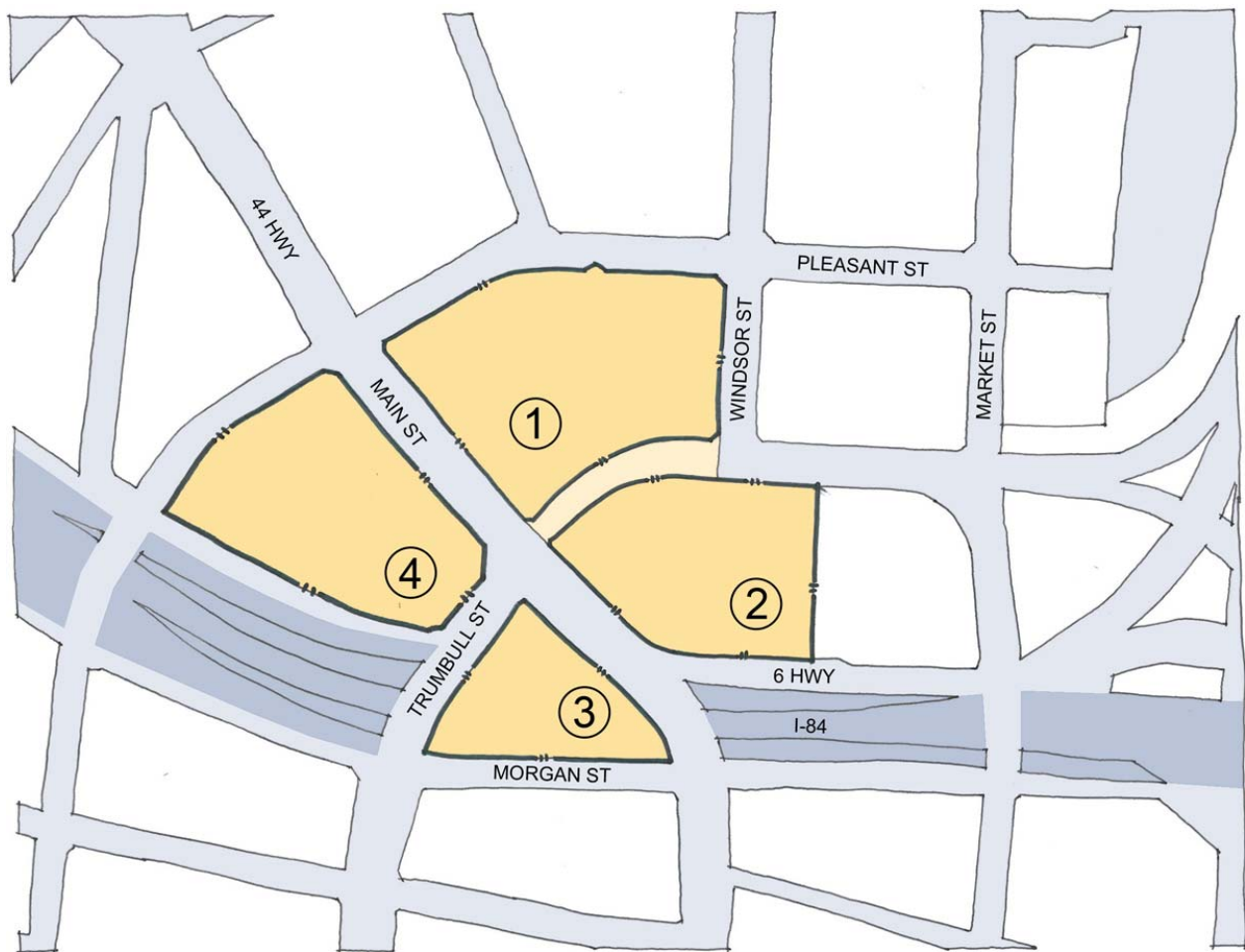


development as a multi-block improvement initiative, rather than a singular, isolated building program. This redevelopment area has over 1,000 feet of interstate frontage between High Street and Trumbull Street, thereby possessing the ability to greatly influence the positive redefinition of the North End's image. Its frontage on the I-84 elevated plaza is another important design feature, since the success of public spaces depends largely on active, engaging building edges.

