

AN ADVISORY SERVICES PANEL REPORT

Nantucket Massachusetts



Nantucket Massachusetts

Implementing Downtown's Future

October 13–17, 2008
An Advisory Services Panel Report

Urban Land Institute
1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.
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About 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 38,000 members worldwide, 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. 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, participants 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, academics, 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 hopes that ReMain Nantucket's foresight in bringing an objective, expert ULI panel to consider options for the future of

downtown will provide new ideas and clearer direction in the future.

The panel also thanks the more than 200 Nantucket residents who gave up their time to be interviewed or prepare written comments. All these individuals informed the panel's work by sharing their views, opinions, frustrations, and hopes for the future of downtown. The panel hopes the strategies presented in this report will assist in developing a stronger, more integrated downtown for Nantucket.

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Foreword: The Panel's Assignment

An island 14 miles long and 3½ miles wide, Nantucket is located in the Atlantic Ocean, 30 miles south of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. The island's one town, also called Nantucket, hugs the busy harbor. The year-round population of approximately 10,000 swells to 50,000 during the summer season. The town includes a bountiful array of stores, quaint inns, cobblestone streets, interesting historic sites, and an active harbor. Scores of sophisticated shops and galleries occupy wharf shacks on the harbor. The rest of the island is mainly residential, with the exception of two notable villages, Siasconset ('Sconset to the islanders) on the east coast and Madaket on

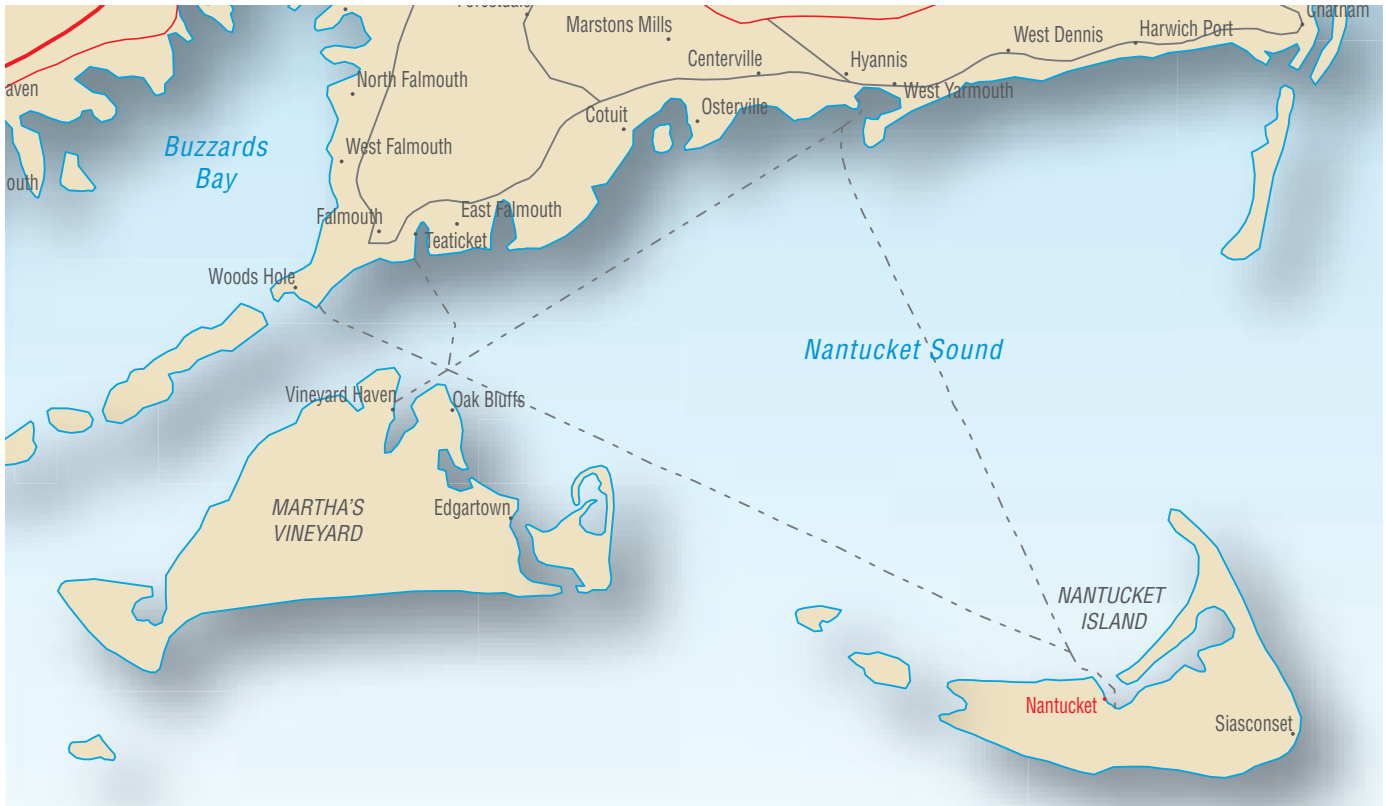
the west coast. The island's summer population is larger than that of any city in Vermont.

Nantucket Island

The island, town, and county of Nantucket are coterminous with one another. The island operates under a town meeting form of government. A town administrator manages the island government's day-to-day activities under direction from the Board of Selectmen, and citizens gather annually to discuss political, administrative, or legislative issues at the town meeting.

Location map.





Regional map.

History

Nantucket takes its name from a word in an Eastern Algonquian language of southern New England, originally spelled variously as natocke, nantican, and nautican. The meaning of the term is uncertain, although it may have meant “in the midst of waters,” or “faraway island.”

Although the island was officially “discovered” in 1602, the original Indian inhabitants lived undisturbed until 1641, when the island was deeded to Thomas Mayhew by the English Crown. Settlement by the English began in 1659, and the island was known mainly as a fishing and agricultural community. Nantucket was part of Dukes County, New York, until 1691, when it was transferred to the newly formed Province of Massachusetts Bay and split off to form Nantucket County.

In the late 1600s, whales were found offshore, and between 1750 and 1840, the island was one of the major whaling ports in North America. By 1840, Nantucket was the unofficial “capital” of the North American whaling industry. Herman Melville’s masterpiece *Moby Dick* begins on Nantucket, and it remains the quintessential novel about the whaling industry. In that same year, however—1840—oil was discovered in Pennsylvania, and the whaling industry began

its dramatic decline. As the whaling industry suffered, so did Nantucket. The late 19th century witnessed a marked decline in population and industry.

Downtown

Like other islands and other coastal areas in New England, Nantucket became a tourist destination and summer colony in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although fishing and agriculture remained important through the 1950s, summer tourism became the primary “industry” on the island. Community leaders recognized tourism’s potential early, and consequently, Nantucket includes some of the country’s earliest efforts in historic preservation.

The four-block downtown area contains some of the best preserved and most interesting pre-Civil War structures in the United States. In 1966, the town was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In the early 1960s, Walter Beinecke, Jr., began to revitalize downtown buildings to attract wealthy tourists. He began a 20-year program of rehabilitating the old downtown, building by building. Where he found no buildings or modern ones, he built new ones with 18th- and 19th-century architecture. Although his efforts



were controversial at the time, many feel they substantially improved the town's look and feel and created downtown's current environment.

Since the 1970s, the "elite" nature of Nantucket's summer guests has established the island as one of the most desirable and expensive real estate locations in the world. Although many explanations exist for this phenomenon—including Beinecke's program, an extensive architectural review process, a limited number of dwellings, and the island's historic and natural beauty—the last 20 years have seen land and housing prices appreciate far beyond similar areas on the eastern seaboard. Housing, both downtown and in the island's other villages and hamlets, commands substantial prices.

Problems and Issues

Many businesses on the island rely on the summer months to carry them through the entire year. Although the popular Daffodil Weekend in April and Christmas Stroll Weekend in December extended the tourist season, June, July, and August remain the height of the season. The island's unique wealth and climate lead to a number of problems and issues.

The island needs more housing opportunities for islanders and workforce. Many summer and year-round residents are concerned about how to maintain the unique nature of the tourist industry while providing appropriate housing and employment opportunities for workers and islanders alike. Many of those who have grown up on the island or that visited every summer find buying, renting, or maintaining homes increasingly difficult. The service workforce of teachers, nurses, and small businesspeople as well as the professional force of doctors, lawyers, and accountants finds owning or maintaining homes on the island increasingly difficult.

The downtown is symptomatic of islandwide issues. ReMain Nantucket, an island-based philanthropic organization, invited ULI to convene a panel to provide advice on strategies to enhance and protect downtown's economic, social, and environmental vitality for future generations. The group provided the panel with the questions listed in the next section. This report details the panel's responses.

The Panel's Assignment

ReMain Nantucket posed five questions that provided the scope of work for panel's assignment. The focus of the five questions was on the

The west end of Nantucket Harbor includes the Brant Point Lighthouse and the U.S. Coast Guard dock.



survival of Nantucket’s downtown. The panel shaped its recommendations as answers to each question or part of a question.

Question 1

What currently is the function of Nantucket’s downtown relative to the rest of the island and what should it be in the future? What does a vibrant year-round downtown look and feel like given the island’s seasonal economic cycles? What uses, services, and institutions need to be downtown for it to be part of the daily lives of both year-round and summer residents? Is there an acceptable percentage or mix of businesses and uses that can be closed in the off-season without making downtown seem deserted?

