

SOUTH END
NEIGHBORHOOD
HOLLYWOOD AREA
& GEMINI SITE
Springfield, Massachusetts

ULI Boston

Report of the Technical Assistance Panel
Urban Land Institute
Boston District Council

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I. Introduction

A. Executive Summary

Background

This report is the result of meetings and investigations conducted by the Boston Council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Advisory Panel (TAP), a group of volunteer Planning, Design, and Real Estate professionals who worked closely with a wide range of constituencies from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts from March to May of 2007. The Panel gathered information through research and discussions, examined the South End neighborhood with a particular focus on the Hollywood Area and Gemini site and, finally, proposed ideas that would promote and encourage positive change in support of the City's stated goals and objectives.

This panel followed on the heels of a Fall 2006 ULI National Advisory Panel, which set forth broad-based recommendations for the entire city. Subsequent to the Hollywood-Gemini TAP, another TAP was convened to focus on Downtown Springfield, located just north of the Hollywood/Gemini Area. The National TAP can be found on line at <http://www.uli.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Reports2&CONTENTID=86791&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm>. The Downtown and Hollywood Gemini Area TAP can be found on line at www.boston.uli.org under "Initiatives."

A ULI National TAP was convened in the summer of 2006 to evaluate the City of Springfield's assets, understand challenges for economic development, and recommend actions that would capitalize on the City's location in the heart of the Pioneer Valley, leverage its existing strengths, and assist the City and Community Leadership in prioritizing its planning and development efforts.

The Panel recommended the following:

- 1.) Encourage strong community leadership from the highest level to step forward.
- 2.) Leave the Springfield Finance Control Board in place for another term.
- 3.) Make downtown the urban center of the Pioneer Valley, a great place to live, work, and plan.
- 4.) Embrace diversity throughout the City.
- 5.) Conserve Springfield's Neighborhoods.

Among other strong recommendations, The City and ULI leadership decided to convene a series of TAPs lead by the Boston Council of the ULI that would focus on two distinct challenges and opportunities deemed to be highest priority: the Downtown, and the South End Neighborhood.

This TAP report focuses on The South End Neighborhood and in particular the area known as Hollywood and a significant site in the South End called the Gemini Site. The National Panel recommended the following:

Develop a plan and implementation strategy for the Hollywood-Gemini area in the South end neighborhood. Redevelopment in 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:

- 1.) Thinking of the area in its totality, not just as isolated projects.*
- 2.) Reducing crime*
- 3.) Reducing density in the Hollywood project and providing off street parking and play space*
- 4.) Encouraging a good mix of neighborhood-oriented retail on Main Street*

This recommendation served as the starting point for the ULI Boston Council TAP on the Hollywood-Gemini Area of the South End.

Observations and Findings

The Hollywood-Gemini ULI TAP Panel, after extensive observation, site visits and interviews of City and community leadership, neighborhood businesses, property owners, and residents encountered a neighborhood feeling the weight of declining hope, weakened quality housing stock, with passionate but challenged community leadership of too few in number carrying too much of the load, and with planning challenges and opportunities that were many and difficult to prioritize and act on. The real and perceived problem with crime as well as high vacancy of business and residential space creates an atmosphere of fear, despair and apathy that makes progress hard to image, never mind achieve.

The Panel believes, as do a number of citizens and City leaders, that a new beginning has been created by the ULI National TAP and that there is momentum that can and must be maintained so that all stakeholders embrace the need for change, come together in an organized fashion and agree to and prioritize the actions that will lead to renewed economic development and a stronger mixed-use neighborhood that is once again safe to live, work, and play in.

Analysis and Recommendations

The Panel made a number of recommendations at the conclusion of its study that can generally be summarized as follows:

- 1.) Create a more inclusive community development coalition of stakeholders dedicated to establishing economic development, planning, and funding priorities for the Hollywood-Gemini Area. They must come together and be the change agents for the community.
- 2.) Embark on a Community Master Planning effort to assess the physical environment and recommend changes that will promote safety, connectivity, business and residential diversity that is well founded, patient, and sustainable over the long term.
- 3.) Leverage a wide range of funding alternatives that will support the agreed upon priorities for mixed use development, housing stock diversity, and business/retail development in the neighborhood.

B. Acknowledgements

About the Urban Land Institute (ULI)

The Urban Land Institute is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members. Founded in 1936, the institute has more than 35,000 members worldwide representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service.

As the preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information and experience among local, national and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places.

The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and to help create and sustain thriving communities worldwide.

About Technical Assistance Panels (TAP's)

The goal of the ULI's TAP program is to bring the best expertise in the real estate field together to address complex land use, planning, and development projects, programs, and policies. Each panel team is comprised of qualified professionals who dedicate their time to ULI and who are chosen for specific expertise given the panel topic and screened to ensure objectivity.

In keeping with ULI's mission, TAPs are convened to provide *pro bono* planning and economic development assistance to public officials and local stakeholders of under-resourced communities and nonprofit organizations who have requested assistance in addressing a wide range of land use challenges.

A group of diverse professionals strategically assembled to cover the full spectrum of land use and real estate disciplines relevant to the challenges of the Hollywood-Gemini study area spent two days visiting and analyzing existing built environments, specific planning and development issues, and formulating realistic and actionable recommendations to move initiatives forward in a fashion consistent with the City's goals and objectives as well as those in the ULI National TAP Report.

Panel of Experts and TAP Process

ULI Boston selected a panel whose members represent land use and development disciplines such as planning, urban design development, marketing and finance, required to adequately understand and assess the critical physical, planning, and real estate challenges in the Hollywood-Gemini Neighborhoods. Panel members included the following:

- Frederick A. Kramer, President, ADD, Inc (Co-Chair and Chair of ULI's Public Outreach Committee).
- Wayne Mueller, Project Manager and Chief Administrative Officer, Qroe Companies (Co-Chair).
- Mossik Hacobian, Executive Director, Urban Edge.
- Victor W. Karen, Vice President of Project Development, RF Walsh Company.
- William Shapiro, Acquisitions Analyst, Leggat McCall Properties.
- Sandy Wolchansky, Development Manager, JPI.
- Stephanie Wasser, Executive Director, ULI Boston.

- Tracy Smith, District Council Coordinator, ULI Boston.
- Renu Madan, consultant.

Officials of the City of Springfield who served as primary contacts for ULI Boston included the following.

- David B. Panagore, Executive Director, Office of Planning and Economic Development, City of Springfield.
- Brian Conners, Deputy Director of Economic Development, City of Springfield.
- Ryan McCollum, Assistant Project Manager, Office of Planning and Economic Development, City of Springfield.

Richard Henderson and Robert Kaye from Mass Development also provided important information and feedback throughout the TAP Process, and the Panel is grateful for their thoughtful participation.

As a critical part of the TAP process, additional information sessions were held between ULI panel members, City officials, neighborhood associations, business leaders, and law enforcement officials. The TAP Panel heard presentations and participated in Q&A with the following people:

- Steve Desilets, Director, Building Department, City of Springfield.
- William Cochrane, Deputy Police Chief, City of Springfield.
- Angie Florian, Leo Florian and Ed Maloney, representatives, South End Neighborhood Association.
- Peter Gagliardi, HAP, Inc., a community development organization that focuses on affordable housing in Springfield and western Massachusetts.
- Juan Jareno.
- Kimberly Lee, Vice President of the Springfield Day Nursery.
- Kathleen Lingenberg, Director of Housing and Neighborhood Services, City of Springfield.
- Deryk Roach, Parks Planner, City of Springfield.
- Hon. Charles V. Ryan, Mayor, City of Springfield.
- Domenic Sarno, Councilor, South End, City of Springfield.
- Businesspeople & Property Owners.

