



DOWNTOWN

ESTABLISHING A DOWNTOWN

I HAD HEARD FROM MANY PEOPLE THEIR DESIRE FOR a pedestrian-friendly, traditional downtown. We began thinking about where to redevelop and quickly realized that we didn't have an identifiable center. People had different ideas about where our downtown actually was located. Some contended that it was the office building corridor along Meridian, while others maintained that it was along Range Line Road because that's where most of our retail was. Still others claimed that the downtown was in Old Town, an area that had been the historic business center when Carmel was a small town. The problem was that all of these were legitimate claims, but to develop as a city, we needed a central, identifiable downtown area.

We began by taking a look at our Old Town area. Carmel began its life as the Quaker town of Bethlehem in the early 19th century. The town changed the name to Carmel in 1874 because there was already another Bethlehem in Indiana and, as the story goes, the U.S. Post Office threatened to cut off mail delivery unless a name change was made. Bethlehem was renamed Carmel. The Society of Friends, or Quakers, believed in adhering to an austere lifestyle, to which the simple and plain architecture of the original Old Town area stands as a testament. It was and is the historical heart of the city. We already had a lot of good north-south road development and use from people going to and from Indianapolis, so we decided that any development would also have to improve on some of our east-west roads. Old Town runs for about four blocks east-west and about eight blocks north of Main Street, and it sits adjacent to two of our biggest public

CARMEL ARTS & DESIGN DISTRICT



investments: our public high school and library. The Old Town area, though, suffered from a lack of upkeep; the residential streets lacked sidewalks, storm sewers and street lighting. Private investment was not occurring. Many houses were dilapidated and many more were being broken up into businesses and substandard rental housing. It was important to restore and preserve this area because Carmel doesn't have many historical buildings. It was also important to protect the public's substantial investment in our public high school and library.

To address the problems plaguing Old Town, one of the first things we did was totally rebuild the residential streets in the area. We completely rebuilt every one of them from scratch, removed the old pavement, and added curbs, sidewalks, period lampposts and brick sidewalks.

Old Town also suffered from outdated water mains. Low pressure in the area was more than just an annoyance; it could have hampered the fire department's ability to fight fires. We upgraded the area's water mains and separated the remaining combined storm and sanitary sewers to make sure all basic services were up to par in Old Town.

As soon as we made these investments in the neighborhood, we started seeing the private sector respond. People began buying homes and making substantial investments in their restorations. That initial investment in restoring Old Town's crumbling infrastructure drew people to the area and was the first step to its rejuvenation.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

WHEN THE CITY FINISHED REBUILDING the streets of Old Town, we started to work on the nearby business area, a space of about four blocks along Main Street that needed the same



Carmel: 'round about right



Carmel: 'round about right

kind of attention. We rebuilt those streets and put in brick sidewalks and period street lighting. One of the most important improvements was the acquisition of the former Monon Railway and its conversion to the Monon Trail. This project was probably one of the most important improvements to the Old Town area. We felt that if we showed businesses the potential of the area, they would invest there as well.

Developers and in many cases, their lenders, are wary of making investments in older parts of cities; that's why it takes proactive moves on the part of a community to get things rolling. Our development regulations throughout the country have made it difficult for lenders and developers to work on the older areas. It's easier for them to invest in big new developments because so many times they're met with unforeseen problems in aging sections of towns; EPA issues, such as underground oil tanks from abandoned service stations, can turn an otherwise profitable venture into a financial disaster. Given the competitive market in which these developers

PAGE 22: BICYCLES PARKED OUTSIDE OF CONDOS ON MAIN STREET.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NANCY HECK, CITY OF CARMEL

PAGE 23: SUNRISE IN THE ARTS & DESIGN DISTRICT.

PREVIOUS PAGE: SNOW FALLING ON MAIN STREET IN WINTER.

THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A DETAIL OF THE FOUNTAIN THAT SITS AT THE CENTER OF A ROUNDABOUT ON MAIN STREET. DINERS ENJOY THE WEATHER IN THE ARTS & DESIGN DISTRICT. SHOPPERS AT CARMEL'S FARMER'S MARKET.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NANCY HECK, CITY OF CARMEL

operate, they often cannot have greater risk of the unknown and less certainty their investment will be profitable. That's why we see so many areas in older cities that are completely devoid of capital investment. Instead, malls and new residential areas are built at the margins, creating sprawl and multi-million dollar infrastructure requirements for cities. That's where city re-development commissions become essential.

The Carmel Redevelopment Commission has been the vanguard of the renovation of Carmel's downtown. Bringing together local government, private investors and developers, they have been instrumental in the realization of City Center and the Arts & Design District. Working in partnership, we have accomplished a great deal in a relatively short time frame. What follows is the story of how it all came together to make Carmel's downtown what it is today - vibrant and thriving.

RIGHT: CHILDREN PLAY ON THE SCULPTURE "FIRST RIDE" BY J. SEWARD JOHNSON. PHOTO COURTESY OF NANCY HECK, CITY OF CARMEL



PAGE RIGHT: CARMEL CITY HALL IN THE SPRING. PHOTO COURTESY OF NANCY HECK, CITY OF CARMEL



When you're faced with a situation where developers are reluctant to come into an older area, you have a choice to make: you can throw your hands up and say, "Well, that area is done for," and forget about it, or you can look for a solution. In Carmel we've used our city redevelopment commission to form public-private partnerships that attract private capital. Redeveloping an older area may seem like a costly endeavor, but that's because the costs of new development and the required infrastructure outside the city are largely hidden. The developer doesn't pay the entire cost of new roads, power lines, storm drains or fire stations. It falls upon the city to build and maintain this new infrastructure, the costs of which often easily exceed tax revenues from new developments that depend on that infrastructure. On the other hand, older areas of the city already have power



LEFT: HOUSES IN THE VIL-
LAGE OF WEST CLAY.

ABOVE: THE PALLADIUM
CONCERT HALL.
*PHOTO COURTESY OF NANCY HECK, CITY
OF CARMEL*

RIGHT: SHOPS AND RESTAU-
RANTS IN THE VILLAGE OF
WEST CLAY.
*PHOTO COURTESY OF NANCY HECK, CITY
OF CARMEL*



lines, storm drains, roads, fire stations and police patrols in place. That makes them ideal places for new, private investment that results in lower taxes for residents.

One way for a city to begin redeveloping older areas is by aggregating land: purchasing small lots, cleaning them up, combining them into larger parcels that are easier for the private sector to finance and redevelop and making them available to developers. This requires a public commitment of city funds up front. While some people will be skeptical, it's much less expensive than building and maintaining new infrastructure. People clearly see where their tax dollars are going and they can demand certain things in return; higher architectural standards and underground parking, for instance, are things we've required of re-developers in Carmel. Most developers won't commit to building underground parking by themselves,

BELOW: THE EXTERIOR OF THE TARKINGTON THEATER.

PAGE RIGHT: CITY CENTER ON RANGELINE ROAD.
PHOTO COURTESY OF NANCY HECK, CITY OF CARMEL



because it makes their investment have too low a return. We have allowed the re-developer to dedicate a portion of their future property taxes to provide covered multistory or underground garages. In the end, the community gets better development and parking solutions. That also saves the adjacent land from becoming acres of parking and the city collects more in the long term in property taxes. It's similar to an annuity for the city because instead of building large surface parking lots, that space can be turned into more retail or office space, which raises revenues resulting in a much more attractive development. This is the method we used to build our City Center.



