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11.439 Revitalizing Urban Main Streets
Spring 2009

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MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning Spring 2009
11.439 Revitalizing Urban Main Streets

Field Trip Walking Tour of St. Claude Avenue Commercial Corridor

Team 1: Traffic/Pedestrian Activity/Public Transportation

In your tour of the St. Claude Avenue Commercial Corridor, keep the following questions in mind (and please add your own!):

Traffic

1. How wide is St. Claude Avenue? How wide are intersecting streets?
2. How fast is vehicular traffic on St. Claude Avenue? On intersecting streets?
3. What percentage of the traffic appears to be through-traffic (as opposed to local traffic to local destinations)?
4. What percentage of the traffic appears to be commercial traffic (trucks, delivery vans, etc.) and what percentage private vehicles? Can you describe the commercial traffic (trucks from similar industries, mostly delivery vans, or service vehicles)?
5. Is there adequate parking along the street?
6. How do parking conditions vary along St. Claude Avenue?
7. Are the spaces metered or regulated in some way? How?

Pedestrian Activity

8. Do you feel comfortable as a pedestrian in the District?
9. Are crosswalks clearly marked? How far apart are they? Are there pedestrian crossing lights?
10. Are there benches and other places for pedestrians to rest?
11. Are there buildings, storefronts, activities that give interest to the pedestrian experience? Where are they?
12. Are the sidewalks wide enough for a walk with a friend?
13. If you were in a wheelchair or pushing a stroller, could you navigate from one block to another?
14. Which sections of the corridor are more accessible or interesting to pedestrians?

Public Transportation

15. Are there bus and train lines along or near St. Claude Avenue?
16. Are transit stops clearly labeled?
17. Are there shelters for bus stops? Benches?
18. What are the pedestrian connections to bus and/or transit stops?
19. Who is using public transportation?
20. What transportation assets in the district might help advance the food market vision? What are transportation-related barriers to the vision?

General

21. Define the core or central node of the St. Claude Avenue corridor. Why is this the core?
22. Are there other important nodes along the corridor? Why are they important?
23. What do you perceive as the two or three greatest challenges facing the District?
24. Define the image of the corridor in 2-3 sentences. What elements of the District create this image?
25. If you could only do one thing to improve the physical quality of the District, what would it be?
26. How could the commercial aspect of the District be improved?
27. If you could do one thing to develop the district as regional food market, what would it be?
28. What connections do you see between economic development and the physical characteristics of the District?

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Team 2: Commercial Activity

In your tour of the St. Claude Avenue Corridor, keep the following questions in mind (and please add your own!):

Level of Commercial Activity

1. As you walk down the street, does the commercial area appear vibrant?
2. To what extent do businesses appear to be open full-time and regularly?
3. How many storefronts are occupied? How many are vacant? Can you estimate what percentage of the street frontage or length of the corridor is unoccupied space or vacant of activity (parking lots, vacant buildings, vacant lots, street intersections)?
4. Are there businesses or commercial properties in the process of renovation/rehabilitation? How extensively do buildings need repairs/maintenance?
5. Are there commercial buildings that appear abandoned? How large are they? How prominent or important are they to the corridor?
6. Does there appear to be enough parking for the commercial establishments?
7. What is your impression of storefronts and displays in the District? Are they visually interesting?

Business Mix

8. What percentage of activity is convenience retail? comparison retail ? service?
9. What concentrations of the same or related businesses exist?
10. What and where are the anchor or destination businesses that attract many people?
11. Is the corridor divided spatially by type of uses or businesses?
12. Are there businesses or economic activities that appear to serve a regional (rather than neighborhood) market?
13. What existing businesses are related to or support developing the district as a regional food market?
14. From your observations, how would you describe the market/clientele for the corridor? How does it appear to vary spatially or by business type?
15. How would you describe the corridor's economic role?

Development Opportunities

16. Are there vacant or underutilized sites along the corridor?
17. What are potential uses for these sites?
18. Are there undesirable or problematic uses along the corridor?
19. What is the typical size of retail stores? What range of sizes exists?

