

Columbus, Ohio
An evaluation of downtown house and
retail strategies, conducted for the
City of Columbus and
The Columbus Area
Chamber of Commerce
1985

ULI

COLUMBUS



ABOUT ULI-
THE URBAN
LAND
INSTITUTE

COLUMBUS, OHIO

An Evaluation of Downtown Housing and Retail Strategies, Conducted for the City of Columbus and the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce

September 8-13, 1985
A Panel Advisory Service Report

ULI-the Urban Land Institute
1090 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

ABOUT ULI— THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

ULI—the Urban Land Institute is an independent organization that conducts research; interprets current land use trends in relation to the changing economic, social, and civic needs of our society; and disseminates pertinent information leading to the best and most efficient use and development of land.

Established in 1936 as a nonprofit institution supported by the contributions of its members, ULI has earned recognition as one of America's most highly respected and widely quoted sources of information on urban planning, growth, and development.

Members of the Washington, D.C.-based Institute include land developers, builders, architects, city planners, investors, planning and renewal agencies, financial institutions, and others interested in land use.

Much of the Institute's work is accomplished through its councils, each headed by an executive group of distinguished authorities:

- Urban Development/Mixed-Use Council
- Commercial and Retail Development Council
- Industrial and Office Park Development Council
- Community Development Council
- Residential Development Council
- Recreational Development Council
- Small-Scale Development Council
- Federal Policy Council
- Development Regulations Council
- Development Services Council

This Panel Advisory Service report is one of a series of research publications to further the objectives of the Institute and to make authoritative information generally available to those seeking knowledge in the urban field.

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	4
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	6
PANEL MEMBERS AND STAFF	7
THE PANEL'S ASSIGNMENT	8
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	10
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	12
The Essential Dynamic of Columbus's Downtown	
Housing and Retailing	12
Residential Development	15
Retail Development	22
Land Use, Transportation, and Urban Design	31
The Planning Process in Columbus	37
ABOUT THE PANEL	42
APPENDIX: Participants in On-Site Investigation	44

FOREWORD

CONTENTS

The downtowns in many older American cities, particularly those in the Northeast and Midwest, have experienced a recent decline, owing to a number of factors including the decrease in industrial jobs, the growth of suburbs, the migration to newer, Sunbelt cities, and the inner-city problems of decay and congestion. Over the years, however, Columbus, the nation's 19th largest city, has remained immune to many of these changes.

As the capital of Ohio, the city has enjoyed a strong employment base and has never depended heavily on manufacturing or other industrial jobs. As home to Ohio State University and to Battelle Memorial Institute, Columbus has been a regional academic and research center—a status that has attracted many high-technology firms to the city's economy.

An aggressive annexation policy during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s further strengthened the tax base and allowed the city to expand well beyond the traditional urban limits—to 185.7 square miles. In addition, Columbus has become home to several large insurance companies and to other service-based businesses, while office development has continued at a rapid pace. Indeed, during the 1970s, Columbus was the only major city in the Northeast or Midwest that grew in both population and employment.

Panel members tour a Columbus shopping center with John Christie, president of the chamber of commerce, and local guides.



Despite these attributes and advantages, and despite the recent expansion of its cultural opportunities, downtown Columbus has undergone some decline, notably in the fields of retailing and housing. Because of the communitywide concern about these issues, the city and the chamber of commerce invited a panel from ULI—the Urban Land Institute to examine the potentials for downtown retailing and housing in Columbus, and to recommend specific strategies and policies for meeting these perceived needs.

The sponsors' objectives, which guided the panel's assignment, included the following aims:

- To further and enhance the diversity of land uses and services that has recently been generated in the downtown;
- To improve the quality and variety of the cultural offerings that are centered in the downtown;
- To improve the local public planning efforts, particularly those related to given development opportunities; and
- To take the fullest possible advantage of the city's present and projected prosperity.



The nine members of the panel—real estate professionals in varied fields—were selected for their knowledge and broad experience of development, finance, and design issues. This panel conducted an on-site investigation that encompassed an extensive tour of the city, as well as interviews with the sponsors, public officials, community and neighborhood leaders, and members of the business community. An oral presentation was given on September 13, 1985; the present, published report represents the panel's official findings and recommendations on specific strategies and policies for promoting residential and retail development in downtown Columbus.

In this manner, ULI's Panel Advisory Service offers communities throughout the United States and Canada the benefits of the technical expertise and experience of the Institute's members. By providing an impartial, objective evaluation of actual problems confronting large and small communities alike, ULI encourages sound land use planning and development.

Since the Panel Advisory Service began its work in 1947, 140 assignments have been completed at the requests of communities, developers, or organizations pursuing public/private cooperative interests.

The panel members hope that this report will stimulate future actions that will benefit not only downtown Columbus, but also the entire Columbus community.

Rich Kight, of the city's strategic planning office, briefs panel members.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Both personally and on behalf of ULI—the Urban Land Institute, the panel members and staff wish to express their appreciation to the city of Columbus, the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Central Business District Planning Task Force for the opportunity to be involved in such an important and challenging assignment.

In particular, the panel would like to thank Phil DeVore, deputy director; Richard Kight; and others serving on the strategic planning staff of the city's Office of Management and Budget. This group was responsible, together with the chamber of commerce, for preparing the excellent briefing materials given to the panel. In addition, members of the planning staff; John S. Christie, president of the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce; and the chamber's staff consistently made themselves available to the panel throughout the on-site visit, to answer questions and provide additional materials and information.

The panel also acknowledges the financial support of the Central Business District Planning Task Force. Members of this group were also among the nearly 100 individuals who took the time to meet with panel members during their visit. These interviews gave the panel a broad range of views from all community sectors, as well as the extensive and timely information on which to base many of its findings.

Finally, in the panel's view, the on-site preparation of this report would have proved impossible without the aid of Joanne Bushby, Bobbi Hall, Gloria Hinton, Debbie Kistner, Louise Kolb, and Julie Scroggins—the staff of Headquarters Companies.

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THE PANEL'S ASSIGNMENT

Although Columbus is not beset with the economic problems of many other large, older cities, several serious concerns do exist within both the business community and the public sector. Generally, these two groups feel that Columbus, although it has grown rapidly, would still benefit from particular types of development, especially in its downtown; and furthermore, that a broad range of activities should be encouraged in downtown Columbus. Work toward this end has already begun, and these concerns have led to the assembling of a ULI panel in Columbus.

Any number of plans have been prepared for the city of Columbus over the years. Thus, the ULI panel's sponsors—the city and the chamber of commerce—did not ask that the panel generate a master plan for the downtown. Indeed, an apparent consensus within the community holds that a downtown master plan is undesirable. A recognized need does exist, however, for direction, as well as for established policies and guidelines for downtown development, with an eye to encouraging retail and residential development.

Specifically, the ULI panel's task involved recommending particular strategies for obtaining downtown retail expansion, downtown residential development, and improvement of the downtown planning process. In this regard, the panel members were asked to assess a broad variety of issues, from the impact of transportation networks to the availability of financing. Of particular interest was the potential for public sector initiatives to promote retail and residential development, because the planning approach has traditionally been limited to finding ways in which privately initiated development might be made to fit with bordering land uses.

The panel was asked to judge the various influences on the potential for downtown residential and retail development. The sponsors also requested that the panel members consider the relative importances and impacts of these factors, and that they suggest the most useful, efficient actions to be taken by the public and private sectors.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS



The Commission is pleased to present this report to the public. It is the result of a year-long study of the waterfront area and its potential for development. The Commission's recommendations are based on a thorough analysis of the area's history, current conditions, and future needs. We hope that these recommendations will provide a clear path forward for the waterfront's development.

As a result of the Commission's study, several key recommendations have been identified. These include the need for increased public space, improved pedestrian infrastructure, and the preservation of historic buildings. The Commission also recommends the development of new housing and commercial spaces to revitalize the waterfront area. These recommendations are intended to create a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive waterfront community for the future.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Mel Shottenstein, chairman of the Central Business District Planning Task Force, introduces panel members at the public meeting.



RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- In order to promote downtown residential development, the city must focus its attention on sites near the core on which development can occur quickly; it must make suitable city-owned sites readily available, and take action to increase the availability of other such sites.
- The city should continue, and strengthen, its efforts at code modification and reform, in order to cut development costs for new construction and to stimulate adaptive use. This action would encourage and ease privately sponsored residential development, while helping to demonstrate the depth of the demand for downtown housing.
- Increased financing availability would also act as an incentive for private efforts. In this connection, the city should promote the formation of banking consortiums and investigate the establishment of a tax-exempt financing program for housing.
- The panel also believes that a need exists for an agency to handle housing-related programs, and to facilitate market-rate residential development.

RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

- In the panel's view, the proposed Capitol South project is the most important retail development now being built or broached in Columbus, and its success is essential to the generation of new retail opportunities downtown. For this reason, and because of the city's role as a partner and participant in Capitol South, the municipality should take all necessary steps to ensure Capitol South's viability, including restricting the premature development of potentially competing retail facilities.
- The panel strongly maintains that the image of High Street as the commercial center of Columbus needs reinforcing. This aim can best be realized through the stimulation of new streetfront retailing in this corridor, with zoning and height bonuses and with tax abatements.
- The riverfront is a distinctive asset and should accommodate limited restaurant and retail uses. The panel believes, however, that festival retailing would prove inappropriate to the riverfront at present.

LAND USE, TRANSPORTATION, AND URBAN DESIGN

- Besides playing its role as the primary commercial center, High Street should keep serving as the principal downtown transit route. The panel advises against completely removing automobile traffic from High Street, although public transit should get preferential treatment during peak hours. Also, the city's efforts might well be directed toward improving transportation-related signage.
- Major structural changes in the pedestrian circulation system are unnecessary, although overall improvement in the pedestrian streetscape would be desirable.
- The downtown parking exemption area should be kept, and guidelines set, to require landscaping for all parking lots in the city's core.

PLANNING PROCESS

- The panel's investigation distinctly revealed an overwhelming need for coordination of the many development initiatives, marketing ventures, and implementation strategies now underway in downtown Columbus. To this end, an organization representing all community sectors should be set up to coordinate major planning efforts.
- The city should vehemently promote the business community's participation in setting planning priorities and in assessing planning initiatives.
- The panel recommends that the formal planning process be based on the local political and business context. The process, however, should show concern for downtown retail and residential development, as well as for high-quality urban design.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

THE ESSENTIAL DYNAMIC OF COLUMBUS'S DOWNTOWN HOUSING AND RETAILING

The physical form of downtown Columbus reflects the priorities of the community. Those priorities have most frequently involved encouraging development without encroaching on private decision making.

The spread of development ensues partly from relatively modest land prices. No clear-cut, absolutely prime location stands out. Instead, a multinodal pattern of development has occurred. The advantages of this pattern have included a high overall development level and great ease of movement in the downtown. And despite the relative dispersion of major employment nodes, the linear form that has evolved has made possible a fine, efficient public transit system. The openness and flexibility of Columbus's downtown form have also permitted market-responsive development at relatively low prices—undoubtedly, a contributing element in the city's competitive drawing power.

