Planning for Prevention: Motels on North Temple

NORTH TEMPLE NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE:
Promoting Equitable Development Along the North Temple Corridor

Westside Studio | Spring 2017
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West Side Studio

This is a workshop course places students in a real-world planning context while providing the west side neighborhoods with planning services. Students partner with specific west side groups to map assets, identify needs, and design projects that address the community’s wants. This semester, our project is titled, “NORTH TEMPLE NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE: Promoting Equitable Development Along the North Temple Corridor.” We worked with several community organizations like University Neighborhood Partners and NeighborWorks. Our primary client will be the Redevelopment Agency of Salt Lake City (RDA).

Salt Lake City neighborhoods in the west side have undergone drastic transformations because of macro level socioeconomic shifts in the United States as well as local investment and disinvestment practices. Most striking are trends of gentrification in particular neighborhoods, contrasted starkly with neighborhoods that have experienced prolonged disinvestment and marginalization. The course will be part of a community based project to understand how west side neighborhoods have changed over time. The intention is to develop effective strategies and policies to offset displacement and/or disinvestment; in other words: to find balance and achieve equitable development for current residents and generations to come.

North Temple is in the midst of transforming into a mixed use, multi modal corridor that unites low density residential areas. The addition of the TRAX light rail line brought significant public investment that has leveraged private development. The corridor has been established as an urban renewal area by the Redevelopment Agency of Salt Lake City to further the leveraging of public and private investment. As neighborhood change occurs, it is important that policies and practices promote equitable development that considers existing underrepresented residential groups while also serving the needs of a growing and changing community.

Executive Summary

In the past few decades, there has been an increase in the rate of homelessness. Most recently, the housing crisis and the Great Recession created a spike in foreclosures and unemployment. Recognizing this growing issue, the city of Salt Lake City established committees to study issues relating to homelessness, including housing, income, health care, education, government supports, and veterans experiencing homelessness and to identify means to prevent, mitigate the effects of, and end homelessness. This report is designed to provide information on homelessness, homelessness in Salt Lake City, and homeless services offered by State agencies to assist the joint committee’s efforts.

Introduction

There are many perspectives with similar opinions on the motels on North Temple. We have spoken with residents and business owners regarding their opinions on the motels on North Temple. Local residents express their thoughts and feelings as being discouraged as they feel their neighborhood has made tremendous progress in last couple of years and these motels are
the last piece of the puzzle that are holding them back. Residents love their neighborhood but are frustrated with the reputation that comes with it as it is referred to as a dangerous, violent and crime stricken area and these hotels are adding to that cause rather than helping the neighborhood. Business owners feel the same. They love being in the neighborhood and business is adequate but the presence of the motels is scaring away customers and without such motels their businesses could thrive.

Local organizations such as The Redevelopment Agency of Salt Lake (“RDA”), NeighborWorks, Salt Lake and Salt Lake City’s Division of Housing and Neighborhood Development (“HAND”) have been in discussion for quite some time about what to do with these motels. They charge high rents to those among the poorest of the poor. Equitable development could mean to redevelop these motels in a way that the needs of business owners, community members and guest are met.

**Study Site**
Data Analysis

Although these numbers were based on estimates and not hard facts, owners, managers and employees felt very confident about these numbers that were given. The only viable way to get a better and accurate count would be to knock door to door on each room and ask customers one by one why they are staying at the motel. Which, is outside of the scope of this projects. Perhaps with the aid of owners, this is something that we would recommend a future team of students or to do. We can now use this data to help show the public and other organizations what their local companies are doing and what kind of people are customers at these local motels. Below is a chart looking at the three motels that we surveyed and their general information.

Prices, Occupancy and Average Stay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motel</th>
<th>Nightly Rate</th>
<th>Weekly Rate</th>
<th>Monthly Rate</th>
<th>Average Stay</th>
<th>Acreage</th>
<th>Assessed Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All-Star (68 Units)</td>
<td>$44.99</td>
<td>$210.00</td>
<td>~ $840</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.26 Acres</td>
<td>$1.4 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway (100* units)</td>
<td>$60.00</td>
<td>$240.00</td>
<td>~ $960</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.87 Acres</td>
<td>$2 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econo Lodge (121 units)</td>
<td>$42.00</td>
<td>$386.47</td>
<td>~ $1544</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.60 Acres</td>
<td>$1.9 Million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After speaking with representatives of the RDA, NeighborWorks, HAND we discovered that each organization had plans and would love to help mitigate the motels but all plans and actions are in the very early phases of planning and strategizing what would be the best plan of action. To help and play our part in such a process these we needed to answer the primary question and concern which was “Who is using these hotels and who is their clientele?” We spoke with different representative of the Econo Lodge, All-Star Motel and Gateway Inn.

