

**OUR VALLEY • OUR VISION • OUR FUTURE**

**SOUTHERN NEVADA STRONG**

**Downtown North Las Vegas  
Implementation Strategies  
Report**

December 2014

**Cover images left to right:**

*Jerry's Nugget at Las Vegas Boulevard*

*Downtown North Las Vegas Open House comment cards (Photo credit: RTC)*

*North Las Vegas Gateway Monument (Photo credit: Google Street View)*

*North Las Vegas Students (Photo credit: 2012 North Las Vegas Community Report)*



# Downtown North Las Vegas Implementation Strategies Report

December 2014

## table of contents

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE	1
1. THE ROLE OF DOWNTOWN NORTH LAS VEGAS	5
2. DEFINING SUCCESS: THE COMMUNITY'S VISION	9
3. OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS	15
4. ACTIONS OVERVIEW	21
5. ACTIONS DETAIL	25
WORKS CITED	43
APPENDICES ( <i>under separate cover</i> )	







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Southern Nevada Strong (SNS) is a collaborative regional planning effort, funded by a \$3.5 million dollar grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Through this grant, SNS seeks to build a foundation for long-term economic success and community livelihood by better integrating reliable transportation, housing, and job opportunities throughout Southern Nevada.

As a part of this regional planning effort, SNS seeks to highlight specific locations that are well suited to model principles of sound urban planning and sites that demonstrate opportunities for jobs, housing and transit. The biggest opportunity lies in connecting the sites through a comprehensive transit and transit-oriented redevelopment strategy.

Downtown North Las Vegas was identified as one of the areas presenting significant opportunities for reinvestment and connectivity. This report identifies the investments and policy changes that are necessary to set the stage for successful implementation of specific initiatives.

The Downtown  
North Las Vegas  
Area will be great  
when

... we give people a reason  
to come to North Las  
Vegas! - events, attractions,  
malls, civic plazas, restaurants,  
and hotels!

CUANDO SE  
UNA REA

The Lake Mead Village  
Concept has taken  
root! ☺

Residents have  
enough affordable or  
accessible <sup>places</sup> to eat  
to live healthy, active,  
productive lives!

WHEN IT  
HAPPENS  
!!!!

the island is fully  
developed and we have  
mass transit connectivity  
from the north to the south.

Area redevelops  
with new businesses  
and old buildings are  
removed

When we have more  
retail, especially  
more international

the shopping  
across the  
from City Hall  
complete!

We get  
a movie  
theater!!!

Finish the  
215 to better  
connect the  
Northern Hemisphere  
#SNVStrong ☺

## introduction: background and purpose

Located at the southern edge of North Las Vegas, Downtown North Las Vegas has not yet been realized as the city's true civic center. The Southern Nevada Strong opportunity site analysis sought to evaluate the area's potential as a vibrant hub of activity for the City. The purpose of the project was to identify projects, policies and programs that can be implemented in the short term in order to support current momentum and better position the area for future development.

The initial focus of the opportunity site analysis was on the properties the City refers to as the Lake Mead Island ("the Island"), centrally located in Downtown North Las Vegas. Throughout this document, "opportunity site" refers to these properties. This area is bound by I-15 to the west, Las Vegas Boulevard to the east and Lake Mead Boulevard to the north and south. The Island (also referred to as the Gateway Site

in the 2009 *Downtown Master Plan and Investment Strategy*) is immediately east of a freeway exit. It provides access to Downtown North Las Vegas and has the potential to be a major gateway into the community (Figure 1). The improved N. Fifth Street Super Arterial bisects the Island, connecting the northernmost areas of North Las Vegas and southernmost areas of Henderson within the Las Vegas Valley. The Island is in relatively close proximity to Downtown Las Vegas and the Las Vegas Strip.

Surrounding land uses and future development patterns, especially those in Downtown North Las Vegas, will influence the design and development of the opportunity site into the future. The analysis includes a study of the greater Downtown North Las Vegas area, which is referred to as the "study area" throughout this document.

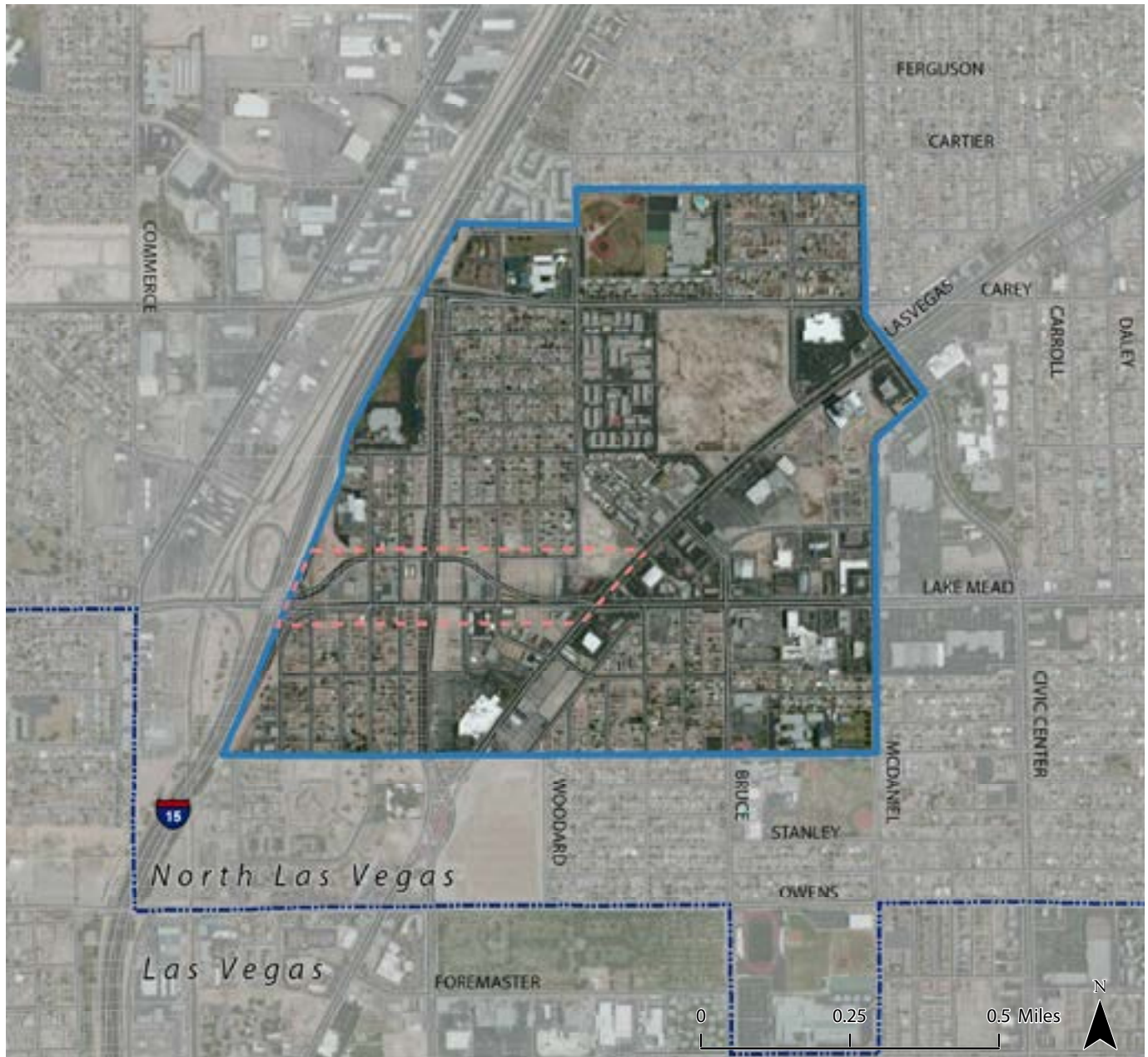







Top: Las Vegas Boulevard near North Bruce Street Intersection

Bottom: MAX service on Las Vegas Boulevard near Civic Center Drive Intersection



FIGURE 1: NORTH LAS VEGAS STUDY AREA MAP SHOWING STUDY AREA BOUNDARY AND OPPORTUNITY SITE



-  Downtown North Las Vegas Study Area Boundary
-  North Las Vegas Opportunity Site
-  City Boundary
-  Parcels
-  Streets



Data Source: City of North Las Vegas Planning & Zoning Division



Over the course of the opportunity site analysis and planning process, it became apparent that:

- The market will not support the desired mixed-use development at the Island/Gateway Site in the short term without significant subsidy; and
- The entire Downtown would benefit from a variety of measures to help establish a stronger district identity and bolster its overall image as an attractive place for investment.

The Implementation Strategies Report document is the second of a two-part analysis that provides the foundation to future investment. The initial document, the *Opportunities and Barriers Report* (see appendices), compiles and interprets data that describe the current conditions in and around Downtown North Las Vegas, as well as information about the regional demand for new businesses and investment. The document identifies the investments and policy changes that are necessary to set the stage for successful implementation of specific initiatives. It focuses on

the supportive uses necessary to create a vibrant and attractive area: identifying the key opportunities upon which the City can build, and the major barriers that it must overcome. It provides a set of recommendations that build from a substantial public outreach effort coordinated by Southern Nevada Strong. Seven appendices provide additional detail on information referenced throughout this report, provided under separate cover:

- Opportunities and Barriers Report,
- North Las Vegas Business Outreach Memo,
- Hispanic/Latino District Case Studies,
- Design Concept Graphics,
- Summary of Opportunity Site Workshop; and
- Excerpts from the *Downtown Master Plan & Investment Strategy* and the *North Fifth Street Transit Supportive Concept Plan*.



Top: East Lake Mead Boulevard and North McDaniel Street Intersection

Bottom: Retail development near North McDaniel Street and East Lake Mead Boulevard (Photo credit: Google Streetview)

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# the role of downtown north las vegas

**A shared understanding of the need for a more successful Downtown is important for galvanizing stakeholders and supporting messaging to funders and other partners.**

**Why does the City of North Las Vegas need a successful Downtown?**

### Cultural Relevancy

North Las Vegas is unique because of its large proportion of Hispanic/Latino<sup>1</sup> residents and businesses. About 39% of North Las Vegas residents and 60% of those living within three miles of the site are Hispanic/Latino. The area has thus attracted many businesses that cater to the needs of these residents.

