

MLK SUBAREA PLAN

Appendix A: Focus Group Results

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The consultant team conducted a series of focus group discussion sessions in the Peoples Community Center located at 1602 Martin Luther King Jr. Way. During the 3 day period over 45 individuals participated in 13 separate topic focus group discussions. Each focus group session lasted an average 1.5 hours.

The participants were asked to share their concerns, hopes, issues and visions for the MLK subarea. Follow up questions were asked by the consultant team seeking additional clarification. Participants were encouraged to state their views and suggestions even when they strayed from the topics for which the focus groups were initially organized. Following is a brief summary of the major suggestions.

General themes

The following general themes were identified as a result of discussions in all 13 focus groups:

- Current negative perceptions need to be changed, particularly the gang and drug images of the 1960s. MLK was the historical center of the arts and entertainment for downtown Tacoma and the surrounding community. Art and culture needs to be re-emphasized in the rebranding of MLK possibly even returning to the historic Hilltop designation.
- MLK has significant historical landmarks that should be preserved and integrated with new mixed use structures.
- The existing building context defined by 2-3 story historical buildings should be retained and integrated with new mixed use developments that emphasize pedestrian qualities at street level.
- The retail core at 11th and MLK needs to be improved and expanded to increase retail and nighttime activities and capture hospital employees and patrons.
- Public transportation, including rubber tire and LINK or streetcar rail, is critical to the long term development of MLK and needs to be improved.
- Non-motorized transportation connections, pedestrian and bicycle, need to be reinforced within MLK and between MLK and the downtown, waterfront, and UW Tacoma.

- Views of Mount Rainer, the downtown, waterfront, and Port are important to MLK and need to be preserved and protected at major vista points and public corridors.
- There are no known or published hospital master plans that identify growth requirements, projects, boundaries, or mitigations necessary with adjacent properties or the community. This must be resolved if the community and marketplace are to be reassured of the long term opportunities available in MLK.
- Tacoma owns some strategic properties and has loaned funds for some strategic redevelopment projects that must be activated if MLK is to move forward and be perceived as a viable investment opportunity.

Education and young adults

- Peace Community Center was established in 2001 by the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The program operates on a \$1,000,000 a year donations and provides after-school tutoring programs and summer programming. The program is operated by a 30-40 staff from Americorp and conducts 200-250 intense weekly sessions at schools and the center. They also offer college programs and some financial aid and adult-time. The program is conducted for the church service area rather than by school boundaries.
- An affordable housing objective should be to diversify the housing stock integrating low income into market rate income projects rather than creating “low income housing ghettos and image stigmas”. There is currently a concentration of low income housing projects on Yakima Avenue at the edge of MLK.
- MLK is an interim community - young families buy homes in the neighborhood because housing is affordable but move on when incomes rise and they can afford it partly due to poor performing schools.
- McCarver and Jason Elementary serve a large population of low income transitory and homeless students with a high turnover that inhibits skill development and socialization.
- Tacoma Housing Authority is partnering with McCarver School for vouchers to encourage parents to keep their kids in school. 40

vouchers serve 100-120 kids. This is the first year of the program.

- MLK library was closed recently due to lack of funding. The library jointly served McCarver School and Peoples Center. McCarver school kids are bused for after-school at Peoples Community Center where parents pick them up after work.
- Peoples Community Center master plan proposes to retrofit the indoor pool and expand it to include leisure pool slides, lazy river, and other features. Computers and wireless connections would also be useful. Funding, however, has not been finalized.
- McCarver School, as well as Peoples Center, should become the center of MLK community activities and events at the south end of MLK in addition to People's Park at the north end of MLK.

