

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this planning report is to present problems threatening downtowns and explore a variety of solutions for restoring the downtown core. A downtown is the heart of the city. If it is not operating well the rest of the city is affected. I have a stake in this planning report since I am an artist passionate about historic preservation and appreciative of ethnic diversity. These elements are crucial for downtown success. When they are coupled with good business and planning strategies downtowns cannot help but come back.

To do this subject justice would require volumes. This planning report attempts to summarize key points and provide a blueprint for creative decision-making. The numerous solutions given should offer management personnel encouragement that much is being done. However, the work and commitment to downtown can never cease. Only with continual vision can downtowns be worthwhile places.

The Central Business District, known as the downtown, was once the focus of

activity for the city. It housed both people and a wide range of services including government, commercial and cultural activities. As time went on people moved further from the city center conducting their lives in the suburbs. This exodus left central business districts virtually abandoned.

Now cities everywhere are struggling to reinvent their downtowns and create the vibrancy people once felt in the downtown setting. People have developed new habits of living that complicate planning efforts. They have found new ways to occupy their time. Watching TV and surfing the net occupy considerable free time. People are more reluctant to spend time anywhere but at the mall or at home. They must be coaxed and prodded to find the gems that most downtowns offer if only anyone cared to look.

Once people are sheltered, clothed and fed, have a job and healthcare they need something else to give their lives meaning and purpose. Living is more than going through the motions; it is about experiencing the richness of life. This is what the arts offer. The arts give us ways to celebrate and express our innermost feelings. We are completed when the arts are part of our existence.

The arts are a necessary ingredient to a healthy city. Without them there is blight, loss of property values, disrespect, crime and eventual destruction. The arts are not frivolous. They must not be an afterthought. They are an integral part of all communities.

If this is the case, why then are the arts not more respected? The problem is

people think that the arts do not pay for themselves. People who do not use them wonder why they are asked to pay for them. The answer is fundamental. Everyone uses the arts in varying degrees. Since the arts are part of the community, they should be paid for by members of the community. Supporting the arts is one means of being a good citizen and a good neighbor and creating a city worth calling home.

Through education, the arts can be elevated in people's minds. Once the arts are valued, then financial backing will follow. Imagine a world with no art. Architecture would have no ornamentation. There would be no ornamental landscaping. There would be no theaters, music halls or dance clubs. Festivals, parades, art galleries and museums would not exist. There would be no murals or statues. These are only some of the many examples of what art brings to our lives. Without art, life would be colorless, sterile and ultimately unbearable.

The places we want to be are where art flourishes. By putting more and more art, more and more places will be not only tolerable; they will be memorable. Expectations need to be elevated. It is necessary for people to respect themselves enough that they insist on a better way of life, one that includes art. When people lose respect for any aspect of life blight creeps in, takes hold and unless fought, takes over. I contend that blight exists where there is no art. Hopelessness breeds inaction. With every step taken, a community is born.

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "though we travel the world over to find the

beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not.”<sup>1</sup> This is one way of thinking. However, this sentiment raises a question. How do we learn to carry it? We cannot know what beauty is unless we are exposed to it. We must be taught. Blending beauty with function turns the commonplace into something of value people will cherish. It takes effort but it is ultimately worth it. Only when beauty is ever present can it become a part of us.

Is bad art better than no art at all? This question was asked at a Stockton Public Art Meeting I attended. I would have to answer yes because bad art opens the door to the possibility of good art as well. Diversity of the arts and cultures is necessary. It takes variety to add spice to life. To build a city that welcomes everyone, everyone must be reflected. The more diversity, the more each and everyone will feel welcome and know there is something for them. We should not fear what we do not know. We need to be open so we can learn what makes each of us special and draw on these qualities to make us more fulfilled in and of ourselves.

Everything ties together. Without art the cityscape is bleak. Buildings are not thoughtfully designed. Streetscapes are barren and awkward and most of all the color and excitement stirred by the arts is absent when cities do not make a concerted effort to integrate them into their space. Appearance draws a person in but substance is what keeps him coming back for more. The arts are one part of the picture. They make architectural and landscape design more creative and provide activities that make downtown life continually interesting.

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson quote on a Public Space Program temporary mural in San Jose

Even if the arts do not pay for themselves, can we afford to be without them? This is one investment every city must make to begin to break the cycle of bleak, colorless, barren, dull environments that happen when art is not present. It is better to do something than to do nothing. There will always be reasons why not to proceed (e.g. vandalism, vagrants, window bars, no funding). The city that prospers, however, is the city that takes the risk.

Art can pay for itself. Art can be used to restore a sense of pride of place and thereby attract residents and tourists alike to spend their time and money downtown. This infusion of money into the downtown can, in part, be reinvested into the arts.

Creating a city is like creating a home. It must be a place where we feel safe and comfortable with each other. It needs to have amenities that encourage our well-being. Many cities have diminished their environments by not spending money on basic amenities that keep people feeling civilized like they are worth investing in. In attempting to curtail vagrancy and homeless encampments, cities make barren plazas void of seating with little appeal as a meeting space. Everyone passes through the space never being encouraged to tarry, enjoy calming scenery and the people that otherwise could be their new friends. We are asked to move through and move on. People do not relax and take their time. Everything has become about how fast things can be done. Doing things fast doesn't mean doing things well. People need to slow down and enjoy life.

Great cities do not just happen. They are made. Making a city great requires thoughtful consideration of the people using it. It requires creativity and a

willingness to tackle the hard problems. It requires selling people on the unique qualities that make every city worthwhile.

Offering residents and visitors an aesthetically engaging environment with ample programming is only half of the equation. Efforts must be made to educate people that downtown is worth their time and expense. People must once again be willing to explore and invest themselves in downtown. Put in other words, if the banquet is laid and no one comes to the table then the feast is wasted.

Downtowns will be what they were intended when they once again become attractive incorporating a wide variety of options **and** people accept and appreciate downtown offerings as integral and enriching to their lives.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **PROBLEMS**

Downtown environments were functionally dismantled through a series of new development trends and technologies. This activity has only intensified in our present day. The cumulative effect brought about downtown's demise.

Suburbs sprang up on the outlying fringes of cities across the United States. This housing boom was spurred by soldiers returning from World War II wanting a home of their own for themselves and their families. Suburban housing was preferable to housing downtown because there was more available. Housing in the suburbs was new and cost less than prices downtown. Suburbs were the trendy alternative and what everyone was buying. A home with a yard has always been considered the American dream.

At the same time, the introduction of a national highway system made it possible for people to go further to satisfy their work and shopping needs. Unfortunately, freeway placement was careless. Often freeways ran through disadvantaged and minority areas that did not have the power or clout to protest. Whole sections of cities were razed to make room for freeway convenience. Effectively, the side effect of freeway installation was to displace residents, bisect

once unified neighborhoods and in many instances eliminate structures and open spaces that gave cohesion and pride to the community.

Freeways helped fracture the city. They allowed people to stop relying on downtowns for their needs. Fewer people lived, worked or shopped downtown. Instead, people lived in the suburbs and drove to newly constructed outlying shopping malls. Businesses that were downtown closed or moved to the mall to be nearer their customers.

Reliance on the automobile changed the nature of activity. People either complied with new trends or got left behind. The focus shifted from the pedestrian and a slow pace of life. The pace got more frenzied and less friendly. Auto dependence isolated people in their cars.

Most people wanted the freedom a personal automobile brought. Unfortunately, people never thought of the price that such freedoms exacted. More and more land was taken for roads and parking lots. In downtown, this activity made little sense. But parking lots were constructed anyway in an effort to make downtowns competitive with outlying malls.

Nobody thought about people who did not want to or could not drive. Money was shifted from offering mass transit options to constructing more and more roadways. Existing mass transit was neglected or eliminated. Every resource was invested in creating an automobile dependent culture.

The shift from downtown caused property values and sales tax revenues to drop. This cycle perpetuated itself according to the National Trust for Historic Preservation as,

Neglected buildings, boarded-up storefronts and empty, trash-strewn streets gradually reinforced the public's perception that nothing was happening downtown, that nothing was worth saving there. People forgot how important their downtown and its historic commercial buildings were in reflecting their community's unique heritage.<sup>2</sup>

The pattern was repeated across America. Cities lost their individual character. One city became much like the next. Nothing was special or valued. The resulting downtown environment, as well as the mindset, was a breeding ground for apathy and neglect. It was easier to abandon downtowns altogether than to restructure the environment to encourage its intended use. Making downtown vibrant took too much work. In short, people stopped caring enough to make the investment of time and money that downtown required.

People wanted convenience. They devoted themselves to whatever achieved it. Enjoying the park, strolling from shop to shop, going to the outdoor café, watching a movie, browsing the art gallery, these became activities harder to find time to include. People stopped taking the time to revel in the search and delight in the discovery. It was easier to jump in the car and go to the mall or shop at one-stop stores like Wal-Mart.

Compounding the dilemma was the invention and widespread introduction of the television. Instead of having to go out of the house to be entertained, people stayed in and watched from the convenience of their home environment. This new behavior changed the nature of entertainment and the arts. People were no

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nationaltrust.org/> (link to National Main Street Center/ About Main Street/ America's Main Streets)

longer as intrigued by the movie houses of downtowns. These glamorous palaces were used less and less.

As the decades passed, people invested more of themselves in technology. The introduction of the personal computer invaded American homes and occupied people's time. According to the author of *Smart Mobs*,

Mobile communications and pervasive computing technologies, together with social contracts that were never possible before, are already beginning to change the way people meet, mate, work, fight, buy, sell, govern, and create. People might gain new powers at the same time we lose old freedoms.<sup>3</sup>

Our newfound habits have made us lose something very precious, a feeling of community. We have abandoned the simple pleasures that once fulfilled us. Life has become more complicated. Many people are stressed and cannot relax. Friendly consideration is a strain. Few people take the time to visit a neighbor or make a friend at the stores they frequent. People rush in and out when they shop, take brief lunches if at all and spend most of their time commuting because they no longer live close to their jobs.

In many regions, present day housing prices have escalated so much that people are forced to move far from employment centers if they want the possibility of owning their own homes. People are depressed, disillusioned and often outright hostile. We are disconnected. We do not make time in our daily routines to be good to ourselves or others. Instead we go through the motions of the life we are trapped in and rarely examine why we feel so empty and incomplete.

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<sup>3</sup> Rheingold, Howard. *Smart Mobs*. Cambridge MA: Perseus Publishing, 2002, Introduction xiii.

Our urban environments have changed. Unfortunately, the change has not been for the better. Our cities have put a strain on us. Poor land use decisions have created environments that are not sensitive to the environment or to existing structures. We lose more and more everyday. And we wonder why we feel a sense of emptiness and loss.

People did not realize much of what was happening in America until it was too late. A long time Stockton resident told me that she and her friends never took pictures of the downtown areas they frequented because they thought, "they would always be there." Unfortunately, many places that were well loved were torn down years ago to make room for so-called progress.

Such a lifestyle does not fulfill us. The endless sameness of chain stores and fast food restaurants has taken over our lives. We wonder, where is the art? Where is the history? Where is the ethnic diversity?

Little by little, art has been removed from our cities. Architecture is reduced to boxy unadorned structures trying only now to comply with urban design guidelines that strive to reintroduce visual interest and excitement into our urban forms. Plazas and parks where art used to flourish have been gutted because of economic concerns and to discourage loitering, vagrancy and homeless encampments. Put in other words, gathering places that nurtured the soul are sterilized so they do not encourage inappropriate use.

During a period of careless action, historical structures were hastily razed. This has made it harder to find our past in our present. Bad decisions and politics forced countless architectural wonders to be demolished because they

were in the way of trendy new projects. Downtown environments were torn apart and most times rebuilt with buildings that did not blend well into the existing environment. Some lots have waited years for new building to take place if at all because of inadequate project funds. And so the downtown fabric has been eroded by the powers that be.

Ethnic diversity fared much the same. Token attention has been paid to minority groups because they have little political voice. Rights are legally violated through the redevelopment agency's power of condemnation and eminent domain. The agency has used their efforts to clear land of people and buildings for projects they deem necessary for the greater public good. And so, our cities have blended into one conglomeration we can no longer find ourselves within.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **SOLUTIONS**

Downtowns need a full range of uses. They should have housing, jobs, services, entertainment and amenities to satisfy both residents and tourists. Downtown should be a safe and fun place to be. As long as people feel that downtown offers them something, it is likely that they will be interested in venturing there.

Many things attract people to an area. The downtown environment often includes hotels, restaurants, a sports complex, theater or convention center. Shopping centers are usually located away from the downtown core. However, they are places that large numbers of people continually frequent. Since this is so, a clear solution seems to be to blend the shopping mall into downtown. People go where malls are. Place the mall downtown and the people will come.

Reorganizing where uses are located can give better order and balance to our cities and ultimately our lives.

