

1999 Rudy Bruner Award

SILVER
medal winner



PARKSIDE PRESERVATION

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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COMMITMENT TO PLACE:
URBAN EXCELLENCE & COMMUNITY

BRUNER FOUNDATION, INC.

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with

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1999 RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

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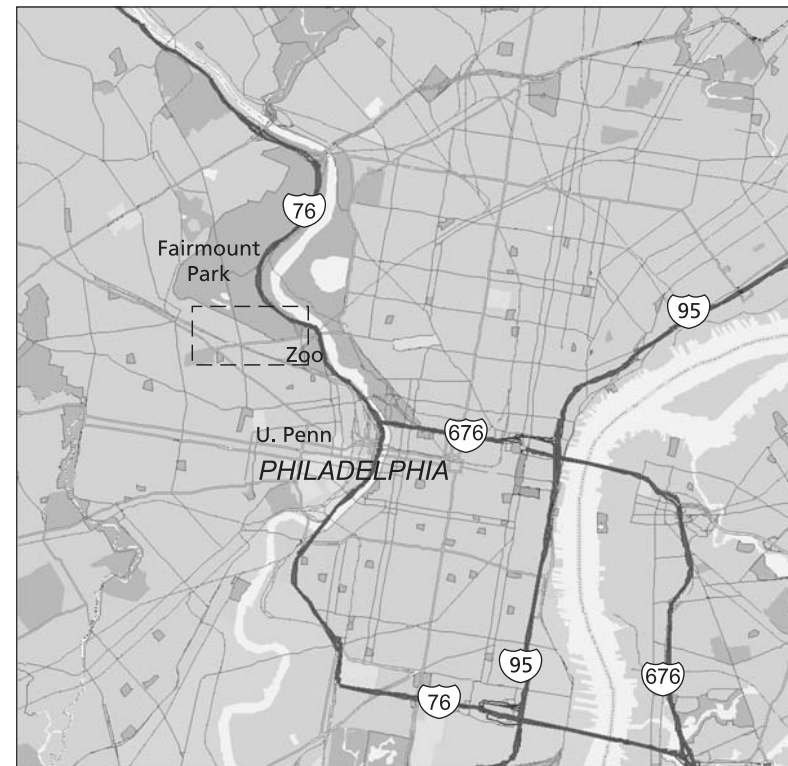
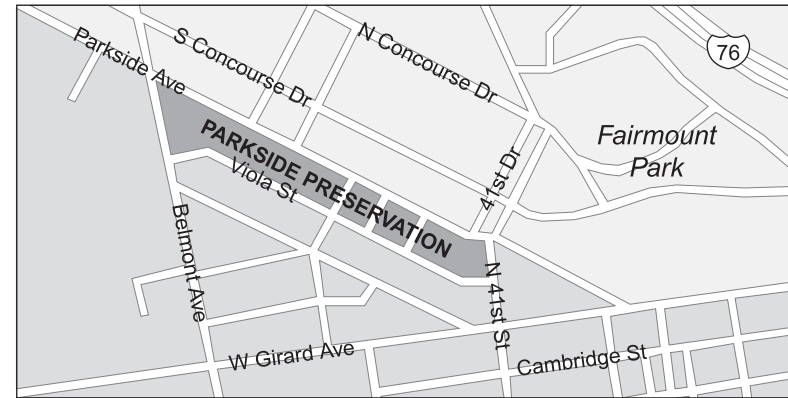
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PARKSIDE PRESERVATION AT A GLANCE

WHO MADE THE SUBMISSION?

- Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation, James L. Brown, IV, Executive Director.

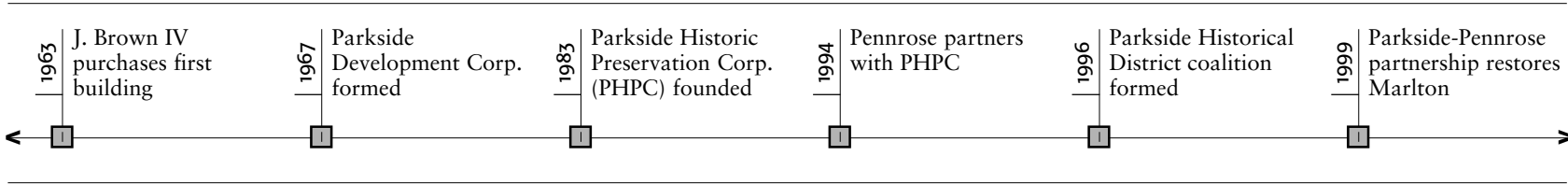
WHAT IS PARKSIDE PRESERVATION?

- Historic restoration of several blocks of late 19th-century mansions on Parkside Avenue, facing Fairmont Park.
- Revival of portions of a well-defined and tightly bounded neighborhood characterized by poverty, abandonment, and depopulation.
- A mixture of low- and moderate-income housing for working families and groups with special needs, including substance abusing women with children, people with AIDS/HIV, people with mental and physical disabilities, and the elderly.
- An effort to revitalize and capitalize a predominantly African-American neighborhood to preserve significant buildings, and to serve current residents.



CHRONOLOGY

- 1963
James Brown IV purchases six-unit building at 4218 Parkside Ave for \$12,000 and rehabilitates it.
- 1967
Brown and his partners buy 19-unit Landsdowne and form the Parkside Development Corporation. Cosmetic rehabilitation is completed by 1972.
- 1970s
Brown and his wife, as private developers, accumulate nine more properties with 45 units on Parkside Ave over next two decades, but bank redlining makes construction difficult.
- 1982
Brown asks University of Pennsylvania architectural historian George Thomas to conduct historic district research.
- 1983
Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation (PHPC) founded. Parkside Historic District placed on National Register of Historic Places. More thorough and historically correct restoration of Landsdowne is completed.
- 1993
Brantwood restoration completed and occupied by Philadelphia Health Management Corporation.
- 1994
Pennrose Properties wins RFP for rights to restore Brentwood and partners with Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation.
- 1996
Brentwood completed.
- 1996
Parkside Historical District Coalition formed with 10 area organizations.
- 1999
Brantwood II completed.
- 1999
Parkside-Pennrose partnership restores Marlton for “We Are the People with AIDS/HIV.”



KEY PARTICIPANTS

Individuals who were interviewed are marked with an asterisk [*]

Community Developers

- *James Brown IV, Executive Director, Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation
- *John Rosenfield and Robert Totaro, Pennrose Properties
- *Leonard Goldman, private developer

Parkside Historic District Coalition

- *Anthony Venuto, Director, Belmont Housing Corporation, a subsidiary of Inglis House (provides skilled care to people with mobility disabilities)
- Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church (a suburban congregation with a history of commitment to the area and a partnership with First African)
- *Pastor Joseph Ginyard, Gospel Chapel (in the area for 36 years, the Chapel has operated a transitional home for homeless women and has adopted the Leidy School)
- Christ Community Baptist Church
- *Ron Shelton, Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity West Philadelphia (a nonprofit affiliated with Habitat International, which partners with the First African Church to create affordable, owner-occupied housing)
- *Pastor Henry L. Pinkney, First African Presbyterian Church (the first African Presbyterian Church in America and Habitat for Humanity's community partner, the church operates several social service programs)

Leidy Elementary School (the only public school in East Parkside, it provides childcare and GED classes for the community)

- *Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation
- *John Loeb, Vice President, Philadelphia Health Management Corporation (PHMC, a nonprofit public health organization, it provides direct services, program evaluation, and technical support for health care)
- *Alexander Hoskins, President/CEO, Philadelphia Zoo
- *Walter Kubiak, Executive Director, 1269 Housing Corporation (a nonprofit organization that provides housing for people with chronic mental illness)

