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Author

Lyndon, Donlyn

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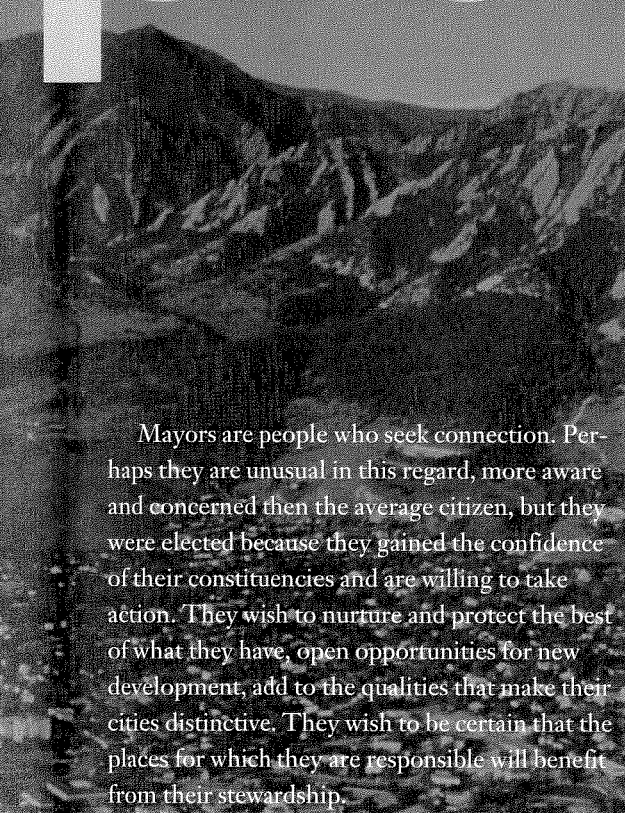
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The presentations made by mayors at the Mayors Institute on City Design are testimony to the powers of place. These elected officials are people who care deeply for the places in which they live, who know that community character plays an important role in the lives of their citizens. None suggested that a city was admirable because it was indistinguishable from others, none offered testimony for anomie and placelessness.



replacing



Mayors are people who seek connection. Perhaps they are unusual in this regard, more aware and concerned than the average citizen, but they were elected because they gained the confidence of their constituencies and are willing to take action. They wish to nurture and protect the best of what they have, open opportunities for new development, add to the qualities that make their cities distinctive. They wish to be certain that the places for which they are responsible will benefit from their stewardship.

Many of the problems mayors bring to the Mayors' Institute involve replacing something about their community that has been lost: main streets that have been abandoned in favor of outlying shopping centers, manufacturing districts that no longer have viable industries, waterfronts that have experienced a succession of uses and are now little more than wasteland, places to gather that no longer function as community meeting places, streets that are no longer pleasant to walk on. These together lead to a loss of identity, to the absence of any distinct character in the city that can be recognized and nurtured as a source of community pride and identity.

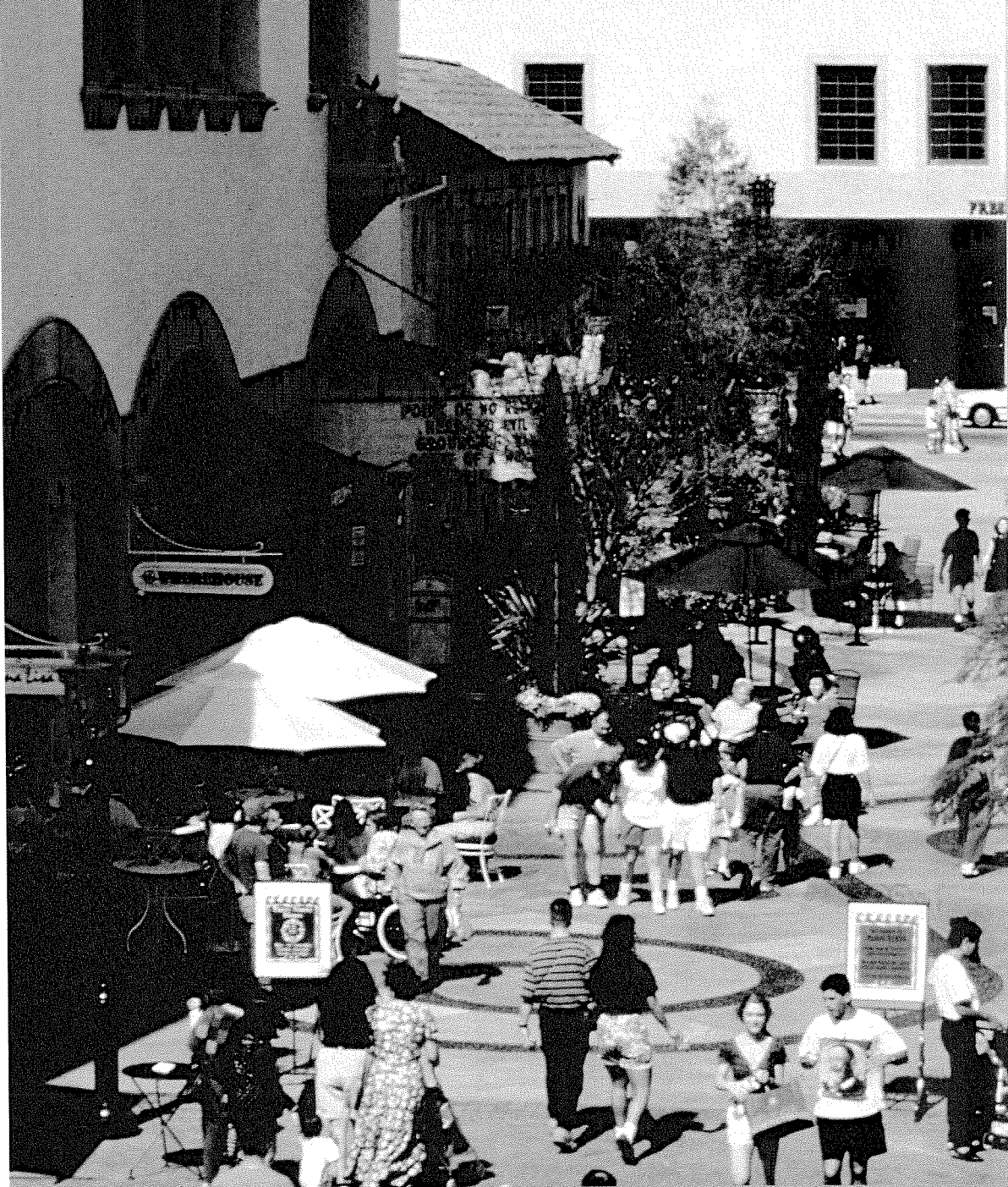
Often the situations mayors confront result from changing economic conditions — conditions that are altering the ways in which we live, work, exchange goods and conduct business. These changes are often exacerbated by the translation of real estate, which is rooted in locale, into mortgage assets and leases that are transferable, held by parties completely remote from and disinterested in local concerns. Several mayors brought problems resulting from redevelopment programs, intended to attract investment and tax dollars; the programs, however, proved to be over-scaled and inappropriate, adding to the community's sense of loss and dislocation rather than contributing to its sense of well-being. Still other issues stem from narrowly focussed efforts to solve specific problems, often ignoring the very complex web of relationships inherent in city form.

