

Executive Summary

St. Clair Superior Community Building Project

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St. Clair Superior Community Development Corporation



FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

In 2024, a partnership of the Mandel Foundation, Land Studio, and the St. Clair Superior Development Corporation sought the creation of a strategic document that in a sober and professional manner evaluated the St. Clair Superior neighborhood ... both its assets and debits and provided a Yellow Brick Road of recommendations for future development in the areas of economic, housing, and tertiary development. The Partnership wanted the final strategic document to be inspirational and aspirational while at the same time providing a potentially transformative narrative that would serve as the basis for future development discussions by the residents of St. Clair Superior along with members of the private, public, and non-proftt sectors.

The document before you, completed by DumontJanks, seeks to answer the challenges raised above as we follow St. Clair Superior’s Yellow Brick Road.

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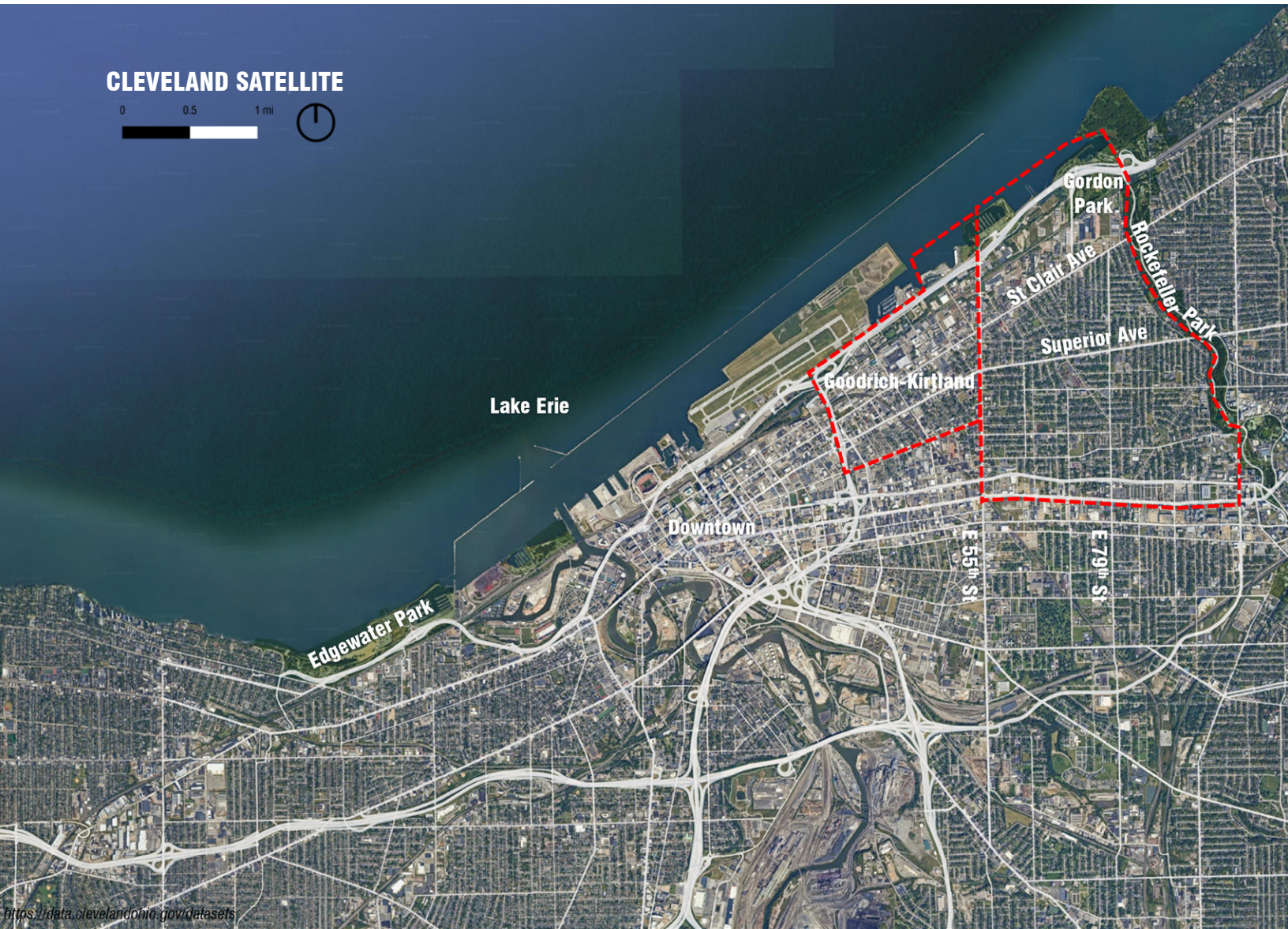
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INTRODUCTION

The St. Clair Superior Economic Development Planning Project identifies investment strategies and place-making opportunities to support the revitalization of an historic neighborhood.

