

**CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
INTERDEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM
PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Emil R. Moncivais, AICP, AIA, Director, Planning Department

SUBJECT: Resolution authorizing acceptance of an Urban Land Institute (ULI) Report and presentation of the recommendations – St. Paul Gateway District (City Council District 2)

DATE: April 21, 2005

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This resolution will authorize the acceptance of an Urban Land Institute (ULI) Advisory Services report, the St. Paul Gateway District, as completion of the agreement between the City of San Antonio and the ULI, to develop a concept plan and recommend marketing and development strategies for the East Commerce Street corridor, between IH-37 and Monumental.

Staff recommends acceptance of this report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During recent decades, the city of San Antonio has experienced significant residential and commercial growth in the central business district. While resources have been provided for this area and the area immediately to the east of downtown, near the Sunset Station/St. Paul Square development, the near east side of downtown has not fully developed.

A number of studies and plans, including the Downtown Neighborhood Plan, adopted by the City Council in May, 1999 and the Downtown Housing Study, developed through the Downtown Alliance, have indicated that the near east side offers ripe opportunities for residential and commercial development. With new entertainment venues starting to develop in this area, and new housing developments expanding to the area south of the study area, the near east side area was targeted for a study by the Urban Land Institute, through their Advisory Panel program.

The Eastside community has seen significant public investment totaling \$150 million from 2001 through 2003. These capital projects include \$48 million for the Spring View development, \$34 million for six elementary school additions and a new middle school, and \$5.7 million for public works and transportation projects per the Capital Improvement Plan. Most recently, voters approved a \$2-million bond initiative to reconstruct a section of E. Commerce Street. It is anticipated that these significant capital improvements will serve as a catalyst for future development.

The Urban Land Institute Advisory Panel visit was proposed to address a comprehensive approach for short and long term marketing and development strategies. The study was also to explore opportunities for improved connectivity from the St. Paul Square/Alamodome area to the HemisFair Park/Convention Center area, exploring transportation infrastructure, traffic, and public transit solutions.

The Urban Land Institute is an independent organization established in 1936 that consists of individuals involved in all phases of land development. The organization conducts research and interprets current land trends in relation to the changing economic, social and civic needs of our society and disseminates pertinent information leading to the best and most efficient use and development of land.

ULI was entrusted to prepare a concept plan for the study area with emphasis on the East Commerce Corridor as it is poised for economic development, and its focus as an arts and entertainment district. In addition, ULI was tasked to recommend incremental implementation strategies linking the developments to existing generators and their relationship to a phased growth plan.

ULI maintains an Advisory Services Department "for the purpose of benefiting the general public through improved planning and utilization of urban land." As part of their service, ULI:

- ◆ Provided a panel of 8 persons who collectively have a varied and broad experience and knowledge applicable to the particular issues to be considered. They included:
 - J. Kevin Lawler, Panel Chair - *West Palm Beach, Florida*
 - Robert H. Busler, Jr. AIA - *Washington, D.C.*
 - David R. DeSimone - *Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*
 - Lynn Everett-Lee - *Hollywood, Florida*
 - Philip Hart - *Los Angeles, California*
 - W. Thomas Lavash - *Washington, D.C.*
 - David S. Plummer - *Coral Gables, Florida*
 - Harry G. Robinson III, FAIA, AICP - *Washington, DC*
 - Mtamanika Youngblood - *Atlanta, Georgia*
- ◆ Arranged for the panel to visit San Antonio during November 14-19, 2004, to study the issues, and consulted with over 70 public and private officials and other stakeholders and community citizens familiar with the issues. The panel schedule included the following:
 - *November 14 – Arrival and orientation*
 - *November 15 – Briefing and tour of the study area*
 - *November 16 – Interviews with key stakeholders*
 - *November 17 & 18– Report preparation by panelists*
 - *November 19 – Panel presentation and departure*
- ◆ Prepared its reports, conclusions, and recommendations that were orally presented to the City and interviewees, at the close of the on-site assignment.
- ◆ Provided the City with a written report of the study, its conclusions and recommendations. The strategies that framed the report analysis included the following:

- The panel organized its analysis and recommendations according to four framing statements that best articulate the need for redevelopment in the study area. These were used to organize the findings in the report.
 - Re-Connecting with the City
 - Humanizing the Corridor
 - Investing in the District
 - Establishing a New Focus and New Identity
- The panel recommended branding the East Commerce Street corridor the St. Paul Gateway District in an effort to establish a new image for an area plagued by negative perceptions. The panel considered various action areas designated by strategic land uses beyond the East Commerce Street corridor, and the new name better describes the redevelopment area.
- The panel strongly endorsed the need for significant public sector investment. The primary focus was on two areas a) the area between IH-37 and the railroad tracks, from the Alamodome to Nolan Street; and, b) the East Commerce Street corridor between IH-37 and Hackberry Street, including the connection to downtown San Antonio. Secondary concerns included the Dignowity Hill Historic District, the Friedrich building and the surrounding cultural area, and the residential area south of East Commerce Street between South Cherry and Monumental streets.

The report identifies a goal to build upon the area's historic and cultural resources and create a mixed-income residential community characterized by its arts and entertainment venues as well as its historic neighborhood characteristics. As more people choose to live closer to the downtown, this area provides an ideal location for redevelopment of mixed-price housing, new businesses and accompanying employment opportunities within an area known for its unique identity.

POLICY ANALYSIS

In May 1997, the City adopted the *Master Plan Policies*. Approval of this agreement and development of the concept plan for the east side area is consistent with the following goals of the *Master Plan Policies*:

- Preserve, protect and enhance the integrity, economic viability, and livability of San Antonio's neighborhoods.
- Encourage development of the downtown area as a complete neighborhood to enhance its image to both visitors and residents.

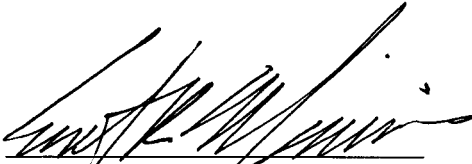
In May 1999, the City adopted the Downtown Neighborhoods Plan. In addition, through the Neighborhood Action Department, the City sponsors a Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization Project along East Commerce Street, in the study area. Also, a Federal Empowerment Zone designation exists for much of the study area. The City policy guides and Federal designation can be utilized to assist the panel with developing their growth and development strategies within the study area.

FISCAL IMPACT

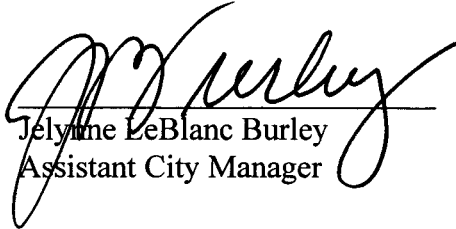
The total cost of the services performed by ULI will be \$110,000. The first and second installments, totaling \$95,000 were paid in accordance with the Agreement executed by the City. The final installment of \$5,000 is scheduled to be paid upon receipt of the final report. Funds were budgeted during the FY 2004 budget process for this service.

COORDINATION

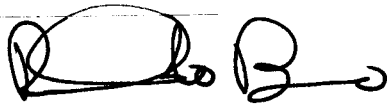
This item has been coordinated with the City Manager's Office and the City Council District 2 Office.



Emil R. Moncivais, AICP, AIA
Director, Planning Department



Jelynn LeBlanc Burley
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J. Rolando Bono
Interim City Manager