

## General Question and Answer Session with Consultant

- Q: Will eminent domain be utilized to carry out the goals of the Master Plan?
- A: The plan is conceptual and flexible. It is possible to carry out this plan without using eminent domain – what is seen in this plan is just an illustration of parking facilities, things can change.
- Q: There are wonderful opportunities for public art in Maverick park and there should be a system to allocate \$\$ for high quality public art. Are there tools in place that can be utilized to make this area known for high quality public art, both mobile and stationary?
- A: In some cities, a percentage of funding or the development budget is set aside for public art. This is something to be explored in San Antonio. This would be good language to add to the master plan
- Q: Can experienced, senior architects be made available for this process to provide input to or make recommendations regarding proposed development to ensure quality architecture throughout the plan process?
- A: This Master Plan calls for a “town architect” to be involved in the plan implementation process. This provides coordinated review for building architecture AND urban design of public space.
- Q: Why use rail trolley vs. a bus trolley? [Comment- this section of the plan as written does not relate to the surrounding community.] Perhaps we should mention the current system that currently goes up Broadway.
- A: This issue should be studied further. It would be great to have a trolley that goes all the way down Broadway to Alamo Heights. However, it may be better to save it for a feasibility study at a later time. During the charrette process, some residents indicated that the number of lanes and street width along Broadway would be too few and too small with a wider sidewalk and a trolley.
- Q: Were underground utilities considered? Above ground utilities were in the picture but are not in the illustrations. All utilities should be placed underground.
- A: Yes, but the initial cost estimates to bury utilities showed a cost much greater than what the TIRZ will generate. If utilities are to be buried, this should happen in targeted areas due to the enormous cost.
- Q: Comment – 1 way streets should be used on east/west streets.
- Q: Comment – connectivity should be examined for all modes of transportation. Existing and planned VIA routes should be incorporated and utilized.

A: Yes, integration should happen. Existing and planned routes not reflected in the maps should be added.

Q: There has been a lot of discussion that “park once” is not needed in this area because there is plenty of space here for on-site parking facilities. Please further explain and provide examples of “park once” where it has been successfully been implemented.

A: There are numerous cities that manage parking in this way – most tourist cities do and well as most older cities on the east coast and cities with considerable density have a park once system/authority. Specifically places with mixed use developments of 3-5 stories. [case studies can be provided] Mixed use causes aggregate parking demand to decrease to approximately 2-2.5 spaces per 1,000 sf. Suburban locations that are not walkable need 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet. This results in the need for less parking spaces and also frees up more land that does not need to be utilized for parking. This is also more cost effective because people can build a mixed use building on a lot that is not big enough for a building and parking – so if they can get their parking somewhere else development is more likely to occur. In addition, many small businesses can’t always afford parking lots so “park once” attracts development that otherwise, may not be able to afford to come.

Q: How important is the trolley, and how can this be related to the Pearl District in Portland?

A: River North and the Pearl District are similar because when the projects were initiated the areas were mostly dead. A rail based trolley provides predictability and assurances for investors because the tracks will always be there. It demonstrates a long-term commitment to a particular area. Whereas rubber based transit can be moved or redirected to other areas.

Q: Were smaller-scale green spaces or pocket parks considered, especially in the bigger residential neighborhood as Madison Square Park.?

A: That was actually considered in that area, some of it is taken care of because of the setbacks in the area provide a significant amount of green space (in the form of front yards) but also because it is not that big and there is already a large park and that the River is a huge amount of green space. In San Antonio, parks have a history of being underutilized. What we really need more people using them – you are never more than a couple blocks away from a green space no matter what. Buildings can also provide green space through a particular design. Pocket parks should not be necessary given potential building design and existing park and open spaces.

Q: How can the fine-grain, historic, walkable city that we are striving for be achieved in today’s market where people prefer to create single-use, multi-block developments?

A: That is why this plan was prepared. There are a lot of different environments to shape the investment that is coming. The plan helps to take large, multi-tenant building and make them more than an enormous concrete box. By employing a town architect to address design and by utilizing tools such as building and spatial design and the park once concept to free up space that would generally be used for parking – otherwise the smaller properties are too expensive to develop as a stand alone project.

