

# New Orleans SDAT

## SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY ON SOUTH CLAIBORNE





# A SUSTAINABLE DESIGN ASSESSMENT TEAM REPORT





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# Introduction

This report represents the culmination of many ideas birthed during the South Claiborne Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) project. It reflects both the expertise of the multi-disciplinary SDAT Team, as well as the local expertise of city staff, local developers, business owners and retailers, non-profit organizations and churches, and most importantly, the citizens of the South Claiborne Avenue corridor.

## The Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) Program

The Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) program focuses on the importance of developing sustainable communities through design. The mission of the SDAT program is to provide technical assistance and process expertise to help communities develop a vision and framework for a sustainable future. The SDAT program brings together multidisciplinary teams of professionals to work with community stakeholders and decision-makers in an intensive planning process. Teams are composed of volunteer professionals representing a range of disciplines, including architects, urban design professionals, economic development experts, land use attorneys, and others.

Today, communities face a host of challenges to long-term planning for sustainability, including limited resources and technical capacity, ineffective public processes and poor participation. The SDAT approach is designed to address many of the common challenges communities face by producing long-term sustainability plans that are realistic and reflect each community's unique context. Key features of the SDAT approach include the following:

**Customized Design Assistance.** The SDAT is designed as a customized approach to community assistance which incorporates local realities and the unique challenges and assets of each community.

**A Systems Approach to Sustainability.** The SDAT applies a systems-based approach to community sustainability, examining cross-cutting issues and relationships between issues. In order to accomplish this task, the SDAT forms multi-disciplinary teams that combine a range of disciplines and professions in an integrated assessment and design process.

**Inclusive and Participatory Processes.** Public participation is the foundation of good community design. The SDAT involves a wide range of stakeholder viewpoints and utilizes short feedback loops, resulting in sustainable decision-making that has broad public support and ownership.

**Objective Technical Expertise.** The SDAT Team is assembled to include a range of technical experts (planners, architects, economists and others) from across the country. Team Members do not accept payment for services in an SDAT. They serve in a volunteer capacity on behalf of the AIA and the partner community. As a result, the SDAT Team has enhanced credibility with local stakeholders and can provide unencumbered technical advice.

Alexandria Township, NJ  
Oklahoma City, OK  
Northampton, MA  
Pittsfield, MA  
Forest City, NC  
Cache Valley, UT  
Reno-Tahoe-Carson Region, NV

New Orleans, LA  
Longview, WA  
Guemes Island, WA  
Syracuse, NY  
Northeast Michigan  
Lawrence, KS  
Hagerstown, MD

Tucson, AZ  
Englishtown, NJ  
Dubuque, IA  
Culver City, CA  
Central City, LA  
Albany, NY

## SDAT Communities



**Cost Effectiveness.** By employing the SDAT approach, communities are able to take advantage of leveraged resources for their planning efforts. The AIA contributes up to \$15,000 in financial assistance for each project. In 2008, each SDAT project is estimated to cost between \$20,000-\$30,000 total. The SDAT team members volunteer their labor and expertise, allowing communities to gain immediate access to the combined technical knowledge of top-notch professionals from varied fields. Finally, the SDAT process employs a compressed schedule and the application of innovative public participation techniques to leverage resources effectively and produce timely results.

**Results.** Many communities want to become more sustainable but are immobilized by conflicting agendas, politics, personalities, or even the overabundance of opportunity. Further, many communities have not yet taken stock of their current practices and policies within a sustainability framework; others have identified issues of concern but desire assistance in laying out a plan of action to increase sustainability. The intense SDAT process and compressed schedule allows a community to capitalize on SDAT information quickly and build momentum for implementation of its plan. The SDAT includes the delivery of a formal report and recommendations as well as a follow up assessment.

The SDAT program is modeled on the Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) program, one of AIA's longest-running success stories. While the R/UDAT program was developed to provide communities with specific design solutions, the SDAT program provides broad assessments to help frame future policies or design solutions in the context of sustainability and help communities plan the first steps of implementation. Through the Design Assistance Team (DAT) program, over 500 professionals from 30 disciplines have provided millions of dollars in professional pro bono services to more than 150 communities across the country. The SDAT program leverages the pivotal role of the architectural community in the creation and support of sustainable and livable communities.

## The SDAT Process

In November of 2006, CityWorks New Orleans submitted an application to the American Institute of Architects for a Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) project to assist the city in building a strategy for the revitalization of the South Claiborne Avenue corridor. The application was accepted and in September 2007, SDAT Team leader James Sherrell and AIA staff completed a preliminary visit and met with city officials, neighborhood organizations, developers and others along the corridor. The initial visit helped inform the selection of a multi-disciplinary team of professionals for the full SDAT. The full SDAT Team visiting the community in November to conduct the program.

From November 12-14, 2007, the SDAT team members worked closely with local officials, community leaders, technical experts, and citizens to study the South Claiborne corridor and examine its core issues. The team held a



For the purposes of this SDAT project, the South Claiborne Avenue Corridor was defined as the two-mile stretch of South Claiborne Avenue beginning just west of the New Orleans Superdome and ending short of the parish line. It includes the surrounding neighborhoods that form the foundation of the corridor's current varied identity as well.



number of public input meetings in a variety of locations along the corridor, as well as specific stakeholder meetings with neighborhood organizations, developers, housing specialists, revitalization groups, churches and city staff. The team also conducted over 5 dozen street interviews with residents in Central City and business owners along South Claiborne Avenue. On November 14th, the SDAT Team held a town hall meeting at the Dryades YMCA to present its observations and findings. The team issued a wide range of recommendations covering issues along the South Claiborne Avenue corridor. The following report includes a narrative account of the South Claiborne Avenue SDAT project, with detailed recommendations concerning several principle areas of investigation:

- Economic Development and Workforce Development
- Land Assembly and Land Use
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- Transportation

The recommendations are made within the broad framework of sustainability, and designed to form an integrated approach to the future of the South Claiborne Avenue Corridor. In the context of the corridor, these recommendations are focused on a sustainable recovery, both acknowledging the challenges created by the aftermath of Katrina, and the pre-existing issues the corridor has faced for decades.





# EXISTING CONDITIONS





# Existing Conditions

The South Claiborne Avenue corridor is defined by the avenue's path west of downtown New Orleans. The section from Jefferson Parish to the large interchange at Earhart Boulevard and Interstate 10 visibly follows the crescent in the river that gives New Orleans its nickname. For this stretch, the street is six lanes, three in each direction, with a significant neutral ground in the middle. It is characterized by a mix of residential and commercial districts along this section of South Claiborne, including a mix of uses which form an eclectic collection encompassing both the area's past as well as its present. There are a variety of neighborhoods adjacent to South Claiborne Avenue. The corridor includes strong neighborhoods where local pride, ownership, and reinvestment are robust, as well as some of the most distressed neighborhoods in the city, where significant disinvestment has occurred over decades. As a result, there is a wide disparity in neighborhood identity and issues depending on geography. Rebuilding and recovery efforts along South Claiborne reflect these realities, with some neighborhoods proceeding at healthy rates and others stagnating and in need of interventions from public and private sources. The distressed neighborhoods on the eastern end of South Claiborne are home to the largest concentration of public housing in the city of New Orleans, and the resolution of controversial public housing issues is central to larger plans to support neighborhood recovery in these areas.

## What the Team Heard

The overwhelming sentiment that was communicated to the SDAT Team members from residents, developers, retailers, and non-profit organizations was a sense of civic frustration. City residents have been engaged in a number of planning processes since 2005. They have been involved in citywide planning processes such as the Bring New Orleans Back and Unified New Orleans Plan, as well as neighborhood-based plans. The lack of visible progress along the corridor following the establishment of a series of plans has resulted in significant skepticism regarding municipal government and a general state of planning fatigue among residents. Citizens yearn to see physical signs that the corridor and its neighborhoods are returning to life. The experience is mixed along South Claiborne, with some neighborhoods experiencing healthy rates of return and rebuilding, and others continuing to struggle with vacant properties, physical deterioration of the built environment, and little or no visible indicators of progress.



**"Just do something."**

*- Neighborhood Resident*

**"Do one thing,  
then you can see  
the future."**

*- Neighborhood Resident*



# Challenging Environment

The prevailing situation along the South Claiborne corridor presents numerous challenges. Living conditions are difficult. The rate of commercial and retail return and investment has been slow, making the provision of basic goods and services a labor intensive process within city limits. New Orleans is faced with significant challenges in the interim regarding intergovernmental coordination of the recovery process. Private investors, developers, and residents registered frustration regarding the bureaucratic and policy barriers to constraining the recovery process. They also expressed aggravation concerning the constantly changing circumstances within which individuals must continuously adjust as they attempt to rebuild residences, careers, and the neighborhood fabric. The city exhibits an unsettling dynamism regarding the lack of a clear framework to facilitate and empower individual residents and businesses to participate effectively in rebuilding and renewal. There is a lack of reliable public data and information to create the conditions for stability and productive investment in the recovery effort. As a result, the prevailing perception of city government and the recovery process is characterized by chaos and uncertainty about the future. Stakeholders complain about a general paralysis inside and outside of municipal government, a high risk for private investment, and a resulting slow pace of recovery. As a result of these conditions, the SDAT Team believes there are several overriding considerations for the South Claiborne stakeholders.

**“In the hood, they’re not looking out for us.”**  
- Central City Resident

## The Need for Leadership and Collaboration

The Claiborne Avenue corridor has several neighborhoods and organizations that are accomplishing significant victories in moving recovery forward on a small scale, but the corridor is in need of a convening organization that can bring all the stakeholders together and catalyze collective action and unity across the area. Because public and private resources are so limited, the area faces a significant premium on partnership. Corridor stakeholders will need to build the skills to partner and leverage their existing assets effectively in order to have success. Having a central organization that can play a civic leadership role in facilitating collaboration among Claiborne Avenue’s stakeholders will build significant momentum for additional investment, partnership and collaboration across a host of important issues. The corridor is also lacking a cohesive and unifying vision that all the neighborhoods can identify and subscribe to equally. The city will need the neighborhoods to reinforce the reinvestment that will happen on the corridor with investment and rebuilding in the adjacent area. The lack of a neutral convening organization to help facilitate a clear consensus vision among corridor stakeholders presents an initial significant challenge to recovery along South Claiborne.

## The Focus on the Basics

The SDAT Team believes that South Claiborne avenue also needs to begin building momentum for success by focusing on the fundamental and feasible rebuilding projects that can build relationships and create the framework for partnering on more significant investments as the recovery process moves forward. The team feels that coordinating significant local effort around simple intervention projects, such as paint programs, debris removal, and other pride projects will build significant capital for long-term partnering along the corridor.

## Coordination, Communication and Information

There is much work to be done to begin moving the South Claiborne Avenue toward recovery. The SDAT Team believes that effective coordinating roles and clear communication frameworks are fundamental structural prerequisites for progress in the corridor. The need to access reliable information about reinvestment efforts, tax incentives, partnering opportunities and other recovery-centered activities is essential to increasing partnership and collaboration among corridor stakeholders. Government must play a central role in establishing transparent mechanisms and implementing tools that increase public access to accurate information about the recovery process and facilitate connections among the many stakeholders engaged in rebuilding efforts. Civic leadership in the corridor is also a



key ingredient to establishing an effective coordination of multiple complex partnerships for corridor reinvestment. There is also a need for a robust grassroots process and open dialogue about the future of the Claiborne Avenue corridor to build collective investment and commitment in the future. Government will play a central role, with active civic partners, in establishing the framework for a process that involves a broad spectrum of Claiborne Avenue's citizens.

## An Integrated Recovery Management Process

Given the limited public resources available to the recovery effort, one of the most important roles that municipal government can play in the process is to serve as an information hub for all the city's stakeholders. The city lacks a clear framework to guide residents or business interests and encourage private investment in the recovery. While the creation of the city's Office Of Recovery Management was a positive step toward reoriented municipal government operations around the recovery effort, the SDAT team recommends that the city establish an integrated recovery management process that is driven by a clear set of goals and accompanying indicators to measure progress.

**"If we want actions now, we have to have data that supports them now."**

*- South Claiborne Stakeholder*

## Recovery STAT: The City as Information Hub

One of the chronic challenges facing the city of New Orleans is the difficulty obtaining reliable, accurate information. The team heard time and again that residents, property owners, and local business owners could not gain access to critical information. The City has an opportunity to play a critical role by providing timely, accurate and transparent information to a host of stakeholders with an interest in recovery efforts. The Office of Recovery Management is the natural centerpiece for the implementation of a 'RecoveryStat' management tool, and the team believes the city should empower ORM with the authority to lead management and accountability of city agency operations regarding recovery. One of the best existing models of municipal management and accountability systems is the Citistat program in Baltimore.

The Citistat program required a minimal start-up investment of \$285,000, and an annual operational investment of \$400,000 in staff and data systems. However, it helped save the city of Baltimore over \$350 million through a robust use of indicator tracking and management over agency accountability. The city was able to improve government services while reducing costs significantly. Through implementation of the citistat system, Baltimore was able to address two issues that are of similar importance in New Orleans – crime and infrastructure maintenance. The city lowered its crime rate by 40% and was able to respond to pothole service requests within a 48 hour time period, for instance.

The citistat program has been replicated in over a dozen other jurisdictions since its success in Baltimore. The SDAT Team recommends that New Orleans officials make use of a similar data-drive management system for the city's recovery process to reduce uncertainty, increase public access to information, and create a sense of stability about the direction of the recovery effort for private investors and citizens. The city already employs the technological geo-spatial analysis for some of its operations, and by combining this technology with a robust management process and applying it across city agency's it could reap substantial benefit. For more information about citistat, consult their website at <http://www.ci.baltimore.md.us/government/citistat/>.