Religious community

- St Leo's Jesuit Parish was established in MLK in 1879 - and has been located at its current site since 1950. A number of the other churches in MLK were also established in very early development periods.
- Catholic Community Services (CCS) hospitality kitchen members come from all over Pierce County. Food Connection is the largest food bank in Pierce County and serves MLK, the downtown, as well as surrounding residential neighborhoods and communities south to Lakewood. CCS also conducts medical clinic services to 30-40 MLK residents on a daily basis.
- CCS also provides backpack lunches for grade to middle school students during the week and over weekends to mitigate for what is likely a shortage of food during nonschool days. CCS has operated the backpack lunch program for 3 years with funding provided from donations like United Way.
- Affordable housing for single individuals, aged, disabled, and homeless is a major need in MLK. Associated Ministries and other outreach groups provide services but need associated housing. Guadalupe Vista was developed in southeast MLK by Catholic Services as a low income tax subsidy housing project.
- Hilltop Christian Center and Associated Ministries moved into MLK during the height of the gang and drug violence. Hilltop Action Coalition (HAC) was founded 20 years ago to deal with gang and drug issues and is now a

separate nonprofit housed at 13th and I Street. HAC plans to renovate the building and turn it into a multiservice center. HAC created a park in an adjacent lot and donated the property to Metro Parks.

- MLK Housing Development Authority (MLKHDA) owns the property located at 11th & MLK which it cleared and intended to redevelop as a mixed use project. The project was never finalized, however, and the property is currently subject to foreclosure. Tacoma Housing Authority would like to purchase the property but the asking price may be too high as a consequence of MLKHDA's indebtedness.
- Tacoma has a design assistance program and Associated Ministries provides low cost loan programs for façade improvements.
- MLK has a significant concentration of social and community services organizations and facilities including low income and subsidized housing projects. A possible concern, however, is that these services and facilities could be too concentrated creating a potential "project" image that could off-put private, market rate housing and other developments. Future housing assistance programs, for example, advocate mixed use and mixed income developments that scatter assisted households within the community rather than concentrating them in "housing projects".
- MLK's principal commercial competition is the 6th Avenue and Sprague commercial corridor. The district has aggressively remarketed itself creating a dynamic neighborhood retail core supported by surrounding residential neighborhoods. MLK has not done a similar remarketing effort or outreach to neighborhood residents and customers.
- MLK could use a small business incubator to assist with business startup and provide local jobs.

Health care

- Community Healthcare (CHC) is 43 years old, operates in 4 locations including the new building to be developed on MLK. CHC serves all incomes and 51% of the CHC board must be patients. CHC expects patient load will double in next 5 years.
- CHC also provides social services including residencies for doctors, nurses, and dentists which they will offer from ground floor clinics

at their new MLK facility. The facility will also include a 22 hour emergency clinic.

- CHC is expanding to provide more preventative care services under the approach mandated in Obamacare. CHC is working with the Franciscans at St Joseph's Hospital on preventative care programs and services.
- Tacoma City Council recently increased MultiCare and San Franciscan Health Systems taxes by eliminating a portion of the 100% exemption which has historically been allocated to nonprofit hospitals in Tacoma.
- MultiCare is focusing on developing facilities to meet their next 10-year growth requirements which will be accommodated within their current campus. They think they have enough land to meet all needs within the current zoning boundaries established north of 6th on MLK.
- Insurance programs under which doctors are registered are the primary determinants of which hospital patients will use rather than type of care. There is no incentive to specialize or avoid redundancies of care between the facilities since insurance drives the market rather than type or location of care.
- Obamacare shifts the focus outwards from hospitals into the community with outreach preventative care clinics and facilities. Future facility development is likely to be in the community similar to what Community Healthcare (CHC) is doing rather than in the further development of centralized hospitals. MultiCare has 93 outreach centers currently and expects to develop more.
- CHC's parking garage does not provide people or retail oriented space at ground level but the front of the new clinic facility on MLK will provide a community room and coffee shop as well as clinic reception.
- MultiCare has 9,000 total employees of which 5,700 work in MLK of which 3,000 live in Tacoma. They recently completed a scatter gram locating all of their MLK employees which they offered to share.