As the graphs show in the Econo Lodge 65 percent of their customers are tourists from out of state, 25 percent are homeless paying for a room with their own money and 10 percent...
other (employees, hourly customers, escorts, etc). The All-Star Motel has a very different demographic of customers where 1 percent of their customers are tourists, 59 percent are homeless paying with their own money and 40 percent are ‘other’. The Gateway shows us that 50 percent are homeless paying with their own money while 30 percent are homeless but are paying with government vouchers, 10 percent are tourists and an additional 10 percent are other clients.

Criminal Activity

The following question that we were asked and wanted to find ways “Do these hotels bring crime to the neighborhood?” It has been expressed various times throughout our studies that people love living near North Temple on the west side they just feel they have a bad reputation with crime and these hotels could be affiliated with such acquisitions. We discovered this heat map of crime in the area and we do in fact see a trend in crime and these hotels.

Case Studies

Case studies allow for an opportunity to understand what other areas in the country are doing to tackle similar situations. We chose to look at several motels transformations that may help with the current situation located on the North Temple corridor. In New Mexico, several motels were transformed into low income and supportive housing. The Imperial Hotel in Georgia, an extended-stay hotel was converted into supportive housing as well as motel mitigation policies occurring in Costa Mesa, California. We will present the history, context for each case study, and understand why each project was successful. By doing so, we will look at what makes each project successful and what aspects planners and policy makers should
consider in implementing in the North Temple area.

Costa Mesa, California

Since 2015, the city of Costa Mesa has been trying to clean up its motel scene along its popular roads, Harbor Blvd. and Newport Blvd. These motels house homeless, prostitutes, and attract other illegal activity that has caused the city many financial and safety issues for the area. The city first decided to try a non-aggressive action by changing the zoning area from commercial to high-density residential in order to increase the property value. The city hoped this would get some owners to sale their property for redevelopment, but only the chain motels like Motel 6 sold out. The city council decided after about a year to increase their pressure to get these problem hotels out by passing laws to punish motels. They ended up passing two laws, one that would fine motels for excessive police calls (average 0.4 calls per room per month) and another that would limit motels from renting rooms to customers longer than 30 days. The city also approved an increase in prostitution arrest and undercover assignments for the police department.

As of today, only one other motel on those boulevards has shut down. The owners of the Costa Mesa Motor Inn decided to sell their property after the problems the motel has caused for the area. However, the owners have had problems selling the hotel because its residents have sued them for displacement. This hotel has hosted homeless for the years and these homeless would be displaced if the Motor Inn shut down. These lawsuits are still going on, and it will be interesting to see what the city will do to meet the needs of the homeless and the motel owners.

Another issue that has developed over the last couple of years is the push back from motel owners. Because of aggression from the city, these owners fear that their livelihood is in jeopardy and their rights are being voided. The New Harbor Inn is currently in a legal battle with the city to keep their doors open. In 2016, the city sued the owners of the motel for being a public nuisance since the motel has become a hotbed for illegal activities. However, the owners have fired back and have sued back claiming the city is discriminating them and their low-income tenants. The case is now being pushed to federal courts to resolve this issue.

This case study of Costa Mesa is still ongoing, but will be important to keep a watch of. The Costa Mesa area is a lot like North Temple because it has successful motels, not run down hotels. The Gateway, All-Star and Econo-Lodge are full every night and bring in a lot of money for its owners, but has caused problems for the city of Salt Lake. An important take away from this case study is that a city should not be too aggressive in their policy making to clean up motel areas. Keeping in mind that owners are not trying to increase crime but make a living from their business, will help make cleaning up North Temple a smoother process.

Luna Lodge, Albuquerque New Mexico

Luna Lodge was built in 1949 and is a remnant of the peak of Route 66 travel. It was built using the Southwest Vernacular architecture of the time, keeping with the style of hundreds of other motels on the Route 66 corridor. Tough economic times in the early 1970’s and the
construction of Interstate 40 put Luna Lodge out of business. It sat untouched until it was designated and documented as a Historic Building by several organizations in the early 2000’s. This allowed for several non-profits to apply for grants, allowing for NewLife Homes to convert the motel into apartments for low-income individuals, many of whom have disabilities and special needs. The motel also hosts a small business incubator & laundry facilities for the community.

