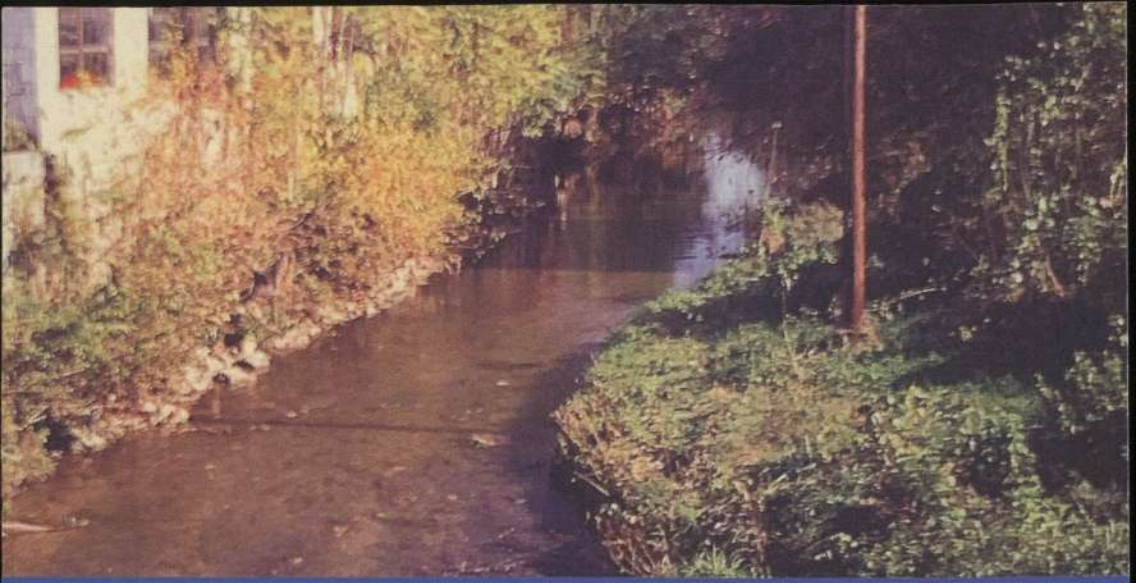
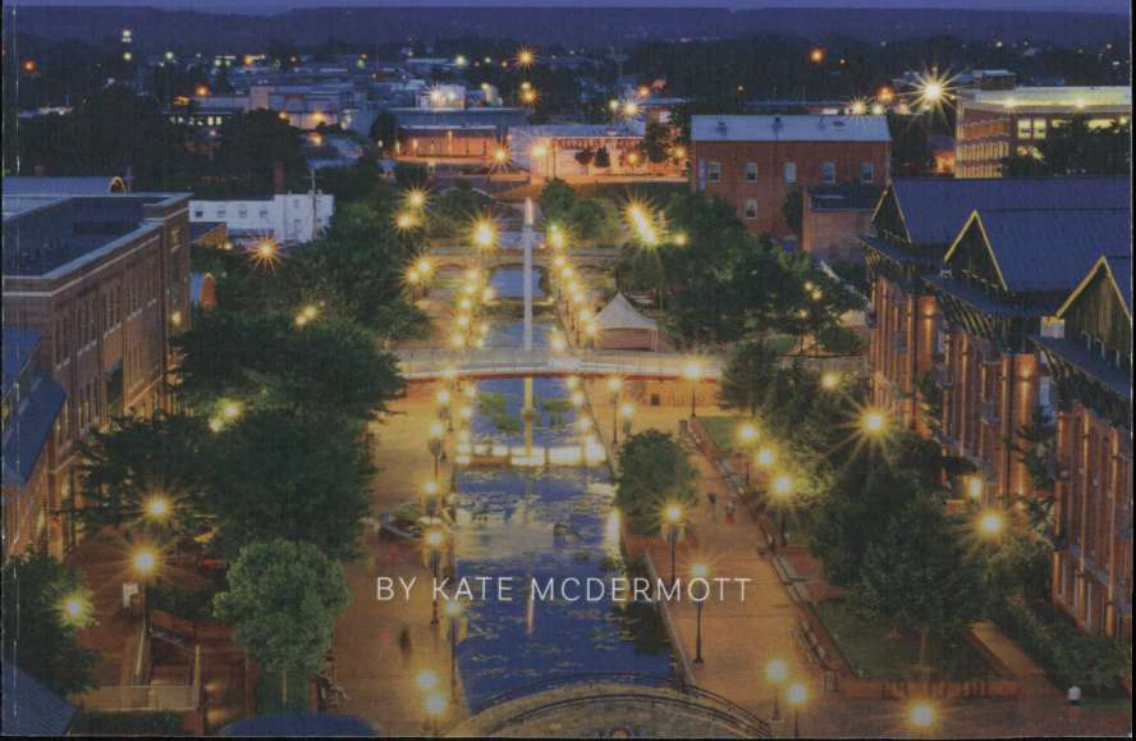


FROM THE BRINK TO BRILLIANT

The Revitalization of Downtown Frederick, Maryland



BY KATE MCDERMOTT

FROM THE BRINK TO BRILLIANT

The Revitalization of Downtown Frederick, Maryland

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This book was commissioned by Don Linton and published in cooperation with Downtown Frederick Partnership.

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A Note from the Benefactor

THIS BOOK TELLS A STORY THAT MUST BE TOLD.

When I was growing up, the city of Frederick was home to a vibrant business community. Everything you could need or want was available in Downtown Frederick. It was also the social hub, the place where people came—especially on Saturday evenings—to shop and visit with their friends.

That all changed when the shopping centers arrived. Downtown became a ghost town. Businesses closed and restaurants shuttered. You had to go to a shopping center to find a good lunch.

Our elected city officials did nothing and Downtown Frederick was dying.

A group of rebels, myself included, became active and pushed hard to save our downtown. This is the story of how we were able to bring life back to Frederick. What a story.

By working very hard, we were able to turn the city around. We elected new officials who led and guided the city and well, the rest is history. Frederick is now one of the best places to visit, shop and meet friends. Our downtown is now recognized across the state—and the nation—as a great place to visit. Even on Sunday mornings, the streets of Downtown Frederick are packed with people visiting, eating and touring. What a pleasure it is now to see how vibrant our beloved downtown is today!

Our work is not done, though. We still need to work hard to make sure we do not slip back to old ways. The delays we've encountered for years on approving the new hotel is a sad example of how some folks still never look forward.

Most of those involved are no longer with us and this book is dedicated to those unknown heroes who helped make it happen. Bless them, one and all.

Don, a proud rebel.

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PART I

1965-1976

The Times They Were A'Changin'

CHAPTER 1

"Those Were the Days My Friends We Thought They'd Never End..."

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 20TH CENTURY, Downtown Frederick was a bustling mecca of dining, entertainment and commerce. You could catch the latest Hollywood blockbusters at the Frederick, Tivoli or Opera House theaters and pick up anything from shoes to sheets at national retailers such as Sears or JCPenney's. Routzhan's Department Store and Hendrickson's Dry Goods were the "go-to" local retailers for longtime Fredericktonians. And after you'd shopped 'til you dropped, you could stop at the Francis Scott Key hotel, Frederick's place "to see and be seen," for lunch or dinner in one of the hotel's five elegantly appointed dining rooms.

The historic Francis Scott Key Hotel

Frederick was such a draw that local lore holds that even the First Lady of the United States, Mamie Eisenhower, was known to frequent Downtown Frederick, where her security detail would escort her into the McCrory's store on North

A bustling Downtown Frederick in 1952

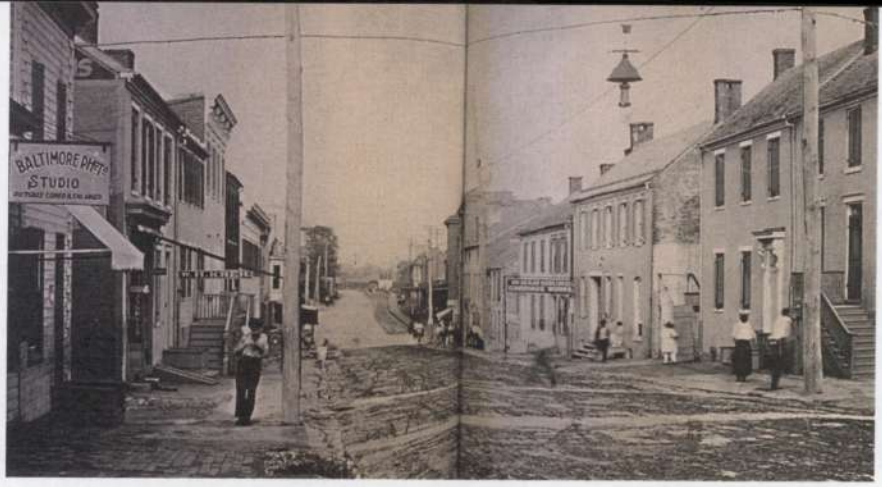
Market Street so she could buy her favorite handkerchiefs before heading up to Camp David (previously known as "Shangri-la) or their farm in Gettysburg, PA.[1]

On All Saints Street, African American-owned businesses catered to nearby residents, supporting the commercial, religious and social needs of people of color in Frederick. From Patrick to South Streets between Bentz and East Streets "could be found almost every service for Blacks that was available to white people on Market Street," wrote Joy Hall Onley in her book "Memories of Frederick: Over on the Other Side." [2]

Anchored by Asbury United Methodist Church at West Court and All Saints Streets, the neighborhood was home to businesses owned by people of color, for people of color. These included Clifford Holland's grocery store, Brown's Cleaners, Paul Reid's Soda Fountain, Lee's Men's Shop, several barbers and scores of others.

"You never had to leave All Saints," said Gerald Palm, a member of Frederick's African American Resources Cultural and Heritage (AARCH) Society. "Everything you needed was there."

"Downtown Frederick was the center of everything," recalled Don Linton, a Frederick native and businessman. "Saturday nights were big nights in Downtown Frederick. It was where you met your friends. The Salvation Army band would be playing at the corner of Church and Market Streets. For those of us living in Frederick County, Downtown Frederick was all we had."



All Saints Street, circa 1903

Ron Young shares those memories as well. "Saturdays were like going to the county fair…It seemed like everyone in the county would come downtown on Saturday," the future mayor of Frederick recalled.[3] One of the most popular spots in town was the White Star Grill, a small eatery on North Market Street that was famous for its hot dogs—and onions. "I must have eaten a couple hundred hot dogs over the years," recalled Linton. "As a teenager, I worked at a gas station on Jefferson Street and would always go to the White Star and bring back hot dogs for the other employees. The only problem was the onions were so strong we could not eat them in the office because of the smell."

Pungent onions or not, the White Star was a Frederick institution and a familiar stop for those who returned to town after an absence. "My older brother went in the Air Force and the White Star was one of the first places he went to for lunch when he came home on leave," Linton added.

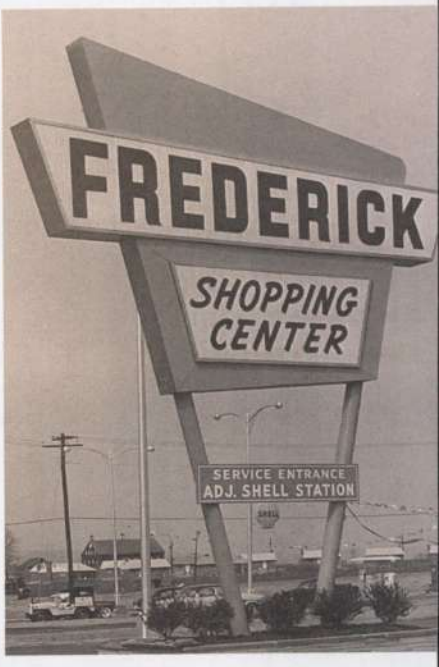
But by the late 1960's, things were changing and Downtown Frederick was beginning to lose its luster. It was hardly alone. All across America, once bustling downtowns were watching businesses pack up and move their operations to be closer to the new highways that were bypassing city streets. From El Dorado, Arkansas to Rawlins, Wyoming, American downtowns were struggling.

In Frederick, motorists no longer needed to use Market Street to travel through the city. U.S. Route 15 opened, offering a stoplight-free north-south thoroughfare. Interstates 270 and 70 allowed

Store closures increased with the opening of new shopping centers, including the Frederick Shopping Center on Seventh Street.

easy access to Washington D.C. and Baltimore. The new Frederick Shopping Center located right off Route 15 on Seventh Street opened in 1957, offering easy access and ample parking. Over the next two decades, the Frederick Towne and Francis Scott Key malls would also lure shoppers away from Downtown Frederick with their climate-controlled interiors and abundant parking.

George B. Delaplaine, Jr., a life-long Fredericktonian whose family founded and published Frederick's local paper in 1883 (originally known as the Frederick News, it later became the Frederick News-Post), recalled: "By the mid-1960s, Downtown Frederick was losing stores rapidly. It was more than the usual seasonal ebb and flow. Something felt different…I had a bad feeling where things might be heading in Frederick…"[4]



Frederick Shopping Center, circa 1957

He was hardly alone. There was talk of moving both the County Courthouse as well as the post office out of downtown. The loss of these major public entities would be a huge blow, especially if attorneys, accountants, bankers and other professional service providers followed them to be in closer proximity to these essential services.

On All Saints Street, things were changing, too. "The Black business landscape began to change…as the Civil Rights Movement gained ground," wrote William O. Lee in his book, "Bill Lee Remembers: A Chronicle of Twentieth Century Black Life in Frederick, Maryland." "Integration had a downside, however. Black consumers ventured outside their community to patronize establishments where they had once been unwelcomed. Sales plunged at Black community-owned businesses. Many closed their doors."[5]

Dave Chapin came to Frederick in 1970 to interview for a new job with Richard (Dick) Kline, one of downtown's "rebels" as Linton would later brand the group of activists who would fight to save the area. As Chapin and his wife were driving up Market Street, which looked like an urban jungle with its blocks of crisscrossing overhead electrical wires, she asked him point blank: "Are you sure you want to move here?"

Her question was not without merit. "The streets of downtown were sparsely populated and of those on these streets, few were shoppers or tourists," said community activist Peggy Pilgram. "There was a general feeling of malaise…"[6]

Linton described the situation in even more dire terms. "In the early 1970s, Downtown Frederick was an economic disaster area. Stores were boarded up and property values went down. We also had a little creek that was polluted and wound its way through town. The Square Corner (the intersection of Market and Patrick Streets) was ugly. Our hotel closed. People's Drug Store moved out. You couldn't find a decent place to eat lunch, and the Elks Club burned down. It was a very depressing time."[7]

By 1972, the Frederick News reported there were "more than one dozen empty stores in a three-square block radius from the Square Corner."

It was clear to many that Downtown Frederick was failing. But as legendary basketball coach John Wooden said, "Failure isn't fatal, but failure to change might be."

CHAPTER 2

If You Build It, They Will Come

AS AN ACCOUNTANT WITH A THRIVING BUSINESS in Downtown Frederick, Linton was getting tired of waiting for city leaders to step up and reverse the decline he was witnessing all around him. And he knew that residents and other business owners, like Dick Kline, shared his frustration.

In 1970, the city of Frederick established the Downtown Action Committee. Kline agreed to lead the group, but it proved to be a futile undertaking, since the city controlled its funding and held the ultimate decision-making power. Critics would later say that the only thing the committee truly accomplished was to use a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to commission a study of Downtown Frederick by the urban planning firm Marcou, O'Leary and Associates, Inc.

The firm's 1971 report identified major problems as well as opportunities in Downtown Frederick. On the plus side, the Marcou report noted that Downtown Frederick enjoyed:

- An attractive geographic location with easy access to the major markets of Baltimore and Washington D.C.
- A stock of historic buildings that, "although they represent the varying styles of a century and a half, contribute to an overall architectural character of great distinction which pervades the district." [8]
- Its history as "the county's principal retail service center since

Downtown Frederick has a rich stock of beautifully preserved residential and commercial buildings.

its earliest settlement. About one-third of the total retail sales occurring in the county are estimated to be taking place in the downtown area."[9]

- A compact and well-defined physical area.
- A variety of tourist and recreation attractions in the city and county.

But on the other side of the balance sheet, Marcou's report enumerated a number of major problems facing Downtown Frederick, including:

- Parking: "...available parking...does not serve well the section of Market Street from Patrick to about Third Street, the core of the retail area." [10]
- Competition from the new Frederick Towne and proposed Francis Scott Key malls.
- Vacant storefronts, overhead wiring and generally unattractive streetscapes.
- The need to keep essential public services, including the Frederick County Courthouse, a new library and the Board of Education in downtown.

It also suggested developing a linear park along Carroll Creek from Baker Park to the east.[11]

But first and foremost, Marcou pointed out, Frederick needed to address its parking problems.

Three years after the establishment of the Downtown Action Committee and two years after the Marcou report, the city had taken little or no action on the document's findings.

"I recall Dick Kline saying many times that they just couldn't get people to move on it," recalled Chapin. "It seemed like there were people who had no interest in saving downtown."

By 1972, businesses in Downtown Frederick were bearing the lion's share of the city's tax assessments, even as the area became increasingly depressed. As the Frederick News reported, "the value of property in the downtown area has dropped. Not only have sale prices reflected the decline in the value of downtown property, but there are more than one dozen empty stores in a three-square block radius from the Square Corner." These vacancies, the article noted, were often the result of "...stores driven out by the high taxes."[12]

Tired of waiting for City Hall to step up, a new community group was formed with the goal of trying to implement many of the Marcou report's recommendations. The Frederick Improvement Foundation, Inc. (FIFI) had two major objectives: 1) to coordinate the activities of all existing groups in the improvement of Frederick and not to be in competition, 2) to create new interest in improving Frederick and "try to cut the red tape."[13]

The group hired Paul Spreiregen, an architect who helped Annapolis get its first parking garage. In a letter to Linton in March 1973, Spreiregen noted that by creating more off-street parking, not only would Downtown Frederick be better able to compete with the new shopping malls, but it would also increase pedestrian traffic.

"The neglect of pedestrians is one of the reasons old town centers like Frederick have been declining," Spreiregen wrote. "If you make the center as interesting a place to be as its full potential allows, it will be highly competitive with all the shopping centers in the area."[14]

After chartering a bus to travel to Annapolis to see how that city managed to incorporate a parking deck into its existing historic downtown grid, Linton and his self-described band of "rebels with a cause" delivered a petition to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen asking the city to "Take immediate steps leading to the construction of a tiered parking facility." It was signed by scores of business owners, attorneys, accountants, retailers and bankers.

Even the general manager of the new Frederick Towne Mall agreed that Downtown Frederick's parking problem was the reason the area was losing customers to his mall. "It is counterproductive to good business," William Parkins said. "The important thing for attracting people to the downtown area is that they should be able to get in, get out and not have to drive all around looking for a parking spot."[15]

Refusing to give up the fight, activists such as Linton, Kline and others attended dozens of Board of Aldermen meetings and continually lobbied city officials to support the construction of a new parking deck.

Their efforts eventually paid off, when in 1973, the lot behind City Hall on North Market Street was chosen as the site of a proposed multi-level parking garage. Although Spreiregen would not get the winning contract for what would become known as the Church Street Public Parking Garage, the final design did follow his recommendation that the size be revised to preserve the neighboring townhouse and former church parsonage at 19 E. Church St., the destruction of which he believed would be an economic and aesthetic loss for the community.[16]

The mid-19th century, three-story, city-owned townhouse served as the Frederick Visitors Center from 1976 to 2011. It is now the headquarters of Frederick's Main Street revitalization program, Downtown Frederick Partnership.

CHAPTER 3

Taking the Bull by the Horns

WHILE THEY CONTINUED TO BATTLE City Hall over the need for convenient garage parking in Downtown Frederick, Linton and his fellow renegades in FIFI decided they were done waiting. They would start to take things into their own hands.

The group's membership was comprised of numerous downtown stakeholders, including property owners, business owners, attorneys, clergy, media, politicians, and others. Together, they identified several key issues they wanted to address, including efforts to keep the County Courthouse and the post office in Downtown Frederick.

The old Frederick County Courthouse (now City Hall)

In March 1973, Frederick County's leaders were engaged in heated debates about the location of the new county courthouse. Although other sites (including some outside of downtown) were considered, the south side of West Patrick Street at Court Street was the favored site for the proposed 250,000-square-foot facility. Yet some of the County Commissioners expressed concern about the cost of acquiring properties that were asking $8 a square foot.[17]

Linton recalls that one of the three Frederick County Commissioners voted to move the courthouse out of town, one voted to keep it

downtown, and another would not vote. This deadlocked the process for more than a year.[18]

At the same time, the U.S. Postal Service was threatening to close its downtown location. Located at the corner of East Patrick Street and Chapel Alley, the Frederick Post Office was built in 1917 and in true Neo-Classical style, featured eight large Doric columns and a traditional frieze.[19] But by the mid-1970s, the Postal Service declared they had outgrown the building and, citing a familiar refrain of the times, wanted to move to a site that was closer to major transportation routes and offered more parking.