Among the most important decisions now facing Columbus is how to capitalize on these advantages while more closely defining the conceptual structure. Resolving this issue is particularly important, as the sheer size of the city, as well as its potential for growth, together create an increasingly complex situation for local decision makers. Columbus's bonding capacity has largely been absorbed. With continued growth, infrastructure requirements are an ongoing responsibility, and the very scale of past growth now requires much more attention to maintenance. At the same time, the city expects less and less federal and state support in the years to come. Thus, it is imperative that a stricter standard of planning priorities be set up in Columbus.

ADVANTAGES AND NEEDS

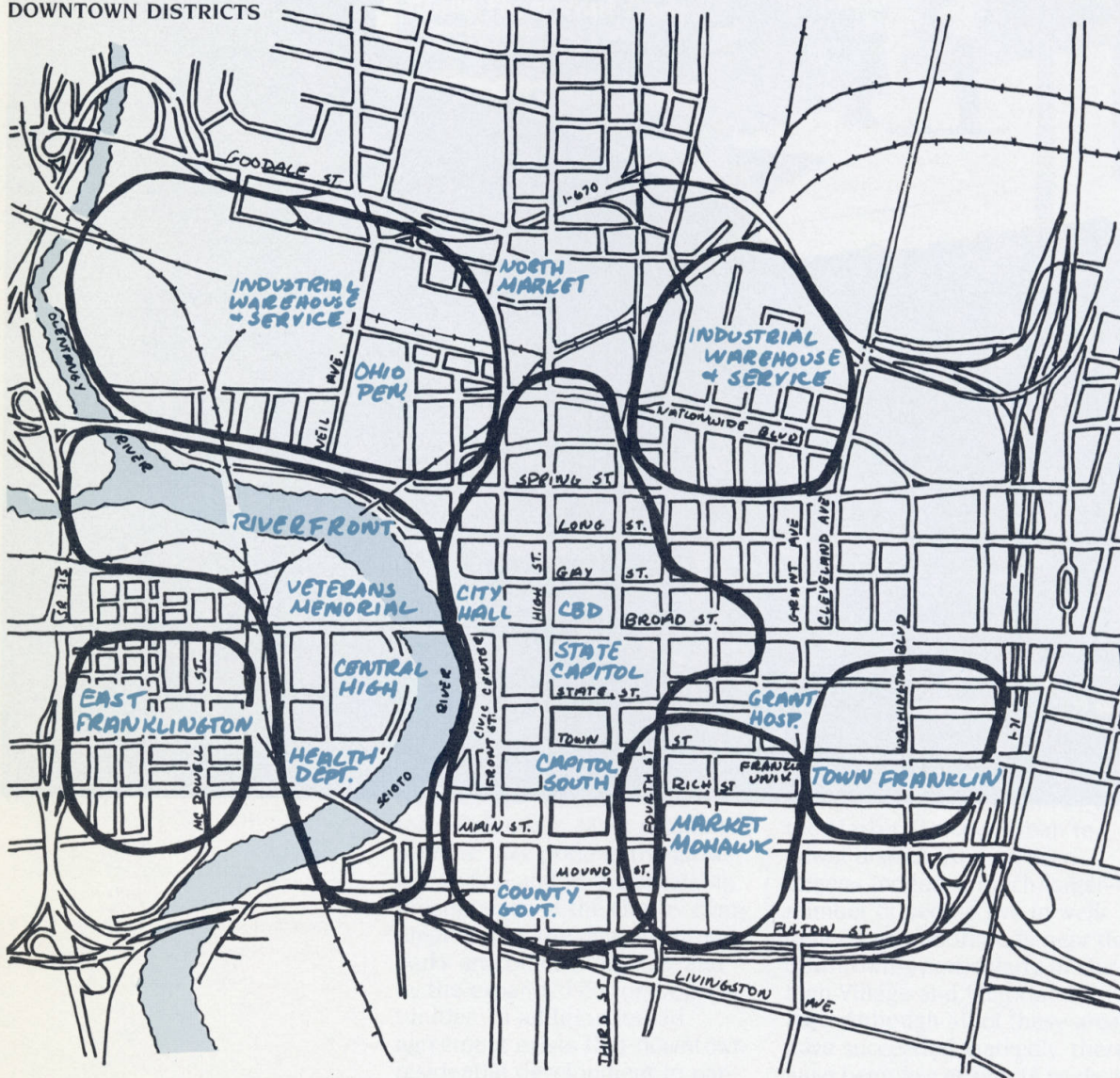
Columbus is blessed with a superb central location, an enviable highway network, and a mass transit system with few peers in municipalities of its size. These blessings, coupled with the efforts of a genuinely creative public citizenry, have yielded remarkable results. The problems of coping with remnants of the old industrial era have largely bypassed the city and its environs, and the matrix is in place for a strong participation in the new service sector and in the high-technology industries.

Within this positive vision, however, some dark clouds do appear. A net out-migration from Franklin County has occurred in all but one of the last 11 years. Indeed, Franklin County—traditionally the source of 80 percent of the growth in the Columbus metropolitan area—will likely secure only 30 percent of that growth in the next decade. The revitalization of downtown Columbus is essential if the city is to stem this tide. The identity of a city depends upon its downtown, and an attractive, vital downtown is necessary to maintain growth and to draw newcomers into the community. The expansion of the local residential base and the establishment of street-level and smaller-scale retailing are both crucial to the revitalization of downtown Columbus.

Although employment growth has been good, certainly Columbus's job development base would benefit substantially if the community could offer an extended range of housing options. As indicated in a later section of this report, a variety of opportunities exists: retrofitting of older facilities, expansion of the success stories of near-inner-city housing, development of core units on a scale sufficient to generate their own special personalities, and finally, experimentation with a housing type that is relatively new to Columbus, though familiar in other central cities: the high-rise, both rental and condominium.

So far, securing a downtown residential base has proved difficult. Possibly, the very range of suburban real estate opportunities in greater Columbus has severely limited interest in central-city housing. Several near-downtown neighborhoods, notably German Village and Victorian Village, have enjoyed extraordinary success, with low vacancy rates and with levels of price increases and of capital appreciation that compare solidly with those of most suburban locations. The success of these neighborhoods has gone relatively unnoticed, although it does demonstrate substantial market approval for residential units near the city's core.

DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS



FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Clearly, there may well be a need to prime the pump. Within this context, it is noteworthy that, although Columbus has a first-rate program for social housing—the proportion of UDAG and CDBG funds used for this purpose is remarkably high—little effort is expended toward including programs for moderate-income groups. No one individual or agency serves as a focal point for facilitating market-level housing within the city. Yet housing is a field of great importance and requires professional guidance.

Fiscally, a broad-based, stable resident population would represent a substantial advantage, not only because tax revenues would rise, but also because this kind of population's feedback to the retail base would be an obvious asset. Median income data for Columbus suggest that families generate, on the average, nearly \$3,000 in non-food merchandise purchases annually, over and above their ancillary purchases on food and in other job- and tax-generating areas. New retail development near the core could add luster to present retail facilities and serve as a catalyst for additional retail development.

Retail establishments along High Street in downtown Columbus.



THE IMPORTANCE OF DOWNTOWN RETAIL

Although strategies to promote retail development will form the subject of a detailed discussion elsewhere in this report, the panel wishes to emphasize these strategies' importance to the life and vigor of any major downtown. Reviving all of the small-scale retail of the past would prove impossible. The goal in this field, however, can and should be to secure as much retail development as possible, both to provide convenient shopping facilities for office workers and residents, and to add life to the downtown streetscape.

The development of residential uses, and that of retail opportunities, in downtown Columbus are two processes that are unavoidably intertwined. Moreover, an enormously potent synergy goes on between the two that has been overlooked while the city, very properly, has been reshaping its economy. Now is the time for an even finer level of tuning—for infill projects as well as for major restructuring. The city of Columbus is ripe for effective strategies and structures to promote retail and residential developments that will, in turn, contribute significantly to the attractiveness and energy of the downtown.



Panel members Oakleigh Thorne and Allen Patton investigate downtown housing potential with Rich Kight, supervisor of the strategic planning office.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL FOR DOWNTOWN HOUSING

According to the panel's discussions with various city officials, community leaders, and businesspersons, an overwhelmingly positive attitude reigns regarding the potential for all types of development in downtown Columbus. Most residents seem to take pride in the growing skyline and in the emerging preeminence of the city, as demonstrated by the new downtown parks and office buildings, and by the expanded cultural opportunities. In addition, broad agreement exists that downtown residential development in particular would be a positive step.

Despite these positive attitudes and good intentions, and despite a relatively clean, safe environment, almost no new housing has appeared in downtown Columbus in recent memory. Currently, about 3,000 people live in the downtown. Most of these people live in apartment buildings, in converted single-family structures, or in elderly housing in Town Franklin or in the Market Mohawk urban renewal district. And an even larger—indeed, a much larger—number of people live in well-defined neighborhoods near the downtown—particularly in German Village and Victorian Village. Although all of these areas have succeeded markedly, there have been few attempts to develop new housing. The several downtown projects proposed in the last few years have failed to materialize for a variety of reasons.

Mayor Rinehart discusses development possibilities with Thomas Murray, chairman of the panel.



Recent studies have shown that a demand, and thus a market, do exist for additional residential projects downtown. Because of an insufficient number of recent undertakings, however, a demonstration of the depth of that demand would be invalid. Most potentially interested developers are unwilling to pioneer this effort, and the public sector has offered insufficient inducements to encourage private projects.

MARKET ANALYSIS AND DEMAND

Market studies indicate that the demand for downtown housing falls into three categories. First, the 25-to-35 age group shows a strong demand for affordable housing, either rental or for-sale. Second, an existing upscale market awaits the building of relatively small but luxurious units. This market is primarily composed of two-wage-earner households without children and may overlap, either with the 25-to-35 age bracket, or with a slightly older one. This group appears to be a growing component of the market for downtown housing. Third, there is a more limited market for luxury housing among older and more affluent empty-nester households already accustomed to higher-quality dwellings. Because of the possible overlaps, pinpointing an exact market designation for any potential development is difficult. Clearly, however, despite the unknown depth of the demand, a market does exist for varied housing types.

The recent redevelopment of residential neighborhoods next to the downtown is also an encouraging sign. The rehabilitation of these districts, notably of German Village and Victorian Village, has resulted in increased investment and values and in an improvement in housing quality. In addition, these redevelopment efforts have formed a residential base on both sides of the downtown—an event that certainly enhances the potential for housing development within the inner city.