Investors

- National Equity Fund
- Edison Capital
- Duquesne Power and Light

City of Philadelphia

- *Wayne Spilove, Chairman, and Richard Tyler, Executive Director Philadelphia Historical Commission
- *John Kromer, Director, Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development
- *Noel Eisenstat, Executive Director, Redevelopment Authority
- *Steve Mullen, Commerce Department
- Richard Redding, Executive Director, City Planning Commission
- *Fernando Gallard, Manager Retention, Mayor's Business Action Team
- William Mifflin, Executive Director, Fairmount Park Commission

State of Pennsylvania

Aileen Demshock, Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency
 Janet Klein, Chairperson, Pennsylvania Museum and Historic
 Commission

*Vincent Hughes, State Legislator

*Chaka Fattah, US Congressperson, Pennsylvania 2nd district

Architects/Planners/Preservationists/Builders

*Robert P. Thomas, Partner, Campbell Thomas & Co.
 Architects

*George Thomas, Architectural Historian, University of
 Pennsylvania

*Edmund Bacon, former Executive Director, Philadelphia City
 Planning Commission

Ed Hillis, Dormas Construction

*Don Meginley, President, Preservation Alliance of Greater
 Philadelphia

Kathleen Milley, National Trust for Historic Preservation

Amy Frietag, Director, Fairmont Park Historic Preservation
 Trust

Tenants

*Mothers and children of Interim House

*Senior residents and families along Parkside Avenue

Other

*Mother Divine, Friends of Father Divine

*James Brown V, and Charlotte Brown, Parkside Preservation

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

HISTORY

The East Parkside neighborhood first attracted interest because of its proximity to America's first World's Fair, the 1876 Centennial Exposition, at nearby West Fairmont Park (Memorial Hall, directly opposite Parkside's mansions, is among the few remaining Exposition structures). Transit lines reached Parkside in the 1890s, making it an attractive location for early development. After the Exposition buildings were dismantled, the blocks along Parkside Avenue were developed by (and, for the most part, for) a group of German nouveau riche "beer barons" who had moved west from center-city neighborhoods. Frederick Poth built most of the mansions along Parkside Avenue in 1897, and in the following decades smaller, more modest homes rose on the side streets connecting Parkside Avenue and Girard Avenue.

In the 1920s the area underwent its first major demographic shift, receiving an influx of mostly Jewish, middle-class eastern European immigrants. The 1950s and 1960s brought another major population shift, to middle- and lower-income African Americans. There was significant disinvestment in the area as vandalism, arson, and abandonment diminished the community. These troubles in West Philadelphia, and in this neighborhood in particular, reflect the larger story of Philadelphia's growing urban problems over the past 30-40 years. The city saw its population drop by almost half in that period; East Parkside fared even worse, sliding from an estimated

10,000 in 1950 to 4,379 in 1997. The steepest decline in population occurred in the decade of the 1970s, when the area experienced a 41% drop.

James Brown IV and his wife Charlotte rented an apartment in Parkside in 1961, just as the change in ownership and ethnicity of the neighborhood had begun, and the abandonment and deterioration of the buildings was beginning to take hold. His landlord, William Henderson, had purchased two of the Parkside Avenue mansions. Brown learned the art of renovating historic properties by working with Henderson on that building, and honed these skills on the building he purchased in 1963 at 4218 Parkside for a hard-earned \$12,000. The renovation of these buildings was closely tied to the heat and rhetoric of the 1960s civil rights movement and the desire of these young African Americans to do something that would make a material difference in the quality of their community. To increase his skill and understanding of the community development process, Brown quit his research job and took a position with the City's Redevelopment Authority to work under Director and well-known urban planner Ed Bacon.

Some of the larger mansions were abandoned and had begun to deteriorate visibly by 1967. Brown and Henderson "took it upon themselves to board up (the Landsdowne) and seal the doors," and they purchased the building later that year at auction. With the advent of the 1968 Housing Act, they formed the Parkside Development Corporation to rehabilitate the Landsdowne for low- and moderate-income people. The difficult rehabilitation was

completed in 1972. By then, Brown had quit the Redevelopment Authority to become a full-time community developer. He and his partners purchased other buildings but found mortgage financing scarce until the mid-1980s, when banks came under local and federal pressure to make community development loans.

In 1982 a search for better ways to finance low-cost housing led to the idea of using historic tax credits to generate capital for development. In 1983 Brown and several partners formed the Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation (PHPC) and hired architectural historian George Thomas to research and complete the nomination form to place the district on the National Register of Historic Places. The district was approved in November of that



James Brown IV, Executive Director, Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation.

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year. Soon after, with the help of University of Pennsylvania historic preservation students as interns, historically appropriate and energy-efficient improvements were made to the Landsdowne.

In 1986 Brown became engaged in a new effort that led to his biggest financial loss. City agency officials asked him to participate in a project to demonstrate the possibility of creating low-income units with a mix of city-financed low-interest loans, private financing, and historic tax credits. On assurances of support from the city, Brown borrowed several hundred thousand dollars from a private lender to begin the work on 10 of his buildings, only to see negotiations with the city fail over prevailing wages for construction workers. Faced with foreclosure, Brown obtained another loan for construction from Mellon Bank. When construction costs ran over budget, Mellon Bank refused to extend the loan. Eventually, in 1996, after extended negotiation and litigation, the properties were placed in receivership. In April 1999, Mellon offered those properties to Pennrose Properties, which is purchasing them for development.

In 1990 restoration of the remaining three major mansions on Parkside Avenue (one had been demolished, leaving the Brantwood, the Brentwood, and the Brantwood II) began with applications to the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) for pre-development funds, to the City for Community Block Grants support, and to the Federal Home Loan Bank for mortgages. The Brantwood was completed in 1993.



The Landsdowne Apartments restored in 1987.

Obtaining the Brentwood for restoration was more difficult since the use of federal funds mandated that the city use a proposal process to select developers. Brown was angered when PHPC lost the bid to a developer from outside the community, Pennrose Properties, a larger organization seen as more capable of undertaking the more extensive renovations of the Brentwood. PHPC, Brown felt, was clearly the legitimate developer in this community, and for a time they considered using community pressure to stand in the way of the development. (The clear consensus of officials is that PHPC could have stalled or stopped development if they wished.) Instead they agreed to partner with Pennrose, making use of Pennrose's financial resources and expertise and PHPC's community credentials and experience. Brentwood was completed in 1996, and Brantwood II became ready for occupancy in April, 1999. Ultimately, this was a good experience for PHPC. They have developed a solid relationship with Pennrose that is extending to other development projects throughout the neighborhood.

While Brown has been the most significant force in the redevelopment of Parkside, he has not been the only one. Five churches in the neighborhood have been closely involved in community welfare. Other players have also taken an interest and sometimes an active role in community development, including the Philadelphia Zoo, Habitat for Humanity, the Leidy School, Belmont Housing, and the 1260 Housing Corporation. In 1996 the Parkside Historic District Coalition was formed, with PHPC as a founding member, as a forum in which these groups could meet to inform

each other about projects, plans, and concerns for the neighborhood. They have commissioned a neighborhood needs assessment report, and they are working together to increase and improve resident participation in planning.