Planning activities were held on May 2, 2007 at the Zanetti School at 59 Howard Street where an all day intensive “charrette” was held by the Panel to develop a series of recommendations that would be shared with the community at a public presentation that evening. The presentation was delivered to an audience of more than 50 people, consisting of business owners, city officials and employees, community residents, public officials, and members of the media. Mayor Charles Ryan and David Panagore were also present and spoke briefly to the audience.

The Boston Council of the ULI and the TAP Panel would like to extend a sincere thanks to the citizens and public officials of Springfield for their time, for providing excellent data, and for coordinating a stimulating and productive experience for the TAP panelists. The Panel is grateful for the professional assistance provided by Mayor Charles Ryan and City Planning and Economic Development officials David B. Panagore, Ryan McCollum, and Brian Conners for their professional assistance. ULI Boston also thanks ADD Inc for the printing and binding of this report.

II. Background and Panel Assignment

A. ULI National Report

On September 24-29, 2006 an Urban Land Institute National Advisory Panel, under contract with the City of Springfield and funded in part by local businesses, conducted a comprehensive study and reported the panel's findings and recommendations on the City's resources and challenges.

The National ULI Report identified development in the South End neighborhood of Springfield as an immediate need and a high priority. The City of Springfield and the Springfield Redevelopment Authority (SRA) own about one third of the land in this area, much of which is concentrated in two distinct locations, the Gemini site and the Hollywood Area, within the boundaries of Morris, Main, Richelieu, and Marble streets. The national report identified this neighborhood as fertile ground for a community planning effort that would address both commercial and residential context, challenges, and opportunities. The report recommended 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

The complete report by the National Panel is available online.¹

B. City of Springfield's Goals for Neighborhoods

Springfield's neighborhoods fall into three broad categories as identified in the National ULI Panel Report.

- 1.) *Conservation areas* where housing stock is at strong market values and well kept.
- 2.) *Rehabilitation areas* where housing stock is deteriorating and commercial areas are weakening.
- 3.) *Spot redevelopment areas* where housing shows major deterioration, major code violations, significant disinvestment, and underinvestment.

Many of the neighborhoods, including the South End, have experienced difficulties as middle income households have left the city for nearly suburban communities.

The South End and in particular, the Hollywood Area and the Gemini Site fall into Category 2 and 3 above and as such are in need of strategies that will lead to stabilization and economic development. The South End must move beyond its recent past and take a new step forward as a diverse ethnic community of mixed income with a beneficial adjacency to the goods and services of a reinvigorated Main Street shopping area.

Chief Development Officer David Panagore explained that the city has largely completed the first stage of its reorganization plan, focusing on addressing the core competencies required for proper

¹ Report for Downtown, City of Springfield, Technical Assistance Panel, Urban Land Institute, Boston District Council, 2007

City administration and governance. Currently, the city is in an “administrative stabilization” stage, improving and formalizing administrative best management practices (e.g. community policing and computer systems), as well as switching over to a more effective financial system. Continuing to work on governance while simultaneously tackling challenging economic development issues will continue in subsequent phases of work by The Control Board and other City Officials.

According to Mr. Panagore, Master Planning for the City has been challenged by insufficient resources and a diverse group of constituencies with conflicting priorities.

The City of Springfield requested that the Panel provide recommendations and ideas to:

- (1) spur both physical and economic development and
- (2) develop an improvement program for the South End Neighborhood’s Hollywood Area and Gemini Site, given their critical location adjacent to the City’s downtown core.

Improvements to the Hollywood – Gemini Area can serve as a catalyst for further economic development in other neighborhoods with similar challenges.

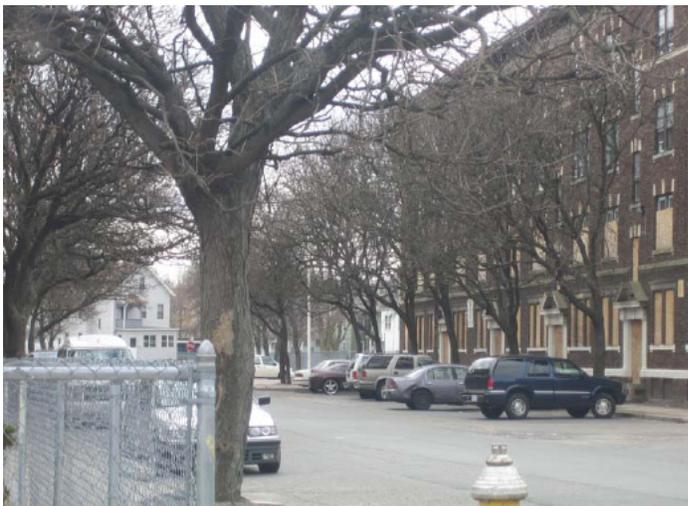
C. Study Area

The **Hollywood Area and Gemini Site** are located in the **South End neighborhood** of Springfield, the smallest of the city's seventeen neighborhoods located less than ½ mile south of the Central Business District. Together, these two areas comprise a considerable portion of the land area in the South End.

The **Hollywood Area** is bounded by Main, Richelieu, Marble, and Adams Street. The area is comprised of many 4-story multi-family brick apartment buildings built predominately in the 1920s, as well as single-family and two-family homes. Several of the buildings are currently boarded-up and vacant. Many of the parcels within this area are vacant and in poor condition. Some of the structures are currently targeted for demolition.

The **Gemini site** is vacant land that is the former home of a 100,000 SF textile mill (owned by the Gemini Corporation) that was destroyed by fire in 2003. Located between Morris and Central Streets, one half block north of Main Street, this 3-acre site is now owned by the City of Springfield which has secured \$200,000 for cleanup of its remaining Brownfield issues. Across the street from the site on Central Street is a large townhouse development that is currently under rehabilitation by a private developer. This is a sizeable site that if properly programmed and developed, can act as a catalyst for continued change.

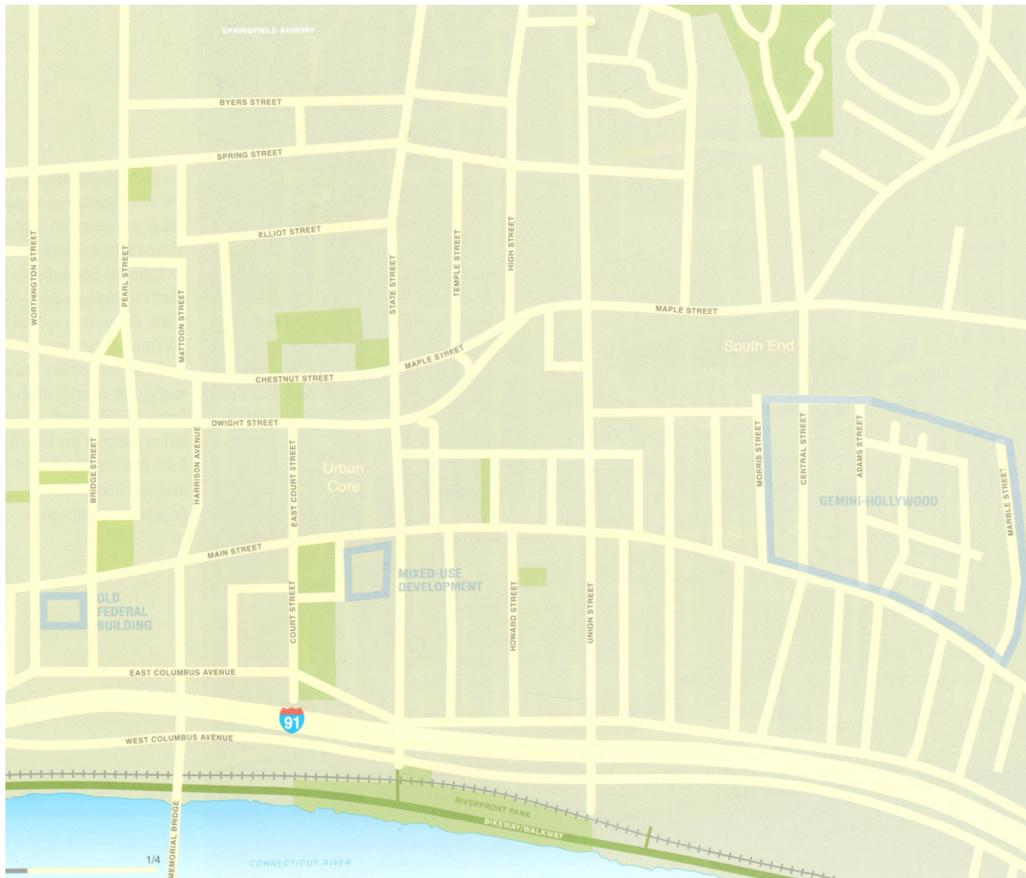
Emerson Wight Park is an important but underutilized open space that sits on several acres of land south of Marble Street and the Hollywood neighborhood.



