



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

# C STREET CORRIDOR

Prepared for Downtown San Diego Partnership  
& City Center Business Improvement District



DECEMBER 2023

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The material presented in this document was prepared by members of the Urban Land Institute’s San Diego-Tijuana chapter from September through October 2023. The report seeks to provide an informed outlook on local real estate and planning topics and as understood by ULI San Diego–Tijuana and our contributing members. The analysis, views and opinions expressed herein are those of the contributors and not necessarily their employers, the Urban Land Institute, or the ULI San Diego–Tijuana chapter. The material that follows was developed from a number of sources: interviews, research by individual contributing authors, surveys, and forecasting. While the information contained in this report represents informed analysis of issues in the San Diego–Tijuana region, it should not be used to make business decisions in lieu of professional consultation.

# ABOUT THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

The Urban Land Institute (ULI), is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research and education organization supported by its global network of members. The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

Founded in 1936, the Institute now has nearly 50,000 members across 81 nations worldwide, representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines working in private enterprise and public service. A multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates an open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places.



## About ULI San Diego – Tijuana

ULI San Diego – Tijuana is a community of more than 800 people from diverse professional and personal backgrounds in the binational region. As a nonpartisan organization, we have long been recognized as one of America's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development. Our local program of work includes more than 50 educational forums,



*ULI San Diego – Tijuana TAP panel walked C Street to conduct a site and context analysis.*

mentorship programs, and technical assistance interventions annually.

ULI San Diego–Tijuana's education and outreach is focused on four core areas including: housing affordability, transit, community engagement, and fostering leadership. ULI San Diego – Tijuana is the only binational District Council in the global ULI network.



ULI San Diego – Tijuana TAP panelists.

## About Technical Assistance Panels

In keeping with the ULI mission, Technical Assistance Panels convene ULI members who volunteer their time to aid public agencies and non-profit organizations that have requested expert insight to address their land use challenges.

During this process, a group of diverse professionals representing the full spectrum of land use and real estate disciplines typically spend one to two days visiting and analyzing site-specific conditions in the built environment, identifying pertinent planning and development issues, and formulating realistic and actionable recommendations to move initiatives forward in a fashion consistent with the applicant's goals and objectives.

## The TAP Process

- 1 Define the problem
- 2 Assemble the team
- 3 Build the briefing book
- 4 Stakeholder interviews
- 5 Site tour
- 6 Panel deliberations
- 7 Presentation and final report

## PANEL CHAIR



**Juan Arriaga**  
Senior Vice President  
LOWE



**Heather Foley**  
Associate  
HED

## PANELISTS



**Benjamin Arcia**  
Senior Associate  
McCULLOUGH LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



**Marisa Mangan**  
Planner  
SAN DIEGO ASSOCIATION OF  
GOVERNMENTS (SANDAG)



**Howard Blackson**  
Urban Design and Community  
Planning Manager  
MICHAEL BAKER INTERNATIONAL



**Brian Mooney**  
Principal and Senior Vice President  
of the Planning and Design Division  
RICK ENGINEERING COMPANY



**Amber Lake**  
Director of Landscape Design |  
Senior Associate  
CARRIER JOHNSON



**Phuong Nguyen**  
Transportation Engineer  
CR ASSOCIATES



**Mary Lydon**  
Executive Director  
HOMEAID SAN DIEGO



**Teri Slavik-Tsuyuki**  
Principal + Storyteller + Brand Designer  
TST INK

## TAP COMMITTEE CHAIR



**Diego Velasco**  
Principal & Founder  
CITY THINKERS

## ULI SAN DIEGO – TIJUANA PROJECT STAFF

**Christopher Clark**  
Executive Director

**Tatiana Perez**  
Senior Associate

## REPORT WRITER

**Jennifer Whitelaw**  
President  
WHITELAW MARKETING, INC

## REPORT DESIGNER

**Jasmine Smith**  
TWO ELEVEN DESIGN CO.

# THE CLIENT



## About Downtown San Diego Partnership

The Downtown San Diego Partnership is a nonprofit organization that serves as the principal voice and driving force behind the economic prosperity and cultural vitality of Downtown San Diego. It also serves as the managing organization for several special districts including the Property and Business Improvement District, otherwise known as the Clean & Safe program, that provides essential public services in the 275 blocks of Downtown. The organization's nearly 300 members, representing a variety of business sectors including real estate, technology, banking, law, defense, insurance, communications, energy, and tourism are committed to nurturing a Downtown that benefits the entire San Diego region.

## About Downtown Property and Business Improvement District

The Downtown Property and Business Improvement District, otherwise known as the Downtown Partnership Clean & Safe program, is a passionate group of maintenance and safety ambassadors, unhoused care professionals, beautification experts, and support staff who have been dedicated to making Downtown cleaner and safer for more than 20 years. Residents, businesses, and property owners can have confidence in Downtown because of the best practices, continuous improvement, and recognized excellence that the DSDP Clean & Safe team brings to the responsibility of serving Downtown's neighborhoods.

Special thanks to our client representatives for this project:

**Betsy Brennan**

President & CEO

DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO PARTNERSHIP

**Sean Warner**

Director of Public Realm

DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO PARTNERSHIP

**Joel Hermosillo**

Director of Business Engagement

DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO PARTNERSHIP

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



C Street, Downtown San Diego.