# An Action Plan for South Claiborne

Following a series of public workshops and meetings with key stakeholders, the SDAT Team is making recommendations for the revival of the South Claiborne Avenue in four key areas:

- Economic Development
- Land Assembly and Zoning
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- Transportation

The report covers each of these areas with specific recommendations and strategies to pursue in both the short and long-term recovery





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT





# Economic Development

## Retail Development on S. Claiborne Avenue

The business case for retail development in inner cities has been made. Retailers such as Foot Locker, Walgreen's, Toys-R-Us, Blockbuster and Radio Shack have benefited from the untapped retail market located in inner cities across the U.S. According to the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, the unmet retail demand in inner cities is estimated to be over \$40 billion, which is larger than the total retail spend in twenty six states. Inner city neighborhoods in cities such as Boston, New York City and Oakland have seen impressive increases in retail development. Retail development benefits inner city communities not just in the number of jobs created or the access to higher quality products at competitive prices; but it also helps to change the image of inner city neighborhoods and attract other private investment. The S. Claiborne corridor in New Orleans hopes to be a part of this trend. The SDAT team was asked to provide broad recommendations on how to attract retailers to the S. Claiborne corridor.

Similar to most inner cities, New Orleans faces challenging economic conditions that can thwart retail development such as crime, low median household income, and fragmented land parcels. Additionally New Orleans is confronted with the added complications caused by Hurricane Katrina which has created significant infrastructure issues and low population density. However, despite these challenges the actions that need to be taken are no different than what other communities have successfully accomplished. Below we present basic and practical actions that have undergirded other community-led retail development initiatives.

### Action 1

### Form a S. Claiborne Redevelopment Partnership *Short Term (Within 3 Months)*

In order to achieve economic progress in inner city communities it requires the involvement of key stakeholders that will directly benefit from the outcome. While there are many collaborative partnerships working diligently in the neighborhoods connected to S. Claiborne Avenue, none are working specifically on the retail corridor. Therefore, we recommend that a S. Claiborne Redevelopment Partnership is formed to drive the retail development process in a coordinated fashion. The Partnership would provide a public-private collaborative forum to debate issues, exchange ideas and develop an actionable retail development plan, and serve as the backbone for its implementation. This Partnership should involve all existing neighborhood and faith-based groups and other stakeholders such as the following:

- Land Developers and Owners
  - Local Employers and Universities
- Public Officials
  - Funders

It is important to include Land Developers and Owners in the strategic planning process because their actions must align with the overall vision in order to achieve the desired objectives. Additionally their participation will help them better manage risks as they will be fully aware of the plans in place to address impediments, which will boost investor confidence and expedite the development process.

The large Local Employers in the area such as Baptist Hospital and Tulane University act as anchors to the community and provide a certain level of economic stability. Their employees and customers make-up a sizable part of the potential market for retailers and therefore their desires must be included. In addition their leadership, expertise and financial resources can prove to be invaluable to the process. For example, local education institutions can be instrumental in conducting market research.

Public Officials involvement at the state and city level is critical. Integrating the public sector's role of planning, infrastructure and financing tools with a market-driven strategic plan will increase the probability of successfully attracting retailers to the area.

Also partnering with funders such as a local foundation will help to secure resources throughout the process.



The S. Claiborne Redevelopment Partnership as a collaborative group will represent different and sometimes competing perspectives. Therefore, the goal of the Partnership is to proactively work through conflicts and make the necessary trade-offs needed to maximize limited resources. For example, the City may have already budgeted dollars for a streetscape project. However, through dialogue created by the Partnership, the group may come to the consensus that those funds may be better spent on a more pressing issue. The Partnership will help to alleviate decisions being made in a silo while leveraging available resources.

Additionally, we strongly recommend that the S. Claiborne Partnership identifies a single point of contact to act as the champion for the effort and be accountable for the project results. They should be the “go to” person for information related to the project, which will help to create transparency and build trust. The champion should be a committed and well-respected leader that can galvanize others, build consensus, set priorities and make executive decisions.





# Action 2

## Conduct Market Research *Short Term (Within 6 Months)*

Fundamental to an inner retail development initiative is the market research. The market research provides the intelligence and basis for determining what type of retail is needed and how much retail the market can support. It helps to set realistic expectations and enact data-driven decision making throughout the strategic development process. It will also provide the data to support the marketing efforts.

For inner cities, the market research is especially critical because it can identify opportunities that are often overlooked from traditional demographic data. For example, the income density per square mile is not a common metric, but for inner cities it is a better reflection of the purchasing power than median household incomes. Since inner cities typically have higher population density than their suburban counterparts, the income per square mile is typically much higher representing a more lucrative market for certain retailers. According to ICIC, the inner city retail spend per square mile is over 10X greater than the suburbs.

The market research should reveal key insights about the market that retailers are interested in above the standard demographic and economic information, such as:

### Key Insights Revealed by Market Research

- Income density (provides an indication of the buying power)
- Lifestyle data (provides information on shopping preferences and spending patterns, which typically are different in urban markets)
- Capture rate (provides a measure of the unmet demand by retail category)
- Competitive landscape (provides information on the number, type and quality of existing retailers in the trade area)
- Committed investments (provides information on planned investments that can increase the demand for retail such as housing projects or new arts or entertainment venues)

We recommend that the S. Claiborne corridor works with a strategic partner such as Social Compact to conduct the market research. Social Compact is widely recognized for its neighborhood inner city drilldown market analysis that has been instrumental in attracting retailers to inner city neighborhoods such as Washington D.C. and NYC. They have been successful in conducting research that provides better estimates of economic indicators (e.g., population size, household incomes, market size, buying power etc.). Other possible partners include LISC Metro Edge or a local university partner such as the University Of New Orleans Center for Economic Excellence.



# Action 3

## Develop a Strategic Plan Short Term (Within 9 Months)

According to the UNOP, the objectives for S. Claiborne are as follows:

- Develop mix of one full-block depth of commercial on the River-side and Lake-side of S. Claiborne
- Encourage retail establishments, large and small
- Provide a new supermarket and other needed local retail services
- Study potential sites which can accommodate full tow block depth development for larger-scale retail establishment

These objectives need to be validated and converted into a strategic plan based on the market research. The strategic plan should answer questions such as the following:

### Brand/Identity

- Based on the market research, what are the competitive assets S. Claiborne offers that are appealing to retailers and different than the surrounding areas?
- Based on the market research and industry trends, what can the S. Claiborne corridor realistically become known for while reflecting the values and desires of the community (e.g., eco-friendly, pedestrian friendly, urban retail, discount retail, etc.)?
- What is the desired look and feel of the S. Claiborne corridor that is aligned with desired identity (i.e., streetscape and façade improvements)?

### Retailers

Who are the target retailers for the S. Claiborne corridor that strike a balance of what stakeholders want and what the market can support based on the market research?

- Who are the retailers that are receptive to urban markets? Trade Dimensions ([www.tradedimensions.com](http://www.tradedimensions.com)) is a good source of information on retailers (e.g., areas of operations, expansion sites, selection criteria, contact information, etc). Through its data, research can be conducted to identify retailers that may be a good fit for the S. Claiborne corridor.
- Will the strategy target destination retailers as the anchors or include/exclude big box?
- Will the strategy target 24x7 retailers?

Based on the market research, will the retail strategy primarily cater to transient consumers (e.g., commuters, employees and other visitors to the area) or local residents?





# Impediments

What are the impediments to retail development on the S. Claiborne Ave (e.g., land assembly, low population density, crime, etc.)?

- For each impediment, what are the plans in place to address them (e.g., what are the specific actions that will be undertaken? who will be responsible for its execution? what are the required resources? how long will take to implement, etc.).

In Action Four we provide recommendations on how to address some of the critical impediments.

# Milestones

What are the key milestones that the Partnership will strive to achieve within a defined timeframe (e.g., population density, crime rate, homeownership rate, parcels assembled, etc.), which can demonstrate to retailers that the necessary progress is being made?





# Action 4

## Prepare Market for Retail *Medium-Long Term (Over 1 Year)*

The strategic plan should specify the actions needed to prepare the market for retail. Below we offer solutions to address some of the most critical issues.

### Suboptimal Development

During our interviews, we learned of a retail development project on S. Claiborne that some stakeholders felt was not aligned with the desired vision for the corridor. After speaking with developer they felt there was no clear vision for the corridor that could influence their activities and the cost of keeping the land vacant would be unreasonable. We believe a S. Claiborne Redevelopment Partnership would help to alleviate such tensions. As stated previously the Partnership would create closer working relationships among multiple stakeholders such as between the developer and the community to develop mutually beneficially solutions. For example, more than likely the desired retail for the corridor would generate higher rental income, creating a win-win situation for land owners, developers and the community.

In the interim between the current reality and the desired vision, we have been asked what can be done to pacify developers. While financial incentives are an option, the City's financial constraints do not make this a viable alternative. Additionally, financial incentives are rarely effective when the local business environment does not support the market. Through direct dialogue among the key stakeholders as describe in the suggested S. Claiborne Redevelopment Partnership, we believe creative solutions can be devised. For example, the developer may limit the lease period of retailers coming on board during the transition period with the expectation of earning higher rents later from higher-valued retailers. Therefore instead of extending a 5-year lease agreement it may be 2-years.

### Crime

Crime is a major deterrent to business development. To combat this challenge, Business Improvement Districts have been proven to be an effective solution. A Business Improvement District or BID is an association of business owners and public sector constituents within a defined area that agree to a self-tax to be used for common services, such as security. In the case of the S. Claiborne corridor the funds collected under a BID can be utilized to hire a private security firm. Additionally the BID can fund other clean and safe programs and other issues needed for business attraction and retention such as marketing, façade improvements, etc.

### Homeownership

Homeownership is a key economic factor that retailers utilize in site selection decisions. Additionally it represents a benchmark for economic stability and is the main economic asset for most U.S. families. For this reason, homeownership should be encouraged and promoted throughout the neighborhoods abutting the S. Claiborne corridor. Given the major housing development projects that are underway, such as C.J. Peete and B.W. Cooper there is a great opportunity through these developments to increase homeownership, which can serve as the backbone for sustained revitalization. Additionally, the planned VA hospital complex will create the need for significant workforce housing. Therefore, the S. Claiborne area should think creatively on how to capture a portion of this segment with market rate housing solutions.

It is also important to note that population density should be taken into consideration in the new housing development projects. As noted previously, a high population density can offset low median household incomes. Without it, it will be more difficult to attract retailers to the S. Claiborne corridor.

### Land Assembly

Fragmented land parcels make retail development difficult, especially if the goal is to attract big box retailers. In the section the SDAT team offers specific suggestions on how the S. Claiborne Redevelopment Partnership can assemble land effectively with limited resources.



# Action 5

## Conduct Marketing *Medium-Long Term (Over 1 Year)*

Marketing is the linchpin to actualizing the strategic plan. Without a strong marketing plan, it will be difficult for retailers to become aware of the latent retail market on S. Claiborne. This is especially true given that other municipalities across the country are proactively and aggressively pursuing retailers as part of their economic development efforts, which is intensifying competition for retail among neighborhoods particularly those who are within close proximity to one another. The S. Claiborne corridor is currently confronted with this issue because there are nearby neighborhoods that have similar retail objectives. One of the ways to address this issue is to collaborate with the nearby neighborhoods to develop a complementary plan that avoids cannibalization. For example from the strategic planning process, it may be determined that S. Claiborne will target mainly big box while a smaller corridor such as O.C. Haley will target boutique shops. In general the strategic plan should identify which retailers the S. Claiborne corridor should target taken into consideration the unique assets of S. Claiborne (e.g., demographics, customer demand, retail gaps, etc.) and the competitive forces within the local retail market.

Once the desired retailers are determined, by type and by name, a targeted marketing plan can be developed. The S. Claiborne corridor has to think of itself as a product and as such, it has to market its key product attributes to the target retailers. In order to identify the relevant product attributes, the market research for S. Claiborne should be matched against the site selection criteria of the prospective retailers. Retailers' site selection criteria can be obtained from sources such as Trade Dimensions or the Chain Store Guide, in addition to the company's website. The next step is to convert the key product attributes into slick marketing materials, using the language and buzzwords of retailers. The marketing materials should then be directed to the relevant company contacts. Warm introduction to these contacts should be made to the extent possible leveraging the New Orleans business community to avoid becoming lost in a pile. The materials should also be sent to site selection firms, which play a key role in offering advice to retailers, as well as to retail developers.

In addition to the initial distribution of the marketing materials, the S. Claiborne corridor stakeholders should attend key trade conferences. Conferences are a great place to obtain in-person meetings, build relationships and advance the retailers' interest. Once a relationship has been forged, it is important to keep the retailers, site selection firms and developers abreast of your progress. For example, when a key milestone is achieved such as a sustained reduction a crime, that information should be relayed.

In the short-term the marketing can be managed by the BID. However, since business attraction and retention is not limited to retail or the S. Claiborne corridor, we offer as a suggestion the implementation of a quasi public/private economic development entity to support the City of New Orleans. In addition to recruiting tenants and coordinating the leasing strategy for the S. Claiborne retail corridor, this entity can play a broader role such as job creation and small business assistance. Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) is a local example of such an entity and Jersey City Economic Development Corporation is well-recognized successful model.

In summary, attracting retailers to the S. Claiborne will require leadership, a collaborative and data-driven approach, sound strategic and marketing plans, and time. This will be an iterative process, therefore sustained commitment, perseverance and accountability will be needed for its success. It has been done before. Projects such as Grove Hall Mecca in Roxbury, MA; and Four Corners Mall in Columbus, OH prove that inner city retail development can happen and we believe it can also happen for the S. Claiborne corridor.

