

2005 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence
Reinventing Downtown



BRUNER FOUNDATION, INC.

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2005 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence



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ROBERT SHIBLEY, AIA, AICP

WITH

EMILY AXELROD, MCP; JAY FARBSTEN FAIA, PhD; AND RICHARD WENER, PhD

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Preface

Every cycle of the Rudy Bruner Award brings new insight into the challenges facing American cities. 2005 was no exception. The 2005 Selection Committee identified many of the most critical themes in urban placemaking today, and chose to celebrate projects that address those themes in new and creative ways. And although our cities face significant issues, it is always tremendously exciting to see that creative city building is alive and well throughout the country.

The 2005 winners embody a renewed commitment to our downtowns. As a group these places have made their downtowns more lively, more beautiful, and more responsive to the needs of changing populations. The community builders, entrepreneurs and policy makers who created these places have contributed new visions of downtown at a variety of scales. Together the 2005 winners show how the public and private sectors can come together in new kinds of partnerships, and they demonstrate once again how the efforts of a single visionary individual can have transformative effects in the life of the city.

We at the Bruner Foundation are always amazed and delighted at the acuity of the Selection Committee observations and discussions, and of course we take great pride in presenting their choice of winners to you. The 2005 winners are a disparate group, united in embodying new visions of downtown, an impressive depth of commitment to

their respective projects, and imagination in rethinking the concept of place. These winning places have found new ways to reinvigorate downtowns, re-energize neighborhoods, and create new destinations on neglected inner city blocks. Transit oriented development, art based placemaking, visionary leadership, and public/private partnerships are a few of the themes you will recognize in 2005. The reinvention of a first ring suburb is a new theme, and one that holds great promise for cities around the country.

Portland Streetcar, our Gold Medal Winner, was recognized because of the creative mix of public and private sector efforts that came together to transform entire quadrants of the city. This transit based project resulted in brownfield remediation, reclamation of waterfront sites that had long been dormant, major new infill development, and the reuniting of sections of the city that had been virtually isolated. And all of this while improving air quality, reducing automobile traffic, and contributing to a safe and convenient downtown. Amazing.

The revitalization of **Downtown Silver Spring** demonstrates that first ring suburbs can indeed reinvent themselves to respond to changing demographics. No longer isolated bedroom communities, these suburbs are emerging as new and important secondary downtowns, connected to their major hubs by transit, and serving as corporate

and business headquarters in their own right. By combining a range of affordable housing, major corporate and cultural headquarters, a new mix of retail uses, and a major new transit station, Silver Spring showed that an aging and under-used suburban center can become a vibrant 24/7 downtown for people of varied ages and incomes. An effective partnership between the city and the private sector affirmed the viability of reconfiguring and reimagining first ring suburbs which are now playing a more central role in the urban landscape.

Fruitvale Transit Village demonstrates that a committed community organization like Unity Council can have a major impact on its neighborhood. In a unique and unprecedented partnership with the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) the Unity Council effected land transactions that had never been done before. Their imaginative project unites a major BART station with a neighborhood retail center in downtown Oakland through a lively, colorful mixed use pedestrian space. The genius of the project was to combine services that serve the community with on site housing adjacent to a major transportation node, all connecting to the city's major retail street and to BART. This was done with an outstanding architectural design, and it is helping to turn the neighborhood around.

In Paducah, KY an historic neighborhood next to the downtown was a center of drug dealing and widespread deterioration. Thanks to the imagination of artist residents and the planning department who worked together to create the **Artist Relocation Program**, Lower Town has now become a new arts district, with artists from all over the country choosing to relocate to historic homes where they can own their own galleries and living spaces. Through creative cooperation between the City of Paducah, a local bank, and artists living in the area, an old neighborhood next to the downtown has been reborn into a gallery district that will help to grow Paducah's reputation as an art destination in the region, will continue the revitalization of the downtown, and will create a new level of creative capital for the city. Everyone wins.

The Heidelberg Project owes its success to its visionary artist founder Tyree Guyton who saw beauty in his childhood neighborhood, a place that had been abandoned and neglected for many years. By turning the discarded refuse of everyday life into new art forms, Guyton dignified the lives of his neighbors, and brought a new sense of identity to his neighborhood. Despite two cycles of demolition of his work by the City of Detroit, Guyton has made the Heidelberg Project into the third most visited destination in a troubled city, creating beauty, and bringing new energy into a formerly neglected and abandoned site. It is a privilege to recognize such a project, and

salute the vision of an individual who continues to make a tremendous difference in his city.

We share the excitement of the 2005 Selection Committee in recognizing these outstanding projects which have contributed to the vitality of five cities across the country. We know the thinking behind these projects has application in any number of places, and we hope that this publication will bring the ideas to each of you.

Simeon Bruner, *Founder*

Introduction: The 2005 Rudy Bruner Award

THE RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (RBA) is a national award for urban places that seeks to promote fresh and innovative thinking about cities and the urban built environment. Established in 1987, the Rudy Bruner Award celebrates urban places that are distinguished by quality design and by their social, economic, and contextual contributions to our nation's cities. RBA winners often transcend the boundaries between architecture, urban design and planning, and are frequently developed with such vision and imagination that they transform urban problems into creative solutions to some of our cities' most persistent problems.

The RBA is unique among national awards because of its emphasis on the complex process of placemaking as well as on the ways in which a place impacts its city or neighborhood. Understanding that every urban place grows out of complex layers of social, economic, aesthetic, and personal interactions, the RBA asks some important questions. What kinds of places make our cities better places to live and work? How do these places enrich the urban landscape? Do they contribute to the local economy? Do they create community pride? Do they build bridges among diverse populations or create beauty

where none existed before? And perhaps most important, what can we learn from the creative thinking inherent in RBA winners, and how can that learning be applied in cities across the country?

The criteria for submitting an application for the RBA are intentionally broad, encouraging applications from a wide variety of projects. In the last two award cycles, over 40 states have been represented. It is no surprise, therefore, that RBA winners are diverse. Many represent new models of urban placemaking that have successfully challenged conventional wisdom about what is possible. Most are products of hard-won collaborations among diverse groups of people, often with differing agendas. And all RBA winners have contributed to the vitality of the cities and neighborhoods in which they are located. By celebrating their success, the RBA highlights the intricate and challenging process of urban placemaking, emphasizing the complexity of the processes and values that produce significant urban places. Studying the varied stories of RBA winners, their histories, and their processes of development, we can discover creative ways to respond to some of our cities' most intractable problems.

THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

A new Selection Committee is named for each award cycle. To ensure lively and informed discussion, every selection committee is made up of an inter-disciplinary group of urban experts. Selection Committees always include the mayor of a major city as well architects, developers, community organizers, philanthropists, and financiers. As the Selection Committee members discuss the applications considering a wide variety of questions to include but not limited to:

- What kinds of places make neighborhoods and cities better places in which to live, work, and play?
- How did these places come into being?
- What visions powered their creation?
- How did these visions become a reality?
- What obstacles had to be overcome to make the place a reality?
- What makes these places important in their urban contexts?
- Do the winners offer new ideas that could be adapted in other cities?

In this way, the Selection Committee explores the dynamic nature of urban excellence and contributes to a broader understanding of the issues that are currently critical to the urban built environment.



THE 2005 SELECTION COMMITTEE

ANDREW ALTMAN, *Executive Director, Anacostia Waterfront Corporation, Washington D.C.*

LELAND COTT, FAIA, *Founding Partner, Bruner/Cott and Associates, Cambridge, MA*

MAURICE COX, *Former Mayor, Charlottesville, VA; Assistant Professor, University of Virginia, Founding Partner, RBGC Architecture*

CHRISTOPHER B. LEINBERGER, *Land Use Strategist and Developer, Founding Partner, Arcadia Land Company, Chairman and CEO, Historic District Improvement Company, Albuquerque, NM*

LOUISE MANUEL, *Senior Project Manager, LISC, Los Angeles, CA*

DEE WALSH, *Executive Director, REACH Community Development Corp., Portland, OR*

Left: Maurice Cox, Leland Cott, and Louise Manuel reviewing applications
Right: Andrew Altman and Chris Leinberger review applications

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Since the RBA seeks excellence in places where it may not be expected, eligibility criteria are intentionally few. First, the project must be a real place, not a plan. It must be sufficiently complete to demonstrate its excellence to a team of site visitors from the Bruner Foundation, and it must be located in the continental United States. Site visits are integral to the award process, and it is not feasible to conduct visits to international locations.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

The Selection Committee meets twice; first to select the five finalists from a field of about 100 applicants, and then to select the Gold Medal Winner. Between these two meetings, Bruner Foundation staff researches the finalists and visits each site for two or three days, exploring the projects and pursuing questions raised by the Selection Committee. The team members tour the projects, interview fifteen to twenty-five or more project participants (including community participants), take photographs, observe patterns of use and collect secondary source documentation on the project. This year's site visit team was led by Robert Shibley, Professor of Architecture and Planning at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Other site

INTRODUCTION



visit team members included: Jay Farbstein, Ph.D., FAIA, president of Jay Farbstein & Associates; Emily Axelrod, director of the Rudy Bruner Award; and Richard E. Wener, Ph.D., associate professor of environmental psychology at Polytechnic University in Brooklyn, New York.

After the site visits, the team prepares a written report and a power point presentation for the Selection Committee at its second meeting in May. With the site visit team on hand to answer questions, the Committee debates the merits of each project to decide upon the Gold Medal winner. In this discussion process the committee explores the issues facing urban areas, comes to a deeper agreement about the kinds of places that embody urban excellence, and identifies seminal and innovative ideas in urban placemaking.

2005 Winners

The 2005 Rudy Bruner Award winners were selected from a field of 133 entries from over 30 states. The applicants included a rich diversity of projects that are contributing to their respective communities in a variety of ways, and the committee commended the work of many applicants.

GOLD MEDAL:

Portland Streetcar Project, Portland, OR

The Portland Streetcar Project includes 2.4 miles of double track streetcar linking five districts on the west side of Portland. The Streetcar Project has resulted in reclamation of a 70 acre brownfield site, and in \$1.4 billion of private and institutional investment since 1999, encompassing both residential and non-residential uses. It has contributed to the continuing development of a high quality, livable urban environment in Portland by serving high density areas, reducing auto trips, and delivering safe, clean, cost-effective transit services.

Left: Dee Walsh, Maurice Cox and Leland Cott working on the selection process
Right: Leland Cott and Dee Walsh review applications

SILVER MEDALS:

Fruitvale Village, Oakland, CA

Fruitvale Village is a 225,000 square foot “transit village” built by the non-profit Unity Council. Located on former BART parking lots, Fruitvale Village is a mixed use development that creates a pedestrian street and public plaza, 47 units of mixed income housing, a health clinic, a public library, a senior center, office space, and 40,000 square feet of neighborhood retail shops and restaurants. One of Fruitvale’s major goals is to strengthen community institutions and catalyze neighborhood revitalization – physically, economically and socially.

Artist Relocation Program, Paducah, KY

Paducah’s Artist Relocation Program encourages artists from across the country to relocate to the Lower Town neighborhood of Paducah. The City provides incentives for artist relocation, including historic homes offered at affordable rates, and a local bank lends relocating artists funds to restore the houses. The Artist Relocation Program contributes to the revitalization of a blighted historic neighborhood, strengthens the creative economy of Paducah, and creates a renewed residential community in the downtown.

The Heidelberg Project, Detroit, MI

The Heidelberg Project is a series of art installations by artist Tyree Guyton, located in an inner-city neighborhood in East Detroit. It includes a variety of art works, three art education programs, and space for a visiting artist. Despite partial demolition by the City of Detroit on two different occasions, the Heidelberg Project has been rebuilt and is now the third most visited site in the city of Detroit, building bridges among a diverse group of visitors from around the world.

Downtown Silver Spring Revitalization, Silver Spring, MD

The revitalization of downtown Silver Spring, developed in the context of Maryland’s Smart Growth policies, represents a re-invention of first ring suburbs through a creative public/private partnership. The revitalization effort has resulted in over one million square feet of retail space including movie theaters, restaurants, office space, multi-family dwelling units, civic space and parking garages, and the world headquarters for Discovery Communications. The revitalized downtown, located adjacent to a Metro stop, also includes four reconstructed main streets with extensive new streetscape for safe and attractive pedestrian movement.

2005 AWARD PRESENTATIONS

Because the Rudy Bruner Award is intended to stimulate a national discussion on the nature of urban excellence, award presentations offer an important opportunity to raise awareness of the issues addressed by each winning project. Past awards have been presented at the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and in many of the cities in which winning projects are located. At the presentations planners, community organizers, architects, and developers speak about their projects, and mayors are often present to recognize the contributions these projects have made to their respective communities.

This year's Gold Medal award of \$50,000 was presented to the Portland Streetcar Project at an event that honored not only the project, but the many people who were instrumental in the project's implementation. Silver Medal winners were each awarded \$10,000 at events in their respective cities, with local press and elected officials present to recognize their achievement.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

As part of an ongoing effort to facilitate a national dialogue on the meaning and nature of urban excellence and to promote important new ideas about urban placemaking, the Bruner Foundation publishes a book containing case studies of the winners. Each book recounts the story of the winning projects, and the dialogue and debate among SELECTION COMMITTEE members. Each project case study is prefaced by a "project at a glance" section that briefly summarizes the project and the SELECTION COMMITTEE discussion. This overview is followed by detailed accounts of the history, character, financing, and operation of each winning project. In addition to describing the five winners, a concluding chapter identifies the most important themes recognized by the SELECTION COMMITTEE.



Robert Shibley presenting the Rudy Bruner Award to the Artist Relocation Project team

BRUNER FOUNDATION PUBLICATIONS

Bruner Foundation books are currently in use in graduate and undergraduate programs in universities across the country. The work of the Rudy Bruner Award and its winners has been recognized by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Environmental Design Research Association. Recent articles on the RBA have appeared in *Foundation News*, *New Village Journal*, *Architectural Record*, *Design Book Review*, and *Architecture* magazine. See also the chapter on the RBA in Lynda Schneekloth and Robert Shibley's *Placemaking: The Art and Practice of Building Community* (John Wiley and Sons, 1995), and in the McGraw Hill compendium on the state of the art in urban design, *Time Saver Standards for Urban Design* published in 2003, edited by Don Watson, Alan Plattus, and Robert Shibley.

Case studies contained in Bruner Foundation books are now also available on the Foundation's web site, www.brunerfoundation.org.

Bruner Foundation books, some of which are available from the Foundation, include:

- PHILIP LANGDON WITH ROBERT SHIBLEY AND POLLY WELCH, *Urban Excellence* (Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1990).
- NEAL PEIRCE AND ROBERT GUSKIND, *Breakthroughs: Re-creating the American City* (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers, State University of NJ, 1993).
- JAY FARBSTAIN AND RICHARD WENER, *Connections: Creating Urban Excellence; 1991 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence* (Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1992).



Maurice Cox and Simeon Bruner at the Boston Redevelopment Authority city model

- JAY FARBSTEIN AND RICHARD WENER, *Rebuilding Communities: Re-creating Urban Excellence*; 1993 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1993).
- JAY FARBSTEIN AND RICHARD WENER, *Building Coalitions for Urban Excellence*; 1995 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1996).
- JAY FARBSTEIN AND RICHARD WENER, *Visions of Urban Excellence*; 1997 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (Bruner Foundation, Inc. 1998)
- ROBERT SHIBLEY WITH EMILY AXELROD, JAY FARBSTEIN AND RICHARD WENER, *Commitment to Place: Urban Excellence and Community* (Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1999)
- RICHARD WENER, PhD WITH EMILY AXELROD, MCP; JAY FARBSTEIN FAIA, PhD; ROBERT SHIBLEY, AIA, AICP; AND POLY WELCH, *Placemaking for Change: 2001 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence* (Bruner Foundation, 2002)
- FARBSTEIN, JAY, FAIA, WITH EMILY AXELROD, MCP, RICHARD WENER, PH.D., AND ROBERT SHIBLEY, *Creative Community Building: 2003 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*, (Bruner Foundation, 2003)



An earlier Bruner Foundation endeavor revisited the winners and finalists from the first four cycles of the RBA to learn how the projects have fared over time. The book asks which places have continued to thrive and which have struggled, and why. Partially funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, teams of Foundation staff and consultants, HUD regional staff, and past Selection Committee members revisited 21 projects. The conclusions these observers reached can be found in:

- JAY FARBSTEIN, ROBERT SHIBLEY, POLLY WELCH AND RICHARD WENER, *Sustaining Urban Excellence: Learning from the Rudy Bruner Award, 1987-1993* (Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1998). This book is available through the Bruner Foundation or through the HUD User web site.

Dee Walsh and Maurice Cox discuss applications

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Robert Shibley, AIA, AICP, is a professor at the School of Architecture and Planning at the State University of New York, Buffalo. He is also a founding partner of Caucus Partnership, a consulting practice on environmental and organizational change. At the University at Buffalo, he is a former chairman of the Department of Architecture and now serves as the director of The Urban Design Project, a center in the school devoted to the study and practice of urban design.

Emily Axelrod, MCP, is the director of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. She holds a masters degree in city planning from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and has worked in urban planning in both the public and private sectors in San Francisco and Boston.

Jay Farbstein, PhD, FAIA, is an architect by training. He leads a consulting practice in Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo, CA, specializing in helping public sector and private clients develop and document their requirements for building projects as well as in evaluating the degree to which their completed buildings meet those requirements.

Richard Wener, PhD is associate professor of environmental psychology in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Polytechnic University in Brooklyn, New York. He has done extensive research on the effects of built environments on individuals and communities.

ACCESS TO OTHER RUDY BRUNER AWARD MATERIALS

Winner applications are also on line. This archive of applications allows both perusal of original application material, and the ability to select winner projects by keywords in seventeen categories including housing, historic preservation, art, land use controls, commercial development, transportation, etc. The University at Buffalo site is coordinated through The Urban Design Project, directed by Robert Shibley and developed by the staff at the University at Buffalo's Lockwood Memorial Library. It is a valuable tool for students and others interested various aspects of the urban built environment.

<http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/bruner/>

Also, all RBA applications through 1999 have been recorded on microfiche and are accessible through:

Interlibrary Loan Department
Lockwood Memorial Library
State University of New York at Buffalo
Amherst, NY 14260
Phone: (716) 636-2816
Fax: (716) 636-3721

An abstract and keyword identification has been prepared for each application and can be accessed through two major databases: RLIN/Research Library Information Network and OCLF/First Search.

The Bruner Foundation also maintains a web site for the RBA. The site contains an overview and history of the award, summary material and visual images of all winners, biographical material on Selection Committee members; and online versions of every Bruner Foundation publication. The web site also contains information on how to apply for the RBA. The Web site address is:

<http://www.brunerfoundation.org>

For more information, please contact:

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Gold Medal Winner
Portland Streetcar Project
Portland, Oregon





Portland Streetcar Project At A Glance

What is the Portland Streetcar Project?

"...an active participant in the continuing development of a high quality, livable environment in the City of Portland by supporting streetcar development serving high density areas and by delivering safe, reliable, clean, cost-effective transit services."

(Portland Streetcar, Inc. Mission Statement, June, 2001)

- ➔ Three miles of double track streetcar linking five districts on the west side of Portland, Oregon for a capital cost of \$72.9 million.
- ➔ Thin slab and rail section innovations allowing for economical rail infrastructure with minimal impact during system construction.
- ➔ \$2,287,854,000 of private investment within the local improvement districts for the Portland Streetcar system.
- ➔ A spine of four parks (two are complete) flanked by the double track and mixed-use neighborhoods replacing approximately seventy acres of reclaimed brownfields.
- ➔ A planned streetcar route that will create a circulator loop linking east and west Portland across the Willamette River.

Project Goals

- ➔ Create a high quality transit service as an incentive for high density mixed-use development within the Central City.
- ➔ Connect major attractions in the Central City including Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital, the Pearl District, the Cultural District, Portland State University, RiverPlace, and South Waterfront with high quality transit.
- ➔ Develop rail transit that operates in mixed traffic and on existing rights-of-way at lower cost than light rail transit.
- ➔ Develop rail transit that fits the scale and traffic patterns of existing neighborhoods.
- ➔ Reduce short inner-city auto trips, parking demand, traffic congestion and air pollution.

Project Chronology

1972 Portland's *Downtown Plan* calls for North-South transit on 12th Street as a downtown "circulator."

1985 "North West Triangle Report" adopted by City Council, calling for the rezoning of the River District.

1987 Commissioner of Public Works Earl Blumenauer's speech to the Council on his transportation vision includes reference to streetcars as an option for the Central City circulator.

Portland Development Commission (PDC) becomes a major property owner north of the Central Business District (CBD)

in the River District Urban Renewal Area with acquisition of Union Station and its surrounding thirty acres.

1988 Portland's *Central City Plan* calls for vintage trolley on 12th street.

1989 City of Portland approves master plan for Hoyt Street Yards, advocating mixed-use development.

1990 City initiates "Streetcar Feasibility Study" and Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC).

1992 City receives \$900,000 federal HUD grant with local match, with Senator Hatfield's support.

1972
Portland's *Downtown Plan* calls for North-South downtown transit.

1990
City initiates "Streetcar Feasibility Study" and Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC).

1995 Senator Mark Hatfield earmarks \$5 million in FTA funds for TriMet to implement the streetcar.

Portland Streetcar, Inc. is selected to design, build, operate and maintain the streetcar.

2000 (January) City and TriMet enter into intergovernmental agreements to provide funding assistance and services to the Portland Streetcar project.

2005
Streetcar service to RiverPlace begins.

1987
Cmsr. Blumenauer's speech to the Council references streetcars in the central city.

1992
City receives \$900,000 federal HUD grant for streetcar.

1996-1999 1,311 units of housing and 400,000 square feet of mixed-use constructed in the Pearl District.
Construction begins in May on streetcar section from Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital to PSU.

2001
Substantial completion in January with vehicles starting to arrive in April.
Passenger service starts in July.

1993 Hoyt Street Properties acquires forty acres from Burlington Northern Railroad adjacent to PDC property.

1994 *River District Development Plan* approved. Work begins on the River District Development Agreement.

PDC reports first of River District private development projects – Pearl Lofts (twenty-seven condominium units).

1995 Senator Mark Hatfield earmarks \$5 million in FTA funds for the streetcar through regional transportation agency (TriMet).

City issues RFP to design, build, operate and maintain the streetcar.

PDC reports second of River District private development projects – Hoyt Commons (forty-eight condominium units).

Portland Streetcar, Inc. is selected to design, build, operate and maintain the streetcar.

1997 (March) Two years of negotiation conclude with adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding with Hoyt Street Properties on River District Development.

1999 PDC reports that from 1996 through 1999, there were 1,311 units of housing and approximately 400,000 square feet of mixed-use commercial space constructed in the Pearl District.

Housing is a mix of townhouses, condominiums, seniors housing and rental units.

Hoyt Street Properties development agreement amended increasing density.

Construction begins in May on streetcar section from Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital to Portland State University.

Notice to proceed given in September to the Inekon Group (Czech Republic) to manufacture streetcar vehicles.

2000 (January) City and TriMet enter into Intergovernmental Agreements to provide funding assistance, personnel and other services as needed to the Portland Streetcar project.

2001 Substantial completion in January with vehicles starting to arrive in April. Passenger service starts in July.

2004 PDC reports that from 2000 through 2003, 1,218 units of housing were completed.

2005 Streetcar service to RiverPlace begins.

KEY PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

SAM ADAMS, *Commissioner of Public Utilities, City of Portland*

BRUCE ALLEN, *Senior Development Manager, Portland Development Commission (PDC)*

HENRY A. ASHFORTH III, *Chief Executive Officer, Ashforth Pacific, Inc.*

GREG BALDWIN, *Partner, Zimmer, Gunsul Frasca Partnership*

EARL BLUMENAUER, *U.S. Congressman for Oregon's 3rd District*

MICHAEL BOLLIGER, *President, Bolliger and Sons; business owner interested in Eastside extension; past chairman of Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) for Portland Streetcar; member CAC*

JOHN CARROLL, *Chairman, Chairman of the Board, PSI*

DIKE DAME, *President, Williams and Dame Development, Inc.*

KAY DANNEN, *Community Relations Manager, Shiels Oblatz Johnsen, Inc.*

VICKY DIEDE, *Portland Streetcar Project Manager, Portland Office of Transportation*

MARK DORN, *Track Engineer/Design Consultant Manager, URS*

MARK EDLEN, *Managing Principal, Gerding/Edlen, developer*

STEVE FOSLER, *Principal, Fosler Architecture, LLC, member CAC*

RICK GUSTAFSON, *Chief Operating Officer, PSI; Principal Shiels Oblatz Johnsen, Inc.*

ROD O'HISER, *formerly, City of Portland Planning Department*

J.W. MATT HENNESSEE, *Commission Chair, PDC*

D. CARTER MACNICHOL, *Principal, Shiels Oblatz Johnsen, Inc.*

DON MAZZIOTTI, *Executive Director, PDC*

DOUG OBLETZ, *Principal, Shiels Oblatz Johnsen, Inc. and Managing Member, Sockeye Development*

TOM POTTER, *Mayor, City of Portland*

MICHAEL POWELL, *Owner, Powell's Book Store; member and Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors, PSI*

VICTOR RHODES, *Principal, Rhodes Consulting and former Director, City of Portland Office of Transportation*

ROGER SHIELS, *Principal, Shiels Oblatz Johnsen, Inc.*

GORDON SMITH, *U.S. Senator for Oregon*

CHRIS SMITH, *Current Chair, CAC*

TIFFANY SWEITZER, *President, Hoyt Street Properties, member of the Board of Directors, PSI*

HOMER WILLIAMS, *Director, Williams and Dame Development, Inc.*

BRANT WILLIAMS, *Director, City of Portland Office of Transportation*

MARIA ZIMMERMAN, *Administrative Assistant to Congressman Earl Blumenauer*

Project Description

Urban Context and History

Portland, Oregon sits at the intersection of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers with a good inland deepwater port that initially supported the shipment of goods from the Columbia River to the Willamette River. Portland was a key port until the railroads came in the 1890s, when it was eclipsed by the port of Seattle where ships did not have to navigate the difficult entry up the Columbia River from the Pacific.

The city has its origins in a legendary place known as “The Clearing” between two already established communities: the territorial capital, Oregon City, about twelve miles to the south, and Fort Vancouver to the north. The grade school textbooks and websites on Oregon history are fond of the William Overton story, reciting his interest in the 640 acres of land that is now Portland, and its potential for commercial use. In 1843, Overton, so the story goes, did not have the twenty-five cents needed to file a claim, so he partnered up with another legend in Oregon, Asa Lovejoy. Lovejoy, in turn, surrendered his interests in the land to a Francis W. Pettygrove but prior to giving up his interest, Lovejoy wanted to name it after his hometown, as did Pettygrove. A toss of the coin decided the argument with Pettygrove’s Portland (Maine) winning over Lovejoy’s Boston (Massachusetts).

The Central City we know today is actually the result of a 19th century merger of three cities, Portland, East Portland and Albina. Since the mergers, land uses also changed with East Portland and Albina assuming more of the industrial load and Portland on the west side becoming more of what we think of as downtown. It is this Central City that establishes a context for first the 1972 *Downtown Portland Plan* and then the *Central City Plan* to create an “inner city circulator” linking the commercial centers of the three merged cities.

The *Central City Plan* adopted by the City Council in 1988 is part of a longer process of rethinking the locational shifts that occurred in industry since the 1950s. Its charge was to support the emerging expansion of commercial, retail and residential uses into the former industrial areas of Albina to the north and east of downtown and to the former city of East Portland, this time connecting the three cities merged a century earlier through recognizing the land use changes needed to deal with the changes in the industrial landscape.

Streetcars played an important part in connecting different parts of the city, and in changing development practices in Portland from those associated with the first horse drawn streetcars on Front Street in 1872. The system was a catalyst for development in all three of the downtown communities and in the emergence of new suburbs. The ascendancy of streetcars in Portland concluded with closing the last

surviving streetcar line that ran from the public housing projects to Beaverton, south of the city, in the 1950s. This closing also marked the beginning of a thirty year decline economic decline in Portland. In announcing the expansion of the Portland Streetcar loop in March of 2005, the major newspaper in the state, *The Oregonian*, stressed this history with the following quote: “As the city grew [since 1872] and the streetcar went to rails, nothing indicated a commitment to development of an area quite like the laying of track for a streetcar” (Adair Law, special to *The Oregonian*). As will be seen, the same appears to hold true for the reincarnation of streetcar traffic to Portland in the new millennium.



The Portland streetcar facilitated over \$1.4 billion in private sector investment within the Local Improvement District.

In 1980, Portland continued work to reverse its decline with an amendment to its now famous 1972 *Downtown Plan* which focused on reversing the three trends related to population and job loss: retail migration to the suburbs; a concurrent dependence on the automobile; and an increase in air pollution, leading the area to experience sixty bad air days a year. The plan made access (not parking) a priority related to reversing all three problems and stressed public transportation as part of the key to its future success. By 1987 the city had begun to regain its prominence in retailing, moving from less than six percent of the market in the late 1970s to over thirty percent of the regional retail share in 1989. It had also reduced its number of bad air days to less than ten per year.

The Portland metropolitan statistical area of 2003 was reported as 2,009,305 and is expected to grow to over 2,300,000 by 2010. In the face of this pressure the City views its balance of rail, bus, auto, bike and pedestrian traffic as critical to the ability to sustain its quality of life. This same set of projections has led the city to add additional commercial and residential density to the Central City and, with the aid of improved public transit, to steadily reduce local dependence on autos.

This growth projection exists concurrently with a difficult state economy and an unemployment rate for the city of 6.2 percent. The vacancy rates in offices in the CBD are at eighteen percent when they were less

than ten percent just eight years ago. And high tech employment that fueled some of its growth in the 1980s and early 1990s has decreased. There is a significant reduction in the downtown payroll and parking revenues are down thirty percent. Portland also has what some consider a high crime rate compared to the rest of the state, but it is widely believed this statistic is due to a higher than usual level of reporting by a non-apathetic public.

According to the Portland Streetcar, Inc. (PSI) web site, specific transportation related decisions in the past have contributed to the ability of the City to manage increased population and to position itself for new job growth and improved quality of life. These decisions include:

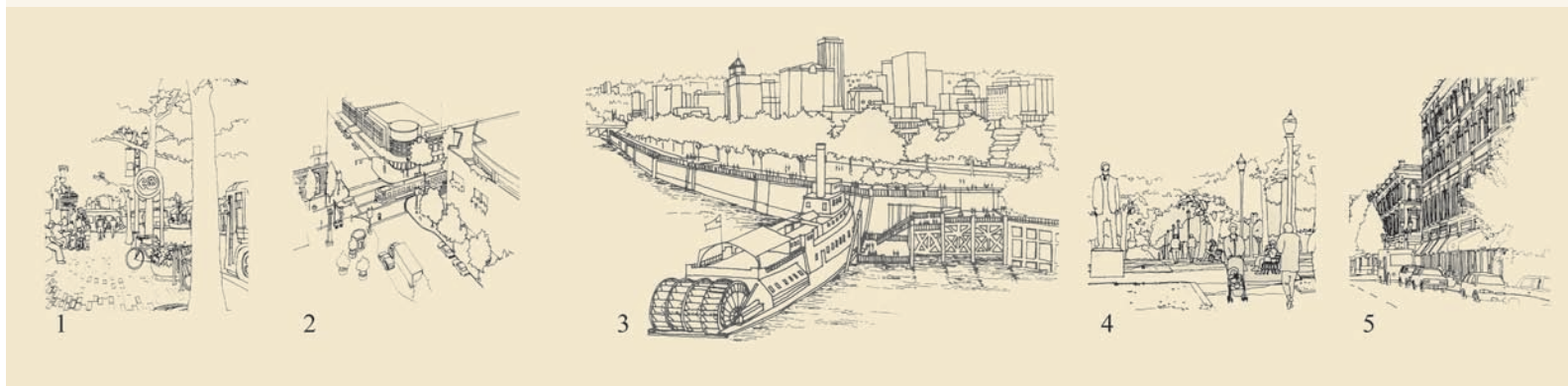
- Establishment of TriMet, a public regional transit agency with new buses and a twelve block downtown transit mall;
- Elimination of a freeway along the Willamette River where a popular public park now sits;
- A decision not to build a freeway that would have destroyed housing in established Portland neighborhoods, and;
- State and local support for MAX, the regional light rail service that now links suburban communities more than thirty-three miles apart from each other as well as to downtown Portland.

(A 5.5 mile spur to the Portland International Airport opened in the fall of 2002, and a 5.8 mile spur opened north to EXPO in May 2004.)

The Portland Streetcar system is one more important transportation decision that has enhanced Portland's vitality while helping the City accommodate new residential and business growth.

The technical description of the Portland Streetcar Project history would have us start with a feasibility study in 1990 leading to hiring a project manager, establishing a Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC), and hosting a series of public meetings leading to a plan for the streetcar in 1991. This series of events sparked implementation actions

culminating in a 1995 solicitation for a contractor to design, operate and maintain a streetcar system. Portland Streetcar, Inc. (PSI), an organization of property owners, community and neighborhood leaders and public officials, was the successful (and only) respondent to the solicitation. Construction began in May of 1999 on the 2.4 mile first phase of the system, and by 2001, streetcar service linked the Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital in Northwest Portland to Portland State University. By March of 2005, the line was extended another 0.6 miles to RiverPlace, fully connecting the most densely populated area in the state of Oregon (Northwest Portland), to the district adjacent to the downtown.

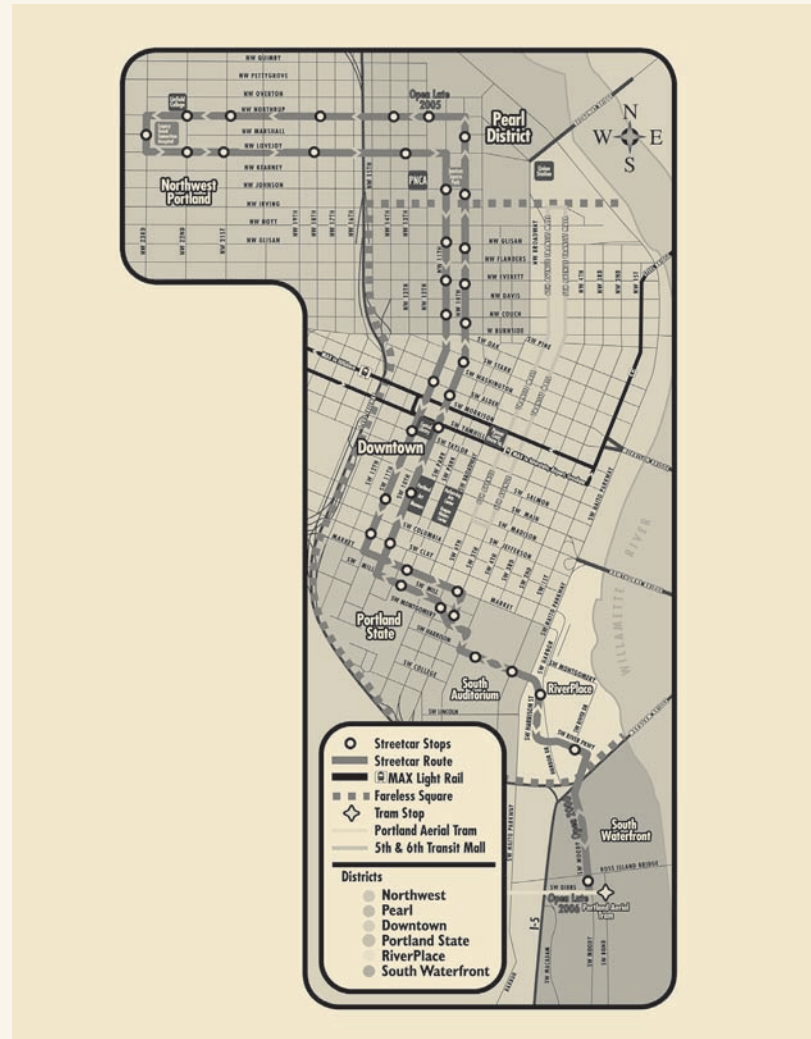


Portland's Downtown Plan and Program won the 1989 Rudy Bruner Gold Medal. The plan helped establish a new transit mall (1), light rail system (2), a new waterfront park (3), enhanced park space (4), and emphasized preservation throughout the Downtown (5).

(Source: Portland Office of Transportation and the Portland Development Commission)

The richer story connects John Carroll's (first chair of the Citizen's Advisory Committee) nostalgic memories of the "Red Car" in Los Angeles, to Congressman Earl Blumenauer's long standing belief in public transportation as both a vehicle to improve air quality and a primary strategy for growth management. It was Blumenauer who appointed John Carroll in 1990 to the CAC for the Portland Streetcar Project. The six-month appointment marked the beginning of Carroll's intimate involvement with the project, a relationship that continues to the present day. While he no longer serves as director of the CAC, he is currently the Chair of the Portland Streetcar, Inc. Board. Carroll refers to this involvement as proof that, "you and three other people can do anything or stop anything." In this case it was an affirmative assertion that helped make the Portland Streetcar Project happen.

The project story, however, goes well beyond John Carroll's nostalgia for streetcars. It is a story of planning and plan implementation over decades, regional coordination and community debate at every step of the process of project development, hard fought and innovative as well as flexible development agreements with the private land owners; it is a story of practical design, efficient engineering, common sense operations, and of the creative financing of the system. It is also a story of learning from what has become the centerpiece of a national movement for streetcar use involving over eighty cities throughout the United States and the world.



The Portland Streetcar Inc. system map illustrates the connections to areas of high employment in Northwest Portland and Portland State.

THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Portland is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its 1972 *Downtown Plan*, updated in 1980. Eight additional planning efforts since then connect the Downtown to the larger Central City and region, including the *Central City Plan*. Virtually all of these call attention to the River District, which has undergone enormous transformation just prior to and following the installation of the Portland Streetcar.

In the 1980s some neighborhoods were protesting “dense” townhouse developments by literally burning down a new townhouse development in Northwest Portland. Even so, density was just beginning to be seen as a significant way to manage growth and sustain quality of life in Portland. From the 1980s through the 1990s planning policy protected intact neighborhoods and pushed dense development into the Central City according to plan. After the 1990s, many residents changed their attitudes about density and began to move into the denser environments for the convenience of access to work, shopping, and entertainment options without requiring car trips. Actions taken to implement the 1988 *Central City Plan* facilitated this process. The July resolution adopting the *Central City Plan* described the plan in this way:

“A plan that is a vision for the future, which establishes the Central City as the center of commerce and cultural activities in the community, recognizes the unique environmental setting and historic precedence of the area, incorporates the residential and business characteristics of individual districts within the area, preserves the integrity of adjacent neighborhoods, and improves the livability of the area for all citizens.”