Parkside garden gate detail

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PROPERTIES DEVELOPED BY BROWN & ASSOCIATES IN PARKSIDE

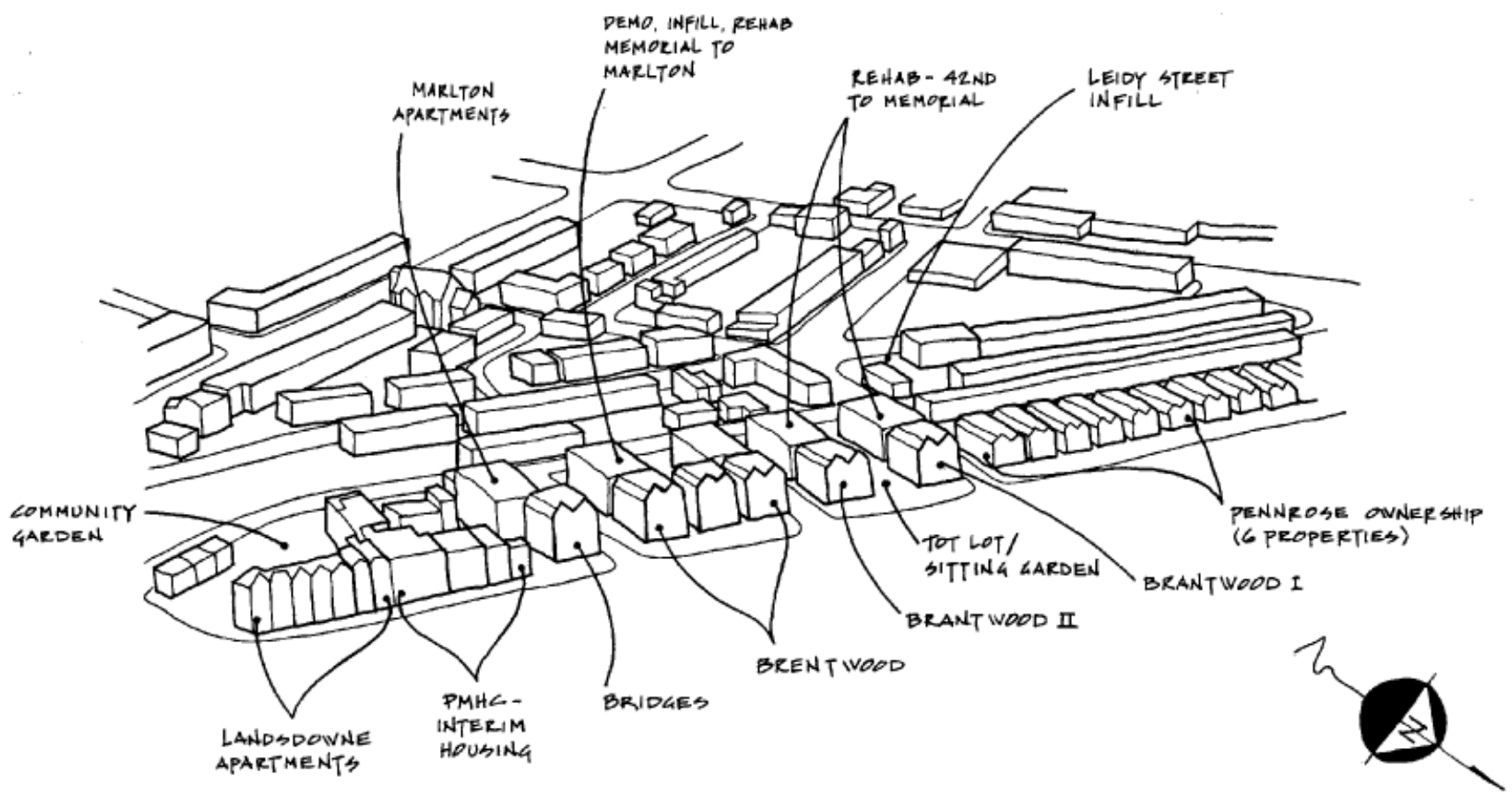
NAME	# RENTAL UNITS	DATE OF WORK	TENANTS	OWNERS/DEVELOPERS
LANDSDOWNE APARTMENTS	48 UNITS	REHAB, 1972 RESTORED, 1987 RESTORED 1991	LOW-INCOME, SUBSIDIZED, AND MARKET-RATE 50% TENANTS FROM 1260 HOUSING CORP, REST ARE SECTION 8 AND MARKET RATE	PARKSIDE DEVELOPMENT CORP. FORECLOSED BY MELLON, 1996
BRANTWOOD I	18 UNITS 3 WHOLE FLOOR UNITS	RESTORED 1993 REHAB 1994	PHMC FEMALE SUBSTANCE ABUSERS AND CHILDREN PHMC DAYCARE, AND STAFF OFFICES	PHPC PHPC
BRENTWOOD	43 UNITS	RESTORED 1996	ELDERLY (SECTION 8) AND FAMILIES (MARKET RATE)	BRENTWOOD PARKSIDE ASSOC (PENNROSE AND PHPC AS PARTNERS)
BRANTWOOD II	16 UNITS	APRIL 1999	MARKET RATE	BRANTWOOD II ASSOC (PENNROSE AND PHPC AS PARTNERS)
MARLTON RESIDENCES	25 UNITS	JUNE 1999	ADULTS WITH AIDS/HIV	MARLTON HOUSING PARTNERSHIP (PENNROSE, PHPC AND WE THE PEOPLE LIVING WITH AIDS/HIV)

VISION

James Brown IV began by staking a claim in the neighborhood, buying and restoring buildings that seemed in danger of demolition. As his experience, confidence, and skill grew, he set his sights on saving the showplace street-front of Parkside Avenue. Later, as he evolved from an individual developer to a nonprofit community development corporation, he began to dream of restoring the entire neighborhood. Throughout these transitions, however, his effort has been marked by a long-term vision encompassing at least three main

themes: social justice, conservation, and economic development. All three of these narratives demonstrate Brown’s commitment to a neighborhood that he and his family have lived in for almost four decades.

One striking element of Brown’s social vision was his determination to anchor the neighborhood with special needs housing. Mansions along Parkside have become homes for people with impaired



The location of properties developed by the Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation.

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mobility (Belmont Housing Corporation), people with chronic mental illness (the 1260 Housing Corporation), women who were substance abusers and their children (Philadelphia Health Management Corporation, or PHMC) and, more recently, people with AIDS/HIV (We the People with AIDS/HIV). Since these mansions are some of the very finest buildings in Parkside (see “Renovations” below), their location helps reverse the tendency for the services they house to become associated with a “slum” area within an otherwise “respectable” neighborhood (thus the infamous “not-in-my-back-yard,” or “NIMBY” syndrome). Instead, it is almost guaranteed that the mansions will remain the area’s crowning jewels, offering services which are an important element of community life.

This special needs housing strategy points towards another related element of Brown’s social vision: his commitment to inclusive planning. Although the Parkside community itself has had little direct involvement in the development process, the Selection Committee noted that Brown went out of his way to involve community service and advocacy groups in the project. While Brown clearly retained a great deal of authority in the relationship, the site visit team observed that support for Brown’s actions among community leaders was wide and deep. Since the still-devastated neighborhood is not yet home to a politically active population, Brown’s efforts to engage local social services as an intermediate strategy seemed appropriate. It would be fully in keeping with PHPC’s social vision to help foster a politically viable neighborhood



Detailing on the Marlton restoration.



community through such efforts, and then incorporate it into the ongoing process.

Brown’s social vision is closely related to his conception of *conservation*, which is a much more comprehensive term in his usage than it is ordinarily understood to be. In part, it has meant using the existing building stock instead of razing and building anew. But it has also meant something more fundamental than that. As one interviewee explained, “The neighborhood was a drug and crime zone sprinkled with homeless people. To you or me it might have looked as if no one lived there. Brown looked at the same place, and saw the same people, but he recognized them as local residents, and built a home for them as well as for newer residents.”



