

Using Parks to Increase Connectivity and Urban Growth ULI Webinar: Jan 21, 2020

Questions & Answers

- 1. With the large roadways still in existence I am concerned about just how effective the Buckhead park will actually be in knitting Buckhead together. I am thinking of the efforts in St. Louis to connect the Arch to downtown. Could the presenters comment on this when appropriate?**
 - a. Molly McCabe: My colleague (and current RPIC chair - Jim Durrett) has been active on the HUB404 project. My understanding of the project is the park system will sit above the current road system. Jim: The HUB404 project will be enormously effective at creating mobility options and connections for people who would rather not use an automobile to traverse the district. It will create attractive options for north to south and east to west movements above the existing road and rail network.

- 2. How does Florida's entitlements process help encourage/shape Ft. Lauderdale's urban park development?**
 - a. At present nothing specific is required of Ft Lauderdale developers. The opportunity we saw is to plan for public realm improvements and require new developments to conform to and respect the public realm design plan.

- 3. Of particular interest and contemporary relevance is how the values of urban open space can be retained by existing diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods, rather than contributing to ongoing processes of displacement and gentrification. Can presenters speak to successful methods for addressing this issue?**
 - a. In a nutshell, I think one of the best things that a municipality can do is to capture the increased value created by open spaces and then use that value to help underwrite workforce housing opportunities. Think about using Tax Increment Financing/Zones.

- 4. How does moving the city/county buildings into a combined campus impact pedestrian and vehicle traffic in the campus itself? I like this idea, but it will have an impact on the neighbors both by its presence and by their absence in their former locations. Are these impacts being considered and/or factored into the greater downtown plan?**
 - a. The new city/county project fronts the new train and bus station and would replace an underused, old bus station and garage and dated public sector offices. The existing buildings are currently unwelcoming, inefficient, incompatible with neighboring land uses with the result that people avoid the area. The new project would be a use-appropriate infill development that can be designed to better interact with surrounding uses, connect segments of the downtown while also creating new park space and an improved public realm.

- 5. Will the Opportunity Zone legislation have an impact on Fr. Lauderdale and San Antonio's park development efforts?**
 - a. I hope so! Waiting to be seen what the impact is but we are in the OZ here in SA.

Molly McCabe: The project in Kalispell, MT is in an OZ and has helped bring in longer term minded capital to the project. The investors believe the new linear park will catalyze the industrial area and bring community value. Ultimately there is an alignment of long-term community benefit with long term investment dollars. Ft Lauderdale's OZ-designated land is not part of the downtown, so it won't factor into this project.

6. Among legacy cities that have seen much demolition, vacant urban land can make a logical opportunity for greenspace development in neighborhoods - however extensive remediation is often necessary. Are there cost effective recommendations the presenters may have seen that can still offer compliant options for repurposing?

- a. Omar Gonzalez: I would recommend finding partners and using all available grants, including EPA / Federal cleanup dollars. Public-Private Partnerships would make sense here too as there are returns to be gained from development in a vacant urban site for all parties (think about taxes generated, jobs created, future rents, etc.)

7. Can both presenters talk about how their projects relate to city master plans (and zoning), as well as parks and recreation master plans?

- a. Omar Gonzalez: We fully participated with the City to be a part of the master plan. In fact, based on our relationship with the City, we largely wrote the section that refers to our site and surroundings.

8. Can you say more about how the designs build in resilience ie. what specific strategies are used? Are there requirements currently in these areas that require resilient design?

- a. Omar Gonzalez: We certainly wanted resilience to be part of the story and have designed ways to be more sustainable in terms of water, energy and even socially. For water, we are capturing and re-using water and tapping water sources that are alternatives to domestic water. For energy, we are looking into solar. For social resilience we have mandatory workforce housing requirements as well as mandatory local participation in retail/commercial spaces.

9. Re: Hemisfair, could you speak more to the TIF structure/ funding mechanisms? What is the formal relationship between the 501c3 conservancy and the local govt corporation?

- a. OG: Our TIF is designed to capture incremental land values and the City will rebate us 100% of the increment in property taxes collected for the next 15 years; the county for 50% of the increment for 12 years (pending approval). It is set up through the City and the uses are restricted to public purposes such as parks, plazas, parking, lighting, sidewalks, etc. The Conservancy was set up as a separate entity and has a formal agreement with the LGC that its sole purpose is to raise philanthropic funds for the park.

10. Omar, can you describe the steps taken to initiate the 501C3 arm, the structure (are they subject to your policy makers), and once you had it in place, how did you fund the position(s)?

- a. The Conservancy has its own board and is not subject to policy makers. The funding is sent from the LGC which right now is largely financed by the City. Over time the

Conservancy hopes to be financially self-sufficient (raise enough unrestricted dollars to cover expenses)

11. Particularly in ft. lauderdale, how amenable was FEMA to working with you on this project?

- a. FEMA not a factor in our part of the study effort.

12. How is the increased labor required to maintain the expansion of parks accommodated in terms of funding? Is this subsidised by the private entities utilizing the infrastructure, or is this under the purview of the city/county budget?

- a. Omar Gonzalez: It should all be baked into the projections. For Hemisfair, we escalate the land rents annually and have occassional market adjustments built in....so yes over time it gets paid through the private entities. For the "startup" years it is part of the City's Parks & Rec budget

13. How do you combat the notion of parking demands around new development / around new parks? Was it a big factor during your projects or promoting alternative transportation is generally accepted?

- a. Omar Gonzalez: We like to say that you "Park" and "Parking" go hand-in-hand. Texans still rely heavily on private automobiles so we partnered with the first multi-family developer to oversize his garage so that we can manage/control the first 238 spaces for public use. We also promote alternative ways to get to the park and are building infrastructure to accommodate pedestrians, bicycles, scooters and wheelchairs.

14. Did you have any difficulties convincing the city of the benefits of design improvements and if so how did you communicate that to city employees, elected officials, business owners and residents.

- a. Jeanne Myerson: Ft Lauderdale was very receptive to the recommendations and really sought creative ideas for their consideration.
Omar Gonzalez: San Antonio was receptive as well. We rely on City leadership (our Councilmember is an architect so that helps!) and on an engagement strategy that includes presenting at neighborhood association meetings, community groups, Rotary clubs, and business groups.
Molly McCabe: Interestingly, in Kalispell, the city & economic development agency were the drivers on the new park. Where we see some pushback is from the public who believes (erroneously) their tax dollars will be used to fund the development and it won't result in any benefit to them. The TIF tax benefits derived from increased property values will be re-invested in the community.

15. In either case study, did either municipality raise taxes to fund/spur these developments? If so, how did the public initially react to that?

- a. Jeanne Myerson: Ft Lauderdale raised a \$200M bond and allocated some of the funds to the improve the DDA's park, Huizinger Plaza. Discussion continues about the allocation of additional bond dollars to other park and public realm projects.

Omar Gonzalez: in San Antonio no taxes were raised but Municipal Bonds were used and that requires a public vote which won over 65% approval.

16. Regarding the San Antonio workforce housing of 151 units, how long is the ground lease?

- a. 45 years + 3 10-year extensions = 75 years

17. Who performed the study for you that showed that ROI for these investments? When did that take place?

- a. Omar Gonzalez: TXP, Inc. Economic Development Consultants. The study was done in 2016/17