas, improve tax revenues, expand housing opportunities, and remove public nuisances. Whereas abandoned and vacant properties lower property values, a land bank helps local governments transfer these properties back to responsible landowners more readily, turning them back into usable parcels that support neighborhood health and vitality. In some cases, the highest and best use may be as public space that can enhance the development potential of an adjoining property or the larger neighborhood.

For the many smaller vacant lots spread around the city, the panel recommends that the city consider bundling available city-controlled vacant land and structures in a targeted area, instituting neighborhood-compatible design standards, and putting the land out in a solicitation. In this way, vacant lots that are grouped together can go up for bid by small builders to do neighborhood infill construction in an efficient manner that requires less subsidy. The city should avoid large subsidies of \$100,000 or more per property.

Downtown Market Potential

Downtowns are destinations that provide rich and diverse land uses for people to gather, live, work, and play. They are the centers for business, commerce, and government. Great downtowns have compact, walkable environments; architecturally significant buildings; arts and entertainment; parks; and housing available for all income levels. When all of these attributes come together, they provide citizens with a great place and exceptional lifestyle. Springfield has all of these attributes. Few cities in America can boast this kind of walking environment and easily identifiable districts.

Downtown Assets

Springfield is the center of the Pioneer Valley region: no other city or town in the region possesses its breadth of cultural offerings, historic built environment, and architectural fabric. Residents and business owners in the Pioneer Valley, especially in the surrounding suburbs, need to understand that a vibrant Springfield benefits everyone.

Downtown Springfield's museums, arts, theaters, and geographic centrality are major assets. Downtown Springfield has great market potential to position itself as the cultural center for the Pioneer Valley region.

Historic Downtown and Cultural Attractions

The historic buildings that characterize downtown contribute to an atmosphere that is remarkable for a city of Springfield's size. Highlighting this streetscape is the Quadrangle with its concentration of cultural facilities, Court Square with Symphony Hall and City Hall from the "City Beautiful" era, and the attractive residential Mattoon Street historic district.

Regional Centrality

Springfield is truly the gateway to the Pioneer Valley. That is much more than an advertising slogan. Within two hours, Springfield is within

reach of well over 25 million people—an enormous marketplace. Located at the intersection of I-91, I-291, and I-90/the Massachusetts Turnpike, Springfield provides exceptional access to Boston and Worcester, Massachusetts; Hartford and New Haven, Connecticut; and metropolitan New York. Interstate 91 alone carries more than 100,000 vehicles a day. Furthermore, Springfield has four trains daily to New York City and three trains daily to Boston. It serves as the headquarters of Peter Pan Bus Lines, one of the northeast's largest coach carriers, with service to more than 70 cities. This centrality is an economic development tool whose potential has only been partly realized.

Downtown Liabilities

In addition to its significant assets, Springfield's downtown has some real or perceived liabilities to consider.

High Vacancies in Office and Commercial Space

A substantial inventory exists of unused or underused older, primarily commercial, Class B and Class C buildings, many of which are functionally obsolete. The office vacancy rate is in the 15 to 18 percent range—or slightly more if available sublet space is considered. No new speculative or multi-tenant office space has been constructed in the central business district for more than 15 years.

With rents for the city's four Class A office buildings running in the range of \$14 to, at most, \$19 per square foot, including operating expenses and taxes, new private office construction cannot be justified. Downtown's 45 Class B office buildings and 22 Class C office buildings have vacancy rates well over 20 percent, with rents from as low as \$6 to \$12 per square foot, inclusive of operating expenses and taxes.

Crime

Downtown is shared space for the city and region and must be perceived to be safe for business con-

ditions to improve. The perception is that downtown is a high crime area, with a significant homeless population and numerous social problems.

Nevertheless, the reality suggests a more-positive picture than is often reported. The city of Springfield is actually safer than it was a year ago and should be commended for taking significant steps in addressing this issue. Under the city's new police commissioner, citywide crime is down by some 7 percent just within the past six months. Today, 600 walking patrols are on the street, up from only 16 a year ago. When compared with cities of similar size, Springfield actually has one of the lower crime rates nationally.

On balance, the central business district clearly needs “shoring up,” which the panel believes is definitely attainable. Although this revitalization will not occur overnight, neither should it take an unrealistically long time with a real commitment—and a true partnership between the public and private sectors. The bottom line is that the city has a story that it can tell that should help decrease the perception of increasing crime (Figure 3).

Opportunities for Downtown

Springfield's downtown holds many opportunities for its renewal and redevelopment. They include maximizing the effect of the many local colleges and high-profile major employers, attracting new markets to downtown and comprehensively showing off the city's cultural assets, and cultivating new residential and retail development downtown.

Higher Education

Springfield's colleges and major employers can play a significant role in economic growth. As integral engines of the city's economy, they can seek new ways to connect to the community. They can reconnect by moving certain back-office facilities, student housing, or classrooms to downtown. Communities throughout the country are using their colleges as catalysts for urban revitalization. Springfield has several institutions of higher education within its borders, with approximately 17,000 postsecondary students among Springfield Technical Community College, Cambridge College, Springfield College, Western New England College, and American International College. Several



Above: The ULI panel recommends developing downtown Springfield as the urban and cultural center for the Pioneer Valley. Left: Located at the intersection of several major interstate highways, Springfield is also readily accessible by air, train, and bus.

Figure 3
Springfield Police Department Crime Report Data

Crime	2005*	2006*	Change	Trend
Murder	8	9	13%	Up
Rape	61	63	3%	Up
Robbery	326	331	2%	Up
Aggravated assault	925	825	-12%	Down
Burglary	958	967	1%	Up
Larceny	2,986	2,783	-7%	Down
Motor vehicle theft	900	779	-13%	Down
Total	6,164	5,757	-7%	Down

* Comparison of the first half of 2005 and 2006.

Source: Springfield, Massachusetts, Police Department.

vocational training programs exist, both at the secondary and postsecondary school levels. Springfield is considered to have the state's number-one small business creation program. The panel understands that at least one or two colleges, including Cambridge College and American International College, are interested in moving supplemental educational facilities downtown. The panel strongly endorses exploring these options.

Students and younger people are often early movers into revitalizing urban cores. Younger people gravitate toward city centers and environments that offer urban energy. If the city of Springfield wants these young people—especially its skilled postsecondary students—to remain local, it must create opportunities for them. Giving them a feeling of ownership in how the city center develops in the future is important.

Major Employers

The city is fortunate in having three exceptionally large, active, and growing employers—MassMutual Financial Group, Mercy Hospital, and Baystate Health—employing a combined total of more than 11,000 people in Springfield. In addition to being major employers, all have proven to be outstanding corporate citizens whose contributions to all aspects of the community are impressive. The panel understands that the city is not currently working with major employers on an in-city housing program. Through Fannie Mae, very good programs exist for employer-assisted housing, which is an opportunity worth exploring to benefit both the city and employees.

Serving a regional clientele of close to 1 million people, Baystate Health has become the 16th-largest employer in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Its outreach efforts with the public school system, Tufts University School of Medicine, and the University of Massachusetts make Baystate one of the best connectors for Springfield and the Pioneer Valley's growth. Furthermore, as a provider of high-value-added services, Baystate Health is competing for medical professionals from across the country. A vibrant city center would give Baystate a competitive edge when recruiting talent.

As the new economic development staff is hired, an outreach program can be initiated to regularly call on large employers and small businesses to determine whether the city can assist them and help their businesses grow. In the panel's experience, assisting existing businesses has been the strongest economic development tool—much greater than national or regional recruiting efforts.

Market Significant Attractions

All of the stakeholders, including the Convention and Visitors Bureau, economic development offices, Chamber of Commerce, and SBID, need to have a common message regarding the amenities in Springfield and the Pioneer Valley area. Springfield needs to collateralize the positive things happening and tell its story.

MassMutual Center

The new MassMutual Center is a thriving meeting, convention, and special events center and an anchor for downtown and the southern end of Main Street. Over the next three to five years, it stands to be an excellent catalyst for additional retail development and possibly a hotel in the next ten years.

Theaters

Well over 100,000 people a year attend the city's shows and events at both CityStage and Symphony Hall throughout a production season. One of the challenges is to figure out how to package these amenities when marketing the city. The hotels, restaurants, and other public amenities must join forces.

Expand Opportunities Downtown for Various Housing Types

A clear need exists for new market-rate and workforce housing to be brought into the downtown market. Many of the vacant or underused Class B and Class C office buildings are historic structures that offer substantial potential for adaptive use, particularly housing, within a short- to medium-term time frame. Because a significant amount of subsidized multifamily housing already exists downtown for households of low to moderate incomes, the panel recommends that any re-



The MassMutual Center is a thriving meeting, convention, and special events center and an anchor for downtown and the southern end of Main Street.

habilitation of these buildings for housing be for market-rate units. A healthy balance of various housing types should be available, and various housing options should be explored.

