**Dr. Briavel Holcomb’s text describing the exhibit**

**(Retrieved from http://oldnewbrunswick.rutgers.edu/ExhibitionText2.html and http://oldnewbrunswick.rutgers.edu/NBwalk\_Holcomb.html)**

Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries, is pleased to announce the opening of a new exhibition, "The Changing Landscape of New Brunswick", which will be on display in Gallery '50 of the Archibald S. Alexander Library from May 3 to July 31, 2002.

During the 20th century, the built environment of New Brunswick changed radically, especially in the downtown area adjacent to the Raritan River. The most enduring features of the landscape are churches, and, to a lesser extent, banks. The scale of the city has changed both horizontally and vertically. Blocks that once had a diversity of owners, architectural styles and uses, such as the area between Albany Street and the railroad tracks, now have a single owner and one architect and one function commercial offices. The 19th century skyline of churches and chimneys is replaced by one of high rise office and residential blocks. In some locations, a series of buildings have replaced their predecessor: the "Golden Triangle" between George Street, Albany Street and the railroad had an impressive opera house in the late 19th century, an assortment of retail shops including a cinema in the 20th century, and is now occupied by an imposing commercial office building. In contrast, the building on the corner of Church and Neilson Streets was occupied by the National Bank of New Jersey in 1907, Pottery International retail store in the 1970s, and, after restoration, by the Old Bay restaurant today.

This transformation of the city's landscape has at times been controversial, with advocates for displaced residents and businesses and for historic preservation protesting demolition. Nevertheless, the city will doubtless continue to change in the 21st century, and it is interesting to speculate as to which buildings in today's New Brunswick will still be extant at the beginning of the 22nd century.

This exhibition uses materials from Special Collections and University Archives, as well as more recent photographs to illustrate how the industrial landscape of the early 20th century has been replaced by commercial and residential uses. Featured are several photographs taken from the air over the last few decades by Professor Emeritus Dr. John Brush, Department of Geography.

The exhibition is curated by:

Dr. Briavel Holcomb, Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, and

Michael Siegel, Cartographer, Department of Geography.

The Archibald S. Alexander Library is located at 169 College Avenue in New Brunswick. Gallery '50 hours are Monday through Friday, 9 to 5.

For more information please contact Fernanda Perrone,
Exhibitions Coordinator at 732.932.7006 or hperrone@rci.rutgers.edu

**Dr. Briavel Holcomb’s text describing the New Brunswick walking tour**

New Brunswick Walk, 2003
Briavel Holcomb, Bloustein School, Rutgers University

New Brunswick is a small city (48,500 in 2000) which, like many others, suffered several decades of disinvestment in the Post World War II period as retail stores moved to outlying malls and middle income residents moved to suburbia. New Brunswick lost all of its seven downtown department stores in the decade 1965-75; the ‘minority’ population increased from 3.8% in 1940 to 51% in 1990, and in the 1960’s and 1970’s the city experienced deteriorating housing, redlining and crowding.

In 1974, the international pharmaceutical corporation of Johnson and Johnson, established here in 1887, decided to build a new corporate headquarters and to spearhead the revitalization of the city. Two public-private partnerships were formed, New Brunswick Tomorrow (NBT) and the New Brunswick Development Corporation (DevCo) to plan and implement redevelopment. Since then downtown has been transformed, although there are still on-going projects and much remains to be done. During the 1990s the city saw investments of over $700 million for new offices, retail and housing. As we walk you will see many examples of rapid urban change. Things to keep in mind are the changing scale of the built environment, the consumers, clients and residents for whom the city is being transformed, and the distribution of costs and benefits of revitalization.

In 2000 New Brunswick’s population was 36.2% White, 28.9% Hispanic, 17.1% Black, and 4% Asian. The 1996 estimated average household income for residents was $48, 462 while the estimated average for the downtown daytime population (including commuters) was $71,908. The largest employers in town are Rutgers University (8,500 employees), Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (3,500), St. Peter’s University Hospital (3,500), The University of Medicine and Dentistry of NJ (2,500) and Johnson and Johnson (1,600).