The post office, a critical public service provider to businesses and residents, was ready to turn out its lights in Downtown Frederick.

Following significant outcry and lobbying from citizens and city leaders, the Postal Service relented and agreed to build the new post office on land that adjoined the existing site. But the fate of the stately old post office was less certain.

Downtown Frederick's advocates ultimately succeeded in keeping the new post office downtown, but a grassroots effort to try to purchase the old building failed, despite input from the State's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

Frederick's historic post office was demolished in 1983.

"In a day and time when our country is trying to implement a 'New Federalism,' it seems a shame for an agency of the federal government not to cooperate with a local government and citizens who are successfully bringing their historic town back to economic good health," Carolyn R. Greiner, executive assistant to Mayor Ron Young, wrote to Bruce MacDougal at the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Register of Historic Places.[20]

For leading the city's efforts to save its historic buildings, including the post office, Young was presented with an award by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.[21] But it would not be enough to save the structure. It was demolished in 1983 to provide parking for the new post office building.

The prospect of losing major public services like the post office and county courthouse deeply concerned advocates of downtown's revitalization.

One of those was Frederick News publisher George B. Delaplaine, Jr., who was also a member of FIFI's board of directors. Aside from his family's deep Frederick roots and significant philanthropic support of civic, cultural, educational and youth causes, Delaplaine's perspective was especially significant, since less than 10 years earlier, when faced with the prospect of having to find a larger space for his publishing company, he chose to keep his business downtown.

Delaplaine's decision to purchase the historic Trolley Building at 200 E. Patrick St. showed he was willing to "walk the talk" and silenced any detractors who would call it hypocritical for his paper to editorialize that the courthouse should remain downtown. "A move out of downtown could force virtual evacuation of the downtown, not only by members of the legal professions and real estate companies, but of many other related enterprises," read an April 2, 1972 op-ed in the Frederick News. "It would signal the end of Downtown Frederick as a center of commerce."[22]

"I hoped our statement of faith by staying downtown might encourage other employers to follow suit," Delaplaine wrote in his book, "Read All About It!" "I strongly believed that a newspaper should not editorialize about the importance of saving a city's downtown when it is far removed from it. We stand or fall together."[23]

While city and county leaders continued to spend hours in endless debate about the future of public services in downtown, FIFI member Curt Bowen read something in his Kiwanis magazine that piqued his interest. It was a story about the volunteer-driven revitalization of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, an initiative that was achieved

In a show of support for Frederick's struggling downtown, the Frederick News moved its operations to the old trolley building on East Patrick Street in 1968.

without government help. Inspired by the story, Bowen arranged for members of FIFI to tour Doylestown and learn more about their work. A few months later, a contingent from Doylestown came to Frederick to tour the city. Linton recalls one comment by a member of the visiting continent who offered a key bit of advice to those assembled: "When you see a great looking building, whatever you do, don't tear it down."

It was a message the volunteers would take to heart. They were resolved to help Frederick reclaim its former glory.

Thus was born "Operation Town Action."

CHAPTER 4

More Action, Less Talk

OPERATION TOWN ACTION (OTA) was founded in 1974 to "enhance the beauty of our town and by doing so, place our businesspeople in a strong competitive position." [24]

Ron Young

Its members, led by co-chairs Curt Bowen and Peggy Pilgram, were encouraged when, after years of waiting for city leaders to act on their recommendations and those of the experts they had hired, Fredericktonians decided City Hall needed an infusion of fresh blood and new ideas. A year earlier, in November 1973, citizens elected five new aldermen. And an incumbent alderman, Ronald N. Young, was elected mayor—at the ripe old age of 33.

"The Board of Aldermen I served on was resistant to progress," Young recalled. "I decided I had to run for mayor. If I won then I could change the course of the city, make it more transparent, and hopefully make it a vibrant livable city again."[25] It also meant that OTA had one of their own—Young was a member—leading City Hall.

Young's election sparked a new wave of revitalization efforts, but it was the tireless work of OTA volunteers that would help Fredericktonians reclaim their downtown.

To help people recognize the potential that lay in downtown's stock of historic architecture, several OTA members began the painstaking process of inventorying many of downtown's buildings. Working for seven months under a veil of secrecy, Richard (Dick) Markey, a talented graphic designer and owner of a downtown business, worked with local architect Landon Proffitt and Terri Kreitzer of the Historic Preservation Society to create sketches that displayed how those buildings could look if refurbished and restored to their original condition.

On Sept. 11, 1974, these dedicated volunteers were ready to share what they'd been up to. They invited residents, business and property owners to City Hall for a special meeting. They heard presentations from OTA's co-chairs and their advisors from Doylestown about how revitalization could change the trajectory of Downtown Frederick. A crowd of 150 Fredericktonians learned of the many different community organizations that had signed on to support the effort, including the Chamber of Commerce and FIFI.

And then they were treated to visions of what could be: beautiful renderings of how properties on North Market Street between Carroll Creek and Second Street could look if rehabbed with everything from new paint and repointed bricks to clean windows and the removal of false facades.

Peg Pilgram (center) and Curt Bowen (far right) volunteered thousands of hours to Operation Town Action.

By the end of the night, 41 property owners agreed to improve their properties and another 25 would sign on before the year was over. One of the first buildings to participate in the program was historic Kemp Hall, a former Union Army supply depot and where Maryland legislators met in April 1861 to debate whether the state would secede from the union.[26] OTA leaders had secured the commitment of Kemp Hall's owners to participate in the rehab efforts prior to the Sept. 11 public meeting. Restoration work began the very next day, ensuring a quick PR victory—and the start of a "new" look for many of downtown's old and historic buildings.

A banquet held the following year celebrated the accomplishments of OTA and recognized 12 downtown property owners for completing their improvements.


The Frederick Post

Downtown Beautification Program Begins

Operation Town Action 'A New Way Of Life'

Kemp Hall To Receive Face Lifting

Frederick Post front page Sept. 13, 1974

Ron Young, in a presentation to the All-American Cities board in 1975, said OTA lived up to its name. "The whole emphasis has been on action. Don't talk about it, do it," he said.[27] Noting that OTA was a self-help community effort that was achieved without city, state or federal funds, he added, "It is estimated that well over 1,000 people have participated, contributing tens of thousands of volunteer hours. The co-chairpersons (Bowen and Pilgram) totaled over 6,000 volunteer hours between them."[28]

Markey, whose images helped people begin to understand the hidden potential in downtown's historic buildings would later say, "I'm probably proudest of Operation Town Action since it had the most impact on revitalizing the city."[29]

EVOKING THE PAST
TO BUILD A FUTURE

Recognizing the potential that historic spaces and places possess as attractions in their own right, the National Trust for Historic Preservation established the National Main Street Center in 1980 to help historic downtowns restore their vitality through preservation-based economic development.

In the ensuing 40-plus years, that approach has resulted in a cumulative reinvestment in America's Main Streets of $85.43 billion and the rehabilitation of more than 300,000 buildings.[43]

By the mid-1970s, the same visionaries who had worked to keep businesses in Downtown Frederick believed the community's treasure trove of historic structures could be an appealing antidote to cookie-cutter malls and big box stores.

In the middle of the 20th century, Downtown Frederick's sidewalks were bustling with activity.

Although some facades had been altered over the years with plastic panels that covered original wood transom windows and detailed brickwork, Downtown Frederick was blessed with good bones. The 1971 Marcou report noted that the area's buildings, "although they represent the varying styles of a century and a half, contribute to an overall architectural character of great distinction which pervades the district."[44]

Downtown Frederick can thank a controversial decision by its mid-19th century

leaders for its ability to build a new future for itself in the 20th century based on its historic downtown.

During the 1830s, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad expressed interest in making Frederick a railhead to support its operations in central and western Maryland, but city leaders were not interested. So the B&O went 30 miles further west, setting up a new railhead in Hagerstown.[45] Frederick would instead serve as a branch terminal.

"Because the railroad bypassed Frederick, the city remained intact as an agricultural, religious and business center for Frederick County," said Bert Anderson, a leader in adaptive reuse projects and an early investor in Downtown Frederick's revitalization. "That kind of put a bubble around Frederick and very little of the original architectural fabric of the city was tampered with. You did not see the destruction or wholesale razing of buildings to make room for parking lots and warehouses."

Frederick retained its historic charm by carefully preserving and maintaining classic structures such as the old Hendrickson's Department Store.

Thus by the middle of the 19th century, the stately Victorian and Federal townhomes that line the streets that crisscross Market Street stood as they had since they were built in the 18th century—and started to attract the attention of newcomers to Frederick. People like David Bork.

During his travels as a teacher and business consultant, Bork had visited other communities that were considered interesting destinations because they highlighted their historic architecture instead of hiding it behind "modern" fiberglass and metal facades.

So when a new job brought Bork to Frederick, he was immediately smitten. "I have an eye for antiquities, and I could see the architectural potential of Downtown Frederick," he said. "My job was to get others to share that vision and get it going."

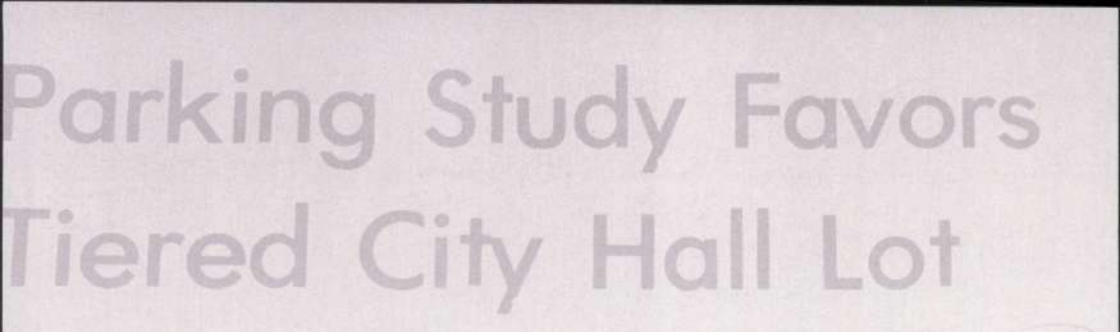
As one of the original members of Operation Town Action, Bork worked alongside fellow OTA members Terri Kreitzer and Susan Markey to tirelessly catalog Downtown Frederick's historical assets and encourage property owners to restore them to their original condition. "I think I used to know every single building in that area," he recalled.

For businesses in particular, restoration could mean anything from replacing and painting rotting wood window trim to removing cheap plastic signs and facades—20th-century affronts to the interesting brickwork, leaded glass and etchings they hid.

In 1973, the volunteer group Frederick Preservation Advisors succeeded in getting Downtown Frederick on the National Register of Historic Places.[46] A year later, OTA created renderings of how properties on North Market Street between Carroll Creek and Second Street could look if rehabbed. Twelve businesses would complete their restoration efforts shortly thereafter.

But that was truly just the beginning. Over the course of the ensuing half-century, Downtown Frederick would see scores of its historic structures experience new life as everything from restaurants to boutiques, performance venues to hip residential lofts and apartments. This adaptive reuse has maintained structures of rich architectural significance while also creating a 21st century tagline that attracts people to Downtown Frederick by touting its blend of "Hip & Historic."[47]

Adaptive reuse of existing structures has brought new life to once abandoned buildings.



CHAPTER 5

Making Progress

AS IF DON LINTON DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH on his hands as he worked to expand his accounting firm, raise his young family and volunteer with FIFI, in 1974 he was elected to lead the Chamber of Commerce. Encouraged by the progress being made by OTA, Linton decided it was also time to make some bold moves to ensure the Chamber was moving in the same direction. Under his leadership, the board hired a new executive director for the organization and made the crucial—and prescient—decision to hire the first full-time director of tourism.[30]

Change was in the air.

Over on East Street, a young Navy veteran from Texas was buying up properties that had been overlooked by many Frederick natives and rehabbing them into little shops and boutiques.

Bert Anderson had a flourishing wholesale antique import business in an old warehouse he bought at the corner of North East and Second Streets. Across the street from his building sat a row of small houses, many of which were occupied despite a lack of indoor plumbing. Fredericktonians referred to them as "Shab Row."

East Street had once been home to many well-known African American families of Frederick, "notably, the Carrolls, the Combs, the Palmers, and Pete Johnson," Hall Onley noted.[31] But by the mid-1970s, the area had fallen into disrepair. "It was a disgrace but the city just turned a blind eye to it," Anderson recalled.

Shab Row had become a neglected eyesore on downtown's East side.

Despite how far the once-thriving area had declined, Anderson recognized the potential amid the disinvestment. Having been stationed in Scotland while in the Navy, the little houses reminded him of the small individual shops he had become accustomed to seeing in English and Scottish villages. "There was something about the little buildings that appealed to me," he said.

With a strong interest in architecture and having been influenced by early adaptive reuse projects like Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco, Anderson decided to purchase the nine little houses (plus a few next to his warehouse) in 1975 for $45,000. "Most of the Rotary Club told me I was nuts," he said. "It was generally thought that I was wasting my time and money. Sometimes it takes a newcomer to the community to see opportunities."

The financing for Anderson's adaptive reuse project came from Fredericktown Bank & Trust, whose president at the time, Meredith Young, believed in the viability of downtown and in the importance of keeping major institutions there. "Community banks are the lifeblood of any smaller community because they have the local knowledge and make loans to projects that would not seem viable to bigger banks," Anderson said.

Young led by example. Several years earlier in 1969, he invested $1.5 million to build a new, larger headquarters for his bank at 30 N. Market St. rather than move out of downtown. "His leadership in

deciding to commit to downtown kind of set the stage," Anderson said. "It brought great credibility to the idea of remaining downtown and not moving out. I think it was absolutely a turning point."

Other signs of progress were starting to pop-up around town as well. The Elks Club building on West Second Street that had been destroyed by fire in 1970 was finally razed and the property was donated to the city by its owner, Bonita Maas, to become a small infill "pocket" park.

Trees were being planted along Market and Church Streets, which Linton took as vindication of his lone efforts in 1970 to add trees to the downtown streetscape. At the time, the six Bradford Pear trees he planted near his office building at Second and Market Streets got him in hot water with city inspectors because he had not cleared his well-intentional arboriculture efforts with them first. "I did not receive a fine for planting the trees, but I did receive a lot of compliments," he later recalled. "It was the beginning of great things to come."[32]

Bonita Maas Pocket Park

Thanks to Linton's leadership, local garden clubs and residents began to donate funds to sponsor the planting of trees. The city provided the labor and eventually more than 1,000 trees would be planted throughout the city.[33] Frederick was named a Tree City by the Arbor Day Foundation for its commitment to creating an urban tree canopy. It was the first city in Maryland to earn that honor.

The importance of preserving Frederick's historic architecture was also starting to gain steam. Nearly 25 years earlier, the city had designated the "Old Frederick District" and established an architectural commission to make recommendations to the mayor and aldermen.

At the time, this local historic district was only the second in the state and the 13th in the nation.[34] Building on those early efforts, the city established its Historic District Commission in 1967, and five years later in 1972, the Frederick County Landmarks Foundation was formed to "promote the preservation of historic sites, structures, natural landmarks, and communities of Frederick County." The combined decades of preservation efforts paid off when in 1973, the volunteer group Frederick Preservation Advisors succeeded in getting Downtown Frederick on the National Register of Historic Places.[35]

That same year, the State Highway Administration began reconstructing South Market Street. But when Ron Young assumed the mayorship a year later, he saw an opportunity to do even more. The city decided to bury the power lines, rebuild the sidewalks, replace the streetlights, institute a new traffic light system, plant trees and improve safety at the street crossings.[36]

It was agreed that to save costs, the city would do all the trenching, also replacing water and sewer lines while the street was torn up.

But for their part, Potomac Edison insisted that the cost of burying the power lines be spread across the base rate of city residents. Needless to say, when customers started getting the resulting bills for $22,[37] there was an uproar. "Three of the four aldermen who ran for reelection lost. I barely won," Young recalled. "But to their credit, not one of the losing aldermen ever regretted their votes and their support. They knew they had helped lay the foundation for modern Frederick."[38]

Ugly overhead powerlines disappeared when they were buried on South Market

Shortly after taking office, Young also announced that he was moving forward with the construction of a parking garage to address the parking issue identified in the 1971 Marcou report. "This was the first parking garage but more importantly a signal that things

After years of delays, the City's first parking garage opened in 1975.

were going to change, and we were going to move forward with revitalizing the city," he recalled.[39]

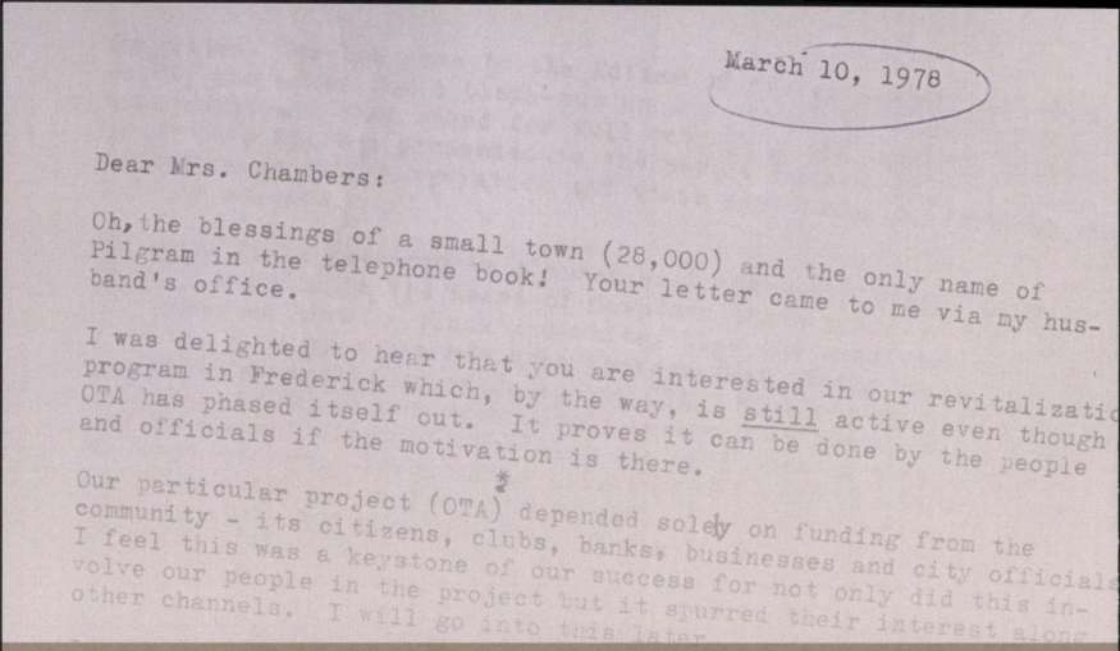
Because residents had made it clear they did not want their tax dollars to pay for the garage, the city established a parking fund. Monies from parking in the garage, on the city's surface lots and at meters, as well as fines collected from parking tickets, would go to cover all expenses associated with the garage. The city also encouraged businesses to pay for half of their employees' parking fees as well as their clients' or customers' parking.[40]

Young also followed some advice he'd been given: never reserve spaces. "If parkers were guaranteed a non-designated space, then we could actually rent 120 percent of the spaces. At least 20 percent of the renters would not be there at any one time," he recalled.[41]

Finally, in 1975, the long-debated, much-delayed parking deck on East Church Street opened—and no tax dollars were used to pay for its construction. "We fought City Hall and we won," Linton recalled.[42]

After years of decline and inaction, momentum was building in Downtown Frederick.

And then it started to rain…



March 10, 1978

Dear Mrs. Chambers:

Oh, the blessings of a small town (28,000) and the only name of Pilgram in the telephone book! Your letter came to me via my husband's office.

I was delighted to hear that you are interested in our revitalizatio program in Frederick which, by the way, is still active even though OTA has phased itself out. It proves it can be done by the people and officials if the motivation is there.

Our particular project (OTA) depended solely on funding from the community - its citizens, clubs, banks, businesses and city officials I feel this was a keystone of our success for not only did this involve our people in the project but it spurred their interest along other channels. I will go into this later.

PEG PILGRAM'S RECIPE FOR
DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

If members of Operation Town Action needed further validation that their hours of volunteerism were paying off, they got it when Southern Living magazine featured Frederick in a story entitled "Four Star Cities of the South" in its May 1976 issue.