Location is only part of the solution. City leaders must actively promote interesting options. This is especially important in the case of a downtown mall. Malls often contain numerous chain stores. For cities to be attractive, local independent stores need to be encouraged and given technical assistance to compete with their chain store counterparts. In this way, both can coexist offering maximum variety and interest to their consumers.

In order for solutions to be devised, people must think outside the box. Purists want us to be conventional and balk at new ways of thinking. Downtowns have sunk too far to be bound by such attitudes. Decision makers must consider creative solutions from many sources to devise an action plan that makes strides in the restorative process.

Restoring a downtown is daunting if done alone. Many organizations and programs exist that are available as a support system to give technical assistance to downtown associations and the various other personnel and individuals interested in making the downtown a special place to be. I was introduced to the components of the list of organizational programs providing support for downtown revitalization, presented in Figure 1, through the Urban Planning Program at San Jose State University and my associated internship and research.

## Figure 1

### List of Downtown Revitalization and Support Solutions

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#### **Support Organizations for the Arts and Downtown Development**

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation  
Project for Public Spaces  
Urban Land Institute

#### **Public and Private Programs**

Main Street Four Point Approach  
Public Space Program  
Façade Improvement  
Greyhound Community Reflections Mural Program

#### **Spatial Arrangement of Downtown**

Mixed Use  
Transit Oriented Development  
Arts Districts

#### **Preservation**

Sensitive Developers  
Sensitive Development  
Watchdog Preservation Groups  
Salvage

#### **Cultural Tourism**

#### **Public Art**

#### **Special Exhibits**

Tributes  
Italian Street Painting  
Infiorata  
Fiberglass Objects For Auction  
Tours and Traveling Exhibits

## **Seasonal Festivals**

Parades  
Holiday Celebrations  
First Night

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The way the downtown is arranged can enhance or detract from its use. If the downtown is easily navigable with numerous functions and amenities, people will want to be there. Making downtowns competitive with outlying regions of the city is a continual challenge. Support organizations rely on a variety of programs to strengthen downtown viability. Staff of astute cities realize that downtown success depends on policies that promote aesthetic appearance as well as historic character creating a sense of place that is energized through ongoing activities and cultural tourism. (See Figure 1)

### **Support Organizations for the Arts and Downtown Development**

Support organizations offer numerous services that benefit downtowns. Each stresses different concerns. Strong downtowns rely on the help of multiple support organizations to address their specific needs. This section is designed to introduce sources of support from which downtowns may choose. Individual cities must investigate and select the support organizations they find appropriate for their own circumstances. I chose the sources featured because they represent a balanced approach to planning with an emphasis on education and research, community participation and marketing, ultimately leading to downtown strength and vitality.

The Knight Foundation assists non-profit arts organizations improving their marketing skills. Project for Public Spaces enlists community participation to revitalize public spaces. The Urban Land Institute is dedicated to research and education in the field of real estate creating improved developments.

## **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**

The goal of this foundation is to help non-profit arts organizations market themselves more effectively. The foundation supports an innovative communitywide approach to cooperative marketing. Goals include increasing collaboration among participating groups, improving the quality and effectiveness of marketing and increasing revenues so that organizations can be stabilized returning their focus to artistic development.

In 1994, the Knight Foundation put these strategies to work helping four artistically outstanding but struggling arts organizations in Charlotte, N.C. understand how to respond to an audience, be relevant to their community, and be knowledgeable about competition. This effort was not just about selling more tickets. The arts organizations were able to make a place in the community and offer meaning to people's lives because they began to think about themselves and their audiences in new ways.

The pilot Marketing Services Organization, or MSO, created during the North Carolina grant served the needs of the arts center and its tenants. The MSO is now self-sustaining attracting clients willing to pay competitive professional rates for marketing services.

In order to encourage future partnerships, the Knight Foundation evaluated the success of the MSO. It found that the participating arts groups could sustain the collaboration remaining in partnership after the grant funding ended when the groups had to pay for their own marketing services. The evaluation also noted

that the MSO helped stabilize the arts groups, increase revenues and raise the quality of marketing materials.<sup>4</sup>

### **Project for Public Spaces**

This nonprofit offers technical assistance, conducts research and is an educational organization. Their mission is to, “create and sustain public places that build communities.” Founded in 1975, evolving from William H. Whyte’s Street Life Project, they have been active in over 1,000 communities helping public spaces become vital. The scope of their activities includes parks, plazas and central squares; transportation; public buildings and architecture and public markets.



**Figure 2. Map of Communities Impacted Nationally By Project For Public Spaces**

Source: Map emailed by Katie Salay of the Project For Public Spaces staff on June 26, 2003.

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<sup>4</sup>*Marketing the Arts*. Miami Florida: John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, November 1999,1&2.

The approach they use to achieve these improvements focuses on getting to know the needs and the hopes of the people in the community they are trying to help. Together, with community members, a vision is created for the places that are meaningful within the community. Manageable projects are stressed and implemented quickly so that an immediate difference is recognized.

On-site observations, time-lapse filming, customized interviews and surveys are some of the tools that allow interaction where people live, work and gather. This form of information gathering reaches people that otherwise may not have been involved in an improvement effort. These techniques are combined with public forums, workshops, meetings and committees that unite to problem solve community concerns. In this way, Project for Public Spaces helps, “rebuild communities both in spirit and as places.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Urban Land Institute**

This group is tackling tough land use issues affecting city environments and developing solutions. Founded in 1936 during the Great Depression, its original objectives were similar to its guiding principles today. Objectives included the study and interpretation of real estate trends, examining principles by which private enterprise could effectively develop real estate, developing a body of knowledge in real estate and associated subjects, publishing informative texts and technical journals on related subject matter, and housing and disseminating real estate data for further study.

The ULI code of ethics includes respect for: the land, the profession, the consumer, the public, equality of opportunity, others in the land use and

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.pps.org/> (link to About PPS/ What We Do)

development profession, the larger environment, the future and future generations and personal integrity.<sup>6</sup> Its mission is to provide responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment.

ULI members learn by doing. Members plan, develop and redevelop neighborhoods, business districts and communities across the U.S. and around the world. ULI is comprised of over 20,000 members with offices in Washington, D.C. The Institute's continuing focus on nonbiased research and education makes it one of the world's most respected and often quoted organizations in urban planning, land use, and development.<sup>7</sup>

Although the information and assistance included in this report exists it is useless if it falls on deaf ears or closed minds. The executive who supervised my internship for the Urban Planning Program at SJSU commented that she found the available information lacking because it did not apply to the city where she was working. Unfortunately, this sentiment can serve as a barometer for what other downtown professionals may be thinking. I would advise professionals involved in improving downtowns to look deeper at the available information to find truths that can be adjusted to fit their individual circumstances as well as truths that are universally applicable.

### **Public and Private Programs**

Public and private programs work together to increase downtown appeal. The National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Program helps participating cities reinvest in their Main Street to bolster economic development. San Jose's

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.uli.org/> (link to About ULI/ Code of Ethics)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.uli.org/> (link to About ULI/ History)

public space program enlivens public spaces downtown by introducing art into otherwise empty, colorless spaces. Oakland's Fruitvale District offers matching grants to owners through their façade improvement program for exterior renovations thereby improving the attractiveness of the area. The Greyhound Community Reflections Mural Program utilizes Latino artists to paint murals located in all major downtown Greyhound stations. These programs and many more like them help to create vibrant downtowns.

### **Main Street Four Point Approach**

To reverse the damage to America's downtowns the National Trust for Historic Preservation has developed the Main Street Four Point Approach to assist cities interested in reviving their Main Streets. This approach relies on design, organization, promotion and economic restructuring to achieve its goals.

Over 1,600 communities have adopted the Main Street approach.<sup>8</sup> Participating communities think of Main Street as the heart of their community. They actively save historic buildings, revive the commercial core, strengthen business, and control community-eroding sprawl so that a sense of place and community life can return to their city and eventually to America.

City governments and businesses question why they should invest in downtown. The National Trust for Historic Preservation provides many answers. Main Street is a symbol of community economic health, local quality of life, pride, and community history. A vital Main Street retains and creates jobs making for a stronger tax base. Main Street is a good place for new small businesses to begin

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nationaltrust.org/> (link to National Main Street Center/ About Main Street/ America's Main Streets)

since strip centers and malls are often too expensive. Main Street is the ideal location for independent family owned businesses that keep profits in town. These businesses provide a range of goods and services that make for a stable economic foundation that does not allow the city to be consumed by large businesses and chain stores with no ties to the community. Local businesses enhance the community because they have a stake in it. Often they sponsor community projects.

Main Street provides an important civic forum where the community can congregate. Parades, special events and celebrations held there reinforce community pride. Private developments like malls often restrict free speech and access. Many Main Street districts become tourist attractions because they include interesting buildings in prime locations, and have a selection of unique businesses and events not found elsewhere. A healthy Main Street core protects property values in surrounding residential neighborhoods and reduces sprawl.

The Main Street program is designed to improve all aspects of the downtown ranging from economic management, strengthening public participation, and making downtown a fun place to visit to recruiting new businesses, rehabilitating buildings, and expanding parking. It has enlivened entrepreneurship, downtown cooperation and civic concern. It is a practical strategy scaled to local resources and conditions that stem from local issues and concerns. Despite the program's focus on historic preservation and retaining community character, it is a successful economic development tool.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nationaltrust.org/> (link to National Main Street Center/ About Main Street/ Economic Statistics)

## Public Space Program



**Figure 3. Public Space Program Window Display Draws Attention In San Jose**

Source: This and all other photos not specifically attributed to sources were taken by the author, Joy Neas.

On January 8, 2002, the Redevelopment Agency Board of San Jose approved issuing Public Space Programming “Request for Proposals.” The RFP hoped to attract qualified and interested programmers who had a clear strategy for:

Enlivening public space with the addition of events, regulated street performers, furniture and infrastructure; and, Coordinating the public space program with the Agency and the City’s Office of Cultural Affairs.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.populuspresents.com/> (link to About Us/ History of the Public Space Program)

The benefits of creating a public space program were brought to light by the Urban Land Institute Advisory Services Panel in its June 2000 report as a way to help improve downtown San Jose identity and create links between retailers.

The “Re-Connect with San Jose” campaign followed as a way of drawing the community back into the heart of the Downtown. This effort was the beginning of a public space program.

The concept is that events and activities encourage people to come downtown more frequently, increase the time they spend visiting multiple destinations and give texture and substance to the open areas that are an extension of the activities.<sup>11</sup>

Specific events were selected because they were unique, had the ability to enliven public spaces on a day-to-day basis and could ultimately increase the public space “scene.” Events are coordinated with merchants, residents, existing arts groups/institutions and City offices and are intentionally scheduled on different days of the week, various seasons, and various public spaces in order to create a more wide-ranging impact.

One critical element of the program is the Public Space Catalyst. It is the outreach office of the public space program. It serves as a one-stop shop for bringing public programs to the Downtown Core. Members of the programming team staff the office. The office assists members of the public interested in staging their own events. The office rents out equipment at a discounted fee and offers guidance for navigating the public space permitting process.

This program has been carefully designed, with the help of some of the best programmers that the South Bay has to offer, as a way that the Redevelopment

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.populuspresents.com/> (link to About Us/ History of the Public Space Program)

Agency can encourage the community to make greater use of public spaces. Ultimately, the Agency hopes that programs become self-supporting and lead to the revitalization of public spaces in Downtown San Jose.

I am encouraged by the difference this program is making because of what I have observed. This is an excellent model for other cities to use to enliven their public spaces.

### **Façade Improvement**



**Figure 4. Improved Façade  
in Oakland's Fruitvale District  
Becomes A Backdrop For  
The Fruitvale Dia de los Muertos Festival**

The UC Berkeley/Oakland Joint Community Development Program, or JCD, is one of many partners and funding sources invested in the commercial revitalization efforts being made in the Fruitvale District of Oakland. On September 30, 1997 the City Council approved a new citywide Façade

Improvement Program so that substantial improvements could take place.<sup>12</sup>

Leading the work is the Community Economic Development Agency and the Spanish Speaking Unity Council's Fruitvale Main Street Program. This collaboration has helped over 70 businesses in the Fruitvale commercial district improve their facades.

The Façade Improvement Program offers business and property owners matching grants for exterior renovations approved to commercial and mixed-use properties. Architectural assistance is also available.

Eligible improvements include rehabilitation of historic facades, renovation or repair of windows, exterior detailing, new awnings and improvement or removal of safety grilles and guards. Grants are given to projects that meet the stated goals of increasing the visual impact and economic vitality of the commercial district, clustering projects for maximum impact, and enhancing property appearance and historical features.

