

Morris Kafka



DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The interview with Morris Kafka is a valuable component of this oral history collection. Whereas many of the interviews come from the side of the ‘establishment’ or the power-players in positions of influence, Kafka can be viewed as an outsider. His outspoken criticism of the development of New Brunswick is an important counterbalance to the voices representing Johnson & Johnson, the New Brunswick

municipal government, the New Brunswick Development Company [DEVCO] and so on.

Kafka’s connection with New Brunswick dates back to his grandparents, who lived in the city. His grandfather was a member of the Builder’s and Carpenter’s Hall and his grandmother worked for New Jersey Bell. Morris Kafka went to Moriah Yeshiva Academy in downtown New Brunswick on the corner of Liberty and Nelson Street, when that neighborhood had a more Greek and Orthodox Jewish character.

He developed a deeper connection to New Brunswick through his involvement in real estate and housing preservation. In 1984, while an undergraduate student in Art History, Kafka became a homeowner on Suydam Street near the corner of Livingston Avenue. Under the guidance of Dr. Marder, Kafka studied the architectural history of New Brunswick and published studies — on the Bishop House, transportation and the train station’s architectural history — in the Rutgers University Library Journal. “I was in the New Jersey Room constantly as a student,” Kafka recalls. “And when I wasn’t doing active research, just for my own curiosity, I was looking through the photo files of historical photos in New Brunswick.” [3]

Regarding his involvement in real estate, Kafka said: “I purchased a house from the 1860’s with the intention of preserving it. And I subsequently purchased with various partners six more buildings in the Second Ward and just on the border of the Second Ward.” [3] His properties were used as low to moderate income rentals. [9]

Kafka established himself as an active community member of the Second Ward, serving as the President of the Second Ward Neighbor Club for eighteen years. “We were concerned with neighborhood preservation which was about the quality of life and making sure people had good house to live in. We were also concerned with the history,”

Kafka said. [4] He also became a charter member of the New Brunswick Historical Society when it was revived in the 1980s.

Kafka described his relationship to Mayor Lynch which began through efforts to persuade the city government to appoint a Historical Association with an official government role. [5] At a meeting regarding the historic Agnew House, threatened by the expansion of Route 18, Kafka asked Lynch about his historic preservation plans. Lynch “said in front of the crowd that his concern was making sure everyone had good ,safe housing and that this was not a priority. So that’s pretty much where that ended with Lynch.” [5]

This attitude helps to explain the history of the Hiram Market Historic District. “It was listed and it made it onto the Register. It qualified. It had some very significant buildings. And the nicest way I can put it is that there was demolition by neglect,” Kafka explained. [5-6] Eventually, in a situation Kafka describes as “notorious,” in 1985 there was a proposal to de-register Hiram Market after these demolitions. [5, 6] “The easiest way to get rid of historic building without outright demolition is to vacate it and neglect it...They just let it fall apart...They know time is on their side,” Kafka remarked, in reference to the developers who were buying up property in the Hiram Market neighborhood. [9]

Through his business — buying and restoring historic properties — and as a reputable property owner, Kafka was able to earn “a little clout when I went to speak to the city.” By the 1990’s Kafka was interested in negotiating with the city. He came with a diplomatic approach: “redevelopment can be exciting and beneficial to the city, but what makes a city special is its soul which is its history and where it’s been. Not everything old is important, but not everything new is an improvement. Can we save the best of what’s old and capture the best possible new design within reason to have harmony, a synergy here?” [10] Kafka mentioned Livingston Arms and the State Theater as examples of successful preservation but added that, “sadly, there’s very few public projects I can point to.” [11]

Kafka discussed numerous buildings that were lost — including the Indian Queen Tavern and the Lockkeeper’s House — but noted that he could not “remember a single situation anytime where there was any public outcry about any historic building that the city or the developers ever changed their plans. And this is a thirty-five year memory, from my own memory. I cannot think of a single instance, and that’s quite alarming.” [14]

His perception of the city’s master planning strategy is that, “New is better; new is better,” with an emphasis on “urban removal.” [15] Whereas historic properties are built for longevity, Kafka questioned whether the redevelopment of the 1980s “was all built

maybe just as placeholders or as speculative investments to hold what was known as valuable real estate for the next step.” [15]