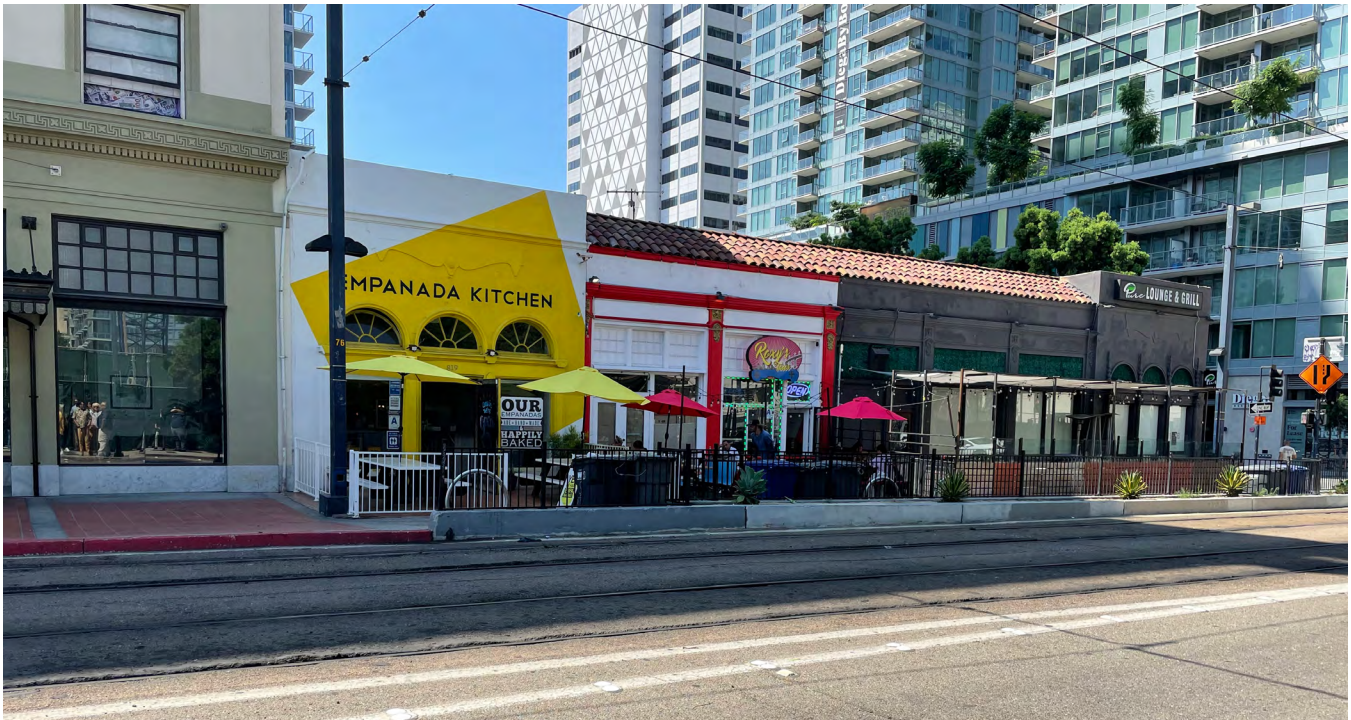
## Assignment

The Downtown San Diego Partnership and City Center Business Improvement District invited the ULI San Diego – Tijuana District Council to provide expert advice on an area with C Street forming its spine and extending from Union Street to Tenth Avenue, and Broadway to B Street, to create desired results for the following outcomes.

1. Develop a **realistic plan of action**, which could be executed by stakeholders in the study area and sub-areas, and which should chart a path to achieve a **vision of a vibrant, interesting, and bustling corridor**.
2. Highlight **opportunities for public and private investment** in the study area.
3. **Market the area** as the opportunity-rich place it is today, helping to **overcome its negative reputation**.
4. **Bring stakeholders together behind a common vision**.

To that end, the panel is being asked to address the following questions:

1. What is an **attainable vision** for the study area, and sub-areas, **to promote a vibrant, economically viable, and sustainable corridor**?
2. What are the challenges to achieving our goals for the study area?
3. What improvements in public infrastructure are needed to fulfill the vision described above?
4. What is the market demand for new businesses, office, and residential development?
5. What are the specific revitalization strategies in finance, regulatory process, land use, infrastructure, and design that will position the corridor for a turnaround and sustainable growth?
6. What is the step-by-step plan to implement the vision and recommendations proposed by the TAP?
7. Who are potential community partners for implementing the initial work at the site?



C Street, Downtown San Diego.

## CONTEXT

Downtown San Diego, located approximately 120 miles south of Los Angeles and 30 miles north of Tijuana, Mexico, sits on San Diego Bay in the southern half of San Diego County.

According to the Downtown San Diego Partnership: The Innovation Economy's Next Frontier from the Downtown San Diego Partnership report, "Downtown is roughly 1,450 acres, or 2.3 square miles. This excludes the Port Tidelands, which encompass the west and south edges of downtown. When the Tidelands are included, downtown is closer to nearly four square miles. Downtown San Diego encompasses seven thriving neighborhoods, each with its own unique identity. This includes Civic/Core, which includes the C Street Corridor under study."

As articulated in the 2006 San Diego Downtown Community Plan, "Many of the Civic/Core office towers open onto B Street, which currently terminates at the Civic Center. C Street was intended as a pedestrian mall servicing the trolley, but prevalence of building 'backs,' limited and inconsistent traffic access, and security concerns have resulted in low commerce activity."





## About C Street Corridor

Downtown San Diego’s C Street has a light rail transit system that runs for the entire length of the corridor between Park Avenue and India Street. Within the TAP area of study are two C Street trolley stops – one at Civic Center and one at Fifth Avenue. These stops are served by both the Blue and Orange trolley lines.

Between Front and 10th Street (the boundaries of this TAP study), C Street is closed to cars between 2nd and 6th Avenues. The walkways widen and narrow accordingly for pedestrians.

Within the study area, the C Street corridor has many vacant storefronts. Many of the buildings along it that share walls with other streets orient their ingress/ egress and “faces” to those other streets rather than to C Street.

Of longtime concern is the historic California Theater, located at C Street and 4th Avenue. It sat vacant for 30+ years, became a site of frequent trespass during that time, and is currently vacated and structurally unstable. According to the City of San Diego’s Brian Schoenfisch, Deputy Director of its Urban Division, plans are underway to demolish the building.