Student Housing

Students are one of the few demographics that are generally more prone to pioneer living in a transitioning urban neighborhood. Provided the area has convenient connections to the colleges, through reliable mass transportation or by foot, students are in less need of other amenities that currently do not exist downtown. Springfield Technical Community College, with an enrollment of approximately 6,000 students, mostly commuters, has expressed an interest in exploring opportunities for downtown student housing in the future.

Housing for Artists

Artists are also early movers in downtown revitalization efforts. They like the authenticity found in the architecture of older buildings and are generally more accepting of a “gritty” urban fabric. Art Space, a national developer of subsidized artist housing, had recognized a need for artist housing several years ago in the proposed development at the Gemini site. These efforts should be strategically refocused downtown. A high concentration of artists already lives in the region. Significant art festivals take place in the area, most notably the

Crafts and Arts Festivals in Northampton. The panel feels that the low cost of housing in Springfield, coupled with the proximity to Northampton, means a realistic opportunity exists to pull artists into Springfield’s downtown.

Even though both student and artist housing may require subsidies, these subgroups are not perceived by the real estate market and wider community as typical affordable subsidized housing. Artists and young creative people are seen by the real estate market as a leading indicator that a neighborhood is about to turn around.

Affordable Housing

As market opportunities for downtown housing expand, keeping affordable and workforce housing in the area will be important. Currently, affordable housing is not an issue, because most housing in downtown would be considered affordable.

Expand Retail Development

“Lifestyle retail” is an expanding trend throughout the country as cities create new urban centers to attract a growing class of street-oriented retailers—as well as customers—who do not want to be enclosed in traditional shopping malls. Lifestyle retail centers tend to be pedestrian-friendly, open-air developments with distinctive architecture,

No other city or town in the region possesses Springfield's breadth of cultural offerings, historic built environment, and architectural fabric.



typically blending mixed uses associated with a traditional main street. These centers are vibrant places where people can live, work, and play—and gather in public spaces that feel like part of a community. To its benefit, Springfield already has an authentic urban district. It does not need to focus on building one, rather on merchandising and branding the one it has.

One example of a retailer seeking this type of environment is American Apparel, a socially conscious, youth-directed Los Angeles–based clothing manufacturer and retailer. The company goes after this lifestyle retail market by gravitating specifically toward the urban fabric of pioneering street locations. In doing so, American Apparel has become a catalyst for additional retail to follow.

Identify and Attract Target Markets for Downtown

As part of its market analysis focusing on revitalization for Springfield's urban core, the panel considered the likely demographics that would be attracted to living downtown as essential preparation. Households with grown children (empty nesters) and people in their mid-20s or younger (Generation Y) are two likely candidates. In addition, the panel examined the components for a successful retail/commercial strategy that can trans-

form downtown Springfield into a notable retail destination.

Empty Nesters

This group has an institutional memory of what downtown Springfield used to be. It is their city. Bars are generally not this demographic group's main interest, but cafés and good retail are. Only a few diverse restaurants are needed to capture some of these people.

An opportunity also exists to cross-pollinate traffic from other events and attractions in Springfield. Empty nesters are prime markets for both urban housing and retail. Census data indicate that only about 2 percent of all American households have children under 18 years of age. With approximately 75 percent of the market without young children, cities have found ready consumers for urban offerings.

The Youth Market

The youth market, often referred to as Generation Y, is becoming immune to traditional advertising found in shopping malls and is demanding authenticity. They rebel from suburbs and shopping malls. They crave authenticity found only in cities.

Focus on the Right Tenant Mix

The many bars now within the central area attract a narrow range of customers. While some stores

cater to the needs of a daytime working population, choices for shopping downtown are currently limited. Although retail growth downtown is important, perhaps an even more critical step for revitalization efforts is cultivating and attracting the right tenant mix.

For the most part, the downtown merchandising mix should seek to be completely different from anything else in the region. Avoid the chain retail found in malls and power centers. Shopping downtown is more difficult, so distinctive shops can make the customer's time and effort worthwhile. The goal should be to create a retail destination that is unique for the Pioneer Valley region.

Large, national credit department stores are no longer a viable anchor for downtown. However, specialty retail and restaurants, with an emphasis on locally owned businesses, should be an important emphasis for the next two to three years. Attracting a few small national tenants could also go a long way. For example, the city could focus on getting an additional Starbucks downtown. With the current daytime office population, this goal is realistic in the next one to two years. A Starbucks would also be seen as a litmus test for the turnaround of downtown.

With high vacancy rates in the downtown office market and the limited spending power of current daytime workers, new offerings to draw visitors and regional residents should be part of the economic development strategy. As downtown becomes healthier, with new housing and office, this market will expand naturally.

The panel heard various opinions about the city's "entertainment district": the Mardi Gras and other sex-oriented businesses on and around Worthington Street in the central area. Some interviewees felt that this type of entertainment district poses a threat to developing a vibrant downtown, whereas others maintained that these businesses form a financially viable core that constitutes a not-insignificant source of revenue. The panel recommends a compromise: this entertainment district should not be encouraged to expand beyond its present confines, and these businesses must be tightly controlled and monitored so as not to induce a perception of crime in the area.



Cluster Businesses Downtown for Street Synergy

Urban retail districts are a reflection of a neighborhood's or city's soul. Main Street should be known as having the most distinctive retail environment in the Pioneer Valley region. Whereas a shopping mall or strip center retailer relies on the synergy found in the proximity of its cotenants, urban retailers rely on a more-random synergy from clustering near other storefronts, preferably independent businesses that offer a distinctive, interesting streetscape.

Although Main Street can become the "soul of Springfield" and draw from the entire city and region, other neighborhood retail markets can emerge throughout the city. Opportunities to create smaller, walkable urban retail districts exist in other areas. As the South End becomes more secure, the State Street corridor and Central Street are good candidates for this type of revitalization. Nationally, some communities have had success in creating specialty shopping districts to anchor neighborhood commercial such as antiques, home furnishings, and the like.

Parking

Easy access to parking is essential to the success of any retail business, but parking does not have to be directly in front of the store. Parking need not destroy an urban streetscape to be effective.

Many downtown restaurants and shops cater to the needs of a daytime working population. New offerings should be sought to draw visitors and regional residents.

An urban retail district should have some nearby street parking, surface lots, and parking garages.

Ample parking exists in downtown Springfield; it simply needs to be programmed more effectively to overcome the perception of limited parking. Customers need to know where to park and must have assurance that parking is safe and secure. To allow downtown and Main Street to develop, the city should also consider offering free parking after 5 p.m. and on weekends.

Seek Higher Occupancy in Existing Downtown Commercial Space

Before Springfield focuses on new construction, more absorption is needed of what is available today. Alternative uses for existing retail and hotel space need to be explored creatively and exhaustively, including as back-office and educational facilities. Some of the existing Class B and C buildings may be able to be converted to residential. The hotel occupancy rate should increase before the city builds any new hotels.

The panel heard talk of a boutique movie theater that could take over the old USFO store space in the Tower Square mall. This very creative use of dead space could have several benefits: (a) as a new concept to the region, it would pull from a larger trade area than most other retailers would; (b) a niche theater could be programmed for corporate conferencing and classroom space during the day (a great amenity to the offices); (c) it would be an anchor representing a shift in downtown retail.

Downtown Design Elements and Key Projects

The center of Springfield can be defined as the area surrounding Court Square. On Main Street, Court Square houses government offices, Symphony Hall, office buildings, and the MassMutual Center and offers excellent opportunities for mixed-use development. In addition, downtown can draw on the many neighborhoods, parks, and colleges of Springfield that are within a 15-minute drive from Court Square.

Springfield's downtown can be broken down into two general areas:

- **Urban Core:** the area from Symphony Hall to the Museum Quadrangle and from Worthington Street to Union Street, all destinations that are no more than a ten-minute walk from Court Square; and
- **Metro Center:** the area along Main Street from the Arch to South End and along the river to the new Federal Building, all destinations that are no more than a 15- to 20-minute walk from Court Square.

Given the broad scope of the questions presented to the panel and the city's limited resources available to carry out recommendations, the panel decided to focus on the Urban Core and Metro Center areas as defined here. These areas potentially have the greatest effect on the city as a whole and can spur future development and investment.