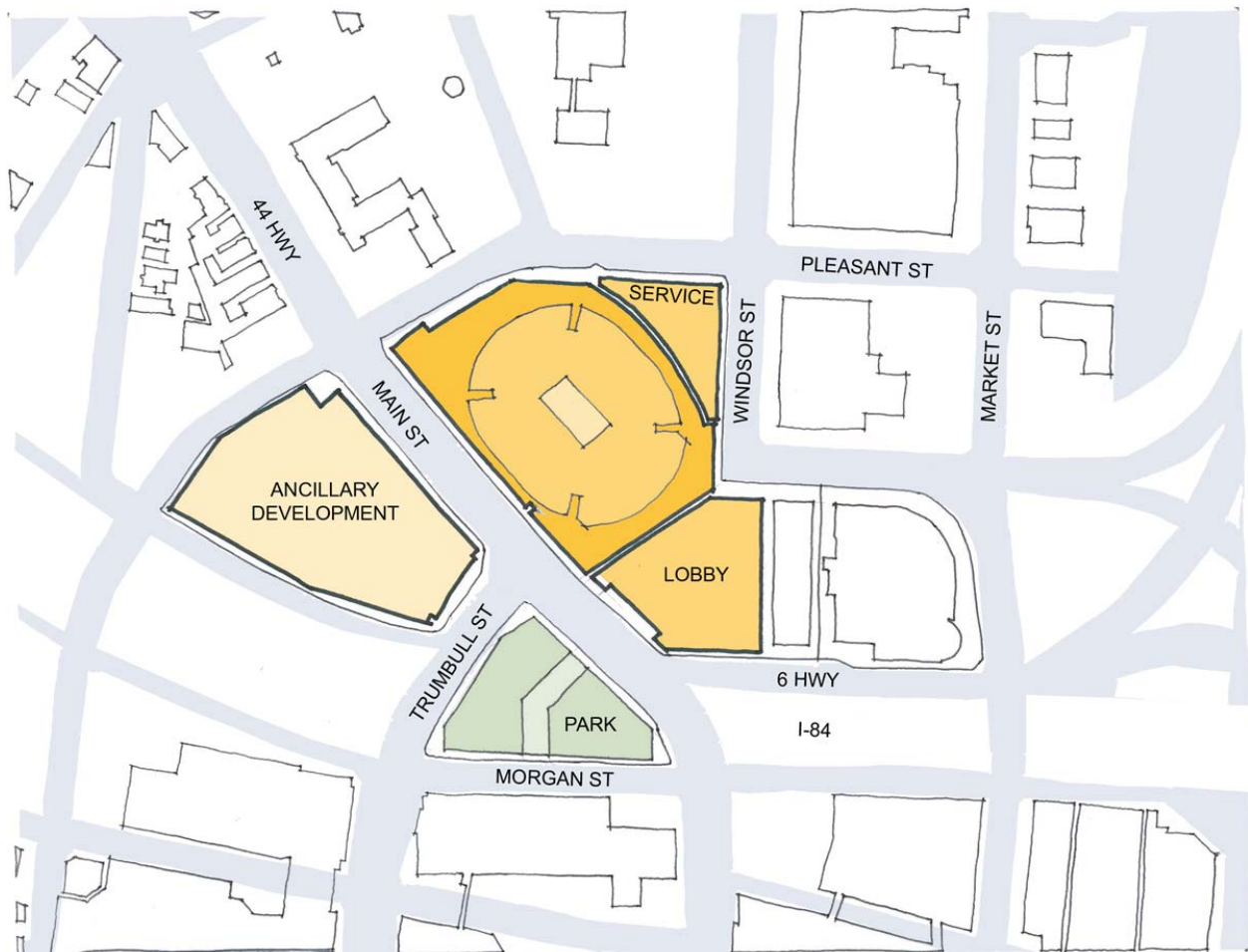
Four blocks, then, are identified as desirable for a comprehensive arena development for Site 3. Blocks 1 and 2 are required for the arena building itself, supporting fundamental program uses such as the seating bowl and concourse, service areas and a public lobby. Block 3 (the I-84 air rights parcel) supports a secondary – but still important – function for the arena: a public park and plaza. Because arena events attract thousands of visitors, the inclusion of a public space near the main entry serves as a crowd control device. From a thematic and cultural point of view, such a space provides an opportunity to make the arena project reflect Hartford's unique personality with public art, landscaping, lighting, etc. Block 4 also supports a secondary function – that of an accompanying development opportunity, which could include a portion of the necessary arena parking. This block also presents three important edges to consider: the Main Street façade facing the arena, the Trumbull Street façade facing the new park, and the I-84 façade facing downtown and passing highway traffic.