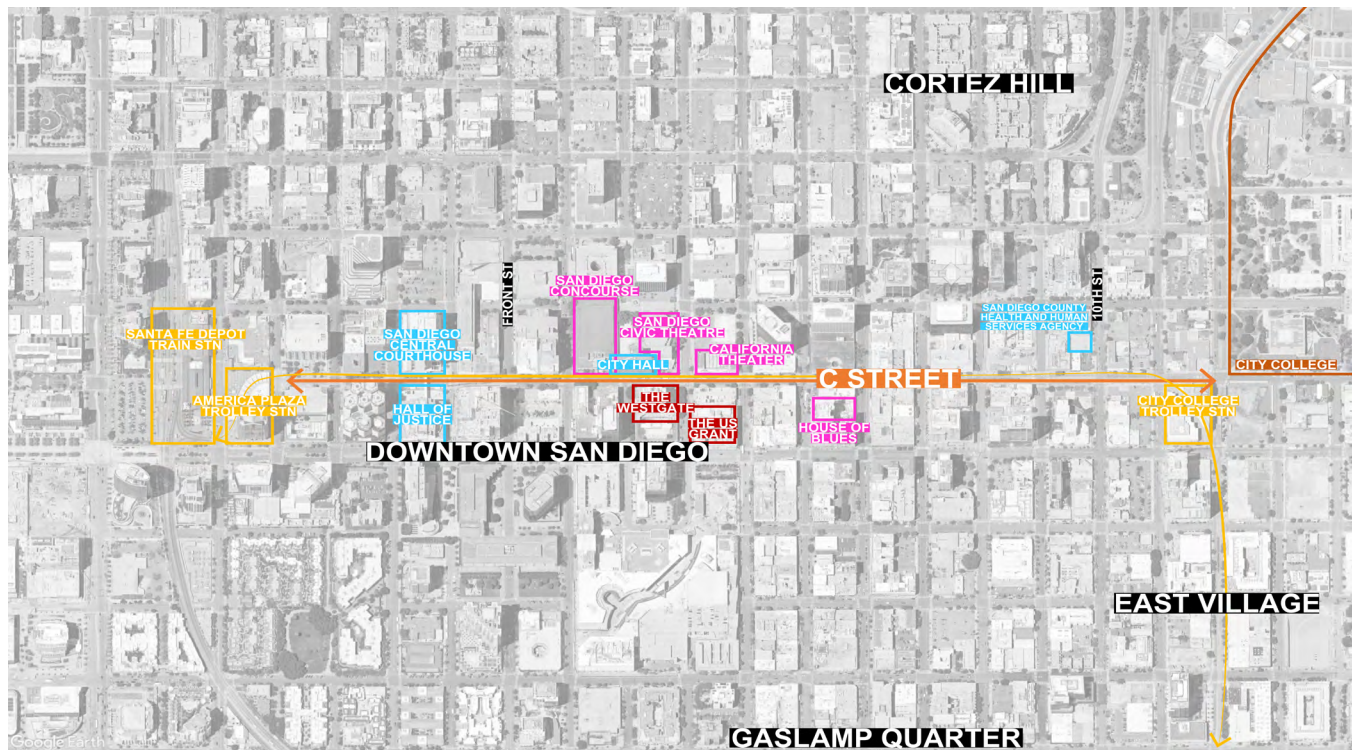


C Street, Downtown San Diego.

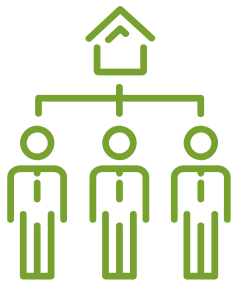
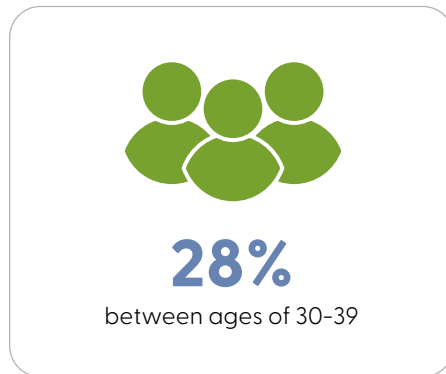
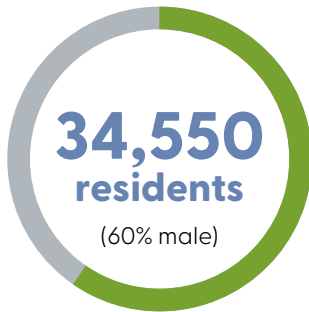
The population along the C Street corridor is comprised primarily of office workers, trolley riders, and unhoused individuals. Before and after working hours, the population along C Street is primarily unhoused individuals.

Due to its large unhoused population, Downtown San Diego Partnership’s Clean & Safe workers remove a lot of trash and human waste from C Street. Pet waste is another problem.

The C Street corridor is mostly hardscaped, along with intermittent street trees, planter boxes, and defensive landscaping.



## Downtown San Diego statistics relevant to this study



**24,744**  
residential units  
**99%**  
multifamily



**76%**  
of residents are  
**renters**



**81,237**  
employees working downtown



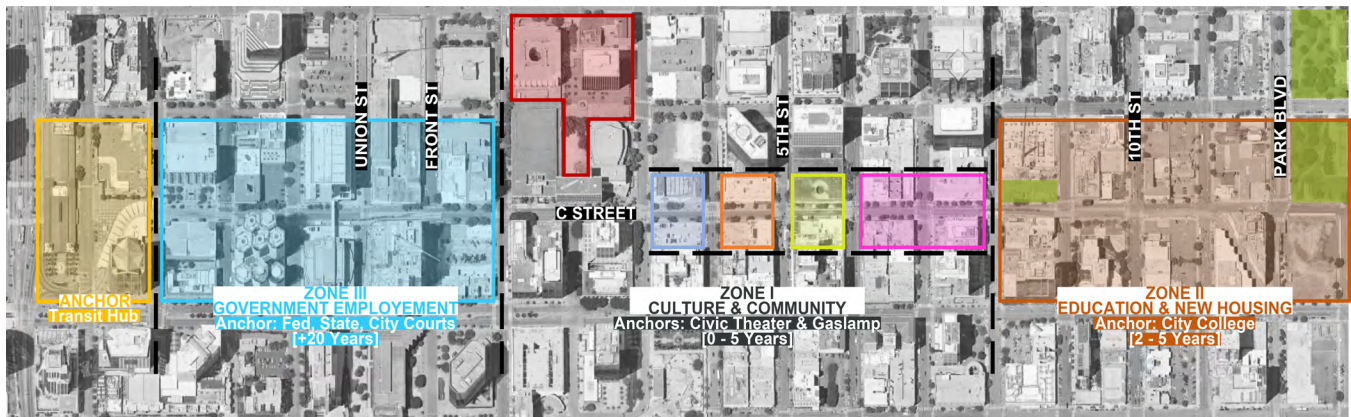
Approx. 1 in 5 residents  
**walk to work**



**65,000**  
parking spaces



Source: Downtown San Diego: The innovation Economy's Next Frontier



Context zones map.

## Major Conclusions

Action is needed now to address glaring issues, but many permanent solutions will grow organically from seeds planted today. Accordingly, ULI's panel created a short, medium, and long-term approach. The panel's recommendation is to transform the C Street corridor into a mobility parkway enlivened with dogwalkers; art; music; ancillary/creative retail; wayfinding and branding signage; and gathering spaces.

Using segmented identities determined during the TAP process, activate each one- to two-block segment of the C Street Corridor to reflect and augment the best aspects of each area. Leverage the populations of dog walkers, city workers, artists, eventgoers, and more to cultivate a livelier street scene.

Support this vision with a drop-in center for the unhoused population as well as increased safety patrols and lighting. Hardscaped "hiding spots" should be transformed.