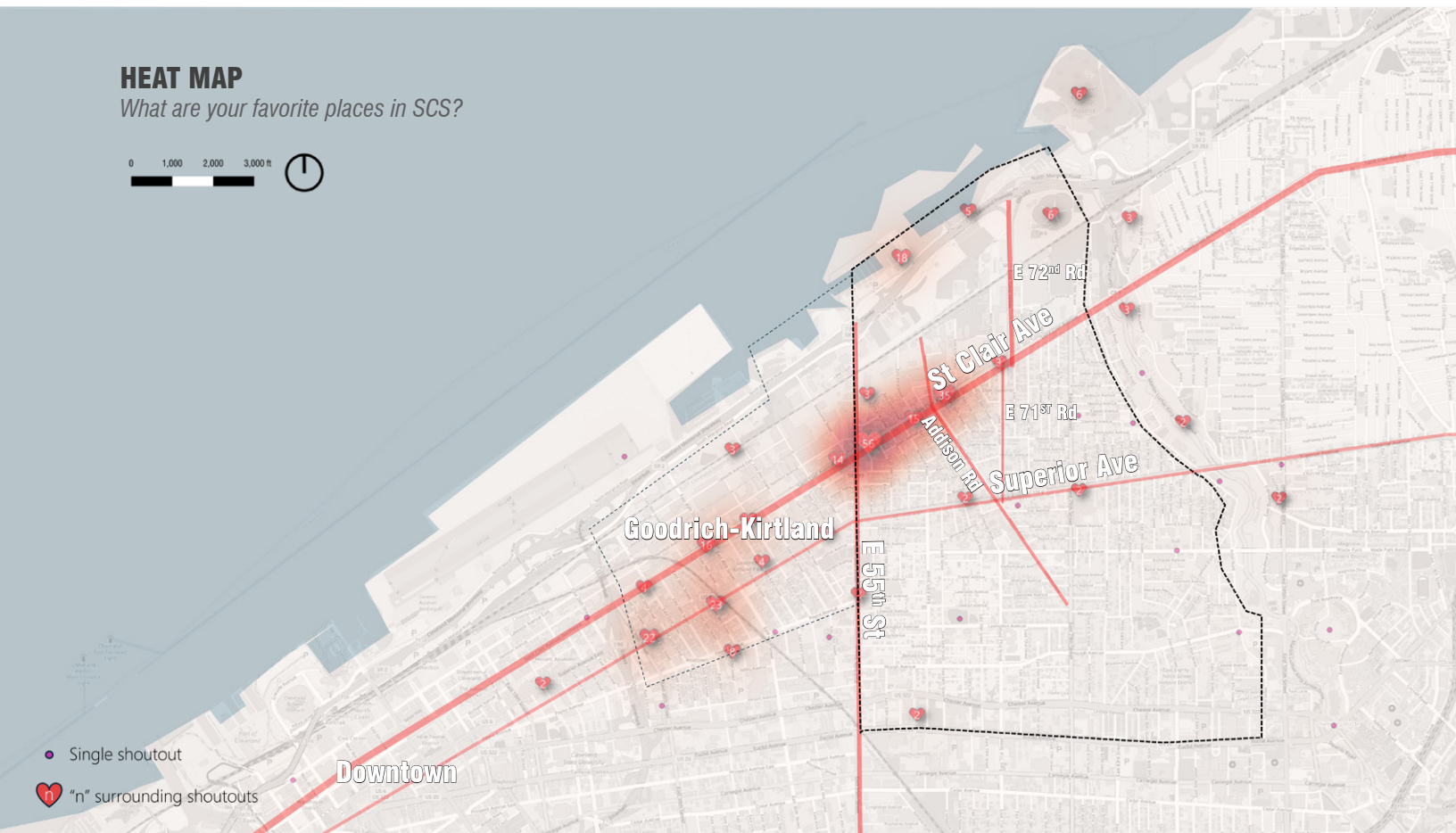
St. Clair-Superior is an east-side Cleveland neighborhood. It developed into a key industrial hub in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with small foundries and tube works appearing along major rail lines by 1880. By the early 1900s, the area north of St. Clair Ave. bustled with metal and machine industries. Dense residential neighborhoods emerged south of St. Clair, largely populated by immigrant workers and diverse ethnic groups. Slovenians were the most prominent, making the neighborhood home to the largest Slovenian population outside Slovenia. After World War II, many residents relocated to the suburbs, and a general manufacturing decline led to significant population decreases and a downturn in economic fortunes.

Despite these shifts, St. Clair Superior has preserved its multicultural heritage. The neighborhood is now home to a large African American population, boasts the vibrant Asiatown, and has successfully attracted young entrepreneurs who seek to draw on St Clair Superior’s rich traditions in manufacturing, music, and the arts.

In addition, the district possesses unique assets: it’s location relative to major employment centers, proximity to the lake, excellent land control, a wide array of cultural and civic institutions, etc., that make it the right location for investment intended to improve the quality of life of residents, businesses, and all who come to St. Clair Superior in alignment with the Mandel Foundation’s mission.

With the neighborhood poised for revitalization, it needs only an appropriate strategy to help grow the district’s population, drive economic development, and incentivize private sector investment. Cleveland has good precedents for this kind of positive change, with Detroit Shoreway on the west side being a prime example.

