

NASSAU

URBAN LAB







# Nassau Urban Lab FINAL REPORT

July 2016  
Nassau, The Bahamas – Washington, DC



EMERGING and  
SUSTAINABLE  
CITIES  
Initiative

in collaboration with



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## FOREWORD

### GILBERTO CHONA

Many cities across Latin America and the Caribbean share a common issue: the abandonment and underutilization of central areas or downtowns. In most cases, city centres are bustling with activity during the day, but become ghost towns during the night. This is the case of Nassau, a Caribbean capital city where its downtown area, rich with historic landmarks and local treasures, becomes almost completely silent and vacant after sunset. This phenomenon is especially common in emerging cities where the inadequate use of tangible and intangible urban assets is juxtaposed with a rapid urban sprawl towards suburbia.

The revitalization of historic city centres and the recovery of the urban public realm are some of the most pressing urban challenges we face today in the region. As people and commercial developments have been moving to the sprawling suburbs, many historic city centres have fallen into decay. Nowadays, due to this abandonment, many downtowns are considered unsafe, unaffordable, and lacking in the amenities that have become ubiquitous in the suburbs. Downtowns are places to work but not to live, and until we can reverse this trend, they will continue to be undervalued cultural and economic assets hampering the overall sustainable development of these cities. The revitalization processes of central areas can become an opportunity to create inclusive and diverse sustainable urban environments, with quality public spaces, smart mobility and connectivity for both higher and lower income residents.

The Urban Design Lab (UDL), as a component of the Emerging and Sustainable Cities Program, allows for the identification of such urban challenges and proposes tangible solutions by way of intelligent urban design projects within a broader urban strategy for the implementation of the projects. This participatory process of the UDL engages stakeholders and fosters buy-in from the community, adding to the projects' potential for being accepted, promoted, and maintained in the future by members of the Central Nassau communities. Revealed in this document, the UDL offers a tailor-made product, a solution that is comprehensive, multi-sectoral, adaptable, feasible and most importantly, sustainable.







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## FOREWORD

### NICOLA VIRGILL-ROLLE

The Bahamas is creating a National Development Plan (NDP), Vision 2040, a new national vision for sustainable development in the country. The NDP is structured around 4 pillars - economy, governance, human capital and the environment (built and natural). The proposals elaborated by the Nassau Urban Design Lab feed into the NDP as a pilot transversal project for urban redevelopment, not only for New Providence, but for all islands of The Bahamas. Working hand in hand, the IDB, the Government of the Bahamas and its partners envision a more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient place to live and work for Bahamians, both in Nassau and throughout the Family Islands. Both of these projects offer spaces for citizens to participate, engage, be heard, and take ownership of the process; and in the case of the Emerging and Sustainable Cities Program (ESC), this is done through the Urban Design Lab.

The Urban Design Lab has offered an opportunity for residents and students to voice their concerns, opinions, and suggestions for how they would like to see their city and their communities developed in a more holistic and sustainable way. It has allowed the local college students to apply their learning and propose tangible solutions, urban design solutions, to the every-day problems that we face here in Nassau. It has fostered a rich, international academic and cultural exchange, something that these students, from the College of The Bahamas and the University of Technology Vienna, will likely carry with them as they continue their educational endeavours and professional development. Ultimately, it has allowed Nassauvians to imagine a different future, one that is more vibrant, more resilient, and more inclusive.



# 1

# INTRO

This is a plan to utilize Central Nassau's natural and cultural assets to rejuvenate this area and create an economically successful, sustainable, diverse and interconnected community. Nassau is currently facing a key moment in its growth trajectory as a city, facing challenges in the areas of affordable housing, unemployment and crime. Despite the rapid urban growth of the city, Nassau's Downtown today remains empty and disconnected from the rest of the city.



## 1.1 Nassau – Hub of the Caribbean

As a popular cruise ship destination, Nassau is known for its pristine beaches, coral reefs, and opportunities for diving and snorkelling. It retains many of its characteristic pastel-coloured British colonial buildings, such as the pink-hued Government House and the Public Library Building. However, at a time when neighbouring, lower-cost Caribbean destinations such as Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic are becoming increasingly competitive, it is critical for The Bahamas—and especially for the City of Nassau—to develop a strategy that reimagines the city by enhancing both residents' and tourists' experiences in a way that showcases Bahamian history and culture.

Nassau is the capital and largest city of The Bahamas. It lies on the island of New Providence, with neighbouring Paradise Island across the Sir Sidney Poitier Bridge. The City was established in the most populous area in the archipelago of The Bahamas, and most importantly and strategically where a natural harbour was located. The Downtown area was built mostly using the local limestone deposits of New Providence Island's natural ridge. Originally, the city was serviced by the surrounding areas that provided it with local materials and food to be sold at market.

The island of New Providence recorded a population of 246,329 in the 2010 census, equivalent to 70 per cent of the entire population of The Bahamas. Nassau is currently facing a key moment in its growth trajectory, facing challenges related to affordable housing; youth unemployment, crime, 'brain drain', and increasing competition in the global tourism market. Despite the fact that the country's population rose by 45% over the past 25 years, Nassau's Downtown today remains empty and disconnected from the rest of the city. A quick inventory of the city's historic buildings, cultural heritage, and creative industries, indicates a strong potential for Nassau to improve its brand as a creative city. Revitalizing a downtown that attracts the locals and engenders a sense of pride and place will

create the foundation for redefining Nassau's image while reasserting it as a destination of culture and arts. Creative cities are magnets for investment, talent, and tourism; and creative economies, including those based on Crafts and Folk Arts, can serve as a tool for urban development.

Though rich with historic landmarks and local treasures, Downtown Nassau is an echo of its past when it was a bustling and liveable city

The promotion of the creative sector in Nassau, a city with deep cultural roots and strong community connections, is key to responding to the city's urban sustainability challenges.

## 1.2 Why Central Nassau?

Central Nassau, the focus of this Plan, is an area representing the historic centre of city life and consists of two communities – Downtown Nassau and Over-the-Hill. These communities are divided by more than just the natural ridge that borders Downtown and demarcates the passage into and out of the Over-the-Hill neighbourhoods. The historic Over-the-Hill neighbourhoods,

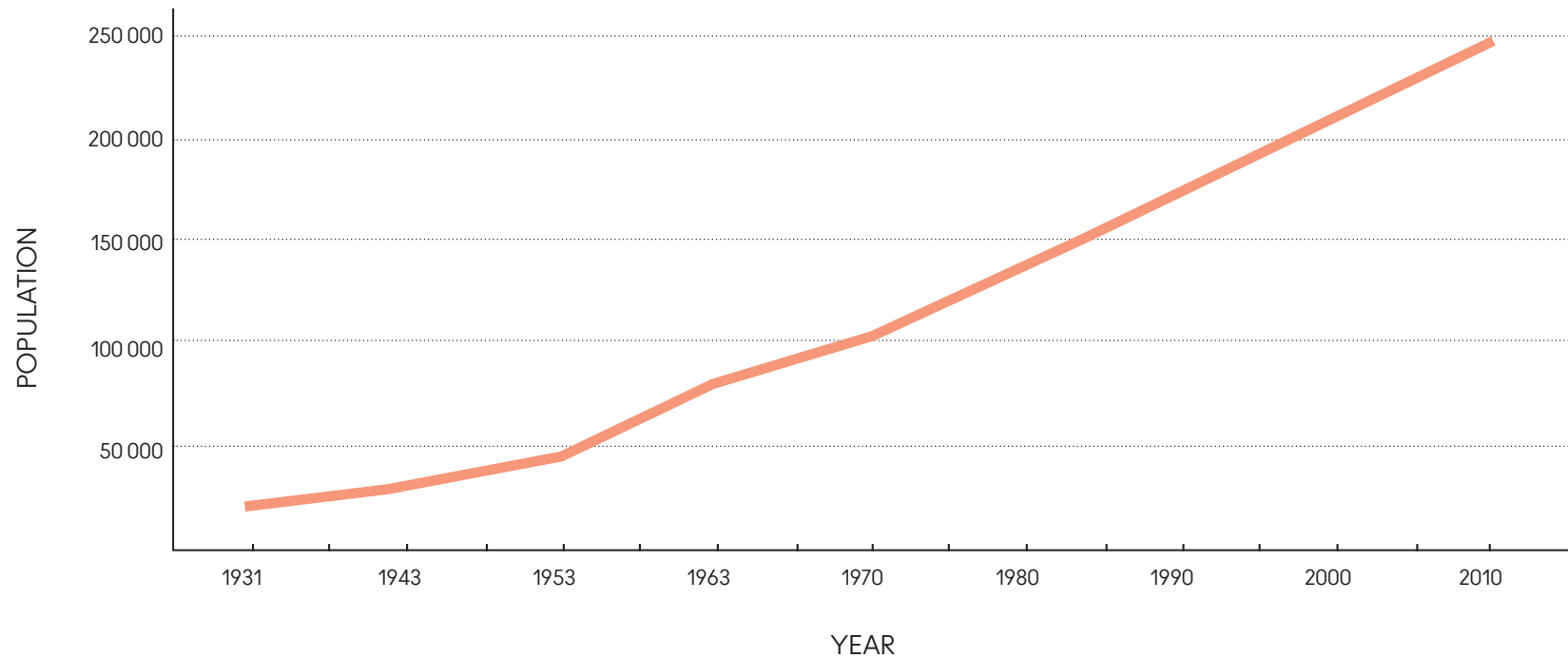
including Grants Town, were established as freed slave settlements and carry strong historic and cultural significance on the island. Central Nassau, which until the 1950s represented the entire city, still harbours Nassau's identity and culture.

On an island that is only 80 square miles (207 km<sup>2</sup>) no one is ever far from Downtown, which is still considered the hub of most activities in Nassau and the historic birthplace of the country. Thousands of people visit daily to shop, dine, sightsee and enjoy the tropical climate of the city. Despite its strengths, conversations held with university students and professors during the Nassau Urban Design Lab (UDL) workshops revealed that locals—particularly young people—have a tendency to avoid Downtown Nassau, observing that the area only caters to tourists.









Population growth (Source: Census 2010)

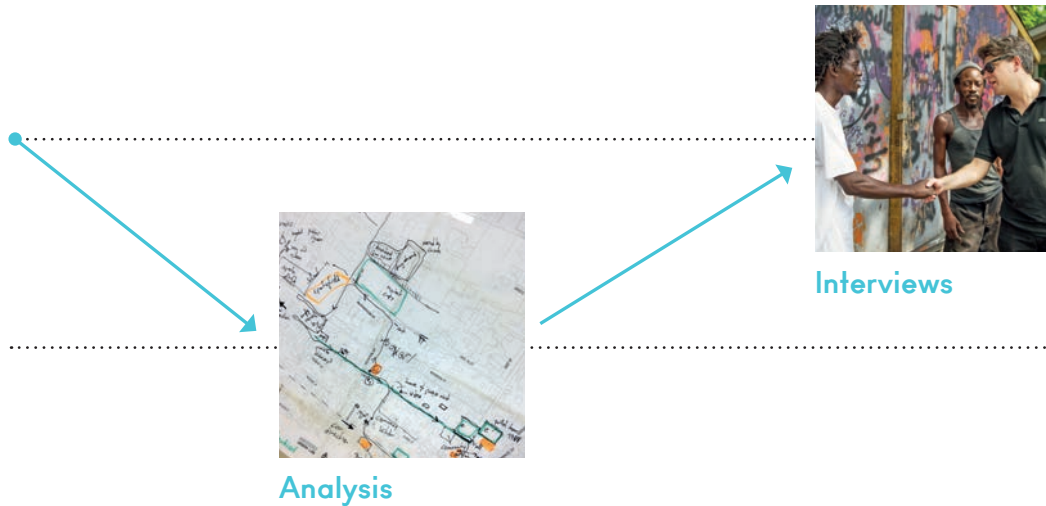
Popular international retail chains, like The Body Shop, are migrating away from Bay Street and relocating to high-end suburban shopping centres west of the city. As a result, Downtown Nassau only offers a few jewellery and souvenir shops, the Straw Market, and a couple of small restaurants and government buildings. Moreover, the redevelopment of areas such as Cable Beach as a tourist zone, and the drop in the number of stopover visitors—those who stay at least 24 hours or more—are other factors that have led to the overall deterioration of Downtown Nassau.

While the busiest parts of Downtown are Bay Street and Woodes Rogers Walk along the water, the area extends for several blocks in each direction. The Downtown area starts at West Bay Street, near the Junkanoo Beach area, and extends east down Bay Street, past the historic

site that is now the British Colonial Hilton Hotel. The area near the Hilton and across from the cruise ship port is the most vibrant area during the day, full of commercial and retail establishments. In the evening, this area lacks activity unless a cruise ship is in port, providing a temporary lively night scene. Beyond this area immediately surrounding the cruise ship port, at Prince George Dock across from Rawson Square, Downtown begins to show visible signs of decay. The old industrial port on East Bay Street was relocated to the new Nassau Container Port on Arawak Cay in 2012, and left many waterfront properties in the area vacant, and business in the area declined. Tourists and residents no longer walk down East Bay Street; for its lack of activity and use, it serves as a virtual boundary demarcating the eastern end of Downtown.



## 1. PREPARATORY PHASE



Methodology of the Urban Design Lab (UDL)

Over-the-Hill is an area literally located 'Over-the-Hill', meaning over a natural ridge, which rises behind the southern edge of Downtown Nassau. However, this area, though in very close proximity to downtown, holds a different character than Downtown. It is a more residential area with Grants Town as its main centrality. Low-income families now inhabit this area that the people in Nassau refer to as a 'ghetto'. The commercial uses are mainly located along the North-South corridors of Blue Hill Road, Market Street, and East Street. According to Bahamian Urban Planner Amos Ferguson, this area is critically in need of intervention. Run-down buildings and lack of basic infrastructure like water and sanitation are accompanied by a shortage of public space. Although there is plenty of vacant land, squares and plazas or otherwise public gathering spaces are non-existent. As Collins Wall once divided Black from White in this

## 2. PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS



city, so the "Hill" seems to naturally isolate these neighbourhoods and segregate them socio-economically from the rest of the city.

The historic identity of the Central Nassau area, meaning Downtown and Over-the-Hill, is one of a symbiotic and interdependent relationship. This connection of places allowed for the birth of many of Nassau's beautiful urban structures as well as the rich social and cultural heritage of this Bahamian community. Grants Town once was a family-friendly and safe place – an ideal area to raise children and develop small businesses – with strong ties to its Bahamian roots. Unfortunately, the strong relationship between these two places has dissolved, yet yearns to be rekindled.

The above mentioned urban issues make Downtown Nassau and Grants Town an important urban plan-

### 3. ELABORATION OF DESIGN PROPOSALS



Validation  
Workshops



Conceptual Urban  
Design



Final Presentation

Reach out to the public

Internal work

ning area. Its glorious past illustrates the potential of its historical and natural assets. Despite the physical challenges and social stigmas, Nassau is a “brand” with high potential. It is a city with history, an urban waterfront, beaches, recreational offerings, and arts and culinary treasures. It is a city that hosts millions of tourists every year. As such, Central Nassau is the ideal location to showcase the rich Bahamian culture and history while becoming the innovative and inclusive hub of The Bahamas.

In December 2014, Nassau was designated as a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts by UNESCO, becoming one of only two cities in the Caribbean at the time—the other being Jacmel, Haiti—that were a part of this prestigious worldwide cultural network of Creative Cities. Armed with this recognition, the city now has an additional incentive to work towards its revitalization.

The historic identity of the Central Area of Nassau, meaning Downtown and Over-the-Hill, is one of a symbiotic and interdependent relationship.

#### 1.3 Working Methodology of the Urban Design Lab

The Urban Design Lab (UDL), a planning methodology that arises from an agreement between the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Austrian Ministry of Finance (BMF), aims to integrate new participatory strategies into urban planning and design. The methodology was developed by the IDB in 2014 and has improved since then with staff members and students of the University of Technology





Creative workshop with local stakeholders at Doongalik Studios Art Gallery



Social Cartography of Perception exercise at COB

of Vienna. In search of new, innovative planning techniques, the IDB is exploring a toolbox for integrated and participative planning by including a wide range of stakeholders into the design process. The UDL has been implemented in 17 cities throughout Latin America and the Caribbean and has contributed to the development of the Emerging and Sustainable Cities Program (ESC) Action Plans throughout the region.

As cities become increasingly complex, there is a need for innovative mechanisms that successfully tackle

urban challenges by proposing solutions that comprehensively consider the multiple factors that shape built environments today. The UDL is a temporary think-tank that helps municipalities find multi-sectoral solutions in a complex and dynamic world. It is set up as a supportive laboratory for the planning department of a city, and acts as a neutral planning facilitator to help generate urban solutions in the context of rapid urbanization. The labs assist in creating a dialogue between different groups of stakeholders, which significantly increases the chances for successful and sustainable urban development.

City development is often done in silos: planners do the zoning; architects design the buildings, etc. This sectoral character of urban contexts hinders a truly multi-disciplinary approach and therefore makes it impossible to correctly define problems and their solutions. When introducing UDLs in cities, a vacuum of ideas is often encountered. Municipal planners are often overwhelmed with many tasks,

The UDL is a temporary think-tank, which helps municipalities find multi-sectoral solutions in a complex and dynamic world.

and have little time to develop concrete solutions to larger problems. Moreover, many cities often lack strong urban management institutions or have difficulty solving issues associated with urban growth, such as poverty and informality.

Urban Design Labs help find answers to the questions many city leaders often have: Where should we intervene and how? What are the most impactful investments necessary to see change in the city? UDLs offer a

platform for the exchange of knowledge and experience of viable solutions in emerging topics, thereby adding value to the discourse on how to tackle actual urban problems. In order to understand planning as a dynamic process, it is imperative to involve a broad number of stakeholders into the planning process. A stakeholder analysis (“stakeholder mapping”) is often conducted, followed by interviews identifying the key challenges of each sector and other relevant stakeholders in the area. The stakeholder group becomes the basis of the Local Support Group (LSG), a permanent and important participant during the planning process.

In Nassau, the major goal is to define implementable urban strategies for the central areas of the city, by involving not only government officials, but also neighbourhood residents, community groups, and all other relevant stakeholders from the culture and arts communities and the private sector.

A key element in the process of the UDL in Nassau is the collaboration of two universities in the planning process: the College of The Bahamas (COB) with students from architecture and various other fields of study; and the University of Technology of Vienna, Austria (UTV), with Master students from the Institute of Urban Design, Housing and Land Policy. Based on a detailed diagnosis and analysis of the planning area, the group of local and international students was able to understand the local situation, discuss viable urban strategies and jointly design urban interventions during the Academic Workshop held in Nassau in November 2015.

Unconventional and unique ideas provoked debates and dialogue within the groups, but also in the community, comprised of local residents and engaged citizens in Central Nassau. Because of the participative nature of the Urban Design Lab methodology, a critical mass of supporters was reached from the Nassau community, and this approach created a sense of ownership and approval of these new and fresh ideas and concepts. Guest lecturers

Community leader Valentino ‘Scrooge’ Brown during a walkshop in Grants Town



Kay-Kay Tong, owner of the supermarket on East Street



and both local and international urban specialists, like the Director of Urban Planning of Brooklyn New York, Winston von Engel, and many others were invited to the academic workshop. By including the academic sector into the planning process, the UDL created a win-win situation for both the city, which was able to test and discuss new development ideas, and the universities, whom were able to transcend teaching and have a real impact on the city. Andreas Hofer, Helmut Schramm and Arthur Kanonier, all from







Participatory workshop with members of Government, students of COB and other local stakeholders in September 2015



UTV, led the academic workshop together with Valeria Pintard-Flax and Marga Jann from the COB. At the closure of the Academic Workshop, a public discussion was organized in the Salem Union Baptist Church in Grants Town on November 12, 2015. It was an important activity to gain feedback from the community and intensify the dialogue between several stakeholders.

The Nassau Urban Design Lab operated through three stages of development: a) Preparation and Research,

b) Participatory Workshops and Urban Strategy, and c) Final Project Design and Dissemination. Through all stages, the project managed to include a wide range of local stakeholders throughout the planning process, from the preparation phase with interviews and stakeholder mapping, and also during the workshops and feedback sessions on the urban strategies.

#### Preparation and Research

The preparation and research phase is important in order to understand the planning area and the people living and

working in it. The Nassau Urban Design Lab worked with a team of two young professionals over a period of four weeks in September 2015.

The team, on the ground in Nassau, researched the history and the main problems and strengths of Grants Town and the downtown area. Through interviews with approximately 20 key local stakeholders, the most relevant urban issues of the central area were identified. Based on these interviews, a stakeholder map was created that provided insight on the emerging topics and relevant stakeholders that should be included in the planning process. Throughout the development of the Urban Design Lab, a Local Support Group (LSG) was set up based on the interviewed stakeholders and others who were added during the process. The creation of a LSG is an important tool to inform, include and engage the local leaders in the projects in order to create ownership and acceptance of the projects.

Another activity during this phase was the gathering of current planning instruments such as zoning plans and existing urban projects for the city. For this, a vast catalogue of planning data was compiled, including a Geographical Information System (GIS), socio-demographic data and a corrected land cadastre. The UDL methodology

works with existing data rather than research on new data sets. The relevant data is selected by based on emerging topics extracted from the interviews. This process ensures a more efficient data collection process. When necessary, the team complemented data sets with additional qualitative research through focus groups and expert interviews.

#### Participatory Workshops and Urban Strategy

During this phase, participatory workshops were organized around different sectors, such as public entities and actors (e.g., government ministries working on projects that have impact within the city boundaries), neighbours and community leaders, groups of local specialists, and the cultural, environmental and heritage sectors. Through the workshops, a collective diagnosis of the planning area was made.

Through mapping activities, potential local action areas and actions were identified. Additionally, analytical focus group discussions about the neighbourhood identified emerging issues of culture, urban management and redevelopment, among other relevant issues. The information generated in the workshops was synthesized into a clear logic framework showing hierarchies and relationships among topics and ideas from the different testimonies



Discussions during the participatory workshops in September 2015





The comprehensive work among both local and international experts from various disciplines as well as inhabitants of Nassau and stakeholders has to continue with a mutual dialogue.

Validation workshop of the urban interventions in February 2016



and statements. This was done in such a way to filter out the prevailing or emerging topics and, at the same time, create a local and trans-organizational consensus view of the neighbourhood, enabling the generation of urban strategies and projects from these activities.

From September 22<sup>nd</sup> until October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the UDL team worked with the communities and private and public stakeholders on four core activities: 1) Urban Vision about the Place, 2) Collaborative SWOT Analysis, 3) Cartography of Social Perception, and 4) Urban Scenarios.

During this intense period of workshops, the team conducted five workshops: 1) Focus group with architects and urban planners; 2) Public workshop with entrepreneurs and sector specialists from the Government of The Bahamas; 3) Focus group with community members; 4) Focus group with UNESCO Creative Nassau; and 5) Children and community workshop in Grants Town. The minutes and results of these community and expert workshops are displayed in the annex of this plan.

From the 4<sup>th</sup> until the 12<sup>th</sup> of November, 2015, an Academic Workshop hosted by the College of The Bahamas (COB) and University of Technology of Vienna (UTV) was conducted at the School of Mathematics, Physics & Technology (SMPT) at COB. During ten days of intensive work, the students and professors developed urban strategies and urban interventions based on a preliminary urban strategy and the findings of the collaborative and com-



munity based diagnosis and analysis. Up to 30 students conducted walking tours, mapping activities and created urban scenarios in seven groups. These projects are the basis for the urban strategy in Downtown and Grants Town. In addition to the academic workshop, a study for urban design and housing on the issue of urban interventions in the context of urban renewal in historic centres was organized at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism UTV led by Andreas Hofer and his team.

The selected results from the Academic Workshop, and the additional urban design studies elaborated by the IDB design team of urban specialists, was presented at the 'Validation and Feedback Workshop' held on the 27<sup>th</sup>





Discussion on Urban Strategies with students of UTV and COB in November 2015

and 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2016 in Nassau. At this time, the Local Support Group gave feedback on the proposals and discussed the technical and economic feasibility of these projects. Based upon the results of this workshop, the designs for this plan were finalized.

#### Final Project Design and Dissemination

During the last phase of the methodology, the final project design of urban strategies and prioritized proposals are developed and further elaborated to fit into this plan. The process of collaborative design does not come to an end at

this stage. There is a consolidated urban strategy in place with a variety of design approaches; however, this plan has to be understood as a strategic rehabilitation plan that is the basis for the further development of the central areas of Nassau. It is recommended that a phased approach be taken; that there be a profound piece-by-piece, plot-by-plot urban redevelopment process, led by a public Urban Redevelopment Agency. The comprehensive work between both local and international experts from various disciplines, as well as residents of Nassau and its stakeholders, must continue with a mutual and on-going dialogue.





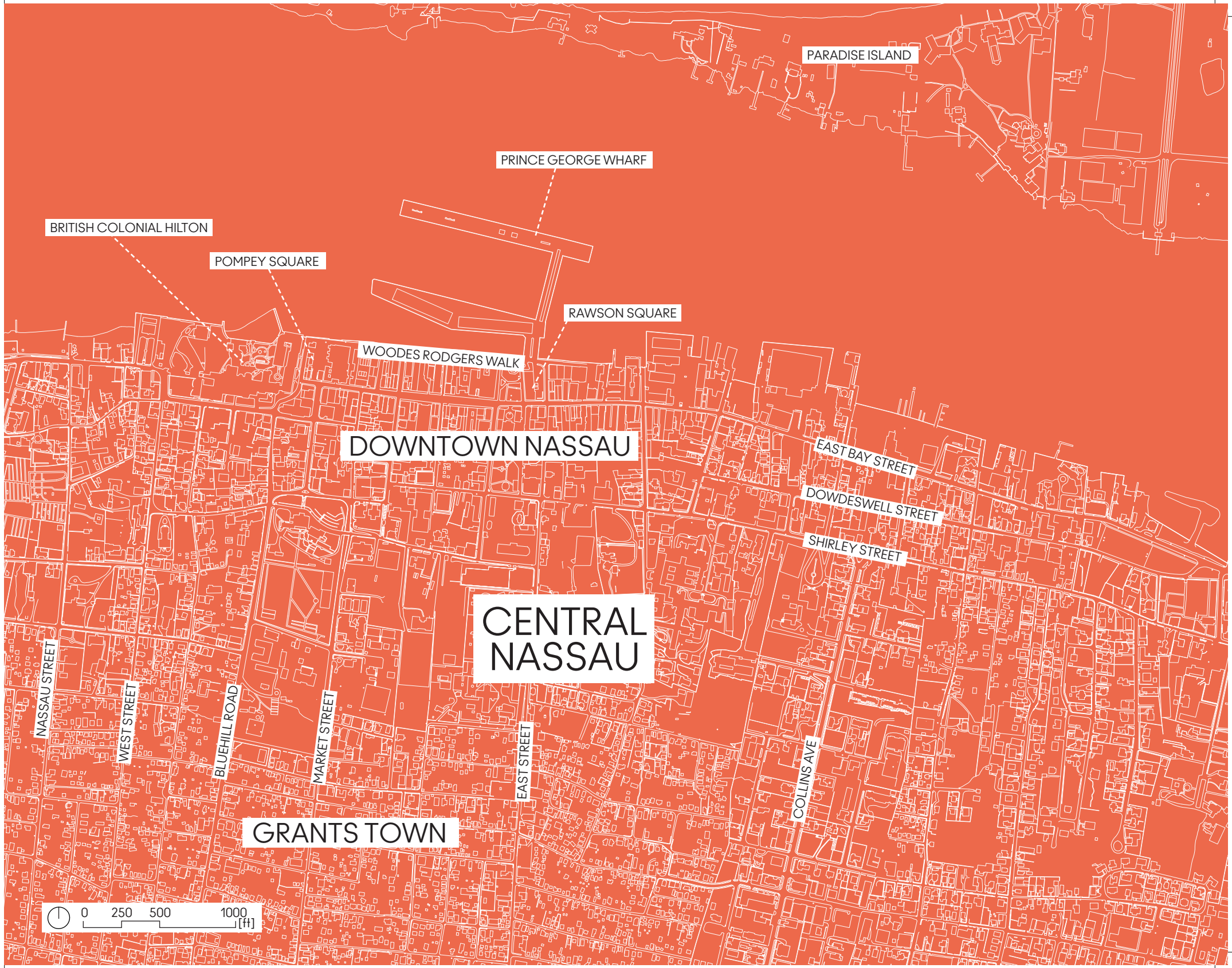
# 2

# PLANNING AREA

The planning area of Central Nassau, encompassing Downtown Nassau and Over-the-Hill, is nothing less than the heart of Nassau and The Bahamas. It is the area where Nassau was born, full of history and stories. It is the face of the city to its many visitors and the centre of trade, government and local culture. But, it is also a place undergoing dramatic changes over the last decades that faces a wide range of challenges today and into the future.







PARADISE ISLAND

PRINCE GEORGE WHARF

BRITISH COLONIAL HILTON

POMPEY SQUARE

RAWSON SQUARE

WOODES RODGERS WALK

DOWNTOWN NASSAU

CENTRAL  
NASSAU

EAST BAY STREET

DOWDESWELL STREET

SHIRLEY STREET

NASSAU STREET

WEST STREET

BLUEHILL ROAD

MARKET STREET

EAST STREET

COLLINS AVE

GRANTS TOWN

0 250 500 1000 [ft]



St.  
Andrew's  
Presbyte-  
rian Kirk



Downtown  
Nassau  
Bay  
Street,  
Parliament  
Square

### 2.1 The definition of Central Nassau

The planning area is labelled Central Nassau and is defined by the combined areas of Downtown Nassau and Over-the-Hill. Downtown is located in the northeast of the island, which refers to the area between Nassau Street on the West and Mackey Street on the East. It is bounded by the natural features of the island's landscape – the water to the North and the Hill to the South. Over this hill, a natural

ridge approximately 1300 feet (400m) South of Downtown, lies Over-the-Hill, an area comprised of several neighbourhoods, including the historic neighbourhood of Grants Town. The multiple limits and neighbourhoods that make up this area of the city attest to its complex history where racial divisions and class segregations have left traceable scars throughout the city's urban structure. These scars are reflected in the urban fabric of today, where connectivity is lost where the memory of Collins Wall remains.

In the downtown area, several government buildings such as Parliament, Courts and Government House can be found, as well as iconic sites such as the British Colonial Hilton Hotel, the cruise ship Port, and East Bay Street, the main shopping street of the city. Downtown begins near Junkanoo Beach along West Bay Street and stretches past the historic site where the British Colonial Hilton now stands. Continuing from the Hilton, one will find a pedestrian-zoned street in front of the Pirates of Nassau Museum on King Street. Moving north from there, the recently commissioned Pompey Square, made possible by a public-private partnership led by the Downtown Nassau Partnership, stands out as a lively public plaza for residents and tourists alike. This plaza creates a dynamic connection between the western end of Downtown by the British Colonial Hilton Hotel and the rest of Bay Street, and is a vibrant part of Downtown, surrounded by restaurants, bars, the urban waterfront, a museum, and the historic and active Straw Market, recently renovated after a fire in 2001. Stretching several blocks to the east, Bay Street is full of souvenir and apparel shops, jewellery shops, boutiques, banks, and a few restaurants and bars. However, the target consumer of these commercial sites is generally the tourist, and not the local resident. The area is also full of historic landmarks and monuments, like the Queen Victoria Statue in Parliament Square. Interspersed throughout the vicinity are many historic buildings, such as the Vendue House, Christ Church Cathedral and the Nassau Public Library.



View on Downtown Nassau and potential of implementation of continuous boardwalk and waterfront



Heading east past the Bacardi Bar, located on the corner of East and Bay Streets, the character of the built environment changes dramatically. The tourist section of Downtown dissipates at this point after approximately seven blocks, and vacancy becomes commonplace, although a few smaller, local shops and business, like the Rum Cake Factory and a local Bank, are still found scattered along East Bay Street. Following the relocation of the original shipping port from this area, the eastern end of Downtown reflects its current condition as an inactive, abandoned and unattrac-

tive area meant for passing thru quickly. Moving south from Bay Street, along the ridge (or the Hill) can be found many public and historic buildings such as churches, governmental buildings, museums, and hotels, amongst which include the St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Kirk, the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas, the Graycliff Hotel, John Watling's Distillery, the Central Post Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health, and the Department of Public Service. Continuing south over the ridge, the Over-the-Hill area, which includes the area



„The main question is, if the tourist satisfaction with Bay Street will diminish if Bahamians abandon the street?“



Bay Street as an important tourist destination



Souvenir shop on Bay Street

of Grants Town, is delimited on the East by East Street and Collins Wall (which until the mid-1940s was a physical barrier made out of stone and concrete that divided the white and black citizens of Nassau) and on the west by Nassau Street, and to the south by Wulff Road.

During the development process of the Nassau Urban Design Lab, a strong socio-economic and cultural dependency between the elite Colonial power structure and the rich, and formerly white Bay Street merchants and the mainly black population of Afro-Bahamian Grants and Bain Town was detected. Despite the fact that today these neighbourhoods are separated and fractioned, they are both important landmarks in Bahamian national history. According to the results of the workshops, both neighbourhoods have strong ties to the past, making those areas rich in culture and history. Together, these two areas will be referred to as Central Nassau.

Map: Planning area, with street names, limitation of planning area.

## 2.2 Characterization of Central Nassau

The area that became Nassau, first settled in 1666, was eventually developed as the country's economic hub and capital mainly because of an excellent natural harbour, well-protected by a string of barrier islands, e.g. Paradise (formerly Hog Island), Silver Cay, Salt Cay, Athol Island, etc. Moreover, New Providence Island was of strategic value to the British by proximity to the continent; it made a convenient bridge between the archipelago, North America and Jamaica, the principal island in the British West Indies. Just as important was its strategic proximity to the islands held by Britain's longstanding enemies – Spain's Cuba and France's Haiti on Hispaniola. In days gone by, Dunmore Town on Harbour Island was the unofficial capital because of superior economic activity. Nassau was the poor relative. During the 19th century, Nassau became urbanized, attracting rural residents from the Family Islands and other

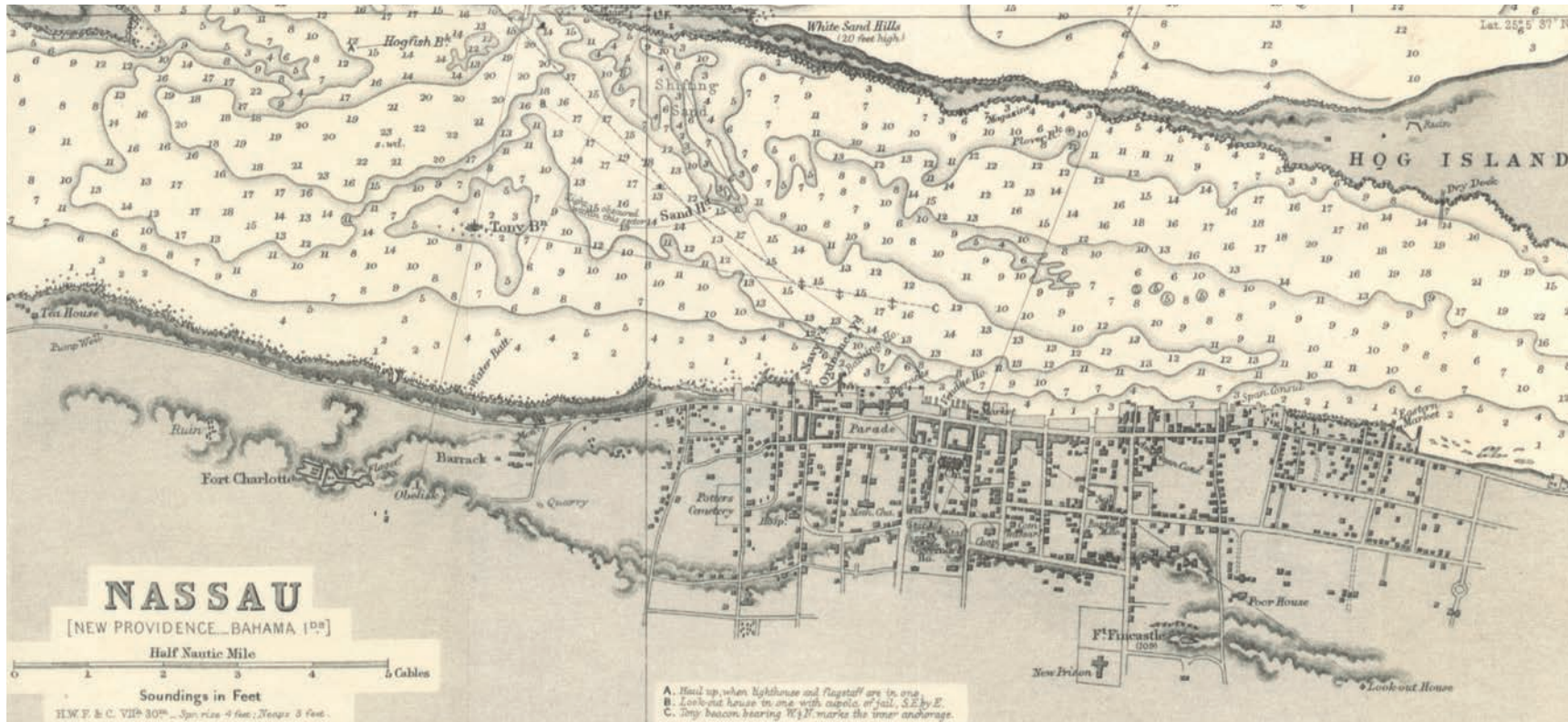


Historic view onto  
Downtown Nassau and  
Bay Street in the early  
1900s

parts of the Caribbean. Since the 1950s the city has experienced accelerated urban growth and therefore an evident expansion of its urban footprint. However, back in 1788, the heart of Nassau was just a few blocks of buildings between Government House and the harbour. Gradually, it began expanding towards the east to Malcolm's Park, south to Wulff Road, and west to Nassau Street. Grants Town and Bain Town, south of the city, became the main residential areas for those of African descent, and until approximately 30 years ago was the most populous part of the city.

Bay Street is a busy commercial street during the day, offering mostly luxury items like watches and diamonds, but also textiles and cheap souvenirs. Most activity occurs between the British Colonial Hilton and East Street ("Bacardi Bar"), followed by a completely run-down stretch with vacant small-scale commercial buildings. The building heights on Bay Street are approximately two to three storeys decreasing to a more low-density area as it moves towards Montague Beach at its eastern end. Almost every building is vacant on East Bay Street after "Bacardi Bar",





Historic map of Nassau, 1848

with only some office buildings in use. The upper floors of these buildings were formerly exclusively residential, but are now vacant as well and there are few people on the street, losing urbanity after the Sidney Poitier Bridge and Mackey Street.