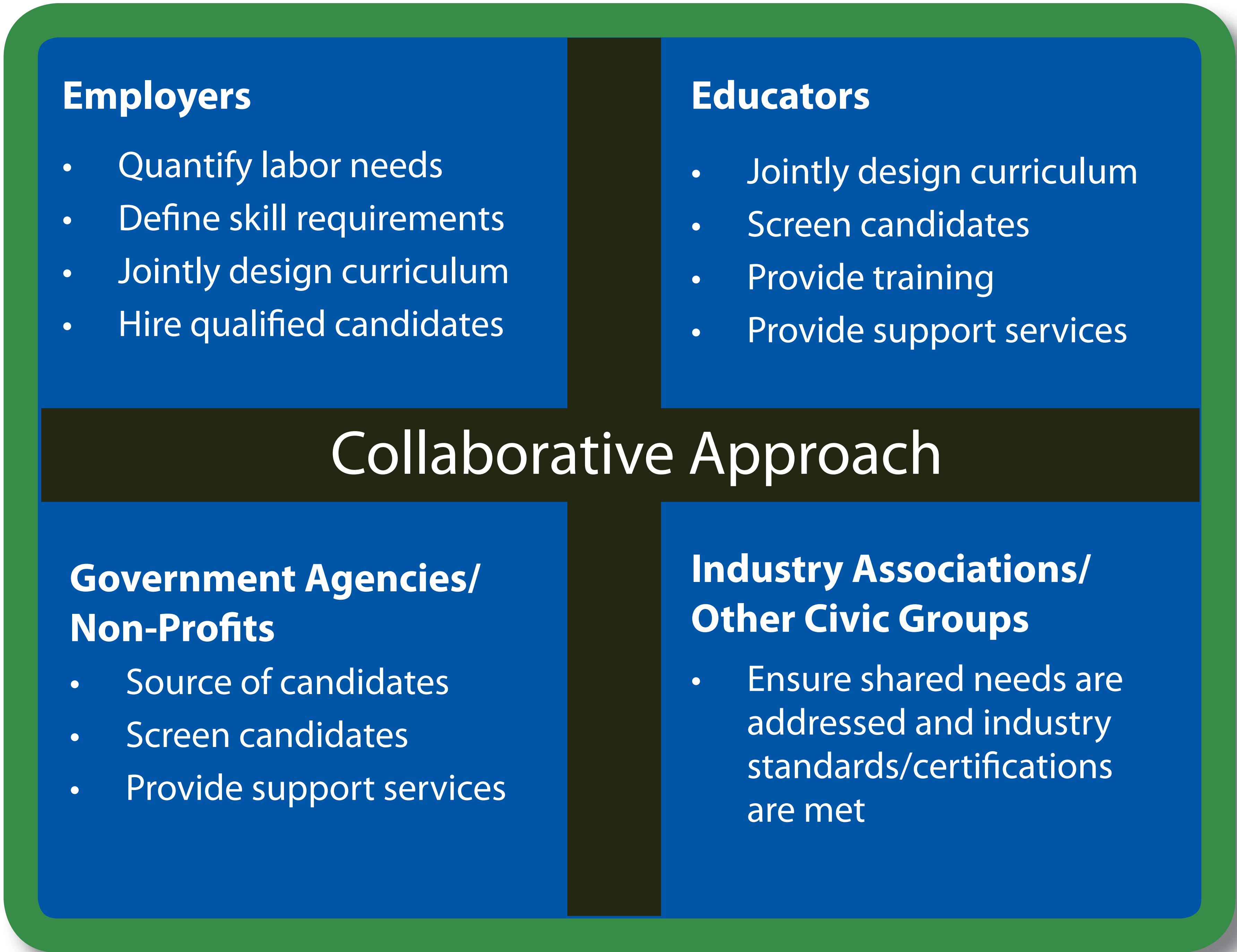




# VA Hospital Workforce Development Opportunity

During our interviews, we became aware of the VA hospital project that is expected to bring thousands of jobs to the city downtown. Even though this project was outside our scope of work, we believe this is a major workforce development opportunity that can benefit New Orleans inner city residents, specifically in nursing. The nursing career lattice workforce model is a best practice being used in Boston, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, and other cities. It is a collaborative approach to training that involves employers, educators, government agencies and non profits playing different roles.

Nursing Career Lattice Model: A Collaborative Approach



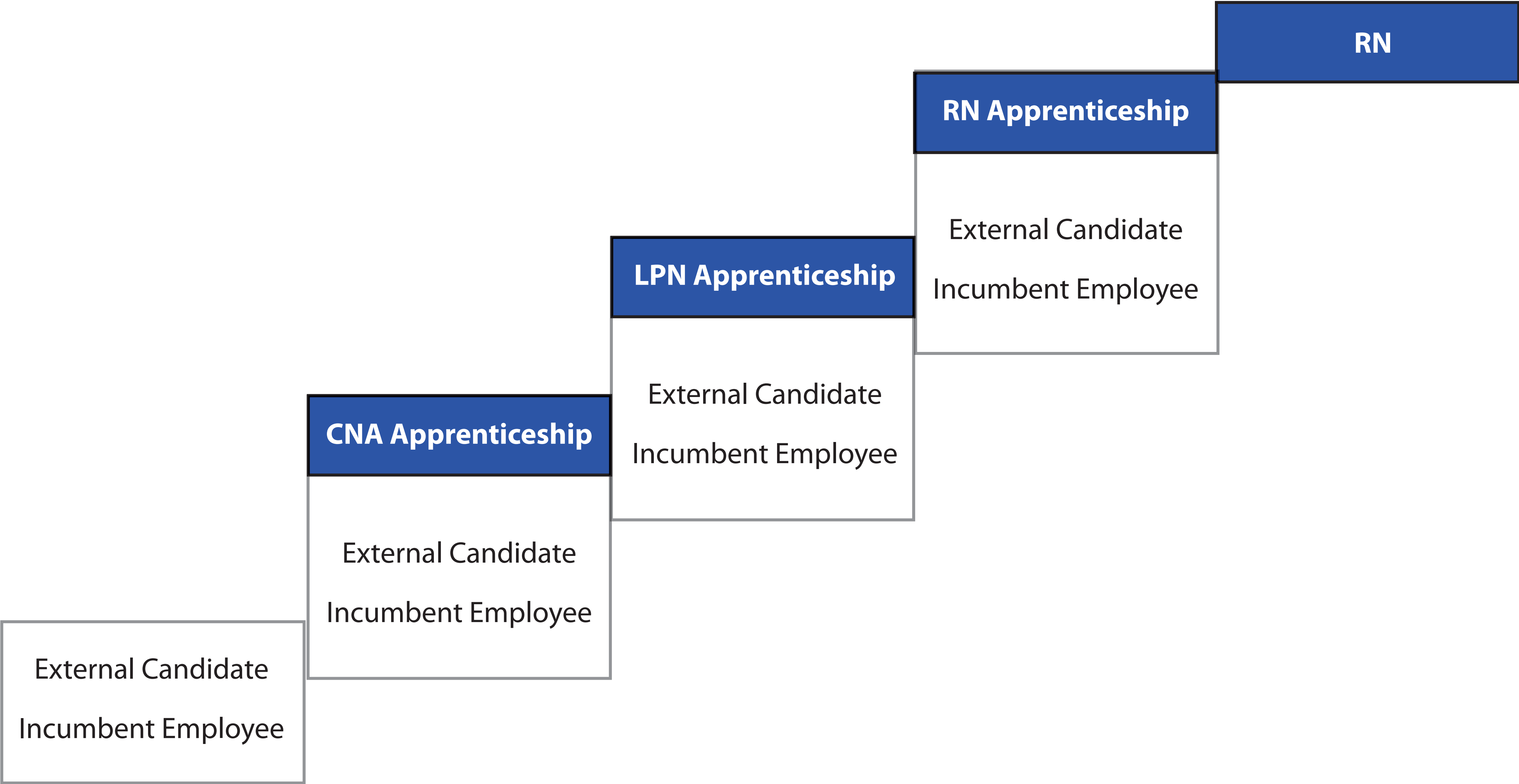
Using a competency based apprenticeship model, individuals can advance from a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) to License Practical Nurse (LPN) to Registered Nurse (RN) under an “earn while you learn” program with an increasing wage scale during the training period. It offers career opportunities for both underemployed incumbent workers and the unemployed. The career lattice model can offer multiple benefits for the VA hospital and the community such as:

- Better access to jobs with a clear career path
- Streamlined screening, training, and hiring process
- Provides employees who are highly skilled
- Improved retention and job performance
- Enhanced the quality of care
- Increases staff diversity
- Matches or exceeds training required by licensing boards
- Creates a strong workforce pipeline with local residents



Nursing Career Lattice Model: Achieves High Workforce Retention Rates

Sample Areas		
Baltimore	930 trained	85% retention
Boston	900 trained in 3 years	91% retention
Dakotas	134 apprentices	90% retention



The nursing career lattice model is just one example of the many opportunities created by the VA hospital. It is our hope that the VA hospital is leveraged as an economic catalyst to link residents to jobs and small business opportunities.



# LAND ASSEMBLY





# Land Acquisition and Assembly in Challenged Urban Communities

AIA SDAT's target area, Central City, is a long-time and well-established neighborhood in the City of New Orleans, roughly bounded by Earhart and Napoleon Avenues, and South Galvez and La Salle Streets. The area is split by a six-lane city-wide connecting corridor, South Claiborne Ave. (Route 90), which poses two radically opposite challenges to the area: (1) it provides the transportation means for thousands of vehicles traveling in and out of the city every day, and (2) it is the connecting spine behind which two highly challenged neighborhoods exist. Although few demographic, physical and/or market statistics exist, it is widely known that this area has experienced high levels of disinvestment and urban distress for decades. Hurricane Katrina in 2005 has only exacerbated, and in some cases severely worsened, the existing conditions in the area. Since the devastating impact of the hurricane, planners, consultants, the philanthropic community, and the government have been working with communities to create blueprints for urban recovery.

In early 2007, after several failed attempts, communities reached a common ground regarding the level of redevelopment desired. This lengthy and politically sensitive neighborhood planning process has created an environment of growing frustration about the pace of recovery and lack of action in some of the neediest communities. Inclusive neighborhood plans can be powerful tools designed to create consensus around neighborhood revitalization issues and specific residents' needs. If neighborhood plans are based on current political, economic, physical, and social issues they become a community's roadmap for change and represent the first step toward the implementation of projects intended to create sustainable communities. Unfortunately, neighborhood plans in challenged urban communities are seldom implemented – in most cases, due to the public sector's inability to structure and implement efficient, expeditious, and continuous land acquisition and disposition plans. In the absence of coordinated public and private investments, communities miss the opportunity to be an integral part of the recovery process and places do not gain the necessary market strength in which mixed-income communities can flourish and succeed.

*Publicly-owned land that is strategically located and that can be assembled into larger properties is the most important resource a community can have. Publicly-owned land creates an opportunity for communities to have a seat at the table with public and private developers when specifics about projects are planned and negotiated.*

Long-time distressed communities facing challenges such as significant vacancies, low household incomes, high crime activity, and poor infrastructure and building conditions, find serious barriers to land acquisition activities. The complexities around land acquisition and assembly processes in communities such as Central City are usually underestimated. This translates into frustrations among community leaders unfamiliar with land acquisition practices in communities that need to be rebuilt, but where little or no change has occurred in decades. Specifically in the City of New Orleans, land acquisition is a process with added complexities due to environmental constraints and Hurricane Katrina's devastating impact. A successful redevelopment strategy must deal with a multiplicity of issues including: (1) inefficiencies of the market in which the oversupply of land is not positioned to serve a large underserved demand; (2) lengthy and complicated public acquisition and disposition barriers; (3) scarce federal, state and local subsidies; (4) uncoordinated public investments; (5) diminished public sector capacity; (6) inefficient public delivery systems (7) high acquisition and development costs; and (8) extra-ordinary costs placed on property owners, such as flood insurance and increasing public utilities costs, that jeopardize a family's ability to afford a home. These issues translate into a lengthy redevelopment process and low levels of success. Addressing these tremendously challenging issues requires a strong foundation to ensure a long-term recovery process.

Change in Central City will be possible if the following components exist:

**Civic Infrastructure**  
**Partnerships**  
**Leadership**  
**Strategy**



**Civic Infrastructure:** Long-term community organizing efforts build consensus and provide support around recovery activities. A well-organized committed community with high levels of civic capacity has strong political relationships and is able to review, discuss, support or reject redevelopment activities and the creation and/or expansion of social service programs to best fits the community's needs.

**Partnerships:** Partnerships among public sector, for- and non-profit developers, and community leaders are key to a successful recovery. Partners must (a) share similar values and goals for the community, (b) understand each partner's strengths and weaknesses, and (c) commit to work through the barriers of the implementation process.

**Leadership:** Long-term political leadership is necessary to ensure the continuous flow of public resources for project implementation.

**Strategy:** The recovery of equitable communities requires the maximization of impact and resources – these must be the goals of a realistic acquisition strategy.

## Acquisition Strategies: PRINCIPLES

A successful strategic acquisition plan should identify a sequence of discrete development and investment opportunities and transactions that are based on in-depth knowledge of the market, physical and social characteristics of a place. The goal is to produce realistic and measurable development activities that balance growth and equity.

**Data Driven:** A thorough analysis of the economic, social, and physical limitations of a place is key to determining the type and level of redevelopment actions. The analysis of accurate and up-to-date data allows for informed investment decisions.

**Long Term:** Commitment to the implementation of continuous short-term transactions ensures the maximization of long-term social, economic, and physical impact

**Transactional:** Plans must determine realistic and measurable transactions.

**Multiple and Mixed:** Neighborhood recovery requires the coordination of mixed actions implemented by multiple partners.

**Connected:** Investments must build from strength – current and/or proposed market, physical, social or political activities.