Another encouraging factor concerns the physical condition and configuration of downtown Columbus. Although the downtown is a widespread one, employment is fairly concentrated, with 42 percent of all central-city jobs located within one block of High Street. Other positive variables include an attractive riverfront, considerable open space, and relative cleanliness and safety. (Despite a widely held perception that the crime rate runs higher in the downtown than elsewhere, statistics actually show that the downtown compares favorably with the suburbs in crime levels.) These variables further enhance the potential for housing development in this locale.

OBSTACLES TO DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

During its deliberations, the panel noted several apparent impediments to housing development in central Columbus. Some of these impediments, like the relatively high cost of land in downtowns, and the difficulties of its assembly, typically halt development in the central cores of major cities. Predictably, the cost of land in downtown Columbus is higher than that of land in its suburbs and outlying areas. In addition, the recent pace of downtown office development has raised land costs to between \$10 and \$15 per square foot. As a result, any developer considering a downtown residential project must decide whether units built at a density high enough to cover these costs will still be feasible and marketable.

Site assembly may prove a somewhat more easily solved problem here than in many other cities because Columbus is physically spread-out and has a high proportion of surface parking. Even though land may be available, however, sometimes the costs may preclude residential development. Thus, site assembly continues to obstruct downtown housing, even here.

Besides cost and assembly, which have clear and direct effects on potential supply, several other factors may be seen to limit demand and, with it, the willingness of developers to embark upon residential projects here. First, the number of varied, attractive, and reasonably priced housing alternatives outside downtown Columbus is nearly overwhelming. Second, because of the excellent highway network and public transit system, the commuting times are short, averaging only 15 to 25 minutes, even from the outlying suburbs. And a third limitation for the demand for downtown housing lies in the issue of crime levels and perceived security problems. Regardless of the actual crime statistics, developers of downtown residential projects must particularly concern themselves with security, especially if they wish to attract affluent residents for high-priced units.

Even considering all of these negative determinants of both supply and demand, the panel believes that the greatest obstacle facing housing development is the lack of sufficient recent undertakings in this field to demonstrate the depth of demand. Developers and financial institutions have understandably felt reluctance to pioneer this effort. Relatively few projects have been proposed in recent years. Those that have been proposed have not been built, apparently for a variety of reasons.

In this context, the currently proposed Waterford project, a 111-unit, luxury high-rise condominium, may present a useful and needed chance to prove the depth of demand for downtown housing units. The \$11.1-million project would stand in the southwestern quadrant of downtown, near the riverfront and next to Bicentennial Park. The Waterford has already received a conditional financing commitment, which indicates the interest of at least some financial institutions in downtown residential projects. Both the public and private sectors should encourage this project in all possible ways, because it could wield a tremendous impact, by demonstrating the real demand for such housing.

STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE DOWNTOWN HOUSING

THE PANEL'S GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

In devising strategies to help the city and the private sector to stimulate downtown housing, the panel has suggested some actions that would increase the availability of suitable sites, reduce development costs, and make financing more readily obtainable. The panel members have identified, on the one hand, six housing types that apparently offer clear development opportunities, and on the other hand, several specific sites for potential residential projects.

The six types of residential development for which opportunities seem to exist are the following:

- 1) Rehabilitation of existing units;
- 2) Adaptive use of existing facilities such as warehouses, offices, and hotels;
- 3) New infill construction on a lot-by-lot basis;
- 4) New low-rise construction on larger sites;
- 5) New mid-rise construction; and
- 6) New high-rise construction.

Some of these activities have already begun, to some extent. Rehabilitation of existing units has been occurring for some time in Town Franklin and, to a lesser degree, in Old Town East. Some adaptive use has also been taking place, particularly in the northern sections of downtown, near the Ohio Center. These kinds of activity will probably continue there. Infill development, on the other hand, has been less prevalent in downtown, although some highly successful infill has been accomplished in Victorian Village, to the north of downtown. It appears that the area to be watched, both for conversions and for infill, is the quadrant lying west of Washington Street, east of Third Street, south of State Street, and north of Fulton Street. This southeast quadrant shows the greatest potential to leverage the type of success and market penetration already achieved by German Village.

In the three other fields of new construction—low-rise, mid-rise, and high-rise—fairly little has happened to date. Indeed, the mainstay of the housing supply in the central core and in the immediate vicinity has been low-rise housing involving either renovation or infill development and located in traditional neighborhoods with tree-lined streets. Some downtown sites that potentially avail themselves are large enough for low-rise projects using suburban building techniques and, possibly, thematic designs. Certainly, this development type would be economically infeasible on most downtown sites, where mid-rise or high-rise development is preferable.

The panel's interviewees reported some feeling that the addition of mid-to-high-rise housing in the forms most commonly seen in larger cities would be an asset for Columbus. Most likely, this type of housing would best be set in a densely urban environment—possibly one enhanced by a waterfront or a park, and with a high level of amenities. Although in the past, marketing high-rise units in Columbus has proved difficult, there is no particular evidence that the market segment judged to be interested in central-city living would balk at mid- or high-rise units. With the burgeoning of the Columbus skyline, the increased focus on the riverfront, and the appearance of new parks, strong indications point to the probable success of mid-to-high-rise housing in some downtown sections. Also, the increasing in-migration of residents from cities where high-rise buildings find greater acceptance, plus the potential for corporate sales and leases, should help support this type of residential development. The panel strongly encourages the city and private interests to support current and future efforts in this field.

COURSES OF ACTION

A small number of downtown residential projects might well be undertaken without the need for special actions or inducements on the part of the city. Most such projects, however, will require active encouragement, as shown by the current lack of such developments in the absence of inducements. The courses of action available to the city take basically three forms: those that make available a larger number of suitable sites for housing; those that cut development costs; and those that improve the obtainability of financing.

SITES

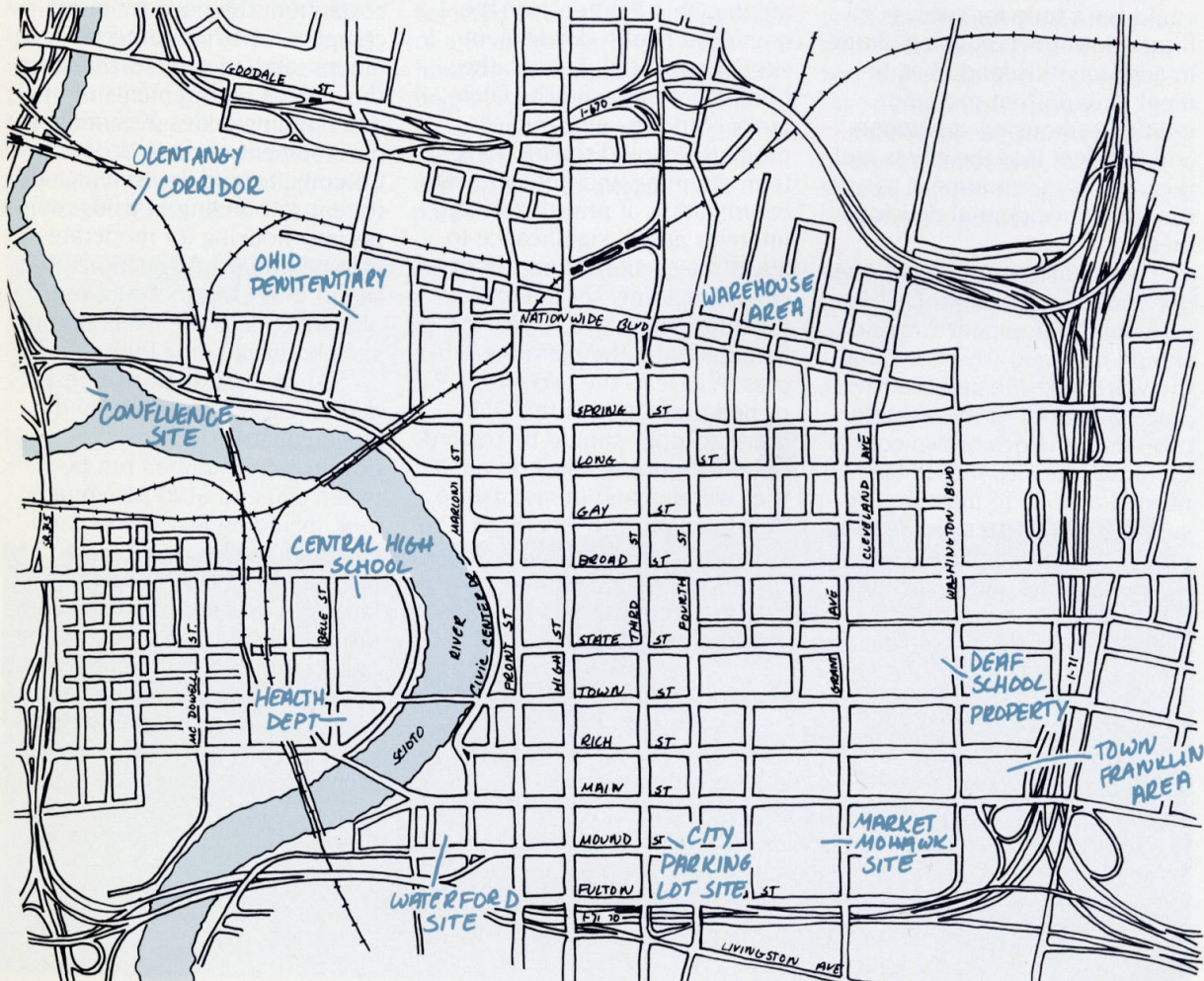
To increase the availability of appropriate sites, the panel recommends that the city:

- Place first emphasis on suitable city-owned sites, and offer such inducements as land price writedowns and below-market ground leases;
- Give support to and take control of adaptive use and infill development on sites in market-tested areas; and
- On larger-scale developments, provide, where feasible, program direction and coordination of those acquisition and planning activities that enable cost-efficient development.

To ensure that these activities bring the desired results, the city should set up specific criteria with which to decide the suitability of available sites for residential development. These criteria might well include:

- The presence of reasonable levels of residential amenities;
- Good access to downtown employment centers and essential shopping;
- Nearness to parks, riverfront, health care facilities, and cultural centers; and
- Nearness to proven downtown residential developments (to reduce marketing risk).

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES



In line with the suggested courses of action, and with the above criteria for suitability of sites, the panel has identified several sites and named an appropriate level of associated activity for each. Those sites that immediately avail themselves, and that the city can provide direct inducement for, include the site adjoining the Deaf School property; a city-owned parking lot at Third and Mound Streets; and a site at Fourth, Grant, and Fulton Streets, inside the Market Mohawk urban renewal area.

The city should focus its attention on these and other parcels, in or near the core, where development can take place quickly and without great expense or large-scale planning efforts. Project scale or size is also important in making a statement regarding the feasibility of downtown housing. For example, a phased development on city-owned or controlled property could set a tone for success in future downtown housing efforts. In addition, this kind of statement is important in demonstrating to housing consumers and builders that the city is making a strong commitment to downtown residential development.