Typical neighborhood street with construction in progress

For Brown conservation meant using existing building stock to anchor renewal, but it has also meant ensuring that those properties remained available to neighborhood residents and programs. One consequence has been that, although there were relatively few people living in the neighborhood from the outset, virtually none of them have been displaced. This vision of rebuilding a neighborhood for the people who are already there sits at the core of Brown’s approach and is a good part of what makes this urban intervention so powerful.

As in all successful community development projects, there is an economic component to Brown’s central vision. Brown sees his project as a way to “capitalize” an African American community in

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Renovations along Marlton Avenue are in progress

a way that is reminiscent of the social criticism and political goals of the later civil rights movement. His goal is to create a viable African American neighborhood, one in which residents can achieve some degree of autonomy through the creation of wealth. (As a major investor in the area, he considers himself one such wealth-seeking resident.) Skilled in attaining government funding, he remains wary of the strings and formal planning that must accompany such money and prefers to focus on the neighborhood's natural assets to lure private investment. Brown and some others see Parkside as ripe for development, offering not just a compendium of problems but tangible assets – particularly location (see “Context” below). Although he has begun with low- and moderate-income, and special needs housing, Brown eventually hopes to create market-rate units to accompany a more general economic rebirth of the neighborhood. This economic focus again reflects his commitment to the area, and adds a necessary pragmatic element to his overall vision of conservation.

Finally, historic preservation plays a key role in Brown's vision, although the site visit team felt that it was clearly a secondary concern compared to other goals. The Selection Committee concurred, impressed with how the project was “about how people come together rather than being about objects.” Even so, as with every part of the project, this economic strategy (devised to get historic preservation tax credits) has been incorporated into the broader vision. The attention to detail required by this type of renovation has resulted in truly beautiful buildings, buildings that



The Brentwood from Fairmount Park

not only serve to avert a “NIMBY” response, but also stand as eloquent symbols for the care, love, and commitment felt for this neighborhood. The decision to house low income or special needs residents in these renovated buildings reinforces the basic elements of Brown’s vision in a way that perhaps no other strategy could have.

Organization/Leadership

Transformation of the almost 4,000 structures in the area will take 25 years, Brown estimates, and he’s in for the duration. ‘That’s my goal and my career. Unless I go bankrupt, I’ll stay right here and see it through.’

Historic Preservation Magazine

James Brown IV is the animating force and visionary leader of redevelopment in Parkside. The nonprofit community development corporation, PHPC, is the most important vehicle for implementing his vision. Brown functions as the head of PHPC, works within the area as a private developer as he has for over 30 years, serves as a member of the Parkside Historic Community Coalition, is a member of the Fairmont Park Property Committee, and acts as a consultant or unofficial advisor to other organizations operating in the area. PHPC largely works with for-profit (Pennrose Properties) and nonprofit (PHMC, 1260 Housing) partners to rehabilitate and restore properties. It has a board of directors made up of local residents and members of local organizations. Their role is largely to review and consider issues, support, lobby, and ratify decisions.

It would not be an exaggeration to call Brown’s leadership style heroic – a Selection Committee member remarked that if the Rudy Bruner Award were an “Urban Pioneer” award, Brown would certainly win it hands down. He has led by example and by perseverance, over time and through adversity. His commitment to the area – he has lived and worked there for nearly four decades – has given him a prominent, even inspirational, presence within the community, and has lent credibility to his efforts. He has carefully cultivated a deep set of political roots, working closely with nearly every local grassroots community organization and maintaining ties to the government as well (an Assemblyman opened his interview with the site visit team by stating, with only a little irony, “Whatever Mr. Brown wants”). Clearly, he is trusted and admired, and his standing in the community has made it easy for the residents

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to accept his judgment on NIMBY issues. A site visit team member suggested that it might be convenient to think of Brown as the unofficial Mayor of Parkside.

As important as Brown and the PHPC are, other organizations play important roles in the area. Most are represented in the Parkside Historic District Coalition (PHDC), a loosely bound coalition of institutions within East Parkside. The coalition functions mainly to maintain open communication and cooperation among its members, and is seeking to create channels of contact with residents. PHDC has explicitly avoided joint projects or more formal relationships in favor of maintaining a forum in which members can keep each other informed of their plans. Brown explains that once you have formal plans and structures, you have to divide up the pie, and this generally leads to conflict. It also can foreclose opportunities that you didn't know that you had. Thus both Brown's own board and PHDC keep a somewhat improvisational organizational style, maintaining an ability to respond to opportunities as they arise. "It is in the doing that the idea comes," explained former Executive Director of the City Planning Commission Ed Bacon.

The model here is of strong but not overly structured leadership, decentralized in the sense that community-wide development decisions are made by a number of different organizations, with Brown and PHPC being the largest and most active. Brown has the respect, and the ear, of important officials at all levels of city government and beyond, as well as of neighborhood leaders. He has kept his focus on his own significant but limited set of projects,

and has not attempted to control or oversee everything in the community. The progress that has been achieved, and that is poised to accelerate in the near future, has been the result of a number of neighborhood groups operating in concert but independently: the churches, Habitat for Humanity, and other nonprofits and developers. In this respect the lack of powerful centralized control has been a strength, allowing a number of players to pursue solutions simultaneously.

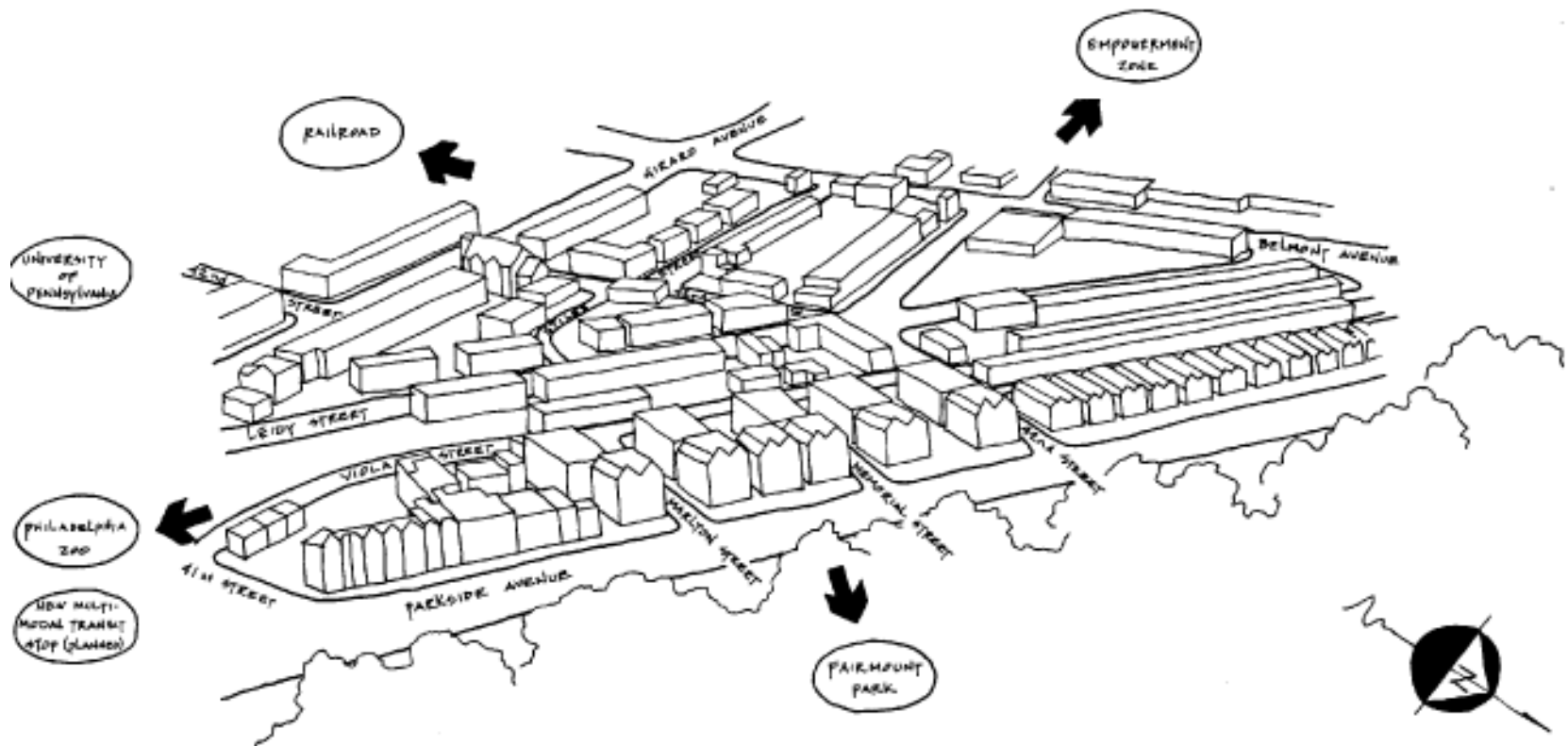
Another way Brown's leadership has been strengthened through dilution has been the addition of Pennrose Properties into the mix. When PHPC moved from relatively small-scale projects like the Landsdowne and the Brantwood to the much larger Brentwood, the government rebuffed them in favor of the larger and more experienced Pennrose. After some initial anger (see "History"), Brown made the best of this situation, partnering with Pennrose for the Brentwood and future projects. As John Rosenfield and Robert Totaro of Pennrose explained it, the partnership is a marriage of "street savvy" and "suit savvy": Brown is good at local and city politics, and has the support of the community, while Pennrose has experience at getting state low-income tax credits (they had already done more than 50 low-income projects with a high rate of success). PHPC gained Pennrose's capital, national reputation, experience, and ability to put a deal together; Pennrose gained PHPC's help in getting local support for zoning, community development block grants, and HUD "HOME" grants.