According to some, the urban decay of Bay Street is due to the relocation of the port which closed operation in 2011 and relocated to Arawak Cay. Now, this waterfront area is fully vacant and not accessible to the public as these waterfront properties are privately owned by a handful of wealthy families. Though it is rumoured there are plans for a new waterfront development, these plans have not been made public. Others attribute the decline of this area to the conversion of Bay Street into a two-lane unidirectional road. Bay Street was traditionally a two-way road,

until Atlantis, the popular Paradise Island Resort located across the Sidney Poitier Bridge, advocated for improved, speedy access for guests from the airport to the resort.

Bay Street used to be the "main commercial district and street in the whole country and was home to a variety of retail outlets, including clothing, jewellery and perfume stores, as well as nightclubs, restaurants and bars" (Martin, N.P. and Storr, V.H., 2009). It was also the key site for social and cultural expression on the island. But over the last decades, the linear centrality of Bay Street has shifted from a site with local importance and tradition to a site for tourists, particularly those arriving in the millions annually by cruise ship at the Prince George Wharf which was deliberately dredged at considerable expense for this purpose. Bay Street is the gateway to the Island and Country for the

Historic photograph of Bay Street in the early 1900s



tourists who arrive on cruise ships. "The main question is, if the tourist satisfaction with Bay Street will diminish if Bahamians abandon the street?" (Martin, N.P. and Storr, V.H., 2009).

Central Nassau has a variety of building styles and heritage buildings, which are both striking and unique in the Caribbean. Reflecting the prosperity of the colonialists and loyalists alike, buildings were designed in timber and later in cut limestone from the local quarries. The significant inventory of historic buildings include the gov-

ernment buildings around Parliament Square and Rawson Square; the Public Library built in 1879 as a jail; Fort Fincastle built in 1793; Fort Charlotte built in 1794; Balcony House built around 1790 on Market Street; and the British Colonial Hotel built in 1899 on the original site of former Fort Nassau (built in 1696); just to name a few (Gravette, A. 2000).

Over-the-Hill is a community made up of a series of neighbourhoods located in what was then considered southwest New Providence. Grants Town, located in Over-the-Hill, is characterized by its rich history as a former town





Historic photograph of Grants Town

for the former African slaves. As land was set-aside for the Africans in Nassau, the first settlement, Headquarters, was established. The influx of Africans after 1807 then necessitated carefully planned settlements. "The first of which was Grants Town, which began as a government-sponsored project to provide land for the African recaptives and which encompassed settlements and residents both to the north and south: Headquarters, Carmichael and Delancy Town respectively" (Bowe, R. 1982).

Important streets in Grants Town are East Street, Market Street, Baillou Hill Road, Anderson Street, Augusta

Street, Hay Street and Lewis Street to name a few. Today, the area is in decline, with a high number of vacant buildings and, more importantly, vacant lots.

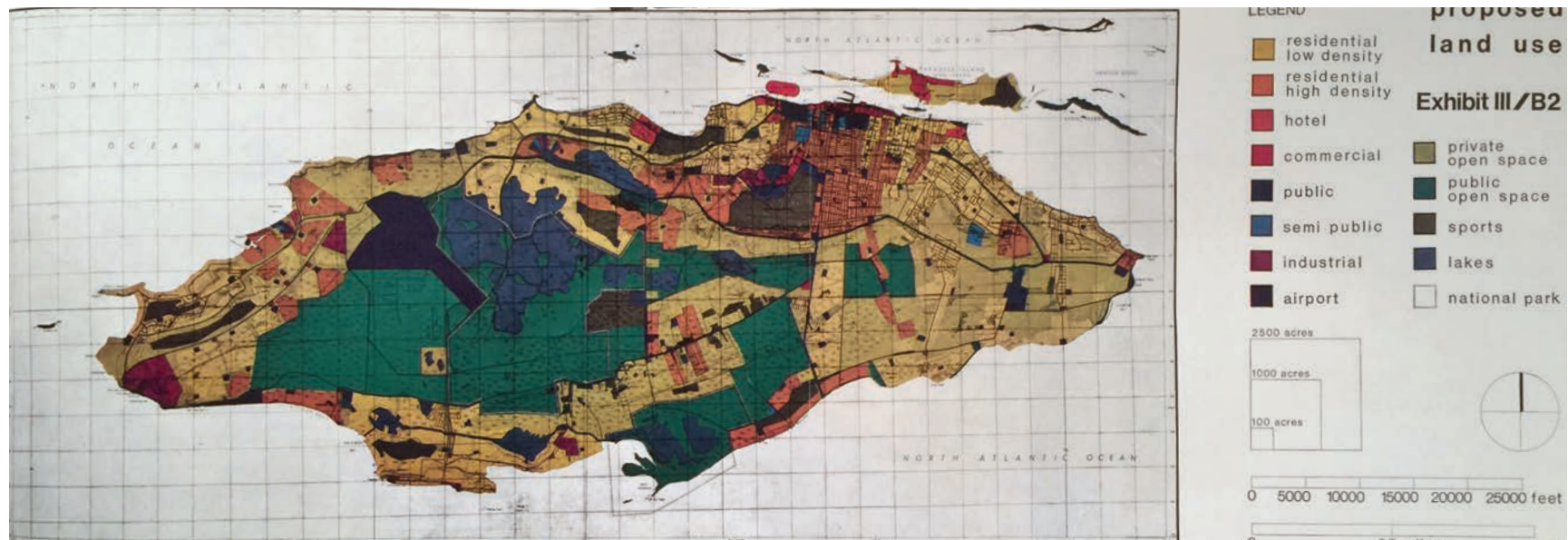
The total population of New Providence is 246,329 inhabitants, with 80,222 households and an average household size of 3.5 inhabitants. Grants Town and neighbouring Bain Town have a population of 8,743 and 2,493 occupied households and 235 vacant dwelling units (Census, 2010). According to the 2010 census, Downtown Nassau is part of Grants Town and Bain Town. Nonetheless, there are hardly any people actually living in the Downtown area. The num-











Development Plan of New Providence Island and the City of Nassau (1969)

ber of buildings in Grants and Bain Towns is 2,469, but the Census counts 2,728 dwelling units. This means that most of the people, families, elderly, etc. live in single family houses. Approximately 11 percent of the whole housing stock is vacant. Taking into account the amount of vacant land, Grants Town and Bain Town constitute an extremely low-density area with an average of approximately 12 inhabitants per acre (31 per hectare).

### 2.3 Planning and Subdivision Act 2010 as legal framework of Urban Planning

Many land-use and urban planning studies have been carried out over the years by consultants, which provide pertinent information on where structures are built in the Downtown and Over-the-Hill community. These studies yielded plans that illustrate building types with their locations and adjacencies. However, what is lacking currently is a comprehensive Land Use Plan with direct correlation to the

building codes, planning legislation and planning practices of The Bahamas.

The 2010 Planning and Subdivision Act is a strong document providing a set of valuable land use controls. The Act is progressive and innovative with new instruments such as Bonus Zoning, Temporary Uses and Secondary Plans. However, the zoning rules are not clearly defined, such as construction restriction zones, or green areas zoning that prohibits construction. Moreover, the instrument of the secondary plans is not clearly defined either. However, these regulations are a solid basis to further develop urban planning policies on the Island of New Providence.

### 2.4 Review of urban plans and strategies for Nassau

The following section presents a review of urban plans and strategies for Nassau in the last fifty years, from the 'Development Plan of New Providence Island and the City of Nassau' drafted by Paul Lester Wiener and Francis Ferguson





←  
Grants  
Town  
Urban  
Improve-  
ment Pro-  
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(1980),  
Project  
area

→  
Grants  
Town  
Urban  
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toric image



in 1969; the 'Grants Town Urban Improvement Project' from the early 1980s; Jackson Burnside's outstanding 'Historic Nassau Study' on architectural heritage and research from the early 2000s; and the 'Nassau Harbour and Bay Street Renaissance Program' from the mid-2000s designed by the international environmental consulting firm EDAW (now AE-COM).

With so many plans and studies, the Island of New Providence has never had a shortage of urban ideas, visions and strategies. However, the majority of these projects were either not implemented, or only done in a piecemeal fashion. As a result, urban decay and decline was not avoided, and neither was the urban sprawl that emerged. Nonetheless, it is important to understand these attempts of urban redevelopment in order to fully understand urban politics in The Bahamas.

#### 2.4.1 Development Plan of New Providence Island and the City of Nassau (1969)

The Development Plan of New Providence Island and the City of Nassau was an impressive effort undertaken by stu-

dents of the School of Architecture at Columbia University, directed by Paul Lester Wiener and Francis Ferguson, under a collaboration with the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning of the United Nations that sought to *answer pressing questions about urbanization and land development in the Caribbean as a result of population changes, the emergence of tourism as a key economic sector, which has led to rampant speculation* (Columbia University Institute of Urban Environment and Division of Planning, 1968). At the same time, the Government of The Bahamas was exploring means of planning development, which provided the perfect situation for the plan to be carried out.

The plan applies the 'rational method' of planning, providing (i) a sound characterization of the background that covers the historical roots of settlement in The Bahamas, the nature of the Bahamian economy, and its ties to Great Britain and the United States; (ii) a thorough depiction of the then current social, economic and physical conditions and trends on New Providence, leading into (iii) a comprehensive proposal offering general development policies on tourism and economic activity based on prob-

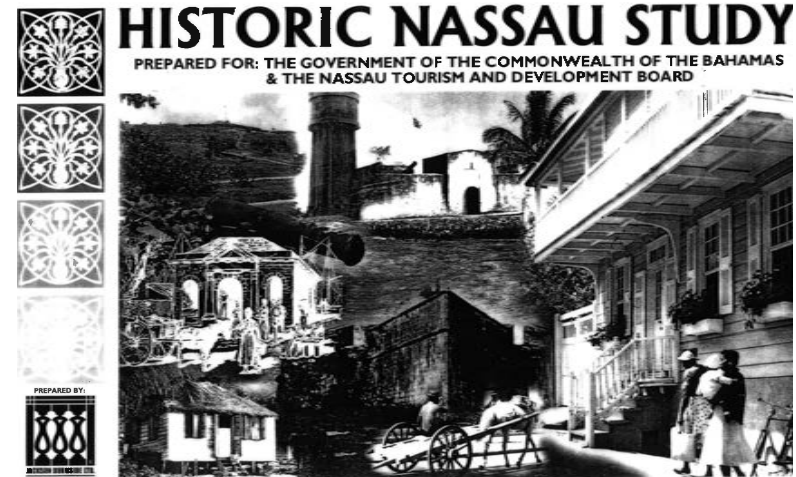
able growth patterns; specific plans for New Providence Island focused on land use, circulation, and utility systems; and detailed plans and actions for the Grants Town and the Central Nassau areas. The plan concludes with (iv) a comprehensive implementation and control mechanism focusing on “the how” to carry out the proposals; on providing subdivision regulations, and on a proposed zoning ordinance.

On the areas of Downtown and of Grants Town, detailed planning and urban design analyses were carried out with the same components of the ‘rational method’. For these areas, the plan was seeking the objectives of: a) creating a system of parking areas to absorb the needs for this service, b) creating a network of pedestrian paths along some of the streets, alleys and block-centres, c) creating a community and commercial nucleus at the intersection of the pedestrian path and the main road, where a public plaza is also set, and d) intensifying the residential setting by means of demonstrating that the current plots of land could accommodate more single-detached dwelling than traditionally planned. One acre of land in an area with primordially existing buildings holds approximately 4 to 6 dwelling units (10 to 15 dwelling units per hectare). Accounting for an additional acre for roads and proper room between buildings, this is reduced to a density of approximately 2 to 4 dwellings per acre (5 to 10 per hectare), whereas an area with dwellings proposed by the University could increase this figure to 12 to 16 dwelling units per net acre (30 to 40 per net hectare).

#### 2.4.2 Grants Town Urban Improvement Project (1980)

Grants Town Urban Improvement Project was a project prepared by Carson Llewelyn-Davis Carson for the Government of The Bahamas in May 1980. The project proposed a gentle rehabilitation of the housing stock in Grants Town responding to conditions very much the same as what is found there today. The project sought to improve the vibrant com-

Historic  
Nassau  
Study  
(1999)



munity life by reclaiming its residential use and enhancing the locally oriented commercial establishments. Although the proposal targeted low-income families, it would have also served the rest of the community as a *catalyst for independent private improvement actions and investments* (Llewelyn-Davis, Carson, 1980).

The project tackles similar challenges to those we can observe today, however perceptions of insecurity seem to have increased within the community. The population of the area used to be 23,200 inhabitants in 1980. This figure dropped to 2,493 (Census 2010), as well as the number of households, which has gone from 5,385 in 1980, to 2,493 in 2010. The steady decline of the neighbourhood has continued from 1980 with the same patterns. As wealthier families moved out of Grants Town they did not sell their properties but instead either rented or abandoned their houses and therefore the number of unoccupied structures and lots increased. This tendency has continued to this day.

Interestingly enough, the authors of this project state that previous studies on Grants Town - ‘Development Plan of New Providence Island and the City of Nassau’ from 1969, and two other studies from the early and mid-70s – showed that the recommended strategies were essentially similar: they proposed community centres, assumed provi-



This shows that the Island of New Providence never had a shortage of urban ideas, visions and strategies. However, the majority of these projects were either not implemented at all, or only done in a piecemeal fashion.

sion of piped sewerage, proposals to densify the sites of the single storey buildings with two storey buildings, proposed renewal of deteriorated sites into larger redevelopment projects including demolition and rebuilding, and provision of larger recreational sites.

The renewal project foresaw land purchases to construct close to 300 new homes, housing repairs for approximately 200 dwellings, construction of 400 septic tanks, toilets/shower units, rehabilitation of 600 houses including major repairs, provision of basic housing, construction of 150 senior citizens housing units, 75 family homes for rent, and construction of 150 private sector ownership houses. But the project was not only about housing, it also provided an environmental health program (solid waste collection, solid waste disposal, etc.), community facilities (community centres, parks and playground improvements), new roads, sidewalks and street lighting and water protection.

For implementation the project foresaw a 19-person team with its own project office led by the Government of The Bahamas. However, the project budget was cut down to a minimum and short sighted housing investments did not take into account the traditional behaviour of living standards of Bahamian families. Multi-family homes turned out not to work in Nassau.

#### 2.4.3 Historic Nassau Study (1999)

Jackson Burnside presented the *Historic Nassau Study*, prepared for the Government and the Nassau Tourism Development Board, in 1999. This outstanding study is the foundation of an important research work for the ongoing restoration, preservation and redevelopment of the Historic City of Nassau. This document seeks to define a *Uniqueness Preservation Plan* (Burnside, J., 1999), a tool that is organized, flexible, and adaptable. The study contains an analysis of the urban fabric of Downtown Nassau, (e.g. the existing infrastructure, special streets and places, transportation network, land uses, historic building uses, town structure) and a vast inventory of all relevant historical buildings in the historic downtown district.

The study also contains a public opinion survey about Downtown Nassau, addressing topics such as the boundaries, as well as possible challenges and potentials. In this survey, Bay Street was voted as the most attractive street in the city, followed by Parliament Street, Shirley Street and West Bay Street. When asked what makes streets attractive, 'plant life, trees, flowers and landscaping', 'attractive and maintained buildings' and 'cleanliness' were some of the most important elements identified.

The study also outlines the importance of the creation of a 'Nassau Historic Plan' that would include the development of specific public space design studies for each street and urban space or neighbourhood that could *potentially contribute to the enhancement of quality in Historic Nassau* (Burnside, J, 1999). Additionally, the study defines qualities to contribute to the 'uniqueness' of Downtown Nassau: the sense of nature, the ocean as open space, etc.

This study provides a valuable basis for the development of an integral heritage protection strategy of Downtown Nassau. Jackson Burnside proposes a process orientated urban development approach for Downtown, similar to the proposed implementation strategy for this plan.



Nassau Harbour and Bay Street Renaissance Program (2006)

#### 2.4.4 Nassau Harbour and Bay Street Renaissance Program (2006)

In 2006, the Nassau Harbour and Bay Street Renaissance Program presented a comprehensive plan to reclaim the waterfront for all Bahamians. This study was prepared by EDAW (now AECOM) and addresses the guiding principles to reclaim the waterfront, to incorporate Bahamian culture, to establish Nassau as a world-class liveable city, incentivise economic investment, create ecological resiliency, etc. The multi-sectoral plan has very clear ideas about traffic solutions, for example, alternative airport access options to reach Paradise Island, a proposal for the coordinated taxi and jitney services, and some clear recommendations and

urban transformation proposals for the development of the Nassauvian waterfront: a) The 'Living Waterfront' bounded by Eastern Parade Ground to the east and Elizabeth Street to the west with the harbour to the north, with a character of an active and liveable community along the city's edge and shopping venues oriented toward the waterfront; b) 'Potter's Crossing' bounded by the Eastern Parade Ground to the west and William Street to the east with a regional festival character along with marina and ferry uses; and finally, c) 'Harbour Point', bounded by East Bay Street and Village Road to the east, including Fort Montague, and William Street to the west (EDAW, 2006).

Unfortunately the plan was not fully implemented, however the proposals are still valuable, especially the development and transformation of the harbour area and the reactivation of East Bay Street, which has now fallen into complete decay. Many stakeholders say that despite the plan never being implemented, it is broadly discussed up to this day and members of the planning community of Nassau criticize that there still is no zoning plan in place.

One lesson learnt from the EDAW study is that whilst drafting a study is not enough to define strategies and plans, but that the implementation of a management structure is just as important as the study itself. The principal idea of the EDAW study, which claimed for an inclusionary Downtown Nassau, are still viable but it is imperative that high quality technical studies, such as this one, take into account the public realm in order to promote the implementation and materialization of projects. The public management of such plans is vitally important to the success of urban development projects. Now, as ten years have passed, and new developments are underway, such as the construction of "The Pointe", an extension of the British Colonial Hilton in the mere downtown area, and the decay of East Bay Street has rapidly continued, the EDAW plan needs to be adapted and enhanced along with a management and economic plan.



# 3 EMERGING TOPICS

Emerging Topics are the most important issues that resulted from the public consultation process. These topics reveal the importance of the public realm, how local people feel about the city, and its connection with the sea. Quantitative data was not the focus for development of this study. All interventions are based on the dialogue and communication in the workshops. The locals are the true planners of Central Nassau.







In this chapter the results of the public consultation process during the workshops and interviews conducted between September 2015 and February 2016 are analysed. As mentioned earlier, opening dialogue in urban development projects by promoting communication between stakeholders, is one of the key elements in the methodology of the Urban Design Labs. During the moderated process of collaborative diagnosis, emerging topics were collectively discussed and defined. This process enabled not only a broad discussion, but also ownership within the stakeholder groups.

### 3.1 Local Support Group

The initial activities included conducting interviews with representative members of all relevant stakeholder groups. These interviews offered a first glance at emerging topics and problems of the central area of Nassau. The interviewees not only gave insights on the urban issues of Nassau, but also linked the team to other relevant stakeholders in the city making it possible to compose a stakeholder map.

These stakeholders included shop-owners, community and civic organizations within the Grants Town community, in addition to the Creative Nassau community. Outreach was successful with organizations such as the Bain Grants Town Advancement Association and local churches in the area that have opened its doors to the community. Among the most important stakeholders in the community of Grants Town is a local community group led by community leader Valentino Brown and his team of collaborators. These groups have provided ways for the residents to take 'ownership' in making their communities better.

Other stakeholders are the Government of The Bahamas, who participated with different departments in the process of designing the proposals, and the academic sector with both Bahamian and Austrian students working together on the design of urban strategies and pilot projects for this plan. Professors and students from the College of The Bahamas and the University of Technology of Vien-

na participated during the workshop phase in a collaborative diagnosis and analysis of the urban situation of the central area of Nassau. A number of local architects and urban planners also contributed to the development of the plan and gave insights on the existing studies.

Moreover, the culture and arts sector plays an important role in the city. UNESCO designated the City of Nassau as Creative City of Crafts and Folk Arts on December 1, 2014 at which time it became a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Complementary to the Culture, Art and Heritage sector, the various museums and galleries were also included into the public consultation process, along with governmental officials.

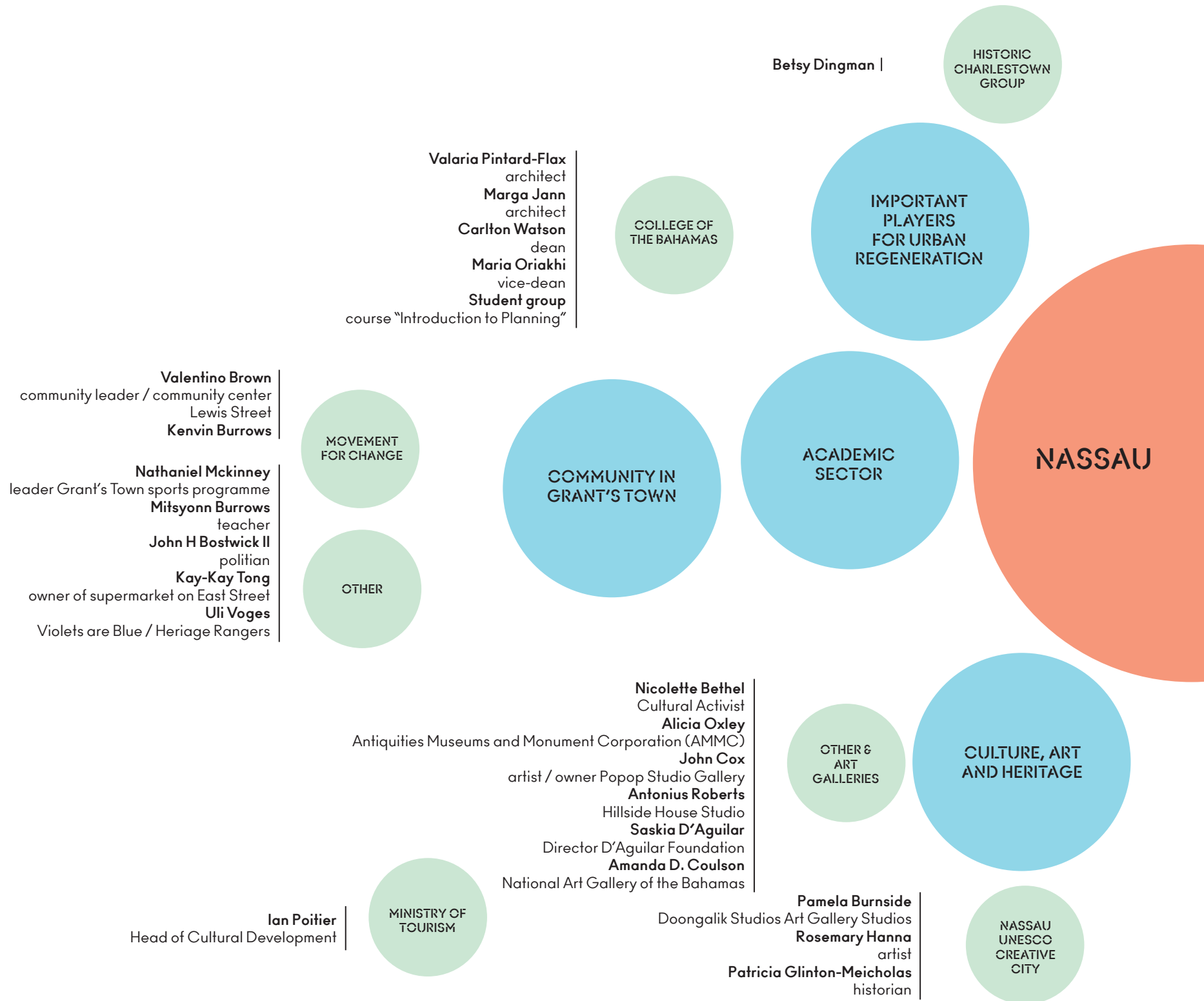
The Downtown Nassau Partnership (DNP), several hotel owners, real estate specialists, entrepreneurs and property owners represented the private sector.

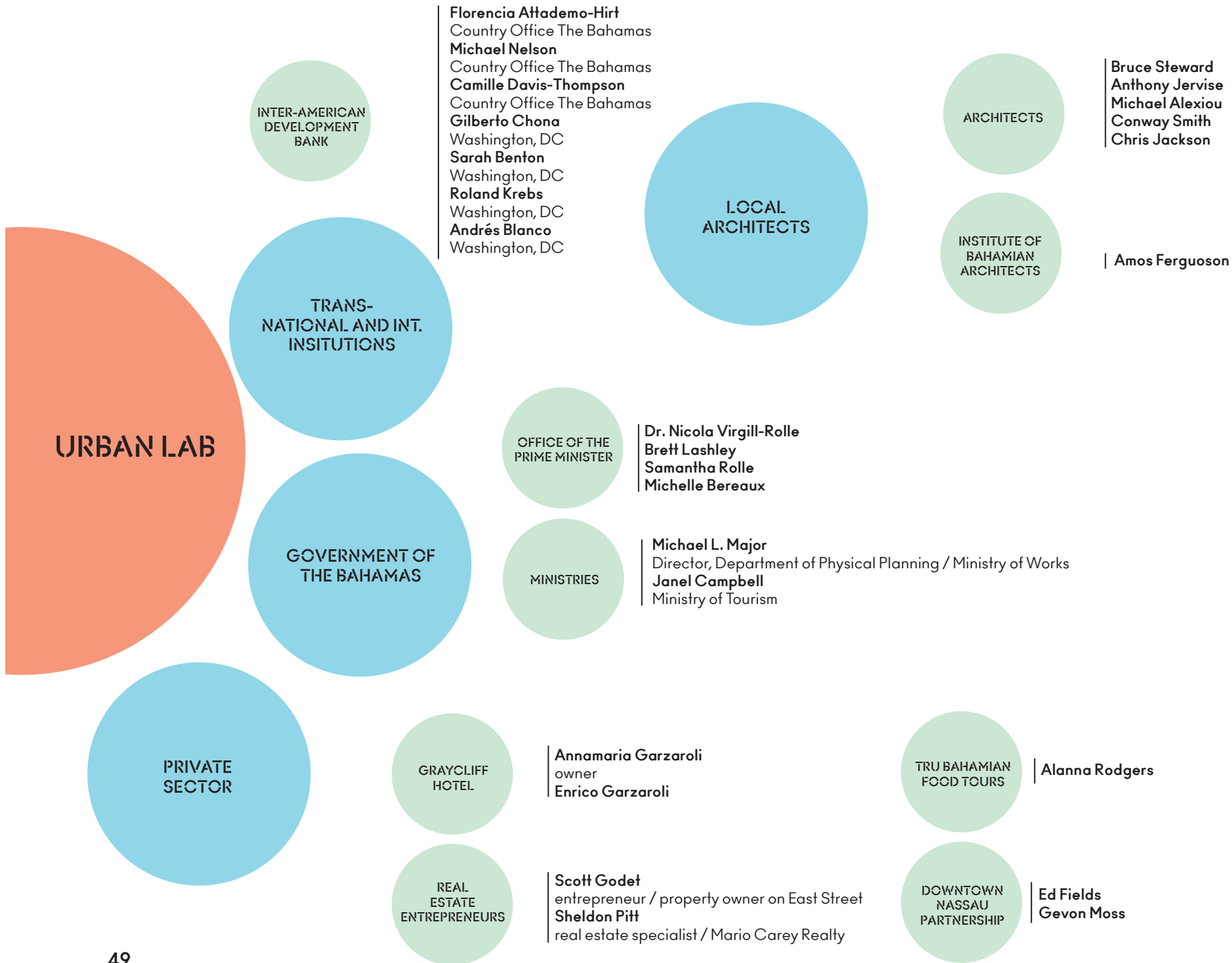
“Downtown should have more residents. (...) most of the Bahamians are going to the shopping Mall Palmdale and Mall Marathon. To revitalise Downtown they should build the boardwalk and reclaim the waterfront.”

Sheldon Pitt













Abandoned warehouses at Downtown waterfront waiting for urban renewal



Cruise terminal

### 3.2 Integrated urban system of Central Nassau

During the urban workshops of the Nassau Urban Design Lab, nine emerging topics were defined. Emerging topics are urban issues that emerge during the workshops and preparation phase and reappear several times during the public consultation phase. The UDL methodology avoids working on topics not relevant to the public, and stresses the need and urgency to respond respectively. The emerg-

ing topics for the Nassau central area are: a) disconnected public space; b) human scale mobility; c) need for urban regeneration and affordable housing; d) heritage value of buildings; e) image of the city; f) climate and urban ecology; g) security and the social dimension; h) local economic development; and i) culture and arts as driver for sustainable urban development.

#### 3.2.1 Disconnected public space

##### Disconnection from the waterfront

The Caribbean coastline bordering Downtown Nassau is the most evident and iconic natural asset of the city. The urban beaches of Junkanoo Beach at the West Esplanade on West Bay Street are in walking distance from the docks of Prince George Wharf, the cruise ship terminal. These beaches are also in close proximity to the traditional neighbourhoods of Grants and Bain Town. However, Nassau lacks a continuous boardwalk at the waterfront, despite the high quality of the water and the potential for local economic development. At the moment, the seacoast is unattractive and an uninviting backdoor of the city that is not accessible for the people. The existing waterfront, Woodes Rodgers Walk, is very short (approximately 1300 feet (400m) long) and caters to mass tourism - mostly cruise ship visitors not bringing significant revenue to the city.

##### Parks and recreational areas

Although the few existing recreational areas, like the basketball courts at Hay Street in Grants Town and Malcolm Park, and the current playing field at Market Street, are well received and are actively utilized, there is a clear lack of green public spaces, and parks, especially for children in the Downtown area and Grants Town. Despite the tradition of gathering with neighbours on the porches of Grants Town houses, these semi-public, semi-private spaces have unfortunately been disappearing. The neighbourhood now suffers from the absence of parks and recreational areas



Cruiseship passengers  
enjoying their daytip to  
Downtown Nassau

for any age group and there is an urgent need to generate more spaces that can host leisure activities for the community and support clean, fresh air with shading and vegetation.

#### Missing network of public spaces

The city is lacking a system of connected public spaces, making it unattractive to walk in the central area. Narrow sidewalks are challenging for pedestrians and the traditional cantilevers and arcades are disappearing due to

missing building codes and weak enforcement. Important crossings or public spaces like parks and plazas could be better utilized for economic activities with a high frequency of clients, as is the case for the newly built Pompey Square in Downtown Nassau. Shaded pedestrian walkways connecting a succession of plazas every 660 feet (200m) would not only make it more appealing to walk through Downtown Nassau but also would promote the interaction of neighbours, tourists and locals.





First attempt of a pedestrian zone at King's Street

“The area of ‘Over-the-Hill’ has parks and green spaces that are not used properly.”

Pam Burnside

### 3.2.2 Human scale mobility

#### Quality of public transport service

Public transport in Nassau is unreliable most of the time throughout the year making it difficult for people to reach their workplaces in Downtown Nassau where most jobs are offered. Bus stations do not exist, and the buses, called jitneys in The Bahamas, do not follow a regular time schedule

and bus stations do not exist. As there are few shelters for people waiting for the bus, they are left to stand in the sun or rain. There are no maps of routes, or schedules, and most of the bus services stop at 6 pm. There are between 25 and 30 companies with transport concessions who own the bus routes for the entire island, and passengers do not have the option to change or transfer bus routes with on a single ticket.

With a lack of a proper public transportation service on the island, there is a high car dependency. However, the low density patterns of the city and separation of urban functions result in very long commutes and extended traffic jams on the main routes. There is a need for a central bus station and exclusive traffic lanes for buses in order to provide fast and smooth bus rides in the city and throughout New Providence, as well as a proper inter-island transportation system. Overall, car dependency in Nassau is too high and public transport is not seen as reliable.

Taxi service exists, but most are individually owned, with limited radio taxi service. It is quite challenging to get a taxi in the evening or at night. Taxi rates are high, with no fixed rates within the Downtown or for special routes.

#### Traffic congestion and parking

Traffic congestion was the most frequently mentioned challenge during the UDL workshops and interviews. The city has doubled its inhabitants in the last 40 years but the public transportation system was never properly adjusted to



Picturesque view on Straw Market from Market Street

“The major bus ‘terminal’ for Downtown used to be closer to the Straw Market but was moved near the corner of Bay Street and Victoria Avenue, not a specific terminal but only a lane for busses to stop.”

Nicola Virgill-Rolle

service this population growth. With a gradual urban sprawl and suburbanization process and as a result of the spatial separation of working places and homes plus an inefficient public transportation system, there has been a significant increase in car dependency. With people commuting to the city centre in private cars, mostly occupied by one or two persons, the main corridors of Nassau (Bay Street, Shirley Street and the feeder roads) are heavily congested. As is common in similar scenarios, people blame Jitneys for

the problem of congestion and propose banning them from Downtown Nassau. However, an efficient public transport system that offers quality service and punctuality is a more viable, inclusive and long-term solution, not only for the traffic congestion problems but also to keep the city alive and vibrant.

As a consequence of the daily influx of private cars, the demand for parking areas has also become problematic. Currently, available parking spaces are offered horizontally on valuable downtown properties which could be utilized for other functions and uses.

#### The Five-Minute-City: Cycling and walking in Nassau

Old pictures from the Nassau of the fifties and sixties reveal that the usage of bikes (referred to as ‘the iron donkey’) in the city was quite common. However, with one third of the inhabitants and an estimated one tenth of the spatial extension it has today, Nassau was quite a dense, walkable and therefore *bikeable* city. The green ecosystem of the famous enormous silk-cotton-trees made walking and biking much more pleasant. As people lived close to the market and their working places, walking and biking were a convenient way



←  
Busy Bay  
Street

→  
Public bus  
on Bay  
Street





of getting around. Today, with the quantity of cars on the road, the large distances and the missing shaded paths, it is less appealing. However, if people encountered space to cycle and to walk conveniently, especially from the traditional and low-income neighbourhoods of Grants Town and Bain Town, these more sustainable means of transportation might be a true alternative for Nassauvians. Furthermore,



“The reason for Downtown being a lifeless area are the malls that have been built outside the city center (...) there is no reason to come Downtown for retail for Bahamians as all stores went to the malls.”

Nicola Virgill-Rolle

people with disabilities cannot access sidewalks with wheel chairs and they fully depend on cars. In this respect Nassau continues to face great challenges to become an inclusive city for all people.

#### Access to Over-the-Hill and connections to Downtown Nassau

Despite the short distances between the traditional neighbourhoods of Grants and Bain Town and Downtown Nassau, these areas are disconnected from each other. The distance between the traditional neighbourhoods of Grants and Bain Town and Downtown Nassau is short: from central Rawson Square, the heart of Nassau, to Lewis Street, the heart of Grants Town, it is a 10 minute walk of 2950 feet (900m) passing the hill on East Street. However, the stakeholders interviewed perceived this distance as being much longer and described it as quite uncomfortable due to the heat and lack of shade and appropriate sidewalks. Tourists hardly walk over the hill to Grants Town as there is an absence of signage and wayfinding.

### 3.2.3 Need for urban regeneration and affordable housing

#### Vacancy and mono-functionality in Downtown

In almost all historic city centres in Latin America and the Caribbean, we observe vacancies in prime, central locations, and Nassau is no exception. The transition of this city from a small Caribbean town into the widely sprawled city of today, came with logical patterns of the shifting of functions and uses in the central areas. Bay

Traditional housing in Grants Town



Infrastructure improvement works in central Grants Town



Street used to be the economic heart of The Bahamas, with traditional mixed-use neighbourhoods offering commercial space on the ground floors and housing on the upper three floors. With the transition to a massive cruise ship terminal and increased car dependency, residential uses moved out

of the centre. Bay Street inhabitants, in average mostly high income and white, moved out to their single-family houses and mansions with gardens and pools leaving behind a derelict area that has been transformed into a mono-functional centre with very scarce residential use.





Urban decay on East Bay Street

#### Shortage of housing and residential opportunities

As the rental housing stock is scarce and the few available options cater to tourists and thus are expensive, Downtown is also not an attractive area for Bahamians to live. However, its central location and proximity to workplaces makes Downtown an area with great potential for residential developments that could catalyse the regeneration of the city's historical neighbourhood.

#### Grants Town and the Shortage of Housing

Grants Town is the low-density part of Nassau, with approximately 12 per acre (30 per hectare), mostly living in single-family houses. There is a shortage of housing opportunities, no affordable rental apartments, and no market for properties due to unresolved land title issues. Despite the central location of Grants Town, the area is currently not a desirable place to live for young families or elderly people as security continues to be a problem for this part of the city. Although the community has been making commendable efforts in organizing and working together, safety continues to be a challenge for Grants Town residents.

Commercial Downtown at East Bay Street

"A lot of young Bahamians are looking for affordable housing right now which would bring people back Downtown. A lot of hotels are being development, but nothing for the residents. Amanda Coulson states she would also love to live Downtown."

Amanda Coulson

#### Missing improvement proposals and development plans led by public institutions

Even though there have been multiple upgraded and improvement plans for the central area, such as the EDAW Plan in 2006 or the Columbia University Plan from 1969, the essential parts of these proposals were never implemented. Currently there is no zoning and development plan in



place, a fact that many participants of the workshops mentioned. The public sector is not leading, but reacting to private initiatives for urban development without leveraging public interest and seeing the integrity of interventions.

However, some important improvements are undertaken by the government such as the construction of Pompey Square led by the Nassau Downtown Partnership, the renewal process around Graycliff Hotel and Restaurants and the Charlestown Urban Renewal project.

#### 3.2.4 Heritage value of buildings and places

Nassau has a vast variety of historical buildings in the central area; these buildings are from different periods including the colonialists, the loyalists, the Forts, governmental buildings, and historical churches. The mixture of architectures and styles portray the local Caribbean identity and create an attractive location of landmarks of cultural interest with great potential that has not been fully maximized.

Beyond the rich architecture, neighbourhoods such as Grants Town are an important part of the social and cultural heritage of Nassau. In addition, this area houses several iconic churches that together could be linked as part of a historic and religious trail, bringing together religious spaces that could serve the community in the social development of the neighbourhood.

#### 3.2.5 Image of the city

##### The brand of Nassau

The Bahamas is a world-renowned touristic destination and within the context of the Caribbean countries, Nassau has a lot to offer, that is way beyond what the current tourist is consuming. Downtown Nassau combines commercial and recreational services with urban beaches, the waterfront and an important culinary offering. However, Bay Street with its souvenir shops, jewellery shops and cheap clothes, stores is the first and only impression visitors get coming from the cruise ship.

