Interview with Anthony Marchetta

Listokin: Our paths have intersected many times.

Marchetta: Oh yeah.

Listokin: In very good ways.

Marchetta: And in fact, you know, one of my first courses in housing was with David.

Listokin: Yeah.

Marchetta: When he was a grad student. With Jim,, too.

Listokin: We were so young.

Marchetta: Oh yes.

Listokin: I mean this was . . .

Marchetta: If you would have told us, both of us, at that point, that this was going to be a . . .

Listokin: Was that a summer class? Was that in the . . .

Marchetta: No, I took them summer and year round. I was a part-time grad student for five years.

Berkhout: Really?

Listokin: No, I do remember. You know that's . . .

Berkhout: Okay, Tony you're going to be sitting here.

Listokin: Yeah, that will be good.

Berkhout: We're going to both videotape this and audio tape it.

Marchetta: I didn't know that part.

Berkhout: And we're going to transcribe it, literally. And give you a chance to review it, and then we also need you to sign that release form that we're just using it for educational purposes.

Marchetta: If you make any money out of it, I want a piece of the action.

Listokin: Oh yes, not the money, we're going . . .

Berkhout: Here.

Listokin: So one shot at Hollywood.

Marchetta: One shot at Hollywood.

Listokin: That's it, that's it. We better not muff it.

Berkhout: All right. I'm just trying to get this in the right, you don't need to look at it at the moment. I'm just trying to get the focus correct here, and if you move it around then it kind of drifts a little. There that's good. All right. There we go. We need a longer wire here probably.

Listokin: It will help to continue the catch up.

Marchetta: Yes, yes.

Listokin: Actually this has been interesting, you know, looking back on New Brunswick. I mean I tell students you know what you see now is not what your predecessors saw or not that long ago.

Marchetta: Absolutely. It's intriguing. My daughter is into public health. She's at John Hopkins getting her masters in public health and her MBA simultaneously. She's intrigued with the urban planning aspects of this thing so she's been asking me for a city planning background.

Listokin: If she needs anything from us, have her call me.

Marchetta: I will do that. I will do that.

Berkhout: Okay, David.

Listokin: Well, Tony, thank you, thank you for being part of this. We're going to have a good discussion. And actually what we're finding is that people's personal background is often germane on how they kind of came to New Brunswick. So, maybe, if you can start there. Give us a little thumbnail sketch. I never came to New Brunswick. I was born in New Brunswick.

Listokin: Oh, okay. All right. Yet better. So if you can . . .

Marchetta: St. Peter's Hospital, March of 1949. And my parents, both immigrants, had immigrated from Sicily and grew up here in New Brunswick. Did Cub Scouts on campus. They had a Cub Scout pack on campus, and grew up in New Brunswick and then New Brunswick High School and then Rutgers University. And I ended up working for the City of New Brunswick.

Listokin: Now we're preparing some outline of you know why, who, what – it’s like a newspaper article, who, what . . .

Marchetta: Where.

Listokin: Maybe if you can share some of your perspectives on, you know, what prompted the redevelopment?

Marchetta: Well, you know, since I was a kid in New Brunswick, I had experienced New Brunswick pretty much at its peak in the fifties. It was a vibrant, small town in central New Jersey. It was the county seat. It was a great community to grow up in. It was diverse. We had a lot of ethnic groups. Though we were Italian, we ended up in the Hungarian neighborhood. Accents were prevalent whether they would Hungarian, or Italian, or even Lebanese. There were a lot of diverse groups, but we had a vibrant downtown. Saturdays you would go downtown in New Brunswick, and it was so crowded you could barely walk the streets. It was that kind of place. There must have been a dozen men's clothing stores. And that was, in part, I think, because the university was there and it was an all male school, and men dressed up back then, and there was lots of activity in New Brunswick. We had four movie theaters, the State, the Rivoli, the Strand, and the Albany. So that's where all the activities were, but as I got older, you know, into my middle school years and then high school, you could see the change in the community. I was about 13 years old, I think, 12 or 13 years old because shortly after that we moved to another location, and I remember our neighbor saying she had just gone to the new mall, Menlo Park, which at that point was not a covered mall, and she had taken the bus to get there. And not knowing anything about it at that point, but, that to me is the beginning of New Brunswick's ebb. All of a sudden the suburbanization of our state with the development of housing in the suburbs, and then followed by the retail, and ultimately commerce in the suburbs, New Brunswick lost its reason for being in many ways, and it was no longer the commercial center of the region, and little by little the shopping centers start being built in the suburbs and downtown New Brunswick lost its vitality. We still had the state, rather the county, and we had the state university, which were major components, and Johnson & Johnson certainly, but also the two hospitals were here. But what happened was little by little the community became a daytime community and less and less of a full-time community for residents. The neighborhoods started to get broken up a little bit. In part because Rutgers had students and was growing and a lot of the neighborhoods started having more students living in them, and that was not necessarily bad, but it was overcrowded sometimes, cars became more prevalent. The neighborhood started to change, and in high school we still had a decent school system. I went to New Brunswick High School and graduated in 1967. You know, we sent kids from my graduating class, which was nearly 600 students, to all the major schools. All the Ivy’s. We had at least 20 or so that went to Rutgers out of my graduating class, and we had a strong education system. But New Brunswick had been the center of a region and was a regional school district, and, you know, I was there when there three different communities in the school district.

Listokin: Was that when North Brunswick?

Marchetta: North Brunswick, Milltown, and New Brunswick were senders, but my older cousins who were ten years and eight years my senior, when they went to school, Franklin Township sent their kids there, and even sections of South Brunswick and other parts of the region had been sending their kids, but over the decades they start pulling out. But when I went there it was still a regional school system, which created an interesting blend. In grammar school it was only New Brunswick children. When we went into middle school, seventh and eighth grade, again it was still New Brunswick students, but in ninth grade, the Milltown students joined us, and then in tenth grade the North Brunswick students joined us. And they were predominately white neighborhoods, and the high school environment it created a blend of I'd say roughly 60 percent, 65 percent white and then 30 or 35 percent minority, and the minority was changing. It was historically black, but I remember when the first major Hispanic group came to town or, as I recall it, it was the Puerto Ricans, and the Puerto Ricans were not really immigrants because they were American citizens, but they spoke a different language and different culture, but we were able to reasonably get along. While I was at Rutgers, starting in the fall of 67, things were obviously changing in the community, and racial tensions were getting higher, and then there were the riots of ‘68 and then later, and that started to change things in New Brunswick further or accelerate change. It was already declining in my mind because of the lack of its purpose as being a commercial center, but it when it had the racial tensions, people that could sought safer environments, and started to diminish the number of residents that were willing to live in New Brunswick, and that further accelerated in the seventies when North Brunswick, which had signed a contract in the mid-sixties, early to mid-sixties that said that they would stay in New Brunswick school system for ten years beginning in 67. As they approached the end of that ten-year period, they made it known that they wanted to build their own high school in North Brunswick, which . . .

Berkhout: Because of the population increase there?

Marchetta: There were a lot of reasons. Primarily it was the population growth that they could then now support their own high school, but the subtext was we were going to be in a safer environment, we're not going to have the minorities, we're not going to have the poor people there, we're going to create our own little suburban community, enclave; and Milltown was not invited to join North Brunswick and saw itself staying in New Brunswick, which was unacceptable to them because now the racial proportions were going to dramatically change. So I think in, I think it was 1966 or 1976 or 1977, North Brunswick pulled out, and when they pulled out, no it had to be, yeah, it had to be somewhere in that mid-seventies, when they pulled out, all of a sudden New Brunswick went from when I was there in 1967 of a school that had only three grades in the high school, ten, eleven, and twelve, which was almost 600, more than 600 kids per class so 1800 class to a school that dropped to four grades with probably 500 or 600 students total. So they had the equivalent of one class in the entire high school at that point. I don't think there were a 150 graduating kids in the high school each year, and I think it was even less, and that changed everything, because if you were willing to stay in New Brunswick, up until that point, all of a sudden, you were unwilling to make that commitment, especially if you were a young family with children. Having been that, I was, you know, dedicated to New Brunswick, I wanted to stay in the community and lived here until my oldest child was in the sixth grade. Not because of the public schools, we tried the public schools, but they were unacceptable, but we sent her to the parochial school in town, St. Peter's, and she was doing great, but they had no money. So, they didn't have the money for science classes, and computer classes were becoming more and more prevalent so ultimately we had to make a decision, and it was probably the most difficult decision for me to do was to leave New Brunswick after 40 years having lived my entire life here, but we left . . .

Listokin: You were working for the Middlesex County then?

Marchetta: Well I had just left Middlesex County. I had graduated Rutgers in 1971, and looked for a job unsuccessfully for about a year. Substitute taught in the New Brunswick school system for almost a year, and was really somewhat shocked by what I had seen. Having graduated in 1967 and now substitute teaching in 1971. Even though they hadn't split out the dramatic change in attitude. One minor one, when we were in high school in 1967 you were not allowed to wear blue jeans to school. If you showed up with blue jeans in school you were sent home. Four years later I'm substitute teaching and everybody including the teachers were wearing blue jeans. I went up to the assistant principal at the time I was there, and said what happened? You know, I had been sent home myself once, and he just shook his head, and so . . .

Berkhout: Was he wearing jeans?

Marchetta: No, no he was not wearing jeans, but the fact was that the whole attitude in the school system had changed dramatically. It became less formal, more casual, and less in control. One of the reasons why I was asked to show up everyday, you know most substitute teachers get called and they have to show up, if they're called. After having done that for about a week, the principal asked me just show up everyday, and I said why? He said well, we want somebody that can control the class. And I was never afraid of kids or yelling at kids or insisting that they act in a certain way. Yet, it was not the norm at that point, and he preferred having someone that at least, whether they had a class for me to teach, was in the building, could do hall duty or something, because I wasn't afraid of the kids. And some of these teachers were, not only afraid of the kids, validly afraid of the kids. My apartment mate at the time had almost a full-time job because the teacher that he was substituting for had been pushed down the stairs. Twice! And injured. During the time I was substitute teaching that one year after college, you know, fire alarms were being pulled regularly. Kids were getting – it was a tough school environment. So if you had a kid in your environment and you had the resources you were getting your kid out of there for valid reasons.

So that escalated the spiral of the city, and you know, what was going on. The city was impoverished somewhat. It had a large percentage of low income people and minorities, and the ones that had the economic resources were leaving because if they had a family they didn't want to have their kids going to the public schools there. So that to me while I was at Rutgers was probably the ebb of the city of New Brunswick, the late sixties, early seventies, I think was at New Brunswick's lowest point, and it was not unlike any other urban area. Plainfield struggled, all the urban areas were struggling in the state, and this was just another example of it. But New Brunswick had certain advantages that other towns didn't have. So I think that if New Brunswick, rather, if New Brunswick had stepped a couple more levels below, mainly if, for example, J&J decided to leave town, if St. Peter's Hospital, which at one point was talking about leaving New Brunswick, if any of these major institutions were to leave it was only going to further accelerate the demise of the city, and fortunately they didn't.