Development Strategy:

The architectural appearance of arenas have the ability to significantly enhance the image of a city, depending on how prominent its location, and how visible its building mass. Interstate visibility will be somewhat limited on this site, since I-84 is depressed and other tall buildings (Crown Plaza Hotel and Bank of America) are located between it and I-91. Some visibility may be apparent to eastbound traffic along I-84, but this will likely change if and when new development takes place on Block 4, west of Main Street. On the other hand, an arena location slightly separated from the tall buildings of the C.B.D. presents the ability to design public spaces – such as the plaza, lobby, and lounges – with striking views of the downtown skyline. Conversely, many downtown buildings will enjoy the new ability to look down on the new arena from the south.

Assuming that a portion of the Trumbull Street right-of-way is incorporated into the arena parcel, the size of the property would be sufficient to support such a building. The configuration of the parcel, however, is irregular, which results in a site organization that places the arena bowl towards the northern end, as illustrated below. The southern portion of the site, then, would be designed as the “front door”, with a public lobby opening onto an exterior plaza that connects to the I-84 elevated plaza on Block 3, and further to downtown. The “back door” with service access and functions, then, would be located either on Pleasant or Windsor Street.



### Circulation:

Located near the juncture of two major interstate highways, the regional access for this site is well-positioned. Since the site is only a block away from the northern edge of the downtown core, most of the event parking would utilize public and office parking lots and garages that are empty in the evenings. While not all of this parking can be counted on, the bulk of the downtown parking supply is located within a ½ -mile walk from the arena entry. A dedicated parking lot or garage adjacent to the arena will still be necessary, however, to meet competitive criteria geared for V.I.P. parking – one possible location being across Main Street on Block 4. Regional and local transit systems at Union Station represent another nearby transportation option, located approximately five blocks from the arena’s front door, or about a ten-minute walk. A downtown trolley or other special-event transit/parking systems would also help to achieve a more balanced multi-modal mix, to reduce the impact on downtown roadways.