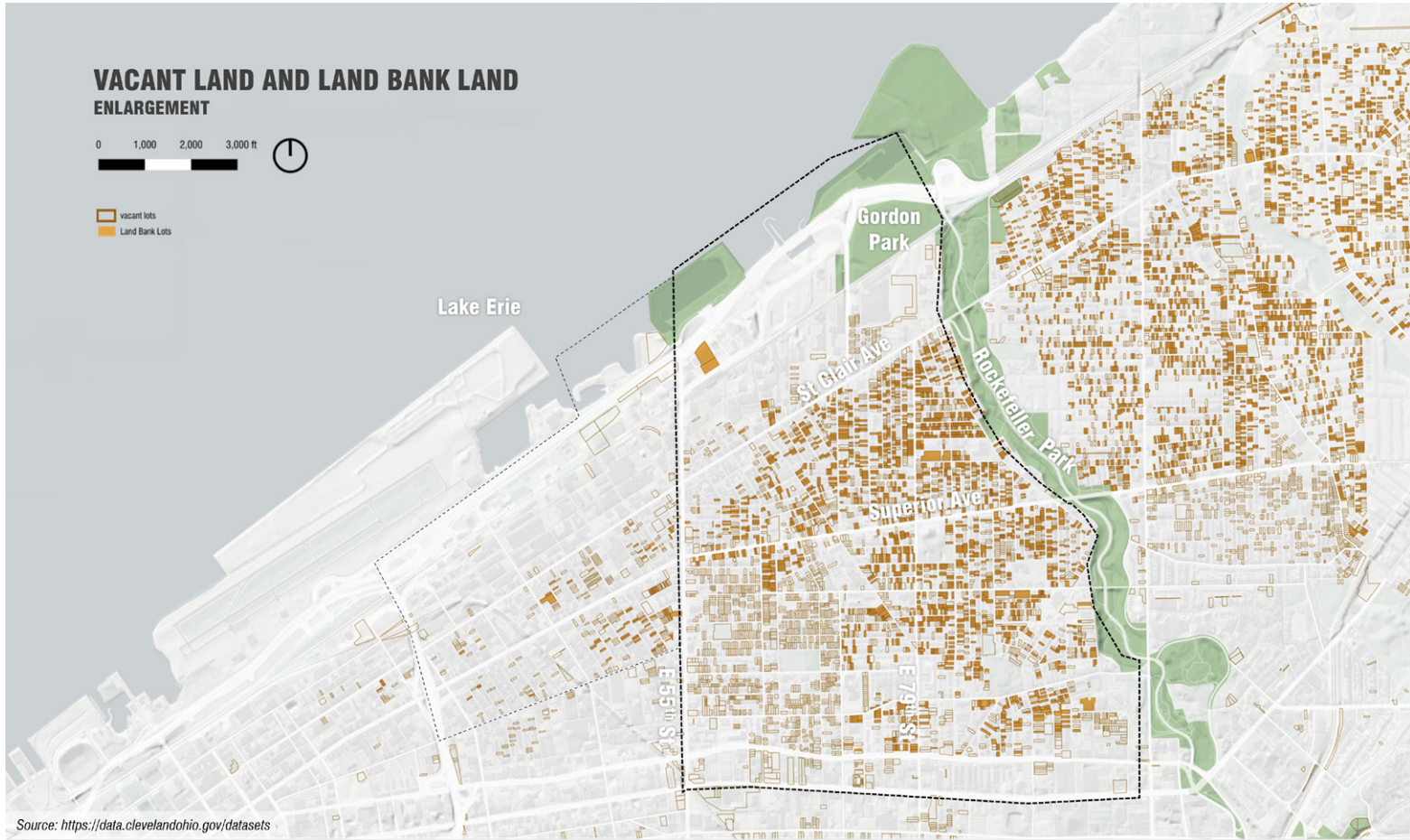
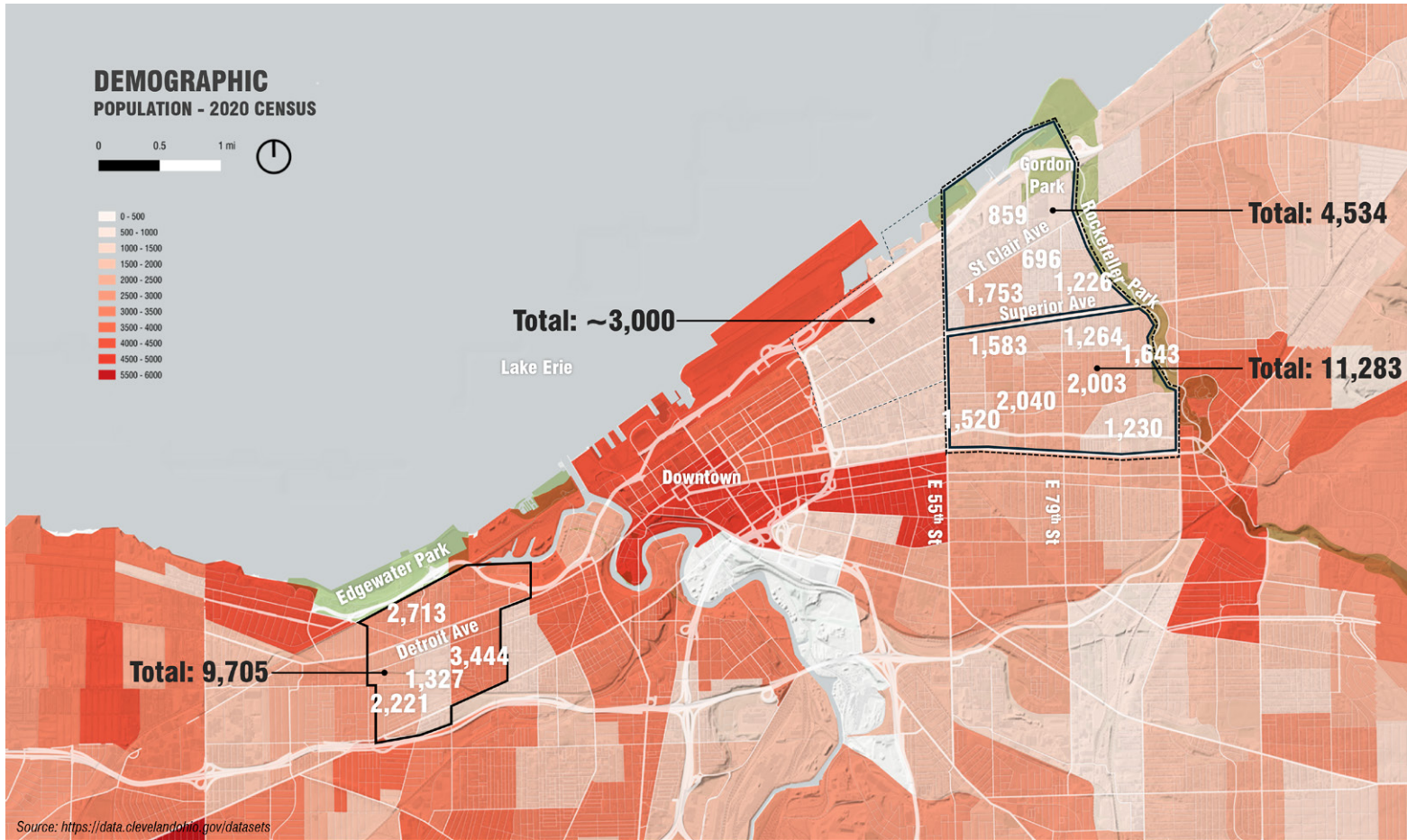
To formulate this strategy, we engaged in an intensive six-month effort. Our work included multiple visits to St. Clair Superior, an extensive engagement plan, a rigorous analysis of available data, and ideation sessions with a working group comprised of key neighborhood and city constituents. The resulting recommendations focus geographic attention in three critical nodes on St. Clair Ave. and organize investment opportunities in three key buckets: infrastructure, housing, and economic development.