General

20. Define the core or central node of the St. Claude Avenue corridor. Why is this the core?
21. Are there other important nodes along the corridor? Why are they important?
22. What do you perceive as the two or three greatest challenges facing the District?
23. Define the image of the corridor in 2-3 sentences. What elements of the District create this image? How does commercial activity contribute to this image?
24. If you could only do one thing to improve the physical quality of the District, what would it be?
25. How could the commercial aspect of the District be improved?
26. If you could do one thing to develop the district as regional food market, what would it be?
27. What connections do you see between economic development and the physical characteristics of the District?

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Team 3: Architecture/Urban Design

In your tour of the St. Claude Avenue Corridor, keep the following questions in mind (and please add your own!):

Architectural Styles and Quality/Condition of Buildings

1. What are the predominant building materials?
2. Do the buildings appear to be of a consistent style or are they varied? What height are the buildings?
3. Do the buildings fit other styles elsewhere in the city or are they their own distinctive style?
4. In general, what is the condition of the buildings?
5. What hurricane and/or flooding damage to buildings do you observe? How extensive is it?
6. Are there businesses or commercial properties in the process of rebuilding/renovating?

Land Uses

7. Does it look as though people live and work in the District (i.e., live in the neighborhoods next to St. Claude Avenue)?
8. What percentage of activity appears to be convenience retail? comparison retail? Service? Vacant?
9. Does there appear to be enough parking for the commercial establishments?
10. Are there vacant land or buildings that seem suited for new uses related to the vision for a regional food market?
11. Are there any parks in the District? What is their condition?
12. How are the open space, parks, and vacant lots used?

Streetscape, Street Furniture, Signage

13. What is the condition of the sidewalks? Are they wide enough to comfortably walk with a friend?
14. Are there places to sit? Are there bike racks? Are there shade trees or planters?
15. Describe the kinds of signage along St. Claude Avenue. What works well, what doesn't?
16. Are there streetlights along St. Claude Avenue? Along side streets? How far apart are they spaced? How high?

Vacant Lots and Buildings

17. Where are the vacant lots and buildings along St. Claude Avenue? What is their condition?
18. Are there commercial buildings that appear abandoned? How large are they? How prominent or important are they to the corridor?
19. Can you propose uses for any vacant lots (perfect place for a small park? Commercial development? Community garden?)

General

20. Define the core or central node of the St. Claude Avenue corridor. Why is this the core?
21. Are there other important nodes along the corridor? Why are they important?
22. Define the image of the District in 2-3 sentences. What design elements of the District create this image?
23. If you could only do one thing to improve the physical quality of the District, what would it be?
24. How could the commercial aspect of the District be improved?
25. If you could do one thing to develop the district as regional food market, what would it be?
26. What connections do you see between economic development and the physical characteristics of the District?

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Team 4: District Image/Clues/People

In your tour of the St. Claude Avenue Corridor, keep the following questions in mind (and please add your own!):

District Image/Clues

1. What is your initial impression of the corridor?
2. What contributes to this impression?
3. Define the image of the corridor in 2-3 sentences. What elements of the corridor create this image? Please prepare a photo narrative for this question.
4. How does this image compare to the surrounding areas?
5. How would you describe the corridor's economic role? How do the economic uses affect the corridor's image?
6. Are there economic uses that are related or support developing the district as a regional food market?
7. Are there design or physical assets that might support developing the district as a regional food market?
8. Does your impression or image of the corridor vary in different parts of the corridor or by where you enter our portion of the corridor?

People

9. Describe the people who live/work/shop here. Are there differences between district shoppers versus residents? Do different areas of the district or different businesses appear to serve or attract different groups?
10. Are there any sources of sizable visitor groups to the district?

General

11. Define the core or central node of the St. Claude Avenue corridor. Why is this the core?
12. Are there other important nodes along the corridor? Why are they important?
13. What do you perceive as the two or three greatest challenges facing the District?
14. If you could only do one thing to improve the physical quality of the District, what would it be?
15. How could the commercial aspect of the District be improved?
16. If you could do one thing to develop the district as regional food market, what would it be?
17. What changes do you think are most important to overcome any image "problems"?
18. What connections do you see between economic development and the physical characteristics of the District?