Question 2

(A) How can downtown best complement the Mid-island area where many people now conduct most of their commercial activities of daily living and vice versa? (B) Given high real estate values, what strategies can be

used to allow local businesses to attain and maintain profitability? (C) What strategies and opportunities arise from seasonality?

Question 3

What are the barriers to coming to downtown and how do we get around them? Other than the airport, the delivery systems for people, cars, goods, and fuel all originate in the downtown district. Are there ways to capitalize on that influx to enhance the downtown area? Are there ways to manage the seasonal peak capacity issues—traffic, parking, and pedestrian flow—to mitigate the impacts of those delivery systems on the environment and the downtown infrastructure and economy? During the last 12 months, a transportation plan and downtown parking garage have been debated in town, a downtown bus stop is being tested, and Zipcars have been considered by a nonprofit. What other ideas can Nantucket explore to creatively solve transportation issues and concerns in an environmentally sensitive way?



Question 4

Can you help us identify big ideas or potential projects and opportunities that can be targeted over the next ten years to strengthen downtown's economic, social, and environmental future? And then help us understand the pros and cons.

Question 5

Is there a role for philanthropy in enhancing or creating an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable downtown? What are possible public/private partnerships and opportunities for collaborations to strengthen the future of downtown Nantucket?

Summary of Recommendations

The panel suggests a number of initiatives and programs that can help the island begin to address the outlined issues. The panel's recommendations support a number of big ideas that follow.

Invest in Downtown Management

The panel recommends strategically investing in downtown management, including hiring a downtown manager, managing downtown parking, developing strategies to fund infrastructure and programming, and developing programs for both residents and guests.

Evolve the Nantucket Islands Land Bank

The Nantucket Islands Land Bank should broaden its mission from a sole focus on open space to a broader focus on community preservation. New initiatives for the land bank could include encouraging workforce housing projects, creating civic space and public gathering areas, improving waterfront access, expanding the bike-path system, and improving connections between Mid-island and downtown commercial areas.

Emphasize Workforce Housing

The panel recommends rapidly expanding existing programs of the Nantucket Housing

The narrow lanes of 'Sconset, at the east end of the island, are a sharp contrast to the busy streets of the town of Nantucket.

Authority and Nantucket Housing Office, prioritizing these programs with greater immediacy, and providing for more coordinated action from town government and the community. This effort should include investment in new multifamily housing and creation of new housing stock, particularly in downtown.

Create the Nantucket Institute

This think tank should focus on both local and global issues of historic preservation, sustainability and community viability, conservation, aquacultural and agricultural stewardship, and technology interface with each of these topics. The focus of the institute would be to reposition downtown for the

off-season, to increase islanders' thinking and interaction on Nantucket's future, and to position Nantucket as the strategic center of thought on these issues.

Create a New Waterfront Neighborhood

The new neighborhood should create a place that strengthens the connection between the waterfront and downtown, respects the historical fabric and seafaring nature of the island, uses sustainable development practices for new buildings and infrastructure, and provides a setting and focus for other big ideas discussed in this report, such as workforce housing, the Nantucket Institute, community and historic preservation, and repositioning of downtown that is attractive to year-round residents.

Question 1

What currently is the function of Nantucket's downtown relative to the rest of the island and what should it be in the future? What does a vibrant year-round downtown look and feel like given the island's seasonal economic cycles? What uses, services, and institutions need to be downtown for it to be part of the daily lives of both year-round and summer residents? Is there an acceptable percentage or mix of businesses and uses that can be closed in the off-season without making downtown seem deserted?

Downtown Nantucket defines the community for year-round residents, seasonal visitors, and tourists alike. As the island's heart and soul, downtown supports community life and vitality. Unlike a shopping center or a mall, downtown is about more than retail. In its best condition, it served as the island's governmental, civic, cultural, and religious center; key transportation hub; most significant neighborhood; and tourism epicenter. Downtown is also the gateway to the rest of the island.

Downtowns are like ecosystems. They are fragile and can be disrupted. Downtown Nantucket looks healthy. Although its architecture and character are well preserved, all is not well. Like many other communities nationwide, Nantucket has decentralized retail and civic services from downtown to edge locations.

Nantucket's growth as a seasonal enclave for the wealthy has created new demand for a different kind of downtown retail. It has also led to soaring real estate values that make it more difficult for employees to live on the island. National economic and demographic changes will continue to shape the depth of the market and consequently the value of property and retail goods on Nantucket. Other external forces that shape Nantucket's downtown retail



The legacy of Walter Beinecke, Jr.: Shops throughout the historic downtown are in either space converted from residences and older commercial uses or newly built structures that reflect the historical architecture of the town. These spaces accommodate high-quality retail focused on seasonal and short-term visitors.



mix include competition from the Internet and the mainland, labor force limitations including H2B visa policies, and environmental regulations.

Similarly, changes in local economic and market conditions, ranging from the slow erosion of downtown's overnight lodging to the migration of full-time island residents out of the older, core-area, residential neighborhoods, all contribute to a difficult business climate and undermine the traditional functions of downtown. On-island influences shaping downtown include growing congestion, soaring land and housing values, parking chaos, lodging-base changes, community residential patterns, building ownership policies, privatization of the island experience, and the relationship with Mid-island. The current downtown is a product of the interplay of these varied and sometimes competing influences.

Downtown embodies community values because it was the center of almost all community functions. Much more than a retail center, downtown served as the heart of government and civic activity; the entryway for visitors and goods; the lodging hub; and a home for workers, families, and summer guests. Future planning for downtown must include the following diverse uses:

- Government and civic services, including public safety, administration, courts, library, and churches;
- Retail services for islanders, seasonal residents, overnight guests, day visitors, and harbor uses;

- Entryway facilities for all visitors, freight, and fuel;
- Attractions, including historic and architectural collections, waterfront activities, museums, and not-for-profit organizations; and
- Accommodations for residents, seasonal workers, and overnight guests.

In recent years, many of these functions have partially or fully eroded. Much of the local-serving retail has migrated to Mid-island, which offers convenience, easy parking, and lower lease costs. A number of government and civic uses have already left downtown; more government offices are proposed for relocation. The guest-bed base has also changed as large private homes dispersed across the island have replaced downtown lodges and fundamentally altered longstanding traffic and shopping patterns. The number of year-round residents living in or near downtown has dramatically declined. Local-serving retail is rapidly being replaced by seasonal businesses. Many year-round residents have stopped coming downtown because they can find nowhere to park or nothing to buy.

Downtown is losing its relevance. One resident told the panel, "I go downtown now for pleasure, not necessity—just to make sure it's still there!" By this process of specialization, downtown loses its richness, the casual interaction that comes with multiple layers of functions. Downtown becomes a monoculture that supports only a small share of life on the island. Rising rents, lowered margins, continual

traffic congestion, and an abundance of high-end seasonal stores—ironically, all signs of current market success—are threatening downtown’s fragile ecosystem.

“We are a living museum but we’ve preserved the exterior and none of the essence of the community that makes our real history. We’ve preserved the shells and created a ghost town,” a resident told the panel.

Untreated, these influences will continue to produce a narrowed version of downtown, and Nantucket will cease to be the heart and soul of the island. Given current pressures, an “unattended” downtown will see increasing retail seasonality, narrowing retail mix, decreasing government and associated uses, diminishing presence of service professionals, and declining local retail ownership. Ultimately, this self-destructive cycle will lead to falling rents and the beginning of a new cycle.

Nantucket will become an outdoor museum, a theme park for tourists, but not a real town or a vibrant mixed-use place. Ironically, the newer, narrower, and function-specific downtown will also become unsustainable. If landlords allow the retail mix to shrink, accept short-term return instead of the market security of a multifunctional, more complex downtown, then ultimately the emerging visitor–summer guest market will also leave downtown, bored and disinterested with the predictability of the experience. Eventually, rents will fall and a new regeneration process will begin. In the interim, much will be lost for all involved.

If residents think this result is acceptable, then so be it; but if they think downtown is worth saving, then they will have to do more to address the forces that are changing its character.



Trends Are Not Destiny

The panel believes that market intervention strategies can reverse these trends by addressing the following issues:

- Deal with parking, congestion, and circulation.
- Interject culture, entertainment, management, and community functions.
- Retain and expand key civic uses.
- Tackle housing affordability.
- Integrate Mid-island commercial uses.
- Make use of off-season capacity.
- Intervene in the commercial mix.
- Rethink the harborside site.

The remainder of this report expands on these ideas and offers recommendations on how to influence the pressures reshaping downtown, revitalize the community’s core, and reinvent a place that will still express the unique and compelling character of Nantucket.

Mitchell's Book Corner, at the upper end of Main Street, is another gathering place during both the summer season and winter months.

Question 2(A)

How can downtown best complement the Mid-island area where many people now conduct most of their commercial activities of daily living and vice versa?

Mid-island and downtown are distinct physically and functionally. The two areas must become complementary, connective, and integrated. The migration of services from downtown to Mid-island reflects trends seen in many small towns nationwide. Retail and services follow population from historic downtowns to fringe areas. The physical obsolescence of historic buildings and their incompatibility with contemporary merchandising strategies and automobile-oriented consumers accelerate this trend. Mid-island's continuing growth makes it more convenient for year-round residents and enables it to further assume downtown's traditional role. Mid-island continues to grow because it requires less time to access, park, and find products unavailable downtown—all issues that frustrate islanders who attempt to shop regularly downtown.

