**Interview with Glenn Patterson**

Listokin: . . . he was actually the teaching assistant when I did the colloquium back in ‘84, I guess it was, or ‘85 something like that.

Berkhout: We met with Chris Foglio yesterday. She was telling us about how she initially got involved, but also that you know some of the Rutgers faculty when she was working at the time that was not very supportive.

Listokin: Well how are you doing Glenn?

Listokin: How am I doing? Good. Good.

Listokin: Well this has been an informative process. You had – we sent you the e-mail on some of these materials, hopefully. All right. So.

Patterson: I don't know if I saw it or not, but whatever.

Berkhout: Right, I gave him a form too. Because we are recording this for Rutgers purposes we just need a signature from you.

Patterson: So does this mean I'm going to be on You Tube?

Berkhout: I don't think so. I think it's mainly for research purposes. If people want to more to study the planning of New Brunswick or how it applies elsewhere that's what the purpose is. At least it's cooler here today.

Patterson: Yeah. It's not too bad out there.

Berkhout: They're having AC problems. Your building was extremely cool I know that.

Patterson: Yeah. It depends what room you're in.

Berkhout: I see. Okay. This is just an updated, I added a few people at the end there so. Okay. Thank you.

Listokin: Thank you for being part of this. Actually we're starting these things now with: can you tell us something about yourself? You know, kind of growing up and, you know, how you came to New Brunswick? I mean, just before we start into the specific redevelopment.

Patterson: Well, I'm Glenn Patterson. I'm the Director of Planning, Community and Economic Development for the city. I've been doing that since 1991 so that's about 18 years that I've been doing that. Grew up down at the Jersey shore, Point Pleasant Beach. My father had been the Chairman of the Zoning Board down there. My uncle had been the mayor and a freeholder, so I was always interested in land use issues and so forth, and after getting out of college I ended up at the Rutgers . . .

Listokin: Where did you go to college at?

Patterson: I have a BA from American University in political science. Found some courses down there interesting in the urban affairs area and so forth. Tried law school for a while, and said the world has enough second-rate lawyers, so let's try planning. Came to Rutgers, I guess, it was ‘83 for my masters in planning back when I was over at Lucy Stone out in the hinterlands of Piscataway, and that's where I really first got connected with New Brunswick. I think Frank Nero, who had my job at the time, had come over to speak in one of the classes – Susan Fainstein’s maybe or something like that – and so I got talking to him after class and so forth, and I started working for Asbury Park for a while. Started there as an intern and went there full-time, and eventually Chris Foglio asked me if I'd like to come up to New Brunswick and be her assistant because she was moved from the assistant position to take Frank's position when he moved over to DEVCO, and have been in New Brunswick ever since. So that was about 20 years ago.

Listokin: All right. I can imagine what were some of the reasons motivating the redevelopment, but maybe if we can get your perspective on what those reasons were, and maybe we can think about them in terms of the different players, and of J&J, and the hospital, and the city, and maybe if I can get your perspective on that.

Patterson: Yeah. I wasn't in the city when the redevelopment first got started, but I've talked to a lot of the original players like, you know, John Lynch, John Heldrich, and so forth, but I think there was a sense – I mean J&J back in the seventies was considering moving out of town, and everyone thought that that would really be a death blow to the city, and the city was not in good shape back then in the mid-seventies. And so the community came together. They had, you know, people from the communities, such as Roy Epps and other people involved with Dick Sellars and John Lynch and John Heldrich and so forth to put together some plans. And they hired Leo Molinaro from American City Corp., and he did a plan and said, "Yeah, you know, there's something here to work with." I think New Brunswick was lucky in that its major institutions never picked up and left. I used to work for Asbury Park, and all their major institutions by the time I was working there in the mid-eighties, had pretty much picked up and left. I think the *Asbury Park Press* still had some presence in town, but they had moved out to Neptune Township on Route 66, New Jersey Natural Gas had moved out, JCP&L had moved out. I forget what the name of the major bank was down at the shore back at that time, but they had moved out. So there was really like nothing left to work with, whereas, I think New Brunswick has had an advantage that a lot of the urban areas haven't had in that we've had a J&J, a Rutgers, Robert Wood Johnson Hospital, St. Peter's Hospital, County of Middlesex still in town so there was always a good daytime population base to work with here that it wasn't a completely dysfunctional city. It was a city that was definitely frayed at the edges to say the least, but there was still something to work with. There was still an economic reason for New Brunswick to exist. And it has a great location in the middle of the state. A turnpike exit. The train station is here so it's an easy place for a lot of people to meet. People are still familiar with it and had a lot of good feelings about New Brunswick if they'd gone to Rutgers or something like that, so I think we always had a lot of advantages that maybe some other cities in the state didn't have when they were trying to do redevelopment.

Listokin: Maybe what we'll do rather than going back to when it started because that was really before you came aboard, maybe if we can start when you came aboard. You know, like what were, you know, where was redevelopment at that point? And if you can maybe take us forward on what were some of the projects and the thinking behind the projects, and, you know, what do you think are some of the major lynchpins under your watch. You know from 1991 forward.

Patterson: Essentially before I came here in 1988, and at that time a few of the initial redevelopment projects had been on line. I guess the Hyatt had opened in 1983. That was a place I used to like to hang-out sometimes after class at the bar and the lobby down there with some of the graduate students. So that was on line. I think Kilmer Square, Golden Triangle, 410 George, Albany Street Plaza were just coming on line or had just come on line, you know, a year or maybe two years before that. So it was just really getting started. The downtown was still fairly sad looking. A lot of vacancies. A lot of stores that, you know, weren't selling the best quality merchandise and things like that. When I got here couple of the first things that we were working on were a lot of neighborhood focus things not just the downtown. The first thing I was really working on was an RCA agreement that the city was doing with Warren Township, a regional contribution agreement, and we were trying to be the first in the state to do one of those.

Perth Amboy beat us out by like a week or two, but we had the second RCA in the state, and we were using that to build affordable housing out in the neighborhood, because that was the vision that we were trying to do things in downtown, the Hiram Square area, Riverwatch, some things like that, but John Lynch was the mayor at the time had a vision that having this balanced housing in town, is what we called it, that there was going to be some upscale stuff in town so you could have people living in town who had disposable income, support the retail, and so forth, downtown.  By the time I got here, the city had already started on doing middle class housing in town through a lease purchase program – that's Renaissance Station, Douglas Estates – that's actually how I met Frank Nero – he had come to the class to talk to us about the lease purchase program, and they were doing, I think, Douglas Estates at the time.  And when I got here . . .

