

## **Interview with John Heldrich**

Heldrich: How we got into it.

Listokin: I think that's a very important part of the story. I don't know if we want to just wait until we are all set up and then. . .

Heldrich: I mean you don't have to record that.

Listokin: No, no, I just want to. . .

Cooper: Everything is fine and recording now.

Berkhout: I have to get my coffee now.

Heldrich: Oh there, it is floating around.

Berkhout: I know. Thanks.

Listokin: So maybe do we first – I know we introduce one another. Maybe we just spend thirty seconds. . .

Heldrich: Sure.

Listokin: Edwin, do you want to just go around? Let's go around the table and make sure who knows who everyone is.

Cooper: I'm Edwin Cooper. I'm an incoming doctoral student at the Planning and Policy School.

Heldrich: Let me see, you've got J&J on your back. (Laughter)

Cooper: Currently I have been and J&J for the past two to two-and-a-half years and looking to start school this fall.

Heldrich: Wonderful.

Cooper: A pleasure to meet you.

Listokin: My name is David Listokin. I've been a professor at Rutgers for many

years. I currently. . .

Heldrich: Yeah, I've heard. . .

Listokin: I co-direct the Center for Urban Policy Research and until the end of this month I'm the Graduate Director and the Doctoral Director of the Planning and Public Policy program. And I have been in the New Brunswick area since 1970, so a lot of this stuff I have seen.

Heldrich: Oh yeah.

Listokin: And so it's a real privilege to be doing this.

Berkhout: I'm Thea Berkhout, Associate Dean of the Bloustein School and thought it would be a good idea to get some of your and other people's stories recorded.

Heldrich: Yeah.

Berkhout: So that we have a better perspective on how. . .

Heldrich: Oh, you have been very persistent, that's good.

Berkhout: New Brunswick worked through this redevelopment process.

Isenberg: I'm Alison Isenberg; I'm in the History Department at Rutgers.

Heldrich: Oh.

Isenberg: I'm also the incoming President of the Society for American City and Regional Planning History, so my areas are in the American cities and suburbs in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and I have done a fair amount of work on poverty and redevelopment in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Heldrich: Very good, well I thought that – just to give you some background. Very quickly, I'm a real local, I was born and raised here, and I still live here. My mother was a widow with five boys, of which I was the youngest. And I used to play baseball a lot, off the old

walls of the Johnson and Johnson factories dreaming two dreams, and one was to play for the New York Yankees and the other was to work for Johnson and Johnson.

Because I think that you all well know in academia, that pre-World War II, only about 5% of high school graduates went on to college, because it was the Depression Years. And I was fortunate, I was the first one in my family to graduate from college and of course that was directly tied to World War II. I was in World War II; I was in the Battle of the Bulge.

And I returned and we had the voucher system, that's what the GI Bill was, and then I was accepted at Rutgers – I was accepted at Rutgers day school. I couldn't handle the day school because I had responsibilities to my mother yet at home and some other responsibilities, so I went five nights a week for four years and got my degree and started a business during the day so we could survive. And then I was [ . . . ] [hired as a manufacturing trainee at Johnson and Johnson.

I spent twenty years in manufacturing and ran several plants – the largest one ESDP, which is now closed. [It was] [ . . . ] a million square foot [facility] [ . . . ]. And then not to my knowledge I was being moved around to staff positions to broaden my experience [ . . . ].

Isenberg: Uh hum.

Heldrich: And then I was [promoted to the] [ . . . ] Domestic Operating Company, [which] in those days was like the mother company and spawned the other J&J companies that were being [formed] [ . . . ] because we were highly decentralized under the umbrella of the domestic company. Of course as those companies got bigger [ . . . ], they wanted [their own independence] [ . . . ].

Isenberg: Right.

Heldrich: And that led to [subsidiary divisions] [ . . . ]. In [ . . . ] 1970, [ . . . ] Johnson

and Johnson's headquarters were very small. You had the Board of Directors, you had the Executive Committee, you had the Law Department, you had the Public Relations and Financial Consolidation Group. The Domestic Operating Company used to service all of these companies that were [divisions] [ . . .].

Fortunately I was [promoted to [ . . .] corporate because they came to the conclusion, and this is around '69 or '70, that the corporation was growing at an exponential rate and it was huge, it was just expanding. [And there was the concern under the LBJ administration, and the impact of new regulations on our business, their main concern was how do we manage these changes from an administrative viewpoint.] [ . . .].

And so I was given the assignment or the job to develop the administrative structure worldwide. [ . . .] My operational experience came in handy [as we developed this new structure] [ . . .]. In the process of doing this, we had the riots in 1968. If I may, this background ties in.

Listokin:        This is. You may do it.

Heldrich:        [ . . .] [Let's start with the J&J credo which was at the core in our commitment to stay in New Brunswick.] [Our credo is] built into the culture of Johnson and Johnson – and [ . . .] we will talk about this later in our interview. [ . . .] Our current Chairman [ . . .] sent out a letter and thought it was a great idea, even though they survey every year, they call it the Credo Survey. It would be interesting to send out to all Johnson and Johnson employees what the credos meant to you. Okay, so they had a big contest. Of course [ . . .] I [participated] and was [ . . .] fortunate to be chosen to be in the book, which is this book on Johnson & Johnson's reflections on our credo.

And if I may take the license to take one minute to read this because it captures [what we

are discussing] [ . . .]. And this is what I had submitted and they picked out. “In 1968 our nation was rocked from to coast to coast and many of our urban cities by riots and disturbances. At the federal level, President Lyndon B. Johnson convened a meeting in Washington of the CEO’s of our major corporations. The outcome of the meeting was that the prime cause of the riots was under-employment and that we form a national alliance of business to work towards workforce solutions. Our hometown, New Brunswick was fortunate that we only experienced protest and minor disturbances. Johnson and Johnson moved rapidly and established Project Action.”

And now this is where I came in, because I was tagged by the Chairman because I was born and raised and lived here and was active here to come back to J&J and tell them what they should do, recommend what they should do and to develop short term solutions at the local level. “During this period Johnson and Johnson was considering a new world headquarters. There was grave concern within the community that Johnson and Johnson would move out of New Brunswick as many other corporations were relocating to the suburbs.” [ . . .]

“We had many meetings and discussion of what our roles should be in the current environment. Our decision-making process was driven by the third responsibility of our Credo which reads ‘We are responsible to communities in which we live and work.’ Our decision to stay in New Brunswick and build our new world headquarters was the catalyst that contributed to the renaissance of our city, which has led to an urban model that has national reputation. As for myself, there can be no greater reward than to have been part of our Credo decision-making process that has brought our city from despair to hope to a new day.” [ . . .].

That kind of summarizes or sets the stage [ . . .]. We took short-term actions because it was underemployment that was the issue. In New Brunswick [ . . .] [may of us were] out on the streets almost every night during these periods because [we] [ . . .] knew the people and [in an

environment of the [ . . . ] Vietnam War; we had protest at the university. You had our community, schools were having [ . . . ] disturbances.

Listokin:       Protests.

Heldrich:       But it was chaos and that was in the '70's. So we dealt first with [this] [ . . . ] short-term, which was the under-employment issue [ . . . ].

Listokin:       Actually if you can talk a little bit more on the, the project Action to Employment and maybe what were some of the actions.

Heldrich:       [Yes] [ . . . ]

Listokin:       And thoughts. . .

Heldrich:       [Our action plan} [ . . . ] was sort of unheard of at that time. We developed a coalition between the employment service and the employment ends of our operations here in New Brunswick and Rutgers University. I'm ashamed, but I have forgotten the professor I tapped into who really was very helpful. [ . . . ] And he was helpful from the standpoint that the National Alliance and Business was funded by [many] [ . . . ] of the major corporations, so we decentralized and so were able to [use] [ . . . ] their office to avoid duplication. It was the first movement towards some integration of the workforce, which [motivated} [ . . . ] me because I ended up with the Center for Workforce Development. Now that gave me the opportunity. . .

Listokin:       This was to bring in some. . .

Heldrich:       Oh, I'm sorry.

Listokin:       . . . to bring in some New Brunswick residents into the workforce to reduce unemployment and to. . .

Heldrich:       Right. [Yes] [ . . . ] and that was where the concentration was focused and we were fortunate because we had a good base to start with. I mean you go to Newark or

Plainfield. [It was in] [ . . . ] mass destruction and – I mean our ability to mobilize was great. I [ . . . ] knew the people to [contact] [ . . . ]: Roy Epps from the Urban League and other different key players, so that's how we got off the ground and addressed [under employment] [ . . . ] very aggressively. But in the meantime, [J & J was] [ . . . ]also discussing [ . . . ] a new headquarters and where should it be. It was [in process for several years as we evaluated our options] [ . . . ].