In interviews at local Hispanic/Latino-owned businesses, respondents indicated that they selected their location precisely because North Las Vegas has become a hub for their community. Owners said they felt comfortable in an area full of Hispanic/Latino businesses, a theme that was repeated by other business owners who wanted to reach a chiefly Hispanic/Latino clientele base. At the same time, there remain many barriers to business creation among Hispanic/Latino residents. According to ethnographic research completed in 2013, the most common challenge is the language barrier. Inability to speak English can prevent immigrants from starting and growing businesses.



Top: Mercado, a Latino-themed public market in Portland, Oregon.

Bottom: A community member at one of the SNS outreach events expressing his visions for the future of Downtown North Las Vegas

<sup>1</sup> The US Census uses the term "Hispanic or Latino" to denote both cultural and language groups.





current financial issues, including a low credit quality rating, hinder its ability to single-handedly improve safety and aesthetic appeal through infrastructure improvements. To realize a successful downtown and encourage the rehabilitation of deteriorating buildings and homes, the City will need to forge new partnerships with businesses, the State, nonprofits and other organizations.

#### Income

Lack of income is a significant concern in Downtown North Las Vegas. The City has noticeable issues with homelessness within the study area. Shelters and social service providers in the City of Las Vegas provide assistance to the homeless population in Downtown North Las Vegas.

#### Safety

Weak social networks cause people to feel less connected and more vulnerable. Conversations with business owners and residents in the study area indicate that they are concerned about safety which includes



#### Economic Development

Laying the groundwork for a thriving business district would create more opportunities for residents to start and expand

businesses and would result in economic development benefits for the City as a whole. Targeted investment could also help to bolster the negative perception of the area by making visible improvements and opportunities for new businesses.

#### Lack of Past Investment and Partnerships

Despite several planning efforts, including the *2009 Downtown Master Plan*, there remain few initiatives to create opportunities for the businesses that exist in the downtown area. The City's

both crime and transportation in the Downtown. Streets within the study area are prioritized for vehicles and unsafe for pedestrians, particularly children walking to and from school.

### Lack of True Civic Identity

Most central business districts (CBDs) include a large concentration of employment opportunities, a range of dining options, parks and other gathering spaces, soft goods (i.e., clothing, shoes, etc.) retailers and cultural institutions. While Downtown North Las Vegas does include many successful retailers and is also home to a large employer in North Vista Hospital, many of the other ingredients are missing. With the exception of the new City Hall facility, which also hosts the North Las Vegas Library, Downtown North Las Vegas lacks the ingredients of a typical civic center or CBD. The City is in the process of making changes that concentrate services in Downtown North Las Vegas, such as creating a public safety campus at the former library site.

It is important to note that it may not be necessary to add all of the typical components of a downtown. It may actually be advantageous to rebrand the area as a vibrant business district as a way to differentiate the area from Downtown Las Vegas and to better leverage existing assets.



Top: Improved crosswalk, Denver, CO.  
Bottom: Valley Metro Rail station, Phoenix, AZ.

Opposite page top : Pedestrians dashing across the road rather than walking to the nearest crosswalk (Photo taken in Downtown North Las Vegas)

Bottom: Entrance to the City of North Las Vegas, Government Center

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## defining success: the community's vision

**The North Las Vegas Downtown Master Plan and Investment Strategy established a unified vision for the future of Downtown. Outreach activities associated with the current effort confirmed this vision:**

*The Downtown is fully redeveloped into a community focal point with amenities and features that promote its unique identity. Some of the amenities and features found in Downtown include aesthetically pleasing plazas, vibrant neighborhoods, commercial areas and municipal facilities.*

*The entryways into the City along Las Vegas Boulevard and Lake Mead Boulevard feature imaginative street patterns that immediately distinguish the City as highly attractive and pedestrian-oriented.*

*The streetscapes include attractive street furniture, banners, signage and decorative lighting that promote walkability, reduced traffic congestion and direct access to businesses located along the street fronts.*

*Light rail/transit corridors, bicycle routes and a trail and park system link commercial areas, neighborhoods and government buildings within Downtown.*



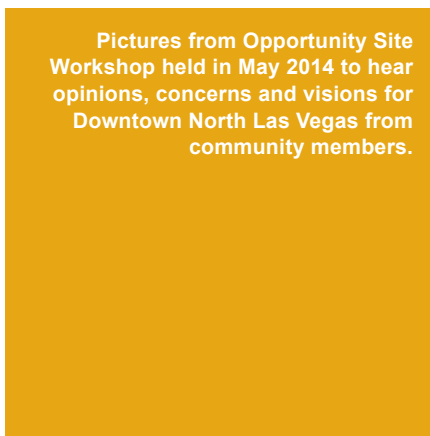
**Top: 14th Street has been rebranded in Denver, CO. Raised crossing islands were added to minimize the pedestrian crossing distances. Colored concrete also better defines crossings.**

**Bottom: View of Downtown Phoenix's street furniture and pedestrian amenities** (Photo credits: Williamson Images/studioINSITE, LLC and <http://phxdp.blogspot.com/>)

Outreach activities provided an opportunity for nearby residents and interested members of the public to revisit this vision, including new suggestions and concerns for the future of Downtown North Las Vegas.<sup>1</sup>

### Community Workshop

Workshop participants expressed various opinions about development in the area. These included suggestions that development be focused around Civic Center Plaza, a vote against mixed use as it infringes on residences and concern about whether building would take place on a potential retail site (the 32-acre Las Flores site), and if so, when it would occur. Participants also commented on aesthetic concerns: suggesting street landscaping, cosmetic improvements and requesting that lawns not be used for parking. The public made a number of suggestions to improve safety and comfort in getting around Downtown including: making it



<sup>1</sup> Outreach events: (1) On May 21, 2014, Southern Nevada Strong and the City of North Las Vegas hosted an open house to seek public input on the site possibilities for the opportunity site located in Downtown North Las Vegas. (2) To gather ideas for the needs of the North Las Vegas business community, 15 businesses along the Las Vegas Boulevard-Lake Mead-Civic Center triangle were interviewed. These interviews were conducted through informal conversations with business owners and managers, who spoke candidly about their visions for the area and for their businesses.

easier to cross major multi-lane thoroughfares (such as Las Vegas and Lake Mead Boulevards) that create a dividing line; providing more sidewalks (especially in residential areas) bike lanes and street lights; better road maintenance; rapid bus service; and removing landscaping or architectural elements such as gates along properties that obstruct traffic visibility.

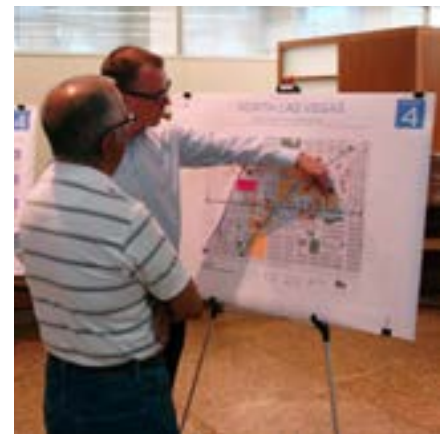
### MetroQuest

Input from the MetroQuest outreach effort (Figures 1 & 2) also provided a foundation for recommendations. MetroQuest is an online community engagement platform that was used in this project. A total of 684 participants provided feedback and suggestions for development of the study area. Participants marked a total of 1838 locations in Downtown North Las Vegas.

### Interviews for potential project ideas

During interviews with local business owners, many participants expressed a need for

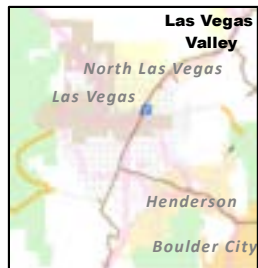
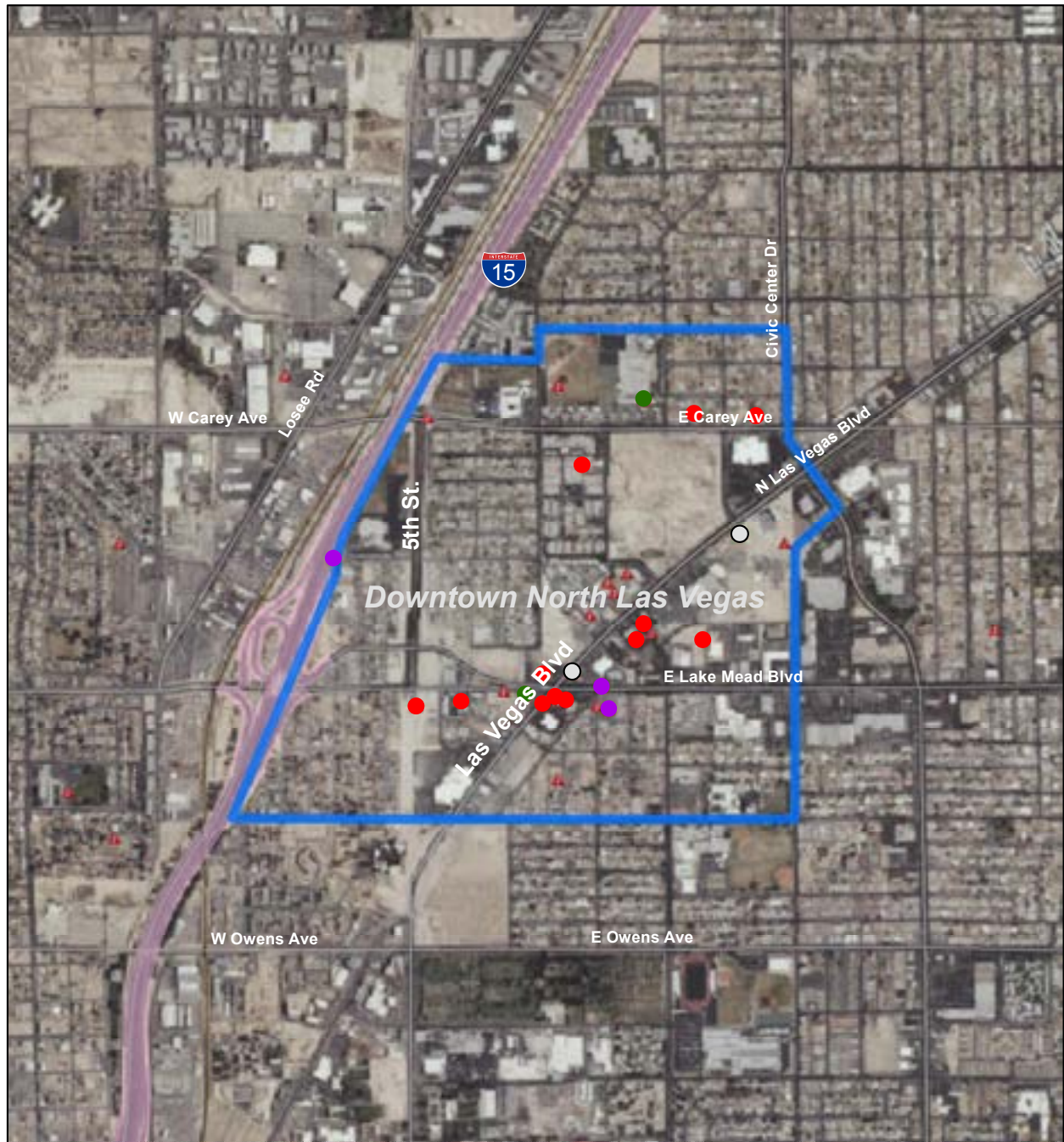
family-oriented and kid-friendly recreation. All businesses mentioned wanting to see more parks nearby. They also wanted greater variety in restaurants, at least one entertainment theater and additional shopping malls—in short, more commercial plazas. Nearly half of the businesses also said they wanted the City to specifically bring some sort of attraction—whether a water park, outdoor mall or theme park—that would draw Southern Nevadans from all over the region. Security and cleanliness were also top concerns that Downtown North Las Vegas business owners want the City to address.