Bus stop  
at vacant  
property  
on Bay  
Street



##### Lost identity

From the early 1950s, The Bahamas has become a popular destination and along with it has come the urban decay of Downtown Nassau as tourism has left its scars. As tourists began to gather in Bay Street to celebrate Junkanoo, the most important Bahamian festival, particularly in Nassau, which has *its origins in West Africa and was celebrated in some form in The Bahamas from the nineteenth century* (Saunders, G., 2010), the street began to be transformed and the feast adapted accordingly. Stores with souvenirs and duty





“There is definitely a need of new branding of the Bahamas promoting its specific identity besides the beaches and the Atlantis hotel as for now there is no marketing for people interested in arts. The Bahamas will never be able to compete in the mass market, but rather on a boutique level as there are a lot of other places with beautiful beaches and palm trees.”

Amanda Coulson

free goods conquered the area and after the Public Market for vegetable, local produce, fish, etc. burned down in 1974 it was replaced in 1983 by the tourist focused Straw Market. Locals lost their market and the city lost the traditional ‘Caribbean’ feel of a *centrality* (Martin, N. P. and Storr, V.H., 2009).

The flight of residential uses, the tearing down of historic buildings and the influx of massive tourism has somehow erased the historic identity of the historic centre.

An alternative city branding and the notion of a boutique city  
Despite Nassau’s great historical and cultural heritage, the city has no other branding than that of mass tourism with icons such as the Atlantis Hotel and the beaches making it difficult to distinguish it from other Caribbean countries. The recognition and recovery of cultural offerings, arts and craft, architecture, history, and traditional heritage of

Downtown, Grants Town and Over-the-Hill, are important access points for the development of a much needed alternative brand and marketing strategy for the city.

### 3.2.6 Climate and Urban ecology

#### Resiliency: Threat of Climate Change to Coastline

According to the Hazard and Risk Study report prepared by ERM, the City of Nassau and the northern part of the island is not as exposed to natural hazards as the southern part. Sea level rise has to be expected for about 13/16 inches (20 mm) for 2050. However, the downtown will have a medium to high risk in coastal flooding. A major threat is inland flooding. Therefore, for future developments like the waterfront project, Downtown Nassau will need to adapt to rising sea levels and systematically improve infrastructure to control floods. This also affects urban design like sidewalks for new buildings with elevated ground floors.

#### Eco-architecture

One of the most important factors in urban planning and architecture is to understand the climatic context in order to provide high quality living environments. The lack of vegetation and shade, adequate public space, condensed traffic and a lack of sustainable mobility alternatives has created heat islands in most of Downtown and Grants Town including the connecting urban corridors. Traditional architectural and urban elements such as arcades, porches, the typical window shutters and clapboard houses, have been replaced by glass-facades, public spaces without shade and buildings without cantilevers. It is thus important for interventions to take into account the climatic characteristics of the city in order to provide high quality urban spaces.

#### Sanitary problems and garbage collection

Due to the lack of drainage, floods occur quite rapidly after heavy rainfall, especially in Downtown and Grants Town. The combined sewage and rainwater system should be sep-





Abandoned properties in Grants Town



Traditional residential building in Grants Town

arated in order to avoid overflow of the sewer. Trash collection problems are evident as garbage is often dumped on streets. Educational programs and civic culture programs addressing adequate disposal of garbage should be implemented with a special emphasis on children and teenagers in order to reverse these habits amongst the citizens.

### 3.2.7 Security and the social dimension

#### Organized communities and violence

In Grant's Town, community outreach has been successful, with organizations and local churches that have made a concerted effort to reach the surrounding community. In parts of Lewis and Hay Street where community activists such as Valentino Brown, Nathaniel McKinney and many others have become role models for the kids in the neighbourhood by providing positive options for after-school activities. However the neighbourhood continues to struggle with crime as illegal activities like drug trafficking and theft take place especially after dark. Overall, the city's high homicide rates and the reported crime on the news have led the inhabitants of Nassau to perceive the city as an insecure place.

#### Eyes on the streets

In the past, the city centre housed mixed-use buildings and the diversity of functions kept people on the streets and in the public realm. Today, poor lighting and the gradual decrease in activities feed the sense of desolation of the Downtown area as night arrives. As Jitneys (public transportation) stop operating at night and cars abandon the city it is rare to see people in the streets after dark.

#### Nassau – a city in decay

The appearance of Nassau, both in Downtown and Grants Town, is perceived by many as dirty and derelict, with many run-down buildings. Grants Town in particular is seen as dirty and congested, with many abandoned cars littering the landscape. This negative image of the neighbourhoods, together with poor infrastructure (Grants Town until this day has no sewerage system and some homes have no running water) create a negative image of these areas leading to insecurity and social conflicts.

### 3.2.8 Local economic development

#### Cruise ship industry

Heavily dependent on the cruise ship industry since the early 1950s, Nassau has become a popular destination for tourists. As they flood into Nassau in big waves, visitors arrive at the main dock at Prince George Wharf and enter into Rawson Square, Bay Street and the adjacent alleys. The ground floor areas at Bay Street are dedicated completely to souvenir shops, cheap clothes and other small shops and businesses with high rents for the tenants. The services offered in Downtown Nassau are limited and cater to only one type of tourist who stays only for a short time and spends little money. It is important therefore that Nassau expands its vision and converts Downtown into a place that not only is more appealing to a wider range of visitors but also to its local residents.

“Downtown is right now just an area for drunk people on weekends.”

Michael Alexiou

#### Commerce on Bay Street

Downtown, especially Bay Street is mono-functional, and completely dedicated to commerce. There is little to no activity, and tourists have to look closely to find attractions. There is hardly any signage to the sights and the average tourist from the cruise ships either stays on the boat, or isn't interested in the cultural offerings of the City of Nassau, which leads to a limited economic diversity. Shops close at

6 pm leaving the city empty at dusk; and there is no nightlife with the exception of a few bars dedicated to mass tourism.

#### Potential for local economic redevelopment

There are hardly any jobs in Nassau outside the tourism and the cruise ship business. Spontaneous job offers at the tourist attractions enable quick money, but do not diversify the local economy. Tapping into new ideas and innovations such as supporting small businesses and new concepts for local economic development like the Creative Nassau and Ministry of Tourism's Markets on Pompey Square, held on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday present much needed economic perspectives for the city of Nassau.

### 3.2.9 Culture and arts as drivers for sustainable urban development

#### Architecture, Arts and Craft

Nassau is rich in history, art, and architecture and most importantly in culture and tradition. It is unique in that it is one of the few places in the Caribbean where the diversity of building styles and a historic urban fabric is partially preserved until today. Museums like the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas, Educulture Junkanoo Museum, Pompey Museum and the many cultural centres and art galleries in downtown or close to downtown showcase local Bahamian culture. Creative Nassau is promoting social projects and entrepreneurship among Bahamians to improve people's life.

#### Food and the city

Food and the culinary experience in Downtown Nassau are limited. There is only one restaurant in Downtown Nassau that sells authentic Bahamian food, the others offer varied ethnic fare such as Greek, Chinese, Mexican, etc. American fast food franchises however proliferate and are easy to find. One of the positive examples is 'Tru Bahamian Food Tours', which was founded by Bahamian entrepreneur Alana Rodgers in 2012 to offer visitors of The Bahamas a *true, authentic and local culinary experience*.



### Historic area Grants Town

Grants Town itself is a traditional neighbourhood with a very rich past, but unfortunately with a violent and insecure present. Culture, art and craft are means for urban development, with a very positive connotation for its residents. Although community organizations such as *Violets are Blue* and Scrooge's Corner are already actively transforming the neighbourhood, it is important for them to be supported and incorporated into the larger urban renewal process.

### 3.3 Cartography of Social Perception

The Cartography of Social Perception is an exercise developed in the last few years during the Urban Design Labs. In this activity, a moderator asks people in a workshop situation where they feel comfortable, which places, squares,

“Nassau’s artistic and handcrafted goods from the Bahamas are a potential livelihood. It is time to rethink and take time to enjoy art for tourists and residents.”

Nicola Virgill-Rolle

etc. they like and are asked to place a green pin or colour dot on a map. The next question is where they feel sad or uncomfortable, identified with a red pin or colour dot. Lastly people are asked where they would like to change places, situations, and to identify them with a yellow dot. This methodology allows highlighting areas with weak or positive connotation on a map. At the same time, the yellow dots make hints to areas that need attention and further discussion.

Exhibition space at National Art Gallery of the Bahamas located on Top of the Hill



In the case of the Nassau Urban Design Lab most of the green points (makes me happy) are concentrated in the north-western part of Nassau, starting from the cruise ship dock continuing to Junkanoo Beach. The places that make people happy also continue south of Bay Street in the Charlestown area, where the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas (NAGB) is located. A few green points can also be found on Paradise Island – Atlantis Hotel. The NAGB, the Straw Market, the Pirates Museum and the pedestrian zone next to it as well as the Hillside House Studio are perceived as interesting places. On the other hand, the area northeast of the cruise ship dock along East Bay Street has most of the red dots. Another concentration of red dots can be found on Potters Cay, situated underneath the Eastern Bridge to Paradise Island. Other places that make people sad are situated across Over-the-Hill and especially Grants Town. In response to the question of where to intervene to bring about an improvement in the neighbourhood, people proposed the ‘dead’ part of East Bay Street with a lot of abandoned and vacant buildings and its surroundings, as well as again the area on Potters Cay. Several yellow points of potential interventions were also located across Grants Town. Summarizing this activity, interventions should be

### 3.4 Scenarios towards an urban strategy

The scenarios focused on the revitalization and connection between Downtown Nassau and Grants Town. Alongside the rehabilitation process, the creation of affordable housing and offer of lower rental prices in both areas of the city were identified as a key priority. Students suggested that bringing the University closer to Downtown could catalyse the creation of a student centre or business incubator encouraging young Bahamians to start businesses after University rather than leaving the country. Another idea was the creation of a training centre in Grants Town in order to keep people busy and off the streets.

In essence, the drafting of urban scenarios gave way to multiple and diverse ideas that enriched the planning process and ultimately enabled a complete and multi-sectorial look on the rehabilitation of Downtown Nassau and Grants Town.





# 4

# URBAN STRATEGY

Based on the interviews, the collective diagnosis developed during the Nassau Urban Lab, the emerging topics, together with results of the Social Cartography of Perception and the different urban scenarios, a common urban vision was elaborated and validated with the representatives of the community and governmental officials. This vision, the general planning goals and the design criteria, were the basis for the design of the urban projects. Given the valuable previous urban studies, projects and plans, the urban strategy shall complement these ideas with concrete actions and aims to achieve a more sustainable development for Central Nassau.





#### 4.1 Vision

The central area of Nassau is a vibrant and appealing place with an international connotation, where locals and tourists meet and gather. It is a safe place to live and to do business, a place with a true Bahamian identity, full of culture, art tradition and life. Central Nassau is a compact urban fabric, with short, walkable distances and lots of opportunities for doing businesses.

#### 4.2 General Planning Goals

The general planning goals are defined as follows and shall be a guideline for the elaboration of strategic activities that will be addressed in integrated projects:

##### **Foster tradition and Culture as an Economic Asset**

- Recognize historic and resilient street layout and the building tradition in Central Nassau;
- Strengthen Nassau's cultural and historic sites, making them accessible for locals and tourists;
- Culture and Arts as motor for economic development, identity of the city;
- Create incentives for local economy and local culture for the sector by providing vital urban ground floor areas on the main corridors of the city fabric ;
- Maximize the potential of Nassau's reputation and image as a touristic hot-spot in the Caribbean and at the same time rethink brand of Nassau as a creative city.

##### **Create vibrant centralities and a city of short distances**

- Re-establish accessibility of Downtown Nassau and the traditional neighbourhood of Grants Town with quality public spaces;
- Repopulate the sector by increasing the supply of new and diverse housing for different social segments and making Central Nassau more attractive for residents;
- Create vital neighbourhoods with proximity, the so

called '5-minute-city', a city of short distances, promoting mixed use developments;

- Make Nassau a vibrant city, with 24 hour activities;
- Bring the sea as an important element of the Nassau cityscape: Make the waterfront accessible to all Bahamians with a continuous public boardwalk;
- Create opportunities for modern and sustainable mobility on a human scale by connecting the existing public transport system with a network of bicycle paths and wide sidewalks for pedestrians.

##### **Create a sustainable Urban Ecosystem**

- Decrease heat-islands in the city;
- Create a system of central green areas, parks and ecological urban corridors;
- Enable walk and bicycle friendly urban development.

##### **Improve urban security and social resilience**

- Increase security in Downtown and Grants Town: improve public lighting, and activate the streets by promoting a diversity of uses, night-time activities and bringing back residents.

##### **Enhance local governance and inclusionary planning**

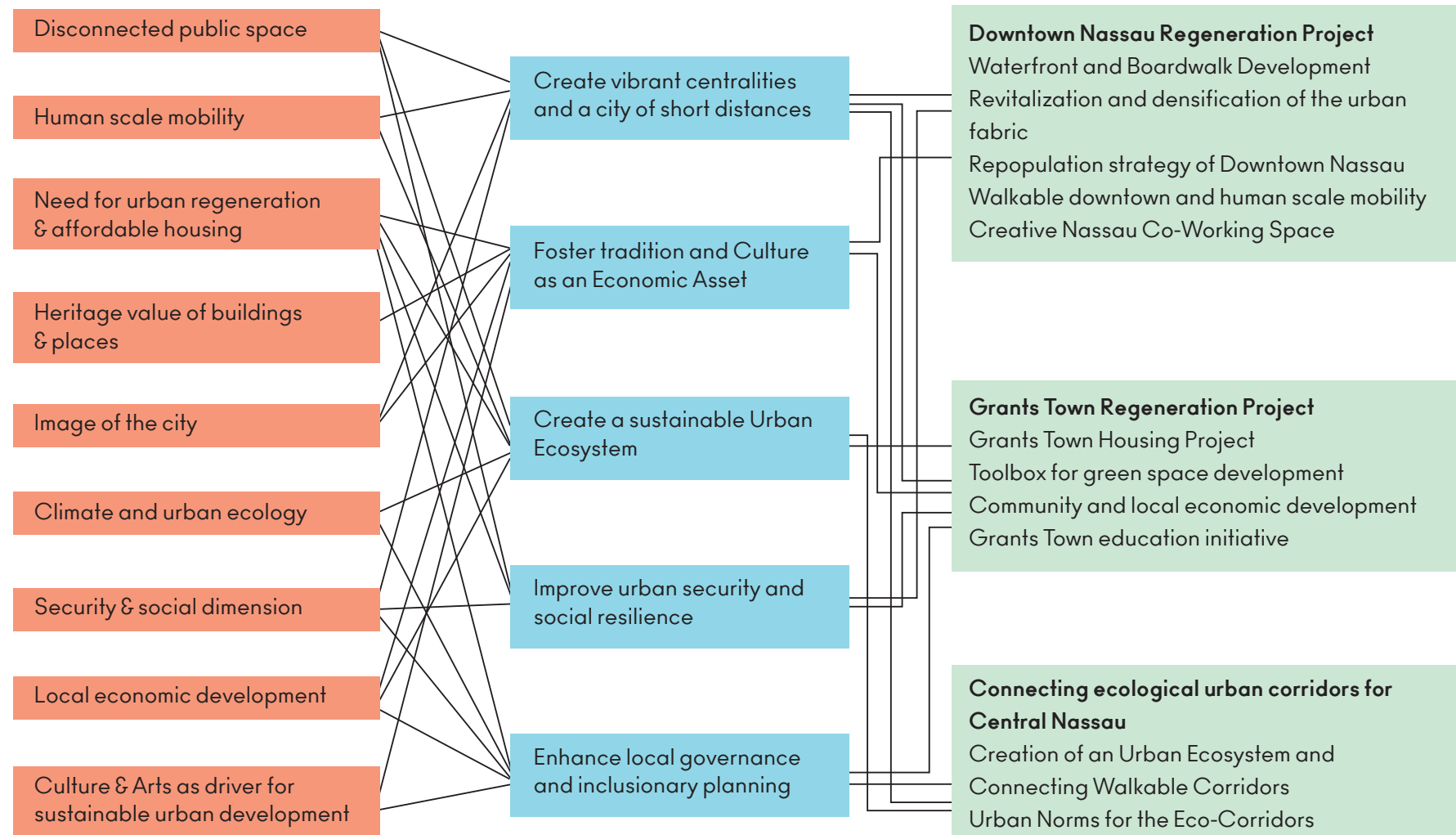
- Regain trust and confidence in Government supported by local, neighbourhood-based governance;
- Rethink urban planning instruments promoting an integrated multidimensional approach.

The comprehensive urban strategy for Downtown Nassau and Grants Town is developed through three local strategies from which stem urban projects that can be operationalized. The urban projects have to be understood as initial proposals to develop further detailed projects – depending on availability of land, property rights and urban management capabilities. Vision and economic outlook in each of these projects is essential considering a context where the real estate market, especially the housing segment, is led by the private sector.

## TOPICS

## OBJECTIVES

## PROJECTS





### 4.3 Strategic Interventions

To achieve the general planning goals, strategic activities shall be undertaken that will be addressed in integrated projects. The three local strategies are: a) Downtown Nassau regeneration project b) Grants Town urban regeneration project; and the c) Connecting ecological urban corridors.

The Nassau Urban Design Lab team worked on the design of these urban strategies through the definition of concrete urban project proposals, based on the emerging topics and workshops, the urban scenarios and cartography of social perception. A student workshop was organized by the College of Bahamas and the University of Technology (UTV). Valeria Pintard-Flax (COB) together with her Austrian academic partners Andreas Hofer, Helmut Schramm and Arthur Kanonier and Roland Krebs (UTV) led this academic workshop. On ten days from November 4th, seven student groups worked on urban strategies and pilot projects in Grants Town and downtown. These projects helped to understand and reflect the needs, problems and potentials of Central Nassau. Some projects drafted by the students were directly incorporated into a plan while others were further developed into proposals for the strategy.

#### A. Local Strategy 1: Downtown Nassau Regeneration Project

This comprehensive strategy for Downtown Nassau not only proposes physical revitalization strategies through concrete urban projects and planning and financial instruments, but also incorporates urban interventions that aim at providing housing and economic opportunities for local residents. Within this framework, Downtown Nassau will become an inclusive area for living, working and leisure activities.

Through a continuous and publicly accessible boardwalk with commercial activity and a new local market, tourists and residents will be able to access the waterfront, which will finally be integrated into Downtown Nassau. The revitalization and densification of the urban fabric will en-

The Nassau Urban Design Lab team worked on the design of these urban strategies through the definition of concrete urban project proposals, based on the emerging topics and workshops, the urban scenarios and cartography of social perception.

sure the provision of housing for middle income families, who will also benefit from a more walkable and bicycle friendly city with human scale mobility. Meanwhile, local residents will be able to access Creative Nassau, a business hub for entrepreneurs and artists promoting innovation and research.

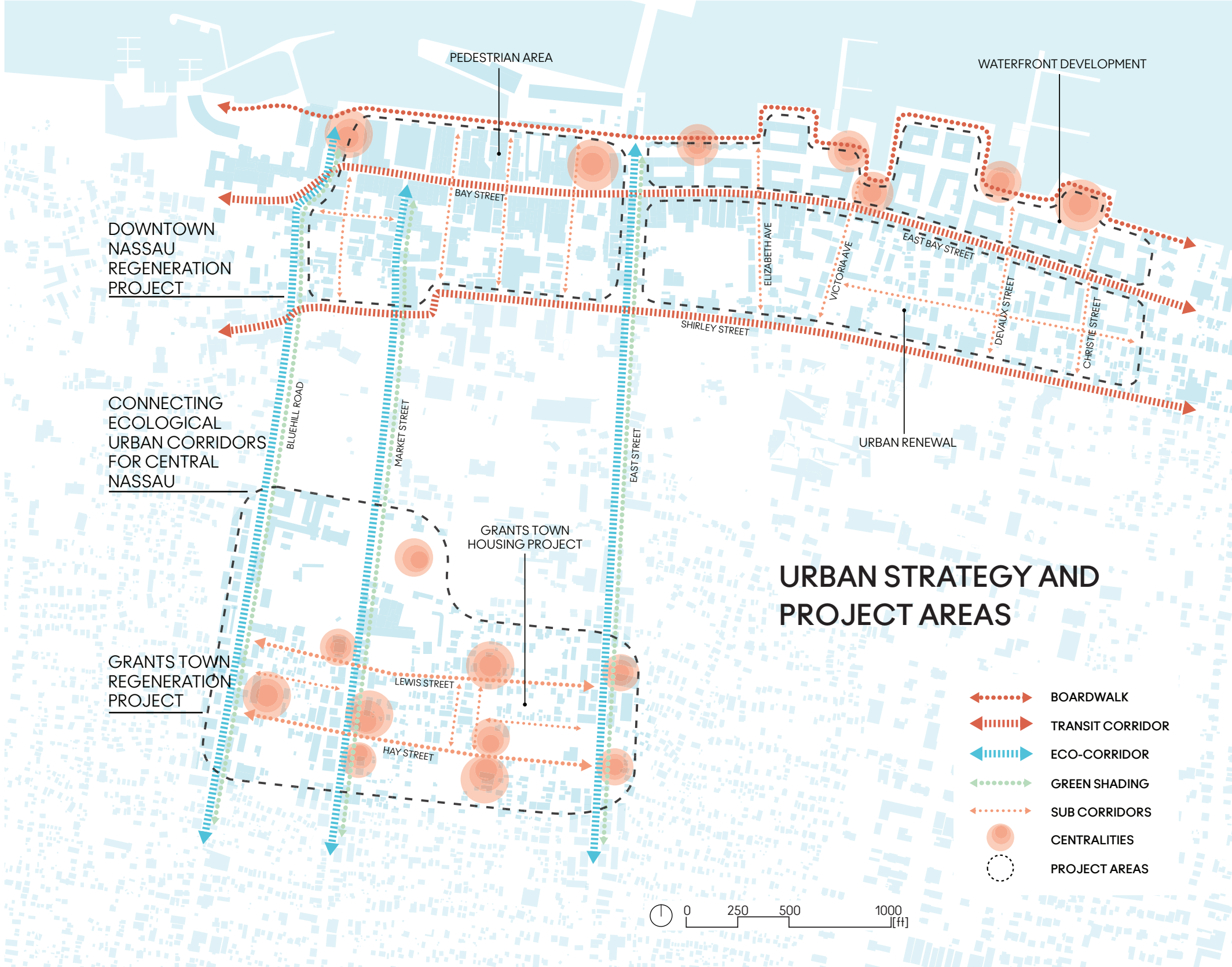
Finally the strategy proposes the definition of a zoning and form-based plan in order to ensure the correct future development of this area.

#### Projects:

- Waterfront and Boardwalk Development
- Revitalization and Densification of the Urban Fabric
- Repopulation strategy of Downtown Nassau
- Walkable Downtown and Human Scale Mobility
- Creative Nassau Co-Working Space

#### B. Local Strategy 2: Grants Town Regeneration Project

Combining urban design and architectural solutions together with social-economic activities, this strategy tackles the low density and urban decay of Grants Town through a regeneration of its housing stock and the development



DOWNTOWN  
NASSAU  
REGENERATION  
PROJECT

CONNECTING  
ECOLOGICAL  
URBAN CORRIDORS  
FOR CENTRAL  
NASSAU

GRANTS TOWN  
REGENERATION  
PROJECT

PEDESTRIAN AREA

WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

BAY STREET

ELIZABETH AVE

VICTORIA AVE

EAST BAY STREET

SHIRLEY STREET

DEVALUX STREET

CHRISTIE STREET

BLUEHILL ROAD

MARKET STREET

EAST STREET

GRANTS TOWN  
HOUSING PROJECT

LEWIS STREET

HAY STREET

## URBAN STRATEGY AND PROJECT AREAS

- BOARDWALK
- TRANSIT CORRIDOR
- ECO-CORRIDOR
- GREEN SHADING
- SUB CORRIDORS
- CENTRALITIES
- PROJECT AREAS

0 250 500 1000 [ft]





of new housing projects that contemplate communal areas heightening the existing community engagement in this part of the city. Moreover, a flexible and easy to implement toolbox seeks to incentivize the creation and activation of public green spaces in existing vacant plots. Recognizing the importance of community development, this strategy also proposes several projects offering training and support for local entrepreneurs, artists and residents seeking economic opportunities as well as enhancing community participation.

#### **Projects:**

- Grants Town Housing Project
- Toolbox for Green Space Development
- Community and Local Economic Development
- Grants Town Education Initiative

#### **C. Local Strategy 3: Connecting ecological urban corridors for Central Nassau**

Through this strategy the historical links between Grants Town and Downtown Nassau will be restored. Strategic urban corridors will reactivate through densification and mixed-use developments over pedestrian shaded walkways and bike paths interconnecting a sequence of public spaces.

#### **Projects**

- Creation of an Urban Ecosystem and Connecting Walkable Corridors
- Urban Norms for the Eco-Corridors

#### **4.4 Design criteria and planning goals**

For the design of the proposals, specific design criteria for all projects in downtown and Grants Town were established. These criteria shall guide all future interventions in Central Nassau:

- Create a network of attractive public spaces

- Design according to the human scale and walking velocity: walking distance 660 feet (200 m) maximum from plaza to plaza
- Create opportunities to stop and stay, places to sit and relax, give people choices
- Provide interesting things to look at, also at night. Think of city which is working 24 hour a day, 7 days a week. Important poles are the ground floor areas on central corridors.
- Create places for leisure and sports, not only at residential areas.
- Urban Ecosystem: plan for the local climatic conditions and climate change, recognize sun and shade as integral elements of design
- Maintenance is key: implement complementary educational programs and cultural activities
- Everyone should feel safe, promote areas with more "eyes on the street" and repopulate neighbourhoods with mixed-use development. This means to develop commercial, cultural or business activities at the ground floor areas and residential use in the upper floors.

#### **4.5 A new Urban Management**

In order to ensure the implementation of the projects and a sustainable and inclusive planning process for the Central Nassau area, a new urban management structure shall be discussed. The planning framework for Nassau has been developed and improved over the last years and the current Planning and Subdivision Act of 2010 offers a wide range of innovative planning tools that can form a good basis for further development. Besides the proposal for a new management structure, the creation of opportunities for knowledge transfers on urban issues is highly recommended and can be supported by the IDB and their wide range of contacts and networks.



# 5

# PROJECTS

*When new buildings are planted in places people frequently use, the buildings must learn to make meaningful conversation with city spaces and the people in them (Jan Gehl, 2016).*

Density and close connections between buildings are important to generate urbanity together with creative economies and lively street activity. Central Nassau has to find its way back as an inclusive city for all Nassauvians.







The goal of this strategy is the physical and social re-integration of Grants Town and Over-the-Hill with Downtown into one Central Nassau. This will be achieved by a series of interventions and actions defined in this chapter. Recognizing the interdependence of these neighbourhoods, these projects seek to act as catalysers for an exponential transformation of Central Nassau. As we have learned from the experiences of other plans and studies for the area, it is important that the project be perceived as a development process, strongly supported by the Government, the private sector and a Local Support Group. The proposals are developed at strategic locations and this document is the basis for the process orientated urban development of Central Nassau.

## 5.1 Downtown Nassau Regeneration Project

### 5.1.1. Waterfront and Boardwalk Development

The Downtown Regeneration Project defines strategic urban interventions in the core area of Downtown Nassau. The main goal of this strategy is to redefine the area as a potential sequence of public spaces and plazas that are connected with *walkable* and *bikeable* corridors. Nassau's most important asset, the waterfront, shall be incorporated by opening it up to the public realm and, at the same time, revitalizing East Bay Street with economic incentives. Additionally, the narrow streets around the central Bay Street corridor are traffic-calmed making it more accessible and therefore more attractive for pedestrians, cyclists and small businesses. The implementation of these projects is strongly supported by the establishment of a new urban management body (see Chapter 6).

After the logistic harbour of Nassau, once the economic backbone of the city before tourism was moved to Arawak Cay, the area was abandoned, leading to East Bay Street's decline. Taking advantage of Nassau's Caribbean oceanfront, its most valuable natural asset, this area will be

revitalized and completely renewed with a new definition of the waterfront and connections with the rest of the city. The main focus of this project is to bring back the waterfront to the public realm through the generation and incorporation of public space.

The new waterfront and boardwalk is an extension of the approximately 1310 feet (400 m) long existing Woodes Rodgers Walk with an additional 0.9 miles (1.4 km) uninterrupted, continuous boardwalk, equipped with attractive public spaces and new urban functions.

The sequence of public spaces is defined as follows: The existing Pompey Square and Rawson Square have a walking distance of 1150 feet (350 m). Five additional public spaces with green areas, from short walking distance of each other, will complete the sequence of public spaces and completely redevelop the area into an exciting waterfront for both locals and tourists. The new waterfront is equipped with urban furniture, benches, seating facilities and public toilets, decorated and designed by local creatives. The waterfront will be entirely public with no fences or private, luxury and exclusive areas in order to provide an inclusive public space available to all.

Furthermore, ground floor areas, including building and public space, must be adapted to climate change related risks for the coming 25, 50 to 100 years.

#### New market on waterfront

Markets are important urban elements in all cities, because they generate a daily public life that enables interaction of people, fostering economies with local produce. As the Straw Market replaced the old public market, the city lost the public market in the seventies and the Straw Market replaced losing an iconic space. *Bringing back this important urban element*, the newly developed waterfront will include a commercial strip with a fish and vegetable market located in the public space, followed by two green plazas and a marina with restaurants and tourism infrastructure, a cultur-







# DOWNTOWN NASSAU REGENERATION PROJECT

CREATIVE NASSAU  
CO-WORKING SPACE

WALKABLE DOWNTOWN AND  
HUMAN SCALE MOBILITY

WEST STREET

BLUEHILL ROAD

MARKET STREET

BAY STREET

0 250 500 1000  
[ft]





WATERFRONT AND  
BOARDWALK DEVELOPMENT

REVITALIZATION AND DENSIFICATION  
OF THE URBAN FABRIC

A

B

C

EAST BAY STREET

DOWDESWELL STREET

SHIRLEY STREET

EAST STREET







Section AA

Sections  
through  
waterfront  
and Bay  
Street



Section BB



Section CC

0 20 40  
[ft]

al area and plaza, as well as additional marinas and green areas. The project proposes restricting the selling of souvenirs or tourism products with a governmental order, ensuring the function of the market. As it will be opened only on specific days, the rest of the time, the market area will be used as public space. Tourists will be able to appreciate an authentic local Bahamian experience while locals will have a reason to come back to the market. Parking will be provided in the vicinity with a vertical parking garage.

#### Waterfront development with rules for inclusionary urban design

The urban design of this new mixed use development respectfully integrates into the existing urban fabric of Downtown. The building blocks are relatively small-scale resembling those existing inside the inner city. The blocks are approximately 43 000 to 65 000 square feet (4000 to 6000 m<sup>2</sup>) each, with building heights adapting to the scale of architecture of existing buildings on East Bay Street. Thus the

# WATERFRONT AND BOARDWALK DEVELOPMENT PROJECT DENSITY INDICATORS

TOTAL	RESIDENTIAL UNITS	958
	HOTEL ROOMS	297
	PLOT AREA	466 529 sq ft.
	BUILT AREA	330 883 sq ft.
	GROSS FLOOR AREA	1 311 375 sq ft.
	SITE AREA	23 acres
	FAR	2.8



**A** RESIDENTIAL UNITS 105  
PLOT AREA 42 428  
BUILT AREA 32 845  
FAR 2.9

**B** RESIDENTIAL UNITS 91  
PLOT AREA 36 721  
BUILT AREA 28 314  
FAR 2.9

**C** RESIDENTIAL UNITS 88  
PLOT AREA 36 416  
BUILT AREA 26 746  
FAR 2.8

**D** RESIDENTIAL UNITS 67  
PLOT AREA 31 145  
BUILT AREA 23 914  
FAR 2.6

**E** HOTEL ROOMS 140  
PLOT AREA 32 148  
BUILT AREA 23 697  
FAR 2.8

**F** RESIDENTIAL UNITS 102  
PLOT AREA 24 089  
BUILT AREA 20 517  
FAR 4.5

**G** RESIDENTIAL UNITS 67  
PLOT AREA 25 352  
BUILT AREA 19 036  
FAR 3.0

**H** RESIDENTIAL UNITS 128  
PLOT AREA 51 444  
BUILT AREA 33 280  
FAR 2.8

**I** RESIDENTIAL UNITS 114  
PLOT AREA 51 009  
BUILT AREA 34 369  
FAR 2.6

**J** HOTEL ROOMS 157  
PLOT AREA 32 583  
BUILT AREA 21 867  
FAR 2.7

**K** RESIDENTIAL UNITS 118  
PLOT AREA 72 484  
BUILT AREA 44 300  
FAR 2.3

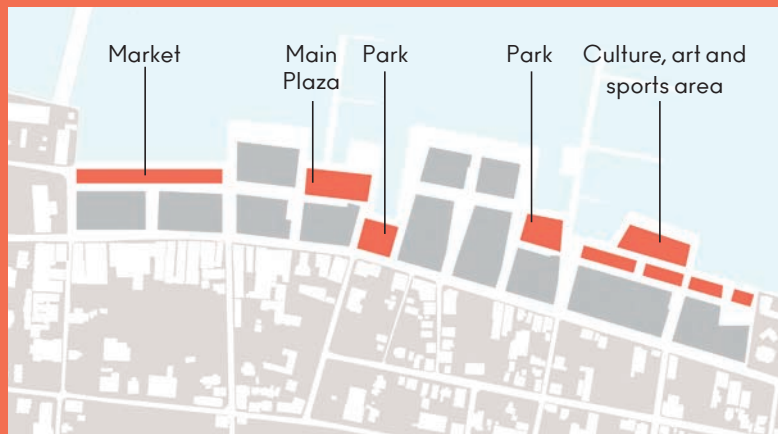
**L** RESIDENTIAL UNITS 78  
PLOT AREA 30 710  
BUILT AREA 21 998  
FAR 2.9





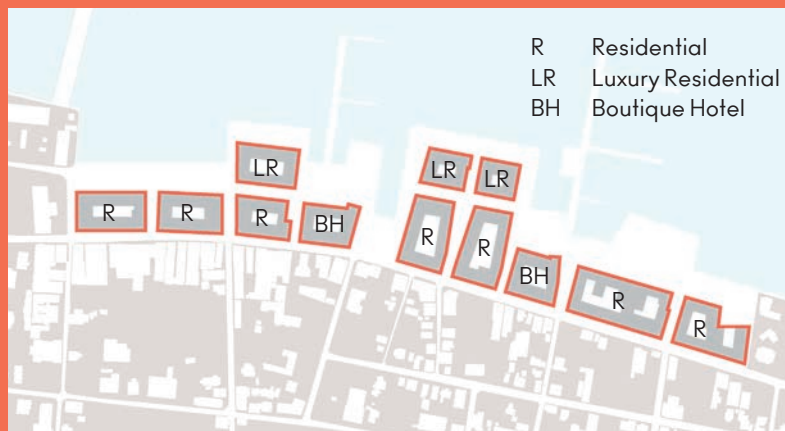
### Connections to the neighborhood

The new street network in the waterfront area will be smartly integrated into Downtown Nassau by connecting the existing corridors with the newly developed boardwalk and public spaces. The boardwalk at Woodes Rodgers Walk will be extended to a 0.9 mile (1.5 km) long continuous public space linking Pompey Square and the waterfront development.



### Open public spaces

The system of open public spaces of Downtown Nassau will be complemented with five new plazas and parks accessible every 660 feet (200 m). This sequence of plazas designed with a combination of hard stone surfaces and green areas, will be able to host cultural and leisure activities for all visitors.



### Land use

Seeking a more "liveable" Downtown, the proposed land use for the waterfront is mainly residential. An inclusionary zoning will ensure that 25 % of the Gross Floor Area is allocated for affordable housing. Two boutique hotels and three blocks with luxury residential use compensate the additional cost for the inclusive zoning rule.

### Continuous facades

The new waterfront shall be developed with continuous facades that will contain and enhance public space such as the new plazas and parks. Inside the building blocks however, facades can be designed more freely such as setbacks that will create different scale pocket parks and plazas.



### Groundfloor zones

East Bay Street will be revitalized with the development of new buildings on the northern part of the street. The red areas indicate where mandatory commercial activity on the ground floor must be provided. Alternatively, community or cultural uses may also be permitted.



### Inner courtyards

The inner courtyards of the waterfront development shall be kept free from construction. These areas although private, will be permeable and contribute fresh air and comfortable microclimates for residents and visitors with green shaded gardens.



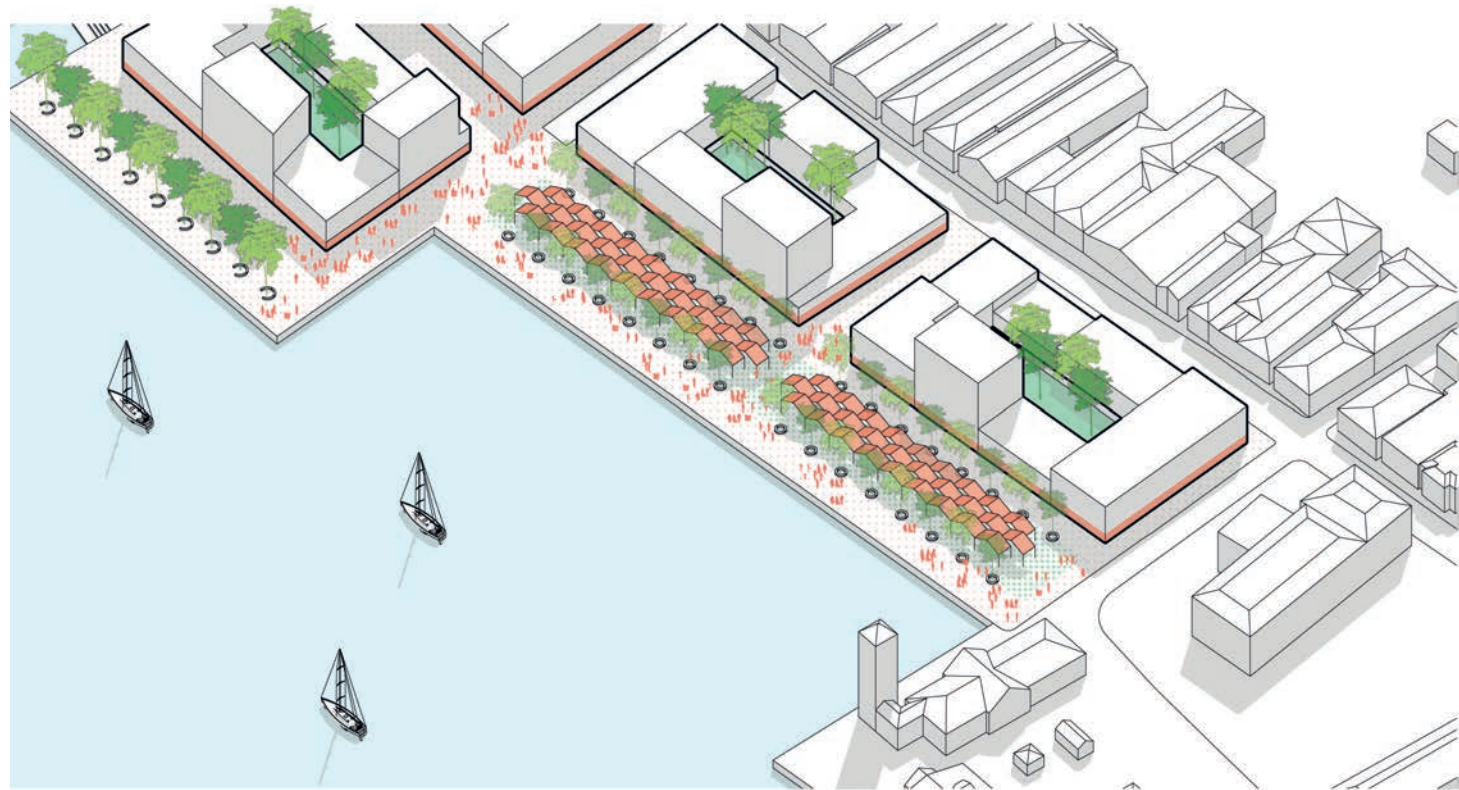




### Building heights

The urban design integrates into the existing urban fabric of East Bay Street. The new buildings shall not be taller than on East Bay Street with a maximum of 3 to 4 storeys. The buildings facing the water shall be limited to 5 to 8 floors, with the exception of a 12 storey emblematic building that will stand as a landmark, matching the height of the cruise ships while respecting the ensemble of the historic Downtown Nassau morphology.

