
Cathedral

DISTRICT

About This Issue Guide

The purpose of this issue guide is to help us talk productively about a difficult issue that concerns all of us.

Deliberation

It's not a debate. It's not a contest. It's not even about reaching agreement or seeing eye-to-eye. It's about sharing what we hold valuable and working together to make our communities functional and pleasant.

Deliberation is about examining the costs and consequences of possible solutions to challenging conditions and discerning how we might move forward.

Cathedral District Jacksonville, Inc. values the concerns of people who live, work, worship, and visit the Cathedral District.

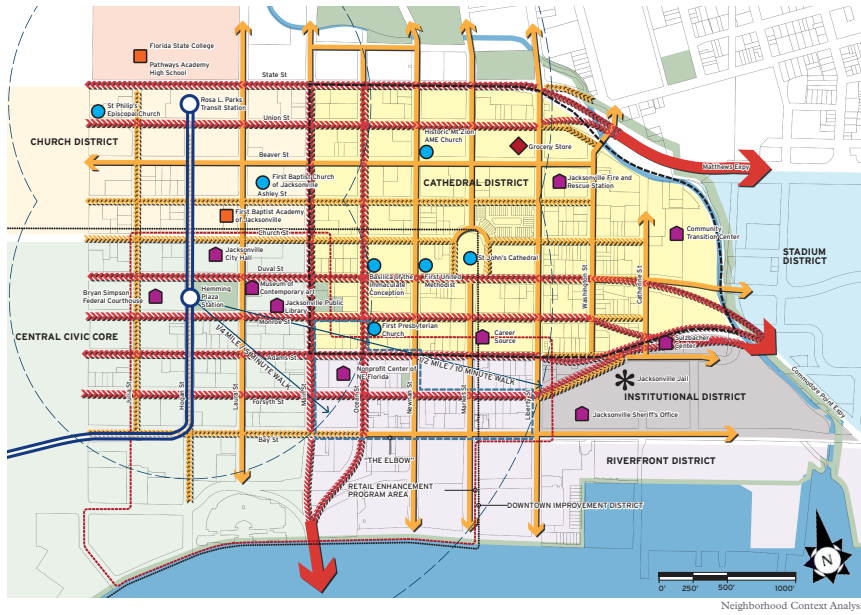
The hope is to engage people from five district churches as well as residents in dialogue about the future of the Cathedral District.



CREATING A VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE URBAN CORE

The Cathedral District, located in the urban core of Jacksonville adjacent to the downtown business district, offers a unique energy and atmosphere. The thirty-six square block area is anchored by five historic Christian churches whose leaders are as committed to the city's needs as they are to their worshipping members. Currently the residential population is less than 2,000 and there are few businesses. Over the past 30 years the churches have served disadvantaged populations and created nonprofit organizations to serve children, women, families, and the homeless.

Volunteers in Medicine provides health care, Family Promise temporarily houses homeless families, the Cathedral Arts Project offers performance and visual art programs, Aging True works with people 65 and older, especially people with limited assets. Many of these organizations, now independent nonprofits, were founded and funded by Cathedral District churches. And while many people have benefitted, the Cathedral District has not developed into a thriving, vibrant neighborhood with safe spaces for living, leisure, retail, and restaurants. St. John's Cathedral Dean Kate Moorehead was quoted as saying, "When I came seven years ago, we realized that we had inadvertently done 'toxic charity.' We had created urban blight by creating all these nonprofits to minister to the poor." So, what to do?



NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

The Cathedral District is home to five historic churches. It is adjacent to the Civic Core, Riverfront, and Stadium Districts, and forms the northern edge of "The Elbow" (an emerging restaurant and entertainment destination). A majority of the Cathedral District is easily walkable to the Skyway and other public transportation.

It also contains, or is adjacent to, the Jacksonville jail, the Community Transition Center, and many homeless services. While these provide much-needed functions, there is a disproportionate balance relative to the other uses in the neighborhood.

Multiple one-way streets and major thoroughfares surround and cut through the neighborhood making it feel unsafe as a pedestrian.

LEGEND

Cathedral District	
Retail Enhancement Area	
Downtown Improvement District	
"The Elbow"	
Skyway	
Major Street	
Street	
Park	
Religious Institution	
Civic / Government Institution	
Educational Institution	

MASTER PLAN

Cathedral District-Jax, Inc. | Torti Gallas + Partners, Inc. | Genesis Group

Cathedral District-Jacksonville, Inc. became a Florida nonprofit organization in 2016. Under the leadership of Ginny Myrick and a board of directors and with the financial help from several foundations, the organization first engaged the Urban Land Institute whose staff visited Jacksonville to conduct an initial study. ULI recommended that the Cathedral District seek bids for consulting firms with expertise in urban planning and design. The board chose Torti Gallas + Partners, Washington, DC for a three-to-six-month analysis of the District's strengths and needs that resulted in a comprehensive master development plan.

Forum Guidelines

- Focus on the each of the challenges.
- No one or two individuals should dominate. Everyone is encouraged to participate.
- Listen to understand. Keep an open mind.
- Listen to each other.
- Disagree respectfully with others' ideas.
- Move toward greater mutual understanding.



Parking Lots



Cathedral District-Jax, Inc.

The master plan included three development scenarios each with progressively increased numbers of residential family homes, parking arrangements, and commercial development. Each scenario has a schematic that illustrates what the development would look like. Why not choose a scenario and move forward? Meaningful change takes place when citizens are fully engaged as co-creators of their communities, thus the deliberative forums that will use this dialogue resource.

The amount of property devoted to parking presents a development challenge.

