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DRAFT INTRODUCTION

July 30, 1993

In 1974, when New Brunswick was a "City at the Crossroads", the highly respected American City Corporation was commissioned to study New Brunswick's potential for revitalization. The consulting team was headed by Leo Molinaro.

The study determined that, although New Brunswick was suffering from the early symptoms of economic decline and physical deterioration, it had many significant assets and advantages for revitalization. The consultants said that neither the public nor the private sectors could do it alone, but that a true public/private initiative could work to renew the city.

That study set the direction and the strategy for what has become known as the New Brunswick Tomorrow public/private partnership -- the process that has spearheaded the dramatic economic, physical, social and cultural renaissance in the city over the last 19 years.

With revitalization preparing to enter its third decade and the 21st Century rapidly approaching, New Brunswick Tomorrow and the City of New Brunswick agreed that it was a critically timely opportunity to commission another professional study to evaluate the City's revitalization, past and present, and to make recommendations for the future. Fortunately, Mr. Molinaro was available to return to New Brunswick to analyze what has happened and to make proposals for the future .... this time as President of the nationally known consulting firm of Molinaro Associates, Inc., of Columbia, MD.

His expertise and unique perspective of someone who was there at the beginning have enabled Mr. Molinaro to measure the progress of revitalization in New Brunswick and to target future projects and programs. His assignment included three tasks:

1. Analyze local projects and programs in economic, social, and physical terms to see what remains to be done, by whom and with what resources.
2. Analyze the capacities, goals and resources of the major organizations currently concerned with revitalization.
3. Identify new projects which have potential to strengthen the revitalization process.

The informational base used by Molinaro Associates was prepared in large part from over 100 interviews with 77 community leaders, elected officials, City agency staff people, educators, business leaders, developers, investors and persons with

development responsibilities in medical and educational institutions. Three central themes emerged:

- \* The New Brunswick Revitalization Process is alive and well and eager to get on with the next challenges of revitalization.
- \* The basic ingredients of the Revitalization Process are Leadership, Participation and Organization.
- \* The future of the Revitalization Process depends upon recruiting new leadership, broadening participation and retro-fitting the organizational structure to take on the tasks of revitalization for the next generation.

In general, Mr. Molinaro reported that the Public/Private Partnership established in 1975 has continued to be effective through a wide range of economic, social and political changes in New Brunswick. The Partnership will continue to move ahead so long as it continues to define its mission clearly and maintains the commitment of both public and private sectors.

This document provides highlights of the report by Molinaro Associates, with the hope that they will stimulate community discussion and participation.

James Cahill  
Mayor  
City of New Brunswick

John J. Heldrich  
Chairman  
New Brunswick Tomorrow

## REVITALIZATION DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Despite severe recessionary pressures in real estate development locally and nationally, real estate development continues at a vigorous pace in New Brunswick. We can find no comparable level of activity in any city of comparable size and location in the nation. In fact, the entrepreneurial approach to revitalization adopted by the City and New Brunswick Tomorrow has generated new jobs while the economy generally remained flat. While New Brunswick should be proud of its ability to maintain a vigorous pace of physical development, there are points which should be given very careful attention as New Brunswick plans for the continuation of its physical and economic revitalization.

To summarize current revitalization activities:

1. Public and quasi-public institutional development accounts for the majority of activity underway. While this is positive and significant, it has limitations imposed by economic conditions.

2. The question of balanced development should be addressed in the next phase of the Revitalization Process. Balance in this context could involve more private sector participation in economic terms, more leadership at the neighborhood level; focusing on longer-range neighborhood goals, and more effort to identify and enlist the market support potential of "multiplier" elements in future revitalization plans and strategies.

### GOALS, MISSION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

#### New Brunswick Tomorrow

New Brunswick Tomorrow (NBT) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1975 for the purpose of formulating community goals, creating a positive self-image, establishing developmental priorities and establishing a public/private partnership with the City, the business community, health and educational institutions and community organizations at the grass roots level. In 1989, the mission of NBT was recast in terms of the lifetime needs of the people and families of the community through a holistic model organized around the human life cycle.

New Brunswick Tomorrow has operated somewhat as a city-wide philanthropic organization and social agency over the past few years. These operations have been effectively conceived and managed by the Board of Directors, Officers and staff. In order to move into the next phase of the Revitalization Process, NBT should consider focusing on: leadership identification, leadership

recruitment, leadership training and leadership placement.