The Fruitvale neighborhood is one of two commercial neighborhoods selected to start the program.<sup>13</sup> Though this program is located in a city district rather than the downtown proper I believe it could work equally well to make visible differences in the downtown. I was introduced to this program because I noticed the difference it made to Fruitvale Avenue. I went to the Fruitvale District to attend their annual Dia de los Muertos Street Festival. The building facades

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www-iurd.ced.berkeley.edu/paruofm.htm> (link to Read April 1998 Newsletter) *Forum News, University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum*. "Oakland Business Districts Get a New Look." Volume XI, No. 1, April 1998, 4.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www-iurd.ced.berkeley.edu/paruofm.htm> (link to Read April 1998 Newsletter) *Forum News, University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum*. "Oakland Business Districts Get a New Look." Volume XI, No. 1, April 1998, 4 & 5.

were a beautiful complement to the event. They added considerably to the experience.

### **Greyhound Community Reflections Mural Program**



**Figure 5. Greyhound Community Reflections Mural entitled, Nuestro Futuro Crece de Nuestras Raices in the San Diego Greyhound Station**

Applying murals to interior and exterior walls of buildings is a widespread enhancement treatment. The following is an unusual example of mural use. On my recent trip to Tucson to undertake research for this planning report, I traveled by Greyhound bus stopping in San Diego for the day. In the depot, I was surprised to find a mural. When I read the plaque describing it, my amazement increased. The plaque was entitled, Greyhound Community Reflections Mural Program, *Nuestro Futuro Crece de Nuestras Raices* (Our Future Grows From Our Roots). The plaque detailed the background of the mural and its symbolism.

The mural was created in San Diego in July 2000 during the National Council of La Raza Annual Conference in conjunction with the Greyhound Community

Reflections Mural Program. It was developed by El Centro Cultural de La Raza working with area high school art students. The finished work represents the local Latino culture as seen by the city's youth.<sup>14</sup>

I decided to find out more about the mural program. I talked with depot staff that told me that all major Greyhound terminals would be having murals that were painted by members of the Latino community. I questioned the narrow focus of the program. The only reply I received is that this program is designed to reach and utilize the talents of this particular segment of the population.

Searching online, I found information about the Greyhound Community Reflections Mural Program that filled in the gaps of my research. Greyhound teamed up with the National Council of La Raza to develop the mural program. Local community centers help select young Hispanic artists to paint the murals. Artists are given an honorarium to encourage them to develop their talents through further education. In addition, Greyhound donates money to the community center that helped with the project. "Greyhound is committed to playing a larger role in the communities it serves by offering up their terminal as a canvas to the local Hispanic community."<sup>15</sup>

The Greyhound Community Reflections Mural Program is visionary. It combines art and culture with transit. It gives youth a venue for expressing themselves. However, as it exists, I believe it is too limited a vehicle. Hopefully, the program will be expanded in its scope utilizing artists from every culture and reaching every Greyhound station.

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<sup>14</sup> San Diego Greyhound Station Mural Plaque

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.greyhound.com/> (link to About Us/ Community/ Community Reflections Mural Program)

## **Spatial Arrangement of Downtown**

Locating mixed use and transit-oriented developments downtown stimulates activity by offering residential and commercial opportunities near transit. Such developments make it possible for people to live, work, shop and travel within a more compact area so that less time and energy is spent on daily routines and more time is available for leisure.

Creating downtown arts districts by locating multiple art uses such as art galleries, museums, theaters and clubs within close proximity attracts both residents and visitors to view downtown as a preferred destination for their entertainment needs. The downtown becomes imbued with life when the intricate balance of land use is restored.

## **Mixed Use**



**Figure 6. Mixed-use project in Downtown San Diego combines the Greyhound Station, Pickwick Hotel with retail stores and restaurants**

Mixed use focuses a variety of uses in a given project. The combination of several uses creates greater diversity and overall appeal for the public. Mixed-use projects often include housing and retail opportunities.

### **Transit Oriented Development**

Transit Oriented Development, known as TOD, encourages people to use public transit instead of private vehicles because it concentrates housing and commercial uses within convenient walking distance of major public transit sources. As a result, TOD's promote pedestrian and mass transit activity reducing the dependence on private vehicles especially in downtown areas where parking is a continual problem.

Downtowns that include transit oriented developments offer greater accessibility to and from art and shopping venues throughout the region. Increased accessibility combined with decreased congestion are the ultimate benefits of TOD developments.

### **Arts Districts**



**Figure 7. Banner promoting the Tucson Arts District in downtown**

Arts districts concentrate art related uses in a specific area of the city for maximum benefit and public appeal. The Tucson Arts District is located downtown. It includes art galleries, clubs with live music entertainment, a performance theater currently being renovated and a theater showing foreign films.

### **Preservation**

History is what sets each city apart. Without history, cities blend together and offer few reasons for anyone to take notice. Cities that make downtown preservation a high priority realize that maintaining a strong sense of heritage deepens community pride.

Developers, like the CIM group, sensitive to the value of retaining historical assets, invest the time and money needed into historic renovations creating memorable development projects.

Watchdog preservation groups of committed participants, most notably the Preservation Action Council of San Jose, monitor the city's treatment of its historic resources challenging the city to act responsibly in its decisions regarding these properties.

Salvage efforts are a last resort when resources are forfeited. Owners allow salvage of distinctive materials for resale as was demonstrated by the El Dorado County Habitat for Humanity's salvage effort and sale at the Sam's Town demolition. Through salvage, though the building is lost, parts of it live on finding new use generating income for new building projects.

Stuart Brand, in his book, *How Buildings Learn*, asks an important question. “What does preservation preserve? You might say it honors peculiarity, specific to the building and to the locality. It fights the invasive uniformity of franchise fast-food joints, multinational gas stations, and high-rise office buildings.”<sup>16</sup>

A similar sentiment noted in *How Buildings Learn*, although in more poignant terms, is a quote from Brian Eno, the British rock musician and avant-garde artist:

We are convinced by things that show internal complexity, that show the traces of an interesting evolution. Those signs tell us that we might be rewarded if we accord it our trust. An important aspect of design is the degree to which the object involves you in its own completion. Some work invites you into itself by not offering a finished, glossy, one-reading-only surface. This is what makes old buildings interesting to me. I think that humans have a taste for things that not only show that they have been through a process of evolution, but which also show they are still a part of one. They are not dead yet.<sup>17</sup>

These observations make us aware of the mindset that spurs preservation. The following are a variety of methods that achieve the preservationist’s goal.

### **Sensitive Developers**

I was first introduced to the CIM group because I discovered they were involved in the rehabilitation of the Twohy Building, a Downtown San Jose City Landmark, and one of my favorite buildings in San Jose. Since they were involved with this project I wanted to know more about the firm. I got better acquainted with them by reading an article written by Edwin Garcia in the San Jose Mercury News. The title, “A different vision for downtown S.J. –New

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<sup>16</sup> Brand, Stewart. *How Buildings Learn*. New York: Penguin Books, 1994, 100.

<sup>17</sup> Brand, Stewart. *How Buildings Learn*. New York: Penguin Books, 1994, 11.

Company Brings Down-To-Earth Approach-<sup>18</sup> really got my attention. Early in the article I was impressed by this quote. “The value of a lot of the architecture cannot be replaced by a new building,” said Shaul Kuba, a CIM principal. This sentiment touched me since I do not often hear such words expressed.

Reading the article further I learned that, “CIM, has gained a reputation for rebuilding rundown areas - and bringing critical mass to once moribund downtowns.”<sup>19</sup> In order to do this, the firm blends new construction with historic buildings to highlight their charm. What most affected me, however, is when I read that CIM forms partnerships with existing owners without relying on cities or redevelopment agencies to use the power of condemnation. This is how development was meant to be.

### **Sensitive Development**

Developers can assist preservation efforts by creating sensitive developments. Cities help developers be more sensitive by formalizing design guidelines that structure development. Trendwest Resorts, a leading builder and operator of timeshare properties, takes pride in its relationships with city officials, businesses and local developers. In a recent building effort in Victoria Canada, Trendwest worked with a Canadian architectural firm to ensure that its first urban high-rise property fit into the local landscape. Because of Trendwest’s desire to partner with the city and local professionals it was able to satisfy Victoria’s strenuous land use and building requirements. In this instance, the installation of

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<sup>18</sup> Garcia, Edwin. “A different vision for downtown S.J. -NEW COMPANY BRINGS DOWN-TO-EARTH APPROACH-.” *San Jose Mercury News*, April 8, 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Garcia, Edwin. “A different vision for downtown S.J. -NEW COMPANY BRINGS DOWN-TO-EARTH APPROACH-.” *San Jose Mercury News*, April 8, 2002.

underground parking enabled the resort to be pedestrian-friendly like all of Victoria's downtown. In addition, sidewalk improvements were required by the city for all waterfront developments. Trendwest Victoria includes a path from the resort that runs directly into downtown. By making such adjustments the development is able to connect to downtown and respect and protect the local historic environment it inhabits.<sup>20</sup>

### **Watchdog Preservation Groups**



**Figure 8. The Jose Theatre in downtown San Jose is a PAC\*SJ success story**

Citizen groups keep a vigilant eye on proposed demolitions and building proposals to ensure that historic properties are protected. The Preservation Action Council of San Jose (PAC\*SJ) is a non-profit membership organization that provides information to property owners and education to the public. They

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<sup>20</sup> Walsh, Keith. "Your Vacationing Future." *WorldMark Destinations*. Redmond WA: Worldmark by Trendwest. March 2003, 10 & 11.

promote programs and policies directed towards historic preservation and compatible new architectural design.

PAC\*SJ achieves its goals because it discusses the impacts of proposed projects to historic areas and structures with city officials, Redevelopment Agency staff, developers, architects, planners, and property owners formulating task forces with leaders versed in legal and cultural aspects of the projects.

PAC\*SJ successes have included saving and ensuring rehabilitations of the Scheller House on the SJSU campus, as well as the Jose Theatre and Montgomery Hotel in downtown San Jose. <sup>21</sup>

Similar groups nationwide act as community watchdogs. They keep a vigilant eye on new development proposals and determine possible effects to historic resources mounting preservation campaigns when necessary.

## Salvage



**Figure 9. Salvage Sale at Sam's Town  
in Cameron Park  
by the El Dorado County Habitat For Humanity**

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.preservation.org/> (link to About Us)

One way to ensure partial preservation of unique historic resources is through salvage efforts. When a building cannot be saved, salvage is imperative. In El Dorado County, Habitat for Humanity was invited by the building's owner to salvage materials from the Sam's Town landmark scheduled for demolition and sell the items onsite to the general public as a fundraiser for the organization. Habitat for Humanity took the remaining items to the El Dorado County Habitat ReSTORE, a building materials thrift store, and sold them there. Proceeds from these efforts are used for constructing and rehabilitating houses for new homeowners. Habitat for Humanity promotes conservation by accepting donations of materials for resale.<sup>22</sup>

### **Cultural Tourism**

This term refers to tourists who are drawn to a city for the art and cultural opportunities available there. Cultural tourism brings financial and social benefits that are an important resource for cities everywhere. In San Diego, cultural tourists increased the local economy by 250 million dollars in 2000.<sup>23</sup> Cultural tourists help cities develop into lively centers of interaction and productivity. However, it is important to remember that cultural tourists come and go. Cities must be engaging for their full time residents not merely cater to tourists who visit them from time to time.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.eldoradocountyhabitat.org/ReSTORE.htm>

<sup>23</sup> Murphy, Dick. *City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture*. San Diego CA: City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, 1.

## Public Art



**Figure 10. Weber Avenue  
Beautification  
Public Art Project  
in downtown Stockton**

“Envision the power of public art to transform the urban landscape” was the slogan used to elicit involvement in the creation of the public art master plan for the city of Stockton. I was asked to attend the initial planning meeting by a fellow member of the Stockton Art League. This meeting changed the direction of my life. I had a vague notion of what public art was but the opening statements from the deputy city manager of Stockton started me thinking. She said that public art is more than statues in the park. She went on to say that it could be used to enhance architecture. After hearing this remark, I thought to myself, isn’t this just

good architecture? The way I see it, one of the benefits of public art is that it puts the artistry back into architecture.

I joined a team that created conceptual designs for Stockton's Public Art Master Plan. My team's designs accompanied by my text were included in the final document. Illustrative panels detailing our designs went on a traveling display throughout Stockton to acquaint the community with the topic.

Cities everywhere have "percent for art policies" which mandate that a percent of the budget of capital improvement projects be used for art. San Diego, however, adopted a public art policy in 1992 that is unlike any other in the United States. What makes this program different is that artist involvement is negotiated between the Public Art Program and City department staffs on a case-by-case basis instead of a percent set aside. Key points in the program are described in Figure 11 below.

## Figure 11. San Diego's Public Art Program

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- Artist involvement usually starts at the beginning of the project and is an integral part of its design.
- Artist selection can be made directly by the lead architect or engineer.
- Conceptual information from the artist is included when the project is first presented to the client and the community.
- The artist's vision is fleshed out in construction documents becoming an integral part of the construction bid.
- The artist, as subcontractor, works directly with the lead architect or engineer.
- Design fees are paid and negotiation takes place for fees for overseeing fabrication and installation as needed.
- The client department manages funds with Public Art Program staff providing technical support.
- The Public Art Program staff both implements and monitors this policy to ensure that a standard of excellence is maintained during the project.