The workshop was held in an open house format that allowed participants to move at their own pace through six stations while providing feedback and engaging in conversation with members of the project team.



FIGURE 2: NORTH LAS VEGAS STUDY AREA MAP SHOWING SAFETY CONCERNS FROM METROQUEST

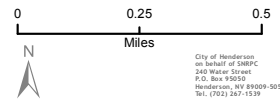


**Downtown North Las Vegas  
Opportunity Sites  
Safety Concerns 2/26 - 3/30**

- Better Lighting
- Crime
- Other
- Vehicle Speed
- Vehicle/ Pedestrian Conflict
- ▲ Safety Concerns



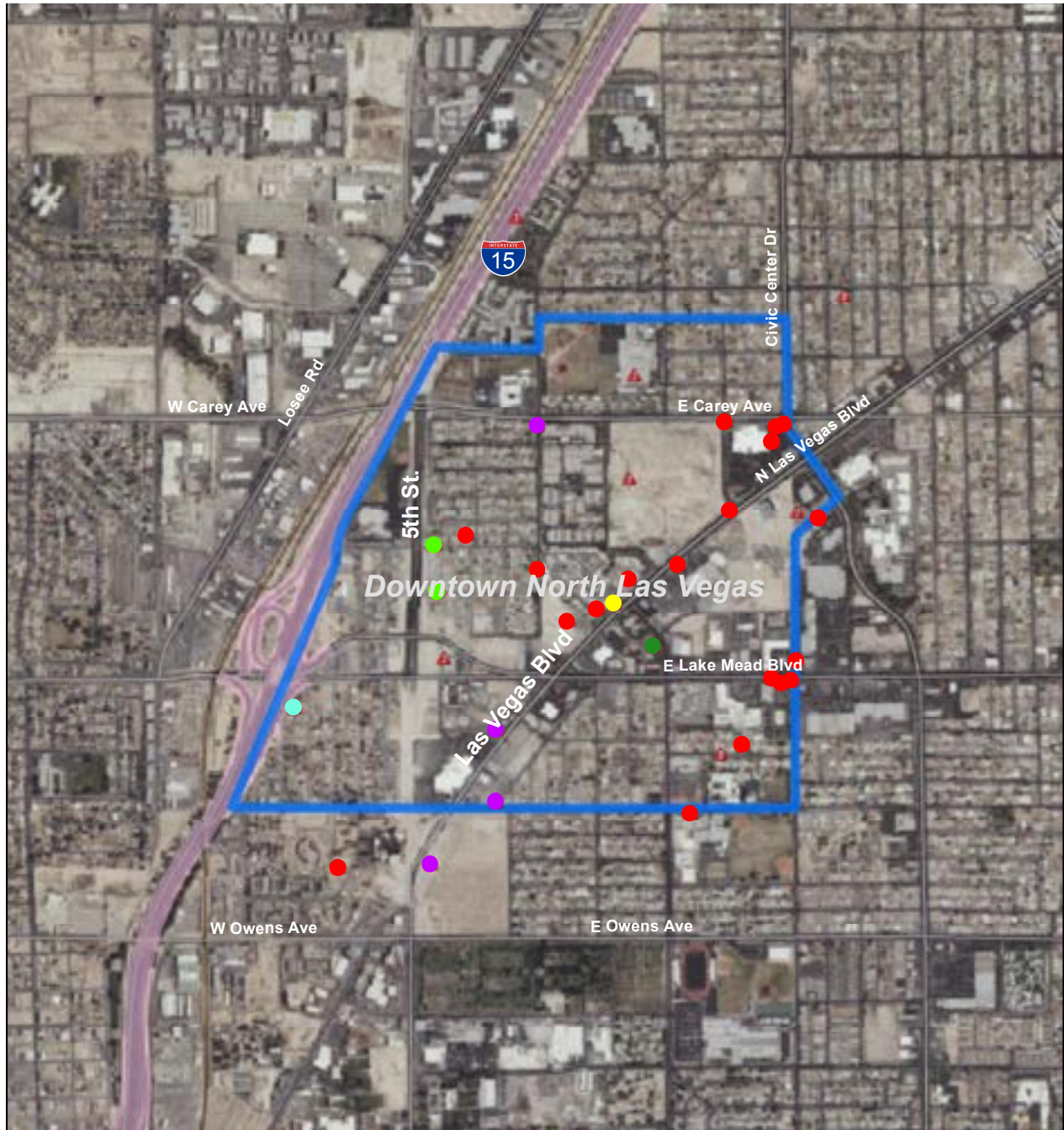
Revised: October 04, 2012  
 Sources: Boulder City Government,  
 Clark County Government,  
 City of Las Vegas Government,  
 City of North Las Vegas Government,  
 City of Henderson Government,  
 and University of Nevada Las Vegas  
 based on Projected Coordinate System:  
 NAD83, StatePlane NV East FIPS 2701 Feet  
 Note: This map is offered as a general reference  
 guide only. Neither warranty of accuracy is  
 intended nor should any be assumed.



City of Henderson  
 in behalf of SHSPC  
 240 Water Street  
 P.O. Box 9055  
 Henderson, NV 89009-5055  
 Tel. (702) 267-1539



FIGURE 3: NORTH LAS VEGAS STUDY AREA MAP SHOWING SAFETY CONCERNS FROM METROQUEST



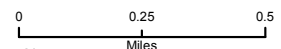
**Downtown North Las Vegas  
Opportunity Sites  
Safety Concerns: 3/31 - 4/14**

- Better Lighting
- Crime
- Crosswalk Needed
- Crosswalk Unsafe
- Vehicle/ Pedestrian Conflict
- Vehicle Speed
- ▲ Safety Concerns



Revised: October 04, 2012  
Source: Boulder City Government,  
Clark County Government,  
City of Las Vegas Government,  
City of North Las Vegas Government,  
City of Henderson Government,  
The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada  
and University of Nevada Las Vegas  
Based on Projected Coordinate System:  
NAD83, StatePlane NV East FIPS 2701 Feet

Note: This map is offered as a general reference  
guide only. Neither warranty of accuracy is  
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## opportunities and barriers

**City Hall, North Vista Hospital, an active business community and surrounding neighborhoods provide a strong foundation for growth and redevelopment. Yet, Downtown North Las Vegas lacks strong definition and identity as a destination for residents and visitors alike.**

The majority of existing buildings are considered unattractive, are outdated, and do not support a walkable business district. In addition, a large amount of surface parking and vacant lots contribute to the lack of a legible built form and organization of the area. Current land values and leasing rates do not support new construction, but the area is seeing new investment from existing building owners and the

revitalization of a larger shopping center centrally located in the area. Coupled with existing businesses, the revitalized shopping center will support the Hispanic/Latino culture of the district and surrounding neighborhoods.

### **OPPORTUNITIES: CREATING A VIBRANT MIXED-USE DISTRICT**

Downtown North Las Vegas presents several opportunities that will help create a vibrant mixed-use district, a defining center of civic life and a local/regional attraction with a strong sense of place. Additional information can be found in the *North Las Vegas Study Area: Opportunities and Barriers Report* (see appendices).



The presence of institutions like North Vista Hospital (top) and the North Las Vegas City Hall (bottom) provide a strong foundation for growth and vitality. Photo credit (bottom): Julie Jacobson

- **Interested and engaged local businesses:** Many local businesses in the area are small enterprises with less than ten employees and locate in the area to have access to the Hispanic/Latino community. They reach their

market through word-of-mouth referrals, recommendations from other local businesses and a few paid advertisements. Not a single existing business owner said they would consider moving his or her shop to a different location.

*Investment Strategy.* Based on the *North Las Vegas Comprehensive Master Plan*, the City has designated much of the Downtown as an ‘Activity Center,’ indicating that it is going to serve as a high-quality defining center of the City with a strong sense of place.



Top and Bottom: City of North Las Vegas, Comprehensive Master Plan (2006) and the North Las Vegas Downtown Master Plan and Investment Strategy are documents that provide direction and planning foundation for Downtown North Las Vegas.