And, you know, I graduated in 1971, substitute taught for a year, and then just as fortunate enough to find an opportunity and was employed by the city in something that I was intrigued with, which was housing, and it was housing rehabilitation funded through a federal program called the FACE program, federally assisted code enforcement, where they would select a neighborhood. The city applied for it, got selected, they would do this concentrated code enforcement, and it was about a 20 block region in the, I think it's the second ward, which is interesting in that Remsen Avenue is the main spine, the boundaries were Commercial and Lee, and Remsen ran right down the middle of it, and it ran from near George Street, but not all the way to George Street, to nearly Suydam Street including Suydam Street, so it was a pretty large block of the community, and they would go in there and have inspectors inspect all the structures to ensure that they met minimum code standards, and if they did not, they would issue us, not a summons, but an inspection report and said that they had to be brought up to code within a prescribed period of time. But the benefit was they would also provide low interest loans and grants to assist the property owners. You didn't have to be a resident, you could be an investment owner as well, to fix up the property.

Berkhout: Why did they choose that section or did they do this city wide?

Marchetta: No, they did not. Well first of all city wide costs would be . . .

Berkhout: This was an experimental kind of program?

Marchetta: It was a program that the federal government offered, and you were supposed to, I think, pick the worst areas.

Listokin: I think it was like the 312 program.

Marchetta: It was Section 312 and 115. He remembers the numbers.

Listokin: 312 loans and 115 grants.

Marchetta: Absolutely. That had maximum grant of up to $3500.

Berkhout: Right.

Marchetta: And you could get up to $20,000 under 312 program, and this is where being willing to stretch my confidence a little bit. I told them I could do that, and the only courses I had were undergraduate courses, and I had no business courses.

Listokin: What did you major in?

Marchetta: Geography/urban planning. And at that point there weren't any, you know, finance courses in the undergraduate program. It was not even a department, it was an option. You could major in one of four subjects, geography, political science, history, and economics, and you selected that as your major and you could take the urban planning option, which was like a double major because you had a ton of courses. I had as many courses in the city planning as I did in geography. But at the time, you know, remember this was the sixties and seventies, social planning was the prominent stuff at that point, and I kept looking for the ones that were more physical and dealt with physical things so there weren't a lot of courses available at that point that gave you the numbers of budgeting and finance – things that you need to know – but I convinced the manager of that program, the director of that program that I could learn that stuff, and I was able to get the job, and I started with a clean slate. Having no knowledge, I had no idea what a mortgage was when I took this job. Nothing. But I learned the regulations and the program policies, got some people in the city that were friendly and were willing to give me a little time to teach me about title, land titles, and understanding clearing of land titles, and then I met with another person that a similar title, which was financial advisor in a similar program in Plainfield, and this woman had known how to do the job. My predecessors in New Brunswick were not very good. They had not done a good job in my job in the position that I had, and as I knew nothing, I had to learn everything, and as a result I didn't care if it was a promissory note or a mortgage, I didn't know either one of them so I had to learn them both.

And my predecessors were unwilling to do the extra work to get into a full blown mortgage, which was a lot more demanding, but you could get up to $20,000 whereas the promissory notes and the grants limited it to $3500, and some of these homes needed a lot more work, and what the program also did was allow you to refinance your existing debt on the property. So my very first loan was $18,000. Nobody had written anything for more than $3500 up until that point, but I was able to refinance the guy's existing second, third, and fourth mortgages. Pull them altogether, do the rehab, and he would end up with a house that was fully repaired, meeting code, and his actual monthly payments were dropping because we were giving loans at 3 percent for 20 years, and he was paying probably the most of the people were paying, you know, 12 percent for these second and third mortgages, so they were able to do very well. And as I learned the program, you know, I became better at it. Six months, I had exceeded, in six months on the job, exceeded my predecessor, but if you're doing them at $15,000 and $18,000 instead of $3500 you can catch up real quick, and I did that for a while, and then after being there for about a year and a half, I was asked by then assistant city administrator if I would be interested in his position, because he was leaving to go with the then mayor Patricia Sheehan who became DCA Commissioner, and he was going to go down to Trenton with her as her chief of staff.

Berkhout: Did you know Pat Sheehan when you were working on this program?

Marchetta: Only that she was the mayor. You know? I really, you know, even though I had grown up in town, had never been involved in any of the politics whatsoever, and I actually got the job, the first job, the Feester Park Improvement financial one because I showed up because I was taking a graduate course at night, and wasn't even in the graduate program was hoping to get into the graduate program in the future, and I had to write a paper. And I went to this guy who was the director to get information. I had already submitted a resume six months earlier, but there was no position at that point. And I walked in the door off the street getting information and he thought I was there applying for job, and there happened to be an opening at that point. He said how did you hear about the job? At which point the paper left my mind, and I went into job interview mode, and I said I just heard about. I didn't hear about, I just happened to walk in the door at the right time. Dumb luck. Luck is better than skill, and I talked myself into the job.

Listokin: Just for the record, you then went for a graduate degree?

Marchetta: Yeah, when I started that job, the financial advisor, the guy that I was working for, had actually graduated from a program that I don't think is offered anymore. There was a one-year planning program at one point, which was not the MCRP. He had graduated from that, and he was actually a reformed church minister. Yes, Donald Dykstra.

Berkhout: Huh. A Dutch name.

Marchetta: Yes, he was. Very much so. Reddish hair, and Don had done this because it was the socially correct thing to do, and he was doing this work, and he was the director of this program, and I as I said, just walked in the door trying to get some information for this paper. And he wasn't convinced I was going to be able to do the job, but he said I'll throw your resume in with the other two, and you can talk to the city administrator who is making the decision; another Rutgers connection. I walked in the door with Ed Savage who was the city administrator at that point, and didn't know him from Adam, and my resume was one page. Very thin resume. And he looked through it, saw that I had graduated from Rutgers the year before, saw that I had a reference on there. Well the reference was my apartment mate's father who was working in county government, and he saw the name, and he asked me how I knew him, and I told him he was my apartment – turns out that Ed Savage at that moment in time was the president of the

Board of Trustees of Rutgers University, and my roommate's father also a Rutgers grad had graduated with him back in the thirties, and he called up my apartment's – he said what do you know about this guy. He said, “Oh hire him. It would be like hiring my own son.” Dumb luck. Just a series of coincidences.

Anyway I got the position. Did that for about a year and half. While I was there I applied to and was admitted to the graduate program, and I talked my way, I discussed with my boss the fact that, you know, I wanted to take graduate courses, but during the day, but you know, I was meeting with home owners to get financial information, I was preparing loan packages, so I said listen, why I don't set up evening hours so I can – these people don't have to take time off from work to come to meet with me, and I can go to class during those hours. So I worked a swap, where I went to class during the day, went to work after class, and then went to, had night hours twice a week for four hours each evening that covered those possibilities. And it worked out well for all parties.

So I was going swimmingly along doing this, just happy. I was pursuing, I did my first semester full time at Rutgers, did okay in grades, and then, I guess it was the end of that first semester, because I got approached around the end of the year, December, or actually maybe it was at the beginning of the following year, January, from this assistant city administrator who was going to Trenton. And he suggested that I be considered for this job, because apparently this program was having difficulties, and there had been a turnaround in that 18 months and it was attributed, in part, to the fact that there was money being distributed, and I was doing the distribution so they thought well of me, and asked if I was interested, and I said I was, and I ended being recruited. Interviewed then, I had to get to know the politicians, and in reality I got hired to become the mayor's assistant, legislative assistant, and the city's assistant city administrator while technically having a permanent address in North Brunswick because my parents lived there, and for voting and things like that I kept that as a permanent because not knowing where I would be. So I voted in New Brunswick, I had – when I turned 21 I was still at Rutgers so I registered my home address, my parent's home address as my voting address. So I knew none of the politicians, but I had to get to meet them, and I ultimately got selected for the job, and I worked with Ed Savage, and then the new mayor who was a gentleman by the name of Aldrich Cooper who had been the city council president. He was African American and when Pat Sheehan went to Trenton as the ECA Commissioner, he assumed the mayorship, and he was the first African American mayor of the city of New Brunswick. He was a J&J executive at the time. His father, actually, had been a scientist for J&J, and he had graduated from the University of Connecticut and had played basketball. He was 6 foot 5, very big guy. And I was thrust into this whole new environment, which kind of ties into all this because all of a sudden I was not only dealing with this little program, but I had personnel issues. I was responsible for all personnel and civil service issues. All of the federal grant programs came under bailiwick, and any legislative functions that the mayor had I would work on, and I represented the mayor on various boards and the like. I sat on the library board as his designee and a few other organizations like that. Interesting, we were talking today, you know, we're in a financial crisis at the state. One of the things I had to do as legislative aide to the mayor was the city was against a proposal that was going to allow fireman to become eligible for a pension after 20 years, 20 and out. And we felt that that was going to adversely impact municipal government. They couldn't afford the costs. And I was actually asked to go and speak to a Senate subcommittee in Trenton. I was 25 years old, really novice, maybe not even 25, 24, novice, and I had to testify before Senator Dunn, a very powerful Senator from Union County, Elizabeth, at that point. And there were fireman in the audience that were screaming, very intimidating for a young man to just – I didn't prepare the statement. The statement was prepared by others, but I had to present and represent the city on that. So here we are, you know, 40 years later or whenever it is, 35 years later in deep financial crisis, and the pensions are the ones that are causing it. But that was a great opportunity. We were able to . . .

Listokin: So what was happening at that point just far as the city with revitalization.

Marchetta: Nothing at that point. Really, what had happened before, actually before I had, probably in the fifties was the major urban renewal plan. The city had attempted to do an urban renewal and cleared a large section of New Brunswick. The section that now has – what is it, not 101 – 301 George Street and the other one the red building next to it.

Berkhout: The Matrix . . .

Marchetta: Yeah the Matrix properties, and the properties were the residential units are behind it, what is that, River something or other. All that was cleared, and in addition to that where the public housing was, was cleared to build the public housing, and that took place in the fifties.

Listokin: It was classic urban renewal . . .

Marchetta: Failed.

Listokin: . . . and public housing.

Marchetta: And public housing, and it failed.

Berkhout: Pat Sheehan told us about that, and one elevator for this huge building.

Marchetta: Yeah, I mean it was terrible. The buildings were very, very basic. Yet when they were built it was not 99% minority. It was integrated. In fact, I remember a buddy of mine in junior high school or high school, we decided to double date, and this is Alan Cohen, a nice Jewish family, lived in the public housing project, and his father would pick – Alan and I went to Milltown, this must have been ninth grade, because that's when the Milltown students came to the school system – and picked up these girls and we went and we went on a roller skating date, but when I think about it, it was an integrated community back then. But ultimately it became predominately all minority. So any anyway, so . . .