DESIGN

Urban Context

East Parkside is a compact, relatively isolated neighborhood in the northeastern corner of West Philadelphia, whose population is 90% African American. Filling about 20 blocks, it includes

approximately 1,500 homes and a score or so of other buildings including churches, stores, a fire station, a school, and a funeral home. It is bordered to the west by the city Zoo, to the east by an empowerment zone, to the north by the enormous Fairmont Park, and to the south by a deteriorated neighborhood giving way to heavy development around the University of Pennsylvania.



The Parkside neighborhood is strategically located adjacent to Fairmount Park, the Zoo, the proposed new multi-modal transit station, the Philadelphia Empowerment Zone, and the University of Pennsylvania.

The neighborhood's location offers several advantages. A new multi-modal transit stop planned for the nearby Zoo, encompassing Amtrak, trolley, light rail, and bus, promises convenient commuting in a city where 30% of the families do not own cars. The new transit lines will make even easier the already convenient access to downtown, and will add commuting possibilities for Reading, the mall, and the empowerment zone as well. The neighborhood is also close to Fairmont Park and important park facilities such as the Mann Music Center. In the past, however, the very enormity of the Park (it is larger than Manhattan Island) has made maintenance difficult, presenting a key obstacle to renewal. Brown has also addressed this problem to some extent, participating in and collaborating with the Philadelphia Green, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, the Fairmont Park Historic Trust, Friends of Philadelphia's Parks, and other related organizations.

Despite these assets, however, it is important to recognize just how far Parkside has to go to become a healthy neighborhood. The vacancy rate in this area is 22.7%, more than double the Philadelphia average, and real estate values are the lowest in West Philadelphia. Home ownership is rare. As of the 1990 census the median income was about \$16,000 (65% of city median income). A significant minority (34%) of current residents live below the poverty level. There is little evidence of a coherent, unified neighborhood; most residents who have stayed endure low income and social dysfunction. They are largely people without the resources to leave. Sixty-seven percent of all families are headed by a single parent, and unemployment is 16.7% (nearly double the city

rate). The few retail businesses remaining in the area, mostly on Girard (the "main street"), offer little in quality services or job possibilities to residents.

Brown's renovations, while still too small in scope to effect an immediate transformation of the neighborhood, have nevertheless had a noticeable impact, particularly along Parkside Avenue itself. Because it is a heavily traveled corridor to the city from western suburbs, the Avenue had become a symbol of urban decay; it now stands as a symbol of urban renewal and rejuvenation.

An Historical Neighborhood

"No one in their right mind would ever try to rebuild this building!"

Ed Bacon, former Executive Director,
Philadelphia City Planning Commission.

The original housing stock, especially along Parkside Avenue, was distinguished and unique in Philadelphia. The German beer barons who established Parkside Avenue made use of German and Flemish revival styles, rather than those of the English Victorian era that dominate the rest of the city. In part this reflected their choice of an upstart architect, Frederick Poth, who worked outside the fashionable "South of Market" area for nouveau riche like the beer barons.

The several blocks of Parkside Avenue housed the brewmeisters themselves in the largest and finest of the neighborhood's homes.



The Brantwood II on Parkside Avenue

Their ornate mansions, largely intact today, present a unified and coherent face to the avenue and the park. The preference for strong ornamentation concentrated on the street front, for porch fronts to emphasize the suburban quality, and for style elements derived from florid Dutch and German architecture, contrasts with the plain red brick buildings of Rittenhouse Square. On the eastern edge of Parkside Avenue, developers built 14 four-story copper and terra cotta trimmed Pompeiian brick double buildings that look like mansions but were instead apartments. The block is unified by the row of elaborately molded terra cotta porch fronts. Farther west on Parkside is a group of three-story porch front doubles, again presenting a unified appearance to the street.

As one moves away from the park, the next layer of housing was intended for middle managers in the booming brewery business. Beyond that are row houses and smaller units for workers, which sit next to what used to be the industrial area itself. The houses on these secondary streets are more modest in scale and materials, but are similar in style and ornate decoration, with gable fronts and porches.

The Renovations

While the original housing stock may have been lavish and beautiful, perhaps the most important fact about Parkside's buildings from a modern-day perspective was their extremely deteriorated condition before Brown's intervention. The Brentwood, for example, was entirely burnt out, little more than a