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Source note: "The Artist and the Urban Environment." San Diego CA: City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, 4-7.

This approach allows the artist to be more involved in the process. It helps the project reach a more satisfactory outcome because all participants are allowed to interact with each other developing the most comprehensive project possible.

### **Special Exhibits**

Special exhibits located downtown add opportunities for community involvement. Tributes give the community a chance to come together and remember defining moments like 9/11.

Street painting and Infiorata allow people to watch and appreciate artists who make performance art forms before their eyes. Adventurous individuals experience the joy of creating their own chalk squares at festivals everywhere.

Decorated fiberglass objects located in unexpected places quench the thirst for discovery and amusement generating large sums for numerous charities when they are auctioned.

Art tours acquaint the public with artists, their studios and venues showcasing their work. Variations on this theme are numerous. In Stockton, an event known as The Taste of Fall combines art and music with a tour of downtown restaurants. Each adds to the other. Participants get to know businesses all the while reveling in local art.

Traveling exhibits like the North American Tour of a replica of Columbus' Nina allow many cities to share so that people can gain common knowledge feeling closer to one another. This sampling of what is available opens our minds. What is possible only depends on imagination and the will needed to make it a reality.

## Tribute



**Figure 12. 9/11 Flag Tribute At Crissy Field in San Francisco**

The arts have the ability to heal our spirit. Shortly before the first anniversary of the tragic events of September 11, a San Francisco based artist named “Pop” Zhao from China organized a fitting tribute to those who died with his artwork entitled *Celebrate: Life, Liberty, Beauty*. The work consisted of cloth panels decorated with American flags and rainbow trim held by thousands of volunteer hands stretching from the Golden Gate Bridge to Crissy Field.<sup>24</sup> All cultures came together in remembrance of those who went before us. Although this event did not take place in downtown, events like this bring together many people from

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<sup>24</sup> Watercutter, Angela. “With love, America.” *San Francisco Examiner*, September 9, 2002.

different cities that are bound to be attracted to vibrant downtown offerings wherever they travel.

### **Italian Street Painting**



**Figure 13. Annual Italian Street Painting Festival  
in downtown San Rafael**

Source: <http://www.youthinarts.org/> (link to Italian Street Painting Festival/ Sponsors)

The origins of Italian street painting go back to 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy where artists used pavement as their canvas for chalk. The tradition was revived in 1973 with the first known festival of street painting in the Italian village of Grazie di

Curtatone.<sup>25</sup> The phenomenon spread to the Bay Area in 1994 when Youth in Arts brought this performance art to San Rafael.

Widespread street painting activity draws thousands of viewers. However, it is more than performance art. Businesses and individuals sponsor squares. Artists usually volunteer their talents. The money raised benefits community arts programs. Downtown San Rafael is hosting their 11<sup>th</sup> Italian Street Painting Festival this year. Their event is a celebration of art, music and cuisine. It encourages artists of all ages to participate. One of the festival's notable features is Children's Avenue where hundreds of children, ages 2-12, draw squares that when viewed together look like a colorful quilt of images.<sup>26</sup>

Italian Street Painting Festivals have different features. Some are juried and pay artists a stipend. Some are combined with food and music and an assortment of receptions. However, there are several constants. Italian Street Painting Festivals use art to bring people together from the creation of the work to its appreciation. In addition, they raise money to nurture the arts.

As a professional street painter, I encourage more events like this to be held in downtowns everywhere. Even if I never had earned a cent from this art form I have seen the tremendous potential for community building this one venture offers.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://arts-festival.com/streetpaintinghistory.htm>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.youthinarts.org/> (link to Italian Street Painting Festival/ Kids Activities/ Children's Avenue)

## Infiorata



**Figure 14. Infiorata demonstration at the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival in San Francisco**

Infiorata, an Italian art form, was demonstrated by skilled artisans invited to share their talents at the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival at Yerba Buena Center in San Francisco. Artists of the Infiorata di Noto in Sicily, the most famous festival of its kind, spread over 200,000 flower petals to create their elaborate designs on plaza surfaces while onlookers watched. The above work took about 8 hours to be completed.<sup>27</sup>

Infiorata is similar to Italian Street Painting. Both art forms are from Italy and adorn pavement surfaces with large images. The performance nature and cultural roots of these works draw appreciative audiences.

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<sup>27</sup> <http://sanfrancisco.about.com/library/weekly/aa092302a.htm>

Festival organizers are continuously looking for ways to engage the audience. In this way events present exciting new possibilities without becoming stale. Introducing unusual forms of art like Infiorata captures public attention. Infiorata could one day be as prevalent in American communities as Italian Street Painting.

### **Fiberglass Objects For Auction**



**Figure 15. Ponies Del Pueblo in Tucson Arizona**

Chicago initiated a project entitled “Cows on Parade” in 1999 that featured life-size decorated fiberglass cows. This venture is attributed to bringing 2 million extra visitors to the city in addition to increasing the local economy by \$200

million in tourist spending. An auction of the cows netted \$3.5 million for charity.<sup>28</sup>

The curator of special projects for the Chicago Public Art program said the reason this event was such a success was that member businesses of the Greater North Michigan Avenue Association guaranteed \$100,000 to the project before it was launched, which brought a matching grant from the state's department of tourism, giving the project the start up funding it needed.<sup>29</sup> Such funding is a necessary component for the success of this exhibit. Some cities, like Stockton, refuse to participate because they do not have the funds to proceed. This is unfortunate, since it has been proven that this type of exhibit stimulates tourism and the local economy.

Decorated fiberglass cows along the streets of Zurich, Switzerland inspired the Chicago exhibit.<sup>30</sup> Due to the recognized success of this exhibit, cities everywhere have begun to showcase a variety of decorated fiberglass forms that are eventually auctioned as a fundraiser.

A satirical web article claims:

That people put up with the art cows proves our cities are now officially too safe. In an alert society, the cows would've been rejected as the corporate shells they are, not greeted with hugs of recognition and flowers around their necks<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Haithman, Diane. "Delayed Flights." *LA Times*, Saturday, March 10, 2001.

<sup>29</sup> Haithman, Diane. "Delayed Flights." *LA Times*, Saturday, March 10, 2001.

<sup>30</sup> Haithman, Diane. "Delayed Flights." *LA Times*, Saturday, March 10, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> [www.suck.com/daily/2000/10/10/](http://www.suck.com/daily/2000/10/10/)

I think this article misses the mark. This exhibit form is an important opportunity for artist, viewer, and local community programs. Artists decorating the fiberglass objects are paid for their efforts with both money and the realization that their work will be seen throughout the city for months at a time eventually garnering large sums toward fundraising efforts. Viewers are treated to the thrill of discovery from the unexpected placement of objects as well as the joy of interacting with them. Local charities and community programs receive proceeds from the auction efforts. All in all, I think this is an exciting trend as long as organizers continue to devise new methods to make the experience fresh.

## Tours and Traveling Exhibits



**Figure 16. Gallery sitter, Joy Neas, at the Mexican Heritage Center during the “Taste of Fall” restaurant and art tour in downtown Stockton**

Art tours provide the opportunity for the public to see a variety of artworks and artists at participating art spaces they may not have otherwise frequented. Open studio tours allow people to visit artists in their studios so they can have personal interactions with them gaining an understanding for how the artist creates. Communities who engage in this activity use numerous variations on this theme.

In Stockton, the Downtown Stockton Alliance has hosted an event of this type called the Taste of Fall. It is an art and restaurant tour located in downtown. Though the organizers have been discouraged by the levels of public participation, even foregoing it from time to time, I think it is an important opportunity that helps people get better acquainted with their downtown. In order

for events and places to gain a following takes time. Only with consistent nurturing and development can lagging prospects turn into hot draws.

Organizers must look beyond immediate results and look forward to the long-term possibilities of creating more vibrant downtowns.



**Figure 17. Executive chef, Tom Karpon, of Inn at the Anasazi presents his creations at the Joye Robbins Gallery in Santa Fe as part of ArtFeast**

Source: Harlib, Leslie. "Santa Fe, A crossroads of art and cuisine." *Marin Independent Journal*. March 5, 2003, Lifestyles D1& 2.

Santa Fe, New Mexico combines art and food in a celebration called ARTFeast. The celebration includes two events. The first is a tour of art galleries where edible installations are featured. The second is an International Dinner prepared by top chefs of the region. Dinner participants leave the event

with hand-painted plates made by local children who competed for the honor of creating them.

ARTFeast was the brainchild of a local gallery owner named Karan Ruhlen. The Santa Fe Gallery Association sponsors the celebration. It raises money to buy art supplies for public schools. The benefit of this celebration is made clear in Ruhlen's own words,

One thing we've been working on is making Santa Fe a year round destination. Year after year, the restaurant community continues to help us. The event gives the gallery owners a great networking opportunity. We have gotten to know our tourism and business community much better. And we help the children. That's why this is such a great fundraiser. It boosts so many communities.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Harlib, Leslie. "Santa Fe, A crossroads of art and cuisine." *Marin Independent Journal*, March 5, 2003, Lifestyles D1& 2.



**Figure 18. Replica of Columbus' Nina in port in Vallejo during a West Coast Tour**

Traveling exhibits allow cities to share in experiencing important art and historical contributions. They give people a source for excitement and interaction. A non-profit group recreated Columbus' ship, The Nina, sailing it to ports on both the west and east coast. The ship serves as a living part of history to be used as a public educational tool. People tour the Nina getting a feel for this period in history.

The Nina has made several west coast voyages. Among the California ports it visited were downtown Stockton, Sacramento, Vallejo, San Rafael and

downtown Eureka. It ventured northward to ports in Oregon and Washington eventually stopping in Vancouver. Touring the Nina gives people a mode for discovery and connects us to our shared past.

### **Seasonal Festivals**

Seasonal festivals located downtown encourage community interaction and celebration. Parades highlight the arts, history and culture by incorporating music, costumed performers and floats with historical and cultural themes. Holiday celebrations commemorate days set aside to allow community members to share rich cultural traditions with one another.

First Night, celebrated on New Year's Eve in participating downtowns, is the most encompassing holiday celebration and the truest showcase of community. This family friendly event welcomes all cultures and art forms creating a truly spectacular multi-cultural downtown art event. In all, seasonal festivals add an important layer of community activity to downtown environments resulting in stronger downtowns.

## Parades



**Figure 19. 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Chinese New Year's Parade in downtown Stockton**

Parades bring the arts and culture together. They rouse excitement from spectators with music and dance, colorful costumes and floats. Parades tend to be associated with a variety of cultural holidays and special events. They deeply impact downtowns because that is where they are often located. Parades are important because they reflect a source of community spirit and pride. They bring life and vitality to the downtown environment.

Stockton hosts several parades throughout the year. The most recognized of these are the annual Cinco de Mayo parade downtown as well as the Festival of lights, an annual downtown event that includes a Christmas tree lighting combined with a waterfront celebration completed by a lighted boat parade at the downtown waterfront. In recent years, Stockton groups have put together several new parades in its downtown. Interest in honoring veterans spurred the creation of a 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade. In 2003, a new downtown festival, taking place

under the freeway, was launched with a parade celebrating Chinese New Year. It remains to be seen if these become mainstays in the Stockton community. For such events to develop and grow into community assets they must be regularly offered so they build a following.

### **Holiday Celebrations**



**Figure 20. St. Mary's Marching Band from San Francisco performs at the Chinese New Year's Festival in Stockton held under the Crosstown Freeway**

Holiday celebrations take many forms. All cultures celebrate their rich traditions. By attending a variety of festivals, community members are able to celebrate their differences and reflect on their similarities. Celebrations and festivals help us get acquainted and more fully appreciate one another. Every culture has something to offer. Cultural traditions complement our lives fulfilling us in numerous ways so we are able to be our best. We are incomplete if we

isolate ourselves and do not draw from one another. Fear and disinterest comes from what is not known and appreciated.

Downtown Stockton hosts an assortment of holiday celebrations and ethnic festivals. The Chinese New Year Festival begins the year. It is followed by the Cinco de Mayo festival. During the summer, downtown hosts a 4<sup>th</sup> of July event and the Barrio Fiesta, a popular Filipino celebration. Finally, at the end of the year, downtown is home to the Festival of lights and First Night, a family oriented New Year's Eve Party. During these events downtown is full of life and a joyful place to be. This is because, at these times, people have a reason to flock to downtown and enjoy being there.