- Q: Do high-rises belong along the river? We don't want this part of the river to become designed for high rise hotels only.
- A: Buildings shade the river and they can do that without destroying the quality of the river. All elements should be addressed and some taller buildings with a moving shadow may create a more interesting river-scape. The goal is to shade the water but not the landscape that supports the water. Most buildings should be low-to-mid rise, but some taller buildings that cast a moving shadow are also important features.
- Q: Why can't a parking structure exist without a liner building?
- A: An important quality of urbanity is knowing the difference between a front of a building and the back of the building – this provides for this. It also allows for the front of the building to reflect human activity rather than cars and trash pickup. This kind of atmosphere makes the street seem dead and it is no longer walkable.
- Q: Comment – The housing in the area should still be affordable – it should be livable for average families.
- Q: Comment – The balancing the density and movement along Broadway and Avenue B is good, this allows them to become streets again and not service streets. The San Antonio Art Museum is moving forward on improvements with their master plan. This area also has some security issues and the best way to eliminate that is to put people on the street.
- Q: Comment – we should be careful with historic structures in the area and be sure to identify areas where history has taken place.
- Q: When someone wants to do something with their property after this, what commissions will this go to?
- Q: How will the land for the pocket parks be acquired?
- Q: In certain drawings/images, public use is delineated on private property. How will this work?
- A: The plan is only conceptual. It is not absolute. It provides conceptual ideas for potential developers. The reason to make drawings is to help people to start to understand what can be done. The drawings are NOT binding, just examples of what can be.
- Q: The river grade is so deep that it invalidates the pocket park and vistas concept. How is this addressed?
- A: The difference is 15-20 feet depending where you are, especially towards lock and dam. In other places there is only a 6-9 ft difference. There are many ways to mitigate the difference in grade and many of the techniques we are suggesting we have done downtown already. Intermediate levels or a form of terracing can be utilized. This also provides for a coherent and consistent edge between the river and the buildings above. Over time, as unique situations come up due to topological constraints, there are

variances available. Property owners were always taken into consideration throughout this process. This allows the public at the street level to engage with the River, even with the 15-18 foot grade difference. The goal was to come up with a design that could be implemented over time and still give the area a uniform appearance. The difference and grade combined with the parks at the street level creates a bio-swale to river.

Q: Do pocket parks duplicate the function of the river's edge?

A: Comment – Pocket parks are in the RIO as a requirement for ADA and smaller property owners due to the grade change. Creating these green spaces pushes the buildings back from the river and actually lets more people enjoy the river from the street level.

Q: A lot of traffic is directed into the area from McCullough; how does the plan address mass transportation on McCullough?

A: We will take a closer look at that.

Q: There is a lot of concern about how this will affect property owners, especially with the illustrations that you have provided. Although you say this is an illustrative plan, there is no guarantee that the government won't just come in and take land to create a parking garage.

A: There is no reason why eminent domain would need to be evoked for this vision to materialize.

Q: Concern about proximity to Park Once utilities, will they really work? Can a Park Once Utility lead to eminent domain? Will the economics of liner buildings work?

A: Information/case examples can be provided. In most cities of this scale you can save a lot of money by building a shared parking structure rather than requiring everyone to build their own parking lots.

Q: Explain the idea behind the water management facility?

A: The water management facility provides utility space based upon increased residential space – once the area grows a need for more utilities will develop. It will deliver a source of clean water into the River, rather than having to create more sewer mains for the water to be funneled to the water treatment plant and expanding the size and capacity of the central system. This facility is potentially more economical than that.

Q: Will car dealerships ever be compatible with this plan?

A: There are quite a few fine looking car dealerships – it can be done.

Q: Comment – this plan will bring life back into this area, I'm all for shaking up the status quo and thank you so much for coming.

Q: Could you provide examples of successful Park Once projects and Form Based Codes? (preferably Texas markets)

