**Elements of the Report**

**History and Culture**
An in depth review of the neighborhood history and cultural institutions
- Ensure that the existing, historic and cultural integrity of the neighborhood and ecologically significant landscapes are restored.

**Key Places**
An in depth review of the key social and physical locations that contribute to the neighborhood aesthetic
- Recognize key places that have historical, cultural and aesthetic values and strive to preserve them for a lasting foundation of redevelopment.

**Site Analysis**
An in depth review of circulation, land use and activity, topography and hydrology, natural features and infrastructure, important view sheds and structures
- Research current physical and social conditions to establish a framework from which successful design considerations can be made.

**Continuing the Process**

This report is provided as a resource for the community, developers and decision-makers. This “living document” will be continually shaped through public dialogue and community demands. This report intends to provide a comprehensive framework to inform decision-making and ensure that all new projects meet the main objective – a balance of development, history, culture and ecology.

**ADC District Design Considerations**
District-wide design considerations that account for The Block and East End neighborhoods and development stakeholders.
- The culmination of a thorough opportunities and constraints analysis will lead to design considerations that reflect a sound understanding of initial community goals, and suitable approaches to revitalizing The Block.

**Creation of district-wide design coordination for revitalization**
A comprehensive strategy is proposed to begin thinking of how The Block can be revitalized. This report establishes a framework from which The Performance Center, Asheville Art Museum, Eagle Market Street Development Corporation, Mountain Housing Opportunities, Mt. Zion Development and other stakeholders can use for future development.
- All proposed district development must account for the neighborhood and its users and strive to preserve the integrity of The Block.

**Purpose and Process**

In response to a request by the Performance Center and CJMW Architecture to conduct a comprehensive site analysis, the Asheville Design Center (ADC) has drafted The Block: Expanded Site Analysis and District Design Considerations. ADC, a local non-profit community planning and urban design agency, conducted an expanded site study of an area surrounding the Performance Center site. The study area lies within the Eagle-Market District of Downtown Asheville, locally and historically referred to as “The Block.” The intent of this analysis is to explore opportunities to integrate the Performance Center facilities and services with the surrounding neighborhood and with potential future development. This site study provides an overview of the site as well as an outline for growth and neighborhood revitalization.

Upon initial inquiries into the state of the neighborhood to be influenced by the Performance Center, ADC quickly discovered the importance of looking beyond the boundaries of The Block for an appropriate understanding of the area. As a community-based organization, it is important to note that there is an obligation for ADC to provide quality analysis and design considerations for the Asheville community as a whole and not for the sole benefit to the Performance Center.

Given the recent adoption of the Downtown Master Plan, ADC felt compelled to enter into a substantial public process in order to understand the “truth” behind The Block and the Eagle-Market District. Many public and private partners were involved in preparation of the report and with the extensive public process we are able to build consensus for the proposed initiatives and recommendations. ADC conducted a series of public input meetings to gain the valuable knowledge in this report. This public process also provides a means to integrate the facilities and services provided by the Performance Center with future neighborhood development. The Downtown Master Plan in part has sparked community interest in downtown neighborhoods, and the public process was vital in determining how The Block can be rejuvenated and reconnected to the surrounding neighborhoods.

In addition to a thorough public process, ADC was fortunate to work with Master of Urban Design students from University of North Carolina at Charlotte Design + Society Research Center. As part of a studio project, students provided ADC with design ideas on improving the urban fabric of The Block. The students sought to develop specific ideas that could help to form the basis for neighborhood design considerations. Student proposals included sustainable urban design strategies coupled with opportunities for enhancing the cultural identity of the district.
District Design Opportunities

- Variety of enhancements to Spruce and Market Streets to bring pedestrians into The Block.
- Opportunity for small pocket park at corner of Eagle-Market.
- Wilson Alley could be an enhanced pathway focusing on arts and entertainment.
- Improvements are needed at the Biltmore gateway to encourage pedestrian traffic.
- The triangular lot north of Triangle Park could be another open space that provides an entry to Wilson Alley.
- Sycamore Alley could be enhanced as a gateway with pedestrian treatments.
- Various improvements are possible for Triangle Park. The wall is an opportunity for a mural.
- New development could allow for additional connections to Biltmore Avenue.
- Possible to create a view point at intersection of Market and Market Street extension.
- Development at Biltmore/Mart could contribute to The Block’s southern gateway. Signage is needed.
- Market Street extension could be established as a small bike and walking friendly street.

A Key Objective

In review of redevelopment efforts in communities with similar neighborhood characteristics, it has been determined that the most successful efforts balanced the demands of the users while preserving the community’s historic legacy and sustaining their cultural and ecological identity. Thus the primary objective of this report’s design considerations became balancing development, history, culture and ecology within The Block.

District Design Opportunities

Over the course of several months, the ADC design team conducted extensive fieldwork and research to determine the existing conditions of the area. From this a variety of site analysis maps and diagrams were generated. This particular map uses the design team’s knowledge of existing and potential opportunities based on urban form, development potential, and community goals.

The Performance Center site should preserve the view of Mt. Zion Church from Pack Square Park along Spruce Street.

The Performance Center site could be designed to continue pathway from Pack Square Park to Velvet Street and/or Sycamore intersection.

Critical point for Performance Center to become architectural landmark.

Improvements are needed to the existing pedestrian bridge and its landing (or replace with better crossing).

This is an ideal location for a bus shelter and small open space. Gateway markers such as sculpture and signage could be incorporated.

New at grade connection (regular intersection or roundabout) could be created using crosswalks and ramps.

The vast width of Charlotte Street provides an opportunity for a tree-lined median. This could enhance safety and aesthetics.

Return Velvet Street to the Block (current City right-of-way).

Bringing back Velvet Street could connect to a variety of sites, linking key parts of The Block back together.

The Department of Public Works site represents a long term redevelopment opportunity.

Beaumont/Charlotte Street intersection could be enhanced to enable better neighborhood connections.

Coordinated Development

These diagrams summarize what is already there, what is planned or proposed by the major developers, and what improvements are possible if these developments occur. In addition to the re-introduction of affordable housing, a mix of uses, and urban vitality through a single coordinated development effort, there is great potential to bring back Velvet Street, add a retail-wrapped parking deck and make better connections to the East End. These opportunities will not be possible without meaningful financial investment in the area.

Goals of the Project

The goals of The Block: Expanded Site Analysis and District Design Considerations are simple and straightforward. This is not a plan; it is a tool for planning. It is hoped that these goals will foster a “total” neighborhood experience that addresses the cultural, natural, educational and development opportunities that great communities can provide.

ADC Project Goals

1. Gain a thorough understanding of the district’s site conditions so that future development can respond and respect the area’s context.
2. Promote urban development that addresses and accounts for community grievances, mostly caused by years of disinvestment, neglect and urban renewal.
3. Coordinate urban development projects through dialogue among developers and community stakeholders to foster a vital urban district, one that reflects the strong underlying history and character of The Block.
4. Encourage a conversation that will empower residents and business owners in the decision-making process concerning future development; foster a neighborhood identity.
5. Explore and maximize opportunities to attract investment, effectively leveraging private and public investment to improve the community.
6. Discover ways to reconnect The Block to Downtown, the East End Neighborhood and other parts of the City for all transportation modes: walking, cycling, public transportation and vehicular movement.
8. Assist in implementation of the Downtown Master Plan.
7. Offer a wide range of inspiring design possibilities for The Block and surrounding areas, developed by volunteer planning and design professionals.
9. Promote the idea of community-based, district-specific and inclusive design considerations for The Block.