Listokin: Which one was Renaissance Station?

Patterson: Renaissance Station is the one on Sanford Street in the old Conrail rail yards.  They did about . . .

Berkhout: I didn't know that was Conrail rail yards.

Patterson: Yeah.  It was, I think it was, like, they stored their freight care there.  I'm assuming to guess for . . .

Berkhout: So it's on the way out to where the Cook Campus comes.  It's like . . .

Patterson: Yeah.  Its south of the Cook Campus just to the south, and sort of, before you get there, but it's sort of in between Squibb and the Cook Campus.

Berkhout: Right.

Patterson: And it was, I think, 140 something units that they were doing out there. And it was a lease purchase.  It was a very innovative program.  It was very high profile for the city. I know ABC Nightly News came here and did a segment on it where people could put a thousand dollars down, live in the house for, I think, it was 18 months or two years, and the trick with the program was that the banks would credit the equity increase in the house from when you first moved in there to when you actually were going to close on it, and count that towards your down payment, so you could get into the house for just a thousand dollars down.

Listokin: That was the lease purchase concept.

Patterson: Back then there weren't as many programs as you have now where you have, you know, two percent down payment, zero percent down payment, and so forth. So this was to get over the barrier of high down payment costs, high closing costs, to get into houses.

Listokin: All right. So we had the Renaissance Station there, and then whatever the mayor wants to reach out into the neighborhoods and then, you get back to the RCA?

Patterson: Yeah. They also wanted to do, Lynch wanted to do affordable housing. He was the one that put forth the RCA concept in the fair housing act.

Listokin: This is now Lynch?

Patterson: Lynch, yeah. He wanted to have – make sure there was affordable housing in town. He was very, very supportive of that. So we did this first RCA with Warren Township. They were giving us $26,500 for each unit we accepted. We were accepting 166 units from them, and we were doing a combination of rehabbing existing units that were in town and also building new affordable housing. So right across the street from Renaissance Station, which was the lease purchase project, we were doing Delovan Court, which was 44 units of affordable housing. Sort of around the corner we did Comstock Court, which was 19 units. We were doing a buy down at Hampton Club, which was a new concept that people hadn't done until then. We were basically taking the market rate units that they built, throw on some RCA and balanced housing dollars from DCA added, and riding down the cost from, back then, probably from like $125,000 to, like, $70,000 dollars, something like that, so they could be sold to moderate income families. So we were being really, really innovative, and really aggressive in trying to get affordable housing dollars into town.

Listokin: Can you tell me something about the planning process involved? You have a big city. You have a lot of neighborhoods that have numerous amounts of housing need. So, like, how do you make your decisions where the developments go and the balance between new construction and rehabilitation of the existing stock?

Patterson: Well it's not a process where you sit back and do that really as a planning report or things like that. It's driven a lot more by the opportunities that are available to you what the economics are at the current time. One of the sayings that . . .

Listokin: So you say the opportunities. A developer comes forth or a piece of land becomes available, I mean . . .

G. Patterson: Yeah, it could be a developer says, “Hey we'd like to do something over here.” It could be, you know, we find out that a piece of land is available. Or we could say, you know, “We really want to do something over here. This is, you know, a really deleterious land use or something like that. It's a bunch of chop shops or, you know, deteriorated buildings. We need to get that out of there. It's got a bunch of problem bars in that neighborhood. We want to be able to take them and make the community nicer looking over there.” So it's really sitting down and trying to figure out how to make the project economically feasible. You have to have a pro forma that works. The saying is, you know, “Planners don't plan, bankers plan.” If you can get the dollars, you can go do it. So we quickly became very experienced in running a lot of pro formas and being able to talk to developers and the language developers talked in so that we could get the projects developed. And we had to try and figure out how to put together multiple different subsidies because using just RCAs or using just home dollars, or using just tax exempt bonds or whatever was never enough. You would have to cobble together three, four, five, seven different subsidy sources to make it work. They all have their different rules and regulations. A lot of times they conflict where one says you have to do it this way, the other one says you can't do it that way, and trying to make it – make it all work. And then everybody wants to be the last one to commit to the project, which is something we're going through with a project right now. So you have to this dance with all the subsidizing agencies, HMFA, DCA, COA, HUD, and so forth that somehow simultaneously get them all to say "yes."

Listokin: And is DEVCO, you know, who are the players talking now about the affordable housing in the neighborhoods. The players involved in that are?

Patterson: Yeah, back then DEVCO was acting as the developer for a lot of them. They're not so much doing that anymore. They're focused on some different things, but back then doing the lease purchase housing DEVCO was the developer. And they'd always enter into the joint ventures with a private developer. With Renaissance Station they had a private developer. Stefazzio LLC or something like that. I can't remember the exact name of it. And those guys would do like the actual developing and so forth. But DEVCO would help put the project together, help work the way through the funding and political maze to get something so you could get it approved, get the community support for the project, help work with HMFA, DCA, and so forth in getting the project funding done. And they were critical to the process, particularly back then because developers just weren't as experienced in doing this stuff back in the eighties as they are now. There are a lot of developers out there who just do this as, I mean that's their businesses. You know the Michaels, the Penroses – companies like that. And they weren't – they weren't as prominent back then. And you needed a DEVCO to make it happen. And it's a lot easier to do it in New Brunswick today because we have a long history of successful projects. Doing it back in the mid-eighties, you know, this was all a crap shoot for a lot of developers. I mean particularly when we were doing the stuff downtown, which was not necessarily affordable housing, but doing Riverwatch and so forth. I mean that was a big leap of faith for a developer to say that someone with money was going to put it down to spend, back then, you know a $125,000 or more to buy a house in downtown New Brunswick or in the downtown of any urban area. The affordable housing was a little easier to sell, but the financing on them was difficult also.

Berkhout: So was it DEVCO or was it John Lynch that convinced the developers of the Riverwatch and the Hiram area to take the big leap of faith?