Proposed new market  
of the Waterfront and  
Boardwalk Develop-  
ment project



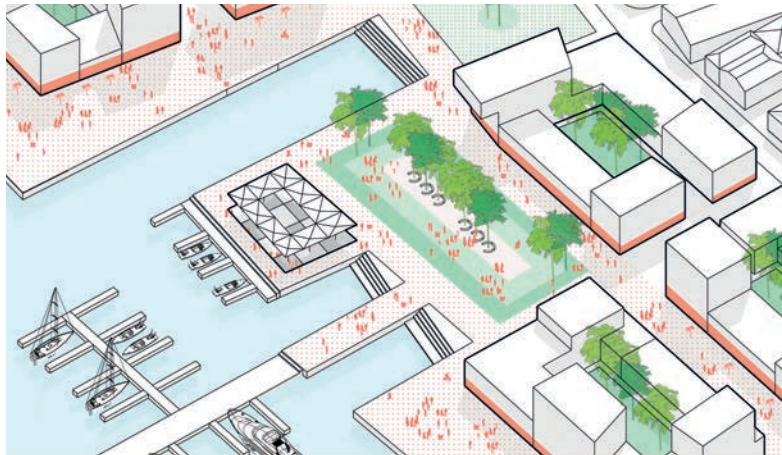
buildings on Bay Street shall not be higher than 1 times the width of Bay Street and 1,5 times that of the buildings which will remain on East Bay Street. Towards the waterfront and boardwalk, buildings can be taller, but not higher than the British Colonial Hilton and the newly built extension project of the Hilton, "The Pointe". Some landmark buildings on the new waterfront, especially directly on the waterfront can reach up to 115 feet (35 m). However, the average building height shall not be higher than maximum 70 feet (21 m) on the waterfront and maximum 40 feet (12 m) on East Bay Street.

The skyline and urbanscape of Downtown shall be preserved in addition to its small-scale character. The existing street grid is fully incorporated into the design of the new area as well as the existing visual axis. This new development area is entirely car-free and designated as a shared space for pedestrian and cyclists.

The new buildings will be mixed-use with predominantly residential developments with shops, galleries, restaurants and cafés in the ground floor area. Each block shall be commissioned to different architects in order to create a modern and diverse urban environment. An urban development committee shall supervise the quality of these buildings and the urban context as the architects will be selected upon a national or international architecture competition.

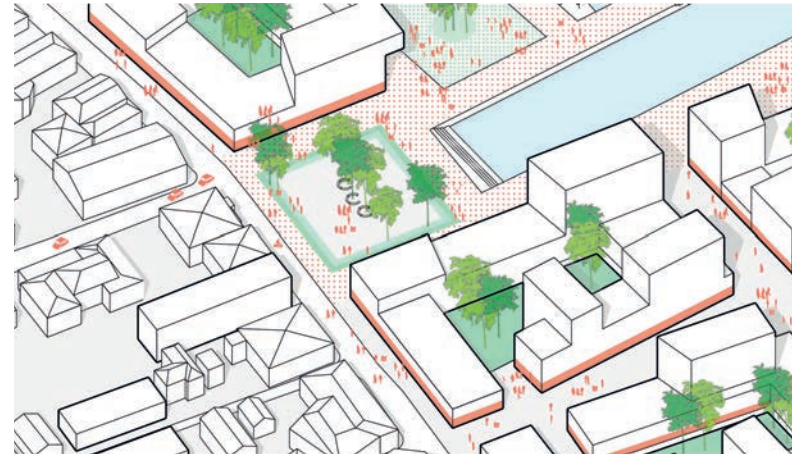
The project aims at recapturing the boutique touch of downtown catering to locals and tourists alike. Therefore the area as a whole shall not be exclusively for tourists or second homeowners leaving only specific buildings or even a block that can be designated for solely touristic services such as hotels. The revitalization of Downtown Nassau will focus on the construction of new housing





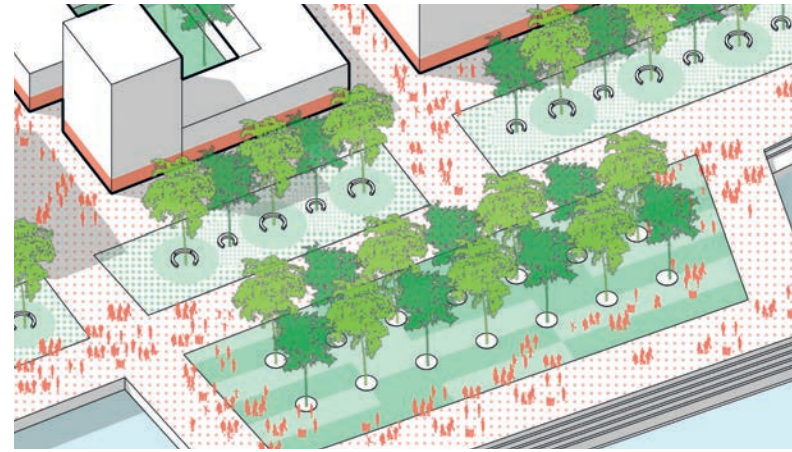
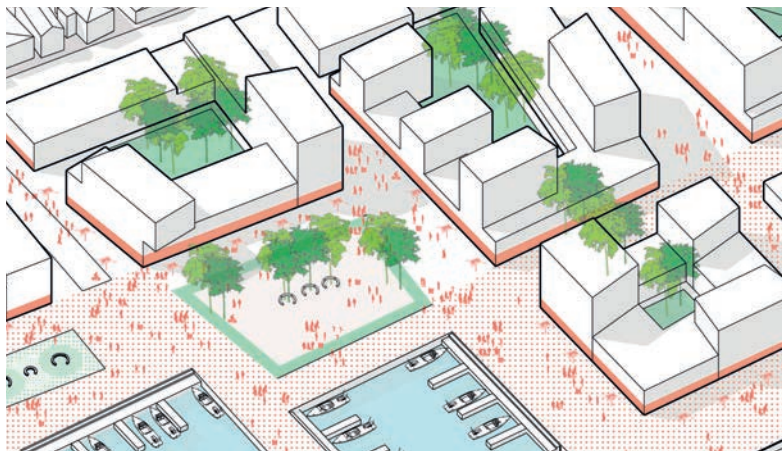
←  
Main  
plaza

→  
Bay Street  
Park



←  
Marina  
Park

→  
Culture,  
art and  
sports  
area



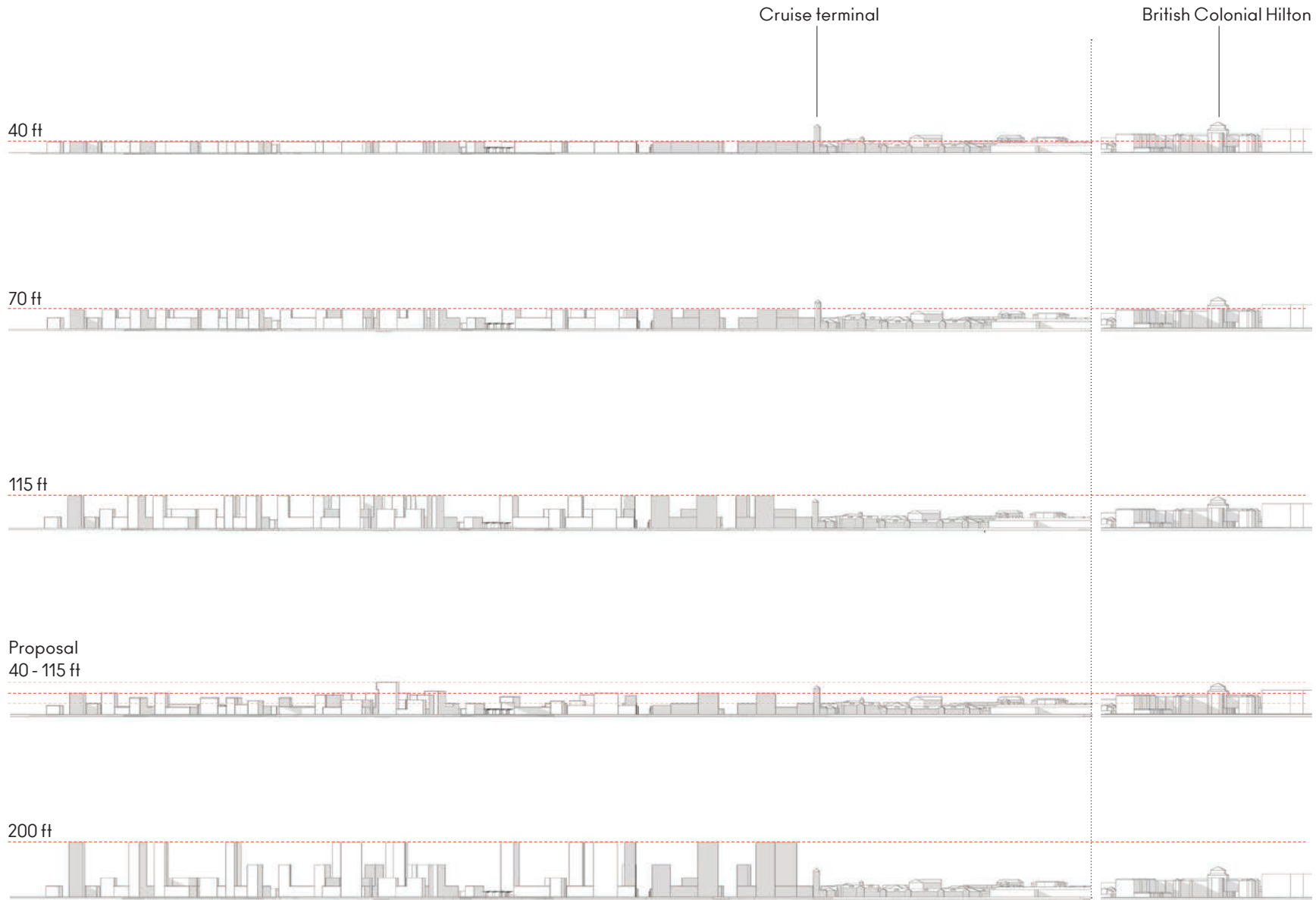
opportunities in order to promote drawing local people back into settling in the area. The urban design foresees the construction of approximately 700 to 800 new residential units appealing to families, entrepreneurs, or governmental workers that will help revive this central area. An inclusionary zoning concept shall be included into the development rules of the area, having 25 % of all apartments, for an affordable rental for young Bahamians or foreigners who actually live in Nassau, families, and young entrepreneurs. Providing areas for luxury and exclusive residential buildings will create an added value to this area that will cross-finance and subsidise the mid-income homes.

### 5.1.2 Revitalization and Densification of the Urban Fabric

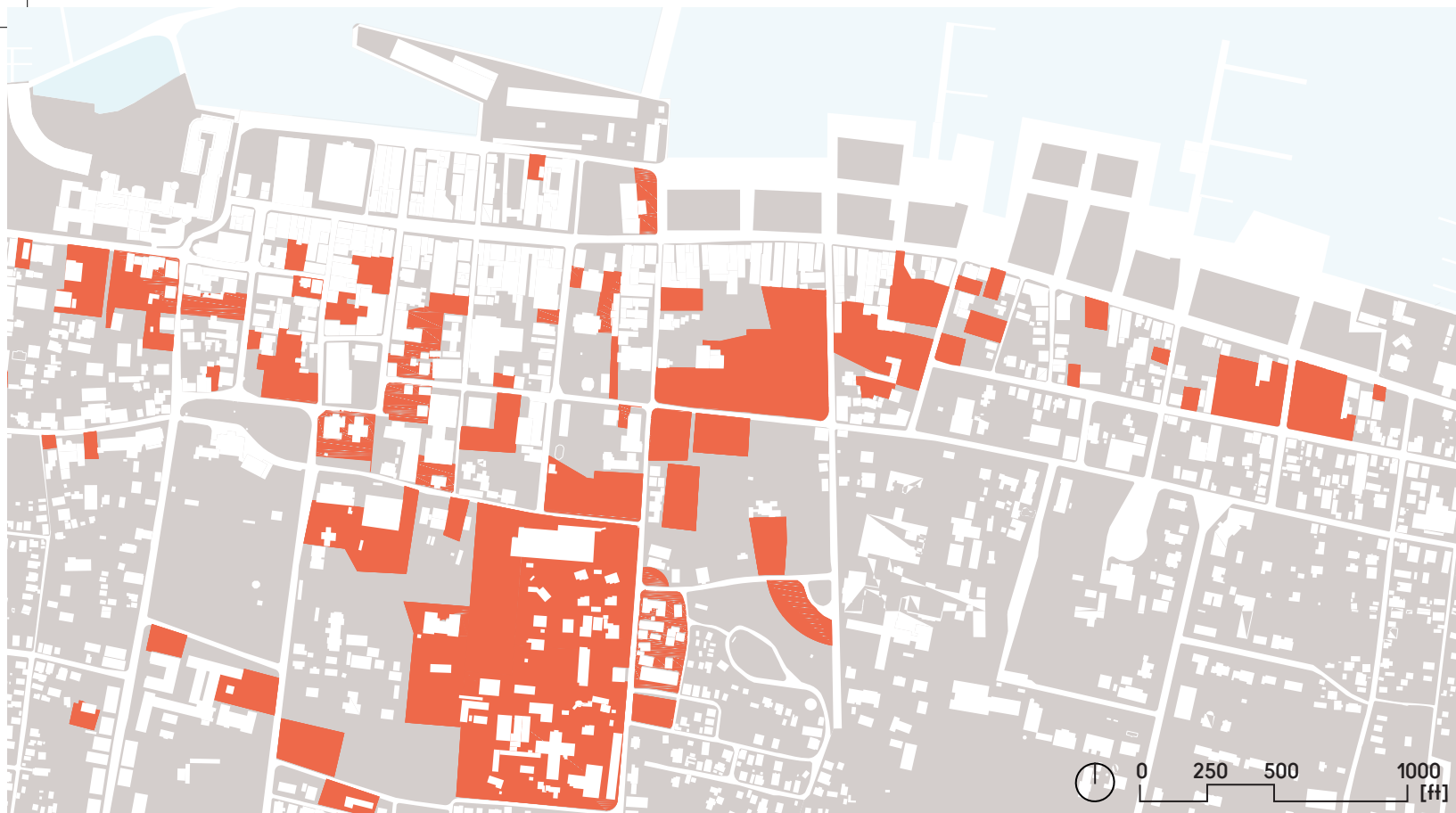
The core area of Downtown Nassau between Rawson and Parliament Square, especially the streets around Bay Street between the British Colonial Hilton and Parliament, has a traditionally dense structure, with the exception of Dowdeswell Street. However, over the last decades, the neighbourhood has concentrated many parking areas have been developed in this area in response to the need for public parking which has led to a decline in its density. Through a more efficient use of space, these lots can be re-developed while simultaneously generating vertical

# MAX. BUILDING HEIGHTS ON WATERFRONT

5







Study on vacant parking areas aptable for densification in Downtown Nassau

parking that will supply the current and future parking demand. The project needs strong public management and regulations, and an integral business model as the land values would double or triple with a comprehensive urban densification plan in place. This traditional neighbourhood can be revitalized with mid-income homes, with medium densities in infill-developments. 25% percent of the housing shall be developed with an inclusionary zoning concept, where 25% of each building is designated for affordable housing on a rental basis. The government defines the urban renewal zone with tax alleviation for those property owners willing to transform parking lots into housing areas. Broad and secure sidewalks and planting of new trees to facilitate shade will give the neighbourhood a new image.

Complementary to the waterfront development, this project will enable the revitalization of the central core as a new residential area and will foster Central Nassau as a sustainable city of proximity and short distances.

### 5.1.3 Repopulation Strategy for Downtown Nassau

Rental housing is predominant among one-person households and some of the more dynamic population groups, such as young people who are not looking to buy a home, but might be interested in living in a central location where they can work, live and interact without the need of a car. The support of the rental housing market could be a better way to satisfy the greatest demands and increase residential mobility (Blanco, 2014).

Repopulation of  
vacant lots in Down-  
town Nassau



A proper rental housing policy for Downtown Nassau should be linked to the planning and zoning instruments and will help mitigate low-density peripheral growth. Conditioned by general zoning laws and construction permits, inclusionary zoning will help to mobilize residential space for people seeking affordable housing by allocating 25%, or approximately 240 units of the total 958 units of the newly constructed affordable housing at the Waterfront and Boardwalk Development, for rent to dwellers who are not able or are not willing to purchase a property in Downtown Nassau. The property will be owned and administered by the developers in coordination with the Ministry of Housing for the selection process. But the repopulation strategy with affordable rental housing is not limited to new devel-

opments and city extension projects such as the Waterfront and Boardwalk Development. Tax incentives, in designated urban revitalization areas, could stimulate the densification of the existing urban fabric in Downtown Nassau, especially in the lots that are currently used as car parking. By providing vertical parking garages in strategic locations, the Downtown area could be revitalized with inclusive housing projects for people who are in need of affordable rental housing.

Thus, applying this repopulation strategy, spatial and functional segregation of low-, mid- and high income is halted and a denser Nassau can be achieved. A more accessible, more compact and more inclusive Nassau is possible. Furthermore, bringing back residents to Downtown



Nassau will lead to a more lively central area, with new demand for shops, restaurants and bars – in close proximity of the neighbourhoods of Central Nassau.

#### 5.1.4 Walkable Downtown and Human Scale Mobility

Nassau's first urban extension projects were laid out for urbanization during the 1920s. Most of the buildings in the historical core close to the harbour zone were built by this time. Then, the city used to be defined by these limits including the historical core and Over-the-Hill as well as the traditional Afro-Caribbean Grants and Bain Town communities. Nassau then had a *human scale* and incentivised walking and cycling. The human scale can also be observed by how the buildings are composed and how the morphology of the urban fabric emerged. The patterns are designed for a slower pace intended for pedestrians or horse-drawn carriages. The project thus seeks to recover the character of this area with the following strategies.

##### Traffic solutions for mass tourism

Although the overall mobility problems and the excess of cars cannot be solved exclusively in Downtown Nassau, a few measures can be adopted to relieve traffic congestion within this area. Examples include diverting all rides from Lynden Pindling International Airport to Paradise Island via Mackey Street, avoiding the passage through Downtown Nassau.

##### Reorganize bus system for the island with central Nassau as hub

Central Nassau is the main public transportation hub of the island, accessible for all people from Nassau and should therefore provide a round the clock high quality transportation service. Improvement in the service of Jitneys, the local buses, will be achieved through redesigning all routes according to an origin-destination study. Bus services would also be required to provide a reliable service, with bigger

busses and fixed routes, proper sheltered bus stops with printed bus schedules and proper lighting and security.

##### Shared-space Historical City and the 24-Hour-City

In order to return the Historical City of Nassau to the thriving area that it was by bringing back its music and exciting nightlife, several interventions will take place in the commercial core of Nassau (King Street, George Street, Market Street, Trinity Place, Frederick Street, Charlotte Street and Parliament Street and Bank Lane). This area will become a car-free zone with an exclusively shared-space for pedestrians, cyclists and shuttle buses. No private cars will be allowed to park or transit. The street surface will be redesigned for maximum 12 miles per hour (20 km/h) with shading elements and trees. A collaborative planning mechanism will incorporate all property owners into the development of a common strategy to provide a more pleasant area where restaurants and cafes will make Downtown vibrant again.

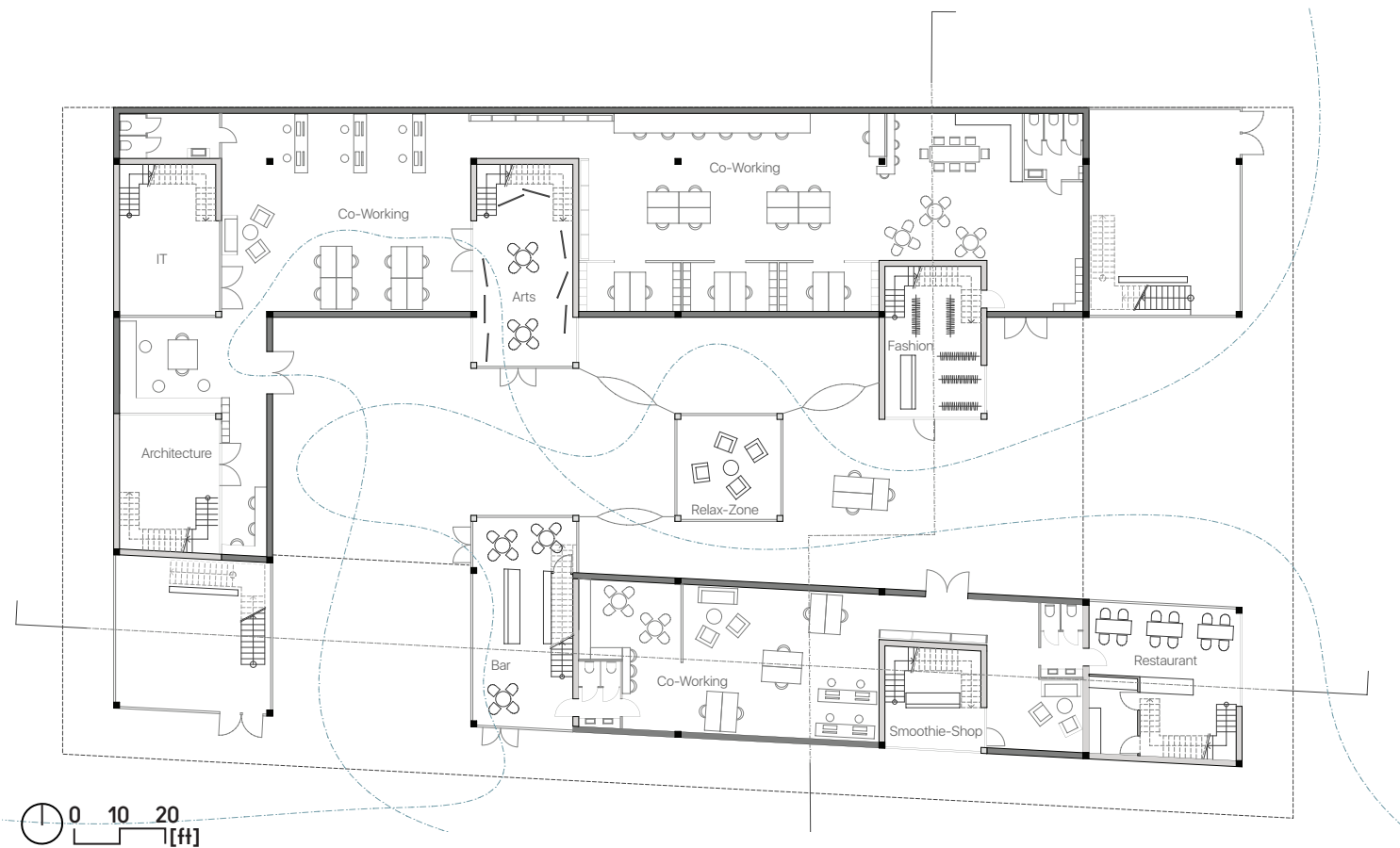
##### Decentralized Multi-level Garages

The mobility strategy will include solutions to resolve the deficit in parking spaces in Downtown Nassau. Almost all interventions will require the provision of parking places close to the venues. Through decentralized multi-level garages, the provision of vertical parking areas will give way to the activation of valuable urban land for new developments other than extensive vehicular parking.

#### 5.1.5 Creative Nassau Co-Working Space

One of the current public horizontal surface parking lot, belonging to the Central Bank of The Bahamas, is located at Duke Street (Shirley Street) and Market Street, directly across from the historic Government House property.. The plot has approximately 32300 square feet (3000 m<sup>2</sup>) and can accommodate 100 parking spaces. The multi-storey car garages that will be developed in the area will enable the conversion of the usage of this plot as a downtown busi-

Floor plan  
of pro-  
posed  
Creative  
Nassau  
Co-Work-  
ing Space



ness hub for entrepreneurs and artists. The building is designed as a creative incubator for Nassau centrally located in Downtown.

An important element of the building is the development of an urban ground floor area which invites visitors to enter and see the installations, exhibitions, products, etc. in an exhibition courtyard. An additional leisure space and playground is provided for clients, visitors and guests. The ground floor area also hosts the co-working spaces suitable for 100 entrepreneurs and artists. A flexible ground floor wall division enables the implementation of a maker-space, a production area with a 3D printer for experimental research and production of prototypes.

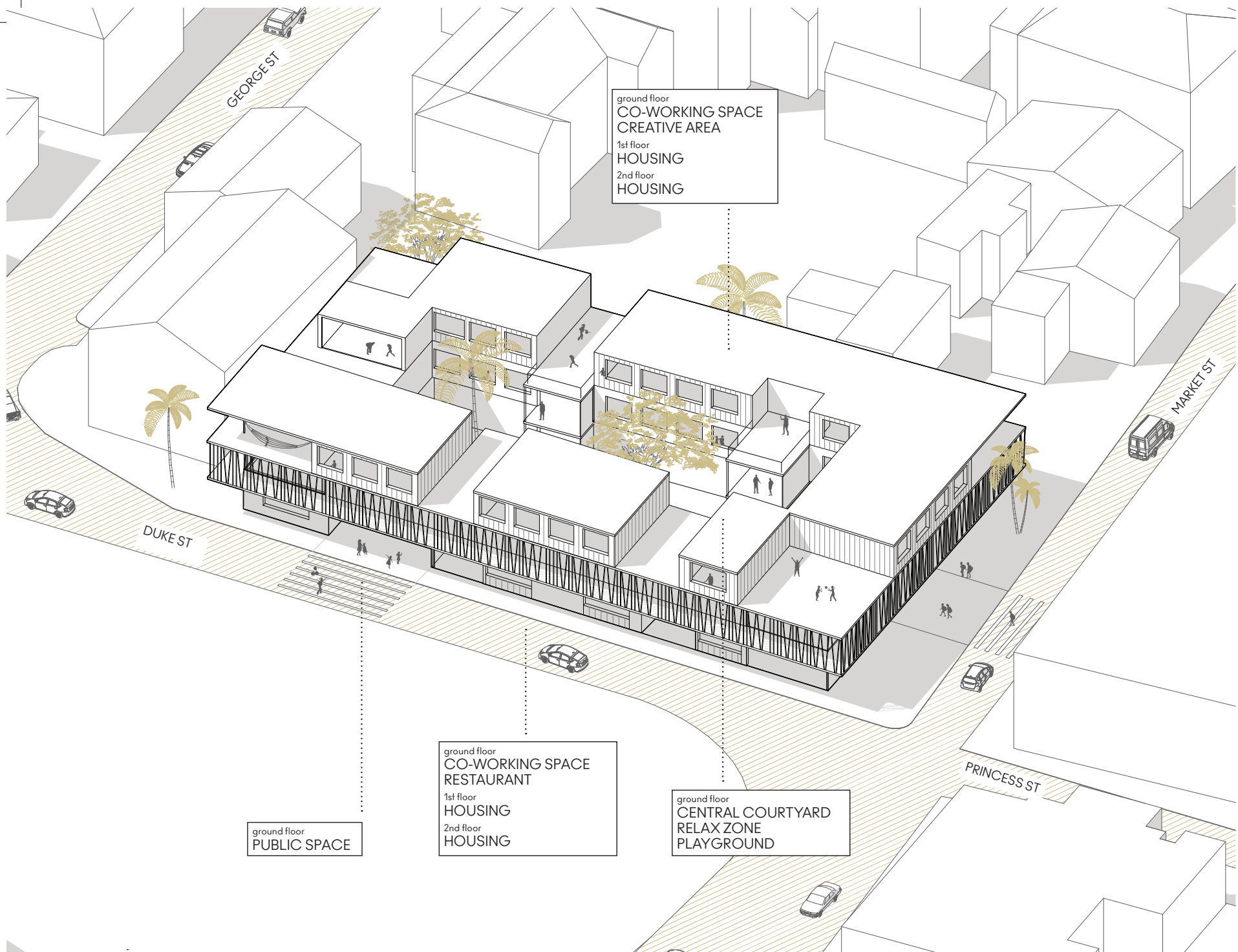
The College of Bahamas will have a study and seminar room to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, technology and experiences. A system of public Grants will provide office space at the business hub for a certain amount of time in order to develop new products and services.

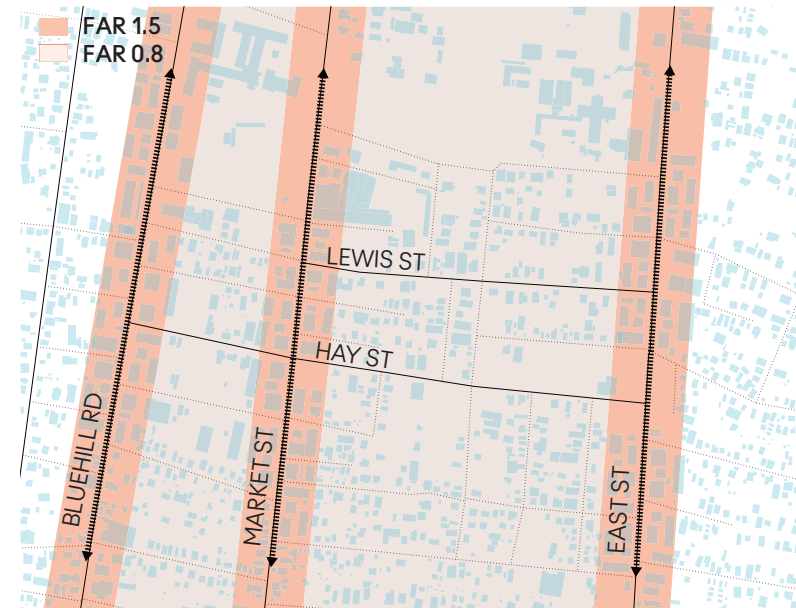
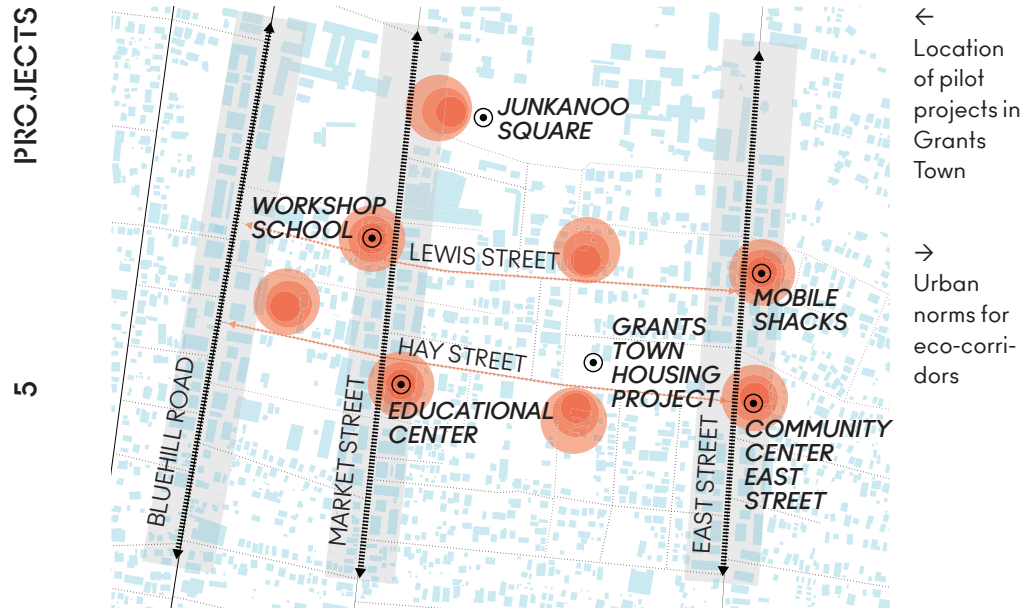
The two upper floors provide rental housing for the entrepreneurs and students.

## 5.2 Grants Town Regeneration Project

Grants Town is a low density, low-income neighbourhood continuously struggling with crime and insecurity. For years the quality of life for its community has dwindled and despite many efforts to rehabilitate this area, it has continued







to decline, calling for an urgent intervention. In this scarcely populated area (approximately 12 inhabitants per acre or 30 inhabitants per hectare), the vacant lots, some of which have been taken over by nature, stand in contrast with multiple churches with strong ties to a vibrant community that once resided here. As the middle class has apparently left the area and only come to attend the services in the weekend, a struggling low-income population is left behind with limited education and no jobs.

The Grants Town Regeneration Project is addressing these challenges with a series of urban interventions, combining urban design and architectural solutions together with social-economic activities. The project highlights Grants Town most important asset: an organized strong community whom together with the private sector, NGOs, individuals and neighbours, have begun to transform and improve their environment.

Grants Towns' urban fabric is structured by the main corridors, which run into downtown, namely East Street, Market Street and Blue Hill Road. The corridors have

an important significance as commercial strips, with shops, governmental buildings, churches, gas stations amongst other uses; and they are characterized with a more dense urban structure. The traditional residential areas are located between these urban corridors, in a quiet environment, embedded in a green network of beautiful mature trees.