The problems are endemic, but there are ways to overcome them. Many remedies have been suggested by Mayors' Institute participants, remedies that are cast in the particulars of the place being discussed. Here I will gather some observations, gleaned through discussions at the national and regional institutes held over the last decade, into some common themes. These are ways not only to replace qualities that have been lost, but also to re-place projects in their context, people in their communities, cities in their landscapes. They are valuable not only for mayors, but for all those who take part in the commissions, workshops, meetings and debates that accompany change.

Re-placing strategies should respond to the multiple layers of structure — architectural, urban and landscape.

Far left: French Quarter, New Orleans. © Neil Alexander.
Above: Charleston, S.C. Courtesy South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.
Left: Boulder, Colo. Courtesy Boulder Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Santa Barbara, Calif., is remarkable for the consistency of its urban spaces as well as the architectural style of its buildings. Courtesy Santa Barbara Conference and Visitors Bureau.



Oakland, California Downtown's Patient Progress

Oakland's downtown, long held hostage to the anticipation that it could ultimately attract a great shopping center to its heart, has finally

overcome the mesmerizing fascination of that prospect. The city is recovering its downtown in an incremental fashion and devising

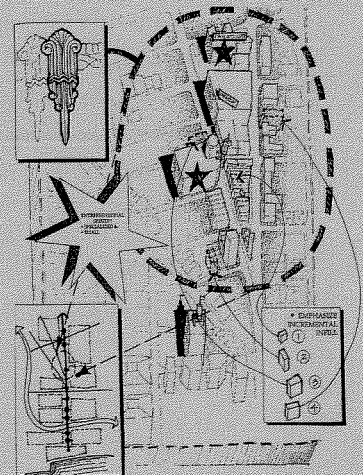
ways to extend the benefits of government rebuilding into surrounding areas.

For many years the center of Oakland had a huge hole designated to become a megaretail center. Finally, in a change of strategy, the city took a measured approach. First, it supported a modest, small-scale complex of retail, office and public spaces adjacent to one of its downtown BART rapid transit stations. Then it lured a large, attractive federal building (with ground-floor retail front-

age and a glass atrium) to the edge of that complex, and a state office building next to that.

Most recently, the city has committed its own (earthquake induced) office expansion to the creation of a civic center that respects the cadence and character of the surrounding downtown district, in part by restoring a historic office building that serves as a visual landmark for the key downtown intersection.

In his presentation to MICD: West, Mayor Elihu





Re-Placing

The charge for the leadership of the city is to pay sufficient attention to both the needs of new enterprises and the qualities that have created value in the city in the first place — then to set the ground for continuing evolution. To remain healthy, cities need to respond effectively to new challenges while remaining firm in their commitment to creating good places, places that nurture and support responsible citizenship, places where people love to be.

To ensure that the best qualities of a place are conserved and extended, the citizens, staff and leadership of a city must require that new uses are fit carefully and strategically within the city fabric. New projects must be connected to what is presently there — re-placed, not just inserted — developed in sympathy with the way that citizens have thought about the place. They must give new impetus to historic patterns or sometimes substitute whole new patterns in a way that is considerate of the present and previous structure.

In the fabric of the city itself there should be a steady insistence on its most essential, characterizing aspects. These may be a particular style of building, as in Santa Barbara, a network of discernible relationships and careful details, as in Savannah, or a distinct relation to the natural landscape, as in Bozeman, Montana, whose mayor described the city's structure almost entirely in terms that related to the experience of the grand and beautiful landscape around it.

The terms of these relations are often fragile. Only by informed and persistent attention to the decisions that make up a city does a true sense of place emerge and hold the imagination of its citizens. Through their constant attention, mayors become designers of the cities entrusted to their care.

Case study images:

Left: Proposed civic center, with new construction to the left, the rehabilitated city hall in the center and the addition to the Broadway building on the right. Courtesy C.W. Fentriss and J.H. Bradburn Associates.

Center: Summary sketch of opportunities in downtown Oakland. Courtesy MICD: West.

Below: City Center, a retail and office complex, was the first step in reviving Oakland's downtown. Courtesy Oakland Convention Bureau.

Harris highlighted his concern for finding a strategy that would extend outward the new energies being brought into downtown, particularly along two main streets, Broadway and Telegraph Avenue. Such plans could use to advantage the area's remarkable heritage of terra-cotta commercial buildings and the uniquely distinguished, Art Deco Paramount and Fox Theatres.

The discussion centered on finding incremental strategies for change rather than counting on still

another version of the previously hoped for megaproject. This mall, with five department stores, would have combined renovation with new construction, so the city had not undertaken demolition in the area.

Thus this extended district has considerable resources with which to work: a BART stop in its midst, a mix of building sizes that allow for differing forms of initial investment, existing businesses (including a department store), cultural program-

ming in the restored Paramount Theatre, a new pair of ice-skating rinks brought in by the redevelopment agency and the new development energy the office initiatives bring.

Oakland has set the stage for a gradual but effective change in the vitality of these downtown spaces along the traditional spine of the city.





Charleston's waterfront park connects to the city by reflecting the adjacent street structure in its circulation plan. A range of spaces — from a busy promenade to an adventuresome fountain to a quiet alley — serve as settings for many different activities. Designers: Sasaki Associates, Cooper-Robertson and Partners. Above photo courtesy Donlyn Lyndon; inset plan and opposite page photos courtesy Sasaki Associates.