There are several other sites, not under public control, where housing development can and should be urged. These include the Waterford site and the Riverplace site, both in the western portion of the downtown core. Certainly, the city should take all needed actions to improve the suitability of these sites, to facilitate the development of residential units there, and to ensure their success, once built.



Five additional parcels are currently under mixed public control and lie outside the downtown core. These parcels are the Ohio Penitentiary, the municipal health department site, Central High School, the Confluence site, and the Olentangy corridor—all of which properties would require long-term planning and public/private coordination. If private market interests attach significance to any of these sites, then the city should certainly set in motion the appropriate mechanics for administering the planning process. A caveat: the two city-owned properties in the Olentangy corridor should be treated on a low-priority basis because they will demand infrastructure development with city funds. Privately sponsored housing development, however, should definitely not be discouraged on any of these non-core sites.

DEVELOPMENT COSTS

High development costs in downtowns are a common problem and stem from high land costs, from the need for more complex construction techniques, and, in some cases, from the exigent requirements of fire and building codes. Assuredly, development costs in downtown Columbus could be seen as a deterrent to building housing, especially housing for moderate-income groups. Any actions that would lower these costs would, of course, raise the likelihood of such housing being built.

At present, high-rise, residential class A (concrete-and-steel) construction costs in downtown Columbus run between \$90 and \$120 per square foot, including land, while land costs run between \$10 and \$15 per square foot. At this cost level, the development of rental projects is highly unlikely, if not impossible, without some form of subsidy. Such subsidies are, of course, easier to accomplish on city-owned or -controlled sites, but land price writedowns can be applied in any case, if the writedowns are properly structured.

Regulatory changes can also lower development costs, as well as facilitate the development process itself. The panel, aware that some code reform has already taken place, urges that these changes continue and that they be fully implemented. Particularly when large sites are to be developed in places where a low-rise profile (two to four stories) is appropriate, a relaxation of the fire codes is essential to allow multistory, wood-frame construction. Moreover, if the conversion process is to continue and to succeed, the codes need modification to permit inducements for second-floor residential uses and for loft configurations.

In addition, careful attention should go toward controlling the infill and conversion processes, particularly in the southeastern and eastern sections, where they have been prevalent for some time. The municipality would do well to come up with such zoning and regulatory techniques as would ensure that housing opportunities are preserved in these areas. Recently, many available sites and structures have gone to low-rise office and service-business uses.

FINANCING

The availability of suitable financing remains an essential element in any type of development. Improvement is certainly needed in this arena, if residential development in downtown Columbus is to be invited. Even with land price writedowns on selected sites, the development of any middle-income rental housing will require financing at below-market rates. The panel recommends that the city promote the formation of banking consortiums to award this financing.

Also, the appropriate officials might well investigate the possible use of the so-called 103B program for tax-exempt financing of housing. This program is being used effectively by major cities throughout the United States. Through this mechanism, municipalities and/or properly designated housing authorities can issue tax-exempt revenue bonds, the proceeds of which can be used to lower significantly the cost of housing. The bonds can be insured through the FHA and through private mortgage insurance. The program requires that 20 percent of the units financed must be reserved for low- and moderate-income residents; the remainder can be offered at market rates. This stipulation has not been an obstacle elsewhere, and no apparent reason exists for it to be a problem in Columbus.

With regard to higher-priced and for-sale housing: without a doubt, the conditional commitment for the Waterford project presents an encouraging sign of institutional interest. Future projects, however, may require additional assistance, if not direct subsidies. The city should take all appropriate steps to facilitate financing for this development type. Again, this help should include the promotion of banking consortiums.



The Ohio Penitentiary is the site of proposed development west of the downtown core.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS ON HOUSING

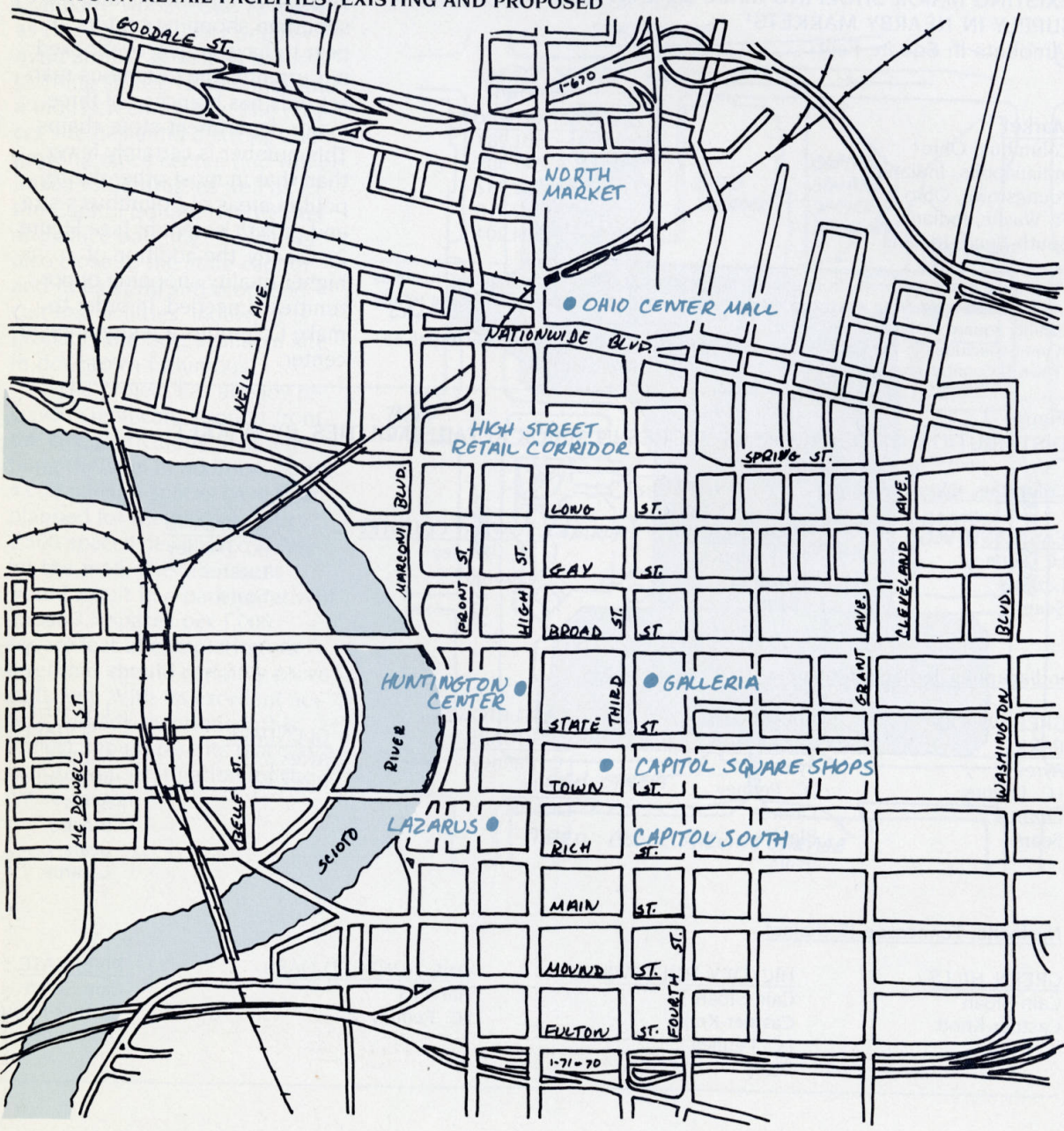
The city should indeed take note of the emerging market for additional downtown housing and aid efforts to meet this demand in whatever ways it can manage. The demand is broad, and calls for a variety of housing types, to serve a range of buyers and renters. In the community's apparent consensus, residential development would enhance the quality of the downtown and of the city as a whole. Development appears to be stalled, however, by a reluctance to pioneer this market. Thus, the public sector must devise and implement sufficient alternatives to induce the desired development level. The panel recommends that the city pursue all available means to accomplish this goal, and in particular, that it concentrate its efforts on stimulating initial developments that demonstrate the demand.

RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

An exciting, diverse array of retail opportunities is one of the major elements that make a downtown a vital and interesting place. The distinct lack of such an array in downtown Columbus is both an obvious and a troubling problem. In the face of overwhelming growth in other project types—office buildings, convention centers, and cultural facilities—Columbus has seen a steady decline in retail activity. Since 1950, downtown retail activity has plummeted by 60 percent, from 659 stores in 1950 to only 255 in 1980. Lazarus is the only major department store in downtown Columbus, and its space has been reduced substantially in recent years. Unsurprisingly, this decline has been accompanied by the expansion of suburban retail, as the suburban population has flourished. But because of its excellent access, downtown Columbus probably occupies a better position than do other cities' downtowns, to reverse this trend and reassume its dominant role in retailing.

In devising strategies for promoting downtown retail in Columbus, the panel primarily discussed four major issues: the overall demand for expansion of retail facilities, the implications of the proposed Capitol South Mall, the importance of the High Street retail corridor, and the potential for retail along the riverfront and in its vicinity.

DOWNTOWN RETAIL FACILITIES; EXISTING AND PROPOSED



DEMAND FOR EXPANDED RETAIL FACILITIES

A recent study investigated retail markets in a region including Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia. The primary aim of this study was to uncover markets that were probably undersupplied with regional shopping-center square footage. Several demographic variables came into play in determining the amount of space that might reasonably be absorbed in the subject mar-

kets. The analysis showed that Columbus is now one-half million square feet undersupplied with regional shopping centers. The researchers made this determination after including the 1 million square feet of space for the proposed downtown Capitol South retail market. Figure 1 shows how Columbus's situation compares with those of nearby retail markets. From this analysis, the reader can see that metropolitan Columbus can and will support another major retail facility.

More specifically, there is a clear demand in the Columbus market for shopping of a high-end quality. The results of the panel's interviews consistently emphasized this need, and the suburban shopping centers appear to have largely overlooked it. Currently, the Columbus market only has branches of three major department-store chains. This number is certainly fewer than that in most other metropolitan areas of Columbus's size and growth potential (see Figure 2). Clearly, the addition of higher-quality shopping opportunities is needed, in order to make Columbus a regional retail center.

Figure 1
EXISTING MAJOR SHOPPING MALL SUPPLY, COMPARED WITH SUPPLY IN NEARBY MARKETS¹
(Amounts in Square Feet)

Market	Amount Over or Under
Columbus, Ohio ²	- 501,283
Indianapolis, Indiana	+ 641,505
Youngstown, Ohio	+ 232,332
Ft. Wayne, Indiana	+ 569,910
South Bend, Indiana	+ 594,204

¹This table presents results from a much larger study. It offers the "difference" figure as an indicator suggesting whether a market is over- or undersupplied with major retail-facility square footage.

²Centers included in the Columbus market figure were Eastland, Northland, Westland, Town & Country, and Capitol South.