- **Confirmed direction and planning foundation:** There are many plans that discuss the potential of Downtown North Las Vegas. The *2006 City of North Las Vegas Comprehensive Plan* and the *2009 Downtown Master Plan and Investment Strategy* both place emphasis on the Downtown, envisioning it as a mixed-use district and a vibrant city center with a unique identity. Within Downtown, the entire opportunity site also is located within the Downtown Business District where mixed-use projects are encouraged (Mixed Use Development District Overlay), and where the possibility of setting up a Business Improvement District was suggested in the *2009 Downtown Master Plan and*

- **Flexible development standards and supportive guidelines:** Existing development regulations are generous and offer flexibility for future growth potential, including the Downtown Core Subdistrict and Planned Unit Development zoning. The Comprehensive Plan designates more than half of all lands within the Downtown study area (54%) as redevelopment area (R-A District). Strategies in this district include designating areas for intensification of retail, service uses, casino, hotel and entertainment uses, medium-high and high-density residential uses, and also coordinating the streetscape design elements. Design and development guidelines

encourage development that is consistent and compatible with the desired type of transit-oriented development and that is integrated with adjacent residential uses.

- **Good transportation access:**

The site is convenient and accessible to existing transportation corridors, including the I-15 freeway, Las Vegas Boulevard, North Fifth Street and Lake Mead Boulevard.

- **Access to public transportation:**

There is existing bus rapid transit along Lake Mead Boulevard, North Fifth Street and Las Vegas Boulevard and good transit connections to the Downtown Transit Center and surrounding destinations.

- **Transit improvements:** There are recent improvements to local transit infrastructure resulting from the transformation of North Fifth Street to a high-capacity transit corridor. In addition, the City of North Las Vegas, in cooperation with the Regional

Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC), plans to continue improvements to North Fifth Street between Losee Road just north of Carey Avenue and the Northern Beltway. This will provide an enhanced north-south transportation corridor, improve mobility, alleviate traffic congestion, provide transit and multi-use trail facilities and accommodate growth. Funding for improvements to North Fifth Street north of Cheyenne Street has not been identified at this time.

- **Public ownership:** The City Redevelopment Agency owns several parcels of land with development potential within the core of the Downtown Redevelopment Area. This offers an excellent opportunity to design the desired type of transit-oriented development that encourages further investment around the area. Consolidation of parcels to create more intense development with attractive neighborhood gathering spaces and open spaces could also be

explored.

- **Infill potential:** There are opportunities for infill development in and near the Downtown. The *Visioning 2025 Strategic Plan* calls for promoting high quality residential infill and mixed-use development as a strategy for the City to pursue in the coming years. The City's Comprehensive Plan mentions that past development in North Las Vegas has grown northward, leaving vacant parcels of various sizes within developed areas in the Downtown, which have now become prime opportunities for infill development.
- **Pedestrian activity potential:** There is potential for a high level of pedestrian activity in the area due to the proximity of residential neighborhood areas to the north and south. The City recently made improvements to North Fifth Street between Owens Avenue and I-15 to include landscaped multi-use trails, streetlights, a pedestrian bridge and other improvements including traffic signals.

- **Civic Center draw:** Major public institutions such as the Development Services Center and Municipal Court generate a large number of visitors into Downtown North Las Vegas each day. This draw has the potential to attract new development and private investment to serve visitors.
- **New and planned investments:** There have been several recent investments in both the public and private sectors. Agora Realty is in the process of redeveloping the Civic Center Shopping Center (east of City Hall along Lake Mead). A future phase of that project aims to develop a community plaza with micro-retail opportunities. There are also recent improvements to local transit infrastructure resulting from the transformation of North Fifth Street to a high capacity transit corridor.
- **Cultural diversity:** The strong presence of the Hispanic/Latino community (in 2012, 39% of the population in North Las Vegas was Hispanic/Latino, compared

to 29.8% in Clark County) enhances the cultural fabric of the community and contributes to a unique sense of place.

### **BARRIERS: WHAT IS KEEPING THE AREA FROM DEVELOPING?**

#### **Market Barriers**

- **Revitalization potential:** Other potential development sites are closer to the core of Downtown and enjoy better connectivity than the opportunity site. Development of this site may not be an ideal starting point for Downtown revitalization.
- **Large amount of vacant land nearby:** While many investors are looking for the next opportunity, the amount of vacant land and redevelopable property nearby may create a perception that the future of Downtown is too uncertain. This potential barrier could be an opportunity to demonstrate how the right project can be successful and transformative.
- **Ability to attract new businesses:** Poverty is a significant concern in North Las Vegas. Nearby Las Vegas has the highest concentration

of shelters and social services in Southern Nevada. Late 20th century stereotypes of violence and danger persist, though violent crime in the area is actually lower than other parts of the Las Vegas valley.

#### **Transportation Barriers**

- **Poor connectivity and long block lengths:** The existing Downtown street network is not well connected. While the opportunity site has good access, automobile circulation in Downtown is limited, with large parcels, fences and gates negatively impacting travel in some areas. Current conditions throughout the study area include a lack of protected pedestrian crossings and an abundance of narrow sidewalks with obstructions such as utility boxes and street lights. Combined with long street blocks, these conditions discourage walking as mode of transportation in the study area. In addition, the diagonal trajectory of Las Vegas Boulevard results in large, oddly shaped parcels, which can further worsen conditions for pedestrians.



- **Surface parking:** There are abundant parking lots immediately adjacent to individual uses, with minimal shared parking or coordinated parking strategies. The placement of parking between businesses and sidewalks contributes to an unfriendly pedestrian realm.
- **Pedestrian and bicycle safety:** The narrow sidewalks in Downtown have no buffers to separate from high-speed traffic on adjacent roadways. Additionally, crossing the multi-lane arterials at intersections may be challenging for pedestrians. On East Lake Mead Boulevard, for example, a pedestrian must cross eight travel lanes. Vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and people with disabilities, may have difficulty crossing eight travel lanes within standard crossing intervals. In some cases, streets designated as bicycle routes, such as Las Vegas Boulevard, experience high-speed automobile travel, making it unsafe and unwelcoming to potential cyclists.



Top: Abundant surface parking creates unfriendly pedestrian realm

Center: Long crosswalk at intersection of East Lake Mead Boulevard and N Las Vegas Boulevard

Bottom: Long block lengths in Downtown North Las Vegas



- **Transit access and safety:** MAX Transit and standard bus shelters are located on narrow sidewalks in close proximity to the street, which can create an unfriendly environment for transit riders. In addition, many subdivisions have walls or fences that block pedestrian connections between the residential neighborhoods and the transit corridor. The land west of Las Vegas Boulevard has limited east-west connectivity, creating barriers to the only potential pedestrian connection between nearby neighborhoods and the MAX line. This results in extreme out-of-direction travel and significant added time for potential transit users.

#### Land Use Barriers

- **Conflicting policies or lack of policies, for development intensification:** Certain sections of the zoning ordinance allow for development that may conflict with other City policies that support denser, transit-oriented development. For example, some of the high-density residential-zoned parcels currently are subject to 35-foot building height restrictions.

These same zones also call for wide building setbacks, similar to those required for larger-lot, lower-density residential development. While current zoning allows for some flexibility, some zoning may need refinement to allow for more intense uses. For example, a large percentage of land Downtown is currently zoned exclusively for low-to-medium density residential, which does not permit the type of higher-density housing envisioned. This zoning allows for larger lots with a density range between 4.5 to 13 units per acre, which is more common in suburban development patterns.

- **Lack of identity and sense of place:** During our interviews with business owners and managers, all of the participants mentioned one or more of the following words in connection with the City's reputation: ugly, poor, insecure, crime-ridden, dangerous or low-income. Vacant lots, large surface parking areas and separation of uses prevent a common identity or sense of unity to strengthen the development potential of the Downtown area.

- **Surrounding development:** Development in the surrounding area is occurring, but it is not necessarily transit-supportive. Much of the surrounding zoning is general commercial, general industrial or County zoning, which could result in a range of uses that do not align with the envisioned future of Downtown.



Top: Vacant lots and separation of uses weakens the development potential of Downtown North Las Vegas. (Photo credit: Google Streetview)



## actions overview

The following tables summarize the actions and strategies needed to address barriers and position for opportunities in Downtown North Las Vegas. Chapter 5 provides additional detail.

**TABLE 1: DOWNTOWN NORTH LAS VEGAS—ACTIONS OVERVIEW**

PRIMARY ACTIONS	ACTION	POSSIBLE LEAD ROLE	POSSIBLE PARTNERS	CAPITAL FUNDS REQ'D	TIMELINE
Improve safety for all transportation modes	Implement the transportation recommendations included in the <i>Downtown North Las Vegas Major Corridors Study</i> and the <i>Downtown Master Plan</i> .	NLV	NDOT, RTC	\$6M	Ongoing
	Design and construct short-term pedestrian crossing safety improvements/ streetscape enhancement on Lake Mead at McDaniel, Lake Mead at Bruce, McDaniel at Hunkins, as well as at least one mid-block crossing of Las Vegas Boulevard between Lake Mead and Civic Center Drive.	NLV	NDOT, Agora, North Vista Hospital	\$50-250K	6 months-2 years
	Focus short-term landscaping and street furniture investments on the area bounded by Las Vegas Boulevard, Civic Center Drive and Lake Mead Boulevard, with an emphasis on McDaniel and Lake Mead Boulevard near Civic Center Shopping Center and North Vista Hospital. Improvements should focus on shade and other features (public sculptures, murals, benches, utility box wraps, intersection painting) to improve pedestrian experience, and make walking distances and climatic conditions acceptable.	NLV (RDA), NDOT	RTC, North Vista, other private property owners, sponsors	\$50K-\$1M	6 months-2 years
	Expand City of NLV and RTC partnership linking sidewalk improvements with transit stop improvements.	NLV, RTC	N/A	\$75K-\$1M	Ongoing

TABLE 1: DOWNTOWN NORTH LAS VEGAS—ACTIONS OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