Dwight Street in Hollywood Area



Row House Apartments on
Central Street across from Gemini



Study site proximity to Downtown core



Study site

III. Observations and Findings

Primary Considerations

Throughout the site visits, presentations, and Q&A sessions, panelists heard a number of consistent themes, and they are summarized as follows:

Crime and Public Safety.

This issue was raised consistently due to its negative impacts on businesses and residents in terms of quality of life and property values. Drug activity and overall call volumes to the police department are higher than in many other neighborhoods in Springfield. Some parts of the Hollywood area, including its alleys, dead-end streets, and Emerson Wight Park, hamper access and create a number of areas that are difficult to patrol effectively and are less visible to residents along the streets. In Hollywood, in particular, landlord-tenant rules and regulations range in quality and are inconsistently articulated and enforced.

Social Tension.

Many parties referred to tension in the South End between long-time white ethnic homeowners and a much larger, newer, population of renters, most of whom are ethnically diverse. Some community members feel the tension is based predominantly on economic differences, while others feel that race, language, or ethnicity plays a major role. The Panel notes these findings without drawing a conclusion, but it is clear that the divide creates difficulty in finding common ground between residents, business owners and other shareholders.

Lack of Inclusiveness.

The South End Neighborhood Association’s Board consists of eight residents who grapple with the issues that are deemed important to the well-being of the neighborhood. They do a credible job where resources are focused but are not fully representative of the residents of the neighborhood, and participation by others needs to be more strongly encouraged. City officials, residents, and business owners expressed concern about how to create an inclusive environment where people can work as partners in a city, breaking through some of the barriers which have developed in prior years.

Absence of a Sense of Neighborhood.

The City of Springfield finds that many people lump this area of the City into their idea of “downtown;” however, the area does not receive the redevelopment opportunities associated with the downtown, and given that it is largely residential, it operates more as a neighborhood. The lack of an organized and understandable block pattern of streets, buildings, and open spaces in Hollywood leads to a sense that it is divorced from both the adjacent Emerson Wight Park as well as Main Street. The scale of buildings is diverse from larger multi-family rental apartments to smaller owner occupied one- and two-family homes. Open spaces are disorganized and underutilized in general. Retail fabric along Main Street is sparse and of inconsistent quality. Overall neighborhood identity is weak, and today, it is not considered a good neighborhood.

Excess Subsidized Housing, Density, and Lack of Market-Rate Housing.

Many businesses and community members attribute blame for the real and perceived problems in the community on the “density” or concentration of low-income, renter population in Hollywood. The panel heard differing points of view on density and the type of housing that should be developed or demolished.

Vacant Buildings / Disorganized Open Space.

There are a large number of vacant and boarded-up buildings in the subject areas. This not only deteriorates from general aesthetics and a sense of neighborhood, but also consistently attracts and exacerbates illegal drug activity. A number of these structures are scheduled for demolition but there are no plans for the resulting open spaces that will be created or, in fact, what may be done to organize and strengthen the disorganized open spaces and street patterns that already exist.



Hollywood vacant apartments



Emerson Wight Park.

Many issues regarding this large park and playground were raised. People, including persons formerly housed at the homeless shelter at the York Street Jail, are often found loitering and participating in illicit drug activity in the park. It has very poor vehicle and pedestrian access and visibility, in addition to issues of flooding. Further, no substantive parking is provided for those that would use the park, and all of the single-family homes that surround the park turn their backs on it.....their backyards face the park.

Emerson Wight Park

Limited neighborhood services, schools, churches, or full service grocery stores.

Children in the South End neighborhood of Springfield who don't go to the Zanetti School on street travel up to five miles to a half dozen different schools in various neighborhoods across the City. The local Springfield Day Nursery has a waiting list of up to 100 children trying to get into this school. There are no community centers right in the Hollywood area, and access to basic goods and services such as full service grocery and drug stores along Main Street is limited. This is a significant but all too common a challenge for the neighborhood: low-income families pay more for basics in the neighborhood at convenience stores, or they must drive (or take the bus) to full service retail areas miles away.

IV. Analysis and Recommendations

The TAP Panel presented several recommendations on the second day of working sessions after carefully considering all of the physical and social challenges confronting the Hollywood Area and Gemini site. The Primary concern of the Panel focuses on creating a sustainable organizational structure that will secure both short- and long-term commitment from stakeholders in the neighborhood. Once this coalition is established it can begin to plan for and implement the actions that will secure the future of the neighborhood.

The many issues, recommendations, and ideas that were addressed during the Panel’s work in Springfield need to be tackled by an organized and broad-based coalition of residents, business and property owners / managers, community leaders, and City Officials. These constituencies need to come together to identify and implement common goals and objectives for their community. There are many who can play a significant role in transforming the Hollywood/Gemini areas into safe and sustainable neighborhoods.

A. Organizational Structure

Before any neighborhood planning can occur and be implemented in the study area, a broad-based coalition of stakeholders must be created that will work to reconcile different perspectives in the community and join together to articulate the challenges as well as the sustainable solutions that will lead to improvement. When asked, one community meeting attendee answered that she did not participate in any neighborhood group or structure. Typically, a few active members end up doing most of the work, but more inclusive and diverse representation by seemingly disparate constituencies is critical in regaining the trust, respect, and cooperation of those who live and work in the communities.

The Panel recommends collaboration and substantial outreach to engage residents and establish a South End Redevelopment Coalition or Task Force.

A list of recommended stakeholders includes the following:

- Homeowners
- Renters
- Neighborhood Council
- Property Owners
- Property Management Companies
- Local Businesses and Service Providers
- Government and Public Agencies
- Educational Institutions
- Banks and Major Downtown Employers
- Religious Institutions
- Cultural and Civic Institutions
- Others

**The Boston Housing Partnership (BHP):
A Shining Example**

Panel member Mossik Hacobian, Executive Director of Urban Edge, described the Boston Housing Partnership (BHP) as created in the mid 1980s and continuing to operate today as a model for building a coalition to sustain a 20-year community development effort across the South End neighborhoods. The BHP consists of representatives of City and State agencies, civic leaders, Community Development Compensations (CDCs), advocates and social service organizations.