### Massing:

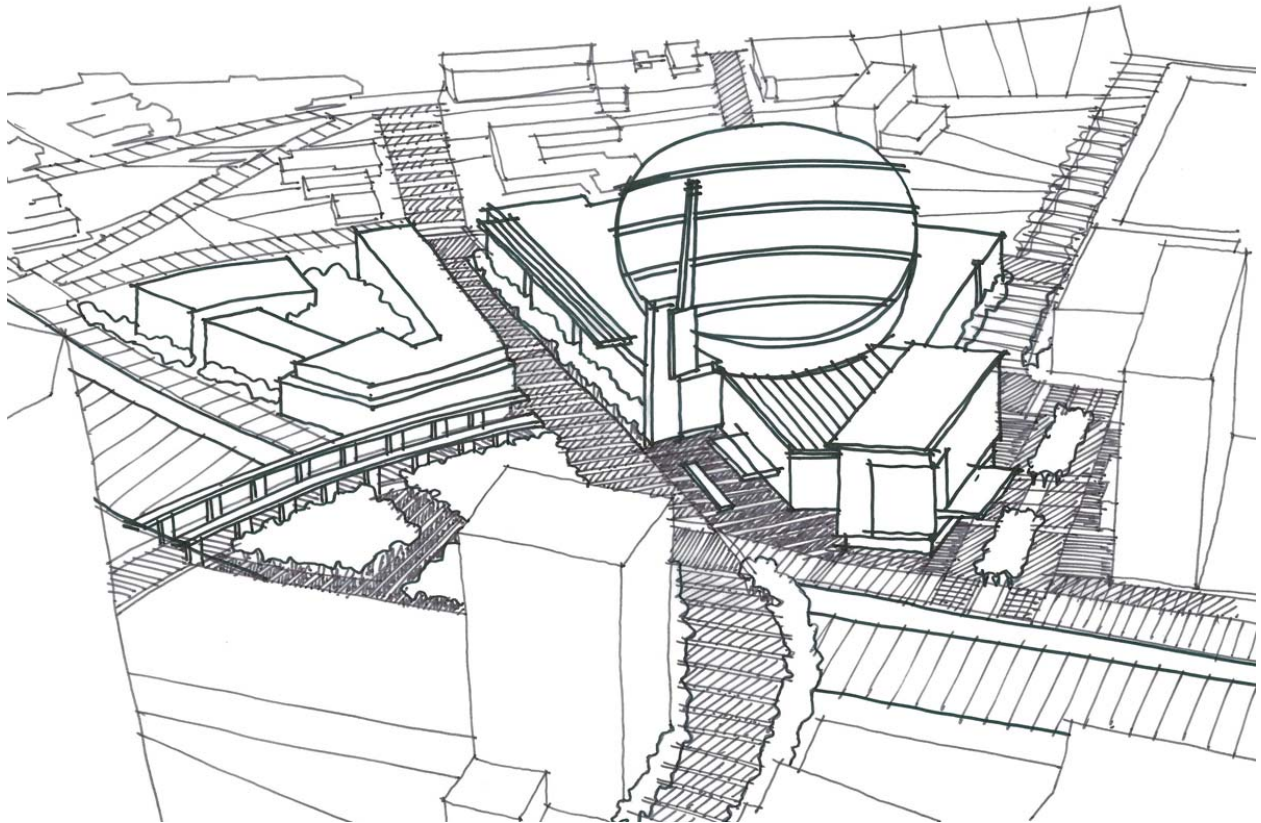
While arena buildings may be several hundred thousand square feet in total size, the various program elements and site features allow for a variety of architectural solutions within the overall composition. In the case of Site 3, an important urban design aspect is the sequence of spaces that lead visitors walking from downtown to the front door lobby. Because of the relatively tight site, there is not much land available for creating public plaza spaces, once the



building footprint is established. This places a particular importance on enhancing the I-84 air rights parcel into a park/plaza for visitors as they circulate in and out of the arena; it also is an effective visual foreground for the building. A taller building mass along Main Street would help to define the public plaza, and would also enhance the visibility of the arena complex within the downtown context and along the I-84 corridor.

As the arena transitions down to a neighborhood scale along Main Street, an accompanying building on the west side of the street will reinforce the arena complex with supporting uses and development character. An arena tower or marquis along Main Street would also help to mark the building entry, as well as increase the ability for building visibility from downtown and drivers along I-84. A building mass on the east side of the arena lobby would help to frame the front door, with the opportunity to accommodate ancillary uses. Given the parcel configuration and adjacent roadways, an option for a special vehicular drop-off/ plaza is possible between this portion of the arena and the Crown Plaza Hotel, to the east.

Additionally, the streetscape improvement program along Trumbull Street could extend across the interstate, perhaps with a partially covered walkway to encourage pedestrian connections and further define the area as a northern gateway to the city.



### **Site 5 (Existing Civic Center)**

The site bounded by I-84, Ann Street, and the Hartford 21 Project (along Trumbull and Asylum Streets) represents a redevelopment scenario that replaces the existing Civic Center with a new facility. This strategy would trigger two major impacts on downtown. First, it would remove an obsolete arena, which is an introverted building whose big blank walls do little to encourage vibrant street activity. Second, it would further bolster downtown's newest development by integrating a state-of-the-art arena with not only the Hartford 21 Project, but with mixed-use activities that continue to evolve on adjacent blocks.