Complementary

Downtown and Mid-island need to adopt separate, complementary roles. Downtown functions as a special, occasional civic and cultural place where the island began and its heart still lives. Mid-island functions as the center of commerce, especially to year-round residents, because it is convenient and provides daily necessities, including food, education, and health care.

Creating a complementary relationship between these two places requires understanding the needs of businesses and residents and the reasons each prefers Mid-island or downtown. Islanders repeatedly told the panel that they use Mid-island over downtown based on convenience, proximity to their homes and

schools, diversity of goods and services, and community activities.

Services migrated out of downtown for the same reasons. They are valid reasons that mirror national and especially small-town trends across the nation. To begin evolving both places, residents need to shift from an “us versus them” mentality to a creative approach of developing two complementary, supportive places.

Connective

“We need better connections between Mid-island and downtown so they don't feel like two different things. It's only a 15-minute walk—it just feels like miles!” a resident told the panel.

Downtown and Mid-island need stronger connections. Presently, bicycles, cars, trucks, and pedestrians face numerous real and perceived barriers when moving between the two areas. These barriers must be understood and removed to enable the two areas to become distinct but mutually supportive. The proposed bike path connecting downtown and Mid-island needs to be constructed.

As local-serving economic, educational, and health activities relocated to Mid-island, downtown evolved into a hub for cultural, entertainment, civic, and specialty retail uses. Downtown's major services include theater, movies, and cultural venues of all kinds that support art shows, seasonal events, and civic functions.

Changing roles for downtown and Mid-island reduce trips from year-round residents into downtown. Most year-round residents no longer live in or adjacent to downtown. Residents no longer need to travel downtown to meet their daily needs.

Ultimately, downtown and Mid-island must each be organized and regulated as distinct economic and social places so that residents are required to view and use both places for what they are. Recognizing different uses for each area will reinforce a complementary relationship between them.

Downtown is the heart and soul of the island. It is the historic civic center, the gathering place, the point of most arrivals, and the symbol of the island. It is now a largely seasonal place. Yet it remains the place that islanders show off to their visitors because it visually and spiritually says who and what Nantucket is.

Mid-island supplanted downtown's traditional role as the center of commerce because it is convenient to the places where year-round residents live and work and because it is accessible to cars, transit, pedestrians, and bicycles. However, it wants to become more like downtown. Why? Residents are nostalgic for traditional design and spatial organization, which is the essence of Nantucket and the reason people are here. Mid-island is missing the elemental design, organization, walkable density, and look of downtown.

Overcoming that love/hate emotion is achievable. By using the same concerted efforts that preserved downtown—unified municipal and private efforts and investments in planning, zoning, form, pattern, and design concepts—Mid-island's physical form can be made worthy of the island's heritage.

The panel recommends taking concrete steps to address these challenges. Mid-island should be viewed as a complement to downtown, not a competitor. To work together, each area should specialize its uses. Mid-island should become Nantucket's regional center for shopping, services, education, and health care. Downtown can then become the island's gateway and specialty retail, entertainment, cultural, and civic center. Both areas should serve as transit hubs.

The panel also recommends creating strong connections between Mid-island and downtown. Steps should be taken to encourage easier connections for bicycles, transit, pedestrians,



and vehicles to access both locations. Real and perceived barriers must be removed to provide fast and easy access between the two areas.

A home at the eastern end of downtown's waterfront.

Satellite parking and transit service can help unify Mid-island and downtown. The panel recommends creating seasonal satellite parking in Mid-island adjacent to a transit hub with frequent connecting shuttles to downtown. This report further details these recommendations under Question 3.

Integrated

Downtown must move to become more relevant for more people by being recognized as the island's center of civic, cultural, entertainment, specialty retail, and visitor arrival. Solidifying the distinct roles of each place must be important to residents and policy makers. Clearly defining the roles and functions of each place will permit each to positively evolve in a natural way. Integrating the roles of each place means respecting the distinct contribution each makes to island society and economic life.

Integration also means evolving the form and appearance of Mid-island. Downtown is what everyone thinks all parts of Nantucket should look like. Moving the look, organization, and feel of Mid-island to fit expectations and perceptions of Nantucket urban form is an essential tool that will integrate the two places. Reforming Mid-island should be based on the design and spatial requirements for development that facilitate automobiles while maintaining the essential form, pattern, organization, and feel of downtown.

Integration means bringing the two areas together through design. Form-based codes can change Mid-island's physical organization

and look in the vein of downtown while accommodating and facilitating ease of access by cars, bikes, and public transit. Zoning and thoughtful marketplace management can also help create distinct opportunities and uses exclusive to downtown and Mid-island. Transit, pedestrian paths, and bikeways can help integrate the two areas by providing easy connections and shrinking the actual and perceived distances.

Nantucket can create a new model for small towns across the country facing similar challenges by using the design tools that made it internationally famous, coupled with thoughtful marketplace management. The model should address how design looks, feels, and functions; what retail and civic services it supplies; and how visitors access and circulate in downtown.

Realizing the old days were great is everyone's perception. After all, "old" made the island what it is and who the islanders are. Although understanding and respecting the heritage of the island and its people are important, the future health and success of downtown, Mid-island, and year-round and seasonal residents require that Nantucket move on and evolve. If islanders are to overcome the current challenges, they must continue to honor and respect the past by maintaining the island's physical continuity and to embrace the future by building on the past. They cannot be afraid to change.

Question 2(B)

Given the high real estate values, what strategies can be used to allow local businesses to attain and maintain profitability?

“We need a quality experience downtown for residents and tourists,” according to a Nantucket resident interviewed by the panel.

The community can support successful businesses with zoning restrictions, planned interventions, and thoughtful business education and assistance. Real estate values and commercial rents are likely to remain market driven and will determine which retail, restaurant, and office uses locate downtown. The focus should remain on keeping downtown Nantucket vital while retaining desired businesses.

Use Vertical Zoning to Control Future Outcomes

Some communities use vertical zoning to create a sustainable mix of uses, including retail, office, and housing. Vertical zoning generally permits only restaurants or retail to occupy first-floor spaces. Usually, the zoning grandfathers existing uses but prohibits future nonconforming uses. Over time, the zoning leads to more active and supportive retail and restaurant business zones, while office and other nonactive uses move to second or third floors.

Target Retention Efforts

Planned interventions or targeted retention of a certain business or type of business can play a significant role in maintaining a mix of local and other businesses. This type of intervention should be considered only when economic realities are affecting the ability of a business to continue operating in changing

cost situations. Financial dependency can be created that may be difficult to sustain when the benefactor is no longer present or willing to provide support.

Improve Circulation

Circulation improvements will enhance downtown’s business environment and customer experience. Circulation improvements should address parking management, vehicle circulation, pedestrian movement, wayfinding, and freight movement. Producing and implementing a parking management strategy that has both summer and winter components will greatly improve conditions for visitors as well as residents and ultimately the downtown businesses.

Invest in Infrastructure and Services

Investing in the retail environment infrastructure and maintenance will improve the opportunity to compete in a challenging business environment. Place making investments can vary greatly and can include street furniture, public art, and storefront improvements. The addition of a public art program that emphasizes the local culture and artists can greatly enhance the downtown experience and give locals a reason to visit downtown.

A commitment to high-quality public services, such as trash removal and clean public bathrooms, sidewalks, and streets, will assist in creating an environment that improves the opportunity for a successful and competitive business environment. Funds needed for these services can be town provided, or some business improvement districts (BIDs) or general improvement districts could be created to enhance town-supported efforts.

Create a Stakeholder Group

Establish a group or individual who focuses on downtown's economic health and vitality while also being mindful of the needs of residents, visitors, and businesses. This entity would be responsible for creating events and a climate for business success. Funding such a group or individual could be town supported, business supported, or some combination. Alternatively, a BID or other district could be created to fund these efforts.

Invest in Business Support

Business education, training, and support programs will help retain local businesses. Small business development and support is offered all across the country. Training programs and technical assistance help a business be more effective and efficient and

can assist in increasing overall profitability, thus creating a higher probability for retention. This role is often played by the local chambers of commerce or other local business groups.

Add Housing

By encouraging development of year-round and income-diverse resident housing in or near downtown, Nantucket will add to the long-term viability of the area and improve the opportunity for business success. Nearby residents will aid in supporting economic vitality. These residents will assist in animating the streets of downtown and be more likely to use local businesses.

The ULI panel and sponsors in front of the Whaling Museum.



Question 2(C)

What strategies and opportunities arise from seasonality?

With “downtime” after the high season ranging from eight to nine months, downtown Nantucket needs to offer activities and services that attract islanders and break up the long winter months. These activities use downtown’s infrastructure (buildings, meeting places, and sense of place) and bring the year-round population’s talents and achievements downtown. With many businesses shuttered, and tourism, the primary economic driver, in hibernation, downtown can use two strategies to sustain cultural and economic vitality and refocus the district on the needs of year-round residents.