Secure the foundation of the plan by working with partner agencies and institutions for permitting, plans, and collaborations recommended throughout this plan. Also establish specific collaborations with key building and business owners to implement transformation strategies.

## The Challenge

The C Street corridor is, and has been for many years, hampered by myriad challenges.

- ▶ Irregular car traffic
- ▶ Homelessness/safety concerns
- ▶ Empty after business hours
- ▶ Buildings/businesses face away from C Street
- ▶ Empty storefronts and buildings
- ▶ Office vacancy along C Street
- ▶ Historic buildings make adaptive reuse a challenge

Punctuating these issues is a downtown San Diego office vacancy rate around 20% and high borrowing costs that are discouraging new development.

The challenge at hand is how to create a vibrant, safe, and branded destination with limited resources and significant headwinds.

## Funding Sources

Funding sources to consider for implementing strategies detailed in this plan include:

- ▶ City of San Diego
- ▶ Downtown San Diego Partnership
- ▶ Downtown Property and Business Improvement District (PBID)
- ▶ Grants (especially for homelessness causes)



C Street, Downtown San Diego.

## The Briefing Material

The TAP Panel reviewed the following background materials.

- ▶ Technical Assistance Panel C Street Corridor Briefing Packet

This comprehensive document provided panelists with background information about the site conditions and history prior to their arrival for the working session.

- ▶ Map of study area
- ▶ List of interviewees
- ▶ “Lighting C Street” proposal
- ▶ 5th Avenue Station, San Diego - Property Report (MTS Trolley)
- ▶ 5th Avenue Station, San Diego – Audience (MTS Trolley)
- ▶ 2023 Unsheltered Homeless Count Report from DSDP Clean & Safe Unhoused Care Team
- ▶ DSDP City Center Business District report
- ▶ Data from Replica comparing mobility and spending patterns between 2019 and the present within the boundaries of B Street, Broadway, Front Street, and Park.
- ▶ DSDP 2023 Membership by Industry & Level report

- ▶ DSDP C Street Survey Results
- ▶ DSDP Demographic Overview for C Street

The panel made the following assumptions as part of its analysis and recommendations.

- ▶ City Center BID Board of Directors approved RGB poles with added technology lighting as a pilot project for C Street between 7th & 8th Avenues. If successful, this project will extend throughout other C Street blocks.
- ▶ The number of unhoused individuals living downtown dropped from 1556 in July of 2023 to 1286 in August of 2023, but averaged 1762 throughout the year to date. (DSDP Clean & Safe Unhoused Care Team’s Unsheltered Homeless Count Report)
- ▶ A public park on the northwest corner of C & 9th is planned.
- ▶ Current market conditions do not support development/construction of new office, residential, or retail space along C Street. Similarly, redevelopment of the Civic Center is likely a decade or more away. Revitalization of the C Street corridor must happen by modifying and improving existing conditions.

# STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

## Who We Spoke To



**Abner Figueroa**  
Owner  
COAL BROS TAQUERIA



**Alonso Vivas**  
Senior Vice President & Executive Director Clean & Safe  
DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO PARTNERSHIP



**Amelia Wall**  
Property Manager  
HINES - PROCOPIO BUILDING



**Betsy Brennan**  
President & CEO  
DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO PARTNERSHIP



**Brian Schoenfisch**  
Deputy Director / Urban Division  
CITY OF SAN DIEGO



**Dani Garcia**  
Director of Safety Services  
Clean & Safe  
DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO PARTNERSHIP



**Ernesto Romo**  
Director of Maintenance Services  
Clean & Safe  
DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO PARTNERSHIP



**Gina Argerake**  
General Manager  
HOUSE OF BLUES



**Howard Greenberg**  
President  
TRILOGY REAL ESTATE MANAGEMENT



**James Langley**  
Partner  
LDG COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE



**Jim Hamilton**  
Principal  
CITY WEST ADVISORS



**Julio Hernandez**  
Area Sales Manager  
EXPANSIVE  
(CO-WORKING OFFICE)



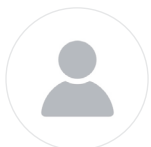
**Jimmy Parker**  
Director / Culture Program  
STOCKDALE CAPITAL



**Joyce Lu**  
Director of Sales & Catering  
WESTGATE HOTEL



**Gordon Summer**  
Downtown resident



**Mary Mansoor**  
Owner  
SAMMICH HOUSE



**Richard Gonor**  
Executive Vice President  
JLL



**Sarah Brothers**  
Vice President of Marketing & Communications  
DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO PARTNERSHIP



**Sean Myott**  
Manager of Real Estate Assets  
SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM (MTS)



**Sumeet Parekh**  
President  
HP INVESTORS



**Tyler Ezell**  
Senior Lighting Designer  
SYSKA HENNESSY GROUP

## What We Heard

The following comments come from the panel's interviews with the stakeholders and materials supplied by Downtown San Diego Partnership. The panel divided into breakout rooms to host the interviews and then reconvened to share stakeholder comments with all panel members.

### SAFETY & HOMELESSNESS

- ▶ “The trolley? I wish I could be more comfortable using it.”
- ▶ “I never leave my office.”
- ▶ “Several people have overdosed on our property, including some deaths.”
- ▶ “We have an exit door to the retail corridor that was open pre-COVID. We have had to keep it locked now because we get transients in who steal from CVS.”
- ▶ “There’s a homeless shelter a block away from where we are. They can’t be there all day, but they have to stay in proximity.”
- ▶ “Get people on streets involved with proactive tasks.”
- ▶ “Incubate art to incubate retail to incubate total vibrancy. But first, we need to incubate mental health.”
- ▶ “Illuminate buildings from inside to make them seem occupied. Add security cameras.”
- ▶ “Consider a dedicated DSDP person for C Street.”
- ▶ “The only reason I haven’t closed my business is because I love my customers and they love me.”

### STREET & SPACE ACTIVATION

- ▶ “Create a reason to come.”
- ▶ “We need bold experimentation - try, fail, try something else.”
- ▶ “We need these empty buildings cleaned up.”
- ▶ “More people living on and near C Street, along with destination retail (namely restaurants with outdoor seating) will contribute to a much more active pedestrian experience.”
- ▶ “(We need) empty buildings replaced with shops and restaurants, a bike lane or bike lane connection, green space and public murals as art.”
- ▶ “Activation and attraction will require improvements to paving, pedestrian access, storefronts, and wayfinding.”
- ▶ “I liked the activation on C Street last year with live music and restaurants.”
- ▶ “We have the ability to put nearby activities on our elevator screens, flyers in our lobbies, send an email, and

post it on our tenant website.”