The Urban Core is made up of various districts close to one another that are clearly definable but not well connected. Despite their proximity to one another, a perception exists that these districts are not easily navigable on foot. People who visit Springfield need directional assistance to know where they are and how to move from district to district. An example is the Mattoon Street area, which is adjacent to the Museum Quadrangle; yet a visitor at the museum would not necessarily

walk into this architecture-rich housing district because nothing invites visitors in.

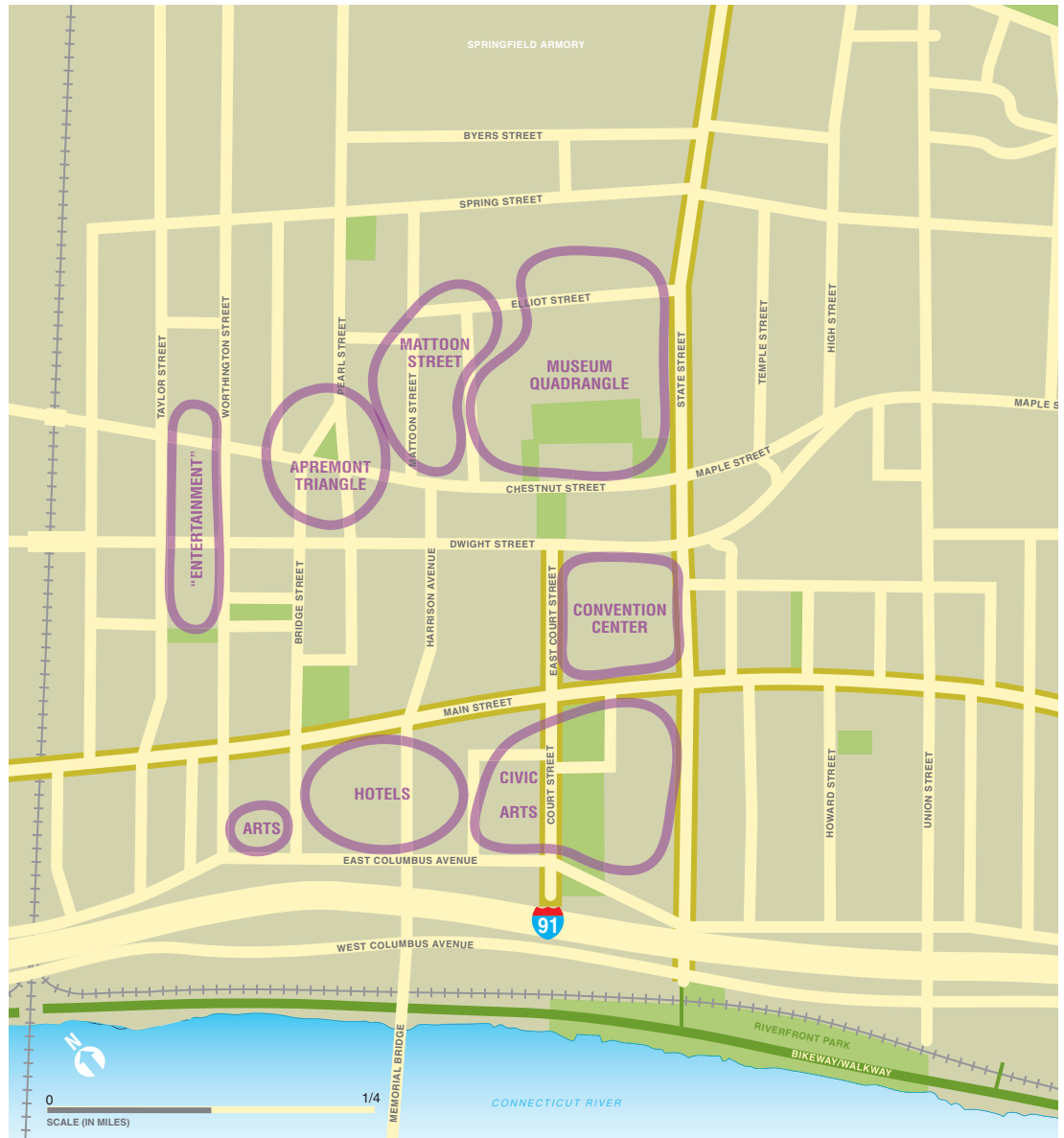
Readily identifiable graphics and signage can easily guide a visitor from one district to another. Historical markers should be expanded and prominently placed to highlight the significance of a location or building, giving the reader a sense of the past. In addition, a visual and environmental hierarchy of streets should be delineated to connect the various districts, particularly along major arteries such as Main Street and State Street and secondary routes such as Court, Dwight, and Chestnut streets. An enhanced streetscape will present a physical road map for visitors and locals alike to follow and enjoy the beauty and history of Springfield.

Main Street needs to feel like a main street. It should be a vibrant mix of uses, including office, hotel, restaurant, retail, the arts, and housing. To enhance the area, the streetscape project that was completed around Court Square should be continued from the Arch to the South End (that is, im-

Clearer downtown links and directional assistance would help visitors move from one nearby district to another, such as from Springfield's Museum Quadrangle to the adjacent Mattoon Street residential historic district.



Springfield's Urban Core is made up of clearly definable districts that are close to one another but not well connected with appropriate signage.



proved sidewalks, lighting, trees, highly visible signage, banners, benches, and the like).

Improvements to State Street should be coordinated and consistent with the quality that has been completed at Court Square. In addition, Pynchon Park at East Court Street should be the connecting point from Court Square to the museum district just up the hill and therefore include similar streetscape materials. Key intersections should have pavement changes, highly visible directional signage, crosswalks, and appropriate lighting. The city should establish walkable gateways to the Urban Core along Main Street at the Arch and at the South End.

State Street is the primary boulevard into the Metro Center, a residential collector, and the gateway to colleges, schools, the new Federal Build-

ing, and the MassMutual Center. Again, the street improvements should be coordinated with those already made along Main Street. MassMutual and the colleges along State Street should be encouraged to create people-friendly entrances to their campuses. The schools should consider placing student centers along State Street. This strategy will bring people and activity to the street and make State Street the gateway to downtown that it should be.

Priority Projects

The panel examined several potential areas of interest for the redevelopment of downtown, prioritizing the ones of greatest interest as short-term projects warranting immediate attention (in the next one to two years) and mid-term projects that should follow in the next three to five years.



Distinct downtown districts are perceived as not easily navigable on foot. The outline overlays a footprint of Springfield's Eastfield Mall on downtown; the arrows indicate common access points that mall customers walk easily. The overlay illustrates the proximity of different parts of the Urban Core and the South End neighborhoods from a pedestrian perspective.

Short-Term Priority Projects

Following are projects that could have immediate positive effect and influence future development activities.

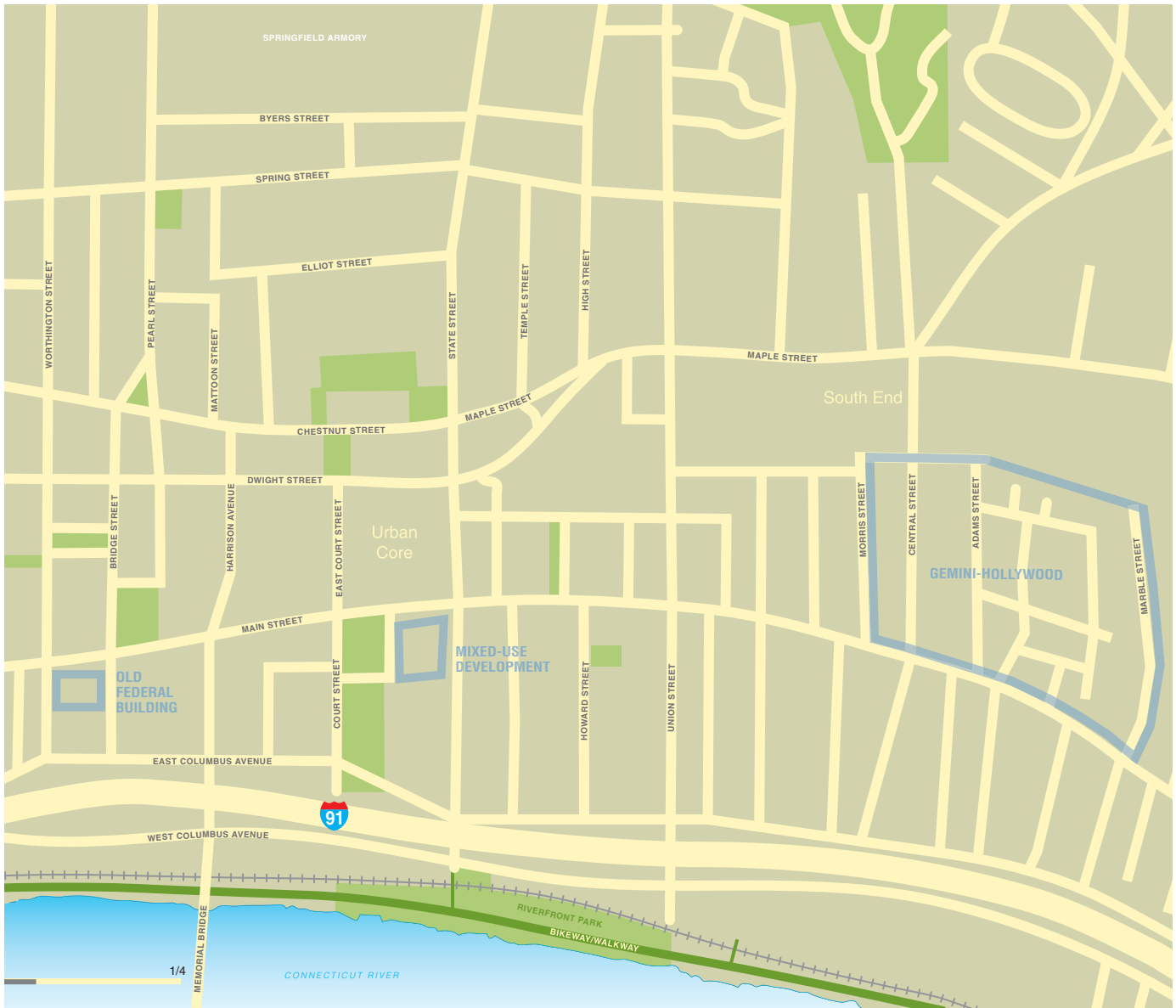
Court Square-Court Square Building. This key Court Square site, across from the MassMutual Center, is strategically located in the heart of the downtown city center. The city controls the site. Court Square and the adjacent buildings, the Byers Block and 1250 Main, all built between 1835 and 1892, are some of the city's oldest structures. They are beautifully detailed in a way that cannot be reproduced today.