ENGAGEMENT

Our recommendations grow from significant interactions with neighborhood and city stakeholders. The three primary engagement vehicles were:

- A working group consisting of representatives from the St. Clair Superior Development Corporation, City of Cleveland, Cleveland Foundation, Cuyahoga Land Bank, Enterprise Community Partners, Habitat for Humanity, and the Mandel Foundation.
- A community survey that generated over 500 comments from about 120 respondents who described their favorite places in the district, what they desire to see in the district, and their perspective on the district's challenges.
- Focus group meetings with a variety of stakeholders including residents, Main Street businesses, housing-focused stakeholders, industrial companies, general stakeholders (including St. Martin de Porres School, Partnership Schools, Thomas Aquinas School, faith-based institutions, the Slovenian National Home, foster care non-profits, food-related organizations, and others), SCSDC Board, the Gund Foundation, the City of Cleveland, the City Council, and Cleveland MetroParks.
- An open public meeting to discuss the neighborhood's opportunities and challenges.



ANALYSIS

Our analysis included both hard and soft data. In addition to the engagement described above, we worked with City and Mandel Foundation staff to identify and review previous planning efforts, ensuring this work builds synergistically on previous studies, and to mine the City's GIS databases for relevant information. As a result, our recommendations are derived from the best available facts describing St. Clair Superior.

The primary findings suggest stakeholders' favorite places include the stretch of St. Clair from 55th to Addison Road, Asiatown, and especially the parks and lake, with the lake seen as the biggest opportunity in the district. Stakeholders desire more amenities, particularly shops and restaurants, improved public infrastructure, more cultural events like farmer's markets and festivals, and access to community-improvement opportunities, like clean-up days, house repair assistance, storefront improvement loans, and education and training.

CVV

Other feedback highlighted the appeal of the district to artists and makers; concerns over gentrification; the need to create a "center" with banking, groceries, restaurants, medical services, etc.; a desire to improve the quality of life; and a desire to invest in people as well as places.

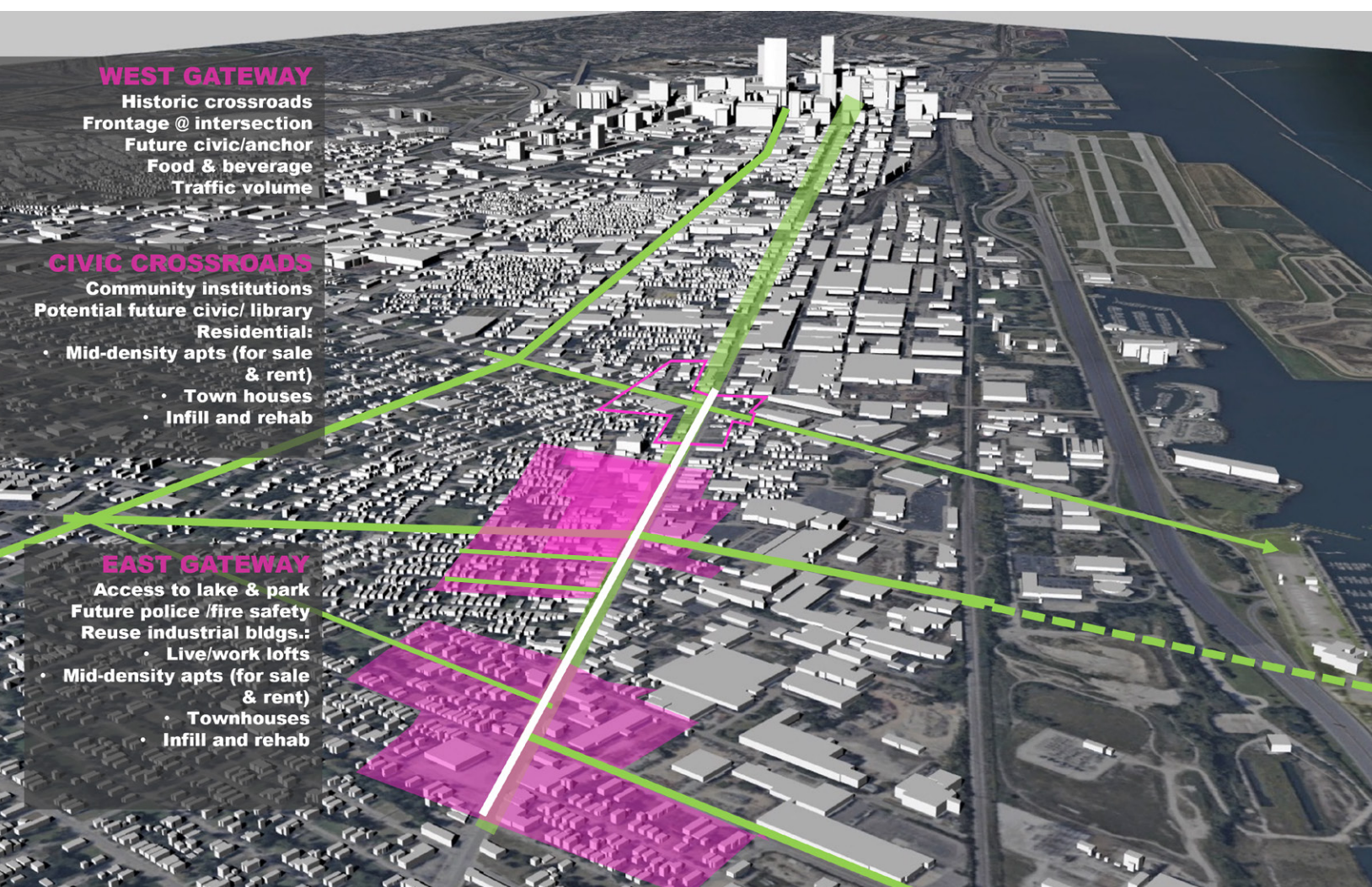
We summarize the data analysis by listing the following opportunities and challenges.