## First Night



**Figure 21. Street performer entertains First Night Martinez 2003 audience**



**Figure 22. Artist In Action "Creation Station" at First Night Stockton 2003**

First Night began in Boston in 1976. Its mission statement proposes,

to reveal and celebrate the diversity of Boston through the First Night celebration and The Neighborhood Network, using art as a catalyst to unify the community through creativity, imagination and participation.<sup>33</sup>

It was started by a group of artists who wanted an alternative to traditional New Year's Eve celebrations. First Night has grown from a small arts event centered on the Boston Common to a model for more than 200 similar celebrations throughout the world.<sup>34</sup>

First Night events take place on the evening of New Year's Eve. Participants buy a button for the evening that allows them entry into all the events. First Night begins with a community procession that anyone can join. This is followed

<sup>33</sup> [www.firstnight.org/Content/AboutUs/Index.cfm](http://www.firstnight.org/Content/AboutUs/Index.cfm)

<sup>34</sup> [www.firstnight.org/Content/AboutUs/Index.cfm](http://www.firstnight.org/Content/AboutUs/Index.cfm)

by numerous performances featuring music, dance, storytelling, and poetry in a variety of indoor and outdoor locations throughout the downtown. First Night also includes a visual arts component with art exhibits, demonstrations and hands on art experiences. The culmination of the evening is usually a fireworks finale at midnight issuing in the New Year.

First Night depends on volunteer efforts for its success. As a volunteer organizer for Stockton's First Night Visual Arts, I have seen the dynamic effects this extraordinary event has on downtown. First Night brings thousands of people together downtown, if only for one night, in celebration with the arts.

### **Summary**

What do the solutions mentioned have in common? These solutions are designed either to attract or support the attraction of people to their downtown. All promote the health and vitality of the downtown for the community. By creating meaningful experiences people want in their lives, solutions like these can increase the attractiveness of the downtown setting so it once again becomes the vibrant center of community life for every city.

Sporadic opportunities cannot fulfill us. Vitality stems from continual activities and places that stir a sense of excitement in the air and make us eager with anticipation for all that is to come. The combination of people with the arts, history and culture is what makes a downtown vibrant.

CHAPTER 4  
MAJOR CASE STUDY



Figure 23. Map of Downtown Tucson

Base map source- [www.joanhullrealty.com/mapofdowntowntucson.htm](http://www.joanhullrealty.com/mapofdowntowntucson.htm)

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**Figure 24. In Tucson Art Is Everywhere**

In preparing this report I was introduced to the wealth of art present in Tucson. Because Tucson made the effort to incorporate the arts into their city, I have made the effort to visit over and over again. I have spent days on the bus just for the chance of spending a small fraction of time getting to know the city better. Tucson is not perfect but they are trying to put their best face forward. Tucson has graffiti and decay but at least they have not given up hope. They are working diligently despite forces that would diminish their work. I value Tucson because of what they offer. The city makes sense. It is pedestrian friendly. It incorporates amenities because it considers the people using it. Tucson is not afraid to use creativity to tackle the hard problems. This is why they have sold

me on their city. I will keep coming back, again and again, because it is a place I would gladly be.

### **Tucson Draws You In**

I first became aware of Tucson on a cross-country bus trip to visit friends living in Texas. It is fitting that public transportation took me to this remarkable city. Along the freeway, I noticed the exquisitely decorated sound walls flanking the sides of the transportation corridor. As my bus exited the off ramp to go to the station in the heart of the downtown, I encountered seating areas that incorporated some of the sound wall motifs into their design. On the way, the bus sped by murals, brightly colored structures, and a statue in the median park. My eyes could not look fast enough to take in all the art that was there.

I only had a brief stop before I had to continue to other cities on my way to Texas. Before I left, I ran to nearby sights furiously taking pictures of everything I saw. The Greyhound station has murals on all sides. A nearby bus stop was decorated with angelic sculptures. Just across from the Greyhound station is an art school with a mural on its side. On another street there was an old hotel that caught my eye.

I had barely scratched the surface when my bus was ready to continue on its way. I knew that I must come back to Tucson and spend more time there. I don't know when or if I would have found this exciting city if not for this bus trip.

I looked for the chance to return to Tucson and spend the day investigating its downtown further. The opportunity came about six months after my first visit. This time I scheduled a half-day layover during my bus trip to Texas so I could

see all the sights I had merely glimpsed the first time. I was determined to get the flavor of this city.

After the bus dropped me at the station, I rented a storage locker and left as many of my bags there as I could. Then I began on my journey of discovery traveling on foot carrying my camera and my purse. The first sight I came across was the Congress Hotel just up from the Greyhound station. I had not gone in the last time so this time I allowed myself the luxury. The brick façade did not prepare me for what I found inside. The lobby was decorated with Native American patterns and mission style furniture. It was breathtaking.

I had no particular route for my journey. I just wanted to see as much of the downtown as was possible during the time I had. I let my instincts be my guide. I cut through the Congress Hotel. It was there I found a train depot that was undergoing restoration. A sign on the depot said that the restoration would be complete in 2003. I was impressed by Tucson's respect for both history and transportation.

As I continued away from the Greyhound station, toward the freeway, I passed by a transit hub. I had seen this only through the bus window the last time I came to Tucson. This time I walked around it so I was able to get the full effect. The structure included arches and columns made of brick inlaid with tile designs. A clock and a banner were located at the entryway. There were seating areas with vines and greenery. Overall, the transit hub was very inviting. Once again I was impressed with Tucson's careful attention to its transportation amenities.

As I meandered through the downtown, I encountered decorated bus stops. This time I took a picture of a bus stop that had a metal silhouette adhered to a background of wire mesh. On the street surface by the city center, I noticed a painted tree shape. This reminded me of a photo I had seen of similar paintings on a downtown Stockton street from years ago. Near the city center was a most impressive structure with a tiled dome and courtyard. I made my way through the courtyard walking across a plaza and continued up the street. The more I walked, the more I noticed intimate seating areas bounded by native vegetation. Usually they were placed to afford the traveler with a view of unique buildings or other aesthetic amenities. These areas offered the pedestrian traveler a peaceful setting for needed respite. The more time I spent in Tucson the more I thought that I had died and gone to heaven.

I finally made it to the freeway where my attraction to Tucson had begun. I took photos of the sound walls that had first alerted me that Tucson was something special. Sound walls were decorated on both sides. Under the overpass were mosaic mural panels mounted to the concrete. The design featured views of downtown. The mosaics were well executed though their mounting was somewhat precarious.

Making my way back from the freeway towards the Greyhound station, I came across a building with inlaid mosaics and wrought iron. There was much I had left to see. When I reached the pedestrian bridge over the street, I decided to take it. To my surprise, I discovered it led to the brightly colored buildings I noticed from the bus window before. I was thrilled. The pedestrian bridge led to

a plaza with a gazebo. The colored buildings were a series of stores and restaurants including Tucson's Visitors Center.

I happened to arrive at lunchtime at the same time as the weekly noontime concert. I decided to rest and enjoy the music and the ambiance. The plaza had inlaid mosaics like I had seen in Macau. These mosaics are similar to those found in Lisbon and Rio. Many people sat at picnic tables listening to the free concert. A path of lizards was painted on the walkway through the complex. They led from the parking garage to the Visitor's Center.

Across the street from the facility was another parking structure. It was painted in rainbow colors, each deck painted a different color. The parking structures and shopping complex were within one block of Tucson's Convention Center. On the next block over was an historic cathedral.

I started back toward the city center. Under the pedestrian bridge is a median park with a statue. Just beyond it I discovered another restoration project. The sign on the building read "Fox Tucson Theatre Re-opening 2004." My appreciation for Tucson grew because of their willingness to restore both transportation and arts facilities.

Before I went to lunch, I spent some time at the Pima Arts Council. Staff of a downtown arts agency I happened by directed me to it. Luckily when I visited there was a display of public art applicants for the Depot Restoration Project. The mock-ups the artists submitted really made the project come alive for me. I most liked the gilded luggage and travel items that would be placed around the station if that artist is chosen as the finalist.

While at the Arts council, I collected brochures and information that would help me piece together Tucson's approach to art. I left feeling closer to a deeper understanding of the city.

Searching for an authentic Mexican restaurant was an adventure. I did not eat at the restaurant by the Visitor's Center because I wanted something that looked less trendy. Before I found the restaurant I finally ate at, I came across a beautifully restored underpass. Tucson's attention to its transportation features truly amazes me. Just as I was about ready to give up finding a local restaurant, I saw the El Charro. It did not look like much from the outside but I was drawn to it because the electric boxes in front of it were painted with desert designs. This use of art intrigued and pleased me so much that I decided to give the El Charro a chance. I was not disappointed. The inside of the restaurant was beautifully decorated with colorful walls, paintings and art objects. The delight I found at the interior space reminded me of how I felt when I entered the Congress Hotel. I learned that this restaurant is one of the oldest Mexican restaurants in the nation.

Before I left Tucson, I wanted to find authentic art pieces for sale. I asked the staff of the arts council and the El Charro for their recommendations. Both had a vague notion of arts shops nearby. I finally found a complex called Old Town Artisans. I had hopes of buying art pieces from artists directly or from artists recommended by the staff. I was not happy with the products available at these shops. By this time it was late afternoon and the shops were closing. I was asked to leave. I still had not made my purchases. I was dejected. I did not know where to go.

Fortunately, I was directed to the Tucson Museum of Art. Usually I do not go to museums without a compelling reason. What I found made me glad I did. The museum had a pleasant seating area with a stunning metal bench, a fountain and a large wall mural. The space was inviting because of the art. When I got to the door, however, I found a janitor cleaning the museum. Fortunately, the curator passed by when I was there. I told him that I had been asked to leave the Old Town Artisans empty handed. I asked if I could buy something in the museum store. The curator agreed. I looked and found a small ceramic bowl in my price range. I wanted to know who made it. The curator said that his student had made it. That was enough for me. I paid him and was on my way.

Though I spent less than twelve hours in Tucson, I circled its downtown twice. I took representative photos of all the art I saw. Now that I have spent time downtown, I have a sense of how Tucson comes together as a city. There is still much more to learn. Next time I visit Tucson I plan on staying several days in the Congress Hotel.

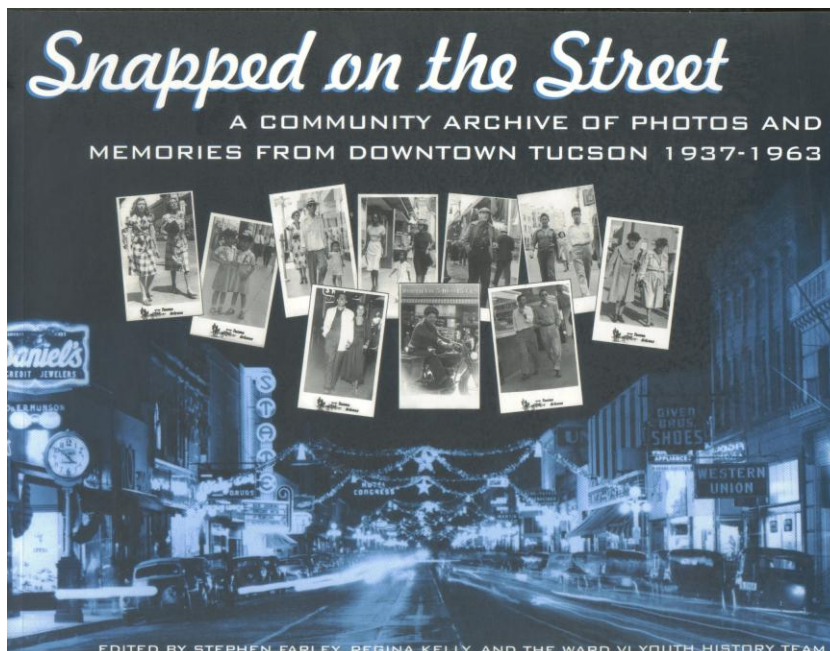
A little over six months later I returned to Tucson. This time I stayed in the Hotel Congress for three days and two nights. The appreciation phase of my earlier visits entered the research phase. I contacted individuals I thought were responsible for implementing the projects I had previously identified as key works in the downtown. During my stay, I came across additional works and agencies integral to the success of downtown Tucson. I added these to my list of topics to include in this report. I followed one lead to the next until I was able to assemble the best information I could about all the topics I had chosen.

## **Tucson Pima Arts Council**

The Tucson Pima Arts Council, or TPAC, is responsible for part of the decorative art in Tucson.<sup>35</sup> “Original design and hand-crafted artwork are incorporated into city and county structures, streets and parks. These projects are administered through the TPAC Public Art and Community Design Program.”<sup>36</sup>

“TPAC serves as advocate for the role of the arts in economic development, cultural tourism and neighborhood revitalization. Over \$200 million annually is generated by museums and cultural organizations for the Tucson economy.”<sup>37</sup>

### **Offshoot Projects**



**Figure 25. Front cover of, *Snapped on the Street*, the TPAC offshoot project from a public art mural**

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Associate Director David Hoyt Johnson. Tucson Pima Arts Council, February 24, 2003.

<sup>36</sup> Bringing The Arts And The Community Together Brochure. Tucson-Pima Arts Council.

<sup>37</sup> Bringing The Arts And The Community Together Brochure. Tucson-Pima Arts Council.