Diversify the Economy

This sounds like a mighty challenge, but it can begin with small steps. The more downtown diversifies its economy with new ideas and activities, the more relevance downtown will gain for year-round islanders. The following ideas are simple steps that could begin to diversify downtown’s economy. All three of these ideas could be promoted through a “Made in Nantucket” campaign, similar to the “Handmade in America” campaign in North Carolina, to highlight the island’s arts, products, and talented workforce.

Promote Nantucket’s Cottage Arts-and-Crafts Industry

Many local artisans do not have a retail venue from which to show and sell their products. Downtown in the off-season would be an ideal place to host an event that invites Nantucket artisans to display and demonstrate their talents. “Off-season pricing” may offer an opportunity to sell to islanders as well. The event could be Webcast, with an

online auction, Web-streamed lectures, performances, and demonstrations. Initially, this event could be tied to the Christmas Stroll and pitched as an opportunity to “Buy Nantucket” for the holidays. It could even include on-site packaging and shipping from the island proprietors. Once established in the off-season, and with the creation of more gathering space in downtown, this event could be presented during the high season as well, thereby giving local artisans access to the island’s strongest consumer market—tourists and summer residents.

Create the “Taste of Nantucket”

At the opening and close of the high season, downtown could be the site for an on-street food fair. This event could highlight locally grown produce and prepared products, including food contests, cooking demonstrations, tours to local farms, and home-gardening lectures; it could feature some of the higher-end downtown restaurants in a more affordable, “food bites” sort of way. The effect of the event could be extended by creating an online (and print) sales opportunity for the collected food products featured during the event. Vinegar makers, chocolatiers, jam producers, bakers, and others could be included under an umbrella “Nantucket Treats” Web catalogue.

Organize Educational Programs

Downtown organizations could organize and host extracurricular and vocational education programs that lead to high-value jobs based on the traditional trades and current professional needs of the island. Preservation carpentry, sustainable landscape design and maintenance, financial planning, culinary training, server and hospitality training for summer workers, organic gardening (and Master Gardener certification), marine mechanics, traditional boatbuilding, and many more courses could



The Dreamland Theatre, converted to a motion picture facility in the 1920s, is currently closed for renovations. It has served a number of roles in the community, including as a place of assembly and earlier in the 20th century as a hall for the Improved Order of the Redman.

be developed and conducted downtown during the off-season, using local talent for curriculum development and downtown venues for classroom and fieldwork. Arranging for continuing education credits or other certificate relationships with colleges and universities could attract more participation.

Create Wintertime Events for Islanders

Downtown is too beautiful to be abandoned in the off-season. Organizers need to continue to create or expand events that encourage islanders to come down and explore. If businesses are not open, organizers should create opportunities for entrepreneurs to sell in other ways during the event. During the panel's interview, one resident said, "We need physical and cultural revitalization downtown. There used to be band nights on the waterfront, street fairs, all sorts of activities that have stopped. I miss seeing young people downtown—that's what makes a place alive, and we don't have that anymore."

Create a Skating Rink

If weather permits, convert an underused parking lot into a simple temporary skating rink somewhere in downtown. The parking lot could be flooded and benches moved to the location. Live or recorded music could be brought to the site, and vendors could be licensed to provide hot beverages and snacks. Even if the rink is open only during the day-light hours for a couple of weekends, it would give people a reason to stretch their legs and come downtown.

Sponsor a Frozen 5K

The downtown management organizations could sponsor a Frozen 5K and Fun Run that begins and ends downtown, with music, hot drinks, and prizes from local businesses. Knitted scarves or fishermen's caps could be given out instead of T-shirts!

Hold Public Events and Tours

Additional activities could include a children's scavenger hunt, perhaps around Valentine's

Day or St. Patrick's Day. Off-season historic house and garden tours, similar to those currently produced by the Nantucket Historical Association, would provide opportunities for locals to experience what visitors do without all the crowds.

Hold a Downtown History Walk

Reintroduce the community to the sights and sounds, the architecture and the human stories behind the island's history by producing a weekend historic walking tour of downtown. Using school students to research and present the history of the buildings and other landmarks will bring their families downtown. Employing the local theater community to develop strolling characters, perform small vignettes, and serve as period-costumed tour guides is another way to engage the community in both creating and participating in the event. Any of these ideas would benefit from partners in the arts and education communities. Musicians could perform. Actors could reenact life at the historic house museums. Schoolchildren's projects could be displayed during the events.

Events and educational programming require a huge commitment of time, a sizable infusion of funds, and lots of volunteer involvement. Specific resources for these types of programs can include the chamber of commerce events committee, downtown management staff, non-profit arts organizations, and philanthropies with intersecting interests. Funding sources could include dedicated revenue from BIDs, lodging taxes, and other public sector sources or sponsorship funds, collateral products, and staff.

Timing

Short-term (six to 12 months) action items include the following:

- Host the Frozen 5K for New Year's 2010.
- Outline possible ideas and events for vocational and lifelong learning programming, and identify events partnerships.

Midterm (12 to 24 months) action items include the following:

- Promote lifelong learning programs in downtown.
- Plan and present Taste of Nantucket.
- Design and conduct Downtown Historic Tours off-season.
- Add additional downtown, off-season events for families.

The following are long-term (24 months or more) action items:

- Increase curriculum offerings for the lifelong learning program; consider job placement follow-on program.
- Offer repeat events that are popular; create new events that fit the season and downtown.

Question 3

What are the barriers to coming to downtown and how do we get around them? Other than the airport, the delivery systems for people, cars, goods, and fuel all originate in the downtown district. Are there ways to capitalize on that influx to enhance the downtown area? Are there ways to manage the seasonal peak capacity issues—traffic, parking, and pedestrian flow—to mitigate the impacts of those delivery systems on the environment and the downtown infrastructure and economy? During the last 12 months, a transportation plan and downtown parking garage have been debated in town, a downtown bus stop is being tested, and Zipcars have been considered by a nonprofit. What other ideas can Nantucket explore to creatively solve transportation issues and concerns in an environmentally sensitive way?

The island's physical transportation capacity is essentially fixed. During summer, it is strained to its limits. In this historic island setting, expanding that physical capacity is unreasonable and inappropriate. Accordingly, the island faces the stark choice of either limiting the number of people and vehicles downtown or achieving more efficient traffic movements. One resident told the panel, "The island has outgrown its infrastructure."

Currently, significant barriers prevent travel downtown from other parts of the island, such as real and perceived traffic congestion, too little parking, pedestrian/vehicle conflicts, bicycle/vehicle conflicts, and surges caused by ferry arrivals and departures.

Although traffic circulation has been studied, largely in the context of ferry operations, data about parking demand are insufficient for both downtown employees and visitors. Consequently, analyzing the effectiveness of potential solutions is difficult at present. The

panel's recommendations are made in the absence of important data. The panel, however, believes that with concerted community action, these transportation issues can be effectively addressed.

Recognizing and Understanding the Barriers to Travel Downtown

"Automobiles have taken over Nantucket," a resident told the panel. Unmanaged parking results in competition for limited parking that in turn creates traffic congestion and frustrates customers and residents. Employees and business owners take curbside parking spots first thing in the morning, leaving visitors and customers to hunt for the few remaining spaces. This situation creates unnecessary extra circulation and conflicts with pedestrians and cyclists. Congestion is compounded by vehicles dropping off and picking up ferry passengers at the docks. Ferry traffic coming to the island is then hampered in moving through town and to other parts of the island, even though relatively few cars and trucks embark or disembark.

Access to downtown for people walking or riding bikes is variously unsafe and uncertain. They have simply too little space to pass without impeding vehicle flow and each other because of lack of adequate sidewalk width and, in some places, no sidewalk at all. Similarly, despite good provision of bike paths elsewhere on the island, no dedicated routes exist for cyclists around or out of downtown. Limits on transit service make public transit less appealing for some residents and visitors.

The entire downtown has very poor accessibility for people with disabilities because of excessively uneven and frequently narrow sidewalks and inadequate ramping. Down-



town does not comply with either the spirit or the letter of Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

These significant barriers frustrate islanders and limit downtown's economic potential. However, the panel sees ways that many of these barriers could be overcome through strong management that achieves greater efficiencies.

Overcoming the Barriers

These recommendations are listed in order of priority and should not be taken in isolation. They are interdependent and in many ways rely on one another.

Gather Data to Provide Baseline Information for Decisions

Good data about the number of people downtown and their travel habits are imperative. The panel recommends a collaborative effort by the town, chamber of commerce, and other downtown organizations to achieve a comprehensive inventory of legal on-street and off-street parking spaces throughout downtown and in neighborhoods affected by downtown parking. Both public and private spaces should be inventoried. Map this information block by block. Legal spaces should be numbered to assist in the analysis of parking use.

Hourly counts of vehicles parking should be done during the summer season, the shoulder season, and the dead of winter. These counts will establish the range of demand. During the peak season, counts across the day from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. would be best to capture the full range of activity. When counting, noting the length of time each vehicle is parked is extremely useful. A portion of the license plate number of the vehicle occupying a given space during each observation period should be noted, which allows the turnover rate to be determined.

The survey should determine the number of employees working downtown by time of day and, if possible, survey them to learn their commuting patterns (e.g., how they get to work, by what route, what time of day, and, if driving, where they park). Identifying employee parking demand is an essential element of understanding parking patterns.

The study should identify and evaluate specific measures to alleviate parking problems, including options to manage employee parking, to provide remote parking, and to charge for parking. The study could suggest an overall assessment of transit market opportunities for access to downtown and to other island destinations to determine what appropriate types of service would be (and then to consider how to fund them).