Opportunities:

- Affordable and diverse area to attract new residents and businesses
- Strong location between University Circle and Downtown relative to major employers
- Significant development potential with good land control
- Good high-frequency public transit
- Powerful anchor institutions and amenities around which to build
- Significant synergistic investments planned

Challenges:

- Reverse population decline
- Improve home-ownership rate
- Shrink major streets which are oversized relative to traffic volumes
- Provide better pedestrian and bike infrastructure
- Address safety concerns
- Increase open space amenities



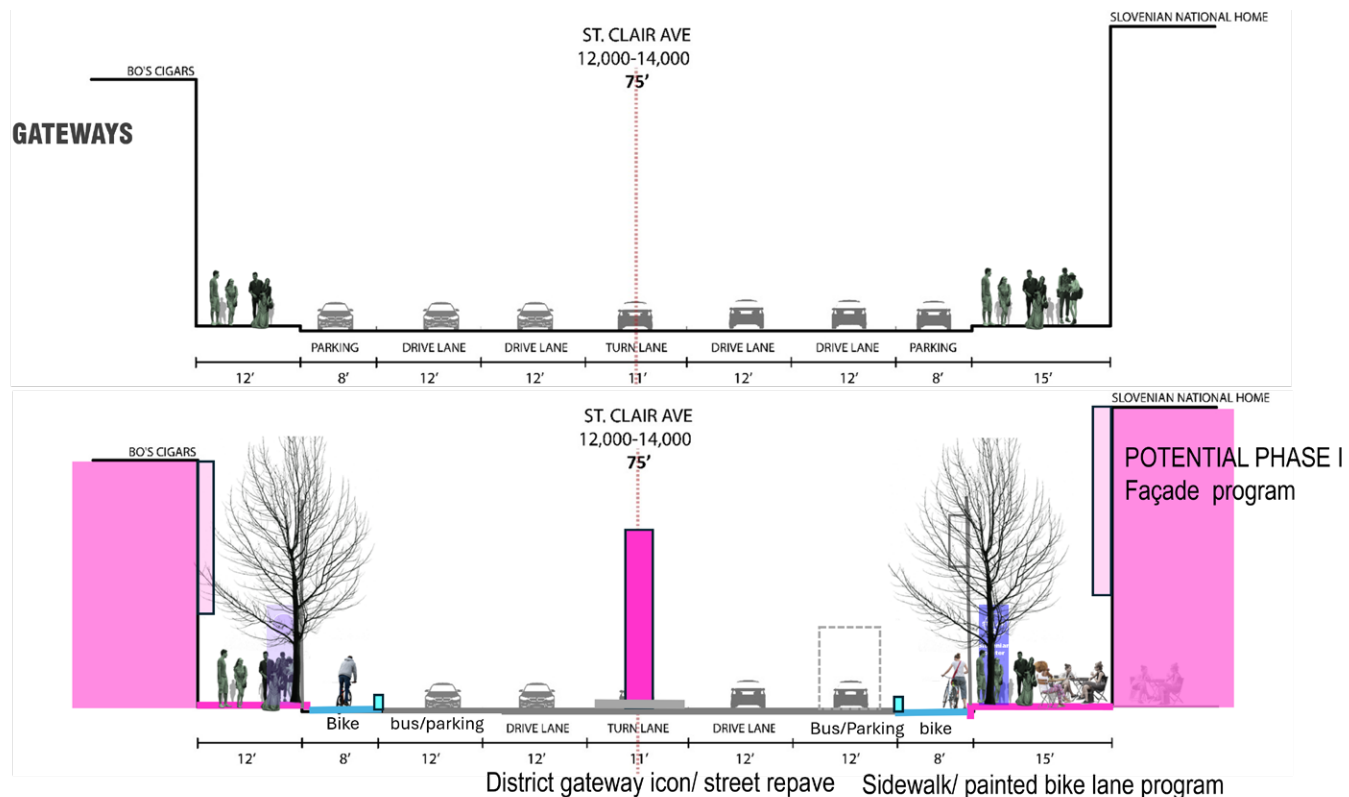
THE BIG IDEA

As a geographic area, St. Clair Superior is large. Our most important recommendation is therefore to focus investment in three nodes. A more scattered approach risks the impact of the investment being diluted to the point where it will have little to no effect.