Reintroduce the Structure of the Place to its Inhabitants

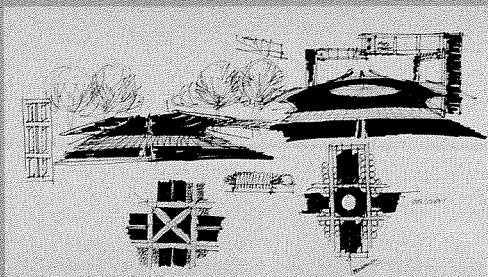
Cities are great reservoirs of understanding, full of messages waiting to be deciphered by casual observation as well as by strict analysis and interpretation. The spaces and buildings of cities and the activities and relationships they support have formed the underlying matrix for cultural development and everyday life. Places remain powerful sources of binding experience, reference points around which people can share common understandings.

Cities should insist that change take a form that

can be assimilated into the city's understanding of itself. But people who have lived in a place for a long time have often become so fully used to existing patterns and uses that they are no longer conscious of the essential elements that give character to that place. This makes it difficult for them to see opportunities for change, to recognize actions that may be destructive and to give priority to essential factors that they wish to hold constant.

Conversely, in many quickly growing areas there is a rapidly changing population and little developed understanding of the place. General

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Taking Responsibility for Rebuilding



It would have been understandable had Mayor Ronald Norick canceled his trip to the Mayors' Institute last April. Days before, a bomb had destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in his city. The blast killed 169

people, injured hundreds and damaged more than 300 buildings.

But Norick honored his commitment. He came away with inspiration for a community-based planning process to help the area

recover, and a promise of support from Samina Quraeshi, director of the NEA's design program.

The Murrah building was situated at the north edge of downtown. Before the disaster, this was a fringe area, zoned for industrial uses and occupied by offices, small shops and parking. After the blast, the area experienced severe decline; businesses closed or moved because of building damage and took away customers from businesses that remained. Clearly, the rebuilding process

would require a new way of looking at the area.

In May, the NEA sent a fact-finding team of design professionals; the consensus from these meetings was to launch an inclusive planning process that would engage the energies and talents of the local design community, business owners and citizens.

"It took outside perspective to say, 'You have talent and we can help you with more.' We were in such a constant crisis that we didn't take time to think through those steps," recalls Jackie

Jones, executive director of the Arts Council of Oklahoma City. The team's visits and the subsequent planning effort were hosted by the Arts Council, the city's planning department and Second Century/Oklahoma City Urban Renewal Authority.

Citizen volunteers (including designers and area property owners) were organized into six "district teams," each focusing on a specific area of North Downtown. For three weeks, they examined the issues; discerned opportunities and



marketing images found in the media may be more familiar to incoming residents than the city's actual form, landscape or climate; traditional values may not be a part of any living understanding of the place.

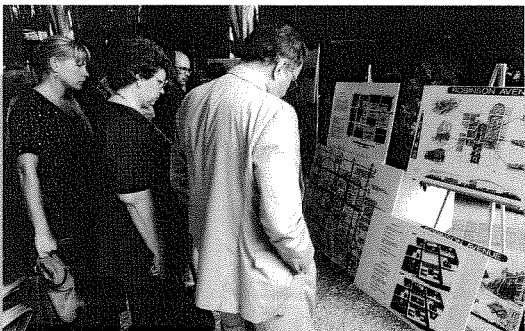
To ensure that the city develops in a coherent fashion, that each of its parts builds towards a larger whole, it is necessary to build public understanding of the city's various parts, the ways in which they relate to each other and the resources already invested there. This requires a long, ambitious and continuous public education process, one that can likely only take place in segments, with neighborhoods and interest groups providing the initial impetus.

Structured properly, the processes of planning can themselves become an extended education program for the city. Walking tours, surveys, participation workshops and invited lecturers all can be utilized in shaping issues, focusing attention on the qualities of the place and inviting people to care about — not simply accept or ignore — the conditions of the city. Often there are rich

resources at hand; extensive collections of historical photographs, maps that are stored in city archives and, most importantly, citizens and professionals who are committed to building a broader understanding of the roots of the community and the various ways it might see its future. Cities do well to capture the devotion of these people, encourage their coordination and open opportunities for education, deliberation and debate.

Mayors can play an essential leadership role in bringing issues to public consciousness, but often feel hesitant to enter an arena that has been delegated to planners and design professionals. Frequently mayors, who know their cities well, have mentioned that the Mayors' Institute sessions have helped them to trust their own intuitions and introduced them to a language for communicating about design issues, which they previously had difficulty discussing. Several mayors returned to their cities and set up similar case review and discussion sessions, some involving city staff, some involving the general public.

Far left, below: Proposals for Broadway Avenue redesign. Center: Citizens' proposals on public view in July. Photos by David Fitzgerald, courtesy National Endowment for the Arts.



explored concepts to rebuild the area. In July, the national design panel reconvened and synthesized the "district teams" ideas into both early actions and long-term plans.

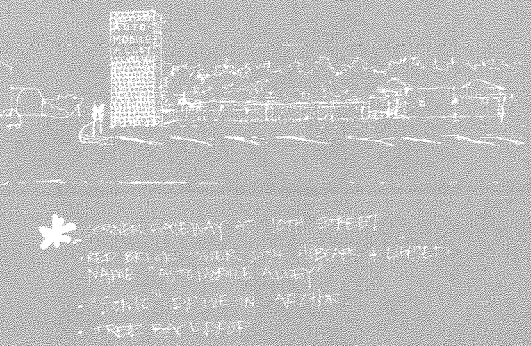
Shortly after the bombing, the federal government allocated Oklahoma City \$39 million in emergency community development funds,

and the planning process established a framework for how to spend the money, planning director Garner Stoll said. About half will be spent stabilizing or demolishing damaged buildings, half on long-term capital improvements.

One idea generated by a district team, the redesign

of Broadway Avenue, will be the first project to receive funding. A longer term goal will be to develop entertainment activities that build on the street's "Automobile Alley" image, such as a cruise night or outdoor movies.