Twenty years ago, Egleston Square in Boston's Roxbury and Jamaica Plain neighborhoods was similar to Springfield's South End neighborhood. Crime and safety issues were foremost on people's minds. First, the neighborhood had to be stabilized. Urban Edge was able to use resources aggregated and leveraged by BHP to renovate long-vacant and abandoned buildings in Egleston Square and surrounding blocks. Subsidized housing was used strategically to help create the conditions for market rate development. Further, Urban Edge, local merchants, churches and organizations embarked on a "take-back-the-streets" effort and welcomed everyone who wanted to participate. No one was excluded. Like the South End, Egleston Square was in need of banks, a pharmacy, and a grocery store. A coalition of organizations and the City of Boston convinced Fleet Bank to open a branch. This was followed by the opening of a McDonald's restaurant, which attracted the attention of other retailers, including an Athlete's Foot franchise store, a Walgreen's pharmacy, H & R Block, and, eventually, others.

Today Egleston Square is beautiful, vibrant neighborhood in which people want to live because it is a safe neighborhood with good housing stock, racial harmony and cooperation, quality retail, and other economic developments.



A celebration of Boston's 375th birthday on August 18, 2005
at the Egleston Square Peace Garden

B. Panel's Recommended Priorities / Goals

The Panel recommends the following priorities or goals for a new neighborhood coalition to consider:

Address Public Safety and Crime Perception.

The Panel heard that over the last few years, crime or the perception of crime, is a significant problem in the area. Action is recommended to address this issue.

- 1.) A joint program with residents and the police department to include community policing and a public awareness program high-lighting the improvements that are being made.
- 2.) The relocation of the homeless shelter from the York Street Jail will mitigate the number of homeless people passing through or loitering in the Hollywood Area.
- 3.) Property owners should create high quality, consistent rental agreements for their residents and enforce them. The City should consider a licensing program for residential property landlords.
- 4.) Zoning ordinances for Main Street should be evaluated in order to encourage uses that are supportive of the improvement of the area (e.g. goods and services, ethnic retail and grocery) and mixed uses (e.g. retail with residential uses on upper floors) and to discourage uses that are counterproductive to improvement. (e.g. automobile dealerships, bars, bottle recycling centers).

Support Development of Neighborhood Retail.

There is a marked absence of nearby affordable and quality goods and services as well as amenities. Currently, residents must take public transit or drive to get basic goods and services that most urban communities have more readily at their disposal. Bringing the proper mix of retail and needed amenities to the South End would also create jobs and attract additional businesses to the areas around the Hollywood area and Gemini site. The most important needs identified were banking, pharmacy services, a hardware store, and, most importantly, a grocery store of significant size (but not necessarily a super store)

Support Development of Neighborhood Amenities.

Additional neighborhood services are also needed, including common open and/or play space of a proper scale, strategically programmed and easy to maintain and police, a new facility for Springfield Day Nursery and expanded child care services, a community center (perhaps relocation of the South End Community Center that operates in less than ideal space today on the other side of Main Street), church extension services, and perhaps a neighborhood school and police station.

Encourage Maintenance of Properties and Physical Appearance.

Another priority proposed for a redevelopment coalition is pursuing ideas to encourage improvement in the housing stock. Based on examples from around the state and country, the coalition can explore code and licensing strategies to control the stock of rental properties and improve code enforcement, in addition to facilitating landlord-tenant mediation to improve the quality of rental properties. In addition, organizing to involve tenants in even the most modest of physical improvements will begin to make a difference, yield tangible results, and bring residents and businesses together. Given the number of vacant and poorly maintained properties, the City should adopt a “demolition by neglect” statute (recommended by national panel as well) that can be enforced in target neighborhoods. The City should work with landlords to take tax delinquent property and find ways to incent home ownership on these parcels.

Expand Residential Products.

There is a stark “abruptness” to the diverse density of housing types in the Hollywood neighborhood. In particular, four-story multi-family apartment blocks coexist beside single-family homes and blighted open space. Using open areas already in existence or creating middle-scaled workforce housing (a mix of ownership and rental opportunities) on sites where buildings will be demolished could ameliorate this situation. The Panel agreed with some active homeowners that a more diverse stock of housing and range of incomes in the community would help to reestablish the neighborhood as a more stable and diverse. The Panel also believes that better goods and services along Main Street would follow such a change. However, acknowledging the active debate about the type and amount of housing that should be encouraged or demolished in the community, and that the current market in Hollywood/Gemini does not currently render market-rate housing feasible, the Panel also believes that subsidies must still be used strategically to stimulate market-rate development.

The Panel is convinced that the Hollywood/Gemini area can once again become a place where people will want to live or start a business, but improvements will take time and a concerted sustainable effort on the part of a representative and committed group of organized stakeholders is critical.

The critical first steps will need to be deliberate, decisive, visible, and publicized.

C. Physical Improvement / Site Plan Concepts

The Panel presented a menu of viable physical improvements for the proposed new development coalition to consider as they create a vision for the Hollywood/Gemini areas of the South End neighborhood. These proposed changes to the physical infrastructure of Hollywood/Gemini should stimulate discussions and creative solutions among participants in the redevelopment process. The overarching goals are to:

- 1.) Reduce crime and the perception of crime.
- 2.) Grow the economic base and community services to support the existing and future population.
- 3.) Promote more market-rate housing and home ownership.
- 4.) Promote business and retail development along Main Street.
- 5.) Turn vacant lots into development opportunities or beneficial open spaces.

HOLLYWOOD AREA

Observations: Following are the Panel’s key observations in the Hollywood Area of the South End:

- Lack of order to street pattern. There are some very well-ordered streets in the Hollywood area, and there are others that are chaotic, or that are closed off to Main Street, or that restrict a logical flow of people and traffic.
- Too many open spaces/vacant lots that don’t serve a purpose and are unkept.
- No parking/access to Emerson Wight Playground
- Few off-street parking lots properly distributed.
- Street parking that is perpendicular to streets (Dwight Street) and a lack of order and consistency to streets with parallel parking
- A number of properties are scheduled for demolition for a variety of reasons, but there are too many open and underutilized lots already and no apparent strategic plan for how to combine sites or use the available property subsequent to demolition to achieve goals for parking, diverse new housing stock, play areas, or beneficial open space.

Opportunities: Following are some of the opportunities for physical improvements in the Hollywood Area of the South End:

Improve the Street Pattern.

Suggestions on changes to the street patterns in the Hollywood area include the following:

- Extend Oswego Street to Main Street, thereby improving the connection to Main Street, creating new retail corner stores, and eliminating dead ends within Hollywood
- Eliminate Montpelier Street and create more retail space on Main Street.
- Bridge Oswego Street to Main Street, and Marble Street to Richelieu Street
- Bridge Rutledge and Wendell to Marble and Dwight
- Extend Rutledge Street through Emerson Wight park to Richelieu Street

Improving circulation and reinforcing the street grid in the Hollywood area will serve to improve access and clarity for residents, visitors, and public safety officials. It will create new corners, improve visibility and transparency, create order in street patterns, and provide connections within

the area and to the rest of the South End, thereby reconnecting both Emerson Wight and the Hollywood area to Main Street.

Establish a Demolition and Redevelopment Strategy.

Three buildings near the Hollywood / Gemini sites were slated for demolition in May 2007 for a variety of reasons. Reducing the density of housing in the South End was a strategy echoed by many city officials and business owners. It was also recommended by the National ULI Advisory Panel. While a strategic reduction in density may make sense, there does not appear to be a plan for what would happen to the vacant land once the buildings are demolished. The Panel strongly recommends that a comprehensive community master plan be created that will establish design guidelines for building demolition, new structures, sidewalks, secure parking, and open space. There are a multitude of vacant lots already that serve no real purpose and open space should be consolidated and organized (e.g. vest pocket parks perhaps) to support the goals of the neighborhood for passive and active recreational purposes.

Create Additional Development Opportunities.