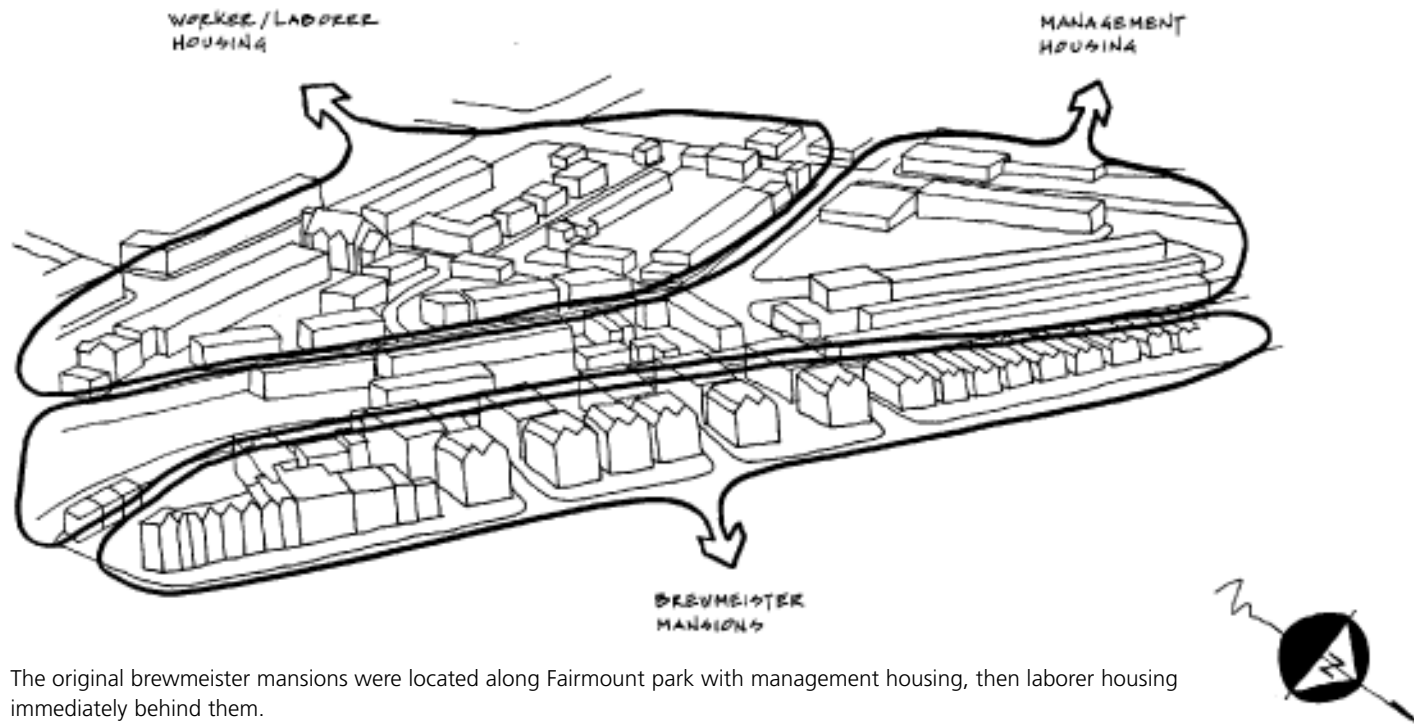
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shell. Conditions in the neighborhood were so poor, however, that Brown actually saw the Brentwood's state as a relative advantage: the fires had gotten rid of most of the lead paint, reducing abatement costs. Such an attitude, while pragmatic, points to the sorry state of the area's unburned buildings – to make a gutted one so appealing. In short, these were serious, fundamental renovations to salvage buildings that, as Ed Bacon remarked, “No one in their right mind” would consider saving. “If I had studied planning,” Brown laughed, “I never would have gotten involved.” From Brown's perspective, if he had had the training of a conventional planner, he would have demolished to build new structures or looked elsewhere to do this work.

In this light, the care that has been taken to maintain and restore the exterior style and detail of the original is impressive. Gargoyles have been recast, decorative moldings duplicated, cornices replaced. New and in-fill buildings lack the detail of the historic structures but attempt to copy the scale and line of the originals. The interior designs follow the exterior detail where necessary; interior walls, for example, do not intersect bay windows.

Even so, the Selection Committee felt that the quality of the restorations had diminished in the more recent projects. The Landsdowne, a huge, four-story mansion with minarets and bays in



The original brewmeister mansions were located along Fairmount park with management housing, then laborer housing immediately behind them.

a “grandly eclectic” style decorated with pressed tin cornices, traceries windows, and a variety of textures “recalling the picturesque Queen Anne,” has been restored in magnificent style and minute detail. The Brantwood and later buildings, however, show evidence of less attention to detail. One finds, for example, beautiful oval windows, but with ordinary flat molding in the place of the original ornamental woodwork.

In addition, the interiors of the buildings tend to be fairly conventional modern apartments out of keeping with the historic facades. They are certainly functional, and are well-designed with the special needs of their residents in mind. The Brentwood, for instance, has a ground floor lounge where the elderly and family

residents can meet and socialize. Large family-sized apartments are on the ground level, with separate entrances, so children can enter directly without running through apartment hallways. Other units have been made fully wheelchair accessible. Nonetheless, the Selection Committee noted that the impressiveness of restoring such devastated buildings was diminished somewhat by these ordinary interiors.

The restorations also create occasional jarring juxtapositions of images. One can stand inside a new living room of a grand, restored mansion and look out the back window to see, several yards away, a rotting and collapsing structure. Brown has managed to take advantage of some of these discontinuities. For example, a



Original details on Brentwood



View of the restored Brentwood from Brantwood II, illustrating the simplified molding details on the oval windows.

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vacant lot, the site of a demolished mansion, separates the Brentwood 1 and 2. It is being turned into a small park that will serve as an entranceway and provide a pleasant view for many units. Archways reflecting the rounded arches of the surrounding buildings are being designed for the street frontage facing Fairmont Park.

FINANCING

Approximately \$21 million worth of development has been invested in this area to date. The expensive materials and high degree of care required by restoration efforts have made the cost of renovations about 20-25% higher on the Parkside mansions than typical Philadelphia rental units. A 1996 publication by the City of Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development notes that rehabilitation of long-vacant properties in Philadelphia ranges from \$70,000 to \$150,000, and cites the Brentwood as an example of a project worth the extra cost because “it serves as a gateway and protective barrier for a low-rise residential neighborhood behind the Avenue,” and because its demolition would lead to increased security problems, vacancies, and abandonment. Noel Eisenstat, Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority, explained it this way: “Brown’s work costs way too much – it goes against the market – but it’s okay because he’s taking a stand on a strategic piece of property, a gateway site for the whole city.”

Financing of these projects has been driven by several realities. No one within this community has had the financial resources to support rehabilitations and restorations (one of Brown’s stated goals

is to help build some of this capacity in the neighborhood). Brown needed to begin by restoring the most expensive showpiece buildings to create confidence in the neighborhood before development could move on to more modest buildings. The market (in terms of the cost of loans and the income that rentals can bring) is not yet able to support this development. As a result, PHPC has had to use several strategies to create the necessary funding. Brown was an early user of both low-income and historic preservation tax credits as a way to generate capital for development. Two-thirds of the cost of his developments are typically covered by private sources. In addition, to make the investment more attractive for limited partners and to increase PHPC’s long-term equity stake, they encourage investors to donate their remaining share to the corporation when the asset no longer carries any paper value, giving limited partnership investors one last tax deduction.

Brown believes that subsidized development creates dependence and leaves developers and residents subject to official whims and policy changes; for that reason he is especially eager to finance with other sources (such as equity partnerships). PHPC has received seven major private foundation grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$125,000, the most significant ones from the Pew Charitable Trust and the Connelly Foundation. PHPC has partnered with for-profit and nonprofit organizations with financial resources and/or access to other funding sources (such as Pennrose and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Corporation). They also have been successful at getting public loans and some private grants to support projects. As the development of the neighborhood advances and

reaches greater maturity, they hope to use the equity in early sites to support market rate loans for future construction.

Brown’s formula makes financing these projects straightforward. He uses low-income and historic preservation tax credits, equity from general and limited partners, and combines them with loans and grants. It is interesting to note that the project has benefited

both from Pennrose’s experience in the tough competition for low-income credits, and from Philadelphia’s strong history in this area (with about 10% of the state’s population, the city typically receives nearly half of the state low-income tax credits). The city has supported development by extending the maximum on community development block grant subsidies by 30%, giving Parkside \$2 million in Community Development Bank (CDB) grants. The city Redevelopment Authority also supports projects in East Parkside by turning over land and structures seized for tax default. City officials see this approach as a model of community development via public support for nonprofit/for-profit partnerships.

One member of the Selection Committee noted that, while this fundraising is impressive, it is not particularly difficult to raise this kind of developer money for rental units; the true challenge comes in making the leap from a renting to an owning population.