Listokin: There wasn't much going on.

Marchetta: There was very little really going on. The code enforcement program. But there was nothing in the concept of redevelopment in any major way, but when I was at City Hall with Aldrich Cooper as mayor, and it had actually begun probably with Pat Sheehan, discussions were going on with J&J to try to lead some kind of effort, and while I was there, J&J funded a study done by the American Cities Corporation.

Berkhout: Leo Molinaro.

Marchetta: Leo Molinaro and his number one assistant was a woman by the name of Lillian Burns. She did a lot of the work.

Berkhout: Okay. Because we've been trying to see Leo and his wife is now ill. He is in a retirement community in Philadelphia. So we haven't been able to see him. But I wonder if Lillian Burns is still around?

Marchetta: I have no idea. I have no idea. But anyway . . .

Listokin: And your perspective on that plan?

Marchetta: Well, see, I was at City Hall at that moment, and this was going forward. And they were starting this by doing an extensive set of interviews. And Lillian got to interview me. And she asked me my opinions, and who knows what the questions were at that point, but essentially was trying to ascertain whether or not there was any possibility that the City of New

Brunswick could pull itself together if there was a combined effort by private and public sectors to see itself restored and repositioned for the new world. The new economy. And ultimately that report came out, and, you know, the report said that there should be two major thrusts. One was the planning and social service thrust, i.e. New Brunswick Tomorrow, and then the redevelopment thrust, which was the development corporation, which is now Devco. J&J funded that report, and it was a pretty good report. I don't think it was all encompassing, but it was – I remember having a copy of it. I may still have one in my attic somewhere – but there was that report, and . . .

Listokin: Now it's interesting your description of that. The city was not mentioned. You know, it was kind of that Devco was the development arm, and New Brunswick Tomorrow was the social arm.

Marchetta: Right.

Berkhout: And not looking to the city . . .

Marchetta: And these were private nonprofit entities. They were supposed to be private nonprofit entities, as I recall.

Listokin: And that was the point – the city was just felt – just didn't have the resources or the competence or what was . . .

Marchetta: I think that the bureaucracy that government had wouldn't allow them to act directly, and being a private entity they had more flexibility and could reach out for more dollars. Plus, J&J couldn't really give money directly to the city and control it. They could give money to a nonprofit that they had board control of and kind of supervise the distribution of the dollars and the programs that they were going – so I think that's how it came about. But, you know, the first thing, they had to show that this could actually come about, and after the reports were created and the nonprofit boards were created.

Now, I only stayed in City Hall from February to the following July so that was a year and a half, because in November after the February that I got hired, there was an election to fill the post of mayor, Aldrich Cooper lost to a gentleman by the name Dick Mulligan, Richard Mulligan, who was really being – the campaign manager was John Lynch, he was running the show. Dick Mulligan was the mayor's candidate, and they brought a whole new slate in. And although I submitted my letter of resignation, it was not accepted. They asked me to stay on, but we both knew it was not going to be for a long time, and the we, the mayor and I reached an understanding that by – I had to stay until July because I was getting married July 19th, and I said, I'm going to look for a job, I'm going to look for a job now, January. Not just before I'm going to get married. So he said, not to worry. We'll do a deal and with a little hesitation he honored his agreement. There was a little balk or two along the way, but because he wanted things a certain way, and I just couldn't do it that way, so – so, anyway, but I was there for about a year and a half.

Listokin: So in that year and a half, what was going on in the redevelopment?

Marchetta: Well, there was a lot of transition. Okay. J&J started the process under the Sheehan/Cooper administration.

Berkhout: And that's when they hired Leo Molinaro.

Marchetta: Yeah. They were – I was actually interviewed by Lillian under the – when I was at . . .

Listokin: And since you're good with dates just maybe if you can when talking about these people, the dates?

Marchetta: That had to be 1974 or 1975, and 1975 is when Dick Mulligan came in to office, January of 1975.

Berkhout: Can we go back a little bit?

Marchetta: Sure.

Berkhout: We found out from John Heldrich that in 1968 – well, I don't know when was LBJ's last year, 68? 67 or 68 LBJ convened a group of mayors of cities that were having strife or riots or whatever.

Marchetta: That was most cities.

Berkhout: And was connecting those issues with unemployment problems, and he asked those CEOs, and whoever was then CEO J&J was one of those people who was part of that.

Marchetta: Dick Sellars.

Berkhout: Dick Sellars right – to create task forces or something to try to deal with the unemployment in the cities.

Marchetta: Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, CETA.

Berkhout: And so he put John Heldrich in charge of that, and at that point John Heldrich started looking elsewhere and he saw the Hartford plan, which, I guess, had been done by American Cities.

Marchetta: I didn't know that.

Berkhout: And so eventually he got Leo Molinaro here, and it took a few years to get Dick Sellars to agree to, you know, consider the study.

Marchetta: See I wasn't – I was too young to be privileged, and certainly . . .

Berkhout: And Sellars apparently said something like, “Why don’t you bring in that Italian guy.”

Marchetta: Well Dick Sellars, well Dick Sellars, there are a few quotes that go out, there was one that Dick Sellars was attributed to that I heard, because I was getting involved with the George Street Playhouse at that point, and 1978, I went on the board, but Dick Sellars was attributed to the statement, “The arts don't pay,” meaning putting money into it is not going to help. It turns out to be, in my mind, one of the three pronged legs that kept the city afloat during its worst times because it kept people coming back that normally wouldn't be coming to New Brunswick so – Dick Sellars is attributed to the fact that he wasn't going to allow J&J to leave New Brunswick, even though there was a lot of movement being suggested, I don't know what other people said, but that's my understanding. You know, it came to a very close board vote, and Dick Sellars was leading the charge to stay in New Brunswick, so I give Mr. Sellars a lot of credit for that.

Listokin: So, if I could take you back to that year and a half period, so we had this plan . . .

Marchetta: Well, it was being developed right? It was only being developed. I don't know when the report actually came out. It could have come out in 1975 or 1976. I was being interviewed by Lillian in either 1974 or 1975, because during that 18-month period that I was there, I don't remember exactly where, but my suspicion is that it was in 1974.

Berkhout: Okay.

Listokin: So that was really a holding period.

Marchetta: Yeah. At that point they were just – “Well, what are we going to do,” you know? They needed to come up with a game plan, and the game plan was this report, which, you know, J&J being business people they took that report as if it was a cooking recipe and followed to the T. And you know in many respects they did a good job, and some things fell short, but over all J&J has got to be commended for what they were able to accomplish.

Listokin: If actually we could go forward with what's going on with the city. Also interlaced with . . .

Marchetta: All right so you have a political . . .a major political . . .

Listokin: . . . with your own personal view of what was going on.

Marchetta: Okay. There was a major political change. There had been an old regime that controlled City Hall for decades. These were John Lynch senior and Richard Mulligan senior. They were supposed to assume control when their parents gave up. Well, in walks Pat Sheehan with . . .

Berkhout: She had a gang of three or, I don't know she called it something . . .

Marchetta: It was the new five. It was the new five. Not the "gang of" something – and it was George Shamon, he was Lebanese. Also New Brunswick had a fairly substantial Lebanese population. Lebanese attorney. Sharp as a tack, and they wanted to change the politics in town. And they ran a campaign, and at that point, it was a commission form of government. There were five commissioners. Each had their own little role. And I remember Mayor Paulus. He was the mayor forever as I was a kid.

Berkhout: Was he part of Lynch and . . .

Marchetta: No, yeah he was part of the old Lynch regimen.

Berkhout: Who was the other person? Lynch and?

Marchetta: Richard Mulligan.

Berkhout: Mulligan senior.

Marchetta: And Richard Mulligan senior was a J&J executive that did very well for himself. I don't know if he was a J&J executive before he was the mayor or – I don't know how that came about. But, I believe he was with J&J for a while.

Berkhout: So Pat Sheehan and . . .

Marchetta: Pat Sheehan, Aldrich Cooper, John Smith, Bill Cahill . . .

Berkhout: Bill Cahill?

Marchetta: Bill Cahill.

Berkhout: Any relation to the current Cahill?

Marchetta: Uncle. And who is the other.

Berkhout: And you said the Lebanese person.

Marchetta: Yeah. He was not – he was campaign manager. So it was Pat Sheehan, oh yeah, Carl Valenta whose wife now, Blanquita is still a freeholder.

Berkhout: Oh, okay.

Marchetta: So Carl, so Carl was the Italian representative. Aldrich Cooper was the black representative.

Listokin: These are the ward people?

Marchetta: The ward people, okay? So there were no – you didn't vote by ward. It was always by broad – the ward system hadn't been in play for a while, but there were different ethnic groups in different wards.

Berkhout: Right.

Marchetta: The sixth was the Irish. The fifth was the Hungarian. The second, which was the Italian had become that was Feester Park, that had become the African American neighborhood. So Carl Valenti dealt with the Italians. Bill Cahill dealt with some of the Irish. Pat Sheehan was the widow of, I forget what her husband's name was, I want to say Richard, but it may not be Richard, but her husband had been a city council member and had died very young of a heart attack. So she was a widow with three little kids . . .

Berkhout: And she worked at J&J.

Marchetta: And she worked at J&J. And she joined the team. So you had a woman candidate very rare. An African American candidate also very rare, and the new five challenge the . . .

Berkhout: The Mulligan/Lynch . . .

Marchetta: The Mulligan/Lynch organization in 1967. I was a senior in high school. I remember that campaign vividly. It was – I never remembered a campaign before, but that year for whatever reason, it was probably a much higher profile campaign. There were signs every where, and they really got the enthusiasm of the city behind it. Now the old regime had the same kind of breakdown ethically. They had Felix Cantor was the Italian they had – they had the same – so they replicated it, but with younger more progressive people, and they ran a very aggressive campaign, and they won. And the new five came in, all five commissioners. And one of the problems that they made during the campaign was, because one of them usually would be selected among the commissioners as the mayor. And so they said who will be the mayor, and they said, "Whoever gets the highest votes." And, lo and behold, Pat Sheehan got the highest votes. And no one expected that, but we had our first female mayor at that point. Let me just turn that off.

Berkhout: Oh, okay.

Marchetta: Let me just change this.

Listokin: Take it if . . .

Marchetta: No I'm not going to take it. Okay. So Pat Sheehan wins and is now the mayor.

Listokin: Pat Sheehan (inaudble) . . .

Marchetta: And this is 1967 and it's a tumultuous time in the country with civil rights, and it was 1968 when, I think, had our first riot, all right?

Listokin: What is your recollection of the riot?