Civic Square 1. Opened in Fall, 1995 and funded, with Devco’s involvement, through the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the state Economic Development Authority, The Governor’s Economic Recovery Fund, Middlesex County, Rutgers and private donors. The project replaced a building, which had formerly housed a department store, and, later, the Department of Social Services. It cost about $47 million, is a 175,000 square foot project, and houses the Mason Gross School of the Arts and the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. The theater complex uses the 400-car underground parking garage on evening and weekends. (I think the sculpture in the entrance has something to do with Shakespeare’s "If music be the food of love....")

Senior Citizen Plaza. This is the focus of the cultural center of Central New Jersey. The George Street Playhouse (400 seats) is in the former YMCA, Crossroads Theatre (270 seats) is a premier Black theater company in a new building (though it cancelled its 2000-1 season due to financial difficulties and has only a few programs for the 2002-3 season). The State Theatre, built in 1921 as a vaudeville and silent film palace, has been refurbished (cost $4million) and reopened in 1988 with an active program of concerts, films and performances. Across the street is a vacant lot where the former Roger Smith, a 70 year old hotel, once the fashionable place to be, was demolished in Spring 2002. It housed welfare tenants prior to demolition. It is to be replaced by Heldrich Plaza, a $110 million hotel, 50,000 sq.ft. conference center, and 30-40 condominiums. It will house the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development (part of the Bloustein School). Liberty Plaza, a mixed office/retail building opened in 1998 at Liberty and George. It houses national chain stores (GNC and Radio Shack), two upscale restaurants (North Star and Soho) and UMDNJ administrative functions.

Plaza I and II. Plaza I is the white building on the corner of George and New Street. It was virtually the only new investment following clearance of the land between George Street and the Raritan River under the Urban Renewal Program in the 1950s and 1960s. Plaza II, the brick faced office building, was one of the first projects undertaken by DevCo in the late 1970s. It cost $6.5 million and was designed by the firm of I.M. Pei.
C Town. The only supermarket in downtown, Davidsons, closed in 1979 citing lack of profitability. For a decade, local residents had to rely on small stores or travel several miles to a supermarket. C Town rents this store from the city for $1 a year. How many gourmet ice cream stores are there in the city?

Lower George Street. The area between downtown and Douglass College is undergoing residential redevelopment. It is the focus of the city’s HOPE VI mixed-income housing project. The New Brunswick Homes, high rise public housing projects were built in the late 1950s and housed over a thousand people, most of them women and children. Although there was strong demand for this housing, with a long waiting list, there were long-term efforts to demolish them. As long ago as 1982 then-mayor John Lynch proposed demolition and replacement with alternative housing, but funding was never feasible. In 1996, the New Brunswick Housing Authority submitted a $23 million grant proposal to HUD to fund demolition of the Homes and the construction of "scatter site" housing. 246 units would be demolished and 102 replaced, with the balance of units covered by Section 8 vouchers. The proposal was rejected, but resubmitted (for $26 million) in July, 1997. The triangular high-rise houses senior citizens, as does the UAW financed newer block.

In September 1998, HUD awarded New Brunswick $7.5 million under the Hope VI program to replace the New Brunswick Homes. Of the 101 municipalities, which applied for Hope VI funding, 22 received awards but only New Brunswick received the full amount it requested. The high rises were demolished in summer 2001 and are being replaced with 198 mixed income housing units in the lower George Street area and at six other locations around downtown. Most units will be rental, but some will be for purchase. Funding for the project is estimated at $30 million with private sector money funding the balance. The plan is for social services, job training etc. to be provided to residents.

Hope Manor is the first HOPE VI project and opened in 2002. It will have 68 units on completion, with some retail space and tot lots. Half of the units are designated as public housing. Nearby along George Street is the newly constructed Lord Stirling elementary school. The former school building – on the other side of George- is to be refurbished for senior citizen housing.

Future Plans for lower George Street. DevCo is developing plans for several new buildings along George Street. These include a Rutgers Public Safety Building which would include both offices and secured parking for public safety vehicles, and a mixed use development which would incorporate a new 35,000 square foot Rutgers bookstore, 191 two bedroom student apartments, and street level retail space in addition to parking. It is hoped that this would link the College Ave and Cook-Douglass campus and bring more students to downtown.