PRIMARY ACTIONS	ACTION	POSSIBLE LEAD ROLE	POSSIBLE PARTNERS	CAPITAL FUNDS REQ'D	TIMELINE
Create a safe and attractive environment	Increase code enforcement. Identify and secure funding for more frequent inspections and assessments.	NLV	NLV businesses	\$50K	Ongoing
	Graffiti abatement program. Consider increasing fee on water utilities to help to fund program; could also be funded by businesses.	NLV	NLV businesses		
	Establish “Clean and Safe” program. In conjunction with an Improvement District (see below) or as a stand-alone effort, establish enhanced maintenance and patrol for Downtown area.	NLV	Business leaders, business groups	\$50-250K per year	6 months-1 year
	Enhance home improvement assistance program. Identify funding mechanism(s) and design program to support homeowner investments in existing housing stock.	NLV	Non-profit, HUD	TBD	Ongoing
	Restructure and market façade improvement program. Identify demonstration projects, marketing materials and design assistance support; target Lake Mead Boulevard as a starting place.	NLV	Local architect/s, business owners, UNLV’s Architecture program	\$25- 50K	6 months-1 year



Left:  
 San Diego’s Clean and Safe Program  
 Maintenance Ambassadors.  
 (Photo credits: downtownsandiego.org)



TABLE 1: DOWNTOWN NORTH LAS VEGAS—ACTIONS OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

PRIMARY ACTIONS	ACTION	POSSIBLE LEAD ROLE	POSSIBLE PARTNERS	CAPITAL FUNDS REQ'D	TIMELINE
Improve district identity	Rebranding (renaming, logo, etc.): Gateways, signage, wayfinding. Develop business district map and marketing materials. Build on the energy of businesses that are already locating here—Hispanic / Latino-oriented businesses and restaurants.	Business group	NLV; Latin Chamber; CCSN graphic artists	\$50K	6 months-1 year
	Increase events and programming in the Downtown area: Work collaboratively with public and private groups to identify potential activities and events that will induce direct or indirect economic support of Downtown businesses. Identification of events and activities could potentially attract a broader demographic to increase activity. (Lake Mead Taco Tour, Mexican Independence Day Celebration, etc.)	Business group	NLV; Latin Chamber	TBD	Ongoing
	Work with the Arts Committee to establish a mural program and/or other arts initiatives.	Business group	NLV, Metro Arts Council of Southern Nevada	\$50K	6 months-1 year
	Improve open space amenities: Program and promote existing amenities, such as the City Hall splash pad and front lawn area; Support Agora Shopping Center Plaza.	NLV	Agora, Business group, non-profits	\$50K-2M	6 months-2 years



Left: District identity can be strengthened by promoting existing open space amenities such as the City Hall splash pad and front lawn area (Photo courtesy: Google Streetview). Right: Dancers celebrate El Grito in Las Vegas at Fiesta Las Vegas Latino Parade & Festival (Photo courtesy: <https://www.multivu.com/>)

TABLE 1: DOWNTOWN NORTH LAS VEGAS—ACTIONS OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

PRIMARY ACTIONS	ACTION	POSSIBLE LEAD ROLE	POSSIBLE PARTNERS	CAPITAL FUNDS REQ'D	TIMELINE
Support existing businesses and create opportunities	Grow a collaborative business group. Continue to develop and build relationships between business community and other community organizations for mentoring, skill building, fundraising and development. City role to assist with convening and chartering.	NLV and Agora	Area businesses; community members	\$15-30K	6 months-1 year
	Create a Business Improvement District (BID) or a similar organization where businesses levy a fee on themselves to pay for promotion, beautification, events and safety that provide a mutual benefit. BID's currently are not allowed in Nevada.	Business Group	NLV; International Downtown Association; Main Street Coalitions	\$10-15K	1-3 years
	Establish and promote sources for small business loans.	NLV	Local Community Banks; Foundations; Developers; Property owners	\$10-15K	Ongoing
	Support new food and dining options in the Downtown area. Explore food cart hub and/or community kitchen concept	NLV	Restaurant owners; Culinary Workers Union and schools	\$10-15K	Ongoing
Support new development	Provide technical assistance to potential developers who would like to use alternative financing tools in the area. (NMTCs, CDBG Section 108, etc.)	NLV	Developers, Community Development Financial Institutions, Other banks	\$10-15K	Ongoing
	Establish better working relationships with large property owners.	NLV	Property owners	-	Ongoing
	Leverage existing property holdings at the Lake Mead Gateway area (the "Island") and other areas of Downtown. Consider selling property with conditions on the purpose/form of future development and using the proceeds for Downtown improvements.	NLV	-	-	1-6 months
	Provide public incentives for development that help to further the community's vision for Downtown	NLV	Developers	-	Ongoing



## actions detail

**This chapter elaborates on all of the action steps that were specified in Chapter Four. Each action step identifies specific implementation barriers that must be overcome and then elaborates on specific actions the City can take to overcome those barriers. This chapter also includes successful case studies to inspire and exemplify the actions.**

### IMPROVE SAFETY FOR ALL TRANSPORTATION MODES

A safe transportation system encourages walking, biking and transit use, while accommodating motorists through and to Downtown North Las Vegas. Discussions with local businesses pointed to the need to improve sidewalks and create safer crossings. Safety

improvements increase mobility options for workers, shoppers and visitors within Downtown, creating a more economically vibrant and thriving economy. There are several barriers to overcome when implementing this action:

- There are several **unsafe street crossings**. At most intersections, there is a crosswalk on only one side, leading pedestrians to potentially have to cross the roadway intersection three times to reach their destination legally.<sup>1</sup> Distances between existing marked crossings are also a barrier. Many of the existing marked crosswalks are hard-to-see, faded or missing entirely. Businesses on the Las Vegas Boulevard corridor noted the high incidence of jaywalking

<sup>1</sup> North Las Vegas – TOD Transportation Opportunities and Barriers Memo, Nelson Nygaard, April 15, 2014.

and car accidents, mainly because the distance between crosswalks is too great and pedestrians prefer to risk a dash across the street rather than walk to the nearest crosswalk.

- **Physical barriers** limit efficient, safe and direct travel options. The land west of Las Vegas Boulevard has limited east-west connectivity. North Fifth Street also serves as a physical barrier separating the east and west portions of Downtown. These barriers cause extreme out-of-direction travel and significant added time for pedestrians, cyclists and transit users. In addition, limited connectivity exists between residential neighborhoods and the Downtown commercial core.
- Many streets are not interconnected and motor **vehicle circulation is poor.**

Automobile circulation within Downtown is limited, with large parcels, fences and gates restricting connectivity in some areas.

- The **abundance of driveways** creates traffic conflicts for all users. Between 2008 and 2011, the most common crash type within the Downtown study area were angle collisions and rear-end collisions (Figure 2).<sup>2</sup> Both types of crashes may

occur when motorists exit and enter out of the driveways. The driveways create more points of conflict with non-motorists and may increase potential crashes.

- **Unsignalized intersections and median openings** can create safety hazards. Crash data for the Downtown study area also indicated a high number of crashes occurring from unsignalized intersections and median openings (angle

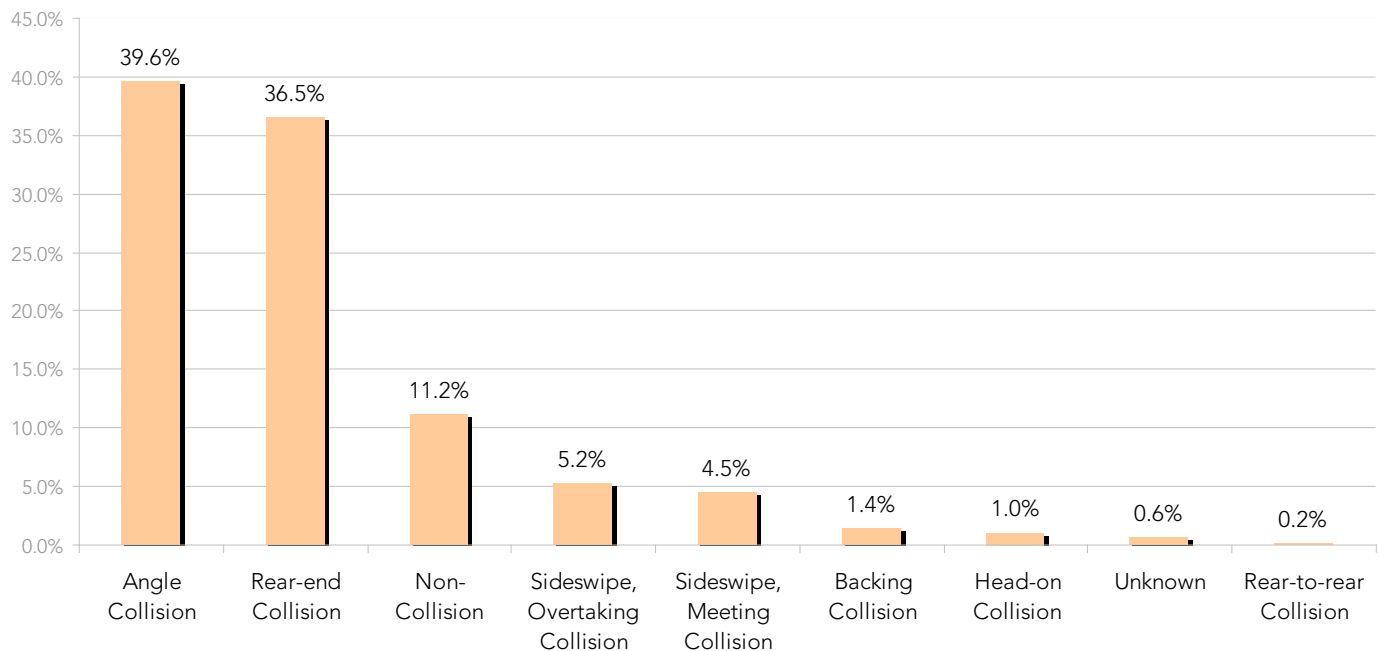
crashes).<sup>3</sup>

- There are a number of locations throughout the Downtown study area that are **lacking sidewalks**, or have sidewalk obstructions that limit pedestrian connectivity, including utility poles and railings.

