

## III. Redevelopment Potentials

### A. Summary of Current Plans and Proposals Presentations

Early in the planning process the team attended a series of meetings held at the offices of SLDC to brief them on existing development plans and proposals for the City and region as they apply to the Downtown. The following is a summary of those meetings.

#### Board of Public Service Plans and Proposals

The Board of Public Service gave an overview of the four primary projects it is currently undertaking within Downtown. The projects include:

##### 1. The Re-Decking of Eads Bridge

The lower level of the historic landmark bridge is used for the MetroLink line connecting St. Louis to East St. Louis. The upper level is currently not being used. BPS expects to contract soon to re-deck the upper level for vehicular use. The historic design of the bridge restricts new deck widths to 54 feet wide. The proposed design includes 4 travel lanes with a 5-foot walkway on one side. Bike enthusiasts have rallied to better accommodate bicycle traffic through realignment and /or designation of lanes.

##### 2. Multi-Modal Project

A new multi-modal station is currently in the final design stage with related track work expected to go out for bid in the short term. The station is just north of the Mill Creek Valley, at 14<sup>th</sup> and Spruce Streets. The +/- 20,000 square foot facility will accommodate MetroLink, Greyhound, Amtrak, Bi-State Bus and a car rental facility. The station will also be able to accommodate a future high-speed rail line.

##### 3. Grattan Street Parkway

This project includes improved local road connections between near south neighborhoods and the Downtown. The proposed parkway will be four-lanes with a landscaped median. The parkway will connect at 18<sup>th</sup> Street north of I-64/STH 40 and at 17<sup>th</sup> Street south of I-64/STH 40.

##### 4. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street Parkway

This project includes the extension of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Street on and off ramps from I-64/STH 40 into and out of Downtown. The project is being developed by both the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) and the City of St. Louis. The City has completed design and is awaiting final ROW acquisition to proceed with constructing a parkway from Olive to Delmar, along 22<sup>nd</sup> Street. If the City proceeds with its component of the project, MoDOT proposes connecting I-64 to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Street Parkway at Olive. How and whether this parkway should be connected to the new Mississippi Bridge project identified on the following page are issues that will need to be addressed during the planning study.



## **Streets Department Plans and Proposals**

### **1. New Traffic Signalization System**

The Downtown area, from Chouteau to Cole and the Mississippi River to Tucker will undergo a comprehensive reconstruction of the traffic signalization system using fiber optics. This system will replace the existing system installed in the 1950's. This new system will involve 75 intersection, and should dramatically improve traffic movement in the Downtown while at the same time significantly decreasing pedestrian conflicts.

## **Bi-State Development Agency Plans and Proposals**

Bi-State runs mass transit services in the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County and areas in Illinois. Services include MetroLink, the bus system, Call-a-Ride, the Arch parking structure, and the Arch Tram. Bi-State is currently in the process of designing a St. Clair County MetroLink Station, which is to open in 2001. MetroLink is very successful, far exceeding any initial ridership projections. Bi-State bus service is threatened by operations subsidy shortfall. Bi-State provides special event buses for Rams games, but only for travel from Illinois for baseball games. MetroLink has high special event ridership. An Arts in Transit program was established in 1986 to provide civic design, an art link for the public transit facilities, and community and economic development. New bus shelters will be installed in the next few years, and an image and signage program will increase visibility of the MetroLink system.

## **Missouri Department of Transportation Plans and Proposals**

The Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) discussed a proposed new Mississippi River bridge connecting Missouri to Illinois with a proposed touchdown in the northern area of the Downtown. The bridge will be signed as I-70. In the City of St. Louis, the current touchdown locations are at Tucker and at 14<sup>th</sup> Street. The bridge alignment and approach designs are currently undergoing environmental review. Construction funds are not yet budgeted.

## **Corp of Engineers Plans and Proposals**

The violent character of the Mississippi waterway was discussed. The discussion included typical maneuvering of barges and other boats that may traverse the Mississippi River, along with a statement that the Corp of Engineers and the Coast Guard typically oppose recreational boating activities on the Mississippi due to the character of the waterway. The River typically moves seven feet horizontally for every 1-foot of vertical increase. There are several leases along the riverfront currently for permanent and temporary commercial and/or tourist boats. Parking lots at the water's edge are flooded approximately four months out of the year. A portion of this parking is leased to the existing casino, and 70% of the revenue generated goes to the Port Authority.

## **East-West Gateway Plans and Proposals**

East-West Gateway was established in 1965 and covers eight Missouri and Illinois counties. The organization provides a forum for coordinated development within the region, with a voting board that includes the chief elected officials from its member jurisdictions, lay people and Bi-State. East-West Gateway has been involved with development of the existing MetroLink system and its expansion, and has adopted a Regional Transportation plan, *Transportation Redefined*, in 1994 to address regional transportation issues.