### New Brunswick Corporation

The New Brunswick Development Corporation (DEVCO) is a not-for-profit organization also established in 1975 as the development arm of the overall revitalization process with close working relationships with NBT and City. The sole mission of DEVCO at that time was to identify specific projects that would advance the goals and objectives of NBT and the City and do whatever was necessary to make those projects happen. If no qualified developer could be found to develop the project selected by NBT and DEVCO, DEVCO was to be the "developer of last resort".

DEVCO faces quite a different challenge in defining its mission for the next phase of revitalization. Almost everyone interviewed acknowledged the pivotal role DEVCO has played in launching the physical and economic development components of the Revitalization Process since its introduction in 1975. However, there is also an almost unanimous view that DEVCO's role is changing. Many expressed uncertainty and confusion as to the future role of DEVCO.

To avoid further diffusion and dilution of DEVCO's operations, a first priority should be to redefine its mission. Once defined, this mission should be carefully and thoroughly explained to all the essential parties in the Revitalization Process. It should be a serious effort to engage the community in a full dress discussion of how DEVCO can continue to perform a vital function in the Revitalization Process.

### New Brunswick City Market

New Brunswick City Market was founded in 1987 when the New Brunswick City Council approved a Special Improvement District (SID) in downtown New Brunswick. Property owners within the SID pay self-assessed annual taxes that are used for supplemental services and improvements within the SID beyond those provided by the City.

City Market is a not-for-profit organization established to receive the funds generated by these special taxes and to "improve the economic and social viability of the SID as a place for the diverse business and cultural populations of the regional community to live, work, conduct business, and pursue leisure time activities".

In the last two years, under new leadership, City Market has conducted an aggressive marketing and promotion program in the SID.

To provide City Market with a broader and deeper range of professional expertise and to draw it closer into the next phase of revitalization recommended for George Street, it is suggested that a more direct relationship be explored with DEVCO. City Market and DEVCO have not had many opportunities to work together on specific projects, but their activities certainly require much closer collaboration between DEVCO and City Market.

It is suggested that a full range of organizational alternatives be explored with DEVCO, from agreements on having DEVCO provide specific professional back-up on basic policy issues, to the merger of City Market into the DEVCO organization.

New Brunswick Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development (DPCED)

This City Agency has responsibility for:

Planning - Reviews and approves development projects within the City; serves as staff to the City's Planning Board; oversees the City Master Plan and enforces the zoning ordinance; and handles public inquiries regarding planning and zoning issues.

Community Development - Administers and monitors Community Development Block Grants; plans and develops all new affordable housing projects; monitors housing rehabilitation projects; oversees availability of funding for all emergency housing programs; and coordinates Operation Clean Sweep with community organizations.

Economic Development Division - Serves as liaison to the local business community; conducts technical training seminars for local business people; administers small business loan pool; assists local technical assistance organizations; helps people obtain technical assistance on business problems; plans and coordinates trade fairs; and coordinates City participation in large-scale development projects.

The Division of Economic Development is not budgeted or staffed to address the economic development policy issues which are certain to impact the next phase of the New Brunswick Revitalization Process. This is certainly not meant to be a critique of any current staff people or the programs they currently conduct. On the contrary, in terms of budget and staff and the range of programs they must conduct, New Brunswick is receiving full value for its level of expenditure.

Continuation of the Revitalization Process requires a significantly strengthened economic development function in the City. This can be done in either of two ways:

1. The City can expand the staff and budget of the current structure in City government to strengthen the policy-planning function; or

2. The City might find it more cost-effective to contract for specific services and work products from appropriate local groups on an as-needed basis. It could reach out for the highest and best available specialist for a pin-pointed task rather than expand its full time staff to deal with every emerging opportunity or function.

In either case the potential role of DEVCO in economic development should be carefully examined. While the policy formulation is clearly a City function, DEVCO could be a vital connection to the private sector.

#### AGENDA 2000

The agenda items are conceptual in nature. Detailed analysis will be needed in the next phase of work to translate these concepts into site-specific, cost-specific and time-specific plans and strategies. Extensive and continuing engagement with every segment of the community will be needed to make sure every available talent is enlisted in the process, every willing participant finds a personal mission in the process, and every program or project has visible benefits for the community.

#### NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

The single most frequently mentioned need in interviews is neighborhood revitalization. The City conducts or supports several effective programs aimed at improving the quality of life in neighborhoods. New Brunswick Tomorrow and DEVCO also carry out neighborhood improvement programs. Advocacy groups, such as the Puerto Rican Action Board and the Hungarian Association, are actively pursuing neighborhood improvements. The Civic League of Greater New Brunswick has a long record of neighborhood improvement from physical development to social development and the development of economic opportunities at the neighborhood level. The YWCA, Salvation Army and churches also are actively working in neighborhood improvement.