We chose to develop City Center as Carmel's new downtown because the Old Town area wasn't large enough to constitute a viable downtown for a city of our projected population in excess of 100,000 residents. It was in May of 1997 that the Carmel Redevelopment Commission unveiled the plan for Carmel City Center, a long-term project intended to bring new businesses, townhomes and a performing arts center to central Carmel. Looking for a suitable place for development of our new downtown, we turned to the area just north of City Hall where a largely abandoned retail center, which had been home to a Kroger grocery, sat in a state of abandoned disrepair, covered in graffiti. It also stood adjacent to a substantial amount of undeveloped land, making it the perfect place for redevelopment. It was located roughly halfway between the northern and southern boundaries of the Range Line Road retail corridor. On December 19th of that year, we bought the old Kroger and started aggregating adjacent parcels of land, about 88 acres in all.

To make this central location more attractive to developers, we made sure the underlying infrastructure was sound. In partnerships with developers, the area began to take shape. At the same time that the City Center project was underway, the Carmel Redevelopment Commission also began work on redeveloping the Old Town, the original village center of Carmel. In 2000, the Carmel Redevelopment Commission began the project by purchasing an old lumber yard in Old Town. As with our other new developments, we took the initiative to ready the area for development by rebuilding the infrastructure. The decision was made to create a place focused on the art and design industry as well as restaurants. We built four archways, installed over the roads leading in and out of the district, to identify the new Arts &



Design District; we also designed a unique logo and created a fund for public outdoor sculptures. The area is now flourishing with new art galleries, interior design stores, restaurants and shops. It's now an inviting area to explore on foot, where public sculptures line the sidewalks.

To maximize the use of space in the Arts & Design District and maintain the area's main street feel, we insisted on bringing the new buildings right up to the street, as in the case of older cities. The parking lots were put behind the stores. The area was designed for people, not cars. Today, Main Street transitions effortlessly between Georgian townhomes and storefront retail shops with residences in their upper stories and beautiful streetscapes.

One of our goals for these new developments was to build additional apartments in Carmel. The older zoning laws had made it difficult to build new apartments, so there was a scarcity in the city. Even worse, due to the lack of new apartments, many of the available apartments tended

ABOVE: AS A PART OF CARMEL HIGH SCHOOL'S VOCATIONAL BUILDING TRADES CLASS, STUDENT BRYAN PRATT HELPS TO PUT THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON THE FLOWING WELL PROJECT.

LEFT: CARMEL'S BUSY MAIN STREET.
PHOTO COURTESY OF NANCY HECK, CITY OF CARMEL

to be run down and overpriced. That was something we wanted to change. Not everyone wants or can afford a house, and a successful city needs a variety of housing options. By lifting some of the more onerous zoning restrictions, we allowed developers to compete to build new housing. To date, we've added several thousand apartments, ensuring that Carmel has housing options for all its citizens. Nice apartments also make it possible to compete for well-educated young people. Someone who has just graduated from college or graduate school usually isn't ready to buy a house; however, we need these young people in order to attract corporate headquarters and technical firms to Carmel.

The first parcel of land to be turned into housing in City Center was sold to AMLI, a residential development firm. At the same time we obtained federal, local and donated funds to build a reflecting pool and veteran's memorial. A developer that has been instrumental in the successful development of Carmel City Center is Pedcor, which established its new headquarters there. Their new headquarters shares the Georgian building style of nearby townhomes and has its parking garage underground for a more efficient use of space. Overall, seven separate development companies have chosen to develop buildings in our City Center project. Cities should attempt to work with as many varied developers as possible, not only to reduce risk but to involve more businesses as well.

As part of the new developments, we set strict architectural standards in order to give the area a cohesive style and ensure high quality construction that would endure. When our City Hall, police headquarters and fire station were built in the 1980's they set bold new standards for Carmel. Done in a style that borrows heavily from the Georgian Colonial and Federal buildings of the 18th century, they have become a touchstone for the architectural standards of our recent developments. It is a style that has roots in colonial Williamsburg as well as in London, bridging the Atlantic as the quintessential style of the Enlightenment. Fashioned out of red brick and limestone, these buildings are here to stay.