"The process brought together people who wouldn't have otherwise met each other," Stoll remarked. "Property owners got to know local designers, and as the federal money comes in, hire them to do the work. They were all part of the workshop and sympathetic

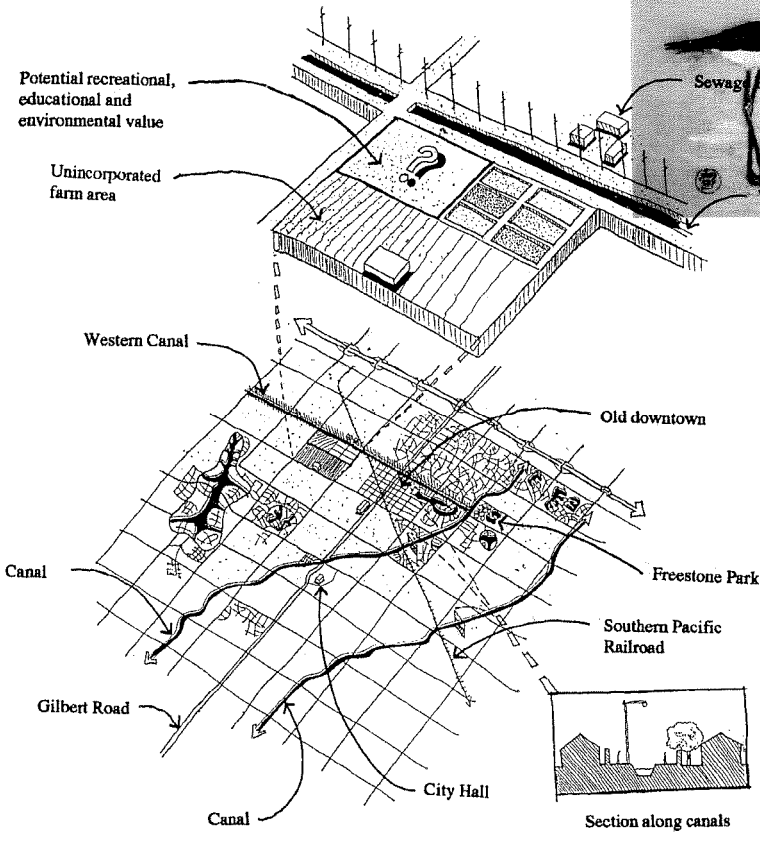
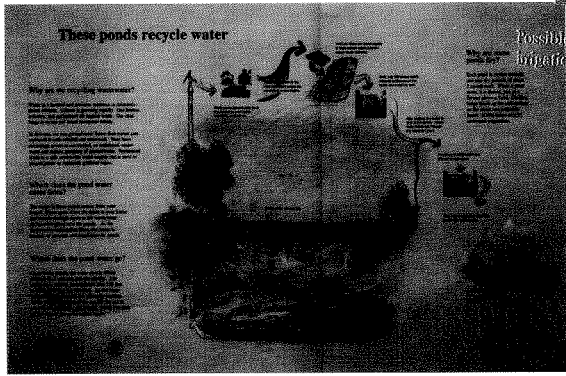
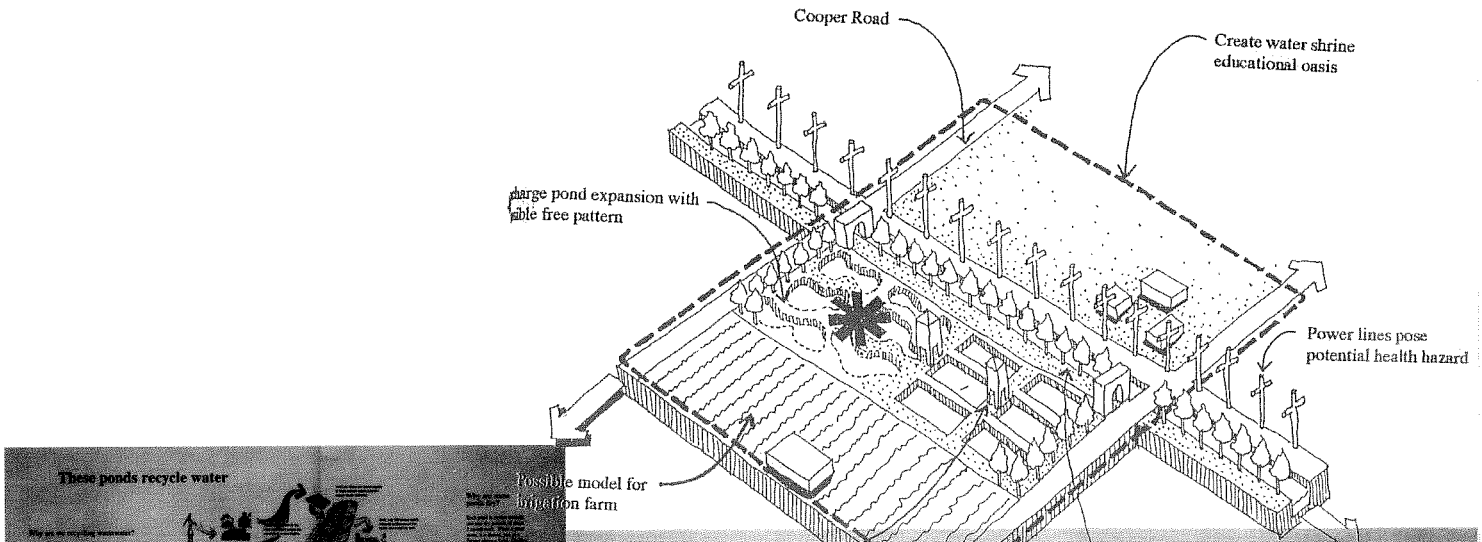


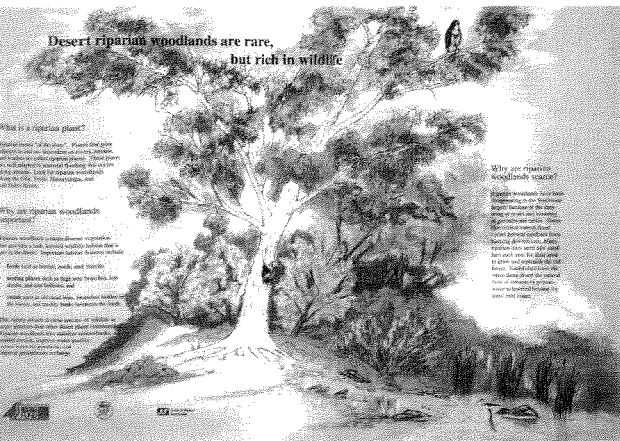
to it, and can help the property owners understand why it is a good idea to follow the recommendations."

"What this workshop did for many of us was give us permission to look for-

ward instead of backwards," Jones concluded. "That was really critical at that time for this city. Not without respect, but we had to take responsibility for rebuilding."