The housing stock of Grants Town is in bad shape. Since the urban renewal projects carried out in the 1980s and early 2000s, there have not been any significant positive changes, although the Government's renewed Urban Renewal 2.0 Programme in 2012 is in effect. However, there are important lessons learnt from previous renewal programmes that need to be taken into consideration for future interventions. Multi-family housing projects, especially those over three units per house are not successful in Grants Town and therefore should be avoided. People feel uncomfortable with high densities and are not accustomed to living in this typology of housing. Another issue has been the mono-functional housing and infrastructure projects that have not addressed the pressing challenges of unem-



# GRANTS TOWN URBAN REGENERATION PROJECT

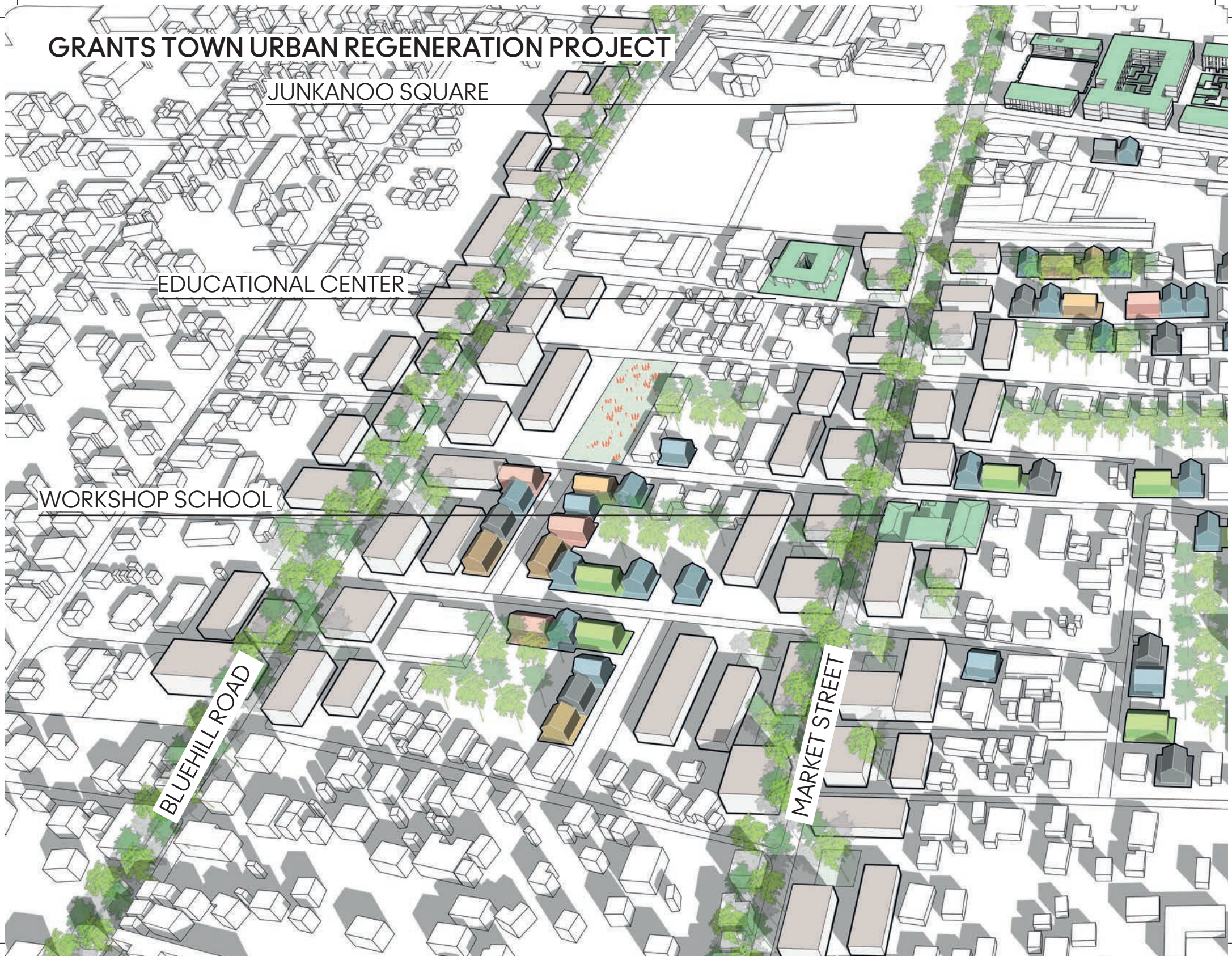
JUNKANOO SQUARE

EDUCATIONAL CENTER

WORKSHOP SCHOOL

BLUEHILL ROAD

MARKET STREET







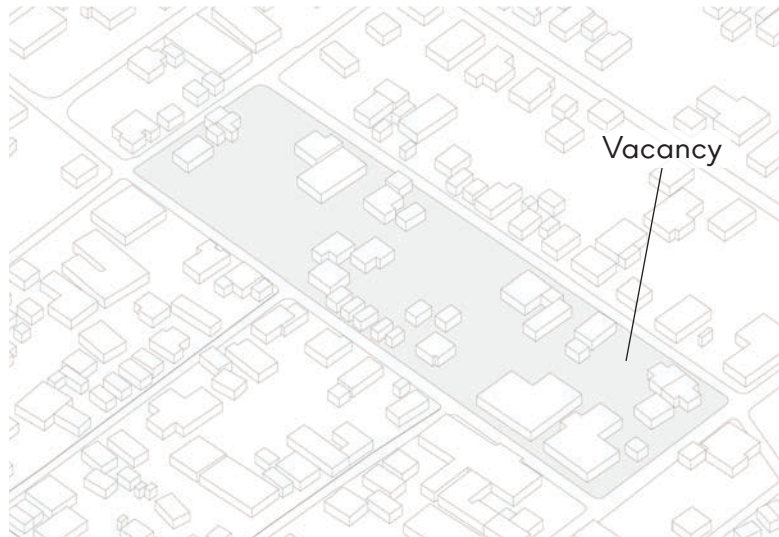
MOBILE SHACKS

GRANTS TOWN  
HOUSING PROJECT

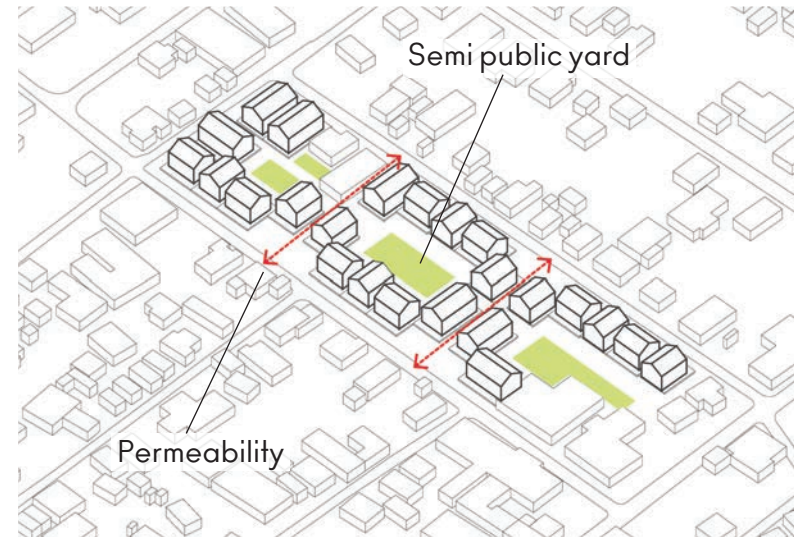
COMMUNITY  
CENTER EAST STREET

EAST STREET

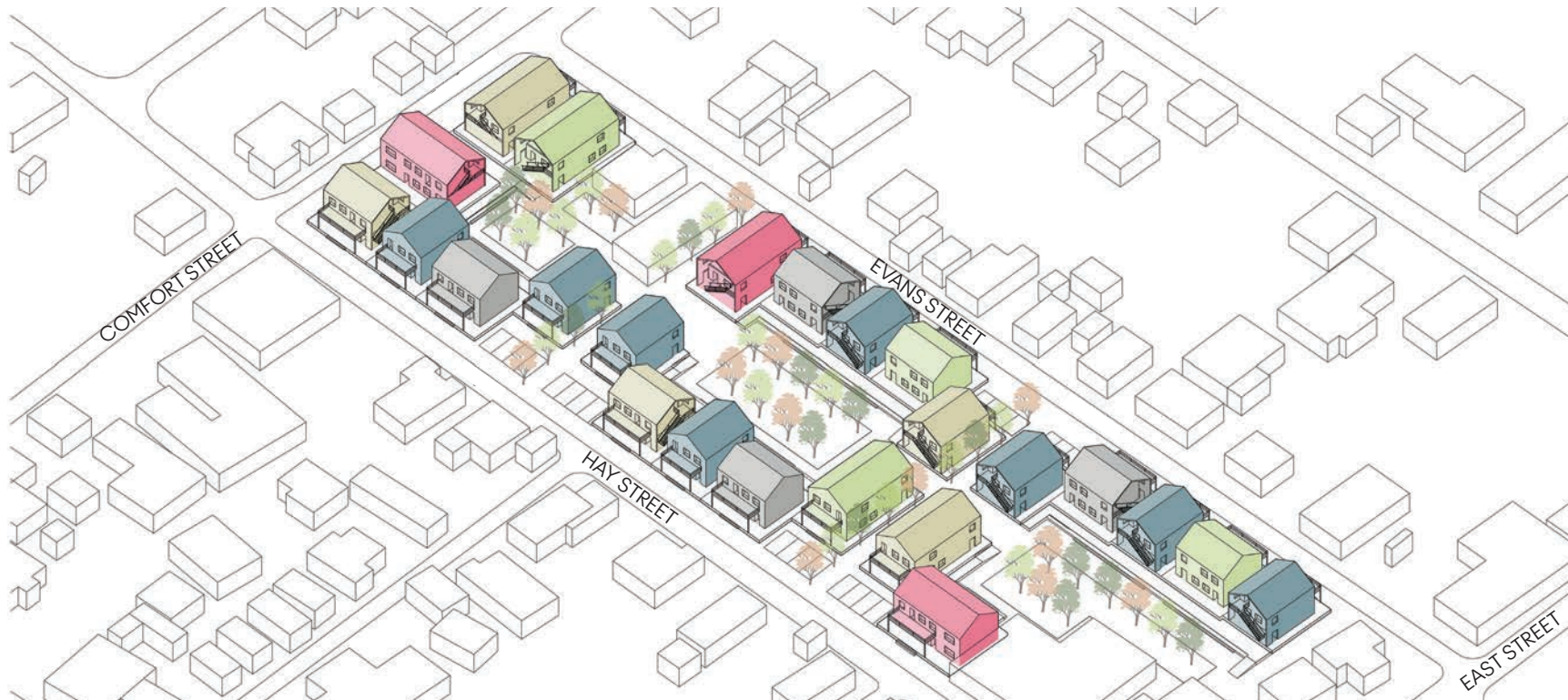




Current:  
Block area 2.77 ac, Coverage ratio 0.60 ac = 0.21, FAR 0.93 = 0.33



Intervention:  
Block area 2.77 ac, Coverage ratio 1.30 ac = 0.46. FAR 2.21 ac = 0.80



Street section of pilot project in Grants Town



ployment and insecurity. People envision Grants Town as a safe and secure centre with a strong community identity rooted in its history, tradition and family. While providing people with homes and thus repopulating the area is important, the success of rehabilitation interventions lie in a more comprehensive approach that ensures the creation of jobs and security as well.

### 5.2.1 Grants Town Housing Project

In order to respond to the low density and the urban decay of Grants Town, the Grants Town Housing Project envisions a rehabilitation of the housing stock. Because of its proximity to Downtown, the rehabilitation of Grants Town not only becomes a strategic location for new housing and economic opportunities for the area but for the entire city. Grants Town has the potential for local economic development opportunities to flourish with a special emphasis in the consolidation of the creative city initiatives supporting arts

and crafts embedded in a mixed-use built environment. The project proposes the purchase of vacant land by the government that shall be converted into valuable properties for housing suitable for low to mid income families. Due to the short distances to downtown, the neighbourhood shall develop into a more efficient urban fabric and deploy an innovative housing model. It is recommended that a Housing Trust or Bank would buy as many properties as possible and tax vacant land that continues without maintenance or use (see chapter 6). Property owners should have more pressure brought to bear in order to develop housing properties and to contribute to the development of the neighbourhood.

Vacancy in some areas of Grants Town is very low with a coverage ratio of an average block of just 0.21. That means that only one fifth of the property is actually occupied by buildings. Having analysed the Floor Area Ratio (FAR), the measured density is just 0.33, a very low figure compared to other parts of the city, especially downtown.



## ANALYSIS AND DESIGN CONCEPT

**Sloping roof**

*Traditional roof of residential buildings in Nassau*

**Staircase**

*Structure adapted to climb to second floor for housing*

**Porch**

*Semi private space, supports front of building*

**Outer Hall**

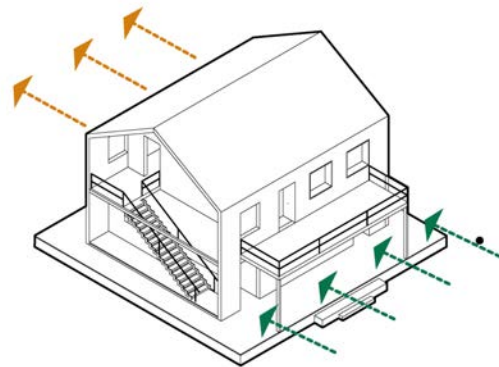
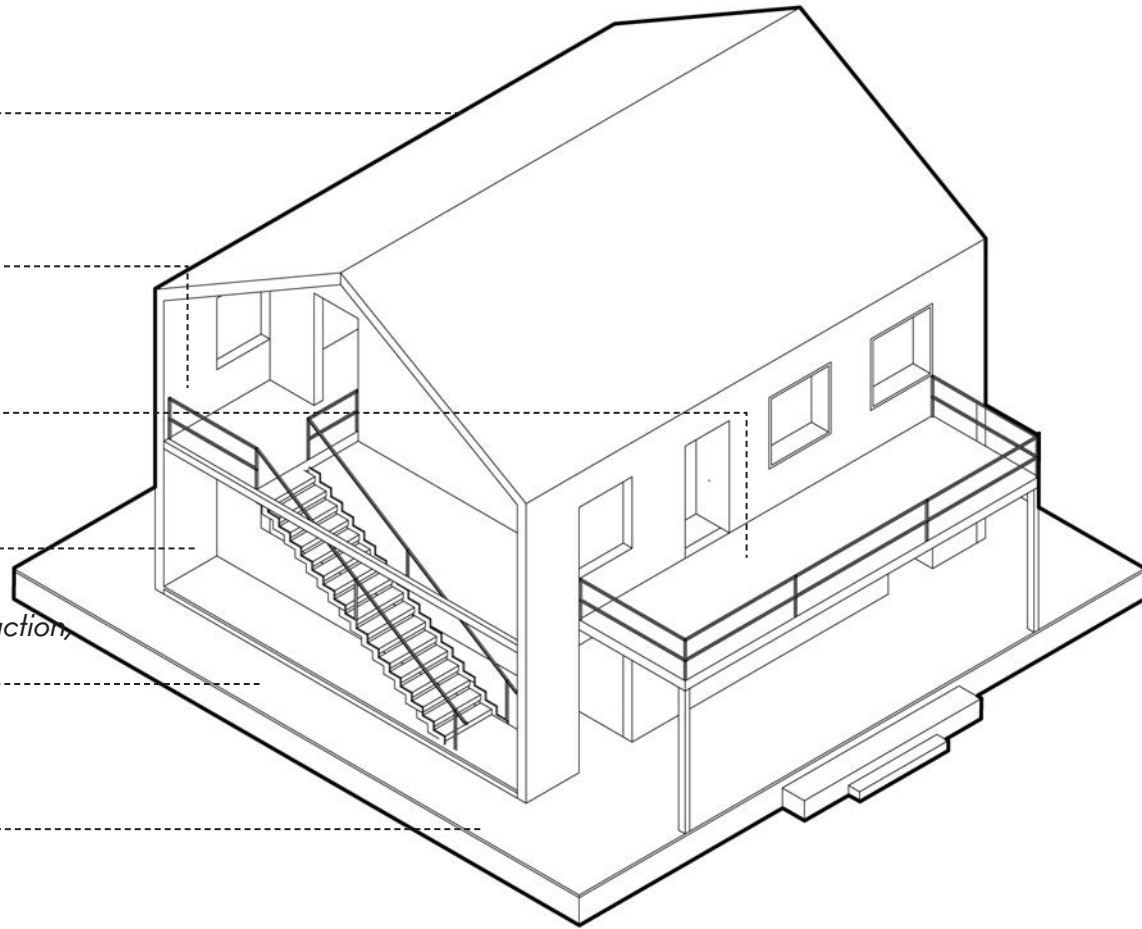
*Semi private space, supports front of the building*

**Garden**

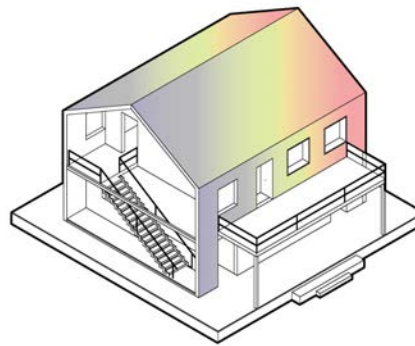
*Green spaces not connected to the construction, adaptable for (landscape) gardens*

**Base**

*traditional structure used in constructions in the region*

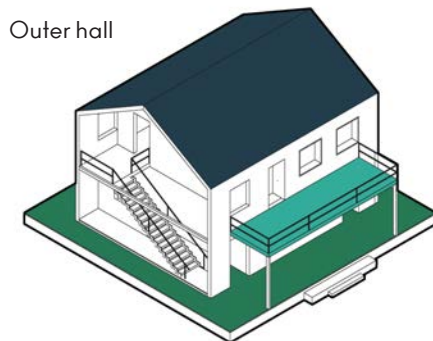


Ventilation

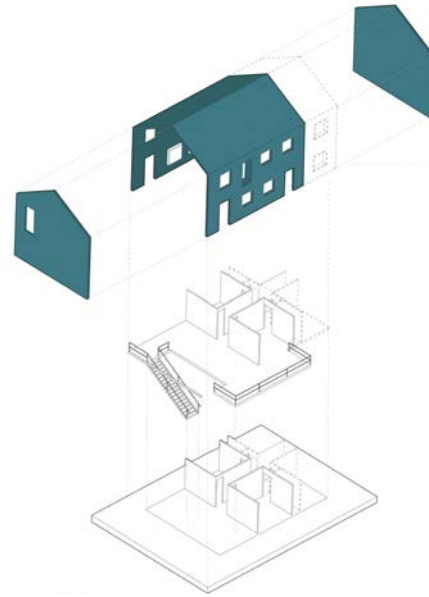


Heat analysis

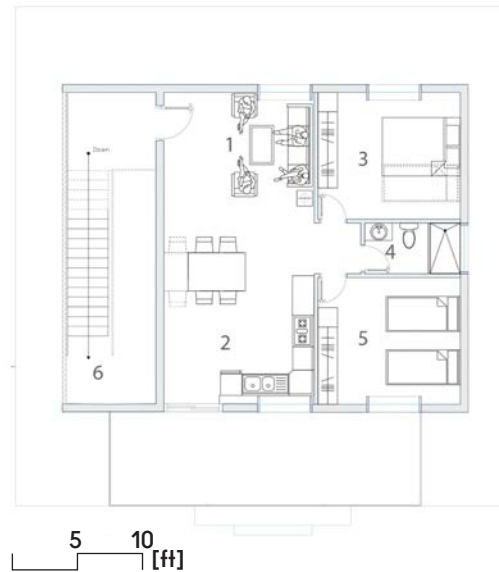
- Traditional sloping roof
- Porch
- Outer hall



Spaces



Axonometric view

**Second floor**

- 1. Living room
- 2. Kitchen
- 3. Main bedroom

- 4. Bathroom
- 5. Shared bedrooms
- 6. Stairs & Lobby

**First floor**

- 1. Living room
- 2. Kitchen
- 3. Main bedroom

- 4. Bathroom
- 5. Shared bedrooms
- 6. Stairs & Lobby

The new housing model envisions the development of higher densities taking into account the thresholds that the community and experts expressed during the Nassau Urban Lab. There shall be a maximum of two storeys in the inner areas of Grants Town with no multi-family houses exceeding three to maximum four units within one building. The creation of a sense of community is a strong argument for the development of this housing typology.

Under the philosophy that 'it takes a community to raise a child' in the past, porches and courtyards were shared amongst neighbours and this project would like to recover the communal spirit of this community. Semi-public courtyards will provide open space for social interaction, leisure activities, urban gardening and safe places for children to play. Houses will have two fronts, one into the courtyard and another one to the street.

The courtyards shall be developed jointly in a collaborative way with representatives of all the families residing in the building. Under professional guidance, a community development process would be organized with the new inhabitants of the blocks. As maintenance is an important issue in Grants Town, people are invited to co-create and work together within the block. The jointly development of the courtyards will create ownership and therefore a communal care and pride in the upkeep of the space.

The proposed permeable block structure in Grants Town shall be developed wherever possible to create shorter distances within the community and to create safe walkable car-free corridors. These corridors enable the development of a more structured housing facility.

The design of the typology is inspired in the Bahamian clapboard house, enhanced and improved with





sound and thermal insulation suitable for multifamily housing. With maximum three to four families per building, each house is equipped with a porch, the traditional meeting place for the neighbourhood. The Floor Area Ratio of the new urban layout is approximately 0.8 that is almost 3 times higher than the existing typology.

The housing model is flexible and extendable. As during the development process, residents are organized in groups for the collaborative development of the courtyard, in the development phase, the families get to know each other and contribute with their wishes to the design of the urban layout of the block. The planning team will design a tailored made design for the new residents of the houses. They can combine houses, make them longer or wider, adapting it to the main overall plan.

Wherever a large plot for the development of the housing model is not accessible, such as on small plots, single-family houses suitable for one or two families or a home for an elderly resident can be developed.

A housing pilot project and prototype will be developed at the strategically located block limited by East Street, Hay Street, Comfort Street and Evans Street. Further sites will be developed according to the urban development process.

Due to low property prices, it could be a prime opportunity for the government to purchase properties for affordable housing projects. However, it is important to mitigate the possible threat and potential displacement of low-income residents as property values rise.

Because people need skills and not just homes, the project contemplates complementary projects that will not only facilitate the maintenance of communal spaces, but will hopefully strengthen not only the interaction between neighbours, but also with their natural environment, promoting a healthier and more sustainable urban lifestyle. The following complementary projects portray the multi-sectorial character of the project.

### 5.2.2 Toolbox for Green Space Development

The decline of Grants Town is today visible through the multiple vacant plots. However, these areas also hide an important potential for green space. Growing cities often fail to preserve green space and face great challenges in dealing with the consequences. Permeability of soil is very important for the ecological balance of a city, as green spaces absorb emission and enable drainage. However procuring land for parks in an already consolidated urban structure is extremely challenging

Silk cotton trees have always been present in Bahamian tradition as meeting points and places to gather. Not only do the trees provide shade and protection from sun and rain, but they have a historical and symbolic meaning making their impressive crowns an important landmark that can be spotted from a distance.

The project provides a network of public spaces using the existing silk cotton trees for the development of public spaces following these steps:

- Identify public space potential around existing mature trees.
- Clear the area and preserve the trees and the spaces around them.
- Add different uses and facilities from the toolbox
- Create a network of green public spaces.

A toolbox is developed with different functions serving the community. The modules are a) Basis, the silk cotton tree with benches and simple furniture, b) mobility point, bus shelter underneath the trees, c) playground within the trees, d) small market stall, e) urban gardening, f) sport, g) sanitary facilities and h) theatre and music, the cultural venue under the trees.

A concrete sample of a pocket park is elaborated for an abandoned site at Lewis Street, close to East Street where a basic element, a sanitary unit and a playground will be built. An additional community element is public site





←  
Public  
space by  
day and  
night

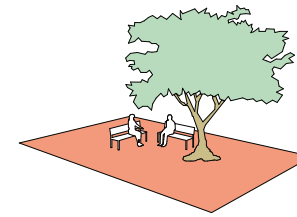
for barbecue. As Grants Town does not presently have a lot of public spaces with facilities, additional public sites for barbecues will be implemented every 660 feet (200 m).

### 5.2.3 Community and Local Economic Development Community Centre at East Street

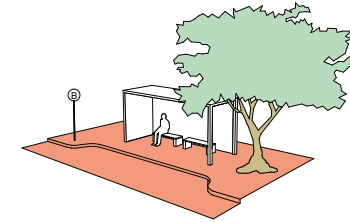
This project aims to create a community meeting point located at the junction of East and Hay Street, in the middle of Grants Town. The new centre will use the space of three vacant buildings to provide new spaces for the community including educational opportunities for the young and old.

→  
Toolbox  
for green  
space  
develop-  
ment

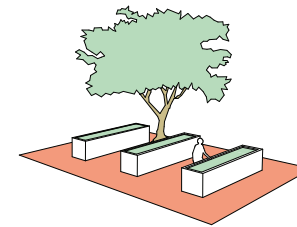
Basis



Mobility Point



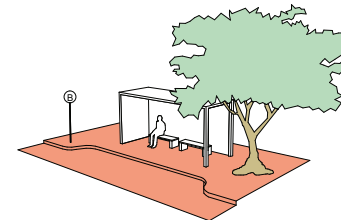
Urban Gardening



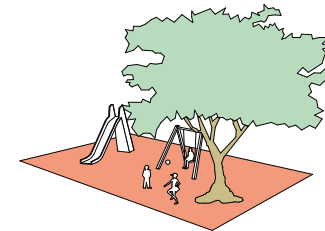
Sport



Mobility Point



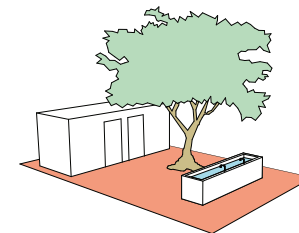
Playground

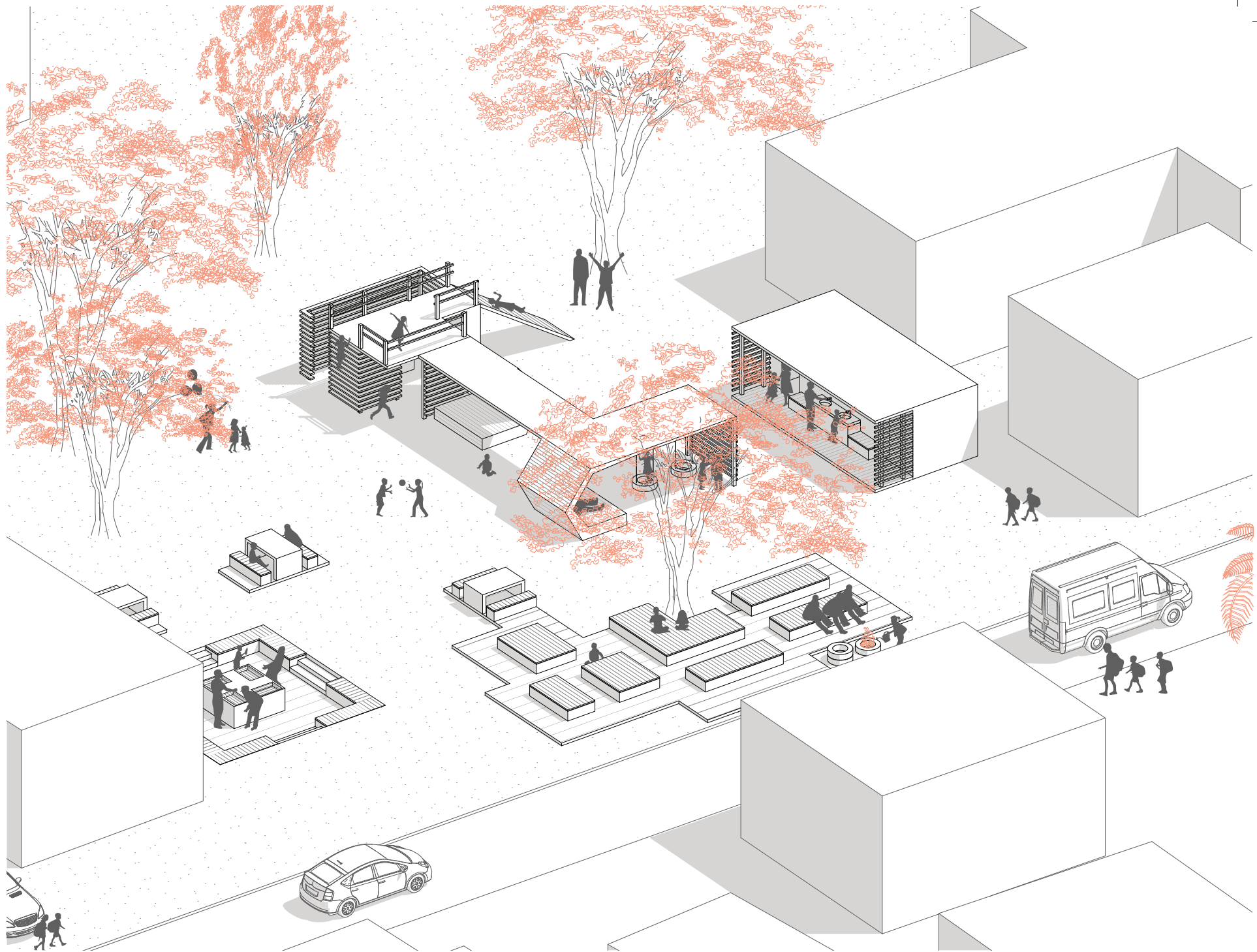


Sport



Sanitary Facility









Community Center on East Street

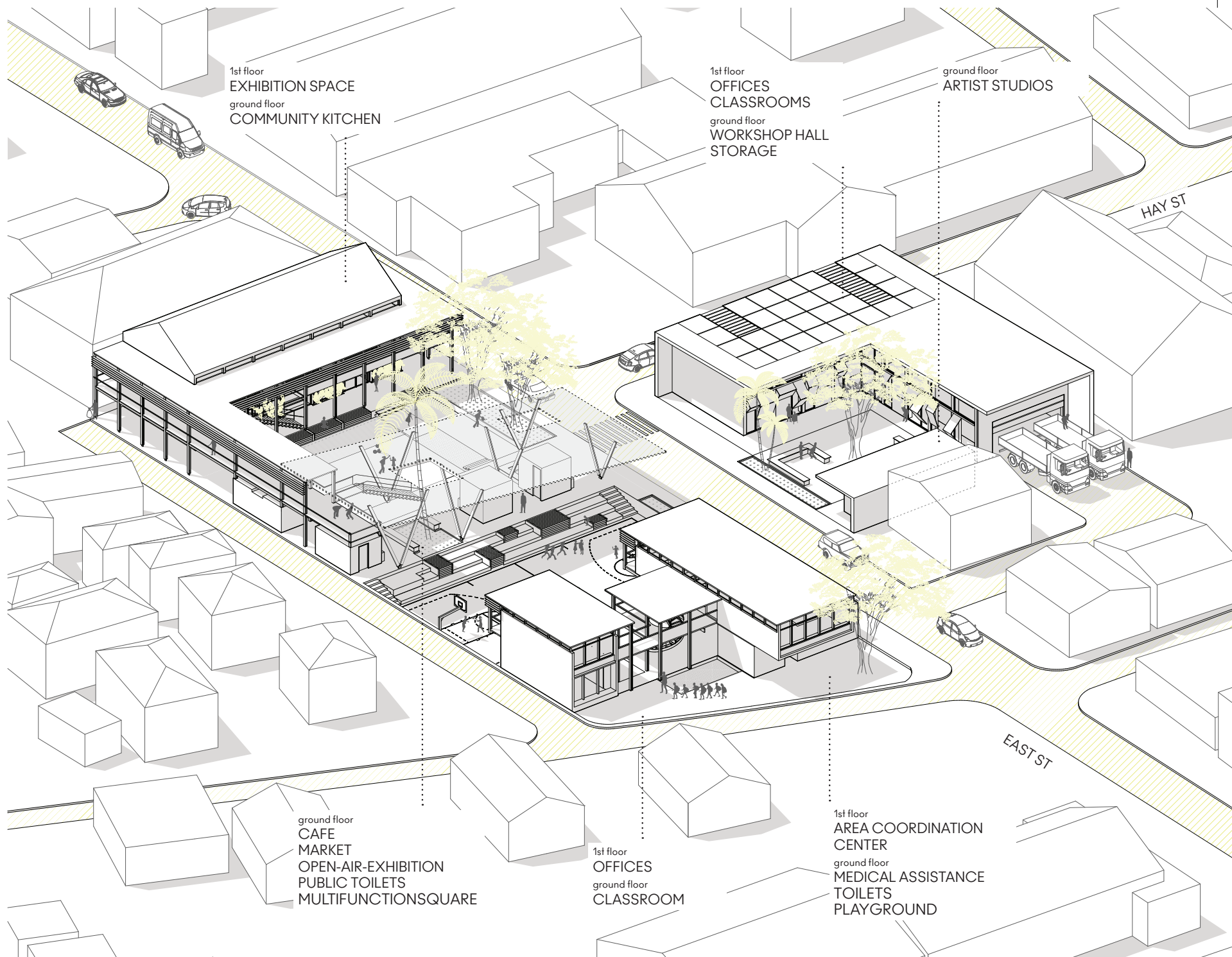
The centre will offer a community school with various classrooms, a café, a community kitchen (used as a cafeteria, restaurant and event location for the people receiving vocational training), an exhibition hall, medical assistance, an open-air market, public toilets and sport facilities.

This multifunctional and densely developed community will cater to local artists and artisans who presently sell to tourists at Downtown Nassau. Providing training in traditional arts and crafts the centre will not only create an economic model within the community, but also provide additional support in necessary life skills, with special offers for woman entrepreneurs and adolescents.

The community office will also offer assistance with Grants for local entrepreneurs. support with applications, collaborate in marketing and branding strategies, and interface with related assistance agencies such as

BAIC (Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Corporation, BTVI (Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute, NTA (National Training Institute), The Department of Labour, The Chamber of Commerce, The College of The Bahamas' School of Economics which offers a seed fund award for best ideas for local businesses with financing opportunities as well as supporting entrepreneurs with training. The exhibition space will allow for the organization of community fairs, and together with the community kitchen and public cooking events will incentivise a local micro-economy. This centre will hopefully also attract visitors who will be encouraged to return to Over-the-Hill to interact with the Bahamian community and purchase local goods, services and products.

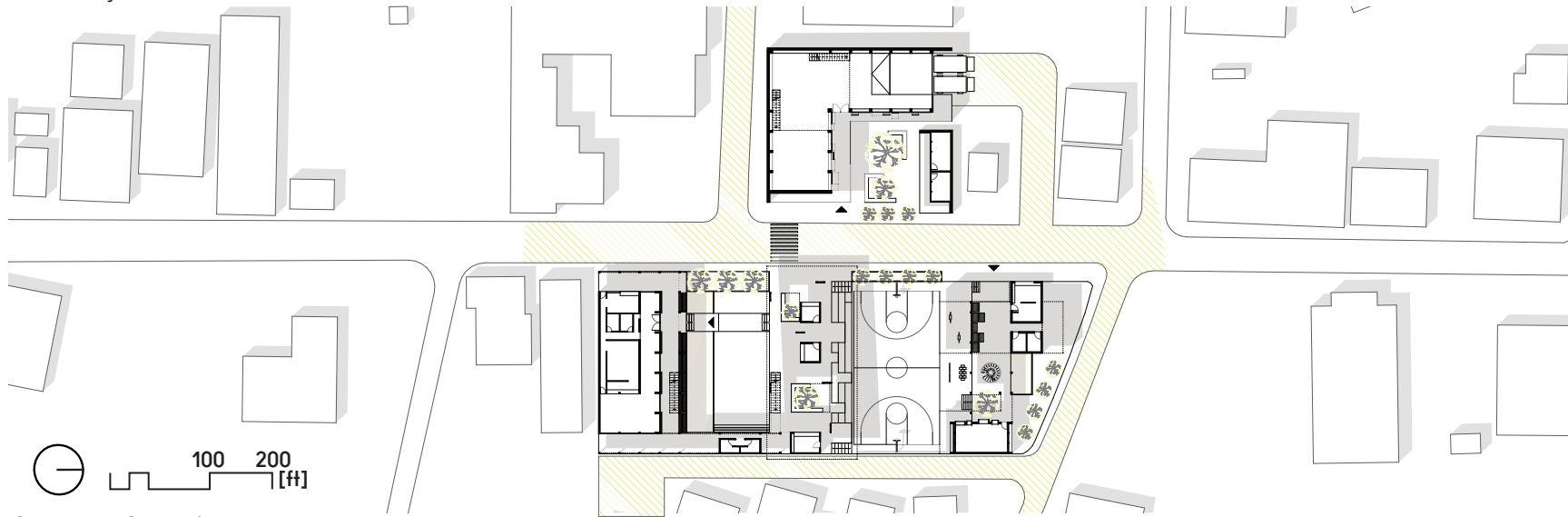
Special attention is given to the promotion of small business development for low-income families with a



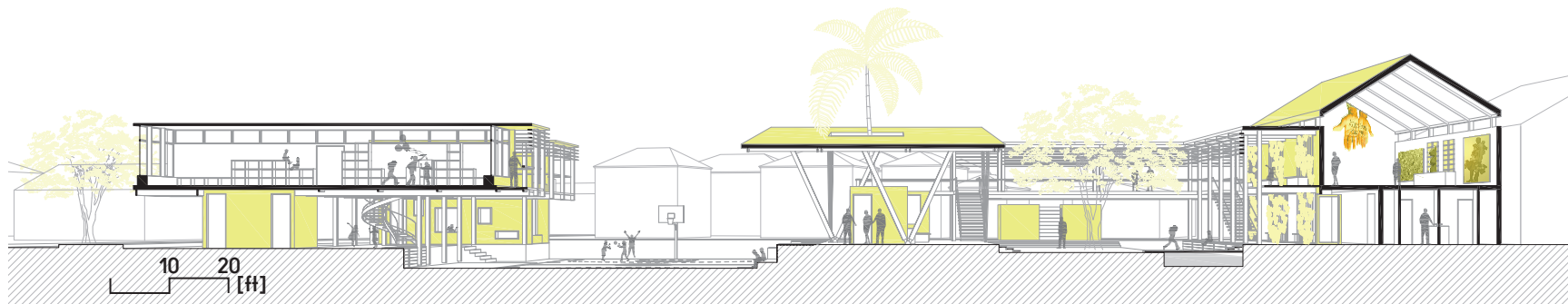




Community Center views



Community Center floor plan



Community Center section



Mobile Shacks

particular focus on women through a workshop area provided with machinery and tools for sewing classes for clothing manufacturing, souvenir production, and Junkanoo costume production amongst others.

This community will work closely with the university, strengthening knowledge exchange. The centre will be a laboratory for community and local economic development and establish strong ties between the community, local entrepreneurs, private sector assistance grants and funding, and Grants and subsidiaries from the public sector.

#### Mobile Shacks and Temporary Use as a means of urban development

The mobile shacks are meant to occupy vacant lots temporarily, as a mock-up of the future intervention. The legal framework of the Planning and Subdivision Act of 2010 allows for temporary uses in vacant lots (see chapter 6).

The shacks are light, easy to build timber constructions that can be pre-fabricated in the community workshops. The frames can then be placed and assembled

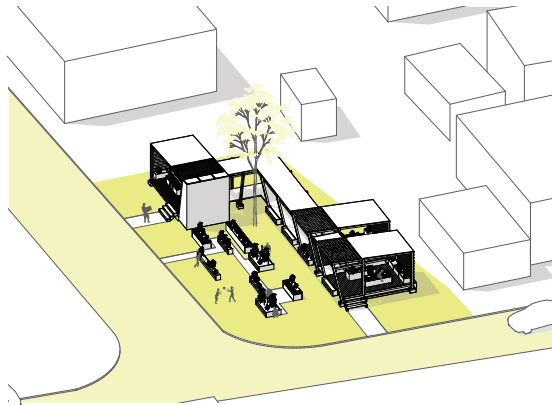
on-site. The lightness of this construction is advantageous in many ways. Firstly, it allows for its placement on vacant spaces where ownership is questionable and therefore can be removed quickly if there is a legal problem with occupancy; secondly, the shacks can be used for temporary uses like markets or food stands; thirdly, as they are easy and quick to build, the whole process of construction as well as setting up the businesses can be completed by the community themselves, enabling them to actively participate in the transformation of their neighbourhood and their lives.

The shacks will be produced and managed by a Local Development Corporation making it available for any member to rent a mobile shack and place it throughout the city of Nassau – a true Grants Town product that has the ability to spread out all over the island.

The shacks will also be used for participatory planning activities as they become visible elements in public spaces, attracting community members that otherwise might not have participated in the activities of the agency.