Today Georgian townhomes and buildings look out over a central green with a long reflecting pool. At one end of the pool, the Veteran's Memorial Plaza provides the people of Carmel with a place to honor our nation's men and women in uniform. There is a flag for each branch of the service. Indiana sculptor Bill Wolfe created a large bronze that stands at the center of the plaza. It was dedicated on October 6, 2006. It is a place of quiet dignity that reminds all of us of those who have served and continue to serve our country. It is in the heart of Carmel's new downtown.

LIVING NEAR AMENITIES

TO CREATE A MORE LIVABLE, WALKABLE URBAN CORE IN CARMEL, WE NEEDED to engage developers and help them see why mixed-use projects would work in Carmel. In the past, most developers had specialized



ABOVE: GALLERIES, RESTAURANTS AND SHOPS ALONG MAIN STREET IN ARTS & DESIGN DISTRICT.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NANCY HECK, CITY OF CARMEL

RIGHT: VISITORS TO CARMEL'S ROCK THE DISTRICT, AN ANNUAL MUSIC FESTIVAL, WALK DOWN MAIN ST.





in certain types of structures, building only apartments, houses or commercial office complexes. We were sure that mixed uses would work in Carmel, if done right. The well-educated, professional workers and their families that were being attracted to our community wanted the benefits of more pedestrian-friendly areas where they could walk to work, to get a meal, to a show or cycle to another nearby amenity on the Monon Trail. We wanted to create an area that was vibrant during the day as well as night. That requires mixed uses, so we built offices, apartments and condominiums near and above restaurants, stores and commercial space.

We also realized that the project's architecture would be as important as the types of activities and opportunities that were available. Just adding uses and building taller buildings does not engage and draw people to an area. We wanted a streetscape that was visually enticing. Many people travel to Europe to see the beautiful architecture and linger in the plazas and relax at sidewalk cafes, just taking in the scenery and people-watching. We wanted to create that same type of ambiance. We wanted



Carmel: 'round about right



Carmel: 'round about right

ABOVE: THE APPROACH TO THE ROUNDABOUT AT OAK RIDGE & ADIOS PASS.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NANCY HECK, CITY OF CARMEL

PAGE LEFT: A WALK TO RAISE MONEY FOR A LOCAL CHARITY.