Figure 2
DISTRIBUTION OF DEPARTMENT STORES IN MAJOR RETAIL FACILITIES, BY MARKET

Columbus, Ohio (3 Chains)

<u>EASTLAND</u>	<u>NORTHLAND</u>	<u>TOWN & COUNTRY</u>	<u>WESTLAND</u>
J.C. Penney	J.C. Penney	J.C. Penney	J.C. Penney
Lazarus	Lazarus	Lazarus	Lazarus
Sears	Sears		Sears

Indianapolis, Indiana (6 Chains)

<u>GREENWOOD PARK</u>	<u>WASHINGTON SQUARE</u>	<u>CASTLETOWN SQUARE</u>	<u>GLENDALE</u>	<u>LAFAYETTE SQUARE</u>
Ayres	Ayres	J.C. Penney	Ayres	Murphy
J.C. Penney	J.C. Penney	Kahl's	Block's	J.C. Penney
Lazarus	Lazarus	Lazarus		Ayres
Sears	Block's	Sears		Block's
	Sears			Sears
				Lazarus

Nashville, Tennessee (5 chains)

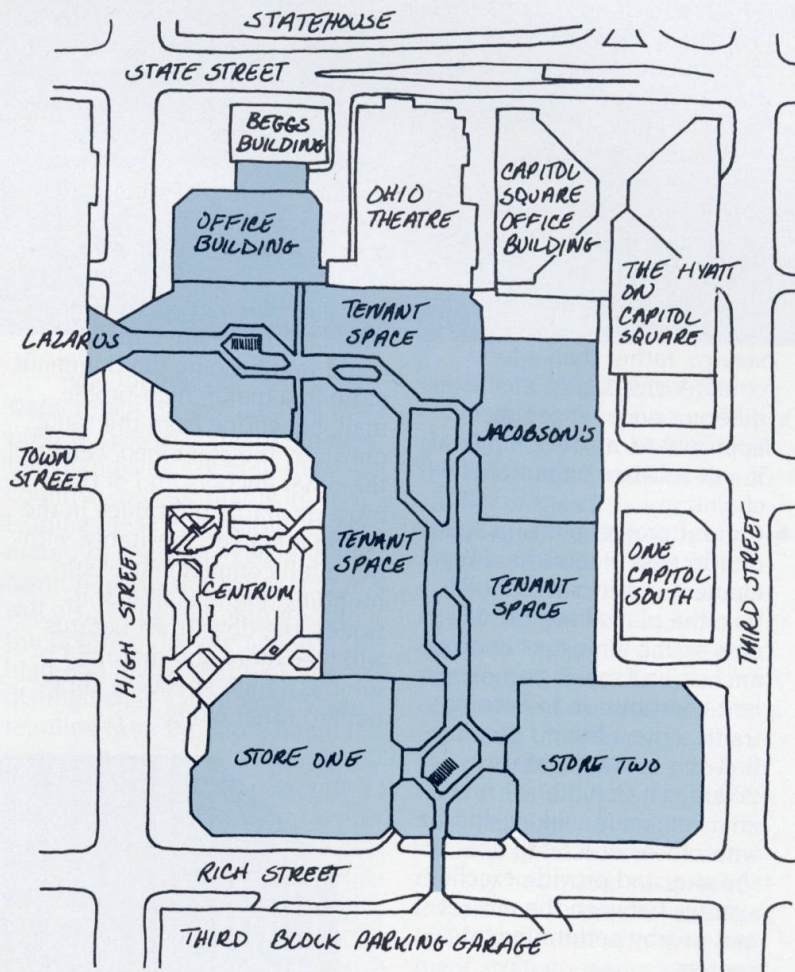
<u>GREEN HILLS</u>	<u>HICKORY HOLLOW</u>	<u>ONE HUNDRED OAKS</u>	<u>RIVERGATE</u>
Cain-Sloan	Cain-Sloan	Harvey's	Cain-Sloan
Castner-Knott	Castner-Knott	J.C. Penney	Castner-Knott
	J.C. Penney		J.C. Penney
	Sears		

CAPITOL SOUTH

The most likely beneficiary of the current undersupply of retail facilities in the Columbus market is the proposed Capitol South Mall. This project, to be developed by The Taubman Company, will include as many as three good-quality department stores, as well as fashion clothing stores, restaurants, and a multiscreen theater. The project site lies amid a strong and growing office center, and will be linked to Lazarus, as well as to the Capitol Square Hyatt Hotel and office building. The site is also close to the state capitol and to existing and proposed cultural facilities. Indeed, it is probably the best available site in downtown Columbus.

The project has already received significant support from the city, particularly in assembling the site. In addition, about 4,000 parking spaces have been planned for the project, with 2,500 spaces designated solely for the mall. This allotment would result in a parking ratio of about 2.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet at completion—a level that should certainly prove sufficient. With its excellent access, already mentioned, this project should take its place as a major retail destination for the entire region.

CAPITOL SOUTH MASTER PLAN



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROJECT PROGRAM

At this time, Capitol South has an extraordinary chance to succeed. The program for the project encompasses several elements that will act as key determinants of its position in the regional market. These features arise primarily out of the following four considerations:

- A high-end orientation is critical. The quality of the anchor department stores will be pivotal, as will the mix of stores, and its significant difference from that in the suburban centers.
- The quality of the food presentation also merits close attention. Current plans include sit-down restaurants, with minimal emphasis on take-out service, rather than a food court. A diversity of menus in differing price ranges seems appropriate, as does minimal, if any, reliance on national chains.
- Current project plans include a multiscreen cinema as a key element in the merchandise mix: the plans have the cinema acting almost as another anchor, and making an excellent contribution to evening traffic. (There are no existing first-run movie theaters in downtown Columbus.) A cinema can share parking spaces with offices and retail uses on the site, and provide excellent synergy between the project and nearby performing arts centers.
- Convenient lobby connections with several office buildings, both present and proposed, as well as connections to the Capitol Square Hyatt and to potential residential or commercial structures, will lead customers to the mall and lend an urban, mixed-use character to downtown Columbus's projects.

LAZARUS'S PARTICIPATION: GAINS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Another well-considered project feature is the proposed link to the Lazarus store. Both facilities will benefit from this connection: Capitol South from the addition of a major anchor tenant, and Lazarus from greatly strengthened regional drawing power. The effective combination of these two facilities could alone virtually assure downtown Columbus its rightful position as the regional retail leader. In order to join in this effort substantially, however, Lazarus will have to make a major investment—estimated at \$20 million or more—in the downtown store and its parking facilities. Seemingly, this investment will be justified by the benefits to be gained, and by the prevention of the alternative—continued deterioration of the downtown retail core, with possibly the eventual closing of the Lazarus store.

Through its combination with Capitol South, Lazarus could well become the dominant store in a major, high-profile mall, benefiting from the traffic drawn by the combined weight of the other anchors and of the most desirable boutiques in the regional market. Inevitably, without a full complement of surrounding, high-fashion boutiques, the downtown Lazarus will lose more and more of Columbus's high-spending shoppers to other cities.

Also through its participation in Capitol South, the downtown store can reinforce its position as a full-line, high-end flagship for all of the Lazarus stores in Ohio and Indiana. Moreover, as the evident flagship, it can set the tone for merchandise presentation throughout the region.

But full participation in the project would require that Lazarus rehabilitate and reactivate its parking structures. Increased use of these structures would draw Capitol South traffic through the Lazarus store. Of course, the proposed walkway over High Street, connecting Lazarus to Capitol South, will be an ideal conveyor of pedestrian traffic between the two components. Unlike a simple glass sky bridge, which would represent a wide gap in commercial activity between Capitol South and Lazarus's second floor, this bridge will be lined with shops on both sides. Its 60-foot width would mean a major expense to Lazarus, but it would offer the store the desired, virtually ideal link with the mall.

Lazarus's flagship store on High Street would undergo extensive renovation as part of the Capitol South plan.





Panel members George Sternlieb and Andrew Ham interview Lazarus's president, Art Handshy.

Another benefit to Lazarus will be that Capitol South will also bring substantial new activity to High Street, thereby replacing idle uses opposite the store's main doorways with an entrance to a major new project and with associated foot traffic.

As its contribution, the downtown Lazarus will undoubtedly bring to Capitol South the largest, most established anchor that the mall could secure. It will bring the region's leading retail name to the project, and with it, shopping patterns established throughout the region in the course of the store's long history on this site.

As a member of Federated Department Stores, Lazarus will bring access to some of the best merchandising talent in the country—access, that is, to the leading ideas in retailing, as generated in major markets and in fashion-leadership cities. Lazarus will also bring to Capitol South the potential for the needed high-end image that typically distinguishes varied downtown retailing from the more familiar, suburban retail.

Perhaps most importantly, Lazarus could help Capitol South attract appropriate, high-end department stores to the two remaining department store locations in the Capitol South plan. If added to Capitol South, several high-end stores new to the region would likely seek multiple locations within the Columbus market, and Lazarus may already be in a position to help them find sites in appropriate centers. In this way, a new store could open a second and perhaps a third branch in the suburbs, after establishing a position in the downtown market.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Besides the development of the Capitol South Mall in itself, the panel has examined the possibility of the city's limiting development of potentially competing retail in the fringes of Columbus, in order to improve Capitol South Mall's chances for success. The panel advises that the city will find this move in its best interest as a partner in this mall, and that, therefore, the city should take whatever action it deems necessary to ensure that no other regional malls are developed prematurely. To date, the city has made a substantial investment in the project, using tax dollars; thus, this development strategy seems completely justified. Capitol South Mall will occupy an unusually strong position from which to meet a currently unmet demand, both in terms of regional shopping-center square footage, and of high-quality retail facilities.

There has also been some concern that retail space on the fringes of Columbus continues to grow at a rapid pace. This is indeed true; however, the suburban space now being developed differs completely in product type from that being proposed at Capitol South. Recent suburban shopping developments have primarily kept to a smaller scale, and been marketed as convenience facilities. Capitol South will be a substantial, regional retail facility, and the Columbus market has not added any kind of regional shopping facility since 1969. Thus, apparently, Capitol South's timing should prove conducive to its success.

Current project plans show a reasonable attempt to relate to the surrounding streets, where possible. Capitol South, however, will not likely create true streetfront retailing. The proposed strategy is appropriate and acceptable, if not ideal, because the project must compete with suburban malls for suburban shoppers. Nevertheless, the streetfront impact of the mall deserves careful design attention, with the aim of preserving an active pedestrian environment.

THE HIGH STREET CORRIDOR AND STREETFRONT RETAILING

Following its opening, Capitol South will be the dominant force in retailing in downtown Columbus. As previously noted, the principal aim of the project will be to draw clientele from the suburbs. Most will travel by automobile to a parking garage and will have no real exposure to the surrounding streetfront retail. When Capitol South has reached full lease-up, and when shoppers more frequently head downtown, more and more of the available retail spaces along High Street will find occupants. While not directly drawing from Capitol South's traffic, these retailers will benefit from the improved reputation of downtown retailing; they would be unlikely to take or retain their locations if Capitol South remained unbuilt.