A corner in the town provides a tableau of island forms, including cobblestones, brick pavers, picket fences, old street trees, traditional homes converted for commercial use, and the ever-present parking issues. Because the panel visited during October, the summer parking craze was not in full effect; nonetheless, the issue of downtown parking was evident.

Additional parking analysis could include surveying customers to learn about their patterns (e.g., where they park, how many persons in the vehicle, when they arrive, how long they stay downtown). Selected observations could be done to determine how many vehicles downtown at any one time are simply hunting for parking and how long they take to find an open space. Findings from those observations could suggest the degree of benefit available in terms of reduced congestion, time saved, and lowered energy consumption were parking to work better.

Although the most recent study of downtown and ferry traffic offered some interesting suggestions to improve operations, broadening the scope to create a peak-season transportation management strategy could be helpful. Such a study could address the degree to which ferry traffic increases congestion (and thereby indicate how much improvement would occur were the ferry landing located outside downtown); could evaluate other seasonal management actions, such as selective turn restrictions or limited street closures (for segments of Main Street, for example); and could compare benefits from parking management and transit service changes. In short, a comprehensive assessment of the causes of congestion, a clear definition of the transportation problems, and an evaluation of coordinated actions to tackle the problems would provide a higher level of information for the town to consider than it has enjoyed so far.

Much good work has been done, and that work should be used as the foundation for follow-up studies. Some additional technical analysis is essential, especially concerning parking and transit. More important, however, the transportation issues need to be articulated in the context of the island's seasonal patterns, its economy, and its future so that the purpose behind specific actions and details can be readily understood and debated.

Develop an Employee Parking Management Program

An effective employee parking management program will free spaces for shoppers. For every

employee vehicle removed from downtown parking, up to six customer vehicles could be accommodated during the daily business hours. For instance, relocating 50 employee vehicles would enable approximately 300 additional customer vehicles to park downtown each day, which in turn would result in more than 600 additional shoppers and visitors. This substantial increase in customer accessibility should assist the bottom line of local business. Reducing the need to hunt for parking minimizes circulating traffic and improves traffic flow.

Employees must be given realistic and convenient parking alternatives. Such options may include satellite parking lots within walking distance or accessible by dedicated and frequent shuttles. The recently expanded elementary school lot in Mid-island would be an ideal location during the summer season.

Review Spaces for Taxis and Local Businesses

The panel recommends reviewing the current spaces allocated for taxis and local businesses. One option may be to charge for parking, at least during peak season. Paid parking could increase turnover and generate revenue to support satellite parking shuttles and other initiatives. Paid parking can be instituted with little or no physical hardware. Payment techniques such as pay stations that can be affixed to a building wall or even a prepaid disk placed on a dashboard offer compatibility with a historic downtown.

The panel estimates that parking revenue could exceed \$300,000 just for the summer peak season, based on parking statistics given to the panel. Revenues could be used to fund alternative transportation programs. Vigorous enforcement is still necessary to keep the system working properly but should result in fewer parking citations.

Improve Transit Service

The panel recommends exploring more frequent peak-season transit service and, potentially, year-round transit service. The panel heard a great deal of island support for this concept.



Short term, the Nantucket Regional Transit Authority (The Shuttle) should consider re-structuring routes to minimize transfers and make most efficient use of existing vehicles. Options for using newer, accessible, smaller vehicles that are quieter, cleaner, and more energy efficient should be examined. Nantucket's public transit ideally could be all electric.

Manage Ferry Pick-up/Drop-off Operations

Centralizing ferry passenger pick-up/drop-off activities at a specific location could reduce downtown congestion and improve the arrival experience. The town lot could serve this function during peak season if supported by frequent shuttles.

One option could be to modify police control, allowing the 60 or fewer vehicles arriving on the ferry to proceed in convoy without interruption over four or five minutes. This expedited, prioritized flow should reduce the duration of ferry traffic congestion. Currently, police provide manual traffic control over the Fourth of July holiday; this service could be extended across the summer, especially for the noon boat.

Implement the March 2008 Ferry Access Study Recommendations

The panel endorses the recommendations of the March 2008 Ferry Access Study and encourages their implementation. This would include reversing traffic flow on Oak Street.

Connect Downtown to the Inner-Island Bike Paths

The proposed Washington Street bike path extension should be pursued. It is an important safety issue that should be ranked highly among the various bicycle network priorities. Similar actions should be taken to improve pedestrian connections to downtown, especially from Mid-island. Downtown quayside walks should be widened along the waterfront and to the ferries. The panel recommends relaying the most damaged and uneven surfaces throughout downtown immediately to address basic safety and accessibility. Cobbles and sidewalks should be maintained, not replaced.

Consider Creative Choices for Truck Traffic

Creative, long-term solutions for congestion from truck traffic leaving the ferry will help resolve this issue. The panel encourages the stakeholders to implement measures to soften the curves on Orange and Washington streets. Additionally, truck services could be transitioned to use an island-appropriate size of truck that could more easily navigate streets and cause less damage. This option may face legislative hurdles and concerns about operating cost. The terminus of the Steamship Authority's ferry could be relocated so that vehicles do not have to pass through downtown and the narrowest streets. This change was previously considered and should be kept open as a future possibility.

The ferry terminal, where thousands of visitors disembark during the summer season, is associated with an influx of downtown traffic creating problems for islanders, seasonal residents, and visitors alike.

Encourage Car Sharing

Car sharing should be explored as an option for seasonal visitors and year-round residents. Car sharing would reduce the total number of vehicles needing to park in and near the downtown core. Encouraging all seasonal residents to car share could reduce the number of vehicles left parked on street through the winter. Island-appropriate rental cars could also be stipulated to maintain a mix of vehicles better suited to local conditions.

Be Wary of Building a Parking Garage Downtown

A parking garage has been suggested as a possible solution to downtown parking problems. Even if a garage would help address the problem, it would be a disproportionate solution to a problem that lasts only two or three months a year. Garages are extremely expensive to construct and also very expensive to operate, especially if underused, because the fixed operating costs do not vary with demand. A parking structure would likely need to be built above grade because of the high water table, so it would become one of the largest buildings on the island. Wrapping a garage with other uses would simply make the proposed building even larger.

Just as with traffic signals, a garage can be a piece of urban hardware inappropriate to the historic setting. The panel believes strongly that other less intrusive and more flexible solutions

should be examined first in light of the varying needs year-round. A garage represents an inelastic solution to an elastic problem and is not an appropriate option for the island.

In summary, all transportation solutions for downtown need to be considered in light of the markets they serve. This would be especially true for an expensive item like a parking garage. Operating transportation services is like any other business: you need to know who your customers are, what they need, and how best to deliver those services.

Adopt Environmentally Sensitive Options

Given the island's growing sustainability activity, short distances, and low traffic speeds, the panel recommends considering investing in electric buses. These would be the cleanest, quietest transportation option available and allow Nantucket to consider locally generated, renewable power sources. Electric buses are generally smaller and therefore more suited for use in a historic district. Nantucket should also consider the use of smaller, more efficient taxis, given the prevalence of taxis as a transportation mode on the island. Improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities will support and encourage existing efforts and should minimize future energy consumption.

Question 4

Can you help us identify big ideas or potential projects and opportunities that can be targeted over the next ten years to strengthen downtown's economic, social, and environmental future? And help us understand the pros and cons.

Big Idea 1: Invest in Marketplace Management

“Why invest in a community that won't invest in itself?” a resident asked the panel. As mentioned previously, downtowns are ecosystems composed of a mix of uses, architecture, circulation, and people. Downtowns have their own personality and demands.

Downtowns around the country have come to understand that they need to be managed. They need to be marketed and promoted with special events and other efforts that attract specific consumer groups. Their business mix needs to be relevant to the target consumers and operated with the highest standards. They need to be well maintained, accessible, and safe.

Hire a Marketplace Manager

The panel has recommended many programs, initiatives, and ideas for the community's consideration. To accomplish even a few of them and to achieve lasting success, Nantucket needs a downtown marketplace manager.

The marketplace manager is, at a minimum, one professional with support staff who focuses attention on improving and maintaining the economic health and vitality of downtown on behalf of residents, visitors, businesses, and property owners. The manager's activities often include the following:

Creating and producing events. Not every event in downtown is intended to “ring the cash register.” A good downtown management

plan includes both events that gather the community and programs that help promote goods and services throughout the year.

Marketing the district. Whether people visit downtown or not, the manager needs to communicate the downtown's virtues and “personality” to residents, visitors, and downtown employees.

Managing systems. Some downtown management organizations take on the responsibility of managing systems such as parking, maintenance, or visitor services.

Monitoring and tracking the details. The “facts and figures” of downtown are truly limitless. The manager's office needs to be the repository of information that explains the district and its businesses, properties, open spaces, parking spaces, special features, and programs.

Funding Options

As in shopping centers, marketplace management requires financial and operational support. Many organizational models are available. The most common include

Business Improvement Districts. Also known as special improvement districts or community improvement districts, BIDs are usually formed by a self-directed property tax assessment. They provide funding, staff, board leadership, and a plan of work to manage downtown.