## **City Treasurer Plans and Proposals**

The Treasurer's office has controlled parking revenues generated by the City since the 1950's. This revenue is obtained through meters, violations, fines and off-street parking facilities operated by the City. The Treasurer's office has constructed several off-street parking structures including one at Kiel Center, and is currently developing a structure as part of the Marquette residential development. The representative stated that parking typically costs \$95/month for structured parking in the Downtown, with an 85-90% occupancy in the Core study area.

## **Laclede's Landing and Riverside North Current Plans and Proposals**

The Laclede's Landing Redevelopment Corporation and its various affiliated organizations: Laclede's Landing Merchant's Association, Warfside Redevelopment Corporation, and the Riverfront Development Corporation of Downtown St. Louis, Inc. have been planning for the Laclede's Landing and Riverside North areas for almost 20 years. The Laclede's Landing Redevelopment Corporation is a Section 353 shareholder owned company.

Initial efforts to revitalize the area began in 1966, with a second wave of activity occurring in 1976 when significant economic restructuring took place. This area is defined by Biddle Street to the north, Washington Avenue to the south, the Mississippi River to the east and I- 70 to the west. The Landing currently includes a mix of retail, office and loft residential, along with 5,000 parking spaces. Approximately 95% of the current user market comes from outside the City.

Some of the current issues surrounding redevelopment of the area that were discussed include:

- Difficulties in land acquisitions, site size, existing transportation infrastructure and the Mississippi River as it relates to residential development
- Two primary circulation issues of pedestrian movement north-south to and through the site and vehicular movement east-west into the site. Need for a shuttle to move people
- Not able to have a marina developed here due to the violent nature of the Mississippi River. The Corps of Engineers has denied this type of development
- How the placement of the Eads bridge was the beginning of a series of large transportation impacts that diced up the riverfront.



There were design guidelines completed for the area that address dumpsters, paving, signage, and so forth, however the height and scale of new development must be considered to a greater level, as current new development tends to be project driven rather than strategy driven. In addition, circulation and land use issues need to be addressed.

One current development in Laclede's Landing is the conversion of two stories of existing office use into residential. Another development in current discussions is a new hotel to be located in the Riverside North area.

The five-year development plan for these areas would include 200 units of new/rehab, mid-rise construction in Laclede's Landing, 50 units in Riverside North, a hotel to be located along I-70 with 100-150 rooms to be completed in year four, a parking garage east of the Embassy Hotel to support the Admiral Casino, and 40,000 sq. ft. of retail along First and Second Streets. A total of 500 housing units would occur within a 10 year development plan. This development plan would be geared to a middle to upper income residential market. There has been some resistance to developing residential development in the Riverside North area.

Although the Redevelopment Corporation does not directly receive public money, there are currently 18 sources of public money available for development of lands along the riverfront. The Corporation uses tax abatement as an incentive for redevelopment. The Corporation is currently looking for investors, along with national and local developers for the area.

## **East St. Louis Riverfront Current Plans and Proposals**

A local market analyst is currently doing a feasibility study for development of the East St. Louis riverfront as a Music Center. Federal funding for this project is not available. The Gateway Center Geysir is one piece of an entire development plan for the east riverfront that is currently in place. This geysir emits a fountain of water twice a day. The additional physical components of this music center would include an amphitheater on axis with the Arch that would seat approximately 10,000 people. The St. Louis Symphony may be one organization to extensively use this facility. Another all-season theater would accommodate 5,000-7,000 persons. The museum would be a gateway piece along the water. This museum would include an adverse cultural representation, having the largest range of music representation in the country. The Smithsonian has expressed interest in being a part of this museum development. An education/research component may entice area universities, and is proposed to include a life-long learning center and research library. The use of these grounds for area festivals was also discussed. Larger planning issues include the development of a bike and interpretive trail system that would connect into a regional system. The overall goal of this project is to improve the image of East St. Louis.

There is currently \$50 million from the State of Illinois available for the development of this site in terms of business relocation, land acquisition and environmental remediation. Approximately \$17 million in private funds are available. The museum would be funded through a general revenue bond, with a 2004 target completion date. The Governor of Illinois is pushing for this development.

## **Union Station Current Plans and Proposals**

In 1977 Oppenheimer Properties, Inc. bought Union Station after several studies had been completed on potential re-use scenarios. The project was to be a stand-alone destination, but not so large that it would be financially unfeasible. The project opened in 1985 under the management of Rouse Company and included retail, restaurants and a new 479 room hotel. \$135 million in financing was obtained, and tax credits helped make the project a reality. In addition, the Mayor of St. Louis at the time appointed an aide to assure the success of this project. The Union Station project was a catalyst for approximately \$1 million in neighborhood revitalization. The Kiel Center development also attributed to revitalization of this area. Currently, the retail components are less successful than the hotel component. Sixty-two percent of business is from outside of the metro area. Current projects being planned are a movie theater complex, a Hard Rock Café, and new office construction. Another project under study, which may compete with Union Station activities, is an entertainment complex in St. Charles County. The representative from Union Station discussed the possibility of an entertainment district for this area, and stressed the importance of having a multi-modal station in close proximity to the Station.