Marchetta: Well, that's interesting. Actually there was one in the summer of 1967 in Newark that got a lot of attention.

Berkhout: Right, they closed down the parkway.

Marchetta: And I was working for the Pennsylvania Railroad. There had been an accident; a trail derailment in Edison. So we were working 24-hour shifts, you know, working 24 hours on shifts, and I was on the night shift out in Edison, and one of my coworkers needed a ride to Newark, because he was going to spend the night sleeping near the railroad tracks. I said, No I'll give you a ride." I had a car. He didn't have a car. And they would normally take trains, but there was no train service at 3 o'clock in the morning so I said, it was Edison, then Newark, that's not that far. I'd give him a ride. I drove him into Newark dropped him off down in central Newark somewhere. Came back the next day and read in the *Daily News* on the work bus that there had been riot. Didn't see a thing. Did not see a thing in the part of Newark that I dropped this gentleman off at. It, you know, that just – that riot in 1967 started raising attention. There were other riots across the country. In 1968 it was scary. The riots, and we had them more than just once. There was one . . .

Listokin: You're talking about 1968 in New Brunswick?

Marchetta: In New Brunswick. 1968 in New Brunswick, Pat Sheehan was the new mayor of this town, a slight woman, and what she did when was she went to City Hall and she stood on the steps of City Hall. And I remember a photo in the *Home News* of this frail woman standing at the top of the stairs in front of a huge crowd of African Americans, and she was essentially trying to calm the crowd, and she succeeded. We did not have severe riots in New Brunswick. Much less severe in New Brunswick than in Plainfield or Newark. We got through that fortunately, I give a lot of credit to the administration at that point, and Al Cooper, an African American, and a prominent African American in the community with Pat Sheehan, I think, quelled the community and tried to say, “We'll work to improve the environment.” So we fared better, much better, than other communities as a result.

But I was working at the county workhouse as a guard – that’s another one of my jobs – when there was another problem in New Brunswick, and they had curfews and shut down, and so it was not one year. It happened a couple of years, and there was minor, you know, window breaking and things like that. But there was no major violence. No fires of substance that I can recall. So we were fortunate we got through that very difficult period of time reasonably well, and you got to give the leaders of the community the thanks for that.

Berkhout: But yet when they were finished then the old guard came back in.

Marchetta: Well, what happened was she got reelected, and they changed the form of government to strong mayor/council form. Big difference. And that was good. She got reelected though. So she was actually in her second term, and if she had stayed, maybe they would have won. Maybe if a different council member rather than the first African American had run, because there were a lot of racial undertones going on with that campaign, maybe they would have won. Al Cooper was a City Council President and quite honestly I think the brightest guy on the Council, and he did a good job for the year that he was mayor. Unfortunately, you know, that's not always what wins political elections, and the second generation of the old regimen came back led by John Lynch and the mayor at the time was Dick

Mulligan. But that was a very difficult time. Mulligan did not do well as the mayor. I was there for, as I said, seven months with him. And even in the first seven months that I was there, I could see where he was having difficulty controlling his own council people and other factions within his organization, and I think he sensed that he wasn't in charge. And he didn't like that. And as a result, I think it was in his second year of office, I don't think he did more than a year and a half or two years of office, and there was turnover. For example, my boss had been Ed Savage. He was a city administrator. The new administration came and there was a city council member, Paul Abdalla who got elected with Rocko Cantenese, Paul Abdalla, I'm trying to remember some of these other people, oh Joe Vince, and, I forget who the other two council people were, but they got elected, and they . . .

Berkhout: He was elected to the City Council?

Marchetta: Yes, these guys were City Council members. And Dick Mulligan was the mayor. Joe Lynch, Paul Adalla, and Rocko Cantanese, I can't remember who the other two were. Anyway, they came in. Rocko was already trying to make his own strides, and causing problems with them. Because he had his own opinions. And there was factions being created in the city, and all of a sudden Dick Mulligan, as I said, he had inherited a lot of money from his father was what I was told, and he got frustrated with his job, and Paul Abdalla was council member, and then he resigned from the council and became city administrator.

Berkhout: Okay.

Marchetta: Then resigned from city administrator and became Devco president.

Berkhout: Right.

Marchetta: Okay. They never . . .

Berkhout: So was he city administrator?

Marchetta: They never replaced the city administrator so you didn't have a city administrator.

Berkhout: Did you work for Paul Abdalla for while then? Or you were gone?

Marchetta: Yeah, I would have had to when I got – I stayed on for seven months in that timeframe. You know, I don't know, it was probably at the end of that seven months that Paul became the city administrator, because for a while there was no city administrator. I kind of was given all the responsibility, but none of the power. So, and then all I remember is Paul was the first city administrator, but I maybe wrong. And then he stepped down and became DEVO president. And then at one point with no city administrator, I remember this, there was no city administrator, Dick Mulligan decided it was time for him to go. Mid-term. And without telling anybody, he closed his law practice, and put his house on the market, sold his house, and on his last day he wrote a letter saying he was resigning, and he drove out of New Brunswick, and last I heard he was in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Berkhout: That's what we heard, yeah.

Marchetta: And here's a city without a . . .

Berkhout: Did he have a family?

Marchetta: What?

Berkhout: Did he have a family?

Marchetta: He had a wife. I don't know if he had any kids. I think it was his second, I don't know, remember. All of a sudden they put then City Council who was an African American by the name of Gil Nelson, he was a city attorney, and he was acting mayor. So we had another Black mayor, Gil Nelson, and you can probably research – he got arrested, went to jail, lost his . . .

Listokin: So while all this was going on again as far as the redevelopment, it's treading water.

Marchetta: It's treading water and it's not being controlled in any way by the city, it's really being done by J&J.

Berkhout: Right. So that . . .

Listokin: Can you play that out a little?

Marchetta: Yeah. J&J's initial thrust was New Brunswick Tomorrow. They – Abe Wallach, I think, was the first executive director of New Brunswick Tomorrow . . .

Berkhout: While Paul Abdalla was made the head of Devco?

Marchetta: This was before, I think.

Berkhout: Oh, okay. You started with NBT?

Marchetta: Yeah, I think they started with NBT, and they – they started doing social programs.

Listokin: And it makes sense in that sequence, you can't develop yet.

Marchetta: You can't develop. You got to deal with some of the social issues that are before you . . .

Berkhout: Including unemployment.

Marchetta: Including – and to tie in to what you were suggesting about employment, John Heldrich and Ralph Voorhees both got very involved in that.

Berkhout: Right.

Marchetta: And I think – I think initially it was Ralph that was in charge of the Middlesex County Comprehensive Employment and Training Act Program called CETA, which was a great program, you know. When I was at City Hall, I was in charge of personnel, and we decided we knew we were going to get CETA dollars. And we said, "Well how can we best employ those CETA dollars." At the time, firemen were the people that showed up with an ambulance if you were injured. And the firemen had basic first aid, but they didn't have many more – much more skill level than that. So we had this great idea that we were going to change – we had professional fire department, professional police department – we were going to create a new arm that was going to be professional first aid and connected with the hospital. And Emergency Medical Taxi, EMTs. That was the certification that was then the highest. I don't know if there is anything beyond that. But EMTs were trained for that kind of emergency service. Not firemen. So we decided we were going to use those CETA dollars to create our own emergency medical tech program. And what I was responsible for doing was interviewing and coming up with all these people that had the skill levels and the certifications, and that when the dollars were available we could immediately jump into it. So I actually advertised, interviewed dozens and dozens of people, and had my list of 20 that were going to be hired. We said it was a 24-hour day organization. And when the CETA dollars came in I hired those people, and we then were able to take the firemen out of the role of driving ambulances, and we got EMTs to run it, and it worked out very well. We were very fortunate. And we may have been one of the first to have that type of program. We also used money for a recycling program that had been initiated by students at Rutgers, and we expanded it to the city, and Ed Savage, because he was aware of what was going on at the university, knew that they were starting a recycling program, this was early seventies, and we actually co-joined the program and set up recycling locations around town and started our public works garage . . .

Listokin: Was that done for like both environmental and employment reasons?

Marchetta: It was primarily for environmental, really. But we then used it . . .

Berkhout: That's right after Earth Day.

Marchetta: Initially it was run by the students.

Berkhout: I think the first Earth Day was in seventy or something?

Marchetta: Yeah, yeah. So it was done initially through the students, and then we were able to hire some people with some of the CETA dollars. We also started a program for senior citizen centers. We started a senior citizen center in Trinity Church here. Right across the street. And we funded that with CETA. We hired people with CETA dollars.

Listokin: So you have these pockets of programs going on . . .

Marchetta: Yeah, programs going on that – that New Brunswick Tomorrow is tying into. They're funding daycare centers. They're doing things like that, which are helping to generate a more positive environment in the community.

Berkhout: That's when David Harris took over the daycare centers.

Marchetta: Yeah.

Listokin: Was the EMT the fact that it was, you know, health related, any of that connected back? That would be something that J&J or . . .

Marchetta: No. I think it really had to do with the firemen not wanting to be – and we were paying outrageous – we could get certified emergency medical techs for less than we could get a fireman.

Listokin: About 60 percent . . .

Marchetta: Right. So it made sense. We could hire these people. They were better trained. They could run the program, and it was tied directly to the hospitals. It was actually based through the hospital. So it worked out much better on lots of levels.

Listokin: So you have again just the beginnings of NBT beginning to do – attract –

focusing on employment and training. And as it turns out the city with CETA was also kind of in that kind of mental thing on . . .

Marchetta: That's true. And they're overlapping a lot. And the CETA program did other things that I think benefited the city. Non-profits were eligible for CETA dollars. George Street Playhouse got CETA dollars, and with those CETA dollars they funded two ethnic theater companies; a Hispanic theater company and an African American theater company. Crossroads started out as a CETA program.

Berkhout: Right. Eric Krebs told us about that. Yeah.

Marchetta: So that – yeah, that's good old Eric. So CETA, I think, did a lot of very good things, and it is the closest to the WPA that I can think of that we've ever done.

Listokin: Yes. It was one of the more successful great society programs.

Marchetta: Right, right. Exactly.

Berkhout: Why aren't we doing that now?

Marchetta: Good question. So anyway, it worked out well. It created jobs, and it filled voids that couldn't be filled before. So the CETA program, I think, did a lot of good during that period of time. Okay, so after the New Brunswick Tomorrow got going, I think Abe Wallach switched from New Brunswick Tomorrow, I'm not a 100 percent sure, but I think he was Devco president for a while. And then Lee Fagioni, a retired J&J exec, I don't know if she's still alive, I don't think she is.

Berkhout: Yeah, I've heard her name.