TPAC public art projects can develop beyond their original scope. Stephen Farley was granted a commission in 1998 to produce four interchange walls using historic photos transferred onto ceramic tiles to be located on the new eastern gateway into Downtown Tucson. Tucson residents submitted photos for the project. In all, Farley received 197 street photographs but was only able to use 14 for the project. Instead of returning the extra photographs, Farley collaborated with other individuals, including students, who conducted interviews and organized the photographs into a book.<sup>38</sup>

### **Transportation**

“Transportation is where the money is,” was a statement made by a Metropolitan Transportation Commission staff person at a lecture I attended. It is not surprising then that most of the art projects I encountered in Tucson were related to transportation in some way.

Transportation projects are inevitable. What impressed me about Tucson was that art was combined with function. This is due to Tucson’s 1% public art policy for capital improvement projects like transportation facilities so that sound walls, bus shelters, the transit mall and the train depot as well as public seating interspersed along streets all included artistic elements that introduced decorative design throughout downtown. Even private enterprises like the Greyhound depot were decorated with murals offering a sense of cohesion. Including art in such a comprehensive manner heightens the visual interest and perception that downtown Tucson is a place worth noticing.

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<sup>38</sup> Stephen Farley, Regina Kelly, and the Ward VI Youth History Team. *Snapped on the Street*. Tucson Arizona: Tucson Voices Press, 1999, 5-7.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Trolley operated by a local non-profit offers a sense of history not found in other cities. The success of the trolley on neighboring 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue helps it be considered as an integral component to Tucson's transportation system. The city has plans to extend the trolley and relocate the Greyhound station to a new intermodal center being built at the train depot. Such an abundance of public transportation choices makes Tucson a world-class city and a joy to visit.

### **Freeway Sound Walls**



**Figure 26. Sound wall by off ramp from I-10 into downtown Tucson**

The freeway sound walls are the first clue I had that Tucson was someplace special. The director of the Tucson Pima Arts Council referred to their designs

as a pueblo deco motif.<sup>39</sup> “City planner Bob Peterson states that not only is one percent of capital improvement money set aside for public art, but various city and county grants are also available. Just about every road improvement in the county also entails a public art project.”<sup>40</sup>

### **Bus Shelters**



**Figure 27. One of five public art bus shelters currently existing in Tucson**

The Tucson Pima County Arts Council oversees public art in Tucson.

Distinctive bus shelters are one of its projects. The director said that to date

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Associate Director David Hoyt Johnson, Tucson Pima Arts Council, February 24, 2003.

<sup>40</sup> Uschuk, J. “Drive-By Art.” *Tucson Weekly*, 11, 8, 2001.  
<http://www.tucsonweekly.com/gbase/Archives/index> (link to Issue Archives 11-8-2001 - 11-14-2001/ 11-8-2001, Arts Section, Drive-By Art)

there are five shelters around downtown with five more scheduled.<sup>41</sup> The shelters I saw were astonishing to say the least. One incorporated sculptural angelic forms, another displayed cut metal flowers combined with a series of vines while still another was a collage of sorts using metal machine parts to make intricate designs.

### **Painted Shuttles**



**Figure 28. One of fourteen public art decorated Ticet shuttles in Tucson**

Source: <http://dot.ci.tucson.az.us/parkwise/parkwise.htm>

TPAC was also instrumental in the painting of 14 free shuttles for use around the downtown. An open call to artists was solicited to find the best artists for the project.<sup>42</sup> The shuttles, known as Ticet, looped the downtown frequently. I watched many pass by.

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Associate Director David Hoyt Johnson. Tucson Pima Arts Council, February 24, 2003.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Associate Director David Hoyt Johnson. Tucson Pima Arts Council, February 24, 2003.

**Transit Mall**



**Figure 29. Ronstadt Transit Center In  
Downtown Tucson**



**Figure 30. Public Art Tilework  
at the Ronstadt Transit Center**

The Ronstadt Transit Center is the project that led to a continuing partnership between the Tucson Pima Arts Council and the Department of Transportation. The director of TPAC said that the department of transportation had a budget for tile work for the transit center. Being astute, he negotiated with the department of transportation to allow an artist to design the tile installation instead of the stock tile that was planned. Two conditions were agreed upon and met. The replacement tile could not cost much more than the stock tile and needed to be installed in a timely manner that did not delay the project. After the success of this project, the department of transportation readily included the Tucson Pima Arts Council in their projects.<sup>43</sup> This is a classic example of a visionary collaboration and what every project aspires to be.

### **Greyhound Depot**



**Figure 31. Current Downtown Tucson Greyhound Station**

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Associate Director David Hoyt Johnson. Tucson Pima Arts Council, February 24, 2003.

I think the Greyhound Depot is thoughtfully placed. It is at the edge of what I consider to be the downtown. Buses have to drive through downtown to access it. Because of its location, I was given a glimpse of downtown the first time I came to Tucson. This made me want to come back for more. If the depot would have been in another location that didn't require access through the downtown, I might not have ever discovered Tucson and made it my report case study.

The last time I visited Tucson I was alarmed to discover that sweeping changes are being planned for the whole downtown through a Redevelopment Project known as Rio Nuevo. An intermodal center is being planned that will replace the Greyhound Depot.<sup>44</sup> I find this to be an unfortunate prospect. The depot itself is painted with numerous murals. The sidewalk along its front edge has decorative seating elements. I worry how the Rio Nuevo project will affect these environments. Newer does not necessarily mean better.

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<sup>44</sup> Downtown Tucson Intermodal Center Fact Sheet sent from the Tucson Redevelopment Agency

## Train Depot



**Figure 32. Downtown Tucson Train Depot Undergoing Restoration For Inclusion In The Downtown Tucson Intermodal Center**



**Figure 33. Prospective Public Art Pieces For The Downtown Tucson Intermodal Center**

The train depot is one block from the Greyhound depot. The only thing that makes access between them a bit difficult is unregulated street traffic. This is what should be changed if anything.

The historic train depot is being restored for use in the intermodal project. The depot has five buildings in all. Buildings will serve as offices, shops, a restaurant, a museum and the main depot. Work on the depot was completed late in 2003. The fact that Tucson is saving this structure speaks highly of the priorities of this community. Historic structures let us celebrate our past.

## Trolley



**Figure 34. Trolley Traveling On 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
In Downtown Tucson**



**Figure 35. Trolley Garage And Storage Area**

A non-profit group interested in using authentic means of transportation has restored several trolley cars and is running them on weekends along 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue. On Sunday the trolley costs 25 cents. The 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association subsidizes the Sunday rides paying the difference of 75 cents from the usual dollar fare. They usually end up paying \$300 a weekend. <sup>45</sup>

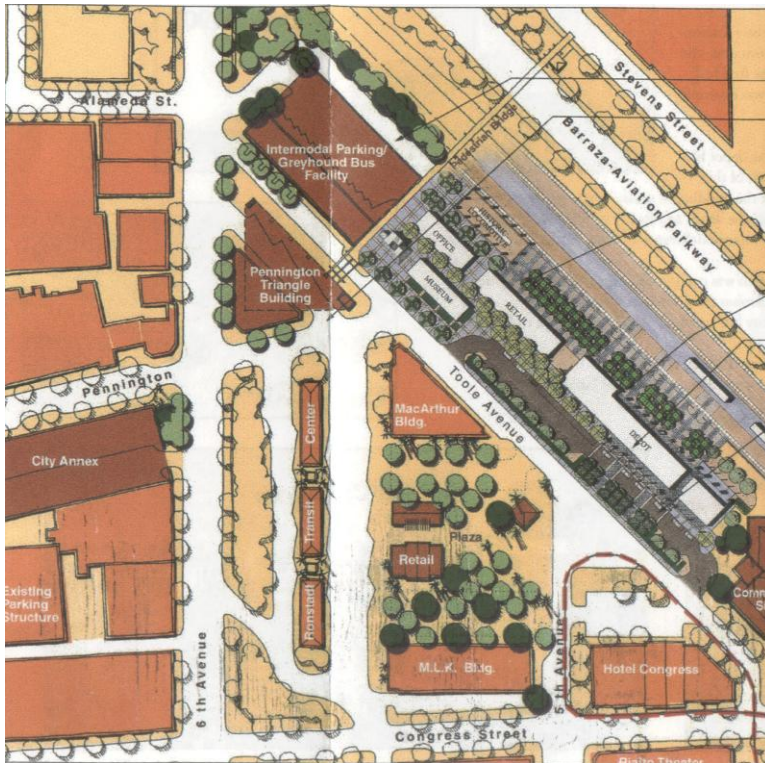
I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw the trolley coming down the street. It was a joy to behold. Trolleys evoke thoughts of a bygone era and serve to excite most who see them. I found the trolley yard by accident while I was looking at a classic example of adaptive reuse and noticed several trolley cars parked behind the fence. As part of the intermodal project, the trolley will be extended into the heart of downtown. <sup>46</sup> I can hardly wait. This program is an example of non-profits at their best and an example of what can be achieved with public/private partnership.

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Director John Sedwick, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association, February 24, 2003.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Director John Sedwick, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association, February 24, 2003.

## Downtown Tucson Intermodal Center



**Figure 36. Rendering of  
Downtown Tucson Intermodal Center**

Source: Downtown Tucson Intermodal Center Fact Sheet sent from the Tucson Redevelopment Agency

The Southern Pacific Railroad Depot was completed in 1907. It was a hub of commercial activity for half a century. During both World Wars the depot functioned as a venue to transport men and supplies. In 1941 the depot was expanded because of increased activity associated with World War II. In 1998 Tucson purchased both the depot and its site with the intent of restoring the historic depot buildings for the creation of a downtown intermodal transportation center. A development plan was completed based on eight months of public

involvement. The Intermodal Center Master Plan seeks to combine transportation facilities including rail, inner city/inter city bus travel, bicycles, pedestrians, trolley, automobiles and others as well as to revitalize the eastern downtown and preserve the historic depot building, a Tucson treasure. Plan specifics are as follows: The Intermodal Facility will replace parking spaces lost due to the Barraza-Aviation Parkway. The transit center should be extended and integrated into the existing Penington Triangle Building. Three associated buildings with the depot should be rehabilitated for use as a museum, office and retail space. Since the depot and its associated buildings are the center of the Historic Warehouse District their restoration should opt for the greatest reusable space. The depot will be home to Amtrak, Arizona Shuttle, Old Pueblo Trolley and Arizona High Speed Rail. The Facility will include public areas and a restaurant. The depot's arcades will be reopened as a pedestrian route along the façade. The location of the plaza draws pedestrians into the Intermodal Depot District. Reintroducing a third set of tracks allows for the expansion of passenger rail services. Development should be encouraged near the intermodal center so levels needed for economic revitalization can be reached. Parking should be limited to lots and structures. Streets should be narrowed to direct vehicles more efficiently through the district reconfiguring intersections for perpendicular street alignments wherever possible. An underpass used only by pedestrians and bicycles should be created. The Hotel Congress, retail and entertainment venues are important contributors to the Depot District.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Downtown Tucson Intermodal Center Fact Sheet sent from the Tucson Redevelopment Agency

## **Color**

Our built environment has been overrun by a predominant use of gray concrete and neutral tones with less and less space provided for landscaping. Our surroundings have become bland and desensitizing. We are leery of using color because there are fewer models to guide us.

Incorporating color into our world is more important now than ever before. People hunger for the visual interest that comes from observing the full spectrum of colors around them. Colors stimulate our senses and enliven our spirit. They can draw our attention or calm our mood.

Color takes on additional significance in Tucson because of its close ties to Mexico. This is shown by the bold color selection for La Placita Village. The City Hall Rainbow demonstrates how Tucson inspires the use of the full color spectrum.

### **La Placita Village**



**Figure 37. Arched Walkway Leads Into La Placita Village Shopping Area**



**Figure 38. Noontime Concerts Entertain La Placita Village Visitors**



**Figure 39. Painted Geckos Lead Visitors From The Parking Garage To The Visitor's Center**



**Figure 40. Decorative Plaza And Gazebo At La Placita Village**

The La Placita Village shopping complex was created in the 1970's as part of the Convention Center project. The Director of the Pima County Arts Council shared that it was created on a site that once housed the Barrio until it was razed to make room for the development. He said that the loss of the Barrio was one of the city's deepest regrets. According to him the complex had not done well over the years.<sup>48</sup> I wonder if this was due to the fact that the project displaced the

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with Associate Director David Hoyt Johnson, Tucson Pima Arts Council, February 24, 2003.

people that would have used it or because the residents turned their back on it in protest.

The complex faces the main thoroughfare from the freeway. Its back is toward the Convention Center in an awkward arrangement. It is apparent to me that if it were more creatively sited it could have opened to the convention center and the busy thoroughfare allowing greater access from both directions. Unfortunately, the price Tucson paid for this project was too high. Prime location should never forfeit history or culture. I think this project has not succeeded as planned because it was too short sighted. It forfeited both.