Matrix Development Under construction between New and Liberty Streets are nearly 800 new luxury apartments with parking decks and retail space. The $70 million Highlands, begun in 2002 nearer the River, will have 417 luxury market-rate apartments in a 4 story building above an enclosed parking lot for 650 vehicles (a design chosen in part after the flooding during Hurricane Floyd in September 1999). The Metropolitan, on the upper lot, will be a 10 story, $85 million building with 359 luxury market rate units and a four level parking deck for 1100 cars. Both developments will include retail space. Rents may be in the range of $2000 a month for a two bedroom apartment. There are also plans for a $5 million renovation of the Plaza I and II office buildings. The site of the former Memorial Homes is to be for Hope VI rental units where construction has begun.

Hiram Market This is the site of the oldest part of the city and was the original focus of the city’s commercial activity. The first market in town was started here in 1732. The area was the site of a protracted battle over historic district designation during the late 1970s and early 1980s. A number of historically and architecturally interesting buildings were here including a school house built entirely of wood, the second bank building in the state, the synagogue of the oldest Orthodox congregation in the city, and Horace Day’s rubber factory which operated between 1839 and 1960. The preservationists lost the battle and all those buildings have been demolished. In their place, luxury townhouses - "Hiram Square at Riverwatch" - were built. With prices starting at $160,000, the goal was to bring middle income residents and consumers downtown. Sales were initially very slow, however. More recently, Riverwatch Commons was completed in Spring, 1997. It consists of 117 luxury apartments and cost $12million. It is a venture of DevCo and Applied Housing Companies of Hoboken. At opening, a one-bedroom unit rented for $800 and a 2 bedroom for $1000, and most units were occupied.

Two restaurants (Delta’s and The Frog and the Peach) occupy buildings formerly housing the local newspaper (The Home News) and a horse stable. Christ Church is on the Historical Register. The congregation was organized in 1702 and was the "birthplace" of American Episcopalianism. Some of the brownstone headstones in the graveyard date back to 1760. The Georgian style church is built of native brownstone and the steeple reflects the work of Christopher Wren. The First Reformed Church dates from 1812 and is also on the historic register. In its graveyard are buried many Revolutionary War soldiers and members of old New Brunswick families.

Boyd Park. This waterfront park was redeveloped and restored with a $5.9 million grant/loan from the New Jersey Green Acres program. There is a plan to widen Route 18 and separate local and through traffic on different levels to ease traffic flow. The work is scheduled to begin in 2004, cost $100 million, and take 3 to 6 years for completion.

Kilmer Square. This is a rehab-infill retail mall funded in part with a $3.6 million Urban Development Action Grant. Developed originally by Don Gatarz and Robert Epifano, it was later taken over by DKM Properties. DevCo encouraged a consortium of the state’s leading lending institutions to purchase $18 million of Industrial Revenue Bonds to cover costs. Today it is a 145,000 square foot office/retail complex. It has had both design and occupancy problems, though its restaurants seem to thrive. The national coffee chain Starbucks moved in a few years ago. Soon after a nearby locally run coffeehouse went out of business.

Hyatt Regency Hotel Plans for the Hyatt were announced in 1978 and a $6 million UDAG was awarded to the project. Initially, the hotel was to cost $18 million and generate 400 jobs. Construction was delayed by the controversy over historic designation. The hotel opened in 1983, cost $32 million and employed 239 people. One hundred jobs were reserved for low and moderate-income people. The Hyatt was awarded a 15-year property tax abatement under the Fox Lance law.

Johnson and Johnson Corporate Headquarters. This is the centerpiece of the city’s redevelopment. Designed by I.M. Pei, constructed between 1979 and 1983, the site covers 12.5 acres with a 16-story office tower and six low-rise modular office buildings. There are 380,000 square feet of floor space and the buildings cost in excess of $70 million. The headquarters also has a tax abatement. It includes dining and recreational facilities as well as a day care center and parking decks. Note the Henry Moore sculpture of a mother and child. J.& J. is the fifth largest employer in town but the largest private/for profit employer.