Marchetta: Lee Fagioni, a woman executive from J&J, an older woman who had retired, became New Brunswick Tomorrow executive director, and she continued doing her thing, and then they started to do the redevelopment. And I think the very first redevelopment projects that Devco looked at – this red brick building next to the one white building on George Street – it's 301 I think, 303 George, and the next one. That was going to be first commercial project. They Hyatt was being thought about. But the first one was that building. And I recall J&J taking the lead, "Let's build this building." And Devco was in charge of it. But no one would finance it, and they ultimately had to put together a consortium of something like a dozen banks to fund that little office building because nobody wanted to take the risk of investing in New Brunswick. That's how bad it was. Nobody would fund New Brunswick.

Listokin: And I suspect the only the way they were able to get that group of 12, because J&J was right behind it.

Marchetta: Not only behind it, but they pre-leased it, and put in Chicopee, which was then a division of J&J in the building. So it was a no brainer as far as a development project, but it took that kind of incentive to get people to come and reinvest in New Brunswick, and it was successful.

Berkhout: Now that was an I.M. Pei design?

Marchetta: Yeah I.M. Pei was designing his city in a town and a town in a city or city in a park and park in a city, which . . .

Berkhout: Because John Heldrich told us that he took him up in a helicopter, I.M. Pei, and I.M. Pei sort of laid out, "Well, there's your Cultural Center, here's office, whatever," and so I guess that's how he ended up being also the architect for that building?

Marchetta: Yeah. He was already doing the J&J headquarters, and said, "Why don't you do this on the side." And so they gave him that as a side project. So that is an I.M. Pei building too. That's not how the Cultural Center came about though.

Listokin: That probably was not one of the most successful, well designed . . .

Marchetta: Well I'm not a big fan of J&J's world headquarters.

Berkhout: Yeah.

Marchetta: I think it's – for the time it was, you know, a risk and a major risk, but in today's climate I think it's grossly under density over there, and I have a great idea that I once mentioned to Dick McCormick, I don't think – he thinks I may be crazy – I said that red building on George Street, which was built when I was a kid, that was designed so it would compliment Rutgers. I think it should become Rutgers building. I think J&J . . .

Berkhout: Well, years ago I think there was talk about it being . . .

Marchetta: Yeah. It should be – it’s time now. J&J should give it to Rutgers and as a quid pro quo they should be given the opportunity to build a tower on their site. Because, day one, when they built that building, and moved into that building, it was too small. That's why, in no time, they went into the building on the Golden Triangle, so they should of, you know, I think they can probably work out a plan on that site that they have to build a tower that's not 16 stories, point tower that it is right now. Make it an office tower.

Listokin: It's remarkably low AFR.

Marchetta: Remarkably low AFR and the floor plates are terrible in today's office market. So.

Listokin: I'd like to go back to – the model of Devco and NBT is, of course, they compliment each other, and they in theory, you know, it's a partnership of the city and Rutgers, and the neighborhood groups.

Marchetta: It was supposed to be a partnership.

Listokin: Okay. How were things playing out? In other words, that's kind of, we have our arms locked together . . .

Marchetta: Well okay. So the first two . . .

Listokin: But you were in the city because the city . . .

Marchetta: I was in the city only till then, you know, and then I left – I was in the city, but I wasn't in the city.

Listokin: But in your broader perspective, your knowledge of New Brunswick.

Marchetta: And I was in 303 George, I was with the county, and then ultimately at 303 George. But . . .

Listokin: But how much were the neighborhood groups influencing, the city influencing, you know . . .

Berkhout: Was there consultation going on with community? About . . .

Marchetta: In theory, because there were community representatives on the boards, and one of the key board members in both was Roy Epps. Dave Harris was also involved.

Listokin: And I know there were public meetings as well.

Marchetta: And they had – but they were public meetings of Devco, but not of any governmental entity, and maybe they were advertised, maybe they weren't, I don't – you know, I never went to many of those meetings.

Listokin: But your perspective is what? In other words who was running . . .

Marchetta: My perspective was that J&J was running it. I think the general population would say that J&J was running both New Brunswick Tomorrow and Devco, and that they had input from the city, and I think the one thing that really came about was John Lynch's influence in that. As I said, when Dick Mulligan left, there was no mayor, no city administrator. They were in trouble. And this coalition or this group that had beaten the new five, now was struggling, and there was going to be an election in the spring. And at that point, John Lynch, who had been really behind the scenes, came forward and ended up being the candidate for mayor.

Berkhout: Oh I see. So he became mayor already in the late seventies.

Marchetta: Yeah, yeah, and what happened was, I think, he was looking to become state senator, but he would not have his political base if he lost New Brunswick, so he had to run for mayor, and that was a good thing for the city, because John Lynch, you know, there are obviously criticisms of the man, but he is a strong leader, and he's a very bright individual. And as a result, he knew the political games. He was bred into the political process, so he knew it better than anybody. And he became a good foil for J&J going off and doing everything on its own. So when John Lynch became the mayor, he was a very strong mayor and could balance, because it was not really a public/private partnership, it was really a private effort at that point. I think when John Lynch became mayor it became city and private sector doing it.

Listokin: Can you think of some examples of that?

Marchetta: Well, examples. I believe that a lot of things would have been done differently if there was not a strong partner at City Hall, and John Lynch was a strong partner at City Hall, and John was able to achieve public investment, especially after he became a state Senator that would have never, I think, occurred without. And Devco and J&J couldn't have done it by themselves. So, I think the fact that John was able to position the city to be the beneficiary of a lot of public investment was probably the strongest thing. Now, on the design of projects, I don't know. I can speak to the ones that I had some familiarity with. The Cultural Center, I think I may have mentioned that to you at one point. There was not a high degree of confidence supporting George Street Playhouse was going to be of any benefit to the City of New Brunswick, and we were struggling . . .

Listokin: On the part of?

Marchetta: J&J and the city for that matter, both of them. Neither of them . . .

Berkhout: Eric said that Lynch never came to one performance.

Marchetta: I don't know.

Berkhout: He said one time when the Governor was there.

Marchetta: That's a possibility, and George Street was struggling. It really was struggling. It was not a well-run board. It was a good board initially when it got started because they took this risk, but they didn't have the understanding of the business operation of theater. Neither did Eric quite honestly. That was not his strength. His strength was that he had chutzpah. And he would take on anybody if he thought it was something he could achieve. And, you know, you've got to give credit to those entrepreneurs. He would have made a fortune if he had not gotten into theater. He was very talented, but he got this idea, and he started it when I was an undergrad. It was Brecht West. It was Easton Avenue, then it was moved over to the commercial area and it was put on Albany Street for a while, and then ultimately he and John Herochik, who was a grad student of his at that point, decided they were going to take a lease and they took a lease because there was empty space all over New Brunswick, and this was an old Acme store.

Berkhout: A carpet dealer?

Marchetta: What?

Berkhout: That place became a carpet dealer?

Marchetta: Yeah, at one point but it was originally an Acme Grocery Store. And they went in there and they built risers using old desks that they didn't need at the university, and created a theater, and it opened up – I'll tell you – in 1974. And I know that because the very last show of the first season was *Sleuth*, and I was given tickets at a campaign event when Cooper was running for mayor so it had to be, you know, September of 1974 or October of 1974, and I got tickets for the very last show, and my wife and I had been going to Broadway shows since we were in college, and liked Broadway, and had seen *Sleuth* on Broadway, and I had these free tickets to go see *Sleuth*. We went there, and we were stunned at how well the performance was – how good the performance was. We immediately signed up as subscribers the following year trying to support the effort for this theater, and I think the theater for lots of reasons helped the city along in its process. It stayed there. It was open at night. It brought people into town. The few restaurants that existed in those days benefited by the theater, and they survived. And when all of a sudden the redevelopment movement was going on. J&J was building its facility over there or built its facility, the major block, you know, J&J wanted to clear everything around them. They looked at that Golden Triangle, George, Albany, what was then the railroad, and there was a street back there called Washington, but it really was up to the railroad, and they wanted to redevelop that. Well I . . .

Berkhout: Was that where the Acme was? Where that Golden Triangle went?

Marchetta: Yeah, right in the middle of it is the largest single piece on that block, and so we were in the catbird seat. I was on the board and found myself the un-elected president of the board.

Listokin: On the board of the George Street.

Berkhout: George Street . . .

Marchetta: Of the George Street Playhouse, and not unlike the city at that point, I had encouraged someone who was a bank president to go on the board and after a year wanted him to become president, because we were in such financial disarray that we needed someone that understood money and could get money. So we put this gentleman by the name of Lee Terry in as president, but J&J executive Bob Andrews and I were the nominating committee, and we asked Lee to join us as a president of the board. And his response was, “I've only been on the board a year, why would I do that? I don't know it that well.” We said, “You know numbers. We're in need of that knowledge. You got to help us out. We got to get ourselves back on financial footing,” and the goal was we had bought the theater for $60,000 . . .

Listokin: This was the old Acme . . .

Marchetta: The Acme Theater for $60,000 dollars. Well we'd been there for a while at that point, and it was struggling to survive. This was probably ten years later in the early eighties, and we needed to refinance ourselves. Now the value had gone up. It was probably worth several hundred thousand dollars, but New Brunswick was starting its redevelopment, and one of the things it did was tear up George Street and redeveloped the George Street corridor by putting the brick pavers in there, which destroyed us as a theater, because people couldn't get there at night, you know, construction was everywhere between J&J and on George Street, it was a mess. So our subscribers and our single ticket buyers primarily dropped precipitously, and we actually lost about $75,000 or $95,000 that season, and we were in a deep hole, and we needed to borrow, and we had the asset of our theater. So Lee Terry was going to help us get our building refinanced and get us back on some financial footing. Well, he accepted it reluctantly with the provision that one of us, Bob Andrews or I, become vice president. I was just starting my MBA, so that was 1981, and I didn't really want to do it, but Bob absolutely refused so I ended up saying that the vice president doesn't do anything. Lee will be in charge, I'll help him out, but – so Lee became president July 1st of 1981 and I started my MBA in August of 1981, and Lee was fired as bank president when another bank acquired them in September of 1981. And here I am starting my MBA and thrust into the presidency of the playhouse that was in deep financial straits. We had actually, as a board, had individually pledged $5,000 each.

Berkhout: Wow, back then that was a lot.