Listokin: So this in the mid-to-late '70's?

Heldrich: This would be in the [mid] [ . . . ] '70's.

Listokin: Early '70's.

Heldrich: [Mid] [ . . . ] 70's.

Listokin: Even before.

Heldrich: This is in the early '70's, with what was called the Hartford Process at that time in Hartford, Connecticut. Jim Rouse of the Rouse Company was a very socially conscious developer and he had established an organization called the American Cities Corporation which [was headed by Leo Molinaro, a former professor at the University of Michigan] . . . [ . . . ] and we became [close] friends [during this period] . . .

Listokin: Leo Molinaro.

Heldrich: And he was in charge of this corporation and their responsibility was to do feasibility studies some of which could be addressed by the Rouse Company directly and others to give some direction to the communities in which they were working. [I visited Columbia, Maryland] [ . . . ].

Listokin: Columbia, Maryland?

Heldrich: [ . . . ] I became enamored with the [Hartford Process and the] fact that they were forming a coalition between the business sector, the private sector, the public sector

and the community. So conceptually, it was a wonderful model.

Listokin: American Cities Corporation, they were involved in helping foster the greater Hartford Process?

Heldrich: Pardon?

Listokin: Were they involved?

Heldrich: Yes.

Listokin: Yes, okay so that was one of those. . .

Heldrich: That was one of those . . .

Listokin: One of those bringing together the public and private sectors.

Heldrich: Right. While conceptually I was sold, operationally I was disappointed because they had two 501(c)3 corporations they established, one was planning and the other was development. Okay, well first off they had them in separate parts of the city. Secondly, the planning, the development group became opportunistic rather than [ . . . ] working in the public interest [which was a difficult task].

Anyway I came back and I talked to the Chairman to whom I reported – Dick Sellars who [ . . . ] is 92 and I still keep in touch with him. He was the Chairman at the time and I reported directly to him. And he took an interest in New Brunswick, always had because our top executive group at that time basically [brought great stability and involvement with the city. He focused on] [ . . . ] the physical planning because he liked that. He was a frustrated architect, I think. So he was talking about putting up a new office building, which was very common in those days. [ . . . ].

And I told him about the Hartford Process, so I got Leo down to meet with him and we had an hour's meeting. [ . . . ] And Leo said, "He's not ready, John. He's not ready for what we

– we’re talking about – taking on a whole city,” and it was a [somewhat] [ . . . ]traditional approach that they were following. So he said, “You’re going to have to convince him to [take on the city [ . . .].” (Laughter) [As I was starting a ] [ . . . ] a new job, I mean, this [became] [ . . .] my side job. And so we continued and I continued to push the concept. And then out-of-the blue one day . . .

Listokin: And this concept being this comprehensive approach . . . ?

Heldrich: Right, looking at the whole partnering [process] [ . . . ] And he calls me on the phone and he says, “John, that little Italian guy you got in here a year or so ago,” (laughter) he said, “Get him back.” So I called Leo and we went up in his office and I’d say within twenty minutes the decision was made. I had done [his] [ . . . ] homework, Leo came in and Leo says, “So what do we do?” He said, “Well we need to really look at this and see what are the odds of turning this city around, so we have to do a study,” that was very critical.

And he said, “Okay, what’s it going to take?” And he became the convener within the community of the key player at that time, which were . . .

Listokin: And this in now Molinaro?

Berkhout: Sellars?

Listokin: Sellars?

Heldrich: Sellars.

Listokin: Sellars.

Heldrich: Sellars, at our J&J guest house convened this meeting and it was the mayor, it was the heads of the hospitals, it was Ed Bloustein from Rutgers, it was a good cross-section of bankers. [ . . . ] In those days we had seven banks, five of the bankers were local, guys who grew up here. [In addition, we had] [ . . . ] community [ . . . ] people at the meeting. And so

we all agreed that we would conduct this study and have the Molinaro American Cities Corporation do that.

I was made chairman of the group and then it got down to money. So Dick Sellars says to me on the side, he said “Look, everybody’s had to put something into the pot,” and that’s when I learned Rutgers had some administrative money. Because Bloustein pledged from Rutgers and everybody pledged and the difference we made up, Johnson & Johnson, which was a major share. And that funded the study and [so it could begin] [ . . .]. We [ . . .]literally must have had a hundred needs within the community and you can begin to feel [a] sort of unifying effect. I don’t like to be dramatic on this, but it’s something I think about, what was the mix that really got things going?

And then after the study, the study came out and they said, “We’re in better shape than we thought.” We had no mass destructions, we had disturbances, and we knew we had to define what the issues were. We were the home of the state university, the home of Johnson & Johnson, we were the county seat and so by the time we got done – and we had in the beginning the emerging of which are now the Robert Wood Johnson Hospital, all of these [ . . .] seeds out there and we had some [ . . .] downsides, too.

Because the downsides of the educational system, that’s when North Brunswick pulled away and put in their own school system [even though New Brunswick was] [ . . .] a regional school. And so. . .

Isenberg: Who actually conducted the study?

Heldrich: Pardon?

Isenberg: Who conducted the study?

Heldrich: American Cities Corporation.

Isenberg: Oh, so they did, they carried it through with their own staff?

Heldrich: [Yes] [ . . . ] the study. And then I hired, you're going to be meeting with him, Andy Baglivo, because I am trying to build this administrative structure [ . . . ] and we're working night and day. [ . . . ] And so Andy Balglivo, I needed and I got him. The chairman said, "John, whatever you need you'll get." [ . . . ]

Andy Baglivo was the right guy at the right time, he went to Rutgers, Phi Beta Kappa in Journalism. He worked for the *Newark News*, the *Evening News* and got let go from there when they folded. And he became Governor Cahill's communication director and then he started his own business. So our then head of Johnson & Johnson's public relations and communications, [Larry] Foster, also [was a part of the process] [ . . . ], he was the [*Newark Star Ledger*] night editor. So he said, "John, I know a guy." So we sat down with Andy and he then was hired as a consultant. He's been with me for thirty-five years, to this day. So he's grown up with this process and you know it's a very important asset.

His value to me wasn't the value that was how not to get in trouble. (Laughter) I mean because he had, no, he had the experience and you know and he eventually became my closest confidant and we could talk about things. And his great strength was he told you as he saw it. He was never this kind of person who is trying to figure out what you wanted to hear. So we had our differences and most of them were resolved and others were – I had to say, "Right, Andy, everything is fine but this is the way we're going to do it."

So that and the recommendations that came out, what did we call it, New Brunswick Tomorrow, which was the – at that point was the planning group. Because the city had a very strong mayor, John Lynch at that time, and they were starting to build an economic development [department] [ . . . ]. So you had this 501(c)3 for planning and you had a 501(c)3 for

development, which was of course New Brunswick Development Corporation, of which Dick Sellars became chairman . . .

Listokin: And I guess it had picked up some of the echoes of what was in Hartford, but it was set up differently.

Heldrich: Right. Right and that's where I came in because I said, "You have to deal with the physical and the social simultaneously." I mean because we have a responsibility to our people who live here and the people who work here, quoting from the credo, but that's the way you're brought up. And so we formed those two 50(c)3's. And we had a lot of power both from the university and NBT board and you're going to be talking to a couple of the people that were originals in that, Ken Wheeler is an example, and we used to spend hours talking on history. He was very concerned about doing the right thing in the development process.

So this was interesting because at this point, I sat back and I said, "You know, we're all working together." You know, [building] [ . . . ] a coalition, of course that was a community-based group, really and then the development corporation and J&J, we bought Kilmer Square was the first. . . I mean the city was – in the '70's or '68, like most urban cities, [ . . . ] it was dying. I came back from running a plant in Decatur, Illinois, several years before that and I couldn't believe it was my same city because everybody was moving out to the suburbs. And of course you had the impact of World War II veterans who . . .

New Brunswick was 40 percent Hungarian. Well now it's maybe a half percent or maybe one percent, but at that time we had 12 million men and women in World War II. So when the younger generations are coming out and they move all over the world and all over the country and things changed very dramatically. And of course with the exodus to the suburbs and I mean you can get, at that time you could get a no-down payment on a little house and a lot of them

were, there were married people on campus and they had quonset huts.

Berkhout: Right.

Heldrich: Because it was heavily infiltrated by former military people, youngsters, many like myself who went in at 18. And so that. . .