"Until a few years ago, Frederick was losing ground quickly as an economic center. Its buildings, a mixture of Colonial, Federal, and Victorian architecture, were deteriorating. The Postal Service was going to move the post office out of the downtown area. And there were even plans to move the courthouse out of town," the article read.[48]

But the story went on to credit the work of OTA and its volunteers, including Peg Pilgram, with reversing the decline. Peg was quoted in the article, which caught the attention of the beautification committee from Mt. Pleasant, Texas. The chair, Mrs. G.H. Chambers, wrote to Peg and asked her if she might share some of the insights gleamed from Frederick's revitalization efforts.

What followed was a seven-page typed response by Pilgram that addressed "big picture" issues such as funding and motivation, and included a detailed 10-point rundown on specifics that stressed:

- Cooperation between city government and citizens is essential.
- Compatibility among co-chairs is crucial, given the amount of time they will be working together.
- Timing is everything. "Have your presentation at a time when painters, contractors, and garden clubs can start immediately on the revitalization. We had two buildings pre-arranged with masons and painters the day after our big community meeting," Pilgram wrote.
- Prominently place large signs with your organization's name and logo at projects associated with its revitalization efforts.
- Keep the public informed. Hold open houses, run ads, and pitch stories to local media about projects underway. "This helped spread the interest in upgrading...even homes joined in," added Pilgram.
- While seeking support and help from other groups, keep your revitalization organization independent.
- Don't let public interest go to waste. If people call in with ideas or offering to volunteer, follow up quickly.
- The key volunteers must truly dedicate themselves to the effort for at least one year.
- If possible, create a specific newsletter to keep track of progress and send to all business and property owners, bankers, community leaders, etc.
- Say thank you! Hold an awards ceremony, acknowledge progress and contributions made.[49]

PART II

1976-1990

Rising Waters and Rising Prospects

CHAPTER 6

"And the Rain, Rain, Rain Came Down, Down, Down In rushing, rising riv'lets..."

Winnie the Pooh and the Very Blustery Day

THE FIRST WEEK OF OCTOBER 1976 was a wet one in Frederick County. Nearly four inches of rain fell over the course of just a few days—and predictions for Oct. 9 didn't look any better. Forecasters called for a 90 percent chance of rain that Saturday. But few were prepared for the amount of precipitation that would fall before the day was over: Frederick was deluged by 7.2 inches of rain in 16 hours, with three inches falling in just one hour that Saturday morning.[50]

Looking south on Market Street as the flood waters began to recede.

The liquid blitz forced Frederick to finally acknowledge a problem it had faced at points throughout its 200-year history: after unrelenting heavy rains, Carroll Creek would roar to life in extraordinarily destructive ways.

In Downtown Frederick, the torrential rains caused Carroll

As waters rose on the streets below, James Office Supply staff rode out the flood on the roof of their building.

Creek to quickly overflow its banks. Dr. James "Doc" McClellan, a city alderman, was stranded at his veterinary clinic on West Patrick Street, along with several of his animal patients. Bob James, owner of James Office Supply on Court Street, had to flee to the roof of his building with his staff to escape the flood waters. They spent five hours there before being rescued. Although they survived the flood, their building did not. It was ultimately condemned and demolished.[51]

Records indicate Carroll Creek had a history of flooding, including in July 1868 when it overflowed its banks and caused more than $500,000 in property damage to downtown homes and businesses[52] (nearly $2.5 million in today's dollars).[53]

But this time was different. Considered at the time to be a 100-year flood, by the time the waters receded, blocks north and south of the creek were left covered in inches of mud, muck and debris. An estimated 100 or more properties were heavily damaged or destroyed.[54] As Frederick resident David Bork said, "I remember thinking, 'This is one hell of a mess.'"

The polluted creek that ran through Downtown Frederick became a raging river at the height of the 1976 flood.

Following the flood, Downtown Frederick was declared a disaster area by President Gerald R. Ford.

When all the damage assessments were complete, Downtown Frederick businesses and properties along the creek incurred upwards of an estimated $25 million in damages.[55] Many businesses were forced to close their doors for good.

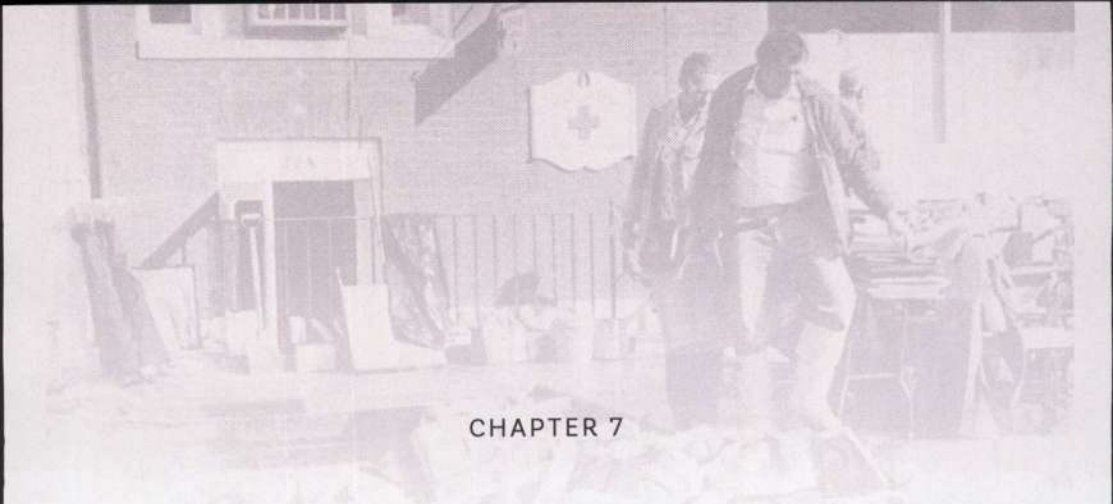
"There was an aura of a post-storm cloud that hung over downtown," recalled Marlene Young, a Frederick County native. "People wondered if downtown would survive, yet community resilience prevailed."

The destruction was so great that Frederick County, including Downtown Frederick, was declared a disaster area by President Gerald R. Ford.[56]

In the days and weeks following the flood, Fredericktonians came together to help their neighbors. They cleaned, washed and salvaged what they could. In fact, it would be only days before downtown returned to many of its pre-flood rhythms. Businesses that were able to do so reopened and daily routines, like going to the post office and bank, resumed.

"There was such as spirit of revival that people just kind of rolled up their sleeves and got it cleaned up," said Bert Anderson, whose Shab Row properties on East Street escaped flood damage.

But the backbreaking work of cleaning up would actually prove to be the easy part. The long-term work to make sure it wouldn't happen again would be much more difficult.



CHAPTER 7

When Life Hands You Lemons...

GIVEN THE DESTRUCTION the Great Flood of 1976 caused, many assume that it was the catalyst that spurred the revitalization of Downtown Frederick. Ron Young adamantly disagrees.

"Revitalization was well underway," he said, citing among other things, the efforts of Operation Town Action. He acknowledges the flood was a major setback, but a setback that once overcome became the anchor for the next phase of "downtown's renaissance."[57]

Mayor Young and the Board of Aldermen knew that in order to continue the revitalization that had occurred pre-flood—things like burying power lines, adding new streetlights and trees, and rehabilitating storefronts—they would have to find a way to control Carroll Creek.

In 1975, the Army Corps of Engineers issued a report on Carroll Creek flooding and recommended no action be taken. Asked to review that study in light of the devastation wrought by the October 1976 deluge, the Corps stood by its initial findings, citing a low cost-to-benefit ratio.[58] That conclusion led many to argue that if the 1976 flood was considered a 100-year event, why did the city even need to pursue flood control measures?

Young knew why. "In his (Young's) opinion, the Corps did not consider the 'human aspect and the vitality' of the downtown," the Frederick Post reported.[59] The young mayor believed that if nothing was

done to address flooding, downtown could become a wasteland.

Young and the Board of Aldermen were committed to addressing the problem, despite the opinion of the Army Corps of Engineers. They commissioned a private firm to recommend how to control the creek's flooding.

They were presented with several options, one of which included removing all the buildings from the creek's floodplain. "In essence, this would mean virtually eliminating downtown," Young recalled.[60] Another option was to build a 100-foot concrete channel through the city that would control the waters, similar to the large drainage culverts that are prevalent in places such as Los Angeles.

Frederick's Carroll Creek flood control project was modeled conceptually after San Antonio's famed Riverwalk (above).

For Young, each "solution" was almost as bad as the problem it was designed to address.

Several influential downtown stakeholders, including Don Linton and Young, had been to San Antonio, Texas, where its popular Riverwalk serves as both a flood control measure and an economic engine that brings spending dollars to the restaurants, shops and hotels that line its banks. "My idea was to model Carroll Creek, *conceptually*, after San Antonio," Young said.[61]

He proposed a three-pronged plan for Downtown Frederick that would:

- Control flooding.
- Create a linear park that would make Carroll Creek a signature water attraction in Downtown Frederick.
- Spur economic development.

Jim Rouse, who developed some of the nation's largest commercial revitalization projects including Boston's Faneuil Hall, New York's South Street Seaport and Baltimore's Harborplace, was invited by city leaders—both public and private—to look at the plans for Car-

roll Creek. Rouse agreed with the project's potential. "I took him down to the creek and told him what I had in mind and asked him if I was being unrealistic," Young recalled. "He told me he loved what I was planning and then said he would give me a few tips on making it better."[62]

Around this time, John Fieseler was a young radio reporter whose beat included City Hall. He recalls many a Wednesday afternoon mayoral press conference during which Young would engage in easy banter with the reporters on hand. "He really established a rapport with the people covering him," Fieseler recalled. Which may be why Fieseler often felt that Young used those weekly sessions as trial balloons to float what he was planning to present to his Board of Alderman, since Fieseler realized "there was lots of debate about what Young was proposing."

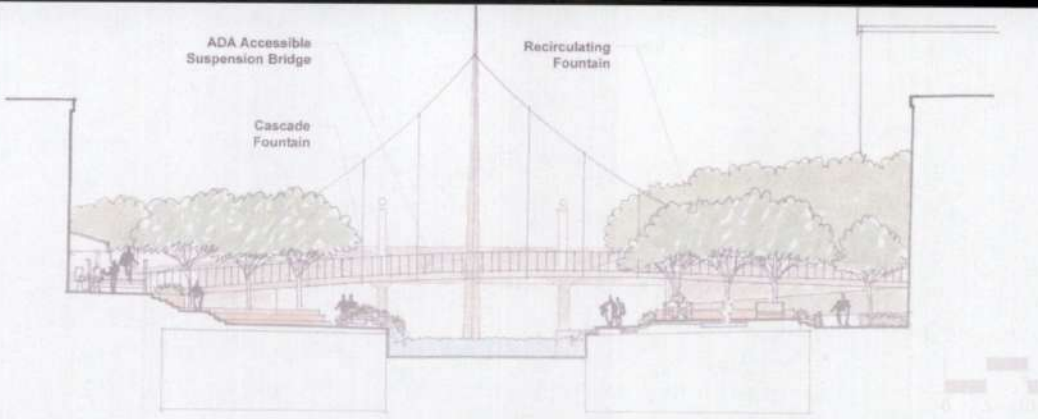
But there was no doubt that if the project came to fruition, it would very much carry Young's imprint. "Ron was really hands on," Fieseler said. "I remember going to his office in City Hall and seeing samples of paver bricks on the floor and pencil sketches of ideas he had on his desk of what he was envisioning."

With each new iteration or tweak to the designs, Fieseler grew more and more impressed—and depressed. "I remember thinking this is really cool, but knowing the transient nature of working in radio, I'll never be around long enough to see it."

Indeed, before any economic development or beautification efforts could begin, the city would first have to tackle the less glamourous but absolutely essential need to address Carroll Creek's penchant for flooding.

The final approved flood control plan called for the construction of 1.3 miles of underground concrete conduits through which the raging waters of Carroll Creek could be diverted. But there was just one problem: the cost.

When totally complete, the flood control measure alone would cost nearly $60 million.



CHAPTER 8

The Flood Control Measure

WITH AN ESTIMATED PRICE TAG that was several times the city's annual budget, Young and the Board of Aldermen knew they would need help from the State of Maryland to get the project off the ground. "I knew there were very few people who believed in the project and who felt we could do it without bankrupting the city," Young said.[63]

Dick Brady was one of the new members elected to the city's Board of Aldermen in 1974. A real estate professional by day, he was concerned that unless something was done to control Carroll Creek, Downtown Frederick would continue to be at the mercy of heavy rains that could unleash devastating floodwaters. "I remember many folks thinking the cost to save the area would be too high and the area wasn't worth the investment," Brady recalled. "But (without the flood control system) there would have been properties lost and not recovered. We needed to save and restore downtown businesses."

To convince the skeptics, Young had to sell his ambitious trifold project and help people understand how it removed in excess of 100 acres from the floodplain,[64] while also beautifying the area and creating a platform for economic development in the decades to come.

The city's strategy was to start small, requesting enough funds to get the project underway and then continue to seek funding each year to keep it going. "There was no serious money for flood control," the former mayor recalled. But by capitalizing on established relation-

ships with delegates who could advocate for the project in the state legislature—including "Doc" McClellan, the Frederick veterinarian who had to be rescued from the 1976 flood waters—the Young administration was able to secure $2 million a year for several straight years to fund its capital projects.

But Young knew that the state's contributions (which would eventually total $8 million) were essentially seed money to get the project moving, so he made the calculated decision to start the work in the middle of the 1.3-mile stretch. "That way it would be visible and it would be harder for somebody to turn us down," he recalled. "We could say, 'We built this much, it's going to be embarrassing if we don't finish.' If we had started at either end, they could stop the project and it might go unnoticed."[65]

Aerial view of the middle section of the Carroll Creek flood control project.

The mayor was fortunate to have Bob Strine, the city's director of Public Works, in his corner. As a long-time city employee, Strine was a wealth of institutional knowledge that Young needed to bring his vision for the flood control measure to fruition. Strine "was the glue that held the operation and maintenance of the city together," Young said. "He knew everything about the city's infrastructure."[66]

The city benefited from Young's vision and Strine's experience. "Ron and Bob were absolutely the two right people at the right time," Bert Anderson said.

As construction on the flood control measure progressed, the public could begin to understand how the large culverts— each big enough to accommodate a motorcoach bus—would actually divert storm-

waters. What was a little harder for some to comprehend, including some government planners, was the three-foot-deep water feature that would sit above the culverts. "At one point, someone said we need to put a fence along the water so people wouldn't fall in," Young recalled. "I said no. We need to *feature* the water, not hide it."[67]

Another component of the project that baffles some people to this day is how the flood control project retains stormwater until it makes its way to the underground culverts. Frederick's Baker Park lies just west of downtown. Its 58 acres feature playgrounds, trails, ball fields and Culler Lake, all of which are part of the stormwater management system. The park's open spaces function as a natural reservoir that holds the floodwaters as they drain back into the creek before ultimately being carried through the channels.

Massive underground culverts divert raging storm waters to prevent flooding.

By 1987, work on the flood control measure—the first part of Young's vision for Carroll Creek—continued and progress was clear. But the city of Frederick still needed $36 million to finish the entire 1.3 miles of underground conduits. So Young went back to the state and requested a 50-50 match to complete the project.

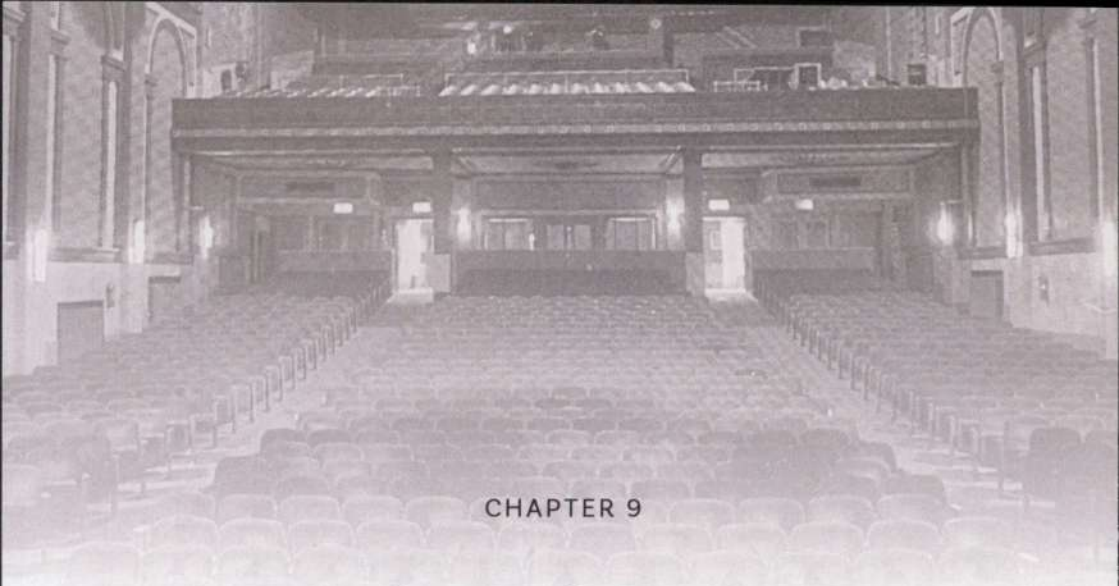
Doc McClellan was then serving his third term in Annapolis and proved to be instrumental in ensuring that state officials understood both the need for the flood control measure in his district as well as the necessary funding to complete the massive undertaking.

With McClellan's support, Gov. William D. Shaeffer listened to Young's pitch for more help from the state. But Shaeffer believed that as the county seat, Frederick County should contribute to the project as well, since it would also benefit from the measure. What resulted was an agreement by which the state, county and city would each contribute $12 million to ensure the project would be finished.[68]

Mayor Ron Young was adamant in developing a flood control system that was both functional and aesthetically pleasing.

It would take another 15 years to complete the final stretch of the flood control measure, but by 1992, Downtown Frederick no longer had to fear the raging waters of Carroll Creek following heavy rains. Work could finally begin on developing Carroll Creek Linear Park along its banks.

But the outlook wasn't as rosy for many of those who advocated for the project. That included Alderman Brady, who did not win his bid for reelection. "Although it has taken years and lots of money to implement, I feel justified in the options that were taken at the time," he said.



CHAPTER 9

Economic Development Part I: Property Acquisition

RON YOUNG RECOGNIZED THAT ONCE the potential for devastating flooding from Carroll Creek was eliminated, Downtown Frederick would be poised to usher in a new era of revitalization, one that would build upon the initial efforts of the early 1970s.

Prior to the flood, many property owners used historic tax credits to renovate their properties. But under the program's guidelines, buildings located in designated floodplains were not eligible for the credits. This impacted some of the most visible and critical structures in the heart of Downtown Frederick. On top of that, loans from private lenders were scarce. "It was tough for a lot of these property owners, especially those south of the Square Corner, to borrow money," Young recalled.[69]

Given the level of destruction left in the wake of the flood, and with limited financial resources available to rehabilitate their properties, many owners could not or did not want to pursue rebuilding.

Young saw an opportunity.

"The flood made it easier to obtain some of the property along the creek," he recalled.[70] Working simultaneously while the flood con-

trol measure construction was underway, the Young administration began to try to acquire as much property as possible along both sides of the creek from Baker Park on the west end to East Patrick Street on the east end.

"I wanted to get all the properties I could so that we could lay out a plan for the creek and control what would happen," Young recalled. "Because if we just put this park in and people went back and left falling-down garages (on their properties), it defeated the whole purpose."[71]

Young's vision was to connect Market and East Streets along the creek by creating a vibrant, active public space that would feature hotels, restaurants, festivals and music.

The city first approached property owners, particularly those holding small parcels, to see if they would be interested in donating their land to the city. Several did so. The city then negotiated purchase agreements for several larger parcels. But there were holdouts. City attorneys had to file a condemnation suit to acquire two properties south of Carroll Creek that were needed to start construction on the flood control project. It would take time, but the city ultimately prevailed.

In the end, the city acquired, either through donation, trade or purchase, an estimated 25 acres of property along the creek.[72]

These included:

- The current site of the Patrick Center (30 W. Patrick St.), which when it was constructed was the first new building in Downtown Frederick in nearly 50 years. The city bought the empty lot at its asking price, divided it into two separate parcels and resold the lots to cover the entire original purchase price.

The Patrick Center at Court and East Patrick streets.

Weinberg Center for the Performing Arts on East Patrick Street.