Marchetta: Back then. For me it was an astronomical amount of money, but I did like everybody else committed $5,000, that if needed would be drawn upon. It was never drawn upon. That was one of my goals. Never have it drawn upon. And I became the president. Anotherseries of dumb luck. Eric and I took over the objective of trying to find the money, and went to what then was Middlesex County Bank. I knew the executive vice president. He said, "Tony, I'd love to loan it to you. The asset is clearly worth the money. It's not, but who wants to be the bank that forecloses on a non-profit group that's not starting to show some promise." We had been in business for about seven or eight years. "We don't want to close down the George Street Playhouse, he said, "But if you can find another bank to hold my hand, we'll participate. So we then went to Franklin State Bank, which was Tony Shoveril, who was the chairman of that bank. He had been on the board of the George Street Playhouse when I went on in 1978, and stepped off probably in 1979 or 1980. So we went back to him. He knew us. We tried to get an appointment. Couldn't get an appointment because he was out of town. Finally got an appointment. Sat down with him, and as it turns out he had been at the ABA conference in San Francisco, and as a small talk, as I entered in, I mentioned to him that a good buddy of mine, a fraternity brother from Rutgers had been at the ABA conference. We had just spoken, and he mentioned that's where he was at. And Tony Shoveril, chairman of the Franklin State Bank said who was he? I said, "Oh you wouldn't know him. He's at a bank in New York at Irving Trust." He said, "Really?" And he said, "What's his name?" I said, "Well his name is Don Peret," and he turns to me and says I just spent a week with Don and Penny Peret in San Francisco." Turns out, Franklin State Bank had a correspondent relationship with Irving Trust and Don was their representative. Don was a dear friend of mine, and we spent the next half hour talking about Don and Penny and what they did out in San Francisco. And he said, “And why are you here?” “We need money.” “How much?” he said. “Well we would like 100,000 dollars.” He said okay. That was it. I said. Well, I have another bank is willing to participate.” “Oh, we really don't need them, but if you want them involved,” I said “Yeah, let's have more people involved.” So both Middlesex County Bank and Franklin State committed to $100,000, but at that point in 1981 what were interest rates on second mortgages?

Berkhout: Oh.

Marchetta: 18 percent. First mortgages were 14 so it was 18 percent loan on $100,000 secured by the real estate.

Listokin: And the cash flow of the theater could pay?

Marchetta: No. We were in such bad shape at that point that we actually had – we had booked the season through April or May, but had only money that year until December. So that's why we needed the money because we couldn't even fulfill our obligation, but the other thing I did when I became its president, the smartest thing that I did without question was ask a member of our board who had been the most critical, but he obviously knew the most about finance, Don Becker, who was the CFO of Chicopee, J&J subsidiary, and Don was on the board, and we had maybe two board members from J&J, and Don was a hard ass. I put him in charge of the treasury. He didn't want it. I insisted that he take it. And Don did a magnificent job. He sat down with the staff of the George Street Playhouse, and worked through the finances and budgeted. We paid off that loan in a year, and at 19 percent we had to get rid of it soon. So . . .

Listokin: With the revenues coming from?

Marchetta: From our theater, right.

Listokin: The ticket sales?

Berkhout: Wow. $200,000 or 100,000?

Marchetta: $100,000 dollars. It was $100,000 dollar loan.

Listokin: Do you want to go a little forward on George Street because you clearly had a very intimate—involvement. . .

Marchetta: Okay we stabilized the finances, and Don was in charge of that and doing a good job. Eric was doing a good job.

Listokin: And again the period is roughly?

Marchetta: 1981 to 1985 I was the president of the board. So I was also pursued my MBA and had family and kids so it was a very intense time in my life, but we were getting the theater back on better financial footing, especially with Don's effort. I was working for Middlesex County. I was local so we would have meetings in my conference room after hours. It worked out very, very well. And we little by little stabilized the theater. And then about 1983 J&J was really pushing to do the Golden Triangle Project, and they ha a developer DKM that was going to be the developer on that project. So Devco really wanted to see that Golden Triangle get redeveloped. Ron Berman, who was then president and chairman of DKM, was running the project, and we were approached, meaning the George Street Playhouse, were approached to see if we would be interested in selling our property as part of this redevelopment project. And my response was absolutely. If we get the right number, there are two conditions -- we have to have new place to go and we have to get adequate funding, and adequate price for our property. Well, Paul Abdalla was now the executive or president of Devco. So they approached us, and we said, “Yes.” We had a meeting with them. I had a meeting with them, and he told us that they had a great idea. They had a great location for us, and you know where the C-Town is there on George Street, which was then just in front of three large buildings of public housing, you're going from one old grocery store theater to another grocery store theater. Well that's not what I had in mind, and was very upset about it because . . .

Listokin: Just a little aside on that. What would have happened was C-Town was going to close or go to another location?

Marchetta: There was no C-Town. It was empty at that point. It was an empty building, and it had been Davidson's Food Town at that point, and it was an empty building. And my concern was we had a location on George Street in New Brunswick which was sort of okay, you know, especially now with J&J across the street. We were only a block from Rutgers. We were across the street from the new world headquarters of J&J, and our subscriber base, our customer base, was predominantly outside of New Brunswick. They came into New Brunswick to go to the theater, and the location in front of a public housing project in a much more desperate part of New Brunswick we thought was going to adversely affect. It was like the closing of George Street during construction. It was going to kill us. And I was not happy with it. So I discussed it with my executive committee, which was about eight or ten individuals, and I got their support for opposing this. And at that point, opposing J&J and Devco was not an easy undertaking especially for a non-profit organization. So we arranged a meeting with Devco, Paul Abdalla, and John Heldrich was there, and during that meeting it became clear by my members – the members of my executive committee, largely women, largely from the suburbs that this was not acceptable to them. They were concerned about security. They were concerned about a lot of things. So J&J or rather Devco at that point said, “Well, you know, what are you going to do.” We weren't sure of where we were going to go, but the meeting did not go well to say the least. We left. Nobody was happy, but I felt it important to try to maintain relationships with Devco and J&J, and I reached out toward John Heldrich the next day and asked if we could meet. And I assured him that it had nothing to do with the idea of redeveloping the Golden Triangle. We were supportive of that. We just needed to have a location that made sense for us, and we didn't have any money. So I asked if he could help us by funding a site selection effort, and we would engage a consultant that knew theaters, that would explore possible locations in New Brunswick. And he agreed to it, and funded it with $8,000 dollars I think it was. We hired a guy by the name of, I think, Robert Branigan. It was Branigan out of New York. He was a theater consultant. And the only condition John had, John Heldrich had, was that the C-Town location had to be one of the locations in consideration to at least look at that. We said, "Fine." So they went through and they looked at what was available. What could become available, and the report that we got back essentially said the three locations in consideration, you know, after review were the C-Town location, the YMCA, and at that time the Ferren Deck was under construction. And I think that was part of a project done by Devco. So that was one of the early projects done by Devco. So this was 1983ish, and they wanted to – we thought that – we saw the conceptual plan, and the Ferren Deck had this one lower level that had this wide open space, and then offices on the ground level. We said, "Well maybe those offices could be reconfigured into a theater and the open space, which was the lobby, could be our lobby for a theater." So we would – so we actually looked at that, and that was my first choice, one of my first, you know, that was high up. Because I liked the idea that we were across the street from the train station. Virtually all of our actors lived in New York. All of our directors. So they could come in, get off the train go to work. So that was the original high spot. The YMCA was a great location in many respects because it was adjacent to the shut-down State Theater, and from a long-term perspective being able to get that up and going again would create a Cultural Center. A place where they could work together. And we had actually . . .

Listokin: And the State Theater was never considered. It was just too big?

Marchetta: It was too big. I mean we – our theater . . .

Listokin: It would have made no sense.

Marchetta: Yeah. Our theater at George Street at the Acme was maybe 260 seats? And we couldn't – we would love to go 350 or 380 or something like that, but that's nearly 2,000. I think it's 1800 seats. So it's a big, big theater. So it was out of the question economically for us. I mean we were barely going. And we were able to convince ultimately Devco and the powers that be that the better location was the YMCA building. Yet it was much bigger than what we needed. We really – we were looking at the gymnasiums. There was an existing gymnasium and there was space to add on behind it. Attached to the gymnasium was a low level building that had weight room and handballs.

Listokin: In the Y.

Marchetta: In the existing Y. In the existing Y. And the gymnasium was tall. It had a running track around it so it had some substantial height to it. So Branigan recommended the George Street Playhouse go to the YMCA. We engaged an architect meaning – this became a Devco project, and what Devco decided to do was to take the abandoned, nonfunctioning YMCA and a big player in this is Ed Bloustein. Ed Bloustein, Rutgers efforts in New Brunswick as an outsider are underestimated. Rutgers came in. Took over the old PJ Young's building. Made it the Mason Gross School. Brought students back into town for the first time in decades. So you had students going to the old PJ Young building. So, now the idea was we'll take the YMCA, which had stairs up to the ground level, and you walked through it, and then you had this gymnasium at the back end of the building. We would make that level the theater level. The lower level would be all the, you know, prop rooms and offices. Everything would be on the lower level, and there was plenty of plumbing because there was a swimming pool and lockers. So that we had showers and accommodations for people and actors coming in. The green room was downstairs. So the design was that. And this add-on that was on the back of the gymnasium, the back of the building, which housed the weight room and the racket ball courts, was torn down, and they built another large space which actually is the theater itself. The seating area of the theater is in the old gymnasium, but the stage and the back stage are in a new structure. So, that was the design. Now the original estimate was that this project would cost a million dollars. Also the second, third, fourth, fifth level of the building, which were SROs, single room occupancy building, that the Y had had, would now become rooms for Mason Gross students, because they were still in town. They were still at the PJ Young building at that point. So they were going to have places that they could have students.

Listokin: As a dorm?

Marchetta: Essentially as a dorm. As a dorm. It would be housing for graduate students. And it was going to cost about a million dollars. Well it came out closer to two million dollars.

Listokin: Just because of the complexity of the construction?

Marchetta: Underestimating the complexity of the construction. For one thing, when they opened the walls, they saw a brick method that they had never seen before. They didn't even know why the walls stayed up. It was not that it was unstable, but it was a technique that nobody had seen in a long, long time. They found things that they didn't expect. So construction is like that.

Listokin: It's a two million dollar project.

Marchetta: Two million dollar project that Devco is going fund and what we agreed to do was sell our building for an amount, and, quite honestly, it was less than I think the building was worth, but if we agreed to a lower number we could get a reduced lease number in the new space. So we traded ownership of a building to a long-term leasehold. So we had a twenty-year lease and the twenty-year lease essentially said we would pay, I think it was $45,000 a month, a year, I forget what it is, probably a month, and that would be fixed, and that would include utilities too. Well . . .

Listokin: So it was truly being heavily subsidized.

Marchetta: Heavily subsidized for us and we did get the $300,000 that we paid, and we used that to help, you know, fund some of the other things. For example, they finished the building and, you know, everybody was learning here, you know. We engaged someone that knew something about theaters to kind of supervise this project for our perspective. We had no actual role – it was being developed by others. But we monitored what was going on, and we tried to give them some suggestions. For example, the stage of George Street is all wood, because if you're acting you want to walk on wood, dancing you want to walk on wood. You don't want to have concrete. Well we would have been quite happy with well laid plywood. They put down grade I red oak. Why? We're going to paint it black. We told that to the guy that was installing it. He almost started to cry. Because it was this beautiful floor when it was being laid. We're going to paint it black. You know, that's what you do in theaters. So things like that.