**Properly Scaled and Sequenced:** Scale of interventions and proper timing ensures an equitable market build-up.

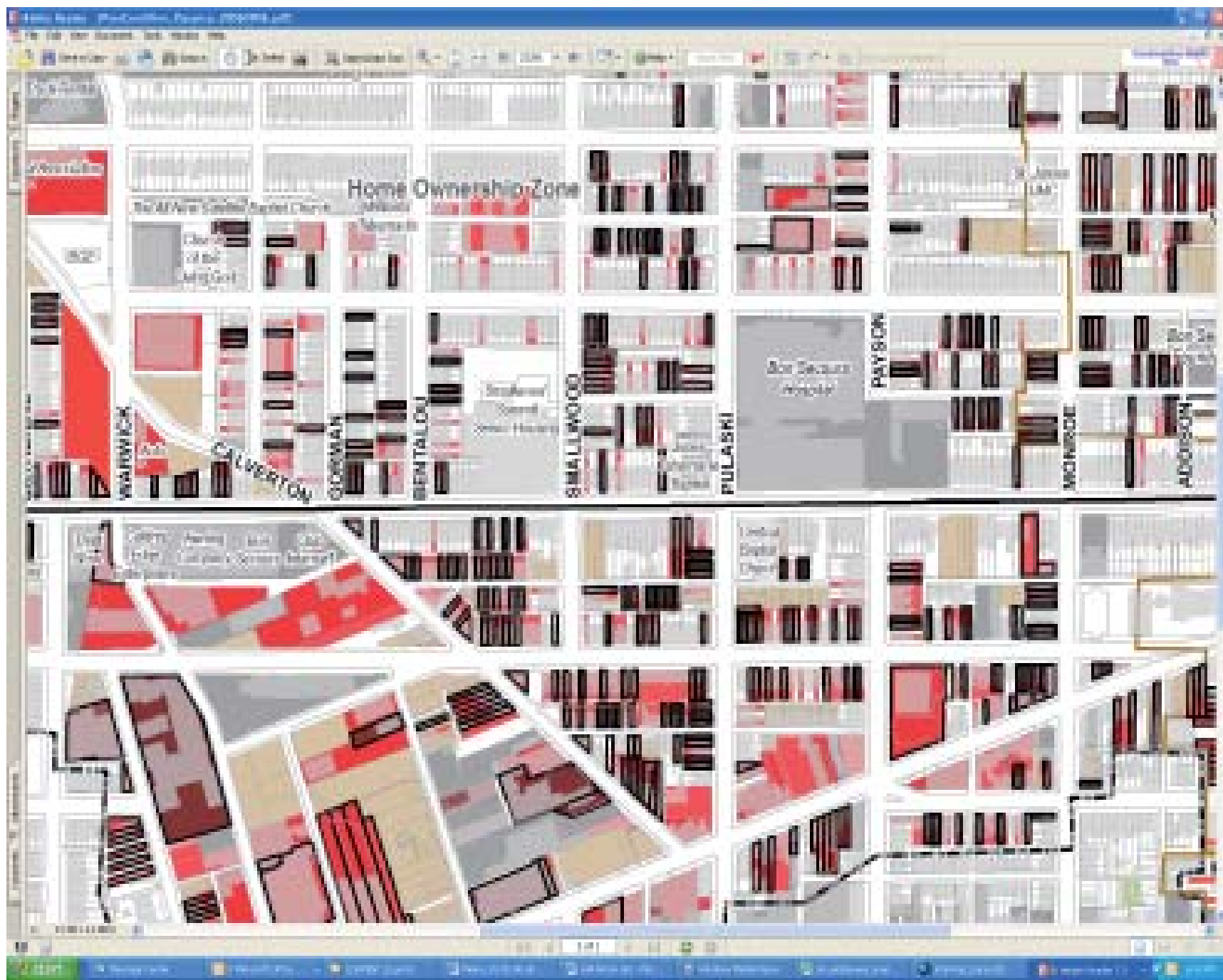
**Dynamically Adjusted to Market Conditions:** Type, scale and location of interventions must be flexible to respond to ongoing market fluctuations. Tracking outcomes and assessing impact ensures necessary strategy corrections.

## Target Area Acquisition Strategy

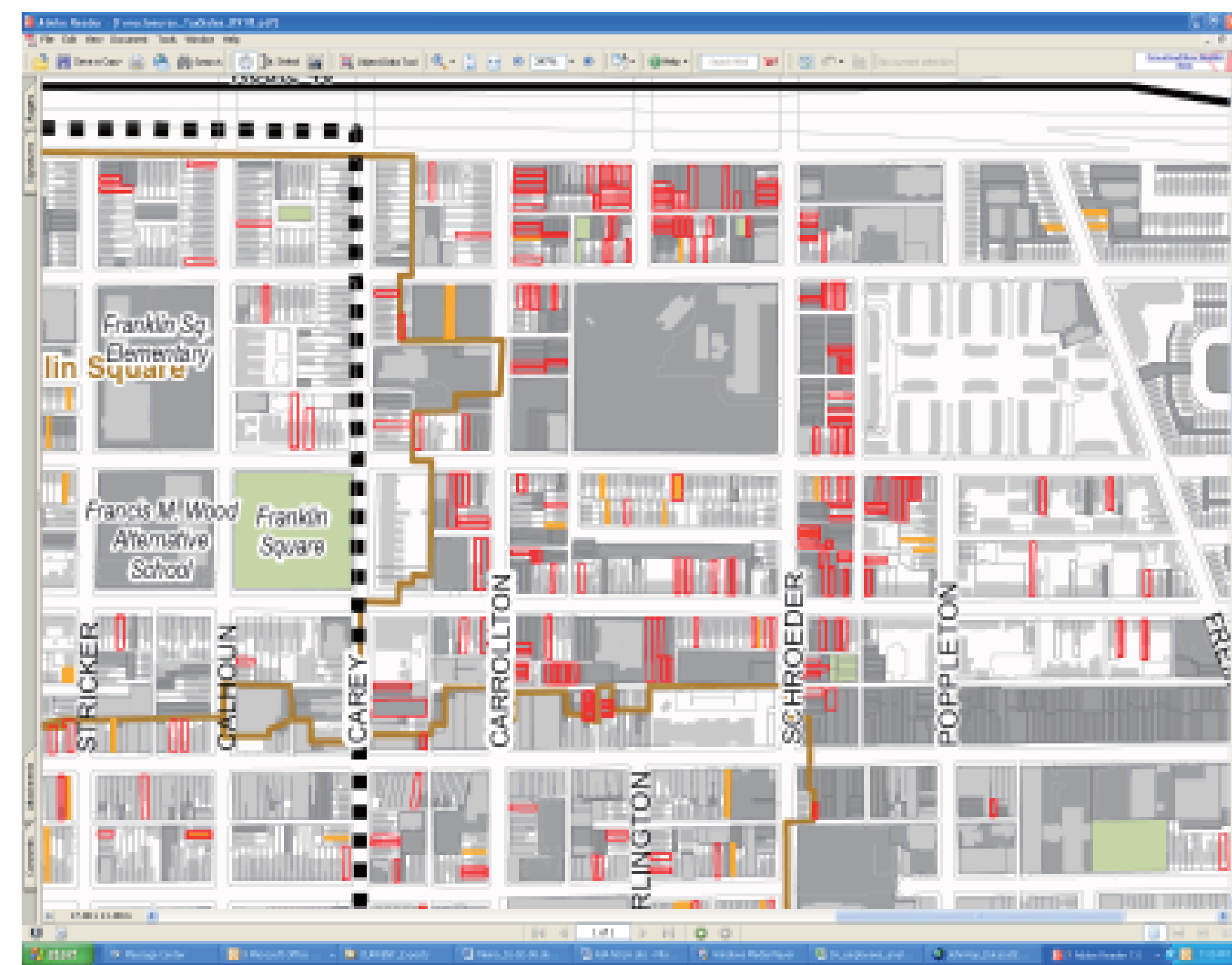
The creation of an acquisition plan requires a deep understanding of an area's physical structure, housing stock, institutional assets, and level of available physical (land) and economic resources. As already mentioned, land acquisition is a lengthy process, the results of which are not revealed for years. Whether an acquisition is for residential or commercial purposes, any property acquisition that does not lead to the maximization of public resources and of the impact on market recovery is a failed recovery strategy. It is for this reason that any acquisition decision must be based on long-term goals and on real-time accurate information. The typical datasets necessary to prepare an acquisition strategy are shown below:

- Ownership (public and private)
- Vacancy (land and buildings)
- Tax Liens
- Code violations
- Property condition
- Land use
- Tenure (owner/renter occupied)
- Public infrastructure condition

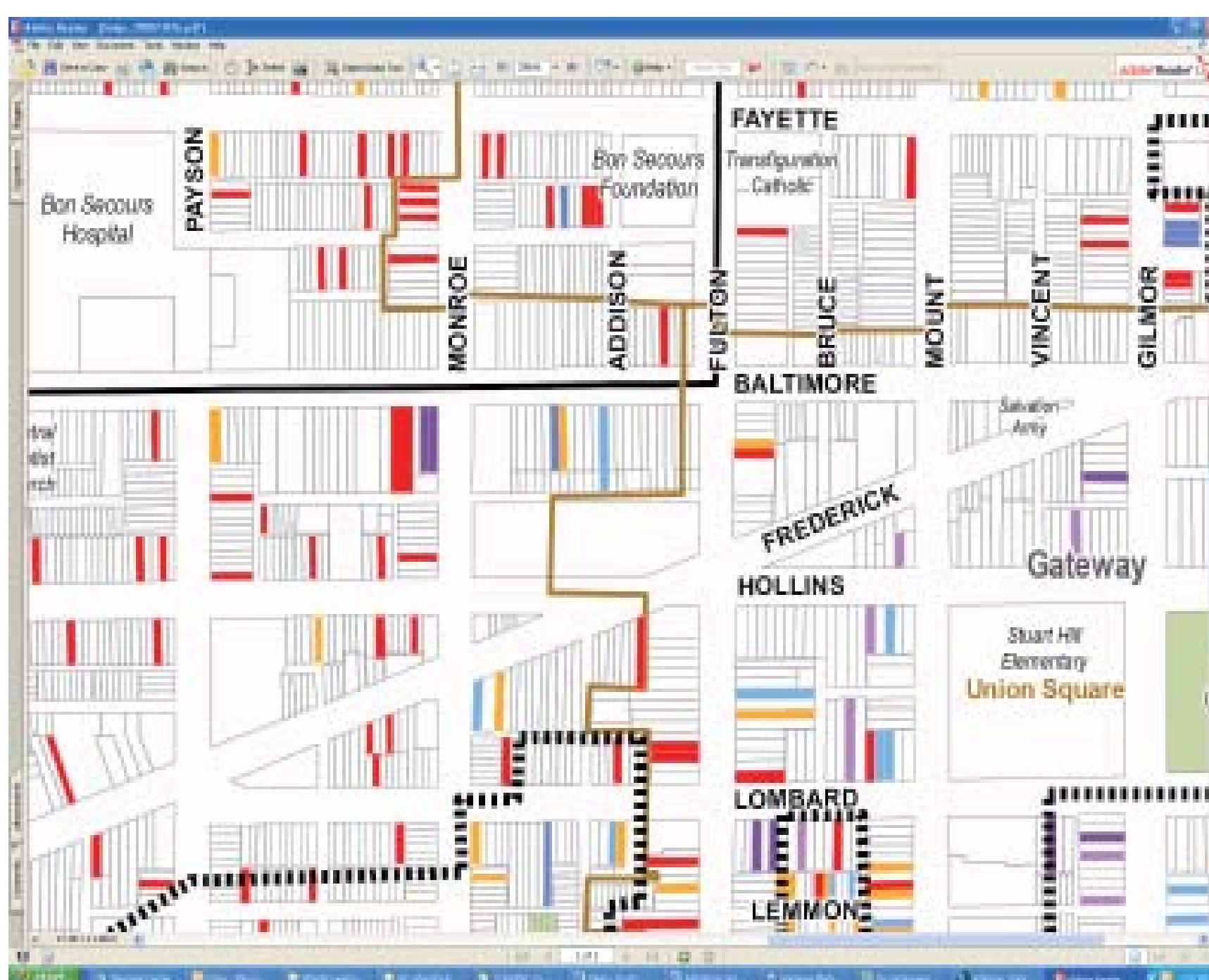




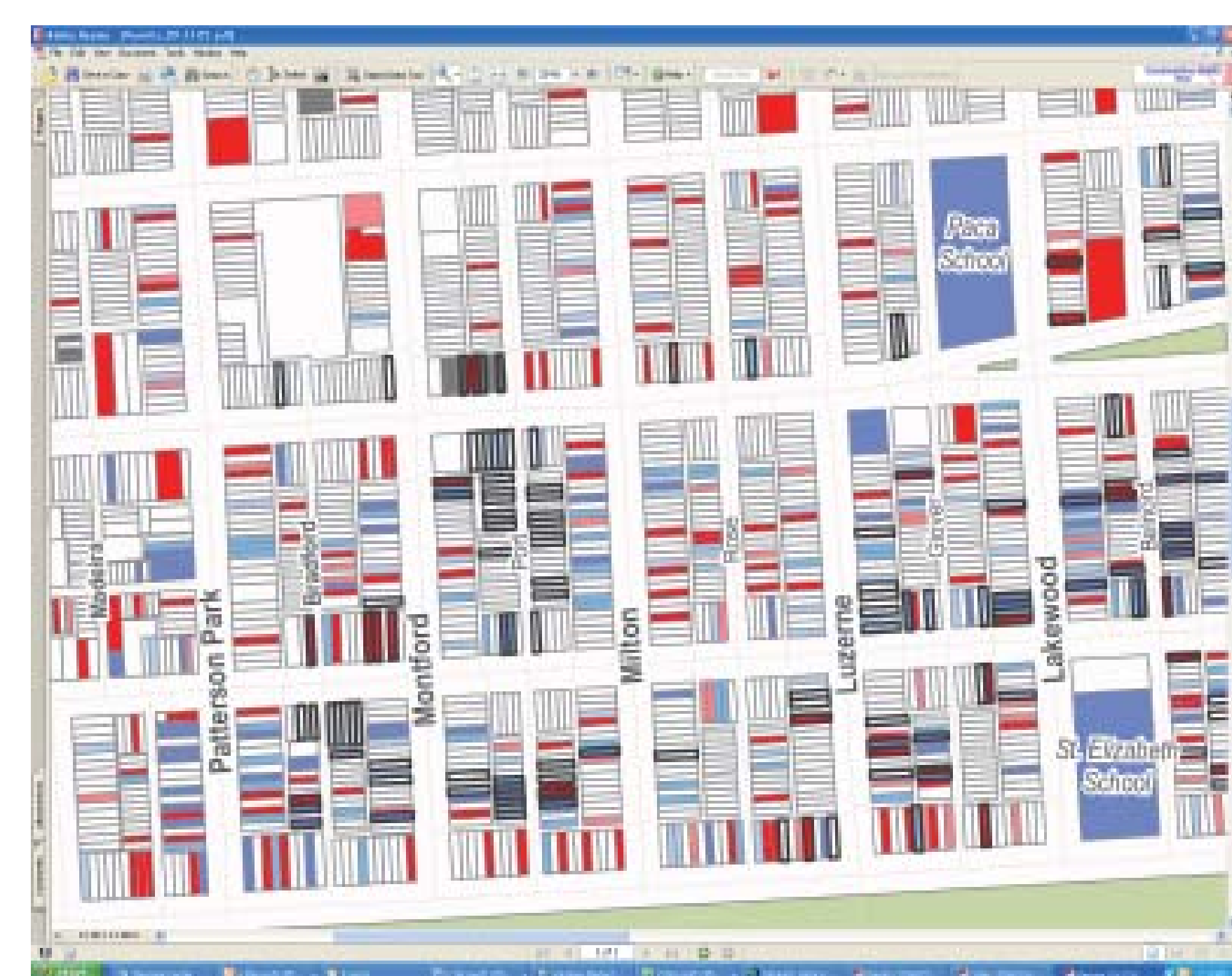
Properties in Poor Condition and Vacant Properties



Tax Sales and Foreclosures



Sales Activity



Building Permits Activity

If not readily available, this information must be gathered through the collection of public records and through on-the-ground property surveys. Once compiled, these datasets must be updated periodically to ensure that current and future public investments can be adjusted to reflect unexpected market changes or to private market activity. The analysis of this information will reveal different acquisition opportunities throughout the study area.