<sup>2</sup> City of North Las Vegas Major Downtown Corridor Study (2014).

<sup>3</sup> City of North Las Vegas Major Downtown Corridor Study (2014).

**FIGURE 2: NORTH LAS VEGAS DOWNTOWN STUDY AREA CRASH TYPE (2008-2011)**



Source: NDOT Traffic and Safety Division, 2012; Parsons Brinckerhoff. City of North Las Vegas Major Downtown Corridor Study, 2014.



- Unmarked crossings, sidewalks with obstructions and a lack of curb ramps pose barriers to accessibility at many Downtown intersections. *The Comprehensive Trails and Bicycle Master Plan (2011)* mentions that sidewalks built prior to 1999 may have obstructions such as street signs, light poles and other utility equipment. Such obstructions make sidewalks **non-compliant with ADA**. On roadways such as Las Vegas Boulevard and East Lake Mead Boulevard, sidewalks are narrow and may share space with utility poles.
- There is a **lack of bike infrastructure**, with no existing bicycle lanes or signage Downtown. Designating a lead staff person to coordinate the bicycle facility development may overcome the limited support for the planned system (as per the *North Las Vegas Comprehensive Trails & Bikeways Master Plan*).

### Actions to Improve Safety

#### Implement recommended transportation improvements:

- To the north of East Lake Mead Boulevard, the nearest at-grade street crossing is nearly a half mile north at East Carey Avenue. There is a pedestrian overpass across North 5th street at East Judson Avenue; however, residents must either climb stairs or add an extra 715 feet to their trip through the use of ramps to access the overpass. For a person with limited mobility, this can be a **significant deterrent**.<sup>4</sup>
- The *Downtown North Las Vegas Major Corridors Plan* and the *Downtown Master Plan* outline a range of transportation improvements needed within Downtown. These include:
  1. Redeveloping Las Vegas Boulevard with medians, wider, detached sidewalks, landscaped buffers and marked crossings;
  2. Targeted intersection improvements along Lake Mead Boulevard; and
  3. Adding new pedestrian and bike connections throughout Downtown.

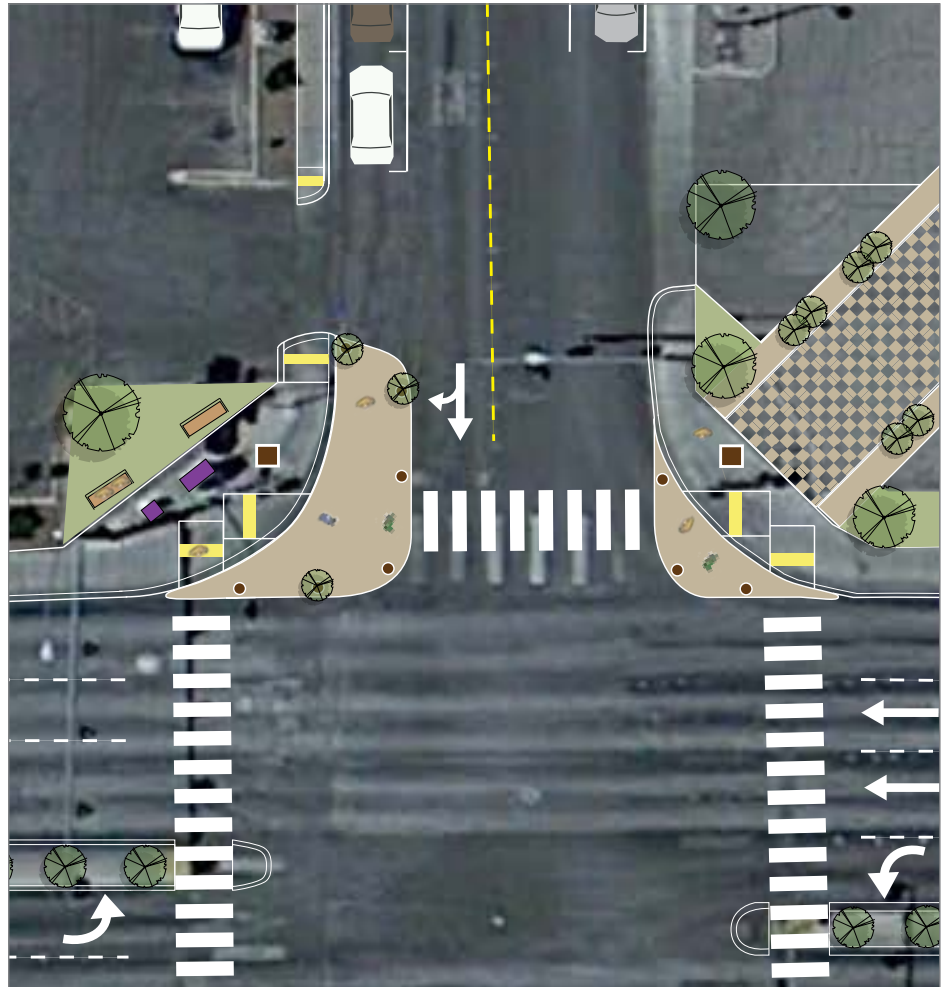
#### Pursue short-term safety improvements:

- Design and construct short-term pedestrian crossing safety improvements or streetscape enhancement on Lake Mead at McDaniel, Lake Mead at Bruce and McDaniel at Hunkins, as well as at least one mid-block crossing of Las Vegas Boulevard between Lake Mead and Civic Center Drive.
- Some of the short term improvements suggested here can be incorporated into the long term projects for Downtown that are in concept and/or design phase. These include a Complete Streets project for Las Vegas Boulevard from Tonopah to Carey and on Carey from Revere to Pecos, Pedestrian Safety Improvements on Las Vegas Boulevard from Evans to Pecos and the Lake Mead Couplet.

<sup>4</sup> North Las Vegas – TOD Transportation Opportunities and Barriers Memo, Nelson Nygaard,

April 15, 2014.

- The interim design concept at the North Bruce Street and East Lake Mead intersection consists of median island refuges to improve pedestrian safety across East Lake Mead Boulevard. Additional intersection improvements include ADA compliant curb ramps and new marked crosswalks. As a designated bicycle route, North Bruce Street is designed to accommodate cycle tracks in both directions to enhance multimodal connections across the City.



- At the high traffic volume McDaniel and East Lake Mead intersection, the interim safety improvements include painted bulb-outs, to shorten crosswalk lengths and help calm traffic (see *appendices*). The interim design concept also illustrates a scheme for a plaza entryway that could be completed by future development of the adjacent property.
- For the McDaniel and East Hunkins Drive intersection (see *appendices*), the recommended improvements include

painted bulb-outs and painted crosswalks with ADA compliant curb ramps. The interim design includes movable planters and appropriate street trees. There is also an opportunity to paint the intersection with a locally inspired art theme.

**Top:** Interim safety improvements at McDaniel and East Lake Mead intersection.

**Bottom:** McDaniel and East Hunkins Drive intersection painted with a locally inspired art theme.



### Focus on short-term landscaping and street furniture investments:

- The area bounded by Las Vegas Boulevard, Civic Center Drive and Lake Mead Boulevard should be improved in the near term, with an emphasis on McDaniel and Lake Mead Boulevard near Civic Center Shopping Center and North Vista Hospital. Improvements should focus on shade and other features (public sculptures, murals, benches, etc.) to improve the pedestrian experience, and make walking distances and climate conditions acceptable. One such example can be seen at the northwest corner of the McDaniel and East Lake Mead intersection where opportunities exist to accommodate new street furniture and landscaping treatments to improve pedestrian experience (see *appendices*).

### Integrate street and transit improvements in partnership with RTC:

- In collaboration with RTC (and NDOT depending on the facility), the City of North Las Vegas should work to

strategically locate transit stop and adjacent pedestrian realm improvements in areas that:

- 1) Currently have poor pedestrian facilities and are identified in the Downtown Corridor Study for improvements; and
- 2) Have active development, redevelopment or rehabilitation projects planned or underway. With limited resources and a large area requiring improvements, it will be critical to establish a strong nexus between public-realm improvements and private-realm investments.



### Case Study: Olvera Street (Los Angeles, CA)

The market plaza at Olvera Street dates back to the founding of Los Angeles by Spanish settlers in the late 1700s. It has historic value and is home to businesses, restaurants and important religious observations for the community. Uniquely, Olvera is a named alley, but businesses have since turned to face the alley instead of their original streets. It is a pedestrian environment, closed off to vehicle traffic. Olvera has become a major tourist destination.

### CREATE A SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE ENVIRONMENT

A safe and attractive environment draws businesses and visitors, while creating a welcoming place of which residents can be proud. Business owners also confirmed that a safe and attractive environment with a common identity are key to the success of Downtown North Las Vegas. Barriers to overcome include:

- The area is generally **unfriendly for pedestrians**. Long street blocks in Downtown make it inconvenient and unappealing for pedestrian travel. There is an abundance

of surface parking lots located between businesses and sidewalks, increasing the distance non-motorists must travel.

- There is a **negative perception** of Downtown. Many visitors and business owners have a poor perception of Downtown, and are concerned about homelessness, poverty and crime.
- Downtown has **no shared or unique identity**, to set the area apart from other communities.
- There is an abundance of **vacant and underused parcels**. The amount of vacant land and redevelopable property within and around Downtown creates a perception that the future of Downtown is too uncertain.

### Actions to Create a Safe and Attractive Environment

#### Direct additional resources to increase code enforcement:

- A targeted code enforcement program can reduce code violations while restoring the



look and feel of Downtown. Increased enforcement should be used in conjunction with other programs, such as property improvement programs, infill redevelopment incentives and neighborhood involvement and clean-up campaigns.

#### **Expand the graffiti abatement program:**

- Local awareness, education, volunteerism and enforcement are the primary components of this program. There are a number of stakeholders that should be involved in the early planning stages of this program, including law enforcement, area schools, City leaders, residents, business owners and community and youth groups. Working with area partners, the program should include an accessible response system to report graffiti that is monitored by zone or block leaders who can respond and initiate abatement. The City could consider increasing fees on water utilities to help to fund the program, and/or seek funding from local businesses.