The city may wish to take major steps to promote streetfront retailing. Although Columbus has infrequently practiced this type of specific development regulation, the city may now find it appropriate to offer incentives and disincentives to streetfront retailing in given locations. Such incentives, which may include zoning and height bonuses, tax abatements, and linkage requirements, would go toward including retail or restaurant uses at grade. The effect of the incentives could be enhanced by using similar measures to discourage off-grade retail, which might otherwise threaten to absorb potential tenants for streetfront space.

Furthermore, the panel recommends that such requirements, incentives, or disincentives be applied to a closely designated area, such as that stretch of High Street that runs through the downtown core. Government buildings should, of course, have to meet the same criteria.

The intersection of Broad and High Streets—traditionally the center of retailing in downtown Columbus.





OTHER INFLUENCES ON RETAIL ACTIVITY

CULTURAL FACILITIES

Proposed and existing cultural and entertainment facilities can enhance the likelihood of success of Capitol South and other retail installations proposed for downtown Columbus. By attracting the evening traffic so critical to full-menu restaurants, performance events at the Palace, at the Ohio Theater, and at other proposed venues can complement the character and drawing power of the multi-screen cinemas proposed in Capitol South. These events can also inspire the downtown workforce to remain downtown for dinner and entertainment after work. Evening activities can enhance the downtown's reputation throughout the region, as well as Columbus's reputation among cities.

Culturally oriented performance spaces generally consume both capital and operating subsidies. The panel recommends that the city persuade any proposed facilities to locate in the downtown, along High Street and close to Capitol South, whenever possible. The new performing arts center put forward by the state should receive careful study, to determine the exact size that would best complement the sizes of the existing facilities and enable Columbus to attract the widest possible range of cultural events and activities. The operation of all major downtown performance spaces, including the Ohio Theater, the Palace, and the future state performing arts center might then fall under a single operating authority, which would coordinate management and administration, minimize total subsidy, ensure cooperation, and avoid direct competition.

OFFICE BUILDINGS

High Street is clearly the downtown's primary commercial axis, which has its centerpoint at the state capitol, extends north to the Ohio Center, and runs south to the county government center. This "axis" image should be reinforced at every possible opportunity. High Street should be seen as a valuable commercial address for retail, hotel, and office uses. Accordingly, high-density office development, public or private, should be urged to align itself close to High Street. Government office projects—federal, state, county, and city—should, ideally, occupy infill sites several blocks north or south of Broad Street, in order to present the more central sites as inducements to prospective private projects.

The next government building would probably best stand at the southern end of the High Street axis, in order to attract traffic to Capitol South, until the project stands on its own legs. Subsidized, internal food-service operations should be discouraged in this government building and in all other projects.



SKYWAYS

Pedestrian walkways connecting buildings over public streets can form important links between related uses, as when they join convention centers with hotels, multiple office buildings with single-tenant ones, and parking garages with commercial uses. In Columbus, a more generalized skywalk system—although a convenience to pedestrians in bad weather—would likely detract from streetfront retailing, which is a more appropriate goal at present.

To enhance the quality of High Street as a commercial address, the panel suggests that street-level pedestrian activity be directed along High Street's sidewalks, with special exceptions made only for tunnels and second-level connections. Capitol South, intended as a special environment able to compete with suburban shopping malls, would be just such an exception. Improvements to the sidewalks and streetscapes, as well as storefront design criteria, can make for attractive street-level pedestrian paths that need little reliance on off-grade connections.

Whenever developers propose walkways or tunnels connecting commercial uses in downtown Columbus, these links' impacts on the streetfront spaces as commercial addresses deserve close attention.

RETAIL ON THE RIVERFRONT

Recent years have seen substantial effort devoted to the improvement of the riverfront. The effort has clearly paid off: the area is now a highly attractive public asset, and represents a commercial environment that cannot be overlooked. Limited retail and restaurant uses would enhance this environment and generate revenues. The proposed floating restaurant seems to the panel an excellent idea, and riverfront and in-park concession programs, offering food and impulse purchases to park users, would also be good for the riverfront. If these concession programs grow into more permanent destinations, they will do so through acquiring a distinct clientele and thereby avoiding direct competition with downtown retail, restaurant, and entertainment tenants.

The panel has noted several proposals for festival retail marketplaces on various sites in the riverfront area. This type of retailing has recently achieved renown as a boon to the downtowns of a number of cities. Festival retailing, however, generally gets its support from tourist activity with superregional market draws. Consequently, the panel sees it as inappropriate for any sites in the downtown core of Columbus at this time. Undoubtedly, as the overall levels and varieties of activities increase in the downtown, the concept may earn reexamination.



The state capitol serves as a focal point for downtown Columbus.

NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL

Grocery and convenience shopping necessary to residential districts would remain inappropriate to the core of the central business district within the next few years. Nonetheless, the city should encourage convenience retailing in developing in-town neighborhoods, such as Town Franklin and Market Mohawk. A shopping center on Livingston Avenue can meet the basic needs of the present in-town residents, while probably also serving the new residents of any high-rise downtown or riverfront projects that might be built. Gourmet and specialty shops in Capitol South could also provide conveniences for residents of the business district.

LAND USE, TRANSPORTATION, AND URBAN DESIGN

Columbus has as its most striking physical features 1) the dramatic downtown skyline along the Scioto River; 2) the presence of the state capitol building as a focal point for downtown; and 3) a comprehensive, rational highway system that structures the regional land use pattern and focuses circulation on the downtown. In evaluating the potential for various forms of development, the panel found it essential to examine this potential in the light of these salient physical features.

Buses line the High Street retail corridor.

ACCESSIBILITY

THE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

Downtown Columbus is superbly served by a system of radial interstate highways and arterial roadways that converge upon the downtown. These radials, in turn, are tied together, both by the circumferential roadways that define the downtown itself (the "Inner Belt") and by those that surround the larger metropolitan area (I-270). This system has evolved and been refined in Columbus, to a point perhaps unmatched in any other U.S. city of similar size.

The relative ease of travel to and from the downtown from almost any point in the region carries great importance, as does the relative freedom from traffic congestion, particularly for a growing metropolitan area with a rapidly changing central business district (CBD). The panel has reviewed the plans for further refinement of this system, and the plans appear to be justified.

The accessibility of the interstate highway system and, hence, of the land uses within the heart of the downtown is also particularly well implemented, using one-way pairs of east/west and north/south roadways. This system enables traffic to flow during the peak hours quickly and with little congestion, onto the Inner Belt, where it is distributed onto the radial highways that give access to the distant reaches of the metropolitan area.



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The public transit system within the Columbus region appears to be well-managed, clean, efficient, and adequately financed by the community. Many of the system's features would excite the envy of far larger and more mature metropolitan areas. Notable in this regard are the park-and-ride facilities; the express bus lanes; the elimination of fares within the downtown; and the several plans, such as those for increasing the capacity for express movements on major corridors, for adding terminals in the downtown, and for improving transit/pedestrian interfaces within the center city. The system's abilities, first, to attract ever-greater patronage over the last 10 years, and, second, to operate on a sound financial basis while upgrading its overall capital facilities and equipment, are particularly noteworthy.

As Columbus's downtown keeps expanding as the office hub of the region, most likely, the demand for public transit access to the core will also keep growing. This phenomenon, in turn, will generate the patronage needed to justify implementing an expanded transit system, including light rail corridors and high-capacity downtown terminals.

The panel has reviewed the plans for a transit mall along High Street in downtown Columbus. Clearly, the basic idea is sound, and certainly, it is one that should not be dispensed with lightly. Certain modifications to the concept, however, demand consideration. Specifically, High Street should remain the principal route for downtown transit movements. This modification would permit access to centers of office employment, and to the expanded retail uses concentrated along this corridor, without interfering with the downtown traffic-circulation "loop." The present system of one-way pairs of streets results in traffic flows around and parallel to High Street and appears to function efficiently. Thus, the system should remain as it is, without the proposed redirection of the buses off High Street.

Some doubt arises, however, about the necessity of removing automobile traffic from High Street altogether, although public transit certainly deserves preferential treatment during peak periods. Likewise, the panel deems it undesirable or unnecessary to reduce the width of the street pavement from four to two lanes or to widen the sidewalks to 27 feet, as proposed in the transit mall concept. On the other hand, upgrading the overall pedestrian streetscape in the existing 20-foot sidewalk space, plus making adjustments in the location and distribution of bus stops, would both be desirable moves. Also, the panel found it apparent that wider knowledge of the free-fare system in the downtown should be promoted.

PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION SYSTEM

At present, the sidewalks function as the primary pedestrian circulation system in downtown Columbus, within the public rights-of-way and paralleling the public streets. At the same time, several interior block connections have emerged, both within certain buildings and along minor public streets and alleys. Also, proposals have arisen for additional mid-block pedestrian overpasses. The panel endorses pursuing a fairly flexible and development-responsive system of pedestrian circulation that employs all of these opportunities, instead of seeking to enforce a rigid and highly structured overall pattern.

Pedestrian movement is now safe and convenient. The sidewalks are sufficiently wide and in reasonably good condition. Efforts should be made, however, to make further upgrades of the downtown streetscape, with special attention to expanded street tree planting, improved public signage, and consistent quality of pavement surfaces. Upper-level pedestrian connections should only be considered on a case-by-case basis, and must be planned to avoid blocking light and views or discouraging pedestrian use of sidewalks. The proposed connection across High Street from Capitol South Mall to the Lazarus Department Store definitely exemplifies a justifiable connection. Similarly, connections leading from parking garages across streets and into buildings served by those garages merit encouragement.

The Ohio Center and the adjoining Hyatt Hotel, major activity centers at the northern end of High Street.



Generally, the panel finds that no one part of downtown Columbus is particularly inaccessible, and that, overall, no sections are too widely dispersed to deter pedestrian travel between them. Even the Central High School site on the west side of the Scioto River lies within easy walking distance of the downtown office and retail core. In time, continued development will fill in sites between some of the more distant major activity centers, and thus eliminate the present sense of dispersion. In this regard, insufficient justification exists for a "high-tech" people mover system for the downtown. The free-fare bus zone in the downtown, and a rational pattern of bus movement into downtown and between major activity centers, should together suffice to supplement pedestrian movement, without the need arising for a costly people mover.

PARKING AVAILABILITY

The city's present policy of relying on the private sector to provide parking, in response to market demand, is a good one. The parking exemption area for the downtown retail and office core, for instance, should be retained. (This area extends along both the Broad Street and High Street corridors, within the Inner Belt and east of the Scioto River.) If lower-density office development were to emerge along the edges of this core, the building of on-site parking in association with such development should become a requirement. Also, standards should be set that require both internal and perimeter landscaping for all downtown parking lots.