Patterson: Um, you know, that was a little before my time, but I'd probably say, you know, both of them. I mean the city and DEVCO, particularly back in those days worked very, very closely together. I guess Paul Abdala was originally over at DEVCO. He was a little bit before my time, but when I came here, Frank Nero, was over there. He and John worked closely together, and both were very focused on getting it done. Not getting hung up on, you know, trying to be perfect.

Listokin: And on this housing effort, did that dovetail with what New Brunswick Tomorrow was doing? I mean I'm just trying to . . . there are like two arms of trying to help the city, or not really with the housing?

Patterson: Um, I don't think NBT had that big of a role with the housing. I guess when they were originally established back in the mid-seventies they were more of a planning agency, and I guess the, when Molinero did his initial study downtown, he did it through NBT and so forth. I think by the mid-eighties they had refocused themselves more as a social service coordination agency, and weren't really too involved in the physical planning of it. And that was more DEVCO's role. DEVCO was established to be more the bricks and mortar arm of redeveloping the city, whereas NBT had gone and established programs such as the teenage daycare program out at the high school. A lot of school-based programs. I think one was actually called school-based where they would have a lot, you know, after hour services and so forth.

Listokin: Just so I don't lose the question, so there was initial planning done at the beginning by American Cities and what have you, and now since as planning director was that work then incorporated into the city's, you know, master planning, redevelopment planning? I mean . . .

Patterson: Yeah, the report itself was never officially adopted as anything, but I think the . . .

Listokin: The American Cities plan?

Patterson: Yeah, the American Cities Report. But I think the vision that kind of came from that is still very important. What it saw New Brunswick could be, and I think that's one of the keys to the success here is the political leadership in town for the past 30 years has had a pretty clear vision as to what they wanted for New Brunswick, and were able . . .

Listokin: Can you articulate some on that vision?

Patterson: Well I think, I think Lynch had that New Brunswick could be a very successful urban area. That, as I said before, we still had major anchors downtown. We could build upon them. We could build things such as the Hyatt Hotel downtown, and people would go to it. That we could build upscale housing in downtown, and it would be attractive. Those offices would come here. That we could rejuvenate the George Street corridor downtown, and that we could revitalize the neighborhoods through combinations of housing rehabilitation and developing both middle-class, lease-purchase type housing, and affordable housing in town. And I think still, I mean 30 years later, that's still what we're working on. I think we've had a fair amount of success with it, but that's still kind of what guides us is that we want to have a balanced town where there is something for everybody here. And I think somebody rated us the fifth most diverse community in the state. I think, you know, we have been somewhat successful with that.

Listokin: You have spoken some on the housing efforts, but on your watch we've had some major commercial projects, you know, not to talk about all of them, but, you know, your observations and how they came about. And maybe take, you know, one or two as examples that you think were particularly important and just tell us about it.

Patterson: I think some of the ones that were done a little before I got here. Obviously probably the most important was the J&J decision to stay in town that sent a really strong message that New Brunswick was serious and was a place where you can invest private dollars, and they built a wonderful facility downtown. I think when I.M. Pei designed it, the concept was a city in a park within a city. It sometimes . . . it's a little remote from the rest of downtown, but it has made a very attractive downtown. I think a lot of people, you know, the J&J Tower even though you can't find a sign over there to say what it is. Everybody knows what it is. It's a good icon for the city. And it showed that, you know, some world players were investing in New Brunswick, so I think that's always got to be the number one. I mean the Hyatt was a big investment early on. I think that was a big risk, but that was really helped by the fact that in developing that hotel you knew you were going to get the J&J trade because it was their hotel.

They were paying for it. But later on, you know, across the street here, the Heldrich Center. I mean, that's a major project that has really transformed this area of downtown. I mean, you know six or seven years ago this area down here looked substantially different. That project was done without having a Johnson & Johnson, you know, guaranteeing bonds or anything like that. It's a very private-sector oriented project. I mean it did get some assistance, but it’s very private-sector oriented, and it's got to sink or swim on the market, but I think it has transformed another area of downtown. So when we first started back in the, you know, the mid-eighties or early eighties, everything was focused on that sort of George and Albany intersection up there with J&J, 410 George, Kilmer Square, and so forth. This has brought it down here with Heldrich, Liberty Plaza across the street.

Listokin: So you can talk some about whom were the players involved in the Heldridge Project?

Patterson: Chris Paladino was the main planner. He really pushed the project as is not uncommon with a lot of these projects it went through a lot of ups and downs. You know, the Riverwatch Project, Hiram Square had a similar type of history, where you had sort of an initial vision. Ideas changed. The economy changed while you're going through this process, and it morphs. The Heldrich project, the design of it changed drastically two or three times. I mean, one time it was a very skinny, very, very tall building. It ended up being, you know, a moderately tall building. I think it’s 10 or 12 stories, and it ended up with a very, I think, classic design. I'm very, very pleased with the way it came out.

Berkhout: Was it . . . was having something like that here part of Molinaro's original . . .

Patterson: No, I don't think in particular. I mean, as I recall, I haven't reread his study in a couple of years, but yeah, he definitely talked about having the Hyatt Hotel, the J&J Headquarters, I think focusing on that George and Albany node up there. The cultural center was one of the main things that he talked about.

Berkhout: And that was here on Livingston.

Patterson: That was here, down here, but just having the cultural center and the State Theater here, I mean really was enough to transform the neighborhood. Liberty Plaza which we did, I guess it's almost 10 years ago, helped and so forth, but having this thing right in the middle taking out the old Roger Smith Hotel . . .

Berkhout: The Days Inn.

Patterson: Went through a lot of – the Days "Otel" – missing the "H" up there on the roof sign – it really helped really transform things, and we were able to do it with a couple of other projects, Rockoff Hall and the soon to be started New Brunswick Arts Building on the other corner down there.

Berkhout: On George and Livingston?

Patterson: Yeah.

Berkhout: Yeah.

Listokin: Where is the university in all this?