A hypothetical example of an acquisition strategy is briefly described below for the Central City area. This exercise does not take into account property prices, code violations, or property conditions, and assumes 20%-30% vacancy scattered throughout the area.

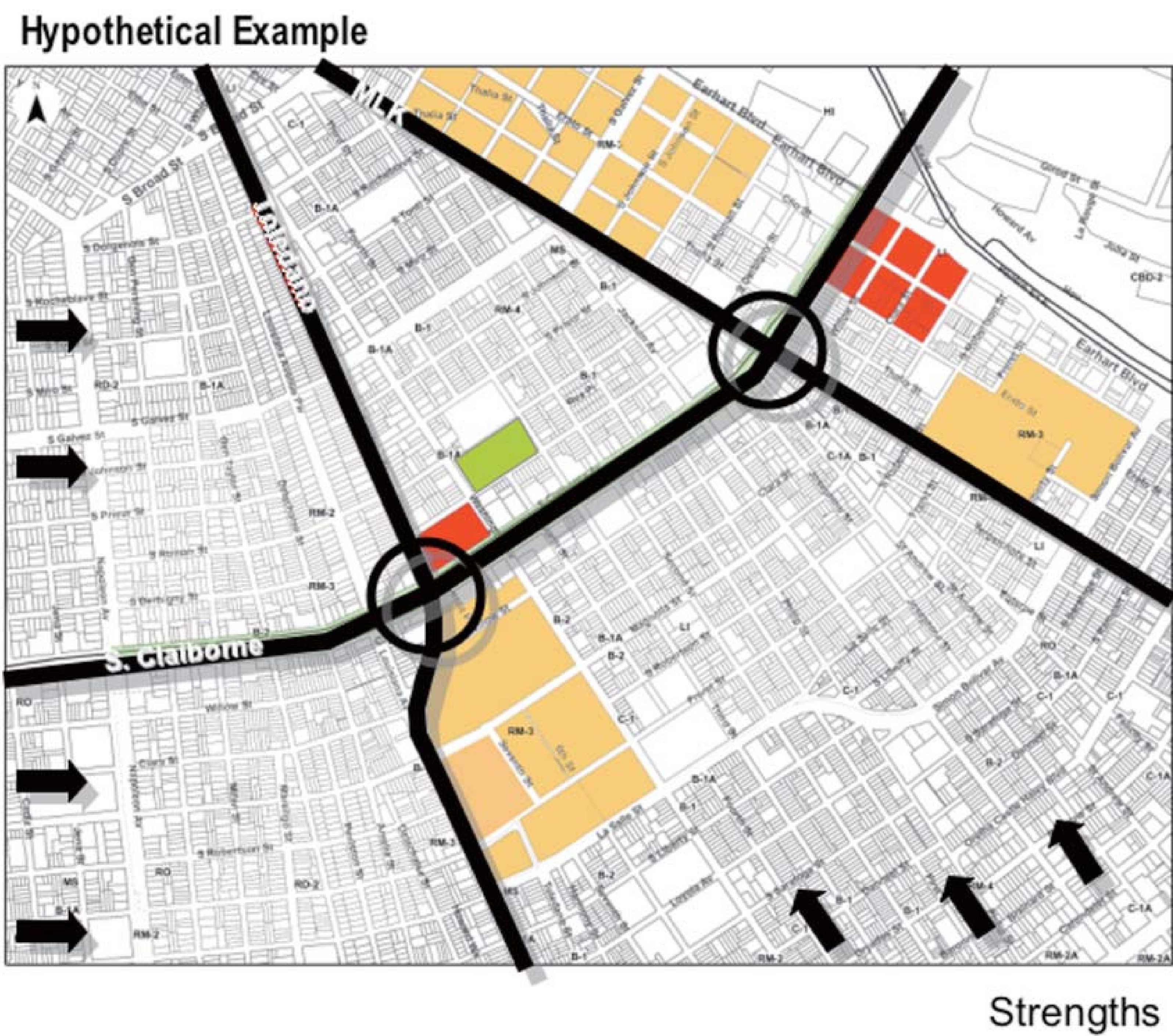
Map 1 shows the area's strengths. **In Yellow** are Public Housing sites. The site located on the southwestern corner of the area is C.J. Peete and the one located on the northeastern corner of the areas is B.W. Cooper. These sites are planned to be redeveloped in the next 5 years using Hope VI funding. The third public housing site located on the southeastern corner of the target area has been recently redeveloped by the New Orleans Housing Authority. **In Red** are private investments; a Home Depot is planned for development on the blocks bounded by S. Claiborne Ave., Earhart Blvd, Clara St., and Clio St. (on the eastern side of the area bounded by Earhart Blvd.), and a site is currently under redevelopment for the creation of 10,000 sq. ft. of commercial space, including a supermarket, and other neighborhood related retail services.

The **black arrows** represent adjacent neighborhoods that are in stable condition and have higher home sale values, and therefore present an opportunity to attract private investment that will require little or no subsidies. The **black lines and circles** represent connecting corridors and important intersections dissecting the target area. These elements are important assets for investment purposes because they are highly traveled and provide good visibility and access to internal sections of the neighborhoods. These corridors are the backbone on which catalytic investment should occur. New investments along these corridors or intersections will quickly improve the overall perception of the place making it more inviting and less intimidating. Land acquisition should focus on these corridors, intersections and the areas around proposed investments, such as the proposed redevelopment of the Public Housing Sites. Although this seems a logical and straightforward thinking process, it rarely occurs.



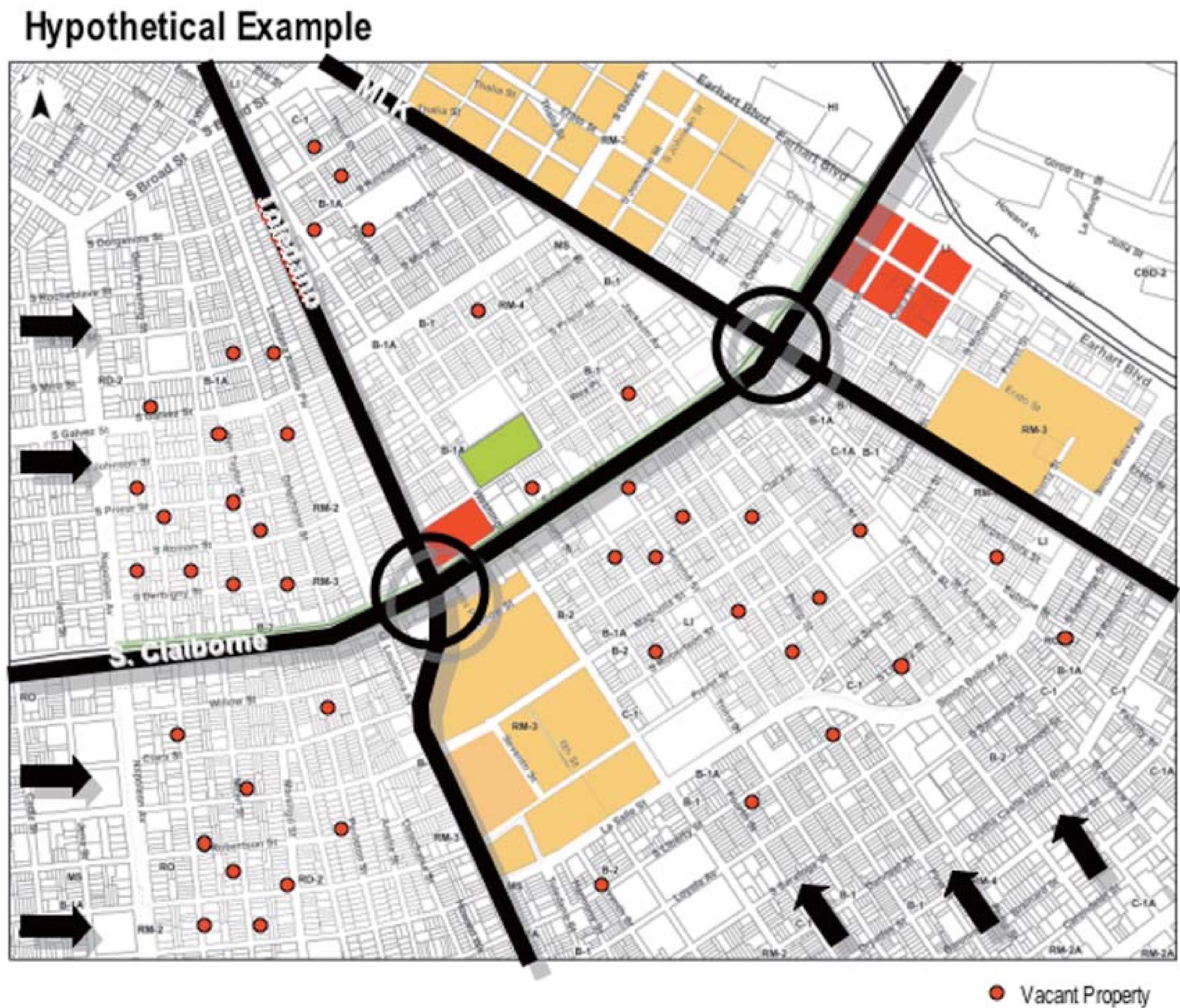
**Civic Infrastructure:** Long-term community organizing efforts build consensus and provide support around recovery activities. A well-organized committed community with high levels of civic capacity has strong political relation.

Map 1. Area Strengths



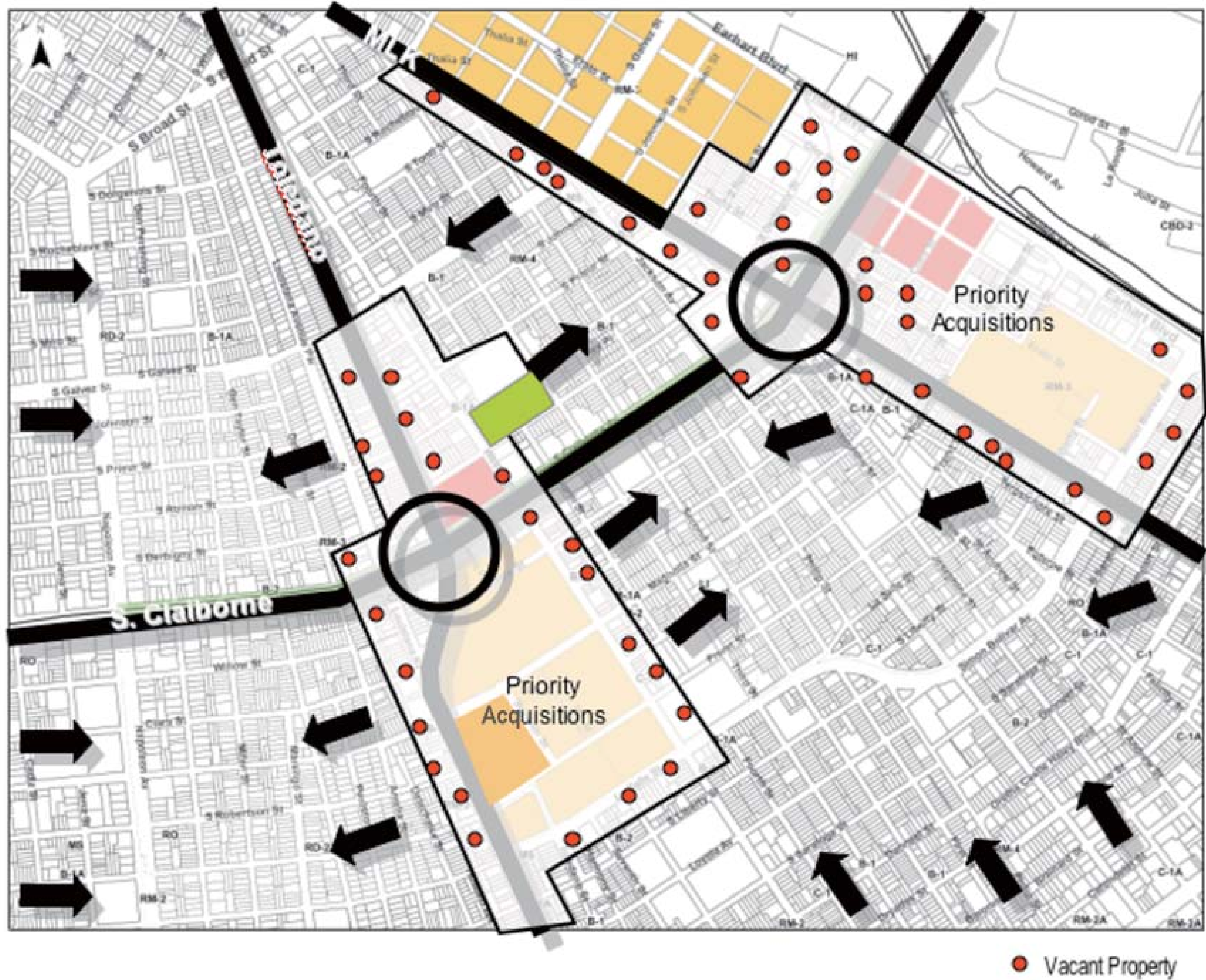
To follow are samples depicting two different acquisition strategies. Both strategies produce the same number of housing units and commercial space but they do not leverage investments and assets in the same way. In Strategy A, land acquisition is scattered and disconnected. The long-term impact of this strategy is diminished by its inability to leverage the proposed Hope VI investments and available land resources surrounding them. In addition, few or no properties are acquired in highly visible corridors or in a clustered fashion—acquisition is opportunistic rather than targeted.