Housing and social services

- Associated Ministries is 50 years old and promotes a cross cultural collaborative approach to the community.
- Tacoma Community House, and employment and education services center is located at L & M Streets in MLK.
- The Affordable Housing Consortium is located at South Yakima. The nonprofit organization has 60 members drawn from realtors, architects, mortgage lenders, as well as other housing providers.
- Habitat for Humanity family services is also located to serve MLK households.
- The Cross Cultural Collaborative (CCC) is a multiracial nonprofit organization combining the resources of 30 organizations with 158 members. The organization was formed 12 years ago to provide grants for equity issues that affect health such as transportation and employment, and jobs for teenagers.
- The larger Tacoma community has a "fear of the homeless" - households that are living on the margins due to economic, health, addiction, or other problems. Nativity House located at 25th & Jefferson is a central service center. The facility will be expanded with St Leo's campus to include 50 units of housing for homeless households and individuals.
- Drug dealing was a problem at Heritage House's hospitality kitchen serving food to the homeless until the staff confronted the dealers and drove them out by threatening to generate publicity and exposure.
- The facility serves about 5,000 persons per year from the downtown core including 200 permanent homeless. There are no other shelter groups within the downtown and MLK area.
- Tacoma Community House provides education and employment but needs additional classrooms and affordable housing.
- Individuals that transition through the bootstrap programs often relocate out of MLK as they gain employment and socialization as it is difficult to remain in the local area where they had and could have recurring problems and associations.
- MLK has concentrated a large number of social service providers and low income housing

- but must avoid creating a “low income ghetto” image. Social providers and low income housing should be mixed into market rate developments throughout MLK to avoid creating a stigma that would be adverse to the social services sector and private market developments alike.

Open space and the environment

- Evergreen Tacoma - connections by walk, bike in mixed use districts. McCarver Elementary has community garden on the east side - a Metro Park improvement.
- Community Healthcare (CHC) developing new building on MLK located between 11th-13th Streets. The building will be 59,000 square foot, 3 stories - Hilltop Regional Medical Center.
- Pierce County Health Department working on contaminated properties which includes 25 former gas stations in MLK alone. GeoEngineers did site identifications which are available on GIS.
- Health Department also involved in wellness program emphasizing biking and walking on MLK. Sense of place - perception of who do you belong to as part of community building.
- The SR-16 Trail will ultimately extend to connect with the Prairie Line forming a loop system from the Narrows to downtown to the waterfront to Ruston and back. A bike path is planned on Fawcett then to Division then west on Yakima.
- Metro also promoting Open Space Habitat Plans for urban and backyard wildlife. MLK has impervious surfaces due to fragipan formed by glaciers which are hard packed gravels that are not permeable.
- Community Gardens have been developed on the Metro Parks site at McCarver School, and 8th and I Street with another planned for 25th and J Street. “Castings” is overseeing garden development in MLK.
- McCarver could be developed as a magnet school with a science emphasis and utilize volunteers available from UW Tacoma, Evergreen, and Bates Technical. The Title 1 schools enrollment is down though it serves a large population of transient and homeless children. It has an after school program run by the Boys & Girls Club.
- Tacoma has a tree canopy program with a goal of achieving 30% cover throughout the city.

Issue in MLK is view blockage - especially on the hillside.

- MultiCare’s proposed 3-story building will have a green roof with solar applications on the south side of the building.
- The brownfield issue is a major impediment to redevelopment activities and requires an area-wide rather than parcel specific approach if the market is to be reassured and provided some predictability.
- MLK needs wayfinding signage to direct vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians to local attractions as well as downtown and waterfront destinations. Gateways should be developed to define MLK at 19th and 9th on MLK.
- Design overlays should protect views of Mt Rainer from public places and corridors, and preserve solar applications from higher building structures.

Historic

- In 1981-1982 Tacoma completed a cultural inventory with Pierce County of archaeological, historical, and architectural landmarks county-wide. Tacoma updated the inventory in 1997 and 2004 including landmarks in MLK.
- Past efforts to rejuvenate MLK including Main Street approach proposals have failed due to a lack of local leadership or enthusiasm - the area lacked the “sparkplugs” to follow through with proposals and make things happen.
- Rite-Aid (Save-A-Lot) cleared a block of older buildings in order to construct the current 1 story brick building on MLK and 11th. The typical franchise building design was modified to provide an attractive, though empty façade on MLK even though the store fronts onto a large surface parking lot.
- The store’s recruitment as a major goal of the city and was considered a good thing at the time by providing a drug outlet that the area lacked. The Rite-Aid franchise failed due to too much competition within the larger area market and the building was taken over by Save-A-Lot.
- Save-A-Lot carries off-market brands, and a low capacity display configuration resulting in low sales per square foot compared to Safeway’s display and stocking practices. Customer volumes were low at Save-A-Lot during evening hours compared with Safeway.