Listokin: If I could. . ?

Heldrich: Yeah, you can interrupt because I wanted . . .

Listokin: I know John Lynch and I know there was a planning department.

Heldrich: Right.

Listokin: I know that they were part of this process, but how did they view this . . . ?

Heldrich: Oh well, they – that’s what I was going to get to is the, take this little Kilmer Square as an example. We bought the land and then we got the Kilmer tree and it was the first little park, new park in the city in years. And we got comments, some of my peers, “That’s not going to work, people are going to throw stuff.” But it became that little park and we started to have music at noontime and lunches and flower shows and it . . .

To me today, when I look back objectively, I say that was a big catalyst. Because for the first time, people started, and you could feel it, started to take pride, here we got the new city. Lynch was very involved in, of course, the development process. He was very smart, I don’t think anyone will get credit for it. He spent a lot of time and effort of getting the infrastructure of the city because he was smart enough to see on the development cycle you have old pipes and things, the city was being dug up and around. And also they had representatives of Devco, the Development Corporation was formed six months after New Brunswick Tomorrow.

In the early days, I sat on both boards and that was something, we had two from New Brunswick Tomorrow and the reverse for Devco on NBT. And the reason for that was checks

and balances in government, it used to be, so you had those checks and balances. So some of the first physical projects, of course with the . . .

Listokin: Plaza One and Plaza Two. . . ?

Heldrich: Right, right.

Listokin: Was that the . . . ?

Heldrich: And they were the first new buildings in eighteen years or twenty years [ . . . ] in the city. And New Brunswick Tomorrow now as the city economic development group and [ . . . ] with the advantage of having Devco was that it was a 501(c) private, so they could speed a lot of things up [with ] [ . . . ] the bureaucracy. [ . . . ] And so it was all part of this unification process and so we started to [move] [ . . . ] NBT [ . . . ] away from planning and within five years they became the social umbrella for the city.

Listokin: So the function of planning was then what? Now the city was better structured to do some of that planning or . . . ?

Heldrich: Well first off, we had the planning work that was done from Molinaro's view, there was a lot of planning.

Listokin: Right, I guess it was the Raymond Parish and Pine studies and there was the Meyer and Schiff studies which all came about. . .

Heldrich: We got them all . . .

Listokin: There was a lot of planning going on.

Heldrich: [Yes] [ . . . ] we had a lot of plans to look at.

Berkhout: So you didn't need NBT to do it.

Heldrich: And that's when I said, we had literally. . .

Listokin: But that happened because of the initiative, of NBT.

Heldrich: Right, but we also had when you really dug in and found, we probably had fifty plans in the city that were done, but nothing never happened. I mean they – and now that was how it was formed and developed over time. [ . . . ] I’m a great believer [in] [ . . . ] ‘Keep things simple.’”

Out of this, this is part of now what’s evolving here, is what I call the New Brunswick Process because we have tried it now. Now when you look, this is called “summit partners,” this is what the mayor calls it. These are the people who make decisions, these are the people. You had UMDNJ, you had City Market, you have the Development Corporation, you had J&J, you had NBT, Rutgers, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, St. Peters, and this goes back to that era. And this was almost an ad hoc group, it wasn’t an official group. We would meet frequently because now you’re unifying and trying to keep people abreast of what the other hand is doing.

One of the things that became very obvious to me that I was not used to at J&J, the left hand didn’t know what the right hand was doing and so by bringing the top players together and [ . . . ] . . .

Berkhout: And you convened them?

Listokin: And bring . . . ?

Heldrich: Pardon?

Berkhout: You convened the partners? You did that, convening the partners or NBT did that?

Heldrich: No, the mayor.

Berkhout: Oh, the mayor did that.

Heldrich: The mayor, the mayor did this.

Berkhout: Okay.

Heldrich: It's very important, one of the big lessons I tell some of the students who come in and talk to me is I say, "Don't bypass local government." I said, "It's their city and when you start – and don't get into confrontational mode, I mean cultivate the city. Even if you don't like them, cultivate them and work with them because we have to do these things together, I mean there is – now, the holistic [model]. . .

Listokin: Now if I can just clarify, the convening of these, the major players, this was being done under the New Brunswick Tomorrow framework or had been done before or in parallel or – I'm just trying to understand the relations.

Heldrich: Well, it actually started before we had the organizations. I mean it actually started when we knew we were conducting the studies. Sorry. Because that's when we started to bring people together, communications was a big thing. I was out, Leo was out. We were out every night explaining to people you know what we were trying to do and needed their support and so forth. And so this is at the mayor's discretion, you don't have a timetable. Now we're up to another long period, I mean I'm covering thirty-five years.

Listokin: And the mayor was then Lynch, this was. . .?

Heldrich: It was Lynch.

Listokin: Lynch, okay.

Heldrich: Well, Pat Sheehan was at the beginning and then Lynch came in and then of course Jim Cahill who's been a superb mayor. One of our great strengths has been continuity in government and Jim Cahill was never interested in going beyond being mayor and that's a blessing because he put all of his energy and time – I mean he was not looking on it as a stepping stone to a run for something else.

Then I established, which I read about and I had one board member and lawyer that shook me up on this, what we call the holistic model. And I remember he raises his hands and he says, “What is this? What are we getting holistic for?” (Laughter) And I said, “You don’t understand, I’ll explain it to you.” And that was the holistic model is that – and this is very unique, I did this at the state level in certain areas – is that we have to learn and develop how to deal with the whole person. We have so much fragmentation, still have so much fragmentation and lack of leveraging of resources and so the holistic model was NBT’s. So it’s become a significant part of addressing the social issues. We can leave this soon because then we’re on the train, we’re really moving.

And then Development Corporation was reorganized and everything had been tied together, I mean as a unified approach. It took a very hard line on this, a hard line being, “You get on the train and if you don’t want to play ball, you get off of it.” And the community bought that and everyone bought that because they could see that – and where did we find our own results – it was through Rutgers.

I said, one day, “You know, in business if we want to know what the consumers think and what’s going on, we go out and we survey.” So we have to have some mechanism to measure our performance over time and of course that was when we . . .

Listokin: That was the Eagleton. . .

Berkhout: The Eagleton Survey.

Heldrich: Which was done for, well every two years for twenty-four years [and lots of] [ . . .]information. To me as chairman, this was – I would study that, it helped do two things for us. It gave a shot when we do this at the same time every two years and it took a while to convince a few people, but [many people] [ . . .] wanted a movable feast, they wanted to pick the

best time to do the survey. And I said, “We do the survey at the same time every two years.”

Listokin: Right.

Heldrich: It may be good, it may be bad, I mean times, but that’s what we should do. And so it was a wonderful tool to get what the sense was [of people] at that point in time. In addition to that, it was an excellent planning tool because as chairman I could go through that and say, “There are issues, take the school.” We’re always negative for a long period of time and then of course you begin to learn it takes time. I mean the physical was great, you look at the survey and the physical, I mean (claps hands) you know because people can see it, they can feel it and they can see the change. The social changes come slower and so we were addressing that issue [followed by a full board meeting] .[ . . .].

And then Devco itself was then going heavily into planning because now the physical was starting to move. And as I often say, what we did is we did the groundwork, we laid some of the first stones and we have a new generation. The thing that concerned me always is the – I applied the same thing I did at J&J, that “Who is replacing you? What is the depth of our organization starting to move people in.” So now we have, see what am I? I’m going to be 84, but you know now we have a base of say 40 to 50 people in most of the key spots and that’s. . .

Listokin: And this is through, you were referring to NBT and Devco and the city’s entity . . . ?

Heldrich: And the other institutions, the . . .

Listokin: The Cultural Center people. . .

Heldrich: The university . . .

Listokin: The major players . . .

Heldrich: [Yes] [ . . .], the major players have all. . . We paid a price for some of

these things, particularly academia because it takes so long for you to replace somebody.

Berkhout: [Yes] [ . . . ].

Heldrich: And so you have these long gaps and then when you have gaps, you lose ground.

Berkhout: Uh hum.

Heldrich: I think the rule of thumb, at least Carl van Horn tells, he said, “Remember the first time you said, ‘Carl, we’ve got to get more faculty in here.’” And he said, “Well it’s going to take about a year.” I said, “A year?” (Laughter) I said. . .

Berkhout: It’s actually taken three, four.

Heldrich: It takes longer. So. . .

Listokin: Can you speak a little more about, because I think that’s one of the more unique aspects was the annual survey. What you view, and now I appreciate better, it was like a consumer survey.