Patterson: Rutgers has participated in a number of projects. I think, frankly, I mean a lot of times they've had to be dragged to the table. I think even for this project where we're at now down here with Bloustein. I mean Rutgers has done a lot. I think they've had to be pushed to get them in involved, but I think all the projects have worked out really well for them. When they University Center up on Easton Avenue, the Rutgers apartment dormitory project, I think they were skeptical as to whether that would work, and I think it's still the number one requested dormitory in the system. It's been a great project there. Doing this project here, I mean, you know, the Arnold Constable Building and I forget the name of the other building that was here, but they were, you know, derelict, they were outmoded for the time and for the future. They weren't going to come back and be department stores and things like that. It was something that needed to be taken down and something new created here. And we got this nice facility here, and as part of that we were able to do some improvements to the back of City Hall. Eventually a couple years later we did Civic Square Two. This was originally called Civic Square One, and we got a new police station out of it. We redid the post office; our offices ended up over there, the county got a new administration building out of it. We did the family court building up the street, which is Civic Square Three. So we were able – this was sort of the first piece in this sector of town, and we built upon that moving sort of up New Street to revitalize that corridor.

Berkhout: Now is that DEVCO driven? Or city driven?

Patterson: Combinations. I mean everyone asks that questions who is doing this, and a lot of it's – it’s hard to say, you know, oh it's this person or that person. It's a lot of ideas get thrown into the pot. Different people have different contributions to make, and then eventually the project comes out of it.

Berkhout: But it's driven by one of the two, J&J is no longer involved as it was at the beginning?

Patterson: Yeah. I mean J&J was involved very heavily, obviously, in their headquarters, and the Hyatt and so forth. They really haven't been, you know, that involved directly. I mean they do provide some funding to both NBT and DEVCO in terms of operational funds and so forth, but in terms of, you know, here's a check for building this office building over there, I mean, that doesn't happen. In terms of pushing the projects, that's DEVCO's role, but they do it in conjunction with the city. We all sit and go over the projects. They're the ones that are actually on the line to develop it. We're doing the planning for it. And what my office is doing is doing the redevelopment plans. You know writing them so that we can have the zoning to do it. Be able to have the powers to acquire properties and so forth. Be able to provide the tax incentives and so forth after a project gets built. DEVCO is usually working with a private partner, you know, Advance, Penrose, whoever they're working with. That's their job to go out, you know, and bring those guys in. They're hiring the architects and so forth to do those projects. So I mean there's lot of – a lot of people involved.

Listokin: Where is the county in all this?

Patterson: County – in a regular run of the mill redevelopment project and so forth, I mean the county is not all that directly involved. I mean they've been involved in some of the projects such as when we did Civic Square Two where the prosecutor's office is in Civic Square Two on the post office side. We did the new county administration building. They sold the old administration building to Penrose Properties so they could do the mixed income project that is Skyline Tower now. But as a sort of a driver in the redevelopment process, I mean, you know they're not necessarily a frontline player, but they've been very supportive in lots of other ways.

Listokin: The hospital?

Patterson: They've done a lot, a lot of expansion. Most of it not as redevelopment projects, but a couple of them have been, but they've had this tremendous growth where they've, you know, expanded and taken over three or four blocks from when I first started here 20 years ago. They are a tremendous employment center for the town. I think probably when I got here they probably had a 1000 or 1500 employees. I think they're up around 5000 now, and they've created a major medical center, and that's something that drives other business into town. It brings other people into town. It gets people familiar with New Brunswick. I think it was one of the problems, you know, back in the seventies and eighties, people were just scared to go to urban centers whether it was here, Newark, Jersey City, wherever. You know having a Robert Wood Johnson, having a cultural center were things that would bring people in here and just sort of get them familiar with it, I think, made people a lot more comfortable with it. That, you know, they'd open a business here. Or buy a house here things like that. I think – I know John Stossel did one of his segments on, I think it was 20/20, does that all the time that how people are scared of things just because they're unfamiliar with them. They just hear the 10 o'clock news, headlines, and so forth, that if you live there, you know, you don't find it particularly scary. It's just unfamiliar, and the more you can get people to come there and be familiar with it, you know, you can get them to invest whether it's in a business or a house or whatever.

Listokin: So besides your office, which is Planning and Economic Development, what are the other city, you know, offices or entities that are significantly involved in redevelopment?

Patterson: Well we try to be as much of a one-stop shop as we can. We were set up to do that. I mean we're the liaison with the developers. But probably the other ones that are most involved would be the City Engineer's Office, because basically you want to go build the thing you have to make sure that you can do it from an engineering standpoint, and if you have issues with sewer capacity, water capacity, street realignments, traffic, things like that, that they're all going to be involved in and they have to, you know, be involved in all those nitty gritty type details. The city business administrator's office, they're always involved. The City Council is very involved. I mean they have to approve all the stuff and go through the public process because there are multiple points in the process where you have to have public meetings, public hearings, and so forth, and they have to make some tough decisions, and you know, sometimes some very courageous decisions about whether to guarantee some financing for a project, whether to do a tax exemption for the project whether, you know, to vacate a street or whatever, and a lot of these things are fairly controversial when they're happening. Anytime you're doing change, and particularly, you know, you're taking someone's property, or you're building something that is going to be tall and different, you get a lot of people coming out to the city council meetings, and there's some, you know, spirited debate about that. They've always been very stand up in being able to say, we think this is going to be good for the city in the long term, and I think in almost every case that's been proven true.

Listokin: Has the application of eminent domain changed over time?

Patterson: Oh, yeah.

Berkhout: That's funny because one person told us it was never used, and another person said we used a lot.

Patterson: It's not used as much as people think it is, but yeah, you use it. You have to use it sometimes to make things happen. Just because something is in a redevelopment area, and you're acquiring the property doesn't mean that you're taking it through eminent domain. It may start out with people saying, you know, I'm never going to sell to you or, you know, we have the power you know to take the property. Most things get negotiated out, and they're negotiated settlements.

Listokin: So you started to say it has changed over time.

Patterson: Yeah.

Listokin: And in what way the application of eminent domain?

Patterson: Well, not so much the application. I mean it's become a much more controversial method of trying to develop things.

Listokin: So you try to do more negotiation now before using eminent domain than in the past?