#### **Establish a Clean and Safe program:**

- In conjunction with an Improvement District or as a stand-alone effort, the City should establish enhanced maintenance and patrol for Downtown. Businesses within this area would elect to pay a fee to raise money that supplements publicly-financed services for neighborhood improvement, including cleaning, security, community justice services, market research and retail advocacy. A board of directors, composed of property owners, representatives and interested citizens would govern the program.

#### **Evaluate the success of home improvement assistance programs:**

- In 2014, the City of North Las Vegas launched two programs for home improvement and assistance. These include the Single Family Owner Occupied Rehabilitation Program, which provides assistance to low and moderate-income households to improve their

living conditions and the Blight Removal Program.<sup>5</sup> The City should revisit these programs and evaluate their effectiveness on Downtown properties. The City could also set up an annual monitoring system to revisit and make necessary improvements to these programs. A similar program in the region is carried out by the City of Henderson. This program provides grants to property owners with residential buildings located in specific geographic areas. The program stipulates that property owners make a financial contribution toward the improvements—such as exterior painting, landscaping and front yard fencing in order to qualify for the grant. In addition, the applicant must provide at least two cost estimates from licensed contractors and the lowest estimate will be chosen. In Henderson, the maximum benefit is \$1,500 with an 85% grant and 15% owner split.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <http://cityofnorthlasvegas.com/Departments/ParksAndRecreation/PDFs/NeighborhoodServices>

<sup>6</sup> [http://cityofhenderson.com/redevelopment\\_agency/docs/Incentive%20Programs/06.2013%20Update/Program%20Guidelines%20and%20Application.pdf](http://cityofhenderson.com/redevelopment_agency/docs/Incentive%20Programs/06.2013%20Update/Program%20Guidelines%20and%20Application.pdf)

**Foster a civic organization:**

- Local non-profit organizations, interested residents, schools and other community organizations can volunteer to promote civic pride and help in neighborhood beautification efforts. Model programs in other cities include organizations such as Pride Inc.<sup>7</sup> that have local chapters in neighborhoods. These chapters organize activities such as painting homes to help owners who are no longer able to maintain the property. Volunteers include high school students and community members.

**Restructure and market facade improvement program:**

- The City of North Las Vegas Facade Rehabilitation Program offers up to \$100,000 in funds for facade improvements to commercial, retail and office properties located within the boundaries of the City's Redevelopment Areas. At this time, the program is inactive and has not received much interest from property owners.

We propose that the City reconfigure its program in the following ways:

- Clarify program goals and geographies by creating a set of materials for distribution;
- Actively market the program through in-person meetings with property owners along Lake Mead and Las Vegas Boulevards;
- Stipulate a timeframe in which the improvements must be made, or funding will revert to the City;
- Set up an easy-to-access application with an associated annual deadline;
- Consider allocating some of the available money as a revolving loan program or initiate a property owner match, which would allow the program to reach more businesses and require that business owners have some ownership over the improvements;
- Develop a list of partner

contractors who know about the program and can provide quick bids for potential projects;

- Develop design guidelines that promote the visual aesthetic put forward in the *2009 Downtown Master Plan and Investment Strategy*; and
- Co-market this program with energy-efficiency upgrade programs for commercial buildings.



Above: Advertising materials for the Fort Wayne, IN façade grant program

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.prideincorporated.org/>

## IMPROVE DISTRICT IDENTITY

Downtown needs a common identity that will promote a sense of ownership and pride. District branding can add to a unique sense of place, attracting businesses and visitors to explore the neighborhood, shop, stay and return. The community identified three key goals for revitalizing Downtown North Las Vegas—all related to strengthening a common identity. These include: making Downtown North Las Vegas a local and regional destination with a unique identity; branding and marketing Downtown to showcase its unique sense of place and identity and; celebrating its distinct culture by establishing Downtown as a cultural center. Barriers to overcome include:

- The area has several **vacant and under-used lots** that dilute the look and feel of Downtown.
- There is an **overall lack of well-defined public spaces**, public art or cultural space to celebrate the unique local history and culture.
- **Large surface parking**

**areas** detract from the common identify of Downtown.

- The **separation of land uses** prevents a common identity or sense of unity to strengthen the development potential of the Downtown.
- The **lack of a clearly defined boundary and common brand** are also barriers that limit a sense of place and identity.

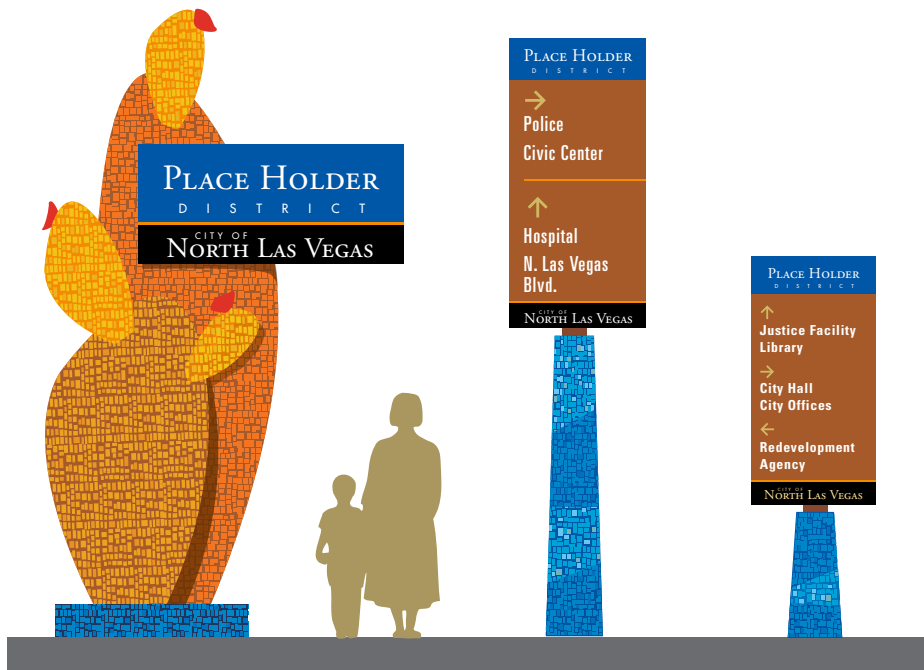
### Actions to Improve District Identity

#### Develop an identity branding campaign:

- Focusing on image, identity and branding will be essential in making the Downtown a local and regional destination and to celebrate the culture of the area. *The Downtown Master Plan and Investment Strategy (2009)* recommends a distinct name for the Downtown North Las Vegas area. The local community should be directly involved in the naming and branding effort to promote a strong

sense of ownership and community pride.

- Additional efforts will include targeted marketing campaigns to reposition Downtown North Las Vegas in the minds of existing and potential residents, businesses and investors. Developing a business district map and marketing materials that incorporate the new logo and name would further reinforce the brand. Examples of the targeted efforts could include setting up a committee which is dedicated to developing and carrying out various marketing campaigns, creating a marketing theme that establishes a feeling that there is new investment happening Downtown and developing a separate website using the new brand that promotes the neighborhood's businesses and provides key contacts.
- The common branding can also be carried forth in all signage and wayfinding elements. Gateways,



Top: Designs for signage and gateway monument identified in *Downtown Master Plan and Investment Strategy Report (2009)* Bottom: Gateway Monument implemented at Las Vegas Boulevard and North 5th Street (Photo courtesy: Google Street View)

signage and banners will help distinguish Downtown North Las Vegas from the surrounding community and create a cohesive

and unique identity. *The City of North Las Vegas Downtown Master Plan and Investment Strategy Report (2009)* identified designs for signage and gateway monuments. Implementing signage and gateway monuments with the recommended color palette and materials at key intersections, entry points and bus/transit shelters will help reinforce the Downtown identity and help in orienting visitors.

**Increase events and programming in Downtown:**

- The City needs a guiding document and a district management agency such as a Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) to serve as a booster for the neighborhood. Working with area partners, the City should seek the organization of a local management agency to facilitate events programming and to promote business, attractions and activities in Downtown North Las Vegas. Additionally the area must leverage its cultural diversity and the presence of a large Hispanic/Latino community by embracing this identity and marketing



itself as the City’s cultural center. Some of the notable examples of such successful transformations/collaborations are enclosed in the Hispanic/Latino District Case Studies (see *appendices*) at the end of this report.

#### Promote landlord incentives and recognition:

- Organizing an ongoing City Club with elected leaders, business owners and citizens would act as a platform to discuss ways to improve property owner and business owner relations in the community. This group could also organize reward programs for businesses that have taken initiatives for building improvements. This could be in the form of a “Most Improved Building Façade” award, as an example. The City of North Las Vegas could also organize a free training program for landlords that illustrates how to be a proactive property manager, including code compliance, applicant screening and how to recognize and deal with drug and other illegal activity (*Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Strategies*). The City could

also set up a “Good Landlord Program.”

#### Work with the Arts Committee to establish a mural program and/or other arts initiatives:

- The City of North Las Vegas should work with its Arts Steering Committee to create a mural program that engages the community. Murals are an increasingly popular public art form that adds vibrancy and vitality to the built landscape for relatively little monetary investment. Many communities in the United States have mural programs. To get a mural designed or commissioned, a neighborhood has to organize and apply, contribute time and energy, and agree on the themes and images to be represented. Murals connect people to discuss what is important and how they want to identify their neighborhood. Participants can include nonprofit groups, arts groups, residents, congregations, political representatives and business leaders. The Clark County Arts Commission and the City of Las Vegas Arts Commission are two successful models or partners.

#### Improve open space amenities:

- Welcoming public spaces can help Downtown North Las Vegas become a local and regional destination. These spaces should be designed for a range of activities, large and small, to encourage gathering, social interaction, recreation and demonstration.
- These spaces should incorporate the City’s Hispanic/Latino culture through flexible gathering spaces that allow for open-air markets, food festivals, special events and celebrations. Constructing interpretive spaces that promote and allow visitors to engage with the local culture, environment and history is also recommended. Public spaces for recreation appropriate to the desert environment such as spray grounds, picnic shelters to provide shade and seating can also be incorporated. At the City Hall fountain and plaza, amenities should be designed to include improved seating, shade structures and benches, in order to showcase this location as a resource for community members and as a space for public events.



events might include larger concerts and themed weekend-long events. Given the potentially catalytic nature of the rehabilitation project, the City should also consider providing a financial contribution to the project. Finally, the City or business group should promote this space in the business district map and other City-wide marketing materials.