Heldrich: Uh hum.

Listokin: Now how that led to modification in your priorities and actions, in other words the results of the survey then led us to do or spend more time on X, Y and Z or reshift. . .

Heldrich: Two things come out and that’s a very good question because that’s how I view this, you see. Take the schools as an example and what programs are going into the schools? How much money are we addressing to the schools and you start to shift your priorities to inform other people, the people that are givers that are giving money or they want to support special grants or so forth.

Then there are things that pop out that we’re doing a better job than is reflected in the consumer’s mind. That tells us we’re not doing a very good communication’s job. So we would

make adjustments based on that because you have limited resources, no much how money you have. And it's like the universities go through and we all are going through now.

I also used to kid when I'd give talks, you know Ed Koch was mayor at that time. I used to say, "How [are we] [ . . . ] doing?"

Listokin: "How am I doing?"

Berkhout: Right.

Heldrich: I used to walk around the street saying, "How are we doing?" (Laughter) and so that was a – and, of course, very important and this is why I started through NBT the leadership program is that all of these things take leadership and frankly most people don't want to lead, they are willing to work but you have to have somebody who's moving things.

So today, I mean that's the base. I mean if you want to, from my viewpoint, after twenty years I resigned and we had changes at J&J. And we were very fortunate in the period I was there we had Jim Burke who became Chairman and I reported to him and [ . . . ] Dave Claire was the President. [They were] [ . . . ] very supportive of New Brunswick. And you take accounting and Bob Campbell is here and I'll tell you why, he was the Chief Financial Officer and on the Executive Committee, we grew up together. And when I needed money or I had something I'd go, "Hey Bob, you figure out how to sell this. I'll do the selling of the other part." You know and whether we could do it.

In the early years and up until this date, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation was a major player and Johnson & Johnson. Johnson & Johnson is still an important player, but not at the intensity that it was in this period, but the foundation follows the holistic model, you see. I will get money from the foundation to do things and they have their . . .

I had their, we have all kinds of stuff. I've got boxes and boxes and I even have fun

going through them because people wanted to go back and see how did this happen? And it's really a lot of, then the concern. . .

Listokin: Actually if I can, before we leave the Foundation. . .

Heldrich: [Yes] [ . . . ].

Listokin: I know they were very significant in terms of changing Middlesex Hospital into what it is today.

Heldrich: Oh [yes] [ . . . ].

Listokin: But let's go back earlier before that was happening, where were they in this process, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation?

Heldrich: Where were they?

Listokin: Right.

Berkhout: Early on.

Listokin: Were they involved in NBT and . . . ?

Heldrich: Well they have always been – first off, remember it's health-related, ninety percent of their funds go to health. But they have a fairly large window recognizing that health is affected by having better housing, better schools and this is why they fit in. And they were strong supporters of the – well, here it is, I have all of my stuff here. This is the Foundation. “We look for four key characteristics in prospective grantees and partners. These are the vulnerable populations.”

Participant: Okay.

Heldrich: The third one is “The vision to solve problems that affect health by working in a non-traditional environment, by working outside the usual areas of the health focus in places as diverse as schools, streets, jails, our grantees go where health happens to introduce

change. Portfolios and supportive programs give people who need it most the opportunity it needs to take personal responsibility for improving their health and the quality of their life.”

As an example, I got a million dollars from the Foundation to support our emerging performing arts center in New Brunswick. And people say, “How can a health foundation give?” And I said, “Well its part of – it’s going to create jobs, it’s going to create more people coming into the city, it’s going to . . .” Because my vision has always been that New Brunswick, we want to make New Brunswick a designated city where people get up in the morning on a Saturday and the father says, “Well we’re going to go down to New Brunswick, we’ve got the university and they’ve got these programs and the performing arts center.” And so everybody, the boat continues to rise and that’s very key, so that’s how we get support from the Robert Wood Foundation, the rationale for it.

Listokin: Which also parallels your holistic perspective.

Heldrich: Right, exactly.

Berkhout: John?

Heldrich: That’s what I sold them on.

Berkhout: When you first went to Hartford, how did that happen? How did you know about what was going on in Hartford?

Heldrich: I read about it. I read articles.

Berkhout: To know, so you were the one who took the initiative to go to Hartford and find out about it?

Heldrich: [Yes] [ . . . ].

Berkhout: As part of your having to deal with the under-employment issue?

Heldrich: Right. Right. I became a student of, not an academic student, but a

student of the urban [scene].

Berkhout: Right.

Heldrich: I visited over thirty-two cities over my career on this issue. And that's. . .

Listokin: Actually if you can talk a little bit more about that, you know just what you just said.

Heldrich: What?

Listokin: Visiting thirty-two cities, I mean. . .

Berkhout: Visiting thirty-two cities.

Heldrich: Well, they would, every city has been trying and every city has their program. I was very sensitive that when I was invited out not to be in position of one-upmanship. I mean we were trying to do, and I would always preface things in a way. But you do learn, you know. I was out. . .

Now Leo Molinaro was a big help here, because he would set me up in many of these and we worked together because they started the same program up in Hunterdon County. And I said, "Hunterdon County, they have no problem." But they were having problems, too, because of the. . . So they modeled some stuff through us.

Listokin: So actually you came to American Cities Corporation through your visit to Hartford, not the other way around?

Heldrich: No I read, no I read about the Hartford process, they mentioned that and I got, you know – but I was reading everything that I could at the time along with my regular job.  
(Laughter)

Listokin: Any other, within New Jersey besides Hunterdon County, looking at what Jersey City and Newark.

Heldrich: Yeah, I visited and of course Camden has been a – I have been down there a couple of times. Leadership's poor, as you know. [ . . . ] It's a tough area. And Trenton, they've had an economic development group, but very fragmented. I'd say the weakness in a lot of the cities I visited, they didn't have our unity, what I call unity of purpose, you know.

But we've got, we've got plenty of information. I mean I've got piles and piles of it. But we have a lot of. When I was talking to Thea – I mean my dream has been, but it's not in the . . . But nothing happens because our resources have been turned to other places, but New Brunswick has everything, it is a revolutionary city. I mean the university, I mean if we could put this all together, I've thought about one of our buildings like when I visited Germany a number of years ago when the new Reichstag was built in that little center and they have this huge – have you been there?

Berkhout: In Berlin?

Heldrich: Berlin and they have this huge, it looks like a stadium. It goes around and around.

Berkhout: I have seen pictures of it.

Heldrich: And it's the history of Germany.

Berkhout: Yeah.

Heldrich: Good and bad.

Berkhout: Right.

Heldrich: And I said, – we couldn't put it up, but I was thinking – it's a microcosm of that and we could take our citizens and our new people coming in and move them around and say, "Here is the history of the city, from a revolutionary city. Here is what each group has been able to contribute to it" – because our demographics changes are dramatic now. I mean and so . .

. And everybody gets very excited about it, but it's not a funding thing because your demands are more short-term. But maybe the next generation will be able to do that.

But I think what Thea started here and all of you is – kind of the seeds of an opportunity maybe to – I mean there are so many parts to this, I mean you could spend a lifetime on one part. But it's like they have done, I have gotten funding for them, too, for the mapping program.

Berkhout: Oh, uh hum. You mean for the county, for the visitors center?

Heldrich: For the state.

Berkhout: Oh the state, okay.

Heldrich: [Yes] [ . . . ], that's what's her name? She put out the, they put out the manual on New Jersey, the big book on the history of New Jersey.

Isenberg: The encyclopedia? Marc Mappen and Marlie Wasserman?

Heldrich: [Yes] [ . . . ].

Berkhout: Okay, great I do remember that, right.

Heldrich: And they had this mapping, J&J is going to host. . .

Berkhout: Right, in October.

Heldrich: In October.

Isenberg: Over the span of the last forty years, would you single out any people who represented the voice of the history of New Brunswick, its industrial history, its social history, you know in the same way that we can identify mayors or hospital leadership? Were there people that you would recall or that maybe we should seek out in interviewing.

Heldrich: Undoubtedly and I shouldn't say this but there's a lot of people [who have died].

Berkhout: Yeah.

Heldrich: But the city has of course the historian, don't they? I think there's . . .

Berkhout: I don't know. I know the librarian, Bob Belvin who got his PhD in history, in fact at Rutgers who has been New Brunswick Librarian certainly has a wealth of material there.

Heldrich: [Yes] [ . . . ].

Berkhout: But I don't know if that's who you're talking about. There is somebody in the mayor's office who is a historian?