Patterson: Not necessarily. I mean in the seventies or eighties, I mean, people didn't pay whole lot of attention to it, and I think there was general consensus that, well, you have to do this to save these cities. And eminent domain for redevelopment was really just used in cities, you know, the New Brunswick, the Newarks, the Trentons, Jersey City, places like that. I think as you got in the eighties through the nineties and around the turn of the century, it started – people saw it was a successful way to revitalize your town. It started getting used on a broader scale, and it wasn't always clear. You weren't always using it in something that anybody walking down the street would say, “Oh, that's a slum.” Or “That's clearly dilapidated, yeah, you need to do something there.” So it was pushing the envelope more, which got people pushing back and saying, you know, maybe that's not the appropriate way to do that, and started looking at what the laws actually said. There were a lot more court cases that came down, which had the affect of constraining exactly what you could do in how you were acquiring things. Making you go through a much more deliberate, in-depth process to declare something to be in need of redevelopment, blighted, and that your plans had to be much more detailed. Something you may have been able to do in a much quicker fashion back in, you know, 1995, you're taking, you know, many more weeks, months to do now because, one, you're more likely to get a challenge to it; two, that the law has become more clarified as to what you can and can't do, and I guess it was the Gallenton decision and a couple of others that said, you know, you can't just have a net opinion of some expert, you know, saying “Oh, yeah, that's blighted.” You've got to prove it now. So whereas back in the nineties the standard might have been this, the standard now is this, so it's a lot tougher areas that you may have been able to declare blighted back in 1995 under some of the recent decisions you can't do now. And you're much – and when you do it, it's much more likely that somebody there is going to challenge it. You know, that the low hanging fruit has already been picked, and it's tough to do, but it's still a really valuable tool because in the downtown areas you still have parcels where you want to do something, they're split up among you know 7, 8, 9 different owners. One hold out stops the process dead and you need to do it. It's more work, but that's what our job is to go prove that. So we still do use it, but it's a higher bar for us to show that, you know, this is necessary and this is the proper way to do it.

Listokin: You've spoken about what has happened. What do you see going forward on the redevelopment? You know, things changing. Things being the same. You know, what's on the horizon?

Patterson: I think New Brunswick is still going to continue to you know have major projects proposed in the future. I think this is a good place to invest. I think things like the state master plan and just, you know, sustainable policies, energy policy and so forth are going to make a place like New Brunswick an attractive place to invest. You know I joke with people saying that the best thing that could happen to New Brunswick is seven dollar a gallon gasoline because you can work here, live here. You don't need a car. I mean, I bicycle to work. You know, about 25 percent or 30 percent of my office walks or bicycles to work. You can live in town and get here easily. And I think in the future that's going to become more important. You're not going to be able to live out in Hunterdon County and commute into New York or whatever. That you're going to be working and living more in places like New Brunswick. So I think we're positioned well for the future for attracting new investment. The mechanisms that we use to do that maybe a little different in the future. We may not be able to use the redevelopment process as much, but then again, we may not need to.

Listokin: And why, because? Because of the push back on it?

Patterson: There's push back on it. And, too, I mean, as I said, the low-hanging fruit has already been picked. In downtown probably one of the things that are, you know, immediately jump out to you as, that's a slum or a dilapidated blighted area. A lot of it has been fixed up. So you may need other strategies to acquire those properties and so forth.

Berkhout: Are there particular geographic areas in the city that you see becoming more – where more changes may be taking place?

Patterson: Potentially. I mean as ...

Berkhout: I mean you mentioned the George Street corridor.

Patterson: Yeah. I mean the George Street corridor has a lot of changes already, but I think an area that may change is sort of the fifth and sixth ward area as we do more development down here. Particularly if we get more jobs coming in here with Rutgers expanding, the hospitals expanding, other businesses coming into town that we need to house people. Not everyone wants to live in a high rise in the downtown area. Does the fifth and sixth ward start becoming more of a, you know, single family, owner occupied type of neighborhood. They're very dominated by the students now. Almost all the housing up there is rental. Some of it's non-student rental up there, but is there a place in town where someone who wants to live in New Brunswick, they're working at a hospital, J&J, or whatever, but they don't want to live in Skyline Tower or, you, know One Spring Street or something like that. They want a house. I mean that's something that could be in the future, that, you know, it becomes more like Brooklyn Heights or something like that where people are owning down there, and that it is not as student dominated, but that is. I don't know whether that will happen or not. I mean Rutgers this year, I've heard various different numbers of what your enrollment is going up to here, and you're not building any new housing, at least immediately.

Berkhout: We're using a hotel for 500 students.

Patterson: Yeah. And I think the most –

Berkhout: There is new housing that's going to go on Livingston apparently.

Patterson: But that's down the road and when I was here in ‘83 to ‘85, my studio project was developing that area over on Livingston, behind or over there –

Berkhout: Did you work with Tony Nelessen?

Patterson: No. It was Bob Beauregard and Brent Friedlander.

Berkhout: Oh, yeah.

Patterson: Yeah, I never took Tony's studio. But we're talking about developing it over there, and that was 30 years ago. Nothing has happened yet.

Berkhout: Right. Although there is, now, more definitive planning going on there.

Patterson: But, I mean for right now I mean the enrollment has really increased this year.

Berkhout: Yes. I think it's about 5,000 more than it was a few years ago. So.

Patterson: Yeah. I mean I've heard numbers up in the 40s, and there is no new housing on campus for that right now. And one of the things that we've seen in the last couple of years or the last year are developers coming in and privately acquiring properties, tearing them down, and wanting to put up let's say multifamily buildings with one bedroom, two bedroom apartments, and we're seeing a lot of that along Union Street, along Easton Avenue. Got a couple of new applications coming in on that where the private market is responding to this demand. Because it's a huge, strong demand out there, and that's always been one of the problems that we've had. I mean the fifth and sixth ward used to be our sort of middle-class, ethnic enclave up there with the homeowners, and then the homeowners just can't compete with the price that students can pay, and investors would buy the properties, and it's all turned over to rental. We'd like to have more home ownership up there, but the more demand that comes from just having a larger student population makes that tough. So that vision I was just talking about whether that happens or not, I mean, I think a lot depends on what Rutgers enrollment plans are for the future, and a lot of that has to do with the economy. I mean my son is just going to Rowen this year, and for a while it looked like he was going to end up in a triple because they ended up taking a lot more people that are coming in this year. So that's something that we're always still struggling with, but I think that's an area where something could change. So I think there's demand. I have people – all my staff is living in the Highlands, Skyline, and places like that. They don't necessarily want to stay there, but they don't want to live with students all around them. They have a real job now, and they have to get up at seven in the morning and they can't party till three in morning. And actually, the fraternities are actually the quieter things over there. Rutgers alcohol policy, I mean they can't have kegs anymore. You know, they got to sign in and sign out who their guests are and so forth. They're much better controlled than some housing that's off campus. The housing that's really a problem for us is an old Victorian, and I mean a one or two family that you can get, legally get under the Occupant rules eight or nine people in each apartment. Some of them you can, you know, 15 people in apartment. There's not too much demand for that, because the students don't want to live three in a room anymore, but the ones you get, they're the problems because it's kind of, you know, this group thing when in these split. Nobody is responsible for anything, you know, for putting out the trash, cleaning up, or anything. They're the problem properties, and so when you get – we prefer these units for students if they're going to be smaller units that at most can have three or four persons per unit. They are much less problematic.