- Some of the key historical and older mixed use buildings on MLK are owned by speculators who have little interest in upgrading the meet current market demand. Rather, most assume current zoning and future market demand will support very high rise redevelopment meaning building stock is future tear-down rather than current retrofit.
- Current zoning is too generous, meaning height and density allowances are beyond probable market demand or interest. As result, incentives such as transfer of development rights (TDR) have nothing to offer.
- Tacoma owns the Browne's Star Grill, the adjacent storefront, as well as Mister Mac's on MLK as a result of past drug and crime problems. The 2-story Browne's Star Grill and the adjacent mixed use building were originally designed with ground floor retail spaces and with separate access entries and stairways to second story front office uses and back building residential flats or apartments. The buildings retain original skylights, windows, woodwork, plumbing fixtures, and other period details. The roofs are in poor shape, however, and leaks are damaging floors and causing mold.
- The city initiated an RFP for redevelopment some years ago but the proposals were not economically viable and one of the likely developers eventually went bankrupt. As a result, the buildings have been empty for 6-7 years and may not be physically salvageable for a cost that an economic reuse will support.
- The Browne's Star Grill/Mister Mac's buildings and property occupy the most valuable site in the MLK retail core. In their current state, the properties significantly diminish market interest and the brand image of MLK. This property must be marketed as the very first action if MLK is to rebrand and re-energize its image and opportunities.
- The MLK brand is associated with 1960's drug and gang violence. Even though MLK has one of the lowest crime rates in Tacoma, the public association with crime and other undesirable images still exists. The greatest brand and market impact on MLK would be to introduce a Starbucks since it would signify that the area is safe to frequent or gather in and a secure investment.
- The area was originally known as Hilltop and housed most of the city's restaurants, entertainment, and other cultural and ethnic activities. Tacoma's leaders, including elected officials, use to make the Browne's Star Grill a

favorite hangout. It may be a good idea to return to the Hilltop name and the historical associations rather than MLK since MLK is not unique to Tacoma and a relatively recent re-designation.

- MLK's commercial core was fragmented by the one-way couplets on 11th and 12th, and by the extension of retail activity east into the downtown. The current core may be too large to be effective and could be further diluted if retail is proposed to be extended further south on MLK from 11th.
- Building codes are not aggressively enforced in the district, particularly the older mixed use buildings on MLK. Tacoma currently follows the Uniform Building Code (UBC) rather than the Uniform Existing Building Code (UEBC) which would be more appropriate for some of MLK's older building stock.
- Uncertainty about the hospital's future development plans has created a problem with residents and developers who do not know if they will be affected by hospital expansions (beyond designated boundaries). Neither hospital has a publicly adopted master plan identifying boundaries, projects, or mitigations on adjacent properties or the MLK community.
- MLK, particularly the core area, has a number of older buildings that could qualify for local or state landmark designation. An historic district designation would help define the core and identify standards for existing building retrofits or new building integrations in ways that retain the core area's unique history and pedestrian scale.
- The older MLK building stock includes a number of design and construction features which rate them as greener than any new "green" constructions. Consequently, there are environmental as well as historical reasons for retaining the older building stock.
- Empty storefronts are a problem since they lack pedestrian activity and interest. The vacant spaces should be filled with temporary art galleries, workshops, or other people-oriented activities to keep them lively - possibly even extending rental terms to make some temporary tenants permanent if the use and activity proves viable - much like Spaceworks has been accomplishing in other areas of Tacoma.