(Adopted CCP Planning Process, Resolution 33717, July 25, 1984.)

The plan objectives included three specific mandates that were particularly relevant to the Portland Streetcar Project:

- Clarify the functional role of the Central City and its relationship to the larger community;
- Identify feasible public actions to assist and attract private investment in the Central City; and
- Assure a human scale.



- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Downtown | 5. Loyd District |
| 2. Pearl District | 6. Hawthorne Boulevard |
| 3. Nob Hill | 7. Sellwood |
| 4. Old Town/China Town | 8. Alberta Street |

To these mandates were added several objectives including the desire to “establish the relationship of each of the districts in the Central City to each other and to the Central City as a whole.” The current and projected alignment of Portland Streetcar, while not specifically referenced except as a Central City Circulator (building on the *Downtown Plan* reference), does exactly this by implementing four key components. First, there will be a spine of four parks, two of which are complete. Second, the parks will be linked and bordered by the double track of the transit service. Third, they will be surrounded by a ring of mixed-use and mixed-income neighborhoods. And four, each neighborhood is to have a distinct identity (Northwest Portland, the Pearl, Downtown, Portland State, RiverPlace, and eventually, South Waterfront). At this stage in development, 24,000 Portland State University students and another 12,000 Oregon Health Services University students are linked to cultural attractions downtown and to a ring of mixed-use housing projects on a streetcar line that also frames what will be the spine of parks.

Plans for the Portland Streetcar include extensions that would link communities on both sides of the river.

Regional Coordination

When it was proposed, the project was not considered a regional priority for TriMet, the region's metropolitan transit organization. TriMet was then focused on the \$3 billion South/North Light Rail Project and had concerns that the streetcar would distract attention from assuring completion of this project. As a result, the Streetcar Project was required to seek funds other than regional transportation funds. There were predictions that the streetcar would be a failure due to operating in mixed traffic. One of TriMet's employees dubbed the streetcar as a "donkey trolley."

In order to get TriMet's cooperation on the project, both political and practical moves were made, including an agreement to not seek federal funds from the same sources employed by TriMet. For example, an early allocation of funds for study came from HUD, and later resources came from a special allocation from the Federal Transit Agency outside the allocations offered by formula to TriMet. Since that time TriMet representatives have changed their attitude a great deal. They now support the operations of the first 2.4 miles of double track with an allocation of \$1.6 million dollars per year, which is the amount they would have spent on bus service in the area now served by the new rail system. In addition, in 2000 they sponsored the "Willamette Shore Streetcar Study." TriMet is providing two-thirds of the operating expenses for the Portland State University to RiverPlace

extension that opened in March of this year, and is also committed to providing another two-thirds of the operating support for the RiverPlace to Southwest Gibbs Avenue service in the South Waterfront District.

TriMet has come a long way past the "donkey trolley" label to embrace the Portland Streetcar as an important part of the regional transit system. Steps along the way in TriMet's conversion included the incorporation of a vintage trolley system run on TriMet rails. This vintage system was then recast in the form of a modern transportation element and became the Portland Streetcar. Most of those interviewed on the subject believe the initial resistance dissipated when competition for funding was addressed. TriMet did not become convinced, however, until it saw the increasingly dense development that was emerging in anticipation of the Streetcar Project.

Both the City Department of Transportation and TriMet see themselves in the community development business, not strictly as transportation providers. In the City, Vic Rhodes, then Director of Transportation, changed the name of one of his departments from Transportation Engineering to Transportation, Engineering, and Development. TriMet and the City view transit as a key growth management strategy in the region.

COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

The River District

One of the many stories of public and private cooperation that demonstrates the streetcar leverage comes from the first development agreement with Hoyt Street Properties L.L.C. The story starts in 1987, in what is now the River District, an area between the densely populated Northwest Portland, home of Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital, and Portland State University. The area included thirty acres around the old Union Station property and forty acres of Burlington Northern Railroad yards. The Portland Development Commission acquired the thirty acres as a possible site for a future convention center, which was eventually located across the river. Six years later, in 1993, Hoyt Street Properties acquired the Burlington Northern property, thus aggregating seventy acres of property with the potential to link two major employment centers and Northwest Portland residential neighborhoods to the downtown.

The entire seventy acres was zoned industrial and was surrounded by warehouses. The Portland Development Commission reports that there were no streets in the seventy acres, no parks, no housing and no amenities. It was also the “largest contaminated site in the city.” In addition, the Lovejoy Viaduct, an expressway ramp, served to further

isolate Northwest Portland from the area. A consortium of business and government leaders, which included owners of the seventy acres, oversaw a *Vision Plan* for the area calling for high density housing (5,500 units with approximately one hundred acres a unit), a mix of incomes, and parks and open space. The PDC led the negotiation of an agreement between the City and Hoyt Street Properties to develop their property, committing to approximately \$150 million in public and private funds that led to the final realization of the *Vision Plan*.



The historic Union Station still exists in what is now the River District.



The aerial photo shows the extent of brownfield remediation required in what would become the River District.

The development agreement between the City of Portland and Hoyt Street Properties L.L.C. was completed in 1997 and was one of the reasons for developer confidence in the potential transformation of the abandoned and contaminated rail yards. The agreement cited as “contingent obligations” the “Lovejoy Project” (the demolition of the expressway ramp), the construction of the “Streetcar Project,” the delivery of the “Park Squares Project,” and a “Neighborhood Park Project.” In exchange for these contingent conditions, the developer agreed to housing affordability and density goals. Those density goals were renegotiated two years later and significantly increased.

The agreement defines the “Lovejoy Project” as the “...removal of the N.W. Lovejoy and N.W. 10th Avenue ramps and reconstruction of those streets at grade along with construction of a new ramp to the Broadway Bridge at N.W. 9th Avenue and N.W. Lovejoy, including all street improvements...” The “Streetcar Project” was defined in the same agreement as “...the construction of a new streetcar system, connecting downtown Portland and, ultimately, Portland State University, with the Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital area along an alignment including N.W. 10th and N.W. 11th Avenues, N.W. Lovejoy and N.W. Northrup within the property.” The “Park Squares Project” included land acquisition by the city as well as the design, construction and maintenance by the City of both South Park Square and North Park Square as amenities in the overall

development, incorporating two full blocks at approximately 40,000 square feet each. In like fashion, the “Neighborhood Park Project” involved the acquisition by the City of approximately 90,000 square feet and the design, construction and maintenance of the property acquired as a public park.

Another contingency was the controversial agreement dictated by Portland’s City Council to provide for an income distribution consistent with the income demographics of the City of Portland as a whole. This required another level of public finance (an estimated \$50 million) beyond the costs of demolishing the Lovejoy ramp, the construction of connector streets (an estimated \$15 million), the building of a streetcar system (an estimated \$45 million), and the building of three large parks (an estimated \$10 million). At the time of the agreement none of these contingencies except for the Lovejoy Project were in place. The agreement and a 1994 *Vision Plan* for the area were used to acquire the needed funding in accordance with deadlines identified in the agreement.

A History of Cooperation

The State of Oregon has a long history of citizen activism, an organized and vocal business community, and solid land use planning. From the early days of One Thousand Friends of Oregon and the Citizen’s Advisory Committee (CAC) that debated the key elements of the

Downtown Plan for a decade prior to its acceptance, Portland citizens have stayed involved. When it came time to appoint the CAC of community and business representatives for the Portland Streetcar Project, the process was understood and respected. Senior stakeholders and advocacy groups stepped up to serve and worked through a wide range of issues inviting the public into the alignment, design and operation decisions. Michael Powell, past chair of the Citizen’s Advisory Committee, summarizes this history by suggesting that there is a “culture of inclusion” in Portland that makes projects like the streetcar possible.

The City Commissioner of Public Utilities, Sam Adams, attributes the success of their planning efforts and their ethic of participation to involved citizens who read newspapers and books. They also consume large quantities of micro-brew beer and go out a lot, demanding a quality public realm in which to do so. Adams speaks of the business community as “not at war with progressives,” and describes them as a group of people who do not subvert community goals to their financial interests. For the most part, Portlanders have little respect for arguments based on authority. Adams describes all of this as contributing to a climate that assumes consensus is possible. Participants also expect, and are not deterred by the fact, that the process to get to this consensus will “drive you nuts.”

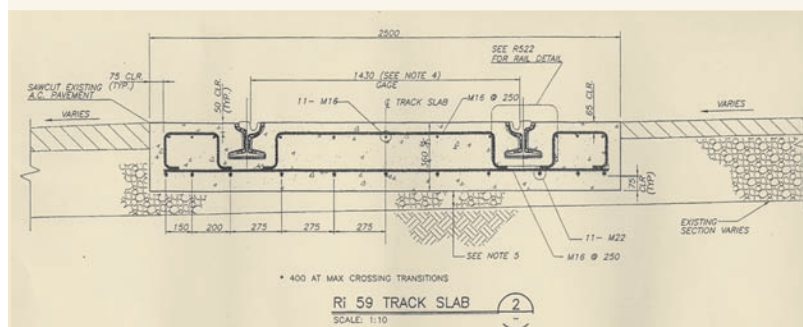
DESIGN AND OPERATIONS

To place the story of the design and construction story of the Portland Streetcar in some context requires us to recall two Neil Goldschmidt elections. The first was in 1976 as then Mayor Goldschmidt ran for office during the construction of Tri Met's Downtown Transit Mall. There was an article and a picture of him in front of the project under construction. He responded by making a TV ad with him in front of a jackhammer on the mall calling for even more improvements downtown. A second election occurred a decade later in 1986, when Neil Goldschmidt, former Portland mayor, was then running for governor. The opening of the light rail occurred in September, just two months before election. The downtown disruption was extensive during the period, and there was considerable skepticism toward the light rail project. The headline in *The Oregonian* read, "Would you

do this in an election year?" There was a photo of Goldschmidt with his arms outstretched surrounded by the chaos of construction in the central business district. Goldschmidt was successful in both elections.

The Portland Streetcar, Inc. Board, which included leading property owners along the line, established design and performance criteria intended to make construction considerably less expensive and less disruptive to adjacent businesses. Streetcar construction was designed to avoid interference with utilities, to allow for ease of access to the utilities, and to be constructed rapidly.

Professional staff from URS, the lead engineering and design firm in the project, and from Portland Streetcar, Inc. worked with rail manufacturing innovators in Austria on the technology of rail-slab relationships and devised a twelve inch deep section that could go on top of phone and other utility vaults, handle 5,000 pounds per square inch loads, span trenches of up to ten feet, and that could be laid in increments of three blocks in three weeks. This track section and construction efficiency was facilitated by the use of a slip form track and slab-laying machine. Streetcar costs for the first 2.4 miles of double track were between \$20 million and \$25 million a mile, compared to light rail at between \$60 million and \$80 million a mile.



The innovative thin track slab allows for both rapid and inexpensive construction.

The care taken to minimize disruption of business during construction was extraordinary, with most stores experiencing the chaos of construction in front of their door for less than a week. One anecdote brings the construction management care for ongoing business into sharp focus. During construction at one storefront serviced from the street a delivery truck showed up. The entire construction crew nearby stopped its work immediately and helped off-load the delivery in a matter of minutes. The speed of construction has many benefits, but perhaps the most significant one is political. The installation of streetcars can happen within a four year election cycle, which appeals to politicians at every level of government.

PSI kept its cost per mile down and improved the scale of the rail cars compared to the MAX light rail by purchasing modern “off the shelf” streetcars from Inekon in the Czech Republic. They initially purchased five cars, and then added two more. Three new cars are currently on order. The economy becomes clear when one understands that this is ten cars in a three hundred car manufacturing run from one of the largest streetcar providers in the European Union. The cars are small with large windows and are built low to the ground, allowing the rider to view business frontage and pedestrians on the street at almost eye level.

PSI customized the off-the-shelf cars, choosing its own color palate, seat fabrics, adding air conditioning, refitting the cars to be bi-directional, adding in stainless steel hand rails, providing a modified bridge plate for improved access for the disabled, and providing a new fare box design. In addition, they needed to do some structural adjustments to the cab. Sponsorships for the cars and stations do not sell ads but offer marketing tag lines in a discreet and uncluttered way that adds to the simple and uncomplicated image of the entire streetcar system.



One source of economy in the PSI project was the purchase of five “off the shelf” cars from Inekon in the Czech Republic.

The station designs are practical and minimalist. For one designer they are seen to be somewhat disappointing. "...on sloping sidewalks, the required modifications to the platforms, barriers and ramps have become obtrusive." This is acknowledged by PSI and modifications are already in process further simplifying station designs.

The stations have electronic signboards announcing the wait time until the next car. Some, when reading the almost fourteen minute wait time, as a worst case, decide to walk. The system designers and operators say, great, that's part of the point. Meanwhile they are working to bring the headways down to twelve minutes with the opening of the new section, and aspire to get ten minute headways as their ideal.

Preparing for system operation has paid off for PSI. Six months prior to opening the line, the striping on the roadway was done with signage announcing the coming of the line and stressing the importance of keeping rearview mirrors inside the stripes to avoid losing them. At this point they have lost only one mirror and had a total of four "tow-aways." When a car is parked on the rail right-of-way, the car is not towed but simply moved to the next available parking spot out of the train right-of-way with a note of explanation. By not issuing tickets, problems can be identified and cars can be moved in a matter of minutes with minimal disruption on the line.

When asked, "Why not provide bus service in lieu of a streetcar?" almost all respondents offered comparable answers related to developer confidence in a fixed line. While the Hoyt Street Agreement left room for the provision of rubber tire transit, the key parties to the agreement were clear that the combination of predictability for developers as well as for transit passengers was higher for fixed rail. They knew where to put development, and passengers knew exactly where they were going and how long it would take.

Several government officials, developers and citizens interviewed also identified that there are some intangibles related to train riding. There are people who will ride a train that will not get on a bus. Ride quality is a factor. As board members of PSI state, "the train is an event while the bus is just a bus." Also the occasional user has confidence in exactly where they are going. The scale of the streetcar is more rider friendly, as it is smaller than light rail and more consistent with Portland's 200 by 200 foot block grid system. Finally, virtually all saw the streetcar as a catalyst for development, while few saw bus service as convincing in this role. Businesses will occasionally protest if a bus stop is placed outside their establishment. They are big, smelly, and noisy. No one, however, is complaining about the location of a streetcar stop near their property.



The design of the Portland Streetcar added a new element to a balanced transportation system in Portland. The MAX light rail travels at fifty-five miles per hour and brings the suburbs downtown, while the streetcar usually moves at ten to fifteen miles per hour and moves people around the Central City. Light rail has much higher capacity per car than the streetcar, which has thirty-two seats and can hold up to 120 passengers per car when fully packed.

PORTLAND STREETCAR, INC. (PSI)

PSI has no employees. It is a non-profit corporation under contract to the City to oversee design, construction and operations of the Streetcar Project. It is governed by a board of twenty-two business owners, community members and governmental leaders. PSI sub-contracts for staff services. All sub-contractors, as well as City and

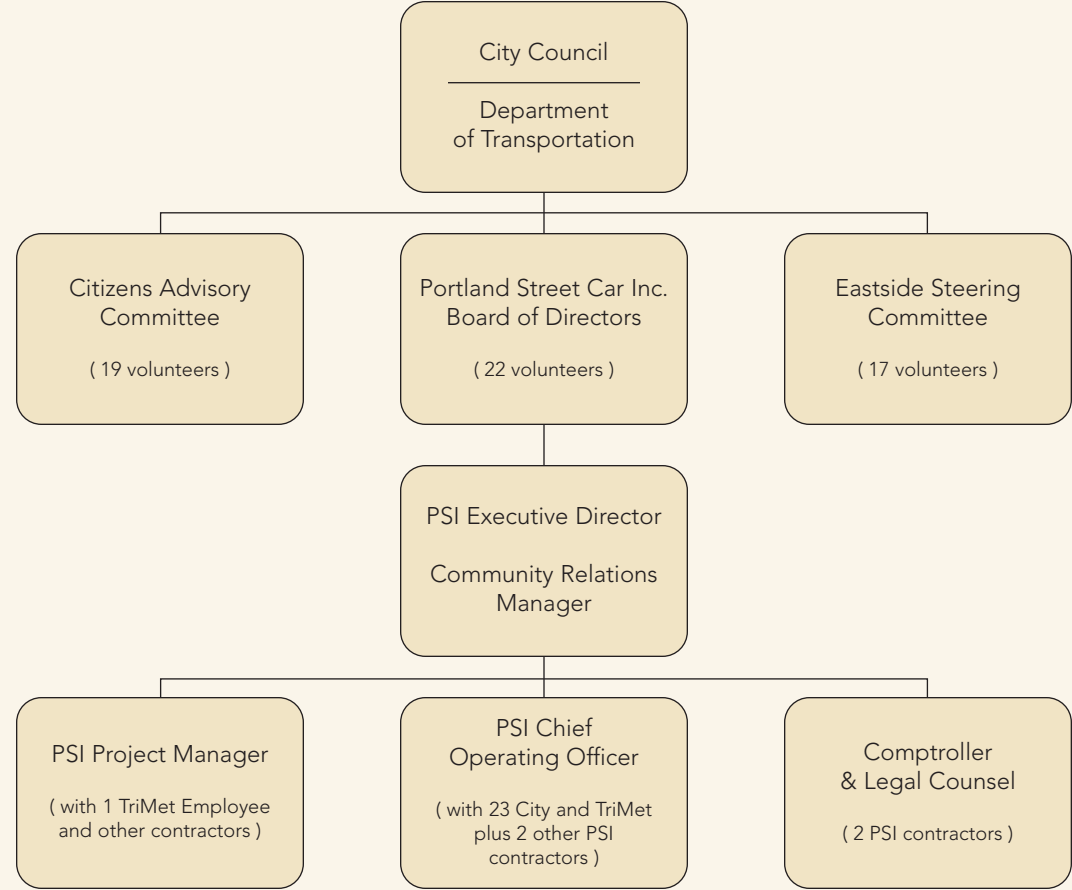
TriMet employees assigned to the project, work under the direction of the PSI Executive Director, the PSI Chief Operating Officer and the PSI Construction Manager, all employees of Shields Oblatz Johnsen, Inc. (SOJ). As a not-for-profit, PSI believes they have more flexibility in the promotion of the Streetcar Project, in the operation of a safe environment, and in sustaining a high level of support in the business community and among other stakeholders.

In addition to managing PSI, SOJ also has development interests along the line, as do several others, including PSI CEO John Carroll who, with Roger Shiels, is intimately involved in the development and implementation the Portland Streetcar. Developers who see the potential of the streetcar to leverage development opportunity are a central part of the design, development and operation of the system. The profit motives are clear and the returns are good.

SOJ was initially involved in the early 1980s working for the Burlington Northern, advising them about land use options for what has become the River District. One of their partners, Douglas Oblatz, is also a managing member of Sockeye Development, which has completed the Museum Place Project and two others in a three block development abutting the streetcar. The projects involve a rich mix of uses including a grocery store, a soup kitchen, a YWCA facility, a range of retail outlets, and low to moderate as well as market rate housing.

The scale of the streetcars fit in well with the pedestrian scale of the streets.

PSI ORGANIZATION CHART



The PSI organization chart shows a broad spectrum of units reporting ultimately to Executive Director Roger Shiels (SOJ), and through him to the board of directors of PSI. They report to the CAC and Eastside Steering Committees. The PSI Board also has a direct reporting line to the Portland Department of Transportation (PDOT) and their project manager, Vicky Diede, as well as Brant Williams, the PDOT Director. They, in turn, report to the Portland City Council. Within this organization the day-to-day work is done by a series of PSI “contractors” performing the duties of Project Management, Chief Operating Officer, Comptroller, and Legal Counsel. Except for two office managers contracted by PSI, others reporting to the Chief Operating Officer are almost all City and TriMet employees. Project Management has the consultant teams of design and engineering staffs, a general contractor, the vehicle manufacturer, as well as a TriMet senior inspector reporting to it.

The PSI organization chart is essentially a map of the public and private cooperation required to design, construct, operate and maintain the system at the level that has been established. This predictability assures the continuation of the leverage effects related to the introduction of the system. The extensive volunteer citizen councils and board components provide a check and balance, weighing developer interests and citizen concerns against the broad missions and capacities of the Office of Transportation and City government.

PSI is an organizational model that is especially effective for design and construction. Its by-laws, for example, were used to start Atlanta Streetcar Inc. The small number of formal employees adds to sustainability and offers flexibility to respond to organizational challenges. For example, PSI faces some new challenges as it considers the extension to Lake Oswego. Does it remain Portland Streetcar, Inc., or change its name? How will the mayor and council in Lake Oswego participate in the governance and finance of the system? PSI board members believe the virtual structure of the organization makes it well suited to address such challenges.

Key elements of the organizational model seen as replicable in other cities include:

- Creating a forum for dialogue across stakeholder interests;
- Defining it as not just a transit system but as a vehicle for economic and community development;
- Maintaining a “pay to play” role for property owners in the Local Improvement District (LID) with a respect for the value for service offered those who contribute to the LID; and
- Using the organization and the streetcar as part of a larger growth management system where the organization starts in the discussion with a “clean slate.”

FINANCES

For the construction of the first 2.4 miles of double track from Northwest Portland to Portland State University, the City picked up seventy-three percent of the capital costs of the system. Over half of the total \$56.9 million cost came from City parking bonds. The private sector LID accounted for seventeen percent of the capital and the federal government picked up the remaining ten percent. Operating costs for the same system show no federal contribution, a thirty percent city parking revenue contribution, an eleven percent source from private sponsorships, and the largest source is TriMet's fifty-nine percent, an offset for what bus service to the area would have cost.

Public Money

Timing is everything. The early federal commitment from HUD for an initial feasibility study and the boost provided early in the process with the \$5 million of Federal Transit Authority (FTA) funds secured by Senator Hatfield gave energy to system finance and added to the public confidence in the project. The innovative transfer of federal funds from FTA through TriMet to the project helped streamline the design of the system and reduced construction costs. Essentially, the FTA funds in the project were "passed through" TriMet where they were used for bus acquisition and local funds earmarked for the buses were then released to help fund the streetcar. This made the

streetcar free of federal requirements to "design it up." There were no NEPA requirements for alternatives analysis and no federal Davis Bacon Act constraints because of the use of local funds in lieu of federal.

This is a streetcar built by the automobile. Parking in the Central City was used to finance almost half the capital costs of the original system and also continues to help finance its operation. Bonds tied to an increase in short term parking fees from seventy-five cents to ninety-five cents in five garages allowed a total bond of \$28 million against the capital costs for the system. In addition, an allocation of \$2 million for capital comes from the City Parking Fund. Parking meter revenues are now being used for the operation of the system, with new meters in the River District being dedicated to the Streetcar Project. In addition, increased fines for parking violations (given for "rampant lawlessness") were also dedicated to the streetcar. An aggregate of the public and private sector sources related to parking revenues of all kinds indicates that \$950,000 (twenty-nine percent) of the \$3.3 million operations budget for the first three miles of the system will come from parking. Parking's contributions to capital costs from public sources totals forty percent.

Other public support for the initial 2.4 miles of double track included a \$1.8 million allocation from the City's General Fund and another \$1.7 million from the City Transportation Fund. Federal support was limited to the FTA funds at \$5 million and the \$0.5 million from HUD. The remainder was made up from the tax increment financing of the South Park blocks Urban renewal area.

There were some shifts in how the first extension was financed compared to the initial 2.4 miles. Tax increment financing for the first section of the system represents about thirteen percent of the capital costs, while in the .06 mile extension just opened it totals over fifty-three percent of the total capital costs. A transportation land sale yielded an additional nineteen percent to the capital resources in the extension, while no such funds were available in the first phase. Federal participation dropped from ten percent of the total capital to five percent in the extension, with city and private sources picking up the difference. TriMet did not make financial contributions to capital costs in either round of financing, but is carrying fifty-nine percent of the operational cost of the first 2.4 miles, and sixty-seven percent of the costs of the second .06 miles.

Private or Not-for-Profit Money

Portland has made good use of Local Improvement District funding for several projects in service of its Downtown Plan and Central City Plan goals. Thus, by now a \$9.6 million LID for the first 2.4 miles of double track was almost routine. Portland State University is a big player in the LID. It has over 24,000 students and parking capacity for 3,000 cars. They provided \$2 million to the LID. Legacy Good Samaritan provided an additional \$1.6 million, and Hoyt Street Properties provided an additional \$0.7 million. The remaining funds came directly from other owners adjacent to the line, assessed at \$6 per \$1,000 of assessed value on their property and from owners a block away from the line who were assessed at \$3 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Michael Powell, a local bookstore owner, chaired the LID process and "was never turned down." He believes the adjacent property owners were convinced by low construction impacts and the promise of higher property values. The private sector has also stepped up to support the operations of the Portland Streetcar with car sponsorships amounting to \$250,000 a year. Overall, the LID is now on the full three miles of double track, representing eighteen percent of the total capital cost.

PORTLAND STREETCAR CAPITAL AND OPERATIONS FUNDING

NORTHWEST PORTLAND TO PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
 (2.4 MILES OF DOUBLE TRACK). SERVICE BEGAN ON JULY 20, 2001.
Capital Budget - \$56.9 Million

Sources:	City Parking Bonds	\$28.6 million
	Local Improvement District	9.6
	Tax Increment (South Park Blocks URA)	7.5
	Federal Transportation Funds	5.0
	City Parking Fund	2.0
	City General Fund	1.8
	City Transportation Fund	1.7
	U.S. HUD Grant	0.5
	Misc.	0.2

Operations Budget - \$2.7 Million (July 1, 2003 – June 30, 2004)

Sources:	TriMet	\$1.6 million
	Parking Meter Revenues	0.8
	Sponsorships/Fares/Promotions	0.3
Service Hours:	21,500 hours	

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY TO RIVERPLACE
 (0.6 MILES OF DOUBLE TRACK). SERVICE BEGAN ON MARCH 11, 2005.
Capital Budget - \$16.0 Million

Sources:	Tax Increment (North Macadam URA)	\$8.4 million
	Transportation Land Sale	3.1
	Local Improvement District	3.0
	U.S. HUD Grant	0.8
	Transportation Fund	0.6
	Misc.	0.1

Operations will cost an additional \$600,000 for RiverPlace service

Sources:	TriMet	\$400,000
	Parking Meter Revenues	150,000
	Sponsorships/Fares/Promotions	50,000
Service Hours:	27,000 hours	

RIVERPLACE TO SW GIBBS AVENUE
(0.6 MILES SINGLE TRACK). SERVICE BEGINS JULY 2006.

Estimated Capital Budget - \$15.8 million

Sources:	Regional Transportation Funds	\$10.0 million
	Tax Increment (North Macadam URA)	3.8
	Local Improvement District	2.0

Operations will add an additional \$600,000 for Gibbs service

Source:	TriMet	\$400,000
	Parking meters	\$200,000
Service Hours:	30,000 hours	

IMPACTS

Development Impacts

The consensus on streetcar alignment generated much of the private investment that followed. Portland Streetcar, Inc. has settled on a leverage calculation for the first phase of system construction investment of \$72.9 million against \$2,287,854,000 in private and institutional investments – a ratio of one to thirty. This calculation was done for investments in the Local Improvement District boundary and was limited to projects completed between 1997, when the alignment was selected. They claim 7,248 residential units have been constructed and 4,624,150 square feet of non residential construction. The compilation of projects for this calculation occurred in January of 2007.

The leverage effects are credited by virtually all those interviewed as occurring in anticipation of the line. The developers did not wait for its actual construction. Using River District Urban Renewal boundaries, the Urban Renewal Agency calculated 5,200 new housing units and 3.6 million square feet of commercial and institutional space since 1997, with construction on the line beginning a full year after the absorption of housing units in the district peaked. These numbers overlap with the calculation of development between 1997 and 2004 and involve a different boundary than the LID.

Another snapshot of development taken from 1996 through 1999 shows 1,311 units of housing and approximately 400,000 square feet of mixed-use commercial space constructed in the Pearl District (in the Northwest corner of the River District). Again, this was the volume of construction in the area that occurred in anticipation of the line's opening and well prior to the start of construction.

The first starts in housing and commercial production were cautious ones. The first twenty-seven units by Hoyt Street Properties (the Pearl Lofts) in 1994 were self-financed. This project provided the “comparable” to kick off the next project of forty-eight units in Hoyt Commons in 1995. From there Hoyt went block by block with fourteen townhouses and sixty-eight condominiums in 1996.

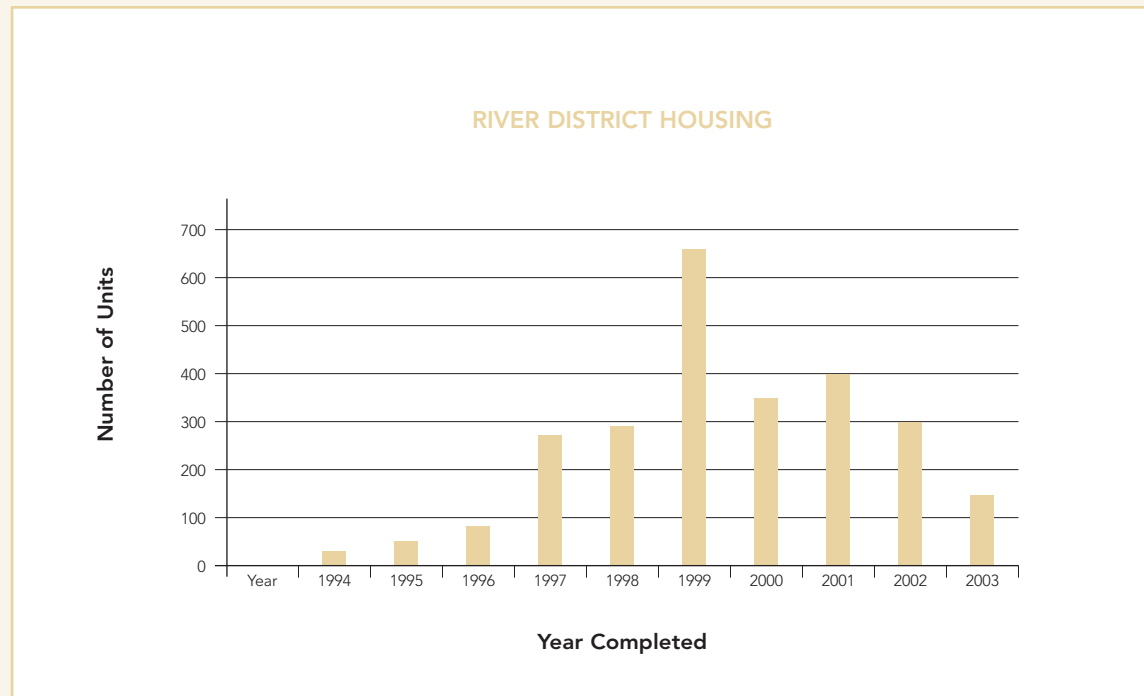


The Pearl District (left) and one of the early Hoyt Street Properties projects (right) illustrate some of the progress made in areas adjacent to the Streetcar.

The assessed land value of land in the River District in 1990/1991 was \$3.65 per square foot, and by 1994 was up to \$42.00 per square foot. By 2000, after the amended agreement with Hoyt Street Properties was signed, the assessment was \$125.00 per square foot and by 2005 it was assessed at \$200.00 per square foot. The Portland Development Commission reports that in the last six years alone, land value in the city as gone up an average of four percent while the river district values are up 250 percent for the same time period.

Another snapshot of land values provided by the Portland Development Commission illustrates that all land use categories within one hundred feet of streetcar alignment from 1999, when construction actually began, and 2001, when it opened, increased an average of seventeen percent over the two years. PDC reports that this is twice the average annual rate of increase experienced by the rest of the city.

In the mid-1990s, Hoyt Street Properties believed that they would get the best return from townhouse construction. However, they agreed that if the Lovejoy viaduct came down, the spine of parks starting with Jameson Park were built, the street grid were built out, and if the Streetcar Project went forward, they would be able to assume higher densities. The 1997 Development Agreement between Hoyt Street Properties and the City of Portland actually provided for a graduated



HOYT STREET PROPERTIES ACTIVITY (SINCE THE 1997 INITIAL DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT)

PROJECT	AMOUNT \$ (millions)	CONDO	APTS	TWN HSE	RETAIL (square feet)	OFFICE (square feet)
Streetcar Lofts	\$ 28	139			9,000	
River Tec	\$ 10					75,000
Riverstone Condos	\$ 25	121			10,000	
The Pinnacle	\$ 51	176			51,000	
Park Place Condos	\$ 47	131			15,000	
Lexis Condos	\$ 23		139		8,500	
Kearney Plaza Apts.	\$ 18		138		7,500	
Johnson St. Town House	\$ 7			13		
Bridgeport Condos	\$ 35	123			8,000	
TOTALS	\$ 244	690	277	13	109,000	75,000

Calculated 1997-2005

scale: If the Lovejoy Viaduct came down, then they would build eighty-seven units to the acre. If the streetcar was provided, then they would build 109 units to the acre. If the spine of parks was provided, then they would build 133 units to the acre. In 1999, the renegotiated Development Agreement provided for an additional twenty-two units per acre, and as of 2001 when the line opened, Hoyt Street Properties alone had built 946 units at an average density of 143 units per acre in the River District.

An analysis of how the housing densities in the River District sorted out according to production by income category shows solid progress on the twenty year targets set by development agreements and Portland Development Commission policy on the area.

Douglas Oblatz of Sockeye Development (also a principal in Shields Oblatz and Johnsen) reports on three blocks of development at Museum Place adjacent to the West End of the streetcar alignment. Their three block development includes 140 apartments over a new 47,000 square foot grocery store; 1,100 square feet of retail; 220 underground parking spaces; a YWCA Downtown Center; the St. Francis apartments with 132 mixed income rental units above ground floor retail; and an additional



30,000 square feet of ground floor retail with offices above for a project known as Madison Place. In addition, in the same three block area, John Carroll is building the Eliot with 250 market rate condominiums.

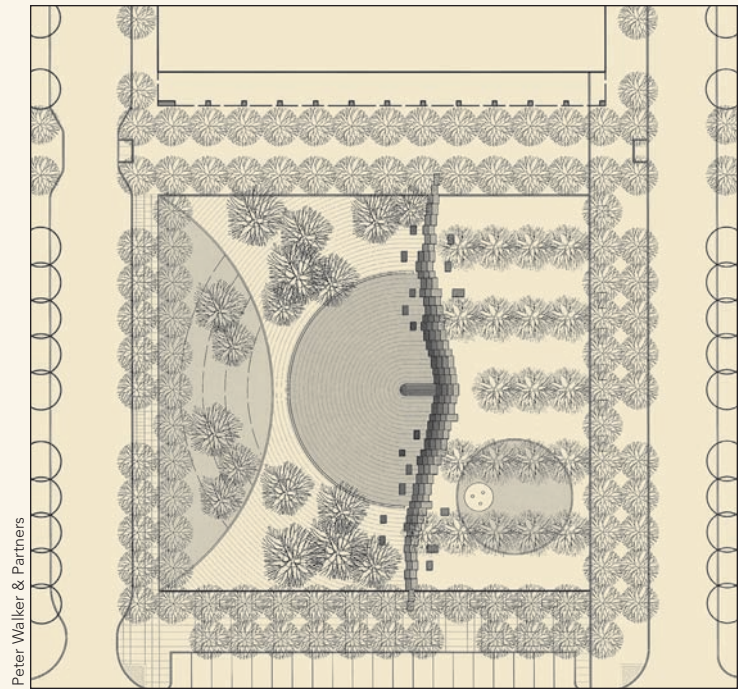
The streetcar passes through a five block area that links the CBD and the River District on the site of the former Blitz-Weinhard Brewery that closed its doors in 1999. The Brewery Blocks are now being rapidly redeveloped for over \$294 million, with the PDC providing a \$6 million loan at eight percent to be repaid over ten years, and an additional \$2 million in streetscape improvements. At completion the project is expected to yield a total of 530,000 square feet of office space 185,000 square feet of retail, and already has its full complement of residential at 370 units. The on-site employment projections are estimated to be 2,300 jobs, fully twenty-three times the employment of the complex in the last days of the brewery operation. The project is seen to already be boosting streetcar ridership, and the Streetcar Project was a big factor in the largely private sector decision to advance the project.

Recent reports by PSI show total development activity from 1997 through 2006 totaling \$2,287,854,000 with 7,248 residential units and 4,624,150 square feet of non-residential construction.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY WITHIN THE
PORTLAND STREETCAR LOCAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS
JANUARY 2006



The photos above show development around Jamison Square and the map to the right illustrates development sites facilitated by Portland Streetcar Inc.



Peter Walker & Partners



Peter Walker & Partners



Peter Walker & Partners

Above: Site Plan for Jamison Park by Peter Walker and Partners
Below and Right: Children enjoying Jamison Park fountain

RIVER DISTRICT HOUSING PRODUCTION BY INCOME CATEGORY (COMPLETED OR UNDER CONSTRUCTION)

	2002	2004	20 YEAR TARGET
Low/Extremely Low (0-50% MFI)	740 (21%)	740 (16%)	20%
Moderate Income (51%-80% MFI)	748 (21%)	835 (18%)	25%
Middle/Upper (Over 80% MFI)	2,036 (58%)	3,155 (67%)	55%
TOTAL	3,524 UNITS	4,730 UNITS	100%

Calculated 1997-2005

Transportation Impacts

The Portland Streetcar system has seven cars and operates with twenty-seven employees. It is a seven-day-per-week service that runs from 5:30 am to 11:30 pm. Monday thru Friday. Weekend service is 7:15 am to 11:45 pm; on Sunday service stops at 10:30 pm. Current headways are thirteen minutes and the fare is mostly free (outside the fareless zone, the system is \$1.40). The streetcar's weekday ridership is about 7,800 riders per day, with Saturdays performing at 6,400 riders and Sundays at 3,000 riders. Ridership over the first years operation tends to peak in the summer, and is consistently highest on Saturdays.

Parking is also positively impacted. The number of parking spaces per unit of new residences in the area adjoining the streetcar alignment has moved from an average of 1.5 per unit to less than one per unit, with the range running from 0.6 to two cars per unit. Essentially, residents along the line who work or go to school in reach of the line or the MAX find they have little need for a car.