As previously discussed, the development of neighborhood amenities, including neighborhood services, retail, as well as expanding residential options should be considered by a redevelopment coalition consistent with the goals of a new community master plan. The combination of City owned properties along with the Gemini Site provide ample opportunities for City sponsored public and private development opportunities. Within Hollywood, there are a number of underutilized properties and properties scheduled for demolition that are of a size adequate to support development through a carefully crafted RFP process.

Create an Open Space Strategy.

Emerson Wight Park is a large, beautiful, wide-open space, but it is inaccessible and invisible to the general public due to street patterns and its design, including lack of parking and the adjacent hill which provides an environment difficult to police. The Panel believes that this park is a tremendous asset but fails to meet its intended purpose. It must be reconnected to the community, relocated, or redesigned to achieve its real potential. A number of concepts were discussed at the public presentation and depicted later in this report.

Address lack of lighting.

Many of the streets of Hollywood are dark and narrow. Additional street lighting is recommended and should be carefully considered in any community master planning effort.

GEMINI SITE

Observations: The following are the TAP Panel’s key observations in the Gemini Site of the South End:

- Largest contiguous, developable site in the neighborhood.
- Limited usable open space available in the Gemini Site area and could be considered here.
- Many city-owned and under-utilized parcels directly adjacent to the Gemini Site mean variety of opportunities exist for synergistic community planning / site consolidation.
- Winn Development’s ownership and proposed renovations to property along Center Street establish an excellent example for private investment opportunity and housing stock improvements.

Opportunities: Following are some of the opportunities for physical improvements on the Gemini site in the South End:

Create New Housing and mixed use development on Gemini Site.

Given the newly-renovated residential development across the street from the Gemini site on Central Street, the Panel believes that there is potential for additional moderate density residential development in this location. The type of housing (e.g. more row houses, town-homes, etc.), and its mix with other uses is a good subject for discussion by the new coalition. Housing here is closer to the downtown and should begin to transition toward more market-rate housing, either ownership or rental, consistent with goals for diversity of housing stock and access by a more diverse and higher-income population.

Convert Gemini Site into a large-scale park /soccer or ball Field.

Another option for the Gemini site is to leave it mostly as-is, and turn it into beneficial, active open space. Given the size of the development site, and the proximity to existing open space, the Panel recommends that open space be integrated into mixed use development density appropriate to the site given its adjacency to the downtown. The Panel does NOT recommend that this significant site be converted to open space in its entirety. It is too large a site in too significant location and represents a significant opportunity for catalytic development.

Establish Programmed Open Space.

The Panel advocates planning specific uses for specific parcels or parks to help activate them and increase their usage by the community. There is too much “un-programmed “open space at this time. Any additional open space should be very strategically programmed and located, and it should be of a scale that supports its intended use, easy to maintain and to “police “.

Site for Springfield Day Nursery / Community Center / School.

Both the Springfield Day Nursery and the South End Community Center currently operate in physical spaces that are not supportive of or conducive to their business goals and objectives. One has run out of space, and the other resides in an old armory. The Springfield Day Nursery has a waiting list of an estimated 100 to 200 children for their South End facility. They believe the number of children they serve can be doubled if they had space of a quality and character that would allow it. The school indicated that additional daycare space in the Hollywood area would work very well for them and that many of their customers are working mothers from the adjacent community.

Retail Development.

Another option for the Gemini site is to develop community retail that the South End desperately needs. New retail, such as a grocery store, would draw people from outside the community (e.g. from Downtown where there is also no grocery store), and such visitors may also spend money on other goods and services while visiting. This may help to improve the activity and vitality of the community and can also be incorporated into a mixed use development with residential and / or commercial uses.

Consider Additional Parking to Support Main Street Retail.

Additional parking would be helpful along the Main Street corridor; possibly also on side streets. While there are currently more vacant storefronts than operating ones, the community can begin

to plan for parking that will support a more thriving Main Street that connects Downtown with the areas south of the City.

Mixed-use Development.

There are some important examples of mixed use development which are buildings or complexes that combine residential, retail, and office space. Mixed Use development adds economic and social vitality to neighborhoods. The Panel encourages the proposed Redevelopment Coalition to analyze and advance proposals for smaller scale community mixed use development.

MAIN STREET AREA

Observations: Following are the TAP Panel’s key observations regarding the Main Street area of the South End:

- Numerous vacant store fronts and counter-productive uses
- Limited parking
- Active bottle redemption center (perceived negatively by community)
- Bars
- Homeless shelter (formerly) nearby
- Lack of grocery store, bank, and pharmacy
- Poor quality of street trees, lighting, sidewalks, etc.

Opportunities: Following are some of the opportunities for physical improvements regarding the Main Street area of the South End:

Extend Main Street Improvement Plan from Howard Street to Rutledge Street.

The City has a plan to improve Main Street through the Downtown from the north until it crosses Howard Street. The Panel recommends extending this plan further south to Rutledge Street, so that the Hollywood/Gemini area can be reconnected to the Downtown, and Main Street can be improved to promote more productive retail tenancy, which in turn will support neighborhood improvements in the residential areas of the South End.

Reinvigorate Community Business Organization.

The Panel also suggests taking strategic steps to reinvigorate the existing community business organization and reestablish a sense of ownership, pride and opportunity in the business community. In order to do this, local business leaders must be able to “see their future “and feel that the City and Neighborhood is committed to change. The Business Organization should focus on viable neighborhood business opportunities and stabilizing the physical environment along Main Street.

Encourage Business Development through Subsidized Loan Program.

The Panel recommended using low-interest loans for businesses to start small stores. This will help develop a sense of retail character in the community. The Chamber of Commerce and others offered details and examples.

Homeless Shelter Relocation.

Concerns were reported about the residents of a men’s shelter on the other side of Interstate 91 and the Connecticut River, who are forced to leave the shelter’s confines early each morning. Many of these residents are found loitering in the Emerson Wight Playground and other parts of

the Hollywood area, including Main Street at the time of this writing, the City of Springfield had implemented a plan to relocate the shelter and mitigate this concern.

Zoning Evaluation and Change.

The City has selected a Development Consultant that should work with the City Planning department to evaluate existing zoning requirements for the Main Street corridor and recommend changes and refinements that would be consistent with the type of development desired in the area. Changes should address the creation of incentives for positive desired uses (neighborhood retail, banking, community grocery, drug stores, etc.) as well as the development of constraints or barriers to certain negative uses (recycling centers, bars, automotive uses, etc) and densities that are counterproductive to the goals for redevelopment along the street. Zoning considerations should be developed in close concert to Community Master Planning efforts suggested for the Hollywood Area and the Gemini Site.

D. Conceptual Site Plans

The following conceptual plans represent a menu of planning and design ideas intended to stimulate discussions among participants in the redevelopment process for the Hollywood/Gemini area. They are presented here to stimulate creative solutions and lead to a clear identification of priority goals and objectives. The Panel recommends that a more detailed Community Master Planning effort be undertaken.

Each of the following concepts addressed similar issues in different ways:

- 1.) Strengthen the physical street pattern in Hollywood in order to promote clear travel paths, safety, and organization.
- 2.) Create new, and/or reinforce existing open space within the community at a scale that can be “ policed “ by the community and activated by both passive and active programming tied strategically to the size and location of the open space.
- 3.) Connect Hollywood to Main Street
- 4.) Improve the Main Street streetscape; create new street corners, etc.
- 5.) Develop a moderate density mixed use development with supporting open space at the Gemini Site.

Proposal 1

- Extend streets to eliminate dead ends (violet)
- Move Emerson Wight Park at smaller scale into the center of the Hollywood Area apartment complex by demolishing two blocks of apartment buildings, some of which are already earmarked for demolition, (dark green, park areas)
- Develop single-family housing on most of the current Emerson Wight Park area (orange)
- Develop a mixed use project with housing, open space, and community space at Gemini Site



Proposal 1 focuses on the value that properly scaled parks and open space add to residential communities in both the Hollywood area and at the Gemini Site.