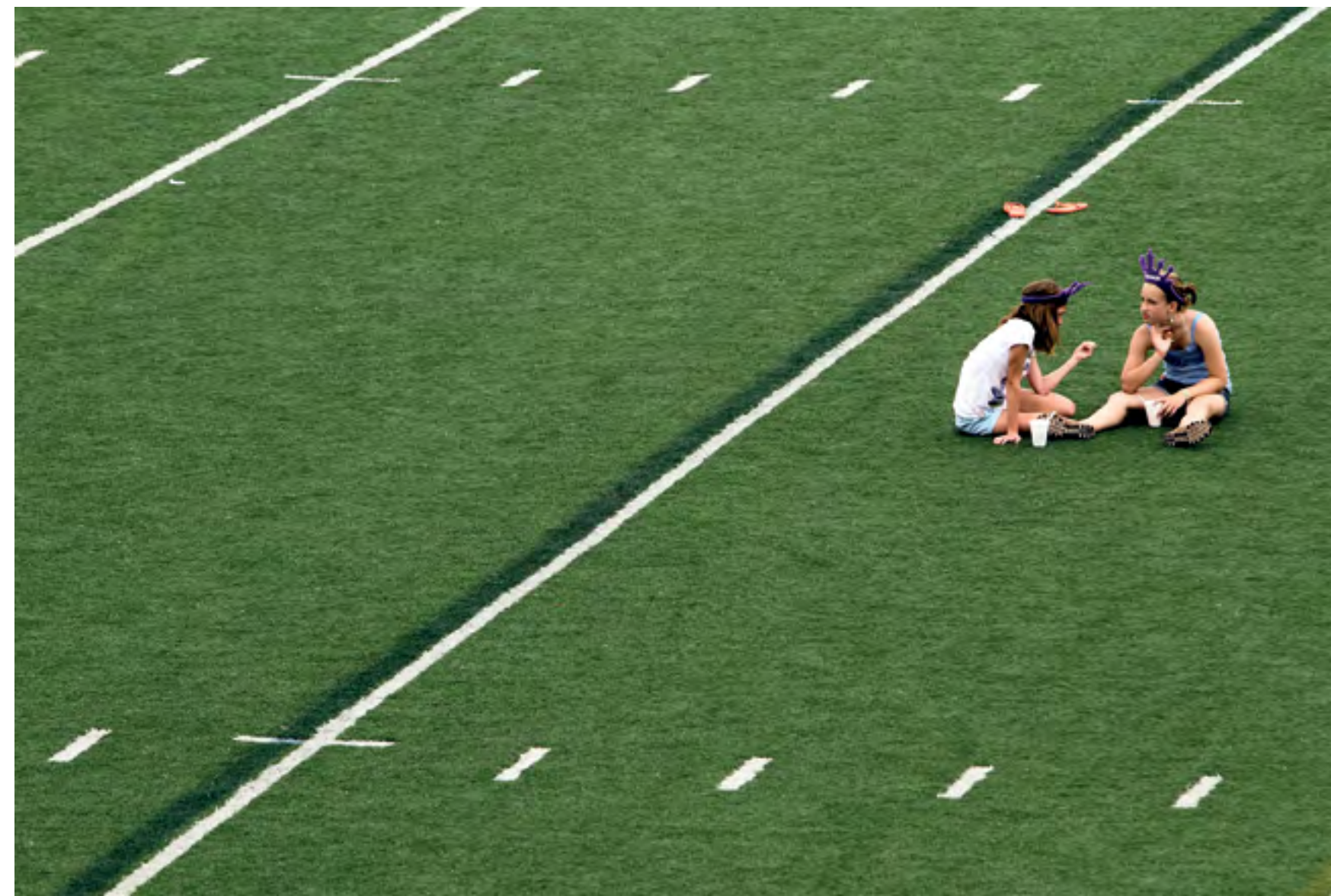
BOTTOM RIGHT: VISITORS TO CARMEL'S ROCK THE DISTRICT, AN ANNUAL MUSIC FESTIVAL, WALK DOWN MAIN ST.

to show that creating more density through mixed-use development could lead to an exciting, thriving area that attracted people and business. We took the best of what history had taught us about creating the best cities and used new development tools unavailable in the past, added high quality architectural standards, and implemented techniques we knew would appeal to a community to create a gathering place, a true, dynamic downtown for Carmel.

We have plenty of cul-de-sacs and houses built on several acres, and that isn't going to change. Yet, everyone doesn't want to mow a yard and live on

RIGHT: LOCATED ON 116TH ST. IS FLOWING WELL PARK, WHICH CONTAINS A NATURAL ARTESIAN WELL THAT PROVIDES HIGH QUALITY DRINKING WATER.

PAGE RIGHT: ABOVE, "CITY HOMES" IN THE VILLAGE OF WEST CLAY. BELOW, CAROLINE LAFNITZEGGER, LEFT, JULIET SANDERS, BOTH OF CARMEL TAKE A BREAK FROM WALKING AT THE RELAY FOR LIFE, A 24-HOUR EVENT HELD ON CARMEL HIGH SCHOOL'S TRACK TO RAISE FUNDS FOR CANCER.



a cul-de-sac. Many of our residents are professionals, scientists and business people from other countries who have lived in condominiums and apartments and who are not used to nor want to maintain a yard. Our city is stronger today because it has a variety of housing options.