• The Weinberg Center (20 W. Patrick St.), formally the old Tivoli Theater, was decimated by the flood. The raging waters lifted the theater's Mighty Wurlitzer organ from its base and dumped it on the stage. "Mud was left everywhere. The theater was inoperable," Young recalled. Given the state it was in, the property owner approached Young about gifting/selling the theater to the city. Under the terms of the agreement, the land would be owned by the Weinberg family but the city would own the structure. The city of Frederick purchased the building for $19,000, which the family promptly turned around and donated back to the city.[73]

Young then appointed a Mayor's Advisory Committee for the Arts (it would later incorporate to become the Frederick Arts Council). One of their first tasks was to renovate and operate the theater. "Volunteers cleaned up the building. Local Army reservists rewired all the chandeliers and checked the electrical system. Theater groups tackled the dressing rooms. The organ was restored. Many community organizations chipped in, shoveling mud, cleaning, painting, and doing general repairs," Young recalled.[74]

• The Delaplaine Arts Center (40 S. Carroll St.) was originally known as the Mountain City Mill and was owned by George B. Delaplaine, Jr., owner of the Great Southern Printing and Manufacturing Company and publisher of Frederick's daily newspapers. Delaplaine used the property for many years for newsprint storage. But when he got into the cable TV business, he needed a high elevation site in the city's watershed that could be used for a transmission tower. The Delaplaine family agreed to swap the mill building for the tower site. "We traded equivalent values and they donated the difference," Young said. The city now owns the building, mortgage-free, and leases it to the Delaplaine Arts Center for $1 annually.[75]

The former Mountain City Mill was transformed into the Delaplaine Arts Center.

- The Carty property (48 E. Patrick St.) was one of the most difficult for the city to acquire, but also key to its redevelopment plans for the creek, including the construction of what would become its third public parking deck. The building on the lot was in disrepair and the city was asking for just a portion of the property, but the owner said it was all or nothing. The city reluctantly agreed. In 1996, thanks to private funding, the building was renovated and reopened as the National Museum of Civil War Medicine during the administration of Mayor Jim Grimes.

- During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln spoke from the old B&O railroad station (100 S. Market St.). The building was purchased with State historic preservation funds, Community Development Block Grants and other sources of funding. It was eventually restored and converted to a community center.[76]

The old Carty furniture store became the National Museum of Civil War Medicine.

Abraham Lincoln spoke at the old B&O railroad station in 1862.

- The Frederick City Packing Company and Jenkins Canning Factory on East Street closed in the 1970s. The property would prove to be the city's largest land acquisition. The roughly two-block area between East and Carroll Streets is now home to Frederick County Public Schools headquarters, the Frederick Visitors Center, the All Saints Parking Garage, an affordable housing development and the William D. Schaefer Building at 100 E. All Saints St. that will be the new headquarters of the Frederick Police Department.

Some might liken it to a real-life game of Monopoly, wheeling and dealing to acquire properties. But this was more than a board game: it proved to be a high-stakes, innovative and visionary approach that would shape the future of Downtown Frederick.

The Frederick Visitor Center is located in a circa-1899 industrial warehouse.

CHAPTER 10

Economic Development Part II: Bring Wallets Downtown

WHILE WORK ON THE FLOOD CONTROL measure was underway, city staff also focused on another part of Young's plan for post-flood Frederick: economic development.

The goal was to work with local business owners and commercial and residential real estate agents to actively sell Downtown Frederick as a great place to live, work and play.

"Our first decision was to keep government downtown," Young said. "We decided that City Hall, the city police headquarters, the County office buildings, the Courthouse and the library should remain downtown. We knew that many private offices needed or wanted to be near these facilities and would also stay if government did."[77]

When the new courthouse opened at the corner of Patrick and Court Streets in 1982, it was a sign that the years of meetings and lobbying efforts that had been going on since the mid-1970s had paid off. A major public tenant was staying put.

Yet filling commercial spaces in downtown proved to be challenging. In the years following the flood, major retailers such as Sears, McCrory's and JCPenney's pulled up stakes and relocated to the new malls outside of downtown. Dining options were limited as well, making it difficult to meet for a business lunch.

After-work drinks or happy hours were non-existent. Local lore says you could roll a bowling ball down Market Street after 5 p.m. and not hit a soul.

For Dick Brady, the dearth of activity was double trouble. As a commercial real estate agent, his job was to try to get businesses to locate downtown. And as an alderman, he committed to ensuring the survival of all of Downtown Frederick.

"It was difficult to lease anything," he recalled. "There was a lot of disinvestment, no people and a lot of underutilized property."[78]

To help change that, the public and private sector worked together to recruit new restaurants to downtown, places that would provide sit-down dining in more than a bar setting. But they did not preclude bars, either. That's because bars often offered live music and for young people in particular, that was a big draw.

Despite its out-of-the-way location behind the Church Street Public Parking Garage, La Paz quickly became a hit with locals.

One of downtown's most popular new restaurants was La Paz. Tucked away behind the new Church Street Public Parking Garage, the restaurant offered affordable Mexican fare and rocking bands at night. Opened by Graham Baker, grandson of Joseph Dill Baker, after whom Baker Park is named, what the tiny two-story building lacked in prime street visibility, it made up for in being "the place" to dance the night away.

As commercial realtors' efforts to recruit more entrepreneurs to town began to pay off, some businesses wanted to limit the influx of new competition. "We were finally getting some decent restaurants downtown," Young recalled. "One afternoon, six restaurant and bar owners came to my office. They told me they wanted to limit the number of restaurants that could get alcohol licenses. If I didn't support their effort, they would throw me out of office at the next election."

Young was not easily intimidated. "I pointed to the door and said, 'Get started.' I explained that an important part of making downtown successful was that anyone eating out might say, 'Let's go downtown.' If they came, they might have a favorite, but they would most likely visit all of the establishments at one time or another."[79]

One of the new restaurants was located in another one of Bert Anderson's ambitious adaptive reuse projects on East Street. In 1984, Anderson bought the building that once housed the Everedy Company. He used funding from industrial revenue bonds that were designed to help investors overcome commercial interest rates that at that time bordered on 16 percent. "Municipalities were desperate for these investments to spur economic development," Anderson recalled. He was able to secure a loan backed by Frederick County with an interest rate of 6.5 percent. Without it, he acknowledges he could not have revitalized the old warehouse space into an office, dining and retail complex.

After successfully rehabilitating the old structures known as Shab Row, Bert Anderson set his sights on the old Everedy Company.

As they had done when he purchased the old homes of Shab Row, people questioned Anderson's sanity for investing in old, dilapidated warehouses. But he again proved them wrong, bringing in his first new tenant a year after purchasing the property. And then in 1986, a fine dining Italian restaurant opened in Everedy Square and drew acclaim from the food critics of the Baltimore Sun and The Washington Post.

But even the best reviews couldn't solve a bigger problem that had to be addressed if Downtown Frederick was to achieve its ambitious goals for revitalization: hardly anyone lived there.

"We knew we needed bodies—walking wallets—downtown in the evenings," said Maribeth Visco, a commercial real estate agent in

Frederick for more than 40 years. "But at that time, you wouldn't see a soul. Downtown property went for a song."

As they did with Downtown Frederick's vacant commercial spaces, the public and private sectors again came together to build on the early efforts of Operation Town Action in the 1970s. They helped people reimagine the potential of Downtown's stately 18th and 19th century townhouses that had been divided into apartments over the years.

"We (the city) made it easier to upgrade the upper floors of businesses, to build in vacant space and to update existing housing," Young recalled.[80] And recognizing that if people were to live downtown, they'd also need their cars, the city offered special rates for residents who utilized the parking garages.[81]

Visco said that a one-two punch of a downtown residential brokers' tour followed by a commercial brokers' tour began to open the minds of those who had long written off Downtown Frederick as both a place to live and work. "We had to actively work at getting people to come downtown, but those tours were transformational because they opened up the possibilities to a wider audience," she recalled.

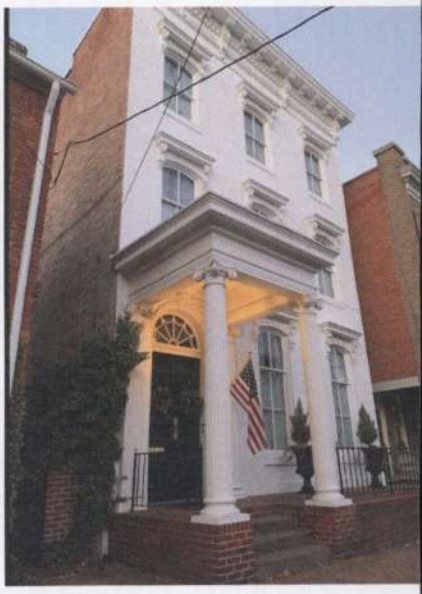
The opening of the central branch of Frederick County Public Libraries on East Patrick Street was an important step in keeping public services downtown.

And in another major victory in the battle to keep vital public services downtown, in 1982 Frederick County Public Libraries opened its new main branch, the C. Burr Artz library at 110 E. Patrick St., once the site of an automobile dealership. The $2.7 million building featured 18,000 square feet and backed up to Carroll Creek.[82]

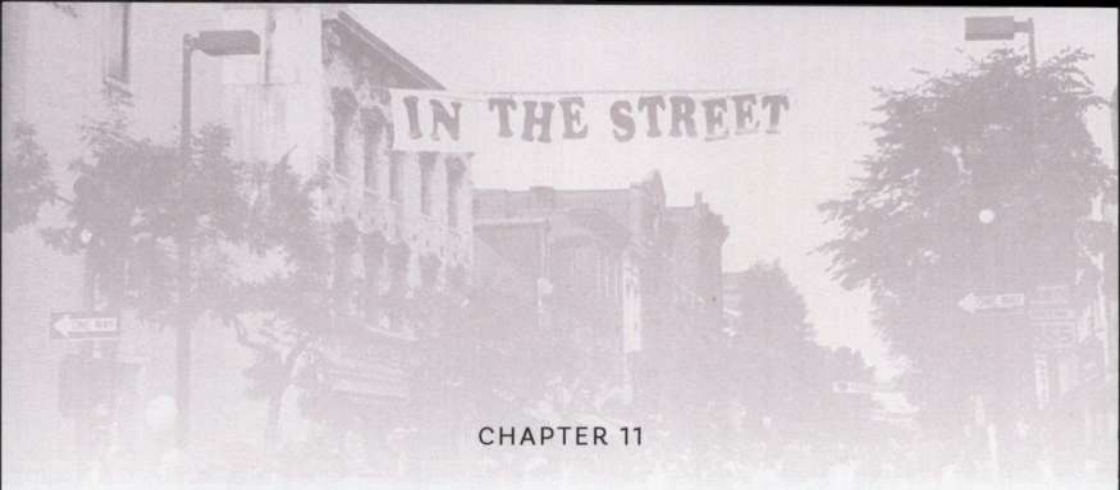
These accomplishments, along with beautification initiatives such as new sidewalks and the street tree program, began to change the image and perception of Downtown Frederick.

"We witnessed a series of years where the properties in downtown were increasing (in value) at a rate of 25 percent a year," Young said. "We were seeing apartment buildings being converted back to single family homes. We saw houses being renovated and upgraded. Eventually we began to attract infill development."[83]

The pieces of the puzzle were starting to come together.



Many of Downtown Frederick's stately homes began to catch the eye of homeowners attracted to their historic charm.



CHAPTER 11

Economic Development Part III: Throw a Party

BY THE MID- TO LATE 1980S, Downtown Frederick was definitely starting to look and feel different. Work was progressing on the flood control measure on Carroll Creek. And although the last part of Young's three-pronged approach to recovery—the linear park above and beside the flood control—was still years away, new restaurants were opening, retailers were occupying what had once been empty storefronts and a new wave of enthusiastic preservationists were bringing Downtown Frederick's historic housing back to its former glory.

What better way to celebrate these accomplishments than by having a party?

"I had short-, mid- and long-term goals but I felt early on that we had to show that something was happening right away," Young recalled.[84] To get bodies downtown to see for themselves the changes taking place there, he launched summer Sunday Night Concerts in the Baker Park bandshell. With little funding to support it, Young and his staff recruited local bands who were looking for exposure or military bands that performed for free. With each successful concert, the energy built. "The crowds grew. People danced and food vendors came. We were able to get sponsors," he recalled.

Frederick's Summer Concert Series has been a popular attraction for 50 years—and counting.

Now known as the Summer Concert Series, this event has become a summer tradition and continues today, nearly 50 years later.[85]

Under the Young administration, the city also launched Frederick's 4th, an Independence Day celebration and fireworks display in Baker Park. And as an enthusiastic artist himself, Young was instrumental in creating the annual Frederick Festival of the Arts along Carroll Creek. What began in Everedy Square and Shab Row as a small special event has now grown into an attraction that draws thousands every year and features artists from all 50 states and several countries. Although initially operated under the city's auspices, the event is now run through the Frederick Arts Council, an independent nonprofit.

But for many, the granddaddy of all the parties in Downtown Frederick is In The Streets, first held in 1983 to celebrate the reopening of North Market Street.

Earlier that year, the city had again taken a big risk and decided to bury the power lines on North Market Street, from the Square Corner to Seventh Street. This time, however, Young and his aldermen decided to do things differently.

Bathtub races in Baker Park have been part of Frederick 4th's festivities

"We made the decision to fund the second stage from the capital budget. We decided to do as much of the work as possible to reduce the cost," he said, noting that the city took advantage of federal workforce programs to perform the labor, while a bond issue ensured there would be no tax implications.[86] And there would be no rate increase for property owners as occurred when the lines were buried on South Market Street in 1973.

In The Streets has drawn massive crowds 40 years.

The project would ultimately be a huge inconvenience to the burgeoning rebirth of Downtown Frederick, but when complete after six months there would be no ugly overhead wires crisscrossing the street. New street and traffic lights would be pedestrian-scale, while new sidewalks and trees would create a welcoming business corridor. "Fortunately, most people saw the benefit this time after the economic and aesthetic successes of the first phase (on South Market Street)," Young recalled.[87]

Yet the city recognized the short-term pain the construction placed on business owners and their customers. When the project wrapped up, plans were made to throw a street party to thank Fredericktonians for their patience. The goal was to get people excited about coming downtown again, but Young insisted the celebration would have to be self-supporting—if for no other reason than doing so would ensure it would not be subject to budget cuts.

With sponsorships and $500 in seed money from the city (which Young required to be repaid after the event),[88] the first In the Streets ultimately drew upwards of 40,000 celebrants.[89] "Thousands of people poured into a vibrant Downtown Frederick to sing, dance, slurp down fancy foods and cold beer and celebrate the completion of the once dusty North Market Street renovation project. Bars and restaurants were packed until after midnight,"[90] the Frederick Post reported.

The efforts of scores of volunteers and public officials over the course of 13 years were bearing fruit. People were rediscovering Downtown Frederick. They realized there were places to park, places to eat and places to live.

While some might have declared it "Mission Accomplished," it was just the beginning.

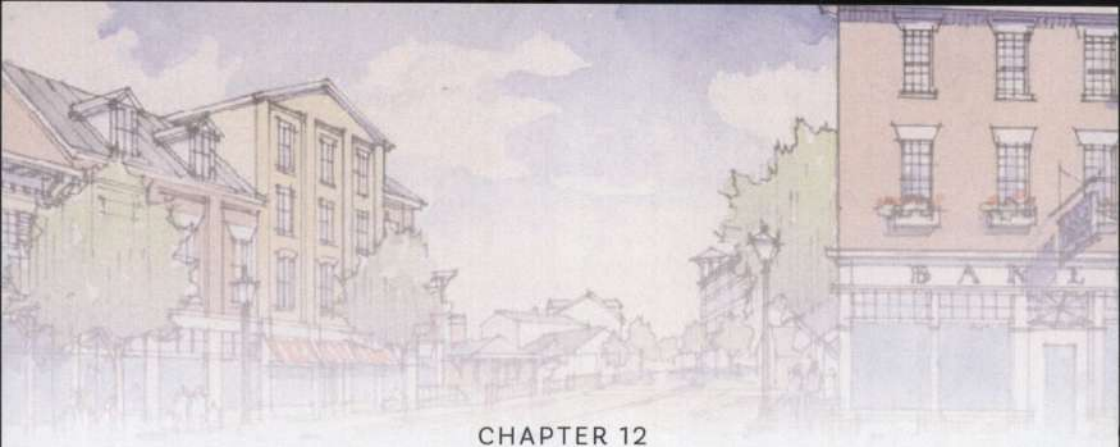
The best was yet to come.

PART III

1990 - TODAY

The Best is Yet to Come

"Still it's a real good bet
The best is yet to come."



CHAPTER 12

A New Decade Brings New Leadership

THE BEGINNING OF THE 1990s brought more changes to Frederick. For the first time in 16 years, the city had a new mayor. Ron Young lost his bid for a fifth term to Paul Gordon, a retired accountant and former member of the city's planning commission who often criticized the cost and budgeting of the Carroll Creek project.[91]

A weakening national economy led to a series of recessions in the late 1980s and early 1990s. So it was no surprise that Gordon—and apparently the voters of Frederick—wanted to make sure the city could weather any current and future storms.[92]

Paul Gordon

Given his desire to focus on the city's finances, Gordon was more than happy to outsource Frederick's economic development efforts to a group of local business leaders who advocated for the establishment of an independent, non-governmental organization that would focus on the area's economic development, including the continued revitalization of Downtown Frederick.

The Greater Frederick Development Corporation (GFDC) was established in 1990 as a non-profit organization with a 25-person board of directors representing a large cross-section of stakeholders, including many from the downtown community.

One of those members was Scott Grove, who had moved to Frederick seven years earlier and bought an 1822 townhome on South Street. As a resident of downtown, as well as a seasoned marketing professional, Grove was eager to help promote the untapped economic and cultural potential of his community.

"At the time, a lot of progress had been made," he recalls. "We had a few nice restaurants and stores and special events like In The Streets. But downtown would have seemed somewhat subdued in terms of tenant occupancy and pedestrian traffic in comparison with today."

Grove was asked by downtown business owners to organize a meeting with Charles Street Development Corporation in Baltimore to learn more about how that organization operated and to see and tour its early revitalization efforts. "At the time, Charles Street Development was an important model," Grove recalled.

The information they took away from their visit would eventually help the new GFDC board and its executive director, Jerry Moomau, better understand how to promote several of the properties that the Young administration had acquired along Carroll Creek. But because the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had yet to sign off on the entire flood control measure, the properties were still included in floodplain maps. With financing already difficult to access because of prevailing national market conditions, finding interested buyers for the sites proved to be challenging.

Gordon would only serve one term and was followed by Jim Grimes. The successful owner of a local trucking company, Grimes did not mince words when it came to the top priority for his new administration: "...the first order of business for this city's government is economic development," he stressed to voters in an op-ed to the Frederick News Post on Oct. 29, 1993.[93]

Jim Grimes

Once in office, Grimes worked closely with GFDC members Jonathan Warner, Mike Smariga and Michael Proffitt to advocate for two simultaneous and significant design and infrastructure improvements that were crucial to supporting economic development in Downtown Frederick.

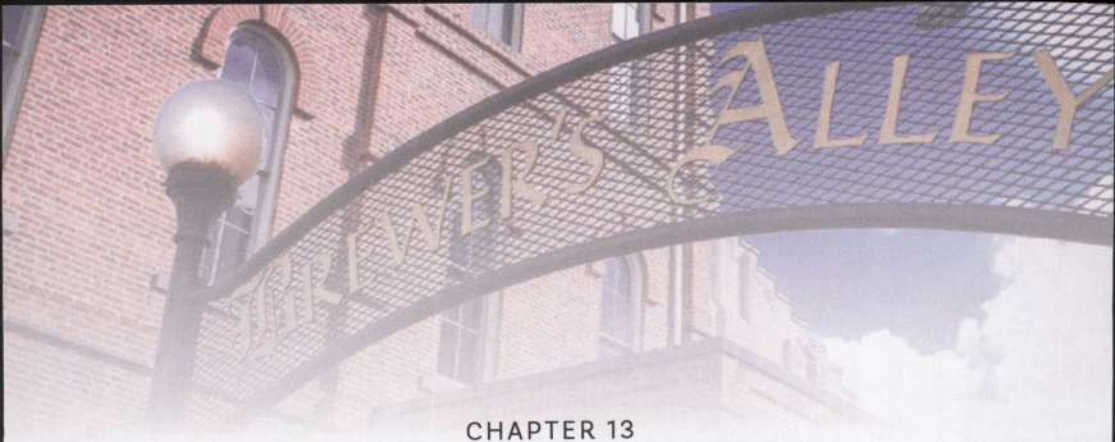
The first was to extend East Street all the way to Interstate 70 to create a new gateway for downtown. "We knew we needed an efficient and effective way to improve access to downtown," Warner recalled. At the same time, the trio was lobbying for Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) service to and from D.C. directly to Downtown Frederick.