— Todd W. Bressi





Establishing Connections to the Larger Natural Environment

Time and again people lose sight of the natural features that have formed their cities. Often, the natural characteristics of a place have been so important to its growth and expansion that they have been inundated by growth and submerged in construction.

Mayors often come to the institute seeking advice about recovering their cities' sense of connection to the water. Many cities were founded in proximity to creeks, rivers or harbors, but these waterfronts have very often become neglected or abused. Usually the purposes for which the waterfront is useful have changed entirely. Places that once were landing, launching and hauling areas, zones for stevedores, truckers and fishermen, are now being designated recreation spots, with lurching, jogging and cycling or simply quiet contemplation, as the primary engines for change.

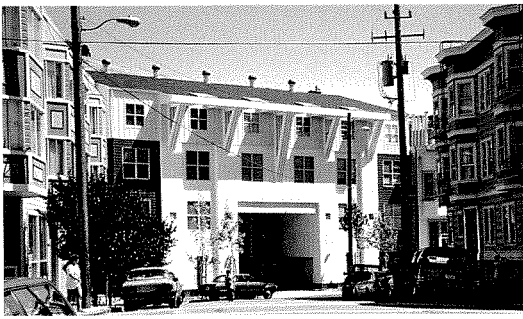
The management of water, its distribution as a resource and its reclamation from wastes, was once relegated to the status of an unconscious utility. But now it requires conscious choices, which can contribute to the overall development of the city. Many mayors bring cases having to do with the management of water resources — from

Tulsa, Okla., where the use of a floodplain for recreational purposes is being debated, to Gilbert, Ariz., where the treatment and disposition of sewage effluent has become a tool for the development of recreational areas and places for wildlife observation and education.

More subtly, the inherent structure of the land has been often been obscured by filling wetlands and hollows or cutting hills, making it difficult to understand the natural and human history of the place. Wetlands are an essential part of the ecological conditions that support wildlife habitat and they provide means for absorbing runoff in periods of high flow. Creek restoration and wetlands preservation are becoming part of the repertoire of city design — albeit sometimes with talk of restoration that seems altogether improbable, and of mitigations that are, at best, contrived.

Programs that pursue natural resource protection and enhancement can be a powerful tool for city design. However, when left to develop according to single-purpose criteria they can be as limiting as single-minded economics — inhibiting, rather than encouraging the creative incorporation of landscape factors into patterns that restore a sense of wholeness to the place.

Gilbert, Ariz., sought to couple the expansion of its sewage plant with educational and recreational activities. New recharge ponds include interpretive exhibits, and possibilities for a demonstration irrigation projects and for linkages with nearby canals and greenways were noted by the Mayors' Institute resource team. Drawings courtesy MICD: West, posters courtesy City of Gilbert.



Del Carlo Court, multifamily housing in San Francisco. Designer: Solomon Architects and Planners. Courtesy Christopher Irion.

Finding Consistencies

Citizens construct their sense of place through thousands of daily interactions, the conscious memories of which attach themselves to surprisingly few landmarks and events. Instead, people's sense of belonging to a place is grounded in the ubiquitous relationships among buildings — their frequency and position, their materials and form of construction, the character of their faces and the entries they turn to the public way — and to the layout and design of the roads, paths and landscapes that thread through the city.

When there is consistency in these elements and relationships, it is easier for people to form memories and to recognize common interests; it is more likely that these elements will attract allegiances and set the stage for continued development. Main streets, both the Disney and the “main streets” program versions, demonstrate the hold that a consistent (not strictly repetitive) pattern of buildings and streetscape can have on the imaginations of those who live in a place. Vigorously designed buildings from the past can also play a large role in determining city form, triggering concepts and emotions that can be

shared, marking out reference points in the structure of the city.

Many cases that mayors have brought to the institutes involve the reuse of valued buildings. These buildings often serve as a good rallying point for change, allowing the affections that have developed around historic structures to spread to their surroundings and to set standards for the nature of what should be adjoining. With an example of genuinely significant design as the core element of an area, it is easier for communities to see the need for and to demand suitably scaled and carefully designed buildings.

Buildings that play a very significant role in defining the structure of the city and carry the memory of its history deserve uses that embellish their presence. Appropriate use is a judgment call, however, and is sometimes contentious, pitting concerns for preservation against claims for entrepreneurial vision.

We live in circumstances different than those that produced almost any building that is a candidate for historic preservation. There are, however, consistencies in type of use and purpose that extend well beyond any given time period, and there

Case study illustrations:
Right: Reading study area, courtesy MICD: East.
Far right: Reading Outlet Center. Penn-Lyn Studio, courtesy Bucks County Visitors Bureau.

Reading, Pennsylvania The Outlets and The Center

Reading, Pa., has a gift for adjusting its economy to changing times. During the Revolutionary War, it prospered as a maker of cannons and rifles. Decades later, the Reading Railroad thrived as a leading shipper of the vast coal deposits to the north. In the 1900s, Reading emerged as an early center of automobile manufacturing. And in recent years its service sector, led by engineering, finance and insurance operations, has boomed.

Perhaps the brightest

spot in Reading's economy is its role as a regional factory outlet center, attracting more than 12 million shoppers every year. Like the mayor of any city that draws so many visitors, Mayor Warren Haggarty Jr. wonders how outlet shoppers can be drawn to other activities in Reading — particularly downtown.

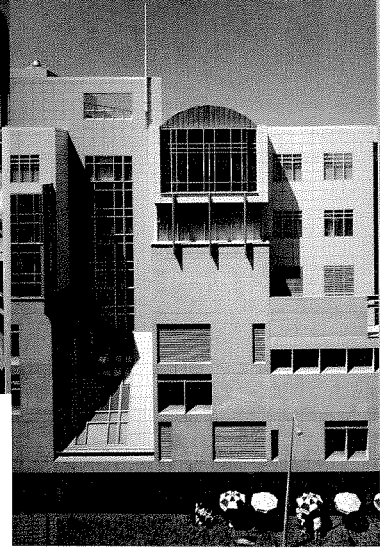
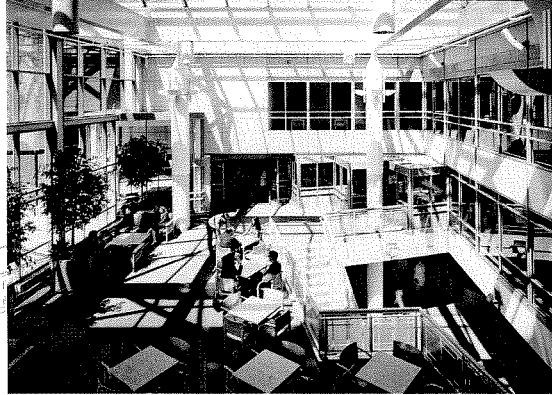
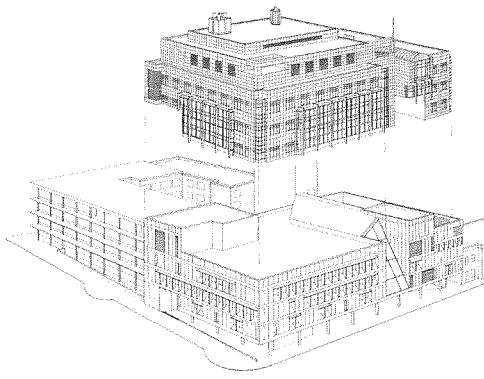
Many of Reading's outlets are located in renovated factory buildings barely a half mile, but a world away, from downtown. Most shoppers arrive by bus or car and