Arts

- DASH recently located in MLK in 2003 and in the current building location in 2006. DASH

employs 18 instructors on a part-time basis to teach dance and theater and produce shows in schools and throughout the community. DASH uses Mt Tahoma High School's 500 seat theater and Jason Lee Middle School's 250 seat auditorium for most major stage productions.

- DASH also conducts focus groups with kids than has them create, produce, direct, and act in their own original productions.
- A problem for DASH was finding an available storefront to rent for their dance studio and offices. They found it difficult to contact or interest building owners in leasing them space at any price.
- Metro Parks operates the Sparks program in Tacoma School District facilities.
- School of Tacoma Arts (SOTA) has operated in Tacoma for 11 years and has scattered sites in the downtown and MLK on Yakima.
- Spaceworks was formed 2 years ago to place temporary artist workshops and galleries in empty storefronts throughout Tacoma using donated funds provided by the Arts Commission. Spaceworks goal is to eventually create long term rentals out of temporary artist tenants. The temporary program utilizes a 30 day lease agreement that is renewable until or unless the landlord finds a permanent tenant which can include the temporary artist if the artist finds the space feasible.
- Shunpike, a Seattle nonprofit organization, provides support services for arts groups. The program currently sponsors 12 storefronts in Tacoma including 8 on Broadway and 4 on MLK.
- The Woolworth Building at 11th & Broadway was converted 10 years ago by Tacoma Contemporary Theater using funds provided by the Tacoma Arts Commission, form the 1% program for the arts, and with grants from the Ford Foundation and local banks.
- Ethnic Fest is conducted each summer in People's Park at the north end of MLK to promote the cultural and artistic diversity in MLK. The festival is a huge success and demonstrates the safety and friendliness of the community to outsiders. DASH sponsors "Hip Hop in the Park" during the Ethnic Fest.
- Hilltop/MLK was the center of the arts and entertainment historically - Tacoma's Harlem district. This heritage should be promoted and possibly reincorporated into the MLK brand.

- Tacoma Art Place, an artist workshop, has been located at 11th & MLK for the past 5 years. The Toy Boat Theater, a 30seat venue, is also located nearby. Arts Leadership Lab is an informal artist interest group serving MLK.

- MLK would be a logical location for an artist live/work/teach/display/sell project attracting local artists in the area as well as artists from Bates Technical and UW Tacoma.

Transportation

- Employee parking at MultiCare is restricted. MultiCare provides off-campus parking for employees at MultiCare's expense as well as free shuttle service for all employees to and from off-site locations. MultiCare also provides a 100% subsidy for employee van and car pools. In addition, MultiCare encourages the use of public transportation by its employees and full subsidizes bus and rail passes for employees wherever they live in Tacoma and as far away as Seattle, Olympia, and Kitsap County.

- MultiCare completed a geo-coded employee location map and Pierce Transit a Commute-Trip Reduction (CTR) survey to assess potentials - both of which are available for use.

- LINK alternatives planning will begin in April and extend for 12-18 months. LINK will require local partner funding in order to complete more corridor development. The city, for example, could provide the right-of-way as its matching fund.

- Tacoma is attempting to implement a coordinated construction project approach to transportation and utility projects so that a single project accomplishes all upgrades in a corridor rather than separate multiple constructions. Design Integrated Review Team (DIRT) is the implementing entity - which they are considering expanding to include more than just city agencies.

- Mobility Master Plan and Downtown on the Go are the most recent programs to promote walkability in the downtown area. Sidewalks are not complete or ADA accessible and intersections remain a safety and convenience problem in downtown, MLK, and throughout the city. Lighting is generally ok with Acorn standards.

- There are no crosswalks on Yakima. City is not marking crosswalks in general. High tech flashing crosswalks have been installed at J Street and McCarver School. One mile safe routes have been identified from McCarver into

the neighborhoods and a taxi service transports homeless children to the school.

City recently abolished parking requirements in the downtown preferring to go with market defined solutions instead.