The city should hold back from assuming a more active role in providing off-street parking in the downtown, except as this parking may relate to given public facilities or to facilities in which the city has a direct public interest. Two current examples of such situations are 1) the city's own office buildings, for which, like any other property owner, the city should take the necessary measures to ensure that its employees and constituents have adequate parking; and 2) the Capitol South Mall, a joint public/private venture in which the city holds a vested interest. Additionally, the panel does not endorse the idea of a differential property tax system to hasten the adaptation of surface parking lots to more intensive uses. In fact, this type of system fails to affect the actual demand for development and may even distort the effective operation of the downtown land market.

PHYSICAL PLANNING AND DESIGN

THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The city of Columbus possesses a strong physical framework for planning. Its built environment uses a formal grid plan, which has been superimposed upon the features of the natural environment. This plan has been reinforced by a well-conceived infrastructure system, consisting of both utility and transportation networks. Development is accommodated within this framework, then fine-tuned in the marketplace.

The development of downtown Columbus has primarily been shaped by two elements—one natural and the other artificial—the Scioto River and Capitol Square. The river has contained development east of its natural course, but it has also given the city a major open-space resource. The curving course of the river makes for a dramatic foreground for the city, enabling its skyline to be seen to great advantage from the west. Of course, floodplain issues relating to the river have also constrained development. But now, apparently, studies by the Army Corps of Engineers will facilitate construction of a levee on the west bank, enabling future development there.

East of the river, Capitol Square is the most prominent feature of the manmade plan. Particularly recently, it has served as a magnet for development, which now aligns itself in radii from the square, along the grid system. This growth pattern should be promoted, although development elsewhere should not be precluded. The formal layout of this grid/radii plan contributes greatly to the character of development in the downtown.



The Huntington Bank Building is an important instance of the new development surrounding Capitol Square (right).

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

A Newly Important Planning Element. Mixed-use development can help to ensure an efficient and viable downtown. Supporting uses should be programmed, planned, and facilitated as necessary to bring about user convenience and to eliminate unnecessary trips within the downtown. Although, in Columbus, no proposed development will likely fail solely because of imperfect land use planning, the real success of such downtown housing neighborhoods as Town Franklin may depend upon the provision, at a minimum, of such ancillary uses as convenience retail. And locations with insufficient nearby population to support these ancillary uses may need transportation service to more remote facilities.

Mixed-use planning can be achieved within a single development, or within the context of the whole downtown. It concerns itself with both the juxtaposition of uses and the diversity of types within each use. Housing, for instance, must be convenient to retail, recreational, educational, and other uses, but equally, the housing component must itself offer a variety of options: low-density housing, high-rise units, loft configurations, and the like.



Potential for Adaptive Use. One way to promote mixed-use development is through reusing existing buildings. A mix of structures of differing styles and ages enriches the character of a city. Such structures need not be either architecturally or historically significant to justify their retention: retention and reuse may be justified economically and may, in fact, constitute the only way in which certain development aims can be met. Columbus has a diverse stock of public and private buildings of varied architectural styles and functions. Obvious landmarks, like the Capitol Building, the LeVeque Tower, and the Ohio Theater, stand out, but also, industrial and warehouse buildings, 19th-century houses, and special retail facilities—particularly on High Street—can and should be woven into the fabric of downtown Columbus.

In order to retain such structures, a private or public interest often must change the buildings' current uses or introduce a mix of uses. Apparently, however, Columbus's zoning and building codes inhibit both reuse and adaptation to new building functions. This matter calls for detailed examination and for appropriate modifications to the codes.

A PROBLEM IN COORDINATING DOWNTOWN ACTIVITY CENTERS

In Columbus, many people seem to perceive that downtown distances are greater than they actually are, and these perceptions may influence whether or how people will travel between locations. When the success of an existing or proposed development depends upon its accessibility to and from other sites, a project team might appropriately consider introducing special public transport services to link these land use nodes. Such services may be necessary only temporarily, but a possible need for permanent service should not be ruled out. Fare structures should also get consideration in the planning and implementation of these services.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Detailed architectural guidelines are controversial planning tools and do not appear warranted in Columbus at this time. Urban design guidelines, however, could wield an even greater impact, both by unifying the downtown and by enhancing its appearance. Two examples of potential guidelines are 1) standards for landscaped treatment of public rights-of-way and of undeveloped properties, and 2) parameters for public and private signage. Today, the impressive image of downtown Columbus is diminished by the expanses of unlandscaped streets and of surface parking lots that surround the development core. The appearances of downtown streets and parking lots can be enhanced tremendously with landscaping. Measures ought to be taken to encourage or require these efforts.

The city of Columbus has admirably managed, through practice or ordinance, to control advertising signs to a degree seldom seen in other metropolitan areas. Signage related to the transportation system, however, should be enhanced and coordinated throughout the downtown.

THE PLANNING PROCESS IN COLUMBUS

Few American cities have had the kind of chance to influence the long-term character and development of their communities that Columbus has now. Its business leaders have long been involved in civic improvements, cultural affairs, and charitable concerns. In fact, Columbus embodies the American entrepreneurial spirit at its best. Not only have its leading business families been involved in development, sports, and public affairs on a national scale, but also, a new and younger cadre of national leadership has emerged from the Columbus community. A new generation of Columbus families and businesspeople is creating nationwide business enterprises in food merchandising, real estate development, and the service and information-processing industries.

The city has been able to avoid the worst of the "Rust-belt's" economic woes because of its diversified economy—its functions as the state capital and as the home of Ohio State University and of several insurance-industry headquarters. In addition, Columbus has gained national attention for its energetic approach to managing city government and public affairs—a formidable task at a time when city public service requirements are expanding, and traditional revenue sources are drying up.

For all of its blessings, however, Columbus is going through a crisis of sorts, a crisis few American cities have ever had the luxury and opportunity to resolve. Despite or because of its strengths as a community, Columbus has reached a plateau on its way to becoming a great city. Its leaders are searching for a direction, a formula for reaching this goal.

Without undertaking a complex public planning process, but with notable public/private cooperation and leadership, Columbus has developed its downtown; improved its waterfront; provided utilities in advance of suburban growth; built roads, an airport, and an excellent mass transit network such as few communities enjoy; and brought into being cultural and educational facilities that are well endowed and supported by its citizens. It is also a city of established historic villages and neighborhoods, and of rich architectural fabric. Signs are appearing of growing interest in living in urban neighborhoods, in renovation of loft spaces and warehouses, and in revitalization of commercial storefronts. These achievements are indeed enviable ones.

Panel members Richard Ward and Roger Kallman interview Philip DeVore of the strategic planning office.



ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS

In seeking to devise an appropriately expanded planning process for Columbus, the panel found it useful to examine and refer to the planning processes, practices, and organizations of other, similarly sized American cities. Most of these cities use at least one of the following models:

The first model centers upon a cabinet-level senior staff official, either in the mayor's or the chief executive's office, responsible for coordinating public support and resources for economic development and downtown development, and relied upon as a link with the business community. In some cities, this official is entitled "deputy mayor," in others, "administrator" or "director of development." The key feature of this model is this individual's immediate access to the chief executive, and his or her ability to speak for the latter on development matters as a member of the immediate cabinet. True, some public chief executives play this role themselves from time to time, or assign it to one of their senior staff. But consistent, daily attention is needed to cope with the complex development issues of any large community, and most chief executives using this method delegate this responsibility to a trusted and politically sensitive development professional. Two cities now taking this approach are New Haven and New York.

THE NEED FOR ORGANIZATION

Not many big U.S. cities can continue to prosper for long without some degree of coordinated public/private planning on a formal basis. As mentioned above, Columbus has reached a stage of growth, a plateau, on which the current privileges of informal coordination and informal planning will cease to reveal the necessary solutions and directions.

Rarely today does a community of more than 300,000 population, such as Columbus, lack a formal, well-coordinated development planning process. Also, rarely does a big-city downtown lack some form of land development, marketing, and urban design guidance, not to mention a professionally staffed organization trained to deal with developers, architects, real estate brokers, and consultants on downtown matters.



Thomas Murray, chairman of the panel, responds to questions following the public presentation.

A second model uses a privately financed, chief-executive-supported downtown development organization; this group acts, in effect, as a marketing agent for local downtown development. The typical organization of this kind also functions as a catalyst for and participant in planning efforts and initiatives, and performs liaison between the public and private sectors. Such organizations are professionally staffed, serve as resources for downtown market data, and spend considerable time marketing the downtown image to local and out-of-town groups. Although a few such organizations dwell within chambers of commerce, the most effective ones are separate from the local chambers, although obviously, board memberships will overlap. The signal feature of these organizations is that they focus staff energies on downtown issues and represent the downtown business community in its dealings with local government. In some cities, they also manage mall districts, transit and parking districts, and retail/pedestrian malls, while also promoting downtown activities and events. Examples of this model include the Denver Partnership in downtown Denver; Tulsa, Unlimited, in Tulsa; Central Atlanta Progress; and the Hartford and Minneapolis Downtown Councils.

The third approach emphasizes the liaison and coordinating role between the public and private sectors, with particular reference to development matters. Typically, it calls for the creation of a legal, quasi-public/private partnership with a board appointed by the mayor or chief executive. In some cases, the city council appoints one of its members to the board. These partnerships usually have professional staffs and, often, funds from the local government or from a taxing district.

This third approach holds an obvious appeal, in that the business community benefits from representation by its peers and by professional development staff, while the staff takes on the job of coordination of development matters with local government concerns. Because of the board appointments by the mayor's office, these organizations often assume development-related tasks on behalf of the local government, such as negotiating development agreements or undertaking development efforts directly for the local government. Examples of this type of model include the downtown development authorities in Miami and Tampa, as well as organizations in Columbia, South Carolina, and Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

COLUMBUS'S ORGANIZATIONS

Although none of these three approaches is currently at work in Columbus, there is a wealth of task forces, subject-specific committees, project-specific nonprofit corporations, and several communitywide economic development organizations engaged in marketing, project planning, and job creation. These organizations comprise:

- Capital Corporation
- Capitol South Corporation
- Capitol Square Commission
- Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA)
- Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce
- Columbus Growth Foundation
- Development Committee for Greater Columbus (DCGC)
- I-670 Development Corporation
- Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)
- Neighborhood Area Commissions
- Ohio Center Corporation
- Parks and Recreation Commission
- Riverfront Development Corporation

The number of these organizations and committees, as well as the composition of their boards, certainly indicate that a great deal of attention, time, and energy is being spent by public and private leaders and staff. In the panel's view, however, the question of how all of these public and private planning and marketing efforts are being coordinated, and the question of whether energies and funding sources are being duplicated or diffused, remain unanswered. No one person or organization appears to be responsible for coordinating downtown development initiatives or for maintaining an overview of implementation strategies. Interestingly, no committee or organization deals specifically with downtown housing and retail development. The nearest approximation to this kind of activity is the project-area planning done both by the board of the Capitol South Corporation, and by the Riverfront Development Corporation.