"In addition to serving on the GFDC, each of us served on other committees, such as the Chamber's Frederick Area Committee on Transportation (FACT) and its Economic Development committee," Warner said. "So we all used our own bully pulpits to move these projects forward." Their efforts paid off when the first MARC train pulled into Downtown Frederick in 2001.[94] The East Street extension would take longer, but it, too, was successful, when the new gateway to downtown officially opened in 2009.[95]

After years of lobbying, commuter rail pulled into Downtown Frederick in 2001.

Many of the projects that had taken a back seat during the Gordon administration began to spring back to life under Grimes' tenure, including efforts to convert a city-owned building in Downtown Frederick into a museum that would prove to be a tourist attraction for Civil War enthusiasts.

With each incremental success, investors started to sit up and take notice of the potential awaiting them in Maryland's second largest city.



CHAPTER 13

Attracting Drinkers and Thinkers

IN 1994, FREDERICK NATIVE Phil Bowers, whose family's roots in Frederick stretch back several generations, launched an ambitious undertaking to redevelop Frederick's old City Hall and Opera House at 124 N. Market St., into a restaurant and brew pub. The building was underutilized after city offices moved one block away to the historic County Courthouse on Court Street, which had become vacant when the new modern courthouse opened in 1982.

Bowers' adaptive reuse project was the first to take advantage of the State of Maryland's Neighborhood BusinessWorks grant program. The grant enabled him to exercise a purchase option on the property from the city of Frederick and helped him better access financing to support $1.2 million worth of renovations.

The project, which took nine months to complete, helped open the doors for scores of new restaurants and bars that would open along Market and Patrick Streets over the next 25 years. In fact, Bowers himself would go on to open four additional downtown restaurants.

Frederick's old City Hall and Opera House was renovated in 1996 to become Brewer's Alley, a restaurant and brew pub.

While things were buzzing on North Market Street, the Grimes administration was giving new attention to a building on East Patrick Street that had been acquired under the Young administrations. During Ron Young's last year in office, the city purchased a parcel that was necessary to accommodate plans for downtown's third parking garage and anticipated mixed-use developments that would pop up along Carroll Creek once the floodplain designations were lifted.

At the time the city of Frederick acquired the old Carty building, the structure was in significant disrepair and required major rehabilitation.

Although the city only needed a portion of the property for what would become the Carroll Creek Public Parking Garage at 44 E. Patrick St., its owners were not interested in a partial sale. They wanted to sell the entire parcel, which included a circa-1830 building.[96]

The city finally acquiesced and purchased the entire property for $1.89 million.[97] The structure on the parcel was known as the Carty building and had been the place where Fredericktonians bought furniture for over a century.[98] But by the mid-1990s, the building had been vacant for many years and the Grimes administration realized they needed to act.

"It was in a state of significant disrepair," recalls Rick Weldon, who at the time was Grimes' chief operations officer. "Given another five or 10 years, the structure would have been in serious danger (of not surviving)."

Although Grimes was the mayor, he was a businessman at heart. The empty and decaying building fronted East Patrick Street and enjoyed high visibility. So he began to reach out to his connections in the community to see if they could find a way to save the building and make use of its prominent location to build more enthusiasm for redevelopment in Downtown Frederick.

Frederick's ties to the Civil War are deep, with many local churches, including Evangelical Lutheran Church, used as makeshift hospitals for the wounded.

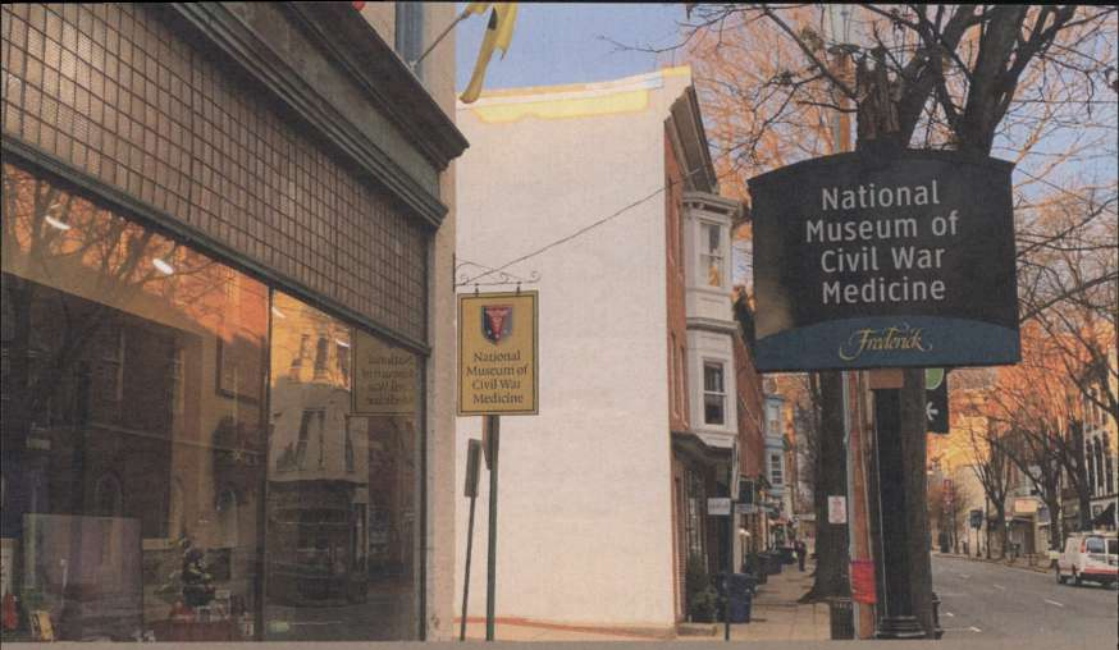
"The money (for the building) was already spent," Grimes recalled. "So it made sense to do something with it."

And what better way to do that than to provide a home for a museum that would reflect Frederick's deep connections to the Civil War.

At one point during the four-year conflict, Frederick was deemed "one vast hospital" as soldiers injured in nearby battles, including the Battle of South Mountain and Antietam, were sent to Frederick to be treated in the city's churches, homes and commercial buildings—including the Carty building. Legend has it that dead soldiers were sometimes embalmed in the building's front windows.[99]

As word got out about the city's hopes for finding a new use for the Carty building, Dr. Gordon E. Dammann and his wife, Karen, let it be known that they were looking for a place to establish a museum to showcase their impressive collection of Civil War artifacts. Working with other partners, they had incorporated the National Museum of Civil War Medicine several years earlier,[100] but as of 1994, the museum had no permanent home.

It became clear that a Civil War museum would present a great opportunity to reuse the historic Carty building while also creating a destination for Civil War history buffs that would help support the city's economic development goals. Grimes reached out to some of



FREDERICK'S TIES TO
THE CIVIL WAR

MONOCACY NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD: In the summer of 1864, Union soldiers engaged Confederate forces in the Battle of the Monocacy, delaying Confederate General Jubal Early long enough for additional Union reinforcements to reach Washington D.C. and prevent rebel forces from taking the capital. Although the Union would lose this fight, it would later become known as "The Battle That Saved Washington." Monocacy National Battlefield is located three miles south of Downtown Frederick.

SUCCESSION VOTE AT KEMP HALL: As a border state, Marylanders were deeply divided about which side to support during the Civil War. In the summer of 1861, with Confederate troops occupying the state capital in Annapolis, state legislators convened at Kemp Hall in Frederick to debate whether the state should remain in the Union. Kemp Hall is located on the southeast corner of Church and North Market Streets.

POW DETENTION: In addition to serving as a makeshift hospital like many other churches in Frederick, St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church was used to hold captured Confederate soldiers. Thanks to its windows which sit several feet above ground, it was believed to make for a more difficult escape. Later renovations to the church revealed graffiti by these POWs on the plaster behind the organ pipes in the choir loft.

HOSPITALS: Following the battles at Antietam and South Mountain in 1862, Frederick's churches, schools, hotels and homes became makeshift hospitals. Among the largest was the Hessian Barracks, which after housing German prisoners during the Revolutionary War, would become U.S. Army General Hospital No. 1. As the war dragged on, Frederick would also see wounded and sick soldiers following the battles of Gettysburg and Monocacy. Many who succumbed to their injuries or disease are buried at Mt. Olivet Cemetery on South Market Street.

PROXIMITY TO NATIONAL AND STATE CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELDS: Given its location wedged between Pennsylvania and Virginia, Frederick is only 30 miles from some of the most significant events in Civil War History. In addition to the national battlefields at Antietam (23 miles) and Gettysburg (31 miles), the Battle of South Mountain (18 miles) in 1862 saw Union Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan and Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's forces clash across several key mountain passes (Fox, Crampton and Turner), setting the stage for the bloody Battle of Antietam three days later. Frederick is also only 22 miles from Harper's Ferry, W.Va., site of John Brown's abolitionist raid on a federal armory.

BARBARA FRITCHIE: Legend has it that when Stonewall Jackson and his Confederate troops came marching through Frederick in 1862 on their way to engage with Union forces at the Battles of South Mountain and Antietam, elderly Fredericktonian Barbara Fritchie defiantly waved her U.S. flag

Replica of Barbara Fritchie House on West Patrick Street

at the soldiers on the street below. John Greenleaf Whittier would go on to immortalize the event in his poem "The Ballad of Barbara Frietchie" (the German spelling of her name). Although there is some dispute as to the accuracy of the account Whittier penned, Fritchie remains etched in Frederick folklore and is buried at Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

Sources:

nps.gov

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dnr.maryland.gov

barbarafritchie.org

Frederick's most influential business owners to see if they would be willing to contribute to the rehabilitation—admittedly a project that would be no small task and come with no small price tag.

Eventually, a group of prominent local businesses and philanthropists matched a $1 million grant from the State of Maryland to provide the funds necessary for the building's renovation[101] and in 1996, the National Museum of Civil War Medicine opened its doors to the public at 48 E. Patrick St. In the years since, the museum has become the centerpiece of Frederick's Civil War tourism sector, attracting more than 25,000 visitors in 2019. When those visitors leave the museum, they often eat and shop in Downtown Frederick, making the museum an important contributor to the local tax base.

The Carty building transaction was evidence of Grimes' pragmatic approach to problem-solving. He exercised it again towards the end of his second term to solve an age-old problem for traditional downtown business districts: parking—or a lack thereof. In the 20 years since the Church Street Public Parking Garage opened in 1975, downtown's growing success was contributing to more parking woes for businesses and their patrons—including those of the C. Burr Artz Public Library.

In 1991, Frederick County Public Libraries began discussing plans for a major renovation of its main branch on Carroll Creek. With new development and public amenities along the creek within sight but not yet complete, the new plans for the library called for it to become fully enmeshed in the planned landscape.

As development continued along Carroll Creek, the new C Burr Artz Public Library was designed to include a terrace that enables patrons to enjoy a bird's eye view of activities along the creek.

In addition to numerous interior upgrades and a significant expansion to 60,000 square feet, the $8 million renovation[102] called for the facility to have a second-floor outdoor terrace that would overlook Carroll Creek and provide a "destination within a destination" for library patrons.

But it also meant that parking demands would have to be addressed. The new 545-space Carroll Creek Public Parking Garage would have to accommodate new businesses and their employees, as well as visitors to downtown—including the library.

"Mayor Grimes told me we had to make parking available for the library's users," Weldon recalled. "I give Jim all the credit for saying 'We have to figure out how to make that work.'"

By the time the library opened in 2002, the Grimes administration had negotiated for two floors of parking in the new deck to be allocated for library patrons and ensured they could enjoy two hours of free parking. It was the kind of "make it happen" approach that Grimes, ever the businessman, took to his leadership role with the city.

"In one of my first conversations with Mayor Grimes, he made it very clear that our job was to help anyone who approached the city with a request—be that planning, engineering, permitting, whatever—and find a way to get to 'yes,'" Weldon recalled. "He wanted us to put the effort into making projects work."

CHAPTER 14

Mixing Things Up

AFTER TWO TERMS AS MAYOR, Grimes was succeeded in November 2002 by Jennifer Dougherty, a local retailer and restauranteur who became the city's first female mayor. She campaigned on the promise of bringing the economic development function under City Hall, believing that such an important aspect of local government should not be conducted by an outside non-profit like the Greater Frederick Development Corporation.[103]

Jennifer Dougherty

At the time, the GFDC was headed up by Richard Griffin who had previously worked for the city of Frederick in its planning department. One of the first things Griffin did when he became director of the GFDC in 2000 was to resubmit Frederick's application to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center (NMSC) to request designation as a Main Street community. A prior application, submitted in 1998, had been denied.

The second submission was quickly approved in 2000, thanks to Griffin's ability to show how smart planning and design is a key component of successful business and residential development that brings jobs to historic downtowns. With the NMSC's stamp of ap-

proval for its revitalization efforts, the GFDC was eligible to apply for state grants and national training programs to support its work in Downtown Frederick.

But when Dougherty announced her intention to create a department of economic development within the city, Griffin decided to apply for the director's position. As a certified urban planner, he understood the true economic development potential of Carroll Creek.

He got the job and went to work quickly, dusting off binders of old plans for the Carroll Creek area that were created during previous administrations. "As I was reading those plans, I remember saying 'These are really good,'" he recalled. "But none of them had been implemented."

One of those plans was the Carroll Creek Park Master Plan and Implementation Strategy, prepared for the Carroll Creek Commission in 1991.[104] The commission was a volunteer group of residents and other city stakeholders who were tasked with developing recommendations for land use and design of the linear park. Led by local business owner Richard (Dick) Kessler, the group created a wish list and shaped a vision that according to fellow commission member Bert Anderson "is remarkably close" to what people see in 2022.

Richard Griffin

But they needed someone to turn the plans into action. That person was Griffin.

Griffin was anxious to begin promoting 11 sites along Carroll Creek that the city had purchased or acquired following the 1976 flood. But he soon discovered that potential investors were hesitant, given that the properties were still technically in Carroll Creek's floodplain.

It was up to city engineer Richard Lind to change that. He worked tirelessly with FEMA representatives to remove the final obstacles that were preventing the area around Carroll Creek from being re-

moved from federal floodplain maps. "Richard had to provide lots of engineering calculations regarding the flow capacity of the conduits and the storage capacity of Baker Park during flood events," Griffin recalls.[105]

It took a number of months, but in 2003, FEMA formally approved a map amendment that removed Downtown Frederick from the 100-year floodplain.[106]

And once that happened, "The development flood gates opened," recalled Anderson.

Within the next six years, a number of signature developments began to spring up along the creek. These included:

- Creekside Plaza: A six-story mixed-use building at 50 Citizens Way that features luxury penthouse condominiums overlooking Carroll Creek Linear Park.

Creekside Plaza

- South Market Center: A 56,000-square-foot, four-story office building at 50 Carroll Creek Way with lower-level parking. Its commercial spaces are occupied by restaurants which enjoy outdoor seating on a brick terrace above Carroll Creek.

South Market Center

- Maxwell Place: A 68-unit condominium building on East All Saints Street with central garage parking, including some designated public parking spaces.

Maxwell Place

- The New La Paz: After nearly three decades at their original location tucked away next to the Church Street Public Parking Garage, Graham and Marcie Baker moved their venerable Frederick restaurant to a new, significantly larger building at 51 S. Market St., abutting Carroll Creek Linear Park.

La Paz went from a hidden location to prominence along Carroll Creek.

In addition to these projects, several of the other sites the city was marketing were sold to eager developers who had been waiting on the sidelines for FEMA to adjust its floodplain map so they could get the financing they needed to get in on the action.

While new construction was happening along the creek, many historic buildings in Downtown Frederick were also getting a new lease on life. Thanks to historic tax credits and other incentives from state and federal programs, "Building after building got picked up and renovated," Griffin recalls.

At the same time, Dougherty and the city's Board of Aldermen created the Carroll Creek Task Force to examine funding options and designs for the next phase of public improvements for Carroll Creek Linear Park. In 2005, they broke ground on enhancements such as brick paths, water features, shade trees, planters and a 350-seat outdoor amphitheater.[107]

A new pedestrian suspension bridge, named after William O. Lee, one of the city's first Black aldermen who served from 1986 to 1994,[108] was dedicated in 2006. It serves as the centerpiece of the 1.3-mile linear park. The price tag for the improvements, which run from Court Street to just past Carroll Street was close to $11 million.[109] Funding came from the city of Frederick, Frederick County, the State of Maryland and from purchasers of city-owned properties that fronted Carroll Creek, who were required to make per-linear-foot contributions to help fund the park's improvements.[110]

Carroll Creek Linear Park's numerous water features attract young and old alike.

CHAPTER 15

New Names Come to Town

WITH RICHARD GRIFFIN now charged with heading up the city's new Department of Economic Development, the GFDC was in need of a new executive director. As fate would have it, she discovered Frederick before Frederick discovered her.

Kara Norman

Kara Norman was an urban planner working in San Antonio when she stumbled upon Downtown Frederick during a visit to mid-Maryland in 2001. At that time, the city's revitalization efforts were picking up a head of steam. Work on the final phase of the Carroll Creek flood control measure was wrapping up. The first phase of the linear park that Ron Young had envisioned along the creek was still years from completion, but good things were afoot. The newly expanded and renovated C. Burr Artz Library on Carroll Creek was getting ready to open, properties along the creek were ready for development (as soon as FEMA removed them from its floodplain map), and Frederick enjoyed daily commuter rail service to Washington D.C. from the new transit center on East Street.

"I remember having an overall sense that things had been happening here, that people cared," Norman recalled of her first visit to Frederick. "It had a lot of potential."

MAIN STREET APPROACH™

Originally developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and its Main Street Center, the Main Street Approach focuses on a historic preservation-based approach to economic development built around on four main points.

DESIGN:
Accessible, attractive, distinct communities create places where people want to be.

PROMOTION:
Special events and marketing efforts sell downtown as a great place to live, work and play.

ECONOMIC VITALITY:
Recruiting and retaining successful businesses and entrepreneurs keeps the commercial district alive and full.

ORGANIZATION:
Successful revitalization requires volunteers, funding and community engagement.

In what can only be described as a case of serendipitous timing, shortly after her visit, Norman learned Frederick wanted to hire a director for its Main Street program.

With her background in planning, Norman proved to be the perfect fit and by October 2002, she was the new executive director of the GFDC, sharing space in an office across from City Hall with Griffin and Heather Gramm, the city's business development specialist. At that point in time, Norman had a staff of one at the GDFC—herself. But she was eager to help Downtown Frederick implement the National Main Street Center's four-point approach to revitalization.

"I don't think I fully recognized what an opportunity it was," she said. "The job enabled me to work in what I studied and what I love to do."

There was only one problem: she didn't have a lot of money to work with.

After it established its new Department of Economic Development, the city provided the GFDC with only $30,000 to support continued downtown revitalization efforts. Private investments made up another $30,000. With $10,000 allotted toward committee projects and expenses, plus standard overhead costs, the budget wasn't just lean…it was skeletal.

"I remember calling home and saying, 'I think I made a huge mistake,'" Norman said. "'I'm not sure they can even pay me.'"

Undeterred by the challenges she faced, Norman hit the ground running, building the relationships, credibility and support she needed for the continued revitalization of Downtown Frederick. Griffin and other leading members of the downtown business community who supported the Main Street initiative introduced her to "tons and tons of people," she recalled. With each new connection, she would also sell the Main Street Approach™ to historic preservation-based economic development.

Norman and GFDC's board of directors also believed that to help people fully understand how their downtown revitalization efforts were distinct from work to promote economic development across the entire city, the organization could benefit from a new name.

In 2003, Downtown Frederick Partnership became the official name of the city's Main Street organization. The new name spoke not only to the geographic area in which its efforts were focused, but also to the fact that success could best be achieve through collaboration and partnerships.

When Norman assumed the reins of the GFDC from Griffin, Design and Promotion committees—two of the four standing committees called for in the Main Street Approach—were already in place and had achieved several notable successes.

Shab Row

Thanks to efforts dating back several decades, downtown's stock of historic architecture had been largely preserved. Power lines were hidden under Market Street, the Carroll Creek flood control measure was nearing completion, the street tree initiative that Don Linton started in the 1970s had blossomed to provide a lush street canopy, and work was underway on a new East Street gateway to downtown with access right from Interstate 70. Downtown Frederick was looking pretty good from a design standpoint.

There were also a few signature special events, such as In The Streets, which had become an annual tradition, and the Festival of the Arts that regularly drew big crowds. Everedy Square and Shab Row had popular holiday promotions, but the traffic they generated did not always spill over into the rest of downtown.