When asked about the Johnson & Johnson headquarters, Kafka described the property as “interesting,” “iconic,” “a building that looks modern and elegant, and actually sanitary...It’s an exquisite campus.” Still, he had the criticism that “an office campus surround by a lawn does not belong in the center of a downtown,” and that “what was there before was discounted.” [15-16] Beside the problem of the interesting historical buildings that were cleared away, “what was public property has now become private.” [16]

Kafka also had strong criticism of Memorial Homes: “They were already considered a failure and going to be knocked down before these were even built.” [16] He described the high-rise projects as “institutional concrete places,” with poor maintenance and malfunctioning elevators. He allowed that this type of architecture was not unique to New Brunswick. [16] His thoughts on the Hope VI Replacement homes that took the place of Memorial Homes echoed his other sentiments regarding certain current building methods and issues of long-term viability and maintenance. He commented that these vinyl-sided frame houses “might be placeholder houses that in a generation will be said, “Oh, they’re deteriorated. We’re going to knock them down again.” This whole mentality of “just build it for now with tax dollars” doesn’t rest well with me.” [17]

His critique of the Hyatt — although allowing that “having a major hotel in town is a benefit” — is that “it looks like a hotel that belongs out on the highway.” [17]

When opposing the construction of The Vue [the residential component of the Gateway Transit Village] Kafka explained how the concerns of the Historical Board were routinely dismissed. He describes when the Historical Board came to speak at a Planning Board meeting:

We were told we had to wait until the end of the Planning Board meeting to speak as private citizens. This is a city board going to another city board. We were verbally treated in the most brusque manner. We were discounted. We were negated. We were treated rudely. And they said, “Why don’t you choose another block to preserve.” One of the people on the Board said, “I know the buildings are attractive in front, but they’re yucky in back.” This was their level of interest in preservation. [20]

Despite buildings that dated “back to the early days of Rutgers” and a building site that fronts “Old Queens which is arguably one of the most important sites in the county if not the state,” those in favor of preservation were rebuffed, told that “the transit village is just a great project and it’s worth it.” [20] He mentioned that Rutgers did not become more involved, despite the close proximity and status as a major tenant. [23] Kafka commented on the contradiction between the name of the development and the actual

development: “That is not village scale. What architect worthy of the name would create a dead zone on Easton Avenue where you have to walk two hundred feet past a parking deck and blank walls? That’s not a village.” [26-27]

Kafka refutes the idea that it is more expensive to save historic buildings: “Studies have show it’s not. It’s less profitable to the people who make commissions... So it’s not that it actually costs more per square foot especially when a building is intact, but the architect wants their grandiose new building; it’s easier to sweep it clean. There’s no concern for anything about the environment, historical or otherwise. And this is typical.” [21]

He expressed his frustration with the limited, advisory role of the Historical Board and the refusal of the city to preserve property through public request or by recommendation for the Historical Board. [24] “The sad thing is we’re all the losers,” Kafka lamented. “This is the tragedy. This is not an esoteric group of obscure artifacts. This is concern for the holistic health of the city. The city will become an anonymous anyplace when everything of history is gone.” [24] He expressed strong reservations about the contemporary, short-sighted culture of development, which he described as “an engine that eats itself. Development only succeeds when it keeps developing.” [24]

Another issue Kafka discusses is the role of the municipal government in relation to the momentum of development:

I see the city following rather than leading. The City Planning Board accepts the designs and experts of the developers with the red carpet and they tailor the city’s master plans to the needs of these developers. It doesn’t go the other way around. This is the major flaw. The city is letting the fate of the city be decided by individuals who have not been elected by the residents nor appointed by the mayor, nor have to answer to the citizens. [27]

Kafka feels that a more ideal planning vision would originate from the city and the community, and then developers would “come in and integrate their plans to that.” He considers a primary source of the problem to be: “the process is backwards from the optimal situation.” [28]

This interview continues with discussions about how redevelopment could have been performed more sensitively in the 1960’s, ’70’s and ’80’s [31] and the importance of involving minority communities in the planning process, which he admits can be “tedious.” [32] He refuted stereotypes about preservationists being portrayed as: “little elitist wealthy people sipping tea and discussing arcane things. We’re not. We’re concerned with the holistic fabric of the city into the future, and that message is not being respected.” [34] Kafka concludes with with a bit of hope, despite the long struggle:

It’s emotional talking about these things. It’s extremely frustrating. It’s impossible to explain the many, many hours of meetings, letter writing, negotiating, and the feeling of disappointment or even betrayal from the attempts to work with people

who we hope will make things work out...But I will continue to try to work with anyone who tries to work with us. But we're not being respected is how I feel. The Historical Board was appointed by the mayor; it's needs to be given equal clout to Planning Board or any other boards. And being told that a building looks "icky" in the back, um, isn't the viable reason for allowing a whole block to be knocked down...I hope this offers you another perspective. And I'm just scratching at the surface of things that you've talked about..." [37]

KEY QUOTATIONS

[Quotations have been edited for grammar and alphabetized by topic]

Agnew House, Route 18, Lynch, Historic Preservation, Hiram Market

I went to town meetings and there was a concern that the Agnew House, for example, where Route 18 is near Route 1 was going to be compromised by an eventual outbuilding of Route 18. And I spoke up at the meeting and asked Mayor Lynch what was his plan for that building or other buildings at risk and he said in front of the crowd that his concern was making sure everyone had good, safe housing and that this was not a priority. So that's pretty much where that ended with Lynch. Um, and I continued to try to write letters and keep the openings. It was very frustrating. As is well-known, the Hiram Market was designated an historic district in 1980 by the Historical Society and other historically-minded citizens. [5]

Architecture

Hope VI seems to be built in a manner that won't last a long time. You know, they're pretty much basic, vinyl-sided frame houses, and I'm concerned about the long term maintenance of those. Whether those, again, might be placeholder houses that in a generation will be said, "Oh, they're deteriorated. We're going to knock them down again." This whole mentality of "just build it for now with tax dollars" doesn't rest well with me. I'm not expecting marble monuments, but there are ways to build things that are hospitable and well-designed and durable. And that's the best way to use our money. We're seeing more and more flimsy, um, structures put up. I don't think much of the new architecture is going to be looked at as textbook examples of either cutting edge design or classic design here in the city. And I hope that we'd try for that; that we'd strive for some of that. [17]

Ethnic populations

I mean what speaks to the Irish American community that built the canal? The Lockkeepers House maybe did and that's gone. What speaks to the Greek community that was downtown in Hiram Market. To the huge Jewish community that was here. So many different waves of immigrants coming through for

opportunity. I think it's the neighborhoods. Like the whole of Louis Street was where the Hungarians came. You know, all those look-a-like houses from 1920's...not a single one hasn't been [aluminum or vinyl] sided over [the original wood]. That actually is historic because that's where Johnson & Johnson housed all those Hungarian immigrants when they came over. I mean that's a huge piece of our history. We do have the Hungarian Museum which is a great endeavor. We have little things that were starting and just fading. We could have done better. But those pieces of advice still hold for now; we're not doing them now. [33]

Historic Board

Well here's the thing. I read the ordinance for the Historic Board. It's our job to record and preserve the landmarks of New Brunswick. The city does not even give us a chance to research the vulnerable landmarks to prove their history or to consider them. We are not given the voice. We're charged with preservation, and then we're denied any resources, and we're minimized, and sort of ignored in the official proceedings, and in the planning process given the slightest courtesies to make maybe a window dressing of diplomacy. You know, they'll say, "Oh, well we met with them." Nothing of substance happens. [23]

And even as advisory when we go to a Planning Board meeting we should be seated up on the dais with them. We're told to sit in the back of the room, wait 'til everyone is done, speak, and then someone who's in the Office of Economic Development is belligerent with us when we try to speak including the city historian who is eighty years old and a scholar. So those meetings are well-recorded. You can hear them. Sometimes they're polite, but any promise at follow-up meetings or further planning is not followed through on. It's extremely frustrating. [24]

Historic preservation

I cannot remember a single situation anytime where there was any public outcry about any historic building that the city or the developers ever changed their plans. And this is a thirty-five year memory, from my own memory. I cannot think of a single instance, and that's quite alarming. [14]

... there wasn't as much communication as there could be, and when people tried to come to a City Council talk, City Council often acted like it was burdensome to listen to the public. I know it's tedious. [32]

...there's a general view of preservation by a developer is it's literally that's not going to sell our house; it's keeping you from building your building. That's not where we're at in New Brunswick. But there's sort of this stereotype of the [preservation minded] being pain in the neck gadflies that are interested in preserving crumbling things that mean nothing. And that's the way we're

portrayed. Like we're little elitist wealthy people sipping tea and discussing arcane things. We're not. We're concerned with the holistic fabric of the city into the future, and that message is not being respected. That's the biggest challenge.[34]