- MLK has some 100 foot right-of-way streets created as a result of historical streetcar service between MLK and the downtown. These streets would be prime candidates for green street conversions on the upper plateau.
- Pierce Transit has major funding problem due to fall off in retail sales. The agency reduced schedules and curtailed some routes including the shuttle loop between MLK and downtown. Further cuts may be required for the transit authority to balance costs with projected revenues if voters do not approve additional transit taxes.

Community development

- Tacoma adopted the state multifamily tax abatement program that reduces property taxes on multifamily projects for 10 years.
- MLK has problem with out-of-area property owners who have purchased some frontage properties assuming eventual high rise development will support eventual tear-down strategy. The local retail vacancy rate is higher than it should be even in this economy as a result of disinterested property owners.
- Tacoma has acquired considerable number of properties within MLK are result of failure to pay taxes. A GIS plot should identify city-owned properties within the area.
- Commercial market lacks quality tenant prospects in MLK and good quality spaces to rent or sell. The community needs to upgrade appearances, aesthetics, and functional spaces to be marketable.
- A number of potentially aesthetically interesting older and historic building storefronts have been covered with inappropriate materials or boarded up creating an under-siege appearance and brand image.
- Quickie 2 - no advertising but has good traffic, local owners but lacks aesthetics.
- St Joseph's Hospital originally proposed their parking garage project without retail on the ground floor in violation of standards - the project was appealed and redesigned to include retail facing onto MLK.

- There is no hospital master planning requirement - city and residents do not know long range requirements or intentions creating anxiety in the community and uncertainty in the marketplace. The "Medical Mile" concept that the hospitals would grow together along MLK is not accurate and counterproductive. City officials should stop promoting the Medical Mile theme if the community is to be reassured of long term investment along MLK and around the hospital boundaries.
- There are no "micro" design standards for mixed use zoning district in MLK. The current "macro" design standards are not appropriate to the scale and context that exists and should be emphasized in MLK. An overlay design district may be a way of ensuring future development in MLK creates an appropriate and complimentary context.
- Safeway was upgraded a couple of years ago for \$1,500,000 as a result of community pressure. The building is a prototype store and about 40-50 years old. The upgrade improved exterior and interior appearances and intensified the display and thus sales per square foot returns. The parking lot, however, was not improved and remains a blank wasteland.
- The principal commercial realtor in MLK is Jim Johnson though most properties are advertised and negotiated by the private owner.
- Biggest marketing problem is the left over branding of the area from the 1960s gang and drug activity. Current problem is the abandoned appearance created by vacant and boarded over storefronts, including some that have tenants but have not upgraded storefront presentations, signage, or displays.
- MLK property owners and merchants are not using the city's low cost improvement program for facades, signs, etc.
- MLK should remain the principal retail spine for the community. LINK or streetcar service and the development of mixed use structures along the corridor would help rejuvenate the market.
- Code enforcement should be increased in MLK particularly for littering, boarded up structures, and vacant buildings. City should utilize the Uniform Existing Building Code (UEBC) rather than the Uniform Building Code (UBC) to account for the older structures and unique building requirements of MLK.

- Brownfield contamination from gas, fuel oils, lubricants, cleaning solvents, and other hazards are located throughout MLK on a site specific basis as a result of gas stations, laundries, and other historical industrial activities.
- Some sites have been inventoried but not identified leaving current landowners and potential developers in a bind. A developer is not going to option or purchase a property and then engage in a due diligence process of determining whether the site is contaminated, the cleanup requirements, and other particulars. An area rather than a site specific approach is required to resolve market uncertainties, identify solutions, and provide funds to assist with redevelopment activities.

Realtors

- Realtors Association bought the Urban League Building located at the southeast end of MLK in 2005. The Urban League is still a tenant along with the Realtors Association.
- There is considerable interest and speculation about transit-oriented development (TOD) and mixed use in MLK if LINK or streetcar is extended into the community.
- Farmers' Market is a popular destination in the summer and there is a proposal to acquire additional property around People's Park in order to develop a shelter to house a year-round Public Market.
- The downtown market is spilling over into MLK and would support the development of more market rate housing - particularly on the edge of the hillside with view potentials.
- A Ford Foundation Study was accomplished for rejuvenating the MLK retail core in 1998. Problem was lack of follow-through on part of city and MLK associations.
- Alberta Canada is a recent "new look" development providing affordable housing for seniors.
- MLK Housing Development Association (MLKHDA) is close to being insolvent - debt accumulated to develop the property at 11th & MLK exceeds the value of the property and any development work completed thus far. Jack Connelly, a local attorney, has taken over MLKHDA to see if he can resolve its financial situation.