- ▶ “The House of Blues can participate in an activation event on C Street. We also can help with contacts and line up an act/artist.”
- ▶ “Communicate with building owners regarding holding events in their vacant space, low rents, etc. Look into 30-day (or less) pop-ups.”
- ▶ “It’s too early to get people to volunteer space. They need proof first. Have a few more pop-up events to capture attention and get people to want to be part of it. Make them regular and expected.”
- ▶ “Brand C Street as a cultural district (music, art, artist incubator spaces, etc.).”
- ▶ “Add graphics on empty storefronts.”

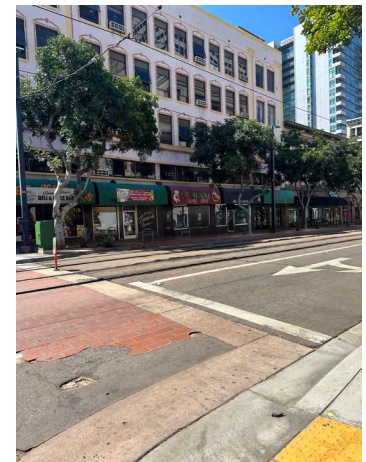
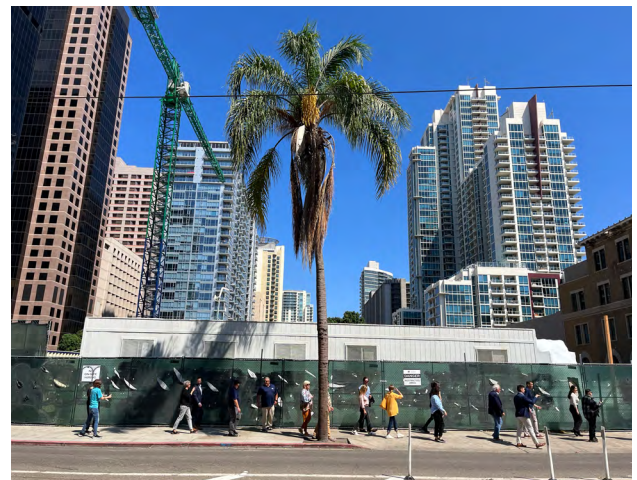
### FRAMEWORK

- ▶ “Anything from a regulatory perspective that gets in the way - we can deal with it.”
- ▶ “We’re definitely willing to help the community around us because we’re only as strong as the community around us, so there’s strength in numbers.”
- ▶ “Maybe a good spot for true protected east-west bikeway as well as pedestrian access.”
- ▶ “With the right planning and projects, C Street could become a real destination for San Diego.”
- ▶ “Strive to make it more transit/pedestrian. Interweaving car traffic is too challenging on such a narrow thoroughfare.”
- ▶ “C Street has no real vehicle traffic and loading is difficult - it’s tough place for retailers.”
- ▶ “People created e-businesses during the pandemic and now need cheap brick and mortar space.”
- ▶ “Create a place of low barriers for fledgling businesses.”
- ▶ “BIDs can do events, lighting, bring people together. Determine and do the immediate fixes that are inexpensive and quick. Then get into escalating levels of intervention.”
- ▶ “Present the stark realities to C Street stakeholders – the crisis on C Street - and then the vision and contribution needed.”



## Site Tour: What We Saw

- ▶ Plenty of eyes on the street, just not the eyes we want to see or be seen...
- ▶ Vacant storefronts
- ▶ Inaccessible storefronts facing onto C Street
- ▶ Lack of lighting
- ▶ Lack of signage
- ▶ Car lanes are arbitrary or unnecessary (they don't go anywhere)
- ▶ Confusing streetscapes
- ▶ Inconsistent upkeep and lack of human-scale accessibility
- ▶ The trolley (both good and bad)
- ▶ An unsanitary street



# PANEL FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

To structure “an attainable vision for the study area, and sub-areas, to promote a vibrant, economically viable and sustainable corridor,” the panel concentrated on three areas:

1. Safety and Unhoused Population 2. Street & Space Activation 3. Framework

## 1. Safety and Unhoused Population

### ESSENTIAL FIRST STEP

Concerns about safety and the large unhoused population along C Street were unanimous priorities among interviewed stakeholders.

#### Lightbulb Safety Idea 1

### Lighting

Provide additional lighting along C Street. The panel likes the RGB lighting favored by Downtown San Diego Partnership. Extend the program beyond its test case if successful. In addition to promoting safety, this type of lighting can and should provide activation and community character by customizing the light colors. (See Street and Space Activation section.)



San Luis Obispo.



Minneapolis' Nicollet Mall utilizes RGB lighting along the street in the form of decorative lanterns designed by local artists.



#### Lightbulb Safety Idea 2

### Patrol

Extend the Clean & Safe patrol hours to encompass 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. (currently 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) to better accommodate the working population, nearby residents out walking (with or without dogs), and future activation efforts along the corridor.

Aim to have two Unhoused Care Team members on the C Street corridor during patrol hours to help connect unhoused individuals with resources and services. (If a services storefront is opened on the C Street corridor for unhoused individuals, one patrolling team member may be adequate.)

Expand and promote the Clean & Safe team's on-call chaperone program. (See kiosk section below for promotion opportunity.)



### Lightbulb Safety Idea 3

## Visibility

Remove raised planters to improve visibility and increase eyes on the street and prevent camping and hiding spaces. Add trees instead.

The pedestrian barriers do little and should be removed. Use the space to enhance pedestrian promenades.



Civic Center Trolley Station.

### Lightbulb Unhoused Idea 1

## Trash Maintenance Program

Increase the number of Big Belly trash cans along C Street. These tamper-resistant cans should also be branded to the C Street corridor (or even to sub-sections that emerge along the corridor).

Engage the unhoused workforce in the Clean & Safe maintenance work program. This arrangement would improve the cleanliness of C Street (and beyond) and provide income and purpose for participants.



San Francisco's Yerba Buena Community Benefit District uses BigBelly trash cans to keep the streets clean and feature the work of local artists.

### Lightbulb Unhoused Idea 2

## Kiosks

Request a kiosk for the C Street corridor and recommend content. (The City of San Diego recently approved 50 interactive kiosks for downtown to help visitors and residents navigate the city. The program is a partnership with IKE (Interactive Kiosk Experience) Smart City and the Downtown San Diego Partnership.)