do little walking beyond the outlets. Even if they made it downtown, they'd find a struggling retail district whose main street is lined with vacant lots — a legacy of decades of redevelopment failures.

The resource team made several suggestions about how to move shoppers around the city. One idea was to establish a bus or trolley route between the outlets and downtown; the vehicles could run on existing streets. Another was to establish low-cost or free

“shopper parking” downtown and shuttle people from there to the outlets. Any transit link, the mayor was advised, should be as direct and convenient as possible.

Actions aimed at reinvigorating downtown should be considered in a broad context, the team cautioned. For example, a proposed civic center and hotel could be a catalyst, but its design should relate to the rest of the city. It should be pedestrian friendly with multiple entrances along Penn Street; it



should be a serious search for uses that require similar dimensions, take advantage of the design elements incorporated in the building and can be suitably supportive to neighboring activities.

The retention of appropriate use and form in significant buildings is also of great importance to maintaining the structure of the city fabric — the cadence established by street intersections, building entries, the size of structures and the network of open spaces and vegetation that runs through the city and determines much of its character.

In case after case, mayors present problems created by changes in the location and size of roads or the rerouting of fundamental transportation patterns so they privilege through traffic. Such actions tear apart the equilibrium of places and call forth new patterns of movement and ways of building that are not appropriate for their location. Walter Kulash, elsewhere in this issue, discerns a growing sense among traffic engineers and transportation planners that they must balance the goal of maximum traffic flow with other objectives in order to create effective and pleasurable streets.

Streets are not the only public infrastructure that must be carefully considered. The provision

of lighting, utilities and communication systems, the disposition of sewage and storm water — the facilities required to support the life of the place — all need attention. Re-placing means equipping the area for the lives that will be lived there and making advantage of each act of construction to add to the qualities of the place.

Left to its own devices each city agency, like an individual corporation, will take action on its own terms, oblivious of larger opportunities for coordination. Streets will be resurfaced even while plans are being considered for their reconfiguration; trees will be brutally trimmed for maintenance convenience in areas where their shade and form are essential to the creation of handsome public ways. Mayors and city managers must take decisive action to bring the various agencies of government together, to reclaim purposeful control over all the actions of the city and put all capital investments, even of the most modest sort, to work in building a cohesive place.

The expansion of the Joslin Diabetes Center in Boston involved adding new space on top of an existing facility, establishing a new lobby and internal courtyard, and relocating clinic space to a streetfront. These changes clarified and intensified the structure of the area. Designers and engineers: Ellenzweig Associates; LeMessurier Consultants; BR+A/Bard, Rao + Athans Consulting Engineers; R.W. Sullivan Engineers. Photos: Steve Rosenthal.

should include other compatible uses along its front, avoiding the blank facade typical of such buildings; nearby activities should include restaurants and retail.

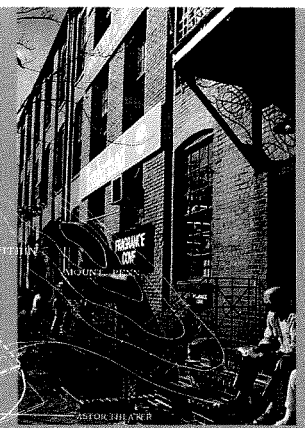
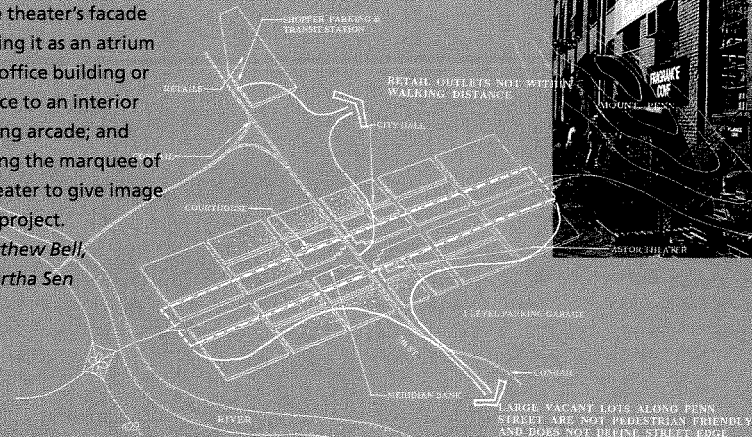
General studies of and policies for physical form and land use should set the framework for development at all scales. For example, the city should study the development potential of every downtown block under the current zoning, then determine where specialized public spaces should be located. In general, down-

town should not try to directly compete with the outlets but rather offer something that complements the outlets such as restaurants or specialty retail. Dense development of housing and mixed use should be encouraged throughout the area, the team urged.

Significant visual elements of downtown, such as the historic Astor Theater, across the street from the proposed civic center, should be key components of the strategy. The vacant theater could be used as a neighbor-

hood movie house or a dinner theater. Other suggestions included preserving the theater's facade and using it as an atrium for an office building or entrance to an interior shopping arcade; and restoring the marquee of the theater to give image to the project.

— Matthew Bell, Siddhartha Sen





The murals in San Diego's Chicano Park enliven the areas under an elevated freeway. Left to right: *Los Niños del Mundo*, by Gato Felix; *Colossus*, by Mario Torero; and *Tree of Life*, by Felipe Adame, Guillermo Aranda, Guillermo Rosete and Vidal Aguirre.