Heldrich: I don't know. Well we have a historical society, don't we?

Listokin: Yes.

Heldrich: [Yes] [ . . . ].

Berkhout: But I think its county, I think its Middlesex County.

Heldrich: We'll, see, I don't know how you approach this thing. I would, if you can get X-number of graduate students and give them assignments. . .

Berkhout: Well we have one.

Heldrich: I'm just saying, find out where all of these resources are. I mean I have a place here with boxes and boxes that I'm trying to go through to really separate the corn from the chaff, because you've got a lot of garbage in there, that deal with New Brunswick and the things that were done and the people we've had in and so forth. But you know there are tapes, some of them are at NBT, some of them are at Devco, and some of them are in the library.

Berkhout: Right and you said Andy Baglivo has some?

Listokin: If I can, we don't have to have the last work on it, but let me just tell you some of the places we have been going and then you mentioned some. The Alexander Library in their archival room they have various things. They don't have a vertical file on New Brunswick, but

if you put in New Brunswick Tomorrow, you put in City of New Brunswick and things come out.

Heldrich: Right.

Listokin: You know the master plan from 1957 and the original American Cities study and the Meyers and Schiff, etc. so that's one good source. The City of New Brunswick has actually a good assemblage, in part they were keeping in their version of a vertical file, so they were doing clippings from the *Home News* on lots of [historical information on] [ . . . ] the early and later stages on it.

We'd like to access your files because I think your file and you're very organized, etc. I mean you are being modest. We need to access your files. We will approach NBT . . .

Heldrich: Some of them are here.

Listokin: We will approach NBT and Devco. I guess one of the things would be if we went further on that list, where else and who are some of the people that we absolutely need to talk to who are accessible currently? So first on the sources of information before we leave that, I've mentioned some. Do any others come to mind?

Heldrich: Well, it depends.

Berkhout: You had mentioned Andy Baglivo probably has a lot of files in his office.

Heldrich: Well, he knows where they are.

Berkhout: Okay.

Heldrich: You know, I think the core of it is what we have really covered, although it depends . . .

Berkhout: J&J must have files.

Heldrich: You know, you get from a history viewpoint. St. Peter's Hospital just put

out a hundredth year, all of these are part of the bits and pieces that. . .

Isenberg: That's right, they would have received copies of the meeting. . .

Heldrich: The whole history of Robert – see, I don't know what they do within the hospitals.

Isenberg: That's a good question.

Heldrich: All of the big institutions, I mean these are all. . .

Berkhout: What would have J&J kept?

Listokin: What would J&J have kept?

Heldrich: That's a good question. They have a – I'd have to check on that, I'm not sure where they kept in it. There's a lot of J&J from the General all the way down and as you talk to some of the people that have been involved – another good source though, what Andy tried to do is, which is an interesting issue I have to deal with because it sounds like everything was rosy, everything wasn't rosy but we kept things moving. When any kind of publication would come out and if you didn't mention the city, you know you got calls from the city or vice versa. So we tried to go through all of the annual reports from NBT.

Isenberg: Okay.

Heldrich: Andy did try to incorporate it so it really became what was happening at Devco, what was happening here.

Berkhout: Right.

Heldrich: But it wasn't designed to do that, because you were reporting on New Brunswick Tomorrow activity.

Berkhout: Right.

Heldrich: The other thing that is very important to understand and I still tell them

this today is that when you're doing a survey, it's the whole city, it's not New Brunswick. In people's mind, you raise the questions and they answer them but they are not saying, "Well that's New Brunswick Tomorrow and that's the Development Corporation and that's Rutgers University." Except when they get the polls, is Rutgers University good for the community?

Well if you're like J&J, you're in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile, we've been there since the beginning. So we don't have to in a sense go around and beat our own chests and people know that and it's been consistent. Now you get some negatives from time to time, but that's something you address.

Listokin: If I could and again we're viewing this as a reconnaissance of first discussion rather than a last discussion. But if I can just try to summarize some of your thoughts on what do you think was key to the success of what was done and maybe if we can talk a little bit more about that. So one was the multi-group involvement, you know bringing the different players and the public and private sectors.

Heldrich: Right.

Listokin: This holistic perspective on how you revitalize and in fact all of the elements need to be addressed, you know education, physical, etc. Now having an effective organizational structure, it didn't exist at the city level and here you have between NBT and Devco, sort of two immediate arms, NBT originally planning and Devco of course remained development. NBT over time maybe shifted some from planning into the more holistic.

Heldrich: NBT doesn't do any planning anymore.

Listokin: Even though of course originally it sparked a lot of planning.

Heldrich: Yeah.

Listokin: The feedback, you know, the annual feedback through the surveys, etc,

any other elements? If you said, “What were the features that helped contribute to what was successful?” I mentioned four or five, any others that you think were key?

Heldrich: Yeah, well, you can get into and maybe I’m not – the things that you have mentioned were all part of it, but you take again our relationship to the county and our relationship to the state, New Brunswick – and we’ve been fortunate over the years to have had good support and that gets into . . .

Like well the bridge situation is the example, I just point that out here. I mean we could not have, I mean a lot of people felt that J&J was being a little hard-nosed here, but we were going to stay here in New Brunswick, we would always have had a presence, but our new headquarters. And it was very critical that the bridge be done and that was held up as we discussed earlier.

But it was, which Governor now, is he 90 now or 70, Byrne, Governor Byrne, we had him down at the time and said – because everybody wanted to know, “Is J&J going to move out?” And he said, “Well we can’t accomplish the objectives of building the groundwork for the renaissance of this city unless you deal with Route 18.”

Berkhout: Hum.

Heldrich: And of course, years later they’re doing it again. And then that was approved. Those kinds of things, I mean there is big. . .

Listokin: And also it’s not just to the county and state, it’s actually to the federal government.

Heldrich: Yeah and that really. . .

Listokin: With the UDAG and so on.

Heldrich: When you meet with the mayor, that’s not my bag. I mean I know there

was a lot of, I was involved in some of the things just to help get them to fit right. See my era stopped, I'm still – which I enjoy because it's off the record, I've got a sign on my door that says, "Old Sage" (Laughter), so it's a nice position to be here.

Berkhout: You should see some of the pictures up there.

Heldrich: And I could talk and I can suggest and I can give history and I can do things and I don't have to worry about making the decisions, but I love the city and we have come a long way. An example was the, I'm talking about myself now.

I was at the tenth floor of the Heldrich, this goes back maybe right after it was opened. And I was standing there looking out over the city as dusk was coming in and I said, "There's something missing." And of course it was the importance of the performing arts center to bring life to everything, you know. And it was somewhat analogous to people saying, "What keeps J&J together?" You know you have 350 [operations around] [ . . . ] the world, our Credo, that's the common denominator. It's our Credo that keeps up together because if we all follow a credo and do what we're supposed to do, we'll be okay.

And that excited me a lot, you know so I have been heavily involved in the performing arts center raising money and trying to get – and that's going to be a boon to the city. Because we do know today that none of the arts organizations, they're all in debt you know. They are undercapitalized and there is a lot of duplication. So administratively, if we can accomplish what we see can be accomplished, there will be very substantial amounts of money thrown in. Plus part of this is a new office building and condominiums, so you get the air rights and you negotiate that and get that money to drop down for the arts.

Listokin: That's how it's done in New York City, as an example, the Broadway theatres in part have survived by selling the air rights, and they have to have demand. Okay so

part of the reasons why I asked what the elements were was the concept of transferability, again what were the elements that led to the success here? Let's talk about – if you had these elements, a multi-group holistic organizational structure, feedback, you know good relations with the full gamut of the political system, etc. Would it work in Camden or – what also distinguished New Brunswick is a coming together of economic functions that aren't always true elsewhere.

Heldrich: Yeah.

Listokin: How transferrable is this model?

Heldrich: Well, my answer to that is its leadership. I mean you can go down, I have been down to Camden twice. I mean to share information, but you know it's so political, and Trenton itself, I've been there several times, is you know a many splendored thing.

Cooper: When you say leadership do you mean public leadership in the public sector or private sector or what type of leadership?

Heldrich: I probably shouldn't get into this, but what I'm saying is that we haven't demonstrated providing the ethical and competent leadership to drive to do the right things. Everything is political, I mean it's very . . . [ . . . ]. It's like cleaning out anything. But the people have to rise up, I mean you talk about this and everybody agrees with you and they say, "Well that's New Jersey."

Berkhout: I know.