Listokin: Looking back, with 20/20 hindsight, are there things that should have been done differently, could have been done differently?

Patterson: I can't take the George Bush scenario here and say I wouldn't change anything? I mean the downtown retail still always struggled, but that's just tough to do because of, I think, a lot to do with the existing layout of the retail. It doesn't match up well with what, you know, modern retailers need for a store size. You tend to get things that are, you know, not the best quality. I think, you know, I think one of the things we need to work on more is not so much the development type stuff, but focusing more on quality of life issues. Noise in the neighborhoods. Graffiti in the neighborhoods. Just trying to make it a more pleasant environment for people out in the neighborhoods to live in. We have a lot of people complaining about speeders on the roads and so forth. And a lot of – it’s a tough thing for the city to deal with because you're just dealing with human nature. If some idiot is going to drive, you know, 40 or 50 miles an hour up a residential street, you can't have a cop there all the time, and you can't have a speed bump on every street, but we're trying to deal with those types of issues of quality of life in the neighborhood. I think that's something that we've struggled with, and that we need to do better on. It's not something I regret, but I think that's an area that we need to focus on better to make it as pleasant a living environment for people to come here. Because one of the reasons we want homeowners because New Brunswick is so dominated by the rental population, and its not just renters, but a very transient rental population with the students who, you know, are living in the neighborhoods for two or three years and moving on. And also the immigrant population which just tends to move along a lot. I mean the immigrant population has brought a lot of vitality into town, but people are moving around a lot. You don't get a sense of community as much, and we'd like to get more homeowners out there. One of the things to try to do that is sort of the demand for units. There's just so much demand for units that it drives up the prices. Makes it tough for a homeowner to compete with an investor, but also if you want to be a homeowner you don't want to deal necessarily with all of the hassles of living in an urban environment with, you know, permit parking, alternate side of the street parking, potentially graffiti, noise, things like that, and I think that's an area we need to step up with.

Listokin: There's been some criticism leveled that there wasn't enough neighborhood involvement in the redevelopment. You think that’s fair?

Berkhout: Community members I think.

Patterson: Yeah, I mean, you can always have more. I mean we've done a lot. I mean we were doing, one of things we haven't talked about was New Brunswick Homes, the public housing when we took that down. John Clarke was the executive director. He kept a tally every time we had a, you know, a public meeting or a meeting with the residents and the community involved with that. And you know, it was up to 300 meetings, and there was a lot. I mean just a tremendous amount of resident involvement in that process. So, I don't think that's always a fair criticism. We still get criticized on that you know it wasn't, you know, community involved, and there were just tons of it. And in that process, we went out and asked the community organizations and so forth to get involved. That was part of the Hope VI process; particularly on the social service side to have the local non-profits come in and provide services to the public housing residents. There was a deafening silence when we asked them to step up to the table. I mean nobody stepped up. You know, they wanted money from the process to be able to go do it and HUD’s attitude was, well, you've got money from all these other different sources to provide services to this population, you're supposed to step to the table. We don't have to pay you to step up, and it was – it was sort of eye opening that nobody really stepped up to the table to do that.

Berkhout: So NBT couldn't get involved in that?

Patterson: NBT was involved, but they're not – they don't provide the services themselves. I mean they're a coordinator and so forth. NBT was very involved in that process. I eventually had Catholic Charities involved doing some of the monitoring and so forth. That didn't work out the best, so, I think we got we got UMDNJ involved with doing that, but yeah, it was kind of, kind of eye opening.

Listokin: More of the physical fabric could have been saved or – clearly there has been emphasis on new construction?

Patterson: Well in the neighborhoods, I mean, we've done a tremendous job of housing rehab and so forth to do that. A lot of it comes down to the economics to do things. I mean, you know, take across the street where the Heldrich Center is now. Yeah, you had the old hotel that was there, and people said, "No why don't you save that. You could renovate," and so forth. You couldn't renovate it. It wasn't going to function as a modern hotel. It didn't have facilities. It had to come down. You couldn't make something that was economically feasible there. We've had some of these issues come up with the Gateway Project, right now, that we're doing.

Berkhout: Right, with the building.

Patterson: I mean there's the one building on the corner. It has a couple of interesting architectural features on it, but it's really impossible to leave that one building, and it's not a tremendous architectural building. It's got a couple of neat features to it, but I think looking at it on balance of what you're going to get out of the project with a major new bookstore for Rutgers that they've needed for a long, long time, new housing there, new parking, you know, parking right next to the train station that, on balance, I mean, it's a very positive development for the city, and you know they had architectural consultants involved, historical consultants involved to try and design the building so that it would have as minimal impact on the surroundings. So there are a lot of historic buildings right around it. And it got through the state process, and you know they didn't have too many concerns about it and so forth, but, I mean that building up there on the corner that's nice looking. Yeah, it's a nice looking building, but look at all the stuff around it, and nothing in the 30 years of doing this, you know, that block hasn't redeveloped, and it should. I mean it's next to the train station. It's next to the hospital. It's next to J&J. It's next to Rutgers. It's a really prime piece of real estate that should be something that's really contributing to New Brunswick and it was a dirt parking lot for the majority of it, and some of the other properties were really pretty dilapidated – some of the housing that was on there. So yeah, you can say it would be nice to keep it. Show a pro forma as to how you can develop something there. Pay price for acquiring the properties that everybody is looking for and that retains the building. I don't think anyone would have a problem with that. No one wants to just go knock things down just to knock them down. Its how do you do something that is economically viable so that you will have a developer who will come in and put the dollars down to do it; that when you get a finished project is going to be economically feasible and you can't always retain it. But, I mean there are a lot of things that have gone on that have retained or are sprucing up some of the historic buildings in town. I mean right next door to St. Peter's church – the city provided some dollars for that. They got some historic preservation money from the state for that. Then the same with both of the churches down on Neilson Street, Christ and the

Episcopal church down there, Christ Reformed and Christ Episcopal. We've done a number of different things like that. We've taken 116 Livingston, which was a redevelopment project that was an old dilapidated apartment building. Used tax credits and historic preservation credits to renovate it, and it's a renovated, historic apartment building right now, and that redevelopment process was the stimulus for getting a good chunk of Livingston Avenue declared as a historic district; that was the process to do it so that could qualify for the tax credits to make that happen. So we're interested in doing that, but it's just not something you are able to do on every project, and a lot of projects it's just not feasible to do.