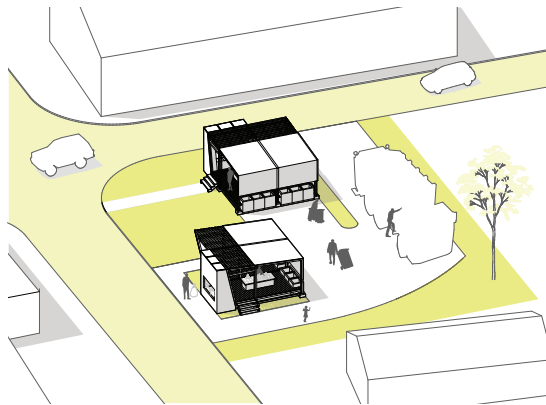


MARKET SHACK

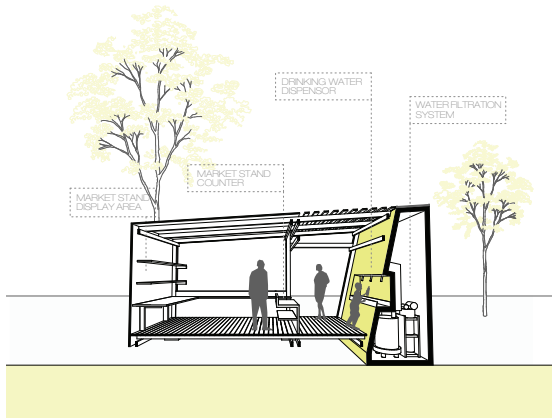
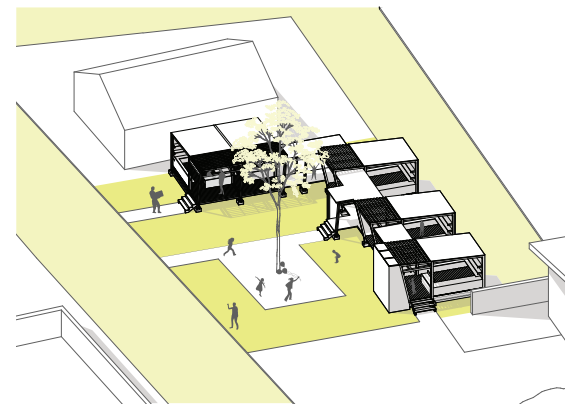


Axonometric views

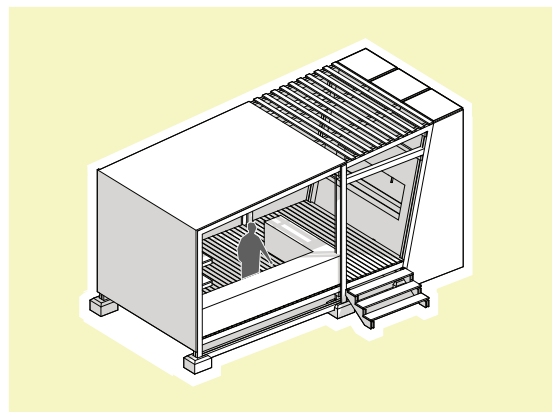
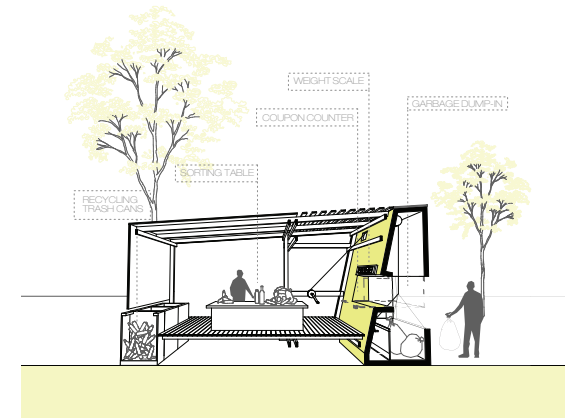
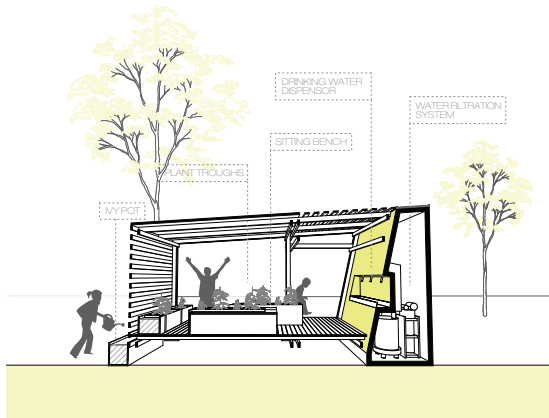
GARDENING SHACK



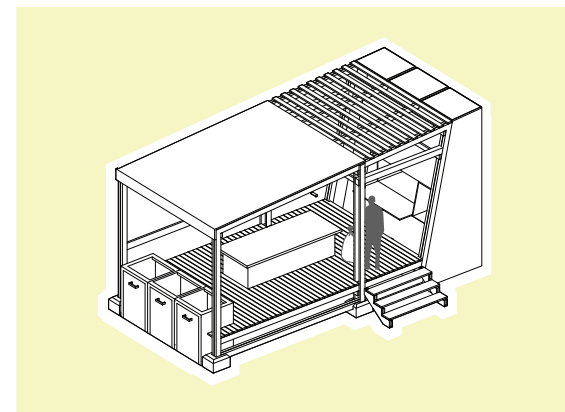
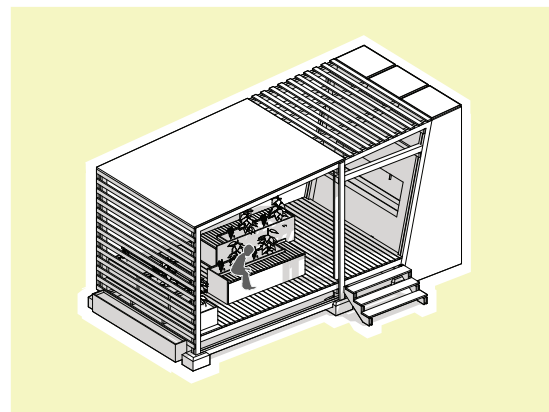
RECYCLING SHACK



Sections



Detail



This temporary structure is a multipurpose facility and can be used also as a recycling, processing or a gardening facility. It can be assembled in many ways and the variety of possible uses is unlimited and can be assembled in many ways. The students and professors of the College of The Bahamas can be helpful in the research of more innovative uses and the development of new products using temporary structures as a means of urban transformation in emerging cities.

Junkanoo Square – a cultural incubator and public university  
'Meet in the Middle' is an economic incubator and training centre on the former site of the supermarket on Market Street. It is located literally in the middle between Downtown Nassau and Grants Town. The location is perfect for a public building, because it is centrally located and serves as an economic incubator for both downtown and Grants Town. The Co-working space could also be used as an extension of the College of The Bahamas. The compound is multi-functional with a student's home, an elderly home, a co-working space, training rooms, and a widely open public square called the Junkanoo Training Square.

This space is presently a parking lot, but it is also used as a practise area for the One Family Junkanoo & Community Organization every Saturday throughout the year. By collaborating with the members of the Junkanoo Think Tank to design and model relevant programmes for economic stimulation in the area with an organized training schedule and complementary activities such as temporary cafés and restaurants, this project has the potential to extend the vibrant Junkanoo culture into an economic engine for the over-the-hill communities which would also attract visitors to the area.. This square can therefore be articulated into a true public space between Downtown and Grants Town, with steps and benches to facilitate the Saturday Junkanoo practises and other activities.

#### The Workshop-School on Market Street

The workshop-school on Market Street established in conjunction with BTVI and NTA as a satellite location, will offer the Grants Town community access to a school conveniently located within the neighbourhood for vocational training as carpenters, electricians, as well as other skills needed for the maintenance of the historical neighbourhood. This public service would be provided and financed by government agencies, and constructed under supervision of the respective ministry.

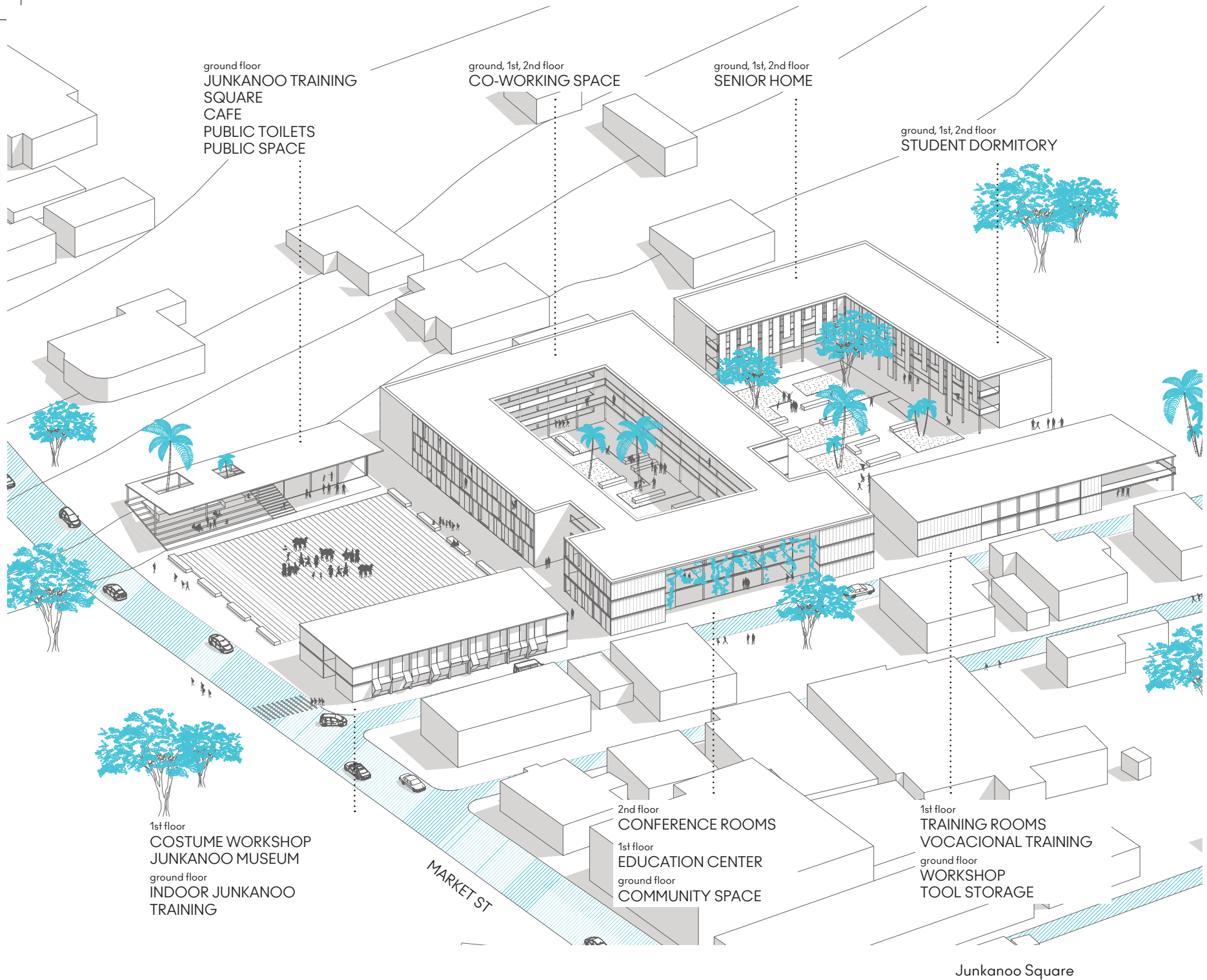
This pilot project aims to prepare and educate unemployed youth for the job market with skills that they can employ in their neighbourhood. The jobs would be offered on a rotational basis. After one year's training at the workshop-school, the educated professional can move on to a more qualified job. The facility is also equipped with a culture corner and stage to provide cultural activities and arts to the neighbourhood.

#### **5.2.4 Grants Town Educational Initiative** Educational Centre

Located at Cockburn Street and Market Street on vacant land owned by the church, the Educational Centre will serve the community (all age groups including both the young and the elderly) by offering a properly stocked and operated public library with access to thousands of books, internet services, and venues for cultural events. A playground and other community facilities will make this project a model reference point on how to activate vacant land, especially on property owned by the churches which have traditionally, played an extremely important role in supporting the community of Grants Town.

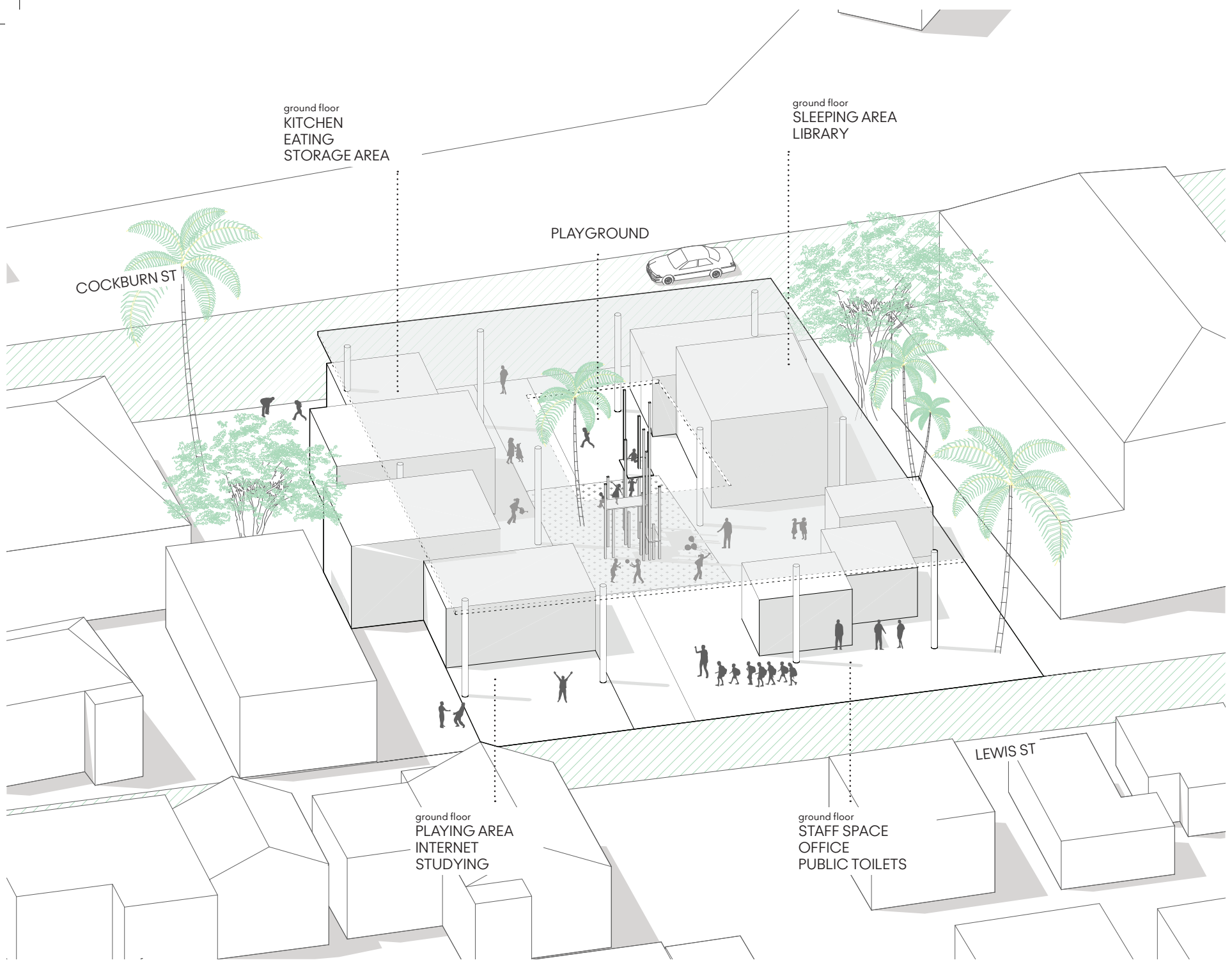
The structure is open, with a wide roof and four small pavilions underneath carefully designed to respond adequately to tropical climates.

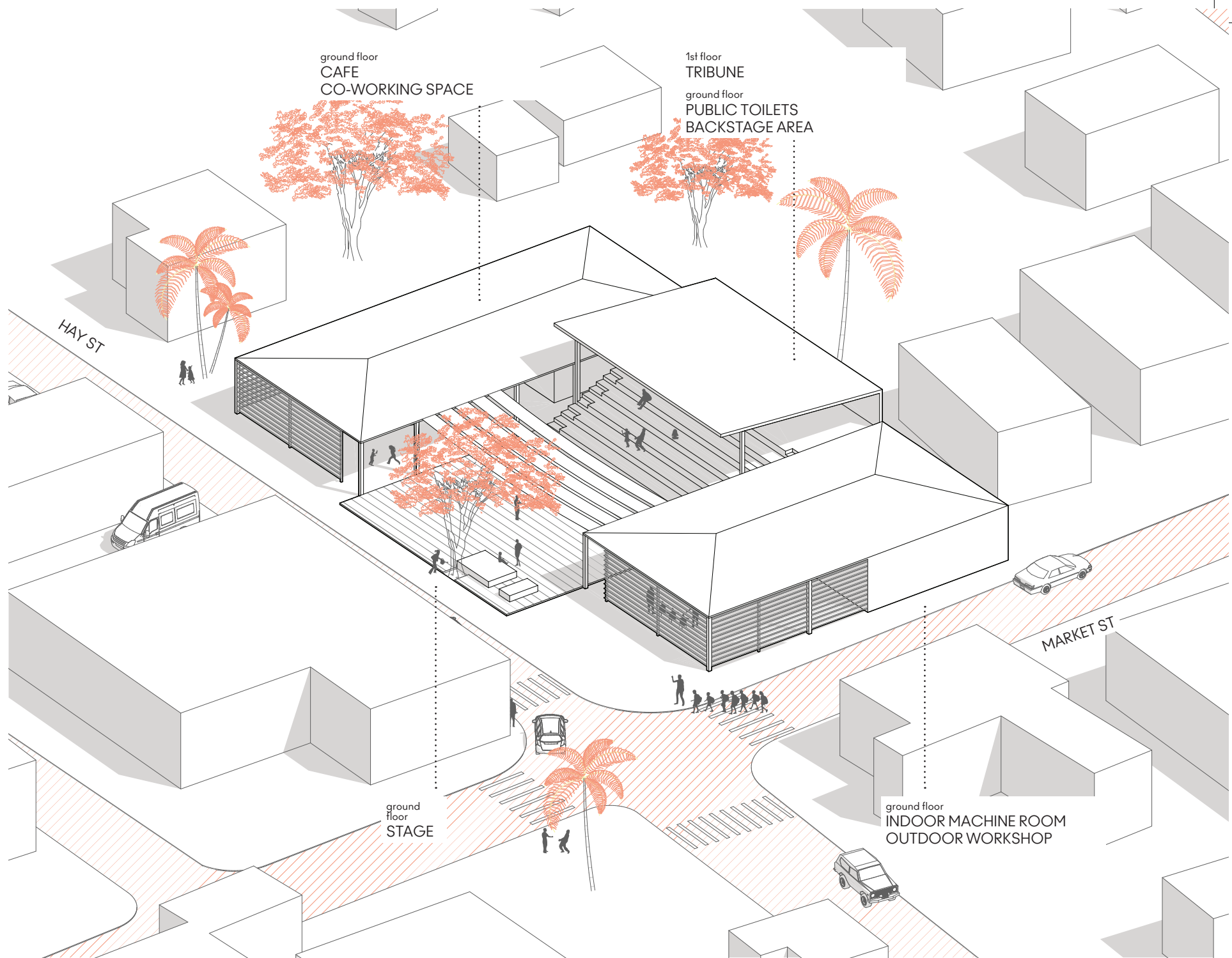




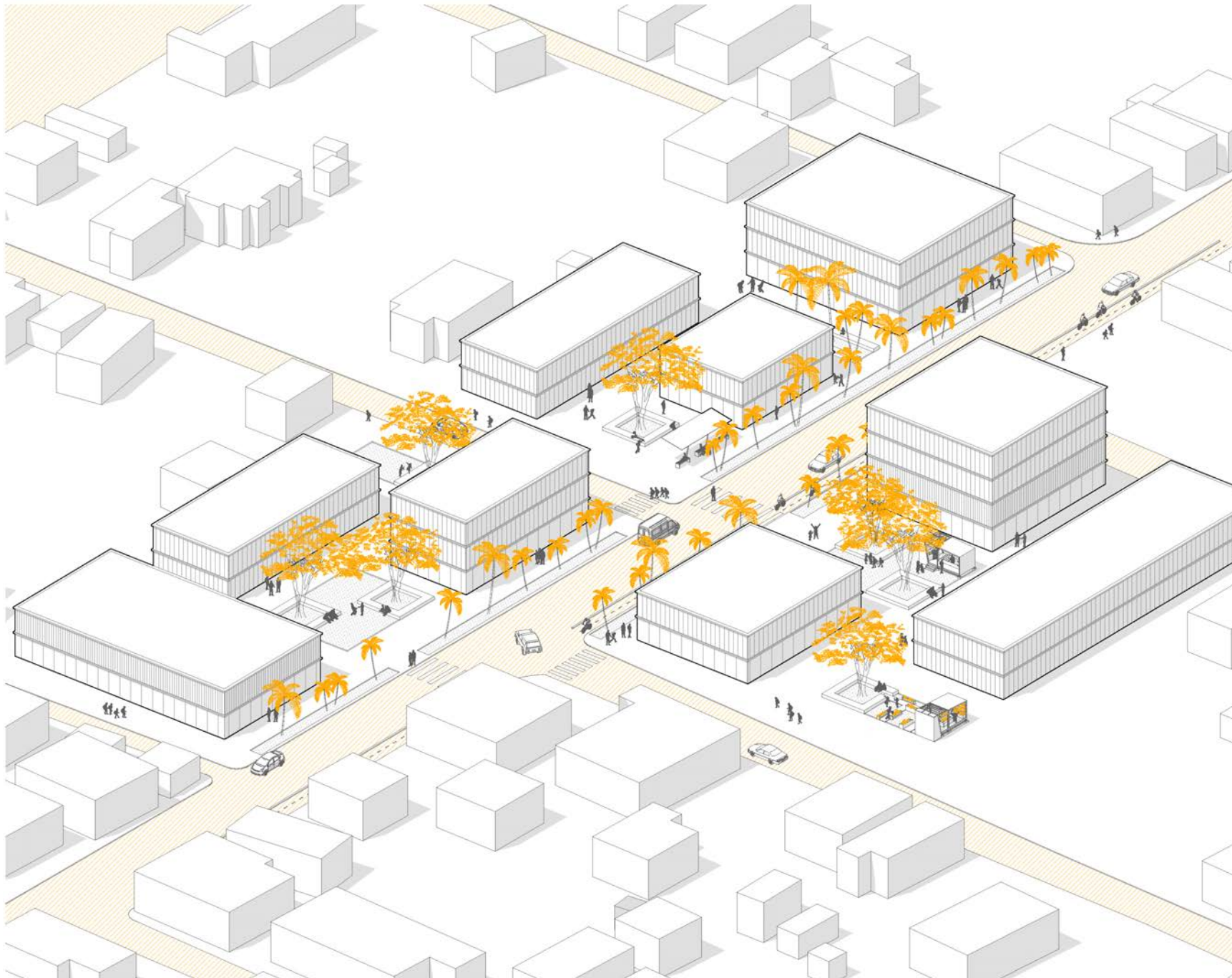












### 5.3 Connecting Ecological Urban Corridors for Central Nassau

This strategy addresses the disconnection between downtown and Over-the-Hill neighbourhoods like Grants Town; between people and places; between people and their culture and identity; and between people and opportunities, both recreational and economic.

By reconnecting the city centre with its adjacent neighbourhoods through accessible modes of transport this strategy aims to re-establish historical linkages and create micro-centralities with mixed-use patterns.

The project seeks to emphasize the following dense and mixed-use main corridors with sidewalks, trees and building typologies that facilitate shade: a) East Street leads from Rawson Square to Grants Town and runs through the whole island; b) Market Street extends from Straw Market through Grants Town and has a vocation for tourism and art/crafts, culture and religion; c) Blue Hill Road, leads from British Colonial Hilton through Grants Town. It is less busy than East Street and St. Agnes Church is located on this road.

#### 5.3.1 Creation of an Urban Ecosystem and Connecting Walkable Corridors

By establishing eco-corridors with trees for shade and better infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists, and people with disabilities, this project aims to disincentivize car use in this part of the city.

With attractive walkable corridors with wide shaded sidewalks and an active streetscape, this intervention will again bring together the traditional neighbourhoods of Grants Town and downtown. Through a pilot project in a section of Market Street a set of urban norms will be defined such as the compensation of additional floors with public space accessible to the community. This pattern of public spaces shall be repeated as micro-centralities every 490 to 660 feet (150 to 200 m) and shall be well connected by at least 13 feet (4 m) wide sidewalks on each side.

The corridors will be mixed-use with commercial or community use in the ground floor area, and residential or offices in the upper floors. As these corridors each have specific characteristics different uses have to be developed for each of these commercial corridors.

#### 5.3.2 Urban Norms for the Eco-Corridors

The implementation of the above mentioned project 'Creation of an Urban Ecosystem and Connecting Walkable Corridors' shall be defined as a Secondary Plan according in a strategic sequence of centralities as defined in the Planning and Subdivision Act 2010. The tool allows the definition of urban rules for the implementation above proposed urban project.

The Secondary Plan for the Urban Corridors shall be include the following elements:

- Urban Design Solutions for the defined zones of the Secondary Plan
- Application of the tools of the Form-Based-Code, namely,
  - Urban form with an urban design solution in cooperation with the owner
  - Tax incentives for the implementation of the plan
  - Community use, shops or workshops for the ground floor areas.
  - Height (max. 70 ft. or 21 m) and densities regulation (minimum FAR = 1.5)
  - Regulation about surface parking
  - Regulation for natural permeability and infiltration of rain-water
- Application of tools of the Bonus Zones: Build two floors more conditioned to the provision of community space in the building or / and creation of public space on the plot
- Mandatory public space
- Mandatory shade and green space development



# 6

# TOWARDS A NEW URBAN MANAGEMENT

All the proposed projects in this document shall be implemented by an efficient public management, strongly supported by a capable agency. Projects have to be organized in a new, innovative way, enabling bottom-up initiatives in the top-down legislation. At the same time the valid Planning and Subdivision Act 2010 shall be enforced, but also updated to the current needs demanded by new urban realities. Territorial planning, zoning ordinances, financial resources, institutional coordination, and top-notch urban construction and maintenance are required for sustainable Nassau.







In cities like Nassau, where land ownership is not always clearly defined, where social and spatial processes are complex and intertwined, flexible and integrative planning processes should be added to the existing urban planning legal framework. As planning is a process of trial and error in a constantly changing environment, this process and the tools used for it must be flexible and continuously adapting to emerging challenges. The Planning and Subdivision Act 2010 is a useful basis for urban development on the Island of New Providence.

However, experience shows that traditional planning tools alone can hardly cope with the complex urban processes in our cities. Top down planning, like traditional zoning and building regulations, often are not enough and new approaches are developed globally to meet the demand of more open and broad ways to plan our cities. Especially in complex and vulnerable contexts of cities in Latin America and the Caribbean, integrated and participative planning is needed to support the shift from mono-sectoral action towards strategic and process-oriented planning.

In this chapter we stress the importance of the implementation of the valuable urban planning tools provided by the Planning and Subdivision Act 2010 and suggest additions to the planning framework to help the implementation of the proposed urban projects. With a new mindset and framework of how we plan Nassau in an inclusive and multi-sectoral way, it might be possible not only to implement the proposed projects in a sustainable way but to realize a paradigm change in The Bahamas and to become a pilot project for similar processes in the Caribbean.

## 6.1 Legal Framework

### 6.1.1 Implementation and upgrade of the Planning and Subdivision Act of 2010

As a basis for urban planning and urban design in Downtown Nassau, an advanced legal framework is necessary

that involves all actors in urban development with a certain security and trust. In particular, the urban design proposal for downtown desires to be defined within a Form Based Code. This regulation allows for the street grid, public space and volume of new buildings to follow a concerted strategy.

The Planning and Subdivision Act from 2010 as described in chapter 2 is providing some useful tools that are important to be implemented in Nassau and in Central Nassau, such as the definition of different land uses, a special architectural regulation for areas of special interest, like Downtown Nassau. The act enables the possibility of temporary uses, Article 30 Temporary Use By-law, and innovative building right tools, Article 29, Bonus Zoning. Hence it is important to create and implement the following documents defined by the Act for Central Nassau based on the existing legal framework:

- Create a Land Use Plan document with a real plan based on the official cadastre, defining zoning and densities and height regulations
- Define a Secondary Plan according to article 21 Planning and Subdivision Act 2010
- Set up Special Architectural Policies within the Land Use Plan to manage adequate urban development
- A set of policies regarding building rights (Bonus Zoning)

Furthermore it is necessary to upgrade the act with additional urban planning tools in order to provide effective, flexible and sustainable urban development. To strengthen the planning framework, some additional elements and planning tools are proposed to be added to the Planning and Subdivision Act.

- Prepare a Strategic Urban Development Plan for the Island of New Providence with a precise analysis, definition of vision and strategic goals for a) urban topics and urban form, b) Open Green Space and c) human scale

- mobility. This plan shall be updated every 10 years.
- Added Value Tax for higher densities achieved with the Secondary Plan, meaning a tax on real estate when value is added to the property through urbanistic intervention, like zoning or higher FAR index or infrastructure investment.
- Inclusionary Zoning. Inclusionary housing refers to a range of local policies that tap the economic gains from rising real estate values to create affordable housing—tying the creation of homes for low- or moderate-income households to the construction of market-rate residential or commercial development (Jabobus, R., 2015). In the case of Nassau, this would require new residential developments or renovated existing residential projects to provide (rent or sell) a certain percentage (10-30 percent) of the provided dwellings for affordable or public housing.
- Heritage Protection Zones: A precise definition of the areas of architectural interests as mentioned in the Planning and Subdivision Act in order to create protection zones for Heritage Buildings and characteristic ensembles.
- Land Mobilization: Mechanisms to activate and mobilise vacant land and buildings through incentivising development through tax alleviation for housing projects.
- Form-Based Code: define as a concrete tool for the Secondary Zoning. A FBC is a “land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. A form-based code is a regulation, not a mere guideline, adopted into city, town, or county law”, Form-Based Codes Institute (FBCI), 2016.
- Land Use Plan: define requirements for the Land Use Plan with a precise definition of zoning areas and target densities. In the Land Use Plan it shall be only admissible to determine *areas* as building land, if a) *the areas* are already built up and these buildings are in conformity with

the *Construction Law* or when b) *the relevant areas will fulfil the following requirements i) suitable for building-up due to their natural conditions; ii) will be required as building areas in specific time period, however, no longer than within 10 years; iii) can be duly developed within this deadline.* The following areas may not be determined as building land: a) If they are not suitable for building-up due to natural conditions (condition of the ground, groundwater level, danger of flooding, climate, rock fall, etc.); b) If their development would require uneconomic expenditure, especially for water supply, sewage disposal, energy supply or traffic connections; c) If due to the necessity to preserve the image of places and landscapes building-up must be omitted; d) If their building-up would entail particular economic difficulties or special nuisances for the inhabitants.

### 6.1.2 Form-Based Building Code for Central Nassau

The existing Planning and Subdivision Act 2010 already defines the tool of the Secondary Plan to provide special architectural policies within the Land Use Plan in order to manage adequate urban development in areas like Central Nassau. However, today there is a lack of concrete ideas and designs on how to transform this area. Clear urban norms should be defined to implement and manage the regeneration of Central Nassau.

A FBC is a strong tool complementary to the Land Use Plan. It defines foremost the relation between the built environment and the public realm. It fosters predictable results of urban form, and the protection of the historical urban fabric and a high-quality public realm. For this to be achieved, a FBC should regulate all building activities in a certain determined area which is defined in the Planning and Subdivision Act 2010 as Secondary Plans, defining typology, materials, scale and / or other design criteria, especially regarding heritage. Additionally, the following elements shall be defined in the FBC:



- Alignment of streets and building lines;
- Highest permitted occupancy and building indexes or Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR) of the building lot;
- Maximum permitted number of floors and height of the buildings;
- Minimum permitted distance between buildings

The following element can be defined optionally in the FBC:

- Requirements for connection to public utility and other infrastructure;
- Requirements for the protection of adjacent buildings;
- Architectural and aesthetic shaping of certain building elements (materials, facades, roofs and the like);
- Requirements for environmental protection and technical, hygienic, fire safety, general safety and other requirements;
- Special requirements for the construction of buildings.

As maintaining the historical ensemble of downtown and protecting certain buildings is highly recommended, the built form of new developments are of strong concern. Hence, a Form-Based Code (FBC) for the downtown area and especially for the Waterfront developments area is needed, with clear regulations for new developments and remodelling. The mentioned projects under chapter 5 seek to rehabilitate Downtown Nassau as an inclusive, liveable place for everybody. In order to ensure the implementation of the entire renovation strategy there is a need for norms and regulations as well as robust public management strategies and detailed timelines.

## 6.2 A new Urban Management Structure

Based on the upgraded legal framework of the Planning and Subdivision Act, a new urban management structure will be necessary to implement the urban projects described in this plan. The Emerging and Sustainable Cities Action Plan for Nassau will conduct a systematic assessment of institution-

al options for the design of an urban development agency for New Providence, with a centred emphasis in the sustainable urban development of Nassau, based on best international practices. The assessment will take into account the current competencies of the Central Government, public utility enterprises, as well as the potential contribution of non-governmental organizations and private corporations, along with a comprehensive review of the legal framework for territorial and urban planning in The Bahamas.





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## Figures

Figure-ground plan of central Nassau and Grants Town / UDL, 2016

Areal view Nassau / Ramón Zamora, 2015

Grants Town / Ramón Zamora, 2015

Historic image children on bicycle / Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

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Community leader Valentino 'Scrooge' Brown / Roland Krebs, 2015

Key Key Tong, owner of the supermarket on East Street / Roland Krebs, 2015

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Participatory workshop with members of Government and students of COB / Ramón Zamora, 2015

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St. Andrew's Presbyterian Kirk / Ramón Zamora, 2015

Downtown Nassau Bay Street, Parliament Square / Ramón Zamora, 2015  
 View on Downtown Nassau / Ramón Zamora, 2015  
 Bay Street as an important tourist destination / Ramón Zamora, 2015  
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 Cruise terminal / Ramón Zamora, 2015  
 Cruiseship passengers / Ramón Zamora, 2015  
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 Picturesque view on Straw Market / Ramón Zamora, 2015  
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 Commercial Downtown at East Bay Street / Ramón Zamora, 2015  
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Figure-ground map / UDL, 2016  
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 Map Building heights / UDL, 2016  
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 Workshop School on Market Street / UDL based on UTV, 2016  
 Application of Urban Norms along the Eco-Corridors / UDL based on UTV, 2016  
 Areal view of Downtown Nassau / Ramón Zamora, 2015



# ANNEX





## ESCI NASSAU, BAHAMAS // NASSAU URBAN LAB

### Urban Regeneration of Nassau Downtown and Over-the-Hill

#### Minutes of the Interviews and Workshops from September 22<sup>nd</sup> to October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015

The Government of The Bahamas (GoBH), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the College of The Bahamas (COB), and the Vienna University of Technology (UTV) convened the Urban Design Lab (UDL) in Nassau in order to deploy participative methodologies that allow for the integration of residents' visions in the formation of proposals for neighbourhood revitalization. The target groups for the workshops were:

- Staff from the Department of Physical Planning, urban planners, urbanists, architects and other specialists and key actors in the city.
- Staff from the Government of The Bahamas
- Community leaders, residents, neighbours and interested parties
- Key actors of Nassau's Creative City Program

The UDL is a dialogue-orientated planning and design methodology, which will define key activities for an urban Nassau in the framework of IDB's Emerging and Sustainable Cities Initiative (ESCI).

The first step of this dialogue-oriented planning methodology was a series of planning workshops in the week of October 5, 2015. Prior to the workshop week, urban specialists conducted interviews with key-stakeholders. The UDL, which was developed by the University of Technology in Vienna and the ESCI team in the last two years, will conduct several workshops with the communities in central Nassau.

In four core-activities, urban specialists worked with the communities on the following topics / questions:

- vision about the place
- participatory SWOT analysis
- urban scenarios
- cartography of perception

In focus groups prior to the workshop week, urban specialists conducted interviews and research (mapping) in the specific areas of the city, which the community considered interesting (for example: East Bay Street and Grants Town). The result of the workshop week is a "preliminary urban strategy" of the proposed planning area. This product will be the basis for an academic workshop to be held between the 4th - 12th of November in Nassau in cooperation with UTV and COB.

Prior to the mission, two young professionals prepared the workshops by conducting interviews with stakeholders, drawing stakeholder maps, and organizing the workshop (invitations, finding a venue for the workshop, etc.).

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#### Project Team

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Vienna, Austria on November 1, 2015

#### Annex – List of attendance

## 1 Summary of the Preparatory Studies

The implementation of the Emerging and Sustainable Cities Initiative in The Bahamas takes place in the City of Nassau in New Providence, the main island of The Bahamas. The Island, with an extension of 207 km<sup>2</sup>, is practically fully urbanized. The main and capital city of The Bahamas is Nassau with approximately 250,000 inhabitants (2010). At first glance, the city is characterized by functional and spatial segregation of social classes and uses. The density of inhabitants on the island seems to be rather low, and in the last few years the gap between lower and upper middle class has become much more visible. The local economy is mostly based on the tourism industry.

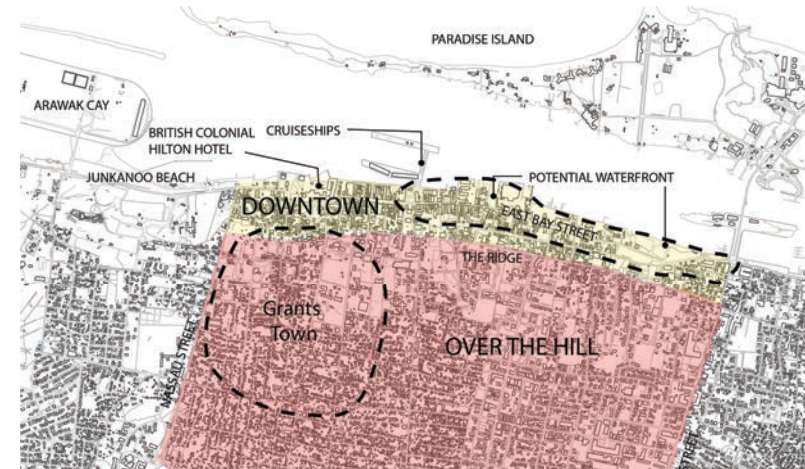
### 1.1 A rough sketch of the Downtown area and Over-the-Hill

The main urban core of Nassau is Downtown Nassau located in the northeast of the island; Downtown generally refers to the area from Nassau Street to Mackey Street, and is limited by “the hill”, a natural ridge delimitation. Downtown Nassau is characterized by the location of several government buildings, such as Parliament and Government House; the British Colonial Hilton Hotel; the cruise ship port; and East Bay Street, the main shopping street in Nassau.

Bay Street is a busy commercial street during the day, offering mostly luxury items like watches and diamonds, but also textiles and cheap souvenir shops. Most activity occurs from the Hilton until Elisabeth Street (“Bacardi Bar”), followed by a completely run-down stretch of downtown with a lot of vacancies. The building heights are approximately 2-3 stories on Bay Street, and these decrease as one continues into the eastern part of the city (reaching IDB House). The street loses the “urban” feel after the Sidney Poitier Bridge and Mackey Street. We observe that almost every building is vacant on East Bay Street starting from ‘Bacardi’, with only some office buildings in use. The upper floors of the former residential buildings are vacant as well. On the North side of the street we observe that there used to be a commercial port, with several wharfs/docks, which was moved west of Downtown to Arawak Cay in 2011. Some people say the urban decay of Bay Street was fallout from the relocation of the port. Others say that the conversion of Bay Street into a two-lane unidirectional road lead to this decay. Bay Street used to be a two-way road, until Atlantis, the popular Paradise Island Resort located across the Sidney Poitier Bridge, demanded improved (i.e., speedy) access for guests from the airport to the resort. Now, the waterfront is 100% vacant. These waterfront properties are held in the hands of two or three families, but a few still belong to the Crown.