New City Centre/Albany Street Plaza. Formerly named the Golden Triangle since it is one of the most valuable pieces of land in the city. This tract was slated as a redevelopment area in 1982 allowing it to be purchased by eminent domain. The area formerly housed the Cone Zone, The George Street Playhouse, The Art Cinema and various retail stores. These were demolished and the present 10 story office building with 260,000 square feet of office space and 725 car deck replaced it. The current tenants include J and J and its subsidiaries. About a thousand people work in this building daily.

Railroad Plaza. This is the hub of the city. The renovated train station is interesting architecturally and the station reminds us that New Brunswick was both historically and is today an important transportation hub. It is on the main rail line linking the cities of megalopolis - the most trafficked railroad in the country, and the New Jersey Turnpike, which carries more traffic than any other in the U.S. Historically, both ocean and inland water transport came through the city. Across Albany Street is the Ferren Parking Deck. Construction began on this in 1980, financed by bond issues. The cost was about $12 million. About 30 properties were taken through eminent domain, including two restaurants, a tire merchant, a newsagent and an office equipment company. Owners of these properties were offered "fair market prices" and were eligible for relocation assistance. However, since owners of nearby properties taken for Robert Wood Johnson Hospital expansion had received prices well above the market value in some cases, the Ferren Deck owners felt aggrieved. Rutgers bookstore was moved from a College Avenue location (now Records Hall) and is the largest single tenant. Its presence here presumably draws students (and their purchasing power) downtown. The Ferren Deck accommodates about 1,250 cars. A new plan for this area – the CORE (Commercial, Office, Research, Entertainment)- unveiled in 2002 calls for a 32 story "identity tower" to replace the Ferren Deck. Underway is the completion of a second 8 story office block for Albany Street Plaza

University Center A mixed use project on a two acre site. This $50.7 million project was a joint effort of Rutgers, the New Brunswick Housing and Urban Development Authority and Robert Wood Johnson Hospital. The twelve story building houses nearly 700 students, has a 1,057 space car park and 14,300 feet of retail space. It was completed in 1994.

Robert Wood Johnson Hospital. In 1978 an agreement was reached between the then Middlesex Hospital and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey to make the hospital the primary teaching hospital of the medical school. Construction of a medical education building and parking garage began in the early 1980s and cost about $72 million. The expansion required the taking of about a block of residential and commercial properties, some of which were purchased at prices quite favorable to their previous owners. However, the tenants of these properties, some of whom were low income, Hispanic families, were less fortunate and reportedly received short notice and little relocation assistance. The expansion, now including buildings on the other side of Albany St, provided construction jobs, medical and service sector employment, improved health care availability, and brought affluent professionals to work (and spend?) in the city. The Cancer Institute of NJ opened in 1996 and is undergoing expansion to triple its original size. Adjacent to the RWJ hospital is the Bristol-Myers Squibb Children’s Hospital which opened in March 2001. A new Child Health Care Institute is under construction next door which will accommodate both research and treatment clinics.

Somerset Street. This is part of the Hungarian Neighborhood. New Brunswick has been called "the most Hungarian city in the US" because proportionately it once had more Hungarians than any other city. In 1915, out of a total population of 30,013, there were 5,572 Hungarians. The first immigrants came in 1888 and there followed, in the early twentieth century, many skilled workers who found employment in the former cigar factory on Somerset Street and at J and J. It is estimated that, at one time, nearly two thirds of J and J employees were Hungarian. While some immigrants returned to Hungary after WW1, many came back to New Brunswick within a few years and in the 1920s built homes in this area, many financed through the Magyar Building and Loan Association. After 1956 and the Hungarian Uprising, 30,000 refugees were resettled through Camp Kilmer in nearby Piscataway. About a thousand of these refugees settled in New Brunswick. On this walk we pass Hungarian restaurants, the Hungarian Civic Association, Athletic Club (founded in 1913), St Ladislaus Church (with a statue of Cardinal Mindszenty commemorating the visit of the cardinal here in 1973). Nearby is the Hungarian Cultural Center with a library and gallery.