Locating New Centers of Vitality

Perhaps the most difficult challenge for mayors is to nurture and encourage the kinds of imagination that will bring new life and energy to the city. Cities are evolving entities; they cannot reflect only their past. Buildings and public spaces need to support the places of which they are a part; they need also to bring new vitality into the city — contribute to, not merely enhance, its heritage. Traces of genuinely imaginative vision are neces-

sary for future interest in a community.

Bringing people into an area that has been neglected or abandoned is often difficult, but it is one of the most essential strategies for inducing vitality. At first this may be through holding special events; festivals, markets, walks and information sessions. Most effectively this will include the location of simple civic structures that focus public interest, such as the Public Boat House in Burlington, Vermont. Many cities have also used the

Richmond, California Preserving and Transforming a Factory

The former Ford factory in Richmond was built in 1938, very possibly in anticipation of the impending wartime mobilization. It sits on the most dramatic site along the north end of San Francisco Bay, adjacent to what was to become the astonishingly large and productive Kaiser shipyards.

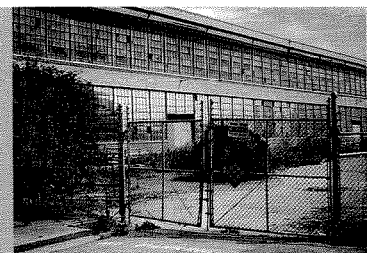
The influx of war workers into the area permanently transformed the nature of the city and its demographics, leaving a permanent legacy of underemployment after the shipyards and the

factory were closed. Much of the waterfront edge of the former shipyards has been transformed into fenced and isolated islands of upscale rental and condominium housing and a marina, cut off from the rest of the city.

The plant sits alone on its point with the Richmond harbor to the west and a large potential park to the east. The challenge Mayor Rosemary Corbin brought was to find a suitable use for this great but isolated building, which now belongs to the city, was damaged in the 1989

earthquake and has FEMA funds designated for reconstruction. The building, designed by Albert Kahn, is a fine example of sawtooth clerestory-lighted industrial architecture, with a long, dignified facade facing the port facilities on the harbor and a more randomly configured east facing wall that was used for unloading and loading trains that pulled up next to the building.

Recommendations for the mayor included developing transportation access back into the center of the



city, paying close attention to the development of the adjoining areas as places of public use and finding modest incremental uses that would bring, for instance, community job training and start-up businesses into the structure. Corbin wondered how rigorously any rehabilita-

Right: Ford Motor Assembly Plant. Courtesy MICD: West. Far right: The plant and the surrounding harborfront. Courtesy Ted Schroder Aerial Photography; Richmond Redevelopment Agency.

resources of their local art communities to bring initial attention to a place and demonstrate care; creating surprising juxtapositions of form, color or content that spark a new look at existing opportunities or announce the presence of underrepresented ethnic communities.

Uses that can benefit from even short-term occupation of existing structures give an interim vitality that wards away vandalism and degradation. Professional offices and smaller start-up companies that cannot afford major installations frequently partake in the regeneration of an area. In many cities pioneer uses have included adventurous forms of housing: housing that is based on the conversion of existing structures spurned by the conventional market, or live-work units that are created out of building types not normally used for housing.

Encouraging the formation of groups of such uses may take some time and individual attention, but such efforts are often able to take hold and to bring areas back into the life of the city, faster and better than more wholesale means. Massive redevelopment projects that are dependent on large-scale market conditions often lead to long delays and a loss of local control. Businesses that have a stake in the local community and are prepared to make an extra effort to take advantage of the place can more immediately set the tone for development.

But locating people in an area is not enough. To spur new life and interest in the place, people



Stairway leading from Los Angeles Public Library to top of Bunker Hill office district. Designer: Lawrence Halprin. Courtesy Donlyn Lyndon.

must be visibly evident. Buildings and open spaces should be designed so that they reveal and celebrate the activities that take place in and around them. Buildings designed as stripes and mirrors project a world alien from individual human interpretation and involvement — a world where personal interests are disenfranchised. Such places proclaim loudly their interchangeability, their owners' allegiance to abstracted ideals and their ready disavowal of local constraints, sensibilities and implications.

Requiring that buildings be designed with human-scaled elements and include places for external use and repose will not, in itself, transform corporate strategy — yet calling business to account as a participant in the creation of amenable cities is part of the evolution of a new attitude towards community responsibility, a new sense for the importance of human experience and sustaining values.

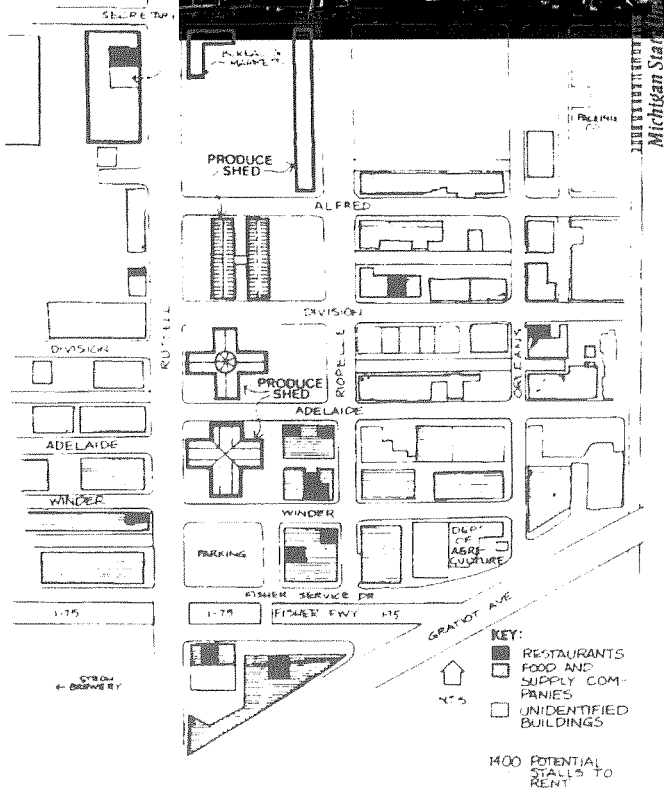


tion should conform to historic preservation standards. The team advised that the various parts of the structure be examined carefully and that differentiations in the character of the building could become the basis for locating differing uses, as well as for making appropriate modifications. The eastern, loading edge of the building might, for instance, receive substantial modification, even including connections to new purpose-built structures, while the western street face might retain its

sedate character and public frontage.