Content for the C Street corridor kiosk should include the 211-help line, a panic button, and information for the Clean & Safe chaperone service. Content tailored to the unhoused should include:

- ▶ Regularly-updated information on where to find a bed
- ▶ Where to find a drop-in center
- ▶ Employment resources
- ▶ Health/medical resources
- ▶ Mobile clinic schedules



Downtown Raleigh plans to implement IKE kiosks to provide information, share art, and connect the community.



Shoreline Community Services in Pacific Beach recently opened *The Compass Station*, a hub of resources for the unhoused population in the San Diego Central Beach community.

### Unhoused Idea 3

## Drop-in Center

Create a staffed, resource drop-in center along the C Street corridor.

Nearby overnight shelters require that occupants leave in the morning and return in the evening. Throughout the day, unhoused individuals must fend for themselves. Providing a drop-in center with public bathrooms and showers, as well as access to drinking water, computers, charging stations, and a variety of social services, would help the unhoused population around C Street live more humanely and create less disturbance.

Consider locating the center adjacent to the Clean & Safe program. Other locations to consider include the Churchill Hotel, YWCA, Golden Hall, Diego's first floor retail space, and the parking garage at 7th & C. Consider engaging local universities for tenant improvement (TI) design services.

Reference *The Compass Station* in Pacific Beach and its operating partner [Shoreline Community Services](#) as an example.

Funding sources can include grants (from various sources) and/or subsidies by the DSDP PBID.



Resources in *The Compass Station* include computers; laundry; showers; mental and physical health and substance abuse services; clerical services; and housing assistance.



## 2. Street & Space Activation

### C IS FOR CULTURE AND CHARACTER

Activations can be phased and varied to enliven the C Street corridor. The stakeholder quote, “We need bold experimentation – try, fail, try something else,” should be a guiding light in this effort.



Empty Harlem storefronts beautified with artwork.

## Macro View Ideas

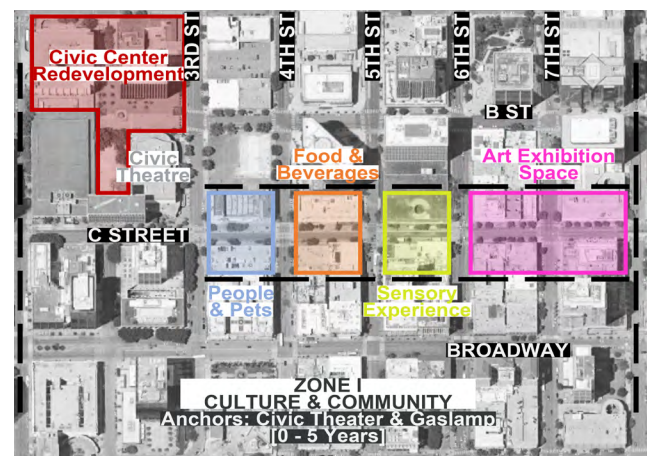
Our panel recommends several strategies throughout the C Street corridor:

- ▶ Remove cars from C Street and add parklets – dog walkers will do more to activate the street than cars will.
- ▶ Add low-profile planters with seating in lieu of tall planters. Implement ground-level landscaping, which will maximize visibility for safety while providing a park-like experience.
- ▶ Remove trolley station fences and barriers to enable mid-block crossing.
- ▶ Add micro-retail walk-up windows.
- ▶ Add light installations in empty storefronts.
- ▶ Long-term: install permeable pavement along C Street under trolley tracks.

## Segmented Strategies

The panel suggests creating and activating distinct identities for different segments of the C Street corridor. The RGB lights mentioned in the Safety and Unhoused Population section could be used strategically to delineate different segments. Street banners could also be used to brand the segments.

- ▶ Third to Fourth: People and Pets
- ▶ Fourth to Fifth: Food Lab
- ▶ Fifth to Sixth: Sensory space
- ▶ Sixth to Seventh: Arts



## People & Pets – Third to Fourth

Take advantage of the significant surrounding population of dog owners to activate this part of C Street from early morning through evening.

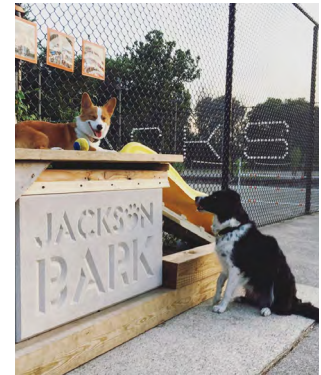
- ▶ Add a California Theatre Dog Run – Before and/or after demolition of the building, a dog run could be inexpensively created and maintained on the property.
- ▶ Dog-themed mural on corrugated metal – A mural could both advertise the dog run and beautify the area.
- ▶ Knee-wall fencing – Keep dog walkers and their pets safe from vehicular traffic but maintain view corridors to promote safety and participation.
- ▶ Provide dog water fountains.
- ▶ Add shade and seating.
- ▶ Host pet parades and/or dog costume contests – Such events can attract local and nearby residents, as well as people less familiar with downtown. Pet parades and costume events can be promoted to media outlets to publicize the area.



Dog park shipping container mural by John Potter.



California Theater.



Left: 2022 Gaslamp Quarter Pet Parade. Right: Community dog park in Chicago. The park is an adaptive reuse of four abandoned tennis courts.



Culver City utilizes empty space by turning it into a pocket park that includes a dog park.



Outdoor restaurant seating on a closed street in Alexandria, VA.



Outdoor restaurant seating at The Lab in Costa Mesa, CA.

## Food Lab – Fourth to Fifth

- ▶ Add new parklets in-street in front of restaurants to accommodate bistro tables – Restaurants in this area can pull from the dense population of Civic Center workers as well as the well-established Gaslamp District food and entertainment hub two blocks south that's popular with both locals and tourists. Increasing outdoor seating capacity would add eyes on the street and create vibrancy.
- ▶ Host food trucks/carts in front of Ross two to three times per week – whether on-going or temporary, food trucks/carts could quickly add options to this segment of C Street and establish it as a go-to lunch (and maybe dinner) hub. These mobile vendors should pay into the BID to participate.



Food trucks lining the street in Downtown San Diego.



Brooklyn Ribbon Fries, micro-retail located in Japan.

- ▶ Micro-retail, walk up service windows – While current foot and vehicular traffic along C Street doesn't support robust retail use, walk-up service windows could be a boon for nearby denizens, start-up businesses, and landlords who are willing to alter their spaces accordingly. Example uses include electronics repair, coffee service, shoe repair, etc.