It is extraordinarily unusual for a community economic development organization to perform effectively both citywide economic development activities and downtown-specific development marketing. Just as major corporations decentralize their product development initiatives, most medium-sized and larger American cities split the responsibilities for citywide development and for downtown-focused development. In many cases, chambers of commerce, "committees of 100," and/or industrial commissions perform the citywide role, while completely separate downtown organizations, such as those outlined above, carry out the downtown development and planning role.

DRAWBACKS TO THE LOCAL PROCESS

Several aspects of Columbus's current planning process warrant closer examination, in determining how best to improve and augment that process.

PARTICIPATION

The city's professional planning staff—the strategic planning division—works within the mayor's Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Through the director of OMB, and the assistant director for strategic planning, the planning professionals are called upon to provide staffing for myriad downtown projects and initiatives. Their responsibilities extend to long-range planning for capital facilities, land use, and site-specific projects; market studies; and data base management. Directly answerable to the mayor, they provide important public planning advice, particularly on long-range planning coordination. But there has been little or no staff planning that specifically relates to downtown retail, housing, or historic preservation, on a citywide or a neighborhood basis.

On the other hand, no opportunity avails itself in the course of the planning process for the private business community to become involved either in setting priorities; or in screening given public planning initiatives, testing them against market realities, and commenting on public plans or development initiatives before they are announced. This lack is a major weakness of the process. A true public/private partnership starts with participation from both sectors at the inception of a project or idea. The riverfront district effort is an exception, as private participation has formed a part of the planning and development process there. But clearly, this particular process has been a project-specific one.

IMPROVEMENTS

Furthermore, the process fails to show a distinct concern for high-quality urban design and streetscape improvement. This failure is another serious flaw, as there is no single more important aspect of a downtown improvement scheme than its provision for the improvement of streets, curbs, sidewalks, and block faces. So far, Columbus has been fortunate, in that a number of its downtown developers have voluntarily landscaped their sites, primarily to attract office tenants. Many streets and block faces in the downtown core remain, however, that could still benefit from careful design planning and street-scape enhancement.

Such improvements can be encouraged through any one of several methods. Specific improvements on new development sites can be required through the zoning ordinance. In addition, many cities now promote these efforts by sharing the costs with property owners or by setting up special assessment districts. These programs may be conducted through a downtown organization representing both the public sector and private business interests.

MASTER PLANNING

Another important shortcoming of the current process and structure is the absence of a downtown master plan. Although much project- and site-specific planning has taken place, no clear efforts have been made to coordinate these activities or to link them to a broader capital improvements strategy.

Traditional master planning, as applied to downtowns, has met with skepticism from both planning professionals and downtown businesspeople. The process of detailing and dictating land uses is unrealistic in a dynamic downtown real estate market, although numerous cities do maintain complex land use plans and zoning ordinances for this purpose.

An alternative model, the development opportunity approach to downtown planning, is going forward in other cities. Under this type of scheme, each available site has its potential public and private development opportunities explored. These options are then illustrated in concept plans, and necessary public improvements (street-scapes, public utilities, street closings) are outlined. Next, development decisions are made, based on market forces or on the success of marketing programs. At no time does local government or a downtown development organization dictate or mandate that certain uses "beat out" others. By taking this approach, however, both the developers and the community will know in advance which public improvements are required to make the ultimate development decision an effective one. Advance commitments to making certain public improvements lessen some of the uncertainty commonly faced by a downtown developer. At present, the Tampa Downtown Development Authority is trying out this planning model.



ORGANIZATION

The panel recommends that Columbus consider undertaking a major planning effort for its downtown, through an organization that truly represents and coordinates all downtown interests. The planning effort should await the formation and professional staffing of that organization.

The specific form and structure of the downtown planning process should take shape in the context of the local political and business climate. The three models outlined in this report are those most commonly used, but the city and the chamber of commerce should assess them and choose those elements that would prove most effective in Columbus. However, the current process of site- and project-specific commissions, task forces, and nonprofit corporations—informally coordinated though it is—creates a perception of a community losing control of its destiny and unsure of its priorities. In the highly competitive economic development game, first impressions are always crucial.

It is not uncommon for communities to go through stages of self-discovery in their searches for priorities. It is common for cities to use nonprofit development corporations and task forces that address site-specific concerns and topics, and then to see them disband. In Columbus, there seems to be too much emphasis, however, on formalizing the sundry project-related groups and organizations, when apparently, what is really needed is the formalizing of a full-fledged downtown planning and development organization to coordinate the various projects and initiatives now being addressed by corporations, task forces, and committees.

If Columbus is to assume its desired place among the great U.S. cities, it must take a long, hard look at its current planning process, at the numbers of individuals and organizations involved, and at feasible attempts to formalize that involvement in the most effective possible way. Only in this way will the city be able to make some sense out of the many initiatives now underway in its downtown. Columbus is at a crossroads in its growth—it has the rare chance to formalize a downtown planning process through community leadership and through a coordinated, effective development organization. This chance must not be lost.

ABOUT
THE
PANEL

ABOUT THE PANEL

THOMAS F. MURRAY, PANEL CHAIRMAN New York, New York

Thomas F. Murray is chairman of American Continental Properties, Inc., which acquires and manages commercial and agricultural properties for U.S. and foreign investors.

He is a trustee and past president of ULI, and his financial experience includes membership on many boards of directors of financial and commercial companies. He was a director and chief investment officer of Equitable Life Insurance Society of New York, and is now a director of the Paine Webber Cashfund, Inc., and of Search America Corporation. Murray is a member of the Citibank Real Estate Advisory Board and serves as a real estate consultant at Cornell University and at other institutions.

PETER G. GERNEY Des Moines, Iowa

Currently, Gerney is a research analyst for General Growth Companies, a developer of regional shopping centers throughout the United States. In this position, he identifies markets that offer potential for the development of regional shopping facilities, and locates sites within favorable markets. Before joining General Growth, Gerney was employed by Carley Capital Group of Charlotte, North Carolina. With Carley, he worked on the feasibility of such diverse projects as research parks, office buildings, apartment complexes, and hotels.

Gerney holds a master's degree in geography from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

CARL M. GEUPEL Hartford, Connecticut

Carl M. Geupel is vice president and treasurer of Halcyon, Ltd., in Hartford, Connecticut. As the head of Halcyon's business group on economic and financial analysis, he has devised financing and implementation strategies specifically for large-scale developments. He has held primary responsibility for urban high-rise developments in New York City, Miami, and Chicago.

Geupel also directed the technical assistance team that provided project workout advice for HUD's Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) program for two years.

ANDREW MARTIN HAM Tampa, Florida

As executive director of the Tampa Downtown Development Authority, Andrew Ham is responsible for managing the planning and execution of the continuing redevelopment of downtown Tampa. Ham has over 12 years' experience in organizing and managing successful development and revitalization programs for public agencies and private corporations. He has directed major public redevelopment programs in Pensacola, Florida, and Hampton, Virginia, and managed private projects for a development firm in Norfolk, Virginia. Over the past five years, Ham has been personally involved in waterfront development and planning, downtown housing programs, downtown retail, and mall and streetscape efforts.

In Tampa, the Authority is now involved in the generation of an urban design-based zoning ordinance; the development of the second phase of the city's people mover system; the programming of 1,500 units of downtown housing; the extensive development of the waterfront; and the marketing of downtown Tampa's business opportunities.

ROGER G. KALLMAN Chicago, Illinois

Roger G. Kallman—an associate partner with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill of Chicago—works on activities encompassing land planning and urban design, transportation planning, new town planning, campus planning and design, historic preservation, adaptive use studies, and environmental assessments. On individual projects, he directs technical planning services, manages project performance, and coordinates the work of special consultants.

Kallman is actively engaged in both domestic and international projects, for both public and private clients. He has served as senior planner for "Chicago 21," a comprehensive plan for Chicago's urban center, and for the Milwaukee Central Area study, a plan to revitalize that city's central business district. Other projects on which he has acted as senior planner include the master plan for Seddon Island, a proposed new community in central Florida; the master plan for the St. Louis Metro Area Rail Gateway Enterprise, a reuse strategy for underused railway land; and many feasibility studies of suburban mixed-use developments for real estate investment groups.

GEORGE STERNLIEB
New Brunswick, New Jersey

The founder and director of the Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy Research, Sternlieb is also professor of urban and regional planning there. He is a director of the Citizens' Housing and Planning Council in New York, as well as a consulting advisor to HUD, the housing subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Bureau of the Census, the states of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and New York City. Most recently, he served as a member of the President's Urban Affairs Task Force.

Sternlieb has written and published over 100 monographs and articles, including *The Future of the Downtown Department Store*, *Shopping Centers: USA, America's Housing*, and *Income and Jobs*. He has also edited a special series of books on housing problems.

He received his bachelor of arts degree from Brooklyn College in 1950, his master's in business administration from the Harvard Business School in 1953, and his doctorate in business administration from Harvard in 1962.

OAKLEIGH J. THORNE
Washington, D.C.

Thorne is the first vice president and regional manager of Coldwell Banker Real Estate Consultation Services, and, as such, has charge of the Washington, D.C., and New York offices. He has more than 20 years' experience in real estate counseling: providing advice and information to clients on real estate market economics, financial investment characteristics, and valuation of real property.

Before joining Coldwell Banker, he filled the positions of vice president of Real Estate Research Corporation, Washington, D.C.; and vice president for acquisitions for the Richard Roberts Company in Avon, Connecticut. He has published several works, including the article entitled "Financial Analysis—The State of the Art," which won ULI's 1975 Charles B. Shattuck Award.

G. ALLEN PATTON
Nashville, Tennessee

Patton is vice president of the R.D. Matthews Company, one of the leading real estate development firms in Nashville. The company now focuses primarily on downtown office development: its involvements include work on a new, 23-story high-rise building; the recent purchase of a 30-story complex; and historic rehabilitation efforts.

Now, Patton is overseeing the purchase, financing, redevelopment, and leasing of the Life & Casualty Tower complex, which includes five buildings and over 400,000 square feet of office space in the heart of downtown Nashville. As Matthews's vice president for national property development, Patton is also actively seeking new opportunities, not only in Nashville, but also in other parts of the country.

RICHARD C. WARD
St. Louis, Missouri

Ward is a principal and cofounder (1968) of Team Four Research, a professional services firm specializing in strategic planning and in economic and development consulting for both private and public clients. His special fields of expertise comprise the market and financial feasibility of residential, office, and retail developments; growth management and land use control programs for fast-developing communities; area redevelopment planning for major urban institutions and corporations (regional medical centers, universities, and "Fortune 500" companies); and revitalization strategies for downtown business districts.

Richard Ward holds graduate degrees in city planning and in urban design, and an undergraduate degree in architecture. He is a licensed real estate broker in Missouri, and a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), of the Council for Urban Economic Development (CUED), and of ULI.

APPENDIX

Participants in On-Site Investigation

- Chuck Adrian, Columbus
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- Andrea Anderson, Columbus
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