Hiram Market

So what happened with the Hiram Market Historic District - and it's notorious - is that it was listed and it made it onto the Register. It qualified. It had some very significant buildings. And the nicest way I can put it is that there was demolition by neglect. The city began to, um, condemn, acquire or otherwise vacate the buildings. And during the winters of the years in the early 1980's through the mid 1980's, suddenly we would see large holes appearing in the roofs of some of these buildings and windows would be missing from these buildings, and the elements would begin to come into the structures. I don't know how that happened, but they were not necessarily acts of nature. The buildings were being, um, compromised causing accelerating deterioration. Who knows how that happened... [5-6]

Now what we have in 1985 is a proposal from Michael P. Gupko, the construction official for the City of New Brunswick to de-register Hiram Market after these demolitions occurred. And he lists eight buildings here that have been demolished or collapsed since designation. Now if you look at the photos from 1980, and there's a whole copious number of photos, nothing looks near collapsed. They're all occupied; they're in use. I was actively shopping and eating in, you know, the different establishments in the Market... [6]

You know, I watched what happened with the acquisition of the buildings, and it was basically mostly they were just buying them. Some people did not want to sell, and most notably you'll see that the Frog and the Peach and what's now Delta's, but was J. August, they did not sell, and they survived. They managed to hold out. And their buildings are nicely maintained and indicative of someone who was there and have some significance.[8]

That was my understanding that they were able to be purchased. So once they were purchased, they were vacated which is the first step towards complete decay. So the easiest way to get rid of historic building without outright demolition is to vacate it and neglect it. So I'm going to suggest that in many cases this is the way that people who don't want to deal with the burden of historic building, it's where they want to do something new, tend to react. They just let it fall apart. If no one's in the building or they don't allow anyone to make repairs, they don't give permits, they make it hard for people. They know that time is on their side. So this is Mike Gupko asking for the district to be deregistered. Mike Gupko had quite a history in town over the years with a lot of controversy involving construction and a lot of friction

with historical groups and other people...You know, the Hiram Market was happening while I was in high school and college. [9]

Indian Queen Tavern

Going back even earlier, I can remember watching the Indian Queen Tavern being hauled over Route 27 when the earlier renovation...I guess 1972... of Route 18 was done when they put the overpass instead of the circle in. That's now part of East Jersey Olde Towne. But that was one of our oldest buildings and we just said, "Bye, bye." It's gone.[12]

I just was remembering that another historic was removed and that was arguably quite important to the history of this city. That whatever planning was done was not done to incorporate it. It's just an illustration that someone knew it was historic; took it away to save it. But our own city didn't keep the historic asset of import. It may have been where some important historical things occurred. I don't know if it was the tavern where they had Rutgers classes in early days. I can't remember the specific details, but it's well-documented.

Johnson & Johnson Headquarters and implications for downtown New Brunswick

Architecturally, it's interesting. I think it's iconic. It's a great showplace for Johnson & Johnson. And I think their landscaping is exquisite. The I.M. Pei Atelier, you know, clearly made a building that looks modern and elegant, and actually sanitary. There's something that represents J&J. And they have beautiful artwork there. It's an exquisite campus. My concern is that the idea of an office campus surrounded by a lawn does not belong in the center of downtown. And Johnson & Johnson was probably trying to help the city by making sure that their workers were downtown and would spend their lunch hour in the city, be part of the city, and I think that makes sense. I do feel that, again, what was there before was discounted, and there were six blocks of old buildings in the city, some of them were distinctive. We had Art Deco International Theater. There's any number of interesting older buildings that just were cleared away, and what was public property has now become private enough that if you sit on their wall or stroll on their grounds their security will come and tell you to leave unless you've asked for permission for a tour or something. So it creates a friction or a tension between what was sort of democratic public space for use by the residents and visitors the city and what's a very elite institution. After more than thirty years most people become used to it, forgotten what's there. But I found that our downtown streets where we had all the Mom and Pop stores and all the little restaurants and places to go and all the inexpensive apartments have slowly be eroded away, and that was essential to the matrix of New Brunswick. And what's replaced them has been geared for very specific clientele. Quite logically, a developer wants the most expensive rental or condo units in their building. They're not going to be putting in units made for the people who work as the custodians in

the restaurants or the wait staff or whatever. And all those people that used to be down there causing those little businesses to hum can't easily find housing anywhere nearby. It has had a negative effect on long term ability for us to have a Main Street. [15-16]

Lockkeeper's House

There was one historic Lockkeeper's House down at Commercial Street and Route 18 approximately, that when the DOT was extending Route 18 they agreed to preserve. And it was moved into a grassy area between the river and Route 18. It was up on jacks.