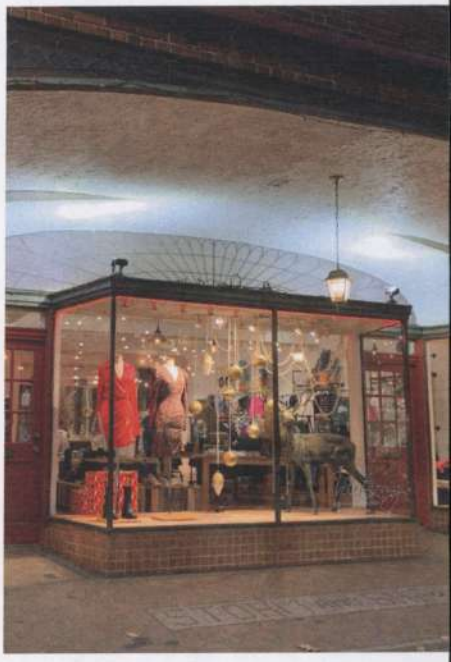
First Saturdays in Downtown Frederick now regularly draw huge crowds both in summer...

So in 2003, the Partnership decided to revive an effort that had started, but faltered, a few years earlier. First Saturday Gallery Walks, modeled after a formula that had been successfully implemented in other Main Street communities, were designed to bring people downtown one day each month by spotlighting the large number of galleries, antique dealers and jewelers. Once there, the goal was to help them discover what other businesses in the historic district offered.

The event's success would require asking businesses to remain open until 9 p.m. Norman knew that the request would have the greatest chance of being accepted if it came from fellow business owners who were willing to do the same. "Some people said it was a crazy idea and that it'd never work," Norman recalls. "But we asked them to try it anyway."

...and winter, when Fire in Ice illuminated ice carvings literally shut down the streets of downtown with overflow crowds.

Two leading merchants, April Reardon, the young, enthusiastic owner of The Velvet Lounge, a trendy women's boutique on Market Street, and Tom England, co-owner with his wife, Marlene, of Dancing Bear Toys & Gifts, volunteered to reach out to their fellow business owners and ask them to do what they themselves were doing: staying open "late" (until 9 p.m.) for First Saturday Gallery Walks.



The Velvet Lounge on North Market Street

Some businesses decided to try it, some did not. But it wouldn't take long before the purchasing potential of thousands of people downtown on the first Saturday of every month persuaded many of the holdouts to join in.

The inaugural First Saturday was held in March 2003. With each passing year, business participation grew—as did the crowds. By 2009, a First Saturday attendee survey revealed that an average of nearly 11,000 people attended the monthly event and spent a total of $450,000 in downtown businesses. By 2014, those numbers grew to an average

The Partnership's annual report details the work of the organization's standing committees.

of 14,000 people and $502,000 in spending, which all told, represented an infusion of more than $6 million into the local economy.

The success of First Saturday would fuel a wave of new enthusiasm for special events and promotions from some of the very same people who once scoffed at the idea. "Before long, people started bringing us other ideas on how to promote downtown," Norman said. As is true of any group project, not everyone's ideas made it to the floor (or the street), including Norman's. "Have there been things I really wish happened, but didn't? Sure," she admitted. "But some things can't be forced and sometimes it just isn't the right time."

With the Design and Promotion committees up and running, the Partnership set its sights on the other two parts of the Main Street model: Economic Vitality and Organization.

When Norman arrived at the GFDC, there was no concerted effort underway for business retention and recruitment. It was also up to her and the board of directors to guide the organization and shepherd its fundraising efforts.

Because the Main Street model calls for community-driven revitalization, Norman began recruiting business owners, residents and anyone interested in advocating for downtown to participate. She asked her volunteers what they believed their committees' short-, medium- and long-term goals, as well as budgets, timelines and tasks should be.

Whether it was fundraising, volunteer recruitment, or business retention, "I asked them what they wanted to achieve and where they wanted to go," Norman recalls, knowing that each goal that was met would inspire momentum to keep going. "It's a very iterative, incremental process, but it works."

THE PARTNERSHIP'S
PARTNERS

As its name implies, Downtown Frederick Partnership is a group effort. On any given day, with regard to any given project, Executive Director Kara Norman and her staff of three associates collaborate with scores of public and private entities in their efforts to promote Downtown Frederick.

These partners include:

- City of Frederick Department of Economic Development.
- Frederick County Office of Economic Development.
- Frederick County Chamber of Commerce.
- Frederick Arts Council, a nonprofit that advances the arts and co-manages the Downtown Frederick Arts & Entertainment District with the Partnership. The A&E District was designated by the Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development in 2003.

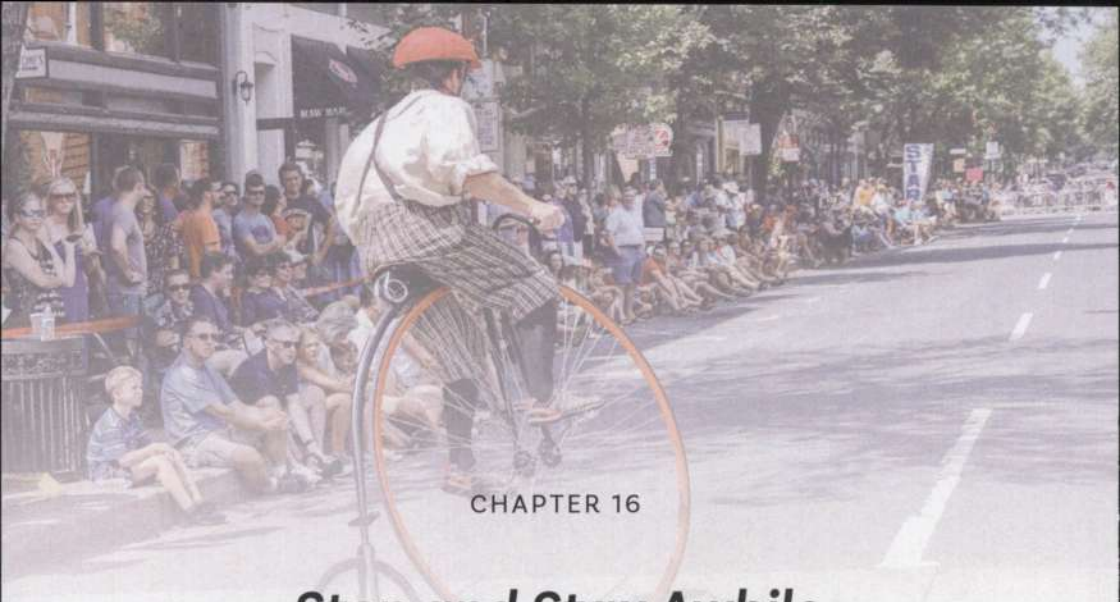
- Celebrate Frederick, a nonprofit that works with the city of Frederick to coordinate special events, including In The Street which will celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2023.
- Frederick County Executive and County Council.
- City of Frederick Mayor and Board of Alderman.

But this list is hardly inclusive.

"We work with hundreds of organizations both in and out of downtown," Norman says. "It might be the Health Department in support of Bring a Broom Saturday or the Asian American Center of Frederick to promote the Carroll Creek Culture Series. Or the community volunteers who sponsor and help maintain our flower baskets."

The Partnership and its partners are committed to supporting each other's missions, although Richard Griffin, director of Economic Development for the city of Frederick, says his office clearly benefits the most, given that downtown sits inside the city limits. "We get so much more value out of our relationship with Downtown Frederick Partnership than we put into it," he said.

It helps that these partners are also neighbors. "We are all located within blocks of each other," Rick Weldon, now president and CEO of the Frederick County Chamber of Commerce has said. "It's not unusual for us to have 'sidewalk' meetings when we run into each other on the street and give each other the latest updates on what's going on in our worlds. It helps us, Frederick County's largest economic development advocates, row in the same direction."



CHAPTER 16

Stop and Stay Awhile

WHEN JOHN FIESELER FIRST ARRIVED in Frederick in 1979 to work in local radio, he recalls thinking that downtown obviously had an established historic charm but "there was a lot of underutilized street-level retail space and the upper floors were even more underutilized."

And there was one more thing that stood out: "There were a lot of antique dealers."

John Fieseler

Fieseler eventually left his radio career to become the director of the Tourism Council of Frederick County in 1997. By the time he retired from that post in 2021, the little town he discovered 42 years earlier had changed. "I saw a really healthy downtown economy and most of the businesses relied on some mix of downtown residents, employees and visitors. But visitors were the profit margin."

When he started at the Tourism Council (now Visit Frederick), Downtown Frederick was basically a day-trip destination, but Fieseler thought it had the potential to attract visitors for multi-day stays. Ken Burns had released his acclaimed documentary on the Civil

War several years earlier and the movie "Glory" had rekindled interest in Civil War history as well. Fieseler decided the time was right to play on Frederick's numerous ties to the War Between the States.

Because the Tourism Council was tasked with promoting tourism throughout Frederick County, Fieseler could tout Civil War attractions in Downtown Frederick such as the Museum of Civil War Medicine and the Barbara Fritchie House (which is a replica, not the original home of the firebrand nonagenarian who stood up to Stonewall Jackson and his troops as they marched through Frederick) as well as nearby attractions such as the Monocacy, Antietam and Gettysburg battlefields.

Frederick still had antique dealers, but it also had a growing list of sit-down restaurants, some offering sidewalk or creekside dining. Storefronts were beginning to be used for retail once again, not offices or storage. And thanks to the efforts of Downtown Frederick Partnership and other organizations, such as Celebrate Frederick, there were new special events and a growing enthusiasm for the untapped potential of downtown.

In what would prove to be one of many, many collaborations between their two organizations, Fieseler approached Kara Norman with an offer that was simply too good to pass up. He knew Downtown Frederick Partnership was operating on a shoe-string budget, so he offered to match the cost of the advertising the Partnership was spending with local media so the organization could buy an ad in the Washington Post to attract a larger audience to First Saturday events. "Needless to say, it made a big difference," Norman recalled.

With each passing year, the pair would collaborate and coordinate on many more projects that supported the complementary goals of their respective organizations. They often spent so much time together in meetings, hearings and planning sessions that Fieseler noted, "There were weeks when I saw Kara more than my own staff."

Yet even as Frederick's fortunes were growing, Fieseler's budgets were not.

As early as 2000, the Frederick County Commissioners recognized that a hotel/motel tax could benefit economic development and tourism throughout the county. As word spread of the variety of things to see and do in the area—including Downtown Frederick as well as attractions in the county such as its historic covered bridges and the National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg—the number of overnight visitors was growing and contributing to more spending, not just on hotels, but meals, shopping and more.

"At that point in time, hotel taxes were decades in operation. They were in use on the Eastern Shore, in southern Maryland and in Baltimore," said Rick Weldon, who after serving in Mayor Jim Grimes' administration as chief operating officer, would go on to serve one year as a Frederick County Commissioner and seven years as a member of the Maryland House of Delegates.

Local leadership saw the value of the tax, but Fieseler recalls that some of the biggest opponents of the move were hoteliers themselves, with some arguing that the tax would keep people from staying overnight. Despite strong lobbying efforts by many members of the business community, efforts to pass the tax in 2000 failed.

But its proponents would revisit the issue again three years later. Fieseler says that in addition to concerns about suppressing overnight visits to Frederick County, opponents of the tax in 2000 also argued that even though the tax was purported to support tourism, there was no provision for ensuring the money wouldn't just end up in the county's general fund, as frequently happens elsewhere.

So when the Frederick County Board of County Commissioners agreed to bring the issue up again in 2003, language was included that specifically stipulated that money raised by hotel/motel taxes would have to be dedicated to destination marketing efforts in Frederick County.

Frederick Restaurant Week logo

With that, the hoteliers got on board. There was very little opposition to instituting the tax and in April 2004, a measure to impose a hotel/motel tax no greater than 5 percent was passed by the Maryland State Legislature. Frederick County decided to initiate the tax at 3 percent, knowing that it would have the opportunity to go up to 5 percent in the future if dictated by market trends.

To ensure that the new funds would truly support efforts to attract more tourism expenditures in Frederick County, in 2006 the Tourism Council of Frederick County (Visit Frederick) set aside a portion of the hotel/motel tax revenue to support local non-profit attractions, events and activities. Better known as TRIPP (Tourism Reinvestment in Promotion and Product) funds, the program has awarded more than $3,388,000 since its inception in 2006.[111] "The goal was to use the money to help support projects that had an identified audience and needed to reach them," Fieseler said.

National Clustered Spires High Wheel Race

These grants have supported special attractions such as the Friends of Carroll Creek Park's annual "Sailing Through the Winter Solstice" illuminated boats in the creek and the National Clustered Spires High Wheel Race in Downtown Frederick which features "penny farthing" bikes from the late 1880s. Touted as "The Only High Wheel Race of Its Kind in America," this unique event has become a huge summertime draw and has helped reinforce Frederick County as a destination for biking enthusiasts.

In 2016, the Frederick County Council (the county changed from a County Commissioner to County Charter government in 2014) decided to raise the hotel/motel tax to the 5 percent the legislature initially granted. A portion of the increase was set aside to create a Destination Development Fund that Visit Frederick manages and uses to promote projects such as Restaurant Week in Downtown Frederick and the County's agricultural tour which highlights local farms and farm-to-table producers.

Fieseler's tourism efforts were also helped by ongoing development along Carroll Creek. By the mid-2000s, with construction of the flood control system complete, work on the visible aspects of the linear park that sits atop it was also starting to take off. Brickwork began to cover the large, utilitarian concrete pads that had lined the creek. Fountains, pedestrian bridges, planters and public art began to dot the banks of the waterway. By 2016, $27 million[112] had been poured into the linear park that Ron Young had imagined 37 years earlier (and which young radio reporter Fieseler never thought he'd be around long enough to see). It was becoming the economic development driver Young had imagined.

Interior of Frederick Visitor Center

Amid all these accomplishments, Visit Frederick opened its new Visitor Center in a restored circa-1899 industrial warehouse prominently located on the newly extended East Street "gateway" from Interstate 70. Funding for the $1.5 million renovation project came primarily from County bonds, although a portion of hotel/motel funds help pay for the debt service on the project.

Carroll Creek Linear Park in all its nighttime glory.

Visitors were seeing ads promoting Downtown Frederick in regional print runs of national magazines and reading about it in the New York Times.[113] That kind of exposure helps explain why, by 2019 (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic) Frederick County saw $425 million in tourism-related revenue, with visitors supporting 6,800 jobs, many of them in Downtown Frederick.[114]

TO CHAIN
OR NOT TO CHAIN

In the mid-1990s, as Downtown Frederick's revitalization was attracting more attention, Bert Anderson was trying to convince one of the nation's most popular women's clothing stores to open up in his newest adapted reuse project: Everedy Square.

Anderson, and his commercial real estate broker Maribeth Visco, were trying to get Talbots to make Frederick home to one of its smaller, second-tier stores.

They first approached the company with the idea in 1994. Intrigued by what Frederick could offer, representatives did a site tour. Although they liked the Frederick location, "They said that before they would consider the expense of opening a store, their catalogue sales within a three-mile radius of the new location had to reach $150,000 for the previous year," Anderson recalled. "We were short by about $13,000. I bought a lot of Talbots sweaters for the next two or three years."

Starbucks on North Market Street

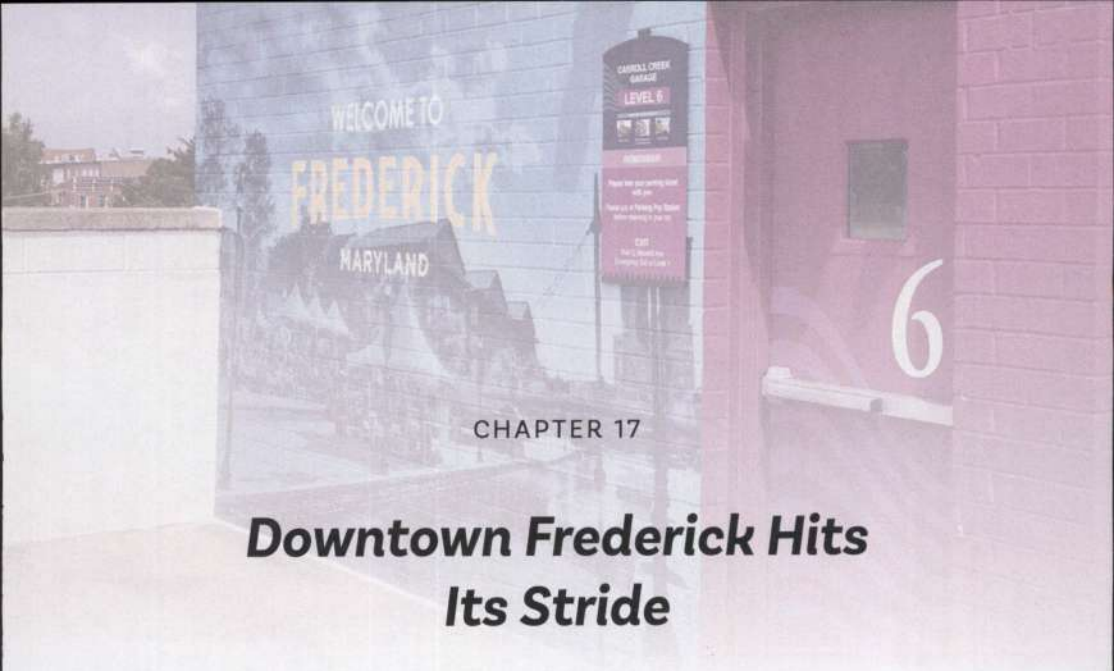
Talbots reconsidered the location again in 1997 and the store, now a staple of Everedy Square, opened in April of that year.

Allowing chain stores to locate in historic downtowns is often a hotly debated topic, yet as former Frederick Mayor Ron Young pointed out, "We used to have lots of chains downtown: Sears, JCPenney's, McCrory's," he said. "But then they all left and there came a time when no chains would come because we didn't have the foot traffic."

Indeed, some believe the presence of a major national chain—think Starbucks—lends an air of credibility to a district and supports additional business recruitment.

Kara Norman, executive director of Downtown Frederick Partnership, says the issue is often simply determined by market forces. "Modern retailers want spaces that are wide and shallow," she said. "That's the opposite of what many historic buildings can offer."

Perhaps that is why, as of 2022, without a formal policy, Downtown Frederick has maintained a business mix that is decidedly independent. In fact, there are only two national chain stores in the historic district: Starbucks and Talbots



CHAPTER 17

Downtown Frederick Hits Its Stride

BY 2017 DOWNTOWN FREDERICK was, in the words of Visit Frederick's ad campaign, "Hip & Historic."

Ron Young's vision for a vibrant, walkable linear park through the heart of downtown had come to fruition, as Carroll Creek had been transformed from an ugly, polluted flooding menace into a tranquil urban oasis.

The third phase of improvements to Carroll Creek Linear Park, from Carroll Street to East Patrick Street, was completed in 2016. New fountains, brickwork and public art installations totaling $15.7 million extended the park's attractions[115] and complemented significant private investment on the eastern end of the creek, including the rehabilitation of the abandoned Union Knitting Mills building into prime office space, event venue and craft breweries.

The park also benefited from the tireless efforts of a group of volunteers, led by retired radiologist and garden enthusiast Dr. Peter Kremers, who began planting water lilies and other colorful aquatic plants in the creek in 2013 to combat algae. The effort, known as Color on the Creek, has now grown to include 400 volunteers and donors, many of whom don waders and enter the creek to plant the lilies and then remove the foliage in the fall to make room for a special winter installation.

Sailing through the Winter Solstice

Sailing Through the Winter Solstice begins in November when a colorfully lit and imaginative array of boats lay anchor in Carroll Creek. The public is invited to cast $1 votes for their favorites, with the proceeds supporting Color on the Creek and local charities. The event started with one boat in 2016 and has now grown to 25—and counting.[116]

By the mid-2010s, library patrons were attending free Friday lunchtime concerts on the terrace overlooking the park. Colorful flower baskets, sponsored by local garden clubs, residents and businesses collectively known as Flowers Over Frederick, adorned streetlight poles on Market, Patrick and East Streets. Downtown had four parking garages and construction was underway on a fifth.

Business and citizen advocacy had succeeded in keeping major public employers downtown, including the County Courthouse, the main branch of Frederick County Public Libraries, City Hall and the Board of Education, which opened its new 90,000-square-foot headquarters just two blocks south of Carroll Creek in 2005.

Frederick County Public School Central Office in Downtown Frederick

Downtown commercial spaces, including those that had long been vacant, became hot commodities. Underutilized second and third story floors of buildings were converted into sought-after urban apartments. And some of the historic district's stately and lovingly restored townhomes—some of which Ron Young remembers selling for the mid-$20,000s in the late 1960s—sold for anywhere from $700,000 to $1 million.