With these vigorous and expanding efforts in operation, it seems desirable to see how the most essential neighborhood ingredients could be organized in at least one neighborhood for a sustained period of 3 to 5 years. The goal would be to provide the entire community with a model of what needs to go into a neighborhood to make it a total neighborhood concept. It would not replace or diminish any of the ongoing programs. In fact, it would

give all the ongoing programs an opportunity to see how these programs could work in a coordinated, organized environment.

Funding, staffing and other managerial matters would have to be carefully worked out with the neighborhood residents. As far as possible, the residents would hold staff positions with community agencies, institutions and businesses.

The fundamental idea is to give neighborhood revitalization equal importance with downtown revitalization and with economic development. Coordinating all available resources in a real neighborhood, over a manageable period of time, would seem to be a rational, practical way to set a new standard for neighborhood living in New Brunswick.

#### A NEW COMMUNITY

There is a unique opportunity on both sides of Route 27, centered around Van Dyke Street to plan and develop a new community. In planning terms, this scale of development has been called a Planned Unit Development (PUD). The area in question on both sides of Route 27 currently has a random mix which includes: utility facilities; industry; housing; strip commercial; educational and religious institutions; railroad lines; and vacant land.

The opportunity exists to plan and develop new uses and eliminate undesirable and underutilized uses in a carefully planned way which would provide new housing choices for a variety of residents, new job opportunities, new institutional facilities for residents, and new recreational facilities.

Route 27 is a political boundary between the City of New Brunswick and Franklin Township. It is also the political boundary between Middlesex County and Somerset County. Some form of cooperative understanding would be desirable to assure the viability of whatever is developed within the separate jurisdictions. At present, the First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens has the most direct property stake on both sides of Route 27. Pastor DeForest Soaries, Jr. has provided leadership in identifying the potential of the site and has clearly committed his leadership to realizing this potential. Reverend Marian Hannah, Pastor of Antioch Christian Church on the New Brunswick side of Route 27, has also been actively working on community development issues and will be an important stakeholder in this initiative. The City of New Brunswick Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development has also been considering how best to realize the potential of that area in economic terms.

## GEORGE STREET: INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL MARKET

George Street has come a long way in the past 15 years, but it has not yet achieved its fullest potential. The missing element seems to be a retailing concept which welcomes and uses the rich variety and cultural and generational diversity in the New Brunswick population. For example, Rutgers University itself enrolls 30,000 full time students in its New Brunswick campuses. This is three times as many as their campuses in Newark and Camden combined. Another 10,000 faculty, administrative and support people are brought to the New Brunswick campuses.

Equally important for this concept is the market represented by the residents of New Brunswick and Middlesex County. In ethnic terms, the African American, Asian, and Latino families in the area would be an important source of people who could contribute to the international cuisine and arts and crafts shops, both as owners and operators and as customers. Johnson & Johnson has a steady stream of international visitors to New Brunswick, who also find the International Festival Market attractive.

The concept of an International Festival Market on George Street would require selection of perhaps 2 blocks on each side of George Street to concentrate as many small ethnic businesses as possible. A special effort should be made to line up local African American, Latino and Asian entrepreneurs and operators to build and manage the shops, cinemas and night clubs. This does not compete for patrons with established restaurants, theaters and other entertainment whose clientele has been established over the past several years. In fact, it should add to their business. Marketing strategies could be worked out to avoid destructive competition.

The fundamental strategy is to complete the revitalization of George Street with a unique kind of retailing and entertainment which taps the largest available market in the area and provides new entrepreneurial opportunities and jobs for the ethnic communities in New Brunswick.

### "HEALTH CARE CITY"

In his 1993 State of the City address, Mayor Cahill listed "The Health Care City" concept as a major item in his community and economic development agenda, saying "...our city continues to be the home to one of the nation's premier medical and health care communities."

New Brunswick is a major regional health, pharmaceutical and medical center with a potential for national and international



development. The continuing development of New Brunswick as a regional medical and health care center should have high priority in the New Brunswick Revitalization Process.

A good deal of discussion has already been underway. The concept needs to be worked out carefully with the stakeholders listed above plus the City, the community, and business leaders. These essential parties need to be convened and structured discussions initiated to decide how to proceed with this concept. A work group could be assembled to define goals and alternative strategies to reinforce the invaluable resources already present in New Brunswick. The consortium approach already established in many new ventures requiring collaboration among plural entities should be considered.

The thrust here is to position New Brunswick to be able to respond in an organized strategy to new opportunities which appear likely to emerge as the region and the nation confront the burgeoning market for health education, health care, research and training.