### **Land Use:**

As documented in the city's study entitled "Downtown West," many restaurants and entertainment businesses are present in the four-block area between the existing Civic Center and Union Station. The current arena, however, discourages pedestrian activity that would further activate these and other businesses. A new arena that features both programmable space and articulated fenestration, materials and graphics will make the building a contributing anchor to the growing mixed-use district – rather than an impediment. In the Parcel Plan, Parcels 6, 7, and 8 are identified as necessary for the arena building itself, supporting fundamental program uses such as the seating bowl and concourse, service areas and a public lobby.

In addition to the existing businesses, approximately 6-½ acres of vacant land exists in the four blocks between Union Place, Asylum Street, Ann Street and Church Street, with other potential

redevelopment opportunities also available – indicated by Parcels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 9. Several buildings in the areas to the east and west of the arena are part of the Ann Street or Pratt Street historic districts, which add invaluable charm and pedestrian scale. The ability to introduce other buildings of compatible use and character would establish more of a critical mass with more of a continuous corridor of active uses – similar to other urban mixed-use/entertainment districts such as Memphis, Washington D.C., or Glendale, Arizona.

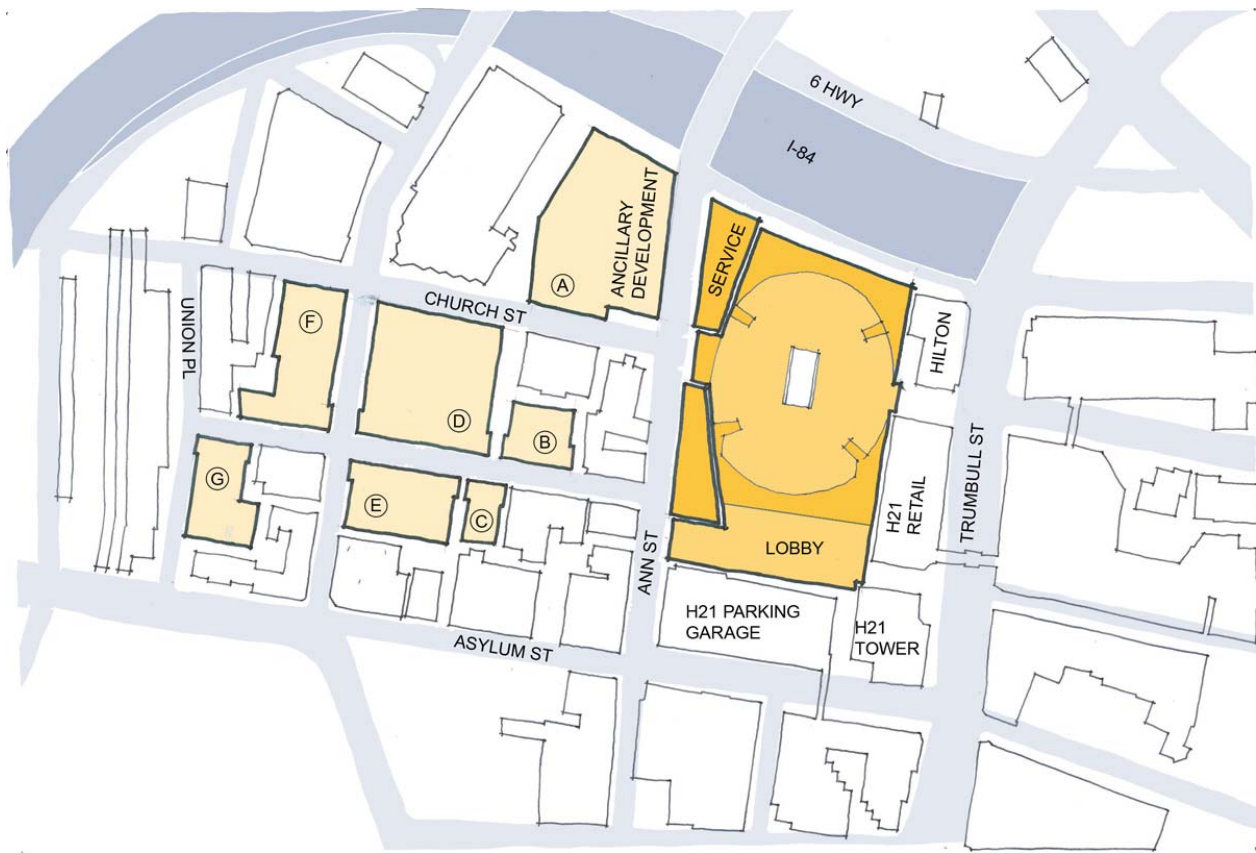


Development Strategy:

Since a new arena would be larger than the existing Civic Center, the only way that a new building could fit onto this site would be to demolish the existing city-owned Church Street Garage next to I-84, and close down one block of Church Street. Removing the parking garage will obviously reduce the amount of available downtown parking, but it frees up an important downtown edge that faces both the interstate and the North End neighborhood. Both the east and west sides of the arena (facing Trumbull Street and Ann Street) have the ability to transition in scale down to 3- to 4-story building heights. In fact, the Trumbull Street side already has the building storefronts in place, developed by the Hartford 21 Project; a design challenge would be how to manipulate floor levels and program elements to appropriately integrate arena functions with the existing buildings. Perhaps most interestingly, the arena lobby and front door could be designed as an indoor-outdoor space just north of the residential tower and parking garage, acting as a connecting element between Pratt Street and Allyn Street.