Deliberative Forums

Public deliberation is simply a way for people to come together to share **what they hold valuable** about community issues. With the help of a neutral moderator, forum participants listen carefully to others, share their ideas, seek areas of agreement and, if possible, make some choices that might indicate how to take the best “first steps” forward. In this case, we value the concerns of people who live, work, worship, and visit the Cathedral District and what they think about the future of the Cathedral District neighborhood.

There are three distinct challenges related to development of the Cathedral District. Each challenge requires creative thinking. Prioritizing how to take the best steps forward is the primary objective for bringing people together for dialogue. To the degree Cathedral District Jacksonville, Inc. can make progress on each of the challenges, those who, live, work, worship and visit the area will benefit.

Challenge 1 Focus on Alternative Parking Strategies

Challenge 2 Create a Walkable Environment

Challenge 3 Rally Community Willpower

Challenge 1 Focus on Alternative Parking Strategies

The Cathedral District has an unusual urban problem, too much parking! More than 50% of the thirty-six-square-block area is dedicated to surface parking. The five historic churches are contributors to this problem but so are absentee land owners, state-owned property, and commercial businesses. While people who worship on Sunday mornings value convenience and safety, church parking spaces remain largely unused during the week.

Are there ways to better arrange and manage parking without compromising personal safety and convenience? An expert in urban planning and design writes, "I believe that the modern surface parking lot is ripe for transformation....But parking lots are, in fact, much more than spots to temporarily store cars: they are public spaces that have major impacts on the design of our cities and suburbs." (When A Parking Lot Is So Much More, Ben-Joseph, Erin, New York Times, 2012)



Solar Parking. Palm Coast, FL Community Center

Parking areas can be used to produce solar energy, provide space for farmers' markets, vegetable gardens, serve as outdoor lobbies to buildings and residences, and be partially used for trees and landscaping. Once more, with more people using ride services - Uber and Lyft - riding bicycles and walking, the District might not require nearly as many parking spaces.

Consider the following examples of what could be done as well as some corresponding drawbacks.

- Create shared parking arrangements with several churches.
 - This would require collaboration.
- Upgrade selected vacant and surface parking lots applicable city code standards.
 - This would require city code enforcement consultation.
- Install solar canopies over strategically located parking lots.
 - Solar requires significant investment.
- Develop a "parking lot diet" to replace several lots with commercial or residential buildings.
 - People will have to walk further to their destinations.
- Other ideas?

Challenge 2 Create a Walkable Environment



Urban planning experts assert that walking is the simplest, most cost-efficient way to improve a city's economic and environmental viability, and it creates healthier, happier residents. Choosing walking can help designers build more inviting streets, and allow cities to prioritize their people over cars. With the availability of smart phone apps to provide walking directions and pedestrians' health benefits, a Cathedral District that makes walking a pleasant experience could have a significant impact on the area.

This walkability option values personal health and neighborhood aesthetics. It calls for an area of the city that is geared to pedestrians more than cars.

Here are some ideas and potential consequences.

- Each church could create a safe access plan for mobility-challenged persons.
 - This could require special construction permits.
- Work with the Downtown Investment Authority to create a Land Bank strategy to acquire parking lots.
 - This would require a government authority to oversee the program.
- Create attractive crosswalks and landscaped intersection bump-outs.
 - Traffic would be slowed.
- Create parks and plant trees, gardens, and green spaces with passive and active playgrounds.
 - Parks might attract more homeless people.
- Add bike lanes and move toward two-way vehicular traffic.
 - Driving through the District would take longer.
- Additional thoughts?

Challenge 3 Rally Community Willpower

Willpower is a word that is often associated with good nutrition, health, and dieting. Personal willpower is perhaps the most necessary ingredient in making a positive change in one's health. By the same token, willpower is required among people who frequent the Cathedral District. The neighborhood suffers from parking obesity and our streets could benefit from some dieting to better manage traffic.

The biblical proverb, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" makes a significant point. While the Cathedral District Jacksonville, Inc. is a 501c3 organization that has worked with helpful consultants and invited key stakeholders to weigh in on the district's future, there is much more to be accomplished in bringing people together who live, worship, work, and visit the neighborhood.



What will it take to create public leverage? Where is our public voice? Is it possible to rally around a common vision?

Consider the following.

- Hold information sessions and forums in churches and residential complexes to generate interest in the future of the Cathedral District.
 - Requires extra coordination on the part of churches and homeowners.
- Create a CDJ network of people - Vision Keepers - who will plan block parties, ice cream socials and other events to cultivate neighborhood relationships.
 - CDJ would need to create another layer of administration.
- Write Letters to the Editor and newspaper Opinion columns in support of CDJ efforts.
 - This could result in an uneven CDJ narrative.
- Build a Cathedral District playground with the help of a community build organization like KaBoom!
 - A parking area would need to be converted.
- What other actions might be considered?

Reflection, Agreement, and Next Steps?

After deliberating each challenge and considering the specific actions and corresponding tradeoffs, can we discern some common ground? Let us transition from sharing personal opinions to seeking agreement on what can be done to create a vibrant Cathedral District. Consider the following questions to determine areas of agreement or significant interest in what we hope might be feasible ways to move forward.

1. Can we detect any shared sense of direction or any agreement about the parking challenges?
2. Was there agreement or common thoughts about walkability and the general neighborhood environment?
3. What did you hear the group saying about tensions, difficulties, or what might prevent progress?
4. What do we still need to talk about?
5. What are the next steps that should be taken?

PLEASE COMPLETE THE POST-FORUM QUESTIONNAIRE. THANK YOU!!

Successful community planning and problem solving occur when everyone is engaged in the process. When citizens know their views are recognized and valued, they gain more pride in their community. When professional planners and elected officials take the public's voice seriously, trust grows.

THANK YOU for taking the time to participate in this deliberative forum!