Heldrich: It's like it's become part of our culture. It's part of our culture to have a [soft] [ . . . ] ethics, part of our culture. You know fifty-cents, nobody can prove this yet so I haven't been brought up short, I spend twenty years also down in Trenton, I founded under Governor Kean, a terrific guy. And you know the State Commission on Employment, Training and Education and I was convinced that fifty-cents out of every dollar gets eaten up in the

bureaucracy and only about fifty percent go to the people that need it, so there is something wrong. You know there is something wrong there.

But so I guess what I'm saying is that some of our problems in the state are so severe, I mean it's. . . From my experience, I mean everything you get into is political. I mean it's who you know and what you know and who is going to get so much here. I mean rather than saying, "Here's the damn issue and we've got to work to get it done."

Cooper:        Yeah.

Heldrich:      And you've got to clean house. [ . . . ].

Listokin:      On a different tack, with the benefit – we've spoken about things that you thought were important and some of the major milestone achievements. With the benefit of hindsight and there's always 20/20 hindsight, things you would have done differently? You know, looking back we've spoken of things that were done right and things that if I knew then what I know now, things that may have been done somewhat differently?

Heldrich:      Well, yeah that's a good question, I've been asked that a couple of times.

Listokin:      I'm asking that respectfully.

Heldrich:      No, no, listen that's very important. I think I was in an era when you're building the base of going forward, I conceptually would do the same thing. Now, a lot gets tied to change, I mean change is what you struggle with at the state level and it drives me crazy. [ . . . ].

But one gets elected, it could be the same party but it takes a year for them to you know take care of all the people they own their votes to and then you have two years and they start. . .

Listokin:      Re-election.

Heldrich:      They start campaigning, so continuity is a very important word here. It's a

gnawing question because it's hard because people change, I think. See you build up, you build up your network and you build up your base and you it's like running a team, you know. And then all of sudden you loose players and you have to get some new players in. But we still have great opportunity there.

Well to give you another specific, which we didn't know as much about, technology. I mean there are so many things we can do now technologically. I mean other things I have mentioned, to this day I think we've got 400 agencies in New Brunswick, it's a fragmentation. I said, "Somebody's got to grab that by the thing and say" – you know they are tough decisions, what can be consolidated and what can be eliminated and what can be – and that, of course, is rife for politics, too because everybody is agitating. Now I like that, I mean that's part of, I like to get into that because I feel I can help solve it, you know when you get into it. I used to, you know.

And people have to have, an awful lot comes back to leadership and they have to have respect for their leadership. I mean their integrity and so forth and that's in short – of course, I come from a different generation and have different view points, that's the book by Brokaw, you know, *The Greatest Generation*, and the J&J Executive Committee I was on, we were all veterans. It was great, tremendous passion for doing things.

This right here today started with the General sixty-five years ago, I have the policy someplace. He established a policy way back that if you retire from the Executive Committee at Johnson & Johnson and continue in community activity and in his vision, world community, non-compensatory, in other words, you are not getting paid, volunteer, that they would furnish you office space and administrative support and so this is what we have. Now it has changed, unfortunately. I have been retired twenty years and everything I do I have never taken a dime

for. I think I have built my reputation up on the basis of really my integrity.

But what's changed some of it is over time has been when J&J didn't have outside directors. We were not allowed to go on outside boards. But when we had to bring – and it's the right thing to do and as the corporation got bigger – bring outside directors in, then they would allow J&J executives to go on boards of other companies. [ . . .].

Berkhout: Right.

Heldrich: [ . . .]

Isenberg: Do you find that when you were contacted directly by other cities as David said, who were interested in the groundwork that was being laid here and seeing the glimmers of success, were you mostly contacted by corporate leadership in those other cities or by the city mayoral leadership?

Heldrich: You have different sources there. You have the chairman, the chairman type thing.

Isenberg: Right.

Heldrich: You had Leo Molinaro was always out, I mean he would recommend or I was also involved at the state level and so I would get contacts. There are some things written, Andy had a lot of stuff that's been published on this, so they were all of the connections.

Isenberg: Do you recall specific cities that reached out to you, you know a phone call from Rochester or a phone call from Orlando, Florida, or do you have any particular stories?

Heldrich: [Yes} [ . . .], it's like I didn't know them at the time and I forgot his name now, in Trenton, the head of their economic development would call me, but these are all close, knowledge-based people, too. Now the ones that were further out, like we went out to Cincinnati once and we went out to Michigan once were really through the network of Leo.

Berkhout: You mentioned Cincinnati to me and what mistakes they had made.

Heldrich: Well yeah, I really have to clarify that.

Berkhout: You said something about not involving the community or something.

Heldrich: Well, a lot of mistakes were made in this area where the company said, “We’re committed to community and we’ll put up new housing.” But they were making it unilateral, in other words, they would go out and they would do these things or they would put up the new office building and that was like their contribution to revitalization. And of course the people, the community was upset because they said that nobody talked to us.

Berkhout: Right.

Heldrich: Nobody asked what we felt the needs were. And when I would go out to these places, I’d say it was very important. They wanted to do good and they did do good, but they didn’t get any credit for it and that was the thing.

Berkhout: Right.

Heldrich: And I said, of course, you have to put leadership into the mix. I had my whole staff, I have this all documented, but it’s a big change today in a way. But my whole staff had a responsibility to New Brunswick, I had [eight] [ . . . ] vice presidents reporting to me. And they would take on the jobs and they weren’t forced to do this but I mean it was all part of our culture at J&J.

Listokin: On the looking back, clearly most of the development that occurred in New Brunswick was new construction as opposed to rehabilitation or you know preservation, etc.

Heldrich: Yeah.

Listokin: The thinking there . . .

Heldrich: That probably is a general statement, but there were things done just recently in recent years with the administration building. They converted it where the court houses were, they converted it into apartments.

Listokin: They reclad the outside.

Berkhout: And the State Theatre, of course.

Heldrich: Yeah, there were things done. I think the bigger part of the apple was and things have happened with Rutgers, I mean, we just had the big opening. So, yeah, I'd say it's a larger percentage, but you're going to be meeting with Chris, right?

Berkhout: Yes.

Heldrich: And he's been around long enough and he's been the avant guard of this. I mean we've made, really in the days was involved, these are leaps, big leaps forward. I mean when you put up two buildings, you know what we thought was fantastic. And of course the J&J headquarters and the Hyatt and all of those things, it's all J&J.

Berkhout: I guess one of the more and I even remember this, one of the more controversial areas was the Hiram District. Because I remember when I was working with Kenneth Wheeler at the time that there were more public meetings about whether we preserve those buildings and I guess some of them were where the Frog and the Peach is.

Heldrich: Oh yeah.

Berkhout: But north of towards Nelson Street was taken down. But I remember at that time I guess there used to be. . .

Heldrich: I reminisce with Joe Black and of course he is the owner and his wife was the chef because there was a tough time of whether they were going to come down or were they going to stay up.

Participant: Right.

Heldrich: But thank God they're still there.

Listokin: Well I have these discussions with my students. I remember when the mill buildings were up.

Berkhout: Right.

Listokin: So you could have said, "Well if the mill buildings would have stayed, you would have had great lofts, etc."

Berkhout: Right.

Listokin: You know where this building is. On the other hand, these were buildings serving – the new buildings were serving functions that were important so it's not all that easy. Hiram Street was always a good point, it was the oldest remaining portion of the city by the river and so that made sense.

Berkhout: Right.

Heldrich: And they have done, I think they have done – I mean the critics will always be the critics, but you know this mayor and this administration I think have done an [excellent] [ . . . ] balancing job between affordable housing because you need both and that's very key. We've got those housing projects down. I mean whoever dreamed those up in the day, I mean they are about as conducive to – I mean it was like a jail.

Isenberg: New Brunswick Homes, yeah.

Heldrich: Right there on the highway, I mean it was – you know and it was very difficult.

Isenberg: Those were constructed mid-'50's, I think, the New Brunswick Homes?

Heldrich: In the '50's, yeah.

Isenberg: I think it was the '50's.

Listokin: Another area you know was the level of involvement of the neighborhood groups and the communities. Actually when you go back to some of the founding documents like the American Cities, you see how there was – just like there was a church group that was involved. So clearly in its times, there was a lot of outreach.

Heldrich: Oh, yeah.

Listokin: Could there have been more, I mean again looking back? You know if you were doing things today would you have to have done more?

Heldrich: It's difficult, you can always do more, I guess. But I mean it was. . . Now you'll be seeing Roy Epps, I assume?

Listokin: Yes.