BREWERY BLOCKS SINCE 1999

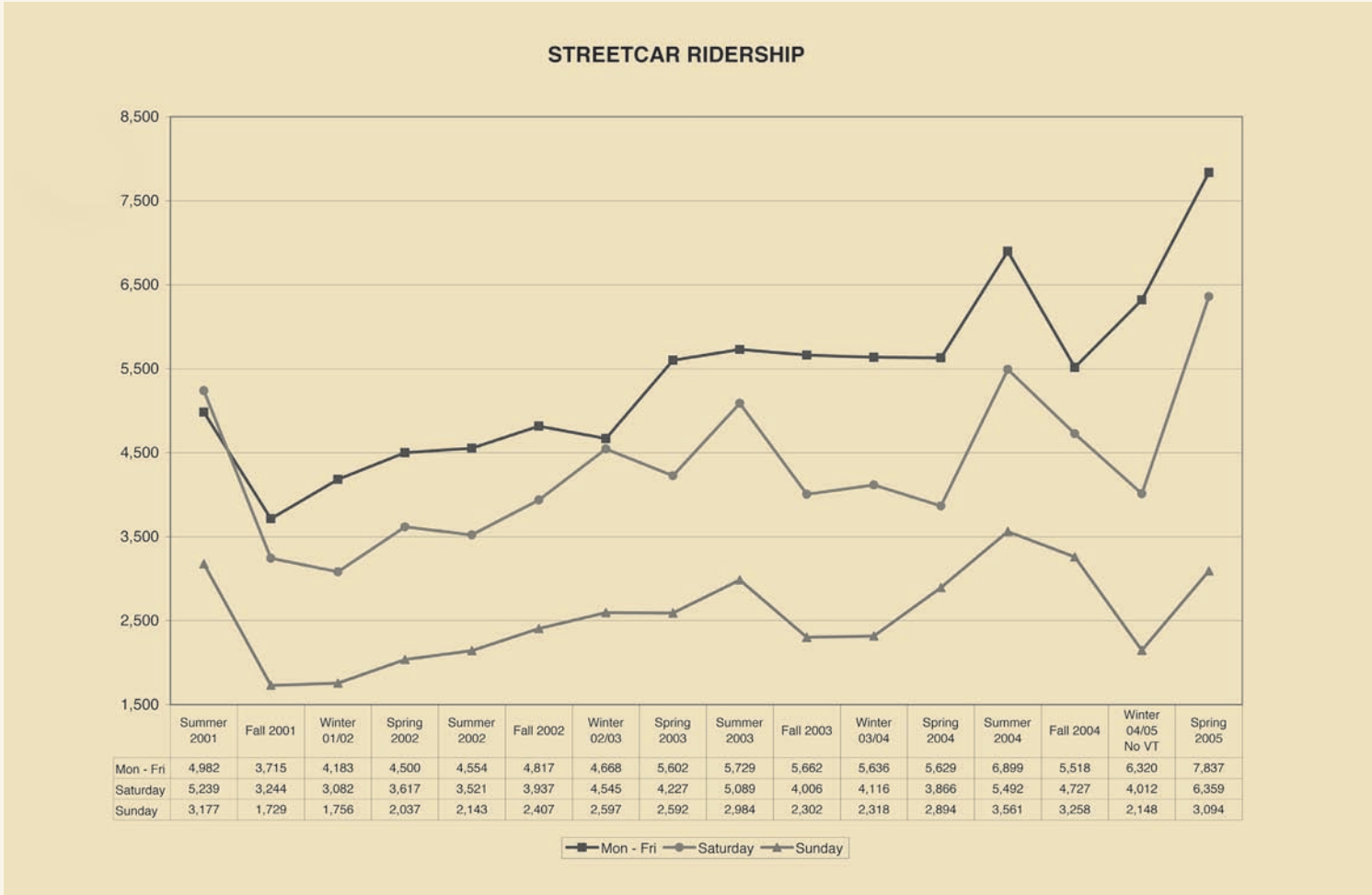
PROJECT	CONDO	APTS	RETAIL (sq. ft.)	OFFICE (sq. ft.)	OTHER
Block I (2002)			9000	78,000	10,000
Block II (2002)			50,000	75000	
Block III (2004)	125		10000		
Block IV (2005)			51000		
Block V (TBD)		245	15000	280,000	
TOTALS	125	245	135,000	433,000	10,000

Calculated 1999 through 2005

FUTURE PLANS

The extension of the line to the South Waterfront District is scheduled to provide service beginning in September of 2006. It is expected to cost approximately \$15.8 million and will link the downtown with that former brownfield site, where approximately \$1 billion will be invested in new mixed-use development. The Portland Streetcar is part of the North Macadam Investors LLC agreement for that work, just as it was part of the Hoyt Street Properties Agreement in the River District. Homer Williams, Chair of Williams and Dame Development, signed

the Hoyt Street Properties Development Agreement as the then Manager of Hoyt Street Properties, and he signed for the North Macadam Investors as their manager. The thirty-four acres of South Waterfront District development is expected over the next ten years to produce another 250,000 square feet of retail, a 1.5 million square foot medical facility, 5,000 new jobs, and 2,800 new housing units, all within an easy walk of the streetcar.



There are also plans under consideration to extend the line across the Willamette River, north and south of the existing alignment to East Portland, linking the Lloyd District (convention center) site and east side strip commercial and neighborhood, to the west side, in a full streetcar loop. The Eastside Steering Committee is already in place and discussions of route alignment and land use dominate their meetings. Some participants want the streetcar but do not want to be “Pearlized.” They are concerned that the extreme makeover of the west side will become a template for a similar transformation of their neighborhoods. Unlike the River District or the South Waterfront brownfields, some see the east side as composed of intact working class neighborhoods where former industrial lands are already transformed with heavy and light commercial development and residential services. There was no gentrification in the redevelopment of the old rail yards in the Pearl or River District, but there could be on the Eastside.

In addition, work is underway to extend the streetcar line to Lake Oswego. It is not an accident that the September 2000 study, The “Willamette Shore Streetcar Study,” is well received in Lake Oswego. Their mayor, Judie Hammerstad, is the Chair of the National Community Streetcar Coalition and is currently a member of the Board of Directors of PSI. TriMet capital projects developed the study to test if they could use the existing rail right of ways to service John’s Landing, Dunthorpe and Lake Oswego in an effort to reduce the pressure on car commutes

on the congested Highway 43 corridor. The study suggests a \$62.7 million system with twelve minute headways in peak times would bring commuters to downtown in about fifteen minutes. The group is currently seeking funds for the next phase of project development.



The model of a portion of the South Waterfront illustrates the high density of proposed development.

Streetcar Advocacy

Another impact of the streetcar is the way it has generated interest in new streetcar systems nationally and internationally. Part of the mission of PSI as amended in 2003 is to encourage others to develop streetcar systems. Thus far they have entertained over eighty communities from around the world to tour their work, and also have consulted with several municipalities, including Atlanta, GA and Charlottesville, NC, in different stages of developing their own streetcar systems. PSI is active in the Community Streetcar Coalition and is their “poster child.”

In correspondence with the Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration, the general manager of Portland’s TriMet, Fred Hansen, recently wrote to support consideration of what is referred to as Small Start Legislation. This is an effort led by Congressman Earl Blumenauer to enable less capital-intensive transit investments and to rethink the federal transportation system user benefit calculations to allow for a different understanding of what constitutes benefit. Both Hansen and Blumenauer use the Portland Streetcar, Inc. experience to make their point. Hansen’s letter talks about the necessity to consider in benefit calculations not just the trips taken but also the car trips not taken. His example follows:

“A young couple (this could be an empty nester couple, a single mom or a host of others) is looking to buy a residence in one of our outlying neighborhoods, Hillsboro. They work at Nike but in their off hours they like to either get out of town for recreation or take advantage of urban pleasures such as the theater, Saturday Market, and our fine restaurants. Instead of living at the edge of our region they decide to move into a townhouse in the Pearl District. They do this in part because of the proximity of MAX and Streetcar. They take MAX to Nike (as they would have had they moved to Hillsboro) but are now able to take Portland Streetcar to the theatre, restaurants, and many other activities in the city. They still use their car to get out of town, but now it sits idle much of the week.”

Hansen’s letter goes on to describe the statistics of the streetcar-related development in his city as an illustration of car trips not taken.

Assessing Project Success

Success in Meeting Project Goals

From the application

- *Create a high quality transit service as an incentive for high density mixed-use development within the Central City.*
- *Connect major attractions in the Central City including Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital, the Pearl District, the Cultural District, Portland State University, RiverPlace, and South Waterfront with high quality transit.*

The density and mixed use of the developments along the streetcar alignment and to the park blocks all were described as significantly influenced by the streetcar system. Similarly, the neighborhoods in five districts are connected with the system, and the ridership peaking at over 7,800 daily trips is higher than the initially predicted 4,000 and is still climbing.

- *Develop rail transit that operates in mixed traffic and on existing rights-of-way at lower cost than light rail transit.*
- *Develop rail transit that fits the scale and traffic patterns of existing neighborhoods.*

The physical description of the system matches the goal statements.

- *Reduce short inner-city auto trips, parking demand, traffic congestion and air pollution.*

Parking revenues in the city are down thirty percent as a measure of parking demand. We have logical arguments for the reduction of short inner-city auto trips related to the fact that over 8,000 new residents now live adjacent to the streetcar and related MAX in the Central City of Portland. No data were offered on traffic congestion or pollution effects, but 7,800 streetcar riders per day are not in their automobile or on a bus.

Progress has also been made on goals developed by the Board of Directors, Portland Streetcar, Inc. June 26, 2001 and November 4, 2003.

→ *Complete phase 1: Continue development efforts for extension of the Streetcar Project to RiverPlace and North Macadam in accordance with the established plan adopted by the City of Portland.*

The line to RiverPlace (0.6 miles of double track) continuing the initial 2.4 miles addressed in the application was opened in March of 2005. The North Macadam line is programmed to open in 2006 and by all accounts is on schedule, with significant residential and other development already under construction that anticipates its successful conclusion.

→ *Consider Additions: Work with property owners and neighborhoods that have expressed interest in consideration of streetcar service additions.*

There is an Eastside Steering Committee in place, and Lake Oswego has announced a 2009-2010 completion schedule.

→ *Encourage others to develop streetcar-oriented communities*

To date, representatives from over eighty cities have toured the Portland Streetcar system and PSI consultants have been called in to consult with several cities on the finance, design, construction, and operation of similar systems considered in those cities. PSI consultants, the City, and TriMet are active participants in the National Community Streetcar Coalition and are working with the U.S. Congress to advance Small Start Legislation that will encourage greater federal support for such systems in the future.

In March of 2004, Shiels Oblatz Johnsen issued the “Streetcar Initiative Report” that identifies twenty-two cities that are currently planning a streetcar line. Four of these cities are currently building lines and three of them currently operate streetcars. The survey concludes that all the cities involved in streetcar planning, design and operation believe that “there should be a coalition to improve accessibility and availability of federal dollars for construction of streetcar systems in our cities.” From this, PSI has been building just such a coalition.

→ *Work with TriMet and others to obtain additional operating funds to enable existing peak-hour service frequencies to be reduced from fourteen minute to ten minute headways or less.*

This was described as a priority and involves the acquisition of three more streetcars from the Inekon Group, which have been ordered.

Selection Committee Discussion: What We Learned

Strategic Transportation Connections

Linking key employment centers with transit, housing, park infrastructure and retail contributes immeasurably to the walkable mixed-use communities that are increasingly in demand in urban areas.

Non-Profit and Business Community Leadership

Public policy can be implemented through well-constructed non-profit and business collaborations. The role of both the enlightened self-interest of business and the public interest in non-profit organizations can be critical ingredients in the implementation of urban revitalization programs and in the balancing of public and private interests in development.

Trust in Streetcar Appeal

People who will not ride busses will ride streetcars; they like them. Current streetcar technology is low impact with minimal disruption to normal business during construction. It offers a permanent route to add to business confidence in patron routes, provides a scale of vehicle that works in concert with the pedestrian character of the streetscape and regular downtown streets, and is a non-polluting form of transportation that also reduces congestion on the street by reducing car trips.

Sometimes Retail Leads

While the common logic of planning is that retail will follow office and housing markets, the PSI project demonstrates that key retailing can also lead development. It can make it more attractive for office and housing development and supports the life on the street needed for good working and living neighborhoods.

Leverage is Good for Everyone

PSI has made it part of its mission to advance the cause of streetcar usage throughout the United States. In doing so, the Portland renewal story is further advanced even as the lessons of its renewal are better understood. Their successes, and their efforts to share their experiences with other cities, have potential for spreading transit-related benefits across the country.

Brownfield Reclamation Requires Imagination

Over one hundred acres of brownfield rail yards and an expressway separated Portland neighborhoods and employment centers from downtown and Portland State University. In many cities these impediments would be seen as insurmountable, especially in a declining economy with increasing unemployment and higher levels of office vacancy. The PSI story, however demonstrates that once imagined through careful vision planning, the public, private and non-profit worlds can implement very ambitious projects.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

See Portland Streetcar website: <http://www.portlandstreetcar.org>

ABBOTT, CARL (1983) *Portland: Planning, Politics and Growth in a Twentieth Century City*, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

OZAWA, CONNIE P. (2004). *The Portland Edge: Challenges and Successes in Growing Communities*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

RELATED RUDY BRUNER AWARD WINNERS:

Text taken from <http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/bruner/>; see also www.brunerfoundation.org

Portland's Downtown Plan and Program, Portland, OR; 1989 Gold Medal Winner

Portland's Downtown Plan and Program is a detailed city planning mechanism to revitalize and enhance Portland, Oregon's downtown area. This multifaceted plan featured expanded and centrally located local transit; appropriately located and designed uses to fashion the downtown into a twenty-four hour locale; the positing of transit, building, and development into an urban form that steps down to the river-front; preservation and restoration of historic buildings and the proper scaling of new development within historic areas; and provision and design of public places. The Portland Downtown Plan is a successful comprehensive downtown planning process that could serve as a model for other mid-size American cities. The Plan is exemplary in terms of its grassroots participation, its populist goals and objectives, and the successful collaboration between citizens, business and political interests.

Southwest Corridor Project, Boston, MA: 1989 Silver Medal Winner

The Southwest Corridor Project implemented a new multi-modal transportation complex, involving the replacement of the Metropolitan Boston Transportation Authority Orange Line, the establishment of four lines of commuter rail, Intercity Amtrak service, and eight transit stations. The project was implemented through the cooperation of public agencies and community organizations in Boston.

Cleveland Historic Warehouse District, Cleveland, OH; 1997 Silver Medal Winner

The Warehouse District has preserved a series of historically significant Victorian warehouse buildings in downtown Cleveland, adjacent to the financial district. The District has preserved important buildings which would otherwise have been lost, and has created a new mixed-use residential neighborhood that also includes retail shops, restaurants, jazz clubs, and commercial tenants in the heart of Cleveland.

Silver Medal Winner
**Downtown Silver Spring
& Discovery World Headquarters**
Silver Spring, Maryland





Downtown Silver Spring At A Glance

What is Downtown Silver Spring?

- ➔ The mixed-use revitalization of a “first ring” suburban downtown.
- ➔ Retail space (more than one million square feet) including movie theaters, restaurants, grocery stores and other retail shops.
- ➔ Office space, including the American Film Institute and the world headquarters for Discovery Communications.
- ➔ Multi-family dwelling units near existing neighborhoods of single family homes.
- ➔ Civic spaces with public art, fountains and greenery that serve as central public spaces for the downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- ➔ Four reconstructed main streets with extensive new streetscapes for safe and attractive pedestrian environments.
- ➔ Safe, attractive and efficient public parking structures.

Project Goals

- ➔ Introduce new development in the context of Maryland’s Smart Growth policies, and with the consensus of major stakeholders.
- ➔ Establish a public-private partnership that will revitalize the Central Business District (CBD) for eastern Montgomery County.
- ➔ Extend and strengthen neighborhoods close to downtown with housing and retail.
- ➔ Create a transit-oriented community, taking advantage of the local Metro station.
- ➔ Use an incentive zoning tool that provides significant opportunities for public involvement.

Project Chronology

1887 B&O Railroad stop makes Silver Spring an early railroad suburb.

1938 Silver Spring Theatre and Shopping Center open in downtown Silver Spring.

1948 Hecht's Department Store opens the first suburban department store in downtown Silver Spring.

1960s Regional shopping centers open, drawing business away from Silver Spring.

1978 Silver Spring Metro stop opens.

1988 Silver Triangle I plan for a large enclosed shopping center, office tower, and bridge retail building spanning Georgia Avenue is proposed and generates wide community opposition.

1992 A smaller shopping center, Silver Triangle II, is proposed but also generates community opposition.

Douglas Duncan runs for County Executive and declares he will cancel the Silver Triangle II plan if elected. He wins and the plan is cancelled.

1994 The "American Dream" plan proposes a large inward-facing entertainment mall.

1996 The "American Dream" plan dies for lack of private financing.

1938
Silver Spring Theatre and Shopping Center open.

1960s
Regional shopping centers open, drawing business away from Silver Spring.

1988
Silver Triangle I plan developed.

1992
Douglas Duncan runs for County Executive.

1998
Foulger Pratt and Peterson propose smaller-scale, street-based retail plan.

1948
Hecht's Department Store opens.

1978
Silver Spring Metro stop opens.

1992
Silver Triangle II plan developed.

1997
Duncan brings team of Foulger Pratt and Peterson Companies.

1998
(September)
Downtown Silver Spring Plan is approved.

1997 Duncan brings team of Foulger Pratt and Peterson Companies to engage in community discussions to develop a new proposal and generate community support.

1998 Foulger Pratt and Peterson propose smaller-scale, street-based retail plan that calls for incremental development of the area. The plan receives widespread community support.

(September) Downtown Silver Spring Plan is approved with \$165 million in county funding for infrastructure support.

1999 (April) Ground-breaking for Downtown Silver Spring.

2000 Discovery Communications and the American Film Institute agree to come to Silver Spring.

KEY PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

JOHN CARTER, *AIA, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division*

GLENN KREGER, *Team Leader, Silver Spring Team, Community-Based Planning Division*

MIGUEL IRAOLA, *ASLA, Urban Design Coordinator, Community-Based Planning Division*

SANDRA TALLANT, *Planning Coordinator, Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan, Community-Based Planning Division*

LARRY PONSFORD, *AICP, Development Review Division*

GWEN WRIGHT, *Preservation Section, Countrywide Planning Division*

Office of Montgomery County Executive

DOUGLAS DUNCAN, *County Executive*

WILLIAM MOONEY, *Office of the County Executive*

GARY STITH, *Silver Spring Redevelopment Office*

Foulger Pratt and Peterson Companies – Development Group

BRYANT FOULER, *Foulger Pratt Development Group*

CAREY JOHNSON, *Peterson Companies*

THOMAS MASKEY, *Peterson Companies*

Montgomery County Planning Board

WENDY PERDUE, *Vice Chair*

JOHN ROBINSON, *Commissioner*

Montgomery County Government

JENNIFER BARRETT, *Silver Spring Regional Services Center*
SUSAN HOFFMANN, *Silver Spring Regional Services Center*

Designers

GARY BOWDEN, *AIA, RTKL, Inc.*
DENNIS CARMICHAEL, *FASLA, EDAW*
STEVE COHEN, *AIA, SmithGroup Architecture*
JIM URBAN, *FASLA, James Urban Landscape Architecture*
JANET KRESLIN, *AIA, Gensler Architects*

Community Representatives

SHERYL BRISSET-CHAPMAN, *National Center for Children and Families*
THERESA CAMERON, *Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County*
MIKE DEGEL, *Allied Civic Group*
ELNORA HARVEY
BARBARA HENRY, *Discovery Communications*
BOB HICKS
MARCUS JOHNSON, *Three Keys Music*
SUSAN MADDEN, *Montgomery College*
FRAN MEYER, *Silver Spring Regional Advisory Group*
CYNTHIA RUBESTEIN, *Allied Civic Association*
WEBB SMEDLEY
HOWARD SRIBNICK, *Silver Spring Advisory Board*
LAURA STEINBERG
DALE TIBBITTS
CHARLES WOLFF

Other Contacts

DONALD ZUCHELLI, *President, President, ZHA, Economic Development Consultant*
GUS BAUMAN, *Attorney*
RAY BARRY, *American Film Institute*
CARMEN CAMACHO, *Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce*
AURELIA MARTIN, *City Place*
CHARLES NULSON, *Atlantic Reality*
PANDIT WRIGHT, *Discovery Communications*
JERRY MCCOY, *Silver Spring Historical Society*
ANNYS SHIN, *reporter, Washington Post*

Project Description

Urban Context and History



The Silver Spring of the 1950s (top photo) is significantly different than the urbanized center of 2003 (bottom photo).

Silver Spring is an unincorporated area of Montgomery County, Maryland which abuts the northern border of the District of Columbia. It has a long history as a transportation dependent community, although the mode of transportation it has depended on has varied from railroad, to trolley, to the automobile, and finally the subway. Silver Spring was still a rural area when its first post office opened during the Civil War. Only two decades later, it became a stop on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and at about the same time a farm in Silver Spring was sold and converted to the area's first suburban home development. Robert Oshel, a historian of Silver Spring's Woodside Park, writes that "real estate developers began platting Silver Spring's first 'suburban' developments several years after the opening of the B&O's Metropolitan Branch made commuting to Washington possible" (Oshel 1998). By the end of the century there was also trolley service running from Silver Spring to the Washington, D.C. border. By the 1930s, Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring was a thriving commercial district with over sixty retail stores.

The nature of retail business was altered in 1938 when the new art deco style Silver Spring Shopping Center opened at the corner of Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road. The shopping center was said to be the second of its kind in the country, and for its debut an entire section of the *Washington Post* was devoted to its wonders. The shopping center was followed in 1945 by the county's first public parking lot

in downtown Silver Spring, foreshadowing the growing dependence of retail business on cars. Shortly after the end of World War II, the Hecht's Department Store Company opened its first branch outside of downtown Washington next to the shopping center. Not long after that, other national stores also came to the area, including Sears and J.C. Penney.

Retail business continued to move outward from the urban core. The downturn for downtown Silver Spring began in 1960, with the opening of the first regional shopping center in suburban Washington in the northern suburb of Wheaton. Not coincidentally, at about the same time the Washington Beltway came to Silver Spring. Within a few years, the Wheaton Mall was one of the most successful in the country, and its success was mirrored by the gradual decline and deterioration of

retail business in downtown Silver Spring. In 1978, there were great expectations and hopes for the impact of the new Silver Spring Metro Station on the Washington subway system's Red Line, but relatively little development followed except for several new office buildings. Emblematic of this decline was the decision to close the Silver Spring branch of the Hecht's Department Store in 1987.

The downtown Silver Spring area saw some office rebound in the 1980s, at least in part because of the new Metro stop, and some retail growth in the 1990s. Even so, most of the Central Business District (CBD), including the area at the "one hundred percent corner" of Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road, lay in disrepair. Crime was an increasing problem. Any growth in the area was held up by the inability to put together a successful plan for the revival of the Silver



The Silver Spring Shopping Center and its context in 1938 (left) is a sharp contrast to the same area in the 1950s, (right).

Theatre and Shopping Center. The area was, in the words of the *Washington Post*, “a collection of tattoo parlors, pawn shops and Mom-and-Pop discount clothing stores” (June 21, 2004).

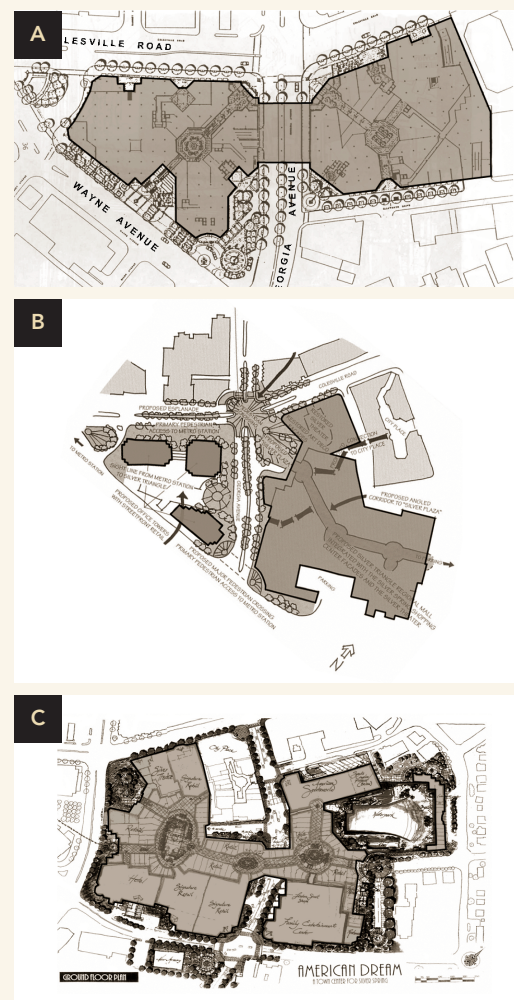
The evolution of the Downtown Silver Spring project goes back almost twenty years to the initial attempts to revitalize the triangle that is formed by the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road. Three failed plans set the stage for the current project. The first, in 1987, was the so-called Silver Triangle plan. That proposal called for the creation of an almost one million square foot mall that would be anchored by two major department stores (Macy’s and Nordstrom’s), hotels and an office tower along with retail shopping in a bridge building that would span Georgia Avenue. There was a strong consensus in the community that this plan was much too large, too expensive and would generate too much traffic, and the community and the county government eventually rejected it. In 1991, a more modest proposal was made which was dubbed Silver Triangle II. In support of this proposal, an urban renewal district was created in 1992 for several blocks of the downtown area. The use of urban renewal by the county was not easy for Silver Spring to accept, because it involved giving up its suburban identity, admitting that the area was indeed urban in character, and that the downtown was “blighted,” a term usually applied to inner-city areas.

The Silver Triangle II plan was smaller than its predecessor, with the retail focus around the area of the historic shopping center. There were also plans for later development of office space west of Georgia Avenue. Community opposition to that proposal was sufficient to make it an issue in the 1992 county election, and helped defeat one county executive and elect the current County Executive, Douglas Duncan. The 1992 recession also helped to doom this proposal. Duncan, during the general election campaign, vowed to defeat the Silver Triangle II proposal, which he did promptly after taking office.

The county then issued a “Request for Expressions of Interest” for the area. The request emphasized the county’s willingness to support and subsidize the selected project with incentives and infrastructure improvements. They settled on a submission from Canadian developers whose résumé included the Mall of America. The past experience of these developers proved to be an accurate predictor of what was ultimately proposed. Their plan, the “American Dream” proposal, called for a large, enclosed mall that included theaters, ice-skating, miniature golf, and a great deal of parking. As the impact statement made clear, it focused heavily on attracting tourists to the area as a means of economic development.

Some in the community were appalled by the scale as well as by the design of the proposed mall – what one observer called “ten pounds of mud in a five pound bag.” Even so, the opposition was never sufficient to kill it. This project had the support of the county government as well as the citizen’s Silver Spring Redevelopment Advisory Board, which in early 1996 voted overwhelmingly to move forward with the proposal, although several expressed continuing reservations. Others commented that many in the county and the community were fearful that this third plan was a last chance for Silver Spring, and that if it failed there might be no successor. Even though the county promised \$350 million in support and subsidies towards the development, the “American Dream” failed because it could not find sufficient support in the private sector. After several delays, when it became clear that private financing for the project was not going to be sufficient, the county executive, Duncan, “pulled the plug.” That was, by all accounts, a particularly difficult time for the community, because the next step was not yet clear.

In several ways, the “American Dream” plan set the stage for the next effort. It had received a tremendous amount of publicity, which helped put Silver Spring on the map for developers. Most importantly, the county’s commitments of \$350 million for infrastructure and subsidies were still on the table. In addition, the community was now acclimated, some say desensitized, to the scale of development that might be possible, and was certainly ready and even anxious to see



Three failed plans: The 1987 “Silver Triangle” plan was replaced with “Silver Triangle II” (B) defeated in 1992 and that was followed by the “American Dream.”

a project finally get started. Also, historic preservation of key elements of the district had become important to the community. (Silver Triangle II developers had insisted that the Armory would have to come down, putting that space “in play” for future plans.)

The county next approached a more local development team composed of Foulger Pratt Development (Rockville, Maryland) and the Peterson Company (Fairfax, Virginia), who had reputations for work in downtown areas. The county executive was surprised when Bryant Foulger told him that they would not offer a design, but rather they would suggest an extended community process toward creating a plan. The developers had observed negative community reactions over the decade to the past proposals and had concluded that no project could be successful unless community support was developed and supported at the outset. The county executive was taken aback, but after several discussions agreed to this process.

For their part, the developers saw a great opportunity in the vastly underserved community in and near Silver Spring. County data showed that there were 500,000 people living within a five mile radius, many with incomes that could support a strong retail plan. Silver Spring is a major transportation hub. Thirty thousand people work within a five minute walk of Downtown Silver Spring and 50,000 mass transit commuters (commuter rail, Metro rail, and bus) pass through the area daily.

The developers spent the better part of the next year meeting with members of the community through a Steering Committee created by County Executive Duncan. The committee included some who had protested previous plans as well as other community groups. What emerged was a plan that relied on smaller scale, street-based retail, with elements that might be considered “new urbanist,” and was consistent with the state’s *Smart Growth Plan*. Duncan commonly refers to it as a strategy for “a series of singles, instead of a home run.” The name “Downtown Silver Spring” symbolizes the goal of this project – to revive street life and commerce in the Silver Spring CBD. County officials were stunned when, with \$350 million in government support available, the Foulger Pratt and Peterson plan called for use of only \$187 million. It was, by comparison, quite a bargain for the county.

The developers and a community group were able to agree on the basic elements of a plan – small-scale, local retail, and rehabilitation and reuse of the Silver Theatre and Shopping Center. Foulger’s plan was to achieve consensus, even unanimity, on basic ideas. At meetings of the Steering Committee, he posed and obtained unanimous votes of support on questions such as “Is it important to revitalize the CBD?” “Is it important to draw people back to Silver Spring?” and “Should the site include a hardware store, grocer, bookstore, and national restaurants?” Foulger promised the Steering Committee that the plan would address all of these goals and told them that when it did he

expected their complete and total support. The plan he brought back several months later indeed contained the elements he had promised. The only serious points of contention concerned the proposed loss of the Armory, which was to be replaced by a parking deck, civic building and new plaza.

Foulger noted that the community process made recruiting retail tenants easier because he was able to tell representatives of national chains that the community had specifically asked for their presence and would support their store. Most observers felt that the community got everything it wanted except for the loss of the Armory, and were especially pleased with the presence of Whole Foods, Borders Books and a local hardware store. An executive at the Whole Foods Market, Inc. national office indicated that opening a store in Downtown Silver Spring when it did was “a little like going out on a limb” since they were the first major retailer to commit to the development at a time when the American Film Institute was still negotiating its terms. To bring a store to an area seen by many as dangerous was unusual, since their stores are often open late at night. Opening this facility was viewed by Whole Foods as an expression of confidence in the plan and the community and was, the executive noted, significantly helped by the support of the Montgomery County government.



While some grumble about the lack of local restaurants, most seem to feel this is not an important issue. Clearly, winning the headquarters for the American Film Institute (AFI) and Discovery Communications was a major success and a vestige of the earlier Silver Triangle scheme. Discovery Communications had been spread among six locations in Bethesda and the lack of expansion opportunities there made a regional search for a headquarters necessary. AFI's presence in Silver Spring helped influence Discovery to consider this site, since they and Discovery worked together on projects. Also attractive was the ample space in close proximity to both the Metro and proposed new downtown.

Planners of Downtown Silver Spring felt that the development needed a visible presence – an iconic image – that would attract attention and bring people into the area. The American Film Institute (AFI), with its

The Whole Foods store was one of the first to commit to the new downtown Silver Spring.

national and international program recognition, was seen as that icon. For that reason Duncan became personally involved in the negotiation to bring them to the old Silver Theatre, beginning initial contacts in the fall of 1997. Duncan apparently said to the directors of the American Film Institute that he would do “whatever it takes” to get them to come. What it took was allocation by the county of \$7.8 million toward the restoration of the theater and the offer of a ten year lease for the Silver Theatre at \$10 per year, with an option for nine additional ten year renewals.

AFI’s mission is to archive, preserve, restore, and exhibit films, as well as using film as an educational and community building tool. The leaders of AFI bought into the urban development model as part of their decision to place this theater in Silver Spring. In the same way that many communities are using entertainment or performing arts centers as a base for community development, AFI’s Silver Theatre and Cultural Center is seen as much more than just a movie theater – it is a centerpiece for Silver Spring’s revival. AFI executives note that films have an advantage in this respect because for many people films are better known and more accessible than other art forms. In addition, they noted, it is much less expensive to change the program of a movie theater than it is for a performing arts theatre or an amusement park.

Advisor Donald Zuchelli has suggested that attracting AFI “broke the whole shell open” and gave confidence to the community and other potential investors. AFI was not the first step, but it came at a key time. AFI, with its \$25 million investment in the theater, was a critical part of the restoration effort. “We needed to catch the imagination of the public.” Many people said, “I cannot believe AFI is in Silver Spring.”

AFI has aspirations beyond simply showing films. They see film as having a role in educational outreach, and believe in using film to bring people together and build “cross-cultural awareness and understanding.” In addition to “Silver Docs,” a nationally known film festival, the organization works with local schools on curriculum, has special programs for families at risk, and offers community education programs. They say that the education component of their mission made locating



The AFI Silver Theater and Cultural Center is a centerpiece for Silver Spring’s revival.

AFI in Silver Spring was “a no-brainer,” bringing an important cultural amenity to a diverse community that was cosmopolitan, but needed support. AFI executives note that since their opening in March 2003, their presence, special programs and festivals have had a multiplying effect on the success of Downtown Silver Spring. In addition, synergies have grown out of the theater. AFI’s work with Discovery Communications is a prime example. AFI certainly has brought increased visibility to the community. For example, one local Washington, D.C. television station uses the image of the Silver Theatre marquee as one of its icons representing the D.C. area. “Silver Spring,” one executive said, “is, god help us, becoming hip.” Box office receipts are ahead of projections with 147,000 tickets this year versus 98,000 the previous year, a forty-seven percent increase in sales.

The other key large-scale project for Downtown Silver Spring was the Discovery Communications Headquarters Building. Discovery was



The Discovery Communications Headquarters opened in 2003

attracted by the plans to bring AFI to Silver Spring, since AFI and Discovery Communications were partners in a variety of high-tech communications projects. Discovery Communications had been based in Bethesda, but had spent several years looking for another site in the metropolitan area for an expanded headquarters. They became attracted to Silver Spring for several reasons. First, they were heavily recruited by Duncan, who presented them with a vision of what Downtown Silver Spring could become, as well as a public-private partnership that included tax and zoning incentives. Discovery officials note that the top executives bought into the vision and wanted the company to be part of Silver Spring’s revival. As an example of their commitment, the new building was planned without a cafeteria, as a way to get its workers out into the community and at local shops. In return, Discovery employees were provided with discounts at local stores and restaurants. The site was a 3.4 acre triangle of land across Georgia Avenue from the shopping center, and its proximity to the Metro stop was particularly enticing to Discovery. After significant discussions and debates over aspects of the site plan, the design was approved and the completed headquarters opened in 2003.

The City Place project was another pioneer in redeveloping space in Downtown Silver Spring. In 1990, it took over the Hecht’s building that had become vacant when Hecht’s closed its store in 1987. The façade was expanded (with the County Historic Preservation Commission

approval) and the interior was modified to serve a number of smaller retail and entertainment operations. City Place took a significant risk by opening in anticipation of redevelopment plans that were still being discussed. It suffered through a number of years as the lone new retail outlet in the area while various redevelopment plans rose and fell. They hung on and now hope to take advantage of Downtown Silver Spring's success. City Place has remodeled its exterior to fit the new streetscape of Ellsworth Avenue and is adding new tenants.

The *Sector Plan*, created by the Planning Board in 1999 for the Silver Spring CBD, envisioned this area as "the local downtown for surrounding residential communities and eastern part of the county, [and] the community's principal market center..." It identified five key actions to support revitalization: 1) rezone for development incentives and flexibility; 2) construct core projects including Downtown Silver Spring, AFI, the civic building and veterans plaza, and Discovery

Communications; 3) support the area by constructing civic and cultural facilities downtown, such as expanding Montgomery College, adding a new district court building and fire station; 4) begin structured parking and trail systems; and 5) improve circulation on major streets.

Once construction got underway, progress was made quickly. In 2000, Whole Foods and Strosniders Hardware Store opened and Discovery Communications began construction of its headquarters building. In the next three years, the pace of construction was dramatic, and by now over 1,500,000 square feet of new space has been renovated or built (see Table 2).



The 1999 Sector Plan created by the Planning Board (right) was preceded by almost a decade by the City Place project (left)

There are several ways in which the state's Smart Growth plan applies to Downtown Silver Spring. First, a basic element of the *Downtown Silver Spring Plan* comes from application of the recommendations of the *Sector Plan* for increased density and building height in the areas near the Metro station. Planners made use of a planning review tool known as the "Optional Method of Development" under which developers are allowed and often encouraged to increase density. In return for an increase in density, amenities and facilities are required such as public art, pedestrian pathways, public space, and affordable housing. Reduced parking requirements support the urban feel and transit-oriented aspects of the plan. This unique incentive zoning tool is a critical feature in the success of the development and the character of public spaces in Silver Spring.

The *Smart Growth Plan* supported the use of existing infrastructure (such as the Silver Theatre and adjacent shopping center), and the use of mixed-use zoning in the CBD. Mixed-use development is seen throughout Downtown Silver Spring. One striking example is the new local public library, which will have residential units above the ground floor library space. The *Smart Growth Plan* also fostered transportation options other than single occupancy cars. Higher density development near the Metro station encourages transit use, which should be enhanced when the major structures at the Metro Station are completed. It will also be supported by the bike paths that are

currently under construction. The Silver Spring Business Improvement District (BID) also provides a van service ("VanGo") that makes a circuit through the retail area and Metro station every eight minutes. At a larger scale, the State of Maryland's corridors and wedges approach to smart growth planning focuses a great deal of attention on the density of the areas bordering on the District of Columbia.