## **Darst Webbe Current Plans and Proposals**

These areas provide the 'front door' to Downtown from the south. In 1995 HUD awarded a 46.7 million dollar grant to the St. Louis Housing Authority for demolition and redevelopment of the Darst-Webbe public housing complex. The redevelopment will include re-introduction of the street grid system, removing the existing super-blocks. Improvements to the streetscapes, public areas, and civic buildings will contribute to the redefined neighborhood. The project will have a significant impact on housing immediate to the Downtown through the addition of 745 housing units, with a density of 20 units per acre at build-out. Of this total, 180 units will be low income, 105 units moderate income, and 460 market rate units. 445 of these units will be rental, with 150 dedicated to elderly residents. 54% of the units will be public housing. The average cost for the market rate for-sale housing is to be \$125,000-\$170,000. The master plan includes housing typologies to guide the development, as several developers will be involved with the project.

## **Gateway/ Convention Center Hotel Current Plans and Proposals**

There is currently a 1,000 room convention center hotel planned. This hotel will be located in a building renovation and addition to occur on Washington Avenue across from America's Center. This hotel will include a new parking structure, with underground connections to the hotel. The structure will have 24,000 sq. ft. of retail on the ground floor and will be capable of handling 1200 cars. This structure will cover one and a half blocks, and will be continuous above street level over St. Charles. There will also be a skywalk connection 43 feet above the street level to connect the hotel to America's Center. There will be a combination of public financing, via tax increment financing and state revenues, a HUD Section 108 loan and City funds.



## **Saint Louis Centre Current Plans and Proposals**

Opened in 1985, the 4 level mall is currently 59-65% occupied, with Dillards and Famous-Barr as anchors. Current lease rates average \$10/ sq. ft., down from \$35/ sq. ft. when the mall opened. A current breakdown of users identifies 35% Downtown workers, 1% tourists, and 64% residential users. The Centre offers 3 free hours of parking on the weekend. The redevelopment plan includes converting the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors back to moderately priced office space, moving the food court to the second level and allowing for service uses on the first and second levels. The plan would also need to address issues with access, visibility, signage, wayfinding and parking. Further, changes to the skybridge may occur as part of this redevelopment effort, such as removing some floors or changing colors. The success of redevelopment of Saint Louis Centre may be significantly enhanced by the Convention Center Hotel Development.

## **Cupples Station Current Plans and Proposals**

Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Missouri currently owns the buildings, and is working with an investment company on redevelopment proposals. Current proposals include the construction of a new 550 car parking structure with ground floor retail on vacant land, a 220 room hotel in the three building Manhattan Coffee complex, approximately 200 loft units, a museum and office rehab. The proposed cost for this redevelopment is around \$100 to \$150 million.

## **Other Projects and Planning**

An overview of previous planning efforts included a discussion of the:

- 1960 Plan for Downtown that proposed the creation of the Mall and discussed a ring highway system;
- 1973 Comprehensive Plan that discussed skywalks, built stadium parking and began urban renewal discussions that included a new convention center;
- 1987 Downtown Plan that placed importance on the riverfront, had the idea of the half mall from Cupples Station to Ralston Purina and first discussed the MLK business park;
- 1989-1992 Streetscape/ Landscape Plan which identified Clark Street between Union Station and the stadium as an important pedestrian connection, identified Washington Avenue as an important connection and discussed the covering of the freeway within the Downtown;
- 1990 Skidmore, Owings and Merrill Study of a Hospitality District that proposed a clear connection from the Convention Center to Laclede's Landing, leaving the current configuration of the freeway as it is, and indicating the location of a proposed major new convention center hotel development;
- 1992 Washington Avenue Loft District Plan that identified four sub-districts along Washington Avenue from the Convention Center to 20<sup>th</sup> Street;
- 1980's Riverfront Plan that provided the basis for current development along the river's edge;
- 1993 Riverfront Plan that proposed major new infrastructure improvements, such as additional parking and improved road accessibility, based on the legalizing of gaming along the Mississippi River's edge; and, the
- 1993 Downtown St. Louis Strategic Plan

### **Additional Topics of Discussion**

- The fact that the City-wide capitol budget is \$3 million/year, with a large portion going directly to the Aldermanic Wards
- There has been not general public bond issue since 1962
- Tax abatement applies to 58% of the property in the City
- There are strong Eminent Domain powers
- Status of historic preservation efforts in the City, and that absolute authority is given to the Heritage and Urban Design Commission regarding demolition or saving of structures
- Regional economic overview that included a discussion of undevelopable land in the region, growth statistics for the Metropolitan Statistical Area, and statistics for change in the City of St. Louis
- Discussion of the need for a unified leadership