Heldrich: Now he's been with me on this also from the beginning, you know. Which is good, you'll get a different perspective. We have, the kinds of things that we have, I just pulled out a few things that I want to share with you.

Now this report isn't public yet. The Foundation, because of the amount of money that poured into the NBT over the years, they engaged a fellow named Bill Bunch. He's the *Philadelphia Daily News* political writer. He got a number of awards, a pretty top-flight reporter, and a pretty fine guy. He was engaged by the Foundation to kind of do a broad review of NBT and this is his report but it hasn't been released yet. But it's also another interesting story because he spent a lot of time, I mean he dug up a lot of things on the process. Once that is something, I think all of these things will be helpful.

Berkhout: You said Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded that?

Heldrich: Yeah.

Berkhout: And it's a study of, it's a review of NBT?

Isenberg: It's historical as well or more of the moment?

Heldrich: They picked a specific period, more contemporary.

Isenberg: I see.

Heldrich: They wanted to see – and he's been around, this fellow. He's uncovered things that they are addressing now, I mean more aggressively and one is the impact of the demographic changes and the social setting because it's very heavily Hispanic now. But the mayor is very, very – he of course is from the city and grew up here and I think he's an exceptional mayor to have stayed as long as he has. And he does do the right thing and he does have some good people around him. So he'll be a great source.

Berkhout: I have a couple of specific questions, because we're going to be seeing Kenneth Wheeler tomorrow and I know that Kenneth has told me in the past that he had a hard time getting Rutgers very involved early on and that he used to tell Ed Bloustein all the time, "Ed, we should be doing more for the city."

Heldrich: That's true.

Berkhout: And Kenneth became sort of the representative of Rutgers.

Heldrich: Well he was the Provost, wasn't he?

Berkhout: He was the Provost and he also was an urban historian and I'm just wondering two things. How much influence – and I know you knew Kenneth well from Highland Park, was he helpful in helping more broadly about the history of the city and what cities could be?

Heldrich: There are a lot of things I talked to a lot of people on. They weren't all my creations that it helped solidify. Of course I knew when he was appointed by Bloustein,

that's who I went to and Bloustein himself was engaged.

Berkhout: He was, okay.

Heldrich: In fact, he was the last one to be engaged as president. He said the difference between just putting them on a board or putting them on for a number of reasons was that he wanted people who want to be on the board who are engaged in the process because that's what you're bringing to the table. Now sometimes it's money, I mean that's all part of the thing. But Rutgers has been – there are kinds of things. I mean you have got a lot of programs in the city, particularly the school and I think I'd like to see more.

With all due respect I have found over the years it's hard to get – because you have to write so many books and papers, you get detracted from community activity, is that a fair statement?

Berkhout: Yeah.

Listokin: No.

Heldrich: Not you . . .

Berkhout: No.

Heldrich: But I think as I look back you know trying to get people involved in the university and I mean and the hard work.

Listokin: And you can just look at the Department of Planning and our planning and public policy, there is – it's the exception if something is being looked at that's New Brunswick.

Berkhout: Right.

Listokin: I mean it's almost like what's immediately in front of you, that doesn't excite you. If you are a native New Yorker, you don't visit the Empire State Building.

Heldrich: One of the staff at the Heldrich Center who now has his PhD and he's very

mature now, it's been ten years. When I first met him when he was in school, he says to me he says, "Mr. Heldrich, how did . . . ?" The same question we're talking about. "How did New Brunswick get this way?"

And I said, "Well you just got your Master's in it, you tell me. (Laughter)

Berkhout: It must have been Aaron Fichtner.

Heldrich: It was sort of fun, I mean but he was – so I spent time with him. If you can be more specific, I'll tell you.

Berkhout: I guess that kind of surprises me and maybe irks me a bit, I guess, that Rutgers hasn't been as involved because it's so vital to the life, especially student life. And there have been proposals in the past and I don't know if you remember Peter Eisenman.

Heldrich: Yeah.

Berkhout: But I have the drawing hanging outside of my office of an arena that he designed for the downtown and thought all of the student services could be put in there and you'd actually bring students to the downtown. But I mean Rutgers has kept its separate campuses and even now we have this one residence hall downtown, it really hasn't – I don't think it has been involved enough in kind of thinking through how do we get students more involved? How do we bring them into the downtown? How do we get them to think about that part of the community?

Heldrich: Well we had a group up from not Duke. . .

Isenberg: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill?

Heldrich: A North Carolina group came up and they were highly impressed with the new dormitory.

Berkhout: Right. Yes, I think Chapel Hill, they are doing a lot of building there.

Heldrich: They picked up on that right away, it was right in town. And I guess it's mostly graduate students, too, in it.

Berkhout: There are undergraduates there, too.

Heldrich: Oh there are undergraduate students?

Participant: Yeah.

Heldrich: Well from my observations, I think there has been a lot accomplished between university and the collaboration with Devco. Stresses and strains, you always have stresses and strains.

Berkhout: But the initiative was always taken by Devco as far as I can see, rather than the university saying, "We need to do this"?

Heldrich: Yeah.

Berkhout: Or do you feel the university took those initiatives?

Heldrich: Well that I don't know, yeah. But the university is a very important key to this whole thing and has been. Dick Sellars when he was here, the chairman of the board spent ten years as head of Devco.

Berkhout: Head of Devco?

Heldrich: Yeah.

Berkhout: Now is he somebody we can still talk with?

Heldrich: No, he's very ill.

Berkhout: He's very ill?

Heldrich: Yeah, he's up in Osterville and he's 92 and he's. . .

Berkhout: Does he have . . . ?

Listokin: Some of the, and I've jotted down some of the early people involved, is

Abraham Wallach someone we should talk to, is available?

Heldrich: No he's gone, that was a big controversy.

Listokin: I know he was here just a little bit.

Heldrich: But he was the, see he's a planner.

Listokin: Right, he was in Jersey City.

Heldrich: In fact, the whole staff was a planning group at that time and then I brought Ted Hargrove in.

Berkhout: Oh yeah, Ted Hargrove.

Heldrich: Ted Hargrove was a true community leader which I thought we needed because the planning was shifting within the city and Devco.

Berkhout: Is he still living? Is he available to talk to?

Heldrich: Who's that?

Berkhout: Ted Hargrove.

Heldrich: Oh yeah, yeah. I don't have his address handy, but I can get it for you, yeah. He was here. And then Jeff Vega came right out of – he was the first Hispanic to graduate from school here.

Berkhout: Vega, yeah.

Heldrich: And I hired him.

Berkhout: And Jim Burke, is he – is it James Burke?

Heldrich: Yeah he was actively involved from the standpoint of commitment of Johnson & Johnson, but he's also not well.

Berkhout: He's not well?

Heldrich: I'm getting worried, all of these World War II guys.

Listokin: Of those who we haven't mentioned who would you recommend?

Heldrich: I have to go to my list and I'll do that. The best thing and what I do as I go, I have all of the annual reports.

Isenberg: Right. I was interested, you described the symbolic importance of the park, of Kilmer Park and whether you might . . . ? Do you recall who might have taken the lead behind the park, designing the park?

Heldrich: Oh, it was Dick Sellars.

Isenberg: Oh so that was Sellars, okay.

Heldrich: He was a great. . .

Berkhout: He liked physical planning you said?

Heldrich: We had Kilmer House then. Joyce Kilmer worked for Johnson & Johnson.

Isenberg: Oh, is that right? Okay.

Heldrich: So and there is the Kilmer. . . Talk about history, we have a, I forget who runs it now, the house, the house.

Berkhout: Right, the one on Joyce Kilmer Avenue?

Heldrich: Yeah.

Isenberg: Yeah. Do you remember any of the architects or landscape architects in particular that were involved in these early stages?

Heldrich: No, not in the early day. The names. . .

Listokin: It was Meyers and Schiff but they were like an overarching with a number of, including I think some landscape architects.

Heldrich: We had I.M. Pei well that's another. Well there is so many, one of the

units I had under me was the facilities planning and construction. And of course it's an I.M. Pei building, we contracted with him and he was fantastic. So one day I talked and I said to him, "I.M., I'd like to see you make a schematic of how New Brunswick, of how you would see New Brunswick in the future?" So I put him on the helicopter and took him on the helicopter around the county and so forth. I didn't think, but he – and then we drove around.

And he came back and he drew circles down where the Hyatt is now and said, "This is your hotel." And then he went up and we had of course the city hall. "This is your government center." Another big circle. And he kept going around and the performing arts center, he put the State Theatre and he said, "This whole area would be a wonderful performing arts center." So he was a very conceptual guy, so he laid this out. I have it someplace in my files. And was helpful in . . .