The Downtown Silver Spring Project

ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP

There are several levels of organization and leadership for this project at the public, business and community levels. There seems to be broad agreement that the leadership of county executive Douglas Duncan was critical to making this process a success. Duncan was personally involved in attracting key tenants, including AFI and Discovery Communications. He worked with the County Council and through the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Direct contact with the community was made through these agencies. Also, special note was made of the input provided by

Bill Mooney of the Office of the County Executive, who was brought to Silver Spring because of his previous countywide experience in dealing with contentious community issues. His expertise, he says, is in listening to the community. Mooney helped to identify community members for the Steering Committee, including many who had been vocal opponents of past projects. Some of these citizens also became part of an informal “kitchen cabinet” that met occasionally with Duncan.

The private sector played a key role in the development of Downtown Silver Spring, largely represented by the partnership of Foulger Pratt and Peterson. They served as developers and planners, and created and supported a process for working directly with the community. They remain with the project at this point, working to complete development as well as marketing to retail and office tenants.

At the community level, there are a number of groups that have had an impact on this project. Preservationists, as represented by the state and county preservation agencies and by the Silver Spring Historical Association, have worked to save the historically significant sites that overlap with this redevelopment area. There are also a number of neighborhood organizations that have been involved in this project. These groups developed over the years in the fight over the high school and the previous shopping center designs. Many members of these organizations were representatives on the Steering Committee



and the so-called “kitchen cabinet” which consulted with the county executive. Later, they created a nonprofit agency, “Celebrate Silver Spring,” to accept donations and provide an ongoing citizen’s advisory board for downtown and in the region.

FINANCES

Downtown Silver Spring is, as advertised, a public-private partnership. The commercial space of retail, office, housing, and hotel space is privately designed and financed with a total private investment of \$200 million. This investment was made possible because of considerable support from Montgomery County. Over \$187 million has been spent by public agencies for civic buildings, parking, historic preservation, land purchases, demolition, and other infrastructure (see Table 1). Discovery Communications, which is on the other piece of the original Silver Triangle parcel, provides another \$130 million of private investment.

The Montgomery County Smart Growth Plan includes residential and agricultural wedges, urban growth boundaries, and the 1-270 transportation corridor.

Total public support then is about one third of the \$517 million total investment for the original project redevelopment zone, and eighteen percent of the estimated \$1.3 billion current total investment in the area.

The investment in Downtown Silver Spring represents about 1,500,000 square feet of built space, of which a little more than half is for office space, about one-third for retail sites, and approximately ten percent for residential use (Table 2). The residential space consists of 1,745 units that have been approved or are under construction. In addition, Montgomery County requires that 12.5 percent of all housing – rental or owned – be affordable, defined as available for people at sixty-five percent median income. If a builder is allowed additional density through the Optional Method, the percent of required affordable units increases on a sliding scale up to twenty-two percent. At present,



Housing is an important component of the downtown Silver Spring revitalization.

215 affordable units have been built or approved in the Downtown Silver Spring area.

About 4,700 parking spaces have been created in Downtown Silver Spring (Table 7). County planners note that the parking requirements placed on construction here – 1.6 spaces per 1,000 square feet of office space and one space per dwelling unit – was one-third to one-half normal requirements. The figure was reduced in accord with the state *Smart Growth Plan*, which encouraged full occupancy vehicle use. They noted that attempts to reduce parking below these levels would have met heavy resistance from developers because of the needs of their retail tenants. Without adequate parking, developers said, stores would not have been attracted to the site. The Discovery Communications Headquarters building allowed for one space for each permanent employee in their underground parking. They have many part-time, non-permanent staff, and over thirty percent of all of their employees use public transportation.

The Central Business District of Silver Spring has also been declared an Arts and Entertainment District. These districts are nominated by the county and approved by the state. Artists who buy a building and who live and do remunerative work in the arts in the CBD are exempt from real estate taxes. This district has been in place for two years and as yet no sites take advantage of this option.

TABLE 1 – OVERALL SOURCES AND USES

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT USES	PROJECT COSTS	SOURCE OF FUNDS
Discovery Communications	Office and parking	\$130 million	Private
Downtown Silver Spring	Retail, office, hotel, and housing	\$200 million	Private
Subtotal of Private Costs		\$330 million	
Silver Spring Government Center	Civic building and public meeting space	\$15 million	Public (Montgomery County)
Silver Theatre	AFI movie theater and Round House Stage	\$20 million	Public (Montgomery County)
Public parking garages	Public parking structures	\$63 million	Public (Montgomery County Public Parking Funds)
Downtown Silver Spring	Land purchase, historic easements, and demolition of the Silver Spring Armory	\$89 million	Public (Montgomery County)
Subtotal of Public Costs		\$187 million	
Total Public and Private Costs		\$517 million	

TABLE 2 – LAND USES

PROJECT NAME	RETAIL (square feet)	OFFICE (square feet)	HOTEL (square feet)	CIVIC (square feet)	RESIDENTIAL (DUs)	PARKING SPACES
Discovery Communications	N/A	545,420	N/A	N/A	N/A	800
Downtown Silver Spring	507,340	297,408	151,130 (242 rooms)	48,000	160	3,900
Totals	507,340	842,828	151,130	48,000	160	4,700

TABLE 3 – SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION

PROJECT NAME	DATE OF APPROVAL	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE
Discovery Communications	06/01/00	2003
Downtown Silver Spring	07/22/99	
Retail		2003
AFI		2003
Parking		2003
Office		2004
Hotel		2006
Civic Building		2007
Residential		2007

TABLE 4 – PRIVATE COMMERCIAL PROJECTS

PROJECT NAME	DATE OF APPROVAL	GROSS FLOOR AREA (square feet)	PROJECT STATUS
United Therapeutics Headquarters Building	07/15/04	191,636	Under construction
Silver Spring Innovation Center	03/27/03	19,930	Completed
Easter Seals	05/08/00	49,680	Un-built
Total		261,246	

The revitalization of downtown Silver Spring is important—first ring suburbs are the next inner-city.
(2005 Selection Committee)

TABLE 5 – HOUSING PROJECTS – PRIVATE

PROJECT NAME	DATE OF APPROVAL	GROSS FLOOR AREA (square feet)	PROJECT STATUS
The Crescent	10/21/04	150,993 (143 units)	Un-built
The Portico	09/23/04	170,000 (153 units)	Un-built
Williams/Wilste Building	07/19/04	187,060 (135 units)	Un-built
Ripley Street Condominiums	07/29/04	391,125 (336 units)	Un-built
930 Wayne Avenue	04/29/04	151,140 (143 units)	Un-built
Gramax Building	N/A	N/A	Renovation completed
Silver Spring Gateway	02/05/04	526,400 (471 units)	Un-built
Tezzera Lofts	05/22/03	33,665 (24 units)	Under construction
8045 Newell Street Condominiums	02/27/03	136,752 (120 units)	Under construction
Silver Spring Square (Canada Dry)	09/26/02	(220 units)	Under construction
Total		(1,745 units) (Including 215 affordable units)	

TABLE 6 – PARKING REQUIREMENTS

PROJECT NAME	PARKING REQUIRED	PARKING PROVIDED
Discovery Communications		
Office	1.6 spaces/1,000 sq. ft.	800 spaces (privately funded)
Downtown Silver Spring		
Retail	3.5 spaces/1,000 sq. ft.	
Office	1.6 spaces/1,000 sq. ft.	
Hotel (242 rooms)	1 space/2 rooms	
Civic	1.6 spaces/1,000 sq. ft.	
Residential (160 DUs)	1 space/unit	
Subtotal of Parking		3,900 (publicly funded)
Total Parking Spaces		4,700 parking spaces

TABLE 7 – PUBLIC PROJECTS

PROJECT NAME	DATE OF APPROVAL	GROSS FLOOR AREA	PROJECT STATUS
Silver Spring Fire Station	03/06/03	N/A	Under construction
Montgomery College Health Science Building	08/06/02	N/A	Completed
Silver Spring District Court House	11/29/01	N/A	Completed

DESIGN

The project site is a twenty-two acre triangle that begins at the “one hundred percent corner” of Silver Spring (the intersection of Colesville Road and Georgia Avenue), and is within the Silver Spring CBD that encompasses more than 300 acres. Planners noted that county policy and programs provided them with a number of tools that they were

TABLE 8 – PLANNING TOOLS AVAILABLE
TO THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK
AND PLANNING COMMISSION

CBD Zone
Optional Method of Development and Incentive Zoning
Green Tape District
Parking District
Urban Enterprise and Urban Renewal District
Arts & Entertainment District
Business Improvement District
Location of civic facilities
Public open space and amenities requirements
Affordable housing requirements
Historic preservation requirements

able to use to support development and design, foremost among them being the CBD Zone and the “Optional Method of Development.”

After the extensive process of meeting with the community to develop ideas and consensus for the basics of a plan, the designers created what they described as a series of “fluffy” images – drawings that were more about place than architecture. In general, except for the Discovery Center and the historic sites, they felt that the buildings in this community were less than noteworthy and that the building facades were less important than the sense of place they could create. New buildings for Downtown Silver Spring were designed for scale and character. Whereas the previous and failed plans had big ideas and created detailed models to show them off, designers said that this design process involved a great deal of healing and community contact.

The main visual foci of Downtown Silver Spring are two striking and contrasting images – the restored historic art deco style buildings of the Silver Theatre and Shopping Center, and the very modern concave lines of the Discovery Communications Tower with its highly lit glass lobby showing an interior faced with Jerusalem stone and stainless steel. Discovery Center architects wanted their building to be “the defining landmark for Silver Spring and the county.” The L-shaped Discovery Headquarters consists of two wings of seven and ten stories respectively, flanking a 150-foot-tall atrium. The facility is designed

so that the wings can be separated into two distinct properties if desired in the future. A significant public garden is provided along Wayne Avenue for use by the employees and residents of Silver Spring.

The most controversial aspect of the Discovery design concerned the hotly debated decision to enclose the “Five Senses Garden” with a steel fence. Using the “Optional Method,” this public space was negotiated by the county in return for increased height and density. County planners argued before the Planning Board that the fence was not appropriate because it made the park less accessible to the community. However, Discovery officials indicated that they were concerned about vandalism and the safety of their overnight employees given the potential for homeless and others in the area late at night. As a compromise, the public garden is only closed after dark. Many still hope that the fence will one day come down, now that Downtown Silver Spring is losing its image as a dangerous place.

The American Film Institute’s home in the Silver Theatre holds three screening areas; the 400 seat Theatre 1, and new 200 and 75 seat theaters. Theatre 1 is the original 1938 screening area that has been carefully rebuilt to replicate the original John Eberson design. The original space could not be restored after so many years of disuse; instead it was reproduced from photographs and included the recreation of original wall fabric, forty of the original sixty colors, plus decorations



and lighting fixtures. It is now, they claim, the most technologically sophisticated film display center in the country and one of seven that can show seventy millimeter films. The original Silver Theatre was a classic art deco style design. On the exterior, a strong horizontal emphasis was created on the parapet that rises above the curved marquee. A tall spire that is visible from blocks away tops the building. The horizontal lines carry over into the lobby with its marble wainscoting, wood panels and shallow barrel vaulted ceiling. The main screening room has lushly colored wallpaper and decorations with repeating geometric designs and gold leaf, as well as dramatic lighting.

The before and after of the Silver Spring shopping center (above) and the Discovery Center with its “Five Senses Garden” (below) illustrate core elements of the Silver Spring revitalization program.

The original art deco style Silver Spring Shopping Center was unique for its time, providing off street parking surrounded by a semi-circle of shops, and a gas station along the outer ring off Georgia Avenue. The *Downtown Silver Spring Plan* is differentiated from the previous plans by reorienting the focus of activity away from the original shopping center. It moved the town center off of the busy intersection of Colesville Road and Georgia Avenue to the geographic center of the redevelopment area along Ellsworth Avenue. This focus partially turns its back on these two main streets (AFI still faces Colesville Road while storefronts acknowledge Georgia Avenue). This new corridor funnels foot traffic along the shops on Ellsworth Avenue, across Georgia Avenue, and

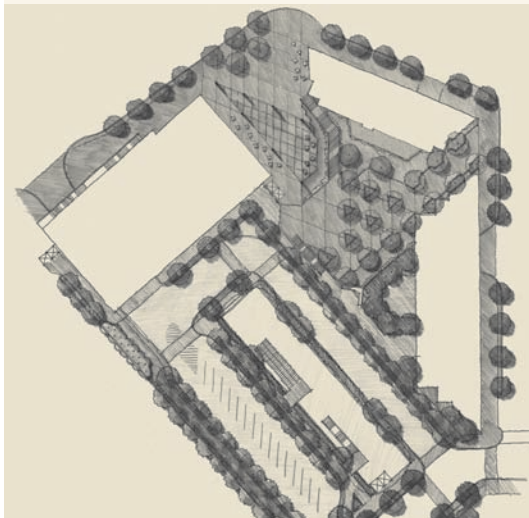


Quality design is a hallmark of both the exterior (left) and the interior (right) of the Discovery Center project.

past the Discovery Center's pedestrian space into the Metro station. While the Ellsworth Avenue spine is largely completed, the two major public spaces and developments that will anchor either end are still in process. Inside Downtown Silver Spring, the new Civic Building and Veterans Plaza are currently under construction, replacing the demolished Armory. On the other end of this spine, planning is going forward for a hotel, residences and multi-level bus and parking area at the Metro station. Downtown Silver Spring is, according to developers, two-thirds complete.

The broad plaza, with its lively murals and wide walkways along Ellsworth Avenue, is welcoming to pedestrians. The *Washington Post* (June 24, 2004) describes the "brick sidewalks and street-level retail reminiscent of the hugely successful Bethesda Row project." Designers said they did not consider creating a pedestrian mall because automobile access is seen as critical to retail success, although they close off the central area along Ellsworth to traffic on evenings and weekends for general use and frequent special events.

The sector plan calls for major improvements to the pedestrian crossing along Georgia Avenue, and walkways have been added to improve access to the Discovery Headquarters entry, although it remains a large and very busy intersection.



The scale of buildings in this district gradually diminishes from very tall current and planned structures at the Metro station, including the Discovery Center, to more modest heights through downtown Silver Spring, reaching the smallest scale approaching the residential areas. The center of Downtown Silver Spring consists of mostly national and regional outlets, with some local stores. The initial restaurants have all been from national chains, largely because of their advantage in obtaining financing. Planners emphasize that most of the residential buildings (especially the new condominiums) and office development would not have happened without the success of the Downtown Silver Spring Plan.

Preservation was a critical issue in the dynamics of rejecting and approving development plans. The coalition that successfully opposed the earlier designs used preservation as a rallying point. Their impact and strength convinced Foulger Pratt and Peterson to address these issues directly, early in the planning process. Historic preservation efforts focused on the Silver Theatre and Shopping Center, and also included moving (rather than demolishing) the Tastee Diner two blocks to accommodate the Discovery Center.

Preservation is a key feature in the image of this project. AFI's presence is critical to Downtown Silver Spring. The potential for restoration and recreation of the once spectacular Silver Theatre helped attract

The "book ends" of the revitalization effort are the Veterans's Plaza (top two images) and the transit plaza (bottom).

AFI and is now part of what gives the site its sense of place. Maintaining a large portion of the original Silver Spring Shopping Center also helps give the downtown its own style and panache, as well as resonance with the community.

The key loss for preservationists was the demolition of the 1928 Armory Building. The designers dissected what they felt was important about the Armory – the wooden floor, and the large meeting space – and have recreated these in the new Civic Building, but these features are little comfort to local preservationists. While many in the community came to see this as an acceptable and necessary trade-off to get the whole project underway, committed preservationists remain unconvinced that other options were not feasible. Developers were insistent that the Armory space was needed for a parking garage –

replacing an older and “very unfriendly” garage. Designers for the Walt Disney Corporation were brought in to create a garage that was user-friendly and safe in function and appearance and allowed for quick egress.

Gwen Wright, head of the preservation office for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, feels that the loss of the Armory was difficult but notes that saving it might have had an element of “facadism,” since at best a restored Armory would have been surrounded by a number of large buildings, changing its original context of broad open green space. She also notes that the county was required to provide mitigation for the loss of the Armory, which took the form of funding the publication of a book of historic sites in Montgomery County, a survey of historic properties in the entire



The new downtown Silver Spring is a pedestrian friendly place.

CBD, and the creation of a Graphic Information System layer of historic properties throughout the county. Jerry McCoy, president of the Silver Spring Historical Society, is not convinced, but believes that the fear many residents had of losing the potential development made saving the Armory impossible.

Landscape design for the Downtown Silver Spring area includes a bicycle trail that is part of the Smart Growth plan. This trail, which is still under development, works its way through the retail, residential, and the surrounding areas. The trail is not yet complete, but the goal,



The bicycle trail is planned to ultimately connect the Metro station to downtown.

upon completion is to use the trail to serve the Metro station, to provide another alternative to automobile use for commuters, and to connect the trail to the larger regional bike trail system.

IMPACTS

Downtown Silver Spring is locally and widely seen as a successful revival story. The streets appear to be well used in daytime and evening. The site visit revealed that many adults and young people were on the street and in the stores at nine o'clock at night, even on an unusually cool March evening.

Stores are open and seem to be thriving, and the local Whole Foods and Borders Books are very profitable. Sarah Kenney, Whole Foods' Mid-Atlantic Division Director of Marketing, said that sales growth has been "mind boggling" at this store and has exceeded all expectations – it is now in the top fifteen percent of all their stores in sales. She states that "what is most fun about the store is the community's response... we received enormous support." It is also one of the company's strongest community-based stores. Many people come there to meet, mingle, and hang out with friends.

Investment by the county and Downtown Silver Spring developers has spurred significant additional private investment. The *Sector Plan*

sees Downtown Silver Spring as one of many nodes in the CBD. Total investment in the area has reached \$1.3 billion. There are signs that the success of Downtown Silver Spring, as recent as it is, is starting to spread to other areas of the CBD. In particular, properties south on Georgia Avenue towards the District of Columbia border are showing signs of life as new restaurants are moving in and property owners are rehabilitating their buildings. Private office and residential developments outside of the redevelopment zone are springing up. Moreover, residential developments include a significant number of condominium buildings. Previously there were only rental units in the CBD. A reporter for the *Washington Post* warns not to overstate the change south on Georgia Avenue, as there are still many “sketchy” stores and significant improvement is needed.

Tax receipts and real estate values have risen sharply – faster than the rest of the region – and the parking district revenues are in the black for the first time in years. A CNN report lists Silver Spring among the fifty “hottest” zip codes in the country, with a median home value of \$365,000 – a 109.6 percent increase in value over the last five years, and a forecast 12.5 percent growth next year. The area has improved sufficiently so that county planners do not expect the Urban Enterprise Zone status to be renewed once it expires, as the area no longer qualifies as blighted based on revenues and land values.

Transit goals have been met or exceeded. More than fifty percent of workers in the area use modes other than single occupancy vehicles, and more than thirty percent use public transit to get to work. Transportation officials also note that automobile traffic on the streets in and through the Downtown Silver Spring area is well within anticipated limits.

There has also been growth in the capability and competence of local citizens and community groups over the years as a result of this development effort. Members of citizens groups are both interested and knowledgeable, their conversation causally peppered with urban planning jargon such as “activated streets” and “eyes on the street.”

There are some negative impacts of such rapid growth in values and prices. The steep rise in retail rental rates has been the problem most commonly cited, and was also the focus of a *Washington Post* article. Some of the early retailers, those who felt committed to Silver Spring through the bad times and who looked forward to the revival, are concerned about rising costs. Montgomery County has created funds to bolster these early retailers through business training or relocation, but some have clearly suffered. This is likely to be an ongoing problem as the revival continues to spread further beyond Downtown Silver Spring into other areas of the CBD.

There are similar issues with respect to affordable housing, especially given the proliferation of home ownership as compared to rental units. The county has addressed this concern by mandating that 12.5 percent of all new units be affordable at sixty-five percent median income. How effective this provision will be in ameliorating the problem is not clear at this point.

An additional question is what has happened to the homeless and distressed population that formerly inhabited the Downtown Silver Spring area. Two local organizations, Progress Place and the Shepherd's Table, are supported by the county to address these issues, but how much of an impact they have made is not clear.



FUTURE PLANS

Downtown Silver Spring is about two-thirds finished. While the spine along Ellsworth Avenue toward the Metro station is largely complete (although some retail spaces, particularly on the second level of the shopping center, are still empty), major anchoring projects at either end of the spine are not. At one end of Downtown Silver Spring the Civic Building and Veteran's Plaza are beginning construction.

At the other end of the spine is the Metro station development, which will include a three level area to support car and bus traffic into and out of the station, with a hotel and residential buildings on top. These plans are not finalized, though planners appear confident that work will proceed soon.

The nature of development in downtown Silver Spring will change in 2006 when the Urban Enterprise Zone authorization expires. It is unlikely to be renewed because the success of the effort has increased values and revenues to a point where the area no longer qualifies for this designation. While it is likely that the county government will continue to support future infrastructure, most development in the CBD is likely to be based on the momentum of this project and carried out by the private sector.

Assessing Project Success

Success in Meeting Project Goals

→ *Introduce new development in the context of Maryland's Smart Growth policies, and with the consensus of major stakeholders.*

The project worked with Smart Growth guidelines and is used within the state as an example of good Smart Growth development. The major stakeholders from a variety of citizen organizations were significantly involved in developing guidelines for Downtown Silver Spring.

→ *Establish a public-private partnership that will revitalize the Central Business District (CBD) for eastern Montgomery County.*

As discussed above, this project mixed public and private decision-making and funds. Montgomery County supplied the initial parameters for the project and was heavily involved in planning, design and environmental review. The county also provided more than \$180 million in funds, largely for infrastructure improvements. The private sector ran the design process with the

citizen groups, created the final design, supplied the balance of the funding, and has marketed the facilities.

→ *Extend and strengthen neighborhoods close to downtown with housing and retail.*

Residential neighborhoods close to downtown were never weak, but felt threatened by the deterioration of the downtown area. They have been an important beneficiary of this project, both in terms of access to needed stores (Whole Foods, Strosniders Hardware store and others) and for the security and growth in the value of their properties and communities. It is a project that serves the local communities much more than the earlier plans would have.

→ *Create a transit-oriented community, taking advantage of local Metro station.*

The project is heavily oriented to the Metro station and uses the presence of the Metro as a marketing tool. Creation of a true transit oriented community is still a work in progress, awaiting the efforts planned for the Metro station itself that will provide a hotel, more residential units and better car and bus access for commuters.

→ *Use an incentive zoning tool that provides significant opportunities for public involvement.*

The CBD Zone and the “Optional Method of Development” provide a unique incentive zoning tool that allows the community to determine the character of development. Specifically, the “stepping down” of development from the Metro Station to the adjacent neighborhoods, the public open spaces, the preservation of historic structures, the design of the streets, and the pedestrian circulation system were all established by the community through the review process. In general, the character of the entire development was established by this knowledgeable community in partnership with the developers through this flexible planning process in Montgomery County.

Selection Committee Discussion: What We Learned

No Silver Bullets

One of the chief lessons learned by this community and by county government officials and planners was to eschew the “silver bullet” or “home run approach” in favor of a more incremental, small scale “series of singles” development plan. The previous, un-built developments were massive all-or-nothing efforts that might have brought in huge revenues, but also could have failed, leaving in their wake a changed and scarred landscape. Duncan has said that he is using this approach as a model for other communities in Montgomery County.

The Wise Use of Iconic Architecture

Even without the “silver bullet,” the project still needed some iconic images. Downtown Silver Spring needed to claim tenants that brought credibility and visibility in a way that could change people’s perception of the area. For Downtown Silver Spring those icons were the American Film Institute and Discovery Communications.

Community Values, Education and Decision Making

The county learned the value of community involvement at the front end of the planning process, as taking the time for significant community

input at the outset saved time in the end and made for a better product. Community members educated themselves in process issues and planning models over years of confrontations and protests through three proposed, and ultimately un-built, downtown proposals. In the end they provided important expertise and guidance on the significance of historic resources and the desired nature of the final development. In the case of Silver Spring, “failure” over the years functioned as a community learning mechanism that ultimately led to a better downtown space.

The Right Tools for the Job

Montgomery County was able to bring to bear a “tool bag” of resources to support development, including the redevelopment zone, the enterprise zone, the optional method of development, the parking district, and so on. As a group these tools provided substantial support to get development started and to guide it in the desired direction.

Making the Most of Local Resources

Ultimately, local resources, both in terms of physical sites and human capital, were more critical to making this project a success than were outside expertise and funding. The historic sites played a key role in attracting important tenants and in providing an image and theme for a development that was uniquely Silver Spring and “not just another suburban mall.” In the final design, Silver Spring was able to tie the

new downtown district to the Metro station, making that key transportation resource an obvious benefit for retail and housing.

A Reimagination of Place

An important element of Silver Spring’s success was learning to accept a new definition of itself as less suburban and more urban – with urban problems and solutions that provided urban density.

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OSHEL, ROBERT (1998)

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Online at <http://users.starpower.net/oshel/history.html>

RELATED RUDY BRUNER AWARD WINNERS:

Text taken from <http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/bruner/>. See also www.brunerfoundation.org.

Bridgemarket, New York, NY; 2003 Silver Medal Winner

Bridgemarket is a contemporary urban marketplace with a combination of mixed uses including a restaurant seating 900 people, a high end housewares and furniture store, a twenty-four hour upscale supermarket, and a new public plaza and garden. This project serves as a vital community resource and as a bridge between adjacent neighborhoods that exemplifies imaginative reuse of the landmark space beneath the Queensboro Bridge in Manhattan.

Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco, CA; 1999 Gold Medal Winner

Yerba Buena Gardens is an eighty-seven acre mixed-use urban development in the South of Market district of San Francisco. It is a diverse, contemporary development which includes a cultural center with over two dozen museums and galleries, an open space network, housing, recreation, and entertainment facilities. The project has helped to reclaim a rundown sector of the city, and has provided jobs, cultural amenities and open space to residents, while supporting tourism in San Francisco.

Southwest Corridor Project, Boston, MA; 1989 Silver Medal Winner

The Southwest Corridor Project implemented a new multi-modal transportation complex, involving the replacement of the Metropolitan Boston Transportation Authority Orange Line, the establishment of four lines of commuter rail, Intercity Amtrak service, and eight transit stations. The project was implemented through the cooperation of public agencies and community organizations in Boston.

Silver Medal Winner
Fruitvale Village
Oakland, California





Fruitvale Village At A Glance

What is Fruitvale Village?

- ➔ A 257,000 square foot “transit village” built on former BART parking lots.
- ➔ An active, retail-lined connector between the BART station and the neighborhood’s primary retail artery.
- ➔ A pedestrian street and plaza that also serves as a major community-gathering place.
- ➔ Forty-seven units of mixed income housing.
- ➔ 114,000 square feet of community services (clinic, library, senior center) and office space (including the Unity Council’s headquarters).
- ➔ 40,000 square feet of neighborhood retail (shops and restaurants).
- ➔ 150 car parking garage within the buildings (plus a large parking structure for BART).

Project Goals

- ➔ To strengthen existing community institutions and catalyze neighborhood revitalization – physically, economically and socially.
- ➔ To reduce poverty, build assets, and contribute to the local economy by providing a stable source of jobs and income.
- ➔ To encourage and leverage public and private investment.
- ➔ To enhance choices for neighborhood residents, including services and retail choices.
- ➔ To provide high quality, affordable housing.
- ➔ To improve the perception and reality of safety.
- ➔ To beautify a blighted area.
- ➔ To increase BART ridership and reduce traffic and pollution.
- ➔ To be sustainable and environmentally sound.

Project Chronology

1964 The Unity Council (UC) was founded.

1969-1974 Arabella Martinez serves as first Executive Director of UC.

1974-1982 Martinez's groomed successor leads UC.

1982-1988 Another Executive Director takes over UC; a period of substantial decline follows.

1989 Arabella Martinez returns as UC Chief Executive Officer.

1991 The Fruitvale community opposes BART's proposal to build a multi-level parking facility at the Fruitvale station.

1992 The Unity Council receives \$185,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds to develop an alternative plan for the station.

1993 The Unity Council is awarded a \$470,000 Federal Transit Administration planning grant for predevelopment activities including economic, traffic, and engineering studies of the area.

1994 The Fruitvale BART Transit Village Policy Committee is formed through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by The Unity Council, BART, and the City of Oakland.

1964
Unity Council founded.

1991
Fruitvale community
opposes BART parking
proposal.

1993
Unity Council awarded
\$470,000 FTA planning grant.

1997
Unity Council creates
Fruitvale Development
Corporation.

2003
Initial occupancy
of Fruitvale Village.

1969-74
Arabella Martinez serves
as first Executive Director.

1992
Unity Council receives
\$185,000 CDBG grant.

1994
Fruitvale BART Transit Village
Policy Committee formed.

1998
Unity Council gains site control.

1995 The Unity Council holds a series of community planning meetings.

1996 The City of Oakland passes a zoning ordinance creating a new transit village zone, which allows higher density, mixed use development, and reduction of parking requirements around BART stations in Oakland.

1997 The Unity Council creates the Fruitvale Development Corporation (FDC).

1998 The Unity Council gains control of the site through a land swap with BART.

1999 BART receives \$7.65 million from the FTA to build replacement parking near the Fruitvale station. Construction of the Transit Village project begins.

2003 Initial occupancy.

2005 (January) Arabella Martinez retires and Gilda Gonzales takes over as Chief Executive Officer of UC.

KEY PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

ARABELLA MARTINEZ, *former Unity Council and Fruitvale Development Corporation Chief Executive Officer*

GILDA GONZALES, *Unity Council and Fruitvale Development Corporation Chief Executive Officer*

MANNI (MANUELA) SILVA, *former Unity Council Operations Director and Fruitvale Development Corporation Senior Executive Officer (interviewed by phone)*

JEFF PACE, *Unity Council Vice President of Finance & Business Operations*

MARSHA MURRINGTON, *Unity Council Vice President of Programs*

TOM LIMON, *Unity Council Public Market Manager; former Project Manager for Fruitvale Village*

JENNY KASSAN, *Unity Council Program Manager, Main Street/BID*

GENESTA IRANI, *tenant of housing and retail*

IGNACIO DE LA FUENTE, *President, Oakland City Council (interviewed by phone)*

JEFF ORDWAY, *Manager of Real Property Development, Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART)*

ANITA ADDISON, *Director of Planning, La Clinica de la Raza*

PEGGY JEN and CATHY CRAIG, *LISC*

KEN TAYMOR, *ATTORNEY, MBV LLC Law*

CHEK TANG, *Design Architect*

LUIS ARAMBULA, *Project Architect*

ROBERT APODACA, *Marketing Director, MVE & Partners*



Fruitvale Transit Village Site Plan

Project Description

Urban Context & History



Entry to the Village from BART station

Riding the BART train (which is elevated along this stretch – and especially northbound where you can see most easily to the east), you cannot help but notice a bright, colorful new complex of buildings – with palm trees, banners and apartment balconies all visible from the platform. Descending and exiting the station, one is drawn into a lively pedestrian plaza, lined with retail shops and small restaurants, and equipped with seating areas and a fountain. This path takes you naturally in the direction of International Boulevard about a block to the east. International Boulevard is a vibrant commercial artery with a wide variety of shops and other businesses, and connects the neighborhood to downtown Oakland. In a few moments, unless you stop to visit the clinic, library or senior center, you have traversed Fruitvale Village.

The project is located in the Fruitvale neighborhood, a few miles south of downtown Oakland. Historically predominantly Latino (in a city where African-Americans are the majority and whites are a minority), this neighborhood has become more diverse in recent years, with particular growth in the Asian-American population.

It was German immigrants settling in the San Francisco Bay area who first established the fruit orchards in the 1800s in what is now called Fruitvale. The orchards, in turn, formed the base for a new fruit canning industry, contributing to a thriving commercial and manufacturing base that became known as Oakland's "second downtown."

The community of Fruitvale was annexed by Oakland in 1909 and continued to thrive through World War II. It was during these war years that many Hispanic and African American workers were attracted to the local war industry jobs. Following the war, however, the area began a decline that continued into the 1990s. Businesses, canneries, and factories left, along with white middle class residents who were relocating to more affluent suburbs. As the businesses left and the manufacturing base eroded, Fruitvale began to suffer from problems typical of neighborhoods in decline – vacant storefronts, joblessness, poverty, and crime. The area continued to be troubled into the 1990s, with a reported retail vacancy rate of forty to fifty percent, and the second highest crime rate in the BART system at the Fruitvale station.¹

The Unity Council was founded in 1964 as a response to some of these problems. This organization emerged as a social service provider that also defined its mission as strengthening and organizing the political voice of the local community. Originally, the Council focused its efforts on the large Latino population, but has since expanded and diversified to meet the needs of new immigrant groups. Today, the population of Fruitvale Village is very diverse. There are many recent immigrants, and over half of all families in the area speak a language other than English at home. Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese are typical first languages. One fifth of the households in the Fruitvale community live under the poverty line.

Not far from the project site are two prior RBA silver medalists, one of which is the Hismen Hi-Nu Terrace (1997), an affordable housing project with retail at the street level, which is several blocks north of Fruitvale on International Boulevard. Also nearby is Swan's Marketplace (2001), a mixed-use development in an historic building downtown. There is also a new, strikingly modern middle and high school campus in the neighborhood.

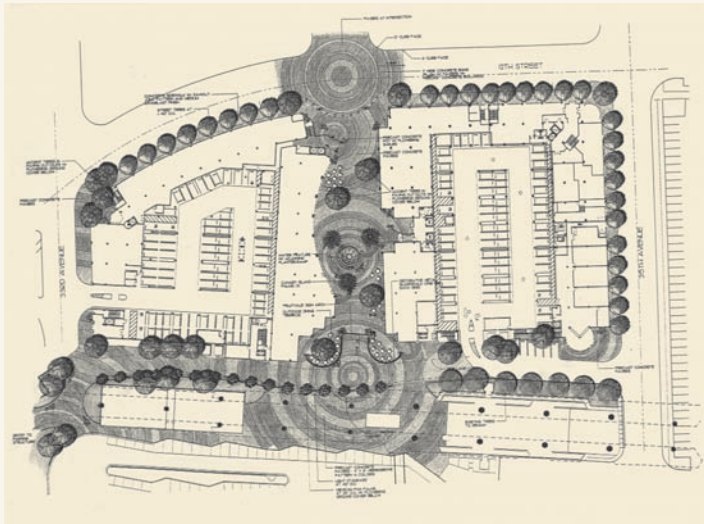
Fruitvale Transit Village

TRANSPORTATION AND PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

The neighborhood is very well served by transportation. It is bordered on the west by I-880, the main north-south freeway serving the East Bay. A BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) line runs through the neighborhood, with a station which is part of the project. In conjunction with the Fruitvale BART station (used by 6,400 daily commuters), there is an inter-modal transit hub where ten local and regional bus lines converge. There is also a taxi stand, and a bicycle station (part of the project and the largest in the United States) that provides free “valet” (attended) bike parking.

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT), Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration; *Transportation and Environmental Case Studies* (Publication Number FHWA-EP-01-010; Case Study 6 on Fruitvale Transit Village Project (2000)

A key goal of the project was to connect the BART station to the neighborhood, particularly International Boulevard. In fact, the project's origin dates to the community's protest over BART's 1991 proposal to construct a multi-level parking structure on what was at the time a surface parking lot along East 12th Street between 35th and 37th Avenues, further separating the station from International Boulevard. Instead, Fruitvale Village was constructed along East 12th Street between 33rd and 35th Avenues, and 34th Avenue was replaced with a two block pedestrian walkway and plaza, connecting the BART station and International Boulevard. The Fruitvale Village project flanks the



Interior parking ringed by commercial program; plaza paving links future public market to BART.

plaza, and its four-story mass frames the space. The plaza gives access to ground floor retail on both sides. In the block to the east, by contrast, the plaza faces the mainly blank walls of buildings that front on International Boulevard and, while there is one shop window, some seating, planting and a small stage, it is much less lively than the other block. However, plans call for the establishment of a Public Market for small vendors in this area which, if successful, would contribute greatly to increasing activity levels. With or without the Public Market, the connection is highly effective and there is a real sense of linkage from the BART station to the heart of the neighborhood.

As part of assembling the project site, the street parallel to the BART line, East 12th Street, was realigned and narrowed to slow traffic, and parking was added along it. This street is also lined with retail and access points to most of the social services.

Parking was a very large issue for this project, in part because BART required that all surface parking that was taken away had to be replaced. While BART originally had funds earmarked for this station's parking garage, the community protest led to those funds being diverted to other stations. The Unity Council had to find the funds to build a new, multi-story parking structure, now completed on the west side of the BART elevated tracks. This structure, along with new surface parking to the north of the station, provides sufficient capacity

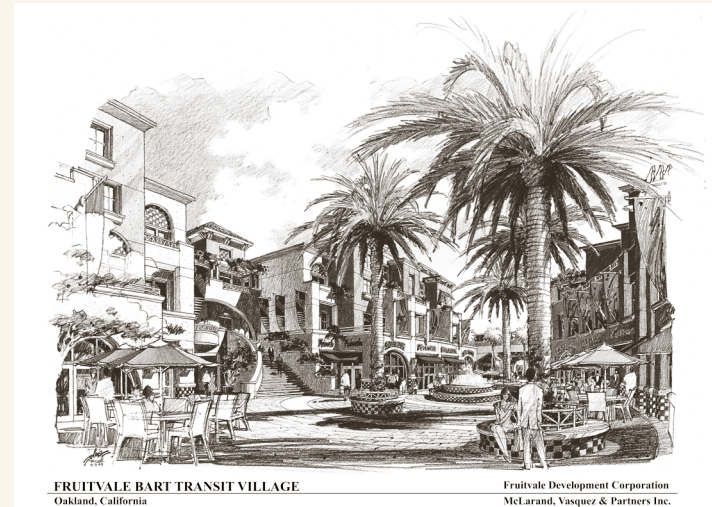
to replace the spaces in the remaining surface parking lots to the south of the project, which will be the site of the second phase of Fruitvale Village.

PROGRAM

Retail

A total of 40,000 square feet of retail space lines the ground floor along the plaza and the northerly portion of East 12th Street, providing a variety of stores and restaurants. Among the businesses included are:

- convenience market (Market One)
- florist (Soap Garden)
- shoe store
- record shop (Acapulco)
- espresso coffee and bakery (Powder Face)
- phone store (Digicom Wireless)
- bridal shop (Casablanca)
- optometrist (Dr. Irani)
- private dental group (Premier)
- tax service (H&R Block)
- bank (Citibank)
- restaurants (Burger One, Subway, Saigon Wraps, Suruki's, K-Fusion [Korean BBQ], Jalisco Two [Mexican restaurant])



Concept sketch (top) reflects character of the plaza as built (bottom).