Sundowner Inn, Albuquerque New Mexico

Another remnant of Route 66 tourism is the Sundowner Inn in Albuquerque. The Sundowner Motel was built in 1960 and unlike other motels of its day, featured a nightclub and swimming pool, making it one of the hottest places in town. The Sundowner already had fallen on hard times due to the opening of Interstate 40. As the motel saw less use in the mid 70’s, the Sundowner became home to visionaries Bill Gates and Paul Allen and the beginnings of Microsoft.

The old, rundown 110-room motel surrounding an acre of asphalt has now been transformed into a 71-unit, mixed use, mixed-income rental housing development with many community amenities including 3,400 square feet of commercial/retail space fronting along Central Avenue targeting small businesses. Of those 71 units, 44 are efficiencies, 15 are one-bedrooms, 11 two-bedrooms, and one three-bedroom unit. The development contains units for low income households, but also incorporates market rate units to make this a truly mixed-income development. Affordable rental rates will begin at $320 per month for an efficiency, $343 for a 1-bedroom, and $411 for a two-bedroom apartment, including utilities. Market rate units will begin at $432 per month for an efficiency, and go up to $1,084 for the three-bedroom unit.

The City of Albuquerque worked along with New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority and New Life Homes to provide a change of use. Prior to residing in NewLife Homes housing, the majority of the residents have been in crisis housing, emergency shelters, substance abuse treatment programs, or on the streets. The Sundowner’s 71 units are for lower-income residents, with about a quarter of the apartments set aside for those with special needs.

Stagecoach Motor Inn, Santa Fe, New Mexico

The Housing Trust of Santa Fe purchased the land where the old motel sat and began construction on the 60 new apartments in 2012. Every apartment has been leased to tenants who qualify for the affordable housing. Stage Coach offers compact development with ample open space, including community gardens and orchards, sport courts, walking paths with fitness zones for adults and teens, and native rain gardens that offer opportunities for explorative learning and play. The spacious community building has a sunny lobby with seating, a kitchen, a computer lab, offices, and a large classroom for daycare and after school programs. The site is pedestrian friendly with paths connecting directly to the Arroyo de Los Chamisos nature trail, public transportation, and commercial activities along Cerrillos Road, an ideal workforce housing neighborhood with a concentration of retail employment nearby.
On-site services include a resident social service coordinator and programs provided through nonprofit organizations. Financial fitness, computer and CPR training, health screening, and preschool daycare are provided. Additional modules available on demand include: homebuyer training, energy literacy and healthy home education, financial literacy and job training/placement for youth, ESL, after school recreation, cooperative child care/parenting skills and healthy cooking and gardening programs. Partnership for the redevelopment of the motel included UnitedHealth Group and Enterprise Community Partners to secure funding for the project, which cost about $12 million. In addition to the apartments providing exclusively affordable a quarter of the apartments are reserved for those who are emerging from homelessness or who have special needs. Lifelink, working with shelters around town and other organizations, helped find these tenants, who will receive ongoing case management from their referring organizations.

**Imperial Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia**

Started in 1910 and opened in 1911, the Imperial Hotel was one of the first major commercial projects in Downtown Atlanta designed to address the rapid business climate. Through the 1940’s to the 1970’s, the hotel saw some of its highest use in music and entertainment. In 1980, a developer purchased the Imperial Hotel and quickly abandoned it, leaving it vacant. Through the 1980’s as the aging and empty structure declined, homeless citizens moved in. The homeless population increased by the thousands in Atlanta. The rising tensions in the city over their growing numbers would lead to a historic confrontation centered at the Imperial.

In late June of 1990 several Atlanta homeless advocates entered the Imperial Hotel and proceeded to occupy the site in protest. Outraged over the treatment of the homeless, the takeover was a planned demonstration against several moves by the city of Atlanta. Members of the group were particularly upset about funds from the Federal Government originally intended for low income housing that was instead used to develop commercial districts. In order to exit in peace, a deal was struck with the Mayor, and the city agreed to create 1,000 single room housing units for the homeless. A non-profit purchased the Imperial hotel with the help of other organizations, with the intent to renovate it featuring 90 apartments for both low and middle income individuals. These units provide permanent, sustainable housing to Atlanta's homeless and disabled residents.