A food window in Brunswick, Australia.

## Sensory Space – Fifth to Sixth

- ▶ House of Blues curated monthly performances on 5th between C and Broadway – House of Blues management is amenable to helping identify and secure performers for activation events planned by DSDP. Note: events will need to happen inside if alcohol is served.
- ▶ Host live music on either side of Fifth Avenue Trolley Station – Use a predictable schedule so people know to come gather. Target happy hour or lunchtime to avoid noise disturbance during work hours. Coordinate with C Street restaurants so they can promote their happy hours/ menus.
- ▶ Outdoor projected art or films, including music videos, above 5th Avenue Trolley Station – Target evenings of House of Blues shows, baseball games, or other nearby events to position C street as part of San Diego’s cultural and entertainment district.



*The walls of 1065 Fifth Ave could be used for projections.*



*Movies projected onto a building in Berlin, Germany.*

*A Place in Time is a collaborative architectural video projection by Tiffany Carbonneau and Susanna Crum created for the InLightn Festival in Indianapolis.*





*Toranomon Light Art*

## Arts – Sixth to Seventh

- ▶ Allocate empty tenant space to artist studios – For landlords willing to lower lease rates, artists have a long track record of activating buildings and areas, congregating together, and creating foot traffic.
- ▶ Dedicate live/work artist space – The nearby Scripps Building is a successful example.
- ▶ Artistic lighting/mood lighting – Use RGB and other lighting to create a fun/artistic vibe in this segment of the corridor. Mood lighting has also been shown to enhance neighborhood ambiance and boost mental health.
- ▶ Dedicate space for legal graffiti art à la Leake Street Arches in London
- ▶ Convert dead retail spaces to art installations, performance art behind windows seen from street – work with local artisans and colleges to create a communication channel for landlords looking to temporarily activate empty storefronts with art.



*Toranomon Light Art*



*Tokyo train station blue mood/mental health lighting.*

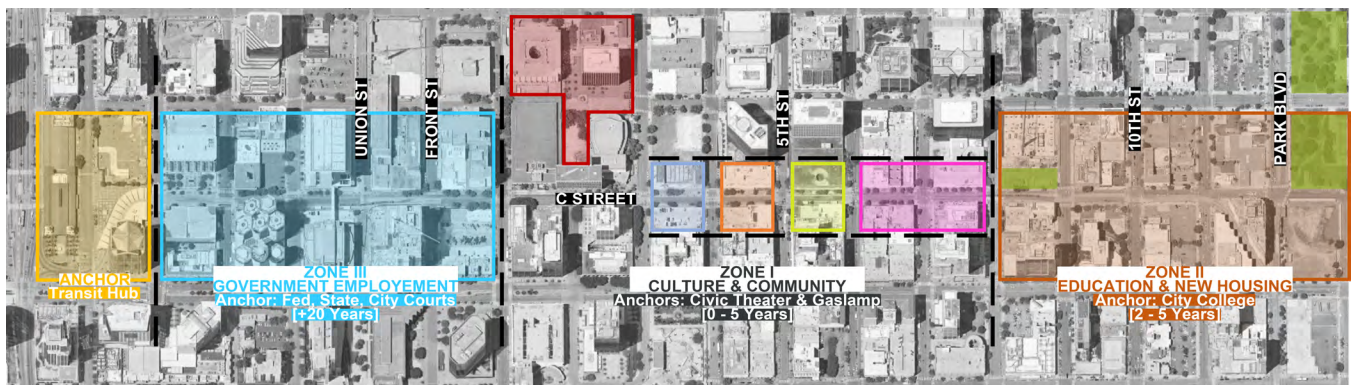


*Leake Street Arches project by Corstorphine + Wright.*

# 3. Framework

## THE FOUNDATION OF THE TRANSFORMATION

Conditions and considerations listed below support and enable the ideas and strategies articulated in this report's Safety & Unhoused Population section and Space & Street Activation section.



Context zones map.

## Short-term approach - Context Zone I - Central

### A starting point:

- ▶ Start at the 100% Corner (the busiest area in a city) - 3rd / 4th Marston Building + 4th / 5th Vacant Building
  - Identify lessees and owners for implementing ground floor activations.

### Public Realm Program

- ▶ Implement and expand the streetlight program and provide guidelines to landlords and business owners.
- ▶ Create a signage program and design guidelines.
  - Wayfinding / Directional
  - Parking Lot Location
  - Maintenance by the Partnership
- ▶ Furniture associated private building frontages (not permanent)
- ▶ Streamline the permit system to support a special events program.
  - Guided walking or transit tour of historic downtown sites
  - Trolley Platform (Fest) Entertainment Events
- ▶ Provide dog-friendly landscaping (in dog walk/run zones).
- ▶ Close C Street between 5th and 7th to car traffic.
- ▶ Establish an information/charging kiosk.
  - See recommendations in Safety & Unhoused Population section.

### Private Realm Program

- ▶ Vendor carts – See more detail in the Space & Street Activation section.
- ▶ Painting/mural program – DSDP should spearhead this program to populate the C Street corridor with additional murals/art but work with private building owners.
- ▶ Shopfront Improvement Program – improve ease of use/access for business owners.



Wayfinding signs in Seattle.



## Mid-term approach – Context Zone II – Eastside

- ▶ Use the Portland Loo example (around-the-clock, easy to clean, tamper resistant) to advocate for a public bathroom at the Bosa-funded, public park. An around-the-clock public restroom will be essential for minimizing human waste along C Street (and beyond).
- ▶ Create parkway plazas from 5th Avenue to 10th Avenue through closure/vacation of car traffic segments.
  - Demographics suggest a dog Park(way) would be successful.
  - Rad Lab's popular Quartyard pop-up concept located along Market Street in downtown will soon need a new home. The California Theater site could be considered.
- ▶ Engage with local educational institutions to establish art programs and exhibitions along C Street. Consider linking with similar outreach and collaboration in downtown's IDEA District. Educational institutions that could be considered include:
  - University of California, San Diego
  - San Diego City College
  - San Diego High School
  - NewSchool of Architecture & Design
  - Monarch School
  - San Diego State University
  - University of San Diego
  - California State University at San Marcos



Portland Loos.