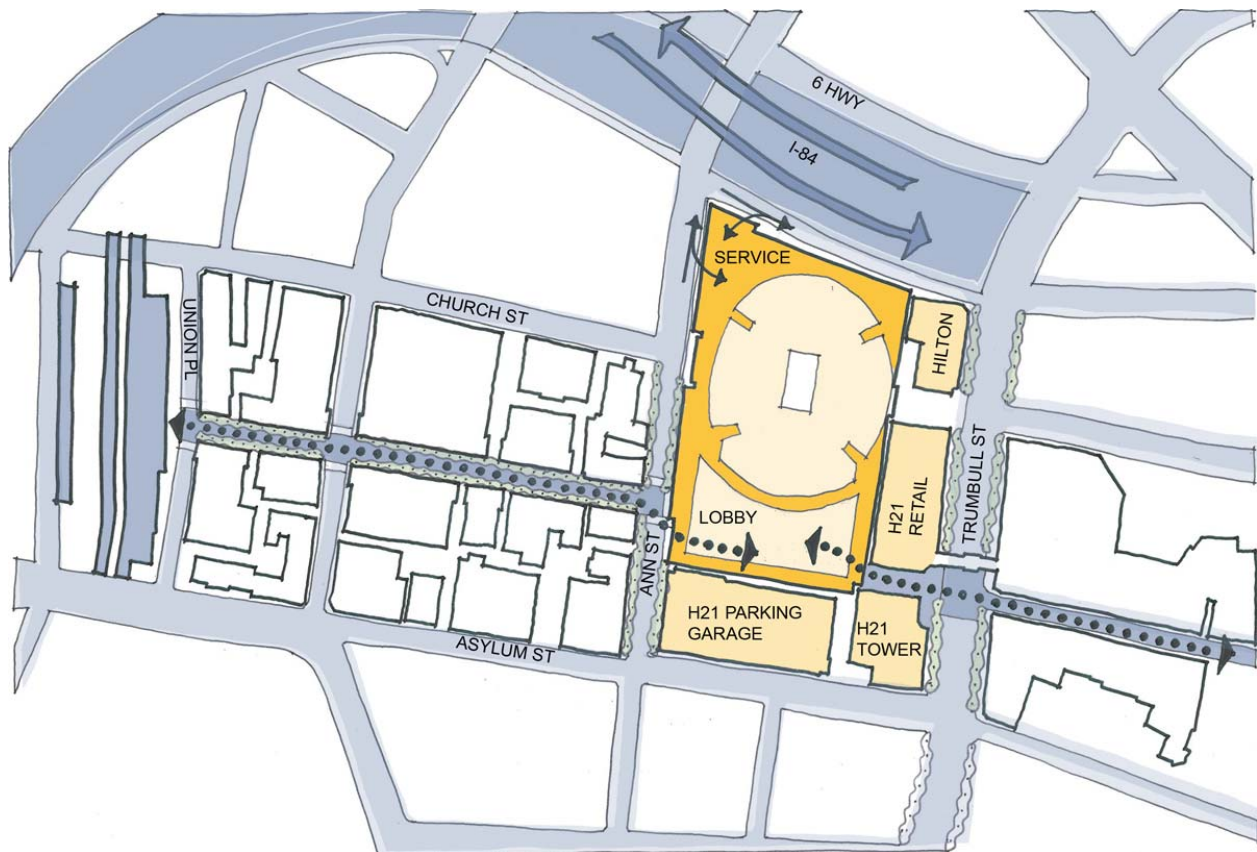


Rebuilding a new arena on the existing Civic Center site is an attractive option for several reasons. First, it maintains the historic use of the site, but also reaches a potentially wider audience by offering more uses with a modern facility. Second, it capitalizes on existing – as well as planned – parking and transportation systems. Third, it strengthens the nascent mixed-use district in this part of downtown jump-started by the Hartford 21 Project, and connects – rather than blocks – the Allyn Street corridor and the Pratt Street corridor. Fourth, it replaces an imposing blank wall of a parking garage with an iconic civic building that is oriented toward the North End. Finally, it has the ability to become integrated with the pedestrian scale that downtown is focusing on, in contrast with previous generations of buildings that were built with large blank walls and detached plazas and podiums.



### Circulation:

Frontage along I-84 would establish a strong presence for the arena; for visitors coming to events and related entertainment, it is an easy visual marker to spot. Because it is embedded in the downtown core, multiple vehicular access points exist, and plenty of parking options are well distributed within easy walking distance. Located two blocks to the west (approximately five minutes walking), transit options from Union Station will also be ideally located – funneling visitors through two blocks of mixed-use activity to and from the arena. A similar circulation pattern exists to the east as well, with the potential for downtown office workers, residents and visitors to walk through the Pratt Street corridor on their way to and from the arena. A downtown trolley or other special-event transit/parking systems would also help to achieve a more balanced multi-modal mix, to reduce the impact on downtown roadways.



### Massing:

While arena buildings may be several hundred thousand square feet in total size, the various program elements and site features allow for a variety of architectural solutions within the overall composition. In the case of Site 5, each of the four sides presents distinctly different urban design considerations.