Several years ago the private owner of La Placita painted the complex and its parking garage an assortment of rainbow colors in an effort to increase use of the site. TPAC's director mentioned that the color selection was probably influenced by Tucson's ties to Mexican culture.<sup>49</sup> On my second trip to Tucson I made the effort to visit La Placita. Its strong colors attracted me the first time I saw it. At the time I visited it there just happened to be lunchtime music. This is a regular event. I couldn't help but notice the modest turnout and thought it could be much more. La Placita has trendy shops and restaurants though a bit unauthentic for my taste.

One of the smartest things I found about La Placita, other than its vibrant colors, was that the Visitor's Bureau is located there. A series of painted geckos form a path from the parking garage to the Visitor's Bureau. This unexpected touch delighted me.

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Associate Director David Hoyt Johnson, Tucson Pima Arts Council, February 24, 2003.

## City Hall Rainbow



**Figure 41. Bringing Color To The Downtown**

An optics professor conceived the unique City Hall Rainbow art piece. He approached the Director of the Pima County Arts Council to help him make his vision a reality. The director led him to the appropriate individuals for permission.<sup>50</sup> Although I did not see this work in action, the professor mounted panels on the roof of the City Hall that under proper conditions and angles cast rainbow hues. A plaque is erected in the plaza by the City Hall that explains the

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Associate Director David Hoyt Johnson, Tucson Pima Arts Council, February 24, 2003.

project. This installation is a testament to Tucson's creativity. Everyone that comes to Tucson can look for and be welcomed by its many colors.

### **Communication and Collaboration**

Communication and collaboration is necessary to make a liveable city. When people are willing to work together, improvements can be made. The 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association, enlisting the help of other community leaders, makes continual strides in identifying and solving Tucson's most pressing problems. Bicas, Bicycle Intercommunity Art and Salvage, provides a creative outlet for community enhancement by a local non-profit. The Hotel Congress contributes to the downtown arts district by inviting artists to show their work in the hotel.

### **4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association**



**Figure 42. Mural By The 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association Office**



**Figure 43. The 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association Keeps 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Looking Its Best**

Probably the most active group I found in Tucson was the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association that sponsors street fairs and other events using the proceeds, along with membership dues, to perform regular upkeep and beautification along 4th Avenue.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchant Association's success boils down to communication and partnership to address problems. One key program helped tackle panhandling with the Tucson Downtown Alliance asking people to give money to social services on behalf of the homeless rather than to the homeless themselves.<sup>51</sup>

I don't consider 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue to be in downtown though a downtown map includes it in the downtown boundary. However, even if 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue is not in downtown proper its influence on downtown is significant. This street is art intensive. It has an abundance of uses attracting frequent visitors. I originally

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Executive Director John Sedwick, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association, Feb. 24, 2003.

went there to find the Merchant's Mall. I never found the mall. The whole street is the mall. It is a wonderland of beauty and treasures serving as a model for the downtown.

## **Bicas**



**Figure 44. Trash Containers On 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Using Recycled Bicycle Wheel Rims For Their Tops And Bicycle Front Forks For Their Sides**

Bicycle Intercommunity Art and Salvage is a non-profit organization that trains youth to repair bikes and make recycled art.<sup>52</sup> Their works can be found along 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. This Tucson based bicycle-recycling center creates such unique works that they caught my eye. The 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association bought these

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<sup>52</sup> *Bicas Coaster to Coaster*, What's Happening At Bicas Bicycle Intercommunity Art & Salvage, Winter 2002-2003.

pieces to adorn the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue streetscape.<sup>53</sup> This is an impressive use of local wares to satisfy local need.

### Hotel Congress



**Figure 45. Entrance Into The Congress Hotel**



**Figure 46. Hotel Congress Murals**

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Executive Director John Sedwick, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association, Feb. 24, 2003.



**Figure 47. The Hotel Congress Exhibits Regular Art Displays**

The Hotel Congress combines history and art. Hotel Congress is, “where summer spends the winter since 1919.”<sup>54</sup> The hotel was built in order to provide lodging for passengers of the Southern Pacific Railroad when train travel was fashionable. Today, the Hotel Congress is a downtown Tucson landmark. It attracts guests with its authentic old west charm complete with original furnishings. “The rooms are a step back in time, with such simple pleasures as radios, windows that open, steam heat in the winter and comfortable evaporative cooling in the summer.”<sup>55</sup> Youth hostel dormitory rooms are also available. Muralist, Larry Boyce, from New Mexico was hired to paint lavish designs in the

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<sup>54</sup> Hotel Congress Brochure

<sup>55</sup> Hotel Congress Brochure

interior of the hotel. Artists regularly show their work in both the lobby and the restaurant of the hotel.

### **Downtown Support**

The Tucson Downtown Alliance and the Tucson Arts District Partnership support downtown improvement by providing numerous opportunities for public participation. Together, these organizations contribute greatly to increasing downtown involvement.

### **Tucson Downtown Alliance**

The Tucson Downtown Alliance actively works to promote art, history and culture in downtown Tucson. The Alliance's mission is:

To enhance Downtown's position as a dynamic center for the arts, commerce, and entertainment, and to promote Downtown as a celebration of the history and cultural heritage of Tucson and the region, for residents and visitors to enjoy.<sup>56</sup>

To fulfill its mission, the Alliance functions as an event promoter for all downtown events including Tucson Meet Yourself, the Dia de los Muertos procession and Fiesta San Augustin and supports the Tucson Arts District Partnership ArtWalks and studio tours by providing promotion, maintenance and security. In addition, the Alliance publishes a monthly free newspaper that includes an arts section as well as a regular article entitled, "Historic Downtown."<sup>57</sup>

### **Tucson Arts District Partnership**

The Tucson Arts District Partnership works diligently to get people interested in the arts. Their programs are located downtown and include ArtWalk, a guided

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<sup>56</sup> Email from Executive Director, Don Durband, Tucson Downtown Alliance, March10, 2003.

<sup>57</sup> Email from Executive Director, Don Durband, Tucson Downtown Alliance, March10, 2003.

art tour offered weekly October through May except in April, historic walking tours as well as an open studio tour. In addition, Tucson Arts District Partnership manages the Phantom Gallery, which showcases the work of local artists in vacant storefronts as well as their own office, Artist of the Month whose work is displayed in their office window and Art Square Market, a juried outdoor art market.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> <http://www.tucsonartsdistrict.org/> (link to Our Programs)

## **Theatre Restoration**

Theatre restoration renews community assets. Theatres serve as anchors for downtown activity. Many cities invest in theatre restorations as a first step towards downtown revitalization. In Tucson, however, it was residents who placed value on historic downtown theatres and initiated the restoration process.

The Fox Theatre Foundation and the Rialto Theatre Foundation are working to reopen these theatres as downtown destinations. Tucson is a model of how private leadership can complement city planning.

## **Fox Theatre**



**Figure 48. Fox Theatre  
Facade**

The Fox Theatre was built in 1929. It was the first movie experience for many as well as the Tucson location for the Mickey Mouse Club. The Fox Theatre was the heart of downtown for over 40 years. According to a brochure from the Fox Tucson Theatre Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to the restoration, renovation and re-opening of the historic 1929 Art Deco Fox Movie Theatre, “the theatre is an irreplaceable part of our community history.”

Succumbing to the plight of many movie palaces, the Fox has been closed since 1974. The theatre’s architecture is largely intact with ornate lighting, painted ceilings and proscenium arch uniting deco style with southwestern colors. The foundation states that, “architecturally, the building is one of the finest examples in existence, and will be a credit to our community, a tourist destination, and one of the largest cinema venues in the state.”

The present restoration effort was first envisioned in 1997 when a group of concerned citizens thought the time was right for the Fox’s return to downtown prominence. There are plans for the 1,300-seat theatre to show both movies and small-scale live performances. Although the Fox Theatre is similar in size to the nearby Rialto Theatre, I believe the Fox will complement the Rialto because the Rialto is planned to function as more of a community event space.

Restoration of the Fox depends on fundraising efforts by the Foundation. Restoration work will take about two years with the proper funding. The foundation is currently soliciting individual donations. Another fundraising strategy includes individuals adopting a seat with their name engraved on a

name plaque for a fee. The idea of adopting a seat has spread to other cities, like my hometown of Stockton, where another Fox Theatre near and dear to my heart is being restored.

What I found impressive is beyond these standard fundraising methods the Fox Tucson Theatre Foundation has gone even further in involving Tucson residents in the restoration project by asking for memories and photos to be included in a commemorative book to be published. When available, this book will become a community history, celebration and method of raising money that is sure to rouse the greatest public interest and a model for other cities to follow.<sup>59</sup>

### **Rialto Theatre**



**Figure 49. Rialto Theatre Across From The Hotel Congress**

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<sup>59</sup> Fox Theatre brochure

This theatre is undergoing much the same process as the Fox. I was able to go inside the theatre to find out information about the restoration. Currently the Rialto is in use for limited engagements to raise money for their renewal. I was impressed to find a wall display showing all the theatres that once had been in downtown Tucson. The board had a photo of each theatre with its name, year it was built, location and number of seats. The photos had pieces of string corresponding to locations on the downtown map. It was very effective though it made me a bit sad to see just how much Tucson had lost through the years. The recent effort to restore several key Tucson establishments is a small step on the way back.

The Rialto Theatre was constructed in 1919. Its opening put Tucson on America's cultural map. It was home to plays, films and Vaudeville. Its stage featured the Sistine Choir as well as Ginger Rogers. It is the oldest performance theatre in Tucson. The Rialto Theatre showed Tucson's first talking picture.

The Rialto has seen many changes. Its name was changed to the Paramount in 1948. For the fifteen years that followed, it was Tucson's premiere movie house. Unfortunately, it suffered the same fate as many other luxurious playhouses. It closed its doors. Then it became a porno palace. Finally it began showing Spanish language films. A fire and later boiler explosion shut the theatre again. The Rialto was scheduled to be demolished.

Tucson citizens negotiated the purchase of the theatre property. They realized the importance of preserving this unique structure. In 1995, the non-profit Rialto Foundation was formed to conduct fundraising efforts directed at the

theatre's restoration. Once this task is complete the Rialto will be used for performing arts, film festivals and community events.

Fortunately the Rialto is structurally sound, though in disrepair, with most of its original architectural details remaining. Its décor will be restored or replicated to reflect a past era for future theatergoers to enjoy. Upgrades in state of the art technical equipment will make the theatre comparable to modern facilities.

The Rialto's 1,200-seat auditorium promises to complement smaller and larger venues currently in Tucson. The restoration of this mid-size theatre offers options that are currently unavailable. It is estimated that Rialto events will bring over 150,000 people annually into the downtown. These people will patronize restaurants, shops and assorted activities in addition to theatre events. The Rialto is located in the downtown's arts district next to art galleries. It is across from the Historic Hotel Congress. Its proximity to arts and history only serves to accentuate mutual assets and heighten the combined effect.<sup>60</sup> I photographed the block the Rialto is located on before becoming aware of its existence. It blends seamlessly into the surrounding streetscape it inhabits. To me that is its best feature. If it had been demolished this block would have lost its cohesion. That would have been regrettable since it is one of the most aesthetically pleasing blocks in all of downtown.

When I went into the Rialto I was not particularly impressed with its architecture. After reading the Rialto Foundation brochure, however, I began to understand the theatre's underlying value to the Tucson community. Though I have deeply rooted preservation tendencies, sometimes an asset's worth is

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<sup>60</sup> Rialto Theatre brochure

buried so deep that it cannot easily be seen. This instance, in particular, makes the case for cities not rushing to judgment but looking deeper to understand the overall context of potential demolition sites to the community before making decisions. It is fortunate that Tucson residents rushed to save the Rialto from destruction. I look forward to the Rialto's renovation. It adds greatly to downtown Tucson.

### **History**

“Tucson stands on what archaeologists believe is the longest continuously inhabited site in the nation.”<sup>61</sup> Humans lived here as far back as 11,000 years ago. The Hohokam Indians farmed the area in the first century. After they disappeared, the Pima and Tohono O’odham tribes arrived.

Irishman Hugh O’Connor, an explorer for Spain, founded the City of Tucson on August 20, 1775. A walled presidio, nicknamed the “Old Pueblo,” gave refuge to residents and travelers.

Tucson became part of Mexico when it gained its independence in 1821 and fell under U.S. jurisdiction after the Gadsden Purchase in 1854.<sup>62</sup> “Tucson was known as a rowdy frontier town tempered by social refinements brought by city settlers.”<sup>63</sup> In 1867, Tucson became the capitol of the Arizona territory. Tucson’s population increased in 1880, when the Southern Pacific Railroad arrived.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> <http://www.aimrelocation.com/az/tucson/tuchistory.html>

<sup>62</sup> [http://www.cityoftucson.org/tucson\\_history.html](http://www.cityoftucson.org/tucson_history.html)

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.aimrelocation.com/az/tucson/tuchistory.html>

<sup>64</sup> [http://www.cityoftucson.org/tucson\\_history.html](http://www.cityoftucson.org/tucson_history.html)

This historical overview of Tucson puts current history into context. Tucson's long connection with Mexico is visible in the El Charro Café. In contrast, the Zellweger Mansion, built after the arrival of the railroad, depicts the wealth and variations in style found in Tucson.