Voluntary downtown organizations. Many districts are managed by a nonprofit organization supported by voluntary contributions of all the downtown stakeholders, including businesses, property owners, cultural institutions, and local government. Voluntary support is inherently more difficult to raise and maintain, but it is often the way that a community gets started with marketplace management.



The protected Nantucket heathlands provide habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals. Approximately 60 percent of Nantucket, a 50-square-mile island, is protected by private conservation groups, the town of Nantucket, and the Nantucket Islands Land Bank Commission. The land bank is one of the nation's leading models for land preservation programs based on a real estate transfer tax.

Downtown development authorities. In many states, local communities are able to create special taxing districts or tax increment financing districts that direct the revenue specifically to downtown-related activities. Board representation and project limitations are often written into the state enabling legislation or the local bylaw creating the downtown development authority.

Direct town funding. Some cities and towns include marketplace management in the municipal budget and hire and direct the management staff from town hall.

Downtown Nantucket is blessed with an extraordinary building stock; a truly unique, historic waterfront environment; and an image that is not only well-established, but known worldwide. These assets form a foundation for marketplace management that few other downtowns possess and many would envy. Most downtowns have created marketplace management organizations with far fewer downtown assets and very little funding.

Timing

Short-term (six to 12 months) action items include the following:

- Investigate models of downtown management organizations and staffing profiles.

- Create the leadership board and begin to identify the vision, mission, and goals and objectives for the management group.
- Select a funding mechanism and begin the process of securing support.
- Create job descriptions and begin the search process for a marketplace manager.

Midterm (12 to 24 months) action items include the following:

- Complete the process of securing funding.
- Secure office space in the downtown district, preferably in a second-story location.
- Launch the marketplace office.
- Work the work plan.

Long-term (24 months or more) action items include the following:

- Continue to work the plan.
- Annually review and update the work plan.

Big Idea 2: Evolve the Land Bank

“Nantucket needs to move from open-space preservation to community preservation,” a resident told the panel. The Nantucket Islands Land Bank is a land conservation program created to acquire, hold, and manage important open spaces and landscapes on the island.



By every account, the land bank has been phenomenally successful. Thanks to the combined efforts of the Nantucket Conservation Foundation, the Nantucket Land Council, the Sconset Trust, and other local, state, and national conservation organizations, over 60 percent of the island is now in public or nonprofit ownership and only 8.8 percent of land is still open to development.

Given this extraordinary level of success, the panel believes that now is the time to consider broadening the mission of the land bank from open-space preservation to community preservation. Although the open-space preservation agenda is not complete, it is reaching a point of diminishing returns. Other pressing issues are now threatening the character and vitality of the island. The panel encourages Nantucket to seriously consider either enhancing the real estate transfer tax or expanding the focus of the current income stream from open-space preservation to community preservation. Supported activities could include construction of workforce housing, creation of civic spaces, downtown revitalization, waterfront access improvements, and other community activities, including those for children.

The Nantucket Islands Land Bank is a national model that responded to an acute community need when it was conceptualized and founded. Communities throughout the nation now use development to pay for preservation. However,

the challenges facing Nantucket have changed dramatically since 1983. By evolving the program to support community preservation, Nantucket may create a new national model. Changing the transfer tax will undoubtedly require both local and state legislation, but no other program is likely to generate as much revenue to help solve critical local problems.

Big Idea 3: The Nantucket Institute

Nantucket needs to come together as a community to accomplish two important things. First, it should capitalize on Nantucket's leadership in historic preservation, conservation, and tourism. Second, it should organize community discourse around issues of present and future need, including energy independence, economic diversity, and community sustainability.

Given the island's wealth of ideas, experience, and talent, the panel recommends that Nantucket create the "Nantucket Institute." Nantucket has a rich historical connection to literature, intellectual discourse, and great oratory. Downtown could be an ideal location to host a series of community discussions and think tanks on issues of community and global interest. With the proper logistical and financial support, the institute could undertake a series of weekend-long or longer seminars, workshops, study groups, tours, and hands-on programming.

Folgers Marsh, located near the Nantucket Shipwreck & Lifesaving Museum, typifies the natural beauty extant on most of the island.

Program Topics

Institute-sponsored programs should explore issues with relevance to Nantucket and other communities. Topics should intersect with technological innovation, which could be a significant component of the design of the events. For instance, a weeklong program on historic preservation could include looking at new preservation technologies in use or needed to move the discipline forward. The following list offers some other potential topics.

Historic preservation. How can “living museums” like Nantucket better preserve, interpret, and promote themselves in the face of the demands of modern, in this case island, life?

Sustainability. What technologies and options are required to maintain diversity and protect the long-term viability of communities, not just ecologically, but also socially, culturally, and economically?

Conservation. Nantucket is in the forefront of land conservation. What is on the horizon for a community that has already conserved the land it can, has embedded values of recycling and composting into the local culture, and recognizes the fragility of the environment in which it finds itself? And how can the “Nantucket lessons” help other communities around the country and the globe find their own solutions?

Aquacultural and agricultural stewardship. Sustainability involves the protection and enhancement of the food supply. What does Nantucket already know—and what does it need to know—to be a better supplier of local needs and to help sustain and enhance two important economic alternatives to tourism?

Types of Programs

Each edition of the Nantucket Institute should be convened downtown—in the Atheneum; at the Whaling Museum and other historic house museums; in coffee shops, storefronts, and restaurants; on the wharves, in the streets, and in the future, at Dreamland and new downtown gathering places. With private, nonprofit, and public sector partnerships, any of these “conversations” could include

- Conferences with off-island and island experts discussing the issues;
- Public forums to flesh out the issues and opportunities as they play out for islanders today;
- Hands-on workshops to acquaint students, families, and even college students in the techniques to address each issue;
- Community gatherings with thematic or social focus;
- Reading groups in advance of the weeklong program, such as “Island Reads”;
- Films, exhibits, and performances that explore the theme;
- Speeches and debates, including school student participation; and
- Web and print products that are promoted both on and off island to help build the reputation of the institute and create demand for future programs.

Goals for the Institute

Think small in a big way! The institute idea does not have to be fully formed to be tested. Interested leaders could take any one of these topics, or others, and brainstorm about the variety of issues, activities, off-island participants, and interested local stakeholder groups to begin with just one one-weekend or five-day institute. With the lessons learned from one program, others can emerge. Throughout, the institute’s goals should be to

- Reprogram downtown for more vitality in the off-season;
- Engage islanders in thinking and interacting about Nantucket’s future; and
- Position Nantucket as the center of thought on these and other issues for the region, the nation, and perhaps the world.

Timing

Short-term (six to 12 months) action items include the following:

- Identify top institute topics, and outline elements, speakers, activities, outcomes, and communications.
- Secure commitments from speakers, venues, sponsors, and the like.
- Test the first Nantucket Institute–type program in fall 2009.
- Publish findings in winter 2010.

Midterm (12 to 24 months) action items include the following:

- Flesh out additional institute topics.
- Conduct one institute annually.
- Publish findings 90 days after each event.

The following are long-term (24 months or more) action items:

- Expand the institute’s influence and reach.
- Consider creating a permanent, physical, downtown home for the institute.

Big Idea 4: Prioritize Workforce Housing

“In four years I’ve rented ten places—I constantly have to move my family around with no hope of owning our own home,” an islander explained to the panel. Nantucket islanders are well aware of the intense pressure to provide workforce housing. The existing housing stock is not adequate to meet a large and growing demand. Economic stability depends on the island’s ability to develop viable short- and long-term solutions for both the seasonal and year-round workforce. As the ReMain briefing book identified, “The lack of affordable housing for middle- and low-income residents as well as seasonal workers is arguably the single most critical issue facing Nantucket.”

The Nantucket Housing Authority and the Nantucket Housing Office have both implemented programs that address some immediate housing issues, including affordable housing covenants through zoning amendments,

government-subsidized housing, and initiatives to recycle housing on town land as affordable rentals. Despite current government efforts, more aggressive programs are needed to address immediate and future housing needs. Housing issues should be addressed with greater immediacy. More coordinated action by the town government and the voting community is the key.

Housing Issues

During interviews with the panel, islanders expressed concern about many housing issues, including the following key concerns:

- Lack of suitable sites for affordable and workforce housing developments;
- Intense pressures and little hope of home-ownership for young families and essential professionals who must work multiple jobs just to afford rent;
- The need to move many times in one year because of seasonal rent rates; and
- The growing stream of people forced to leave the island because they are unable to afford living there; the subsequent drain on skills, talent, and personal contributions to the Nantucket community; and the high cost of replacing lost essential skills and talents.

A concerned resident told the panel, “It’s damaging our economy as well as our community. We hire and train people in services but then lose them off-island as soon as they can leave because there’s no way they can afford to stay.” A key success factor for vibrant downtowns worldwide is a year-round community of residents actively engaged with their surroundings and with one another.