The Fruitvale Development Corporation (FDC) marketing brochure points to several attractive features of the project, including proximity to the transit hub, accessibility, potential for high sales, and adjacent social services – all of which draw traffic. There are large banners at each end of the plaza proclaiming, “New shops are open!” At the time of the site visit, several storefronts were still vacant, though FDC’s goal is to get them leased in 2005. FDC reports an effort to encourage diversity and refrain from competing with existing local businesses. Thus there is only one Mexican restaurant in Fruitvale Village, so as not to compete with existing restaurants on International Boulevard. This connection to the local business community derives in part from the Unity Council’s long sponsorship of a national Main Street Program for International Boulevard merchants. It is clear that the project is not limited to the Village, but continues throughout the area, with upgraded storefronts, street furniture, signage, traffic calming, and street trees.

Genesta Irani, the wife and partner of local optometrist Dr. Irani, spoke from a merchant’s point of view of their decision to locate in Fruitvale Village. In their modern and attractive shop, Ms. Irani explained why this specific location works well for them. They chose it because they were just starting out and wanted to be in a place which was somewhat under-served and had high demand so they would have many potential clients and less competition. Her husband

speaks Spanish, giving him a great advantage with the local population, which is reported to be highly appreciative of their services. Open for just under a year, they are doing better than they had hoped and feel very welcome and comfortable with the community. They love the warmth and spirit they find here, with customers dropping in to say hello, bringing gifts for their baby, and thanking them for their services. Ms. Irani feels they would not find this community support in a different, especially middle class, location. Interestingly, their shop sells frames and sunglasses mostly at the lower and higher ends, with little in the middle. While as many as sixty percent of their customers are very low income and use Medicare or Medicaid, another twenty-five percent have good union-provided health insurance and others pay cash.

They have also chosen to rent an apartment in Fruitvale Village, so they can have better access to their young child during working hours. While the Village felt safer to them than International Boulevard (which they considered as a location for their shop in part because the rents were lower), Ms. Irani does not feel entirely safe and at night does not walk outside the complex (where security is provided). She reports feeling that while the Village is safer than its surrounds, it is not that safe.

Finally, they find FDC to be an excellent landlord, effective and responsive. FDC holds tenant meetings to learn of their needs and provides them with help in marketing and advertising (including cash grants).

Social Services

A key component of the project is the generous provision of social services. These tenants (or in the case of the clinic, owners) occupy about 114,000 square feet, mostly on the second floor, and provide several benefits. They enrich the services offered to the community, draw people to the project (which helps the retail and makes it easier for clients to visit other services), and they provide valuable revenue which contributes to the project's viability.

La Clinica de La Raza, a community health provider, is situated at the southeast corner of the project, and occupies all three floors (about 42,000 square feet) including street frontage. A long-established, substantial institution, La Clinica has many locations and is the largest employer in the Fruitvale neighborhood. It serves a predominantly Latino clientele, though that has diversified along with the region. Its decision to be part of the project brought a substantial anchor "tenant." For financing reasons, they required that they own their building and the land it sits on (even though they sit in part over a shared parking garage), so unlike other tenants they are owners in the project.



Locating at the Village, while perceived as very positive for them and their clients, required trade-offs, including getting less space than they might have wished for. On the other hand, the smaller facility also kept down their occupancy costs. La Clinica chose to include mainly revenue-generating functions at the Village site in order to pay for the space, and to keep other functions in their prior building on Fruitvale Avenue. They find that there is considerable synergy with the Unity Council and its other services; La Clinica offers training and education as well as direct healthcare services to clients of the senior center and Head Start, and will have a booth at the planned Public Market.

East 12th Street façade

The limited space caused them to be very efficient and some spaces were scaled to be smaller than desired (such as waiting rooms and offices). The first floor has the dental clinic, laboratory, pharmacy x-ray, and cashier. The three main medical clinics (pediatrics, family medicine and women's medicine) occupy the entire second floor and can share exam rooms depending on demand. The third floor has less-visited functions including preventive medicine, social services, administrative offices and a large conference room.

In terms of design, La Clinica had its own team which coordinated with the Village's architect, mainly taking responsibility for interior design, but also for early phases of the exterior design. The process was said to have proceeded reasonably well, with accommodations in each direction. The Village's architect did exert final control over the exterior, eliminating arched windows and gabled roofs, which La Clinica wanted. La Clinica is relatively satisfied with the facility, rating it very high on aesthetics (inside and out) and moderately high on function, with many of their reservations being the result of informed decisions related to budget limitations (as mentioned, some spaces are too small, there are HVAC system problems, and there were some less than optimal finish material choices).

While La Clinica is a separate operation, the Head Start program is operated by the Unity Council, which leases the space from its

subsidiary, the Fruitvale Development Corporation. The De Colores Child Development Center offers a substantial Head Start program serving up to 244 children each week in its 16,000 square foot facility. With an entry on the southwest corner of the project (and a curbside drop-off and pick-up lane), most of the facility is on the second floor. There are many classrooms and a large outdoor terrace (over ground floor parking) with play equipment and craft areas.

The Fruitvale Senior Center, also operated by the Unity Council, is on the second floor, but in the building to the northeast side of the plaza. With a variety of function rooms, it has access to a second, quieter outdoor terrace (also placed over ground floor parking).

The Cesar Chavez Library is a branch of the Oakland Public Library, and appears to be well used and a valued amenity in the community. It occupies about 15,000 square feet on the second floor at the north-



The Unity Council offers a Head Start program in their DeColores Childcare Development Center.

east edge of the Village and features a variety of areas targeted to specialized uses and user groups (children, young adults, computer users, etc.). In an innovative financing arrangement, the library prepaid twenty years rent (as did the Fruitvale Senior Center), helping to capitalize the project.

Housing

Rental housing units occupy the upper two floors of both buildings. The units have separate, secure elevator access from the garages and plaza. Forty-one units are loft-style (with double-height living rooms and one or two bedrooms that overlook the living space). The one-

and two-bedroom units range in size from about 800 square feet to about 1,100 square feet. All units, market or affordable, have the same, relatively high, level of finishes (including granite counter tops). Of the forty-seven units, ten are designated “affordable.” The affordable designation sets the rents at a percentage of median income. The rental price of the market rate units is \$1,100 to \$1,700 depending on size and orientation. There is a broad mix of residents in terms of ethnicity and prior housing location due to a widely distributed marketing program. The Unity Council also constructed an attractive sixty-eight unit senior housing project a block or two from the Village (Las Bougainvillas) and has plans for about 500 more units as part of the Village’s Phase Two.

Offices

There is substantial office space on the second floor on either side of the plaza. On the south, the Unity Council occupies the entire 13,000 square foot space, though it appears to be under-utilized. On the north side of the plaza, there are about 21,000 square feet of vacant office space that has not yet gotten its tenant improvements. The FDC has identified it as one of this year’s priorities to find an appropriate tenant for this space. It is being offered at \$1.80 per square foot per month for full service. When leased, it is expected to carry the overall project into profitability.



Left: Decorative stair from public plaza to second floor commercial spaces

Top right: Senior Center

Bottom right: Entrance to Oakland Public Library

PARKING

Parking was a key aspect of the project, required not only to support the new uses, but to fulfill the requirement to replace all BART parking spaces lost in conversion of the site. BART agreed that once the multi-story garage was completed, all needed parking would be in place for the Village, including its planned second phase. The site has the following number of spaces:

LOCATION	SPACES
FDC/Unity Council Parking	
Building A	72
Building B	78
Lot C	138
Phase 2 lots (on future construction site)	<u>550</u>
Subtotal	838
<i>(77 Lot C spaces have been given to BART as part of the long-term plan)</i>	
BART Parking	
Parking Garage	558
Derby Street Lot	223
Surface Spaces	<u>28</u>
Subtotal	809
Total Currently Available Parking	1,647



DESIGN

The movement and transportation aspects of site planning, as well as the basic disposition of functions, were described above. These resulted in the project being broken into two structures which frame a pedestrian plaza linking the BART station to the neighborhood's commercial artery.

In terms of the project's architectural design, it is somewhat reminiscent of other recent projects in the area (including the RBA winner Hismen Hi-Nu), with visual elements borrowed from the California Mission Style including massing, roofs, and colors. The three and four story mass of these substantial buildings is broken down into smaller elements and colors are rich and saturated. Both the architects and the client representatives described the intention to be culturally relevant to the Latino community and to ensure that other ethnic groups would not have difficulty relating to the image or feel excluded by it. Thus, the image is simplified and modernized, with very limited references to historical forms.

The design of the pedestrian plaza uses multi-colored paving in a swirl pattern, a ramp and stairs to deal with a small change in grade, a strategically placed fountain, and art and seating to enliven the pathway. With large palm trees and other plantings it is an attractive

The Phase II FDC/Unity Council parking lot, designated for future housing.

and well used space. A great deal of attention was paid to the graphics and signage program, with information kiosks at each entry, clear directional signage, and integrated informational signage as well. It contributes to the colorful, almost festive character of the plaza.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This project grew out of community resistance to BART's proposal in 1991 to construct a parking garage on a surface lot between the Fruitvale station and the neighborhood's commercial center. BART held a public meeting to present its proposal and received many

complaints from local residents and community leaders concerning adverse effects on crime (the station already had the second highest crime rate in the system), traffic, air quality, and separation of the station from the commercial district. Because of the opposition to the proposal, BART agreed to work with the community to develop an alternative.

The Unity Council, which had led the opposition, became the natural medium for community participation. In 1992, the City of Oakland gave the Council a grant of \$185,000 from Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to develop an alternative plan. The Council worked with the University of California at Berkeley's National Transit Access Center to sponsor a community design symposium. Five architectural teams were invited to study and prepare proposals for the site, which were then presented to about sixty community leaders, including then-mayor Elihu Harris and BART area director Margaret Pryor. Key themes that emerged from the interactions were the need to revitalize the surrounding neighborhood and to better integrate local businesses into the station development. There were subsequent community meetings that took the concept designs to a broader segment of the neighborhood. The following year, based on the success of the initial process, the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Authority awarded the Council \$470,000 to continue and expand planning. In addition to conducting



FRUITVALE BART TRANSIT VILLAGE
Oakland, California

Fruitvale Development Corporation
McLarand, Vasquez & Partners Inc.

Concept sketches by McLarand, Vasquez & Partners, Inc., illustrate the character of facades and streetscape along E. 12th Street.

further workshops, the Council commissioned economic, traffic and engineering studies of the site.

In 1994, the three main players formalized their relationship for the project in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Unity Council, the City of Oakland, and BART. This established the Fruitvale Policy Committee with two representatives of the Council, one from BART and two from the City, including the mayor and the council person representing the area. La Clinica de La Raza also participated in these policy meetings. Apparently, BART had never before utilized such an arrangement to plan the area around a station.

By 1995, workshops were held with the goal of achieving consensus on a conceptual site plan. To reach that place, basic principles were revisited, including discussions about the positive and negative attributes of the existing situation, as well as goals and preferences for the way the Village should be. In the third workshop, participants chose between two alternative plans and the selected one established the direction for the development. It included the principal elements of the actual project: location on the BART parking lots, pedestrian plaza connecting the station to 12th Street, ground floor retail and restaurants, and a mix of housing, retail and offices.

As the project became more “real,” a structure was put in place to handle its development. The Unity Council formed the Fruitvale Development Corporation (FDC) in 1996. While BART does not normally sole source its contracts, due to the special nature of the project and the pre-existing relationships to the community and the Policy Committee, for this project it awarded FDC an exclusive negotiating agreement.

It is likely that no one anticipated the hurdles that remained or how long it would take to overcome them. One major hurdle was to assemble the development parcel and find a mechanism to give the FDC ownership rights. It took two years to finalize a land swap, whereby the FDC was granted fee simple title to Parcel A (which contains the Unity Council’s Offices, its Head Start program, La Clinica de La Raza and the pedestrian plaza), plus a ninety-five year lease for Parcel B (which houses the senior center and the library), in exchange for giving BART a parcel behind the station owned by the Unity Council as well as other nearby parcels owned by the City. Thus, BART was able to meet a long-standing requirement of its real estate policy by maintaining the value of its holdings in the area.

The other major issue was dealing with BART's policy of maintaining parking spaces. Any spaces lost due to development were required to be replaced one-for-one. This required a structure to accommodate about 500 cars. Remarkably, the Unity Council helped obtain a grant from FTA for \$7.65 million for this purpose. The Council hoped FDC could build the structure and when that proved to be unacceptable to BART, the cost escalated (due to BART's higher overheads). This would have meant that fewer spaces would be built, which would not have adequately replaced lost parking (for both phases). A remarkable aspect of this story is that the Council had twice tried to find additional funds in order to build a large enough garage, and it did. The final increment involved a complex deal whereby the Council borrowed money in part against an income stream it could earn by charging for parking at surface lots which would be built a later phase. It also got a release from BART from having to provide any additional replacement parking in the future.

In 1999, plans for the project were finalized, but it took two more years for financing to be secured. Almost ten years after the initial BART proposal, construction began on Fruitvale Village.

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

This project is "transit-oriented development" (TOD) as currently defined by the Congress of New Urbanism. The specifics of the project were derived at exactly the same time that Congress's self-professed "movement to reform North America's urban growth patterns" emerged. TOD, according to the principles of the Congress, combines a mix of uses including housing, retail and commercial space with public transportation in a pedestrian-friendly environment. The 1000 Friends of Oregon, early subscribers to the Congress's principles, describes such transit-oriented development in one of the earliest publications of the concept as follows. (This citation was published a year after the Fruitvale Village Project started to evolve.)

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is a simple concept: moderate and high density housing, along with complementing public uses, jobs, retail and services, are concentrated in mixed-use developments located at strategic points along the regional transit system. Each TOD has a centrally located transit stop and core commercial area; accompanying residential and/or employment uses are within an average 2,000 feet walking distance. The location, design, configuration, and mix of uses in a TOD provides an alternative to current suburban development trends by emphasizing a pedestrian-oriented environment and reinforcing the

use of public transportation. This linkage between land use and transit is designed to result in an efficient pattern of development that supports the transit system and makes significant progress in reducing sprawl, traffic congestion, and air pollution. The TOD's mixed-use clustering of land uses within a pedestrian-friendly area connected to transit provides for growth with a minimum of environmental and social costs. (1000 Friends of Oregon 1992, quoted in U.S. DOT 2000)

Transit-oriented development plays out in Fruitvale successfully according to Rodney Slater, U.S. Secretary of Transportation. At the formal launch of the Fruitvale Transit Village on July 9, 1999, he stated: *"Transportation planning should be about more than concrete and steel. It should be about building communities, and we are all looking to Fruitvale as an example of how that can happen."* (quoted in U.S. DOT 2000)

ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP

The Unity Council

From a community perspective, this project was led – from protest through planning, design and development – by the Unity Council. The Council was born in 1964 with roots in the anti-poverty movement and Latino organizing (starting with a campaign against a measure that would have rescinded the state's Fair Housing Act). It started life as the Mexican-American Unity Council, quickly shifting from a political action group to a social service provider. Initially, the Council was concerned with ensuring that this section of Oakland, with its largely Latino population, would get its share of federal monies flowing to the City. Later, it changed its name to the Spanish Speaking Unity Council, to broaden its representation of people with roots from countries other than Mexico. In 1989, recognizing the still-greater diversification of the neighborhood, it ceased identifying itself with any particular ethnic group (though its Latino connections remain evident).

In its years of service to the local community, the Council developed deeply connected roots. Not only has the Unity Council been in existence for over forty years, but it has been involved with many people in its diverse programs. These programs evolved over time in

response to funding availability and community need. Some of the programs include, or included, information and referral services, English as a second language, job readiness training, and economic development. As time went on, sponsors (such as the Ford Foundation) suggested that they move into housing, and the Council did, indeed, build a number of housing projects in the surrounding areas (including to the south of Oakland). In this way, the Council became a community development corporation (CDC), though it still sees itself primarily as a community-based service organization, and makes much of the difference in perspective this entails. In other words, despite constructing a very substantial project, it does not feel that building projects is its primary objective.

The Council was also one of the original providers of a national Main Street Program, currently housed in the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This allowed, and indeed required, the Council to develop even broader ties in the community, since participants were local business and commercial property owners. It was natural, then, when the BART parking garage proposal surfaced, that the Council would act as community spokesman in protesting the proposal and working to develop alternatives. International Boulevard. International Boulevard, at the time of the negotiations with BART was less than fifty percent occupied. It now boasts over ninety percent occupancy in largely rehabilitated structures serving the local business community and residents.

Arabella Martinez

It is impossible to imagine this project happening without Arabella Martinez. Martinez was part of the group that formed the Unity Council and served her first term as its executive director from 1969 to 1974. She returned to the Council in 1989 “to rescue her baby” from a decline so substantial that its continued existence was threatened. In the intervening fifteen years, she had risen in the social service field to become an Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare in the Carter Administration. Her experience, administrative skills, and contacts in Washington and elsewhere made her an invaluable asset to the Council. For example, when added funding was needed to build BART’s garage, she was able to call Federico Pena, then U.S. Secretary of Transportation.



Left: Arabella Martinez

Right: Revitalized International Boulevard

Manni (Manuela) Silva

As crucial as Martinez's contributions were, she could not have done it alone. Another key player was Manni (Manuela) Silva, who Martinez brought in on her return in 1989 to help turn around the near-defunct Council. Silva's role was, from the beginning, that of implementer, the one who "got things done," while Martinez focused more on vision, lobbying, and oversight. Silva also had a background in housing development (having built a substantial number of HUD-assisted units), which helped with the interim projects. She was also appointed to run the Fruitvale Development Corporation, the entity that handled construction and development of Fruitvale Village. In this role, Silva made many of the deals for financing as well as managing the development process. Silva left the Unity Council after over a decade of service eight months before Martinez. Her replacement as Executive Director, Gilda Gonzales, brought strong political ties and knowledge of the City, having previously served as the mayor's chief of staff.

Partnerships

While the Unity Council took the lead on all aspects of this project from the perspective of the community, they "partnered" with a number of entities who contributed to its realization. These partners included:

- Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART)
- City of Oakland
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MPO for Bay Area)
- Federal Transit Administration
- U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit)

BART was obviously a key player in this project, having started the process with its proposed parking structure and, eventually, making the site available to the Unity Council. BART was represented on the tri-partite Policy Council, but its contributions need to be understood in terms of the role of one of its real estate staff, Jeff Ordway. Within certain strong but flexible limits, Ordway served almost as an in-house advocate for the project. Ordway explained that from BART's perspective, in the early 1990s they were losing ridership due to lack of parking at certain stations – thus the parking structure requirements reflected at Fruitvale. There was little sensitivity to urban planning issues (more of a transportation engineering perspective) and little or no awareness of the emerging principles of transit-oriented development (TOD); for example, BART often destroyed street grids to create huge parking lots. This was also the first time their projects had been subject to environmental review and they were more than surprised at the community response shown at mandatory public meetings.

However, it was not that the community was opposed to the parking structure *per se*, only that it was being located in the wrong place. In order to move forward, BART agreed that the local community could have input, and joined the Unity Council and the City on the newly formed Policy Council.

Why would BART, a regional authority whose main goals are to increase ridership and operate in the black financially, bother to do this? The answer may lie in its unusual structure, with an elected board composed of representatives of each area it serves. Margaret Pryor, who represented the area that includes Oakland, supported the community, and her fellow board members fell into line behind her. BART was also looking to exploit its real estate holdings adjacent to its stations, and was entertaining notions of joint development with the private sector. Ordway appears to have been able to insert some “soft” objectives into the equation, including better links from the gates to the community in terms of perceived safety, enlivening the surroundings with retail, and the public service convenience of being able to shop on the way home. In the spirit of Jane Jacobs’ *The Life and Death of Great American Cities* (1961), these objectives provided the security of “eyes on the street” for Fruitvale.

The project would also put tax-exempt property back on the rolls, a benefit to local government rather than BART. While Ordway was

also an advocate for TOD principles, they were not so clearly articulated when the project started; rather, they emerged in the visioning and design workshops described above.

The relationship between BART and the Unity Council is complex and multi-faceted. At times, BART provided very substantial support. But at other key points, BART was a considerable obstacle (for example, enforcing its policies and standards delayed the project, raised the cost of the parking structure and required it to be larger than it otherwise might have been in order to replace all lost parking spaces). On the other hand, BART was also able to demonstrate considerable flexibility, at times bending or changing long-standing policies.

City of Oakland

The other key partner in this project is the City of Oakland. The City was the third member of the Policy Council, provided substantial funding early on and throughout the project, lent expertise and oversight, cooperated in realigning and abandoning streets, participated in land swaps that helped assemble the site, and now occupies a substantial part of the project as tenants (the senior center and the library). The City was principally represented by Ignacio De La Fuente, who started as a local labor leader and organizer and was then elected to be the City Council representative for the area (and more recently has become Council President). De la Fuente was an

early community advocate for the project, and then guided it through numerous city reviews, approvals, and deals. Having such an advocate at the City was essential to the project's progress, though it appears somewhat unusual from an observer's perspective that a council member played this role rather than the mayor. However, De La Fuente did, clearly, gain the support of the entire council and two mayors – mainly Elihu Harris; by the time Jerry Brown was elected in 1998, the project had its major components in place. While Fruitvale Village did not figure prominently in De La Fuente's first election campaign in 1992, it did for his re-election in 1996.

FINANCES

Project Development

The Unity Council and its partners were able to obtain very substantial financing for the project, initially in the form of planning grants, then later as grants and loans for construction. Once basic sources of equity and other contributions were committed, Citibank sponsored tax-exempt bonds for the balance. The variety and complexity of sources was remarkable, with approximately thirty different contributors. The following table shows sources and uses for the project.

SOURCES OF FUNDS 07/31/04

EQUITY

FEMA	1,045,304
Ford Foundation	122,000
R&R Goldman Fund	300,000
Levi-Strauss	226,881
E&W Haas Jr. Fund	400,000
PG&E	50,000
Neighborhood Reinvestment Corp.	100,000
NCLR	25,000
Land Proceeds	517,025
Total Equity	\$2,786,210

CITY OF OAKLAND

City EDI	3,300,000
EDA Grant	1,380,000
Measure K Bonds (Prepaid lease)	2,540,000
City Library (\$4.5 million prepaid lease)	4,900,000
CDBG/Other	77,339
EPA Grant	99,998
City-BTA Bike Station	400,000
Tax Increment Allocation (B) (LISC)	4,000,000
Total City of Oakland	\$16,697,337

DOT/BART

MTC	47,121
FTA Child Development Center	2,300,000
FTA Pedestrian Paseo	780,000
FTA-CMA Bike Facility	400,000
FTA-Pedestrian Plaza	2,228,534
Dot/Bart	\$5,755,655

SOURCES OF FUNDS 07/31/04

INTEREST/MISCELLANEOUS

Interest/Other _____	643,707
Additional Bond Funds Interest/Misc. _____	176,661
Total Interest/Miscellaneous _____	\$820,368

DEBT

Unity Council FTV/Perm Loan _____	885,473
Unity Council Bridge Loan _____	911,830
NCBDC _____	750,000
City Section 108 _____	3,300,000
Citibank Subordinate _____	1,400,000
City Housing Loan _____	750,000
501 (C) 3 Bonds _____	19,800,000
Total Debt _____	\$27,797,303
TOTAL SOURCES OF FUNDS _____	\$53,856,873

USES OF FUNDS**Predevelopment**

Staff & Overhead _____	645,985
Contract Services _____	389,286
Total Predevelopment _____	\$1,035,271

Hard Construction Cost

Off-Site _____	1,291,931
Building Structure _____	27,793,806
General Contractor Fees _____	1,095,138
Construction Contingency _____	1,679,789
Bond Requirements _____	144,935
Tenant Improvements _____	2,341,680
Plaza Improvements _____	1,800,000
Public Art _____	24,185
Total Hard Construction Costs _____	\$36,171,464

SOFT COST

Acquisition Cost _____	1,764
Architecture and Engineering _____	2,819,787
Permits, Fees & Taxes _____	773,218
Development Staff/Operating _____	2,840,686
Utility Hookups _____	600,000
Environmental Remediation _____	188,680
Legal, Insurance & Other _____	744,031
Contingency _____	630,144
Bike Facility Soft Cost _____	262,968
Total Soft Costs _____	\$8,861,278

INTEREST AND FEES

Construction Interest _____	2,671,049
City Section 108 _____	150,000
NCBDC _____	76,285
Unity Council _____	172,868
Bond Issuance Cost _____	790,490
Reserves and Lease-up _____	323,600
Total Interest and Fees _____	\$4,184,292

BRIDGE LOANS

Unity Council Bridge Loan _____	911,830
NCBDC _____	750,000
Total Bridge Loans _____	\$1,661,830

TOTAL USES OF FUNDS _____	\$51,914,135
SURPLUS (DEFICIT) _____	\$1,942,738

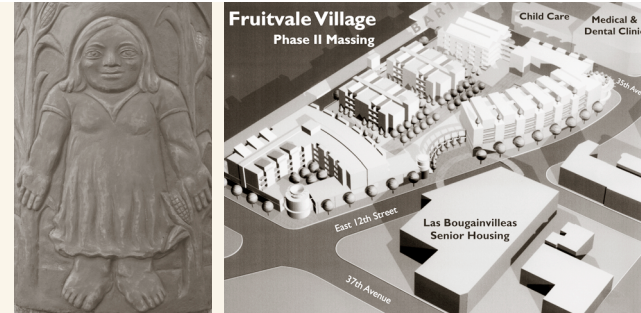
Operating Budget

The operating budget is almost as complex as the capital financing. Given that FDC and the Unity Council are separate legal entities, they are reported individually. The FDC, which owns and operates Fruitvale Village and three other properties, has about \$3 million in annual revenue. While its total expenses are about \$4.5 million, much of the difference is accounted for by depreciation, so that the net bottom line cash operating loss is relatively small (around \$30,000 for the Village and a similar figure for the other properties). FDC also shows net assets of over \$32 million. Since the operating loss is essentially an accounting artifact, it appears that the projects are viable at the current level of occupancy and interest rates.

The Unity Council has an annual operating budget of over \$10 million (plus an additional \$1.5 million for two of its properties) and appears to operate with a small net asset surplus. The Council pays about \$300,000 per year in rent to FDC for its office space.



Space for future public market with indoor market space adjacent to the plaza.



FUTURE PLANS

One of the primary goals of FDC for 2005 is the completion of lease-up, including the few vacant retail spaces and especially the large vacant office space. Also planned for 2005 is the opening, by the Unity Council, of the Public Market in the plaza connecting to International Boulevard. The major project, however, is the so-called Phase Two of the Village, which will construct housing (and perhaps other uses) on BART's surface parking lots on the two blocks immediately to the south of Fruitvale Village. Preliminary plans call for 500 to 600 units. Further project definition and feasibility studies will be conducted in the next year, followed by design, financing and construction on an unknown timetable. The land, however, is tied up for them and the Unity Council currently derives income from parking fees to repay the loan it secured as part of the financing of the BART parking structure. Also, the replacement parking has already been constructed as part of the structure, so that part of the deal, at least, is completed.

Top left: Detail of art in market plaza

Top right: Model of Phase II massing on the existing parking lot

Assessing Project Success

Success in Meeting Project Goals

➔ *To strengthen existing community institutions and catalyze neighborhood revitalization – physically, economically and socially.*

Fruitvale Village would appear to be having a very substantial positive impact on its community. It is very attractive visually, and delivers the benefits promised by transit-oriented development: it forms a connector between transit interchanges and the broader community; it has enlivened activities and provided community space; and offers a viable mix of housing and of retail.

Fruitvale Village would also appear to be playing a key role in transforming the broader community, which is becoming safer, more attractive, and more viable commercially. Commercial retail vacancy rates along International Boulevard are reported to have fallen from the forty to fifty percent range ten years ago to one percent today.

➔ *To reduce poverty, build assets, and contribute to the local economy by providing a stable source of jobs and income.*

The Village claims to have created 500 jobs (documentation was not obtained and it is possible that some were limited to construction). Though the project itself houses a number of significant employers, it is uncertain how many of the jobs are new.

➔ *To encourage and leverage public and private investment.*

The project itself attracted substantial investments from the City and from La Clinica de La Raza. In addition, developers are building market rate housing in the vicinity. (It would seem, however, that the area has a considerable distance to go before it could be considered to be gentrifying).

➔ *To enhance choices for neighborhood residents, including services and retail choices.*

The Village is a focus of important community services (library, senior center, Head Start, clinic), providing a convenient place for people to come to meet many of their needs on the same visit.

This use of community services complements the now traditional TOD model of mixed housing, retail, and commercial space. It also reinforces the Unity Council's commitment to meeting social needs. Retail and housing choices were also expanded by the project.

→ *To provide high quality, affordable housing.*

Phase One has provided forty-seven units of housing, of which ten are affordable. The units are well planned and finished to a higher level than would be typical for the market. There are no physical differences between market rate and affordable units. Phase Two will provide approximately 500 more housing units, but the affordable mix will likely depend on requirements of the financing sources. Near this project, the Council has also built sixty-eight units of subsidized senior housing.

→ *To improve the perception and reality of safety.*

The project provides "eyes on the street," as well as passive and active security devices, and private security guards are visible. Residents and businesses report that the area is safer, but not yet as safe as it might be. One measure of success is that the Fruitvale BART station was reported to have the second highest crime rate in the system prior to the project's construction, and now it has one of the lowest.

→ *To beautify a blighted area.*

Before and after photographs illustrate the degree to which Fruitvale Village has improved the area. However, the project was built on a landscaped parking lot, which was not particularly unattractive in itself. The surrounding area has also been improving, in substantial measure due to the Unity Council's Main Street program.

→ *To increase BART ridership and reduce traffic and pollution.*

BART estimates that 300 to 600 new daily trips have been generated since the project opened, though some may be due to extraneous factors (such as the increasing cost of gasoline). No data were available on reductions in traffic and pollution, though such impacts are typically claimed by TOD proponents (and may, indeed, have been achieved).

→ *To be sustainable and environmentally sound.*

Again, this is a typical TOD goal, but no data were available for measuring the environmental impacts of Fruitvale Village. The project was not presented as being particularly "green" in its design, use of materials, or construction.

OTHER MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The project also benefits from very good planning and urban design, with a site plan that successfully integrates the BART station with the commercial development on International Boulevard. The architecture provides a functional accommodation of community services, retailing and public plaza activities.

Fruitvale Village has the potential to serve as a general model for other sites, although many factors make it unique and unlikely to be replicated as such. For example, BART and the City are looking at three other stations as possible TOD sites and each has special features and factors that make it different from Fruitvale. Generally, it is unusual to find the strong community organization and leadership this project had. Also, the mix of uses and of financing would have to be tailored to each site. Fruitvale, however, deserves credit for being one of the first (if not the first) substantial TOD project in the region, certainly the first led by a non-profit agency. The project should also be commended for inspiring others to strive to achieve their level of accomplishment.

Selection Committee Discussion: What We Learned

The Fruitvale Village experience provides a number of lessons that can be of value to other projects – even ones that are not necessarily transportation-oriented.

Effective Partnerships

To some extent, the Unity Council, BART and the City of Oakland make strange bedfellows. Each has its own mandates and interests. However, each apparently realized that they needed the others in order to achieve their own objectives. Thus, they formalized the partnership in 1994 as the Fruitvale Policy Committee. This was of tremendous value to the project, helping it to overcome challenges as they arose. And, in the end, each of the entities did benefit: the Unity Council improved the community for its constituents (and increased its income and equity, as well as developing its capacity); BART increased ridership (estimated to be between 300 and 600 new daily riders) and improved safety at a problematic station; and the City increased property taxes, became more effective in delivering services, and reduced crime and other problems in a troubled neighborhood.

Effective Leadership

Convincing Arabella Martinez to return to the Unity Council may be the single most important decision anyone made to benefit the project (though that outcome was unknown at the time). Without her, the Unity Council likely would have failed, while with her, it was in a position to guide the project for the community. Martinez also brought in others, such as Manni Silva. The Unity Council appears generally to have understood the importance of careful transition planning. Of course, national connections helped as well. BART found Jeff Ordway who grew into an advocate for the project, and the City's Ignacio De La Fuente provided crucial leadership at that leg of the triangle.

Public Involvement

This project started as a proposal for a BART parking structure. But community opposition to its placement, voiced at public hearings, led to an effective community planning process. This happened in part because the community had a history of action and had an effective voice in the Unity Council. Throughout its evolution, key decisions and directions were set with broad input from the community and other stakeholders working together in a public forum. This resulted in strong community support for the project. The Unity Council contrasts this process, which it characterizes as community based, with what sometimes happens when CDCs that are well intentioned

but less connected to the community propose a building project that does not really tap into the community's needs – and may not get the same level of local support.

Perseverance

This project required more than ten years of commitment by its participants, with serious stumbling blocks presenting themselves with some regularity. The degree of perseverance required is probably more than could be expected – particularly if the participants had known from the beginning what would be required of them. More likely, the commitment developed gradually as people spent more and more time on the project and began to see its possibilities and benefits.

Creative Financing

As described above, this project required highly complex financing – as many as thirty-one sources had to be tapped, blended and coordinated (since funders' requirements are often different). The Unity Council and its partners showed creativity and flexibility in locating and obtaining support. When a potential source of funds such as the Federal Transit Administration wanted to support the project but could not award funds to the Unity Council, BART agreed to accept the funds and allocate them to the project.

Quality Design and Construction

This project would not be as good as it is without a desire for, and commitment to, quality. The Unity Council hired the best professionals it could find to assist it with the project, from consultants and planners to architects and builders. Their approach was to aim for high quality, and then to compromise only where they had to.



Village housing above retail space at East 12th St. entrance to plaza

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

See Unity Council websites: <http://www.unitycouncil.org/> and <http://www.fruitvalevillage.net/>

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration;
Transportation and Environmental Case Studies
(Publication Number FHWA-EP-01-010); Case Study 6
on Fruitvale Transit Village Project (2000). Online at
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ejustice/case/case6.htm>

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Taken from <http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/bruner/>. See also www.brunerfoundation.org

Center in the Square, Roanoke, VA; 1997 Silver Medal Winner

Center in the Square incorporates restoration of a 1914 warehouse to create a downtown cultural center housing the Art Museum of Western Virginia, Science Museum of Western Virginia, Roanoke Valley History Museum, Mill Mountain Theater and The Arts Council of the Blue Ridge. By bringing together these cultural entities in a rent free space and by encouraging community input, Center in the Square has created a new cultural and educational destination in Roanoke and has spurred revitalization in downtown Roanoke.

New Community Corporation, Newark, NJ; 1993 Gold Medal Winner

Born out of the riots of 1967, the New Community Corporation (NCC) rebuilt the devastated central ward of Newark through creation of the largest community development corporation in the country, offering a range of comprehensive and innovative services to meet a variety of urban needs. NCC includes manufacturing, retail, educational, housing and other initiatives in the Newark area. This grass roots redevelopment venture houses over 6,000 individuals in apartments and homes contained within fifteen housing developments (2,498 units ranging from senior citizen high rises, family town houses, to mid-rise mixed tenancy buildings) in Newark, New Jersey. The Corporation also serves as a source of employment, day care, educational opportunities, social and health care services, and job training.

Roslindale Village Main Street, Boston, MA; 1991 Silver Medal Winner

Roslindale Village Main Street is an organization of merchants and citizens devoted to revitalization efforts in the former Roslindale Square in southwest Boston, MA. Between changes in retailing (such as malls and huge discount stores) and urban/demographic forces, the area declined by the 1970s from a thriving commercial district to a metal-gated, burned-out zone with but a few determined business concerns remaining. Through concerted, innovative historic preservation efforts, including rehabilitation of storefronts and commercial signage to revitalize a commercial center through street improvements, sidewalks, lighting, benches, small parks, and landscape improvements, the area was designated a National Main Street Center Urban Demonstration Program (the only one of the original eight to endure) and incrementally very successful results occurred. The once again thriving district had seventeen building renovations and thirty storefront facade improvements. A program of cultural and promotional events was developed. A ripple-effect can be seen beyond its immediate purview: the MBTA reopened and greatly improved a closed transit station, the closed Roslindale High School was converted to apartments, and local banks nicely enhanced landscaping efforts. An effective coalition of local community groups were able to make Roslindale Village Main Street the most lasting National Trust Main Street Urban Demonstration Program in the country.

Silver Medal Winner

Lower Town Artist Relocation Program

Paducah, Kentucky





Lower Town Artist Relocation Program At A Glance

What is the Lower Town Artist Relocation Program?

- ➔ A program that encourages artists from across the country to relocate to the Lower Town neighborhood of Paducah, Kentucky.
- ➔ A program for rehabilitating historic structures in a deteriorated neighborhood.
- ➔ A program to encourage infill of vacant lots in Lower Town with artist live/work space.
- ➔ An economic development program that strives to develop a new economic sector (art galleries and businesses).
- ➔ A job program that seeks to employ local workers in the process of rehabilitating historic properties and building new infill projects.
- ➔ A community building tool for Lower Town and for the City of Paducah.

Project Goals

- ➔ Attract working artists from around the country to relocate to Paducah.
- ➔ Increase home ownership and property values in Lower Town.
- ➔ Rehabilitate historic structures in Lower Town.
- ➔ Reduce crime and eliminate blight in the neighborhood.
- ➔ Economically revitalize Lower Town (and Paducah) with an influx of new retail and service businesses.

Project Chronology

1999-2000 City of Paducah establishes policy of creating “vital neighborhoods” as a major policy direction.

Artist Mark Barone begins complaining to City officials about the condition of Lower Town. Simultaneously he begins exploring models of art-based revitalization in other cities.

Lower Town Association reorganized with purpose of decreasing crime and improving safety in the neighborhood.

City Planning Department and Director Tom Barnett initiate dialogue between neighbors and the City.

2000 City passes Rental Occupancy Ordinance, hires Mark Barone, and begins marketing properties to artists.

1999-2000
Artist Mark Barone urges City to intervene in Lower Town. City Planning Department initiates dialogue with Lower Town residents.

2001
City initiates planning process for Lower Town.

2003
City initiates infrastructure improvements in neighborhood.

2003-Present
Artists from around the country relocate to Lower Town, creating a new art district in the downtown.

2000
City passes Rental Occupancy Ordinance, and hires Mark Barone.

2002
City completes Lower Town Neighborhood Plan.

2005
Infrastructure improvements in Lower Town completed.

2001 Department of Planning initiates formal planning process through meetings with Lower Town residents to determine what they want for their neighborhood.