Redevelopment of the Court Square building is complicated by the lack of adjacent parking but has great potential as a mixed-use facility with market-rate housing and ground-floor retail. This

redevelopment would capitalize on the investment to develop the MassMutual Center and appropriately complement the Courthouse, City Hall, Symphony Hall, and church that currently surround the square.

The panel recommends that:

- The city designate this project as a priority and develop criteria for the reuse of the building;
- The city consider investing the necessary funds to acquire property behind the building to create a parking deck for the development;
- The city consider incentives if necessary to make the project feasible for development, using a minimum of a 3:1 private/public investment ratio; and



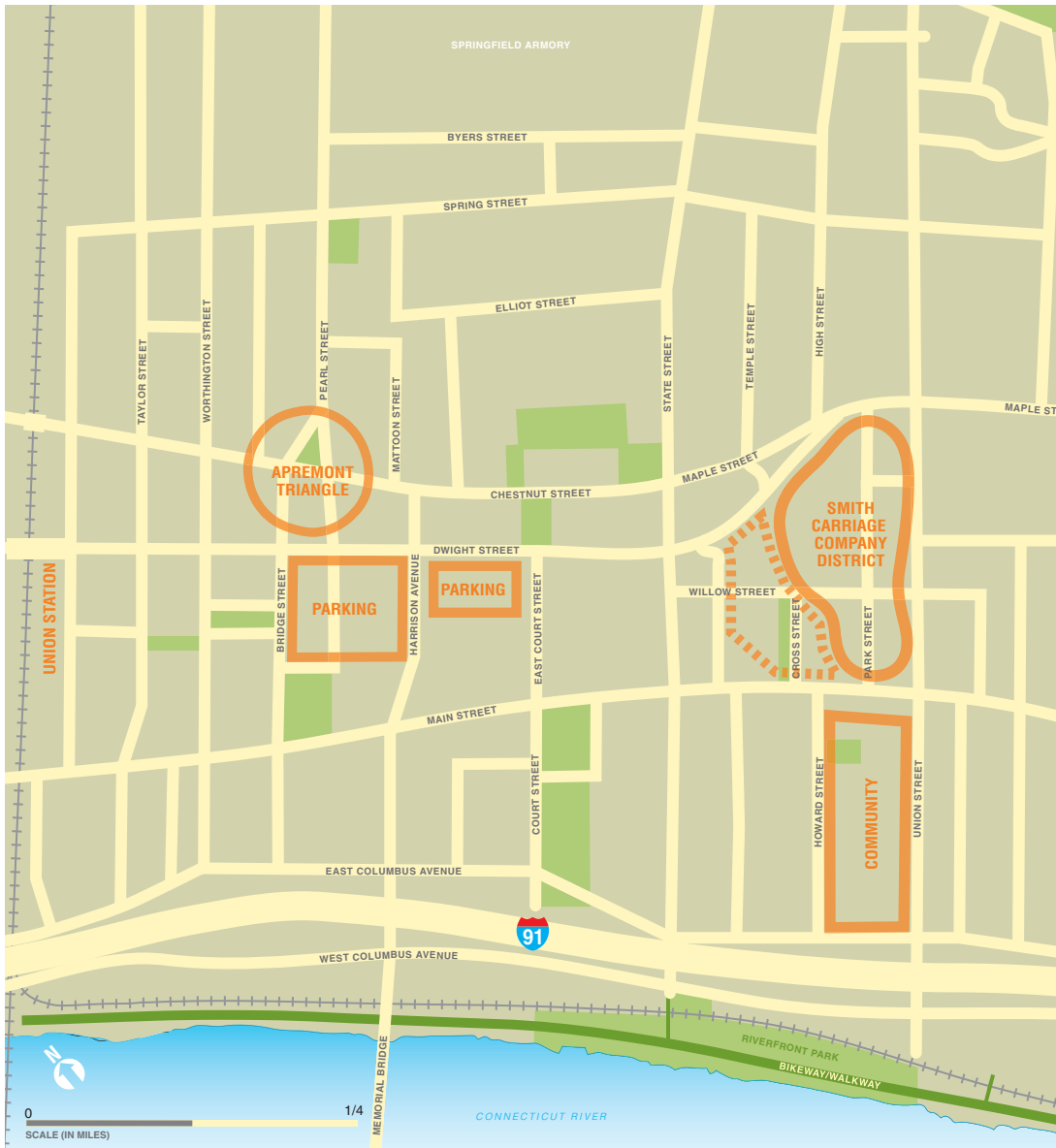
Short-term priority projects: The city should start with the redevelopment of key areas in the Urban Core and the South End.

- This project go out for RFQ/RFP as soon as criteria and a developer package of information can be prepared.

Old Federal Building on Main Street. Located in the heart of the central business district, this building has been a destination for many years. When the new Federal Building opens, closure of the old building will diminish pedestrian traffic in this part of the city. The city should take the necessary steps to gain control of the site, if possible, and ensure that the site is used in a manner that will best help downtown revitalization efforts. Ideal new uses for the site would continue the property’s role as a destination and an anchor for this area of downtown. The treatment of the streetscape and first floor of the property is extremely important to the feeling of this district.

One promising potential use that the panel heard would be as a downtown campus for one or more regional colleges and universities, bringing both energy and activity to the downtown. Examples exist throughout the country of cities incorporating these types of educational facilities into urban cores. In Chicago, Roosevelt College, a predominately minority commuter school, took over a former department store for its downtown campus. The University of Texas took over a former office building for a downtown campus in Houston. Such uses provide an anchor for this part of Springfield and bring students, faculty, and administration and their buying power into the area.

The Main Street space is an effective retail use to help create more pedestrian life at this intersection. For example, it could be used as a restaurant run by the Culinary Arts School or as a bookstore.



Mid-term priority projects: For downtown, the panel recommends adding mixed uses to downtown parking ramps and better defining the retail hub around the Apremont Triangle area. The South Side has excellent potential to extend the residential market for the Smith Carriage Company District.

The panel recommends that the city:

- Engage with the appropriate people at the General Services Administration to determine the details of the federal departure from the building; and
- Enter into conversation with the interested educational institutions about locating in the facility with a goal of filling the space as quickly upon departure of the federal occupants as possible.

York Street Jail. The jail is a key downtown property that has languished for years. Although the building has historic and architectural interest, no economic or market use has been found for the property since its closure many years ago. The panel concurs that this property should be torn down. Sale or reuse of the building is not feasible because of its condition and the extraordinary

costs associated with any rehabilitation. The jail stands as an extremely visible symbol of downtown stagnation. Environmental remediation is already underway, and plans to demolish the jail should continue to be a priority for the city. After the site is cleaned and vacant, the city can wait for the right development opportunity that will meet the criteria outlined by the panel.