Map 2. Strategy A





## Hypothetical Example



100 vacant properties: \$40m

This simple example is one way of looking at a problem. Clearly, a highly complex problem like the one presented in this case requires a set of in-depth analyses that consider the value and impact of physical, economic, and social variables on an acquisition and investment strategy before any decision is made.

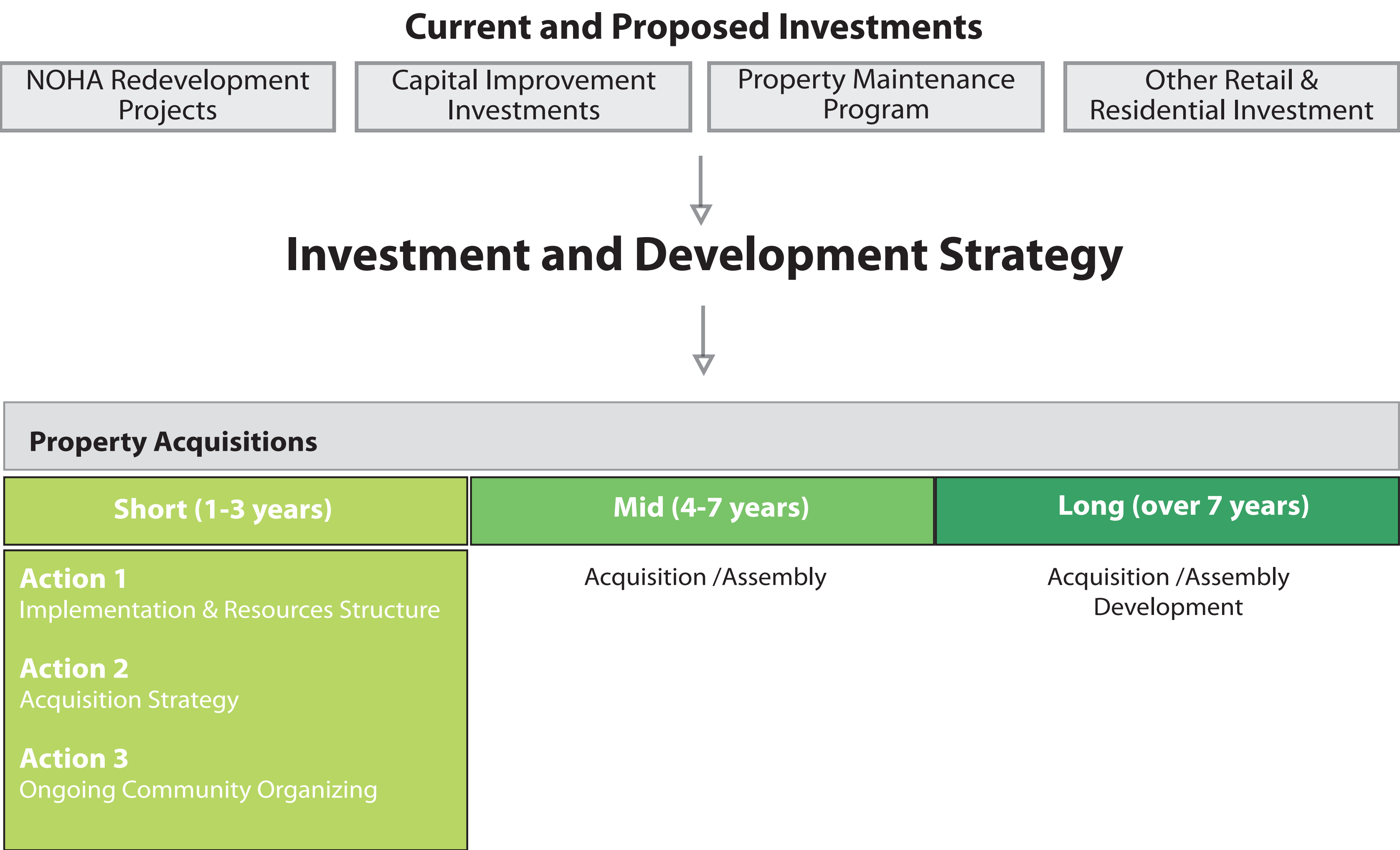
More specifically in the study area, there are opportunities for commercial acquisitions along S. Claiborne Avenue, and many opportunities for residential acquisitions scattered throughout the neighborhood. The public acquisition and disposition process is similar for either use, though financial resources, short- and long-term commitments, and overall investments goals can be quite different. If the investment goals are to bring a few retailers to the area with the hope that eventually private investment can be attracted, Strategy A along S. Claiborne Ave. seems appropriate. If the goal is to revitalize and create equitable communities, which are strongly recommended in this report, Strategy B is the appropriate direction. A strategy such as Strategy B must determine:

1. Opportunities for sub-regional retail investments through the creation of a market study as the basis for an informed acquisition and fundraising strategy
2. Opportunities for the creation of walkable neighborhood retail nodes along the corridors or on secondary more pedestrian-friendly streets. It has been widely shown in the community development and community financing fields that market studies for this type of retail are not helpful and rarely attract traditional financing resources. Rather, a study of population density and disposable income must be created.
3. Opportunities for residential acquisitions. These must be coordinated with other large investments to (1) maximize overall impact, and as much as possible (2) to secure the flow of public resources for the creation of affordable housing. Predictability of action and investments promote the long-term implementation and success of the strategy.



# Short-term Actions

Finally, a superficial and brief plan of action is described below. The complexities of an acquisition strategy requires a deep understanding of the local public financing, regulatory and legal acquisition and disposition processes. The following should be interpreted as suggested actions rather than actual recommendations.



## Action 1

## Implementation & Resource Structure

### 1.a. Form S. Claiborne Neighborhood Redevelopment Corporation (SCNRC)

This entity serves as the repository of acquired land and coordinates redevelopment efforts. Its Board shall be composed of local active profit and non-profit developers (NGS, NONDC, NDF, others), and officers of the Office of Recovery Management (ORM).  
Lead/Resource: ORM / Target Area Recovery Funds

### 1.b. Allocate funds to a Central City Revolving Acquisition Fund

An acquisition loan fund that serves all of ORM's target recovery areas ensures the long-term public financing capacity to implement acquisitions and redevelopment plans. This effort shall be led by ORM.  
Resource: CBDG / Target Area Recovery Funds / Road Home Funds

### 1.c. Streamline Public Acquisition Processes

ORM leads these efforts and, although improved capacity is still required, this public agency leads all public acquisitions. Improvement of the acquisition and disposition process includes added capacity in public processes such as blight certification, actions towards properties with tax liens, code enforcement activities, etc.  
Resource: Target Area Recovery Funds / Road Home Funds / Lot Next Door Program



# Action 2

## Acquisition Strategy

### 2.a. Create and Update Central City Property Surveys and collect other property-related information

Data collection must include land use, liens, property condition, vacancy, assessment and market value, tenure, violations, foreclosures, etc.). This effort must be led by City’s planning and/or GIS, or the New Orleans Redevelopment Agency, consultants, and on-the-ground surveyors  
Lead/Resource: CityWorks / Pro-bono professionals / Greater New Orleans Foundation

### 2.b. Implementation of Acquisition Strategy

Coordinate and prioritize acquisition opportunities. Manage acquisition pipeline to ensure availability of public resources.

### 3.b. Periodic Outcomes Assessment

Understand the periodic impact of the current and proposed investments. Revise program assumptions to calibrate strategies, which may include optimal density, renter-homeowner distribution and target household incomes, development pipeline and phasing, public improvement costs and resources and overall financing options.

# Action 3

## Ongoing Leadership & Community Organizing

Civic leadership is an cross-cutting issue effecting the long-term health of the South Claiborne Avenue corridor. A central convening organization with corridor-wide support is an essential step to getting implementation of recovery projects off the ground. The corridor will need a catalyst to keep momentum and interest from stakeholders as the process moves forward, and to help focus energies in a strategic way.





# NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION





# Neighborhood Revitalization

**Strategy:** Intervene to make residential blocks and areas more stable.

## Rationale

Blocks and residential areas need to look like people are proud to be there. Houses and common spaces need to show they are cared for to a certain standard so that when neighbors see them they feel confident that the neighborhood is getting better. Recognizing that many homes are not owner occupied but are rental properties and that many residents have limited incomes, this strategy needs to be modest in scope so that it can include as many neighbors as possible.

There are three concepts that provide a foundation for this strategy and help describe an outcome that results from the successful implementation of this strategy.

**Collective Efficacy**  
**Neighborhood Resiliency**  
**Neighborhood Confidence**

## 1. Collective efficacy.

Collective efficacy is an informal social mechanism. It is defined as a sense of social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to take action on behalf of the public good. This means neighbors do things like exert social control over public spaces and street corners, sanction bad behavior when they see it, and watch over kids that may not be their own so they don't get in trouble. Places where the basic values and norms are understood – even if they are not written down – make it easier for neighbors to enforce those norms and values. Places where the rules are unclear and people don't take action because they don't know if other neighbors will back them up are places with low collective efficacy and usually have more crime and rundown housing.

Planning on its own doesn't create collective efficacy. But in this strategy document we need to plan very specifically about how neighbors can build this sense within their neighborhood. The strategic components described here can have a direct impact on creating collective efficacy if they are carried out thoughtfully and with that aim in mind.

## 2. Neighborhood resiliency.

The second concept here is neighborhood resiliency. Neighborhood resiliency is the capacity of a neighborhood to bounce back or respond positively when something goes wrong. Neighborhoods are like the human immune system. A healthy human can catch a virus and recover. When confronted with a disease the equilibrium of the immune system may be upset, but after a while the equilibrium is restored. If the body has a weak immune system the virus causes other problems. The equilibrium is not easily restored and the person gets sicker.

For neighborhoods the analogy to the immune system is the whole range of social capital that can exist in neighborhoods – networks (both formal and informal), relationships and connections, leaders. All these are part of the neighborhood's immune system. If that system is weak it takes longer for the neighborhood to recover.



From the literature on resiliency we learn there are three key properties that describe how neighborhoods react to adverse conditions. The first is resistance which relates to a community's ability to withstand a disaster and the degree of disruption that can be absorbed without the community undergoing a long term change. The second property is recovery, the community's ability to pull through a disaster and bounce back to its pre disaster level of functioning. The third property is creativity – not just returning to the way things were before the disaster but adapting to new circumstances and learning from the disaster experience.

The challenge in the here and now is to strengthen neighborhood resiliency, i.e. to build up the immune system of leaders and social connections. The strategies described here promote activities that neighbors can do in the short term to build the social connections that strengthen neighborhood resiliency. The challenge is not just to get the neighborhood functioning as it was, but to make it stronger and better.

### 3. Neighborhood confidence

Neighborhoods improve when neighbors see changes around them that suggest the neighborhood is getting better and as they understand those changes they have an improved sense of their own future and the future of the neighborhood. The best strategies are the ones people can see and understand. Unfortunately much planning work has focused on large scale, complex projects and has ignored the smaller, more immediate efforts that can alter how people feel about the direction of the neighborhood..

A key outcome for these strategies described here is to build people's confidence in themselves and in the future of the neighborhood by providing opportunities for neighbors to take action that other neighbors can see and understand

Along the Claiborne Corridor there are a number of residential neighborhoods. All of these neighborhoods have different qualities and characteristics. Some neighborhoods, like Broadmoor, are exhibiting higher levels of collective efficacy and resilience than other neighborhoods. The strategies described here are general enough to be adapted to all of the neighborhoods, but it is important to note they were written with Central City in mind, primarily because more of the limited amount of field time was spent there.

#### Key Questions:

What can neighbors do now to strengthen the image, market, physical conditions, and social connections in these neighborhoods?

If collective efficacy, neighborhood resilience, and confidence are important, what do we do to build those things?

#### Components to this Approach:

**Block Walks:** use the Block Walk to engage neighbors to look with fresh eyes on their neighborhood

**Target Blocks:** target blocks or groups of blocks for action.

**Pride Projects:** carry out a range of these projects on blocks that engage as many neighbors as possible

**Debris Removal:** organize debris removal

**Exterior Paint Projects:** undertake exterior paint projects

**Revolving Loan Fund:** utilize a Revolving Loan Fund



# Components

## 1. Carry out Block Walks in the neighborhoods along the Claiborne corridor.

The Block Walk is not another long range planning exercise. It is simply a tool for direct observation by neighbors of the kinds of choices people are making regarding the upkeep of their property and public spaces. In a Block Walk, neighbors gather and walk blocks and talk about what they see. They note really nice or well maintained houses and yards and they talk about why they feel those set a standard. They identify weaker houses and obvious infrastructure problems.

Block Walks can:

- Give neighbors a reason to get out and meet their neighbors. This can translate into feeling a shared sense of ownership and responsibility for the neighborhood's future;
- Give residents a way of seeing their surroundings with "fresh eyes" – to see things they may have stopped noticing because of familiarity;
- Break the overwhelming task of figuring out how to change a whole neighborhood into more manageable pieces;
- Reveal unstated standards and give people a low-risk way to talk about the impact these standards have and what they would like them to be;
- Be a doorway into specific meaningful ways for neighbors to get more engaged in the day to day life of their block at the individual or household level.

One way to do a Block Walk is to, as a first step, walk on a set of blocks in a different neighborhood but one that is similar to the residents neighborhood. This gives the residents a safer space to talk about what they see and like or dislike.

Questions for the comparison blocks might include:

- What kinds of patterns do you see...fences, porches, yards, paint?
- What are some things you would like to know more about?
- What are some things that could improve the look of the block?

At the neighbors' block the questions could include:

- What could individuals do to strengthen the image and physical conditions of this block
- What could neighbors on the block do together to strengthen the image and physical conditions on the block?

It is not necessary that a large group of people participate, since the walk can always be repeated on different blocks. The basic idea is to get people looking and talking about what they see in front of them and to identify some key projects they can achieve in the short term by engaging more neighbors.

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## 2. Target blocks for action.

Probably the best blocks to choose for concentrated action are those blocks that either have higher rates of home ownership, have some recovery work already being done, and have a lower number of vacant houses – or simply blocks where people want to do something. This last criteria is most important. If there are neighbors who want to work to make their block better this is a more important criteria than the others described. Approaches need to build on strengths and a core group of neighbors willing to invest time, energy, and resources is a most important strength.