- A: Park Once examples– can be provided. Form Based Codes – Pasadena, Fort Worth, Miami, Farmers Branch (they won an award), El Paso, Ventura, CA.
- Q: I don't think the idea of parking structures at street level will completely ruin the pedestrian element, Frost Bank seems to do well.
- A: There is much less life on the outside of Frost Bank than there are other buildings in the downtown area that don't have parking structures. We probably don't want to line Broadway with Frost Bank like buildings, it would not do well.
- Q: Why is the Park Once concept only designated for certain areas within the plan and not in others?
- A: The seemingly most trafficked, most obvious places were chosen for Park Once. However, designation areas in the plan are only conceptual. This really is just an illustration and should not be taken as "the plan" for park once plan for the area – changes can be made. The more parking can be shared and maximized, the better.
- Q: Were round-a-bouts and bike lanes considered for the plan?
- A: Round-a-bouts very pedestrian friendly because the traffic never actually stops. Round-a-bouts also require additional ROW, which River North does not actually have. They are also not suited for urban areas.
- Q: How will the heavy amount of traffic on Broadway be addressed?
- A: It is no secret when a significant amount of traffic is going in either direction – heavy traffic can be solved through synchronizing the lights to move the people through the area.
- Q: Were environmental issues addressed when developing the plan?
- A: The San Antonio River is not ecologically a "river". The public and private open spaces along the street level will help improve water quality through providing a natural filtering system for the runoff water.
- Q: Along Avenue B, limiting building height to 3-stories could result in mainly condo development. Could building height increase if stepped back?
- A: 4-stories would be appropriate. Value is built by differentiating the market. 3-4 stories could go up on Avenue B and 5-7 on Broadway. However, increased height creates parking issues and the greater the height, the more building design becomes about making room for parking and incorporating enough spaces into the development. Avenue B should visibly and economically should be a different place than Broadway because a successful area depends on differentiating the market.
- Q: Was traffic calming considered? Narrowing the streets is important and I want to make sure that this is part of the plan.

A: If the streets are narrower and parking exists on both sides of the street, drivers are generally more cautious. They approach a pedestrian-oriented street (wider sidewalks and street trees) differently than a street of wide-open lanes. Corner bulb-outs reduce the width of the street upon entry; the way people drive on streets is heavily related to how it looks and feels like (specifically upon entry). If places look like you should drive slower, most people do – even if you can actually drive faster.

Q: Is mixed-income housing possible?

A: This involves close public/private/non-profit collaboration. In some cities, a portion of the TIF is set aside for affordable or mixed-income housing. The master plan suggests that a target should be established for this area. If, in 5 or 10 years, the target is not met, the city council should adopt a more aggressive policy. In this housing market, it is possible to deliver housing targeted to a certain economic level without needing any subsidies. If subsidies are used, they should be leveraged towards the area where they do the most good.

Q: Comment – We should really focus on the quality of the river water

Q: Is Form Based Code (FBC) essential to making this plan work and if so, why?

A: “Well, lightning can always strike, but it will significantly increase your chances for success.” Rather than treating new buildings as aggregations of floor area or cubic yards of enclosed space it conceives of the way you would develop a lot in terms of the type of building you would put on it and its interaction with the public sphere. These buildings are intended to have a relationship with the history and heritage of San Antonio. There is a whole genre of big multi-colored boxes with windows in them that have taken over as the default product. It doesn’t make real cities and residents can not interact with the private and public sphere when this development pattern is used. This is an opportunity for San Antonio to stop developing in ways that don’t relate to the area in which they are located; the more you do it the better it gets and there is no reason not to start now rather than later. By approaching buildings as a type of an urban organism rather than something on an assembly line it makes something worthwhile. It reflects the historical development pattern of downtown, people build along Houston Street with the intent of creating a great city. San Antonio should be proud of that history and should build on it. It also provides a path to sustainability, both politically and economically. A master development entity is essential to FBC to act as a quality control system.

Q: Who have you seen administer Form Based Codes in areas like this, a large space with many property owners in one central area?

A: You would need a skilled architect on the city staff or on a consulting agreement. It is hard, but building something first class is always harder than building something mediocre.

Q: Who can do this?

A: A staff member of Development Services or a Non-Profit entity. It really needs to be someone who has in mind at all times what the community agreed what this area should look like.

Q: In terms of the TIRZ, how does this relate to boards and commissions?

A: Typically it is an employee or officer of a redevelopment authority (which you have in this city) that would be in charge of making sure that all of the TIRZ money is returned to this area and used as efficiently as possible. Any type of development goes through the typical development process. However, it needs an ombudsman who will follow this process and make sure that it is implemented well.

Q: How can density be increased in a controlled manner?

A: The calibration of density comes from the understanding how buildings and blocks and neighborhoods function physically. Typically they choke on the cars and that moderates the scale significantly. This area also has a great history and we tried to design an area that doesn't make the historic buildings look ridiculous in scale.

Q: How do you preserve historic neighborhoods without limiting density?

A: You certainly want to save the areas that are still in tact. However, after some point, many houses get demolished and several blocks end up with a few houses scattered between office buildings, parking lots, and condos. This is when it would be appropriate to create a heritage block and re-assign the historic buildings to a block or around a square.