I don't remember where it came from initially, but it may have well have been on their new headquarters. That's actually lost to my memory which is sad. It will probably come into my mind later. But it had been carefully moved by the DOT and secured so that it could be restored as a Visitor's and Information Center in Boyd Park. The city was tired of being an eyesore and ordered it demolished, again, you know, at off hours. And so even the DOT had saved it, it was going to be preserved, executive decision caused it to disappear which was disturbing. It was the only intact Lockkeeper's House there. [12]

Memorial Homes

Well I think housing high rise projects were generally a misguided idea, and I think with the Pruitt-Igoe projects [in St Louis] it was proven. They were already considered a failure and going to be knocked down before these were even built. They already knew that they were devastatingly problematic. They built [the Memorial Homes] projects with exterior corridors in an area known for ice and snow. I don't know if you were ever in there, but they weren't suited to safe, dignified housing. They did not make people feel comfortable at home; they felt like institutional concrete places. There weren't even originally showers in the bathrooms; they were just bathtubs. You know, maintenance was lacking and the elevators didn't function properly for years and years. The community spaces were limited. Um, there was no comfortable foyer to come into. It was not designed with any thought for the psychology of having a private place. That's not just New Brunswick; that's endemic to many of those projects. So we took away a whole bunch of little row houses where formerly working class people may have had their own address, and they the ability to have some kind of private place, plant some flowers, an identity, and then we moved them into essentially filing cabinets, and then realized they were outmoded. The biggest disappointment there is that many of the people who lived in those buildings were people that had been from longstanding families in the City of New Brunswick, and many of them were relocated as far away as Perth Amboy. That's a policy problem.[16-17]

Redevelopment

My tack was that redevelopment can be exciting and beneficial to the city, but what makes a city special is its soul which is its history and where it's been. Not everything old is important, but not everything new is an improvement. Can we save the best of what's old and capture the best possible new design within reason to have harmony, a synergy here? People like to hear that, but putting that into practice has not been easy or effective.[10]

So the New Brunswick you see today may be something that's been preserved by luck or was preserved by a back room deal. Maybe it was preserved because it was economically viable. Nothing has been preserved by public request or by recommendation of the Historical Board...nothing...although attempts are made in every year to have something preserved. And they say, "Why not pick another block." Well guess what, every time we pick something, you know, developments rolling ahead. The sad thing is we're all the losers. This is the tragedy. This is not an esoteric group of obscure artifacts. This is concern for the holistic health of the city. The city will become an anonymous anyplace when everything of history is gone. You know this lack of concern for scale, for the historical perspective of city for the way it was and is used, for what makes a healthy, viable city is going to cause problems in an ongoing way. We're also in a disposable culture. Development is an engine that eats itself. Development only succeeds when it keeps developing. They make their money from developing. They will redevelop the same sites over and over. I am sure that you will start to see this within a few years. Their sights are set on the Ferren Mall which is already redevelopment. I wouldn't be surprised if Kilmer Square [another redevelopment project from the 1980s] gets targeted for redevelopment because it's relatively low density. I'm sure they're very sad that they built those little three-story townhouses in the Hiram Market because now they're finding that they can sell much denser properties at a bigger profit. So there will be constant boom and bust cycles. Things will be built to make money on and sell and then rebuilt. [24]

The primary purpose of a city government is to protect the welfare of its citizens. That includes balancing the interests of for profit business with the health and welfare of the city long term. A builder should be encouraged to develop things that are beneficial. Notice they call it Transit Village. That is not village scale. What architect worthy of the name would create a dead zone on Easton Avenue where you have to walk two hundred feet past a parking deck and blank walls? That's not a village. That has now become dangerous. There were formerly stores and houses on that side. Even the Rutgers building [across the street] got it right; they have little stores all along the sidewalk on Easton Avenue. There's nothing except at the very corners of this new project. It's not designed to be pedestrian-friendly. It's

essentially the same quality architecture as the housing projects that were knocked down, but set on top of a parking deck. We already know that buildings on top of parking decks are dangerous. If there's a fire you're doomed. Why they even allow that I don't understand. [26-27]

Basically, I see the city following rather than leading. The City Planning Board accepts the designs and experts of the developers with the red carpet and they tailor the city's master plans to the needs of these developers. It doesn't go the other way around. This is the major flaw. The city is letting the fate of the city be decided by individuals who have not been elected by the residents nor appointed by the mayor, nor have to answer to the citizens. So the nearest to democracy is these town meetings that they have. If you go to any of them, nothing that the public says... none of their suggestions are generally incorporated. [27]

So 2008 isn't much different than 1984. Even with all the dialogue that we're trying to start, half the municipalities in New Jersey have Historical Boards and they have some oversight [powers]. We're willing, ready and able. We have our historians. We have people that have a long term vision for the city in here. We have people who own real estate in here. And we're not getting adequate interface. We're not getting enough meeting time. We're not getting enough clout. We have no teeth in the ordinance. We have no say. And this continues. It's very frustrating.