## 3. Carry out a series of “pride projects”.

Pride projects are simply activities that neighbors do together to make physical changes on their blocks. These often include things like the following

**Dumpster days.** The neighbors rent a dumpster and people fill it with their own debris;

**House lighting projects.** Neighbors buy attractive exterior light fixtures and hire someone to install them. The fixtures are turned on in the evening and make the block look homey and safer. A block with almost all the houses lit also looks like a block that is organized and a less likely candidate for criminal activity.

**Landscaping projects.** These include planting front yards, installing window boxes, or any kind of landscaping work. Many times neighbors solicit the assistance of a landscape architect or designer to help select the right plantings and help neighbors install them.

**Memorializing heroes.** A vacant lot can be transformed into a memorial for a neighbor who was well known and loved by all. Individual houses where key persons lived can be memorialized with a plaque. These simple actions can help celebrate a neighborhood’s current history and help reinforce the neighborhood as a special place.

In the light of the cataclysm created in these neighborhoods by Hurricane Katrina these efforts may seem trivial. But they are not. The idea here is not to just plant flowers or install house lights but to make those activities a community event. The idea behind these actions is to move toward the sense of collective efficacy described earlier. These projects are designed to produce something that neighbors can see and understand as something that is making the neighborhood better. Every one of these actions should be accompanied by some kind of party to celebrate at the end so that everybody can participate. Experience shows that when people begin to interact with their neighbors on positive activities that make the neighborhood better the level of connection they feel to their neighbors and to the neighborhood increases.



## 4. Debris removal

In some of the neighborhoods we noted huge piles of debris. A neighborhood kid asked one of our team when the debris would be removed because it made it harder to play. While there is a clear responsibility of the municipal government to remove debris on the public way and on some private vacant lots, the fact is that they are not doing it and probably won't. People could either organize to pressure government to do what they should be doing or they can organize themselves to do it.

The approach with the most immediate short term impact is for people to organize to do it themselves. Again, however, this is not just about removing the debris. It is about getting neighbors involved in this action – identifying locations, planning the project, recruiting volunteers, hiring dumpsters, possibly hiring some help. This is not an easy project but it can have an immediate impact. Since some of the debris may have resulted from “fly Dumping”, the practice of contractors dumping debris in places where they think no one will notice, a cleaning program, signs warning against such dumping, and neighbors organized to take down license plate numbers can mitigate this problem.

It is important to recognize that even if neighbors do clean up the piles of debris, new piles will emerge. They need to be addressed quickly as a way of reinforcing the idea that the neighborhood will not be violated.

Costs related to this project are : dumpster rental, shovels, gloves, hiring some help, signs and sign posting, food for the party afterwards, awards to recognize volunteers. A high impact project in the Central City neighborhood could be achieved for \$5,000 - \$7,000.



## 5. Paint projects

The one story design of many of the homes in the target area lends them well to a volunteer paint project. In order to have the most impact, however, it is important to recognize that the idea is not just to paint houses but to make them look as beautiful as possible. This often requires some preparation work (removing existing paint, repairing clapboards, etc.) and the use of more than one color. Color palettes (what colors look interesting together) are available through paint companies or historic preservation groups.

A core of neighborhood leaders should select as a beginning five houses for treatment. Criteria can be developed that make sense locally, but one criterion should be that the houses should be highly visible, e.g. corner houses. Volunteers and neighbors can be recruited to do the preparation and painting.

The idea here is to create a standard for what painted houses look like so that other owners and/or volunteer teams can follow suite. A Solid objective would be over a year to paint 3-5 homes per block in a small neighborhood.



## 6. Developing a small Revolving Loan Fund (RLF).

The purpose of the RLF is to make small and larger loans for home rehab. These loans would fund needed interior and exterior repairs. Exterior items might include new roofs, doors, window replacement or restoration (with lead abatement), and porch restoration. Loans could be matched with any available grant money.

The idea here is to provide a low interest (3%-5%) loan to incent owners, including landlords to make repairs. There are hundreds of such loan funds operating in the United States

Neighborhood Housing Services of New Orleans (NHS) has such a loan fund and, while it may not have capital for new lending efforts, it does provide a structure for the kind of lending envisioned here so that a new fund structure does not need to be developed.

## Making this Work

Recognizing there are a number of small neighborhoods within the Claiborne corridor and a number of organizations, the following are the key elements to implement this plan:

1. An organization to engage neighbors and bring them together around positive projects. This does not imply one organization for all the neighborhoods but an organization in whichever neighborhoods that would want to participate in the approach described here.
2. An organization to package and administer a loan fund as well as grant funds. NHS could be that organization but it should be noted our team was not able to meet with NHS during our visit because of our own scheduling conflict.
3. A leader who will champion this approach. This could be a president or member of a neighborhood association. Whoever it is, this person needs to be committed to achieving results and engaging people.
4. A relatively small pool of flexible funds to support activities as they emerge. These funds would support:
  - Pride project grants (\$20,000 - \$25,000) per year to cover the costs of these special projects, e.g. dumpster rental, flowers, paint, house lights, signs, neighborhood logos and banners, etc.
  - Loan capital – low interest loan money that can be loaned out to property owners (\$150,000 - \$200,000).
  - Operating costs – to cover the staff time to coordinate these projects as well as the administrative costs of managing the loan fund (\$75,000 - \$100,000 per year)

These figures are based on an intervention for a 6-8 square block neighborhood. It should be noted that the New Orleans Community Foundation has recently announced a small grants program for plan implementation. These funds could be used to cover the costs of the pride projects and other components described in this document.





## Conclusion

Strengthening the connections among neighbors, doing things that neighbors can see and understand, creating the conditions for neighborhood confidence to emerge, building on strengths, making the neighborhood more resilient against threats – these are all components in neighborhood revitalization. The strategies described here can directly achieve those outcomes.

### Key Questions for Leaders to Ask When Carrying Out These Projects

- How can we use this project to strengthen the image of this neighborhood?
- How will this project maximize the involvement of neighbors not just in the planning but in the doing as well?
- How can we use this project to build confidence in the future of the neighborhood?
- How can we keep certain people that have been leaders on these projects engaged? How can we develop their leadership skills?
- What are we learning from these projects that can inform our future work?

If leaders are involved in asking these questions and finding answers through their work, activities like debris removal and house lighting can become more than simple beautification exercises. They can transform neighborhoods into more closely connected communities.



# TRANSPORTATION





# Transportation

The South Claiborne Avenue corridor's transportation issues are intertwined with community identity. Throughout the corridor's history, it has served a variety of functions for its adjacent communities:

- As a major arterial route connecting the suburbs and parishes west of the city with the downtown;
- As a central gathering place for the neighborhoods connected to the corridor, particularly with the use of its large neutral space for a number of community functions;
- As an important retail and commercial corridor, serving the local community and traveling commuters with a range of offerings, including theaters, grocery stores, gas stations, convenience stores and other retailers.

Currently, South Claiborne Avenue presents a somewhat schizophrenic identity as both a state highway and major arterial route to and from downtown, and a retail center serving a series of neighborhoods. Therefore, the resolution of the corridor's identity and core functions is central to addressing its main issues. The residents and stakeholders of South Claiborne must determine whether the corridor will serve as a retail center and gathering place or simply a connecting corridor.

During the recovery planning processes, residents identified the following key priorities for the corridor, which was reinforced with the team during the SDAT process:

- Walkable/bikeable corridor
- Premium transit services
- Recovery nodes/transit-oriented development
- Destination retail
- Commuter corridor

City officials, residents and stakeholders along South Claiborne are going to have to decide who the corridor is prioritized for and establish a common identity and accompanying design elements. The contradictory input at this stage includes the notion that South Claiborne should be primarily a walkable, pedestrian-centered street with additional transit operations such as street cars and busing. Another school of thought maintains that the corridor should serve as a main commuter route to downtown and should be designed to efficiently and effectively support vehicular access. South Claiborne cannot effectively serve these oppositional roles, and local leaders will have to make a conscious choice about the future identity of the corridor and establish accompanying strategies, regulations and policies to pursue that identity.

## Issues along the South Claiborne Avenue Corridor

South Claiborne Avenue presents a number of transportation issues. As a state highway into the Central Business District, the vehicular traffic volume exceeds 40,000 daily.

## Intersection of Land Use and Transportation

Some of the older retail sectors of the corridor feature buildings with street frontage and narrow sidewalks. Heavy industrial traffic passing at speeds exceeding 40mph has a significant impact on the retail environment, shaking the buildings and creating noise issues.



# Pedestrian Issues

South Claiborne Avenue presents many significant challenges to a healthy, functional street that can support multi-modal transportation. Some of the major issues affecting the pedestrian experience include the following:

- **Street speed.** Vehicles travel at excessive speed along the corridor, making it a dangerous street crossing for pedestrians.
- **Street design and width.** As a six lane highway, the corridor presents challenges to any pedestrian attempting to cross the street.
- **Barriers to downtown.** As South Claiborne approaches the Central Business District, it becomes a raised highway dissecting historic neighborhoods and providing a significant barrier to pedestrians and bicyclists alike.
- **Limited Pedestrian Facilities.** Sidewalks and crosswalks are in poor condition, and sometimes non-existent. There are excessive curb cuts in places along the corridor where vehicular access issues have been given priority over pedestrian facilities.
- **Streetscape issues.** The existing streetscape along South Claiborne Avenue includes a variety of buildings. Some buildings have street frontage while others have significant setbacks. There are few trees along the corridor and the wide neutral space and streets create significant barriers to crossing Claiborne Avenue for any pedestrian.

## Recovery Strategies

The SDAT Team believes the city must use public investments in South Claiborne to spur private investments. Given the limited public resources available, the city needs to make strategic choices in the short term and focus its investments on visible physical changes. It can focus on catalyzing low-cost investments that are quickly implemented by partnering with local organizations on pride projects that include tree planting, public art, public paint projects and other low-cost activities that create enthusiasm in the community. The city must also begin to develop a new policy direction to guide long-term development along the corridor by focusing on defining character through policies that guide form, use, orientation and density. Public investments should connect to existing catalytic projects along South Claiborne and build upon local resources by focusing investment strategically. The key strategy should be targeted toward identifiable community centers and nodes in leveraging public resources for increased private investment. These investments should focus on keep retail nodes relatively compact, and allowing for the long term development of mixed use centers. Residential connectivity to the corridor should also be a priority to create a more vibrant relationship between commercial and residential areas of South Claiborne Avenue.

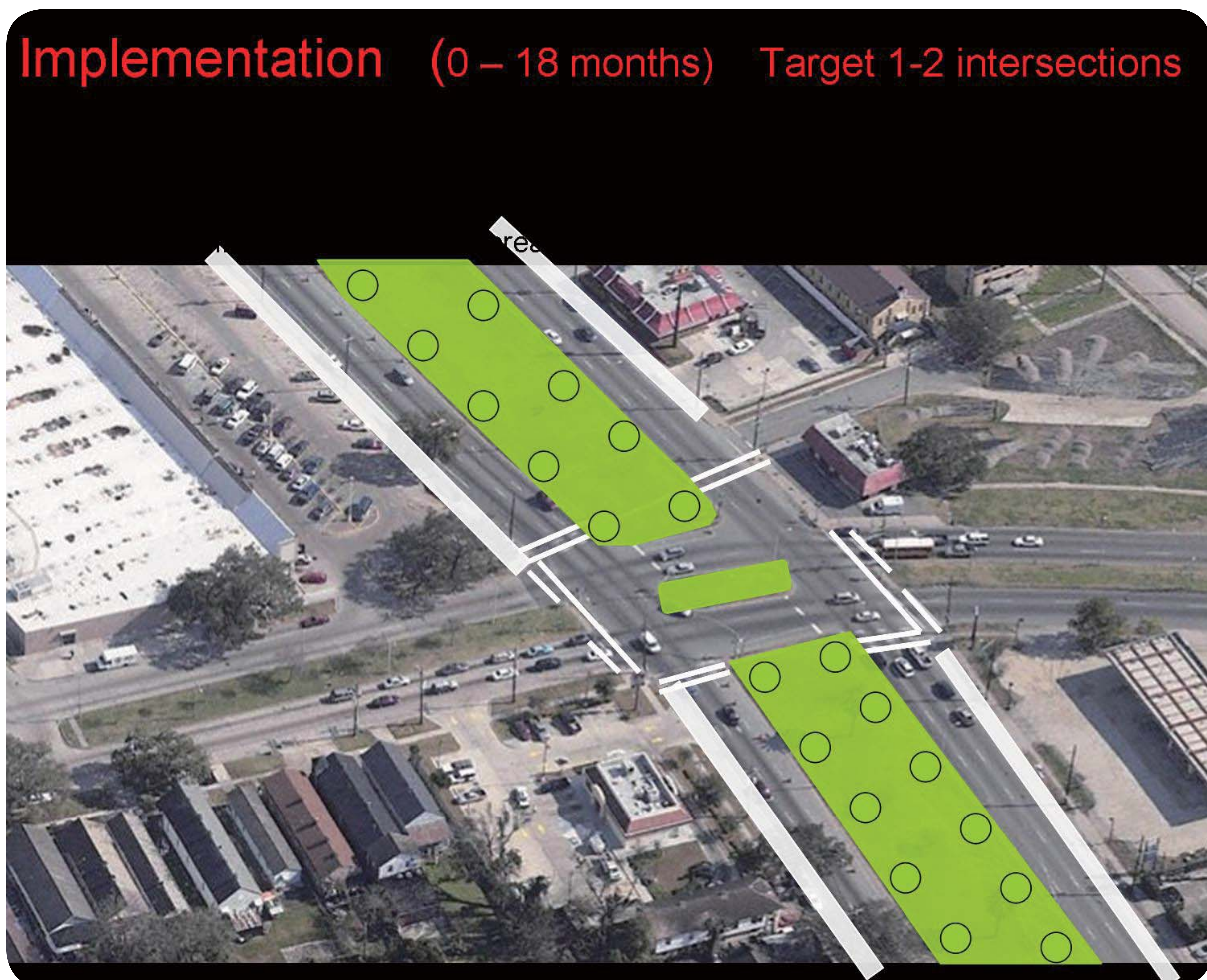




# Action 1

## Implementation Short Term (0-18 Months)

In the first stages of implementation, the city should target a priority node for redevelopment and make basic, low-cost investments that are feasible and quickly implemented. All of the cross walks in the target area should be restriped as a starting point to enhance the pedestrian experience and make a visible improvement at a key strategic node. The city can also engage in striping on-street, curbside parking to encourage a change in character from a vehicular corridor to a mixed-use, pedestrian friendly center. Landscaping the wide neutral ground in the area to include trees and visually attractive spaces can also enhance the area and spur additional private partnership. Finally, the city should target its public resources to maintain or increase transit services for this node, increasing accessibility and use of the area.