And we used him when we were getting into the J&J design, you know he came down and we had a community presentation because we just like to get – part of my objective was to keep people excited and feeling good that things are moving, you know, and the polls will show over all of the years of course the physical improvements are always higher because people can see it.

And the social, the other side is a little more difficult because you can't see it all the time. It's a matter of watching trends or their attitude towards certain institutions.

Berkhout: John, going back to the landscape architecture question, I remember many years ago there was that old PSE&G building or whatever it was. . .

Heldrich: Public Service.

Berkhout: Public Service and Haas, a painter, had that big trompe l'oeil painting on the side of the building.

Heldrich: Oh yeah.

Berkhout: And then it became, it made you feel like if you were walking down the sidewalk, you'd walk right through the. . .

Heldrich: We had people, we had a couple of people on bicycles that went right into the wall. (Laughter)

Berkhout: And then there was some controversy, it was always slated to come down, I guess but then in the meantime you were having it look nice.

Heldrich: Public Service, that was of course a power station.

Berkhout: Yes, right.

Heldrich: And that was again under me.

Berkhout: It was right across the street in front of the Hyatt, in front of where J&J is.

Heldrich: When I talked with Public Service, it was Jim Burke looked out his window one day and he calls me up and says, "John" and he's the one that recommended the artwork on it.

Berkhout: The painting?

Heldrich: And we had that done and I think we were on cycle and about two years we had to wait. By then when I got the people in, I said "How fast can you get it down" because it became a place to go see.

Berkhout: Yes, right.

Heldrich: And I said, "We told everyone ahead of time this was eventually to come down."

Berkhout: Yeah.

Heldrich: And they said, we'll get it down over the weekend, at that time. And my

flowers are going up on the bridge again, that started.

Berkhout: Yeah and the flowers were all part of, I had always heard a story that, I don't know if it was Burke or somebody from J&J spent a lot of time in European cities and really liked the fact that the European cities had so many flowers and we didn't.

Heldrich: Yeah.

Berkhout: Is that, was that . . . ?

Heldrich: Part of me, but a lot of people were traveling of course because I was directly involved. We originally put them on the railings before they put that. Oh that was the area that Pei was – you know, remember the bridge and they started to put that white facing on the railroad bridge?

Berkhout: Right.

Heldrich: He said, "That's terrible, absolutely terrible. You are destroying the beauty of that." And he got to Burke and Burke called and got my people you know to call the state and they stopped. You can still see where they stopped doing that. And there are so many side stories on this thing.

The night we had the hearing on Route 18, we had it at the high school. And I was to be one of the speakers and we had everybody lined up as to why we needed the Route 18. And of course, they knew, and a guy comes up to me and says, "Oh Mr. Heldrich don't worry. They will go to the public speakers first and he said you are close to the top." He said, "You'll be able to leave whenever you are ready." Well, they had this hearing, I think there were twenty people left and I was still sitting there. So I got up and I said, "I'm going to give my talk anyhow," which I did. So I got some publicity, not that I planned it.

But there were so many, big things came out of some crazy ways. I mean, my wife, of

course Regina got the first flower show at the Kilmer Square. We used to have a flower show. And then she told J&J what plants to put in for the bridge.

Berkhout: I see.

Heldrich: And that's another funny story because I walked to work, as you know, for twenty years. I mean back and forth. And so when we put them up originally along the railings, they were being pulled up at night. Kids would pull them up and so forth.

Berkhout: Oh, right.

Heldrich: So then we got permission from the state to hang them up, but they only did it on one side, the side I walked on.

Berkhout: Yeah and that was a much more attractive bridge than the one that's there now. It used to be an older bridge with nice railings.

Heldrich: Oh yeah, they put those so people don't jump. I mean it's another law that – I.M. Pei was, he said what have we got these things blocking this beautiful bridge and so forth? And I said, "Because people may jump in." He said, "If they want to jump in, let them jump in."

Berkhout: Right. (Laughter)

Heldrich: But it's a journey that was absolutely memorable and I'm really glad you're taking a shot at it.

Listokin: We're very pleased we have this opportunity.

Heldrich: So anytime.

Listokin: So maybe we should, we have gone a while.

Berkhout: Right.

Listokin: Thank you and as I said, this is really the pilot reconnaissance. We're doing research in a lot of places.

Heldrich: Oh yeah, I understand.

Listokin: Your files will be invaluable.

Heldrich: Well maybe I can get through them before you . . . (Laughter)

Isenberg: Don't throw away too much. (Laughter)

Heldrich: Well there have been suggestions, they wanted to write. . . Going back several years ago a couple efforts to write the whole story but it never got off the ground.

Isenberg: It will.

Heldrich: It's one of those things that everyone thinks is a great idea but until you get down to getting the resources and the time.

Listokin: Yeah, it's time.

Isenberg: So it will happen, yeah.

Berkhout: Well it's amazing how many people when they heard about it are interested in giving some funding for it, including J&J has some interest now as well.

Heldrich: Yeah.

Berkhout: We're talking with them.

Heldrich: You're talking with their. . ?

Berkhout: Well it went to communications and then communications gave it to Michael Bzdak and so Joyce Hendricks is kind of trying to work on where might be the best place because then it gets all involved in that block grant. We're trying to get them to see this as also a communications-related project, so we'll see.

Listokin: That's also presenting this in an attractive fashion.

Berkhout: Right.

Listokin: So it's not just this little report, who knows. As it turns out, I have a

number of students, Glenn Paterson was a former student.

Heldrich: Oh, is that right?

Listokin: He's been Head of Planning and Economic Development I think now what for twenty or twenty-five years.

Berkhout: Wow.

Listokin: A lot time. Chris Foglio was a former student.

Berkhout: Right.

Listokin: We've got a bunch of people.

Heldrich: We've got a built in – they all can add things.

Berkhout: Right.

Heldrich: Well I'm pleased you're doing what you're doing.

Berkhout: Good.

Listokin: Well, thank you. We're going to be frequent visitors here.

Heldrich: Any time, I'm not in as much as I used to be, but I'm still. . .

Isenberg: I know that on occasion the library sciences students at Rutgers have helped individuals and businesses organize their collections. I don't know if that is of interest to you, but there are some of the students whose own interests are in business history or urban or suburban history. But if you find that you, everything from the right kind of folders to how to decide what to keep or throw away, so if you're interested in that help I'm sure that a student would be thrilled to do that as a project for a semester.

Heldrich: Yeah, that's a good idea.

Isenberg: If you want some company.

Berkhout: Right. We could find out about it.

Berkhout: Yeah, do you know faculty who would oversee somebody doing this?

Isenberg: Oh definitely.

Berkhout: Okay.

Isenberg: Certainly.

Heldrich: See the workforce development came and that's been a long passion of mine. I've got another one now. But to have had for years I worked on the state's literacy.

Isenberg: Oh, okay. Well it sounds like actually we should do a separate interview with you some time purely on the employment, underemployment, and workforce development aspect of your work.

Berkhout: Right.

Listokin: And there are other cuts here, the whole cultural side, that's its own story.

Isenberg: Yes.

Listokin: Right the public arts, the performing arts center, the murals.

Berkhout: Well Kenneth will tell us the story tomorrow about the State Theater, I'm sure, because that was one of his. . .

Heldrich: He was very, because I knew him so well, but he was very good at identifying very legitimate concerns that could have been mistakenly done.

Berkhout: Right.

Heldrich: Yeah, so . . .

Listokin: I know that was a survey we did, I think it was about twenty or twenty-five years ago. We spoke to shoppers and asked their zip codes. At that point, retail in New Brunswick was almost all local.

Berkhout: Right.

Listokin: The contrast was the attendees to the State Theatre.

Berkhout: Right.

Listokin: Which was a huge swatch and actually in terms of economic functions, culture is important. What is the economic function of a post-industrial city? Well culture is important, health services are important, restaurants are important.

Berkhout: Right.

Listokin: It becomes. . .

Heldrich: Yeah, we have good restaurants today, too many good ones. (Laughter) I try not to discriminate and I go to one and then, oh I haven't been back. There are too many good ones, I can't make it around. Okay. . .

Isenberg: Thank you for your time.

Listokin: I'm going to take a few minutes.

Berkhout: Yeah, take those down. I'll let you deal with this one, too. I'll put these away. You should take a look at the drawings and the picture of John outside of his office here, right outside in the hallway.

Heldrich: Oh that, oh yeah. I didn't put that up.

[End of recording]