USES/SOURCES FOR THE BRANTWOOD

USES	
CONSTRUCT COST	\$1,890,600
FEEES	\$192,000
MISC.	\$26,000
CONSTRUCTION	
FINANCING & CHARGES	\$37,000
PROJECT RESERVES	\$37,000
DEVELOPER’S FEE & OH	\$411,484
SYNDICATING FEES & EXPENSES	\$43,140
OTHER	\$5,100
TOTAL	\$2,642,324
SOURCES	
MORTGAGE	\$825,000
CDBG	\$372,700
HISTORIC TAX CREDITS	\$1,445,624
EQUITY	\$2,643,324

Parkside Preservation and the City of Philadelphia

The Parkside effort has clearly been led from within the neighborhood; indeed, as both the site visit team and the Selection Committee recognized, Brown is wary of public funding and has gone out of his way to ask for as little as possible from the city (he did not want to be part of the Empowerment Zone next door, for example). The City of Philadelphia has, however, played the important role of development facilitator at crucial times. The city has been helpful, especially in recent years, in channeling federal housing support in the form of low-income tax credits and CDB Grants. The City also supported and ratified the historic district

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status for the neighborhood, which was critical for making use of historic preservation tax credits. It played a critical role in bringing Pennrose Properties into the neighborhood by requiring a bidding process for developing the Brantwood, and then helped to bring Pennrose and PHPC together as partners to complete the project.

City efforts have not always been so helpful. Brown’s difficulties with the Mellon bank began in 1986 when city officials initially encouraged him to buy homes for a demonstration project of public-private funding and then later terminated its involvement.

FUTURE PLANS

Development momentum is now moving off of Parkside Avenue and down the side streets of the district, and Brown anticipates that the rest of the rehabilitation of the neighborhood will take the better part of a decade. Progress is accelerating, however, and that timeline may shorten due to several factors: the resources, expertise, and drive added by PHPC’s private partner, Pennrose Properties; PHPC’s recognition and growing reputation, which makes it easier to garner support from the city and other organizations; and the slowly strengthening coalition of groups adding their energies to Brown’s casue. Members of the Parkside Historical District Coalition and another, non-related private developer have significant programs of development underway. Virtually every block in the triangle has properties that are active, that have been acquired for impending development, or that are under consideration. Successful implementation of the Zoo’s

transportation center proposal could significantly accelerate progress.

When the new building for Interim House, developed jointly by PHPC and PHMC, is finished, work on Parkside Avenue will be essentially complete and, as envisioned early on, the effort will move to the interior blocks. The partnership of PHPC with Pennrose Properties plans to complete 60 units of senior housing on Girard Avenue east of 40th Street through rehabilitation and new, in-fill buildings; 12 properties for rehabilitation on Viola between 42nd Street and Memorial; rehabilitation of older structures and addition of new in-fill buildings on the South Side of Girard, west of 42nd Street; and development of a commercial retail area on 41st Street between Girard & Poplar.

In addition, they plan to take advantage of a proposed new law that would allow the use of low-income tax credits for home ownership by creating new market-rate housing on Leidy Street, after this street has been declared an urban renewal area. This would be PHPC’s first foray into home ownership development. Brown expects land to be given to PHPC by the city and hopes to use state and Redevelopment Authority tax-exempt bonds for financing.

The new Interim House facility should provide several important side benefits for the community. There is a plan for public community space in this facility. Brown hopes to have a satellite program from a community college available there, as well as a day care center. Also, since special needs housing provides health care

jobs for people in the community, there is also discussion of providing a health care job training center at this site.

Habitat for Humanity, working with the Belmont Housing Corporation and the First African Presbyterian Church, will continue to create occupant-owned, sweat-equity homes and plans to develop the entire block of Styles between 42nd Street and Belmont. It will also develop four lots behind the First African church into a community park. Private developer Leonard Goldman and his partner Harold Thomas have also begun buying and developing property in and near the area. They now control 30 properties, mostly on Girard and 42nd Street, at the south end of the district, to be developed for low-income rental housing. Habitat for Humanity and Belmont Housing are putting together the financing to acquire Belmont Village, a 12-unit apartment house, and to create six accessible units for Inglis House clients, offices for Habitat, and a dormitory for volunteer workers.

The 1260 Housing Corporation has constructed ten new row houses on Thompson Street that will serve as transitional housing for individuals with chronic mental illness. Christ Community Baptist Church has yet to define plans to develop property it owns on Girard between 40th and 41st Streets.

Possibly the most exciting new developments center around the Philadelphia Zoo. The Zoo and others (including Brown) are lobbying hard to reopen a long abandoned railroad stop near its front entrance. This, along with a planned new light rail line, would create a multi-modal transportation center (Amtrak, trolley, light

rail, bus) that would carry customers to and from the Zoo, create easy access to work opportunities for area residents, and could become the focal point for a retail center. Conversely, improved public transportation will improve accessibility to the neighborhood from other parts of Philadelphia.

ASSESSING PROJECT SUCCESS

HOW WELL PROJECT MEETS ITS OWN GOALS

- *To arrest a neighborhood's deterioration.*

Parkside Preservation has been relatively successful in this regard. Physical and architectural improvements are significant on Parkside Avenue and are beginning to be felt on the interior blocks, where significant change is likely to occur in the next few years. There is a great deal left to do, but it appears that the neighborhood has “hit bottom” and is beginning to recover. The out-migration of residents has slowed or ceased, and there is some anecdotal evidence that people are beginning to move into the area. It is also important to note that, while crime is an important issue in this neighborhood, there has been very little vandalism in project buildings, suggesting tacit community support. The residents we talked to did not feel overwhelmingly fearful or concerned – women might be wary of walking at night, but not particularly during the day, alone or with their children. Brown suggested that one reason that police respond better in this neighborhood than in some others is because they

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know that Parkside is willing to follow through with prosecution. (See also “Impact” below).

- *To provide a standard of housing not normally available to the poor.*

The quality of the renovated housing is good and is a major improvement over existing neighborhood conditions. Much of the housing in the best buildings is for special needs groups. Future development will be aimed less at special needs residents and more toward adding additional low-income and market-rate housing.



Marlton Apartments under renovation for We Are the People With AIDS/HIV.

- *To bring historic preservation into an area not ordinarily desirable to developers.*

PHPC has succeeded in saving and restoring buildings that almost certainly would otherwise have been demolished. When Brown started there was no development money for this neighborhood and especially not for the significant mansions that are quite expensive to restore and renovate. Changes in the tax code helped, but even so, it was Brown’s perseverance that made the difference.

- *To support the socio-economic and ethnic composition of the area.*

As yet little pressure has emerged from other socio-economic or ethnic groups to move into or gentrify the neighborhood. This is probably more due to physical and economic conditions in the neighborhood than to specific strategies to avoid gentrification. It is significant, however, that premier space in restored mansions on Parkside has been leased to services that support the neighborhood population.

OTHER MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Sustainability

Concerns about the sustainability of this project and its unique network of organizations and leaders exist for several reasons: because so much is focused on the leadership of James Brown; because development cannot be supported exclusively by private funding (and market-rate rentals and purchases are still partly dependent on subsidies and tax credits); because of the lack of a

formal, comprehensive plan; and because East Parkside still seems a long way from becoming a solid, cohesive community.

To be sure, Brown remains central to these efforts in many respects, and his loss would be a serious blow to progress. There are, however, reasons to think that development here will continue and flourish. James Brown V is apparently being groomed to take over his father’s position. Also, solid and long-term community leaders in the Parkside Historic Coalition could fill some, if not all, of any leadership void. Significant momentum for development also exists here – not enough to ensure continuation, but enough to ease the path for a next generation of leaders. Funding sources such as equity from Pennrose and tax incentives do not appear to be lessening, and may expand to cover private ownership efforts. Lastly, while the project lacks a formal neighborhood-wide comprehensive planning document, Coalition members share a common understanding of goals, values, and future directions. Nonetheless, the Selection Committee emphasized what seems obvious but remains crucial: the project’s continual progress depends on the participation of people willing to work as hard as Brown. Such a scenario, though far from impossible, is certainly not given.