# Action 2

## Policy Development Short Term (0-18 Months)

The city of New Orleans should also begin the policy development work necessary to provide the supportive framework for constructive investment in the corridor. In the initial stages of the recovery process, it should limit or prohibit additional curb-cuts along the corridor to facilitate a more attractive pedestrian experience. It should require access from perpendicular streets to improve connectivity with neighborhoods. It can also consider requiring shared curb-cuts for retail establishments along South Claiborne. In order to facilitate the transition to a pedestrian-centered character on the corridor, the city could consider prohibiting drive-through services at retail establishments in a defined area along the area. At a minimum, new policies should seek to require traffic impact studies for major retail or employment centers under consideration to make proper measurements and interventions that support the transition to a pedestrian-friendly street design. The city could encourage transportation demand management (TDM) plans for new development. It can also contribute to additional private use of multi-modal transportation opportunities by creating supportive policies that encourage car sharing programs, employee transit subsidies, bicycle storage facilities and lockers with new development in the corridor. Finally, policy supports could be put in place to create shared parking facilities or cluster parking locations to reduce surface parking along the street front.



# Action 3

## Implementation *Medium Term (2-5 Years)*

In the mid-term future, New Orleans city officials should consider a variety of traffic calming measures to reduce street speeds along the corridor. These measures may include landscaping of the neutral ground with additional tree planting, adding bike lanes, and defined on-street parking areas. The city can implement a new street lighting system to improve the streetscape experience at night, particularly by including roadway lighting and pedestrian lighting at major nodes along South Claiborne. The city should seek to reconstruct critical intersections to improve pedestrian safety and manage traffic growth. Measures could include curb extensions, pedestrian-oriented lighting, a tighter curb radius, and additional landscaping. Finally, the city should consider resurfacing the corridor and restriping it, particularly through a 'road diet' to narrow existing lane width or decrease the number of lanes. It could also include a designated bicycle facility in the area, and enhance crossings at major nodes, with the potential future addition of a transit line to integrate into existing and planned improvements.

### Measures Could Include

- Curb Extensions
- Pedestrian-oriented lighting
- Tighter Curb Radius
- Additional Landscaping







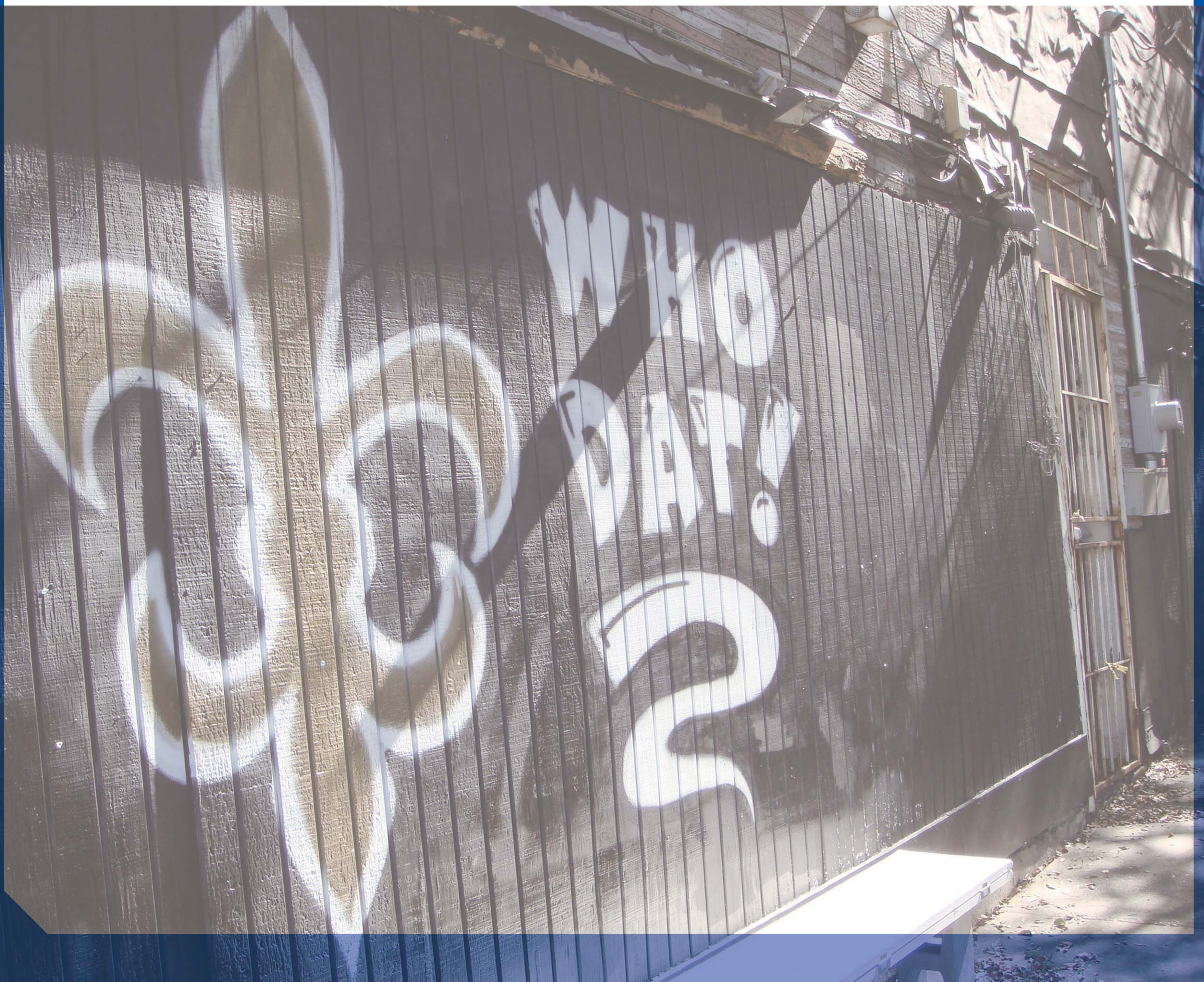
## Action 4

### **Implementation** *Long Term (5-20 Years)*

The city should consider adding a streetcar or rapid bus transit system to its long-term planning for implementation along South Claiborne Avenue. It should also consider larger infrastructure investments to include reconstruction of the street with wider sidewalks, enhanced pedestrian features, and concurrent utility modernization built into its new infrastructure. These major investment decisions can be phased in as the city begins to redefine the character of the South Claiborne Avenue corridor to suite the needs of pedestrians.



# CONCLUSION





# Conclusion

There is no magic bullet to facilitate South Claiborne Avenue's rebirth and recovery. The hard reality of the recovery process is that it will require a collective long-term commitment and significant patience. The challenges facing the area are complex and will require a systemic approach involving a broad array of resources and talent. It will require collective effort. However, the SDAT team was repeatedly struck by inspiring individual stories of recovery and small success stories that together form the beginning of a new narrative for South Claiborne Avenue.

## The Claiborne Commitment

Every citizen and stakeholder in the South Claiborne Avenue corridor has a unique contribution to make to the recovery process, and everyone must recognize that each piece of the process is part of a larger collective effort. Every effort must be tied to another contribution in order to build upon each other and create the collective capacity to make recovery possible. Sustainable Recovery will not take place without a systemic approach involving complex partnerships across a broad group of interests. Everyone has a role to play in the process – government cannot accomplish the job alone. Property owners, businesses and entrepreneurs, and civic organizations must work together to accomplish shared goals. Interagency and intergovernmental coordination is a necessary prerequisite for the initial public investments that will spur change in the area, but the local collaboration between neighborhoods, citizens, and businesses on South Claiborne Avenue will be the critical ingredients for long-term success. The SDAT Team found numerous examples of the commitment that will be necessary over the long-term, and believes that with the right partnerships, there is reason to be optimistic about the long-term future of South Claiborne Avenue.





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS





# Acknowledgements

The SDAT Team would like to thank the numerous organizations involved in the Sustainable Design Assessment Team process, who gave generously of their time and shared invaluable insights with the team. The team would like to extend a special thanks to Councilwoman Stacy Head's office for its support of the SDAT. It would also like to thank the many organizations who participated in the three-day process. Most importantly, the team would like to thank City-Works New Orleans for its local leadership of the SDAT process and its commitment to rebuilding and recovery in the city.

## The SDAT Team

### Team Leader: James Sherrell

James Sherrell is an architect who apprenticed under Kevin Roche, a world renowned, internationally practicing architect in New Haven, Connecticut. James brings freshness to the team and much experience in the design of large structures. Sherrell studied at Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, GA gaining great experience with urbanism and urban architecture. James is the principal partner and founding member of Polis Studio, LLC.

### SDAT Team Members

#### Land Assembly & Zoning: Graciela Cavicchia

Ms. Cavicchia joined TRF in 2003 and serves as Director of TRF's Neighborhood Development Services. She is responsible for developing the implementation of revitalization projects in partnership with private developers and public sector clients. Ms. Cavicchia has over 10 years of experience in urban design and planning, real estate, and community development and has received national and international honors for her work. She currently teaches a graduate studio in planning at the University of Pennsylvania. A trained architect, Ms. Cavicchia holds a MCP in Urban Planning from Rutgers University.

#### Market Development: Maxine Johnson

Maxine Johnson is a seasoned management consultant with expertise in research and analysis and strategy development. Most recently Ms. Johnson led an international consulting practice for the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC). ICIC is a non-profit organization that develops sustainable market driven strategies for urban cities. While at ICIC, Ms. Johnson managed large-scaled engagements in cities in the U.S., the U.K. and Canada. As the Director of the consulting practice, Ms. Johnson convened private sector business leaders, Mayors, and other public and civic leaders to develop business strategies to leverage the untapped market opportunities found in inner cities.

Prior to joining ICIC, Ms. Johnson worked at AXA Financial (formerly, Equitable Life) providing in-house management consulting services. She was involved in various strategic initiatives, which involved project management, reengineering, organizational redesign and change management. Before AXA, Ms. Johnson worked as a management consultant at Booz Allen & Hamilton specializing in Financial Services and Strategic Sourcing. Before Booz, Ms. Johnson spent over four years at Chase Manhattan Bank as an Operations and Product Manager working in domestic and international offices. Ms. Johnson has a MBA from the University of Michigan and is a past Consortium for Graduate Studies in Management fellow. Additionally, Ms. Johnson has a BS in Industrial Engineering from Polytechnic University in New York.

#### Transportation: Karina Ricks

Karina Ricks is Deputy Associate Director for Transportation Policy and Planning in the District Department of Transportation where she manages a wide range of initiatives that unite transportation, land use, environmental and economic development objectives for a very urban system. Karina joined DDOT initially to lead the Mayor's groundbreaking Great Streets program - a unique initiative that recognizes the powerful impact of transportation investments and infrastructure design on local economic development, neighborhood livability, and travel mode choices and targets investments to achieve larger economic, environmental and human capital objectives. Karina came to DDOT from the District's Office of Planning where she was the city's Transit-Oriented Development





Coordinator. In both capacities she has had extensive experience in the integration of land use and transportation planning for economic revitalization. In her six years with the District, Karina has served on several city and regional task forces including the regional Transportation Policy Board (TPB), Metropolitan Policy Development Committee, Rail~Volution National Steering Committee, Brownfields Inter-Agency Task Force, Soil and Water Conservation Board, and DC Bicycle Master Plan Advisory Committee. Prior to joining the District government, Karina was with the federal U.S. EPA as a Policy Advisor working with communities across the nation on smart growth and sustainable development issues. She has also worked for years as an international consultant on development and democracy in Eastern Europe and Oceania. Karina holds a Master's Degree in Urban Planning from Cornell University and a Bachelor's Degree from Michigan State University.

## **Neighborhood Revitalization & Housing: Michael Schubert**

Mike Schubert is a consultant/trainer focused on neighborhood revitalization program development, implementation and evaluation. He began his career in 1975 with Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago, serving as Neighborhood Director for the Near Northwest neighborhood, one of the first NeighborWorks organizations in the country to achieve completion of its mission. He continued to serve with NHS as Associate Director until 1989 when he was appointed by Mayor Richard M. Daley to be Commissioner of the City of Chicago Department of Housing. In 1992 he began work as a consultant, working primarily with foundations and non-profits. One of his early projects was a four-year evaluation of the impact of Neighborhoods Inc. of Battle Creek on the quality of life of three neighborhoods in that city. He also conducted an evaluation of the impact of homeownership on individual quality of life in Santa Fe, New Mexico for the Pew Partnership for Civic Engagement. Mike is an award winning trainer and has been on the faculty of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation Training Institute for six years, teaching courses on neighborhood revitalization. He has also done additional trainings in Connecticut, Michigan, Maryland, and Wisconsin.



# SDAT Staff

## **American Institute of Architects: Joel Mills**

Joel Mills provides process expertise, facilitation and support for the Center's Sustainable Design Assistance Team (SDAT) and Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) programs. In this capacity, he works with AIA components, members and partner organizations to provide technical assistance to communities across the country on sustainability and urban design.

His experience includes community-based technical assistance, process design, facilitation and training across a number of fields including juvenile justice reform, local government, education, family strengthening, civic media and emergency management. During the 1990s, Mr. Mills spent several years supporting international democratization initiatives by providing technical assistance to parliaments, political parties, local governments, civic and international organizations. His scope of work included constitutional design and governing systems, voter and civic education, election monitoring and administration, political party training and campaign strategy, collaborative governance, human rights and civil society capacity building. He maintains active memberships in the International Association of Facilitators (IAF), the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), and the Mid-Atlantic Facilitators Network. He also serves on several public and private boards.

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