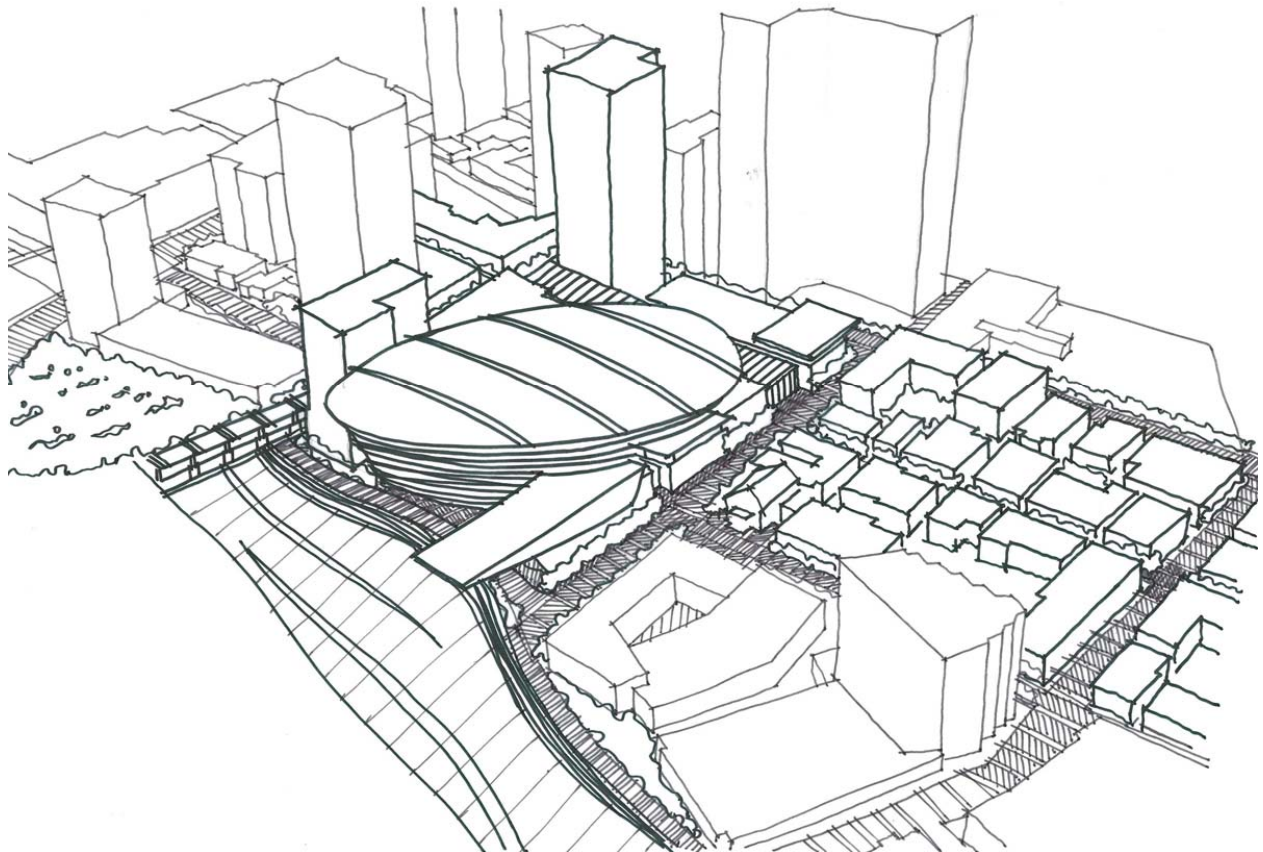
The northern edge creates an iconic architectural opportunity, expanded by the idea of integrating a portion of the interstate wall into the materials, graphics, lighting, etc. of the arena façade. An improved I-84 park and possible bridge enhancement along Trumbull Street would



further define this as a downtown gateway. A cantilevered roof along Ann Street is another idea that could enliven the arena architecture, especially as perceived by passing drivers along I-84.

The western edge of the arena block between the interstate and the Hartford 21 parking garage borders the Ann Street National Historic District – a multi-block area of small-scale buildings, including the St. Patrick – St. Anthony Church. It is critical that the arena building break down in scale to relate to this unique context; it is also critical that the complex appear transparent and inviting to pedestrians, to support the resurgence of this urban district.

With the Hartford 21 tower and parking garage occupying the length of Asylum Street (between Ann Street and Trumbull Street), the arena would have little presence along its southern edge. However, the creation on an inside/outside public space that also functions as the main public lobby for the arena is an intriguing thought which warrants further study. Conceptually, this design feature could link the Ann Street District and Union Station to the Pratt Street District and the heart of downtown – the arena, in effect, could become a major “link” in downtown, rather than the “barrier” that it has been for the past 32 years. Like Asylum Street, the Trumbull Street edge is built out by the Hartford 21 tower and retail buildings, as well as the Hilton Hotel. In addition to creating a primary entry into the lobby space discussed above, some arena uses (as well as exterior signage and graphics) could potentially be integrated into the Hartford 21 retail block.





SPORT

**City of Hartford  
New Downtown Arena Study**

**July 2007**