The current location of the major park, Emerson Wight, does not benefit the vast majority of Hollywood/Gemini residents.

This Proposal involves moving the park to the area between Niagara, Bayonne, Saratoga, and Oswego. In addition, the streets Richelieu, Rutledge and Wendell are all extended so that most of the streets are usable and there are fewer dead ends. This is important for policing and safety.

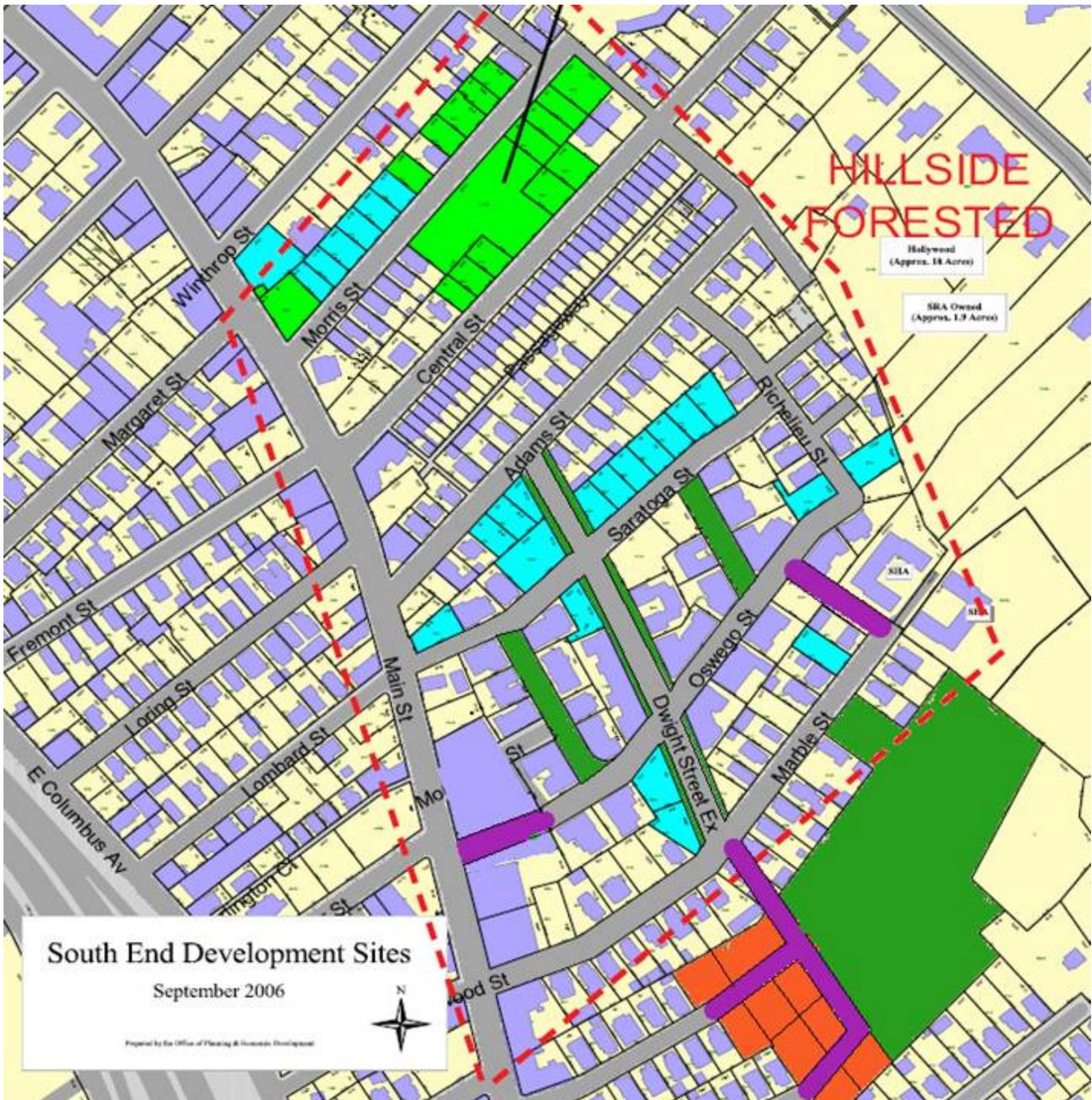
A small park area remains where Emerson Wight Park was perhaps for a playground. The plan is based on the idea that residents should not have to walk more than two blocks to get to a park or playground. Pedestrian ways near the park in the center can be created, perhaps making surrounding streets one-way with a small amount of on-street parking.

Some buildings would have to be demolished to make this plan a reality, and the land area of Emerson Wight Park would need to be relocated to another area of the City to allow for the construction of more single or two-family homes in its place.

The Gemini Site should be conceived of as a moderate density mixed use project that completes the design of the street edge and provides beneficial open space as part of its mix of uses, perhaps tied to the development of much needed quality community space.

Proposal 2

- Extend and re-order streets (violet), eliminating dead ends
- Reduce Emerson Wight Park by about 1/3 (dark green) and add up to 10 single-family lots (orange)
- Add narrow green space play and pedestrian corridors in the midst of the most dense apartment blocks (dark green)
- Reduce the width of Dwight Street; make it a more pedestrian friendly and treed environment with parallel parking spaces. The land area gained can be given to adjacent development parcels.
- Develop a mixed use project with beneficial open space at Gemini Site.



Proposal 2 involves leaving Emerson Wight Park generally in its current location.

Given that Dwight Street is very wide, perhaps more so than needed, it could be developed into a boulevard-style, tree-lined street with pedestrian-friendly edges, as depicted in the accompanying illustration. In this way, Dwight Street becomes important in the community, running all the way through and connecting itself along the edge of the park up to Wendell and Rutledge. This also creates or improves connections to the park and allows a reduction in the size of the park.

Emerson Wight can still operate as a playing field in this plan. Also utilized here is an idea that grows out of “mews housing” in Philadelphia, which turns some streets into green pedestrian ways and play areas ways between some of the most dense housing areas. In the Hollywood/Gemini area, Niagara and Bayonne are dense areas with housing on both sides. In essence, open space could be created between the front doors where people live, allowing residents to sit on their stoops, children to play without automobile traffic, and also create a connection to the park.

Cutting off Montpelier, another dead-end street, and bringing Oswego through (indicated in purple), is a way to create some rationale to how streets intersect with Main Street. This provides usable dimensions to develop new retail, and produces street organization with some structure and clarity. It is also a way to create safer travel paths and fewer dead ends where counterproductive activities can thrive out of the view of passers by and law enforcement officials.

As in other schemes, the Gemini Site should be carefully evaluated to create a mixed use program that engages the street edge and includes beneficial open space of a scale that contributes to activating a very important “missing tooth “in the South End neighborhood fabric.

Proposal 3

- Add new park directly off of Main Street (dark green)
- Reduce size of Emerson Wight Park (dark green) and convert surrounding area to single-family residential lots (orange). Marble Street fronts on the park.
- Extend streets eliminating dead ends (violet)
- Develop the Gemini site as a mixed use project with community space and market rate housing



Kim Lee of Springfield Day Nursery said that if you want to make a big splash, you have got to throw a big rock." In this way, Proposal 1 may be viewed as a very large rock and Proposal 2 a smaller one.

Proposal 3 would perhaps be a medium-sized rock. This design borrows from the other two. It involves creating a neighborhood park as the heart of the community, and in the north corner along Main Street, a layer of community uses that have been identified as lacking in the Hollywood/Gemini area (e.g. pharmacy, bank).