Many professionals talk about the “Nassau Harbour and Bay Street Renaissance Program”, a strategic master plan drafted by the design company EDAW – now AECOM, a global design and consultancy office (see <http://www.aecom.com>). This plan, launched in 2006, is a strategic plan of the downtown area, yet it lacks a detailed urban design of the specific planning areas. Due to the

changes in the urban fabric in downtown Nassau, the current Hilton Development project, and the recent development of Arawak Cay as a container port, this plan has become obsolete and needs a complete upgrade. The plan’s design which includes an ‘urban’ waterfront with 4-story buildings is questionable, but the core idea of incorporating the waterfront into the city development seems to be the right decision.



Map: The local situation of Downtown Nassau, Over-the-Hill, Grants Town and East Bay Street.

Source: R. Krebs, 2015

Over-the-Hill is an area which is literally located ‘Over-the-Hill’, meaning over the ridge which rises behind on the southern edge of downtown Nassau. This area is completely different from downtown Nassau, as it is a more residential area, with Grants Town and Bain Town as its main centralities.

The low-income inhabitants characterize the area now; the people in Nassau refer to it as ‘Ghetto’. The central functions besides ‘residential’ are located at Blue Hill Road. We did not have the chance to visit more areas of ‘Over-the-Hill’ other than Grants Town.

Urban Planner Amos Ferguson refers to this area as critically in need of intervention. Buildings are very run-down and lack basic infrastructure like water and sanitation. There is no public space; I observed a lot of vacant land, but no squares or plazas or public spaces where people could gather. It appears to be a socio-economically segregated area where no one goes except locals.



But, Grants Town has a rich history. The largest concentration of Africans historically lived in the "Over-the-Hill" suburbs of Grants Town and Bain Town to the south of the city of Nassau, while most of the inhabitants of European descent lived on the island's northern coastal ridges (Wikipedia 2015). Until about 30 years ago this area was the most populous part of the city.

## 1.2 SWOT- Analysis and urban scenarios

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<b>PUBLIC SPACE</b>	Beaches +3 Cruise port basketball court (Hay Street) Malcolm Park Existing playing field Designated park areas Potential green spaces (Shirley Street)	Lack of (green) public spaces (Downtown, Grants Town) +6 Nodes can be better utilized (roundabouts/plazas) Lack of parks with shading No continuous coast / board walk +1 No side walks No recreational places +2 The waterfront is not entirely accessible Centralities sea is a backdoor and an unattractive zone to stay no parks for children
<b>MOBILITY</b> (location/ transport / walkability)	Road network / grid Side walks Central of Public Transportation Centrally located Center of government	Lack of reliable public transportation (no bus schedule, no bus stations, bus service stops at 6pm > impacts people's ability to work) +8 No bus terminal +2 Lack of abundant inter-island transportation Traffic congestion +10 Parking issues +7 No bike lanes +1 Lack of way finding / signage +1 Over reliance on cars Limited accessibility from "Over-the-Hill's" communities to Downtown Nassau lack of pedestrian space Width of street +2

		Downtown area is clustered No disability consideration <i>Getting a taxi in the evening</i> Lack of sidewalks – poor walkability +3 No fixed taxi rates
<b>URBAN (RE-)DEVELOPMENT</b>	Existing Downtown development initiatives Graycliff Downtown Development +1 Potential for redevelopment (e.g. East Bay Street) +2 Charlestown revaluation and renovation of Nassau	No apartments to rent Vacant and deteriorated buildings Downtown (particularly on East Bay Street) +8 Not attractive for Bahamians to live Downtown +1 Low density Downtown +1 Lack of housing opportunities Downtown +11 Lack of mixed use Downtown +1 High rents / property prices +1 Lack of organization in Grants Town no urban development or zoning plan, no planning policies +6 Housing in the 'Over-the-Hill' area needs upgrading +1 no vision for the future urban development of Nassau Nassau is missing centralities Missing linkage to the 'Over-the-Hill' community (Segregation Downtown & Grants Town)
<b>HERITAGE VALUE OF BUILDINGS</b>	Downtown – area of historical architecture +2 Caribbean-Style Architecture Historic architectural landmarks of cultural interest +4 Colonial architecture +2 historic structures on Dowdeswell Street Grants Town as center of the community (families identity and history) Highest concentration of churches	Old colonial structures

	Intact historical buildings +1	
<b>IMAGE OF THE CITY</b>	<p>Reputation</p> <p>Proximity to other Caribbean countries</p> <p>Beaches Downtown</p> <p>Open green spaces Arawak Cay / Clifford Park</p>	<p>Fake town - souvenir shops</p> <p>No Caribbean feel</p> <p>No identity or specific cultural branding (apart from beaches and the Atlantis Hotel) +5</p> <p>No specific branding to distinguish from other Caribbean countries</p>
<b>ECOLOGICAL DIMENSION</b>	<p>water front +2</p> <p>beautiful sea</p> <p>Potters Cay</p> <p>Natural beauty</p> <p>Attractive view</p> <p>Ocean access</p>	<p>Heat +2</p> <p>Lack of trees and green spaces +1</p> <p>Fast flooding</p> <p>Noise and air pollution +3</p> <p>Sanitation</p> <p>Lack of drainage +4</p> <p>Lack of landscape</p> <p>Garbage (need for beautification in community) +1</p>
<b>SECURITY AND THE SOCIAL DIMENSION</b>	<p>Strong community</p> <p>Police visibility</p>	<p>Lots of tourists increase potential for violence</p> <p>Illegal activities like drug traffic +1</p> <p>Poor lighting</p> <p>Dirty, broken down buildings +1</p> <p>Downtown Paul's Alley</p> <p>Grants Town – dirty / congested / crime</p> <p>Perception of (personal) "insecurity" in Nassau / negative stigma +3</p> <p>Homeless people</p> <p>Population density</p> <p>security / crime issues +5</p>
<b>ECONOMIC DIMENSION</b>	<p>Self-sustaining economy</p> <p>Small businesses</p> <p>Lots of tourists</p> <p>Central businesses</p> <p>Cruise ships</p>	<p>Business model of the cruise industry (cheap / transient)</p> <p>Souvenir shops in Bay Street</p> <p>High cost of renting +1</p> <p>Too commercialized</p>

	<p>Spontaneous job offers</p> <p>Quick jobs</p> <p>Tourist attractions (but too commercial)</p> <p>Extravagant night life</p> <p>Potential of redevelopment (Bay Street)</p> <p>Port – economic motor</p> <p>Economic activity at the Straw Market and Surroundings</p>	<p>Tourists don't spend much.</p> <p>Little to no activity</p> <p>Not enough local businesses</p> <p>Too many jewelry stores</p> <p>Too geared for tourists</p> <p>No attraction</p> <p>daily tourists staying shortly</p> <p>offices moving out</p> <p>Downtown is dead after 6pm - "9-5 city" economic activity with limited night life +3</p> <p>poverty / unemployment (especially among young men)</p> <p>Retail streets do not work in a one way direction</p> <p>Poor economic situation +4</p>
<b>CULTURE</b>	<p>Nassau is filled with history, architecture and most important with culture +3</p> <p>Cultural landmarks</p> <p>Fish Market</p> <p>Artistic Opportunities</p> <p>Museums (National Art Gallery, Junkanoo Museum, Pompey Museum) +5</p> <p>Tradition of Junkanoo culture +1</p> <p>Historic Area (Grants Town)</p> <p>Variety of cultural expos – Straw Market, Souvenir Shops +3</p> <p>Cultural Centers</p> <p>Show Casing of Bahamian Culture</p> <p>Local Bahamian Delights +1</p> <p>Creative Nassau +4</p> <p>Art Galleries (Popop Studio, National Art Gallery) +1</p> <p>Traditional arts &amp; crafts</p> <p>Historic churches</p>	<p><b>GASTRONOMY</b></p> <p>Lack of food places</p> <p>Downtown is not interactive</p> <p>No activities at night</p> <p>No entertainment</p> <p>No nice restaurants</p> <p>No representation of Bahamian Culture</p>



	<b>GASTRONOMY / FOOD</b> Organic food in the island Potters Cay - 'market' under the bridge with small vendors (very vibrant space) +2 Culture of food +2 Fish Fry Night life	
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### 1.3 Social Mapping / Cartography of Perception – overall area

Summarizing this activity, it seems obvious that there is a clear break in the perception of the neighborhood to this community. Most of the green points (makes me happy) are concentrated in the northwestern part of Nassau, starting from the cruise ship dock continuing to Junkanoo Beach. The places that make people happy also continue south of Bay Street in the Charlestown area, where the National Art Gallery of Bahamas (NAGB) is located. A few green points can also be found on Paradise Island – Atlantis Hotel. The NAGB, the Straw Market, the Pirates Museum and the pedestrian zone next to it as well as the Hillside House Studio are perceived as interesting places.

On the other hand, the part northeast of the cruise ship dock along East Bay Street has most of the orange dots. Another concentration of orange dots can be found on Potters Cay, situated underneath the Eastern bridge to Paradise Island. Other places that make people sad are situated across 'Over-the-Hill' and especially Grants Town.

In response to the question of where to intervene to bring about an improvement in the neighborhood, people proposed to improve the 'dead' part of East Bay Street with a lot of abandoned and vacant buildings and its surroundings but also again the area on Potters Cay. Several yellow points of potential interventions are located across Grants Town.



Figure 1. Social mapping – Nassau. Source. UTV, 2015.

### 1.4 Cartography of Perception – Lewis and Hay Street – Over-the-Hill

Summarizing this activity, most of the green points (makes me happy) are concentrated on Hay Street at the basketball court as well as a few other places like Scrooge's community centre, Marcus Garvey and Martin Luther King House (two historically relevant buildings) but also on the vacant lot (former 'Silver Slipper' on East Street next to the Chinese supermarket where the community also sees a lot of potential for an intervention (yellow dots). Another place that makes people happy is Slime's graffiti studio and the Wall of Respect also located on East Street.

On the other hand, most of the orange dots (makes me sad) can be found on Lewis Street across the community centre on a vacant, abandoned lot that cannot be used for community activities. Other spots that make the community sad are punctually spread over Grants Town marking the places full of rubbish.

In response to the question of where to intervene to bring about an improvement in the neighborhood, people proposed to improve the community centre (on the corner of Lewis and Comfort Street) as well as to intervene on the abandoned and vacant lots across Grants Town, e.g. on the corner of East and Lewis Street.



Figure 2. Cartography of Perception – Grant's Town. Source: UTV, 2015.

### 1.5 Urban Scenarios (emerging topics)

#### EAST BAY STREET | DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

- Creating a linkage between Downtown and 'Over-the-Hill' +2
- Student common center
- Creating mixed use/residential buildings Downtown (not exclusive or gated) +2
- Attracting people to Downtown by lowering cost of properties, to encourage rehabilitation
- Bringing academic institutions to Downtown (shipping – union wharf)

#### GRANT'S TOWN

- Improving the existing community center on Lewis Street
- Creating a training center to keep people busy and off the streets

#### CULTURE AND ARTS

- creating experiences 'up the hill' with the group of Historic Charlestown
- fostering Nassau's potential as an artistic place with handcrafted goods from the Bahamas
- incentivitation of creative hubs all over Downtown as hotspots +1
- need for traditional Bahamian food places
- promoting more music in the streets every evening, more entertainment for the Bahamians, more traditional food and restaurants
- attracting people by creating cultural points of interest, e.g. theaters, museums, libraries +2
- Encourage selling cultural crafts in market places and streets
- Organizing creative events

#### LOCAL ECONOMY

- Create activities for tourist as well as residents, e.g. aquarium, water park, national park, entertaining area, outdoor cafes,... +1
- Creating a more 'urban' experience for young people
- Extend the Fish Fry or incentivize other restaurants, bars, nice marinas,... (creating more jobs)

#### RULES, REGULATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

- Building planning policies and legislation
- Improve access to updated maps
- Creating a zoning plan
- Defining transparent planning guidelines decided by all stakeholders
- Regulation - noise ordinances, sanitation,...

#### PUBLIC SPACE

- need of well shaded public spaces (e.g. Pompey Square) +1
- developing the water front by building the boardwalk from East Bay Street to Bay Street. +5
- create more green spaces and playgrounds appealing to children
- improving urban furniture, e.g. implementing spray cooling systems
- creating a more lively and vibrant waterfront (e.g. cooperating with music)
- Active and maybe temporarily used plazas and squares +1
- Prioritizing green areas and the planting of trees



- Transforming Potters Cay into a farmers market

#### **TOURISM | ACTIVITIES IN THE CITY**

- need of new branding of the Bahamas promoting its specific identity
- fostering the unknown identity of Nassau
- Encourage sports bars – to bring more activity for people
- City in motion – foster recreation, movies, restaurants,...
- Offering sports facilities in the city

#### **MOBILITY**

- Traffic calming and traffic management
- Implementing a bus service around the whole island to make more jobs possible
- Improving public transportation to reduce the congestion on Bay Street +1
- Create parking spaces +1
- Creating bike lanes and fostering bike use (showers in buildings) +2
- Combining multiple modes of transportation / mobility in the area – center not accessible to cars (Park&Ride) +3
- Define parking lots and policies for parking to discourage the use of cars, e.g. free parking outside of Downtown
- Improve accessibility for pedestrians and increase walkability creating better sidewalks +5
- Need for better street signage
- Trollies (old fashioned wood like San Fan.)

#### **HERITAGE**

- Sensitivity to architecture (historical preservation) +2

#### **HOUSING**

- Building affordable housing for young families +3
- Building a community shelter (emergency housing/apartment)

#### **IMPROVEMENT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD**

- Suggestion for Urban renewal programs > 'Over-the-Hill'

- redeveloping and upgrading the area to be more attractive for tourists wanting to see the 'real' Nassau.
- Environment – improve drainage, redirect drainage to water feater
- Cleanup (communities) beautification
- building a community pool
- creating a multi use arena for different kinds of cultural / sports activities and events

## **2 Interviews with the stakeholders**

### **2.1 Methodology for the interviews**

The stakeholders have been asked the following questions:

#### **General**

- *How do you imagine Downtown in 10 years?*
- *What are the challenges Downtown Nassau is facing currently?*
- *What and how has Downtown changed in the last few years?*
- *Where are socially and environmentally vulnerable areas in Downtown?*
- *◦ Grant's Town? What specific needs do they have? (housing needs?)*
- *◦ Is the part of the city growing?*
- *◦ are there any centralities in this part? (a church, market, school,...)*
- *Which projects have been conducted by the government? Are they still visible or why did they fail?*
- *Is there any public space without need to consume in Downtown Nassau or Grant's Town?*
- *Can you name traditional neighborhoods in Grant's Town or Downtown?*
- *What kind of role has culture, music and art in these neighborhoods?*

#### **Creative City**

- *What does the UNESCO Creative City designation mean to Nassau?*
- *Where is the 'Creative City'?*
- *How do you imagine a 'Creative City'?*
- *Where do you see the potential for Nassau?*
- *Who is working in the creative city?*
- *How do you think the Creative City program will influence the development of the city?*

## 2.2 Nicola Virgill-Rolle

*Interview conducted on the 22nd of September, 2015, Office of the Prime Minister (OPM - Director of Financial Services), Samantha Rolle (OPM) and Michelle Evans (IDB).*

According to Dr. Virgill-Rolle, the area between Bay Street and Shirley Street from Elizabeth Avenue to Hall Lane is dead with almost no activity, whereas on Shirley Street side there is some activity. However, the area where the cruise ships dock is an area with a lot of activity and congestion.

The major bus terminal for Downtown used to be next to the cruise ship docks but was moved near the corner of Bay Street and Victoria Avenue, not a specific terminal but only a lane for busses to stop.

The area around Charlotte Street and Bay Street from the British Colonial Hilton Hotel to Parliament Street is a very well preserved area with lots of activities for tourists as well as locals (Straw Market, restaurants, stores,...) but only until 8p.m. During the week, it gets quiet around 8p.m., from Wednesday to Sunday there is quite a lot going on in this specific area. Even around the cruise ship area there are some cafes that are very active on Fridays and Saturdays, there is also a club there. The back area facing the cruise ship dock is a lot more active in comparison to the front side of Bay Street. That's why the boardwalk that is going to be built between the Green Parrots Restaurant near by the bridge and the Sushi Restaurant (Elizabeth Ave.) needs to be linked up.

The reason for Downtown being a lifeless area are the malls that have been built outside the city center but also parking issues. Most of the parking in Downtown is for taxis. The call up system used to work better. There is no reason to come Downtown for retail for Bahamians as all stores went to the malls. Tourists just stay for a couple of hours and take a cab over the bridge or a ferry to Atlantis. Some will also go to Junkanoo Beach on the West Side of the cruise docks which is the nearest beach to Downtown that is publicly accessible. Some tourists will also go to the Fish Fry or the Fort. There are no activities to do, no parks for children. Tourists will either go beaching or to the water park on Paradise Island. The waterfront is not entirely accessible as it is blocked by private property.

Other important topics are:

- The major shipping area used to be near the Green Parrot Restaurant, a lots of shipping companies were there but are now vacant with fences around them.
- Over-the-Hill expands between East and West Street with a higher level of density of housing.

- Charlestown (at the top of the hill) and Graycliffe are two good examples for the revaluation and renovation of Nassau.
- The main axes in the city are defined by Bay Street, Shirley Street, East Street (goes all across the island), Collins Avenue (shopping and medical district), Baillou Hill Road, Market Street and Nassau Street.

### The main challenges of Nassau

- *daily tourists staying shortly*
- *lack of public transportation (bus stops driving at 6p.m., getting a taxi in the evening, no bus schedule > impacts people's ability to work)*
- *security / crime issues (a lot more policemen posted in Downtown now)*
- *poverty / unemployment (especially among young men)*
- *Housing in the 'Over-the-Hill' area needs upgraded*
- *There is a lot of commerce, businesses, apartment structures, and abandoned buildings. The government is looking up to fixing up places to write off the property tax, if there are investing in paint.*

### Dr. Rolle's vision of Downtown in 10 years

- *a mixture of living space (heights up to 3-4 floors)*
- *parking*
- *more city experience for young people*
- *Activities for tourist as for residents*
- *Boardwalk experience*
- *Traditional Bahamian food places*
- *More lively and vibrant waterfront (cooperating with music)*
- *Active and maybe temporarily used Plazas and squares*
- *Suggestion for Urban renewal programs > Over-the-Hill*

There was the idea of a new tram and bus system, years ago, to reduce the congestion on Bay Street. The government is spending a lot of money on parking. There are no squares that are used (Pompey Square – Rawson Square only for special government activities). One of the few public places is the "park" nearby the restaurant 'Green Parrot'. People meet there for e.g. exercising. As Nassau is missing centralities, Downtown definitely needs variety, lots of different activities (cinema, theatre,...) as it was in the 1990's when Downtown used to be a very livable and vibrant area.



Under the eastern bridge to Atlantis is “Potters Cay” - the fish market with small vendors which is a very vibrant space. Although it is not the cleanest place and has no infrastructure, there are still some cultural Junkanoo activities taking place.

As many students leave the Bahamas to study abroad, they get used to the urban feeling. When they come back, they are looking for the same experience, which is nonexistent in Nassau.

#### Creative City

Dr. Rolle sees Nassau’s potential as an artistic place with handcrafted goods from the Bahamas and its potential as a lively hood. She also states that it is time to rethink and take time to enjoy art for tourist and residents. Linking “dead downtown” with a major hub, Straw Market and the Graycliffe area is seen as very important.

#### Suggested planning area:

- Nassau Street (carnival route-festival-tourism)
- Dead Bay Street

### 2.3 Anthony Jervis

*Interview conducted on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September, 2015. Tony is architect and preservation specialist,* Anthony says that there still was and is no urban development plan and it will be very difficult to change something in the next few years in downtown. There are a lot of studies of downtown, but nothing was realised, it’s a real challenge to implement the ideas. The most important study is the EDAW study for the Harbour in the mid-2000s: ‘Nassau Harbour and Bay Street Renaissance Program’ (EDAW, 2006). This plan was also never implemented, but is broadly discussed still to this day.

The city of Nassau is designated from Mackey Street to the Forth Charlotte, all on the side of government house and National Art Gallery of Bahamas (NAGB) is considered and the land at the east side of Downtown belongs to the private property-this area is completely lifeless. The area on the eastern side needs a complete overhaul.

Vendors around Potters Cay need a lot of work and it needs a plan for development. Nowadays the sea is a backdoor and an unattractive zone to stay, traditionally the reason was hurricanes and the transportation of goods through the backdoor. Today circulates a plan about building a boardwalk at the seaside, but this could be a challenge because of the private property.

Most areas in downtown are not created for the residents-its more for the tourists (American tourists concept: t-shirt + jewellery). The products are about 80% from china, whereas rarely local products are sold.

There is no centrality or public space in whole downtown. The Bahamians tend to watch TV in the evening, the only meeting point is during the day in their religion houses. If you look at Over-the-Hill, it’s a huge difference between the developing Chinese project next to the Hilton and the historical grown structure of poor families. As the population in Over-the-Hill has changed, people died out and suddenly it ends up as vacant, it has become “home” for selling drugs etc.

#### Creative City

Anthony believes that the topic of culture is a good one for revitalizing Downtown to attract people by crafts and arts from their own country, but it will be a challenge to begin the movements and the changing of Nassau.

#### The main challenges of Nassau

- Parking
- Public transport
- Traffic
- Tourism
- Affordable housing
- Green space
- Concept of cheap sub division-low income
- Economy
- Identity
- Presenting of Bahamian Culture

#### Anthony Jervis' vision of Downtown in 10 years

“Its going down! The problem why it is going down: it seems to be that there is no will and there is no one being successful in selling and marketing. It needs a reason that people come to Downtown (shopping, food, etc.). So what is the reason to get the Bahamians into Downtown?”

#### References

*Jackson Burnside Studies*

*UN Habitat Manila, Curitiba*

### 2.4 Alexiou and Associates

Interview conducted on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, 2015. Michael Alexiou, Architect, A. Conway Smith, Architect, Chris Jackson, Architect

Michael Alexiou says that the city, Downtown, is dead after 6pm, most city with a wonderful waterfront are actively going to a realisation. The living environment will basically drive the redevelopment of this area and to create vibrant places. There is no urban development plan and it needs a lot of work to be done to change something in the next few years in downtown. There are also a lot of studies for downtown, but nothing was implemented, like the EDAW Plan. EDAW Plan: They came up with this study and paid a lot of money for it- just conceptual.

The “new part” of East Bay Street to the bridge needs “regulated heights”. There is no existing zoning plan. They did a redevelopment plan for the downtown area and tried to build mixed use buildings in the downtown area. But to get to anyone that gives you the rights for 20 stories- (right now 4 floors) is very difficult. The Bahamians are scared of scale, because of the heritage (British colonial-Victorian architecture). Mr. Alexiou thinks it's better, that the normal height is four floors, on the base, and then go on the middle up to 20 floors. So when you walk in the scale of the base, it will be the same scale as the buildings in the surroundings. But they also think that the zoning plan will be just three to four floors. There was a decision on all heights on the Bay Street.

They are waiting to see what the solution of this area for the development will be. It's not the decision of the Department of Physical Planning; it's the decision of the government. The Department of Physical Planning is afraid, because they have to design a new source system and new infrastructure. But they don't have the money for that.

“What if the Chinese comes and say we can do this and do the whole planning on Bay Street? What are the Chinese going to do? They do whatever they want”. The Downtown Nassau Renewal group wants to build a boardwalk in the front of the private property on the east side of Bay Street. Jackson says that would be a little bit difficult because some people don't like to have it in front of their buildings. It would be a national interest to have it but it seems difficult because of private properties. The private have also their own interest and they want to protect that.

Retail doesn't work in a one way direction and that's the reason it is not working Bay Street, it is a one way environment.

#### Change in the last few years

40 years ago, there was a very beautiful old town,. People lived there, everyone was on the street, the shops were busy. Then people started to move out, businesses started to move out too. The traffic congestion started, shipping, busses (where actually were one or two busses, became more busses), many cars, old houses. 1968 the first government came in. It was the first change from the British to the maturity rule, which is a good thing, because if didn't would happened they would be social unrest. But nobody cared about the tradition and the old culture, so no one cared about the colonial buildings and architecture. There is no preservation at all. Nassau has lost a lot

of heritage buildings. Instead, the island became full of suburbia and malls. There have been a lot of changes, some of them good, but mostly not. A good decision is e.g. the bridge to Paradise Island.

Over-the-Hill: Is full of old plantations and the slavery was a polished, the owners gave a piece of land to the slaves. There is a kind of developed on the main streets (East Street, Balliou Hill Road,...), but around these streets it's just sprawl. The Connection from Over-the-Hill to downtown very important, but there are real difficulties how to do it?! Because as you know, you come from the town, it is a pretty high hill and these where all the old colonial poverties. Link it together, define ave. the EDAW Report does talk about it. Most of the people who try to make plans the Bahamas, they all seem to be concerned with this.

The area Over-the-Hill is not growing anymore, it is probably got this max size. It's not growing because no one is willing to do a proper development. There wasn't water there about 20 years ago. Some people still go to the font. One family of Over-the-Hill had a pineapple farm, they started to sell it and they began to build the roads. So people started to move out and the house started to be a shop with cars in the front.

The dead Bay Street is owned by 3-4 families, mostly old white (that had controlled everything) like the Bethel family. Downtown was the economic heart of the Bahamas and it was controlled by these 3-4 white families. Then, they build the cargo harbour at Arawak Cay, they relocated, but they have still their land at downtown. And the government has no money to do anything, but that doesn't mean that they can't define the zoning plan.

Now in downtown: the shops left and the area becomes completely abandoned with very bad architecture. Maybe we can find some pieces there and there are pieces where somebody could buy or subsidy - to build some low income housing that the people live here again, there are some shops and restaurants- it can become a living city again. Right now it is just an area for drunk people on weekends.

Lyford Cay does create a huge economic impact, because the people who have there a house, there are not just coming for one night, they are staying for a couple of months and leave their money in the Bahamas, but they are also here for tax reasons. They are creating a lot of jobs! The problem is that these areas are behind gates, it's like two different worlds on one island.

#### The main challenges of Nassau

- Centralities
- Politics, bad government
- Retail streets do not work in a one way direction



- Economy
- Employment
- Poverty
- socio economic
- poor planning
- Car issue
- Traffic congestion
- offices moving out
- No planning for parking
- Environment
- Infrastructure
- Green lungs

#### Alexiou's vision of Downtown in 10 years

"Downtown is ready for development. But how? Boardwalk, maybe linking Over-the-Hill, mixed use, not gated community, not exclusive. Maybe it gets a playground for the elite. Low cost housing, maybe housing for young professionals. The problems for these solutions and the ideas, nobody gets an answer."

#### **2.5 Gevon Moss**

*Interview conducted on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2015. Administrator at Downtown Nassau Partnership (DNP)*

The main challenges are a lack of development on the east side. The No.1 issue is the area between East Street and Nassau Street, it needs to be "repaired". Gevon is convinced that the EDAW plan is a fantastic study and his office has been using it as a platform for their projects.

Nassau has developed well in the last few years, it centrality has improved. They built some new venues, Pompey Square, Rawson Square, harbour place and more pedestrian zones. But there is still no urban growth in downtown. The only centralities are Pompey and Rawson square. A new place for the residents and tourists should be the already desired boardwalk from East Bay Street to Bay Street. The traffic at the Bay Street is also a main subject. His office has suggested a shuttle system which would depot all people of the outskirts that loop around the city, to relieve the traffic. He also proposes free parking outside of Downtown.

#### Creative city

He is looking forward to how impactful it is going to be. Before it begins to focus on culture, Downtown has to get clean. Gevon's ideas are e.g. garbage bins, how garbage is collected and sorted. He also says that Downtown can be a great creative city. It could allow a platform for music and art all the time, therefore creating a new identity of Nassau! Maybe the intention should be to spread tourists out everywhere. The problem is that the tourists are always moving in the same quarter. Maybe creating experiences up the hill with the group of Charlestown to get people up to Over-the-Hill could be a good point to start. They are trying to connect Over-the-Hill and downtown, for tourists and residents. Nowadays, People are staying at home mostly because of the crime at night-time, especially Downtown.

#### The main challenges of Nassau

- Parking availability
- public transportation
- socially and environmentally vulnerable areas
- Housing needs in downtown
- House upgrading in 'Over-the-Hill'
- Crime
- most challenged area: 'Over-the-Hill'

#### Gevon Moss' vision of Downtown in 10 years

"Downtown should become a living city with different people who can afford to live there. Some could be high end and some affordable housing." Connection to 'Over-the-Hill' – there should be some activities to get the people to Downtown"

#### **2.6 Amanda Coulson**

*Interview conducted on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 2015. Director of the National Art Gallery of the Bahamas (NAGB)*

#### The main challenges of Nassau

- Traffic
- Lack of sidewalks
- Parking issues
- No decent bus service or public transport
- No relationship to the city because of poor walkability
- Lack of regular signage
- No identity or specific cultural branding apart from beaches and the Atlantis Hotel

#### Amanda Coulson's vision of Downtown in 10 years

- More accessible to pedestrians and public transport
- Center – not accessible to private cars (Park&Ride)
- Better sidewalks
- Traffic calming and traffic management
- Development of the water front
- Nice affordable housing for middle class Bahamian families

As there is a natural tendency of the Bahamian to be cool, shaded and wants to be air conditioned and driven everywhere, there is a need of well shaded public spaces – no Bahamian would use e.g. Pompey Square in the day or building traditional architecture with porches around the house. In the past, Downtown used to be a very lively and vibrant area with a lot of shops, but nowadays Bahamians go to malls. Past 6 o'clock there aren't a lot of things that are open or that you could go to in the evening although there used to be a lot of bars and clubs Downtown in the past.

A lot of young Bahamians are looking for affordable housing right now which would bring people back Downtown. A lot of hotels are being development, but nothing for the residents. Amanda Coulson states she would also love to live Downtown.

#### Creative City

Amanda Coulson states that culture is a major motor to helping redevelop Downtown. There are already quite a few art projects in Nassau, but certainly more needs to be done as it seems that now hotels have sucked up all the entertainment.

There are a few art projects going on in the city right now. There is the NAGB (National Art Gallery of Bahamas) but there is also Antonius Roberts with the Hillside House Studio and the D'Aguilar Art Foundation with different events in the evening attracting people to Downtown again. Concerning the Creative City, there are also some events in Pompey Square, e.g. musical events and the weekly arts and crafts market selling traditional Bahamian products. Since Nassau was designated as Creative City for its traditional arts and crafts – handing down traditional knowledge as Junkanoo and the art of straw making, it has been very helpful for the museum as it raises the profile of the city, puts the city into a network as they have been invited to other cities now, e.g. Beijing.

Amanda believes that there is a need to implement more cultural activities and museums Downtown, as the NAGB is the only museum besides the slave and pirate museum. It puts a lot of pressure on the NAGB as the space to display art is very limited.

The potential of the Creative City and Nassau's extremely creative community from Amanda's point of view is creating employment and a professional class to work in a museum such as technicians and curators. It also contributes to the city as authentic Bahamian music, arts and crafts could be advertised.

#### Image of the Bahamas

Speaking about the missing Bahamian identity, Amanda Coulson personally believes that Downtown should e.g. have only a certain kind of signage. She compares it to the 'Galleria' in Milan, where shops are only allowed to have their signage and logo only in black and gold. It gives consistency and elegance which she would also propose for Downtown.

There is definitely a need of new branding of the Bahamas promoting its specific identity besides from beaches and the Atlantis hotel as for now there is no marketing for people interested in arts. The Bahamas will never be able to compete in the mass market, but rather on a boutique level as there are a lot of other places with beautiful beaches and palm trees. In addition the Straw Market selling Chinese products does not contribute to a positive branding of the city. There should be certain legislation about the products being sold.

#### Heritage

After independence, there was a rejection of the colonial, traditional and the reminiscent of the past – also in architecture – but it was seen as progress at that time. In the 80s a movement to destroy traditional structures and build concrete houses which is seen as a success by the middle class Bahamian family has taken place. Only now there is a rediscovery of tradition such as the straw culture.

Concerning East Bay Street, the dead part of Downtown, the shipping and old cargo harbor have moved to Arawak Cay about 10 years ago but still until now no new development has happened.

Due to walkability and security issues the linkage to the 'Over-the-Hill' community is missing but focusing attention back on the neighborhood and Nassau's historic center could foster the communities economy by redeveloping and upgrading the area to be more attractive for tourists wanting to see the 'real' Nassau.

Amanda Coulson and her husband Ulrich Voges are very engaged with the community trying to create an outdoor market in 'Over-the-Hill'.

## **2.7 Bruce Stewart and Amos Ferguson**

The interview was conducted on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2015 with *Bruce Stewart Architects* and *Amos Ferguson – Institute of Bahamian Architects and independent architect and urban planner*.



Talking to the Bahamian architects Amos Ferguson and Bruce Stewart, they would suggest taking “Over-the-Hill”, Grant’s Town as a planning area as they state the whole area of Downtown is very questionable because of current studies and developments. Concerning the urban development and planning of the city, multiple studies have been done but none of them really get implemented.

What they believe is missing the most are planning policies and guidelines as well as a vision for the future urban development of the city of Nassau and also the island of New Providence. They argue that the Bahamas haven’t learnt from their mistakes, e.g. the increased traffic flows

Amos Ferguson and Bruce Stewart express concerns in terms of building a board walk mainly because of the private land owners having their marinas in front of their property but also that developers do not have information concerning the rules, e.g. the floor area ratio.

Referring to ‘Over-the-Hill’ Amos has done some basic studies on the area between Collins Avenue, Wulff Road and Nassau Street which used to be the main residential area in the past. He also point out that there have been several studies about ‘Over-the-Hill’, e.g. the Grant’s town Urban Renewal Study and another study from the 1960s by Columbia University.

The main corridors / North-South arteries leading directly to Downtown and a possible linkage of ‘Over-the-Hill’ and Downtown:

- *Market Street*
- *Baillou Hill Road*
- *East Street (crossing the whole island of New Providence)*
- *Collins Avenue (Eastern boundary of ‘Over-the-Hill’)*
- *Wulff Road (Southern boundary of ‘Over-the-Hill’)*
- *Nassau Street (leading directly to Junkanoo Beach)*

Downtown used to be a vibrant place but people started to move away. There were many beautiful, traditional houses but as malls got developed, there were more parking spaces needed. A lot of houses in Downtown used to have retail space on the ground level and living spaces in the upper stories.

There were no transportation issues in the past as boats would dock directly on Bay Street which was the boundary to the sea. What we see today north of Bay Street is all reclaimed land.

#### Bruce Stewart’s and Amos Ferguson’s vision of Downtown in 10 years

- Affordable housing
- Building policies and legislation
- access to updated maps

- zoning plan
- transparent planning guidelines decided by all stakeholders

## 2.8 Michael Major

*Interview conducted on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2015. Director – Department of Physical Planning*

The shipping operations moved from East Bay Street to Arawak Cay which is the new cargo harbour now – a joint venture between the government and private entities. Moving the cargo harbour removed a lot of the congestion from the central Downtown area. There are two parts of Downtown – a vibrant part where the cruise ship dock is and then the dead part on East Bay Street.

The next 10 years could be the same as the past 10 years. If no projects are going to be developed, the area will deteriorate exponentially as the buildings are not occupied. The causes of the dead part of East Bay Street are the shopping malls that were built in the 1980s, but also parking issues. From the planner’s point of view, Michael believes that for the further development of Downtown there is a need of partnerships between the government and private owners. Downtown is not attractive to locals anymore. Though, there is a demand of residential and mixed-used buildings but also more parking spaces. There has been a proposal to pedestrianize Charlotte Street, the small street between Cumberland Road and George Street has already been pedestrianized.

The Government is committed to a policy of exposing the waterfront but the issue concerning the idea of the board walk is that the developers always wanted to build a marina in front of their Bay Street properties but Michael Major states that this problem can be solved. The current height restriction on the water front between West Street and Victoria Avenue, the part of historic Downtown, is 4 stories. Currently the department of physical planning is looking at creating a zoning order, defining planning criteria, increasing the building heights to make them more feasible for developers.

In terms of culture Michael Major mentions the carnival of Junkanoo.

In the past Downtown used to be a very vibrant area with a lot of night clubs, a movie theatre. Recently the Straw Market Authority was created in order to control what is being sold in the Straw Market.

## 2.9 Sheldon Pitt

*The interview was conducted on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, 2015. Sheldon Pitt is Real Estate Specialist at Mario Carey Realty.*

Sheldon says that downtown has lost all his Bahamian clientele. 70% is just for the tourists. In the past the people came from Over-the-Hill to shop, but right now it's really difficult to come downtown for the Bahamians because of the parking situation and the changing of the roads, the bus services are changing, etc. Another big problem is, that the busses stop in the middle of the street; therefore they stop the whole traffic for a couple of minutes. Few years ago Shirley Street was also in both directions, like Nassau Street. Sheldons advice for the traffic problem is to change Bay Street and Shirley Street like the Jervis Street in Toronto. This street changes in different hours. In the morning they have an extra lane going in different directions, because of the traffic flow and in the evening, when you go back uptown, there is an extra lane going out of town.

Maybe there should be a bus service around the whole island to make more jobs possible for the Bahamians, to connect their homes to the workplace-to help people to get a better standard. This public transport should be done right away, says Sheldon convinced. Another possibility is to create "park and rides" in downtown, where you can leave your car and go by bus to your office.

Downtown should have more residents. It's inconvenient-most of the Bahamians are going to the shopping Mall Palmdale and Mall Marathon. To revitalise Downtown they should build the boardwalk and reclaim the waterfront. The water belongs to the government, so it could be possible to connect the already existing boardwalk next to the restaurant Green Parrot to the West Bay Street, or maybe to the fort. Where East Street stops, Downtown stops. All the investment stopped at the east street. The Chinese promised to revitalise the east side of downtown. It's a big topic of the last couple of years. Arawak Cay is displaced because when the tourists come by the cruise ship, they see at first the roasted boxes, maybe there should be the extended fish fry or other restaurants, bars, nice marinas, etc. It would be a nice area for more jobs and the development of downtown.

The entertainment at night is slowly moving back to downtown. Opening the main road at night with bars and restaurants, or shopping at night to get the area more lively, to get more foot traffic would be an option. There are also concepts for Bay Street to stop the traffic and open it just for pedestrians.

The rent in downtown starts at 2000-3000\$ for a very small area at the beginning of the East Bay Street. At Bay Street, the rent is about 18000\$ a month (for around 800 to 1000 sq feet). There are no restrictions for the rents and there is no limit. The owner decides on the price.