**Motel Conversion Considerations**

At times, cities have motels that are hit with either blight or high crime rates. This leads to undesired activity that spills into the neighborhood. The neighbors then consider dealing with the problems. These situations usually provide an opportunity for neighborhood revitalization to take place. Revitalizing the blighted motels to be turned into community assets is a fantastic opportunity to help with providing transitional housing for the less fortunate. Attached in the report is an appendix on the process in which the process can be started.
Conclusion

The homeless and low income population in Salt Lake City have been impacted by the housing crisis and recession. Homelessness is up in Utah based on a report from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD's 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress found that the number of people experiencing homelessness in Utah on a single night in 2016 is 7.2 percent. Specifically, HUD estimates, Utah experienced a 19.5 percent reduction in homeless families, a 0.6 percent drop in veteran homelessness and a 5.6 percent decline in individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. But yearlong data on homelessness collected by the Utah Division of Housing and Community Development reveal that homelessness jumped from 12,241 to 13,114. The state's report released in May also said the population of homeless families was up 17 percent.

There is a gap between those seeking shelter and available beds. Much work is still required to completely reduce to zero the unsheltered homeless population. The number of unsheltered homeless individuals can be expected given the counts of available year-round beds and of emergency shelter, transitional housing, or safe haven housing, which are substantially less than the number of homeless individuals. Nonetheless, the gap between those seeking shelter and available beds occurs not only at the State level, but at a local level as well. More funding is likely necessary to bring the level of year-round beds to the level of need. Solutions may also be needed for emergency shelters, including discussion of requirements of shelters regarding sobriety and mental illness. Long-term success for many clients with serious mental illness and addictions requires stable housing.
References


Image credits:
Map of motel locations along North Temple west of I-15. (Source: Google Maps 2017)

Allstar Travel Motor Hotels, Salt Lake City, Utah. (Photo: Michael Barton)

Econo Lodge Downtown, Salt Lake City, Utah. (Photo: Michael Barton)

Gateway Inn, Salt Lake City, Utah. (Photo: Michael Barton)

Crime map originally drawn by K. Bell for Salt Lake City Corporation, credits on image say: “SLC IMS GIS, Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), MapmyIndia, NGCC, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community”
Note: SLC IMS is Salt Lake City Information Management Services

(with red car) Luna Lodge, Albuquerque, New Mexico. (Image source: Apartments.com)

Restored sign for Luna Lodge, Albuquerque, New Mexico. (Image source: Route66Women.com)

Restored sign and adobe facade, Stage Coach Motor Inn, Santa Fe, New Mexico. (Image source: PavilionConstruction.com)

New brightly colored stucco on restored Sundowner Motel, Albuquerque, New Mexico. (Image source: ArchPaper.com)

Imperial Hotel and the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Atlanta, Georgia. Clerical leaders were influential in helping the residents of the Imperial Hotel negotiate with the city. (Image source: Curbed.com)
Front entrance and flag pole of the veterans’ housing at Freedom Landing, Salt Lake City, Utah. (Image source: Google Maps 2017)

Palmer Court, Salt Lake City, Utah. (Image source: SLC Redevelopment Agency, SLCRDA.com)
Appendix

Addendum for Motel Acquisition

1. Identify funding sources for acquisition
2. Evaluation of targeted properties:
   a. Assess crime patterns, Previous and current Code Violations, Probability for redevelopment, and Condition of structure
3. Evaluate project for all possible housing types
   a. Work with housing partners for suitable housing goals
   b. If HUD funding is going into project, other rules kick in
4. Work with community partners to identify who will operate the housing
   a. What kind of housing will be provided
   b. What services will be provided ie. case management, job training, mental health, medical space
5. Approach property owners to assess willingness to convey their property
6. Due diligence
   a. Title or legal issues
   b. Environmental issues
   c. Profile of residents
   d. Assessment of building condition
7. Determine end product or proper utilization of building
   a. Adaptive reuse or rehabilitation vs demolition and new construction
8. Acquiring the property
9. Development RFP preferred end use design for targeted population size and other characteristics
10. Request for proposals for development of the property
    a. Select a project, choose the developer, secure financing, and private public partnership