One subsequent follow-up study (conducted as a design thesis at the University of California, Berkeley) suggested that a new bus loop connecting the factory building to downtown might even drive right through the structure, implanting its presence and the new uses that it would house in the consciousness of people using the buses.

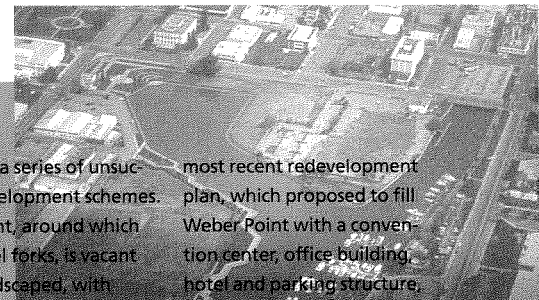
Detroit Eastern Market and area plan. Photo courtesy Theodore Spitzer, Public Market Partners. Plan courtesy Michigan State University.



A Long-term Process; Short-term Urgency

Mayors coming to the institute know that effective city design is a long-term process. It will take years of continuing attention before coming fully to fruition. Yet mayors are pressured to take immediate, short-term actions that will maintain interest in the place and demonstrate their effectiveness as city stewards.

There are many versions of the long-term/short-term dilemma, ranging from financing schemes that involve bonding to the timing of public improvements that will eventually foster change in the private sector. A recurrent theme in cases brought by the mayors is the tension between the pressure for immediate action and the prospects of long-term benefits that may accrue if land is held in reserve for future development. Since land in a city remains a part of the everyday experience of the place, its character influences



Stockton, California Assembling Authority

Stockton, Calif., sixty-five miles from the Pacific Ocean in California's arid Central Valley, is not commonly considered a waterfront city. Yet it was a provisioning depot for the Gold Rush, served by steamships from San Francisco, which reached it via the San Joaquin River.

Stockton was founded at the end of a channel that now terminates at the foot of downtown and the Civic Center. The city's port remains active farther down the channel, but this final segment of the waterfront has been vic-

timized by a series of unsuccessful development schemes. Weber Point, around which the channel forks, is vacant and unlandscaped, with abandoned parking lots, an occasional tree and a pervasive sense of neglect. A landmark hotel that stands where the channel once ended now fronts a parking lot built over the last stretch of water.

Mayor Joan Darrah expressed to the Mayors' Institute a concern for bringing this area back to life. With good reason, Darrah and others were doubtful that the

most recent redevelopment plan, which proposed to fill Weber Point with a convention center, office building, hotel and parking structure, would come to fruition. The resource panel questioned whether this would be a good use of such a distinctive and precious site, even if it were economically feasible. The mayor was especially distressed by a growing negative reaction in the community to downtown and to planning — a perception exacerbated by the empty waterfront.

the perception of the city, whether or not there are plans for its future. Vacant lots represent opportunity when interest in development is hot; they signal neglect and abandonment when there is no evident indication that they are valued. Action is required, and mayors are called upon to forge viable tactics for the present as well as to help construct an image of the future.

Those who wish to make change — whether political leaders, entrepreneurs of development, planners and urban designers or neighborhood activists — must assemble the authority to act. Only by subjecting proposals that have city-changing potential to informed public scrutiny, making sure that they are re-placed within a larger context, will those proposals be truly understood. And by engaging citizens in a series of such processes the issues can become a part of public discourse, forging the elements of mutual under-

standing and common aspirations that lend authority for decisive change. That authority will evaporate, however, if no actions take place.

Mayors frequently have the unenviable task of needing to sort their way through an array of bewildering proposals and recommendations — all the while maintaining a steady presence in the public eye, getting on with the responsibilities of leadership when the path is not yet clear. Understanding and articulating those things that make their community distinct, that lie at the root of their community's identity, can serve as a rallying point for mayors, city staff and constituents as they track a path through conflicting claims and contrary visions — re-placing elements of the city so that they will respond to present need while building cities that future generations will happily call home.

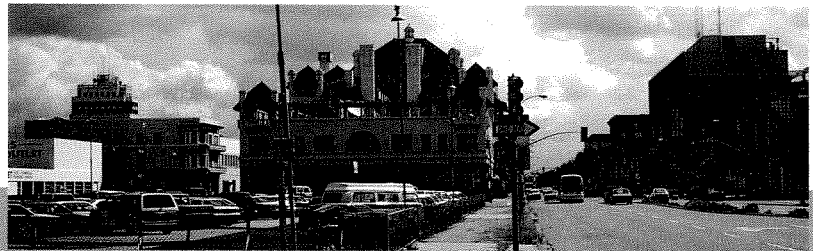
Acknowledgements

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The images of Detroit's Eastern Market originally appeared in *Public Markets and Community Revitalization* (New York: Project for Public Spaces, 1995).

Case study illustrations:

Left: Workbook developed for task force walking tours.
Center: Waterfront area.
Right: Stockton Hotel.



The panel advised Darrah to initiate an extended community process to build public involvement and confidence in the waterfront's future. Following this advice, Darrah initiated a process that began with a site visit and presentation to the city council by Samina Quraeshi, director of the National Endowment for the Arts Design Program. Next Darrah appointed a twenty-eight person task force and hired a consultant team consisting of an urban designer, landscape architect, economic development specialists and

workshop organizers.

The consultants' work with the task force and city staff has included finding ways to reintroduce the structure of the city and the characteristics of the site into the public consciousness. Based on their own analysis, the consultants organized walks and a boat trip to familiarize the task force with the site and its potential, and made presentations regarding waterside developments in other communities.

The task force met frequently in 1995, providing

opportunities for various groups to present program ideas and development schemes. It conducted two public workshops and assessed the viability and desirability of various land use and design arrangements.

Just a little more than one year from Darrah's visit to the institute, the Task Force endorsed a long-term vision for the area and a series of short-term actions by various city agencies that will lead quickly to better use and care for the waterfront. These will include making the point an

animated family recreation and events ground for the whole city, repairing the head of the channel and creating a "water square" fronting the Hotel Stockton and furthering incremental waterfront development in ways that make effective connection to existing neighborhoods.

Immediate actions, some already initiated, include sponsoring cultural and recreational events along the water to encourage public involvement, capturing the benefits of a street improvements program to refurbish

the edge of the point and greening significant portions of the open land.

There has, meanwhile, been extensive public involvement in the process, with media coverage that has brought a new consciousness of the city's assets. A variety of investors have used the forum provided by the planning process to air their interests and test public reaction to development proposals. The mayor has confidence that positive change is underway.