## Long-term approach

- ▶ Transform buildings to front onto C Street.
- ▶ Remove the 5th Avenue Trolley Station, as the Civic Center station is adequate and very close by.
  - Requires collaboration with MTS
  - Eventually trade light rail train cars for streetcars (+20 Year)
- ▶ C Street becomes known as the mobility corridor for Downtown (trolley, bicycles, pedestrians, adjacent parking garages).
- ▶ Create a C-Zone Streamline Permit System.
- ▶ When market conditions support it, add more housing to C Street. This would provide additional eyes on the street and foot traffic.
- ▶ Create a Historic Buildings Plan to provide clarity and a path forward for building owners and developers. Having a plan in place would support the development of additional housing.

# ROLE OF THE DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO PARTNERSHIP

## The Partnership's Relationship with the Landlord

- ▶ Enhance the area's aesthetics and conditions with pop-up events, ensuring post-event clean up.
- ▶ Act as the primary operator of pop-up events and art installations.
- ▶ Convey the benefits of this TAP plan to area landlords.
- ▶ Lead efforts to revitalize empty storefront spaces.
- ▶ Help attract new tenants/occupants.
- ▶ Work with the City to streamline the permitting process for incoming C Street tenants.

## Landlord/Property Owner Benefits

- ▶ Create a new revenue stream for unleased space.
- ▶ Seeding the district for future commercial activity.
- ▶ Developing a brand.
- ▶ Partnership for streamlined permitting.
- ▶ Maintenance and operations funding.



C Street, Downtown San Diego

# THE ACTION PLANS

Based upon the ideas and strategies above, the Downtown San Diego Partnership and City Center Business Improvement District could move forward with the following action plans.



## Short-Term Action Plan

1. Identify or create an implementation entity – either committee within DSDP or a mixed group of downtown stakeholders and land use practitioners to begin moving this plan into action.
2. Storefront audit – determine what is activated and what is not. Develop an agreement with landlords for short-term usage of vacant space.
3. Implement storefront improvements:
  1. Vinyl window art for empty store fronts
  2. Light up storefronts at night
  3. Micro retail spaces within the buildings
4. Apply for the City of San Diego's Placemaking Permit. Use this TAP report for content parameters and start immediately so that the permit is available in the next 3 months. Allow the permit to run for 2-3 years. (Similar to the process underway for the Bay to Park Paseo.)
5. Assign dedicated personnel for consistent marketing, vendor, and artist coordination, and educational outreach.
6. Revise or establish BID fees to reflect additional expenses.
7. Introduce public art and wayfinding initiatives to the DSDP board and membership.
8. Implement and expand the lighting plan.
9. Establish a drop-in center for the unhoused population with an experienced operator.
10. Advocate for a 24-hour, tamper-resistant restroom in the public park
11. Request a kiosk for C Street corridor and recommend its programming.
12. If demolition is not imminent, replace the fencing around the California Theater with decorative, security-focused fencing that incorporates pedestrian-scale lighting. Adjust the fence's layout to be as close to the building as feasible, fostering a more inviting link between the businesses on C Street (such as the Local, Coal Bros, and others) and the Civic Theatre. With the additional space, create a dog run– see recommendations in Street & Space Activation section. If demolition is imminent, use the vacant lot as an interim dog park.
13. Coordinate with landlords to fix broken lighting.
14. Bring in food trucks/carts in conjunction with events at the Civic Theatre or other events (with fees paid by the vendors) to test the concept.
15. Stabilize the ground cover and install durable, low-profile planters.
16. Remove pedestrian barriers.
17. Test the film/music video projection idea onto Ross building or another near the House of Blues.
18. Program street musicians at 5th Avenue transit station to test the concept.
19. Work with building owners and artists to create one or more art murals. Opportunities: Ross building, building on SE corner of 5th and C, Allen Pharmacy.



*Third Street Promenade designed by ROMA, aims to expand the pedestrian orientation of all streets in downtown Santa Monica, CA. The plan calls for reconceiving the downtown streets as an integrated and locally serving system of urban open spaces that accommodates multiple travel modes, provides an inviting environment for public life, and creates a distinct image for the downtown district.*

## Mid- and Long-Term Plan

1. Determine businesses that would thrive in the region and assist in establishing communication with landlords (such as educational centers, pet grooming services, veterinary clinics, and so on).
2. Simplify the permitting process to lessen the initial setup challenges for businesses.
3. Promote and advocate for a greater number of businesses oriented towards C Street.
4. Collaborate with the City of San Diego to envision and transform C Street into a beneficial public asset.
5. Install permeable pavement along C Street under the trolley tracks.
6. Create a Historic Buildings plan.



*StreetShow in Minneapolis, MN provides a platform for and promotes local street performers.*



*A rendering of a plan for a pedestrian-focused plaza and street in Miami, FL, based on the Dutch idea of "woonerfs" or "living streets."*
















### Next Steps

#### Fall/Winter 2023

- ▶ ULI will develop and deliver the final TAP
- ▶ ULI will present the report findings
- ▶ Begin implementation process

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



-  **National Alliance to End Homelessness Blog**
-  **Unhoused Outreach Program/Services**  
The Compass Station Pacific Beach
-  **Managers for Compass Station**  
Shoreline Community Services Pacific Beach
-  **City of San Diego Action Plan on Homelessness Report**  
See Wraparound Services and Outreach Efforts Recommendation p. 34
-  **Creative Placemaking**  
Recommendations from and impact of 6 Advisory Services Panels
-  **Homeless to Housed**  
Case studies of successful projects to address homelessness
-  **Downtown Revitalization**  
Advisory Services Panel Report: San Francisco, CA
-  **Surfside Downtown Revitalization**  
Report: Surfside, FL
-  **Transforming Downtowns into Mixed-Use, Mixed-Income Neighborhoods**  
2023 Fall Meeting Session
-  **How Can We Revive the Downtown Core?**  
2023 Fall Meeting Session
-  **Behind the Facade**  
Research report
-  **Enhancing Resilience through Neighborhood-Scale Strategies**  
Research report
-  **Workhouse Arts Center**  
Technical Assistance Panel Report: Washington
-  **ULI Chicago: Redevelopment Strategies for the South Side Corridor TAP**  
Technical Assistance Panel Report: Mundelein, IL
-  **Together: Strategies for Promoting Health and Community in Privately Owned Third Places**  
Research report



**Soft City**, David Sim | **Your City is Sick**, Jeff Siegler | **Tactical Urbanism**, Anthony Garcia & Mike Lydon  
**How to Turn a Place Around**, Kathy Maddon



**ULI San Diego-Tijuana** | 4960 North Harbor Drive, Suite 200, San Diego, CA 92147 | [sandiegotijuana@uli.org](mailto:sandiegotijuana@uli.org)  
[sandiego-tijuana.uli.org](http://sandiego-tijuana.uli.org)