Mid-Term Priority Projects

The following mid-term priority projects suggest vital next steps for downtown redevelopment activity.

The Main Street and State Street Corridor Improvements. Corridor improvements along Main and State streets are critical to the success of the other mid-term projects below. Priorities may need to be shifted to address the needs on Main

Street from the Arch to South End. Included in these corridor improvement plans should be a major wayfinding signage program that directs people to places of interest as well as clearly marking public parking. Parking in downtown is readily available and can be improved through better signage, lighting, and enhanced streetscape treatment. Connections to the river can be easily accomplished through upgraded landscaping, improved sidewalks, lighting, and a graphic arts program at the foot of State Street as well as Court Street where they merge at the river's edge.

Downtown Parking Lots. Several downtown parking lots offer potential redevelopment sites as mixed-use facilities. The Civic Center deck, currently slated to be turned over to the convention center, torn down, and rebuilt, could be wrapped with retail or housing on the Dwight Street and Harrison Avenue sides. The East Court side could provide separate parking for the MassMutual Convention Center.

The incentive to a developer to build market-rate housing could be a lower land cost with infrastructure that includes separate private parking for the residents. As the market dictates, the same configuration could be used for a second phase of the project on the parking lot across Harrison Avenue. At a minimum, policy changes would require all parking lots to put attractive facades on sides facing the public.

Apremont Triangle Area. This intersection should be the neighborhood retail hub of the area. A better pedestrian connection is needed to the Mattoon Street housing. This area should also be the western anchor for the Museum Quadrangle just two blocks to the east. In addition, Pearl Street could be enhanced to be an attractive gateway to the Apremont Triangle area.

Future Downtown Development: Union Station

Information presented to the panel led it to conclude that the cost of quality renovation far exceeds the value of the investment for Union Station, and the current market rents simply will not support it. As other downtown projects are completed, market conditions around Union Station should improve and the project's overall financial feasibility would be enhanced. Currently, however, the degree of subsidy required poses serious challenges at a time of scarce public resources and weakened private market conditions in downtown. The panel recommends that additional work on this project be postponed until a better plan can be developed with well-defined links and connections with the surrounding neighborhood.

Although funds are available from state and federal sources to move forward with the development of an intermodal transportation facility here, the panel did not believe that the project would have any significant community development benefits beyond increased ridership. It would not act as a catalyst in the near term for surrounding developments.

Any necessary steps should be taken to secure the funding. The structure should be secured and protected from additional deterioration because the building is architecturally significant. When the commuter-train proposal is real and other market indicators are positive, then—and only then—will spending the amount of money necessary to create a destination out of Union Station be worthwhile.

Conserving Springfield's Neighborhoods

Beyond its downtown, Springfield continues to impress, with its outstanding housing stock, the beauty of the Connecticut River, and the city's wonderful network of parks—including its crown jewel, the 735-acre Forest Park. The many local parks provide recreation, while the tree-lined streets and intact architectural features make for many beautiful and desirable neighborhoods. Several historic districts dot the area, including Forest Park, Lower Maple, McKnight District, and Mattoon. These neighborhoods by and large are low-density single-family neighborhoods, with some two- and three-family homes.

As the backbone of the city of Springfield, these neighborhoods merit close attention to strengthen code enforcement and conserve their architectural integrity. Engaging the city's many civic and neighborhood associations is also an important step to strengthen Springfield's communities.

A City of Homes

Springfield has always been known as a city of homes. The city's collection of Victorian houses is an asset whose potential has only been touched upon. Spread throughout many of the city's residential neighborhoods, a number of these homes have been handsomely and tastefully restored, while an even greater number await restoration and modernization. The panel has observed literally dozens of houses where considerable deterioration and erosion undermine their viability and livability. As will be discussed, a number of tools and techniques can be used to provide high-quality housing and in the process ensure the continued health of the city's older neighborhoods. The wide range of types and prices of houses that the city offers is a further community asset.

Many of the city's 17 residential neighborhoods are older, with houses that have interesting and desirable architectural features. Neighborhoods

range in size from under 4,000 to more than 25,000 people. Median household incomes range from the low \$20,000 range to the mid-\$40,000 range, according to the 2000 U.S. census. An enormous diversity of populations exists, but virtually all have one characteristic in common: a strong sense of neighborhood and community. The neighborhood councils serve as watchdogs, guardians, and advocates for what they view as their best interests. They guard those prerogatives jealously and, on the whole, to the benefit of their neighborhoods in particular versus the community in general. Although neighborhood pride is laudable, the community groups also need to regularly consider what is best for the city as a whole: more jobs, visitors, a healthy downtown, and a reputation for good government are critically important elements for each and every neighborhood's long-term economic health.

By the standards of most medium- and larger-sized cities in the northeast, Springfield's housing is remarkably affordable. Dollar for dollar, Springfield residents get more for their money than do

Neighborhood conservation efforts would help maximize one of the city's outstanding assets: its collection of beautiful Victorian homes, many of which await restoration and modernization.



Many of the city's 17 residential neighborhoods are older, with houses that have interesting and desirable architectural features.



residents almost anywhere else in the Pioneer Valley—and a real housing bargain compared to residents of Massachusetts living farther to the east. Median prices of single-family housing are under \$150,000, with a few very desirable areas in the mid \$300,000 to \$400,000 range for large, well-maintained homes in very attractive neighborhoods. A house that sells for \$200,000 in Springfield would sell for more than twice that amount in comparable areas of metropolitan Boston and for 50 percent more in the Worcester area.

While Springfield's low cost of housing provides limited comfort to those of low income whose housing needs are real, it offers a real opportunity for middle- and higher-income households in the community to improve their standard of living. Furthermore, it can serve as a real stimulus for outsiders considering Springfield and as a major tool in the community's economic development efforts.

On the basis of price, square footage, and architectural character, the attractive housing stock in Springfield has made it a bedroom community for those working in Hartford, Connecticut, and elsewhere in the Pioneer Valley. In the Washington, D.C., area, for example, with its very high housing costs, an increasing number of people live in Baltimore, which has more modest housing prices, and commute daily to the D.C. area. The city of Balti-

more runs an extensive advertising program in the Washington area to encourage this phenomenon. A similar "come home to Springfield" marketing campaign should be considered in Hartford and surrounding communities throughout the Pioneer Valley.

In contrast, Springfield's reasonable housing costs discourage new residential construction or substantial privately financed rehabilitation and modernization of older housing units. Given today's construction costs, new privately developed and financed units cannot compete economically with the prices for existing housing. The large size of many of the older homes presents problems in that rehabilitation is more costly and operating expenses higher than in newer houses. Houses of 3,000 to 4,000 square feet are not uncommon.

Conserve Neighborhoods

The panel encourages the city to increase its neighborhood planning efforts by working with local residents and businesses. Generally, neighborhoods and even areas within neighborhoods fall into three broad categories:

- *Conservation areas:* Housing stock is at strong market values and well kept. *City strategy:* Public improvements, amenities, and enhancements.
- *Rehabilitation areas:* Housing stock shows signs of deterioration; commercial areas are weakening. *City strategy:* Targeted code enforcement; encourage rehabilitation with loan programs, working with banks; encourage spot new construction.
- *Spot redevelopment areas:* Housing shows major deterioration, major code violations, significant disinvestment, and underinvestment. *City strategy:* Encourage catalytic projects to bring neighborhood back: housing, commercial, or mixed use.

A city is always a mix of downtown areas and neighborhoods. In Springfield, neighborhoods are feeling the stress of recent city woes. Many neighborhoods have seen middle-income households move to suburban areas where the perception of

rising property values was greater than in the city. Problems of code violations and absentee landlords who do not maintain the neighborhoods were reported in many neighborhoods. Especially in the older areas with large houses, some have been turned into multifamily residences, often owned by absentee landlords. And many two- and three-apartment multifamily houses, of which one unit was traditionally owner-occupied, are now all-rental occupancies.

Multifamily developments of four stories built as apartment buildings also dot many areas. The panel heard from neighbors about crime, lack of upkeep of some units, trash, and lack of cohesiveness caused by turnover of tenants and the multicultural environment. In addition, illegal small businesses, such as repair shops and automotive businesses, are moving into garages while the older, small local retail strips sometimes lack tenants.

While older housing stock is at risk of deterioration and disrepair, new construction is at low ebb. In 2005, only 126 permits were issued for new construction of single-family housing, compared with 317 in 1986 for similar housing. Although Springfield's relatively low prices and low rents are attractive to the occupants, extensive rehabilitation or new construction find competing within that same price range difficult, leading in some cases to lack of maintenance.