Listokin: How transferable is what happened in New Brunswick?

Patterson: You know Paladino and I talk about that a lot. It's tough. A lot of it is the personalities that are involved, and sort of the local situation. I mean and New Brunswick has been lucky. I know there may be some critics out there that wouldn't see it that way, but we've had two mayors for the last 30 something years – that provides a lot of political stability so that people feel comfortable investing here, and that they're not going to get in the middle of the project and, you know, and get cut off at the knees. You know, it's sort of the personalities that have evolved in this. We've all just worked really well together. We all like each other. We all get along, so we don't have the situation in some towns where, you know, the housing authority or the parking authority or something like that, you know, isn't on board because they're very independent from the mayor and don't share the mayor's vision or the council's vision, or whatever. Here, everybody has pretty much gone in the same direction, and that's, I think, pretty rare. And I don't know that you can transfer that. You can transfer the model that we have where you sort of set up New Brunswick Tomorrow to work on the social issues in town, school issues, and so forth, DEVCO to be the bricks and mortar arm, an office like mine to coordinate these kinds of efforts, and help developers get through the process so you can redevelop things, have an attitude where, you know, redevelopment and growth is not seen as something bad, but as something good.  But a lot of it, I mean, it's having personalities that work together well. Having people who know their stuff.  I mean this stuff – it's hard.  With Heldrich, with Riverwatch and so forth, I mean, they took 10, 15 years from when people first started talking about, "Let's go do this," to having a grand opening on the thing.  I mean you go through a lot of iterations.  It's – it's hard and it takes a long time, and if you have a lot of political upheaval where the outs are in and the ins are out, and so forth, then it's really tough to do.  So it's – I mean other cities have –

Listokin: And I guess some other unique factors being, you know, a J&J and ...

Patterson: Yeah.  I think some other places that might be our size, you know, an Asbury Park, a Plainfield, and so forth.  I mean they don't have those major institutions in town like we have, and that's been a major plus for us.  I mean other towns have been successful and done it with, you know, different models.  Now look at Jersey City.  I mean you can't have much more political upheaval than they've had in Jersey City over the last 30 years, but they've been tremendously successful.  I mean they've got things that New Brunswick can never have.  I mean their, you know –

Listokin: Across the Hudson –

Berkhout: Yeah.

Patterson: Yeah, we can't be a mile from Wall Street.  We don't have PATH tubes to get us there.  They're, you know, 10 minutes from a major international airport, and so forth so they have a different set of advantages.  They've done – I think their model has been fairly different than ours.  I mean Hoboken different than both of ours.

Berkhout: I have a question about two projects. I guess it was while you have been in your position; a block with the UNDNJ offices and where SOHO is that was redeveloped, right? I don't even remember what was there before, but was that all one project? And did you -- were you involved in that?

Patterson: Yeah, yeah. Yeah that was retail from Bayard Street to Liberty Street and then up on the second floor, I think there were a few apartments up there. Everything was at least two stories maybe something might have been three stories. But I don't think there was much up there. I mean Jersey Subs was down here on this end where Dunkin' Donuts is now. There was an ice cream store. There were a couple other things there, and then there was an old school that was actually operating as the Board of Education headquarters behind it.

Berkhout: So did you have to use eminent domain to do that project?

Patterson: It was a redevelopment project. We definitely had the powers; I'm trying to remember if we actually used eminent domain or whether – I don't recall exactly. My sense is, is that everybody eventually negotiated out. So there wasn't an actual taking. I could be wrong on that, but I don't remember one being real controversial.

Berkhout: Is there anything like that planned for any part of the George Street retail space?

Patterson: Well we're talking, I mean next door over here, we've talked about the cultural center project.

Berkhout: Right. But I mean anything else that would include new retail space and restaurant space in those next few blocks down toward Albany?

Patterson: Not right now, no. We haven't, haven't done that. But what was on – we love to talk about the Liberty Plaza Project, so we're able to use that to really help the rest of downtown. Because when we did that there were a lot of vacancy in downtown, and we were able to take Jersey Subs and move them up to a building that had been dilapidated for a long, long time. It had been, you know, basically cemented up for 20 years. The guy that had the ice cream store there, the guy was really struggling. We moved him over right next to the Court House on the corner of Bayard and Elm, and a reporter once came back and did followup story with guy. And the guy, you know, "My business increased by 500%. I was able to quit my day job with AT&T. I'm looking at selling out to somebody else in the near future at a profit. You know, it was the best thing that ever happened to me." Now I'm sure you can go out and find stories of other people who didn't like the process, but I mean there were a lot of successes with that too, and, you know, Extreme, which ended up next to Jersey Subs up there. I mean there were four or five businesses we were able to take from this area here. Move them and fill in gaps in the rest of downtown so they stayed in downtown, and we were able to get new retailers in downtown like Radio Shack, G&C, and another couple of nice restaurants, and so forth. I mean the Dunkin' Donuts space turned over a couple of times with some things, but I mean, we've got a Dunkin' Donuts down there now, which, you know, it seems like everybody in town goes to. So that project was a real success for us. It brought a lot of new workers into downtown with the – I think its 125,000 square feet of UNDJ office space there. So we got new people into downtown. Some great retail and we were able to there because the floor plates worked. It was one of the things I really pushed for was setting the building back more so we got these big wide sidewalks so the restaurant is able to have real nice cafe space outside. It's just a more pleasant experience, because for a main street of a town New Brunswick size, George Street is the narrowest I've ever seen them. You go to Somerville, you go to Red Bank or whatever, they have much wider streets, and it makes it really difficult because people always want bike lanes downtown. They want to put, you know, they're talking about the BRT – bus rapid transit – downtown. All these different things they want to have happen downtown. One of the things I'm always pushing for is having even wider sidewalks because there's a lot of pedestrian volume downtown, and the distance between the storefronts on each side just isn't very big. It's a really, really narrow main street, which, I guess, is what happens when you built back in 1730 or whatever it was when they laid it out.