The Panel pointed out that it is currently not clear what people consider being "there" when referring to the South End. It has no real center and no perceptible organization or planning continuity. This design creates a significant place that marks the South End, especially with its park adjacent to Main Street. The park's location would also give people a window into a residential area of the South End.

The extension of Wendall and Rutledge around the Park would create new housing opportunities for single and two-family homes that front on the park creating much needed " eyes on the street " thereby enhancing safety and creating more diverse and newer housing stock for residents.

The park on Main Street could also be a significant open space that could serve as the front door for mixed use development at the Gemini Site.

E. Funding Options

The Panel recommended a number of funding sources be considered by the new coalition which can be leveraged to achieve the adopted goals and objectives.

The development of market-rate housing and workforce housing is identified as a desire for the Hollywood/Gemini area. However, the communities do not appear ready for market housing development. Current sale prices are lower than the cost of construction and even the cost of rehabilitation in some cases. The Panel recommends gradually “up streaming” the housing stock by attracting something between the current low-income subsidized housing and market-rate housing. The following is a list of ideas to address the gap in development costs and The Panel recommended a number of funding sources be considered by the new coalition which can be leveraged to achieve the adopted goals and objectives.

Homeownership Tax Incentive.

Another idea is to provide a tax incentive for home purchases in targeted neighborhoods (similar to the tax credit provided by the federal government) to first-time homebuyers. In Washington, DC, such a program dramatically increased the rate of homeownership throughout the District of Columbia²

Institutional Support.

The city could partner with area banks and foundations to provide grants and below-market mortgage loans for investment in particular areas such as Hollywood-Gemini. The grants could be made in collaboration with a requirement that a certain number of hours of investment in the community (via community service, neighborhood involvement, etc.) be a requirement to “pay back” the grant.

Direct Federal and State Grants.

Direct grants from the federal and/or state government could be used to subsidize the development of market-rate housing in targeted areas. In particular, these grants could be used to target infrastructure or other high-cost aspects of development that would enable developers to dramatically lower their upfront development costs to pass along those reduced costs to homebuyers by way of a reduced price. Examples of these might be Rehab loans funded by community development block grant (CDBG) or HOME funds from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Housing Programs with “Sweat Equity” Components.

Homeownership can also be stimulated through a program similar to that used by Habitat for Humanity whereby the homeowner “earns” their home through contribution of “sweat equity,” or their own labor, in addition to monetary investment. A program like this will require the City to partner with entities such as Habitat for Humanity to provide the additional resources necessary to develop these types of opportunities. The City could also offer a sort of “homesteading loan” to be paid down by new owners’ efforts to improve a property over a number of years. If such a property is improved to a level acceptable to the City, and the resident occupies the property for a

² Source: Washington, D.C.’s First-Time Home-Buyer Tax Credit, Fannie Mae Foundation. This report is available at http://www.fanniemaefoundation.org/programs/pdf/dctaxcredit_rpt_execsumm.pdf.

minimum number of years, the loan would be forgiven. This program could be applied to both, single-family homes, as well as apartment units, and the up-front cost of the program to the City would be very low for the land and buildings it currently owns.

The Panel recommends that the proposed coalition consider all of these options, and then develop a program that would focus them into a “development pilot.” This proposal differs from a traditional government rental-subsidy model. Rather, it represents a public-private partnership providing development cost support to encourage the real estate development community to invest their own funds to help redevelop an area

IV. Next Steps / Summary

Following are some possible steps with which to begin the process of redevelopment as proposed by the Panel:

Development Consultant Tasks. The City of Springfield noted that they have hired GLC Development Resources to provide development consulting services. Two staff persons from GLC attended the presentations on May 2, 2007. Following are potential tasks recommended for such consultants to consider:

- **Micro-market Study.** The Panel recommends the development consultants examine the Zimmerman/Volk study, commissioned by the City to determine which portions are applicable to the Hollywood area and Gemini site.
- **Definition of Bridge Housing.** Another potential task for the development consultants is to strategize relocation opportunities for people who may be displaced either permanently or temporarily by any planned demolition to reorganize the street layout, for example. This is one aspect of a “bridge housing” strategy.
- **Retail Potential.** The development consultants can also analyze population, traffic, and market fundamentals to estimate the specific retail potential in the Hollywood/Gemini area. The Panel believes that Main Street’s many vacant or underused lots can be developed to generate retail business that will cater not only to the local residents but to residents within a 3-5 mile radius.
- **Overall Goal Definition.** The development consultants can also contribute their expert opinions as all stakeholders work together to define overall redevelopment goals for the Hollywood/Gemini area (e.g. homeownership rate, property uses, physical appearance).
- **Community Master Plan.** The new coalition should work with the development consultant to retain a planning consultant and create a master plan and accompanying zoning regulations for the Hollywood Gemini neighborhood that takes into consideration the primary themes of the conceptual studies above: reorganize street patterns, create ordered and programmed open space, reconnect Emerson Wight to the neighborhood create housing of proper moderate density and diversity, and reconnect the neighborhood to a Main Street supported by new zoning guidelines for acceptable uses, density, and design guidelines.

Workforce Education in Partnership with Institutions. The Panel heard many times during TAP sessions about a need for workforce education. Many of this community’s residents do not have adequate access to employment. Given that local vocational training institutes are in need of new space, this presents a very promising potential “synergy” of need that could be capitalized on or near Main Street.

Strategy/Phasing Plan to Achieve Vision. Another next step is for stakeholders to discuss and develop a phased plan for redevelopment with both short- and long-term objectives.

Immediate Kick-off of a Multi-Year Strategy. Considerable momentum has now been gained. Taking as many steps, even if they are small ones, as quickly as possible is advised to ensure that existing energy is maintained and that a transparent and inclusive process is created.

SUMMARY

The audience reaction to the Panel's presentation on May 2, 2007 was lively and largely positive. There were many varying points of view about specific strategies for redevelopment. It is easy to forget that everyone involved shares the same vision; a better and safer neighborhood where people *want* to live, work and play.

The Panel fully expects the ultimate plan may look different from the conceptual and thought-provoking ideas put forth in this report. Overall, the audience's responses reflected tremendous interest and hope. Gratitude was expressed for the attention they were receiving after feeling under-served and neglected for many years. One resident noted this was the most positive presentation he has heard in 31 years. Mayor Ryan also expressed his gratitude, as well as commitment to an improvement plan for the area.

The Panel focused on and presented the current challenges, values and strengths of the Hollywood/Gemini area of the South End neighborhood. They recommended building upon and creating opportunities for new value. The Panel also advised that passion and sustainability of effort, without the accompanying negative emotions, are very much needed to accomplish these goals. The Panel sensed concern in the audience that this exercise may end up like others in the past – resulting in no significant action. The Panel conceded that the study alone will not accomplish anything. The Panel's aim was only to offer ideas to spark an interest and desire among the neighborhood's stakeholders to come together to create a better neighborhood. There is no quick fix to the current situation but there are many steps that an organized and empowered group can take to move the community forward.