- Key challenge and opportunity for MLK is how to tap into the hospital staff and customers for retail and restaurant demand. Area retailers have not been able to do that thus far - the hospitals operate as self-sufficient mini-cities.
- Goodwill Industries, located just outside of MLK boundaries at the southeast end of the corridor employs a large number of people in the refurbishment of households goods and has been a good stimulus for the area.
- Tacoma City Council's waiver of business and occupation (B&O) taxes for the hospitals is perceived to be a good idea and should be expanded to startup or small businesses in MLK.
- Hospitals do not have master plans that define future development requirements, projects, boundaries, or mitigations of impacts on adjacent properties or MLK community. It is difficult to promote development in MLK in view of unknowns and uncertainties.
- MLK could benefit from a major brand, like Starbucks, locating in the district to vouch for its safety and market and investment potential.
- MLK property owners and businesses need to engage in a clean-up and fix-up campaign to enhance storefront facades, signage, landscaping, and other improvements if the market is to perceive the area to be a viable investment opportunity.

Business

- No one attended the focus group session from the MLK retail or business community evening offering at Peoples Center.

Government

- Tacoma's Community and Economic Development Department and services have been and will be severely cut back due to declining city revenues. The city's business development group staff of 4 helped local business associations, like Hilltop, conduct technical workshops, recruit businesses, and coordinate business-city activities.
- City staff remaining after another scheduled cutback will no longer be able to work with local neighborhood or business associations or assist with business recruitments, façade improvements, and a variety of other programs the city used to fund. Local business district and community organizations will have to

shoulder the load themselves using their own resources and funds.

- The city may be able to provide grants or other limited financial incentives in lieu of staff services depending on how long and how deep the recession affects the city's long term financial situation.
- Pierce Transit Authority's (PTA) budget has been cut 43% over the past 4 years with more to come due to the recession. PTA is shrinking boundaries of service and if ballot measures fail, future cuts will be in drivers and thus service. The core routes in the downtown area were protected during the last round of cuts though the shuttle route between MLK and the downtown was dropped. Direct service between MLK and the downtown is still provided by a combination of other routes that converge on the downtown through MLK - though the loop shuttle is gone.
- Pierce Transit could alter service boundaries to reflect the outcome of recent ballot measures. Generally, transit services win within Tacoma and lose in the outlying rural areas. About 2/10 to 3/10s of a cent extra is required to keep PTA service constant within current PTA boundaries. The ballot issue will be decided in the November 2012 election.
- 50% of all PTA riders make less than \$20,000 per year, 75% make under \$40,000 a year indicating how dependent low income employees and households are on public transit services.
- Tacoma is a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement community receiving a dedicated source of funds from HUD each year. Increasingly CDBG funds are required to be spent on housing services rather than traditional community development programs as in previous decades.
- MLK streetscape improvements and possibly even proposals for streetcar or LINK expansion could be proposed to be funded with Local Improvement District (LID) financing where local abutting properties are assessed part of the cost over a long term loan repayment schedule.
- MLK Housing Development Association's (MLKHDA) proposed mixed use development project at 11th and MLK was hit by the housing bubble paying too much for property, leveraging large loans of property values that have declined, resulting in a project that may not be feasible give the debt that has been accumulated to date. MLKHDA has a good,

viable board but needs financial management assistance under this circumstance.

- Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) is also a Public Development Authority (PDA) which can operate as a real estate development entity buying and selling land, developing and selling projects, and other activities available to a development organization. THA could assist with or assume the MLKHDA project or others on behalf of the MLKHDA or other organization, or the city, or in its own interests.

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