Department of Planning completes “Survey of Structures” in Lower Town, collecting data on over 300 parcels.

Artist Bill Renzulli decides to make the move as the first official out-of-town artist recruited through the program.

2002 Department of Planning completes Lower Town Neighborhood Plan, with the Artist Relocation Program as its cornerstone. Plan is adopted by City.

2003 City initiates infrastructure improvements in neighborhood.

Paducah Transit Authority undertakes rehabilitation of former plumbing supply facility as its new headquarters.

Artist Bill Renzulli renovates a home, builds a studio and moves into Lower Town.

2003 – 2005 Over forty artists relocate to Lower Town, in rehabilitated or infill structures.

2005 All planned infrastructure improvements are completed, and most available properties are turned over to artists.

KEY PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

MARK BARONE, *Artist and Lower Town resident,*
City of Paducah Artist Relocation Program Coordinator

BILL PAXTON, *Mayor*

TOM BARNETT, *Paducah Director of Planning*

BUFORD WILSON, *Paducah Urban Renewal*

MIKE MCDOWELL, *Paducah Historic Commission*

WALLY BATEMAN, *Paducah Bank*

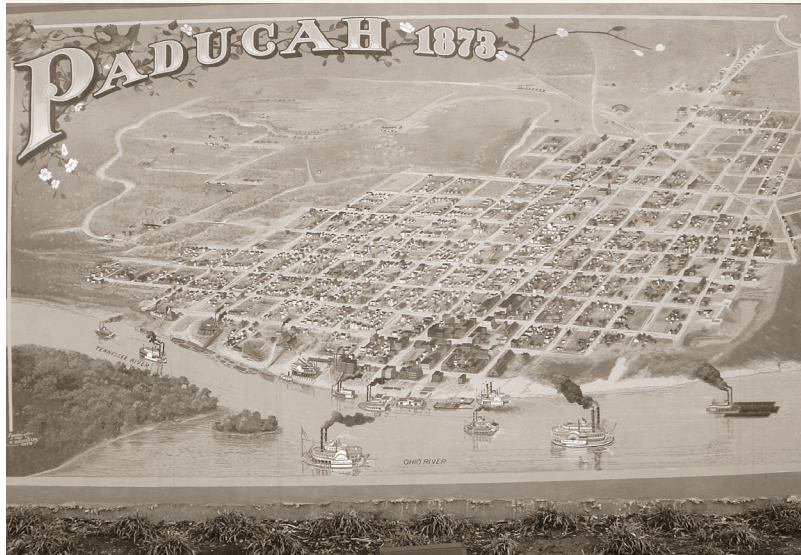
BILL RENZULLI, Julie Shaw, Mark Palmer, Monica Bilak,
Aynex Mercado, *artists and residents*

CAROL GAULT, *Director, Paducah Main Street Association*

GAYLE KALER, *Former President Lower Town Association*

Project Description

Urban Context & History



Map of historic Paducah

Paducah is proud of its history, which dates back to the Revolutionary War. In 1779, a small army landed on the banks of the Ohio River and defeated British posts in nearby Illinois. In 1818, President James Monroe purchased the area from the Chickasaw Indians in what came to be known as the Jackson Purchase. The town itself was founded in 1827 by William Clark (of Lewis and Clark) who named it for the Paducah Indians, once the largest nation of Indians known in the country. Paducah was incorporated in 1830, and was already a thriving and growing town.¹

Despite Kentucky's policy of armed neutrality during the Civil War, Paducah became the site of a battle in 1861 when Confederate soldiers seized the area on September 3 and Ulysses S. Grant landed in Paducah the next day to oust them. After the invasion by the Confederacy, the State of Kentucky declared itself loyal to the union. The famous Battle of Paducah was fought on March 25, 1864, when the Confederate Army attacked a union fort there. It is interesting to note that the recruitment of African Americans as soldiers actually began in Paducah in 1864; any black citizen who joined was freed from slavery, as was his family.²

In the nineteenth century, much of Paducah's economic base was river-related industry, as large quantities of goods moved up and down the Ohio River. Boat and barge manufacturing and other related

^{1,2} <http://www.paducahky.com>

activities thrived for many years, and are still in evidence. Today, one can still see large barges of coal, gravel, and other dry goods as they are moved along the Ohio River, the “northernmost ice-free inland waterway in the United States.” In fact, Paducah claims to be directly accessible to more miles of navigable waterways than any city in the world. A recent Chamber of Commerce survey estimates that there are still approximately 3,500 jobs in the larger fifteen-county region that are directly related to the river industry.

Paducah maintained a healthy manufacturing and river-related economy up through the early years of the twentieth century. The emergence of railroads in the mid-nineteenth century again brought Paducah to prominence when it became a major transportation node and supply center. Railroad engine manufacture emerged as another major industry, when a steam engine production company located in town.³

Paducah today is a city of 26,000, located in a region of 250,000. The nearest large cities are Nashville, St. Louis, Memphis, and a bit farther along, Chicago. The major economic sectors now providing employment within the City are education, health and social services, retail, manufacturing, and arts, entertainment, recreation, hotel and food. Its population is seventy-two percent white and twenty-four percent African-American, with small numbers of other races including Hispanic and Native American.⁴

Paducah’s economy has had a similar trend to many other small cities across the country. For many years it fared well based on its historic industries and excellent accessibility. Its downtown remained the center of commerce, with handsome, historic structures located near and adjacent to the river. Like many small city downtowns, however, with changes in the manufacturing and transportation sectors, the downtown began to decline as early as the 1930s. The arrival of a major shopping mall to the west of town in the 1980s delivered the final *coup de grace*.

The Paducah Main Street Association (part of the National Main Street Program) reports that fifteen years ago the downtown was deserted. The Director reports with considerable pride, however, that the downtown is making a comeback, with a ninety percent occupancy rate in approximately 300 downtown structures. The 300 buildings in the downtown district employ close to 4,000 people, with a recent net gain of 120 new downtown jobs. Similarly, the number of downtown businesses jumped from 290 to 300 in the past year. Higher occupancy rates in downtown residential units also attest to a more vibrant city center.

The recent revival started with the construction of the Quilt Museum in 1990, and was followed by the City’s purchase of the Petter properties in 1995 and the subsequent redevelopment of the almost entire square block of properties located at Broadway and Water

³ <http://www.paducahky.com>

⁴ <http://www.city-data.com/city/Paducah-Kentucky.html>

Streets. The most visible signs of the downtown revival include the recent rehabilitation of several key blocks of historic structures along the river, including historic Market House Square, a former market, which now houses a cinema, museum, and community space. Across from Market Square small scale historic streets have seen the advent of new shops and restaurants that appear to be doing well, and contribute to a lively atmosphere.



Left: Historic buildings in downtown Paducah
Right: Revitalized street in the downtown

Paducah has, in recent years, enjoyed a growing reputation as a center for arts and culture. The annual quilt show and the Museum of the American Quilter together draw over 100,000 people annually, and have given Paducah the reputation of "Quilt City USA." The Museum of the American Quilter's Society itself draws about 70,000 every year, and approximately fifty riverboats stop in Paducah annually, providing the community with a healthy tourism base. In addition, Paducah recently completed the \$40 million Four Rivers Performing Arts Facility, built on the river's edge adjacent to the downtown. With \$20 million contributed by the state, Paducah was able to raise \$20 million in private dollars to build this state-of-the-art facility, no small achievement for a town of 26,000.



Other downtown festivals and events draw tourists to Paducah. The BBQ and Arts Festival for example, draws approximately 40,000 people. The Paducah Main Street Association helped to create the “First Friday Cultural Trolley,” in which a free trolley runs back and forth from Lower Town to downtown from 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm on the first Friday of every month, encouraging people to visit the Lower Town art district. During “Saturday Nights After Dinner,” a program that runs from May to September, the downtown streets are closed, making way for gatherings, small parades and performances, street theater, food vendors, and a general community gathering. Paducah continues to cultivate its local attractions and is increasingly a destination for people traveling within the region to view the growing number of galleries and shops related to its art venues.

URBAN DESIGN

Consistency of scale and well preserved historic structures built in the mid to late 1800s and early 1900s characterize the downtown, much of which is encompassed by a National Historic District. The dominant architectural style is five to six story Victorian and Art Deco buildings, with arched windows and stylized cornices and entries. Some of the central buildings in the downtown have been renovated and adapted to new uses relating to tourism, culture, and entertainment, while others maintain a more traditional mix of office above and

retail at the ground floor. Mixed-use zoning also permits residential uses above the first floor commercial uses.

The Ohio River is the dominant organizing factor in the downtown. Although Paducah was originally developed along the river and oriented to it, major floods have taken their toll. The most recent major flood was in 1937, when the Ohio flooded to as far as 32nd Street (thirty-two blocks inland from the river). This event resulted in the construction by the Army Corps of Engineers of a flood barrier in the form of a wall, approximately fifteen feet high, running along the river the length of the downtown. The barrier wall seems to provide the necessary flood protection, as there have been no such disasters since, but serves to literally wall off the river, the town’s major natural amenity, from the downtown.



Flood control barrier on the Ohio river

The barrier wall strongly inhibits the natural integration of downtown life with activity and vistas on the river. There are openings in the wall for pedestrian access to the river where from the river's edge one can view considerable waterborne activity – large barges loaded with gravel, coal and other dry goods are pushed up and downstream by working tugs. In the summer months, large paddle wheel steamers provide additional commercial activity and tourism on the river. Bike paths, pedestrian paths and seating have been developed at the river's edge, but remain completely separated visually by the wall from the pedestrian level in the downtown.



Mural on flood control barrier

Efforts have been made to mitigate the effects of the wall with a mural depicting Paducah's history. It is nevertheless evident that the flood barrier presents significant challenges to development of the riverfront as the major downtown resource it could become. Similarly, a large part of the downtown waterfront is currently paved over with at-grade parking, further limiting development potential in the heart of downtown.

Artist Relocation Project

LOWER TOWN

Adjacent to the downtown lies the Lower Town neighborhood, Paducah's oldest residential neighborhood. In the city's early days, Lower Town was "where prosperous citizens built brick and frame houses in the Greek Revival and Italianate styles."⁵ Over the years, however, the historic fabric has withstood numerous assaults, beginning as early as the Civil War when Union soldiers occupied Paducah in 1864 and ordered all two story residences within "musket range" of the nearby fort to be burned. Much of the historic housing stock in Lower Town was lost at that time, only to be rebuilt in the ensuing years.

⁵ <http://www.paducahky.com>

"Lower Town neighborhood is in crisis and at a crossroads... Without a comprehensive effort, the City will lose the opportunity to stabilize and reinvigorate this neighborhood"

In 1982, the importance of Lower Town's historic structures was realized when it became part of a National Historic District, requiring zoning review by the local Historic Architecture Review Commission (HARC) for all exterior façade changes in the District. Lower Town is also an Enterprise Zone, enabling tax credits for certain types of improvements, and is included as a state designated Renaissance Area. Historic zoning allows for "mixed-use much like what was found at the turn of the century," including live/work space for artists.⁶

Lower Town, a thirty-three block area, is flanked by the major downtown anchors of the Four Rivers Performing Arts Center on one side, and the Museum of the American Quilter and Convention Center on the other. Despite its illustrious history, prime location, and its historic designation, Lower Town had fallen into serious disrepair in the past decades. As recently as 2001, some would not walk or drive into the neighborhood, where drug deals, crime, and blight were commonplace. Residents and neighbors were in despair over the extent of urban blight in the neighborhood, and its future looked bleak.



Planning and survey work in the neighborhood underscored its deplorable condition. According to the *Lower Town Neighborhood Plan*, published by the City in 2002, fifty-one percent of people in the neighborhood were living in poverty; seventeen percent were unemployed, and the average per capita income was \$8,000. Coupled with a seventy percent rental profile, only thirty percent home ownership, and renters who were for the most part transient, the neighborhood was in real trouble. In the previous year, seventeen drug related crimes were reported, and property values were thirty to fifty percent lower than in other areas of town. A long history of lax code enforcement had made matters worse. *The Lower Town Neighborhood Plan* described the general consensus that the "Lower Town neighborhood is in crisis and at a crossroads... Without a comprehensive effort, the City will lose the opportunity to stabilize and reinvigorate this neighborhood" (City of Paducah, 2002).

Blight conditions prevailed in Lower Town

⁶ <http://www.paducahky.com>

The neighborhood did, however, have some allies, as well as a history of concerned residents. In the late 1980s, the Lower Town Association had been established by a group of preservationists with the purpose of preserving historic structures in the area. This group was ultimately ineffectual, however, and was reorganized in late 1999 as a “phoenix organization” whose purpose was to organize a core group of community residents to partner with the City’s initiative to address issues of deteriorating infrastructure, crime and urban blight in their community. These neighbors valued the historic character of the neighborhood and saw its proximity to downtown, its scale, and rich historical character as an asset. They believed Lower Town could be restored.

The impetus for this new activism was artist Mark Barone, whose home and studio had been in the neighborhood for sixteen years. He witnessed a drug deal just outside his house, became fed up with the deterioration of his neighborhood, and began agitating for the City to address the neighborhood’s problems. In Barone’s words, the neighborhood had become “dangerous, blighted, and unacceptable” as a place to live and work.

The Planning Department was well aware of the problems in the neighborhood and was equally concerned. Planning Director Tom Barnett had lived in Lower Town when he first moved to Paducah in



1994, and had advocated for a revitalization program for Lower Town in 1996. The City had long since made vital neighborhoods a primary goal for the city government. With support from Barone and the Lower Town Association, the Planning Department initiated a survey of the area as a precursor to developing a Lower Town plan. Lower Town then encompassed 333 structures and 546 units. Of these, 257 were residential units, divided among multi-family (103) and single-family (154) structures. About eighty-five percent of these units were concentrated in a fifteen block area, and seventy percent were rental units. Another seventy structures were commercial, and the neighborhood also included seventy vacant lots (City of Paducah, 2001).

The process of developing the Plan involved an active citizen participation process. The City began meeting with the residents to determine which issues were of concern to the neighborhood, and which were most pressing. They discussed issues of infrastructure (broken sidewalks,

An historic property acquired by the City for restoration

In Barone's words, the neighborhood had become "dangerous, blighted, and unacceptable" as a place to live and work.

absence of lighting), issues of blight (deteriorated and poorly kept properties, abandoned properties), crime, and traffic. There was general agreement that the combination of absentee landlords who had no incentive to keep up their properties, and a policy of non-enforcement of building codes, had contributed to the deterioration of the neighborhood. As a first step in reclaiming Lower Town, in 2001 the City passed the Rental Occupancy Ordinance, which required the purchase of a business license to run rental property and provide for regular inspections of rental property as a condition for issuing licenses. It also gave the Inspection Department the authority to remove tenants from substandard units. The City was aware, however, that active code enforcement ran the danger of resulting in demolition of historic structures, so as buildings were inspected, landlords were given ample opportunity to make improvements. The City also helped market properties in cases in which landlords were unwilling or unable to make the required improvements and wished to sell.

On the basis of discussions with neighbors and extensive survey work, the City published the *Lower Town Neighborhood Plan* in 2002, the culmination of several years of community and city activity. The plan called for a variety of strategies to be applied to Lower Town. Recommendations are related to transportation, lighting,

police enforcement, code enforcement, infrastructure improvements, promotion of the neighborhood, downtown trolley linkage, waterfront planning, funding strategies, and the newly conceived Artist Relocation Program.

The code enforcement strategy relied heavily on the previously enacted Rental Occupancy Ordinance and related fines, and called for the Inspection Department in conjunction with the Paducah Police Department to initiate a Lower Town Task Force for one year. According to the *Lower Town Neighborhood Plan*, this team would, beginning in April 2002, canvas the area door-to-door "initiating enforcement proceedings and or citations to all violators. No stone will be left unturned in cleaning up the neighborhood and having all violations abated" (City of Paducah, 2002). This part of the plan set the tone, and began in earnest the process of rescuing historic structures from further deterioration.

With the implementation of the more aggressive code enforcement program, the extent of deterioration of structures within the neighborhood became clear. Several structures inspected by the City were simply too far gone to rehabilitate, and were demolished. Many more were cited for code violations, with landlords given several six month periods

in which to correct violations. In many instances, however, landlords were unwilling or unable to bring their properties up to code, claiming to have insufficient funds to improve the properties. Also in the course of the inspection process, three low and moderate-income households were relocated to newly rehabilitated structures.

The Department of Planning and the Department of Building Inspection have been careful to build a “firewall” between their departments to avoid the perception that the City is using building inspection as a tool to pressure owners into selling. As Planning Director Barnett stated, “...The city’s goal is to get these properties fixed up. If the landlords can do it, so much the better.” When landlords were unwilling to repair the structures, they would sometimes contact the City, knowing that the property was virtually without value on the open market. Prior to acquiring a property, the City advertised and posted properties for sale in the paper, having done the work to acquire clear title to it. In the case of properties acquired by the City, they were most often purchased at prices exceeding their market value and then transferred at below market value to artists willing to invest.

ARTIST RELOCATION PROGRAM HISTORY

The idea for the Artist Relocation Program (ARP) was brought to the City by Lower Town resident and artist Mark Barone, who is generally

credited with the idea and now serves as the program coordinator. The creation and implementation of the day-to-day program was the result an ongoing collaboration between Barone and Planning Director Tom Barnett. Based on discussions with the community and an assessment of the tools available to them, the ARP became the cornerstone of the *Lower Town Neighborhood Plan*.

The concept behind the ARP is simple. Initially, the hope was to attract somewhere between twenty and thirty artists to relocate to Paducah to repopulate the Lower Town neighborhood, and bring their entrepreneurial, intellectual, and artistic skills to create a new artists’ district in the downtown. The ARP was viewed as an economic strategy as well as a residential one. Artists, it was thought, would become a new community of residents who would rehabilitate their structures, live in the neighborhood, and run galleries and studios out of new live/work spaces. They would also provide new investments of time and money, and thus creating a new economic underpinning to the neighborhood. The additional promise of the plan was that if they were successful in Lower Town, the City would use similar tools in other areas of town.

The Artist Relocation Program model is straightforward. Once the City has acquired a property in Lower Town, it is advertised through the ARP to artists across the country. Mark Barone, first employed by



the City in 2000 to run this program, places advertisements for the program in prominent art magazines across the country. It is Barone who is the first interface between artists and the City. He gives artists information about the incentives available to them, discusses the city and the neighborhood, and hosts those who decide to come to Lower Town to explore the possibilities. He shows them available properties and tries to match artists' needs and interests to available spaces. Interested artists then submit proposals to the City; these are reviewed by the Urban Renewal Authority. Often, according to a representative of the Urban Renewal Authority, they are looking at as many as three applications for one property. To date, the City has spent \$639,000 acquiring and stabilizing historic properties in the area. The City estimates that private investment from artists (including bank loans) within the district is now over \$14 million.

Everyone involved agrees that home ownership is central to the success of the program. Too many artists have been victimized by the now well-known pattern of artists populating fringe areas, only to make it

attractive as a destination and be forced out by gentrification. The ARP offers home ownership and the long-term security associated with it. Barone and Barnett agree that they "would have been happy with thirty artists." As of March 2005, twenty-seven artist galleries (mainly rehab projects, with some infill) were open as artist living space and galleries. Another seven infill projects were permitted and underway; an additional three new infill projects were to start construction in the spring of 2005. In addition, thirteen rehabs are currently underway through the Artist Relocation Program, and three rehabs are currently underway as independent projects. Among those building a new infill project is the recent winner of the annual quilt show, who is building an 8,000 square foot living space and production facility in the neighborhood. Already her presence has attracted two quilt artists who are planning on opening galleries in the area. Almost all of the vacant lots in the area of heaviest residential concentration have been spoken for.

DEPARTMENTAL COOPERATION

The success of the ARP involves close cooperation among city agencies. The Department of Building Inspection operates independently, inspecting properties in the district, and working with landlords to bring properties up to code. Director of Planning Tom Barnett oversees the ARP, and is actively involved in all aspects of it, with Mark Barone

The Mark Palmer gallery

serving as the liaison between the City and artists interested in the program. The Director of Planning makes decisions and recommendations about property acquisition by the City. When the City wishes to purchase a property it is publicly advertised, and the Planning Department seeks approval from the Paducah Urban Renewal Authority, which is the entity that actually acquires the properties.

A third critical public agency is the Historic Architecture Review Commission (HARC). HARC is empowered through the National

Historic District guidelines to review any proposed exterior changes in the District, and evaluates them according to Secretary of the Interior Standards. HARC views the ARP as an effective tool for saving many at-risk historic structures. There has, however, been tension between the program and the “strict historic interpretationists” who feel the ARP allows improvements that are not strictly in character with the historic structures. Despite this ongoing tension, overall HARC has positive feelings about what has been accomplished, particularly in light of a history of frequent demolition as the principal method of code enforcement. Issues regarding the cost of authentic restorations and available funds do crop up, but have been negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

HARC remains concerned as well about the nature and quality of infill development. Several lots have been infilled to date, again with negotiation with HARC. All involved noted the caveat that in terms of the infill structures, the City does not want to engage in the “futile attempt to make the new appear old,” but is looking for designs that reflect and respect the historic materials and scale of the neighborhood. A good example is storefronts recently built on spec by Paducah Bank. This four-unit gallery structure mimics the scale of historic storefront, with tall glass storefront windows, and residential or studio uses above. All four of the units are occupied by artists and present active and well-tended facades on the street.



Julie Shaw Gallery

PADUCAH BANK

The *sine quo non* of the ARP is its private partner, Paducah Bank. A community bank with its headquarters in Lower Town, Paducah Bank was, in their own words, willing to “throw all standard banking processes out the window.” In the beginning they were worried about investing in a neighborhood that was so blighted, but were reassured by the fact that one of their largest early loans was to a doctor who had stable finances and who had decided to become a full-time artist. He was moving to Paducah through the ARP to restore a Victorian house and add gallery space to the rear. The doctor is pleased with the partnership with the bank and the City, and remains committed to the program.

Today Paducah Bank has a loan officer whose job is to work with artists who are interested in relocating to Lower Town. Once they have established that the artist is creditworthy, they will loan up to 300 percent of appraised value for rehab and construction, at seven percent on a fixed thirty year term. (In some cases the City bought down loans from an earlier seven and one-half percent.) The philosophy of the bank in this unusual lending practice is that they want their loan to cover both purchase and renovation costs because they want the artists to be able to support themselves while the work is in progress. They view the artists’ success as a priority and are willing to



be flexible in their lending practices to maximize that possibility. As the bank is quick to point out, this is not a purely philanthropic activity on their part. They are making a decent return on their money, have seen their home community turn around, and have their name associated with the most successful revitalization in town. To date they have loaned about \$6 million in thirty-six loans to relocating artists, with an average loan amount of \$168,000. An additional eleven loans for a total of \$2,465,000 are pending, and with the approval of loans pending the average loan amount will increase to \$181,000. The bank estimates they currently talk to five to ten new artists per week. To date the bank has had no problems with late loan payments.

Ongoing neighborhood renovation

PROCESS

In order to be accepted into the program, interested artists must submit a proposal, which is reviewed by the Urban Renewal Board before properties are turned over to them. These proposals contain information on intended use of the property; detailed plans; drawings of all related elevations and façade details; detailed cost estimates of the proposed work; a timeline for the work; and evidence of financial ability to complete the project. These are reviewed by both the ARP coordinator and more formally by the Urban Renewal Board. In some cases the Board reviews more than one proposal for a site, trying to choose artists who are most likely to be successful.

INFRASTRUCTURE

In addition to the ARP, the *Lower Town Neighborhood Plan* recommended a variety of infrastructure and street improvements. In 2004 the City installed new street lights throughout the neighborhood. The fixtures have a traditional/historic design style, and lateral poles to accommodate banners advertising upcoming events and festivals. The lighting was funded through a \$650,000 Federal Highway Department grant acquired under the auspices of the Paducah Area Transit System, which is located in Lower Town and has been a strong partner from the beginning. In addition, as individual structures are improved, the sidewalk and curb adjacent to them are fixed through a \$500,000 city fund.

To prevent high speed “boom box traffic” cutting through the neighborhood, most intersections have been posted with four way stop signs. Although a simple fix, this change has dramatically reduced the amount of traffic traversing the neighborhood at high speeds. These infrastructure improvements have been accompanied by a more visible police presence, with police officers sometimes accompanying code enforcement officials and inspectors into certain properties.

COSTS AND BENEFITS

It is difficult to see any disadvantages to the Artist Relocation Project. The advantages to artists are clear. The ARP offers a variety of benefits, the most significant of which is the opportunity to own the building



Texaco Station gallery, before and after

in which they will live and work, and to acquire it at little or no cost. Properties are often offered at cost, or even free, as an incentive to artists to “take them on,” and to come and be a part of the program.

In addition to the property itself, the artists benefit from:

- One hundred percent financing for purchase and rehab of an existing structure or for the building of a new structure in Lower Town;
- Thirty year fixed rate financing for up to 300 percent of appraised value;
- Free lots for new construction;
- \$2,500 for professional fees;
- Sales tax exemptions for all construction materials, due to inclusion in the Enterprise Zone;
- Websites funded by the City of Paducah;
- National marketing of the City and Lower Town; and
- Mixed-use zoning to allow for live/work space.

There are also significant intangibles. All of the artists agreed that a major incentive was to join a pioneering group of artists in forming a new art-based community. Many had been living in more isolated circumstances, and others felt frustrated with environments where the cost of doing business was consistently prohibitive. Lower Town offers a welcoming environment, and a community ready, willing and able to support the artists’ work and lives.

The City is also a winner with the ARP. As Mayor Paxton states, “these folks are active citizens. They serve on boards and they care about the City.” Paducah has also seen an historic neighborhood rehabilitated, an increase in its tax base, and the addition of the creative and intellectual capital of a new community of citizens whose work and neighborhood will attract tourists to a revitalized arts district. In some cases there is also a spillover effect when people elect not to relocate to Lower Town but like Paducah, and seek to locate homes and businesses in the adjacent downtown.

The ARP has resulted in the investment of \$14 to \$15 million in the Lower Town neighborhood, much of which has gone to local contractors. The fruit of their investment is a renovated and beautiful new community adjacent to the downtown. The City has also gained a great deal of national publicity for the program, partly as part of a deliberate strategy to apply for national awards to bring attention to Paducah and the ARP. The ARP has received a national APA Award, among several others, and with the continued advertising campaign its reputation is growing. Mark Barone estimates that he has spoken to about 200 artists from 41 states; the web site, www.paducaharts.com, has gotten in excess of 45,000 hits.

Several people noted that the previous year had seen a \$10 million increase in tourist spending in Paducah, much of which they attribute to Paducah's growing reputation as a center of arts and culture. Although this increase cannot be attributed entirely to the ARP, most feel the program has played a significant role in increasing tourism. Paducah's stated objective is to become the "Soho of the South," or the new Santa Fe. Among the artists and the representatives of the city there is a real belief that Paducah is well on its way.

The ARP has also resulted in new investment in Lower Town independent of the program. Two local television broadcasters are moving into the neighborhood, having bought and rehabilitated historic homes privately. The Paducah Bank has built three attached gallery-studio units on spec, and all are fully occupied. Although the Department of Planning recognizes the importance of continuing to support this fledgling program until it is completely stabilized, early indications are that it is having the intended effect of increasing private investment in the area.

FINANCES

It is difficult to identify all the various expenditures related to the Artist Relocation Program. Many were one-time infrastructure improvements such as lighting and paving. Others involve one-time property acquisition



through the Urban Renewal Revolving Fund and the City's General Fund. The combined expenditures on property acquisition as of 2005 from these sources are approximately \$639,000. Other costs include those related to more stringent building inspection services, staff, and administration.

Within the Planning Department, the ARP budget was \$42,000 in the first year, and is \$65,000 this year. The Department intends to request \$100,000 for the 2006 fiscal year, but predicts an actual budget of approximately \$75,000. This budget covers the salary of the project administrator, costs of advertising the project nationally, costs of the \$2,500 worth of services and support offered to artists, and other miscellaneous costs. The City estimates it gets a \$6 return for every \$1 spent.

In addition to Paducah's investment, the artists themselves have invested many thousands of their own dollars in securing and improving their home and gallery spaces. A recent estimate of dollar investment for the forty-five artists who have relocated to Paducah is \$14 million. In a city this size, this scale of investment is having a significant impact on the local economy.

Paducah Bank gallery project

LOWER TOWN ARTIST RELOCATION PROGRAM COSTS

CITY OF PADUCAH COSTS

Item	Cost	Source	Use
Lower Town Redevelopment	\$639,443	CD-39	Property acquisition, stabilization, etc.
Architect Fee, 524 Harrison St.	\$2,388	CD-71	524 Harrison St.
Artist Relocation 2001	\$13,338	General Fund	Promotion of program
Artist Relocation 2002	\$15,015	General Fund	"
Artist Relocation 2003	\$21,745	General Fund	"
Artist Relocation 2004	\$26,453	General Fund	"
Artist Relocation 2005	\$30,708	General Fund	"
Artist Relocation Grant	\$6,000	CD-70	"
Architect General Fund	\$33,405	General Fund	Reimbursement for professional fees
Art Festival 2003	\$8,144		Promotion
Art Festival 2004	\$12,551		Promotion
Lower Town Lights match	\$110,000		City contribution to new lighting
Salaries to Date	\$122,920		
Total Artist Relocation Program Cost	\$1,042,110		
Less Sale of Property	-\$130,758		
Total ARP Cost to City to Date	\$911,352		

LOWER TOWN ARTIST RELOCATION PROGRAM COSTS

OTHER INVESTMENTS IN LOWER TOWN

Item	Cost	Source	Use
Sidewalk Improvements	\$500,000	General Fund	Safety
Lighting Improvements	\$650,000	Federal Highway Grant	144 Period Lights installed
Stop Signs	\$137,500	General Fund	Safety
Artist Investments in properties	\$7,600,000	One time only	
Paducah Bank Rehab Loans (34)	\$5,632,517	Paducah Bank	Historic Structure Rehabs
Paducah Bank Loans for Infill (13)	\$2,892,000	Paducah Bank	New Infill Constructions
Paducah Bank Spec Project	\$400,000	Paducah Bank	3-3000 sq ft Spec Bldgs sold to Artists
Paducah Transit Authority Improvements	\$5,100,000	Federal Highway Grant	Rehab Historic Hoe Supply Bldg into PATS Hdqtrs and Transfer Station
Total Investment in Lower Town	\$22,912,017		

ESTIMATED REVENUES

Property Taxes (59 new residents)(annual)	\$183,218	Estimated total over the 5-year period; \$36,643 annual average
Building Permits	\$44,096	
Electrical Permits	\$3,540	
Contractor Licenses	\$34,140	
Artist Business Licenses	\$17,404	Estimated total over the 5-year period; \$3,480 annual average
Total Revenues to Date	\$282,398	

THE ARTISTS

In the course of the site visit, the team interviewed four resident artists and one resident non-artist, all of whom had relocated to Paducah through the Artist Relocation Program or because of the art community there. The interviewed residents all felt that there were certain elements in the ARP which were critical to its success. The character and size of the Lower Town area was top on the list. They felt that the historic character, defined boundary, proximity to downtown, and general feel of the area were important elements in their decision to move there. The ability to own homes and to have live/work space was equally important.

For most of them the small town environment was both a plus and a minus. It had the advantage of providing a welcoming and familiar community, and the negative of being somewhat limited socially and culturally, especially in the winter months. Some artists travel to visit family or for a winter break during those months. They all agreed that there was something exhilarating to them about having moved outside their respective “comfort zones, into an urban pioneering situation.” They were pleased with being part of a new urban adventure.

Mark Palmer

Mark Palmer, a painter since the 1990s, owns one of the oldest structures in the neighborhood. He had been running a gallery in Washington, D.C. and had recently made the decision to become a full-time artist when he heard about the ARP. He expressed frustration at having been an “urban pioneer” in a tough neighborhood in Washington, D.C. to find gallery and studio space he could afford, only to be pushed out by gentrification. He was also fully aware that making it as an artist in the D.C. market would be very difficult due to the high cost of living. The prospect of home ownership was very appealing to him, and he was also looking for a change.

In Mark’s case, he had run the Washington, D.C. gallery with artist Craig Kittner, who had already moved to Paducah and was encouraging Mark to do the same. Mark saw an ad in a national art magazine and decided to visit in January of 2002, deciding soon thereafter to make the move. His gallery features many nationally known artists, and he does some art showing and buying at shows and through the Internet, so he had some flexibility in choosing a base location. By September of that same year he was moving in, and was the fifth artist to relocate through the program.

Like many of the artists, he cited Mark Barone as one of the most persuasive factors in his decision to move. Barone, as a practicing artist himself, whose work Mark Palmer knew, could talk from his own experience about many of the factors of concern to artists. Barone's enthusiasm, and own personal story of seeing the neighborhood improving, welcoming other artists, and running a successful gallery space himself, all contributed to Mark Palmer's decision.

Mark expressed great satisfaction with his move. As he says, he has much more gallery space here, and much nicer space than he would have anywhere in Washington D.C. He likes living above his studio and gallery, and also really appreciates the welcoming community of other artists. He finds Paducah very open, and looks forward to growing his gallery business with Paducah as a base. Like the other artists, Mark stressed the idea that the next frontier for the new artist community would be to develop their marketing strategy for local and regional buyers as well as for the tourist trade.



Mark Palmer Gallery, before and after

Julie Shaw

Julie was living in rural Ignacio, Colorado on a piece of land where she had built a large studio and jewelry production space, her own log cabin, and a guest house. Her one-of-a-kind jewelry is sold in over 250 stores across the country. When she first heard about the ARP, she was already looking to relocate to a less remote location.

Although she was aware of the website for the ARP, she didn't really consider it until she broke her foot and was stranded on her land for over six weeks, when she had the time to really ponder a move and study the options. It was during that period that she contacted Mark Barone to talk about the ARP. After talking to Barone, she came for a three-day visit, fell in love with the building she now occupies and with the area, and made the decision on the spot.

Julie now produces her jewelry in a downstairs workshop, with gallery space adjacent, and lives above in a restored Victorian brick house. She says the opportunity to be in on something new, be an urban pioneer, was enormously appealing to her. She was also in search of a community of like-minded artists, and feels she has found that in Paducah.

Monica Bilak

Monica and her husband lived for several years in Kenya, East Africa. They had returned home to the U.S. and had located in Nashville when they came to Paducah to visit friends. With three children, aged four, six, and eight, they were looking for a less urban setting than Nashville, and for a friendly community where they could raise their children. Although not practicing artists, Monica learned about what was going on in Lower Town, and she and her husband decided to make the move.

The Bilaks bought their house privately, not through the ARP, and run a coffee and gift shop on the ground floor of the house, featuring specialty coffees. Her husband, a nurse-practitioner, found work in one of the two major hospitals located nearby, and they are now firmly ensconced in the Lower Town community. This family was attracted by the good public schools in Paducah, by the ease of small town life, and by the welcoming community. For them it was far more affordable even than Nashville, and they are committed to raising their family in Lower Town.

Bill Renzulli

Bill Renzulli was one of the first artists to move to Paducah through the program. A practicing physician in the Wilmington, Delaware area, he had decided to become a full-time artist, and was looking for a place where he could have the space and community support to do so. He saw an advertisement in *Art Calendar*, and subsequently contacted Mark Barone and visited Lower Town.



The Global Nomad coffee house and gallery

During his visit he met not only with Barone, but also with Mayor Paxton and with the directors of the local museums to try and assess the art environment. He was attracted by the energy of the people he met, and felt Lower Town offered the scale and density of community he was looking for. In 2002 he moved to Paducah, restored the large Victorian in which he and his wife live, and added on a studio and gallery space at the rear of the building.



Global Nomad coffee house interior

He states that having been in Paducah three years, he never expected the success the program is experiencing. The number of artists coming to the community far exceeds his expectations, and he is very pleased with the community that is developing. Bill noted the large number of non-artists and locals who are now moving into Lower Town as a result of the ARP. He felt this was a good sign for the viability of their neighborhood.

Like other artists, he sells his work in galleries in other cities, but is based in Paducah for his work and for the gallery he operates. He agreed with the other artists who stated that although there is a lot of tourism in Paducah, it has not historically been art buyers who come to town. He is at the forefront of the effort to improve marketing of the artist district and gallery community, with a goal of increasing the number of people coming into the neighborhood to see and buy good art.

Bill cites the possibility for home ownership, the well-defined historic neighborhood, and the critical mass of artists that has now developed as the most important factors in this new venture. Like the other artists, he is very committed to the place and feels that as more and more artists arrive and complete their gallery and home spaces, the reputation of the gallery district will continue to improve.

Aynex Mercado

Aynex is a quilt artist who was living in western Massachusetts until this year. She has a home/studio renovation under construction in Lower Town, and is planning to open her gallery in the next couple of months. Aynex was feeling isolated in Massachusetts, and was also looking to be part of a community of artists. As she stated, every quilter knows about Paducah. She had visited many times to see the Quilt Museum and to attend the annual quilt show.

When she saw the ad for the ARP in an art magazine, and saw the low housing prices, she decided to visit. When she visited, she attended a potluck at Bill Renzulli's home and was impressed with the friendliness and welcoming environment among the artists. Her decision to relocate to Paducah was based upon the people she met while visiting, as well as the knowledge that one of the most famous quilters in the country was relocating her studio to the neighborhood as well.

She agreed with the other artists that marketing is a priority for them, and like the others felt that full commercial viability is still several years away. She noted, however, that six to eight major cities are within driving distance for access to other galleries and outlets.

FUTURE PLANS

The City intended from the beginning to use the ARP and the Lower Town Neighborhood Plan as a blueprint, or at least as an incubator, for ideas for revitalizing other neighborhoods. Two nearby neighborhoods have been identified as the next target areas, and planning work is already beginning in the Fountain Avenue area and in Upper Town.

As far as the artists themselves are concerned, now that many of them are settled in their new spaces, the priority for them is to improve the marketing of their galleries not only for the tourist economy, and for those visiting Paducah for the many special events and festivals, but to attract local residents back into Lower Town into the new arts district. Plans are in place for a campaign of colorful banners around town to advertise the open studio days, and for an ongoing program of open studios and galleries throughout the year.



A restored gallery house in Lower Town

IMPACTS

The ARP has clearly had many significant impacts on the neighborhood and on Paducah. Within the Lower Town neighborhood, Paducah Bank and individual artists have invested approximately \$14 million. In addition, the City has overseen significant improvements to the infrastructure of the neighborhood, and has guided public investment such as that of the Paducah Transit Authority into the area. Crime has been reduced, and drug-related traffic has diminished considerably.