Providence Square. This was formerly a cigar factory, which was built, in the 19th century. After the cigar factory closed, the building had several different commercial and industrial tenants. In the early 1990s it was converted into a senior citizen housing project with 98 one bedroom apartments, 40 of which are Section 8 funded. The project had UDAG and DevCo financing.
French Street. This is a street in transition. A decade ago it housed mainly low income residents and businesses, which catered to that clientele. There were store front churches, a family health clinic and several thrift shops. Some of these remain, but evidence of change is obvious with the addition of several antique emporia, remodeled bars, an art gallery, and the hospital expansion. This can be considered an example of commercial gentrification. The Health Sciences Technology High School opened in 1999 and was the first "option school" in N.J. It now has 160 students who must maintain a B average, wear uniforms, and complete 50 hours of community service each school year. Further South on French Street is a growing Mexican community. Between 1990 and 2000 Mexicans increased from 548 to 7,364 in New Brunswick. Food stores and restaurants cater to this clientele.

Bayard Street On the corner of Bayard and Joyce Kilmer is the Hungarian Presbyterian Church, founded in 1905. Joyce Kilmer Ave (named after the city’s most famous poet) is increasingly an axis of the growing Latino community. The Cuban, Dominican and Mexican segments are currently growing faster than the earlier Puerto Rican population. The numerous lawyers’ offices on this street are explicable by the proximity to the County Court House and other municipal and county offices close by.

Kennedy Square. The Middlesex County Office Building was constructed in the early 1960s with a grant from the Kennedy administration to ease high unemployment in the city. The County is a major employer and this building brought several hundred commuters into the city each day. The old Middlesex Co. office building is under conversion to Skyline Tower which will comprise 70 rental units (20% of which will be designated affordable housing), a fitness center and court offices on the lower floors. The city of New Brunswick (City Hall is also on Kennedy Square) now has a residency requirement for employees.

Civic Square II. A joint venture of DevCo and the Keating Development Company is creating New Jersey’s only privately developed government complex. This will be comprised of two buildings, pedestrian and traffic improvements and will blend historical renovation of a building formerly occupied by the Post Office with new construction. Privately financed and constructed, the $49 million project will house city, county and federal offices. A new 118,000 square foot public safety building incorporated the old PO façade and houses the city’s planning and inspection divisions. It consolidated local and county law enforcement offices and the New Brunswick Police Department from its old location on Route 18 near the Raritan. The new 115,000 square-foot County Administration building replaced the older, inadequate facility,

George Street. This is the major commercial axis of the city. As noted earlier, between 1965-75 New Brunswick lost seven of its major stores (Arnold Constable, PJ Youngs, Roselles, Fishman’s Nathan’s and Woolworths. Sears moved to Route I. Many other smaller enterprises moved out and their place was taken by various budget merchandise stores oriented to low income patrons, or left vacant or boarded up. Between 1950 and 1976 commercial rents in the CBD declined 91% from $9.66 per square foot to $.86 per square foot. In the 1970s New Brunswick lost more than 3,100 white-collar jobs from the departure of Squibb, Boy Scouts of America, National Bank of New Jersey and WCTC. Over a period of 40 years the city lost over 6,000 industrial jobs as firms left the city’s high taxes, obsolete utilities and unionized labor market. Plans began in 1979 to simulate commercial redevelopment by converting George Street into a two-lane mall with bricked and widened sidewalks, plantings and landscaping. Funding came from the state’s Economic Development Authority, the city, and some private contributions. Since then, some new businesses have opened, others have expanded, and a few national chains (e.g. Starbuck’s Coffee) have been attracted. Restaurants have been particularly successful. It is worth noting that there has been a 27% increase in jobs in the city during the ‘Nineties, and that while the 1996 estimated average household income for the city was $48,000, that for the "downtown daytime population" was estimated at $71,000 so stores may cater to visitors more than residents. There is, however, still no "anchor" store.

City Market. This is a special improvement district (SID) encompassing a 20 square block area from Albany Street in the North to Morris St. in the South, and Neilson St in the East to Kirkpatrick St. on the West. The J and J company, DKM properties and Omar Boraie are the largest property owners in the SID. City market was founded in 1987 when the New Brunswick City Council approved the SID. 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 sponsors programs and promotions such as Book Fair and Christmas decorations, provides small business seminars and runs a parking validation program. It provides banners, facade design, street cleaning and on-foot security guards.