Housing Opportunities

Downtown Nantucket offers many opportunities to create attainable housing for year-round residents. Creating new housing downtown could help remedy one resident’s complaint that, “In winter we are left with a dark island, but I love to see the lights on—it’s magical.” Housing development can help create

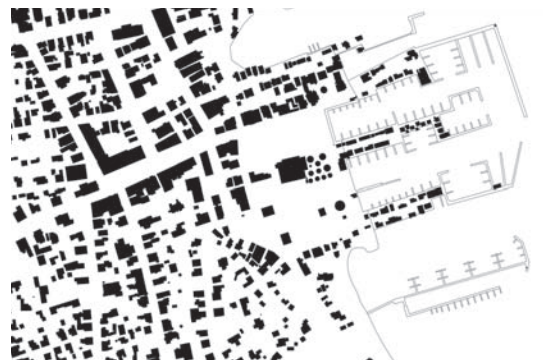
that magic. The panel encourages Nantucket to take the following steps to help resolve the housing crisis:

Invest in new housing. The panel recommends significant investment in and support for several new multifamily, income-diverse developments prioritized for year-round islanders. Despite universal praise for the Abram’s Quarry development from its residents and other islanders, all express considerable consternation that development completion took more than seven years. With the lessons learned from this project, the housing authority should be able to accelerate and proactively support future projects.

Proactively use downtown housing. In the short term, the panel recommends creating a program to convert the underused upper floors of existing structures into residential space. In the longer term, the panel recommends including housing in the new waterfront neighborhood. Including housing in the neighborhood will increase downtown’s year-round population and consequently reenergize its wintertime economy and vitality.

Seek out best practices. Many mountain communities responded to land value and scarcity issues similar to Nantucket’s with multifaceted, aggressive housing programs that address short-term rentals and long-term owner-occupied units. Nantucket can learn from best practices pioneered by places such as Aspen/Pitkin County, Colorado; Jackson Hole/Teton County, Wyoming; and Breckenridge/Summit County, Colorado.

Accelerate existing plans for the Community Housing Bank Act. Nantucket’s proposal for a Community Housing Bank Act impressed the panel. The proposed 1 percent seller-paid fee on real estate transactions over \$2 million will provide significant revenue to acquire, construct, maintain, and support affordable housing. However, concern exists about the several years’ delay in getting enabling legislation passed. A priority for all housing bodies should be swift cooperation and



The examination of urban form in the town of Nantucket is an exercise in geometry. In these views from the town, downtown, and street levels, the street, parcel, and building elements establish the structure and identity of the town as a compact modified grid that is formal near the harbor and more organic and unrefined at the fringe. The source of the panel’s recommendations for establishing a new neighborhood near the harbor is based on the more formal grid pattern. Proposed block size, building mass, and street dimensions are consistent with protecting the historic architecture and landscape of Nantucket Island.

concerted action to deliver this critical program.

Coordinate employer-owned housing. Better cooperation among employers, particularly those with varying seasonal patterns, could help create shared solutions to provide seasonal housing.

Gather data to empower good decisions. Data collection will help ensure that key decisions are made on the basis of accurate information. Data should be gathered around themes that include housing, transit, and parking. Housing data should include the number of units and their location, condition, and ownership.

Big Idea 5: A New Waterfront Neighborhood

The panel recommends that a new waterfront neighborhood be considered for the area currently occupied by the National Grid site, the Grand Union supermarket, and the adjacent parking area. The panel envisions a traditional neighborhood that respects the town's historical and functional fabric and provides workforce and rental housing and new civic space. The neighborhood's civic space can serve as the "locus" for the Nantucket Institute and other educational opportunities.

This neighborhood's 200 or more units should include a mix of rental and for-sale units. These could be either for year-round or seasonal workers, students, or visitors to the institute. The panel does not think this site is appropriate for standard seasonal rental units.

Design Principles

The waterfront neighborhood should strengthen the connection between downtown and the waterfront, respect the building size of blocks that form downtown's historic fabric, acknowledge the seafaring and industrial history of the site, use sustainable development practices, and consolidate landownership to create greater development potential.

The panel believes that residents who choose to live in this neighborhood will experience a fundamental change in behavior and will reduce their car use. The panel did not design the units in this neighborhood as typical Nantucket seasonal units. This new neighborhood will be a different sort of residential area, and not all units will have dedicated off-street parking. As noted previously, a substantially improved public transit/bus system and shuttle between remote parking and downtown will be required.

The panel considered three options for the layout of the new waterfront neighborhood. The final version suggested by the panel incorporates a smaller town green adjacent to Main Street. The new neighborhood incorporates many of the existing design components that are emblematic of Nantucket, including on-street parking, a compact nonrectilinear grid, and other architectural features consistent with 19th-century design. A key component of the design is to establish upper-level housing in a variety of rental and condominium formats. The panel suggested a conceptual building program with 200 or more dwelling units.



Conceptual Building Program: A New Waterfront Neighborhood

Existing		Proposed	
Consolidated Site	4.3 acres	Civic Park	0.5 acre
Parking	130 spaces	Income-Diverse Housing	200+ units
Grocery	8,000 square feet	Civic Space	5,000 square feet
Retail	1,500 square feet	Retail and Restaurant	18,000 square feet
Industrial and Fuel Storage	1.5 acres	Grocery	12,000 square feet
		Community Center	12,000 square feet
		Parking	141 spaces



A bird's-eye perspective of the proposed new waterfront neighborhood for Nantucket.



Perspectives of the new waterfront neighborhood detailing mixed-use buildings, traditional architecture, and the vital but restrained town square.

Question 5

Is there a role for philanthropy in enhancing or creating an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable downtown? What are possible public/private partnerships and opportunities for collaborations to strengthen the future of downtown Nantucket?

“There’s a catch-22; the island benefits from the great philanthropy of some visitors, which is hugely generous and well intentioned but inevitably changes the dynamic on the island. We risk becoming dependent on it. What would we do if they [the philanthropists] left?” The panel cautions the community against depending on private generosity to address matters of broad community interest and responsibility. Factors as diverse as the state of the general economy, changing social priorities, or donor views can reduce or eliminate philanthropic generosity. In such situations, the community’s financial dependency might contravene common desire.

Nonetheless, philanthropy plays an important role in advancing the panel’s suggestions and programs. Private charitable sources can “seed” programs and efforts. The community can use private foundations to bring key parties together to dialogue and monitor the progress of adopted programs. A philanthropic entity can serve as both the convener and the “keeper of the action list” for any particular topic or program.

As convener, a philanthropic entity can serve as the best agency to gather the needed parties because it has no perceived economic agenda or partisan interest. In similar fashion, an independent, philanthropic “keeper of the list” can monitor agreed actions and bring failures to appropriate public attention. Philanthropic entities can also provide modest capital to start various programs that require funding to get off the ground and achieve self-sufficiency.

Public/Private Partnerships

The sponsor asked the panel to comment on the applicability of public/private partnerships as a means of implementing downtown programs and opportunities. Partnerships between private sector entities and public agencies are a proven way to implement complex undertakings and leverage public assets and capital. Redevelopment of publicly owned lands and buildings is perhaps one of the most common and proven uses of this relationship structure. The panel encourages forming public/private partnerships to address a task as varied and complicated as any: redevelopment of the harbor district. Many existing models of such relationships exist throughout the United States, and these can be identified as specific projects and needs arise and used as models for implementation.

Conclusion

In *Moby Dick*, Melville writes “Nantucket! Take out your map and look at it. See what a real corner of the world it occupies.” Indeed, the first impression of the town is one of a quaint and charming village surrounded by a beautiful natural landscape that is unparalleled on the East Coast. Great strides in the national historic preservation and downtown revitalization movements have their roots in the work begun on Nantucket more than 50 years ago. But as the panel realized, beneath this exterior, the downtown is troubled. Although the backdrop is enticing to visitors, the islanders and seasonal residents think that more and more downtown has a certain “museum” feel.

The ULI panel suggests that, as in other museums, the collection and exhibits must change to survive. The loss of daily activity and human interaction in downtown must be stemmed. The panel’s suggestions—the institute, the new neighborhood, downtown management and housing—are an attempt to reintroduce life there. The panel also suggests forging a new relationship with the rest of the island that is connective, integrated, and complementary.

The success of this vision will require bold moves and dedicated leadership. The public and private sectors of Nantucket must work together to execute important action plans to achieve the ideals envisioned for the island. Bold does not mean foolish, nor does it mean achieving unconditional consensus for each initiative or individual development proposal. Community leaders must listen to a diverse set of stakeholders and formulate actions that are in the community’s best interest. Routine moves are also important. The day-to-day nuts and bolts of effective, responsive collaboration of municipal management with the private sector will make the vision coalesce.

About the Panel

James DeFrancia

*Panel Chair
Aspen, Colorado*

DeFrancia is president of Lowe Enterprises Community Development, which provides development management and advisory services on planned communities throughout the United States and abroad. DeFrancia is engaged in residential, commercial, and resort development. He has been involved in real estate development for more than 30 years; prior to that, he served as an officer in the U.S. Navy.

A Life Trustee of the Urban Land Institute, DeFrancia has participated in or chaired more than 20 Advisory Service Panels helping communities and organizations address strategic issues of land use, development, and revitalization. He is a past national director of the National Association of Home Builders, a former Virginia representative to the Southern Growth Policies Board, and a former member of the board of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority. He has been a guest lecturer or panelist for the Bank Lending Institute; the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy; the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University; George Mason University; and George Washington University.

DeFrancia is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, with postgraduate studies in business and finance at the University of Michigan.