Home ownership is now dominant in the area, and a new arts district is in fact in place. The Main Street Association and others associated with the program credit a recent rise in tourism and the stabilization of downtown to the program. There is no doubt that the neighborhood is a bustling and energized area, with construction ongoing on every block, people on the street, gallery windows open and attractive, and a new coffee house in place.

The long-term impacts remain to be seen. The City has expressed a desire to create a national image for Paducah as an arts and cultural destination and increase regional tourism. The Artist Relocation Program in Lower Town has certainly increased Paducah's visibility in the national arts community. Paducah is somewhat difficult to get to for those outside the region, and is competing with many other national art districts around the country. Much will depend upon the artists' economic success, and their ability to market the district to locals and to visitors. With the City of Paducah firmly committed to the success of the program, and with the collective experience of the artists who have moved there, ongoing efforts at marketing will evolve.



Assessing Project Success

Success in Meeting Project Goals

In the City's estimation, the goals of the Lower Town Neighborhood Plan have been essentially accomplished, and the Plan is now considered to be "fully implemented." This assumes the successful completion of all of the planned infill developments, and the long-term success of the artists who have relocated to Lower Town.

➔ *Attract working artists from around the country to relocate to Paducah.*

The City has been successful in attracting the number and kind of established artists they had hoped to Paducah. Early indications are that the artists and gallery owners are pleased with what they have received from the City and with the welcoming environment they have encountered.

➔ *Increase home ownership and property values in Lower Town.*

There is little question that the ARP has increased home ownership and property values in Lower Town. In a neighborhood that was seventy percent rental, and mainly transient, every property that has changed hands is now owner occupied. Although final demographics in the area are not yet settled, this goal seems to have been reached.

➔ *Rehabilitate historic structures in Lower Town.*

Through the inspection and city acquisition process, some structures were lost, but many have been rehabilitated. Although there is some ongoing tension between strict preservationists and the ARP, the general consensus seems to be that the program has resulted in the preservation and rehabilitation of a significant number of historic structures.

➔ *Reduce crime and eliminate blight in the neighborhood.*

Again, new figures on crime in the neighborhood were not available at the time of the visit, but there is clearly a great deal more street life and visible community in Lower Town than there was before the ARP. Much of the drug trafficking has been driven out of the neighborhood, and the streets are again safe to walk in the day and night.

➔ *Economically revitalize Lower Town (and Paducah) with an influx of new retail and service businesses.*

The twenty-seven galleries that have opened so far and the ten new infill projects that are in planning or under construction will certainly achieve the goal of creating an influx of new retail businesses. It is too early in the program to assess the economic success of these businesses, but if marketing efforts are successful, and the reputation of the arts district continues to grow, the future looks promising.

Selection Committee Discussion: What We Learned

The Selection Committee discussion identified several important lessons to be learned from the Lower Town Artist Relocation Project. These observations and themes can help placemakers and policymakers in other cities to learn from the experience in Paducah.

Creative Partnerships

Revitalization of an entire historic neighborhood is difficult for either a private or public entity to undertake alone. The code enforcement power of the City was a necessary foundation for what was to follow. Similarly, it was important for the City to be willing to take the risk of acquiring properties which, although historic in nature, were compromised by years of neglect. However, it took the private sector, in the form of the artists themselves as well as the support they received from Paducah Bank, to begin to reinvest in this historic neighborhood. Once some momentum was established, these entities could take advantage of economic investment in the area that was in turn spurring other adjacent investment, thereby strengthening the position of both the public and private partners.

Achieving Critical Mass

The Artist Relocation Program has demonstrated the power of community, and its ability to transform neighborhoods and even cities. Each of the artists we interviewed underscored the importance for them of relocating to a community of other artists whose creative energy could stimulate their own work, and who could provide a supportive group of friends and neighbors with whom to undertake the process of creating a new arts district. It would have been difficult, or maybe even impossible, to attract artists on the same scale without as large an area of good housing stock and building lots to work with.

Creative Economy in Action

Although still in its early stages, the Lower Town Artist Relocation Program is adding credence to the recent research on the power of the creative economy. The new arts district that is being created has already jump-started a struggling downtown, and brought new visitors from throughout the region to Paducah. Challenges remain in attracting more art buyers from the local area and from beyond the region, but the program has added to an already existing reputation for Paducah as an arts hub, and has strengthened Paducah's power as an arts destination.

History is Important

One of the most important factors in attracting artists to Lower Town was the quality of the historic structures that were being offered, and the rich history surrounding the neighborhood. The town leaders and Paducah's citizens felt a strong allegiance to this beleaguered neighborhood which embodied so much of Paducah's rich history. Historic buildings and historic districts add character and quality to any city, and can become a draw in the larger process of economic revitalization.

Adapting the Ideas

The ideas underlying the Artist Relocation Project can be adapted to other cities across the country. The role of the private and public sectors may vary, and even the nature of the group to be appealed to might differ, but this project demonstrates that creative thinking and partnering, centered around home ownership, can invent new ways of bringing new life and an entire new community to a city, and at the same time revitalize a struggling neighborhood.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

See project website: <http://paducaharts.com/flash.html>

See City of Paducah websites:

<http://www.city-data.com/city/Paducah-Kentucky.html> and

<http://www.paducahky.com>

City of Paducah (2001), *Lower Town (Survey of Structures)*,
Department of Planning.

City of Paducah (2002), *Lower Town Neighborhood Plan*,
Department of Planning.

RELATED RUDY BRUNER AWARD WINNERS

Text taken from <http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/bruner/>; see also <http://www.brunerfoundation.org>

Project Row Houses, Houston, TX; 1997 Silver Medal Winner

Project Row Houses has forged new connections among Houston communities through the rehabilitation of twenty-two historic “shotgun” style houses which now provide art gallery and installation space, showcasing the work of prominent African-American artists. In addition, Project Row Houses provides five houses and support services for single working mothers, and a variety of daycare and after school programs for neighborhood youth.

Village of Arts and Humanities, Philadelphia, PA; 2001 Gold Medal Winner

The Village is a private, non-profit community-based organization dedicated to revitalizing its host neighborhood through the arts. Begun in 1986 as a summer project to engage neighborhood children in building a community park, the Village has grown into a major provider of arts-inspired programs in education, land transformation, construction, and economic development. The organization serves over 10,000 low-income, primarily African-American youth and families in North Philadelphia. It seeks to build community through innovative arts, educational, social, construction and economic development programs. In all of its activities, the Village seeks to do justice to the humanity and social conditions of people in North Philadelphia and in similar urban situations.

Betts-Longworth Historic District, Cincinnati, OH; 1993 Silver Medal Winner

The Betts-Longworth Historic District consists of a ten-block subneighborhood in the West End of Cincinnati (one block northwest of downtown) that contains both Italianate and Queen Anne architecture. The project sought to establish a new mini-neighborhood through the preservation of historic buildings and the creation of new homes. This revitalization of a blighted historic neighborhood in downtown Cincinnati provides affordable housing in a socially and economically integrated setting, with minority involvement in both development and construction.

Silver Medal Winner
The Heidelberg Project
Detroit, Michigan





Heidelberg Project At A Glance

What is the Heidelberg Project?

- ➔ A series of art installations located in a two block area on the east side of Detroit.
- ➔ Art education programs including “Art in Da Hood,” and programs at the Bunche Elementary School and the Childrens’ Home of Detroit.
- ➔ The third largest tourist destination in Detroit.

Project Goals

- ➔ To create beauty in a blighted neighborhood.
- ➔ To use society’s refuse in the creation of public art that transforms an urban community.
- ➔ To build bridges and foster dialogue among diverse groups of people.
- ➔ To heal individuals and neighborhoods through engagement in the creative process.

Project Chronology

1986 Artist Tyree Guyton, a Heidelberg Street resident, begins work on transforming an abandoned crack house on his street into a work of art.

1986-1990 Guyton continues with the transformation of three additional abandoned drug-infested houses, and creates several sculptures.

1990 Tyree Guyton is featured on Oprah Winfrey as a creator of “neighborhood nuisance.”

1991 Mayor Coleman Young demolishes four Heidelberg houses and related installations.

1992 Tyree Guyton receives the Michigan Governor’s Arts Award.

1993 Jenenne Whitfield joins the project as Executive Director.

1990-1995 Tyree Guyton struggles to rebuild the Heidelberg Project.

1996 Tyree Guyton takes on projects in Germany and Minnesota; a photo exhibition of the Heidelberg Project travels Europe.

1997 The Heidelberg Project gets a grant of \$47,500 from the City of Detroit to create a welcoming center at the project. In response to neighborhood opposition, two prominent City Councilors wage a campaign against the Heidelberg Project.

1986

Artist Tyree Guyton begins work on transforming an abandoned crack house into art.

1991

Mayor Coleman Young demolishes four Heidelberg houses.

1990-1993

Tyree Guyton struggles to rebuild Heidelberg Project.

1999

City demolishes art and structures for the second time.

2002

Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick elected.

1986-1990

Guyton transforms three additional abandoned houses.

1993

Jenenne Whitfield joins the project as Executive Director.

1998

Heidelberg Project recognized as third most visited destination in Detroit.

1999-Present

Guyton rebuilds and expands Heidelberg Project.

2002-2005

Heidelberg Project reaches agreement to acquire City land and expand project; City recognizes importance of project to Detroit.

1998 The Heidelberg Project recognized as the third most visited site in Detroit. The City suggests relocating project. Guyton gets a temporary restraining order to prevent another demolition.

1999 The Heidelberg Project loses a court battle to remain on site; the City demolishes all art on city property and Guyton's (privately owned) studio containing stored art work. The Heidelberg Project files a lawsuit against the City for demolition of private property, and loses lawsuit. A documentary on the Heidelberg Project licensed by HBO for one year, and wins Honorable Mention at Sundance Film Festival.

2000 Whitfield and Guyton take the Heidelberg Project to Harvard University, Pittsburgh, and Ecuador. Documentary about the Heidelberg Project, entitled *Come Unto Me*, wins an Emmy.

2001 Guyton travels to Ecuador and Brazil lecturing on his work and on the project, and is invited to participate in show at Detroit Institute of Art.

2002 Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick is elected.

2003 The Heidelberg Project works cooperatively with Guyton's alma mater, Bunche Elementary School, to provide visiting artists to work with children.

2002-2005 Guyton has a show on the Heidelberg Project at the Harvard Design School and does Heidelberg-based park project in Red Fern area in Sydney, Australia. A new Board of Directors is formed. Detroit Collaborative Design Center assists with site plan and architectural plans of House That Makes Cents; fund raiser for House that Makes Cents held in March. The Heidelberg Project is given space for project office in the Franklin Wright Settlement House.

KEY PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

JENENNE WHITFIELD, *Executive Director of Heidelberg Project*

TYREE GUYTON, *Artist and founder of the Heidelberg Project*

HANSEN CLARKE, *Michigan State Senator from Heidelberg district*

TERRENCE H. GERMAN, *Architect/Heidelberg Project*

Board of Directors

MONIQUE MARKS, *Franklin Wright Settlements Director*

HENRY HAGOOD, *Director of Planning and Development,*

City of Detroit

MARILYN WHEATON, *Wheaton & Associates*

MAME JACKSON, *Wayne State University*

DAN PITERA, *Detroit Collaborative Design Center*

Project Description

Urban Context & History



Houses near downtown Detroit

Detroit's early history dates back to 1701, when it was founded by the French explorer Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac as part of the French effort to establish forts at strategic locations in North America to try and keep the British from moving west out of New England. Originally established as Fort Ponchartrain, it was later named Ville D'Etroit (city of the Strait) due to its location on the Detroit River, a narrow body of water connecting Lake Erie with Lake St. Clair. It later became a British territory which it remained until the American Revolution, when it was taken over by American forces under the command of General George Washington in 1796.¹

Detroit was incorporated as a city and held its first election in 1805, and in 1837 Michigan was admitted to the Union as the 26th state. In its early years as an American city, Detroit was an important station along the Underground Railroad for slaves escaping from the South into Canada. After the Civil War, Detroit was a major destination for freed slaves leaving the South, who came in search of jobs in the automobile industry.

As a result of its importance as a destination for freed slaves, Detroit has a rich cultural tradition. It has long been associated with the American musical scene. Former slaves relocating to Detroit brought with them musical traditions that developed over the years into a vibrant jazz and blues movement. Mississippi transplant John Lee Hooker recorded his first blues hits in Detroit in the 1940s. Later, as

¹ This history is derived from Tina Granzo's article at <http://www.detroithistory.com>, as well as <http://www.visitdetroit.com>.

the city grew and developed into the nexus of the American automobile industry, the Motown sound became synonymous with Detroit.

Much of the city's history has been shaped by its close identification with the automobile. In 1903 Henry Ford founded the Ford Motor Company in Detroit, and in 1913 introduced the country's first assembly line. This period began Detroit's long ascendancy to the center of the American automobile industry. In its heyday as a thriving city of two million, the "Motor City" was known around the world as the hub of this robust American industry, with Ford, General Motors and Chrysler all headquartered in or near Detroit.

Other national trends have also shaped this city, most notably the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. The fight for racial equality ignited the notorious 1967 race riots in Detroit. These riots are almost universally seen as a turning point for the city. With the city ablaze and racial tensions high, whites began to flee the city in droves. In fact, it has been said that "anyone who could afford to leave the city did" (Whitfield 2000-2001). Detroit lost nearly a million residents from the 1950s to the 1980s. Detroit thus became synonymous with racial dissent, poverty and social injustice. In 1974, Coleman Young, with a deep background in the Civil Rights Movement, took over this beleaguered city as its mayor. Mayor Young was deeply interested in empowering black leaders and entrepreneurs in his city.

Despite the efforts of Mayor Young and his successors, over thirty years later Detroit's population decline is well known, and continues at a rate of about 10,000 people per year. To add to the city's difficulties, Detroit has lost 15,168 businesses since 1972. Within the context of these staggering statistics, flight from Detroit's public schools has been even more extreme – the city has lost 33,000 students since the 1998/1999 school year. According to the school department, those left are the hardest and most expensive to educate. At a current population of 951,270, Detroit's citizens are eighty-two percent African-American and twelve percent Caucasian. With the recent downturn in the American automobile industry, unemployment numbers in Detroit have far exceeded those in other parts of the country (currently fourteen percent compared with five and four-tenths percent nationally). With a projected \$389 million shortfall over three years, in 2005 Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick (elected in 2002) announced a layoff of 686 people in city government, as well as the elimination of 237 vacant jobs. He was also forced to cut salaries ten percent across the board, end late night bus service and close the Belle Isle, the oldest aquarium in the United States. Even with more cuts and new taxes being considered, the city faces the threat of receivership.²

² Wilgoren, Jodi, "Shrinking Detroit Faces Fiscal Nightmare" *New York Times*, 2 Feb. 2005

The precipitous decline in Detroit's population has resulted in vast tracts of abandoned and derelict land virtually adjacent to the downtown. For urban pioneers and those seeking to assist in the turnaround of the downtown, development opportunities abound. Detroit residents who have remained in the city are credited with an enterprising and pioneering spirit, and Detroit's young mayor is determined to fight the odds and to take his city back from the brink of disaster.

DETROIT TODAY

Modern Detroit is in many ways a city of contradictions. With a land area of 142 square miles, Detroit is one of the largest cities in the country – bigger than Manhattan, San Francisco, and Boston combined. It maintains its historic role as the center of the automobile industry,



Abandoned building near downtown.

with the world headquarters of General Motors in downtown Detroit and Daimler/Chrysler located in nearby Auburn Hills. Much of the city's employment continues to depend upon the automobile industry. In the same vein, despite many indices of cultural and economic decline, Detroit has continued to be a center of musical innovation, from Motown to today's Techno craze which is based there.

Much of the physical form of Detroit relates to its history as a center of the American automobile industry. The basic plan of the city is radial, with four major streets emanating from the "hub" of the downtown. Even today, Renaissance Center, the world headquarters of General Motors, is a major focal point of the downtown and is at the hub of the radial plan. Much of the city was developed by Henry Ford and other automobile magnates as they built housing for their workers. As a result, Detroit has an unusually high number of single family homes. Also due to Detroit's history as the Motor City, it was the first city to have a paved road, a traffic light, and an urban freeway. The historic dominance of the automobile has diminished with the Detroit economy, and an estimated one third of Detroiters do not have cars.³ This fact notwithstanding, the city's financial crisis may well result in additional cuts in bus service.

Mayor Kilpatrick is nonetheless ambitious for the economic future of his city, and is working to diversify Detroit's economy and to position

³ Wilgoren, *op.cit*

it as a player in world markets. Born after the 1967 riots, this mayor embraces technology and has been active in recruiting such companies as CompuWare which, along with Vistion, EDS and Price Coopers Waterhouse, now have headquarters in downtown Detroit and have added 6,000 jobs to the downtown economy. Twenty-two new restaurants have opened in the downtown in the past two years (Wilgoren 2005) and Super Bowl 2006 will be in Detroit as well. Detroit has also recently added a major new baseball stadium, Comerica Park, adjacent to which is an indoor professional football venue, both within the downtown area.

The Department of Planning and Development for Detroit attests to other signs of an improving economy. With over 7,000 new units of housing "in the pipeline," Detroit currently ranks number two in Michigan in building permits. According to the Director of Planning,

the price of units to be built ranges from million dollar homes to affordable units. Consistent with the goals of the Planning and Development Department, many of those moving into the downtown are either young professionals, working for the new companies, or empty nesters who want to move back into town. Detroit is eager to keep young professionals in the city, as they are crucial to the economic and intellectual well being of the city. These two populations have created a demand for new loft housing, restaurants, services, and entertainment, and are beginning to bring life back into the downtown



Left: Building being renovated for housing

Right: New housing near downtown

in the evening hours. This demand is consistent with the City's goal of creating infill development to "build back in" and try and re-connect neighborhoods and districts which have been separated by large tracts of blighted land.

The City is also working hard on its public infrastructure, and making efforts to take advantage of its Detroit River edge. It is in the process of developing a five-mile river bike/walk path which will extend between the two major bridges in the downtown, and connect major recreational and cultural venues which already exist along the river's edge.

Those who know and appreciate Detroit and its history feel that those who have remained in the city, either by choice or circumstance, are

"urban survivors" with a deep pride in their city. This self-reliant pioneering spirit is cited again and again in describing the Detroit character, and is an important part of the story connected with the Heidelberg Project. In her own written history of the Heidelberg Project, published in *The Southern Quarterly* (2000-2001), Jenenne Whitfield states that "[Detroit] is a city of originality. Traditionally, Detroit has been an innovator, spearheading global ideas that enact global change. The city's rich legacy of music, architecture, automobiles, civil rights, and a diversity of people combine fruitful elements that should make a city thrive."

Although Detroit is notorious as America's fastest shrinking city, it is also at the nexus of some of the country's most creative thinking about the urban built environment. This urban landscape offers immense challenges, but also an unprecedented moment in which to think creatively about the kinds of opportunities presented by this confluence of social, economic and geographic factors. How does one redefine a city that has half the population it once had? What are the opportunities and challenges associated with the availability of large tracts of vacant land in or near the downtown? What does it mean when the "gaps" become the dominant urban form, outnumbering structures?



New loft project near downtown.



Dan Pitera of University of Detroit Collaborative Design Center is a vocal advocate for Detroit and the opportunities it presents. He points out that the urban context offered by Detroit calls for a new way of thinking about urban density and environment, embracing perhaps a new concept of urban wilderness and a reconsideration of the implications of urban density. With its large supply of single family houses, many of which were very well built and remain in good condition, many beautiful neighborhoods remain, often housing people of very different economic means side by side. Solutions to Detroit's situation are beginning to emerge in the form of urban farming, urban wilderness reclamation projects, and the Heidelberg Project. With its many challenges, Detroit provides a fertile ground for re-thinking traditional approaches to urbanism, and building on an indomitable spirit of urban pioneering. In many ways Detroit provides the perfect context for the Heidelberg Project, which calls for a reconsideration of the very nature of urban art.

The Heidelberg Project

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The Heidelberg Project is located in the Gratiot McDougall Hunt neighborhood on the lower east side of Detroit, which is fast coming to be known as the Heidelberg neighborhood. The area is roughly triangular, bounded by Gratiot Street (one of the principal streets radiating from the downtown), Mt. Elliot Street and Verner Street. It is home to 2,200 people in about 300 houses, both single family and now multiple unit structures. According to the Monique Marks, director of the Franklin Wright Settlement House (the local service agency), the population of the neighborhood is ninety-seven percent African-American and includes many seniors and children (many of whom are in foster care), and many single parent households. Twenty-eight percent of the population is under eighteen years old, and fourteen percent is over sixty-five. She notes that many local residents are transient, and that there are many homeless people living in the neighborhood, sleeping in cars or trucks and in vacant lots. Although pockets of the neighborhood are in reasonable condition, especially near the Franklin Wright Settlement House, much of it is characterized by extreme urban blight. Abandoned houses burn down in the neighborhood at an estimated rate of eight to ten per month, with their charred remains left standing as a grim reminder of urban decay,

Abandoned houses next to occupied houses on a single block.

drugs, homelessness, and poverty. In 2002, over 300 serious crimes occurred in this census tract, thirty-three percent of which were violent in nature.⁴

The Franklin Wright Settlement House, located on the edge of the neighborhood, is the oldest settlement house in Michigan. Serving about 200 children and seniors per month, Franklin Wright has a unique understanding of the neighborhood. Their services include after-school care, health care, hot meals, and a wide variety of support services. The director estimates the average income in the area at less than \$11,000. Most of the houses that are owner-occupied are second or third generation occupants, many of whom cannot afford to maintain the houses they have inherited.

According to the Heidelberg Historical Research Team (2004), Heidelberg neighborhood is one of the oldest African-American



⁴ Heidelberg Historical Research Team, 2004



neighborhoods in Detroit. In the early 1900s, the neighborhood was known as “Black Bottom,” named for its rich, dark soil. It was one of the few areas in town where blacks could own property, and was therefore at the center of the black migration from the south. Many freed slaves settled in the neighborhood and secured jobs in the automobile industry. During its glory days, African-Americans in what was also known as “Paradise Valley” owned over 300 businesses and local music clubs and entertainment venues were a popular destination in Detroit’s lively night life scene.

The first blow to the area came with Detroit’s first race riots in 1943, followed several decades later by the location of a highway right-of-way for I-75 which went directly through Paradise Valley. By the 1950s, changing social and economic times forced additional local businesses to close, culminating in the 1967 riots. Prior to the 1967 riots, Tyree Guyton, then a resident, remembers Black Bottom as a thriving center of jazz and music, a beautiful neighborhood and great place to live. Many feel the neighborhood never recovered from the riots, and its more recent history has been consistently troubled.

Michigan Senator Hansen Clarke, who represents the 275,000 person district of which Gratiot McDougall is a part, supports that point of view. He grew up in the area, and states that it has long been a tough neighborhood. Tragically, he states that most of the neighborhood

Left: Wright settlement house neighborhood
Above: Outer edge of Heidelberg Project

friends with whom he grew up are now dead or disabled from street related crime. (There is a fifty-five percent mortality rate in the neighborhood for African-American males under twenty-one.) Into this setting of extreme urban blight comes the Heidelberg Project, which Clarke sees as a seminal event in his neighborhood, and at the crux of a movement toward revitalization.

HEIDELBERG PROJECT HISTORY

The Heidelberg Project began in 1986 when neighborhood resident and artist Tyree Guyton returned home from art school and a stint in the military. As he recalls, he stepped out his door one day and “heard the neighborhood speaking to him.” He knew he had to do something about what was going on in his community. With that he took up a paint brush, and began by decorating an abandoned crack house with paint, color, and with the debris from streets and alleys,



Left: Founder Tyree Guyton
Right: “Souls of The Most High”

turning the house into a canvas. In Guyton’s mind he was taking what had been discarded by society and turning it into something of beauty. To his surprise, as he decorated the crack houses and turned them into sculptures, people became interested and started visiting the site to see what was going on. One house was covered with baby dolls, some of them disfigured and dismembered. One journalist wrote about that house, “If the house had a voice it would have wept and squalled, ‘this is what we have done to our children’” (Noriyuki 1996). Another house, called the *Fun House*, was covered with artifacts of all kinds, flowing from the roof down the sides of the house, including shoes, dolls, and other castaway remnants of urban life. As the house sculptures grew, more people started coming into the neighborhood. As care and attention were focused on these structures, drugs and prostitution declined.

Tyree Guyton began to expand his work, creating a series of sculptures on the vacant and abandoned lots. Like the houses, these sculptures also dramatized political and social issues of concern to his community. On the tree sculpture, *Souls of the Most High*, Guyton hung multiple pairs of discarded shoes from the branches. This powerful piece harkens back to his grandfather’s stories of lynchings in the South. As the work continued to grow, so too did visitor and outside interest, culminating at first in 1990 when Guyton was given a show along with two other artists at the prestigious Detroit Institute of Art.

While visitors looked at the project with awe, there was a small but vocal group of neighborhood residents who felt very differently about it, stating that Guyton's work was junk, not art, and was creating an eyesore in the neighborhood. During that time Guyton was invited onto the Oprah Winfrey show, not realizing that he was being presented there as a neighborhood nuisance. Shortly after his appearance on that show, Mayor Coleman Young brought in the bulldozers, destroying four art houses and the bulk of Guyton's work.

There is a great deal of speculation associated with Young's actions, and in the end Young's decision is not well understood. One theory is that Young, himself a strong fighter for civil rights in the African-American community, felt that the outside interest in the community was mostly from whites who were not connected to the African-American plight, or to his political agenda of empowering the black community. Others theorize that he felt humiliated by Guyton's appearance on *Oprah*, and by the way in which the Heidelberg Project highlighted blight in Detroit. Although the real reasons will probably never be known, it had a devastating effect on the project, as four city-owned sculpture houses and some vacant lots were cleared of Guyton's work.

At the same time, however, proponents of the project recognized that something special was happening on Heidelberg Street and were prepared to fight for it. They realized that when a house was decorated,

crack users and prostitutes would abandon it. When Guyton "marked" a house with his art, the community began to protect it – to this day not one of Guyton's works has ever been vandalized. The number of visitors from outside the neighborhood also continued to grow. In 1998, an attorney documented that the Heidelberg Project had then had visitors from eighty-five different countries, all fifty states, and virtually all of the major cities in Michigan.⁵

With support from his friends and admirers, Tyree Guyton began to rebuild the Heidelberg Project. Working mainly on his own, with the help of friends, family, and neighborhood children, Guyton began work on other abandoned houses, on his own house which quickly became the *Polka Dot House* (or *Dotty Wotty House*), and on additional



Dotty Wotty House, with details of the porch and "Faces in the Hood"

⁵ Wilgoren, *op.cit.*

sculptures. This time Guyton obtained permission from owners of abandoned lots and houses to use their properties. Car hoods became the palette for large paintings of *Faces of the Hood*, and the individual *Faces of God* portraits were placed strategically at the entry to the two block area. It was during this period that the *OJ (Obstruction of Justice) House* first came into being.

This second cycle of effort also met with strong city opposition. Then Mayor Dennis Archer had paid lip service to his support of the project, and had publicly hailed Guyton's achievement. In addition the Project had by then documented 275,000 visitors annually. Nonetheless, a small group of opponents, armed with arguments that stated the project was a nuisance, was attracting vermin and needed to be stopped, convinced two City Counselors to oppose the project, and ultimately were victorious when Mayor Archer again bulldozed much of the project. It is interesting to note that several of the people we interviewed felt that a deeper source of opposition was a sense of shame on the part of residents that so many outside visitors were being made aware of the desperate circumstances of their neighborhood.

A critical difference in this public action was that in addition to the demolition of city-owned property in the project area, they also demolished a privately owned building which contained much of Guyton's stored art work. This act led to a lawsuit filed by Guyton

against the city. He was at first victorious, receiving a damages award of \$500,000, but the case ended in a jury trial in which the Heidelberg Project was ultimately defeated, receiving little or no compensation for the damage done to project property.

HEIDELBERG PROJECT TODAY

Although it seems impossible in the face of such a troubled history, the Heidelberg Project is in many ways stronger today than it has



OJ or "Obstruction of Justice" House

ever been. After a hiatus of traveling internationally to discuss his work, and a time of healing after the death of his grandfather and subsequent divorce, Guyton returned to the Heidelberg Project and rebuilt it in what is perhaps its most robust form to date. It is one of the top three visitor destinations in Detroit, second only to the Detroit Institute of Art and the Charles Wright Museum of African History. In reflecting upon the history of his project, Guyton states that he would not change anything about his project's history, noting that the notoriety and impassioned dialogue have engaged the people with his project in ways that would not otherwise have happened.

Perhaps the most significant barometer of the change in the status of the Heidelberg Project is that the City of Detroit, under Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, has become a staunch supporter. The City is in fact in the process of selling four city-owned lots to the Heidelberg Project at a very reasonable cost. This will add to the existing project ownership of four art houses and six lots, giving the project significant control over their two block campus. Even those who may have been opposed to the Heidelberg Project in the past now confirm that it has become one of Detroit's main cultural attractions. Members of the city council have referred to Tyree Guyton as a "prophet in the city," ridding the neighborhood of drugs and prostitution. Henry Hagood, the Director of Planning and Development for Detroit, sees the Heidelberg Project as a kind of community museum, reflecting the

artist's view of the world. In Hagood's view, the City needs to embrace diverse events and places if it is to take its place as a major city. As he points out, in a city of 142 square miles, Detroit can certainly accommodate a two block project that brings the city such renowned artistic innovation.

THE EXPERIENCE

Approaching the Heidelberg Project from the downtown, one drives east along Gratiot Street through expanses of vacant land, low density retail and light industrial sites, turning right into the Heidelberg neighborhood. The residential neighborhood is characterized by two story houses, mainly wood frame, in varying degrees of repair. Most blocks have as many vacant lots as houses, and in most cases these lots are littered with urban debris. It is noticeable, therefore, when one reaches the outer edge of the Heidelberg Project, where the vacant lots on either end of the two block site are clean, free of debris, and planted with grass. Large plywood paintings are interspersed around the lots, depicting the *Faces of God* images which reappear throughout Tyree Guyton's work.

On the first block lies the original *Dotty Wotty House*, begun by Guyton with his mentor and grandfather, Sam Mackey. Still occupied by Mrs. Guyton, the house is decorated with the signature polka dot theme, which is connected to his grandfather's love of jelly beans.



Top left: "Faces of God" (detail)
 Top right: Vacuum Installation
 Bottom: OJ House

Bright colors, large circular shapes, and a variety of urban debris cover the house, making it bright and attracting the attention of visitors entering the site. Next to the *Polka Dot House* is a yard space covered with a field of painted upright vacuum cleaners, each with discarded gloves on the handle. Executive Director Jenenne Whitfield remarks sardonically that the vacuum installation is dedicated to the city.

In front of the *Polka Dot House* is the famous shoe tree, entitled *Souls of the Most High*. This work consists of a large tree festooned with painted and tied together pairs of discarded shoes. The imagery and references for this tree are related to Sam Mackey's stories to his grandson about lynchings in the South – how as a child, witnessing lynchings, he would look up and see only the soles of the peoples' shoes as they hung lifeless from the trees. This is one of Guyton's earliest pieces, and remains particularly powerful.

Across the adjacent vacant lot is the *OJ (Obstruction of Justice) House*, the most recent Heidelberg project. This house was originally decorated with a variety of discarded and broken dolls. Graphics on the outside of the house refer also to the 1967 riots. In its original identity, this house referenced both the "obstruction of justice" which Guyton associated with the O.J. Simpson trial, and also the effects of the 1967 riots, with the dolls representing broken lives in the community.

Project plans call for this house to be covered with pennies and redeveloped for artist studios and a children's gallery, and will be known as the *House that Makes Cents*.

Across Heidelberg Street from the two main houses is a large vacant lot, flanked on one side by the visiting artist house. The one story visiting artist house is painted in brilliant yellow and green, and sculpture is placed all around the property and on the vacant lot at the center of the project. This open space functions as the Heidelberg Project "commons."

The two centerpieces of the central lot are *Faces in the Hood*, an installation of car hoods grouped together and painted by Guyton with faces, forming a kind of bulwark at the center of the space, and *Noah's Ark*, a reclaimed fiberglass boat, painted with polka dots and filled to overflowing with discarded stuffed animals of all descriptions. Also on the lot are a picnic table, another highly decorated tree, the

Heidelberg Project's information booth, and several individual paintings and sculptures. At different time, this space has also been the location of the *Rosa Parks Bus* – a 1955 passenger bus that was donated to the Heidelberg Project – covered in polka dots and other painting. Originally entitled *Move to the Rear*, the bus has a colorful history, having been threatened with towing by the city, hidden in an ice rink, stolen, and recovered, and is currently on display at a different location. The bus is slated to be returned to the project in the coming months.

Other less prominent works lie at the outer edge of the site. A large green house, decorated with stuffed animals and called the *Party Animal House*, is at the edge of the project. Already owned by the Heidelberg Project, this house will eventually become an art gallery and shared office space. Down the street is a modest playground structure placed by the Project and used by neighborhood children. Several additional structures are located on this street frontage – several are privately owned, and in reasonable condition, while two others are abandoned. One of these is owned by the Project, and the other slated to be partially demolished and to become a part of an outdoor performance space.

In 2002, Guyton also initiated his own "war on blight," in which he painted large circular polka dots on abandoned houses throughout the city, thus drawing attention to those houses, and also creating a



Left: Visitor Information booth
Right: Visiting artist house

connection between urban abandonment and his work. He reasoned that “if the city could move so quickly to demolish the Heidelberg Project...perhaps they could move just as quickly to rid the city of the thousands of burned out abandoned structures throughout the city.” With this project, Guyton is attempting to, as he puts it, “polka dot the city.”

Several ongoing education programs are associated with the Heidelberg Project. In 1995 Guyton “adopted” nearby Bunche Elementary school, where he had once been a student. Due to cuts in the art budget, Guyton volunteered to work with fourth and fifth grade students once a week, or to arrange for visiting artists to work with the children. This process has been well accepted and is ongoing. “Art in Da Hood” refers to the ongoing and less formal on-site participation of neighborhood kids with the Heidelberg Project. Children who come to the site are given art materials with which to work as they create or touch up art projects. They also run the information booth, guide tours of the site, and sell Heidelberg products to tourists and visitors. Finally, Guyton works with children at the Children’s Home of Detroit, providing art instruction and mentoring on a regular basis.



Top: Noah's Ark
Center: Party Animal House
Bottom: Faces in the Hood

ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP

The Heidelberg Project is virtually synonymous with Tyree Guyton. He invented it, he built it, and he rebuilt it in the face of two cycles of demolition. Guyton continues to create and nurture it on a day-to-day basis. His commitment to the project is based upon his personal belief that art saves lives. Like all of Guyton's work, that belief and statement has several levels of meaning.

On the most obvious level, he sees his work as taking what is there, what exists in the lives of neighborhood residents, and reconfiguring the pieces to create an experience of joy and beauty. At the same time, the process of creating the art attracts the interest and participation of many people, especially neighborhood children. They work alongside Guyton, learning from him about art, about the value of creating community, about commitment, and about alternatives to life on the street. And then, there is a more literal interpretation – Guyton points out that many times homeless people have taken shelter beneath the art works to protect themselves from weather, danger, or other threats. As he says “You see, art saves lives.”

Guyton's message, embodied in his work, reaches deep into the social ills and social norms that surround us. As he points out, “In our society, we throw people away.” The urban debris he uses in his work

is a metaphor for the community; in Guyton's work he takes what has literally been discarded and calls attention to its potential for positive transformation. In his own words, Guyton set out to “make the neighborhood into something so beautiful the whole world will want to see it.” Tyree Guyton states his philosophy as follows:

I believe that my job as an artist is to help people to see! I wanted to use my talents to bring about positive change in my community. I did not set out to create controversy but then you can't bring about real change without controversy. ...I use art as a catalyst for social change. I chose to start right here in my own neighborhood and yet I realized that the first change had to start with me. Changing my mind and seeing with my eye of understanding helped to eradicate my fears and limitations. Social change must start with self and then you can change the entire world around you.⁶

Tyree Guyton's daily rituals on the site reinforce that goal. Each morning he arrives at the project and spends the first hours sweeping, weeding, touching up art work damaged by weather and time, and making sure that things are in order. From there he moves to the more creative part of his day, creating new work and adding on to work already there. He is constantly interrupted by visitors wanting to know about the work, its meaning, its significance. He greets each

⁶ Whitfield, Jenenne, “Thoughts on Tyree Guyton's Heidelberg Project”, *Southern Quarterly*, 2000-2001

visitor who approaches him with warmth, interest and courtesy, patiently explaining the work to them. In this way his work is building bridges among diverse groups of people, maintaining dialogue, and creating community united around an appreciation of this unique art form. As Mame Jackson, an art historian from Wayne State University, points out, despite his world travels and growing reputation, “Tyree would rather be on Heidelberg Street than any place on the planet.”

It is interesting to note that although the two block project is located in the midst of a center of crack, heroin, and homelessness, it does not get bothered or damaged in any way. Guyton feels that the community, including the criminal element, actually protect the project, and feel a sense of ownership. In this way the fact that the Heidelberg Project continues to exist is seen as a victory in a setting where it could easily have been destroyed.



Left: *Founder Tyree Guyton*

Right: *Tyree Guyton greeting visitors*

For Tyree Guyton, his art is a medicine, healing the community as it has healed him through difficult times. As he points out, “One can’t heal the land without healing the people first,” and through his participatory process, his steady presence in the neighborhood, and patient explanations to visitors of all kinds, he sees himself as a healer, dealing with rifts in the community, in the city, and even in the world. Despite a very difficult history, the project now seems more stable than ever before. One wonders how Guyton has maintained his commitment in the face of ongoing financial challenges, the city’s bulldozers, or other detractors. But as he states, “I wouldn’t change a thing that has happened. Everything that has happened has made me who I am today.”