Engage Civic and Neighborhood Associations

The panel met with many civic groups who are passionately interested in their neighborhoods and the quality of life there. Many said few people actually participate in their organizations, but each has a dedicated core of activists. The panel heard from more than a dozen neighborhood groups that are involved with code enforcement and planning issues.

These neighborhood groups can be important partners with the city in developing revitalization strategies as well as local land use plans to keep these older areas in sound condition and very livable. The panel suggests the following strategies.

Strengthen Code Enforcement

The city has made great strides in its code enforcement operation in the past few years. Much

of it is automated, with a website that allows filing of online complaints and provides a list of properties with complaints. The inspectors have handheld devices and technology that allow them to do much of their work electronically in the field. They have partnered with the court system to have several days a week set aside for code enforcement cases. The city should be congratulated for this work.

Some areas that still need improvement are a quicker turnaround of inspections after complaints come in. Access to residential units is especially important, and a change in laws or court procedures might be needed to get inspectors into a unit in a timely fashion to deal with rental properties with code violations or complaints of suspected violations. In addition, a "demolition by neglect" statute should be implemented (if currently not in place) and enforced in target neighborhoods. This law would allow the city to cite neglectful property owners quickly and, if necessary, demolish a property before it becomes a haven for criminal activity or blights nearby properties.

By establishing stronger and more active partnerships with other agencies and the courts, code enforcement staff can work creatively with the police on suspected drug houses. Sometimes drug houses can be shut down because of code violations when police cannot readily gain evidence of specific criminal activity. The agencies that deal with illegal or unlicensed businesses can also be partners in code enforcement.

The civic associations can be partners and proactive in code enforcement, as they have been in the past. Expanded activities can be developed through these partnerships, which neighborhood associations can sponsor, such as the following:

- Cleanup days where people put out unwanted items on the curb for pickup;
- A local letter campaign to residents that includes a checklist of things a resident can do before the inspectors come, such as repairs to porches, fixing peeling paint, removing unused building materials or other debris in the yard; and
- Production and distribution of multilingual brochures on code enforcement.

Nonprofits can be useful in working to organize civic associations and to train them to run meetings, advocate with the city, get neighbors of different ethnic groups to participate in efforts, and educate newcomers about the laws regarding property maintenance in a friendly way before city action becomes necessary.

Reclaim Condemned and Tax-Delinquent Property

Given the historic character of many areas, repairing condemned properties as quickly as possible is important, if feasible. Such repairs can be approached through a homesteading program (see below) or by working with nonprofits to fix up the units and resell them to homeowners, with requirements that they live there for a certain period. When neighborhoods have vacant sites, the city should evaluate whether de-densification is appropriate. These lots can be sold for a dollar to the adjacent owner as a larger lot or yard, or could be turned over to the civic association or the recreation department as community gardens or vegetable gardens, or even used as tot lots.

Create a Homesteading Program

The city of Springfield should develop a homesteading program to sell houses that are under city ownership for \$1 to households who agree to live in the house for five years as their principal residence, bring the structure up to code, and obtain an occupancy permit. Taxes should be abated until the house is ready for occupancy. This program should be targeted to middle-class households and could be marketed in nearby major employment centers such as Hartford, Connecticut, and Amherst and Northampton, Massachusetts, as well as within the city of Springfield and to employees who work in the city.

Other communities have used homesteading successfully to foster long-term homeownership. For example, the city of Greeley, Colorado, encourages the conversion of rental single-family houses to long-term homeownership in designated neighborhoods with the assistance of low-interest loans. The goal is to stabilize those areas that have seen decline caused by increased rental pressures; help preserve and maintain older, semihistoric housing stock; and revitalize the neighborhood with property owners who care about the structures. In

Lynchburg, Virginia, the homesteading program administered by the Lynchburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority provides prospective homebuyers the opportunity to purchase for a dollar a historic, but derelict, house. In return, the new owners must correct health or safety hazards, rehabilitate the building, occupy the property as their principal residence for not less than five years, and maintain the property in good condition.

Criteria to consider in setting up a homesteading program include the following:

- Targeting the program for middle-class households with sufficient incomes to readily repair and renovate the properties;
- Establishing a clear timeline for repairs, typically a year or less depending on the degree of rehabilitation required;
- Establishing a residency requirement for owner occupancy for five years; and
- Establishing a support system to administer and run the homesteading program, including building inspectors to ensure timely completion of improvements and a follow-up system to ensure owner occupancy for the specified time.

Encourage Good Maintenance of Rental Properties

The maintenance of rental property is often a problem in older cities, and Springfield is no exception. It is particularly a problem when many absentee small landlords, who perhaps have bought properties for more than the rental stream will support, cannot maintain the properties. The panel suggests two approaches that can be thought of as a “carrot and a stick” approach.

The “carrot” is to train landlords in best practices or to provide low-interest rehabilitation loans for repairs. This training can be done in a series of evening meetings where speakers discuss the laws, the procedures in the court system, tenant selection, building maintenance, and so on. Rehabilitation loans can be funded by community development block grant (CDBG) or HOME funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, sometimes with a few units re-

stricted to affordable/workforce households to provide mixed-income buildings.

The “stick” part of the approach is to do more-thorough and frequent code enforcement, entering into consent agreements with landlords on repairs. If repairs are not completed as agreed to, follow-up is required and landlords can be fined, or in severe cases, sent to jail. This remedy should be applied only in the worst cases or to send the message that the city is serious about landlords who disregard the laws, tenants, and neighbors.

The city could also use licensing of rental properties to give another form of control over the rental stock and to raise funds to cover both code enforcement and landlord-tenant mediation. These fees do not have to be large, but even an annual \$25 fee can raise significant funds. By requiring a license, the city can maintain a list of landlords and send out materials, such as information on lead paint and sample leases that comply with local laws. In cases where the property is poorly maintained and the landlord is not taking corrective action, the city can revoke the license. This tool can be very effective.

Apply HOME and CDBG Funds Strategically

The panel understands that funds from HOME are being used partly to subsidize the construction of new homes on vacant lots in these older neighborhoods and that given the relatively low market value and high cost of new construction, a subsidy of \$100,000 or more per unit is not uncommon. This use is not the highest and best for scarce funds.

The panel recommends that these funds be targeted to larger projects or to fund neighborhood stabilization efforts. Funding some preventive approaches can help neighborhoods retain value, such as making low-interest deferred loans for low-to-moderate-income homeowners to repair their houses. Providing substantial gap financing for renovations of large buildings, use of tax credits for mixed-income buildings on infill parcels, or adaptive use of interesting older properties in key parcels in downtown are potentially more effective uses of CDBG and HOME funds. (Please see the section of this report titled Establish Criteria for Evaluating City Projects for suggested criteria for public subsidy of projects on page 19.)

The city needs to provide ongoing information to the public, using all forms of communication about significant changes in code enforcement and these positive new efforts. The SFCB, mayor, and city staff should be recognized for these steps that will ultimately lead to improved functioning of city government without the SFCB.

Neighborhood Priority Projects

Although the panel discussed the downtown core as its primary focus for specific redevelopment opportunities, the panel also commented on the strong potential and priority of some other select sites in the city.

Short-Term Priority Projects: The South End

The South End is a significant problem area in the city. Although crime is a real concern in this area, the redevelopment of these parcels has great potential as a catalyst for the whole neighborhood's revitalization. Currently, the city and the Springfield Redevelopment Authority (SRA) own about a third of the land in this part of town. Much of that land is concentrated in two distinct locations that are close to each other, the Gemini site and the Hollywood parcel, within the boundaries of Morris, Main, Richelieu, and Marble streets. Vacant land in the South End requires remediation, and the city intends to use brownfield grant money to achieve it. This project should be one of the city's top priorities. Rehabilitation of the townhouses across from the Gemini parcel is already underway.

The combination of the Hollywood properties, the adjoining single-family homes, the Gemini parcel, and the SRA-owned land offers the opportunity for several new housing developments: rehabbed apartments and townhomes, and new construction. This area is ripe for a neighborhood planning effort that would consider both commercial and residential areas, ultimately arriving at a mixed-income, mixed-use community that works in a better way for existing residents as well as newcomers.

The panel recommends the following actions:

- Use code enforcement and stepped-up police patrols to clean up the “war zone” atmosphere that exists in the South End today.

- Form a public/private partnership to reduce density and provide safe, off-street parking.
- Provide incentives to encourage updating of single-family homes.
- Produce market-rate housing on city- and SRA-owned sites.
- Promote new business development along Main Street.

Mid-Term Priority Projects

The panel identified several mid-term neighborhood redevelopment opportunities, including expanding residential products and enriching community resources in the South End, and proactively inventorying architecturally distinctive but vacant churches for adaptive reuse.