St. Clair Avenue and Superior Avenue are the two major spines in the neighborhood, suggesting themselves as the most obvious locations. Our analysis suggests St. Clair is the better choice because it is home to more cultural anchor institutions, better retail, and most importantly, is closer to the lake—the key untapped asset in the district. We therefore propose investment focus on St. Clair at:

- **West Gateway.** The proposed West Gateway is centered on the historic intersection of St. Clair and 55th. It is a key entry point to the district from Downtown. Investments here should focus on improving the frontage at the intersection, looking to attract a civic anchor institution, and reinforcing and improving restaurant and other food and beverage options.
- **Civic Crossroads.** The Civic Crossroads is located at the intersection of St. Clair and Addison Road. The node is home to many important community institutions and would be the perfect location for future additional civic uses, like a library. Residential uses are well-suited to this node, with the opportunity for mid-density for-sale and rent apartments and townhouses using both infill and rehabilitation methods.
- **East Gateway.** The East Gateway is based at the intersection of St. Clair and 72nd. It acts as an entry point to the district from University Circle, and provides good access to nearby parks and the lake. It would be a good location for future public safety facilities, including a satellite police station. There are several former industrial buildings that could be reused to create live/work lofts and maker spaces. In addition, there are residential opportunities for mid-density for-sale and rent apartments and townhouses using both infill and rehabilitation methods.

We further organize potential investments in these three nodes across the themes of infrastructure, housing, and economic development.



St Clair Ave Improvement

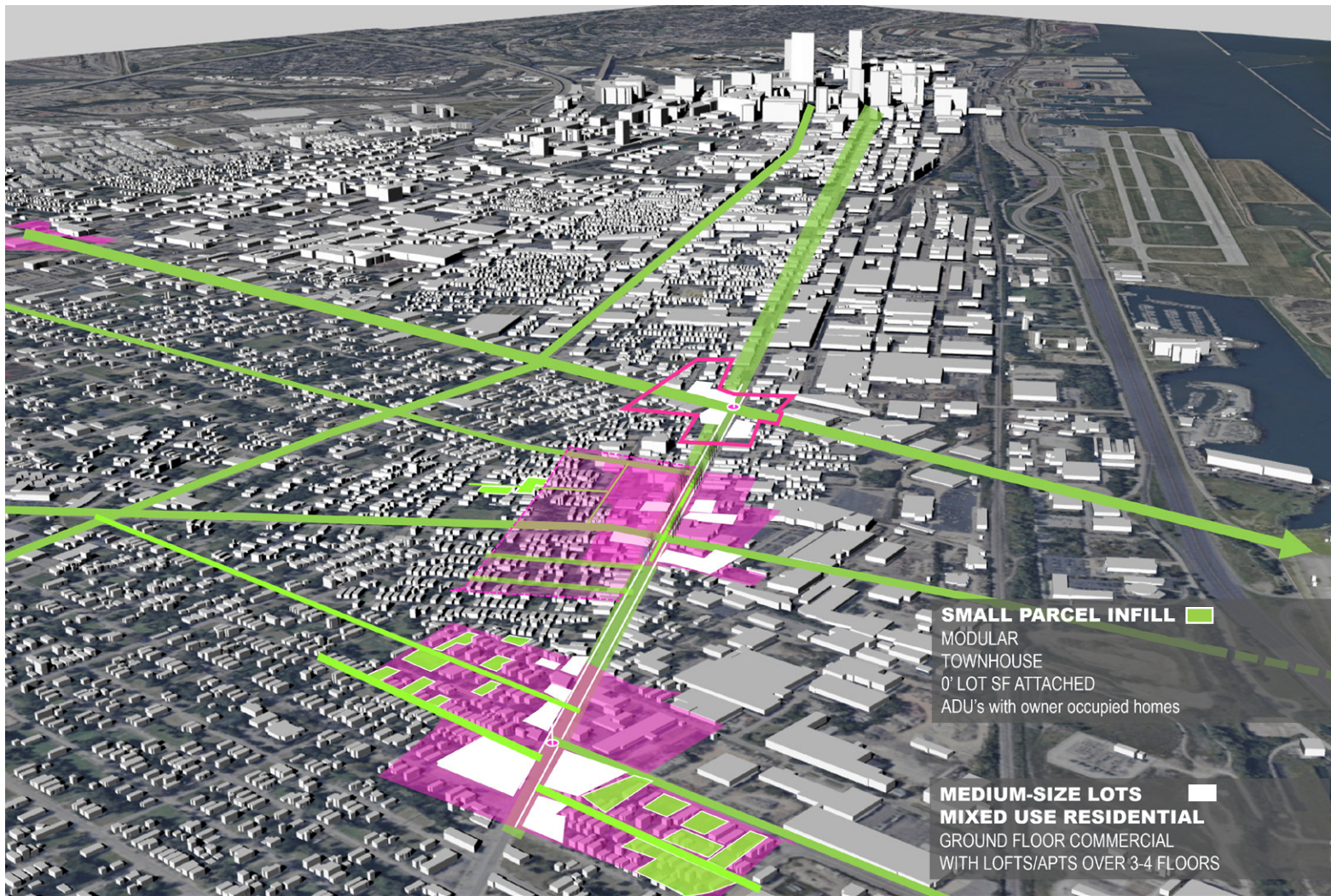


55th and 72nd St Improvement

INFRASTRUCTURE

Placemaking can have a significant impact by creating spaces in which people want to be and by providing visual evidence of positive change. Our recommendations focus on improvements to several key streets:

- **St. Clair Avenue.** Traffic volume on St. Clair do not require the large number of travel lanes in the street's current configuration. As a result, the street's width acts as a barrier. We therefore recommend removing two travel lanes and introducing a bike lane, which can link with the broader city wide bike network. In addition, we recommend the inclusion of a sculptural element at the two key east and west gateway locations which can act as markers for entry into the district. We also recommend improved tree plantings, lighting, and signage. At the key crossroads node, we recommend the inclusion of a wide median, large enough to support small pavilions.
- **55th Street.** 55th is a crucial corridor, being one of only two direct links between St. Clair Superior and the lake. The city has significant plans for the street which are worthy of support. This includes the introduction of bike lanes, improved wayfinding, reinforced street tree plantings, lighting, and an open vista to the lake.
- **72nd Street.** 72nd is the other existing direct link between the district and the lake. We again recommend the introduction of a bike lane, improved wayfinding, additional street trees, lighting, and an open vista to the lake and marina. In addition, new residential infill could enhance the street's character.



HOUSING

Improving the available housing portfolio is crucial to attracting new residents to St. Clair Superior. We also need to increase the percentage of owner-occupied homes in the district and add more choices into the market by providing apartments and lofts in new or reused larger buildings on or near St. Clair Avenue, townhouses proximate to St. Clair, and different types of detached and attached single family units on the north-south streets intersecting St Clair.

Community development will not occur unless we achieve these outcomes. Our study therefore identifies appropriate parcels of different sizes at the three key node locations. It will be important to focus new housing efforts in these three nodes to create sufficient population density to support new retail and other opportunities.

There are good opportunities for small-parcel infill at the Civic Crossroads and at the West Gateway, including on 67th Street, which would make a good location for a potential pilot project. These parcels are appropriate for modular homes, townhouses, and zero-lot line single-family attached housing. They can also support accessory dwelling units that can accompany owner-occupied homes and provide an income stream that can help finance purchases and/or improvements.

All three proposed nodes—East Gateway, Civic Crossroads, West Gateway—have good options for medium-sized lots and mixed-use residential development. These buildings should have ground floor retail or commercial with three-to-four stories of lofts and/or apartments above. We recommend keeping this development consistent with the district's existing scale.

The study's full report includes specific examples of potential development sites, with appropriate densities, parking, mix of uses, etc. Examples include both single-family infill and mixed-use development ranging from about 40,000 gross square feet to about 80,000 gross square feet.



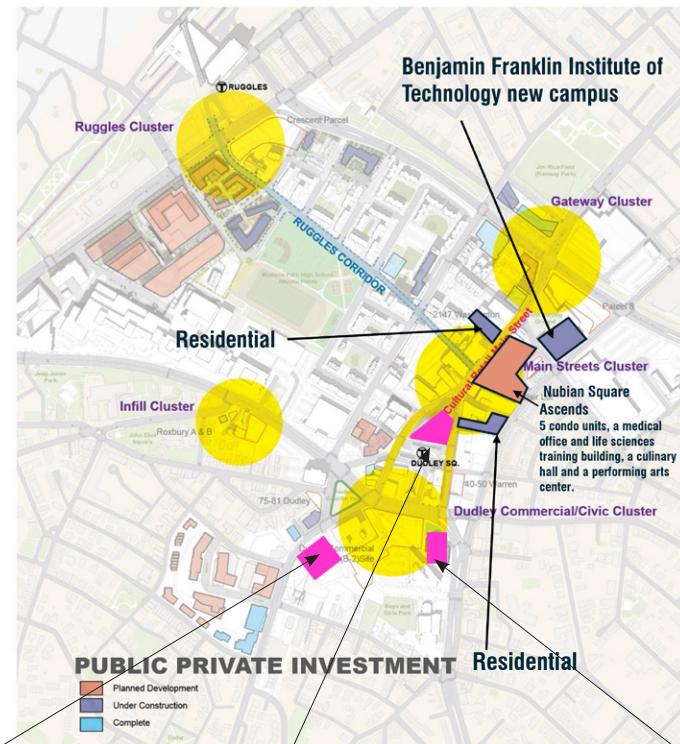
West Gateway



Civic Crossroads



East Gateway



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The final key element of revitalizing St. Clair Superior is a focus on economic development. We must improve the district's economic well-being and quality of life. This means supporting existing residents and businesses, attracting new residents and businesses, incentivizing both public and private sector investment, helping with job training, and improving public infrastructure.

Nubian Square in Roxbury, a neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts, provides an interesting case study, with strong parallels to St. Clair Superior. Roxbury was originally a farming community that transformed into an industrial base because of immigration and transportation networks. As manufacturing declined, so did the neighborhood and its population.

In 2004, Boston commissioned the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan. That plan resulted in significant investment, including: a district police station, a new municipal building, and a library renovation. The plan also identified housing infill sites at three key nodes. These investments subsequently attracted a new campus for the Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology.

A key lesson from Nubian Square is the importance of attracting civic and anchor institutions. In St. Clair Superior, potential sites for various kinds of anchors include:

- **West Gateway** is well-suited to a civic anchor non-profit, or bank, or post office.
- **Civic Crossroads** already hosts a major school and recreation center, and could host additional municipal or community center uses, or even potentially a new library.
- **East Gateway** would be a good location for new public safety facilities or a community arts building.