The big concern I have that I've talked about is that I'm afraid that my upset, my frustration from three decades of trying to make this city better by integrating the best of historic fabric is continuing to fall on deaf ears when it comes to the people who have any power." [29]

I hate to say it, but perhaps it's a case study in how something goes horribly wrong. We are the only city in the nation that's had an historic district removed from the Register. We are the laughing stock of historic preservation around the nation. We may be the way other people can learn. Can we save ourselves? I don't think if we continue on this current trajectory." [35]

State Theater

Another good example of preservation is the State Theater where funds from the Green Acres somehow were able to be used for interior and exterior architectural restoration of a building that had suffered, but still had some significance in the community. It's a Lamb designed theater. It had much of its original décor and architecture intact. And I think when you go in there now you get a real sense of it as a special destination. And it's viable; it's a real draw for the town. It hasn't been replicated elsewhere very often." [11]

Urban Renewal

I've always thought that this city has a urban renewal motif in its master planning from the post World War II era which we also call "urban removal" in certain circles; where anything that's there just plow it down, make it all new. New is better; new is better. We've already seen new become old. The new projects were supposed to be an improvement. New was better; only better for a little while and now [once it is no longer new it has lost its luster]. The new Ferren Mall was supposed to be a solution. Now the Ferren Mall; which lacked any kind of maintenance of its architectural components, had whatever décor [or sense of style] it [once had has been] eviscerated [including] whatever landscaping was there [which is now gone]. It is now unattractive and ready to be demolished, and not for another twenty years will anyone realize that, "Oh, that was an example of 1980s architecture." Whether we like [that style] or not now, that era will no longer exist in New Brunswick because it was all built maybe just as placeholders or as speculative investments to hold what was known as valuable real estate for the next step. [15]

Vue, Transit Village

When we met with the Planning Board, the Historical Board went in. George Dawson has been in the city many years, the city historian. We went to the Planning Board...we were told we had to wait until the end of the Planning Board meeting to speak as private citizens. This is a city board going to another city board. We were verbally treated in the most brusque manner. We were discounted. We were negated. We were treated rudely. And they said, "Why don't you choose another block to preserve." One of the people on the Board said, "I know the buildings are attractive in front, but they're yucky in back." This was their level of interest in preservation. I said to the city, "These buildings date back to the early days of Rutgers. I believe enough time should be given for them to be studied to find out what historical background they have, how they're connected to Rutgers, because we're sure that there are some historical connections. This is the last intact 19th Century row of commercial buildings in this entire area, and it fronts on Old Queens which is arguably one of the most important sites in the county if not the state. It's part of the identity of the city, even the state ... Old Queens in some way. I mean this is our most prominent institution of higher education at the public level. I said, "I assure you that Princeton would not build a high rise across from the core of their historic campus. The town would not want that." All of the pictures they were looking at of The Vue were only showing a truncated version of the bottom half of the view. I said, "It's more than twice the height of the university building across the street. Do you realize how big this is?" We also were interviewed by Channel 9 News in front of these buildings expressing our concern. We wrote to the State Office of Historic Preservation. The response was that the transit village is just a great project and it's worth it. They were basically not even interested in talking

about it even though these buildings have been identified as historic resources worthy of listing. [20]

They certainly could have done something more monolithic. I studied architecture at NJIT before I was at Rutgers. I would suggest that what they did at the street level is a modest or rudimentary attempt at integration. They have a plan or façade that goes up two levels right at the sidewalk line which is closer than the church buildings are at the sidewalk line. Well yeah, the top is set back. But the density that's here and the scale, especially that large clock, doesn't sympathize with the church. It doesn't over power as badly as it might have, but it still is overpowering. Now I also mention there was the Lyceum Building next to the church. And the church was given a million dollars or the Lyceum was sold for a million dollars. [22]