### **El Charro Cafe**



**Figure 50. El Charro Cafe  
In Downtown Tucson**



**Figure 51. El Charro Cafe Dining Room Interior**

The El Charro Cafe, a Tucson icon, is the oldest family owned Mexican restaurant in the United States. It is situated in the family home, built by Jules Flin, in the late 1890's. In the mid-nineteenth century, Jules, a French stonemason, contributed to early Tucson history by carving a church portal. His daughter, Monica, left her mark on 20<sup>th</sup> century Tucson history by opening El Charro Café in 1922. Each generation since has created parts of El Charro. The El Charro cookbook claims, "It is not the best because it is the oldest, it is the oldest because it is the best."<sup>65</sup>

### **Zellweger Mansion**



**Figure 52. Zellweger Mansion Facade**

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<sup>65</sup> El Charro Cookbook



**Figure 53. Zellweger Mansion Back Patio**



**Figure 54. Zellweger Mansion Rear Building  
Used For Events**

The Zellweger Mansion, or “the Z” as it is affectionately known, is located in downtown Tucson on Church Avenue where Tucson millionaires with Victorian-era wealth built extravagant homes. It was constructed in 1898. According to its owner, Thomas Langdon Hill, it is the only remaining mansion on Church Ave.

I discovered the Z from a radio commercial I heard while relaxing for the evening in the Hotel Congress. My room did not have a TV so I tuned into the radio for entertainment. If not for this coincidence, I don't know that I would have found it.

I stopped by the Z before my return bus trip. The owner graciously told me the mansion's history and gave me a tour. The Z's grounds are as impressive as the structure itself. What I found the most interesting, however, was how the mansion came to be enjoyed by eager event guests. Hill said that he and his wife had been reluctant to rent out their home for events. He told me that one intended bride refused to leave the mansion until he agreed she could have her wedding there. The wedding was such a success that he opened the mansion to special events on the weekends.

What makes the Zellweger Mansion special? I think it is the sense of history one feels by being there. The Z Mansion website gives top reasons to hold an event at the Z. One is that the Z Mansion is like stepping into the gilded age of America's Victorian tycoons. Another is that there are thousands of hotels and millions of restaurants but only one Z mansion. The list continues by noting the flexibility and low price of the Z and concludes with the statement that only Z best memories are made at the Z mansion!<sup>66</sup> History cannot truly be appreciated unless it is shared. Fortunately, the Z's owners are making that possible. The Z mansion, the last of its kind in downtown Tucson, is more than an old Victorian mansion. Its time-honored history has made it a cherished community asset.

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<sup>66</sup> <http://www.zmansion.com/>

## **Culture**

The cultural traditions of Tucson help form the stabilizing foundation on which its history is built. Tucson's many cultures are best showcased at the downtown convention center at the annual Tucson International Mariachi Conference and the Tapestry of Tucson multi-cultural exhibit located there.

### **Tucson International Mariachi Conference**

Tucson hosts the International Mariachi Conference, its largest cultural event, in the downtown convention center. At the conference, students and the general public explore the rich mariachi cultural tradition and raise funds for a behavioral health agency known as La Frontera Center Inc. The Tucson International Mariachi Conference serves as a model for similar conferences across the nation.<sup>67</sup>

### **Tapestry of Tucson**

In 1997, Tucson's Mayor, City Council and the Tucson Convention Center Commission created teams consisting of community leaders and volunteers who shared their insights about cultural and historical influences shaping Tucson.

The result of their work is the Tapestry of Tucson project, a series of interpretive exhibits and displays, located at the Tucson Convention Center and funded by grants and private donations.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> <http://www.tucsonmariachi.org/> (link to About Us)

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.ci.tucson.az.us/tcc/> (link to Tapestry)

## Private Enterprise Murals



**Figure 55. Mural Façade In Downtown Tucson**

Tucson probably has more murals than anything else. When I talked to the director of TPAC I asked him about how these murals came to be. He said that most were private efforts by owners allowing artists to paint individual storefronts.<sup>69</sup> However the murals came to be, they are spectacular. Their pervasiveness throughout all of downtown suggests Stewart Brand's words, "The product of careful continuity is love."<sup>70</sup> It shows.

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<sup>69</sup> Interview with Associate Director David Hoyt Johnson, Tucson Pima Arts Council, February 24, 2003.

<sup>70</sup> Brand, Stewart. *How Buildings Learn*. New York: Penguin Books, 1994, 49.

## Early Works Before Recognized Public Art



**Figure 56. El Presidio Fountain**

Tucson art has come a long way since the efforts of the pioneers of art in public spaces. One of the first artists to make significant contributions, Charles Clement, decorated the El Presidio fountain in 1971. The fountain, designed by architect Michael Lugo, was adorned with water symbols on sculpted panels. Commissioned by Pima County and funded by a public bond issue, the fountain in the plaza near City Hall, was the first art project in Tucson to be publicly funded in this way.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *Guide To Public Art In Tucson*, Tucson/Pima Arts Council, 1987, 11.

## **Summary**

Tucson is a colorful city. They're not afraid to show their true colors like so many other places. Tucson still has a long way to go but at least they have begun. According to an agent at the transit hub, downtown has gone downhill (nothing to do on Sunday because everything is closed). I, however, explored a whole street of shopping and local flavor, on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and then went to the downtown art film theater before having a sumptuous dinner downtown and retiring for the evening. You can always find things to do if you are willing to make the effort. I do say that Tucson transportation should be easier on Sunday. Several of the spots I would have gone were only serviced by county transit weekdays.

Tucson problems: vandalism, homelessness and structures showing their age. Only time can make the difference. I think these things will get better because Tucson wants them to and has people willing to do the work it takes to turn the downtown around. The Tucson Downtown Alliance and Arts District Partnership are promoting a better central downtown while the 4<sup>th</sup> Ave Merchants Association is working to make its area, with close linkages to downtown, lively and a place that beckons people to visit.

## CHAPTER 5

### MINOR CASE STUDIES BY TOPIC

#### Art

The Woonsocket Neighborhood Development Corporation in Rhode Island is using art to rebuild their community. The WNDC has created an Artist in Residence program, which provides the artist in residence a rent-free apartment in exchange for 365 hours of arts instruction/programming annually. The program is designed to give children a positive way to use their time in order that they can develop skills that will help them throughout their lives.

Woonsocket hosted its first Artist in Residence in 2000. Amazingly enough, the artist that was selected was none other than Tucson artist, Stephen Farley, who edited the book “Snapped on the Street” that was previously discussed.

For his artist residency, Stephen directed neighborhood children to collect oral histories and photos of Woonsocket’s Constitution Hill, Fairmount, and Veterans Memorial communities which were published in a book entitled, “*A Different View*.”<sup>72</sup>

WNDC realizes the importance of the arts to a well-rounded city. On their website they quote Robert McNulty, President of Partners for Livable

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<sup>72</sup> <http://www.wndc.org/>

Communities, who states that, “(Arts) Culture is a school-to-work strategy, a youth development strategy, and an economic enterprise strategy. Arts and culture are clearly not indulgences, but rather mighty allies in the complex community building process.”<sup>73</sup>

The rationale for this innovative program can best be expressed through a statement made by the WNDG:

We believe in the importance and transformative power of artistic/cultural resources as part of a comprehensive community revitalization effort, and that the cultivation of this resource in our community will greatly enhance what has already been achieved. We believe that we need more secure places for neighborhood youth to go after school, and that we must create more opportunities for them to activate and extend their knowledge, imagination, talents and skills. Finally, in order to make this vision a reality, we believe that we need a creative, sharing, artistic mentor and role model in the midst of our community.<sup>74</sup>

## **History**

Los Gatos, California virtually recreated their historic downtown after it was seriously damaged in the quake of “1989”. An article in the *Los Gatos Weekly Times* recounts how, “Residents got a wakeup call when they saw familiar old homes and downtown businesses off their foundations, their glass shattered, their bricks and mortar scattered on sidewalks.”<sup>75</sup> In all, Los Gatos suffered \$233 million in property damage, much of it to historic buildings.

In the days following the disaster, the Los Gatos mayor called an emergency community-wide meeting to address the most extreme quake-related concerns. The meeting was standing room only with people coming from all areas, from

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<sup>73</sup> <http://www.wndc.org/>

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.wndc.org/>

<sup>75</sup> Kaplan, Shari. “Moving Exhibit.” *Los Gatos Weekly Times*, October 13, 1999.

downtown to the mountains. During the meeting, residents made it clear that they wanted their old Los Gatos back. Historic renovation and preservation were paramount to the rebuilding effort. To hasten this effort the council, aided by the planning department, fast tracked restoration projects by expediting permits and waiving fees so that owners would be encouraged to restore their properties.

Now the downtown is thriving. Many of the historic homes that looked the most hopeless following the quake have been restored. The Forbes Mill Museum of Regional History hosted an exhibit on the tenth anniversary of this memorable moment in history showing the local damage and destruction as well as the inspiring efforts towards reclamation brought on by the quake.<sup>76</sup> Los Gatos is a testament to the part history can play in a community when everyone is willing.

### **Culture**

The word “culture” can be interpreted in several ways. For many, the word is used in reference to the arts. For others, like myself, the term takes on ethnic implications. For the purposes of this paper, I choose to use the definition of culture as referring to ethnic heritage.

Culture is an integral component of downtown settings. In Stockton, California a variety of cultures are present. The most prominent of these are Mexican, Filipino, Chinese, Italian and African American. Each culture tells their story in different ways. The Mexican culture is brought to life downtown with the Cinco de Mayo parade and festival annually. The Mexican Heritage Center complements this effort by educating hundreds of downtown visitors with its art

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<sup>76</sup> Kaplan, Shari. “Moving Exhibit.” *Los Gatos Weekly Times*, October 13, 1999.

exhibits and symposiums focusing on Mexican themes. The Chinese culture puts on a spectacular Chinese New Year's Festival annually in the Civic Auditorium downtown. Remnants of Stockton's Chinatown can be seen near the Cross-town Freeway cutting through downtown. The African American culture is not as large in Stockton though they make quite an effort at being recognized. The African American Chamber of Commerce is located downtown. The Italian culture is most visible downtown in the business community. Italian owned businesses remain to this day.

But it is the Filipino culture that requires the greatest attention in Stockton. Downtown Stockton once housed the largest Filipino population outside of the Philippines. At present, only three of the structures from Little Manila, as it is known, still exist. Stockton's Cross-town Freeway and Gateway Project razed the built environment of the area. In 2000, Stockton's City Council declared Little Manila to be an historic site.<sup>77</sup> The Little Manila Foundation raised money for banners that were placed around the site at a recent dedication. It is their goal to save the three remaining structures of Little Manila, one of which would be used to house a Filipino Museum. Though the mayor and city council honored Little Manila at the banner dedication, the Little Manila Foundation, the Filipino American National Historical Society and the National Trust for Historic Preservation are the only groups willing to contribute financial support to turn dreams into reality.

Many cultures are prominent in Stockton. Each works hard to achieve their goals. Without culture, downtown Stockton would offer so much less to the

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<sup>77</sup> Little Manila Foundation brochure

community. Unfortunately, the city offers little public assistance to ensure that culture not only exists but thrives in downtown. The struggle for cultural attainment is endless.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

Sprawl is forcing us all to lose our identity. Instead of making sure downtowns are strong we are moving further and further away from our center. This wastes our land and numerous other resources. If we continue making such poor choices we will have nothing left one day. When little value is placed on what is created so that nothing is permanent and everything is torn down with ease, no history is allowed to take root. Our present is constantly upturned so that, indeed, we have no present and respect no past, looking to an uncertain future. In order to find the charm we so desperately seek we feel forced to travel outside America. I say let us use art, history and culture to make American cities places we can enjoy.

If we can define what we are looking for we can create a nationwide environment that gives us deeper fulfillment. An artist friend of mine said that we should be spending our time, “bringing beauty and function together.” Maybe then we would want to be where we are. None of this should mean we stop traveling around the world; it just changes the nature of our travel experience. If

we are content with our cities, then travel becomes a way of learning about our neighbors so we can embrace them in our own backyard rather than a way to escape the humdrum environments we have forced upon ourselves.

In order for cities to reach their full potential, creativity must be an integral component. The more people discover the replenishing energy the arts, history and ethnic diversity give to the downtown the greater the likelihood that abandonment and decay will diminish and be replaced by the hopefulness that only creative inspiration can bring. When people realize and appreciate the unique characteristics each city offers, cities everywhere can better attract and provide for those who choose to enjoy them.