Downtown Frederick had come a long way since its nadir in the late 1960s.

Downtown Frederick Partnership's Façade Improvement Program gives old buildings a fresh look.

Meanwhile, Norman and the committees of Downtown Frederick Partnership were racking up a string of impressive accomplishments

In 2002, the organization funded its first façade improvement grants designed to help property and business owners give their buildings and storefronts a facelift through things such as fresh paint, awnings, lighting and signage. Since then, more than 100 properties have taken advantage of the program, which is supported primarily by State of Maryland Community Legacy Grants.

Alive@Five started with three summer events; by 2022, it had expanded to 21 happy hour concerts on Carroll Creek.

Downtown Frederick Partnership's wildly popular "Alive@Five" happy hour concerts premiered in 2004 with three events. Today, every Thursday during the spring and summer months, a live band entertains crowds in the 350-seat Carroll Creek Amphitheater from 5-8 p.m. The schedule now spans 21 weeks from May until September and is the Partnership's largest fundraising event, with an average attendance of 800. In 2022, it brought in gross revenue of $298,000. Supported through corporate sponsorships and a $5 entry fee, Alive@Five in Downtown Frederick has become a rite of summer for many Fredericktonians.

Downtown Frederick gift cards

In 2006, the Partnership, with project management by the Tourism Council of Frederick County (Visit Frederick), launched its Downtown Frederick Gift Card program. The Frederick Visitors Center is the point of sale for the cards, which are honored at close to 200 downtown businesses. This is a pass-through program from which the Partnership derives no income. It simply supports the organization's mission to encourage patronage of downtown businesses. In fiscal year 2021, fans of Downtown Frederick purchased $348,000 worth of gift cards.

To support the economic vitality of Downtown Frederick businesses, in 2007 the Partnership initiated its Competitive Edge Series which provides educational programs, speakers and resources to help entrepreneurs strengthen and/or expand their operations. The program receives major underwriting support from many local banks and businesses.

Frosty Friday carolers

Over the ensuing years, the Partnership has launched several new special events, including Frosty Friday which encourages shoppers to spend Black Friday patronizing downtown businesses. There are special promotions, hot chocolate stations, live music, and much more. Each April, the annual Bring a Broom Saturday encourages volunteers to get down and dirty by sweeping sidewalks, planting flowers and engaging in an overall clean-up of downtown.

In 2008, the Partnership and Visit Frederick, using a combination of a federal Preserve America grant, Maryland State Heritage Authority funds and capital improvement project money from the city of Frederick, secured $900,000 to initiate a comprehensive wayfinding program for Downtown Frederick. The project called for the Part-

nership to coordinate the removal of about 100 existing signs and oversee the design of 150 new signs for the historic district. The city then managed the siting, fabrication and installation of new vehicular signage from Interstate 70 as well as pedestrian-level signage on downtown streets.

Following that success, the Partnership began to sink its teeth into legislative issues that impact downtown businesses. It supported a measure by the city's Department of Economic Development for a text amendment to the city's municipal code that allows craft breweries and distilleries under 10,000 square feet to operate outside of areas solely zoned for industrial use. After its passage, two distilleries and five craft breweries opened in Downtown Frederick, providing yet another market niche to promote. Four of the five breweries opened in renovated properties on the eastern end of Carroll Creek Linear Park, bringing economic development to the last phase of the project.

The Partnership then collaborated with representatives of the craft beverage industry and the city to pass an ordinance that allows eating and drinking establishments to offer live entertainment without a permit.[117] "We brought together representatives from the city, residents and the craft beverage industry," Norman recalled. "We had great conversations about some of the impediments the craft beverage businesses faced. Within a year, we were able to help make the change. It showed the importance of having all the impacted groups at the table."

Downtown Frederick's holiday tree lights are a beloved holiday tradition.

The Partnership also assumed management of the holiday tree lights program, which illuminates downtown's street trees in white lights from Thanksgiving through the end of daylight savings time. Supporters can now sponsor a tree and its lights. What began decades earlier with a single resident adding lights to the street tree in front

of his own home has now grown into one of Downtown Frederick's most beloved traditions. In fiscal year 2021, 155 street trees sported holiday lights thanks to $67,000 that was raised to support that project alone.

With each new achievement, it was becoming increasingly clear that Downtown Frederick had "made it." It was racking up award after award, including accolades from The New York Times and the American Planning Association. But for many who remember the early revitalization efforts back in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the pinnacle came in 2005 when Downtown Frederick was named a Great American Main Street by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center.

The award recognizes exceptional successes in comprehensive, preservation-based commercial district revitalization. Only 100 communities across the U.S. have been granted the honor,[118] and Frederick won it only five years after its official designation as a Main Street community.

Yet the work is far from over (see Epilogue). Downtown Frederick's economic development proponents are tackling bigger and more complex projects, but it is all part of the nurturing that living, breathing cities and towns require.

For his part, Don Linton is still "in the fight," advocating tirelessly for a hotel in Downtown Frederick. Now well into his 80s, he's earned the right to pass the torch to a new generation, but he's not ready. "It makes me proud to see the progress that has been made, starting with those tireless volunteers of Operation Town Action," he said. "We started this 50 years ago and we're not done yet."

NO PAIN, NO GAIN

Historic Preservation can be expensive and time-consuming, but ***the benefits outweigh the costs.***

A key tenet of the National Main Street Center's approach to revitalizing historic downtowns is recognizing the vital role the preservation and restoration of period-specific architecture plays in creating authentic and interesting destinations that can support 21st century uses.

Frederick's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) reviews and provides guidance that reflects best historic preservation practices regarding exterior rehabilitation of historic properties, new construction and demolition in the city's Historic District.[119]

Although sometimes the subject of debate and derision, it is hard to imagine what Downtown Frederick might look like today if not for the group's commitment to ensuring the area maintain its charming authenticity. "I believe the importance of the Historic Preservation Commission cannot be overstated," said Bert Anderson, a supporter and investor in adaptive reuse projects in historic buildings. "They are the reason we have the preservation of the architecture we see downtown today."

Richard Griffin, director of Economic Development for the city of Frederick, acknowledges that historic preservation can engender mixed emotions. "People love it because it creates a beautiful ambiance that has contributed to the allure of Downtown Frederick, but property owners struggle with it at times because preserving historic buildings is costly." Aside from the challenges associated with finding period-specific building materials for repairs or renovations, older buildings can present a host of other problems, from inadequate heating and cooling systems to accessibility issues.

Yet everyone agrees that when it works, historic preservation can be, in Griffin's words, "the goose that lays the golden egg."

Downtown Frederick has an extensive inventory of residential and commercial structures that have been preserved, restored and adapted to accommodate modern uses. Some of these are:

BREWERS ALLEY: Frederick's first town hall and market house opened at 124 N. Market St. in 1769. In 1873, the building was replaced and in 1879, Frederick Douglass delivered a speech there. The property would eventually house Frederick's City Hall offices, its jail and its opera house. Today, this bustling brew pub and restaurant hosts private events on its second floor in rooms that bear the names of their earlier iterations: the Booking Room and the Mayor's Office.

MONOCACY VALLEY CANNERY: During its heyday, nearly 6.5 million cans of vegetables passed through the Monocacy Valley Cannery every year. Saved from demolition, the 1904 building underwent a careful renovation that preserved many of its vintage elements, including original beams and a massive sliding door that allowed wagons to bring farm fresh produce to the plant for processing. Today, the Cannery offers more than 30,000 square feet of prime office space.

Colonial Jewelers

COLONIAL JEWELERS: The former Maryland National Bank building on Downtown Frederick's Square Corner features a soaring two-story lobby area, oversized arched windows and at the center of it all, the bank's formidable vault. When the bank closed, longtime Frederick business Colonial Jewelers took over the space, making use of its abundant natural light—and the vault—to highlight and protect its merchandise.

FREDERICK ARTS COUNCIL: In 2020, the Frederick Arts Council converted a vacant church on East Second street into gallery, performance and office space. The facility regularly showcases free or reduced-fee exhibits and events by local artists.

Frederick Arts Council gallery space

DELAPLAINE ARTS CENTER: The building began as a whiskey rectifying house in the 1850s before being converted to a steam flour mill, eventually known as the Mountain City Mill. It survived two devastating fires and in 1958, the Great Southern Printing and Manufacturing Company acquired the property and used it for several decades as a storage facility for the Frederick News and Post, then located just across Carroll Creek. In 1986, the Delaplaine and Randall families donated the property to the city of Frederick for use as a visual arts center. Extensive renovations in 1993 created two large galleries and offices on the first floor. Subsequent renovations added gallery spaces, classrooms, an art library and studio space on the upper floors. A new addition includes an event hall, gallery shop and a 1,000-square-foot deck overlooking Carroll Creek Linear Park.

Delaplaine Arts Center Gallery

FSK HOTEL: Known in its heyday as the "place to see and be seen" in Downtown Frederick, the brick, five-story Francis Scott Key Hotel is now home to market-rate and income-qualified apartments. Built in 1923, the building features a two-story-lobby with a mezzanine and original detailed millwork and large murals. It is located in downtown's Theater District right across from the Weinberg Center

Lobby of Francis Scott Key Hotel

for the Arts. The Maryland Ensemble Theatre is located on its lower level.

THE GLASS FACTORY: This 44,000-square-foot structure had been derelict for years and was filled with three open floors of broken glass and lots of bird droppings (thanks in large part to a collapsing roof.) After six years of renovations, the building that opened in 1912 as a hosiery factory started its second act in 2000 as Class-A office space that features original wood beams and flooring, custom welding and glass partitions that make use of much of the abandoned glass that was saved and repurposed.

KEMP HALL: Constructed in the mid-1800s by Evangelical Reformed Church, Kemp Hall served as Maryland's State House during the spring and summer of 1861 and was where state legislators debated whether Maryland should stay in the Union. Throughout the Civil War, it would serve as the headquarters for the federal provost marshal and a supply depot for the Union Army. It was also used by the Confederate army when its troops occupied the city. Today it is home to three retail storefronts and 18 new, luxury apartments.

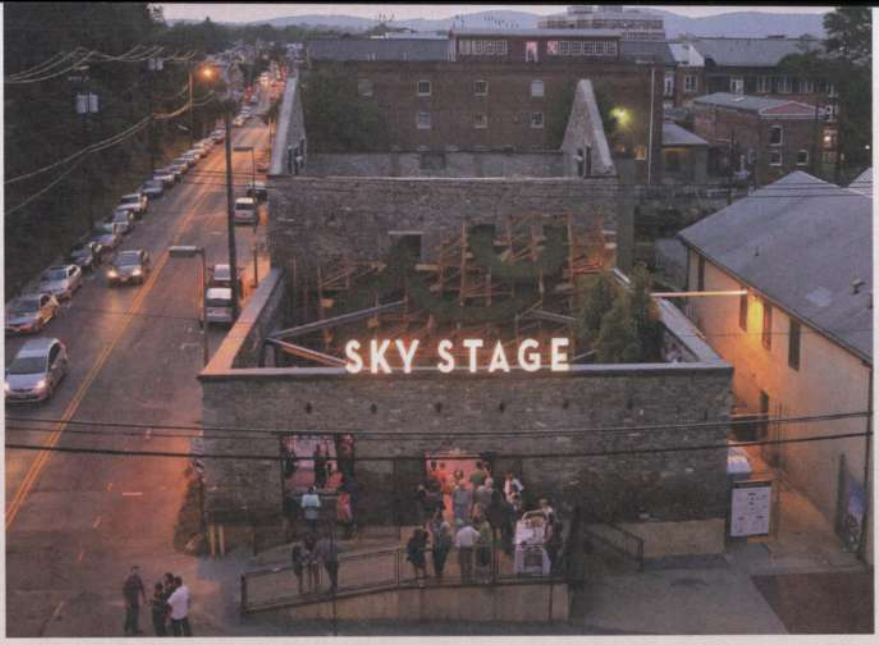
PYTHIAN CASTLE: Shortly after its construction in 1912, the Pythian Castle would buzz with activity, especially on evenings when many members of the Knights of Pythias Mountain City Lodge No. 29 would be attending soirees in the building's grand hall on the fourth floor. Today, the parties are over, but the grandeur of the hall remains, albeit in the form of a penthouse luxury condo, complete with stained glass windows and loft space below the 18-foot barrel vaulted ceiling. The building includes six other condominiums and a rooftop deck. Given the segregation policies of social organizations in the first half of the 20th century, there was also a Pythian Castle for Frederick's African Americans on All Saints Street that later became a private residence.[120]

Inside the Pythian Castle

SHAB ROW: Many of these small row houses once housed tinkers, wheelwrights and other artisans who serviced the first stagecoaches traveling west on the National Pike (now known as U.S. Route 40). When purchased in the 1970s, many were still without indoor plumbing, thus earning the name Shab Row. They are now home to an eclectic mix of boutiques, coffee and tea houses.

SKY STAGE: Following a devastating fire in 2010 to this pre-revolutionary stone warehouse, the arts community rallied to transform the empty hulk into an interactive building-scale work of public art. The building, which has no permanent roof, has become an open-air 140-seat theater for drama, music, dance and more. Its centerpiece is a digitally designed, two-story sculpture with ribbons of drought-resistant plants that twist and wind through a wooden lattice and the building's doors and windows. Sky Stage has won numerous national and international design awards and is currently seeking grants to install a semi-retractable roof.

UNION KNITTING MILLS: The first pair of nylon hose in the United States were made in this circa 1890s building that sits on the eastern end of Carroll Creek Linear Park. Once on the verge of complete destruction due to neglect, the $8 million renovation created sought-after modern office space with features such as reclaimed wood and brick as well as exposed rafters and ductwork. The ground floor features two craft breweries with seating along



Sky Stage

Carroll Creek Linear Park that are part of the area's burgeoning craft beverage hub.

EVEREDY SQUARE: Once home to the Everedy Company, which produced the Everedy Bottle Capper and later a line of kitchenware, the former industrial buildings were one of the earliest adaptive re-use projects in Frederick when they were converted into modern retail, office and restaurant spaces in the 1970s and 1980s.

Before

After

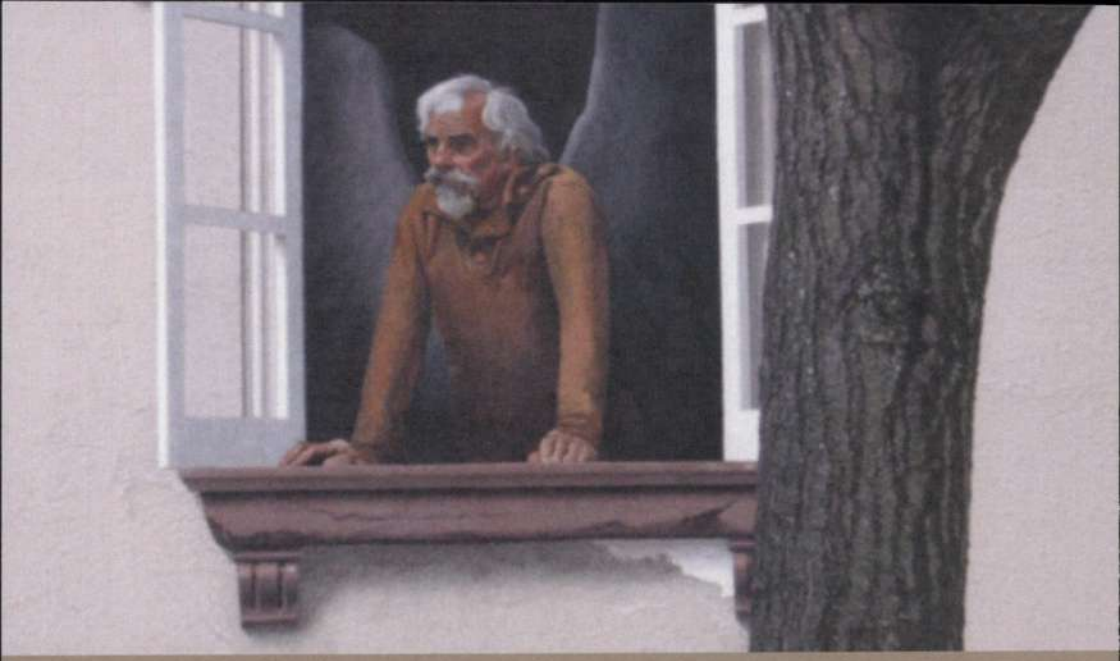
Visitation Academy

VISITATION ACADEMY: Opened in 1846, Visitation Academy was in operation for 170 years before the all-girls Catholic school closed in 2016. Over the course of its history, the site was also used as a Civil War hospital. With an expansive interior courtyard, balconies and original stained-glass windows, the property is being renovated into a 57-room boutique hotel with a restaurant and bar. There are also residential condos on the property.

The Temple

THE TEMPLE:

The 15,000-square-foot former Masonic Temple is now home to a Paul Mitchell Partner School. Built in 1901, the building features exposed brick walls, eight-foot windows, original hardwood flooring and a second-floor mezzanine. Its renovation received Maryland State Revitalization Project honors in 2005 from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



PUBLIC ART
IN DOWNTOWN FREDERICK

The nonprofit organization Americans for the Arts states that "cities gain value through public art – cultural, social, and economic value...It reflects and reveals our society, adds meaning to our cities and uniqueness to our communities."[121]

Downtown Frederick is a living, breathing museum of public art that includes everything from statues to murals to kinetic sculptures. The Downtown Frederick Public Art Trail highlights more than 20 pieces worth finding and admiring. But the list is hardly inclusive and intrepid visitors are apt to spot art just about everywhere they look.

The "**Community Bridge**" (Carroll Street at Carroll Creek) is a *trompe l'oeil* (fool the eye) mural conceived by Frederick artist William Cochran in 1993. More than 100 volunteers gathered ideas for symbols that represent "the spirit of community." Cochran then painted the bridge over Carroll Creek for five years, translating the symbols into individual painted stone carvings. He created other *trompe l'oeil* murals around town in the late 1980s as part of his "Angels in the

Community Bridge

Architecture" series. This includes "**The Edge of Gravity**" (50 Citizens Way), "**Earthbound**" (45 N. Market St.) and "**Egress**" (200 N. Market St.)

Look on the east side of the Francis Scott Key Hotel to find "**The Dreaming**," a five-story, layered installation of architectural art glass, weaving, painting and engraved stone by William Cochran. Based on more than 100 "Dreaming Conversations" with residents, it explores the role of dreams, imagination, and innovation in the development of Frederick, including the contributions of Native American, German, African and English settlers.

Located in Frederick's Veterans Memorial Park across from the old armory, the **"Victory" monument** by Italian sculptor Giuseppe Moretti commemorates "the war to end all wars." It rests atop a stone octagon with panels that list the local men and women who served in WWI. Memorials honoring veterans of WWII, Korea, Vietnam and other military engagements have been added to the park over time.

Initiated and managed by the Rotary Club of Carroll Creek, the **Carroll Creek Kinetic Art Promenade** is a series of metal sculptures that bring color, texture and eye-catching movement to the waters of Carroll Creek Linear Park from East to Highland Streets.

Kinetic Art Sculpture

In recognition of Frederick being home to the Maryland School for the Deaf, artists Chanel Gleicher and Tiffany Saccente created colorful yellow bike racks that spell out

Sign Language Sculpture Bike Racks

F, R, E, D, E, R, I, C, K in American Sign Language. These racks are located along Carroll Creek Linear Park, near the MARC train station.

Located at the entrance to Carroll Creek Linear Park from Market Street, artist Thomas Sterner's stainless steel "**Water Lily Wave**" and "**Water Lily Swirl**" employ integrated lighting to illuminate the pieces which depict flower stalks bending in the breeze or toward sunlight.

Clustered Spires Glass Etchings decorate an elevated walkway across Citizens Way. Created by Yemi Fagbohun, the art celebrates the clustered-spire skyline of Downtown Frederick captured by John Greenleaf Whittier in his famed "Ballad of Barbara Fritchie."

Colorful **zodiac-themed sculptures** are seen on both the east and west sides of the stone moon bridge that crosses Carroll Creek near Market Street. The sculptures by Nikolai Pakhomov are intended to connect time, universe and humanity.

Water Lily Swirl

Lord Nickens Mural

A local civil rights leader and direct descendant of slaves,[122] **Lord Nickens** is honored in this **mosaic** by Jack Pabis and Anthony Owens. The art features his image and words and was commissioned for the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It is on the side of the Bernard W. Brown Community Center at 629 N. Market St.