The other measure of sustainability stressed by the Selection Committee will be found in the success of efforts in the neighborhood to go beyond rental housing to homeownership. From the Selection Committee perspective, the creation of low-income and preservation credit rental units is an easier task than

attracting ownership investment. At the present, none of the efforts of Parkside preservation have addressed the issue of ownership, nor is there a long term strategy in place to achieve it.

Impact

It would be inappropriate to suggest that a few buildings in this small neighborhood outside downtown can or should have a city-wide impact, with respect to finances or overall livability. Certainly this project has the attention and support of city government, from agency heads to elected officials. For the city, these are visible and symbolically important blocks. Where they once conveyed an image of urban decay and deterioration, now they are put forward to showcase change and renewal. Parkside is also held up as a model of how local African-American communities can create and nurture their own capacity to foster development.

In addition, Brown’s expertise has been used to support development in other areas. He has consulted and advised other neighborhoods and other development projects, and Fairmont Park officials say they have used their relations with Parkside as a model for dealing with “friends of the park” groups in other parts of town. At a recent, informal meeting in the mayor’s office, city officials were surprised that community representatives from another part of town (North Philadelphia), who they expected to feel competitive with PHPC, instead praised Brown’s work and demanded that the city provide him more funds and greater support. Brown seems to be viewed throughout the city as an inspiration and a community resource.

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Two business owners on the western edge of this area say that PHPC has made it easier for business people to consider moving to this part of Philadelphia. Leonard Goldman, a private developer who has begun buying and rehabilitating modest homes in and near the southern edge of this district, indicated that PHPC's success has reduced the risk he and his partners face in coming into this area. It has increased interest in prospects here and made it easier for them to syndicate their investments. He typically drives potential investors along Parkside Avenue to impress them with change in the area. Goldman also indicated that in the past year he has seen some private owners in the area beginning to fix up their own homes. Principals from Habitat for Humanity also credit Brown with helping them navigate the city's bureaucratic maze to get started in the neighborhood.

Perhaps the most important impact of Parkside Preservation has been on the neighborhood itself and its near-moribund community. This is appropriate, given Brown's core commitment to conserving the area. There is evidence that neighborhood institutions are returning: the First Avenue Presbyterian and the Annex Christ churches, for example, have been restored. The community school has been renovated. A number of interviewees mentioned lower crime rates and a friendly atmosphere. There are, then, hopeful signs that Brown has succeeded in getting the area to take its first steps towards the ultimate dream of a thriving, diverse working-class neighborhood. Nonetheless, the Selection Committee felt quite strongly that one of the hardest obstacles yet remains: making the transition from a rental to an owning population. At this stage, the

Committee conceded, Parkside does not seem "ready for home ownership," but without this key ingredient there is a significant limit to future revitalization. Thus, as one Committee member noted, there is "much pioneering left to go" before Parkside could be considered fully recovered.

Leadership and Vision

A theme that permeates this project is the ability of one person to make an impact. What has made Brown's leadership so valuable has not simply been his role as charismatic leader; rather, it has been his commitment to that role over decades of diligence. He and his family have lived in the neighborhood throughout its very worst



Typical Parkside neighborhood view

years. He has pursued creative economic strategies, but never any that conflict with his loyalty to conserving the existing place and protecting the people who live in it. And he has continually been willing to incorporate other players as they came onto the scene, even if they initially presented apparently hostile or competitive faces, as Pennrose did. It is these qualities that have built Brown’s standing in the community, providing a model of “urban pioneering” that supports the community as well as changing it.

This kind of leadership reveals the related value of commitment to place. It is significant that Parkside reflects nearly 40 years of efforts centered on a single neighborhood. Such an investment of time and energy, and the continuous cooperation with local organizations, were more than the makings of a leader; they were also the concrete expressions of a commitment to a place. This kind of genuine caring for Parkside has been a crucial element of Brown’s success, and would seem to be an important value for any project aiming to renew the spirit as well as the buildings of a damaged area.

Values Reflected in Development Process

Brown’s commitment, as indicated earlier, has not been just to the place. Still echoing the fire and rhetoric of his 1960s civil rights era-roots, he has indicated that one of his goals is to strive for equality – symbolically, contractually, and financially – for African Americans in these projects. It is critical, he feels, for the community to build independence from government subsidies and outside funding to

foster self-determination for the community. “How do we get away from subsidization? Little by little it is important to prove that we can create development in the inner city and that we can support ourselves in the open market. Otherwise we subject ourselves to the whims of politicians and agencies.”

Another important theme has been the effort to be inclusive in process and design. As noted earlier, Brown has invited community participation to the extent possible in Parkside, and has been rewarded with broad and deep support from community organizations. He has shown a serious interest in developing this participation even further once the neighborhood attains a state that can support a politically aware population. Even without the direct involvement of community residents, work with service providers has supported a rich diversity of residents (although still few from the middle class). Rather than shying away from groups such as AIDS/HIV patients, the mentally ill, the physically disabled, and substance abusers, Parkside has embraced them, and even used their presence to anchor buildings and stabilize the community. To be sure, accommodating these groups had a utilitarian side – these were populations that often had access to sources of funding because of their special needs. Their presence made it easier to fund expensive projects, especially early in the process, and they provided many tenants in an overbuilt market. But it also true that Brown has sought diversity and has looked for ways to integrate these groups into the community.

Lastly, Parkside Preservation has owed its success in no small part to the organic nature of the design process. Brown has shied away from government funding as much because of its demand for concrete plans as for its fostering of economic dependence. He has skillfully maintained good relations among all the players by refusing to define the “pie” over whose pieces fights might erupt. Instead, he has preached the value of taking opportunities as they arise. Thus, for example, historic preservation was a way to get funding, but became an eloquent statement of commitment to the area’s special needs population. A site visit team member reported that, like all good placemakers, Brown has balanced social justice and economic strategies, using the former to guide and the latter to power his projects.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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Zane Miller and Bruce Tucker, *Changing Plans for America’s Inner Cities: Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine and Twentieth-Century Urbanism* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998). An historical narrative of city planning in Cincinnati, highlighting among other things the use of historic preservation as an economic and community development tool.

Related Rudy Bruner Award Winners

(For full bibliographic cites, please see Introduction)

Quality Hill in Kansas City, Missouri (1987 cycle). The renovation and redevelopment of this historic district adjacent to downtown was directed by a private developer who structured a partnership with the city and 20 local companies.

Ocean Drive Improvement Project, Miami Beach, Florida (1991 cycle). The preservation and revitalization of a 15-block, 26-acre ocean front historic district of Art Deco hotels and apartments overseen by the City Beach Office of Historic Preservation and Urban Design.

Betts-Longworth Historic District, Cincinnati, Ohio (1993 cycle). A preservation-based redevelopment plan for a downtown “mini-neighborhood” containing some of the city’s oldest homes and encouraging participation of minority developers and contractors.

Lowerton, Saint Paul, Minnesota (1995 cycle). The redevelopment of a historic district near the downtown by a small private nonprofit organization that has created a lively, mixed income and mixed use area, including retail, office, and low-mod and market rate housing.

Cleveland Historic Warehouse District (1997 cycle). Preservation of a series of historically significant Victorian warehouse buildings in downtown Cleveland that has created a new mixed-use residential neighborhood in the heart of Cleveland.

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