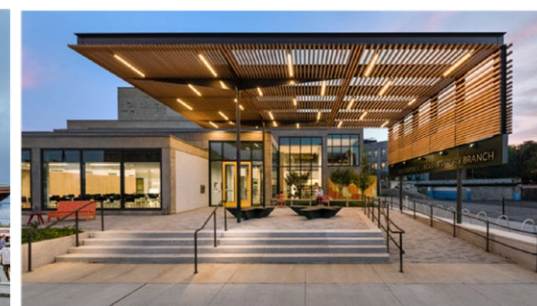
Economic development resources should also be directed toward façade improvements. While we do not normally prioritize aesthetic changes, in St. Clair's Superior's case, a bold visible signal will improve morale and provide clear indication of positive momentum. We therefore recommend an architectural study be commissioned along St. Clair Avenue to explore appropriate responses, opportunities to restore original brick façades, storefronts, and prioritize key buildings. New infill buildings can then also be designed to appropriately enhance the street's historic character. Finally, we recommend the establishment of a low-interest loan program that will allow property owners to implement the recommended improvements.



Area B2 Police Station 2012



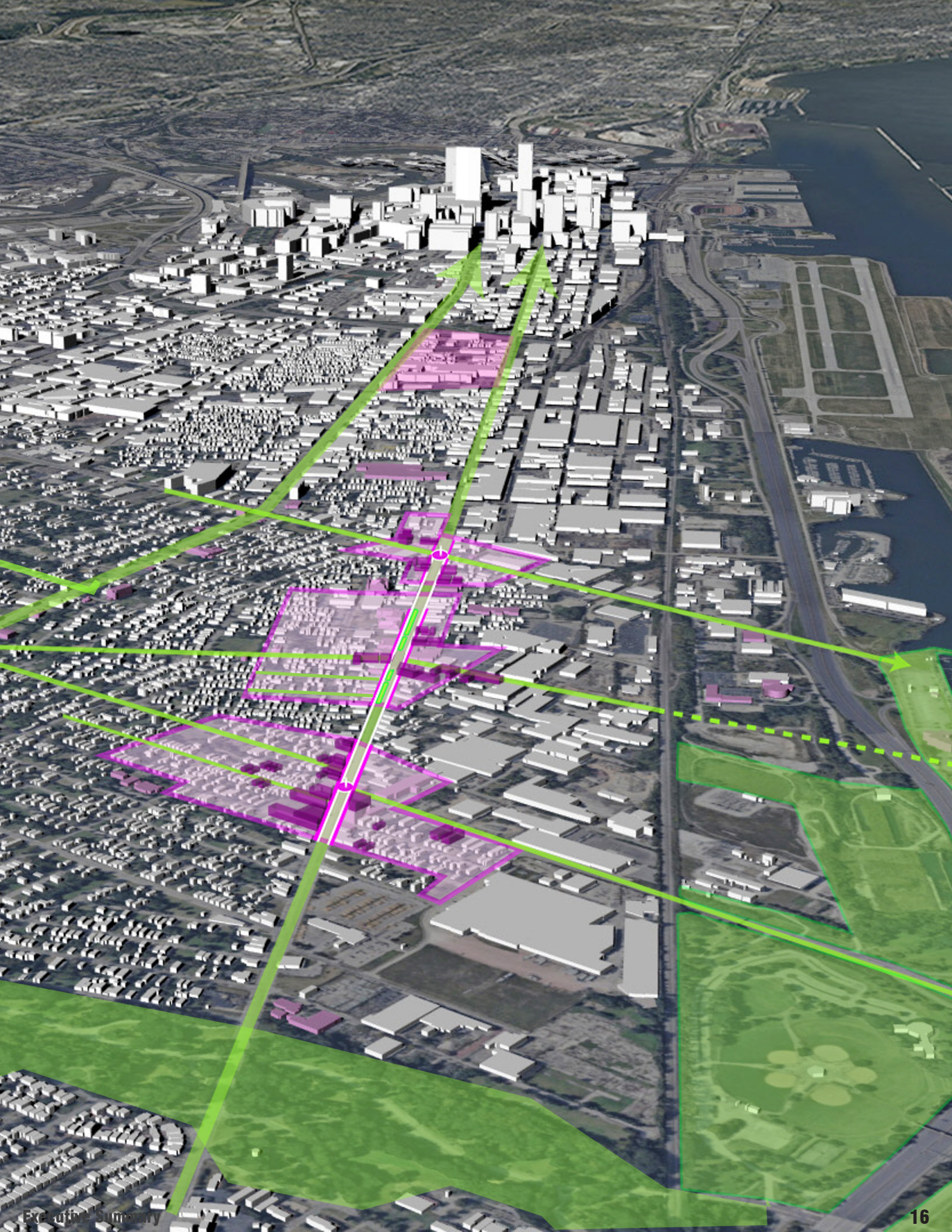
Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building 2015



Roxbury /Boston Library renovation 2020

Nubian Square, Roxbury Strategic Master Plan





PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

We close with a summary of the plan's principles and strategies. The principles are key, because new opportunities will inevitably arise during plan implementation. By referring to these principles, decision makers will be able to ensure each action builds incrementally toward the larger vision in a consistent manner. You should think of these principles as the plan's "non-negotiables".

The SCS Community Development Planning Project's key principles are:

- Target near- and mid-term investments in specific areas
- Modernize public infrastructure
- Strengthen the district's visual identity
- Preserve the district's existing building scale
- Protect and support current residents and entrepreneurs

Finally, we summarize the key strategies for implementing these principles in the near-term:

- Focus on infrastructure, housing, and economic development
- Secure a local anchor institution
- Provide small low-interest loans through local funding sources
- Prioritize street and façade improvements