Culture is also an important topic, especially for tourism. Sheldon is not happy about the mixing of their Junkanoo with the typical Brazilian carnival.

Over-the-Hill has been neglected. The main roads: East Street, Market Street, Baillou Hill Road, Nassau Street. The connection from Over-the-Hill and downtown was already planned, but the

people are still not coming because there have nowhere to go. There should be maybe more focus on downtown for the Bahamians. Maybe around 30-40% tourists and the rest for the Bahamians.

#### Creative Nassau

In the 1930s to 60s there was a lot of culture in Nassau. It should be attached to this and our culture again. They should try to make Junkanoo better and preserve the Bahamian culture. Maybe creating jobs for Junkanoo costumes, for each workspace one professional group. There should be also more music at the streets every evening, also more entertainment for the Bahamians, more traditional food and restaurants. Our visitors should take the culture of the Bahamas in their foreign countries.

#### The main challenges of Nassau

- Traffic
- Public transport
- Lack of sidewalks
- Parking issues
- No decent bus service or public transport (20 to 30 owners of the bus service)
- Boardwalk
- Bypass
- Identity
- Bus terminal
- Fixed taxi rates
- Housing in downtown
- Restaurants on the waterfront
- Rents
- Identity

#### References

- Toronto -Jervis Street
- Bar Hopping - Toronto Queens Street
- Canada: funding from the government for the artists

## **2.10 Pam Burnside and Patricia Glinton-Meicholas**

*This interview was conducted on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2015 at the Doongalik Art Studio, Nassau. Pam is running the UNESCO Creative Nassau Initiative Pam's husband was Jackson Burnside, a well*



*known and renowned architect in the Bahamas. He did a lot of studies for the city. Pam is running the UNESCO Creative Nassau Initiative. Patricia Ginton-Meicholas is a historian, author and advocate for what is truly Bahamian.*

#### UNESCO Creative Nassau

The vision for this program is to have more tourists coming to Nassau because of the Arts and Crafts by 2020. The question is how to reflect and present the city to the visitors. There is already a regular market at Pompey Square for artists to show their work – the authentic Bahamian work.

#### Heritage

Nassau is small – but is a very old city and has a lot of assets to preserve. They don't do enough to identify those building and the historic connection they have. It is not appreciated in the national realm that Nassau is a patrimony and is important in the region. But there is not enough research done in the past. People need education to know the importance of the city. Pam and Patricia run a radio show in Nassau about heritage and cultural topics. It is important to think about Nassau not just as a commodity, or a merchant area, ... , people have to understand that the city is part of the living-mechanism and they have to make sure that it performs this function.

#### Over-the-Hill and Bay Street

Over-the-Hill is an important area in the city. People from there used to come down to Bay Street, because it was a central location, where the straw market now is, with the vegetables and the meat. There was only one real food store downtown, where you placed the order and pick it up. Again, everything was about walking in the city. You had a straw basket and this was what you shopped with. All these activities were very green (now everything is plastic). Everything happened on Bay Street, the post office was there, the pharmacies, the shops, the heart of the government, ... In the evening Bay Street was alive. All musicians played at the 20 clubs in Bay Street. It was very vibrant and it was organic. It was about meeting local people. Now, crime keeps people away from Bay Street. Everything goes back to the type of visitors they have in Nassau. Once, those people who came to the Bahamas spend money here.

Shops used to be in Bay Street in the past. Everybody walked in the city or went by bicycle. Patricia states that it was really mixed use. It was an important shopping and entertainment centre for the local people. Tourists felt safe enough to go into the areas / sub-urban area. There were nightclubs at supported local musicians and dancers. It brought business to Bay Street.

#### Traffic and environment (Silk Cotton Trees)

Environmental issues, drainage among others, is a problem in downtown Nassau. Too many people without paying attention to the system. Buildings are planted out with fruit trees. Nobody

was hungry, everybody had something to eat. There used to be a lot of tree on Bay Street, a lot of trees. In fact, trees used to be the most important meeting place in Bay Street. They congregate under Silk Cotton Trees specific trees, because it was cool and provided shade. It was a place where Bahamians always congregated. At Parliament Square there used to be a lot of Silk Cotton Trees, but they got lost. These things are important to people's daily life. These trees are long lived and very strong.

#### Residential use at Bay Street / Junkanoo culture

People used to live above their shops. There was always life in Bay Street. Bay Street merchants, these were white Bahamians who still own Bay Street. Junkanoo is so important – because of the slave background – and the poor, black people were able to take over Bay Street to have the parade. This has a strong psychological meaning to the people. Having Junkanoo at Bay Street is about to claim Bay Street as our own. Having people living there keeps up the life in Bay Street. "We are going to the Bay" means that they are going to the festival. "Come to collect me" means come to collect the costumes. This goes far into heritage and tradition. Merchants at Bay Street are wealthy Bahamians. Gevon Moss from the Nassau Downtown partnership – which is a Public Private Partnership trying to get the merchants along with the government to get decisions made which is difficult as they have different agendas.

Bahamian are known as being very "bigcity" people which means they will fight for what they believe in.

Eastern Bay Street definitely needs renovation but the prices of the properties are very high. The merchants of Bay Street had investments into all of the major sectors of the economy. They were trying to get tenants of major firms / banks / insurance companies, but the old buildings wouldn't not suit their needs. Therefore they would allow the building to rot to get by the laws that state you must preserve and renovate a building that is older than a certain number of years.

Allowing the buildings to deteriorate and fall down, offers you then the opportunity to build whatever you want – with modern conveniences. Eventually, it suits them financially to wait.

The Historic Charlestown Group is working on bringing back all of the old buildings, organizing walking tours to get people to learn more about the history of the buildings. There was a historical committee out of the Ministry of Works whose aim was to preserve Downtown Nassau and everything had to be maintained in a certain way so that the colonial architecture can be preserved but they do not know if it is still operating.

#### Examples of important historic buildings

- Pompey Museum / Square – very old building on Pompey Square where slaves used to be sold.

- Anglican Cathedral – on Bay Street, was very significant for Nassau in order to become a city because of the British background of the Bahamas. The building is one of the oldest in town.
- St. Matthews church / St. Francis church (provide a lot for the community – catholic connection in the city is very important)
- Library
- Government House
- Magna Charta Court
- John Watlings Distillery

#### Creative Nassau

The real interest of the government promoting tourism in the Bahamas began in the 1950s and 1960s. Creative Nassau aims to bring Nassau back to its glory, to take the historical background and inject it into modern day society. The car has destroyed the whole ambience of the area. It all depends on who is in charge of tourism, what sort of elements get put into showing what the Bahamas and Nassau are about as a city.

There is a Bahamian saying: *“be who you is and not who you ain’t, cos if you ain’t who you is, you is who you ain’t”* meaning that Bahamian just need to be themselves. Instead of foreign companies coming who don’t understand what the Bahamas are really about, Bahamian people need to do it themselves as they know the Bahamas best.

#### **Contact**

Alicia Auxley – Antiquities Museums and Monument Corporation (AMMC)

Enrico Garzaroli – Graycliff Hotel (probably the oldest hotel in Nassau)

Betsy Dingman – Historic Charlestown Group

#### **2.11 John Cox**

*This interview was conducted on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2015. John Cox is Artist – Popop Studio Gallery.*

John Cox says that ‘Over-the-Hill’ is relevant to the Bahamian culture because the profile is different from what it is now. In the old days it was very vibrant. It becomes a very volatile environment. It’s filled with history, architecture and most important with culture. But realistically, you can’t just go ‘Over-the-Hill’; somebody has to take you, because you can get into trouble when you go there alone. The area needs to be programmed sensitively to the people that live there. It has to be integrated into a more sensitive way. He thinks that when it starts to develop, it

should be in downtown, because there is the most potential to transform an environment. It has to revolve around a creative community, creative intelligent and creative energy. Because the creative don’t need as much to do and the effect is greater.

Good Example: Williamsburg in NY and Design District Miami. Movements like these could also develop in Downtown. Dehydrated buildings: Some of the owners prefer to let them collapse than to rent them. Once you start with hotspots, it could have a kind of ripple effect. The people from the cruise ship will suddenly start to go to the east side then to the west side. The closest you can get to Over-the-Hill, is to jump off Charlestown, which is on the top of the hill. Charlestown has a better chance to integrate Over-the-Hill than downtown. It probably needs some virtual connection at first, just bringing people to get an exchange of stories, history, etc. Maybe just a type of experience on this side, something that’s more public places, sculpture garden,...

When you are planning a platform for your headquarter, it couldn’t work in Over-the-Hill, because its to far away. It could maybe work in three, four or maybe five years, but not yet. It could be very difficult to get a tourist all the way up, because a lot of them are here for fast consuming.

Example: ART Basel, French Basel event, Aqua, Creative Nassau would like to make something similar to this in one of the old hotel buildings on George Street (next to the church). They would like to make a related platform like in Miami Beach. The church auditorium could be transformed for weekly events. It should be an opportunity to do communicate, be creative, etc. Maybe it should include the street and the buildings around too. The experiences shall be layered like art with food, drinking, books, etc. to get the whole area interesting for everyone.

Even if Downtown is going to transform, it may be a good idea to integrate a health and wellness component. The area around Victoria Ave. was residential. As example if you would like to open a gallery etc., if you have a couple of apartments on the top, it would help to subsidise the founds to keep. (Small commerce, wellness, health, etc.) It would make the area lively and vibrant again.

#### The main challenges of Nassau

- Parking
- Public transport
- Traffic
- Tourism
- Affordable housing
- Green space + public space
- Economy
- Identity!!
- Presenting of Bahamian Culture



- Transforming spaces
- Creative hubs
- Downtown mixed-use
- New zoning

John Cox' vision of Downtown in 10 years

- Creative Hubs all over Downtown as hotpots
- Downtown linked to Over-the-Hill
- Creative community, creative economy, creative education.

## 2.12 Nicolette Bethel

*This interview was conducted on July 3, 2015 via Skype, prior to the workshop week. Nicolette Bethel is Anthropologist at the COB and Artist.*

The Bahamas as a country doesn't have an urban strategy for Nassau; they have a strategy for the whole country. The Nassau Downtown Partnership though, is working mainly for Bay Street, between Armstrong Street and Nassau Street. They are not public, they not a NGO either, they are an organization made up of all Bay Street projects. They are not working past the ridge, so they do not include Grants Town or Bain Town or other areas the 'Over-the-Hill'.

About is the settlement behaviour? Everybody is moving west, because the real estate sector wants us to move west, because that's is where the highest land prices are. The settlement behaviour traditionally was first moving east, then south and now, if you are wealthy enough you can move west. But generally, there is a movement moving to the suburbs and the focus of investment is definitely there.

What are the main urban topics of Nassau? The main focus point is downtown Nassau and the extended traditional core (a little more east and west from the previous described urban main area). Another spot is the south of the island where you could develop a second municipally or a second city; create a new centrality on the island.

The major urban issues for Nassau are:

Traffic – recent road development improved the quality, but created different problems, eg. It has effected businesses, it might have effected Downtown.

Grants Town – the parcels are still owned by the people, who's parents grew up there, but now they use them as rental properties. Often it is rented to immigrants, and they tend to be poor. They don't have access to transportation. There have been studies done, ten years ago by Desiree Cox

in an urban project between 2002 and 2007. She has done studies of 5 central areas including Grants Town.

Economic Issues: The economic focus of Nassau has been on tourism and mass-tourism. In the last 30 years there has been a strong focus on creating jobs in construction industry and in the tourism industry (and the two are linked). You have the construction of the new tourism facilities. It has an expiring end, it is not sustainable and the workers don't have to be skilled. This has no focus on skilled workers; you don't need much training for being a carpenter, masons, etc. Generally, there is a major problem for young people. Many young people are interested in culture and arts, and there is very little employment in this area. There is a disconnection what is the potential market, and the current tourism-market. Tourists don't really leave the cruise ships and there are a lot of economic activities, which are affecting Bahamians. Most of the people are working as straw-vendors and taxi-drivers and there is nothing what young Bahamians are looking forward to do.

There is a lot of potential in Nassau, but it is not explored. There is a lost opportunity. We have to create reasons to come to Nassau, other than the tourism (it's warm, the nice beaches and the casinos, etc). People may come to Atlantis, but not to Nassau in the first place. Downtown – next to Bruces' office has most of the urban potentials for urban development. East Bay Street Area is the economic most relevant area. Theatre space: at the empty buildings at the Eastern Bay Street – Theatrical spaces. Nicolette is engaged in such a project.

## 3 Workshop #1 – focus group with architects and planners (COB)

*Monday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015 – College of Bahamas*

10.00 – 10.30 Roland Krebs – Introduction / Presentation of the methodology  
10.30 – 11.30 SWOT Analysis  
11.30 – 13.30 Urban Scenarios

### 3.1 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was conducted as a group work with presentations which was followed by a discussion.

*Group work to do a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis on the neighborhood map (with Post-Its) considering the 5 dimensions of sustainability: environmental, social, spatial, economic, and governmental (public management)*

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
IMAGE	TRANSPORT

<p>Reputation</p> <p>Proximity to other Caribbean countries</p> <p>Beaches Downtown</p> <p>Open green spaces Arawak Cay / Clifford Park</p> <p><b>ARCHITECTURE AND HERITAGE</b></p> <p>Historic district and architecture</p> <p>History and culture of historic area</p> <p>Architecture in Downtown</p> <p>Caribbean-Style Architecture</p> <p>Good architecture landmark buildings</p> <p>Landmarks – cultural interest</p> <p><b>ECONOMY</b></p> <p>Port – economic motor</p> <p>Economic activity at the Straw Market and Surroundings</p> <p><b>DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <p>Existing Downtown development initiatives</p> <p>Graycliff Downtown Development</p> <p>East Bay Street – opportunity for redevelopment</p> <p>Potential for redevelopment</p> <p><b>CULTURE</b></p> <p>Culture</p> <p>Creative city</p> <p>Popop Studio Gallery</p> <p>National Art Gallery</p> <p>Arts &amp; Crafts</p> <p>Church</p> <p>Tradition of Junkanoo culture</p> <p>Food in the street</p>	<p>Public transport</p> <p>Lack of abundant inter-island transportation</p> <p>Traffic</p> <p>No bikes</p> <p>Inner city – no walkability</p> <p>Lack of wayfinding / signage</p> <p>Limited accessibility to transport</p> <p>Over reliance on cars</p> <p>Congestion</p> <p>Limited accessibility from “Over-the-Hills” communities to Downtown Nassau</p> <p><b>HOUSING</b></p> <p>No apartments to rent</p> <p>Vacancies on East Bay Street</p> <p>East Bay Street vacant</p> <p>Lack of residential real estate in Downtown</p> <p>People don’t live in Downtown anymore</p> <p>Low density in Downtown</p> <p>No housing in Downtown</p> <p>Absence of housing</p> <p>Lack of housing opportunities Downtown (different age groups and socioeconomic groups)</p> <p>Lack of mixed use Downtown</p> <p>Social ? of Over-the-Hill</p> <p><b>SECURITY</b></p> <p>Perception of (personal) “insecurity” in Nassau</p> <p>Negative inner city views</p> <p>Crime</p> <p>Poverty</p> <p>Dirty</p> <p><b>ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <p>Waste waters arriving Downtown</p> <p>Storm waters</p> <p>Floods</p> <p><b>NIGHT LIFE</b></p>
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	<p>City is dead at night</p> <p>Empty Downtown after 5 pm</p> <p>“9-5 city” economic activity with limited night life</p> <p><b>PUBLIC SPACE</b></p> <p>No public space in poor area</p> <p>Lack of parks with shading</p> <p>No continuous coast / board walk</p> <p>No side walks</p> <p>Lack of public space in Grant’s Town</p> <p>No place to relax</p> <p><b>IDENTITY</b></p> <p>Branding / identity</p> <p><b>ECONOMICS</b></p> <p>Business model of the cruise industry (cheap / transient)</p> <p>Socioeconomic weakness</p> <p>Souvenir shops in Bay Street</p> <p>Cost of renting</p>
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Figure 3: SWOT - architects and planners focus group. Source: UTV, 2015

### 3.2 Potential Urban Scenarios

Principal criteria for the development of a revitalization strategy for the neighborhood; group work, presentations and discussion

Drawings and texts are constructed from participants' imagination of their neighborhood and its relationship with the surrounding area and the rest of the city and the sea. This activity should attempt to answer the following questions:

- What kind of elements does our urban scenario have?
- What are the main challenges faced by the neighborhood?
- How can we respond to trends in urban development and infrastructure projects? How can we reverse the trends of deterioration in the area by enhancing its main attributes?
- How can we integrate the neighborhood with the city/downtown/the sea?
- What type of construction or intervention and urban development is necessary and suitable for the inclusive transformation of the area?
- How can we integrate other dimensions of sustainability (social, economic, cultural, environmental, governmental) in the development of the neighborhood?

- What emblematic urban projects do you propose for the neighborhood that would positively transform it without changing or eliminating its identity?
- What densities, heights, FARs, etc. do you propose for the neighborhood?

It should be kept in mind that the goal of the scenario planning technique is to provide a comprehensive view of the area in order to elaborate an integral urban strategy for the planning area, which is drawn from the similarities of the individual urban scenarios. Each group presents their scenario briefly, followed by a discussion about the potential for a common urban strategy.

#### 3.2.1 Group 1

Team members: Students of COB with Prof. Marga Jann

- Attractions by theater and cultural institutions, aquarium, water park, national park, entertaining area, outdoor cafes (paris style?)
- Street: Urban furniture, better street signage, pedestrian streets, parking, bike lanes, shade pompey square
- more piers
- Green spaces ex. Park spaces
- Points of interest (commission artist)
- The pointe
- Potters cay- farmers market, transforming dock
- Bus depot
- Student common center
- Transport: organized public transport,
- Trollies (old fashioned wood like San Fan.)
- Sports: Mini golf, sporting facilities
- Environment: drainage, redirect drainage to water feater
- Vegetal arcade (as mall)
- spray cooling
- multi use arena
  - community pool
  - electricity: solar panels (shaded green parking lot), hydro – electric c
  - community shelter (emergency housing/apartment)



Figure 4: Urban Scenario - group 1. Source: UTV, 2015.

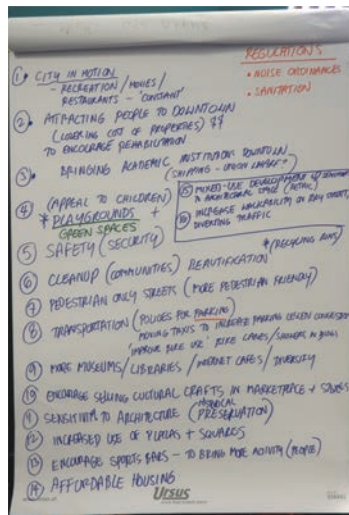


Figure 5: Urban Scenario - group 1. Source: UTV, 2015.

### 3.2.2 Group 2

Team Members: Michael Major, Valeria Flex, Amos Ferguson, Brett Lashley, Gilbert Chona, Andreina Seijas, Sarah Benton

- Regulation: noise ordinances, sanitation
- City in motion: recreation, movies, restaurants – constant
- Attracting people to downtown: lowering cost of properties, to encourage rehabilitation

- Bringing academic institutions to downtown (shipping – union WHARF?)
- Green spaces and playgrounds: appeal to children
- Safety – security
- Cleanup (communities) beautification
- Pedestrian only streets: more pedestrian friendly
- Transportation: policies for parking, moving taxis to increase parking lessen congestion, improve bike use, bike lanes, showers in buildings
- More museums, libraries, internet cafes
- Encourage selling cultural crafts in marketplace + streets
- Sensitivity to architecture (historical preservation)
- Increased use of plazas + squares
- Encourage sports bars – to bring more activity for people
- Affordable housing
- Mixed-use development – sensation to architectural style (retail)
- Increase walkability on bay street, diverting traffic



Figure 6: Urban Scenario - group 2. Source: UTV, 2015.



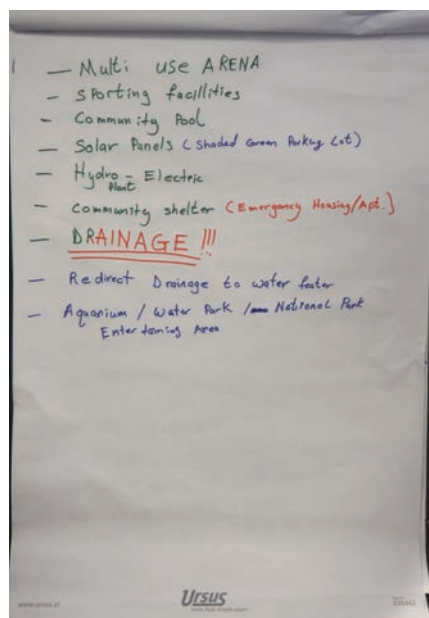


Figure 7: Urban Scenario - group 2. Source: UTV, 2015

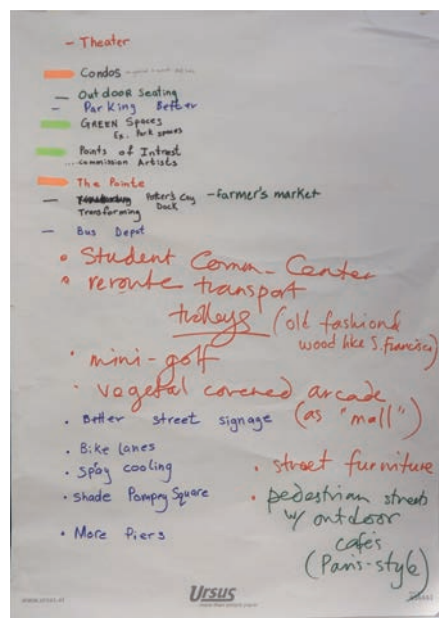


Figure 8: Urban Scenario - group 2. Source: UTV, 2015.

#### 4 Workshop #2 – public workshop (COB)

Monday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015 – College of Bahamas

16.00 – 16.30	Roland Krebs – Introduction / Presentation of the methodology
16.30 – 17.30	SWOT Analysis
17.30 – 19.00	Cartography of Perception

#### 4.1 SWOT Analysis

#### 4.1.1 Group 1

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<b>CULTURE</b> National Art Gallery	<b>TRANSPORT</b> Public transport

Junkanoo	no bicycle lanes
Junkanoo Museum	traffic congestion
Historic Area (Grant's Town)	public transport not reliable
Museums	lack of pedestrian space
Variety of cultural expos – Straw Market, Souvenir Shops	lack of parking locals
Museums	no / limited parking in Downtown
Cultural Centers	Width of street
Show Casing of Bahamian Culture	Traffic congestion
Straw Market	
Pompey Museum	
Local Bahamian Delights	
<b>HERITAGE</b>	<b>HOUSING</b>
Historic Landmarks	Density of housing
Historic churches	High rent
Strong architectural character	Not enough residential spaces (this would encourage night life)
Colonial period houses	Not resident friendly
Dowdeswell Street historic structures	Lack of housing in Downtown area
Colonial architecture	
Historical sites	<b>PUBLIC SPACE</b>
Presence of historical structures still intact	Lack of green space
<b>PUBLIC SPACE</b>	Downtown – limited space not a lot of open space
Beaches	Public space
Cruise port	Not enough 'green' spaces
Beaches	Drainage / flooding
Small basketball court	Nodes can be better utilized (roundabouts/plazas)
Malcolm Park	
Existing playing field	<b>VACANCY</b>
Designated park areas	Unused space / buildings in Downtown
Potential green spaces (Shirley Street)	Vacant Buildings Deteriorated unsightly
	Dilapidated buildings
	Old colonial structures
	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>
	Downtown is not interactive
	No activities at night
	No entertainment
	No nice restaurants
	Too many jewelry stores
	Too many abandoned buildings (Eastern Section)
	Everything closes at 5 / 6 pm – dead area

	<p><b>ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <p>Garbage</p> <p>Garbage – need for beautification in community</p> <p><b>SECURITY</b></p> <p>Security – safety</p> <p>Grant's Town – dirty / congested / crime</p> <p>Dirty / hot</p> <p>Congested / overcrowded</p> <p>Not enough local businesses</p> <p>Downtown area is clustered</p> <p>No disability consideration</p> <p>Segregation Downtown &amp; Grant's Town</p> <p>Lack of organization in Grant's Town</p>
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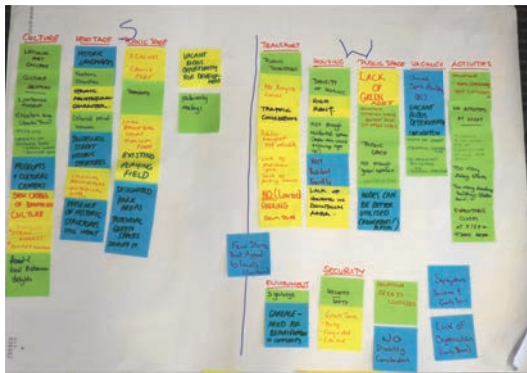


Figure 9: SWOT - group 1. Source: UTV, 2015.

#### 4.1.2 Group 2

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
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<b>CULTURE</b> History and culture Cultural landmarks Straw market Fish Market Artistic Opportunities Historical Architecture	<b>TRAFFIC</b> Roads Parking
<b>LANDSCAPE</b> Natural beauty Attractive view Ocean access	<b>ENVIRONMENT</b> Pollution Dirty Sanitation Drainage Lack of landscape No green space
<b>BUSINESS</b> Self-sustaining economy Small businesses Lots of tourists Central businesses	<b>SECURITY</b> Lots of tourists increase potential for violence Illegal activities Safety Gangs Broken down homes
<b>LOCATION</b> Centrally located Center of government Central of Public Transportation Police visibility	<b>ATTRACTION</b> No recreation Lack of food places No attraction
<b>STREETS</b> Road network / grid Side walks Night life Strong community	Population density Heat Too geared for tourists Negative stigma Poor planning Noise and smells Homeless people



Figure 10: SWOT - group 2. Source: UTV, 2015.

#### 4.1.3 Group 3

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<b>GASTRONOMY</b> Organic food in the island Produce exchange + 'market' under the bridge Diversity Fresh fish Oh Andros Creative Nassau as Actor Best food in Over-the-Hill Culture of food Fish Fry	<b>SECURITY</b> Dangerous Drugs Poor lighting Dirty broken down buildings Downtown Paul's Alley
<b>LANDSCAPE</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENT</b> Hot Lack of trees Fast flooding

Waterfront Beautiful sea Waterfront Potters Cay	<b>ECONOMY</b> Too commercialized Tourists don't spend much! Little to no activity
<b>ECONOMY</b> Cruise ships Spontaneous job offers Quick jobs Tourist attractions (but too commercial) Extravagant night life Potential of redevelopment (Bay Street)	<b>IDENTITY</b> Fake town souvenir shops No Caribbean feel
<b>HERITAGE</b> Center of community (families identity and history) Highest concentration of churches Intact historical buildings	<b>TRAFFIC</b> No bus stops / station Small roadways



Figure 11: SWOT - group 3. Source: UTV, 2015.

#### 4.2 Social Cartography of Perception

social/emotional mapping: interviews and maps; small group work, group discussions.



The participants work with a large-scale map of the planning area and the surrounding area. Colored stickers (3 colors agreed on by the participants) are used for this activity in order to represent 3 categories of feelings or perception. Each workshop participant is given up to 10 stickers of each color and is then asked to place the stickers according to the category/feeling and location on the map:

- Where do you feel happy? Which places make you happy in the area? What is the most beautiful place you see in the map? (green)
- What makes you sad? Where do you feel sad and why? (orange)
- What are the places that need to be addressed or need intervention? What needs to change? (yellow)

The result will be a colorful map of perception, which expresses visually which places need to be investigated in more detail. The result also helps to clarify a more specific problem definition, analysis and diagnosis. The result of the mapping activity shall be discussed briefly in the group and collectively summarized, adjusted and complemented with ideas and issues not mentioned or arising earlier.

Summarizing this activity, it seems obvious that there is a clear break in the perception of the neighborhood to this community.

Most of the green points (makes me happy) are concentrated in the northwestern part of Nassau, starting from the cruise ship dock continuing to Junkanoo Beach. The places that make people happy also continue south of Bay Street in the Charlestown area, where the National Art Gallery of Bahamas (NAGB) is located. A few green points can also be found on Paradise Island – Atlantis Hotel. The NAGB, the Straw Market, the Pirates Museum and the pedestrian zone next to it as well as the Hillside House Studio are perceived as interesting places.

On the other hand, the part northeast of the cruise ship dock along East Bay Street has most of the orange dots. Another concentration of orange dots can be found on Potters Cay, situated underneath the Eastern bridge to Paradise Island. Other places that make people sad are situated across 'Over-the-Hill' and especially Grant's Town.

In response to the question of where to intervene to bring about an improvement in the neighborhood, people proposed to improve the 'dead' part of East Bay Street with a lot of abandoned and vacant buildings and its surroundings but also again the area on Potters Cay. Several yellow points of potential interventions are located across Grant's Town.

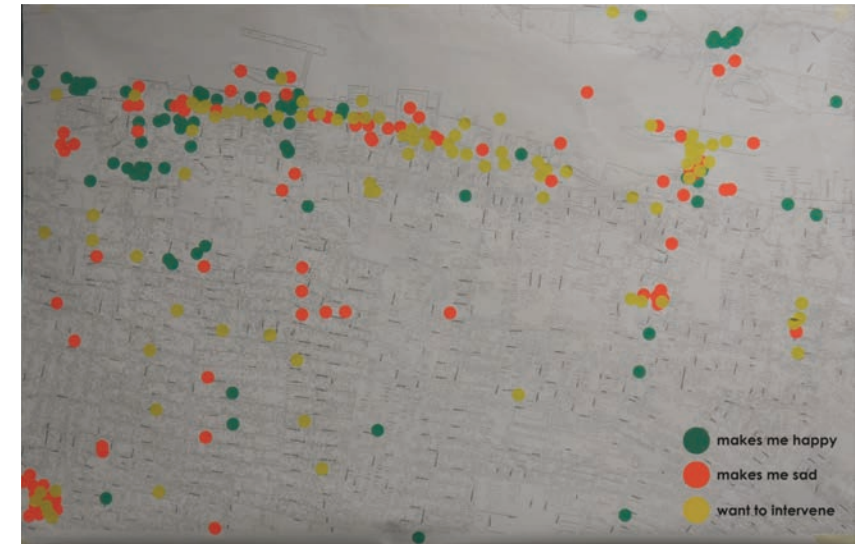


Figure 12: Social Cartography of perception for Downtown and Grant's Town. Source: UTV, 2015

## 5 Workshop #3 – focus group formed by community members (Grant's Town)

On Tuesday, October 6, 2015, Valentino Brown and Ulrich Voges take us on a walk through the community of Grant's Town and explain daily life and the projects their organization 'Violets are blue' is doing with and for the community – e.g. organizing a cook out with a local chef and one from Chicago.

*"The moment anybody can afford to leave Grant's Town, they get out as he calls the environment 'toxic'".* People are living under a very bad and frightening condition. There is no responsibility for taking care of the environment. The government does not pick up the garbage. A lot of the houses do not have running water, there are only a few fountains in the neighborhood. Another health issue is the flooding and in consequence the water holes breeding mosquitoes. Ulrich Voges proposes e.g. creating a volleyball court on a vacant land in the neighborhood which can be implemented with only a few things: sand, old tyres, a little bit of concrete, two wooden posts and a net.

Mr. Voges is convinced that offering sports facilities can be seen as active crime prevention keeping people busy and occupied. E.g., every afternoon the community center on Lewis Street is offering tutoring classes for the children helping them with their homework. Furthermore, the community has organized a coach on the basketball court to be there with the kids keeping them off the streets.

Some points about the organizations:

- Valentino Brown aka Scrooge, the community leader running a small community center founded the 'Movement for Change' which is a nonprofit organization.
- Ulrich Voges' 'Violets are blue' is a for-profit organization empowering people in the community trying to bring back the economy to Grant's Town.

Some ideas for Grant's Town:

- Creating a micro-economy in Grant's Town is possible as a lot of people have skills and ideas.
- Connecting Downtown to the other side of the hill is absolutely necessary.
- Nassau has been stalling in their tourist numbers for the last few years – Downtown still has the same shops and products on Bay Street.

But there are a lot of travelers who want to see the authentic, real Bahamas and don't want to see the façade. In order to bring the tourists 'Over-the-Hill' and thereby bringing back the economy, Ulrich Voges and Valentino Brown have the idea to define a tourist route starting from the wharf up the hill visiting the most historic landmarks such as the house Martin Luther King used to stay in the late 50s when he visited the Bahamas.

## 6 Workshop #4 – focus group 'Creative Nassau' (Doongalik Art Studio)

*On Wednesday, October 7, 2015, a group of the most important stakeholders for history and art came together for a discussion about Nassau as a creative city.*

The regeneration of Bay Street has a very strong context to the regeneration of Grant's Town. The area of 'Over-the-Hill' has parks and green spaces that are not used properly. Including Bahamians into the process, meeting them on the same level and listening to the ideas of the Bahamian people is very important as foreigners cannot easily understand the situation. There is a vision of creating a community center training people life skills and traditional arts and crafts, creating an economy within the community.

Housing

Clapboard Houses

Moveable houses in Grant's Town built on cinder blocks

Bahamians do not like multifamily housing. Based on the African model, there was the common yard for the community but still every family would have its individual house structured in such a way that people could communicate from porch to porch. It is important to keep housing interconnected and at a human scale with a maximum of 2 stories.

History

Grant's Town and Bain Town are organically a part of Bay Street and the city. Getting to know the history of the country and the island is considered very important prior to any suggestion for development. The roots of the Bahamian history influenced a lot e.g. the economics. In the past, black people e.g. had no access to banks so based on the African concept of loans within the community they organized loans themselves within their community.

Jumbey Village

A village founded by Edmund Moxey – a politician and artist – passionate about preserving Bahamian culture. Jumbey Village was a village incorporating artists, people making jewellery where people would have the opportunity to see Bahamian culture and history, situated close to the College of Bahamas, but it was closed as Moxey's party fell out.

Property and land ownership

There is a lot of confusion about property and land ownership. In the past when Bay Street merchants had economic control all over – also in Grant's Town and Bain Town, they would help people to build their houses as they owned all the hardware stores but people would have to sign over the property to the merchant. There are difficulties with land tenure and their various forms that need to be regularized. E.g. Generation property: The example of when people would die, their children would find out that there is leasehold that had to be surrendered. Also there are a lot of abandoned lots because there is no clear ownership.

CREATIVE NASSAU

The Creative Nassau organization is mainly working as a facilitator assisting arts and crafts projects in the Bahamas.

## 7 Workshop #5 – children's and community workshop (Grant's Town)

*On Wednesday, October 7, 2015, a workshop was conducted during an afternoon tutoring program at Valentino 'Scrooge' Brown's community centre on Lewis Street in the heart of Grant's Town.*

## 7.1 Your dream Nassau or Over-the-Hill

The children ranged in age from around 5 to 10.

*Drawings are constructed from the children's imagination of their neighborhood and its relationship with the surrounding area and the sea. This activity should attempt to answer the following questions:*

- *What do you like about your community and neighborhood?*
- *What makes you happy? What makes you sad?*
- *What would you like your neighborhood to have and/or to look like?*



Figure 13: Children's drawings - Grant's Town. Source: UTV, 2015.

The results of the children's imagination of Grant's Town including their visions:

- Houses
- Trees
- a community centre

- sports facilities such as swimming pools, volleyball and basketball courts, bouncing castles, playground



Figure 14: Children drawing in the community center. Source: UTV, 2015.

## 7.2 Social Cartography of Perception (Lewis to Hay Street corridor)

*Besides the children's drawing activity a few community members joined the workshop for a cartography of perception of the area around Lewis and Hay Street.*

Summarizing this activity, most of the green points (makes me happy) are concentrated on Hay Street at the basketball court as well as a few other places like Scrooge's community centre, Marcus Garvey and Martin Luther King House (two historically relevant buildings) but also on the vacant lot (former 'Silver Slipper' on East Street next to the Chinese supermarket where the community also sees a lot of potential for an intervention (yellow dots). Another place that makes people happy is Slime's graffiti studio and the Wall of Respect also located on East Street.



On the other hand, most of the orange dots (makes me sad) can be found on Lewis Street across the community centre on a vacant, abandoned lot that cannot be used for community activities. Other spots that make the community sad are punctually spread over Grant's Town marking the places full of rubbish.

In response to the question of where to intervene to bring about an improvement in the neighborhood, people proposed to improve the community centre (on the corner of Lewis and Comfort Street) as well as to intervene on the abandoned and vacant lots across Grant's Town, e.g. on the corner of East and Lewis Street.



Figure 15: Cartography of Perception - Grant's Town. Source: UTV, 2015.

Workshop I 05.10.2015  
1000-1300

NASSAU URBAN LAB

WORKSHOP - RETHINKING AN URBAN DOWNTOWN  
MONDAY, October 5th - TUESDAY, October 6th, 2015

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Logo: IDB - EMERGING AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES

Logo: TU WIEN

Logo: BMF - FEDERAL MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Logo: STÄDTBAU TU WIEN



Workshop 1a

05.10.2015  
1600 - 1900

# **NIASSAU URBAN LAB**

**WORKSHOP - RETHINKING AN URBAN DOWNTOWN**  
MONDAY, October 5th - TUESDAY, October 6th, 2015

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Städtebau TU Wien

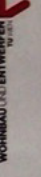
Workshop 2a

05.10.2015  
1600-1900

# **NIASSAU URBAN LAB**

**WORKSHOP - RETHINKING AN URBAN DOWNTOWN**  
MONDAY, October 5th - TUESDAY, October 6th, 2015

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Städtebau TU Wien

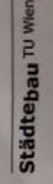
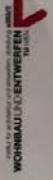


WORKSHOP 2A 5.10.2015  
16-18<sup>00</sup>

# NASSAU URBAN LAB

WORKSHOP - RETHINKING AN URBAN DOWNTOWN  
MONDAY, October 5th - TUESDAY, October 6th, 2015

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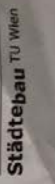
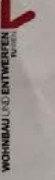


WORKSHOP 2b 06.10.2015  
16<sup>00</sup>-19<sup>00</sup>

# NASSAU URBAN LAB

WORKSHOP - RETHINKING AN URBAN DOWNTOWN  
MONDAY, October 5th - TUESDAY, October 6th, 2015

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WORKSHOP 4 07.10.2015  
10:00-13:00

# NASSAU URBAN LAB

WORKSHOP - RETHINKING AN URBAN DOWNTOWN  
MONDAY, October 5th - TUESDAY, October 6th, 2015

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CITIES  
Initiative**

[urbandesignlab.org](http://urbandesignlab.org)