Artist Sarah Hempel Irani designed the larger-than-life **statue of Claire McCardell**. McCardell, a Frederick native whose innovative designs redefined women's sportswear for decades to come. It is located on the south side of Carroll Creek Linear Park near East Street.

The **"North of Fourth" Mural** at 613 N. Market St. was created by Anthony Owens and Jack Pabis. It combines mosaic tile and *trompe l'oeil* painting to create an image that depicts the sun and the moon in tribute to the neighborhood's first sustainable "green" housing.

Claire McCardell Statue

Source: VisitFrederick.org

EPILOGUE

The Story Continues...

The Work Continues

As it approached its 25th anniversary, it was clear that Downtown Frederick Partnership had survived its initial growing pains. It had blossomed from its early beginnings as the Greater Frederick Development Corporation into a financially stable, well-staffed organization (in 2022 it had four full-time employees).

After launching and growing several signature special events, developing a solid fundraising framework, and significantly enhancing Downtown Frederick's streetscape with everything from building façade improvements to bike racks and free pet waste bag stations, the Partnership has set its sights on several new initiatives that reflect its maturity and advanced organizational capacity.

Redevelopment of Post Office Site

Just as proponents wanted to keep the post office in Downtown Frederick in 1982, the Partnership and the city of Frederick continue to fully support maintaining a retail post office downtown to provide critical services to local businesses and residents.

When the "new" post office opened in 1982, it also included a large mail processing facility. But in 2011, the U.S. Postal Service announced that it would cease its mail processing operations in Frederick and move them to its Baltimore Processing and Distribution Center.[123] As a result, the majority of the existing 3.83-acre site[124] on East Patrick Street is currently utilized for parking and storage, with only a small section devoted to the retail post office and local sorting operations.

Given the area the building and its parking lots occupy, it creates a "dead spot" for pedestrians who head east on Patrick Street. Seeing no shops or eateries for nearly an entire block, they often stop and turn around when they reach the site rather than continue toward the retail offerings of Everedy Square & Shab Row. "The size and use of the existing facility is a clear blockage in downtown so redevelopment of the site continues to be one of our key policy objectives," Norman said.

Retaining the retail post office either on site or in close proximity while repurposing the underutilized acreage would create opportunities for additional residential, retail and office uses. This would not only further integrate the East Street corridor with the remainder of Downtown Frederick but also capitalize on the site's location, which provides direct access to Interstate 70.

Like so many of Downtown Frederick's previous successes, the effort to redevelop the existing post office site will be complex, require extensive collaboration among numerous stakeholders and will not be accomplished quickly. "This will require an exchange agreement with the federal government and that is often costly and complicated, but it has been done in other cities and it can be done here," said Richard Griffin, the city's Director of Economic Development.

Downtown Ambassador Program

As of November 2021, visitors to Downtown Frederick often cross paths with Downtown Ambassadors. Clad in brightly colored and labeled uniforms, the ambassadors are a visible presence on the streets and provide an extra measure of hospitality to visitors and residents alike.

Downtown Frederick Ambassador

The Downtown Frederick Ambassador Program employs up to six full-time workers from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday (depending on the season) to monitor and clean more than 17 blocks of downtown. They provide friendly greetings, directions and information to visitors, pick up trash and power wash sidewalks, remove graffiti and stickers from light poles and other public infrastructure, collect leaves and debris from sidewalks and gutters, pull weeds in public spaces, and more. They are also available to escort patrons to their vehicles if requested.

The program had a first-year annual operating budget of $335,000 and is supported by grants and funding from private foundations as well as the city of Frederick and Visit Frederick. Private funders

include Delaplaine Foundation, founded by former Frederick News-Post publisher George B. Delaplaine, Jr., and the Ausherman Family Foundation. Both local organizations have awarded the Partnership other grants for capacity building and strategic planning.

"We have wanted to have a formal ambassador program for some time," Norman said. Downtown Frederick Partnership now contracts with Block by Block, a company that provides hospitality and safety services to more than 100 urban districts and parks across the country. "This program is a major step forward for Downtown Frederick," Norman added.

Streetscape Redesign

Some things get better with age, but that is rarely the case with sidewalks, traffic patterns and other essential elements of successful urban design. Add to age the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it has become clear that certain aspects of Downtown Frederick's streetscape could use some updating.

In 2021, Downtown Frederick Partnership and the city of Frederick launched a study of the streetscapes of Market and Patrick Streets. East Street improvements are moving forward as a part of a separate study. More than seven months of study, two community workshops and a public survey (which collected nearly 2,000 responses) provided key insights into issues such as existing land use, transit and pedestrian circulation patterns, as well as parking, sidewalks, open spaces and street tree placement.

The information gleaned, while critical to shaping future improvements, was not necessarily a surprise. While the brick pavers that comprise many downtown sidewalks certainly add an element of charm, when mixed with overgrown tree roots, they can become uneven tripping hazards.

"Regular visitors to Downtown Frederick know our sidewalks are difficult to navigate as an able-bodied person," Norman said. "For those with mobility issues—or parents trying to push a stroller—they can be extremely challenging."

Streetscape study rendering of a potential re-imagining of downtown streets.

And although parking downtown is vastly improved over what it was when the volunteers of Operation Town Action were advocating for the first parking garage 50 years ago, it remains an issue—one that was brought to the fore by the pandemic.

With downtown restaurants seeking outdoor space in an effort to overcome indoor dining restrictions, the city of Frederick, with advocacy from the Partnership, established "pop up street dining" on North Market Street every weekend during the summer of 2020. The program proved to be so popular that it returned for three Saturdays in the summer of 2021. Despite closing several blocks of the street to vehicular traffic and parking spaces, the program was very well-received by many residents.

"The lessons we learned from the pandemic provide an opportunity to reimagine our public streetscape and ensure our long-term recovery and continued growth," Norman said. But like so many other major initiatives, it will take time. "This is a multi-year effort. We will need to conduct additional studies related to parking, traffic, utilities, and of course, identify funding,"

City leaders hope that with the passage in 2022 of the federal bipartisan infrastructure program (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), they will be able to access critical funding to move this project forward.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Diversity, equity and inclusion efforts continue to be a focus in Downtown Frederick.

Like all socially-responsible organizations operating in the 21st century, Downtown Frederick Partnership is examining its policies, programs and personnel—including volunteers—to better reflect the interests, priorities and perspectives of all people who live, work and play in Downtown Frederick.

In 2020, the Partnership began a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion outreach effort that included nine focus groups and a 2021 community survey. Based on the input received, the organization created a road map for new projects while committing to learn more about how it can encourage an inclusive environment.

Organizations such as The Frederick Center, which provides support and resources to the LGBTQ+ community, the Asian American Center of Frederick, Centro Hispano de Frederick, the Maryland School for the Deaf and others have participated in some of the Partnership's Competitive Edge workshops. "Representatives from these organizations touched on topics such as marketing to their constituents, hiring diverse staff and more," Norman said.

In addition to external outreach efforts, the Partnership is also committed to ensuring its board and committees reflect the diversity of downtown. The organization's formal policy states: "This is a critical time for community organizations to step outside of their own work and reevaluate the way they do business — to create an atmosphere that doesn't just accept diversity but demands it."[125]

Empty Promises

For all its successes, Downtown Frederick still struggles with some particularly sticky issues, including how to address long-term vacant properties.

With its low vacancy rates, the small number of properties within Downtown Frederick that remain vacant for long periods of time have become a flash point for critics. Leaders of Downtown Frederick's revitalization efforts continue to seek solutions that weigh the rights of individual property owners against those of frustrated residents, business owners and investors who believe these properties detract from the greater good.

Empty storefronts can disrupt the energy of downtown streets.

Richard Griffin acknowledges that addressing long-term vacancies engenders lots of heated debates—both in the community and within government itself. There are those who believe market forces should dictate when buildings are occupied and/or sold provided the properties meet all code requirements. Others believe that government has a duty to address properties that are blighted and may attract squatters and rodents, especially if the buildings become a public nuisance.

In 2021, the city of Frederick passed a Vacant Property Registration Ordinance which requires the owner of any nonresidential and mixed-use buildings that have been vacant for at least one year to register those properties with the city. Failure to register a vacant property or to comply with inspection requirements or maintenance standards results in a $1,000 fine. Each day a violation continues is considered a separate offense.

Only time will tell if this attempt to address the problem will work.

Funding the Future

If given the opportunity for a do-over, Downtown Frederick's current leaders wish they could go back to the early days of the Carroll Creek project to change how it—and future redevelopment projects—would be financed.

To fund public improvements, communities often rely on a mélange of financing options, ranging from municipal general funds to gov-

ernment bonds, public and private grants, or tax incentives, including tax increment financing (TIF). The World Bank reports that TIFs have been used by U.S. municipalities for more than 40 years, providing "a locally administered redevelopment financing tool that exploits the rise in economic value and associated increase in tax receipts that accompanies successful urban redevelopment."[126]

Since Downtown Frederick was removed from FEMA's floodplain map in 2003, the area has seen public and private development in the hundreds of millions of dollars to properties along Carroll Creek. Given Downtown Frederick's success, the value of those properties—and their tax value—has skyrocketed.

As outlined in Part II of this book, much of the early financing for the Carroll Creek flood control project came from a combination of city, state and federal funds, including grants. Private investment has been critical to supporting many of the aesthetic aspects of Carroll Creek Linear Park. Developers of new construction along Carroll Creek are required to make per-linear-foot contributions to support improvements to the park.

But unlike other revitalizing cities, the city of Frederick has not used TIF financing to support ongoing revitalization projects.

"Every time we want to fund a new major project or initiative, we have to start the search for funds all over again," said Griffin. "We have to issue bonds, request money from the county, state and the local general fund. I think if we had to do it all over again, I would definitely consider TIF so we would have a bucket of funds we could tap."

Hindsight is 20/20 but missing out on the money that TIF could have brought to Downtown Frederick has left those in the economic development business feeling—no pun intended—green with envy.

A Home for All

In revitalized cities across America, success has its costs. Downtown Frederick is no exception.

Stately Victorian townhomes that 50 years ago sold for less than $50,000 now garner 15 times that amount. Second and third floor apartments, once considered so undesirable that they sat vacant for years, now rent for an average $1,500/month for a one-bedroom.

The desire to live, work and play in Downtown Frederick has led to gentrification that threatens established neighborhoods throughout the roughly nine blocks from South to North Seventh Street, including traditionally African American areas such as All Saints Street as well as the area known as "Uptown," which is located north of Fourth Street.

Downtown home prices continue to climb.

Once the hub of African American life in Frederick, now many of the homes that line All Saints Street have been bought up by newcomers to the community, many of whom are not African American. On other blocks throughout downtown, small row homes are being bought and used for short-term vacation rentals. Rising property values risk pricing out the community's original residents.

To help long-term residents stay in their homes, Griffin says under Maryland's Homestead Property Tax program, Frederick has placed a five percent cap on increases in taxable assessments each year. The city of Frederick also offers historic tax credits to qualifying properties to help fund improvements such as new roofs or other significant repairs. "Our hope is that these programs will help families who have lived in Downtown Frederick for generations continue to make it their home," he said.

It helps that Frederick has a strong network of public, private and nonprofit organizations that have made workforce housing a priority in downtown, where access to public transportation is readily available. On North Market Street, Frederick County sold its County services building to the nonprofit Interfaith Housing Alliance which converted the structure into 59 new market-rate apartments. In 2017, 70 new mixed-income apartments were built near West Patrick and West South Streets. On East Church Street, a private

developer completed an adaptive reuse of the old Ox Fibre Brush Company factory into 83 units of workforce housing. And an innovative project at the intersection of Ice and West All Saints Streets is transforming land owned by Asbury United Methodist Church, one of the oldest Black churches in Frederick, into affordable housing for members of the congregation and the community.

Downtown Hotel & Conference Center

For all of its stunning successes, Downtown Frederick has struggled to add what many consider to be the "crown jewel" in its revitalization efforts: a full-service hotel and conference center to host the more than two million visitors annually[127] who come to town to enjoy its history, architecture, restaurants, shops, breweries and distilleries.

Feasibility studies have revealed that a hotel in Downtown Frederick would:

- Create $35 million in direct net new spending annually.
- Generate $1.13 million annually in incremental Maryland state taxes.
- Result in nearly $1.13 million annually in local (city/county) property taxes.
- Bring an estimated 225 new direct jobs.
- Serve as a catalyst for more than $100 million in follow-on development in Downtown Frederick.[128]

With a local hotelier eager to provide the private financing and branding necessary to construct and operate the 230-room, $70 million hotel and meeting space, and local businesses excited about the prospect of the number of visitors (and wallets) who could remain downtown, it would seem like an easy win.

But don't tell that to its proponents, who have spent the better part of 15 years working to bring the project to fruition. "I wanted to

Rendering of proposed downtown hotel and conference center

spend my 50th birthday in the new Downtown Frederick hotel and I just turned 63," said the project's private developer, Peter Plamondon, Jr., co-president of Frederick-based Plamondon Companies. His organization owns and operates six branded hotels in the greater Frederick area. Yet despite their proven track record of success, they have encountered stiff headwinds from some members of the community who object to any public funds being used to bring a full-service hotel to Downtown Frederick.

"As the largest hotelier in Frederick County, we understand better than anyone where the business generators are," Plamondon said. "We know the landscape and we know there is a demand for a full-service hotel in Downtown Frederick that is not being met."

The hotel's critics object to the notion of any public funds being spent on the project, such as those required to build the necessary infrastructure including water, sewer, public parking and utilities. But Frederick's Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Rick Weldon is quick to point out that many of those who object to public funding to support a hotel in Downtown Frederick are enjoying the fruits of public bond money in their own districts. "They are hypocrites," Weldon said, noting that the construction of a full-service hotel in Downtown Frederick remains the number one infrastructure priority for his organization.

"Virtually every full-service hotel, regardless of where it is located, is a public-private partnership," added former Visit Frederick Director John Fieseler. Yet as Plamondon points out, his private investment will represent the majority of the Downtown Frederick hotel and conference center's project value.[129]

"This is a heavy lift, but we will get it done," he said. "And when it's done, the amount of growth it will spur is almost incalculable."

Norman believes the new hotel will appeal to the millions of tourists that visit Frederick every year as well as businesses who want to court clients or potential employees. And it will also serve Frederick's residents. "This is something that will support all the celebrations we have," she said, whether they be weddings, anniversaries, reunions or community events.

Together, Weldon, Norman, Griffin, Fieseler and Helen Propheter, recently retired director of the Frederick County Office of Economic Development, have spent literally hundreds of hours in meetings, hearings and informal discussions on how to overcome the opposition to what Norman calls "the missing piece of Downtown Frederick's business infrastructure."

"All five of us have never wavered in our advocacy for a full service, flagged hotel in Downtown Frederick that will provide meeting space for visitors, businesses and residents," Griffin said.[130]

As of February 2022, it seems that a hotel and conference center in Downtown Frederick will finally become a reality. Frederick County approved $2.52 million toward the project, which estimates indicate would be repaid within three or four years in property and income tax revenues. The city of Frederick will contribute $1.18 million.[131] If all goes as planned, construction is expected to begin in 2024 on the site of the old Frederick trolley station and Birely tannery which abut Carroll Creek Linear Park.

Downtown businesses are ready to welcome the new kid to the block. "Every time I'm in Downtown Frederick I run into local business owners who say to me, 'Pete, when is the hotel starting?'" Plamondon said.

Nearly 50 years after Ron Young faced opposition to his bold vision for a revitalized Downtown Frederick with Carroll Creek as its centerpiece, some of the arguments against the hotel sound vaguely familiar.

In a letter to the Frederick News Post in 1989, Peg Pilgram, the tireless volunteer who gave so many hours to Operation Town Action in the 1970s, wrote: "'The more things change, the more they stay the same.' When news of the first parking deck was announced, there was a hue and cry. When news came of the Weinberg Center being acquired, there was a hue and cry; when news came of electrical wires being buried on North and South Market Streets, there was an enormous hue and cry."[132]

Yet in the ensuing 50 years, those decisions have proven to be instrumental building blocks that have contributed to Downtown Frederick's overwhelming success. Will those objecting to a hotel in 2022 find their arguments similarly debunked in 2072?

Progress is often painful. But those who question its value need look no further than Downtown Frederick, where the vision and dogged persistence of its leaders—past and present—are fully displayed in a vibrant, flourishing and revitalized community that is thriving in the 21st century.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

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Over the course of the last 25 years, I have worked or volunteered with many of these people. Many have become more than just professional contacts; they have become friends—and another reason why I am blessed to call Frederick my home.

Kate McDermott

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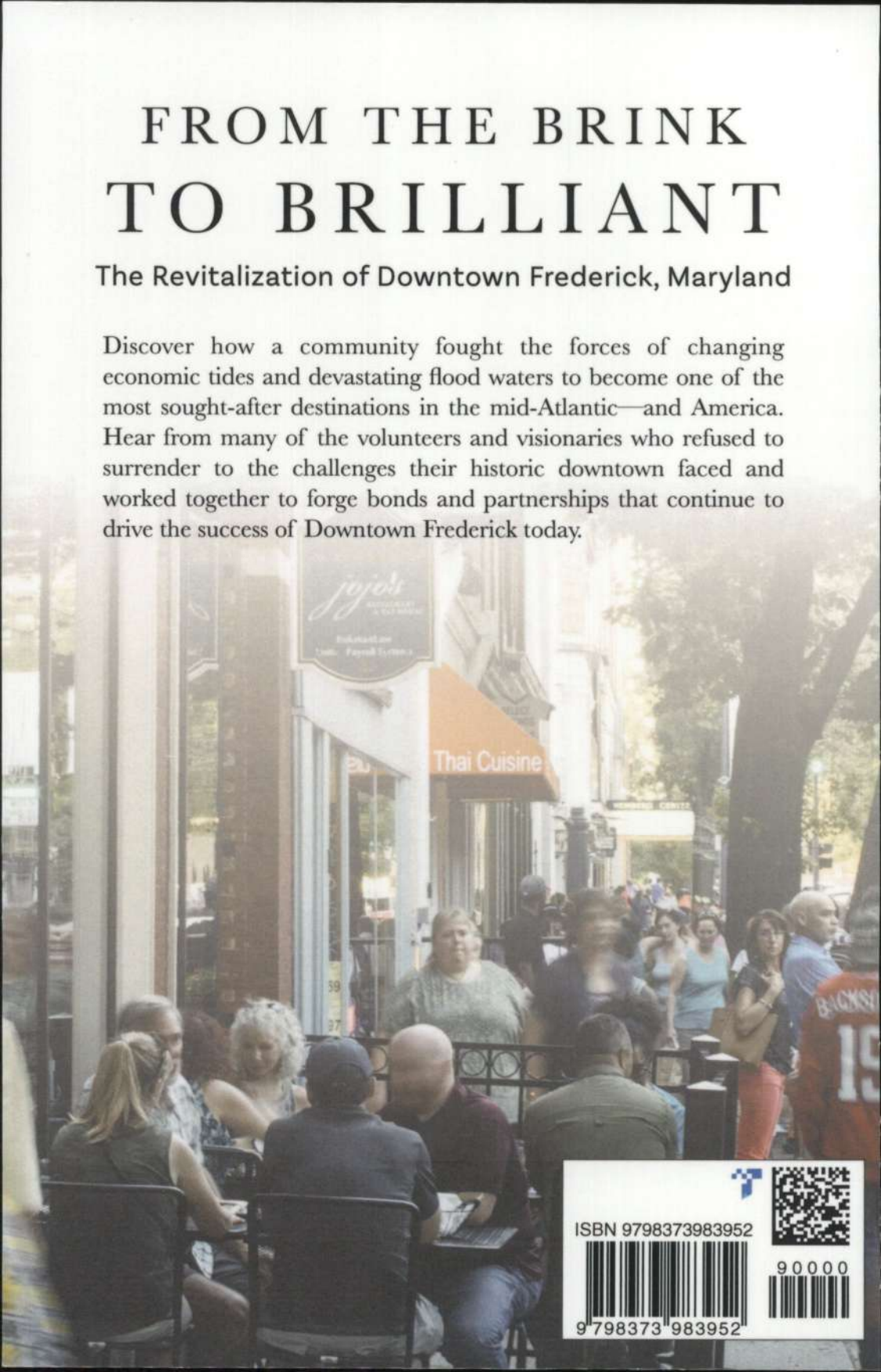
FROM THE BRINK TO BRILLIANT

The Revitalization of Downtown Frederick, Maryland

Discover how a community fought the forces of changing economic tides and devastating flood waters to become one of the most sought-after destinations in the mid-Atlantic—and America. Hear from many of the volunteers and visionaries who refused to surrender to the challenges their historic downtown faced and worked together to forge bonds and partnerships that continue to drive the success of Downtown Frederick today.



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