Smith Carriage Company District

This area off Main Street at Willow, Park, and Cross streets is already home to apartments yielding the highest rents in the city and is conveniently close to the nearby downtown government and business centers as well as arts and entertainment attractions. In addition to successful rental development, the area has a pocket park and parking. This success should be capitalized on to fulfill the area's potential as a housing district and complemented with for-sale loft housing to create the “Smith Carriage Company Residential District.”

Community Resources at East Columbus Avenue and Union/Howard/Main Streets

This area is home to some beautiful, historic structures that house a Montessori school, the South End Community Center, and an alcohol treatment facility. The church for sale nearby at East Columbus should be considered for conversion to a community use that would be an extension of the current functions. Main Street has good existing retail frontage. Community planning should take

place to better understand how best to capitalize on existing community-based downtown assets.

Vacant Houses of Worship throughout Springfield

Many churches in Springfield are vacant and for sale throughout the city, with possibly more on the horizon as other houses of worship with small congregations move toward consolidation. These significant buildings, many of which are architecturally noteworthy, contain great spaces that should be treated as a resource for community uses in general.

Sites for Future Development

The panel identified the Mason Square Fire Station, the former Chapman Valve Site, and the Memorial Industrial Park II as promising sites with excellent potential for redevelopment.

Mason Square Fire Station

This vacant historic firehouse in the commercial district at the corner of State Street and Wilbraham Road should go out to RFQ/RFP and allow the market to decide its highest and best use. The building should be secured and protected from additional deterioration during this process. Although the lack of on-site parking complicates redevelopment, the building's strategic location and potential for economic revitalization benefits make this an important site for redevelopment.

Former Chapman Valve Site

The city should persist in its efforts at the former Chapman Valve Site and continue to assemble resources for environmental cleanup of the property. Although a master plan and environmental site assessment have been completed, the city needs to establish criteria for new users of the property to ensure that any future redevelopment project is a catalyst for local economic development and the creation of good jobs. Any redevelopment of this



site must also consider compatibility with the Indian Orchard neighborhood and consistency with the community land use plan. A minimum threshold of jobs per acre should be established. Because assembled land is such a scarce resource, warehousing or distribution uses with few jobs should be strongly discouraged on this site.

Memorial Industrial Park II

This site with excellent access has promise for redevelopment. It should ultimately be developed under requirements for job creation, compatibility with neighboring properties, and conformance with the community land use plan.

Community planning would help evaluate how best to capitalize on existing community-based downtown assets, such as the South End Community Center.

Conclusion

The panel offers this report not as a panacea but as a series of suggestions that may assist the city in meeting its current challenges. Although the Springfield Finance Control Board should remain in place for another term, the emergence and development of leadership from all sectors of the community will be a critical step for Springfield's future. In the spirit of this new phase, Springfield should embrace and celebrate its diversity and identify ways to include a representative cross section of the community in its decision making.

As the urban cultural center of the Pioneer Valley, with an architecturally diverse and historic core, Springfield's downtown should be a destination to live, work, and play. The rapid implementation of the panel's recommended priority projects—such

as redevelopment of vacant property on Court Square and adaptive reuse of the old Federal Building—will be a strong step forward in this direction. An additional focus on the South End neighborhood, with an emphasis on the Gemini-Hollywood area, can be a catalyst for this neighborhood's revitalization. Finally, efforts to conserve the character and integrity of Springfield's neighborhoods, and harnessing the power of the city's many neighborhood associations, will be a great boost to Springfield's other communities.

About the Panel

Maureen McAvey

*Panel Chair
Washington, D.C.*

McAvey is executive vice president for the Initiatives Group at the Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C. ULI is the premier research and education organization within the real estate and land use industry. In her position, she is responsible for all research and content programs currently underway. Before her current position, McAvey was the Senior Resident Fellow for urban development at the Urban Land Institute. She has over 25 years of experience in real estate development, consulting, and the creation of public/private financial structures.

McAvey was director, business development, for Federal Realty Investment Trust (FRIT), a NYSE-traded owner and manager of retail developments and mixed-use developments. In that capacity she assisted in the establishment of public/private financial structure of a mixed-use retail/housing development in Arlington County, Virginia. She also completed a similar public/private partnership with the city of San Antonio to further FRIT's Houston Street mixed-use project there. As part of the San Antonio project, tax increment financing, Urban Development Action Grant funds, and an Economic Development Administration grant assisted in the funding of necessary public improvements.

McAvey served as the director of development for the city of St. Louis, a position in the mayor's cabinet. In that capacity, she was also executive director of the St. Louis Development Corporation, leading seven development-related boards and commissions. Major accomplishments included construction of a new neighborhood commercial center, anchored by a 60,000-square-foot, 24-hour grocery; a privately financed \$1 million master plan for the revitalization of the downtown area;

negotiation of development agreements to secure a new 1,000-room convention headquarters hotel; and a neighborhood planning effort.

Prior to St. Louis, McAvey led the real estate consulting practices in Boston for Deloitte & Touche and for Coopers & Lybrand. While in the "Big Six" firms, she directed the due diligence efforts for over \$12 billion in securitization projects for major banking and financial institutions. Her clients included institutional developers, major corporations, utilities, and colleges and universities. Consulting efforts ran the gamut of new financings, restructuring, troubled projects, strategic planning, and mergers and acquisitions.

As a private developer, McAvey directed the West Coast operations of a national development firm, where she served as project manager for a \$40 million rehabilitation of a national historic landmark hotel with office and retail components. She also directed the master-planning effort for a 70-acre, million-square-foot university-related research park, including the architectural, legal, and organizational components of development.

McAvey holds two master's degrees: one from the University of Minnesota, and one from the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. She has done extensive course work at Harvard Business School in commercial lending, investment management, finance, and real estate development.

McAvey was a member of the Board of Trustees, Urban Land Institute, 1995–2001. She chaired the Regionalism Forum for two years, exploring issues of smart growth, multijurisdictional boundaries and planning efforts, and shared revenue/fiscal disparities alternatives. She led an international panel to Cracow, Poland, assisting the city in creating its economic development plan and strategy. McAvey is a frequent guest lecturer at major universities and a frequent national speaker.

Lewis Bolan

Washington, D.C.

Bolan is a real estate economist and development consultant with 30 years of professional experience. He is the cofounder of Bolan Smart Associates, Inc., the independent economic consulting affiliate of the national commercial brokerage firm of Grubb & Ellis. Bolan formerly was vice president of Real Estate Research Corporation, director of its Washington office, and head of its investment advisory services division. A planner as well as an economist, he also served as director of planning for Victor Gruen International, a European-based planning and design firm.

Bolan's activities encompass 40 states, nearly all the nation's major cities, and many foreign countries. He has directed development planning activities and investment evaluation for major new communities and mixed-use projects together with office, industrial, retail, hotel, and residential land uses. A recognized expert in the fields of strategic planning and financial analysis, he has worked for many leading developers, Fortune 500 companies, and financial institutions, as well as served as adviser to numerous local, state, and federal government agencies.

Bolan is an adjunct professor of real estate at Johns Hopkins University. He is a member of the board of the Allan L. Berman Real Estate Institute at Johns Hopkins. Active in the Urban Land Institute, he frequently contributes time to the Advisory Services panels and other research projects. Bolan is a board member of Lambda Alpha, an honorary land economics fraternity, where he serves as program chairman. He has a BA in sociology and economics from Columbia University and a master's of city planning from the University of Illinois.

Bolan is a frequent contributor to real estate and business publications. His articles and comments have appeared in such publications as the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *National Real Estate Investor*, *Real Estate Forum*, *Urban Land*, the *Business Review*, *Kiplinger Report*, *US News and World Report*, and numerous other publications. For the past

two years, he has served as project director of *Trend Watch*, a Johns Hopkins publication focusing on commercial real estate trends.

Elizabeth B. Davison

Rockville, Maryland

Davison is an urban economist who has spent her more than 30-year career in both the private sector, as a real estate and land use consultant, and the public sector, as a planner and manager of a range of housing and community-development programs. She has been the director of the Department of Housing and Community Affairs for Montgomery County, Maryland, since 1996. She directs the department of over 110 staff and a combined budget of over \$33 million per year, in the arenas of community development, consumer affairs, commercial revitalization, affordable housing programs, and land use policy in Montgomery County, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C., with a population of over 870,000. She was the director of the Office of Planning Implementation for the county from 1991 through 1996 and also worked for Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission from 1974 through 1980, in the research divisions in both Montgomery and Prince George's County, conducting demographic studies and commercial revitalization studies.