Listokin: Now were the students, were the Mason Gross students living there as a dorm? Or did that . . .

Marchetta: It did materialize, and it worked against us sometimes, because, you know, somebody brought in an illegal toaster. Toasted something, and when the fire alarm goes off on the third floor it goes off in the entire building, and guess what? You may be in the middle of a show. And that did happen a few times. And we did actually have to modify the security system.

Listokin: So how long was that going on? With the Mason Gross students?

Marchetta: For a while. I don't a decade. Probably a decade. And then they built this building. What was the year they built this building?

Berkhout: 1995 in the fall of 1995 it was completed and they moved in.

Marchetta: So it was used. I don't know – I don't know what it's being used for right now. So I have no idea what's going on.

Listokin: Those – those rooms – the SROs that had been used by Mason Gross.

Marchetta: I don't know what they're being used for right now. They may still be used for student housing. I have no idea. Graduate student housing. It's a good question. I have no idea. But anyway we did that. We ended up opening up the new theater, I think it was 1985.

Listokin: Actually they may be offices from the State Theater, could that be?

Marchetta: Who knows. The State Theater has its own space, but I have no idea what is above there right now. But anyway . . .

Listokin: Was Crossroads part of this redevelopment?

Berkhout: Right. You're right. State Theater offices are upstairs at the George Street. There are a few floors there.

Marchetta: Yeah.

Berkhout: And I think Crossroads have offices there, Listokin: Was Crossroads part of this?

Marchetta: No.

Berkhout: I'm going to have excuse myself just a second. I'm going to have to leave in about a half hour for something else.

Marchetta: Okay, we'll try to shut it down by then too.

Listokin: Cause Crossroads . . .

Marchetta: Crossroads was on Memorial Parkway at that point, and when we – before that time, Crossroads came in. The Hispanic Theater never took off, but the African-American group Crossroads did do well, and was building its own population, and they came to the board and asked to be separated. They wanted to run their own show.

Listokin: They were in the market area at one time, is that correct?

Marchetta: They were in the old brick building where Tony Nelessen lived at that point. I forget what that building was called, but – they had split off. But they had been very successful, and there's probably another thing that took New Brunswick Tomorrow and Devco probably got behind was to build them a new theater. And they did. So the vacant lot – we owned that vacant lot that was adjacent to the YMCA, and actually had an extension on it. That was the pool. The YMCA pool. When we built the theater, that portion of the building was taken down. There was no need to have a swimming pool anymore, and that vacant lot became the Crossroads Theater.

Listokin: If you could just – go a little forward so now we have George Street . . .

Marchetta: So George Street that's 1985 . . .

Listokin: And George Street's role as part of the – maybe if you go forward and what is going on with George Street and its role in the New Brunswick redevelopment.

Marchetta: Well George Street became a success. When we opened the new theater at the YMCA in 1985, I was the president. I wanted to stay through the opening of the new theater as president. At that point, no one had been president of the board for more than two years, maybe three, I was there for four, and we opened the new theater. And we had this beautiful new facility. We were able to sell tickets. We had a rent that we could afford, which we later modified because utility costs were included in the rent, and that became a problem for Devco. So we renegotiated that lease, and what we agreed to was that we would assume the utility cost. We took a slight reduction in the base rent, but then we were responsible for our own utilities, which was probably a good idea. But the lease was fair in the sense that it was fixed at this rent based on we had one year after we operated in the new theater to establish a revenue base, and once we exceeded that revenue base eight percent was additional rent. So it was a fair deal.

Listokin: It's like a percent of sales.

Marchetta: Yeah. Percent of sales. Essentially that. So we actually increased our revenue, and the rent ultimately went – so they got more money over time. And the George Street Playhouse started to flourish. And we expanded our ticket base, and, you know, we're much more stable than we were. When I left the board after 16 years, which was probably in 1998, I think I left in 1998 or 1999, 1998 I think it was, that I left the board of the George Street Playhouse. We were financially stable. Not great, but we didn't owe anybody a lot of money, and we were paying our bills. And I have no idea where they are today. So . . .

Listokin: And your perspective on George Street's contribution to New Brunswick redevelopment.

Marchetta: I think J&J underestimated the power of the arts. J&J is delighted in the fact, I'm sure, that George Street has succeeded, which then spurred the redevelopment of the

State Theater, which was in large measure funded by Middlesex County, in addition to the locals and the state.

Listokin: And how – how was – through what part of the county?

Marchetta: I have no idea. I know that they came up with money. And that was . . .

Berkhout: Well I heard that Dick Sellars actually bought it and then sold it to the county or some such thing.

Marchetta: Yeah. I believe that that's true. Devco or somebody bought the theater and then convinced the county. And again, this is the public/private. I'm certain that John Lynch, working on behalf of the city and Devco convinced David Crabiel, who was then the head of Middlesex County, the political head of Middlesex County, that this was something that the county should contribute, and they did. And the restoration of the State Theater with the George Street Playhouse next to it, and then in the future, with Crossroads, you had three functioning theaters. What a unique thing that was, and to my mind none of the theater growth that occurred in New Brunswick would have happened – restaurant growth, would have occurred in New Brunswick without it, and all of a sudden you went from a town that the pub was fine dining to Panico's, which was great, and then La Fontana, which is something else today, and little by little more and more restaurants of—all of a sudden, New Brunswick became a restaurant spot on the New Jersey map, and to this day, I think, between Hoboken and New Brunswick you more Zagat named restaurants than anywhere else. I think Hoboken is one and New Brunswick is number two. So that made a big difference in getting people to come back into town and Devco's goal and New Brunswick Tomorrow's goal was to restore the community to full functions. It's almost there. It's almost there because they've created housing. The first housing they created which was on the old Hiram Market area struggled for decades, for a decade at least.

Listokin: You mean townhouses.

Marchetta: The townhouses. It wasn't the product. It was New Brunswick. Nobody was ready to move into New Brunswick, and I think there's been a coalition and combination of forces that have all come together. The urban market has created itself. You can sell houses and condos in urban areas where you never would have believed – South Amboy, Rahway? Amazing. New Brunswick was one of the leaders in that, and that started. Even though the first project would have failed miserably. If a private developer had done that he would be bankrupt, but because it was Devco they were able to survive it, and that housing. And then you brought in . . .

Listokin: Again the Hiram Market townhouses?

Marchetta: Hiram Market townhouses. And then the new apartments that were built on the lower section of the old urban renewal site. That brought in more people, and I think New Brunswick needs more middle income people. I'm – I don't believe in the idea that gentrification is bad, because gentrification brings in more money, and unless you have people with disposable income, guess what, a city will never get back to its economic health. The one last – and I think residential housing took a long time to get developed, but it's now reaching a point where it's successful. The next step is a school system, and I don't think . . .

Listokin: And as a product of the school system, what's the answer?

Marchetta: Regionalization. And that's not an answer for New Brunswick. That's an answer for the State of New Jersey.

Berkhout: In New Jersey we need county wide school systems.

Marchetta: I concur with Thea completely. I believe this is ridiculous. That a small state like New Jersey has 600 plus school districts.

Berkhout: We need 21.

Marchetta: We need 21 school districts. And, quite honestly, we need 21 planning boards. And I think our land use methodology is horrendous. You know, we want public input. We understand that, but I don't know how the state can function when a little community that happens to have a piece of real estate that's attractive can dictate what is beneficial for an entire region. I think land-use decisions have to be made at the level of impact. So if you've got a six-lot subdivision, I don't care if it's a municipality that does that, and I don't care of it's, you know, a municipality of 1500 people, but if it's something that's going to impact not that town, not that county, but a region of the state, it should either be done at the state or at a minimum at the county level, and we waste more money in bureaucracy. You know, part of our housing cost, why we have the highest housing cost in New Jersey is because the bureaucracy and fees that are latched on. Call it affordable housing. Call it wetlands. Call it – the regulations easily eat up 25 percent of the costs.

Berkhout: And the duplication and the . . .

Marchetta: Duplication. Right. Exactly. So if we have a school system that's one county superintendant of schools. Maybe three or four assistants. You still get rid of a dozen, you know, superintendents. I can't believe that any study would show that it's more cost effective to run it the way we do.

Listokin: If I could go back to – stepping back in time, some of the early projects was the hotel the Hyatt Hotel.

Marchetta: That was a UDAG grant.

Listokin: What is some of your perspectives on those projects?

Marchetta: Well, the Hyatt Hotel was a great idea because New Brunswick had had a hotel, the Roger Smith, that had been the jewel of New Brunswick for many years, and it was closed.

Listokin: And where was that?

Marchetta: That was right across the street.

Berkhout: Yeah. Became the Day's Inn.

Listokin: That was the Roger Smith, okay.

Marchetta: That was the Roger Smith Hotel, and it was a classic. It was a great hotel at one point. And now you had no hotel. So J&J building its headquarters, having a hotel convenient to it, there you got your built-in user. So they used the UDAG grant to acquire the dollars. Again, this is the public/private involvement.

Listokin: It was six million dollars.

Marchetta: Is that what it was? I don't remember.

Listokin: Yeah. Big money.

Marchetta: Yeah big money back then. So they got UDAG and they built it as a hotel. I was working for Middlesex County at that point, and I had just got a federal grant to run affordable housing conference, and we were one of the first users of the hotel. We had a conference in there. It wasn't done when we booked it. So it was very early on. And they never really got the HVAC working right. The crystals were flying all over the place during the conference. But it was a work-out schedule. But that was a great idea. Public/private involvement. J&J was a primary user, and ultimately J&J acquired it. They were one of the participants in it. And they ultimately now own it. So it was a great idea.

What's happened is Devco is now in a position with the success its had, and the city is in the position with the success its had to undertake projects like the Heldrich and now they're talking about the Cultural Center, which I think is going to be a bigger nut to crack.

Berkhout: And the Gateway Project.

Marchetta: And the Gateway Project. Well the Gateway Project would have happened on its own. Could have happened on its own. The economics, I think, are there that the private market would be able to succeed in that location. It's next to the train station. TODs are big time now. It's next to the university. You know, the reason why a public entity was . . . was acquisition and that's why eminent domain must remain a tool in a toolbox of local government.

Listokin: If I could, and I really we're going – this is a wonderful discussion – let’s step back from sort of the blow by blow of details.

Marchetta: Right.

Listokin: Is New Brunswick a model and is it replicable?

Marchetta: New Brunswick is a model . . .

Listokin: And components of that model are . . .