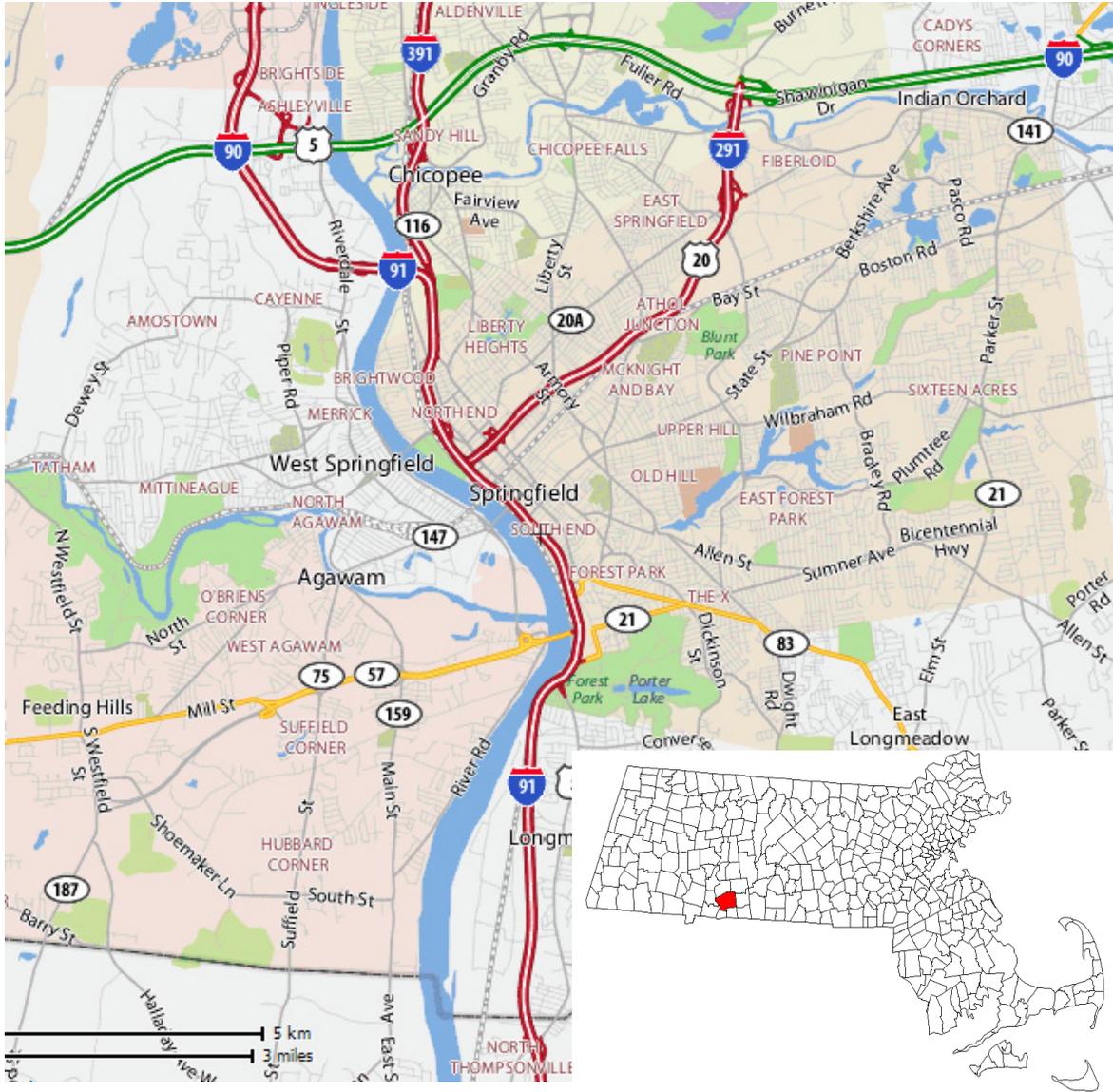
The Panel came away very impressed with the City Administration's commitment (in both personal and financial terms) to improving the Hollywood/Gemini neighborhood. The Panel noted that if the community and its stakeholders could agree on some primary objectives, there were many significant strengths to capture and leverage, and that the final result would be an area that once again becomes a very strong asset for the City -- economically stable, safe, and supportive to existing and growing quality businesses as well as families of mixed ethnicity and incomes.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Map of Springfield Metropolitan Area and location within Massachusetts

Appendix B: Map of the Hollywood and Gemini Sites

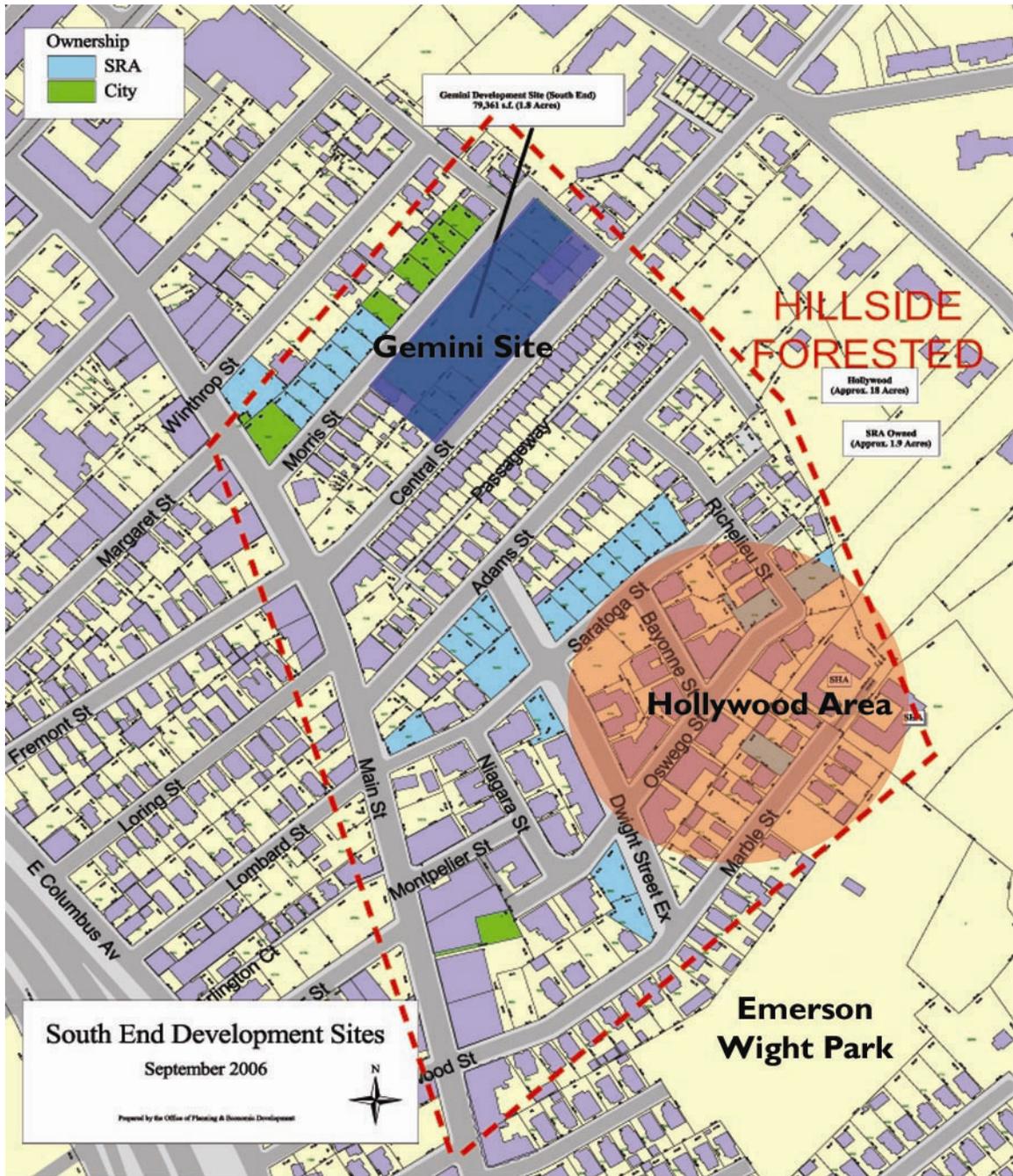
**Appendix A: Map of Springfield Metropolitan Area
and location within Massachusetts**



Source: Yahoo Maps

Source: Wikipedia

Appendix B: Map of the Hollywood and Gemini Sites



Source: City of Springfield