Before joining the county, Davison was vice president of Hammer, Siler, George Associates and prior to that, vice president with Real Estate Research Corporation. In her 15-year consulting career, Davison conducted market studies and financial feasibility studies for real estate development projects specializing in mixed-use developments. She also prepared commercial revitalization studies, growth management studies, and infrastructure needs studies for local and state governments. Her clients included major corporations, nonprofit organizations, real estate syndicators, real estate developers, banks and other financial institutions, universities, and federal, state, and local governments.

Davison's academic training was at George Washington University as an undergraduate in economics and Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, for graduate study in economics and urban

studies. Most recently, she completed the program at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University for senior officials in state and local government. She is a member of the Urban Land Institute, the American Planning Association, and the honorary society, Lambda Alpha International. She has been an active speaker at numerous conferences and has authored several articles for national journals in planning, real estate, and community development.

Barry Elbasani

Berkeley, California

Elbasani is a founding principal of ELS. He is responsible for overseeing all projects and ensuring that the firm's vision and underlying philosophy are sustained. Under his direction, the firm has earned a national reputation for its success in urban planning and the design of major downtown retail and mixed-use projects; performing arts; educational facilities; and cultural, sports, and recreational facilities. Additionally, he has extensive experience in renovation and urban design. His completed projects include Stonebriar Centre, near Dallas, Texas; Village of Merrick Park in Coral Gables, Florida; and Church Street Plaza in Evanston, Illinois. He is currently working on Victoria Ward Village Shops, a mixed-use urban village in Honolulu, Hawaii; a mixed-use campus gateway at Fresno State University; Summerlin Town Center in Summerlin, Nevada; and Chiva City in Valencia, Spain.

Elbasani's retail and mixed-use experience is broad and includes several renovations and the design and planning of open-air, enclosed, and festival retail centers. He was principal-in-charge for Pioneer Place in Portland, which has been profiled in Urban Land Institute publications and received an AIA Design Award. The Grand Avenue in downtown Milwaukee received the Award of Excellence in Urban Retail, awarded by ULI in 1988. Denver Pavilions, North Point Center, Woodlands Mall, and Stonebriar Centre have all received design awards from the International Council of Shopping Centers.

Elbasani is committed to design solutions that respect their environmental and cultural context,

achieve architectural and technical excellence, and create places that celebrate and enhance the experience of urban life.

He received a bachelor's of architecture degree from Cooper Union School in 1964 and a master's of architecture in urban design from Harvard University in 1965. Elbasani is registered to practice architecture in California, New York, New Jersey, Georgia, Texas, and Florida and is certified by NCARB. He is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and the Institute for Urban Design, a member of the Urban Land Institute Mixed-Use Council, the International Council of Shopping Centers, and Lambda Alpha International and has lectured at UCLA's real estate school. He has served on ULI Advisory Panels for downtown San Jose, Cincinnati, West Palm Beach, and the Nationals baseball stadium in Washington, D.C.

Patrick Fox

Hingham, Massachusetts

Fox has been with the Saint Consulting Group since 1998, serving as project manager, division manager, and vice president before becoming company president. He manages operations with a focus on ensuring continued project victories for Saint Consulting's clients. He developed the staff recruiting and in-house training programs designed to keep Saint staff on the cutting edge of developments in grassroots campaigning and land use politics, and he continues to craft innovative methods and strategies for achieving client objectives.

Fox has an MBA from Northeastern University and experience that includes work on more than 100 political campaigns, management of a U.S. congressional office, and operation of a government relations consulting firm.

Jeff Kaplan

Houston, Texas

Kaplan is a founding member of WulfeUrban, a consulting division of Wulfe & Company, one of Houston's most respected commercial real estate firms. WulfeUrban works with retailers, developers, and urban brokers seeking to take advantage

of emerging markets for urban regeneration in American. Kaplan's work includes both large metropolitan downtowns and older established communities, smaller towns, and communities.

Kaplan is currently chairing Urban Marketplace, an educational outreach program for ULI that will promote investment opportunities in Houston's urban areas. He is also the real estate columnist for *002+ Magazine* and is a Big Brother through Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

Raymond L. Kuniansky, Jr.

Atlanta, Georgia

After 12 years in the not-for-profit world of affordable housing, Kuniansky joined the for-profit side to develop mixed-use loft products in Atlanta, Georgia. He joined the Citiesouth Group, LLC, in October 2006 in this new venture. The first project is a seven-acre tract of land in downtown Atlanta to be developed with loft condos, retail, and live/work space.

In 1994, Kuniansky joined the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership (ANDP), a not-for-profit organization involved in neighborhood revitalization. ANDP has been involved in the production of over 8,000 affordable housing units valued at \$720 million since its inception in 1991. As chief operating officer, Kuniansky had oversight of an \$11 million loan fund, all development activities, and public policy/advocacy work of the organization. In its 15-year history, ANDP has accomplished numerous activities, including the renovation and conversion of a warehouse into mixed-use, mixed-income housing; new construction multifamily housing; low-income housing tax credit transactions; and single-family infill.

Kuniansky's public policy work included publishing the *Making the Case* report; developing inclusionary zoning policies for three municipalities, including the city of Atlanta; developing proposals for housing trust funds; and, most important, raising the public awareness of the need for affordable housing in metropolitan Atlanta.

Before working with ANDP, Kuniansky spent ten years as a commercial real estate lending officer

for three Atlanta banks: Decatur Federal, Home-Banc FSB, and Bank South. Prior to banking he spent two years in the insurance business and five years as a teacher for the Atlanta public schools.

Kuniansky, a native of Atlanta, received a BBA in finance from Georgia State University in 1981. He currently serves on numerous community boards, including the ULI National Affordable Housing Council, the Temple board of trustees, Reynoldstown Revitalization Corporation Advisory Council, Project Interconnections, Inc., and the Community Housing Resource Center.

Ellen M. McLean

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

McLean served as chief financial officer (CFO) for the city of Pittsburgh from 1999 to 2005, and previously she led the city's Office of Management and Budget. In her position as CFO, she developed and managed the city's annual operating and capital budgets totaling \$450 million, including revenue collection and tax compliance, real estate and property management, debt management and issuance, rating and regulatory relationships, and labor-management initiatives and bargaining strategy. She initiated and implemented a data-driven performance measurement program—Citistat Pittsburgh—resulting in the adoption of a strategic, data-driven approach to problem solving across city operations. She served as executive director of the city's Comprehensive Municipal Pension Trust Fund, treasurer and finance chair of the Pittsburgh Water & Sewer Authority, and member of the city's Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority, one of two financial oversight bodies.

McLean was a key player in the city's strategic filing for distressed status under Pennsylvania state law as a means to force tax reform and cost containment. During her tenure, the city won a historic change in its tax structure resulting in a more equitable distribution of the tax burden among businesses and nonresidents as well as the implementation of a comprehensive five-year financial recovery plan under which Pittsburgh is operating today.

Currently, McLean provides strategic and financial consulting services to local government entities and nonprofit organizations. Her consulting services include designing management systems to improve the quality and effectiveness of operations through integrated, agency-wide planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. Most recently, she completed a review of the Pittsburgh Public School District's fiscal position at the request of the new superintendent, an engagement funded by the Heinz Endowments.

McLean has a master's degree in public management, financial management from Carnegie Mellon University as well as an MA and BA in English from Duquesne University. She is a member of the board of trustees at the Ellis School, an independent all girls K-12 day school, and the House of the Crossroads, a residential drug and alcohol treatment program. She is a past member of the boards of the McGowen Center for Artificial Organ Development and Artists & Cities.

Alvin McNeal

McLean, Virginia

McNeal is a senior vice president with Fraser Forbes Company, a land brokerage firm in Washington, D.C. He is an urban planner and has been involved in all aspects of real estate development and municipal and community planning.

Before Fraser Forbes, McNeal directed Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) unique and highly successful public/private development program until October 2003.

During his tenure, WMATA's public/private development program became a model "transit-oriented development program," encompassing 60 transit-oriented development projects, valued at over \$3 billion. Since its inception in 1974, the program has generated over \$100 million in revenue and will exceed \$150 million in 2004. The projects have added 50,000 new daily riders to WMATA's Metro-rail and bus systems, 25 primary jobs, and several million dollars in new taxes to the coffers of local jurisdictions. The projects have demonstrated that more-compact developments at Metrorail stations can offer housing choices and diverse living areas while creating financial returns for transit agencies, developers, and the public. McNeal has served as an adviser to several transit agencies on transit-oriented development.

McNeal has a bachelor's degree from North Carolina Central University and a master's degree from the University of Cincinnati. He has written articles for journals and presented papers at professional conferences. He is a coeditor of *Washington on Foot*, a very popular book of neighborhood walking tours published by the Smithsonian Institution.