Ford C. Frick

Denver, Colorado

Frick is a managing director of BBC Research and Consulting, a Denver-based market research and economic consulting firm. He directs the firm's practice in resort and community

development economics, real estate, and tourism planning. Projects typically involve financial feasibility analysis, economic impact assessment, redevelopment strategies, business valuation, or market research. The company's resort clients include ski area operators, development interests, federal agencies, and local governments. Many recent projects have focused on resort community development issues and commercial revitalization efforts, including those in Aspen, Telluride, and Steamboat Springs, Colorado; Mammoth Lakes, California; Jackson Hole, Wyoming; Lake Tahoe, Nevada; and McCall, Idaho.

By way of example, Frick's current projects include an evaluation of heritage tourism initiatives, a revenue enhancement analysis for Colorado state parks, a feasibility evaluation for a new ski resort in British Columbia, a funding analysis for an Aspen-area transportation authority, and a real estate valuation for a redevelopment site in Vail, Colorado.

Frick's views on the future of tourism, recreation, and resorts have been quoted in *Forbes* magazine, the *New York Times*, the *Journal of the Federal Reserve*, *SportingNews*, *USA Today*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. He is a frequent speaker and author on resort development trends and implications. Frick is on the Research Advisory Board of the Colorado Tourism Organization and is a trustee of the Colorado Legal Aid Foundation. He has a master's of urban and regional planning from the University of Colorado and bachelor's degree in political science from Colorado College.

Betsy Jackson

Ann Arbor, Michigan

Jackson is president of The Urban Agenda, an urban development consulting firm located in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She was president

of the International Downtown Association (IDA) in Washington, D.C., for four years. IDA is a nonprofit professional organization that champions vital and livable urban centers. Before joining IDA in 1997, Jackson was executive director of the Society for Environmental Graphic Design.

She has worked in the field of downtown revitalization and management for 24 years, first as executive director of Jackson Main Street, in Jackson, Michigan, and then for nine years as program associate and program manager for the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Center.

Jackson has a master's degree in urban planning and a bachelor's degree in journalism, both from the University of Michigan.

Michael Maxwell

Miami Shores, Florida

Nationally recognized for achievements as a developer and workout specialist, Maxwell has spent over 30 years acquiring and developing nearly \$1 billion in real estate assets, primarily in Florida and the Caribbean.

He is managing partner of Maxwell + Partners, LLC, Miami. The firm specializes in urban infill development and is noted for its innovative project solutions creating new market opportunities and products. The team has delivered more than 2 million square feet of mixed-use, office, retail, warehouse/distribution, resort hotel, residential, and specialty products. The firm provides consulting in market creation for urban redevelopment. As advisers, the firm's participation in workouts, restructures, asset management, construction completion, and disposition exceeds \$300 million.

As a developer and adviser, Maxwell is known for visioning niche markets, sensitive place making, green/sustainable strategies, and exceptional architecture that create high-value-added commercial and residential products. A trained architect and urban planner, he is a licensed real estate and

mortgage broker; holds the American Institute of Certified Planners designation; has earned awards for preservation, industrial, and redevelopment projects; and earned a BA, University of Texas, and a master of planning, University of Virginia.

His community and industry involvements include adjunct professor of business, Nova Southeastern University MBA Real Estate Program; full member ULI, ULI Florida/Caribbean District Council Executive Committee; ULI Inner City Council; co-vice chair, 2008 ULI Fall Meeting; ULI Advisory Services panelist; Greater Miami Urban League; and founder of New Urban Development LLC, a not-for-profit affordable housing company.

Edward McMahon

Washington, D.C.

McMahon holds the Charles Fraser Chair on Sustainable Development at the Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C., where he is nationally known as an inspiring and thought-provoking speaker and leading authority on topics related to sustainable development, land conservation, urban design, and historic preservation.

He is an attorney, community planner, lecturer, author, and expert on the topics of sustainable development, land conservation, growth management, urban design, and historic preservation. Before joining ULI in 2004, McMahon spent 14 years as vice president and director of land use planning for The Conservation Fund in Arlington, Virginia. He is also the cofounder and former president of Scenic America, a national nonprofit organization devoted to protecting America's scenic landscapes. He has organized successful efforts to acquire and protect urban parkland, wilderness areas, and other conservation properties.

The author of 15 books and over 150 articles, McMahon's latest books are *Land Conservation Finance* and *Better Models for Commercial Development*. He also writes a regular column in *Planning Commissioners Journal*. Over the

past 15 years, McMahon has drafted numerous local land use plans and ordinances.

McMahon has an MA in urban studies from the University of Alabama and a JD from Georgetown University Law School, where he taught law and public policy from 1976 to 1985.

Alexandra Notay

London, United Kingdom

Notay is the research director for ULI Europe, a global not-for-profit education and research institute that focuses on issues of land use, real estate, and urban development. ULI Europe's mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Notay leads on all policy and practice initiatives in Europe.

She holds regular pan-European policy forums on critical issues such as affordable housing, capital markets, planning, and sustainability and also supports ULI's growing regional initiatives in the Middle East and India. Her recent publications include *Value Capture Finance: Global Practices and Implications for the UK*; *Social Infrastructure and Sustainable Urban Development: A European Review*; and *Bridging the City Investment Gap in Europe*.

Before joining ULI in 2007, Notay was a civil servant in the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and before that, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. As business manager for CLG's Regional, Urban and Economic Policy Directorate, she led the business planning and strategic support for key policy streams including UK urban policy, regional development agencies, and ERDF/State Aid funding negotiations with the European Union.

Notay holds a BA in international relations (School of African and Asian Studies) from the University of Sussex and is a registered Practitioner of PRINCE2 Project Management. She is a keen linguist, having studied Arabic, French, Japanese, and Spanish, and since 2006 has been a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Ross Tilghman

Seattle, Washington

Tilghman heads the Tilghman Group, which provides transportation planning services. He brings 24 years of urban planning experience. He provides transportation-related revenue projections, market studies, planning, and development strategies to government, not-for-profit, and private sector clients facing real estate development challenges. His projects typically involve downtown revitalization, academic and institutional campus planning, historic district redevelopment, mixed-use projects, special event access, and parking.

His recent work includes master plans detailing transportation requirements for The Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington; Gallisteo Basin Preserve, New Mexico; and St. Mary's College of Maryland, as well as for downtowns in Evansville, Indiana; Natchez, Mississippi; St. Louis, Missouri; Green Bay, Wisconsin; and Parker, Colorado. Additionally, he has provided parking studies for numerous municipalities and conducted transit market studies to identify ridership potential for new services in Denver and Los Angeles. Tilghman has also specialized in transportation planning for state capital campuses, working with Washington, Iowa, and Minnesota to improve their access and parking programs.

Tilghman served three years as director of a downtown business improvement district in Illinois. He oversaw maintenance, facade improvements, parking, and upper-story redevelopment efforts in concert with Main Street redevelopment principles.

He frequently participates in national resource panels assisting communities with development questions, including ULI's Advisory Service Panels, the Mayor's Institute on City Design, AIA R/UDAT, and the Ohio Design Assistance Team. Tilghman received an AB, magna cum laude, in history, from Washington University in St. Louis and an MA in geography from the University of Washington, Seattle.

Gregory A. Weimerskirch

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Place making—a particular passion of Weimerskirch’s—is at the forefront of his work as a principal of Urban Design Associates (UDA). He joined UDA in 1991, successfully forging a bicoastal career that also includes award-winning work as an art director for Lucas Film, Ltd., and the motion picture and television industries. His interdisciplinary approach and experience in art direction enrich UDA’s projects, especially those of a place-making nature.

As an architect and urban designer, Weimerskirch is particularly adept at taking traditional architecture and making it relevant to both the context and objectives of a client project while also advancing the strategies, design concepts, and techniques to suit a 21st-century reality.

Weimerskirch has contributed his design skills to a diverse array of high-profile projects, including Celebration, Florida; Norfolk, Virginia; and Ellon, Aberdeenshire, Scotland. His work in film includes art direction for *Star Wars: Episodes II and III* and the *Ellen DeGeneres Show*. He recently designed the anchor set for NBC Sports coverage of the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China.

Stan Zemler

Vail, Colorado

Zemler signed on to become Vail’s town manager in October 2003 and is best known for his strong leadership skills as a consensus builder. He brings 20 years of local leadership experience, having served as the president and chief executive officer of the Boulder Chamber of Commerce before arriving in Vail. Zemler’s current focus is to help guide Vail’s expansive redevelopment, which includes public and private investments of more than \$1 billion over the next four years. He also has been instrumental in organizing a regional transportation coalition to address congestion and other effects along Interstate-70. The

coalition includes representation from 27 cities and counties with an aim to develop a regionally preferred transportation plan with locally accepted solutions.

As Vail’s town manager, Zemler oversees a budget of \$42 million and approximately 200 full-time employees, including the community information officer, fire chief, police chief, community development director, public works and transportation director, finance director, information systems director, and the human resources director.

Before his appointment at the Boulder Chamber in 1997, Zemler served as acting city manager for the city of Boulder during a transition period in which he helped the city council work through a challenging budget period resulting in cuts of \$1.5 million. Zemler served as deputy city manager for Boulder for five years and was executive director of the Boulder Urban Renewal Authority from 1995 to 1997, where he facilitated attempts to redevelop an aging shopping mall and orchestrated development of an urban renewal plan in which tax increment financing was used for a hotel project. Previously, he held other positions with the city of Boulder and was an adjunct professor at the University of Colorado, College of Environmental Design.



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