The Heidelberg Project now has a twenty year history. Traditionally it has had little formal structure, either financially or administratively. A turning point came in 1993 when Jenenne Whitfield became involved, quitting her corporate banking job to become Executive Director. With Jenenne Whitfield as Executive Director, the Heidelberg Project is now a 501-C3 corporation, and is building the structure it needs to ensure its future. A new local Board of Directors is now in place, and the advisory board includes representatives from the Cranbrook Museum, the Museum of African American History, the Batista Gallery, Deloitte and Touche, General Motors, Wayne State University, ASG Renaissance, the Detroit Institute of Art, the

Detroit City Council, the City of Detroit Department of Cultural Affairs, and others. A national advisory board includes such prominent figures as Richard Florida, Mame Jackson of Wayne State University, and John Beardsley of the Harvard Design School, all of whom are willing to lend their names and support to the Heidelberg Project. In addition to the Boar, several local entrepreneurs and business people have lent their skills to the project in an ongoing basis, including the Detroit Collaborative Design Center at the University of Detroit Mercy, which has assisted the project in developing a long-term site plan and in developing architectural plans for its current project, the House that Makes Cents.

The Board Development Committee has established three major goals for the project: to establish a stable an ongoing relationship with the City of Detroit; to “get the word out” about the project through a series of high-profile fund raisers; and to get Jenenne Whitfield and Tyree Guyton maximum exposure as speakers and lecturers around Detroit and the country.

IS IT ART?

The notoriety and fame of the Heidelberg Project is inextricably tied to the ongoing debate, “Is It Art?” This is a fascinating discussion that has gone on at the neighborhood level, among visitors to the site, at

the city level, in academia, and even across nations. Mame Jackson, Professor of Art History at Wayne State University, is a long term supporter of the project and a member of the advisory board. In her view, the Heidelberg Project is at the nexus of the current discussion about the very nature of urban art. She points out that the national dialogue on this subject asserts that the traditional “curatorial” definitions of art as precious objects locked away in museums is unrelated to much of the most important work going on today.

Today’s art, Jackson states, is contextual, political, and provocative, raising important social and existential issues. The dialogic function of art itself has become an important component of modern urban art, and in this way the Heidelberg Project is on the cutting edge. On the other hand, she also feels that because of his art training and talent as an artist, Guyton’s work has a “foot in the traditional art camp.” She points out that it can stand on its own with its form, massing and line quality, and that this fact gives it sufficient credibility to sustain the dialogue. Jenenne Whitfield writes in *The Southern Quarterly* (2000-2001) that Guyton “chose to abandon the ‘Fine Art’ form in exchange for a style that came from the depth of his soul, even though his early work demonstrates all the attributes of a fine artist.”



On the Heidelberg Project website, Jackson characterizes Tyree Guyton's art in the following way:

A dismembered doll reminds us of a crucifixion... a boat, of an aborted escape...a fragment of quilt, of a comforting childhood hug. In worn out shoes that seem to climb neighborhood trees there is a playful irony between the melancholy of discarded usefulness and the unexpected independence of the objects as they themselves take on a new life.

On a less intellectual level, it is instructive to watch visitors to the Project. Many different kinds of people are drawn to it. On one Saturday site visit, there were a visiting group of graduate students, led by the Dean of the Architecture School at University of Detroit Mercy; a family with several teenage children from the Midwest; a school group; and a group of tough neighborhood kids, all talking to Tyree about his work and what it represented. Guyton views this ongoing dialogue as bridge-building between his community and people from other walks of life, and it is central to his view of the role of his work. In his view, what is most important at the Project is the dialogue.

The EDRA Places Award of 2004 recognized the Heidelberg Project in the design category. In *Places* (Vol. 16), the project is described in terms of its social import. "Clearly this work is not only about what you see. It's about the dialogue it engenders. ...The Heidelberg Project offers an alternative vision to young children in one of America's most blighted urban areas; it broadens community awareness of the power of art; and it brings a new sense of important social realities to the consciousness of visitors".

In the view of some, Tyree Guyton is the most important art object there. His presence adds a "profound sense of reality" to the work, and brings it to the human level, making it more special. To others Tyree represents the energy and pioneering spirit of the Detroit residents who remain committed to their city. In many ways the Heidelberg Project and Tyree's work is an ongoing metaphor for Detroit's evolution – picking up the pieces and reconfiguring them into something of beauty and meaning. Guyton himself sees his art in the following way: "...In transforming the environment I aim to transform people. Only then can healing, health and hope begin."

Right: Tyree Guyton greeting visitors

HEIDELBERG PROJECT INCOME AND EXPENSES 2004

INCOME		EXPENSES	
Fund Raising Gross Income	\$13,816	Fund raising events	\$1,397
Corporate contributions	\$15,178	Contract labor and services	\$2,322
Foundation contributions	\$8,000	Program expenses	\$2,832
Individual contributions	\$7,536	Repairs and Maintenance	\$3,675
Grants	\$900	Professional fees	\$855
Restricted Donation	\$1,880	Australia project	\$14,774
Earned income	\$1,700	Sales, marketing and advertising	\$4,542
Other income	\$2,086	Taxes	\$5,901
Sale of goods	\$7,297	General operating expenses	\$8,316
Credit Adjustment	\$2,230	Site development	\$5,954
Misc.	\$600	Other/Misc.	\$2,761
		Debt	\$1,431
Total Income	\$61,223	Total Expenses	\$54,760

Not included in the above table are in-kind services and donations, such as a donation of IBM computers and software (\$4,733), the services of Jenenne Whitfield in 2004 (\$62,500), Guyton's site maintenance (\$8,000), and a marketing strategy report from the University of Michigan (\$235,000).

FINANCES

During its twenty year history, the Heidelberg Project has operated on a “shoe string.” To this day, only the Executive Director draws a salary, there is no significant cash flow, and property that has been acquired to date has come through one-time donations or gifts. The new Board of Directors and the Executive Director are, however, poised to change this situation by raising the profile and fund raising capacity of the project.

A recent March 2005 fund raiser for the *House that Makes Cents* cleared \$80,000, which was at a scale virtually unprecedented by previous fund raising efforts. The ultimate goal is to raise \$295,000 to complete the *House that Makes Cents*, as well as to raise funds needed to acquire the remaining city-owned lots. There is a definite feeling in the project that it has turned a corner, having improved and stabilized its relationship with the city, and engaged people with the necessary skills and connections to help them attain financial and legal independence.

IMPACTS

How does one measure the impacts of the Heidelberg Project? On the most elementary level one cannot yet make the case that the project has transformed the surrounding neighborhood in any major way. However, although there has been no new private development in the neighborhood in many years, developers Madison and Madison are in the process of acquiring land from the city to build approximately 60 energy efficient artist live/work units in the area at the edge of the neighborhood. A spokesperson from Madison and Madison said they were looking to build upon the energy and synergy created by the Heidelberg Project. In addition, Gratiot McDougal United Development Corporation (GMUDC) and McDougal Hunt Citizens District Council, two non-profits operating in nearby neighborhoods, have plans to build new affordable units in the area. In speaking with these developers, they could not confirm a direct relationship to the Heidelberg Project.

Another impact is the estimated 275,000 people from ninety countries who are reported to visit the project annually. Certainly they carry away with them a different impression of an inner-city neighborhood when they experience the art, talk with Tyree, or spend time talking to other visitors. Some surely understand it as a ray of light amidst a forgotten area; others, no doubt, walk away with a less positive

impression. Conversely, as visitation occurs, neighborhood residents come into contact with people from other parts of Detroit, from other cities and from other cultures. The art is a natural mechanism for building bridges among these people. Whatever their background or perspective, many thousands of people are at least considering the questions raised by the art as they visit the project. Their presence on the site and increased automobile traffic driving through the neighborhood is reported to have reduced crime in the immediate area.

A more anecdotal impact has to do with the effect of the project on neighborhood children, or others who come to be involved with it on a longer-term basis. For example, one young child, who lived in a home of drug abusers, became attached to Guyton and his work, and came there most days after school. His teachers at school saw his work improving and were puzzled, knowing he had little support at home. Eventually Guyton and Whitfield met with teachers and explained his connection to the project.

There are many other stories of young people, and homeless people, who came to be attached to the Heidelberg Project. One homeless individual who was hired by Guyton as a street sweeper for \$5 an hour eventually becoming emboldened to find steady work and

“graduate” from the Project. There are stories of other children who grew up and left the neighborhood, but still return to check in with Guyton and Whitfield. Guyton’s impact as a role model for these children, and his support for their “becoming themselves,” is difficult if not impossible to measure.

State Senator Hansen Clarke goes farther in his estimation of the impact of the Heidelberg Project. In his estimation, the Heidelberg Project has “done more for urban revitalization [in Detroit] than the Renaissance Center, casinos and Super Bowl put together.” As an artist himself, Clarke quotes art historian Clement Greenberg in saying that “Every truly original work of art first appears ugly.” Hansen thinks Tyree Guyton will prove to be one of the greatest artists of our time, and that the Heidelberg Project will have huge historical significance. He also underscores its importance as an intersection between a “bricks and mortar” approach to community revitalization, and one that addresses peoples’ spirits as well as buildings. Clarke feels the Heidelberg Project is transformative by “glorifying what is actually happening,” and that it gives hope to residents by pointing out that “who they are, as they are, is extraordinary.”

In his estimation, the Heidelberg Project has "done more for urban revitalization [in Detroit] than the Renaissance Center, casinos and Super Bowl put together."

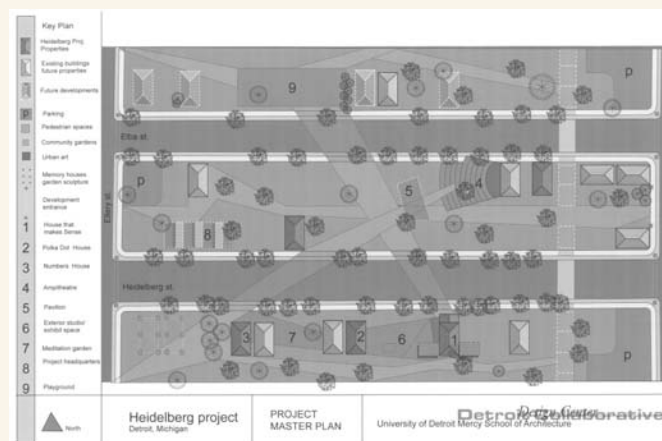
FUTURE PLANS

The Heidelberg Project has ambitious plans for the future. The long-term goal is to create a cultural village, which will be marked with an archway entrance to the project and will also include community gardens, a children's playground, a meditation garden, an outdoor pavilion, a visual arts gallery, space for children's programming, visiting artist-in-residence houses, offices, and a library. The more immediate goal is to acquire all of the remaining thirty-eight lots in the two block area that are not already owned by the project. The sale of five of those lots is for a sum of \$7,300 is currently pending with the city.

The second most immediate goal is to acquire the remaining \$215,000 for the *House that Makes Sense* to house a visiting artist studio, a studio for Guyton, a children's gallery, and a library. The

plan for constructing this house involves working with Youth Build Detroit as the general contractor, thereby offering the opportunity for young people to gain contracting skills in building the project. The completion of the house will provide support for the three ongoing children's education programs ("Art in Da Hood," "Connecting the Dots" and Bunche Elementary School), as well as exhibition space for their work.

The site plan by the Detroit Collaborative Design Center (University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture) lays out the long-term physical vision of the urban cultural village. In addition, the University of



Left: Tyree Guyton with visitors
Right: Plan for future development

Michigan Business School has prepared a report for the Heidelberg Project, creating a five year approach for developing and implementing a complete strategic plan. This report includes a proposed organizational chart, job descriptions, and recommended next steps. Many recommendations from this plan have already being implemented, including the appointment of a more diverse and well-connected board, and the official hiring of Jenenne Whitfield as Executive Director.

Much of the future of the Heidelberg Project will depend upon the success of implementing strategic plan goals with respect to organization and fund raising, and the creation of a steady income stream. The Board's goals for fund raising and increased visibility around Detroit are already being implemented as new members have been recruited, and high profile fund raisers have been staged. Income remains a more difficult challenge; considerable effort will be required to develop a sustainable cash flow to protect the project from economic setbacks. In many respects, despite a 20 year history, the Heidelberg Project is in its infancy with respect to organizational structure and development. But the groundwork is well underway to ensure a more stable and viable future.

Assessing Project Success

Success in Meeting Project Goals

➔ *To create beauty in a blighted neighborhood.*

The Heidelberg Project has created an oasis in a troubled and deteriorated inner-city neighborhood. People who have experienced the project may disagree about whether it is beautiful, but there is no doubt that the Heidelberg Project space engenders awe and respect for what has been accomplished. It is impossible to visit it and not be overwhelmed by the creative energy of the art and the kind of messages it carries.

➔ *To take what has been discarded by society and transform it into something beautiful.*

The Heidelberg Project has taken urban debris and reconfigured it in ways that communicate powerful visual and social messages. For example, the individual pieces that comprise *Faces in the Hood* have artistic integrity and as a group create a powerful presence; the whimsy and exuberance of *Noah's Ark* are unavoidable; and the humor and wisdom of the vacuum cleaner piece is also dramatic.

➔ *To build bridges and create dialogue among diverse groups of people.*

This is perhaps the most significant accomplishment of the Heidelberg Project. People from Detroit, the U.S., and around the world visit and engage with the project. Some take photos from the safety of their cars, many others wander around the site, talking with Guyton or other visitors. Neighborhood residents use the open area as a common front yard, coming together for informal gatherings. In this way the Heidelberg Project brings people together in a series of ad hoc dialogues about mundane subjects, and about the meaning of this unique urban place.

➔ *To heal communities through art.*

Although this is arguably the most elusive goal to measure, there is evidence of the healing impacts of the Heidelberg Project on the community. This healing has taken place on an individual level, including that of Tyree Guyton himself; and on a community level, in terms of the ultimate acceptance of the neighborhood, the pride of many working in the neighborhood, and the City's recent acknowledgement that the Heidelberg Project is now a major cultural destination. One can imagine this spirit growing and extending its reach as the project stabilizes and develops new financial resources.

Selection Committee Discussion: What We Learned

Cities across the country can learn a great deal from the Heidelberg Project. In discussing the project, the Selection Committee noted several different and important themes.

Beauty is Transformative

The Heidelberg Project takes the discarded refuse of urban life and configures it into works of art that are provocative, soulful, and beautiful. Individually and as a collection, in their placement and relationship to each other, the pieces create a powerful place that makes a statement of hope and of joy in a setting that has suffered poverty and neglect. Like all great works of art, the project raises many questions and issues, both aesthetic and political; but it brings people together around shared interest to debate its merits, and certainly to celebrate the creation of a unique kind of urban place.

Persistence is Powerful

Artist Tyree Guyton, often working alone, has persisted in creating the project over a twenty year period, despite two cycles of destruction by the city. His beliefs in the importance of his work, his dedication to it, and his artistic ability have combined to create a place with its own unique power and magnetism. Much of the success of the Heidelberg Project can be attributed to Guyton's willingness to continue his work in the face of enormous obstacles. The Committee noted that in creating important urban places, one person can truly make a difference.

Abandonment as Opportunity

Although many urban ills have grown out of urban abandonment, for a few creative individuals across the country it has provided the opportunities to establish transformative projects. The Heidelberg Project, the Village of Arts and Humanities in Philadelphia, and Project Row Houses in Houston, to name a few, have taken derelict spaces and used them to create places that make important statements about the power of art and creativity to transform lives. These kinds of projects can become models for so many other cities dealing with the same kinds of problems. While Detroit is dealing with the problem on a scale unprecedented in other American cities, many urban areas face challenges of this kind, and much can be learned from these projects that have turned problems into opportunities.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

See project website: <http://www.heidelberg.org>

For Detroit history, see www.historydetroit.com by Tina Granzo and www.visitdetroit.com/visitorcenter/aboutdetroit

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RELATED RUDY BRUNER AWARD WINNERS:

Text taken from <http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/bruner>. See also www.brunerfoundation.org.



Village of Arts and Humanities, Philadelphia, PA; 2001 Gold Medal Winner

The Village is a private, non-profit community-based organization dedicated to revitalizing its host neighborhood through the arts. Begun in 1986 as a summer project to engage neighborhood children in building a community park, the village has grown into a major provider of arts-inspired programs in education, land transformation, construction, and economic development. The organization serves over 10,000 low income, primarily African-American youth and families in North Philadelphia. It seeks to build community through innovative arts, educational, social, construction and economic development programs. In all of its activities, the Village seeks to do justice to the humanity and social conditions of people in North Philadelphia and in similar urban situations.

ARTScorpsLA, Los Angeles, CA; 1999 Silver Medal Winner

Begun in 1992, ARTScorpsLA (ACLA) is a community based organization that transformed blighted and abandoned land into greenspace and community gathering places. Through ARTScorpsLA, multi-ethnic young people in the urban community designed and created a youth artpark, a community mural project, and gathering places on reclaimed land and in neglected buildings. The project has promoted community building through the arts on a variety of sites, transformed blighted neighborhoods, and contributed to community pride.

Project Row Houses, Houston, TX; 1999 Silver Medal Winner

Project Row Houses has forged new connections among Houston communities through the rehabilitation of twenty-two historic "shotgun" style houses which now provide art gallery and installation space, showcasing the work of prominent African-American artists. In addition, Project Row Houses provides five houses and support services for single working mothers, and a variety of daycare and after school programs for neighborhood youth.

What We Learned About Urban Excellence



The Question of Urban Excellence:

The Rudy Bruner Award Since 1987

Since 1987, the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (RBA) has sought to promote fresh and innovative thinking about cities, and to encourage us all to demand – and build – excellent urban places. Award winners are places that incorporate political, community, environmental, and formal elements into an inclusive and multi-dimensional whole. RBA Selection Committees do not impose pre-conceived definitions of excellence on their consideration of applications. Rather they strive to discover excellence in the places represented in each application.

This is not an easy task for Selection Committee members. They are given no definitive criteria for award except that the place considered must be real. Unimplemented plans are not accepted. The places submitted must be considered excellent by the members of the interdisciplinary Selection Committee but there is no absolute measure against which their choices will be evaluated. The same is true for the applicant teams, who must make many decisions about how to represent their projects in order to make a convincing argument for the quality and importance of the places they nominate.

In short, the selection process requires Committee members to maintain an open mind, and to make closely held personal positions on excellence open to challenge by other members of the Selection Committee.

Similarly, applicants, and those who write in support of each application, have to rely on a collaborative construction of the reasons they believe the places they created are worthy of consideration for the Award. In this mutual search for convincing definitions of excellent places, the Bruner Foundation, its Selection Committees, and applicants for the Award have, for almost twenty years, been engaged in an exploration of the critical factors that promote excellence in process, place, and values.

The range of place types recognized in the RBA process is wide. No special privilege is given to large or small places, to any specific theme or building program, or to the strength of any given discipline over another. No building program or theme is more or less likely to be awarded. Since its inception, the program has awarded places as disparate as Yerba Buena Gardens in San Francisco and New York City's Greenmarket. Yerba Buena involved over \$15 billion of capital investment, while Greenmarket began in 1975 with a grant of \$35,000. In 1989, the gold medal was awarded to Portland, Oregon for its work implementing the 1972 Downtown Plan, and in 2003 to the Camino Nuevo Charter Academy, an elementary school in the MacArthur Park neighborhood in Los Angeles that has revitalized a struggling immigrant community through engagement of parents in the education of their children. As these examples show, the twenty years of the RBA has yielded a staggering variety of themes and types of winners.

The 2005 Rudy Bruner Award continues the tradition of discovering excellence in a wide variety of urban places. In this year's cycle, there are two art based places and three transit oriented places. All of the places awarded are very different in scale, cost and impact. For example, the Portland Streetcar Project's capital expenditures were \$88.7 million. This project shares the spotlight with the Heidelberg Project, a series of art installations in inner-city Detroit, with 2004 annual expenditures of less than \$70,000. Yet the Committee recognized the very different, yet equally important, impacts of these remarkable places on their respective cities.

In the selection process, design remains important, but is considered in the context of the integrated effect of all aspects of placemaking. Social responsibility is often a characteristic of RBA award winners, many of which have played pivotal roles in revitalizing and empowering their blocks, neighborhoods, or communities. The quality of leadership and a guiding vision in the creation of place often emerges in the discussions. Even the economics of projects are subject to a variety of interpretations from Selection Committee members and applicants alike. Some projects rely on significant public funding, while others are totally market driven or led by foundation resources. Many represent a complex and often creative mix of funding sources. Again, there is no assumption of what constitutes good project economics outside the full complexity of the applicant's context: the reality of

their process, the physical, material and social make up of place, and the values evident in both process and place, all drive the selection process.

The RBA plays a unique and crucial role in the realm of awards for urban places. It is not a design award, nor is it an award for plans or social programs, rather, the RBA considers quality of place characterized not only by quality design, but by the skillful interweaving of political, community, environmental, and formal elements into an inclusive and multi-dimensional whole. RBA winners often transcend the boundaries between architecture, urban design and planning. They are frequently developed with such vision and imagination that they often dramatically transform sites that struggle with some of our most persistent urban problems into quality places to live and work. As we conclude the tenth RBA Award cycle, the importance of such an award continues to be affirmed not only by the winners themselves, but by policy makers, design professionals, community organizers, and others involved in the complex process of urban placemaking.

Reinventing Downtown: The 2005 Rudy Bruner Award

Elements of all of the previous Selection Committee discussions, as recorded in past RBA publications, resonate with the 2005 winners. Even so, as in every RBA cycle to date, the unique talents of the Selection Committee and applicant teams have created still another vantage point about making and sustaining excellent urban places.

In many ways, this tenth cycle of the RBA has been about the process by which place constituencies establish new visions of place and community when the old ones no longer work. These winners illustrate the ways in which urban excellence emerges through processes that include the rethinking of neighborhood or community identities. The process of rethinking often includes both what and how these places contribute to their larger urban context. The 2005 winners represent powerful imaginations of alternative futures. The themes underlying them respond, each in their own way, to the challenges faced by our cities today, and together they suggest a variety of ways of rethinking urban issues and re-imagining urban places.

TRANSIT ORIENTED PLACES

There are three winners this year that are transit oriented: the Portland Streetcar Project, Fruitvale Village, and Downtown Silver Spring. All of these winners created dramatic shifts in the public image of their precincts, neighborhoods, and cities as a whole. Constituents had to re-imagine both places and processes to realize new possibilities.

Imagining Place

Consider Portland, Oregon, where acres of abandoned rail yards, Portland's Lovejoy expressway ramp, and another seventy acres of empty or underutilized warehouse structures created a barrier between an established northwest neighborhood and its downtown. Added to that, the City faced a declining economy reflected in increasing office vacancy rates, increases in unemployment, and a high city crime rate. This is not the mix that would normally lead one to predict such a city would be tearing down viaducts, redirecting parking revenues to streetcars, redeveloping large tracts of brownfields, and building new housing and commercial structures as well as public parks in the central city. Yet the power of a new vision of Portland resulted in public investments that would cover the cost of demolition of the Lovejoy ramp, the creation of a multi-million dollar park infrastructure, new street infrastructure replacing rails, a streetcar system connecting

employment centers about 2.5 miles apart, and almost \$1.5 billion in related new commercial and housing development. This is the legacy of Portland Streetcar, Inc. — they enabled a completely new and even more robust vision, now a reality, of the urban core.

Silver Spring, Maryland had a different set of issues. A “first ring” suburb of Washington D.C., Silver Spring was the site of one the nation's first suburban malls. The historic mall, in significant disrepair, stands near the abandoned art deco Silver Theatre and frames the corner of one of the busiest intersections in the city. Traffic moved through this central intersection, and there was a very active metro with park and ride, but no real reason to stop. There was little significant retail in the area and less reason to expect some anytime soon. However, the Montgomery County government, working with merchants, residents, and developers, re-imagined this place. They did not see it as a dying first ring suburb of the nation's capital, but as a potentially vital urban center in its own right. By attracting the headquarters of Discovery Communications, and by moving the center of its “downtown” one block from that same busy intersection, thus creating an entirely new four block district, it successfully invited over 550,000 square feet of new private commercial space and over 500,000 square feet of new or renovated retail. Belief in this new imagination made it happen and created a dynamic new place that is clearly and appropriately connected to its transportation hub.

A third example of dramatic reinvention is the Fruitvale Village Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) stop in Oakland, California. The area known as Fruitvale had been experiencing disinvestment for a period of close to thirty years. The crime rate, vacant store fronts, unemployment, and poverty all indicated this was a troubled neighborhood. From BART's perspective, it was a good place to build additional parking capacity, but the Unity Council and citizens of the area had a different vision. They believed that by building a quality retail, service, and housing connection between BART and a dying commercial area, they could revitalize the modest retail strip on International Boulevard into one hundred percent occupancy. Adding to the creativity of the vision, the Unity Council developed a program for over 40,000 square feet of new retail that included neighborhood services and health care. These uses and new retail would in turn help to create the market demand for considerably more space that was already vacant and underutilized. This was the Unity Council's forward looking and counter intuitive imagination: the way to fill vacant retail space on International Boulevard was to create new retail and service space in Fruitvale Village, turning a busy but stark BART station into a center of commercial and neighborhood activity.

The Artist Relocation Program offers a new model of repopulating the downtown and bringing new stakeholders into the city.

Creating Process

All of this rethinking and imagination work also had dramatic process components. In Portland, the streetcar project could easily have been challenged by distrust of governmental action, the motives of the private sector, and the limitations of non-profit organization. In almost any other city, the giving of control over the planning (including alignment), design, construction, and operation of streetcar infrastructure to a non-profit organization led by a board that included developers who stood to profit from the decisions required a significant leap of faith. It was further complicated by partial support by governmental resources. But Portland has a long tradition of collaborative action and creative public and private partnerships. The use of advisory committees provided oversight along with safeguards in government contracting. All this, in addition to a series of meetings that included the business community, governmental agencies, major institutions, housing advocates and residents, ultimately resulted in a high level of support for a project that had the potential to benefit everyone. In the end, the general public as well as politicians heartily endorsed the process as one that was both fair and right for their community. In fact, the results clearly reinforce this understanding of partnering among business, not-for-profit agencies, and government as a vehicle to administer the public's business.

A different set of challenges faced the citizens and the Montgomery County administrators who oversaw the process of “re-centering” what is now downtown Silver Spring. They had experienced several failed development efforts over multiple years and administrations. Each effort was more grandiose and, in a way more desperate, fueled in part by previous failures. In this community, citizens became engaged in a dialogue about a “small starts” approach very different from the previous grandiose plans that presented themselves as “silver bullet” solutions to the problems of their downtown. Imagine public officials seeking election on the premise that a good process of engagement without a clear proposal of what should happen would ultimately result in a solution for their struggling city. These are exactly the processes entertained and accepted by the citizens of Silver Spring.

Still another set of challenges was faced by Fruitvale constituencies who ultimately embraced what was a modest community-based organization (the Unity Council) in a fight against a powerful authority that wanted a parking structure between their station and the community. Because of the clarity and efficacy of the process involving all stakeholders, several years later that same authority bent its own rules to give a subsidiary of the Unity Council, the Fruitvale Development Corporation, an exclusive negotiating agreement binding the City, BART, and the community to a new vision for the area. This vision

became a reality very different from BART’s original intent, but is one that is responsive to the local community on many levels.

Other 2005 Selection Committee Observations on Portland Streetcar Project, Fruitvale Village, and Downtown Silver Spring

The members of the Selection Committee made many observations about the transit related projects in this award cycle, some of which echo the dialogue of past Committees. In addition, they emphasized the importance of strategic transportation opportunities which encouraged urban infill development rather than more sprawl, the quality of design reflected in each of these projects, and the way in which each of them relied on consistent civic engagement as they adjusted the form and identity of their downtowns to reflect current challenges.

Build on Strategic Transportation Opportunities. All three transportation oriented developments took advantage of their strategic transportation opportunities, using them to effect the transitions in place that they desired. Portland is the most obvious, as they saw the need and opportunity to connect two important employment centers, urban housing, and downtown with one efficient streetcar system. Both Fruitvale and Silver Spring, however, looked at well-utilized transit stations that seemed to contribute little to their neighborhoods and believed that, with the strategic placement of amenities, employment

centers, key services and residents, the stations could be more fully integrated into the life of the communities. In all three cases, the transitions involved significant roles for the public, strong leadership, and confidence in the capacity of transportation nodes to help revitalize urban areas.

Design Quality and Symbols are Important. All three transportation related cases realized the importance of design and other gestures toward creating quality public space. Portland added four new “park blocks,” building on a tradition of parks in the City. The investments in park amenity were a substantial acknowledgement of the importance of high quality public space in the life of new communities. Silver Spring worked with the architecture of the Discovery Center and its public park, the commons, and the Veterans Plaza on axis with the transit center. Its award winning “Five Senses Gardens” by landscape architect John Urban, and the plans for design of the Veterans Plaza, further reinforce the critical importance of design quality in the public realm. Fruitvale used a familiar California architectural vernacular, based on pedestrian scale massing and bright color to create inviting public spaces. It then put its front door at the BART station and drew people through its public plaza and market spaces to the commercial strip on International Boulevard, proving that sometimes relatively small changes in circulation patterns can have

tremendous impacts. The commitment of all three transit based projects to design quality helped assure their enduring value and success.

Public Engagement is Ever Present. Finally, all three transit oriented projects put their trust in civic engagements processes. Portland built on its long tradition of community advisory commissions to provide the necessary check and balance to the private interests on the Portland Streetcar, Inc. board. Fruitvale leveraged the leadership of the highly regarded Unity Council and its ties to the community. And Silver Spring moved planning for the area into a very straightforward process of community consultation.

Portland Streetcar offers a finely crafted mix of people, process and place. The project is important because it demonstrates that cities can continue to improve themselves—it offers hope for the future of our urban centers.

ART BASED PLACES

The other two places awarded in this year's RBA cycle are art based interventions, something we have seen in other outstanding RBA winners. They offer dramatically different images of place, both based upon a belief in the importance of art to the life of their local communities. Paducah, Kentucky's Artist Relocation Program focused on attracting, building, and maintaining a community of mature and successful artists who are care about and belong to their neighborhood. The Heidelberg Project, by contrast, uses art in the service of social protest, focusing attention on the conditions of inner-city Detroit. Like the transit oriented places, the art based programs require participants and citizens in their respective cities to entertain dramatically different visions of place.

Imagining Place

The t-shirts of Paducah, Kentucky suggest it is the fifth most important cultural destination in the world, a bold vision for a town of 26,000 located hundreds of miles away from any major city. Yet it is precisely this kind of boldness and imagination that has fundamentally reshaped a dangerous and blighted historic neighborhood adjacent to the downtown. This area, Lower Town, was one in which fifty-one percent of the population were living in poverty, where seventy percent were

transient renters, and where a large majority of the historic building stock was in deplorable condition. Add to the mix the fact that that drug-related crime was on the rise. Now imagine telling successful artists from all over the United States that this is the site where they should invest \$300,000 to \$400,000 in new or renovated home and studio construction in order to make this neighborhood into a wonderful community of artists. And yet it happened, largely because of the creative vision of Mark Barone and the willingness of town planner Tom Barnett to embrace a creative vision for this historic neighborhood.

Detroit's Heidelberg Project offers another powerful depiction of the role of imagination in shaping not just the future of a neighborhood, but the awakening of a city. In addition, for many the project pushes the frontiers of what constitutes art. Here one has to consider a largely abandoned and blighted two blocks in a sea of distressed neighborhoods on Detroit's east side. This is the place Tyree Guyton chose as the site and context for his paint, sculpture, and environmental art that has evolved in this location for almost twenty years. His work has rendered these two blocks the third most visited tourist destination in the City, and has been transforming the awareness of visitors, the citizens of Detroit, and the world about the plight of such places and the people that inhabit them. That same body of work made of largely discarded material is also shaking the foundations of the art world.

Creating Process

The Heidelberg Project and the Paducah Artist Relocation Program are even more remarkable for the participation processes employed in their making. Artist Mark Barone, living in the blight of Lower Town in Paducah, virtually willed colleagues, neighbors, and city government, largely unknown to him at the time, to join him in the making of the art community that the City now enjoys. He did it by forging a coalition with the City's Department of Planning, and working with the Director of Planning to develop a strategy to realize his vision through personal outreach, the internet, and art magazine ads. Through the process, bank loans were secured from civic minded lenders. While clearly significant funds were invested by the artists moving to Paducah, the initial loans amounts were often for more than the bank could expect if foreclosure were required. Barone and Planning Director Tom Barnett worked with the conventional tools of the municipal planner: comprehensive code inspection, historic review boards, and frankly modest city infrastructure investments. It is the simplicity and degree of success of the intervention that remains hard to imagine even as its success is undeniable.

Artist Tyree Guyton is at the center of the Heidelberg Project, where he has employed controversial art and action in his community – so politically threatening that it has been bulldozed by the City on two occasions. Even as it has been destroyed, it has increased in visibility, attracting still more local, national and international interest because of its controversy. Guyton's methods are unorthodox, but have created an enormous impact in Detroit, and around the country. The project is a powerful artistic statement, and an intellectual one that challenges viewers to see the beauty inherent in a neighborhood of discarded people and property. The Heidelberg Project is about the re-imagination of what has been thought to be without value. As such, the cycles of construction and destruction that have been part of the history of the project are a metaphor for the ongoing struggle of a disenfranchised community. The Heidelberg Project is also a form of performance art, even as it creates artifacts on the landscape and meaning in the lives of those who participate as spectators, commentators, destroyers, and promoters. It is a project that focuses attention on the distress and neglect so endemic in inner-city neighborhoods, in a way that has created community pride and strength. Involving community members, engaging visitors, and continually changing and expanding, it represents the resilience and ultimately the triumph of the human spirit.

Other 2005 Selection Committee Observations on Artist Relocation Program and the Heidelberg Project

Again, the Selection Committee revisited themes common to most of the discussions held in the twenty year life of the award program. These themes added depth to the Committee understands of the importance of art, in all its forms, as an agent for community revitalization, and as an essential life force in the urban environment. The members also talked about the crisis conditions of the art based interventions, and saw the artists and other participants in the project as people whose creative imaginations transformed crisis into opportunity.

History and Beauty are Transformative. The Selection Committee devoted a great deal of discussion time considering the ways in which art changes lives. The history of the Paducah neighborhood married with the artistic intention of the new residents has fundamentally changed the quality of the neighborhood, its relation to a revitalizing downtown, and the very understanding of how the people of Paducah think of themselves. The same is also true for the citizens of Detroit touched by the Heidelberg Project. It is impossible to look at an abandoned house in the city the same way after seeing houses that have been turned into artistic statements by Tyree Guyton's signature polka dots. A simple polka dot on an abandoned building now suggests the creative potential of structures that the city wants desperately to forget.

Persistence and Critical Mass are Key Elements to Success. The persistence of the participants in both art projects working to achieve a critical mass of residence, in the case of Lower Town in Paducah, and of visibility, in the case of Heidelberg, was singled out as an important lesson learned. As few as twenty new artists investing in the Paducah arts community is enough to literally change the shape of the blighted community and awaken the potential for such transformations in other parts of the city. The publicity on the art projects and programs of the Heidelberg community helped to establish a new language spoken by the people of Detroit about the possible future for the city and about the beauty inherent in what has been abandoned or discarded. With persistence and repetition come recognition, awareness and, ultimately, a different understanding of possible futures.

Finding Opportunity in Crisis. Both Lower Town and Heidelberg are places born of crisis. Both start with abandoned and blighted neighborhoods characterized by crime, desperate poverty, and blight. The artists in both communities saw opportunity in the problem and used that opportunity to reverse the momentum of neglect and disinvestment. The solutions, however, were not conventional; rather they required a re-imagination of place and potential that moved a set of crisis conditions into new directions. In Paducah, Lower Town had truly lost its reason to exist given changes in the riverfront economy of the City. The Artist

Relocation Program is a completely new identity for this neighborhood and creates a new connection to downtown. In the Heidelberg Project, the neighborhood is part of a much larger national tendency to abandon whole neighborhoods in the inner city. Guyton takes this tendency and forces those who view his art to see the beauty in what society discards, and to guide visitors toward a deeper understanding of the neighborhood and the stories of its residents.

Creative Economy in Action. The last theme shared between Heidelberg and Lower Town relates to the way in which both communities have engaged or added to the creative economy of their communities. Paducah has a large number of new artists, activists, and citizens

added to its ranks; many now populate the boards of a number of cultural organizations. It has also extended the art based economy of Paducah by attracting visitors who come to see the diversity of art being created there. The Heidelberg Project has brought visitors from all over the world to Detroit and has become a major destination for visitors, second only to the Museum of Art and the African-American Museum. In the Heidelberg Project we also see a new non-profit board maturing and taking on the mission of the Project with aggressive programming, even as it transcends and adds value to the twenty years of labor by Guyton. Both of these projects are changing the political climate of their city, the view of the inner city by suburban dwellers, and the local economy through the small business they have established.

The Heidelberg Project is important to everyone because it celebrates hope in face of despair, models the transformative powers of art in the urban environment, and puts forward a new vision of urban space.

Conclusions: Rethinking and Re-imagining the Potential of Place

The 2005 Selection Committee considered the applications in all of their complexity and inherent contradictions. In the final analysis, the discussion among the Committee members affirmed the power of urban placemaking, and the importance of a frankly analytical as well as imaginative rethinking of downtowns and neighborhoods. This cycle of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence reinforces the understanding that successful placemaking often also depends upon the commitment of a wide variety of stakeholders, and a strong vision by guiding organizations, individuals, and government agencies. Above all, the places awarded in this cycle all demonstrate an understanding of the rich potential inherent in our downtowns and neighborhoods. Committee members emerged from their discussion with a clear affirmation of the resilience of our cities, and of the role of imagination in creating downtowns and neighborhoods that respond to critical urban issues. The RBA, through its distinguished Selection Committees, continues to play a unique and important role in acknowledging the power and complexity of excellent urban places, and in giving them the recognition they so richly deserve.

2005 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence

The *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence* is dedicated to discovering and celebrating urban places that integrate effective process, meaningful values, and good design. These special places are also distinguished by their social, economic and contextual contributions to the urban built environment. Rudy Bruner Award winners transcend the boundaries between architecture, urban design and planning, and are often developed with such vision and imagination that they transform urban problems into creative solutions that can be adapted to cities across the country.

This book presents five outstanding projects which comprise the 2005 Rudy Bruner award winners. They offer creative approaches to urban placemaking in a variety of settings. Each of the projects reflects a deep commitment by groups of citizens, public agencies and individuals who dedicated themselves to making their cities better places to live and work. We salute their efforts.

The winners include:

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FRUITVALE VILLAGE
Oakland, California

LOWER TOWN ARTIST RELOCATION PROGRAM
Paducah, Kentucky

THE HEIDELBERG PROJECT
Detroit, Michigan

The *Rudy Bruner Award* is biennial. The Gold Medal Winner receives \$50,000, and each Silver Medal winner receives \$10,000. This book and other publications are available from:

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