Listokin: Well, you've seen our list of people, anyone, any glaring omissions?

Berkhout: Those are people we've already interviewed. Well, we've also, not on that list, we I guess David Harris is somebody that we plan to call.

Patterson: Yeah, you always got to talk David. If you can get him, he's down in Florida, but Frank Nero.

Berkhout: Oh yeah? Okay.

Patterson: Yeah, he'd be. I'm not sure if he's still with Beacon Counsel or not whether he retired or not.

Listokin: Yeah, I knew Frank.

Patterson: But he was very, very involved, you know, in those early years, I think in getting when it was really, really hard to get a lot of this stuff off the ground. Frank had lots of connections. He had worked in the Byrne administration. I think he was an assistant secretary at HUD in the Carter administration, so he had lots of connections and knew who to call to try to make things happen, and just a real bright energetic guy.

Berkhout: We did plan, we would like to interview John Lynch. Now Jim Cahill said he was going to get information to him and have him contact David, but do you keep in touch with them?

Patterson: No I haven't.

Berkhout: Do you have any way to get –

Listokin: Besides the mayor is there anyone else?

Berkhout: Who keeps in touch with him who would be, you know, could explain to him the importance of the project. I mean he's certainly a key person when –

G. Patterson: Tom Kelso would probably be someone.

Berkhout: Oh, okay. Yeah, we are meeting Kelso next week.

Listokin: Would it be okay, I'm sure the city has just lots of folders and files on these projects. Can we just take a look at stuff?

Patterson: Yeah, I guess so. Most of that stuff is you know public documents anyway.

Listokin: You know, the master plan, you know, there have been documents done related to the redevelopment.

Patterson: Yeah, we've got all the redevelopment plans, you know, and master plans and so forth. In fact the master plans don't focus too much; it just talks about it in general terms, but yeah.

Listokin: Any other thoughts that you think are germane that we haven't touched on?

Patterson: No, I mean the only project we didn't really talk about a whole lot was the whole New Brunswick Homes thing, which was kind what I was doing when I first came here. I think that when I first came up here and I interviewed with John Lynch, you know, I interviewed with Frank and Chris before that, and then I had to come over and interview with John. And I think Frank and Chris were both there, and that was what we were talking about there, and I think it was my first or second day starting up here; we had a meeting about New Brunswick Homes. What were we going to do about it? How are we going to fix this and do replacement housing and so forth for it? So that was a project, you know, 1988, and you know we finally got our Hope VI grant in 2000 I think it was, and started, I think the homes were demolished in 2001, I think, and you know had to rebuild on the site and a couple of sites surrounding there, you know a few years after that. So that was a 15 or 17 year process, and you know, I think it has been very transformative for downtown. I mean when you come up from Douglass, heading up into town now, that whole corridor has changed dramatically starting with the Rutgers Public Safety Building, and then as you get up by Remsen Avenue, I mean just a lot of change there, there's sort of that one block that's still left where the church is that really needs some help, but a lot of other stuff has really upgraded. We've put or kept the affordable housing downtown. Mixed it in so it's not just public housing, but there's some tax credit units so it's not just the poorest of the poor, it's the moderately poor also. New Brunswick Homes was just such a negative symbol for the city. It was highly visible with the people in town, the people who were living there. You know, a lot of them, really kind of wanted to stay there. I think it was because they just didn't know what else it could be. It's such a tremendously better environment down there now. You don't have the problems that you had with crime, with drugs. I'm sure there are still issues down there, but it's not to the extent that it was before. I can't tell you the number of times I've gotten calls from people they want to buy houses in town, but we would really like to buy one of those townhouses next to that's Highlands place. We don't want to live in the Highlands, we want to live in those townhouses next it. And I have to tell them, look no, that's our affordable housing downtown, and you know, yuppies don't qualify. You know, its affordable housing. How people mistake for, you know, upscale housing. So we're really proud about that.  We were just down there for national night out a week ago, and you know, a great outpouring from the community, came out to a barbecue and so forth down there.  You know a very friendly environment.  It just looks tremendously better, and I think it's providing much better housing.  A much higher quality of life for residents of New Brunswick, and it wasn't a gentrification or anything.  We kept people in town.  A lot of people who have lived in New Brunswick homes returned here.  Other people moved to other places in New Brunswick or other places in the immediate area using housing vouchers and so forth, but it made a tremendous difference to downtown, and I think that helped other things to happen downtown, because it created a very negative image, but more importantly it was really bad housing for people who, you know, didn't have a whole lot of other options.  I think it's just done a lot of improvement. But that's something that took, you know, another project 15 years or more to make it happen and going through a lot of iterations, and we were talking about the community involvement and so forth.  Chris Foglio and I, you know starting back in ‘89 or ‘90 something like that, doing public presentations on it and so forth. When Chris and I were first going down to New Brunswick Homes down in the community room to the first public presentation to the residents about this, I think it was Lynch and others.  They wanted us to take, you know, police guards with us and so on.  They thought we were going to get killed down there, and Chris and I were both like, no that's the last thing we want.  We just want to go down there and talk, and we never had, you know, really antagonistic people – people would certainly be impassioned in their comments and so forth, but we never felt unsafe in going down there and talking to people. Actually, you know, I had some very good conversations.  Developed some real interesting good relationships with people down there.  It was a really, really, interesting process, and I think what's come out of it has been excellent.  It's a great project.  I wish we had more money in the project to be able to do it even better, but it's been a tremendous improvement for that neighborhood.

Listokin: Good.

Berkhout: I understand that Tim Pernetti has been to see ...

Listokin: I'm going to run now.

Berkhout: Oh okay.

G. Patterson: Okay.

Berkhout: And we'll see you at 1:30 David. We have another interview. Tim Pernetti went to see the mayor about the possibility of a downtown arena. I still have Peter Eisenman's drawing hanging outside of my office, which would have been that block where the church is I guess. So I'm just wondering if you have any ideas about whether that's something that is still workable, and would that, you know how serious that kind of a project would be for New Brunswick?

Patterson: I'll – oh, good – I've never been the hugest proponent of doing, you know, a downtown arena . . .

[end of recording]