Marchetta: The model is – well, clearly it's a collective effort where the public and private investment is made to restore the community. And I think it's a model that is much more replicable today than it was when New Brunswick started it, because older urban areas have the infrastructure that is both aged in some cases, but also irreplaceable in others. The railroad station is in right downtown New Brunswick. The fact that the Gateway will work in large measure is because it's right downtown New Brunswick. The reason that Omar Boraie One Spring Street works is because it is a block away from the train station. The trains have become, in the last 25 years, a much more valid form of transportation and much more acceptable from the marketplace. So being near the train station helps. I think the market is much more willing to consider urban locations today, but it's not going to be a full fledged family potential community without good schools, and I don't know that New Brunswick can on its own do it. I think it should be done on a regional basis. Whether it's regional schools or it's charter schools or it's vouchers, something has got to be done that allows people to feel comfortable that they're providing the best opportunity for their kids in New Brunswick, and that wasn't the case before. It's getting better though. New Brunswick has done some very interesting things. I think that this school that they did for medical technicians, the medical service . . .

Berkhout: The science . . .

Marchetta: What is called?

Berkhout: I don't know, but there's a science high school.

Marchetta: The science high school, but it teaches kids to get into the medical support field. Great idea. It's a great idea. That helps.

Berkhout: But it ought to be open to kids throughout the county and not just New Brunswick.

Marchetta: Why not? You know?

Berkhout: And then you would have more of a mixture of . . .

Marchetta: And I think the county – I think regionalization is really the only real solution for education and it should be done. If that were the case, if you could sell that one last – I think it's the only really remaining obstacle – you would have a community that everybody would consider, put it on their list of consideration. I certainly would have stayed in New Brunswick if that situation had been different. So, but just to finalize the replicability of it. New Brunswick was unique in my mind compared to let's say Plainfield. Roughly the same size. At one point the economics in Plainfield were much stronger than New Brunswick. They were always considered the Queen City. There was a lot more money there. But after the sixties, the riots of the sixties, they felt – and they didn't have the same long-term staying power institutions. They had a hospital. They had a major corporation, I forget what it's called that was there, but New Brunswick had two hospitals, had the county seat, which Plainfield does not have . . .

Listokin: Had Rutgers.

Marchetta: And it had Rutgers.

Berkhout: And J&J.

Marchetta: And J&J, but other cities have major corporations. J&J was committed to – I mean those institutions really underpinned the New Brunswick revitalization.

Listokin: So we don’t lose it, you made a passing comment earlier about the role of Rutgers . . .

Marchetta: I think it was underestimated. I think Rutgers really did a lot, because it was the university and the faculty that supported institutions like the George Street Playhouse. It was Bloustein that committed to put the Mason Gross School into the old building. It was Rutgers that agreed to build this facility in town. It's Rutgers that built the new dormitory in town. These kinds of things – without those things, where would New Brunswick be today? In my mind a lot further down on the redevelopment ladder of success, and the fact that Rutgers was here and plays a very significant role. When I was at Rutgers, everything was moving out of town. New Brunswick had been the heart of Rutgers, when I was at Rutgers in the sixties and the seventies everything was going elsewhere. It was going to Livingston. Livingston campus and to Bush campus. What we've seen in the last decade and a half is that it has turned its direction back into town, and that's made a big difference in the City of New Brunswick.

Berkhout: What about your hindsight question? In hindsight?

Listokin: 20/20 hindsight.

Marchetta: What would I have done different?

Berkhout: What mistakes were made and what would you have done differently.

Marchetta: I think the Hiram Square area could have been done differently. I think . . .

Listokin: As in saving more of what was there?

Marchetta: Yes.

Listokin: What Tony Nelessen and people like him were advocating around?

Marchetta: People – you go to Lambertville, you go to these older communities that have been able to restore old sections of town, it becomes a magnet. Princeton, you know, it has its old downtown. I think there was room in New Brunswick to have a section that could have been preserved as something that had some history to it. And New Brunswick has historically not done that. I mean, not only the Hiram Market, but there was a mansion on Hamilton Street called Strong Mansion. The Strong family goes back to pre-colonial days, and in that mansion at one point, four or five different presidents had stayed.

Berkhout: That was the one where there's now service parking lot?

Marchetta: Now there's an apartment building. This is on Hamilton Street near Lewis Street going out of town on the left hand side there are some apartments there that – and that mansion was on five acres of virgin land, and it got burned. There are some questions of whether it was a natural fire or unnatural fire, and then it got redeveloped. And that building had more history in it than, you know, buildings in colonial Williamsburg. So we could have done a little bit more to preserve some of our past.

Listokin: Should more housing have been developed?

Marchetta: I think more housing should be done, but I don't know that housing could have been done back then. I think it can be done now, and I think it should be accelerated. The other thing is the access to the waterfront. You know, you built 18, it became a major highway.

Listokin: Which, of course, was important. J&J was saying, "If you don't build 18 we're not going to stay."

Marchetta: Yeah, that's all. I'm all in favor of it. But what they're doing retroactively now is trying to connect the river. Philadelphia has great connections to the waterfront, better than we do. And, I think, somehow figuring that out, I mean, when I was here, living here in the seventies and early eighties, things that brought people into town besides the institutions like the theater and other . . .

Listokin: It was retail.

Marchetta: Retail, I don't think so. I think what brought them were events, and you know, the late Bob Schneider, you know, who was an early supporter. A graduate of our program.

Berkhout: He was the owner of J. August Cafe.

Marchetta: But before he was J. August Cafe, he lived in the old building on Memorial Parkway, but he started when he had the original J. August, which was actually a plant shop on Church Street, he started having the Church Street Festival. And every year, for maybe five or seven years they had this event. And people would come from all over the place. And he got the church, Trinity—not Trinity Church, Christ Church involved, and the Reformed hurch involved, and they did something and it brought lots of people into town. Then they moved across the river and had the river festival. They were events that started to create in the general public's mind that you could go to New Brunswick and not get knifed.

Listokin: So you're saying with hindsight more of that should be done?

Marchetta: More of that. What is it that Rouse called it – the Festival . . .

Listokin: Festival Place.

Marchetta: Rouse was doing it, but he was doing it the same time we were doing it here in New Brunswick. And if we had focused on that we could have done a little bit more. We could have made Hiram Square a festival location, you know? And you know . . .

Listokin: How about, you know, the city historical and current criticism that this was really a corporate-driven effort and you didn't have the community involved and it didn't really benefit other than indirect.

Marchetta: I disagree.

Listokin: And your . . .

Marchetta: My feeling is that community involvement is important to a degree, but what does a community know about redevelopment? I mean they only are concerned with how it impacts them, and I just don't think that the general community has the big picture view. And unless you have a corporate private sector involvement coupled with a public sector, you could have community meetings from now until eternity and nothing will ever get done. So I think, yes, we should have the community involved, but the general community, it's like going to a planning board meeting. Everybody stands up and talks about traffic, and they attribute their knowledge to the fact that they have a driver's license. That is not enough to be in charge of making a decision that deals with traffic. Community input is required, but not community control. Now, sure, could we have created more parks? Yes. Could we have done better in the schools? Yes. Could we have done more social services? Those are all yes, but where are the dollars for those things coming from? And unless you start to build the institutions that can support those dollars, that can pay the taxes to support them, it's not going to happen. So you have to do it in some economic order, and I think community input is important, but let's let the professionals design it.

Listokin: But a much more minor point reflecting some of my interests, a number of people have said the role of the parking authority was very key?

Marchetta: Yeah.

Listokin: Is that your take on that?

Marchetta: Absolutely.

Listokin: The New Brunswick Parking Authority.

Marchetta: The New Brunswick Parking Authority, any authority, it could have been the housing authority, but they needed an authority that could be somewhat out of the direct role of the city, because the city has other things to deal with. Could focus in on an aspect, and the Parking Authority became the acquisition authority for the city of New Brunswick, and parking was a problem. The Parking Authority could justify taking on projects that had parking components to it, and then doing the other thing. So the Parking Authority was a good tool, and, as I said, it could have been an improvement authority, it could have some separate authority that had the right to condemnations. Improvement authorities are probably the best suited for that. New Brunswick doesn't have an improvement authority. They don't need more authorities, so they used the tool of the Parking Authority.

Listokin: This also was pointed out, the scale of the authority. They could cross subsidize, you know, they could absorb a loss on the deck for the first three, four, five years because they had enough other revenue . . .

Marchetta: Right. They were a large enough entity that they could allow the project to mature to the point that it was generating revenue. So . . .

Listokin: Any other thoughts? We have covered a lot.

Marchetta: We have covered a lot. I think, you know, retroactively, New Brunswick has had a great history and if we could figure out a way to utilize some of that history more. I mean New Brunswick has on Somerset Street the Hungarian Cultural Center. Have you ever been in it? I think that we could organize some of these things to a little bit better. You could use it as a tool to get people interested and involved.

Berkhout: Now, John Heldrich actually, I guess, would like to see the results of some of this be on exhibit somehow. A visitor's center or something that could maybe achieve some of that. And he said show some of the history before the redevelopment, the immigrant groups that have come through and lived here, and then what the redevelopment has done.

Marchetta: You know you make an interesting point, John Heldrich is a very key person in the whole process. And if you had a name who the most significant people in this process were it had to be John Lynch and John Heldrich. The two of them together created a . . .

Listokin: If you could maybe talk some on that?

Marchetta: Well, John Lynch was a very powerful and effective mayor. He could run the city well, and knew how to get the dollars. Being a state-wide power broker in the sense that he was a state senator that had influence over the state, he could get things done that very few people could get done. So you had this very powerful person in the public sector, and then you had John Heldrich, who was a senior executive at Johnson & Johnson, who has his history, his personal history in New Brunswick, and you had these two people come together with the private sector and public sector at a level that they could influence their respective environments, their organizations, to focus in on New Brunswick. That's rare. That's very rare.

One last comment. There are a lot of towns that try to redevelop, and without question after my 20, 30, 40 years now in government and development, the one key element that is necessary, more than anything else, is leadership and you can look at a community that has the same resources as another and one is successful and one is an outright failure, and why? It's leadership.

Berkhout: Is it continuity of leadership?

Marchetta: I think it's a combination of both. It's continuity and quality of leadership. Continuity is very important because these projects – when did the report get published?

Berkhout: Eighty something.

Marchetta: Eighty something and we're now in 2000 – it’s 20 years.

Berkhout: Or seventy something.

Marchetta: Or seventy something, 30 years. So these things take a long time to reach fruition, and you can't do it in one or two terms. So you need to have continuity and I think you have to have quality of leadership, and most communities don't have it.

Listokin: That's right. The Long Branch versus Asbury.

Marchetta: And Hoboken is successful in spite of itself.

Listokin: Well, if you're located right by Manhattan.

Marchetta: As I said, in spite of itself, it is successful.

Listokin: This is terrific. Thank you.

Marchetta: You're welcome. If there is anything you remember e-mail me.

[end of recording]