Above: Denver Art Museum has a long history of engaging Hispanic/Latino audiences regularly partner with local artists to incorporate in their open spaces the many perspectives found in the local community (Photo Courtesy: <http://includuseum.com/>)

#### Organize events at Agora Shopping Center Plaza:

- As part of the Civic Center revitalization project, developers are planning a central plaza with outdoor seating. The space may include a stage, a children's play area and other community amenities. The City or Downtown area business group should work with Agora to program the space with small and large events. Weekly events could include a craft market, art show, concert series, etc., while quarterly or annual

Workshop participants identified the need for urban open space that is close to shopping amenities. To encourage more urban open spaces within Downtown, the City can provide incentives or establish partnerships for the development of an urban public space in the new development.

## Case Study: South 12th Street (Tucson, AZ)

The South 12th Avenue district is overseen by the South Side Business Coalition (founded 2012). The Coalition's goal is to turn the street into a destination like Olvera Street in Los Angeles. The district is 2.4 miles long and has suffered from neglect, crime, litter, and broken infrastructure, yet it continues to attract Hispanic/Latino business owners and patrons. Like most Hispanic/Latino corridors, the Hispanic/Latino community is strong, but not politically active. This is common because immigrant status, community self-sufficiency, and limited English language skills tend to isolate Hispanic/Latino communities. South 12th Avenue has the mayor's support, but has been unable to get enough votes to pass an improvement bond and failed to secure a vital grant.

### SUPPORT EXISTING BUSINESSES AND CREATE OPPORTUNITIES:

Supporting businesses and creating opportunities is a vital component to the success of revitalizing a business corridor. The average citizen does not have access to, nor knowledge of, every possible economic resource. They do however,



have good ideas about what they want their communities to be like and what kinds of retail and services will work there. Support for businesses creates a thriving and inter-dependent business community that will advocate for each other and reinvest in Downtown. Barriers to overcome include:

- Many residents near Las Vegas Boulevard do not speak English as their native language. Lack of English skills makes this population vulnerable at every level. When people are unable to meet their basic needs, they will be less able to contribute to a vibrant retail district. The **language barrier** also isolates immigrant communities, making them more self-reliant and less likely to reach out for assistance.
- The Hispanic/Latino business community contends with **litter, graffiti, unsafe pedestrian environments, disconnection, and a perception of violence** that keeps people away.
- Within one mile of the Downtown study area, **retail vacancy rates** were as low as 2% in 2010 and have steadily climbed to as high as 15% since.
- The **average building** within a one-mile and three-mile radius of the Downtown study area was built in 1979 and 1963, respectively, compared to 1993 for Clark County.
- Within one mile of the Downtown study area, **rent per square foot** is \$22.01 compared to \$19.30 for Clark County (annualized).





### Case Study: New Alisal Business District (Salinas, CA)

The Salinas United Business Association (SUBA) was created in order to manage the growth of the Alisal District. The SUBA business improvement district is the primary tool for SUBA to effect change and raise money. This BID is supported by the City of Salinas Economic Development Department and is located in the Salinas Valley Enterprise Zone. SUBA provides beautification and marketing, street clean up and business training for members.

- Within this same area, 39% of the population **did not graduate from high school**, compared with 15% for all of Clark County.

#### Actions to Support Existing Businesses and Create Opportunities

##### Develop a collaborative business group:

- Work collaboratively with both public and private groups to identify potential activities and events that will induce direct or indirect economic support of Downtown businesses.
- The Las Vegas Metro Chamber of Commerce, Urban Chamber of

Commerce and the Latin Chamber of Commerce Community Foundation<sup>1</sup> can take the lead to organize the type of events and activities that could potentially attract a broader demographic to increase activity (Lake Mead Taco Tour, Mexican Independence Day Celebration, etc.).

#### Create an Improvement District:

- A valuable tool for developing Hispanic/Latino business districts is the business improvement district, special services district or empowerment zone. By first designating the specific boundaries to achieve this identity and then providing avenues for building revenue, the vision and scope for a retail corridor becomes clearer and less daunting. Official designation by the City creates authority and validity for a district. Like the National Main Street Program formula, these districts need to have strong public-private partnerships that include several levels of

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lcccf.org/>



government and a variety of businesses.

- Successful Hispanic/Latino business districts have benefitted from a certain level of organization. In cities where neighborhood and business associations are encouraged and supported via budget and technical assistance, Hispanic/Latino communities are better able to create and implement a vision. Cities with successful districts often have a chamber of commerce specifically to address the needs of the Hispanic/Latino business community. Successful corridors are usually involved with the City's economic development department.

#### **Establish and promote sources for small business loans:**

- A successful business district will require an active partnership between the City, local businesses, and external organizations. The City needs to work to understand business practices in this area, build trust, and overcome

language barriers. Many of the businesses in the Downtown area consist of 10 or fewer employees and do not have enough capital to expand or reposition their business as market opportunities arise. Access to capital has been difficult due to their small scale and existence in a distressed and blighted area. A small business loan program could assist Downtown businesses to acquire real estate, make improvements to business spaces, and purchase working capital.

#### **Support new food and dining options in the Downtown area:**

- Local non-profits, businesses, entrepreneurs and interested community members can work with City staff to create policies and goals for a local food cart program. Working with public and private partners, the City should pursue use of vacant parking lots to lease spaces for small businesses.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Example of a recently successful food cart program: <http://oregonon.org/blog/2014/nedco-and-food-carts/>

### Case Study: Grow Henderson Fund (Henderson, NV)

Grow Henderson Fund provides funding to small businesses for expenses such as real estate acquisition, leasehold improvements, working capital and machinery and equipment. This program serves as a catalyst to creating jobs Downtown. The Grow Henderson Fund is based on a partnership between the City of Henderson Redevelopment Agency and the Grow America Fund, Inc. (GAF). GAF is an affiliate of the National Development Council (NDC) and is a nationally recognized Small Business Lending Company.

### SUPPORT BUILDING REHABILITATION AND NEW DEVELOPMENT

For many areas in transition, reinvestment in existing buildings coupled with strategic public investments can spur larger, more catalytic projects. Because Downtown North Las Vegas has older building stock, there are many areas where buildings have not seen investments in many years. A strategically developed catalyst project could create the greatest level of positive change, spurring on additional development. Barriers to overcome include:

- In order to make new mixed-use projects feasible, rents must be high enough to justify construction costs. Many people see this area as a place with **little new investment and as a place that can't justify high-density housing** because it is not a safe or inviting place for pedestrians. The City will need to work with its partners to co-invest in key infrastructure improvements

that will make the area more attractive for investors.

- Many **local developers don't know how to position themselves** to capitalize on public investment in the area. In addition, with the exception of affordable housing developers, few developers have experience with federal programs such as HUD Section 108, 221(d) (4), New Market Tax Credits, etc.
- Developers in the Valley say that it is **difficult to get financing for innovative development types**, such as live-work units and mixed-use projects anywhere in the Valley. Finding new sources of capital will be critical to making projects work in this area.

## Actions to Build Redevelopment and New Development

### Provide technical assistance with alternative financing tools:

Often times, the pioneering project in an area will need to use a variety of financing tools to begin a project. The City should designate staff or hire a consultant who can provide technical assistance to potential developers who would like to use alternative financing tools in the area (NMTCs, CDBG Section 108, etc.).

- **New Market Tax Credits:** Provides federal income tax credits for commercial, industrial, mixed-use and community facilities in low-income communities with census tracts with a poverty rate of at least 20%.
- **Low Income Housing Tax Credits:** Provides tax credits for acquisition, rehabilitation and new construction of rental housing targeted to lower-income households. At least 20% of residential units must be restricted to residents with income less than 50% median

gross income of the area—or at least 40% of the units must be restricted to residents with income of 60% or less of the median gross income of the area.

- **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG):** Provides communities with resources to address a wide range of community development needs, including affordable housing and service provision, infrastructure improvements and housing and commercial rehab loans and grants, as well as other benefits targeted to low- and moderate-income persons.
- **HUD Section 108:** Increases the capacity of block grants to assist with economic development projects by enabling a community to borrow up to five times its annual CDBG allocation.
- **EB-5:** Investment dollars for new commercial enterprises that will benefit the US economy by creating new jobs for US citizens.

### Establish better working relationships with large property owners:

- Based on conversations with the development community, some feel that communication with the City had been primarily during development review. The City should engage with property owners in advance of detailed development plans to discuss the future of the area and suggest ways that partnerships could help to create a more cohesive neighborhood in this area.



Above: Logo for The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. HUD celebrated the program's 40th Anniversary this year. Bottom: Nevada Housing Division administers the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program.

**Leverage existing property holdings at the Lake Mead Gateway area (the “Island”):**

Consider selling the property with conditions on the purpose/form of future development and using the proceeds for Downtown improvements. The City could send a Request for Information (RFI) to solicit information from potential developers. The RFI can include specific design objectives, what the City can offer and what the potential development agreement may include.

Development options include:

- Sell now with or without development agreement;
- Sell later with or without development agreement, interim uses now;
- Hold, groundlease; and
- Hold, develop yourselves.

**Provide public incentives for development that helps to further the community’s vision for Downtown, including:**

- Pre-development assistance: Grants or low-interest loans for pre-development (evaluation of site constraints and opportunities, development

feasibility, conceptual planning, etc.) to reduce pre-development costs.

- Land assembly and property price buy down: Assistance with the process of combining parcels together into one developable site. Sometimes takes the shape of technical assistance or expedited process. Other times, the public sector acquires the parcels, combines them, and sells to a private party.
- Reduced building permit/planning fees or impact fee buy down/waiver: Reduce various development fees as an incentive to induce qualifying types of development or building features (e.g. stormwater improvements through the Commercial Stormwater Fee Reduction).





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